

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

12.18.2022

Good morning baseball fans,

The free agent dollars just keep on flowing. Funny what \$11 Billion in revenues will do for an industry.

This week those long free agent contracts, **Scott Hatteberg** hit into a triple play and hit a grand slam in the same game, **Old Hoss Radbourn** and a season on the mound—60 wins, 73 complete games, 678 2/3 innings pitched. Grab some coffee and also enjoy miscellaneous stuff and trivia.

If you find yourself in mid-cost Maine any of the next three Wednesdays, I will be hosting sports trivia at the Newcastle Publick House at 6 pm. Sadly, no ESPN or web-simulcast.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Two for the price of one.

Five teams had two or more players hit 150+ HRs each during the 1970's. Name the teams and hitters.

1959-1999 8 managers won 2 or more World Series over these 40 years. Name them.

Dodgers 1959-63-65 Dodgers

Pirates 1960, 1971

Yankees 1961-62

Reds 1975-76, Tigers 1984

Dodgers 1981, 1988

Twins 1987, 1991

Blue Jays 1992-93

Yankees 1996-98-99

(Answers at the bottom)

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Reading Joe Posnanski's The Baseball 100, which this newsletter included excerpts from last year. One man's opinion on the best 100 players of all time—a fun read. I'll be dropping interesting things into miscellaneous stuff in the coming weeks.

A couple of this week's favorites:

Only twice has a player had 200 singles in a season. **Ichiro Suzuki** with an insane 225 singles in 2004, and Ichiro in 2007. He led the league in singles 10 years in a row.

As mentioned here before, hit .300, scored 100 runs, drove in 100 runs, walked 100 times for 7 straight years. Not Bonds or Mays, Mantle or Trout, Williams or Joe D. Only **Willie McCovey**.

Yes they are still pissed in Boston

A few lingering thoughts on **Xander Bogaerts** departure from the Boston Globe and others.

The massive offer that brought Bogaerts to San Diego came to be only because of the Red Sox' special combination of arrogance and negligence. They were so misguided in their pathetic desperation to win the deal that they lost a player who should have been a Red Sox for life.

Don't be suckered by the outcome and the jackpot. Don't give them the excuse. The Red Sox had months to keep Xander Bogaerts. Imagine if they'd had the sense to try.

The Sox had 2.6 million attend games at Fenway, the lowest turnout in a non-COVID year in the 21-year history of the current ownership group. The Giants — in their first season following the retirement of franchise icon **Buster Posey** — had 2.5 million fans, their worst attendance in a full-capacity year in the history of Oracle Park. "Whose jersey are they going to wear at our games?" wondered one Giants official.

The Giants made a concerted effort to answer that question this offseason, pursuing a star to upgrade their roster and capture the imaginations of their fans. They made a hard run at Bay Area native Judge and then, after he re-signed with the Yankees, pivoted to Correa with a 13-year, \$350 million deal.

Meanwhile, the Sox didn't come close to re-signing Xander Bogaerts and there is nothing close to a deal to extend **Rafael Devers**. Oh, and they charge the highest average seat price in all of baseball.

To be fair, another point of view from Joe Posnanski's newsletter:

Contract: 11 years, \$280 million through 2033.

How it looks in 2022: I hate that the Red Sox did not re-sign Bogaerts. I hate that they didn't make a particularly good effort to re-sign him. I hate that they let **Mookie Betts** go. I hate that they seem ready to do the same thing with Rafael Devers. I hate that their ownership group seems ready to cash in their ticket. I hate all of it.

That said — was this a good deal for the Padres? I hope so, because like so many of these players, I like Bogaerts a lot ... but I don't really believe it. He's a hit-first shortstop — his defense has been fairly shaky through the years — and he has pretty extreme home/away splits.

Xander in Fenway Park: .312/.375/.497, 165 doubles, 89 homers.

Xander everywhere else: .271/.338/.420, 143 doubles, 67 homers.

Now, he will be playing 81 games in one of the toughest hitters' ballparks in baseball? I don't particularly love the probabilities.

Bobby Ojeda just turned 65. Signed by the Red Sox in 1978 as an undrafted free agent, Ojeda threw 718 innings for the Red Sox — fifth most by a lefty in the last 50 years — before getting dealt to the Mets for **Calvin Schiraldi** prior to the 1986 season, a trade that loomed large when the Mets beat the Red Sox in the World Series that year, with New York winning both games started by Ojeda (including Game 6, in which Schiraldi took the blown save and loss).

Carlos Correa got the fourth-largest guarantee in MLB history behind **Mike Trout** (\$426.5 million), **Mookie Betts** (\$365 million) and **Aaron Judge** (\$360 million). It's the most guaranteed money for a shortstop, surpassing **Francisco Lindor's** \$341 million.

Trea Turner is the third shortstop to hit at least 100 home runs and steal at least 200 bases over his first eight seasons. He is joined by **Hanley Ramírez** (158 HR, 237 SB) and **Jimmy Rollins** (114 HR, 248 SB).

Red Sox signed free agent relief pitcher **Kenley Jansen**. Interesting to read Jansen is 8th in all-time saves:

Mariano Rivera	652
Trevor Hoffman	601
Lee Smith	478
Francisco Rodriguez	437
John Franco	424
Billy Wagner	422
Craig Kimbrel	394
Kenley Jansen	391

Gerrit Cole and **Carlos Rodón** each struck out more than 200 batters in 2022. The last pair of Yankees to fan 200 in the same season--**Mike Mussina** (214) and **Roger Clemens** (213) in 2001.

