

Baseball's young guns take aim at tradition

In "My 66 Years in the Big Leagues," Hall of Famer Connie Mack wrote: "Any minute, any day, some players may break a long-standing record. That's one of the fascinations about the game — the unexpected surprises."

"Unexpected" surprises?

Of course. You might even be unexpectedly surprised to learn which batter had the most hits in his first five full major-league seasons. Or which pitcher the most strikeouts.

First, let's define a player's "first complete" big-league season as his first year with a minimum of either 130 at bats or 50 innings pitched.

Thus, we find that only three players have ever collected a total of 1,000 or more hits in their first five years. Does that include either Pete Rose or Ty Cobb, the top two in all-time career hits? In point of fact, Rose had 899 hits in his first five years, and Cobb 735.

What about Wade Boggs? Close, but no cigar. Boggs, with only 118 hits in his rookie year, finished his first five seasons with a total of 978 — highest among active players, but still just No. 8 on the all-time list.

The "unexpected" surprise is that the top young gun ever was Joe Medwick, the man who ranks 67th on the all-time hit list. "Ducky" stroked 182, 198, 224, 223 and 237 hits in his first five complete years with the St. Louis Cardinals (1933-37). It gave him a total of 1,064 hits, or 212.8 per season. Paul Waner had 1,057 hits in his first five seasons (1926-30) with the Pittsburgh Pirates, for the No. 2 position. Interestingly enough, Paul's brother (and teammate) Lloyd ties for the fifth spot with 986 hits from 1927 to 1931 with Pittsburgh.

The only other man in history to average more than 200 hits a year through his first five full seasons is perhaps the most unexpected surprise of all. Earle Combs of the New York Yankees recorded marks of 203, 181, 231, 194 and 202 from 1925 to 1929, for a total of 1,011 hits. Combs accumulated only 855 other hits in his remaining seven seasons in the majors. Now let's turn to strikeouts.

Which pitcher holds the record for K's during his first five seasons? Chances are most fans would guess one of the three usually considered the hardest throwers ever — Walter Johnson, Bob Feller or Nolan Ryan. Good guesses. But with 973 (Feller), 914 (Johnson) and 816 (Ryan) none of the three even ranks in the top 10 for the first five seasons.

For that matter, neither does Steve Carlton (758), who stands second to Ryan on the all-time career strikeout list.

With batters' current infatuation with the long ball, it's not surprising to find that five of the early "1,000-K" men are active pitchers. Bert Blyleven (1,094), Dwight Gooden (1,067), Frank Tanana (1,052), Mark Langston (1,018) and Fernando Valenzuela (1,016), respectively, rank third, fourth, sixth, eighth and ninth in strikeouts during their first five seasons.



JOHN GRABOWSKI

The runner-up spot is held by the all-time No. 3 K-man, Tom Seaver, who fanned 1,155 in his early seasons, or 231 per year.

