

# Inventing perfection

This year marks the 130th anniversary of Lee Richmond's 'No-Hit, No-Run, No-Man-Reach-First game'

BY JIM GATES

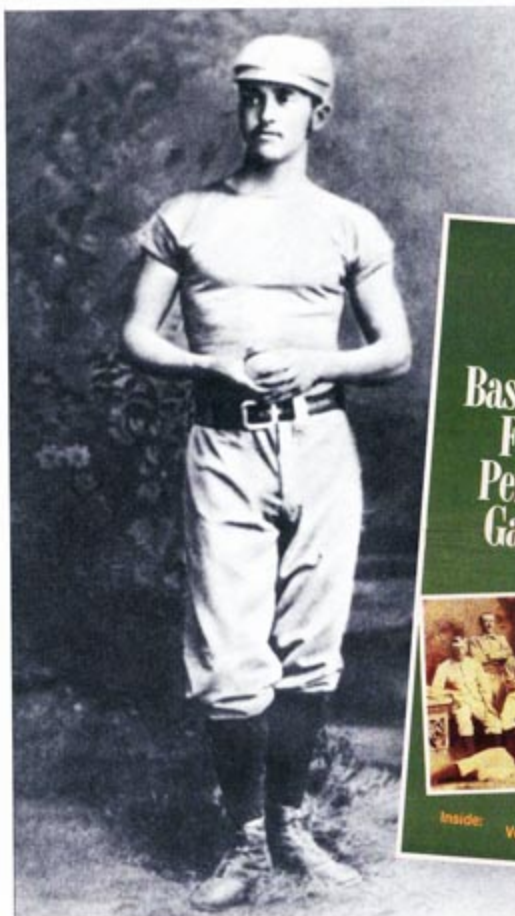
*"I do not recall any particular fuss was made about it by any newspaper or set of fans."*

— LEE RICHMOND, in an interview  
36 years after the first perfect game

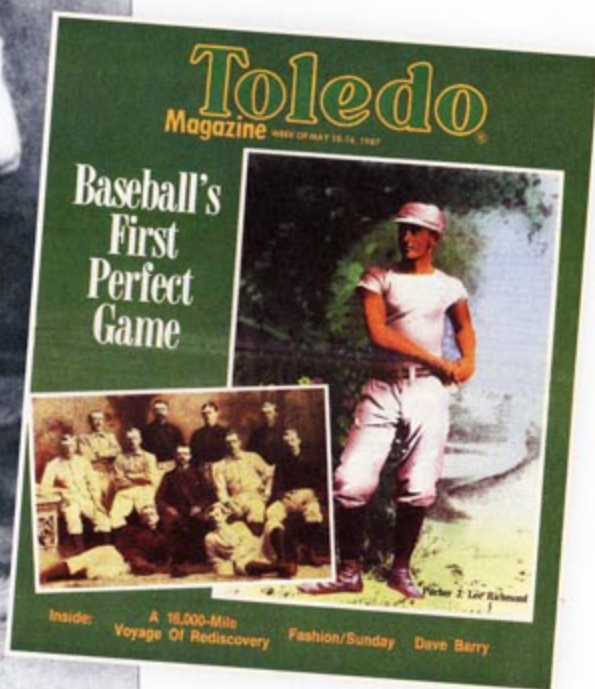
The Paul Dickson Baseball Dictionary, 3rd ed., defines a perfect game as "a no-hitter in which all 27 opposing batters fail to reach first base, either by a base hit, base on balls, hit batter, fielding error, or any other means." The entry also stipulates that the first use of the term "perfect game" occurred on Jan. 10, 1909 when the *Washington Post* reported that "[Ed] Walsh congratulated Addie Joss on the latter's feat of pitching a perfect game [on October 2, 1908]."

The 2009 season treated fans to one of these rare baseball events, the perfect game thrown by Chicago White Sox pitcher Mark Buehrle, but few realize that this occurred almost 130 years after fellow southpaw Lee Richmond pitched the first such game for the Worcester Ruby Legs. The Cleveland Blues were Richmond's opponent on June 12, 1880 when baseball history was made. But if the term 'perfect game' was not used until 1909, what did they call this game?

Richmond himself actually provided the best description of the event when he was quoted as saying, "It is a singular thing of that no-hit, no-run, no-man-reach-first game



Lee Richmond appeared in 74 games for the Worcester Ruby Legs in 1880 – the year of his perfect game – with 66 starts, 57 complete games and a National League-best three saves. After his baseball career, Richmond served as the Dean of Men at the University of Toledo.



in 1880 that I can remember almost nothing except that my jump ball and my half stride ball were working splendidly and that the boys behind me gave me perfect support."

