

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

11.20.2022

Good morning baseball fans,

No controversy for Awards Week. Today we take a look at the role of Wins in Cy Young votes through the years, MVPs over age 35, Peter Gammons on culture plus expanded trivia.

Grab a coffee and enjoy.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

In honor of the Cy Young Award this week, two questions for the price of one.

11 pitchers have won 3 or more Cy Young awards. 4 left handers and 7 right handers. All starters. Two won their first in the 1960's, two won their first in the 1970's, one won his first in the 1980's, the rest after 1990. How many of the 11 can you name?

Second question is tougher.

Rangers, Rockies have never had a Cy Young winner

This year Sandy Alcantara became the first Marlins winner. Expos (Pedro Martinez), Nationals (Max Scherzer), Reds (Trevor Bauer) each have had only one pitcher win.

Six teams have had two (and only two) pitchers win the Cy Young. Can you name the 12 pitchers? If you name 7 or more you are doing well.

Angels 1964 and 2005

Cardinals 1968 & 1970, 2005

Diamondbacks 1999, 2000, 2001 & 2002, 2006

Giants 1967, 2008 & 2009

Mariners 1995, 2010

Pirates 1960, 1990

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Buck Showalter won his 4th Manager of the Year award for his work with the 2022 Mets. The Mets went 101-61. He won his first at age 38 as manager of the Yankees in the strike-shortened 1994 season. Showalter also won in 2004 with Texas and 2014 with Baltimore.

Showalter beat out Atlanta's **Brian Snitker**, the Dodgers' **Dave Roberts**, Cardinals' **Oliver Marmol**, Phillies' **Rob Thomson** and the Padres' **Bob Melvin**. It is the first time a Mets manager has won the award, which has been given out since 1983.

Showalter has won with four teams. Next most is **Tony LaRussa** with 3 teams—A's, Cards White Sox.

Terry Francona won his 3rd. Francona, who was leading the youngest team in M.L.B. after missing large chunks of the previous two seasons because of health issues. All three have come with Cleveland after he won two World Series with Boston. **Dusty Baker** (Giants) and **Bobby Cox** (Braves) are the other two to win 3x with the same team.

Baltimore's **Brandon Hyde** and Seattle's **Scott Servais** finishing second and third. Houston's **Dusty Baker**, the Yankees' **Aaron Boone** and Tampa Bay's **Kevin Cash** also received votes.

Francona's latest recognition comes after the Guardians shocked the sport with a 92-win regular season and a first-place finish in the A.L. Central. The small-time spenders swept the playoff-tested Rays in the wild-card round and took the high-rolling Yankees to a decisive Game 5 of their A.L. division series before their improbable run came to an end.

With Cleveland, Francona has amassed an 845-671 record. **Lou Boudreau** and **Mike Hargrove** rank second and third in wins, with 728 and 721, respectively. Francona's 10 seasons as manager are the most in team history; two more years than his tenure as Boston manager.

Babe Ruth glove auctioned for record \$1.53 Million

A glove used by **Babe Ruth** during the second half of his illustrious career sold at auction for \$1.53 million on Saturday, setting the record for the price paid for a baseball glove.

The previous record is believed to be \$387,500 for a **Lou Gehrig** glove sold in 1999.

The Ruth glove came from the collection of Jimmy Austin, an 18-year Major Leaguer who played for the Yankees and the St. Louis Browns from 1909-29, and to whom Ruth personally donated the glove.

Audio of a 1964 interview with Austin that was conducted for the 1966 book "The Glory of Their Times" captured him discussing the precious piece of baseball gear.

"My childhood memories with my Uncle Jim are extremely dear to me," Susan Kolokoff, Austin's niece, said in a statement from Hunt Auctions, which handled Saturday's sale. "The glove had rested in a box for the last 30 years until we learned of its history and heard the amazing audio recording."

Saturday's sale took place during the 19th annual Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory Live Auction.

Aaron Judge hit 62 HRs this year. He led NL leader **Kyle Schwarber** (46) by 16. His closest AL rival was **Mike Trout** (40) who he led by 22. Judge paced the Majors in runs (133), homers (62), RBIs (131), on-base percentage (.425), slugging percentage (.686), OPS (1.111), OPS+ (211) and total bases (391), while earning the fourth All-Star selection and third Silver Slugger Award of his career.

Judge also paced the AL with 111 walks, finishing five batting points shy of the Twins' Luis Arraez in his pursuit of a Triple Crown.

Judge is the first Yankee to win AL MVP since **Alex Rodriguez** in 2007, and the first Yanks outfielder to win it since **Mickey Mantle** in 1962. Judge is the second player to win both Rookie of the Year and MVP with the Yankees, joining **Thurman Munson**, who won Rookie of the Year in '70 and AL MVP in '76. 14 Yankees have won 21 MVP awards--**Babe Ruth**, **Lou Gehrig (2)**, **Joe DiMaggio (2)**, **Joe Gordon**, **Spud Chandler**, **Phil Rizzuto**, **Elston Howard**, **Yogi Berra (3)**, **Mickey Mantle (3)**, **Roger Maris (2)**, **Thurman Munson**, **Don Mattingly**, **ARod (3)** and Judge all won MVP awards as Yankees. (for the first 7 years of the MVP award previous winners were ineligible, hence Babe Ruth with just 1).

The first player to lead the Majors (outright or tied) in homers, runs scored, extra-base hits and RBIs since Mantle in 1956, Judge's 1.111 OPS was the highest by a Yankee since Mantle in '61 (1.135). Judge led MLB in homers by 16, the largest gap since the A's **Jimmie Foxx** led the Majors by 17 homers in '32. Judge's 11.99 AB/HR ratio is the third best in Major League history, behind only **Mark McGwire** (10.61) and Babe Ruth (11.76).

While Judge had an exciting season (and I really hope the Yankees re-sign him) let's not forget we are seeing something historic with **Shoei Ohtani**. Ohtani, 28, batted .273/.356/.519 with 34 homers, 11 stolen bases and 95 RBIs in 157 games, while also going 15-9 with 219 strikeouts in 166 innings on the mound. He became the first player in AL/NL history to qualify among the league leaders as both a pitcher and a hitter in the same season.

Ohtani became the first player in AL or NL history with 10 wins on the mound and 30 homers at the plate in the same season. Hall of Famer **Babe Ruth** is the only other player with 10 wins and 10 homers in the same year, when he had 13 wins and 11 homers in 1918.

Ohtani also became the only player in AL or NL history with both an eight-RBI game and a 13-strikeout game in a career and he accomplished the feat in back-to-back days against the Royals on June 21 and 22.

As a pitcher, Ohtani led the American League in strikeouts per nine innings and led the league with 10 games with at least 10 strikeouts. Among AL leaders, he was third in strikeouts, fourth in ERA and tied for fourth in wins. And as a hitter, Ohtani ranked third in the AL in extra-base hits, fourth in homers and fifth in OPS.

This was the fifth time the MVPs came from the Yankees and Cardinals in the same season.

2022 **Aaron Judge and Paul Goldschmidt**

2005 **ARod and Albert Pujols**

1985 **Don Mattingly and Willie McGee**

1943 **Spud Chandler and Stan Musial**

1942 **Joe Gordon and Mort Cooper**

In 2022 only 4 pitchers threw more than 1 complete game—**Sandy Alcantara** 6, **Framber Valdez** 3, **Aaron Nola** 2 and **Nathan Evoldi** 2. Another 23 pitchers threw 1 each. From 1970 – 1979 17 pitchers threw over 100 complete games—**Gaylord Perry** with the most at 197. The last pitcher to throw 6 complete games in a season was **Chris Sale** for the 2016 White Sox.

How many years of goodwill did 2016 championship buy the Cubs? The Cubs haven't won 75 games since 2019, and while the 2022 team was better than the 2021 one, it was hardly filled with young talent. The Cubs gave just 631 PA and 113 innings to players under 25.

John William Lindsey holds the record for spending the most time in the minor leagues before being called up to the majors. Lindsey played in the minor leagues for 16 years before being called up to play for the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2010. He made his MLB debut at the age of 33.

In 2019, pitcher **Edwin Jackson** became the first player in history to play for 14 MLB teams, a feat accomplished within the first 17 years of his still-active career. The previous record was held by **Octavio Dotel**, also a pitcher. Dotel played for 13 teams during his 15-year MLB career.

In the early days of baseball, much of the first part of the 20th century was known as the “dead ball” era, and it wasn’t until the early 1920s that balls started flying out of the stadium at a much more rapid pace.

Up until the 1930 season in the American League and 1931 in the National League, a player was credited with a home run if a fly ball was hit that bounced in the playing field and then over or through the outfield fence.

Apparently, none of **Babe Ruth’s** home runs were of the “bounce” variety, but **Lou Gehrig** was in fact credited with a few “bounce” home runs.

In late August 1994, MLB was over two weeks into a strike that interrupted the season. Just before the waiver trade deadline expired, the Minnesota Twins traded aging outfielder/designated hitter **Dave Winfield** to the Cleveland Indians for a player to be named later.

Two weeks after the trade, on Sept. 14, the rest of the 1994 season was canceled, so Winfield never played for the Indians that season, and no player was ever named in exchange.

Later on, executives from both the Indians and Twins got together for a dinner, with Indians’ execs picking up the dinner tab, making Winfield the only player in MLB history ever traded for a five-star meal.

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

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

On Aug. 4, 1982, New York Mets utility outfielder **Joel Youngblood** started against the Chicago Cubs and future Hall of Fame pitcher **Ferguson Jenkins**. Youngblood singled off Jenkins in the top of the third inning, scoring two runs.

During the game, the Mets traded Youngblood to the Montreal Expos. Youngblood flew to Philadelphia to join his new team late that afternoon, and made his debut that night, replacing **Jerry White** in right field in the bottom of the sixth.

The following inning, Youngblood came to bat against future Hall of Fame pitcher **Steve Carlton** and singled, becoming the first player in MLB history to record a hit off two separate Hall of Fame pitchers while playing for two different teams on the same day.

Canadian-born right fielder **Glen Gorbous** enjoyed a very brief three-year career in Major League Baseball with the Cincinnati Reds and Philadelphia Phillies from 1955-1957, but it was after his career ended that Gorbous astounded the baseball world.

In an exhibition while he was with the minor-league Omaha Cardinals, on Aug. 1, 1957, Gorbous set a world record by throwing a baseball 445 feet 10 inches.

With today's modern baseball stadium standards, that ball would travel out of every park in the majors.

He Could Go All the Way

Of the 154,483 home runs hit between 1951 and 2000, only 975 (0.63%; about one per 158) were inside-the-park.

The leader since 1950 is **Willie Wilson** (the pride of Summit H.S. in NJ), who played in the major leagues from 1976 to 1994, with 13.

Tom McCreery had 3 in one season in 1897.

Between 1890 and 1905 Jesse Burkett set the MLB career record with 55.

Alcides Escobar of the Royals hit an inside the park HR against the Mets in the 2015, the most recent of 10 inside the park HRs hit in the World Series.

On July 25, 1956, **Roberto Clemente** became the only MLB player to hit a walk-off inside-the-park grand slam in a 9–8 Pittsburgh Pirates win over the Chicago Cubs, at Forbes Field.

On August 27, 1977, Texas Rangers teammates **Toby Harrah** and **Bump Wills** hit back-to-back inside the park home runs.

Exhibition Stadium, due to its proximity to Lake Ontario, facilitated a bizarre in-the-park home run for **Kelly Gruber** of the Toronto Blue Jays in 1986, when an otherwise routine pop up was lost by the Detroit Tigers outfielders in the thick fog.

On October 4, 1986 during a Twins' home game at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome, **Greg Gagne** tied a modern-era major league record by hitting two inside-the-park home runs against the Chicago White Sox. Only 18 players in major league history have performed this feat, with Gagne being just the second since 1930. Both home runs were hit off Chicago starting pitcher **Floyd Bannister**, who also tied a modern-era major league record by allowing two inside-the-park home runs in one game. The Twins went on to win the game, 7–3.

