

Tigers Stripes

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Tigers Fans Who Always Care

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MICHAEL FULMER AND TIGERS ROOKIE STARTERS – By David Raglin

The good news from the awards balloting was that Michael Fulmer easily won the American League Rookie of the Year award, joining current rotation-mate, Justin Verlander, who won the award ten years ago. How does Fulmer compare to other Tiger rookie starters in history?

It's hard to compare starting pitchers over time. One hundred years ago, starters pitched many more games and innings. Modern stats like WAR would overrate starters from early in Tigers history and pitchers like Fulmer and Verlander would not show up very high on the list. Fielding-Independent Pitching, an ERA stat that only takes into account homers, walks, and strikeouts, does not work across eras where home runs and strikeouts were rare events. ERAs also vary greatly across eras.

I decided to go with ERA+, a comparison of a pitcher's ERA with the league average, to take into account differences over the years. You will see that Mark Fidrych had an ERA+ of 159, meaning that the league ERA was 59 percent worse than Fidrych's 2.34, adjusting for Fidrych's ballpark. Fidrych tops the list below, and his 159 ERA+ actually led the whole American League in 1976. I started in 1902 because the 1901 Tigers had two guys who would have made the list, but they had also pitched for the Tigers in 1900 before the American League declared itself a major league; it seemed a stretch to call those two guys rookies. I set a cutoff of 130 innings to make the list.

Top Ten Tigers Rookie Starters, 1902-2016, Ranked by ERA+

Rk	Player	Year	Age	G	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	W	L	ERA	ERA+
1	Mark Fidrych*	1976	21	31	250.1	217	76	65	53	97	19	9	2.34	159
2	Ed Summers#	1908	23	40	301.0	271	112	55	55	103	24	12	1.64	145
3	Virgil Trucks	1942	25	28	167.2	147	64	51	74	91	14	8	2.74	145
4	Dave Rozema	1977	20	28	218.1	222	87	75	34	92	15	7	3.09	139
5	Hal White	1942	23	34	216.2	212	80	70	82	93	12	12	2.91	136
6	Herman Pillette#	1922	26	40	274.2	270	110	87	95	71	19	12	2.85	136
7	Michael Fulmer*	2016	23	26	159.0	136	57	54	42	132	11	7	3.06	135
8	Dizzy Trout	1939	24	33	162.0	168	82	65	74	72	9	10	3.61	135
9	Frank Lary	1955	25	36	235.0	232	100	81	89	98	14	15	3.10	125
10	Justin Verlander*	2006	23	30	186.0	187	78	75	60	124	17	9	3.63	125

* Rookie of the Year, # Retroactive Rookie of the Year as voted by members of the Society For American Baseball Research

You certainly know many of the names: Fidrych, Rozema, Verlander, and probably some from earlier times, like Trucks, Trout, White, and Lary. I know I did not know much about Summers, White and Pillette.

Summers, a knuckleballer, played a key role in the 1908 team that won the pennant by a half-game over Cleveland. Summers led the team in innings pitched, wins and ERA. There was no Rookie of the Year award in 1908, but in 1986, members of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) retroactively gave it to him. Summers pitched well in 1909 and 1910, but had troubles in the postseason, going 0-4 in the 1908 and 1909 World Series.

Pillette, who was also retroactively named Rookie of the Year, only pitched for two seasons in the majors after his sensational 1922 year, but pitched for 21 more seasons after that in the Pacific Coast League. His son, Duane, pitched for eight years, 1949-56. Both father and son led the AL in losses.

It's ironic that Rick Porcello won the Cy Young Award in the American League over Verlander. The Tigers turned Porcello into Yoenis Cespedes, whom they then turned into Fulmer. (The Tigers also have Alex Wilson from the Porcello trade, and one of the guys they got from the Mets was flipped to the Yankees as part of the Justin Wilson deal.) As much as we miss Porcello and wish him luck, given the Tigers' lack of young players and payroll problems, Fulmer is more valuable to the Tigers right now.

