

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

11.13.2022

Good morning baseball fans,

I hope you are managing withdrawal. Let the hot stove season begin.

You'll see a newsletter shift from game anecdotes to more analysis, Hall of Fame discussion and history stuff. Tidbits will try to keep you entertained through the long, dark winter.

This week Hall of Fame committee, everything you ever wanted to know about Qualifying Offers and the Rule V draft, an argument not to give Aaron Judge a huge contract, miscellaneous anecdotes and trivia.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

150 players have won Rookie of the Year. 18 went on to enter the Hall of Fame. Here are the years and teams. The over/under is 14 correct answers—I'm betting you get at least 15. how many of the 18 can you name?

1947 Dodgers

1951 Giants

1956 Reds

1956 White Sox

1958 Giants

1959 Giants

1961 Cubs

1964 Twins

1967 Twins

1967 Mets

1968 Reds

1972 Red Sox

1977 Orioles

1977 Expos

1982 Orioles
1991 Astros
1993 Dodgers
1996 Yankees

WORLD SERIES LINGERING STUFF

Astros are the first team to clinch the World Series on its home field since the 2013 Red Sox. The home drought (which does not include the Dodgers' "home" win in Arlington, Texas, in the '20 pandemic-affected postseason) was the longest in history.

Framber Valdez went 2-0 in the 2022 Fall Classic and joins **José Urquidy** (three) as the only Houston pitchers to win multiple World Series games. Valdez went 3-0 with a 1.44 ERA in four postseason starts, including 2-0 with a 1.46 ERA and a 0.89 WHIP in two World Series wins over the Phillies. In 12 1/3 total innings in the Fall Classic, he gave up two runs on six hits and five walks, striking out 18 batters.

In the clinching game 6 Valdez never let a Phillies runner advance to third base until Kyle Schwarber led off the sixth inning with a solo homer to right field. He came back to retire the next three hitters -- **Rhys Hoskins, J.T. Realmuto and Bryce Harper** -- and was pulled after 93 pitches.

What a difference a year makes. Valdez's performance in this year's World Series helped him erase the memories of last year's disappointing Fall Classic, in which he gave up 10 runs and struck out only three over 4 2/3 total innings. The Astros won all four of Valdez's playoff starts, and he finished the postseason with a 1.44 ERA.

Phillies right fielder **Nick Castellanos** made an interesting point, saying the postseason experience of **Rob Thomson** and several of his coaches makes a huge difference for a team with so many playoff newcomers.

Thomson went to the playoffs numerous times as a coach for 10 years with the Yankees, and was part of a World Series champion in 2009. **Kevin Long** is the first hitting coach to make a series with four different clubs. And **Bobby Dickerson** previously went to the playoffs with the Orioles and Padres. Castellanos said if coaches are tight, the players pick up on their insecurity. Thomson and Co., instead, were a stabilizing influence.

The 2022 World Series provided fans with a no-hitter, a home run onslaught, two large-market teams, and a heart-warming storyline with Houston's Dusty Baker finally getting his managerial championship ring at age 73.

But it still didn't make for must-see TV, based on the final series viewership numbers that came out Tuesday, compared to baseball's past Fall Classics.

The Astros' six-game series win over the Phillies averaged 11.78 million viewers on Fox, and 12.03 million combined viewers (Fox, Fox Deportes and streaming), the network said, which are fine numbers amid the harsh realities of the modern TV universe but still makes for one of the least-watched World Series on record.

In fact, it trails only 2020's pandemic-affected Fox TV-only 9.94-million-viewer average (Dodgers over Rays). Last year's six-game Braves win over the Astros averaged 11.94 million for the network, which has aired the World Series since 2000.

For some contrast, Game 7 of the 1975 World Series between the Red Sox and Reds drew 51.6 million viewers. Game 6 between the Phillies and Astros this season had 12 million. That's how much the rise of cable television and streaming services — along with the increased popularity of other sports — has changed television habits

MATTRESS JACK WINS \$75 MILLION AFTER HOUSTON ASTROS WIN WORLD SERIES

The Astros entered the series as around a -180 favorite at sportsbooks, with the Phillies a +160 underdog.

Jim "Mattress Mack" McIngvale had \$10 million worth of futures bets on the Astros to win the Fall Classic, which would win an estimated \$75 million. The largest of these was a \$3 million bet on the Astros at 10-1 odds at Caesars Sportsbook, which was placed in Louisiana back in May. He also had a \$1 million wager on the Astros at WynnBet at 12-1 odds and a \$1 million wager at Betfred Sportsbook at 5-1 odds, among others.

The estimated \$75 million is the largest payout ever in legal U.S. sports betting history.

Like most of his big wagers, this one is tied to a mattress promotion for his Gallery Furniture store in Houston. He said on a recent VSiN appearance that business was booming.

"We had the biggest day in store history on Sunday, and then did 25% better on Monday," Mack said on VSiN. "We busted through the \$75 million in liability, so we're done taking bets on the mattresses right now. The customers are excited and they're saying 'Go Astros.'"

Despite the large wager, Ken Fuchs, Head of Sports at Caesars Sportsbook, told VSiN that the sportsbook wasn't concerned with the pending liability if Houston won.

"What can we say? We just wrote the biggest check in sports betting history to Mattress Mack for \$30,000,000," Fuchs said in a statement on Saturday night after Houston won. "Would we do it all again? You bet. While Mack may have won this round on the field, we're proud of how we teamed up to support first responders and military veterans in Houston, Philly, and Atlantic City. And to Mack – we tip our Astros cap – and remind him that he can now support his Texans and Rockets ... both attractively priced at +100000 to win a championship. The Astros are also currently +550 to win next year's Fall Classic."

<https://youtu.be/FfZ6X2EsL9s>

Yordan Alvarez kicked off the Astros' championship run with one of the biggest home runs ever hit. His three-run shot with the Astros down two runs in the eighth helped spark a seven-game romp through the AL side of the bracket.

Alvarez himself didn't much take part in that romp, or the World Series that followed. In the 54 plate appearances that followed his walkoff against the Mariners, Alvarez hit .133/.288/.244 with 13 strikeouts. He was absent for most of the Astros' run, and with how top-heavy the team's lineup is, his failure to hit had a disproportionate effect on the team's run scoring.

In retrospect, though, maybe Alvarez wasn't slumping or struggling. Maybe he was just waiting. Maybe he was biding his time for a chance to unleash that mighty power stroke and change the Astros' season one final time.

In the top of the sixth of Game Six of the 2022 World Series, that chance came. Alvarez came to the plate once again with two men on, with one out, with his team trailing, against a lefty on the mound brought in just to face him. Alvarez fouled off a two-seamer in off the plate, then watched as **Jose Alvarado** sprayed his next two pitches. Maybe Alvarado feared going down 3-1 to the big man, maybe he missed his spot, maybe he wanted to announce his presence with authority, but Alvarado's 2-1 fastball, at 99 mph, caught way too much of the plate. No HR had ever cleared the hitters background in centerfield of Minute Maid until his blast.

Astros bullpen--They ended the playoffs with a 0.83 ERA in 54 1/3 innings, capping it with four shutout innings in game 6. Even "0.83" understates the case; two of the runs were allowed by starters pitching in relief. The team's true relievers allowed four runs, three earned, in 31 1/3 innings pitched. None of them blew a save, none of them wore a loss. The Phillies scored just four runs after the fifth inning in this World Series.

From 2017 to 2022 the Astros played at a 101-win pace in the regular season, winning the five full-season NL West titles in those six years. After that, they've won two World Series, four AL pennants, and appeared in every single ALCS, the last of those a record. If the 2017 sign stealing are a part of their record, so too are the last two years, when a team under new management and built around an incredibly deep pitching staff went 201-113, then 20-9 in successive postseasons, winning consecutive pennants and a World Series.

