

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

2.6.2022

Good morning baseball fans. For your reading pleasure, two cups of coffee worth of baseball stuff.

A terrific look at the dominance of Ted Williams and Stan Musial (a subscriber contribution). A piece on crazy doubleheaders which includes a description of the Baker Bowl where the Phillies played years ago—how about a right field wall twice as tall as Fenway's green monster? Many emails on how much you enjoyed last week's trivia question—name the career HR leader for each letter of the alphabet. Joe Posnanski in his blog came up with another fun one outlined below. And a geeky piece from The Athletic on advanced metrics.

Enjoy.

TRIVIA QUESTION 1.

(from Joe Posnanski's blog)

Name the pitcher with the most career wins for each letter of the alphabet. Not as easy as last week's career HRs by letter. Answers at the bottom – how many can you name?

TRIVIA QUESTION 2.

21 pitchers have won multiple Cy Young awards. Give yourself 1 point for each of then 10 with 3 awards or more. Give yourself 2 points for the 11 pitchers who won twice. How'd you do? Answers at the bottom.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Over 60% of MLB players are in their first three seasons. Might explain why the player's union wants an increase in the \$570K MLB minimum.

To be eligible for the Rookie of the Year award in 2022 means players may not have more than 130 at-bats, 50 innings pitched, or 45 days on an active major-league roster heading into this season. Days on the roster in September now count against the rookie threshold, whereas days on

the active roster in any September prior to 2020 do not count, a change MLB made to the rookie eligibility rules in 2020.

Adley Rutschman is the Orioles switch hitting catcher prospect ranked near the top of all minor leaguers. His grandfather Ad Rutschman, was a longtime coach at NAIA Linfield College and the only person to win national championships as a coach in both baseball and football.

The only brothers to win batting titles--Dixie Walker (.357 with the Dodgers in 1944) and Harry Walker (.363 with the Cardinals and Phillies in 1947).

Listed alphabetically, Henry Aaron is first on the Hall of Fame roster, Robin Yount is last.

The first Black American League pitcher to win a World Series game was Jim “Mudcat” Grant. In 1965 Grant led the AL in wins with 21, thus becoming the first Black 20-game winner in American League history. After beating Don Drysdale and the Dodgers 8-2 in the Series opener at Metropolitan Stadium, he lost Game 4 to Drysdale, then in Game 6 won 5-1, throwing six one-run innings and hitting a three-run homer in the sixth inning, keeping Minnesota alive for Game 7. Jim Kaat would lose that final matchup to Sandy Koufax, who threw a 10-strikeout shutout to seal the victory for Los Angeles.

Roberto Ortiz will be one of 5 new umpires this season in MLB. He becomes the first Puerto Rico born full-time umpire.

Minor League Baseball announced that the Triple-A schedule will be expanding from 144 to 150 games. According to the press release, the move is designed to “help Triple-A baseball better align with the Major League season” by delaying “the end date of the Minor League campaign to September 28.”

MiLB notes that the development puts into place the longest Triple-A season since at least 1964. In 2019, the most recent minor league season to begin on time, the Triple-A regular season schedule wrapped up by September 2. Ending the regular season within the first week of September was the typical process, leading to particular challenges for MLB teams that had injured players attempting to make late-season returns to the big leagues. Getting recovering

players into minor league game action on rehab assignments during September became impossible unless one or more of the club's farm teams had qualified for the postseason.

The last Major League pitcher to throw a 10-inning complete game was Roy Halladay, Blue Jays (4/13/2007 vs. DET).

SUBSCRIBER CONTRIBUTION OF THE WEEK

Thank you, Allen Miller.

So, I don't remember what it was but something got me thinking about MVP voting and what Musial and Williams did in the late-40s and early-50s, so I put some stuff together that illustrates their stats and where they ended up in the MVP voting—really how dominant they were during that time.

Here are Musial's stats:

YEAR	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	OPS+	TB	WAR	
1943	157	701	617	108	220	48	20	13	81	72	18	0.357	0.425	0.562	0.988	177	347	9.6	MVP-1
1944	146	668	568	112	197	51	14	12	94	90	28	0.347	0.440	0.549	0.990	174	312	8.9	MVP-4
1945	Military Service																		
1946	156	702	624	124	228	50	20	16	103	73	31	0.365	0.434	0.587	1.021	183	366	9.3	MVP-1
1947	149	678	587	113	183	30	13	19	95	80	24	0.312	0.398	0.504	0.902	134	296	5.1	MVP-20
1948	155	698	611	135	230	46	18	39	131	79	34	0.376	0.450	0.702	1.152	200	429	11.3	MVP-1
1949	157	722	612	128	207	41	13	36	123	107	38	0.338	0.438	0.624	1.062	177	382	9.1	MVP-2
1950	146	645	555	105	192	41	7	28	109	87	36	0.346	0.437	0.596	1.034	165	331	7.3	MVP-2
1951	152	678	578	124	205	30	12	32	108	98	40	0.36	0.449	0.614	1.063	183	355	8.8	MVP-2
1952	154	678	578	105	194	42	6	21	91	96	29	0.34	0.432	0.538	0.970	167	311	7.5	MVP-5

Things of note:

1943 – Led MLB in G, PA, H, 2B, 3B, TB, and WAR; led NL in BA, OBP, SLG, OPS, OPS+. Won MVP.

Only struck out 18 times in 701 PA while leading MLB with 347 TB.

1944 – Led MLB in 2B and NL in H, OBP, SLG, OPS, OPS+, and WAR. He hit a meager .347.

Finished 4 in MVP.

1946 – Coming back from military service he led MLB in G, H, 3B, TB. Led the NL in PA, R, 2B, BA, SLG, OPS, OPS+, WAR, and won the MVP again.

1947 – had an off year when he hit just .312 with an OPS of .902.

1948 – Led MLB in H (with 230!), 2B, 3B, SLG, OPS, TB, and WAR. Led the NL in R, RBI, BA, OBP, and OPS+. Won the MVP again! He had an OPS of 1.152 and struck out 34 times in nearly 700 PA.

1949 – Led MLB in G, H, 2B, TB; led NL in 3B, OBP, TB. BA. “Slumped” to a WAR of 9.1 and finished second in MVP.

1950 – Led MLB in SLG, OPS, OPS+, and NL in BA while driving in and scoring more than 100 runs. Second in MVP voting.

1951 – Led MLB in R, BA, TB, and NL in 3B. Had an OPS of 1.063. Finished second again in MVP.

1952 – Led MLB in G, R, 2B, BA, OPS, TB. Led NL in SLG and finished fifth (WTF?!?) in the MVP.

How dominant is Musial over these 9 seasons?

Led MLB four times in games, and once in PA (and NL once more)

Scored over 100 runs every year and led MLB in R twice (and NL twice more), had over 100 RBIs five times and led NL once.

Led MLB five times in H (and NL another time), 2B five times (and NL once more), 3B three times (and NL twice more)

For the five years 48-52 averaged 31 HR a year, but never struck out more than 40 times.

Led MLB in BA twice and NL four more times. Hit over .345 8 out of 9 years.

Led NL four times in OBP

Led MLB twice in SLG and NL four more times.

In OPS, led MLB and NL three times each. Led MLB in OPS+ once and NL four more times.

Had more than 300 TB (peaked at 429!) every year but one while leading MLB six times.

Led MLB and NL twice each in WAR.

Won three MVPs and finished second three times, fourth and fifth once each.

Now let's see how Williams' stats look:

YEAR	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	OPS+	TB	WAR	MVP
1941	143	606	456	135	185	33	3	37	120	147	27	0.406	0.553	0.735	1.287	235	335	10.4	MVP
1942	150	671	522	141	186	34	5	36	137	145	51	0.356	0.499	0.648	1.147	216	338	10.5	MVP
1943-45 Military Service																			
1946	150	672	514	142	176	37	8	38	123	156	44	0.342	0.497	0.667	1.164	215	343	10.7	MVP
1947	156	693	528	125	181	40	9	32	114	162	47	0.343	0.499	0.634	1.133	205	335	9.6	MVP
1948	137	638	509	124	188	44	3	25	127	126	41	0.369	0.497	0.615	1.112	189	313	8.3	MVP
1949	155	730	566	150	194	39	3	43	159	162	48	0.343	0.490	0.650	1.141	191	368	9.00	MVP
1950	89	416	334	82	106	24	1	28	97	82	21	0.317	0.452	0.647	1.099	168	216	4.3	MVP 2

1951	148	675	531	108	169	28	4	30	126	144	45	0.318	0.464	0.556	1.019	164	295	7.2	MVP 1
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Things to note:

1941 – Oh yeah, he hit .406. But wait there's more! Led AL in OPS+, but also led MLB in R, HR, BB, BA, OBP, SLG, OPS, and WAR, but did not win the MVP (we all know why). It's worth noting that he struck out exactly 27 times while doing all this.

