

Baseball tidbits newsletter – interesting and random stuff, fodder for bar bets.

Good morning baseball fans. Sorry I'm a little late this morning—long, hit week of golf in San Antonio. Grab another cup of coffee—here you go.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Name the five active players in the top 200 career Total Bases leaders.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

This day in baseball history: May 15, 1941, when DiMaggio singled off of White Sox left-hander Eddie Smith in a game the Yankees ultimately lost, 13-1. The loss dropped New York under .500 at 14-15, and DiMaggio's single -- which drove in Phil Rizzuto for the Yankees' only run -- raised very few eyebrows. But from there, over the next two months, he kept hitting. And hitting. And hitting. 56 straight games.

How bad are the Reds? The Reds, as of Friday, had a 6.65 team ERA. This would be remarkable at any time in baseball history — only the 1930 Phillies have ever had a higher ERA than that for a full season. The Reds would need to throw 102 consecutive scoreless innings to get out of last place in team ERA.

Shohei Ohtani hit his 100th career home home in last night's 9-1 win over the A's, becoming the second player in MLB history — it's now him and **Babe Ruth** — with at least 100 homers as a batter and 250 strikeouts as a pitcher. It was the reigning AL MVP's seventh long ball of the 2022 season.

Ohtani is the third Japanese native to reach the mark, joining **Hideki Matsui** and **Ichiro Suzuki**.

Robinson Canó was a free agent for less than two weeks. The eight-time All-Star signed with the Padres, who will only need to pay him the major-league minimum because the Mets are responsible for the rest of the \$40.5 million left on his previous contract.

Dhoan Duran is a threat to set a new Twins velocity record seemingly every time he touches the mound -- and he did that twice over a one-inning appearance on Saturday, extending his own record up to 103.3 mph on a fastball to **Franmil Reyes** in the ninth inning of Minnesota's 3-2 loss to the Guardians.

That was the hardest pitch thrown in the Majors this year, surpassing a 103.1 mph offering thrown by Cardinals right-hander **Ryan Helsley** on May 1 -- and Duran's own 103.1 mph heater four pitches earlier.

Aaron Judge and **Giancarlo Stanton** have been teammates since 2018, but they have never started a season together like this.

Both sluggers homered Friday night en route to a 10-4 win over the White Sox at Guaranteed Rate Field. This victory gave the Yankees an MLB-best 24 wins on the season, and it's only the fifth time in franchise history they have reached this mark through 32 games. The other four years (1928, '39, '58, '98), they won the World Series.

Judge and Stanton join **Babe Ruth** (14) and **Lou Gehrig** (10) from 1930 and **Mickey Mantle** (16) and **Yogi Berra** (12) from 1956 as the only pair of teammates in franchise history to have 10-plus homers in 32 games.

The two sluggers might be seeing the ball better than anyone in the Majors. Over the past 15 games, Judge and Stanton are a combined 42-for-118 (.356 average) at the plate -- with each having 21 hits in that span.

This has put both hitters in the top four in home runs and RBIs on Friday night. Judge ranked first in home runs (12) and fourth in RBIs (27), while Stanton was tied for third in home runs (10) and ranks second in RBIs (30).

A stunning 65 percent of Judge's batted balls are coming off the bat at 95 mph or more (or, put differently, 52 out of 80 of them). Stanton has 47 batted balls coming off the bat at 95 mph or higher, giving him a slightly lower rate at 58.8 percent, which is fourth-highest in MLB.

Josh Hader of the Brewers broke the record for consecutive games to start a season with a save, passing Lee Smith (1994, Orioles) and Jose Mesa (2005, Pirates) with a save Friday against the Marlins.

The save also marked Hader's 34th consecutive scoreless appearance, covering 32 2/3 innings dating back to 2021, both of which are the longest active streaks of any Major League pitcher.

Yadier Molina passed **Mike Piazza** this week for 6th on the career hits list for catchers. The top 5:

Ivan Rodriguez, 2,844

Ted Simmons, 2,472

Carlton Fisk, 2,356

Jason Kendall, 2,195

Yogi Berra, 2,150

Think **Patrick Sandoval** of the Angels has been tough to hit? Hitters are 0-for-30 with 20 K's against Sandoval's changeup in 2022.

Lowest BA allowed on individual pitch type, 2022

Minimum 30 plate appearances ending on that pitch type

Patrick Sandoval's changeup -- .000

Nabil Crismatt's changeup -- .057

Corbin Burnes' curveball -- .067

Amir Garrett's slider -- .069

Tony Gonsolin's slider -- .071

Aaron Loup's sinker -- .071

Matt Foster's four-seam fastball -- .071

Hitters have gone 0-for-30 against Sandoval's changeup. In 35 plate appearances ending on the pitch, the Angels left-hander has recorded a whopping 20 strikeouts, which equates to a 57.1% strikeout rate -- a nearly unparalleled mark among starting pitchers on any individual pitch type.

Highest strikeout rate on individual pitch type, SP, 2022

Minimum 25 plate appearances ending on that pitch type

Shohei Ohtani's splitter -- 61.5%

Patrick Sandoval's changeup -- 57.1%

Eric Lauer's four-seam fastball -- 56.1%

Shane McClanahan's curveball -- 51.9%

Germán Márquez's knuckle-curve -- 51.9%

More than half the time this season, when batters have swung at Sandoval's changeup, they've missed. His 52.4% whiff rate on changeups is the seventh highest any hurler has registered on a single pitch type this season (min. 50 swings).

A year ago, Sandoval added 1.7 inches to his average horizontal changeup movement, going from 11.4 inches of arm-side run in 2020 to 13.1.

In 2022, he's added another 2.4 inches, increasing his horizontal movement to 15.5 inches, which means that the changeup Sandoval is throwing this season has 4.1 more inches of arm-side run -- running down and away from right-handed batters -- on average than his changeup from two years ago.

