
Introduction

One and Done

A rookie, according to a dictionary definition, is “one who is in his first year of participation in a major professional sport” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1975).

It seems reasonable to expand that definition now by adding a “her” to “his,” and to assume the subject is a first-year participant in any endeavor . . . major, minor, amateur, anything. Not just a big league sport.

However, for the purpose of what follows on these pages, we arbitrarily revert to the original, narrower description, and focus entirely on major league baseball rookies.

Not just some of them, but all of the 116 talented men officially saluted as Rookies of the Year.

This prestigious award is unique because a player has only one opportunity to win it. Cy Young awards, Manager of the Year, and MVP honors can be achieved multiple times, as can individual “best” years in all offensive and defensive categories. In quotes from the profiles that follow, several players remind us just how distinctive the Rookie of the Year honor is.

THE AWARD’S HISTORY

Professional baseball was in business for the better part of a century before official Rookie of the Year recognition was instituted. One could wonder if, say, young George H. Ruth would have outpolled George H. Sisler for the honor if the award had been presented back in 1915. Or, in 1932, might Arky Vaughan have won out over Dizzy Dean? We’ll never know.

It was 1940 when something resembling the current Rookie of the Year citation was first bestowed. The Chicago chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA) initiated it. For seven years—1940 through 1946—the Chicago writers selected one player, from among all 16 major league teams, as Rookie of the Year.

The first honoree was Cleveland shortstop Lou Boudreau, an eventual Hall of Famer. Pistol Pete Reiser of the pennant-winning Brooklyn Dodgers was the 1941 choice. He was followed by Cardinal pitcher Johnny Beazley, Yankee third baseman Billy Johnson, New York Giants right-hander Bill Voiselle, Red Sox pitcher Boo Ferriss, and, in 1946, by Cubs first baseman Eddie Waitkus.

In late '46, following baseball's first post-World War II full season, *The Sporting News*, the so-called bible of baseball, inaugurated its own Rookie of the Year choices. Phillies slugger Del Ennis was its initial RoY selection. Experimenting with a number of different formats over the years, *The Sporting News* has continued to name top rookies ever since. Its complete listing of honorees appears later in the book.

Whether the Baseball Writers' Association of America felt that *The Sporting News* was intruding on the Chicago chapter's notoriety, or whether the BBWAA simply chose to expand its program, is no longer clear. Whatever its motives, the BBWAA went national. In other words, it decided to have its members in all major league cities choose Rookies of the Year.

So, beginning in 1947, the writers have been Major League Baseball's authorized voting body. It is this national BBWAA group's 116 honorees who are recognized in this book as baseball's official Rookies of the Year.

As an added distinction, since 1987 the annual prize has officially been the Jackie Robinson Award in honor of the national BBWAA's first recipient in 1947.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR CRITERIA AND QUALIFICATIONS

A player shall be considered a rookie *unless*, during a previous season or seasons, he had (a) exceeded 130 at bats—or 50 innings pitched—in the major leagues; or (b) accumulated more than 45 days on the active roster of a major league club or clubs during the period of a 25-player limit (typically opening day through August 31). Military service time and time on the disabled list are not charged as time on active rosters.

In connection with the player profiles that will follow you'll frequently find that a man's career start technically preceded his official Rookie of the Year season. That's because he participated in big league action earlier, but not enough of it to disqualify him from rookie status.

Scott Rolen is the foremost example. A 1997 Rookie of the Year, Rolen joined the Philadelphia Phillies in August 1996. By mid-September he had recorded

precisely 130 at bats. During his next plate appearance he was injured by a pitched ball and removed from the lineup, and was unable to play again that year. “Hit by pitch” is not an official time at bat. He was therefore still eligible for the rookie award. And, indeed, he won it the following season.

Various selection formulas, sometimes altered from season to season, guided the writers in the early years. During the 1960s players weren’t considered if they had more than 75 at bats, registered more than 45 innings pitched, or were rostered between May 15 and September 1 in a previous season. The current criteria were established in the early 1970s.

CASTING THE BALLOTS

Two BBWAA members who regularly cover each major league team are selected to vote for Rookie of the Year. Thus, 28 journalists covering the 14 American League teams cast ballots; 32 writers, two for each club, vote for the National League’s top freshman.

Each writer can vote for three players under a ranking system that awards five points for a first-place vote, three points for second, and one point for third.

