

National League's Best Teams

Chapter Seven

The 1962-66 Los Angeles Dodgers: The Last Best Team Before Divisions

The classic pennant race for each league's championship ended in 1969 when a second round of expansion, leaving both leagues with 12 teams, necessitated the indisputably correct decision to split each league into two divisions—Eastern and Western—with the pennant determined by the winner of a League Championship Series between division winners.

Two teams—the Los Angeles Dodgers and St. Louis Cardinals—won the final six National League pennants decided the old fashioned way, the Dodgers with three (1963, 1965, and 1966) in four years and the Cardinals with three (1964, 1967, and 1968) in five. It could have been four in five years for the Dodgers, who—as happened in 1946 and 1951—ended the 1962 season in a tie for first place only to lose the National League pennant in a best two-of-three playoff, this time to the San Francisco Giants. Both teams, the 1962-66 Los Angeles Dodgers and the 1964-68 St. Louis Cardinals, won the first two of their three World Series, with the first for each establishing their place in historical lore, the Dodgers sweeping the Yankees in 1963 and the Cardinals outlasting the Yankees in seven games in 1964. Both teams' third and final World Series ended in a defeat that seemed a demoralizing coda from which each was slow to recover, the 1966 Dodgers swept by the upstart Baltimore Orioles and the 1968 Cardinals blowing a three games-to-one lead to the Detroit Tigers. Neither the 1962-66 Dodgers nor the 1964-68 Cardinals were a great team, according to me, if for no other reason than that each, in the midst of their three pennants in five years, had at least one anomalous season in which they were not competitive: Los Angeles finishing sixth with a losing record in 1964, and St. Louis finishing seventh with a losing record in 1965 and sixth in 1966.

Both Los Angeles and St. Louis in these years had a single dominating pitcher who was positively awesome, Sandy Koufax for the Dodgers and Bob Gibson for the Cardinals. They seemed perfect on the mound, a combination of unvarnished power and unambiguous artistry. And as great as they were just on the basis of their talent, what made them seem to me (a kid growing up at the time) so impressively unbeatable was each man's triumph of the

will (with no due respect to the fascism that had become associated with those words). Even though the record books show they did occasionally lose a game, you could just tell from Koufax and Gibson's very demeanor, their very presence on the mound, that they refused to lose. You just knew they were going to win when they took the mound, even in a way that more contemporary dominant pitchers I've seen—Roger Clemens and Randy Johnson, for example—could not impress. (Of course, maybe that was just me as an impressionable kid, as opposed to me as a harder-to-impress adult.)

The **1962 to 1966 Los Angeles Dodgers** seemed to be locked most of those years in mortal combat for the National League pennant with the San Francisco Giants. In three tight, tense Dodgers-Giants pennant races in the 1960s, the two teams played themselves to virtually a draw—tying their regular season series in 1962 and 1966 with nine wins each, and the Dodgers holding a two-game edge (ten wins to eight) in 1965, which turned out to be exactly their pennant-winning margin of victory.

The two teams faced off in an epic battle for the pennant in 1962, finishing the 162-game regular season in a tie with 101 wins each. The race seemed to be LA's to lose with a 5½-game lead on August 9, when they went to San Francisco for a three-game series. Losing all three was not helpful to their cause, but the Dodgers had worked the lead back up to 3½ games when the Giants came to town for a four-game series beginning on September 3. Once again, three losses to San Francisco closed the gap considerably, and once again LA rebounded to build a four-game lead with only seven games remaining on the schedule. Losing six of those seven, however, including the last four games of the season, forced the playoff series that ended very badly for the Dodgers in the deciding third game—played in Dodger Stadium—when they blew a 4-2 lead in the ninth inning giving up four runs to lose the game, 6-4, and the pennant to the Giants. Nothing quite as dramatic as the Bobby Thomson home run eleven years before, as the tie-breaking run scored on a walk with the bases loaded and the insurance run came home on an error by second baseman Larry Burright, who had been brought in as a defensive replacement in the seventh inning.

Although they failed to win the pennant, the 1962 Dodgers may have been the best in this team's five-year run that ended up with three pennants, if for no other reason than that Sandy Koufax was lost for most of the remainder of the season on July 17 with circulatory problems in his dynamic left arm that would ultimately force his retirement at the peak of his career in 1966. Koufax was 14-5 at this point in the season, and the Dodgers were in first place by a game over the Giants. (Koufax would return late in the season and suffer two losses, including the first game of the playoffs.) With this being the 1962-66 Dodgers' best offensive year, Maury Wills setting a new stolen base record with 102, and Don Drysdale winning 25 games, Los Angeles was able to maintain its lead over San Francisco until the very end of the regular schedule, although their winning pace slackened after Koufax was sidelined.