So you want to get yourself a great holiday gift? Here you go

<https://fineartamerica.com/shop/shower+curtains/baseball+card>

1,862 to choose from. I always wanted a **Thurman Munson** shower curtain.

Mlbtraderumors.com is a source worth skimming once a day. In less than two minutes you can come upon interesting stuff. It had a piece on how teams are trying to give more years at lower AAV to deal with tax tiers.

But it also made an interesting point on how teams value starters-- Cole, Strasburg, Price, Kershaw, Scherzer and Grienke had all had multiple seasons with 200+ innings pitched prior to inking their megadeals; **Carlos Rodón** has never gotten to that level. Workload for starting pitchers continues to dwindle, though, and it stands to reason teams will increasingly value per-inning performance while weighing workload volume less as expectations for pitcher roles change.

According to ESPN's free-agent tracker, 16 percent of the free agents who signed contracts of \$50 million or more from 2006 to 2021 stayed with their own clubs. You might guess Scott Boras clients changed teams more often, but at 14 percent he kept players with their clubs at

nearly the same rate. Four of Boras' 28 free agents in that period — **Alex Rodriguez, Matt Holliday, Chris Davis and Stephen Strasburg** — stayed put.

Looking back on some 2022 highlights:

Mets were HBP 112 times last season—most for a team since 1897.

Dodgers were first team since 2001 Mariners to lead majors in runs scored and fewest runs allowed—a -334 run differential.

Astros were first bullpen in history to throw 40+ post season innings with an ERA under 1.00.

Spencer Strider of the Braves reached 200K in 130 IP, fastest for a rookie ever breaking **Randy Johnson's** record.

Vaughan Grissom of the Braves youngest ever to hit HR and steal a base in MLB debut.

Harrison Bader became the third Yankee centerfielder to hit 3 HRs in a post-season—**Mickey Mantle and Bernie Williams**.

Austin Nola (Padres) and **Aaron Nola** (Phillies) first brothers ever to face each other in post-season.

JULIO FRANCO, THE AGELESS ONE

in 2005, the 47-year-old professional hitter signed a two-year deal to play for the New York Mets. Yes, a few years before he hit the half-century mark and two years before he became a rare, baseball-playing grandpa, Franco was still in a Major League Baseball uniform. The man who played with **Pete Rose and Tug McGraw** would now be on a team with **David Wright and Jose Reyes** -- two stars who weren't even born when Franco made his debut in 1982.

Franco had already been in the league for 20 seasons, appeared in 2,377 games and compiled 2,521 hits. He had a batting title way back in 1991, three All-Star appearances, five Silver Sluggers and a career .299/.366/.419 slash line. Those numbers don't include extremely successful stints in Korea, Japan and the Mexican League (he hit .423 and .437 during two separate seasons in Mexico in his early 40s). And he had amazingly kept that consistency going during his age-40 seasons, putting up a .292/.365/.428 slash line from 2001-05 for the Braves.

He became part of the oldest-batter-vs-oldest-pitcher homer when he clobbered this **Randy Johnson** pitch into the D-backs' pool.

He became the oldest player to hit a home run with this shot off the Padres in April 2006.

He also became the oldest regularly appearing player to steal a base at the age of 48 during a game in 2007. He's the oldest to pinch-run, hit a grand slam and holds pretty much every other "oldest to" record you can think of.

The 49-year-old was released and signed by the Braves in July 2007, finishing his MLB career with, what else, an RBI single.

FUN FACTS FROM BASEBALL-ALMANAC.COM

You should check out this interesting website. Baseball Almanac is an interactive baseball encyclopedia with 543,993 pages of in-depth baseball facts, original baseball research and baseball statistics.

Their mission-- one-stop shopping for facts, statistics, and trivia on professional baseball. Organized by categories such as all-star games, awards, fabulous feats, famous firsts, hall of fame, player stats, record book and year in review, the site also features current baseball news and 'Today in Baseball History' notes. All of the information on the Baseball Almanac site itself is free. This is a useful site both for baseball fanatics as well as for those just wanting to check a fact or brush up on their baseball knowledge.

The following tidbits were pulled from just one of the site's pages.

4/23/2000 **Bernie Williams** and **Jorge Posada** both hit a home run from each side of the plate during the same game making this the first game where two players have switch-hit home runs.

8/27/2000 The Anaheim Angels became the first American League team with at least four players that have at least thirty home runs each: **Troy Glaus**, **Garret Anderson**, **Mo Vaughn**, and **Tim Salmon**.

9/23/2000 **Luis Gonzalez** became the first player to hit a homerun into two bodies of water. On this day he hit a homer into McCovey Cove in San Francisco. In April of 2000 he hit one into the pool in Bank One Ballpark in Phoenix.

10/26/2000 **Derek Jeter** of the New York Yankees became the first player to receive the All-Star Most Valuable Player Award AND the World Series Most Valuable Player Award during the same season.

8/06/2001 **Scott Hatteberg** of the Boston Red Sox became the first player to hit into a triple play and hit a grand slam during the same game.

