

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

10.30.2022

Good morning baseball fans,

Every year I complain about how late these World Series games go. Too much money on the line with all those commercials and west coast eyeballs to care about me.

Entertaining first two games. Off we go to Philadelphia for now a best-of-five.

Grab a mug and enjoy lots of World Series stuff, PitchCom, Gammons on bullpens and trivia.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Five players this season hit at least 30 home runs and stole 10 or more bases. The only one whose team didn't make the playoffs is, you guessed it, **Shohei Ohtani**. The other four:

One Dodger

One Yankee

And two playing in the World Series—one for each team.

Can you name them?



Ten World Series rings. Yogi Berra.

WORLD SERIES FACTS AND ANECDOTES

Dusty Baker, 73, has managed 3,884 regular-season games over 25 seasons. **Rob Thomson**, 59, has managed 111 games since he was named manager of the Phillies on June 3.

Baker, 73, is the oldest manager in World Series history. He has won a World Series as a player with the Dodgers, was on deck when **Henry Aaron** hit home run 715, with **Glenn Burke** was

part of the first high five, won the first NLCS MVP and was on hand for the 1989 World Series earthquake, the single-season home run record, the largest blown lead in a potential World Series clincher, the Bartman Game and the only game in history in which four consecutive batters reached base in each of the only four ways to get on base without putting the ball in play—in a potential postseason clincher, no less.

Thomson, 59, has been in pro ball since he was a 32nd round pick of the Tigers in 1985, but this is his first major league managing gig—and one he didn't get until the Yankees passed him up for **Aaron Boone** and the Phillies fired Joe Girardi this year. He could join **Bob Lemon** (1978 Yankees) and **Jack McKeon** (2003 Marlins) as the only managers to take over a club midway through a season and win the World Series. Thomson is the first Canadian to manage a World Series game.

There hasn't been a day game in the World Series since Game 6 between the Cardinals and Twins in 1987. That fight is over and the bottom line won.

2022 is the first time both pennants were decided on the same day since 1992.

This will be the first World Series since 1995 not called by Joe Buck. Joe Davis took over the top job after Buck went to ESPN for "Monday Night Football."

In postseason series with the current 2-3-2 format, teams splitting the first two games at home have still gone on to win 47 of 86 times (55%). The split obviously means there is a great deal at stake in Game 3. In all best-of-seven series tied 1-1, the winner of the third game has triumphed 68 of 98 times (69%).

Houston's **Jose Altuve** (86), **Alex Bregman** (80), and **Yuli Gurriel** (80) are in the top 17 all time for most playoff games. Altue, Bregman and Gurriel have played 80 of those post season games together over the last six seasons. They passed **Derek Jeter** and **Bernie Williams** who played 79 games together in a six-postseason span from 1998 to 2003.

Astros is lefthander **Framber Valdez**, who this season set a single-season MLB record with 25 consecutive quality starts. His game two effort was a big turn-around. He failed to last three innings in his two World Series starts last year, allowing ten runs. Last night--allowed one run

over 6 1/3 innings with nine strikeouts and three walks as the Astros beat the Phillies 5-2 to even the series at a game apiece.

The 28-year-old has been excellent in his three postseason starts this October, posting a 1.42 ERA. The Astros won each time.

Game 1, Phillies catcher **J.T. Realmuto** had himself a night. Nine years and 1,005 regular season games to play his first World Series game. He lifted a two-run double off the wall in left-center field that tied the game in the fifth and lined a game-winning, opposite-field solo shot leading off the 10th.

Realmuto became the first catcher since **Carlton Fisk** in 1975 to hit an extra-inning home run in a World Series game, sending the Phillies to a 6–5 win over a stunned Astros team. Understand what preceded that swing: after catching all 1,690 pitches Philadelphia pitchers have thrown this postseason, including 143 through nine innings of Game 1, after taking the foul ball off the jaw, after tying the game with a two-run double off Houston ace **Justin Verlander** in the fifth inning, after falling behind leading off the 10th inning 1-and-2 to **Luis Garcia**, a pitcher he had never seen before, after laying off two cutters down and away to get the count full, after choking up on the bat to go into full two-strike mode ... only then did Realmuto go all Carlton Fisk on the Astros.

Besides Realmuto and Fisk, only two other catchers ever launched an extra-inning home run in a World Series game: **Hammerin' Hank Gowdy** in 1914 and **Tim McCarver** in 1964.

He joined a very short but illustrious group of catchers who reached base three times with three RBIs and six total bases in a World Series game: **Gary Carter**, Tim McCarver, **Yogi Berra** and **Roy Campanella**. None ever did it from the third spot in the lineup, as Realmuto did.

Game 1 -- It was 20 years ago...20 years almost to the day...that **Dusty Baker's** Giants had a 3-2 lead in the World Series and a 5-0 lead in Game Six, a handful of outs away from the team's first championship since it moved to San Francisco in 1958. Baker lifted his starter, **Russ Ortiz**, in the seventh with a shutout going, then watched his bullpen, so good to that point, fall apart -- a three-run homer in the seventh, a solo shot and a two-run double in the eighth -- and lose 6-5. It was the last time a team had blown a 5-0 lead in a Series game. Until game 1 and the Phillies comeback from down 5-0 to 6-5 winners.

Game 1 – **Justin Verlander** with a 5-0 lead. His career record in games he had been given a 5-0 or better lead? 99-0 before game 1. Verlander didn't give up 5 runs in the whole month of April, July and September.

No starting pitcher has ever blown a lead that large in a postseason game after finishing a season with A) an ERA under 2.00 and B) enough innings to qualify for the ERA title.

The Astros had won 65 games in a row when they took a five-run lead (or larger) in any game, regular season or postseason.

Verlander and the Phillies' **Aaron Nola** — gave up at least five runs, as the exalted Game 1 starters in a World Series. Did you know that had happened only three times in the previous 90 years?

- Game 1, 2004 — **Tim Wakefield** (Red Sox) vs. **Woody Williams** (Cardinals)
- Game 1, 1980 — **Bob Walk** (Phillies) vs. **Dennis Leonard** (Royals)
- Game 1, 1955 — **Whitey Ford** (Yankees) vs. **Don Newcombe** (Dodgers)

Verlander retired the first 9 Phillies he faced. The last World Series starter to do that was **Luis Tiant** in 1975. Tiant buzzed through the Big Red Machine-- **Pete Rose, Joe Morgan, Johnny Bench, Tony Perez, George Foster, Dave Concepcion, Ken Griffey Sr., Cesar Geronimo and pitcher Don Gullett**.

Game 2 – not every day you see three consecutive doubles. **Jose Altuve, Jeremy Peña and Yordan Alvarez** banged back-to-back-to-back doubles off Phillies starter **Zack Wheeler** on his first, second and fourth pitches of the night. Those hits, coupled with a shaky defensive showing from the Phillies, capped a three-run frame that set the tone in a 5-2 win.

Game 2 – At age 28, **Alex Bregman**, who homered in the fifth inning, already has two more postseason homers than any third baseman in history. His two-run knock was his eighth, topping **Gil McDougald and Scott Brosius**.

Game 2 – **Jose Altuve** now has nine career three-hit games in the postseason, tied for third-most in playoff history, trailing only **Derek Jeter and Bernie Williams**, who each have 12.

The record for most hits in a single World Series is 13, accomplished three times. **Marty Barrett** of the Red Sox (1986), the Yankees' **Bobby Richardson** (1964) and the Cardinals' **Lou Brock** (1968).

The Astros are the third team in the wild-card era to reach the World Series undefeated in postseason play. The other undefeated teams got smoked in Game 1 after a bundle of days off and lost the series. The 2007 Rockies (7–0) lost Game 1, 13–1, to the Red Sox after eight days off and were swept. The 2014 Royals (8–0) lost Game 1, 7–1, to the Giants after five days off and got **Madison Bumgarner** in seven.

How deep is Houston's pitching? **Ryan Stanek**. 59 games, gave up 2 HRs, ERA 1.15 was best in the majors for pitchers with 50+ IP, opponents batted .188 against him, struck out 44% of the batters he faced. Pitched just two innings this post season. Astros have 4 relievers ahead of him—**Rafael Montero, Bryan Abreu, Ryan Pressley**. The 5 including Stanek's two innings—23 IP, 2 runs for a 0.78 ERA and 33 K's. That's a bull pen.

What a break for the Phillies to have the DH come into the NL this year. **Bryce Harper's** arm injury was significant enough he can't play the field. Without his bat at DH they may not have made the playoffs.

Harper couldn't play in the field but he did ok hitting. He hit .419 (18-for-43) with six doubles, five home runs, 11 RBIs and a 1.351 OPS in 11 postseason games leading up to the World Series. He earned NLCS MVP honors following his go-ahead, two-run home run in the eighth inning in the Game 5 clincher on Sunday. Harper's OPS is the eighth highest in postseason history. The names ahead of him: **Manny Ramirez** (2008 Dodgers), **Barry Bonds** ('02 Giants), **Carlos Beltrán** ('04 Astros), **Rickey Henderson** (1989 A's), **Nomar Garciaparra** ('99 Red Sox), **Paul Molitor** ('93 Blue Jays) and **Willie Stargell** ('79 Pirates).

Without the DH, Harper is sitting in the Phillies' dugout, watching the action.

Harper 2022 Postseason by Pitch Type

	No. of pitches	Avg.	SLG
vs. Fastballs	105	.542	1.208
vs. Non-Fastballs	60	.263	.526

The most Hall of Famers on the field in a World Series was 13, way back in 1932, when **Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Earle Combs, Bill Dickey, Lefty Gomez, Tony Lazzeri, Herb Pennock, Red Ruffing and Joe Sewell** suited up for the Yankees and **Kiki Cuyler, Burleigh Grimes, Gabby Hartnett and Billy Herman** were with the Cubs.

Heck, both managers in that Series are in the Hall of Fame (the Yankees' **Joe McCarthy** as a manager, the Cubs' **Rogers Hornsby** as a player). And so is umpire Bill Klem!

The 1996 Series between the Yankees and Braves holds the more modern (Divisional Era) record, with eight players (**Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera, Wade Boggs and Tim Lincecum** for the Yankees, and **Greg Maddux, John Smoltz, Tom Glavine and Chipper Jones** for the Braves), plus managers **Joe Torre and Bobby Cox**.

Future Hall of Famers you will see in this World Series? Who do you predict heads to Cooperstown?

Justin Verlander -- ranks 27th among pitchers in Baseball Reference's wins above replacement, he's got 244 wins and 3,198 strikeouts and is one of just six pitchers with three no-hitters

Dave Dombrowski -- The Phillies are now the fourth franchise (joining the Marlins, Tigers and Red Sox) that Dombrowski has guided to a pennant, with five trips to the World Series overall. He assembled the Marlins' first World Series winner in 1997 and captured his second crown with the 2018 Red Sox. If the Phillies get the job done in this Series, Dombrowski will have guided 10% of the 30 teams to glory.

Dusty Baker -- He's one of just 12 managers with 2,000 wins (and the first Black manager to reach that milestone).

Not hard to imagine **Bryce Harper and Jose Altuve**.

