

## **The 2018 Red Sox Compiled a Record Breaking Regular Season**

*Is this team better than the former-record holding 1912 team?*

By PJ Montezuma

The 2018 Boston Red Sox finished the regular season Sunday September 30 with a franchise-record 108 wins and 54 losses on the back of a productive offense and frequently strong pitching performances. The only Red Sox team to come close to the numbers of the 2018 squad was the 1912 team, who won 105 games and lost 47 games during their 154-game season.

The 2018 season began with the Red Sox tying the 1946 team for the franchise's best start through 20 games (17 wins and three losses), and no other team in franchise history had had a better record through 98 games (going into the All-Star break in July). The team was at a league-best record of 68-30 and with a winning percentage of .694. Here, too, the numbers for the 1912 side are almost identical: This record through the first 98 games of the season was one game better than the 1912 record of 67-31.

The team finished the season with the fourth-highest winning percentage (.667) in team history and the highest since the 1946 team finished 104-50 (.675). Their season-long dominance made them the only team in the league not to have lost four straight games at any point, matching the 1903 and 2013 squads. On top of having the best record in all of the league, the Red Sox also led all of baseball with a .268 average, .339 OBP, .453 slugging percentage. Alongside that, their 876 runs scored and 355 doubles were also the most in the majors.

The 1912 team had eerily similar stats as the five mentioned above about the 2018 team. The 1912 team had a batting average of .277, the fourth highest BA in the league, which led them to the league's best record 105-47 (.691). Their .355 OBP, second highest in the league, and .380 slugging percentage, fourth in the league, are both close to the numbers that the 2018 team finished with. The 1912 team finished their regular season with 799 runs scored, second in the league, was followed up by the fact that this team also led all of the majors with 269 doubles.

### **Hitting:**

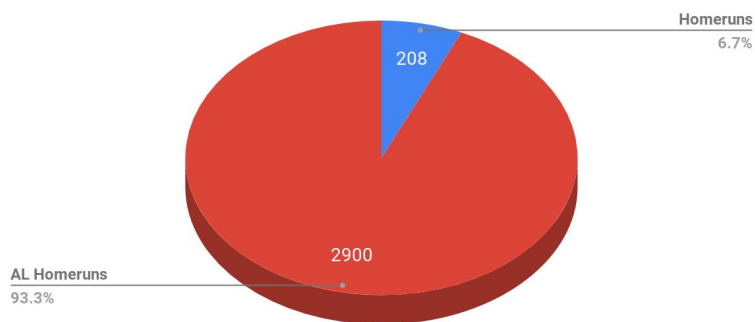
The offense of the 1912 team was led by Hall of Fame outfielder Tris Speaker, who would be named the league MVP that season with a .383 batting average. The 2018 offense was led by outfielder and MVP contender Mookie Betts, with a .346 batting average.

Betts' 2018 season is similar to Speaker's 1912 season in that both were MVP-caliber and cemented their superstar status in the MLB. Both were outfielders, and both usually batted at the number 8 spot, until this season where Betts became the leadoff hitter. Speaker and the

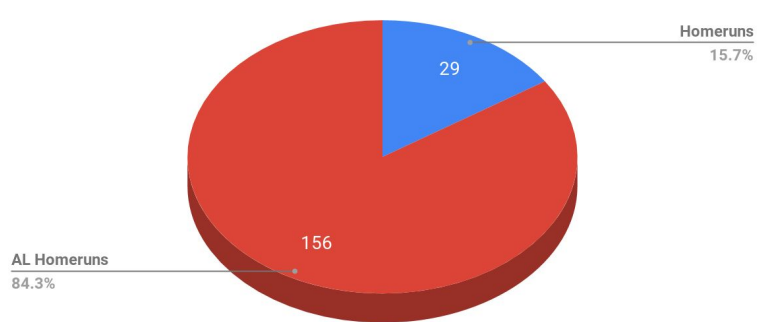
1912 Sox were playing during the Dead Ball Era, so whereas pitching numbers can look absurdly high to current fans both individual and team batting numbers look surprisingly low to people who only know the modern era. Speaker drove in 10 home runs and 90 RBIs. Betts scored 32 home runs and drove in 80 runs.

Nonetheless, team-to-league comparisons can help assess the relative strengths of the two sides. Additionally, a quirk of fate means that for home games, at least, the comparisons have the added advantage that the same park, with essentially the same playing dimensions, was involved: 1912 being the year Fenway Park opened. No other 100-plus-year team-to-team comparison enjoys this statistical advantage as even Wrigley Field (opened in 1914) saw some significant alterations through the beginning of World War II.

**2018 Red Sox Home Runs**



**1912 Red Sox Home Runs**



102 out of the 208 homeruns the 2018 Red Sox hit this season were at Fenway Park. The 208 home runs was the seventh-most in franchise history, followed up with their 592 extra base hits which were the most in the league and third-ever in franchise history.

