

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

3.13.2022

Life just got much better. We have labor peace, spring training about to start, opening day set for April 7 and college baseball up and running.

This week features lots of shorter factoids and a quiz. Before you change your clocks, kick back and enjoy reading about baseball.

Reader question of the week--*Who are players whose careers were far better than their statistics would indicate? Joe Morgan pops out for me.* Let's open the question to our subscribers—hit me with a name and a paragraph on why. We'll publish the best arguments in the coming weeks.

And more reader feedback--*I loved the stats that one of your readers related to miles, regarding Hank Aaron's total base count over Stan Musial. (pointing out Aaron's total bases difference added up to 12 miles).*

Here is a different take on it.....722 = 180 more HR's, or 240 more Triples, or 361 more Doubles or simply 722 more singles. Quite a difference from Aaron to Musial and then to everyone else who ever played MLB. Amazing.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA QUIZ

Top HR hitters by decade. Player hit majority of his HRs that decade for the listed team. Must answer both or all three players for correct answer. Answers are below in the HRs by Decade piece.

1. Blue Jays had 2 of top 10 HR hitters in 2010's.
2. A's had 2 of the top 10 in 1990's
3. Giants had 2 of the top 10 in the 1990's
4. Red Sox had 2 of the top 10 in the 1980's
5. Tigers had 2 of the top 10 in the 1980's.
6. Reds had 2 of the top 10 in the 1970's
7. Giants had 3 of the top 10 in the 1960's
8. Dodgers had 2 of the top 10 in the 1950's
9. Yankees had 2 of the top 10 in the 1950's.
10. Red Sox had 2 of the top 10 in the 1940's.
11. Yankees had 3 of the top 10 in the 1940's.
12. Yankees had 2 of the top 10 in the 1930's.
13. A's had 3 of top 10 in 1930's.
14. Yankees had 3 of the top 10 in the 1920's.
15. Cardinals had 2 of the top 10 in the 1920's.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Another unlikely to be broken--Most pitching wins for a rookie--**Grover Cleveland Alexander** went 28-13 for the Phillies in 1911.

You can probably win a beer betting they can't name the four Astros pitchers who struck out 300+ batters in a season--**J.R. Richard** (1978, '79), **Mike Scott** (1986), **Gerrit Cole** (2019) and **Justin Verlander** (2019).

Since **Don Mattingly**'s retirement after the 1995 season most games at first base for the Yankees--**Tino Martinez** with 959 starts; **Mark Teixeira** is second with 898.

Mattingly is 10th in Yankees games played behind **Jeter, Mantle, Gehrig, Berra, Ruth, Bernie Williams, Roy White, Posada and Bill Dickey**.

In 1987, Mattingly hit a record six grand slam home runs, Interestingly, these were the only grand slams in his 14-year career. In 1987, Mattingly also set the record of eight consecutive games with a home run. Two of the grand slams were part of that streak.

Ron Hassey was a lefty batting catcher for 7 teams 1978-1991. Hassey caught **Len Barker**'s perfect game for Indians in 1981 and **Dennis Martinez**'s perfect game for Expos in 1991.

On April 14, 1925, at Shibe Park in Philadelphia, **Lefty Grove** and **Mickey Cochrane** not only formed a battery, they both made their major league debut. It was the first of 224 games together for the future Hall of Famers in nine years on the Athletics.

Lefty and Mickey led the A's to three straight pennants from 1929 to 1931, and the championship in 1929 and 1930. Both players are in the Hall of Fame.

2008 Name change worked:

Tampa Bay Devil Rays	645-972	winning pct .399
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Tampa Bay Rays	1,181-986	winning pct .545
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Ralph Kiner won the NL HR crown as a Pirates rookie in 146, then proceeded to lead the NL in HRs the next six seasons.

Mark McGwire is the only player ever traded in the middle of a 50+ HR season (in 1997 he hit 58 HRs for the A's and the Cardinals).

McGwire hit his 400th home run and his 500th home run in consecutive years (1998 and 1999).

McGwire also holds the rookie record for home runs when he hit 49 in 1987.

The three players who hit a home run as a teenager and also after the age of 40 are **Ty Cobb**, **Rusty Staub**, and **Gary Sheffield**.

Reggie Jackson is the only member of the 500 HR club to never have back-to-back seasons of 30+ HRs.

Eddie Murray's career high for HRs in a season was 33, lowest of any member of the 500 HR club.

The youngest player to hit at least 40 home runs in a season in the 20th Century was **Eddie Matthews** when hit 47 home runs for the Braves in 1953 at age of 21.

The only player to homer in his first two plate appearances in the World Series was **Gene Tenace** of the Oakland Athletics in 1972.

In the at-bat before **Hank Aaron** broke **Babe Ruth**'s career home run record, he topped **Willie Mays**' National League record for runs scored. Aaron began the 1974 season with 2,060 runs scored, two runs behind Mays. On April 14 at Cincinnati, Aaron tied Ruth by hitting his 714th home run. He also scored two runs in that game to pull even with Mays. On April 18 in Atlanta, Aaron walked and scored a run in the second inning to pass Mays and then broke Ruth's record by hitting a home run in the fourth inning.

Bernie Williams and **Jorge Posada** are the only teammates to hit home runs from each side of the plate in the same game. This feat occurred on April 23, 2000 against the Toronto Blue Jays.

In 2008, **Alex Rodriguez** completed his 12th season with at least 100 RBIs and 35 home runs breaking Babe Ruth's record

Joe Adcock, Lou Brock, Henry Aaron -- All three of these players are credited with hitting a home run into the centerfield bleachers in the Polo Grounds. What makes these home runs tape measure shots is the centerfield bleachers were 473 feet from home plate. It is believed that these were the only three players to accomplish this feat. An interesting fact is that Brock and Aaron hit their home runs on successive nights in 1963. Adcock hit his home run in 1953.

"Guinness Book of World Records". According to this source of records:

"**Mickey Mantle**'s home run on April 17, 1953 hit at Griffith Stadium which traveled 565-feet is considered the longest home run ever measured."

"Guinness also notes that Mickey's 643-foot homer hit at Detroit's Tiger Stadium on September 10, 1960 is the longest home run measured mathematically after the fact."

On May 24, 1936, **Tony Lazzeri** of the New York Yankees was the first player to hit two grand slams in one game.

Robin Ventura hit 18 grand slams in his career. His total number of career home runs is 294. He is the only player with at least 13 grand slams who did not hit 300 home runs in his career. **Joe Rudi** and **Rudy York** had 12 grand slams and less than 300 home runs.

On September 4, 1995, Robin hit two grand slams for the Chicago White Sox in one game. On May 20, 1999, playing for the Mets, he hit two grand slams on the same day in a doubleheader, one in each game.

4 HRs in one game. Five Hall of Famers did it. They are **Lou Gehrig** (06/03/1932), **Ed Delahanty** (07/13/1896), **Chuck Klein** (07/10/1936), **Willie Mays** (04/30/1961), and **Mike Schmidt** (04/17/1976).

Hoyt Wilhelm, the famous knuckleball pitcher, hit a home run during his first at-bat then had a twenty-one year career without hitting another home run.

Todd Zeile owns the MLB record of hitting a home run for the most different teams. His 253 home runs were spread among 11 different teams – St Louis (75), Chicago Cubs (9), Philadelphia Phillies (20), Los Angeles Dodgers (38), Florida Marlins (6), Texas (30), New York Mets (41), Colorado (18), New York Yankees (6), Baltimore (5), and Montreal (5). Zeile's final home run was also the last homer given up by a Montreal Expo pitcher. In his last at-bat of his career, Zeile connected off of **Claudio Vargas** in the sixth inning of the Mets 8-1 victory over Montreal at Shea Stadium. The

John Miller hit only two home runs in 61 at-bats. However, his first home run came in his first at-bat and his last home run came in his last at-bat. The first home run came playing for the Yankees in 1966. His last home run came playing for the Dodgers in 1969.

Johnny Mize in 1947, hit 51 homers and struck out 42 times.