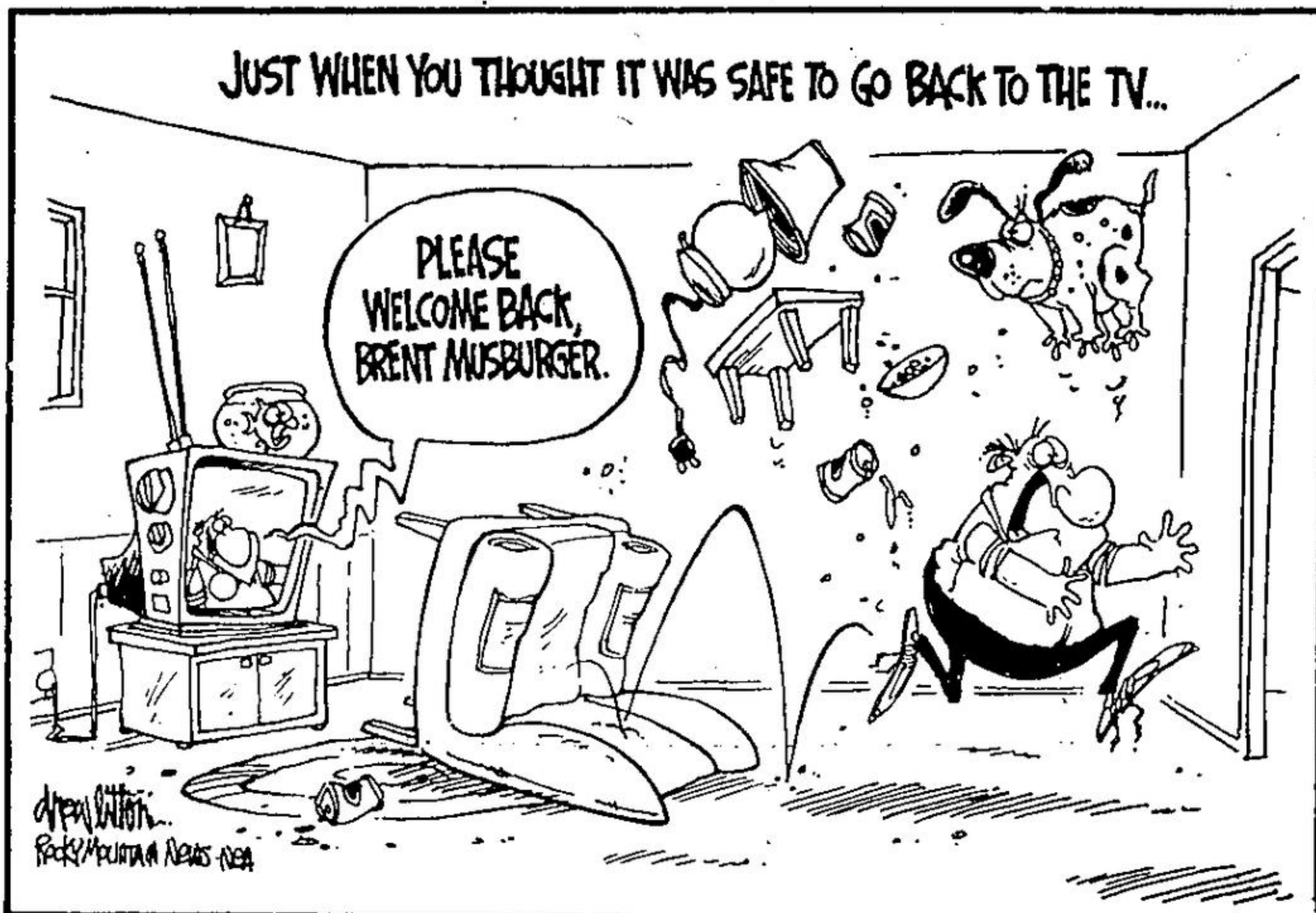
Not bad at all, but still 38 short of the "unexpected" surprise leader.

Who is this mystery man? If you guessed Ferguson Jenkins, go to the head of the class. This often-overlooked strikeout artist is usually best remembered by trivia fans as being the only pitcher with more than 3,000 career strikeouts and fewer than 1,000 bases on balls.

His strikeout totals of 150, 236, 260, 273 and 274 gave him a mark of 1,193 Ks, for an average of 238.6 per season in each of his first five full years in the majors.

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SATURDAY

Baseball
Georgetown Lions Club Midget Rep team - hosted baseball tournament at Fairgrounds baseball diamond.

Slo-Pitch
Limehouse Inter-Plant Slo-pitch league games at Limehouse Park. 9 a.m. Morror vs. Chalmers, 10:30 a.m. M and M vs. Curwood, 12:00 p.m. Radical vs. Referees, 1:30 p.m. McGibbon vs. Smith and Stone.

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SUNDAY

Flag Football
Georgetown Men's Flag Football League games at GDHS main field. 8:45 a.m. Corrigan-Dawgs vs. Plus Welding, 10 a.m. Oldtimers vs. Kaspers, 11:45 a.m. Plus Welding vs. M and M Pro Sports, 12:30 p.m. Longhorns vs. Glen, 1:45 p.m. Meznic ELeetric vs. Karry Kit-chens.

Flag Football
Georgetown Ladie's Flag Football League. Games start at 9 a.m. at GDHS.

Baseball
Georgetown Lions Club Midget Rep team - hosted baseball tournament at Fairgrounds baseball diamond.

Equestrian Competition
Dressage and cross-country competition at Myrddin Stables located on south side of 17 Sideroad just past Trafalgar Road. Competition starts at 8 a.m.

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Young Guns

Baseball's leading hitters: First 5 seasons

Batter (years)	Total hits
Joe Medwick (1933-37)	1,064
Paul Waner (1926-30)	1,057
Earle Combs (1925-29)	1,011
Ralph Garr (1971-75)	987
Chuck Klein (1928-32)	986
Lloyd Waner (1927-31)	986
Vada Pinson (1959-63)	985
Wade Boggs (1982-86)	978
Stan Musial (1942-44, 46-47)	975
Joe DiMaggio (1936-40)	970

(Note: Minimum of 130 at bats determined first full season)

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