

# DID YOU KNOW...?

## What Major League Baseball team holds the modern record for the most runs scored in a single game?

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Well, it's spring again. Somehow, it was an underwhelming transition. I always expect bright sunshine, mild temperatures, and outdoorsy things to do.

And I never get them. It's like winter said something along the lines of, "I'm not done yet! Wait your turn!"

Heavy sigh. You'd think that by my age I'd know better.

What I do know is trivia. How about this week's assortment? Coming right up!

Did you know ...

... you may suffer from ophidiophobia? I do. It's a fear of snakes. (Crawly reptiles have always bothered me.)

... the birth of a member of the British royal family helped spur interest in astrology? When Princess Margaret (1930-2002) was born, the Sunday Express newspaper asked an astrologer to predict what the newborn princess could hope for "in the stars." The subsequent piece was a hit, and the newspaper began printing regular astrological predictions about things going on in the world. (The stars foretold it.)

... a patent was taken out in 1876 for a mustache shield? Invented by Virgil A. Gates (1828-1908), the shield was designed to be worn over the upper lip and mustache to prevent that hairy lip from interfering with eating and drinking. It resembled more than anything else a pair of eyeglasses for the lip. (And it made the wearer look pretty silly, too.)

... a Roman poet was able to prevent having his land taxed? The great poet Vergil (born Publius Vergilius Maro, 70 BC-19 BC), author of The Aeneid, is recorded as having held a funeral for a fly. The funeral was complete with pallbearers and a lengthy eulogy, but it was not held for "artistic expression." By burying a fly on the land surrounding his private home, Vergil was able to turn his home into a cemetery – which, at that time in Rome, was tax-exempt. (Sticking it to the Man ... a time-honored tradition.)

... an Academy Award™ winning movie was almost not made? In 1954, United Artists optioned the script for a film by Paddy Chayefsky (1923-1981), about a middle-aged butcher and a teacher who fall in love, called Marty. Cast in the lead role was actor Ernest Borgnine (1917-2012), but when Borgnine showed up for the first day of filming, he discovered that the sets had not been built. The film was not intended to be shot at all, he learned, because the studio had optioned it as a tax write-off. The plan was to cancel production and then attribute salaries, sets, costumes, and other expenses to it as a failed project for tax reasons. They learned rather quickly, however, that the tax write-off wouldn't work unless the film was actually produced, and the movie went on to earn four Oscars – Best Actor for Borgnine, Best Adapted Writing for Chayefsky, Best Director for Delbert Mann (1920-2007), and Best Picture for 1955. (Irony. Rather ironic, eh?)

... a Major League Baseball modern-era record for runs scored in a game was set in 2007? On August 22, 2007, the Texas Rangers played the Baltimore Orioles at Camden Yards in Baltimore. At first things were definitely going the Orioles' way, as they took a 3-0 lead into the fourth inning. Texas grabbed the lead that inning, scoring five runs. Then, in the sixth inning, the bottom fell out as far as Baltimore was concerned. The Rangers scored nine runs in the sixth, ten runs in the eighth, and another six in the ninth to destroy Baltimore, 30-3. Texas recorded a team-record 29 hits in the game as well. Additional trivia note: To add insult to injury, the record-setting game was the first half of a doubleheader. The Rangers won the nightcap as well, 9-7. By the way, the all-time record for runs scored in an MLB game was set in 1897, when the Chicago Colts annihilated the Louisville Colonels by a score of 36-7 on June 29. (A couple of real pitchers' duels there, eh?)

... the saying, "Close but no cigar," has a basis in fact? In the early years of the 20th Century, carnivals offered prizes for contests of skill such as shooting, and among the prizes were cigars. If the person playing the game fell short of the target, the barker running the game would shout out the phrase. Over time, people began using the phrase to refer to anything that was a near-miss. (Kind of like this column sometimes; close, but no cigar. Good thing I don't smoke.)

... rats are empathetic? Studies have shown that rats will help a cage mate stuck in a trap, even if there is a tempting pile of treats nearby. Rats who were studied were seen to spend their time helping their trapped fellow, then sharing the treats. (Not so dirty rats, wouldn't you say?)

... Hawaii moves about four inches closer to Japan each year? The reason, of course, is the motion of the Earth's tectonic plates. (So in maybe ten million years Hawaiians will have to go through Japanese customs, or something.)

... Canada almost renamed their Northwest Territories? In 1996, the nation considered changing the name of the Northwest Territories and asked citizens for their input in the matter. Many aboriginal names were considered, but the name that came in second place overall was "Bob." Fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on your point of view), the debate on changing the names was set aside before "Bob" or any other name was put to an official vote.

Now ... you know!



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