

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

12.25.2022

Merry Christmas baseball fans,

I hope Santa was as good to you as he was to Scott Boras.

This week Moe & Moe (**Moe Drabowski and Moe Berg**), 2022 season highlights, first of two pieces on young players from the Dominican Republic, two light hearted pieces (Uniform numbers ranked by WAR and players with holiday names) and trivia.

Pour yourself an eggnog and enjoy.

THIS WEEK’S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Its another two questions for the price of one week.

11 times since 1970 a player has been his league’s MVP and won the World Series.

2018 Red Sox

2017 Astros

2016 Cubs

2012 Giants

1988 Dodgers

1984 Tigers

1983 Orioles

1980 Phillies

1975-76 Reds

1973 A’s

1970 Orioles

Name the 11 players.

Four times since 1900 teammates have finished 1-2 in the majors in hits. **Ty Cobb and Bobby Veach** for the 1919 Tigers. And three more:

2022 Dodgers

1982 Brewers

1965 Reds

Name the six hitters. Answers at the bottom. Good luck.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

We had four free agents this offseason who have won both the MVP and Rookie of the Year award in their careers--**Aaron Judge, Justin Verlander, Cody Bellinger and José Abreu**.

Happy birthday to **Rickey Henderson**. He turned 64 today. Henderson stole more than 50 bases each season from 1980 to '86. That's seven consecutive seasons of 50-plus SB, a standard so unthinkable for modern baseball that you have to completely shift the parameters of your search to find anything mildly, remotely close: In the last *10* seasons, there has been one player with seven *non-consecutive* seasons of more than 25 stolen bases. (That's **Starling Marte—Trea Turner and Jarrod Dyson** are right behind with six such seasons each.) In other words, MLB doesn't have anyone right now who's been even half the base-stealer that Henderson was at the start of his career. (Or the middle or, frankly, the end: It's been over a decade since anyone stole more than 65 bases. Yet Henderson did it at age 39 in '98.) So a happy birthday to the Man of Steal, and may the new year with its new rules, bigger bases and all, bring us more action on the basepaths.

Of the six teams that won the most regular season games in 2022, the Astros went 11–2 in postseason games and the other five (Dodgers, Braves, Mets, Yankees and Cardinals) went 6–16.

Congrats **Aaron Judge** on being named 16th Yankee captain. **Derek Jeter** (12 seasons 2003–2014) served longest tenure as captain of the Yankees.

Highest average ticket price, 12th largest payroll. Boston Red Sox.

Projected 40-man payrolls for 2023:

1. New York Mets, \$384.4 million
2. New York Yankees, \$290 million
3. San Diego Padres, \$267.4 million
4. Philadelphia Phillies, \$231.5 million
5. Toronto Blue Jays, \$231.2 million

Fifty-seven countries and territories have provided at least one Major League player throughout the history of the game.

Dansby Swanson signed with the Cubs for seven years, \$177M on Saturday, officially bringing this year's four-shortstop free-agent class to over one billion dollars (\$1.1B to be exact).

Assuming the Mets carry a \$390 million luxury tax payroll, they'd be spending \$157 million beyond the \$233 million luxury tax threshold — 67 percent beyond the level where teams incur penalties. That's a huge margin — but at least by percentage, not the largest in MLB history.

In 2004, the Yankees spent \$83.4 million beyond the \$120.5 million luxury tax threshold — a payroll that was 69 percent over the line. The Yankees likewise carried a payroll that was 68 percent over the threshold in 2005. More recently, in 2015, the Dodgers carried a \$297.9 million payroll in a year where the threshold was at \$189 million — spending 58 percent beyond the threshold.

RIP **Denny Doyle**, who died Tuesday. He was 78. Doyle came to the Sox in a trade for a player to be named in June 1975, and rode a magic carpet for a half-season in helping the Red Sox win the AL East and advance to the World Series. A career .250/.295/.316 hitter, Doyle hit .310/.339/.429 in 89 games with the Sox that year while playing second, third, and short. He spent two more years with the Sox, playing his last game at age 33 in 1977. He played 4 seasons with the Phillies and 2 with the Angels in addition to his run in Boston.

Boras has owned the offseason, breaking records for his clients and negotiating four nine-figure contracts, including the deals for **Carlos Correa** (13 years, \$350 million), **Xander Bogaerts** (11 years, \$280 million), **Carlos Rodón** (six years, \$162 million) and **Brandon Nimmo** (eight years, \$162 million). He also negotiated the contracts for **Masataka Yoshida, Josh Bell, Taijuan Walker, Sean Manaea, Matthew Boyd, Cody Bellinger, Joey Gallo, J.D. Martinez, Austin Hedges and Michael Brantley**. That's more than \$1.24 billion in new contracts this winter. And by the way, he's still working on deals for free agents such as **Jurickson Profar, Michael Conforto, Zack Britton, Elvis Andrus and Kyle Davies**. Assuming a 5 percent commission rate, that means the Boras Corporation has secured approximately \$62 million in total commissions this offseason.

TALE OF TWO MOE'S

The record for most strikeouts in relief in a World Series game is held by **Moe Drabowsky** (11 K's for the Orioles vs. the Dodgers in Game 1 of the 1966 Fall Classic)

Drabowsky relieved an ineffective **Dave McNally** with the bases loaded and one out in the third inning. Though he walked a batter to let in a run, he finished the inning with the Orioles leading 4–2, and he threw six scoreless innings after it to preserve the Game 1 victory. The Orioles would sweep the Los Angeles Dodgers in four games, making Drabowsky a World Series champion for the first time.

Drabowsky was selected by the Kansas City Royals in the expansion draft after the 1968 season. He won their first game in franchise history and led the AL in wins for relief pitchers, with 11. In 1970, he was traded back to Baltimore, where he won his second World Series, this one against the Reds.

The right hander pitched for the Cubs, Braves, Reds, A's. White Sox and Cardinals. He went 80-105, struck out 1162 in 1641 innings pitched. He threw a no-hitter while pitching for Trinity College in Hartford. In 1958, he gave up **Stan Musial's** 3,000th hit.

MOE BERG: CATCHER AND SPY

Nick Acocella, ESPN.com

"He [Moe Berg] bluffs his way up onto the roof of the hospital, the tallest building in Tokyo at the time. And from underneath his kimono he pulls out a movie camera. He proceeds to take a series of photos panning the whole setting before him, which includes the harbor, the industrial sections of Tokyo, possibly munitions factories and things like that. Then he puts the camera

back under his kimono and leaves the hospital with these films," says Nicholas Dawidoff, a Berg biographer.

Moe Berg has long enjoyed a reputation as the most shadowy player in the history of baseball. Earning more notoriety for being a frontline spy than for being a backup catcher, it is difficult to separate fact from fiction in Berg's undercover career. Just Berg being a spy begs the question: How much of the fiction might have been used as cover?

In 1934, five years before he retired as a player, Berg made his second trip to Japan as part of a traveling major league All-Star team. One might wonder what the seldom-used catcher, a .251 hitter that season, was doing playing with the likes of **Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig**.

Berg, who spoke Japanese, took home movies of the Tokyo skyline that were used in the planning of General Jimmy Doolittle's 1942 bombing raids on the Japanese capital. The U.S. government wrote a letter to Berg, thanking him for the movies. Biographies, magazine articles and word of mouth have elevated this story into the stuff of legend.

The only utility player to be the subject of three biographies, few of his accomplishments came in the batter's box. It was Berg whom St. Louis Cardinals scout Mike Gonzalez was describing when he coined the phrase "good field, no hit" in the early 1920s.