THE FIRST SIGN OF SPRING – By David Raglin

I have a lot of traditions. Every year, we go to Michigan to visit my brother and his family for Thanksgiving. On Black Friday, I make one stop -- the Barnes and Noble in Rochester -- to pick up a few gifts and one gift for myself. That is the Bill James Handbook. It's the first book out for the 2017 season, and, with baseballreference.com and other stats sites out there, the only paper stats book I still buy. I have every edition of the book since the first one in 1990.

The book started as a Baseball Register-like volume, focusing on players' season-by-season stats, but that is now less than half of the book. The rest is a cornucopia of statistical listings: baserunning, fielding, ballpark factors, manager stats, leaderboards, and more. I have done an article each year of a few of the stats, but this year, with the team in such flux as we await the deals that we have been told will be probably coming, I'm going to pull a bunch of stuff out of the book. Some of the stats are meaningful, some are more trivial, but I hope you find them to all be fun.

Justin Verlander up and down – We all know how Verlander went from being one of the best starters to a couple of rough years, and then back to the top. Bill James has a stat called game score, which assigns a score to each starter's starts, and he uses that to put together a ranking of starting pitchers once a week. (Think of the rankings of golfers or tennis players.) Verlander was #1 among active hurlers as recently as May 9, 2013; he lost his spot the next week to Clayton Kershaw, who has been #1 ever since. Verlander was still sixth about a year, on May 26, 2014, but dropped all the way to 98th on July 22, 2015. Since then, he has been rising, reaching the #6 position on the last day of the 2016 season, his masterful game against the Braves which he lost 1-0. (In case you were wondering, the five guys ahead of Verlander are Kershaw, Max Scherzer, Madison Bumgardner, Corey Kluber and Jon Lester.)

Miggy's long flies – Miguel Cabrera hit 119 balls 320 feet or farther. The only players who hit more were Nolan Arenado (who plays in Colorado) at 126 and Albert Pujols at 129. Kris Bryant also had 119 long flies. Miggy had four balls hit 400-plus feet turn into outs, tie with five others for fourth in the majors. Marwin Gonzalez of Houston had 8 400-plus flies that were caught, and Diamondbacks Jake Lamb and Jean Segura had five each.

Interleague play – The Tigers were 13-7 in interleague play in 2016. That sounds good, but seven of the 15 American League teams had interleague records that good or better. The American League had a .550 winning percentage in interleague play, projecting to 90-72 over a full season. This is not unusual; the American League's winning percentage in 2015 and 2014 was .543 and .557, respectively, and the junior circuit has had a winning record in interleague play every year since 2004.

Upton takeaways – Justin Upton grabbed four balls over the wall, turning home runs into outs, in 2016: April 26 vs. Oakland, July 24 at Chicago, August 27 vs. Los Angeles, and September 9 vs. Baltimore. His brother, Melvin Jr., was second on the list with three takeaways. The interesting thing is that between then, they had one takeaway in the careers before 2016. When Camden Yards was built, they designed it on purpose so that the walls in most of the outfield were at the perfect height to grab a ball going over the wall, and many of the other new parks have imitated that. There were 48 potential home runs brought back in the park in 2016 in the majors.

Career leaders – Bill James has a method to project the probability a player will meet certain career milestones and break all-time records, based on the current pace of the player and his age. He says that Miguel Cabrera has a 64 percent chance to get 3,000 hits and a 3 percent chance for 4,000 hits (he has 2,519 now and will turn 34 in April). For home runs, he has 446 now and a 74 percent chance for 500, a 35 percent chance for 600, and a 2 percent chance for 700. He has 523 doubles now and a 6 percent chance to best Tris Speaker's record of 791. He has 1,553 RBIs and a 47 percent chance for 2,000 and a 9 percent chance to beat Hank

Aaron's record of 2,297. He has 4,414 total bases and a 5 percent chance to go past Aaron's record of 6,856. (In unrelated trivia, Rickey Henderson's record of 2,295 runs is only two behind Aaron's record of 2,297 RBIs.)

