

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

10.16.2022

Good morning baseball fans,

Sorry to be behind schedule this morning. Up a little late watching Padres stun Dodgers. What a night with brutal Yankees loss one strike away (while watching 18 innings Mariners-Astros on my phone).

How much would the boys at Chrones Tavern have made if they plopped down \$1K betting both Phillies and Padres would win?

This morning tons of playoff facts/stats/weirdness, 100 innings in Boston, Sports Illustrated's Tom Verducci on playoff pitching. Enjoy.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

A question that salutes the Yankees and the Mets making the post-season (first time ever both teams won 98 or more games in same season).

Five managers have skippered both the Yankees and the Mets.

Name them.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Think of it this way--The four best teams in the National League — including the team with the best regular-season run differential in 85 years — are out. The New York Yankees are on the brink after blowing a ninth-inning lead on Saturday night with some pitcher named **Clarke Schmidt**. The Astros and Mariners played a 359-inning scoreless game only a few days after Cleveland and Tampa Bay played a 337-inning scoreless game.

The Yankees had never once blown a multiple-run lead entering the ninth inning of a playoff game. Never once. They were 167-0.

2008

1980

1929

Financial crises and Phillies World Series wins.

Be careful what you root for.

In the history of best-of-five postseason series, teams holding a 2-1 lead have gone on to win the series 67 of 93 times (72%). In Division Series with the current 2-2-1 format, teams up 2-1 and playing Game 4 in their home ballparks have advanced 21 of 26 times (81%). In 15 of those instances, the series has ended in Game 4.

Saturday was Mariner's first home playoff game in 21 years. Bummer to get swept by the Astros but a positive season.

For the Padres Friday was their first home playoff game since 2006 vs. Cards, first win since 1998 vs. Braves.

The Braves were 77-32 after June 1, the best record in baseball over the Dodgers by a half-game. They overcame the Mets to win the National League East on a tiebreaker and weren't swept in a series all season.

Braves called up **Michael Harris II** on May 28, they were 22-24. They went 79-37 after that, a .681 pace. They went 79-35 when Harris started, a .693 pace.

They were second in the majors in home runs and their pitching staff was second in strikeouts.

As loaded as the Dodgers are, the Braves thought they had everything in place to be the first team to repeat as World Series champions since the 1998-2000 Yankees won three in a row. Instead they became the first defending WS champ to be eliminated in their first playoff round since 2005 Red Sox.

On June 25, **Blake Snell** broke **Bryce Harper's** left thumb with a pitch, costing the slugger two months. Since returning on August 26, he's hit .227/.325/.352. He's barreled just ten balls since his return, playoffs included.

The Phillies were 24th in the majors in Defensive Efficiency at .687, a simple stat that measures how often a team turns batted balls into outs. In the last ten years, only the 2021 Red Sox and 2017 Astros have advanced to the LCS round with lower-ranked defenses.

More from the 'you can't make this stuff up' file-- The Phillies announced Tuesday morning that they will be without **David Robertson** in the NLDS—a blow to a bullpen that is already somewhat inconsistent at best. The reason? He jumped up to celebrate **Bryce Harper's** home

run Saturday and strained his calf. (The 37-year-old righty is “devastated,” Phillies manager **Rob Thomson** said.) What a reminder of the perils of aging.

With 6 runs in an inning vs. the Cards and 6 runs in an inning vs. the Braves the Phillies became the 14th team to have multiple 6 or more run innings in the post-season. 8 of those teams won the World Series.

On June 25, Blake Snell broke Harper’s left thumb with a pitch, costing the slugger two months. Since returning on August 26, he’s hit .227/.325/.352. He’s barreled just ten balls since his return. Then Bryce Harper got to the playoffs--first five playoff games, batting .444 with 3 doubles, 2 HRs. And of the 10 balls he put in play, 6 left the bat at over 100 mph.

Philadelphia’s **Rob Thomson** is the first manager in history to inherit a team at least seven games under .500 during a season and then win a postseason series.

The second the ball left **J.T. Realmuto's** bat in the third inning of Game 4 of the National League Division Series on Saturday afternoon, the crowd at Citizens Bank Park roared in anticipation of a potential home run.

The ball instead glanced off the angled wall in deep center field, but the fans still got their home run during the Phillies' series-clinching 8-3 win over the Braves, which set up an NLCS date with the Padres.

With the ball ricocheting away from Braves center fielder **Michael Harris II**, who made an unsuccessful leaping attempt, Realmuto sprinted around the bases in 15.4 seconds for just the 18th inside-the-park home run in postseason history **and the first since the Red Sox's Rafael Devers** in Game 4 of the 2017 American League Division Series against the Astros.

It was also the first by a catcher in MLB postseason history. Realmuto's inside-the-parker was the first of its kind in postseason play, it was nearly identical to one he hit at the same ballpark five years ago as a member of the Marlins

Arizona fall league. Since the AFL began in 1992, roughly 60 percent of the participants have advanced to the Majors -- a total of more than 3,000.

Astros over Mariners in 18 innings. 8 Astros pitchers combined to throw 18 shutout innings. 6 hours, 22 minutes (third longest playoff game ever), 498 total pitches from 18 pitchers. Just 4

walks but 5 HBP. The 18-inning affair is tied for the longest playoff game in Major League history.

Then rookie shortstop **Jeremy Peña** delivered the biggest hit of his young career. Peña walloped a leadoff homer in the 18th inning. Astros go to LCS for 6th straight year. The Astros and the Braves (eight in a row) are the only teams to reach the LCS in six consecutive postseasons.

Jose Altuve went 0-for-8 against Mariners pitching, becoming just the sixth player in postseason history to achieve the unfortunate feat. Ironically, one of the previous five was Astros legend **Craig Biggio**, who went 0-for-8 in Game 4 of the 2005 NLDS against the Braves.

Behind the plate for 17+ innings, postseason history:

1-T. **Cal Raleigh** (SEA): 18.0 innings, 2022 ALDS Game 3

1-T. **Buster Posey** (SF): 18 innings, 2014 NLDS Game 2

1-T. **Wilson Ramos** (WSH): 18.0 innings, 2014 NLDS Game 2

4. **Brian McCann** (ATL): 17.1 innings, 2005 NLDS Game 4

I was lucky to catch the Astros game one comeback against the Mariners. 7-3 lead with 6 outs to go, **Yordan Alvarez** detonated that 117-mph, 438-foot 3 run walk off bomb off Seattle's **Robbie Ray**.

As Joe Posnanski wrote--many of the most famous home runs in postseason baseball — **Carlton Fisk's** wave-it-fair blast, **Bill Mazerowski's** shot to beat the Yankees, **Chris Chambliss'** run-through-the-crowd crusher — came with the score tied.

Before Alvarez, there had only been three October walkoffs that actually turned the score around. Probably the least known of these came in 1986, Game 3 of the National League Championship Series, when the Mets trailed the Astros 5-4 with one out and one runner on. That's when **Lenny Dykstra** hit the game-winning home run off **Dave Smith**.

Probably the best known of these came in 1988, World Series Game 1, when the Dodgers trailed Oakland by a run with two outs in the ninth and **Kirk Gibson** hit the "I do not believe what I just saw," walkoff home run off **Dennis Eckersley** and then limped his way around the bases.

And certainly the most impactful of these came in 1993, Game 6 of the World Series, when Toronto trailed by a run and **Joe Carter** hit the "touch 'em all, Joe" homer off **Mitch Williams** to walk off the World Series against Philadelphia.

But you will notice something. Of these, only Gibson's came with two outs. And in all the cases, the team was trailing by just one run. That puts Alvarez's moment in a slightly different category. His Astros were trailing by two runs. And there were two outs. The only other home run I can come up with that is even comparable in terms of mathematical drama is one you might have heard something about, 1951, Giants trailing the Dodgers 4-2, **Bobby Thomson** steps to the plate against **Ralph Branca**, the pennant on the line.

But, two things about the Shot Heard Round the World.

1. It technically was a regular-season home run; the Giants and Dodgers played a three game play-off because they had tied for the pennant.
2. There was actually only one out.

So, yeah, Alvarez's homer is unique in baseball's postseason history: Stuff like this doesn't happen. So why did it seem so bound to happen? I think that comes down to the sheer brilliance of Yordan Alvarez. He's 6-foot-5, 225 pounds and he seems way bigger than that when you see him in person. And he's a hitting genius. There's no way to get him out. He hits righties, he hits lefties, he hits in the day, he hits at night, he hits when the roof's open, he hits when the roof's closed, he hits fastballs, he hits sliders, he hits with runners on, he hits with the bases empty, he hits change-ups.

And Joe Sheehan:

So, when Mariners manager **Scott Servais** faced his nightmare scenario — having to get Yordan Alvarez out to seal a game that the Mariners had led by four runs on three different occasions — he decided to bring in left-handed starter Robbie Ray. I'm not going to lie, even in the moment this seemed like the worst of all options. Robbie Ray is a fine pitcher, he won the Cy Young Award just last year, but in his extensive baseball career he had never once been brought into anything even close to a situation like this. Not once.

