

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

12.26.2021

Good morning baseball fans,

I hope Santa was good to you.

Don't miss the link to video of Javier Baez on the bases, one of the highlights of 2021.

In this issue some Hall of Fame and Free Agent stuff, Peter Gammons on Buck Showalter. Enjoy.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Javier Baez shows you how to get creative on the bases:

https://youtu.be/DO4h-fH_vu8

Weird stat of the day--Goose Gossage 13 blown saves in 1983 for the Yankees. Gossage is the all-time blown saves leader at 112, just ahead of Rollie Fingers at 107.

Buck Showalter to the Mets got big headlines. Meanwhile, Oakland hired Mark Kotsay to replace Bob Melvin as manager. As a player, the Padres traded Kotsay to the A's after the 2003 season and he enjoyed his best season in 2004 when he batted .314 with 15 homers, earned 4.6 rWAR and finished 14th in the American League MVP voting. He spent four of his 17 big-league seasons in Oakland. He had 1784 career hits, batted .276 with 127 HRs. Kotsay played for the Marlins, Padres (twice), A's, Red Sox, White Sox, Braves and Brewers.

Known as one of the best college players of all time, Kotsay had a career batting average of .404 during his time at Cal State Fullerton. In 1995, he won the Golden Spikes Award as an outfielder and pitcher, leading the Titans to a College World Series title while closing the clinching game. He was inducted into the College Baseball Hall of Fame in 2019.

Last week we listed the 12 players ever with 200 hits and 100 walks in a season. One of them was Woody English. Who was Woody English? I had no clue. He played 12 seasons as a

shortstop and 3B, a decade with the Chicago Cubs starting in 1921 and last two seasons with Brooklyn. He played on Cubs losing World Series teams in 1929 and 1932, finished 4th in MVP voting in 1931 behind Frankie Frisch, Chuck Klein and Bill Terry.

A lifetime .286 hitter with 1356 hits. But in 1930 in 156 games for the Cubs he had 214 hits and 100 walks. So Woody English is in the same club as Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Stan Musial and Ty Cobb.

Skimming through the all-time hit leaders list—not sure I would have guessed all with more than 2,500 hits:

Omar Vizquel (2877), Johnny Damon (2769), Al Oliver (2743), Vada Pinson (2757), Bill Buckner (2715), Luis Aparicio (2657), Robinson Cano (2624), Julio Franco (2586), Garret Anderson (2529), Steve Finley (2548), Buddy Bell (2514). All of them in the top 100 in hits all time.

HALL OF FAME

As we approach January 25 HOF election results announcement, I emailed a dozen subscribers (about 10%) two weeks ago. I said my view of PED users and the character clause in general is evolving. I asked for feedback – what if the HOF and the writers had a one-time make up event to enshrine great performances between the lines, even if the player was suspected of PEDs plus players who had been overlooked in earlier votes?

I suggested adding 21 players:

1. Dick Allen
2. Don Baylor
3. Adrian Beltre
4. Barry Bonds
5. Roger Clemens
6. Dwight Evans
7. Todd Helton

8. Jeff Kent
9. Fred McGriff
10. Mark McGwire
11. Thurman Munson
12. Mike Mussina
13. Rafael Palmiero
14. Manny Ramirez
15. A-Rod
16. Scott Rolen
17. Gary Sheffield
18. Curt Schilling
19. Sammy Sosa
20. Billy Wagner
21. Lou Whitaker

I suggested considering an additional 12:

1. Carlos Beltran
2. Bobby Grich
3. Keith Hernandez
4. Tommy John
5. Andruw Jones
6. Kenny Lofton
7. Andy Pettitte
8. Jorge Posada

9. Luis Tiant

10. Omar Vizquel

11. Bernie Williams

12. Maury Wills

No Pete Rose, No Shoeless Joe Jackson.

The premise was to make notes at the HOF putting PEDs in context, but that the earth would keep on spinning if we plugged 21 to 33 guys in and put the arguments behind us.

I received some thoughtful responses. And (not surprisingly) a wide range of opinions from “how can you keep Bonds and Clemens out considering the careers they had?” to “those cheaters—never”. Even Baylor-Kent-McGriff-Vizquel generated responses from “definitely to overrated”. The debate continues...what do you think?

BOOKS

Joe Posnanski’s book *The Baseball 100* was nominated for The Casey Award, which has been given to the year’s best baseball book since 1983. Here’s the list of other finalists:

- *The Bonafide Legend of Cool Papa Bell*, Lonnie Wheeler
- *The Bronx Zoom: Inside the New York Yankees’ Most Bizarre Season*, Bryan Hoch
- *Cheated: The Inside Story of the Astros Scandal and a Colorful History of Sign Stealing*, Andy Martino
- *Cobra: A Life of Baseball and Brotherhood*, Dave Parker and Dave Jordan
- *Escape from Castro’s Cuba*, Tim Wendel
- *Forty Years a Giant: The Life of Horace Stoneham*, Steven Treder
- *Lights, Camera, Fastball: How the Hollywood Stars Changes Baseball*, Dan Taylor
- *Our Team: The Epic Story of Four Men and the World Series that Changed Baseball*, Luke Epplin

FREE AGENCY

WHICH 2022 DRAFT PICKS HAVE TEAMS GAINED AND LOST FROM QUALIFYING OFFER FREE AGENTS

Of the [14 free agents](#) to receive qualifying offers this winter, nine have already figured out where they will be playing next season, leading to some noteworthy adjustments to the 2022 draft order. For a refresher on the QO rules, you can check [this list](#) of what signing a qualifying offer-rejecting free agent would cost each team, or [this list](#) of what teams receive as compensation for losing a QO-rejecting free agent.

Or, for simplicity's sake, you could just read this post right here as a quick summary of the extra picks gained and lost due to these signings. First of all, four of the nine signed players don't factor into the discussion, since they are back with their former teams — [Brandon Belt](#) accepted the Giants' qualifying offer in the first place, while [Raisel Iglesias](#) re-signed with the Angels, [Chris Taylor](#) re-signed with the Dodgers, and [Justin Verlander](#) re-signed with the Astros.

For the five other signed QO free agents and the five unsigned QO free agents, here is the breakdown of what their former teams would receive as compensatory picks. The specific order of the compensatory picks is based on the previous year's record, so the team with the fewer wins would get the superior pick.

- **Extra pick after Round 1 of the draft:** This is awarded to a team that receives revenue-sharing funds, and whose QO-rejecting free agent signs with another team for more than \$50MM in guaranteed salary. The **Rockies** and **Reds** would therefore each qualify if [Trevor Story](#) (Colorado) or [Nick Castellanos](#) (Cincinnati) signed for \$50MM+. Since the Reds had the better record between the two teams, the Rockies would pick 32nd overall and the Reds 33rd overall if both clubs indeed ended up in this same category. If Story and/or Castellanos signed for less than \$50MM, Colorado and/or Cincinnati would be in the next group...
- **Extra pick between Competitive Balance Round B and Round 3:** Four picks have already been allotted within this group, comprised of teams who don't receive revenue sharing funds. The **Mets** received an extra selection when [Noah Syndergaard](#) signed with the Angels, the **Blue Jays** received two picks when [Marcus Semien](#) signed with the Rangers and [Robbie Ray](#) signed with the Mariners, and the **Red Sox** got a pick when [Eduardo Rodriguez](#) signed with the Tigers. Like Toronto, the Mets could also receive a second pick if [Michael Conforto](#) signed elsewhere. The **Braves** ([Freddie Freeman](#)) and **Astros** ([Carlos Correa](#)) would also land in this category if their respective QO free agents left town. The draft order of this sandwich round based on 2021 record would line up as Mets (77 wins), Braves (88 wins), Blue Jays (91 wins), Red Sox (92 wins), and Astros (95 wins). For the moment, the four picks in this group represent the 75th-79th overall selections in the draft, though that specific order will be altered based on where the other QO players sign, or what other second-round picks might be surrendered as penalties for signing those free agents.

- **Extra pick after Round 4:** For teams that lose a QO free agent but exceeded the luxury tax threshold in 2021, their compensatory pick is pushed back to beyond the fourth round. Therefore, this is where the **Dodgers** will make their extra pick in the wake of [Corey Seager](#)'s deal with the Rangers.

Moving on, here is what the four teams who have signed QO free agents had to give up in draft capital...

- **Second-highest 2022 draft pick, \$500K in international signing pool money:** The **Angels** didn't receive revenue sharing funds, and didn't exceed the luxury tax in 2021. As a result, signing Syndergaard will cost the Angels their second-round draft selection and a chunk of their funds for the next international signing period.
- **Third-highest 2022 draft pick:** The **Mariners** and **Tigers** fall into this category, as teams who received revenue sharing payments in 2021. For Seattle, this is simply their third-round selection. For Detroit, their "third-highest pick" won't be determined until MLB establishes the order for this year's [Competitive Balance Draft](#). Depending on which of the two CBD rounds the Tigers are drawn into, their cost for the Rodriguez contract could either be their second-rounder or their pick in Competitive Balance Round B.
- **Both their second AND third-highest 2022 draft picks, and \$500K in international signing pool money:** The **Rangers** splurged by signing both Seager and Semien, and thus faced twice the draft penalty (both their second-round and third-round picks) for landing a pair of QO free agents. Texas would have faced the same penalty as the Angels if it had signed just one of Seager or Semien.
- **Second- and fifth-highest 2022 draft picks, \$1MM in international signing pool money:** The stiffest penalty is reserved for teams who exceeded the luxury tax threshold last season. Therefore, only the **Dodgers** and **Padres** would have to give up multiple picks to sign a single QO free agent, which would surely influence any efforts on their part to pursue Correa, Freeman, Conforto, Story, or Castellanos.

THE WORST FREE AGENT SIGNING EVER AT EACH POSITION

By Joel Reuter in Bleacher Report

"The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry."

That idiom is the perfect embodiment of the risk and reward that goes into shelling out millions of dollars on the [MLB](#) free-agent market.

Yesterday, we took a look at the [best free-agent signing](#) in MLB history at each position, highlighting guys like Greg Maddux (ATL), Randy Johnson (ARI) and [Manny Ramirez](#) (BOS) who helped lead their teams to World Series titles while putting up superstar-level production.

Now it's time for the opposite end of things.

Ahead we've selected the worst of the worst at each position, focusing on production relative to expectations, and more importantly relative to salary. The longer the deal and the bigger the financial commitment, the more likely a deal that went south was to earn a spot on this list.

Only outside free-agency signings were considered—no players re-signing with their previous team, no contract extensions, no trade or waiver additions.

We've also included a handful of dishonorable mentions at each position, but feel free to suggest anyone else you feel is worthy of consideration.

Off we go

Catcher: Todd Hundley, Chicago Cubs

Date: Dec. 19, 2000

Terms: Four years, \$23.5 million

It was a big story on the North Side when Todd Hundley—a Chicago-area native and the son of longtime Cubs catcher Randy Hundley—came home and brought his power bat with him by inking a four-year deal prior to the 2001 season.

Hundley enjoyed a breakout season in 1996 when he slugged 41 home runs as a member of the New York Mets, and he followed that up with another 30-homer season and a second straight All-Star appearance the following year.

He reached free agency coming off another strong year in 2000, as he logged a [143 OPS+](#) with 24 home runs and 70 RBI with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Unfortunately, the Cubs saw nothing close to that level of production during his time with the team.

He hit .199/.285/.398 for a 79 OPS+ with 28 home runs in 171 games

over the first two years of the contract. After that, he was shipped back to the Dodgers in a trade that brought Eric Karros and Mark Grudzielanek the other way

First Baseman: Mo Vaughn, Anaheim Angels

Date: Dec. 11, 1998

Terms: Six years, \$80 million

One of the most feared sluggers in baseball during the 1990s, Mo Vaughn hit .315/.405/.569 for a [148 OPS+](#) while averaging 36 home runs and 110 RBI during his six seasons as an everyday player for the Boston Red Sox.

That impressive run with the team concluded following the 1998 season when he reached free agency for the first time in his career. His foray into the open market came at the perfect time, as he hit .337/.402/.591 with 40 home runs and 115 RBI to finish fourth in AL MVP balloting during the '98 season.

In search of a big bat to join the homegrown trio of Jim Edmonds, Tim Salmon and Garret Anderson in the middle of the batting order, the Anaheim Angels gave him a massive six-year, \$80 million deal.

After productive seasons in 1999 (119 OPS+, 33 HR, 108 RBI) and 2000 (115 OPS+, 36 HR, 117 RBI), he missed the entire 2001 season with a ruptured tendon in his left arm, and he was traded to the New York Mets for Kevin Appier prior to the 2002 season.

He battled knee injuries from there, playing in just 166 more games and posting minus-1.2 WAR in his three seasons with the Mets.

Also Considered: Eric Hosmer (SD), Adam LaRoche (CWS), Tino Martinez (STL), Albert Pujols (LAA)

Second Baseman: Chone Figgins, Seattle Mariners

Date: Dec. 8, 2009

Terms: Four years, \$36 million

A valuable Swiss Army knife during his time with the Los Angeles Angels, Chone Figgins hit the free-agent market at the perfect time.

The 32-year-old had put together a career year in 2009 when he hit .298 with a .395 on-base percentage and an AL-leading 101 walks, adding 42 steals and 114 runs scored as a dynamic table-setter with a career-high [7.7 WAR](#).

That netted him a four-year deal from the Seattle Mariners, and he was slotted in as the team's everyday second baseman for the 2010 season.

In his Mariners debut, he hit .259/.340/.306 for an 84 OPS+ with 42 steals and 1.2 WAR, and that proved to be the high point of his tenure with the team.

He played in 147 games over the next two seasons, logging an ugly minus-2.1 WAR along the way, before he was designated for assignment with \$8 million left on his contract.

Also Considered: Omar Infante (KC)

Third Baseman: Pablo Sandoval, Boston Red Sox

Date: Nov. 25, 2014

Terms: Five years, \$95 million

Pablo Sandoval helped lead the San Francisco Giants to a third World Series title in five years during the 2014 season, contributing 3.2 WAR during the regular season before batting .366/.423/.465 with 26 hits in 17 games during the postseason.

The Boston Red Sox moved quickly in free agency that offseason, signing him to a five-year, \$95 million deal on the same day that they agreed to a four-year, \$88 million contract with Hanley Ramirez.

The "Kung Fu Panda" hit .242/.292/.366 with 10 home runs and 47 RBI in 126 games during his first year in Boston and then played just three games the following year before undergoing surgery to repair a torn labrum in his left shoulder.

A knee sprain and a viral infection limited him once again in 2017, and he was hitting .212/.269/.354 in 108 plate appearances when he was designated for assignment on July 14.

All told, he produced minus-1.6 WAR in a Red Sox uniform, and to make matters worse, he found his way back to San Francisco and returned to productive form as a part-time player and pinch hitter.

Also Considered: *David Bell (PHI), Corey Koskie (TOR), Dean Palmer (DET)*

Shortstop: Jose Reyes, Miami Marlins

Date: Dec. 7, 2011

Terms: Six years, \$106 million

With a fancy new ballpark ready to open, the Miami Marlins set out to make a splash during the 2011-12 MLB offseason.

They walked away with shortstop Jose Reyes (6/\$106M), starter Mark Buehrle (4/\$58M) and closer Heath Bell (3/\$27M) as their free-agency haul, and a year later all three guys were gone.

After a 93-loss season in 2012, the Marlins packaged Reyes and Buehrle with Josh Johnson, John Buck and Emilio Bonifacio and sent them to the Toronto Blue Jays in exchange for seven players.

Reyes hit .287 with 60 extra-base hits and 40 steals in his lone season with the Marlins, and he was productive during his first two seasons in Toronto as well, but the back end of the contract was a disaster.

He was eventually traded to the Colorado Rockies in the Troy Tulowitzki deal and then suspended 59 games for violating the league's domestic violence policy. The Rockies designated him for assignment on June 15, 2016, when he returned from his suspension, cutting ties with more than \$39 million remaining on his contract.

All told, his \$106 million contract amounted to 9.3 WAR worth of production.

Also Considered: *Cristian Guzman (WAS), Julio Lugo (BOS)*

Outfielder: Josh Hamilton, Los Angeles Angels

Date: Dec. 15, 2012

Terms: Five years, \$125 million

A year after signing Albert Pujols to a massive 10-year deal, the Los Angeles Angels made a splash once again by inking slugger Josh Hamilton to a five-year deal with a \$25 million annual value.

After posting a [141 OPS+](#) with 43 home runs and 128 RBI in his final season with the Texas Rangers, two years after he won AL MVP honors, expectations were high for his middle-of-the-order production. Instead, he hit a middling .250/.307/.432 for a 108 OPS+ with 21 home runs and 79 RBI in 151 games in his first year with the team.

Things only got worse from there.

He was limited to 89 games in 2014 with a thumb injury, and he underwent shoulder surgery prior to the 2015 season. During his recovery, he [suffered a relapse](#) into his drug addiction, and the Angels ultimately facilitated a trade that sent him back to the Rangers for a player to be named on April 27, 2015.

They ate roughly \$62.5 million of his remaining salary in the deal, and he finished his Angels tenure with 2.7 WAR in 240 games played.

Outfielder: B.J. Upton, Atlanta Braves

Date: Nov. 29, 2012

Terms: Five years, \$75.25 million

It's generally a result of injuries or a decline in production that keeps a player from living up to a big free-agency contract, but sometimes, a deal just looks bad from the start.

This one falls firmly into that second category.

B.J. Upton looked like a budding superstar when he hit .300/.386/.508 with 24 home runs, 82 RBI and 22 steals as a 22-year-old in 2007, and while he failed to match that level of production in the years that followed, his mix of power and speed continued to mask some of the shortcomings in his game.

When he reached free agency after the 2012 season, he was coming off a 28-homer, 31-steal season, but behind those impressive counting numbers he had an ugly .298 on-base percentage and a [26.7 percent](#) strikeout rate.

Undeterred by those red flags, the Atlanta Braves signed him to a five-year, \$75.25 million deal, and his production promptly bottomed out.

He hit .198/.279/.314 for a 66 OPS+ with a 31.5 percent strikeout rate and minus-1.7 WAR in two seasons before he was packaged along with All-Star closer Craig Kimbrel and traded to the San Diego Padres where he didn't fare much better.

Outfielder: Albert Belle, Baltimore Orioles

Date: Dec. 1, 1998

Terms: Five years, \$65 million

After a stellar eight-year run in Cleveland, slugger Albert Belle joined the Chicago White Sox on a five-year, \$55 million deal prior to the 1997 season that made him the highest-paid player in baseball.

That contract contained a unique clause that demanded he remain one of the three highest-paid players in the sport or be allowed to opt out of the contract and re-enter free agency. He exercised the clause after the 1998 season, and when the White Sox balked at offering him the necessary raise, he hit the open market.

The Baltimore Orioles swooped in with a five-year, \$65 million deal, tying him with Mike Piazza for the [third-highest average salary](#) in baseball, behind only Mo Vaughn (\$13.3M) and Randy Johnson (\$13.1M). He hit .297/.400/.541 for a [143 OPS+](#) with 37 home runs and 117 RBI in his first season with the Orioles.

However, he played just one more season after that before a degenerative hip condition ended his career. He remained on the 40-man roster for the final three years of the deal as a condition of his contract, and that allowed the Orioles to recoup much of his salary through insurance.

Still, it's far from what was expected when he was given the big contract.

Also Considered: Jason Bay (NYM), Derek Bell (PIT), Bobby Bonilla (NYM), Michael Bourn (CLE), Milton Bradley (CHC), Rusney Castillo (BOS), Carl Crawford (BOS), Ian Desmond

(COL), Jacoby Ellsbury (NYY), Dexter Fowler (STL), Jeffrey Hammonds (MIL), Andruw Jones (LAD), Gary Matthews Jr. (LAA), Nick Swisher (CLE), Yasmany Tomas (ARI)

Right-Handed Starting Pitcher: Carl Pavano, New York Yankees

Date: Dec. 20, 2004

Terms: Four years, \$39.95 million

After helping the Florida Marlins win a World Series in 2003, Carl Pavano had the best season of his career the following year, going 18-8 with a 3.00 ERA, 1.17 WHIP and 139 strikeouts in 222.1 innings.

His career lined up perfectly with free agency, and he parlayed it into a four-year deal from a New York Yankees team hard at work rebuilding its starting rotation. They also acquired Randy Johnson in a trade with the Arizona Diamondbacks and signed Jaret Wright to a three-year, \$21 million deal.

Pavano's first season in pinstripes saw him make just 17 starts before he was slowed by a right shoulder injury, and things only got worse from there. He then missed time the next spring with a strained buttocks before dealing with shoulder inflammation and then breaking two ribs in a car accident.

The following spring, he was [called out](#) by veteran Mike Mussina, who said he needed to prove he wanted to pitch for the Yankees. He responded by making a grand total of nine more starts with the team over the final two years of his contract.

His final stat line in four years with the Yankees: 26 GS, 5.00 ERA, 1.45 WHIP, 145.2 IP, [0.4 WAR](#)

Also Considered: *Wayne Garland (CLE), Edwin Jackson (CHC), Ubaldo Jimenez (BAL), Jaime Navarro (CWS), Ricky Nolasco (MIN), Russ Ortiz (ARI), Chan Ho Park (TEX), Jason Schmidt (LAD), Carlos Silva (SEA), Jordan Zimmermann (DET)*

Left-Handed Starting Pitcher: Mike Hampton, Colorado Rockies

Date: Dec. 12, 2000

Terms: Eight years, \$121 million

The Colorado Rockies were intent on building a competitive starting rotation during the 2000-01 offseason, and they spent big to try to do it, adding left-handers Mike Hampton (8/\$121M) and Denny Neagle (5/\$51M) in free agency.

Hampton went 22-4 with a 2.90 ERA in 239 innings to finish runner-up in NL Cy Young voting in 1999, and he followed that up with a 3.14 ERA in 217.2 innings before hitting the open market at the age of 27, so the expectation was that he would be the ace of the staff.

Coors Field had other ideas.

He had a 5.41 ERA ([99 ERA+](#)) in 203 innings in the first year of his contract and an even uglier 6.15 ERA (78 ERA+) the following year. After that, he was traded along with Juan Pierre to the Florida Marlins in exchange for Preston Wilson, Charles Johnson and two others.

The Marlins flipped him again two days later to the Atlanta Braves, and he pitched well in 2003 and 2004 before injuries started to pile up.

Also Considered: Wei-Yin Chen (MIA), Kei Igawa (NYY), Scott Kazmir (LAD), Eric Milton (CIN), Denny Neagle (COL), Greg Swindell (HOU)

Relief Pitcher: Mark Davis, Kansas City Royals

Date: Dec. 11, 1989

Terms: Four years, \$13 million

Fresh off 1989 NL Cy Young honors with the San Diego Padres, lefty reliever Mark Davis became baseball's highest-paid player in terms of annual value when he signed this four-year contract with the Kansas City Royals.

A year after converting 44 of 48 save chances with a 1.85 ERA, 1.05 WHIP and 92 strikeouts in 92.2 innings to edge out Houston Astros ace Mike Scott for top pitcher honors in the National League, he stumbled to a 5.11 ERA with four blown saves in 10 chances over 53 appearances in his first season in the American League.

Things didn't improve from there and he lasted two-and-a-half seasons in Kansas City, posting a 5.31 ERA with seven saves in 95 appearances before he was traded to the Atlanta Braves at the 1992 trade deadline for reliever Juan Berenguer.

Also Considered: Heath Bell (MIA), B.J. Ryan (TOR), Bruce Sutter (ATL)

PETER GAMMONS (IN THE ATHLETIC): BUCK SHOWALTER WILL CHANGE THE METS CULTURE, AS HE HAS FOR EVERY TEAM HE'S MANAGED.

The Mets are the fifth team [Buck Showalter](#) has taken over; none of his previous four clubs had a winning record in the season preceding his arrival. And these Mets? Even if their budget says they're in win-now mode, they are still not a team of which one could say "all they need is a couple of tweaks and it'll be The Summer of '69, down at the drive-in." This will be the 16th season since [Carlos Beltrán](#) took the [Adam Wainwright](#) curveball for called strike three. Billy

Eppler is their fifth general manager and Showalter their fourth manager since [Dominic Smith](#) strolled to home plate, hit a three-run walk-off in the 11th inning of the 162nd game of the 2019 season to cap their last winning (86-76) season, which now feels like a distant memory.

Showalter hasn't been hired to ride a stallion up San Juan Hill. His job, as it's been everywhere he has managed, is part architect, part Sag Harbor construction baron, part "This Old House" producer. To date, his grandest moment as a Met came in 1976 with the Hyannis Mets of the Cape Cod League, when he batted .434 (still the league's wooden bat record), was named MVP and in 2020 was picked by Baseball America as the second-best player in league history (positioned between Jason Varitek and Thurman Munson).

When Showalter took over the [Yankees](#) in 1992, the franchise had suffered through three straight losing seasons, which had happened once previously (1965-67) since Babe Ruth was bought from the Red Sox. Two years later, the Yankees had the best record in the American League when the 1994 work stoppage ended the season. When play resumed the next season, they reached a fifth and final game in the 1995 Division Series, lost, Showalter was fired, and the Yankees the next season began their run of four world championships in five seasons under Joe Torre.

When he took over the [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) in 1996, it was his team to build, from the bottom up. By their third season, they won 100 games, he was fired after the 2000 season, and then one club he had helped build beat another when the Diamondbacks beat the Yankees in the 2001 World Series.

When he took over the [Texas Rangers](#) for the 2003 season, they had lost 270 games in three seasons. The Rangers had a winning 2003, traded [Alex Rodriguez](#) and after Buck left following the 2006 season, within two years Ron Washington's teams began a five-year winning run, including two trips to the World Series.

When he took over a 32-73 [Orioles](#) team in mid-2010, the franchise hadn't had a winning record since 1997. He moved the furniture around to have a winning record the remainder of the season, and in 2014 his Orioles swept the [Tigers](#) in the playoffs despite his opponents starting [Max Scherzer](#), [Justin Verlander](#) and [David Price](#) in the ALDS.

Now, he has a team with a \$265 million payroll whose starting point is a pair of elite pitchers in Scherzer and [Jacob deGrom](#). The pair will be 38 and 34 respectively come September and will earn a combined \$80.5 million between them. Even if there are holes on this Mets club, these are certainly not the 1992 Yankees, whose best starting pitcher was Melido Perez. This is a Mets team with two historically good pitchers, and as the architect and developer Buck Showalter's first job will be to collaborate with Scherzer and deGrom on the best way for each to make close to 30 starts. That is the goal, that is why owner Steve Cohen hired Showalter, and everything else — from who plays third and who plays second, who plays right field and who needs to cut back on his Twitter use — will be worked out.

[Zack Britton told *The Athletic's* Ken Rosenthal that Buck will bring accountability to the Mets.](#)

Indeed. Quickly. Inadvertently or not, when [Pete Alonso](#) shifted the blame for being thrown out at the plate in a pivotal September game to third base coach Gary DiSarcina — DiSarcina was let go after the season, whether that is directly connected or not — that was the opposite of accountable, and that pertains to the bosses upstairs. That was out of former manager [Luis Rojas](#)'s hands.

It will not be out of Showalter's hands. Those kinds of things simply won't happen, and those who have followed Alonso since college think it wasn't who he is, and that he will appreciate the attention to accountability. [Listen to Manny Machado now on the subject of Buck Showalter](#), the reverence and the respect there. There was a time when Machado was considered something of a diva; we can look back and recall similar feelings managers or coaches had towards Carl Yastrzemski in the mid-'60s, or Ken Griffey Jr. decades later, then remember how those players became revered as teammates after they had established themselves as both players and clubhouse presences. Yastrzemski went through managers before 1967 who never understood that what he cared most about was winning and that the Red Sox culture was a raft trip Into The Mystic, in this case not Van Morrison's ethereal plane, but the twists and turns of Boston's famed Mystic River.

When Rojas interviewed with some teams after being fired by the Mets, he told them that shortly after his firing, he'd gotten called from 15 different teams about open jobs. "Welcome to our world," one manager told him, an experienced manager who respected Rojas. "What's difficult for young managers is that they are judged so quickly, and often never get the opportunity to develop what they are as managers when most of us learn and re-evaluate every month, every season."

The [Giants](#) won 107 games in 2021. Gabe Kapler won manager of the year, as he deserved. But most of the stories were about past "failures" in Philadelphia, not considering that possibly some of what were perceived as *his* issues was the dysfunction of the [Phillies](#) organization before the transition to the Dave Dombrowski/Sam Fuld/Preston Mattingly regime.

When Kapler began his managerial career in 2008 in Greenville, S.C., and the Boston organization, he was considered a potential major league manager. Reliever [Daniel Bard](#) went to Greenville off a bad experience in Lancaster, Calif., and says "he thought a lot outside the box, and he cared a lot about every individual player. I had three straight starts under three innings, but he never showed frustration. I could talk to him anytime, and he clearly cared about me. A couple of years later he was with Tampa, we talked in the outfield before a game and it was all about my well-being." The award represented Kapler's growth as a manager and that development's relationship to Giants executive Farhan Zaidi.

[Before he became a writer of some note](#), Lars Anderson was a young first base prospect in the Red Sox organization who remembers Kapler "as being someone who was never afraid of anyone asking him questions. I could ask, 'why are we doing this?' And he'd explain, never showing that it annoyed him. He taught me how to eat. He'd take me to Waffle House and

bring almond butter to put on my waffles. He read and suggested books. He sought ways to connect with players as people, and I respected him for it.”

Zak Farkes was a Harvard-educated infielder with whom Kapler discussed books that they both found interesting. Farkes gave him a copy of an Ayn Rand book, Kapler read it overnight and the next day they took the time to discuss the book.

“He’d throw batting practice to me and when I’d get mad, he helped me understand that I was actually trying to show how much I cared, and the difference (between) actually caring and *acting* like it. He played a part in my life.” Farkes now owns a solar heating company near Boston. He is not surprised that personal relationships are an important part of Kapler’s leadership style.

In his 2021 jobs with MLB Network and the YES Network, Showalter was able to closely observe Aaron Boone, and when Boone took the blame for whatever ailed the Yankees on a particular night, Showalter told any friend who would listen what a good job he thought Boone was doing.

“Sometimes people think managers have far more control over outcomes than they actually have,” says Tigers manager A.J. Hinch. Adds one National League front office executive, “I think part of that problem stems from the volume of young people in front offices who haven’t played or spent time in clubhouses or faced public scrutiny for their advice and consent.”

If one goes through managers hired for their first jobs in the period from 1990-2021, ponder these numbers:

- 69 percent (136 of the 197 managers) had minor league managerial experience.
- 55 of the 197 (27.9 percent) lasted less than two years.
- 42 of the 197 (21.3 percent) lasted more than five years.

Tony La Russa, who has managed more regular-season games (5,259) than anyone but Connie Mack, won the second-most games (2,821) and managed three world champions and six pennant winners in two leagues, says “looking back I’ve been very lucky because I’ve always worked for good people.”

Yes, LaRussa was fired, by Ken Harrelson in 1986, but he cites the late Roland Hemond for “sticking by me in my early years when things got tough” and mentions no hard feelings towards Harrelson; three years after being fired, the Oakland [Athletics](#) with Sandy Alderson as general manager and La Russa as manager swept the Giants to win the 1989 World Series. On a similar tack, Showalter believes that the relationship between the front office and uniformed personnel requires “collaboration,” something Mets GM Billy Eppler stressed with the [Angels](#) and clearly maintained in his relationship with Brad Ausmus.

Several managers mention that social media has made their jobs more difficult in this current era, but La Russa says “it’s part of the game today, and you have to deal with it.” Most do; 11 of

the 20 managers who have managed the most games in the game's history have so in the modern era (Gene Mauch finished in 1987), while La Russa, [Dusty Baker](#) (12th, 3,722) and [Terry Francona](#) are active. Of the 25 all-time winningest managers, Torre (4 times), Showalter (3), Bobby Cox (1), Bruce Bochy (1), Baker (4), Francona (2), Lou Piniella (3) and Dick Williams (4) were all fired.

Sparky Anderson won two World Series in Cincinnati, got fired, went to Detroit and won another ring. La Russa, Torre, Cox and Williams are in Cooperstown, and a number of the others like Jim Leyland, Bochy, Francona and Baker seem destined to be, as well. Leyland would be right at the top of any contemporary list of best managers, and had the instincts and sense to step away from jobs in Pittsburgh, Florida and Colorado when he felt all collaboration had rusted. When he interviewed for the first time, with the [Astros](#) in 1985, General Manager Dick Wagner did not like the way Leyland was dressed and instead gave the job to Hal Lanier.

Alex Cora is a rare case, one whose Red Sox won the World Series the first year he managed. When Josh Byrnes was the Arizona GM in 2009, he fired Bob Melvin and made Hinch, then the farm director, the manager. It was an unusual move, widely criticized by traditional media, especially as Melvin's career puts him in an elite class of modern-era managers. Hinch got off to a slow start in 2010, he and Byrnes got fired, and he worked in the [Padres](#) front office until Jeff Luhnow wisely plucked him to manage the Astros. Until the Tigers went 37-34 in the second half and fell short of .500 in 2021, Hinch had not managed a sub-.500 team after his first firing.

Whitey Herzog had a background similar to Hinch, both men steeped in scouting and player development. Bob Short hired him to Texas to replace Ted Williams in 1973, and Herzog didn't last the season, fired when Short had a chance to hire Billy Martin. Herzog moved on to the California Angels and then to Kansas City, where he turned the [Royals](#) franchise around with three first-place finishes in 1977-78-79, before crossing I-70 to St. Louis, winning the 1982 World Series over the [Brewers](#) and heading to the Hall of Fame.

There never was a question about Mike Scioscia's future as a manager, despite questionable Dodger front office judgment that let him go after years spent serving the organization as a coach. When he took over the Angels in 2000, Scioscia had a minor league-developed, Gene Mauch-raised bench coach in Joe Maddon, a fully prepared staff with Marcel Lachemann, Mickey Hatcher and [Ron Roenicke](#), a detailed, brilliant leader in team president Bill Stoneman and a core of Tim Salmon, Troy Glaus, Garrett Anderson and Darren Erstad, who came out of the farm system together. Mauch, who never won a pennant, had a major imprint on that team, and was the victim of managerial life's circumstances in his career.

Torre was a superb manager in St. Louis but was let go after the end of the 1995 strike to cover up a case of the [Cardinals](#) ownership backing out of a Todd Zeile contract. Now Showalter, three times replaced, goes into Citi Field the way Torre, four times fired, went to the Bronx. Twenty-six years later it's the right time for the two great pitchers to have their stories play out on the October stage, just as Randy Johnson and Curt Schilling did in Arizona. The [Starling Marte](#) signing has a chance to be one of the best moves of this off-season, having listened to

what [Don Mattingly](#) and Billy Beane said about his ability, character and instincts. [Francisco Lindor](#), like Machado, wants to be as beloved as he is talented. Mark Canha is a manager's player. Showalter's 10-man coaching staff will be part of the construction plan.

It's time now for an owner with a significant art collection, an owner whose bathrooms are worth more than any manager's house, to put the \$265-million worth of players he's acquired in a position to win in 2022, to truly win. Scherzer, deGrom, Lindor, Marte and Alonso didn't get where they are without paying an exhaustive price. Now Showalter must make it all fit. Come October, it's always about the players and the roles for which they are best suited, not the market price of the sum of their parts. George Steinbrenner and Torre wouldn't have those five World Series trophies without the daily routines of Derek Jeter; Peter Magowan and Bochy wouldn't have their three without [Brandon Crawford](#)'s tireless attention to detail; John Henry and Francona wouldn't have their two together without the selflessness of Jason Varitek.

When Jeffrey Loria owned the [Marlins](#), he constantly demonstrated his humanitarian nature, even to A-ball pitchers with drug issues. What he never fully grasped is that baseball players are not art objects simply to be bought and sold, so his impulses led him to moves like trading [Dan Straily](#) for [Luis Castillo](#). It was less than seven years ago that Cohen sold a Picasso for more than the \$45 million he'll pay another artist, Scherzer, in 2022. The late Mike Flanagan taught Showalter that the best way to collaborate with Peter Angelos in Baltimore was to have lunch with him once a homestand and give him insight into the people who wore Oriole uniforms.

I think back to the first day of an Oriole spring training in Sarasota, watching J.J. Hardy take every throw and lay his glove down on the front of the second base bag in perfect tag position. Two springs ago, [Manny Machado](#) reminded me of that, and what Machado learned from that and from Buck Showalter and what it all means. The right tag at the right October moment can mean a parade, which, in the end, is baseball's greatest reward, which to Steve Cohen means more than a Picasso or Giacometti.

TERRANCE GORE: BASEBALL'S GREATEST WINNER

By Rex Kaplan (on medium.com)

Terrance Gore is a simple man. He makes smart choices. He chills, he runs, and he wins. He wins a lot.

Atop the list of players with the most World Series rings since 2015, one man stands alone. He's won three championships with three different teams despite only having 67 career at-bats, and has recorded only 15 career base hits with zero home runs. An even more difficult feat? He's won two rings since the last time he had a Major League plate appearance.