Rookie shortstop **Jeremy Peña**, who had two more hits last night and scored the go-ahead run on Alvarez's homer, was named World Series MVP just over a week after he won the same honors during the American League Championship Series. He is the only rookie in history to get at least one hit in his first six World Series games, slashing .400/.423/.600 across 26 plate appearances in the series. He also accounted for (both scoring and driving in) seven of Houston's 22 runs in the series, with four of the seven giving his team the lead.

The Phillies were 1-for-20 with runners in scoring position across the last five games of this series. (Incredibly, that includes their 7-0 victory in Game 3, where they were 0-for-3 with RISP—all their scoring that night came via home runs with the bases empty or a runner only at first.)

In the 1980s, starters accounted for 67% of postseason wins. Last season that rate dropped to 51%.

It has been 22 years since the Yankees three-peated as champions from 1998-2000. It's the longest streak without a repeat champion in the history of MLB, the NBA, NFL, and NHL. The previous long streak was 18 years in the NBA from the 1969-70 season until the 1987-88 season.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

The last player to win the AL Cy Young Award and the World Series in the same season--the Royals' **Bret Saberhagen**, 1985

Hank Aaron hit 755 home runs – the pitcher who served up the most to Aaron was Hall of Famer **Don Drysdale**--17.

My how times have changed. 1977. **Reggie Jackson** signing a free agent deal with the Yankees. 1973 AL MVP, 3 time champion with the A's, hit 27 HRs in 1976 for the Orioles. The Yankees paid him the big bucks—5 years/\$3 million.

The Boston Globe has been pounding Red Sox ownership over the lack of a deal to re-sign **Xander Bogaerts**. The Red Sox' star shortstop is coming off a season where he hit .307/.377/.456 with an .833 OPS. He was in the running for the American League batting title, ranking third in batting average behind just Twins' **Luis Arraez** (.316) and Yankees' **Aaron Judge** (.311).

Bogaerts was named an All-Star for the fourth time in 2022, and was an AL Gold Glove finalist at shortstop for the first time in his decorated career.

The Yankees struck out 50 times, had 21 hits and scored just nine runs against the Astros in the ALCS.

Josh Donaldson struck out in 44% of his Yankee at bats this season. His 2022 percentile rankings were down in average exit velocity, max exit velocity, hard hit percentage, xwOBA, xBA, xSLG, Barrel %, K%, BB%, Whiff % and Chase Rate. Oh, and at age 36 he is paid \$21 million.

Up and coming... The Orioles are coming off an 83-79 season that saw them go 11 games over .500 after July 1. The revamped schedule will help the Orioles. They were eight games under .500 against division opponents this past season. Two fewer series against those teams are welcome.

33 hitters have recorded 3,000 hits and 500 HRs. Which member of the 3,000 hit/500 HR club was teammates with two other members (at different times)--**Rafael Palmeiro** (Orioles teammates with **Eddie Murray** in 1996, and Rangers teammates with **Alex Rodriguez** from 2001-03)

5 years/\$102 million for a relief pitcher? Ask me in 5 years if the **Edwin Diaz** deal worked out for the Mets. Happiest people must be agents for closers. Three of Phillies top four saves leaders from 2022 -- **Corey Knebel**, **David Robertson** and **Brad Hand** -- all hit free agency on Sunday. **Kenley Jansen**, **Taylor Rogers**, **Alex Colomé**, **Zack Britton** and **Will Smith**, whose club option is likely to be declined by the Astros, all have extensive closing experience

Add in **Michael Fulmer** (3.17 ERA, 9.0 K/9, 17 saves in 2021-22), **Rafael Montero** (2.37 ERA, 9.6 K/9, 14 saves in 2022) and **Robert Suarez** (2.27 ERA, 11.5 K/9 in 2022) and you have lot of relief pitchers who may cash in big this off season. Thank you Mr. Diaz.

JT Realmuto led baseball in innings caught this year. Again. He is the only player in baseball who has started more than 500 games at catcher since 2018. He just won his second Gold Glove, joining his two Silver Sluggers and three trips to the All-Star Game. In other words, he hardly ever takes a day off, and there is little reason for a manager to want to give him one. You get a Tidbits bonus if you knew **Garrett Stubbs** is his backup.

Speaking of Realmuto...**Noah Syndergaard** is terrible at preventing stolen bases. Intriguingly, though, he was much better once he was traded to the Phillies. Indeed, 25 of the 26 swipes he allowed came in his 15 starts with the **Angels**, an abysmal 4% caught-stealing rate; runners were 5-for-7 in the 10 games (nine starts) he pitched with Philadelphia. That's a 29% caught-stealing rate; the league average is 25%. Part of this improvement was probably due to having Realmuto behind the dish, but **Max Stassi**, the starting catcher in Anaheim, is not a bad thrower. He caught 12 of the 56 runners attempting to steal off him this year (21%), and if you exclude the 17 steals against Stassi with Syndergaard pitching, his caught-stealing rate is actually well above average (31%).

2011. **Justin Verlander** was AL MVP. He was 24-5 with a 2.40 ERA and 250 strikeouts. I didn't have a clue that the runner-up was **Jacoby Ellsbury**. I wouldn't have gotten that with another 100 guesses, but Ellsbury really did have a strong season — .321/.376/.552 with 32 homers, 39 steals, 119 runs, 105 RBIs.

Brent Strom is known as the guru of pitching coaches. He retired last year from the Astros but was tempted back to work by the Diamondbacks. In 2021 Arizona had the second worst ERA (to the Orioles) in baseball. In Strom's first season in Phoenix they reduced their ERA by 1.15 runs. In 2021 the D'backs lost 110 games. They improved this season to 74-88. Previously Strom led the rebuild in Houston. From 2015-2021 the Astros led the AL in wins, ERA and strikeouts.

Clayton Kershaw has 197 career wins. Two pitchers with 200 or more for the Dodgers--**Don Sutton** (233 Dodgers victories) and **Don Drysdale** (209). Kershaw will collect close to \$20 million from the Dodgers next season to chase 200 wins.

All Gold Glove recipients are eligible for the pair of league Platinum Gloves as the league's best defensive player, with the two winners determined through fan voting. The award debuted in 2011. Yankees catcher **Jose Trevino** won in the AL. **Nolan Arenado**, Cards 3B won for the 6th straight time. Arenado is a 10 time gold glove winner as best defensive player at his position. With Arenado's win, a St. Louis player has claimed the NL Platinum Glove six times in 12 years. Catcher **Yadier Molina** was a four-time winner.

Voters in Pawtucket approved a \$330 million expenditure to build a new high school where McCoy Stadium now stands. It's expected to take five years to complete the project. McCoy opened in 1942 and was home of the Triple A Red Sox from 1970-2019.

With the season done, I returned to Joe Posnanski's great book [The Baseball 100](#). A few goodies from George Will's introduction:

June 19, 1846. In a meadow near a pond in what is now the Murray Hill section of Manhattan 25 year old Alexander Cartwright made one of the most important and durable decisions in human history: Cartwright decided Base Ball's (it was then a two word noun) should be 90 feet apart.

Centerfielder **Tris Speaker** made six unassisted double plays.

Ichiro Suzuki led his league in singles 10 straight seasons. He was the only player ever to have 200 singles in a season—he did it twice.

The only player in MLB history with at least 400 homers, 500 doubles, 1500 RBI, 1500 runs scored, 300 stolen bases is **Carlos Beltran**.