On June 17, 2007, **Prince Fielder** of the Milwaukee Brewers hit a popup to center field that became an inside-the-park home run when Minnesota Twins outfielder Lew Ford lost the ball after it struck a speaker on the ceiling of the Metrodome. Fielder weighed 262 pounds (119 kg) at the time, becoming the third-heaviest player to hit an inside-the-park homer. On June 19, 2008, he hit another inside-the-park-homer at Miller Park in Milwaukee, versus the Toronto Blue Jays.

In the 2007 All-Star Game, **Ichiro Suzuki** became the only player to hit an inside-the-park home run in an All-Star Game, hitting it at AT&T Park in San Francisco. Suzuki, playing for the victorious American League All-Stars, earned Most Valuable Player honors.

On April 6, 2009, **Emilio Bonifacio** of the Florida Marlins became the first player in 41 years to hit an inside-the-park home run on Opening Day, which was also the first home run of Bonifacio's major league career.

Tom Verducci of Sports Illustrated with some World Series observations

The Astros won the World Series using 11 pitchers. Only one of them—**Lance McCullers Jr.**—was drafted and developed by Houston, and he gave up seven of the 17 earned runs the team allowed. Houston built the rest of its staff through international free agency (5, signed for a combined \$180,000, or less than a year's supply of baseballs for a team), trades (3) and lower-tier free agency (2).

Mostly all of Houston's World Series pitchers throw fastballs with elite ride and breaking pitches with elite spin. Of all pitchers who threw at least 100 curveballs this year, the Astros had six of the top 23 spin rates.

The results were easy to see, as the Phillies hit .121 against the Astros' high fastballs (4-for-33) and .154 against their spin (10-for-65). That was the story of the 2022 World Series: the Astros had more and better pitching options than did the Phillies. How they acquired them—scouting for athleticism, arm action and natural pitch properties—is a lesson for the rest of baseball.

The Phillies were not a good defensive team, and they knew it. They also knew they had to slug to overcome that weakness. It didn't happen enough. Since 2008, there has never been a World

Series when the defensive difference was so stark, at least measured by batting average on balls in play (which is also due to the Astros' pitchers keeping the ball off the barrel).

2022 World Series Batting Average Allowed on Balls in Play

BABIP Team Rank, World Series 2008-22

Phillies .309 26 of 30

Astros .205 2 of 30

Only the 2012 Giants were better than Houston at limiting average on balls in play (.195).

The Phillies ranked 24th this year in Defensive Efficiency, a measurement of turning batted balls into outs. In the past decade, nine of 10 world champions ranked above average in Defensive Efficiency, including three straight who ranked in the top four.

The 2022 World Series set a record for fastest average velocity on fastballs: 95.5 mph. That's up from 91.6 in just 10 years. However, pitchers in this series threw fastballs less than 48% of the time.

Hitters have adjusted to the increase in velocity, which is why teams spin the ball now more than ever. Across the postseason, fastballs (not including cutters) accounted for 49% of the pitches—but they also accounted for 54% of home runs and a batting average 45 points higher. In the 2022 post season batters hit .235 off fastballs, .195 off non-fast balls.

The Astros hit .213 with two strikes. Among the past 30 teams in the World Series, only the 2014 Giants were better with two strikes (.238).

ANOTHER BONUS TRIVIA QUESTION

(I was asked this great trivia question this week. Answer at the bottom of the newsletter.)

13 players

Played for only one MLB team

Are not in the Hall of Fame

Hit 200+ HRs

All of them played in 1970 or later

Angels, Brewers, Mets, Nationals, Phillies, Red Sox, Rockies, Tigers, 2 Twins, 3 Yankees.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The Dodgers have had 18 rookies of the year. Yankees are second with 9. Cards and Reds have had 8 each.

Tip of the cap to **Michael Harris II** and **Julio Rodríguez** on winning ROY. Adding to the stream of exciting young talent.

Rodríguez, he was in a class of his own among AL rookies this season. He led all rookies in home runs (28), wins above replacement -- according to both Baseball-Reference (6.0) and FanGraphs (5.3) -- OPS (.853), wRC+ (146) and total bases (260). He ranked second among rookies in RBIs (75), runs scored (84) and stolen bases (25), while finishing third in hits (145).

Rodríguez joined Angels superstar **Mike Trout** in 2012 as the only rookies in AL/NL history with at least 25 home runs, 25 stolen bases and an .800 OPS.

Rodríguez is the fifth player in Mariners history to claim the honor -- and the second in the past three seasons. He joins **Kyle Lewis** (2020), **Ichiro Suzuki** (2001), **Kazuhiko Sasaki** (2000) and **Alvin Davis** (1984).

Rodríguez is also just the eighth Dominican-born player to claim the honor, and the first since **Neftali Feliz** in 2010. The others are **Hanley Ramírez** (2006), **Angel Berroa** (2003), **Albert Pujols** (2001), **Rafael Furcal** (2000), **Raul Mondesi** (1994) and **Alfredo Griffin** (1979).

Harris led all NL rookies with a 5.3 bWAR, including 4.4 offensive WAR and 1.3 defensive WAR (per Baseball-Reference). He also racked up 19 home runs and 20 stolen bases. The only other rookies since 2000 to finish with at least 15 homers and 15 steals while accounting for at least 3.0 oWAR and 1.0 dWAR were **Bryce Harper** and Mike Trout (each in 2012).

Harris is only the eighth player to win the award while on the reigning champ. Before him, the last was Steve Sax on the 1982 Dodgers. The others: **Pat Zachry** (1976 Reds), **Tom Tresh** (1962 Yankees), **Frank Howard** (1960 Dodgers), **Tony Kubek** (1957 Yankees), **Bob Grim** (1954 Yankees) and **Gil McDougald** (1951 Yankees).

Braves righthander **Spencer Strider** was NL runner-up. Strider whiffed 202 batters, most for a rookie since **Yu Darvish** struck out 221 for the 2012 Padres. Strider went 11-5, 2.67 ERA, 202-45 strikeout to walk, 1.83 FIP.

Eight times teammates have finished 1-2 in the Rookie of the Year voting:

2022 NL: Michael Harris II & Spencer Strider, Braves

2011 NL: Craig Kimbrel & Freddie Freeman, Braves

1989 NL: Jerome Walton & Dwight Smith, Cubs

1984 AL: Alvin Davis & Mark Langston, Mariners

1975 AL: Fred Lynn & Jim Rice, Red Sox

(Lynn is one of just two players to win Rookie of the Year and MVP in the same season, along with 2001 Ichiro Suzuki.).

1963 AL: Gary Peters & Pete Ward, White Sox

1960 AL: Ron Hansen & Chuck Estrada/Jim Gentile tied, Orioles

(all three were also All-Stars, the only time three rookie teammates have made the All Star game).

1957 NL: Jack Sanford & Ed Bouchee, Phillies

Highlighting some other great rookie seasons

Mark McGwire for the A's hit .289-49-118 as a 23-year-old in 1987; and setting a rookie HR record that stood for three decades. In 1987, McGwire led the American League in home runs and slugging percentage, was third in RBI and second in total bases. He finished sixth in the AL MVP balloting.

Pete Alonso, 2019 Mets (.260-53-120)

1988 **Mike Piazza** was also an All Star and Silver Slugger winner in his 1993 rookie campaign (Dodgers). In his 24-year-old rookie season, Piazza finished seventh in the AL in batting average (.318); sixth in home runs (35) and fourth in RBI (112).

2007 Brewers **Ryan Braun** put up a .324-34-97 line, with 91 runs scored, 15 steals and a league-topping .634 slugging percentage in 2007. Notably, he started 112 games at third base that season – and did not start there again in his 14 MLB seasons (defensive issues at the hot corner led to a move to the outfield).

1997 Red Sox **Nomar Garciaparra**'s rookie season saw the 23-year-old lead the American League in at bats, hits, and triples, while scoring 122 runs and putting up a .306-30-98 stat line, with 22 stolen bases.

2011 Indians **Shoeless Joe Jackson** In 147 games, he hit .408, with 233 hits, 126 runs scored, 45 doubles, 19 triples, seven home runs, 83 RBI and 41 stolen bases. In 1911, Jackson was second in MLB in batting average (to **Ty Cobb's** .420); first in on-base percentage (.468); second (to Cobb) in slugging percentage at .590; second in runs scored (again to Cobb); second in hits (Cobb); second in doubles (Cobb); and second in total bases with 337 (Cobb, 367). He finished fourth in the MVP voting.

Ichiro Suzuki was the Rookie of the Year and League MVP in the same season for the Mariners. As a 27-year-old MLB rookie, he led the AL with a .350 average and 242 hits – and added a league-leading 56 stolen bases and a Gold Glove.

As a 20 year-old rookie for the 1939 Red Sox **Ted Williams** hit .327, banged out 31 home runs, led all of MLB with 145 RBI, led the American League with 344 total bases and scored 131 times. He finished seventh in the AL in batting average; fifth in hits (185); first in total bases (344); second in doubles (44); fifth in triples (11); and third in home runs (31).

In 2001 for the Cards **Albert Pujols** hit .329, with 37 home runs, 130 RBI and 112 runs scored and earning Rookie of the Year Award and a fourth-place finish in the MVP balloting. Over the first ten seasons of his career, he topped a .300 average, 30 home runs and 100 RBI every season.

Grover Cleveland Alexander, 1911 Phillies (28-11, 2.57 – leading the league in wins, complete games with 31 and shutouts with seven);

Dwight Gooden, 1984 Mets (17-9, 2.60, while leading the NL in complete games with 16, innings pitched with 276 2/3 and strikeouts with 276);

Fernando Valenzuela, 1981 Dodgers (13-7 in the strike-shortened 1981 season – winning both Rookie of the Year and the Cy Young Award – and leading the league in complete games with 11, shutouts with eight, innings pitched with 192 1/3 and strikeouts with 180);

Mark Fidrych, 1976 Tigers (19-9, 2.34 – leading the league in ERA, complete games with 24, throwing complete games in 11 of his first 12 MLB starts.

Coming out of the bullpen for the 2011 Braves, 23-year-old **Craig Kimbrel** set the rookie record for saves, with 46 – leading the National League. He put up a 2.10 ERA in a league-leading 64 appearances (fanning 127 in 77 innings).

As a 21-year-old rookie in 1933, **Josh Gibson** helped lead the Pittsburgh Crawfords to the Negro National League title. He played in 68 of the Crawfords' 89 games and was behind the plate in 48 of them. In the process, he led the league in hits (94), triples (7), home runs (18), RBI (74), total bases (177), on-base percentage (.442), and slugging percentage (.774). He finished second in batting average, and third in runs scored, doubles and walks.

Side: note: MLB rules indicate a player qualifies as a rookie unless he has exceeded 130 at bats or 50 innings pitched in the major leagues. From 1930-32, Gibson played primarily for independent clubs.

Gibson went on to play a total of 14 seasons in the Negro Leagues (MLB now considers the Negro Leagues from 1920 to 1948 to be major leagues) – putting up a .374-165-730 line. He twice won the Triple Crown (1936 and 1937), led the league in home runs 11 times, RBI seven times, runs scored five times, hits twice, batting average three times and total bases six times.

In other Rookie of the Year news, The Seattle Mariners traded outfielder **Kyle Lewis** to the Arizona Diamondbacks in exchange for outfielder/catcher **Cooper Hummel** on Thursday, the team announced. Lewis was the 2020 American League Rookie of the Year and finished 17th in MVP voting that season. Lewis was the 11th overall pick in the 2016 draft. In 2020 he hit .262 with 11 home runs and 28 RBIs in the truncated 60-game season. Lewis missed much of the past two seasons with injury issues, including a torn meniscus in 2021 and a concussion in 2022.

