

## Academic Forum 33 (2015–16)

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### Biographical Sketch

Dr. Margarita Peraza-Rugeley is an Assistant Professor of Spanish in the Department of English, Foreign Languages and Philosophy at Henderson State University. Her scholarly interests center on colonial Latin-American literature from New Spain, specifically the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Using the case of the Spanish colonies, she explores the birth of national identities in hybrid cultures. Another scholarly interest is the genre of Latin American colonialist narratives by modern-day female authors who situate their plots in the colonial period. In 2013, she published *Llámenme «el mexicano»: Los almanques y otras obras de Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora* (Peter Lang,). She also has published short stories. During the summer of 2013, she spent time in Seoul's National University and, in summer 2014, in Kyungpook National University, both in South Korea. <https://www.facebook.com/StringPoet/>

## The Best Players in New York Mets History

**Fred Worth, Ph.D.**  
**Professor of Mathematics**

**Abstract** - In this paper, we will look at the players who had the best careers as members of the New York Mets. We will also list the best players who played at least one game for the Mets.

Who was the best fill in the blank of all time? To have any reasonable chance to answer that question, one must have criteria. I almost said "objective" criteria, but that is not necessary. "Best Mets of All Time" could mean "the ones I liked the most regardless of their performance." If that is the criterion, Jerry Grote has a chance to be the starting catcher. If "Best Mets of All Time" means most powerful hitters then Grote will not get into the game without buying a ticket.

For this paper, I will construct two separate rosters with 25 players each. The first list will be "best players as Mets." "Best players" will focus primarily on offensive performance using statistics such as on-base-plus-slugging (OPS) and measures of power, such as home runs (HR) and home run percentage (HR%). The second list will be "best players in major league baseball history who played at least one game for the Mets."

For the first list, I needed to decide how much someone had to play for the Mets to be eligible for my All-Time Mets team. Since the Mets only came into existence in 1962 and had not had

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the most successful history, they do not have many players with long tenures with the club. For hitters, I started thinking 1600 plate appearances might be a reasonable criterion. That would be the equivalent of three seasons as a regular player. I began to rethink that criterion as overly generous but found that only about 50 players in Mets history reached that threshold. So 1600 plate appearances are the minimum. For pitchers, I needed to come up with two different criteria, one for those who primarily started and one for those who primarily relieved. For starters, I decided to go with 600 innings pitched. For relievers, 150 appearances were the cutoff. I chose those since the offensive criterion was roughly the equivalent of three full seasons and these would be the corresponding numbers for pitchers.

When two players are close in ability, I will typically lean toward the one who had a longer career with the Mets. I will also, occasionally, use subjective criteria when things are close.

### All-Time Mets Team

#### Catcher - Mike Piazza and Todd Hundley

	OPS	PA	AB	HR	RBI	ISO	AVG
Mike Piazza	.931	3413	3023	200	601	.257	.300
Todd Hundley	.773	2762	2425	121	385	.202	.244
Gary Carter	.731	2448	2176	89	349	.163	.249
John Stearns	.716	3080	2679	46	312	.116	.259
Ron Hodges	.663	1683	1426	19	147	.082	.240
Jerry Grote	.650	4335	3881	35	357	.073	.256

Except for shortstop, no other position will come close to having such a lopsided choice for the starting position. Mike Piazza has the second most plate appearances as a catcher but leads in virtually every other category. His OPS is more than 20% higher than Todd Hundley's second place total. The second and third ranked catchers in home runs combined for only ten more than Piazza. His isolated slugging percentage is more than 27% higher than Hundley's second place total. If we want to go to subjective criteria, Piazza also ranks high, hitting a game-winning home run in the first game played in New York after the 9-11 attacks.

For the backup position, Todd Hundley is the obvious, though not glamorous, choice over Gary Carter. However, we will hear from Carter later.

#### First Base - Keith Hernandez and John Olerud

	OPS	PA	AB	HR	RBI	ISO	AVG
John Olerud	.926	2018	1662	63	291	.185	.315
Carlos Delgado	.857	2023	1754	104	339	.239	.267
Keith Hernandez	.816	3684	3164	80	468	.132	.297
Dave Magadan	.778	1888	1575	15	202	.096	.291
Ike Davis	.767	1741	1512	68	224	.192	.241
Todd Zeile	.753	1631	1423	41	176	.146	.259
John Milner	.741	1803	1566	62	221	.166	.241
Ed Kranepool	.699	5373	4865	109	557	.117	.263

First base presents a real problem. Keith Hernandez was solid for a long time. However, his numbers are not as strong as those of John Olerud and Carlos Delgado. Defensively Hernandez

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has an edge, and I want to pick him because of some of my favorite Mets memories. The one I WANT to pick is Ed Kranepool, but that would be silly.

