

National League's Best Teams

Chapter Eight

The 1972-76 Cincinnati Reds: The Big Red Machine Bears Down on the Bear Cubs

The Cincinnati Reds' "Big Red Machine" of the mid-1970s are widely regarded as one of baseball's best teams ever. And deservedly so. From 1970 to 1976, the Reds finished first in the National League West five times, won four National League pennants, and two World Series. Without discounting the 1970 division title and pennant, the Cincinnati team being considered here is the team that won four division titles, three pennants, and two World Series from 1972 through 1976. Why begin in 1972, when cornerstone players Pete Rose, Johnny Bench, and Tony Perez were outstanding regulars on the 1970 team? Because 1972 heralded the arrival (from a trade with Houston) of Joe Morgan to play second base and the beginning of the transition to other core players on the Reds team that dominated major league baseball in 1975 and 1976, winning back-to-back World Series. Dave Concepcion at shortstop and George Foster, Cesar Geronimo, and Ken Griffey (Sr.) in the outfield were either not with the team or did not play regularly for the Reds until 1973 or 1974.

No other National League team in the twentieth century has as high an achievement score as the **1972 to 1976 Cincinnati Reds** by my methodological approach, which now is adjusted to take account of divisional play. As explained in *Transparency Annex A*, my adjustment is to give an additional point for each pennant won and half a point for having the best record in the league. For accounting purposes, I added these to the first-place score (always worth three points to begin with.) The 1972-1976 Reds and the **1906-10 Chicago Cubs** allow for the perfect comparison because both finished first four times, finished second once, and won two World Series in five years. The difference is that finishing first for the Cubs meant winning the pennant while finishing first for the Reds meant winning their division, which gave them *only the opportunity* to play for the pennant. For example, while the 1906-10 Cubs earned 12 first place points (4 x 3) for their four pennants in five years, the 1972-76 Reds earned 16.5 first place points for their four division titles (4 x 3 = 12), three NL pennants (+ 3 = 15), and three times having the best record in the National League (+ 1.5 = 16.5) in five years.

I'm okay with this because any methodology must acknowledge that finishing first since 1969 is not quite the same as finishing first before then, when first place by definition meant "league pennant." A methodology that tries to account for the advent of divisional play by giving pre-1969 first place/pennant-winning teams an additional point as if they had also won a then-nonexistent division would be unfair to teams in the divisional era that faced an extra challenge (or two, since 1995 and an additional playoff round to account for wild card teams) to winning the pennant. Giving the 1906-10 Cubs four additional points, as if they won the division, for each of their four pennants would potentially undervalue the achievements of the 1972-76 Reds because there is no telling whether those Cubs—great as they were—would also have won four League Championship Series to make it to the World Series. But I also don't want to diminish the importance of finishing first, which is why finishing first is always worth three points, and winning a pennant only one additional point.

After winning their first pennant in twenty-one years in 1961, coming close in 1962 (when they won 98 games), and not being eliminated until the final day of the 1964 season, the Cincinnati Reds finished the 1960s as primarily a middle-of-the-pack National League with good hitting—featuring the likes of Frank Robinson (until he was famously traded away for Milt Pappas following the 1965 season), Vada Pinson, and by the end of the decade the likes of Rose, Perez, Bench, and first baseman Lee May—and power pitching, exemplified by Jim Maloney in the mid-1960s. When rookie manager Sparky Anderson took Cincinnati to the World Series with 102 regular-season wins in 1970, finishing first in the NL West by 14½ games, there were great expectations for the Reds in the years ahead. Those expectations seemed dashed when Cincinnati finished tied for fourth in the West with a losing record in 1971, and many wondered whether the Reds had returned to their norm of mid-pack baseball.

Then came to Cincinnati Joe Morgan to team up with Pete Rose, Johnny Bench, and Tony Perez. The rest is Big Red Machine history:

- In 1972, the Reds won the NL West by 10½ games, defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates to win the pennant, and then became the first victim of the Oakland Athletics on their way to three consecutive World Series championships.
- In 1973, the Reds won their division by a much closer shave of 3½ games over the Dodgers. With 99 victories, they were clearly a far better team than the NL Eastern Division championship New York Mets, who needed only 82 victories to win their division, but such superiority did not save the Reds from the vagaries of a short League Championship Series, the first major upset in the new pennant playoff since divisional alignment.
- Cincinnati's 98 victories in 1974 were fourteen more than the NL Eastern Division champion Pittsburgh Pirates, but unfortunately four fewer than the Los Angeles Dodgers, who took the NL West by that margin.
- The following two years, of course, were when the Reds became known as the Big Red Machine, and when the "Machine" was at its biggest, baddest, and very best: 108 victories in 1975—the third-most in NL history at the time, and the most since the Pirates had won 110 games way back in 1909—a 20-game margin of victory over the Dodgers (and 16 games better than the first place Pirates in the NL East), and a championship over the Boston Red Sox in a seven-game World Series best

