

SUNDAY BASEBALL TIDBITS

JULY 2020

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

Gerrit Cole has won his last 16 regular season decisions

Cole signed a nine-year, \$324 million contract with the Yankees over the winter. He is coming off a transcendent 2019 season in which he struck out 373 hitters across the regular season and postseason, the fifth-highest single-year total in history. And there's the fact that Cole is finally in pinstripes, 12 years after he told the Yankees, "No thanks," when New York drafted him and he chose to pitch for UCLA instead.

But there's another reason you might have forgotten about: Cole will be chasing history from his very first start of 2020. The flamethrower has gone well over a calendar year without seeing an "L" next to his name in a regular-season box score, a span of 16 consecutive pitching decisions that dates back to May 27, 2019. That means that Cole would need an 8-0 start to 2020 to tie Hall of Famer Carl Hubbell for the longest pitcher win streak in history in games in which he was the pitcher of record (meaning he was on the hook for either a personal win or loss). With a win on Opening Day, Cole -- who is currently in a 15-way tie for 10th place on the all-time list -- would already start climbing the rankings.

Here are the nine pitchers with win streaks longer than Cole's since 1904, listed in descending order. *(Note: These streaks do not include postseason appearances, which means that Cole's loss to the Nats in Game 1 of last year's World Series does not preclude him from tying Hubbell's record.)*

1) Carl Hubbell -- 24 straight wins

Streak: July 17, 1936 - May 27, 1937

Hubbell famously struck out five straight Hall of Famers in the 1934 All-Star Game and also hurled an 18-inning shutout in '33, so this streak is just one of several bolded points on his Cooperstown resume. It began with a shutout of the Pirates that put Hubbell's Giants just two games over .500, but 15 more consecutive wins (including 13 more complete games) by Hubbell boosted New York to the National League pennant and earned Hubbell his second NL MVP award.

The Yankees finally hung a loss on Hubbell in Game 4 of the World Series, but the screwballer's regular-season streak stayed intact through the first two months of the 1937 campaign, helping him solidify his famous "Meal Ticket" moniker. A near-record crowd of 61,756 (and another

25,000 fans turned away at the gates) came to the Polo Grounds on May 30 to see Hubbell go for No. 25, but the Dodgers spoiled the party with five early runs. All told, Hubbell's streak included 21 wins as a starter and three more out of the bullpen (he also picked up two saves along the way).

2) Roy Face -- 22 straight wins

Streak: June 7, 1958 - Aug. 30, 1959

Face's 1959 campaign is one of the all-time seasons put up by any reliever: His 18-1 record that year still represents the most victories ever recorded by a pitcher with one or fewer losses. Face [called himself lucky](#) to come out of the Pirates' bullpen so many times without a loss, but his skill played a huge role, too. The 5-foot-8, 155-pound forkballer often pitched multiple innings without any negative effect, and his dominance peaked by mid-July 1959, when his season record stood at 13-0 with a 1.10 ERA. Face would go on to save three of the Pirates' four wins in Pittsburgh's upset of the Yankees in the '60 World Series.

3-T) Jake Arrieta -- 20 straight wins

Streak: Aug. 4, 2015 -- May 25, 2016

Arrieta's run is probably the most statistically dominant on this list. To start, it included not one, but two no-hitters -- the first on ESPN's Sunday Night Baseball at Dodger Stadium, and the second less than eight months later in Cincinnati. It also encompassed the majority of the greatest second half recorded by any pitcher, by ERA (0.75), in history. Overall, Arrieta allowed just 14 earned runs across the 20 games he won.

3-T) Roger Clemens -- 20 straight wins

Streak: June 3, 1998 - June 1, 1999

The Rocket put together his run while wearing two different uniforms, beginning it with the Blue Jays as he pitched his way to a second straight AL Cy Young Award and then continuing it after he was traded to the Yankees. Clemens needed a little luck along the way, escaping with a no-decision in seven different starts in which he allowed three earned runs or more -- including a seven-run implosion against the Orioles and a five-run start against the Rangers in early 1999. Still, Clemens went nearly an entire calendar year without suffering a loss.

3-T) Rube Marquard -- 20 straight wins

Streak: Oct. 1, 1911 - July 3, 1912

After winning his final decision of 1911, Marquard made history of his own by going 19-0 to start the '12 campaign -- still a record for the most wins without a loss to begin a season. Marquard's record would have actually been 20-0 if he had played in the current era; he pitched a scoreless inning of relief on April 20 and then watched his Giants come back for a walk-off win in the bottom of the ninth, but rules in those times gave the win to the pitcher who tossed the most innings. New York's offense made it comfortable for Marquard: He won each of his first dozen decisions of 1912 by at least three runs.

