

Chuck Schilling: A Red Sox Player Profile

Even most casual baseball fans know who Carl Yastrzemski is, one of the greatest Boston Red Sox players ever and a Baseball Hall of Famer. But, on the 1964 Topps card entitled "Sox Sockers" who is this he's sharing the card with? That's the Red Sox second baseman at the time, the slick fielding Chuck Schilling.

As far as I know, Chuck Schilling is of no relation to the much more famous pitcher Curt Schilling. What is greatly certain is that Chuck Schilling was not a "socket." Yes, he did hit 8 home runs in 1963, but with a .234 batting average and .610 OPS. It also turns out that 1963 was actually the last time Chuck would be above replacement level, according to advanced metrics.

Meanwhile, Yaz had an awesome 1963, winning his first batting title and leading the American League in hits, doubles, walks, and on-base percentage (OBP). It was also Yaz's first All-Star Game nod. Schilling hit those 8 HR... and was worth 1 Wins Above Replacement (WAR) with the glove. The poor OPS wasn't enough to make Schilling valuable though. He was worth a mere 0.2 WAR in 146 games. He'd been about just as good with the glove in 1962, but even worse with the bat.

That all being said, the set designers at Topps did have reason to believe that Schilling may eventually find his stroke at the major league level. After all, Schilling batted .340 in the D league (today's A ball) and .314 at AAA. Those are obviously good marks. That offensive potential never came to be realized, but you can understand their optimism based on those performances.

However, Chuck Schilling DID have one very good season in MLB. That was his rookie year in 1961. Despite a mere .666 OPS, Schilling did have a .340 on-base percentage in a league-leading 737 plate appearances that year. His counting stats didn't look bad at all for a defensive-minded second baseman either: a .259 batting average, 5 HR, 62 RBI, plus 7 stolen bases. However, he was caught 6 times, so his stolen bases weren't so valuable.

But where Schilling really shined in 1961 was with the glove. He led the league in assists at second base, 2nd in double plays turned, and was worth a whopping SIXTEEN runs above average by Total Zone at the keystone. Obviously, that final stat led the league. Had they been awarded at the time, Schilling would've won the Gold Glove, and it would've been entirely deserved. His defensive WAR was 1.9!

Unfortunately, Schilling never really developed with the bat. Part of that was a wrist injury suffered in 1962. At least in 1963 his 25 doubles and 8 HR gave him some offensive value. By 1964, he simply was too much of a liability with the bat and his play in the field began to suffer. He somewhat rebounded as a bench player in 1965 before being traded after the season to the Minnesota Twins. He'd be on the Twins roster to start 1966, as rosters were allowed to have 28

players until May 15. But, when the rosters reverted to 25 men, he retired rather than be forced to accept a minor league assignment.

Chuck Schilling did OK for himself in life after that, teaching high-school math on Long Island. He even played competitive softball until the age of 69. Sadly, Chuck Schilling passed on March 30, 2021, aged 83.

Had Schilling not suffered that wrist injury, it's likely he would've stuck around as a Gold Glove-caliber second baseman for quite a few years. Fortunately, we have that Sox Sockers and other baseball cards as a reminder of his brief, but interesting baseball career.

Thanks for the memories, Chuck Schilling!

~ *Amelia Desertsong*