1942 – Led MLB in R, HR, RBI, BB, OBP, SLG, OPS, OPS+, TB, and WAR, and AL in BA. He won the triple crown and finished SECOND in the MVP voting AGAIN! How the hell did Joe Gordon win this?

1946 – Coming back from two years in the military, he led MLB in R, BB, SLG, OPS, OPS+, and WAR, and the AL in TB. "Only" hit .342 with 38 HR, but managed to win the MVP.

1947 – Led MLB in BB, BA, OBP, OPS, OPS+, and WAR. Led AL in R, HR, RBI, SLG, TB. For the second time in three seasons (over 6 calendar years) he won the triple crown and finished SECOND in MVP AGAIN!

1948 – Led AL in 2B, BB, BA, OBP, SLG, OPS, OPS+, and finished third in MVP.

1949 – Led MLB in R, RBI, BB, OBP, OPS, OPS+. Led AL in G, PA, HR, SLG, TB, and WAR. Hit just .343, but somehow managed to win the MVP

1950 – Played in just 89 games.

1951 – Led the AL in BB, OBP, SLG, OPS, OPS+, TB, and WAR, then finished 13th in the MVP.

How dominant is Williams over these eight seasons?

Led MLB in R five times and AL once more.

Led MLB in HR twice and AL twice more, plus led AL in 2B twice

Led MLB in RBI twice and AL once more.

Led MLB in BB five times and AL twice more.

Led MLB in BA once and AL three more times. Never hit lower than .342 in a season from 41-49.

Williams has the highest lifetime OBP ever so no big surprise he led MLB five times and AL twice more (the other year he had an OBP of "only" .442)

Led MLB in SLG three times and AL four more times.

Had an OPS over 1.000 every year and led MLB five times and AL twice more

Led MLB in OPS+ four times and AL three times.

Led MLB once in TB and AL three more times.

Led MLB in WAR three seasons in a row and the AL another time.

In the six seasons he played from 1941-49, his MVP votes looked like this: 2 firsts, 3 seconds (remember, 2 of those years he won the triple crown), one third.

So, between these two guys, the league and MLB leader board for this period looks like this (remember that Williams didn't play in 1943-45 or part of 1950, and Musial didn't play in 1945):

YEAR	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	OPS+	TB	WAR
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1941				W				W		W	W	W	W	W	W		W
1942				W				W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
1943	M	M			M	M	M				M	M	M	M	M	M	M
1944					M	M						M	M	M	M		M
1945																	
1946	M	M	M	M W	M	M	M			W	M	W	M W	M W	M W	M W	M W
1947				W						W	W	W	W	W	W	W	
1948				M	M W	M	M			W	M W	M W	W	W	W	M W	M
1949	M W	W		W	M	M W	M	W	W	W		M W	W	W	W	W	M W
1950											M		M	M	M		
1951				M			M			W	M	W	W	W	W	M W	W
1952	M			M	M	M					M		M	M		M	

A big question that Allen raises—were there any other pairs of hitters in the last 120 years who were so dominant for so long?

TOMMY JOHN AND A VERY BAD, AWFUL PLAY IN 1988

In the summer of 1988, 45-year-old Yankees starting pitcher Tommy John was in his 25th season as a Major Leaguer.

On July 27th of that year, Tommy got the start against the Milwaukee Brewers in Yankee Stadium. In the top of the fourth, Tommy and the Yankees were up 4-0.

But with one out, Tommy walked Milwaukee second baseman Jim Gantner. Jeffrey Leonard came to the plate.

"He hit a ball off the end of the bat," Tommy says. "And he hit a little squirter down the first base line."

Tommy charged the ball.

"And I made my first mistake by saying to myself, when I saw the ball, 'I'm gonna barehand it.' "

Tommy says that, in his long Major League career, he almost never barehanded ground balls. He was a glove guy all the way. The little voice in his head knew that.

“ 'No, I ... no. I shouldn't do it. No. Oh ... ' ” he remembers thinking.

The problem was that he didn't listen to that voice.

"And I picked the ball up and dropped it," he says.

And you can score that: "Error charged to the pitcher."

Gantner was now on his way to second. And Leonard was hustling up the line.

"I should have taken a bite out of the ball and gone back to the mound and had runners on first and second," Tommy says.

But Tommy thought he still had time to get Leonard out at first.

"And I turned, and I threw it to first base," Tommy says. "And I didn't have a good grip on the ball. And I threw it about 10 feet wide of Mattingly at first base.

"Well, that's my second mistake."

The ball had caromed off the ball boy sitting along the right field line. Now Gantner was on his way to third, with Jeffrey Leonard not far behind.

The Brewers third base coach waved Gantner around.

"Then it's rolling down the right field line," Tommy says. "And Dave Winfield never backs a play up. But he backs *this* play up. He picks the ball up, and he throws it home."

The right fielder's throw appeared to be on target to the waiting glove of the Yankees' catcher.

"And I hear somebody say, 'Cut 2!' 'Cut 2' means you cut the ball off and relay it to the catcher," Tommy says. "I cut the ball off, I turned and I threw the ball to the catcher, who was about 20 feet away. And I whizzed it right by his head."

Gantner scored. The ball skidded out of play as Leonard approached third. As the play-by-play guys tried valiantly to keep up with the chaos, the umpire awarded Leonard home. The score was now 4-2.

Tommy thought ... "Oh, no. That was my third error."

... in just 12 seconds.

"And, you know, it was a physical meltdown," John says.

Tommy got out of the fourth inning with no further damage, other than to his pride. He returned to the dugout, where he gathered his teammates and told them ...

" 'Guys, look. I've got three more errors in me. Let's get our butts out there and let's start hitting the ball so my next three errors won't make a tie game out of it.' And everybody's just guffawing," he recalls. "They were just laughing their butts off."

The inspiring pep talk worked. The Yankees rallied for 12 more runs. Tommy went eight innings and gave up just one more run for the 16-3 win.

Tommy John retired the following year. During his long career, he committed a very stingy 49 errors. That's an average of just under two per season.

Maybe that's why he seemed a little surprised when I asked him if he'd talk with me about his Major League record.

"I pitched 26 years," Tommy says. "I win 288 games. And I have a surgery named after me. And people want to talk about three errors on a play."

<https://youtu.be/bub07gwRgzY>

Phil Rizzuto and Bill White on the call.

A GRIPPING SAGA: 11 TALES OF PTCHERS USING SPITTERS, SANDPAPER AND SCUFFING

from Jay Jaffee in Sports Illustrated (his name should be familiar—his book Cooperstown Casebook was the prize in our recent contest to add subscribers-won by the contributor of the piece on Musial and Williams). If you exclude players from the HOF for PEDs or bad personal behavior, what about those who “bent” the rules? Three of the guys in the piece are in the Hall.

Dirt on Kenny Rogers' hand caused quite a commotion during the 2006 World Series. In the wake of allegations by Blue Jays broadcasters Dick Hayhurst and Jack Morris that Boston's Clay Buchholz applied a foreign substance to the baseball on Wednesday in Toronto, it's worth remembering that baseball lore is chockfull of colorful stories of pitchers (or position players) doctoring the baseball by various means. Saliva, sweat, scuffing, sandpaper, and substances such as Vaseline, K-Y Jelly, pine tar and glue have all been used in the years since Major League Baseball officially outlawed the spitball after the 1920 season. Most pitchers aren't choirboys; get any one talking long enough, and he'll probably own up to a bit of dabbling in the black arts, at least "in the bullpen" — nudge-nudge, wink-wink, say no more.

It isn't just the marginal ones who search for that extra something that will make the ball dart unpredictably, either. Many a good pitcher has been accused of doctoring the ball by a frustrated opponent (or an opponent's adjunct, as Dirk Hayhurst and Jack Morris served when accusing Buchholz). Some pitchers have even owned up to doing so. Only a few have been caught and drawn ejections or suspensions; in my Buchholz piece I listed 12 from the 1980-2012 range. What follows is a colorful but hardly comprehensive tour through the annals — accusations, admissions and the occasional action to eject or suspend — ordered roughly by chronology.

