

BASEBALL TIDBITS FEBRUARY 2021

FEBRUARY 7, 2021

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

Spring training fast approaches. Stay safe out there.

Dustin Pedroia retired this week. Rookie of the Year in 2007, Most Valuable Player in 2008 (he led MLB in hits with 213 and doubles with 54, led the AL in runs scored with 118). He was a four-time Gold Glove winner, four time All Star. His career slash line was .299/.365/.439. He was a member of three World Series-winning Red Sox teams and a major contributor to the 2007 and 2013 titles. Wrapped his career with 140 HRs and 138 stolen bases, 1805 hits and .299 batting average.

Only pitcher in history has ever won back-to-back Cy Youngs with different teams--Greg Maddux with the Cubs in 1992 and the Braves in 1993.

Cardinals have only had one Gold Glove-winning home run champ in the history of their franchise-- Albert Pujols. Nolan Arenado is slipping into some excellent company.

Liam Hendricks signing with the White Sox as closer. 1.78 ERA is nice but his big value is 'balls in play'. 55 BIP per 100 batters faced over the last two years. For Chicago that's 40 less (mostly 9th inning, often high leverage situation) balls in play per year over last year's closer Alex Colome'. Among relievers who have worked 80 innings or more over the last two seasons, Hendricks ranked seventh in lowest contact percentage, according to FanGraphs. Colome ranked 61st. Hendricks was fifth among all relievers in strikeout rate over the last two years (13.13 per 9 IP). That's an upgrade.

With his trade to Oakland, Elvis Andrus ends a 12-year run as the Rangers starting shortstop. He was the last remaining connection to their back-to-back pennant-winning teams in 2010 and 2011.

Since Oct. 7, 1952, the day the Yankees won their fourth straight World Series, only two owners have won three in succession. George Steinbrenner's Yankees, 1998-2000, and Finley's Athletics, 1972-74.

Free Agent signings that immediately paid off

2018: [J.D. Martinez](#), Red Sox, OF/DH
Full contract: 5 years, \$109.95 million (2018-22)
First season: .330/.402/.629, 43 HR, 130 RBI, 6.4 WAR

2004: [Vladimir Guerrero](#), RF, Angels
Full contract: 5 years, \$70 million (2004-08)
First season: .337/.391/.598, 39 HR, 126 RBI, 5.6 WAR

2001: [Ichiro Suzuki](#), RF, Mariners
Full contract: 3 years, \$14 million (2001-03)
First season: .350/.381/.457, 8 HR, 56 SB, 7.7 WAR

2001: [Manny Ramirez](#), LF, Red Sox
Full contract: 8 years, \$160 million (2001-08)
First season: .306/.405/.609, 41 HR, 125 RBI, 5.2 WAR

1999: [Randy Johnson](#), LHP, D-backs
Full contract: 4 years, \$52.4 million (1999-2002)
First season: 17-9, 2.48 ERA, 364 K, 9.1 WAR

1997: [Roger Clemens](#), RHP, Blue Jays
Full contract: 4 years, \$40 million (1997-2000)
First season: 21-7, 2.05 ERA, 292 K, 11.9 WAR

1993: [Greg Maddux](#), RHP, Braves
Full contract: 5 years, \$28 million (1993-97)
First season: 20-10, 2.36 ERA, 197 K, 5.8 WAR

For reference

1977: [Reggie Jackson](#), RF, Yankees

Full contract: 5 years, \$3 million (1977-81)

First season: .286/.375/.550, 32 HR, 110 RBI, 4.5 WAR

Greatest Hitter - continued

More notes on last week's discussion of Greatest Hitter of All Time. One subscriber emailed "skip Ruth and Cobb as they are from a different age. Williams-Mays-Aaron—who is the best?" I picked 7 categories from Games played to On Base plus Slugging that reflect batting value. All had great careers. I included Ruth and Cobb for reference (and the first ten years of Mike Trout for fun). You can't make a bad pick.

Aaron

3298 Games

3771 Hits

755 HRs

2174 Runs

2297 RBIs (all-time leader)

.305 Average

.928 OPS

-

Mays

2992 Games

3283 Hits

660 HRs

2062 Runs

1903 RBIs

.302 Average

.941 OPS

Williams

2292 Games

2654 Hits

521 HRs

1798 Runs

1839 RBIs

.344 Average

1.116 OBS

Ruth

2503 Games

2873 Hits

714 HRs

2174 Runs

2214 RBIs

.342 Average

1.164 OBS (all-time leader)

Cobb

3034 Games

4189 Hits

117 HRs

2245 Runs

1944 RBIs

.366 Average (all-time leader)

.944 OBS

Trout

1252 Games

1380 Hits

302 HRs

944 Runs

798 RBIs

.304 Average

1.000 OBS

NYPD & Tiffany: the story behind the Yankees logo

The interlocking “NY” of the Yankees’ logo is arguably the most recognizable in all of professional sports, spotted on streets from The Bronx to Beijing, Manhattan to Melbourne. Their navy blue and white caps have transcended baseball, becoming a global cultural touchstone.

Yet most are unaware of the origins of that logo, a story that begins more than three decades before the franchise’s first pitch. It prominently features Tiffany & Co. -- internationally renowned for their treasures in little blue boxes -- and the swashbuckling early days of the New York City Police Department.

According to an account published one day later in The New York Times, NYPD patrolman John McDowell was walking his beat in the early hours of Jan. 8, 1877, spotting a robbery inside a saloon at 315 Seventh Avenue. (The newspaper erroneously printed the officer’s surname as McDonnell.)

Grappling with a group of three thieves, McDowell was shot behind the left ear. Two of the men scattered when backup arrived, but a seriously wounded McDowell still managed to arrest a 19-year-old named James Farrell, who also went by the name George Flint. Farrell admitted to shooting the patrolman.

McDowell recovered and was awarded the NYPD’s Medal of Valor, which prominently featured the interlocking “NY” symbol above a silver shield, depicting a woman placing a laurel wreath on a policeman’s head.

It was designed by Louis Tiffany of Tiffany & Co., and survives at the New York City Police Museum; the engraved back lauds McDowell “for bravery in pursuance of resolutions of the Board of Police of New York,” and is dated Jan. 12, 1877.

The baseball team arrived in 1903, the Highlanders playing their home games at Manhattan’s Hilltop Park while wearing an ornate “NY” across their chests. In 1909, the interlocking “NY” made its first appearance on the Highlanders' uniform caps and left sleeves.

It is believed that the design was adopted by William “Big Bill” Devery, one of the club’s owners and a former chief in the NYPD.

The “NY” migrated from the left sleeve to the left breast of the Yankees’ home uniforms from 1912-15, albeit in a larger version than is currently worn today. When the Yanks helped celebrate Fenway Park’s centennial in 2012, Derek Jeter led his team onto the field in gray uniforms sporting the old version of the logo.

In 1916, the Yankees removed the “NY” from their jersey and went with a plain, pinstripes-only look -- the logo remained off the uniform until '36, meaning that Babe Ruth (whose Yankees career spanned the years of 1920-36) never played a single game with the “NY” on his chest.

Of course, Ruth did wear caps with the “NY.” The Yankees tried numerous cap designs from 1903-21, including caps that featured pinstripes in 1915, '16, '19 and '21.

They settled on their forever cap in 1922, a solid navy cap with the white “NY” insignia that would be worn by Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle ... and, of course, Jay-Z, who rapped in 2009 that he “made the Yankees hat more famous than a Yankee can.”

To that claim, it would seem, he has some challengers.

FEBRUARY 14, 2021

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

Good morning. 46 days til opening day. Short but sweet this week.

One of the fun things about this newsletter is the feedback from serious fans. Commentary on our ongoing discussion of greatest hitter of all time:

On the greatest hitter question, I have no issue with segregating players by era. I notice people seem to be less focused on RBI's than I thought they would be--given that the purpose of hitting is to drive in runs. On the other hand, how much should we care about runs scored since they depend upon one's teammates? Also, walks (and therefore OBP and OPS) are tricky since how we define "hitting" is one thing and "batting" maybe another. It all depends on what you want to measure.

