



My Drift
Jerry D. Petersen



Baseball

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As I write this article, the Olympics in Rio are in full swing and football (America's "new" favorite sport) has started. Just when baseball (America's "old" favorite pastime) was getting interesting and fans were coming back to the stadiums, these other sports are getting all of the attention. Yes, in recent years, baseball has played second fiddle to both football and basketball. Fans love for the game has been declining for many years. Young people would rather play a game on their cell phone than go to a baseball game. The older fan base who really enjoy a good baseball game are starting to die off.



I enjoy watching baseball. There is no clock. You can relax and enjoy a hot dog and a beer or two. Baseball is a "thinking man's game" where you have time to second guess the manager or coach. Baseball statistics are more important than with any other sport and baseball fans remember all the key numbers. I also have enjoyed listening to Vin Scully call the Dodger games on the radio.

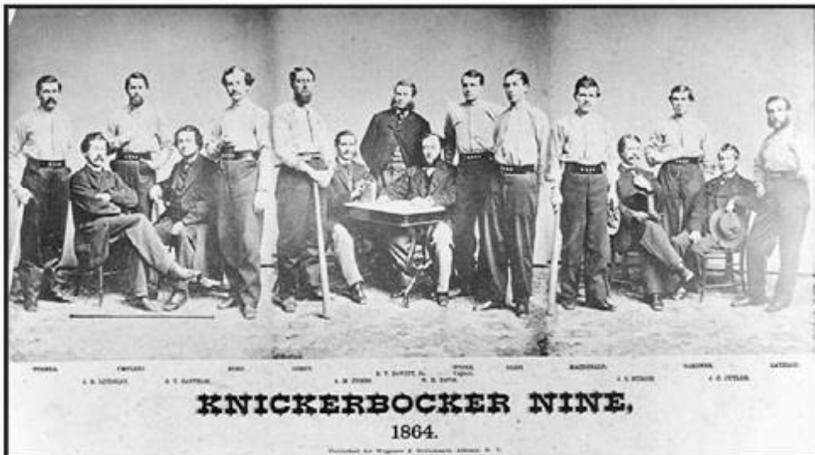
Baseball History



**General
Abner Doubleday**

You may have heard that a man named Abner Doubleday invented the game known as baseball in Cooperstown, New York, during the summer of 1839. Doubleday then went on to become a Civil War hero, while baseball became America's beloved national pastime. Not only is that story untrue, it's not even in the ballpark. Doubleday was still at West Point in 1839, and he never claimed to have anything to do with baseball. In 1907, a special commission created by the sporting goods magnate and former major league player A.J. Spalding, used flimsy evidence—namely the claims of one man, mining engineer Abner Graves—to come up with the Doubleday origin story. Cooperstown businessmen and major league officials must have believed it since they established the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown.

As it turns out, the real history of games resembling baseball in the United States date back to the 18th century. Its most direct ancestors appear to be two English games: Rounders (a children's game brought to New England by the earliest colonists) and Cricket. By the time of the American Revolution, variations of such games were being played on schoolyards and college campuses across the country. They became even more popular in newly industrialized cities in the mid-19th century. In September 1845, a group of New York City men founded the New York Knickerbocker Baseball Club. One of them—volunteer firefighter and bank clerk Alexander Joy Cartwright—would codify a new set of rules that would form the basis for modern baseball, calling for a diamond-shaped infield, foul lines and the three-strike rule. He also abolished the dangerous practice of tagging runners by throwing balls at them.



The first baseball team

**The New York
Knickerbockers**

Cartwright's changes made the burgeoning pastime faster-paced and more challenging while clearly differentiating it from older games like Rounders and Cricket. In 1846, the Knickerbockers played the first official game of baseball against a team of cricket players, beginning a new, uniquely American tradition.

The First Professional Baseball Teams and League

The Cincinnati Red Stockings were the first team to declare themselves as openly professional, and were easily the most aggressive in recruiting the best available players. Twelve clubs, including most of the strongest clubs in the National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP), ultimately declared themselves professional for the 1869 season.