To put it another way, his changeup has gone from a pitch that had 1.6 inches less horizontal movement than other MLB changeups with similar velocity to one that has 1.5 inches more.

He's added 1.6 inches of drop, too, increasing his vertical movement from 28.2 inches to 29.8 inches since 2021.

Brett Gardner looks like he will retire with 1,470 hits, 274 stolen bases and 139 home runs for the Yankees. He appeared in 140 or more games 10 times, including what might have been his final season in 2021. A World Series champion in 2009, All-Star in 2015 and Gold Glove winner in 2016, he also tied for the American League lead with 49 stolen bases in 2011 and hit a career-high 28 homers in 2019.

Want a shocking (at least to me) stat...that can probably win you a drink in a bar bet...**Ken Holtzman** had more career wins than **Sandy Koufax**, 174 to 165.

Christian Yelich hit for the cycle against the Reds.

If it feels like you've heard that before, it's because you have.

Yelich became the first player in MLB history to hit for the cycle three times against the same team, completing the feat with a triple amid a six-run ninth inning in the Brewers' 14-11 loss on Wednesday at Great American Ball Park.

Yelich hit for the cycle against them twice in 2018 in the span of three weeks. Wednesday's version -- double in the first inning, three-run home run in the third, single in the fifth and triple in the ninth -- was the 10th cycle in Brewers history but the first to come in a loss.

In the modern era (since 1900), only five players -- **Bob Meusel**, **Babe Herman**, **Adrian Beltre**, **Trea Turner** and Yelich -- have hit for three cycles. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, there's a sixth. **Long John Reilly**, one of the original Cincinnati Reds in the late 1800s, also hit for the cycle three times.

No hitter has cycled four times.

At least not yet.

The two other active players with multiple career cycles--Dodgers **Trea Turner** (with 3) and **Freddie Freeman** (with 2).

Yelich cycles vs. the Reds since 2018: 3

Cycles by all other Brewers in last 10 years: 0

Other *teams* with three cycles since 2018: 0

Cycles vs. Reds by players not named Yelich since 2018: 0

Cycles by Yelich at Great American Ballpark: 2

Cycles by everyone else who has ever played at Great American Ballpark: 1*

Cycles by Reds in Yelich's lifetime: 0**

Things ain't great in Boston. Part of the problem--**Trevor Story** struck out in 32 percent of his plate appearances through 26 games. From 2017 (his first full season) to 2021, Story struck out 735 times. Only **Joey Gallo**, with 809, had more.

Bet you didn't know this--Diamondbacks manager **Torey Lovullo** won his 354th game on Tuesday, a franchise record. Arizona has had eight managers since 1998. Only **Buck Showalter** and **Bob Brenly** are over .500.

John Smoltz is on the list of Hall of Famers who had one-season cameos with the Red Sox. That august group includes **Orlando Cepeda, Rickey Henderson, Juan Marichal, Tom Seaver, and Al Simmons.**

YOGI BERRA

Here, in no particular order, are eight of the top accomplishments of No. 8's incredible life.

1. Unrivaled champion

Berra appeared in 21 World Series as a player, coach and manager from 1946-85. He won 10 World Series rings as a player with the Yankees and played in 75 World Series games, both of which are all-time records. And he didn't just show up -- he excelled. Berra posted an .811 OPS in the Fall Classic with 12 homers and 39 RBIs, all while playing behind the plate.

Eight may be Berra's iconic number, but maybe it should be 10. Berra was incredibly proud of having a ring for each finger; after the Yanks won the 2009 championship, he would tease **Derek Jeter** about the shortstop's five rings, telling him that he was only halfway there.

2. D-Day veteran

With World War II underway, an 18-year-old Berra interrupted his budding baseball career to join the Navy, volunteering for a secret mission to operate machine guns on a 36-foot rocket boat, the U.S.S. Bayfield. That placed Second Class Seaman Lawrence P. Berra and five crewmates 300 yards from the shores of Normandy on June 6, 1944, for the Allied D-Day invasion, providing cover fire on Omaha Beach to soften the German defenses.

"I sit and I thank the good Lord I was in the Navy," Berra told MSNBC in 2004. "We ate good, clean clothes, clean bed. You see some of these Army men, what they went through, that's the ones I felt for."

3. Clutch hitter

Regarded as one of the best "bad ball" hitters of his era, Berra was never a comfortable at-bat for any pitcher. He slugged the first pinch-hit home run in World Series history, in 1947 off the Dodgers' **Ralph Branca**. He was also near-impossible to strike out; Berra struck out only 414 times in 8,359 career plate appearances. In 1950, he had 12 strikeouts (and 55 walks) in 151 games.

4. Three-time MVP

Berra won the American League Most Valuable Player Award in 1951, '54 and '55, which makes him tied for the second most all-time. **Roy Campanella** is the only other catcher to win three MVPs. In addition, Berra finished second in the AL MVP Award voting in 1953 and '56. If there is one that got away, it could be 1950, when he hit .322 with 28 homers and 124 RBIs but finished third in the balloting. The award went to his Yankees teammate, **Phil Rizzuto**.

5. Trusted gloveman

Berra eventually earned a reputation as a master handler of pitchers. Berra caught two no-hitters in his career: **Allie Reynolds'** 1951 gem (surviving a ninth-inning foul popup that Berra dropped, only to secure a near-identical chance on the next pitch) and **Don Larsen's** historic perfect game in Game 5 the 1956 World Series. He led the AL in assists five times, and from 1957-59, he went 148 consecutive games without making an error. He also threw out 48.6 percent of runners attempting to steal, and forever insisted that **Jackie Robinson** was out at home when the speedy Dodger stole it in the '55 Series.

