

SUNDAY BASEBALL TIDBITS

AUGUST 2020

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

First time in 66 years no team started the season 3-0. That's 1954. For comparison the last time that happened in the NFL was 1951, the NBA was 1958 and the NHL was 2000.

The Mariners broke a 15 game losing streak to the Astros.

Joey Gallo has hit more HRs (45) since 2017 over 425 feet than any other hitter (Stanton and Sanchez are in the top ten).

The last team to have back-to-back MVP Award winners -- but won by different players is Detroit Tigers (Justin Verlander in 2011, Miguel Cabrera in 2012)

Only two pitchers have had three consecutive games with 13 or more strikeouts-Pedro Martinez (two separate streaks in 1999) and Gerrit Cole (2019)

From the "you've got to be kidding me" department, Yankees record for most strikeouts on Opening Day is held by Tim Lincecum (9 K's on Opening Day 1991).

Jason Stark

Jason Stark of The Athletic is a wonderful baseball writer who is worth the cost of a subscription. Some of his goodies from the beginning of this weird season:

Yoenis Céspedes of the Mets homered off the Braves' Chris Martin on Opening Day, it provided one of the strangest tidbits of this or any season:

- It was his third consecutive game with a home run. That seems good.
- *But* those games took place on May 13, 2018 ... then (68 days later) July 20, 2018 ...then (735 more days later) July 24, 2020!

Derek Holland of the Pirates made MLB history when he was ejected from a game before he made an appearance for the team.

How does a guy get a hit with the bases loaded but not drive in a run? You should consult with the Dodgers' Corey Seager on that one, because he just did it.

In the seventh inning Tuesday in Houston, not long after the benches had emptied over the popular handiwork of Joe Kelly, Seager smoked a ball to the right side that drilled his teammate, Chris Taylor, in the leg. So if you're scoring at home, it's Taylor who is out, and Seager who gets credit for a hit. But he also gets a bagel in the old RBI column.

OTHER ACTIVE BIG LEAGUERS TO DO IT: That would be none.

LAST TO DO IT: That would be the always-resourceful Juan Uribe, back on June 8, 2015, with a shot that nailed his Braves teammate, Freddie Freeman.

LAST TO DO IT AGAINST THE ASTROS: Lee Mazzilli, on July 20, 1978, with a single that hit his Mets amigo, Bobby Valentine.

OTHER FAMOUS MEMBERS OF THIS CLUB: Adam Dunn, Matt Holliday, Mark DeRosa and Jason Kendall are among the 11 others to pull this off in the 21st century. And then there's Ozzie Smith, who plunked Cardinals teammate Steve Braun in Game 2 of the 1982 World Series.

Last week in Houston, the Dodgers' Edwin Ríos led off the 13th inning with a home run. Now that's been done before. But thanks to the miracle of the runner-on-second rule, our friend Boog Sciambi got to fulfill his lifetime dream, right there on ESPN, of saying: "And that's a leadoff two-run homer."

That used to be impossible, but not anymore. Regardless, just so Edwin Ríos is clear on what he did ... through Wednesday, there had been 307,753 home runs hit in baseball history – but only one lead-off two-run homer.

The strangest but truest extra inning of the year: The Royals managed to score a run in the 10th inning - despite zero official at-bats! Ghost runner on 2nd. Sac bunt Sac fly. Walk. Runner thrown out stealing. Hasn't been done for at least 50 years.

The first home run of the 2020 was allowed by a guy named Max (Scherzer). But guess which hitters were responsible for the first two-homer games in each league? That would be two more guys named Max – Muncy (NL) and Kepler (AL).

Craig Kimbrel had an ugly outing-- Walk, Wild Pitch, Out, Walk, Stolen Base, Walk, Hit By Pitch, Walk. In fact, there has been only one other game since the invention of the modern save rule in which a reliever entered a game with a ninth-inning save opportunity, then spewed out four walks and a hit batter, and didn't make it through the inning. That involved the Indians' Danys Baez, on Sept. 8, 2002 – a 2/3-1-4-4-4-0 classic in which he hit Paul Konerko, walked José Valentín, Willie Harris, Magglio Ordóñez, and Carlos Lee, and served up a three-run homer to Frank Thomas.

