

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

Good morning baseball fans. Lord knows when we will see MLB games but here is your weekly hit of hopefully interesting stuff.

While you hustle to get a Valentine's Day gift, we try to answer the question, "was there another pair of hitting contemporaries as dominant as Ted Williams and Stan Musial?" Also, Griffey vs. Bonds, Bill White, Hideo Nomo, Deion Sanders and Bo Jackson and more. Enjoy.

Sobering thoughts from Evan Drellich and Ken Rosenthal in The Athletic

Super Bowl Sunday in the [NFL](#) marks Day 74 of the owners' lockout in baseball, and the current juxtaposition of the two sports in the American consciousness is jarring. Yet with the magnitude of what is at stake in baseball, would the threat of missing some games in April really be enough to sway one or both parties? At present, there is no reason to believe the answer is "yes." The sport's first work stoppage in a quarter-century amounts to a turning point in the league's history and future, with at least hundreds of millions of dollars at stake, and maybe more over time.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Mike Trout's 816 RBIs are the fewest for any 300 HR hitter ever.

Over a 162-game span from June 18, 1986-July 10, 1987, Eric Davis hit 49 homers and stole 93 bases

TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE WEEK

How many of the ten Hall of Famers whose last name starts with A can you name? Answer at end. Good luck.

R.I.P. JEREMY GIAMBI, FORMER OUTFIELDER AND BROTHER OF JASON

Jeremy Giambi, the brother of former Yankees star Jason Giambi and who played parts of six seasons in MLB, died Wednesday at his parents' home in Southern California, police and his agent said. He was 47.

The Giambi brothers were teammates on the Oakland Athletics for two seasons, from 2000-01. Jeremy Giambi also played for the Royals, Phillies and Red Sox. The outfielder hit 52 home runs with 209 RBIs in 510 career games.

Giambi was perhaps best known for being tagged out on the Derek Jeter “flip play” in Game 3 of the 2001 ALDS between the Yankees and A’s. Giambi did not slide and was tagged out by Jorge Posada, keeping the Yankees, who had lost the first two games of the series, ahead 1-0. The Yankees won the game and went on to reach the World Series.

A member of Cal State Fullerton’s 1995 College World Series championship team, Giambi was drafted in the sixth round by the Royals in 1996 and made his MLB debut for Kansas City on Sept. 1, 1998. The A’s acquired him in a trade before the 2000 season, bringing the Giambi brothers together.

Giambi testified before a federal grand jury in San Francisco investigating the Bay Area Laboratory Co-operative, or BALCO, the company at the center of the sports steroid scandal. He was quoted by The Kansas City Star in 2005 as admitting he used steroids.

In 6 seasons Jeremy Giambi had 1705 at bats in 507 games. He batted .263 with 53 HRs.

Jason Giambi in 20 seasons had 7267 at bats in 2260 games. He batted .277 with 440 HRs and was MVP with the A’s in 2000.

INTERESTING DRAFT PICKS

A few football names you might recognize:

Tom Brady, Montreal Expos 1995, catcher

Ken Stabler, New York Yankees 1966, pitcher

Dan Pastorini, Mets, 1967, shortstop

Archie Manning, Braves 1967, shortstop

Ray Guy, Reds 1969, pitcher

Joe Theisman, Twins 1971, shortstop

Dave Winfield, 1973: 17th round by Minnesota Vikings; 5th round by Atlanta Hawks; 1st round by Padres.

Charlie Ward, Yankees 1994. Won Heisman trophy but not drafted by NFL, played 12 years as a point guard in the NBA.

Danny White, Indians 1973, shortstop

Steve Bartkowski, Orioles 1974, catcher. 1st pick in NFL draft, split high school QB with Vince Farragamo.

Dan Marino, Royals 1979, shortstop

John Elway, Yankees 1981, pitcher

Jack Del Rio, Blue Jays 1981, catcher. USC teammate of Mark McGwire and Randy Johnson before pursuing football.

Kerry Collins, Tigers 1990

Marshall Faulk, Angels 1993

Ricky Williams, Phillies 1995

Daunte Culpepper, Yankees 1995

Michael Vick, Rockies 2000

Colin Kaepernick, Cubs 2009

Russell Wilson, Rockies 2010, second base

Patrick Mahomes, Tigers, 2014, pitcher

TED WILLIAMS AND STAN MUSIAL—ANY OTHER PAIRS OF HITTERS MATCH THEIR DOMINANCE?

I loved Allen Miller's submission from last week. He laid out a statistical comparison of the peak years of Stan Musial and Ted Williams and asked the question—has there ever been a pair of hitters who dominated the same extended era as much?

Perfect project for filling a few days of retirement. Four logical steps:

- Define dominance
- Define extended era
- Search for candidates

- Compare

I chose 7 measures—Runs, Hits, Batting title, OBP, HRs, OPS and MVP awards. Lead your league in any of those categories and you are truly “dominant”. Hits/Batting title/OBP find great hitters. HRs/OPS find great power. Runs is job one. And if the writers elect you MVP that says you were the best that year you receive an extra point.

For dominance Allen had used “League Leader”. A high bar that oozes “dominance”. Jim Thome hit over 600 career HRs but led his league in a key stat once in his career. Hardly “dominant”. Plenty of players finished top 5 in the key 7 measures many times, but that doesn’t translate into dominant.

To define “extended period” I used first year you led one of the 7 league leader categories to the last year you led one or more categories. For Williams and Musial that was 16 years and 14 years respectively.

I then went to the career stats page on Baseballreference.com for each Hall of Fame batter, plus league leading seasons over the last 15 years to capture players not yet in or not eligible for the Hall. And because this isn’t a debate over HOF criteria, I looked at great hitters who for whatever reasons are not in the hall (Shoeless Joe Jackson, Pete Rose, Barry Bonds, Raphael Palmeiro, Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, Manny Ramirez, etc.). For each time a player led his league in one of the 7 measures he received a point. Add up the points and you have the most dominant players.

Then it was look at the years each player was “dominant” and look for overlapping pairs, and how they compared to Williams/Musial.

You will see below the results broke out three buckets:

GREAT: 7 hitters with 22 or more times leading the league in one of the 7 measures. Ruth, Hornsby, Cobb, Bonds, Honus Wagner, Mantle, Schmidt.

VERY GOOD: 22 hitters who led the league in the 7 key measures 10 to 18 times.

THE REST: 50+ hitters who led the league in one of the 7 key measures at least 3 times

To simplify I eliminated pre-1900 players. 122 years is enough so goodbye pre-1900 players including Dan Brouthers (24 points), Billy Hamilton (14), Ed Delahanty (12), Cap Anson (11).

