

A Look At Retrosheet's Triple Plays

By Chuck Rosciam

Using the event files from *Retrosheet*¹, a database was built containing all of the recorded plays in which three outs were made. In this data set 189 triple plays (TP) were identified. [See table at the end of this article.]

An analysis of the data was performed to answer a few basic questions and to write a narrative description for each of the plays. The narratives are presented elsewhere. The following table is a breakdown of the 572 players who handled the ball and the 432 different players at each position who were involved in the 189 TPs:

Position Players Involved in the Triple Plays

<u>Position</u>	<u>Tot</u>	<u>Diff</u>
Pitcher	23	23
Catcher	36	36
1 st Base	162	124
2 nd Base	136	107
3 rd Base	90	64
Shortstop	105	74
Left Field	5	5
Center Field	7	7
Right Field	8	7
Total	572	432

There were 25 Players who were involved in fielding three or more TP's. Gary Gaetti heads the list with seven. Kent Hrbek is in second place with six. Don Kessinger, Bobby Wine, Harold Reynolds, and Richie Hebner had four to their credit. 7 players helped turn two of them in the data period. 330 were involved in only one TP.

Five Unassisted Triple Plays (of the twelve on record) were turned, in the 189 triple plays studied, by the following:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Tm</u>	<u>Pos</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Inning</u>	<u>Against</u>
Ron Hansen	Was	SS	7/30/1968	1st	Cleveland
Mickey Morandini	Phi	2B	9/20/1992	6th	Pittsburgh
John Valentine	Bos	SS	7/8/1994	6th	Seattle
Randy Velarde	Oak	2B	5/29/2000	6th	New York Yankees
Rafael Furcal	Atl	SS	8/10/2003	5th	St. Louis

The following table shows the breakdown by the position that originated the play, the number of putouts and the number of assists by each position. There was an average of 2.10 assists per triple play.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Orig</u>	<u>POs</u>	<u>As</u>
Pitcher	18	16	22
Catcher	9	29	19
1 st Base	20	165	57
2 nd Base	27	136	123
3 rd Base	66	84	79
Shortstop	34	116	79
Left Field	4	5	4
Center Field	6	8	7
Right Field	8	8	7
Total	189	567	397

There were 179 different pitchers who benefited from the TPs. Ten benefited the most with two each.

The home team turned 105 and the visitors made 84 of the total. When the home team turned their TP's they were winning 30 times, losing 54 times and tied 21 times. The visitors were ahead 44 times, losing 21 times, and tied 19 times. That meant that the team that turned the triple plays was ahead 39% of the time; were losing 39% of the time and tied 21% of the time. The distribution by inning was:

<u>Inning</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Home</u>	<u>Visitor</u>
1 st	17	9	8
2 nd	28	16	12
3 rd	19	9	10
4 th	29	18	11
5 th	30	14	16
6 th	23	11	12
7 th	13	10	3
8 th	19	11	8
9 th	10	6	4
14 th	1	0	1
Total	189	105	84

There were four game-ending triple plays. They were turned by the White Sox, Orioles, Astros and the Expos. Five times the TP started with a strikeout. The other 184 started with a batted ball of the type: (a) Fly Ball 23 times, (b) Ground ball 84 times, (c) Line Drive 69 times, and (d) Pop-ups 8 times. Eighteen times the line drive put out was immediately followed by a doubling-up second put out by the same fielder. Of the 189 that didn't start with a strikeout, 157 began with a putout and 27 started with an assist.

