This Day in History… November 4, 1955

Death of Cy Young

On November 4, 1955, baseball legend Cy Young died in Newcomerstown, Ohio. He left behind records that still define a pitcher's workload and a career that spanned baseball's early major-league era.

Born Denton True Young on March 29, 1867, in Gilmore, Ohio, he was the oldest of five children. His family called him Dent. He attended school through sixth grade, then left to help on the family farm. Baseball was part of his life from an early age. As a boy and teenager, he played on local teams as a pitcher and second baseman.



Young stamp from the Legends of Baseball Issue

In 1888, Young pitched for a semi-professional team in Carrollton, Ohio. In 1889, he played for teams in Leesburg and New Athens. The next year, he signed with Canton's minor-league team. His fastball impressed the scouts. One story says that his pitches knocked boards off the grandstand, leading someone to say it looked as if a cyclone had struck. Reporters began calling him "Cyclone Young," soon shortened to "Cy." He played for Canton for 14 weeks, winning 15 games and losing 15.

The Cleveland Spiders signed Young in 1890. On August 6, he made his major-league debut against the Chicago Colts. He allowed three hits and led Cleveland to an 8–1 win. The following season, he recorded the first of 16 seasons with at least 20 victories. In 1897, he threw his first no-hitter, against the Cincinnati Reds. The scoring of that game was disputed, and Young himself believed he had allowed one hit.



Stamp honoring the first World Series game in 1903.

Young's best season by wins came in 1892, when he won 36 games. He reached 30 victories in five seasons. His durability stood out in an era when starting pitchers often worked through games instead of turning the ball over to a bullpen. Young regularly pitched complete games and was still active in his forties. His career covered major changes in the sport, including an increase in the distance between the pitching mound and home plate.

In 1899, Cleveland owner Frank Robison transferred Young and other players to the St. Louis Perfectos, later known as the Cardinals. Robison owned both clubs. Young played two seasons in St. Louis and developed a lasting partnership with catcher Lou Criger. In 1901, when the new American League declared itself a major league, Young joined the Boston Americans, later known as the Red Sox. That year, he won 33 games and led the league in wins, strikeouts, and earned-run average, earning the league's pitching Triple Crown.

Young helped Boston win the first modern World Series in 1903. He pitched in four games and won two as Boston defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates. The next year, he threw a perfect game against the Philadelphia Athletics, retiring all 27 batters. It was one of three no-hitters in his career. His perfect game came during a stretch of 25⅓ consecutive hitless innings, a major-league record. He threw his third no-hitter in 1908, at age 41.



In 1902, Young served as a pitching coach at Harvard.

Young spent his final seasons with Cleveland and Boston, retiring after the 1911 season. His last victory came on September 22, and he lost his final game in October. Across 22 major-league seasons, he won 511 games, started 815, completed 749, and pitched 7,356 innings. All four totals remain major-league records.

After baseball, Young returned to farming and took on other work. He also managed the Cleveland Green Sox, a minor-league team. In 1937, he was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Young died at age 88. The Cy Young Award was created in his honor in 1956. For its first 11 seasons, one award went to the top pitcher in the major leagues. Since 1967, one pitcher in each league has received the honor.

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