Preacher Roe: A late-blooming, wily lefty who became a mainstay of the *Boys of Summer*-era Brooklyn Dodgers staff, Roe confessed to using a "Beech-Nut slider" less than a year after retiring, in the pages of a 1955 *Sports Illustrated* article by Dick Young:

"One way I figured out to keep my fingers clean, was to wipe 'em on the visor of my baseball cap. It looked like I was adjusting it on my head. I always made certain the visor was kept clean. I even went to the trouble of brushing it off with a towel on the bench between innings.

"It didn't take long for some of the hitters to figure there was something going on between my spitter and the way I fingered the cap. That was just fine for me. I started using the gesture as a decoy. That was as good as the pitch itself. From then on, even when I wasn't going to throw a wet one, I'd go to my cap just to cross them up."

Whitey Ford: A Hall of Famer who pitched for 11 pennant-winning Yankees teams during his career (1950-1967), Ford was open to admitting to all kinds of shenanigans after his playing days were over. "I didn't cheat until later in my career when I needed something extra to survive," he told FoxSports' Hal McCoy last year. "I didn't cheat when I won the 25 games in 1961. I don't want anybody to get any ideas about taking away my Cy Young Award. And I didn't cheat in 1963 when I won 24 games. Well, maybe a little." Ford said he would use his wedding ring, his belt buckle or catcher Elston Howard's shin guard to scuff the ball, as well as a "gunk" composed of baby oil, turpentine and resin.

Art Fowler: Though he reputedly threw a spitball during his nine-year major league career (1954-1964, with a couple gaps), Fowler is more famous for his long tenure as Billy Martin's pitching coach at several stops, where he'd teach the tricks of the trade. Most famously, he's said to have taught the spitter to A's starters Mike Norris, Rick Langford, Steve McCatty, Matt Keough and Brian Kingman, a rotation that completed an amazing 94 of 159 starts in 1980, Martin's first year at the helm in Oakland. The team won 83 games, 29 more than the previous year, and their success drove opponents crazy.

"Rick Langford threw about 15 against us," said Yankees manager Gene Michael after one series. "We didn't see Mike Norris, but we know he throws it (the spitter) too. They all do, but Langford was the worst."

Gaylord Perry: The most famous post-ban spitballer, Perry won 314 games and struck out 3,534 batters (still eighth all-time), sometimes by applying a little something extra, sometimes by just

letting a batter think he had. It was all part of an elaborate pre-pitch ritual in which he'd touch his cap and various parts of his uniform, as you can see in [this video](#) and [this one](#). As Peter Gammons wrote in a 1989 *SI* article:

Perry has admitted to having used K-Y jelly, vaseline, saliva, fishing-line wax, resin, sweat and dirt to make baseballs do peculiar things. However, he may not have been as much of an outlaw as he led us to believe. Dave Duncan, who was Perry's catcher with the Cleveland Indians in 1974, a season in which Perry went 21-13, claims Perry threw only one spitter that year. "He had a great sinker and just kept up the act [his fidgeting on the mound] to make hitters believe he was loading up the ball." says Duncan. "So they focused on trying to catch him cheating instead of concentrating on how he was pitching them." Though opponents watched him closely. Perry was caught throwing an illegal pitch only once in his career.

Perry, who titled a mid-career autobiography *Me and the Spitter*, legendarily offered his services to Vaseline as a pitcher, the response to which was contained in a one-line postcard. "We soothe babies' asses, not baseballs." He didn't get busted until 1982, the 21st of his 22 seasons, when he was ejected after umpires found a slippery substance on the ball.

Don Sutton: Another Hall of Famer and 300-game winner and a contemporary of Perry's, Sutton was notorious for the ways in which he would deface baseballs. As Thomas Boswell wrote in "Salvation Through Salivation," a *Washington Post* column collected in the 1982 classic *How Life Imitates the World Series*, Sutton.

"...has been accused of cutting, scuffing, sandpapering, and generally disfiguring balls in so many ways that he says, 'I ought to get a Black & Decker commercial out of it. The only fun I get now is hiding dirty notes in my uniform pockets for the umpires to find when they search me. I have a bet with [PGA golfer] Gary McCord that if I'm serched on national TV, I'll strip to my undershirt and jock.'"

Tommy John: Groundbreaking elbow surgery wasn't the only thing that enabled John to last 26 years in the majors. Boswell called him "the elegant Rhett Butler of outlaws" and wrote, "[T]he gentlemanly John can turn a tiny scratch into a double-play grounder. Asked how many pitches he has, John said, 'Four basic ones—fastball, curve, slider and change-up—plus eight illegal ones.'"

Mike Scott: A mediocrity for the first six years of his career with the Mets and Astros, Scott emerged as an ace with Houston in 1985, and he won the Cy Young the following year, nearly doubling his strikeout rate (from 5.6 per nine to 10.0) while helping his team make the playoffs. His dramatic transformation was said to owe to his learning to throw a split-fingered fastball, but the Mets, his opponents in the 1986 National League Championship Series, believed he had scuffed balls in his 14-strikeout series-opening shutout.

"New York manager Davey Johnson showed a group of reporters eight balls that were scuffed in exactly the same spot — a mark about the size of a 50-cent piece," said one newspaper article.

Backed by home plate umpire Doug Harvey, Scott denied the allegations at the time, but in 2011 he came clean... sort of. "I've thrown balls that were scuffed but I haven't scuffed every ball that I've thrown," he said for an MLB Network special.

Joe Niekro: The less famous brother of Hall of Fame knuckleballer Phil Niekro, Joe won 221 games in 22 years himself, but he's remembered as much because he was caught red-handed in 1987, when he was pitching for the Twins in his the penultimate season of his career. Asked by home plate umpire Tim Tschida to empty his pockets, he tried to fling an emery board and a piece of sandpaper away (see the 34-second mark of this video) but the umps found it immediately:

Niekro claimed he used the emery board to manicure his nails — a plausible alibi for a knuckleballer — and the sandpaper for his blisters, but he drew a 10-day suspension nonetheless.

Jay Howell: As the closer for the 1988 Dodgers, Howell was ejected in the eighth inning of Game 3 of the National League Championship Series against the Mets after pine tar was discovered on his glove; he claimed it was merely to improve his grip. After he was ejected, the Mets rallied for five runs and won the game to take a 2-1 series lead. Howell was suspended for three days (soon reduced to two), an action that even drew criticism from the Mets, who had earlier rallied to beat him in the 9th inning of Game 1. His suspension forced the Dodgers to use Orel Hershiser to close out Game 4 in the 12th inning, and they eventually won the series in seven before going on to upset the A's in the World Series.

Orel Hershiser: He may have looked like a choirboy, but after coming back from 1991 shoulder surgery, Hershiser drew suspicion that he was reaching back for something extra. Ironically, the most famous allegation came from Davey Johnson, who managed the Mets during the 1986 Scott and 1988 Howell controversies; he was piloting the Orioles in 1997 when they faced Hershiser's Indians in the ALCS. After the 39-year-old Hershiser shut out the Orioles for seven innings in Game 3. Johnson spoke up. From the Philadelphia Daily News:

"I know from my experience that Orel likes to put water on the back of his neck... He prefers to have the cover of the ball moist as opposed to dry, and he will get water wherever he can get it... He was going from his mouth right to the ball, and that's illegal. I wanted to point it out to them, and at least Orel was thinking about it."

Adding fuel to the fire, Indians teammate Chad Ogea agreed with Johnson after the game: "I've known Orel for three years and he cheats...He showed me how to cheat, but said I can't do it until I'm about 35." Hershiser laughed off the discussion and wasn't disciplined.

Kenny Rogers: The most famous recent allegations of such skullduggery came in Game 2 of the 2006 World Series between the Tigers and the Cardinals. TV cameras spotted a brown smudge on the thumb of Rogers' left (throwing) hand during the first inning (SI.com later unearthed photos of him with similar smudges from midseason and the ALCS). After umpires conferred before the start of the second inning, Rogers was ordered to clean his hand of the smudge,

which was said to be some combination of dirt, rosin or pine tar. He did, and went on to pitch eight scoreless innings in a Detroit win. Said umpire supervisor Steve Palermo after the game:

"There was no formal request made about [Rogers] being inspected... There was a noticeable dirt mark on his pitching hand, and after the first inning, Alfonso Marquez, the home-plate umpire, asked him to remove the dirt so there wouldn't be any question about any controversy. And I think if you see the following innings, he pitched fine without the dirt."