Example: When Eric Hinske was chosen American League Rookie of the Year in 2002, he received 19 first-place votes (a 95-point total). He placed second on nine ballots (27 points). Hinske’s overall score: 122 ballot points. Two Baltimore pitchers were runners-up. Rodrigo Lopez, the only American Leaguer other than Hinske with first-place votes, totaled 97 points. His Oriole teammate, Jorge Julio, earned one second-place pick and 11 thirds . . . 14 points.

Most Valuable Player voters are permitted to cast ballots for up to 10 players. But for the other major award categories—Manager of the Year, Cy Young, and of course Rookie of the Year—BBWAA writers can submit no more than three names.

A CELEBRATED ROLL OF HONOR

On the following pages each of the 116 Rookies of the Year, since 1947, is profiled. You’ll see that pitcher Bob Grim is the only RoY to record 20 victories in his rookie season. That Pittsburgh, of the 16 franchises in business from 1947 on, did not have its first Rookie of the Year until 2004. That the Boston Braves had two in the award’s first four years, but the All-Star-laden Milwaukee Braves never had any. That the Dodgers have 16 Rookies of the Year, by far the most of any franchise, and feature an unprecedented five consecutive selections from 1992 through ’96. That Joe Charboneau appeared in fewer games than any of the other RoY position players.

And that such top-shelf luminaries as Mickey Mantle, Hank Aaron, Ernie Banks, Mike Schmidt, Steve Carlton, Brooks Robinson, Roberto Clemente, Greg Maddux, Sandy Koufax, Al Kaline, Barry Bonds, and Bob Gibson were not selected as Rookies of the Year.

Each Rookie of the Year's up-or-down career following his breakthrough first season is reviewed, as are the post-baseball ventures of those RoY who are no longer active major leaguers. Be they current or former players, we raise a toast to every one of them.

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The Jackie Robinson Award

A Jewel in the Legacy of Baseball's First Rookie of the Year

JACKIE ROBINSON

1947 Brooklyn Dodgers, Major League Rookie of the Year

Personal Data: B. January 31, 1919, at Cairo, GA. D. October 24, 1972.

Physical Attributes: 5'11½", playing weight 195 lbs. Bats right, throws right.

Rookie Year, 1947: Primary position first base. Led league with 29 stolen bases.

Total Career, 10 years: Dodgers 1947–56.

	BA	G	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI
1947	.297	151	175	31	5	12	48
Lifetime	.311	1,382	1,518	273	54	137	734

The Baseball Writers' Association of America could not have picked a better time to inaugurate its national organization's annual Rookie of the Year selections. Nineteen forty-seven was perfect.

Because never in history has a rookie been more scrutinized, more publicized, and more a subject of controversy than 1947 Brooklyn Dodger newcomer Jackie Robinson.

It is indeed fitting that this pioneer—for whom babies are named, postage stamps issued, and monuments cast—was crowned the BBWAA's first Rookie of the Year.

Appropriate, too, was Commissioner Peter Ueberroth's 1987 announcement that, thenceforth, the prestigious accolade would be known officially as the Jackie Robinson Award.



Jackie Robinson, Brooklyn Dodgers, 1947

The famous pathfinder, major league baseball's first African American player in the 20th century, was the national Baseball Writers' Association of America's first Rookie of the Year. Since 1987, the trophy, presented to the honored freshmen in both the American and National leagues, has been officially known as the Jackie Robinson Rookie of the Year Award.

(Courtesy of Los Angeles Dodgers)

Voters usually have a relatively easy time choosing Rookie of the Year winners. Many times the honoree is a clear-cut unanimous choice. Yes, occasionally decision-making can be difficult, as we see with two pairs of cointerwinners over the years, as well as a few other tight elections. Invariably, though, the Jackie Robinson Award goes to men who've started their big league careers with season-long excellence. Selectors base their voting on the performances turned in during *that first year*, with no regard for what the players' future production might be.

The majority of those futures, as you'd figure, are relatively lengthy—about 12 seasons on average. With few exceptions, the outstanding freshman years chalked up by Rookies of the Year usually predict fulfilling careers. As Jackie Robinson's was.

His career lasted only 10 years. But it featured appearances in six World Series, a Most Valuable Player award, six seasons hitting more than .300, one batting championship, two stolen base titles, and an incredible 20 thefts of home plate. It's a career forever memorialized at baseball's Hall of Fame.

Numerous players' uniform numbers have been retired by their principal teams. During 1997 ceremonies recognizing the 50-year anniversary of Jackie

Robinson's first big league season, his number 42 was retired by Major League Baseball. No player on any team (excepting those men then currently assigned that numeral) will ever again wear number 42.

