

1976 Major League Baseball Season

Statis Pro Baseball Advanced

The 100th anniversary of the National League fittingly saw one of the original member cities take home the title, capping a dominating three year run for the Cincinnati Reds. While slipping six games to 102 wins from 1975, the Reds still cruised to a ten game margin over the Dodgers, whom the Reds beat 13-6 in the season series. The six game slouch could be pinned on the subpar season by All-Star catcher Johnny Bench who hit a mere .234 with 16 HRs, but the rest of the Big Red Machine was running with precision led by repeat MVP Joe Morgan (.320 27HR 111 RBI 60SB), old pro Pete Rose (215 H), and rising stars George Foster (.306 29 121) and Ken Griffey (.336). Overall the Reds plated 857 runs allowing their mediocre pitching plenty of room to breathe. Six starters recorded 11 or more wins, but 15 was tops by Gary Nolan.

The Phillies surged to an unexpected 101 wins toppling the favored Pirates by ten games. The Phils scored the 2nd most runs in the NL with a productive line up top to bottom and good depth off the bench. Schmidt paced the team with 38 HR and 107 RBI. The Phils could not shut down the Reds in the NLCS however, even with superior pitching led by Carlton (20-7) and Lonborg (18-10) and an excellent five deep bullpen. The Reds swept the Phils 3-0 with timely hitting and pitching that was good enough.

In the Junior Circuit the defending champs, the Red Sox, barely eeked over .500. The offense still put up good numbers but the pitching staff, aided by newly acquired Fergie Jenkins, finished a dismal 8th in ERA. Only the timeless Luis Tiant put up a good season (21-12, 3.06). The biggest surprise was the reemergence of the Yankees as a force after languishing in mediocrity for most of the last decade and adding no pennants since 1964. Billy Martin's squad was led by MVP and Captain Thurman Munson (.302 17 105) and Graig Nettles (32 HR) at the plate and the pitching (3.19) and defense (+96 runs) were best in the league. Ex-Angel Ed Figueroa contributed a surprising 19 wins and Catfish and Dock Ellis chipped in 17. The bullpen was masterful notching a 2.56 ERA for the season.

In the West the Royals made their first playoff appearance in history with a slew of young talent. George Brett won his first batting title (.333) at age 23 and Hal McRae was not far behind (.332). The team eschewed the longball for speed swiping 218 bases. The Royals had to fend off the last shadows of the Oakland A's dynasty and the potent Twins who led the league in runs. Rod Carew took a break from winning the batting title, the only year from 1972-1978 in which he did not lead the league. But as usual the Twins pitching was loathsome (10th) and despite the heroic work of Bill Campbell (17-5, 20 saves 167 IP in relief), the starters proved their undoing.

The 76 ALCS was one for the ages with five hard fought games capped off by a dramatic series winning Home Run by Chris Chambliss off Mark Littell deep into the Bronx night causing a mob scene not unlike those prompted by Aaron and Maz. The World Series was not fated to be so dramatic, the Reds swept the Yankees 4-0 and out scored them 22-8.