CY YOUNG WINNERS

No surprise or drama—**Justin Verlander and Sandy Alcantara** won the 2022 Cy Young Awards.

Verlander: 12 seasons of at least 200 innings pitched, 251 regular-season games in which he went at least seven innings, and five seasons in which he led his league in starts, led the American League in wins (18), E.R.A. (1.75) and hits allowed per nine innings (6.0). Verlander also had MLB's lowest batting average allowed (.186), lowest OBP allowed (.227) and lowest slugging percentage allowed (.270). His WHIP was the best in baseball and he struck out more than a batter an inning.

The best statistical indicator might very well be ERA+. It's a stat that accounts for overall quality of pitcher adjusted for all ballparks in all eras. His 220 ERA+ basically suggests he's more than two times better than the replacement-level pitcher. His other impressive stats — 1.75 ERA, 0.829 WHIP, 12 homers in 175 innings — all speak to just how superior he was over the competition.

He won his third Cy Young after also winning in 2011 and 2019, and the ninth season in which he placed in the top five in voting by members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Verlander leads active pitchers with 244 wins.

Verlander was a unanimous winner with all 30 first-place votes, topping his fellow finalists, **Dylan Cease** of the Chicago White Sox (14 second-place votes) and **Alek Manoah** of the Toronto Blue Jays (seven second-place votes).

Alcantara's 228⅓ innings led the majors in 2022, and his 434⅓ innings over the last two seasons are 36⅓ more than any other pitcher (and the equivalent of just under seven average starts). Alcantara, 27, was an All-Star in 2019, and his career E.R.A. of 3.49 coming into the year was solid. But his success was obscured by his 20-34 career record with the perpetually rebuilding Marlins. His team struggled again in 2022, losing 93 games, but Alcantara thrived, going 14-9 with a 2.28 E.R.A. and 207 strikeouts. He completed six of his 32 starts, while the rest of Major League Baseball's pitchers combined to complete only 30 of 4,828. Those 6 complete games were more than any other team had.

He went 14-9 despite poor run support, and the Marlins were six games over .500 (19-13) in his starts and 30 games under .500 (50-80) in everyone else's.

Alcantara, who signed a five-year, \$56 million extension with the Marlins in November 2021, was also a unanimous pick, putting him far ahead of the other finalists, **Max Fried** of the Atlanta Braves (10 second-place votes) and **Julio Urías** of the Los Angeles Dodgers (seven second-place votes). He is the third pitcher from the Dominican Republic to win—**Pedro Martinez and Bartolo Colon**.

This was Alcantara's third full season in the majors (not counting the pandemic-shortened 2020) and he's gotten better in each, both reducing his ERA every season and increasing his workload, from a 3.88 ERA in 197 1/3 innings in 2019, to 3.19 in 205 2/3 innings in 2021, to this year's resounding performance.

The only other season in which both Cy Young votes were unanimous was 1968 when **Bob Gibson** of the St. Louis Cardinals, with a 1.12 E.R.A., won the N.L. award and **Denny McClain** of the Detroit Tigers, with 31 wins, won the A.L. award.

JOE POSNANSKI ON PITCHER WINS DRIVING CY YOUNG AWARDS

In 1956, **Don Newcombe** won baseball's first Cy Young Award. He won it almost one year to the day after Cy Young himself, baseball's winningest pitcher, died in his hometown of Newcomerstown, Ohio, at the ripe old age of 88.

In those early days, baseball had only one Cy Young winner rather than one in each league. The reason, best I can tell, was that not everybody was sold on the whole idea of giving pitchers their own award. The hitters were not sold on it because, you know, \$&^# pitchers. But also the pitchers were not sold on it because they worried it would eliminate their chances of winning the MVP award.

This wasn't a problem in '56 — Newcombe won the Cy Young Award AND the MVP award. And the reason, looking back, was pretty simple: Newcombe won 27 games that year. That was far and away the most in baseball; second on the list was Detroit's **Frank Lary** with 21.

Most wins equaled best pitcher in 1956 ... and for long after that.

Was Don Newcombe actually baseball's best pitcher that year? There's an argument to say he was (he did lead the league in WHIP and, I mean, 27 wins is 27 wins) but by today's standards, no, I don't think he'd be viewed as the best. He didn't finish top seven in either Baseball-Reference WAR or FanGraphs WAR. A couple of Cleveland pitchers — **Herb Score and Early Wynn** — both had quantifiable better seasons by more advanced metrics.

But for years and years, pitcher wins WAS the advanced metric.

1950s Cy Young Winners

1956: **Don Newcombe, Dodgers** — led baseball with 27 wins.

1957: **Warren Spahn, Braves** — led baseball with 21 wins.

1958: **Bob Turley, Yankees** — Won 21 games, which was one behind Spahn and Pittsburgh's **Bob Friend**. It was a super-close vote, but Turley's Yankee-ness triumphed.

1959: **Early Wynn, White Sox** — led baseball with 22 wins.

1950s in review Pitcher who led the league in wins won three of four Cy Youngs.

1960s Cy Young Winners

1960: **Vern Law, Pittsburgh** — won 20 games, which was one behind Spahn and St. Louis' **Ernie Broglio**. I think Pittsburgh's surprising run to the pennant was the difference here. In

retrospect, Broglie probably should have won it ... and maybe that would have made the infamous Lou Brock for Ernie Broglie trade look just a little bit more defensible.

1961: **Whitey Ford, Yankees** — led baseball with 25 wins

1962: **Don Drysdale, Dodgers** — led baseball with 25 wins

1963: **Sandy Koufax, Dodgers** — led baseball with 25 wins. Koufax was the first unanimous winner of the award as he also led the league in ERA (1.88) and strikeouts (306).

1964: **Dean Chance, Angels** — won 20 games, which did not come close to leading baseball. The Cubs **Larry Jackson** won 24 games that year. Chance won over the voters with his sparkling 1.65 ERA and 11 shutouts. Chance is the first pitcher to win the award over someone with several more victories.

1965: **Sandy Koufax, Dodgers** — led baseball with 26 wins, won the Cy unanimously again.

1966: **Sandy Koufax, Dodgers** — led baseball with 27 wins, won the Cy unanimously again. This was the last year of the single Cy Young award winner.

1967 AL: **Jim Lonborg, Red Sox** — led league with 22 wins.

1967 NL: **Mike McCormick, Giants** — led league with 22 wins.

1968 AL: **Denny McLain, Tigers** — led league with an absurd 31 wins.

1968 NL: **Bob Gibson, Cardinals** — won 22 games, which did NOT lead the league or even come close. **Juan Marichal** won 26 games that season. But Gibson won the award unanimously anyway, as his absurd 1.12 ERA demanded.

1969 AL: **Mike Cuellar, Orioles** — won 23 games, which was one behind **Denny McLain**. I suspect there was an anti-McLain vote that year, probably not because McLain was a jerk but more likely because he'd already won the award once. That's OK, I think Cleveland's **Sam McDowell** should have won the award, he had a 2.29 FIP and led the league in strikeouts and fewest homers, but he didn't get even a single down-ballot vote.

1969 NL: **Tom Seaver, Mets** — led league with 25 wins.

1960s in review: Pitcher who led the league in wins won the Cy Young nine out of 13 times. And the four times that they didn't are pretty easily explainable.

In total, the winningest pitcher has won 12 out of 17 Cy Youngs so far. It's clear that the default position, up to this point, was simply to give the award to the pitcher who won the most games. That would change a little bit in the 1970s as voters began to get excited about

... relief pitchers and a whole new statistic, SAVES!

1970s Cy Young Winners

1970 AL: **Jim Perry, Twins** — led the league with 24 wins.

1970 NL: **Bob Gibson, Cardinals** — led the league with 23 wins.

1971 AL: **Vida Blue, Athletics** — won 24 games, which was second in the league behind **Mickey Lolich**. Blue's 1.82 ERA carried the day, plus 24 wins is a lot.

1971 NL: **Fergie Jenkins, Cubs** — led league with 24 wins.

1972 AL: **Gaylord Perry, Cleveland** — led league with 24 wins.

1972 NL: **Steve Carlton, Phillies** — led league with 27 wins.

1973 AL: **Jim Palmer, Orioles** — won 22 games which was two behind **Wilbur Wood**.

1973 NL: **Tom Seaver, Mets** — won only 19 games; he became the first Cy Young winner to not win 20 games. A breakthrough! He was a full five victories behind the Giants' **Ron Bryant**.

Note: Something clearly happened in 1973. That year, for the first time, voters collectively seemed more interested in ERA (both Palmer and Seaver led the league in ERA) than wins. But the bigger thing was that relief pitchers were beginning to play a much bigger role in the game

and in the Cy Young voting. Montreal's **Mike Marshall**, who appeared in 92 games that year, finished second in the Cy Young voting behind Seaver.

1974 AL: **Catfish Hunter, Athletics** — led league with 25 wins.

1974 NL: **Mike Marshall, Dodgers** — Told you! Marshall appeared in a record 106 games, won 15 of them, saved 21 more, and took the Cy Young convincingly over 20-game winners **Andy Messersmith** and **Phil Niekro**.

1975 AL: **Jim Palmer, Orioles** — led league with 23 wins.

1975 NL: **Tom Seaver, Mets** — led league with 22 wins

1976 AL: **Jim Palmer, Orioles** — led league with 22 wins.

1976 NL: **Randy Jones, Padres** — led league with 22 wins.

1977 AL: **Sparky Lyle, Yankees** — Another reliever wins the Cy! Lyle took it over a trio of 20-game winners. In retrospect, this would have been a good year to give the award to **Nolan Ryan**, who you probably know never won one.

1977 NL: **Steve Carlton, Phillies** — led league with 23 wins.

1978 AL: **Ron Guidry, Yankees** — led league with 25 wins and won the award unanimously.

1978 NL: **Gaylord Perry, Padres** — led league with 21 wins. Second time in three years that a Padres pitcher led the league in wins and won the Cy Young.

1979 AL: **Mike Flanagan, Orioles** — led league with 23 wins.

1979 NL: **Bruce Sutter, Cubs** — became the third reliever to win the Cy Young; he took it over 21-game winners and brothers, **Joe and Phil Niekro**.

1970s in review: Wins are as dominant as ever. The winningest pitcher was dominant again, winning 14 of the 20 Cy Youngs in the decade. Three of the other six awards went to relief pitchers.

In total, the winningest pitcher has won 26 out of 37 awards. And, being honest, things started getting pretty stale at this point. Over the years, the pitcher with the most wins was often the best pitcher or at least it could be argued as so. But guys like **Gaylord Perry** in 1978 and **Mike Flanagan** in 1979 won the award SOLELY because they won the most games. And that trend would get worse before it got better.

1980s Cy Young Winners

1980 AL: **Steve Stone, Orioles** — led league with 25 wins.

1980 NL: **Steve Carlton, Phillies** — led league with 24 wins.

1981 AL: **Rollie Fingers, Brewers** — Fourth reliever to win the Cy Young, but this was the strike season so everything was all messed up.

1981 NL: **Fernando Valenzuela, Dodgers** — Won 13 games in the strike season, one behind **Tom Seaver**. But, hey, it was Fernandomania!

1982 AL: **Pete Vuckovich, Brewers** — Won 18 games, and I had always assumed that led the league. He did not. The White Sox's **LaMarr Hoyt** led the league with 19 wins. And, here's the weirdest thing: Hoyt did not get a single Cy Young vote. Not even a third-place vote. Not one. It's one of the wildest things in Cy Young voting history.

Here's what I think happened: Hoyt started the year off 9-0 with a 1.45 ERA and was this weird phenomenon; he was 27 years old and had never even been a full-time starter before (he didn't even start the season as a starter). Then suddenly he's 9-0 and the talk of baseball. Then he came crashing to earth, at least somewhat, he lost seven out of eight decisions, and everyone was like: "OK, yeah, that guy was a fluke." It's like nobody bothered to notice that at the end of the season, he led the league in wins. But they would notice the following year.

