

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

2.26.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

More opinions on rule changes, will **Justin Verlander** be the last 300 game winner?, **Wee Willie Keeler**, sticky stuff and trivia. Kick back and enjoy.

Editor's Note – I plan to knock off a bucket list item this summer and visit Dodger Stadium the first week of June when the Yankees are in L.A.. I will be buying tickets next weekend. Please let me know if you'd like to join me on a west coast adventure and I'll grab tickets.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

4 players homered as teenager and over age 40

He debuted at age 18 in 1905 and played 22 seasons with his first team. He won an MVP and a Triple Crown. At age 41 homered for the 1928 Philadelphia A's. Better known for his average (he won 12 batting titles) than his power.

In 1963 at age 19 he hit his first HR with Houston. In 1985 his last HR was at age 41 for the Mets. Lefty hitter, he had 2714 career hits for 5 teams.

Member of the 500 HR club, he played for the 1987 World Series winner. Right-handed slugger, at age 19 he homered for the Brewers, at age 40 for the Mets.

Started hitting HRs in 1994 at age 19 and didn't stop until 2016. The 3x MVP hit 36 HRs at age 20 and 31 at age 39. And a bunch in between.

I have the most career hits for a catcher, ahead of **Ted Simmons, Carlton Fisk and Joe Torre**.

My 2844 hits are 50th on the MLB career hits list.

My 2427 games caught is first all-time.

17 of my 21 seasons were the American League.

I was 1999 AL MVP. Elected to the Hall of Fame in 2017.

I won 13 Gold Gloves, 14x All-Star, batted .300 eight straight seasons.

I am one of 8 catchers who drove in 100 runs and scored 100 runs in a season.

Who am I?

Boston Red Sox four World Series winners this century. Who was their winningest pitcher each season?

2018 Red Sox win 4-1 over dodgers

Improbable Cy Young winner a year earlier in 2017 when he went 22-4, this right hander led the 2018 World Series champs at 17-7.

2013 Red Sox win 4-2 over Cards

Lefty who won 110 games for the Red Sox. In 2013 he was 15-8 to lead the team, then went 2-0 in the Red Sox victory over St. Louis in the Series.

2007 Red Sox win 4-0 over Rockies

Right hander who won 200 games for Boston. He is in MLB's top 80 in career games started with 463. He went 17-12 in 2007, did not pitch in Sox sweep of the Rockies.

2004 Red Sox win 4-0 over Cards

Right hander went 21-6 in 2004, second in Cy Young voting to Johan Santana. Won his only decision in sweep of St. Louis in the World Series.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

The last Yankees player to lead the American League in home runs in back-to-back seasons--**Mickey Mantle** (1955 and '56). Mantle edged **Roger Maris** 40-39 in 1960 before Maris' historic 1961 season to keep Roger from leading back-to-back.

Mantle won the triple crown in 1956—he batted .353 with 52 HRs and 130 RBIs. In Mantle's Triple Crown season he also led the majors in runs scored (132) and slugging (.705), total bases (376) and OPS (1.169). But his .464 on base pct. was second to 37 year-old **Ted Williams** with .479.

Interesting observation—**Freddie Freeman** batted with 424 baserunners on in front of him a year ago, and with **Trea Turner** now in Philadelphia, that number could drop significantly. Freeman hit .390 with RISP in 2022, driving in 100 runs.

Freeman is the only player since 2018 to have over 450 RBIs and at least a .400 OBP

Speaking of Freeman, he is one of five 1B who has hit for the cycle twice. The others are

George Sisler

Lou Gehrig

Bob Watson

John Olerud

It was a “where is the pitching?” opening day when Stanford beat Cal State 21-13.

Randy Johnson pitched in more games in his 40's than his 20's.

Derek Jeter has been criticized for getting too much credit for his defense, for being aloof, for being famous because he played in New York. Those may be true but credit where credit is due:

734 post-season at bats, 200 post-season hits—both tops all time.

3465 hits is 6th all-time behind **Pete Rose, Ty Cobb, Hank Aaron, Stan Musial and Tris Speaker**—pretty good company.

All-time shortstop leader in runs created, RBIs, runs scored, times reached base.

16 seasons with 145+ games played.

12 seasons he batted .300—more than **George Brett or Roberto Clemente**.

Second to Pete Rose with 10 seasons with 700+ plate appearances.

Of the 2747 games he played, he got hits in 2114 of them, multiple hits in over 1,000 of them.

Double digit home runs 16 times, double digit stolen bases 17 times, scored 100 runs 13 times—all most ever for a shortstop.