6. Perennial All-Star

Berra earned selection to the All-Star Game in 15 consecutive years from 1948-62, appearing in 18 in all (there were two All-Star Games each year from 1959-62), leading AL catchers in home runs and RBIs for nine straight seasons from 1949-57. Though his career home run total of 358 has since been surpassed by **Carlton Fisk, Johnny Bench and Mike Piazza**, Berra's mark of 1,430 RBIs still stands as the most of all-time by a player who primarily was a catcher. He was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1972 and honored with a Monument Park plaque in '88.

7. A man of principle

As a manager, Berra guided the Yankees to the World Series in 1964 and did so again with the Mets in '73, making him one of seven managers to win pennants in both the American and National Leagues. Berra's last managerial job was in 1984-85, which ended when **George Steinbrenner** dismissed him just 16 games into the '85 season. Berra stayed away from Yankee Stadium until Steinbrenner apologized in 1999; on "Yogi Berra Day," he caught a ceremonial first pitch from Larsen, then watched as **David Cone** fired the 16th perfect game in Major League history and the first by a Yanks pitcher since Larsen's.

8. Welcome to The Show

Berra made his Major League debut at age 21 on Sept. 22, 1946, going 2-for-4 with a two-run homer off right-hander **Jesse Flores** in the first game of a doubleheader against the Philadelphia Athletics at Yankee Stadium. Berra's passing would come exactly 69 years later at age 90, of natural causes in his sleep at an assisted living facility in West Caldwell, N.J.

FROM JOE POSNANSKI AND MLB.COM

Angels' 22-year-old rookie **Reid Detmers** — he threw the no-hitter against Tampa Bay. Angels won 12-0. It was Detmers 11th career start, the 12th no-hitter in Angels' history. Detmers entered with a 6.33 ERA in 10 career starts.

Detmers became the sixth rookie this century to throw a no-hitter. The other five are:

- The Diamondbacks' **Tyler Gilbert** vs. the Padres, Aug. 14, 2021.

- The Giants' **Chris Heston** vs. the Mets, June 9, 2015.
- The Red Sox' **Clay Buchholz** vs. the Orioles, Sept. 1, 2007.
- The Marlins' **Anibal Sanchez** vs. the Diamondbacks, Sept. 6, 2006.
- The Cardinals' **Bud Smith** vs. the Padres, Sept. 3, 2001.

Detmers did it earlier in the year than the others — you have to go back to **Steve Busby** in 1973 (April 27) to find a rookie who threw a no-no this early in his rookie season.

Detmers struck out only two batters. That's pretty mind-boggling in today's game, with strikeouts rampant. Only one pitcher since 1980 — the often-magical **Francisco Liriano** back in 2015 — had thrown a no-hitter striking out that few. Detmers became only the fifth pitcher in the Expansion Era to throw a no-hitter while striking out two or fewer batters.

Can you name the only pitcher in that time period to throw a no-hitter with zero strikeouts? The only pitcher in the Expansion Era to throw a no-hitter without striking out anybody was the Cubs' **Ken Holtzman** against Atlanta at Wrigley Field in August, 1969.

Detmers had never before thrown more than six innings in a professional baseball game. Even more striking, it appears that he never threw a complete game in college. Seriously, you have to go back to Detmers' high school days in Chatham, Ill., to find a complete game (he even threw a perfect game for Nokomis High) — but those games were seven innings.

I think it's quite possible that Tuesday was the first time in his life that Reid Detmers ever pitched nine innings.

Detmers showed why he was so highly regarded, entering the year as MLB.com's No. 1 left-handed pitching prospect in baseball, limiting Tampa Bay to one walk and an error to complete the no-hitter despite striking out just two batters.

Detmers, the No. 10 overall pick in the 2020 Draft out of the University of Louisville, had never pitched deeper than six innings as a professional, including 14 Minor League starts, and had never thrown more than 97 pitches in an outing. But Detmers easily surpassed those totals, needing 108 pitches to complete the no-no while becoming the 25th rookie to achieve the feat.

It had been nearly four years since an Angels pitcher had even thrown a shutout, much less a no-hitter. Southpaw **Andrew Heaney** was the previous Halos hurler to hold an opponent scoreless over a nine-inning complete game, doing so against the Royals on June 5, 2018.

Angels catcher **Chad Wallach** homered in the third inning. He became the fifth catcher in the Wild Card Era to homer in a game where he caught a no-hitter, according to Elias. He joins **David Ross** (April 21, 2016), **Alex Avila** (May 7, 2011), **Jason Varitek** (May 19, 2008) and **Charles Johnson** (June 10, 1997 and May 11, 1996).

Tuesday was just Wallach's second game in an Angels uniform. That's tied for the fewest games into a tenure with a team by a player who caught a no-hitter since 1900, with 1979 **Alan Ashby**, in his second game with the Astros for **Ken Forsch**'s no-hitter, according to Elias. Of course, no-hitters are nothing new for the Wallachs -- his father, Tim, was at third base for **Dennis Martinez**'s perfect game in 1991.

25 balls in play! Max Scherzer once threw a no-hitter *with only nine balls in play*. So nearly tripling that wouldn't be a formula anyone would draw up for how to pitch a no-hitter. But even when a guy strikes out only two hitters all night, as Detmers did, it's still rare. According to Baseball-Reference's Stathead, there hadn't been a no-hitter with that many balls in play in more than 40 years — since **Jerry Reuss** allowed 26 on June 27, 1980. But meanwhile, across the field ...

Everybody hits! Well, everybody hit on the Angels anyway — which turned this into a No-Hitter versus Every Hitter kind of game. As my friend, Doug (Kernels) Kern was first to point out, in a game in which no Rays were getting any hits, *everybody* in the Angels' starting lineup *got at least one hit ... and scored*. So how many other times had that happened in any no-hitter since 1900, according to STATS? That would be never!