Shifty moves – Given the lack of left-handed hitters, the Tigers have not been that affected by the shifting at the plate. Victor Martinez is the only guy who was greatly affected. Baseball Info Systems estimates that Martinez lost about 29 hits by hitting into the shift and gained about 15 hits from hitting away from it, a net of -15 hits, so his .289 batting average would have been .316. Assuming they were all singles one way or another, the runs created formula estimates that cost the Tigers about 12 runs. The hitter most hurt by the shift was former Tiger Curtis Granderson, who lost 34 hits to the shift and only gained 10 by hitting away from it, a net of -24 hits.

SPRING TRAINING TRIP DATES SET – By David Raglin

It's getting cold outside, but this is something that will warm your hearts: It's time to start making plans for the 34rd Annual Mayo Smith Society Spring Training Trip in sunny Lakeland, Florida. This year we will get to see the newly reconstructed Joker Marchant Stadium and spring training facility. If you've been saying for years, "I should go to spring training," well, this is the year. The schedule for our week is below:

Saturday, March 18: vs. Miami in Lakeland, 1:05 (and tentatively the Clubhouse dinner)

Sunday, March 19: vs. Baltimore @ Sarasota, 1:05

Monday, March 20: vs. N.Y. Mets in Lakeland, 1:05

Tuesday, March 21: Off-Day

Wednesday, March 22: vs. Toronto @ Dunedin, 1:07 (and dinner in Dunedin after the game)

Thursday, March 23: vs. Atlanta @ Disney, 6:05

Friday, March 24: vs. Atlanta in Lakeland, 1:05

Saturday, March 25: vs. Pittsburgh @ Bradenton, 1:05

There are three home games, but two of the road games are on the weekend and one is at night, when traffic will be lighter. Prices and hotel information will be in the next issue of *Tigers Stripes* in around the holidays, but go ahead and book your flights! For more info, please contact Dave Raglin at 703-835-1198 or darags@ymail.com.

See you in sunny, warm Lakeland!

KING TIGER VOTING EXTENDED (JUST A LITTLE) – By Mark Pattison

When settling on the production schedule of this issue of *Tigers Stripes*, we realized quickly that we wouldn't give all voters enough time for their second – and last! – notice on voting for King Tiger 2016. Therefore, we are extending the deadline to Wednesday, Dec. 7, at 11:59 p.m. ET. That's it – no later than that!

Again, a summary of the rules: Any player in uniform for the 2016 Tigers is eligible, but only one can win. You're voting for both a player's on-field performance and his off-field involvement. You can vote for only one Tiger; no split voting. You can vote only once (we have fraud detection measures). If you and your spouse are members separately, then and only then do you have two votes; otherwise, you'll have to come to agreement on who to vote for. If you wish, feel free to include the reasons why you voted for your choice, since we may include them in the January issue of Stripes when the winner is announced.

You can vote by email at pattison_mark@hotmail.com and putting "King Tiger" on the subject line, or by postal mail to Mark Pattison, 1221 Floral St. NW, Washington, DC 20012. Keep those votes coming in!

STOCKING STUFFERS FOR YOUR FAVORITE TIGERS FANS -- By Todd Miller

With the holiday season upon us, it's time to consider gifts for the Tigers fans in your life, or as a way to treat yourself to something special after the roller coaster ride that was Tigers baseball in 2016. The selection of Bengal-centric presents includes:

Detroit Tigers 2017 Fantasy Camp – Enjoy a week under the Florida sun by taking instruction from, and playing games with former Tigers, including Willie Horton, Mickey Lolich, Jim Price, Frank Tanana and Lou

Whitaker. Cost per camper is \$3,750. The first session runs Jan. 22-29, and the second session is Jan. 29-Feb. 5. For more information, or to register, call Jerry Lewis at 313.471.2550 or visit tigers.com/fantasycamp.