6-T) Jose Contreras -- 17 straight wins

Streak: Aug. 21, 2005 - July 4, 2006

Contreras' run had some perfect bookend symmetry as it started and ended against the Yankees, with Hall of Famer Randy Johnson opposing him in both games. Wedged in between the separate legs of Contreras' streak in the 2005 and '06 regular seasons was the '05 postseason, which saw the Cuban righty win three of his four starts and help lead the White Sox to a long-awaited World Series title.

6-T) Johan Santana -- 17 straight wins

Streak: July 17, 2004 - April 26, 2005

Santana pitched brilliantly even in defeat, surrendering just two runs on a pair of homers by the Angels in a 2-1 loss that snapped his streak on May 1, 2005. The Twins' ace twirled plenty of gems before that, including a 14-strikeout, no walk performance against the Orioles in September 2004 that helped him sew up his first of two career AL Cy Young Awards. Altogether, Santana strung together 22 straight outings in which he allowed three earned runs or fewer to close out the '04 season.

6-T) Dave McNally -- 17 straight wins

Streak: Sept. 22, 1968 - July 30, 1969

McNally went 15-0 out of the gate to begin the '69 campaign, earning him the nickname "McLucky" from some of his teammates (the Orioles came back to win seven games that McNally left while trailing on the scoreboard), but it wasn't his fault that he had a high-powered Baltimore lineup with stars like Brooks Robinson, Frank Robinson and Boog Powell backing him up. The left-hander eventually strung together four straight 20-win seasons for Earl Weaver's ballclub.

6-T) Johnny Allen -- 17 straight wins

Streak: Sept. 10, 1936 - Sept. 30, 1937

Allen came oh-so-close to preserving his streak for at least one more winter, but he finally suffered a loss in the Indians' last game of the season after he was outpitched in a one-hit shutout thrown by Tigers pitcher "Whistling Jake" Wade, who entered that game with a 5.64 ERA. Allen finished his career with a 142-75 record, for a .654 win percentage that [ranks 11th](#) among Modern Era pitchers with at least 200 career decisions.

Roger Angell—"Season Ticket"

An easy library read that focuses on the 1985-87 seasons but is filled with interesting tidbits:

Christy Mathewson --pitched three shutouts in the 1905 world series, won 37 games in 1908.

Sandy Koufax--Threw 4 no hitters in 4 years capped by a perfect game in 1965.

Ron Necciai pitched a no hitter in 1952 for the Appalachian league's Bristol Twins in which he struck out all 27 batters,

Joe Wilhoit hit safely in 69 straight games for the 1919 Wichita Wolves. Joe DiMaggio hit in 61 straight games for the San Francisco Seals in 1933,

The Tigers batted .455 against the Padres starters in the '84 world series.

Managers

Most serious fans know Sparky Anderson is the only manager to lead two teams in career wins—Tigers (1331) and Reds (863). But did you know these:

Joe McCarthy at 1460 is the winningest Yankees manager. Three other managers won over 1,000 games with the Yankees--Joe Torre, Miller Huggins and Casey Stengel.

Mike Scioscia leads the Angels with 1650 wins, over 1,000 ahead of Bill Rigney.

Former Yankees and Pirates skipper Bill Virdon is the all time Astros leader with 544 wins.

Cito Gaston is all time Blue Jays leader ahead of John Gibbons and Bobby Cox.

Lou Piniella is Mariners all time wins leader with 840. Piniella won 316 with the Cubs, 255 with the Reds, 224 with the Yankees and 200 with the Devil Rays for 1835 career managing wins.

The Orioles won 1480 games with Earl Weaver in charge.

Ron Washington is the Rangers leader at 664 wins.

Ned Yost is the Royals all time winningest manager ahead of Whitey Herzog, Hal McCrae and Dick Howser.

You can win a bet with this one

Which pitcher has the highest career strikeouts per nine innings (minimum 1,000 IP) in MLB history?

My guess of Aroldis Chapman (he has 14.8 per 9 innings) was wrong because in 10 years he doesn't have 1,000 career innings.

The answer is Yu Darvish (11.1237). That's a "wait, what?" moment.