In his 15 major league seasons, in which he played just 662 games, Berg was a lifetime .243 hitter. He started out as a slick-fielding utility infielder before the Chicago White Sox in 1927 moved him to catcher, where he then found his niche as a substitute backstop, filling that role until he retired in 1939.

In only one year did the 6-foot-1, 185-pound Berg appear in more than 100 games; he played in fewer than 50 games in 12 seasons. But he was a brilliant scholar, picking up degrees from Princeton and Columbia Law School and studying philosophy at the Sorbonne.

His linguistic skills inspired this observation by a teammate: "He can speak seven languages, but he can't hit in any of them."

Berg was a hit with people, though. He had a reputation for charm and erudition that brought him introductions to powerful people, such as the Rockefeller family, who ordinarily did not associate with ballplayers.

Morris Berg was born in a cold-water tenement on East 121st Street in Manhattan on March 2, 1902, to Russian-Jewish immigrant parents -- Bernard, a druggist, and Rose. The family moved across the Hudson River to Newark, N.J., in 1906.

At seven, Berg began playing baseball for a Methodist Church team under the pseudonym Runt Wolfe. He later starred at Barringer High School. From there, it was on to Princeton, where he

majored in modern languages and played shortstop on the baseball team. He and a teammate, also a linguist, would communicate on the field in Latin.

After graduating magna cum laude in 1923, Berg was signed by Brooklyn, for whom he played shortstop and batted .186 in 49 games. After spending the winter at the Sorbonne in Paris, he returned to the United States and played two seasons in the minors.

A student at Columbia Law School, in 1926 he joined the White Sox, who had bought his contract from Reading of the International League. Berg became a catcher by accident the next season. In August 1927, after three Chicago receivers were injured in a matter of days, he volunteered for the job.

A deft handler of pitchers and possessor of a rifle arm, by 1929 he was the White Sox's regular catcher. He hit a career-high .288 in 106 games and received two votes in balloting for the American League's Most Valuable Player.

Unfortunately for Berg, the following year in spring training he suffered a knee injury and spent the rest of his career (with the Cleveland Indians, Washington Senators and Boston Red Sox after Chicago) as a bench warmer. When he called it quits at 37, he had just 441 hits in 1,812 at-bats, with only six home runs and 206 runs batted in.

After two years as a Red Sox coach, Berg left baseball on Jan. 14, 1942, the same day his father died. Bernard Berg always regarded his son's choice of a career as a waste of a fine intellect. Moe's love of the game - and of the travel and social hobnobbing it afforded him -- was a matter of contention between them to the end.

It is at this point, just after the start of the United States' entry into World War II, that Berg's life became the subject of much speculation. Nelson Rockefeller gave him a job with the Office of Inter-American Affairs that allowed him to travel through South and Central America studying the health and fitness of the population.

He parlayed that post into becoming an officer in the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA, in 1943.

Berg, according to one biography, was prone to blunders: getting caught trying to infiltrate an aircraft factory during his training, dropping his gun into a fellow passenger's lap, and being recognized by wearing his O.S.S.-issue watch.

Despite these mistakes, Berg was well-regarded enough to have been chosen to carry out one of the O.S.S.' more ambitious endeavors - a plot to possibly assassinate Werner Heisenberg, the head of Nazi Germany's atom-bomb project. Berg, who spoke German fluently, was sent in December 1944 to Zurich to attend a lecture by Heisenberg. Berg's assessment of the situation was that Germany was not close to having a nuclear bomb, and there was never an attempt to kill Heisenberg.

Another story involving Berg's spying career came at the end of the war, when, while traveling through Soviet-occupied Czechoslovakia with some other agents, he produced a letter with a big red star on it when asked for credentials. The Americans lacked any authorization, and supposedly what Berg showed the Soviet soldiers was a copy of the Texaco Oil Co. letterhead.

After being forced out of the spy business in the late forties, Berg didn't hold a regular job. A bachelor, he often freeloaded off friends and relatives, especially his brother Sam, who once sent Moe two eviction notices to get him out of his house. After living with Sam for 17 years, he moved in with his sister Ethel for the final eight years of his life.

To the end, however, Berg remained a dandy.

In 1960, out of financial necessity, he was prepared to break his lifelong silence about his supposed exploits and agreed to write a book. However, the project collapsed when the editor glowingly praised the prospective author's movies on the mistaken assumption that he was about to sign a contract with Moe of The Three Stooges.

Berg died at 70 on May 29, 1972 in Belleville, N.J., of an abdominal aortic aneurysm. Ethel took his ashes to Israel. To this day, no one knows where his remains are buried.

In death, as in life, Moe Berg was a mystery.

TWINS IN SAN FRANCISCO—NOT MINNESOTA

The Giants' bullpen could be double trouble over the next few years.

San Francisco has agreed to a three-year \$33 million contract with left-handed reliever **Taylor Rogers**, a source told MLB.com's Mark Feinsand on Friday.

The team has not confirmed the deal, which is pending a physical.

The deal will reunite Rogers with his twin brother, **Tyler**, who has pitched for the Giants since 2019. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, the Rogers brothers have a chance to become the second set of twins to appear in the same MLB game for the same team. (Johnny and Eddie O'Brien both made appearances for the Pirates on July 31, 1956.) Taylor and Tyler previously pitched in the same game on April 11 this past season, but for different teams -- Taylor for the Padres and Tyler for the Giants.

Taylor and Tyler become the 4th set of twin brothers to be teammates in the majors:

Jose and Ozzie Canseco	1990 Oakland A's
Eddy and Johnny Obrien	1953-58 Pittsburgh Pirates

Joe and Red Shannon

1915 Boston Braves

The last pair of pitching brothers to be teammates in the Major Leagues were **Jeff and Jered Weaver** on the 2006 Angels.

AS THE YEAR WINDS DOWN, A LOOK BACK AT HIGHLIGHTS FROM A VERY ENTERTAINING SEASON

DUSTY

Dusty Baker wins his first World Series as a manager, 40 years after he won as a player with Dodgers. That's the biggest gap ever. He also became the oldest manager to win the WS.

NO-NO

The Astros no-hit the Phillies in World Series Game 4 for the third postseason no-hitter, joining Roy Halladay's in the 2010 NLDS and **Don Larsen's** perfect game in the 1956 World Series.

Cristian Javier, Bryan Abreu, Rafael Montero and Ryan Pressly combined for the Astros' second combined no-hitter of '22. Javier and Pressly became the first pitchers to be part of two combined no-nos in a career, let alone a season -- and they did it by starting and finishing the *same* two no-hitters.

PENA

Astros Rookie **Jeremy Peña** hit .345 with a 1.005 OPS in the postseason, picking up both ALCS and World Series MVP honors along the way. He became the first rookie position player to win World Series MVP. Not covered by those awards was his ALDS Game 3 go-ahead homer in the 18th inning, making him the third rookie with an extra-inning postseason home run, joining Cleveland's **Oscar Gonzalez** in AL Wild Card Game 2 this year and Houston's **Chris Burke** in 2004 NLDS Game 4.

YORDAN

With his ALDS Game 1 walk-off home run, ALDS Game 2 go-ahead drive and World Series Game 6 go-ahead homer, the latter two in the sixth inning, **Yordan Alvarez** entered a list of his own. The second homer on the list made him the only player in postseason history with multiple go-ahead home runs in the sixth or later with his team trailing. That's for a career -- and he ended up with three, all this past postseason.

PHILS

The Phillies were 21-29 through 50 games and ultimately reached the World Series. That's tied for the fourth-worst record through 50 decisions for any team to win a pennant, with the 2003

Marlins. Only the 2005 Astros (18-32), 2019 Nationals (19-31) and 1914 Braves (20-30) won pennants after worse 50-decision starts.

