



Journeyman Raburn first among equals as Chicago killer

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Of all the great players who have throttled the White Sox and Cubs as if both teams were their personal patsies, we have the champion Chicago Killer.

The winner is...Ryan Raburn.

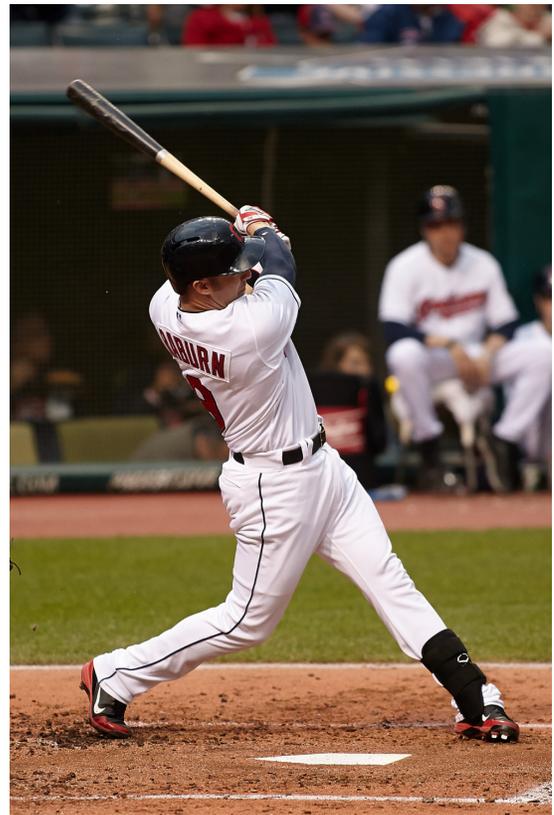
Who? Huh?

You don't have to be a Hall of Famer to dominate our Local Nines. In Raburn's case, you're a genial journeyman who didn't even play full-time with the Detroit Tigers when you began beating the Sox almost single-handedly. When his amazing run-producing numbers against Chicago are crunched, he zooms ahead of the likes of Mike Schmidt or Torii Hunter or Joe Torre or Mike Sweeney as the player most deserved of intentional walks whenever he comes up.

Raburn can't explain it. Just one of those crazy things that happens in baseball, a game both of failure and unexpected successes.

The 33-year-old right-handed hitter was tucked way down among a lineup of Sox killers when he was in and out of the batting order of the Tigers over the past half-decade. But he's seemed to step it up when he gained more playing time with the Cleveland Indians. Latest feat was a go-ahead, eventual game-winning two-run single at U.S. Cellular Field April 12.

Raburn's feats were pulled together by the Elias Sports Bureau, baseball's New York-based official statistician and an organization that will come up with surprising num-



Ryan Raburn has been a Sox killer for years, but now he has an all-time statistical distinction, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Photo credit: Kyle Emery/Cleveland Indians.

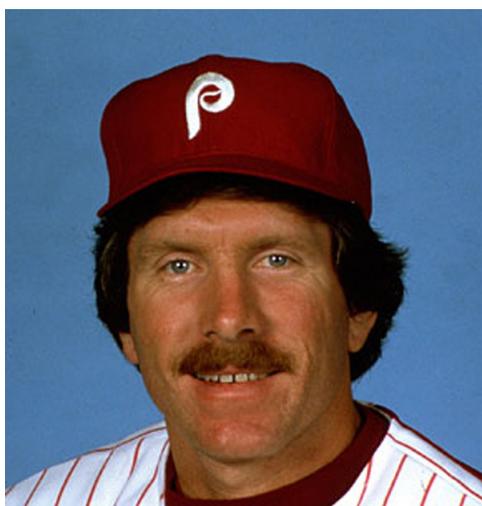
bers. His mastery over the Sox was detailed in the Indians' media notes assembled by the very helpful, old-school Cleveland media relations chief Bart Swain. Interestingly, the Raburn phenomenon got little play in Chicago media, which usually does not track dominant visiting players.

72 of 275 RBIs vs. Sox

A .257 lifetime hitter who got off to a .191 start in 2014, Raburn ranks second all-time with the highest percentage (26 percent) of runs driven in against one team for a player with at least 200 at-bats. He has 275 career RBIs with 72 against the Sox. Overall, he's batted .301 with 17 homers and 18 doubles.

Raburn ramps it up even more at U.S. Cellular Field, where he sees the ball well. He's batted .316 with 10 homers and 46 RBIs on the South Side.

Throughout history, Raburn was edged out only by former AL president Dr. Bobby Brown. As a Yankees infielder in the 1950s, he knocked in 27 percent of his runs against the St. Louis Browns/Baltimore Orioles franchise.



Mike Schmidt hit proportionally more homers in his number of at-bats at Wrigley Field than Willie Mays and Henry Aaron.