Texas Rangers opened a new ballpark this season. For their first act, on Opening Day, they played the first 1-0 game in the debut of any new full-time ballpark in almost 90 years – since the Indians opened Municipal Stadium with a 1-0 loss in 1932.

THE KYLE FILE: You should know that Fergie Jenkins, Greg Maddux and Grover Cleveland Alexander never threw an Opening Day shutout for the Cubs. But Kyle Hendricks just did. And that wasn't even the Strange But True part.

The only three hits he gave up were all to the *No. 9 hitter*, Orlando Arcia. And according to STATS, there hasn't been a single other game since 1901 in which any pitcher threw a three-hit shutout, with all the hits by the No. 9 hitter.

Ah, but what do you think happened the next day? The Brewers got hits from every spot in the lineup *except* the No. 9 spot.

Miscellaneous Yankees Stuff

Got some positive feedback on last week's stats on Horace Clarke, Bobby Murcer and Roy White.

Gene Michael. Played 7 of his 10 MLB seasons with the Yankees. 561 hits with NYY and .233 average. Those 561 hits produced 204 RBIs. 79 doubles, 10 triples, 12 HRs. His highest annual salary was \$55K.

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Greetings from NJ, en route back to NC from Maine. Put an offer on a summer home—please keep a good thought.

Mookie Betts had his sixth 3 HR in a game last week. He joins Johnny Mize and Sammy Sosa as all-time leader.

Two Dodgers to hit four home runs in a game--Gil Hodges (Aug. 31, 1950) and Shawn Green (May 23, 2002)

Youngest player with a three-homer game--Hall of Famer Al Kaline (20 years, 119 days)

Three Atlanta Braves players to win MVP Awards--Dale Murphy (1982 and '83), Terry Pendleton ('91) and Chipper Jones ('99)

I would not have guessed it but in their 45 year history at Shea Stadium the Mets were 143 games over .500

Which Hall of Famer is the only player to twice hit for the cycle with two home runs? Joe DiMaggio (1937 vs. the Senators and 1948 vs. the White Sox).

Only Padre to lead the NL in home runs in a season--Fred McGriff (35 homers in 1992)

Three Atlanta Braves players to win MVP Awards--

Dale Murphy (1982 and '83), Terry Pendleton ('91) and Chipper Jones ('99)

Only player to hit 30 HRs for Yankees and Braves—Gary Sheffield.

Last team to have 4 former MVPs on the roster, 1996 Red Sox. Clemens, Mo Vaughn, Canseco and Kevin Mitchell.

Top lifetime slugging pct against Red Sox include Ruth, Gehrig and Frank Robinson. But number one all time is Luke Voit.

Stay safe out there.

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Pitchers who lost a perfect game in extra innings: Pittsburgh's Harvey Haddix in the 13th inning in Milwaukee in 1959 and Montreal's Pedro Martinez in the 10th inning in San Diego in 1995.

Seattle's Felix Hernandez threw the majors' last perfect game, on Aug. 15, 2012, against the Tampa Bay Rays. This is now the longest stretch in the majors without a perfect game since the 13-year gap between Catfish Hunter's for Oakland in 1968 and Len Barker's for Cleveland in 1981.

18 pitchers have been chosen first over all in the draft, which began in 1965. Only six have reached 100 victories in the majors: Mike Moore, Andy Benes, David Price, Tim Lincecum, Floyd Bannister and Stephen Strasburg. Another, the Yankees' Gerrit Cole — the first overall pick in 2011, by Pittsburgh — has 98 career wins.

Last week was the 100th anniversary of the death of Ray Chapman, the only major league player to be killed by a pitched ball. Chapman, the Cleveland Indians' shortstop, was struck in the head by the Yankees' Carl Mays at the Polo Grounds the day before. Mays, a submariner, had noticed Chapman moving his back foot, perhaps to bunt, as he delivered the fatal fastball up and in.