IN FACT, even as a starter he's never faced a situation like this. He's only completed one game in his entire career, and that was a complete -game shutout he threw in Pittsburgh back in 2017. He's never had to get one guy out in the ninth inning to win the game. This seemed a hell of a time to ask him to do it.

Even beyond that, Ray's most glaring flaw as a pitcher is his tendency to give up the long ball — he gave up 32 of them this year, second-most in the league. He has not, even in a tiny sample

size, shown any noticeable ability to get Alvarez out (in five previous encounters, Alvarez went one-for-three with two walks). Alvarez, as mentioned, hits lefties about as well as he hits righties.

I'm not sure at all what Scott Servais saw happening here.

Worth noting, Alvarez has the best Average, OPS, OBP and Slugging Pct lefty on lefty in the majors over the last 4 seasons. To be fair Ray is effective against left-handed batters, holding them to a .217/.271/.372 line for his career and a .212/.260/.387 line in 2022, with a 44/5 K/BB this year. But he is a starter who was thrust into a high leverage, middle of the inning situation.

But to be fair to Servais, it probably wouldn't have mattered who was pitching. The Mariners had their chances. They were up 7-3 going into the eighth. Then reliever **Andrés Muñoz**, who throws the most unhittable stuff imaginable, gave up a two-run homer to **Alex Bregman**. The Mariners still led by two going into the ninth. But then reliever **Paul Sewald** hit **David Hensley's** jersey with a pitch and he gave up a single to **Jeremy Peña**. That's what lost them the game.

The only sure way to stop Yordan Alvarez is to not let him come up in the first place.

When Alvarez stepped to the plate in the ninth inning, Seattle's win probability was 91%. That's based on the history of road teams who were ahead by two runs with two outs and two on in the ninth inning, as the Mariners were. It's not like teams in those situations *never* blow a lead; it happens, sometimes, if rarely. That's why it's 91% and not 100%.

And Alvarez went 3 for 5 with a walk and threw out a runner at home. Not a bad night.

Dodgers 10th straight postseason. They've won three pennants and one World Series in that span, and this year's team could be the best of them all. They won 111 games, five more than they won last season, when they tied the previous record, set in 2019. They've won at least 106 games in each of the last three full seasons.

Love analytics? adjusted ERA, a metric that standardizes ERA based on the league average and ballpark factors, this is the best pitching staff (150 ERA+) the Dodgers have had in their 139-year history.

All that good stuff and bounced in their first round.

Back in the wild card round, Cleveland - Tampa game 2. Tampa Bay's **Jose Siri** and Cleveland's **Andrés Giménez** both struck out five times. Only 4th and 5th players to ever do that in post season. Not hard to figure out how that happens when you look at the relief pitchers in that series:

Tampa Bay's **Pete Fairbanks**: 100-mph fastball, put-away slider.

Tampa Bay's **Jason Adam**: 95-mph fastball, slider that the league is hitting .096 against.

Cleveland's **James Karinchak**: 95-mph fastball with obscene break, huge curveball.

Cleveland's **Trevor Stephan**: 97-mph fastball with split-finger pitch that the league swung and missed at 32% of the time.

Tampa Bay's **James Cleavinger**: 96-mph fastball plus unhittable slider plus he's left-handed.

Cleveland's **Emmanuel Clase**: 100-mph cutter and slider that should be illegal.

Tampa Bay's **Brooks Raley**: Actually throws in the low 90s (whoa!) but makes up for it with a sick slider and changeup that nobody can hit.

It's an endless parade of blinding pitcher power.

The Guardians held the Rays to nine hits -- eight singles and a Jose Siri homer -- across the two games. They struck out 35% of the Rays' batters, and they walked just six men. In the 15th inning of the second game, the Guardians' seventh reliever working his third inning delivered eight four-seam fastballs. The last three came in at 95, 96, and 96 mph. Baseball wasn't like this 30 years ago.

It's not a fluke that this year batters hit .243 and had a .312 on-base percentage and both of those are the lowest in the game since the late 1960s and early 1970s. You have to go back five years just to find the last time that batters across baseball had more hits than strikeouts.

October, meet Padres second baseman **Trent Grisham**. Grisham had established himself as a good regular in 2020 and 2021, combining for six wins in 1.4 seasons, strong on the field (+15 Defensive Runs Saved) and on the bases (23/6 SB/CS). He lost the plot in 2022, however, and had **Fernando Tatis Jr.** ever returned, he might have lost his job: .184/.284/.341 this year. His defense, speed, and durability actually made him an average player, but he didn't hit at all.

Until this weekend. Grisham went 4-for-8 with two homers and two walks in the Padres' series win. (3 HRs in 6 career post season games) Grisham, along with **Ha-Seong Kim and Austin Nola**, wrecked the Mets from the bottom of the batting order. That bottom third, along with **Joe Musgrove and Yu Darvish**, is why the Padres get to keep playing.

Mets and Braves finished with identical records of 101-61, but the Braves were given the division because of their 10-9 record against the Mets during the season. Do you miss a win or go home game, or three-game playoffs like the 1951 Giants and Dodgers?

Padres 1 hit Mets. Joe Musgrove was dominant, allowed just one hit a hit to became the first pitcher in postseason history to throw seven scoreless, one-hit innings in a winner-take-all game. Robert Suarez and Josh Hader also held the Mets hitless in relief.

No team in baseball history had ever allowed just one hit in a winner-take-all postseason game. Padres face Dodgers. Mets pack at go home.

Not a bad contract year for Braves shortstop **Dansby Swanson**. The first pick in the 2015 MLB draft, Swanson has improved offensively every full season since his underwhelming rookie year in '17. This season, he set career highs in hits (177), runs (99), RBIs (96), stolen bases (18), OPS+ (115), total bases (286) and WAR (5.7). He also played in all 162 games.

Jose Altuve just completed his best season since his MVP-winning campaign in 2017. The 32-year-old Astros second baseman slashed .300/.387/.533 with 28 home runs and a 160 OPS+, which was third best in the American League, behind only Judge (211) and Houston teammate Yordan Alvarez (187).

Altuve entered the ALDS with the second-most postseason homers (23) of all time behind only **Manny Ramirez** (29)

Yankees call-up **Oswaldo Cabrera** he hit .309 with five home runs and a 1.000 OPS over his final 20 games of the regular season with 7 outfield assists.

Jeff McNeil of the Mets won the NL batting title. He is the only player in the majors who uses a bat without a knob at the end. He uses a 34 inch bat. You can actually use a bat up to 42 inches long, though nobody has ever come close to using one that long. **Pete Rose** used a 36-inch bat. **Tony Gwynn** used one that was only about 32 inches long.

The Astros this year had the lowest team ERA for any American League team since the designated hitter was introduced in 1973.

At 21, Seattle's **Julio Rodriguez** was the youngest player with a double and a triple in a postseason game since 24-year-old **Lou Gehrig** in 1927

Mets manager **Buck Showalter** has won 1,652 regular-season games, 19th all time. But he is 10-16 in the postseason and has yet to win an LCS game.

Reading recommendation from Peter Abraham of the Boston Globe-: "The Grandest Stage: A History of the World Series" by **Tyler Kepner**. This is a perfect companion to the postseason. In an engaging way, Kepner revisits key moments and people in the history of the Fall Classic. It's one of the best baseball books of the year. Kepner's book "K, the History of Baseball in 10 Pitches" was this newsletter's top book recommendation last year.

The Dodgers tied for the third best runs scored/runs allowed difference in history.

No. 1: 1939 Yankees — 967 runs, 556 runs allowed, 411 run differential

Joe DiMaggio hit .381

No. 2: 1927 Yankees — 975 runs, 605 runs allowed, 370 run differential

(**Babe Ruth** 60 HRs, **Lou Gehrig** 173 RBI)

No. 3: 1936 Yankees — 1,065 runs, 731 runs allowed, 334 run differential

(5 Yankees drive in 100 runs.)

No. 3 (tied): 1902 Pirates — 774 runs scored, 440 runs allowed, 334 run differential

No. 3 (tied): 2022 Dodgers — 847 runs scored, 513 runs allowed, 334-run differential

(111 wins is most in NL since 1906 Cubs)

The Yankees were the only team in baseball to score at least half their runs on home runs.

It's hard to score off the Yankees rotation without hitting the long ball. **Gerrit Cole** allowed 68% of his runs on homers. **Nestor Cortes** 48%, **Luis Severino** 54%. These guys don't give up singles and they don't walk many batters.

In the 35 games **Matt Carpenter** played for the Yankees Carpenter hit .317/.411/.758 with 15 home runs, and the Yankees averaged 6.8 runs per game. In their other 127, they averaged 4.5.

Harrison Bader homered in the Yankees-Guardians game. He became the first Yankee ever to hit his first Yankee HR in a post season game.

Giancarlo Stanton's hit his 10th career post-season HR in game two against the Guardians. Stanton's 6.90 at-bat/home run ratio in the postseason is the highest in Major League history among players with at least 50 at-bats. He trails only **Carlos Beltrán** (11) for the most homers through a player's first 20 career postseason games.

With nine homers in his last 12 postseason games since Game 1 of the 2019 AL Championship Series, Stanton joined a select group of sluggers to achieve the feat, placing his name alongside **Lou Gehrig** (1928-36), **Babe Ruth** (1926-28) and **Jim Thome** (1998-2001).