For me, totals (a function of longevity) count a lot less than BA, SLG, AB/HR, AB/SO (the last because it can have a disproportionately negative impact on team offense) and number of H, 2B, 3B, HR, RBI, BA per 162 games. I think if you look at those stats for Mays, Aaron, and Williams, one of them clearly stands above the other two.

	Average per 162 games							AB/HR (Rank)	AB/SO (Rank)
	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BA	SLG		
Mays	178	28	8	36	103	.302	.557	16.49 (#41)	7.13 (>#1000)
Aaron	185	31	5	37	113	.305	.555	16.38 (#40)	8.94 (#803)
Williams	188	37	5	37	130	.344	.634	14.79 (#9)	10.87 (#591)

The reason Williams has a similar number of H/162 but a much higher BA is that he had a lot fewer AB/162 because he had TWICE as many BB/162 (Mays: 79, Aaron: 69, Williams: 143). That also means a massive difference in OBP (Mays: .384, Aaron: .374, Williams: .482--did I

mention that is the BEST IN THE **ENTIRE HISTORY** of Baseball?). You already know what the OPS numbers look like.

If you want to include R/162 you have this: Mays: 112, Aaron: 107, Williams: 127.

Are we done yet?

Another person emailed asking how Stan Musial and Tony Gwynn stacked up against Aaron-Mays-Williams-Ruth-Cobb-Trout from last week. (keeping Williams for comparison). Musial certainly belongs in the discussion.

Williams

2292 Games

2654 Hits

521 HRs

1798 Runs

1839 RBIs

.344 Average

1.116 OPS

Musial

3026 Games

3630 Hits

475 HRs

1949 runs
1951 RBIs
.331 Average
.976 OPS

Gwynn

2440 Games
3141 Hits
135 HRs
1383 Runs
1138 RBIs
.338 Average
.847 OPS

I still like OPS – getting on base and hitting for power.

Yankees and haven't had a losing season since 1992, when Mel Hall, Roberto Kelly and Danny Tartabull made up their outfield.

First team west of the Mississippi—Kansas City A's in 1955.

Yadier Molina holds the record for most games caught for one team (2,025 and counting) -- the previous record holder was Hall of Famer Gabby Hartnett (Cubs)

Starter-catcher batteries most starts since 1900

Mickey Lolich-Bill Freehan 324

Warren Spahn-Del Crandall 316 Crandall was later manager of the Brewers and Mariners

Red Faber-Ray Schalk 306 White Sox 1920's

Don Drysdale-Johnny Roseboro 283

Red Ruffing-Bill Dickey 282 Yankee hall of famers

Adam Wainwright-Yadier Molina 274

Cardinals games played—position players

Musial 3026

Brock 2289

Molina 2025

On July 21, 1975 Joe Torre of the Mets hit into four double plays against the Astros.

FEBRUARY 21, 2021

good morning baseball fans

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

2020 was such a weird season. 16 playoff teams. Highest starters' ERA and fewest innings pitched amongst the 16—Atlanta Braves. First five playoff games Braves pitchers throw four shutouts.

2014, the Tigers had four Cy Young winning pitchers — David Price, Max Scherzer, Justin Verlander and Rick Porcello — and the fifth starter was Aníbal Sánchez, who won the 2013 ERA title (and no-hit the Red Sox for six innings in the '13 ALCS opener).

The 1999 Hall of Fame class featured three first-ballot inductees, the most since the inaugural class of 1936. George Brett, Nolan Ryan and Robin Yount. The first HOF class: Ty Cobb, Walter Johnson, Christy Mathewson, Babe Ruth and Honus Wagner.

Two pitchers in the Live Ball Era (since 1920) to win 20 or more games and lose 20 or more in the same season -- Phil Niekro (21-20 for the Braves in 1979) and Wilbur Wood (24-20 for the White Sox in 1973)

Garry Templeton (1,190 starts) started the most games at shortstop in Padres history. You might recall he started with St. Louis and was traded of Ozzie Smith.

Jake Arrieta is only the third pitcher to throw multiple no-hitters for the Cubs. Larry Corcoran tossed three in the 1880s, while Ken Holtzman threw no-hitters on Aug. 19, 1969, against Atlanta, and June 3, 1971, at Cincinnati.

Career Home Runs -- Cecil or Prince Fielder both hit 319 homers

When Fernando Tatis hit two grand slams for the Cardinals in the third inning on April 23, 1999, the same pitcher allowed both home runs -- Chan Ho Park, LAD. Thirteen players in MLB history have hit 2 grand slams in the same game. The last was Josh Willingham of the Nationals in 2009. On [July 29, 2003](#), switch hitter [Bill Mueller](#) of the [Boston Red Sox](#) hit one grand slam from each side of the plate. [Robin Ventura](#) of the [Chicago White Sox](#) hit a pair of grand slams against the [Texas Rangers](#) on [September 4, 1995](#). As a member of the [New York Mets](#), Ventura became the first player to hit a grand slam in each game of a [doubleheader](#) on [May 20, 1999](#). [Tony Lazzeri](#) and [Jim Northrup](#) are the only players to accomplish the feat *and* hit a grand slam in the [World Series](#). Both players achieved both feats in the same year (Lazzeri in [1936](#) and Northrup in [1968](#)).

Sustained Excellence

For those of you who feel WAR is a good comparison tool. From a chart on the website FiveThirtyEight.

Albert Pujols (2006, 2011), Buster Posey (2012, 2014), Mookie Betts (2018, 2020) were the highest position player performers on multiple champions. Matt Cain (2010, 2012) and Chris Carpenter (2006, 2011) were highest pitching performers on multiple champions.

Respect Your Elders

Many years ago a friend told me you can't be considered old until you are older than every player in MLB. Here's a look at the 10 oldest players in baseball heading into the 2021 season. To qualify for this list, players must:

- Have played in 2020 (or elected not to play in '20 due to the pandemic)
- Be on a Major League roster, have a Minor League contract or have received a non-roster invite to Spring Training (and not been released yet).

There are some guys still searching: Not-yet-retired-but-not-currently-on-a-roster older folks include Shin-Soo Choo, Ronald Belisario, Edinson Vólquez and Edwin Encarnación. Robinson Canó would be on this list had he not been banned for the season after testing positive for a second time for a PED.

1. Albert Pujols, DH, Angels (age 41)
 2. Rich Hill, LHP, Rays (age 40)
 3. Nelson Cruz, DH, Twins (age 40)
 4. Oliver Pérez, LHP, Indians (age 39)
 5. Adam Wainwright, RHP, Cardinals (age 39)
 6. Yadier Molina, C, Cardinals (age 38)
 7. J.A. Happ, LHP, Twins (age 38)
 8. Darren O'Day, RHP, Yankees (age 38)
 9. Ervin Santana, RHP, Royals (age 38)
 10. Justin Verlander, RHP, Astros (age 38)
- (Brett Gardner who recently re-signed with the Yankees is 37)

I Want a Raise

15 players are slated to earn \$30 million or more in 2021.

Mike Trout	\$37,116,666
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Gerrit Cole	\$36,000,000
Jacob deGrom	\$36,000,000
Stephen Strasburg	\$35,000,000
Zack Greinke	\$35,000,000
Nolan Arenado	\$35,000,000
Max Scherzer	\$34,503,480
Justin Verlander	\$33,000,000
Manny Machado	\$32,000,000
David Price	\$32,000,000
Trevor Bauer	\$31,333,333
Clayton Kershaw	\$31,000,000
Miguel Cabrera	\$30,000,000
Albert Pujols	\$30,000,000
Chris Sale	\$30,000,000

(for you Giancarlo Stanton haters out there--he will make \$29,000,000. Remember, Peter Gammon predicted Stanton will be AL MVP in 2021.)

Ok folks, back to the on-going debate on the greatest hitter of all time.