Total Raburn numbers still pale in comparison to the all-time greats. But more than a quarter of your RBIs against one team makes him first among equals against Chicago franchises.

What Raburn also does is stimulate the curiosity about the visiting players (and hosts on the road) who have broken Chicago fans hearts over the past century.

With the additional help of Elias Sports Bureau, we'll re-assemble the All-Star team of Sox and Cubs killers.

Asserting god-like power against the Cubs, of course, was Phillies Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt, who seemingly couldn't go through a series at Wrigley Field without slugging a homer. He smote 50 homers at 1060 W. Addison St.

4 homers in 4 at-bats

Once Schmidt (sometimes mispronounced as "Smit" by Cubs voice Lou Boudreau) seemingly did it all in one game, as his four homers in his final quartet of at-bats at Wrigley on April 17, 1976 proved. Schmidt almost singlehandedly brought the Phillies back from a 13-2 deficit in the fourth to win 18-16 in 10 innings. Final homer and game-winner in the 10th was belted off right-hander Paul Reuschel.

"The wind was blowing out about 30 mph," recalled Paul Reuschel. "When [Schmidt] hit one off me, I actually thought the shortstop would catch it or the left fielder would

come in and run him off. When he hit it, I said, ‘All right, there’s another out.’ But it just kept carrying and carrying until it landed in the basket.”

Starting pitchers in the game were Steve Carlton (41 lifetime wins over the Cubs) and Paul’s more gifted brother Rick Reuschel. Who’d have even imagined the 34-run spree given that matchup?

This ’76 game and the famed 23-22 Phils victory over the Cubs – second-highest scoring game in MLB history – on May 17, 1979 are often confused as one and the same Wrigley contest. The three common elements were the football-sized scores, warm and windy spring afternoons and, of course, a game-winning Schmidt homer in the 10th. But they were two separate and distinct games, both deemed important enough in ball-park history for all of Schmidt’s homers to be replayed on the WGN-TV special “Wrigley 100: A Century Celebration.”

Schmidt proportionally was the all-time Cubs buster at Wrigley Field, given that fellow Cooperstown enshrines Willie Mays and Hank Aaron belted 54 and 50 homers, respectively, on the North Side. But Schmidt amassed his totals in considerably fewer seasons and at-bats. Schmidt had 524 Wrigley at-bats from 1973 to 1989. Mays had 691 at-bats in 1951 and from 1954 to 1973. Aaron racked up 719 at-bats from 1954 to 1974.

Hanging slider best vs. Schmidt

Turns out the Cubs may have been pitching Schmidt wrong all along.

“You want to get Mike Schmidt out? Hang a slider,” revealed former Cubs right-hander Mike Krukow, who eventually was Schmidt’s teammate in Philadelphia in 1982.

“He couldn’t hit a hanging slider. We were trying to put the ball down around the knees to keep the ball in the ballpark, and we were feeding his strength. You want it down and away. But that was his zone. He’d wear you out.

“We’d talk about it when we became teammates. He was lucky. It seemed every time the wind was blowing out and the Phillies were coming to town. Mike told me, ‘I could go o-for-St. Louis and o-for-Pittsburgh and the third city hint he trip was Chicago, and I knew I’d get hits there.’ He always got good weather and good wind to hit in. That was his ballpark.”

Later in his career, Schmidt finally got tired of answering questions about his takeover of Wrigley. One late 1980s day, I recalled approaching him in the visiting clubhouse. Schmidt rolled his eyes before I said a word.

“When he was hot, you couldn’t get him out,” said Paul Reuschel. “When he wasn’t, anyone could get him out. He was real streaky. You don’t think about those things



Joe Torre began killing Ken Holtzman while catching with the Braves.

[dominating in Wrigley] when you're pitching – you're just trying to get him out. I was a sinker-slider pitcher and I tried to get ahead inside and make him chase it if I could.”

Meanwhile, two opposing hitters did a micro version of Cubs killing against specific pitchers.

I knew Joe Torre in his Braves and Cardinals days was bossman of lefty Ken Holtzman, to the tune of around .500. The freshly-inducted Hall of Famer was slightly better than that gaudy impression. Torre was 33 for 65 (.508) with two homers against Holtzman, all between 1966 and 1971.

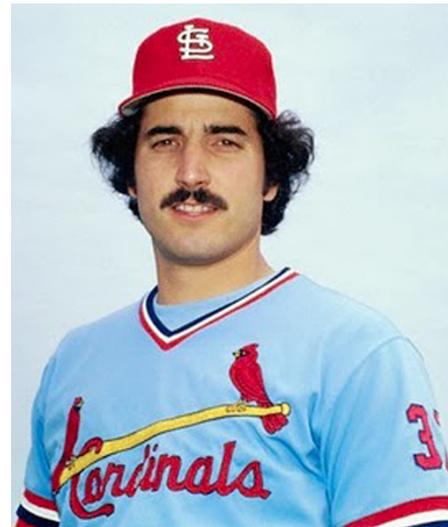
Hernandez solves Sutter

I also thought Keith Hernandez used to dominate Lee Arthur Smith, as the crafty left-handed gap-to-gap hitter and first-base defensive whiz sometimes would get two late-inning at-bats to take the measure of the big fastballer. But Hernandez was death to split-finger master Bruce Sutter, probably because he could get down and golf those sharp-breaking serves. Hernandez finished 11 for 23 (.478) against Sutter in his five Cubs seasons from 1976 to 1980.