1982 NL: **Steve Carlton, Phillies** — led league with 23 wins.

1983 AL: **LaMarr Hoyt, White Sox** — led league with 24 wins. Hoyt's revenge!

1983 NL: **John Denny, Phillies** — led league with 19 wins.

1984 AL: **Willie Hernandez, Tigers** — Fifth reliever to win the Cy Young. This was the year of the reliever in the AL Cy Young voting; Royals fireman **Dan Quisenberry** finished second.

1984 NL: **Rick Sutcliffe, Cubs** — Sutcliffe is both bold and italic because he technically did not lead either league in wins. He went 16-1 with the Cubs after being traded by Cleveland. But if you count the four wins he had in Cleveland, he did tie for the baseball lead with 20 victories. I'm going to count him.

1985 AL: **Bret Saberhagen, Royals** — His 20 wins were two behind **Ron Guidry**.

1985 NL: **Dwight Gooden, Mets** — led league with 24 wins. Won unanimously.

1986 AL: **Roger Clemens, Red Sox** — led league with 24 wins.

1986 NL: **Mike Scott, Astros** — His 18 wins were three behind **Fernando Valenzuela's** 21, but Scott's 2.22 ERA mattered more.

1987 AL: **Roger Clemens, Red Sox** — led league with 20 wins.

1987 NL: **Steve Bedrosian, Phillies** — Sixth reliever to win the Cy Young ... and the weirdest one so far. No starter won 20 games and the pitcher who led the league in ERA and strikeouts, **Nolan Ryan**, went 8-16 somehow. So the trophy kept dropping until it fell on Bedrock.

1988 AL: **Frank Viola, Twins** — led league with 24 wins.

1988 NL: **Orel Hershiser, Dodgers** — led league with 23 wins. Won unanimously.

1989 AL: **Bret Saberhagen, Royals** — led league with 23 wins.

1989 NL: **Mark Davis, Padres** — Seventh reliever to win the Cy Young, and choosing relievers as Cy Young winners was becoming this odd fixation for the voters. Davis did have an excellent relief year, better than Bedrock's 1987 season. The Royals promptly signed Davis for what was considered big money at the time, and that did not go well.

1980s in review: Weird decade, but the winningest pitcher still won 12 of the 20 Cy Youngs, with four of the other eight going to relief pitchers.

In total, the winningest pitcher has won 38 of 57 Cy Youngs, and in almost all the other cases the Cy Young winner was at least CLOSE in victories. There's no question that up to this point, wins and losses still represent, by far, the most important pitching statistic.

1990s Cy Young Winners

1990 AL: **Bob Welch, Athletics** — led league with 27 wins.

1990 NL: **Doug Drabek, Pirates** — led league with 22 wins.

1991 AL: **Roger Clemens, Red Sox** — His 18 wins were two behind **Scott Erickson and Bill Gullickson**. But he led the league in ERA and strikeouts and won the award easily.

1991 NL: **Tom Glavine Braves** — led league with 20 wins.

1992 AL: **Dennis Eckersley, Athletics** — Eighth reliever to win the Cy Young Award and ... blech. I'm not even sure Eckersley had the best season for RELIEF PITCHERS that year. Kansas City's **Jeff Montgomery** was probably just as good. But Eck saved 50 games and I think voters were still kicking themselves for not giving him more support in 1990, when he DID have a ridiculously great season (his ERA that year was 0.61). Anyway, bad choice, especially because Clemens had an absurdly great season, but so it goes.

1992 NL: **Greg Maddux, Braves** — Led league with 20 wins.

1993 AL: **Jack McDowell, White Sox** — Led league with 22 wins.

1993 NL: **Greg Maddux, Braves** — His 20 wins were two behind teammate **Tom Glavine** and San Francisco's **John Burkett**, but Maddux's 2.36 ERA was almost a full run better than either of them.

1994 AL: **David Cone**, *Royals* — Season that was shut down by the strike. Cone won 16 games, one behind **Jimmy Key**.

1994 NL: **Greg Maddux**, *Braves* — led league with 16 wins.

1995 AL: **Randy Johnson**, *Mariners* — His 18 wins was one behind **Mike Mussina**.

1995 NL: **Greg Maddux**, *Braves* — led league with 19 wins.

1996 AL: **Pat Hentgen**, *Blue Jays* — His 20 wins was one behind **Andy Pettitte**.

1996 NL: **John Smoltz**, *Braves* — led league with 24 wins.

1997 AL: **Roger Clemens**, *Blue Jays* — led league with 21 wins.

1997 NL: **Pedro Martinez**, *Expos* — His 17 wins were three behind Atlanta's **Denny Neagle**. Pedro's 1.90 ERA spoke louder, though.

1998 AL: **Roger Clemens**, *Blue Jays* — led league with 20 wins.

1998 NL: **Tom Glavine**, *Braves* — led league with 20 wins.

1999 AL: **Pedro Martinez**, *Red Sox* — led league with 23 wins.

1999 NL: **Randy Johnson**, *Diamondbacks* — His 17 wins were five behind Houston's **Mike Hampton**. Striking out 364 batters and posting a 2.48 ERA persuaded the voters.

1990s in review: Once again, 12 out of 20. But this decade, only one reliever won a Cy Young.

In total, the winningest pitcher has won 50 of 77 Cy Young Awards, that's almost two-thirds. But everything changes in the 2000s.

2000s Cy Young Winners

2000 AL: **Pedro Martinez**, *Red Sox* — His 18 wins were two behind **Tim Hudson** and **David Wells**.

2000 NL: **Randy Johnson**, *Diamondbacks* — He won 19 games, two behind **Tom Glavine**. You are now beginning to see voters value some other things such as strikeouts and ERA and dominance as much, if not more, than pitcher victories.

2001 AL: **Roger Clemens**, *Yankees* — His 20 wins were one behind Oakland's **Mark Mulder**, but I do think it was Clemens' win-loss record that won him the award. He was not the best pitcher in the league, in my view. But he went 20-3 and won the award going away.

2001 NL: **Randy Johnson**, *Diamondbacks* — His 21 wins were one behind teammate **Curt Schilling** and St. Louis' **Matt Morris**.

2002 AL: **Barry Zito**, *Athletics* — led league with 23 wins.

2002 NL: **Randy Johnson**, *Diamondbacks* — led league with 24 wins.

Note: Whew. Is order restored?

2003 AL: **Roy Halladay**, *Blue Jays* — led league with 22 wins.

2003 NL: **Eric Gagne**, *Dodgers* — Ninth reliever (and last reliever?) to win the Cy Young.

2004 AL: **Johan Santana**, *Twins* — His 20 wins were one behind **Curt Schilling**.

2004 NL: **Roger Clemens**, *Astros* — His 18 wins were two behind teammate **Roy Oswalt**.

2005 AL: **Bartolo Colon**, *Angels* — led league with 21 wins ... but this feels a little bit like the last hurrah for pitcher wins. There's a bit of an uproar across baseball as many fans believe (rightfully, I think) that **Johan Santana** should have won this award even though he won only 16 games. Foreshadowing!

2005 NL: **Chris Carpenter**, *Cardinals* — His 21 wins were one behind the Marlins' **Dontrelle Willis**.

2006 AL: **Johan Santana**, *Twins* — led league with 19 wins.

2006 NL: **Brandon Webb**, *Diamondbacks* — led league with 16 wins.

Note: Two things, I think, were happening simultaneously here. One, the voters — and baseball fans in general — were beginning to lose interest in pitcher wins. And two, for various reasons, pitchers stopped winning as many games. Webb leading the National League with only 16 wins was a shocker at the time.

2007 AL: **CC Sabathia**, *Cleveland* — His 19 wins were one behind Boston's **Josh Beckett**.

2007 NL: **Jake Peavy**, *Padres* — led league with 19 wins.

2008 AL: **Cliff Lee**, *Cleveland* — led league with 22 wins.

2008 NL: **Tim Lincecum**, *Giants* — His 18 wins were four behind Arizona's **Brandon Webb**. I think this was the breakthrough vote, the first time voters simply discarded wins (and ERA for that matter) and went with the pitcher they thought had the best overall season. And it was about to get super weird for pitcher wins.

2009 AL: **Zack Greinke**, *Royals* — His 16 wins were three behind the league lead.

2009 NL: **Tim Lincecum**, *Giants* — His 15 wins were four behind the league lead.

2000s in review: Oh yeah, things were changing. In the decade, the winningest pitcher won the Cy Young only eight times, and only one of the other 12 was a reliever. Three times, the Cy Young winner won 16 or fewer games (not counting relievers); that would have been unheard of back in the 20th century.

In all, the winningest pitcher had now won 58 of 97 Cy Youngs, down to about 60 percent.

2010s Cy Young Winners

2010 AL: **Felix Hernandez**, *Mariners* — This was the thunderbolt. King Felix won the award with a 13-12 record ... this in a year when **CC Sabathia** won 21 games. Everything had changed. Or had it?

2010 NL: **Roy Halladay**, *Phillies* — led league with 21 wins. The voters were not OPPOSED to giving the Cy Young to the league leader in wins. But it wasn't an especially big factor. If the pitcher was dominant in other ways and happened to lead the league in wins, sure, they'd get the vote.

2011 AL: **Justin Verlander**, *Tigers* — led league with 24 wins. Won unanimously.

2011 NL: **Clayton Kershaw**, *Dodgers* — led league with 21 wins.

2012 AL: **David Price**, *Rays* — Did leading the league with 20 wins give Price a little extra boost in his super-close Cy Young victory over **Justin Verlander**? Maybe.

2012 NL: **R.A. Dickey**, *Mets* — His 20 wins was one behind Washington's **Gio Gonzalez**.

2013 AL: **Max Scherzer**, *Tigers* — led league with 21 wins.

2013 NL: **Clayton Kershaw**, *Dodgers* — His 16 wins were three behind St. Louis' **Adam Wainwright**.

2014 AL: **Corey Kluber**, *Cleveland* — led league with 18 wins.

2014 NL: **Clayton Kershaw**, *Dodgers* — led league with 21 wins.

2015 AL: **Dallas Keuchel**, *Astros* — led league with 20 wins.

2015 NL: **Jake Arrieta**, *Cubs* — led league with 22 wins

2016 AL: **Rick Porcello**, *Red Sox* — led league with 22 wins.

2016 NL: **Max Scherzer**, *Nationals* — led league with 20 wins.

Note: Are you seeing what I'm seeing? Probably not, because you'd have to be super-nerdy like me to be reading all this, but suddenly I'm noticing that the pitcher who leads the league in wins is getting A LOT of Cy Young Awards again. We'll come back to this.

2017 AL: **Corey Kluber, Cleveland** — led league with 18 wins.

2017 NL: **Max Scherzer, Nationals** — His 16 wins was two behind **Clayton Kershaw**. And Kershaw also had the better ERA.

2018 AL: **Blake Snell, Rays** — led league with 21 wins.

2018 NL: **Jacob deGrom, Mets** — This, even more than the King Felix vote, would have been the one hardest to explain to old-time baseball writers. deGrom went 10-9.

2019 AL: **Justin Verlander, Astros** — led league with 21 wins.

2019 NL: **Jacob deGrom, Mets** — His 11-8 record was only marginally better than his first Cy Young season.

2010s in review: This decade, as you might guess, was the whole point of this post. We can follow through the years as the win became less and less important in the voting. We can point to Greinke, Lincecum, King Felix and ultimately deGrom as pioneers in helping voters understand that wins are not what define a pitcher's contribution.

And yet, in the 2010s, the winningest pitcher won the Cy Young FOURTEEN TIMES, the most of any decade since the 1970s. In all, the winningest pitcher won 72 of the first 117 Cy Youngs*.