- 8/23/2001 **Randy Johnson** of the Arizona Diamondbacks became the first pitcher in Major League history to strike out three-hundred batters in four consecutive seasons.
- 9/25/2001 **Jeromy Burnitz** and **Richie Sexson** of the Milwaukee Brewers became the first teammates ever to hit three home runs each during the same game.
- 9/27/2001 **Lance Berkman** of the Houston Astros hit his 50th double of the season making him the first switch-hitter with at least thirty home runs (he hit his 30th on August 12, 2001) and fifty doubles during the same season.
- 10/28/2001 **Matt Williams** became the first player to hit a home run with three different teams in the World Series. He hit home runs with the San Francisco Giants in 1989, the Cleveland Indians in 1997, and the Diamondbacks in 2001.
- 2001 At the end of the 2001 season, the Milwaukee Brewers became the first team ever with more strikeouts than hits. They had 1,399 strikeouts and 1,378 hits. **Jose Hernandez** led the team with 185 whiffs.
- 5/02/2002 **Mike Cameron** and **Bret Boone** became the first teammates in Major League history to both hit two home runs during the same inning, connecting back-to-back twice in Seattle's 10-run first against the Chicago White Sox.
- 8/31/2002 The **New York Mets** lose their 13th straight game at home in August making them the first National League team to go winless at home during a month in which they hosted at least 10 games.
- 9/22/2002 Chicago Cubs first baseman **Fred McGriff** became the first major leaguer to hit 30 homers in a season with five different teams (Blue Jays, Padres, Braves, Devil Rays, Cubs) when he homered versus Pittsburgh as a Cubbie.
- 4/2/2003 **Todd Zeile** hit a first inning solo homer - this time as a member of the New York Yankees - making him the first modern player to hit a home run for ten different ballclubs.
- 5/12/2005 The 2005 regular season opened with the first ever pair of seventy-plus-year-old managers — **Frank Robinson** of the Washington Nationals and **Jack McKeon** of the Florida Marlins. On May 12, **Felipe Alou** turned 70, joined Robinson & McKeon, and made it a first time Major League trio.
- 7/10/2007 During the 2007 All-Star Game, **Ichiro Suzuki** recorded the first inside-the-park home run in All-Star history on a fifth-inning drive off Padres hurler **Chris Young**. The 87 mile per hour pitch was the first thrown by Young to Ichiro who drove it into the quirky, yet charming, right-field wall at AT&T Park, then circled the bases.

With his 14-3 win over Philadelphia, **Greg Maddux** became the first pitcher in 8/24/2007 Major League history to win ten games in twenty consecutive seasons, eclipsing **Cy Young's** nineteen season streak from 1891 to 1909.

SENIOR HURLER SUCCESS

Justin Verlander will be 40 when he debuts with the Mets. Here are some age 40 and up success on the mound performances.

Roger Clemens, 2005 (Astros)

Age: 42

Clemens won the Cy Young Award one year earlier at the age of 41, but we're instead highlighting his 2005 season. Sure, he was brilliant in '04, going 18-4 with a 2.98 ERA and 218 strikeouts, but he was even better at the age of 42.

After all, Clemens posted a Major League-best 1.87 ERA over 32 starts while helping lead Houston to the AL pennant. He's the oldest pitcher to ever post a sub-2.00 ERA -- and the only AL/NL pitcher with a lower ERA after even turning 40 is Cy Young, who put up a 1.26 ERA in 1908 at the age of 41. Clemens finished third in NL Cy Young voting in 2005, checking in behind a pair of 20-game winners in **Chris Carpenter** (21-5, 2.83 ERA) and **Dontrelle Willis** (22-10, 2.63).

Incredibly, Clemens had a 2.99 ERA in five seasons after turning 40 years old. He went 61-33 during those five years while averaging 27 starts per season and putting up a 146 ERA+.

Randy Johnson, 2004 (D-backs)

Age: 40

After winning four consecutive NL Cy Young Awards from 1999-2002, it had appeared as if age might finally be catching up with Johnson in an injury-plagued 2003 campaign. He struggled out of the gate while attempting to pitch through a right knee injury that ultimately required surgery and sidelined the Big Unit for nearly three months. Even upon his return, Johnson wasn't his usual self, finishing with a 4.26 ERA in 18 starts, all while celebrating his 40th birthday that September.

Any concerns were quickly put to rest the following season. Johnson tossed a two-hit shutout in his third start of the year, then topped it with a 13-strikeout perfect game on May 18. By the time all was said and done, he had racked up 290 strikeouts over 245 2/3 innings while recording a 2.60 ERA in 35 starts. No other 40-year-old pitcher has had more than 218 K's -- let alone 290 -- since the turn of the century.

Johnson narrowly missed out on his sixth Cy Young Award, finishing instead as the runner-up to ... a 41-year-old Clemens.

Nolan Ryan, 1987 (Astros)

Age: 40

Ryan pitched seven seasons after turning 40 years old -- and we could have made an entire separate list out of his individual performances. When trying to narrow it down to his best post-40 season, you could pick 1989 when he racked up 301 strikeouts at the age of 42 (the only 300-K season by a pitcher in his 40s). You could go with '90, when he threw his sixth career no-hitter at the age of 43. Or one year later, when he tossed his seventh and final no-hitter en route to holding opponents to a .172 average in '91 at the age of 44.

But instead, we'll zero in on Ryan's 1987 campaign. Don't be fooled by his 8-16 record -- he was utterly dominant all season. Ryan had an NL-best 2.76 ERA and a Major League-leading 270 strikeouts. He also led the Majors in opponents' batting average (.200) and strikeout-to-walk ratio (3.1). And at a time when a pitcher's win-loss record was valued perhaps above all else, Ryan still managed to finish tied for fifth in NL Cy Young voting. With his same metrics, he likely would have won the honor in '87 if pitchers were evaluated then the way they are today.

Bartolo Colon, 2013 (Athletics)

Age: 40

Colon's sudden resurgence at the age of 40 was made all the more impressive by the fact that it had appeared his career was winding down as early as 2006. After going 21-8 with a 3.48 ERA and winning the 2005 AL Cy Young Award with the Angels, Colon went just 1-5 with a 5.11 ERA while making only 10 starts in an injury-plagued '06 campaign. He made only 37 starts over the next three seasons from 2007-09 -- and put up a 5.20 ERA in the process -- before missing the entire '10 campaign after undergoing surgery to repair lingering shoulder issues.