Notes on Mariners starter **George Kirby**

Kirby pounds the zone like almost no other pitcher in the game.

Strike One! (Zone%, 2022, min. 100 IP)

Yu Darvish 48.1%

Rich Hill 46.5%

George Kirby 46.2%

Chris Bassitt 45.9%

Jakob Junis 45.8%

(source FanGraphs)

Kirby walked just 22 batters in 25 starts, and his 4.1% walk rate was sixth among pitchers with at least 100 innings pitched. As the Yankees did with Severino, the Mariners did with Kirby, managing him with an eye towards a seven-month season, giving him a 17-day break around the All-Star Game and not letting him throw more than 100 pitches, and in fact, letting him throw 90 just twice after the break. There was definitely some struggle late in the year; Kirby's only two starts in which he walked more than one batter came in September, and his walk rate was over 10% in his final four starts.

Larry Sherry of the 1959 Dodgers was the first rookie to win the World Series MVP Award. The only other rookie to do so was **Livan Hernandez**. Hernandez won two games in the 1997 World Series for the victorious Marlins, which earned him MVP honors even though he didn't exactly dominate. He gave up nine runs (eight earned) in 13 2/3 innings while issuing 10 walks versus just seven strikeouts. Hernandez was much more spectacular while winning the MVP award in the National League Championship Series, where he also won two games, including a 15-strikeout three-hitter to outduel **Greg Maddux**.

The Astros allowed just 518 runs this year, the fewest of any AL team in the DH era. But for the stupid runner (they allowed 21 extra-inning runs), they might have become the first team in 50 years to allow fewer than 500 runs. (Another team this year can make the same claim.) Astros pitchers struck out 26% of the batters they faced, second in baseball. When those batters weren't striking out, they were hitting for the second-lowest BABIP (.268) and lowest HR/FB (9.3%) in baseball.

Xander Bogaerts and **Rafael Devers** have made 581 starts together as the shortstop and third baseman. That's the most for the Red Sox since **Freddy Parent** and **Jimmy Collins** started 967 games on the left side from 1901-07.

Bogaerts is viewed as the current possessor of a baton that has been passed over the past 25 years across players such as **Pedro Martinez, Jason Varitek, David Ortiz, and Dustin Pedroia**. He is the through-line connecting the current team to its championship past.

"If Xander opts out and leaves the team and J.D. [Martinez] leaves the team, I think [Rafael] Devers is most likely going to head the same way," Martinez suggested. "Those guys are going to go. They're not going to have the essence of the franchise that we left. The culture that we left is going to be lost. And we don't know when we're going to get it back and how we're going to get it back."

Bogaerts has been that rarest of phenoms: A homegrown prospect for whom the reality has matched the hype. He's a two-time champion, four-time All-Star, and four-time Silver Slugger winner. He has played 1,192 games at shortstop, more than anyone else in Red Sox history. He has participated in 44 postseason contests, fourth in team history.

Over the last five years, Bogaerts is hitting .301/.373/.508 with 105 homers. He's one of five big leaguers to post an OPS of .800 or better in each of the last five years while qualifying for the batting title, joining **Mookie Betts, Freddie Freeman, Paul Goldschmidt, and José Ramírez**. first days in the Red Sox organization after signing as a 16-year-old out of Aruba in August 2009.

I've been very impressed with the games I've watched Braves rookie right hander **Spencer Strider** pitch. Strider signed a \$75 million/6 year extension this week.

Strider reached 200 strikeouts in 130 innings, faster than any pitcher in AL/NL history.

Still, it is a big show of faith for a pitcher who turns 24 on Oct. 28 and has thrown only 134 major league innings. Strider underwent Tommy John surgery in Feb. 2019 and will end up missing nearly a month with his oblique injury before starting game three against Philadelphia.

Strider's guarantee is \$30 million more than the Phillies gave **Aaron Nola** in 2019 coming off a third-place Cy Young finish. It also is \$19 million more than the Marlins gave **Sandy Alcántara**, the likely NL Cy Young winner, last November. Both Nola and Alcántara had three years of service, and players generally receive higher guarantees as they get closer to the six years needed to hit the open market. Alcántara gave up three free-agent years in his deal, Nola and Strider two.

For Strider, there were no precedents, no comparables. The previous largest deal for a pitcher with one-plus years of service was **Madison Bumgarner's** five-year, \$35 million extension with the Giants ... in 2012. Bumgarner's deal included two club options, costing him three free-agent years.

Cool blurb from Boston Globe-- All the best to **Chaz Scoggins**, who is retiring from his position as one of the official scorers at Fenway Park. He started in 1979 while covering the team for the Lowell Sun.

As a college journalist at what was then called Lowell State, Scoggins covered the riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. That led to a position at the Sun for 44 years, interrupted by a stint in the Army.

Scoggins covered the Red Sox from 1973-2012. In all, that's 50 years associated with Major League Baseball. Wednesday was his 1,896th game as scorer. That includes 54 playoff games and three All-Star Games.

MLB pays the scorer, but it can be a thankless task. Before a more formal process was instituted, managers, coaches, or players would often call the press box to lobby for calls to be changed or express their displeasure in person.

Eddie Mathews was the only player to play for the Boston, Milwaukee and Atlanta Braves. 512 homers, drove in 1,453 runs and hit .271. While they were teammates in Milwaukee, Mathews and Hank Aaron combined to hit 850 homers.

Jacob deGrom in injury shortened season only had 11 starts. He did strike out 42.7% of the batters he faced. (For context, San Francisco's Carlos Rodón led qualified starters for the season with a 33.4% strikeout rate.)

The Reds haven't won a playoff series since 1995.

Cincinnati drew only 1,395,770 fans this season, 109,254 fewer than it did last season when there were COVID restrictions on crowds during the spring. It was the franchise's lowest attendance since 1984.

The only player older than **Albert Pujols** (42 years, 265 days) to have a multi-hit game in the postseason is **Julio Franco** (five multi-hit games from ages 43 to 45)

Pujols finished the regular season fourth all-time in home runs (703), second in RBIs (2,218), fifth in doubles (686), third in extra-base hits (1,405), and fifth in games (3,080).

When the Blue Jays beat the Red Sox last Sunday, **Zach Pop** was the winner with **Jordan Romano** getting the save. It was the first time in team history Canadian players had a win and a save in the same game. They're both from Ontario

The Atlanta Braves signed 23 year old rookie right hander rookie pitcher **Spencer Strider** to a six-year, \$75 million contract Monday The contract, which runs through the 2028 season, also includes a \$22 million club option for 2029 with a \$5 million buyout. Strider will make \$1 million per year in 2023 and 2024, \$4 million in 2025, \$20 million in 2026 and \$22 million in each of the final two years of the deal, according to the Braves. If the option is exercised, it will be worth \$92 million over seven years.

Strider reached 200 strikeouts faster than any pitcher in baseball history, doing so in 130 innings, and became the first Atlanta rookie to strike out 200 in the modern era. He posted an 11-5 record, 2.67 ERA and 202 strikeouts over 131 2/3 regular-season innings, and also became the first player in major league history to strike out 200 while allowing fewer than 100 hits.

Atlanta continues to lock up young talent. Strider's deal comes two months after Atlanta inked its other rookie phenom, outfielder **Michael Harris II**, to an eight-year, \$72 million contract. Atlanta also signed third baseman **Austin Riley** to a 10-year, \$212 million extension in August.

Aaron Judge's slow start to the playoffs with 7 strikeouts in two games prompted this stat:

Players with the highest percentage of games with three strikeouts:

1. **Joey Gallo**, 16%
2. **Miguel Sano**, 15.7%
3. **Bo Jackson**, 12.5%
4. **Chris Davis**, 11.4%
5. **Mike Zunino**, 10.9%
6. **Rob Deer**, 10.9%
7. **Chris Carter**, 10.5%
8. **Aaron Judge**, 10%

Next on the list, by the way, is **Giancarlo Stanton**, which means that at one point the Yankees had three of these players in the same lineup.

And Judge's percentage of three-strikeout games goes UP in the postseason. Well, of course — he's going to be facing better pitching. He has struck out three or more times in six of his 36 postseason games so far ... and in three of those games he struck out FOUR times.

He has also bashed 11 home runs and scored 25 runs in those 36 games, which ain't bad. Part and parcel. Everybody should know the deal by now. Aaron Judge has played in New York for seven seasons now. He has struck out 908 times in his career already — that's more than twice as much as **Tony Gwynn** struck out in 20 years.

Hall of Fame pitcher and World Series champion **Bruce Sutter** has passed away. He was 69 years old. Bruce ascended from being a nondrafted free agent to the heights of Baseball by pioneering the split-fingered fastball. That pitch not only led him to the Major Leagues, but also made him a Cy Young Award winner with the Cubs and a World Series Champion with the 1982 Cardinals. Bruce was the first pitcher to reach the Hall of Fame without starting a game (since joined by **Trevor Hoffman**), and he was one of the key figures who foreshadowed how the use of relievers would evolve.