Yordan Alvarez -- Four seasons into his career (with one of those seasons essentially lost to injury), the 25-year-old Alvarez has a 163 OPS+ in 1,537 plate appearances. Only 16 modern era players with at least 1,500 plate appearances prior to their age-26 season had a higher OPS+, and, of those 16, only four -- "**Shoeless**" **Joe Jackson, Dick Allen, Mike Trout and Albert Pujols** - are not in the Hall.

By that measure, Alvarez is off to a better offensive start than the likes of **Joe DiMaggio** (156 OPS+ through age 25), **Eddie Mathews** (154), **Willie Mays** (152) and **Hank Aaron** (151),

In 1960, the New York Yankees set the record for the highest batting average, most hits and most run scored (55) in a World Series (seven-game format) – and lost to the Pirates four games-to- three.

The 1991 World Series was the first Fall Classic in which two teams that had finished in last place the previous season advanced to the World Series. In 1990, the Braves finished last in the NL West at 65-97, while the Twins finished in the cellar of the AL West as 74-88).

1987 was the first World Series when the home teams won every game. The Twins were lucky to have four games at home. On the season they were 56-25 at home (the most 1987 home wins of any MLB team) and 29-52 on the road (the fifth-fewest road wins of any MLB team that season).

In Game Four of the 1968 World Series, **Lou Brock** nearly hit for the cycle, missing just the single. Brock led off the game with a home run to center off **Denny McLain**; grounded out in the second; tripled in the fourth off **Joe Sparma**; grounded out in the sixth; and hit a three-run double (and stole third) off **John Hiller** in the eighth. The Cardinals won that one 10-1.

Reggie Jackson, Yankees ... Yankees' RF Reggie Jackson earned Series MVP honors in 1977, as the Yankees topped the Dodgers in six games. Jackson hit .450 for the Series, with a World Series record-setting five home runs. He led all batters with eight RBI. Jackson etched his name into World Series history in the Series final game, as the Yankees won 8-4. Jackson poled a Series record-tying three home runs in the game – on successive at bats and on the first pitch of each at bat (from three different pitchers).

Jackson had gone .286-32-100 in the regular season.

Two other players hit 5 HRs in a World Series:

Chase Utley, Phillies ... In the 2009 World series, Phillies' 2B Chase Utley rapped five home runs in a losing cause (the Phillies fell to the Yankees in six games).

Astros' CF **George Springer** was a dynamo in the 2017 World Series (and was the Series MVP). He hit .379-5-7, with eight runs scored and seven RBI, as the Astros topped the Dodgers four games-to-three. Springer homered in games Two, Four, Five, Six and Seven.

Springer also set a World Series record for total bases, with 29 – on five home runs, three doubles and three singles.

Yankees' 1B **Lou Gehrig** set the World Series slugging record in 1928 (as the Yankees topped the Cards in four games). He had six hits in 11 at bats, with five going for extra bases (one double and four home runs) for a 1.727 slugging percentage. Gehrig scored five times and drove in nine runs over the four games. In the regular season, the Yankee slugger went .374-47-147, leading **the league in home runs and RBI**.

In the 2002 World Series (Angels/Giants), the Giants' **Barry Bonds** drew a single-World Series' record 13 walks (in 30 plate appearances).

Lou Brock of the Cardinals is the only player to steal seven bases in a single World Series – and he did it twice. In the 1967 World Series, Brock stole seven bases in seven attempts. He tied his own record with seven steals (in nine attempts) in the 1968 World Series.

Giants' **Christy Mathewson** threw three complete-game shutouts in the World Series (1905 against the Philadelphia Athletics). In his three starts, Mathewson threw 27 innings, giving up just 13 hits and one walk, while fanning eight.

In the 1968 World Series, as his Cardinals lost to the Tigers four games-to-three, **Bob Gibson** went 2-1, 1.67 tossing three complete games and fanning a Series record 35 in 27 innings. In Game One of the Series, he showed why 1968 was *The Year of the Pitcher* – fanning a World Series single-game record 17 batters – shutting out the Tigers 4-0. During the regular season, Gibson had gone 22-9, 1.12 and tossed 13 complete-game shutouts.

George Mullin, Babe Adams, Jack Coombs, Christy Mathewson (twice) Charles Bender, Hippo Vaughn, Stan Coveleski, Waite Hoyt, Carl Mays, Art Nehf, Walter Johnson, Bobo Newsom, Lew Burdette, Bob Gibson, Mickey Lolich all threw three complete games in a World Series. Not thinking we will see that again soon.

Alex Bregman of the Astros and **Aaron Nola** were college roommates / team mates at LSU. Nola went 30-6 with a 2.09 ERA and 9.3 strikeouts per nine innings for the Tigers from 2012-14. Bregman hit .337/.409/.514 over 196 games at LSU from 2013-15.

Houston gave up 134 homers. Only the Giants, who play in a bigger and colder ballpark, gave up fewer (132).

The Astros struck out 373 times less than their opponents did against Houston pitching.

The Astros held first place for 158 days during the regular season, including off days. How many days did the Phillies lead the NL East? One.

Starting in 2011 the Phillies traded away franchise staples **Jimmy Rollins, Chase Utley, Carlos Ruiz, Shane Victorino and Cole Hamels**, with the hope that they could restock their farm system and begin to assemble a contender by the late '10s. Only the Rollins deal netted them a prospect who is currently on their roster, right-handed starter turned high-leverage reliever **Zach Eflin**.

Hence the pivot to free agents like **Bryce Harper, Kyle Schwarber, Zack Wheeler**.

Memorial Stadium, Baltimore before Game 1 of the 1983 World Series, Philadelphia Phillies star **Gary Matthews** saw a lot of Black talent.

Joe Morgan. Eddie Murray. Garry Maddox. Ken Singleton. Al Bumbry. Disco Dan Ford. And plenty more that night in Baltimore.

When fans watch the Houston Astros and Phillies line up this week to begin the Fall Classic, it will be a much different picture.

To be sure, Houston's **Jose Altuve** and Philadelphia's **Jean Segura** are among scores of Latin players helping keep big league rosters diverse.

But for the first time since 1950, shortly after **Jackie Robinson** broke the Major League Baseball color barrier, there project to be no U.S.-born Black players in this World Series.

Zero.

Robinson debuted in 1947 with the Brooklyn Dodgers and played in the World Series that year. Since then, the 1950 matchup between the New York Yankees and Phillies has been the only World Series without a Black player.

Starting in 1954 when **Willie Mays** and the New York Giants played against **Larry Doby** and Cleveland, every single team to reach the World Series had at least one U.S.-born Black player until the 2005 Astros did not.

During that half-century, Black greats such as Hank Aaron, Barry Bonds, Lou Brock, Bob Gibson, Rickey Henderson and **Frank Robinson** commanded the October stage. In 1979 alone, Willie Stargell and Dave Parker were among 10 Black players on the "We Are Family" Pittsburgh Pirates champions.

By 2020, when the Dodgers beat Tampa Bay, Los Angeles star Mookie Betts was the only Black player in the World Series.

Black players made up 7.2% of opening day rosters this year. That dipped from 7.6% last year and marked the lowest since study data was first collected in 1991, when 18% of MLB players were Black.

The Phillies had no Black players on their opening roster this year for the first time since 1959. Roman Quinn, a Black backup outfielder, played 23 games before being released.

Since 2017, the year the Astros won the World Series and kicked off this run of four AL pennants in six seasons, only three teams have won at least 500 regular-season games: the Dodgers (562), the Astros (541) and the Yankees (518).

Only five of the players from that 2017 team (**Jose Altuve, Alex Bregman, Yuli Gurriel, Justin Verlander and Lance McCullers Jr.**) are still with the Astros today. Center fielder **George Springer** left as a free agent after the '20 season, and shortstop **Carlos Correa** signed with the Twins this March.

Over the last three full seasons, the only teams that could stop Houston were the 2019 Nationals, a 93-win wild-card team, and last year's Braves, whose 88 regular-season wins were the fewest among the 10 playoff teams. Both Washington and Atlanta caught fire at the right time and were probably better than their regular-season records suggest. Yet even now, despite knowing they beat the Astros in the World Series, it's hard to say that either of them was better than Houston.

This, of course, brings us to the current NL-champion Phillies, who finished third in their division with an 87–75 record and would not have qualified for the postseason had it not added two teams, one from each league, this year. Like Washington in 2019, Philadelphia has a strong top of the rotation that is silencing opposing lineups. Like Atlanta in '21, Philly has the fewest wins of any NL playoff team. And like both of the eventual World Series winners, the Phillies have a Hall of Fame-level talent who is having a career-defining postseason anchoring their lineup.

Yes, the Astros illegally stole signs in '17 and part of '18, but they have remained the best team in the AL even after they were caught cheating. This doesn't excuse their transgressions—if anything, it makes their sign stealing all the more *inexcusable*, because they were good enough to win without cheating—but it is indicative of their organization's excellence.

Moreover, only five of the players from that 2017 team (**Jose Altuve, Alex Bregman, Yuli Gurriel, Justin Verlander and Lance McCullers Jr.**) are still with the Astros today.

Bryce Harper, who turned 30 last week, going into the Series is batting .419 (18 for 43) with 6 doubles, 5 homers, 11 RBIs, and 10 runs over 11 postseason games. He has hit in 10 straight and has reached base in all 11.

Astros second baseman **Jose Altuve**'s double in the fifth inning of game 3 against the Yankees was his first hit of the playoffs, snapping an 0-for-25 streak that was the longest in history to open a postseason. It broke the record set by **Dal Maxvill** of the 1968 Cardinals, who went 0-for-22. (In those days, the postseason was just the World Series, so even though that went seven games against the Tigers, poor Dal was actually 0-for-October.) Still, Altuve has been so good over his career that the double moved him into fifth place all-time in postseason extra-base hits, with 39, trailing only **Derek Jeter** (57), **Bernie Williams** (51), **Manny Ramírez** (48) and **David Ortiz** (41).

After losing to Atlanta in last year's World Series, Houston improved to 7-0 to start this postseason, earning the fifth pennant in franchise history and another chance at its second championship.

With the playoffs expanded to 12 teams this year, the Phillies became the first club in baseball history to finish third in the standings and still reach the World Series. Philadelphia went 87-75 during the regular season — Bregman and the Astros finished 106-56 under manager Dusty Baker, seven games better than any other American League team. The Phillies are chasing their first World Series win since 2008.

Tom Verducci from Sports Illustrated-- Philadelphia's path to win is the same as the one the Nationals took to upset Houston in 2019. Washington hit key home runs, **Max Scherzer** and **Stephen Strasburg** provided length and manager **Dave Martinez** deployed starter **Patrick Corbin** as a reliever to fortify his bullpen. We've already seen Phillies manager **Rob Thomson** use starter **Ranger Suárez** to close the NLCS.

Jose Alvarado will pitch to **Yordan Alvarez** in every meaningful at bat in the back end of a game, just as he did to **Juan Soto** in the NLCS. But Thomson must be careful about overworking and overexposing Alvarado and **Seranthony Domínguez** in a long series, as happened to **Andrew Miller** in 2016, **Brandon Morrow** in '17, **Will Harris** in '19 and **Nick Anderson** in '20. Give good hitters multiple looks at good relievers and you're asking for trouble. That's why innings from Nola and Wheeler are critical, and the way they are throwing, they can do it.