PUJOLS

Albert Pujols entered 2022 with 679 career home runs, returning to St. Louis, where he played the first 11 years of his career, for one last hurrah. He didn't just pass **Alex Rodriguez's** 696 to claim fourth place on the all-time list, he surged to 703 career home runs. Pujols hit 16 homers from Aug. 14 onward, tied with **Aaron Judge and Mike Trout** (more on each of them later) for most in MLB in that span and setting a record for home runs in the final 45 games of a player's career.

BATTERY

Speaking of Cardinals, **Yadier Molina and Adam Wainwright** added to their storied legacy in the backstop's final season. On Sept. 14, the duo made its 325th start as a battery, passing **Mickey Lolich and Bill Freehan** for the most common starting battery since 1900. The two ended '22 with 328 total starts together – setting a high bar for any future pitcher/catcher duos that might dare challenge the St. Louis legends.

JUDGE

Aaron Judge's milestone home run chase provided plenty of captivating moments, especially in the second half. The slugger finished with 62 homers on the season, breaking Roger Maris' American League record of 61 home runs from 1961, and doing so 61 years later. He totaled 11 multi-home run games, tied with **Sammy Sosa** in 1998 and **Hank Greenberg** in 1938 for the most in a single season. Three of his 62 long balls were of the walk-off variety, tying **Mickey Mantle** in 1959 for the most in a single season in Yankees history.

That all translated into a great bet on himself--Judge turned down the Yankees' extension offer of \$213.5 million in March, betting that he'd have a big year and be rewarded with a better contract this offseason. He proceeded to produce arguably the best offensive season in MLB history, logging a .311/.425/.686 slash line with 28 doubles, 62 home runs, 133 runs scored, 131 RBIs, 111 walks, 391 total bases and a 211 OPS+. Judge's historic year was worth 10.6 WAR, according to Baseball Reference. It earned him the American League Most Valuable Player Award, but also a nine-year, \$360 million contract, which set a position-player record for average annual value (\$40 million). Bottom line: Judge made an extra \$146.5 million by betting on himself.

OHTANI

In 2021, we were wowed by **Shohei Ohtani's** two-way mastery. In 2022, he did it again – and then some. He hit 34 homers in 666 plate appearances (586 at-bats), slugging .519. He made 28 starts on the mound to the tune of a 2.33 ERA and 219 strikeouts in 166 innings. Those at-bats

and innings totals are there for a reason: He became the first player to qualify as both a pitcher and a hitter in the same season (based on current qualification rules).

O'S

In 2021, the Orioles went 52-110, but '22 was a completely different story. Baltimore was one of 2022's most energizing surprise teams, going 83-79. Those 83 wins were the third-most in a season after 110+ losses in the prior season, behind only the 1890 Louisville Colonels (88 wins) and 1899 St. Louis Perfectos (84).

VERLANDER

After missing the entire 2021 season while recovering from an October 2020 **Tommy John** surgery, **Justin Verlander** was back and, by many statistical measures, better than ever. His 1.75 ERA led MLB and was the lowest of his storied career. He won the AL Cy Young Award unanimously, becoming the first pitcher to win after throwing zero MLB innings the year prior.

MARINERS

The Mariners ended a 20-year postseason drought, the longest in pro sports entering 2022. In dramatic fashion, they clinched a playoff berth on a Cal Raleigh pinch-hit, walk-off home run. He became the 10th player to hit a walk-off homer on the day his team clinched a playoff spot. But wait, there's more: Raleigh's was the first of those to be off the bat of a pinch-hitter.

JULIO

AL Rookie of the Year **Julio Rodríguez** became the fastest player by games to 15 homers and 20 stolen bases, getting there in his first 81. The 21-year-old became the first player in baseball history to rack up at least 25 homers and 25 stolen bases in his first season in the Majors.

NOT OLD

The Guardians were this season's youngest team in baseball, weighted by plate appearances and batters faced. They became just the eighth team to make the postseason as MLB's youngest team, joining the 1986 Mets, 1970 Reds, 1950 Phillies, 1949 Dodgers, 1947 Dodgers, 1944 Cardinals and 1943 Cardinals, per Elias Sports.

SCHWARBER

In his first season with the Phillies, **Kyle Schwarber** hit 46 home runs – 38 of them out of the leadoff spot. That tied Alfonso Soriano in 2002 for the third-most home runs out of the leadoff spot in a season, trailing only George Springer in 2019 and Soriano in 2006 (39 each). Schwarber's seven multi-HR games from the top of the batting order set a record for such games in a single season, passing Joc Pederson in 2019 and Francisco Lindor in 2018.

DIAZ

All season, the Mets were able to rely on **Edwin Díaz**, who struck out 50.2% of the batters he faced in '22 -- that's 118 of 235. He became one of just three pitchers to finish a season striking out more than half the batters he faced, minimum 40 innings pitched. He joined **Aroldis Chapman** from 2014 (52.5%) and **Craig Kimbrel** from 2012 (50.2%).

TROUT

We got only 119 games of **Mike Trout** mastery this year, but boy, did he make them count. Trout hit 40 homers and slugged .630. He became just the fourth player to hit 40 or more homers in a season while playing fewer than 120 games. And he capped it off with a 490-foot home run for No. 40, his longest tracked by Statcast (since 2015).

NL EAST

The Mets and Braves finished with identical 101-61 records, marking the sixth time in the divisional era (since 1969) multiple teams from the same division reached the century mark in the same year. This year's race culminated in a Braves division title, after the Mets led by 10 1/2 games through June 1. New York became just the fourth team to lead a division or league, pre-1969, by at least 10 1/2 games and not win it.

BRAVES KIDS

Michael Harris II and **Spencer Strider** became the eighth set of teammates to finish first and second in Rookie of the Year voting, but the first of those eight to be on the reigning World Series champion. It wasn't just the two of them – rookies **Vaughn Grissom**, **Dylan Lee** and **Bryce Elder** made their marks, too. Atlanta became just the fourth team in the divisional era to lead the Majors in WAR, per FanGraphs, from both rookie pitchers and rookie hitters.

ALCANTARA

The Marlins' **Sandy Alcantara** had a dominant season, posting a 2.28 ERA over 228 2/3 innings en route to a unanimous NL Cy Young Award. He threw six complete games, including a shutout. Alcantara led MLB in innings by 23 2/3, the largest difference between the top two pitchers in total innings in a season since 1979. That year, **Phil Niekro** led by 49 2/3 innings over **J.R. Richard** and **Dennis Martinez**.

SOTO

It was quite the summer for **Juan Soto**. After becoming the second-youngest Home Run Derby champion, Soto was dealt to the Padres at the Trade Deadline. He became the first player, age 23 or younger, to be traded midseason the year he was an All-Star. In addition, Soto was the first to make multiple All-Star teams and change teams all before turning 24.

DID YOU KNOW?

From NYT annual trivia quiz—bet you can win a few beers asking these:

Aaron Judge has hit the most HRs over the last 6 seasons—216. Next best is **Nolan Arenado** of the Cards at 188.

Paul Goldschmidt, the N.L.'s M.V.P., is a former eighth-round draft pick. Only two other M.V.P.s in the 2000s have been drafted lower. One is **Albert Pujols**. **Jeff Kent**, who was selected in the 20th round of the 1989 draft.

Only two pitchers have won three Cy Young Awards, thrown three no-hitters and won two World Series championships. One is **Justin Verlander**, the reigning A.L. winner. The other is **Sandy Koufax**. Koufax won three Cy Young Awards (1963, 1965, 1966), threw four no-hitters and four World Series championships.