The first attempt at forming a "major league" did not happen until 1875. The now all professional Chicago White Stockings, financed by businessman William Hulbert, became a charter member of the new league along with the Red Stockings, who had dissolved and moved to Boston. The White Stockings were close contenders all season, despite the fact that the Great Chicago Fire had destroyed the team's home field and most of their equipment. The White Stockings finished the season in second place, but ultimately were forced to drop out of the league during the city's recovery period, finally returning to National Association play in 1874. Over the next couple seasons, The Boston Red Stockings dominated the league and hoarded many of the game's best players, even those who were under contract with other teams. After a series of rival leagues were organized but failed, (most notably the American Base Ball Association, which spawned the clubs which would ultimately become the St. Louis Cardinals and Brooklyn Dodgers). The current American League, evolving from the minor Western League of 1893, was established in 1901.



Early baseball "Dead Ball Era" bats, ball, and glove

The "Dead Ball Era"

In the very early part of the 20th century, known as the "dead-ball era", baseball rules and equipment favored the "inside game" and the game was played more

violently and aggressively than it is today. This period ended in the early 1920s with several changes that gave advantages to hitters. In the largest parks, the outfield fences were brought closer to the infield. In addition, the strict enforcement of new rules governing the size, shape and construction of the ball caused it to travel farther.

Negro Leagues

Because blacks were not being accepted into the major and minor baseball leagues, they formed their own teams. The first professional black baseball club, the Cuban Giants, was organized in 1885. Subsequent professional black baseball clubs played each other independently, without an official league to organize the sport. The first known baseball game between two black teams was held on November 15, 1859, in New York City. The Henson Base Ball Club of Jamaica, Queens, defeated the Unknowns of Weeksville, Brooklyn, 54 to 43.



Negro Team – Chicago American Giants

Rube Foster, a former ballplayer, founded the first Negro National League in 1920. A second league, the Eastern Colored League, was established in 1923. These became known as the Negro Leagues, though these leagues never had any formal overall structure comparable to the Major Leagues. The Negro Leagues did well until 1930, but folded during the Great Depression.

Just as Negro league baseball seemed to be at its lowest point and was about to fade into history, along came the Cumberland Posey and his Homestead Grays. Posey, Charlie Walker, John Roesnik, George Rossiter, John Drew, Lloyd Thompson and L.R. Williams got together in January 1932 and founded the East-West League. Eight

cities were included in the new league: "Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore, Cleveland, Newark, New York, and Washington, D.C. Across town from Posey, Gus Greenlee, a reputed gangster and numbers runner, had just purchased the Pittsburgh Crawfords. Greenlee's main interest in baseball was to use it as a way to launder money from his numbers games. On August 6, 1931, Satchel Paige made his first appearance as a Crawford. With Paige on his team, Greenlee took a huge risk by investing \$100,000 in a new ballpark to be called Greenlee Field. On opening day, April 30, 1932, the pitcher-catcher battery was made up of the two most marketable icons in all of blackball: Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson.



Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson

Leroy "Satchel" Paige was an American Negro league baseball and Major League Baseball (MLB) pitcher who became a legend in his own lifetime by attracting record crowds wherever he pitched. Paige was a right-handed pitcher, and at age 42 in 1948, he was the oldest major league rookie while playing for the Cleveland Indians. He played with the St. Louis Browns until age 47.

Joshua "Josh" Gibson was an American Negro league baseball catcher. Baseball historians consider Gibson to be among the very best power hitters and catchers in the history of any league, including Major League Baseball (MLB). In 1972, he was the second player after Satchel Paige who had played in the Negro leagues to be inducted in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

End of the Negro Leagues

Pressured by civil rights groups and a new law called the Quinn-Ives Act that banned discrimination in hiring, Jackie Robinson was signed as the first black player. Robinson broke the baseball color line when the Brooklyn Dodgers started him at second base on April 15, 1947. This marked the end for the Negro Leagues since all their good players started signing contracts with major league teams. By 1950, all of the Negro League teams had folded.

