

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

8.7.2022

Good morning baseball fans,

1/3 of the season to go. What a week.

Juan Soto and Vin Scully. Big stuff. Refill your coffee and take a few minutes to review a historic trade, remember the best baseball broadcaster ever, plus perfect games, lots of odd stuff and of course, trivia.

Vin Scully highlights (a compilation of great calls, Koufax 1965 perfect game, Kevin Costner's Scully retirement speech):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fg2ZAlcRyw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WINiz0Bfb-0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XV9oaU-0050>

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE (TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE)

33 players have 3,000 or more career hits. Five of them had more than 3,500 hits. Name the five.

With **Robinson Cano** released this week there are four active players with more than 2,000 career hits. Name the four.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Honus Wagner strikes again (Bleacher Report)

We have a new record baseball card sale. Shocker: It's another T206 **Honus Wagner**.

- The card, produced by American Tobacco Co. between 1909-11, went for \$7.25 million in a private sale. The buyer and seller remain anonymous.
- The previous record was \$6.6 million for a different SGC 3-graded T206 Honus Wagner that sold a year ago.

That Wagner card, as well as the 1952 Topps **Mickey Mantle** (one of which sold last year for \$5.2 million), remain the two holy-grail baseball cards because of how few exist and the popularity of the players, *The Athletic* card guru Bill Shea says.

Justin Verlander's amazing season rolls along. His 15-3 record is dazzling. His 1.73 ERA is league-leading. His 0.85 WHIP is minuscule. He passed 130 innings pitched this week to vest his \$25 million 2023 player option. He can opt out after the season and command potentially a bigger deal next season.

The only two pitchers in the AL/NL Modern Era (since 1900) to post an ERA under 2.00 and qualify for the league lead at age 39 or older--**Cy Young** (1.99 ERA in 1907 at 40 & 1.26 in 1908 at 41) and **Roger Clemens** (1.87 ERA in 2005 at 42)

The Angels hit 7 solo HRs against the A's Thursday but lost the game 8-7. It was the sixth time any club had seven homers in a loss, and the first since the Twins did it last year in a 17-14 defeat to the Tigers on July 28. It also marked the first time dating back to 1900 that a club hit seven solo homers but didn't score any other runs.

One Oakland A's prospect made history this week. **Denzel Clarke**, an outfielder for the Lansing Lugnuts and the 15th-ranked prospect in the A's organization, became the first professional baseball player to hit two inside-the-park home runs in two straight games.

First, Clarke hit a two-run homer in Lansing's 15-8 loss to West Michigan on Tuesday after he hit a shot into the left field wall. That marked the first inside-the-park home run for a Lugnuts player since 2018.

Then on Wednesday, when the Lugnuts beat the West Michigan Whitecaps 8-1, Clarke hit a deep ball into right field that bounced off the wall and back past the outfielders. He made it home without any attempt to get him out.

In the expansion era (since 1961), three MLB players have accomplished that feat: **Dick Allen** in 1972, **Greg Gagne** in 1986 and **Ruben Sierra** in 1987. In fact, two days later Sierra notched

another inside-the-parker to make it three in three games. But, no one has done it in consecutive games.

Thirteen. As in: The Rays worked 13 walks on Friday night, a franchise record, displaying patience that was eventually rewarded in a 5-3 win over the Tigers.

Friday's walk-a-thon broke the Rays' previous franchise record of 12, which was set during an 11-inning game against the Marlins on June 19, 2010. It was the highest single-game total for any team in the Majors this season and the most since the Yankees worked 14 in a loss to the Astros last July.

I'm sure that got you to thinking...

Most walks team – season. 1949 Red Sox, 853.

Most walks team – game. 1916 Tigers vs A's, 18, 1948 Indians vs Red Sox, 18.

Most walks both teams – game. 1916 Tigers vs. A's, 30.

Most walks team inning – consecutive. 1909 White Sox vs. Senators, 7.

The Montreal Expos (versus the Los Angeles Dodgers) played a twenty-two inning game on August 23, 1989, without a single base on balls setting the Major League record for longest game (by number of innings) without a walk by a team.

On September 11, 1949, the New York Yankees had eleven base on balls, courtesy of the Washington Senators, during the third inning setting the Major League mark for walks during an inning. The National League mark for walks during an inning was set by the Chicago Cubs who walked nine Cincinnati Red Legs batters in the fifth inning of a game played on April 24, 1957.

Did you know that on May 2, 1956, the New York Giants (seven) and Chicago Cubs (four) played a seventeen inning game and set a Major League record for most intentional base on balls by both teams during an extra inning game with eleven?

Braves 3B **Austin Riley** had a pretty strong July. The third baseman hit .423/.460/.885 with 44 hits and 92 total bases. It was the biggest July anyone has had since **Jason Giambi** posted a 1498 OPS in the summer of 2005.

Dylan Cease, of the White Sox who allowed one run over six innings Friday against the Rangers, recorded his 13th straight start allowing one earned run or less. He became the first non-opener to accomplish this feat since ERA became an official stat (1913), and has allowed a

paltry total of five earned runs over his last 76 innings pitched. **Liam Hendricks** finished it up, earning his 100th career save.

From the old baseball card file, the last White Sox pitcher to lead the American League in ERA was **Joe Horlen** (2.06 ERA in 1967).

Something to watch--the White Sox play the Twins 9 times in September.

Aug. 4, 1956: Lincoln Chiefs outfielder **Dick Stuart** slugged his 60th homer of the season in the Class A Western League on Aug. 4, 1956, becoming the seventh Minor Leaguer ever to reach that plateau. He followed **Tony Lazzeri** (1925), **Moose Clabaugh** (1926), **Joe Hauser** (1930, 1933), **Bob Crues** (1948), **Joe Bauman** (1954) and **Bob Lennon** (1954). Stuart finished the 1956 season with 66 blasts and went on to hit 228 in a 10-year big league career. **Ken Guettler** and **Frosty Kennedy** also joined the 60-homer club in the Minors later in 1956 -- and no one has done so since.

Most homers in a U.S.-based Minor League season since Stuart? **Steve Bilko**. After crushing 55 homers in 1956 in the Pacific Coast League, Bilko encored with 56 more in the PCL in 1957 to lead the Minors. He drove 76 balls out of the park in 10 big league seasons with six clubs, including 21 for the 1954 Cardinals and 20 for the expansion 1961 Angels.

Twenty-five players have batted for the A's this year; just five have an OBP above .300. They've given 83% of their playing time to players who are at least 27 years old. They have not used a single pitcher, not one, younger than 25, and 90% of their innings have been thrown by pitchers who are at least 27.

The Rockies will complete their 30th season this year, and they have never finished in first place. They and the Marlins are the only teams in AL/NL history that have never finished in first place.

Joey Votto

Most times leading the league in on-base percentage:

(1) **Ted Williams**, 12

(2) **Barry Bonds and Babe Ruth**, 10

(4) **Rogers Hornsby**, 9

(5) **Ty Cobb and Joey Votto**, 7

In Votto's 16 seasons in Cincinnati, the Reds have had a winning record just five times (if you include the COVID season), have made the postseason just four times (if you include the COVID season) and have not finished even as high as second place in a decade.

In 2010, Joey Votto won the MVP award. It was just a beautiful and balanced season. He hit .324, second in the league, but his .424 on-base and .600 slugging both led the league. He hit 37 homers and 36 doubles. He drove in 113 runs and scored 106. He led the Reds to their first playoff appearance in 15 years.

His career numbers — 2,089 hits, 341 home runs, 1,103 RBIs — seem short of the Hall of Fame. But for 10 seasons, 2008-2017, while playing mostly for losing teams, Votto hit .313/.429/.540.

Under baseball's new, expanded postseason format, the only remaining incentive for each is a top wild-card berth. That's no small thing — the top wild card will play entirely at home in the best-of-three first round. Yet every team that fails to secure a bye will find it exceedingly difficult to win the four rounds necessary to become a World Series champion.

The lowest wild-card qualifier will be entirely on the road against the lowest-ranking division champion. The other two wild cards will face each other, with the survivor advancing to the Division Series against one of the clubs that earned a bye — most likely the Yankees and Astros in the AL, and the Dodgers and Mets or Braves in the NL.

From the Joe Sheehan newsletter--MLB has expanded the playoff field three times in 29 years to provide its television partners with the product they value most. Forget all the stated reasons about competition -- expanding the playoffs is about TV money, full stop. This last expansion, which now allows 40% of the league into the postseason, has stretched the definition of "midseason contender" to a point that confuses the teams themselves. Remember that MLB wanted to expand the playoffs to 14 teams, and almost certainly will try again in 2027. The NHL, NBA, and NFL all have a model in which teams that are barely good, much less championship-caliber, get to be nominal contenders. For better or worse -- you all know where I stand -- that structure has now come to baseball.

Edwin Díaz's 18.1 strikeouts per 9 innings this season for the Mets would set a record for a pitcher with at least 20 saves, passing **Aroldis Chapman** (17.7 K's per 9 in 2014).

Rob Gronkowski: 6-foot-6, 265 pounds

Aaron Judge: 6-foot-7, 282 pounds

Judge is older than you might think. He didn't make the majors until age 25. Bryce Harper has played twice as many games as Judge.