Thebestbaseballteams.com
1972-76 Cincinnati Reds

remembered for Carlton Fisk's dramatic extra-inning home run to even the Series in Game Six; and 102 victories and a 10-game margin over the Dodgers in 1976, followed by a sweep of the New York Yankees in the World Series, best remembered for the superb performances of rival catchers Johnny Bench and Thurman Munson.

Notwithstanding four division titles in five years—three times by dominating margins of 10 games or more—Cincinnati did not usually get off to fast starts. In 1972, the Reds not only did not go into first place to stay until June 25, but did not cross the .500 barrier until May 16 in the midst of a nine-game winning streak that set up their season. In 1973, the Reds were in fourth place, 11 games behind the Dodgers as late as June 30, with a 39-37 record and nearly half the season gone, before rallying by winning 24 of 31 games in July to thrust themselves into the pennant race. Only after they won fourteen of sixteen games from August 29 to September 16 did the Reds take command of the NL West, pushing from second place, 4½ games behind, to a 6½-game lead. A 20-19 start to the 1974 season left Cincinnati trailing Los Angeles by nine games on May 23, a deficit the Reds were unable to make up despite an 18-9 surge in August and winning nine of their first fourteen games in September that brought them to within a game-and-a-half of first place with sixteen games left on the schedule. They could not sustain that pace, however, winning only half their remaining games.

Even in the Big Red Machine's signature season of 1975, they did not breach .500 for good until their forty-first game on May 21. After that, the 1975 Reds compiled an 87-34 record to finish the season (that's a .719 winning percentage), with winning streaks of seven, six, ten, nine, and six games. The pivotal moment in the 1975 pennant race came only 25 games into the season, after a sluggish 12-12 start, when Sparky Anderson asked Pete Rose for the good of the team to move from left field to third base, which not only shored up a position of significant weakness, but allowed power-hitting George Foster to become a regular in the outfield alongside center fielder Cesar Geronimo (also acquired in the Morgan trade) and right fielder Ken Griffey (the dad), although Griffey was for the most part platooned with Merv Rettenmund. Fresh off their great 1975 season, the Reds started off the 1976 season strong and went into first place for good on May 29, but it was 20 wins in 29 games in July that put the NL West division away as Anderson watched his team boost its lead to 9½ games with two full months remaining.

The 1972-76 Cincinnati Reds were the most dominant NL team since the **1949-56 Brooklyn Dodgers**, winners of five pennants but only one World Series in eight years. The Dodgers finished second the three other years, twice their fate not sealed until the last day of their season. Both teams dominated three pennant races by going into the final month with virtually insurmountable leads. The Reds began the month of September when they won their blowout division titles in 1972, 1975, and 1976 with leads of seven games or more, and wound up increasing their lead by season's end all three years. For their part, the Dodgers had a lead of at least nine games on September 1 of the 1952, 1953, and 1955 seasons, ultimately winning those pennants by 4½ (they slumped a bit at the end), 13, and 13½ games. The 1972-76 Reds won 100 games twice and missed by one in 1973, when they won the West by only 3½ games over a very strong Los Angeles Dodgers team that would itself go on to some significant achievement. The 1949-56 Dodgers won 100 games only once, with 105 in 1953.

On the field of play, both teams dominated the league primarily by their ability to score runs, and lots of them. Brooklyn led the eight-team National League in scoring six times in eight years between 1949 and 1956; Cincinnati led the league (by now, twelve teams) twice in runs scored—in 1975 and 1976—and was second the first three seasons of their five-year run. If the two teams had a weakness, it was pitching—and both teams actually had pretty good pitching. The 1949-56 Dodgers led the league in fewest runs allowed only once, but were second three times, and third twice. The 1972-76 Reds were the third stingiest National League team in giving up runs three times and were fourth and fifth once. Indicative of their common strengths, the collective player wins above replacement (WAR) for both Brooklyn's Boys of Summer and Cincinnati's Big Red Machine was heavily weighted towards their position players. But Cincinnati's position players dominated their team's collective WAR, accounting for 82 percent of total player value, to an even greater extent than Brooklyn's position players, whose share of the team total was 74 percent.