Terrance Gore is a weapon that playoff teams love to have due his elite speed and base running skills. Now 30-years-old, he stands 5'7" without a particularly eye-catching swing or plate presence. His baseball card would be most fitting with the title "Pinch Runner." Even being the statistical anomaly that he is, Gore is a player worth appreciating. Here's why:

Gore, a football and baseball star growing up in Macon, Georgia, was drafted by the Kansas City Royals in the 20th round of the 2011 MLB draft out of Gulf Coast Community College — where he hit .330 and stole a whopping 51 bags.

Gore, only the 16th player in MLB history to wear the number 0 on his back, debuted with the Royals late in 2014. He played in 20 total games in '14 and '15, compiling only six total plate appearances while primarily pinch-running. He stole eight bases.

After seeing his first postseason action in '14, where Kansas City fell short in the World Series, Gore stole a bag in the '15 playoffs where he appeared twice as his team went on to win it all — his first ring.

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Prior to the 2020 season, the Los Angeles Dodgers signed Gore to a Minor League deal. Because of COVID-19, there was no MiLB season; however, Gore was kept around and ultimately joined the roster late in the season. He pinch-ran in two games, then was added to the Dodgers WC and NLDS roster. He didn't see any playing time in October, though LA went on to win the Fall Classic — earning Gore his second ring.

Gore earned himself another Minor League contract ahead of Opening Day in 2021, heading close to home and joining the Atlanta Braves. He had a fine year in the minors, remaining there all regular season, but was put on the Braves NLDS roster where he made his debut with the Major League squad. He had one appearance, pinch-running, but that was all. Atlanta, of course, went on to prevail, winning a World Championship — a third ring for Gore.

Gore has one talent that teams find extremely valuable: he is unbelievably fast. His sprint speed and base-stealing ability has kept him around winning teams, and his will to embrace a bench role has payed off. Gore, along with two-time teammate Joc Pederson, became the ninth (and tenth) players in MLB history to win back-to-back World Series' with different teams.

Let's compare some numbers.

Gore career:

RBI — 1

HR — 0

HBP — 3

XBH — 3

Championship Rings: 3

You want to be remembered? Win titles.

Gore has done just that. He enters his eighth professional season as a free-agent. Perhaps where he decides to sign could dictate the outcome of the 2022 season... I guess we'll have to wait and see. For now, we should all appreciate one of the many oddities and gifts that the game of baseball provides. Gore is like no one else, and it is awesome.

MORE LABOR AND BUSINESS

Four former minor-league affiliates become the latest legal challengers to MLB's antitrust exemption

Six years ago, the Supreme Court of the United States turned away a city of San Jose lawsuit that challenged [Major League Baseball's antitrust exemption](#), a now century-old high court policy that is unique in professional sports. San Jose argued its pursuit of the Oakland A's had been stymied by an MLB cartel, but the legal precedent held that baseball is not an interstate business and thus liable under federal antitrust laws.

Four former minor-league teams calculate that times are different and the Supreme Court, following its decision earlier this year against the NCAA, is ready to overturn the exemption that has protected MLB's business decisions from antitrust challenges. The quartet has filed a

lawsuit in a Manhattan federal district court ostensibly against MLB's reorganization of Minor League Baseball, but also to attempt to drive a stake through the exemption.

The four teams suing are the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes, the Norwich Sea Unicorns, the Staten Island Yankees, and the Tri-City ValleyCats. The last two are [also separately suing MLB in New York State court](#) on other claims.

"Virtually no other business in the United States would have even considered such a brazen horizontal agreement among competing businesses," the lawsuit argues of the minor-league reorganization, which culled 40 teams, including the four suing. "MLB and its clubs, however, had no such qualms because for almost a century they have laid claim to an anomalous judiciary created 'get-out-of-jail-free card' from antitrust scrutiny. The so-called 'baseball exemption' ... was first articulated by the Supreme Court in (1922).

"If not for this anomalous precedent, MLB knows that the type of anti-competitive conduct challenged here would warrant per se condemnation. The time is at hand to cast the baseball exemption into the dustbin of antitrust history."

The Supreme Court's roaring '20s-era decision has always stood out as an anomaly, as a misguided take that baseball was only a pastime and not a business. In 1998, Congress stripped out labor from the exemption in passing the [Curt Flood Act](#). This meant teams could not artificially restrain player pay through means that would not survive antitrust scrutiny in other industries without an exemption.

But the act specifically left intact the rest of the business of baseball as falling under the exemption, said lawyer Chris Deubert, who predicts the minor league teams' lawsuit will fail for this reason.

"A federal judge would dismiss this in five minutes," Deubert said. "There have been multiple lawsuits by minor-league baseball players, by the city of San Jose, by scouts, others that have challenged Major League Baseball on antitrust grounds, and they all lose because of the Curt Flood Act. This lawsuit easily fits into that bucket."

Deubert previously worked at Berg & Androphy, one of the two firms representing the minor-league teams.

But Jim Quinn of Berg & Androphy countered that the Curt Flood Act stemmed from the settlement of the 1994 strike in which both sides agreed to petition Congress to remove players from falling under the exemption. So all Congress did by noting the new law did not encompass other aspects of the business of baseball, he added, was to leave intact the rest of the scope of the 1922 Supreme Court case.

In ruling earlier this year that the NCAA could not limit certain athlete benefits, rejecting the collegiate body's antitrust exemption request, the Supreme Court also specifically made mention of the baseball exemption.

"To be sure, this court once dallied with something that looks a bit like an antitrust exemption for professional baseball," the Supreme Court wrote in its unanimous decision. "But this Court has refused to extend Federal Baseball's reasoning to other sports leagues — and has even acknowledged criticisms of the decision as 'unrealistic' and 'inconsistent' and 'aberration(al).'" Federal Baseball is the name of the 1922 Supreme Court decision.

That citation, quoted twice in the minor league teams' 33-page complaint, is what gives the plaintiffs hope that the Supreme Court will hear the case after it is presumably dismissed by lower courts citing the 1922 decision.

The lawsuit names only MLB as a defendant, listing the clubs only as co-conspirators. Teams were not named as defendants so as to avoid jurisdictional fights that would prolong the case, Quinn said.

As for the core issues in the case, titled Nostalgic Partners v Office of the Commissioner of Baseball, the minor-league clubs argue MLB violated antitrust law by conspiring to eliminate their pivotal ties to major league teams. MLB undertook a major overhaul of minor league baseball, arguably seeking to rationalize the system, both geographically and economically. But Nostalgic, the company that owned the now-shuttered Staten Island Yankees, argued in its lawsuit the teams left standing were all too often owned by MLB teams or politically connected owners.

WHY BASEBALL'S MIDDLE CLASS MATTERS SO MUCH IN LOCKOUT

By Chelsea Janes, The Washington Post

Since Major League Baseball team owners locked out the players this month, MLB and the players' union have met only once to discuss a new collective bargaining agreement, according to people familiar with the negotiations. Neither side seems to be feeling much urgency. Neither side seems to believe a deal is within immediate striking distance.

The issues on the table are numerous and varied — and the expectation among multiple people involved in the negotiations is that no substantive progress will be made in addressing them until the new year.

But to the extent that any one issue can be separated from the others, one of the widest gaps in these negotiations exists between the way the owners and players see the economics of the game.

Revenue increased in the years leading up to the pandemic, according to data from Forbes. But average player salaries decreased in that same span, with no major jump to speak of since.

Both sides agree, in theory, on the reason for this discrepancy: Younger players and veterans who are not stars are compensated in a way that allows teams to lean heavily on cheap, young labor. That tendency comes at the expense of veterans; players who wait years to reach free agency don't always find a market eager to pay them.

Unsurprisingly – given Commissioner Rob Manfred is employed to represent the interests of the owners and union head Tony Clark to champion the players – the league's owners and its players disagree on how to do that.

“When we began negotiations over a new agreement, the Players Association already had a contract that they wouldn't trade for any other in sports,” Manfred wrote when he announced the lockout. “Baseball's players have no salary cap and are not subjected to a maximum length or dollar amount on contracts. In fact, only MLB has guaranteed contracts that run 10 or more years, and in excess of \$300 million. We have not proposed anything that would change these fundamentals.”

The owners' position in some ways begins and ends with a comparison to other major sports. Among the union's greatest accomplishments is its stiff-arming of a hard salary cap for years. No other sport gives its players the kind of megadeals available to MLB players. Manfred pointed to that spending because it implies a relative strength compared to other leagues that don't feature the same guaranteed deals that baseball stars receive regularly.

The union's response, though, could be pulled straight from a Bernie Sanders campaign speech: Sure, the top 1 percent or so are receiving plenty of money. But salaries for the middle class are not growing commensurate with the at-times explosive growth of the sport's revenue over the past few decades. A system that works for those at the top does not automatically, or even usually, work for those at the bottom.

According to a study published by the Associated Press this year, the average major league salary fell in 2021, dropping about 5 percent from 2019, which was the last full season. The AP reported that about 60 percent of the players on Opening Day rosters were making less than \$1 million. Of that group, 35 percent made less than \$600,000.

According to that AP report, about 50 of the 900 or so players on Opening Day rosters in 2021 accounted for about 33 percent of all the salary in baseball. And according to data pulled from contract database Spotrac, the richest players are seeing their salaries grow faster than the others: Since 2011, the average salary of the 30 highest-paid players has grown 4.4 percent, while salaries as a whole have increased less than 3 percent in that time.

It's unclear how much the coronavirus pandemic has cost team owners, but many have employed new ways to generate income in recent years, whether through development of areas around ballparks or with the installation of sportsbooks in stadiums. To the players, these additional revenue streams belie any suggestion that owners don't have the money to pay players more.

“There’s top-down economics and bottom-up and they both work in kind of tandem, and when you continue to move the market as a whole, everybody kind of moves up together,” Max Scherzer, a member of the MLB Players Association executive subcommittee, who recently signed a three-year deal with the New York Mets that will pay him a record \$43.3 million annually. “When certain parts of the market don’t function, well, then it drags down the whole kind of player market.”

According to people familiar with MLB’s proposals and approach, who spoke anonymously to candidly discuss the matter, MLB’s negotiators are open to changing the way younger players are compensated but do not necessarily believe players need to receive a broader share of the revenue pie to rectify those disparities. The union, meanwhile, wants to change the way players are compensated in large part by injecting a greater percentage of revenue back into player compensation – helping those at the bottom without costing those at the top.

In the broadest possible terms, the difference can be distilled to this: MLB argues that the owners are putting enough revenue into player compensation but that mechanisms need to be implemented to make sure more of it gets to younger players and those in baseball’s middle class. Manfred and the owners are largely proposing structural changes that address player concerns such as competitive balance but that do so by limiting spending at the top to fund more spending in the middle – taking the same financial pie but slicing it differently.

The players, meanwhile, believe owners need to spend more to facilitate fairer compensation for all, starting with paying younger players commensurate with their relative on-field value so veterans who produce at similar rates no longer seem so expensive. Instead of reslicing the existing pie, players want the owners to chip in more money and bake a bigger one that allows everyone’s slice – younger players, veterans and stars – to grow.

For example, team owners argue arbitration is clunky and full of unnecessary expenses such as lawyer fees and have suggested replacing it with poorly received alternatives like a performance-based formula. Players see arbitration as the first – and, because of the short length of the average major league career, often only – time they can use the free market to help determine their compensation, shedding MLB minimums and using their numbers to argue their value higher.

As the Athletic reported, the union is also hoping to shorten players’ wait for arbitration from three years to two. The more money that young stars make over the major league minimum, the less a team saves by choosing a young player over a veteran with similar on-field production. One argument floated by those against the move is that moving arbitration up a year will lead to even more players on the margins being non-tendered (not given contracts and therefore released) before those deadlines, hurting the middle class that the players want to help. But that notion is, as yet, hypothetical.

Meanwhile, MLB is offering another solution: In his letter addressing the lockout, Manfred said the owners have proposed an age-based free agency system designed to eliminate teams’ ability to manipulate the service time of players.

The argument for age-based free agency looks like this: Sure, a few free agents at the top might make less, because stars such as Carlos Correa or Juan Soto would have to wait to cash in. But service time manipulation, or holding major-league-ready players in the minors to avoid starting the six-year clock that begins when they make their MLB debut and begin accumulating major league service time, would be less effective if free agency is tied to age. Plus, teams that struggle to pay young stars when they hit free agency would be able to control those players longer – thereby helping small-market teams compete while also helping the middle class make more money.

One critique of age-based service time is that young Latino players, who can break into professional baseball at 16 as opposed to 18 for American-born players, would be disproportionately hurt by rules that tie free agency to age. So instead of locking free agency to age, the players want to rework the ways players can accumulate service time, wresting some control from teams by allowing players to accrue it via performance milestones in addition to time spent on the major league roster.

To the players, who believe ownership simply needs to invest more in rosters all around, the idea of costing top-tier stars a year or so of free agent money to benefit the middle class represents a false choice.

“All of our proposals are meant to help every player, in every class, in every situation, in every position. A lot of times it may not seem as straightforward as others,” MLBPA executive subcommittee member Andrew Miller told the Athletic’s Jayson Stark. “We have to be able to communicate that to guys so they understand, ‘Hey, this is the big picture; this is why this moving piece affects this piece.’ The reality is that’s exactly it: We’re looking to address every class of player in every situation and improve upon where they are now.”

Many of the union’s more prominent player negotiators – Miller, Scherzer, New York Yankees ace Gerrit Cole, Texas Rangers infielder Marcus Semien and others – happen to be in MLB’s top tier, meaning they are not the ones experiencing the pitfalls of the compensation system.

“Actually, it’s truly mystifying to see guys like Max Scherzer represent us because he has benefited from a system, and rightfully so – he’s an amazing pitcher and deserves everything he gets,” said retired reliever Jerry Blevins, a former union rep. “But at the same time, he’s in there fighting for guys like me: middle-of-the-road, middle-of-the-pack guys who fill a roster.”

“It makes a big difference because they represent us, the normal guy, even though at the same time they’re benefiting from the system as it’s set up,” said Blevins, who pointed out that unlike major league owners, the “normal guys” in baseball often have just a few years to profit on their talent and set themselves up with their chosen careers. If Scherzer’s career earnings are astronomical, a player on the margins whose career lasts a few years and earns him a few million dollars is far less secure long-term than his more prominent peers, and will have to start over completely when his baseball career is done.

The underlying assumption beneath almost every one of both sides’ proposals is that any new rule will foster a hundred new ways to exploit it, given that owners want to save money and

players want to maximize earnings. Players, therefore, are wary of any rule that diminishes their ability to let the market dictate their earnings because of the expectation that owners will use those rules to suppress them.

Owners are operating in a system that helps keep costs down for young players but also rewards the game's biggest stars with the biggest contracts in pro sports. They are not eager to let the market push their spending further.

DETAILS ON LUXURY TAX PAYMENTS FOR DODGERS & PADRES

By Anthony Franco on mlbtraderumors.com

As expected, the Dodgers and Padres are the two teams that exceeded the luxury tax threshold this past season. The Associated Press [reports](#) that Los Angeles will pay \$32.65MM in fees, while the Padres' tax penalty lands at a more modest \$1.29MM. No other teams exceeded the threshold in 2021.

Neither the Dodgers nor the Padres exceeded the threshold in 2020. Under the terms of the 2016-21 collective bargaining agreement, teams were only subject to escalating penalties for exceeding in consecutive years. Thus, both teams will be treated as first-time payors this offseason.

Teams are only subject to penalties on the dollars they spend above the threshold. The 2021 penalties for first-time payors checked in at 20% on every dollar between \$210MM and \$230MM, 32% on overages between \$230MM and \$250MM and 62.5% on each dollar spent above \$250MM. CBT figures are calculated by summing the average annual values of all of a team's player contracts (plus benefits), not by looking at a team's actual payrolls in a given season.

As their hefty tax suggests, the Dodgers were by far the game's biggest spender in 2021. Los Angeles' final luxury tax number checked in at \$285.6MM. (Their tax payment is calculated as the sum of \$4MM on their overages between \$210MM – \$230MM, \$6.4MM on their overages between \$230MM – \$250MM and \$22.25MM on their overages above \$250MM). The Dodgers flexed that financial might to build a star-studded roster that went to the NL Championship Series.

By exceeding \$250MM, the Dodgers also accepted a minor hit in next year's amateur draft. Teams that exceeded the highest tax threshold in the previous CBA saw their top choice moved back ten spots in the ensuing Rule 4 draft. Instead of picking 30th overall next season as originally scheduled, they'll first select at pick No. 40.

While the Dodgers shattered the luxury mark, the Padres very narrowly exceeded the first threshold. Their final ledger checked in at \$216.5MM, the highest mark in franchise history. San

Diego's financial cost for doing so is minuscule, but surpassing the threshold would be of more import were they to sign a free agent who has been tagged with a qualifying offer. Teams that pay any CBT penalties are subject to the highest levels of [draft pick and international signing bonus forfeiture](#) for signing qualified free agents. Exceeding the tax also reduces the compensation teams receive when one of their own qualified free agents signs elsewhere; this winter, the Dodgers received the lowest possible compensation (a pick after the fourth round) for watching [Corey Seager](#) depart.

As mentioned, the previous CBA contained escalating penalties for teams that exceeded the threshold in multiple consecutive years. It's not clear whether that process will continue with the next CBA (or where the thresholds will land in the next CBA) but most high-revenue teams have occasionally determined to dip back under the threshold to "reset" their tax bracket and dodge escalating penalties.

That makes the Padres' decision to narrowly exceed the threshold and potentially shoulder escalating penalties in future years a bit atypical. A handful of teams settled their spending limits just below the \$210MM mark. According to the AP, each of the Phillies, Yankees, Mets, Red Sox and Astros ended with payrolls less than \$5MM below the first tax threshold. They'll each be first-time payors if they exceed that mark in 2022, with the Yankees and Astros resetting after exceeding the threshold in 2020. (The Cubs also exceeded the threshold in 2020 but didn't come especially close to \$210MM in 2021).

The AP also reports that overall spending on players took a step back. The combined tally of all thirty teams' luxury tax payrolls this past season tallied \$4.52 billion, down from the \$4.71 billion teams spent in 2019. That's not entirely surprising on the heels of a 2020 campaign with essentially no gate revenues, although it's the lowest overall expenditures on players since 2016's \$4.51 billion.

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

12.19.2021

Good morning baseball fans.

It's been a long December in the baseball world, and there's no reason to believe that's about to change. [Major League Baseball](#) and the Players Association are unlikely to talk core economics until January, people with knowledge of the talks said.

So...

An issue focused on accomplishments instead of labor arguments. Enjoy.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Mariano Rivera secured the final out in four World Series winning games—1998, 1999, 2000, 2009. From 1997, for 15 years he averaged 40 saves and 8.1 strikeouts/9. He had 42 post season saves, pitched more than one inning in 31 of them.

The save was invented by Chicago sportswriter Jerome Holtzman in 1959. It became an official statistic in 1969. Holtzman wrote for the Chicago Sun-Times and the Chicago Tribune, The Sporting News and was MLB's official historian.

1936. First hall of fame vote. Ty Cobb got 98% and Babe Ruth got 95%. Exactly what more did the writers who did not vote for them want?

I was playing “if he should be in the HOF, why not him?” this week with a friend.

Andy Pettitte

3316 Innings Pitched

256-153

3.85 ERA

2448 K

19 post season wins

60.7 WAR

Mike Mussina

3562 Innings Pitched

270-153

3.68 ERA

2813 K

7 post season wins

82.8 WAR

In 1968, there were 339 shutouts in MLB – a full 20.9% of the season's games.

The only pitcher to lead both the NL and AL in shutouts – in the same season?

C.C Sabathia, who started the 2008 season with the AL Indians and went 6-8, with a 3.83 ERA and 2 shutouts (which tied with 7 others for the AL lead) and, in July, was traded to the NL Brewers and went 11-2 with a 1.65 ERA and 3 shutouts (which tied teammate Ben Sheets for the NL lead.)

"Take Me Out to the Ballgame" is baseball's unofficial anthem, traditionally sung during the "seventh inning stretch" at ballparks far and wide. The song was written in 1908 by Jack Norworth and Albert von Tilzer, neither of whom had never been to a baseball game.

Ty Cobb, Rogers Hornsby, Lou Gehrig, Ted Williams and Mickey Mantle are the only five players to not only win their league's triple crown, but to lead the majors in batting average, HRs and RBIs.

New York Highlanders and Yankees vs. Boston Americans and Red Sox all time series record. New York 1221 wins, Boston 1007.

THE METS SURPRISE NO ONE, AND THAT'S OK

Over the last 24 years the Baltimore Orioles have had 8 managers (Ray Miller, Juan Samuel, Mike Hargrove, Lee Mazzilli, Sam Perlozzo, Dave Trembley, Buck Showalter, Brandon Hyde. (bonus points if you could name all of them).

Only one manager of the eight had a winning season. Buck Showalter who had five seasons over .500.

The Mets pick was a safe pick.

Showalter's overall record of 1551-1517 (.506 winning percentage, which translates to 82-80 on average) belies how successful he's been over the course of his career. That record includes an expansion season with Arizona and the astonishingly bad year from the 2018 [Orioles](#) that dropped him from more than 50 games over .500 in Baltimore to under the break-even mark.

Showalter took over the [Yankees](#) in 1992; they made the playoffs by 1995 to end a 14-year drought and would have made it in '94 if not for the strike. The Diamondbacks made the playoffs in their second season of existence. Showalter took over the [Rangers](#) in 2003; they won 89 games in his second season. He took over the Orioles late in 2010; he had them in the playoffs by 2012, ending a 15-year drought.

Showalter, 65, has never won a pennant but is widely respected for his preparedness and attention to detail. A three-time winner of the manager of the year award — in 1994 with the Yankees, in 2004 with the Rangers and in 2014 with the Orioles

UNBREAKABLE RECORDS? THINK ANY OF THESE WILL BE BROKEN? ANY OTHER NOMINATIONS?

Joe DiMaggio had a 56-game hitting streak in 1941. Pete Rose came close, at 44 games, so the most famous record may be the most breakable.

The Chicago Cubs went 108 years without winning a World Series. But the Indians/Guardians are working hard on this one.

Johnny Vander Meer threw back-to-back no-hitters in 1938. It could be done again, but who is going to throw a third consecutive no-hitter?

Hack Wilson drove in 191 runs in 1930. Manny Ramirez did have 165 in 1999.

Pete Rose had a record 4,256 hits; to break it someone would have to average 213 hits for 20 years.

Nolan Ryan threw seven no-hitters and had 5,714 career strikeouts.

Chief Wilson hit 36 triples in 1912.

Barry Bonds walked 232 times with 120 intentional walks in 1994.

Rickey Henderson stole 130 bases in 1982 and had 1,406 steals for his career.

Cal Ripken played in 2,632 consecutive games.

Hugh Duffy hit .440 in 1894.

Kid Nichols was the youngest pitcher to join the 300 wins club at age 30, by averaging 30 wins per year for a decade.

Walter Johnson threw 110 shutouts. Modern comparisons: Clayton Kershaw (15), Justin Verlander (8), Max Scherzer (5).

Cy Young finished his career with 511 wins and 749 complete games.

Jack Taylor pitched 202 consecutive games without being relieved once.

Charley "Old Hoss" Radbourn won 59 games in 1884. No modern pitcher will ever *start* 59 games.

WALKING ON SUNSHINE

In 1961, the Yankees' Roger Maris belted 61 home runs (breaking Babe Ruth's then MLB record of 60). He also drove in a league-leading 141 runs, scored a league-leading 132 times and won his second consecutive AL Most Valuable Player Award. In addition, he drew a career-high 94 walks. Ironically, however, *1961 was the only season in his 12-year MLB-career that Maris did not draw a single intentional walk.*

Compare that to the following season, when – On May 22, 1962 – in a 2-1, 12-inning Yankee victory over the Angels, Maris drew five walks in six trips to the plate – *including an AL single-game record* (later tied by the Red Sox' Manny Ramirez) *four intentional passes*. In 1962, Maris drew a career-high eleven intentional passes, while putting up a .256-33-100 line.

Notably, when you talk intentional walks, the conversation pretty much has to focus on Barry Bonds. Bonds holds the records for:

- *IBB in a season* – 120 with the Giants in 2004. (Bonds, in fact, holds the top three spots. The first non-Barry on the list is the Giants Willie McCovey with 45.) *Note: Only three players had as many total walks as Bonds had intentional walks in 2004 – Bobby Abreu, Lance Berkman, and Todd Helton (127 each).* Bonds drew 232 total walks.
- *IBB in a career* – 688. Second Place goes to the still active Albert Pujols of the Angels with 305 as this is written.
- *Most seasons leading the league in IBB* – 12.
- *Most IBB's in a nine-inning game* – four (twice) on May 1 and September 22, 2004.

FEASTING ON FREEBEES

On May 22, 1990, RF and cleanup hitter Andre Dawson of the Cubs came to the plate eight times in a 16-inning, 2-1 Cubs win over the Reds. Dawson drew five intentional passes – the MLB record for IBB in a game. His day went like this:

- Bottom of the first – runner on second and one out – intentional walk.
- Bottom of the fourth – leading off – groundout to SS.
- Bottom of the sixth – two outs and a runner on first – fly out to left.
- Bottom of the eighth – score still 0-0, runner on third, two out – intentional walk.
- Bottom of the 11th – runner on first, no outs – single.

- Bottom of 12th – still 0-0, runners on first and second, two outs – intentional walk.
- Bottom of 14th – score now 1-1, runner on second, two out – intentional walk.
- Bottom of 16th – runners on first and third, one out – intentional walk, loading the bases. LF Dave Clark followed with a walk-off single to win the game.

Dawson, who hit .310-27-100, drew a career-high 21 intentional free passes in 1990.

A few other free pass marks:

- *Most IBB in a season in the American League* – 33 by Ted Williams in 1957 and John Olerud in 1993.
- *Most IBB to a rookie* – 16 to Mariners' OF Al Davis in 1984, when he hit .284-27-116 and was the AL Rookie of the Year.
- *Most intentional walks received by a team in a game* – six, provided by the Cardinals (to the Giants) in a 5-2 loss On July 19, 1975 – with three going to number-eight hitter catcher Dave Rader. Here are the IBB's: bottom of second to Dave Rader with a runner on second, one out and Cardinals down 2-0; bottom of third to Dave Rader, runners on second and third, two out, Cardinals down 4-2; bottom of the fifth to Dave Rader, with a runner on second, two out and the Giants up 4-2; bottom of the sixth to Bobby Murcer, with a runner on second, one out and the Giants up 4-2; bottom of the sixth to Willie Montanez, with the bases loaded, two outs and Giants still up 4-2; bottom of the eighth to Willie Montanez, with a runner on third and one out and Giants up 4-2.
- Six players have received intentional walks with the bases loaded: Abner Dalrymple (August 2, 1881); Nap Lajoie (May 23, 1901); Del Bissonette (May 2, 1928); Bill Nicholson (July 23, 1944); Barry (of course he did) Bonds (May 28, 1998); and Josh Hamilton (August 17, 2008).

WALKIN' IN THE SUNSHINE

In 2004, the year he set the single-season record for intentional walks (120), Barry Bonds also set the single-season record for total walks (232). The next highest MLB walk total that season was 127. In 2004, Bonds walked in 37.9 percent of his trips to the plate. (Notably, he only struck out 41 times in a .362-45-101 campaign.) While Bonds walked more than 100 times in a season 14 times, the only season he reached 100 strikeouts was in his rookie year (1986). Note: The other two members of the 700+ home run club – Hank Aaron and Babe Ruth – had zero 100 strikeout seasons between them. Aaron also never drew 100 walks in a season, while Ruth had 12 seasons of 100+ bases on balls.

Among the references sources for this post: Baseball-Almanac.com; Baseball-Reference.com; MLB.com.

FRANK HOWARD...THE WEEK OF THE HITTER IN THE YEAR OF THE PITCHER (FROM BASEBALL ROUNDTABLE.COM)

It was 1968 and, in the major leagues, pitching was dominant. So much so, that season became forever known as “The Year of the Pitcher.” In fact, pitchers appeared to have such an “upper” hand that MLB went into the 1969 season with a lower mound (10 inches) and a smaller strike zone. Consider, in 1968:

- The MLB earned run average was 2.98.
- Six qualifying pitchers put up ERAs under 2.00.
- Bob Gibson’s 1.12 ERA was (and still is) the fourth-lowest in MLB history (and was the lowest since 1914).
- Only six qualifying hitters hit .300 or better.
- Carl Yastrzemski won the AL batting title with a .301 average, and a .274 average was good enough for the AL top ten.
- Denny McLain won 31 games, becoming the first 30-game winner since 1934 (Dizzy Dean).
- Pitchers Denny McLain (Tigers) and Bob Gibson (Cardinals) won the AL and NL Cy Young **and** MVP awards, respectively.

Yet, somehow – in the midst of all this pitching dominance – the Washington Senators’ big (6’8” – 260-lb.) OF/1B Frank Howard put together one of the most explosive offensive weeks in MLB history. From Sunday May 12 through Saturday May 18, in just 24 plate appearances (in six games), Howard banged out thirteen hits – **including ten home runs** and one double – and drew one walk (for a .542 average). He also scored ten times and drove in 17 tallies. *Side note: Surprisingly, the Senators went 3-3 over Howard’s streak.* Howard’s ten home runs remain MLB’s record for home runs in a week.

Howard’s game lines during the streak looked like this:

- May 12 ... two-for-four, two runs scored, two RBI, two home runs.
- May 14 ... three-for-four, two runs scored, three RBI, two home runs.
- May 15 ... two-for-four, one run scored, two RBI, one double, one home run.
- May 16 two-for-four, two runs scored, four RBI, two home runs.
- May 17 ... one-for-four, one run scored, two RBI, one home run.
- May 18 ... three-for-five, two runs scored, four RBI, two home runs.

Howard picked on some pretty good hurlers during his streak. Three of the long balls came off the Tigers’ **Mickey Lolich**, who went 17-9, 3.19 on the season and won three games in the 1968 World Series. Another pair of the record-setting round trippers came off “**Sudden**” **Sam McDowell**, who – while he only went 15-14 that season – put up a 1.81 earned run average and led the AL with 283 strikeouts. Howard also showed he could “hit ‘em anywhere.” Only two of the ten long balls came at home – and his streak also included home runs in Boston, Cleveland and Detroit.

Howard came into the streak with a .300 average on the season (which he raised to .347 during the six games). Notably, he didn't "come in hot," he had just three hits (.130 average) over his previous six games.

May 12-18, 1968

6 games

24 at bats

13 hits

1 2B

10 HR

17 RBI

.542 average

1 BB

4 K

All-Around Athlete

Frank Howard was All American in both baseball and basketball for Ohio State University – and still holds the Ohio State record for rebounds in a game at 32.

Howard was signed out of Ohio State University by the Dodgers. The 21-year-old began his professional career in 1958 – with the Class B Green Bay Blue Jays, where he hit .333, with 37 home runs and 119 RBI in 129 games, was named the Three-I League MVP and began building his reputation for hitting the ball hard and far. (Today's exit-velocity fans would have loved him.) That performance earned him a September call up to the Dodgers, where he hit .241, with one long ball in eight games.

His early career did feature a few "ups and downs."

In 1959, Howard began his season with the Double-A Victoria Rosebuds (Texas League), where he raked at a .371-27-79 pace over 63 games – earning a mid-June call up to Los Angeles. That stay lasted only about a week, during which Howard went 2-for-19 (.105). He was sent down to Triple-A Spokane, where he continued to dominate minor-league pitching, with a .319-16-47 line in 76 games. That earned him another call up and he went one-for-two (with a home run) in two September pinch-hitting appearances.

Howard again started the season at Spokane in 1960, hitting .371-4-24 in 26 games and earning a May call up. For LA, he hit .268-23-77 in 117 games, earning **National League Rookie of the Year** honors. (*For those who like to know such things, the Phillies' Poncho Herrera finished second in the ROY balloting and Howard's teammate Tommy Davis finished fifth.*)

That One's Outta Here

In the fourth game of the 1963 World Series, Frank Howard became the first player to hit a home run into Dodger Stadium's loge level (upper deck) in left field – a feat that wouldn't be matched for four decades.

Howard stayed with the Dodgers through the 1964 season, showing solid, but not spectacular power (.271-98-297 in four seasons ... 1961-64). His best campaign for LA came in 1962, when he hit .296, with 31 home runs and 119 RBI (going .297-20-71 in 76 games after the All Star break). In December of 1964, he was sent to the Washington Senators as part of a seven-player trade.

It was in Washington that Howard seemed to refine his uppercut swing and his bating eye (he often credited Gil Hodges, Jim Lemon and Ted Williams for the tutelage) and finally reach his “big man” potential. The 1967-1971 seasons (ages 30-34) were clearly Howard's best in the majors. In that five-season span, he made four All Star teams and hit .278, with 198 home runs and 515 RBI. He topped 40 home runs in three straight seasons (1968-70) and also topped 100-RBI in each of those campaigns. Howard led the AL in long balls in 1968 and 1970, as well as in RBI in 1970.

In Washington, “Hondo” Howard became known as “The Washington Monument” and the “Capitol Punisher” – one of the game's most powerful hitters and a true second-deck threat. He also continued his reputation as one of the game's most popular, humble, gracious and accommodating stars.

Howard ultimately played in 16 MLB seasons (1958-73 ... Dodgers, Senators, Rangers, Tigers). He put up a .273-382-1,119 stat line. Howard hit 30 or more home runs in five seasons and drove in 100+ runs in four. The four-time All Star also led his league in total bases twice, slugging percentage once, walks once, intentional walks twice and, as noted earlier, home runs twice and RBI once.

No one pitcher took more punishment from Howard than the Orioles' three-time All Star **Dave McNally**. In 35 games over nine seasons, Howard hit .336 against McNally with 13 home runs and 24 RBI (his most HR and RBI versus any MLB pitcher). Still, he seemed to have an even greater affinity for the offerings of **Bob Hendley** (Brewers/Giants). In just 16 games against Hendley, Howard hit eight home runs and drove in 16 tallies (with a .366 average).

Sam McDowell seemed most prone to pitch around the big guy. In 28 games (95 plate appearances), McDowell walked Howard 25 times (26.3 percent of those plate appearances). That figure includes nine intentional passes – the most any pitcher awarded to Howard. (The 25 total walks were also Howard's high against any pitcher.)

Howard's lowest batting average (minimum 25 at bats) versus any pitcher came against the Orioles' Tom Phoebus at .083 (3-for-36, although two of the three were home runs). Notably, Jim Maloney, Reds and Angels, held Howard to a .118 average over 12 games and fanned him in 50 percent of the times he faced him (17 whiffs in 34 plate appearances).

MORE ODD & FUNNY BASEBALL STORIES

Yogi Berra was behind the plate when Don Larsen threw his perfect game in the 1956 World Series, and he caught two no-hitters by Allie Reynolds in 1951. Then there was the game where Whitey Ford was pitching against the White Sox after a night on the town with Mickey Mantle and Billy Martin: first pitch, a single to Nellie Fox; second pitch, a single to Luis Aparicio; third pitch, he hits Minnie Minoso; fourth pitch, a grand slam to Ted Kluszewski! Out to the mound comes manager Casey Stengel and he asks Yogi, "What kind of stuff has Whitey got?" Yogi replies, "How the hell do I know? I haven't caught one yet!"

Notorious gangster John Dillinger once played professional baseball, although he never made it to the majors. The young Johnny Dillinger was a star shortstop so quick he was nicknamed "Jackrabbit."

Lou Brock broke Sliding Billy Hamilton's record for career stolen bases with his 938th and last steal, at age 40. Hamilton's plaque at the Baseball Hall of Fame credits him with 937 steals, although the exact number remains in dispute. Hamilton claimed that steals had been stolen from him, writing in a 1937 letter to *Sporting News*: "I was and will be the greatest base stealer of all time. I stole over 100 bases on many years and if they ever re-count the record I will get my just reward." Hamilton is baseball's invisible immortal. He holds the record for steals in a game, with seven. He holds the record for runs in a season with an otherworldly 198, in only 132 games. He set another record by scoring in 24 consecutive games. He hit .344 for his career and had the fourth highest on-base percentage of all time, which coupled with his speed was lethal. He retired with the record for career walks and still holds the record for runs per game (1.06). He was a sprinter known for his daring leads and spectacular head-first and "fadeaway" slides. "I never saw a runner get a lead off first base like Billy," said Jack Carney. Sam Thompson, who played with both, claimed that Hamilton was "more daring and reckless" than Ty Cobb.

Rickey Henderson missed three games due to frostbite, **in August**--He fell asleep on an ice pack.

Gaylord Perry was a notoriously weak hitter. For seven major league seasons and over 300 plate appearances, he failed to hit a single dinger. San Francisco Giants manager Alvin Dark joked with reporters, saying: "They'll put a man on the moon before Gaylord Perry hits a home run!" Then on July 20, 1969, a matter of minutes after Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon, Gaylord Perry hit his first major league home run.

On July 27, 1930 Reds pitcher Ken Ash was brought into a game against the Cubs with two on and no outs. He delivered one pitch which resulted in a triple play. Ash was pinch-hit for in the

bottom of the inning, and the Reds staged a rally to win the game 6-5. Thus Ash entered the history books as the only man to win a MLB game with a single pitch.

The spitball was outlawed in 1920, but it was "grandfathered" in for known spitballers who were active at the time. Who threw baseball's last legal spitball? Burleigh Grimes (slippery elm) on September 10, 1934. Ol' Stubblebeard, as Grimes was called, won 270 games and was pretty fair hitter (for a pitcher) with a career .248 average and 168 RBI.

