

# Birds, baseballs, explosions, feathers

MARCH 26, 2001 — A pitch by Randy Johnson hit and killed a dove flying in front of home plate Saturday during the seventh inning of the Diamondbacks 10–5 exhibition victory against the San Francisco Giants. ¶ The bird flew over catcher Rod Barajas head and landed a few feet from the plate amid a sea of feathers. ¶ “I’m sitting there waiting for it, and I’m expecting to catch the thing, and all you see is an explosion,” Barajas said. “It’s crazy. There’s still feathers down there.” ¶ Johnson, the NL Cy Young winner and perhaps the game’s hardest thrower, was not amused. ¶ “I didn’t think it was all that funny,” he said.

*Associated Press*

APRIL 12, 1987 — The Atlanta Braves, a team not known for its knowledge of ornithology, say the bird Dion James killed with a flyball was a dove and not a pigeon. ¶ In the third inning of the Atlanta Braves’ 12–4 victory Sunday over the New York Mets, James led off with what should have been a routine fly to left field. New York’s Kevin McReynolds began drifting under the ball but stopped when it collided with the bird. ¶ By the time McReynolds retrieved the ball, James stood at second with a double. Shortstop Rafael Santana collected the bird from the outfield grass and handed it to the ball girl. She deposited the animal under the stands. ¶ “I didn’t know what had happened,” McReynolds said. “It was that time of game when the sun was in my eyes. The only thing I could think right off was the ball went in the sun and I just lost it. Then all of a sudden, I saw two objects falling.” ¶ The bird was first identified as a pigeon but, after the game, Braves players said it was a dove. ¶ “To the best knowledge of the Elias Sports Bureau, no bird has ever been killed in a major league game by a flyball,” Mets spokesman Jay Horwitz said. But in 1981, in the Northwest League [Cincinnati’s Class A team], Eric Davis (now with Cincinnati) hit a ball that struck a bird and killed it in midflight.”

*United Press International*

AUGUST 13, 1983 — The case came to a swift and humorous conclusion Friday when a prosecutor withdrew the cruelty to animals charge against New York Yankees outfielder Dave Winfield for fear of “adding to errors already made.” ¶ Maximum penalty on the charge would have been a six-month jail term and fine. ¶ The incident took place during the fifth inning of a New York–Toronto game August 4 as the Yankee outfielders completed their mid-inning warmup. Winfield fired the warmup ball from center field, striking a seagull that was walking on the field. ¶ The bird toppled over. A Blue Jays ballboy covered the seagull with a cloth by and carried it off the field as some fans began throwing rubber balls at Winfield. ¶ Following the game, Yankee officials and Winfield were both dismayed when a Toronto policeman arrested the Yankee outfielder on a charge of cruelty to animals.

*United Press International*

FOUR of these players have demonstrated outstanding marksmanship (the precocious Eric Davis doing so in the minor leagues at age 19). While I can find no evidence that Bob Ferguson actually killed any *living* flying thing, he was a player/manager for the National League’s Hartford, Chicago, Troy, and Philadelphia, and the American Association’s Pittsburgh, who played every position on the field (including pitcher) during his career and has a great nickname.



## RANDY “BIG UNIT” JOHNSON



<b>Bats</b> R.	<b>Throws</b> L.	<b>Height</b> 6’10”.	<b>Weight</b> 225.
<b>Career Stats</b>			
W	L	IP	H R BB SO ERA
1988–2003	230 114	3122.3	2435 1215 1258 3871 3.10
<b>Born</b> Randall David Johnson, Sep 10, 1963, Walnut Creek, CA			

## DION JAMES



<b>Bats</b> L.	<b>Throws</b> L.	<b>Height</b> 6’1”.	<b>Weight</b> 170.
<b>Career Stats</b>			
G	AB	BA	SLG BB SO HR RBI SB
1983–1996	917 2708	.288 .392	318 307 32 266 43
<b>Born</b> Dion James, November 9, 1962, Philadelphia, PA			

## ERIC DAVIS



<b>Bats</b> R.	<b>Throws</b> R.	<b>Height</b> 6’3”.	<b>Weight</b> 175.
<b>Career Stats</b>			
G	AB	BA	SLG BB SO HR RBI SB
1984–2001	1626 5321	.269 .482	740 1398 282 934 349
<b>Born</b> Eric Keith Davis, May 29, 1962, Los Angeles, CA			

## DAVE WINFIELD



<b>Bats</b> R.	<b>Throws</b> R.	<b>Height</b> 6’6”.	<b>Weight</b> 220.
<b>Career Stats</b>			
G	AB	BA	SLG BB SO HR RBI SB
1973–1995	2973 11003	.283 .475	1216 1686 465 1833 223
<b>Born</b> David Mark Winfield, October 3, 1951, St. Paul, MN			

## BOB “DEATH TO FLYING THINGS” FERGUSON



<b>Bats</b> B.	<b>Throws</b> R.	<b>Height</b> 5’9”.	<b>Weight</b> 149.
<b>Career Stats</b>			
G	AB	BA	SLG BB SO HR RBI SB
1871–1884	824 3468	.265 .291	128 137 1 356 15
<b>Born</b> Robert Vavasour Ferguson, January 31, 1845, Brooklyn, NY			