The **Josh Hader-Taylor Rogers** swap was the first time in MLB history the league's two saves leaders were traded for each other.

*Brewers trade RP-L **Josh Hader** to the Padres for RP-L **Taylor Rogers**, SP/RP-R **Dinelson Lamet**, OF-R **Esteury Ruiz**, and SP-L **Robert Gasser***

Angels rookie left-hander **Reid Detmers** made history with an immaculate second inning against the Rangers on Sunday, as he became only the third pitcher in AL/NL history to record both a no-hitter and an immaculate inning in the same season.

Detmers joined Hall of Famer **Sandy Koufax** (1962, '63 and '64) and **Mike Fiers** (2015) as the only pitchers to achieve that feat. Notably, Detmers also became the first rookie to do so. It was part of a stellar outing for the 23-year-old, who set a career high with 12 strikeouts over seven strong innings in a 5-2 loss at Angel Stadium. Detmers posted a 1.13 ERA with 31 strikeouts in 24 innings over his past four starts, dating back to July 8.

It was the third immaculate inning in Angels history.

Detmers joined **Nolan Ryan** (July 9, 1972) and **Garrett Richards** (June 4, 2014) as the only Halos pitchers to achieve the feat.

It was the 109th immaculate inning in AL/NL history, with 99 pitchers accomplishing the feat. But incredibly, the Rangers have been the victims of three immaculate innings this season, including two against the Astros on June 15.

Brewers bench coach **Pat Murphy** about **Dustin Pedroia's** candidacy for the Hall of Fame.

Murphy, who coached Pedroia at Arizona State, is not an impartial observer. But he acknowledges Pedroia is unlikely to get in via the BBWAA ballot and would have to find his way in through the Contemporary Baseball Committee.

“Hopefully a committee examines what he did as a player, how he changed scouting and what he meant to setting the culture with the Red Sox,” Murphy said. “To me, if you look at the entirety of what he did, he’s a Hall of Famer. He has three rings and was one of the best second basemen of his time.”

Pedroia does indeed have three rings, although he played only three games in 2018. Still, Murphy makes good points.

Pedroia had a career slash line of .318/.376/.449 after the 2016 season. Playing injured over the final 114 games of his career dropped it to .299/.365/.439.

Jay Jaffe’s well-regarded JAWS system rates Pedroia the 19th best second baseman in history. But only six second basemen have been inducted since 1991, none since **Craig Biggio** in 2015.

“He’s somebody as a voter you’d have to give a lot of thought to,” Murphy said. “I hope he is considered. He was a special player.”

Before we anoint the Padres after the Soto trade something to remember:

- If we don’t include the 60-game aberration season of 2020, the Padres haven’t won a playoff game in 16 years (**Chris Young** over **Jeff Suppan** and the Cardinals, Game 3, 2006 NLDS).
- Not counting 2020, the Padres haven’t won a postseason *series* since the 1998 NLCS.
- Even if we count 2020, they’ve won four postseason series in the history of their franchise, now in Season No. 54. Their good friends, the Dodgers, have won 21 series (and a wild-card game) since then.

Since June 1 the Atlanta Braves have the best record in MLB.

Seattle landed **Luis Castillo** from the Reds at the trade deadline. Last time the Mariners traded for a top of the rotation starter—1989 **Randy Johnson** from the Expos.

Richie Ashburn was purchased by the expansion New York Mets for the 1962 season and was the first batter in franchise history. He had a good year offensively, batting .306, and was the team's first All-Star Game representative. It was, however, a frustrating year for the polished

professional, who had begun his career with a winner and found himself playing for the least successful team in modern baseball history (with a record of 40–120). He retired at the end of the season.

In his last five seasons, Ashburn played for the 8th-place Phillies, the 7th-place Cubs, and the 10th-place Mets. The infamous first-year Mets club won only a quarter of its games, and Ashburn decided to retire from active play. The last straw might have been during the Mets' 120th loss, when Ashburn was one of the three Mets victims in a triple play pulled off by his former teammates, the 9th-place Cubs. According to Jimmy Breslin, it was the prospect of sitting on the bench that led Ashburn to retire at age 35: "He sat on the bench for a while with another team once and it bothered him badly. And he said that if he ever had to be a benchwarmer for the New York Mets he'd commit suicide."

In 15 seasons Ashburn 2574 hits, batted .308, won 2 batting titles, led the majors in hits twice, led the league in OBP 4 times and made 6 All-Star teams.

After he retired, Ashburn teamed up with Harry Kalas in the Phillies broadcasting booth.

On one occasion, he was talking to Harry Kalas about his superstitions during his playing days. He said that he once had a habit of keeping a successful baseball bat in bed with him between games, not trusting the clubhouse crew to give him the same bat the next day. Ashburn told Kalas that he had "slept with a lot of old bats" in his day.

When calling late innings, Ashburn would occasionally ask on-air if the staff of Celebre's Pizza, a nearby pizzeria in South Philly, was listening to the radio. Pizza would then arrive at the radio booth 15–20 minutes later. The Phillies requested that Ashburn discontinue the practice, as Celebre's was not a Phillies sponsor, and it was considered free advertising.

Ashburn was allowed to make on-air birthday and anniversary wishes during Phillies games. To circumvent the Phillies' request, he started to say "I'd like to send out a special birthday wish to the Celebre's twins – Plain & Pepperoni!" Harry Kalas was heard on radio in 2007 making a similar wish.

From 1920 to 1925, **Rogers Hornsby** led the National League in batting average, OBP, and slugging percentage (and by extension OPS and OPS+) *every single year*. Bonds and Ruth swept the triple-slash categories three times combined, while Hornsby did it six years in a row.

Building on last week's **Minnie Miñoso** references: made a professional plate appearance in his age-77 season. (He walked.) Miñoso, who made his major league debut in 1949, came out of retirement in his 50s for five combined games with the **Bill Veeck**–owned White Sox in 1976 and 1980. Veeck's son Mike then activated him again in 1993 and 2003 for the Northern

League's St. Paul Saints, making Miñoso the only person to play professionally in seven different decades (or six, for that matter). Miñoso's stat page points out that when he played for St. Paul in 2003, he had 50.3 years on the average Northern League player. B-Ref also informs me that Miñoso faced pitchers who appeared in the majors as early as 1936 (**Bob Feller**) and as late as 1993 (**Frank Tanana**), as well as another era-spanning pitcher, **Satchel Paige**, who made his pro pitching debut in 1927.

There may be no greater concentration of talent in a single draft than the first round of the 2011 draft. In your garden-variety draft, even a first-round pick has only a small chance of becoming an impact big leaguer, but the 2011 draft was anything but ordinary.

The first pick in this draft was UCLA right-hander **Gerrit Cole**, though Rice third baseman **Anthony Rendon** (no. 6) could've gone with the top pick if not for injury concerns. The Seattle Mariners drafted Virginia right-hander **Danny Hultzen** second, but reportedly considered a high school infielder named **Francisco Lindor**, who ultimately went eighth. The Diamondbacks took Cole's college teammate, **Trevor Bauer**, third overall, one spot ahead of **Dylan Bundy**. Bundy's Oklahoma high school rival, **Archie Bradley**, joined Bauer in Arizona. **Javier Báez** went ninth overall, **George Springer** 11th, **José Fernández** 14th, and so on down the line through Cy Young winner **Blake Snell** at no. 52.

The first round of the 2011 draft, which swelled to 60 picks after the compensation round, has produced 13 All-Stars so far, including seven from the first 14 picks. First-rounders from this draft have featured in six of the past seven World Series. The one exception, 2015, featured a Mets club that was carried to the playoffs by **Yoenis Céspedes**, acquired from Detroit at that year's deadline for pitching prospect **Michael Fulmer**, the no. 44 pick in the 2011 draft and the 2016 AL Rookie of the Year.

The most impressive fact about this draft class is that the top 29 picks all played at least one game in the major leagues, which is an unbelievably high hit rate. Though for all the star power in the first round, the best player in this draft didn't go until the fifth round, when the Boston Red Sox spent pick no. 172 on a Nashville high school second baseman named **Mookie Betts**.

We have highlighted **Bob Gibson's** amazing 1968 season here many times. From *The Ringer*, Between June and August, Gibson started 18 games and pitched nine innings 17 times; in the 18th game, he went 11. Gibson threw more complete games in those three months than **Zack Greinke**, **Madison Bumgarner**, and **Max Scherzer** have thrown in their *careers*.

His 13 total shutouts in 1968 are the most for any pitcher in the live ball era.

From the “You better make the most of your opportunities” file--Two players (among many) who played one game in the majors, different results. **Ron Wright** struck out and then grounded into a triple play and a double play in his lone game with the 2002 Mariners, to **John Paciorek**, who singled three times and walked twice in his only major league look as an 18-year-old with the Houston Colt .45s. **Larry Yount** (Robin’s brother) injured himself warming up for his major league debut so he got credit for the game, but he never pitched in the majors again.

You probably remember **Art Shamsky** as an outfielder for the Amazing Mets of 1969. But Shamsky had an amazing game against the Reds in 1966. Shamsky didn’t enter this game until the eighth inning, and his team lost.