The Montreal Expos turned the most with eleven. The Baltimore Orioles and the Chicago Cubs were each stung twelve times. The National League pulled off 96 and the American League did it 93 times. There were no inter-league triple plays recorded. The clubs who turned and were stung by a TP were:

<u>Team</u>	<u>Turned</u>	<u>Stung</u>
Anaheim (Cal, LA) Angels	6	9
Arizona Diamondbacks	1	0
Atlanta Braves	6	9
Baltimore Orioles	10	12
Boston Red Sox	9	8
Chicago White Sox	7	3
Chicago Cubs	10	12
Cincinnati Reds	4	8
Cleveland Indians	5	7
Colorado Rockies	1	2
Detroit Tigers	7	6
Florida Marlins	1	4
Houston Astros (Colts)	9	7
Kansas City Athletics	1	1
Kansas City Royals	5	5
Los Angeles Dodgers	2	5
Milwaukee Brewers	4	3
Milwaukee Braves	2	1
Minnesota Twins	10	5
Montreal Expos	11	2
New York Yankees	3	9
New York Mets	8	9
Oakland Athletics	7	6
Philadelphia Phillies	9	5
Pittsburgh Pirates	9	8
San Diego Padres	7	10
Seattle Mariners	9	7
San Francisco Giants	7	4
St. Louis Cardinals	7	9
Tampa Bay Devil Rays	1	0
Texas Rangers	4	6
Toronto Blue Jays	3	5
Washington Senators	4	2
TOTAL	189	189

The Minnesota Twins were the only team to have made two triple plays in the same game, which they accomplished in the 4th and 8th innings on 7/17/1990 against the Boston Red Sox.

Four teams turned three triple plays in the same season: Phillies (1964), Cubs (1965), Athletics (1979), and the Red Sox (1979). The shortest period of time between turning double plays (other than the Twins game) was done by the Expos in 1993 who pulled off a pair just six days apart (8/23/1993 and 8/29/1993). The shortest time between being a victim of a triple play belongs to the Angels who were stung just six days apart (5/10/1979 and 5/16/1979). Two triple plays were executed on consecutive days

(4/21/1978 and 4/22/1978) by the Astros and then the Blue Jays. The Baltimore Orioles hold the record for turning and then being stung in the shortest period of time (five days apart 8/25/1992 and 8/30/1992). The Houston Astros turned a TP against the Atlanta Braves on their last matchup in 1990 and again on their first pairing in 1991.

There were 144 different team match-ups in the 189 triple plays. The Cubs stung the Pirates five times and the Mets stung the Cubs four times. Seven teams stung the same team three times.

To flip the coin over, there were 456 different batters/runners involved in at least one triple play. Four players lead the group with four caughts each: Frank Robinson, Boog Powell, Manny Mota, and Don Baylor. Eleven of the 456 were stung three times each and 64 were caught twice. Nine of the 189 batters hit into a TP twice. All batters were putout. Of the 394 base runners, 378 were retired. The breakdown by runner for each base follows.

Runner	On Base	Caught
1 st Base	185	183
2 nd Base	170	167
3 rd Base	39	28
Total	394	378

The men-on-base situations came out to be: (a) Bases loaded 16, (b) Men on 1st & 2nd 150 times, (c) Men on 2nd & 3rd were four, and (d) Men on 1st & 3rd happened 19 times.

There were 125 players who were involved in both sides of a triple play (turning and being stung). Gary Gaetti leads the pack with 8 (turning 7 and stung once). George Scott (3-3), Brooks Robinson (3-3) and Don Kessinger (4-2) each had six. Six others had five: Richie Hebner (4-1), Tino Martinez (2-3), Al Oliver (2-3), Glenn Beckert (3-2), Harold Reynolds (4-1), and Boog Powell (1-4). Ten others were involved four times on both sides. Thirty-five had three. Sixty players turned one and were stung once.

