Demythologizing Dubious Memories

Or:

Do players really remember what they did?

David W. Smith
SABR32
Boston, MA
June 28, 2002
June 29, 1923

Situation:
Jack Fournier goes 6-6 for Brooklyn in Philadelphia

Memory:
With 2 out in 9th and Fournier on deck, Manager Wilbert Robinson sends slow runner on futile steal try, depriving Jack of chance for 7th hit, which would tie the record held by Robinson. (Frank Graham’s book on the Dodgers and Kavanagh/Macht book on Robinson).

Reality:
Fournier did bat in 9th with 2 out and singled for his 6th hit. Dodgers sent 51 men to plate that day, so 6 men batted 6 times and 3 men batted 5 times. There were no stolen base attempts by either team in this game.
October 15, 1946

Situation:
Game 7 of World Series. Enos Slaughter scored deciding run from first on hit by Harry Walker.

Memory:
The hit was a single to left-center, played by Dom DiMaggio and Slaughter scored as Pesky hesitated on relay (frequent account).

Reality:
The hesitation is still debated, but in fact the hit was a double and the center fielder was Leon Culberson who had just replaced the injured DiMaggio.
April, 1947

**Situation:**
Jackie Robinson’s first month in the Major Leagues.

**Memory:**
After an 0-3 debut, Robinson wrote of his next 4 games: “I went to the plate 20 times without a base hit.”
(From “I never had it made”).

**Reality:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4-24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4-26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 (HR)</td>
<td>4-27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 (2B)</td>
<td>4-29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4-30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>4-23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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</table>
October 3, 1951

Situation:
9th inning of final playoff game between Brooklyn and New York

Memory:
Mays, a rookie, was on deck when Bobby Thomson homered to end the game. When asked a few years ago if he were nervous in that situation, he answered: “I was afraid that Leo would use Dusty Rhodes to hit for me.”

Reality:
Dusty Rhodes did not play for the Giants in 1951! His ML debut was in July of 1952.
April, 1954

**Situation:**
Henry Aaron’s rookie year

**Memory:**
Chuck Tanner claims he pinch-hit for Aaron and homered. (SABR keynote speaker in 1994).

**Reality:**
Tanner never batted for Aaron (Marty Perez and Mike Lum did)
1951-1973

Situation:
Willie Mays throwing out runners at home

Memory:
In a Coors beer ad in 2000, Ahmad Rashad said that Mays “threw out hundreds of runners at home plate”

Reality:
Mays had 195 assists as an outfielder in his career. Retrosheet can document 143 of them as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Assists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1962-1967

Situation:
Career matchup between Dick Radatz and Mickey Mantle

Memory:
Radatz: "I faced (Mantle) 63 times and he got one hit -- that home run -- off me. Believe it or not, I struck him out 47 times." (500 HOME RUN CLUB, by Bob Allen with Bill Gilbert).

Reality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AB</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>3B</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>SO</th>
<th>RBI</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>OBA</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td>.438</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1962-1966

Situation:
Career matchup between Bob Uecker and Sandy Koufax

Memory:
Uecker claims that he hit Koufax very well.

Reality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AB</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>3B</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>SO</th>
<th>RBI</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>OBA</th>
<th>OBA</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
September 9, 1965

Situation:
Perfect Game by Sandy Koufax

Memory:
Ron Santo insists that in the first inning he took three strikes “without ever moving my hands”.

Reality:
Ball one
Strike one Swinging
Ball two
Foul out to Catcher
May 31, 1968

Situation:
9th inning of Don Drysdale’s 5th consecutive shutout. Dick Dietz was hit by pitch with bases loaded, but umpire Wendelstedt called him back.

Memory:
After play resumed, Dietz popped up next pitch to Wes Parker at first to end game (Buzzie Bavasi, David Smith).

Reality:
Dietz flied out to left, then pinch-hitter Ty Cline hit into force out (32), and then pinch-hitter Jack Hiatt popped out to first to end the game.
September 19, 1968

Situation:
Mickey Mantle hits home run #535, passing Jimmy Foxx for third place on all-time list.

Memory:
McLain “grooved” pitch for Mantle, telling catcher Bill Freehan to let Mickey know it was coming (McLain’s own words in his autobiography plus eyewitness testimony of many).

Reality:
Freehan did not play in this game! Catcher was Jimmy Price.
July 14, 1970

Situation:
End of 1970 All-Star Game

Memory:
Collision seriously injured Fosse, ruining his career as an effective catcher (Widely asserted part of Rose history.)

Reality:
Rose is the one who was injured. He missed the next 3 games, then pinch-hit before starting again on July 20. Fosse missed no games, catching 10 games in 9 days. From July 14 to season’s end, Rose dropped from .323 to .316 while Fosse went from .309 to .307.
1985-1988

Situation:
Rickey Henderson being driven in by Don Mattingly

Memory:
In the Boston Globe on March 26, 2002, Henderson is quoted: “One year, he [Don Mattingly] drove me in 79 times.”

Reality:
They were teammates for 4 full seasons. Rickey was driven in by Mattingly:

1985  50 times
1986  37 times
1987  21 times
1988  34 times
May 31, 1951

Situation:
Jackie Robinson in rundown vs Phillies

Memory:
Roger Kahn writes in *The Boys of Summer* about Robinson’s incredible ability to escape rundowns: “All the Phillies rushed to the third base line … Granny Hamner, Mike Goliat, Eddie Waitkus, Puddin’ Head Jones, Andy Seminick, Russ Meyer.

Reality:
Kahn has the cast slightly off, but not by much.