Chapman holds a lesser known distinction in baseball: He remains the single-season leader in sacrifice bunts, with 67 in 1917, a record that may stand forever.

All-time leader in walk-off home runs among middle infielders is the Tigers second baseman Lou Whitaker, with 7

Take a look at the Major League leaders in home runs entering Sunday's games, and you'll see quite the juxtaposition. The co-leaders so far this season are 21-year-old [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) and 40-year-old [Nelson Cruz](#) -- with 13 each.

If that wide age gap feels notable, it's because it is. This is the first time in the Modern Era (since 1900) that two players aged 21 or younger and 40 or older have been tied for the Major League lead in home runs to start a day, according to the Elias Sports Bureau (minimum five HRs). Cruz is the first 40-year-old to have a share of the MLB lead in homers since 1958, according to Elias (min. five HRs). Hank Sauer, who was 40 years old at the time, led the Majors with seven homers through April 29, 1958. Since then, no 40-year-old had done it -- until now.

No player has led the Majors in home runs in a season where he was at least 40 years old on the last day of that season, according to Elias.

The oldest player to lead the Majors in homers was 38-year-old Darrell Evans in 1985, with 40. He was 38 years and 133 days old when the 1985 regular season concluded. Only one player has even finished top two in the Majors in home runs at 39, let alone 40 -- 39-year-old Barry Bonds in 2003.

Three players feature the Padres' logo on their Hall of Fame plaque--Dave Winfield, Tony Gwynn and Trevor Hoffman

More from Jason Stark's Strange but True Column in The Athletic

It's not every day you see a catcher running down a baserunner in between second and third base, and a center fielder applying the tag at second base. That's the wacky double play the Cardinals turned in the second inning of Friday's [14-2 loss](#) in the series opener against the Indians at Busch Stadium. On Francisco Lindor's grounder with no outs and runners on first and third base, Cards first baseman [Paul Goldschmidt](#) threw home to catcher [Yadier Molina](#), who then tagged out Cesar Hernandez in a rundown on the third-base line.

Then, Molina chased José Ramírez and Lindor back to second and first base, respectively. About halfway between second and third base, Molina looked like he might throw to first base to get Lindor. But he turned and threw to center fielder [Dylan Carlson](#) covering second base to tag Ramírez out.

It went down in the scorebook as a 3-2-8 double play -- which has not happened in the expansion era (since 1961), according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Abreau

Until last weekend, no player had ever hit three home runs in a game at Wrigley Field for a team from Chicago — without being able to say that team was “the Cubs.” But then José Abreu got rolling for the White Sox and ...

Hit two home runs Friday ... and then three more home runs Saturday ... and then another home run Sunday. Which meant we could also say this:

- José Abreu: 6 HR at Wrigley Field in one series
- Anthony Rizzo/Kris Bryant/Javy Báez/Jason Heyward: 6 HR at Wrigley this year combined

FOUR BY FOUR

But hang on. Those José Abreu/White Sox notes keep on coming, because, well, have you watched this team play? These dudes are fun. They also did this:

- Saturday/Sunday: HR by José Abreu in four consecutive plate appearances

- Aug. 16: HR by the White Sox lineup in four consecutive plate appearances*

(* by Yoán Moncada, Yasmani Grandal, Abreu and Eloy Jiménez)

So how many teams have ever done that — home runs in four trips in a row as a team and home runs in four trips in a row by an individual player on that team, both in the same season? According to STATS, that answer would be ...

Nobody!

Extra Innings

San Francisco. Giants 10, Dodgers 8, in 11 wild innings. Ladies and gentlemen, some unbelievable stuff happened in this game. Did you know that ...

- There were 367 pitches thrown — and the Giants held a lead during none of the first 366 of them? And they won.
- The Giants also used 10 pitchers in this game — and they won. There hasn't been a single other game played before September in modern history in which that many pitchers pitched in a game of that few innings — for the team that won.

But none of that was even the Strangest but Truest part of this, because ...