DOMBROWSKI

Phil's GM **Dave Dombrowski**, who became the first GM to assemble four different World Series teams over the weekend, is the godfather of all-in (then out).

Ask Marlins, Tigers and Red Sox fans.

in short: He spends big (Price, Ordóñez, Schwarber), trades prospects for current stars (Sale, Cabrera, Scherzer), then wins.

Then ... he leaves your team in shambles: Every WS team he's GM'd ('97 Marlins, '06 and '12 Tigers, '18 Red Sox) has finished last within three years.

Dombrowski is back in the Fall Classic with a fourth team, following similar trips with the Sox (2018), Tigers (2006, 2012), and Marlins (1997).

Dombrowski took over a downtrodden Red Sox organization in 2015 and won 93 games the next two seasons before the 2018 team won 108 games and the World Series.

He was fired — “parted ways” as the Sox put it — less than a year later. From the day he was hired until the day he was fired, the Sox went 395-279 (.586).

They are 202-199 (.503) since and finished in last place this season.

Four trips to the World Series with four teams in four decades.

VERLANDER

When the World Series begins, **Justin Verlander** will be 39 years and 250 days old. And when he takes the mound, you're likely going to see some 97s, 98s, maybe even 99s on the radar gun.

It will be something baseball fans today have never seen on the postseason stage. Verlander's velocity, at his age, is unprecedented for a starting pitcher in the pitch-tracking era -- especially in the playoffs. Let alone for a pitcher in his first season back from Tommy John surgery.

Starting a World Series game at age 39 is rare enough. Only 16 pitchers have done it. Starting a World Series game at age 39 and throwing in the upper 90s is another thing entirely.

Verlander hit 101 on the gun at age 23 pitching for the tigers in 2006 against the Yankees. Last week he was 98 mph against the Yankees at age 39.

But Verlander is going to do it. His average fastball velocity in the playoffs is 95.4 mph. Sixteen years after he was hitting triple digits as a 23-year-old in his first postseason in 2006, Verlander has topped out at 98.5 mph in 2022.

In the pitch-tracking era, which began in 2008, only eight starting pitchers have even thrown a pitch in the postseason at age 39 or older. By then, all of their fastballs were in decline. Except Verlander's.

Avg. postseason fastball velocity for 39+ year old SP

Pitch-tracking era (since 2008)

Justin Verlander, 2022 Astros -- 95.4 mph

Bartolo Colon, 2013 A's -- 91.2 mph

Adam Wainwright, 2020 Cardinals -- 90.3 mph

Tim Hudson, 2014 Giants -- 90.2 mph

Rich Hill, 2019 Dodgers -- 89.7 mph

Adam Wainwright, 2021 Cardinals -- 89.5 mph

Andy Pettitte, 2012 Yankees -- 87.9 mph

R.A. Dickey, 2015 Blue Jays -- 82.8 mph

Jamie Moyer, 2008 Phillies -- 81.9 mph

And Verlander's fastest fastball this postseason, at 98.5 mph? It was a strikeout. He rang up **Matt Carpenter** with the front-door heater in Game 1 of the American League Championship Series against the Yankees.

Not only is that the fastest strikeout on record by a 39-year-old in the postseason, it's the fastest strikeout by any pitcher in their late 30s. Past the age of 35, the only pitchers since 2008 to record a strikeout in the postseason on a fastball at 97 mph or harder are Verlander, **Charlie Morton**, **Fernando Rodney**, **Billy Wagner** and **Ryan Madson**. And Verlander's 98.5-mph strikeout of Carpenter is the fastest of them all.

Fastest postseason K's by pitchers over age 35

Pitch-tracking era (since 2008)

98.5 mph -- Justin Verlander, 2022 ALCS Game 1

97.9 mph -- Justin Verlander, 2022 ALCS Game 1

97.9 mph -- Charlie Morton, 2021 NLDS Game 4

97.7 mph -- Fernando Rodney, 2013 ALDS Game 4

97.7 mph -- Fernando Rodney, 2013 ALDS Game 3

This postseason velo from Verlander comes following a regular season in which he averaged 95 mph on the dot, even faster than he was throwing before the Tommy John surgery -- Verlander's four-seamer averaged 94.6 mph in his previous full season, 2019.

He reached as high as 99.3 mph in a start against the Mariners on July 23, the fastest pitch he had thrown in a game since Aug. 4, 2017, and he recorded a strikeout at 99.2 mph in that same start, his highest-velocity K since another one at 99.2 on July 21, 2018.

Verlander hitting 99-plus mph gives him the highest max velo of any over-35 starter, regular season or postseason, since pitch tracking began, by a full mph.

Highest max velo by SP over age 35

Regular or postseason, pitch-tracking era (since 2008)

Justin Verlander, 2022 Astros -- 99.3 mph (age 39)

Charlie Morton, 2021 Braves -- 98.3 mph (age 37)

Max Scherzer, 2021 Dodgers -- 98.0 mph (age 37)

Bartolo Colon, 2011 Yankees -- 97.7 mph (age 38)

Jose Contreras, 2009 Rockies -- 97.2 mph (age 37)

All told, across the regular and postseason, Verlander has hit 98-plus mph 16 times in 2022. That's the most times for any starting pitcher older than 35 in the pitch-tracking era. The only other starters to throw 98 mph or harder at that age are Morton (seven times in 2021), Scherzer (once in 2021) ... and Verlander himself (four times in 2019, when he was 36).

When Justin Verlander takes the mound in tomorrow's Game 1, he will become just the second pitcher in MLB history to start a World Series game in three different decades. The other is **Roger Clemens**, who started for the Red Sox in the 1986 World Series, for the Yankees in '99, 2000, '01 and '03, and for the Astros in '05, back when they were in the National League. Clemens finished his career with a 3–0 record and a 2.37 ERA in eight World Series starts. Verlander, on the other hand, is 0–6 in his seven World Series starts with a 5.68 ERA. He pitched for the Tigers in the '06 and '12 World Series and for the Astros in '17 and '19. Houston went back to the World Series last year, but Verlander was recovering from Tommy John surgery and didn't pitch.

He is allowing a .144 average when his fastball is at least three feet off the ground, .247 when it's below it. (Make him get the ball down.)

He's throwing 54% breaking pitches in the postseason, up from a career-high 48% in the regular season. (Break out the curveball machine in the indoor cage).

He has the fourth lowest batting average against the third time around the lineup. (He's not going anywhere.)

He averages 94.8 mph with nobody on base but 96 with runners in scoring position. (Prepare for the higher gear in big spots.)

Awesome career, awesome performance late in his career. **BUT** he holds the record for most World Series decisions without a win. After blowing a 5-0 lead, with his no-decision Friday,

Verlander remains 0-6 over eight World Series starts. Verlander's World Series ERA is now 6.07, the worst ever among starters with at least 30 innings pitched in the Fall Classic.

OTHER MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

This off season's free-agent class is expected to include four elite shortstops: **Trea Turner**, **Dansby Swanson**, **Carlos Correa** (who has declared he is opting out of his contract) and **Xander Bogaerts** (who is expected to do the same). The shift restrictions that are starting in 2023 will make infield range more important, which should increase the value of all four of these players.

Think about how much they will get. For reference here are shortstop signings from the last two years:

Francisco Lindor	Mets	10 years/\$341 million
Fernando Tatis Jr.	Padres	14 years/\$340
Corey Seager	Rangers	10 years/\$325
Wander Franco	Rays	11 years/\$187
Marcus Semien	Rangers	7 years/\$175
Javier Báez	Tigers	6 years/\$140
Trevor Story	Red Sox	6 years/\$140

Clayton Kershaw's peak, from 2011 through 2017, saw him post a 2.10 ERA in 1452 innings, win five ERA titles and three Cy Young Awards

Red Sox outfielders hit 39 home runs this season, the fifth fewest in the majors. **Kyle Schwarber** hit 45 playing left field for the Phillies.

The NFL is the king of television, with 75 of the 100 most-viewed broadcasts last year, according to Sports Business Journal. College football had six. Only the biennial Olympics can compare (11 of the top 100), while nothing from the NBA, MLB or NHL qualified.

One of our subscribers who jumped on the 1956 NL MVL **Don Newcombe** pitched righthanded followed up with: Don Newcombe was not only an incredible pitcher but a dangerous hitter. He won 153 in his brief 10 year MLB career that was cut short at the age of 34 due to alcoholism. He was often used as a pinch hitter and had 246 lifetime hits and 15 HR's in his shortened career. He was the first pitcher to win the Rookie of the Year, Most Valuable Player, and Cy young Awards during his career. This distinction would not be achieved again until 2011, when Detroit Tigers pitcher **Justin Verlander** who was Rookie of the Year in 2006, won the Cy Young and MVP awards. Both pitchers also won world series games to add to their credentials.

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/don-newcombe/>

It has been more than 4,700 days since the Yankees were the last team standing. Despite five trips to the ALCS and more than a billion dollars spent in player salaries over that span, the ultimate prize of a 28th World Series title has eluded the winningest franchise in the sport's history.

For the 13th consecutive season, the team did not appear in the World Series. For the third time in six years, the Astros ousted them. The drought is now two years longer than their infamous **Horace Clarke** years, 1965-1975.

They have not had a losing record in THIRTY YEARS. They have made the playoffs 24 of the last 28 seasons.

On July 8 they were 61-23, averaging 5.39 runs pr game, team era 2.95. After racing to a 61-23 record in early July, AL East champion New York was no match for the Astros in October — again. Houston went 9-2 against the Yankees overall this year and has eliminated them from the playoffs four times in the past eight seasons, including in the ALCS in 2017 and 2019.

In fact, New York has lost in its last five trips to the AL Championship Series and hasn't claimed a pennant since winning its record 27th World Series championship in 2009.

Aaron Judge hit .132 in the postseason with 15 strikeouts in nine games — hey, **Ted Williams** hit .200 with five singles in 25 at-bats in his only postseason appearance

Trent Grisham of the Padres went up and down.

Regular season hits .184

Hits .500 with 2 HRs against the Mets

Hits .308 against the Dodgers

Poof. He goes 0-19 against the Phillies

First player to win LCS and World Series MVP Awards in the same year—Hall of Famer **Willie Stargell** (1979 Pirates)

Going into the Series we've had 11 instances this postseason in which a starter has gone at least seven innings. That's as many as in the '16 playoffs and more than in '17 (10), '18 (nine), '20 (eight) and '21 (four).

Furthermore, we've already had more starter innings in this year's postseason (341 $\frac{1}{3}$) than last year's (293), despite six fewer games being played so far. Last year's World Series teams both got significantly more innings from their relievers than from their starters:

Team	Starter innings	Relief innings
2021 Astros	64 $\frac{2}{3}$	82
2021 Braves	58	75 $\frac{1}{3}$

This year's pennant winners have, so far, flipped that particular script:

Team	Starter innings	Relief innings
2022 Astros	39	33
2022 Phillies	54 $\frac{2}{3}$	42 $\frac{1}{3}$

And note that the Astros' starter total exceeds their relief total despite having played an 18-inning game against the Mariners in the American League Division Series.