Sutter was initially drafted by the Washington Senators in 1970 but decided to attend Old Dominion University instead. The next year Sutter signed with the Cubs as a nondrafted free agent. He underwent surgery in the minors but found his pitches to be less effective after returning to action. He started working on a splitter to improve his repertoire, a pitch that would come to define his career.

He made his MLB debut with the Cubs in 1976. He was an effective reliever right away, throwing 83 1/3 innings over 52 appearances, registering a 2.70 ERA and notching 10 saves. He took a step forward the next year, throwing 107 1/3 innings in 62 games with a 1.34 ERA and 31 saves. He made the All-Star team that year, the first of six teams he would eventually make in his career.

Sutter continued along in that fashion for the next few seasons, racking up saves while pitching multi-inning outings. In 1979, he was given the Cy Young award for his efforts, a rare feat for a relief pitcher. He saved 37 games that year while recording a 2.22 ERA in 101 1/3 innings.

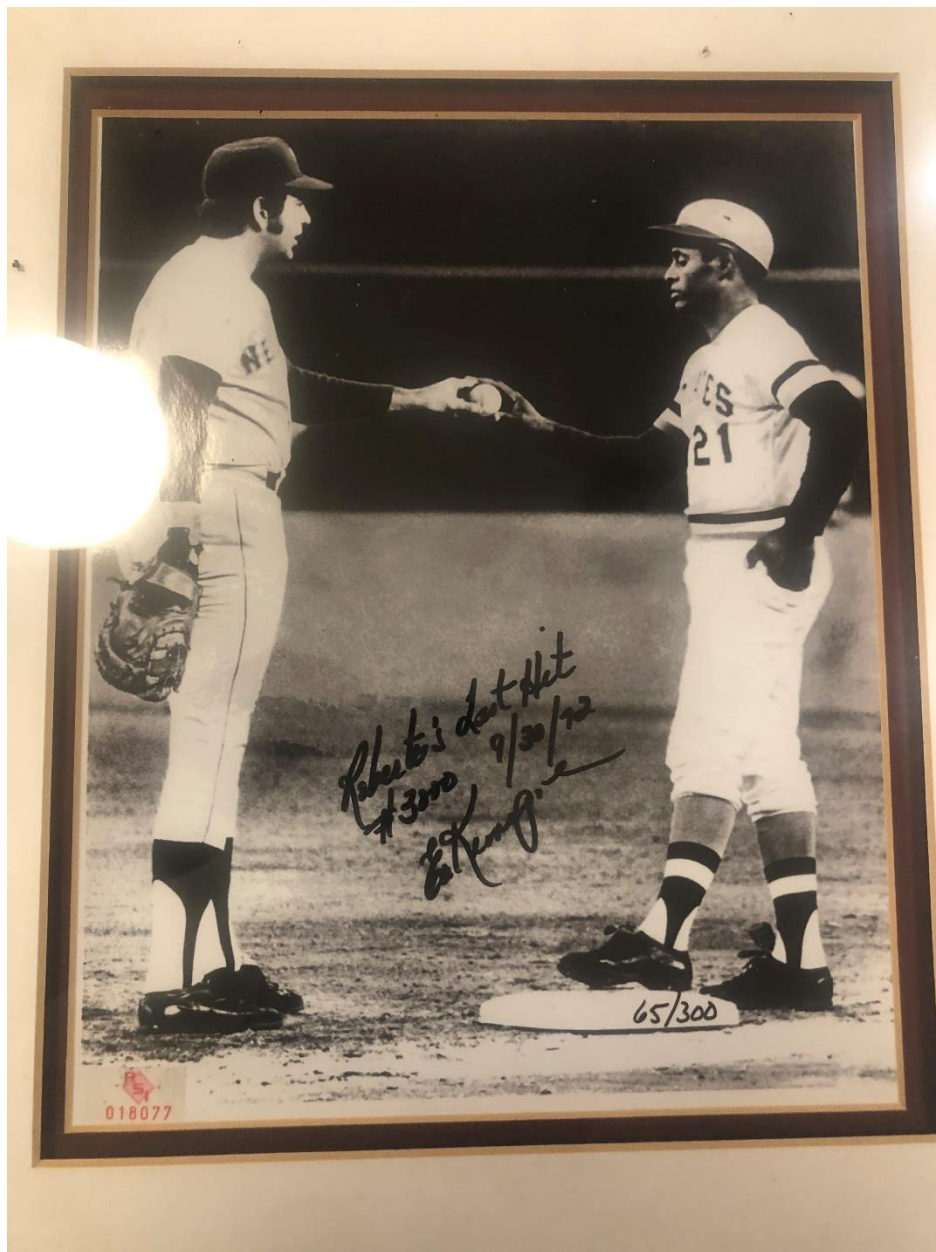
He was traded from the Cubs to the Cardinals prior to the 1981 campaign and would spend four seasons in St. Louis, largely continuing with the same level of excellence he had established in Chicago. 1982 was certainly a season to remember for both Sutter and the Cards. The club went 92-70 during the regular season, winning the NL East on the back of a 36-save season from

Sutter. They swept the Braves 3-0 in the NLCS, with Sutter earning the win in Game 2 and the save in Game 3. They then faced off against the Brewers in the World Series and eventually emerged victorious in seven games, with Sutter winning Game 2 and then saving Game 3 and Game 7. ([Video](#) of Sutter recording the final out via MLB.com's YouTube page.)

Sutter reached free agency and signed with Atlanta prior to the 1985 season, though his effectiveness started to wane as he got into his 30s. He posted an ERA above 4.00 in his first two years in Atlanta, missed the 1987 season entirely due to shoulder surgery, before returning in 1988 to post a 4.76 ERA in what would be his final season.

He wrapped up his MLB career with exactly 300 saves, which was the third-most in history at that time, behind only **Rollie Fingers** and **Goose Gossage**. He also collected 68 victories while posting a 2.83 ERA in a career that included 1042 1/3 innings. He made six All-Star teams, won a Cy Young award and a World Series title.

Some of you know I have a collection of signed Yankee photos of my favorite players and moments. A subscriber sent along this great photo—think about how rare it is as Clemente died just three months after getting his 3,000th hit. If you any special pix please send them along.



WALK IT OFF

There are few plays in baseball more dramatic than a walk-off home run. One of them is a walk-off home run to win a postseason series.

That occurred for the 13th time in MLB history in Game 2 of the 2022 American League Wild Card Series between the Rays and Guardians. Guardians rookie **Oscar Gonzalez** crushed a cutter from Rays right-hander **Corey Kluber** deep to left-center field to lead off the bottom of the 15th, breaking a scoreless tie and ending a marathon game at Progressive Field.

Here's a look at each rare round tripper (winner-take-all games are marked with an asterisk).

Oscar Gonzalez, Guardians: 2022 AL Wild Card Series Game 2

After a 2-1 Cleveland win in Game 1 of the AL Wild Card Series, the Guardians and Rays remained scoreless into the 15th inning of Game 2, setting a record for the longest 0-0 game in postseason history. Gonzalez broke the tie in the bottom of the 15th, sending the Guardians to the ALDS with the second walk-off homer in franchise postseason history (Tony Pena in 1995).

Tampa Bay was close to taking the lead in the top of the 12th, putting runners on the corners with two outs, but **José Ramírez** made a fantastic backhand stop on **Manuel Margot's** grounder down the third-base line and threw a one-hopper to first baseman **Josh Naylor**, who barely kept his foot on the bag while corralling Ramírez's throw for the inning-ending out, setting the stage for Gonzalez to play hero three innings later.

Gonzalez became the fourth rookie in postseason history to hit a walk-off homer, joining **Kolten Wong (2014)**, **Chris Burke (2005)** and **Alfonso Soriano (2001)**, and the second after Burke to hit a series-clinching walk-off.

*** Chris Taylor, Dodgers: 2021 NL Wild Card Game**

The Dodgers had won 106 regular-season games only to finish second in the NL West by one game behind the Giants, meaning they had to play in the winner-take-all Wild Card Game. And for the most of the night the Dodgers' offense was befuddled by Cardinals postseason ace Adam Wainwright and the St. Louis bullpen. Taylor took advantage of L.A.'s final turn at-bat, however, belting **Alex Reyes'** 2-1 slider with a 110.7 mph exit velocity -- matching the hardest-hit base hit of his career, per Statcast -- and sending it into the night to join **Kirk Gibson**, **Justin Turner** and **Max Muncy** on the very short list of Dodgers postseason walk-off homers. Taylor's clout sent the Dodgers on to their first postseason meeting against their biggest rival, the Giants.

José Altuve, Astros: 2019 ALCS Game 6

The Astros led 4-2 entering the ninth, but they found themselves in a tie game headed to the bottom of the inning after a **DJ LeMahieu** homer. Houston made two quick outs against Yankees closer Aroldis Chapman and it looked as if the game might be headed to extras, but

then **George Springer** worked a five-pitch walk. Up next was Altuve, one of only two players in franchise history to win a regular-season MVP award. He sent the third pitch of the at-bat to left-center field, and with that, sent the Astros to the World Series. It was the 11th time in postseason history that a team clinched an LCS win and a trip to the World Series with a walk-off.