The Dodgers held a lead in the ninth inning, the 10th inning and the 11th inning of this game — and they lost. Here's why that was kind of shocking:

- The Dodgers hadn't blown a save in the ninth inning or later all year — and then blew three in one game.
- As recently as 2017, the Dodgers' whole bullpen blew one save in the entire regular season in the ninth inning or later — but they blew three just in this game.
- Brandon Belt, Mauricio Dubon and Evan Longoria got game-tying hits in the ninth, 10th and 11th innings to keep this game rolling. You know how long it had been since the Giants got that many game-tying hits in the ninth inning or later of the same game? Oh, only since July 3, 1951, says Doug (Kernels) Kern, in a game against the Phillies. The game-tying knocks in that game: Ray Noble in the ninth, Bill Rigney in both the 10th and 12th, then Willie Mays in the 13th.

- Finally, you know how challenging is it to lead in the ninth, 10th and 11th innings of any game and still lose? So challenging that only one other team has ever done it, according to STATS — Antonio Alfonseca's 1998 Marlins, on July 24 in Philadelphia.

The Sandman

Comparing this bullpen to Mariano Rivera's prime-time Yankees.

2020 Rays: 21 wins, 10 pitchers with a save.

1998-99-2000 Yankees: 299 wins, 9 pitchers with a save.

Phillies Adventures

Life can be adventurous when you have a bullpen with an 8.00 ERA. The Phillies could tell you all about it — seeing as how they just lived through one of the most bizarre five-game losing streaks of modern times.

THEY CAME FROM AHEAD FIVE GAMES IN A ROW! Let's start with the easy stuff. You know how hard it is to lose five straight games when you hold a lead in every one of them? It's so hard, according to STATS, that no Phillies team had done that ... in nearly 50 years.

Last Phillies team to run off a streak like that? Guillermo Montañez's 1973 Phillies, who actually lost six games in a row despite leading in every one of them, from May 28 to June 3.

THEY LED IN THE FIRST INNING IN EVERY GAME! But here's the Strangest But Truest part. The Phillies took the lead in the first inning five games in a row — and lost all five of those games! That's almost impossible.

So how do we know it's almost impossible? Because, according to STATS, only one other team in the modern era (since 1901) has ever done that. That was Jeremy Guthrie's 2009 Orioles, who pulled off that very same feat between April 27 and May 2 ... and went on to lose 98 games.

20-20 vision

The first team in baseball to 20 wins this season? That would be your Chavez Ravine Dodgers.
The first team to 20 wins last season? That would also be your Chavez Ravine Dodgers.

According to STATS, they're the first team to win (or even tie) the race to 20 wins in back-to-back seasons in nearly a decade and a half, since Juan Uribe's 2005-06 White Sox. But since lots of teams have done this through the years, I thought it would be fun to look back on how their seasons turned out.

LAST TO WIN THE WORLD SERIES BOTH YEARS — Phil Rizzuto's 1950-51 Yankees. (Dodgers not eligible to duplicate this feat!)

LAST TO NOT WIN THE WORLD SERIES IN EITHER YEAR — Edgar Martinez's 2001-02 Mariners. (Dodgers would be eligible to duplicate this feat.)

LAST TO NOT WIN A POSTSEASON SERIES IN EITHER YEAR — Charlie Hough's 1975-76 Dodgers, who finished behind the Big Red Machine in both seasons. (Dodgers also eligible to duplicate this feat, although I'd wager against it.)

LAST TO BE FIRST TO 20 THREE YEARS IN A ROW — Dave Stewart's 1988-'89-'90 A's.

ONLY TEAM TO DO THIS THREE YEARS IN A ROW AND WIN THREE WORLD SERIES IN A ROW — Yogi Berra's 1949-50-51 Yankees.

MOST SURPRISING TEAMS THAT NEVER WERE FIRST TO 20 TWO YEARS IN A ROW — Derek Jeter's 1998-99-2000 Yankees, Pete Rose's 1975-76 Big Red Machine and — how 'bout this — no Yankees team in nearly 70 years (since the 1951 juggernaut). Which is a reminder that, while you don't get a ring for this, it's still a pretty cool feat!