

# BASEBALL IN SHOCK AS JIM CREIGHTON RETIRES

## SPORT'S MOST DECORATED PITCHER ENDS PLAYING CAREER, BECOMES EXCELSIOR COACH

BROOKLYN, N.Y. (Oct 3, 1878) – A bolt of lightning has hit the baseball in the form of a midday telegram on Thursday afternoon: Jim Creighton, the greatest pitcher in baseball history, has ended his playing career after nineteen seasons with Excelsior B.B.C.

At first, a message was sent to A.P.B.L. offices after Creighton let the Excelsior front office know in person that he was going to transition away from playing. From there, it didn't take long before messages shot around the Northeastern United States announcing the game's most popular player had called it a career.

According to the 37-year-old Creighton, he went into some deep thought about his career at the close of the 1878 season. Even though he was 21-19 with a 3.31 ERA while leading the A.P.B.L. in Strikeouts (168) & Pitcher WAR (8.2), from a statistical standpoint it was his "worst" season since the A.P.B.L.'s inaugural in 1871. He considered the fact that, while once being unquestionably the fastest pitcher in baseball, in the 5-6 years since pitchers were allowed use wrist action in delivering the ball a new generation of pitchers had come of age who had caught up to him with regards to the speed aspect of delivering the ball to the batsman. So, after being the sport's highest-paid player for more than a decade Creighton felt he'd made enough money to retire from playing and it was time to move on.

Creighton won't go far, however. His father is a [successful businessman](#), and his family has enough money that, even though Creighton has five siblings, between his baseball earnings and the family business he'll be able to spend time during the summers as Excelsior's new Pitching Coach instead of doing manual labor for 60-70 hours a week. For Creighton, who has enjoyed sports [since he was a child](#), becoming a coach is a natural fit.

For the fans of Excelsior, however, the loss of Creighton the player will feel like a tragedy. After three last-place finishes during the first four seasons of the N.B.B.O., once Creighton joined and came of age he put the team on the proverbial map, and while Excelsior has yet to win a championship his presence made them one of the sport's biggest draws.

Just how dominant of a presence was Creighton on the diamond? His career stats and accomplishments:

Year	Age	TM	LVL	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SHO	SV	IP	HA	R	ER	HR	BB	K	BB/9	K/9	WHIP	H/9	K/BB	WAR	rWAR
1860	19	EXC	NBBO	12	21	4.11	37	35	19	0	0	278.0	322	227	127	11	80	44	2.6	1.4	1.45	10.4	0.6	1.2	-2.0
1861	20	EXC	NBBO	21	12	3.96	38	35	23	1	0	293.1	341	189	129	14	37	56	1.1	1.7	1.29	10.5	1.5	2.4	2.5
1862	21	EXC	NBBO	20	12	3.40	38	35	22	1	0	294.0	333	189	111	10	23	73	0.7	2.2	1.21	10.2	3.2	4.1	3.4
1863	22	EXC	NBBO	26	4	2.29	36	35	27	2	0	302.0	280	138	77	1	28	69	0.8	2.1	1.02	8.3	2.5	6.4	9.2
1864	23	EXC	NBBO	22	14	2.85	43	35	29	0	1	312.1	331	185	99	0	24	95	0.7	2.7	1.14	9.5	4.0	6.9	5.7
1865	24	EXC	NBBO	25	11	2.24	43	35	25	1	2	313.2	310	178	78	1	8	133	0.2	3.8	1.01	8.9	16.6	8.6	5.6
1866	25	EXC	NBBO	25	8	2.85	40	35	24	2	2	296.2	282	180	94	0	23	146	0.7	4.4	1.03	8.6	6.3	8.4	4.8
1867	26	EXC	NBBO	27	15	2.46	44	42	30	1	0	361.2	370	219	99	1	27	117	0.7	2.9	1.10	9.2	4.3	7.9	6.9
1868	27	EXC	NBBO	29	11	2.70	42	42	35	0	0	362.2	366	195	109	1	35	197	0.9	4.9	1.11	9.1	5.6	10.9	8.5
1869	28	EXC	NBBO	23	16	2.95	45	43	25	1	0	335.2	396	274	110	0	38	136	1.0	3.6	1.29	10.6	3.6	8.6	-0.0
1870	29	EXC	NBBO	27	15	3.26	45	42	30	3	0	356.0	384	222	129	0	36	162	0.9	4.1	1.18	9.7	4.5	9.4	4.6
1871	30	EXC	APBL	22	24	4.01	46	45	26	1	0	363.2	442	282	162	1	51	149	1.3	3.7	1.36	10.9	2.9	7.9	0.7
1872	31	EXC	APBL	24	18	2.93	45	45	28	1	0	383.1	423	239	125	1	34	170	0.8	4.0	1.19	9.9	5.0	9.7	2.6
1873	32	EXC	APBL	28	18	3.26	54	46	29	0	1	395.1	447	247	143	3	42	153	1.0	3.5	1.24	10.2	3.6	8.7	9.1
1874	33	EXC	APBL	30	21	2.56	64	45	28	1	1	396.2	444	251	113	4	33	136	0.7	3.1	1.20	10.1	4.1	8.4	6.8
1875	34	EXC	APBL	31	14	2.96	51	46	29	1	0	383.2	460	261	126	3	28	116	0.7	2.7	1.27	10.8	4.1	8.8	5.8
1876	35	EXC	APBL	21	21	2.54	49	45	32	4	0	375.0	430	215	106	5	18	156	0.4	3.7	1.19	10.3	8.7	8.0	8.0
1877	36	EXC	APBL	27	14	3.38	51	45	23	2	2	359.0	448	276	135	6	30	133	0.8	3.3	1.33	11.2	4.4	6.5	2.6
1878	37	EXC	APBL	21	19	3.31	47	45	27	0	0	350.2	421	278	129	0	31	168	0.8	4.3	1.29	10.8	5.4	8.2	2.2
TOTAL				461	288	3.04	858	776	511	22	9	6513.1	7230	4245	2201	62	626	2409	0.9	3.3	1.21	10.0	3.8	141.1	86.9