Colon put up respectable numbers upon his return, going 18-19 with a 3.72 ERA over 53 outings from 2011-12, but he turned back the clock in '13. The right-hander went 18-6 with a 2.65 ERA over 30 starts, while leading the Majors with three shutouts. Colon finished sixth in AL Cy Young voting -- and made his first All-Star appearance since his Cy Young-winning '05 season.

Phil Niekro, 1979

Age: 40

Like Ryan, Niekro pitched deep into his 40s -- and turned in some decent performances across multiple seasons. Relying on his legendary knuckleball, Niekro put up volume numbers in 1979 that will absolutely never be seen again, regardless of age. He led the NL in wins (21) ... and losses (20). Niekro pitched a ridiculous 342 innings across 44 starts -- and he tossed a complete game in 23 of those 44 outings. All of those numbers led the Majors -- and no pitcher has made that many starts or logged as many innings in a season since.

Niekro was rewarded for his durability by finishing sixth in NL Cy Young voting and even garnering a share of MVP votes. He also won a Gold Glove Award. In fact, the Hall of Famer earned four of his five Gold Gloves and made two of his five All-Star appearances after turning 40 years old.

Honorable mention: *Warren Spahn (1962), Dennis Martinez (1995), Tom Seaver (1985), Kenny Rogers (2005), Jamie Moyer (2003), John Smoltz (2007), David Wells (2003)*

JOE SHEEHAN EXPLAINS WHY CONTRACTS ARE BEING STRUCTURED THE WAY THEY ARE

Subscription link for his excellent newsletter below.

With **Carlos Rodon** signing with the Yankees yesterday, most of the top free agents are off the board before Hanukkah, a change from the last couple of fractured winters. The last two off seasons aren't fair comparisons, of course, but a look back four years shows that by today's date, just two of the top ten free agents had signed. Six wouldn't sign until after the new year, with the top two, **Manny Machado and Bryce Harper**, not signing until camps opened!

The speed with which so much talent has come off the market is just one of many different things about this winter. In a shock to the system, three players have received deals running at least 11 years, with Carlos Correa matching Bryce Harper for the longest free-agent deal in history at 13 years. After a stretch in which teams seemed to be avoiding making commitments to players past 36 or 37, we now have the Giants locking up Correa, the Phillies signing **Trea Turner** and the Padres committing to **Xander Bogaerts** through the players' 40-year-old seasons.

I'll admit to some surprise. With contracts like **Trevor Bauer's** (three years, \$102 million), **Max Scherzer's** (3/130) and **Carlos Correa's** with the Twins (3/105), I thought the trend would be to pay higher annual salaries over shorter periods of time. Teams are flush with cash from all of baseball's various revenue streams, and as good as we are at projecting player performance, the error bars render those projections mostly guesses past a few years out. Not all players would want to maximize AAV, and not all teams would find these deals attractive, but this is where I expected compensation to go.

Long contracts have been a feature since the beginning of free agency. In that first wild winter of 1976, the then-Indians signed **Wayne Garland**, off a breakout season, to a ten-year contract. Garland had just five years left in his career. A year later the Rangers inked **Richie Zisk** to a ten-year deal. Zisk lasted six more seasons in the majors. The Yankees' signing of **Dave Winfield** to a

ten-year contract was more successful from a baseball standpoint; it went bad in another way. Contracts of five and six years were common in those first few years of free agency, often to older players who were very likely to decline.

Collusion, the catch-all term for a three-year period in the 1980s in which teams conspired to limit competition for free agents, was about saving money and regaining control. More than that, though, it was about limiting contract length. Egged on by Peter Ueberroth and a mountain of research into how players getting long-term deals performed, teams were encouraged to offer contracts of no longer than three years to even the best free agents.

In the offseason before collusion, players such as **Ed Whitson, Rick Sutcliffe, and Bruce Sutter** signed deals of at least five years. For the next three years, under collusion, those contracts simply did not exist, not even for superstars like **Kirk Gibson, Carlton Fisk, and Tim Lincecum**. Once collusion came to an end, teams didn't even pretend to stick to their guns: **Rickey Henderson and Roger Clemens** soon signed four-year deals, **Jose Canseco** a five-year deal, and it was business as usual once again. Collusion's most concrete effect was to eliminate long-term contracts for a few years.

Eventually, a better understanding of how players age would alter teams' approach to long-term deals, without resorting to violating the CBA, especially to players already in their thirties. As I wrote earlier this year...

"Baseball is increasingly a young man's game, with older hitters at the most risk of no longer keeping up with modern pitching. In the entire league last year, there were 14 hitters 31 or older who were worth three wins. There were 23 in 2021, 12 in 2019, nine in 2018. (I'm guessing that 2021 figure has something to do with the pandemic, maybe with young players' development being hurt in 2020.) [...] In 2022, there were five players 33 and older who were worth three wins. There were eight last year, ten in 2019, five in 2018.

"Your eyes may be blurring at this point, so let me sum up that paragraph for you: It's very hard to be a good player in your thirties in modern baseball."

So it's against that backdrop that a number of teams have signed free agents through their age 39 and age 40 seasons this winter. Why the sudden desire to run back the early days of free agency at a moment when the aging curve is breaking hard against older players?

There's no one factor. Over at FanGraphs, Ben Clemens makes a convincing argument that rising interest rates are driving these offers, as it makes financial sense to stretch contract commitments well into the future. Baseball has just had its first unencumbered season since 2019, driving revenues up to \$11 billion, with more to come. We were always going to get a hot market after two years of the pandemic affecting teams' decisions.