Steve Carlton is the undisputed King of the Balkers, with 90, which is double that of the second-place finisher, Bob Welch.

In the 1934 World Series, the St. Louis Cardinals defeated the Detroit Tigers. Jerome "Dizzy" Dean and his kid brother Paul "Daffy" Dean won two games each, accounting for all four Cardinal wins.

In 1905 doctors wanted to amputate Tris Speaker's arm because it had been injured so badly in a football game. Speaker refused, worked out like a madman, then went on to set a still-standing MLB record for outfield assists with 449.

A trio of brothers made history on September 15, 1963 by playing together in the outfield for the San Francisco Giants. They were Felipe, Jesus and Matty Alou. (Felipe went on to manage the Montreal Expos and the San Francisco Giants).

In 1975 and 1976 Johnny Bench stole 24 bases and was thrown out only twice.

In 1902 when William "Dummy" Hoy batted against pitcher Luther "Dummy" Taylor, it marking the first time in MLB history that two deaf players faced each other.

Carlos May made sure fans didn't forget his birthday, by wearing "May 17" on his uniform.

Effa Louise Manley (1897–1981) is the first and only woman inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. She was the co-owner and an executive of a Negro League franchise, the Newark Eagles.

There has been a player since Ted Williams to hit .400, after all. Wade Boggs had a stretch of 162 games from 6/9/1985 to 6/6/1986 where he batted .401. He had 257 hits in 641 at-bats with 12 HR, 92 RBI, 125 runs scored and 109 walks. He had a .489 OBP and slugged .541.

Brooks Koepka won four major golf tournaments in the blink of an eye, but says his true love is baseball. He told *Golf Digest*: "If I could do it over again, I'd play baseball—100 percent, no doubt." And baseball is in his genes. He's the nephew of Dick Groat, an NL MVP and eight-time all-star shortstop for the Pittsburgh Pirates. Groat is the only athlete to be elected to both the college baseball and basketball halls of fame. He was a two-time All-American at Duke in both sports. In 1952 he was the UPI and Helms national basketball player of the year, after averaging 25.2 points per game. Groat was the third overall pick in the 1952 NBA draft and played one NBA season, averaging 11.9 points per game, before deciding to concentrate on baseball. He

never played a game in the minors, and finished third in the 1952 NL rookie of the year voting with a .284 batting average.

Dubious records:

Caleb Joseph set a major league record for futility, by going 132 at-bats without an RBI in 2016. Tony Mullane had the most wild pitches in MLB history, with 343. But Mullane has a rival in the wildness category, since Gus Wehing holds the record for the most hit batters, with 277.

Nolan Ryan was either one of the wildest pitchers, or the most generous, since he served up a record 2,795 walks.

Jamie Moyer was generous in an even more charitable way, serving a record 522 home runs.

Ron Hunt holds the modern era record for being hit by a pitch, with 50 in 1971.

Hunt led the NF in HBPs for seven years in a row, from 1968-1974.

Hughie Jennings holds the all-time record with 51 HBPs in 1896.

Craig Biggio holds the career record for HBPs with 285.

CELEBRATING GREAT PERFORMANCES

Hank Aaron hit 245 HRs from his age 35 season on. Barry Bonds only had more-317.

Larry Walker

3x batting titles

2160 hits

.313 average

383 HRs

230 stolen bases at 75% success rate

1997 30-30 club with 409 total bases, most since Musial 429 in 1948.

That 1997 season he hit 49 HRs, batted .366.

Born in Vancouver, played little league hockey with future bruin Cam Neely.

Roberto Clemente batted .360 in 60 plate appearances in two (winning) World Series.

Reggie Jackson 5 championships, 116 World Series plate appearances batted .357 with 10 HRs.

Harry Heilmann, HOF outfielder with Tigers and Reds won four batting titles, edging

Ty Cobb in 1921 .394 to .389

Babe Ruth in 1923 .403 to .393, Tris speaker in 1925 .393 to .389 and Al Simmons in 1927 .398 to .392. 2,660 career hits with .342 lifetime average.

Sam Crawford of the turn of the century Reds and Tigers hit 309 triples and 51 inside the park HRs.

Sammy Sosa. Became 5th player to reach 600 HRs. (now 9th at 602, closest active player is Miguel Cabrera, 28th place with 502). Sosa topped 61 homers 3 times. Homered more times over 5 years and 10 years than any other hitter ever.

Gary Sheffield. 509 HRs, 2689 hits, .292 average, 9x all-star, 253 stolen bases.

ONLY 4 PLAYERS WITH 6,000 TOTAL BASES

Aaron 6856

Musial 6134

Mays 6080

Pujols 6042

ANOTHER EXCLUSIVE CLUB--200 HITS AND 100 WALKS IN A SEASON

Gehrig	7 times
Boggs	4
Ruth	3
Helton	2
Musial	2
Cobb	1
Foxx	1
Bernie Williams	1
Greenberg	1
Hack Wilson	1
Olerud	1
Woody English	1

FUN HALL OF FAME STATS CHAPTER 3

Randy Johnson's 13.4 K/9 in 2001 remains the single-season record for a qualified pitcher. The only other qualified starter ever to reach 13.0 K/9 was Pedro Martínez with 13.2 K/9 in 1999.

Walter Johnson 417 wins. 531 complete games. 110 shutouts. 36 wins in 1913 with a 1.14 ERA. 3509 strikeouts. And he hit 24 home runs. The 'Big Train' was a good hitter. Walter Johnson hit more homers than he allowed in four seasons (1910, 1915, 1916, 1919). In four other seasons he hit as many homers as opposing batters (1908, 1909, 1912, 1914). While his batting average, slugging percentage and OPS fall short of Smoky Joe, and of course Ruth, the Big Train leads full-time modern era pitchers in hits (547), total bases (795), extra base hits (159), and runs (234). And he had considerable power with 94 doubles, a rather amazing 41 triples, 24 homers, 255 RBI and 12.8 oWAR.

Cy Young 511 wins. 400+ innings pitched first 6 seasons. 7,356 career innings pitched. 815 career starts. 479 complete games. Faced 29,565 batters.

Lefty Grove led the AL in strikeouts each of his first 7 seasons. 300 wins against 141 losses and he saved 54 games.

Steve Carlton in 1972: 27-10, 1.97 ERA, 310 strikeouts with the 57-97 Phillies.

Think it was a different game? Pud Galvin, 365 game winner before 1900. He threw 600 innings one season, 593 another plus six more seasons over 400 innings.

Nolan Ryan allowed 6.6 hits per 9 innings across a 5386 innings career. 383 of his 5714 strikeouts came in 1973. To surpass Ryan's 5,714 career strikeouts, a pitcher would have to average 286 a year for 20 years.

Don Drysdale threw 48% more innings than Sandy Koufax. Koufax was great but not for long. He had just five seasons with 200 innings pitched.

Rollie Fingers saved 341 games. In 201 of his saves he pitched more than one inning.

JANUARY 25 ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE 2022 CLASS. WE CONTINUE WITH HALL OF FAME DISCUSSIONS. WHO WOULD YOU PUT ON YOUR BALLOT?

KEN ROSENTHAL: WHY DOES DAVID ORTIZ HAVE SO MUCH MORE SUPPORT THAN SAMMY SOSA? EXPLORING YET ANOTHER HALL OF FAME CONTRADICTION.

For the latest example of the inconsistencies of Hall of Fame voting, we bring you the question of Sammy Sosa vs. [David Ortiz](#).

This is Sosa's 10th and final year of eligibility on the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) ballot. It is Ortiz's first. Their career arcs are similar. Their statistics are Cooperstown-worthy. Their confirmed links to performance-enhancing drugs amount to one reported positive test for each, in what was supposed to be anonymous survey testing in 2003. A test that included at least 10 false positives and did not fully distinguish between certain legal and banned substances, according to [commissioner Rob Manfred](#).

Yet, while Sosa has yet to receive more than 17 percent of the vote, Ortiz figures to eventually reach the 75 percent necessary for induction, perhaps even this year. I voted for Ortiz but still do not vote for Sosa, for reasons that will be explained below. Differences between the two exist, in their eras, their performances, the rules in which they played under. But the wide disparity in their expected vote totals is difficult to justify.

Perception is part of this: Ortiz is the beloved "Big Papi," while [many regard Sosa](#), fairly or not, as a fraud, a symbol of the Steroid Era. Ortiz also is the stronger candidate. So it's possible to choose him and not Sosa without invoking the twisted logic that in recent years has made voting for the Hall, an honor writers earn only after 10 years of BBWAA membership, an exercise in increasing futility. The troubling part for me is that I believe allegations of Ortiz's steroid use are too flimsy for me to withhold my vote, yet I applied a different standard to Sosa even though the known evidence against him is the same.

A year ago, I was so exasperated by my own contradictions and choices of so many candidates of questionable character, [I wrote](#) that I was considering no longer voting. Well, I decided to keep at it, accepting that virtually all ballots will include inconsistencies, creating openings for criticism. The process is imperfect. But after 35 years as a baseball writer, I feel I would abandon a certain responsibility if I walked away.

I'm voting for the maximum 10 players, including nine holdovers from my previous ballot — Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Todd Helton, Andruw Jones, Jeff Kent, Scott Rolen, Curt Schilling, Gary Sheffield and Billy Wagner. My only new selection is Ortiz, whom I'm substituting for Omar Vizquel. I was particularly haunted about voting for Vizquel last year just weeks after [reporting with Katie Strang](#) about allegations of domestic abuse against him. Vizquel since has been [sued for sexual harassment](#) by a former minor-league bat boy.

My general philosophy is to pick the best players, excluding character and even performance-enhancing drugs from the equation except when it comes to those confirmed to have violated baseball's Joint Drug Agreement, which took full effect, with penalties, starting in 2004. Much as some of us might wish otherwise, the Hall is not the Hall of Good Guys, or the Hall of Only Clean Players.

As I detailed last year, my ballot includes a litany of dubious individuals, including two others who faced allegations of domestic abuse, Bonds and Jones. I'm dropping Vizquel, who fell from 52.6 percent in 2020 to 49.1 percent in '21, while he remains the subject of active litigation as well as an investigation by [Major League Baseball](#). I still believe Vizquel's on-field performance warrants induction. But he has five more years on the ballot, and I have no problem hitting pause on his candidacy when I consider 10 others deserving. Frankly, this is the course I should have taken all along.

[Alex Rodriguez](#), who like Ortiz is making his first appearance on the ballot, is another player I excluded, but I did not find that decision to be particularly difficult (full disclosure: I work with both Rodriguez and Ortiz at Fox Sports). There is a difference between players who performed in an era when the league, players' union and media were not vigilant on the subject of PEDs, and those who were brazen enough to engage in such conduct after the sport took firm action in an attempt to crack down on the problem. Rodriguez fell into both the "before" and "after" categories. He acknowledged using PEDs from 2001 to '03, then was suspended by MLB for violating not only the sport's JDA but also its Collective Bargaining Agreement with his involvement in the Biogenesis scandal. An arbitrator reduced his initial 211-game suspension for those violations to 162, which to that point was the longest of the steroid-testing era.

Inside and outside the sport, Ortiz has been the subject of speculation about PED use, but in contrast with Rodriguez, there is zero evidence he engaged in doping, outside of the 2003 survey test Manfred cited as inconclusive. Of course, no one knows the extent to which any hitter or pitcher used PEDs, making it impossible to draw conclusions about the impact on any one player's career. But to me, the comparison between Ortiz and Sosa is more compelling than the one between him and Rodriguez, a proven user.

The results of the 2003 survey testing, in which at least 5 percent of the players tested positive, [triggered testing](#) with penalties in '04. The players had agreed to the survey testing after being promised the results would remain confidential. But the union failed to destroy the results promptly, and government agents seized records and samples as part of the BALCO investigation. In 2009, media leaks revealed that in [the survey round](#), Ortiz, Sosa, Rodriguez and Manny Ramírez all had tested positive.

One difference between Ortiz and Sosa is that the majority of Ortiz's career took place during the testing era, while the majority of Sosa's did not. Though testing for PEDs hardly is foolproof, Ortiz played 13 seasons after the program went into effect without testing positive. Sosa, on the other hand, hit 35 homers in '04, the first year of testing with penalties, but played only two seasons after that. Unlike Ortiz, he cannot claim that, over a long period of time, he played by the rules.

Neither player, it is worth recalling, was an immediate star. [Sosa reached the majors](#) at 20 and was traded twice before he hit 33 homers in 1993, his age 24 season. Ortiz was released by the [Twins](#) and [produced his first](#) 30-homer season in 2003, his age 27 campaign.

How each developed into a fearsome slugger might be a matter of debate, but between them they hit 1,150 home runs — 609 by Sosa, 541 by Ortiz. Homers, however, are perhaps Sosa's only edge in a statistical comparison of their offensive profiles. Ortiz's OPS was 41 percent above league-average when adjusted for league and park factors, while Sosa was 28 percent above. Ortiz also is significantly ahead in walk rate, strikeout rate and win probability added, and his postseason resume included a .947 OPS and MVP honors in the 2004 ALCS and 2013 World Series, one of his three championships with the [Red Sox](#)

True, 88 percent of Ortiz's career plate appearances came as a DH, but Sosa's defense went from above-average to below once he emerged as an offensive force, all but negating any advantage. Which is not to say Sosa's candidacy is without merit. His 292 homers from 1998 to 2002 — an average of 58.4 per season — is a major-league record over a five-year span. Using the [JAWS metric](#) originated by FanGraphs' Jay Jaffe, he would rank in the middle of the pack among Hall of Fame right fielders. Like Ortiz, Sosa was among the game's most popular stars during the era in which he competed, elevating the sport.

Why, then, does my ballot include Ortiz and not Sosa? Why didn't I vote for Sosa from the start?

My answers are perhaps too subjective. Even though I am more forgiving of pre-2004 use, I previously viewed Sosa as more a creation of PEDs than others, similar to Mark McGwire. Sosa's rival in the 1998 home-run race [admitted to using PEDs](#) three years after becoming eligible for the Hall and effectively was punished for it, never receiving more than 23.7 percent of the vote before his 10 years expired. My beliefs about Sosa and McGwire might very well have been correct. But if I'm ignoring Ortiz's positive result in the 2003 survey test, I should have done the same with Sosa. And at that point, I might have looked at him differently.

My rationale for excluding Sosa one last time is partly strategic. I don't see him getting enough votes in his final year to even approach 75 percent, so I prefer my votes to go to candidates who stand more of a chance. I could substitute Sosa for say, Helton, who has six years of eligibility remaining, the most of the other players I selected. But at this point, such a maneuver would amount to a hollow gesture, too little, too late.

I strongly object to two of the Hall's rules restricting voters' flexibility — the one limiting us to 10 candidates, which has been in place since the Hall's inception, and the one that reduced the number of years a player can spend on a ballot from 15 to 10, which [took effect in 2015](#), seemingly with the intent of squeezing out players from the Steroid Era as quickly as possible. But I cannot blame the Hall for my decision to exclude Sosa or any other player.

I've come to understand that my reasoning occasionally will be flawed, that producing a consistent ballot is almost impossible. I will continue trying to make informed, thoughtful decisions. But Sosa vs. Ortiz is the kind of comparison that gnaws at me, knowing there is not necessarily a right answer.

ONE VOTER'S POINT OF VIEW (FROM MLBTRADERUMOURS.COM)

Marc Narducci spent 37 years covering all sports for The Philadelphia Inquirer before recently retiring in July. He covered everything from high school sports to the Phillies winning the World Series and the Eagles winning the Super Bowl. A lifelong Southern NJ resident, he remains a freelance writer and broadcaster. Marc reached out to see if MLB Trade Rumors would be interested in publishing his Hall of Fame ballot. I am happy to do it and hope it can be an interesting topic of debate for our readers. Here's Marc...

Voting for the Baseball Hall of Fame is an honor, but it's difficult to see any sport where the task is more challenging.

That's because of the steroid era.

One thing that should be stated off the bat is that there is no right or wrong answer when filling out the ballot in the opinion of this reporter.

As a former The Philadelphia Inquirer

writer for 37 years, the decision of other voters won't be questioned.

We can all agree to disagree and there will be many disagreements, especially when seeing my ballot.

The steroid era has made things so difficult. Do you vote for players associated with steroids?

One school of thought says the best players should go in regardless and the Hall of Fame would be empty without some of the great stars of the game such as [Barry Bonds](#) and [Roger Clemens](#).

Others, and this is the camp will you find me, look at it the opposite way.

The steroid era did permanent damage to the sport. It also hurt the players who followed the rules and were thus competing at a severe disadvantage. Not only that, it hurt former players such as [Hank Aaron](#), who was the all-time home run king and was passed by Bonds.

Due to the damage of the steroid era, Bonds, Clemens, [Manny Ramirez](#), [Alex Rodriguez](#), [Sammy Sosa](#) and [Gary Sheffield](#) aren't on my ballot.

Ramirez and Rodriguez tested positive for PEDs. The others didn't [but Sheffield admitted using a steroid cream](#). Sosa, Bonds and Clemens maintain their innocence.

Sosa [was caught with a corked bat](#), which even without the suspicion of steroids, would be a stain against his candidacy.

Two former federal authorities who were central to the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative (BALCO) steroids trafficking case, [say there is no doubt](#) that Bonds and Clemens used performance enhancing drugs during their careers.

Again, I know that people feel that writers are being sanctimonious in keeping players out whose on-field exploits deserve induction, but everybody has to vote the way he or she thinks is best.

So why is [David Ortiz](#) on this writer's ballot?

We will get to that in a bit.

Here are the players that I voted for in alphabetical order on my ballot in my second year as a voter. One other thing – we know that stats such as RBI and pitcher's wins are taboo in the sabermetric world, but we have included them for people who still care about those statistics.

[Todd Helton](#)

Let's get this out of the way first – there are those who won't vote for Helton due to the fact that he played his career at Coors Field. No doubt it helped him, but he was more than solid on the road. Plus, the toll on a hitter having to go from playing in Colorado to another city isn't easy.

In addition, a lot of players have competed at Coors and didn't come close to the numbers that Helton posted. (All stats used are courtesy of Baseball-Reference.com and Fangraphs.com).

Here is his career slash line at Coors: .345/.441/.607. This was Helton on the road: .287/.386/.469.

Having an .855 road OPS isn't too shabby.

Let's look at two stats that take into account the ballpark – OPS+ and WRC+. Helton's career OPS+ was 133 and his career WRC+ was 132, which means he was 33 percent and 32 percent above league average in those categories

Helton is off the charts with his career offensive statistics.

He had a career .316/.414/.539 slash line with 369 home runs and 1406 RBI.

Helton was a five-time All-Star, a three-time Gold Glove winner and was Top 10 in the MVP voting three times.

[His career OPS of .953](#) is 22nd on the all-time list. He also had more career walks (1,335) than strikeouts (1,175). That is almost unheard of in these free-swinging days.

During a 10-year stretch from 1998-2007, he hit .332/.432/.585 with 298 home runs and OPS+ of 144. His career B-WAR is 61.8, which is 17th among first baseman. Of those 17, 11 are in the Hall of Fame.

A former college quarterback and teammate of Peyton Manning at the University of Tennessee, Helton was the No. 8 overall pick of the Rockies in the 1995 draft and would play his entire 17-year career with the Rockies. This is his fourth year on the ballot and he received 44.9% of the vote last year.

[Jeff Kent](#)

Kent has just two years to go on the ballot and last year he earned just 32.4 percent of the vote. He had a special skill that was way above the second basemen in the Hall of Fame – the ability to hit home runs. Kent has the most home runs of any second baseman in history, 377. He hit 351 of them while playing second base.

Even if one takes the 351 total, that is 50 more than the closest Hall of Fame second baseman, [Rogers Hornsby](#), who hit 301.

Hornsby (.577) is the only Hall of Fame second baseman with a higher slugging percentage than Kent's .500.

Only four Hall of Fame second basemen have a higher career OPS than Kent (.855). His 1.518 RBI are third among all second basemen.

Kent was a five-time All-Star, the 2000 MVP who hit for average (.290) and power. He also had a career 123 WRC+.

His career B-WAR was just 55.5, but that was mainly because he was considered a below average fielder.

Still, his offense was elite, surely enough for HOF induction.

David Ortiz

In 2009, the New York Times reported that Ortiz was among the list of players who failed a 2003 anonymous drug test. [Commissioner Rob Manfred says](#) there were 10 false positives in the survey testing and it is possible that Ortiz was one of them.

He also said Ortiz never failed a drug test although we cited examples of the above mentioned players who didn't either. That said, I feel less certain about Ortiz and only he knows the truth.

So giving him the benefit of the doubt, he's a sure-fire Hall of Fame player even though he spent the majority of his career as a DH. For instance, 485 of his 541 career home runs came as

a DH. Ortiz hit for average (.286) and power. Besides the 541 home runs, he had a .931 career OPS and career OPS+ of 141. He is also 22nd on the career RBI list with 1,768.

In the postseason he helped the Boston Red Sox win three World Series titles, and hit .289 with 17 home runs and a .947 OPS in 385 plate appearances.

[Scott Rolen](#)

[There are 17 third basemen in the Hall of Fame](#), fewest of any position. Only nine third basemen have a higher B-WAR than Rolen (70.1), eight of whom are in the HOF and the other, [Adrian Beltre](#), is a sure-fire candidate. (This also includes [Paul Molitor](#) as a third baseman, even though just 3,623 of his 1,267 plate appearances came at third base. It does not include Alex Rodriguez, who had a career B-War of 117.5, but only 42.7% of his plate appearances came as a third baseman).

Rolen was a seven-time All-Star and eight time Gold Glove winner. His defense was every bit as strong as his offense. Rolen's defensive B-WAR (21.2) is behind just one Hall of Famer – [Brooks Robinson](#), who is No. 1 among third basemen (39.1). (Beltre, at 27.1 is a future Hall of Famer ahead of Rolen).

Only eight HOF third basemen have a higher OPS (.855).

Rolen finished with a .281 average, 316 home runs and 1,287 RBI and was NL Rookie of the Year in 1997 with the Phillies. His career WRC+ was 122.

Rolen was a World Series champion with the 2006 St. Louis Cardinals, batting .421 with a 1.213 OPS in the five-game win over the Detroit Tigers.

He was a major threat on offense and defense, both carrying equal weight. This is his fifth year on the ballot and he is trending upward after earning 52.9% of the vote last year.

[Curt Schilling](#)

Schilling may be the first player to talk his way out of the Hall of Fame. His public comments and tweets have been well-documented and he will likely pay for them. This is his 10th and final season on the ballot. Last year he was close to the 75% total with 71.1%. Normally that would mean he would make it this year, but it would be a surprise if he gets in. He even tried to get off the Hall of Fame ballot, saying he doesn't want to get voted in by the members of the Baseball Writers Association of America. That is not exactly a convincing way to sway voters. The Hall of Fame [denied his request](#).

That said, what he did on the field, despite all his verbal gaffes, make him a Hall of Fame pitcher and he got my vote.

Just a few numbers..

Everybody talks about his 11-2 postseason record in 19 starts, but his WHIP was 0.968 and his strike-to-walk ratio was 4.80.

He was a late bloomer and still went 216-142 with a career a 3.46 ERA and 3,116 strikeouts.

Schilling won three World Series titles, two with Boston and one with the Arizona Diamondbacks and went to another World Series with the Philadelphia Phillies, where he was the 1993 NLCS MVP. He was runner-up for the [Cy Young](#) Award three times and fourth another.

Schilling was among the best big-game pitchers of his era and the only thing bigger was his mouth, which will likely keep him out of Cooperstown.

[Billy Wagner](#)

There are eight relief pitchers in the HOF. Only [Mariano Rivera](#) has a better ERA and ERA+ than Billy Wagner. A seven-time All-Star, Wagner's career ERA was 2.31 and his adjusted ERA was 187. His 11.9 strikeouts per nine innings is best in MLB history (minimum of 750 innings pitched). He also has a career 0.998 WHIP.

Wagner had 422 saves in 491 opportunities (85.9 percent). Only two Hall of Fame relievers have a higher save percentage. Mariano Rivera (89.1%) and [Trevor Hoffman](#) (88.8%). Wagner also has a higher strikeout ratio (33.2%) than any reliever in the HOF. The closest is Hoffman (25.8%).

Now the negative. Wagner pitched only 903 innings, fewest of the Hall of Fame pitchers. Wagner also didn't have a stellar postseason record, although it included just 11 2/3 innings over 14 appearances.

We can see why some may keep Wagner out due to the fact that all eight relievers in the Hall of Fame each exceeded 1,000 innings. Yet he has so many top achievements among the best relievers in the game's history that he belongs with them in Cooperstown.

This is his seventh year on the ballot and he received 46.4% of the vote last year.

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

12.12.2021

Good morning baseball fans. As the billionaires continue to argue with millionaires over the collective bargaining agreement we bring you Hall of Fame, Labor and other fun stuff. Freshen your coffee and enjoy.

I source something every week from The Athletic and this week it was several items. A subscription makes a great holiday gift (even to yourself). If you'd like a free trial to check it out, please let me know and I'll hook you up.

Every year I try to re-watch Ken Burns awesome series Baseball. In the final chapter Marvin Miller said something that really struck me—the collusion of the owners and baseball executives in 1985-88 was a bigger scandal than the 1919 Black Sox. 26 teams working in concert trying to break free agency. Jack Morris, coming off a season as the best pitcher in baseball received zero offers. 8 players impact on a World Series versus 26 teams colluding even at the expense of improving their teams in the standings. Worth thinking about.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

1918-1962 Phillies had just six seasons over .500

Dick Allen rookie of the year season. .318. 201 hits, 13 triples, 29 HRs. Played all 162 games. The Phillies collapse over their last ten games was not his fault--Allen hit .351.

The American League was formed in 1901 with eight teams. Except for the first two years when New York did not have an AL team, the eight original franchises have been steady. Though a few of them have moved to new cities, the original eight are still the core of the American League.

Since 1901 the Yankees (most wins in the AL at 10,503) have won almost 1,700 more games than the Baltimore Orioles/St. Louis Browns (fewest wins in the AL with 8,845). The rankings

Yankees	10,503
Indians	9592
Tigers	9446
White Sox	9411
Red Sox	9321
Phi/KC/Oak A's	9150
Wash Senators/Minn Twins	8866
St. Louis Browns/Balt Orioles	8845

There's nothing quite like the mascots of Japanese baseball teams. Here is Nazo No Sakana, the mascot of the Chiba Lotte Marines team, doing his famous routine of [vomiting out his own skeleton](#).

Roberto Clemente had 27 outfield assists in 1961, 22 in 1958.

I knew Larry Doby was the first black player in the American League but I didn't realize how early.. Signed by the great Bill Veeck, Hall of Famer Doby integrated the AL just 11 weeks after Jackie Robinson debuted with the Dodgers.

3,000 HITS CLUB

How many of the 32 hitters with 3,000 or more career hits can you name? Take a minute and make your list—answer is after the next two items.

GOLD GLOVES

Keith Hernandez and Omar Vizquel each had 11 gold gloves. Neither is in the Hall of Fame.

Most by position:

Pitcher: Gregg Maddux had 18 gold gloves. Active leader Zack Greinke 6.

Catcher: Ivan Rodriguez 13 (broke Johnny Bench's record of 10). Active leader Yadier Molina 9.

First base: Keith Hernandez 11. *Active: Paul Goldschmidt, Eric Hosmer and Anthony Rizzo (4)*

Second base: Roberto Alomar (10). *Active: DJ LeMahieu (3)*

Third base: Brooks Robinson (16). *Active: Nolan Arenado (9).*

Shortstop: Ozzie Smith (13). *Active: Brandon Crawford and Andrelton Simmons (4)*

Left field: Barry Bonds (8). *Active: Starling Marte and Tyler O'Neill (2).*

Center field: Willie Mays (12). *Active: Kevin Kiermaier (3).*

Right field: Roberto Clemente (12). *Active: Mookie Betts and Jason Heyward (5)*

BASEBALL FUNNIES

A subscriber sent a link to a bunch of amusing and strange baseball stories. Reminded me of Daniel Okrent's fun book Baseball Anecdotes which is still available on Amazon. I'll grab a handful for the next few weeks.

On August 17, 1957, future hall-of-fame centerfielder Richie Ashburn of the Philadelphia Phillies hit spectator Alice Roth with a foul ball, breaking her nose. As Roth was being carried off the field on a stretcher, Ashburn hit her with another foul ball, breaking a bone in her knee. The odds of a fan being hit by a baseball are 300,000 to one. The odds of the same fan being hit twice during the same at-bat, and breaking bones both times, are beyond astronomical.

Dick Stuart, first baseman for the Pittsburgh Pirates, led the league in errors a record seven years in a row, from 1958 through 1964. Stuart was renowned for his atrocious fielding and earned the nicknames "Dr. Strangeglove," "Stonefingers," and "The Man with the Iron Glove." His license plate was E3. His 29 errors at first base in 1963 remain the major-league record for the position. One night in Pittsburgh, 30,000 fans gave him a standing ovation for catching a hotdog wrapper on the fly.

Ted Williams fractured his collarbone in the first game of spring training in 1954 ... after having flown 39 combat missions without injury in the Korean War.

What potential hall-of-fame first baseman beat out Payton Manning for starting quarterback with the Tennessee Vols, before a knee injury that ended his football career? Todd Helton, who slashed .316/.414/.539/.953 for his major league career, had an absolutely crazy college bio. He not only started ahead of Manning at quarterback, but he was also the school's best hitter and pitcher, ever. Helton holds the UT records for career home runs and RBI, and he also holds the record for saves in a season, with 12 in 1995, when he had a microscopic .89 ERA. Helton still holds the NCAA Division I record for consecutive scoreless innings with 47.

Don Larsen's perfect game in the 1956 World Series is the most famous pitching performance in baseball history. But it wasn't a perfect day for Larsen, because his wife filed for divorce just before the game started!

Did you know that Babe Ruth once threw a perfect game? *Well, sorta.* During a 1917 game against the Washington Senators, Ruth was the starting pitcher for the Boston Red Sox. Ruth walked the first batter on four pitches, argued vehemently with home plate umpire Brick Owens, slugged him, and got ejected. Ruth's replacement, Ernie Shore, promptly picked off the runner on first base, then retired the next 26 batters, finishing baseball's wildest and most improbable "perfect game." But if the keen-eyed Ruth was correct that the first batter shouldn't have been awarded first base, it really was a perfect game!

Virgil Trucks had a miserable 1952 season, going 5-19. On the brighter side, two of his wins were no-hitters.

In his very first at-bat, future Hall of Fame knuckleballer Hoyt Wilhelm hit a home run. His career lasted 21 more years and 493 plate appearances, but he never hit another homer. Wilhelm is also unusual because he didn't debut as a rookie until he was 29 years old, but then played to age 49. He retired with 143 wins, 228 saves and a gaudy 2.52 ERA. Oh, and that one freakish homer to go with his career .088 batting average.

3,000 HITS CLUB ANSWERS

Rose-Cobb-Aaron-Musial-Speaker-Jeter-Wagner-Yaz-Molitor-Eddie Collins-Pujols-Mays-Eddie Murray-Nap Lajoie-Ripken Jr-Beltre-Brett-Paul Waner-Yount-Gwynn-ARod-Winfield-Ichiro Suzuki-Biggio-Henderson-Carew-Brock-Palmeiro-Cap Anson-Boggs-Kaline-Clemente. How many did you get?

100 EXTRA BASE HITS – AN EXCLUSIVE CLUB

Hit 50 HRs and 40 doubles and you come up short. It takes a great season to reach 100 extra base hits. Just 12 players have done it a combined 15 times. Only 3 players did it more than once.

Babe Ruth. 119 in 1921. (Ruth had 99 in 1920 and 1923, 95 in 1927)

Lou Gehrig 117 in 1927, 100 in 1930.

Chuck Klein 107 in 1930 and 103 in 1932.

Todd Helton 105 in 2001, 103 in 2000.

Barry Bonds 107 in 2001.

Albert Belle 103 in 1995.

Hank Greenberg 103 in 1937.

Stan Musial 103 in 1948.

Sammy Sosa 103 in 2001.

Rogers Hornsby 102 in 1922.

Jimmy Foxx 100 in 1932.

Luis Gonzalez 100 in 2001.

Looking at Ruth's amazing season in 1921--119 extra-base, 59 home-runs, 16 triples, and 44 doubles. 1921 was arguably the Sultan of Swat's best season, as the Great Bambino combined

those extra-base hits with a .378 batting average, a career-high 171 RBI, a career-high 17 stolen bases, and 145 walks versus only 81 strikeouts. He also went 2-0 on the mound that season just for good measure.

HALL OF FAME

The Early Baseball Era is considered only once every 10 years as part of the Hall's Era Committees cycle, which also includes the Golden Days Era (every five years), Modern Baseball Era (1970-87; twice every five years) and Today's Game Era (1988-present; twice every five years). So this will be the last chance at election for the Early Baseball Era candidates until the 2032 cycle.

DICK ALLEN'S NUMBER HAVEN'T CHANGED, BUT HOW WE VIEW THEM SHOULD—JAYSON STARK

I can still recall the sound of my phone ringing, back on a frosty January evening in 1997. On the other end of the line was my wonderful mom, the baseball lover. She wasn't just calling to say hi.

"How'd Dick Allen do?" she asked — a question that made me smile then and now, nearly 25 years later.

It was Dick Allen's final year on the baseball writers' Hall of Fame ballot, you see. And across the Philadelphia metropolitan area, where he'd spent so many memorable years with the [Phillies](#), that was a huge topic, even though everybody knew how this vote would turn out.

"He didn't make it," I told my mother.

"Jayson," she replied, "he didn't have the numbers."

He didn't have the numbers. I can still hear her delivering that pronouncement in my head. I'm not totally sure why. But heck, this was *my mom* casting judgment, so who could forget that?

My mother was no sabermetrician. She knew everything about Roger Angell; whereas Bill James — eh, not so much. But she knew enough to understand why Dick Allen collected a mere 16.7 percent of the votes cast in that election.

He didn't have the numbers.

Or did he?

Once again Sunday, the members of the Golden Days Era Committee decided he didn't — and got this all wrong. For the second election in a row, that committee's vote left Dick Allen exactly one vote short of Cooperstown. Five of the 16 committee members left him off their ballots, and that was one too many. Heartbreaking.

The committee held that election seven years after Dick Allen's last near-miss, 44 years after he played his final game, a quarter-century after his final appearance on the writers' ballot and, tragically, almost a year to the day after he died of cancer at [his home in Wampum, Pa.](#)

Leading up to that election, it saddened me to think of what this day could have meant to him, to his family and to the friends who worked for years to help make his Cooperstown moment happen. I reflected on all of that a year ago, on the day he died, [in a remembrance](#) of my first favorite baseball hero, as a kid growing up in Philadelphia. Instead, I'm almost grateful that Dick Allen didn't have to endure yet one more near-miss.

It will be five long years before his name comes up again at the next meeting of the Golden Days Era Committee. I hope that's enough time for the committee to digest how much the world has changed since the night my mom delivered an assessment the Hall of Fame voters clearly agreed with back then:

He didn't have the numbers.

[Numbers don't change — we do](#)

It starts there, doesn't it? Dick Allen's 351st and final home run came 16,272 days ago — a game-tying ninth-inning home run off Ron Guidry, on May 17, 1977. His 1,848th and final hit came just over a month later — an opposite-field single off a knuckleball king (Wilbur Wood) on June 19, 1977.

He would never play another game in the big leagues after that day. That means his numbers remain frozen in time — right where he left them more than four decades ago. But you know what hasn't remained frozen? Us.

Think of how differently we look at numbers now, versus 20 or 30 or 40 years ago. Think of how much better our sources of information are now versus then. Think of how those new sources of data and information have framed how we evaluate everybody and everything. So why do I believe, along with so many others, that Dick Allen has the numbers now even if he didn't then? That's why — or mostly why, at least.

Why he didn't have the numbers then

Back in the late, great 20th century, the magic Hall of Fame numbers didn't come with a "+" sign after them. They weren't measured in ratios or adjusted for leagues, ballparks or eras. But we could add, subtract and count. So mostly, Hall of Fame voters just counted.

And if it was merely a counting exercise, how could they have looked at Dick Allen as one of baseball's most dominating sluggers — when he hit just 351 career home runs? How could they have placed him alongside baseball's most accomplished hitters — when he was more than 1,100 hits short of the 3,000-Hit Club?

You know how many position players whose careers began in the expansion era had been elected to the Hall without getting 2,000 hits? That answer is zero.

And you know who the last hitter was to get elected by the writers whose AL/NL career hit *and* homer totals were both as low as Allen's (or lower)? That was Jackie Robinson — in 1962.

So how do we explain why there wasn't a single Hall of Fame election, in Allen's 14 years on the writers' ballot, in which he even got 100 votes — or 20 percent of the vote? That's how. Repeat after me:

He didn't have the numbers — well, not those kinds of numbers, anyway.

The numbers that matter now

I've heard this a zillion times in the last two years, since Harold Baines was elected by the Today's Game Era Committee in 2019: If Harold Baines is now a Hall of Famer, how can Dick Allen not be a Hall of Famer?

Here's my reaction: Wrong. It isn't Baines — a product of the counting numbers of yesteryear — who should have changed the perception of Dick Allen. It's actually Edgar Martinez.