And to add to how starng the game was, **Anthony Rendon** of the Angels decided to try switch hitting for the first time. Of course he hit a home run. Rendon may have spent the first 4,258 plate appearances of his career disguised as a right-handed hitter. But all it took was the sight of Phillips out there pitching – and he decided it was time to bat left-handed, in a real big-league game. Whereupon he did that thing that will make us remember this at-bat for the next 700 years. No one in the annals of available play-by-play data had *ever* made that many trips to the plate hitting from one side and then turned around and batted from the other side and hit a home run *in that first trip from the “wrong” side*.

Rendon had hit 154 home runs from one side before he hit that home run from the other side. And that, too, is a record — *by over 100 homers* — for any hitter in the STATS play-by-play database. The old record was 36, *by a guy who was in uniform for this game* (of course): the Rays' **Ji-Man Choi**, who got sneaky and hit his first (and only) right-handed bomb on July 26, 2020.

NO HITTERS (BECAUSE I LOVE LISTS)

Mlb.com

Every franchise has been on the wrong end of a no-hitter at least twice. Understandably, the two teams at the top of the list go back to the earliest days of the National League. At the other end of the spectrum, 13 teams in the bottom half were expansion franchises that began play after 1960.

Here, in descending order, is how often each of the 30 current Major League franchises have been no-hit:

20: Los Angeles Dodgers (Brooklyn Dodgers, Brooklyn Robins, Brooklyn Grooms, Brooklyn Bridegrooms, Brooklyn Superbas)

20: Philadelphia Phillies (Philadelphia Quakers)

17: Atlanta Braves (Boston Braves, Boston Red Caps, Boston Beaneaters, Boston Doves, Boston Bees)

16: San Francisco Giants (New York Giants)

15: Baltimore Orioles (St. Louis Browns)

14: Cleveland Guardians (Cleveland Indians, Cleveland Naps)

14: Oakland Athletics (Kansas City Athletics, Philadelphia Athletics)

14: Detroit Tigers

13: Chicago White Sox

13: Cincinnati Reds (Cincinnati Red Stockings)

13: Pittsburgh Pirates (Pittsburgh Alleghenys)

12: Boston Red Sox

11: San Diego Padres

9: Minnesota Twins (Washington Senators)

8: St. Louis Cardinals

8: New York Mets

7: Chicago Cubs

7: New York Yankees (New York Highlanders)

7: Seattle Mariners

7: Los Angeles Angels (Anaheim Angels, California Angels)

6: Toronto Blue Jays

6: Texas Rangers (Washington Senators)

6: Tampa Bay Rays (Tampa Bay Devil Rays)

5: Houston Astros (Houston Colt .45's)

4: Washington Nationals (Montreal Expos)

4: Milwaukee Brewers

3: Arizona Diamondbacks

3: Colorado Rockies

3: Miami Marlins (Florida Marlins)

2: Kansas City Royals

JAYSON STARK AND WEIRD STUFF

Last Thursday in Philadelphia: Phillies 7, Mets 1, entering the top of the ninth. ... Abracadabra. ... Your final: [Mets 8, Phillies 7](#).

Monday in Chicago (South Side): White Sox 8, Guardians 2, entering the top of the ninth. ... Really? Again? Right. Again. ... [Guardians 12, White Sox 9](#), would be your final score, in 11 incomprehensible innings.

So if that just happened, how can we still use a word like “impossible” to describe it? Well, according to my friends at MLB Network’s fabulous research department, clubs in that mess are still hanging from the edge of the cliff by their pinkies, even though we can’t quite describe them as technically dead, because ...

- Teams in that spot — trailing by at least six runs in the ninth inning or later — were riding an enjoyable little *857-game losing streak* before last Thursday.
- But hey, at least *road teams* in that spot had fared much better. They’d lost “only” *their last 570 games in a row*.
- Yeah, but let’s keep going. This is the 147th season of [Major League Baseball](#). So that’s thousands of weeks of baseball, right? How many of those other weeks had featured *two* teams winning games in which they were down six-plus runs, on the road, entering the ninth inning? According to STATS Perform, that had *never* happened twice within the span of *any* week. And it hadn’t even happened twice in the same season *in 85 years* (since 1937).

No team had won a game like this in 857 games. Then two teams won a game like this in a span of 10 games/five days. So what were the chances of that happening to two teams over any span of 10 games/five days?

Those odds were about *50,000-to-1*, give or take a few hundred. Yes, 50,000-to-1.

The Mets hadn’t won a game in which they trailed by six runs entering the ninth *in 25 years*. It was so long ago ([Sept. 13, 1997](#)), **Bernard Gilkey** hit the walk-off homer in the last game it happened.

The Phillies had lost one game in which they led by six-plus in the ninth or later *in the last 85 years*. But then there’s ...

Josh Naylor! What a story. Eleven months ago, Naylor suffered one of the most gruesome injuries — to his leg and ankle, in a horrific June collision — that we’ve witnessed in a long time. Now he’s back. So that alone is remarkable enough. But then ...

This guy hit *a game-tying grand slam* with two outs in the ninth ... and then *a walk-off three-run homer* two innings later. That, too, would fit the word “impossible” — until it happened.

Did you know that ... Naylor *had never had a two-homer game* in the big leagues ... and had never driven in seven runs *in any series* in the big leagues ... and *had never hit a three-run homer* (let alone a slam) in the big leagues ... and *had never hit an extra-inning homer* in the big leagues? But then ...

That same guy became the first player in the live-ball era (dating to when RBIs became an official stat) to drive in seven runs in any game *from the ninth inning on* ... and became the first player in the history of this sport to hit two three-run (or grand-slam) homers *in the ninth inning or later* of any game. Unreal.

JUSTIN TIME — Justin Verlander is already on the exclusive list of men who have pitched three no-hitters. But then, on Tuesday, he made clear that he might not stop at three.