GREAT					
Ruth	43 points	16 seasons	1918-1933		
Hornsby	39	15 seasons	1917-1931		

Cobb	36	13 seasons	1907-1919		
Barry Bonds	31	17 seasons	1990-2007		
Wagner	25	12 seasons	1900-1911		
Mantle	22	13 seasons	1952-1964		
Schmidt	22	13 seasons	1974-1986		
COMPARED TO					
Ted Williams	40	16 seasons	1940-1958		
Stan Musial	33	14 seasons	1943-1957		
VERY GOOD					
18 points	Foxx	Yaz			
17	Carew	Gehrig	Gwynn	A-Rod	
16	Rose				
15	Aaron	Lajoie	Mays	Trout	Pujols
14	Cabrera	Klein	Ott		
13	F. Robinson				
12	Kiner	Frank Thomas			
11	Brett	Boggs			
10	Ichiro	Dick Allen			
THE REST					
9	Ashburn	R. Jackson	Mize	Morgan	Oliva
8	Duke Snider	Tris Speaker	Henderson	DiMaggio	Greenberg
8	Killebrew	McCovey	Arky Vaughan	McGwire	Altuve
8	M. Ramirez				
7	Edgar Martinez	Clemente	Medwick	Bagwell	Larry Walker
6	Molitor	Griffey Jr.	Jim Rice	Heilman	Dale Murphy
5	Puckett	Ryne Sandberg	Shoeless Joe Jackson	Larry Doby	Sisler
5	Sosa	Stargell	Paul Waner	Hack Wilson	G. Foster
5	Mattingly	D. Parker			
4	Banks	Bench	Raines	Chipper Jones	Eddie Collins
4	Yount	Soto	Betts	J. Gonzalez	
3	Cochrane	Dawson	Jeter	Vlad G	Bill Terry
3	Sheffield	Ryan Howard	Galarraga	Garvey	Belle
3	Kaline				

Most dominant overlapping pairs

Ruth-Hornsby	82
Williams-Musial	73
Bonds-ARod	50
Cobb-Speaker	43
Wagner-Lajoie	40
Mantle-Mays or Mantle-Aaron	37
Foxx-Gehrig	35
Yaz-Rose	34
Schmidt-Brett	33
Carew-F. Robinson	30
Trout-Pujols	30 (and counting)
Gwynn-F. Thomas	29
Klein-Ott	28

Notes, Surprises and observations:

- The low end of the chart is not meant to be exhaustive. There are other hitters who led one of the 7 key measures 3x, but clearly they weren't contenders for most dominant.
- But what about Total Bases, Slugging Pct.? They didn't significantly change the order—as you would expect, ARod and Gehrig benefitted more than Carew and Gwynn but they didn't push into the top 7. And WAR? Gehrig and ARod were slightly higher than Mantle and Schmidt.
- Ducky Medwick got all of his 7 points in 1937.
- In contrast, ARod had 17 years from his first season leading one of the categories to the last season he led.

- Richie Ashburn with 9 points was more times leading the league than I would have guessed.
- Tony Oliva doesn't get the recognition he deserves for a strong run from 1964 to 1971.
- In 4 seasons Juan Soto has more points (4) than Hall of Famers Mickey Cochrane, Derek Jeter, Andrew Dawson, Vlad Guerrero, Bill Terry had in their careers.
- No matter what angle you look from, Babe Ruth's accomplishments were unworldly.

So yes Allen, there was one pair of hitters who overlapped and dominated like Musial and Williams. But beyond Ruth and Hornsby, nobody comes close.

Please let me know if you disagree with the approach or the conclusions, or think of any missing or incorrect info.

TWO PIECES FROM JOE PASNANSKI'S BLOG

—YOU SHOULD CONSIDER SUBSCRIBING OR GET HIS BOOK, "THE BASEBALL 100"

<https://joepasnanski.substack.com/>

GRIFFEY VS. BONDS

OK, look, I have no idea when this baseball season will begin. I have started to have a really bad feeling about things as the owners already try various PR stunts in order to make the players look bad and win the battle of perception. This suggests to me either the owners are out of ideas (which is bad) or they feel like they can win a long, protracted battle by getting people to forget that they are the ones who locked out the players and instead blame the greedy players for all this (which is worse).

It never ceases to amaze me how hard these people make it to be a baseball fan.

But we baseball fans, we few, we merry few, we band of brothers and sisters, soldier on because we do love this game. We love it even as various forces try repeatedly to make it less fun.

So let's talk about something fun: Ken Griffey Jr. vs. Barry Bonds.

Now, let's establish a few guidelines: We're not talking about PEDs here. We're not talking about injuries here. There's nothing fun about any of that.

No, we're talking about Ken Griffey Jr. at his joyful best from 1989, as a 19-year-old phenom, to 2001, as a 31-year-old playing ball in his hometown of Cincinnati, where his dad made his bones. That's 13 seasons of Ken Griffey.

And we're talking about Barry Bonds from 1986, when he was a 21-year-old brash centerfielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates, to 1998, when he was 33 and playing in his hometown of San Francisco where his dad made his bones. That's 13 seasons of Barry Bonds.

Ken Griffey Jr. vs. Barry Bonds.

Let's start with a whole bunch of numbers and attributes.

Griffey (1989-2001): .296/.379/.566, 362 doubles, 35 triples, 460 homers, 175 steals, 64 caught stealing (73% SB), 1220 runs, 1,335 RBIs, 146 OPS+, 1 MVP, 10 Gold Gloves, 8 All-Star Game starts, coolest player in the game, sweetest swing perhaps in the history of the game.

Bonds (1986-1998): .290/.411/.556, 403 doubles, 63 triples, 411 home runs, 445 steals, 130 caught stealing (77% SB), 1,364 runs, 1,216 RBIs, 164 OPS+, 3 MVPs, 8 Gold Gloves, 7 All-Star game starts, best combo of power and speed in the game since his godfather Willie Mays, attitude turned off a lot of people.

OK, I'm not putting WAR in there yet — we'll get to it at some point — because I think WAR in this case makes a copout too easy. If you have an understanding of how WAR works, you will instinctively know which player had more wins above replacement. But we're not looking here for which player WAR calculates being more valuable. Not exactly.

What we're looking for is: Which player would you rather have on your team?

Now, you could argue that the player you want on your team is the one who is quantifiably more valuable. But maybe not. It's worth talking about.