Me, I think the players available this winter, and you can fold recent contracts for Bryce Harper, Manny Machado, and **Corey Seager** in here as well, are the biggest factor. Judge aside, these long deals have been going to younger free agents and/or free agents with broad skill sets who play key defensive positions. No player is a great bet to be productive at 38, but if you have to bet on ones who might do so, it's athletic ones who generate value in all aspects of the game. That's Trea Turner and Carlos Correa and, squinting a little, Xander Bogaerts.

Mostly, though, it's the new CBA. It lifted the tax thresholds, giving teams more room to spend without incurring penalties, and gave the biggest spenders more room before triggering higher tax rates. Take the Phillies as an example. Their last pre-pandemic payroll was \$192 million, about \$14 million below the first tax threshold. Their 2023 payroll is currently projected at \$231 million, but that is still a couple million under the threshold. The Padres are projected to spend \$254 million on players in 2023; that would have put them over the third tax threshold under the last CBA, with marginal tax rates of 32% and 62.5% on some of that overage. Today, the Padres are just barely over the second threshold and could slip under it with some moves.

That change explains an increase in spending, but not the growth in long deals. No, for that you have to see just how punitive the tax system -- which isn't just a financial one -- has become, how effective it has been as a deterrent. Repeater penalties persist, with the base rates rising from 20% to 30% and then 50% for each consecutive year a team is over the threshold. A team that exceeds the luxury-tax threshold and loses a qualifying free agent gets a lower pick as compensation. A team that exceeds the luxury-tax threshold and signs a qualifying free agent...

...will lose its second- and fifth-highest selections in the following year's Draft, as well as \$1 million from its international bonus pool for the upcoming signing period. If such a team signs

multiple qualifying-offer free agents, it will forfeit its third- and sixth-highest remaining picks as well.

The language we use to discuss this system is dated, stemming from the 1980-81 negotiations that created the first compensation structure. The system's primary goal, though, is no longer compensatory: It's punitive. It is creating punishments in the draft, in the international market, and in direct payments for exceeding the tax threshold. Teams have incentives to stay below the threshold that go well beyond the money it will cost them. The money is, truly, the least of the penalties at this point.

So teams now have the strongest incentives in a long time to minimize AAV. There was a time they did so to keep short-term expenditures down, a time before massive national and local television deals made next year's cash flow a non-issue. Now, they want to keep AAV down as a means of keeping the payroll from interfering with their ability to operate in the amateur talent markets.

So despite four deals of at least \$280 million being signed this month, just one of them -- Aaron Judge's -- cracks the top 25 all time for AAV. Correa is actually taking a \$9 million pay cut next year from his 2022 salary of \$35 million.

Now, these deals are long, but by baseball standards none of them are truly out of line. The Angels signed **Albert Pujols** through age 41. The Tigers signed **Miguel Cabrera** to an extension through age 40. **Mike Trout and Mookie Betts** are signed through age 39. As mentioned above, there's a long history, in our game, of giving players long-term deals both out of optimism and as a means of controlling yearly salaries. The deals signed by Correa, Turner, and Bogaerts are nothing like, say, the contract Ilya Kovalchuk signed with the NHL's New Jersey Devils in 2010, a 17-year contract that would have kept Kovalchuk tied to the Devils through age 44, and at just \$550,000 a year for the final five years. That was blatant manipulation of contract length designed to lower a cap hit and without much expectation that the player would play out the full deal. The contract was voided by the league and the Devils were eventually fined for their actions.

No, what the Padres, Phillies and Giants have done is a difference of degree rather than kind, motivated by a CBA that provides considerable incentives to add years and lower AAV, in the context of high interest rates, for players who at least have some hope of providing value late into their baseball lives. It all makes sense.

Web: <http://www.joesheehan.com>

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

10 pitchers won the Cy Young in their free agent walk season.

Justin Verlander 2022 Astros. Turned it into big bucks from the Mets

Robbie Ray 2021 Blue Jays. 13-7. 2.48 era, 248 K's. Signed with Seattle for 5 years/\$115 million.

Trevor Bauer 2020 Reds. Led NL with 1.73 era before signing with the Dodgers.

Roger Clemens 2004 Astros. Won his 7th Cy Young in Houston, re-signed with the Astros.

John Smoltz 1996 Braves. Led majors with 276 K's. re-signed with Atlanta for 4 years/\$31 million.

Greg Maddux 1992 Cubs. 1st of four straight Cy Young awards as he took his excellence to Atlanta.

Mark Davis 1989 Padres. Led majors with 44 saves with 1.85 era. Jumped to Kansas City for 4 years/\$13 million.

Rick Sutcliffe 1984 Cubs. Traded mid-season from the Indians, Sutcliffe went 16-1 in Chicago, re-signed for 5 years.

Catfish Hunter, 1974 A's. Led AL with 2.49 era. Declared a free agent over contract language fight, signed with Yankees.

LONGEST FREE AGENT DEALS

Mlb.com

Bargain or bust? Three of the longest contracts have been signed this month. How do you think the back end of these deals will be judged?