Like Edgar, Allen gets no HOF bonus points for anything he ever did with a glove on his hand. And just as they did with Edgar, no voters are seeing Cooperstown through the prism of Dick Allen's old-fashioned counting numbers.

In Edgar's case, voters realized his greatness wasn't defined by his 309 homers or his 2,247 hits. But his 147 OPS+, his 147 weighted Runs Created Plus and his .933 OPS? They were almost unparalleled in his generation. So even though it took a while — until Martínez's final year on the ballot, in fact — we finally figured it out.

In Allen's case, the folks jumping on his bandwagon also look right past the numbers in his hit column and home run column. Those aren't the numbers that tell us what a historically special

force Dick Allen was in his time. It's those modern metrics — the same ones that propelled Martínez onto the Cooperstown podium in 2019. And what a story they tell.

Allen vs. his generation

It's the 11 seasons from 1964 through 1974 that should paint Dick Allen's Hall of Fame portrait. Did you know there were 17 Hall of Fame hitters who got at least 4,000 plate appearances during those same 11 seasons? It would be hard to argue that any of them were more feared or productive than Allen. And only iconic Hall of Famers are even in the debate.

OPS+

Dick Allen 165

Willie McCovey 161

Henry Aaron 159

Frank Robinson 159

OPS

Henry Aaron .941

Dick Allen .940

Willie McCovey .937

SLUGGING

Henry Aaron .561

Dick Allen .554

Willie McCovey .541

Willie Stargell .541

wRC+

Dick Allen 163

Willie McCovey 158

Frank Robinson 158

Henry Aaron 158

So how could five of those Golden Days Era Committee voters not have noticed that? For the same reasons, I suspect, that the writers voting in the 1980s and '90s didn't factor any of that into their votes: Not in their personal stats glossary.

In Allen's spin through the writers-ballot cycle, those numbers didn't even exist, other than slugging. So you can't exactly say the voters of the 1980s and '90s missed them. They were invisible. And I can testify from my own experience, serving on a previous version of one of these era committees, that there was next to no discussion of modern metrics.

So if a player's case has to be built around, say, wRC+, that can be a hard case to sell — at least in that group. Maybe in five years, that won't be as true, as these numbers grow more and more familiar to everyone who cares about baseball. But it isn't true yet. And that's a shame.

The 160 club

Chris Bodig is the force behind the invaluable Hall of Fame website cooperstowncred.com. The voters of the 1980s and '90s didn't have him around to help them. And it's too bad he wasn't in the room when the Golden Days Era Committee met.

He delved recently into a fascinating research project — one that wouldn't have been possible in any other era. He dug into every modern hitter who has had any 10-year stretch with an Adjusted OPS at least 60 percent better than the average hitter of their eras. Or, to put it in stat-geek terms, he found every hitter with at least 5,000 plate appearances and an OPS+ of 160 or better over any 10-year span.

So why are we dragging that little project into this column? Because from 1964-73, Dick Allen had an OPS+ of 165. So he's on the list. Here's everyone who made that list from the expansion era (1961-2021):

Hall of Famers

Henry Aaron
Frank Robinson
Willie McCovey
Jeff Bagwell
Frank Thomas

Still active

[Miguel Cabrera](#)
Albert Pujols
Mike Trout

PED asterisks

Barry Bonds
Mark McGwire
Manny Ramírez

Everyone else

Dick Allen

In other words, if you set aside the PED group, *every* modern masher who has strung together a 10-year stretch at that level of offensive dominance was either a Hall of Famer already or a certain Hall of Famer when their Hall election day arrives. Everyone, that is, except Dick Allen.

Numbers evolve — humans can too

Dick Allen arrived on the writers' ballot long before I was a Hall of Fame voter. But I still had a few elections where I could have voted for a man who probably did more to make me a baseball fan than any other player of my youth.

I was mesmerized, as a kid, by Dick Allen. I watched him do things I didn't think humans could do. I watched him hit baseballs over fences and flagpoles and billboards that no humans I knew could reach. I'd never seen anyone or anything like him. I was in awe of his talent and oblivious to his flaws. So you might think I'd have jumped at the opportunity to vote for him.

All right, let me own up to this here: I never did cast a vote for him.

And why was that? *He didn't have the numbers*. Why else? Not the numbers of that time, anyhow. Not the numbers I studied and prioritized back then. Not the numbers the voters before me had established as Hall of Fame benchmarks, numbers that shaped my ballots — and the ballots of hundreds of other writers.

But these times aren't those times. So when I think back now on my mother's unforgettable review of Dick Allen's Hall of Fame credentials, you know what I think? She wasn't exactly wrong. Not then. And I wasn't either, not at the time.

Now, though, here's what I'm sure of: The Golden Days Era Committee *was* wrong. Not all wrong — because I certainly have zero problem with the election of Minnie Miñoso, Jim Kaat, Gil Hodges or Tony Oliva. But wrong on Dick Allen.

If those committee members were willing to overlook the fact that Hodges and Oliva never got 2,000 career hits, it makes no sense that it was Allen who missed their cut. Let's take the hit and homer totals out of it and see how those three men stack up in the numbers that should matter:

	XBH	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	OPS+
Dick Allen	750	.292	.378	.534	.912	156
Gil Hodges	713	.273	.359	.487	.846	120
Tony Oliva	597	.304	.353	.476	.830	131

You shouldn't have to memorize the definition of every metric on baseballsavant.com to look at those numbers and recognize which player on that list was the most dominating offensive force. It seems obvious.

It also seems obvious, at least to me, that everyone who is asked to vote for the Hall of Fame in this day and age should be up to speed on what every category on modern stat sheets mean — not just the ones that ruled the conversations of 30 and 40 years ago.

I recognize that Dick Allen's numbers haven't changed in over four decades. But we humans have. So in five years, when the Hall gets the Golden Days Era band back together, they're all free to vote however they want to vote. But when it comes time to debate the case for Dick Allen, here's where that debate should begin:

Turned out he had the numbers after all.

GIVE IT UP FOR BUCK O'NEIL

Fifteen years is a pretty long time. The last time we all went through this with Buck O'Neil, our older daughter (the one Buck called "Sunshine") was five years old, and our younger daughter (the one Buck called "New One") had just turned one. Buck, himself, was 94 years young, with young being the key word; he still drove that Caddy he loved so much to the Negro Leagues Museum every day, and he gave tours and told stories and hugged everybody.

"Give it up," he used to say, and he would stretch out those arms and smile that big smile of his and people wouldn't go in to hug him as much as they would melt into him.

Bob Kendrick and I used to say to each other around that time that while nobody lives forever, Buck was going to give it his best shot.

Fifteen years. That amount of time doesn't ring true to me. It feels much longer ago. It also feels like yesterday. Sunshine is away at college now. New One is in the next room doing her Shakespeare assignment. Margo is standing next to me, and we are staring at the television screen, and my friend Josh Rawitch—the new president of the Baseball Hall of Fame—is on that screen, and he's smiling. What does it mean? Would he be smiling if Buck didn't make it? Does he have to smile no matter what news is coming?

It had already been an extraordinary announcement. Four players from the Golden Days ballot had been elected to the Hall of Fame. Each name Josh announced—Gil Hodges! Jim Kaat! Tony Oliva! Minnie Miñoso!!—sent a wild surge of joy through me. It was so much more than I expected.

Yes, we should pause for a moment to say that it hurt to have Dick Allen fall a vote short *again*—he also fell one vote short on the 2015 Golden Days ballot. But I actually have a couple of thoughts about that. One, you probably know about the hard math of these Hall of Fame committees. There are 16 people on the committee, and each person gets four votes. This means there are 64 votes available.

It takes 12 votes for any player to get elected, which means that the only way to get five people elected is to perfectly spread those 64 votes so that 60 of them go equally to five players. It's a nearly impenetrable math maze.

Miñoso got 14 votes—so that's already two extra votes. That means that for Allen to be the fifth, he basically had to get every single other vote with no more than two total votes going to Maury Wills, Ken Boyer, Roger Maris, Billy Pierce and manager Danny Murtaugh.

As it turns out, three votes went to those five men—and if I had to bet, I would bet all three went to Maury Wills, who has also come very close to being elected before. I don't think you can blame a committee for not magically coordinating their votes when there are so many good candidates on the ballot.

Two, I believe the committee did something that is very difficult but, in my mind, essential: I believe they took into account that Tony Oliva and Jim Kaat are still alive. And I think it's right that they did. This is a difficult topic, but we all hurt for those people who get elected after they are gone. When Josh said Minnie Miñoso's name, the first thought was, "Yes! Finally!" But the second thought immediately rushed in: "He should have been alive for this moment."

If Tony Oliva and Jim Kaat are Hall of Famers (and I do believe they are) then there's no time to waste. Both men are 83 years old—they were born less than four months apart in 1938—and the next Golden Days ballot will not be for another five years. It is no fun thinking about such things; when it comes to the Hall of Fame, we prefer considering immortality to mortality. But I want to see Tony Oliva and Jim Kaat in Cooperstown giving their own speeches and soaking in all the love they've earned.

Back to the moment. Josh is smiling. Margo is pacing nervously. And I'm thinking about a few words that I wrote 15 years ago, words I wrote that I had long forgotten. The words from my first

book, my most personal book, *The Soul of Baseball: A Road Trip Through Buck O'Neil's America*.

I talk about how long ago 15 years was: I had no earthly idea what I was doing when I wrote that book. Early Sunday, I picked up one of the two hardcover copies we still have—it had been forever since I looked at it—and I was taken by how earnest it was, how badly I had wanted to make it great. For Buck. I shot for the stars. I tried to make every sentence sing. I had titled chapters after classic songs. *I Like To Recognize the Tune*. *I Got a Right to Sing the Blues*. *Blue Skies*. *Isn't This a Lovely Day*.

One of the chapters is called, “I’d Rather Have a Memory Than a Dream,” an old Sarah Vaughan tune:

*For dreams are just imagination,
While memories are as real as you
And I've enough imagination
To wish that all my dreams come true*

I couldn't for the life of me remember what that chapter was about, so I went back and read it—the chapter is about the great Negro leagues pitcher and one of Buck's closest friends, Hilton Smith. Toward the end of his life, Hilton Smith wrote letters to the Baseball Hall of Fame detailing his career. It was entirely out of character for Smith; he was a profoundly modest man who almost never even spoke about his playing days unless asked. Bob Feller thought Smith threw the best curveball in the world. But that was for other people to say.

But Hilton's son DeMorris told me that at the end he became preoccupied with the Hall of Fame. So he wrote those letters. When the phone rang, he would hope it was the Hall of Fame calling to let him know he'd been elected.

“What does it matter?” DeMorris would ask his father. DeMorris had played in the minor leagues himself in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and he shared his father's modesty and quiet nature. “You know how good you were.”

And Hilton Smith would look at his son and whisper, “I deserve to be there.”

When I told Buck about the letters, he insisted that it couldn't be true, that he definitely would have known if his friend had sent letters to the Hall of Fame. Maybe, he thought, Hilton Smith wrote the letters but never sent them. In any case, Hilton Smith died in 1983 at the age of 76.

He was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2001.

"I came back to Kansas City after that," Buck told me, "and I went out to see Hilton Smith's gravestone. I said, 'Hilton you're a Hall of Famer.'"

And then Buck said a few words that I wrote in the book as a little poem.

Those are the words I think of as Josh Rawitch gets ready to make the announcement.

I wish he had lived

To see that day.

He was a little sad

At the end of his life,

Just a little.

Thought he had been forgotten.

I wish he had lived

To hear them say,

"You were great.

You were one of the greatest ever."

But I'm sure he heard it.

Josh announces that two people were elected to the Hall of Fame. And the first is Bud Fowler, the first known African-American player in organized baseball.

And as soon as he announced Bud Fowler, I knew. The second person had to be Buck. Here's how I knew: The player on the ballot I thought most likely to be elected, other than Buck, was the great John Donaldson, who won more than 400 games in his amazing career and was, in many ways, Satchel Paige before Satchel Paige.

But as soon as Josh announced Fowler, I knew it couldn't be Donaldson because Josh was announcing the names in alphabetical order.

This is the ridiculous way that my mind works.

Josh Rawitch then looked at the camera, and said some words about someone who was a player and a scout—and at the word “scout,” the room began spinning, and Margo began sobbing joyfully, and my phone began buzzing with texts from people all over the world. I pulled myself together enough to hear him say the name: John Jordan “Buck” O’Neil. Welcome to Cooperstown.

What a happy blur. Over the last few weeks, when I dared, I had wondered what the feeling would be like should Buck get elected. I so vividly remember the horrible feeling when he was not elected in 2006. I so vividly remember the few years after his death when people would ask me about Buck and the Hall of Fame, and I would try to talk about it but, in truth, I didn’t care anymore. To me, then, if Buck wasn’t there to enjoy it, his election to the Hall of Fame meant nothing.

So I wondered: How would it feel if he really got in this time?

And how did it feel? I won’t be able to find the words, but I can tell you that something surprising did happen. As Josh said those words—John Jordan “Buck” O’Neil—I saw Buck. I really saw him, standing there, a memory and a dream, and he was smiling. I could hear him too.

“Minnie Miñoso,” he was saying. “How about that?” And I remembered a time when he and Minnie talked about going to Cuba together.

“Jim Kaat,” he was saying. “One of the best fielding pitchers I ever saw. Yeah!”

“Gil Hodges,” he was saying. “He hit so many home runs against the Cubs when I was there.”

“Tony Oliva,” he was saying, “my hero! As good a hitter as I ever saw.” And I remembered a time when Buck asked Oliva how big that baseball looked to him when he was young and in the zone.

“It looked as big as the moon, Buck,” Oliva said. “As big as the moon.”

And, no doubt, Buck talked about how meaningful it was to have Bud Fowler elected to the Hall of Fame, and how sad it was to see John Donaldson and Dick Allen fall just short. As for

himself? I couldn't hear him say anything about himself. What, after all, was there to say? On the day after he just missed getting elected in 2006, he called me and said, "I want you to do me a favor."

"Sure, Buck."

"I want you to thank all the people who have said nice things since the Hall of Fame thing happened. ... I have never felt more loved. All my life. Tell them that."

And he told me then that God works in mysterious ways, and that by not getting into the Hall of Fame he found out just how much people really loved him.

"Buck," I said, "you're the only person I know who could feel that way."

And he said: "You might be right about that."

He laughed — Buck used to talk about the greatest sound he ever heard, the sound of the ball coming off the bat of Babe Ruth ... and then Josh Gibson ... and then Bo Jackson.

The greatest sound I ever heard was Buck O'Neil laughing.

And in the moment, I heard that laugh again—a laugh of happiness, a laugh of kindness, a laugh of elated disbelief. Buck O'Neil is a Hall of Famer.

And yes, of course, obviously:

I wish he had lived

To hear them say,

"You were great.

You were one of the greatest ever."

But I'm sure he heard it.

MORE HALL OF FAME CELEBRATION FROM TYLR KEPNER OF NYT

Baseball's 'Court of Appeals' Adds Six New Hall of Famers

A pair of old-timers committees corrected previous snubs, electing Buck O'Neil, Gil Hodges, Minnie Miñoso, Tony Oliva, Jim Kaat and Bud Fowler.

Jim Kaat's father, John, raised him on tales of his baseball hero, Lefty Grove, who defined pitching dominance in the years before World War II. When Grove was inducted to the Hall of Fame, in 1947, John Kaat made the pilgrimage to Cooperstown, N.Y., to see him.

Jim Kaat would make many trips to Cooperstown, too, reveling in the chance to roam among legends. He played in the Hall of Fame Game in 1966, on the day Ted Williams and Casey Stengel gave their speeches, and returned through the years to honor teammates at their inductions — Harmon Killebrew, Mike Schmidt, Bruce Sutter and more.

Now Kaat, at 83 years old, will have his own plaque in the gallery, as one of the six old-timers elected by a pair of committees that met on Sunday in Orlando, Fla. Kaat's former Minnesota Twins teammate, Tony Oliva, also 83, was elected, too, along with Gil Hodges, Minnie Miñoso, Bud Fowler and Buck O'Neil.

All of the candidates had been considered and passed over before, including Hodges, Miñoso and O'Neil while they were still alive. The path to the Hall can be arduous for some, and Kaat sounded almost sheepish about his place in a room reserved for the giants of the sport.

"There's got to be degrees of the Hall of Fame," Kaat said. "I think they probably have a back row for me and I'll wave to those guys up there. But it is pretty awesome to think of. I know when my career ended, Bowie Kuhn had told me it was the longest career for a pitcher in history."

Kuhn, a former commissioner of Major League Baseball, was right: Kaat's career spanned 25 seasons and was the longest ever at his retirement in 1983. Nolan Ryan now holds the record for pitching seasons, with 27, along with the records for strikeouts and no-hitters. Ryan is one of those no-doubt Hall of Famers, the ones who took the express lane to immortality with a first-ballot induction by the writers' vote.

Dominance was not Kaat's game. He had 180 complete games, won 16 Gold Gloves and went 283-237 with a 3.45 earned run average. But he is also the first Hall of Fame pitcher in the integration era (since 1947) to allow an average of more than a hit per inning (9.2 per nine). He spent most of his final five seasons as a situational reliever.

"I never really was a perennial No. 1 pitcher," Kaat said, mentioning Grove, Warren Spahn, Greg Maddux and more. "All of those pitchers were No. 1 pitchers. I evolved, some years, into a No. 1 pitcher, but I wasn't the guy that just said, 'You're going to start opening day for 10 years.' I understood that and I know a lot of people in the past, the writers, said it took him too long to accomplish what he did."

Candidates with splashier statistics — but far more complicated legacies — could join the 2022 class next month, when the Hall announces the results of [the writers' ballot](#), which includes David Ortiz and Alex Rodriguez for the first time, and Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens and Curt Schilling for the last. Players who are not elected by the writers can gain entry later through 16-person committees — or, as Bob Costas put it on MLB Network, “baseball’s court of appeals.”

The makeup of the jury, whose individual votes are kept secret, can heavily influence the outcome. Harold Baines, a longtime Chicago White Sox star, was elected in December 2018 by a committee that included Chicago’s team chairman, Jerry Reinsdorf, and its former manager, Tony La Russa. Former teammates like Schmidt, Rod Carew and Ozzie Smith — and contemporaries like Fergie Jenkins and Joe Torre — probably helped Kaat’s case.

“Whether it was exposure, being a broadcaster, that helped, I don’t know,” Kaat said. “I think what helped today was having players there I played with and against.”

Hodges, the slugging first baseman for the Brooklyn Dodgers who guided the Mets to a championship as manager in 1969, nearly made it on the writers’ ballot. Candidates need 75 percent of the vote to be elected, and Hodges got 50 percent in 1971, the year before his death of a heart attack at age 47. Until Sunday, Hodges (who peaked at 63.4 percent) was the only player ever to get 50 percent on the writers’ ballot without eventually making it in.

Miñoso, who died in 2015, never generated much attention from the writers but was [finally recognized](#) for a career that began in the Negro leagues and stretched to 1980, in a token appearance for his primary team, the White Sox. Miñoso, an outfielder, hit .299 with a stellar .848 on-base plus slugging percentage in nearly 2,000 games.

Oliva is a native of Cuba, like Miñoso, and won the American League batting title in 1964 and 1965, his first two full seasons. A left-handed hitting outfielder, Oliva made eight All-Star teams, won three batting titles overall and hit .304 with an .830 O.P.S.

“My family never had a chance to see me play in the United States,” Oliva said. “In Cuba I played very little, I only played every Sunday in the country. My mother, my father, my brother, they never saw me play. I wish they had the opportunity to be here today, but they’re in heaven right now, my father and my mother, they’d be very proud that their little country boy from Cuba is in the Hall of Fame today.”

Fowler and O’Neil were elected by a different committee than the others, one that considered players whose contributions predated the integration era.

Fowler, whose career began in the 1870s, was a pioneer in many regards who is considered by many to have been the first Black player to have played organized baseball against white players. O’Neil, a founder of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, was a star first baseman who spent decades around professional baseball as a manager and scout.

O'Neil died at age 94 in 2006, the year the Hall of Fame admitted [17 members](#) from the Negro leagues, but not him. The Hall created a special achievement award in O'Neil's name, but has at last given him the highest honor of all.

JOE POSNANSKI ON WHERE THE HALL OF FAME SHOULD GO, NOW THAT BUCK O'NEIL, MINNIE MINOSA AND MARVIN MILLER ARE IN

THE TOP 10 PLAYERS WHO ARE NOT IN THE HALL OF FAME (PLUS PETE ROSE)

There's a great scene at the end of "Princess Bride" — a movie with, perhaps, more great scenes than any other — after Inigo Montoya has killed Count Rugen and Westley has reunited with Buttercup, and Fezzik has found the four white horses that will take our heroes off into the sunset.

And Inigo turns to Westley and says: "You know, it's very strange. I have been in the revenge business so long, now that it's over, I don't know what to do with the rest of my life."

I must admit to having just a little bit of that feeling now that Buck O'Neil and Minnie Miñoso have been elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

I wouldn't say that I have chased their Hall of Fame election with the same singular focus as Inigo chased the six-fingered man ... but maybe close. You could probably throw in Marvin Miller too, who was finally inducted this year. To me, those three were, far and away, the biggest omissions in the Hall of Fame.

I should probably explain that because, obviously, some of the greatest players in baseball history — Barry Bonds (*The Baseball 100* No. 3), Roger Clemens (No. 13), Pete Rose (No. 60), Curt Schilling (No. 88), Shoeless Joe Jackson, Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, Gary Sheffield, Manny Ramirez and others — are not in the Hall of Fame, and nobody is sure what will be the fate of Alex Rodriguez and David Ortiz, though early signs aren't too good.

But here's the thing: There's powerful disagreement about those players. I may think that Barry Bonds belongs, but there's a large group of people who believe, just as strongly if not more strongly, that he doesn't.

What made Buck and Minnie and Marvin different, I think, was that there was no powerful counterweight. There was no self-inflicted controversy that made them poison to any group of people. They were men who changed baseball, honored baseball, shaped baseball. There were certainly people who felt, for one reason or another, that Buck, Minnie and Marvin fell short of the Hall of Fame ... but I never heard from anybody who adamantly wanted to keep them out.

I can't imagine such a person existed, unless they were a 1970s or 1980s baseball owner who could never get over the way Marvin Miller beat them every time.

Because of this, the Hall of Fame felt truly empty without those three.

And now those three are in the Hall of Fame.

And, it's very strange: I've been in the business of getting them in the Hall of Fame so long, now that it's over, I don't know what to do with the rest of my life.

I keep a little scoreboard in my computer. It is a list, in my view, of the top 100 (or so) eligible people for the Hall of Fame. And with the Hall of Fame election of Buck and Minnie — plus Gil Hodges, Tony Oliva and Jim Kaat — I've reworked the list quite a bit. Here, then, are the top 10 eligible players, in my mind, who are not in the Hall of Fame.

No. 1: Curt Flood

The more that time passes, the clearer Curt Flood's Hall of Fame case becomes. First of all, he really was a fantastic player — had his timing and circumstances been different, he would have had a real shot at compiling 3,000 hits. I like to compare him directly to his longtime teammate and friend Lou Brock:

Brock through age 25: 456 hits

Flood through age 25: 754 hits

Brock through age 28: 1,027 hits

Flood through age 28: 1,323 hits

Brock through age 31: 1,608 hits

Flood through age 31: 1,854 hits

They were very different players, Flood and Brock — Flood was one of the greatest defensive centerfielders ever, while Brock was, of course, the king of the stolen base (until Rickey) — but they both finished their careers with .293 batting averages, they walked about the same amount, Brock struck out significantly more but also hit with a bit more power. It's not unreasonable to think Flood could have gotten to 3,000 hits like Brock did, thus guaranteeing Hall of Fame election.

We'll never know because Flood fought for his rights and his career basically ended at age 31.

Flood's impact on free agency is complicated and often misunderstood. In 1970, the Cardinals traded him to Philadelphia for Dick Allen, whose name will come up again in this countdown. Flood refused to go. His famous words came in a letter he wrote to commissioner Bowie Kuhn: "After 12 years in the Major Leagues, I do not feel that I am a piece of property to be bought and sold irrespective of my wishes."

His stance was extremely unpopular in 1970; nobody really wanted to hear about player rights in those days. The feeling was that Curt Flood forfeited all rights because he was getting paid \$90,000 and that was an awful lot of money. For the most part, the press was against him. The fans were against him. And, most of all, baseball was against him. Marvin Miller warned Flood that he was destined to lose his fight.

"But it would benefit all of the other players and all the players to come, wouldn't it?" Flood asked.

"Yes," Miller said.

"That's good enough for me," Flood said, and he sued baseball, the case went to the Supreme Court, and — as Miller had foreseen — Flood lost. He lost the case. He lost his career. And it took him a long time and a lot of pain to regain his life.

His case did not lead to free agency. But it did spur a movement. The more I think about it, the more I believe that Curt Flood is currently the biggest omission in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Before Marvin Miller died, he made it crystal clear that he did not want to be elected posthumously to the Baseball Hall of Fame. He was elected anyway, which I think would have really ticked him off, but we only have so much say over our own legacies.

But what I think even more about were his words about Curt Flood. “Put him in,” he said. “That’s a hero.”

No. 2: John Donaldson

Sunday’s Hall of Fame announcement was so joyful, such a bounty of good news, that it’s too easy to overlook the disappointments. John Donaldson so obviously belongs in the Hall of Fame. He should have been elected many, many years ago. It has taken the extraordinary efforts of a man named Peter Gorton and many Donaldson Network volunteers to catalog Donaldson’s overwhelming achievements in Black baseball, starting a decade before Jackie Robinson was even born.

The Donaldson Network has verified that as Donaldson barnstormed around America in those years before and after the Negro leagues were founded, he won more than 400 games, struck out more than 5,000 batters and threw many, many no-hitters. They uncovered dozens of stories that referred to him as “the greatest pitcher in the world.” They highlighted a quote from J.L. Wilkinson, the white owner of the Kansas City Monarchs who probably saw Satchel Paige pitch as much or more than anyone: “Paige is a great a pitcher all right ... but Donaldson had more stuff.”

Buck O’Neil used to say that Donaldson was the pitcher who showed Paige what was possible.

Donaldson received eight out 16 votes on Sunday ... and I feel confident that when his name comes up again on the ballot, he will get elected. The thing is, the Early Era Committee is not scheduled to meet again for another 10 years.

Nos. 3 and 4: Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens

No need for a lot of words here — I think Bonds and Clemens are two of the greatest players in baseball history, better than almost every player in the Hall of Fame, and it just seems ludicrous to not have them in Cooperstown.

I get the argument that you don’t want cheaters in the Hall of Fame, and I get the argument that there are already plenty of cheaters in the Hall of Fame, and I get the argument that steroid use was a different kind of cheating, and I get the argument that there are unquestionably steroid

users already in the Hall of Fame, and I get the argument that their career totals might have been boosted exponentially because of drugs they took, and I get the argument that they played in a time when baseball tacitly (and perhaps even more than tacitly) encouraged players to take drugs so they could play baseball better, and I get the argument that they were probably both sure Hall of Famers before they ever took any drugs so they could play baseball better, and I get the argument that the morass of legal and illegal supplements is so confusing that people who are in that world laugh hysterically every time they hear people talk about “PEDs” as if that’s just one black-and-white thing.

The arguments are so worn out that at this point that I only hear white noise.

But I think Bonds and Clemens are two of the greatest players in baseball history, better than almost every player in the Hall of Fame, better than Mariano Rivera (who was elected unanimously) and Derek Jeter (who missed unanimity by one vote) and Ken Griffey Jr. (who missed unanimity by one vote) and every other player who has been elected in a very a long time.

And it just seems ludicrous to not have them in Cooperstown.

No. 5: Dick Allen

There was something liberating about Sunday’s Golden Days ballot vote. As mentioned, four players got into the Hall of Fame — Hodges, Kaat, Oliva, Miñoso — and, I don’t know, it just felt like this instant relief. Here’s a gross story, but a few years ago we were in Orlando to take the kids to Disney World and I ended up getting kidney stones. It was some of the most absurd and agonizing pain of my life.

Here’s are the two things I remember most: One, the doctor gave me morphine, and said, “This will help with the pain,” and then left the room for what felt like 17 hours. And the morphine DID NOT help with the pain. Not at all. If anything the pain escalated. I cannot even begin to describe how I felt when the doctor walked back in and said so calmly, ‘How are you feeling?’ and I all but screamed, “NOT GREAT, BOB!”

But the second thing I remember was that after several hours of nothing working to stop the pain, it suddenly and completely went away in one second. They had just given me yet another pain

medication, and then the pain was completely gone, and I said, “Wow, whatever that last thing you gave me was, it is incredible.” And the doctor said, “Actually, it’s more likely that the stone moved. There was nothing else we could do.”

Anyway, that instant feeling of relief — the pain was just entirely gone, I felt completely normal and happy and could barely even remember the pain — was a little bit of the feeling when those four guys went into the Hall of Fame. After years and years of arguments, battles, debates, clashes and all the rest, it was like one day everybody decided: “This is kind of ridiculous, these guys were all great, the Hall of Fame is there to honor great players, let’s just put them in.”

And instantly, the years of “Was Oliva’s career long enough?” and “How much credit should Gil Hodges get for managing the ’69 Mets?” and “Did Jim Kaat win enough games?” and “Was Minnie Miñoso’s peak high enough?” disappeared completely.

I long for that feeling with Dick Allen. We all know that, in time, Dick Allen will be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. It’s a certainty. He has finished one vote shy TWICE, which is just cruel. Allen was, unquestionably, one of the greatest hitters in baseball history; his 156 OPS+ places him squarely between Willie Mays (155 OPS+) and Stan Musial (159 OPS+). He endured ferocious racism, fought back the way he knew how, followed his own path and sparked as many controversies as any player of his time.

Some years ago, Bob Costas asked him if he thought about how good he COULD HAVE been without all those controversies, without the difficulties. And Dick Allen said he did, he thought about it all the time.

But he was so good anyway.

No. 6: Lou Whitaker

Lou Whitaker’s 75.1 bWAR is the highest for any eligible and non-controversial modern everyday player not in the Hall of Fame. I realize that there are a few qualifiers in there, so let’s clarify. Here are the top five eligible bWAR players not in the Hall of Fame.

1. Barry Bonds, 162.7 (controversial)
2. Alex Rodriguez, 117.5 (controversial)

3. Pete Rose, 79.6 (controversial)
4. Bill Dahlen, 75.2 (19th century player)
5. Lou Whitaker, 75.1

You see how Whitaker is really at the top of his own list, just ahead of guys like Bobby Grich and Scott Rolen and Kenny Lofton and Graig Nettles and Dwight Evans.

Was Whitaker really a 75.1 WAR player — meaning, was he really an automatic, no-doubt Hall of Famer?* FanGraphs doesn't think he was quite THAT good, putting him at a still-impressive-but-not-AS-impressive 68.1 fWAR. And I've heard from others who feel sure that Baseball-Reference WAR overrates Whitaker, even if they are not quite sure of how.

**Whitaker's bWAR is actually higher than Derek Jeter's.*

My feeling is: Whitaker really was that good but many people just didn't notice. The reason he has been so underrated, I think, is because he didn't do any one thing spectacularly well. He hit .320 in 1983, but he was generally more of a .275 kind of hitter, and he walked a lot. He hit 28 home runs in 1989, but he was more like a 15-20 home run guy. He won three Gold Gloves, but Frank White and Ryne Sandberg were more celebrated for their second base defense. He was an excellent base runner, but he stole 20 bases in a season just once. He had the arm to play shortstop or third base (he was actually drafted as a third baseman) but he played second.

And this is your reminder that someone who is above average at *everything* is a really special player — there are just not too many in baseball history you can say that about.

No. 7: Scott Rolen

To me, Rolen's case is basically the same as Whitaker's — well, I think, Rolen's career was a bit more spectacular but also almost 400 games shorter. It's a toss-up to me which one is MORE worthy of the Hall of Fame. I think it's clear they are both worthy.

Rolen, like Whitaker, did everything well. He hit with power, was good on the basepaths, and he was a glorious one-of-a-kind defensive third baseman who won seven Gold Gloves in his career and realistically could have won one or two more.

The drawback is that Rolen's career was injury-plagued — after being relatively strong and healthy until age 30 (he hit 25-plus home runs every year from 1998 to 2004), he averaged just 105 games per season over his last eight years. As such, he barely topped 2,000 hits in his career, though he did make them count — more than 42% of those hits were for extra bases, which is among the higher percentage for third basemen (ahead of, among others, Chipper Jones, Eddie Matthews and Evan Longoria).

Rolen does seem to be climbing the charts on the BBWAA ballot — he jumped over 50% last year, and he is only on his fifth go-around on the ballot. I think he gets in relatively soon.

No. 8: Dwight Evans

Dwight Evans was a walk machine at a time when absolutely nobody cared about walks. I think that more or less sums it up. When the 617 — as Howard Bryant so eloquently calls the Boston Red Sox hype machine — went to bat for a Hall of Fame candidate, they chose Jim Rice because he was ferocious, because he put up that 1978 season for the ages (with 406 total bases!), because he led the league in home runs three times and was widely regarded with fear.

I don't think there's any question that, all in all, Evans was a significantly better player than Jim Rice.

Certainly, WAR says Evans was the better player.

By Baseball-Reference WAR:

Dwight Evans, 67.1

Jim Rice: 47.7

By FanGraphs WAR:

Dwight Evans, 65.1

Jim Rice: 50.8

In both cases, it's not especially close. A big reason is those walks — Evans walked more than twice as often as Rice.

A big reason is their defense — Rice was an average-to-slightly above average outfielder while Evans was a perennial Gold Glove winner.

A big reason is their extra-base power — Rice has a higher slugging percentage which suggests he was the more powerful hitter, but that difference is basically all singles. They ended up with roughly the same number of hits, but Evans had 100-plus more extra-base hits because he hit a lot more doubles.

And, just to throw it in there, Evans was not fast but Rice was a double-play machine.

Guys like Dwight Evans really speak to me. He was so absurdly underrated. And he also caught a terrible break in 1981 when he was well on his way to his best season and one of the great seasons of the decade — in 108 games, he hit .296/.415/.522 with 22 homers and 85 walks. Who knows how great that season could have been had it gone on for 162 games. But, alas, that was the strike year.

I remain convinced that had 1981 been played in full, Dwight Evans would already be in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

No. 9: Dale Murphy

Dale is my friend, so I cannot and will not be unbiased — the last time I put together a list like this, I put together an insane paragraph that is unquestionably the most cherry-picked thing you will read today.

Still, I will use it again:

Name all the players in baseball history who have:

— Won multiple MVP awards

— Won multiple Gold Gloves

— Stolen 30 bases in a season

— Hit 40 homers in a season

— Been the leading vote-getter for an All-Star Game

— And won the Lou Gehrig and Roberto Clemente Awards for representing the game.

It's easy to name them all, because there is only one: Dale Bryan Murphy.

No. 10: Tommy John

Tommy John has skyrocketed up my chart because, frankly, I cannot make any sense of a Hall of Fame that has Jim Kaat in it but not Tommy John. I've long been a Tommy John believer anyway, because he was an excellent pitcher for a very, very, very, very long time and because you simply cannot tell the story of baseball without him.

I imagine every year Tommy John's name is mentioned more than just about any former player in baseball history.

I try to avoid comparing one player to another when it comes to the Hall of Fame because, as Springsteen said, it's a death trap. Bill Mazeroski's in so Frank White should be in. Kirby Puckett's in so Don Mattingly should be in. Catfish Hunter is in so Luis Tiant should be in. Bruce Sutter is in so Dan Quisenberry should be in. You can play this game all day and all night, and I should know because I have.

That said — you simply cannot think of Jim Kaat without thinking of Tommy John. They were left-handed pitchers, near-perfect contemporaries, John won 288 games, Kaat won 283; John won 20 three times, Kaat won 20 three times; John threw 4,700 innings, Kaat threw 4,500; John threw 46 shutouts, Kaat threw 31; John induced 604 doubles plays (far and away the most ever), Kaat won 16 Gold Gloves (second only to Greg Maddux), Kaat became a beloved broadcaster, John was the first to have the elbow surgery that would change baseball and sports forever.

If you were putting them up, side by side, and can only choose one, I think you pick Tommy John as your Hall of Famer. I'm so happy for Jim Kaat, so glad that he is going to the Hall of Fame. I hope Tommy John joins him soon.

Not listed: Pete Rose

I cannot get over how self-destructive Pete Rose has been. There are roughly 500 different ways he could have played his cards so that he would be in the Baseball Hall of Fame right now — and I'm talking about AFTER he got caught up gambling on baseball and his own team while managing the Cincinnati Reds.

One of the words some people use when talking about the Hall of Fame is “deserve.” Does this player DESERVE to go to the Hall of Fame? That charged word, if you use it, defines the Hall of Fame in a very specific way: If a player has to DESERVE the Hall of Fame, that means the Hall is not only for the greatest players or even the players who best tell the story of the game. It is for DESERVING players.

I don’t think I need to run down the long, long, long list of people in history who do not DESERVE to be remembered because they were awful in one way or another, but we remember them anyway because they altered history.