Ken Griffey Jr. exuded happiness. It was one of his many gifts. There's a great scene at the end of my happiest-ever movie, when Mr. White tells Jimmy he is required by the letter of the contract to write a snappy song. Jimmy, who we have learned already is a major jerk, breaks into a big and inviting smile, starts snapping his fingers and sings "I quit! I quit! I quit!" He does the last "I quit" with a sort of boyish giggle. It's such a great moment because it's clear that Jimmy has the gift of making people THINK he's merry and bright and joyful even if he isn't.

I'm not saying that Junior was any less delightful in private than he was in public; I don't know him well enough at all to know what he's like in private. What I'm saying is that he had this rare talent, one that very few great players have had, of making everybody in the crowd feel all sparkly and glittery and wonderful. His home runs felt better than other people's home runs. His great catches felt better than other people's great catches. There was a Bob Ross cadmium yellow sun over his shoulder at all times, and watching Junior even doing the simplest things — settling under a routine fly ball, fouling a pitch back, going first to third on a double — felt like listening to your favorite summer song.

Barry Bonds — no, not so much. His aura was less sunshine and more Miles Davis turning his back on the audience. You rarely got the sense that Bonds was having a good time out there and even more rarely got the feeling that he cared how you were feeling. He played ball, it seemed, because he was great at it. None of this is fair, necessarily, but charisma is in so many ways an ineffable thing, and Bonds wasn't interested. He mostly loathed the media. He mostly saw fans as a burden. He wasn't much for building relationships with teammates.

"Why can't people just enjoy the show, and then let the entertainer go home and get his rest, so he can put on another show?" he famously asked. "When I go to a movie, after the final credits roll, I get up and leave. It's the end!"

Did Junior have any of these feelings? You'd have to think yes — hard to imagine being besieged by a million autograph and media requests and not feeling some of it — but he just didn't have them on full display the way Bonds did.

And so every wonderful thing Griffey did — every titanic bomb, every over-the-shoulder grab, every breathtaking throw — felt for so many people like, “Hey, look at this amazing thing we did together.”

And every wonderful thing Bonds did — every drive into the gap, every stolen base, every diving catch — felt for so many people like, “Look at this amazing thing I did that you were lucky enough to watch.”

That’s totally not fair and certainly not everyone felt that way about either player. But that seemed to be the consensus.

In many ways, Griffey would have been so much more fun to have on your team. He was more stylish than Bonds, certainly. He hit more home runs and, in those days, longer ones. He hit for a higher average, too, and drove in more runs. He played centerfield, and that’s just cooler and more valuable than playing left field. Countless people became baseball fans — and even more specifically MARINERS fans — because of the pure awesome that was Ken Griffey Jr.

I simply haven’t met many people who became Pittsburgh Pirates fans — or even San Francisco Giants fans — because of the young Barry Bonds.

OK, now the other side. Bonds did a lot of little things that Griffey did not. For instance, he walked a lot more than Griffey. A lot more. Griffey may have had the higher batting average, but Bonds had 30-plus more points of on-base percentage, which is an awful lot.

Bonds was a better baserunner. He was a better base stealer. He hit into fewer double plays. He was, by the numbers, a better defender too. Even if you grant Griffey the appropriate advantage for playing centerfield, Bonds was so good in left field, so much better than anyone else, that he still wins the day.*

**(One thing I think people miss about Bonds was just how good an outfielder he was ... every year, pretty much, the guy had more putouts and more assists than any other left fielder. It was true in Pittsburgh. It was true in San Francisco. I think there are three reasons people fail to appreciate his defensive genius. One is obvious. Two is that he was a left fielder, and traditionally left fielders are not great defenders. Three is the weak throw he made in the NLCS*

game against Atlanta, the one Sid Bream scored on. But none of those change the fact that Barry Bonds might have been the best defensive left fielder in baseball history.

Finally, there's something else about Bonds, something way too easy to miss: The guy was indestructible. He played in 90-plus percent of his team's games every year but one from 1989 to 1998 (he played in only 140 games in 1992). Say whatever you want about the guy, he was there to play every day.

Griffey had a harder time staying healthy — particularly after he turned 30 but also before. He certainly *wanted* to play every day and basically did from 1997 through 1999, but annoying injuries kept taking him out in other years. And then his body turned on him completely; he played 145 games the year he turned 30 and never again played that many in a season.

And so, now you're left with the decision. Ken Griffey Jr. or Barry Bonds?

I don't think there's a *wrong* answer here, by the way — it honestly depends on what you value as a fan. No one could blame you for saying, "I choose Ken Griffey Jr. I want to go to the ballpark and watch him play. I want him representing my team. I want to revel in his gorgeous swing and gargantuan home runs and ever-present joy."

But no one could blame you for saying, "I choose Barry Bonds. He was better. He did everything just about as well as it could be done. He is more likely to help my team win games, which is what it's all about. And maybe I like him too, maybe I connect more with him, maybe I think he's been unfairly treated."

No wrong answer here. Two of the greatest players to ever play.

But, yes, now we get to WAR. I'm thinking you have guessed that Barry Bonds had the higher WAR.

What I'm not sure you've guessed is that Barry Bonds had the much, much, much higher WAR.

Baseball-Reference

Ken Griffey Jr. (1989-2001): 78.2 WAR

Barry Bonds (1986-1998): 99.9 WAR

Not close.

FanGraphs

Ken Griffey Jr. (1989-2001): 75.7 WAR

Barry Bonds (1986-1998): 99.2 WAR

Less close.

Win Shares

Ken Griffey Jr. (1989-2001): 313 Win Shares

Barry Bonds (1986-1998): 418 Win Shares.

And the least close of all.

I threw in Bill James' Win Shares because I think it's particularly instructive — I've heard Bill describe a 30-Win Share season as an MVP type season. Griffey had three of those seasons, 30 Win Shares in 1991, 36 Win Shares in his glorious 1997 season (when he did win the MVP) and 31 Win Shares in 1999, his last year in Seattle. He had three other borderline MVP season as well.

Now do Bonds. He had EIGHT 30-Win Shares seasons — he had 30-plus Win Shares every single full season from 1990 through 1998. But here's the thing: None of them were even CLOSE to just 30 Win Shares. They were all way above that.

I mean, look at this craziness:

1990: 37 Win Shares

1991: 37 Win Shares

1992: 41 Win Shares

1993: 47 Win Shares

1994 (strike): 25 Win Shares

1995: 36 Win Shares

1996: 39 Win Shares

1997: 36 Win Shares

1998: 34 Win Shares

Basically, according to Bill James' formula, Ken Griffey's very best season was a slightly down Barry Bonds season.