Tony Gwynn (135 career HRs) received more intentional walks (203) than **Mike Schmidt** (548 HRs) or Ernie Banks (512 HRs).

For 19 consecutive seasons Gwynn had more walks than strikeouts.

Gwynn faced **Greg Maddux** 107 times in his career—never struck out.

Willie McCovey hit .300, scored 100 runs, drove in 100 runs and walked 100 times in seven consecutive seasons. **Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Barry Bonds** didn't.

1952-1955 **Robin Roberts** completed 118 of his 154 starts. He has the fewest walks per nine innings of all pitchers since 1920.

NOTE TO BRIAN CASHMAN (from Joe Sheehan's excellent newsletter).

Aaron Judge's 2022 season (10.6 bWAR) is one of the all-time walk years in history. Only **Barry Bonds** in 2001 produced more bWAR (11.9) entering free agency, and only **Alex Rodriguez** in 2000, in addition to Judge and Bonds, was over ten wins just before entering the market. Rodriguez signed a record-setting \$252-million contract; Bonds, then 37, settled for five years and \$90 million from the Giants. Platform year performance and age are the two biggest determinants of a free agent's eventual contract. Judge is at the extreme end of one and on the wrong side of the other.

If it were just about 2023, or even perhaps the next three years, signing Aaron Judge would be a no-brainer at almost any number. The best free-agent investments are always, always, at the top and bottom of the market. Sign superstars, or sign lottery tickets. It's the big money for the middle of the pool that gets everyone in trouble. The best players are more likely to stay great and they have further to fall while still being productive. If Aaron Judge is half the player he was last year, he's still a star, and that's an unlikely fall.

Judge being 31 next year, though, is a concern no matter how good he was at 30. Baseball is increasingly a young man's game, with older hitters at the most risk of no longer keeping up with modern pitching. In the entire league last year, there were 14 hitters 31 or older who were worth three wins. There were 23 in 2021, 12 in 2019, nine in 2018. (I'm guessing that 2021 figure has something to do with the pandemic, maybe with young players' development being hurt in 2020.) Judge will be 33 in the third year of his next contract. In 2022, there were five players 33 and older who were worth three wins. There were eight last year, ten in 2019, five in 2018.

Your eyes may be blurring at this point, so let me sum up that paragraph for you: It's very hard to be a good player in your thirties in modern baseball. Mind you, the standard here is just three wins, a good MLB regular. If by 2025 Aaron Judge is posting three-win seasons while making \$45 million a year, no one is going to consider that a success.

The biggest free-agent deals are generally signed by the youngest players, the ones who still have some peak left, some upside left. Alex Rodriguez was 24 in his walk year, **Bryce Harper** and **Manny Machado** were 25. (Jason Heyward, too, whoops.) **Corey Seager** was 27. Aaron

Judge was 21 on the day he signed out of the draft and 25 before he was a major-league regular. He had five five-win seasons for the Yankees. You want to guess at how many he has left? I'll set the line at 2.5 and want no part of the over.

The Yankees paid Judge, in salary, about \$40 million for 37 WAR; he will get more than that in the first year of his next deal, which isn't the problem. The problem is he will get more than that in the final year of his next deal, at 37 or 38 or 39, and there's just no case for paying any hitter at those ages. Since 2016, there have been a total of six four-win seasons by players 35 and older. There have been a total of 17 three-win seasons by players 35 and older. Your list of productive older players in the Strikeout Era is basically **Nelson Cruz, Adrian Beltre, Yuli Gurriel, and Ben Zobrist**.

Age is one strike against making a long-term commitment to Aaron Judge. He's surely had his best years and you will have to pay him current-market value at ages when almost no players are good, much less worth \$40 million a season. Judge, though, comes with another strike, one we've discussed here before: He's 6'7", and the track record of aging tall hitters is a disaster.

Falling From Great Heights (bWAR from age 31 on, hitters 6'6" and up)

Dave Winfield	26.2
Frank Howard	17.8
Giancarlo Stanton	3.8
Dave Kingman	2.8
Adam Wainwright	2.2

As I always point out, that's Adam Wainwright's production as a hitter and defender -- it doesn't include his pitching. He's among the top five tall hitters after age 30.

Everyone wants to think the next guy is different, and maybe Aaron Judge is. Dave Winfield did it! Well, Winfield was one of the all-time great baseball athletes, the kind of true three-sport star we don't let develop any longer. He played until he was 43 but had just one good year after 36. Judge is very athletic for his size; he's not Dave Winfield. Frank Howard was a beast at the plate who might have hit 500 homers had he not played through Deadball II in the 1960s. Howard was not the athlete Judge is, and he was done at 35. That's the list.

Oh, that third name on there? Do you think the Yankees really need to be lectured about the downside risk of tall outfielders? Giancarlo Stanton had a three-win year at 31 and was useless at 32. He played barely 500 innings in the outfield in that time and might not play that many over the rest of his career. Stanton is guaranteed \$160 million over the next five years. The presence of Stanton complicates any Judge contract for the Yankees because you can't play two players at DH, and Judge will eventually need to stop playing 1200 innings in the field.

(The Yankees, who have been a very popular topic in my inbox, will get a dedicated Newsletter soon.)

I can't say for sure why very tall hitters age so poorly. My best guess is the bigger you are, the longer it takes to get all the moving parts of a swing going. Losing just a little bit of the hand-eye coordination it takes to be a great hitter may affect this group more than it does shorter players. If you lower the qualifier to 6'5", it brings in some guys who lasted a bit longer, but with injury-riddled thirties -- **Mark McGwire, Frank Thomas. John Olerud** is on the list but was basically done at 35. Jayson Werth was a zero at 32 and 33, then had two good years and was done at 36.

If you tell me I can sign Judge for five years and \$225 million, I probably take that and just live with the decline in 2025 and 2026. Judge, though, turned down 7/230 already, and with this likely being his only chance to get paid, is probably uninterested in that sort of structure. Judge's average salary could be anything, but I am pretty sure the contract length won't be any shorter than seven years, and it could stretch to ten. I'm entirely uninterested in signing him, given all the data above about older players and tall hitters, to anything like that deal.

The one structure I would try to put together is an early opt-out that captures Judge's short-term value while potentially getting me off the hook for the rest of his career. I would treat him like a pitcher, in other words, front-loading a deal for 2023 and 2024 and offering an opt-out after '24, in the hopes that Judge plays well enough to test the market in two years, getting me off the hook for his age-33 seasons and beyond. Maybe something like 8/360, where the first two years are \$50 million each and the last six average \$43 million or so. Even writing it out, though, I am having a hard time crafting a deal that is both attractive to Judge and formatted so it's likely he will opt out.

The combination of one of the best platform seasons ever with a truly terrible free-agent profile makes this a brutal case. This piece makes it seem like I think Aaron Judge is bad, which is obviously not true. He'll probably be an MVP candidate in 2023, wherever he plays, and at least a decent player for a few years after that. I just can't see investing \$350 million in any player's thirties, much less one of Judge's height.

THE PIPELINE IS IMPRESSIVE

The pipeline of exciting young players is strong. 2022 highlights and a few years look back:

2022 **Julio Rodríguez, Adley Rutschman, Michael Harris II ,Bobby Witt Jr., O'Neil Cruz and Spencer Strider.**

Mariners shortstop Rodriguez quickest player ever to reach 25 homers and 25 steals (125 games, three fewer than **Mike Trout**)

Orioles catcher Rutschman second to **JT Realmuto** in WAR amongst all MLB catchers.

Braves outfielder Harris -- In the last 40 seasons, the only rookies age 21 or younger to top Harris' 5.3 bWAR are **Mike Trout** (10.5 in 2012) and Rodríguez (6.0).