The memory blurs after 35 years. I always thought the likes of Torre Cardinals teammate Ted Simmons and pesky left-handed-hitting San Diego Padres outfielders Gene Richards and Jerry Turner also nailed Sutter because they were all low-ball hitters. And they did – just one time apiece – for Simmons and Turner. Each had a homer off Sutter, and their feats obviously stuck out for their singularity. Simmons overall was 5-for-25 against Sutter as a Cub. Turner was 3-for-6. Richards was a measly 1-for-12.

For pitchers, Carlton did not seem all that dominating against the Cubs compared to, say, Sandy Koufax and Bob Gibson. But thanks to “Lefty’s” longevity and ace status on contending teams the majority of his career, he racked up the wins. Elias said Carlton was 41-20 with a 3.11 ERA against the Cubs.

Koufax statistically had some sensational numbers against the Cubs – 21-12 with a 2.44 ERA. The big stats included a 1965 perfect game -- last time the Cubs were ever no-hit – in Dodger Stadium and an 18-strikeout spree in 1962 at Wrigley Field, the ballpark’s single-game whiff record until Kerry Wood punched out 20 in 1998. Yet the Cubs tried to rise to the occasion against the gentlemanly Koufax. He split a pair of 13-inning decisions against them in 1960 and 1961. Southpaw Bob Hendley got revenge against Koufax for losing 1-0 in his perfect game in the next start, besting the masterful lefty 2-1 on a Billy Williams’ two-run homer. And in Koufax’s final Wrigley Field start in 1966, Ken Holtzman took a no-hitter into the ninth inning before winning 2-1 in the only match-up between the Jewish lefties.



A young Keith Hernandez had Bruce Sutter's number as a Cub.

Thanks to Fergie Jenkins, Gibson was somewhat in hailing distance of .500 against the Cubs lifetime. The very focused, serious right-hander, who did not fraternize with his on-field opponents, was 28-22 with a 2.95 ERA lifetime. However, Jenkins was 5-3 in nine head-to-head duels against Gibson.

Feller: 46 wins vs. Sox

All the while, the Sox have had their hands full with other great achievers. Sox historian Mark Liptak recalls that lifetime Indian Bob Feller bested the South Siders 46 times, including the only Opening Day no-hitter ever in 1940 at Comiskey Park. Consummate New York Yankee Whitey Ford logged 35 wins against the Sox, although lost more than he won in duels against fellow ace lefty Billy Pierce, said Liptak.

In 2013, Torii Hunter fittingly jumped ahead of fellow Tigers/Sox killers like Victor Martinez. Interestingly, he replaced the role once filled by Delmon Young, who had more RBIs against the Sox lifetime than Miguel Cabrera. With the Tigers' prowess against the Sox spurring him, the affable Hunter passed up retired Royals slugger Mike Sweeney in overall numbers against the Sox. Tormenting them since his early Twins days, Hunter slugged his 30th career homer against the Sox.



Torii Hunter began killing the Sox while playing center for the Twins. Photo credit: [Keith Allison](#).



Mike Sweeney slugged 29 career homers against the Sox.

Sweeney's 16 years in the American League, mostly with the Kansas City Royals, produced 29 homers, 97 RBI and a .299 average against Chicago. And if that Royal flush wasn't enough, Sweeney was joined in the latter part of his Royals days by a supplementary Sox killer in Mark Teahan with 12 homers, 42 RBIs and a .283 average. Teahan wasn't as effective, of course, when he joined the Sox in 2010.

Liptak is aggravated to this day by the memory of Twins pitcher Joe Mays.

“He was a typical Sox killer pitcher...threw nothing but offspeed junk [like Bruce Chen] and Sox hitters kept trying to hit 800-foot, nine-run home runs against him. Instead, the hitters then kept grounding out and taking pitches on the outside corner for strikes.”

Mays wasn't as dominating as memory suggests. He was 8-6 with a 4.86 ERA against the Sox. Yet whenever he did win, the sight was frustrating.

The Sox no doubt aren't pleased to see Jason Kubel return to the American League after almost two seasons away with the Arizona Diamondbacks. Kubel's numbers against the Sox: 22 homers, 77 RBIs and a .274 average.

Try as they may, none of the above-mentioned murderers' row has a record like Raburn. Whatever he accomplishes in his career, he'll always have Chicago.