Shamsky was double-switched into the game in the eighth inning with the Reds down a run. In the bottom of that inning, he hit a two-run home run to put the Reds in front. Cincinnati’s bullpen blew the lead, and in the 10th inning Shamsky hit a game-tying two-run shot. The Reds allowed two more runs in the top of the 11th, and in the bottom of the frame Shamsky hit *another* game-tying home run, but the Pirates put the game away in the 13th before Shamsky could hit again.

The Ringer also discussed a feature at baseballreference.com that allows you to convert any batter’s stats to how they would have done at Coors Field.

The best use of this feature is to virtually place every batter in MLB history in the most hitter-friendly ballpark we’ve ever seen. The Rockies averaged 7.1 runs per game at home in 1999, in the thin air of pre-humidor Coors Field at the height of the steroid era—and were outscored, allowing 7.7 runs on average.

Some highlights of the 1999 Coors translation:

- 2001 **Barry Bonds** would have hit 95 home runs. A whopping 15 player seasons—including **Pete Alonso** last year—would have landed at 70 homers or more.
- 1931 **Lou Gehrig** would have collected 251 RBIs. A total of 99 seasons, including seven from Gehrig, would have reached 200 or higher.
- 1924 **Rogers Hornsby** would have hit .484, less than a dozen hits shy of .500.
- (Playing the entirety of their careers in ’99 Coors, the site says, **Hank Aaron** would have hit 1,014 dingers to **Barry Bonds**’s 998.)

Relief pitcher **Ryan Webb** played 8 seasons for the Marlins, Padres, Indians and Rays from 2009-2016. He pitched in 375 games. Incredibly he finished 115 of those games yet did not record a single save.

Yankee fans know how brutal it has been to watch **Joey Gallo** at the plate this year. He was hitting .164 when he was traded to the Dodgers. Gallo has a chance to post the lowest batting average (400 plate appearances) since the mound was set in its current place in 1893.

In case you were wondering who Gallo is “competing” with:

Adam Dunn, 2011 White Sox, .154

Jackie Bradley Jr., 2021 Red Sox, .163

Chris Davis, 2018 Orioles, .168

Martin Maldonado, 2021 Astros, .172

Dal Maxvill, 1969 Cards, .175

The Orioles celebrated the 30th anniversary of Camden Yards with a pregame ceremony Saturday that included Hall of Famers **Eddie Murray**, **Mike Mussina**, and **Brooks Robinson**.

Baltimore, which entered the day 1½ games out of the final wild card in the American League, has now won 21 of its last 28 games. The Orioles (56-51) have already reached their highest win total in five years.

REMEMBERING VIN SCULLY

Compiled from multiple sources.

(I met Scully once in the bar at the Scottsdale Ritz-Carlton. He was sitting with then Dodgers manager **Davey Johnson**—even in a 45 second interaction with a stranger Scully was genuinely pleasant to me).

Mr. Scully was the enduring face of the franchise. He was a national sports treasure as well, broadcasting for CBS and NBC. He called baseball’s Game of the Week, All-Star Games, the

playoffs and more than two dozen World Series. In 2009, the American Sportscasters Association voted him No. 1 on its list of the “Top 50 Sportscasters of All Time.”

Informing Dodgers fans in Brooklyn and Los Angeles for 67 years.

As the longest-tenured broadcaster with a single team in pro sports history, Scully saw it all and called it all. He began in the 1950s era of **Pee Wee Reese and Jackie Robinson**, on to the 1960s with **Don Drysdale and Sandy Koufax**, into the 1970s with **Steve Garvey and Don Sutton**, and through the 1980s with **Orel Hershiser and Fernando Valenzuela**. In the 1990s, it was **Mike Piazza and Hideo Nomo**, followed by **Clayton Kershaw, Manny Ramirez, and Yasiel Puig** in the 21st century.

He opened broadcasts with the familiar greeting, “Hi, everybody, and a very pleasant good evening to you wherever you may be.”

Vincent Edward Scully was born Nov. 29, 1927, in the Bronx. He was the son of a silk salesman who died of pneumonia when Scully was 7. His mother moved the family to Brooklyn, where the red-haired, blue-eyed Scully grew up playing stickball in the streets.

As a child, Scully would grab a pillow, put it under the family’s four-legged radio and lay his head directly under the speaker to hear whatever college football game was on the air. With a snack of saltine crackers and a glass of milk nearby, the boy was transfixed by the crowd’s roar that raised goosebumps. He thought he’d like to call the action himself.

Scully, who played outfield for two years on the Fordham University baseball team, began his career by working baseball, football, and basketball games for the university’s radio station. Mr. Scully hit one home run as a college baseball player, an inside-the-park variety, against City College. But he flourished as a broadcaster for the Fordham radio station, WFUV, working basketball and football games and, in his senior year, also calling baseball, having left the team after two seasons so he could get behind the microphone.

At age 22, he was hired by a CBS radio affiliate in Washington, D.C.

He soon joined Hall of Famer Red Barber and Connie Desmond in the Brooklyn Dodgers’ radio and television booths. In 1953, at age 25, Scully became the youngest person to broadcast a World Series game, a mark that still stands.

He moved west with the Dodgers in 1958. Scully called three perfect games — Don Larsen in the 1956 World Series, **Sandy Koufax** in 1965 and **Dennis Martinez** in 1991 — and 18 no-hitters.

He also was on the air when **Don Drysdale** set his scoreless innings streak of 58 2/3 innings in 1968 and again when **Orel Hershiser** broke the record with 59 consecutive scoreless innings 20 years later.

When **Hank Aaron** hit his 715th home run to break **Babe Ruth**'s record in 1974, it was against the Dodgers and, of course, Scully called it.

He often said it was best to describe a big play quickly and then be quiet so fans could listen to the pandemonium. After Koufax's perfect game in 1965, Scully went silent for 38 seconds before talking again. He was similarly silent for a time after **Kirk Gibson**'s pinch-hit home run to win Game 1 of the 1988 World Series.

Scully called 25 World Series and 12 All-Star Games.

He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1982, received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame that year, and also had the stadium's press box named for him in 2001. The street leading to Dodger Stadium's main gate was named in his honor in 2016.

That same year he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama.

In national roles for CBS Sports and NBC Sports, Scully handled World Series, All-Star Games, NFL games, tennis matches and golf tournaments. He was feted not just with the National Baseball Hall of Fame's Ford Frick Award (1982) and the Commissioner's Historic Achievement Award (2014) but with a Lifetime Achievement Emmy Award from the National Radio Hall of Fame (1995). He was a four-time winner of the National Sportscaster of the Year honor (1965, 1978, 1982, 2016), an inductee of the American Sportscasters Association's Hall of Fame (1992) and the Sports Broadcasting Hall of Fame (2008), and a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2016), among many other honors.

In 1953, Barber's paycheck dispute would lead to Scully's most high-profile assignment to date - the World Series. At 25, he was the youngest to call a Fall Classic. And two years later, he'd call the final out of **Johnny Podres**' Game 7 shutout of the Yankees, which sealed the Dodgers' long-awaited first Series title.

Scully quotes:

"How good was **Stan Musial**?" he once said. "Good enough to take your breath away."

"**Bob Gibson** pitches like he's double-parked," he once said.

"Football is to baseball," he once said, "like blackjack is to bridge. One is the quick jolt; the other the deliberate, slow-paced game of skill."

Scully once played a game against Yale and their first baseman, **George H.W. Bush**, in 1947. When he started calling baseball games in 1950, 87-year-old **Connie Mack** was managing the Philadelphia Athletics. Mack was born during the Civil War and Scully had met him.

Written about his last broadcast:

It is midnight in the City of Angels, Los Angeles, California, and Vin Scully, whose name will always remind you of the way baseball can clutch your heart and make you float a few inches above the ground, rounds the bases, and he lets that sound, that wonderful sound, wash over him one final time, like water pouring from a shower head.

MORE REMEMBERING VIN SCULLY

The Los Angeles Dodgers announced late Tuesday that legendary broadcaster Vin Scully has died at the age of 94.

Scully, a consummate storyteller, called Dodgers baseball from 1950, sharing duties with Red Barber, until 2016, following the team across the country from Brooklyn to Los Angeles. He was the last of the solo practitioners, calling Dodger games without a sidekick, doing play-by-play and color by himself. Color, he had in spades, elevating the broadcast of a stick-and-ball match among overgrown kids in pajamas with his oratory.

As a baseball fan growing up in New York, Scully was just an occasional presence in my life. I remember him, from that time, mostly for his call of **Bill Buckner's** error in Game Six of the 1986 World Series. *"Little roller up along first. Behind the bag! It gets through Buckner. Here comes Knight, and the Mets win it!"* Understated, professional, and perfect. Two years later, Scully would make perhaps his most famous call, laying out for a full minute while **Kirk Gibson** circled the bases, finally saying, *"In a year that has been so improbable, the impossible has happened."*

A year after that, I was a Los Angeles resident with access to all the Vin Scully I could handle. I worked evenings, my shifts at a student work-study job overlapping with Dodgers games, and I'd listen to him, on and off with Ross Porter. I was a bit thrown by the one-man booth at first, then grew to appreciate Scully's sense of timing, his pace, and his encyclopedia of baseball stories. The man knew **Jackie Robinson and Leo Durocher and Branch Rickey!** I wasn't born with Scully. I had to learn about him, learn to appreciate him.