Sandy Alcantara won the first N.L. Cy Young Award in Marlins history, leaving only two franchises that have never had a pitcher win the award, which was first given in 1956. The Rockies and the Rangers have never had a Cy Young winner.

Both rookies of the year, **Julio Rodríguez** in the A.L. and **Michael Harris II** in the N.L., had at least 20 stolen bases. That has never happened before.

Two franchises have reached only one World Series and lost it-- The Brewers won the A.L. pennant in 1982 but lost the World Series to the St. Louis Cardinals. The Rockies were the N.L.'s pennant winners in 2007 but were swept in the World Series by the Boston Red Sox.

The Yankees have faced 12 different A.L. teams in the postseason. They have never faced the Blue Jays or the White Sox.

The Nationals 107 and the A's 102 lost more than 100 games last year. The Reds and the Pirates each lost exactly 100.

Current longest playoff drought? In 2014, **Mike Trout** and the Angels were swept in a division series by Kansas City, while **Miguel Cabrera** and the Tigers were swept by Baltimore. Neither team has been back to the postseason since.

The Astros are the only expansion team with an overall winning record. Next best the Angels (created in 1961) and the Blue Jays (created in 1977) have matching .498 winning percentages. The Diamondbacks and Rays are both at .485, the Nationals/Expos are at .484 and the Mets are at .483.

Yadier Molina collected eight National League Gold Gloves in a row from 2008 through 2015. Three American League catchers won Gold Gloves during those years One was an A.L. M.V.P., one was a World Series M.V.P. and one finished his career as Molina's backup in St. Louis. **Joe Mauer** (the 2009 M.V.P.) won three Gold Gloves in those years, **Salvatore Perez** (the 2015

World Series M.V.P.) won two and **Matt Wieters** (who was Molina's backup for two seasons) won two.

David Price retired with 157 wins, four short of the record by pitchers drafted No. 1 overall. Not **Gerrit Cole** (130 but gaining), not **Floyd Bannister** (134), not **Andy Benes** (155). **Mike Moore** retired with 161.

Carlos Beltrán is a retired switch-hitter with 350 or more homers who played in the World Series for the Astros and the Cardinals. **Lance Berkman** is also a switch hitter who hit over 350 HRs and played in a World Series for the Cards and the Astros.

Tony Gwynn was a left-handed-hitting Hall of Famer with 3,000 hits who played for only one team and reached the World Series twice, losing both times, just like **Carl Yastrzemski**.

Mike Trout is an expansion-era right-handed hitter with multiple M.V.P. Awards and a career .300 average, .400 on-base percentage and .500 slugging percentage (min. 1,000 games) as is **Frank Thomas**, the A.L.'s M.V.P. in 1993 and 1994 and hit .301/.419/.555 for his career.

Giancarlo Stanton and **Ken Griffey Jr.** both have been an M.V.P., an All-Star Game M.V.P. and a Home Run Derby winner, but never played in a World Series.

Last name animals:

Hall of Fame second baseman who led A.L. in hits four times in the 1950s **Nellie Fox**.

Pirates righty who no-hit the Mets in September 1969 **Bob Moose**.

Slugger who led majors in strikeouts four times from 1987 to 1993 **Rob Deer**.

First player ever to have four hits, including two homers, in a World Series game (2002) **Tim Salmon**.

Last name colors:

Hit four home runs in Milwaukee on May 23, 2002 **Shawn Green**.

Second baseman whose No. 20 is retired by the Royals **Frank White**.

Threw a no-hitter and made two World Series starts in 1997 **Kevin Brown**.

Last switch-hitter to win A.L. M.V.P. Award (1971) **Vida Blue**. The last switch-hitting position player to win the A.L. award was **Mickey Mantle** in 1962.

WHAT IS THE DODGERS' PLAN?

When you win 111 games and then get bounced (again) from the post-season you analyze.

Their starters threw just 16 ⅓ innings in four games against San Diego. Over the past two postseasons, Dodgers starters are 2–5 in 16 games while taking the ball through six innings only twice. Los Angeles has played 32 straight postseason games without letting a starter go through a lineup three full times.

The Padres chewed up the Dodgers' lineup with power pitching. The Dodgers saw 50% fastballs, up from 48.6% in the regular season, with an average velocity of 95.6 mph, up from 93.8 mph. They hit just .206 against those heaters from San Diego.

(Note to Dodgers: The 87 win Phillies starters took the ball through six innings six times in the postseason and won five times.)

The Dodgers should be concerned about the depth of competition in the packed NL. It's not just the Padres. The Braves, Mets, Phillies and Cardinals are also loaded. All four elite free agent shortstops wound up on NL competitors: **Carlos Correa** to the Mets, **Trea Turner** to the Phillies, **Xavier Bogaerts** to the Padres and **Dansby Swanson** to the Cubs. Of the 14 biggest free agent signings this winter, 10 of them were by NL teams—none of them by the Dodgers.

JUST KIDDING. BRANDON CRAWFORD

Brandon Crawford, 35, has been the Giants' starting shortstop for more than a decade, accumulating four Gold Gloves, three All-Star appearances and a Silver Slugger Award. He has been the Giants' shortstop since 2011. Crawford, who turns 36 next month, slumped to a .231 average with nine homers and 52 RBIs last season while dealing with injuries, down from a .298 average with 24 homers and 90 RBIs in 2021.

Crawford has a \$16 million salary in 2023, then can become a free agent. He has dealt with injuries in recent seasons and might consider retirement at the conclusion of his deal, so the Giants were searching for a shortstop of the future. Enter **Carlos Correa**. Exit Carlos Correa.

With 1525, Crawford trails only **Elvis Andrus** in active games played at short.

CORREA TO THE METS

Correa, the 2015 AL Rookie of the Year, has a .279 career batting average with 155 homers and 553 RBIs in eight big league seasons. He also has been a stellar postseason performer with 18 homers and 59 RBIs in 79 games.

Just about the only knock on Correa's resume is durability. He has played at least 150 games in a season only once because of various injuries.

Correa has become a top-tier defensive shortstop. He received Platinum Glove honors in 2021 with +21 Defensive Runs Saved and 2.9 defensive WAR in 2021.

Correa has played in 148 and 136 games in the last two seasons. Prior to that, he played in more than 110 games just once.

The two-time All-Star spent the first seven seasons of his career with the Houston Astros, winning American League Rookie of the Year honors in 2015 and a World Series title in 2017.

From Joe Sheehan newsletter on Mets lineup and adding Corera--

It doesn't usually work out this way, but if the top four guys in that lineup stay healthy all season long, **Pete Alonso** would have a chance to break the RBI record of 191. He drove in 131 last year, 91 of them teammates, with 499 runners on base for him. Alonso didn't drive in an unusually high percentage of runners on base, just 18%. The record, per Prospectus, is 28%, set by **Harry Heilmann** in 1923. More recently, a number of batters have been up around 25-26%, such as **Andres Galarraga** in 1996.

The record for runners on base for any batter in a season is 626, set by **Dixie Walker**...well, Dixie Walker's teammates...in 1945. The expansion-era record is held by **Derek Bell** in 1996, hitting behind the other Killer Bs, who were on base for Bell 573 times. Batting with 550 runners on is probably the best you can hope for in today's game. So if Alonso could drive in 25% of 550 teammates, that would be 137-138 RBI, and then we know he can hit 53 home runs; he's done it before.