In the end, there is little doubt in my mind that as great as Griffey was, Bonds was the better player. But that's not everything in such discussions. I would say that one of the loudest complaints I've heard about *The Baseball 100* is that Griffey is ranked No. 48. He should, surely, be ranked much, much higher. And I totally get it. There's a part of me that wishes he was rated higher too.

A DESIGNATED HITTER FOR ALL

I'm not sure you could better describe the quirks and vagaries of baseball to a stranger than to say that on Thursday, commissioner Rob Manfred announced to the world that there will be a designated hitter in MLB starting in 2022!

He announced this almost 50 years after the designated hitter was added to baseball.

You just gotta love baseball, right? You gotta love this game where locker rooms are still called clubhouses because that's what they were in the 19th century, where pitchers are still called pitchers because in the early days of the game they had to pitch the ball underhand like horseshoes, where expressions like "can of corn" still exist as reference to grocery store techniques from a century ago.

It's just so baseball to wait half a century after introducing the designated hitter to make it a rule for everybody. It's like if the NFC played without pass interference, or if the NBA's Eastern Conference played without a three-point line or the NHL's Western Conference didn't recognize icing.

Only they would NEVER do something ridiculous like that. Because they're not baseball.

I'm not saying this is a bad thing, by the way. Adopting the DH a half century after adopting the DH totally fits the vibe of the sport — Baseball: Where change is frowned upon, where tradition is sacrosanct and where rules older than Leonardo DiCaprio are still viewed suspiciously.

It's worth asking — in the wake of this historic day — why this happened, why the American League embraced the designated hitter when the grand old actor Vincent Price* was still appearing in movies with names like "Theatre of Blood," while the National League waited until 29 years after Price died to accept the rule change.

**Bill Hader tells a great story that just seems to connect to baseball for me. At his "Saturday Night Live" audition, he did impressions of Vincent Price and James Mason, who started their movie careers in the 1930s. When he was finished, Lorne Michaels said, "That's great, Bill, but ... why now?"*

It will not surprise you to know that the reason for the DH split had little to do with tradition and a lot to do with money. In 1972, the American League was desperate. That year, only three American League teams drew even one million fans — and the Yankees were not one of those three teams. Average attendance was just about 12,000. Teams averaged 3.47 runs per game, the second-lowest total in 60 years. The AL put out that eight of the 12 teams lost money, certainly a lie*, but you absolutely could feel the league's desperation.

**We'll get into some baseball lying in a minute.*

George Brett always says that the only reason he ever listened to famed hitting coach Charley Lau was because he was hitting around .200 and worried about getting sent to the minors, never to be heard from again. "Do I listen to Charley if I was hitting .300?" he says. "Hell no!" The American League was hitting .200 and talking about changing everything — designated hitters, designated runners, platoon baseball, "we have to keep our minds open for progress," AL president Joe Cronin said.

And the National League? Well, the NL was flush. Nine of the 12 National League teams averaged more than a million fans. The average attendance of 16,744 was 4,000-plus higher than in the AL. In the shared markets, the Mets were drawing twice as many fans as the Yankees, the Dodgers owned Southern California, the Cubs were losers and were still outdrawing the White Sox.

In 1972, pretty much ALL of the game's biggest stars — Aaron, Bench, Rose, Morgan, Seaver, Carlton, Clemente, Brock, Stargell, McCovey, even an aged Willie Mays — played in the

National League. It's not just that the American League and National League were separate leagues, they were really separate worlds.

And so the National League was the rich banker with the handlebar mustache eating Lobster Thermidor in a glowing French restaurant and the American League was the dirty street urchin with his nose pressed longingly against the window. So when the AL said, "Hey, listen, we're going to try this groovy new rule where pitchers don't hit, you want to join us?" the NL was like, "Yeah, OK, listen, best of luck to you, seriously, but we're just going to keep playing, um, this little game called baseball."

And as time went on, I think, this became a point of pride for the National League and their fans ... they were the more righteous league, the one playing REAL baseball, and a million words were spilled in reverence of sacrifice bunts and thrilling double-switches and intentional walks to light-hitting No. 8 hitters.

Anyway, that's how it always seemed to me, an American League fan who has no memory of the game before the designated hitter. I was born and raised in Cleveland, I was 6 years old when the DH was instituted so, to me, it was the National League's decision to let pitchers hit that always felt more exotic and curious and out-of-date. I honestly would see a National League game on the Saturday Game of the Week, and I'd see a pitcher hit, and I'd think: "Huh, they're still doing that?"

You've heard that Seinfeld joke about chopsticks: "I tell you what I like about Chinese people ... they're hanging in there with the chopsticks, aren't they? You know, they've seen the fork. They're staying with the sticks. I'm impressed by that."

That's just how I felt with National League fans in love with the DH. They'd seen actual batters hitting instead of pitchers. They'd seen a world where a guy who was hitting .172 and with a 284-to-49 strikeout-to-walk ratio was repeatedly described as being "a really good hitter" (the way people did with Madison Bumgarner). They had seen a way to play baseball without constantly giving up outs with boring and frustrating bunts.

They were hanging in there with the pitchers hitting.

I totally admired that. No kidding. Hey, if NL fans wanted to watch pitchers feebly strike out again and again so they could rhapsodize about strategy and once every 25 years watch Bartolo Colon hit a home run, who am I to deny them that? There's a great chess term called "keeping the tension." In chess, it refers to having two pieces aligned with each other, and neither side captures — they just keep the tension. I was perfectly fine with keeping the DH tension in baseball.

But then a couple of things changed the equation.

One, it's hard to make the argument that starting pitchers should have to hit when teams no longer even ask starting pitchers to pitch for very long. You see the conflict here, right? On the one hand, we're supposed to believe that pitchers should have to hit because baseball is not a game of specialization. Nine vs. nine!

On the other hand, we're supposed to accept that if a pitcher gets in some trouble in the fifth inning it's time to replace him with a specialist who might only be in the game to get out a lefty or to induce a double-play ground ball or something like that. It's never nine vs. nine! Do you know the last time you had a nine-inning game where both pitchers threw a nine-inning complete game? Take a stab in the dark.

Answer: July 7, 2016, Angels vs. White Sox — when James Shields and Matt Shoemaker each threw complete games. The last time it happened in the National League was in April of that season, Clayton Kershaw and Brandon Finnegan.

That's almost six years ago. Nine vs. nine simple doesn't happen anymore.

The more pitchers used, the harder it is to argue that the DH somehow sullies the purity of baseball.

The second thing that changed the equation is that while pitchers were always overmatched at the plate, they've never been MORE overmatched than they are right now. I think we know what that is: The quality of pitching in baseball right now, with everybody throwing 100-mph fastballs and exploding sliders and knee-buckling curveballs, has never been higher.