Maybe that helped me come to him more as I settled into a life in L.A. and environs. When I gained access to every single televised game in 2003 through a satellite, my baseball evenings often ended the same way they had even before that, listening to Vin Scully languidly call a Dodger game. The emergence of satellite and streaming brought Scully, so often calling the

final game of a given night, to a new generation of fans throughout the country, and a heightened level of appreciation for his rare and sublime talent.

For some time in this space, I ran a feature highlighting the games I would be watching on a given night. Those columns would often end the same way: “**Clayton Kershaw** called by Vin Scully.” In the last decade, there was simply nothing better. My then-girlfriend was devoted to Scully, treating his broadcasts like bedtime stories, and she wrote a beautiful, award-winning profile of him in 2014. Scully was a daily part of my life, an important one, in the final years of his career.

Scully retired after the 2016 season, calling his final game from -- horrors! -- AT&T Park in San Francisco. He was the last of his kind, a talent who started on radio being broadcast over the Internet in high definition. In retirement he retained a regal air, and his occasional appearances, whether in person or on video, were met with joy.

That joy has left us tonight. Vin Scully was the best, the very best, to ever call baseball games. He was a part of our game's soul, one we have now lost. Any fan who ever snuck a radio -- or perhaps an iPhone -- into bed to hear one more inning feels that loss tonight.

Thank you, Mr. Scully, for making our game better. Thank you for being you.

(from a subscriber) Several people reached out to me to express their condolences regarding a man I never met: Vin Scully. They know that I, as well as anyone my age who grew up in Los Angeles rooting for the Dodgers, just lost a bit of who we are.

Only nine away games at Candlestick were televised back when I grew up in the Sixties. We could only follow the team on KFI 640. Thank God.

My sweetest childhood memory involves listening to Dodger games with my dad on his bed. His play-by-play was flawless and textured, but it was Vinnie's stories that stood out. He broadcasted alone; he just spoke to me.

I'd wager that **Sandy Koufax**, Magic Johnson, Jerry West and (maybe) Kobe Bryant rank as Los Angeles' most iconic athletes. But please believe me, as a sports figure, Vinnie reigns supreme.

Chad Finn, Boston Globe: Hearing Scully's baseball melody, game after game, was soothing in a way I can't quite explain. It made me feel like I did as a kid, listening to Ken Coleman call Red Sox games on the radio. Scully's voice was what baseball was *supposed* to sound like, at its most idealistic and idyllic.

Dodgers fans were polled asking to rank Scully's best calls—here is their top ten (many of which are in the you tube links at the top of this week's newsletter).

'The impossible has happened' --1988 World Series Game 1; Oct. 15, 1988 – Gibson homers off Eckersley.

Sandy Koufax's perfect game -- Sept. 9, 1965

'A marvelous moment' -- April 8, 1974 Hank Aaron's 715th Home Run.

A reassuring voice in a time of national grief -- Sept. 17, 2001—first Dodgers game after 9/11.

Fernandomania returns -- June 29, 1990 – Fernando Valenzuela throws a no-hitter.

Roy Campanella Night at Memorial Coliseum -- May 7, 1959

'The greatest game ever pitched in baseball history' -- 1956 World Series Game 5; Oct. 8, 1956—Don Larsen's perfect game.

Monday makes 'a great play' -- April 25, 1976—Rick Monday stops a protestor from setting an American flag on fire.

'We go to Chicago!' -- Sept. 29, 1959—Dodgers beat the Braves to advance to the World Series against the White Sox.

'He's done it' -- June 18, 2014—Clayton Kershaw completes 15K/0 BB no-hitter.

Signing off

“You and I have been friends for a long time, but I know in my heart that I’ve always needed you more than you needed me, and I’ll miss our time together more than I can say.

“But you know what? There will be a new day, and eventually a new year. And when the upcoming winter gives way to spring, rest assured it will be time for Dodger baseball.

“So this is Vin Scully, wishing you a very pleasant good afternoon, wherever you may be.”

Some selected pieces on Scully:

- [SI's Tom Verducci](#) on the Beautiful Life of Vin Scully.
- Vin Scully's call of [Sandy Koufax's 1965 perfect game](#).
- *The Athletic's* obit of Scully, [by Andy McCullough](#).
- The L.A. Times's [coverage of Scully](#).
- Dodger Thoughts' [Jon Weisman](#).
- *The Athletic's* [live blog of Scully tributes](#).
- Verducci's [2016 SI cover story on Scully](#).
- [Brian Anderson interviewing Scully in 2016](#).
- The Man. The Voice. The Stories. [Jayson Stark's 2016 oral history of Scully on ESPN.com](#).
- Scully's call of [Hank Aaron's historic 715th home run](#).

WOULD YOU, OR WOULDN'T YOU?

Is it worth breaking the bank for a **Mike Trout, Juan Soto, Bruce Harper**? Consider that the Braves won the World Series last year with just four players earning more than \$8 million. Now, there's a matter of luck, with a handful of their standout players having not hit arbitration or free agency — **Ronald Acuña Jr., Ozzie Albies, and Austin Riley** — but the Braves put together a championship team with moderate contracts and just the 11th-largest payroll in baseball.

So, the question is, Trout and Bryce Harper are great players, but do they help you win? Or do they just put up numbers? The Phillies haven't won anything with Harper, although he's a dynamic player who hits a lot of home runs. What's more, the Nationals won the World Series the season after Harper left for a mammoth 13-year, \$330 million contract with the Phillies.

And of baseball's five highest-paid players this season, only two — **Max Scherzer and Anthony Rendon** — have World Series rings. And those came with the 2019 Nationals. The Angels, who practically burn money on aging and/or overpriced players, signed Rendon to a seven-year, \$245 million contract after that stellar final season with the Nationals, and he's hit .252 in 155 games over three seasons since. And the Angels haven't come close to the postseason.

The fact the Nationals offered Soto more than three times their current \$129.6 million payroll with no guarantee of a World Series is admirable, but it may be best they trade the slugger for a slew of prospects and move forward. That was the case in 2019, when Harper took the Phillies' money and the Nationals moved on with elite pitching — including Scherzer and **Stephen Strasburg** — and then got unexpected contributions from veterans such as **Kurt Suzuki** and **Howie Kendrick**.

Is the way to build a World Series champion to load your lineup and pitching staff with highly paid players? Just ask the Yankees. The answer is no. Ask the Angels how that **Albert Pujols** contract worked out. Ask the Mariners how far their \$240 million went with **Robinson Cano**.

The Padres invested more than \$600 million in **Manny Machado** and **Fernando Tatis Jr.**, and they are still waiting for their return. Many MLB owners are foolishly throwing money at one particular player, locking down a superstar with a 10-plus-year contract for generational money, but unfortunately very few are able to supplement that player with adequately compensated players, so they linger in mediocrity, or like the Marlins with **Giancarlo Stanton**, or the Rangers with **Alex Rodriguez**, or the Rockies with **Nolan Arenado**, they eventually dump the deal on a bigger-market team for prospects and start over.

The Red Sox have to be careful how much they spend on **Raphael Devers** and **Xander Bogaerts** if it's going to result in cost-cutting in other areas. The Nationals are probably relieved Soto turned down nearly a half-billion dollars because it will allow for more to be invested in prospects, more financially feasible free agents, and in retaining current talent.

The biggest spenders rarely are the biggest winners in baseball, and some teams still haven't learned that.

After selling Ruth to the Yankees, the Red Sox didn't have a winning season for another 16 years. Since trading Cabrera and **Dontrelle Willis** to the Tigers for six players, the Marlins haven't made the playoffs in 13 full seasons (though they did sneak in to the postseason during pandemic-altered 2020). The history of teams in other sports divesting themselves of in-their-prime superstars is equally brutal.

AT LEAST YOU AREN'T A WASHINGTON NATIONALS FAN

As Joe Posnanski wrote:

The Washington Nationals — wow, it has not been the best couple of years, has it? They win the 2019 World Series in one of the more unlikely and bizarre seasons in memory (started the year 19-33, won the World Series without winning a single World Series game at home, etc.).

Then a pandemic sweeps the world, the Nationals never get to celebrate their World Series title in front of their home fans, they don't get any bounce whatsoever from their victory. They lose Anthony Rendon to free agency and bet on the wrong horse in **Stephen Strasburg**. They fail to lock up **Trea Turner** and end up, in 2021, shipping him off to the Dodgers as part of the "let's try to help Los Angeles win a World Series" deadline deal.

And in a short time, the Nationals went from:

2019: World Series champs!

2020: 26-34 in a lost season for all.

2021: 65-97 where the only thing worth watching was **Juan Soto**.

2022: 35-69, worst team in baseball, and now no Juan Soto to watch, either.