The Dodgers rebounded to win the 1963 National League pennant by six games over second-place St. Louis, the Giants finishing eleven games back in third. For the most part, LA was in control the whole way. The bottom dropped out for the Dodgers in 1964, when they fell to an 80-82 record and a sixth-place tie with Pittsburgh. In 1965 and 1966, however, it was the Dodgers and Giants again neck-and-neck to the finish line, with Los Angeles winning both times, the first by two games and the second by 1½.

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1962-66 Los Angeles Dodgers

In 1965, a middling 29-26 record in July and August was enough to keep the Dodgers in first place after a strong start to the season, but a loss on September 15 left Los Angeles in third place, 4½ games behind the Giants with only 16 left to play. In a script reversal from 1962—(LA is not far from Hollywood, remember)—this time it was the Dodgers who came roaring from behind to take the flag. Beginning with a thirteen-game winning streak—including six decided by one run—the Dodgers closed out the season with a 15-1 record to close out the season and grasp the pennant with 97 wins to the Giants' 95. Manager Walter Alston started his top three pitchers—Koufax, Drysdale, and Claude Osteen—in all but two of the final sixteen games, with Drysdale winning all four of his starts, Koufax winning four of five (with a no-decision), and Osteen making five starts, winning one and losing the only game LA lost down the stretch. His loss cost LA the chance to win the pennant with but two games left on the schedule. Of the two games not started by one of those three, one was the season finale after a 3-1 triumph by Koufax had wrapped up the title the day before. If the pennant were still at stake, it would likely have been Drysdale on two days' rest on the last day of the season. Despite Koufax and Osteen starting five times and Drysdale four times in seventeen days, the three between them also started all seven games in the World Series triumph over the Minnesota Twins.

And in 1966, after trailing the Giants and Pirates for most of the season, the Dodgers reeled off 13 wins in 15 games to start September to take a 3½-game lead with (once again) 16 games remaining. Those 13 wins included six against the still-awful expansion New York Mets and the renamed Houston Astros, but also three against the Pirates and one against the Giants—the only team to which the Dodgers lost (twice) during that stretch. Their lead was sufficient to withstand an 8-8 finish to the season, which ended ingloriously for Los Angeles in four straight to the Orioles in the 1966 World Series.

In an almost direct contradiction of the **1949-56 Brooklyn Dodgers**, a dangerous offensive club with good pitching, the 1962-66 Los Angeles Dodgers were distinguished for superior pitching and excellent team speed, which played well in the expanse of their new stadium that opened in 1962. Even with big Frank Howard, a slugger for any era who played right field for the Dodgers from 1960 to 1964, Dodger Stadium was too vast, including in foul territory, to succeed with a conventional offense. Dodger Stadium not only suppressed home runs, but took away many hits. This put a premium on pitching and defense. In Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale, the Dodgers had two of the best pitchers in the game in their rotation and still thought it expedient to trade the powerful Howard, who really was ill-suited for Dodger Stadium and an offense built around speed and situational hitting, for another quality starter, Claude Osteen, without whom (with all due respect to the excellence of Koufax and Drysdale) Los Angeles would not have won either the 1965 or 1966 pennants. (Frank Howard, meanwhile, went on to power-hitting fame with the American League expansion Washington Senators.) The Dodgers also had the league's best relief ace at the time in Ron Perranoski, although in 1966 it was Phil Regan with a 14-1 record, league-leading 21 saves, and a 1.62 earned run average who assumed the role of what we now call "the closer."

From 1963 to 1966, Dodgers pitchers allowed the fewest base runners each year per nine innings of any National League team. They led the league in ERA in each of LA's pennant-winning years. With power pitchers Koufax and Drysdale, opposing batters typically put fewer balls in play against the Dodgers than against any other team; Los Angeles led the league in strikeouts every year but one (1965) between 1962 and 1966.

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1962-66 Los Angeles Dodgers

The Dodgers' pitching compensated for a mediocre offense. Alston managed with the expectation that every game, especially at home, was going to be low-scoring, every game was going to be close, and every run would be important. The Dodgers were second in the league in runs scored to the Giants in 1962, but only sixth when they won the 1963 flag, and eighth in the ten-team league when they won both the 1965 and 1966 pennants. The Dodgers won 37 of the 324 games they played in 1965 and 1966 by blowout margins of five runs or more, accounting for only 11 percent of their total games and 19 percent of their victories. By comparison, the Giants—finishing second both years, but only fourth and fifth in the league in scoring—won 49 games by blowouts, making up 15 percent of their total games and 26 percent of their victories. An offensive juggernaut, these Los Angeles Dodgers assuredly were not. The year this LA team had its most productive offensive—1962—was the year when shortstop Maury Wills and left fielder Tommy Davis had the best year of their careers and center fielder Willie Davis the second best of his, according to the wins above replacement (WAR) metric. And Howard had statistically his best season with the Dodgers in 1962, with 31 homers and 119 runs batted in.

