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Posted on Sun, Aug. 15, 2010

Halladay's perfect game put Phillies atop NL list

By Rich Westcott
For The Inquirer

Although they came nearly a half-century apart, the perfect games pitched by Jim Bunning and Roy Halladay gave the Phillies a special place in baseball's record book. They made the Phils the only team in the National League with two pitchers who have hurled such masterpieces.

Since home plate and the pitching mound were moved 60 feet, 6 inches apart in 1893, there have been just 18 complete-game perfectos in the major leagues. Three pitchers from the New York Yankees, and two each from the Chicago White Sox, Cleveland Indians (including one by Neshaminy High School graduate Len Barker), and Oakland Athletics have performed this feat in the American League.

Perfect games, of course, are one of the rarest events in baseball. By comparison, there have been 15 unassisted triple plays recorded, but nearly 700 players have hit for the cycle.



HARRY HARRIS / Associated Press

Jim Bunning strikes out John Stephenson, pinch-hitter for the New York Mets, for the final out of his perfect game on Father's Day in 1964. Gus Triandos is the catcher. The Phillies beat the Mets, 6-0.

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Halladay, plus another near-perfecto by Armando Galarraga that was ruined by an umpire's erroneous call.

In terms of total no-hitters, the 2010 season has been especially productive. To date, there have been five complete games in which the opposition went without a hit. That total has been surpassed by one in just five other seasons - 1908, 1915, 1969, 1990, and 1991.

The sudden rash of no-hitters doesn't surprise Bunning, who along with Nolan Ryan, Cy Young, Tom Hughes, and Randy Johnson is just one of five pitchers in baseball history to have thrown a no-hitter in each league.

Bunning pitched the major leagues' first regular-season perfect game in 42 years with the Phillies in 1964, beating the New York Mets at Shea Stadium on Father's Day. The feat was considered so unusual that he became a national celebrity and appeared on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Six years earlier in 1958, he had thrown a no-hitter with the Detroit Tigers against the Boston Red Sox, retiring Ted Williams for the final out.

"Either the pitchers are better or the hitters are worse," the Hall of Fame hurler said about the abundance of recent no-hitters. "My gut feeling is that the pitching is ahead of the hitting.

"The lineups from top to bottom are just not as tough as they used to be. In most lineups, although the Phillies are an exception, there are three or four hitters that a pitcher really has to contend with, not seven or eight like there used to be."

Any theories on why this is?

"I think it could be that teams concentrate more on scouting pitchers than they do on scouting hitters," Bunning said during the Phillies Alumni Weekend a few days ago.

Bunning, currently a U.S senator from Kentucky, is retiring at the end of his current term after serving a dozen years in Washington in the Senate and, before that, six terms as a congressman.

As a lawmaker, he has accomplished something even rarer than a perfect game. He is the only major-league athlete-turned politician to serve in both houses of Congress. (A conservative Republican, he attracted considerable attention earlier this year for single-handedly blocking - albeit briefly - the extension of unemployment benefits, asserting that there was inadequate funding.)

Bunning met Halladay for the first time during the Alumni Weekend, but there had been prior contact.

When Halladay threw his perfect game against the Marlins in May in Florida, Bunning watched the end of the game on television. Afterward, he sent a baseball to the Phillies pitcher.

"From somebody who knows what it feels like," he wrote on the ball. "Congratulations."

Later, he told Halladay, "Once a century. I got the one from the 20th, and you got the one from the 21st."

Bunning struck out 10 in his game. Halladay fanned 11. When discussing Halladay, Bunning said that "he's the best pitcher in baseball. All his pitches have movement. Everything he throws is right around the plate."

Phillies pitchers have fired 10 no-hitters, including one in 1885, when the mound stood 50 feet from home plate. The Phils have been no-hit in 17 games, the most of any team in the big leagues.

Before they became Phillies, current pitchers Roy Oswalt and Brad Lidge were part of an unusual no-hitter in 2003 while playing with the Houston Astros against the New York Yankees. Oswalt allowed no hits in the first inning, but left the game with an injury. Subsequently, five other hurlers, including Lidge, held the Yanks hitless, the first game they had gone without a hit in 45 years.