It's been almost 27 years since the spring day in Palm Beach, Fla., when [Major League Baseball](#) owners, mired in the longest labor dispute in league history, unanimously voted to expand to 30 teams. That was March 9, 1995. The [Diamondbacks](#) and Devil Rays debuted in 1998. Since then, 22 clubs have appeared in at least one World Series, with 15 different winners across 24 seasons. The eight teams that have not played in the series since 1995: **Reds, Pirates, Orioles, Twins, Blue Jays, Brewers, Mariners, A's.**

Could you name the Dodgers' career wins leaders in order?

Don Sutton (233)

Don Drysdale (209)

Dazzy Vance (190)

Clayton Kershaw (185)

THE RYAN EXPRESS

Nolan Ryan never won a Cy Young. He did finish in the top 5 six times.

He is also one of 8 pitchers who won 100+ games for more than one team:

Nolan Ryan 138 wins for Angels, 106 wins for Astros. 324-292 record with seven no-hitters and 11 strikeout titles. Ryan had a 300-strikeout season when he was 25, and his sixth and final 300-K season when he was 42.

Pete Alexander 190 wins for Phillies, 128 wins for Cubs. 373-208 record, won 30 games three times, and topped 25 wins six times.

Lefty Grove 195 wins for A's, 105 wins for Red Sox. 300-141 record, was named Most Valuable Player in 1931 when he went 31-4. He was 4-2 with a 1.75 ERA in the World Series.

Dennis Martinez 108 wins for Orioles, 100 wins for Expos. 245-193 record; tossed a perfect game, and has the most wins by a Latin pitcher in MLB history.

Greg Maddux 194 wins for Braves, 133 wins for Cubs. 355-227 record, four Cy Youngs (consecutive), and 16 Gold Gloves.

Randy Johnson 130 wins for Mariners, 118 wins for Diamondbacks. 303-166 record. Big Unit won five Cy Young Awards, four of them after the age of 35. He ranks second all-time in strikeouts, and he tossed a perfect game.

Mike Mussina 147 wins for Orioles, 123 wins for Yankees. 270-153 record, he won at least 15 games in a season eleven times.

CC Sabathia 134 wins for Yankees, 106 wins for Indians. 251-161 record, won the Cy Young Award in 2007 with Cleveland. He set the American League record for strikeouts by a lefthander, breaking the previous record held by Mickey Lolich.

BERT CAMPANERIS PLAYS ALL 9 POSITIONS IN ONE GAME

Last week we hit on Bert Campaneris and stolen bases. I loved his baseball card with the fancy green and gold uniforms. At age 9 I remember when he played all 9 positions.

As six-time All-Star [Bert Campaneris](#) turned 80 years old [on Wednesday](#), it's the perfect time to take a look back at his historic performance for the A's in a Sept. 8, 1965, game against the Angels.

It was on that night that Campaneris -- then just a 23-year-old in his first full big league season - became the first player in AL/NL history to play all nine positions in the same game. Only four other players have accomplished the feat since: **Cesar Tovar** (Sept. 22, 1968), **Scott Sheldon** (Sept. 6, 2000), **Shane Halter** (Oct. 1, 2000) and **Andrew Romine** (Sept. 30, 2017).

But it wasn't all fun and games for Campy and Co. that evening at Kansas City's Municipal Stadium.

Though the visiting California Angels had long ago bid farewell to any postseason hopes, they took exception to what they felt was a gimmick -- and they weren't exactly wrong. **Charles Finley**, owner of the last-place Kansas City Athletics, had orchestrated the entire idea, even taking out a \$1 million insurance policy on Campaneris ahead of the big event.

The motive was simple: sell a lot of tickets. And it worked.

More than 21,000 fans showed up to watch an otherwise insignificant Wednesday night game in early September between clubs with sub-.500 records. To put that in perspective, only 1,271 fans came out the following night to watch the same two teams.

As for the game itself, the A's couldn't have scripted a better start. Campaneris played his natural shortstop position during a 1-2-3 top of the first inning, then worked a leadoff walk, stole second and later scored the game's first run on **Ed Charles'** double in the bottom half.

Things remained relatively uneventful over the next handful of innings. Campaneris shifted to second base for the second inning, third base for the third, left field for the fourth and center field for the fifth.

It was in the sixth inning, however, when the spotlight really started to zero in on Campaneris. With two outs and a runner on first in a 1-1 ballgame, Campaneris -- now playing right field -- dropped a routine fly off the bat of **Jim Fregosi**, allowing **Albie Pearson** to score from first.

Two innings later, Campaneris ran into more trouble while making the first -- and what proved to be only -- pitching appearance of his big league career. After retiring his cousin, **Jose Cardenal**, to start the eighth, Campaneris walked the next two batters -- each on four pitches -- before serving up an RBI single to Fregosi.

"He has a fair curve, but he's some kind of wild," Fregosi told the Press-Telegram at the time. "Baby, you had to stay loose up there."

Campaneris escaped further damage by initiating an inning-ending strike-'em-out, throw-'em-out double play.

It's when Campaneris put on the catcher's gear to cross off his final position in the ninth that things really got interesting.

Ed Kirkpatrick, a 20-year-old making his season debut after being recalled from Triple-A Seattle, started the frame with a single. He then immediately put Campaneris' arm to the test, successfully swiping second base.

With two outs and Kirkpatrick at third, the Halos outfielder took off for the plate on a pitch to Cardenal, who was batting. Campaneris scrambled in front of the dish to tag out Kirkpatrick, who crashed into the A's super utility man in an attempt to jar the ball loose.

Campaneris, who held onto the ball for the inning-ending out, jumped to his feet and appeared ready to go after Kirkpatrick, only to be restrained by Cardenal.

"They threw rocks, beer cans and what looked like chicken bones," Kirkpatrick told the Press-Telegram. "I thought Campaneris was going to swing. Then, someone grabbed him. I wasn't going to swing first. After all, he was blocking the plate. I suppose I should stop and let him tag me."

Though the A's would rally to tie the game with a pair of runs in the bottom of the ninth, Campaneris wouldn't be around to see how it played out. While the Angels battled their way to a 5-3 win in 13 innings, Campaneris was on his way to St. Luke's Hospital after injuring his left shoulder in the collision.

Campaneris avoided a serious injury, returning to the lineup a week later, but it certainly wasn't the ideal ending to a night when he forever etched his name into the record books.

MORE OVER THE TOP STATS

A subscriber recommended these from overtimeheroics.net

Barry Bonds's 2004 Season

If you want to talk about ridiculous baseball stats, Barry Bonds's 2004 season is full of them. First off, Barry Bonds drew more intentional walks than the the AL leader had in just walks. Bonds was intentionally walked 120 times. The AL leader, [Eric Chavez](#), had 95 walks.

In his preposterous 2004 season, Bonds reached base more times than he took an at-bat. He took 373 at-bats. Bonds walked 232 times, had 129 hits, was hit by a pitch 9 times, and reached base by error 6 times. Adding that all together, Bonds reached base 376 times. He reached base three more times than he stepped up to the plate.

Now he never won a triple crown, but Barry Bonds led the MLB in WAR, Offensive WAR, On-Base %, Slugging %, On-Base Plus Slugging, Walks, Adjusted OPS+, Runs Created, Intentional Walks, Adj. Batting Runs, and Adj. Batting Wins. Leading in all of these statistics gives Bonds a case for the best offensive season of all time.

He did not lead the league in average, but hit .362. He also did not lead the league in RBIs and Home Runs, but hit 41 dingers with 101 runs batted in. It's tough to lead in those categories when you are getting walked on almost 40% of his plate appearances.

If you go 2-5 with a single and a home run every single game of the season, you'll end up with a worse OPS than Barry Bonds in 2004. With the 2-5 each game with a single and a homer, that is a 1.400 OPS, Bonds had a 1.422 OPS.

An INSANE Jamie Moyer Statistic

When he retired, [Jamie Moyer](#) had faced 8.9% of all MLB hitters ever. By the time Jamie Moyer retired, about 19,000 different hitters have played in the MLB. Moyer faced 8.9% of them, that's roughly 1,700 different batters faced. 1,700! I guess that's the type of stat you get when you pitch for 25 years.