One subscriber emailed about ballpark differences and that Willie Mays had it harder playing so many games at Candlestick Park while Williams, Mantle and DiMaggio had it easier in hitter's

parks. Turns out his assumption of Fenway and Yankee Stadium being great hitter's parks is only partially correct. For details check out <http://seamheads.com/baseballgauge/blog/?p=656>

for one easy to understand analysis of ball park impact on career stats.

And more thoughts from another subscriber (I hope his charts translate ok via email—if you have a problem and want to read them let me know and I will send them in an attachment):

Ask and ye shall receive:

I expanded the charts to include other stats that you were considering and added Trout, Gwynn and Musial. I also added a field for runs produced (R+RBI-HR, since just counting R and RBIs double dips for HR). I was too lazy to reformat things to fit it all into one table, but what the hell.

I think it's pretty obvious Gwynn doesn't make the grade even though his AB/SO stats are crazy for anyone in the last 60 years (see Nellie Fox if you want to blow your mind)--sorry Padre fans. Trout and Musial have stats very much comparable to Mays and Aaron, but in my opinion, not Williams.

	Average per 162 games							AB/HR (Rank)	AB/SO (Rank)
	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BA	SLG		
Trout	179	34	6	39	103	.304	.582	15.02 (#13)	3.87 (>#1000)
Mays	178	28	8	36	103	.302	.557	16.49 (#41)	7.13 (>#1000)
Aaron	185	31	5	37	113	.305	.555	16.38 (#40)	8.94 (#803)
Gwynn	209	36	6	9	76	.338	.459	68.80 (<#1000)	21.40 (#92)
Musial	194	39	9	25	104	.331	.559	23.10 (#274)	15.76 (#267)
Williams	188	37	5	37	130	.344	.634	14.79 (#9)	10.87 (#591)

	Average per 162 games				
	BB	R	OBP	OPS	(R + RBI) – HR
Trout	108	122	.418	1.000	$122 + 103 - 39 = 186$
Mays	79	112	.384	.949	$112 + 103 - 36 = 179$
Aaron	69	107	.374	.928	$107 + 113 - 37 = 183$
Gwynn	52	92	.388	.847	$92 + 76 - 9 = 159$
Musial	96	104	.417	.976	$104 + 104 - 25 = 183$
Williams	143	127	.482	1.116	$127 + 130 - 37 = 220$

You may have heard there's a pandemic which is somewhat limiting my activities, so I figured I'd put together a similar set of tables for the earlier eras. I chose Cobb, Wagner, Speaker, Hornsby, Foxx, Gehrig, and Ruth as the obvious nominees. I think the first three belong in one era while the last three belong in another. Hornsby spans the two eras. Here's what it looks like:

	Average per 162 games							AB/HR (Rank)	AB/SO (Rank)
	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BA	SLG		
Cobb	224	39	16	6	104	.366	.512	97.78 (>#1000)	16.82 (#208)
Wagner	198	37	15	6	100	.328	.467	103.36 (>#1000)	14.20 (#344)
Speaker	204	46	13	7	89	.345	.500	87.15 (>#1000)	25.94 (#47)
Hornsby	210	39	12	22	114	.358	.577	27.15 (#426)	12.04 (#479)
Foxx	185	32	9	37	134	.325	.609	15.23 (#20)	6.20 (>#1000)
Gehrig	204	40	12	37	149	.340	.632	16.23 (#37)	10.13 (#652)
Ruth	186	33	9	46	143	.342	.690	11.76 (#2)	6.32 (>#1000)

	Average per 162 games				
	BB	R	OBP	OPS	(R + RBI) – HR
Cobb	67	120	.433	.944	$120 + 104 - 6 = 218$
Wagner	56	101	.391	.858	$101 + 100 - 6 = 195$
Speaker	80	109	.428	.928	$109 + 114 - 7 = 216$
Hornsby	74	113	.434	1.010	$113 + 114 - 22 = 205$
Foxx	102	122	.428	1.038	$122 + 134 - 37 = 219$

Gehrig	113	144	.447	1.080	$144 + 149 - 37 =$ 256
Ruth	133	141	.474	1.164	$141 + 143 - 47 = 237$

Given that he played in both eras, Hornsby's numbers are kind of mind blowing, indicating that he excelled in each. Gehrig's are just plain sick! I was a little surprised to see Trout made Foxx and Ruth look like contact hitters (he's at the Dave Kingman level of SO). Oh, how times have changed.

I was trying to figure out if there's a way to assess how a hitter combines power and contact, and I came up with a couple of ideas. The simplest is to add their rank in AB/HR and AB/SO. I left out anyone who didn't make it into the top 1000 in either stat, which leaves us with five hitters. This gives a more comparative than quantitative picture, but here's what I got:

	AB/HR Rank + AB/SO Rank
Aaron	843
Musial	541
Williams	600
Hornsby	905
Gehrig	689

I thought it was pretty interesting to see how well Musial did compared to the others. Looking for a more quantitative way to measure the combination of bat control and power I took the

percentage of AB in which the hitter made contact and multiplied it by their slugging average (for all I know there may already be a stat for this but who knows). I came out with this:

	CNT x SLG
Trout	.431
Wagner	.434
Gwynn	.438
Mays	.479
Speaker	.481
Cobb	.482
Aaron	.493
Foxx	.511
Musial	.524
Hornsby	.529
Gehrig	.570
Williams	.576
Ruth	.581

I don't really know what this means, but it's interesting that there's a bit of a gap between the top three and everyone else.

FEBRUARY 28, 2021

Good morning baseball fans. Happy spring training.

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

The Wesleyan alumni on the subscriber list know this but for the rest of you—baseball has been played Andrus Field in the middle of Wesleyan's campus in Middletown, CT since 1874. Oldest continuously used baseball field in the world.

In a little over 12 months, the Red Sox have gone from an outfield of Betts/Bradley/Benintendi to Hunter Renfroe/Alex Verdugo/Franchy Cordero.

Since 1995, the start of the wild-card era, only nine players age 32 or older have had [more than two seasons of 500 or more plate appearances at shortstop](#). Four (Derek Jeter, Omar Vizquel, Jimmy Rollins and Barry Larkin) were either Hall of Famers or are in the Hall of Fame conversation. So with all the talk about the great upcoming class of free agent shortstops it is buyer beware. It will be interesting to see how long their contracts run.

Joey Votto was the first player to cap a three-homer game with a walk-off grand slam vs. the Nationals on May 13, 2012.

Most Yankees opening day strikeouts? Tim Lary (1991). Lary was traded from the Reds to the Yankees in December 1989. In his first year in the Bronx, the former Mets first-round pick out of UCLA posted a 4.11 ERA and had a Major League-worst 19 losses for a Yankees team that went 67-95, finishing last in the AL East. Lary was a free agent after the season but re-signed with the Yankees and got the Opening Day start. He struck out nine batters against the Tigers in a New York loss, setting a franchise record for strikeouts on Opening Day that has yet to be broken. It was the only Opening day start of his 13-year career -- with any team.

Pride of the Yankees was nominated for the Best Picture Oscar in 1942.

Most home runs before age 25--Hall of Famer Eddie Mathews (190 HRs)

How hard will it be to ramp up pitching staffs without major injuries? The Dodgers, for instance, have seven starters, who, including Trevor Bauer, threw 325 $\frac{2}{3}$ total innings in 2020. The entire pitching staff totaled 538 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings — 699 including the postseason. In 2019, they threw 1,445 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings in the regular season (1,490 $\frac{2}{3}$ including the three October series).

Miguel Cabrera needs 13 home runs for 500, and 134 hits for 3,000. He is the only Triple Crown winner (2012) to hit zero triples in his Triple Crown season.

Times have changed. In 1886 a 20 year old left named Matt Kilroy struck out 599 batters. He had 68 starts for Baltimore, 66 complete games, 583 innings pitched, won 29 and lost 34. (the following season he led the majors with 46 wins, 589 innings pitched with 66 complete games). Best seasons – Nolan Ryan 383, Sandy Koufax 382, Randy Johnson 372.