The 1972-76 Reds dominated the National League with a relentless, variegated offense blending batting prowess (exemplified by most of the line-up), aggressiveness (epitomized by Rose), speed (Morgan was a master in the art of the stolen base), and power (Bench, Morgan, Perez, and Foster). They led the league in scoring in 1975 and 1976, and were second in scoring the first three years of their run. While the league average for percentage of extra base hits from 1972 to 1976 was 26 percent, Cincinnati's was 29 percent. Thirty percent (152) of the Reds' 502 wins over the five years were by blowout margins of five runs or more; 33 percent in 1975 and 1976 when they were truly The Big Red Machine.

In addition to hitting with clout, Cincinnati led the league in stolen bases in each of their division-title seasons, with Morgan finishing second in steals to Lou Brock in 1972 and 1973 and Davey Lopes in 1975 and 1976. For the five years under consideration for this team, the Reds averaged 162 steals per season and were successful in 76 percent of their stolen base attempts; the NL average was 95 steals per season for twelve teams and a success rate of 66 percent. While 1975 was the season the Reds won their most games (108), 1976 was the year they were most dominant offensively, leading the league in batting, on base percentage, slugging percentage, doubles, triples, and home runs, and stolen bases. With 210 base swipes, Cincinnati in 1976 was the first National League team to steal 200 bases since the 1918 Pittsburgh Pirates. (It was only the previous year that the California Angels had become the first major league team to break the 200-steal barrier since 1918, and the Oakland A's set the new big league record with 341 steals in 1976.)

While the Big Red Machine had a deadly efficient offense, their pitching was much less imposing, even pedestrian. Cincinnati's adjusted earned run average—which normalizes ERA to the context of the time and the team's home park—was always around the league average; only in 1975 was it much better. Anderson always had a good starting rotation, but its key members were oft-injured. The Reds' two best starting pitchers during these years—Gary Nolan and Don Gullett (who were two of the best in the league when healthy)—lost substantial time on the disabled list, Nolan for two full years. Of greater significance, however, was that Anderson always made sure to have an excellent corps of relief pitchers to back them up—not just journeyman pitchers used in relief and a bullpen ace, but two or usually three dependable relievers. Anderson was the first manager of a great team to make his bullpen the strength of his pitching staff and the centerpiece of his pitching philosophy.

In the five years from 1972 to 1976, Cincinnati relievers Clay Carroll, Pedro Borbon, Tom Hall, Will McEnaney, and Rawley Eastwick made more than 40 relief appearances in a season fifteen times, accounting for 36 percent of the total player value for pitchers on the Reds' staff as measured by WAR. In 1975, despite the Reds winning 108 games and averaging the third fewest runs in the league by starting pitchers, Anderson allowed his starters to complete only 22 games that year—five less than the next fewest complete games by any major league team, who were the Chicago Cubs with the fourth-worst record in the National League. From the beginning of July till the end of the 1975 season—a total of 85 games—Anderson allowed his starters to go the distance only four times. It was not because they weren't pitching well; his starters had a 42-17 record for a superb .712 winning percentage with a 3.86 ERA during those months while the Reds were winning 59 of their final 85 games. Only one National League team—the Philadelphia Phillies, which had the fourth-best record in the league while finished second in the NL East—averaged fewer innings per start than Cincinnati's 6.1 innings.

Most of his starting pitchers were not fond of Anderson because he was perceived as being too quick with his hook, having very limited patience for pitchers in trouble after the fifth inning. Perhaps he wasn't a good pitchers' manager, but "Captain Hook," as Sparky Anderson came to be known, was astute in his decisions when to remove his starting pitchers. By now, having good relief pitching was recognized as an essential component of successful teams. But the best teams still typically had strong starting rotations anchored by a dominant ace, and while the percentage of complete games had declined from 40 percent in the National League in 1950 to 24 percent by 1970, and percentage of victories that were "saved" by a relief ace trended upward—increasing in the NL from 22 percent in 1950 to 42 percent in 1970—starting pitchers were still expected to be able to finish what they started, unless game circumstances dictated pinch hitting for the pitcher or bringing in a reliever. Anderson turned this concept on its head by his inclination to remove his starting pitcher early in games if his pitcher was not giving him what today is called "the quality start"—defined as pitching at least six innings while allowing no more than three runs.