Tony Gwynn

'Mr. Padre' hit .338 over his entire career. Every other hitter that hit at least .338 over their career started before 1940. (Via Jeff Passan)

For Gwynn's career average to drop below .300, Gwynn would have to add 1,183 hitless at-bats to his career, roughly the equivalent of two full seasons. (Via aceballstats)

Eleven times Tony Gwynn did not strike out in 20 games straight. The longest streak of which was 39 games straight without a strikeout in 1995.

With two strikes in the count, Gwynn hit .302. Now that stat was introduced in 1988, but Gwynn has the best career average since its introduction. The next closest? Wade Boggs, hitting 42 points lower than Gwynn.

Gwynn had 45 career four-hit games. Eleven more games than his 34 multi-strikeout games.

Rickey Henderson

On the all-time steals list, the difference between number 1 all time ([Rickey Henderson](#) – 1406) and number 2 ([Lou Brock](#) – 938) is the same as Brock and number 46 ([Jimmy Rollins](#) – 470).

Mariano Rivera

More men have walked on the moon (12) than the amount of earned runs given up by [Mariano Rivera](#) in the postseason (11).

Greg Maddux

Greg Maddux faced 20,421 batters in his career. Only 133 of them saw a 3-0 count.

Maddux allowed as many home runs in his first five seasons with the Braves (1156 innings) as [Bronson Arroyo](#) did in 2011.

Maddux once threw 76 pitches in a complete game. 83 percent of those 76 pitches were strikes. He went to a two-ball count only twice, and he did not throw a ball in the third or fifth innings.

All Maddux stats acquired via [sbnation.com](#)

Nolan Ryan

Entering the 2019 season, 354 pitchers in MLB history struck out at least 1,183 in their career. [Nolan Ryan](#) struck out 1,183 DIFFERENT batters in his career.

Nolan Ryan struck out 163 different batters at least 10 times

[Edgar Martinez](#) struck out in 53% of his at-bats against Nolan Ryan. He struck out in 17% of his at-bats against everyone else.

[80sbaseball.com](#)

[Overtime Heroics – Made By The Fans, For The Fans](#)

HIT HOME RUNS IN FOUR DIFFERENT DECADES

Omar Vizquel, Ted Williams, Willie McCovey and Rickey Henderson all homered in 4 different decades. (from baseballroundtable.com)

- Timing can be crucial – all four members of the Four Decade HR Club began their MLB careers in the final year of a decade. Ted Williams (1939); Willie McCovey (1959); Rickey Henderson (1979); Omar Vizquel (1989).
 - Two of the four players (Williams and McCovey) played just one season in both the first AND final decades of their four-decade HR streaks.
 - Williams, McCovey and Henderson are all in the Hall of Fame.
 - Vizquel is the only one of the four without at least one MVP Award (Williams earned two).
 - Williams (Red Sox) is the only member of the four-decade homer club to play his entire career with one team.
 - Williams and McCovey have the most home runs of any club members (tied at 521), Vizquel the fewest (80).
 - Rickey Henderson played for the most teams (nine) as he worked his way into the “Home Runs in Four Decades Club.”
 - Just coming in under the wire: Willie McCovey qualified with just one home run in the 1980s; Rickey Henderson with just one in the 1970’s; and Omar Vizquel with just a single round tripper in the 1980’s. *Note: Vizquel also had just two long balls in the 2010 decade.*
 - Rickey Henderson’s first and last MLB home runs, appropriately, came as the lead-off hitter in the first inning. He hit a record 81 round trippers leading off a game for his team.
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- CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR--**Ken Griffey, Jr.** began his career as a 19-year-old rookie in 1989 – going .264-16-61. By his final season (2010), he had belted 630 home runs and gone deep in the decades of the 1980’s, 1990’s and 2000’s. In 2010, his final season (at 40-years-old), he played in 33 games for the Mariners, but did not homer.

HOME RUN LEADERS BY DECADE

We have done pieces on HR leaders by decade before—here is another look plus the quiz answers.

To give you an idea what a leap ahead in power numbers **Babe Ruth** was, the HR leader from 1900-1909 was Philadelphia A's outfielder **Harry Davis** who hit 67 HRs in the decade. From 1910-1919 the decade's HR leader was Phillies outfielder **Clifford Gavy Cravath** with 116.

Ruth notched it up a bit with 467 HRs from 1920-1929. The 1920s were all about Babe Ruth, who out-homered the number-two man on the decade list by more than 200 home runs. In 1920, Ruth broke his own season home run record of 29, crashing an unimagined 54; and he broke that record twice more in the decade. To further illustrate the Bambino's dominance, there were fourteen 40+ homer seasons in the decade and Ruth had nine of them (as well as 7 of 8 of the 45+ homer seasons). In 1920 and 1927, the Yankee slugger actually out-homered every other AL team.

1920-1929

Babe Ruth 467 (714)

Rogers Hornsby 250 (301)

Cardinals' second baseman Rogers Hornsby led the NL in homers twice in the decade (42 in 1922 and 39 in 1925), but is better known for his seven batting titles in the 1920s – and for topping .400 three times. Only Ty Cobb, Ed Delahanty and Hornsby can boast three .400+ qualifying seasons. Ruth led Hornsby for the decade lead by 467-250.

1930-1939

Jimmie Foxx 415 (534)

Lou Gehrig 347 (493)

Mel Ott 308 (511)

Jimmie Foxx manned first base, third base and catcher for the Philadelphia Athletics and Boston Red Sox during the '30s, and nabbed four HR titles in the decade, topping 50 homers twice. During his career, he hit at least thirty homers in 12 consecutive seasons.

Yankee first baseman Lou Gehrig grabbed three AL home run titles during the same span, and while he never hit 50 HRs in a season, he did reach 49 twice in the decade.

Over in the NL, Giants' outfielder Mel Ott captured five HR titles in the 1930s, despite never reaching forty homers in a season (he did park a career-high 42 long balls in 1929).

1940-1949

Ted Williams 234 (521)

Johnny Mize 217 (359)

No, there wasn't a power outage in the 1940s, there was World War II and the decade's HR leader, Ted Williams, lost three years to military service. In the seven seasons he did play, The Red Sox' Splendid Splinter won four HR titles and averaged just over 33 homers a campaign. His .406 average in 1941 marks the last time an MLB batting champion finished at .400 or better.

Number-two on the decade's dinger list, Johnny Mize, also lost three years to military service. In the 1940s, he still managed three NL HR titles (for the Cardinals and the Giants) and hit a career-high 51 long balls in 1947.

1950-1959

Duke Snider	326 (407)
Gil Hodges	310 (370)
Eddie Mathews	299 (512)
Mickey Mantle	280 (536)

A pair of Dodgers topped the decade of the 1950s – centerfielder Duke Snider and first baseman Gil Hodges were number one and two in home runs – despite winning only one HR title between them (Snider with 43 in 1956). Snider did reach 40 homers five straight seasons, collecting 207 of his round trippers from 1953 to 1957.

The Brooklyn/LA pair were followed by a couple of power-hitting future Hall of Famers in Braves' third baseman Eddie Mathews and Yankees' centerfielder Mickey Mantle, who came up to the majors in 1952 and 1951, respectively. Mantle won three AL HR crowns in the decade, while Mathews led the NL twice. A couple of notes of interest, Mathews is the only player to play for the same franchise in three cities (Boston, Atlanta, Milwaukee Braves) and was on the cover of the first issue of *Sports Illustrated* (August 16, 1954);

1960-1969

Harmon Killebrew	393 (573)
Hank Aaron	375 (755)
Willie Mays	350 (660)

Washington Senator/Minnesota Twin Harmon Killebrew led all of MLB with 393 homers in the 1960s, topping 40 six times during the decade – in which he also led the AL in homers six times. In 1965, Killebrew was elected to start at first base for AL All Star team, becoming the first player elected to an All Star Team at three positions (Killebrew had previously been elected to start at 3B and LF).

The number-two home run hitter of the decade was Milwaukee/Atlanta Braves' outfielder Hank Aaron, whose 375 HRs led the NL. Hank hit 40 or more five times during the decade, capturing three NL HR titles.

Third on the list for the '60s is Giants' centerfielder Willie Mays, who also took three HR titles and is the only one of the top three to reach the seats 50 times in a season (52 in 1965).