Starters are performing better, too. Last year, they had a 4.55 ERA. This year, it's 3.85.

Obviously, roles last year were impacted by the pandemic having cut the 2020 season short. But the 5.02 innings per start so far this postseason are also more than in '17 and '18 (both 4.7).

The Dodgers, who posted a luxury tax payroll just under \$290MM in 2022 and will see significant salary come off the books this season thanks to possible impending free agencies of players such as **David Price, Trea Turner, Justin Turner** (whose contract has a \$16MM club option for next season) and **Craig Kimbrel**.

Per RosterResource, the Dodgers have an estimated luxury tax payroll of around \$176MM headed into 2023, though this doesn't include contracts for their arbitration-eligible players. Still, that should leave them with plenty of space before they even get to the level they hit this year. Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, the Dodgers have just under \$74MM locked up for 2024, a hair above \$70MM for 2025, and just over \$61MM committed for 2026. This payroll flexibility in the future should give them plenty of room to offer free agents multi-year contracts this offseason.

Bryce Harper's first ten post-season games 10 games, 10 extra-base hits

Did you know that only five other players who ever lived have pounded 10 extra-base hits in 10 games within the same postseason? How 'bout this group:

- **Carlos Beltrán**, 2004, 11 XBH
- **Willie Stargell**, 1979, 11
- **Enrique Hernández**, 2021, 10
- **Hideki Matsui**, 2004, 10
- **Fred McGriff**, 1995, 10
- **Bryce Harper**, 2022, 10

Three rounds (Cards-Braves-Padres) Harper He's hitting .419 (18-for-43) with six doubles, five homers and 11 RBIs this postseason.

If Harper keeps it up, look for him to make this list of the best postseason performances of all-time, listed in reverse chronological order.

Randy Arozarena, Rays -- 2020

Having only played in 42 Major League games before entering the 2020 postseason for the Rays, Arozarena had solid regular-season numbers over that small sample, but was virtually unknown outside of Florida. Then, the 25-year-old outfielder launched 10 home runs to break the previous record of eight for a single postseason, while his 64 total bases smashed the previous record of 50, all while slashing a cool .377/.442/.831. Arozarena's efforts carried the Rays to an American League pennant, and he became the first rookie position player to take MVP honors in a League Championship Series (or World Series), thanks to his performance against the Astros in the ALCS. Arozarena continued to drive Tampa Bay's offense in the Fall Classic, though his team fell just short against the Dodgers and World Series MVP Corey Seager (see below).

Top moment: After Houston won three straight to force a winner-take-all Game 7 in that ALCS, Arozarena's first-inning, two-run homer set the stage for a 4-2, pennant-clinching victory.

Corey Seager, Dodgers -- 2020

If it weren't for Arozarena, Seager's output would have been even more attention grabbing. Seager batted .328 and slugged .746 over the Dodgers' 18-game run to their first championship since 1988. Seager's eight home runs and 50 total bases are both tied for second in a single postseason, behind only Arozarena. His 20 RBIs finished behind only David Freese's 21 from 2011. Seager put together three games with at least three hits and three with three-plus RBIs while being named the MVP of both the NLCS and World Series.

Top moment: The Dodgers trailed Atlanta 3-1 in the NLCS when Seager homered twice to help the club win Game 5 and ignite a comeback that took it to the World Series.

Stephen Strasburg, Nationals -- 2019

October 2019 was not the first time Strasburg had pitched brilliantly in the playoffs (his seven shutout innings against the Cubs while battling the flu in the 2017 NLDS comes to mind), but in this instance he brought his very best to the mound while the rest of the Nationals behind him finally did the same. Strasburg's incredible month began with three scoreless innings of relief in the NL Wild Card Game, followed by five more starts in which he earned four wins and never allowed more than three runs. Strasburg finished the month 5-0, making him the first pitcher to win that many games without a loss in a single postseason. He also struck out 47 batters, tying him for the second most in a postseason.

Top moment: After the Nationals squandered a 2-0 World Series lead with three straight home losses against the Astros, Strasburg held Houston to two runs across 8 1/3 innings to help Washington claim a win-or-go-home Game 6. The Nationals beat the Astros again in Game 7, and Strasburg was named Series MVP.

Andrew Miller, Indians -- 2016

Miller put the "ace" in the term "relief ace" for the Tribe in 2016, both in the regular season and then in October. After making 70 appearances over which he posted a 1.45 ERA and struck out 45 percent of the batters he faced, Miller didn't miss a beat in the playoffs, appearing in 10 games and striking out 30 of the 73 batters he faced (41 percent) while posting a 1.40 ERA to help Cleveland win the AL pennant. Miller was named MVP of the five-game ALCS against the Blue Jays.

Top moment: Miller struck out five of six batters faced in two perfect innings from the seventh through the eighth, preserving a 2-1 Cleveland lead over Toronto in 2016 ALCS Game 2.

Daniel Murphy, Mets -- 2015

Murphy was a revelation for the Mets during the 2015 postseason, going from a .755 career OPS in the regular season, with an average of nine homers a year, to a one-man wrecking crew

in October. In the NLCS against the Cubs, Murphy hit .529 with four home runs before being named MVP of the series. And that came after he hit .333 with three homers in the NLDS against the Dodgers. Murphy's seven postseason home runs were half the number of home runs he hit during the entire regular season in 2015. Overall that postseason, Murphy posted a 1.115 OPS with 11 RBIs.

Top moment: A 4-for-5 performance in Mets' pennant-clinching victory over Cubs in 2015 NLCS Game 4, which included a two-run homer in the seventh inning that marked a record sixth consecutive game Murphy had homered in during that postseason.

Madison Bumgarner, Giants -- 2014

Bumgarner's October 2014 will rank among the most heroic pitching performances that many of us will see in our lifetimes. The Giants' workhorse went at least seven innings in each of his six starts, allowing no more than three runs in any of them and including two shutouts in that mix -- one in the winner-take-all Wild Card Game against the Pirates, and another against the Royals in World Series Game 5. That set the stage for Game 7 three nights later, when manager Bruce Bochy turned to his ace one more time on short rest to protect a 3-2 lead. Bumgarner did just that, shutting the door with five scoreless innings and stranding Kansas City's game-tying run on third base to close out the ninth.

Top moment: It's undoubtedly that World Series Game 7, which saw Bumgarner shut the door for five innings to earn the longest save in postseason history. Bumgarner finished the Series with a 0.43 ERA (one earned run in 21 innings).

Koji Uehara, Red Sox -- 2013

Uehara was nearly untouchable for the indefatigable 2013 Red Sox during the regular season (1.09 ERA, 0.57 WHIP), and he kept on rolling right through October. The Japanese star made 13 postseason appearances and struck out 16 hitters without issuing a single walk. Uehara's postseason totals were somehow even more dominant than his regular season: A 0.66 ERA, 0.51 WHIP and .152 opponent batting average.

Uehara earned seven saves along the way and also finished off the Red Sox's 6-1 victory over the Cardinals in the decisive World Series Game 6. And don't forget his pickoff throw that caught St. Louis' Kolten Wong and ended the Cardinals' night in Game 4 of that Fall Classic.

Top moment: Boston summoned Uehara for five of its six games against the Tigers in the 2013 ALCS, and their star reliever was absolutely lights out. He picked up three saves and a win without permitting a single run across six innings of work, earning himself ALCS MVP honors.

David Freese, Cardinals -- 2011

Freese, who went to high school and community college in the St. Louis area, is one of the brightest examples of a player coming up big for his hometown team. The third baseman simply came up huge when the Cardinals needed him most. He drove in four runs in a win-or-go-home scenario against the Phillies in NLDS Game 4, then exploded in the NLCS, batting .545 (12-for-

22) with three homers and nine RBIs to drive the Cardinals past the Brewers in six games and earn NLCS honors.

But somehow all of that was just a preamble to Freese's heroics against Texas in the World Series. He notched hits in each of the first three contests, running up his postseason hitting streak to 13 games before it was snapped in Game 4. Then in Game 6, Freese played hero twice, belting a game-tying triple with two outs in the bottom of the ninth and a walk-off homer in the 11th -- each of those hits coming with two strikes. Freese *still* wasn't done, beginning Game 7 with a two-run double as the Cardinals rallied back from the edge to beat the Rangers in one of the most dramatic World Series in history. Freese's 21 RBIs across October 2011 set a single-postseason record, and he became the sixth player to be named MVP of both the LCS and World Series rounds.

Top moment: No need to overthink this. Freese saved the Cardinals with his two-run triple as their season was down to its final strike in the ninth inning of World Series Game 6, and then he joined Carlton Fisk and Kirby Puckett as the only players to hit an extra-inning, walk-off homer with their team facing World Series elimination.

Carlos Beltrán, Astros -- 2004

The Astros acquired Beltrán from the Royals as part of a three-team trade in June of 2004, and the 27-year-old outfielder delivered 23 homers over the season's final 90 games to help Houston reach the postseason. Once there, Beltrán hit .435 with an MLB-record-tying eight home runs -- he joined Barry Bonds, who smashed eight homers in 2002, but did so in 17 games to Beltrán's 12. Nelson Cruz later joined the club, launching eight homers in 2011 for the Rangers. Beltrán's peak in October 2004 came from NLDS Game 5 vs. the Braves on Oct. 11, through NLCS Game 4 vs. the Cardinals on Oct. 17, a period in which he hit .611 with five of his eight postseason homers.

Top moment: Beltrán's go-ahead home run in seventh inning of 2004 NLCS Game 4 against the Cardinals -- his fifth straight game with a homer -- lifted the Astros to a 6-5 victory.

David Ortiz, Red Sox -- 2004

Ortiz had already enjoyed a pair of massive seasons after coming over to the Red Sox via free agency before the 2003 campaign, but the legend of "Big Papi, postseason hero" was solidified forever (and further built upon later) in October 2004. It began with a series-clinching, walk-off homer against Angels pitcher Jarrod Washburn in the 10th inning of ALDS Game 3, sending Boston on to an ALCS rematch against the hated Yankees (who had broken Boston's hearts a year before).

After the Red Sox fell behind, three games to none, it appeared the Bronx Bombers were going to get the last laugh again. But Ortiz put his team on his shoulders, belting a walk-off homer in the 12th inning of Game 4 and then a walk-off single in the 14th inning of Game 5 and leading Boston to the first rally from a 3-0 postseason series deficit in history. Ortiz took home ALCS MVP honors and then stayed hot in the World Series, clubbing a three-run homer against the

Cardinals in the first inning of Game 1 to set the tone for the Red Sox's first world championship in 86 years.

Top moment: Ortiz's game-winning hits in back-to-back nights in ALCS Games 4 and 5 gave him three walk-off hits in October 2004 alone, setting the career record for most postseason walk-off hits until Astros shortstop Carlos Correa tied him in 2020.