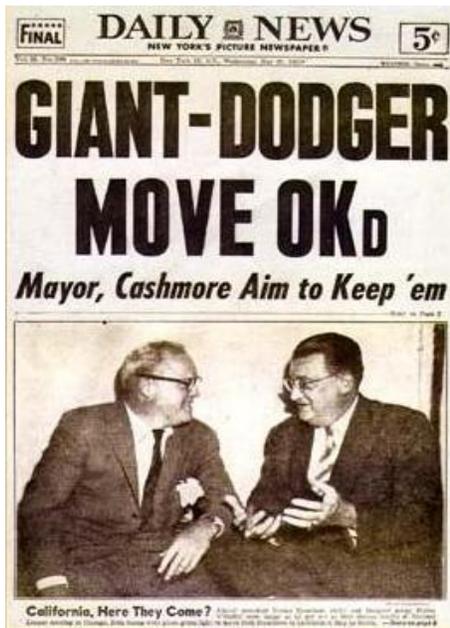
National League Baseball leaves New York

In 1958, the New York market was ripped apart. The Yankees were becoming the dominant draw, and the cities of the West offered generations of new fans in much more sheltered markets for the other New York clubs, the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants. Placing these storied, powerhouse clubs in the two biggest cities in

the West had the specific design of crushing any attempt by the Pacific Coast League (PCL) to form a third major league. Eager to bring these big names to the West, Los Angeles gave Walter O'Malley, owner of the Dodgers, a helicopter tour of the city and asked him to pick his spot. The Giants were given the lease to the PCL San Francisco Seals digs while Candlestick Park was built for them.

Great Baseball Players from the Past

When I was a kid, I followed baseball much closer than I do now. I mostly listened to the games on the radio because when I was a kid we didn't have a television set and later when we did get a TV, there were very few baseball games on it. My favorite team was the Brooklyn and later the Los Angeles Dodgers. My favorite player was Duke Snider. Some of the great players from my day are shown starting on the next page. I'm talking about the golden age of baseball – the 1950's and 1960's.



Willie Mays and Sandy Koufax

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Great baseball players from the 1950's and 1960's



Just in case you don't recognize some of these players, here are the names:

Manager: Casey Stengel

1st Base: Stan Musial

3rd Base: Eddie Mathews

OF: Ted Williams

Catcher: Yogi Berra

2nd Base: Jackie Robinson

OF: Willie Mays

Reliever: Hoyt Wilhelm

Pitcher: Sandy Koufax

SS: Ernie Banks

OF: Mickey Mantle

Pitcher: Early Wynn

There were more great baseball players in the 1950's and 1960's than I could fit on one baseball diamond. So, I made another one.



Manager: Walter Alston
1st Base: Gil Hodges
3rd Base: Brooks Robinson
OF: Richie Auburn

Catcher: Roy Campanella
2nd Base: Joe Morgan
OF: Hank Aaron
Utility: Pete Rose

Pitcher: Warren Spahn
SS: Eddie Yost
OF: Duke Snider
Pitcher: Whitey Ford

I think there were more great players during these two decades than at any other period in baseball history. Right now in 2016, I could not name more than a dozen players in all of baseball. I guess that I have lost interest in following baseball over the years. I would still love to see another major league game in person.

Baseball Statistics

As most of you know, I like statistics so let examine some of the all-time leaders in baseball. For hitters, the six things I'm most interested in are the batting average, runs batted in, home runs, most hits, runs, and stolen bases. I don't look at or count records set before 1920 – the beginning of the live ball era.

Career

Batting Average (BA)		Runs Batted in (RBIs)		Home Runs (HRs)	
Ty Cobb	.366	Hank Aaron	2297	*Barry Bonds	762
Rogers Hornsby	.359	Babe Ruth	2214	Hank Aaron	755
Shoeless Joe Jackson	.356	*Alex Rodrigues	2085	Babe Ruth	714

*Barry Bonds and *Alex Rodrigues were steroid users.

Season

Batting Average (BA)		Runs Batted in (RBIs)		Home Runs (HRs)	
Rogers Hornsby	.424	Hack Wilson	191	*Barry Bonds	73
George Sisler	.420	Lou Gehrig	185	*Mark McGuire	70
Ty Cobb	.420	Hank Greenberg	184	*Sammy Sosa	66

*Barry Bonds, Mark McGuire, and Sammy Sosa were all steroid users

Note 1: The last player with a batting average over .400 was Ted Williams with .406 in 1941.

Note 2: The most recent player with over a 160 runs batted in was *Manny Ramirez (a steroid user) with 165 in 1999.

Note 3: The single season home run record by a “clean” (Non-steroid user) player is 61 by Roger Maris in 1961.