Retrosheet data available on the website *baseball-reference.com* indicates that until 1977, Cincinnati's starting pitchers under Anderson were consistently well below (which is to say, better than) the league average for starters' ERA, and yet each year—except for 1973 and 1974—they collectively threw fewer innings per start than the league average. With the exception, however, of 1972 for this team, Reds starters collectively were always above the league average in quality starts. In the division-winning years, more than 75 percent of the time Anderson allowed his starter to go at least six innings, it was a quality start. Sparky Anderson, it appears, was ahead of his time in implicitly recognizing the value of the "quality start."

While the Big Red Machine had a superior record of achievement, if for no other reason than the Reds had not only to finish first but to win a League Championship Series to get to the World Series, and were arguably a more dominant team, the Boys of Summer have the superior "players score" in my methodological approach for evaluating the best teams. This is primarily because seven of the 1949-56 Dodgers' twelve core players and pitchers were both the best at their positions and among the NL's 10 best position players or five best starting pitchers in the surrounding decade. For the 1972-76 Reds, five of their six core position players—center fielder Geronimo the lone exception—were the best at their position, three were among the 10 best position players in the surrounding decade, and Clay Carroll

was the league’s best reliever both at the time and for the surrounding decade. I’m inclined, however, to give the 1949-56 Dodgers at best only a marginal advantage in contemporary “best players” because, with four additional teams in the National League by the 1970s, the 1972-76 Reds had 50 percent more players to compete against for best at their positions and best in the decade.

Both of these teams had three position players—but no pitchers—with a National League century-plus legacy for their best consecutive years including all or most of the seasons under consideration for their teams. In my view, however, Cincinnati’s Joe Morgan, Johnny Bench, and Pete Rose trump Brooklyn’s Jackie Robinson, Duke Snider, and Roy Campanella as a collectively stronger core of great players. Taking into consideration each team’s relative achievement, dominance, and their respective player legacies in both contemporary and historical context, there seems little doubt that the 1972-76 Cincinnati Reds were a more successful, more dominant, and all around a better team than the 1949-56 Brooklyn Dodgers.

5 BEST NATIONAL LEAGUE TEAMS, 1951-1976

	D-P-WS	W - L %	Ach	Dom	Play	Total
Cincinnati Reds, 1972-76	4 - 3 - 2	502-300 .626	41	35	32	108
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

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

How does the Big Red Machine measure up to the “bear cubs” of Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance lore—the **1906-10 Chicago Cubs**? In discussing methodology at the beginning of this chapter, I’ve already argued that Cincinnati’s five-year achievement—four division titles, three National League pennants, and two World Series championships—is better than Chicago’s four pennants and two World Series championships in five years by virtue of having to win a playoff series three times to get to the World Series, while the Cubs did not have to face that challenge.

The two teams have a nearly identical “players score,” but the Cubs benefit from less competition for their best players because they played in an eight-team league and the Reds in a twelve-team league. Both teams had six players who were the best at their position, but taking account of expansion, the Reds have the advantage here. The Cubs had four position players and two starting pitchers among the NL’s best in their surrounding decade, while the Reds had just three position players and the league’s best reliever in theirs. But I would consider this a draw, once again because the league had half-again as many teams by the time the Big Red Machine was built. Ultimately, however, I believe the 1972-76 Reds have a clear edge in their core players because they had Morgan, Bench, and Rose in the midst of their best years. The 1906-10 Cubs had only two players with century-plus legacies—Three-Finger Brown and Johnny Evers—and, as I acknowledged in my earlier chapter on this team,

my choice of Evers is likely to be controversial for many, and he barely makes my cut as one of the NL's 50 best position players, based on best consecutive years, since 1901 (at least as of 2010).

Taking account of only achievement and core players, the 1972-76 Cincinnati Reds have the edge over the 1906-10 Chicago Cubs as the best team in National League history through the first three-quarters (and one year) of the twentieth century. Before starting this analysis, I had assumed Cincinnati was the better team, the more dominant team, if for no other reason than the names Morgan, Rose, and Bench. But were these Reds as dominating in their time as the 1906-10 Chicago Cubs were in theirs, and can relative dominance in such different eras really be compared?