1970-1979

Willie Stargell	296 (475)
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Reggie Jackson	292 (563)
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Johnny Bench	290 (389)
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Pirates' outfielder Willie Stargell won two league HR titles on his way to an MLB-tops 296 home runs in the 1970s.

Reggie Jackson, who spent time in the 1970s with the Athletics and the Yankees, finished second during the decade with 292 homers – despite never reaching forty in that ten-year span (he did top 40 twice in his career). During the decade, Jackson led the AL with 32 HRs in 1973 and 36 in 1975. On another career note, Jackson is the only member of the 500-HR club to never hit 30 or more homers in consecutive seasons.

Cincinnati catcher Johnny Bench captured two HR titles and two NL MVP awards, while hitting 290 long balls in the decade.

1980-1989

Mike Schmidt	313 (548)
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Dale Murphy	308 (398)
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Eddie Murray	274 (504)
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Mike Schmidt was “winding down” his career in the 1980s (1989 was his last season) and would have gone well beyond his 313 HR total for the decade if it hadn't been for reduced playing time and only 18 home runs his final two seasons. Still, the Phillies' third baseman did earn five of his eight home run titles and all three of his NL MVP Awards during the decade.

Braves' centerfielder Dale Murphy finished second to Schmidt in 1980s' long balls, with two HR titles and a high of 44 in 1987. Murphy also earned consecutive NL MVP Awards in 1982-83.

Eddie Murray won only one HR title in his career, with 22 homers for the Orioles in the strike-shortened 1981 season.

1990-1999

Mark McGwire	405 (583)
Ken Griffey, Jr.	382 (630)
Barry Bonds	361 (762)
Albert Belle	351 (381)

The Athletics/Cardinals' Mark McGwire topped 400 homers for the decade, despite hitting a total of only 18 in the 1993-94 seasons (when he played only 74 games). He led the league in homers three times in the decade; and led all of baseball with 58 homers in 1997, but led neither league (he was traded at the end of July after hitting 34 homers for the AL Athletics, and went on to hit 24 for the NL Cardinals). McGwire is the only player to be traded in the midst of a 50-homer season. McGwire hit 245 homers in the last four seasons of the decade, including a high of 70 for the Cardinals in 1998. During that stretch he homered a remarkable once in every 8.5 at bats. Ken Griffey, Jr. played the entire decade with the Seattle Mariners, leading the AL in homers four times. From July 20 to July 28, 1983 Griffey homered in eight straight games, tying a MLB record (Don Mattingly/1987 and Dale Long/1956).

All-time career and single-season home run leader Barry Bonds (who patrolled the outfield for the Pirates and Giants in the 1990s) surprisingly led the NL in homers only twice in his career and just once in the decade of the '90s (46 in 1993). Of course, leading the NL in walks twelve times (five times in the 1990s) may have something to do with that. Notably, Bonds is the career leader in intentional walks (688). As of 2013, Hank Aaron ranked second (293) and still active Albert Pujols third (275).

Albert Belle played outfield/DH for the Indians, White Sox and Orioles during the 1990s. He led the AL in home runs in 1995 – also becoming the only player to hit 50 or more doubles and 50 or more homers in the same season.

2000-2009

Alex Rodriguez	435 (654)
Jim Thome	368 (612)
Albert Pujols	366 (492)

The 2000s' HR leader, Alex Rodriguez, played for three teams over the course of the decade: Seattle Mariners (2000), Texas Rangers (2001-03) and New York Yankees (2004-09). He led the AL in home runs five times in that span, topping 50 three times. In 2001, Rodriguez hit 52 home

runs setting a new MLB single-season record for shortstops (the Cubs' **Ernie Banks** had the previous high at 47). Rodriguez broke his own record with 57 round trippers in 2002 and remains the only shortstop to hit 50 or more homers in a season. (His third 50-homer season – 54 HRs – came in 2007 as a third baseman.)

First baseman/DH Jim Thome spent time with four teams during the decade: Cleveland Indians (2000-2002); Philadelphia Phillies (2003-05); Chicago White Sox (2006-09); LA Dodgers (late 2009). He won his only home run crown with the Phillies (47 HRs in 2003) and hit 52 dingers for the Indians in 2002.

Albert Pujols started his MLB career with a bang in 2001 – collecting 37 home runs, 130 RBI and a .329 average as a rookie. For the decade, he never hit fewer than 32 home runs, plated fewer than 116 RBIs or hit under .314 in any season. He won the NL home run crown in 2009. Now primarily a first baseman, Pujols came up as a player without a position (other than a predominant spot in the batter's box). In 2001, he played 39 games in left field, 39 in right field, 42 at first base and 55 at third base. In 2002, he spent most of his time in left field, but also played first base, third base and even notched a few innings in right field and at shortstop.

2010-2019

Nelson Cruz 346

Edwin Encarnacion 335

Giancarlo Stanton 308

Albert Pujols 290

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA QUIZ

Top HR hitters by decade. Player hit majority of his HRs that decade for the listed team. Must answer both or all three for correct answer. Answers are below in the HRs by Decade piece.

1. Blue Jays had 2 of top 10 HR hitters in 2010's.
2. A's had 2 of the top 10 in 1990's
3. Giants had 2 of the top 10 in the 1990's
4. Red Sox had 2 of the top 10 in the 1980's
5. Tigers had 2 of the top 10 in the 1980's.
6. Reds had 2 of the top 10 in the 1970's

7. Giants had 3 of the top 10 in the 1960's
8. Dodgers had 2 of the top 10 in the 1950's
9. Yankees had 2 of the top 10 in the 1950's.
10. Red Sox had 2 of the top 10 in the 1940's.
11. Yankees had 3 of the top 10 in the 1940's.
12. Yankees had 2 of the top 10 in the 1930's.
13. A's had 3 of top 10 in 1930's.
14. Yankees had 3 of the top 10 in the 1920's.
15. Cardinals had 2 of the top 10 in the 1920's.

ANSWERS

1. Encarnacion (335/2nd) and Bautista (285/5th)
2. McGwire (405/1st) and Conseco (303/8th)
3. Bonds (361/3rd) and Matt Williams (300/10th)
4. Dwight Evans (256/4th) and Tony Armas (225/7th)
5. Darrell Evans (230/6th) and Lance Parrish (225/8th)
6. Bench (290/3rd) and Tony Perez (226/9th)
7. Mays (350/3rd), McCovey (300/5th) and Orlando Cepeda (254/10th)
8. Snider (326/1st) and Hodges (310/2nd)
9. Mantle (280/4th) and Berra (256/6th)
10. Williams (234/1st) and Bobby Doerr (164/10th)
11. Joe Gordon (181/5th), DiMaggio (180/6th) and Charlie Keller (173/8th)
12. Gehrig (347/2nd) and Ruth (198/8th)

13. Foxx (415/1st), Simmons (190/9th) and Bob Johnson (189/10th)

14. Ruth (467/1st), Gehrig (146/5th) and Bob Meusel (146/5th)

15. Hornsby (250/2nd) and Jim Bottomley (146/5th)

CY YOUNG WINNERS IN THEIR FIRST YEAR WITH A TEAM

A few weeks ago we listed pitchers traded after winning the Cy Young. This week we turn it around.

There have been 14 instances of a pitcher winning Cy Young honors in his first year after changing teams, either via free agency or trade, a feat accomplished by 12 pitchers. Here is a look at that list, in reverse chronological order.

2010: Roy Halladay, Phillies

Acquired in trade with Toronto

Halladay already had an AL Cy Young Award under his belt when he was traded to the Phillies, having won in 2003 in Toronto. His debut season in Philadelphia was one for the ages -- the righty threw a Major League-leading nine complete games, including four shutouts; led the Majors with 250 2/3 innings; and did it all to the tune of a 2.44 ERA. He won the NL award unanimously, joining the ranks of multi-time Cy Young Award winners and becoming the first Phillies pitcher to win one since **Steve Bedrosian** in 1987.

With another stellar performance the following season, Halladay finished second for NL Cy Young honors, receiving four of 32 first-place votes for the award behind winner **Clayton Kershaw**, who received 27.