Yankees manager **Aaron Boone** watched the ball sail out of Minute Maid Park from the deflated visitors' dugout. He had a unique perspective on the moment, having been in Altuve's shoes 16 years and three days earlier. Boone sent the Yankees to the World Series with a walk-off home run in Game 7 of the 2003 ALCS against the Red Sox. Boone is the only man to hit one as a player and lose on one as a manager.

*** Edwin Encarnación, 2016 AL Wild Card Game**

This was a low-scoring affair between AL East foes Toronto and Baltimore that was tied at 2 after the fifth inning and remained that way into the 11th at Rogers Centre. In the bottom of that frame, with lights-out Orioles closer **Zack Britton** still languishing in the bullpen, **Ubaldo Jiménez** gave up back-to-back one-out singles to **Devon Travis** and **Josh Donaldson**, putting runners at the corners. Encarnación then crushed a ball into the left-field seats, and the celebration began north of the border as Toronto headed toward its second straight berth in the ALCS.

Travis Ishikawa, Giants: 2014 NLCS Game 5

The Giants entered Game 5 up three games to one with a chance to clinch on their home field, with **Madison Bumgarner** on the mound. Bumgarner was good, but not infallible, pitching eight innings and allowing three runs. With San Francisco trailing St. Louis 3-2 in the bottom of the eighth, **Pat Neshek** allowed a game-tying solo homer to **Mike Morse** on the third pitch he threw. After a scoreless top of the ninth, **Pablo Sandoval** led off the bottom of the inning with a single off new pitcher **Michael Wacha**. **Hunter Pence** flew out, then **Brandon Belt** walked. Up to the plate stepped **Travis Ishikawa** -- whom the Giants drafted in 2002. He'd played for them in 2006, then in 2008-10 at the Major League level, before bouncing around to the Brewers, Orioles, Yankees, White Sox and Pirates via free agency and waivers. Pittsburgh released him in April 2014, and two days later he signed with San Francisco. Then, in the bottom of the ninth inning of a potential clincher, he sent the Giants to the World Series with one swing of the bat, knocking a walk-off three-run homer.

Magglio Ordóñez, Tigers: 2006 ALCS Game 4

Ordóñez sent the Tigers to their first World Series in 22 years when he launched a three-run walk-off homer off Athletics closer **Huston Street** in the bottom of the ninth inning to complete a sweep of Oakland. It was Ordóñez's second home run of the game -- he also hit a solo shot off starter **Dan Haren**. In the end, Ordóñez had driven in four of Detroit's six runs. Entering Game 4, Ordóñez was just 2-for-13 (.154) in the series with no extra-base hits.

Chris Burke, Astros: 2005 NLDS Game 4

Before Altuve's home run in Game 6 of the 2019 ALCS, this was the only postseason series-clinching home run in Astros history. Burke's line drive into the Crawford Boxes ended an 18-inning marathon against the Braves at Minute Maid Park. Burke had entered the game as a pinch-runner for **Lance Berkman** in the 10th and had walked and flied out to left prior to coming up in the 18th. The Astros were down to their final out in the ninth inning when **Brad Ausmus** launched a game-tying solo homer off **Kyle Farnsworth** to keep Houston alive another nine innings.

David Ortiz, Red Sox: 2004 ALDS Game 3

Little did he know it at the time, but this was the first of several walk-off hits Ortiz would deliver in the 2004 postseason for the Red Sox. The two-run homer came in the bottom of the 10th inning off Angels right-hander **Jarrod Washburn**, lifting Boston to an 8-6 victory and a sweep of Anaheim.

Of course, the rest is history -- the Red Sox fell into a 3-0 hole in the ALCS against the archrival Yankees, and trailing in the ninth inning of Game 4, came back to tie the game before Ortiz won it with a walk-off homer at 1:23 a.m. ET. The next night, Ortiz hit a walk-off single to center to stave off elimination again. Boston would go on to complete the greatest postseason comeback in baseball history, winning two more games at Yankee Stadium before sweeping the Cardinals for its first World Series championship in 86 years.

*** Aaron Boone, Yankees: 2003 ALCS Game 7**

The Yankees had traded for Boone from the Reds at the Trade Deadline in 2003. An All-Star for Cincinnati that year, he'd hit .273 with 18 homers in 106 games. In 54 regular-season games with the Yanks, the only Major League games he'd play for the Bronx Bombers in his career, he hit .254 with six homers. But that's not what he's remembered for in Yankees lore.

The Red Sox got out to a 3-0 lead in the second inning in Game 7, pushing it to 4-0 in the fourth. The Yankees narrowed the gap to 4-2 by the bottom of the seventh, but Ortiz hit a solo homer off **David Wells** to give Boston a three-run lead. Starter **Pedro Martínez** allowed three runs on a single and a double in the bottom of the eighth, and the game was tied. It headed to extras, and **Tim Wakefield** pitched a scoreless bottom of the 10th. But in the bottom of the next inning, Boone, who had entered the game as a pinch-runner for Ruben Sierra in the eighth, got his first plate appearance of the game. He sent Wakefield's first pitch of the 11th out into the night, and the Yanks were headed to their fifth World Series in six years.

Todd Pratt, Mets: 1999 NLDS Game 4

The Mets had required an extra game to make the playoffs -- a Game 163 tiebreaker with the Reds for the National League Wild Card spot. But in the Division Series, they wouldn't even require the maximum five games, clinching in four. After the D-backs took a 3-2 lead in the top of the eighth, the Mets came back and tied it on a sacrifice fly in the bottom of the inning. Nobody scored in the ninth, and the game went to extras. With one out in the bottom of the

10th, Pratt, a backup catcher who had hit three regular-season homers that year, strode to the plate. He knocked a pitch from **Matt Mantei** over the wall at Shea Stadium, and suddenly the Mets were headed to the NLCS.

Joe Carter, Blue Jays: 1993 World Series Game 6

“Touch ‘em all, Joe! You’ll never hit a bigger home run in your life!”

That was Blue Jays announcer Tom Cheek’s call for Carter’s title-clinching homer off Phillies reliever **Mitch Williams** -- still an iconic moment north of the border. Toronto trailed Philadelphia, 6-5, in the bottom of the ninth and appeared to be heading toward a winner-take-all Game 7 before Carter joined **Bill Mazerowski** as the second player to end a World Series with a dinger.

*** Chris Chambliss, Yankees: 1976 ALCS Game 5**

The pinstripes hadn’t won a pennant in 12 years -- an eternity in the Bronx -- but Chambliss put that “drought” to rest with a dinger off Royals pitcher **Mark Littell**’s first pitch to begin the bottom of the ninth. It was a walk-off in a winner-take-all game against the Yankees’ bitter rival at the time, and it sent a sea of Yanks fans streaming onto the field. Chambliss wasn’t even able to make it through the crowd to home plate; he came back later to touch the spot where it would have been, as the plate was already removed from the Yankee Stadium diamond.

*** Bill Mazerowski, Pirates: 1960 World Series Game 7**

The Yankees outscored the Pirates in this Series, 55-27. New York’s three wins came by blowout scores of 16-3, 10-0 and 12-0. The World Series MVP went to Yanks second baseman **Bobby Richardson**. But Pittsburgh scratched and clawed its way to a 9-9 tie in the winner-take-all Game 7, when the defensive specialist Mazerowski stepped to the plate against **Ralph Terry** to lead off the bottom of the ninth.

Mazerowski had homered just 11 times over the regular season, and 138 times over his 17-year career, but he drove Terry’s 1-0 pitch over the left-field wall at Forbes Field (over the craning head of **Yogi Berra**) to deliver an improbable championship for the Pirates over the mighty Yankees. Maz’s homer was the first to end a World Series, and it would be 33 years before anyone else joined him on that list.

TOM VERDUCCI ON PITCHING IN THE POST SEASON.

The Biggest Pitching Trends and Oddities of the MLB Postseason

The new playoff format will have a profound effect on how teams use their pitchers.

Tom Verducci, Sports Illustrated

Like those apps on your phone, the MLB postseason has been updated. Bugs have been fixed (no more single-game elimination) and enhancements have been added (especially for the two best teams in each league, maybe to a fault).

The new format is off to a wild start: the longest 0–0 game in postseason history, the biggest ninth-inning rally in postseason history, the biggest comeback win by a road team in postseason history and the best team pitching performance in a winner-take-all postseason game. That's all after one weekend.

This postseason is more unpredictable than ever because of the wild-card series replacing the wild-card game and because of scheduling quirks caused by the lockout. The changes will have a profound effect on pitching. Here are the biggest pitching trends and oddities in store with this postseason '22 update:

Two of four for Cole and Verlander?

The ALDS oddly alternates game days and off days for the first four days. That means the Game 1 starter can also start Game 4—a potential clincher for one team—on full rest.

Would Yankees manager **Aaron Boone** have **Gerri Cole** start two of the first four games against Cleveland? Cole is slightly better with extra rest (3.24 in 16 starts) than normal rest (3.72 in 17 starts).

Would Astros manager **Dusty Baker** give **Justin Verlander** the ball in Games 1 and 4? That seems less likely because (1) Baker has more good rotation options than does Boone and (2) Verlander has enjoyed extra rest often this year in Houston's six-man rotation. He started only five times this year on the fifth day, once in the past four months. In those five starts, however, he is 3–0 with a 0.90 ERA.