As Bunning once said, "A no-hitter is a freaky thing. You can't plan it. It's not something you try to do. It just happens."

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Rich Westcott is the author of 21 books, including *No-Hitters*, which chronicles all hitless games pitched between 1893 and 1999, and was coauthored with the former Inquirer baseball writer, the late Allen Lewis.

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Galihad

Posted 08:55 AM, 08/15/2010

No pitcher has no hit the Phillies since Bob Forshe in 1978. That no-no is disputable as Dave Johnson hit a clean double that the hometown scorer ruled an error. The Tampa Bay Rays are the kings of getting no hit.

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SyddBarrett

Posted 09:43 AM, 08/15/2010

and joe blanton is the king of getting hit,...in the first inning

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road515

Posted 10:15 AM, 08/15/2010

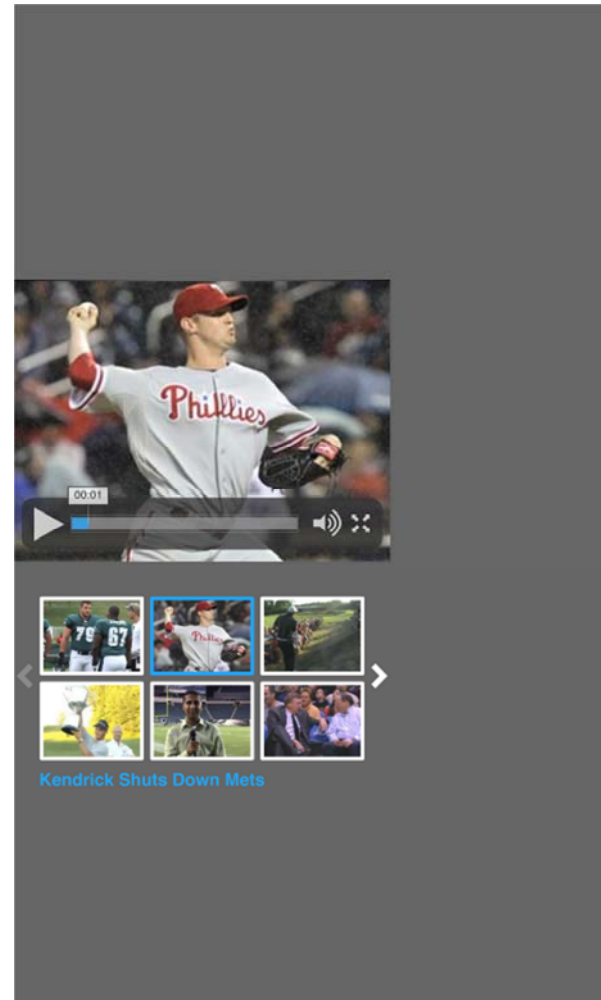
I think the abdominal strain Blanton had before the season started screwed him up this year. It would be nice if Joe B. came back next year toned + conditioned, ala Ryan Howard a couple years ago. Then, Blanton could reach his full potential of an avg. of 2/3 innings more per game, and .75 shaved off his ERA from this year.

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robinlupe

Posted 11:43 AM, 08/15/2010

Terry Mulholland gets too little attention. In August of 1990 he pitched a no hitter at the Vet, I saw it. A Charlie Hayes throw nulled the first baseman off the bag, but they immediately doubled him on the next play, ironically when Mulholland was



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pitcher, it's not something Philadelphia Newspapers is proud to be in that heralded company!

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eaglephanatic Posted 01:31 PM, 08/15/2010
Bunning is admired for his pitching and politics.

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TBear Posted 08:18 PM, 08/15/2010
While I still admire Bunning's baseball achievements, he stained his political reputation by trying to block the extension funding for Unemployment Compensation. This, of course after eight pain filled years of watching "W" sell our country, piecemeal, to Communist China.

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vamendoza Posted 12:54 AM, 08/16/2010
Didn't Hideo Nomo also pitch no-hitters in each league?

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PhillyPhan4for4 Posted 04:49 AM, 08/16/2010
"stained his political reputation by trying to block the extension of funding for unemployment compensation"??? ... agreed! shame on jim bunning for recognizing that at some point my daughter is actually going to have to pay back all of the money we continue to dole out.

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