He got one out into the eighth inning against the Twins before allowing his first hit. And that got me thinking: How many pitchers have ever gotten that close to a fourth no-hitter — or, in Nolan Ryan's case — more than four? Baseball-Reference's Kenny Jackelen jumped on that project. And not surprisingly, it's a cool list, even if the only two other names on it are You Know Who.

Nolan Ryan — 15 times!!! (between 1975 and 1991)

Sandy Koufax — one time (the day of his fourth no-hitter, 9/9/65)

Justin Verlander — one time (and counting!)

the Twins' Opening Day shortstop was a guy once picked first overall in the MLB Draft. That would be Carlos Correa.

But then Correa got hurt last week. And up to replace him came ... another shortstop once picked first overall. That would be Royce Lewis.

Two shortstops picked first overall on the same team — has never happened!

Walker Buehler reached 100 career starts this week with a distinction that made me wonder: Why isn't this the talk of Planet Baseball? And that distinction is ... *Best Career WHIP through 100 Starts by Any Starter in the Modern Era!* Buehler's outrageous sub-1.00 WHIP (0.986)

Aaron Judge hit his career first walk off HR. Lead flipping walk-offs by Yankees centerfielders?

Mickey Mantle (Sept. 13, 1959)

Claudell Washington (Sept. 11, 1988)

Dusty Cooke (Aug. 24, 1930)

Here's to Pirates infielder **Josh VanMeter**. What happens when one catcher (**Andrew Knapp**) gets ejected and then the other catcher (**Roberto Pérez**) gets hurt? Apparently, somebody still has to catch. For the Pirates last Saturday, that somebody was VanMeter, strapping on the old face mask for the first time since he was 14 years old.

The good news: He lived to tell about it. The bad news: The Pirates gave up seven runs in the inning he was out there. So I know what you're thinking: Where does he stand on the all-time Catcher's ERA Leaderboard?

Had all seven of those runs been earned, VanMeter would rank No. 1 on that list – at 63.00. That would supplant Red Sox star **Mike Greenwell**, who took one for the team in 1987 – and six runs/three outs later, his catcher's ERA was 54.00.

But fortunately for VanMeter, only three of the Pirates' runs were earned. So at 27.00, VanMeter will be tied for sixth among all mystery catchers in the Baseball-Reference database. The only other active non-catcher with a 27.00 catcher's ERA: **Andrew (Brother of Austin) Romine**, whose one out behind the plate, while playing all nine innings in a game in 2017, was enough for the Tigers to give up one run.

Strange but True pitching lines:

Hunter Greene (Reds), May 5 vs. Brewers: 8 outs, 7 K, 5 HR — What's up with that? Oh, only the first eight-out, seven-whiff, five-homer start ever. That's all.

Jhoan Duran (Twins), Saturday vs. A's: 2 IP, 0 H, 0 R, 0 ER, 1 BB, 5 K, 16 pitches at 100 MPH+ — And what's up with that? Oh, only the first save in the pitch-tracking era of six outs, no hits, five strikeouts and 16 pitches clocked at triple digits.

May 9, game 28, Pirates **Jose Quintana** became the first Pirates starter to win a game this season. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, the Pirates went deeper into a season without a win by a starting pitcher than any team in history.

MLB REACHES SETTLEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON EMPLOYMENT CASE WITH MINOR LEAGUERS

Michael Silverman, Boston Globe

Minor league baseball players and Major League Baseball have reached a settlement in a long-standing class action suit arguing whether they are MLB employees, with the expected reward for the former potentially significant back-pay damages and a significantly changed wage structure.

The parties in the *Senne v. Major League Baseball* case that has been winding its way through the court system since 2014 have agreed to “a confidential memorandum of understanding,” read a letter signed by the lead attorneys in the case. It remains subject to ratification by both sides, and the players’ council said in a statement it could not comment until preliminary approval papers were filed. It sought until July 11 to do so.

The trial was set to begin June 1. In the fall of 2020, the US Supreme Court declined MLB’s appeal to review, sending the case to the California district court.

It was there the players scored a victory in March, when Chief Magistrate Judge Joseph Spero issued a summary judgment that supported the players’ claims, making them covered by state and federal minimum wage and overtime regulations. The only dollar figure on what damages could have looked like was \$1.88 million that Spero wrote the plaintiffs were entitled to for California wage statement violations.

The prospect of a jury finding MLB on the hook for millions of dollars more was one force believed to be behind MLB’s desire to settle.

Along with the specific size of the settlement, still to be determined is the weight Spero’s pre-trial rulings will carry in how MLB pays its minor leaguers going forward.

KING OF THROWS

Tom House rebuilt **Nolan Ryan** and fixed **Randy Johnson**. He worked with Tom Brady and Drew Brees. At 75, he has reinvented himself (again) with an app that teaches young players to pitch the right way.

When most of the world first became familiar with Tom House, he was catching **Hank Aaron**’s record-breaking 715th homer in 1974. House, then a relief pitcher for Atlanta, was stationed in the bullpen beyond the left-field fence at Fulton County Stadium, just where the ball happened to come down.

Exactly as House had planned it.

As it turned out, House was more than just a guy in the right place at the right time. Watch [the clip on YouTube](#), and you’ll see a rooted figure who takes not so much as a shuffle step in either direction. All House had to do was lift his glove and catch the ball.

The man on the mound, Dodgers pitcher **Al Downing**, was, like House, a soft-tossing left-hander. House, having pitched spring training batting practice to Aaron, had an idea what might happen.

“If the pitch was outside and elevated, I knew he would hit it to left-center field,” House said. “So when I got the choice of where I wanted to be, where do you think I put myself?”

In just the right spot, of course. House has exhibited that kind of knack throughout his decades-spanning career in which catching a milestone homer barely cracks the list of interesting things about him.