A second baseman in midcareer, Robinson's initial season was spent entirely at first base for Brooklyn. His numbers were solid that first year, yet not spectacular: 12 homers, only 48 RBI, and a .297 average. But he was an intimidating base runner. Jack stole 29 bases to lead the National League, hit 31 doubles, and scored 125 runs as the Dodgers won the pennant. Creditable enough stats, and worthy of his rookie award. That season and the next the BBWAA presented only one Major League Rookie of the Year award. Voters ranked New York Giants pitcher Larry Jansen second to Robinson. Other legitimate contenders in 1947 were Yankees pitcher Frank Shea, Giants outfielder Bobby Thomson, and two first basemen—Earl Torgeson of the Boston Braves and the Philadelphia Athletics' Ferris Fain.

Jackie Robinson's statistics, the rings and trophies he earned, and the honors—beginning with Rookie of the Year—are much less remembered than the way he entered the big leagues. And how he brilliantly managed to pave a path for the hundreds of other African Americans who have followed him into professional baseball.

The story of Brooklyn baseball executive Branch Rickey's successful effort to shatter the game's so-called color barrier has been retold for nearly 60 years now. Jackie Robinson is the principal character.

Organized baseball—the two major leagues and their minor league affiliates—unofficially but firmly prevented black athletes from participating. So talented black youngsters displayed their baseball skills in a variety of Negro leagues where spectator attendance was sometimes thin but where competition was always spirited. Many Negro Major Leaguers were judged to have talent equal—and frequently superior—to organized baseball standouts. (Recent research indicates that a handful of African Americans briefly made their way into 19th-century lineups during professional baseball's unstable formative years.)

Eventually, in 1971—a quarter century after Jackie Robinson's Organized Baseball debut—Negro league players became eligible for Hall of Fame installation. Satchel Paige, Judy Johnson, Buck Leonard, Josh Gibson, Martin Dihigo, Ray Dandridge, and “Cool Papa” Bell are among the more than one dozen now enshrined at Cooperstown.

Branch Rickey was certain that somewhere in the Negro leagues was a player with the desire, baseball talent, and emotional stability to handle his “noble experiment”—opening organized baseball to black players. Rickey's scouts pinpointed Jackie Robinson, a first-year shortstop with the Kansas City Monarchs. He was a U.S. Army veteran and a former UCLA scholar-athlete. Rickey invited Robinson to a Brooklyn meeting purportedly to discuss a new Negro league. Upon Jackie's arrival Rickey explained his actual plan.

Robinson, then 26, understood the necessity to “turn the other cheek.” If he did not, warned Rickey, the experiment would not work. Jackie agreed to a contract. When the 1946 season opened he was the first black in a professional baseball uniform in the 20th century. Jackie played for the Dodgers’ Triple-A Montreal Royals farm club that year. Enduring recurring taunts and inside pitches all year, Robinson simply won the International League batting title with a .349 mark. He was as ready as he’d ever be. For Brooklyn.

April 15, 1947. Boston Braves at Brooklyn’s Ebbets Field. Surprisingly only 25,623 fans showed up, 9,000 short of capacity, to witness the game’s most significant event of the century and a civil rights happening of monumental proportions:

A black man playing major league baseball.

Robinson happened to go 0-for-3 that afternoon, but his season-long exploits clearly warranted his Rookie of the Year selection, not only for his box score performances, but also for what he had to do between pitches, during pregame warm-ups, entering and exiting ball parks, and interfacing at the workplace with teammates and opponents. Sometimes friends and foes were indistinguishable.

Degrading racial comments were regularly issued from opposition dugouts, especially Philadelphia’s and St. Louis’s in the early years. National League president Ford Frick proclaimed that any player who would boycott a game against the Dodgers would be suspended. “This is the United States of America,” he said. “One citizen has as much right to play as any other.” The rebels backed down.

In his biography, Robinson wrote, “Sometimes I felt tortured. I just tried to play ball and ignore the insults. It was getting to me. What was I doing turning the other cheek?” But turn it he did. “The haters almost won that round.”

Jackie’s confrontations with profane bigots were tougher than his challenges from baseball’s day-to-day complexities. After his fine rookie season, followed by .296 hitting and 85 RBI in 1948, Robinson registered his career year that was capped off with the 1949 MVP award. Its highlights: a league-leading .342 batting average, 124 runs batted in, 203 hits, 38 doubles, and a league-best and career-high 37 stolen bases. His achievements led the Dodgers to another World Series (and, yes, another defeat by New York).