Having little power that put their slugging percentage substantially below the league average every year but 1962, the Dodgers after 1963 required more base runners for each run scored than the league average. They won the 1965 and 1966 pennants requiring nearly 3.1 runners both years to get on base by hit, walk, or hit-by-pitch for each run scored, compared to the league average those years of 2.89 runners on base per run in 1965 and 2.86 in 1966. The stolen base (Maury Wills was a master), situational hitting such as the hit-and-run play (infielder Jim Gilliam was a master), and the sacrifice bunt were staples of Dodgers baseball during this time—advancing runners to set up scoring opportunities. The Dodgers led the league in steals every year from 1962 to 1965 and were second to the Cardinals (who let Lou Brock run wild) in 1966, and they led the league in sacrifice bunts in 1962, 1964, and 1965, and were second in 1963 and 1966. In winning the last two pennants, Alston had the unique advantage of each of his infield regulars being a switch hitter, always enabling him to have a favorable match-up with the pitcher, whether right-handed or left-handed, whenever first baseman Wes Parker, second baseman Jim Lefebvre, shortstop Wills, or third baseman Gilliam came up to bat (although Gilliam was only a part-time regular in 1966).

Walt Alston's 1960s Dodgers probably overachieved by winning three pennants in four years between 1963 and 1966, particularly given the strengths of their hated rivals in San Francisco. Except for 1963, when the Giants were unable to keep up with the Dodgers, either team could have won any of the pennants the other came away with at the end of their close tussles; it could easily have been the **1962 to 1966 San Francisco Giants** with three pennants and the Los Angeles Dodgers with only one during those years—the Giants, not the Dodgers, recognized in the baseball world as the class of the National League.

In a long shot, it might even have been four pennants in five years for the Giants, as they finished fourth, only three games behind in 1964. That three-games-behind outcome, however, was deceiving because the team was really out of contention by mid-September; Philadelphia's epic collapse was the primary cause for San Francisco closing the gap. The Giants began the final month of the season 6½ games out of first and were even further behind—eight games back—with only 14 remaining. Winning nine of their next twelve put San Francisco in a position, if the stars aligned perfectly, to finish the season in a four-way tie for first with Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and St. Louis—this was the only possible outcome for the Giants to have a shot at a pennant through a playoff series that would have involved four

teams—provided they won their final two games of the season, the Cardinals lost theirs, and the Phillies beat the Reds in their last game against each other. As it turned out, perfect alignment was not to be, the Giants playing their part in an imperfect outcome by losing their final two games of the year to the eighth-place Cubs.

The Giants' 1964 season was also notable for manager Alvin Dark, focusing on first baseman Orlando Cepeda in particular, complaining that his Latino and African-American players left something to be desired as far their mental edge in baseball was concerned. Although Dark insisted he was quoted out of context, his reported words were a variation of a refrain heard even to this day that Latino players, in particular, have a suspect work ethic. Needless to say, without Willie Mays and Willie McCovey, who were African-American, and Cepeda and Juan Marichal, who were Latino, the Giants would have been an historical footnote in the 1960s. Dark's other Latino players included shortstop Jose Pagan (weak hitter, not stellar defensively), and outfielders Jesus and Matty Alou, both of whom lost time to injuries.

Dark was replaced in 1965 by Herman Franks, who led the Giants to four consecutive second-place finishes before he decided that retirement looked good. These included the tough 1965 and 1966 losses to the Dodgers in pennant races that were not decided until the final weekend of the season. In 1965, the Giants won seventeen of eighteen games in September, including 14 straight at one point, to take a four-game lead with twelve remaining. San Francisco stalled, however, winning only five of its remaining games, while LA won eleven of twelve to close out the season and snatch the pennant. The next year, the Giants' disappointment was much the same. For most of July and August in 1966, the Giants were either in first place or within a game or two of the top in a three-team race, also involving the Dodgers and Pirates, before a 12-13 month of September did them in. Even so, San Francisco was still in position to—once again—finish the regular season in a tie for first if they could sweep their final-three games in Pittsburgh and the Dodgers lost theirs in Philadelphia. The Giants did their part, but a Dodgers victory on the final day, after they had lost the first two games of the series, decided the pennant once again in LA's favor.

The 1962-66 Giants, especially in retrospect but even at the time, seemed a more imposing team than their direct contemporary 1962-66 Dodgers. This was a team whose core regulars included *five* future Hall of Fame players—Mays, McCovey, Marichal, Cepeda, and Gaylord Perry. (The Dodgers had only two future Hall of Famers—Koufax and Drysdale—among their core regulars.) Of San Francisco's five, however, only Mays and Marichal had best consecutive years including all or most of the years under consideration for this team that qualifies them, according to me, for a century-plus legacy among the NL's 50 best position players and 30 best pitchers since 1901; McCovey and Perry also have century-plus legacies, but for not for this team; and while Cepeda's best consecutive years of 1960 through 1964 did include the majority of years under consideration for this team—including 31 home runs, 97 runs batted in, and a .301 batting average in the year (1964) Manager Dark questioned his work ethic—they were not good enough to confer upon him even a half-century legacy as one of the National League's 30 best position players between 1951 and 2000, at least according to me.