LET'S PLAY 2. THE BEST, WILDEST AND MOST NOTABLE DOUBLEHEADERS

Sarah Langs, mlb.com

"It's a great day for a ballgame – let's play two!" Those iconic words belong to the late Ernie Banks, the Cubs icon known for his love of the game. Scheduled doubleheaders were far more common in his day, but Banks professed to be ready for two games any day of the week.

In honor of his timeless quote, let's dive into some doubleheader records, with help from the Elias Sports Bureau. Here's a look at five of the best, wildest and most notable doubleheaders in the modern era (since 1900).

Most combined runs: 54, Red Sox at Athletics – July 4, 1939

This was quite the July 4th celebration at Shibe Park in 1939. In Game 1, the Red Sox got out to an early 10-0 lead through the top of the third. The Sox led 4-0 before even recording an out, after a Jimmie Foxx single drove in leadoff batter Bobby Doerr and Ted Williams cleaned up with a three-run homer.

But the A's scored seven across the third, fourth and fifth to get within three, thanks in part to homers from Sam Chapman, Bob Johnson and Frankie Hayes. Then the Red Sox separated themselves for good, scoring three each in the sixth and seventh and another run in the eighth to win, 17-7, with home runs came from Doerr and Jim Tabor. And that was only Game 1, with 24 runs already on the board.

Philadelphia struck first in Game 2, with three runs in the bottom of the first, and by the top of the third, it was 3-2, A's. Foxx hit a two-run double as the third batter of the third, then a walk to Williams, a Cronin sacrifice and a Lou Finney walk loaded the bases for Tabor, fresh off his eighth-inning homer in Game 1. He hit a grand slam to put the Sox up, 8-3. But the A's came right back with a whopping seven runs to take a 10-8 lead. The A's added another in the fourth, but the Sox scored three to tie it in the fifth.

That brings us to the top of the sixth, when fate conspired to bring Tabor up with the bases loaded again. He hit *another* grand slam, becoming just the second player with two grand slams in a game, after the Yankees' Tony Lazzeri in 1936 (also against Philadelphia). It has now happened 13 times – most recently by Josh Willingham in 2009. Of course, at that point it was *just* 15-11. The Sox went on to win, 18-12, including a third homer of the game and fourth of the day from Tabor, in the eighth.

The rest of the top five:

2. 52 runs – May 29, 1912: Senators at Red Sox

3-T. 50 runs – July 6, 1929: Cardinals at Phillies

3-T. 50 runs – May 18, 1929: Dodgers at Phillies

5-T. 49 runs – Aug. 22, 2007: Rangers at Orioles (the 30-3 game was the first of a doubleheader!)

5-T. 49 runs – Aug. 21, 1935: Cubs at Phillies

Most combined hits: 73, Cardinals at Phillies – July 6, 1929

It should come as little surprise that this twin bill also checked in on the top-five list for most combined runs, with 50. The Phillies won the first game, 10-6, racking up 13 hits to St. Louis' 15. The Phillies got multi-hit efforts from Don Hurst, Chuck Klein, Lefty O'Doul and Pinky Whitney. Every position player in the starting lineup had at least one hit, which was also true of the Cardinals. St. Louis got three-hit efforts from Jim Bottomley and Charlie Gelbert, as well as four hits from Andy High. Twenty-eight combined hits, a good start, but nothing too far beyond an ordinary double-digit-run game.

In the second game, the Cards got 28 hits *all by themselves*. They had two 10-run innings and scored 28 total runs. That stood as the most runs by an NL team in a game in the modern era until 2020, when the Braves scored 29. But it wasn't just the 28 hits for the Cardinals – the Phillies had 17 of their own, scoring six runs.

All nine Cardinals starters had at least a hit, as did the only substitute, a pinch-runner who got three plate appearances. Four Cards had at least four hits: Bottomley, Taylor Douthit, Chick Hafey and pitcher Fred Frankhouse, who tied the franchise record for hits by a pitcher in the modern era. Only two of those 28 hits left the park: Bottomley in the fifth and Hafey in the eighth. The Phillies' 17 hits included at least one from every position player to appear in the game, including four from Fresco Thompson.

The rest of the top five:

- 2. 72 hits – Aug. 8, 1922: Pirates at Phillies
- 3. 71 hits – May 30, 1922: Giants at Phillies
- 4-T. 70 hits – Aug. 6, 1932: Cubs at Phillies
- 4-T. 70 hits – June 19, 1929: Giants at Phillies
- 4-T. 70 hits – Sept. 6, 1924: Giants at Phillies

You might have noticed that all the doubleheaders in this section have something in common: They took place at the Phillies' home park, the Baker Bowl, from 1922-32. Over that span, the 19,176 hits at the Baker Bowl were the most of any ballpark that had a single home tenant. The park featured a right-field wall that was as close as 280 feet from home, but batters had to contend with a massive 60-foot-high facade that extended well into right-center. For comparison, Fenway's "Green Monster" is 37 feet high. Thus, a proliferation of hits at the Phillies' park in this span makes sense.

Most combined innings: 32, Giants at Mets – May 31, 1964

The longest game by innings in the modern era was 26 innings, on May 1, 1920, between the Brooklyn Robins and Boston Braves. But this is its own category, most innings for two teams on the same calendar date, but across both games of a doubleheader. The Giants and Mets played a relatively routine, nine-inning game in the first game – a 5-3 Giants victory. But Game 2 was an entirely different affair. The game went 23 innings, lasting a whopping seven hours and 23 minutes – again, after the two teams had already played nine innings that day.

Gaylord Perry threw 10 innings in relief for the Giants, entering in the 13th and pitching through the 22nd before being pinch-hit for. His pinch-hitter, Del Crandall, hit an RBI double for the game's first run since the seventh. The Mets' longest pitching outing within the game was nine innings, from Galen Cisco, who finished the game for them. They managed to piece together 23 innings of pitching even with starter Bill Wakefield going just two innings. An impressive feat, even in a losing effort. The Giants won the nightcap, 8-6.

The rest of the top five:

- 2. 30 innings – Sept. 24, 1971: Astros at Padres
- 3-T. 29 innings – Sept. 14, 1971: Senators at Cleveland
- 3-T. 29 innings – Aug. 29, 1967: Red Sox at Yankees
- 3-T. 29 innings – July 4, 1905: A's at Red Sox

No-hit bids of seven-plus innings in both games: Cubs at Phillies, July 11, 1957 (last instance)

This July 1957 doubleheader was the last time that there was a no-hit bid of at least seven innings in both games, by either team. There have been no-hitters in one end or other of a doubleheader, most recently Max Scherzer on Oct. 3, 2015, and there have been days with multiple no-hitters across the Majors on the same day: June 29, 1990, and April 22, 1898. But we haven't had both of those happen together, a doubleheader with a no-hitter on each end. Thus, the interest in seeing two deep bids in a twin bill, at the very least.

In Game 1, the Cubs' Bob Rush held the Phillies hitless through seven, allowing a single to lead off the eighth. The game went 11 innings, with Philadelphia winning on a Granny Hamner single off Turk Lown. Game 2 began to play out similarly, with one team simply not getting a hit. This time, Phillies starter Jack Sanford didn't allow a hit until one out in the eighth. The Phillies already led, 3-0, at that point, and went on to win, 3-1.

Two extra-inning walk-offs in 10th or later: Phillies at Marlins, Sept. 26, 1998 (last instance)

There have been 41 instances since 1900 of both games of a doubleheader lasting at least 10 innings and ending on a walk-off. It might not sound like something that would be so rare, but just 41 instances in the last 120-plus years of the sport isn't many at all – and this hasn't happened since 1998.

The Phillies took an early lead in Game 1 on a Bobby Abreu homer and added on when starting pitcher Curt Schilling had an RBI single in the fifth. The Marlins added a run in the sixth, but the Phillies answered with another on a Bobby Estalella homer in the seventh. In the bottom of the eighth, the Marlins scored two runs to tie the game at three apiece, where the score stood until the bottom of the 10th. Florida won it on a Dave Berg walk-off double.