The local paper, the *Worcester Evening Gazette*, provided coverage for the day and described this game as "a wonderful shut out" and "the best baseball game on record." The *Gazette* also reported, "...so faultless a game was rapidly played. It was half over in

45 minutes." Even with a brief rain delay of seven minutes in the eighth inning, "the total time of one-hour and 26 minutes (made) the game one of the quickest ever played."

Details of the game, as can be seen by reviewing the original scorecard which is held within the archives of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, also show that Richmond, like so many other perfect game



Worcester vs. Cleveland at Worcester June 12 1880

FIELDING REC'D.			CLEVELAND										UMPIRE, <i>Totally</i>		BATTING RECORD.		
Put Out	Ass't.	Err's	NAMES, POSITION AND No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	At Bat.	Runs	Lo B.	T' B.
4	2	2	1 Dunlap 4	4-3			2-3			2K							
			2 Hancock 5	4-3			3-2			3-4							
10	1		3 Kennedy 2	6-4			2-3			5-4							
7			4 Phillips 3	6-3			9-3			2K							
2			5 Shaffer 9	2-1			2K			5-3							
	9		6 McCormick 1	4-3			3-2			6-4							
1			7 Sullivan 8				8-4		1-3				9-4				
	2		8 Glasscock 6	6-3			4-2			2K							
1			9 Haulon 7	5-3			2K			6-3							
24	14	2	Hits,.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	0	0
TIME OF GAME:			BARNED RUNS,										SCORES:				
Began,	H. M.		1st Base on Err's,														
Ended,																	

26.451



The Hall of Fame's collection includes Lee Richmond's perfect game scorecard, which shows a unique play during Cleveland's fifth inning - written as 9-3 - when the Ruby Legs' right fielder recorded an assist on an out at first base, taking away a would-be single from the hitter.

Worcester vs. Cleveland at Worcester June 12 1880

FIELDING REC'D.			WORCESTER										UMPIRE, <i>Dracley</i>		BATTING RECORD.		
Put Out	Ass't.	Err's	NAMES, POSITION AND No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	At Bat.	Runs	Lo B.	T' B.
0	0		1 Wood 7	1-3			8-4			2K			2-1				
	6		2 Richmond 1	2-3			X-4			2K							1
1	1		3 Knight 9	6-3			4-3			4-4							
2	3		4 Irwin 6	3-1			X			X							1 2
8			5 Bennett 2	1-3			8-4			2K							
1	2		6 Whitney 5	4-3			2-4			8-4							
14			7 Sullivan 3				7-4			2K			4-4				
1			8 Corey 8	2K			9-4			2K							
	4		9 Creamer 4	4-4			2-4			2-4							
27	16	0	Hits,.....	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3		
TIME OF GAME:			BARNED RUNS,										SCORES:				
Began,	H. M.		1st Base on Err's,														
Ended,																	

Struck out by M.C. 7 The first "No Hit, No Run Game" Score by George O. Ward, m.d.

It should also be noted that Cleveland's pitcher, Big Jim McCormick, who would notch 45 victories that season, was also throwing a very good game. He allowed just three hits and only one run, that coming on a double error by second baseman Fred "SureShot" Dunlap. Richmond was later quoted as saying, "I used to think Dunlap was the greatest second baseman in the world."

While perfect games are a celebrated element of baseball, the first man to accomplish this feat is virtually forgotten. Richmond was born on May 5, 1857 in Sheffield, Ohio, the son of a Baptist minister and the youngest of nine children. He attended Oberlin Preparatory College near Cleveland, and was a student at Brown University in Providence, R.I., when he signed a contract to pitch for the Worcester

**Close Calls**

By the current definition, the rules do allow multiple pitchers to be involved in a perfect game, but state that a pitcher is not credited with a perfect game if there was already a baserunner when he took the mound, or because the game went into extra innings and an opposing player eventually reached base. There have been three instances in which the first 27 batters were retired in a row but are not official perfect games.

- On June 23, 1917, Babe Ruth was ejected after walking the first batter in a game against the Senators. Red Sox pitcher Ernie Shore replaced him, erased the baserunner via a caught-stealing, and completed the game without allowing another runner to reach base.
- Harvey Haddix pitched 12 perfect innings against the Braves on May 26, 1959, before an error in the 13th allowed the first baserunner, which eventually became the winning run.
- On June 3, 1995 against the Padres, Pedro Martinez gave up a leadoff double in the bottom of the 10th after nine perfect innings. Martinez was relieved and the next three Padres went down in order.
- Four games were deemed unofficial because they did not last nine innings, and on nine occasions the 27th batter has spoiled a perfect game bid.