DANSBY SWANSON AND GOOD TIMING

The pitch of durable and steady (Swanson has logged more than 7,000 career innings at shortstop and performed in 37 playoff games across the past four years) earned him \$177 million over seven years from the Cubs. But if we can step out of this almost surreal winter spending spree for free agents — position players and pitchers alike, including some who are very good rather than great — we know that Swanson never could have imagined, even as recently as this summer, a deal with a total value of \$177 million or an AAV of more than \$25 million.

Consider that before this year, Swanson never had an OPS+ of 100 in a full season, 100 being what is considered a league-average player by that metric. He had a 115 OPS+ in 38 games as a rookie in 2016 and a 110 OPS+ in the 60-game pandemic season in 2020.

But in his four full seasons before 2022, he posted OPS+ figures between 68 and 99. And though his defense was always solid, he didn't have a defensive WAR (Baseball Reference) above 1.6 or an overall bWAR above 2.8 until this year, in his age-28 season, when he had a 5.7 bWAR, led all NL defensive players in Outs Above Average with 21 and won his first Gold Glove.

Timing is everything, and Swanson's timing was spectacular in terms of having his finest season in a free-agent walk year and doing it in the year when the free-agent market, particularly for shortstops, skyrocketed.

MORE FUN AND AMAZING STUFF FROM BASEBALL-ALMANAC.COM

6/22/1962 **Boog Powell** hits the first home run over the centerfield wall in Memorial Stadium.

6/8/1961 The Milwaukee Braves, on the road against the Reds in the seventh inning, became the first team in history (Major League & National League) where teammates hit back-to-back-to-back-to-back home runs consecutively. The history making players in order were **Eddie Mathews, Hank Aaron, Joe Adcock & Frank Thomas**

4/13/1963 **Pete Rose**, the future all time hit leader, gets his first hit ever.

7/9/1963 **Stan Musial** is the first player to appear in twenty-four All-Star games.

9/15/1963 The three Alou brothers: **Felipe, Matty, and Jesus**, all played together in the same outfield for the Giants. Three brothers in the same outfield had never happened before. In the game at Forbes Field, the Giants defeated the Pirates 13-5 in front of 18,916 fans.

10/15/1964 **Ken and Clete Boyer** are the first brothers to hit home runs in same Series game.

6/15/1965 **Denny McLain** sets the major league mark and is the first to strike out the first seven batters he faces.

9/17 and 9/18/1968 **Gaylord Perry** for the Giants and **Ray Washburn** of the Cards throw no-hitters in consecutive games at Candlestick Park.

5/10/1970 **Hoyt Wilhelm** becomes the first pitcher to appear in 1,000 games.

10/13/1971 First World Series night game is played in Pittsburgh: Pirates 4 - Orioles 3.

8/1/1972 **Nate Colbert** of the Padres sets a major league mark as he is the first to have thirteen runs batted in during a doubleheader.

4/8/1975 **Frank Robinson** manages his first game and hits a home run in his first at-bat as player-manager of the Indians.

10/16/1976 **Dan Driessen** from the Reds is the first designated hitter in World Series history.

THE ALL-HOLIDAY TEAM OF YOUR DREAMS

Now Dasher! On Cupid! Hey Rudolph, you're pitching.

Matt Monagan, mlb.com

It's the holiday season, so it's our obligation to put together a full starting lineup of holiday-themed names. We've covered every position (although some players may not be playing in their go-to slot) and delved deep into baseball's past for a few you may not have heard of. Check out the squad, sing some Carrolls, let it Snow and everyone, please, have a very happy Holliday.

C - Steve Christmas: We could've subbed some longer-tenured big leaguers in this spot, but when your name is Christmas, you kind of need to be on the All-Holiday Team. Christmas appeared in 24 Major League games from 1983-86, batting .364 in '84.

1B - J.T. Snow: The holiday season means snow for many of us, and we're lucky enough to have a pretty good first baseman by that name. Jack Thomas Snow played 16 seasons in the Majors, tallying more than 1,500 hits and six Gold Gloves in that span. But 'tis the season of good deeds, and Snow is probably most famous for saving a certain manager's son from near-disaster at home plate during the '02 World Series.

2B - Cupid Childs: Childs was quicker than a reindeer. The speedster played 13 seasons in the Dead Ball Era, mostly with the Cleveland Spiders in the 19th century, and finished his career with more than 100 triples and 1,000 runs. He also hit a nifty .306.

3B - Pedro Feliz: What's one of the greatest Christmas songs of all time? Yes, that's right: Feliz Navidad by José Feliciano -- a man who himself has a deep baseball connection. Pedro Feliz wasn't the greatest third baseman of all time, but he had some decent offensive seasons in the mid-2000s for the Giants and was a top defender in the league for a few years. He also helped the Phillies get their first World Series win in '08.

SS - Dasher Troy: Troy wasn't much of a hitter and only played five years in the bigs from 1881-85, but he did once hit a walk-off home run after drinking an entire beer. Plus, can you imagine a DP combo of two guys named Cupid and Dasher?

LF - Jamey Carroll: Carroll was a useful utility guy and one of the last former Montreal Expos left in the Majors at the end of his career. He scored the final run in Montreal history. Carroll was primarily a second baseman but appeared at seven different positions, including 12 games in left field.

CF - Ángel Pagán: Angel? Pagan? Both certainly could qualify as Christmas terms. Pagán was an important part of the Giants' World Series championships in 2012 and 2014, even getting MVP votes in '12. He was also quick on the basepaths and in the outfield -- nearly (if he had kept running) turning an unassisted triple play for the Mets in 2010.

RF - Matt Holliday: The superstar of this team. Holliday was a seven-time All-Star and four-time Silver Slugger -- known for hitting homers into a land only **Mark McGwire** could reach. He was also involved in one of the most mysterious plays in baseball history ... on a sacrifice fly by All-Holiday team member Jamey Carroll.

DH - Jesús Aguilar: Aguilar had a breakout season with the Brewers in 2018, smacking 35 homers while driving in 108 runs. He became an All-Star for the first time that season, probably, mostly because of his very Christmas-themed "We believe in Jesus" campaign. The natural first baseman is now a leader on a young Marlins team, still hitting dingers by the bunches.

SP - Dick Rudolph: Yes, it makes sense that a man named Rudolph will be guiding this team tonight. The Fordham alum was a solid starter in the early 1900s, winning 26 games in 1914 and 22 the next season. The right-hander finished off his 13-year career with 121 victories and a respectable 2.66 ERA.

And from Tyler Kepner of The New York Times

In baseball, the Holliday season started in July, when the Baltimore Orioles took a high school infielder named **Jackson Holliday** with the first pick in the amateur draft. He played like a happy Holliday, reaching base in nearly half of his 90 plate appearances in the minor leagues.

Jackson's father, Matt, wore red (for the St. Louis Cardinals) and green (for the Oakland Athletics), and while he never played with **Candy (Maldonado)**, he homered three times off **Cain (Matt)**. He also played for **Tony La Russa**, who once managed a fellow named **Steve Christmas**.

Matt Holliday played his last game in 2018, the same year **Gift Ngoepe** — the first major league player from Africa — played his.

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC LOVES BASEBALL, BUT STEROID PROBLEMS RUN DEEP

James Wagner, NYT

Around 50 percent of baseball's positive drug tests come from Dominican players. From **Jenrry Mejia and Fernando Tatis Jr.** to minor leaguers and teenagers, the problems permeate all levels.

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic — Whenever he hears about another baseball player from the Dominican Republic testing positive for performance-enhancing drugs, an all-too-common occurrence among his countrymen, Jenrry Mejia feels the same intense emotions: sadness and empathy.