**There's a very real chance that I have screwed up the math throughout this post. Hey, I was writing fast. My editor Larry and I will correct mistakes as they are pointed out.*

What does it mean that the winningest pitcher won 14 of 20 Cy Youngs in the decade, and 10 of 12 at one point? Well, I'm not sure it means anything at all, but it's interesting ... and I suspect it does remind us that while pitcher wins is a flawed statistic and was wildly overrated for way too many years, it's possible, I think, to swing too far the other way. A starting pitcher getting the win or loss is obviously related to that pitcher's excellence.

Sure, pitchers are lucky sometimes, they are unlucky other times, they have no control over how many runs their team scores and no control over how the relievers pitch. But if a pitcher throws six innings and allows one run, their team will PROBABLY win. If a pitcher throws five shutout innings, their team will PROBABLY win. If a pitcher throws seven innings and gives up two runs, their team will PROBABLY win. I'm sure that Tom Tango can help us develop a very basic calculator that would show a pitcher's anticipated win-loss record based simply on innings pitched in a start and runs allowed in a start.

But the point is, a pitcher's win-loss record is still something. Let's look at this decade.

2020s Cy Young Winners

2020 AL: **Shane Bieber, Cleveland** — I wouldn't even count 2020, but Bieber did lead the league with 8 wins.

2020 NL: **Trevor Bauer, Cincinnati** — Ugh, I forgot he won this award. Should have gone to Chicago's **Yu Darvish**, who led the league with eight wins.

2021 AL: **Robbie Ray, Blue Jays** — His 13 wins were three behind the Yankees' **Gerrit Cole**.

2021 NL: **Corbin Burnes, Brewers** — His 11 wins were nine behind the Dodgers' **Julio Urias**.

2022 AL: **Justin Verlander**, led the American League with 18 wins.

2022 NL: **Sandy Alcantara**, his 14 wins are seven behind Atlanta's **Kyle Wright**'s 21, and Wright is not even one of the finalists.

This was the first time that both pitchers won the Cy Young award unanimously. First time. And, meaning absolutely no offense to either Verlander or Alcantara, who both had spectacular years, I don't think you'd put either season in the pantheon with **Bob Gibson**'s 1968 or **Sandy Koufax**'s 1966 or **Steve Carlton**'s 1972 or **Dwight Gooden**'s 1985 or **Pedro Martinez**'s 1999 or even Verlander's own 2011.

I mean, Verlander pitched just 175 innings and he finished third in the league in Baseball-Reference WAR. Alcantara did not lead the league in strikeouts, ERA or wins. They were absolutely the best pitchers, I believe that, but was it THAT obvious? Was it really unanimously obvious?

MVPS OVER AGE 35

Regular readers know I love lists.

2004 Barry Bonds (SF): 40 years, 71 days old

When you win a record seven MVP Awards, you're going to show up on this list a few times – four, to be exact. Bonds won the NL batting title, hitting .362, and led the Majors in on-base percentage (.609) and slugging (.812), with a whopping 232 walks.

1979 Willie Stargell (PIT): 39 years, 208 days old

2003 Barry Bonds (SF): 39 years, 66 days old

In his sixth MVP season, Bonds led MLB in walks with 148, correspondingly leading in on-base percentage at .529. He slugged .749 to lead MLB and had a .341 batting average.

2002 Barry Bonds (SF): 38 years, 67 days old

Unanimous. Bonds' fifth MVP Award came unanimously, with **Albert Pujols** again in second. Bonds led MLB in batting average (.370), on-base percentage (.582) and slugging (.799). He was walked 198 times and crushed 46 homers, driving in 110 runs overall.

1992 Dennis Eckersley (OAK): 38 years, 1 day old

Cy Young and MVP

2001 Barry Bonds (SF): 37 years, 75 days old

In his fourth MVP season, Bonds set the single-season home run record with 73. He also led the Majors in walks (177), on-base (.515) and slugging (.863). He hit .328 and drove in 137 runs.

1986 Mike Schmidt (PHI): 37 years, 8 days old

His third MVP.

1981 Rollie Fingers (MIL): 35 years, 41 days old

Cy Young and MVP

Spud Chandler in 1943 (36 years, 21 days old) and **Hank Sauer** in 1952 (35 years, 195 days).

NO METS MVP, EVER

The Mets have only rarely even come close to winning an MVP:

1969: Tom Seaver certainly could have won the award in the Miracle Mets year, had the voters chosen to give it to a pitcher. He received just as many first-place votes as **Willie McCovey**. But Stretch took the prize.

1984: Keith Hernandez finished second in the MVP voting to **Ryne Sandberg**, but it wasn't close — Hernandez got only one first-place vote.

1985: surprised to find that **Dwight Gooden** in 1985, when he had a season for the ages, got only one first-place vote and finished fourth in the race behind **Willie McGee**, **Dave Parker** and **Pedro Guerrero**.

1988: Darryl Strawberry finished second in the MVP balloting to **Kirk Gibson**, despite hitting 14 more home runs and driving in 25 more runs.

YEARS WITH TWO GREAT MVP CANDIDATES

This is just the fifth time since World War II that an MVP race has come down to two players with at least 9.5 WAR in a season.

Aaron Judge has 10.6 WAR. **Shohei Ohtani** has a combined 9.6 WAR.

Here are the previous results:

1968: **Mickey Mantle** (11.3 WAR) won the MVP but received only six first-place votes. People just didn't realize how good a season he'd had. **Ted Williams** (9.7 WAR) finished second with five first-place votes.

2001: **Barry Bonds** (11.9 WAR) won the MVP with 30 first-place votes. **Sammy Sosa** (10.3 WAR) finished second and got the other two first-place votes.

2004: **Barry Bonds** (10.6 WAR) won the MVP with 24 first-place votes. **Adrián Beltré** (9.6 WAR) finished second and got six first-place votes.

2016: **Mike Trout** (10.5 WAR) won the MVP with 19 first-place votes. **Mookie Betts** (9.5 WAR) finished second and got nine first-place votes.

2018: **Mookie Betts** (10.7 WAR) won the MVP with 28 first-place votes. **Mike Trout** (9.9 WAR) finished second but got only one first-place vote.

LOOKING BACK ON SOME BIG OFFSEASON TRADES

Feb. 1, 2021: Rockies trade **Nolan Arenado** to Cardinals for **Austin Gomber, Elehuris Montero, Tony Locey, Mateo Gil and Jake Sommers**.

Jan. 7, 2021: Indians trade **Francisco Lindor and Carlos Carrasco** to Mets for **Amed Rosario, Andrés Giménez, Josh Wolf and Isaiah Greene**.

Dec. 28, 2020: Cubs trade **Yu Darvish and Victor Caratini** to Padres for **Owen Caissie, Ismael Mena, Reginald Preciado, Yeison Santana and Zach Davies**.

Dec. 27, 2020: Rays trade **Blake Snell** to Padres for **Luis Patiño, Cole Wilcox, Blake Hunt and Francisco Mejía**.

Feb. 10, 2020: Red Sox trade **Mookie Betts, David Price** and cash to Dodgers for **Alex Verdugo, Jeter Downs and Connor Wong**; Twins trade **Brusdar Graterol**, Minor League prospect and 67th pick in 2020 Draft to Dodgers for **Kenta Maeda**, Minor League prospect and cash.

Dec. 21, 2018: Dodgers trade **Yasiel Puig, Matt Kemp, Alex Wood, James Farmer** and \$7 million to Reds for **Homer Bailey, Josiah Gray and Jeter Downs**.

Dec. 3, 2018: Mets trade **Jay Bruce, Anthony Swarzak, Gerson Bautista, Justin Dunn and Jarred Kelenic** to Mariners for **Robinson Canó and Edwin Diaz**.

Dec. 9, 2015: D-backs trade **Dansby Swanson, Ender Inciarte and Aaron Blair** to Braves for **Shelby Miller**.

Nov. 20, 2013: Tigers trade **Prince Fielder** to Rangers for **Ian Kinsler**.

Nov. 19, 2012: Marlins trade **Mark Buehrle, Jose Reyes, Josh Johnson, Emilio Bonifacio and John Buck** to Blue Jays for eight players.

Feb. 16, 2004: Rangers trade **Alex Rodriguez** to Yankees for **Alfonso Soriano**.

Feb. 18, 1999: Blue Jays trade **Roger Clemens** to Yankees for **David Wells, Homer Bush and Graeme Lloyd**.

Dec. 10, 1984: Expos trade **Gary Carter** to Mets for **Hubie Brooks, Mike Fitzgerald, Herm Winningham and Floyd Youmans**.

April 5, 1972: Expos trade **Rusty Staub** to Mets for **Tim Foli, Mike Jorgensen and Ken Singleton**.

Dec. 9, 1965: Reds trade Frank Robinson to Orioles for Jack Baldschun, Milt Pappas and Dick Simpson

Frank Robinson was a tremendous talent, and had proven it with Cincinnati by hitting .303/.389/.554 with 324 home runs over 10 seasons with the club. He was the 1956 NL Rookie of the Year, and the '61 NL MVP. Yet Reds general manager Bill DeWitt said the future Hall of Famer had reached his peak by that point, and sent him to Baltimore following the '65 season.

The centerpiece in the return for Robinson was Pappas, a two-time All-Star right-hander with a 3.24 ERA in nine seasons with the Orioles. He only spent two and a half seasons with Cincinnati, posting a 4.04 ERA in 82 appearances (75 starts) before being traded to the Braves in June of '68.

Meanwhile, Robinson went on to put up even better numbers in six seasons with Baltimore, slashing .300/.401/.543 with 179 homers, becoming the first player to win the MVP Award in each league by doing so in his first AL season with the Orioles in '66. That year, he also won the Triple Crown and led Baltimore to a World Series championship.



Umpire Hunter Wendelstedt with the FTX logo. With Crypto company FTX melting down this week, unlikely we will see the logo patches on umpires in 2023.

DAVID CLYDE'S DEBUT

He was supposed to be the player that would be Texas' first ace, and in 1973, he debuted to incredible fanfare

Matthew Postins, Sports Illustrated

On June 22, 1973 in Texas Rangers history, rookie pitcher **David Clyde** made his debut at Arlington Stadium.

Clyde, who was selected No. 1 overall by the Texas Rangers on June 5, 1973, out of Houston's Westchester High School, ended up in Arlington just 20 days after graduating from high school. The buzz around Clyde's first start was palpable as he faced the Minnesota Twins. Clyde threw five innings, striking out eight and gave up just one hit in a 4-3 victory. Clyde started the game by walking the first two Twins, and then striking out the next three. It was also the first sellout in Rangers' history.

Unfortunately, that might have been Clyde's high-water mark with the Rangers. More a move designed to sell tickets than to fully develop Clyde as a pitcher, he threw three largely

forgettable years with the Rangers. After two years out of the Majors, he threw two more seasons for the Cleveland Indians. By 1979, Clyde was out of baseball with a career record of 18-33 with a 4.63 earned run average.

He became a cautionary tale for moving high school pitchers directly to the Major Leagues.

GAMMONS: DUSTY BAKER HELPED BRING ASTROS THE WINNING CULTURE THAT EVERYONE ACROSS BASEBALL SEEKS

(Editor's Note-Because I love pretty much everything Peter Gammons writes, here's his column from The Athletic on Building a Winning Culture. On the long side but I think you will enjoy it.)

It was after the **Christian Vázquez** single that made it 4-1 in the bottom of the sixth inning of Game 6 of this year's World Series that it all started coming back.