The LCS will be a bullpen-palooza

Both LCS have no off days starting with Game 3. That means up to five games without a day off with a trip to the World Series on the line. Most teams don't like using relievers three days in a row or four out of five.

Deftly navigating the LCS this year will require a deep bullpen, an old-school long reliever (likely an erstwhile back-end starter) and a manager who balances patience (keeping the potential five-game gantlet in mind) with aggressiveness (to seize the moment when a win is in sight).

The top two seeds have a huge advantage

The format heavily favors the 1- and 2-seeds getting through to the LCS. The Dodgers, Braves, Yankees and Astros benefit not just from rest and home-field advantage, but also from their LDS opponents needing to use their best starters just to get out of the wild-card series. The 1-

and 2-seeds have home-field and pitching-matchup advantage for each of the first two games in a best-of-five.

For instance, the Phillies won't start their best arm, **Aaron Nola**, until Game 3 against the Braves. **Zack Wheeler** and Nola will get only one start each (barring one on short rest).

Old-school starters for the drought-weary

Shane Bieber of Cleveland, **Luis Castillo** of Seattle and both **Yu Darvish** and **Joe Musgrove** of San Diego are among the hottest pitchers in the postseason who can carry the baseball deep into games. If the Guardians (no World Series title since 1948) and the Mariners and Padres (no World Series titles) are to end their droughts, they will need to win 13 games this postseason. And they probably will need their aces to start six times. That is a grind.

Only seven pitchers have made six starts in a postseason: **Curt Schilling**, **Chris Carpenter**, **Madison Bumgarner**, **Corey Kluber**, **Verlander**, **Tyler Glasnow** and **Blake Snell**. Only three averaged six innings per start: Schilling (2001), Carpenter ('11) and Bumgarner ('14).

Spin the baseball more

As fastballs get faster, they get thrown less—and breaking pitches get thrown more. Why? Breaking pitches are harder to hit, and technology has helped pitchers tailor them in terms of spin, shape and break to be most effective.

Every year for the past five years, pitchers have thrown more breaking pitches. And every year they throw them *even more* in the postseason. This year is no exception so far. Pitchers threw 34% breaking pitches in the wild-card series, while holding hitters to a .170 average on those spinning pitches.

How did Seattle take out Toronto, a great fastball hitting team? They threw a whopping 44% breaking pitches. **Andrés Muñoz**, who can throw 103 mph, threw 84% breaking pitches! The Mariners will use the same formula against Houston, another team whose hitters never get off the fastball.

The Guardians held Tampa Bay to a .107 batting average on spin. Philadelphia's spin was even nastier against St. Louis: .087.

Percentage of Breaking Pitches, MLB

	Regular Season	Postseason	Postseason Batting Avg. Against
2018	27.6%	29.1%	.175
2019	28.5%	34.5%	.207
2020	29.1%	32.4%	.206

	Regular Season	Postseason	Postseason Batting Avg. Against
2021	29.4%	33.9%	.219
2022	31.2%	34.0%	.170

Who does this spin-crazy game favor? It should not surprise you that the four teams with the toughest breaking pitches to hit this regular season are still playing: the Astros (.182), Yankees (.184), Dodgers (.187) and Guardians (.189).

Swing-and-miss bullpens

This is the one obvious flaw in the Yankees. With **Michael King, Zack Britton, Aroldis Chapman and Chad Greene** not on the roster, New York doesn't have its usual core of swing-and-miss relievers. The Yankees' pen is built on power sinker ballers, which plays well with the team's taut interior defense. No team is better at turning ground balls into outs.

But pitching to contact makes a team more vulnerable to bloop and the other vagaries of balls in play.

The last three innings, when hits become harder to get, are about controlling the three true outcomes: limit walks and home runs, boost strikeouts. The best playoff bullpens at this ideal endgame are the Braves, Dodgers, Guardians and Mariners.

Atlanta is the toughest team to hit from the seventh through ninth innings (.205 average and .597 OPS are MLB bests). Los Angeles has the best strikeout-to-walk rate in those final three innings (3.86). Cleveland and Seattle are among the top five in all three late-game categories.

The Yankees are 15th in late-game K:BB rate. Only Philadelphia had less pure "stuff" at the end of games.

Avoid starts on short rest

Bringing a starter back on three days of rest is tempting, but it often doesn't turn out well. Pitchers pitch so infrequently on short rest in the regular season these days (more starts on made on five days rest now than four) that moving a pitcher up is risky. Take a look at the success rate of postseason starts on three days of rest, in five-year increments:

Postseason Starts on Three Days Rest

No.	Team	W–L Starter	W–L
2007–11	12	6–6	5–3
2012–16	16	8–8	3–6
2017–21	21	7–14	2–6

The last starting pitcher to win on three days of rest was **David Price** of Boston in the 2018 ALCS. Since then, starters on short rest are 0–5 in 12 starts.

Dave Roberts will find a way

The Dodgers' manager has a .571 winning percentage in the postseason (44–33), the equivalent of a 93-win team against exclusively elite competition. But the second-guessers love to question his pitcher usage. Much of that criticism comes from outdated ideas of how postseason baseball is played.

After six years of watching Roberts in the postseason, understand how he (in tandem with the front office) will run a game:

1. He will pull a starting pitcher earlier than you think, especially as the lineup turns over a third time.
2. He is more likely to win a game with his bullpen than this starter.

Roberts has managed 77 postseason games. Only seven times has he allowed a starter to exceed 100 pitches. Only six times has he allowed a starter to face 27 batters (three full times through a lineup). His starting pitchers are 21–21 in the postseason. His relievers are 23–12.

Brian Snitker will ride his bullpen

Under GM Alex Anthopoulos, a protégé of Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman, Atlanta adopted the Dodger Way of pitching last season and won a world championship by doing so.

Last postseason, Snitker used relief pitchers to cover more innings (54%) than his starters (46%). In 13 games, his starters never threw more than 96 pitches and never worked three full times through a lineup. He pulled a starter (**Ian Anderson**) with a no-hitter after facing just 18 batters and throwing only 76 pitches. It all worked out. Snitker's starters were 4–3 and his relievers were 7–2.

Watching the Padres pitch is a treat, what with starters going deep into games and relievers **Robert Suárez** and **Josh Hader** firing fastballs with fearlessness. But the wizardry of **Yu Darvish** is on another level. Nobody can spin the baseball like Darvish. Nobody can change the speed and shape of his pitches like Darvish.

Darvish is the Axl Rose of pitchers: his range is ridiculous. Check this out:

Pitch	Velocity	Range
Cutter	81.9–93.4 mph	11.5
Four-Seamer	90.8–98.1 mph	7.3
Slider	75.9–86.6 mph	10.7
Sinker	90.2–97.7 mph	7.5
Splitter	83.2–93.2 mph	10.0
Curveball	64.2–79.8 mph	15.6

His six pitches have multiple variations. In NLDS Game 2 he threw pitches at 20 different speeds among his first 44 pitches.

But nothing was as entertaining as an at bat that ended with **Max Muncy** hitting a home run. The pitch speeds were dizzying in their variety: in sequence, 83, 92, 69, 79, 91, 72. That's +9, -23, +10, +12, -19.

It was one at bat with six pitches in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. Sounds like an AM oldies station.

HERE IS HOW ALL 12 POST SEASON TEAMS WERE BUILT

MLB.COM

Everyone has a different ideal method of constructing a roster. Some fans might prefer their front office splash cash on the free-agent market. Others enjoy a little extra kick out of seeing a group of homegrown stars. In truth, there is more than one way to build a championship-caliber ballclub, and that's never been clearer than looking at this year's 12 postseason-bound organizations.

The Dodgers eclipsed the 110-win mark for the first time in franchise history and will head to the playoffs with a balanced projected playoff roster with eight homegrown players eight free agents, nine acquired in trades and even one via the waiver wire. The Astros -- winners of the AL West -- lead the way in homegrown players with 15, while the Padres sit at the bottom with only three. If you look at contribution levels through the lens of Baseball-Reference's Wins Above Replacement, Houston holds the advantage with a playoff-best 35.2 WAR from its homegrown players, including **Kyle Tucker (5.2)**, **Jose Altuve (5.1)**, **Jeremy Peña (4.8)** and **Alex Bregman (4.5)**.

The Dodgers (17.8) have the highest WAR from free agents, while the Padres (33.5) hold a healthy lead in WAR from players acquired by trade. A certain former Nationals outfielder certainly helped with that.

What follows is a detailed team-by-team breakdown of how each postseason club was built for the end of 2022. If a player was acquired by a team, went to another team and then returned to the original team, he is listed according to how he was most recently acquired. (See: Albert Pujols.) If a player was acquired by a team and then re-signed as a free agent without going to another team, he is listed according to how he was originally acquired.