Carlos Correa, SS, Giants: 13 years, \$350 million (2023-2035)

Julio Rodríguez, CF, Mariners: 13 years, \$210 million (2023-2035)

Fernando Tatis Jr., SS, Padres: 14 years, \$340 million (2021-2034)

Xander Bogaerts, SS, Padres: 11 years, \$280 million (2023-33)

Trea Turner, SS, Phillies: 11 years, \$300 million (2023-33)

Mookie Betts, OF, Dodgers: 12 years, \$365 million (2021-2032)
Wander Franco, SS, Rays: 11 years, \$182 million (2022-32)
Bryce Harper, OF, Phillies: 13 years, \$330 million (2019-31)
Francisco Lindor, SS, Mets: 10 years, \$341 million (2022-31)
Corey Seager, SS, Rangers: 10 years, \$325 million (2022-31)
Mike Trout, OF, Angels: 10 years, \$360 million (2021-30)
Manny Machado, 3B, Padres: 10 years, \$300 million (2019-28)
Giancarlo Stanton, OF, Marlins: 13 years, \$325 million (2015-27)
Robinson Canó, 2B, Mariners: 10 years, \$228.26 million (2014-23)
Joey Votto, 1B, Reds: 10 years, \$225 million (2014-23)
Albert Pujols, 1B, Angels: 10 years, \$240 million (2012-21)
Alex Rodriguez, 3B, Yankees: 10 years, \$275 million (2008-17)
Derek Jeter, SS, Yankees: 10 years, \$189 million (2001-10)
Alex Rodriguez, SS, Rangers: 10 years, \$252 million (2001-10)
Dave Winfield, OF, Yankees: 10 years, \$23 million (1981-90)
Richie Zisk, OF, Rangers: 10 years, \$2.75 million (1978-1987)
Wayne Garland, RHP, Indians: 10 years, \$2.3 million (1977-1986)

60 WINS IN A SEASON? OLD HOSS WAS ONE OF A KIND

Michael Clair, mlb.com



When you look at **Old Hoss Radbourn's** numbers, you can't believe they're real: 60 wins in a single season. Back-to-back seasons with over 600 innings pitched -- topping out at 678 $\frac{2}{3}$. Four hundred and fortyone strikeouts in one summer. Surely this couldn't be *baseball* ... could it? And while there were several notable rule changes that happened during and after Radbourn's career that meant we would never see a pitcher like this again -- he started his career when he could throw underhand and toss from a large pitcher's "box," to name but a few -- there's a reason that his performance still astonishes us today. Nobody -- even in the 1880s -- was doing what Old Hoss did.

If you know the name already, you're either an early baseball scholar and devotee, or you know of the secretive person (or, I suppose, ghost) who runs the popular Twitter account, @OldHossRadbourn. It gave a viral voice to this irascible, irritable, old son of a gun who looked down upon modern players who wouldn't *dare* try to pitch 73 complete games in a single season, drinking whiskey at every step along the way. As funny as it is, it's also probably a fair summation of just who Radbourn may have been.

As we celebrate what would have been his 167th birthday, let's dive a little deeper into Old Hoss' career.

The early years

Born on Dec. 11, 1854, as Charles Gardner Radbourn (sometimes spelled "Radbourne"), he never grew up dreaming of becoming a baseball player ... because pro baseball wouldn't be invented until he was 15 years old. Instead, Radbourn -- whose family had moved to

Bloomington, Ill., -- first worked as a butcher with his father and then as a brakeman for the IB&W Railroad.

Soon, his natural skills on the diamond stood out, though. He began pitching for the local Bloomington nine before moving on to play for Dubuque, Iowa, in 1879 for the whopping sum of \$450 for the season. Of course, there was a little kerfuffle while he was in Bloomington, with charges that Radbourn had thrown a game in exchange for \$25. True to Radbourn's ways, he admitted that while he may have agreed to the sum that night, he was also drunk and therefore "was not responsible for his words."

It's in Iowa when the legends begin -- even though he wasn't a starting pitcher just yet. [According to his SABR biography](#), he was the team's second baseman, outfielder and change pitcher. (These were the days when you couldn't bring in a new player. So, if a pitcher tired out, you would swap him with someone else in the field.)

Radbourn once made 15 putouts in a single game while playing the keystone, and when he pitched against the Major League White Stockings in an exhibition, he completely befuddled the hitters. Cap Anson later said, "In my fifteen years as premier batsman of the game, I never faced a pitcher who baffled me more completely with his curves than did Radbourn on the occasion of that memorable game in Dubuque ... I do not hesitate to say that not one of the old school pitchers, or any of the later slabmen, could equal the famous Radbourn."

He made his big league debut after signing with the Buffalo Bisons the following year. Unfortunately, an arm injury kept him from taking the mound, so he started as a position player. After going just 3-for-21 to begin the campaign, the team released him. Radbourn headed back to Bloomington, his future as a baseballer in doubt.

Providence intervenes

Radbourn may have been content to hang 'em up and work as a butcher or perhaps in a tavern as he later would. But then his friend, Bill Hunter -- presumably the same one who would play two games with Louisville in 1884 -- intervened. Hunter sent the Providence Grays a telegram in which he pretended to be Radbourn. He said that if they paid him the same amount as Buffalo had offered the year before, he would sign. So, when Providence agreed to the terms, Hunter did what any good friend would do: He accepted on Radbourn's behalf.

Having been out of baseball for a year, Radbourn wasn't ready -- or pleased -- to return to the sport. So, Hunter paid out of his own pocket for Radbourn to head to Arkansas to get in shape.

That we have any tales to tell about Radbourn today is thanks to the duplicitous and motivating Hunter. The baseball world owes him a debt of gratitude.

The rivalry

After being forced back into baseball, Radbourn quickly became a star with the Grays. He went 25-11 with a 2.43 ERA in a pedestrian (for him) 325 1/3 innings in 1881. The next year, he went 33-19 with a 2.11 ERA and a league-leading six shutouts in 466 innings. (That same year, while playing right field, Radbourn ended one of the greatest games in baseball history by smashing a walk-off home run in the 18th inning to defeat the Red Stockings, 1-0.)