McCovey seemed to have a breakout year in 1963 when, playing left field because Cepeda was on first, he tied Hank Aaron for the league-lead in home runs with 44, but 1964 was a major disappointment as his batting average dropped to .220 and his home run total to

18 in 130 games for the Giants. He started only 28—and played in only 42—of the Giants' final 59 games as San Francisco tried to stay relevant in the pennant race. A debilitating knee injury that sidelined Cepeda for virtually the entire 1965 season gave McCovey his big break, and that season began his best consecutive years that would rate him among the NL's best position players of all time. Perry did not become a fixture in San Francisco's starting rotation until 1966—the first of his best consecutive years through 1970 that establish him as one of the best pitchers in National League history. Indeed, in 1965, he was essentially removed from the Giants' starting rotation by mid-August; 20 of Perry's last 25 appearances were in relief as San Francisco was struggling to hold off LA.

The Giants may have seemed to have a better all-around team because, while the Dodgers had superb pitching to compensate for a mediocre offense, San Francisco had a far more imposing offense *and* their own dominant pitcher in Juan Marichal, who won 18 in 1962 and then had four straight 20-win seasons, including 25 in both 1963 and 1966. The Giants had three of their players in the top five in the league in home runs in 1963 and 1964, and two in the top five in 1962, 1965, and 1966. With a much more powerful line-up, the Giants needed substantially fewer runners on base for each run scored than did the Dodgers every year from 1962 to 1966.

But the Giants were not as potent offensively during these years as a line-up with Mays, Cepeda, McCovey, and third baseman Jim Ray Hart (who hit 31 home runs as a rookie in 1964 and 33 two years later) might suggest. They were the National League's leading team in runs scored in 1962 and finished second in 1963, but otherwise fared no better than fourth in the league. And the Giants' pitching, while quite good (they finished third in the league in fewest runs allowed three straight years from 1964 to 1966), was not in the Dodgers' class. From 1962 to 1966, the Giants scored 9 percent more runs than the Dodgers, but also gave up 11 percent more runs. Coincidentally, both teams outscored their game opponents over these five years by an average of 96 runs per year. The most significant run differentials between the two teams and their game opponents were the Giants with a 43-run advantage over the Dodgers when they won the 1962 pennant that required a three-game playoff to decide, and the Dodgers' 67-run advantage over the Giants when they won the 1966 pennant by only a game-and-a-half in 1966.

San Francisco manager Franks lamented many years later that had he had a decent double-play combination, it would have been San Francisco and not Los Angeles that won the 1965 and 1966 pennants. The Giants *were* last in the league in double plays in 1965, but turned more than did the Dodgers in 1966. In 1966, however, 25 percent of the outs made by the Dodgers were by strikeout, compared to 22 percent for the Giants, so the three more double plays turned by San Francisco is not at all indicative of better infield defense. The Dodgers were first and second in the league in defensive efficiency—percentage of outs made on balls put into play—when they won the 1965 and 1966 pennants; the Giants were third both years.

Indicative perhaps of how close these two teams were, they have exactly the same “players score” by my methodological approach derived from exactly the same parts: each team with three of their core regulars who were the best at their positions for all or the majority of years between 1962 and 1966; three who were among the NL's 10 best position players, five best starting pitchers, or the best reliever in the surrounding decade (1959 to 1968); and two century-plus historical legacy players whose best consecutive years included a majority of the years under consideration here—Koufax and Drysdale for the Dodgers, and

Mays and Marichal for the Giants. The fundamental difference is that, aside from Maury Wills being the league's best shortstop from 1961 to 1965, all of the Dodgers' "best players" were pitchers, while the Giants' best decade and historical legacy players included two position players—Mays and McCovey—and a dominant pitcher, Mr. Marichal.

Despite Cepeda (through 1964), Mays, McCovey, and Tom Haller—the Giants' answer to the Dodgers' Johnny Roseboro behind the plate, both among the NL's three best catchers at the time (the Braves' Joe Torre was the best at the position from 1963 to 1967, according to me)—giving San Francisco a far stronger core of position players than Los Angeles from 1962 to 1966, the Dodgers probably had the overall advantage in the performance of their position players. The seven core position regulars for the 1962-66 Dodgers accounted for 77.5 percent (31) of 40 position years for the team—(eight positions, not including pitcher, times five years)—and 87 percent of the total WAR for LA's position players. The seven core position regulars for the 1962-66 Giants, for their part, accounted for a lower percentage of 40 position years—70 percent (28)—but a much higher 95.6 percent of the total WAR for San Francisco's position players for the five years. Willie Mays alone accounted for 40 percent of the Giants' position players' total WAR, having four consecutive years from 1962 to 1965 with a player value of at least 10 wins above replacement—an achievement equaled only by Honus Wagner (1905-08) and Barry Bonds (2001-04) in modern National League history. What this means is that the players who rounded out LA's starting line-ups, and role players, contributed more to their team's success than did those for San Francisco—not an insignificant fact considering that all three of the Dodgers-Giants pennant races in the 1960s were decided by two games or less.