American League

ASTROS (57.4 WAR, 2nd among 12 teams)

Homegrown: 15 (35.2 WAR)

- Draft: 8 (19 WAR)
- International: 7 (16.2 WAR)

Free agents: 2 (2.7 WAR)

Trades: 9 (19.5 WAR)

The best team in the American League, the Astros lead all postseason clubs in homegrown and international talent, both in terms of number of players and WAR. Houston excels at finding international bargains, highlighted by **Jose Altuve** (\$15,000), **Cristian Javier** (\$10,000), **Framber Valdez** (\$10,000) and **Luis Garcia** (\$20,000). It also has hit on early-round Draft picks such as **Alex Bregman** and **Kyle Tucker** (two of the top five overall selections in 2015) and **Jeremy Peña**. Despite all that, the Astros' two best players in 2022 have been trade acquisitions **Yordan Alvarez** and **Justin Verlander**.

BLUE JAYS (46.8 WAR, 7th among 12 teams)

Homegrown: 9 (25.3 WAR)

- Draft: 6 (16.9 WAR)
- International: 3 (8.4 WAR)

Free agents: 6 (7.2 WAR)

Trades: 11 (14.3 WAR)

It's a well-established fact at this point that hitting on **Alek Manoah** (5.9 WAR), **Vladimir Guerrero Jr.** (4.0) and **Bo Bichette** (3.6) as a homegrown nucleus has helped Toronto build out its roster through other means, and steps forward by the catching duo of **Danny Jansen** (2.9) and **Alejandro Kirk** (3.9) didn't hurt matters either. The addition of **George Springer** continues to pay dividends at the top of the lineup, while **Matt Chapman**, who was acquired from the A's in the spring, helped shore up the third-base position. Rotation additions **Kevin Gausman** and **José Berríos** had a 50-50 hit rate during their first full systems in the organization, but again,

Manoah's ascension to ace status made that situation all the more palatable north of the border.

YANKEES (46.3 WAR, 8th among 12 teams)

Homegrown: 5 (15.2 WAR)

- Draft: 3 (12.0 WAR)
- International: 2 (3.2 WAR)

Free agents: 7 (9.8 WAR)

Trades: 14 (21.3 WAR)

With the notable exception of 2013 first-round pick **Aaron Judge**, much of the Yankees' AL East division-winning team was imported. **Nestor Cortes** was a steal as a 36th-round pick in 2013, but New York designated him for assignment and gave him to the Mariners for future considerations in 2019 before reacquiring him as a Minor League free agent a year later. **Gerrit Cole** is a much more exorbitant free-agent signing that has paid off. The Yankees may field a playoff lineup with as many as seven position-player starters acquired via trades: **Gleyber Torres, Isiah Kiner-Falefa, Josh Donaldson, Anthony Rizzo, Jose Trevino, Harrison Bader and Giancarlo Stanton.**

GUARDIANS (45.9 WAR, 9th among 12 teams)

Homegrown: 14 (22.7 WAR)

- Draft: 12 (14.6 WAR)
- International: 2 (8.1 WAR)

Free agents: 2 (1.5 WAR)

Trades: 9 (20.7 WAR)

Rule 5 Draft: 1 (1.0)

The youngest team to make the playoffs in MLB's expansion era (since 1961), the Guardians have done it almost entirely with Draft picks and trades. **Andrés Giménez and Amed Rosario** both came from the Mets in the **Francisco Lindor/Carlos Carrasco** deal in January 2022, and Cleveland also landed **Emmanuel Clase, Myles Straw, Cal Quantrill and Josh Naylor** via trades. **Steven Kwan** (fifth round, 2018) and **Triston McKenzie** (supplemental first round, 2015) had breakthrough seasons in 2022, while **Shane Bieber** (fourth round, 2016) continued his reign as the Guardians' ace. Both of the international signees on the club, **Jose Ramirez and Oscar Gonzalez**, are formidable parts of the lineup. **Trevor Stephan** is the only former Rule 5 pick on a playoff roster.

MARINERS (42.4 WAR, 11th out of 12 teams)

Homegrown: 6 (15.6 WAR)

- Draft: 5 (9.6 WAR)
- International: 1 (6.0 WAR)

Free agents: 3 (5.1 WAR)

Trades: 17 (21.7 WAR)

The Mariners are in the postseason for the first time since 2001 thanks largely to deals made to bring talent in, with 17 players on the 26-man roster coming via trade. In terms of WAR, **Eugenio Suárez** led that group in 2022 with a 4.0 WAR while the Deadline acquisition of Luis Castillo helped anchor the rotation. While Seattle has one of the smaller groups of homegrown players among the playoff teams, it's a core that could carry the team for a very long time, led of course by international signee **Julio Rodríguez**, while a pair of first-round picks, **Logan Gilbert and George Kirby**, form a formidable 1-2 starting pitcher punch.

RAYS (38.9 WAR, 12th among 12 teams)

Homegrown: 4 (9.0 WAR)

- Draft: 2 (6.5 WAR)
- International: 2 (2.5 WAR)

Free agents: 4 (4.3 WAR)

Trades: 18 (25.6 WAR)

For all the talk of the Rays' development successes over the last decade, there isn't a high quantity of hometown talent on this likely postseason iteration. But there is certainly a high quality in perhaps the club's two best players (when healthy) in **Shane Bieber** and **Wander Franco**. Elsewhere, the club's pro-scouting department deserves a lot of kudos for identifying pickups like **Jeffrey Springs** (3.6 WAR), **Yandy Díaz** (3.5) and **Drew Rasmussen** (2.9). The 18 trade acquisitions are the most of any playoff-bound team, beating out the Padres and Mariners (both with 15). Interestingly, all 13 projected pitchers were Draft picks while 12 of the 13 hitters (all but **Taylor Walls**) were signed internationally, either by Tampa Bay or another organization.

National League

DODGERS (58.4 WAR, 1st among 12 teams)

Homegrown: 8 (20.6 WAR)

- Draft: 6 (16.1 WAR)
- International: 2 (4.5 WAR)

Free agents: 8 (17.2 WAR)

Trades: 9 (17.8 WAR)

Waivers: 1 (2.8 WAR)

The Dodgers cruised to a franchise-record 111 victories and their 10th consecutive playoff appearance while getting strong contributions from a variety of sources. Aside from the (now eliminated) Mets, Los Angeles received more free-agent production than any other playoff club, led by **Freddie Freeman, Tyler Anderson, Max Muncy and Justin Turner**, and it also had the

best waiver claim in Evan Phillips. Two of the Dodgers' three best players this season (**Mookie Betts, Trea Turner**) arrived via trades, while the perennially strong farm system contributed **Julio Urías, Tony Gonsolin, Will Smith, Clayton Kershaw and Gavin Lux**.

BRAVES (51.2 WAR, 3rd out of 12 teams)

Homegrown: 8 (27.5 WAR)

- Draft: 6 (21.9 WAR)
- International: 2 (5.6 WAR)

Free agents: 7 (7.9 WAR)

Trades: 10 (16 WAR)

Waivers: 1 (-0.2 WAR)

It's not the largest number of homegrown players, but the 27.1 WAR that group produced this year is among the highest totals. That's largely thanks to **Austin Riley and Michael Harris**, who produced 11.8 of that WAR, though draftees **Kyle Wright and Spencer Strider** combined for 7.5 WAR on the mound. A healthy **Ronald Acuña Jr.** could carry the team, and the international signee contingent, this postseason. The two leaders in WAR from the trade acquisition group were both acquired when they were prospects, **Dansby Swanson** (5.7) in the lineup and **Max Fried** (5.9) in the rotation, though we don't want to overlook the contribution of March trade acquisition **Matt Olson** (3.4).

METS (50.6 WAR, 4th among 12 teams)

Homegrown: 10 (20.1 WAR)

- Draft: 9 (20.1 WAR)
- International: 1 (0.0 WAR)

Free agents: 9 (17.3 WAR)

Trades: 7 (13.2 WAR)

The Mets made big splashes last offseason by signing **Max Scherzer, Mark Canha, Eduardo Escobar and Adam Ottavino** -- almost half of their nine free-agent additions. Trades also notably netted them two superstars in **Francisco Lindor and Edwin Díaz** and a stable member of the rotation in **Chris Bassitt**. Of course, New York has been able to get so aggressive in the free-agent and trade markets because of the homegrown nucleus that's solidified in Queens in recent years. Draft picks **Pete Alonso and Jeff McNeil** remain key contributors to the heart of the Mets lineup, with the former eclipsing 35 homers for the third time in four seasons and the latter becoming a first-time NL batting champ, while **Jacob deGrom** can dominate one game on the mound as well as anyone in baseball. The potential power of top overall prospect Francisco Álvarez gives New York another impactful homegrown talent this postseason.

CARDINALS (48.5, T-5th among 12 teams)

Homegrown: 13 (20.7 WAR)

- Draft: 13 (20.7 WAR)
- International: 0

Free agents: 4 (4.1 WAR)

Trades: 7 (23.6 WAR)

Waivers: 2 (0.1 WAR)

On the one hand, the Cards struck at just the right moment to acquire NL MVP candidates **Paul Goldschmidt** (7.8 WAR) and **Nolan Arenado** (7.9 WAR) in trades. On the other, the Cardinals may have won the NL Central on the strength of 13 different drafted players, one more than Cleveland for most in the playoffs. No one else has more than seven. **Tommy Edman** (6.3) and closer **Ryan Helsley** (2.7) are perhaps the biggest names there, but young players **Brendan Donovan** (4.1) and **Lars Nootbaar** (2.2) did their parts to keep the wheel turning in St. Louis. Notably, **Albert Pujols** -- he of the 1999 13th round -- counts as a free agent for these purposes since he returned to the Cardinals for the first time in 11 years last offseason. But if you want to count the 703-homer hitter as a homegrown talent, who are we to stop you?