So, yes, I am going to let the intangibles hold sway here and pick Keith Hernandez as the starter and John Olerud as a backup. No, Carlos Delgado would not be a bad choice. However, I cannot leave Hernandez out.

#### Second Base - Edgardo Alfonzo and Daniel Murphy

	OPS	PA	AB	HR	RBI	ISO	AVG
Edgardo Alfonzo	.829	2302	1997	73	291	.174	.287
Jeff Kent	.782	1631	1496	58	228	.180	.276
Daniel Murphy	.742	2489	2324	42	273	.130	.287
Gregg Jefferies	.732	1757	1598	36	186	.131	.272
Ron Hunt	.723	1887	1683	20	127	.097	.282
Wally Backman	.696	2704	2369	7	165	.061	.283
Felix Millan	.663	2954	2677	8	182	.059	.278
Ken Boswell	.656	2236	2006	29	179	.093	.251
Doug Flynn	.575	1969	1855	5	141	.063	.240

Edgardo Alfonzo's numbers make his choice as a starter a fairly clear decision. Jeff Kent and Daniel Murphy present a tougher choice at backup. Murphy played longer; Kent hit for more power. Murphy's heroics in the 2015 playoffs tip the scales in his favor.

#### Shortstop - Jose Reyes and Bud Harrelson

	OPS	PA	AB	HR	RBI	ISO	AVG
Jose Reyes	.789	4611	4233	79	409	.150	.294
Kevin Elster	.631	1765	1584	34	174	.119	.224
Bud Harrelson	.611	5083	4390	6	242	.053	.234
Rafael Santana	.607	1632	1514	8	113	.062	.248
Rey Ordonez	.594	3216	2937	8	260	.059	.245

Jose Reyes as a starter is the clearest decision of all of the position slots. He leads in nearly everything by a wide margin. If we included triples and stolen bases, his dominance would be even more obvious.

For the backup slot, it is more “least undeserving” rather than “most deserving.” Kevin Elster hit for more power than any of the others, but we will give Bud Harrelson some credit for his longevity and his role in three championship teams (one as a coach) and two world championships (one as a coach) and tab him for the second slot.

#### Third Base - David Wright and Howard Johnson

	OPS	PA	AB	HR	RBI	ISO	AVG
David Wright	.869	6704	5859	235	956	.194	.298
Robin Ventura	.828	1771	1513	77	265	.208	.260
Howard Johnson	.814	4181	3618	185	586	.217	.254
Edgardo Alfonzo	.795	2147	1900	47	247	.133	.296
Wayne Garrett	.691	3361	2817	55	295	.106	.237
Hubie Brooks	.682	2213	2043	28	219	.093	.272

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Third base was a troublesome position for the Mets for many years. We were regularly told how many men had played third in the Mets history, none with any distinction. That finally changed with the arrival of Howard Johnson in the mid-1980s. Johnson hit for power and ran well, putting together three 30 home run/30 steals seasons. However, David Wright is at the top of nearly every offensive category in Mets history. He has become the face of the franchise. He will not be elected to the Hall of Fame, but we would be surprised if David Wright does not join the list of numbers retired by the Mets.

#### Left Field - Cleon Jones and Kevin McReynolds

	OPS	PA	AB	HR	RBI	ISO	AVG
Cliff Floyd	.832	1884	1643	81	273	.210	.268
Kevin McReynolds	.790	3218	2910	122	456	.188	.272
Steve Henderson	.783	2029	1800	35	227	.137	.287
Cleon Jones	.781	3609	3228	79	424	.136	.291
George Foster	.728	2610	2389	99	361	.170	.252

In left field, longevity helped me skip over OPS leader Cliff Floyd. Moreover, sentimentality helped me choose Cleon Jones. Jones was my favorite Met when I was a kid. He was the offensive star of the 1969 Miracle Mets. I wrote a chapter about him in a book that was published about that team. I just had to pick Cleon Jones. Kevin McReynolds is the backup. Never spectacular, but always steady, McReynolds was good for power, average, defense, base stealing. A team full of guys like him would regularly contend.

