

Al Benton, "Longevity"

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Some pitchers had longer careers.

Many pitchers had more successful careers.

But no pitcher accomplished what 41-year-old John Allen "Al" Benton was able to do on July 2, 1952.

Only five days after being purchased by the Boston Red Sox from the San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast League, the Noble, Oklahoma native becomes the only pitcher in baseball history to pitch to both Babe Ruth and Mickey Mantle.

Appearing in the 745th game of his career (including 433 at the major league level) the 41-year-old Benton relieves 37-year-old Red Sox starter Sid Hudson with runners at first and second with two outs in the seventh inning ... he strikes out first baseman Joe Collins to end the inning and then retires the Yankees in the eighth and ninth innings to pick up the first save of the season and the 61st of his career ... batting fifth, the 20-year-old Mantle will go 0-1 against the venerable Benton.



In his 14th and final season in the major leagues, Benton appears in 24 games for the Red Sox in 1952... Benton will pitch one more season, appearing in 50 games for the San Diego Padres in 1953 before retiring at the age of 42 ... his 1952 Topps card (No. 374) is worth \$275 in near-mint condition.

As a 23-year-old rookie with the Philadelphia Athletics in 1934, Benton appears in five games against the Yankees, including four starts ... Benton goes 2-2 against the Yankees with a 2.19 ERA, allowing only 29 hits in 37 2/3 innings ... in Benton's three complete games against New York that season, Ruth is 1-8 (.125).

Benton pitches 14 seasons in the majors, all in the American League, with the Philadelphia Athletics (1934-35), Detroit Tigers (1938-42, 1945-48), Cleveland Indians (1949-50) and Boston Red Sox (1952) ... the 6'4" right-hander compiles a 98-88 career record with a 3.66 ERA, 58 complete games (including 10 shutouts) and 66 saves.

With the Detroit Tigers in 1940, Benton leads the American League with 17 saves ... in 1941, he is 15-6 for the Tigers with a 2.97 ERA (second-best in the AL) and finishes 19th in MVP voting ... Benton is selected to the American League All-Star team in 1941 and 1942.

Following two years serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II, Benton quickly returns to form for Detroit in 1945, posting a 13-8 mark, finishing second (to teammate Hal Newhouser) in the American League with a career-best 2.02 ERA and 23rd in MVP balloting.

On January 6, 1953, the Boston' Red assigned Benton to the San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast on an out-right basis ... the move is made at Benton's request, because he lives in that area of California and expresses a desire to "finish up" near home.

Boston Red Sox at New York Yankees
July 2, 1952

Al Benton Hero As Red Sox Win

Boston					New York				
	AB	H	O	A		AB	H	O	A
DiM'gio, cf	5	3	2	0	Woodl'g, lf	3	1	2	1
Gernert, lb	4	1	11	1	Collins, lb	4	0	7	0
Steph'ns, ss	4	2	3	2	Bauer, rf	4	2	2	0
Kell, 3b	1	0	0	0	Berra, c	4	0	5	0
Lipon, 3b	3	0	0	1	Mantle, cf	4	1	4	0
Evers, lf	4	2	2	0	Brown 3b	4	0	1	3
Wilson, rf	4	1	3	0	M'D'ald 2b	3	0	5	0
Lepcio, 2b	4	2	1	3	Rizzuto, ss	3	0	1	4
White, c	0	0	0	0	bMize	1	0	0	0
Wilber, s	4	0	4	0	Lopat, p	1	0	0	0
Hudson, p	3	0	6	3	Hogue, p	0	0	0	0
Benton, p	1	0	1	0	aCerv	1	1	0	0
					M'Don'ld, p	0	0	0	0
					Sain p	1	1	0	0
Totals	37	11	27	10	Totals	33	6	27	8

a--Singled for Hogue in 6th.
b--Filed out for Rizzuto in 9th.
Boston 000 005 600--5
New York 000 002 200--4
R--DiMaggio, Gernert, Stephens, Lipon, Evers, Woodling, Mantle, Brown, Cerv. E--Wilson, Brown. RBI--Evers 2, Lipon, Wilber, Woodling, Collins, McDougald, 2B --Lepcio, Gernert, Bauer, 3B -- Woodling. DP--Hudson, Stephens and Lopat; Woodling and McDougald. LB--Boston 8, New York 4. BB--Off Hudson 2, Lopat 2, McDonald 1. SO--Hudson 3, Lopat 2. HO--Hudson 6 in 6 2-3, Benton 0 in 2 1-3, Lopat 7 in 5 (pitched to six batters in 6th), Hogue 0 in 1, McDonald 1 in 1, Sain 3 in 2. WP--Hudson (6-5), LP--Lopat (5-5). U--Hurley, Napp, Robb. T--2:35. A--20,514.