Once a promising young closer for the Mets, Mejia, 33, can speak from experience. Since Major League Baseball and the M.L.B. players' union agreed on suspensions for first-time offenders beginning in 2005, no player has been disciplined more than he has: His third positive test, which came in 2016, triggered a lifetime ban.

Mejia, then in his mid-20s, reacted rashly to the punishment and accused M.L.B. of engaging in a conspiracy against him. The lifetime ban was reversed two years later, after Mejia apologized to M.L.B. Commissioner Rob Manfred for his actions, and he was conditionally reinstated, though he has yet to make it back to the majors.

Since then, Mejia has spoken frequently to younger players about the dangers of steroids and how they derailed his career. So after Fernando Tatis Jr. of the San Diego Padres got an 80-game suspension in August for testing positive for a banned performance-enhancer, Mejia said he wanted to give the 23-year-old Tatis — or any suspended player — some unsolicited advice.

"What he doesn't need is people throwing dirt on him," Mejia said recently in Spanish. "He needs someone to talk to him and say that it'll be OK. Everyone knows the situation is bad. But show your face, admit the mistake and keep going."

Tatis's positive test — a jarring event because of his status as an emerging superstar — is just the latest example of a distressing phenomenon among players from the Dominican Republic. Since 2005, there have been 1,308 positive cases among major and minor league players. According to M.L.B., of the 30,000 drug tests it conducts around the world each season, 0.2 percent are positive for performance-enhancing substances, half of which are from players from the Dominican Republic.

For every **Robinson Canó, Melky Cabrera and Bartolo Colón** who tested positive, many more Dominican minor leaguers have been caught. And the most common banned substances in use are old-fashioned anabolic steroids that were prevalent in other sports decades ago.

Dominicans play at all levels of baseball, with eight in this year's World Series between the Philadelphia Phillies and the Houston Astros. But the percentage of Dominicans testing positive for banned substances is out of proportion with their representation in the game. Of the 975 players on teams' Opening Day 28-man rosters and inactive lists this season, 99 — just over 10 percent — were from the Dominican Republic. The percentage was believed to be greater in the minor leagues.

"It's lamentable," **Junior Noboa**, a former major leaguer and the country's national baseball commissioner, said in Spanish in a recent interview from his office in Estadio Quisqueya in Santo Domingo. "It's lamentable that after all of the talks and everything that is done that they keep making these mistakes."

Baseball officials, players, doctors and doping experts offered a variety of explanations for the positive drug tests.

"A scout looks at your player and if he's already 16 years old, he's too old," said Felix Mena, a private trainer who began working with Mejia when he was 15 and said he runs a drug-free program. "So with a kid at 12 years old, you have to start getting him to compete and doing things that shouldn't be done. It's the system that sometimes carries people away. And there's poverty, so it's something social. And you can buy a lot of stuff without prescriptions, like pills and injections. It shouldn't be like that."

Mena is not exaggerating about the ages of the players involved. Unlike players in the United States or Canada, who are drafted after high school at 18, or after multiple years of college, international amateurs can sign as free agents with M.L.B. clubs as young as 16. But in the race to secure the next great talent, teams often reach verbal agreements with players several years younger than that, creating a frenzied market that critics argue breeds corruption and steroid use.

Even after those players become professionals, Mena said the excel-at-all-costs mentality continues. "'I want to risk myself because someone else got \$20 million and I want to get the \$20 million,' so they take a risk because of the culture of chasing money."

The gross national income per capita in the Dominican Republic was about \$8,200 last year, according to the World Bank. Because even a modest signing bonus can be life-changing for a Dominican family, children often put secondary school aside to focus on baseball training. And when they do sign, players have to pay their trainers, who double as agents, as much as 50 percent.

"In the United States, the player is basically made in a school, in a program where there is protection and safeguards, and there is a draft," Mejia said. But in the Dominican Republic, when players aren't throwing hard enough as teenagers and getting the attention of scouts, Mejia said, they, their parents and their trainers sometimes get desperate.

“You look for something to take, thinking that the banned substance can supposedly help, but really it can make the situation worse,” he said, adding later, “Anyone can go to pharmacy or veterinarian and they’ll sell it to you.”

There is a popular thought in the Dominican Republic that banned substances are a quick fix, said Milton Pinedo, a doctor and the president of Fedomede, the Dominican Federation of Sports Medicine, the body that runs the doping testing for the country’s Olympic programs, including the national baseball team.

“That affects trainers and parents,” Pinedo continued, “who have that belief that using banned substances will be a path out of poverty and the youngsters are going to perform and sign early. The abnormal belief in steroids gives them power that they really don’t have.”

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Pinedo listed two other main factors why professional Dominican players end up testing positive more often. He pointed to the lower education levels in the country, particularly among baseball players. As a result, he said, people “cannot discern or differentiate what’s true and what’s not” about steroids.

The third factor, Pinedo said, was perhaps the biggest: the country’s loose controls on banned substances, which can be bought “liberally in the pharmacies and don’t require prescriptions.” Even antibiotics can be bought without a doctor’s order. Older anabolic steroids like stanozolol and boldenone, he said, are popular because they are easily accessible.

“Those are medications that are made in the ’80s and have medical uses,” he said. “Other steroids are designer steroids that are more expensive.”

Victor Conte Jr., the central figure in the BALCO steroids scandal that linked the use of P.E.D.s to some of the country’s top professional baseball, football and track and field athletes, said he believed some baseball players were still circumventing the testing program. But Dominican players using the older drugs are easier to catch.

“Nobody should ever use any sort of an anabolic steroid like that,” said Conte, who pleaded guilty to distributing steroids and money laundering in 2005. “And the reason is because they’re so easily detectable up to six months, if not a year. And even in the cases of like nandrolone, there’s a case that 18 months after injection it was still detectable.”

Pinedo said professional baseball players in the country tested positive at much higher rates than Olympians. He said the most recent positive test among their international athletes came in 2019 — and it was a baseball player participating in the Pan American Games.

“There is no political willpower,” said Pinedo, who has called on the Dominican government to enact tougher restrictions on certain substances. “It’s controlled in many other places. What you’re promoting isn’t baseball, but damaging the health of youth. And the health of the youth is more important.”

Noboa, who is working to reform the player development system in the country, said his office was hoping to receive legislative approval for more resources and power to tackle the doping problem at a young age, from working with parents to better educating players to punishing trainers to testing at independent academies.

“We have to start with the kids from when they’re playing Little League,” Noboa said. “That’s where we have to focus primarily so that when they reach an age when they’re aware, they know that if anyone offers something — ‘This is only for a little bit of time and will help with an injury’ — they say, ‘No, none of that and nothing that’s not on the approved list.’”

M.L.B. established a program in the Dominican Republic in 2018 in which trainers receive an M.L.B. stamp of approval as long as they allow the league to conduct regular unannounced drug tests of their players. This year, M.L.B. was expected to conduct the most tests ever in the minor leagues and in the Dominican Republic.

While the M.L.B. players’ union declined to comment on the issue, M.L.B. responded with a statement: “The league has committed substantial resources, staffing and programming with the goal of PED deterrence across the minor leagues.”

It continued, “As a result of these efforts, in part because of the program’s transparency, the positive test rate among minor league players in the Dominican Republic has been less than 1% for ten consecutive years, and is down 85% since the start of the program. We will continue to enhance and support our programs toward the goal of further deterrence and player safety.”

On a recent morning, Mejia met with Mena. In between playing in the Mexican professional league during the regular season and the Toros del Este in the Dominican winter league, Mejia played catch with the young players Mena is training now. Over the years, Mejia has gotten to know them and has warned them about P.E.D.s.