#### Center Field - Carlos Beltran and Tommie Agee

	OPS	PA	AB	HR	RBI	ISO	AVG
Carlos Beltran	.864	3221	2780	134	493	.219	.279
Lee Mazzilli	.766	2023	1753	39	193	.131	.273
Lenny Dykstra	.763	1908	1686	30	153	.135	.278
Tommie Agee	.748	2687	2416	82	265	.158	.262
Mookie Wilson	.706	3892	3646	51	297	.115	.275

Carlos Beltran is a clear choice for the starting slot, having the highest numbers in everything but PA and AB. However, choosing the backup is a difficult choice. All four were involved in world championship teams. If smiling were a criterion, Mookie Wilson would be the runaway choice. If it were tobacco chewing, Lenny Dykstra would be in the hall of fame. Tommie Agee gets the nod for being a slightly more productive offensive player (HR and RBI) and a spectacular defensive outfielder (see game three of the 1969 World Series). However, any of the other three would be solid contributors.

#### Right Field - Darryl Strawberry and Rusty Staub

	OPS	PA	AB	HR	RBI	ISO	AVG
Darryl Strawberry	.878	4549	3903	252	733	.257	.263
Rusty Staub	.790	2318	2004	63	305	.152	.275
Joel Youngblood	.759	1619	1449	31	175	.135	.280
Ron Swoboda	.720	1666	1471	42	204	.137	.251

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The fewest players from which to choose but there are two solid choices. Darryl Strawberry put up some of the best power numbers in Mets history. Had he not become close friends with cocaine, his numbers, and Mets career, would both have been significantly extended.

Rusty Staub was one of the steadiest players ever to wear a Mets uniform. Never spectacular, but always productive in his two stints with the Mets. He looked more like a chef (which he is) than a ballplayer but had a long career

#### **Starting Pitchers - Tom Seaver, Jerry Koosman, Dwight Gooden, Al Leiter and John Matlack**

	IP*	W	L	ERA	SO	H/9 IP
Tom Seaver	3045.1	198	124	2.57	2541	7.18
Jerry Koosman	2544.2	140	137	3.09	1799	8.07
Dwight Gooden	2169.2	157	85	3.10	1875	7.87
Ron Darling	1620	99	70	3.50	1148	8.18
Sid Fernandez	1584.2	98	78	3.14	1449	6.63
Jon Matlack	1448	82	81	3.03	1023	8.15
Al Leiter	1360	95	67	3.42	1106	8.09
Craig Swan	1230.2	59	71	3.72	671	8.71
Bobby Jones	1215.2	74	56	4.13	714	9.29
David Cone	1209.1	81	51	3.13	1172	7.52
Jon Niese	1068.1	61	61	3.91	826	9.55
Tom Glavine	1005.1	61	56	3.97	516	9.46
Al Jackson	980	43	80	4.26	561	9.49
Steve Trachsel	956.1	66	59	4.09	580	9.10
Jack Fisher	932	38	73	4.12	475	9.54
Mike Pelfrey	896.1	50	54	4.36	506	9.93
Rick Reed	888.2	59	36	3.66	590	8.79
Gary Gentry	789	41	42	3.56	563	7.61
Bob Ojeda	764	51	40	3.12	459	8.13
Pat Zachry	741.2	41	46	3.63	391	8.96
Ed Lynch	730.1	38	40	3.82	259	10.04
Jim McAndrew	729	36	49	3.54	408	8.20
Johan Santana	717	46	34	3.18	607	8.26
Dillon Gee	679.2	40	37	4.03	489	8.93
R.A. Dickey	616.2	39	28	2.95	468	8.16
Pete Falcone	607.2	26	37	3.91	379	8.89
Ray Sadecki	601	30	25	3.35	380	8.46
* a couple of pitchers who qualified were omitted since all or almost all of their appearances as Mets were in relief						

The first three are obvious choices. Tom Seaver may be the best pitcher of his generation. Jerry Koosman was not quite as good as Seaver, but he was never a big drop-off either. Dwight Gooden was great for a while, good for a lot longer. He is another Hall of Fame career derailed by cocaine.

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The other two spots are tougher to choose with nine people (Ron Darling, Sid Fernandez, Jon Matlack, Al Leiter, David Cone, Rick Reed, Bob Ojeda, Johan Santana, R.A. Dickey) looking like reasonable choices. I could pick R.A. Dickey since he is the only one I have met and the only one to win a Cy Young Award as a Met. I could pick Johan Santana for throwing the only no-hitter in Mets history (yes, Beltran's ball was fair, but the umpire called it foul).

