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EDITORS' FAVORITES

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THE SITES WE USE ALL THE TIME...
AND 10 WE CAN'T STAND

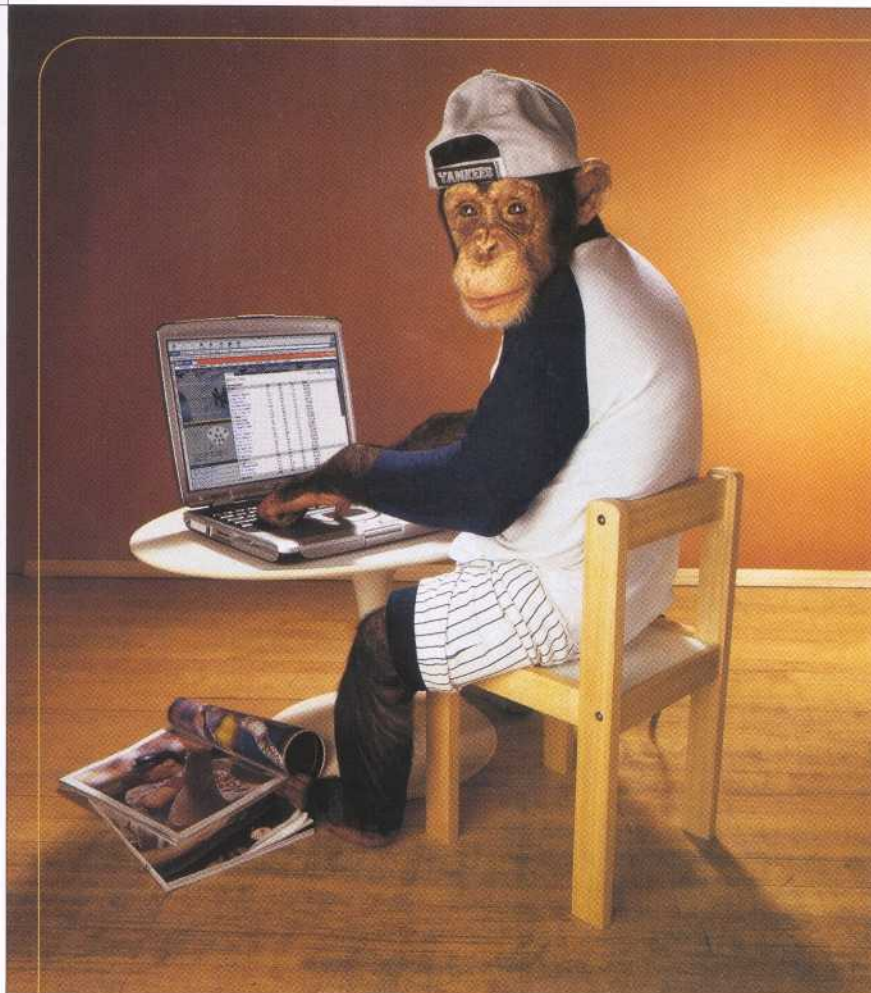
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The Naturals

How did baseball fans of all pinstripes survive without these sites? We have no idea

The game of baseball has managed to weather more than a century without the Web. We're not exactly sure how. Our exhaustive research reveals that fans once had to go to the game to see it; they were forced to trawl through box scores in the next day's newspaper for games that weren't in their area.

Evidently, there were no highlights on demand. No streaming audio for every team. No stats databases, gamecasts, instant-messaged updates, online columnists, virtual ballpark tours, rules finders, or video replays of classic games. Worst of all, folks actually had to go to the ballpark to buy a bobble-head doll.

Those were tough times. But thankfully—as these 27 sites prove—America's national pastime is sliding nicely into the 21st century.

X

BY TY WENGER

IN-GAME ACTION

MLB.com: Gameday Audio (mlb.com) For following the game, MLB.com is your first base. For a seasonlong membership of about \$12 you can access every radio broadcast of every major league game.

MLB Team Radio Networks (geocities.com/baursam/mlb.html) If you're the kind of scowflaw (or skinflint) who can't stand ponying up for MLB's feeds, try these links to local radio (some pirated, some not) for each team.

ESPN: GameCast (espn.com) Click on the in-progress game of your choice—up pops a baseball-field applet with a real-time display of game action, pitcher vs. batter analysis, game logs, and box scores. Click on the players to get their updated stats.

Baseball-links.com: Broadcast (baseball-links.com/links/Broadcast/Minor_League_Games) Some folks get really into minor league baseball. If you like rooting for athletes who don't earn more than you do, follow them through these free radio links to 75 minor league teams.

POSTGAME VIEWING

MLB.com: Baseball's Best Video (mlb.com) Live streaming video of every major league game is a few years away, but MLB.com is getting close, with a host of postgame highlights and classic games. Debuting this year is Condensed Games, which distills entire ball games into a matter of minutes—perfect for “fans” who are too busy to actually watch baseball.

Puget Sound Sports League Baseball Multimedia (pssslbaseball.com/multimedia.html) This collection of audio and video highlights is a perfect complement to the MLB.com collection. The highlights stretch back to 1934, meaning Red Sox fans can watch that ball trickle through Bill Buckner's legs over and over.