So here's what you get:

In 2000, pitchers hit .150/.186/.195 and struck out 37% of the time they came to the plate. This is terrible, by the way, but pretty much in line with how pitchers had been hitting for decades. In 1978, to pull a random year, pitchers hit .148/.183/.188.

In 2005, pitchers hit .150/.182/.190 and struck out 36% of the time. Same thing.

In 2010, pitchers hit .143/.177/.177 and struck out 33% of the time. Worse in some ways, but they put the ball in play more — lots of sacrifice bunts.

In 2015, pitchers hit .133/.160/.171 and struck out 37% of the time. Things seem to be going in the wrong direction, don't they?

And then in 2021, pitchers hit .110/.149/.140 and struck out 44% of the time.

You can see this is definitely going in the wrong direction, and in my view it just isn't sustainable. How badly would pitchers have to hit to convince hardened fans of pitchers hitting that it no longer works? Would pitchers have to hit .060 to make the case? How about 0.38?

Whatever that answer is, that's where baseball was heading.

It's strange that commissioner Rob Manfred decided to announce the universal DH in the middle of a nasty baseball lockout ... but honestly, I have stopped trying to guess why Rob Manfred does what he does. I just don't get the guy at all. As I teased earlier, we should take a moment to talk about one of baseball's oldest traditions — lying about what a financial hardship it is to own a baseball team.

On Thursday, someone asked Manfred if owning a baseball team is a good investment. “Historically,” he said, “the return on those investments is below what you get in the stock market — what you expect to get in the stock market — with a lot more risk.”

Now, this is such unrepentant BS that I'm stupefied Manfred actually said the words — like I say, I just don't get the guy at all. I mean, it's not hard to look up that since 2002, MLB team values have gone up almost 600%, which is like twice as much as the S&P. And risk? There is literally — LITERALLY — no risk at all in buying a baseball team. None. It's the safest investment on earth.

And for proof, you need only look at the last four team sales:

2020: John Sherman bought the Kansas City Royals for \$1 billion from David Glass. I was there in Kansas City when Glass bought the team for \$96 million and for a long, long time, Glass was probably the cheapest owner in the game and the team was a complete fiasco, and Kansas City was considered one of the least viable markets in MLB. The team had a nice run in the mid-2010s. And the team's value increased by 1,040%.

2020: Steve Cohen bought the New York Mets for \$2.45 billion from Fred Wilpon. Wilpon famously was involved in the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme where he either lost \$700 million or made \$300 million, who even knows such things when it comes to money and corruption. His Mets were generally terrible, and his baseball instincts were famously off-key. The team's value increased roughly 662%.

2018: The Marlins were sold for \$1.2 billion despite being one of most troubled franchises in all of baseball. Jeff Loria had pulled off an astonishing switcheroo by selling out the Montreal Expos and then getting the Marlins for \$158.5 million — a nice portion of that loaned to him by MLB at no interest. He then wheedled a tax increase to help pay for a new stadium, sold off the team's best players, earned a top spot in basically every "Worst Owners in Baseball" list, and walked away with a sweet 757% return on his investment.

2018: Frank McCourt — FRANK BLEEPING McCOURT — who was so bad an owner that FOE (Friend of Owners) Bud Selig had to appoint a special watchdog to oversee the Dodgers because of all the shady things McCourt was doing, who was so bad an owner that he arranged a high-priced television deal that pretty much guaranteed most of Los Angeles County would not get to see the team play, who was so bad an owner that the team filed for bankruptcy under his watchful eye, THAT FRANK McCOURT, sold the Dodgers for \$2 billion, a pitiful 437% return on his investment.

With McCourt gone, the Dodgers — according to *Forbes* — are now worth \$3.57 billion.

And with all this as background that anyone can look up, Rob Manfred is telling us that baseball just isn't that great an investment (which by the way, on a whole other level, might not be something the guy running baseball should claim). I say this with love of the game in my heart:

Rob, seriously, if you're reading this, when you're thinking about saying stuff like this, call me. No judgment. No cost. No rehashing of past mistakes. We all just want to get this beautiful game going again.

SOME STATS YOU DON'T SEE EVERY DAY (SUBSCRIBER SUBMISSION)

Lowest Opponents' Batting Average, Single Season

STARTERS		Year	Hits per 9 innings	Opponent's Avg.	
Pedro Martinez	Boston	2000	5.31	.167	AL Record
Luis Tiant	Cleveland	1968	5.30	.168	
Nolan Ryan	California	1972	5.30	.171	
Ed Reulbach	CHC	1906	5.33	.175	NL Record
Sandy Koufax	LAD	1965	5.79	.179	
Bob Gibson (15 th)	St. Louis	1968	5.85	.184	
RELIEVERS					
Aroldis Chapman	Cincinnati	2014	3.50	.121	
Craig Kimbrel	Atlanta	2012	3.88	.126	
Koji Uehara	Boston	2013	4.00	.130	
Eric Gagne	LAD	2003	4.04	.133	

Most Plate Appearances with 0 HRs

	Year	PA	AB	HR	RBI
Rabbit Maranville	1922	747	672	0	63
Bill Wamsganss	1924	736	636	0	49
Juan Pierre	2007	729	668	0	41
Richie Ashburn	1957	729	626	0	33

Fewest HR by a player with 100 RBI

	Year	PA	AB	HR	RBI
Lave Cross	1902	595	559	0	108
Bill Sweeney	1912	699	593	1	100
Pie Traynor	1931	677	615	2	103
Billie Herman	1943	663	585	2	100

Most HR by a player with less than 100 RBI

	Year	PA	AB	HR	RBI
Alfonso Soriano	2006	728	647	46	95 (leadoff hitter 131 of 159 games)
Harmon Killebrew	1963	596	515	45	96
Barry Bonds	2003	550	390	44	90 (note PA vs. AB—lots of walks)
Nelson Cruz	2015	655	590	44	93
Hank Aaron	1969	639	547	44	977

DEION DOUBLE DUTY

Michael Claire, mlb.com

October 1992. Deion Sanders was playing for both the Atlanta Falcons and the Atlanta Braves.

Oct. 11, 1992, Sanders attempted to play for both teams in a single day. That afternoon, the Falcons played the Dolphins in Miami at 1 p.m. The Braves would be in Pittsburgh to play the Pirates in Game 5 of the NLCS that night.