My thoughts wandered to the afternoon of Oct. 26, 2002, which marked the first time **Dusty Baker** hadn't "won a World Series" as a manager, when he took the Giants into Game 6 of that World Series needing just one more victory to be world champions. Twenty years and 10 days before that Vázquez single, in the sixth inning of *that* Game 6, **Barry Bonds** helped his manager along, hitting a prodigious home run into the right-field upper deck in Anaheim Stadium off rookie phenom **Francisco Rodríguez**. Understand, Bonds had hit a similar shot off **Troy Percival** in Game 1; in our postgame show, we showed video of Bonds making a meaningless out against Rodríguez, and I said, "The kid's tough when you haven't faced him," prompting Bonds the next day to correct me and say "if he throws me that again I'll hit it further than the one off Percival." Our ESPN set was at the top of the left-field stands, and as Bonds took his defensive position for the next inning, he waved up to get my attention and pointed to where the home run had gone.

Which all seemed OK. The game, the series, seemingly had an inevitable conclusion, and as **Harold Reynolds**, Karl Ravech and I laughed about it, we noticed that there was a sudden and striking change in the wind. For the first five-and-a-half innings, it had been blowing in from right field. Suddenly, it was blowing out to right field. In the bottom of the seventh, with the Giants eight outs from their first world championship in the Bay Area and **Russ Ortiz** breezing through the Angels' lineup, **Troy Glaus** and **Brad Fullmer** hit one-out singles. Baker came out to the mound and signaled for Félix Rodríguez out of the bullpen to pitch to **Scott Spiezio**.

Spiezio lofted a fly ball to dead right field. Giants right fielder **Reggie Sanders**, an excellent defender, hadn't realized the change in the wind, and he didn't get back to the low wall in time to be able to make a play. Homer. Giants 5, Angels 3, and eight outs away became five outs to the end, because **Darin Erstad** homered and Glaus doubled in two more runs in the bottom of the eighth and Percival closed it with a 1-2-3 ninth that led to a **John Lackey** win in Game 7 and the only championship in Angels history.

Twenty years and 10 days later, on a Saturday night in Houston, those 2002 memories faded somewhat, no longer representing the first time Dusty Baker didn't accomplish something, no longer standing as such a painful reminder of being tantalizingly close despite all the work he had done to build that team, and other teams, into cohesive units.

Just as the 2002 series was a fascinating watch, this 2022 series was a match of stars and cultures. Bryce Harper has become a cross between **Frank Robinson** and **George Brett**, embodying the fiery, fearless superstar leader, with support from the man who makes it all work in **Kyle Schwarber**. And there was the Dusty Culture that for three seasons allowed the Astros to play without regret around their necks.

Organizations build culture in different ways, and from different sources. Baker's 2002 Giants had a culture all their own, one that came down from their manager, but one also that was unavoidably shaped by having one of the most productive players of all time at his statistical peak, and as a constant center of attention. Baker's 2022 Astros were also a unique team in terms of culture, in that they existed against the background of their sign-stealing scandal and its continued fallout. Yet Baker succeeded in moving the narrative past that incident, and making it about the players on the field.

A strong team culture is paramount in forging a successful club, but it isn't always the manager who creates it — players, GMs, coaches and others play their part, and on some teams are the dominant forces. But on these Astros? There's no question where this team's culture came from.

Starting from the top

Dusty Baker is a baseball culture unto himself. He often talks of what he learned from teammates, from **Henry Aaron**, one of the sport's greatest persons, from **Reggie Smith**; in the ugliest days of the racially torn Boston school busing crisis, Smith and other prominent athletes (Bobby Orr, Sam and K.C. Jones), without any publicity, went to schools to urge the kids to keep studying and learning, and in the last six years he has run the Reggie Smith Academy for academics and athletics to aid underserved youth in Los Angeles with the motto that "every student is deserving of opportunity." Dusty is on the board of the academy.

The day after the Astros win, Nov. 6, Tom Verducci wrote of Baker's legendary sense and understanding of body language. In the month after the 2002 series, the Giants did not pick up Baker's contract option, and before he was hired by the Cubs, my then-employer, ESPN.com, ran a story about his alleged tax issues. When I arrived at Cubs camp for spring training in 2003, he took me to his office, closed the door and told me a media person in San Francisco told him that because I had known Giants owner Peter Magowan for more than 40 years, I leaked the story. I had not, and when I reacted by grabbing the chair, Dusty said, "I know right away the person lied. Relax. I had to ask. Your reaction told me all I needed to know."

That's just who he is. When his son Darren was playing in the Cape Cod League in 2019, Dusty spent weeks in the area, and after he had to leave, people in parks around the league recounted tales of Dusty Baker watching his son while signing for and talking to everyone who approached him. As for Darren, when MLB cut the 2020 draft to five rounds, he told clubs he was returning to the University of California, graduated, was a finalist for the national CLASS award for "excellence in community, classroom, character and competition," then was selected by the Nationals in the 2021 draft and this past summer hit .290 in High-A Harrisburg, in between a couple of fishing days with his father.

The first day of Baker's managerial time with the Astros was the first full day of spring training in 2020. The astounding reporting on sign stealing by Ken Rosenthal and Evan Drelich in *The Athletic* had broken the previous Nov. 12, and that was the prevailing story of that day; Baker was the right person at the right time, taking his first job since managing the Nats to a 97-65 season and losing 9-8 to the Cubs — with **Max Scherzer** in relief — in the fifth and deciding game of the 2017 NLDS, then getting fired. There could be no questions that day for the new manager about the scandal, or firings, or the press conference **Jose Altuve and Alex Bregman** were forced to confront. His focus was on moving forward, on that day's workout.

Some players invited me into the clubhouse while the workout was in its later stages. They were subdued, clearly remorseful, but when I told Altuve that players, coaches and a number of people in the organization had told me that he did not participate in the sign stealing, he politely declined to discuss it, and asked that I didn't talk about it on television, or write about it. "It would be a betrayal of my teammates."

Two years later, he still did not want to be singled out. But while he and Bregman were asked by management to speak to the scandal for all the players and he received the most obscene treatment from beered up louts in Boston and New York, he never pointed to 2017 home/road splits that showed a 200-point OPS difference in favor of the road, where there was nary a banging trash can to be heard.

"He is," Baker said, "the ultimate teammate." That from a man who played with Henry Aaron and Reggie Smith.

Also in that Astros clubhouse, often sitting by his locker streaming Sancti Spiritus games from Cuba, was **Yulieski Gurriel**, from a family Blue Jays president Mark Shapiro calls "baseball royalty." Lourdes Jr. joined the Blue Jays in 2018 at 24, and in parts of five seasons has a .285 batting average and 117 OPS-plus. This past season, he played a long stretch with a broken hamate bone. "He didn't tell anyone" says Shapiro. Yuli's father, Lourdes Sr., is one of the greatest baseball figures in Cuban history. In 1984, when the U.S. Olympic team inexplicably did not select either Barry Bonds or **B.J. Surhoff** (the first pick in the 1985 draft), they went to Havana to play in the 1984 Amateur World Series. "He was a great player," Surhoff says, and it showed in the numbers, with Gurriel posting a .992 OPS in the tournament, compared to Bonds' .884.

Lourdes Sr. managed all three of his baseball-star sons, including brother Yunieski, with Sancti Spiritus. Now that both Yuli and Lourdes Jr. play in MLB, he calls each son after every one of their games. “Yuli,” says former Astros international scouting director Oz Ocampo, “is a very special person in that clubhouse.” A batting title, a Gold Glove and two World Series rings speak to that. In his 15 seasons for Sancti Spiritus, starting at age 17, his numbers were .337/.421/.582/1.003 with 591 walks and 388 strikeouts. When I first saw Yuli — and Kendrys Morales — they were 15 at a Cuban Academy, and I wrote that if he were in the States when he turned 19, he might be the first player chosen in the draft. Incidentally, **Delmon Young** was the first pick in the draft the year Yuli turned 19, when he hit .358 with a 1.033 OPS for Sancti Spiritus and his manager-father.

So, there is more to the Astros culture in winning two World Series and two other American League pennants in the last six seasons than banging the cans slowly.

Building it behind the scenes

We have seen how difficult it is to put together a comparable six-season run. There are people calling for Cashman to be fired from the Yankees, for changes in the Dodgers organization. Hey, in Chicago, one can hear that Jed Hoyer might be “in trouble” because the Cubs haven’t “won since 2016.” Wow, a five-year-old kid in Evanston has never seen the Cubs win it all.

“When fans and the media get upset and want changes when their team doesn’t go all the way, they forget how difficult it is to be that one team that wins its final game,” says Toronto president Shapiro. “The postseason often is random.”

Take the Seattle Mariners, whose initial season was 1977, with a game started by The Ancient Mariner **Diego Segui**, who some thought was 77. In 2001, they won a record 116 games. They have had great, Hall of Fame-level players like **Ken Griffey, Jr., Randy Johnson, Edgar Martinez and Alex Rodriguez**. This past season they won 90 games with a captivating young team and knocked the favored Blue Jays out of the Wild Card Series and lost the Division Series to the best team in the sport, the Astros. They also have never played a World Series game. In this century the Red Sox have won four World Series; they’ve also finished last five times. The Giants have won three World Series, and did it in a five-year period. The Cardinals won in 2006 and 2011, before that 1982. The Braves’ 2021 championship followed their others, in 1995, 1957 and 1914.

The Yankees won 99 games in 2022, the Dodgers 111. Each team had serious offensive issues in the postseason. Each team had pitching injury issues. The eight winningest teams in the regular season were the Dodgers, Astros, Braves, Mets, Yankees, Cardinals, Guardians and the Blue Jays. Of those teams, other than Houston, only the Yankees and Guardians won a postseason series. With the financial state of the game, which has rebounded significantly since the onset of COVID-19, we can expect to see more teams leveraging capital and trade assets in the hopes of making the postseason. That’s good for the industry, good for the players, good for the fans who want their teams to compete to their markets’ capabilities. The Brewers are the smallest

market in MLB, and they missed the last playoff spot to the Phillies by a game after making the playoffs the previous four seasons. The last six seasons, Milwaukee has won more regular season games than any National League team other than Los Angeles and Atlanta.

Then there is the opposite end of the spectrum, where the Yankees reside. Now, the Yankees are not just any baseball team. They have 27 world championships. When they take the field on Opening Day against the Giants next March 30, it will be the 50th year the Steinbrenner family has owned them, so if you were born into another family of Yankee fans after October, 1964 — the year David Halberstam chronicled the end of the post-War II Yankee reign that saw them win ten World Series and 15 pennants from 1947 to 1964 — you were used to the early King Georgeisms. He fired **Billy Martin and Yogi Berra** as managers, called **Dave Winfield** “Mr. May,” said “**Ken Clay** spit the bit” and “we’ve seen enough of **Tucker Ashford**” and termed his own style as “creative discomfort.” But after **Bob Watson** stepped down as general manager and Cashman took over in 1998 in the midst of winning four World Series in five years with one manager, **Joe Torre**, the front office parade was over. The Yankees lost the 2001 series, played in the shadow of the events of Sept. 11, in seven games to the Arizona Diamondbacks, and things changed. The 1998-99-2000 Yankees were the last team — period — to win the World Series in consecutive seasons.

When that 2001 series ended, Torre had completed his sixth season as manager, and he did not retire until after 2007, without another pennant. In the ensuing 22 seasons, the Yankees have won it all once, in 2009. George Steinbrenner died on July 13, 2010, in the season following that last World Series win, but he had calmed. When the Red Sox players and families were celebrating on the Yankee Stadium field after the seventh game of the infamous 2004 ALCS, he was staring down from his box and the security chief asked him on his walkie-talkie if he wanted the field cleared. “No,” his voice boomed back, “let them celebrate. They’ve waited a long time for this.”

