

BASEBALL HISTORY

by
Terry Cullen



Member, Society For American Baseball Research

Amazing Indians of '54 Were Never Out of a Ballgame

In 1954, after three straight second-place finishes behind the mighty New York Yankees, the Cleveland Indians finally broke through to claim the American pennant. Despite their brilliant season-long effort, they did not shake free of the Yankees until reeling off an 11-game winning streak that ran from September 8th until September 20th.

When the dust finally settled, the Bronx Bombers had notched 103 victories – more regular season wins than any of their 1949 – 1953 World Championship teams had. But in the end it was the Tribe with their 111 – 43 record that stood on the top of the mountain.

Recently I had the pleasure of speaking at length with the defensive standout of the 1954 Indians, shortstop and New Orleans native George “Bo” Strickland, a very amiable gentleman. Amongst many topics that were discussed, George stated that one of his strongest memories of that season was that the Cleveland players felt that they were never out of any ballgame. Well, I don’t know whether any major league team ever reached such heights, but the 1954 Indians came amazingly close, as the table below illustrates:

1954 Cleveland Indians Were 32 – 13 in One-Run Games			
Margin of Victory		Margin of Defeat	
Cleveland Won By	Number of Times	Cleveland Lost By	Number of Times
1 run	32	1 run	13
2 runs	16	2 runs	6
3 runs	25	3 runs	11
4 runs	8	4 runs	4
5 runs	10	5 runs	4
6 runs	8	6 runs	2
7 runs	4	7 runs	1
8 runs	3	8 runs	1
9 runs	1	9 runs	1
10 runs	1	10 runs	1
11 runs	2	11 runs	1
12 runs	1	12 runs	0

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- *In 115 games decided by 4 runs or less, the Indians boasted a record of 81 – 34 (.704).*
- *In games decided by 5 runs or more they were 30 – 9 (.769).*
- *In 154 games the Tribe lost by 5 runs or more only 9 times.*
- *Two of those nine defeats were in the first week of the season.*
- *There were two periods of 35 games each (April 24 – June 3 and August 20 through the end of the season) in which Cleveland never lost a game by more than 3 runs.*
- *Only once all year did they suffer a double-digit defeat, an 11 – 0 whitewashing by the archrival Yankees on June 25th.*
- *Only once all year did they lose as many as 4 games in a row, July 9th – 11th on the road in Chicago.*
- *The Indians held only a ½ game lead at the All-Star break despite a 56 – 27 ledger.*
- *Cleveland steamrolled the opposition in the second half with a 55 – 16 record. Twelve of the sixteen defeats were by 3 runs or less.*

Despite their staggering success in the regular season, the Indians were swept in the 1954 World Series by the upstart New York Giants. The New Yorkers were led by Hall of Famer Willie Mays, pinch hitter deluxe Dusty Rhodes, and a strong performance by the Giants pitching staff.

And yes, the Indians were never out of any game; they lost each game by 4 runs or less.

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