PADRES (48.5 WAR, T-5th out of 12 teams)

Homegrown: 3 (0.6 WAR)

- Draft: 2 (0.6 WAR)
- International: 1 (0.0 WAR)

Free agents: 7 (14.4 WAR)

Trades: 16 (33.5 WAR)

Let's get this out of the way -- three homegrown players may not seem ideal, and the fact that none of the three (**Luis Campusano**, **Adrian Morejon**, **Steven Wilson**) have a WAR above 1.0 makes it even less so. Do you know what is ideal? Acquiring **Juan Soto (and Josh Bell)** at the Trade Deadline. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that general manager A.J. Preller has relied heavily on trades to build this NL contender, highlighted by that August blockbuster, and the 15 traded players are the most among all postseason clubs this year. The team's four best starters (**Yu Darvish**, **Blake Snell**, **Joe Musgrove**, **Mike Clevinger**) were all acquired in separate deals. MVP candidate **Manny Machado** remains the gold standard for San Diego's free-agent additions and continues to come good on the 10-year, \$300 million contract he signed in 2019.

PHILLIES (45.2 WAR, 10th out of 12 teams)

Homegrown: 10 (17.2 WAR)

- Draft: 8 (13.3 WAR)
- International: 2 (3.9 WAR)

Free agents: 6 (11.3 WAR)

Trades: 10 (16.7 WAR)

That free agent WAR total would obviously be much higher had **Bryce Harper** been healthy all year. As a result, that group is led by **Zack Wheeler** (5.0 WAR). **J.T. Realmuto**, who obviously has since re-upped as a free agent, came via trade from the Marlins and leads the 11 acquisitions with his 6.5 WAR. The Phillies are one of four teams with double-digit homegrown players, and while the group as a whole hasn't put up huge numbers, 2014 first-rounder **Aaron Nola** does have a WAR of 6.0. The international contingent's contributions have been modest, but Ranger Suárez has stepped up to play a vital role in the rotation this year while producing 2.4 WAR.



IN QUINCY, MASS. THEY PLAY 100 INNINGS OF BASEBALL IN 27 PLUS HOURS TO STRIKE OUT ALS

Stan Grossfeld, Boston Globe

They've been playing the 100 Innings of Baseball annually since 2004 to raise money for ALS research. It was the idea of a local amateur ballplayer named Brett Rudy, and when former Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling got behind it, folks paid attention.

What is billed as the longest baseball game in the world starts at 9 a.m. at Adams Field on a gorgeous Saturday morning and ends 27 hours and 17 minutes later.

The teams are named for Walter Bentson and Rich “Ratt” Kennedy, who were both diagnosed with ALS. Bentson is an organizer and the chief umpire for the game, and Kennedy is the president of the Angel Fund for ALS Research, the charity of record.

“**Lou Gehrig** was diagnosed in 1939 and there is still no cure,” says Kennedy. “That drives me crazy.”

The 80 ballplayers raised more than \$45,000 this year, adding to a total of \$851,800 for various ALS charities.

“The score doesn’t matter,” says Bentson, who imported 80 volunteer umpires this year. “Everyone here is a winner.”

But there is no shortage of pain for missing loved ones.

Kennedy’s father died of ALS in the late 1980s, and when his youngest brother, Jimmy, later died, he knew it was genetic. In 2016, while training for his 32nd Boston Marathon, his left leg quit on him and his worst fears were realized.

He is the first person to receive an experimental gene silencing treatment, and the results are amazing. Last April, he managed to run the Boston Marathon again in 4:08.

“People say, ‘You did what?’ ” he says.

Now he offers hope to those recently diagnosed.

“I walk in and they see me looking this good and sounding this good, six years after I was diagnosed,” he says. “It’s the most encouraging thing just to see that. So much of what I’m taking didn’t exist even a couple of years ago.”

But it is not a cure.

“There are many drugs in the pipeline, so I’m cautiously optimistic,” says Dr. Bob Brown, professor of neurology at UMass Medical School, whose team has identified several ALS genes with the help of Angel Fund research grants.

“If you have an expected survivor of four years and you double it to eight years, that’s not a cure. But that’s a big difference for a young person who’s got a family.”

Bentson, who wears a Pete Frates T-shirt in honor of the late Boston College ballplayer and ALS research advocate, also considers himself lucky. He was diagnosed with a less aggressive form

of ALS in 1999. He called his last game in 2006. Now it takes him 45 minutes to put on his umpire gear with the help of his wife, Mary.

But as long as he can walk, with the aid of a Louisville Slugger bat converted to a cane, Bentson will get behind the plate and umpire for one batter at midnight.

This can get dicey; although Bentson has umpired 3,114 games in various amateur leagues, he is now unsteady on his feet.

“My condition slowly deteriorates,” he says. “But I deal with it.”

Three years ago, there was a major midnight scare.

“I put my hand on the catcher and I said, ‘Please, don’t let any ball hit me, because if you do, you’ll never play another game in New England again,’ ” he said.

“The first pitch is right down the middle, the batter swings and fouls the ball straight back. The catcher instinctively stands straight up to see where the foul ball went. And I went ass over tea kettle and there was a hush over the sellout crowd of 14. It wasn’t pleasant.”

“You were fine,” says Mary. “But people were freaked out.”

This year, he holds on to nothing behind the plate.

“I suggest you throw strikes,” he tells the pitcher.

He rings up the hitter with his usual flair, and receives a standing ovation from both teams.

“There was not a dry eye in the house,” says Angie Santomauro, the only woman in the lineup. “There is a little piece of Walter in everyone here.”

Santomauro’s husband, Zach, proudly wears a Gehrig No. 4 Yankee uniform. He has an ironman mentality. That means no shut-eye. Not even a quick nap.

“Oh man, no way,” he says. “Waking up from a power nap and still needing to keep your eyes sharp for a fastball coming at you at 2 a.m., it’s just not tenable.”

“You stay awake and supplement with whatever kind of caffeine or products you need to just power through. You go through all these stages of sleep deprivation, including sadness, anger, and then you come back around when the sun comes up. But stay awake, don’t give in.”

At 1:31 a.m., more than a dozen pizzas arrive. Angie Santomauro, who also manages Team Walter, shakes her head.

"Do not eat the pizza," she says, looking up from her 23-page scorecard. "The carbs will kill you. You'll want to nap."

There are things here you won't see anywhere else.

Rob Forrand, a construction worker from Halifax, threw a record 50 innings and an estimated thousand pitches.

"We'll see tomorrow," he says. "I'm tired. My arm feels great, the rest of me not so much. My legs, my back, they hurt. My arm never bothers me."

He tosses 43 innings in a row, then comes back for another seven.

"I went into my car and turned the heat on because it got cold," he says. "I just cranked the heat and laid back. I probably slept for a total of 10 minutes."

He says losing doesn't bother him.

"It's not about that," he says. "It's about raising money for guys like Ratt and Walter. The pain that we're going through is nothing compared to what they go through every day."

Two players played all 100 innings on defense.

On Team Ratt, Mike Santarpio (his grandfather's cousin is the pizza king) played every single position and every inning on defense. They call him "Pizza," but he's an electrician. This is his seventh charity game.

Santarpio, 34, says his knees and hips hurt. He says baseball is never boring.

"It's a passion," he says. "People that think it's boring don't have the patience to understand the strategy of it."

Scot Leslie, a line painter on Team Walter, played center field without a break. Last year, he tracked down a fly ball in the 100th inning to preserve a 68-66 victory with the tying runs on base.

This year, he hunkers down under a blanket on a lounge chair when the temperature dips into the 40s, but he needs no motivation to contribute.

"It kind of breaks your heart," he says. "So anything to do positively for them, I'm all about."

Leslie went 14 for 19 in the game. What hurts?

"Everything."

Was it worth it?

“Oh yeah, this is the funnest baseball game you could ever go to.”

After the last out, there are slow-motion hugs and thoughts of a hot shower and a warm bed. The final score is Team Ratt 91, Team Walter 79.

“It’s events like this that make it so I’m alive today,” says Kennedy. “Thank you very much.”



Mike Santarpio, one of two players to play all 100 innings.



Umpire Walter Bentsen, who has ALS, calls balls and strikes for one batter.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

A question that salutes the Yankees and the Mets making the post-season (first time ever both teams won 98 or more in same season).

Five managers have skippered both the Yankees and the Mets.

Buck Showalter

Yankees manager: 1992-95

Mets manager: 2021-current

Joe Torre

Mets manager: 1977-81

Yankees manager: 1996-2007

Casey Stengel

Yankees manager: 1949-60
Mets manager: 1962-65

Yogi Berra

Yankees manager: 1964, 1984-85
Mets manager: 1972-75

(Berra won pennants with both—64 Yankees and 73 Mets)

Dallas Green

Yankees manager: 1989
Mets manager: 1993-96

HOUSEKEEPING

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