Game 2 featured scoreless starts from the Phillies' Paul Byrd (6 1/3 innings) and the Marlins' Jesús Sánchez (nine innings). The game headed to extras scoreless. In the bottom of the 13th, Alex Gonzalez hit a solo homer to seal the Marlins' second walk-off win of the day.

CANDY JIM TAYLOR

By Bill Ladson for the Negro Leagues Museum

Candy Jim Taylor came from tremendous baseball family. He was one of four brothers involved with the Negro Leagues in some capacity. Not only did they manage in the talented league, they thrived as active players.

Brother Ben, for example, played first base and was posthumously voted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006. C.I. Taylor, a second baseman, could really play up the middle, while Johnny Taylor was a successful pitcher. But Candy Jim sticks out. He made his mark as a player/manager and was known to put himself in games as a pinch-hitter. It also helped he had a longer baseball career than any of his brothers. It lasted almost 40 years. One historian, Phil Dixon, believes Taylor belongs in the Hall of Fame over brother Ben.

"I don't think [the Hall of Fame] got that one right," Dixon said. "Candy Jim is the one who had the real career. I talked to [first baseman] George Giles, who played for Ben on the Brooklyn Eagles. One of the problems they had with Ben managing that team -- they said he was playing one run at a time. He didn't adjust with the times. Candy Jim, he continued to adjust with the times."

If you think Satchel Paige was a journeyman in the Negro Leagues, Candy Jim would give him some competition. Taylor played for 19 Negro League teams, mostly at third base. His best years were with the St. Louis Stars in the mid-to-late 1920s. The right-handed-hitting Taylor spent seven years in St. Louis and hit .340 and with a .398 on-base percentage and .543 slugging percentage during that span, according to Seamheads.com's Negro Leagues database.

As a manager, Taylor was a master strategist, historians say. He knew the game. For example, he led the Stars to their first championship in 1928 by defeating the Chicago American Giants for the Negro National League title. He managed the great Josh Gibson, Buck Leonard and Cool Papa Bell in 1943 and '44, when they were with the Homestead Grays. Together, they won consecutive Negro League World Series titles. In his 30 years at the helm, according to Seamheads.com's Negro Leagues Database, Taylor won 991 games, a Negro League record. It helped that Taylor managed many young players such as Mules Suttles, Willie Wells, Double Duty Radcliffe, Larry Brown and Willie Foster.

"We sometimes focus on the actual on-field talent and you forget about the folks that guided these teams," said Bob Kendrick, president of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. "Rube Foster was a master strategist. C.I. Taylor was a master strategist, and so was Candy Jim. These were brilliant baseball tacticians, so they knew the game."

Candy Jim's last year as a manager was in 1947 with the Chicago American Giants, who were 28-61 that year. He was scheduled to manage the Baltimore Elite Giants starting in '48, but he died of a heart attack.

"He is managing right up to the end," Dixon said. "His life was baseball. He was a good player to start with, but he was a great manager. He should have been a Hall of Famer as a manager. There is so much work to be done telling these stories. It just depends on who is telling the story."

3B/Manager/Executive Bats right, Throws right. 5'5", 165 pounds

Managed 2071 games. 997 wins, 1121 losses, 35 ties

Player AB 2438. Runs 371. Hits 695. HRs 36. RBI 382. SB 116. AVG .285

Played for 19 teams including: St. Louis Stars, Chicago American Giants, Indianapolis ABC's, Cleveland Tate Stars.

Managed 15 teams including: St. Louis Stars, Chicago American Giants, Indianapolis ABC's, Baltimore Elite Giants, Homestead Grays.

MLB.COM OFFERS EACH TEAM'S BEST PLAYER NOT IN THE HALL OF FAME

Building on last week's building the best team of non-HOFers.

+ - Not yet on the BBWAA ballot

^ - Currently on BBWAA ballot

- No longer on BBWAA ballot

Blue Jays: Dave Stieb#, RHP

Key fact: Blue Jays' all-time leader in wins (175), starts (408) and innings (2,873)

Orioles: Rafael Palmeiro#, 1B

Key fact: He is one of six Major Leaguers with at least 3,000 career hits and 500 home runs

Rays: Fred McGriff#, 1B

Key fact: He was a five-time All-Star, three-time Silver Slugger Award winner and a World Series champion who finished his career with 2,490 hits and 493 home runs

Red Sox: Roger Clemens#, RHP

Key fact: His seven career Cy Young Awards are two more than any other pitcher has

Yankees: Alex Rodriguez^, SS/3B

Key fact: 696 career home runs (fourth all-time)

Guardians: Kenny Lofton#, OF

Key fact: One of seven players all-time with 600 steals and 100 homers

Royals: Frank White#, 2B

Key facts: Five All-Star Games, eight Gold Glove Awards

Tigers: Lou Whitaker#, 2B

Key facts: 1978 AL Rookie of the Year Award winner, five All-Star selections, three Gold Glove Awards, four Silver Slugger Awards

Twins: Joe Mauer+, C/1B

Key fact: Will become eligible on 2024 ballot

White Sox: Dick Allen#, 1B/3B

Key fact: Among players with 7,000 career plate appearances, his 156 OPS+ places him in a tie for 14th all-time with Frank Thomas

Angels: Bobby Grich#, 2B

Key fact: He was a six-time All-Star, four-time Gold Glove winner and one-time Silver Slugger

Astros: Lance Berkman#, OF/1B

Key fact: His 52 bWAR is first among switch-hitters with fewer than 1,900 games played

Athletics: Mark McGwire#, 1B

Key fact: 583 career home runs (11th all-time)

Mariners: Alex Rodriguez^, SS/3B

Key fact: 696 career home runs (fourth all-time)

Rangers: Adrián Beltré+, 3B

Key fact: One of seven players all-time with 450 homers and 600 doubles

Braves: Dale Murphy#, OF

Key facts: Two-time NL MVP Award winner (1982 and '83), seven-time All-Star, four-time Silver Slugger, five-time Gold Glove winner

Marlins: Gary Sheffield^, OF

Key fact: Hit 509 career home runs, including 42-homer season with Marlins in 1996

Mets: Keith Hernandez#, 1B

Key fact: 11-time Gold Glove Award winner

Nationals/Expos: Jeff Reardon#, RHP

Key fact: 367 career saves (10th in MLB history)

Phillies: Dick Allen#, 1B

Key fact: He earned the 1964 NL Rookie of the Year Award, 1972 AL MVP Award and seven All-Star selections

Brewers: Ryan Braun⁺, LF

Key fact: Brewers' all-time leader with 352 home runs

Cardinals: Scott Rolen[^], 3B

Key fact: His career bWAR of 70.1 is ninth-best among third basemen all-time

Cubs: Sammy Sosa[#], OF

Key fact: Only player in MLB history to hit 60-plus homers in three seasons

Pirates: Barry Bonds[#], OF

Key fact: 762 career home runs (most in MLB history)

Reds: Pete Rose[#], OF/1B

Key fact: All-time leader in hits (4,256), games played (3,562) and at-bats (14,053)

D-backs: Curt Schilling[#], RHP

Key fact: 2.23 ERA in 19 career postseason starts, including 2.06 in seven World Series outings (split 2001 World Series MVP Award with Randy Johnson)

Dodgers: Adrián Beltré⁺, 3B

Key fact: One of seven players all-time with 450 homers and 600 doubles

Giants: Barry Bonds[#], OF

Key fact: 762 career home runs (most in MLB history)

Padres: Gary Sheffield[^], OF

Key fact: He racked up 509 homers and 60.5 WAR over 22 seasons

Rockies: Todd Helton[^], 1B

Key fact: One of eight players all-time with at least 350 homers and a .315 batting average

WHICH ADVANCED METRICS MATTER BOTH TO FRONT OFFICES AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC?

Lindsey Adler and Eno Sarris in The Athletic

Teams certainly have better metrics than we do in the public sector, but from what I've seen the gap might be smaller than some people think. The biggest difference is that the most progressive teams are now using information about how players' limbs move in order to inform their appraisal of players — and Hawk Eye has only given the league blanket data on that sort of thing for a couple of years now.

But if you look at public metrics that are meaningful quickly and are sticky year to year, you'll start to see how that lines up well with what teams are doing. For example, reach rate, or how often a player swings at balls outside the zone, becomes meaningful in small samples and is powerfully predictive of future reach rates and other plate discipline statistics. Similarly, barrel rate, or how often a player puts balls in play in the best range of launch angles and exit velocities, starts being important after 50 balls in play — and the exit velocity of one ball can be predictive as well.