In this respect, the 1962-66 San Francisco Giants were much like the **1956-60 Milwaukee Braves**: a team with a strong core of position players and some outstanding players among them, but with largely marginal major league talent among the team's remaining position players. Those Braves, however, were a much better team than these Giants.

Those Braves were also a better team than the 1962-66 Los Angeles Dodgers, according to me. They had three century-plus legacy players—Hank Aaron, Eddie Mathews, and Warren Spahn—compared to the Dodgers' two; were more dominant in their time—winning two pennants by blowout margins of eight games; and did not suffer the indignity of a bad season in the midst of their five-year run, as the Dodgers did when they finished sixth with a record under .500 in 1964. That these Dodgers may have overachieved to win three pennants in five years given how closely matched they were with the Giants does not compensate for those Braves possibly underachieving in winning only two pennants in five years for the number of century-plus legacy players they had.

As for the **1964 to 1968 St. Louis Cardinals** . . . The 1964 Cardinals made for a compelling story with their dramatic surge at season's end to overtake the collapsing Philadelphia Phillies: St. Louis was in sixth place with a losing record on the Fourth of July, 7½ games out in third place on September 1, and 6½ games behind in second place with thirteen games remaining on September 20. The Cardinals won ten of those games, including an eight-game winning streak that ended with a three-game sweep of the Phillies that put them, surprisingly (given from where they had started), in command of the race heading into the final weekend. They had a half-game lead over the Cincinnati Reds, were 2½ up on the Phillies, and had the good fortune of playing the dead-last Mets, already with 108 losses, in their last three games.

Losing the first two put them in a tie for first with the Reds, but they prevailed by salvaging the last game of the season while Philadelphia upended Cincinnati.

The pivotal moment for the Cardinals, however, was not in those frenetic final weeks of the season, but at the trade deadline on June 15 when they made what turned out to be one of the most notorious lopsided trades in history, acquiring Lou Brock (and two no-names) from the Chicago Cubs for pitchers Ernie Broglio (whose presumed best years to come never materialized) and Bobby Shantz (whose best years were behind him and would wind up in Philadelphia by the end of the season), and outfielder Doug Clemens (long since forgotten). At the time, the Cardinals had lost ten of twelve and were in eighth place. It was looking like 1964 would be a major disappointment for the Redbirds, after they had finished second to the Dodgers in 1963 with 93 wins, led the league in scoring, and had the best run differential in their games of any National League team. With Brock in the starting line-up, from then until the end of the year, St. Louis was four games better than any other National League team, and also had the best record of any team in the major leagues. Immediately establishing himself as an impact player whose speed and nuisance factor on the bases would bedevil opponents the way Maury Wills did for the Dodgers, this marked the real beginning of Lou Brock's Hall of Fame career; Brock highest single-season player value of his career, as measured by the WAR metric, were in the 103 games he played for St. Louis in 1964.

With an outfield of Brock, Curt Flood, and Mike Shannon; an infield from first to third of Bill White, Julian Javier, Dal Maxvill, and Ken Boyer; catcher Tim McCarver; and a pitching staff headlined by Bob Gibson, the St. Louis Cardinals seemed primed for many years to be in the thick of the pennant race, if not perhaps the league's toughest team to beat. While Boyer, the National League MVP in 1964, and White were aging veterans, Brock, Flood, McCarver, and Gibson were dynamic, in the fast-lane players. But Manager Johnny Keane, having just vanquished the Yankees in the World Series after his improbable pennant run, decided to leave the filled-with-promise Cardinals because of philosophical differences with ownership over the mid-season firing of General Manager Bing Devine to take over as manager of the very team he just beat—the New York Yankees. The Cardinals did not play up to expectations in either 1965 or 1966—finishing seventh and sixth—under new manager Red Schoendienst, primarily because their pitching was decidedly mediocre after Gibson, Boyer's age caught up with him, and White was traded away in 1966. And then—

—Everything turned around. The 1967 and 1968 Cardinals seemed at the time (to me as an impressionable youth) as dominant a team as there could be, running away with the pennant by 10½ games one year and nine the next. Gibson, McCarver, Javier, Brock, Flood, and Shannon, who switched from right field to third base to make room for former Yankee star Roger Maris, were still core players on the Cardinals. In 1967, the Cardinals were tied for first with the Chicago Cubs, of all teams, as late as July 24, but the Cubs were not yet serious contenders and St. Louis had a commanding 8½-game lead by August 6. First baseman Orlando Cepeda, acquired from San Francisco the previous year and having an MVP season, Brock, and Gibson drove the Cardinals' resurgence to the top. Gibson returned from suffering a broken leg in mid-July to win four of five starts in September and three more in the World Series over the Red Sox (playing in their first Fall Classic since 1946).