The architects

General managers can create cultures, and beyond ownership, perhaps the greatest constant in the last three decades of Yankee baseball has been Cashman, who has made his mark on decades of Yankee rosters at this point, and survived numerous tabloid-driven mobs to stay at the helm of baseball’s most prominent franchise, receiving votes of confidence from multiple generations of Steinbrenners. In 2008 when the Yankees were in third place and won only 89 games and speculation had begun about Cashman’s security, in the lobby of his favorite Manhattan hotel, George Steinbrenner said, “Everything Brian Cashman does has been in the best interest of the Yankees, not his own interest.” In the 22 seasons of the 21st century, the Yankees have won fewer than 89 games four times. They’ve won 100-plus six times, 95-to-99 six, 90-to-94 four.

“I’ve tried to maintain stability and allow people to do their jobs,” Cashman says. “Anyone who knows me knows I try to check in on any player I think might be available. We’ve signed top-dollar, quality free agents (think **Gerrit Cole, Mark Teixeira**) and taken on big contracts

(**Giancarlo Stanton**). Considering where we normally pick in the draft, I think Damon Oppenheimer has done a very good job.”

In Oppenheimer’s 17 years as scouting director, the Yankees haven’t had a first-round selection higher than 16; the last three times they were at the top of the draft were 1990-92, when they picked **Carl Everett** 10th, **Brian Taylor** first and **Derek Jeter** sixth. In 2013, Oppenheimer took Aaron Judge with the 32nd pick in the first round, and six years later, with the 30th pick, he took shortstop **Anthony Volpe**. After watching the Astros and Phillies play a memorable World Series with rookie shortstops, one of whom was the MVP of the series and the ALCS against the Yankees, it’s tempting to think Volpe may be the favorite to be at short next March 30.

When the Yankees were beaten by Houston in the ALCS, one host on MLB Radio said “Cashman did nothing.” Yet in 2022, Cashman acquired **Josh Donaldson, Isiah Kiner-Falefa, Harrison Bader, Andrew Benintendi, Frankie Montas, Scott Effross and Lou Trevino**. **D.J. LeMahieu, Matt Carpenter and Benintendi** were hurt, as well as **Mike King and Chad Green, and Clay Holmes** pitched through ailments. The Astros won 106 games. They had the best pitching in either league. There was nothing random about their victory.

Cashman’s priority this winter is signing Judge. Like Boston’s Chaim Bloom with **Xander Bogaerts**, neither general manager can move forward until each knows what he has and where their financial starting points may be. Both know that to quickly get a deal done entails giving the agent *his* price. Middle ground can take until February if enough teams get involved. It is unlikely Cashman will take the tabloids’ directives and sign one of the premium free agent shortstops for their asking price, as he turns to Volpe or **Oswald Peraza**. There will be a pitching signing, or two. Anthony Rizzo is already back in the fold. They won 99 games. The Dodgers, Astros, Mets and Braves won more. The Yankees won three postseason games, the Dodgers, Braves and Mets won three among them.

The Yankees are always all-in, but other clubs in lesser markets have to pick their spots. Pat Gillick in Toronto and Sandy Alderson in Oakland believed in Alderson’s credo that the “time comes in a contending team’s season when the front office has to show the players that it is trying as hard as it is asking them to play;” Alderson traded for **Rickey Henderson** at the 1989 trading deadline, Gillick at the 1993 deadline, and each won the ensuing World Series. At different times, Alderson made deadline deals for **Harold Baines and Willie McGee**. Gillick made impactful deadline deals for Henderson and **David Cone**, and in off-seasons preceding his 1992 and 1993 championships Gillick signed or traded for **Jack Morris, Dave Stewart, Robbie Alomar, Joe Carter and Dave Winfield**.

In 2016, the Cubs and Indians were tied in Game 7 in extra innings and Theo Epstein’s work to acquire **Ben Zobrist and Aroldis Chapman** was validated. In 2015, Royals GM Dayton Moore told his front office “our now has come,” traded for **Edinson Volquez** and Zobrist and Kansas City had its second championship. As a reminder of the degree of difficulty in winning World Series in small and medium markets: the four 1969 expansion teams were Kansas City, Seattle, Montreal and San Diego. Montreal ended up in Washington, Seattle became Bud Selig’s

Milwaukee Brewers and 53 years later the Royals have won two World Series, the Montreal/Washington Expos/Nationals one. The Seattle Pilots did provide us with “Ball Four,” and the spectacle of the Ancient Mariner, Segui, pitching in the first games in the history of both the Pilots and the Mariners.

The 2022 trading deadline provided a glimmering example of how those clubs need to seize their moments. Seattle GM Jerry Dipoto, through drafts and trades and free agent signings like **Robbie Ray**, had steadily built excitement for the Mariners to the point where their fan base realized they had a chance to end sports’ longest stretch without a postseason appearance. On July 30, with three days left before the trading deadline, he traded four prospects to Cincinnati for the prize of the trade season, the electrifying **Luis Castillo**. Not only did the Mariners make the playoffs, but they knocked off the Blue Jays before being eliminated by the Astros. DiPoto knew when to trade for or protect young players, and when to trade them away for a rare elite starter like Castillo.

Leading from the front

As we saw in the postseason, individual players can create a team culture around them. **Bryce Harper** is obviously one, from the fire that rages in his competitiveness to his gesture to the “Phillies” on the front of his uniform. **Marcus Semien** is one of those, which is why Rangers GM Chris Young made him and his ability to put a team’s culture on a solid foundation paramount when Young was assembling his Texas roster last winter. As Cleveland coach **Sandy Alomar** puts it, “everyone on this team follows what José Ramírez does.” Ask most Blue Jays people, and they point to **Matt Chapman** as their driving force, or “Chapman and **George Springer**.” When the 1989 A’s took the field, they played the Rolling Stones’ “Start Me Up” as Henderson headed to left field. In Toronto, they should do the same for Springer and Chapman.

Dayton Moore says that when the Royals were assessing drafts or available players, “we didn’t necessarily look for the best talent, we were looking for the players who gave us the best chance to win, by performance and making teammates better.” Frank Robinson was that guy. So was Hank Aaron. Derek Jeter, because every teammate Jeter had knew he was always there for one reason: to win. In winning three World Series in 10 seasons, veteran Red Sox players point to **Dustin Pedroia and Jason Varitek**; Bogaerts still recalls his first major-league road trip as a 19-year-old in 2013, when Pedroia sent a tailor to the rookie’s San Francisco hotel room to fit him for two suits, courtesy of Pedey. **Chipper Jones** was that guy. **Robin Yount. Manny Machado** has evolved into one. George Brett. Ken Griffey Jr.

Chase Utley defined that kind of person. He got to the park seven or eight hours before first pitch, and worked at things he told teammates were “things that I might be able to do to help us win that game.” It could be studying video of opposing relievers, Or, against pitchers who were poor fielders or sluggish holding runners, practicing bunting or getting a lead.

Buck Showalter asks his players to “wear it.” In other words, accept fault. **Dennis Eckersley** pitched in the majors for 24 years, and whatever happened, it was never anyone else’s fault.

Not in Game 3 of the 1978 Boston Massacre when he pulled the media away from **Frank Duffy** and said, "Talk to the guy with the 'L' next to his name — me." Or after the **Kirk Gibson** homer. Or the **Robbie Alomar** homer in the key game of the 1992 American League playoffs. Pirates players that same year never forgot that **Jim Leyland** wore it all when they lost the heartbreaking final game of the playoffs to the Braves and **Francisco Cabrera's** series-winning single.

The teachers and their pupils

Some have suggested the single most important figure in this Astros stretch has been **Brent Strom**, whose concepts, teaching and work scouting and developing their young cadre of Latin pitchers is the real foundation of the organization's current success. Strom went with the Astros scouts to the Dominican, and, for example, insisted on taking a chance on one kid who was already almost 18 and only threw 82-84 MPH — and then **Cristian Javier** combined on no-hitters against the Yankees and Phillies in June and November.

Coaches matter, and quality organizations find major- and minor-league coaches who love to teach, and care about and respect players. That is precisely what the Cleveland organization has done for more than 30 years. So, of course, have the Cardinals, from the days when Branch Rickey disciple George Kissell was running their development system to today, with Gary LaRocque. In spring training 1990, Kissell was working with **Todd Zeile** on moving from catcher to third base. Kissell would get Zeile down on his knee in front of a brick wall, then rocket balls with his fungo off the wall, ricocheting at Zeile, requiring quick reactions. Kissell had done the same drills with Torre when he made the switch to third 20 years earlier. Before Torre, it was with **Mike Shannon**, before him, **Ken Boyer**. Kissell used to say, "we have to prepare young men for what they need to play in the big leagues." His motto? "I learn something new every day." To this day, some of us say, "every day I go to a ballpark I hope to learn two things I did not know."

Torre once said, "I learned more from George Kissell than anyone else," and Torre is in the Hall of Fame as a player and a manager. It is no coincidence that Brent Strom was a pitching coach in the St. Louis organization and taught Jeff Luhnow the importance of the high fastball and spin rates, and when **Skip Schumaker** was named manager of the Miami Marlins, he said, "I learned not only from **Tony La Russa** and all the great coaches on his staff, but coaches in the Cardinals (organization) like **José Oquendo**. It was my baseball university."

In many ways, the most remarkable organization of the last decade has been Cleveland. It's a continuation of the legacy of those great Indians teams built by Bill Veeck, partly through his introduction of African-Americans like **Larry Doby**, **Satchel Paige** and **Dave Pope** to the American League (remember, that more backward league didn't have an African-American rookie of the year until **Tommy Agee** in 1966, 19 years after Jackie Robinson won the award), and then carried on later under John Hart. Hart put together the bombers that made the 1995 and 1997 World Series, turned the club over to Mark Shapiro and he, Chris Antonetti and Mike Chernoff set about ignoring market demographics and targeting wins regardless of payroll size.

And it has worked: beginning with the 2013 hiring of **Terry Francona**, the now-Guardians have won more games than any AL team but the Yankees, and got to within an extra-inning heartbreak of winning the franchise's first World Series since 1948.

Antonetti's hiring practice has long been to bring on interns "that are smarter than I am," with examples like executives Mike Hazen, Carter Hawkins, David Stearns, Derek Falvey and Chernoff coming through the organization at various points. They have to make trades based on economics. They had to trade **Francisco Lindor** when he was at the point where he could ask for something north of \$200 million. In the package they got **Andrés Giménez**, who in his second full season playing second base was fourth in all of baseball in Baseball Reference's Wins Above Average, trailing **Aaron Judge, Nolan Arenado and Paul Goldschmidt**. **José Ramírez** was 14th in WAA, yet another year of sparkling production from an international signing who cost only \$215,000. Rookie **Steven Kwan** was 22nd, a fourth-round draft choice. No other team had three players in the top 25 in that category. Then there was closer **Emmanuel Clase**, the best reliever in the American League, who was acquired in a trade for **Corey Kluber**.

So much of this starts with Francona. In the Guardians' run to the playoffs, reliever **Sam Hentges** said, "In April, Terry was using in every possible situation to help me believe I belonged. In September, he was using me to help the team get into October." In April 2013, his first full month with the Indians, Shapiro said, "He's changed the entire culture here." Every coach or team official is free to express his thoughts and argue individual thoughts. He has a pitching coach in **Carl Willis** who has coached five Cy Young winners. Cleveland has long had a strong organizational culture; Francona made it better, and his plaque is awaiting him in Cooperstown.

Shapiro, Chernoff, Francona's protégé Kevin Cash and virtually everyone that has passed through the offices at the stadium long known as The Jake is open to contrarian ideas. In 2021, the Diamondbacks were 52-112, tied with the Orioles for the worst record in the game. Hazen, his wife Nicole gravely ill with brain cancer, was privately asked if there would be changes coming to his uniformed staff. "I put the team together, I'll face it," he replied.

"Our bullpen wasn't good. It wasn't **Torey Lovullo's** fault. He didn't mishandle it," Hazen said, concluding that he was the one who had built that poor bullpen.

When it was time for a season-ending media conference summing up the season, Hazen insisted that he do it by himself.

"It's my job to face the music," he said.