Career

Most Hits		Most Runs Scored		Most Stolen Bases	
**Pete Rose	4256	Rickey Henderson	2297	Rickey Henderson	1406
Ty Cobb	4189	Ty Cobb	2244	Lou Brock	938
Hank Aaron	3771	*Barry Bonds	2227	Tim Lincecum	808

*Barry Bonds was a steroid user

** Pete Rose was banned from the Hall of Fame because of gambling on baseball

Season

Most Hits		Most Runs Scored		Most Stolen Bases	
Ichiro Suzuki	262	Babe Ruth	177	Rickey Henderson	130
George Sisler	257	Lou Gehrig	167	Lou Brock	118
Lefty O'Doul	254	Chuck Klein	158	Vince Coleman	110

Now, let's take a look at major league pitching records. For pitchers, the three things I'm most interested in are most wins, lowest earned run average (ERA), and most strikeouts. Cy Young holds the MLB win record with 511; Walter Johnson is second with 417. Young and Johnson are the only players to earn 400 or more wins. Among pitchers whose entire careers were in the post-1920 live-ball era, Warren Spahn has the most wins with 363.

Career

Most Wins		Lowest ERA		Most Strikeouts	
Warren Spahn	363	Mariano Rivera	2.21	Nolan Ryan	5,714
Greg Maddux	355	Babe Ruth	2.28	Randy Johnson	4,875
*Roger Clemens	354	Clayton Kershaw	2.38	*Roger Clemens	4,672

* Roger Clemens was a steroid user

Season

Most Wins		Lowest ERA		Most Strikeouts	
Denny McLain	31	Bob Gibson	1.12	Nolan Ryan	383
Lefty Grove	31	Dwight Gooden	1.53	Sandy Koufax	382
Dizzy Dean	30	Greg Maddux	1.60	Randy Johnson	372

Note 1: Back in the early years of baseball, Old Hoss Radbourn won 59 games in 1884.

Box Score

Have you ever taken a close look at a baseball box score? Okay, I know that most of you could care less about reading the box scores. But, baseball fans – even casual fans like me like to check out the baseball box scores every day. The box scores for the major league games played the previous day are in the sports section of most major newspapers. Let's take a closer look at a box score from 1958 to find out exactly what kind of information and statistics are in one. I actually remember this game. Back in 1958 I was a big Dodger fan and whenever anything bad happened to the Yankees, I was happy. Bad things didn't happen to the Yankee very often since they were winning the World Series almost every year including 1958 when they beat the Milwaukee Braves. Yes, the New York Yankees were no-hit by knuckleball pitcher Hoyt Wilhelm who was pitching for the Baltimore Orioles at the time.



Knuckleballer Hoyt Wilhelm pitches a no hitter against the Yankees

NEW YORK (A.)				BALTIMORE (A.)					
	ab.	r.	h.	rbi		ab.	r.	h.	rbi
Bauer, rf.....	4	0	0	0	Will'ns, 3b, lf..	4	0	1	0
Lumpe, ss.....	2	0	0	0	Boyd, 1b.....	4	0	1	0
Mantle, cf....	3	0	0	0	Woodling, rf..	2	0	0	0
Skowron, 3b..	3	0	0	0	Busby, cf.....	1	0	1	0
Siebern, lf....	3	0	0	0	Nieman, lf....	3	0	0	0
Howard, c.....	3	0	0	0	Robinson, 3b..	1	0	0	0
Thr'n'b'rry, 1b	2	0	0	0	Triandos, c....	3	1	1	1
aBerra, 1b....	1	0	0	0	Tasby, cf, rf..	3	0	0	0
Rich'rds'n, 2b	2	0	0	0	Gardner, 2b..	3	0	0	0
Larsen, p.....	2	0	0	0	Castleman, ss..	2	0	1	0
Shantz, p....	0	0	0	0	Miranda, ss....	0	0	0	0
bSlaughter ...	1	0	0	0	Wilhelm, p....	3	0	0	0
Total.....	26	0	0	0	Total.....	29	1	5	1

aGrounded out for Throneberry in 8th; bFlied out for Shantz in 9th.