Josh Beckett, Marlins -- 2003

Taken with the second overall pick of the MLB Draft just four years prior, the 23-year-old Beckett pitched like a seasoned veteran for the underdog Marlins. The Cubs knocked Beckett around in NLCS Game 1 with six runs off the right-hander, but he recovered to twirl an 11-strikeout shoutout in a win-or-go-home Game 5 and then came out of the bullpen on two days' rest to throw four scoreless innings of one-run ball in the decisive Game 7.

After racking up 10 more strikeouts in a tough-luck loss to the Yankees in World Series Game 3, Beckett rallied again to record one of the more impressive pitching nights in recent memory: a nine-strikeout, five-hit shutout as a visitor at hallowed Yankee Stadium that helped Florida clinch the franchise's second world championship.

Top moment: Beckett made himself a household name after that shutout in World Series Game 6, which came on just three days' rest. He became the youngest pitcher since Royals righty Bret Saberhagen (21 years old, 1985) to win a World Series clincher.

Barry Bonds, Giants -- 2002

The Giants ultimately fell one game short of the World Series title, but Bonds couldn't have done much more in search of his first ring. Fresh off his record 73-homer regular season a year before, Bonds went deep three times in San Francisco's five-game triumph over Atlanta in the NLDS to set the tone. He followed with another homer and six RBIs while also walking in nearly half of his plate appearances in the Giants' five-game NLCS victory over the Cardinals.

The Angels entered the 2002 World Series knowing clearly that they couldn't let Bonds beat them, but he got his dingers in anyway. Bonds went deep four times and finished the Fall Classic hitting .471 with a 1.994 OPS. But the Giants blew a late lead in Game 6 and watched the Angels finish the job at home in Game 7.

Top moment: Bonds' four World Series dingers included one of the longest ever seen in the ninth inning of Game 2. Bonds hit the ball so high and so far that the camera seemed to lose track of it, bringing the Giants to within a run in a game they eventually lost, 11-10.

Curt Schilling and Randy Johnson, D-backs -- 2001

It takes a team effort to win in October, but Schilling and Johnson were the closest to a "two-man team" that's ever been seen in the postseason. Arizona's co-aces accounted for nearly 60% of the team's innings pitched in October 2001, and they combined to go 9-1 with a 1.30 ERA and 103 strikeouts in 89 2/3 innings of work. Schilling didn't allow more than two runs in any of

his six starts, racking up a single-postseason record 56 strikeouts. Johnson's 47 strikeouts are tied for the second most in one postseason, and his six appearances included a shutout apiece in the NLCS and World Series rounds.

Top moment: In one of the most memorable World Series contests in history in the decisive Game 7 against the Yankees, it was only fitting that Schilling and Johnson carried the D-backs to the finish line. Schilling dueled Roger Clemens with 7 1/3 innings of two-run ball, and after Miguel Batista recorded an out in the eighth, Johnson took over with 1 1/3 perfect innings of relief -- just one night after he started Game 6. Johnson's winning effort out of the bullpen kept Arizona alive long enough for Luis Gonzalez's Series-winning walk-off hit in the ninth against Yankees closer Mariano Rivera.

Jack Morris, Twins -- 1991

Morris had already established himself as a big-game pitcher with a pair of wins for the Tigers in the 1984 World Series, but October '91 solidified that reputation for good. Morris won each of his four decisions for Minnesota that postseason, with a pair of victories each in the ALCS against the Blue Jays and in the World Series against the Braves. He finished the month with a 2.23 ERA across 36 1/3 innings of work for the world champions.

Top moment: We're burying the lede, of course, because Morris' final victory of 1991 ranks among the greatest pitching performances in history. Pitching on three days' rest in the decisive Game 7, Morris outdueled Atlanta's John Smoltz with a 10-inning shutout, keeping the Braves at bay long enough for Gene Larkin's title-winning, walk-off single in the bottom of the 10th. It remains the longest shutout recorded in a winner-take-all postseason game.

Billy Hatcher, Reds -- 1990

The Reds probably weren't the champion pick for many, even after they captured the 1990 NL West division title, but they pulled off back-to-back upsets of the Pirates and A's with Hatcher leading the way. Having just arrived to Cincinnati in April via a trade with Pittsburgh, Hatcher became a Queen City hero with an extraordinarily hot bat in October, finishing the '90 postseason with a .519 average and 1.456 OPS across eight games. That includes World Series records for both average (.750, 9-for-12) and OBP (.800) that stand to this day.

Top moment: Hatcher went 4-for-4 with two doubles and a triple in the Reds' 10-inning win over the A's in World Series Game 2, a victory that turned the tide in Cincinnati's favor for good. Those four hits made Hatcher an incredible 7-for-7 to begin the Fall Classic after he went 3-for-3 with a walk in Game 1.

Orel Hershiser, Dodgers -- 1988

Hershiser's year for the ages began in the regular season when he strung together 59 consecutive innings without allowing a run, breaking the all-time record set by fellow Dodgers legend Don Drysdale. That streak, which helped Hershiser capture the NL Cy Young Award, ran through the Dodgers' final game of the regular season, and Hershiser never let his foot off the gas in October. "Bulldog" captured NLCS honors after starting Games 1 and 3, coming out of the

bullpen on zero days' rest in the 12th inning of Game 4 to get a one-out save and then shutting out the favored Mets on two days' rest in Game 7. Hershiser tossed another shutout on three days' rest in World Series Game 2, and then finished off the mighty A's with a complete-game, two-run effort in Game 5.

Top moment: The Dodgers were out of pitchers and looking to avoid falling behind, three games to one, to the Mets in the 12th inning of NLCS Game 4. Manager Tommy Lasorda called on Hershiser -- who had just pitched seven innings the day before -- to face righty Kevin McReynolds. Hershiser retired McReynolds on a broken-bat fly to center field.

Willie Stargell, Pirates -- 1979

Well past his 39th birthday, Stargell proved he had plenty of "Pops" left in his bat with one more massive season in 1979. Stargell slugged .552 with 32 homers in the regular season to take home the NL MVP Award, and then kept on going with a pair of homers (including a go-ahead, three-run shot in the 11th inning of Game 1) and six RBIs in the Pirates' three-game NLCS sweep of the Reds. Pittsburgh's beloved leader homered three more times and drove in seven runs in the World Series, helping the "We Are Family" Pirates rally from a 3-1 deficit against the Orioles to win the championship in seven games.

Top moment: With everything on the line in World Series Game 7, Stargell took the lead with four hits in five at-bats -- including the key go-ahead, two-run homer in the sixth inning. He became the first player to win the regular-season, LCS and World Series MVP awards in the same season.

Reggie Jackson, Yankees -- 1978

No, we're not going with Mr. October's 1977 postseason that included his five World Series homers -- but stay with us here. Jackson went just 4-for-25 with no homers and two RBIs across his first eight games of the '77 postseason before going deep in each of his last three contests against the Dodgers (including, of course, three homers on three swings in the decisive World Series Game 6).

Meanwhile, Jackson was hot from start to finish in the next postseason that followed the tumultuous "Bronx Zoo" regular season. He finished October 1978 with a .417 average, four more dingers and 14 RBIs across 10 games for the back-to-back champion Yankees, setting the tone with a homer in ALCS Game 1 against the Royals and ending the season with another homer against the Dodgers in the decisive World Series Game 6.

Top moment: Dodgers rookie reliever Bob Welch delivered a key moment early in the 1978 World Series when he struck out Jackson with two men on base in the ninth inning of Game 2. But Jackson got his revenge against Welch in Game 6, walloping a two-run homer that finished off a Series-clinching, 7-2 victory.

Bob Gibson, Cardinals and Mickey Lolich, Tigers -- 1968

The year 1968 is known as the "Year of the Pitcher," and no pitcher was better in 1968 than

Gibson, who posted a Live Ball Era-record 1.12 ERA with 13 shutouts over 304 2/3 innings during the regular season before continuing his utter domination on the mound in the postseason. By this time a World Series legend, having won with St. Louis in 1964 and '67, when he was named World Series MVP, Gibson would outdo himself in '68, though in a losing cause. In Game 1 against the Tigers, he set a postseason record by striking out 17 batters in a 4-0 shutout. Overall, Gibson finished with a 1.67 ERA over three World Series starts that October, striking out 35 and walking four over 27 innings.

(An honorable mention here has to go to Gibson's teammate, **Lou Brock**, who helped Gibson and the Cardinals win the 1967 World Series (.414) and then was perhaps even better in '68 (.464), when he tied his own record with seven stolen bases.)

Meanwhile, Lolich wasn't even the most celebrated pitcher on his own team during the 1968 regular season; instead it was **Denny McLain**, still the Majors' most recent pitcher to win 30 games in a single year. But Lolich matched Gibson pitch for pitch in the World Series, equaling Gibson's 1.67 ERA and winning all three of his starts including the decisive Game 7.

Top moments: Gibson struck out an MLB postseason-record 17 batters in Game 1 of the 1968 World Series against the Tigers, but Lolich got the last laugh in Game 7, outdueling the mighty Gibson with his third complete-game victory.

Sandy Koufax, Dodgers -- 1965

Koufax, considered by many to be the best left-handed pitcher in baseball history, was the MVP of the 1963 World Series, but had his signature postseason in '65. He started Game 2, Game 5 and Game 7 of that Fall Classic against the Twins, tossing 18 scoreless innings over those last two outings and finishing with a 0.38 ERA, 29 strikeouts and five walks in 24 innings overall. In the title-clinching Game 7, Koufax threw a three-hit shutout while walking three and striking out 10 before being named World Series MVP for the second time in his illustrious career.

Top moment: Koufax's strikeout of Twins outfielder **Bob Allison** to end the 1965 World Series with a 1-0 Dodgers victory in Game 7

Hank Aaron and Lew Burdette, Braves -- 1957

Hammerin' Hank only got three cracks at the postseason across his 23 big league seasons, but he made the most of his first opportunity in the 1957 World Series. Aaron homered three times, including a three-run shot that gave the Braves a lead in Game 4, drove in seven runs and batted .393.

While Aaron supplied the offense, Burdette took care of the mighty Yankees attack. The right-hander completed and won all three of his starts, including shutouts in Games 5 and 7, to help Milwaukee shock the Bronx Bombers.

Top moments: Burdette twirled his second shutout in the span of four days in the decisive World Series Game 7, stranding eight Yankee baserunners to finish the Fall Classic with a 0.67

ERA (two earned runs in 27 innings) across his three starts. Aaron went 2-for-5 and drove in **Eddie Mathews** with a third-inning single in the winning effort.

Yogi Berra, Yankees -- 1956

There's plenty to choose from with Berra, considering that he contributed to 10 different World Series-champion clubs, but the catcher's performance in the 1956 Fall Classic was likely his best. Berra finished the Yankees' seven-game triumph over the Dodgers with a .360/.448/.800 slash line, homered three times and drove home a then-Series record 10 runs for the pinstripes. And, of course, Berra was behind the plate calling all 27 outs of **Don Larsen's** perfect game -- still the only perfecto in World Series play -- memorably jumping into Larsen's arms after the final batter struck out.

Top moment: After a hard-fought, back-and-forth series across the first six games, the Yankees won a 9-0 laugher in Game 7. That was thanks in large part to two homers by Berra, who went deep in the first and third innings off **Don Newcombe**, the Dodgers' NL Cy Young and MVP Award winner.