The 1972-76 Reds were unquestionably the most dominant team in baseball in their time—twice winning 100 games, three times winning their division by eight games or more, and twice scoring more runs than any other NL team (to repeat what has already been said). Not for nothing were they “The Big Red Machine.” For their part, the 1906-10 Chicago Cubs in five years established an unsurpassed record of dominance for the twentieth century in the National League by winning 100 or more games four times, winning the pennant by at least eight games three times, leading the league in fewest runs allowed four times, and leading the league in runs scored once and finishing second the other four years. Furthermore, while it is true that the bottom-dwellers in the National League during the Cubs' run were worse teams, perhaps even far worse, relative to the norm than they were in the 1970s, the Cubs had to compete against a greater number of very good teams with at least 90 victories than the Reds. Finally, one can argue that the competition overall was better; player talent and skills for sure were superior by any objective measure; and winning 90 games was harder during the Reds' run—and hence Cincinnati's dominance more remarkable—but I don't believe that, relatively speaking (that's relative to their times), this is a fair criticism. It wasn't the Cubs and seven dwarfs. It was the Cubs, and the Giants, and the Pirates—all three, legitimately outstanding teams. And yet, the Chicago Cubs did not merely win four pennants in those years, they dominated.

- The 1906-10 Cubs played 37 percent of their games against teams that lost 90 or more games, compared to 27 percent for the 1972-76 Reds. But Chicago contended against eight other teams with 90 or more victories (that's in an eight-team league) in their five-year run, compared to only seven that Cincinnati faced off against (in a twelve-team league), and only three of those teams (the Dodgers in 1973, 1974, and 1976) were in their same division. Their winning percentage against teams that won 90 or more games was virtually exactly the same—.560 for Chicago (98-77), .559 (57-45) for Cincinnati—but the Cubs played 23 percent of their games against 90-win teams, the Reds only 13 percent. That translates into a combined total of percentage of games played against 90-win teams and winning percentage against them of 789 for the 1906-10 Cubs and a substantially lower 686 for the Big Red Machine.
- The 1906-10 Cubs had a .640 winning percentage in games decided by one-run, much better than the 1972-76 Reds' .566. This might reflect the baseball of their respective eras, where more games in the first decade of the century were low-scoring affairs, but this does not diminish the Cubs' remarkable winning percentage in such tight games. Taking into account a longer 162-game season for Cincinnati, the two teams played a comparable number of games decided by a

single run (251 for the 1972-76 Reds—31 percent of the total games they played—of which they won 142, and 228 for the 1906-10 Cubs—30 percent of their total games—of which they won 146). During their five-year run, the Cubs never had a losing record in one-run games. The Reds had a losing record in one-run games in only one year, 1974, when they also lost the season series to the Dodgers (losing 12 of 18 games), a margin greater than the four games they finished behind Los Angeles in the NL West.

- For the record, the Cubs also had a much higher winning percentage than the Reds in games decided by five runs or more, .750 to .694, but I'm not convinced this is really relevant (even though it was the “dead ball” era)—especially given that the Cubs had far superior pitching and so were much less likely than the Reds' more pedestrian (but nonetheless pretty good) pitching staff to surrender large numbers of runs.
- But the real clincher for me in favor of those Cubs being a better team than the Bench-Morgan-Rose Reds is that the 1906-10 Chicago Cubs had it all in their time—a dynamic multifaceted offense, superb pitching, and excellent defense—while the 1972-76 Cincinnati Reds were primarily offensively driven, with an excellent bullpen. The Cubs' supremacy in all facets of the game is reflected in the huge differential between runs scored and runs allowed. In five years, the Reds outscored their game opponents by an average of 179 runs per season; the Cubs, during their five-year run, outscored opposing teams by an average of 226 runs. But the true testament to how dominating the 1906-10 Cubs were is the following: they outscored their game opposition—which included two perennial 90-plus-win teams in the Giants and Pirates—by 53 percent; the Big Red Machine may have rolled over their competition, but scored only 29 percent more runs than their game opponents. Chicago's combination of offense and pitching/defense was unmatched by any other National League team in the twentieth century.

And so, I am sorry to say, these are the saddest of possible words for the Big Red Machine to have to hear, “Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance.” Oh, and “Three-Finger” Brown.

6 BEST NATIONAL LEAGUE TEAMS, 1901-1980

	D-P- WS	W - L %	Ach	Dom	Play	Total
Chicago Cubs, 1906-10	4 - 2	530-235 .693	32	60	33	125
Cincinnati Reds, 1972-76	4 - 3 - 2	502-300 .626	41	35	32	108
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

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

CINCINNATI REDS, 1972-1976

4 NL Western Division Titles (1972, 1973, 1975, 1976)
3 Pennants (1972, 1975, 1976)
2 World Series Wins (1975, 1976)

ACHIEVEMENT

1 st place (x 3)	2 nd place (x 2)	3 rd place (x 1)	World Series (x 1)	Score
4 x 3 = 12	1 x 2 = 2	0	2 x 1 = 2	
+ 3 pennants = 3				
+ 3 NL1 (x .5) = 1.5				
16.5	2	0	2	20.5