Royals infielder Witt Jr. fifth rookie ever -- and second-youngest behind Trout -- to post 20 homers and 30 steals.

Pirates shortstop O'Neil Cruz. The tallest regular shortstop in big league history at 6-foot-7, Cruz is a unicorn who registered the hardest-hit ball (122.4 mph) in the Majors this season and led all players at his position in maximum (97.9 mph) and average (93.9 mph) arm strength. He also ranked in the top 10 percent among big leaguers in sprint speed (29.9 feet per second), barrel percentage (8.9) and average exit velo (91.9 mph).

Braves righthander Strider went from winning five games and making 10 starts in three years at Clemson, where he had Tommy John surgery, to breaking **Randy Johnson's** record as the fastest pitcher to reach 200 strikeouts in a season (130 innings).

2021 **Wander Franco, Randy Arozarena, Ian Anderson.**

2020 no obvious future super stars yet, best being Sean Murphy, Tony Gonsolin, Cristian Javier, Jose Urquidy.

2019 Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Fernando Tatis Jr., Yordan Alvarez, Pete Alonso, Austin Riley, Sandy Alcantara

2018 Ronald Acuña Jr., Juan Soto, Shohei Ohtani, Walker Buehler, Shane Bieber

2017 Aaron Judge, Rafael Devers, Dansby Swanson, Josh Hader

2016 Corey Seager, Alex Bregman, Trea Turner, Julio Urias, Blake Snell, Trevor Story, Josh Bell.

2015 Byron Buxton, Kris Bryant, Carlos Correa, Francisco Lindor, Addison Russell, Carlos Rodon, Kyle Schwarber, Aaron Nola and Michael Conforto.

HALL OF FAME

Compiled from various sources—stay tuned for lots more HOF commentary this off season.

On Monday, the Baseball Hall of Fame announced its Contemporary Baseball Era Players Ballot.

Since the beginning, the Hall of Fame has had the Baseball Writers Association of America — the famed BBWAA — decide which players should go in the Hall of Fame. This is the big vote. But almost since the beginning, there have been various smaller committees put together to vote for — well, lots of things. The committees have voted in managers and executives and umpires and that sort of thing. They have voted in Negro leaguers. And they have also voted in lots of players who they felt were unfairly overlooked by the BBWAA.

To get a complete picture:

- There have been 130 players elected to the Hall of Fame by the BBWAA.
- There have been 138 players elected to the Hall of Fame by various committees.
- There have also been 22 managers elected, 40 executives/pioneers elected and 10 umpires elected by the committees.

So in all, while people argue a whole lot about who the BBWAA does and does not elect, the BBWAA entries make up only THIRTY-EIGHT PERCENT of the people in the Hall of Fame. We'll break all of this down in even greater detail as Hall of Fame season continues.

But for now, what you need to know is that the Hall of Fame has a new committee getting together this year called "The Contemporary Baseball Era Players Committee." They will vote on eight players selected who played the bulk of their careers since 1980.

Next year, there will be a Contemporary Baseball Era Non-Players Committee, which will meet to discuss managers and executives and other non-players since 1980.

And the year after that, there will be a Classic Baseball Era Committee to discuss everybody who played, managed or worked in baseball before 1980.

A committee of 16 people will meet in early December to discuss those eight players. If a player gets 12 votes — that's 12 out of 16, or 75% — they're going to the Hall of Fame.

One more thing to point out: Each member of the committee can vote for as few as zero players, which is fine. But they can vote for only as many as three.

Albert Belle. Surly slugger. Hit 50 homers and 50 doubles in a single season. Led league in RBIs three times. When he was hot, he was a ferocious and fearsome hitter. 40.8 WAR.

Barry Bonds. Also a surly slugger. All-time record holder in homers (762), walks (2,558), intentional walks (688) and homers in a single season (73). Won seven MVP awards and eight Gold Gloves. Also stole 514 bases. Also, you know, PEDs. 162.8 WAR.

Roger Clemens. Surly hurler. Seven-time Cy Young Award winner. Led league in ERA seven times, in strikeouts five times and in FIP nine times. Won 354 games and struck out 4,672 batters. His career is essentially **Pedro Martinez's** career and **Sandy Koufax's** career COMBINED. Also, you know, PEDs. 138.7 WAR.

Don Mattingly. Donnie Baseball. A line drive machine before his back went out on him; he led the league in doubles three straight years from 1984 to '86 and in those years also won a batting title, an RBI title and twice led the league in total bases. Nine-time Gold Glove winner. Bill James' famous scouting report: 100% ballplayer, 0% bullshit. 42.4 WAR.

Fred McGriff. Crime Dog. Beloved icon of back-to-back-to-back AAU National Championship teams. Hit 493 home runs. Top 50 all-time in homers, RBIs, walks and extra-base hits. One of the greatest follow-throughs of any hitter in baseball history. Would probably be in the Hall of Fame already had he hit seven more regular-season home runs. 52.6 WAR.

Dale Murphy. The Murph. Two-time MVP. Five-time Gold Glover. Five-tool player who had a 30-30 season in 1983. Was often called the best player in baseball during his career. One of the truly nicest people in baseball history. 46.5 WAR.

Rafael Palmeiro. Solid mustache. One of only seven players in baseball history to reach 3,000 hits AND 500 home runs. The other six are all first-ballot, no-doubt Hall of Famers who don't even need a first name: **Aaron, Cabrera, Mays, Murray, Pujols, A-Rod.** Won three Gold Gloves, though one of the three was perhaps the oddest decision in Gold Glove history (he was a DH that season). Also, you know, PEDs. 72.8 WAR.

Curt Schilling. Provocateur. One of the greatest postseason pitchers in baseball history. Retired with the best strikeout-to-walk ratio among all pitchers in modern baseball history. World Series MVP. Winner of every baseball humanitarian and community service award, including the Branch Rickey, the Hutch, the **Roberto Clemente** and **Lou Gehrig** Awards. Has unapologetically picked a lot of fights in retirement. 80.5 WAR. Schilling--Long career? Yep. Twenty seasons. ... Extended period of dominance? Absolutely. Four top-four Cy Young Award finishes in eight years. October brilliance? Did that: 11-2, 2.13 ERA in 19 starts

Some surprising omissions.

(with commentary from Joe Posnanski on why these six should have been on the ballot.)

Dwight Evans. I'm absolutely stupefied that Evans is not on this ballot. He made his veterans ballot debut two years ago ... and HE GOT EIGHT VOTES. It couldn't be clearer that there is a growing thought that Evans was a big miss by the BBWAA. I certainly think that. Evans posted 67.2 WAR, and while WAR isn't everything, that is a reflection of how many things he did well. He was a great defender*. He got on base. He hit with power. Not having Dewey on this ballot is a HUGE miss. And having **Albert Belle** on the ballot instead of Evans is ... like who's driving this bus anyway?

**A lot of people make the mistake of looking at Baseball Reference's Defensive WAR to determine a player's defensive value. That's just wrong. For instance, Evans has a minus-3.7 dWAR, so you would think: "Oh, he wasn't a great defender."*

No. See, dWAR takes into account a player's defense AND the player's position. In Dewey's case, for example, he was 67 runs above average as a defender, which is very good and also a little bit deceiving because he was a subpar defender at the end of his career. Between 1974 and 1982, he was 106 runs above average, which is elite stuff.

But his dWAR is poor because rightfield is not nearly as valuable a defensive spot as shortstop or third base or catcher or even centerfield. So the positional adjustment for him was minus-113 runs. Lesson: Don't look at dWAR.