Pete Rose definitely does not DESERVE to go into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Regarding baseball, he gambled, lied, gambled some more, lied some more, lied even more after that, etc. And his personal life, whew, nobody wants to open that box — we do know that a woman came forward in 2017 and said she had sex with Rose when she was 14 or 15 year old, to which Rose’s less-than-compelling response was that he believed she was actually 16.

No, he does not deserve to go into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

So many people have their childhoods tied to Pete Rose, to his headfirst slides, to the way he ran to first base on a walk, to his headlining the Big Red Machine, to his corny commercials, to his everyday baseball fury. If the Hall of Fame exists to honor and celebrate and remember the best players of all time, well, Pete Rose was one of those.

And the question now is: Who is going to fight for him to go into the Hall of Fame?

A BASEBALL MAN WHO WAS BEST VIEWED IN TOTAL

Gil Hodges struggled to make the Hall of Fame because voters had to consider him as a player or as a manager. Hodges was decidedly both and is finally headed to Cooperstown.

They were sons of the 1920s, Indiana teenagers when Brooklyn came calling. Gil Hodges, from Petersburg, was about three years older than Carl Erskine, from Anderson. One day, in 1950, they shared an afternoon for the ages: four home runs for Hodges and a complete game — with four hits at the plate — for Erskine. The pitcher was friendly with the slugger and his family.

“I knew his brother and I knew his father,” Erskine said by phone from Indiana on Monday. “All three of those men died of the same heart condition. It was rare, but one of the biggest, strongest men on the team was Hodges, and yet his heart was not strong and it took him too early in life.”

Hodges was just 47 when he died on Easter in 1972, in West Palm Beach, Fla., after a round of golf with his Mets coaches during spring training. Erskine turns 95 on Dec. 13, one of just two living Dodgers — with Roger Craig — who played for the winners of the 1955 World Series. Their candle is flickering, but their legend burns brighter now. Hodges is a Hall of Fame player.

He made it on Sunday when a 16-person panel, at last, delivered a different verdict than all the others. Denied for 15 years by the writers, and again by several iterations of the veterans committee, Hodges will finally have a plaque in Cooperstown, N.Y.

“It’s a great, great thing that happened for our family,” Gil Hodges Jr. said on Monday. “We’re all thrilled that Mom got to see it, being 95. This was perfect timing.”

Joan Hodges, Gil’s widow, rode with him up Broadway in an open convertible in October 1969, ticker tape swirling like snowfall. That World Series triumph, as the manager of the Miracle Mets, was one of three for Hodges. He also helped the Los Angeles Dodgers win a championship in 1959, his last big year as a player.

Hodges averaged 30 home runs and 101 runs batted in per season from 1949 through ’59. He hit 370 homers overall, and in May 1963, when Hodges retired, only two right-handed hitters (Jimmie Foxx and Willie Mays) had more home runs. Now there are more than 40 right-handers ahead of Hodges.

His fielding also set him apart. Gold Gloves were first presented in 1957 — the Dodgers’ last year in Brooklyn and Hodges’ 10th full season — and Hodges claimed the first three. He did not win on name recognition, either.

“A lot of first basemen are good with the glove; Ted Kluszewski, for instance, was an outstanding first baseman, but compared to Hodges he didn’t have the range,” Erskine said. “Gil could go broadly afield. He’d been a catcher at one time earlier, and so he was accustomed to fielding bunts out in front of home plate. He’d charge on a bunt, field the bunt, turn and have a catcher’s throw to second base and nail the runner. I never saw another first baseman who would even try that. But he was agile and he had great hands.”

Hodges may have had the most massive hands in baseball. That is what Roger Kahn wrote in “The Boys of Summer,” at least, confirming it with this quip from shortstop Pee Wee Reese: “Gil wears a glove at first base because it’s fashionable. With those hands, he doesn’t really need one.”

Hodges’ case for Cooperstown had long been perplexing. He was gaining momentum on the writers’ ballot before he died, then spent more than a decade in a holding pattern, with 49 to 63 percent of the votes. Historically, nearly every candidate to get that much support eventually gets in, but the committees had never nudged Hodges across the 75 percent threshold.

The 1993 vote was especially cruel. Roy Campanella, Hodges' wheelchair-bound Brooklyn teammate who would die that summer, could not attend the meeting in person and was not allowed to vote by phone. The family was crushed, at least in the moment.

"That hurt a little different, because we had the 12th vote," Gil Jr. said. "But you know what? When the day ended, everything was still the same. We just went and moved forward."

One problem for Hodges was that candidates are supposed to be judged on a playing or a managing career, not both. By strict interpretation, then, Hodges' 1969 title with the Mets could not have pushed him over the borderline. But that achievement is integral to his story, and his players have long credited Hodges for skillfully using role players and insisting on a clean style of play.

After the Mets beat Atlanta in the 1969 National League Championship Series, outfielder Cleon Jones recalled a couple of years ago, the Braves' Hank Aaron warned a Baltimore scout that the favored Orioles might be in trouble.

"If you don't play the best baseball that you've played all year, you're going to get beat," Jones said, recalling Aaron's message. "This is a good team, they don't make mistakes and they do all the things that it takes to win."

Jones continued: "And I attribute that to Gil Hodges. Had it been anybody else — Yogi Berra or Wes Westrum or even Casey Stengel as the manager, you wouldn't be talking about the '69 Mets. We won because of our leader, which was Gil Hodges, because he instilled that kind of attitude in the ballclub and he didn't allow us to make mistakes."

Hodges' Brooklyn teammates did not expect him to manage, Erskine said, because he was so composed, never prone to tantrums — the opposite, in other words, of the Orioles' Earl Weaver. A manager without a "forceful personality," as Erskine put it, was somewhat rare.

"But if you talk to somebody that played for him as a manager, like Tom Seaver with the Mets, he said, 'Hodges was quiet, but he had a look that could burn your shorts off,'" Erskine said. "So if he gave you this look, he didn't have to say anything. He was not a holler guy, but he gave you the look and you had the meaning of it already."

The Mets could not build on their championship under Hodges. They finished 83-79 in each of the next two seasons, placing third both times. Ed Kranepool, their first baseman, insisted Monday that the Mets would have won "many, many more pennants" had Hodges lived. But of course there is no way to know.

It is a safe bet, though, that Hodges would have accepted his Hall of Fame election with understated grace, not wanting much of a fuss. He built a legacy and raised a family in New York, but he was Indiana, through and through.

“Down-to-earth people — that was his background, the way he was raised,” Erskine said. “Humility was a part of his life. It came just as natural as breathing. So that was kind of his trademark, and it was a good one.”

INTERESTING HALL OF FAMER STATS PART 2

Follow-up from piece a couple of weeks ago, jogging through HOF stats sharing stuff that jumps out

Luis Aparicio combined excellent defense with 2677 hits and 506 stolen bases.

Barry Larkin stole 379 bases with a 83.1% success rate.

Comparing players from different eras is tricky but interesting. Shortstops:

Honus Wagner. Career avg .328. 3420 hits. 723 stolen bases. 101 home runs.

Cal Ripken. .276 average. 3184 hits. 36 stolen bases. 431 home runs. 2632 consecutive games. 2x MVP.

Ernie Banks was the second shortstop (to fellow hall of famer Vern Stephens) to hit 200 home runs. Banks played half his career at 1B. Wound up with 512 HRs.

Post 1960 hall of famers with fewest years of 140 games or more-Willie Stargell 6, Barry Larkin and Tony Gwynn 7.

Not a bad year. Lou Boudreau in 1948 hit .355 as player-manager of the World Series champion Cleveland Indians.

Hall of famer Joe Sewell (Indians 1920-1930 and Yankees 1931-33) struck out just 114 times in 8,333 at bats—1.3%.

Paul Molitor 44% career at bats as DH. Frank Thomas inducted in 2014 became first HOF with majority at bats as DH at 57%. Edgar Martinez followed at 72%.

Martinez played 1403 games at dh, 564 at 3B and 28 at 1B.

101 of Reggie Jackson's 573 HRs were as a DH

205 of Jim Thome's 612 were as DH

Tris Speaker. Lifetime .347 hitter with 3,514 hits (5th all-time behind Rose, Cobb, Aaron, Musial). Hit .306 in three World Series.

Mickey Mantle. 3x MVP, led AL in HRs 4x, triple crown, 12 AL pennants, 7 World Series titles, 18 World Series HRs.

Ken Griffey Jr. hit 438 HRs through his age 30 season. Wound up with 620. First number one overall draft pick to make the Hall of Fame.

Ty Cobb. To go with his 4189 hits he had a .366 career batting average.

LABOR PAINS

FORMER COMMISSIONER FAY VNCENT IS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE (FROM WSJ)

Labor Pains and Opportunities in Baseball

A joint venture and the business promise of betting add up to a promising future.

The current labor strife in Major League Baseball reflects the ebb and flow of some 50 years of struggle between the club owners and the players' union.

The union was molded and led for some 20 years by Marvin Miller (1917-2012), whose tenure resulted in two notable achievements. First, he brought to the players via collective bargaining health and pension programs that are the richest permitted by federal law—the best benefits the league can agree to provide.

Second, Miller got the players freed by an arbitrator from their employment contracts so they could become “free agents.” That freedom led to bidding by clubs for top players. The financial rewards such players generate via long-term contracts amount to as much as \$40 million annually.

In response to free agency, the owners turned to “self-help” in the 1980s by colluding not to sign free agents. The players challenged this as a violation of the collective-bargaining agreement and won a \$280 million arbitration award against the owners that cost each of the then 28 clubs well over \$10 million. That episode has long polluted labor relations in baseball even though few of the colluding owners are still active.

In 1994 the owners turned desperate and made a determined effort to break the union. That led to the cancellation of part of the season and the World Series. The owners failed, and an uneasy form of labor peace has prevailed since.

Looking at the current impasse, I suggest two reasons for optimism. One is the recent joint venture established by the National Football League, Major League Baseball and the players' union to participate with Fanatics Inc. in the marketing and sale of player cards. I believe this is the first time players and owners have agreed to share ownership in a for-profit business, and one can imagine that other such ideas will arise. The new joint venture may represent a shift in the union strategy. It is surely an interesting and imaginative step, especially with the NFL as a participant.

The second reason for hope is the enormous opportunity offered by the emerging sports-gambling business. The professional sports leagues have disclosed little of their strategies for developing this new revenue source. The players and the owners will have to work together—

with one eye on Congress—to structure a system that protects the integrity of the game while tapping the gambling gold.

There are media reports this current labor impasse is a result of union pressure for changes. The current strength of the owners' position was preserved by keeping Congress at bay during the steroid crisis and ensuring that owners retained full ownership of their businesses.

The sale last year of the New York Mets for \$2.6 billion—players received none of the sale proceeds—is an example of the value sports franchises now bring. My guess is the Yankees are worth at least three times that. I suspect this value creation explains why the owners may not be the aggressor in this current battle. The status quo may seem good enough for them.

Sadly, in baseball shutdowns, those hit hardest are those on the fringes of the business—vulnerable concession workers, hot dog vendors and elderly handicapped fans like me who are faithful television viewers.

There is time before spring training to get the new collective-bargaining agreement done. With the baseball business in such bloom, there are few excuses for failure. Then again, baseball is the only game that includes errors as part of the box score.

Mr. Vincent was commissioner of baseball, 1989-92.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE ISSUES: CAN WE DETERMINE HOW MUCH MONEY IS AT STAKE IN BASEBALL'S LABOR BATTLE?

Eno Sarris of The Athletic shows it might be a simple math problem.

The battle lines are solidifying in baseball's current labor strife. The players union wants more pay for younger players, and the owners call that position "[extreme](#)." Is it? Because so few teams are publicly owned, anyone trying to analyze from the outside runs into obstructions along the way, even when trying to come to some sort of basic understanding. The numbers just aren't available.

Try to suss out where both sides are starting from, and competing facts come quickly; the seemingly simple question of what share of the overall revenue pie current players get is actually not simple at all. Maury Brown includes minor league pay and bonuses and benefits in his look, and has the players getting more than half, as you can see [here](#).

When Nathaniel Grow tried the same analysis in 2015 for FanGraphs, he found [much lower percentages](#) for some of those same early years, but his version did not include all the minor league salary expenses, and bonuses. Even if it seems clear that those expenses should be included, it does point to the virtual black box sitting around baseball team revenues and even some costs.

One thing is true no matter which analysis you prefer: The players' share is not the same as it used to be. It has declined over time, and they're arguing for ways to improve their lot. Let's look at a few of the proposals that have become public, to see what their specific impacts might be on the monetary realities of baseball.

[Reduce Arbitration](#)

Arbitration is a notoriously difficult beast to analyze. One of the proposals has been to [cut the number of pre-arbitration years](#) to two instead of three, and to correctly assess that, one would need to model all of the year-to-year raises players would get (player by player) and then account for the added money the star players would get in a fourth year of arbitration, which wouldn't have many benchmarks to use as guides. There are people who are spending the entirety of their workdays modeling this.

Let's take the easier option and cut off the last year of arbitration for everyone, just to see how much that blunt object would cost. That's just a rough calculation — we can add 20 percent to all the third-year arbitration salaries to approximate the free market value of that player, following the rule of thumb that each arbitration year is supposed to push a player 20 percent closer to their market value — and it also gives us a sense of how few players get to that third year of arbitration, let alone free agency.

If we cut the final year of arbitration, 58 players would have been free agents before last season instead of after it. That's an average of less than two per team. Seven teams had no such players. We would add another \$60 million of new salary going the players' way if we did this. Not as much of a big deal, and it's more money going to only five percent of the player population. It would also get those players to free agency sooner, which is tough to account for.

The general desire of the player's association is to get players to free agency faster, but there's [reportedly a more formal proposal](#) on the table for the league to move towards a situation in which players can reach free agency with either six years of service or five years of service and age 29.5, whichever comes earlier.

This would change the lives of fewer than 50 players this offseason, who would now be free agents now instead of going into their last year of arbitration. Forty percent of them would be relievers, and if the catchers were added in, that would describe more than half of the new free agents.

If we give these new players another 20 percent over their salary next year, by using [MLBTradeRumors' arbitration projections](#), they'd cost baseball's owners an additional \$39 million in salary next season.

National League Designated Hitter

This idea has been painted as a significant get for the players, but it also comes with some complications.

To start, we can look at the American League as a guide and realize that there are very few full-time designated hitters. Last year, six hitters accounted for more than two-thirds of their teams' plate appearances at the DH position, making them more or less full-time there. Two of them were pre-arbitration, and the average salary for the six jobs was \$15 million. If the National League followed the same model as the American League, four new free agent jobs would open up and the players might make another \$60 million on those jobs.

But ... that's not quite right. Of the four full-time veteran designated hitters, only two were signed *as designated hitters*. What's more likely, should the National League have a DH, is that the new policy would extend the careers of some first basemen, giving them somewhere to play later on, much as it did for [Miguel Cabrera](#) and [Albert Pujols](#). It might open up the number of teams interested in J.D. Martinez when he reaches free agency, it might help [Kyle Schwarber](#) get more teams to the table, it might allow the [Dodgers](#) to sign [Freddie Freeman](#) and have a place for him (and others on the team) to play. Oh and the owners will benefit from this too — pitchers get hurt at the plate and running the bases, and those are players the owners are paying who aren't on the field, representing lost dollars. Fewer injuries like that would mean some benefit to owners, but current publicly available injury information isn't sophisticated enough to tell us exactly how much those reduced injuries would be worth. If that late-season injury to [Jacob deGrom](#) came [from that swing earlier in the season](#), him not swinging would have meant more than \$10 million of lost production back on the field.

We can say this might mean \$60 million for the players, but that doesn't quite capture all the implications.

Alter the Minimum Salary

In the history of the minimum salary, it only takes big leaps forward after every new negotiation.

It's been tied to inflation recently, and that's why the lines go up a little between 2012 and 2017. But over the same time frame where the minimum increased slightly in five years, overall baseball revenue took off, improving by almost thirty percent in that period. And while the minimum salary has remained relatively stagnant, more and more players have been shifted towards that salary. By my count, [or that of others](#), more than half of baseball is in pre-arbitration, or effectively on the minimum salary. Compare that to three percent of the [NBA](#) on the minimum.

In any case, having more players on the minimum puts pressure on the players' association to alter the minimum salary. What if we took the minimum and really bumped it harder this time? *The Athletic's* Ken Rosenthal [suggested an \\$800,000 minimum](#). Using the playing-time-adjusted salaries at [Spotrac](#), we can see that bumping last year's players on the minimum to this extent would have cost the owners \$89 million in new salaries.

Adding almost a hundred million in salaries might seem like a big deal (even after they spent over a billion on free agents this current offseason). But what if there was a way to bring new money into the league to cover this?

Jersey Patches

Now we come to the new money flowing to ownership that could offset these player demands. But how much? Luckily, we have basketball to help model this one for us, as they've added additional advertising patches to their jerseys recently. In 2020, the average NBA team brought in \$7 million to \$10 million a year for the typical three-year deal, though there were a couple deals that brought that average up by being worth \$20 million a season. The same thing would happen in baseball, where the [Yankees](#) would be able to negotiate a bigger deal than the [Pirates](#), so whatever solution the players and owners come to on the issue will have to address revenue sharing on this particular item.

Porting that NBA number over to baseball doesn't make for a perfect fit. Baseball has more game inventory than basketball, but ratings matter too. And then there's the size and placing of the patch, with some places being more ideal than others. But [over at Sports Business Journal](#), their estimate was that baseball could bring in an additional \$8 million per team, on average. Again, the actual relationship between the teams, the owners, and the players with regards to the new revenue is huge, but that's \$240 million of new money that baseball could bring in to cover some of the costs listed above.

Let's give the owners 60 percent of this new money (around \$140 million) and keep moving.

Expanded Playoffs

Here's another way to bring new money into the sport: more playoff games. Every new playoff game means more revenue at the park, but the current setup of how players and owners share postseason revenue leads to a decently fair split. In [this example from FanGraphs](#), the players and the owners each got just over 40 percent of the ticket revenue, with the Commissioner's Office getting the remaining 20 percent or so.

That's more money for both sides, though, so it doesn't quite cover the 'new' money in the players' proposals, not in the same way that new money for the owners might. But more postseason games also mean more postseason television, and more games to sell. If only the networks or some of those digital streaming services would tell us exactly what they would pay for more games!

It's possible a just-completed deal *could* tell us a little bit about how much a postseason game is worth. ESPN negotiated to pay MLB \$550 million for the rights to 30 regular-season games, and also the wild-card games. An interesting quirk in the deal allows ESPN to trade regular-season games for playoff games if the playoff format is going to change in the future. This story [from SportsProMedia](#) says that "if the current postseason format remains in place, ESPN will exclusively carry one of the two wild-card games, and it will gain eight additional regular season games."

That sets up an equivalency. A postseason game is either worth four regular-season games (eight regular-season games replacing two), or a little bit less (eight replacing three) depending on how you read that clause and how many extra postseason games we are talking about. There's still some guesswork involved but the range between the two is \$42 million to \$58 million. But two extra wild-card games, somewhere in between that range, could be worth \$100 million in new money.

Maybe that's too high? Baseball offered the players \$50 million for the expanded playoffs in 2020, and they effectively got 16 extra wild-card games for that money. But 2020 was a unique season, to say the least. Maybe it's too low in the long term? New games means new opportunities for baseball to negotiate with new partners, perhaps in the digital space. It's new inventory, who knows where it goes. Let's use the most conservative amount, the \$50 million

number for now, with full knowledge that the owners may be able to take bigger advantage of the new games than this number represents.

We've followed the math as best we could, and an interesting thing happens when you put all these proposals on the same table.

Possible Values for Negotiated Items

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PLAYERS AFFECTED</u>	<u>TOTAL COST</u>
\$800K minimum salary	54%	89,908,544
5 yrs/29.5 New Free Agents	4%	38,940,000
National League DH	1%	<u>61,707,600</u>
TOTAL SUM NEW MONEY TO PLAYERS		\$190,556,144
Patches on Jerseys	\$8m/team, 60% owners	144,000,000
Expanded Playoffs	\$+50m	<u>\$50,000,000</u>
TOTAL SUM NEW MONEY TO OWNERS		\$194,000,000

Isn't that a little bit crazy, that this all ended up zeroing out? Of course, neither side will see it this way. The owners will say doubling the minimum is extreme, neither side will agree on what the extra television money is worth for the expanded playoffs, and the haggling over what exactly the NL DH or the last year of arbitration is worth now, and what it's worth down the line, would be extreme. There are team and player shares to be calculated when it comes to the patches, and sharing among the teams to be decided on. And the secondary implications and incentives of each of these moves may not be known for a few years after they're agreed upon.

There are details to be figured out, and there are many devils in these particular details. But if there is any hope here despite all the blustery quotes from leadership, it might just be that these numbers aren't all that far apart. These seem almost do-able. Seems like they could get to the table and figure out how to find the midpoints. Seems like a math problem.

PETER GAMMONS: IN THIS LONELY LOCKOUT WINTER, THE INJURED PLAYERS PAY AN EXTRA PRICE.

Tyler Beede was 28 in September when he and the [Giants](#) jointly decided that the first stage of his rehabilitation from Tommy John Surgery was complete, and what remained between him and pitching in the majors in 2022 would be a final five-plus months of preparation for this coming spring training.

Beede had been geared for major-league pitching from the time he was at Lawrence Academy in Groton, Mass., on a field off Main Street, not far from Finan's Gas Station, across the way from where the Groton Inn — which at one time or another hosted four different presidents — once stood. He was a first-round pick of the [Toronto Blue Jays](#) in 2011, but chose to attend Vanderbilt, where he helped win a College World Series before the Giants took him 14th overall in 2014.

The surgery came in March 2020. He pitched a few rehab games in Sacramento this summer and threw one inning for the Giants in July. In that outing, he gave up two hits and three runs but flashed higher velocity than he'd registered pre-op. He also spent some time with the major-league club later in the season. Giants president of baseball operations Farhan Zaidi was encouraged about the velocity and the sink on his fastball, but as the Giants held on to the best record in baseball, Beede's route took him home with his family to Houston, where he would spend an offseason physically preparing for the spring of 2022.

"I feel really good, things are working out very well," he said Nov. 29. He was in Houston, working out with several players, including fellow Giant [Scott Kazmir](#), who also knows a thing or two about patience. The lockout was three days away when we caught up, but he knew that on the first of the year he would go to West Palm Beach for a month and work out at the facility of Eric Cressey; growing up in Auburn, Mass., Beede had trained with Cressey at his Clinton, Mass., facility from the time he was a teenager.

"I do my conditioning, lifting, throwing and prepare for the opportunity to help the Giants," he said. "It really is an amazing group of guys. They truly care about winning, period. They're fun, they care about one another, there's a special thing about them that makes me hope every day I can contribute this coming season. My arm is feeling great. I think I'm as strong as I've ever been. I can't wait."

He appreciates why [Buster Posey](#) retired, but even when he simply talks about his days playing catch with the venerated catcher, every sentence oozes with respect. He didn't play with [Curt Casali](#) at Vanderbilt but has boundless respect for him, as well.

So, unless the lockout lasts long into March, Beede will just proceed as normal. From the Giants' angle, they just want him healthy and pitching. Zaidi said in September he expected

Beede would be healthy enough to make a significant contribution, especially with the work he'd put into the rehabilitation.

But the lockout is an issue for other pitchers coming off arm surgeries. They cannot talk to or work with their team officials. So the Dodgers cannot allow [Dustin May](#) to continue his rehab with Ron Porterfield and their staff in Arizona. [Mike Clevinger](#) cannot work with the [Padres](#), [Spencer Turnbull](#) with the [Tigers](#), [Tyler Glasnow](#) with the Rays, [Zack Britton](#) with the Yankees, [Tejay Antone](#) with the [Reds](#).

Players not on a 40-man roster can work out at a club facility, but players on the roster may not. [Red Sox](#) pitchers [Chris Sale](#) and [Kutter Crawford](#) cannot work at the club facility in Fort Myers, which is close to Sale's house. The same goes for prospects [Bryan Mata](#) and [Jay Groome](#), both off Tommy John surgery.

There are layers to this legal showdown, countless humans affected by it. MLB commissioner Rob Manfred understands the players are trying to get a redo on the agreement that was reached in 2016, one that was as lopsided as Muhammad Ali-Sonny Liston (Lewiston, Maine, version). The owners don't want to relinquish the growth of their equities. As the union increasingly becomes an 80-20 club — 80 percent of the player revenues going to 20 percent of the players — there is a growing fear that when the lockout ends, the rush to get players signed will crush the middle and lower classes. At the end of the 1994-95 strike, valuable players had to go to a tryout in Homestead, Fla., and the rush to get jobs was such a crush that there were players who agreed to contracts, then had the teams renege on them.

Anyone holding on to the hope that the union and management will accept the concept of the good of the game and structure a legitimate partnership should remember negotiations past, including the comical pay-for-performance model and the ugliness of replacement players.

The owners have to accept a path that gets more than half the teams to actually play in the free agent market, and as a solution is built, the union has to ensure the market doesn't get flooded, which it often does when only half the MLB franchises are bidding and the union strives to get an increasing number of players to free agency.

Tanking is a problem, and one not fully justified by draft position

One thing the sides should perhaps spend less time worrying about? The draft. The more teams are encouraged to minimize scouts and rely on impersonal video and laptops, the less draft position will impact long-term success. In 2013, the [Astros](#) had the first pick in the draft, the Yankees the 32nd pick in the first round. The Astros got [Mark Appel](#), the Yankees [Aaron Judge](#). In 2016, the [Phillies](#) had the first pick, the Dodgers the 32nd in the first round. The Phillies have [Mickey Moniak](#), the Dodgers [Will Smith](#).

The baseball draft isn't as simple as logging on to a Mel Kiper Jr. site and saying, "I need the best left tackle available to fill my roster spot for next season." Having a top-five pick doesn't guarantee a big-league pitcher will be delivered in 14 months.

In the drafts from 2011 to 2020, Cleveland has had 14 first-round picks. Two were in the first 10 selections: [Francisco Lindor](#) (eighth) in 2011, [Clint Frazier](#) (fifth) in 2013. In that decade, they have drafted five pitchers. None of whom have pitched in Cleveland.

Yet, they have had eight pitchers make All-Star teams, including [Corey Kluber](#) thrice; the only one signed or drafted by Cleveland was [Danny Salazar](#), a testament to the club's ability to find pitching lower in the draft and develop it.

Given that the market demographics demand one of lowest payrolls, consider these facts:

- From 2013, beginning with the hiring of [Terry Francona](#), Cleveland's .556 winning percentage is the fourth-best in the major leagues, second in the American League behind the Yankees (.560).
- In that 2013-2021 period, the Cleveland team ERA is 3.74, the third-best in baseball and the best in the American League.
- In that time, their starting pitchers have a 3.86 ERA, fifth-best in the majors, second-best in the American League behind the [Tampa Bay Rays](#) (3.83).
- In their last 800 games, dating to June 21, 2016, 23 different pitchers have started games for Cleveland. The only one of those 23 pitchers whom Cleveland signed as a free agent is [Tyler Clippard](#), and his three starts were all one-inning opener appearances.

Kluber won two Cy Youngs. They traded Jake Westbrook to get him. [Shane Bieber](#) was a fourth-round pick. They traded [Lars Anderson](#), [Tony Sipp](#), [Jason Donald](#) and [Shin-Soo Choo](#) to get [Trevor Bauer](#), traded him and he also won a Cy Young.

Tampa, of course, is right there; before the lockout, Kluber had already begun to impact Rays young pitchers, as he did the Yankees' [Michael King](#), who Aaron Boone believes will be one of the best power relievers in the game in 2022 with changes he made with the help of Kluber.

So there is the Guardians' impressive record for the last nine seasons, achieved with only the ninth pick in 2011 and the fifth in 2013; Cleveland made it to the 10th inning of the seventh game of the 2016 World Series, with Lindor as one of their prime players. Another reason why? They had Frazier and [Justus Sheffield](#) — a 2014 first-rounder they took with the 31st pick — and used them to trade for [Andrew Miller](#), who was such a major figure in their postseason run and one of the best relievers of the decade.

It is a debatable notion to suggest that teams should try to lose to get top picks in the draft. It might have felt that way in 2009 and 2010, when the [Nationals](#) had the top pick and Steven Strasburg and [Bryce Harper](#) were unquestioned uberstars; injuries robbed Strasburg of a Hall of Fame trajectory, unlike Harper, but the 25th pick in the 2009 draft was [Mike Trout](#), and don't let people suggest that Trout was a fortunate Eddie Bane selection for the [Angels](#) given that

they picked [Randal Grichuk](#) a spot ahead of Trout, because the video of his workout at Yankee Stadium is what the Yankees saw and while they would have taken Strasburg, they would have taken Trout had they had any pick from two to 25.

Ken Griffey Jr. was the first pick in the country in 1987, a Hall of Fame giant, but in a poll I took for Sports Illustrated, there were as many teams that would have taken Mark Merchant — who went No. 2 — as there were for Griffey. Harold Baines is a Hall of Famer and first pick in the draft; Paul Molitor went two selections later. Bobby Cox and Paul Snyder of the [Braves](#) went against overwhelming public opinion in 1990 and took Chipper Jones over Todd Van Poppel and endured public ridicule. Time will determine whether [Alex Rodriguez](#) is another Hall of Famer who was the first pick in his draft.

After Astros scouting director Bobby Heck took [George Springer](#) with the 11th pick in the 2011 draft, Heck stayed around and did the 2012 draft and worked it so that top overall pick [Carlos Correa](#) took a discount and the Astros got Correa and [Lance McCullers](#). But Heck left and for the next two seasons, the Astros again had the first pick in the country and selected Mark Appel and [Brady Aiken](#), and neither has yet made the major leagues. Moniak was the first pick in 2016. In fact, for those owners who liken the MLB Draft to the [NFL](#) or [NBA](#), of the first picks in the drafts from 2016-20, only one, [Casey Mize](#), has appeared in the major leagues; Mize is 7-12, 4.23, but he has pitched for Tiger teams with questionable defense, which may change in 2022.

It is unfair to assess the 2019 draftees because the COVID-19 pandemic wiped out the 2020 minor-league season and fractured 2021. Unless the [Orioles](#) intend to hold [Adley Rutschman](#)'s debut for the 250th anniversary of the Star Spangled Banner — coming up in 2064 — he will play at Camden Yards this season. In fact, including Kansas City's Bobby Witt, Miami's J.J. Bleday and Texas' [Josh Jung](#), the first eight picks in that draft will likely play in the majors in 2022. Go further through that first round and you'll see Toronto's Alex Manoah, a rising rotation star, plus Arizona center fielder [Corbin Carroll](#), Cleveland right-hander [Daniel Espino](#) and Yankee shortstop [Anthony Volpe](#) (30th pick); all have long-time big leaguer projections. Volpe is what one gets when area scouts know the player, family and makeup, not just video clips.

As for the No. 1 picks who are in the Hall of Fame, Chipper Jones is the only one who played his entire career for the team that drafted him. Harper is in Philadelphia, [Gerrit Cole](#) in New York, Correa is scouring Expedia for his next destination, Appel is in Philly, Aiken is out of baseball because of injury, [Dansby Swanson](#) is in Atlanta.

The winter of pitchers' catchers

There are certain things one never expects to hear, not even in the first hour after sunrise. "How in the world could the Yankees get outbid for [Yan Gomes](#)?" a caller shouted to Steve Phillips' Leadoff Spot show on XM Radio. Indeed, the [Cubs](#) had signed Gomes as a free agent for three years and \$13.5 million, while the Yankees had surprised some by tendering [Gary Sánchez](#) a contract for the 2022 season.

It wasn't anger about being outbid for [Willson Contreras](#) or [Yasmani Grandal](#). It was *Yan Gomes*. "The caller knows why Yankee pitchers want [Kyle Higashioka](#) to catch them," not Sánchez, said a National League club official who also heard the exchange.

Welcome to the winter of the pitchers' catchers. At the time of that exchange, the caller didn't realize that the Yankees — and the Red Sox, for that matter — had been outbid by the [Marlins](#) for [Jacob Stallings](#). "Listen to the best handlers of pitchers over the years — (Johnny) Bench, (Yadier) Molina, (Mike) Scioscia, (Brad) Ausmus — and it's about the relationship and creating conviction in his pitcher, how if the pitcher is convicted and given the right catcher presentation he doesn't need the framing stats," said the NL front office veteran. "Stallings is one of those guys. He is really good, and the Marlins pitching for the next five years is going to be really good."

The Tigers traded for [Tucker Barnhart](#) to aid their young pitchers. The [Rockies](#) so appreciated the receiving of [Elias Diaz](#) that after four years during which he made \$2.8 million, they signed him to a three-year extension for \$14.5 million. [Austin Hedges](#) has taken command of one of the best young staffs for the [Indians](#). Kevin Cash and Kyle Snyder constantly credit [Mike Zunino](#) for their young staff's development. At the 2021 trade deadline, the Padres traded for [Austin Nola](#), giving up left-handed pitcher [Matt Brash](#) out of Niagara College, who last season in the Seattle system established himself as a premium prospect, throwing 97 1/3 innings and striking out 142. Be it A.J. Hinch or [Dusty Baker](#), there is a good reason the Astros managers ensure Martín Maldonado catches in the postseason.

Kim Ng's offseason plan for the Marlins has seen them deal for Stallings and acquire Avisail García, [Joey Wendle](#) and [Louis Head](#), with continued interest in several other free agents. When the new ownership took over the club, the enthusiastic young analytics-oriented front office began its makeover seeking tools. When then-pro scouting director Jim Cuthbert traded for [Zac Gallen](#) and [Sandy Alcántara](#), he was criticized by the new front office members, some of whom have grown into valued evaluators, after Cuthbert left.

When Miami was shopping J.T. Realmuto in 2019, it was looking for the shiny tools. [Sixto Sánchez](#) had the mega-arm; he's thrown 39 innings. They grabbed catcher [Jorge Alfaro](#), with arm and power tools; he was designated for assignment when the Gold Glover Stallings arrived. And the deal they passed up to get the Philadelphia package was [Austin Riley](#) and [Mike Soroka](#) from Atlanta, but that was the past. The present is about building, and helping what their system develops. They took Vanderbilt outfielder Bleday with the fourth pick in the 2019 draft, and this fall he put things together in the Arizona Fall League and may be close to the majors; the fact that his aunt is CEO of the Yawkey Foundation will make for a nice story when Bleday gets to play an interleague game at Fenway Park.

In the meantime, there are many Yankee and Red Sox fans (especially in Palm Beach County) in South Florida. Ng got Stallings when the Yankees and Red Sox were pursuing him. It should not go unnoticed.

Different numbers matter to different people

B.J. Surhoff was the first pick in the 1985 draft, played 19 years in the big leagues and totaled 2,326 hits.

Surhoff still has great memories of coming up with the [Brewers](#), with Robin Yount and the team values taught young players by Yount, Ted Simmons, Paul Molitor, et al. “One night we lost a tough game, and Robin and I were the last two in the showers,” Surhoff recently recalled. “I congratulated him on what was a really good game — three hits, a great defensive play, so forth.

“He started screaming at me because those individual things meant nothing because we lost. I obviously have never forgotten that. In many ways, because we have so many individual stats, that has changed dramatically. It’s about individual numbers, not team winning.”

Memo to the next [Mets](#) manager: Think about that.

But it’s not just something generational. In the early 1970s, when the Red Sox had dysfunctional moments, there was an unusually ugly loss at home at Fenway, some players were quarreling with one another, several players were yelling at media members and 12-letter words were bouncing around the old clubhouse like squash balls. In the midst of it all, Danny Cater approached me, The Boston Globe’s beat writer. “Your paper has me for one more at-bat than I have, so my batting average in the Globe is a point lower than it is,” Cater said, in the middle of what felt like a political demonstration. “I think you should get it corrected.”

Earlier that season the Orioles were playing in Boston and Earl Williams, a slugger Earl Weaver wanted as a catcher because he loved home runs by catchers, was behind the plate. In an early inning, a pitch got away from Williams. Official scorer Ray Fitzgerald ruled it a passed ball, and, as was the tradition at Fenway, a red light then flashed on the scoreboard and the voice of public address Sherm Feller (who, for you oldies out there, had a writing credit on the song, “Summertime, Summertime” made famous by the Jamies) boomed, “passed ball. That was a passed ball.”

The rest of the inning, Williams got into his crouch and caught with his right arm pointed up towards the press box, middle finger extended. Earl Williams was a nice person, intelligent, but his priority was not the pitcher.

NOT SURE WHAT WEB SITES YOU CHECKOUT FOR BASEBALL NEWS. IF ITS MLB.COM YOU HAVE SEEN A BIG CHANGE SINCE THE LOCKOUT.

On MLB-owned media, the players now barely exist. What's behind that decision?

Overnight last week, as Major League Baseball owners implemented a lockout, the league began acting as if its unionized players — those on 40-man rosters — no longer exist.

The players have been scrubbed from the league's website and content ecosystem. Their headshots were removed from rosters, their highlights hidden, their names wiped from promotional schedules. (April 30 is "Cardinals Third Baseman Bobblehead" day at Busch Stadium.) Team social media accounts quieted and ceased referencing players at all; the league's Twitter account went nearly three days without activity this weekend. MLB Network and MLB.com employees were instructed to mostly avoid mentioning active 40-man players' names on air or in articles for the duration of the lockout.

But exactly why MLB is taking this route isn't clear.