## Perfect games throughout major league history

PITCHER	DATE	CITY	RESULTS
Mark Buehrle	July 23, 2009	Chicago	Chicago White Sox 5, Tampa Bay Rays 0
Randy Johnson	May 18, 2004	Atlanta	Arizona Diamondbacks 2, Atlanta Braves 0
David Cone	July 18, 1999	New York	New York Yankees 6, Montreal Expos 0
David Wells	May 17, 1998	New York	New York Yankees 4, Minnesota Twins 0
Kenny Rogers	July 28, 1994	Texas	Texas Rangers 4, California Angels 0
Dennis Martinez	July 28, 1991	Los Angeles	Montreal Expos 2 Los Angeles Dodgers 0
Tom Browning	Sept. 16, 1988	Cincinnati	Cincinnati Reds 1, Los Angeles Dodgers 0
Mike Witt	Sept. 30, 1984	Texas	California Angels 1, Texas Rangers 0
Len Barker	May 15, 1981	Cleveland	Cleveland Indians 3, Toronto Blue Jays 0
Catfish Hunter*	May 08, 1968	Oakland	Oakland A's 4, Minnesota Twins 0
Sandy Koufax*	Sept. 09, 1965	Los Angeles	Los Angeles Dodgers 1, Chicago Cubs 0
Jim Bunning*	June 21, 1964	New York	Philadelphia Phillies 6, New York Mets 0
Don Larsen**	Oct. 08, 1956	New York	New York Yankees 2, Brooklyn Dodgers 0
Charlie Robertson	April 30, 1922	Detroit	Chicago White Sox 2, Detroit Tigers 0
Addie Joss*	Oct. 02, 1908	Cleveland	Cleveland Naps 1, Chicago White Sox 0
Cy Young*	May 05, 1904	Boston	Boston Americans 3, Philadelphia A's 0
John Ward *	June 17, 1880	Providence	Providence Grays 5, Buffalo Bisons 0
Lee Richmond	June 12, 1880	Worcester	Worcester Ruby Legs 1, Cleveland Blues 0

\* Hall of Famer \*\* Game 5, 1956 World Series

squad. He needed the money to help pay his college bills, and his reported salary of \$2,400 would have made him a franchise player in those days. He went 32-32 in 1880, starting in 66 of the team's 83 games and appearing in eight additional games.

Richmond also pitched for the Brown University baseball team and was active in a number of student activities. To a certain degree, these played a part in the story of his perfect game. On the Thursday prior to his

Saturday perfect game, Richmond had shut down Cleveland 5-0 in a game played in Worcester. He then returned to the Brown University campus to attend what is described as "graduation festivities and parties," all of which kept him going until 4:30 a.m. when he stepped in to play in a class baseball game. He finally went to bed at 6:30 a.m. and slept until about 11:30 a.m., when he woke up to catch the train to Worcester. The train was delayed, so he was

forced to pitch without having the chance to eat a meal or even to warm up properly. And, with this background, he pitched his perfect game.

As some would say, it is good to be young.

One other historic note should be made, as Richmond is often given credit for being the catalyst for the development of rules which prohibit professionals from playing in college sports. This restriction can be traced forward to today's NCAA regulations regarding this same topic.

Richmond's professional career did not last long, as he pitched for only a few more years. He went on to earn his medical degree from the University of the City of New York in 1883, possibly making him the first professional ballplayer/doctor, and he practiced as a physician for several years. He returned to his native Ohio where he taught and coached at the high school and college levels for another 30 years. His teaching repertoire was extensive and included Latin, physiology and mathematics. He would eventually rise to serve as the Dean of Men at the University of Toledo.

While no longer active in the professional game, Richmond remained an active fan of the Toledo Mud Hens and he is reported to have become an excellent golfer. He quietly passed away on Sept. 30, 1929. Several obituaries made note of the rare event he introduced to baseball. However, many remembered him for other reasons, as noted by a published eulogy which said: "Honored as a gentleman, envied as a scholar, revered as a friend, respected as a man, Dr. Richmond will always be remembered by us who were proud to know him as a leader." ♡

### Perfect Hall of Famers

- The only Dodger to throw a perfect game, Sandy Koufax holds the record for the most no-hitters by a pitcher who has thrown a perfect game with four.
- Among current U.S. Senator Jim Bunning's numerous accomplishments is the gem he pitched on June 21, 1964, for the Philadelphia Phillies when he tossed the only perfect game in Shea Stadium history against the Mets and broke an 84-year perfect game drought in the National League.
- Catfish Hunter, Addie Joss, John Ward and Cy Young are the four other Hall of Famers – along with Bunning and Koufax – who have thrown perfect games.



Sandy Koufax

Jim Bunning



PHOTO FILE

Jim Gates is the librarian at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.