Lou Whitaker. I'm equally stupefied that Lou Whitaker is not on this ballot. I actually thought this ballot was essentially made for Lou Whitaker. His 75.1 career WAR is the most for any non-Hall of Famer who isn't tainted in one way or another. He finally made his first veterans ballot in 2020, just like Evans, and he did quite well, drawing six votes (more than Mattingly or Murphy). It's plain loony that he's not on this ballot.*

**I started to wonder if maybe the rule was that a player had to play his ENTIRE CAREER after 1980; maybe that's why Evans and Whitaker are not on there. But Murphy's on here, and he started his career before 1980. The rule is "made their greatest impact since 1980," which is obviously subject to some interpretation. But both Evans and Whitaker played many more games after 1980 than before.*

Kenny Lofton. Lofton retired at the end of the 2007 season, which should make him eligible for this ballot. Lofton, I think, is exactly the reason to keep having veterans committees. Bill James would get rid of all of them, and I can see his argument, but if you're going to have them, then Kenny Lofton is the reason. He got lost on the crazy 2013 ballot — the first one for Bonds and Clemens and Schilling and Biggio and Piazza and Sosa. He was a victim of circumstance. His 68.4 career WAR and brilliance as a leadoff hitter, base stealer and defensive force demand that his case at least be heard. Again, why you're putting his surly teammate Albert Belle back on the ballot but not giving Lofton his day in court is utterly beyond me.

Dave Stieb. Look, I'm not sure Dave Stieb belongs in the Hall of Fame. I like his case, and he's a longstanding member of Baseball Think Factory's Hall of Merit. I also get the arguments against him. What I do feel sure about is that he deserves to have his case discussed. He was wildly underrated as a player, and in 2004, his only year on the ballot, he wasn't even given a second glance. Let's talk about Stieb, baby, let's talk about you and me, let's talk about all the good things and the bad things that may be.

David Cone. I'm a big believer in this one. Cone was a truly fantastic pitcher, he posted 61.6 career WAR, he won a Cy Young and could have won at least one more, he had a couple of legendary postseason moments. I think the closer you look at his case, the more interesting it becomes. He was another one-and-done on the BBWAA ballot and hasn't been on any ballots since.

Fernando Valenzuela. All right, I appreciate that this one is a reach because Valenzuela's greatness as a player was limited to a short time. His 37.8 career WAR — while more than Catfish Hunter — doesn't really play in the Hall of Fame game. But hear me out: Fernando was a hugely important player in baseball history. Listen to Jaime Jarrin:

"I think Fernando created more new baseball fans than any other ballplayer since, I don't know, Babe Ruth. Before Fernando, people from Mexico, from Central America, from South America, they didn't care about baseball. They were just following soccer and boxing. Then Fernando came along, and he created so many new fans that it was unbelievable, especially female fans. Mothers. Grandmothers. People used to pray for him. They used to go to mass on the day he was pitching."

Also, there's John Thorn's theory that the Baseball Hall of Fame should celebrate, you know, FAME, since it's in the title. And for a good long while, Fernando was the most famous baseball player in the world.

You can buy these things or not buy them, but I think it's worth talking about.

Lots more HOF discussions in upcoming Tidbits editions.

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT QUALIFYING OFFERS

In case you missed it, here are the 14 free agents who received \$19.65 million qualifying offers. If someone else signs them their current team receives draft pick compensation.

Braves: SS Dansby Swanson

Cubs: C Willson Contreras

Dodgers: LHP Tyler Anderson

Dodgers: SS Trea Turner

Giants OF Joc Pederson

Giants: LHP Carlos Rodón

Mets: RHP Chris Bassitt

Mets: RHP Jacob deGrom

Mets: OF Brandon Nimmo

Rangers: LHP Martín Pérez

Red Sox: SS Xander Bogaerts

Red Sox: RHP Nathan Eovaldi

Yankees: OF Aaron Judge

Yankees: 1B Anthony Rizzo

Some notable free agents who did not receive a QO:

Astros: OF Michael Brantley

Dodgers: LHP Andrew Heaney, LHP Clayton Kershaw

Mets: RHP Taijuan Walker

Padres: RHP Mike Clevinger, LHP Sean Manaea

Red Sox: DH J.D. Martinez, RHP Michael Wacha

Yankees: RHP Jameson Taillon

INELIGIBLE FOR QUALIFYING OFFER

Not every free agent can receive the QO. Players who have previously received a QO are ineligible, which means the following free agents were ineligible to receive one:

José Abreu (White Sox), Brandon Belt (Giants), Carlos Correa (Twins), Nelson Cruz (Nationals), Zack Greinke (Royals), Kenley Jansen (Braves), Craig Kimbrel (Dodgers), AJ Pollock (White Sox), David Robertson (Phillies), Carlos Santana (Mariners), Will Smith (Astros), Noah Syndergaard (Phillies), Justin Verlander (Astros)

Players who weren't continuously with an organization, either in the Minors or Majors, from Opening Day until the end of the regular season are also ineligible. Notable free agents in this category include:

Elvis Andrus (White Sox), Josh Bell (Padres), Andrew Benintendi (Yankees), Brandon Drury (Padres), Joey Gallo (Dodgers), Trey Mancini (Astros), David Peralta (Rays), Tommy Pham (Red Sox), José Quintana (Cardinals), Taylor Rogers (Brewers), Christian Vázquez (Astros)

Compensation for losing players who reject their QO

- If a team gives a qualifying offer to a player who then signs elsewhere, the club that lost the player is eligible for Draft pick compensation. The QO rules state that if the team that loses the free agent is a revenue-sharing recipient, based on its revenues and market size, then the selection -- if and only if the lost player signs for at least \$50 million -- will be awarded a pick between the first round and Competitive Balance Round A of the 2022 MLB Draft. If the player signs for less than \$50 million, the compensation pick for those teams would come after Competitive Balance Round B, which follows the second round.

The following 14 teams currently qualify for these picks: Athletics, Brewers, D-backs, Guardians, Mariners, Marlins, Orioles, Pirates, Rays, Reds, Rockies, Royals, Tigers and Twins.

- If the team that loses the player does not receive revenue sharing and did not exceed the luxury-tax salary threshold the previous season, its compensatory pick will come after Competitive Balance Round B. The value of the player's contract doesn't matter in this case.

The 10 teams in this category: Angels, Astros, Blue Jays, Braves, Cardinals, Cubs, Giants, Nationals, Rangers and White Sox.

- If the team that loses the player went over the luxury-tax threshold, the compensation pick will be placed after the fourth round has been completed (as with the previous scenario, it doesn't matter how much the player signs for).

Six clubs exceeded the threshold in 2022: Dodgers, Mets, Padres, Phillies, Red Sox and Yankees

Penalties for signing players who reject their QO

Any team that signs a player who has rejected a qualifying offer is subject to the loss of one or more Draft picks. However, a team's highest first-round pick is exempt from forfeiture. Three tiers of Draft pick forfeiture -- based on the financial status of the signing team -- are in place to serve as a penalty for signing a player who rejected a qualifying offer:

- A team that exceeded the luxury tax in the preceding season will lose its second- and fifth-highest selections in the following year's Draft, as well as \$1 million from its international bonus pool for the upcoming signing period. If such a team signs multiple qualifying-offer free agents, it will forfeit its third- and sixth-highest remaining picks as well.

Teams in this group this offseason: Dodgers, Mets, Padres, Phillies, Red Sox, Yankees

- A team that receives revenue-sharing money will lose its third-highest selection in the following year's Draft. If it signs two such players, it will also forfeit its fourth-highest remaining pick.

Teams in this group: Athletics, Brewers, D-backs, Guardians, Mariners, Marlins, Orioles, Pirates, Rays, Reds, Rockies, Royals, Tigers and Twins.