Here's a simple leaderboard that shows you how teams did last year when it came to reach rate, barrel rate and runs scored.

Teams by Swing Decisions, Hit Quality

TEAM	RUNS	BARREL %	O-SWING % (SC)
			<u>Swings outside the strike zone</u>
Astros	863	7.7%	24.9%
Rays	857	8.3%	26.4%
Blue Jays	846	9.7%	27.2%
Dodgers	830	8.8%	23.5%
Red Sox	829	9.9%	30.0%
Giants	804	9.9%	24.0%
White Sox	796	7.8%	29.0%
Braves	790	9.8%	27.7%
Reds	786	9.8%	27.7%
A's	743	8.7%	25.9%
Rockies	739	6.6%	28.9%
Brewers	738	7.6%	26.1%
Phillies	734	7.2%	26.8%
Twins	729	10.2%	26.5%
Padres	729	7.6%	24.3%

Nationals	724	6.9%	24.8%
Angels	723	7.8%	29.4%
Guardians	717	7.7%	28.6%
Yankees	711	7.7%	23.8%
Cardinals	706	7.9%	27.1%
Cubs	705	7.9%	27.2%
Tigers	697	7.7%	28.7%
Mariners	697	8.2%	26.3%
Royals	686	6.9%	29.9%
D'backs	679	5.6%	26.6%
Orioles	659	7.6%	29.8%
Mets	636	7.3%	28.8%
Rangers	625	6.6%	28.6%
Marlins	623	6.4%	30.3%
Pirates	609	5.4%	25.8%

You can sort by each metric to see their power, but it's clear that the best offensive teams are good at these two skills, and so it follows that the best players are good at these two skills. From what I've seen behind the curtain, teams just have better versions of these two stats, with small innovations — along the lines of Dynamic Hard Hit Rate — to better get at the perfect contact quality and the best swing decisions.

For pitching, it's possible we're further behind the best teams, but we here at *The Athletic* developed Stuff+ and Location+ because we've seen those being used in private development labs and team contexts alike. The idea is similar to the two metrics for hitters, since Stuff+ measures the physical qualities of the pitch (a little like judging a player's quality of contact) and Location+ measures the pitcher's ability to put those pitches in the right places in the zone (a little like judging a hitter's ability to discern balls from strikes).

The best teams distance themselves from what we have publicly by using data that we don't have available to us. On the hitting side, teams have batted ball spin, which goes a long way to improving quality of contact models. On the pitching side, teams have more granular spin information, as well as information about how the pitcher is moving his limbs, and both of those can be used to make their metrics better than ours.

The hope is that, over time, this additional data is made available to us in the public sector.

What is a good WAR? What is a good wRC+? What is a legendary FIP? I need a cheat sheet to tape to my dad's armchair.

We all kind of know that .300 is a good benchmark for batting average, right? Let's work backward through a slash line a little bit. Generally, an .800 OPS is what you want to see from a pretty solid player. A 100 wRC+ is league average, so I instinctively use something around a 120 wRC+ as the mark of a really solid player, but a 130 wRC+ is Marcus Semien, Xander Bogaerts and Jose Altuve territory.

A total of 59 qualified hitters reached the .800 OPS mark in 2021, with Phillies outfielder Bryce Harper atop that group with a 1.044 mark and Jake Cronenworth of the Padres at the bottom. Cronenworth's slash line was: .266/.340/.460 — .800. His wRC+ for the season was 116 — 16 percent above league average.

Let's go now to White Sox shortstop Tim Anderson: .309/.338/.469 — .806 OPS, 120 wRC+.

Yankees outfielder Joey Gallo? .199/.351/.458 — .808 OPS, 123 wRC+.

Harper? .309/.429/.615 — 1.044 OPS, 170 wRC+.

The point is, there are a lot of ways to get to an .800 OPS. Personally, if I had a choice, I'd like to be a .300/.400/.500 hitter and call it a day. Unfortunately, only three qualified hitters reached that benchmark in 2021 — Harper, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Juan Soto. Getting to a .400 OBP is difficult. Only 10 players hit .300+/.350+/.450+ in 2021. You've heard of all of them.

As for WAR, it's a counting stat, so a player has to be on the field to be racking up wins. I consider somewhere around 3.0 WAR to be a really solid season for a hitter. You probably want a 3.0 WAR guy on your team. Pete Alonso and Eduardo Escobar were 3.0 fWAR players in 2021. Giancarlo Stanton racked up 2.6 WAR as a designated hitter, J.D. Martinez racked up 2.9 WAR. The threshold for Guys You Care About is, in my estimation, about 2.5 WAR+, depending on circumstances.

I'll take a 2.0 fWAR season from Father Time himself, Nelson Cruz. A 1.7 fWAR season from Gleyber Torres, not so much.

As for FIP, I actually don't really use it as a measurement on its own, necessarily. I'd say for reference, a sub-3.00 FIP is pretty damn good, just like a sub-3.00 ERA is pretty damn good. But I also tend to use FIP in concert with ERA — if the FIP is lower than the ERA, the pitcher is dealing with some circumstances. If the FIP is higher than the ERA, he might be giving up most of his runs on home runs but still largely suppressing runs.

I tend to think a quick way to calibrate your personal rubric or bell curve of success with these stats is to go to either your favorite team's Baseball-Reference page or the FanGraphs leaderboards and take a look there. You know who on your favorite team has been good, bad or solid, and what their skills are. You can see context on how hitters or pitchers around the league are ranking in these categories.

What is the difference between ZiPS and Steamer and any other projection models?

The most basic projection system is MARCEL, which takes a player's most recent data and weights it the most, but also takes information from previous years into account. (MARCEL weights last year five times, the year before four times, and the year before that three times.) Then MARCEL will regress each statistic to the mean, to reflect the fact that outliers usually come back to the fold. Lastly, it "ages" each statistic to reflect the fact that players get worse as they get older. The result is a projection that takes into account the player's recent production but also regresses it to the mean and ages it. That's the basic work of any projection system: account for context. How each projection system accounts for context is what makes them different.

Steamer Projections, created by Jared Cross and his students, have some similarities to MARCEL, but instead of a somewhat arbitrary weighting, Steamer runs regressions in each component statistic to see how to best weight past performance in each statistical category.

Dan Szymborski created ZiPS projections, which follow many of the same processes with some important differences. His projections find loosely defined comparison players to help individualize the aging process in the statistics, so his projections do well going long term. As an example, when trying to judge a player's playing time going forward many years, he'll include things like the player's contract and previous playing time with the team. His pitching projections are heavily influenced by Voros McCracken's DIPS theory, which holds that pitchers don't have much control over balls in play and can best be judged by Defense Independent Pitching numbers.

At Baseball Prospectus, their Deserved Run Average, which is part of the process in creating their PECOTA projections, adjusts for things like quality of opponent, quality of umpiring, weather and actual defense played behind a pitcher. Their projections also include tightly defined comparisons to like players, and include percentiles so that anyone using their numbers can see what a 90th percentile breakout outcome would look like for a similar player.

Derek Carty's THE BAT system adjusts for much of that minutiae as well, but has done well in projection tests by heavily investing in Statcast metrics most recently. These directly measured statistics can help his system group players and put them in the right context by judging the quality of their batted ball contact, as an example. In reaction to the changing properties of the ball year to year, his system also regresses the entire run environment in baseball to project the most likely situation across the sport.

Then there are meta-projections like Ariel Cohen's ATC projections, which look at all the systems out there and judge which systems do best for each component, and then weight each projection system accordingly in order to create a survey projection system, basically. Because he can look at all projections within his numbers, he can help users group players by how much the different systems disagree with each other about their future.

One last thing that changes from system to system is how they do playing time. Some project the playing time as part of the system, others use humans like the FanGraphs' depth charts to power that aspect of their projections.

Some players constantly outperform or underperform their expected stats such as xBA, xSLG and xWOBA. What factors contribute to these discrepancies?

Two things come to mind immediately, but this is not an exhaustive list, and this is a sector that's rife for more research.

One is the tricky interaction between a single player and a single home park. Alex Bregman has often outproduced his expected statistics that are based on launch angle and exit velocity. Here is where Bregman has hit his homers in his career.