After eight years as a big league pitcher, and eight more as a big league pitching coach, he earned a doctorate in sports psychology to better understand how pitchers think. He wrote or co-wrote 22 books on pitching. So profound are his theories about how human arms release small objects that a parade of N.F.L. quarterbacks, including Tom Brady and Drew Brees, has come to him for mechanical tutelage.

His influence, and the loyalty it has garnered, got some attention last September, during an episode of the “[Manningcast](#)” edition of “Monday Night Football,” when Eli Manning was discussing Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott’s outlandish warm-up routine. Manning exuberantly explained, “That’s the Tom House stuff!”

It is reasonable to suggest that nobody on the planet knows more about throwing things than Tom House. And after decades of perfecting the mechanics of some of the greatest athletes to walk the planet — sometimes going as far as fixing the flaws in an opponent’s delivery, only to watch that opponent subsequently beat his team — House has shifted gears with a simple goal for his latest act: Fixing the way young players throw baseballs — for free.

Taking It to the People

Today, House is putting his knowledge and experience into an app called Mustard, designed to help parents and coaches correct mechanical flaws in young pitchers. The app’s A.I., built from tens of thousands of three-dimensional models he has compiled over decades of motion-capture studies, analyzes uploaded video and makes recommendations for things like head angle and hip separation. It then feeds the user an assortment of recorded drills, almost all of them executable without the need of a partner, to address whatever issues are identified.

In an age when exclusive coaching carries more cachet than ever, the Mustard team keeps the bulk of the service free, House said, to democratize instruction and keep children involved. (Mustard also includes a subscription model that allows access to seminars and sessions featuring House and assorted big leaguers.)

The face of that democratic movement is a 75-year-old coach who has made a career of working with Hall of Famers yet loves to post earnest encouragements of young players and coaches on Twitter — he insists all the posts come directly from him.

Of huge concern to House is the astounding number of 13-year-olds in this country who quit organized sports by the time they reach high school — 70 percent of them, according to a poll by the National Alliance for Youth Sports. “Giving out elite instruction to 12-year-olds not only helps them play better, but with more fun,” House said. “It keeps them in the sport.”

It is not as simple as that, of course. By House’s calculations, every inch of growth or five pounds gained pushes a growing teenager backward neurophysiologically by two months.

“A 6-foot-7 18-year-old is going to be three years behind a 6-foot-1 18-year-old because of the massive road trip between big toe and release point,” he said.

Coaching 10-year-olds is very different from coaching 16-year-olds. This is all baked into the equation. And House is thriving as a voice of reason who is unafraid to issue a controversial opinion even as he exudes warmth for baseball and its participants.

A Pioneer in the Field

Keen analysis of players’ bodies and movements should not be surprising when it comes to House, who was an early adopter of training technology, even as the rest of baseball actively rejected such things. In the 1980s, he encountered Gideon Ariel, who competed in the Olympics for Israel in the discus and the shot-put and became a pioneer in the field of motion capture. House was so taken by the process that he sold his stake in a San Diego baseball school, where he taught in the off-season, and took a second mortgage on his home to purchase the equipment for use on pitchers.

Not long after, the Texas Rangers, fresh off a 92-loss, last-place season in 1984, came calling. General Manager **Tom Grieve**, 37 at the time, had just hired **Bobby Valentine**, who was only 35 himself, as manager. The young-gun organization didn’t have money to hire an adequate scouting department; both men knew that sticking with the status quo would not be enough.

House, they decided, was a perfect fit.

He brought Ariel’s system to Arlington and recorded Rangers pitchers in previously unheard-of ways. He connected with a Canadian Olympic rowing coach who used thermography — heat maps — to help gauge recovery time. He installed a weight room (an unusual technique because of a longstanding fear of compromised flexibility) and focused on the rear-facing rotator cuff muscles that serve as de facto brakes for the arm. Given the increased gravity of working down a mound, House concluded, deceleration after a pitch causes more damage than everything leading up to it. “If your accelerators are stronger than your decelerators,” he said, “you’re going to break.”

Fortunately for House, his new manager afforded a very long leash for such theorizing.

“We converted a closet into a little lab with three VHS recording machines and two tiny TVs,” Valentine said of House’s setup. “When we started doing motion capture, Tom showed a javelin thrower, a left-handed tennis player and **Kenny Rogers**, who was a young, lefty pitcher on our team. Then he showed how, at strike point — as the racket hit the ball or the ball left the hand — the front leg was firm and the front side had stopped. The bodies and the arms all looked identical. When I saw that, I said, ‘Wow, you’re on to something here.’”

House expanded his experimentation to the realms of sleep and nutrition, things that today are standard in big league clubhouses but were a shock to the 1980s system. He created subliminal audiotapes to aid visualization. (“I really wanted my voice on those tapes,” Valentine said. “Tom never let me.”)

House’s primary weakness as a pitching coach — and on this he will agree — was that he was more interested in process than outcome. Failure was tolerable if it benefited a player’s long-term goals, which was a problem in a sport that pays big league coaches to win games. The Rangers’ front office, however, understood that House’s methods had long-term value.

“I trusted Tom implicitly,” Grieve said. “If he wanted to teach his guys to throw left-handed instead of right-handed, I wasn’t going to tell him not to do it.”

Because most of House’s alchemy occurred behind closed doors, few outside the program had any real idea about what he was doing.

That all changed with a football.

At some point along the way, House realized that the mechanics for throwing footballs and baseballs were identical, so he started putting pigskins in his pitchers’ hands. Tight spirals on a football made for easy assessment, offering a visual clue about whether the pitcher was doing things correctly. Moreover, the weight of the football built functional strength and aided in recovery for pitchers, not to mention it was a workout they enjoyed.

In football-crazy Texas, the sight of Rangers pitchers playing quarterback in the outfield before games was nothing short of sacrilege. Soon, their coach earned a slew of pejorative nicknames like Nuthouse and Outhouse. Even pitcher **Charlie Hough** got in on the action, joking once to The Los Angeles Times, “We’re leading the league in third-down conversions.”