Is Mike Trout is headed down a path that will put him in the company of Ernie Banks, Ken Griffey Jr., and Ted Williams? All were tremendous players who never won the World Series.

Trout's only appearance in the postseason came in 2014 when his Angels were bounced out of a Division Series in three games by the Kansas City Royals. Trout is 28. Williams was 28 when the Red Sox lost the 1946 World Series. He played 14 more seasons and never went back.

Class move - The Dodgers left a locker open for the late Tommy Lasorda at their Camelback Ranch spring training complex in Arizona.

I remember having a George Brunet baseball card. A few months ago I included this in tidbits:

1959. Worst pitching inning in mlb history. Kansas City A's vs. Chicago White Sox. The A's were down, 8-6, to the White Sox entering the seventh inning. That deficit was 19-6 at the end of the seventh inning ... a frame in which the White Sox had managed only *one* hit, a single. Three Kansas City pitchers had allowed 11 runs on one hit, three errors, a hit-by-pitch and 10 walks -- eight coming with the bases loaded. To this day, it remains the most bases-loaded walks allowed in a single inning by a team ...8 -- A's vs. White Sox, 7th inning, 4/22/59

... or by a pitcher ...5 -- George Brunet, 7th inning, 4/22/59

If you'd like the full crazy story of Brunet's career a subscriber sent these links along from mlb.com and sports illustrated.

[https://www.mlb.com/news/george-brunet-is-the-most-interesting-pitcher-you-never-knew?tcid=fb_article &fbclid=IwAR2VssvC8pR-DibnFUDgNFAHb2i_I0RAanBeVqoP3U1WtkFlZRmEQkiB1JQ](https://www.mlb.com/news/george-brunet-is-the-most-interesting-pitcher-you-never-knew?tcid=fb_article&fbclid=IwAR2VssvC8pR-DibnFUDgNFAHb2i_I0RAanBeVqoP3U1WtkFlZRmEQkiB1JQ)

<https://vault.si.com/vault/1980/08/18/bisbol-is-in-his-blood>

Another reason you should subscribe to The Athletic.

Jayson Stark never disappoints—great stuff heading into spring training.

Stark: The 2021 spring training storylines survey has Padres, Blue Jays front and center

We know it can be challenging, at times like this, to ignore those giant ice cubes that are literally falling from the sky toward your face. We know it can be difficult to look beyond that hockey rink running through what you could have sworn used to be your sidewalk.

But we want you to close your eyes and dream. We want you to perk up your ears and listen closely. Somewhere out there, off in the distance, there are baseballs sailing beneath brilliant sunshine. There are men in cleats, sprinting across resplendent blades of perfectly cut grass.

There is Max Scherzer, already in midseason grunting form. There is Jacob deGrom, sweat beads dotting his forehead, beginning the road to another Cy Young. There are pitchers. There are catchers. There is warmth. There is hope. There is baseball.

So hoist a glass of your favorite liquid refreshment to the dawn of another spring training. It won't be easy — because what is? It won't be normal — because, hey, 2021! But boy, are we ready.

Fortunately, to help us peer ahead at what is about to unfold, we've just finished polling 32 of the sharpest baseball people on the continent. Want to know which spring storylines they have their eyeballs trained on? Read on. Here they come.

Are the Padres ready to ambush the Dodgers?

We're not sure this has ever happened. But the first question on our survey was, "Name the three most improved National League teams" — and the Padres ran the table! They were named on every single ballot. So whaddya know. They're the Mariano Rivera of spring-preview surveys. So all they need now is that, plus about 97 wins, and they'll earn a free ticket to October.

But not only are the Padres arguably the most fun and most magnetic team in baseball. Across the landscape of this sport, they're also viewed as an actual threat to the mighty Dodgers. Check out these reviews from assorted voters:

- *"Those 19 Dodgers-Padres games will be must-see TV."*
- *"If they don't win 95 games, it'll be a disaster."*
- *"They (led) the league in activity and quality."*

There were also lots of wonderment about how their energizer GM, A.J. Preller, could engineer a seven-player trade for Yu Darvish, a five-player deal for Blake Snell and a three-team, seven-

player trade that landed Joe Musgrove — and not even have to deal away any of this team's elite prospects. But that's how these Win the Winter awards are bestowed.

So now, as the February sun rises over Peoria Stadium, this team has a legit win-the-World-Series kind of roster — as long as that just-won-the-World-Series team up the freeway spends 2021 discovering that the fabled World Series hangover is a real thing.

SURVEY SAID: It was eye-popping enough that the Padres were unanimous in the Most Improved NL Team balloting, but the Mets showed up on every ballot but two*. So the most interesting part of this vote was actually the struggle these voters had to figure out the third team on their list. That voting turned out this way: Dodgers 12, Cardinals 11, Braves 7, Nationals 5. But some voters weren't sure *any* of those teams deserved to make the list. One longtime exec added the Cardinals, solely because of the Nolan Arenado deal, then groused: *"With one (new) player? It's embarrassing in and of itself that they are on the list."*

Is this the Blue Jays' time?

So remember that thing we said a few paragraphs ago that might never have happened? Well, guess what. It actually happened in this survey *in both leagues*.

In the Most Improved American League Team voting, the Blue Jays went 32-for-32. So they join the Padres in appearing on every ballot. And after the year we've just lived through, has unanimity ever felt more heartwarming?

On one hand, not one of these voters said they thought the Blue Jays were ready to blow past the Yankees. That's solely because the reaction to their starting-pitching acquisitions (Robbie Ray, Steven Matz, Tyler Chatwood) couldn't possibly have been more lukewarm.

On the other hand, the Jays made three other free-agent signings that our voters loved: George Springer (six years, \$150 million), Marcus Semien (one year, \$18 million to shift from shortstop to second base) and Kirby Yates (one year, \$8.25 million, as a high-upside injury-bounceback closer). The reviews went like this:

- *"Grabbing Springer jumped them to the top."*
- *"Toronto could be a scary team. They're so young, and they're so good. And now they've added Springer."*
- *"They're finally there. They've been biding their time. They've got a really good young core. And now they're supplementing it. I love Semien. And I still think they'll add another starting pitcher."*

But as one voter reminded us, it's possible that none of these things will emerge as the biggest spring story of all in this camp. Where, he asked, will the Blue Jays play this year — since

initially, that answer almost certainly won't be Toronto? Well, lovely Dunedin, Fla., would be a sensational guess.

SURVEY SAID: Did you notice that two-thirds of the AL franchises were just treading water (or worse) this winter? Our voters did. So only four teams besides the Jays got more than *two* votes in the Most Improved Team balloting: White Sox 28, Angels 14, Royals 12, Yankees 6. And one voter refused to list *any* other team except the Blue Jays. His ballot looked like this: "*Blue Jays ... That's it!*"

Who's the bigger team-changer: Lindor or Arenado?

Did somebody just mention Nolan Arenado a while back? Oh, right. That was us. We bring him up because he was part of something historically rare this winter. Here's how rare:

Since 2015, according to STATS Perform, Arenado ranks No. 1 among all NL players in Wins Above Replacement (with 35.3). Meanwhile, in the same period, Francisco Lindor ranks No. 3 among all AL players — but first among AL infielders — in Wins Above Replacement (29.6), behind only Mike Trout and Mookie Betts.

And have you heard *they both got traded this winter* — before either of them had even turned 30? Well, that doesn't happen much. Our friends from STATS looked at every 20-something player since 1901 who was worth at least 29 Wins Above Replacement over any six-year period *and* whose primary position was somewhere in the infield. Here is what they learned:

It's the first time in 80 years that *two* infielders who fit those criteria got traded in the same offseason! The only other time was 1941, when Arky Vaughn and Johnny Mize had to call in the moving vans. But wait. This gets better.

In the eight decades since, there had only been two other infielders on that list who changed teams over *any* offseason. One was Dick Allen (traded after both the 1969 and 1970 seasons). The other was — who else? — A-Rod (traded to the Yankees after the 2003 season, three years after he bolted from Seattle to Texas as a free agent).