After arriving in Fort Lauderdale early in the morning following the Braves' 6-4 victory over the Pirates in Game 4 of the NLCS where he had appeared as a pinch-hitter and played the final innings in the outfield, Sanders caught a few hours of sleep. He was up in time to catch the Falcons' team bus to Joe Robbie Stadium for the game against the Dolphins. It was his first time with the team, having missed every practice in the run-up to the game.

Sanders played all but one defensive snap at cornerback against Dan Marino. Then it was limo-helicopter-jet back to Pittsburgh. It was 8:28, just 16 minutes before first pitch, when Sanders

walked into the stadium. By 8:44, when Bob Walk threw a first-pitch strike to Otis Nixon, Deion was in uniform and on the bench with his Braves teammates. But he would not get into the game.

It was a disappointing end of the saga for Sanders. The Braves lost, 7-1, and, despite coming tantalizingly close, there has yet to be a player who has competed in two pro sports in a single day.

Sanders was on the Braves' roster for the World Series against the Blue Jays -- missing the Falcons' Oct. 18 game against the 49ers -- and he showed why Cox wanted him on the roster so badly. He went 8-for-15 with five stolen bases and he threw a runner out at home. Had the Braves won the World Series, he most likely would have been named MVP.

Over 9 seasons Sanders played in 641 games. He had 558 hits, batted .263, 186 stolen bases/caught stealing 63.

AND BO JACKSON

Mike Lupica

[Bo Jackson](#), as thrilling a football player as he was before a hip injury changed his [history in two sports](#), never made it to the Super Bowl when he was a running back with the Los Angeles Raiders. The one postseason game he played came in January 1991, the AFC Divisional Round against the Bengals in L.A. He was injured late in that 20-10 win over Cincinnati, then the Bills crushed the Raiders, 51-3, the following week in the AFC Championship Game, and that was as close as Bo ever came to Super Bowl Sunday. A year later, he was out of the National Football League for good.

Even though he won a Heisman Trophy at Auburn, and even though he once ran a 40-yard dash in 4.12 seconds for scouts while weighing nearly 230 pounds, he was more memorable for the eight seasons he played in baseball, not for the four he played in the NFL. It was in baseball that Jackson occasionally channeled a comic book superhero.

There was the All-Star Game in 1989, for which he was voted MVP. He made a great running catch early in the game to save a couple of runs. Then, leading off the bottom of the first, he hit a monstrous 448-foot home run off Rick Reuschel. When the ball was in the air, the great Vin Scully said, "Look at that one! Bo Jackson says hello!"

And there was the night at Yankee Stadium when he hit three home runs his first three times up before injuring his shoulder in the outfield trying to make a diving catch on a ball hit by Deion Sanders. Deion turned it into an [inside-the-park home run](#) when the ball rolled all the way to the wall.

There was another time when he tried to call time. It wasn't granted by the home-plate umpire. Bo still managed to hit a home run on the next pitch, despite having just one hand on his bat when he was first back in the batter's box.

Jackson won the Sporting News' AL Comeback Player of the Year in 1993 after recovering from hip replacement surgery. By then, he had left the Royals, his original team in the big leagues, for the White Sox. But even with his replacement hip, he hit 16 homers for the White Sox in 85 games, after not having played baseball for two years. He eventually retired after the shortened 1994 season with a lifetime average of .250, 141 homers, 415 RBIs and a .474 slugging percentage.

His best season was his All-Star season of 1989 with the Royals, when he hit 32 home runs, knocked in 105 and showed you all of his possibilities, whether he continued to be a two-sport guy or not. He didn't turn 27 until that season was over.

There will always be what-ifs for him in both football and baseball. The what-ifs are bigger in baseball because of what we saw from him before avascular necrosis stole so much of his power and speed.

Why are the what-ifs bigger in baseball? Because we saw what he could accomplish even with an artificial hip, that's why.

Back when he did have his speed, when we thought it was all still ahead of him, there was a Wednesday night in Baltimore on July 11, 1990, when the Royals faced the Orioles. I was working this game for ESPN when he really did turn into a comic book hero. In this case, it was Spider-Man.

This was also the night when Curt Schilling came out of the bullpen to get his first Major League victory for the Orioles. The night wasn't about that. The night was about Bo doing something only he could do.

Joe Orsulak hit one the other way for the Orioles, and it looked like extra bases when it came off his bat, at least until you quickly remembered that the man chasing down the ball in left-center was Bo Jackson, who made a terrific running backhand catch just shy of the warning track.

The night wasn't about that, either. It was about what happened next.

Instead of running into the wall, Bo ran *up* it.

One step, then another, then a third, nearly to the top of the wall in left-center. There is a [video of the catch on YouTube](#), and one of the comments is from a man named Guy Sherf:

"I'm just saying no one has seen Bo and Spiderman in the same place together."

Over 8 seasons Jackson played in 684 games for the Royals, White Sox and Angels. He had 598 hits, batted .250 with 141 HRs and 415 RBI. He had 82 stolen bases/32 caught stealing.

TRAILBLAZER HIDEO NOMO

From mlb.com

It's difficult to imagine Major League Baseball today without the talent and influence of Japanese players.

There is, of course, two-way sensation Shohei Ohtani, the 2021 AL MVP. And the list goes on from there: Yu Darvish, Kenta Maeda, Masahiro Tanaka, Hiroki Kuroda, Hideki Matsui, the great Ichiro Suzuki and many more.

Before them all, there was [Hideo Nomo](#).

It was 27 years ago this week that MLB changed forever -- for the better -- when the Dodgers officially announced a deal with Nomo, on Feb. 13, 1995. It turned out to be a seismic event. In the previous 29 seasons, no Japanese players had appeared in the Majors. In the 26 seasons since Nomo's '95 NL Rookie of the Year campaign, more than 60 have followed in his footsteps, including those aforementioned stars.

Nomo joined the Kintetsu Buffaloes of Nippon Professional Baseball's Pacific League as a 21-year-old in 1990 and was an immediate standout, winning the league's pitching Triple Crown, not to mention its Rookie of the Year and MVP honors.

There was precedent for a Japanese player coming to the Majors -- but not much.

Way back in 1964-65, a young left-hander by the name of Masanori Murakami had pitched in 54 games for San Francisco -- all but one in relief -- and [found some success](#). His stint was the result of a deal between the Pacific League's Nankai (now SoftBank) Hawks and the Giants, but there was some controversy over the terms, and Murakami soon returned to Japan. A subsequent agreement between the U.S. and Japanese leagues effectively slammed the window shut on the next Murakami. It remained that way for nearly 30 years.