The distribution of the 189 TP's was evenly spread across the months in proportion to the number of games played. The number of TP's each month were:

Month	#
April	21
May	31
June	30
July	35
August	37
September	32
October	3

The 189 triple plays covered forty-four seasons. 1979 was the *Year of the Triple Play* that saw eleven of them turned. There were none in 1961 and in 1974. The number of TP's each year were:

Year	#	Year	#	Year	#	Year	#
1960	2	1972	6	1984	1	1995	3
1962	2	1973	4	1985	1	1996	5
1963	3	1975	1	1986	5	1997	4
1964	6	1976	3	1987	2	1998	4
1965	8	1977	6	1988	4	1999	4
1966	6	1978	6	1989	4	2000	5
1967	6	1979	11	1990	4	2001	2
1968	7	1988	5	1991	7	2002	6
1969	6	1981	5	1992	5	2003	2
1970	3	1982	4	1993	4	2004	3
1971	5	1983	5	1994	2		

There were 74 different types of triple play positions-involved combinations. The most common was the 5-4-3 which happened 55 times. The next most common was the 6-4-3 which occurred 16 times. The third most frequent was the 4-6-3 which happened eleven times. Twice a triple play involve all four infielders (3-4-5-6). Four times an outfielder caught a fly ball and threw home to peg the runner trying to score. Only once did a cornerman make a putout and then throw across the diamond for the other cornerman to make another out and back across the diamond for the third out (3-5-3). One game (on 8/29/1969 Atlanta Braves vs. Chicago Cubs), saw seven players handling the ball, which is an all-time record. One play had six players involved and three had five fielders involved. Nineteen had just two different players in on the play.

Summary of the 189 Triple Plays

Date	Inn	Fielding Team	Batting Team	B1	B2	B3
196007060	7	Milwaukee Braves	Philadelphia Phillies	1	0	1
196007230	3	Washington Senators	Kansas City Athletics	1	1	0
196205302	6	New York Mets	Los Angeles Dodgers	1	1	0
196209300	8	Chicago Cubs	New York Mets	1	1	0
196307212	3	Chicago Cubs	Pittsburgh Pirates	1	1	0
196309150	5	Detroit Tigers	Baltimore Orioles	1	1	0
196309280	7	Boston Red Sox	Los Angeles Angels	1	1	0
196405170	5	Philadelphia Phillies	Houston Colts	1	1	0
196405312	14	San Francisco Giants	New York Mets	1	1	0
196406040	2	Milwaukee Braves	Cincinnati Reds	1	1	0
196408150	2	Philadelphia Phillies	New York Mets	1	1	0
196409100	5	Washington Senators	Baltimore Orioles	1	1	0
196410020	4	Philadelphia Phillies	Cincinnati Reds	1	1	0

196504150	2	New York Mets	Houston Astros	1	0	1
196505030	6	San Francisco Giants	St. Louis Cardinals	1	1	0
196507142	2	Chicago Cubs	Milwaukee Braves	1	0	1
196507252	4	Chicago Cubs	Pittsburgh Pirates	1	1	0
196508011	4	Detroit Tigers	Chicago White Sox	1	1	0
196508180	1	Boston Red Sox	Baltimore Orioles	1	1	0
196509042	2	New York Yankees	Boston Red Sox	1	1	0
196510030	5	Chicago Cubs	Pittsburgh Pirates	1	1	0
196604180	7	Pittsburgh Pirates	Cincinnati Reds	1	1	0
196604230	9	Boston Red Sox	Cleveland Indians	1	0	1
196608180	2	Minnesota Twins	California Angels	1	1	0
196609042	1	Kansas City Athletics	Boston Red Sox	1	0	1
196609170	9	Chicago White Sox	Baltimore Orioles	0	1	1
196609281	6	New York Mets	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0
196705022	2	San Francisco Giants	New York Mets	1	1	0
196705300	9	Cincinnati Reds	St. Louis Cardinals	1	0	1
196706250	5	New York Yankees	Detroit Tigers	1	1	0
196707150	1	Boston Red Sox	Baltimore Orioles	1	1	0
196708062	5	Chicago White Sox	Baltimore Orioles	1	1	0
196708152	2	Philadelphia Phillies	New York Mets	1	1	0
196805040	8	Philadelphia Phillies	Pittsburgh Pirates	1	1	0
196806030	8	New York Yankees	Minnesota Twins	1	0	1
196806230	3	Washington Senators	Oakland Athletics	1	1	0
196807300	1	Washington Senators	Cleveland Indians	1	1	0
196807312	4	Pittsburgh Pirates	Cincinnati Reds	1	1	0
196809010	3	Detroit Tigers	Baltimore Orioles	1	1	0
196809100	5	Minnesota Twins	Cleveland Indians	1	1	0
196905301	4	Pittsburgh Pirates	Houston Astros	1	1	0
196906252	2	Montreal Expos	St. Louis Cardinals	1	1	0
196907150	5	Detroit Tigers	Washington Senators	1	1	0
196908060	4	Baltimore Orioles	Kansas City Royals	1	1	0
196908130	1	San Diego Padres	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0
196908290	1	Atlanta Braves	Chicago Cubs	0	1	1
197006060	3	Pittsburgh Pirates	Los Angeles Dodgers	1	1	0
197006260	5	California Angels	Kansas City Royals	1	1	0
197008091	3	Cleveland Indians	Washington Senators	1	1	0
197104280	3	Milwaukee Brewers	Boston Red Sox	1	0	1
197107090	7	Pittsburgh Pirates	Atlanta Braves	1	1	0
197107160	3	Houston Astros	New York Mets	1	1	0
197108010	7	San Diego Padres	Atlanta Braves	1	1	0
197109170	2	Houston Astros	Cincinnati Reds	1	1	0
197205250	4	Boston Red Sox	Baltimore Orioles	1	1	0
197206030	2	Montreal Expos	Houston Astros	1	1	0
197206040	9	San Diego Padres	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0
197206270	4	California Angels	Minnesota Twins	0	1	1