Lou Gehrig, Yankees -- 1928

Gehrig's 2.433 OPS (no, that's not a misprint) in the 1928 World Series remains the standard as the highest by any full-time player in a single Fall Classic. It's true that Gehrig's four games played (courtesy of the Yankees' sweep of the Cardinals) are fewer than any other position player on this list, but he didn't need many games to do damage, homering four times, driving in nine runs and reaching base in 12 of his 17 plate appearances.

As was the case throughout the first years of Gehrig's brilliant career, he was likely overshadowed in this Series by **Babe Ruth**, who homered three times in Game 4 and finished with a .625 average. But it was Gehrig who finished with higher on-base and slugging percentages.

Top moment: Gehrig enjoyed a perfect afternoon in Game 3 at St. Louis' Sportsman's Park. He homered to lead off the second inning, motored around for a two-run, inside-the-park homer in the fourth and then walked in the sixth and seventh frames.

Stan Coveleski, Indians -- 1920

A product of the Pennsylvania coal mines and a masterful purveyor of the spitball, Coveleski is one of only nine pitchers to win three games in a single World Series -- and he was dominant in all of them. Coveleski powered the Indians to wins over the Dodgers in Games 1, 4 and 7, going the distance in each of those starts while allowing just two combined runs across 27 innings (0.67 ERA).

Top moment: Coveleski came back on two days' rest to take the ball in Game 7 and tossed a five-hit shutout (needing just one strikeout to get the job done) as the Indians captured their first World Series championship.

Christy Mathewson, Giants -- 1905

It's probably not possible to pitch any better in a World Series than the standard Mathewson set more than a century ago. The Majors' first modern-era star pitcher became an October legend by authoring three shutouts in the span of six days against the Philadelphia A's. Mathewson's staggering totals for the series: 27 innings, 13 hits allowed, 18 strikeouts, one walk and zero runs.

Top moment: How does one choose between three World Series shutouts? It's a true toss-up, but Mathewson climbed back onto the hill for the decisive Game 5, remarkably, on just one day's rest.

NLCS Game 4 was the first time that both starters were knocked out of a postseason game in the first inning since 1932. (**Bailey Falter** lasted two outs for the Phillies, Padre **Mike Clevinger** exited when the 4-0 lead shrunk to 4-3) And that 1932 game actually looked quite a bit similar to the one we saw last night! The Yankees fell behind 4-1 to the Cubs in the first... and then kept hitting, and hitting some more, and ultimately won the game 13-6. (**Lou Gehrig** was 2-for-4 with a double and **Tony Lazzeri** homered twice.) For the Yankees, it ended in a World Series win.

The two of them got two outs combined! This was the 1,735th postseason game in baseball history. So it isn't easy for something — anything — to happen that hasn't happened in any of the previous 1,734. But these two guys did it. How many other postseason games have featured two starting pitchers collecting a *total* of two outs? That would be ... none!

The last time two starting pitchers got this few outs combined, even in a regular-season game? That happened more than 30 years ago, on Sept. 21, 1989: **Jack Armstrong** for the Reds (no outs, five runs) versus **Dennis Rasmussen** for the Padres (also no outs, five runs).

over the last 45 regular seasons, there was only *one* other regular-season game like this.

May 17, 1979, at Wrigley Field, aka the legendary 23-22 game: Cubs starter **Dennis Lamp** got one out (and gave up six runs). Phillies starter **Randy Lerch** hit a home run off Lamp in the top of the first but then got one out in the bottom of the first (allowing five runs).

In game 4 the Padres had a 4-0 lead after 6 batters. Phillies comeback o win 10-6--Only two times in baseball history (Yankees over Indians in Game 1 of 1997 American League Division Series, Pirates over Senators in Game 7 of 1925 World Series) had a team come back after allowing four-plus runs in the top of the first inning in a postseason game.

Phillies in game 4 of the NLCS had HRs from Schwarber, Hoskins and Realmuto. According to the great Jayson Stark (The Athletic):

They did the 1-2-3. It isn't every day that a team's 1-2-3 hitters hit home runs in a postseason game. Matter of fact, if you're talking about Phillies history, it hasn't been *any* day.

This was the first postseason game in franchise history where that happened. But that, too, isn't really the Weird and Wild part — because until Saturday, the Phillies had never even had their 1-2-3 hitters all homer *in the same postseason series*, let alone game! But then they all did it, in the middle of this game, in a span of 11 hitters, because ... baseball!

Let's count to 1-2-3 one more time. But another cool subplot here is that the Phillies didn't merely have all three hitters at the top of their order homer once. Hoskins' double-dip meant they'd combined for *four* homers. And according to Langs, that puts them in even more exclusive company.

POSTSEASON GAMES WITH 4+ HR FROM 1-2-3 SPOTS*

- **1973 A's, ALCS Game 2** (Sal Bando 2 Bert Campaneris 1, Joe Rudi 1)
- **2022 Phillies, NLCS Game 4** (Hoskins 2, Schwarber 1, Realmuto 1)

(*-with the 1-2-3 hitters all homering at least once)

Hoskins' daily double. Finally, there's Hoskins' one remaining claim to fame. He joined **Chase Utley** (twice), **Jayson Werth** (twice), **Ryan Howard**, **Pat Burrell** and **Lenny Dykstra** as the only Phillies to hit two homers in a postseason game. But he actually became part of a more exclusive club of Phillies who hit two *multi-run homers* in a postseason game. It won't take long to rip through that group, either:

- **Dykstra** in Game 4 of the 1993 World Series (aka., the 15-14 game).
- **Howard** in Game 4 of the 2008 World Series.
- **Hoskins** in Game 4 of the 2022 NLCS.

WELCOME TO THE NO-OUT CLUB, MIKE — Clevinger joined quite a club Saturday. He's now one of 10 starting pitchers who made a postseason start *and recorded zero outs*. Here's the whole list (because why the heck not):

- **Reb Russell** (White Sox), 1917 World Series
- **Charlie Root** (Cubs), 1935 World Series

- **Hank Borowy** (Cubs), 1945 World Series
- **Harry Taylor** (Dodgers), 1947 World Series
- **Bob Moose** (Pirates), 1972 NLCS
- **Dennis Leonard** (Royals), 1976 ALCS
- **Bob Welch** (Dodgers), 1981 World Series
- **Al Leiter** (Mets), 1999 NLCS
- **Wade Miley** (Brewers), 2017 NLCS
- **Mike Clevinger** (Padres), 2022 NLCS

From the Joe Sheehan Newsletter

October can make heroes. It's better, though, when heroes make October.

Bryce Harper is a hero. High-school wunderkind, first overall pick, star at 19, MVP at 22, zillionaire at 26. Harper turned 30 a week ago, and he did it with 285 career home runs, 43 WAR, seven All-Star appearances, two MVP awards... and no pennants. Harper had never played in the World Series, and until last Tuesday he had never played in an NLCS.

Harper is the kind of superstar baseball has always had, one sentenced to teams far from the autumn spotlight. **Ted Williams** had a career like this. **Ernie Banks** never played in a playoff game. Even as the playoffs expanded, even as players won the right to pick their employer, you could have a long career without playing past September. **Ferguson Jenkins** is in the Hall of Fame with zero postseason appearances. **Phil Niekro** pitched forever and made just two; he never played in a World Series. Buddy Bell was one of the best third basemen of his era, but he never finished on a first-place team. Nowadays, we have **Felix Hernandez** and **Mike Trout** as examples of the class.

Opportunity isn't guaranteed to anyone in baseball. Even when you find yourself in the playoffs, you may never get a chance to have an impact. Our game isn't basketball, where the best player gets hundreds of touches a game, can take 30 shots, can have the ball in his hands in every big moment. It's not football, where the quarterback touches the ball on every play and a team can decide how often a running back or wide receiver gets to do so. In baseball, you get four shots a game, now and again five, and you have no control over the context in which those shots occur.

So when Bryce Harper walks to the plate in the bottom of the eighth, his team down a run, a baserunner on first base, the pennant on the line, it's an opportunity. Not for Harper, but for us. Sure, it's a fun story when **Trent Grisham** or **Jean Segura** emerges as the bold-faced name for a day or a week, and baseball has a long history of those as well. October makes heroes.

What we want, though, is to see greatness tested, to see a hero rise or fall, to see a crowd raised up or silenced. We want a hero to make October, to be **Derek Jeter and David Ortiz and Reggie Jackson and Sandy Koufax**, to get us up from our seats, pumping a fist and cheering, knowing we've seen an all-time great have an all-time moment. Those two things, the player and the moment, aren't guaranteed to us as fans. That's not the way baseball works. So even before Harper settled into the box, even before **Robert Suarez** came set, October had delivered.

Then Harper delivered. A hero, once and again.

It went the other way a few hours later in the Bronx. **Aaron Judge**, who was never a wunderkind, never a phenom, who just...arrived...at the age of 25 with 52 homers launched from a larger-than-life frame. Unlike Harper, Judge could reasonably view playoff baseball as an entitlement. In six full seasons, Judge's season has never ended after the last game, his Yankees always heading into the brackets. He'd done more than his share to advance their cause once in them, hitting 11 playoff homers in 35 games, posting a .230/.340/.504 line in 160 PA.

Judge walked up the plate in the Bronx early this morning, just after midnight, the Yankees' season having been extended a day not with timely hitting and effective pitching, but by a series of rain showers. He carried a 1-for-15 in the ALCS, even his enormous talent laid low by the Astros' endless parade of live arms. A mighty blow couldn't put the Yankees into the World Series, couldn't even win the game, but it was a chance to lift the damp, tired masses, to stave off elimination, to keep the team alive.

Aaron Judge is no less a hero for his topper to the mound, snagged by **Ryan Pressly** and turned into the pennant-clinching out. If anything, his experience should underline how special Harper's moment was, how rare it is for everything to come together just right to create a baseball memory.

PETER GAMMONS; PHILLIES, ASTROS SHOW US THERE'S NO SINGLE WAY TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE BULLPEN ANYMORE

The Athletic

There has long been both logic and history behind the notion that teams had to have a legitimate closer to win in October.

The 1977 Yankees had the Cy Young award-winning closer (**Sparky Lyle**) and won the World Series for the first time in 15 years; after the season they signed future Hall of Famer **Goose Gossage** in free agency and won it all in 1978. They didn't win another World Series until **Mariano Rivera** began closing in 1996. With the greatest closer who ever lived in the fold, they won four championships in five years and one more in 2009.

Whitey Herzog's Cardinals and Harry Dalton's Brewers traded for **Bruce Sutter and Rollie Fingers**; in 1982 the relievers faced one another as the Cardinals won their first World Series since 1967, and the Brewers captured their only pennant, period. **Dennis Eckersley** left a career as a starter behind and was anointed the Oakland A's closer, becoming a key factor in winning four division titles, three pennants and one World Series in five years. **Lee Smith** was a Hall of Fame giant for the Cubs. All these pitchers were lords of their late-inning realms; for all their greatness, they carried what at times were unimaginable burdens, and when Gossage gave up the **George Brett** homer to win the 1980 playoffs, Smith his homer to **Steve Garvey** in the 1984 NLCS and Eckersley the 1988 **Kirk Gibson** shot into history, they had to be the ones to answer for "blowing" a team's shot at destiny. Eckersley answered questions for more than an hour in 1988 and in the 1992 playoffs, even though he was emotionally shredded because of what some felt cost his team its chance at glory.