When **Nolan Ryan** joined the Rangers as a free agent before the 1989 season, he was 42 years old and 22 years into a career that had largely established him as the greatest power pitcher in baseball history. Two hundred seventy-three wins were augmented by 4,775 strikeouts, the most in history by a wide margin.

As it turned out, one of the right-hander's greatest strengths was his curiosity. Ryan agreed to give the footballs a try, and soon found himself immersed in an injury-prevention program aimed at prolonging a career that was already historically durable. "There was an instant connection," Grieve said.

The moment reporters saw Ryan — a cattle-ranching Texan who had earned intense respect in the state — tossing a football with teammates, criticism of the practice disappeared.

"That drill was different, and the traditional baseball people didn't believe in it," Ryan said. "Because of that, I think Tom got the stonewall from a lot of different angles. He didn't deserve it."

Over Ryan's first three years with Texas, during which he was 42, 43 and 44 years old, he went 41-25 with a 3.20 E.R.A. and led the league in strikeouts twice, whiffing three times as many men as he walked — something he had done only once to that point.

"Nolan was better after age 40 than before," House said. "He threw three pitches to two locations, and fewer pitches per inning. He added a changeup. He never got hurt. That was this Hall of Fame time."

"Tom helped me slow down the aging process," Ryan said. "He brought recovery to my attention — how long it takes to recuperate from a start and be ready again five days later. That was very different at 44 than it was at 24, and the routine we developed was vital to my process."

It almost defies belief, but five of the Rangers' nine primary pitchers during Ryan's first two seasons with the club — the other four being Hough, Rogers, **Kevin Brown and Jamie Moyer** — played into their 40s. Ryan, Hough and Moyer make the list of the eight oldest players of the modern era. They were righties and lefties, control artists and fireballers and each was looking for ways to extend their careers. No matter their demographic, they had one thing in common: They all learned how to maintain their pitching arms from Tom House.

'I'm a Teacher First'

Randy Johnson was struggling. It was 1992, and Johnson, a tall left-hander with a Ryan-like fastball, was in his fourth full big league season. His talents, though, were undercut by a profound lack of control. At 6 feet 10 inches, Johnson simply possessed too many moving parts for consistent coordination. When the Rangers arrived in Seattle that August, Johnson was 2-7 over his previous nine starts, having walked 52 batters over 56 innings while posting a 5.46 E.R.A.

From the visitors' dugout, House and Ryan knew what he was going through. House had followed Johnson, a fellow University of Southern California alumnus, since the pitcher's college days. Ryan had once been a wild fireballer himself, leading the league in walks eight times in an

11-year span. In 1989, however, which was Ryan's first season under House, the 42-year-old topped 300 strikeouts for the first time in a decade while walking only 98.

He and House wanted to help Johnson. A meeting was arranged for early in the morning, before anyone else arrived at the Kingdome. The three men talked through Johnson's mechanical issues, and House offered one primary suggestion: He wanted Johnson to land on the ball of his foot instead of his heel while striding toward the plate. The results were immediate.

"I'd been losing my arm slot, falling off toward the third-base side, and that tip helped me stay balanced," Johnson said. "I didn't play for the Texas Rangers, but Tom helped me anyway. That meeting was extremely impactful."

Johnson closed his season by striking out 117 batters over his final 11 starts while walking only 47 and shaving about two full runs off his E.R.A. That dominant stretch included a game in September in which he struck out 18 Rangers batters — a result that gained extra notice when Johnson credited House with his improvement.

For House, any negative attention he drew was worth having helped a struggling pitcher. "I'm a teacher first and everything else second," he said. "It wasn't even a question for me, really."

It was certainly worth it for Johnson, who pitched until he was 46, winning 303 games and five Cy Young Awards, while striking out 4,875 batters, the second most in history behind Ryan.

Discussing that meeting decades later, Johnson, now a Hall of Famer, was left with one nagging question.

"That help that Tom House gave me — why didn't I get it in high school, or in college, or in four years of the minor leagues?" he said. "Why couldn't someone else have seen it along the way?"

Why? Because Tom House has made a career of seeing things that other people can't. He continues to prove it every day, with a decidedly 2022 approach of having an A.I. version of his deep knowledge available to any player who wants to download it. It is a teaching method that could and should outlive him. To House, having a say in the future of how the game is played is all he needs to make it worth the time and effort.

"I'm 75 years old, and we're here talking about Mustard," he said. "It makes me realize that we're just getting started."

The Greatest Baseball Players in History to Have Served in the Military

Mike Morgan, Bleacher Report

In honor of the approaching Memorial Day holiday, it is important to take a moment and reflect on the freedoms that Americans enjoy every day. It is important to understand that throughout the history of the United States, even through the present day, that there have been many brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

This list is comprised of the 10 greatest baseball players who also served in the military. Every player on this list is in the Hall of Fame.

Some were drafted. Some enlisted of their own accord.

Yogi Berra, New York Yankees, Catcher (1946-1965)

Berra had ever participated in was the D-Day invasion by the United States at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. Berra served as a gunner's mate on board a landing craft on that fateful day.

In addition to his service at Omaha Beach, Berra also spent time in Northern Africa as well as Italy while enlisted in the Navy.

Jackie Robinson, Brooklyn Dodgers, Infielder (1947-1956)

On April 3, 1942, Robinson entered the United States Army and began officer candidate school.

By 1943, Robinson was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army.

Despite the tremendous success that Robinson would later enjoy while playing professional baseball, it was deemed that he could not engage in combat overseas, despite his unit's deployment, because of a previously broken ankle.

This condition led to his being medically discharged in November 1945.

