



image #1

Cobb exemplar #1

Cobb exemplar #2

People may often disagree as to the subjective similarity or lack thereof when comparing faces in photos. Confirmation bias plays a role in this as there is often a strong desire for a person depicted in an old photo to be someone famous. In fact, confirmation bias distorts perception. The best way to resolve such questions is to use morphological facial comparison, a much more objective method that compares key features taken in isolation.

**Image #1** is claimed to depict Ty Cobb. It is shown above adjacent to two well-known Cobb exemplars. All three photos exhibit very similar head angles. The images are properly size matched by aligning vertical landmarks (see red lines)

- Though **image #1** is blurry, the lip shape does not seem to match that seen in either of the exemplars
- We note that in **exemplar #2** Cobb has thin and very straight hair. This is a consistent trait seen in many confirmed images of Cobb. The man in **image #1** appears to have wavy hair.
- The horizontal blue line approximately indicates the top of the skull for Cobb in **exemplar #2**. Note that the top of the skull for the subject in **image #1** extends far above this line. This tells us that the head geometries for this man are markedly different than those of Cobb. This alone makes it virtually certain the **image #1** does not depict Cobb.
- Careful observation of subject's left ear (viewer's right) in **exemplar #1** shows that its shape does not match that of the left ear of the subject depicted in **image #1** (green arrows). Also the angle of the ear with respect to the head is not the same in the two images. Cobb's ear clearly tilts more from the vertical than does the ear belonging to the man in question. It is well accepted that an ear mismatch such as this is by itself exclusionary.

It is virtually impossible for image #1 to be a depiction of Cobb. Aside from the above definitive morphological comparison, it should be added that we have been unable to find anyone who is familiar with Ty Cobb who thinks that the man seen in image #1 is even remotely subjectively similar to Cobb.



image #2



Cobb exemplar #3

**Image #2** is claimed to be Ty Cobb. It is shown above adjacent to a well-known Cobb exemplar (**exemplar #3**). The photos exhibit very similar head angles. The images are properly size matched by aligning vertical landmarks (see red lines)

- Though **image #1** is blurry, the lip shape does not seem to match that seen in **exemplar #3**.
- Note the deep facial crease in both images denoted by the blue arrows (this is sometimes referred to as the nasolabial furrow). Note also the lower extent of this crease in both images, denoted by the respective red arrows. It is clear in **image #2** that the crease extends well below the horizontal red line at the bottom of the nose tip. However, in **exemplar #3** the crease does not extend nearly that far. This makes it highly unlikely that the two images depict the same person
- Careful observation of subject's right ear (viewer's left) in **exemplar #3** shows that it does not match that of the right ear of the subject depicted in **image #2**. In particular the ear in **exemplar #3** sticks out much farther than does that of **image #2**, and also the angle of the ear with respect to the head is not the same in the two images. It is well accepted that an ear mismatch such as this is by itself exclusionary.

It is virtually impossible for **image #2** to be a depiction of Cobb. Again I have to say that aside from the above definitive morphological comparison, it should be added that we have been unable to find anyone who is familiar with Ty Cobb who thinks that the man seen in **image #2** is even remotely subjectively similar to Cobb.

#### About the author:

I am a member of SABR (Society for American Baseball Research) and I serve as co-chairman of the SABR's Pictorial History Committee. I have been producing a newsletter for the committee (about 3 per year) since 2008 that is primarily about identifying people, places and dates with respect to early baseball photos. I am well-known for my expertise in this area. Forensic facial comparison methods are often used.

I have participated in projects at various levels to identify early baseball photos in Library of Congress collections (Bain and Harris & Ewing collections). I have also identified baseball photos for the Boston Public Library, Detroit Public Library, and the Chicago History Museum. I frequently consult in this regard for major auction houses and collectors.

I was photo editor for the book, "Inventing Baseball – The 100 Greatest Games of the Nineteenth Century" and I have served as a photo consultant for many other baseball history books. I have several published articles:

"Analyzing Grand Old Images", The National Pastime, Vol. 28, 2008

"Zooming in on a Great Old Photo", Baseball Research Journal, Vo. 38, Summer 2009

"Chicago History Museum's Baseball Photo Treasure Trove - Chicago Daily News Glass Plate Negative Collection," The National Pastime, June 2015