- All other teams will lose their second-highest selection in the following year's Draft, as well as \$500,000 from their international bonus pool for the upcoming signing period. If one of these teams signs two such players, it will also forfeit its third-highest remaining pick and an additional \$500,000.

Teams in this group: Angels, Astros, Blue Jays, Braves, Cardinals, Cubs, Giants, Nationals, Rangers and White Sox.

From 2012 (when the system was implemented) through 2021, only 11 of the 110 players who received a qualifying offer accepted it. The rest declined and entered the open market in search of a better deal.

Brandon Belt, 1B, Giants, 2021

Accepted \$18.4 million qualifying offer for '22

Kevin Gausman, SP, Giants, 2020

Accepted \$18.9 million qualifying offer for '21

Marcus Stroman, SP, Mets, 2020

Accepted \$18.9 million qualifying offer for '21

Jake Odorizzi, P, Twins, 2019

Accepted \$17.8 million qualifying offer for '20

Hyun-Jin Ryu, P, Dodgers, 2018

Accepted \$17.9 million qualifying offer for '19

Jeremy Hellickson, P, Phillies, 2016

Accepted \$17.2 million qualifying offer for '17

Neil Walker, 2B, Mets, 2016

Accepted \$17.2 million qualifying offer for '17

Brett Anderson, P, Dodgers, 2015

Accepted \$15.8 million qualifying offer for '16

Colby Rasmus, OF, Astros, 2015

Accepted \$15.8 million qualifying offer for '16

Matt Wieters, C, Orioles, 2015

Accepted \$15.8 million qualifying offer for '16

JOE POSNANSKI

Before getting into the hit-by-pitch, the decision, the bomb and Dusty's destiny, I want to show you something that might be a bit tedious. But there's a point to be made. Here are all the pitchers who have won World Series MVP awards, with their basic numbers (you are more than welcome to skip ahead to the rest of this essay, or you can take a little walk down memory lane):

2019, **Stephen Strasburg**: 2-0, 2.51 ERA, 14 1/3 innings, 14 Ks, 3 walks

2014, **Madison Bumgarner**: 2-0, 0.43 ERA, 21 innings, 17 Ks, 1 walk

2008, **Cole Hamels**: 1-0, 2.77 ERA, 13 innings, 8 Ks, 3 walks

2003, **Josh Beckett**: 1-1, 1.10 ERA, 16 1/3 innings, 19 Ks, 5 walks

2001, **Curt Schilling and Randy Johnson**: 4-0, 1.40 ERA, 38 2/3 innings, 45 Ks, 5 walks*

**Whew!*

1999, **Mariano Rivera**: 1-0, 0.00 ERA, 4 2/3 innings, 3 Ks, 1 walk, 2 saves*

**Really?*

1997, **Lívan Hernández**: 2-0, 5.27 ERA, 13 2/3 innings, 7 Ks, 10 walks*

**Double really?*

1996, **John Wetteland**: 0-0, 2.08 ERA, 4 1/3 innings, 6 Ks, 1 walk, 4 saves

1995, **Tom Glavine**: 2-0, 1.29 ERA, 14 innings, 11 Ks, 6 walks

1991, **Jack Morris**: 2-0, 1.17 ERA, 23 innings, 15 Ks, 9 walks

1990, **Jose Rijo**: 2-0, 0.59 ERA, 15 1/3 innings, 14 Ks, 5 walks

1989, **Dave Stewart**: 2-0, 1.69 ERA, 16 innings, 15 Ks, 2 walks

1988, **Orel Hershisier**: 2-0, 1.00 ERA, 18 innings, 17 Ks, 6 walks

1987, **Frank Viola**: 2-1, 3.72 ERA, 19 1/3 innings, 16 Ks, 3 walks

1985, **Bret Saberhagen**: 2-0, 0.50 ERA, 18 innings, 10 Ks, 1 walk

1974, **Rollie Fingers**: 1-0, 1.93 ERA, 9 1/3 innings, 6 Ks, 2 walks

1968, **Mickey Lolich**: 3-0, 1.67 ERA, 27 innings, 21 Ks, 6 walks

1967, **Bob Gibson**: 3-0, 1.00 ERA, 27 innings, 26 Ks, 5 walks

1965, **Sandy Koufax**: 2-1, 0.38 ERA, 24 innings, 29 Ks, 5 walks

1964, **Bob Gibson**: 2-1, 3.00 ERA, 27 innings, 31 Ks, 8 walks

1963, **Sandy Koufax**: 2-0, 1.50 ERA, 18 innings, 23 Ks, 3 walks

1962, **Ralph Terry**: 2-1, 1.80 ERA, 25 innings, 16 Ks, 2 walks

1961, **Whitey Ford**: 2-0, 0.00 ERA, 14 innings, 7 Ks, 1 walk

1959, **Larry Sherry**: 2-0, 0.71 ERA, 12 2/3 innings, 5 Ks, 2 walks

1958, **Bob Turley**: 2-1, 2.76 ERA, 16 1/3 innings, 13 Ks, 7 walks

1957, **Lew Burdette**: 3-0, 0.67 ERA, 27 innings, 13 Ks, 4 walks

1956, **Don Larsen**: 1-0, 0.00 ERA, 10 2/3 innings, 7 Ks, 4 walks*

**It's not well-remembered but Larsen actually made TWO starts in the 1956 World Series. He obviously threw his perfect game. But three days earlier, he started and didn't get out of the second inning. He officially pitched 1 2/3 innings, gave up a hit, walked four and gave up four runs, though none of them were earned.*

1955, **Johnny Podres**: 2-0, 1.00 ERA, 18 innings, 10 Ks, 4 walks

OK, so that's it — the 27 pitchers who have won World Series MVP awards. Those are the most epic pitching performances since they started giving out the award in 1955, and you will undoubtedly see some of your favorites — Koufax in the Yom Kippur season, Gibson in '67, Saberhagen for those unlikely '85 Royals, Morris for pitching that incredible Game 7 against the Braves, that unbeatable Schilling-Johnson combination, Maddy Bumgarner in 2014, all the best.

Now, let me show you one more stat line.

0-0, 0.84 ERA, 21 1/3 innings, 28 Ks, 8 walks, 2 saves.

That was the Houston relief pitchers in this World Series.

Include the whole playoffs: the Houston bullpen threw 54 1/3 innings and here's how they did, compared to all the other bullpens in all the other postseasons.

0.83 ERA (lowest ever)

.126 opponents batting average (lowest ever)

.214 opponents on-base percentage (lowest ever)

.208 opponents slugging percentage (lowest ever)

0.75 WHIP (lowest ever).

So, yeah, that happened.

But, I don't want to focus on the whole postseason. And I actually don't want to focus on the whole bullpen, either. **Luis Garcia**, who gave up the game-winning run in Game 1, is generally a starter. So is **Jose Urquidy**, who was terrific coming out of the pen. I also want to move reliever **Ryne Stanek** to blind CC because for some reason **Dusty Baker** lost faith in him and barely pitched him (even though Stanek had the best ERA among relievers in the American League).

No, I want to focus on the World Series and Houston's four core relievers: **Bryan Abreu, Rafael Montero, Héctor Neris and Ryan Pressly**.

Those four pitchers dominated this World series the way that Koufax once did, the way that Gibson once did, the way the Burdette once did. The Phillies hit .102 against these relievers, 6 for 59, and whenever they came into a game with Houston leading, you just KNEW the game was over.