Joe DiMaggio, New York Yankees, Center Fielder (1936-1951)

from 1943 to 1945, DiMaggio was absent from the Yankee lineup, as he served in the United States Air Force, achieving the rank of staff sergeant.

Initially, during his time in the service, DiMaggio was assigned to the special services division of the Air Force and was based out of Santa Ana Army Air Base, which also served as the Air Force's West-Coast training center.

After having spent some time playing baseball for the Santa Ana team, DiMaggio was re-assigned and transferred to Honolulu, Hawaii, where he starred on that bases' baseball team.

While in Honolulu, DiMaggio developed problems with stomach ulcers, which caused him to be hospitalized a couple of times over the next year or so.

Finally, on September 14, 1945, Staff Sgt. DiMaggio was discharged from the service and allowed the ability to resume his professional baseball career.

Bob Feller, Cleveland Indians, Starting Pitcher (1936-1956)

enlisted in the U.S. Navy on December 8, 1941—the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Feller's time in the service cost him the better part of four seasons in the Majors.

Feller's time in the service was eventful.

After not being satisfied serving in a special physical fitness program where he continued to play baseball and entertain soldiers and citizens alike, while raising money for the war effort, Feller enrolled in gunnery school and was assigned to the USS Alabama upon his completion of the program in the fall of 1942.

Feller spent the next 26 months as chief specialist aboard the Alabama, in charge of a crew in control of the anti-aircraft equipment. During this time, the Alabama ran several successful missions, attacking Kwajalein, the Gilberts and the Marshalls, which are all islands located in the central Pacific Ocean region.

Stan Musial, St. Louis Cardinals, Outfielder (1941-1963)

Musial spent just under 14 months in the Navy, serving as a seaman second class.

During his tenure in the Navy, Musial served with the special services, mostly in the capacity of entertaining troops by playing baseball.

Warren Spahn, Boston Braves, Starting Pitcher (1942-1965)

Spahn also served with the 276th Engineer Combat Battalion, the 1159th Engineer Combat Group in the U.S. Army.

His combat group fought heroically in one of the most famous battles of World War II, the Battle of the Bulge. After fighting their way out of the Hurtgen Forest during the infamous battle, the 276th was then tasked with the responsibility of monitoring and protecting the flow of traffic over the Ludendorff Bridge.

In March 1945, when the 276th received this assignment, the bridge was of vital importance to the United States and their efforts in achieving victory in Germany. It was the only bridge still standing that allowed for passage across the Rhine River.

During his time spent protecting the Ludendorff, Spahn was injured during the near-continuous, daily enemy fire. Spahn, at the time a staff sergeant, suffered an injury to his foot inflicted by flying shards of shrapnel.

For his efforts, Spahn was awarded a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart and was promoted to first lieutenant.

By March of 1946, the Germans had surrendered and Spahn was Stateside, preparing to rejoin the Boston Braves.

Christy Mathewson, New York Giants, Starting Pitcher (1900-1916)

Mathewson also served in World War I. During his time as a captain in the United States Army, Mathewson served within the gas and flame division. This was the same unit, specializing in chemical warfare, that Ty Cobb served in.

It was during his service with Cobb, that Mathewson was accidentally gassed during a training exercise. It was an accident that had later been blamed for Mathewson's developing tuberculosis, which eventually caused his death in 1925.

Willie Mays, San Francisco Giants, Center Fielder (1951-1973)

In 1952, Mays' number was called and he was drafted into the army.

Mays spent about a year-and-a-half in the service. While Mays' official assignment was to the instructional division of the physical fitness department at Camp Eustis, Virginia, over the course of this time, Mays' primary responsibility was to play baseball and provide entertainment.

For two seasons, Mays played in the Army baseball league, providing entertainment and continuing to hone his craft.

Ty Cobb, Detroit Tigers, Center Fielder (1905-1928)

Cobb's insistence in joining the Army during World War I has been well documented. At one point he had attempted to join, but was placed in a deferred class, given the fact that he had a wife and three young children.

Eventually, though, Cobb did receive his wish and was commissioned as an officer in the US Army's gas and flame division. This elite unit was akin to today's special forces units.

However, by the time Cobb reached France, where he was to train prior to entering combat, the

Armistice was signed, thus meaning Cobb would not see any combat during his days with the Army.

Ted Williams, Boston Red Sox, Left Fielder (1939-1960)

After being drafted in 1942, Williams enlisted with the Navy. His goal: becoming a Naval fighter pilot.

During the initial months of Williams' service, prior to beginning his primary flight school training, he played baseball for the base's team.

When it came time for his primary flight school training, it was quickly evident that Williams was as effective in the air as he was in the batter's box. He set multiple cadet records in aerial gunnery.

In May 1944, Williams was commissioned a second lieutenant and had earned his pilot's wings.

Between May 1944 and June 1945, Williams served as an instructor with the United States Marine Corps reserves.

When word arrived that the war had ended, Williams was stationed in Hawaii, where he had been preparing to deploy, wherever necessary, as a replacement pilot.

On January 28, 1946, Williams' time in the Marine Corps had ended and he was honorably discharged from duty.

While Williams may have thought that this was the end of his service, he was recalled into active duty in 1952. He was deployed with the Marine Aircraft Group 33 to Korea.

During his time in Korea, Williams flew 39 combat missions before being relieved of his flight duties due to problems resulting from an ear infection.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Name the five active players in the top 200 career Total Bases leaders.

Albert Pujols 6,058 4th place

Miguel Cabrera 5,164 18th

Robinson Cano 4,274 63rd

Nelson Cruz	3,672	136 th
Joey Votto	3,507	169 th

Refreshing your memory, the top ten:

Aaron	6856
Musial	6134
Mays	6080
Pujols	6058
Bonds	5976
Cobb	5854
ARod	5813
Ruth	5793
Rose	5752
Yastrzemski	5539

HOUSEKEEPING

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