As the Diamondbacks unveiled a number of outstanding young players in the second half of the 2022 season and 2023 began to appear to be the light at the end of the tunnel, Hazen said, "We will work hard to surround those kids with legitimate talent. You'll hear no excuses from me. I don't want to be blaming the manager or the coaches or be making excuses. I look at it like this — I don't want people who work for us to make excuses or point fingers at other people. But I

can't expect that if I'm making excuses and blaming others. If I ask for hard work and honesty, I ask others to accept responsibility, then I'd better accept responsibility. If I can't do that, maybe I shouldn't have the job."

That is how Hazen was raised. When a shoulder injury cut short his playing career after the 1999 season, his Princeton coach **Scott Bradley** said, "He's the best leader I've ever had." Chris Young, who is tasked with altering culture in Texas, played with Hazen for Bradley, himself a former longtime major league catcher. Young and Hazen may be two of the most honestly self-aware people one could ever hope to meet.

Hazen came up working with Shapiro and Antonetti. He then went to Boston under Theo Epstein, who from the time he became Red Sox general manager in 2003 said, "I think it's important to associate with people who aren't afraid to disagree with me. We all need to hear that." A question he often asked as he grew as an executive was, "What am I missing?" In a dozen-year span, his Red Sox and Cubs teams ended respective "curses" that went back to the first initial years of the 20th century.

Collaborative culture

In the spring training after the Cubs won the World Series — in Cleveland, of course — Zobrist was asked if he could sum up the Cubs organization in 10 words or less. He did it in one word: collaborative.

Down the I-10 in Glendale two days later, Dodgers executive Andrew Friedman said he read that and said, "You could write a one-word column with Zobrist's quote." Now, one likely can find a couple of people in Glendale next spring who would like to see more common sense apply to how pitchers are handled in terms of the whole third-time-around-the-order business. But those who have worked with him attest that there is no one who believes in collaborative leadership more than Friedman — close to a dozen baseball people are involved with most Dodgers personnel decisions, and everyone gets their say, often to great effect.

For example, on Aug. 4, 2021, the Orioles released **Evan Phillips**. The Rays then signed him. They put him on waivers Aug. 17. The battery of Dodgers analytics specialists, who might outnumber the faculty at UCLA, liked his stuff and delivery. The scout that saw him in the American League thought his stuff would be best complemented with a cutter. The Dodgers claimed him, and while **Mark Prior** is one of the best pitching coaches in the game, his assistant, **Connor McGuinness**, is the cutter guy. Phillips is now an elite reliever.

Everyone has a say. GM Brandon Gomes, Josh Byrnes, scouting director Billy Gasparino, Galen Carr, Ismael Cruz, Dave Finley, Will Rhymes, Jeff McAvoy, Ron Porterfield (Uteley may have been in London), Jeff Kingston and probably others were there for the Aug. 2 deadline meetings, held not in an office, but outside at Friedman's house. It was like that when Friedman ran the Rays. His pro scouting staff traveled, evaluated and debated as a team, led by department boss Matt

Arnold with McAvoy, **Rocco Baldelli** and Carlos Rodriguez. Friedman's assistants were Erik Neander, Chaim Bloom and James Click.

Arnold went to work in Milwaukee, and when Stearns stepped down, he became the director of baseball operations. The Brewers are, like the Guardians, Marlins, Royals, Reds, Pirates and A's, forced to live and sometimes die within a budget, although Bud Selig left a marvelous ballpark and the city is a great baseball town. "(Owner Mark Attanasio) tries to make us competitive every year," says Arnold. The last six seasons, they have had winning records in every season but 2020, the 60-game anomaly, and in this stretch have won more games than the Red Sox or Cardinals. They finished first twice. Even in 2022, they finished only one game behind the Phillies.

They have a rash of talented young outfielders coming, with **Estevan Ruiz** from the Padres (in the **Josh Hader** trade), **Joey Wiemer**, **Garrett Mitchell** and 2021 first-round draft choice **Sal Frelick**. Scouts who watched Yeehaw Jun for years knew he was the Massachusetts High School Player of the Year in football, baseball and hockey, and most of them believed his best position is shortstop. In the spring, Frelick will get a chance to hit leadoff and play second base. By the end of the season, teenage phenom **Jackson Chourio** could be in the outfield. "The fans here are special," says Arnold. "When we played the Cubs in the (2018) tiebreaker playoff, I rode the train from Milwaukee and it was crazy — the fans were singing, everyone was so excited ... It was so great." The fact that the Cubs are the one large market team in the NL Central and St. Louis, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh are a cheap, short flight away makes it a regional league, the way the Atlantic Coast Conference was at one time.

No one can say who makes for a natural rival for the Marlins, unless the interleague series with the Rays is a simple trip through Yeehaw Junction with a home-and-away guarantee of available tickets. But after years of ownership uncertainty, Kim Ng has brought order to the organization. Jeffery Loria was known to do exceptionally kind things for people, but he could do goofy things too, like come down to the team suite at the winter meetings excited that he'd acquired **Dan Straily** from Cincinnati for Luis Castillo. Unfortunately, Derek Jeter was not given more power in baseball operations. He picked his former Yankee hitting coach, Gary Denbo, who brought with him young analytics theorists who ridiculed the deals for **Sandy Alcántara**, **Zac Gallen** and **Pablo López**. They didn't care enough about a catcher named **J.T. Realmuto** that **Don Mattingly** singled out as a minor leaguer. Denbo is gone. Mattingly had had enough, and Ng hired Skip Schumaker — who was on the radar of several teams — to manage, retained **Mel Stottlemyre** as pitching coach and brought in Oz Ocampo as an assistant general manager.

What Mike Elias and the Orioles have built with their young position players is one of the best stories of the 2022 season. They have a culture guarantee in **Adley Rutschman**. They have **Gunnar Henderson** and **Jackson Holliday** and prospects who can fill Camden Yards for a decade, depending on ownership. In a very competitive division, they are serious competition. **Brooks Robinson** and **Jim Palmer** still live there, **Cal Ripken** should be there. Sig Mejdal is there, as he was in the building of the Astros. Mejdal has ideas. When he was with the Astros, this man from the aerospace industry spent an entire New York-Penn League season in uniform,

coaching to learn what young players go through at the bottom of the development pyramid. Obviously, he is a leader.

Then there is Bloom and the Red Sox. Owners John Henry and Tom Werner don't do public talks. Red Sox president Sam Kennedy speaks for ownership, and he is optimistic. Right now, **Alex Cora** is optimistic. And it's early to speculate about putting Bloom, in his fourth season, on a bus driven by **Franchy Cordero**. Collaboration is communication between a general manager and players, between a general manager and manager, and a general manager and all the personnel from the major-league bench coach to the Gulf Coast League pitching coach.

When Bloom took over, he knew that Henry had decided they were not going to give **Mookie Betts** a \$300 million contract and thus had to be traded. They did not get an All-Star-level player in return; **Alex Verdugo** is a left fielder in a ballpark that requires right-field defense, in six seasons his 8.5 WAR isn't left-field production and his Red Sox three-season OPS+ is 102. He is an average major-league player. **Andrew Benintendi** for Cordero was ... no. This past season, they signed **Trevor Story** to a \$144 million contract despite elbow questions; on July 2 the Red Sox were leading for wild-card position, but when Bogaerts left a July 1 game at Wrigley Field, Story did not move over to short to replace Bogaerts. Instead **Christian Arroyo**, a second baseman, took over at short. The Sox returned to Fenway Park on July 4 in second place, and didn't strike hard at the deadline as they slowly clinched last. When Bloom chose to largely stop sending scouts to Triple A or the major leagues, there were hard feelings in the underbelly of baseball operations, and some of Bloom's front-office hires created some internal division.

Now, the Red Sox finished last, which is a divisive place. While Dombrowski's 2018 team won it all, he had to trade many young prospects to win as Henry and Werner asked, and Bloom didn't have a lot of fungible prospects in the pipeline. We have never been told who made the contract offer to Bogaerts earlier this year, which was less than what they gave Story and guaranteed Bogaerts would hit the free-agent market with Scott Boras working for him. Many general managers maintain that the spring Bogaerts offer made it clear whoever made it didn't want Bogaerts back.

But that's speculation. Those who know Henry know he really cares about the Red Sox. "John and Tom both really care," says Kennedy. "They are extremely passionate. They always finance whatever baseball ops needs. We want to get this right, and John and Tom will do whatever is necessary to do so. If there are issues that haven't been addressed, we have to have everyone in the organization communicating with one another. Texts and Zoom aren't real ways to communicate. If we need to have everyone come in together and participate, hey, communication is a key to success. If we need to better our collaboration we will. I think we already are doing that. I feel good about where we're going after this disappointing season."

One of Bloom's trusted front office leaders says, "Our goal is to study the Dodgers." Mookie Betts ain't walking back through the Jersey Street door. But they can get back to what drove that 2008 team to 108 regular season wins, a team that took the field in Game 5 with six of its eight position players developed within the organization, bolstered by a starting pitcher and

designated hitter signed as top-of-the-market free agents. It isn't Tampa. It's Boston, where the Red Sox won the very first World Series, the Fenway Sports Group has been valued at \$5.8 billion and has been rumored to be interested in buying the Washington Commanders, who nearly 90 years ago were moved from Boston to Washington by a group that included Samuel (Bo) Bregman, whose great-grandson was the Astros third baseman when they earned Dusty Baker his first managerial ring, and eliminated the Red Sox the year before when they were two games from the World Series.

Culture matters.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

In honor of the Cy Young Award this week, two questions for the price of one.

11 pitchers have won 3 or more Cy Young awards. 4 left handers and 7 right handers. All starters. Two won their first in the 1960's, two won their first in the 1970's, one won his first in the 1980's, the rest after 1990. How many of the 11 can you name?

Most career Cy Young awards:

7 - Roger Clemens

5 - Randy Johnson

4 - Steve Carlton, Greg Maddux

3 – Clayton Kershaw, Sandy Koufax, Pedro Martinez, Jim Palmer, Max Scherzer, Tom Seaver, Justin Verlander

Rangers, Rockies have never had a Cy Young winner

This year Sandy Alcantara became the first Marlins winner. Expos (Pedro Martinez), Nationals (Max Scherzer), Reds (Trevor Bauer) each have had only one pitcher win.

Six teams have had two (and only two) pitchers win the Cy Young. Can you name the 12 pitchers?

Angels	1964 and 2005	Dean Chance, Bartolo Colon
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Cardinals	1968 & 1970, 2005	Bob Gibson, Chris Carpenter
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Diamondbacks	1999, 2000, 2001 & 2002, 2006	Randy Johnson, Brandon Webb
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Giants	1967, 2008 & 2009	Mike McCormick, Tim Lincecum
Mariners	1995, 2010	Randy Johnson, Felix Hernandez
Pirates	1960, 1990	Vern Law, Doug Drabek

BONUS TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER

13 players

Played for only one MLB team

Are not in the Hall of Fame

Hit 200+ HRs

All of them played in 1970 or later

Angels, Brewers, Mets, Nationals, Phillies, Red Sox, Rockies, Tigers, 2 Twins, 3 Yankees.

Ryan Howard	Phillies	382
Todd Helton	Rockies	369
Ryan Braun	Brewers	352
Tim Salmon	Angels	299
Kent Hrbek	Twins	293
Bernie Williams	Yankees	287
Ryan Zimmerman	Nationals	284
Jorge Posada	Yankees	275
Bob Allison	Twins	258
Lou Whitaker	Tigers	244
David Wright	Mets	242
Don Mattingly	Yankees	222
Rico Petrocelli	Red Sox	210

HOUSEKEEPING

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The Athletic

Baseballroundtable.com

Bleacher report

Boston Globe

Mlb.com

The New York Times

Joe Posnanski newsletter

Joe Sheehan newsletter

Sports Illustrated

Please check them out and support them.