- Career leader in top-tier Wins with 461 (James Goodman 2nd with 401)
- Career leader in top-tier Strikeouts with 2,409 (James Goodman 2nd with 1,680)
- Career leader in top-tier Pitching WAR with 141.1 (James Goodman 2nd with 132.7)
- Career leader in top-tier Total WAR with 171.0 (141.1 pitching, 29.9 batting)
- 5x Most Valuable Player (N.Y.L.: 1863, 66, 67, 68, A.P.B.L.: 1872)
- 4x Pitcher of the Year (N.Y.L.: 1870, A.P.B.L.: 1874-75, 77)
- 3x 30-game winner (A.P.B.L.: 1874-75, 77)

- 17x All-Star (N.Y.L.: 1862-70, A.P.B.L.: 1871-78)
- 8x Team of the Year: (N.Y.L.: 1863-64, 66-68, A.P.B.L.: 1874-75, 77)
- 16x league leader in Strikeouts (1861-75, 78)
- 6x league leader in Wins (1863, 66, 68, 74-75, 77)
- 3x league leader in ERA (1863, 65, 76)
- 11x league leader in Pitching WAR (1863-66, 68, 70-72, 74-75, 78)
- 13x league leader in K/BB ratio (1861-66, 68, 70-72, 74-76)
- 8x league leader in Complete Games (1863-64, 67-68, 73-76)
- 8x league leader in Innings Pitches (1864-65, 67-68, 72-75)
- 3x league leader in Shutouts (1863, 66, 76)

The above is without taking into account his [batting](#). When the N.B.B.O. was still the only competition in existence, Creighton was also one of its most powerful hitters. That ability reached its peak in 1867-68, when he had a season where he hit .416 with a 1.030 OPS, both marks leading the N.Y.L., and followed it up by leading the league again the next season with a .977 OPS.

While it was Creighton's 1863 season that made him a household name in the Northeast, it was his 1868 season for Excelsior that is considered the greatest ever by an individual player, including the decade since and the formation of the A.P.B.L.:

- **BATTING:** .378/**.463**/.514, **.977 OPS**, 71 R, 84 H, 22 2B, 4 3B, 44 RBI, 35 BB, 5 SB, 3.3 WPA, 3.4 WAR
- **PITCHING:** 29-11, 2.70 ERA, **197 K**, **362.2 IP**, **35 CG**, **5.6 K/BB**, **4.9 K/9**, 9.1 HA/9, 1.11 WHIP, **10.9 WAR**
- 1868 **TOTAL WAR:** **14.3** (10.9 as P, 3.4 as B); all-time single season record

Creighton's 197 Strikeouts and 10.9 Pitching WAR remain the best ever for a full season of baseball at the highest level, and the marks that have come the closest to those are from Creighton himself.

No season before or since has come close to replicating the level of two-way dominance that Jim Creighton displayed in that 1868 season. The only other seasons that look remotely similar are, in fact, Creighton's 1867 & 1870 seasons for Excelsior.

Jim Creighton joined Excelsior in 1860 from Star B.B.C., then an independent club (*NOTE: he joined Excelsior from the "Brooklyn Star Club" in real life*), and at the time St. Johns' John McGowan was cementing his status as the sport's pre-eminent pitcher. By the time McGowan retired he would be considered the standard all others would be judged by, especially when it came to pitching in the postseason. Other star pitchers of the time would be discussed and dismissed because they "warn't no McGowan".

It is likely that for generations, baseball fans will take a close look at the game's most popular pitchers, and as they tell each other that those men "warn't no Creighton."