New York.....0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0-0
 Baltimore0 0 0 0 0 0 1 0..-1
 E-Skowron 2. A-New York 5, Baltimore 7.
 LOB-New York 1, Baltimore 6.
 2B Hit-Williams. HR-Triandos.

	IP.	H.	R.	ER.	BB.	SO.
Wilhelm (W, 3-10)...	9	0	0	0	2	8
Larsen	6	1	0	0	2	2
Shantz (L, 7-6).....	2	4	1	1	0	2

PB-Triandos. Umpires-Paparella, Chylak, Tobacchi, Stuart. Time-1:48. Attendance-10,941.

Box Score Information

Teams A = American League

N = National League

Players who played in game

Position - number of at bats -

number of runs - number of hits -

number of runs batted in - most box

scores also show batting average

Team totals - Scoring by inning

E = Errors A = Assists

LOB = Runners Left on Base

2B = Player(s) who hit a double

3B = Player(s) who hit a Triple

HR = Player(s) who hit a home run

Pitchers Information-Name-Record

IP=Innings pitched H=Hit given up

R=Run given up ER=Earned Runs

BB=Bases on Balls SO=Strikeouts

PB=Past Ball - Umpires -

Time the game took -

Attendance

What is wrong with Major League Baseball?

Games are too long.

The average baseball game in 2016 is over 3 hours long. Many games are over 4 hours long. In 1984, the average time was 2 hours and 34 minutes. In the 1950's, it was closer to 2 hours. Checkout the Box Score above.

Some reasons why games are too long:

- Batters stepping out of the batter's box
- Managers changing pitchers too often
- Instant replay
- Pitchers taking too long between pitches – they average over 23 seconds

How to fix this problem

- Batters must stay in batter's box – If not, umpire will call a strike
- Managers can only change pitchers once in an inning
- Get rid of instant replay for baseball
- Pitchers cannot take more than 12 seconds between pitches – If they do, umpire will call a ball
- For intentional walks, don't waste time throwing four wide pitches

There are too many games.

Post season including the World Series games are played in late October and even early November when it can be very cold, raining and even snowing. Some facts:

- Before 1961, they played a 154 game schedule instead of current 162.
- Before 1969, the winner of the National League played the winner of the American League in the World Series.
- Since 1969, baseball has added more teams, more divisions, more wild card teams, and two additional post season rounds.

How to fix this problem

- Play a 154-game schedule
- Add two teams in order to have a total of 32 teams
- Have two divisions in the National League and two divisions in the American League (eight teams in each).
- Only division winners play in National League and American League championship games with the winners playing in the World Series.
- No more inter-league games

Games start too late

Post season (including the World Series) games have been starting at 9PM EST meaning most games do not get done until after midnight. By the time fans get home it is 2AM or 3AM. This is way too late for kids and some adults like me.

How to fix this problem

- Starting time for all post season baseball games will not be later than 7PM EST
- During the regular season, play half of the schedule during the day
- Let's see now – 7PM EST is 1PM Hawaii time. Hey, that's just right!

The National League plays a different style of baseball from the American League

Basically, in the National League the pitchers have to hit and in the American League they have the designated hitter (DH) to bat for the pitcher. Why? Nobody seems to know!

- When I was a kid, nobody had even heard of the “Designated Hitter” rule.
- Back then, the pitcher on most teams in most leagues was the best athlete and the best hitter.
- The American League adopted the designated hitter in 1973.
- But, as you know, things change and now days the designated hitter is used in most Little Leagues, High School, College, and minor professional leagues.

How to fix this problem

- Well it is obvious to everybody (except the commissioner of baseball and some National League officials) that the National League must change and play by the same rules the rest of the world uses.

Baseball is slow and lacks action and excitement

Baseball fans know that games are more exciting when batters are getting hits, base runners are stealing bases, and the defense is making great plays. The pitcher is pitching quickly and the umpire is calling strikes and balls according to the specified strike zone. But now days, here is what is happening:

- The major league baseball strikeout rate is skyrocketing to absurd levels.
 - Hitters are swinging for the fences
 - Pitchers are striking out more than 8 hitters a game – that is an average of 16 strikeouts per game for both team's pitchers.
 - There are several hitters with more than 200 strikeouts in a season -
Examples: Mark Reynolds 223 strikeouts – Adam Dunn 222 strikeouts
- Compare this to what hitters did back in the 1950's and 1960's
 - Ted Williams averaged 37 strikeouts per season and still smashed 521 home runs

- Joe DiMaggio fanned 13 times in 521 at-bats one season and still hit 30 bombs
- Pitchers were striking out about 4 hitters a game
- When was the last time you saw a player steal home plate?
 - It is so rare now days that they don't even keep statistics on it any more.
 - The last player to steal home on a regular basis was Rod Carew – He did it 17 times in his career. Before that, Jackie Robinson stole home 19 times. The record is 54 held by Ty Cobb.