2004: Roger Clemens, Astros

Signed as free agent

Clemens was on the Yankees from 1999-2003, winning a Cy Young Award in 2001 to add to his hardware from 1986, '87, '91, '97 and '98. For the 2004 season, the Texan signed with the Astros. In a year when he turned 42 years old, Clemens struck out 218 batters, had a 2.98 ERA and won 18 games. He handily won the NL Cy Young, the seventh of his career, over second-place finisher **Randy Johnson**.

Clemens actually improved his stats in a handful of categories the following season, posting a Major League-leading 1.87 ERA and a lower WHIP. He finished third in Cy Young voting that year, behind **Chris Carpenter** and **Dontrelle Willis**.

1999: Randy Johnson, D-backs

Signed as free agent

The winter after a midseason trade sent the Big Unit from Seattle to Houston in 1998, Johnson signed with the D-backs, who were about to begin the second season in franchise history. Johnson had already won one Cy Young Award, in 1995 with the Mariners, but his first four years in Arizona were when he reached legend status. In 1999, Johnson led the Majors with 271 2/3 innings, 12 complete games and a whopping 364 strikeouts. He won Cy Young honors over second-place finisher **Mike Hampton**, securing the first Cy Young Award in D-backs history. Johnson went on to become the second pitcher to win more than two consecutive Cy Youngs, starting a streak of four in a row.

1997: Roger Clemens, Blue Jays

Signed as free agent

Clemens is one of the two pitchers to do this twice. After beginning his career in Boston, where he won three Cy Youngs and an MVP Award across 13 years, Clemens signed with the Blue Jays for the 1997 season. Pitching in the familiar AL East, he led the AL with a 2.05 ERA, 292 strikeouts and nine complete games, and paced the Majors with 264 innings. He won easily over Johnson, marking the second straight year that a Blue Jays pitcher had won the award, after **Pat Hentgen** in '96. Clemens won the award in 1998, too, then was traded to the Yankees before the '99 season.

1993: Greg Maddux, Braves

Signed as free agent

Maddux is the only pitcher to win a Cy Young Award in consecutive seasons for two different teams. Maddux won in 1992, his final year with the Cubs, then joined the Braves in free agency and continued his award-winning ways. In '93, Maddux had a 2.36 ERA in 267 innings, leading the Majors in both of those categories. He went on to win it the following two years as well, marking the first streak of three or more consecutive Cy Young Awards.

1984: Rick Sutcliffe, Cubs

Acquired in trade with Cleveland

Sutcliffe holds a unique place in Cy Young Award history: He's the only pitcher to win the award for a year in which he was traded midseason. Sutcliffe's stint with the Cubs didn't even begin until his 16th start of the 1984 season. After posting a 5.15 ERA in 94 1/3 innings with Cleveland, Sutcliffe was part of a seven-player deal that would turn his season around. In his 20 starts with the Cubs, he posted a 2.69 ERA and a 26% strikeout rate. Sutcliffe won the NL Cy Young Award unanimously, ahead of runner-up Dwight Gooden.

1984: Willie Hernandez, Tigers

Acquired in trade with Philadelphia

Hernandez was traded from the Phillies to the Tigers on March 24, shortly before the regular season began. He appeared in 80 games as a reliever for Detroit, posting a 1.92 ERA and racking up 32 saves as the team won 104 games to lead the Majors by a large margin. He won Cy Young honors over fellow reliever **Dan Quisenberry**, and won the MVP Award over **Kent Hrbek**, too.

1981: Rollie Fingers, Brewers

Acquired in trade with St. Louis

Fingers was traded twice in a five-day span in December 1980, going first from the Padres to Cardinals, who then flipped him to the Brewers. After receiving Cy Young votes in three prior seasons of his career and MVP votes in five, Fingers won both in '81. He had a 1.04 ERA in 47 appearances, including an MLB-leading 28 saves. He won the AL Cy Young over **Steve McCatty** and edged out **Rickey Henderson** by 11 vote points, 319-308, for MVP.

1978: Gaylord Perry, Padres

Acquired in trade with Texas

After 2 1/2 seasons with the Rangers, Perry was dealt ahead of the 1978 season to San Diego, where he thrived as a 39-year-old. With a 2.73 ERA and 21 wins, Perry won the NL Cy Young Award easily, netting all but two of the 24 first-place votes for the honor, ahead of the Dodgers' **Burt Hooton**. He went on to pitch five more seasons after 1978 to wrap up his Hall of Fame career. Perry had won one prior Cy Young Award, in 1972 -- more on that one below.

1974: Mike Marshall, Dodgers

Acquired in trade with Montreal

Marshall had received votes for both the Cy Young and MVP Awards in his final two years in Montreal, 1972 and '73, before the team sent him to the Dodgers in a trade for Willie Davis. In his first year in Los Angeles, Marshall made an MLB-high 106 appearances, finishing 83 games and racking up 21 saves with a 2.42 ERA. He won the Cy Young Award easily, cruising past runner-up and teammate Andy Messersmith. Marshall received Cy Young votes again late in his career, in both 1978 and '79 with the Twins.

1972: Steve Carlton, Phillies

Acquired in trade with St. Louis

Carlton began his career with seven seasons pitching for the Cardinals. He made three All-Star teams but never received a single Cy Young vote in that span. Before the 1972 season, St. Louis sent him to Philadelphia for Rick Wise, and Carlton introduced himself to the city with an all-time great season. In 41 starts, Carlton led the Majors with 30 complete games and paced the NL with 346 1/3 innings and a 1.97 ERA. He won the Cy Young Award unanimously ahead of Steve Blass. Carlton went on to win another three Cy Young Awards in Philly en route to earning a plaque in Cooperstown.

1972: Gaylord Perry, Cleveland

Acquired in trade with San Francisco

Perry's first time winning the award in his first season with a club followed an offseason trade involving Sam McDowell. Perry arrived in Cleveland for his 11th season and put together his best year to date, by many metrics. In 342 2/3 innings, he had a 1.92 ERA and led the AL with 24 wins and 29 complete games. Perry won the AL Cy Young over Wilbur Wood and placed sixth in the AL MVP vote. The right-hander went on to win his second Cy Young Award in similar fashion, as noted above, and ended up in Cooperstown.

1969: Mike Cuellar, Orioles

Acquired in trade with Houston

After four years with the Astros, Cuellar was dealt before the 1969 season to Baltimore, where he was part of a storied rotation. In his debut year in Baltimore, Cuellar posted a 2.38 ERA and 18 complete games in 39 starts. He tied Denny McLain for AL Cy Young honors, with the two receiving the same vote points total. Cuellar received Cy Young votes twice more in his career, in 1970 and '74.

1967: Mike McCormick, Giants

Acquired in trade with Washington

McCormick had been on the Giants before, debuting with the club in 1956 and playing for them through '62, when he was traded to the Orioles. The O's traded him after two seasons to the Senators, who then dealt the left-hander to San Francisco after another two years. McCormick makes the list for winning the award in his first year after changing teams, even if it wasn't a brand-new team for him. In 1967, the first year with separate Cy Young Awards for each league, McCormick had a 2.85 ERA and Major League-best 22 wins, winning the NL Cy Young over Jim Bunning and Fergie Jenkins.

INTERESTING RANDOM FACTS FROM THE BLEACHER REPORT ARCHIVES

(showing the lengths your editor goes to dig up weird and interesting stuff)

When former New York Giants and Green Bay Packers tackle **Cal Hubbard** was done playing football, he turned to baseball, but this time as an official, not a player.

Hubbard was an umpire for the American League between 1936-1951, working four World Series and three All-Star games during his career. After being forced to retire due to a hunting accident that damaged the vision in his right eye, Hubbard became supervisor of umpires for the AL, finally retiring in 1969.

Hubbard came up with the idea that umpires needed to be positioned better on the field in order to make more consistent calls, so based on his suggestion, Major League Baseball implemented the four-man umpiring crew used in each game, and that plan is still in use today.

Hubbard is the only man in history to be elected to both the baseball and football Hall of Fame.

The phrase “walk-off home run” didn’t apply before the 1920 season.

If a player hit a home run in the bottom of the ninth inning or in the bottom of an extra inning before 1920, the home run was actually only credited as a single, double or triple, depending on how many bases it took to advance the winning run.

