

This is one installment in a team effort by The Cleveland Fan, highlighting the top local sports figures by jersey number. Please weigh in with your thoughts on [the Boards](#) . And as David Letterman would say, "For entertainment purposes only; please, no wagering."



There are really just two serious candidates for top honors at #13 in our series...with all due respect to Felix Fermin. As it turns out, Fermin is due more respect than he is often afforded, having brought to Cleveland in trade one of the greatest shortstops in major league history, and one of the most popular Cleveland Indians of all time, [Omar Vizquel](#) . Still not enough to get Felix the Cat serious consideration in his own right.

On the other hand, there are dozens of reasons to decide on Vizquel as our choice at #13, not least the 11 Gold Gloves and the 2,877 hits, in a career that spanned four decades in the majors. He played his best years in our town, and he did it with flair, and a winning smile, and sometimes even with his bare hand. He made spectacular plays routinely, leaving us certain we had never seen anyone do it better. And yeah...I saw Ozzie Smith.



Vizquel's greatness and his eventual Hall of Fame worthiness seem inarguable to those of us

who watched him play every day, yet he still has his [detractors](#) . Consider though, that there are just two other players in major league history with more than 10 Gold Gloves and more than 2,850 career hits. Not two shortstops. Two players...total. Roberto Clemente and Willie Mays. Defense rests.

Omar played in two World Series under the Wahoo cap, and paired up with Robbie Alomar ([ou
r choice for #12](#)

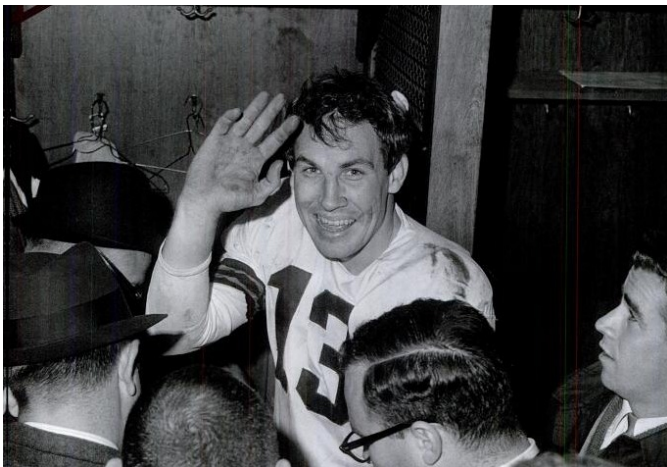
) to form perhaps the best double-play combination of all time. He played more games at shortstop than anyone else, and became the oldest player to ever man the position. And besides, he's got

[his own website](#)

. But there's one big thing he *didn't*

do that his chief competitor at #13 did manage to pull off. And that was to win a world championship for the city of Cleveland.

The Good Doctor Ryan



While Vizquel is revered by Clevelanders in large part for his consistency...his longevity...his excellence over literally thousands of games, [Frank Ryan](#) has been immortalized in Cleveland essentially for just one. December 27, 1964. Cleveland Municipal Stadium. The NFL Championship Game.

Cleveland Browns 27 - Baltimore Colts 0

Maybe it shouldn't be that way, but that's all that matters. He won it all...at the most important position on the field. And nobody in this town has done it since. That makes Frank Ryan Cleveland's most significant #13 ever.

Ryan wasn't even a starter in college at Rice University. He played behind big-time prospect King Hill, who became known mostly for his time as the Philadelphia Eagles QB in the early 60's. Ryan was getting ready to go to graduate school in mathematics, and had been accepted at UCLA and Cal Berkeley among other places. He was shocked when L.A. Rams G.M. Pete Rozelle picked him in the 4th round in the 1958 draft. Rozelle liked his size (6'3, 200) and his strong arm, and thought he had a good chance to develop, as a backup at least.

Ryan considered not playing pro football at all, but since he had been drafted by a southern California team, Rozelle convinced him he could attend UCLA and play for the Rams at the same time. But Ryan mostly rode the bench in L.A., getting frustrated behind Zeke Bratkowski and Billy Wade. He had 11 starts in four seasons, and in 1962 Paul Brown traded for him to be Jim Ninowski's backup with the Browns.

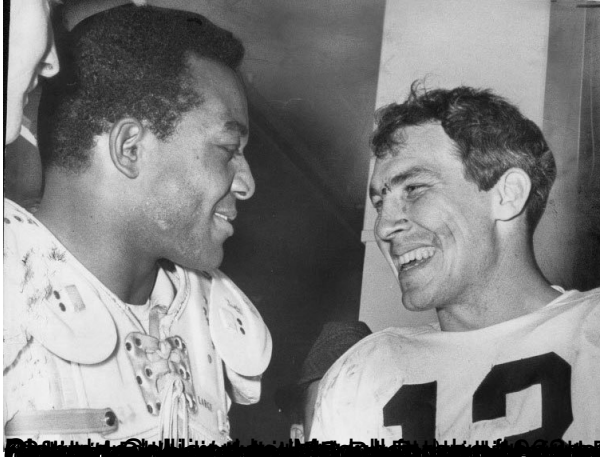


The frustration didn't end there. Ryan was not happy to be traded to Cleveland. He was twenty-six, and he knew that Ninowski was a fixture as the starter with the Browns, and had the full confidence of Paul Brown. In addition, Ryan was good friends with Steelers wide receiver Buddy Dial, and had hoped to be traded to Pittsburgh. He admitted later that his bitterness about his treatment in L.A. affected him with the Browns when he saw Ninowski getting almost all the practice reps, and he felt he wasn't given a fair shot at the starting job.

That shot came in the middle of the 1962 season when Ninowski broke his collarbone and was lost for the season. Ryan started the last seven games in '62, and remained the starter for the next five full seasons. Ryan was inconsistent at times in those seven starts, as the Browns went 3-3-1, but Brown liked what he saw. In his 1997 book, *"When All the World Was Browns Town"*, Terry Pluto relates a quote from Brown, near the end of the 1962 season.. "If Ryan continues to improve, the deal with Los Angeles could dwarf all the others. I don't want to build this out of proportion, but the more I see of him, the more I like. He doesn't lack for courage. He's no schoolboy"



caught out for the purpose of being singled out



and during the game, he was being singled out



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[Justin Durant](#) (born 1985) played as a wide receiver in the National Football League. [Image Football Card Gallery](#)