## Pitching:

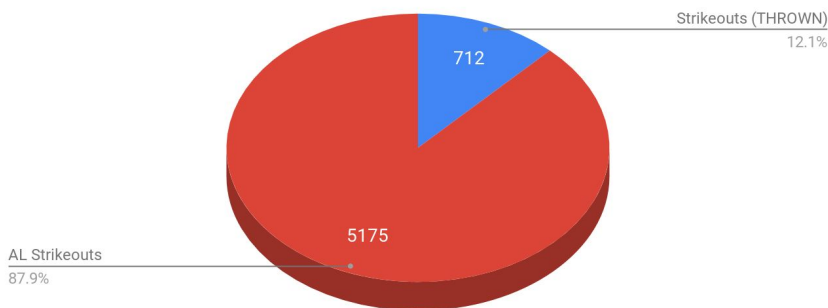
The use of pitchers has changed significantly since 1912, so one stat that separates the two clubs is the number of pitchers with least 10 wins at the break. The 2018 side had four pitchers to have reached that mark: Eduardo Rodriguez (11), Rick Porcello (11), David Price (10), and Chris Sale (10). 2018 closer Craig Kimbrel, occupying a job that had yet to be invented in 1912, had recorded 30 saves by the break, also the most in Red Sox history for a closer at that stage of the season.

By the end of the regular season, Rodriguez, Porcello, Price and Sale had combined for 58 wins, with Porcello leading the way with 17 wins. The top four pitchers on the 1912 team, by contrast, combined for 89 wins, with Smoky Joe Wood leading the club with 34 wins.

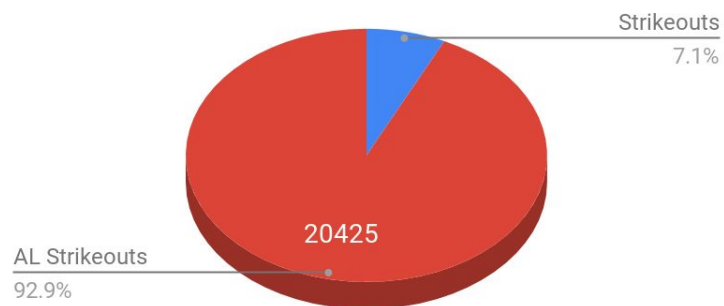
Wood pitched in 43 games in 1912, starting 38 of them and pitching 35 complete games while recording 10 shutouts and earning an ERA of 1.91. He pitched over 344 innings racking up a total of 258 strikeouts. His 344 innings pitched were 68.1 more than their number two starter, Buck O'Brien, who also had 143 fewer strikeouts than Wood. In 2018 Red Sox ace Chris Sale finished the 2018 season with a 12-4 record earned over 27 games. Sale had an ERA of 2.11 and struck out 237 batters while pitching 158 innings. Although Sale was third out of all the Red Sox pitchers total innings pitched, trailing Porcello and Price, he led the starters in strikeouts and also allowed the fewest home runs (11 compared to Wood's 2).

As with hitting, player-to-player comparisons for pitchers can be deceptive, but on a strikeout-to-strikeout comparison, the 1912 team was significantly more efficient than the 2018 version:

### 1912 Red Sox Strikeouts



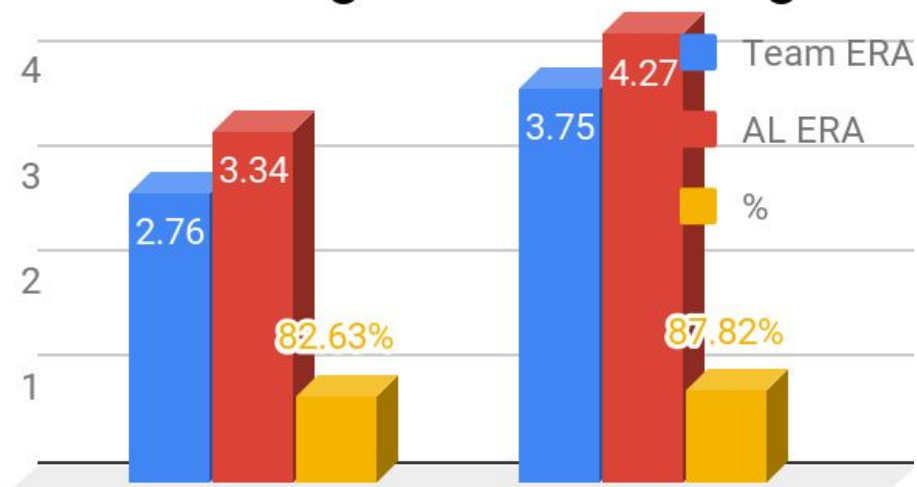
### 2018 Red Sox Strikeouts



However, this comparison only tells part of the story, as the difference in pitching and hitting strategies between the two eras means that strikeouts are not as significant a part of the pitcher's arsenal in 2018 as they were in 1912.

