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Average Major League Baseball Career Is 5.6 Years, According To New Study

July 9, 2007



The average career of a Major League Baseball player is 5.6 years, according to a new study by a University of Colorado at Boulder research team.

The study also revealed that one in five position players will have only a single-year career, and that at every point of a player's career, the player's chance of ending his career is at least 11 percent.

Results of the study, "Major League Baseball Career Length in the 20th Century," will be published in the August issue of Population Research and Policy Review. The study was conducted by former CU-Boulder graduate student William Witnauer, sociology Professor Richard Rogers and doctoral student Jarron Saint Onge. Rogers also directs the Population Program in the CU-Boulder Institute of Behavioral Science.

"Population research can provide rich insight into important and popular social issues, including baseball," Rogers said.

The study examined the career statistics of baseball players who started their careers between 1902 and 1993. Pitchers were excluded because of their unique positions, career volatility and propensity for injuries.

Between 1902 and 1993, 5,989 position players started their careers and played 33,272 person years of Major League Baseball. Using voluminous baseball statistics, the authors then developed a table of average career lengths for the players.

"Everyone knows that Major League Baseball is highly competitive," Witnauer said. "But as Americans enjoy this year's All-Star game, they now have a definitive answer on the average length of a baseball career."

The CU-Boulder Institute of Behavioral Science, established in 1957, provides a setting for interdisciplinary, collaborative research. For more information visit www.colorado.edu/ibs.

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