ACHIEVEMENT SCORE = 20.5 / 5 years x 10 = **41**

DOMINANCE

100 Wins	8 Games Ahead	NL1/Runs Scored	NL1/Fewest Runs Allowed	Score
2	3	2	0	7

DOMINANCE SCORE = 7 / 20 (4 x 5 seasons) x 100 = **35**

PLAYERS

CORE REGULARS	WAR 1972-76	BEST at POSITION	Decade 1969-78	2 nd 1/2 20 th C	20 th C +
1B Tony Perez, 1972-76 *	18.2	MPR, 1969-74	*		
2B Joe Morgan, 1972-79	51.0	1965-82	1971-77	yes	yes
SS Dave Concepcion, 1972-85	15.5	1973-81	no		
OF-3B Pete Rose, 1967-78 **	31.5	OF, 1967-74**	1969-76	yes	yes
CF Cesar Geronimo, 1972-80	10.8	no	no		
C Johnny Bench, 1968-80	32.1	1968-76	1969-75	yes	yes
P Gary Nolan, 1967-76 (-2)	9.0	no	no		
P Don Gullett, 1970-76	9.0	no	no		
P Jack Billingham, 1972-77	3.3	no	no		
P Fred Norman, 1973-79	6.1	no	no		
RP Clay Carroll, 1968-75	4.5	1968-75	1970-74	no	
RP Pedro Borbon, 1972-78	4.5	no	no		
TEAM WAR, 1972-76 = 221.3	195.5				
Core WAR= 88.3 % of Team	83.4 / 10	6 / 12 x 10	4 x 1	3 x 2	3 x 3
44.3 Av. Team WAR + 88.3 %	8.3	5.0	4	6	9

* Perez began his career with Cincinnati in 1965 at 3B, shifting to 1B in 1972. Also one of NL's 10 best position players of decade for best years of 1969-73.

** Rose began his career with Cincinnati in 1963 at 2B, shifting to OF in 1967 and 3B in 1975. Also NL's best Multi-Position Regular (3B-1B) from 1975 to 1981.

PLAYERS SCORE = 8.3 (Base WAR) + 5 (Best at Position) + 19 (NL Best) = **32.3**

BEST PLAYERS IN SURROUNDING DECADE

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

1972-76 REDS		
	10 BEST NL POSITION PLAYERS, 1969-78	
	<i>Joe Morgan, 2B, 1971-77</i>	
	Mike Schmidt, 3B, 1974-78	
	<i>Johnny Bench, C, 1969-75</i>	
	<i>Pete Rose, OF-3B, 1969-76</i>	
	Cesar Cedeno, OF, 1972-76	
	Bobby Bonds, OF, 1969-73	
	Willie Stargell, OF-1B, 1971-75	
	Tony Perez, 3B-1B, 1969-73 *	* Only two of Perez best years with 1972-76 Reds
	Ron Cey, 3B, 1974-78	
	Ted Simmons, C, 1973-78	
	5 BEST NL PITCHERS + BEST RELIEVER, 1969-78	
	Tom Seaver, 1969-77	
	Phil Niekro, 1971-78	
	Bob Gibson, 1969-73	
	Steve Carlton, 1969-74	
	Don Sutton, 1971-77	
	<i>Clay Carroll, RP, 1970-74</i>	

BEST AT POSITION

1B	(65) McCovey-----→Garvey-----→Hernandez-----→(86)
2B	(65) Morgan-----→-----→
SS	(66) Harrelson-----→Concepcion-----→Smith-----→(89)
3B	(64) Santo-----→Schmidt-----→(87)
OF	(66) Clemente-----→Cedeno-----→Dawson-----→
OF	Rose-----→Foster-----→Raines-----→(87)
OF	Stargell-----→Parker-----→Murphy-----→
MP	Perez, 3B-1B-----→Rose, 3B-1B-----→Guerrero----→(87)
C	Bench-----→Carter-----→(86)
P	(64) Gibson-----→Rogers-----→
P	(66) Perry-----→Sutton-----→Richard-----→Valenzuela-----→(87)
P	Seaver-----→Ryan-----→(87)
P	Jenkins-----→P.Niekro-----→Soto-----→
P	Carlton-----→
RP	Carroll-----→Sutter-----→L.Smith----→(87)
	67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85