MLB is advised in labor relations by the law firm Proskauer Rose. Asked to explain the reason the league drastically altered its content vehicles, a commissioner's office spokesperson said, "Every action we are taking is at the advice of legal counsel per the National Labor Relations Act." The spokesperson declined, however, to identify what specifically in the NLRA or baseball's collective bargaining agreement prompts or merits erasing current players.

When commissioner Rob Manfred was asked last week in a news conference whether it was a legal issue, he offered two words: "It is." But legal experts who spoke to *The Athletic* found it difficult to confidently identify MLB and Proskauer's potential legal theory.

"I can't think of anything," said Dave Leach, a professor at Brooklyn Law School and a former regional director for the National Labor Relations Board. "I've never seen a case which had similar facts. And I was there for 45 years, so I saw a good number of cases at the board."

Bruce Meyer, the lead negotiator for the players' union, said MLB made the decision on its own, "and you'll have to ask them for their reasons."

"It's a little bit of a mystery why they think this is somehow required legally," said Jason Wojciechowski, a lawyer at Bush Gottlieb and former editor at Baseball Prospectus. "I don't know what aspect of the law they think they'd be in violation of. As a union lawyer, my suspicion is that's cover. But on the other hand, cover for what?"

Nathaniel Grow, a professor of business law and ethics at Indiana University who writes for FanGraphs, thought it was fair to wonder whether MLB could be applying a pressure tactic. But if so, it might not be a particularly effective approach.

"How much pressure does it really apply?" Grow said. "Is it more of just an aggravating tactic? Are the players going to cave on a second-year arbitration (demand) because their pictures are down from the website? Probably not."

Said an MLB spokesperson: "These actions are not intended to punish players in any manner whatsoever."

In maintaining their stance, MLB will try not to use players' names or likenesses for promotional or commercial purposes during the lockout, the league said. Yet, as of Monday, MLB continued to sell player jerseys, with player names and numbers, through its websites.

Both Grow and a player agent who would speak only anonymously speculated the decision could have something to do with a clause in the uniform player contract, or UPC. The UPC is included in the CBA, and has clauses that address promotional activities and club usage of photographs.

"The Player agrees that his picture may be taken for still photographs, motion pictures or television at such times as the Club may designate and agrees that all rights in such pictures shall belong to the Club and may be used by the Club for publicity purposes in any manner it desires," reads the UPC.

The most recent CBA has expired. Player contracts, though, aren't torn up at the moment a lockout arrives — if your favorite player was under contract before the lockout, he remains so.

"I still don't think (the scrubbing) is actually legally required," Grow said. "But again that's the best theory I've been able to come up with."

There can be competing views on what legally is required during a lockout, though. In one area, injury rehabilitation, the players' union and commissioner's office are known to interpret the requirements of the NLRA differently.

MLB might have raised eyebrows no matter what it did. If the league had continued to use player images during a lockout, players might have been angered the league had done so.

The decision has turned a nonstop content machine into a non-entity. On Wednesday, baseball was in the midst of a hectic and exciting free-agent frenzy. By Thursday, those same players barely existed on the site.

"It's a stunning little dimension of the dispute," said Daniel Gilbert, a labor and history professor at the University of Illinois. Gilbert has followed the MLB-MLBPA labor situation more closely than most baseball fans, yet even he was surprised by how, at the stroke of midnight last Thursday, the first volley of the lockout came in the form of grayed-out headshots and an empty front page on MLB.com. "I think it does highlight how central players' names, images and likenesses are to the labor politics of the sport," Gilbert said.

That visual was widely ridiculed on social media and across the internet. If there was any tactical reason for the league to choose that course, it has backfired in the eyes of some. Legal questions aside, Gilbert said, the optics of wiping websites and instructing reporters to ignore

players suggest it's "the owners trying to present themselves as the trustees of this industry that is bigger than and not dependent upon ... the labor of any particular players."

"But it seems to be such a foolish strategy," Gilbert said. "By scrubbing the images from the website, they're making one of the union's fundamental arguments for them. I think the union is on solid ground by arguing that you can't have something called Major League Baseball without the players who make it happen. You don't have the Angels without (Shohei) Ohtani and (Mike) Trout. You don't have the Dodgers without Mookie (Betts) and (Walker) Buehler. You don't have the Yankees without (Aaron) Judge and (Giancarlo) Stanton."

In the weeks leading up to the lockout, MLB officials instructed league and club employees on how they'd overhaul the league's content streams in the event of a work stoppage.

All team personnel — from low-level staffer to front-office executive — were told they must not contact players or comment on them publicly. Social media managers were to remove monetized Facebook and Twitter posts using the name or likenesses of active 40-man players and hide or delete YouTube videos featuring them, per a club employee.

For MLB.com reporters, the new content limitations were explained last month in staff meetings. Multiple MLB.com employees said they were told they could only mention a player's name in an article if absolutely necessary, and that player could not be the focus of the story. Any reference to a player must be approved by editors. Reporters were encouraged to write evergreen stories — about former players, non-40-man prospects, coaches, Hall of Fame candidates and history — instead of forward-looking angles about the upcoming season.

MLB.com reporters initially were instructed to maintain a low profile on social media during the lockout, according to sources, but hours before the CBA expiration that directive changed: Writers are to avoid posting about baseball on social media until further notice. (That restriction was eased the following day, yet reporters were asked not to mention 40-man players or comment on the labor situation.)

At midnight Thursday, the MLB.com site transformed to feature only a note from commissioner Rob Manfred and evergreen features. Shortly after the lockout began, [a brief explanation](#) was posted on MLB.com acknowledging that "content on this site looks a little different than usual."

MLB.com reporters and MLB Network on-air personalities may cover breaking news and CBA negotiations, according to the league, but will not create content featured around current players until a new CBA has been agreed to. That means very rare mentions of players on the league's website or network due to a Catch-22: MLB Network and MLB.com can still mention players where breaking news warrants it, but because there will be no transactions and little news for the considerable future there will be few occasions to discuss them by name.

MLB Network plans to still air old games and archived footage that doesn't involve current players — that footage is under MLB's copyright, the league noted. Individual clubs will also be limited in how they can use the name, image and likeness of their players; players are not permitted to attend any club event or appear on any club programming or media channels, including social media, per MLB.

While MLB has not had a previous work stoppage in the internet age, other leagues have. The NBA did not use images and video of its players on its website immediately after it began its 2011 lockout of the league's players. That choice, the league [told The New York Times](#) then, was a tactical one, not a legal one. Within three weeks, the league's website would include stories referencing their current players and run stories on their intentions to play for European teams during the lockout, according to a survey of the site through the Internet Archive.

During the 2012-13 NHL lockout, there were some content restrictions for NHL.com reporters and NHL Network personalities, according to multiple former employees. NHL Network [was criticized](#) for its coverage of the lockout, airing reruns of non-NHL games rather than discussing the state of the labor situation. Former NHL.com reporters recall being instructed to write about active NHLPA players only if they were visible at a CBA meeting; in that case, however, that was not delivered so explicitly from the outset as MLB.com's recent directive.

Two days into the NHL lockout, then-Los Angeles Kings reporter Rich Hammond (now an NHL editor at *The Athletic*) [published an interview](#) with Kings forward Kevin Westgarth, the team's NHLPA player rep who had been heavily involved in CBA negotiations. The league demanded that the Kings remove the story from their site, claiming Hammond was a team employee and couldn't have contact with active players. Hammond had never been censored by NHL.com before. He quit.

Perhaps, when it comes to covering labor disputes from inside the house, MLB is learning from the NHL's experience. There is certainly crossover between the leagues today. In 2015, MLB Advanced Media struck a deal to run the NHL's digital and broadcast operations, which included migrating NHL Network to be under the same roof as MLB Network in Secaucus, N.J.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman is also an alumnus of Proskauer, the firm that produced former NBA commissioner David Stern. (Current NBA commissioner Adam Silver worked at a different firm, but his father worked at Proskauer.) MLB's current lead negotiator, COO Dan Halem, worked at the firm as well.

On Thursday morning, Mets pitcher Trevor Williams saw his roster headshot replaced by a generic silhouette and was amused. Williams made the silhouette his Twitter profile picture. The Yankees' Jameson Taillon followed suit, then San Diego's Joe Musgrove too. The trend spread from their text thread to players all around the league. They like the message it sends. One day, they were proud MLB players. The next, the league hardly recognized them.

JAYSON STARK ON HOW TO STOP TANKING

Tanks But No Tanks: How to solve MLB's tanking problem? Reverse the draft order

"A lot of the issues ... (come down to) too many teams not attempting to compete."

—Longtime reliever [Andrew Miller](#), on [The Athletic](#) Baseball Show

I have come here to solve the great baseball labor snafu. You're welcome. If Andrew Miller has captured this correctly, the first step toward peace, kumbaya and, especially, pitchers and catchers on Feb. 14 is this: We need to end tanking. I can help with that.

I have a plan. It isn't my plan. I've heard people talk about it for a few years. Neither side has presented it at the bargaining table. Neither side even seems particularly interested in it. I'm happy to explain why shortly.

It has flaws. It's far from perfect. It might be overflowing with all sorts of unintended consequences. But let's put those aside for a moment because the more I've delved into it, the more I'm convinced it has one major selling point:

It would work.

So here's the idea for this plan, which we'll call (for now) the Tanks But No Tanks plan: Let's not award the top picks in the amateur draft to the teams that lose 112, 104 and 101 games in the previous season. Let's award those picks to teams that just miss the playoffs, not teams that lose hope by Mother's Day.

If this plan were put in place immediately, here's how next year's draft would work. (We'll assume no expanded playoffs for now, even though they're likely coming.)

Pick No. 1 – [Blue Jays](#) (91-71)

Pick No. 2 – [Mariners](#) (90-72)

Pick No. 3 – [Athletics](#) (86-76)

Pick No. 4 – [Reds](#) (83-79)

Pick No. 5 – [Phillies](#) (82-80)

...

Pick No. 20 – [Orioles](#) (52-110)

Pick No. 19 – [Diamondbacks](#) (52-110)

Pick No. 18 – [Rangers](#) (60-102)

Pick No. 17 – [Pirates](#) (61-101)

Pick No. 16 – [Nationals](#) (65-97)

OK, so that's different. If baseball were to keep the draft order as it is now, those two groups would be reversed. That means it would be the Orioles and Diamondbacks lining up to find the

next [Bryce Harper](#), [Stephen Strasburg](#) or [Gerrit Cole](#), not two teams that just won 90-plus games apiece.

So why do this? It's simple.

You're not getting that No. 1 pick — the next Harper/Cole/Strasburg, plus all the draft-pool money that goes with it — by tanking. There's only one way you *can* get that pick — by trying. How 'bout that for a revolutionary concept.

"This would work," said one agent who is probably the biggest fan of this idea I know. "It would incentivize everyone to win in September, either to get to the playoffs or get the No. 1 pick. And that's the first thing all fans deserve."

And it isn't only people on the players' side who agree. For a piece I wrote a couple of months ago, on [what we learned this past season](#), I surveyed people in front offices about which 2021 trend they thought was most important to address in this labor deal. The runaway winner: tanking.

So about three weeks ago, before the lockout, I circled back to one of the executives I talked to then to see how he felt about this idea. I won't describe him further, other than to say his team has spent a few seasons in the recent past in what [MLB](#) would characterize as "a down cycle." So he's familiar with the benefits and pitfalls of that cycle.

"It certainly gives teams a reason to compete in September," he said, "or to pitch your best pitcher that last weekend because you can get a better draft pick. There's no doubt it would change the way you approach things."

Like many people, he has other changes he would favor, either in addition to this or as stand-alone ideas. He initially talked up those ideas as being preferable to this plan. But the more he thought this one over, the more he warmed up to it. He texted me, several hours later, with more thoughts. He still has reservations, but he concluded this way:

"It definitely incentivizes winning, and that would be the purpose. So after thinking about it, you'd get my vote. Creative."

You'd get my vote. I love that kind of talk. But I haven't even shown you yet how powerful the impact of this plan would be. So here it comes ...

The true power of Tanks But No Tanks

Let's illustrate, with actual data, how much draft order can change the fate of a franchise. To do that, I looked at the nine amateur drafts from 2010 through 2018. Then I added up the collective Wins Above Replacement of the players picked in different spots in that draft. As always, we do the math here so you don't have to.

Draft pick values, 2010-18 drafts

PIACK NUMBER	TOTAL WAR	BEST PLAYER
1	117	Bryce Harper 40
2	81	Kris Bryant 29
3	75	Manny Machado 45
16	19	Lucas Giolito (11.0)
20	12	Tyler Anderson (8.1)

M.L.B.'s Lockout: What Is It? How Does It Work? What's Next? LOCKOUT BASICS FROM NYT

Players are locked out and transactions are frozen in baseball's ninth work stoppage. But no one is missing any checks — yet.

At 11:59 p.m. Eastern on Wednesday, the document that governs baseball — the five-year collective bargaining agreement between the owners of the 30 Major League Baseball clubs and the players — [expired](#). Two minutes later, M.L.B. Commissioner Rob Manfred announced that the league had [enacted a lockout](#), which brought the sport to a halt. Teams are not allowed to talk to players, make major-league signings or swing trades.

This is the ninth work stoppage in M.L.B. history, and the fourth lockout. Here is what's going on:

What is a lockout?

In short, it is a type of work stoppage used by the owners of a business during a labor dispute.

"In a lockout, the management tells workers don't show up," said Bob Jarvis, a professor who teaches a baseball law course at Nova Southeastern University. "While in a strike, workers tell management, 'We're not going to show up.' But either way, the factory or the business comes to a standstill because the workers are not there."

A lockout is a tool that owners can use. Leagues can operate without a new collective bargaining agreement in place, but it is common practice in the four major men's North

American professional sports leagues — M.L.B., the N.F.L., the N.B.A. and the N.H.L. — to use a lockout in instances like this.

Manfred referred to M.L.B.'s implementation of the lockout as "defensive." His reasoning: the 1994-95 strike — the last work stoppage in baseball to cost regular-season games (over 900 in all) — came after the league had continued to operate without a new agreement.

When the C.B.A. expired then, the 1994 season began as scheduled. Players went on strike in August as M.L.B. sought to add a salary cap. The union successfully avoided the institution of the cap, but the 1994 World Series was canceled and the strike didn't end until April 1995, with a legal battle playing out in public.

"You want to control the timing of the dispute," Manfred said, adding later, "If you play without an agreement, you're vulnerable to a strike at any point in time. What happened in 1994 is the M.L.B.P.A. picked August when we were most vulnerable because of the proximity of the large revenue dollars associated with the postseason. We wanted to take that option away and try to force the parties to deal with the issues and get an agreement now."

Players felt as if owners had been planning a lockout for some time and that it was an attempt at intimidation.

"It's unnecessary to continue the dialogue," said Tony Clark, the executive director of the players' union. "We've obviously had 26 years without a work stoppage and the industry has continued to do well and grow. And at the first instance in some time of bumpy water, the recourse was a strategic decision to lock players out."

How many lockouts have led to the cancellations of games?

None yet.

In the lockouts of 1973, '76 and '90, a full regular-season was played each time. In 1990, for instance, [the 32-day lockout](#) eliminated most of spring training, but 162 regular-season games were played, starting a week later than usual.

What are the downsides of a lockout?

Even though it is the off-season, Manfred conceded that a lockout is "bad for our business." No games or paychecks are being missed over the winter, but Clark said players considered the lockout "provocative."

"The moment that you declare a lockout, you really push fans into the players' camp," Jarvis said. "You really play into the players' argument that, 'Hey, even though we're the reason that you're coming out to see the games, you won't be able to see the games because of what management did.' It is much better for management to force the players to go on strike so that

management can say, 'Hey, we want the games to go on. It's the players who are refusing to show up.'"

Jarvis said that, at least, this work stoppage was coming during a time when other sports are in season: the N.B.A., the N.F.L., the N.H.L., and college football. But for ardent baseball fans who intensely follow their team's hot stove moves, he said a lockout is bad because the activity has stopped. For the average fan, he said, a lockout isn't going to make a difference. That is, until spring training. If a new agreement is not struck by then, the casual fan will start to notice when the usual schedule is altered. More will when the regular season is affected.

"Right now, the calendar favors ownership," said Michael LeRoy, a professor and sports labor expert at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "Players can't sign free-agent deals and they're going to get anxious about that. But if players are able to hold fast through late January or February, now the advantage shifts to the players. It's not very common, but there are times that lockouts convert to strikes. My concern about this is that a lockout would not be resolved quickly, and that in time it would morph into a strike and it would last into spring training and beyond."

LeRoy said there have been roughly 20 work stoppages in the four major North American sports leagues since the 1960s with almost all of them won by management. The lone exception: the 1994-95 baseball players' strike.

"That was the strike that set the bar for labor unions in sports to emulate and so that is framing everything here," he said. "That was a spectacular success for the union that was so successful, because the union avoided a hard salary cap. And that's why we have players signing 10-year deals for over \$300 million. You have nothing like it in any other sport."

What are the issues in the dispute?

There are a lot.

Although [star players are setting contract records](#) in a system without a hard salary cap — a mechanism present in the other major North American professional sports leagues — players feel owners aren't struggling as much as they say they are; that too many teams are receiving tens of millions in revenue sharing from their counterparts yet purposefully aren't competing for playoff spots; that the industry has grown but the average major-league salary (roughly \$4 million) has remained flat or dropped; that younger, cheaper players are being relied on more than ever and having their service time manipulated.

Owners, though, believe baseball players have the best deal in professional sports and [point to this off-season's free-agent spending](#), which was on pace to set a record, as one point in that argument.

Read more about their dispute [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

What can players do during a lockout?

They cannot sign major league contracts. They cannot take part in team activities. They should not be talking to team officials. They cannot use team facilities. (A fair amount of players, though, already work out with private trainers or coaches in the off-season.)

Some of the specifics of what players can do seems to be in dispute. Asked if contact between club officials and players undergoing rehabilitation for injuries or those talking to team mental health professionals could continue, Manfred said, "That's a legal issue upon which we do not have flexibility."

Clark countered by saying "We have a difference of opinion in regard to what the rules of engagement are here. There have been differences in [other scenarios](#) whereby support was provided to those who needed it. So on that front, it is not a line in the sand that is necessary to draw."

On Thursday morning, Yankees pitcher Jameson Taillon, who is recovering from ankle surgery in October, [tweeted](#) that he was going to have to find his own way to continue his rehabilitation.

"Since MLB chose to lock us out, i'm not able to work with our amazing team Physical Therapists who have been leading my post surgery care/progression," he wrote. "Now that I'm in charge of my own PT- what should my first order of business be? I'm thinking I'm done with this boot. It can go."

The union has told players that, if they were on a 40-man roster at any point during the 2021 season, their medical benefits will continue until the scheduled start of the 2022 season, according to a work stoppage guide provided to agents, a copy of which was obtained by The New York Times. If a work stoppage continues after then, the union said it will use its reserves to cover their health benefits.

What can clubs do during a lockout?

Teams were expected to continue their off-seasons but without a major component: the players. They can work on trades but cannot consummate them. They can continue working with their non playing employees, scouring video, planning their strategies and so on.

Will club employees be laid off or furloughed?

An M.L.B. spokesman said that "for the foreseeable future, there are no plans at the league or club level to implement furloughs, pay reductions or work force reductions" while M.L.B. negotiated what it hoped would be "a full 2022 season" with the union.

In 2020, when the pandemic halted everything in spring training and negotiations over a regular season lasted months, many clubs [furloughed or laid off employees, and instituted pay cuts](#).

Can the sides still negotiate during a lockout?

Yes. They said they planned to, even though no further sessions had been scheduled as of Thursday morning.

“There’s this intense negotiation and then when the lockout occurs, there’s emotion around it and people back away,” LeRoy said. “And usually there’s a fairly lengthy hiatus before any more talks occur. It wouldn’t surprise me if it was weeks later that talks occur. And really, what it becomes is a war of attrition. Who can endure the pain the longest?”

After the C.B.A. expired, neither Manfred nor Clark provided a deadline for a deal. Manfred said M.L.B. enacted the lockout now to provide enough time to reach a resolution that avoids damaging the 2022 season. Clark said players want an agreement that addresses their concerns and hoped it would be “sooner rather than later.”

Is anyone missing a paycheck?

Not yet.

Players don’t earn paychecks or service time in the off-season or spring training, during which they get allowances. Paychecks and service time start in the regular season, which is slated to begin on March 31. (During a lockout, according to the union, clubs are obligated to pay any signing bonuses, deferred salary and any other payments that were earned before the lockout began.)

BASEBALL’S MONEY SQUABBLES SHOULDN’T HIDE MAJOR ON-FIELD PROBLEMS

By Scott Lauber

The Philadelphia Inquirer

A few weeks ago, Dave Dombrowski attended an Arizona Fall League game that featured 18 runs, 21 hits, 10 walks, and 11 pitching changes. It didn’t lack for action. Phillies shortstop prospect Bryson Stott stood at the center of it all, with a double, a sacrifice fly, and a run scored.

But here’s the kicker: The game lasted only 3 hours, 3 minutes.

“It was great,” said Dombrowski, the Phillies’ president of baseball operations. “I mean, the action – just boom, boom. There’s always something going on. I really like that.”

Fans appreciate it, too, more than ever. But despite consumers' shrinking attention spans and a growing number of entertainment alternatives, Major League Baseball plods along with longer-than-ever games in which less and less actually happens, an existential threat to the sport.

The average nine-inning regular-season major league game this year was played in an all-time high of 3 hours and 10 minutes, three minutes longer than last year and 19 minutes longer than in 2011. Meanwhile, hitters combined to bat .244, tied for the lowest average since 1968, and reach base at a .317 clip, the second-lowest mark since 1972. But at least games averaged a brisk 2:27 back then.

Something must be done for the sake of the sport's long-term survival. An owner-initiated lockout in the midst of negotiations of a new collective bargaining agreement would seem like a prime opportunity to also improve the on-field product.

Yet commissioner Rob Manfred said in a news conference last week that negotiations with the MLB Players Association will be limited to economics, not improvements to the on-field product.

"Frankly," Manfred said, "based on the discussions at the table, we saw it as another contentious issue and tried to put it to one side in an effort to get to an agreement on the theory that we could deal with it midterm of the next agreement."

Well, then.

There's no denying the chasm between the owners and players on economic issues – service-time minimums for salary arbitration and free agency, revenue sharing among owners, competitive integrity, and more – is wide enough that it may take longer than the 2 1/2 months between now and spring training to reach an agreement. Introducing a debate about, say, a pitch clock or the electronic strike zone may not be particularly helpful.

At its core, though, this is about leverage. And money, of course.

Dombrowski isn't the only team executive in favor of rules changes to improve pace of play. At last month's general managers meetings in Carlsbad, Calif., several leading executives endorsed the 15-second pitch clock (17 seconds with a runner on base) that helped trim the average time of a nine-inning Arizona Fall League game to 2:46.

Los Angeles Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman said he "wasn't sure what to expect" from the pitch clock. What he found was "a pace to things that I appreciated," so much so that he said he forgot the clock was even there.

"I love it," Toronto Blue Jays general manager Ross Atkins said. "I think the challenge with it is just the buy-in from the players and what it means for a hitter's rhythm and routine. But I love the concept of thinking about how we can react to our fans' desires and think about the health and vitality of this game and creating as much energy and excitement around it as possible."

There's likely similar support among players and owners.

Over the last few years, MLB used the minor leagues as a lab to experiment with a pitch clock, limits on defensive shifts, and other rules designed to reduce dead time. Some are closer to implementation than others. (The electronic strike zone, for instance, is a work in progress).

The cases for and against Jimmy Rollins and Ryan Howard in Cooperstown

Manfred, who works for the owners, has pushed pace-of-play improvements. MLB hired Theo Epstein to consult on potential rules changes. Players Association executive director Tony Clark, a former player, told reporters before Game 1 of the World Series that he's open to talking about new rules "and that's not going to change."

So, what's the problem?

With the players fighting for massive changes to the league's economic structure, the owners argue that on-field improvements are separate from economics, mainly to prevent the players from using the pitch clock or other popular new rules as bargaining chips. But the players contend that economics and the on-field product are interrelated.

And so, both sides continue to whistle past the graveyard, ignoring the most serious threat to their future: the game itself.

Dick Allen's son says his father is laughing at latest Hall of Fame snub

Manfred said last week the owners proposed forming a joint committee to discuss rules changes. The expired CBA also gave him power to implement on-field rules even if they were rejected by the players. Assuming he retains that authority under the new agreement, he could institute a pitch clock, or any other new rule favored by the owners, without a rubber stamp from the players.

"I'd prefer to do it by reaching an agreement with the players," Manfred said during the World Series.

Key questions about the MLB lockout: What each side wants, how long it will last

One way or another, changes to the product must be made. Shorter, more action-packed games matter more to fans than whether players can become free agents before they accumulate six years of major league service time or how the owners share revenues.

"People like fast-paced events, more action," Dombrowski said. "I think [the game] is screaming for a change in that regard. I think it's fan-friendly, I think it's player-friendly, I think it's front office-friendly. However that's created, that's not my responsibility. But I think it would be helpful for the game. I do."

Best that the owners and players don't lose sight of that.

Baseball lockout shows what's wrong with a superstar economy

By Allison Schrager

Bloomberg

For the first time in more than 25 years (2020's pandemic shutdown excluded) there is no baseball. I know it's the off season, but if the impasse between the players union and the owners continues there may be no baseball in April. The disagreement is largely about how younger players and superstars are paid. But the problems stem from big structural changes in the economy that impact every industry. And while the baseball lock-out will eventually be resolved, the economy-wide issues that unions are ill-equipped to address will remain.

The U.S. economy has undergone some big changes in the last few decades that impact every industry, even the classic American game. Better data and data analytics make it easier to spot talent and how much an individual worker or player contributes. There are also bigger rewards to being a superstar both individually and as a team.

Talent tends to cluster, creating superstar companies (or teams) who earn outsize rewards. Increased globalization and technology contribute to a larger, more lucrative market that increases the value of being a superstar, especially if you work at a superstar firm and work with other stars. This leaves mediocre players and workers behind and unable to compete. The winner-take-all economy is a big part of the reason why income inequality has increased.

This also explains why baseball is struggling to find a compensation formula that can satisfy both players and owners. When players enter the Major League they sign a contract that allows them to renegotiate a pay increase through arbitration after three years of service. After a minimum of six years of service they can become free agents and might sign a bigger deal with a different team. The union wants arbitration and free agency to happen sooner. With the current arrangement, many younger players are underpaid during their prime years. The analytics have revealed that most players become less valuable as they get into their 30s, when their contracts would typically expire.

That's why many players have been extending their contracts and avoiding free agency. Under the current rules, the ability to negotiate for higher pay tends to happen after their peak years. If they could get out of their contracts earlier, they could make hay in their prime. This might be acceptable to the owners on its own, but the union also wants to preserve the upside, or the extremely large salaries for the few players who do go on to become big stars and secure big deals after their contract ends.

There is no salary cap in baseball, but there is a "luxury tax" on team salaries intended to prevent an arms race that ends in the richer teams hoarding the best talent. If a team's total salaries exceed a certain amount, currently set at \$210 million, the team must pay a fine that goes up each year the threshold is violated.

So the owners would like to lower the luxury-tax threshold, introduce a salary floor, and base free agency on age instead of years in the league. This would keep salaries down for both young players and stars. Owners argue the players already have a good deal, industry pay has never been higher and the players' share of revenue has been constant. Though that is largely because those few superstar salaries have gotten so high.

To be fair, it may not be possible to pay \$43 million annually to the few stars and pay younger players more. Something has to give. While in other industries the superstar effect means a few firms end up with all the talent and most of the profits, in sports that would mean only a few competitive teams.

Each side is fighting a losing battle. Many economic commentators argue unions are the answer to reducing inequality. And they have a point; that is exactly what unions do. The way unions normally work is they negotiate compensation that applies to all workers/players so everyone is paid a similar amount. The result is that more productive workers subsidize the less productive. This creates stability, regular, steady pay increases and ensures workers have some power.

When more of the economy consisted of routine manufacturing work this was a reasonable trade-off for the chance of being that better-paid worker. The economic value of being more productive wasn't so large and it wasn't easy to figure out who was better at their job. But in a more high-tech, data-driven, service-oriented economy, the benefits of being a super worker are higher, which means you give up more if you unionize with less productive co-workers. This may explain why unions are less popular these days, with the notable exception of the public sector (where there is less scope for upside) and professional sports.

The superstar economy creates a challenge for professional sports because it usually means a few breakout stars are paid a huge salary and wind up at a few exceptional teams, and in sports you need many good teams for it to be interesting to a large, geographically diverse audience. Ironically, it may now be employers who benefit more from unions because collective bargaining usually limits how much superstars can be paid and keeps the league more competitive.

But for players, the existing collective-bargaining model means that either top-tier players continue to be paid big salaries subsidized by younger players who support them and will never get rich, or young players are paid their value and there is a limit on superstar salaries for the best talent. Either option puts pressure on the solidarity of a union. The MLB will eventually reach some kind of agreement. But the plight of baseball shows that unions may not be the answer for workers in a superstar economy.

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

12.5.2021

Good morning baseball fans,

Infuriated by the Lockout. (a core component of my retirement plan was reducing stress—this isn't helping.)

People who should know better and had this hashed out behind closed doors months ago hold the game hostage.

But its Hall of Fame time (vote results and commentary next week) plus other fun stats, history and analysis.

Thank you all for the new subscriber sponsorships. Draw for Jay Jaffee's "The Cooperstown Casebook" came up Allen from Connecticut so Merry Christmas, the book is in the mail.

HALL OF FAME WEEK

Will the early Baseball Era committee vote in Buck O'Neil?

The Golden Days Era committee is looking at Dick Allen, Ken Boyer, Gil Hodges, Jim Kaat, Roger Maris, Minnie Minoso, Danny Murtaugh, Tony Oliva, Billy Pierce, Maury Wills.

Will the baseball writers let alleged drug use slide for Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Manny Ramirez, A-Rod, David Ortiz, Sammy Sosa, Andy Pettitte?

Very good vs. all-time great? Where do the writers see Curt Schilling, Scott Rolen, Omar Vizquel, Billy Wagner, Todd Helton, Gary Sheffield, Andruw Jones, Jeff Kent, Mark Buehrle, Torii Hunter, Bobby Abreu, Tim Hudson, Mark Teixeira, Jimmy Rollins, Carl Crawford, Jake Peavy, Justin Morneau, Prince Fielder, Joe Nathan?

DON'T YOU LOVE BILLIONAIRES FIGHTING WITH MILLIONAIRES?

Major League Baseball is shut down, and a quarter century of labor peace is over.

The sport's owners locked out the players at midnight entering Thursday, initiating baseball's first work stoppage in 26 years, and the ninth in the sport's history. Free agency and other player transactions are frozen, and will likely remain so until a new deal is reached. The major league portion of the Winter Meetings [is canceled](#).

Ever since the 1994-95 baseball strike, every work stoppage in the other three major men's sports, the NBA, NFL and NHL, has been a lockout.

The MLBPA was founded in 1954, but it didn't make significant gains until 1966, when [Marvin Miller became executive director](#). For almost 25 years starting in 1972, work stoppages in the sport were frequent. But not all of them led to regular-season cancellations.

1972: 13-day strike, affecting regular season

1973: lockout, spring training only

1976: lockout, spring training only

1980: strike, spring training only

1981: 53-day strike affecting regular season

1985: two-day strike, affecting regular season

1990: lockout pushing back Opening Day, but season was played in full

[1994-95:](#) 232-day strike, cancelling 1994 playoffs

The minimum salary was set at \$570,500 in 2021. It's not known how much MLB proposed raising it in their most recent offer. Here's a look at how the minimum salary has changed with each new CBA.

- 1968: Minimum salary went from \$6K to \$10K, a 66.7% increase
- 1970: \$10K to \$12K, a 20% increase
- 1973: \$13.5K to \$15K, an 11.1% increase
- 1976: \$16K to \$19K, an 18.8% increase
- 1980: \$21K to \$30K, a 42.9% increase
- 1985: \$40K to \$60K, a 50% increase
- 1990: \$68K to \$100K, a 47.1% increase
- 1997: \$109K to \$150K, a 37.6% increase
- 2003: \$200K to \$300K, a 50% increase
- 2007: \$327K to \$380K, a 16.2% increase
- 2012: \$414K to \$480K, a 15.9% increase
- 2017: \$507.5K to \$535K, a 5.4% increase

In the free agency era, the minimum salary had always increased by at least 15.9% until the just-expired CBA. There is historical precedent for a leap as high as 50%, which would mean \$855,750 for 2022. An increase of 16% would be more in line with the '07 and '12 CBAs,

which would set the minimum at \$661,780. It should also be noted that the minimum salary typically increases each year within a CBA, with the '20 and '21 rates involving cost of living adjustments.

HOW THE MLB LUXURY TAX THRESHOLDS HAVE CHANGED BY YEAR – FROM MLBTRADERUMORS.COM

There was a time when the MLB players' union felt that a luxury tax is just a salary cap in another form, with is why they rejected such proposals back in 1994. Nonetheless, in the first post-strike collective bargaining agreement, executive director Don Fehr “finally said yes to the luxury tax – the first time the union agreed to any form of payroll restraint since free agency changed everything in 1976,” to quote Jon Pessah’s book *The Game*.

Though Pessah called that CBA a “huge victory for Fehr and the union” for other reasons, the owners did get their foot in the door on the matter of a luxury tax. The luxury tax wound up snowballing into a major problem for the players in recent years.

In that CBA, the tax thresholds were set like this:

- 1996: no luxury tax
- 1997: \$51MM
- 1998: \$55MM, a 7.8% increase
- 1999: \$58.9MM, a 7.1% increase
- 2000: no luxury tax
- 2001: if MLBPA exercises its option for '01, no luxury tax

Mechanisms were also put in place that could allow the 1997-99 thresholds to be higher, depending on where the fifth and sixth-highest payrolls in the game landed. Tax rates were set at 35% on the overage for '97-98 and 34% for '99.

While that CBA technically ended with two years sans luxury tax, it became part of all future agreements. The agreement that began in 2003 saw the luxury tax rebranded as the “competitive balance tax.” The MLBPA was able to achieve an initial major increase in the thresholds from where they left off in '99:

- 2003: \$117MM, a 98.6% increase from '99
- 2004: \$120.5MM, a 3% increase
- 2005: \$128MM, a 6.2% increase
- 2006: \$136.5MM, a 6.6% increase

For this CBA, a concept was introduced to penalize second, third, or fourth-time offenders with a higher tax rate. The first-time offender rates were set at 17.5% in '03 and 22.5% in 2004-05, yet

was removed entirely for '06. 30-40% tax rates were set for teams that exceeded the threshold multiple times during that CBA.

For the CBA beginning in 2007, the tax thresholds were set as follows:

- 2007: \$148MM, an 8.4% increase
- 2008: \$155MM, a 4.7% increase
- 2009: \$162MM, a 4.5% increase
- 2010: \$170MM, a 4.9% increase
- 2011: \$178MM, a 4.7% increase

Here after an initial “new CBA” leap, we start to see the tax thresholds moving up more slowly. The tax rates were set at 22.5%, 30%, and 40% and began penalizing teams for exceeding the thresholds in consecutive years, introducing the concept of teams “resetting” its rate by getting under the threshold for one season.

For the CBA beginning in 2012, these were the tax thresholds:

- 2012: \$178MM, no increase
- 2013: \$178MM, no increase
- 2014: \$189MM, a 6.2% increase
- 2015: \$189MM, no increase
- 2016: \$189MM, no increase

Here, the players’ union made large concessions that had a compounding effect they’re still feeling today. If the MLBPA had achieved simply a repeat of the increases from the previous CBA, the 2016 tax threshold would have sat at about \$232MM.

The next agreement introduced the concept of luxury tax tiers, adding first and second surcharge thresholds after the base tax one. For example, 2021 included thresholds at \$210MM, \$230MM, and \$250MM. This CBA also introduced penalties involving the draft.

- 2017: \$195MM base tax threshold, a 3.2% increase
- 2018: \$197MM, a 1.0% increase
- 2019: \$206MM, a 4.6% increase
- 2020: \$208MM, a 1.0% increase
- 2021: \$210MM, a 1.0% increase

While better than the previous CBA, the MLBPA again agreed to tiny increases in the base tax threshold. A simple 5% increase per year beginning in 2012 would have put the 2021 base tax threshold around \$290MM, yet it sat only at \$210MM. Not coincidentally, only the Dodgers and Padres exceeded a \$210MM payroll this year. You can see the restraint this put on a club like the Yankees, which had a lower 2019 Opening Day payroll than it had in 2005.

In the current negotiations, MLB made an initial proposal that included *lowering* the base tax threshold to \$180MM. [According to Gabe Lacques and Bob Nightengale of USA Today](#), “In

final proposals exchanged Wednesday, players requested a \$245 million luxury tax threshold, with no progressive penalties for offenders; owners are offering a \$214 million threshold, rising to \$220 million in the final year of a five-year agreement.”

With a request to jump to \$245MM, the MLBPA is proposing a 16.7% jump over the '21 threshold, which would only begin to make up the ground they lost due to the non-existent or miniscule increases from 2012 onward. MLB, meanwhile, would like to increase the base tax threshold by 1.9% for 2022 and is proposing average annual increases of less than 1%.