197207020	7	Chicago Cubs	Pittsburgh Pirates	1	1	0
197208130	3	Kansas City Royals	Texas Rangers	1	1	0
197306130	7	Montreal Expos	San Diego Padres	1	1	0
197307070	4	Baltimore Orioles	Oakland Athletics	1	1	0
197309032	1	Cleveland Indians	Milwaukee Brewers	1	1	0
197309200	5	Baltimore Orioles	Detroit Tigers	1	1	0
197509070	4	Montreal Expos	Pittsburgh Pirates	1	1	0
197606070	5	Cleveland Indians	Minnesota Twins	1	1	0
197606210	3	San Francisco Giants	San Diego Padres	1	1	0
197607251	1	Minnesota Twins	Chicago White Sox	1	1	0
197704220	4	Seattle Mariners	Kansas City Royals	1	0	1
197705080	3	St. Louis Cardinals	Houston Astros	1	1	0
197706030	9	Baltimore Orioles	Kansas City Royals	1	1	0
197707140	5	California Angels	Seattle Mariners	1	1	0
197707230	6	California Angels	Minnesota Twins	1	1	0
197708082	5	Texas Rangers	Oakland Athletics	1	1	0
197804060	7	Houston Astros	Cincinnati Reds	1	0	1
197804110	2	San Diego Padres	Atlanta Braves	1	1	0
197804210	9	Houston Astros	Los Angeles Dodgers	1	1	0
197804220	2	Toronto Blue Jays	Chicago White Sox	1	1	0
197807150	7	Atlanta Braves	Philadelphia Phillies	1	1	0
197809090	6	Baltimore Orioles	Toronto Blue Jays	1	1	0
197905070	3	Oakland Athletics	Baltimore Orioles	1	1	0
197905100	7	Boston Red Sox	California Angels	1	1	0
197905160	2	Milwaukee Brewers	California Angels	1	1	0
197906100	6	Baltimore Orioles	Texas Rangers	1	1	0
197906190	6	Oakland Athletics	Kansas City Royals	1	1	0
197906230	4	Oakland Athletics	Texas Rangers	1	1	0
197907230	8	Boston Red Sox	California Angels	1	1	0
197907232	2	Pittsburgh Pirates	Atlanta Braves	1	1	0
197907280	1	Boston Red Sox	Texas Rangers	1	0	1
197909070	8	Toronto Blue Jays	Cleveland Indians	1	1	0
197909210	7	Toronto Blue Jays	New York Yankees	1	1	0
198005310	2	Seattle Mariners	Cleveland Indians	1	1	0
198006221	8	Chicago White Sox	Detroit Tigers	1	0	1
198008120	4	Montreal Expos	St. Louis Cardinals	1	1	0
198008200	8	Detroit Tigers	Milwaukee Brewers	1	1	0
198010030	4	San Francisco Giants	San Diego Padres	1	1	0
198104110	8	St. Louis Cardinals	Philadelphia Phillies	1	1	0
198104270	6	Oakland Athletics	California Angels	1	1	0
198105220	8	Seattle Mariners	Texas Rangers	1	1	0
198105230	6	Cleveland Indians	New York Yankees	1	1	0
198108310	2	Chicago White Sox	Detroit Tigers	1	1	0
198205290	2	Minnesota Twins	New York Yankees	1	1	0
198208030	8	New York Mets	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0