1883 saw him take it to a whole new level. Radbourn went 48-25 with a 2.05 ERA in 632 1/3 innings. And then, 1884 came -- the year that Radbourn set records that no one will ever touch.

Now, plenty of rivalries in sports history have led players to new heights. There's Messi vs. Ronaldo. Michael Jordan vs. well, everybody. **Randy Johnson and Curt Schilling** were teammates and rivals, and their heated one-upmanship helped lead the D-backs to the 2001 World Series championship. That's apparently the kind of relationship that Radbourn had with the Grays' other starting pitcher, **Charlie Sweeney**.

Sweeney and Radbourn were a devastating one-two punch in the Grays' rotation in '84, with Sweeney going 17-8 with a 1.55 ERA for Providence to start the season. But Radbourn didn't like the attention Sweeney received or the amount he was paid. Unhappy on the team, things got rough that summer, with Radbourn's play beginning to suffer, too. After losing to Boston, 5-2, on July 16, the Boston Advertiser wrote, "There have been unpleasant reports of the dissatisfaction of Radbourn, pitcher of the Providence club, current for some time. This evening the board of directors of the Providence association decided to summon him to appear before them tomorrow and answer certain questions regarding his conduct for the past three weeks."

But when Sweeney jumped to the St. Louis Maroons of the Union Association later that summer, Radbourn made an offer the Grays couldn't refuse.

"I'll pitch every day and win the pennant for Providence," Radbourn said, "even if it costs me my right arm."

In exchange, the Grays raised his salary, essentially giving him what Sweeney was earning, and handed him another bonus on top of that to ensure the rival league wouldn't also sway him.

From there, Radbourn had perhaps the most remarkable run-in baseball history. The Grays had 51 games left that season and Radbourn started 41 of them. He won 35 games, lost four, and tied once. He won 18 straight games and basically delivered Providence to the pennant all by himself.

In the end, this is what his numbers looked like:

60-12, 1.38 ERA, 75 games, 73 complete games, 678 2/3 innings pitched, 441 strikeouts and a truly absurd 2,672 batters faced. To put that in perspective, the five pitchers on the World Series champion Braves who started the most regular-season games for the team combined to face 2,876 batters in 2021.

1884 Providence Grays

Old Hoss Radbourn 60-12

All other pitchers 24-16-2

End of the line

Perhaps not surprisingly, this season marked the high point of Radbourn's career. Even in this era, when he could throw the ball underhand and velocity wasn't nearly what it is today, that was still a lot of mileage to put on his golden right arm.

"His showing was all the more remarkable and phenomenal when one knows that this great pitcher suffered untold agony in endeavoring to attain the goal for which he worked so hard and so pluckily," manager **Frank Bancroft** said. "Morning after morning upon rising he would be unable to raise his arm high enough to use his hair brush. Instead of quitting he stuck all the harder to his task, going out to the ballpark hours before the rest of the team and beginning to warm up by throwing a few feet and increasing the distance until he could finally throw the ball from the outfield to home plate."

Radbourn remained effective, but never again would he top 600 innings. As his performance waned and his truculent (and perhaps drunken) attitude couldn't be balanced by starting almost every game, the relationship between Radbourn and the Grays soured until he left to pitch for the Boston Beaneaters, the Boston Reds and the Cincinnati Reds before retiring during the 1891 season.

He finished his career with an astonishing record of 310-194 in 4,527 1/3 innings across *just* 11 years -- that's an average of 412 innings per season -- with 1,830 strikeouts. Despite having finished his career 130 years ago in an era when batters didn't strike out anywhere near the rate they do today, Radbourn still ranks 113th all-time in strikeouts.

After retiring, Radbourn went back to Bloomington and did what he probably always wanted to do: He opened a tavern. He called it, simply enough, "Radbourn's Place," with an 1891 advertisement reading, "Best of everything in Wet Goods and Cigars; Base Ball Headquarters." (So, next time you order a drink at a bar, ask for a "wet good." Radbourn would probably like that.)

Sadly, Old Hoss wasn't long for this world. He would pass away only six years later on Feb. 5, 1897, following a hunting accident and other maladies that "lingered on from year to year as disease gnawed at his mental and physical being, robbing him of speech, feeling and locomotion long before the final day arrived."