Top ten includes

Chris Sale

Randy Johnson

Stephen Strasburg

Max Scherzer

Kerry Wood

Jacob deGrom

Gerrit Cole

Pedro Martinez

Chris Archer

Clayton Kershaw is 12th, Nolan Ryan 13th and Sandy Koufax 19th. Not surprising.

But would you have Eric Plunk and Sonny Gray in the top 50 all-time?

A few other notables: Roger Clemens 38th, Masahiro Tanaka 41st, David Cone 51st, AJ Burnett 52nd, Mariano Rivera 55th, CC Sabathia 82nd and Goose Gossage 105th.

More Tidbits

With the 60 game, division aligned schedule this year for the first time in 133 years the Philadelphia Phillies and the Pittsburgh Pirates won't play a regular season game.

For the first time in their history the Cubs don't have a scheduled Friday afternoon home game.

Greg Maddux (1992-95) and Randy Johnson (1999-2002), each won four Cy Young awards in a row. No other pitcher has won three in a row.

Six Hall of Famers played in the 1995 World Series between Atlanta and Cleveland--

Tom Glavine, Chipper Jones, Greg Maddux, John Smoltz (Braves); Eddie Murray, Jim Thome (Indians)

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

Light week of baseball reading but hope you enjoy these. (I watched the Yankees-Mets pre-season game yesterday—King looked strong on the mound, Urshela made some slick fielding plays, Frazier, Andujar and Stanton with some good contact—nice to have baseball back).

Reflecting on Don Larsen's Magical October Day

Larsen pitched the sixth perfect game in MLB history, Game 5 of the 1956 World Series. It is the only no-hitter and perfect game in World Series history and is one of only two no-hitters in MLB postseason history (the other being Roy Halladay's in 2010). It was October 8, 1956, series tied 2 games apiece, Yankee Stadium. 27 up and 27 down in 97 pitches. Yankees won 2-0. Mantle homered.

Hall of Famers in the World Series

Last week I mentioned that six Hall of Famers played in the 1995 World Series between Atlanta and Cleveland--Tom Glavine, Chipper Jones, Greg Maddux, John Smoltz (Braves); Eddie Murray, Jim Thome (Indians).

One loyal reader came back with 1962 Series with seven – McCovey, Mays, Marichal, Cepeda for the Giants, Mantle, Ford and Berra for the Yankees. (plus umpire Al Bartlick).

Seven played in 1983 Series (Cal Ripken Jr., Eddie Murray and Jim Palmer for the Orioles, and Steve Carlton, Joe Morgan, Tony Perez and Mike Schmidt for the Phillies).

Seven played in the 1996 Series (Wade Boggs, Mariano Rivera, Tim Lincecum for the Yankees, Greg Maddux, John Smoltz, Tom Glavine, Chipper Jones for the Braves).

Then there was 1932 and 13 Hall of Famers in the World Series. The 1932 Yankees had nine Hall of Famers of varying stature (Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Bill Dickey, Red Ruffing, Lefty Gomez, Tony Lazzeri, Joe Sewell, Earle Combs and Herb Pennock) and the Cubs had four (Gabby Hartnett, Billy Herman, Kiki Cuyler and Burleigh Grimes).

More Tidbits

The last player with a 40-homer season for the Pirates was Willie Stargell (44 home runs in 1973)

Mickey Mantle (17 K's in 52 plate appearances) has the most career strikeouts (as a batter) in All-Star Game history.

Team had the most players hit 30 or more home runs in the same season was 2019 Twins, 5 (Nelson Cruz, Mitch Garver, Max Kepler, Eddie Rosario, Miguel Sanó).

Bob Turley (1958) first Yankees pitcher to win a Cy Young Award joined by:

Whitey Ford 1961

Sparky Lyle 1977

Ron Guidry 1978

Roger Clemens 2001

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

Finally, Baseball. Even this weird season gives me some good feeling that we have baseball. Some goodies for this week:

Looking Back on 2019

Blue Jays: Last year's club had nine players age 26 or younger reach double digits in home runs, smashing the previous single-season record of six. The group included 20-year-old Vladimir Guerrero Jr. (15 homers), 21-year-old Bo Bichette (11), 24-year-olds Rowdy Tellez (21), Cavan Biggio (16), Danny Jansen (13) and Billy McKinney (12), 25-year-old Lourdes Gurriel Jr. (20), and 26-year-olds Teoscar Hernández (26) and Brandon Drury (15)

Red Sox: At 22 last season, Rafael Devers became the second-youngest player to smack at least 54 doubles in a season, behind only Alex Rodriguez, who was 20 in 1996.