Mejia’s story is a cautionary tale. In April 2015, he was suspended 80 games for testing positive for stanozolol. Three months later, he was suspended 162 games for testing positive for stanozolol again but also boldenone. And in February 2016, he received the only permanent ban in the antidoping program’s history when boldenone was again found in his system. He said that it was all from one usage — he claimed he didn’t know some B-12 vitamins he took while sick in 2015 had steroids — and simply stayed in his body that long. Once there, he said it didn’t help him throw harder.

Intentional or not, Mejia said everything in his body was his responsibility, and thus it was his fault. While a prospect may turn to steroids to help earn his first professional contract or reach

the majors, Mejia was already there. He said the reasons for using at that level are different. Tatis had already signed a 14-year, \$340 million deal when he tested positive but he was working his way back from a wrist injury he suffered in a motorcycle accident in the off-season.

“The temptations are like, for example, you have some pain that you don’t want to admit,” Mejia said. “Or you want to overcome it and you think this is going to help you. Or you want to throw harder or you want to show more. But that’s not the way. You’re sometimes not mature until you’re like 32 years old. You sometimes think like a child. Why are you looking for this when you’re already at the highest level?”

Mena welcomed more scrutiny for trainers throughout the country and argued against what he called a “bad culture” of parents who see their children as the means to prosperity and forsake education.

“If the government of ours takes a concrete position of what should happen, and if you don’t follow the guidelines, you’re arrested or fined,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if you’re the parent. What responsibility does a 12-year-old kid have? The kids aren’t looking for steroids. It’s given to them. The government has to investigate and have a firm hand. Us trainers need be controlled and directed and be told that this shouldn’t happen and if it does, we’re held responsible.”

Conte, who has repeatedly criticized M.L.B.’s testing program as not strict enough, contends that cheating still pays. Although suspensions are unpaid, he pointed to Cabrera, who was suspended in 2012 for 50 games for a positive testosterone test and still signed a \$16 million contract that winter and then a \$42 million deal two years later.

Nelson Cruz, the Washington Nationals designated hitter who is widely viewed as a leader among Dominican major leaguers, said it was encouraging that the rate at which his fellow countrymen have tested positive had decreased.

Cruz, 42, had his own experience with performance-enhancers: He was suspended 50 games in 2013 for his connection to the Biogenesis scandal in Southern Florida that ensnared more than a dozen players, including **Ryan Braun and Alex Rodriguez**. He commended the educational programs in place now that he said weren’t around when he was younger.

“M.L.B. is doing a great job giving talks and counseling about it, to prevent what’s going on there,” he said recently, adding later: “It’s a process, like everything in life, for it to be eradicated for good. It’s something that will take time. We, as Dominicans, have to face the reality and we have to try to improve this.”

In the meantime, Mejia said he would continue preaching to children and praying for a second chance at the major leagues. The closest he got to returning was spending the 2019 season with the Boston Red Sox’ Class AAA team, but he posted a 6.38 E.R.A.

"I'd love to return to the United States, even for one day," he said, "so I can say that I fell, I persevered and I returned to the big leagues."

RANKING UNIFORM NUMBERS BY WAR?

Let's talk about uniform numbers. Not necessarily the players wearing those numbers, as you've certainly seen many lists of in the past. (Like: "**Ozzie Smith** was the best No. 1, and **Henry Aaron** was the best No. 44," and so on.) No, let's talk about the numbers themselves. Which *numbers* have been the most productive? Maybe it's No. 27. Or No. 44. How about 3? Maybe, it's 3. There are 101 different options, counting 0 and 00 separately. See? We told you: Fun.

In order to find out, let's swing over to Baseball-Reference.com and dig into their uniform number database. Let's see how many Wins Above Replacement each uniform number has piled up over the century or so that numbers have been in place. (That last part is important; after an initial brief experiment or two in the 1910s and '20s, the '29 Yankees were the first to commit to it full-time, meaning most of **Babe Ruth**'s best years are not included here, coming as they did with no uniform number. He only wore the legendary No. 3 for six seasons, during which time he accumulated 48.9 WAR, less than a third of his career total of 162.7 WAR.)

As far as we know, no one's ever done this before. Unfortunately, there's not really any such thing as a record of per-game uniform numbers -- even if there were you don't really want to split WAR on a per-game basis -- and also some players have had multiple numbers in a season. That's going to make this something more of a "very good estimate" than "an exact accounting," but let's put two rules into place to account for that:

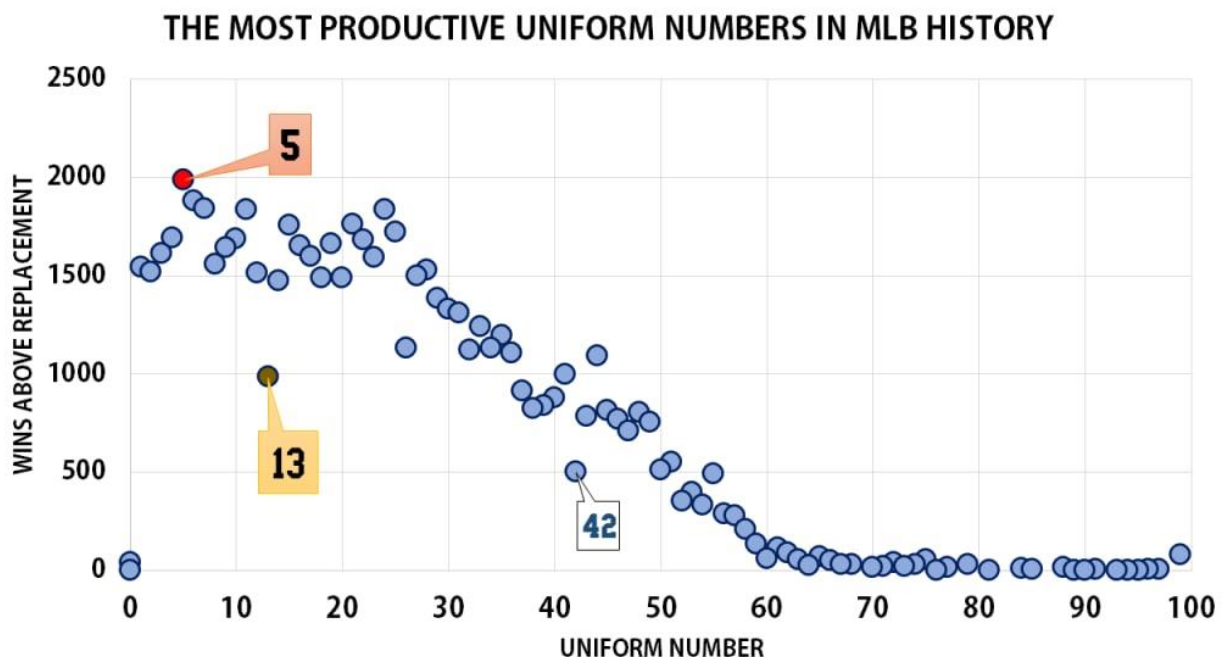
- *If a player gets traded and changes numbers in a season*, each number gets the appropriate WAR credit. (Example: In 2008, **Manny Ramirez** piled up 2.5 WAR wearing No. 24 for the Red Sox, then 3.5 WAR wearing No. 99 for the Dodgers after being traded in July. We can split the same credit for No. 24 [2.5 WAR] and No. 99 [3.5 WAR] here.)
- *If a player switches numbers within a season for the same team*, the number he wore most in his career receives the full credit. (Example: In 1951, **Willie Mays** briefly wore No. 14 for his first few weeks before changing to his now-iconic No. 24. Because he wore 24 the most during his career, that number gets full credit for the season, while 14 gets nothing.)