And then it happened twice *just this winter*. So it's no shock that the Best Trade voting wound up with those two running 1-2, with nobody else in the same zip code:

Lindor* to the Mets 26
Arenado to the Cardinals 19
(* plus Carlos Carrasco)

So which of these two trades will make the bigger impact? Let's zip through the reviews, starting with Lindor (plus the heavily praised Carrasco):

- "*The Mets stole Lindor.*"

- *"I love the Carrasco part, too. But even if they didn't get Carrasco, the Mets got one of the top 10 players in the game — maybe the top five — and what they gave up was very, very replaceable."*

And now the Arenado lovefest:

- *"St Louis gets a superstar that loves to get dirty and play hard."*
- *"I have no idea what was going on there. The Cardinals basically got that guy for nothing. And then the Rockies paid them to take him."*

A couple of voters worried about how much leaving Colorado would depress Arenado's offensive impact. But one voter wasn't buying those Life After Coors worries, saying: "Here's my response to that: DJ Lemahieu."

SURVEY SAID: Lindor and Arenado swallowed up most of the votes in the Best Trades competition — but not all of them. The leader board after those two: Snell to the Padres 8, Darvish to the Padres 7, Andrew Benintendi to the Royals 2. The fun little group that got one vote apiece included Raisel Iglesias to the Angels, an actual Yankees-Red Sox deal (sending Adam Ottavino to Boston) and separate votes for both the Yankees' *and* Pirates' end of the Jameson Taillon trade.

What should we make of the Trevor Bauer deal?

We didn't need to count these votes to know that Trevor Bauer was one of baseball's [most polarizing figures](#). But once we were through counting, we had this weird feeling that the Dodgers had just signed Dwight Schrute, not one of the five best pitchers in baseball.

Take the Best Free Agent Signing and Worst Free Agent Signing voting, for instance. Who ranked first in the Worst Signing competition? That would be Bauer, with 11 votes. But this same man collected nine votes in the Best Signing balloting, too.

We also asked voters to name their most intriguing spring storylines in each league. A bunch of different Padres scenarios got the most votes in the NL. But right behind was, well, guess who? If you guessed the Dodgers' new Cy Young, you nailed it. And the part they found intriguing? It wasn't whether he'd have an ERA under 2.00 again. Let's put it that way.

"It will be interesting to see what he does to a world championship clubhouse," said one voter. "(He's a) 'me' over 'team' guy ... always has been."

Another voter asked what the odds were that Bauer would "screw up a good club." Yet another talked about the Dodgers' "strong culture" and wondered if a guy like him would fit in a clubhouse with so many unselfish leaders. Then there was this prediction from one rival exec:

“I don’t think this ends well.”

Apart from the clubhouse-drama thread, another voter pointed out one more tricky element of this signing. By paying Bauer \$40 million this year and \$45 million next year, the Dodgers don’t just have to write checks for an insane amount of money. It’s that they now have to live with that precedent when they have the impending free agency of Clayton Kershaw, Corey Seager and Cody Bellinger to deal with over the next two years.

So would it be possible for Bauer to win another Cy Young — and still have the Dodgers wishing they never got themselves into this? It’s the clear consensus of our voters that when you’re dealing with Bauer, anything is possible.

SURVEY SAID: Bauer wasn’t the only guy to get votes for both Best and Worst Free Agent Signing. You know who else can say that? Springer, J.T. Realmuto, DJ LeMahieu, Corey Kluber, Yadier Molina, Liam Hendriks, Garrett Richards, Marcell Ozuna, Blake Treinen, Tommy La Stella, Enrique Hernández, Garrett Richards, Jurickson Profar, Didi Gregorius and Drew Smyly. But guess who was the only player to get *multiple* votes for best and worst? Yep.

Can La Russa still work his magic?

The last time Tony La Russa managed a game for the White Sox (June 19, 1986), not a single player on his current 40-man roster was even born yet. Carlton Fisk played for the White Sox that day — and he’s now 73 years old. So in case you’re not catching our drift, *it’s been a while*.

But now La Russa is back, 35 years later, managing a White Sox team with big dreams, big talent and big personalities. So is this a good fit? Our voters were fascinated by that thought, especially after an offseason that saw La Russa face [legal troubles](#) and [questions about his views](#) on social justice and player protests.

In our voting for Most Intriguing AL Spring Storyline, Tony Time finished tied for first with a bunch of Blue Jays plot twists. And even more revealing was this: In the voting for Managers Under Most Pressure, La Russa ranked No. 1 among all AL managers. So it’s no wonder his return inspired quite the debate. Here’s just a sampling:

- *From a rival manager: “I personally think he will be fantastic.”*
- *From a rival GM: “I’m fascinated to see how they’ll mesh and how this will work. He’ll have a lot of eyes on him because of this offseason. And they’re expected to win.”*
- *From an NL executive: “I love this. Let’s bring back Jack McKeon, too.”*
- *From another longtime exec: “This will be interesting. Tony is different, if that’s the right word. I’m not close to being as old as him, and I have a hard time speaking the same language as*

these players. The baseball part, he'll be fine. But relating to these players? I don't know. It'll be interesting."

SURVEY SAID: The voting for Most Intriguing AL Storylines spanned everything imaginable. The Blue Jays and the La Russa White Sox got 13 votes apiece. But also getting multiple votes were these hot topics: How healthy is the Yankees' rotation? (seven* votes) ... What are the Red Sox doing? (four) ... Is this the year Mike Trout and the Angels get back to the playoffs? (four) ... The return of A.J. Hinch and Alex Cora to the dugout (two) ... and the Rays' latest pitching-remake lab experiment (two).

Are the Mets now the kings of New York?

In the Bronx, the Yankees just went through an entire decade (aka the teens) without playing in a World Series — for the first time in 100 years. But it feels as though it's been longer since they weren't even The Most Interesting Team in New York.

Well, here comes Steve Cohen, Francisco Lindor and the post-Wilpon Mets to command our attention. And the sheer array of spring storylines raised by our voters tell us we've now entered a time in which we can't take our eyes off the Mets. Some of the issues facing the team are serious and disturbing, including the recent stories about [Jared Porter](#), [Mickey Callaway](#) and [Ryan Ellis](#). For the purposes of this survey, though, we focused on the baseball issues:

THE LINDOR EXTENSION: Is there anyone out there who *doesn't* expect the new shortstop in town to sign a Mookie-esque deal to stick around for the next 10 to, oh, 50 years? We couldn't find one. As one rival exec put it, "They are going to have to pay him now — but he's a star. And he's young."

THE MANAGER: It was the GM (Brodie Van Wagenen) who moved on after Cohen bought the Mets. It was the manager (39-year-old Luis Rojas) who was allowed to stick around. But in Cohen's previous hedge-fund life, he was known for firing many a high-profile underling for underperforming expectations. So no wonder Rojas got more votes (seven) for Manager Under Pressure than anyone else in either league. From one AL exec: "If he wants to keep managing, he'd better win — in a really tough division."

THE OWNER'S PATIENCE: The smooth, *I'm A Mets Fan Just Like You — and I'm Not Named Wilpon* phase of Cohen's ownership regime is just about over now. The phase in which his team is guaranteed not to go undefeated is about to begin. So the baseball world is watching intently to see if Cohen reacts to the inevitable *This Isn't What I Paid For* baseball developments the way he has long reacted to *This Isn't What I Paid For* hedge-fund developments. As one rival NL exec told us, "We're going to see what this owner is really like. He's spent a ton of money. He's got a very young manager. I think everybody is very interested to see how he responds if his team doesn't perform the way he expects them to perform."

SURVEY SAID: The Mets were all over this voting. They finished in the top three in Team Under Most Pressure (second), Manager Under Most Pressure (first), Most Intriguing NL Story (third) and Most Improved NL Team (second). So we highly recommend they go something like 140-22!

Didn't you used to be the Pirates?

Not so long ago, Gerrit Cole used to be a Pirate. Andrew McCutchen used to be a Pirate. Starling Marte, Josh Harrison, Charlie Morton, Tyler Glasnow, Mark Melancon, Russell Martin, Neil Walker — they all once wore black and gold, on the same planet we live on.