Four relievers. None of them famous. None of them known by casual baseball fans. The Astros signed Bryan Abreu as a 16-year-old construction worker out of the Dominican Republic. They picked up Rafael Montero as a throw-in when they traded **Abraham Toro** to the Mariners. They signed Héctor Neris as a free agent this past offseason for a fairly hefty two-year, \$17 million price tag. And they've had Ryan Pressly for a while now, picking him up back in 2018 for a couple of prospects.

And for all the talk about the big Astros stars, it was those relief pitchers who frustrated, dominated and eventually eliminated the Phightin' Phils. The Phillies hit just .163 as a team. After Game 3, when they mashed five home runs and seemed on their way, they scored just three runs in three games, two of them on **Kyle Schwarber** solo homers.

Obviously, Houston starters **Cristian Javier, Framber Valdez and Justin Verlander** played a huge part, but as great as they were, you always got the sense that the Phillies would rather take their chances against those guys than the heart of the Houston bullpen. In this entire series, the

Phillies scored just two runs after the sixth inning (one of them in extra innings in Game 1). Those absurd bullpen arms took the life out of them.

I think you could argue that the moment that defined this series was not Alvarez's mega-homer last night or the no-hitter or the Astros' homer party in Game 3. I think you could argue that it was the bottom of the eighth inning of Game 6, two outs, with Kyle Schwarber facing Abreu. With two strikes, Schwarber felt so confounded and helpless and desperate that he actually TRIED TO BUNT. That was as hopeless a move as I've ever seen in a World Series game. It goes without saying that he fouled off the bunt attempt for strike three.

And THAT was this series. No, it might not be nearly as much fun or impressive or majestic watching four pitchers dominate one inning at a time as watching a commanding performance by Whitey Ford or Mickey Lolich or Orel Hershisier. But, alas, the scoreless innings count the same.

JOE SHEEHAN ON EXPANDED PLAYOFFS

Playoff time is a little like pandemic time, stretching out in a way that makes days feel like weeks, though for much better reasons. So it may be hard to remember that in the middle of October, we were all up in arms about how MLB's playoff format is unfair to the best teams in the league. It all seems so long ago, now that we've watched the second-best team in baseball go 11-2 in romping to its second title in six years, but the baseball world was very unhappy for a few days there, a moment that, like **Ryan Helsley's** finger and the Padres' bullpen and the Guardians' contact rate, is all a bit forgotten now.

We've been letting second-place teams into the playoffs for nearly 30 years, and third-place ones in for a decade. (The Phillies became the first third-place team to win a pennant.) The yelling was louder this year, though, and I think I can see why. As the playoff field gets larger, it inevitably creates bigger gaps between teams playing each other. That's the one thing we know for sure about expanding any playoff field: Doing so lowers the bar for entry. MLB has long made its peace with this. In recent years, as Rob Arthur has dutifully tracked, competitive imbalance has grown -- the best teams have gotten better at building teams, and the worst teams have given up better at not doing so.

Those two trends collided this year in Southern California, where the 89-win Padres got a second chance to beat out the 111-win Dodgers in a best-of-five series. There can be no question which of these two was the better team over 162 games, but MLB's preference for

short series set them against one another a week after that gap was established. Across the country the 87-win Phillies, who finished 14 games behind the Braves in the NL East, also got another swing at a team that was clearly better than they were. When the Padres and Phillies both won, and without all that much drama, it set off fair questions about what the point of playing 162 games was.

Now, this format isn't my cup of tea at all, but I lost this fight a long time ago. MLB will keep expanding the playoffs because that's how they maximize the money media companies will pay them for the rights to televise the games. MLB is quite unconcerned with the outcomes of those playoffs or whether they map well to the nature of the sport or the length of the regular season. The checks are already cashed, so they just don't care.

The obvious solution is to go to the NPB model where the higher seed, or perhaps in our case a division winner facing a non-division winner, begins a series up 1-0. That creates a real and proportionate advantage. Home-field advantage in baseball isn't strong enough, even if, as with this year's wild-card round, you give the higher seed all the home games. (Home teams went 3-6 in that round. They went 23-17 in the playoffs. They're 64-50 the last three years, and remember that better teams get more home games and additional small edges -- less travel, more rest.)

No, MLB isn't going to address this because they don't see a problem. They have very little investment in the outcome of the tournament. Yes, everyone makes more money and more people are made happy if teams in the biggest cities do well, but that's a minor concern. The league, if anything, has set the rules in opposition to big-city teams, with product-investment taxes and amateur spending limits and differentiation in areas like free-agent penalties and draft pick awards.

The format has problems, but the problem isn't the format. No, the problem is us. No matter how many short series we watch, we refuse to accept the incontrovertible truth that the outcomes of these series don't have meaning beyond "this team won X of Y." The Dodgers won 111 games and the Padres won 89, so we would expect both teams to win three of any given five games. *There are no upsets in a best-of-five or best-of-seven.* Yet we watch 30 or 40 innings of baseball and feel compelled to divine meaning from it.

I say "we" because I am trying to be polite. The truth is, this is an area where statheads have had it right and continue to have it right. We're always looking for a secret sauce, because it would be great to have an answer, but the null hypothesis is that there is none. When two good teams play a best-of, neither will ever be more than a 60/40 favorite or so to win, and even that's in an extreme case. (I think BP had the Yankees as 62/38 over the Guardians this year.)

Rather than make that truth the beating heart of playoff coverage, though, helping fans understand that baseball just doesn't work like basketball does, most of the media elects to chase clicks and feed outrage. Fans are made dumber, literally made dumber, when the sports department of a major metropolitan newspaper tells them their team losing three of four to a

good team is the result of the front office's failure. They're made dumber when we pretend a team that wins nine of 11 games is "built for the playoffs." They're made dumber when the second-best team in the league losing to the best team in the league is considered grounds for firing everyone.

These aren't terribly hard concepts to explain. "Both teams are good. One has to win. The fewer games they play, the less the overall difference between them matters. Over five or seven games, it doesn't matter at all. Enjoy the games, celebrate the champion, just don't read too much into the results."

Playoff coverage is actually getting worse instead of better, for reasons I don't completely understand, beyond the obvious commercial ones. There is more money in making people mad than making people understand, a media lesson that goes far beyond sports. Until the messaging about the playoffs gets better, until fans are told over and over again that the results of short series aren't big-picture meaningful, that there is no team-building methodology that makes you more likely to win October games than June games, we're going to go through this again and again.

It would be nice to fix this now, before 2027, when the playoffs go to 14 teams and the 105-win #2 seed Reds are eliminated in two games by the 84-win Mets, who squeaked into the #7 seed on the third tiebreaker ahead of the Marlins and Cardinals.

If you want to take a lesson from the 2022 postseason, it's this: Anyone can play now. Fourteen teams finished above .500 this year. Twelve of those teams made the playoffs, and the Phillies were 11th in that group by record. Four weeks later, they were up 2-1 in the World Series. The Brewers finished a game behind the Phillies and were eliminated with two days to go. The Orioles, out of nowhere, were eliminated with two days to go. The White Sox finished at .500 and were 1 1/2 games out of first after Labor Day. The Twins were tied for first over Labor Day weekend. The Red Sox won 78 games against the second-toughest schedule in baseball.

Excellence isn't the goal any longer, because if you lose three of four at the wrong time, no one cares about your excellence. The traditionalists lost, and not by a little bit. So if we're going to champion just good enough, then everybody, and I mean everybody, has to be held to the standard of being just good enough. If we're going to smash 111-win teams and 87-win teams into a pile, then all 30 teams have to be tasked with getting to 87 wins. The lesson of the 2022 postseason is that the era of long rebuilds with an eye towards winning 92 games five years from now are done. Go build a .500 team, pick off a few wins at the trade deadline, and go 17-13 down the stretch.