For instance, if the score was tied in the bottom of ninth with a runner on third, if the batter hit a home run, he would only be credited with a single.

The New York Yankees opened their brand spanking new Yankee Stadium on April 16, 2009, against the Cleveland Indians. In that opener, the Yankees’ **CC Sabathia** faced off against the Indians’ **Cliff Lee**, with Lee prevailing, 10-2.

Just over six months later, the Yankees hosted the first World Series game ever at the new Yankee Stadium, and once again, Sabathia and Lee faced off against each other, however this time, Lee was pitching for the Philadelphia Phillies. Two stadium debuts, same pitchers.

Ironically, both pitchers were also traded by the Cleveland Indians a year after capturing Cy Young awards.

On Opening Day in 2009, the Arizona Diamondbacks faced the Colorado Rockies. In the bottom of the fourth inning, D-Backs second baseman **Felipe Lopez**, who had already homered in the game off Rockies pitcher **Aaron Cook** in the first inning, launched his second home run, however, this time he hit it right-handed against lefty reliever **Glendon Rusch**.

It marked the first time in Major League Baseball history that any player had hit home runs from both sides of the plate on Opening Day.

Amazingly, the feat was repeated in the very same game just one inning later. Diamondbacks first baseman **Tony Clark**, who had also homered off Cook, launched a solo blast off Rusch with one out in the bottom of the fifth.

While New York Yankees legend **Babe Ruth** was an outstanding hitter with a career batting average of .344, he wasn’t quite so inclined when called upon to pinch-hit.

During his career, Ruth was a paltry .167 hitter as a pinch-hitter, with just 13 hits in 67 at-bats.

The Yankees were not the original team to introduce pinstripes to Major League Baseball uniforms.

In 1911, both the New York Giants and Philadelphia Phillies sported pinstripes on uniforms for the very first time. The Yankees briefly added pinstripes to their uniforms in 1912, then re-added them on a permanent basis soon after **Jacob Ruppert** bought the team in 1915.

Up until the 1920 season, pitchers in Major League Baseball were allowed to grease up the ball with as much saliva as they wanted.

When MLB officials outlawed spitballs, they allowed pitchers who were already throwing spitballs to continue. **Burleigh Grimes**, pitching for the Brooklyn Robins at the time, continued on in the majors for another 14 seasons, becoming the last player to legally throw a spitball in 1934.

Jim Palmer won 268 games, including eight separate 20-win seasons and three Cy Young awards.

Palmer also gave up 303 home runs during his career. Remarkably none of them were grand slam home runs.

The triple play is indeed a rare feat in baseball, but on Sept. 2, 2006, the Tampa Bay Rays pulled off a first, even for the rarest of feats.

On that day, the Rays produced a triple play that consisted of a strikeout and two baserunners caught off base, against the Seattle Mariners.

With runners on first and third, Rays reliever **J.P. Howell** struck out **Raúl Ibáñez**, with Mariners third baseman **Adrian Beltré** running from first on the play.

Rays catcher **Dioner Navarro** fired the ball to shortstop **Ben Zobrist**, who tagged Beltré out. During that throw, **Jose Lopez** tried to go home from third, but Zobrist fired the ball back to Navarro in time to nail Lopez at the plate.

The play resulted in completing the first 2–6–2 triple play in MLB history.

While the triple play is indeed rare, the unassisted triple play is even more so—only 15 times in Major League Baseball history has the feat ever been pulled off.

Only twice in MLB history has an unassisted triple play ever ended a game.

The first time occurred on May 31, 1927, when Detroit Tigers first baseman **Johnny Nuen** caught a line drive, tagged the runner leading off the first-base bag, and then raced to second to tag the runner returning back to the bag.

Ironically, another unassisted triple play had occurred the previous day, when Chicago Cubs shortstop **Jimmy Cooney** pulled off the feat.

The second time occurred on Aug. 23, 2009, when Philadelphia Phillies second baseman **Eric Bruntlett** snagged a line drive, tagged second base and tagged the runner trying to retreat back to first base.

Texas Rangers shortstop **Toby Harrah**, becoming the "first" to do something became old hat.

On June 25, 1976, in a doubleheader against the Chicago White Sox, Harrah became the only shortstop ever to play every inning of a doubleheader and not get a single ball hit to him.

As if that weren't enough for Harrah, one year later, on August 27, 1977, in a game against the Boston Red Sox, Harrah and teammate Bump Wills became the only players in MLB history ever to hit back-to-back inside-the-park home runs.

In 1963, the New York Yankees won their record 28th pennant, and were moving on to face the Los Angeles Dodgers in the '63 World Series.

In 27 previous tries, the Yankees had won 20 World Series titles, however that year, the Dodgers denied the Yankees a chance at their 21st, pulling off something no team had previously done.

The Dodgers beat the Yankees in four straight games, marking the first time in history that the Yankees had ever been swept in a World Series.

Outfielder **George Foster** of the Cincinnati Reds was the only player to hit 50 home runs in one season in the 1970's, launching 52 in 1977.

Legendary Hall of Fame slugger **Babe Ruth** has been called a lot of things during his life and beyond, but he was also credited with being an innovator as well.

In 1919, Ruth ordered special bats from Louisville Slugger that allowed him to hit 29 home runs in his first full season as a position player, breaking the long-standing single-season home run record set in 1884.

It was the first time that a baseball bat had been produced with a knob on the end.

WHEN A GAME WAS CANCELED BECAUSE OF A PRISON BREAK

Michael Claire on mlb.com

Hall of Fame catcher **Ernie Lombardi** had plenty of practice catching thieves on the bases, but he probably wasn't prepared for what happened on Feb. 8, 1942, when he and the **Dom DiMaggio** All-Stars walked into Folsom Prison for the annual All-Stars vs. prisoners baseball game.

The game itself was nothing new. Baseball teams -- from local town clubs all the way to barnstorming Major Leaguers -- had regularly visited the jail to stage games in the prison yard. Folsom started playing town ball teams as far back as the 1880s, with MLB players coming through beginning in 1913. New York's Sing Sing started hosting games in 1914 -- [Babe Ruth visited in 1929](#) -- and [San Quentin has been playing baseball](#) for nearly a century.

But this day was a little different, and not just for the talent on hand: A prison break would interrupt the game.

Heavyweight boxers-turned-showmen Buddy and Max Baer put on a show down the sidelines before the game got underway. This was no normal baseball grandstand, though, and the incarcerated spectators were nearly right on top of the action. That meant there had to be a unique plan in case of any issues in the yard.

"[The players would] get instructions: if you hear this alarm, you go over -- I don't know if this was exactly the place -- but if you go over in the left-field corner, we'll get you out," Alan O'Connor, a Sacramento baseball historian, said in a recent phone call.

Dom DiMaggio put himself in the lineup, batting fifth and playing center field. Cardinals utility man Eddie Lake, former Pirates slugger Gussie Suhr and Phillies outfielder Joe Marty helped fill out the lineup card. While multiple newspaper reports put Lombardi there, he didn't make it into the game -- perhaps because he had just been traded to the Boston Braves that day and

was furious about it, [exclaiming "Not Boston!"](#) when he was informed of the move. The Yankees' Ernie Bonham got the nod to take the slab first to face the Represa Stars, a team featuring the best players inside Folsom's walls.

Not surprisingly, the Major Leaguers cleaned up. [DiMaggio laced a triple](#) and scored two runs, Suhr picked up five knocks and Marty rapped out three hits en route to a 24-5 lead after seven innings. While the bats may not have gone easy on Folsom pitchers, it appears that the big league hurlers weren't throwing their best stuff: Every Represa player picked up a base hit.

With seven innings in the books, the game was brought to a sudden halt as guards discovered that two inmates had taken this opportunity to escape. (Most reports say the jailbreak happened during the game, though some say the game was delayed two hours for the search, necessitating a shorter contest.) Elvia E. Mead and Philip Gardner, jailed for first-degree murder and burglary respectively, "broke loose from the lower prison yard by cutting a hole in the fence," the [United Press reported](#). "They jumped into the power canal, swam across the swift stream and pulled themselves up the bank with prison-made ropes."

