

True Recounting – Retelling a Statistical Story

Pitching Average (PA) Decides N.L. Pitcher of the Week: September 8-14—1965!

By one thousandth of a percentage point, Barry Codell's **Pitching Average** (PA) has at long last determined the National League's Pitcher of the Week for the second week of September 1965, defying all "better never than late" advocates. Why in the wide world of baseball is this of interest? Because it brings again to light the greatest week-long pitching rivalry in the history of the game!

Upon the completion of the two games that determined the infinitesimal outcome, our dueling hurlers, the immortal southpaw Sandy Koufax and the forgotten Bob Hendley, had lowered their respective ERA's to 2.12 and 6.14, respectively. Revisiting their "two-game tourney" statistically evokes memories and names not only of the games, but of a golden era of pitching excellence.

Sandy Koufax's Dodgers were well on their way to a World Series victory the next month over the Minnesota Twins, while Bob Hendley's Cubs were about to complete a record 19th consecutive year as a second-division team. The first game at Chavez Ravine on Thursday, September 9, drew 29,139 delirious fans as Koufax's game-ending strikeout of former batting champ Harvey Kueen not only completed his perfect game, but established a record of 14 strikeouts in a "perfecto" that still stands. The 1-0 triumph over lefty Hendley should not obscure his opponent's own "one hit, no earned runs allowed" masterful complete game performance. In deed, each man had pitched the game of his life, no "left-handed compliment" indeed!

The Cub hurler's revenge before 6,220 curious wanderers into Wrigley Field the following Tuesday was fully taken in a thrilling 2-1 triumph over L.A. and Koufax. Hendley's shutout attempt was marred only by a pinch hit RBI single by future Hall of Famer Don Drysdale, as he rode a two-run homer by future Hall of Famer Billy Williams to victory. Hendley and Koufax had ended their week-long confrontations with a win and a loss apiece, Hendley leading in complete games, Koufax in perfect ones!

The Barry Code asked the question, "Who bested whom?" And the PA confirmed, "gaining in translation" in its accurate computation of traditional pitching stat components, that our pitcher of the most unique week 44 years ago is, in our photographic finish, Mr. Bob Hendley, he of an otherwise most nondescript career (and so sorry, Sandy, still so deserving in defeat of all possible kudos but one!).

Here's how the numbers voted:

	<u>BA</u>	<u>OPS</u>	<u>ERA</u>	<u>PA</u>
Hendley	.096	.284	0.53	.093
Koufax	.100	.300	0.60	.094

P.S. Thanks to Barry Codell's Pitching Average for this "true recounting," with its concurrent meanings of renumbering and remembering

"The Don"