The Cardinals got off to such a fast start in 1968 that they had an 8½-game lead by the Fourth of July and a 15-game lead on August 10. It didn't matter that they had a losing record the rest of the way (21-25); the National League pennant was easily theirs. It might have mattered, however, that they went into the World Series losing seven of their final

eleven games . . . because—despite another brilliant World Series pitching performance by Gibson—the Cardinals squandered a three-games-to-one lead, losing in seven to the Tigers (playing their first Fall Classic since 1945).

The 1964-68 Cardinals were not a dominant team despite winning the pennant by big margins in 1967 and 1968. The 1967 season was their most dominant, when they won 101 games, led the league in runs scored, and were second in fewest runs allowed. They were only fourth in scoring in 1968, with Cepeda, who had been so phenomenal in 1967, having a very disappointing year at the plate. The Cardinals, leading the league in fewest runs allowed in 1968, dominated the pennant race mostly because Gibson had one of the greatest years ever by a pitcher (22 wins, 9 losses, a microscopic 1.12 ERA), playing a major hand in Major League Baseball deciding to give batters a break by lowering the mound the next season.

For a team that won three pennants in five years, two of them decisively, and seven players who were core regulars all five years, the 1964-68 Cardinals had only one player—Bob Gibson—who was the best at his position (as one of five starting pitchers) or whose best consecutive years at the time made him one of the league’s best players in the surrounding decade or gave him an historical legacy. Gibson’s best consecutive years, from 1964 to 1972, establish him easily among the National League’s ten best pitchers with a century-plus legacy, according to me. His teammates, especially Lou Brock, were good, but not of that stature; for all his accomplishments during these years, Brock was not one of the league’s three best outfielders for any five-year period—which is not in any way an indictment, given the likes of Mays and Aaron and Clemente as his contemporaries—nor was he one of the league’s 10 best position players in the surrounding decade. Ken Boyer may have been the cornerstone position player of the 1964 World Champion Cardinals as their MVP third baseman, but he was at the end of his career and gone by 1966. And Orlando Cepeda may have been the cornerstone position player of the 1967 World Champion Cardinals as their MVP first baseman, but that was his one standout season in only three years with St. Louis. (I do not count Cepeda as a core regular for the 1964-68 Cardinals because of my requirement, explained in *Transparency Annex A*, that a player must have been with the team for at least four years, three of which are years under consideration for his team.)

This Cardinals team reinforces the point I made in NL Chapter Three—“How Important Are Best Players to Achievement?”—that having few “best players” can make even very good teams vulnerable to poor seasons while they are in the midst of winning multiple pennants. Without another player or two playing at the level of Boyer in 1964 or Cepeda in 1967, St. Louis not only could not keep pace with the pennant contenders in 1965 and 1966, but finished in the bottom half of the league standings. Consequently, the **1962-66 Los Angeles Dodgers** and not the 1964-68 St. Louis Cardinals—even though they won the same number of pennants and World Series in the same number of years, and even though they won the last two National League pennants in a unitary league in dominant fashion—were the last “best team” before divisional alignment became a fixture in major league baseball. Moreover, according to me—

—The **1962-66 San Francisco Giants** were also a better team than the 1964-68 Redbirds, even though they won only one pennant (compared to three for St. Louis) and did not score nearly as high in the four “dominance” factors of my methodological approach. The Giants had a far higher “players score” with three players who were the best at their position, three among the best players in the surrounding decade, and two with a century-plus

historical legacy. They reinforce the point, also made in NL Chapter Three, that having many “best players” is not always enough for significant achievement. But having Mays and Marichal in the midst of their best season, and Cepeda and McCovey, was enough to ensure the Giants were always competitive. The Dodgers, with Koufax and Drysdale, just happened to be better. Not by much, but by enough to beat out the Giants twice by two games or less.

5 BEST NATIONAL LEAGUE TEAMS, 1951-1968

	P-WS	W - L %	Ach	Dom	Play	Total
Brooklyn Dodgers, 1949-56	5 - 1	767-466 .622	28	31	37	96
Milwaukee Braves, 1956-60	2 - 1	453-319 .587	26	25	29	80
Los Angeles Dodgers, 1962-66	3 - 2	473-340 .582	26	20	24	70
San Francisco Giants, 1962-66	1 - 0	469-343 .578	16	10	24	50
St. Louis Cardinals, 1964-68	3 - 2	454-354 .562	22	20	14	56

P = Pennant WS = World Series Ach = Achievement Score
 Dom = Dominance Factors Score Play = Players Score Total = Total Score