That left field cluster? That's right by the Crawford Boxes, which create one of the shorter left-field situations in baseball. Bregman has made a living by ensuring that his best contact heads toward the right place in the ballpark, much like Brian Dozier once hit all those home runs to the shortest part of the park in Minnesota.

The other thing that comes up when you look at players who underperform their barrel rates is that hitters who hit more of their barrels to the opposite field tend to underperform their barrel rates. This is probably because of batted ball spin — when you hit to the opposite field, it's more likely to hit a ball that has more side to side spin, and therefore more side to side

movement, which can rob the ball of the distance required to clear the fence. Think of slices and fades both in baseball but also in golf, and what they do to the distance on that ball.

Unfortunately, we don't have batted ball spin available to us publicly, but you can see from this list of [leaders in opposite field percentage on their barrels](#) that using opposite field percentage is a useful proxy in the meantime. These are good hitters, but not the most powerful hitters in baseball, and these things are related — if you only looked at their barrel rate you might overrate their power to some extent.

What pitches are best with higher and lower spin rates?

Spin helps most pitches move more, and so it's usually good to have more spin, but it's a little more complicated than that.

For four-seamers, spin helps the pitch counteract gravity. The more the four-seamer spins, the more high pressure and slower air builds up at the bottom of the ball. Faster air at the top, with lower pressure, means the ball "rises" or just doesn't fall as much as it would otherwise. The effect, dubbed the Magnus Effect, is much like what happens to lift an airplane wing.

With a curveball, you just flip all that on its head. Now the slower air builds up on the top, and the spin is creating a force that pushes downward on the ball. There's some mild evidence that pitches that have exactly opposite spin benefit from a "spin mirroring" effect because batters can see the vertical spin but not the direction, and then the pitches diverge, one staying up and the other diving.

On changeups and sinkers, sometimes low spin can be useful to a pitch, partially because of the absence of the Magnus Effect. Take a look at one of the lower spin rate split-fingers in baseball, the one by [Ryne Stanek](#). In this graph, his split-finger is denoted by the black lines, the average split-finger is in gray, and the background shows the value of pitches in those buckets. As you can see from the red (good) areas, low spin splitters can be very effective.

The same is true for sinkers. Here's Kyle Hendricks' low-spin sinker in the same sort of graph.

As you can see here, it's still useful to have a high-spin sinker, too. The fact that spin is still useful for most pitches is probably part of why there was recently a sticky stuff scandal in baseball.

ANSWERS TRIVIA QUESTION 1, MOST CAREER WINS BY LAST NAME.

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

A: Pete Alexander, 373 wins

I'm trying to think when Grover Cleveland Alexander began to be known colloquially as Pete. I think Bill James is the one most responsible. But even now there are people who when you say "Pete Alexander" have no idea who you're talking about, but when you say "Grover Cleveland Alexander," they somehow know. ... By the way, Doyle Alexander is tied for second on this list with 194 wins, which is fun.

B: Bert Blyleven, 287 wins

Blyleven is well ahead of Three Finger Brown (239). When you look at Blyleven's jaw-dropping numbers now — 287 wins, 3,701 strikeouts, 60 shutouts — it is utterly stupefying, beyond belief even, that it took so long for him to get into the Hall of Fame. I'm not going to get into ESPN's 100 greatest players countdown because, frankly, it would be uncharitable for me to do so, but for them to leave Blyleven out sort of gives you an idea just how under-appreciated the guy still is. (And yes, he's in *The Baseball 100*.)

C: Roger Clemens, 354 wins

You will ask — well, maybe you won't ask, but I did — "How many letters are there where Steve Carlton's 329 wins are not enough to lead?" The answer is nine letters, which I have to say is way more than I expected, though some of that is because of those pitchers in the 19th Century and Deadball who piled up a lot of wins.

D: Hooks Dauss and Paul Derringer, 223 wins

Our only tie. Dauss was a small but mighty pitcher for Detroit between 1912 and 1927. They called him Hooks because of his dazzling curveball, and he averaged more than 260 innings per season from 1913 through 1923. He was soft-spoken and universally liked. Derringer, meanwhile, was a giant man with impeccable control, at least on the mound. Off the mound, he was a wild man who loved fine clothes (they called him "The Dude"), good liquor and getting into the more-than-occasional brawl. He won 20 games for the Reds each year from 1938 through 1940.

E: Dennis Eckersley, 197 wins

It is often overlooked how good a starter Eckersley was from 1975 through '85. It's true, he wasn't exactly on the Hall of Fame track, but he won 145 games by age 30. I have sometimes wondered how Eckersley as a rookie in 1975 — when he went 13-7 with a 2.60 ERA and a top 10 finish in strikeouts — did not receive a single Rookie of the Year vote. But the answer is actually simple: In those days, each writer voted for only one player for Rookie of the Year (no second- or third-place votes) and that was the year that Fred Lynn won both the Rookie of the Year AND the MVP.*

**But, interestingly enough, Lynn did not win Rookie of the Year unanimously. Well, he sort of did, but one writer split his vote between Lynn and teammate Jim Rice.*

F: Bob Feller, 266 wins

A baseball analyst named Ralph Winnie figured that if it had not been for World War II, Feller would have finished with 373 wins. Feller liked that so much he would carry around Winnie's statistical projections with him to baseball card shows and other events and show the numbers to curious fans. I know this because I was once one of those curious fans.

G: Pud Galvin, 365* wins

There are a thousand fascinating things I could tell you about Pud Galvin — including the fact that they called him “Pud” because he could turn hitters into pudding — and I’m sure I will soon. But I think the thing people might know about Galvin is that he would be injected with the Brown-Séquard elixir, which contained monkey testosterone, and this is why there’s an asterisk next to his win total. If you prefer your pitchers monkey-testosterone free, then Tom Glavine is your next choice at 305 wins.

H: Carl Hubbell, 253 wins

King Carl won 20-plus games every year for the Giants from 1933 through 1937 — and he won two MVP awards along the way. It’s wild to me that Hubbell, who was so great, is almost certainly best known for something he did in the ALL-STAR GAME. Yes, it was cool what he did — he struck out Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Foxx, Al Simmons and Joe Cronin in order. But still it’s just kind of wild that in such a great career — which included three World Series, by the way — it is an exhibition game performance that everybody remembers.

I: Hisashi Iwakuma, 63 wins

There have been stunningly few pitchers whose last name starts with “I.” Best I can tell, here’s your Top 5:

1. Iwakuma, 63 wins
2. Jason Isringhausen, 51
3. Kazuhisa Ishii, 39
4. Hideki Irabu, 34
5. Bert Inks, 27

Special shoutout to Jeff Innis, who passed away late last week. Innis won only 10 games, but he had a super-cool pitching motion and was awfully good in relief for a few years there.

J: Walter Johnson, 417 wins

There’s an argument to be made — a pretty good one, in fact — that the best right-handed pitcher and the best left-handed pitcher in baseball history were both named Johnson. Walter and Randy. Seven-hundred-twenty wins between them. Eight-thousand-three-hundred-and-eighty-four strikeouts between them. At least one dead bird between them. Sixty-one years

between them. It's a beautiful thing, baseball, the way that it flows through the years, the way that it connects 1912 with 2002, the way it joins a stocky 6-foot-1 fireballer from Humboldt, Kan., with a lanky 6-foot-10 fireballer from Livermore, Calif.*

**Why We Love Baseball. Someone should write a book with that title.*

K: Tim Keefe, 342 wins

They called him Smiling Tim because in the 1880s that's what passed for a nickname. He was a carpenter with, legend goes, a paralyzing change-up. Funny thing is that in those days, the change-up wasn't about the grip. The idea now is that you grip the ball a certain way — holding it more with the palm — and then it automatically comes out slower than the motion suggests. But back then, the change-up was truly a change-up; the pitcher gripped the ball the same way but PRETENDED to throw the ball hard when actually throwing it slow. Keefe, it is said, was the master.

L: Ted Lyons, 260 wins

What percentage of baseball fans, do you think, would know that Ted Lyons is in the Hall of Fame? It has to be less than 10%, no? Lyons was a very good pitcher; he spent his whole career with the White Sox from 1923 through '46, and he became known as "Sunday Teddy" because he would generally pitch once a week — on Sundays. He called his go-to pitch a "sailer" — it was a fastball that he threw with very little spin (almost a knuckleball, which he also threw) so that it would appear to sail away from the hitter.