AND MORE CBA STUFF FROM KEN ROSENTHAL

A [study by the Associated Press](#) in April revealed that the average major league salary dropped 4.8 percent to just under \$4.17 million on opening day from the start of the previous full season in 2019, and 6.4 percent since the start of the 2017 season, when it peaked at \$4.45 million. There were qualifiers: The '21 figures did not include the salaries of three well-paid players who were not on Opening Day rosters for procedural reasons, and the average likely fell slightly because of the expansion of rosters from 25 to 26 and the additions of minimum-salary players in the extra slots. But to players, the message was clear. Their salaries were not keeping pace with the sport's revenues.

We don't know exactly what those revenues are because only two of the 30 teams, the [Atlanta Braves](#) and [Toronto Blue Jays](#), are publicly owned and required to open their books. We also don't know the extent of the money the owners are earning from ancillary business ventures related to baseball. We *do* know the players' salaries, and surely they are not suffering. But that doesn't mean they're getting their fair share.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Youngest player to win an AL or NL batting title--Al Kaline (20 years old in 1955)

Comment from NY Post--Yankees farm system over the years has proved excellent in getting players to the majors, but not developing difference makers. Sixty-two players who signed their first pro contract with the Yankees appeared in a game last season (tied with St. Louis for second most). Beyond Aaron Judge what homegrown players on the Yankees major league roster would other teams clamor for?

LaMarr Hoyt died this week at 66. In 1977 the right hander was traded (along with Oscar Gamble) from the Yankees to the White Sox for Bucky Dent. Dent helped the Yankees to the World Series. Hoyt won the 1983 AL Cy Young going 24-10. In 260 innings pitched he walked 31. In eight major league seasons, Hoyt had a 98-68 record with a 3.99 earned run average.

Detroit Tigers open the 1984 season 35-5. Best start in MLB since 1884. Sparky Anderson manager. Alan Trammell and Lou Whitaker, Kirk Gibson, Jack Morris and Willie Hernandez lead the team to a 104-58 record. Swept Royals 3-0 in playoffs, beat San Diego Padres in 5 games in World Series. They drew 2.7 million fans (in 2021 the Tigers attendance was 1.1 million).

It pays to stick around. Jim Thome. 6 seasons he hit 40+ HRs. another 6 he hit 30+. Overall he hit 20+ HRs 16 times. 10 times he was in the league top 5 in walks. Hit 612 career HRs.

STATCAST HIGHLIGHTS

Statcast numbers for the year have been released. The six hardest hit balls (based on exit velocity) were all hit by Giancarlo Stanton of the Yankees. That includes a 121.1 mph walk-off single on Sept. 3 against the Orioles that was the hardest base hit of the year. Other fun facts:

Juan Soto, Nationals

The 23-year-old Soto might be the most complete hitter in the game. In 2021, he drew an MLB-high 145 walks ... with only 93 strikeouts. Soto almost never swings at a pitch outside the strike zone -- his 12.2% chase rate was easily the lowest in baseball.

Jacob deGrom, Mets -- Slider

How good is Jacob de Grom's slider? deGrom has the most dominant arsenal in baseball ... and his slider is the most dominant pitch in that arsenal. Not only does deGrom throw his slider harder than a lot of pitchers throw their fastballs -- he averaged 91.6 mph in 2021, maxed out at *95 mph*, and got a strikeout at 94.9 mph -- but his results are unmatched. He allowed a batting average of .096 against it, and for all the pitch types with 100-plus plate appearances decided on them in 2021, deGrom's slider generated the [highest whiff rate](#) (58.1%) and strikeout rate (59%).

Charlie Morton, Braves -- Curveball

There's nothing like a perfectly executed curveball, and Morton's was always a beauty in 2021. On average, it dropped 52.5 inches and broke 16.6 inches, thanks to an elite 3,053 rpm spin rate. Between the regular season and the Braves' World Series run, Morton got 455 [called and swinging strikes](#) on his curve, and 138 strikeouts, both far and away the most of any pitcher.

Strongest arm: Fernando Tatis Jr., Padres

Whether he's at shortstop or in the outfield, Tatis has elite arm strength and loves to show it. His average arm strength on max-effort throws in 2021 was 91.6 mph -- 90.1 mph as an infielder, and 97.4 mph as an outfielder. The Padres phenom made maybe the throw of the year on July 6 against the Nationals, a 95.8 mph relay to the plate from shortstop to nab Starlin Castro trying to score. Tatis got rid of that rocket throw in just 0.62 seconds. He also recorded a 97.0 mph assist to the plate as an outfielder ... oh, and just for good measure, he had one 96.8 mph infield assist on a routine ground ball.

Mariners probably considered the following stats when they paid big bucks to sign Robbie Ray. Ray owns the most strikeouts (1,241) across the first 1,000 career innings of any pitcher in AL/NL history, and he also owns the highest career K/9 rate (11.2) among AL/NL pitchers with at least 1,000 innings. Ray was one of 2021's hardest-throwing left-handed starters with a 94.8 mph average on his four-seam fastball, and he was the only pitcher with 100-plus strikeouts on two different pitch types (four-seamer and slider).

Ray led MLB in strikeouts last year. The last Mariners pitcher to do that was Randy Johnson (294 strikeouts in 1995).

Joey Votto of the Reds had a big comeback season in 2021. Votto had the [largest jump in exit velocity](#) of any player, going from 87.4 mph in 2020 to 92.9 mph in '21 (+5.5 mph). He also had the most-improved hard-hit rate (35.7% to 53.2%, an increase of 17.5 percentage points), and one of the most improved barrel rates (9.1% to 17.2%, an increase of 8.1 points).

MAD MAX

Max Scherzer is 190-97 with a 3.16 ERA in his career for the D-backs, Tigers, Nats and Dodgers. Although he is 37 years old, meaning a three-year deal would take him through his age-39 season, Scherzer has showed only mild signs of slowing. He has won more games with a lower ERA in his 30s than he did in his 20s, though he did scratch himself from World Series Game 6 due to arm fatigue. Scherzer's 2,536 2/3 career innings rank fourth among active pitchers behind only Zack Greinke, Justin Verlander and Jon Lester.

However, only three pitchers since World War II have posted 7 WAR seasons at 38 or older — Randy Johnson, Phil Niekro and Roger Clemens, each one of whom was an outlier in a very clear and specific way that doesn't apply to Scherzer. Since 2000, there have been just 12 pitcher seasons in total by a pitcher 38 or older worth 5 WAR or more. \$45 million per year should bring a 'one of MLB's best at 7 WAR or better'. I love Scherzer's toughness and ability to pitch his best in big games. It remains to be seen if he can deliver value commensurate with that salary at his age.

Scherzer has won three Cy Young Awards and future rotation-mate Jacob deGrom has two.

Scherzer would be the seventh multi-time Cy Young winner to pitch for the Mets. At six thus far in franchise history, the Mets have already had two more of those than any other franchise, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Those six are Tom Glavine, Pedro Martínez, Bret Saberhagen, Johan Santana, Tom Seaver and Jacob deGrom.

Scherzer and deGrom would be just the seventh duo of multi-time Cy Young Award winners to pitch for the same team in at least one season. This is considering only pitchers who had already won at least two Cy Young Awards entering that season. Here's a look at the other six duos.

2021 Dodgers: Max Scherzer & Clayton Kershaw

That's right, Scherzer was part of another of these duos this past season. The 2021 Dodgers had Cy Young winners abound -- four, to be exact, which set a record for a team in a single season. In Scherzer and Kershaw, they had two three-time winners, becoming the second team to have such a duo pitch for them in a season, but the first to have them in the rotation at the same time. The other instance: the 1986 White Sox, with Steve Carlton and Tom Seaver, who did not overlap on the roster. More on them later.

2008 Mets: Pedro Martínez & Johan Santana

Martínez had three Cy Youngs and Santana had two, each of them winning those awards before coming to the Mets. The Mets signed Martínez in free agency entering the 2005 season, then added Santana in a trade entering '08. Their one season of overlap saw Santana lead the Majors in ERA at 2.53, while Martínez had a 5.61 mark in his final year in Queens.

2005-07 Mets: Pedro Martínez & Tom Glavine

Of course, Santana wasn't the only multi-time Cy Young winner with whom Martínez overlapped over the course of his contract in Flushing. When he arrived, Glavine had already been on the Mets since 2003, after winning two Cy Youngs in the '90s with the Braves. The duo made the National League All-Star team together in 2006, part of a franchise-record six All-Stars for the Mets that year.

1999-2002 Braves: Tom Glavine & Greg Maddux

Martínez wasn't Glavine's only multi-time Cy Young-winning teammate in his career. Glavine's first Cy Young Award came in 1991 and his second in '98. His teammate Greg Maddux had already won four Cy Youngs -- in a row -- by the end of the '95 awards season. For the final four years they were teammates, from 1999 through 2002, Glavine and Maddux were a multi-award-winning duo.

2001 Red Sox: Pedro Martínez & Bret Saberhagen

We'll forgive you if this one didn't jump to mind immediately. Saberhagen pitched for the Red Sox from 1997-99 and in 2001, after winning his Cy Youngs in 1985 and '89. But Martínez's second Cy Young came in '99, so he didn't qualify to be one of these teammates until 2000 -- when he'd go on to win a third, anyway. Saberhagen missed the entire '00 season recovering from injury, so the only year where each pitched as a multi-time winner for the Sox was '01. Saberhagen made just three starts, and Martínez missed time as well -- so they were never in the rotation at the same time.

1986 White Sox: Steve Carlton & Tom Seaver

These were two Hall of Famers at the tail ends of their careers. Carlton had won his four Cy Youngs by the end of 1982 and Seaver had won his three by the end of '75. Seaver began the season on the White Sox but was traded to the Red Sox for Steve Lyons on June 29. Meanwhile, Carlton began the year on the Phillies before being released on June 24. He signed as a free agent with the Giants on July 4, and they released him on Aug. 7. The White Sox quickly scooped him up a few days later. Thus, while Seaver and Carlton both pitched for the White Sox in '86, they were never on the roster at the same time.

READER SUBMISSION OF THE WEEK

Fans of the 1958 Philadelphia Phillies had little to cheer about at the end of a rather dismal season. When the final standings were posted, the club was firmly planted dead last in the National League. One bright note was the team's pinch-hitting performance: It led both major leagues with an impressive batting average of .308 and 11 home runs.[fn]Ford Sawyer, "Bowman, Zernial Top Pinch-Hitters," *The Sporting News*, October 28, 1958.[/fn] A leading contributor to this clutch performance was a well-traveled veteran named Dave Philley, who hit .404 off the bench and **ended the season with a remarkable streak of eight consecutive pinch safeties to set a major-league record.** Not bad for a 38-year-old journeyman making his second tour of the city.

It broke the previous record of seven consecutive pinch hits, set by Debs Garms of the Pirates in 1941. Although the Phillies finished in last place, their pinch-hitting corps, led by Philley and Bob Bowman, paced the club to a league-leading pinch-hitting average of .308. Also prominent off the bench were Rip Repulski and Wally Post.

Philley extended his streak to nine hits in a row when he connected in his first appearance of the 1959 season. His seventh-inning double came in Milwaukee on April 16, 1959, against right-hander Lew Burdette, in a 7–3 Phillies loss. Philley elaborated on his overall approach to pinch-hitting: “I walk to the plate with all the confidence in the world. I figure I’ve got only one shot at it.

FREE AGENT PITCHING CAN BE VERY EXPENSIVE

[Raisel Iglesias](#)’ four-year, \$58 million free-agent contract with the Angels was the biggest deal signed by a reliever since the 2016-17 offseason, when [Aroldis Chapman](#) went for \$86 million, [Kenley Jansen](#) for \$80 million and Melancon for \$62 million.

What made Iglesias’ deal all the more impressive is that his market was depressed by his rejection of the Angels’ qualifying offer, which would have subjected any other team that signed him to draft-pick compensation. [Liam Hendriks](#), who signed a four-year, \$54 million free-agent contract with the [White Sox](#) last offseason, had no qualifying offer attached.

Scott Boras, [Max Scherzer](#)’s agent, has a long history of breaking contract records, so it was no surprise that Scherzer’s deal was for an average annual value of \$43.3 million, surpassing the record of his client [Gerrit Cole](#), who signed for \$36 million per season in 2019. And, just in case [Trevor Bauer](#) opts out of the third year of his contract, the AAV of that deal would be \$42.5 million. Therefore, this contract guarantees that Scherzer will hold the record going into 2022 without any competition.

Scherzer is still an ace, as demonstrated by the fact he finished third in the National League Cy Young Award voting, behind [Corbin Burnes](#) and [Zack Wheeler](#). How good is Max? Opponents hit .193 against his four-seamer, .164 against his slider, .150 against his changeup; .265 against his curveball and .236 against his cutter.

The Red Sox took a huge health gamble in reportedly signing James Paxton to a one-year, \$10 million deal [with a two-year club option](#). This type of contract didn’t work out well last year, considering the \$10 million deal Boston gave [Garrett Richards](#), [Corey Kluber](#)’s failed deal with the [Yankees](#), [Drew Smyly](#)’s pact with the [Braves](#) and Paxton’s deal with the [Mariners](#). Paxton, 33, made just six starts over the past two years and posted combined ERA north of 6.50.

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KEVIN GAUSMAN, ROBBIE RAY AND MARCUS STROMAN. AS GM YOUR JOB COULD BE ON THE LINE AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ARE AT STAKE. WHICH FREE AGENT STARTER IS THE BEST LONG-TERM BET?

Enos Sarris of The Athletic

This offseason, [Kevin Gausman](#), [Robbie Ray](#), and [Marcus Stroman](#) will all get big multi-year deals. Because pitching is harder to project than hitting, and pitchers get injured more often and more drastically than hitters, pitching deals tend to be shorter. So there's a little extra risk in plopping down the longer deals to land a top free-agent starter.

That said, these three 30-year-olds offer the rare chance to get a top-end starter in the middle of their career. [Ray is headed to the Mariners on a five-year, \\$115 million contract](#), while [Gausman will replace him atop the Blue Jays' rotation on a five-year, \\$110 million deal](#). Stroman, who pitched for the [Mets](#) in 2021, remains a free agent, but at the rate deals are happening ahead of the Dec. 1 expiration of baseball's CBA, he may not be for long. Which of the three is the best bet to finish out their new deal in style? Let's see what the best research says about pitcher aging and how it might apply to these three candidates.

Results

The cleanest statistic in pitching prognostication is strikeouts minus walks. Strikeouts and walks are the things that the pitchers have the most control over. Sure, those things require a catcher and an umpire and a hitter, but at least there aren't eight other people involved in the play. Statistically speaking, strikeouts and walks become meaningful quicker than any other stat and stay stickier year to year.

In other words, if a pitcher strikes out a lot of guys and doesn't walk a lot of guys, he's good, and he'll most likely continue to do those things.

So let's look at the trio of starting pitchers through the lens of last year's numbers, and then also over the last three seasons:

Free Agent Trio: Strikeouts Minus Walks

	Last Year K – BB	Last 3 years K-BB
Robbie Ray	24.5%	20.9%

Kevin Gausman	22.8%	21.9%
Marcus Stroman	15.6%	14.3%

The major league average this past season was 14.7 percent, so all three were above average. But you also see that Ray and Gausman were much better by this statistic, which is important for aging — [pitchers' strikeouts are sticking around longer](#) in this strikeout-rich league, so they'll remain above-average by strikeouts minus walks longer than Stroman, who is perilously close to average already.

Of course, these aren't small-sample rookies we're talking about. They've given us half-careers, and so we can also point to what happens to their balls in play and see that Stroman has given up a third fewer homers on a per-inning basis, mostly because he's had a league-leading 57.4 percent ground-ball rate while the other two have been extreme fly ball types. And here's the wild thing: ground ball rate might be [the steadiest statistic in terms of aging](#). Even in their late thirties, pitchers aren't expected to lose full percentage points off their ground ball rate in any given off-season.

So when it comes to on-field results so far in their careers, there's reasons to like any of these three pitchers.

Stuff

A pitcher's stuff is a better bet than his command when trying to predict success going forward, At least, that's what [early research into stuff and command suggests](#). Stuff+ is stickier year to year than Location+ and that might be because small nagging injuries can turf a pitcher's command, but once the injury is so terrible that his Stuff is changed, he sits and heads to the injured list. In any case, no matter the source, it looks like Stuff+ is a better bet year over year, so if you're about to give a pitcher a bunch of money and years, you'll want to know that their stuff is good.

Stuff+ is calculated based on only the physical properties of a pitcher's arsenal — spin rate, spin axis, vertical movement, horizontal movement, release point, extension; they're all in there. Here's how our trio did in 2020 and 2021 based on Stuff+:

Free Agent Trio: Stuff+

	2020 STUFF +	2021 STUFF+
Robbi Ray	96.3	98.7
Kevin Gausman	108.8	104.7

Interesting to see that Ray's improvement in Stuff+ paled in comparison to his improvement in on-field results, but that lines up with what happened, physically, on the mound. His pitches were mostly the same, he just threw a little harder, and improved his location strategy, also known as his command.

But it does bring up the question: what happens if Ray's command takes a step back towards where it used to be? He's not working with the same stuff as the other two, at least by this model.

Command

Command is not quite as sticky, year-to-year, but that's not to say there's no value in looking at command, and for a couple of reasons.

Once you remove the very worst Location+ numbers, you see a tighter year-to-year relationship in Location+. In other words, the pitchers with the very worst command see large leaps in command improvement (or end up out of the league, presumably), as in this chart by Max Bay, creator of Pitching+. It shows a graph of the relationship between Location+ in year zero to year one. The gray band is wider at the extreme Location+ values, meaning that there's more spread in that relationship and extreme Location+ numbers are more likely to change year to year.

The other reason to care about these pitchers' command numbers is how important command is on the pitch level. If you only had the location of the pitch, and didn't know anything about the shape and velo of the pitch, you'd have more information than if the tables were turned. Pitchers may not be able to hit a bottle cap off the top of a bat, but having great command is very important, and hugely important on the pitch-by-pitch level.

So how did our trio do, command-wise, over the last two seasons?

Free Agent Trio: Location+

	2020 LOCATION +	2021 LOCATION +
Robbie Ray	91.3	101.2

Kevin Gausman	105.8	103.7
Marcus Stroman		102.8

Pitching is basically doing anything you can to avoid throwing a fastball middle-middle. Command does that for you, especially command of multiple pitches.

Pitches

The number of pitches you have in your arsenal is hugely important to a pitcher's performance as he ages, though the evidence for that has to be pieced together a bit. For one, we know from pitcher aging curves that starters don't see their strikeout rate decline to the same degree as relievers do as they age, [even though they lose as much fastball velocity](#). The difference between relievers and starters is usually number of pitches (and command). Another thing we know is that starting pitchers are [retaining more of their strikeout rate now as they age](#), and that they are using the fastball less and less often as they age. Check out this, from [Jeff Zimmerman's research at FanGraphs](#).

So how can pitchers best set themselves up to age well? By having multiple pitches on which they can rely as they use their fastball less often, naturally. The only difficulty in spotting this is trying to define what it means for a pitcher to own a pitch. Is it just throwing it more than ten percent of the time? Is it being able to command a pitch at an above-average rate? Or is it having above-average pitches by stuff and command combined?

Let's look at our three pitchers via all three methods.

Free Agent Trio: Number of Pitches

	10%+	GOOD LOCATION +	GOOD PITCH+
Robbie Ray	2	2	2
Kevin Gausman	2	2	2
Marcus Stroman	4	4	3

Luckily, our three approaches pretty much told the same story. Marcus Stroman has twice as many pitches to rely on.

Health

This is probably the toughest one to figure out, as you may have noticed from the fact that it doesn't seem like baseball itself has figured out how to stem the tide of injury. One rock-solid finding from Russell Carlton at Baseball Prospectus is that [nothing predicts future pitcher arm injury like past pitcher arm injury](#). So here are the relevant arm injuries in the database over at Baseball Prospectus:

- In 2018, Marcus Stroman missed 43 days with right shoulder fatigue and soreness
- In 2018, Robbie Ray missed 58 days with a right oblique strain
- In 2016, Kevin Gausman missed 22 days with a right shoulder strain
- In 2019, Kevin Gausman missed 11 days with right shoulder tendonitis

This is a pretty clean slate considering that the average starting pitcher is 40 percent likely to hit the disabled list in any given year. Yes, these pitchers did miss some time with other ailments, but they were contusions and leg injuries that don't seem to have risen to the chronic level. It's hard to know exactly how Stroman was feeling during his season away from the game in 2020, but writ large, these aren't necessarily worrisome injury histories from any of the three.

Maybe some other research is relevant here. Carleton also found that *every pitch* [leads to more fatigue and poorer results going forward](#), so maybe it's relevant that Stroman has thrown more than two thousand fewer pitches than Gausman and Ray, and averages 15.8 pitches per inning for his career, compared to 16.8 for Gausman and 17.6 for Ray. There was also once a feeling that ground-ball pitchers got injured more often due to the mechanics of a sinker, but that doesn't seem to be the case. If anything, [ground-ball pitchers get injured less frequently](#).

The hope going forward is that we can use some of our fancier technology to identify better mechanics, or at least ways pitchers can throw hard that aren't as detrimental to their bodies. Private pitching training shop [Tread Athletics](#) released a report on Stroman that summarized that the pitcher "generates his arm speed in a biomechanically efficient way that minimizes unnecessary torque through the elbow and shoulder" after they analyzed the timing of his arm as his front foot first made contact, the flexion in his elbow, the height of his elbow as his arm comes around, and the rotation in his torso. But without an assessment of all three of these pitchers, as well as an understanding of how well-sourced and ubiquitous these mechanical beliefs are, it's unfair to label him the most mechanically sound for the purposes of this discussion.

But, to summarize, it looks like we have three relatively healthy pitchers who will all get five-year-deals this offseason. Two of them make their living off of two elite pitches and high strikeout rates, and the other has a wider arsenal and an elite ground-ball rate. Given the fact that ground-ball rate ages so well, and ground-ball pitchers perhaps have better injury

outcomes, and that Marcus Stroman has more pitches he can start using as he uses his fastball less, it could be the case that he will age the best of the trio.

PETER GAMMONS: THE COSTS OF A LOCKOUT WILL BE MANY, AND YOUNG PLAYERS MAY FEEL IT MORE THAN MOST.

If come the morning of December 2 we awaken and there is no new [Major League Baseball](#) collective bargaining agreement, and owners have instituted a lockout that will shut down most business activities, one truth will be self-evident — that very few understand why the game is being shut down.

The business has record profits. The average player's salary is \$4.17 million, which is a 4.8 percent decline from 2019, but includes 2020-21 seasons impacted by COVID-19, crowd restrictions and enlarged rosters. Owners and players haven't been able to reach agreement on the Designated Hitter rule, roster sizes, the schedule — the list goes on. We on the outside know there is disagreement, but we don't know exactly how things have gotten to this point. You do not work as hard as [Max Scherzer](#), [Gerrit Cole](#), [Marcus Semien](#), [Andrew Miller](#), [Jason Castro](#), et al, if you do not love baseball, and players may question him, but the same must be said of Rob Manfred.

Yet here we are.

In contrast, when Bud Selig stepped to the microphone in Milwaukee to announce the cancellation of the remainder of the regular and post-seasons we knew what was coming. That morning, the previous Collective Bargaining Agreement had expired on Dec. 31, 1993. Selig was technically the Acting Commissioner, a position to which he ascended in September 1992 replacing Fay Vincent, who was the third commissioner in less than four years. From a spring training lockout in 1990 until that Selig announcement, the owners had gone through several concepts from pay-per-performance to a salary cap to change the economics, a system that when the season ended amounted to the players receiving 52 percent of the revenue, the owners 48 percent; today, the split is 57-43 in the owners' favor.

It is clearly understood that the Players Association is trying to regain a piece of the power that it has lost over the last quarter-century, particularly with the last agreement. The average salary is going down, and players understandably want adjustments to prevent teams like the [Baltimore Orioles](#) from tanking — i.e. not attempting to even have a .500 team, which means they won't bid on even middle-class free agents. They want to rework the arbitration system, so that clubs cannot hold back service time on young players.

Both sides want readjustments of the current adjustments, but a lockout has consequences. If it comes to pass, this one will likely come to an end when either the owners are losing too much in revenues or the players are losing too much in salaries; the latter is especially complicated because one estimate claims 33 players command 51 percent of the \$10 billion in player salaries, which means baseball's middle and lower class will reflect a growing have/have not split among its ranks.

But those players may not even be the ones most heavily impacted by a potential lockout. Player development has been stalled with no minor league season in 2020 and limited spring training preparation, shrunken minor leagues and draft choices so that it has been more difficult for young players to get to the major leagues and start the service time clocks — which hurts players. The owners are harmed, too, because even the top prospects from the 2019 draft have been delayed, which costs owners a number of young major leaguers making minimum or pre-arbitration salaries.

[Don Mattingly](#) says “we used to think most young hitters need 1,500 at-bats in the minor leagues.” [Adley Rutschman](#), [Bobby Witt Jr.](#) and the [Marlins'](#) J.J. Bleday were the first, second and fourth picks in the 2019 draft, and not only have none of them had an at-bat in the majors, they've spent what would have been their first three professional seasons *combining* for 1,510 at-bats. Their three teams have realized no major league rebuilding currency while they suffer losing records.

And while there is a revenue distribution among players, consider the owners. From 1961, when MLB expanded from 16 to 20 teams and increased the schedule from 154 to 162 games, there had been no season in which as many as four teams won or lost 100 games. In 2019, for the first time, four teams won 100 games, and four teams lost 100. In 2021, four teams lost 100 or more again. That means that if you're the Orioles, [Pirates](#) or [Royals](#) and the development system known as the minor leagues has been reduced by pandemic or decree, your rebuilding process has become more complex, as well as tedious.

Manfred, both as Commissioner and during his tenure as Selig's right arm, has fought for solutions for teams in Oakland, Baltimore, Miami, Tampa Bay and Cleveland to compete, and, with respect, the Indians/Guardians, [Rays](#) and Royals have done just that with clear, definitive baseball leadership.

In the memo the Players Association sent to its members — [obtained by The Athletic's Evan Drellich and Ken Rosenthal](#) — their goals and principles in this labor showdown were clear.

Incentivize Competition. In other words, end tanking, take away first-round draft choices from teams that lose 100 games three years in a row or do not reach a salary floor. It can be done.

Ensure the best players are on the field. Not that tough. Service time manipulation can be rewired.

Give players their value earlier in their career. Not difficult; arbitration qualification can be adjusted, as Donald Fehr and Gene Orza showed in the one-day strike in 1985 when they gave the owners an extra year before arbitration.

Remove artificial restraints on competition. This is all part of the complex competitive balance issue that put Vincent, Selig and Manfred in the middle of the Owners vs. Owners War that is such a part of the Owners vs. Players Conflict.

Here is a problem: when three of the first four picks in the 2019 draft — two of them coming from elite college programs — haven't reached the major leagues three years later and have averaged one season's at-bats (500) since that draft, how can they be ready? This isn't football and Mac Jones. Vanderbilt may be the 'Bama of college baseball, but the progression for Jones and the progression for Bleday are totally different. Agents can rant and threaten to file grievances if their clients don't start a season in the big leagues, but their interests are tied to their agencies or corporations or whatever they choose to call their businesses, not the industry or the greater body of players — who now have their own haves/have nots issues that transcend service time.

This is all about the philosophy and structure of a partnership that constantly revisits its responsibilities to the entertainment product. The most compelling figure in the game this past season was [Shohei Ohtani](#). Four of the six finalists for the two MVP Awards were Ohtani, Vlad Guerrero Jr., Juan Soto and [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#), all international signings, and a committee from the Commissioner's Office and the Players Association, with joint purpose, can reasonably decide if an international draft will lessen the impact of international players coming to MLB and its audience; anti-immigration politicians will never be a part of the MLB base.

It clearly is in the best interest of the union and the owners — especially those like Miami, Kansas City, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Arizona — to have the line of young players coming up to the majors expedited. Take the Orioles. They have finished last in four of the last five seasons, the only exception being a .468 fourth-place finish in the 2020 60-game season. Then look at their Top 10 Prospects list in Baseball America. There isn't one in that list with 700 minor career at-bats. Now, there was no minor league season in 2020. Last spring, the vast majority of minor leagues had abridged spring trainings, costing them coaching and learning time, as well as roster opportunities lost when MLB eliminated short-season leagues that offered playing time to players taken after the top rounds. In 1976, a [Red Sox](#) seventh-rounder out of Plant High School in Tampa named Wade Boggs reported to Elmira in the New-York Penn League, spent six years in the minor leagues playing 662 games and having 2,680 at-bats, finally made it to the Red Sox in 1982, and in his first 10 full seasons en route to the Hall of Fame had 1,965 hits, 930 walks (against a mere 439 strikeouts) and a .345/.435/.471 slash line.

Mattingly was drafted in the 19th round in 1979, also began his career in the New York-Penn League, spent five years, 500 games and 2,122 at-bats in the minors, and didn't hit 10 home runs in a season until he reached Triple A. Mattingly's first full season with the [Yankees](#) was 1984, when he batted .343 with 44 doubles. In 1985, he was the American League MVP, then in

1976 led the league in slugging, hits, OPS, OPS+, doubles and total bases and lost out in the MVP balloting to Roger Clemens and his 24-4 season for a Red Sox club that won the AL pennant.

If the current structure were in place, neither Mattingly nor Boggs could have signed and had a league to go and play every day, and then would have sat for a season followed by the downsized spring training.

Now, go back to the four teams that lost 100 games in 2021. The [Diamondbacks](#) have two of their top 10 — shortstop [Geraldo Perdomo](#) and outfielder Alec Thomas — who have 1,130 and 1,128 minor league at-bats, respectively, and might be able to contribute late in the 2022 season, if it opens as scheduled.

But a painful example of what the pandemic has done to development comes in the form of outfielder [Corbin Carroll](#). He was the 15th pick in the 2019 draft, and considered Arizona's best prospect. But there was no 2020 season, then in May 2021 he hurt his shoulder and played in only seven games, his only games since the end of 2019. The makeup is there, even if the playing time hasn't been — every morning in Arizona this past season, he did his rehab, then, with only about half-dozen exceptions, he went to the D-Backs night game, sat with scouts and baseball people, and after they drafted shortstop [Jordan Lawlar](#) with the sixth pick and he got hurt, Carroll had Lawlar following the same schedule, including watching the major league games with experienced baseball people.

The Pirates have two of their top 10 who have 1,000 at-bats in the minors, the [Rangers](#) one.

One National League manager says he got a memo informing him that major league coaches cannot have contact with players during the lockout; where normally players in Houston, Tampa Bay, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Arizona, etc. would work out at the regular season parks in January with coaches available to help, that will not be allowed. If a young Rays pitcher wants to dabble with new grips and pitches live or on Zoom with pitching coach Kyle Snyder, that will not be allowed. No hitting coaches may help young players. Working out at spring training complexes would not be allowed, as they will be closed. So if the lockout were to extend well into February, this will be the third straight season without the usual eight-month routine that begins in February and runs to October — in a sport steeped in routine — that young players would normally be learning and performing.

For Witt and Bleday, it would mean that after starting their professional careers after the 2019 draft they might have their first full eight-month routine in their *fifth* professional seasons.

If baseball is locked down for three months, how much attention, media coverage and buildup for ticket plans will there be as the [NFL](#) runs through to the Super Bowl and the [NBA](#) and [NHL](#) are sliding to their playoffs? How many players in the \$2 million to \$7 million neighborhood will have a home if and when teams are scrambling to begin their spring trainings?

The Braves-Astros World Series was a thrilling conclusion to a whole season for which so many of us were thankful, which ended months of being entertained by players like Ohtani and Harper, Soto and [Wander Franco](#), Semien, [Carlos Correa](#) and Tatis.

Now, as we all face Omicron and other COVID-19 variants, moving forward with baseball as a healthy distraction is important for players and owners, who realistically and theoretically share the same interests in their sport's business moving forward. The Marlins need Rutschman and Bleday to dream on, like the folks in Pittsburgh need reasons to believe in [Roansy Contreras](#) and Mike Gonsalves in Pittsburgh and the same just-a-shot-away hope from [Riley Greene](#) in Detroit and Witt in Kansas City.

How we got here makes me think the negotiations have been done on Zoom out of areas with limited internet access. [Rockies](#) owner Dick Monfort can look at Scherzer and say, "I bought into this business because I love watching people like you pitch and compete." Cole can look at any owner he chooses and say, "I am grateful to be spending my life doing what I love."

And everyone in the room can say "luxury." There is more baseball meaning to the word than simply a tax Steven Cohen is going to have to pay at the end of the day.

Then respect one another, the way Selig and B.J. Surhoff once did. They were veterans of the 1994-95 war, Surhoff on the player committee, Selig representing the owners.

When the strike ended, Surhoff still had a contract with the Selig family's [Milwaukee Brewers](#), so he played in Milwaukee for the 1995 season. He became a free agent at the end of that season, and was offered a three-year contract by Orioles general manager Pat Gillick.

Surhoff told Gillick to hold any announcement. I had learned about it, but before I could report it, Surhoff called and asked me to hold it.

"I don't want it out until I've told Bud to his face," said Surhoff. "He deserves that. He drafted me, he's treated me well."

An hour later, Surhoff called back. He had told Selig, to his face, the way it should be when people are sharing baseball.

Top 10 least likely cycles in history

by [Chris Jaffe](#)

You have to admit, it sounded like a joke when you first heard the news.

On July 16, 2010, a new baseball hitter rapped out his first career cycle. This feat, approximately as rare for hitters as a no-hitter is for pitchers, requires a batter to single, double, triple and homer in one game.

So it was with great surprise that the sporting world learned that the newest member of this exclusive club was Giants catcher Bengie Molina.

Bengie Molina?

See? Told you it sounded like a joke. When you think cycle hitters, you don't think Bengie Molina. A cycle requires some speed and Molina is a catcher, the slowest of all positions. Even worse, he's an aging past-his-prime one. And he, well, let's just say he's not the most athletic looking player out there, either. Yet sure enough he hit the cycle with what is his sixth triple enabled him to join the cycle club.

That brings up some questions: Was this the most unlikely cycle ever, and most importantly what are the most unlikely cycles ever?

Plan of action

I have a simple system to figure this out. First, take a player's singles, doubles, triples and homers hit, and divide all by plate appearances. Using PA works better than AB. Ultimately, a player who draws a ton of walks should have a harder time hitting for the cycle because more walks make four hits in a game less likely.

At any rate, once you've divided 1B, 2B, 3B and HR by PA, multiply the four results together for the final score. Wait – multiply? Why not add? Basic algebra: $1B/PA + 2B/PA + 3B/PA + HR/PA$ is the same thing as H/PA , and I'm not looking for the best hitters. A player who hits .350 with no power would score great by that method because he has a nice H/PA . Multiplying rewards those who best balanced and punishes those badly imbalanced, and I'm looking for least-balanced guys to make my bottom 10.

Finally, I want to look at the stats in the cycle season, not career stats, because skills can change over time, most obviously in terms of speed, but power and ability to get hits also go down as well. This isn't perfect. For example, when you use only single-season scores, the most likely cycle hitter ever was Gary Ward with the 1980 Twins.

Huh? He only had 46 PA that year – but he hit 10 singles, six doubles, two triples and a dinger in that span. It's a sample size quirk, but this problem is less problematic than the one caused by using career stats.

Without further delay, here are the 10 least likely cycles

10. Chris Speier, 1978 Expos, 570 PA, 100 singles, 18 doubles, three triples, five homers.

A lot of guys have hit for the cycle with a worse batting average than the .251 mark Speier posted in 1978, but they aren't so heavily dependent on singles. Speier's Isolated Power of .078 is the sixth-worst by any cycle hitter. His slugging average (.329) is "only" eighth worst.

Speier has got to be the least likely man to ever hit for two cycles. His other one came in 1988, despite a season batting average of .216, which is tied fourth worst among the nearly 300 cycle hitters.

This is a bit of a tangent, by Speier's main competition for least likely to hit multiple cycles is John Olerud. Though Olerud was a fine hitter, he had one memorable feature in his pair of cycles. Each time it was his only triple of the year. There are only 16 cycles by batters who hit no other triple all season long, but Olerud has two of them. Bizarre.

9. Charlie Moore, 1980 Brewers: 356 PA, 76 singles, 13 doubles, two triples, two homers

I'm a little surprised to see Moore on this list. The longtime Milwaukee backstop was actually having a good year hitting the ball, as his .291 batting average attests. Plus he hardly drew any walks (24 in 111 games).

Like Speier, his problem was power. He actually had less power than Speier, as his woeful .072 ISO attests. Somehow, a man who averaged an extra base hit once every 21 PA on the year belted out three in one game, though.

8. John Mayberry, 1977 Royals: 641 PA, 79 singles, 22 doubles, one triple, 23 homers.

Mayberry is a different creature from Speier and Moore. Power was never his problem. He just couldn't make contact. He only hit .230 on the year. Between his bad batting average and his ability to draw walks (83), he couldn't quite manage to average a single every other game.

The complete lack of speed also hurt him. His career high was three triples in a season, and that was five years before he hit for the cycle.