Unfortunately for the duo, they didn't make it far. Gardner failed to make it past the final guard post when he was snagged, while [Mead was found](#) "six miles away at Mississippi Bar by three small boys." (Sadly, the article makes no mention of why three boys were in the bar at the time.)

While the duo's great escape caused an early end for this ballgame, there was lots more to come. The prison yard hosted baseball until 1965, when the field was paved over with concrete, and the prison team even joined the local men's leagues starting in the late '40s.

"It was the Rural League for a while and then for about 10 or 12 years, they were in the Sacramento County League," O'Connor said. "And here's the local joke: they only played home games."

Though the big league players didn't earn money for these All-Star contests, unlike their other offseason barnstorming events -- treating it more as part of their civic responsibility -- that didn't mean there were no perks for choosing to walk inside the prison walls.

"Back in the day, Folsom was run like a farm. They had crops," O'Connor said. "The guys that played there in the '50s said they would give them this great feast afterwards from stuff that was grown there. They loved to go up there for a game and then eat afterwards."

While most Major Leaguers would come to the prison for a few hours before heading back out on the road, there was one who called Folsom home: St. Louis Browns pitcher Ralph Schwamb. After being convicted of murder, Schwamb was first sent to San Quentin before heading to Folsom. While there, he became the prison yard's ace pitcher -- even making a comeback attempt with the Hawaii Islanders after being released in 1961.

"Local guys who would go out there to play would say, 'Jesus, here's a Major Leaguer,'" O'Connor said. "'We can't touch him.'"

HISTORY LESSON—SAVE

Joe Posnanski talks about the invention of the save.

April 7, Opening Day, is the 53rd anniversary of the very first save in baseball history. The save absolutely fascinates me because I've long been fascinated by statistics that do not only quantify the game but ones that fundamentally CHANGE the game. And to me, the save is probably the best example of this phenomenon.

In many ways, I suppose, all popular stats change the game to one degree or another. Take steals and blocked shots and turnovers in basketball. I suppose everybody always knew these things mattered. But the NBA, for whatever reason, did not start officially counting any of them until the 1973-74 season, rendering all those Bill Russell blocks and Oscar Robertson steals invisible in the record books. Once they started counting, of course, people became ultra-aware of the game in a new way. Football sacks and the passer rating might be other examples.

But the save is something different, I think, because the save isn't really COUNTING something new. It is an invention, the way that the catcher's mask or the helmet with communications in it or the larger goalie pads are something invented.

You probably know that it was legendary baseball writer Jerome Holtzman who invented the save. He undoubtedly thought he was chronicling the game, not altering it. He thought wrong.

So the first save, as mentioned, was on Opening Day, April 7, 1969. You trivia buffs will know that it was achieved in Cincinnati by the Dodgers' Bill Singer, who had the absolutely wonderful nickname of "The Singer Throwing Machine."*

**I don't blame you if you don't get it — the Singer Sewing Machine is probably not as big a deal now as it was then. But it was a big deal then.*

Singer was not a relief pitcher; he was exclusively a starter, and this would be the only relief appearance he would make all season. He was scheduled to start the next Dodgers game, two days later. But with the Dodgers leading 3-2 in the bottom of the seventh, Los Angeles manager Walter Alston brought in Singer to replace starter Don Drysdale.

Actually, before we get to Singer, let's go down the rabbit hole of that game, because it was really something. The baseball nuts among you might have noticed that the year was 1969, which means this was the first official game played after the Year of the Pitcher, 1968. This means that it was the first official game played after the mounds had been lowered.

In that way, Don Drysdale was pretty much the perfect guy to be on the newly lowered mound. He utterly loved the high mound, felt like a king on top of it. Drysdale's game was intimidation, fastballs and maybe a few wet ones now and again. So much of that was diminished on a lower mound.

"I felt like a stranger out there at the beginning today," he would say, and he wasn't joking. His first four pitches were all high fastballs ... but not high enough. Pete Rose hit the third of those pitches for an opposite-field home run. Bobby Tolan pulled the fourth for a home run as well.

"I was concerned," Drysdale said. "But I wasn't worried."

I love quotes like that, quotes that sound pretty good but actually make no sense. Anyway, Drysdale settled in, retired the next seven batters, and so on. And then something else pretty interesting happened. There was, in 1969, a Major League Baseball initiative to speed up the games. The average time of game had rambled to a touch more than 2:30 — roughly 20 minutes longer than games had been in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

So in the second inning, a rookie umpire named Dick Stello stopped the at-bat between Drysdale and Johnny Bench to call a ball because Drysdale took more than 20 seconds between pitches.

“He had a stopwatch on me,” Drysdale said in a befuddled way. It was the first time in major league history that a ball was called because a pitcher took too long between pitches. It obviously was not and will not be the last, with a new pitcher’s clock coming.

And now for the first save: Seventh inning, Alston pulled Drysdale. It’s still not 100 percent clear why. In the press box, it was announced that Drysdale was feeling a little tightness in his shoulder and was removed for precautionary reasons. This seems perfectly logical; Drysdale, 32, was at the end of his great career, and by the end of April, arm problems would more or less end that great career.

But there was suspicion among reporters that Alston was being crafty here. The game was a 2:30 start, and by the time Singer entered the game at 4:24, the shadows had taken over Crosley Field Dementor-style. Singer threw about as hard as anybody in those days, so the feeling was that Alston wanted to take advantage of the situation. It worked, too: Singer threw three hitless and scoreless innings to notch Major League Baseball’s first official save.

It was not big news, to say the least. *The Los Angeles Times* barely mentioned it in the notes section after the game story. The bigger story was that Singer was scratched from his Wednesday start, to be replaced by Don Sutton.

But the save had only just begun to change the game. The qualifications for getting a save would change a couple of times over the next few years. But once the rule became settled in 1975, things began happening. In 1977, Sparky Lyle would save 26 games for the Yankees, and he won the Cy Young for it (beating out 20-game winner Jim Palmer along with Nolan Ryan, who struck out 341 batters in 299 innings).

In 1979, Bruce Sutter saved 37, and he won the Cy Young over the Niekro brothers, each 21-game winners.

The more people cared about saves, the more sportswriters rewarded them, and the more managers looked to incorporate them into their overall baseball strategies. Everybody now knows that the most basic save of all is the ninth-inning save — the rule specifies that if a reliever starts the ninth inning with a three-run lead or less, he is eligible for a save. That rule could have said that you need to get at least four outs to earn a save or it could have said that it

had to be a one-run lead or it could have said that there had to be runners on base for a pitcher to get a save, and the game would be drastically different.

But because that's the rule, managers — perhaps starting with Tony La Russa — created the modern closer, who comes into the game with a lead in the ninth, and who pitch 60 or 70 innings a year, and who have fundamentally changed the very shape of baseball.

All because of Jerome Holtzman and the save.

GROWING NUMBER OF WOMEN IN BASEBALL JOBS

Alyson Footer on mlb.com

It wasn't that long ago when women who had aspirations to work in baseball had limited options as to what jobs were realistically available to them.

But ever since a flurry of hires that took place in November 2019, scores of women have been appointed by Major League teams in nearly every area of the sport, including those previously considered "male" roles.

Women have been appointed as coaches, scouts and executives. They're broadcasters, managers and general managers. They're being hired simply for being qualified. And, in all likelihood, this is only the beginning of more doors opening for women in pursuit of careers in baseball.

As their roles in baseball and their impact on the game continue to grow, MLB celebrates the many women who have carved out a place in history, many of whom are firsts in their field. A timeline:

November 2019: Andrea Hayden, Twins

Andrea Hayden officially became a member of the Twins' coaching staff in November 2019, when strength and conditioning director Ian Kadish promoted her to assistant coach following a year-long fellowship during the 2019 season. That made her the first female strength and conditioning coach for a Major League team in history.

Nov. 22, 2019: Rachel Folden, Cubs

When Rachel Folden first met with the Cubs' front office, the interview alone was evidence that the idea that baseball and softball are to be kept separate conceptually was outdated. A swing is a swing, and that philosophy led to the Cubs hiring Folden as a lead hitting lab tech and fourth coach for Rookie League Mesa.