But today? Those old dogmas of the defined closer and the 7-8-9 bullpen seem as anachronistic as handlebar mustaches and '80s-tight uniform pants.

This postseason illustrates how different things are now, and it isn't just in the back end of bullpens. Think about all the playoff games you've watched in what has been a month of drama, and of the star performances of players like **Bryce Harper, Manny Machado and Alex Bregman**. See if you can name the winning pitchers in half the games you've watched. Or this: Which pitchers have actually pitched into the seventh inning? The best arms are sometimes used in the fifth and sixth, because outs are outs and leverage matters.

Then look at two critical games in these playoffs.

First let's revisit Game 4 of the NLDS, on Oct. 15, Dodgers at Padres, San Diego up 2-1 in the series. L.A. led this game 3-0 after the fifth inning, and starter **Tyler Anderson** was cruising on 86 pitches, with **Juan Soto, Manny Machado, and Brandon Drury** due up in the bottom of the 6th. In 21st-century postseason baseball, the third time through the order is considered a raging river to cross. Recall the Rays and **Blake Snell** in 2020, or **Rich Hill** and the Dodgers in 2018.

All that dictated that Anderson was not going to face Machado a third time. After reliever **Chris Martin** got the Dodgers through the sixth, **Tommy Kahnle** entered in the seventh and walked the first batter he faced, while the Padres' **Trent Grisham, Austin Nola and Jake Cronenworth** had great October at-bats against **Yency Almonte and Alex Vesia**. The Padres scored five runs, Petco Park went bonkers and the Dodgers went home. Five pitchers for the final nine outs did not work, and by the time the Dodgers' best reliever, Evan Phillips, got in, it was 5-3 Pads with **Josh Hader** on the mound and the Dodgers were through.

Next, on to Oct. 21 — Game 3 of the NLCS in Philadelphia, the series tied at a game apiece, **Joe Musgrove** going for the Padres, matched up with **Ranger Suárez** for the Phillies. The Phillies led 3-2 at the end of the fifth. One of the runs Suárez had allowed was unearned. He had faced 20 batters and thrown 68 pitches, 18 fewer than Anderson had just six nights earlier. **Rob**

Thomson went to **Zach Eflin** for an inning, and he delivered two hits and no runs. For the seventh, he went to **José Alvarado**, averaging 98 MPH, for one inning. Then he went to **Seranthony Domínguez** for two innings with a 4-2 lead, also sitting 98. In the regular season, Domínguez was second on the Phillies in saves with nine, three less than **Corey Knebel**. Thomson believed he was the right person on that night to stretch for the final six outs.

Thomson was right. In Los Angeles, **Dave Roberts** was cast as **Grady Little** Jr. and had to sit in the defendant's box and face the prosecution with the dignity of Eck in '88, Goose Gossage in '80 or **Charlie Leibrandt** in '91 after **Kirby Puckett**'s homer sent us back to the Metrodome for **Jack Morris vs. John Smoltz**.

There are five relievers making \$15 million or more, and few would consider those — **Aroldis Chapman, Craig Kimbrel, and Zack Britton** among them — good investments at this point. There's more value in the tier from \$10 to \$15 million, which includes standouts like Hader, **Edwin Diaz**, Knebel and **Ryan Pressly**.

On the other hand, run the list of relievers with the lowest opponent's OPS. Only Diaz is making big money, and six of the top 10 are being paid under \$1 million. Relief pitching is, as ever, unpredictable — and yet, perhaps more than ever, teams are coming up with ways to find, salvage, or even create great relief arms largely from scratch.

The majority of pitching coaches knew this would be a season in which there would be a lot of pitching opportunities. The lockout effectively went up until spring training. Then, spring training was shrunk and did not allow the majority of pitchers enough work to allow their arms to be built up for a full season. Then, to cram in 162 games, the schedule forced teams to have more games in fewer days than normal. The result? Arm stress.

But teams have become very smart and progressive in recognizing how pitchers' pitches can be improved, their arsenals altered and expanded, their deliveries tweaked. Phillips was released by Baltimore in early August of 2021, and signed by Tampa Bay. He was put on waivers and claimed by the Dodgers two weeks later. Pitching coach Connor McGuiness gave him a different cutter, and now he is a premier reliever. **Jason Adam** was released by the Cubs after the 2021 season; the Rays signed him and he was dominant. **Sam Hentges** was a fourth-round pick in 2017 and is a classic Cleveland development product. The top-10 relievers ranked by the lowest opponents' OPS don't even make as much combined as **David Price** does; but hey, the Red Sox are paying half that contract.

After their dominant performances in the NLCS Game 3, Domínguez and Alvarado were back in there as part of a group of four relievers pitchers jointly trying to close out the series clincher two days later. It was pouring, and pitchers were sliding around and down the mound, but the combination of **David Robertson** and starter-working-in-relief Suárez made Harper's homer stand for the pennant. It made me think about when Harper was 17, and we talked about George Brett; Harper absolutely was, like Brett, the guy who should be his town's championship symbol. When it came to the late innings, Brett's 1985 Royals were all hands to **Dan**

Quisenberry. Eric Hosmer's 2015 Royals leaned on **Ned Yost's** 7-8-9 trio of **Kelvin Herrera, Wade Davis and Greg Holland**, and now, with Harper's Phillies in the World Series, it is a bullpen constructed for the 21st-century game, where every game's closing times depend on power and matchups.

SABR DIGITAL LIBRARY: FROM SHIBE PARK TO CONNIE MACK STADIUM: GREAT GAMES IN PHILADLPHIA'S LOST BALLPARK

Add a new baseball book to your collection from the [SABR Digital Library](#):

From Shibe Park to Connie Mack Stadium: Great Games in Philadelphia's Lost Ballpark

Edited by Gregory H. Wolf

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From Shibe Park to Connie Mack Stadium: Great Games in Philadelphia's Lost Ballpark evokes memories and the exciting history of the celebrated ballpark through stories of 100 games played there and several feature essays. The games included in this volume reflect every decade in the ballpark's history, from the inaugural game on April 12, 1909, to the last, on October 1, 1970.

Shibe Park was the home of the Philadelphia A's from 1909 until their relocation to Kansas City after the 1954 season, as well as the Philadelphia Phillies from 1938 until the ballpark's closure at the end of the 1970 season. In 1953 Shibe Park was renamed Connie Mack Stadium in honor of the baseball icon who had managed the Athletics for their first 50 seasons. Baseball's first steel-and-concrete ballpark, it hosted big-league baseball for 62 seasons and more than 6,000 games, including in excess of 3,500 games by the A's and 2,500 by the Phillies.

This volume is a collaborative effort of 41 members of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) and one of SABR's many books showcasing historic ballparks.

Contributors include: Matt Albertson, John Bauer, Josh Berk, Nathan Bierma, John J. Burbridge Jr., Thomas J. Brown Jr., Ken Carrano, Alan Cohen, Richard Cuicchi, Rich D'Ambrosio, Paul E. Doutrich, Greg Erion, Doug Feldmann, Scott Ferkovich, Dan Fields, James Forr, Brian Frank, Gordon J. Gattie, Mike Huber, Lawrence Knorr, Kevin Larkin, Bob LeMoine, Len Levin, Mike Lynch, Andrew Milner, Bill Nowlin, J.G. Preston, Carl Riechers, C. Paul Rogers III, Harry Schoger, David E. Skelton, Courtney Michelle Smith, Lyle Spatz, Mark S. Sternman, Jim Sweetman, Joseph Wancho, Rich Westcott, Gregory H. Wolf, Jack Zerby, John Zinn, and Don Zminda.

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DRAFTING WELL

Most of the key performers in the upcoming World Series between the Astros and Phillies were highly regarded talents as they worked their way through the Minors. Twenty players on the two rosters cracked MLB.com's Top 100 Prospects list en-route to the big leagues.

Jose Altuve and Framber Valdez are the most notable exceptions. Altuve's small stature scared off scouts, while Valdez was a late bloomer who didn't land a pro contract until age 21, five years after he was first eligible. Altuve signed for \$15,000 out of Venezuela in 2006 and Valdez turned pro for \$10,000 out of the Dominican Republic in 2015.

As for the 20 former Top 100 Prospects, let's rank them based on their prospect hype at the time they arrived in the Majors:

1. Bryce Harper, OF, Phillies

1st-round pick (No. 1 overall), 2010 (JC of Southern Nevada), \$6.25 million bonus/\$9.9 million contract (Nationals)

2. Alex Bregman, 3B, Astros

1st-round pick (No. 2 overall), 2015 (Louisiana State), \$5.9 million bonus

3. Justin Verlander, RHP, Astros

1st-round pick (No. 2 overall), 2004 (Old Dominion), \$3,120,000 bonus/\$4.5 million contract (Tigers)

4. Kyle Schwarber, OF, Phillies

1st-round pick (No. 4 overall), 2014 (Indiana), \$3,125,000 bonus (Cubs)

5. Noah Syndergaard, RHP, Phillies

Supplemental 1st-round pick, 2010 (HS/Texas), \$600,000 bonus (Blue Jays)

6. Zack Wheeler, RHP, Phillies

1st-round pick (No. 6 overall), 2009 (HS/Georgia), \$3.3 million bonus (Giants)

7. Kyle Tucker, OF, Astros

1st-round pick (No. 5 overall), 2015 (HS/Florida), \$4 million bonus

8. Yordan Alvarez, OF, Astros

International free agent, 2016 (Cuba), \$2 million bonus (Dodgers)

9. Nick Castellanos, OF, Phillies

Supplemental 1st-round pick, 2010 (HS/Florida), \$3.45 million bonus (Tigers)

10. Aaron Nola, RHP, Phillies

1st-round pick (No. 7 overall), 2014 (Louisiana State), \$3,300,900 bonus

11. Alec Bohm, 3B, Phillies

1st-round pick (No. 3 overall), 2018 (Wichita State), \$5.85 million bonus

12. Brandon Marsh, OF, Phillies

Second-round pick, 2016 (HS/Georgia), \$1,073,300 bonus (Angels)

13. Bryson Stott, SS, Phillies

1st-round pick (No. 14 overall), 2019 (UNLV), \$3.9 million bonus

14. Kyle Gibson, RHP, Phillies

1st-round pick (No. 22 overall), 2009 (Missouri), \$1.85 million bonus (Twins)

15. Lance McCullers Jr., RHP, Astros

Supplemental 1st-round pick, 2012 (HS/Florida), \$2.5 million bonus

16. Jean Segura, 2B, Phillies

International free agent, 2007 (Dominican Republic), \$70,000 bonus (Angels)

17. J.T. Realmuto, C, Phillies

3rd-round pick, 2010 (HS/Oklahoma), \$600,000 bonus (Marlins)

18. Jeremy Peña, SS, Astros

3rd-round pick, 2018 (Maine), \$585,000 bonus

19. Hunter Brown, RHP, Astros

5th-round pick, 2019 (Wayne State, Mich.), \$325,000 bonus

20. Rhys Hoskins, 1B, Phillies

5th-round pick, 2014 (Sacramento State), \$349,700 bonus

WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC



THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF CHANGING HOW PITCHERS AND CATCHERS COMMUNICATE

PitchCom has revolutionized how players relay pitch signals. But instituting it this season was a mighty undertaking that met some resistance around the sport.