Yankees: Since Statcast tracking debuted in 2015, Aaron Judge and Giancarlo Stanton have combined to hit 44 home runs that had an exit velocity of 115 mph or higher. That accounts for 42% of the Major League total. Judge or Stanton has hit each of the nine hardest homers in Statcast history.

Tigers: Every team had at least three players with more than 15 home runs last year except the Tigers, who had zero.

Astros: Opponents batted just .172 against AL Cy Young Award winner Justin Verlander last season, tied for the fourth-lowest mark by a qualified pitcher in the Modern Era (since 1900).

Mariners: Seattle used a mind-blowing 42 different pitchers last season, breaking the single-season Major League record (40)

Braves: Sure, Ronald Acuña Jr. fell a bit shy of the hallowed 40-40 combo last season. But with 41 home runs and 37 stolen bases, the 21-year-old became the youngest player in history to go 35-35 and the second youngest to go 30-30, behind only Mike Trout (20 in 2012).

Nationals: Washington became the first team in Major League history to win the World Series after beginning the season by losing as many as 31 of its first 50 games.

Brewers: By hitting .326 in 2018 and .329 in '19, Christian Yelich became the first player to claim back-to-back NL batting titles since Colorado's Larry Walker in 1998-99.

Reds: Eugenio Suárez's 49 home runs last season tied Harmon Killebrew (1969) for the second most hit by any primary third baseman in a single season, trailing only Alex Rodriguez (54 in 2007).

Dodgers: While their quest for a World Series championship continues, the Dodgers' streak of seven consecutive division titles shouldn't be underrated. They joined the 1998-2006 Yankees and 1991-2005 Braves as the only franchises to accomplish that feat. Over the past seven

seasons, the Dodgers' 671 wins are 33 more than any other team, their plus-984 run differential is 219 runs better, and they have allowed 259 fewer runs than the next-stingiest club.

Opening Day

Pitcher who holds the record for most consecutive Opening Day starts with the same is Phillies' Robin Roberts (12 straight from 1950-61)—my Tom Seaver or Jim Palmer guesses didn't cut it.

Incredibly there are 10 new managers this year—1/3 of all skippers. There are the big-name veterans: Dusty Baker (Astros), Joe Girardi (Phillies) and Joe Maddon (Angels). There are three skippers getting a second chance: Gabe Kapler (Giants), Ron Roenicke (Red Sox) and Mike Matheny (Royals). And there are four first-timers: David Ross (Cubs), Luis Rojas (Mets), Derek Shelton (Pirates) and Jayce Tingler (Padres).

Scherzer became first starter since 1893 to strikeout 10 or more on three consecutive opening days. (The Yankees still won).

I was surprised to read that the last time both opening day pitchers pitched a complete game was 1993 – 27 years ago. Mark Langston of the Angels defeated Bill Wegman of the Brewers.

More opening day fun—starting streaks with same team by position

Catcher: Yadier Molina (Cardinals)

Consecutive Opening Day starts with STL: 16—longest all-time.

Second Base - Robinson Canó made his 15th consecutive Opening Day start at second base this year -- the longest active streak overall -- but those have been split between the Yankees, Mariners and Mets.

Longest all-time single team streak: 17 -- Lou Whitaker, Tigers (1978-94)

Third Base - Longest all-time streak: 20 -- Brooks Robinson, Orioles (1957-76)

Shortstop - Longest all-time streak: 14 -- Cal Ripken Jr., Orioles (1983-96); Jimmy Rollins, Phillies (2001-14) though Elvis Andrus of the Rangers reached his 12th straight this week.

Left field - Longest all-time streak: 13 -- Lou Brock, Cardinals (1967-79)

Center field - Longest all-time streak: 19 -- Willie Mays, Giants (1954-72)

Right field - Longest all-time streak: 15 -- Roberto Clemente, Pirates (1958-72)

Yankees Baseball Cards

Hoarce Clarke seemed to be the Yankees second baseman forever when I was a kid. He led the majors in at bats in 1970 with 686. In ten MLB seasons he had 1230 hits, batted .256 with 156 stolen bases.

Roy White played 15 years, all with the Yankees. Lifetime average of .271 with 1803 hits, 160 HRs, 233 stolen bases. He led the majors in sacrifice flies in 1971 with 17.

Bobby Murcer had 252 career HRs, 1862 hits, .277 average. He led the majors in on base % in 1971 at .427.