Wow. Was 2013-14-15 really *that* long ago? Must be, because the 2021 edition of the Pittsburgh Pirates is officially unrecognizable. And not even according to us.

That's according to the esteemed voters who took part in this survey and honored the Pirates as baseball's least recognizable team. They showed up on the ballots of 25 of our 32 voters — which was enough to prevent that club still claiming to be the Orioles (19 votes) from somehow repeating as most unrecognizable.

But when we lure these voters into taking part in this survey, we can't just let them cast their votes and move on. Every once in a while, we have to test them. So we invited quite a few to play America's favorite game, *Name Three Pirates*.

Now these are all people who *work* in baseball. And we didn't ask them to name 10 Pirates. Just three. A few laughed and admitted they'd spent enough time talking with the Buccos about potential deals this winter that they felt a need to disqualify themselves. But as for the others? Here's how that went:

- *"Oh God. I know their shortstop. What's his name again?" (Correct answer: Kevin Newman.)*
- *"Gregory Polanco. And ... hmmm. After that I have zero clue. Wow."*
- *"I can name Adam Frazier, Newman, and ... wait, Polanco is still there, right? Is that three? Whew. Don't ask me to go much further."*
- *"I know. Clemente, Stargell and Parker."*

OK, so that went well. Since last year this time, the Pirates have waved *adios* to Josh Bell, Jameson Taillon, Joe Musgrove, Chris Archer, Trevor Williams, Derek Holland and Keone Kela — all of whom at least have some level of recognizability.

So now we have just one player left in uniform — Polanco — who has appeared in a postseason game with their franchise. That would at least make him identifiable to people walking down

the streets of Squirrel Hill. Unfortunately, he hit .153/.214/.325 last year. So maybe in his case, being recognizable can actually be overrated!

SURVEY SAID: Here's your Least Recognizable Team leader board: Pirates 25, Orioles 20, Tigers 6 and — can this be right? — *the Red Sox* 5 ... Our favorite, most creative vote in this category came from a voter who ranked the Mets at No. 1. And why was that? "They look happy," he quipped. "I don't recognize that."

Who's feeling the heat?

Once again this year, we asked our voters to name the teams, front offices and/or managers who are under the most pressure. We've already revealed that La Russa and Rojas were popular managerial choices. But that'll do it for the spoiler alerts. Believe it or not, there were votes for 28 teams/front offices/managers. So let's back to the Big Board and reveal more of the top vote-getters:

JEFF BRIDICH/ROCKIES FRONT OFFICE (18 VOTES): We've been searching for just the right word to describe how the rest of baseball looks at the Rockies and their embattled general manager. But how about "bewildered?" That seems to cover it. Here's one rival exec's all too typical take: "Nothing personal, but I have no idea how Jeff has kept his job. When you piss off your best player, then you have to push him out the door because he's pissed off and then you also pay the team you're trading him to \$50 million to take him, it's hard to think of anywhere else that wouldn't get you fired ... I don't get it."

RED SOX TEAM/FRONT OFFICE (5 VOTES): There is zero reason to think that a president of baseball ops who has presided over exactly one season — Chaim Bloom — is in any "trouble" in the classic sense of that word. But in a little over 12 months, the Red Sox have gone from an outfield of Betts/Bradley/Benintendi to Hunter Renfroe/Alex Verdugo/Franchy Cordero. And even though Bloom wasn't hired to keep the 2018 band together, the question is: Is Boston a place where this production of Extreme Roster Makeover is likely to fly? "It's been a long time," said one voter, "since Red Sox fans have been asked to be patient."

OTHER MANAGERS FEELING THE HEAT: Besides Rojas and La Russa, eight different managers showed up in the Under Pressure voting: Aaron Boone (two votes), Bud Black (two), Jayce Tingler (two) and Scott Servais, Joe Girardi and Charlie Montoyo with one each. In San Diego, Tingler in particular is a guy to watch — much like Luis Rojas. "They're both under the gun," said one voter. "They've got the talent. So they've got no excuses."

OTHER FRONT OFFICES FEELING THE HEAT: So many front offices got votes that it's almost easier to list the ones that didn't. But here's everyone who collected a vote: Bridich/Rockies (18), Preller/Padres (5), Bloom/Red Sox (5), Brian Cashman/Yankees (4), Jerry Dipoto/Mariners (3), Jon Daniels/Rangers (2), Jed Hoyer/Cubs (2), Sandy Alderson/Mets (2) and one each for the front offices of the Reds, Indians, Rays, Blue Jays, Nationals, Astros, Giants, Angels and Phillies. The most surprising votes? Those four for Cashman: "He's one of the best in the business," said

one voter. "But you have to wonder how long he can survive without winning a World Series. They've spent more money than any humans on the planet."

In other voting news ...

THE SIX MOST UNIMPROVED AL TEAMS

Orioles: 22

Indians: 21

A's: 13

Red Sox: 10

Rangers: 9

Rays: 6

SURVEY SAID: One rival AL exec on the Orioles' relentless teardown: "I honestly think they're trying to lose *more* games. I feel like they were upset that they won as many games as they did last year." ... But let's not dwell on the Orioles. It's the presence of the Indians, right on their heels, that's the stunner. They've jettisoned Lindor, Carrasco, Carlos Santana and Brad Hand. Their whole roster won't earn much more than Bauer. And worst of all, they've surrendered the essence that made them special. One voter's astute take: "I just think losing Lindor and Carrasco takes a lot out of their identity and soul."

THE SIX MOST UNIMPROVED NL TEAMS

Rockies: 30

Pirates: 26

Reds: 16

Cubs: 12

Diamondbacks: 7

Brewers: 3

SURVEY SAID: What a great look, that everyone in the NL Central got votes in this category except the Cardinals. Almost nobody in this division is even trying, and it offends the front offices that are. "This whole thing is starting to stink," said an NL exec. "It's un-American."

THE FIVE BEST FREE AGENT SIGNINGS

George Springer (Blue Jays): 18

DJ LeMahieu (Yankees): 16

J.T. Realmuto (Phillies): 15

Trevor Bauer (Dodgers): 9

Charlie Morton (Braves): 9

SURVEY SAID: We look forward to the annual surprises in this category, so it's weird to find so many voters so wedded to the chalk. But among the 36 different players who got at least one vote, the most notable was Charlie Morton — who also tied for Best Free Agent Bargain. You know what that tells us? There's nothing modern front offices love more than a one-year deal for a pitcher with ace upside. "The Braves," said one voter, "took advantage of a rare Rays mistake."

THE FIVE WORST FREE AGENT SIGNINGS

Trevor Bauer (Dodgers): 11

Corey Kluber (Yankees): 9

Tommy La Stella (Giants): 9

Liam Hendriks (White Sox): 9

James McCann (Mets): 9

SURVEY SAID: Here's the deal with this list: Every one of these players also got votes in the *Best Free Agents* category, which tells you that obviously, this isn't about the player. It's about the contract ... So \$11 million guaranteed for Kluber? "Way too much guaranteed for one start since May of 2019," said one voter ... Three guaranteed years for La Stella at age 32? "Love the player," said another voter, "but shocked (the Giants) went that long given his lack of defense or versatility." ... \$54 million for Hendriks? "He's really good," said an AL exec, "but they paid as much as (Brad) Hand *plus* (Blake) Treinen (will earn) per year." ... And a four-year deal for McCann? "I'm not convinced he is a bona fide impactful catcher for the next four years," said yet another voter.

HOW'D THAT GUY NOT GET TRADED?

Kris Bryant: 20

Trevor Story: 10

Sonny Gray: 4

Josh Hader: 2

Kevin Kiermaier: 2

SURVEY SAID: There was a time, early on in the polling, when we thought Bryant might be unanimous. He didn't get there — but any more questions about how available he was for most of this winter? So on one hand, it's amusing that the whole sport seems surprised that he hasn't gone anywhere (yet) — *but nobody traded for him*. On the other hand, said one rival exec, there will come a point in 2021 when the Cubs are "going to trade Bryant and probably (Javy) Baez. (They) need to nail it."

THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT INJURY COMEBACKS

Corey Kluber: 22

Jameson Taillon: 10

Shohei Ohtani: 7
Stephen Strasburg: 7
Mike Soroka: 7

MIDSEASON COMEBACK DIVISION

Chris Sale: 6
Noah Syndergaard: 6
Luis Severino: 5

SURVEY SAID: Mamas, definitely let your babies grow up to be athletic trainers — because 32 different players got votes in this category! One voter told us: “Just put down the entire Yankees rotation except for Cole.” ... A Strasburg voter argued: “It’s got to be Strasburg. It’s not even close. Last look we got of that guy (in the 2019 postseason), he was dominating.” ... And an Ohtani voter was just as vociferous, saying: “He’s huge. He’s a big determining factor in how good that team is.” ... So apparently, health matters!

SIX PHENOMS TO WATCH THIS SPRING

Wander Franco (Rays): 18
Jared Kelenic (Mariners): 15
MacKenzie Gore (Padres): 12
Alex Kirilloff (Twins): 6
Sixto Sánchez (Marlins): 6
Ke’Bryan Hayes (Pirates): 6

SURVEY SAID: In a year in which 50 veteran free agents might not get jobs at all, 30 rookies got votes in this category. But while we heard all sorts of gushing about at least a dozen of those 30, the love for Franco is in a class unto itself, even though nobody actually saw him play in 2020. So here’s a memorable quote from last year’s column on the best prospect in the sport: “He’s going to be a super-super-super-super-superstar. I saw him play for six games (in 2019), and he didn’t have one swing and miss.”

THE SIX MOST UNLIKELY SPRING TRAINING INVITEES

Tim Tebow (Mets): 15
Greg Bird (Rockies): 2
Neftalí Feliz (Phillies): 1
Drew Robinson (Giants): 1
Will Ferrell (All-Dream Team): 1*
Bartolo Colon (Hey, there’s no Universal DH!): 1*

(Not actually invited, but great try!)*

SURVEY SAID: First off, we admire those fictitious choices of Farrell and Bartolo ... Second, all those Tebow votes poured in before he announced his retirement Wednesday night, which allowed him to make this list *six springs in a row*. “He’s 33,” joked one voter, “and he’s gonna ride this list till he’s 50.” *Well, not anymore! ... And finally, there’s the wittiest vote in this whole survey. The *real* unlikely spring invitees? “Fans and scouts,” quipped one of those scouts.

FIVE MORE INTRIGUING SPRING STORYLINES

1. Will the Astros still get booed — and will A.J. Hinch and Alex Cora get booed?
2. Will Trey Mancini (after a lost season battling cancer) and Eduardo Rodríguez (after a lost season battling COVID-related health issues) be the spring’s best comeback stories?
3. Will Kim Ng and this wave of female coaches/instructors be the beginning of a special new era of high-profile jobs for women in this sport?
4. Is there a prayer that owners and players can see past their regularly scheduled acrimony and find a path to the universal DH, expanded playoffs and labor kumbaya — or even one of the above? The whole sport is watching. (“The saga of broken relationships and a lack of trust continues to haunt our game,” said one voter, eloquently.)
5. Testing! Protocols! Contact tracing! Socially distanced crowds! The first Zoom spring training! Can 30 teams make it through the spring without an outbreak or shutdown? “There’s really only one spring story,” one NL executive said. “And that’s COVID.”

And finally, from baseballegg.com

A not-so-short history of baseball team nicknames

Why are Boston’s Sox red and Chicago’s white? Who is it that the Dodgers dodge and why do we care now? Why is the team in St. Louis called the Cardinals? Who was the inspiration behind Cleveland being called the Indians? What crimes did the folks in Pittsburgh commit that led them to be called Pirates?

This article sets out to answer those questions and more as we take a trip around MLB and look at the origins of the nicknames for each of the current 30 teams.

How Major League Baseball teams got their names:

Los Angeles Angels

Let's get some of the easy ones out of the way first. The Angels came into the American League in 1961 as an expansion team. For decades, the Los Angeles minor league team had been called the Angels, since Los Angeles is known as The City of Angels. Why? Because in the 18th century the population of the region ballooned when a Catholic priest named Junípero Serra ran a mission named for San Gabriel Archangel. The mission is still there, you can visit it.

Oakland Athletics

One of the oldest nicknames in pro sports, the Athletics name goes back to the Philadelphia Athletic Club, which was a popular civic organization in the city dating back to the 19th century.

The "A's have taken their nickname with them to Kansas City and Oakland. The elephant as their logo/mascot came about after Giants' manager John McGraw called the A's "white elephants" in 1902. Owner Connie Mack flipped the insult around and adopted the white elephant as part of the team persona. It survives today, which leaves a lot of fans wondering why a baseball team called the A's has an elephant on their uniform.

Seattle Mariners

When the American League decided to expand by two teams in 1977, the Seattle market was offered a team almost immediately to settle an old score. Eight years earlier, the Seattle Pilots had been an expansion team, but mismanagement by ownership led to their demise after one season (they went on to Milwaukee to become the Brewers). The AL offered Seattle a team to shuffle aside a lawsuit brought on them by the city of Seattle for the loss of the Pilots. The new ownership group ran a contest in the newspaper, soliciting nicknames. "Mariners" won by a hefty margin over the runner-up "Kings" or "Kingfish" (both for King County, Washington).

Texas Rangers

This team, which has their roots in the expansion Washington Senators, debuted in Arlington in 1972. They are named for the legendary Texas Ranger law enforcement agency, which traces their roots back to the 1820s.

Chicago White Sox

For decades, the only major league team in Chicago was the Chicago White Stockings of the National League, who went on to become the Cubs (more on that later). When the American League planted a team in the Windy City in 1900, they called themselves the White Stockings in homage to the former NL team. Later, the name was shortened to "White Sox." So, the White Sox nickname is actually borrowed from the Cubs. Chew on that, South Siders. Strangely, the team has rarely worn white stockings.

Cleveland Indians

The Cleveland baseball team has had a long history of nicknames. First, they were known as the Blues because they wore blue striped socks. Then they were called the Naps after their star player, Larry “Napolean” Lajoie.

The team was officially dubbed the Indians in 1915, but the reason is in dispute. Some sources say the Indian name came because the Boston Braves won the 1914 World Series and the theme was popular, others say it was to pay respect to Louis “Chief” Sockalexis, a native American who played pro ball in Cleveland in the last years of the 19th century. Sockalexis died in December of 1913, however, so I’m not sure why it took a full year for the team to change their name for him. The team itself clings to this latter explanation, in part to avoid the controversy of using the term “Indian” which has increasingly become more politically incorrect.

Note: in 2020, the team announced that they would be replacing the name “Indians” in the near future.

Detroit Tigers

According to one source the Tigers earned their nickname from their orange striped socks. However, when they entered the American League in 1901, the Tigers wore blue and red striped socks.

A more likely reason for the Tigers nickname is in reference to the Detroit Light Guard, a famous military unit from Michigan that had performed bravely in the Spanish-American War. The unit was known as the “Fightin’ Tigers” because the crest they adopted featured a Tiger head.

Kansas City Royals

After an unsuccessful decade hosting the Athletics, Kansas City got another chance at Major League Baseball with the expansion of 1969. The name “Royals” was selected from over 15,000 entries in a name-the-team contest. The name “Royals” is meant to signify the royal stature of the city as the hub of steer and horse industry in America. For many years the city has hosted the Kansas City Royal Horse Show.

The KC minor league team had been known as the Blues for several decades, serving for some time as a feeder for the Yankees.

Minnesota Twins

Since the team plays in Minneapolis, a twin city to St. Paul, the name “Twins” was a perfect selection when they received the former Washington Senators in 1961. Their uniforms have almost always included an arm patch that shows two brothers shaking hands across the river that divides the two cities.