PREGAME TRAINING

The Baseball Scorecard (baseballscorecard.com) Quoth Patrick McGovern, creator of the Baseball Scorecard: “I never sit in a ballpark without a scorecard, and I am usually the most popular person in my section.” While we can't guarantee you such popularity, we can

When it was a Game

Prefer to live in the past?
These sites will take you back

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum (baseballhalloffame.org)

There are those who believe a human life is incomplete without a trip to the Baseball Hall of Fame (Pete Rose, perhaps?). But upstate New York is a daunting road trip if you live in Maui, so a visit to this site will do just fine. You'll find bios for 254 members of the hall and an ever-satisfying FAQ page.

Baseball Immortals (baseballimmortals.net)

If you're one of those who consider the Hall of Fame stuffy and overrated (see Pete Rose, above), visit this, the brainchild of Hall of Fame critic Lee Sinins. Sinins thinks the hall often admits the undeserving and excludes the deserving, so he created his own damn hall of fame, thank you very much, replete with a lifetime's worth of statistics for every player.

Negro League Baseball (negroleaguebaseball.com), BlackBaseball.com, Negro League Baseball Shop (the-coop.com/negroleagues)

Hall of Fame slights cannot compare to the major league's half-century ban against black ballplayers, but at least the history of the Negro Leagues is preserved at Negro League Baseball and BlackBaseball. Both offer illuminating features on teams and players. Wrap your head around pitcher Satchel Paige's 2,100 career victories, speedster Cool Papa Bell's ability to round the bases in 12 seconds, and slugger Josh Gibson's single-season record of 84 home runs.

The Stadium Graveyard (stadiumgraveyard.com/stadiumgraveyard1), Ballparks of Baseball (ballparksofbaseball.8m.com), Ballparks (ballparks.com)

Nostalgic for Ebbs? Bemoan the loss of Comiskey? Pine for the Polo Grounds? Then you'll be thrilled by the wealth of online odes to our nation's long-lost ballparks. Pay your respects at the Stadium Graveyard. For the stories behind the demise of those diamonds, visit Ballparks of Baseball and Ballparks. Both sites offer rich histories, loving eulogies, and all the trivial details you could ever want.

guarantee you'll learn how to score ball games with McGovern's step-by-step tutelage.

Science of Baseball (exploratorium.edu/baseball)

How many times during a ball game have you wondered, "Why is it that a cold baseball doesn't fly as far as a warm one?" That and the answers to many other burning questions—how to throw a curve, the scientific basis for a bat's sweet spot—can be found here.

eTeamz: Baseball (teamz.com/baseball/rules/obr)

We all hate that blowhard who can cite chapter and verse of the "infield fly" rule. Now you can be that blowhard. Every last convoluted bylaw is now at your fingertips, thanks to the handy rules searcher found here. The site even debunks 40 common myths about baseball rules.

Berman's Baseball Nicknames (op.net/-lmk/baseball/berman.html)

Peruse this loving collection of some 400 of Chris "Boomer" Berman's player pet names. Then nickname-drop proudly: "Did you see Greg 'Appa' Maddux blow that ball by Chuck 'New Kids on the Block' Knoblach?" Rinse mouth with beer. Repeat.

STAT CENTRAL

Baseball-Reference.com

Next time you get the urge to know Minnie Minoso's lifetime on-base percentage, head to the Web's most awesome collection of team records, schedules, box scores, awards, and career earnings. Need to get out of the house? Plug in your ZIP code and get the address of every major and minor ballpark and baseball museum nearby.

Instant Statboy

Get quick scores and stats with the help of **AgentBaseball** (help.activebuddy.com/agentbaseball), an instant-messaging bot. Add the automated stat hunter to your AIM buddy list and it'll answer nearly any question. Ask "How does Sosa compare with Bonds?" and it spits back breakdowns before you can say Giambi. Check a score or how Big Unit has fared in his last few games. When are the Yanks in town? Your Agent knows.

Baseball Almanac (baseball-almanac.com)

If God were a baseball fan, this site is what his attic would look like. Look, here's a chronology of every time Ty Cobb stole home. And in that shoe box is a compilation of quotes and speeches from Mike Schmidt.

Retrosheet (retrosheet.org) The Trappist monks of baseball history, Retrosheet was founded in 1989 "for the purpose of computerizing play-by-play accounts of as many... major league games as possible."

BaseballPrimer (baseballprimer.com)

Longing for a numerical analysis of the "10 Most Questionable MVP Awards in Baseball History"? Enter BaseballPrimer, a battle royale for baseball eggheads.

THE WORD SERIES

Baseball Weekly (usatoday.com/sports/mlb.html)

George Plimpton once observed that the quality of sportswriting is inversely proportional to the size of the ball. Nowhere is this truth more self-evident than in the generous online servings of *Baseball Weekly*. Almost the entire print publication of this fine baseball bible is offered here for free.

StrikeThree.com

Now that you know everything there is to know in the world of baseball, go to the weekly columns here—the funniest baseball writers in America.

EXTRA INNINGS

Cosmic Baseball Association (cosmicbaseball.com)

An amazing, imaginary league of teams made up of historical figures. The First Daughters vs. Father Figures, with Chelsea Clinton pitching a complete game over Marlon Brando? Or the Ten Commandments besting the Ten Most Wanted in a game umpired by J. Edgar Hoover, Moses, and Saint Augustine? Perfectly ridiculous. Perfectly.

Yankees Suck (yanks-suck.com)

"Angry fan" pages are often the stuff of which restraining orders are made. Look no further for creative displays of seething rage.

Ty Wenger last wrote about wired hoops for *Y-Life*.