

SPEEDY BROWN, A MAN WHO LIVES UP TO HIS NAME

CONT'L CF BROKE NBBO STOLEN BASE RECORD BY NEARLY 20 DURING 1878 SEASON

BROOKLYN, N.Y. (Oct 10, 1878) – Meet [Donald Brown](#). At 31 years of age, Brown has been a member of the Continental B.B.C. organization since joining them as an 18-year-old after the 1865 season. Even though he spent years as a member of the Continental reserve roster, he had one particular skill that earned him the name he more commonly goes by: Speedy.



During his first spring with the team in 1866, Brown made it obvious to his new teammates why Continental had signed him on: he was extremely fast, and on top of that had instincts both on the bases and in the field that allowed him to use that speed to its absolute maximum. However, there was a problem: for all his natural ability on the basepaths and in the field, when Brown was given a bat he had about the same ability hitting the ball as if you'd given the bat to a dog. Now, [there's no rule that says a dog can't play baseball](#), but we're pretty sure that wouldn't work very well.

Aside from some brief appearances as a defensive replacement & Pinch Runner in 1868, Brown would have to work on his bat skills until late in the 1871 season before he received a permanent callup to the Continental senior roster and see regular game action in the N.B.B.O. However, back to the reserve roster Brown went, and he had to wait until 1875 to get another chance at regularly playing in the N.B.B.O.

During the second half of the 1875 season Continental's new Manager, former Sportsman's & Mass. Bay P Charlie Carson, took a look at Brown's speed in the reserves and decided, "...bat be damned, I want to see what he can do for this team as a lineup member." He was inserted into the lineup for William Leyden, then one the worst-fielding CF's in the N.B.B.O. The results: incredibly, Brown hit .319 as a slap hitter and stole 23 bases in 26 games while fielding at a Golden Glove level in the outfield. Carson had seen enough. Speedy Brown would be Continental's CF going forward.

Unfortunately, Brown's first full season as the Continental CF, which occurred after ten years with the club, was not the kind of success that his partial campaign of 1875 indicated. He hit just .205 with a .499 OPS, and his lack of ability to get on base limited him to "just" 32 Stolen Bases over the 70-game season. Still, Brown was good enough on the bases (4.5 BsR) and in the field (+4.7 ZR, 1.055 EFF) to be a net positive.

Carson decided to stick with Brown at CF, and the decision paid off. In 1877 Brown hit just .241 with a .565 OPS, but now he was on base just enough that he was able to steal 69 bases (8 CS) and he managed to finish the season with more Runs than Hits (78 R, 76 H). Combined with his work in the field, Speedy finished the season with a perfectly fine 1.9 WAR, effectively becoming the outfield version of Sons of the Ocean infield wizard Peter Jones.

For his third season as Continental's CF, Brown & Carson decided it was time for Speedy to simply attack the basepaths with reckless abandon. The results:

- .260/.299/.307, .606 OPS, 90 R, 89 H, 7 XBH, 2 HR, 36 RBI, 18 BB, **94 SB**, +7.0 ZR (1.082 EFF), 3.4 WPA, 2.4 WAR

Speedy had become a baserunning maniac. Not only did he have more Runs than Hits for the second season in a row, but this time he managed **MORE STOLEN BASES THAN HITS** (94 SB, 89 H), a baseball first. Brown had just nine Extra-Base Hits all season, and perhaps unsurprisingly five of them were Triples or Inside-the-Park Home Runs.

However, the big achievement of Speedy's 1878 season: a new N.B.B.O. record of 94 Stolen Bases compared to 10 Caught Stealing. Speedy didn't just break the N.B.B.O. Stolen Base record, but destroyed it. Coming into 1878, the single-season SB had belonged to Konrad Jensen, who had 76 Stolen Bases for St. John's for 1866. Speedy beat that by nearly twenty. In comparison Stolen Base leader in the Northeastern League, Portland's Ed Donovan, had 54 SB on the season, a bit less than 60% of Speedy Brown's difficult-to-believe total.

Has Speedy Brown's three seasons as the Continental CF allowed his bat to reach the level of a standard N.B.B.O. CF?
Absolutely not:

- BABIP: 3/10
- GAP POWER: 2.5/10
- RAW POWER: 1/10

Speedy Brown will never be asked to defeat the opposition with his hitting skills, but he's most definitely shown he can help his team win in other ways.

Plenty of eyes will be on Speedy Brown in 1879 to see if he can become the first N.B.B.O. player to break the 100 Stolen Base barrier, something only done by James Burke over 90 games in the A.P.B.L. He just might do it.