Unlike today, there was no [posting system](#) through which NPB players could make the jump to MLB. Instead, they were simply bound to their teams, at least until reaching 10 years of service time. It seemed to be an intractable problem, but a confluence of the right people at the right time -- with a heavy dose of *chutzpah* -- changed the course of baseball history.

only *active* Japanese players were specifically forbidden from heading to MLB. The solution: Nomo had to retire.

It wasn't quite that simple, though. Kintetsu would have to put Nomo on the voluntarily retired list, and why would the club take such a step with a star pitcher? Nomura cooked up a strategy that involved Nomo demanding an expensive, six-year contract from Kintetsu. This sort of thing was unheard of in NPB at the time, and when Nomo refused to back down, the team's brass was furious enough to eventually place him on the list. What seemed like a punishment played right into Nomura's plans.

Once Nomo set his sights on the Majors, there was significant interest. Reports at the time indicated at least six teams were in the mix, including the Dodgers, Giants and Mariners.

What sealed the deal was the involvement of the Dodgers' then-owner, Peter O'Malley. Both sides described an instant connection that formed between him and Nomo and led to the pitcher picking L.A., despite having to settle for a Minor League contract (with a \$2 million signing bonus).

The Dodgers called up the 26-year-old righty to make his debut against the Giants at San Francisco's Candlestick Park on May 2, 1995, and he allowed just one hit over five scoreless innings.

Nomo's first month in the Majors was decent but uneven, but he soon hit his stride. The man dubbed "[The Tornado](#)" for his twisting windup unleashed his [plummeting forkball](#) ([a relative of the splitter](#)) on the National League, to devastating effect. (In Gwynn's words to the L.A. Times, it was "impossible to tell whether it's a forkball or a heater until that sucker drops a foot at the end.") Over a 13-start span from June 2-Aug. 10, Nomo averaged nearly eight innings per outing, posted a 1.31 ERA, allowed a .419 opponent OPS and struck out nearly 30% of the hitters he faced.

In the middle of that run, he started the All-Star Game, matching Johnson, his AL counterpart, for two scoreless innings during which he struck out Kenny Lofton, Edgar Martinez and Albert Belle. He was mobbed by Japanese press everywhere he went. He was on the cover of Sports Illustrated. Nomo finished the year 13-6 with a 2.54 ERA, led the NL in strikeouts (236) and helped the Dodgers top the Rockies by one game for the NL West title. He also beat out future Hall of Famer Chipper Jones for the NL Rookie of the Year Award.

Nomo was superb again in 1996, finishing fourth in the NL Cy Young voting for the second straight year and tossing [a memorable no-hitter](#) on Sept. 17 at Coors Field.

He was never quite the same after that, perhaps feeling the effects of his heavy early-career workload in Japan. Nomo dealt with some injuries, and his production slid. Between June 1998

and December 2001, he bounced around seven organizations, although he did throw a [second no-hitter](#) along the way, for Boston in '01.

Nomo found new life after returning to L.A. in '02, putting together consecutive stellar seasons. That would prove to be his last hurrah, however, as Nomo struggled to a 7.95 ERA over the rest of his career, finishing with a short stint for Kansas City in '08.

Nomo was elected to the [Japanese Baseball Hall of Fame](#) in 2014, but when it came to Cooperstown, Nomo's candidacy died that same year, when he got 1.1% of the vote and fell off the Baseball Writers' Association of America ballot. That's to be expected, given his good but hardly spectacular career numbers. But if the Hall ever opens a wing of its Plaque Gallery for trailblazers who made a profound impact on the sport's history, Nomo would be an obvious choice.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR SUCCESS IN BASEBALL

Joe McCarthy knew success. His winning percentage as a Major League manager is second to none and his seven World Championships are a record that has only been tied - by a fellow National Baseball Hall of Fame manager named Casey Stengel.

Given that success it is safe to say that if McCarthy were to speak, people & players would listen. Baseball Almanac is pleased to present the Ten Commandments for Success in Baseball — a truly legendary list that first appeared in print in the Boston Herald in 1949.

In 1949 Yankee manager Joe McCarthy issued his Ten Commandments

1. Nobody ever became a ballplayer walking after a ball.
2. You will never become a .300 hitter unless you take the bat off your shoulder.
3. An outfielder who throws in back of a runner is locking the barn door after the horse is stolen.
4. Keep your head up and you may not have to keep it down.
5. When you start to slide, slide. He who changes his mind may have to change a good leg for a bad one.
6. Do not alibi on bad hops. Anybody can field the good ones.

7. Always run them out. You never can tell.
8. Do not quit.
9. Do not fight too much with umpires. You can not expect them to be as perfect as you are.
10. A pitcher who hasn't control hasn't anything.

BASEBALL ALMANAC TRIVIA

I just found a trivia section on baseballalmanac.com. First piece shared from it—interesting list.

There are 94 members of the 2,000 hit, 300 home run, 1,000 RBI, 1,000 run scored club. Name those NOT in the Hall of Fame. How many did you get?

1. Barry Bonds
2. Sammy Sosa
3. David Ortiz
4. Manny Ramirez
5. Gary Sheffield
6. Robinson Cano
7. Jeff Kent
8. Fred McGriff
9. Dale Murphy
10. Miguel Cabrera
11. Albert Pujols
12. Dave Parker
13. Adrian Beltre
14. Carlos Beltran
15. Darrell Evans
16. Todd Helton
17. Rafael Palmeiro
18. Alex Rodriguez
19. Scott Rolen
20. Reggie Smith
21. Joey Votto
22. Paul Konerko
23. Dwight Evans
24. Carlos Delgado
25. Jason Giambi
26. Aramis Ramirez
27. Graig Nettles

28. Luis Gonzalez
29. Gary Gaetti
30. Steve Finley
31. Ellis Burks
32. Lance Berkman
33. Miguel Tejada
34. Matt Holliday
35. Don Baylor
36. Moises Alou
37. Raul Ibanez
38. Ruben Sierra
39. Shawn Green
40. Torii Hunter
41. Alfonso Soriano
42. Carlos Lee

BILL WHITE ISN'T JUST A BIG PART OF YANKEE HISTORY, BUT BASEBALL HISTORY.

From pinstripedalley.com

Yankee fans remember Bill White as the beloved announcer, but his contributions go far beyond the microphone.

Most Yankee fans remember Bill White as the beloved TV and radio announcer for the [Yankees](#) from 1971 to 1988. Having previously done short TV segments on stations in both St. Louis and Philadelphia, when White signed on with WPIX he became the first African American to be the regular play-by-play announcer for a major league team.

