

The History of the Early Wilson A2000 The Glove That Changed the Game

Ted Javor, the original designer of the A2000, couldn't be happier.

'If you go through the evolution of the baseball glove, you can understand why this tool is adored by baseball players,' said Javor, the inventor of the most revolutionary mitt in baseball.

The Wilson A2000, named simply after its stock number, entered the sixth decade in 2017. Currently used by nearly 300 major leaguers, the A2000 was the first glove to feature a deep pocket and snap-action hinged palm, the better to catch balls with, plus a triple-lock webbing and a reinforced shell.

'It was a new concept,' said Javor, of Schaumburg.

'Everything you found in that glove had a functional value. But the most important thing is when you put it on your hand, it fit and was ready to use.'

The A2000 was created with input from ballplayers in the late 1950s, tired of the small, deep-padded gloves that required two-handed catches and did nothing more than protect a player's hand.

Javor says he remembers Manager Paul Richards telling him something had to be done because his catchers couldn't handle Hoyt Wilhelm's knuckleball. Solution: the first oversized hinged catcher's mitt. Al Kaline told the Wilson

representatives he needed 'longer fingers because I liked to catch the ball high in the web as opposed to what was then a small pocket.' Solution: the A2000.

In 1957, the first A2000 was introduced and grabbed by players like Ted Williams, Ernie Banks, Nellie Fox and Kaline.

'Everybody wanted one,' Kaline said. 'There was a mad rush when they brought them out in spring training.'

'The A2000 gave you so much confidence, particularly when you had to catch the ball with one hand,' said the Hall of Famer. 'You didn't have to worry about a small area in your palm to catch the ball like you did with the other gloves. Now you had a web all the way down to the heel and a deep, soft pocket in the middle.'

'And when you reached to make the catch, the glove seemed to automatically collapse around the ball.'

Javor said he remembers when the idea of creating the Snap Action hinge came to him: he was eating lunch and began to study a door hinge.

'These guys (ballplayers) jump up now to make a catch and the web is so flexible, it's like a bear trap,' Javor said.

In the spring of 1957 Wilson decided to build a better glove and would ask the players to help build it. Glove fitters arrived in all spring training camps to research what improvements players needed. The fitters took their leather-making tools to the camps. They met with players and cut and designed gloves on the spot. Then the designers returned to the plant and began to create what was to become an American Classic.

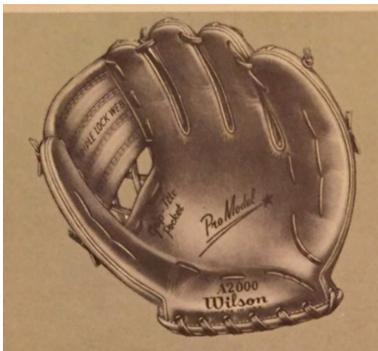
The features the A2000 incorporated remain little changed today. The pocket was moved to the base of the web. The web was widened and the pocket lengthened, which made it

easier for the fielder to catch and secure the ball. A Snap Action feature allowed the player to get the ball out of the pocket quickly. The fiber-reinforced thumb made the glove stiffer than the floppy, older gloves.

Lefty Gomez led the Wilson team that promoted the A2000 to major league players. With the open face design the glove appeared larger than it really was, Gomez was summoned to the office of the American League President Joe Cronin to do some explaining. Gomez managed to convince Cronin that the apparent extra size was only an optical illusion.

1958

The Glove that forever has changed the game and helped make Wilson the choice of Major League Baseball. It was also the first glove designed by and for major league players. The A2000/A210 were the first gloves not to be shaped like the human hand. This original model introduced the 3/4 Triple-Lock web with double X lacing at the bottom of the web, the Snap Action hinge and the Grip Tite Pocket that extended to the bottom of the palm. Rectangular patch, Pro Model Shooting Star logo on the palm and Major League on the thumb. The A2000 was a non endorsed model for the Professional Player, the A210 was the Johnny Antonelli endorsed model.



1959

Introduced the solid full barrel Triple Lock web. Distinguished from later A2000 models in that it does not have a spiral laced web. This model again is X laced at the little finger. Rectangular patch and Pro Model Shooting Star logo in the palm.



1960/61

For stability a spiral laced web has been added to the full barrel web and all the fingers are now X laced. A new finger loop was added to the back of the index finger. The only difference between the two models is that the 1961 glove has a U laced heel.



1962

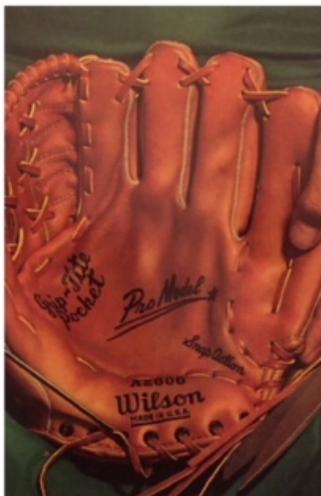
Same web as 1960, the 61 model had a U heel design and the 62 has an L heel design. A2000 is stamped on the heel and still has a rectangular patch and Pro Model Shooting

Star logo. There is a circular Made in the USA stamped at the base of the thumb. The A2001 is introduced, it is the exact same model but made smaller for infielders. The 1962 A2001 may be the finest infield glove ever made, with the Rawlings Pro 1000 H being a close second.



1963/64

Introduced the dual hinged web that will become the iconic standard A2000 web in the 70s and 80s. Vertical dual criss cross lacing in web design. The dual hinged web can still be seen on the gloves of many MLB pitchers. Pro Model Shooting Star logo still remains. The only difference between the two years is that the 64 model has a circular patch on a wider contour wrist strap.



1965

The Wilson comes out with two separate A2000 models. The 1964 dual hinged web with X lacing with the circular patch(above) returns and a new open web model is introduced with a circular patch and Pro Model Shooting Star logo. The open web glove is extremely rare and was a one year experiment.



1966

For some reason Wilson decides to change the web. This model now has a single hinged web with vertical criss cross lacing or sometimes referred to as a Twin Web. This web was not as flexible as the iconic dual hinge web. The glove still has the circular patch and Pro Model Shooting Star logo.



1967/68

The gloves return to the dual hinge web now interlocked rather than X lacing Down each hinge that was introduced in 1963. Interlocked hinge would remain a staple in future A2000s. A vertical The A2000 is stamped on the center of the web. The circular wrist patch remains but the Pro Model Shooting Star logo is retired. A new large W is now in the palm. Also added was a leather overlay at the base of the palm. This may have been added to resemble the Rawlings Dual Step Down Palm. I used this model my senior year in college. It is a fine glove and was capable of use in both infield and outfield play.



If you have an interest in the early A2000 here are a few sources you may enjoy:

Wilson and the Grand Old Game

The History of Wilson Sporting Goods

A Glove Affair, Noah Lieberman

Fascinating History of the Baseball Glove, The Post Game
7/12/2011

The Glove that Changed the Game, The Atlantic 4/15/2012

A2000 Enter Fifth Decade, UPI Archives 6/6/1990

Wilson Baseball Catalog, baseballglovecollector.com

Researched by Robert "Skip" Claprood

Photos from Claprood Collection