That's some epic stuff, right there. I wrote on Twitter that the Nationals have put on a master class of turning a World Series champion into bleep in just two and a half year

JUAN SOTO

I was hoping the Yankees would back up a truck of prospects and trade for **Juan Soto**—I believe he is this generation's **Ted Williams**. Comments on the blockbuster from multiple sources, most from The Athletic:

According to Major League Baseball, 21 current or former All-Stars were traded between June 1 and Aug. 2 and there were 70 deals among teams. Nothing topped the deal between the Nationals and the Padres.

Juan Soto and **Fernando Tatis Jr.** both entered Tuesday with a career 160 OPS+, while **Manny Machado** has a 153 mark this season. No team since the start of the 20th century has had more than three players accomplish that at the same time, and the Padres could keep this group together for a long, *long* time. After all, both Soto and Tatis are just 23 years old, while Machado just turned 30 last month and is signed through 2028.

Overall, five 2022 All-Stars were traded -- **Andrew Benintendi, Luis Castillo, Josh Hader, Jorge López and Soto**. That's tied with 2017, '14 and '03 for the third-most All-Stars from that year to change teams in one season, behind only 2021 (10) and 2016 (eight).

A player like Soto being dealt at this stage in his career is unprecedented. Don't believe us? Keep reading.

Here are nine stats and facts about the Soto trade and its context:

- Soto is the first player to be traded midseason in the year he was an All-Star at age 23 or younger. That's right -- he is the youngest player to change teams during a season in which he was an All-Star.

- This July wasn't Soto's first All-Star appearance, either. It was his second. Soto -- who also won the 2022 Home Run Derby -- is the first player to make multiple All-Star teams and then change teams all before turning 24, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. We weren't kidding about calling this a never-before-seen move.

Soto has a 158 OPS+ so far this season. Only two players in the live-ball era (since 1920) have had an OPS+ of 158 or higher in a qualified season where he played for multiple teams: **Mark McGwire** in 1997 (170) and **Manny Ramírez** in 2008 (166). Depending on where Soto finishes the season, he could join the list.

- Speaking of OPS+, Soto and new teammate **Fernando Tatis Jr.** each had a career 160 OPS+ through the end of last season. That's tied -- with each other -- for the fifth-highest OPS+ through a player's age-22 season, with a minimum of 1,000 plate appearances. They trailed **Ted Williams** (183), **Mike Trout** (167), **Stan Musial** (166) and **Ty Cobb** (163). That's three Hall of Famers and a future Hall of Famer ... and now the next two players on the list are *teammates*. Imagine.

Want more context on why Soto is worth a trade like this? We have plenty. Some 170 players have at least 1,500 plate appearances since the start of 2018. Just three of them have more walks than strikeouts: Soto (50 more BB's than K's), **Alex Bregman** (36 more) and **Carlos Santana** (12 more). Soto is the only active player with at least 1,500 career plate appearances and more walks than strikeouts.

- He has 119 career home runs, 11th most by a player before turning 24. No. 119 came in his last game with the Nationals, when he worked three walks, including two against former teammate **Max Scherzer**. Soto was the first batter to work multiple walks against Scherzer in a game this season. He's just the fourth with a homer and two walks against Scherzer in a game, joining **Travis Shaw** (July 27, 2017), **Jake Lamb** (May 4, 2017) and **Curtis Granderson** (May 17, 2016). Not too shabby off a future Hall of Fame pitcher.

The three walks marked Soto's 31st career game with at least three walks, two more than any other player before turning 24 since at least 1901. Next on that list is Ted Williams, with 29, and after that is **Eddie Mathews**, with 18. Only 89 players since at least 1901 have more career three-walk games than Soto's 31. He's 23 years old.

- Of course, Soto isn't the only All-Star the Padres have acquired in the past few days. **With Josh Hader** and Soto, the Padres are the eighth team to acquire two players amid All-Star campaigns. They join the 2021 Dodgers (**Max Scherzer, Trea Turner**), 2016 Rangers (**Carlos Beltrán, Jonathan Lucroy**), 2015 Blue Jays (**Troy Tulowitzki, David Price**), 2014 A's (**Jon Lester, Jeff Samardzija**), 2003 Yankees (**Aaron Boone, Armando Benítez**), 1998 Dodgers (**Jeff Shaw, Gary Sheffield**) and 1937 Senators (**Wes Ferrell, Rick Ferrell**).

- Why did the Padres need to make a move for bats? They entered Tuesday slugging .376, which ranked 25th in MLB. No team has won the World Series with a slugging percentage that low since the 1988 Dodgers, who slugged .352 in the regular season (ranked 22nd out of 26 teams then in MLB). Power matters in the playoffs, especially lately. Since the start of the 2018 postseason, teams are 106-17 in playoff games when they out-homer their opponents.

MORE SOTO

Jayson Stark

Juan Soto and the numbers that explain the biggest trade deadline deal ever

There are so many ways to explain why Juan Soto was just made the centerpiece of the biggest deal in trade deadline history. But here's a way I always find fun:

Juan Soto by the numbers — the numbers that explain why a hitter like this just got mixed up in a deal like that.

THE MAGIC NUMBER — 23

Soto is 23 years old. I counted 20 players *in the Futures Game* who were older than him. Those 20 players haven't even started their major-league careers yet. Soto just got traded for the half the population of La Jolla.

THE MAGIC NUMBER — 160

Soto's career OPS+ is 160. In other words, when you adjust for his era, league and home ballpark, he's been 60 percent more productive than the average hitter in the majors over the last five seasons. He's 23! Who does that?

Glad you asked. I checked. These are the only hitters in the modern era with an OPS+ higher than Soto's through their age-23 season (and at least 2,000 plate appearances):

Ted Williams, 190

Ty Cobb, 171

Mike Trout, 169

Albert Pujols, 165

But hang on. Of the top 15 players in modern history on that list, *every one of them is a Hall of Famer* — except for Trout, Pujols and Soto. Does it seem a little premature to predict Soto is heading for Cooperstown someday? Of course it does. Until you start digesting the idea that everyone who has had this career path is either a Hall of Famer or a Hall of Famer waiting to happen. And on that note ...

THE MAGIC NUMBER — 119

Have I mentioned that Soto is only 23? Oh, that's right. It's come up. But even at 23 — an age at which Chipper Jones hit his *first* home run — Soto already has launched 119 career homers. History tells us players with that many homers at that age never get traded. But apparently, the historians haven't spent much time around Padres president of baseball operations A.J. Preller.

Since we just established that Soto is on a Hall of Fame track, I looked at all future Hall of Fame position players in the live-ball era who changed teams in their 20s. Only one of them was Soto's age or younger at the time he was traded. That was **Roberto Alomar**, who went from San Diego to Toronto, at age 22, in a memorable 1990 offseason deal that also involved **Fred McGriff, Joe Carter and Tony Fernandez**.

Alomar had 22 homers at the time of that deal. That's the most of any future Hall legend who was traded this young. So Soto just blew away Alomar's record *by almost 100 homers*.

THE MAGIC NUMBER — .427

That's Soto's career on-base percentage. Here's the full list of players with that good of an OBP through their age-23 season (and at least 2,000 plate appearances):

Ted Williams (.481)

That'll do it for that list.

THE MAGIC NUMBER — 19.02 percent

Five seasons into his career, Soto's career walk percentage is 19.02 percent. Here's your leaderboard for highest walk percentage by any player in the live-ball era through his age-23 season (and at least 1,500 plate appearances):

Juan Soto, 19.02 percent

Ted Williams, 18.94 percent

Yes, you read that right. Soto draws walks at a higher rate than Williams, the most selective hitter who ever lived. Who knew that was possible?

THE MAGIC NUMBER — 2

Soto has already led his league in on-base percentage twice (in 2020 and 2021).

OBP titles won by all Padres players combined since the franchise was born 53 years ago: One!

That was by a fellow named **Tony Gwynn**, in 1994.

THE MAGIC NUMBER — 2 (AGAIN)

Before we move on, here's every hitter in the modern era who has led his league in on-base percentage at least twice by his age-23 season:

Ted Williams (three times)

Stan Musial

Arky Vaughan

Mel Ott

Ty Cobb

Juan Soto

FYI: You can dig up more background on those other five guys in Cooperstown, N.Y.

THE MAGIC NUMBER — 31

In his final game with the Nationals, Soto walked three times (and also homered off Max Scherzer), because of course he did. It was the 31st game of three-plus walks in his career. He's 23!

That's more than the total number of three-walk games in the entire Padres careers of Tony Gwynn, **Dave Winfield** and Fred McGriff.

Winfield, 13

McGriff, 10

Gwynn, 7

Total: 30

THE MAGIC NUMBER — 50

But it isn't just the walks. It's the contact. So here's Soto, with 50 more walks (464) than strikeouts (414) in his career. And this is where it's fun to mention one more time: *He's 23!*

So here comes another magical list, of players in the live-ball era with more walks than strikeouts, plus at least 100 career homers, by their age-23 season:

Ted Williams

Mel Ott

Eddie Mathews
Jimmie Foxx
Joe DiMaggio
Juan Soto

That's five Hall of Famers ... and Soto. Ohbytheway, the only one of those guys who has played a game in the last half-century is ... Juan Soto.

THE MAGIC NUMBER — 167

Finally, **Joe DiMaggio** is a Hall of Famer. His career OBP was .398.

Joe Morgan is a Hall of Famer. His career OBP was .392.