198208232	1	Pittsburgh Pirates	San Diego Padres	1	1	0
198209290	3	New York Mets	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0
198306020	2	Chicago Cubs	Pittsburgh Pirates	1	1	0
198307180	3	Oakland Athletics	Detroit Tigers	1	1	0
198307310	4	San Diego Padres	Atlanta Braves	1	1	0
198308080	4	Minnesota Twins	California Angels	1	1	0
198309270	4	St. Louis Cardinals	Montreal Expos	1	1	0
198407190	2	Minnesota Twins	New York Yankees	1	1	0
198505030	6	Kansas City Royals	New York Yankees	1	1	0
198508080	8	Chicago Cubs	St. Louis Cardinals	1	1	0
198605130	1	Seattle Mariners	Milwaukee Brewers	1	1	0
198606050	3	Atlanta Braves	San Diego Padres	1	0	1
198606150	2	Chicago White Sox	Seattle Mariners	1	0	1
198607090	5	Chicago Cubs	San Francisco Giants	1	0	1
198608120	9	Seattle Mariners	Oakland Athletics	1	1	0
198704210	9	Pittsburgh Pirates	New York Mets	0	1	1
198709150	4	Houston Astros	Los Angeles Dodgers	1	1	0
198804050	8	Minnesota Twins	New York Yankees	1	1	0
198807040	4	Kansas City Royals	Boston Red Sox	1	1	0
198808080	4	Minnesota Twins	Cleveland Indians	1	1	0
198808160	8	St. Louis Cardinals	Houston Astros	1	1	0
198904090	8	San Diego Padres	Houston Astros	1	1	0
198906060	5	New York Mets	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0
198906150	1	Baltimore Orioles	New York Yankees	1	1	0
198906280	6	Cincinnati Reds	Atlanta Braves	1	1	0
198909270	2	Montreal Expos	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0
199007170	4	Minnesota Twins	Boston Red Sox	1	1	0
199007170	8	Minnesota Twins	Boston Red Sox	1	1	0
199008080	7	Baltimore Orioles	Oakland Athletics	1	1	0
199009210	4	Houston Astros	Atlanta Braves	1	1	0
199104160	2	Houston Astros	Atlanta Braves	1	1	0
199104280	1	Philadelphia Phillies	San Diego Padres	1	1	0
199106010	2	Seattle Mariners	Texas Rangers	1	1	0
199108040	5	Houston Astros	Los Angeles Dodgers	1	1	0
199109050	2	St. Louis Cardinals	San Diego Padres	1	1	0
199109080	9	Montreal Expos	Cincinnati Reds	1	1	0
199109100	5	Seattle Mariners	Toronto Blue Jays	1	1	0
199207031	5	Detroit Tigers	Seattle Mariners	1	0	1
199208070	6	Cleveland Indians	Baltimore Orioles	0	1	1
199208250	5	Baltimore Orioles	California Angels	1	0	1
199208300	5	Seattle Mariners	Baltimore Orioles	1	1	0
199209200	6	Philadelphia Phillies	Pittsburgh Pirates	1	1	0
199305110	2	St. Louis Cardinals	New York Mets	1	1	0
199308100	8	Pittsburgh Pirates	St. Louis Cardinals	1	1	0
199308230	6	Montreal Expos	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0