I am going to go with Al Leiter in the fourth spot because he was the ace for several years while the Mets were very competitive around the turn of the century. Moreover, for the last spot, I will go with Jon Matlack. Matlack missed most of the glory years of the Mets, though he was instrumental in the 1973 World Series run. However, he was a strong pitcher for some years on some fairly weak teams.

#### **Relief Pitchers - John Franco, Tug McGraw, Jesse Orosco, Billy Wagner**

	G*	W	L	ERA	SO	IP	S
John Franco	695	48	56	3.10	592	702.2	276
Pedro Feliciano	484	22	21	3.33	350	383.2	4
Jesse Orosco	372	47	47	2.73	506	595.2	107
Tug McGraw	361	47	55	3.17	618	792.2	86
Armando Benitez	333	18	14	2.70	456	347	160
Bobby Parnell	329	20	28	3.78	293	331.1	37
Aaron Heilman	305	22	33	4.24	395	450.1	9
Jeff Innis	288	10	20	3.05	192	360	5
Turk Wendell	285	22	14	3.34	259	312.2	10
Roger McDowell	280	33	29	3.13	228	468.1	84
Ron Taylor	269	21	21	3.04	197	361	49
Doug Sisk	263	17	16	3.10	163	412.1	33
Dennis Cook	255	25	13	3.86	234	226	6
Skip Lockwood	227	24	36	2.80	368	379.2	65
Neil Allen	223	25	40	3.54	285	381.2	69
Randy Myers	185	17	13	2.74	264	240	56
Bob Apodaca	184	16	25	2.86	197	362	26
Billy Wagner	183	5	5	2.37	230	189.2	101
David Weathers	180	12	12	3.22	161	198.2	7
Terry Leach	176	24	9	3.11	194	387.2	7
Jeury Familia	169	4	7	2.42	177	178.1	49
Ed Lynch	167	38	40	3.82	259	730.1	4
Francisco Rodriguez	165	9	10	3.05	186	168	83
Danny Frisella	158	24	26	3.08	296	354	24

\* some pitchers with more than 150 games were not considered since they were primarily starters

Because of the changing usage of relief pitchers over the years, simply looking at games or saves or wins or even ERA is not a sure-fire way to pick the best. So for these picks, I looked first at longevity paired with success as a closer. John Franco is one of the most prolific relief pitchers of all-time, so he is an obvious first choice. Tug McGraw and Jesse Orosco were both vital components of many Mets teams including a world championship for each. Lastly, I

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chose Billy Wagner because, though only for a relatively short time, he was simply dominant as a closer, compiling 101 saves in less than 200 games with a very tidy ERA.

#### All-Time Team of Players Who Played at Least One Game with the Mets

This list will have no justifications given. That is because either the justification was given above or, in most cases, the words "Hall of Fame" are attached to the player's name.

<b>1st Base</b>	<b>Years with Mets</b>	<b>AVG</b>	<b>SLG</b>	<b>OPS</b>	<b>HR</b>	<b>AB</b>
Carlos Delgado	2006-2009	.280	.546	.929	473	7283
Eddie Murray	1992-1993	.287	.476	.836	504	11336
John Olerud	1997-1999	.295	.465	.863	255	7592

<b>2nd Base</b>	<b>Years with Mets</b>	<b>AVG</b>	<b>SLG</b>	<b>OPS</b>	<b>HR</b>	<b>AB</b>
Jeff Kent	1992-1996	.290	.500	.855	377	8498
Roberto Alomar	2002-2003	.300	.443	.814	210	9073

<b>3rd Base</b>	<b>Years with Mets</b>	<b>AVG</b>	<b>SLG</b>	<b>OPS</b>	<b>HR</b>	<b>AB</b>
David Wright	2004-2015	.298	.494	.871	230	5707
Ken Boyer	1966-1967	.287	.462	.810	282	7455

<b>Shortstop</b>	<b>Years with Mets</b>	<b>AVG</b>	<b>SLG</b>	<b>OPS</b>	<b>HR</b>	<b>AB</b>
Jose Reyes	2003-2011	.291	.435	.776	111	6087
Tony Fernandez	1992-1993	.288	.399	.746	94	7911