M: Christy Mathewson, 373 wins

So Greg Maddux is definitely our hard-luck pitcher — his 355 wins are good for only second place because of Matty. It's a hard-luck life, being a pitcher with a last name starting with M. Juan Marichal with 243 wins would be the leader if his name were Darichal or Quarichal or Tarichal, but in the Ms he's only good for 11th place behind, among others, Mathews, Mullane, Mussina, Moyer, Morris, McGinnity and Martinez.

N: Kid Nichols, 362 wins

Phil Niekro is second on the list with 318 wins. Joe Niekro is third with 221.

O: Al Orth, 204 wins

Like Tim Lincecum, Orth was also known as a smiler — Smiling Al the Curveless Wonder. As the nickname suggests, he simply did not throw a curveball. And he didn't have much of a fastball, either. What he did have was either a tantalizing slow ball or the weirdest damn spitball anyone ever threw. Branch Rickey said that Orth's spitball, instead of breaking down, broke sideways. Whatever he threw, it was good enough to keep him in the big leagues for 15 years.

P: Eddie Plank, 326 wins

Eddie Plank was a character. He had no pickoff move because he did not believe in throwing the ball to first base. "There are only so many pitches in this old arm," he told a teammate. He would constantly remind himself — out loud — how many outs were left in the game. He would talk to the baseball too. He also was known for taking forever between pitches — or at least what was considered "forever" more than 100 years ago. I suspect that if he played today, he'd be considered a fast worker.

By the way, I have no doubt that the right answer here is Satchel Paige, who figured he probably won around 2,000 games over his career.

Q: Jack Quinn, 247 wins

I guessed that this would be Jose Quintana, who is actually second on the list with 83 wins. That's because I forgot all about Jack Quinn, one of only two big-league players born in Slovakia (the other was Elmer Valo). He had a colorful and long career — he pitched in the big leagues for eight teams over 23 years. He was a spitballing maestro; so much so that when the spitball was outlawed in 1921, Quinn was one of the few whose spitter was grandfathered in. The guy was still throwing the spitball in 1933.

R: Nolan Ryan, 324 wins

I was proud to be a small part of the documentary "[Facing Nolan](#)," which will be premiering at South by Southwest in March.

S: Warren Spahn, 363 wins

You probably know this story, but it's always worth repeating — Willie Mays got off to a horrible start in his big league career. He went 0-for-5 in his first game against Bubba Church and the Philadelphia Phillies. Next day he went 0-for-3, and the day after that he went 0-for-4 — the guy went 0-for-12 in Philadelphia.

"He looks like he'll be a real good ball player," Phillies manager Eddie Sawyer said. "But it seemed to me he's not quite ready."

The next day, the Giants came home to play the Braves, and Warren Spahn was pitching.

First time up, Mays crashed a long home run over the left-field roof at the Polo Grounds.

Spahn threw a shutout the rest of the game and won easily. But, as the year went on, he never stopped regretting that home run.

"His first major league hit was a home run off of me, and I'll never forgive myself," he would say. "We might have gotten rid of Willie forever if I'd only struck him out."

T: Frank Tanana, 240 wins

This one is dedicated to my friend Howard, the world's biggest Frank Tanana fan. Tanana was something else — a fireballer as a young man, a junkballer as an old man, he seemed on his way to the Hall of Fame, he seemed on his way out, it was one remarkable ride. Put it this way — in 1975, he went 16-9 and struck out 9.4 batters per nine innings, the best rate in baseball (he also led the league in strikeouts). Sixteen years later, he went 13-12 and struck out 4.4 batters per nine innings.

U: George Uhle, 200 wins

George Uhle might have invented the slider. Waite Hoyt insisted that he did. Uhle himself wasn't exactly sure about that — at some point, he thought, pretty much every pitch that moved a little was called a slider — but he did take credit for inventing the slider name. Two things about Uhle. One, he was a Clevelander, through and through, and every now and again when I was growing up in Cleveland, the paper would do a little story about him. He seemed really colorful. The other thing is that Babe Ruth once called him the toughest pitcher he ever faced (Though Ruth did hit .336 off Uhle).

V: Justin Verlander, 226 wins

A few years ago, he passed Dazzy Vance (197 wins). There have actually been a surprising number of terrific pitchers with V names — Viola, Valenzuela, Vasquez, Vander Meer, even Cy Young winner Pete Vuckovich.

W: Mickey Welch, 307 wins

You won't believe this — his nickname was Smiling Mickey. Seriously. What's the deal with great pitchers of the 19th century all being called "Smiling"? Welch was a little guy, no taller than 5-foot-8, and he pitched without a windup. He pitched 574 innings for the Troy Rojans in his first season (going 34-30) and he twice pitched 500-plus innings after he came to play for the Giants.

X: David Price(?), 155 wins

Well, he called himself X — closest thing as there has ever been to a big league pitcher whose last name started with X. I believe Xavier Hernandez (40 wins) has the most wins for a pitcher with a first name starting with X.

Y: Cy Young, 511 wins

Next on the list — Chris Young with 79.

Z: Tom Zachary, 186 wins

I would have guessed Barry Zito or Carlos Zambrano, who are second and third on the list. Tom Zachary was a knuckleball-throwing lefty who pitched for seven different teams between 1918 and 1936. He won 18 games in 1921 for Washington and never won that many again, but he is best known for his 1929 season with the Yankees. That year he went 12-0 in one of the more remarkable feats of luck in baseball history.

May 7: Entered in the eighth inning with the Yankees losing 5-4 to St. Louis. The Yankees scored two in the ninth to win it (1-0).

May 25: Pitched a nine-inning complete game against Boston; he allowed 13 hits and four walks but somehow held the Red Sox to three runs and the Yankees won big (2-0).

July 9: Entered a tie game against St. Louis in the bottom of the fifth, and gave up two singles, a double and a walk in 1 1/3 innings, but somehow kept the Browns scoreless. The Yankees scored three runs in the top of the seventh and Zachary was credited with the win (3-0).

July 13: Threw nine innings against the White Sox and despite giving up nine hits and striking out zero, he held Chicago to two runs and got the win (4-0).

July 19: Another complete game, this one at Cleveland, eight hits, four walks but only two runs as the Yankees breezed (5-0).

July 28: Entered the game against St. Louis in the sixth and pitched seven scoreless innings; the Yankees won in the 12th (6-0).

Aug. 4: A complete-game shutout against Cleveland — again didn't strike out a single batter (7-0).

Aug. 10: Pitched 5 1/3 innings at Cleveland, gave up eight hits but only two runs — Babe Ruth homered and the Yankees won (8-0).

Aug. 20: Made it 6 2/3 innings against Chicago, allowed four runs, but the Yankees scored five, even with Babe Ruth going 0-for-5 (9-0).

Sept. 1: Complete game at Boston, gave up 14 hits and four runs, but Ruth homered and Tony Lazzeri hit two homers and the Yankees won again (10-0).

Sept. 15: Maybe Zachary's best game of the season, a four-hit shutout against Cleveland (11-0).

Sept. 24: One more complete-game performance, nine hits, three runs, one strikeout and the Yankees won 5-3 (12-0).

Crazily, the 1929 Yankees did not go to the World Series — the first Yankees team since 1925 to not win the pennant. They actually finished a distant second behind Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics.

ANSWERS TRIVIA QUESTION 2 – NAME THE 21 MULTIPLE CY YOUNG AWARD WINNERS

21 pitchers won multiple cy young awards—how many can you name?

Roger Clemens (7 Cy Young Awards)

Randy Johnson (5)

Greg Maddux (4)

Steve Carlton (4)

Max Scherzer (3)

Clayton Kershaw (3)

Pedro Martinez (3)

Jim Palmer (3)

Tom Seaver (3)

Sandy Koufax (3)

2 each:

Jacob deGrom (NL 2018-19)

Justin Verlander (AL 2011, '19)

Corey Kluber (AL 2014, '17)

Roy Halladay (AL 2003, NL 2010)

Tim Lincecum (NL 2008-09)

Johan Santana (AL 2004, '06)

Tom Glavine (NL 1991, '98)

Bret Saberhagen (AL 1985, '89)

Gaylord Perry (AL 1972, NL 1978)

Bob Gibson (NL 1968, '70)

Denny McLain (AL 1968-69)

HOUSEKEEPING

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