He was 30 by then, and still delivering prime-of-career quality. Having transferred to second base in 1948, then to third, and eventually the outfield, his game showed no significant signs of slowing down until 1955. Injuries limited him to 105 games that year, and a .256 average. Jack improved to .275 over 117 games in ’56. Fans were not aware of it at the time, but the 1956 World Series was Jackie’s baseball farewell. He homered once and hit .250 in the seven-game set against the Yankees. In his last at bat Jackie struck out. Then he retired from baseball.

His knees were sore, he was then 38, and he wasn't particularly chummy with manager Walt Alston or the Dodgers front office. *Look Magazine* offered him \$50,000 for the story of his baseball career and retirement. But before the magazine was distributed, Brooklyn surprisingly traded him across town to the New York Giants, who offered him a good salary. What to do? Following his conscience he fulfilled his deal with *Look* and upheld his decision to retire. Journalist Roger Kahn said Jackie was disturbed about that until the next season's opening day. When Robinson awakened that morning, his knee hurt so badly he could not get out of bed. He never again regretted his decision.

Out of baseball for good, Jack was employed by commercial firms, worked with political campaigns, and lent his time and talents to civil rights issues. His first post-baseball job was with the Chock Full o' Nuts coffee company as personnel manager and unofficial public relations representative. He later was a founder of the Freedom National Bank in Harlem and a low-cost housing project in Brooklyn.

Robinson also worked for the 1960 campaign committee of Richard M. Nixon, and in 1964 was deputy director for Nelson Rockefeller's presidential campaign. Soon after joining Chock Full o' Nuts, Jackie became cochairman of the NAACP's Freedom Fund Drive.

While still with the Dodgers, Jackie and his wife Rachel moved to the Stamford, Connecticut, area, where they resided throughout the remainder of Jack's life. Their three children—Jackie, Jr., Sharon, and David—grew up there.

Sadly, Jackie, Jr., became addicted to drugs while serving in Vietnam. At age 24 and recovering, he was a fatal car accident victim just one year prior to his father's death. David, now in his 50s, has owned a coffee farm in Tanzania. Sharon, the middle Robinson child, is a certified nurse-midwife who now has a position in Major League Baseball's marketing department. Her son accepted a football scholarship to UCLA, where his grandfather had once played football, basketball, and a little baseball, and ran track.

Rachel Robinson, a former nursing professional, is as energetic and involved today as she was 50 years ago. Now in her 80s, she is the founder and active leader of the Jackie Robinson Foundation. Headquartered in midtown Manhattan, the foundation awards four-year college scholarships to academically gifted students of color with financial need. Students are encouraged to continue the Robinson family's legacy of commitment to social causes and community concerns. Since Rachel Robinson founded it in 1973, JRF has issued more than 800 scholarships.

As the 50th anniversary of Jackie's major league debut neared, Rachel wrote a book about the Robinson family. It included numerous memories of that 1947 Rookie of the Year season—its shameful incidents but its triumphs too, and what those meant for the hundreds whose careers followed Jackie's.

“I remember 1947 as a relief and not an accomplishment,” wrote Mrs. Robinson. “After all we had gone through to get there, all I can remember is feeling relieved.”

By the late 1960s Jack’s health had begun to deteriorate. Diabetes sapped his strength. His gait was slowed, a sad sign to those who had watched him run with determination and resolve just 20 years earlier. Cardiac concerns also surfaced. Eventually his eyesight was severely impaired. In October 1972, in commemoration of Jackie’s first big league game, he threw out the first pitch prior to World Series Game Two in Cincinnati.

Nine days later, stricken with a heart attack, Jackie Robinson died. He was 53.

His funeral service in New York was attended by more than 3,000 persons. The Reverend Jesse Jackson spoke there: “[Jackie] didn’t integrate baseball for himself. This man turned the stumbling block into a stepping-stone.”

Jack Roosevelt Robinson would have turned 86 in early 2005. In the 58 years since he first entered the Brooklyn Dodgers lineup, thousands of examples of his courage, tenacity, talent, and contributions have been commemorated—nowhere more appropriately than on the facing of the handsome trophy presented annually to baseball’s Rookies of the Year: The Jackie Robinson Award.