Of the 21 times a person hit for the cycle with only one triple, Mayberry had the second most plate appearances on the year. Just above Mayberry in first place is Olerud, who had 679 PA in his 2001 cycle season. Just below Mayberry in third place is Olerud, with 630 PA in his other cycle season, 1997. Weird hitter, that Olerud.

7. [Bengie Molina](#), 2010 Giants/Rangers: 333 PA, 59 singles, nine doubles, one triple, five homers.

Here's the man who inspired the list. Even if you ignore the sole triple, his numbers are pretty bad across the line.

His numbers should change as the year goes on, further worsening his score. I can't imagine he'll hit another triple this year, but he'll never end up on "top" of this list. Then again, comparing his scores to Charlie Moore, I don't see any way out of the bottom 10 for Molina.

Here's a random fact: though he's only hit six triples in his 13-year career, four have come in the last five seasons. He went five years without a triple in the middle of his career but has since averaged almost one per year. Who knew he had it in him?

6. [Cesar Tovar](#), 1972 Twins: 548 PA, 117 singles, 20 doubles, six triples, two homers.

I'm surprised he scores worse than Molina. Going component by component, he seems to do better than the current catcher. He scores better in singles, doubles and triples, but Molina's advantage comes from homers, especially when adjusted for playing time. It's pretty close, but these guys are all packed in tightly. The real separation begins as we move along into the top three.

Tovar was a good player for a while, but his batting average dropped 50 points in 1972, and he never had that much power. It would've made a lot more sense for him to hit the cycle in 1970, when he led the league in doubles and triples while hitting .300 with 10 homers. That's not how it worked out, though.

5. [Chad Moeller](#), 2004 Brewers: 349 PA, 47 singles, 13 doubles, one triple, five homers.

Moeller is a pretty good comp for Molina. Both are contemporary catchers. In fact, they were only born seven months apart. Both have almost the exact number of plate appearances in their cycle seasons (for now, Molina should move up obviously). Each had one triple and five homers.

Moeller's advantage comes in doubles, but it's not enough to offset his big disadvantage: an overall complete inability to frickin' hit! Molina hit .208 that year, which is not only over 30

points below Molina's current mark, but is the third worst batting average in the history of baseball's cycle club.

Rather interestingly, Moeller's .208 average isn't the worst by a Milwaukee Brewers batter. The second worst batting average by a cycle hitter is Jody Gerut, who hit .197 this year – but still managed to hit a cycle for the Brewers. Normally I'd say Gerut's average could go up as the season goes along, but Milwaukee cut him. Given how bad he was this year (and prior to 2010), Moeller should end the year with his .197 average.

The worst batting average by any cycle hitter is .173, by Andjuar Cedeno in 1992. He also had the worst slugging average in the entire club (.277), and the worst 1B/PA ratio. Despite that, Cedeno doesn't make this overall bottom 10. It's a tough crowd to beat out when you get this low. He hit "only" the 14th least-likely cycle of all-time by my system. Thank God for that 35th-worst isolated power!

4. Tim Foli, 1976 Expos: 546 PA, 101 singles, 36 doubles, one triple, six homers.

What was it with 1970s Expos shortstops? First Speier, who manned the position for the club in the latter half of the 1970s, comes in tenth place on this list, and now Foli, who played short in Quebec prior to Speier, appears on this list.

Fun fact: the Expos traded Chris Speier straight up to San Francisco for Tim Foli in April 1977. Based on this list, it was a fairly even trade.

I'm surprised to see Foli score so poorly. He easily has the best doubles-power on the list, and among this bottom ten only Charlie Moore can top Foli's .264 batting average. Also, his one triple and six homers aren't good, but look typical for this crowd.

One triple and six homers are typical, but most of those guys are doing it in 300-some PA, not Foli's 546. In fact, if you ignore singles and doubles for a second and just multiply the 3B/PA and HR/PA score for all cycle hitters, Tim Foli comes in last out of the 294 contenders

3. Otis Clymer, 1908 Senators: 397 PA, 77 singles, 11 doubles, four triples, one homer.

Yeah, I never heard of him either. Incredibly, he had an OPS+ of 103 that year, which just goes to show just how putrid offense was in 1908, the low point of the Deadball Era. Should I make an era adjustment? No way – batters in low-scoring eras are less likely to hit for the cycle.

Clymer is Tim Foli without the doubles. Sure, his combined 3B/HR score is better, but the most notable difference was Clymer hitting one-third as many doubles (albeit in only two-thirds the PA) as Foli.

Clymer is one of only four men with only one homer in their cycle season. Only one had more PA than Clymer, Lon Knight (whoever he was), in 1883. Aside from Clymer, there's only one time since 1900 a batter's only HR of the year came in his cycle game: Gary Ward in his 46 PA "season" in 1980. (The fourth was Abner Dalrymple in 1891.)

Clymer actually played right field. While shortstops and catchers dominate this list, there are some rightfielders (Clymer and Tovar), and one first baseman (Mayberry).

2. Ivan DeJesus, 1980 Cubs: 692 PA, 128 singles, 26 doubles, three triples, three homers.

This is the second one to make it from 1980, making that the only year with multiple representatives. Another four came in the 1970s, so 1972-80 was the golden era for unlikely cycles.

Remember how I noted if you looked only at triples and homers Tim Foli scores the worst overall? DeJesus is runner up. It makes sense looking at the numbers – he averaged a triple or homer once every month. Yet he got one of each in one game.

DeJesus didn't have Foli's double power. As a result, DeJesus has the third-worst ISO in the history of cycle hitters: .066. Second worst is Clymer. The worst ISO is also the least likely cycle hitter of all

1. Bill Collins, 1910 Braves: 656 PA, 125 singles, six doubles, seven triples, three homers.

Those are some pretty dang impressive power numbers Collins has there. Not many guys average less than one double per 100 trips to the plate. Even back in 1900 that was true. And he was only slightly better with triples not nearly as effective with homers.

Added bonus: He did it while playing left field. That's normally where you put a guy who can't do much but hit. No wonder his team, the Braves, lost 100 games that year.

What's interesting is that there is a big gap here. You have Clymer and Collins in the early days, and then no one under Cesar Tovar in 1972. To fill in the gaps, here are the least likely cyclers for all decades between Collins and Tovar (and I'll toss in one to represent the 19th century as well). Here they are, their stats, and their overall rank out of the 294 cycles:

Name	Year	PA	1B	2B	3B	HR	RNK
Lon Knight	1883	450	75	23	9	1	17
Ray Schalk	1922	534	95	22	3	4	12
Odell Hale	1938	559	96	32	2	8	27
Harry Craft	1940	452	74	18	5	6	68

Lee Walls	1957	402	67	10	5	6	47
Jim King	1964	478	66	15	1	18	13

There were only 23 cycles hit in the 1940s. That's one advantage modern times has: expansion means more games.

HOW HARD IS IT TO MAKE THE MAJORS?

Less than eleven in 100, or about 10.5 percent, of NCAA senior male baseball players will get drafted by a Major League Baseball team. Approximately one in 200, or approximately 0.5 percent of high school senior boys playing interscholastic baseball will eventually be drafted by an MLB team.

First round draft picks make MLB at a 66% clip.

Round 2 that drops to 49%

Rounds 3-5 drops to 32%

Rounds 6-10 drops to 20%

Lowers rounds top out at 7%.

HALL OF FAME WEEK

Orlando Cepeda is in the HOF. 2351 hits, 379 HRs, served 10 months in prison in 1975 for selling 165 pounds of pot.

Rafael Palmeiro is not in. 3020 hits, 569 HRs, tested positive for steroids.

Gil Hodges is getting a lot of attention as a candidate. 370 HRs, 1921 hits. Hodges, a slugging first baseman, finished his career with 43.9 WAR and a 120 OPS+, strong career numbers if slightly below Hall of Fame standards.) Still, no person has been on a ballot more times (34) or received more votes (more than 3,000) without being enshrined in the Hall of Fame.

Hodges first appeared on a Hall ballot in 1969, months before he guided the Mets to a World Series championship. Now, 52 years later, his family will hope that the 35th time is a charm. Hodges is one of 10 candidates on this year's Golden Days Era ballot, one of two era committees that will vote on Sunday.

If voters like Hodges, why not Fred McGriff and his 493 HRs and 2490 hits?

HALL OF FAME SECOND BASEMEN

21 inductees

Roberto Alomar (210), Craig Biggio (291), Rod Carew (92), Eddie Collins (47), Bobby Doerr (223), Johnny Evers (12), Nellie Fox (35), Frankie Frisch (138), Charlie Gehringer (184), Joe Gordon (253), Frank Grant (14), Billy Herman (47), Rogers Hornsby (301), Nap Lajoie (82), Tony Lazzeri (178), Bill Mazeroski (138), Bid McPhee (53), Joe Morgan (268), Jackie Robinson (141), Ryne Sandberg (282), Red Schoendienst (84).

Not a position that prioritizes power and there are many factors to consider in a HOF vote besides HRs, but food for thought...

Those 21 Hall of Fame second basemen hit 3,73 HRs-- Average per player 146 HRs. The bottom ten averaged 46 career homeruns.

Jeff Kent **377 HRs**, 2,461 Hits, .290 career avg., 17 years, MVP, 9 HRs & 23 RBI in 49 post-season games. More HRs than any of the 21 HOF second basemen. He should be a no brainer.

Lou Whitaker 244 HRs, 2369 hits, 3 gold gloves, 4 x All Star, Rookie of the Year. 2,000 games/2,000 hits/200 HRs.

Bobby Grich 224 HR. 4 gold gloves, 6 x All Star.

Not saying either of these guys clearly crosses the 'very good' to 'all time great' line, but they should get a serious evaluation.

MORE HALL OF FAME MUSINGS ON THE EVE OF THIS YEAR'S VOTE RESULTS

<https://joeposnanski.substack.com/>

I have been enjoying Joe Posnanski's blog—he used to cover baseball for *Sports Illustrated* and the *Kansas City Star* and *The Athletic*. He broke out on his own and I signed up. Link to the blog is above—there is a tease of free content worth checking out. The Hall of Fame is his area of most interest. Here are some highlights from this week:

Ken Boyer

Hall of Fame history: Was on the BBWAA ballot for 15 years, getting as much as 25.5% of the vote.

Veterans committee history:

2003 veterans: 13.6%

2005 veterans: 18.8%

2007 veterans: 11%

2012 Golden Era Ballot: fewer than three votes.

2015 Golden Era Ballot: fewer than three votes

I've always been very sympathetic toward Ken Boyer's Hall of Fame case. Normally, I cannot sum up my Hall of Fame feelings by simply comparing one player to another, but I do believe this comparison is so striking that it bears repeating:

Player A: .285/.344/.452, 114 OPS+, 282 homers, 1,318 runs, 1,061 RBIs, 344 stolen bases, 9 Gold Gloves, 1 MVP, 67.9 bWAR.

Player B: .287/.349/.462, 116 OPS+, 282 homers, 1,103 runs, 1,141 RBIs, 105 stolen bases, 5 Gold Gloves, 1 MVP, 62.8 bWAR.

There doesn't seem to be much to separate Players A and B. Both were very good hitters with power, both were elite defenders, both won an MVP award. Yes, Player A did play a little bit longer and he was faster. But Player B was a key to a World Series title, something Player A sadly never could accomplish.

You probably figured it out—Player A is Hall of Famer Ryne Sandberg and Player B is Boyer, and there's no doubt in my mind that the big reason Sandberg is in and Boyer is not is because Sandberg was a second baseman. They did the same things, but Sandberg's power stood out more because he was a second baseman, his defense stood out more because he was a second baseman, etc. Third basemen, unless they're Schmidt, Brett or Chipper, simply do not impress Hall of Fame voters. I don't agree.

But here's the thing I would add about Boyer: His case has been heard and denied. I'm not saying that's fair. But I am saying that he was on the Hall of Fame ballot 15 times, he's been on various ballots five more times, and he has never come close to being elected. At some point, it's time to give other people a chance.

Cannonball Dick Redding

Hall of Fame history: Was on the 2006 Committee on African-American Baseball final ballot and was not voted in. He was actually only one of nine "Pre-Negro Leagues" candidates, and was one of only three not voted in—along with Home Run Johnson and Spotwood Poles.

Cannonball Dick Redding might have thrown the hardest fastball in baseball history. We'll never know, of course, but when discussing the fastest pitchers ever, he should at least be given a hearing. Contemporaries such as Pop Lloyd said he was the fastest pitcher they ever saw. Redding used to tell a story of throwing a baseball so hard against the side of a barn that the ball exploded.

I am entirely unsure why the Committee on African-American Baseball did not vote in Redding—he seems to me their ideal candidate, a player from the early days before the Negro leagues were founded whose greatness had long been overlooked. It is said that Dick Redding threw 30 no-hitters in his career, seven in just one season. There were nine Pre-Negro Leagues

players on the final ballot, and for some reason the committee could only agree on six of them, with Redding being left out. I don't get it.

Jim Kaat

Hall of Fame history: On the BBWAA ballot 15 times, topping out at 29.6%.

Veterans committee history:

2005 veterans: 53.8%

2007 veterans: 63.4%

2009 veterans: 59.4%

2012 Golden Era: 10 votes (12 needed)

2015 Golden Era: 10 votes (12 needed)

Jim Kaat's story is different from Boyer's. Their cases have been made a similar number of times, but Kaat—unlike Boyer—has come SUPER close to election multiple times. In 2005, 2007 and 2009, the vote was taken by all the living Hall of Famers, and he got more than 50% of the vote each time. Nobody was elected in any of those three years because no player South of Willie Mays is going to get 75% of the vote from the living Hall of Famers, so Kaat getting a majority probably should have gotten him in.

Then he fell just two votes shy in both 2012 and 2015.

So, yes, I hope Kaat gets elected. He has lived an extraordinary baseball life as both a player and an announcer. He might be the greatest fielding pitcher in baseball history. He won 283 games when that was the standard by which pitchers were judged. Bill James has shown how just a few small changes in the order of his career—take a win here and put it there, adjust the timing of his career—and he probably wins two or three Cy Young Awards.

My only real issue with Kaat's Hall of Fame case has nothing to do with Kaat—it has something to do with his contemporary Tommy John, who in my mind has a case that's even stronger.

Tony Oliva

Hall of Fame history: Was on the BBWAA ballot 15 times, receiving as much as 47.3% of the vote.

Veterans committee history:

2003 veterans: 59.3%

2005 veterans: 56.5%

2007 veterans: 57.3%

2009 veterans: 51.6%

2012 Golden Era Ballot: 8 votes (12 needed)

2015 Golden Era Ballot: 11 votes (12 needed)

I've written many times that Tony Oliva is my father's favorite player. I'm not sure there are many things more sacred than that in baseball.

One thing I don't quite get about Oliva is why his Hall of Fame momentum died after 1988. That year, he got almost half the votes— 47.3%—and he had been making steady progress on his way to the Hall. Then in 1989, Johnny Bench and Carl Yastrzemski came on the ballot and support for Oliva tumbled. It's really strange.

In 1988, he was ahead of Orlando Cepeda. By 1990, Cepeda had raced by him—I don't know why. Cepeda was elected by the veterans committee.

In 1994, Oliva received more votes than Jim Rice. Soon after, Rice just skyrocketed up the charts and eventually was elected.

All the while, Oliva was way ahead of Dick Allen ... who has since become a true cause and will, I believe, get elected this year (Oliva might too, we will see).

I don't know why that sort of climb didn't happen for Oliva. I suppose it comes down to stats. Oliva's greatness is not easily captured by the stats because he played through so much pain and the worst hitting era since Deadball, and because his career ended up being so short. The ferocious line drives he hit—it's possible that nobody has ever hit baseballs harder—have been reduced to numbers that do not persuade, such as 1,917 hits and 329 doubles. The three batting titles have been diminished along with batting average, and Oliva was *never* interested in taking walks.

I guess as time goes on, fewer and fewer people are left who grew up seeing Oliva play. I didn't. By the time I became aware of baseball, Oliva was a broken ballplayer with shot knees. But I heard plenty of stories from my Dad. Oliva belongs in the Hall of Fame.

John Donaldson

Hall of Fame history: Was on the 2006 Committee on African-American Baseball final ballot in 2006, but did not get voted in.

The 2006 vote happened before a man named Peter Gorton made it his life's purpose to show the world just how great a pitcher John Donaldson was. Gorton's obsession led to the creation of the John Donaldson network, which has uncovered more than 25,000 clippings and photos of Donaldson's career.

A few facts the network has uncovered:

- 413 verified wins
- 5,091 verified strikeouts
- 14 no-hitters and two perfect games.
- Two games with 30-plus strikeouts.

Buck O'Neil has said that Donaldson basically showed Satchel Paige the way.

I think it's pretty obvious that Donaldson belongs in the Hall of Fame.

Gil Hodges

Hall of Fame history: Was on the BBWAA ballot 15 times, twice topping out at 60% of the vote.

Veterans committee history:

2003 veterans: 61.7% (top vote-getter)

2005 veterans: 65% (top vote-getter)

2007 veterans: 61%

2009 veterans: 43.8%

2012 Golden Era: 9 votes (12 needed)

2015 Golden Era: fewer than three votes

All right, so here's what I think about Gil Hodges' Hall of Fame case: The fact that he got 65% of the vote from the living Hall of Famers in 2005 tells you point-blank that he belongs in the Hall of Fame. Getting 65% of the Hall of Famers to agree that you are also a Hall of Famer is harder than getting 100% of the BBWAA vote.

Hodges' case has been made countless times—he was a great slugger for the Boys of Summer Brooklyn Dodgers, a beloved leader, and later he was manager of the Miracle Mets. It's an extraordinary baseball life, and the fact that he's not in the Hall of Fame already inspires puzzled outrage from his many devoted fans.

The 2015 Golden Era ballot is a real puzzle, though. Before that, Hodges was always super-close to getting elected. I believe he's the only player not currently on the Hall of Fame ballot who got 60% of the vote and has not been elected to the Hall. He received overwhelming support from the Hall of Famers in 2003, 2005 and 2007. In 2012, he fell just three votes short of election.

But in 2015, suddenly, his support cratered—he did not get even three out of the 16 votes. I don't know what happened there. It's tough to predict what this committee will make of Hodges' case.

Dick Allen

Hall of Fame history: Was on the BBWAA ballot 14 times, topping out at 18.9%.

Veterans committee history:

2003 veterans: 16%

2005 veterans: 15%

2007 veterans: 13.4%

2015 veterans: 11 votes (12 needed)

Before 2015, Dick Allen had never gotten anything even close to the support he needed for the Hall of Fame. Then, in 2015, more or less out of nowhere, he fell just one vote shy of election, heartbreakingly close. His vote was supposed to come up again in 2020, and it was widely believed—at least among those I spoke with—that Allen was going to get elected this time for sure.

The vote was postponed a year because of COVID.

Dick Allen died on Dec. 7.

This is the part of the Hall of Fame I really dislike—you really want to see players elected to the Hall of Fame while they're still alive. You want them to feel the love.

Dick Allen was an extraordinary hitter and a controversial figure. He was the first African-American baseball star for the Philadelphia Phillies, and he struggled to carry that burden. As a slugger, he had few equals. His rookie season, he hit .318/.382/.557 with a league-leading 125 runs, 13 triples and 352 total bases. Boyer won the MVP, but Allen had the better season (then again, Willie Mays was better than both).

Allen's 1966 offensive season was nothing less than extraordinary: .317/.396/.632 with 40 homers and a league-leading 181 OPS+. He finished fourth in the MVP voting that year behind Roberto Clemente, Sandy Koufax and Willie Mays.

Allen led the National League with a .404 on-base percentage in 1967. He hit 33 and 32 home runs in 1968 and '69, two of the great pitching seasons in baseball history. And his best season was probably 1972, when he hit .308/.420/.603 with 37 homers and 113 RBIs for the Chicago White Sox—he was the runaway winner of the MVP award.

His dominance as a hitter was unquestionably countered by his contentious nature, which is why he got so little Hall of Fame support among the BBWAA. (I think by 2015 the voters were ready to let go of that part and honor the player.) I'm not great at these sorts of predictions, but I think Allen will get elected this time around. I wish he were alive to see it.

Billy Pierce

Pitched from 1945 (when he was 18!) until 1964. ... Probably the best American League pitcher of the 1950s ... Won 20 games twice and led league with a 1.97 ERA in 1955 ... Seven-time All-Star, but even more impressively, he started three All-Star Games.

Key numbers: 211-169, 3.27 ERA, 119 ERA+, 1,999 strikeouts, 38 shutouts, 53.4 bWAR.

Hall of Fame history: Appeared on just five BBWAA ballots and never got even two percent of the vote. Did not appear on a veteran's ballot until 2013, when he got fewer than three votes.

By all accounts, Billy Pierce was a spectacularly nice man, which I assume is why he's on this ballot even though, let's be honest, he's been roundly rejected as a Hall of Fame candidate for 50 years.

I'm not saying that rejection is fair ... just that it's undeniable. I actually believe Pierce does have a Hall of Fame case because I do believe he was the best pitcher in the American League in the 1950s. There are eight Hall of Fame pitchers who appeared in AL games in the decade, but if you look at them, you realize that none really fits the bill as best pitcher of the decade:

Pierce pitched 800 more innings than Whitey Ford, who I think was the second best pitcher of the decade. I think Pierce was more dominant than either Early Wynn or Bob Lemon, who are both in the Hall of Fame. And the other Hall of Famers from the decade don't really compare

well — Jim Bunning was really more of a 1960s pitcher, Hoyt Wilhelm was a reliever and definitely more of a 1960s pitcher, Bob Feller belongs to the 1930s and '40s, Satchel Paige was timeless but certainly not a good comp, and Hal Newhouser was at his best around World War II.

Anyway, on this ballot, I just think every vote for Pierce will hurt more compelling candidates.

Maury Wills

Often credited for reshaping the game by bringing back the stolen base in the early 1960s ... Led the National League in steals every year from 1960 to 1965 and set the record with 104 steals in his MVP season of 1964 ... Starting shortstop for four pennant-winning Dodgers teams, three of which won the World Series ... Seven-time All-Star and two-time Gold Glove winner.

Key statistics: .280/.330/.331 with 2,134 hits, 1,067 runs and 586 stolen bases. 39.6 bWAR.

Hall of Fame history: Was on the BBWAA ballot 15 times, receiving as much as 40.6% of the vote in 1981.

2003 veterans committee: 29.6%

2005 veterans committee: 32.5%

2007 veterans committee: 40.2%

2009 veterans committee: 23.4%

2015 Golden Era Ballot: 9 out of 16 votes (12 needed)

The case for Maury Wills is an emotional one — it has to be. A cold and unemotional look at his career shows a shortstop with an 88 OPS+ and only so-so defensive numbers. That 39.6 bWAR (and 35.7 fWAR) does not sound like a Hall of Fame number.

But the people who watched Maury Wills play will never forget it. He was a blur, a force, someone so very different from everyone else. Imagine a player coming along NOW and stealing 100 bases in a season; it would be electrifying and a contrast with everything else happening in the game. That's the jolt that was Maury Wills.

The people who make Wills' case argue that he basically brought the stolen base back from the dead. It's an interesting argument, but probably one that could be attached to others such as Luis Aparicio, Lou Brock, Bert Campaneris and so on. I admit to being a little bit less sentimental about Wills' Hall of Fame case, but I just looked up Bert Campaneris' numbers for this paragraph — and I can't help but think he's actually a more compelling Hall of Fame candidate than Wills.

MORE FROM BASEBALLEGG—HALL OF FAME DEBATES

Nine players and one former manager have been named to the Golden Days Era Committee ballot, including two candidates who fell one vote shy of election to the Baseball Hall of Fame the last time it met.

This Golden Days committee, one of several the Baseball Hall of Fame convenes to consider candidates who were not elected by the baseball writers, as well as managers, negro leaguers, and early baseball figures, is charged with looking at candidates who debuted or were active primarily between 1950 and 1969.

The ten people named to the ballot are:

- Dick Allen
- Ken Boyer
- Gil Hodges
- Jim Kaat
- Roger Maris
- Minnie Miñoso
- Danny Murtaugh
- Tony Oliva
- Billy Pierce
- Maury Wills

The committee will meet on December 5th during baseball's winter meetings in Florida. Results will be announced that day.

In 2014, Allen and Oliva garnered 11 votes each, one short of the 12 required from the 16-person panel. Jim Kaat received 10 votes in that election, and Wills got nine votes.

The first time the Golden Days Era Committee met in 2011 (for the induction class of 2012), they chose Ron Santo, who received 15 votes. In that election, Kaat was second with 10 votes,

and Oliva had 8. Dick Allen was not on that ballot, but he remains a popular and controversial candidate.

Dick Allen's Hall of Fame Credentials

Allen debuted in 1963 for the Phillies, and from the start he was a remarkable performer. In his first full season in 1964, the strong right-handed batter hit .318 with 201 hits, a league-best 125 runs, 38 doubles, 13 triples (also a league-leading total), and 352 total bases, the best in the National League. For his efforts, Allen was named Rookie of the Year.

Two years later, Allen led the league slugging for the first of three times, and in OPS for the first of four times. Despite playing in the Second Deadball Era, Allen batted .300 seven times, and slugged over .600 three times. He won the American League Most Valuable Player Award in 1972, and was a seven-time All-Star. His career 156 OPS+ ranks 15th all-time.

Yes, that's correct...you read that right: Dick Allen's career On-Base-Plus-Slugging is *15th all-time in the history of baseball*. It's better than Henry Aaron. It's better than Willie Mays and Joe DiMaggio. Better than Albert Pujols.

Consider this: since the end of World War II, Allen's career slugging percentage (.534) ranks 24th among players who appeared as last as often as he did, which was 15 years and about 7,000 plate appearances.

Allen is ranked [13th among first-basemen all-time](#) on our list here on BaseballEgg.com

Kaat's Candidacy Could Be Clouded by Recent On-Air Remarks

Former left-handed pitcher Jim Kaat had one of the longest careers of any player in baseball history, stretching from 1959 to 1983. He entered the game when teams were using four-man rotations, saw the game transition to five-man staffs, then made the shift to the bullpen when he was 40 years old.

Kaat won 288 despite pitching for several mediocre clubs, and he his 898 games pitched ranks among the best of all-time. But there could be off-field issues with his candidacy.

During the 2021 playoffs when he was broadcasting a game between the White Sox and Astros, Kaat made a remark about Cuban-born Yoán Moncada that some felt was racially insensitive or prejudiced. Kaat quickly apologized during the broadcast.

On our list of the [Top 100 Pitchers of All-Time](#), Kaat is included in the extra section at #115, nestled behind Corey Kluber and just ahead of Don Newcombe and Jack Morris.

Elevated Status of Negro Leagues Should Help Miñoso

Earlier this year, Major League Baseball decreed that the negro leagues would be classified as “major leagues” on par with the American and National Leagues, and other leagues that only allowed white players until 1947.

[As we wrote here previously](#), Miñoso’s case for the Hall of Fame is solid even without the addition of his negro leagues years, but in light of MLB’s decision, his chances of election are stronger.

Not only did Miñoso star in the negro leagues as a young player, he was also held back from playing regularly for basically two full seasons because Cleveland felt he needed more experience in the integrated minor leagues. He didn’t need that time: Miñoso was a star the first day he played pro ball against white players. The only thing that halted him from putting up greater numbers was the lack of a real opportunity.

Miñoso ranks [ninth on our list of the Top 100 Left Fielders of All-Time](#).

FROM BASEBALLEGG.COM

Why baseball calls it a “bullpen”

This week PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) asked Major League Baseball to stop using the term “bullpen,” suggesting the new description be “Arm Barn.”

Yes, really.

Rather than write 5,000 words on why PETA has way, way (way) too much time on their hands, I’ll focus this blog post on answering a common question I’m getting right now:

Why is it called a “bullpen”?

The earliest mention of the term “bullpen” in baseball

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the earliest use of “bullpen” in baseball was in a *Cincinnati Enquirer* article published on May 7, 1877, in which O.P. Caylor wrote:

“The bull-pen at the Cincinnati grounds with its ‘three for a quarter crowd’ has lost its usefulness. The bleacher boards just north of the old pavilion now holds the cheap crowd, which comes in at the end of the first inning on a discount.”

According to Wikipedia, the park in question (Avenue Grounds) is mysterious, and historians can’t even agree on where it was located in Cincinnati. Wikipedia says: “contemporary atlases

indicate the “Base Ball Grounds” was about two short blocks west of Spring Grove Avenue, bounded on the south by Alabama Avenue, on the west by Mill Creek, on the north by the imaginary line extending from Monmouth Street, and on the immediate east by railroad tracks. It was a couple of blocks north of the stockyards, and was near the Cincinnati Workhouse, which served as the jail.”

Caylor’s quote in the May 1877 article seems to indicate that the “bull-pen” at the Cincinnati ballpark was being used as overflow seating for crowds buying cheap tickets. Originally, it appears, the Red Stockings had been using it to allow their pitchers to warm up.

But that 1877 article doesn’t explain HOW the area became known as the “bull-pen” in the first place. There’s much confusion about the term among language lovers and baseball experts.

Theories about the origins of the baseball term “bullpen”

Let us count the many origin stories for the word “bullpen” in baseball:

- It’s a reference to dairy farms, where bulls were penned separately from the cows, but in sight of their eventual “mates” so as to get them **ready for “further action.”** *Get it? Like relief pitchers waiting to get into a game.*
- The term “bullpen” could be a reference to **rodeo bulls** being held in a pen before being released into the main arena.
- Late-arriving fans in the 19th century were escorted to standing-room areas in foul territory. Because the fans were herded like cattle, this area became known as the “bullpen,” a designation which was later **adopted for relief pitchers** who warmed up there.
- In the early 1900s, ballpark fences were often plastered with **advertisements for Bull Durham tobacco**. Since relievers warmed up in a nearby area, the term “bullpen” came about.
- Hall of Fame manager Casey Stengel claimed “bullpen” came from managers getting tired of their relief pitchers **“shooting the bull” in the dugout** and were therefore sent elsewhere, where they would not be a bother to the rest of the team – the bullpen. Few historians take this theory seriously.
- At the Polo Grounds (home of the New York Giants and Yankees for many years), which opened around 1880, relief pitchers warmed up their arms in the same area as a **stockyard or pen that held bulls**. This story seems like a stretch.

What’s the real story of the word “bullpen”?

It’s likely that the original explanation comes from the common 19th century term where fans were cordoned off in cheap seating areas, which resembled a “bull-pen” where cows would be kept on a ranch or farm.

Here’s what John Thorn, the official historian of Major League Baseball has to say on the subject:

This is exceedingly stupid. A bullpen was the name for an enclosure to rope off fans on field; it was also the name of a frontier ballgame (see below). The term bullpen, signifying the foul areas in back of first and third bases, was in use as early as 1877.

(more from our series on baseball books)

ARNOLD HANO, AUTHOR OF A BLEACHER'S VIEW BASEBALL CLASSIC, DIES AT 99

"A Day in the Bleachers" recalled what he saw, heard and felt at the Polo Grounds during a 1954 World Series game in which Willie Mays made "the Catch."

Arnold Hano was 4 years old when he became a New York Giants fan while his family was living a block from the Polo Grounds in Upper Manhattan.

It was the summer of 1926, and his grandfather Ike, a New York City police lieutenant, had given the boy his season pass for a seat in the grandstand above first base.

"It was a simple matter for my mother to get me off her hands by teaching me to cross streets by myself," Mr. Hano (pronounced HAY-no) recalled long afterward. Unaccompanied, he attended about a half-dozen games that season.

A year later, he dispensed with the pass and, with spending money he had earned from odd jobs, bought a 50-cent ticket for a seat in the bleachers, having heard it was fun to sit there, out beyond the outfield. He began spending Saturday afternoons on those long narrow planks that passed for seats some 500 feet from home plate, growing to love the wide view of that cavernous, horseshoe-shaped ballpark that they afforded and to enjoy the characters he encountered there.

As he grew into adulthood, Mr. Hano retained his love for the Giants, and for the Polo Grounds bleachers. In 1954, while working as an editor in book publishing and living with his wife, Bonnie, in mid-Manhattan, he plunked himself down on one of those planks to watch the Giants face the Cleveland Indians in Game 1 of the World Series.

Mr. Hano had attended only one World Series game before that, the Giants' loss to the Yankees in Game 4 of the 1936 Series. But he had long been intrigued by the aura of a Series opening game. He wanted to experience it and considered writing a magazine article about it, so he took notes in the margins of his game program and of the pages of The New York Times that he had brought along to read while waiting for the game to start.

He jotted down impressions of his fellow bleacher denizens. There was the man who pleaded for contributions to his campaign to buy watches for the Giants players and coaches as a thank you

for their surprising pennant victory. Another bleacher fan spent the afternoon trying to chat up the pitchers in the bullpens, which were on the playing field, just over the bleacher walls.

After the game, Mr. Hano expanded on his notes to write a 10,000-word account, weaving what he saw in the bleacher world with the action on the field while offering observations on the ballplayers' personas, the managers' strategies and his recollections of the baseball greats of years past. But seeking to sell the article to *The New Yorker*, he was turned down.

Undeterred, and galvanized by an extraordinary play by the Giants' Willie Mays in center field, Mr. Hano spent the next few weeks turning his musings into a book, "A Day in the Bleachers." Published in 1955, it would become a classic, hailed as a forerunner of the subjective New Journalism that flowered a decade later.

Mr. Hano went on to become a prolific writer. But when he died at 99 on Sunday at his home in Laguna Beach, Calif., it was for that book that he was mostly remembered, with its riveting account of Mays' heroics that afternoon, on Sept. 29, 1954 — the play that came to be known as "the catch."

It was the top of the eighth inning, the Giants and the Indians were tied at 2-2.

With no outs and runners on first and second, Cleveland's first baseman, [Vic Wertz](#), sent a drive to the farthest reaches of the Polo Grounds. Mays turned his back toward home plate, raced to the green barrier in right-center field and made a spectacular over-the-shoulder catch.

Then he uncorked an equally spectacular throw to the infield.

"Mays simply slowed down to avoid running into the wall, put his hands up in cup-like fashion, over his left shoulder, and caught the ball much like a football player catching leading passes in the end zone," Mr. Hano wrote.

"He had turned so quickly and run so fast and truly that he made this impossible catch look — to us in the bleachers — quite ordinary.

"Mays caught the ball, and then turned and threw like some olden statue of a Greek javelin hurler, his head twisted away to the left as his right arm swept out and around.

"Off came the cap, and then Mays continued to spin around after the gigantic effort of returning the ball whence it came, and he went down flat on his belly, and out of sight. This was the throw of a giant, the throw of a howitzer made human, arriving at second base."

The Giants won the game, 5-2, in the 10th on a three-run pinch-hit homer by the unheralded outfielder [Dusty Rhodes](#). They went on to sweep the favored Indians in four games.

Writing in [The New York Times](#) Book Review in August 1955, the novelist and longtime baseball fan [James T. Farrell](#) told how Mr. Hano, in his book, provided "vignettes of other bleacher

denizens and writes us a dramatic account of the game itself — and, although we know its outcome, our interest is held here as it might in a novel.”

And [Roger Kahn](#), author of another baseball classic, “The Boys of Summer” (1972), wrote in The Times in 1985, “Mr. Hano’s writing style was informed and unpretentious, and you could feel those splintery old Polo Grounds bleachers beneath you and smell the mustard on the hot dogs, which were usually served up cold.”

Mr. Hano went on to write more than 20 books, including biographies of Mays and other celebrated sports figures as well as novels, and he contributed articles to major national magazines, touching not only on sports but conservation, racial issues and the plight of migrant workers.

Arnold Philip Hano was born on March 2, 1922, in Manhattan. His father, Alfred, was a lawyer who worked as a salesman during the Depression; his mother, Clara (Millhauser) Hano, was a homemaker.

Mr. Hano graduated from Long Island University in Brooklyn in 1941 with a major in English and saw combat in the Pacific with an Army artillery unit in World War II. He was managing editor of Bantam Books in the late 1940s, then editor in chief of the paperback line Lion Books before turning to freelance writing full time.

He received a 1964 Sidney Hillman Foundation award, named for the late clothing workers’ union leader, for “The Burned Out Americans,” an article in the men’s magazine *Saga* telling of the plight of migrant workers.

Mr. Hano married Bonnie Abraham, his second wife, in 1951, when she was doing production work for Atlas Comics and he was with Lion Books, an allied company. She joined with him as Peace Corps volunteers for two years in the early 1960s in Costa Rica.

She survives him, together with their daughter, Laurel Inghram; his son, Stephen, and daughter Susan Hano, both from his first marriage, to Marjorie Mosheim, which ended in divorce; and a granddaughter. Stephen Hano confirmed the death. Mr. Hano’s brother, Alfred, was killed in action during World War II on an Army Air Forces mission over Europe.

In an afterword to a 2004 paperback edition of “A Day in the Bleachers” commemorating the 50th anniversary of “the Catch,” Mr. Hano told of the summer day in 1955 when [Don Liddle](#), the Giants’ reliever who threw the pitch that wound up in Mays’s glove, introduced his young son Craig to Mays. Mays gave the glove to the boy, since Mays was breaking in a new one. Craig Liddle went on to wear it in Little League games and later [lent it to the Baseball Hall of Fame](#), which put it on display.

For all its modern travails, baseball “still remains our greatest game,” Mr. Hano wrote.

“It is also the simplest,” he added. “It often comes down to a boy, his baseball glove and a hero.”

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