The hero

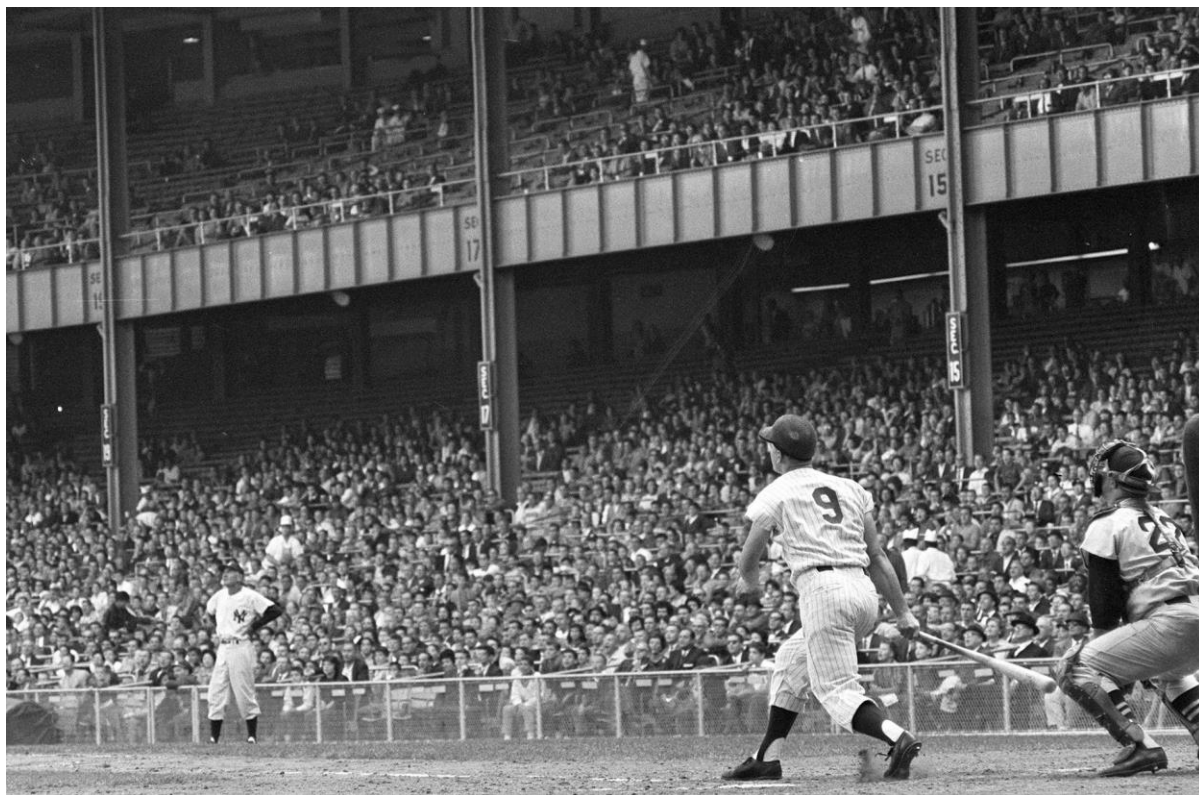
Let's not end on a sad note for one of baseball history's most interesting characters, though. Instead, let's go back to July 12, 1892, when "Old Hoss" showed off some of that fiery courage he displayed on the mound. That evening, a man named George Fletcher brought his family into Bloomington to shop for supplies. While he went inside, Fletcher left his wife and son outside in the carriage when something spooked their horse. As the horse took off running with the carriage behind him, a man dashed out of Radbourn's Place in a white jacket "with the stride of a professional sprinter."

"[L]ike a flash, [he] was at the running horse's head. With his right hand he seized the bit and with his left put a powerful clamp upon the horse's nostrils. The plunging horse dragged the man along with him, and would possibly have gotten away had not the man dexterously turned him so sharply as almost to upset the buggy, thus bringing the animal suddenly almost to a standstill." That man in the white jacket? None other than Radbourn himself, who simply walked back into his tavern and presumably returned to pouring drinks once the action was over.

AND ANOTHER LIST YOU CAN TURN INTO AN AROUND THE BAR QUESTION

Since 1970, 13 times teammates have led their league, finishing 1-2 in extra base hits

Oakland	1973	Sal Bando 64, Reggie Jackson 63
Philadelphia	1975	Mike Schmidt 75, Greg Luzinski 72
Montreal	1982	Andre Dawson 67, Al Oliver 67
Boston	1984	Tony Armas 77, Jim Rice 77
Philadelphia	1986	Mike Schmidt 67, Von Hayes 67
Pittsburg	1992	Barry Bonds 75, Andy Van Slyke 71
San Francisco	1993	Barry Bonds 88, Matt Williams 75
Colorado	1995	Dante Bichette 80, Larry Walker 72
Colorado	1996	Ellis Burks 93, Andres Galarraga 89
Toronto	1999	Shawn Green 87, Carlos Delgado 83
Boston	2004	David Ortiz 91, Manny Ramirez 87
Milwaukee	2012	Ryan Braun 80, Aramis Ramirez 80
Boston	2019	Rafael Devers 90, Xander Bogaerts 85
Atlanta	2022	Austin Riley 79, Matt Olson 78



Oct. 1, 1961. **Roger Maris** hits homer 61 off **Tracy Stallard** of the Red Sox.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Five teams had two or more players hit 150+ HRs each during the 1970's. Name the teams and hitters.

Reds – **Johnny Bench** (290), **George Foster** (197), **Tony Perez** (180), **Joe Morgan** (152)

Red Sox – **Yaz** (202) and **Jim Rice** (172)

Dodgers – **Ron Cey** (163) and **Steve Garvey** (159)

A's – **Reggie Jackson** (177) and **Sal Bando** (152)

Phillies – **Mike Schmidt** (235) and **Greg Luzinski** (204)

Other logical guesses that came up short:

NOT the Pirates – **Willie Stargell** (296) and **Dave Parker**-(122)

NOT the Giants **Bobby Bonds** (119) and **Willie McCovey** (100)

NOT the Braves **Hank Aaron** (179) and **Darrell Evans** (131)

1959-1999 8 managers won 2 or more World Series over these 40 years.

Walter Alston	Dodgers 1959-63-65 Dodgers
Danny Murtaugh	Pirates 1960, 1971
Ralph Houk	Yankees 1961-62
Sparky Anderson	Reds 1975-76, Tigers 1984
Tommy Lasorda	Dodgers 1981, 1988
Tom Kelly	Twins 1987, 1991
Cito Gaston	Blue Jays 1992-93
Joe Torre	Yankees 1996-98-99

Others who managed in multiple World Series in that 40 year window but did not win more than one include **Bobby Cox, Alvin Dark, Whitey Herzog, Red Schoendienst, Earl Weaver and Dick Williams.**

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