Here, too, 1912 team beats out the 2018 version. Both teams had an ERA significantly below the league average, but the side led by Wood was more than 5 percentage points better relative

## 1912 Pitching vs 2018 Pitching

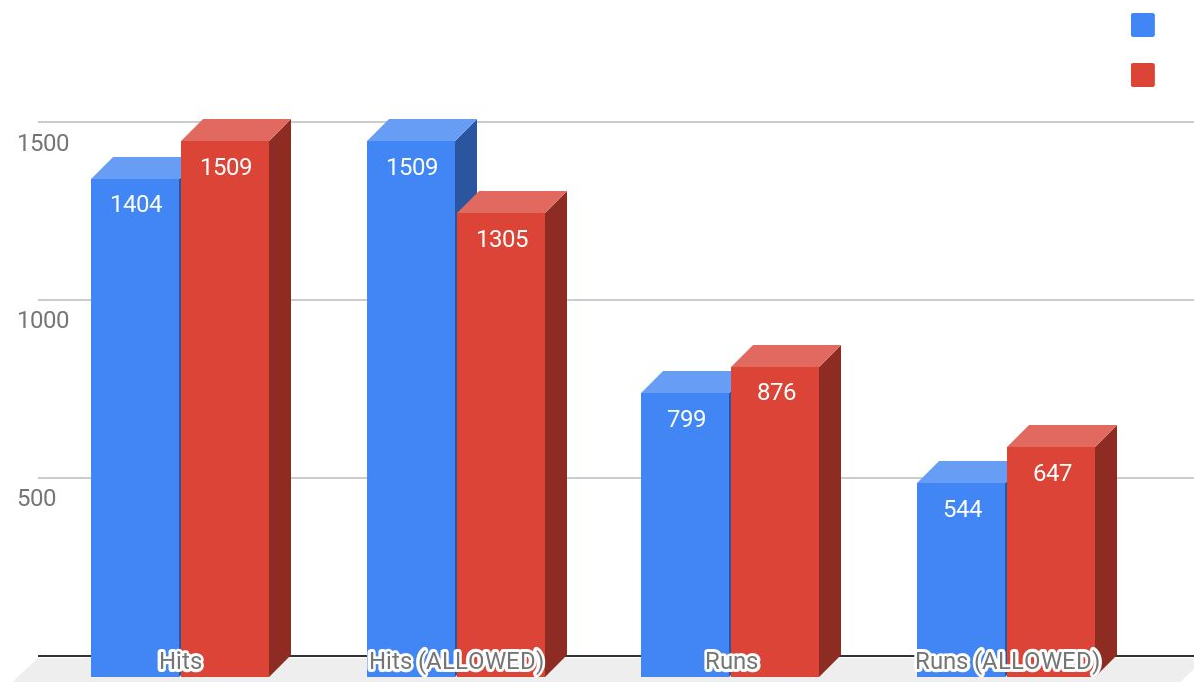


to the league than was the team led by Sale. Even in this instance the 1912 team has a better WHIP (1.196) than the 2018 team (1.246), however both are well below the AL total WHIP.

## Team Offense and Team Defense:

A comparison of hits, hits allowed, runs and runs allowed for 1912 and 2018 teams further highlights the similarities between them.

### 2012 Red Sox vs 2018 Red Sox Hits & Runs



The 2018 team finished the season with more hits offensively than the 1912 team, and allowed 204 fewer hits than the 1912 team. The 2018 team also scored more runs than the 1912 team, but the 1912 team allowed fewer runs. These are the more interesting stats to examine to distinguish the two teams since a majority of their numbers are remarkably similar. With the 2018 team having more hits and runs it shows their offense had produced more than the 1912 team. Although the 1912 team allowed less runs on more hits, it is due to being during the Dead Ball Era.

## Postseason:

The Sox won the 2018 World Series 4-1, playing, in effect, six full games as a result of the 18-inning third game. The 1912 Sox have the distinction of being the only team in history to have won a best-of-seven World Series after playing 8 games. Their record was 4-3-1, game two being called after 11 innings because of dark, despite starting at 2 p.m. on October 9. It was officially recorded as a 6-6 tie, and remains the only tied game in MLB Postseason history.

After analyzing both offensive and defensive statistics, the 1912 team has the advantage on the mound, but the 2018 Red Sox hitting gives them the edge against the 1912 team in that category, which helped allow this team to break the franchise record of 105 wins.

The longest game in Postseason History. The only tie in Postseason history. Two great teams a 106 years apart, both full of character and both brought home a World Series Championship to Boston. It's as if the two teams simply won't let the other claim the mantle of "greatest." And, somehow, that seems fair.