It's a zero-sum sport, of course. Some teams will lose 100, others 90. If we're letting 40% of the league into the playoffs and treating 100-win tournament losers like lepers, though, we have to treat the teams that aren't even trying even worse. That's the lesson to take back to Cincinnati and Pittsburgh and Miami and Denver and Kansas City. Anyone good enough to get into the

tournament is good enough to win a championship, and every team in the majors is no worse than a year away from being good enough to get into the tournament.

That's the lesson from 2023: Expect more from your baseball teams. Demand more from your baseball teams. They can't all be the Astros, but they can all be the Phillies, and for one month a year, there's no difference between them.

MLB RULE 5 DRAFT: WHAT IS IT? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Melissa Lockhard, The Athletic

On Dec. 7, baseball's annual Winter Meetings will conclude with the Rule 5 draft. The draft returns after a one-year, lockout-induced hiatus. It's an event that gets talked about quite a bit among baseball circles every winter, but is often not well understood. So, what *is* the Rule 5 draft? Why does it exist? And what impact has it had on the history of baseball? Let's dive in. What is the MLB Rule 5 draft?

The Rule 5 draft has existed in a variety of forms since the 1890s, but in all of its iterations, the intention behind the draft has been to ensure that organizations don't horde MLB-ready talent in the minor leagues as non-roster players indefinitely. There are two portions of the Rule 5 draft — a major-league portion and a minor-league portion. Players selected in the major-league portion must remain on their new team's active major-league roster for one season or be offered back to their original organization for a fee. Players selected in the minor-league portion join their new organizations with no roster restrictions.

A lot goes into deciding which players to protect and which ones to leave eligible. Teams have to weigh the risk of losing a prospect who they might not feel is ready to help them at the major-league level with the desire to keep 40-man roster spots available for players they need for the upcoming season. Hundreds of players are eligible each year, but most will not be selected and will remain in their current organizations as non-roster players. In the 2020 Rule 5 draft, only 16 players were selected in the major-league portion.

(Note: There was a minor-league Rule 5 draft last December. Fifty-one players were selected in that draft.)

Who is eligible for the Rule 5 draft?

Players are eligible for the first time if they are 1) not on their team's 40-man roster and 2) experiencing their fourth Rule 5 draft if they were either 19 or older the year they signed their first professional contract, or experiencing their fifth Rule 5 draft if they were 18 or younger the year they signed their first professional contract. (CliffsNotes version: players who were 19 or

older and signed in 2019 or earlier, or players who were 18 or younger and signed in 2018 or earlier, are eligible in this year's draft.)

All non-roster players with the aforementioned eligibility are available in the major-league portion of the draft. Those eligible players not stashed on a team's offseason Triple-A roster are eligible for the minor-league portion.

What is the deadline to protect players from the Rule 5 draft?

Teams must add prospects who are eligible for the Rule 5 draft to their 40-man rosters by Nov. 15 to keep them out of the Rule 5 draft pool.

When is the Rule 5 draft?

The Rule 5 draft will take place in San Diego at the Winter Meetings on Wednesday, Dec. 7. It is the final event of the Winter Meetings. Every team that has open spots on their 40-man roster will have the opportunity to select a player, though once they pass on making a selection (or have a full 40-man roster), they can no longer make selections. The draft continues until all teams have elected to pass on making selections or have full 40-man rosters. Draft order is the same as the upcoming Rule 4 amateur draft.

Is there a fee for selecting a player in the Rule 5 draft?

Yes, and like everything else, the cost is rising.

Before the new Collective Bargaining Agreement came into effect in February, teams that selected a player in the major-league portion of the Rule 5 draft would have to pay \$50,000 to the team they were selecting the player from. If the new team decided not to keep the Rule 5 selection on their active roster, they would have to first put the player on waivers and, if the player cleared waivers, offer the player back to his old team for \$25,000. Under the new CBA, the selection fee is now \$100,000 and the player would be offered back for \$50,000.

Can Rule 5 picks be traded?

Yes, and two of the most famous Rule 5 selections were traded by the team that selected them — **Johan Santana and Josh Hamilton**. Santana was selected out of the Astros' system by the Marlins in 1999, but immediately traded to the Twins. Hamilton was selected by the Cubs in the 2006 draft out of the Rays' chain, but was immediately traded to the Rangers. Teams who acquire a Rule 5 selection via a trade are bound by the same roster restrictions as if they made the selection themselves.

Can teams stash Rule 5 picks on the injured list?

Sort of. Teams sometimes target players coming off of serious surgeries in the Rule 5 draft because they can keep those players on their major-league 60-day injured list. However, unless the player spends at least 90 days on the active roster during his Rule 5 season, he will be bound by the same roster restrictions the following year.

Are good players ever found in the Rule 5 draft?

Yes! It isn't often that teams find stars in the Rule 5 draft (the most common target for a Rule 5 selection is a hard-throwing reliever or a utility player with good defensive skills), but it has happened. The aforementioned Santana and Hamilton are two examples.

George Bell joined the Blue Jays in 1980 through the Rule 5 draft. **Shane Victorino** was a Rule 5 selection two years in a row. He failed to stick with the Padres in 2003, but found success with the Phillies in 2004, and wound up spending eight seasons in Philadelphia. Joakim Soria kicked off a 14-year major-league career as a Rule 5 pick of the Royals in the 2006 draft. **Dan Uggla** (2005) and **Graeme Lloyd** (1992) are two others who launched long major-league careers as Rule 5 picks.

The most famous Rule 5 selection is **Roberto Clemente**, who was selected out of the Dodgers' organization by the Pirates in 1954. Earlier than that, the Cubs got **Hack Wilson** from the New York Giants in the Rule 5 draft of that era.

More recently, **Marwin González** (2011), **Héctor Rondón** (2012), **Mark Canha** (2014), **Odúbel Herrera** (2014), **Brad Keller** (2017), **Akil Baddoo** (2020), **Garrett Whitlock** (2020) and **Trevor Stephan** (2020) have made a significant impact with the teams that acquired them via the Rule 5 draft.

The minor-league portion of the Rule 5 draft has also netted a few gems, including **Tyler Gilbert**, a left-hander selected by the Diamondbacks in 2020. Gilbert made his major-league debut in 2021 and threw a no-hitter in his first major-league start. The Astros carried **Seth Martinez**, a minor-league Rule 5 pick in 2020, on their playoff roster for every round except the World Series this fall. He had a 2.09 ERA in 38 2/3 regular-season innings for Houston in 2022. The A's selected **Zach Jackson** in the same minor-league Rule 5 draft. He made his major-league debut in 2022 and had a 2.78 FIP and 67 strikeouts in 48 innings. NFL QB **Russell Wilson** was once a minor-league Rule 5 selection, going from the Rockies to the Rangers.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

150 players have won Rookie of the Year. 18 went on to enter the Hall of Fame. Here are the years and teams, how many of the 18 can you name?

1947	Dodgers	Jackie Robinson
1951	Giants	Willie Mays
1956	Reds	Frank Robinson
1956	White Sox	Luis Aparicio
1958	Giants	Orlando Cepeda
1959	Giants	Willie McCovey
1961	Cubs	Billy Williams
1964	Twins	Tony Oliva
1967	Twins	Rod Carew
1967	Mets	Tom Seaver
1968	Reds	Johnny Bench
1972	Red Sox	Carlton Fisk
1977	Orioles	Eddie Murray
1977	Expos	Andre Dawson
1982	Orioles	Cal Ripken Jr.
1991	Astros	Jeff Bagwell
1993	Dodgers	Mike Piazza
1996	Yankees	Derek Jeter

HOUSEKEEPING

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