Jackie Robinson steals home to win World Series game for the Dodgers in 1955

How to fix this problem

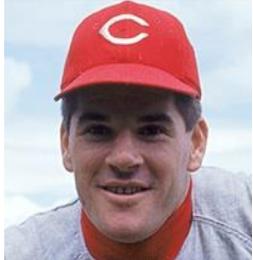
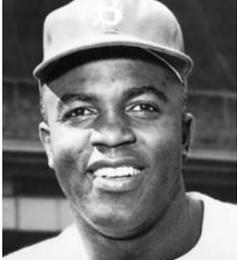
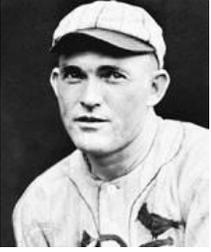
Somehow major league baseball has evolved into a “hit a home run” or “strikeout” league. Home runs are great but baseball needs players who can hit the ball and run the bases. It needs great defensive players. It needs pitchers who pitch quickly. It needs umpires who all use the same strike zone. It needs managers who don't change pitchers for every hitter (in the late innings). That and have the guts to steal home plate once in a while!

So, how do we speed up the game and make it exciting again? Well, all baseball needs to do is incorporate all of my fixes and our National Pastime will be back and as good as ever.

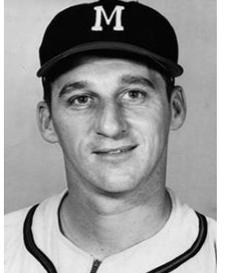
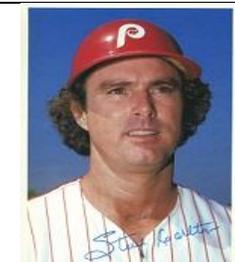
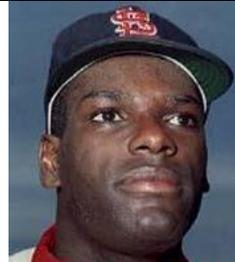
We are going to end this article with my picks for the best 15 baseball players (hitters) and 15 best pitchers in the history of baseball:

Note: These are players who played all or the majority of their careers in the “live ball” period (i.e. since 1920).

Hitters (15th to 1st)

 <p>Pete Rose</p>	 <p>Barry Bonds</p>	 <p>Alex Rodriguez</p>	 <p>Jackie Robinson</p>	 <p>Ken Griffey Jr.</p>
 <p>Mickey Mantle</p>	 <p>Joe DiMaggio</p>	 <p>Stan Musial</p>	 <p>Rogers Hornsby</p>	 <p>Ted Williams</p>
 <p>Lou Gehrig</p>	 <p>Hank Aaron</p>	 <p>Ty Cobb</p>	 <p>Willie Mays</p>	 <p>Babe Ruth</p>

Pitchers (15th to 1st)

 <p>Whitey Ford</p>	 <p>Clayton Kershaw</p>	 <p>Mariano Rivera</p>	 <p>Roger Clemens</p>	 <p>Warren Spahn</p>
 <p>Lefty Grove</p>	 <p>Bob Feller</p>	 <p>Steve Carlton</p>	 <p>Pedro Martinez</p>	 <p>Tom Seaver</p>
 <p>Randy Johnson</p>	 <p>Greg Maddux</p>	 <p>Bob Gibson</p>	 <p>Sandy Koufax</p>	 <p>Nolan Ryan</p>

Well, there you have it – the best hitters and pitchers in the history (since 1920) of baseball. And just for the record, I think Pete Rose, Barry Bonds, Alex Rodriguez, and Roger Clemens belong in the Baseball Hall of Fame.