

At the turn of this new decade, it's time to account for the new "four-decade" players. Only seventeen players in major league history have previously accomplished this feat of longevity. In the 1990s, only Carlton Fisk, Rick Dempsey, Nolan Ryan and Jerry Reuss managed to make the list.

New Members

This decade's new entrants into this elite group of Major League players include: Mike Morgan, Jesse Orosco, and Rickey Henderson.

4 DECADE PLAYERS

Mike Morgan, 41 years old, won a job with the Arizona Diamondbacks this season. Last year he won 13 games with Texas. He truly exemplifies the meaning of "journeyman" pitcher, as he holds the major league record for appearing with the most number of different teams (eleven) during his career. Morgan began his career in 1978 with the Oakland Athletics.

Jesse Orosco, 43 years old in April, was picked up by the St. Louis Cardinals during spring training. In his 22nd year of professional baseball in 1999, he only pitched 32 innings with the Orioles, mostly as a relief specialist against left-handed batters. Prior to 2000, he had appeared in 1090 games and had a career ERA of 3.03. Orosco began his career with the Mets in 1979.

Rickey Henderson, arguably the best leadoff hitter in ML history, started the 2000 season with the Mets again as their left fielder. Just recently he was released by the Mets and picked up by the Seattle Mariners. Injuries cut into his 1999 play, but his batting average was .315 and he stole 37 bases. He is the greatest basestealer in history, and is attempting to set career records for walks and runs. Currently 41 years old, he began his career with Oakland in 1979.

Close But No Cigar

The following Major League players concluded their careers in 1998 and 1999 and got within a few years of "four-decade" status:

Player	ML Debut Year	Last ML Year	1 st Professional Year
Danny Darwin	1978	1998	1976
Dave Stieb	1979	1998	1978
Paul Molitor	1978	1998	1977
Tim Lincecum	1979	1999	1977
Chili Davis	1981	1999	1978
Wade Boggs	1982	1999	1976
Otis Nixon	1983	1999	1979
Tom Candiotti	1983	1999	1979
Tony Phillips	1982	1999	1978
Willie McGee	1982	1999	1977
Julio Franco	1982	1999	1978

The following active players in 2000 are entering their 4th decade of professional play, but it includes minor league years:

Player	1 st Professional Year	ML Debut
Harold Baines	1977	1980
Cal Ripken, Jr.	1978	1981
Doug Jones	1978	1982
Gary Gaetti	1979	1981
Orel Hershisser	1979	1983

Candidates for the Future

Who knows what it will be like ten years from now? Will players' careers be elongated by such factors as better conditioning or the increased use of specialty roles by the players? Or will the careers get shorter because of less dedication to the game or because of compensation structures that encourage more turnover of players.

From a list of players who began their major league careers in 1988 or 1989, and who have a current age in the 30-32 age range, following is a candidate list of players who have a chance to make the "four-decade" player list in the next decade. Of course, this assumes they stay healthy and continue to be productive players:

Player	ML Debut Year	Age in 2010
Roberto Alomar	1988	42
Gary Sheffield	1988	42
John Olerud	1989	42
Robin Ventura	1989	43
Juan Gonzalez	1989	41
Sammy Sosa	1989	42
Ken Griffey, Jr.	1989	41
Omar Vizquel	1989	42
Kent Mercker	1989	42
Andy Benes	1989	43