Chronological Listing of Rookies of the Year (1947–2004)

Major League

1947	Jackie Robinson, Brooklyn Dodgers
1948	Alvin Dark, Boston Braves

American League

National League

1949	Roy Sievers, St. Louis	Don Newcombe, Brooklyn
1950	Walt Dropo, Boston	Sam Jethroe, Boston
1951	Gil McDougald, New York	Willie Mays, New York
1952	Harry Byrd, Philadelphia	Joe Black, Brooklyn
1953	Harvey Kuenn, Detroit	Jim Gilliam, Brooklyn
1954	Bob Grim, New York	Wally Moon, St. Louis
1955	Herb Score, Cleveland	Bill Virdon, St. Louis
1956	Luis Aparicio, Chicago	Frank Robinson, Cincinnati
1957	Tony Kubek, New York	Jack Sanford, Philadelphia
1958	Albie Pearson, Washington	Orlando Cepeda, San Francisco
1959	Bob Allison, Washington	Willie McCovey, San Francisco
1960	Ron Hansen, Baltimore	Frank Howard, Los Angeles
1961	Don Schwall, Boston	Billy Williams, Chicago
1962	Tom Tresh, New York	Ken Hubbs, Chicago
1963	Gary Peters, Chicago	Pete Rose, Cincinnati
1964	Tony Oliva, Minnesota	Dick Allen, Philadelphia
1965	Curt Blefary, Baltimore	Jim Lefebvre, Los Angeles
1966	Tommie Agee, Chicago	Tommy Helms, Cincinnati
1967	Rod Carew, Minnesota	Tom Seaver, New York
1968	Stan Bahnsen, New York	Johnny Bench, Cincinnati
1969	Lou Piniella, Kansas City	Ted Sizemore, Los Angeles
1970	Thurman Munson, New York	Carl Morton, Montreal
1971	Chris Chambliss, Cleveland	Earl Williams, Atlanta
1972	Carlton Fisk, Boston	Jon Matlack, New York
1973	Al Bumbry, Baltimore	Gary Matthews, San Francisco
1974	Mike Hargrove, Texas	Bake McBride, St. Louis

Chronological Listing of Rookies of the Year (1947–2004) (continued)

	American League	National League
1975	Fred Lynn, Boston	John Montefusco, San Francisco
1976	Mark Fidrych, Detroit	Butch Metzger, San Diego . . . and Pat Zachry, Cincinnati
1977	Eddie Murray, Baltimore	Andre Dawson, Montreal
1978	Lou Whitaker, Detroit	Bob Horner, Atlanta
1979	John Castino, Minnesota . . . and Alfredo Griffin, Toronto	Rick Sutcliffe, Los Angeles
1980	Joe Charboneau, Cleveland	Steve Howe, Los Angeles
1981	Dave Righetti, New York	Fernando Valenzuela, Los Angeles
1982	Cal Ripken, Jr., Baltimore	Steve Sax, Los Angeles
1983	Ron Kittle, Chicago	Darryl Strawberry, New York
1984	Alvin Davis, Seattle	Dwight Gooden, New York
1985	Ozzie Guillen, Chicago	Vince Coleman, St. Louis
1986	Jose Canseco, Oakland	Todd Worrell, St. Louis
1987	Mark McGwire, Oakland	Benito Santiago, San Diego
1988	Walt Weiss, Oakland	Chris Sabo, Cincinnati
1989	Gregg Olson, Baltimore	Jerome Walton, Chicago
1990	Sandy Alomar, Jr., Cleveland	David Justice, Atlanta
1991	Chuck Knoblauch, Minnesota	Jeff Bagwell, Houston
1992	Pat Listach, Milwaukee	Eric Karros, Los Angeles
1993	Tim Salmon, California	Mike Piazza, Los Angeles
1994	Bob Hamelin, Kansas City	Raul Mondesi, Los Angeles
1995	Marty Cordova, Minnesota	Hideo Nomo, Los Angeles
1996	Derek Jeter, New York	Todd Hollandsworth, Los Angeles
1997	Nomar Garciaparra, Boston	Scott Rolen, Philadelphia
1998	Ben Grieve, Oakland	Kerry Wood, Chicago
1999	Carlos Beltran, Kansas City	Scott Williamson, Cincinnati
2000	Kazuhiro Sasaki, Seattle	Rafael Furcal, Atlanta
2001	Ichiro Suzuki, Seattle	Albert Pujols, St. Louis
2002	Eric Hinske, Toronto	Jason Jennings, Colorado
2003	Angel Berroa, Kansas City	Dontrelle Willis, Florida
2004	Bobby Crosby, Oakland	Jason Bay, Pittsburgh