Tigers by the Tale: Great Games at Michigan & Trumbull chronicles a century-plus of Detroit Tigers (nee Creams) ballgames at The Corner. Edited by Society member Scott Ferkovich, the book, published by the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) chronicles 50 games from 104 seasons of baseball at Bennett Park, Navin Field, Briggs Stadium and Tiger Stadium. Our own Dave Raglin and Scott Dominiak are among the authors who contributed to this work. *Tigers by the Tale* is available at Amazon.com for \$12.95.

"The Greatest Player That Ever Played the Game" is the title of Society member Norm Coleman's one-man show about Ty Cobb. He has made a DVD of his performance, which he has given throughout the country over the past decade. Clips of the show are available at www.tycobb367.com The DVD is \$22 postpaid. Place your order by sending a check, payable to Norm Coleman, to Norm Coleman; 1 Bloom Lane, #1210; Half Moon Bay, CA 94019.

Terror in the City of Champions: Murder, Baseball, and the Secret Society That Shocked Depression-Era Detroit takes place in the mid-1930s when the Tigers, Lions and Red Wings were atop the sports world and boxer Joe Louis was ascending to a 12-year reign as heavyweight champion. Author Tom Stanton (www.tomstanton.com), a Society member and one of the speakers at this past year's Annual Gathering, uses the Motor City sports scene as a backdrop for masterfully detailing the secret and often loathsome actions of the Black Legion, a self-styled vigilante group that forced people to join under penalty of death, and often made beatings or murders of blacks, Catholics, Jews and leftists part of its initiation rite. *Terror in the City of Champions* sells for \$26 and is available online and in bookstores.

Society stalwarts David Raglin and Mark Pattison have two of their books for sale: *Detroit Tigers Lists and More: Runs, Hits and Eras*, which looks at the baseball scene in Detroit and environs from its very beginnings to the edge of the current century, 2001, for \$10, and *Detroit Tigers 1984: What a Start! What a Finish!*, a "bio-book" of the last World Series winner to call Detroit home, for \$20. Both prices include postage, plus an inscription by the authors to yourself or that special loved one. To order, send a check, payable to Mark Pattison, to Mark Pattison, 1221 Floral St. NW, Washington, DC 20012.

Other books given space of the past year in *Tigers Stripes* include *The Tigers and Yankees in '61* by Society member Jim Sargent, *In Cobb's Shadow* by Dan D'Addona, and *Big Sam Thompson* by Roy Kerr, all available through mcfarlandpub.com, plus Tim Hornbaker's Ty Cobb biography, *War on the Basepaths*, and *The 50 Greatest Players in Detroit Tigers History* by Robert W. Cohen, both generally available online.

We can never forget our longtime friends at the Detroit Athletic Company (originally the Designated Hatter), a team apparel and memorabilia store for the Tigers and all of Detroit's favorite teams, just a block from old Tiger Stadium at 1244 Michigan Ave. in Detroit. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. most days, you can always go to detroitathletic.com if you can't make it to the store in person to view the tremendous selection. And shipping if faster than you can say "Ken Szotkiewicz"!

These gift ideas should help to make holiday season a warm one for the friends, relatives and associates who are the recipients of your generosity, or add enjoyment to your winter.

For **Mayo Smith Society Memberships** send \$20

(US\$23 out of the US) to:

Mayo Smith Society, PO Box 119,
Northville, MI 48167

Name _____

Address _____

For **Detroit Tigers 1984: What a Start! What a Finish!** (\$20) or
Detroit Tigers Lists and More (\$10), autographed by
authors David Raglin and Mark Pattison, send to:

Mark Pattison, 1221 Floral St. NW,
Washington, DC 20012

City, St/Pr _____

Zip/Postal Code _____ Phone _____

Our shirts are now sold through the Detroit Athletic
Company. To purchase a shirt, call 313/961-3550.

E-mail _____

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