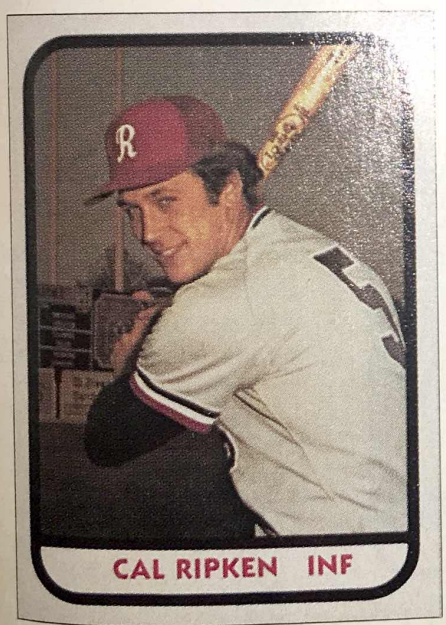
The Long Way HOME

Ten years ago, it took two Triple-A teams 65 days — and 33 innings — to finish a game. When it was over, everyone was in the record books.

by Felice Clyne



Cal proved he was an "Iron Man" before he reached the majors by playing all 33 innings.

With subfreezing temperatures and a bitter wind blowing into Pawtucket's McCoy Stadium, the night of April 18, 1981, appeared ill-suited for baseball.

It turned out to be a night ideally suited for making baseball history.

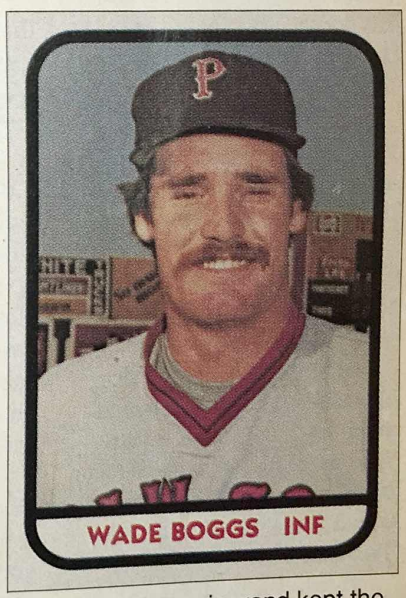
That evening the Pawtucket Red Sox and Rochester Red Wings, Triple-A affiliates of Boston and Baltimore, respectively, started playing at 8 o'clock and continued until 4:07 a.m. the next morning, Easter Sunday. That's when International League president Harold Cooper called and instructed the umpires to suspend play after the 32nd inning of a 2-2 tie.

When the game resumed with much hoopla on June 23, it lasted merely 18 minutes more. Pawtucket first baseman Dave Koza's no-out, bases-loaded single to left in the bottom of the 33rd provided the winning run in the longest game in professional baseball history.

The longest previous professional game was 29 innings, when on June 14, 1966, Miami pinned a 4-3 defeat on St. Petersburg — managed by Sparky Anderson — in a Class A Florida State League game that lasted six hours and 59 minutes.

The improbable event in Pawtucket produced memories of a lifetime for a number of participants. It also provides a perfect event for hobbyists to create their own topical subset.

By combining in an attractive layout key cards from each club's minor league team set with newspaper and magazine accounts of the game, readily available to copy through your local library, you'll have your own fitting memento of one of the most memorable games in professional baseball history.



Wade's magic wand kept the game going with an RBI double in the 21st.

For many, the game was their lone moment in the limelight. But the game also featured a number of players