6 BEST NATIONAL LEAGUE TEAMS, 1901-1968

	P-WS	W - L %	Ach	Dom	Play	Total
Chicago Cubs, 1906-10	4 - 2	530-235 .693	32	60	33	125
Brooklyn Dodgers, 1949-56	5 - 1	767-466 .622	28	31	37	96
St. Louis Cardinals, 1941-46	4 - 3	606-319 .655	32	50	21	103
New York Giants, 1904-08	2 - 1x	487-278 .637	22	40	24	86
New York Giants, 1910-14	3 - 0	478-286 .626	26	45	21	92
New York Giants, 1920-24	4 - 2	461-306 .601	32	25	22	79

x = no World Series in 1904
 P = Pennant WS = World Series Ach = Achievement Score
 Dom = Dominance Factors Score Play = Players Score Total = Total Score

TRANSPARENCY ANNEX

LOS ANGELES DODGERS, 1962-1966

3 Pennants (1963, 1965, 1966)
2 World Series Wins (1963, 1965)

ACHIEVEMENT

1 st place (x 3)	2 nd place (x 2)	3 rd place (x 1)	World Series (x 1)	Score
3 x 3 = 9	1 x 2 = 2	0	2 x 1 = 2	13

ACHIEVEMENT SCORE = 13 / 5 years x 10 = **26**

DOMINANCE

100 Wins	8 Games Ahead	NL1/Runs Scored	NL1/Fewest Runs Allowed	Score
1	0	0	3	4

DOMINANCE SCORE = 4 / 20 (4 x 5 seasons) x 100 = **20**

PLAYERS

CORE REGULARS	WAR 1962-66	BEST at POSITION	Decade 1959-68	2 nd 1/2 20 th C	20 th C +
2B/3B Jim Gilliam, 1953-65	12.4	no	no		
SS Maury Wills, 1960-66	17.5	1961-65	no		
LF Tommy Davis, 1960-66 (-1)	14.0	no	no		
CF Willie Davis, 1961-73	20.6	no	no		
RF Frank Howard, 1960-64	9.0	no	no		
1B/OF Ron Fairly, 1962-68	13.8	no	no		
C John Roseboro, 1958-67	13.6	no	no		
P Sandy Koufax, 1958-66	42.0	1960-66	1961-66	yes	yes
P Don Drysdale, 1957-68	25.4	1957-66	1959-64	yes	yes
P Johnny Podres, 1953-65 (-1)	3.6	no	no		
RP Bob Miller, 1963-67	5.5	no	no		
RP Ron Perranoski, 1961-67	7.9	1963-67	1961-65	no	
TEAM WAR, 1962-66 = 213.9	185.3				
Core WAR= 86.6 % of Team	79.9 / 10	4 / 12 x 10	3 x 1	2 x 2	2 x 3
42.8 Av. Team WAR + 86.6 %	8.0	3.3	3	4	6

PLAYERS SCORE = 8.0 (Base WAR) + 3 (Best at Position) + 13 (NL Best) = **24**

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS, 1962-1966

1 Pennant (1962)
0 World Series Wins

ACHIEVEMENT

1 st place (x 3)	2 nd place (x 2)	3 rd place (x 1)	World Series (x 1)	Score
1 x 3 = 3	2 x 2 = 4	1 x 1 = 1	0	8

ACHIEVEMENT SCORE = 8 / 5 years x 10 = **16**

DOMINANCE

100 Wins	8 Games Ahead	NL1/Runs Scored	NL1/Fewest Runs Allowed	Score
1	0	1	0	2

DOMINANCE SCORE = 2 / 20 (4 x 5 seasons) x 100 = **10**

PLAYERS

CORE REGULARS	WAR 1962-66	BEST at POSITION	Decade 1959-68	2 nd 1/2 20 th C	20 th C +
1B Orlando Cepeda, 1958-64	12.5	1958-64	no		
SS Jose Pagan, 1961-64	2.2	no	no		
3B Jim Ray Hart, 1964-68	14.6	no	no		
3B-IF Jim Davenport, 1958-69	6.6	no	no		
LF-1B Willie McCovey, 1963-71	18.0	s/o	1963-68	^	^
CF Willie Mays, 1951-1971	50.7	1954-66	1959-68	yes	yes
C Tom Haller, 1962-67	15.1	no	no		
P Juan Marichal, 1961-73	36.5	1963-69	1963-68	yes	yes
P Gaylord Perry, 1964-71	11.7	no	no	^^	^^
P/RP Bobby Bolin, 1961-69	10.8	no	no		
P/RP Billy O'Dell, 1960-64	5.3	no	no		
P/RP Ron Herbel, 1964-69	4.3	no	no		
TEAM WAR, 1962-66 = 213.2	188.3				
Core WAR= 88.3 % of Team	80.2 / 10	3.5 / 12 x 10	3 x 1	2 x 2	2 x 3
42.6 Av. Team WAR + 88.3 %	8.0	2.9	3	4	6

^ McCovey has a century-plus legacy for his best consecutive years of 1965 to 1970.

^^ Perry has a century-plus legacy for his best consecutive years of 1966 to 1970.