Honus Wagner is a Hall of Famer. His career OBP was .391.

Tony Gwynn is a Hall of Famer. His career OBP was .388.

So why do I bring that up? Because Soto heads for San Diego with a career on-base percentage of .427. Here's what that means:

For Soto to have his OBP fall below .400 — basically, to Joe DiMaggio Land — he would have to go *0 for his next 167*.

Which seems unlikely.

And that, friends, is why Juan Soto just got mixed up in the biggest trade deadline deal ever.

Joe Sheehan-- Maybe the Nationals will avoid the fates of the teams that traded **Babe Ruth** and **Miguel Cabrera**, but that's not the way to bet.

A look at all 13 of the Hall of Famers since 1945 who were traded by the time they turned 25 years old (**Miguel Cabrera** was traded from the Marlins to the Tigers at age 24 and is certain to make the Hall).

Roberto Alomar
Age: 22
Traded: From Padres to Blue Jays.

Bert Blyleven
Age: 25
Traded: From Minnesota to Texas

Lou Brock

Age: 25

Traded: From Cubs to St. Louis

Dennis Eckersley

Age: 23

Traded: From Cleveland to Boston

Nellie Fox

Age: 21

Traded: From Philadelphia to the White Sox (Fox then made the All-Star game 1 straight seasons)

Goose Gossage

Age: 25

Traded: From White Sox to Pittsburgh

Trevor Hoffman

Age: 25

Traded: From Marlins to Padres (Marlins got Gary Sheffield and one world series—Hoffman was pretty strong for San Diego).

Ferguson Jenkins

Age: 23

Traded: From Philadelphia to Cubs

Ryne Sandberg

Age: 22

Traded: From Philadelphia to Cubs

Randy Johnson

Age: 25

Traded: From Montreal to Seattle

George Kell

Age: 23

Traded: From Philadelphia to Detroit

Pedro Martinez

Age: 22

Traded: From Dodgers to Montreal

Nolan Ryan

Age: 24

Traded: From Mets to Angels

BEST TRIOS EVER

So the question now is this: Could the Padres have the greatest batting trio in baseball history? (And do they even have the best in the division? The Dodgers have **Mookie Betts, Freddie Freeman and Trea Turner** -- with more than one candidate for the NL MVP Award this year.)

While we wait for time to answer that, here are nine other groups that could vie for the honor.

(Note: Years listed are for the time when all three players were on the Major League roster together.)

1) Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Tony Lazzeri -- 1926-34 (Yankees)

Here's the heart of the Murderers' Row Yankees, who won three World Series titles together. While you certainly know the names of Ruth and Gehrig -- among the upper echelon of players to ever walk onto the field -- Lazzeri has been overshadowed next to the baseball giants. During those years, Lazzeri slashed .300/.382/.482 with 259 doubles, 100 triples and 128 homers -- all while manning second base.

2) Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Duke Snider -- 1948-56 (Dodgers)

It's the crew that not only brought Brooklyn its lone World Series title, but helped change baseball forever. Snider held down center-field duties while swinging like a first baseman, bashing 40-plus home runs every season from 1953-57 -- leading the league in slugging and OPS twice during that time. Snider benefited greatly from the bats behind him too, as he led the Majors in runs in 1953 and '55, while leading the NL in '54.

Robinson was a speed and on-base machine, twice leading the Majors in stolen bases and putting up a .410 OBP for his career. Even when he was 36 and near the end of his career during the Dodgers' 1955 World Series run, Robinson still got on base at a .378 clip with an unbelievable K/BB rate (18 strikeouts vs. 61 walks).

Then there was Campanella, the power-hitting catcher, who brought it all together. Campy won three MVP Awards for the Dodgers and topped the 30-homer mark four times. Even all these years later, Campanella is tied with **Johnny Bench** for the second-most 30-homer seasons as a catcher behind **Mike Piazza** -- and Campanella had big league years stolen from him due to segregation. Imagine what could have been possible if he had been allowed to reach the Dodgers before 1948.

3) Mickey Mantle, Roger Maris, Yogi Berra -- 1960-63 (Yankees)

This is the stuff entire shelves of baseball books are made of. Mantle and Maris combined for perhaps the greatest summer in baseball history in 1961 as the two attacked Babe Ruth's then-record of 60 home runs. Many seem to forget that in addition to hitting 61 homers, Maris won back-to-back MVP Awards in 1960 and '61, and he averaged 39 home runs a season while the three shared the lineup together. Mantle won his third MVP Award in 1962 and had a remarkable 188 OPS+ over their four seasons together.

Though Berra was at the nadir of his career and finally stopped playing in 130-plus games a season as he gave way to **Elston Howard**, he still blasted 55 home runs during this period and led the Yankees to two World Series titles.

4) Willie Mays, Willie McCovey, Orlando Cepeda -- 1959-66 (Giants)

Anytime you can start with Willie Mays, you know you're in good company. Mays is, well, Mays -- posting a .974 OPS across the seven seasons this trio played together while averaging 41 home runs a year and collecting an MVP Award in '65. Yeah, that'll do nicely.

Meanwhile, after winning the NL Rookie of the Year Award in '58, Cepeda held down first base while smashing 218 home runs, including 30-plus every year from 1961-64. Though McCovey's best years came after Cepeda was traded from the team, there's a reason the team named the cove near the ballpark after him: McCovey added his own Rookie of the Year Award in '59 and pounded out 201 home runs and a .904 OPS. How a pitcher could possibly survive facing the center of that lineup is a complete mystery.

Of course, this trio highlights just how hard it is to win a World Series: Despite their dominance, the team lost the 1962 World Series to the Yankees in seven games, and didn't appear in another postseason while they were together.

5) Joe Morgan, Pete Rose, Johnny Bench -- 1972-78 (Reds)

While there was plenty of talent up and down the Reds' lineup during this era, there's a reason why they didn't win a World Series title until acquiring Joe Morgan. Each player in this trio is in the conversation as the greatest to ever play their position, so of course stuffing them all into one lineup turned Cincinnati into a fearsome force.

Morgan combined power, speed and a patient batting eye that can't be topped. He averaged a .419 OBP with 20 home runs and a whopping 54 stolen bases per season over this stretch. At the same time, Rose topped 200 hits four times and won the 1973 NL batting title and MVP Award.

And then there was Bench, who hit 40 home runs and won the 1972 MVP Award for his efforts. Over these seven years, he averaged 28 home runs and a 135 OPS+ while squatting behind the dish for 143 games a season. One can only imagine what his numbers might have looked like if ever took a day off.

6) Mark McGwire, Rickey Henderson, Jose Canseco -- 1989-93 (Athletics)

When the A's traded to bring Henderson back from the Yankees in '89, they helped assemble one of the most powerful, athletic and frightening lineups in baseball. With Henderson leading off and running wild, there were plenty of RBI opportunities for McGwire and Canseco behind him. Henderson posted an OBP above .400 every season while back in the green and gold, stealing 254 bases during this second stint in Oakland.

Canseco was still a power/speed threat, too -- even if his 40-40 season came in '88. After playing in only 65 games in '89, Canseco hit 81 home runs -- including an MLB-best 44 in '91 -- and stole 45 bases from 1990-91. Though McGwire wasn't going to steal many bags (his career high of three came in 1997), he could certainly crush some dingers and help bring in the guys who weren't fast enough to race around the bases on their own. He averaged 34 home runs, 96 RBIs and 94 walks a season from 1989-92.

Sure enough, the group was good enough to win the 1989 World Series but couldn't go back-to-back after being swept by the underdog Reds in '90.

7) Manny Ramirez, Jim Thome, Albert Belle -- 1993-96 (Cleveland)

Ramirez and Thome may have gone on to brighter futures in later years, but there's no denying that Cleveland had one of the most frightening lineups during the mid-1990s. Though he was still getting stronger, Ramirez posted a .934 OPS over these seasons, topping the 30-homer mark twice and reaching his first All-Star Game. Thome did just a bit better: His OPS was a whopping .980 and he blasted 38 home runs in '96 -- the first of nine straight seasons in which he'd hit 30-plus homers.

Though his accomplishments were overshadowed by his on- and off-the-field issues, Belle posted a remarkable 1.040 OPS to go with an average of 43 home runs and 40 doubles during this period. His 1995 campaign was one of the best ever as he led the Majors in doubles with 50 and home runs with 52 -- the only player in history to go 50-50.

Sadly for Cleveland fans who have been waiting for a World Series title for nearly 80 years, this group was good enough to win a pennant but couldn't get past the Braves in 1995.

8) Ken Griffey Jr., Edgar Martinez, Alex Rodriguez -- 1994-99 (Mariners)

They may not have reached a World Series, but no team was cooler. Griffey just *was* the '90s -- showing off the sweetest swing possible en-route to four home run titles and back-to-back 56-homer seasons.

Martinez was such a constant threat at the plate that the annual DH award is named in his honor. From 1994-99, this was his *average* batting line: .329/.448/.568 with 25 home runs. Of course, "Gar" also is responsible for "The Double," in the 1995 ALDS to defeat the Yankees, which some believe helped save baseball in Seattle.