199309290	3	Montreal Expos	Florida Marlins	1	1	0
199405140	3	Kansas City Royals	Oakland Athletics	1	1	0
199407080	6	Boston Red Sox	Seattle Mariners	1	1	0
199507130	9	Seattle Mariners	Toronto Blue Jays	1	1	0
199507170	6	Cincinnati Reds	San Diego Padres	1	1	0
199509120	4	Cincinnati Reds	Florida Marlins	1	1	0
199604030	6	Kansas City Royals	Baltimore Orioles	1	0	1
199604070	3	Oakland Athletics	Detroit Tigers	1	1	0
199606060	1	Chicago White Sox	Boston Red Sox	1	1	0
199606150	1	Los Angeles Dodgers	Atlanta Braves	1	1	0
199609080	6	California Angels	Minnesota Twins	1	1	0
199705100	5	Chicago Cubs	San Francisco Giants	1	1	0
199705190	1	San Diego Padres	Cincinnati Reds	1	1	0
199707050	4	Anaheim Angels	Seattle Mariners	1	1	0
199707282	4	Milwaukee Brewers	Toronto Blue Jays	1	1	0
199805080	4	San Francisco Giants	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0
199806130	5	Los Angeles Dodgers	Colorado Rockies	1	1	0
199808050	5	New York Mets	San Francisco Giants	1	0	1
199808300	8	Philadelphia Phillies	San Francisco Giants	1	1	0
199904160	7	Milwaukee Brewers	Chicago Cubs	1	1	0
199905150	6	Philadelphia Phillies	New York Mets	1	1	0
199906140	5	San Francisco Giants	Colorado Rockies	1	1	0
199906170	2	Texas Rangers	New York Yankees	1	1	0
200005110	5	Atlanta Braves	Florida Marlins	1	1	0
200005140	1	Montreal Expos	Chicago Cubs	1	0	1
200005290	6	Oakland Athletics	New York Yankees	1	1	0
200005310	5	Arizona Diamondbacks	St. Louis Cardinals	0	1	1
200009010	2	Baltimore Orioles	Cleveland Indians	1	1	0
200108010	4	Detroit Tigers	Seattle Mariners	1	1	0
200108060	4	Texas Rangers	Boston Red Sox	1	1	0
200204140	4	Texas Rangers	Seattle Mariners	1	0	1
200205170	5	New York Mets	San Diego Padres	1	1	0
200207280	3	Florida Marlins	Montreal Expos	1	1	0
200208010	6	St. Louis Cardinals	Florida Marlins	1	1	0
200209030	8	Montreal Expos	Philadelphia Phillies	1	0	1
200209130	5	Tampa Bay Devil Rays	Toronto Blue Jays	1	1	0
200304100	6	Colorado Rockies	St. Louis Cardinals	1	1	0
200308100	5	Atlanta Braves	St. Louis Cardinals	1	1	0
200405060	8	Atlanta Braves	San Diego Padres	1	1	0
200407070	6	Chicago White Sox	Anaheim Angels	1	1	0
200408190	5	Houston Astros	Philadelphia Phillies	1	1	0

Key: B1 value of "1" means that the Batting Team had a runner on 1st who was put out. B2 value of "1" means that a runner on 2nd was putout. B3 value of "1" means that a runner on 3rd was put out. All 189 batters were put out.

Data Source:

¹ Retrosheet (A.L. Only) 1967-68; (A.L. & N.L.) 1960-1966, 1969-2004

² Thanks to SABR Member, David Smith who has provided me millions of event records over the years and without whom this study could not have been accomplished.

³ Also thanks to SABR Member Tom Ruane whose 1999 analysis of triple plays initiated my research

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