Emma Baccellieri, Sports Illustrated

John Hankins had a request for MLB playoff teams this October:

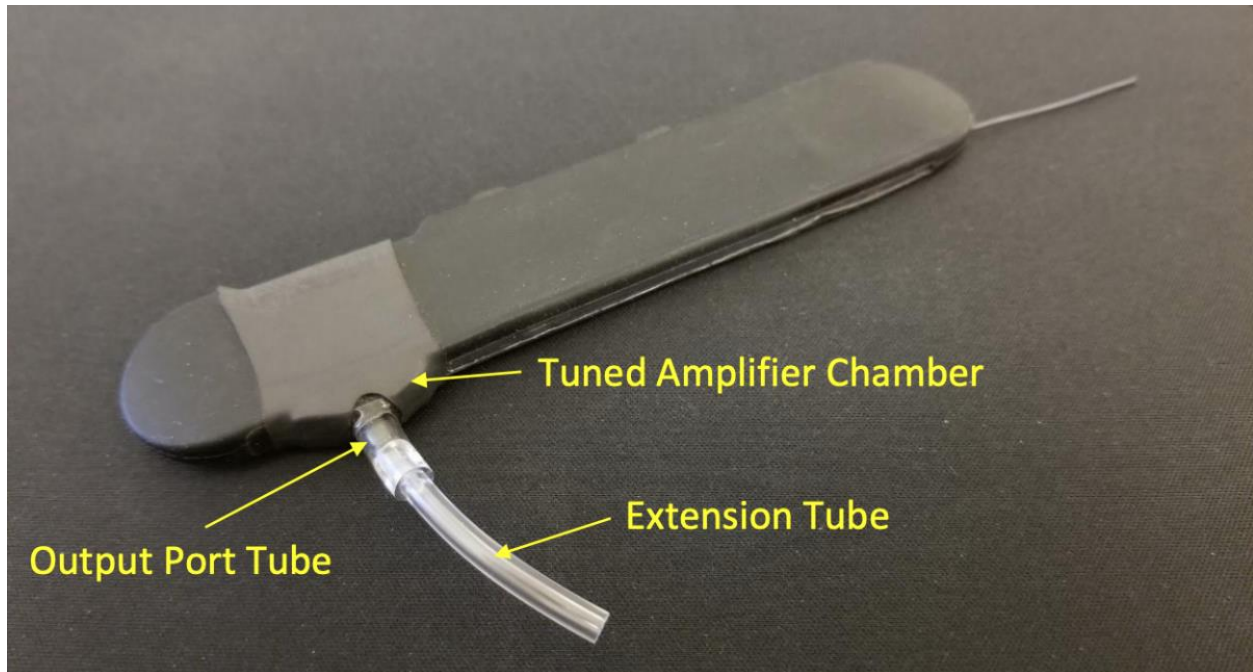
Please be willing to cut holes in your hats.

Hankins is one of the inventors and founders of PitchCom—the device that clubs started using this year so catchers can transmit calls to pitchers instead of visually giving signs. The set-up is fairly straightforward. The catcher presses buttons on his wristband to communicate pitch type and location, which the pitcher will hear through a receiver tucked into his hat, and the same goes for any relevant fielders. (The shortstop and second baseman will typically also be wearing receivers.) While not every team started out the year with PitchCom, more hopped on board as the season wore on, and by September, the device had become so common it was almost unremarkable.

But October presented a new challenge for PitchCom: The playoffs are loud. They're *really* loud. In an environment where teams are desperate for every possible competitive advantage, no one wanted to go back to ordinary, visual signs that would be at risk of getting stolen. But if they were sticking with PitchCom in front of tens of thousands of noisy, championship-hungry fans... how were they going to hear?

Hankins and his co-founder, Craig Filicetti, had been thinking about the problem for months. They worked on a series of adjustments over the course of the season: They reconfigured the audio, getting a sound engineer to optimize the pitch calls for loud environments, and designed several versions of a modified receiver with an earpiece that could amplify the sound even more. And they also made one very simple suggestion: Cut a little hole in each ballcap so the receiver wouldn't be muffled by fabric. But perhaps no one on a baseball diamond can be as particular, or as paranoid, or as prone to suspicion as a pitcher: *You want to cut a hole in my hat?* There was pushback to the early suggestions.

"We begged teams to cut holes in their hats," Hankins recalls, clad in a PitchCom t-shirt and hat before taking in an NLCS game at Petco Park. "Just a hole in the hat."



They ended up making some adjustments to the plan before October: They ditched the full earpiece, instead settling on a version with an amplifier chamber and a small tube, which still requires (yes) a little hole in the seam of the ballcap. The players ultimately liked this one much better. By mid-October? Just about everyone was on board.

“[It’s] like a little tube coming down through a little hole in our hat that goes basically right into our ear. We know these playoff environments get really loud,” Phillies starter **Zack Wheeler** said. “But I’ve been just fine hearing it ... Somebody came up with that, I don’t know who did, but we started using it.”

It was Hankins and Filicetti. And following lots of tweaking and incorporating feedback, they’re pleased with how it’s been received, even in the noisiest of environments.

“It seems to be working. It really has,” Padres catcher **Austin Nola** said during the NLCS. “We might have had one little issue, but I think at the end of the day everybody has really liked it. It takes away from having to put signs out and the ability to steal signs from second base. I think it’s been a good addition.”

The question of how loud PitchCom should be has always been central to the device. When Hankins and Filicetti tried out a prototype early last year, they had 10 volume settings, and they worried that a “10” might be too loud. Weren’t teams going to be concerned about the batter hearing what pitch was coming?

Nope, the early feedback went. It needed to be *louder*, not softer, and so they created a new version where the volume scale went up to 20.

Every bit of that has been needed in the playoffs. Phillies shortstop Bryson Stott, for instance, typically set his PitchCom at eight in the regular season: “I don’t like feeling like it’s yelling in my ear,” he said. “So I just keep it low.” But for the first postseason game at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, he found himself going up, and up, and up.

“My PitchCom was at 20,” he said, “and I still had to cover it to hear what pitch was coming.”

In other words, they’ve needed every volume enhancement they could make.

The most basic of these is reconfiguring the audio. PitchCom has worked with a sound engineer in Nashville to go over every single track—adjusting frequency and amplitude to optimize them for a loud stadium. The engineer has been kept busy. Some teams have a habit of tinkering with and adding to their pitch calls. Though PitchCom comes with a standard collection of pre-set tracks (“four-seam fastball,” “curveball,” and so on, available in English, Spanish, Japanese and Korean), a number of clubs decided to record their own. Some are just basic calls done in a different voice. A few are highly specific to a given pitcher or scenario. Others are simply motivational. One reliever had his team program in the voice from the video game *Mortal Kombat* saying “Finish him.” (Who wants to hear “heater” when you can hear *that*?) One club has a far more profane version of “Throw it over the plate, you wimp.” And Guardians catcher **Austin Hedges** has become known for his “f— yeah” button.

“Teams were very creative,” Hankins said, “which is all we wanted.”

There are about 10 clubs who stuck with PitchCom’s pre-programmed tracks. The others decided to make their own this season. All four of the teams that made it to the ALCS and NLCS—the Astros, Yankees, Phillies and Padres—customized their tracks, Hankins said. All have been worked over by the sound engineer to better cut through loud noise.

The next part of the equation was modifying the receiver. Hankins and Filicetti first worked with an audiologist to design an earpiece—trying to strike the right balance of being loud enough for players to hear audio without blocking out any external noise they still needed to hear.

“We wanted to make sure that they had sound awareness,” Hankins says. “Especially pitchers, they hear the ball off the bat, they have to know if it’s a good one or a bad one.”

By August, they thought they had the right formula. They tested the earpiece that month in game situations in High A and provided them to major-league clubs in playoff contention to try out on their own. But the feedback wasn’t great: Players weren’t a fan of having to stick anything in their ears while on the diamond.

“They were very nice about it,” Hankins says. “But no one really loved it.”

Yet the earpiece was just one part of the modified receiver. It was connected to a tuned amplifier chamber with a pair of tubes. It didn't take long to realize their answer might be removing the earpiece while leaving most of the rest of the design. "We pulled the tube out, and I said, *what happens if you just poke a hole in the hat, and let it stick out?*" Hankins says. Playoff teams still have the earpieces if they need them—a "break-glass-in-case-of-emergency" deal, as he describes it. But no one has had to use them yet this October.

In short: The enhanced audio tracks are easier to hear. The amplifier chamber makes them even louder. The little hole in the hat means the receiver is not muffled by any fabric, and the tube works as a miniature megaphone of sorts, putting the sound physically closer to the players' ears without actually being *in* them. With all of these changes, the system has generally been loud enough for players to hear, even in the loudest of stadiums.

Hankins and Filicetti are pleased overall with how PitchCom has worked this year. In its first season in the majors, it helped the average time of game drop by six minutes, and they're encouraged by the fact that teams grew more comfortable with it over the course of the season. That's helped them continue to troubleshoot and work out kinks—which can be as much about growing players' understanding of PitchCom as it is about changing anything with the device itself.

For instance, the "one little issue" referenced by Padres catcher Nola? When San Diego starter **Mike Clevinger** had a brief problem against the Dodgers in the NLDS on Oct. 11, it turned out his device itself was actually fine. The tube had slipped and gotten tangled in his sweaty hair. A clubhouse attendant brought out a new receiver for him, but he realized that he simply had to adjust his existing one, and he was able to keep going.

With the playoff volume adjustments, players have actually joked about it being too *loud*, rather than too quiet.

"PitchCom is pretty neat. They're pretty great ... [But] maybe if you've got the volume way up, and you get that silent moment and you're going to get the pitch, and it's going to be so quiet that maybe the batter would hear it," Cardinals starter **Miles Mikolas** said before his wild-card start with a laugh. "*He hit a game-ending home run, and I heard the PitchCom go fastball inside!* That would be a neat one."

But that hasn't come to pass just yet: In October, everyone involved has realized, even the quietest moments are still pretty loud.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Five players this season hit at least 30 home runs and stole 10 or more bases. The only one whose team didn't make the playoffs is, you guessed it, **Shohei Ohtani**. The four:

One Dodger

One Yankee

And two playing in the World Series—one for each team.

Can you name them?

Aaron Judge, Yankees 62 HRs and 16 SB

Mookie Betts, Dodgers 35 HRs and 12 SB

Kyle Schwarber, Phillies 46 HR and 10 SB

Kyle Tucker, Astros 30 HRs, 25 SB

Tucker and Shohei Ohtani are the only two players with at least 30 home runs and 10 or more stolen bases in each of the last two seasons.

HOUSEKEEPING

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