And then, there was A-Rod. Though he debuted in '94, he wouldn't become a regular until 1996. At the tender age of 20 and in his first full Major League season, Rodriguez hit .358 with 36 home runs and 54 doubles -- all while playing stellar defense at shortstop. (Somehow, Juan Gonzalez beat him by three points for the '96 AL MVP Award.) Though Rodriguez never approached such a high batting average again, the rest of his game continued to improve until the Rangers signed him to what was at the time the largest contract in baseball history.

9) Albert Pujols, Scott Rolen, Jim Edmonds -- 2002-07 (Cardinals)

Not only was this trio amazing at the dish, but it could be considered the best defensive group on this list, too.

Pujols quickly earned the nickname "The Machine" when he came up in 2001 and put together some of the greatest offensive seasons in big league history. During this stretch, he never hit below .314, got on base below a .394 clip or hit fewer than 32 home runs. He won his first MVP Award and had four more top-three finishes during this span, too -- all of this from a player who was more of a utility player as he moved all over the infield and outfield during his first two seasons!

Edmonds may have been at the other end of his career, but you never would have known it from his on-field performance. The dive-happy center fielder posted a .933 OPS over these six seasons, while bashing 171 doubles and 169 home runs.

And then there was Rolen. Acquired from the Phillies at the 2002 Trade Deadline, Rolen battled injuries, but he was a fearsome slugger when healthy. The third baseman hit 111 home runs to go along with an .879 OPS during his time in St. Louis. It was enough to win the pennant in '04 and give the Cards their first World Series title in 24 years in '06, when they beat the Tigers.

JESSE CHAVEZ—WHAT UNIFORM TOMORROW?

One MLB player has been swapped in more deals than any other.

He's played in less than 15 seasons and been traded nine times -- including once this year. He's won a World Series, he's played in every division and he's probably played for your favorite team.

He is 38-year-old bespectacled Braves reliever **Jesse Chavez**.

Yes, Chavez has been dealt three more times than famous journeymen like **Edwin Jackson** or **Octavio Dotel**. Former pitcher **Dick Littlefield** would've been tied with Chavez at nine (look at his ridiculous transactions page), but his 1956 trade to the Giants for Jackie Robinson was voided: Robinson chose to retire rather than play for the Dodgers' rivals.

1st Trade, 2006

Chavez was selected by the Rangers way back the 2002 Draft -- a pool of players that included **B.J. Upton, Khalil Greene and Prince Fielder**. But before he even had a chance to reach the Majors, he was traded to the Pirates in '06 for **Kip Wells**. Wells appeared in two games for the Rangers and retired 10 years ago. A few of Chavez's teammates during his time in Pittsburgh were **Nyjer Morgan, Doug Mientkiewicz, relief pitcher Matt Morris** and *third baseman* **Jose Bautista**. Nobody from that 2008 Pirates roster is still playing in the big leagues.

2nd Trade, 2009

Chavez played sparingly for Pittsburgh for two seasons and then was dealt to the Rays in November 2009 for **Akinori Iwamura**. Iwamura last played in the big leagues in 2010.

3rd Trade, 2009

Before Chavez likely even realized he was a Ray, he wasn't one anymore: In December, he was swapped for former closer **Rafael Soriano** and sent to Atlanta.

4th Trade, 2010

Seven months later, at the July 31 Trade Deadline, Chavez was moved again. He, **Tim Collins and Gregor Blanco** went to the Royals for pitcher-turned-position-player **Rick Ankiel** and future most-jacked-dude-alive **Kyle Farnsworth**.

5th Trade, 2012

After bouncing between the Minors and Majors with K.C., Chavez was put on waivers in the 2011 offseason and picked up by the Blue Jays. He appeared for 13 games for them in 2012, but was then -- you guessed it -- traded for cash to Oakland in August of that year. He enjoyed some of the better years of his career with the A's -- pitching as both a starter and a reliever.

6th Trade, 2015

Still, even after four solid seasons, the then 32-year-old was moved again. The A's traded Chavez back to the Blue Jays for future All-Star closer Liam Hendriks. Chavez's numbers in Toronto weren't amazing, although he did throw the hit-by-pitch that ultimately resulted in one of the craziest brawls in history.

7th Trade, 2016

After a few months with the Blue Jays, the righty was dealt around the Deadline again: He went to the Dodgers for **Mike Bolsinger**. Chavez had a 4.21 ERA in just 21 games for L.A. but, along with another reliever, seemed almost destined to be at Dodger Stadium.

8th Trade, 2018

Chavez stayed in the Los Angeles area for 2017 -- signing a one-year deal with the crosstown Angels. He signed another one-year deal with his original team, the Rangers, for the 2018 season. Chavez was great in 30 games out of the bullpen for Texas, putting up a 3.51 ERA. So great that the Cubs wanted him in their bullpen. So, yes, he was traded in July to Chicago for Minor Leaguer **Tyler Thomas**.

Chavez was exceptional down the stretch for the Cubs, posting a 1.15 ERA in 31 appearances. He also saw the first October action of his baseball life: He gave up zero runs in one inning of work in the Cubs' Wild Card Game loss to Colorado.

After saying he'd rather retire than play for another team other than the Cubs in 2019, Chavez signed a two-year deal to return to the Rangers. He struggled through injuries in his two seasons with Texas and had one of his worst seasons in 2020, compiling a 6.88 ERA in 18 games.

Chavez considered retiring, but once again, he decided against it: The veteran signed a Minor League deal with the Angels in 2021 before being released in March. Then, in April of 2021, his old friends, the Braves, came calling again -- signing him to a Minor League contract.

The 37-year-old joined the Major League roster in June and found brilliance once more, posting a 2.14 ERA with 9.6 K/9 in 30 games out of the 'pen. He also gave up zero runs in seven appearances for Atlanta in its championship run, including an extremely short spot-start in the NLCS against the Dodgers. Chavez could barely find the words after getting his first ring nearly 20 years and nine cities away from the team he was originally drafted by.

9th Trade, 2022

Chavez jumped back to the North Side of Chicago in March of '22, signing a Minor League deal with the Cubs. But the Braves wanted their man back, mostly thinking he could be a valuable innings-eater out of the bullpen. They traded **Sean Newcomb** for the 38-year-old.

Chavez has since enjoyed perhaps his best season ever: He's struck out 11 batters per nine innings, has a 2.11 ERA and a 2.55 FIP. Mostly because he's been using his cutter more and more. Or maybe it's magic voodoo. Or maybe his cutter is magic voodoo. Who knows?

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IN FIRST PLACE (OR NOT)—OR, MY TEAM IS NOT LEADING ITS DIVISION, WHAT ARE OUR CHANCES THE REST OF THE SEASON?

Since 1996 -- the first full season with at least one Wild Card in each league -- 111 of 150 eventual division champions held at least a share of their division lead entering August. That's 74% of division winners.

Take note, Yankees, Twins, Astros, Mets, Brewers and Dodgers fans -- those are the teams that currently lead their divisions.

Last season, five of the six division leaders on Aug. 1 went on to win their divisions. In the American League, the Rays, White Sox and Astros each won their divisions. In the NL, the Brewers and Giants each won their divisions, but the Mets, who led the East entering July, missed the playoffs.

Since 1996, 14 of the 25 World Series winners, excluding 2020, led their divisions entering August. But neither of the last two winners in full seasons -- the '21 Braves and '19 Nationals -- did. The Braves first took sole possession of the NL East in mid-August, while the Nationals were a Wild Card team.

Comebacks and those 2021 Braves

What about the potential comebacks? Just two teams have gone on to win the World Series after being below .500 entering August -- the 1914 Boston Braves, who were 44-45, and the 2021 Braves, who were 52-54. That means that the 2021 Braves' .491 winning percentage entering August was the lowest of any eventual World Series champion.

Before '21, the lowest winning percentage entering August to win the World Series in the Divisional Era (since 1969) was .528 (57-51) by the 2011 Cardinals.

And if we look at simply making the playoffs? The lowest winning percentage for a team entering August that went on to make the playoffs in a non-strike-shortened season was .436 (44-57) by the 1973 Mets, who went on to win the National League pennant and showed everyone that 'Ya Gotta Believe.' (Again we are excluding 2020 with both of these notes).

Overall, 13 teams have made the playoffs in a non-shortened season where they entered August below .500.

This year's leaders and competition

Of this year's current division leaders entering August, each has had at least a share of that lead entering August at least once in the prior two full seasons, too.

Three teams lead by at least 10 games entering August this year: the Dodgers (12 games), Astros (12 games) and Yankees (11 1/2 games). It's just the third time since the split to three divisions per league that at least three teams had a 10-or-more-game lead entering August.

It also happened in 2017, with the Astros (16 games), Nationals (14 games) and Dodgers (14 games). And in 1998, with the Yankees (15 games), Cleveland (10 1/2 games), Braves (14 games) and Padres (13 games).

In addition to the Dodgers, Astros and Yankees, the Mets also previously had a 10-game lead. It's the third season in the Divisional Era (since 1969) where four or more teams had 10-plus game division leads at some point before Aug. 1, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. It also happened in 2019 (HOU, LAD, MIN, NYY) and 1998 (ATL, CLE, NYY, SD).