Perfect? No, but close enough, and after running the numbers on that, we have a list of 101 digits. That's right: 101, because we're counting both 0 and 00 separately. Thanks to then-Yankee **Miguel Yajure**, who became the first player to ever wear No. 89 when he debuted in 2020, there's no longer any such thing as an unused number. Every single possible number has had at least one player wear it on the field.

Take that list of 101 numbers ordered by value, and it looks like this. This is the official all-time ranking. Those are some iconic digits at the top, before you get into Spring Training numbers near the bottom.

RANK	THE MOST PRODUCTIVE UNIFORM NUMBERS, RANKED									
	5	6	7	11	24	21	15	25	4	10
1 10	22	19	16	9	3	17	23	8	1	28
11 20	2	12	27	20	18	14	29	30	31	33
21 30	35	26	34	32	36	44	41	13	37	40
31 40	39	38	45	48	43	46	49	47	51	50
41 50	42	55	53	52	54	56	57	58	59	61
51 60	62	99	65	60	63	75	66	0	72	68
61 70	74	79	67	64	71	73	88	77	70	84
71 80	97	96	85	91	89	90	00	95	81	94
81 90	93	76	98	92	86	82	80	83	69	78/87
91 101										

Or: how about this view? Aside from "the best players, and the most players, usually wear the lowest numbers," which you already knew, look at how many players are actually afraid of wearing No. 13. Look at how value declines starting at No. 25, then begins to completely fall apart after No. 50, before a slight uptick at 99. Look at a graph that is actually showing you uniform numbers, ranked, by WAR.



BASEBALL'S ALL-TIME TOP UNIFORM NUMBERS, BY WINS ABOVE REPLACEMENT (RANK: 1-10)					
#	5	6	7	11	24
WAR	1,989	1,881	1,842	1,837	1,835
#	21	15	25	4	10
WAR	1,760	1,754	1,720	1,693	1,687

There are stories in each of those numbers. How did we get there? Who was most important while wearing each number? Let's break it down into groups, based on the rules we outlined above. (All numbers current through the end of the 2022 Major League season.)

HERE ARE THE TOP TEN

No. 5

1,989 WAR

Notable names: **Albert Pujols, George Brett, Jeff Bagwell, Brooks Robinson, Johnny Bench, Joe DiMaggio**

To be honest, we were surprised by this, since most pitchers don't wear single-digit numbers, and so we figured a number that both hitters and pitchers would wear would be at the top. Then again, No. 5 is a total murderers' row. In addition to those legends already named, there's **Lou Boudreau, Hank Greenberg, Nomar Garciaparra, Freddie Freeman** and on and on. Forty-nine different players put up at least 10 WAR wearing No. 5. Henry Aaron didn't, but 1.4 WAR of his legendary career counts here anyway, because he wore it for his rookie season in 1954 before switching to his now-iconic 44.

No. 6

1,881 WAR

Notable names: **Stan Musial, Al Kaline, Sal Bando, Willie Wilson, Tony Oliva, Steve Garvey**

The half-dozen doesn't have quite the star power that 5 does, but it's even deeper; 57 different players put up at least 10 WAR with the 6, including **Marcus Stroman**, one of the few single-digit pitchers. Did you know Musial briefly wore 19 in Spring Training? Did you know **Mickey Mantle** actually wore 6 for months as a rookie? Neither did we.

No. 7

1,842 WAR

Notable names: **Mickey Mantle, Iván Rodríguez, Craig Biggio, Kenny Lofton, Joe Mauer, J.D. Drew**

There can't be many more iconic combinations of player and number than Mantle and 7, right?

No. 11

1,837 WAR

Notable names: **Edgar Martinez, Barry Larkin, Luis Aparicio, Toby Harrah, Carl Hubbell**

That's four Hall of Famers listed there, plus **Paul Waner** and **Lefty Gomez** spent part of their careers with 11 as well. Through 2022, this is the deepest number, as 57 different players -- from Martinez at 68.4 WAR to **Bill Mueller** at 10.1 WAR -- have posted at least 10 WAR in the one-one, more than any other number.

No. 24

1,835 WAR

Notable names: **Willie Mays, Rickey Henderson, Ken Griffey Jr., Miguel Cabrera, Dwight Evans**

Now we're talking, so far as all-time stars go. But Henderson only spent about two-thirds of his career in the two-four (for example, he wore No. 35 the year he stole 130 bases), so the full value of his career isn't applied here. That's also true of Griffey (who wore 30, 3 and 17 after leaving Seattle), **Manny Ramirez, and Barry Bonds**, who wore 24 as a Pirate before turning to 25 with the Giants, since Mays owns the 24 for San Francisco.

No. 21

1,760 WAR

Notable names: **Roger Clemens, Warren Spahn, Roberto Clemente, Sammy Sosa, Arky Vaughan**

The first number to get a big boost from pitchers. Three all-time inner-circle legends top this list, though it would have ranked even better had Clemens not worn 12 and then 22 for the Yankees and Astros. He contributed 101 WAR to 21 with Boston and Toronto, then 38.5 more WAR to 22, by our formula.

Today, the number is best remembered for Clemente, who briefly wore No. 13 in 1955 after arriving in the Majors, then quickly took the 21 that he'd wear for the rest of his career.

No. 15

1,754 WAR

Notable names: **Dick Allen, Carlos Beltrán, Tim Hudson, Dustin Pedroia, Red Ruffing, Thurman Munson**

Allen, the 1964 NL Rookie of the Year and '72 AL Most Valuable Player, briefly wore 32 at the beginning of his career and 60 at the end, but he's identified most with 15, and he remains one of history's most underrated players.

No. 25

1,720 WAR

Notable names: **Barry Bonds, Jim Thome, Rafael Palmeiro, Buddy Bell, Tommy John, Mark McGwire**

Remember, this is *only* accounting for Bonds' time with San Francisco, since he was 24 (and briefly 7) with Pittsburgh.

No. 4

1,693 WAR

Notable names: **Lou Gehrig, Mel Ott, Luke Appling, Duke Snider, Paul Molitor**

When uniform numbers first came into existence, they were often assigned in accordance with lineup spot, which is why you see a few cleanup hitters atop the list here. Gehrig was already 111 homers into his career by the time the Yankees even starting wearing numbers, though, so this isn't his full career value.

No. 10

1,687 WAR

Notable names: **Chipper Jones, Lefty Grove, Ron Santo, Ron Cey, Andre Dawson**

Jones briefly wore 16 when he arrived in the Majors, but soon switched to 10 to follow in his father's footsteps.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

11 times since 1970 a player has been his league's MVP and won the World Series.

2018	Red Sox	Mookie Betts
2017	Astros	Jose Altuve
2016	Cubs	Kris Bryant
2012	Giants	Buster Posey
1988	Dodgers	Kirk Gibson
1984	Tigers	Willie Hernandez
1983	Orioles	Cal Ripken Jr.
1980	Phillies	Mike Schmidt
1975-76	Reds	Joe Morgan
1973	A's	Reggie Jackson
1970	Orioles	Boog Powell

Four times since 1900 teammates have finished 1-2 in the majors in hits. **Ty Cobb and Bobby Veach** for the 1919 Tigers. And three more:

2022	Dodgers	Freddie Freeman and Trea Turner
1982	Brewers	Robin Yount and Cecil Cooper
1965	Reds	Pete Rose and Vada Pinson

Name the six hitters. Answers at the bottom. Good luck.

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