<b>Catcher</b>	<b>Years with Mets</b>	<b>AVG</b>	<b>SLG</b>	<b>OPS</b>	<b>HR</b>	<b>AB</b>
Mike Piazza	1998-2005	.308	.545	.922	427	6911
Yogi Berra	1965	.285	.482	.830	358	7555
Gary Carter	1985-1989	.262	.439	.773	324	7971

<b>Outfield</b>	<b>Years with Mets</b>	<b>AVG</b>	<b>SLG</b>	<b>OPS</b>	<b>HR</b>	<b>AB</b>
Willie Mays	1972-1973	.302	.557	.941	660	10881
Duke Snider	1963	.295	.540	.919	407	7161
Gary Sheffield	2009	.292	.514	.907	509	9217
Rickey Henderson	1998-2000	.279	.419	.820	297	10961
Carlos Beltran	2005-2011	.281	.491	.847	373	8271
Darryl Strawberry	1983-1990	.259	.505	.862	335	5418

<b>Starting Pitcher</b>	<b>Years with Mets</b>	<b>IP</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>PCT</b>	<b>ERA</b>	<b>SO</b>	<b>ShO</b>
Tom Seaver	1967-1977, 1983	4782.2	311	205	.603	2.86	3640	61
Warren Spahn	1965	5245.2	363	245	.597	3.08	2583	63
Pedro Martinez	2005-2008	2827.1	219	100	.687	2.93	3154	17
Nolan Ryan	1966-1971	5386	324	292	.526	3.19	5714	61
Tom Glavine	2003-2007	4413.1	305	203	.600	3.54	2607	25

<b>Relief Pitcher</b>	<b>Years with Mets</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>ERA</b>
John Franco	1990-2001, 2003-2004	1119	90	87	424	2.89
Billy Wagner	2006-2009	853	47	40	422	2.31
Jeff Reardon	1979-1981	880	73	77	367	3.16
Tug McGraw	1965-1974	824	96	92	180	3.14

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Jesse Orosco	1979, 1981-1987, 1999-2000	1252	87	80	144	3.16
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### Acknowledgment

All data were obtained from Lee Sinin's "Complete Baseball Encyclopedia."

### Biographical Sketch

Fred Worth received his B.S. in Mathematics from Evangel College in Springfield, Missouri in 1982. He received his M.S. in Applied Mathematics in 1987 and his Ph.D. in Mathematics in 1991 from the University of Missouri at Rolla. He has presented papers at meetings of the American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America. He has also given some workshops at home school conventions. He is a member of SABR (The Society for American Baseball Research), hence the inspiration for this paper. He has been teaching at Henderson State University since August 1991. He is a lifelong Mets fan. He hates the Yankees.

### Quick Wit

#### Novelist Matthew Quick talks about teachers, humor, Hollywood, and his new book, *Love May Fail*

**Michael Ray Taylor, M.F.A.**  
**Professor of Communication**

*Love May Fail*  
By Matthew Quick  
Harper  
400 pages  
\$25.99

*Note: This interview was originally published June 15, 2015, in Chapter16.org, the website of Humanities Tennessee, a nonprofit agency sponsoring literary events and providing free reviews to Tennessee newspapers.*

In Matthew Quick's new novel, *Love May Fail*, Portia Kane wonders whether people really "go back and thank their teachers years later, when they're no longer handicapped by youth and ignorance, when they figure out just how much their teachers did for them." For the rest of the novel, the sixth from the author of *The Silver Linings Playbook*, she does exactly that: thank an influential high-school teacher who has fallen on hard times.

Within the Matthew Quick universe, it's a given that pupil and teacher alike are fundamentally damaged—she by a failed marriage and difficult childhood, he by a savage classroom attack that ended his career—and that they will help each other toward some form of redemption. Quick's work resonates with damage and redemption, delivered in a humorous and disarmingly frank prose style that fans—and filmmakers—adore, prompting *The Hollywood Reporter* to name him one of the 25 Most Powerful Authors in the film industry. In advance of his appearance at Parnassus Books in Nashville, Quick answered questions via email:

**Taylor:** You're a former high-school teacher yourself. Do you ever miss the classroom and daily contact with students and their struggles?

**Matthew Quick:** I do miss working with young people, mostly because they're still excited and hopeful and eager to live life. We adults usually have accrued more hits, more damage, and as a result we tend to be less open to possibility. Being around young people keeps you young at heart—it's true. I particularly miss coaching. I do not miss interacting with parents. And public-school politics are enough to make even the best of us pessimistic. If you care, teaching