Nov. 22, 2019: Rachel Balkovec, Yankees

Rachel Balkovec's first history-making appointment arrived when she was hired by the Yankees

as a roving instructor, assigned to work with hitters throughout the organization. This was the first of two significant hires involving Balkovec, who just a few years earlier changed her name to “Rae” on her resume with hopes the more ambiguous first name would lead to teams taking her calls inquiring about coaching openings.

Nov. 25, 2019: Eve Rosenbaum, Orioles

The flurry of historic hires in November 2019 extended to the Orioles, who added Eve Rosenbaum to their front office as the director of baseball development, a new role. The hire made Rosenbaum the highest-ranking female executive in the organization.

Jan. 16, 2020: Alyssa Nakken, Giants

The biggest hiring splash at that time arrived early in 2020, when Alyssa Nakken became the first female Major League coach. Nakken had worked for the Giants since '14, first as an intern in the baseball operations department. She also worked on projects relating to the Draft, international operations and player development prior to joining the coaching staff.

Nov. 13, 2020: Kim Ng, Marlins

At the conclusion of the 2020 season, the Marlins made history when they named longtime MLB executive Kim Ng their general manager. She is the first woman GM of any professional men’s team in major North American sports, and first woman of Asian descent to lead a club’s baseball operations.

Jan. 4, 2021: Bianca Smith, Red Sox

When the Red Sox hired Bianca Smith as a Minor League coach, she became the first Black woman to serve as a coach in the history of professional baseball. She started her Red Sox career based at the club’s player development facility in Fort Myers, Fla., and worked mainly with position players.

Jan. 29, 2021: Sara Goodrum, Brewers

The Brewers named Sara Goodrum as their Minor League hitting coordinator, a promotion believed to make her the first woman ever to hold that job for a big league organization. She oversaw the Brewers’ hitting program throughout the organization and managed the hitting coaches at the team’s affiliates.

March 9, 2021: Amelia Schimmel, A’s

Shortly after the start of Spring Training, the A’s announced their own history-making hire: they tabbed Oakland native Amelia Schimmel as their new public address announcer for all home games at the Oakland Coliseum, making her the first PA announcer in club history.

March 20 and May 9, 2021: Beth Mowins, Cubs

Veteran broadcaster Beth Mowins called a Cubs Cactus League game in March 2021, marking the first time in club history that a woman handled the play-by-play duties. She marked another “first” a couple of months later, when she made regular-season history by serving as Marquee Sports Network’s play-by-play voice for the Cubs’ Mother’s Day weekend games against the Pirates.

June 2, 2021: Jillian Geib, Rockies

Jillian Geib served as the official scorer in the Rockies' 3-2, 11-inning victory over the Rangers on June 2, 2021, becoming the first woman in Rockies history to fill that role. Geib is believed to be the fourth female official scorer in MLB history, and the first since Marie-Claude Pelland served in the role with the Blue Jays from 2015-17.

July 19, 2021: First all-female MLB broadcast crew

On July 19, as the Rays and Orioles took the field in St. Petersburg, Major League Baseball's first all-women broadcast team had the call for MLB's Game of the Week Live on YouTube. Heidi Watney and Lauren Gardner served as co-hosts for the pre- and postgame shows, with Sarah Langs (analyst), Melanie Newman (play-by-play) and Alanna Rizzo (reporter) handling game broadcast duties.

July 27, 2021: Catie Griggs, Mariners

The Mariners' extensive search for a new president of business operations last summer concluded with the hiring of Catie Griggs, who had spent the past four years as the chief business officer for Atlanta United of Major League Soccer. The Mariners' hiring of Griggs concluded a three-month process that was monitored by a 12-member panel.

Aug. 31, 2021: Angie Mentink, Mariners

The Mariners made history in the broadcast booth, too. When Angie Mentink took the microphone alongside Aaron Goldsmith before Seattle's matchup with Houston, she became the first woman to serve as a color commentator for a Mariners telecast.

Dec. 1, 2021: Sara Goodrum, Astros

Goodrum, who first made history as a Brewers' roving Minor League hitting coordinator, left that organization in December to come one of the highest-ranking female executives in baseball, as director of player development for the Astros.

Dec. 16, 2021: Chanda Lawdermilk, Rays

Among a flurry of Rays promotions in December was the appointment of Chanda Lawdermilk as vice president of baseball operations, from her previous role as director of staff development and recruiting. Lawdermilk became the first woman to reach the VP level in the Rays' baseball operations department.

Dec. 22, 2021: Caitlyn Callahan, Pirates

The Pirates closed out 2021 with the hiring of Caitlyn Callahan as a development coach, based out of its Pirate City complex in Bradenton, Fla. The hiring marked the first time the Pirates will have an in-uniform female coach.

Jan. 10, 2022: Jaime Vieira, Blue Jays

Jaime Vieira will become the first woman in a coaching role in the Blue Jays' organization, after the club hired her on Jan. 10 to be a Minor League hitting coach, ahead of the 2022 season. Vieira was most recently working in the Blue Jays' baseball operations department as a research and development intern, a position she held since February 2021.

Jan. 12, 2022: Rachel Balkovec, Yankees

Balkovec took another giant leap forward with a second history-making appointment within the Yankees organization, when she was named manager of the Low-A Tampa Tarpons. The promotion arrived just a little over a year after she first became a Yankees Minor League hitting coach.

Jan. 26, 2022: Katie Krall, Red Sox

When the Red Sox hired Katie Krall as a player development coach at Double-A Portland, they became the first MLB organization to have two female coaches -- Krall and Bianca Smith. Krall hit the ground running just a few days after the Sox's announcement in Fort Myers, Fla., participating in the team's 2022 Winter Warm-up, a minicamp for 28 Boston prospects.

January 2022: Jasmine Dunston, White Sox

The Sox recently hired Jasmine Dunston as their director of Minor League operations. According to a Sun-Times report, Dunston, the daughter of retired Major Leaguer Shawon Dunston, received a master's degree in sports administration from Valparaiso. Her first baseball job was as a specialist in the Reds' player development department a year ago.

GOOD POINTS FROM THE TONS OF CBA ARTICLES BOMBARDING US

Have you looked at the players negotiating this CBA? You probably have heard that five of them are Scott Boras clients, but have you looked at the list?

The eight players are:

1. Zack Britton
2. Jason Castro
3. Gerrit Cole
4. Francisco Lindor
5. Max Scherzer
6. Andrew Miller
7. James Paxton
8. Marcus Semien

Now, I'm sorry, you look at that list of players and tell me what you see? Is there a Dominican player on that list? No. A Venezuelan player? No. Is there a player who was actually signed out of the international market? No. Is there a young player who is pre-arbitration and being underpaid? No. Is there a player who is in danger of leaving the game without getting his fair share?

Those eight players have made \$653 million and are guaranteed to make \$861 million more.

Eight players worth more than \$1.4 billion in salary. That's who the MLBPA sends to negotiate with the owners.

Under the current system, players are subject to "option years" and can be shuttled back and forth from the minor leagues and major leagues as many times as a club wants throughout the course of the season. Each time a player is optioned, it can be a personally destabilizing event: They won't receive major-league salary or service time, and it might be their last time in the big leagues.

In 2021, 57 major-league players were optioned five or more times, per [research](#) compiled by Jon Becker of Roster Resource. [Louis Head](#) of the [Rays](#) topped the chart, being optioned 12 times throughout the year. The Yankees came close to matching that figure, though, in optioning reliever [Albert Abreu](#) 11 times. ([Mitch White](#) of the Dodgers was also optioned 11 times.)

Yankees outfielder and former top prospect [Estevan Florial](#) was optioned six times, along with reliever [Brooks Kriske](#). Reliever Nick Nelson was optioned five times.

Teams that have road games in Toronto need to find out the COVID-19 vaccination status of each of their players. Unvaccinated players won't be allowed to travel to Canada to face the [Blue Jays](#) due to government regulations. Under new rules agreed to by [Major League Baseball](#) and the MLB Players Association, unvaccinated players will not be paid nor get service time for those games and may be placed on the restricted list. Teams need to be prepared to replace them on the roster for those games.

HOUSEKEEPING

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