Teamed up with Frank Messer and Phil Rizzuto, White was on the microphone for some of the most iconic moments in Yankee history but was largely appreciated for the day-to-day dependability of delivering sound analysis in his typically direct and candid manner of speaking. When teamed with Rizzuto (whose personality could best be described as the polar opposite of White's) and the traditionally trained Messer, White was part of a broadcast booth that played a special role in many great memories of Yankee fans who were fortunate enough to watch and listen in that era.

Yet prior to becoming part of Yankee history as an announcer, White was not only a very good player in the National League for 13 seasons but played a key role in dismantling some of the segregation practices that were still ongoing in MLB long after Jackie Robinson's retirement. (You read that correctly – 'retirement', not 'debut'.) After his career in the booth with the

Yankees, White was far from done in trying to improve the game we love and became another 'first' in the process when he was named President of the National League in 1989. His career is far too long and accomplishment filled to fully cover today, but in honor of Black History Month let's take a quick walk down memory lane.

After putting up 3.1 WAR as a rookie first baseman with the [New York Giants](#) in 1956, White missed all of the 1957 season and most of 1958 as he served in the military. In his absence, the Giants replaced him with future Hall of Famer Orlando Cepeda, and the organization also had a kid named McCovey tearing up Triple-A pitching at the same time. This necessitated trading White to St. Louis, which turned out well for him and both teams.

White was an NL All-Star in his first season with the Cardinals and would be named to the NL squad in five of his first six seasons overall in St. Louis. He'd win six straight Gold Glove awards as a Cardinal (and another later on with the [Phillies](#)) and twice finished in the top 10 in the NL MVP voting. Playing in likely the most difficult era in baseball history to hit, White didn't put up gaudy numbers like the Mays, Aarons, and Clementes of the world, but he was a powerful, and incredibly consistent middle of the order presence on some great Cardinal teams — including the one that beat the Yankees in the 1964 [World Series](#). From 1962 through 1966, White averaged 23 HR and 96 RBI per season with a 126 OPS+, which was only surpassed by Cepeda among NL first basemen. Overall, he averaged 5.3 WAR per season over that five-season stretch which was the best among all MLB first basemen by a pretty good margin.

Yet his biggest impact came off the field. After incidents earlier in his career — one in which he fraternized with a famous actor at the Giants' spring training complex but wasn't allowed into a theater to see the actor's newest movie that same evening, another in which, while wearing a U.S. Army uniform, he wasn't allowed into a restaurant to eat with his white friends wearing the same uniform — White was out of patience for such things after a few years in St. Louis. While in spring training in Florida, White and his Black teammates were still segregated from their teammates off the field. They and their families weren't allowed to sleep in the same hotels, eat in the same restaurants, or use the same recreational facilities as their white teammates, among other demeaning situations.

White had enough and told an AP reporter at length about how nonsensical and humiliating such treatment was, and how tired they all were of being told to be patient, things would get better. (We know in 2022 such behavior can put one's career in jeopardy — it's hard for most of us to put into proper perspective exactly what White was risking.) Fortunately for all, White's bravery in speaking up garnered him support from some key members of the media, the advertising world, and eventually the Cardinals' organization. That started the ball rolling that led to the desegregation of players in spring training facilities across MLB, two years prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In 1989, White accepted a four-year appointment as President of the National League. He was the first African American to hold that position, and as he liked to point out, was also the first former player to hold an executive position that high. Being a 13-year NL veteran came in handy when a prominent NL manager wanted White to discipline another team due to its pitchers

scuffling baseballs, or when a prominent umpire tried to spin a not so honest take on player-umpire confrontations on the field.

Among the usual fun things a league president needs to address, such as a baseball legend receiving a lifetime ban for gambling and an umpire's strike, White also was charged with handling the highly publicized issue of a National League owner who had a habit of using racist terminology both in public and in private — a job made very difficult due to the absurd fact that the owner had many, many supporters, despite her history. After his four-year appointment ended, he stuck around temporarily to assist in finding his replacement while the search for a new MLB Commissioner began.

As White said in his autobiography, he “wished he got out sooner.” What wasn't completely clear to most at the time but we know with the benefit of hindsight, was that the goal wasn't so much finding a new commissioner as it was to severely limit the commissioner's powers, turning the position more or less into a figurehead. With future Hall of Famer Bud Selig elevated to said position, as he stated in his autobiography, White was fine getting out at a time when it became OK for teams to lose, as long as they turned a profit.

Important issues aside for a moment, we're Yankee fans here on Pinstripe Alley, and we remember how much fun it was listening to White and his booth mates, particularly in the late '70s when the Yankees were great on the field. Of course, his most famous call, “Deep to left!” came just before Bucky Dent earned himself a new nickname among Boston fans in 1978:

Two Octobers prior, White was on the microphone for WMCA radio when Chris Chambliss sent the Yankees to the World Series for the first time in 12 years. As an interesting side note, White was never George Steinbrenner's favorite announcer, as “The Boss” felt White was too objective and not enough of a “homer”. When White pointed out on air that Chambliss never touched home plate and that might be problematic should Kansas City protest, he fell a few spots lower on George's favorite announcer list.

Of course there were too many memorably great on-air interactions to cover here, and reciting them in print doesn't even come close to doing them justice. Yet, I'll never forget the instance in which Frank Messer was telling us viewers about Gary Pettis, the young and highly regarded Angels' prospect. The Angels loved everything about Pettis, according to Messer, except there were questions about whether or not he “could hit the fastball.”

“Then what is he doing in the major leagues?!?” White shot back seemingly before Messer even finished. (Hey, if you never heard White, I told you earlier he had a habit of being direct.)

I'm also certain I'm not the only fan who remembers the instance in which Rizzuto spilled his own coffee on himself and the hilarity that ensued between him and White for the remainder of the inning. Listening to the longest, most drawn out “Holy cow ...” of Scooter's career followed by White's genuine laughter and good natured ribbing might be the hardest my family and I have ever laughed together during a baseball game.

It's fun to be nostalgic about what was a great era in Yankee history, and although Bill White never wore pinstripes on the field, he was an enormous part of that great era to Yankee fans, and an enormous part of the organization. Yet it's also important, at all times but especially during Black History Month, to acknowledge his contributions to equality in baseball and by extension, to society as a whole. Although his contributions may not be as well-known as those of other players, they aren't any less significant.

If Scooter was still with us Mr. White, I'm sure he'd still say to you, "White, you huckleberry!"

TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER

Hall of Famers whose last name starts with A

1. Hank Aaron
2. Grover Cleveland Alexander
3. Roberto Alomar
4. Walter Alston
5. Sparky Anderson
6. Cap Anson
7. Luis Aparicio
8. Luke Appling
9. Richie Asburn
10. Earl Averill

HOUSEKEEPING

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