PLAYERS SCORE = 8.0 (Base WAR) + 3.0 (Best at Position) + 13 (NL Best) = **24**

St. LOUIS CARDINALS, 1964-1968

3 Pennants (1964, 1967, 1968)
2 World Series Wins (1964, 1967)

ACHIEVEMENT

1 st place (x 3)	2 nd place (x 2)	3 rd place (x 1)	World Series (x 1)	Score
3 x 3 = 9	0	0	2 x 1 = 2	11

ACHIEVEMENT SCORE = 11 / 5 years x 10 = **22**

DOMINANCE

100 Wins	8 Games Ahead	NL1/Runs Scored	NL1/Fewest Runs Allowed	Score
1	2	0	1	4

DOMINANCE SCORE = 4 / 20 (4 x 5 seasons) x 100 = **20**

PLAYERS

CORE REGULARS	WAR 1964-68	BEST at POSITION	Decade 1961-70	2 nd 1/2 20 th C	20 th C +
2B Julian Javier, 1960-70	3.5	no	no		
SS Dal Maxvill, 1966-71	4.8	no	no		
LF Lou Brock, 1964-77	21.6	s/o	no		
CF Curt Flood, 1958-69	19.1	no	no		
RF-3B Mike Shannon, 1964-69	7.3	no	no		
C Tim McCarver, 1963-69	15.7	no	no		
P Bob Gibson, 1961-74	34.0	1964-72	1964-70	yes	yes
P Ray Washburn, 1962-69 (-1)	8.6	no	no		
P/RP Nelson Briles, 1965-70	8.7	no	no		
RP Joe Hoerner, 1966-69	4.9	no	no		
TEAM WAR, 1964-68 = 196.5	128.2				
Core WAR= 65.2 % of Team 39.3 Av. Team WAR + 65.2 %	64.9 / 10 6.5	1.5 / 10 x 10 1.5	1x 1 1	1 x 2 2	1 x 3 3

PLAYERS SCORE = 6.5 (Base WAR) + 1.5 (Best at Position) + 6 (NL Best) = **14**

BEST PLAYERS IN SURROUNDING DECADE

(based on best consecutive years, informed by wins above replacement)

1962-66 DODGERS and 1962-66 GIANTS		1964-68 CARDINALS
10 BEST NL POSITION PLAYERS, 1959-68		10 BEST NL POSITION PLAYERS, 1961-70
<i>Willie Mays, OF, 1959-68, SF</i>		Willie Mays, OF, 1961-68
Hank Aaron, OF, 1959-70		Hank Aaron, OF, 1961-70
Ron Santo, 3B, 1963-68		Roberto Clemente, OF, 1964-70
Eddie Mathews, 3B, 1959-63		Ron Santo, 3B, 1963-69
Roberto Clemente, OF, 1964-68		Willie McCovey, 1B, 1965-70
Frank Robinson, 1B-OF, 1959-64		Richie Allen, 3B/OF, 1964-68
<i>Willie McCovey, 1B, 1963-68, SF</i>		Frank Robinson, OF, 1961-65
Richie Allen, 3B/OF, 1964-68		Jimmy Wynn, OF, 1965-70
Ken Boyer, 3B, 1959-64		Pete Rose, 2B-OF, 1965-69
Vada Pinson, OF, 1959-63		Eddie Mathews, 3B, 1961-65
5 BEST NL PITCHERS + BEST RELIEVER, 1959-68		5 BEST NL PITCHERS + BEST RELIEVER, 1961-70
<i>Sandy Koufax, 1961-66, LA</i>		Sandy Koufax, 1961-66
<i>Juan Marichal, 1963-68, SF</i>		<i>Bob Gibson, 1964-70</i>
<i>Don Drysdale, 1959-64, LA</i>		Juan Marichal, 1963-68
Bob Gibson, 1964-68		Gaylord Perry, 1966-70
Jim Maloney, 1963-67		Don Drysdale, 1961-65
<i>Ron Perranoski, RP, 1961-65, LA</i>		Ron Perranoski, RP, 1961-65

BEST AT POSITION

1B	Cepeda-----→McCovey-----→
2B	Mazeroski-----→Morgan-----→(82)
SS	(55) Banks-----→Wills-----→Harrelson-----→
3B	(52) Mathews-----→Santo-----→
OF	(50) Ashburn-----→F.Robinson-----→Clemente-----→Cedeno→(78)
OF	(54) Mays-----→Rose-----→
OF	Aaron-----→Stargell-----→
MP	F.Robinson, OF/1B-→ Allen, 3B/OF-----→Perez, 3B-1B-----→ Gilliams, 3B/2B-----→
C	Bailey-----→Torre-----→Bench-----→(76)
P	(46) Spahn-----→Marichal-----→Carlton-----→(83)
P	(53) Antonelli--→Koufax-----→Jenkins-----→
P	Friend-----→Gibson-----→
P	Drysdale-----→Seaver-----→(79)
P	L.Jackson-----→Perry-----→Sutton-----→(75)
RP	Face-----→Perranoski-----→Carroll-----→
	56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74