Baltimore Orioles

The Orioles are the descendants of the St. Louis Browns, who moved to Baltimore in 1954. Baltimore has used the Orioles nickname for more than a hundred years, dating back to the 19th century when their entry in the National League was the best and most innovative team in baseball. They were called the Orioles after the state bird of Maryland.

Boston Red Sox

In 1907, Boston owner John Taylor decided to give his team a makeover. Prior to that, the Boston team played in white uniforms with blue trim, and were officially without a nickname. Newspapers called them the “Americans” to differentiate them from the Boston team in the rival National League. Since the NL Braves wore blue, Taylor decided to outfit his team in red. Within a few years, their red stockings led to the nickname “Red Sox.” Aren’t you glad they did? Otherwise Boston fans would be part of “American Nation” today.

New York Yankees

The New York Press lasted as a newspaper for less than 30 years, but it contributed quite a bit to American culture. It was *Press* editors who coined the phrase “yellow journalism” to disparage the tactics of competitor periodicals. The paper’s sports editor, Jim Price, was the first to use the name Yankees in reference to New York’s entry in the fledgling American League, as early as 1904. He chose Yankees or “Yanks” because it was much shorter in headlines than their unofficial team nickname, “Highlanders”. By the late 1910s, Yankees had supplanted Highlanders as the preferred moniker.

Tampa Bay Rays

When team officials selected Devil Rays as their nickname when Tampa Bay was first announced as an expansion team in 1995, it was not warmly received. Some fans objected to the “Devil” term. The team wanted Stingrays, a common sea creature found in the Florida waters, but that name was copyrighted by a professional team in Hawaii. In 2007, the club officially removed “Devil” and became simply the Tampa Bay Rays (focusing more on sunshine than sea creatures). They promptly made their first trip to the World Series and have been a much better team ever since.

Toronto Blue Jays

“The blue jay is a North American bird, bright blue in color, with white undercovering and a black neck ring. It is strong, aggressive and inquisitive,” said team chairman R. Howard Webster after the club selected the name from more than 10,000 entries in a contest. “It dares to take on all comers, yet it is down-to-earth, gutsy and good-looking.” The team, which joined the American League in 1977, adopted red, white, and blue colors and incorporated them along with the use of the Canadian maple leaf.

Atlanta Braves

Late in 1911, when he became owner of the Boston Braves, James Gaffney, a construction magnate who was a member of New York's prominent political group Tammany Hall, decided to rename the club, which had been known as the "Doves." He settled on the name "Braves" as a sort of inside joke, since an Indian brave with a headdress was the symbol of Tammany. As owner of the team, Gaffney built Braves Field, at the time of its construction one of the most impressive venues in sports. The nickname followed the team to Milwaukee and ultimately Atlanta.

Miami Marlins

The marlin is obviously a salt water fish that is found in the waters off Florida. The expansion Florida Marlins joined the National League in 1993 and chose that name which was used by minor league teams in Miami for a long time. In 2012, when a new stadium was opened in Miami, the franchise shed the "Florida" and became the Miami Marlins.

New York Mets

When the franchise entered the National League for the 1962 season, team owners asked fans to select from among ten names they had chosen. The ten names were:

- Avengers
- Bees
- Burros
- Continentals
- Jets
- Mets
- NYBS
- Rebels
- Skyliners
- Skyscrapers.

Mets (which is short for Metropolitans) won rather easily, with two other names getting write-in votes: Empires and Islanders. Several of the rejected names were later selected by other pro teams (Islanders and Jets, for example).

Philadelphia Phillies

Probably no other major league team has a more interesting history of nicknames than the Philadelphia National League team. Since 1890, they have continuously been known officially as the "Phillies" (simply a shortening of Philadelphia or Philadelphia's), but several times they have tried to shun that name.

In the 1890s the franchise tried to get Quakers to catch on, to no avail. Quakers, of course, are integral in the history of the state of Pennsylvania.

In the 1940s, team owner Robert Carpenter, who had several crazy (for their time) notions, placed a blue jay patch on the team uniform in hopes that Blue Jays would catch on. It didn't.

For a few years in the 1950s the team used "Fightin' Phils" on their correspondence to help cement that name, but it failed.

Finally, in the 1960s the name "Phillies" was embraced and has been in place ever since. The Phillies have used probably as many variations of their logo and team colors as any team in MLB history, at times wearing blue, black, yellow, and red.

Washington Nationals

The Nationals name was actually officially the nickname of the American League Washington club for more than 50 years, though everyone pretty much called them the Senators. Later, the expansion Washington team who played in the American League from 1961-1971, was also the Senators. In 2005 when the Montreal franchise went south to D.C., they revived the Nationals name, "Nats" for short.

Chicago Cubs

In the 1880s, when the then Chicago White Stockings roster was peppered with young players, observers called them "Anson's Colts", after manager Cap Anson. The name gradually morphed into Orphans (after Anson bolted) and then became the Cubs in the early years of the 20th century.

Cincinnati Reds

How boring is this? The Cincinnati baseball club, which traces their origins to the days of the Civil War, was known as the Red Stockings because they wore red stockings. (Not JUST red stockings, that would have been scandalous).

Over the years they've been called the Redlegs and Reds, the name which has stuck. Bowing to pressure, during the communist scare of the 1950s, the team officially changed the name back to the Redlegs for a short time to be politically correct.

Houston Astros

Originally known as the Colt .45s, that nickname was never appreciated by the Colt Firearm Company (who manufactured the weapon), so it was not a surprise when in 1965 the team changed their nickname to Astros. Houston was then the aeronautics center of the country and the hub of the space industry. The term Astros in reference to "astronaut" was a no-brainer.

Milwaukee Brewers

Milwaukee is often called “Suds City” because they are home to several of the nation’s most successful breweries. The Brewers nickname was an obvious choice in 1970 when the city received the short-lived Seattle Pilots as their own. Minor league teams had used “Brewers” for years.

Pittsburgh Pirates

Once upon a time in the 1880s, there was a second major league, called the Players’ League. It was a rival to the National League, started by some of the most prominent players in the game of baseball. The league collapsed under pressure from NL owners, and Pittsburgh “raided” the roster of a few teams. As a result, they were called “pirates” for poaching players. The derisive nickname was adopted the club.

From 1890 to 1911 the name of the city was officially “Pittsburg” according to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. But citizens didn’t like it, and in 1911 they successfully petitioned to have the “h” returned.

St. Louis Cardinals

Sportswriter William McHale started using the “Cardinals” name when covering the game in the late 1890s. Prior to that, the team was known as the Brown Stockings, Browns, and Perfectos. The name apparently came from the brightly colored red socks. It’s all about the socks, right?

Arizona Diamondbacks

Fans chose Diamondbacks in a contest from among Coyotes, Phoenix, Rattlers, and Scorpions. A diamondback is a snake, with a name that has a perfect connection to the baseball field.

Colorado Rockies

Team officials picked “Rockies” over “Bears,” which had the support of the Denver newspaper and many fans.

Los Angeles Dodgers

LA sports teams have an identity crisis. The Lakers get their nickname from the team that came to LA from Minneapolis, and the Dodgers nickname is similarly a holdover from a previous location.

The Brooklyn NL club was known as the “Dodgers” because of the many trolleys in the New York borough. People in Brooklyn had to “dodge” the trolleys in the streets, and there were numerous incidents in which citizens were scrunched to death by the multi-ton cars. Previous

to Dodgers, the team was called the Robins (short for Wilbert Robinson, the team's manager), Superbas, and Grooms (when one season several players were newlyweds).

San Diego Padres

The longtime Pacific Coast League entry from San Diego was called the Padres, so in 1969 the NL expansion club adopted the name. Padre is the Spanish word for father, and since San Diego was the site of one of the first Spanish Catholic missions on the West Coast, that term has long been associated with the city.

San Francisco Giants

Like the Dodgers, the Giants are a transplanted team from New York. The Giants name goes back to at least the 1880s, when their manager liked to call his team "My Giants" because of their stature in the National League (they won titles in 1888 and 1889).