



The “back side” of a 1956 Topps Hank Aaron baseball card. See the stats!

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## STATS, STATS & MORE STATS

By Larry Wolfe

To paraphrase journalist and TV commentator Harry Reasoner, “Statistics are to baseball (and softball) what a flaky crust is to Mom’s apple pie.”

Added journalist Robert S. Wieder, “Baseball fans are like junkies and their drug is the statistic.”

Interest in baseball statistics (or stats) can be traced back to at least 1859 when sportswriter and historian Henry Chadwick invented the box score. His first box score was for a game between the Brooklyn Stars and the Brooklyn Excelsiors and tracked only five stats: runs, hits, putouts, assists and errors.

Compare that to today's box scores by BaseballReference.com that has 17 columns of stats for each batter and 25 columns for each pitcher!

How do baseball fans get hooked on statistics? I can tell you how I did. I blame it on the back side of baseball cards that included various statistics of the player pictured on the front side. As a kid, I virtually memorized all the stats on every card I got. That led to buying baseball books and magazines as well as the venerable weekly publication, *The Sporting News*, that printed every box score from every major league game every week during the season. (Our local paper only covered our "local team," the Cincinnati Reds.) Later I started purchasing the huge *Macmillan Baseball Encyclopedia*. First published in 1969, there would ultimately be 10 editions, ending in 1996. My last one was the eighth edition purchased in 1990 for \$49.95 plus tax, included stats from every player who ever played the game to that point in time, had 2781 pages and weighed in at over five pounds! Now all those stats and more can be found on my 6 ounce iPhone XS!

I guess that's a rather long introduction to our annual stats article for the Sun Lakes Senior Softball Association, so here are this year's leaders in various statistics in both our Lakes and Sun Divisions with the Lakes leader listed first: At Bats (Tom Erpelding, 273 & Rick Oien, 300), Runs Scored (Tom Erpelding, 120 & Steve Hilby 144), Walks (Tom Erpelding, 23 & Rick Oien, 28), Singles (Jeff Jay, 131 & Rick Oien, 127), Doubles (Doug Warwick, 28 & Steve Hilby, 41), Triples (Dan Bradfield, 11 & Chuck Schaan, 11), Home Runs (Al Grefsheim, 10 & Tom Chilton, 46), Batting Average (Gary Alexander, .726 & Reyes Gonzales, .814), Slugging Percentage (Doug Warwick, .901 & Bob Wicks, 1.366), Sacrifice Flies (Gary Hillabolt, 12 & Bill Corso, 12) and Total Times On Base (Tom Erpelding, 181 & Steve Hilby, 227). No new all-time records were set this past year, but Bill Corso and Gary Hillabolt's 12 sac flies tied the record set in 2017/2018 by Rick Ebel.

Special thank yous to our head scorekeeper, Cyndy Hilby, and statistician TJ Tjernlund. We couldn't "track the stats" without them. Enjoy your summer. Why not sit down and relax with a good book....like the *Baseball Encyclopedia*!