What's next

October is quickly drawing closer, but there's still baseball left to be played. Fans of the six division leaders can take some comfort in knowing that, historically, almost three quarters of those teams have gone on to win their divisions. And for fans of teams that aren't in playoff position, there's still plenty of hope -- while 74% of these teams go on to win their divisions, that means 26% do not, too. The 2021 Braves' successes should provide plenty of hope.

LOTS OF BUCK O'NEIL STORIES AROUND HIS HOF ENSHRINEMENT. I LIKED THIS ONE.

And he talked about all the wonderful things, the wonderful players, the wonderful games. He told her stories, incredible stories, about **Satchel Paige**, about **Josh Gibson**, about **Cool Papa Bell**. He told her about walking into the Streets Hotel in Kansas City or the Evans Hotel in Chicago or the Woodside Hotel in New York and being treated like a star, and running into Cab Calloway or Count Basie or Ella Fitzgerald.

He told her about the three times he heard a different crack of the bat.

*The first time he heard the sound, he was a kid standing outside the fence during spring training in Sarasota, and he climbed a ladder, and looked, and saw a ballplayer with a barrel chest, skinny legs. That was **Babe Ruth**.*

*The second time he heard the sound, he was a ballplayer himself, 1938, playing for the Kansas City Monarchs, and he was in the clubhouse in Washington getting dressed, and as soon as he heard it, he raced on the field wearing whatever he happened to have on. That was **Josh Gibson**.*

*The third time he heard the sound, he was a scout at Royals Stadium, and a powerful force was taking a few batting practice swings, and the sound exploded again and again and again, every time he connected. That was **Bo Jackson**.*

JOE POSNANSKI THOUGHTS ON NOLAN RYAN, TONY GWYNN, LOTS OF HOME RUNS, AND HOW HUGE IS AARON JUDGE

The part about **Nolan Ryan** that has never really made any sense is the won-loss record. Sure, we know better than to put too much stock into pitcher wins and pitcher losses. In 1987, for instance, Nolan Ryan led the league in ERA, strikeouts, hits allowed per nine innings, strikeout-to-walk ratio and FIP.

He went 8-16.

Now, that was an extreme version of the Ryan story — in July that year he gave up just seven earned runs all month, had a 2.36 ERA, held opponents to a .198 batting average, and still lost all five games he started.

But, it must be said, that SOME version of Nolan Ryan's snakebit nature hounded him his entire career. He went 324-292 — his .526 winning percentage is the second-lowest among starting pitchers in the Hall of Fame (ahead of only **Eppa Rixey**, who most people have no idea is in the Hall of Fame).

Bill Conlin rather famously did not vote for Ryan on his Hall of Fame ballot because he wouldn't start basically a .500 pitcher in Game 7 of the World Series.

How did Ryan — the most unhittable pitcher who ever lived — lose all those games?

Well, as we've talked about many times here, Ryan was both the most brilliant and most flawed pitcher in the world. He walked almost 1,000 more batters than any other pitcher in baseball history. He threw 50 more wild pitches than anyone (even **Phil Niekro**, who threw knuckleballs for like 500 years). He committed the most errors of any pitcher, by far. He matched a slow delivery with a decided disdain for paying attention to baserunners — Ryan's deterrent against

base stealers was that if you stole a base on him, he was probably going to come high and tight on you the next time you came to the plate.

He allowed 200 more stolen bases than anyone.

So, there were ways — on the right days — to beat Nolan Ryan.

Tony Gwynn faced **Greg Maddux** 103 times — more times than he faced any other pitcher. And he never once struck out. Not a single time. Now, in the past when I've brought up this mind-blowing statistic, most people have properly dropped their jaws, but some have come back by saying something like, "Well, Maddux wasn't a strikeout pitcher," or "That's pretty cool, I guess, though I would need more context."

Well, here's a little more context: One-hundred-thirty-one different batters faced Maddux at least 42 times in their careers. This includes 12 Hall of Famers, plus one first-ballot Hall of Famer to come (**Albert Pujols**) plus several players who very well might be in the Hall of Fame (**Barry Bonds**, **Fred McGriff**, etc.).

OK, so we're talking about 131 of the best hitters of recent vintage.

Maddux struck out every single one of them ... except Tony Gwynn.

Aaron Judge has hit 43 HRs in the Yankees first 104 games.

43 in his team's first 104 games.

Here's how that compares with some of the greatest home run seasons ever:

- **Barry Bonds'** 73-homer season (2001): 45 homers through 104 games
- **Mark McGwire's** 70-homer season (1998): 44 homers through 104 games
- **Sammy Sosa's** 66-homer season (1998): 37 homers through 104 games
- **Roger Maris'** 61-homer season (1961): 40 homers through 104 games
- **Babe Ruth's** 60-homer season (1927): 34 homers through 104 games

12 HRs in 14 games (Aaron Judge enjoyed a 12 in 14 games run last week). Four players have done it twice. It's a good trivia question because three of them are obvious and the fourth is not obvious but is also not like "What, that makes no sense at all, I never would have guessed that one."

Obvious player No. 1: Barry Bonds.

Bonds actually hit FOURTEEN home runs over 14 games in 2001. This was May of that wild season; Bonds homered in 10 of the 14 games, twice homered two times and homered three times against Atlanta. In that Atlanta series, he homered six times in three games.

Bonds also hit 12 homers in 14 games in 1999.

Obvious player No. 2: Mark McGwire

McGwire did it in 1998 and 1999.

Obvious player No. 3: Sammy Sosa

The only player to hit 60 home runs three times — he pulled off 12-homers-in-14-games in 1998 and 2001.

The not-so-obvious player: Albert Belle

Right? He might not have been your first thought, but once you heard that it's Belle you probably went: "Oh, yeah, sure, that makes sense." He did it 1995 and 1998.

Aaron Judge is, pretty much by all measures, the biggest every-day player in the history of baseball. There have basically been five every-day players who stood at least 6-foot-7.

There was **Frank Howard**, who clubbed 382 home runs, most of them in the 1960s, when pitchers dominated the game,

There was **Richie Sexson**, who hit 306 home runs for five teams in the 1990s and 2000s. There was **Tony Clark**, who hit 251 home runs for six teams over almost that exact same time span and is now the executive director of the MLB Players Association. And there was **Walt Bond**,

who had what **Casey Stengel** called tree power (“Everything he hits is in the trees,” Stengel said) and who died at 29 of leukemia.

None of them, not even Howard, was within 30 pounds of Judge’s 6’7” 282 pounds.

AN IMPERFECT DECADE

Mbl.com

A burst of six perfect games over three seasons made the feat seem commonplace. Ten years without one has reinforced its rarity.

Carlos Rodon Pitching for the Chicago White Sox against Cleveland in April 2021, Rodón retired the first 25 batters before his 0-2 slider nicked the top of **Roberto Pérez’s** shoe.

That spoiled Rodón’s perfect game, but he was thrilled to settle for a no-hitter, one of 317 in major league history. Yet only 23 of those have been perfect games.

This month makes it a decade since the Mariners’ **Félix Hernández** froze Tampa Bay’s **Sean Rodríguez** with a sinking changeup and pointed to the skies over Seattle on Aug. 15, 2012, celebrating the last perfect game in the majors. More than 22,000 games have been played since then, and in all of them, both teams have put at least one runner on base.

This is the longest stretch in baseball without a perfect game since 1968 (**Catfish Hunter**) to 1981 (**Len Barker**). As Rodón discovered, the longest stretch ever was 34 years, from 1922 (**Charlie Robertson**) to 1956 (**Don Larsen**, in the World Series).

When Hernández mastered the Rays, though, the perfect game had seemingly become more common. **Mark Buehrle** had thrown one in 2009, followed by **Dallas Braden** and **Roy Halladay** in 2010 and **Philip Humber** and **Matt Cain** in 2012 before Hernández’s. There would have been another, by **Armando Galarraga** in 2010, had replay existed to overturn a blown call by the umpire Jim Joyce on the potential last out.

So that was six perfect games (plus Galarraga’s effort) in a little more than three years — followed immediately by a decade of pure imperfection. What a sport.

Since Hernández’s gem, three pitchers have lined up 26 stars until the 27th fizzled out. **Yu Darvish** and **Yusmeiro Petit** gave up singles with two outs in the ninth inning in 2013, and **Max Scherzer** hit the 27th batter with a 2-2 backup slider in 2015. (Scherzer, then with Washington, ended up with the first of his two no-hitters.)

Sandy Koufax (1965) and **Dennis Martinez** (1991) had achieved perfection at Dodger Stadium. Koufax is one of eight Hall of Famers to do it, but even a no-hitter has eluded some of the greats, like **Steve Carlton**, **Lefty Grove** and **Greg Maddux**.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

33 players have 3,000 or more hits. Five of them had more than 3,500 hits. Name the five.

Pete Rose	4,256
Ty Cobb	4,191
Hank Aaron	3,771
Stan Musial	3,630
Tris Speaker	3,514

With the release of Robinson Cano this week there are four active players with 2,000+ hits. Name the four.

Albert Pujols	3440
Miguel Cabrera	3074
Yadier Molina	2143
Joey Votto	2090

HOUSEKEEPING

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