Robinson Cano's career is probably over. His deal still counts for about \$20 million against the Mets' payroll for tax purposes, and \$3.75M against the Mariners' payroll as well.

Odd record of the week—most times getting the only hit in a 1 hitter thrown against your team. **Eddie Milner and Caesar Tovar**. Both did it twice. Milner was a journeyman OF with the Reds, played in 804 games. Tovar once played all 9 positions in a game for the Twins and got the only first place vote to keep triple crown winning **Carl Yastrzemski** from being unanimous MVP in 1967.

Andrew Painter. 19 year-old Phillies right hander. Number 13 pick in the 2021 draft. Has an excellent shot to break camp with the team.

No, this is not normal: Only four teenagers have thrown a pitch in the major leagues since 1992. Most MLB starts as a teenager--**Bob Feller** (36 starts as a 19-year-old in 1938)

The numbers: Plenty of noise in minor league stats, but Painter has dominated so far. In 2022, he compiled a 1.56 ERA across three levels with wipeout K totals.

Painter, who turns 20 on April 10, is both polished for his age and unfinished as a potential big-league starter.

Painter is The Athletic's # 13 prospect (D'backs outfielder **Corbin Carroll** is number 1).

The Phillies took a high school pitcher with their first-round pick in 2021, the second time in a row they'd done so, and so far both of those prospects look very promising. Painter was the second of those two picks and he's quickly become their best prospect, dominating at three levels as a 19-year-old last year with two plus pitches and a good chance he'll end up with a third. He's huge, 6-7, listed at 215 but probably 10-15 pounds stronger than that already, and could just bully hitters with his fastball in Low A, where he started 2022. He's already working at 94-97 mph over full starts and can reach 99, coming from a high three-quarter slot that makes his two-plane curveball at 76-81 even more devastating. He also throws both pitches for strikes, even improving his control as he moved up the ladder — he walked just two of 109 hitters he faced in Double A, his lowest walk rate at any of the three levels where he pitched. He does have a changeup that projects to a 55 but he barely uses it, while he has a slider that is behind the curveball in effectiveness and isn't as hard as it should be given his fastball velocity.

Painter won't even turn 20 until April, so he has a lot of time to continue developing, but also a lot of time to get hurt, unfortunately. His delivery is good and he repeats it well, but we've seen way too many guys like him get hurt on their way to the majors to ignore the possibility here. If your crystal ball says he'll stay healthy, he's a top-10 prospect in baseball, and might have a case to be in the top 6.

For those of us of a certain age, we remember 1973 and **David Clyde** pitching for the Rangers. Clyde went right from Westchester H.S. in Houston to the majors as a way to sell some tickets. Twenty days after pitching his last high school game, Clyde won his first ever Major League start before over 35,000 fans in Arlington Stadium, the first sellout in stadium history. After a poor start in which he walked the first two batters he faced, he settled down, pitched five innings, giving up only one hit (a home run to **Mike Adams**) while striking out eight batters in a 4-3 victory over the Minnesota Twins. In 84 games Clyde went 18-33 in the majors. He was done by age 24 with a sore arm.

Clyde was the top pick in the 1973 draft. Ahead of a few names—Hall of Famers **Robin Yount** (3rd by Brewers) and **Dave Winfield** (4th by the Padres) plus **Fred Lynn** (41st by the Red Sox), **Eddie Murray** (63rd by the Orioles).

The draft is so much more speculative than the NBA or the NFL. Of the first 200 players drafted in 1973—140 never played in the majors. And besides the names above, the others from the top 200 were ok but not great—**Lee Mazzilli**, **Gary Roenicke**, **Steve Swisher**, **Len Barker**, **Ruppert Jones**, **Floyd Bannister**, **Mike Flanagan**, **Matt Keough**, **LaMarr Hoyt**, **Garth Iorg**, **Butch Hobson**, **Ken Landreaux**, **Mike Krukow** the most recognizable names.

Stats of two Gold Glove second basemen from ages 22 through 28.

Player 1: .304/.391/.416, 210 doubles, 51 triples, 43 homers, 713 runs, 276 stolen bases.

Player 2: .282/.363/.404, 191 doubles, 22 triples, 57 homers, 492 runs, 163 stolen bases.

Player 1 is **Chuck Knoblauch**.

Player 2 is Hall of Famer **Craig Biggio**.

At that stage in their careers, I actually used to confuse them. They were both first-round picks. They were both, at their best, doubles machines. They both seemed candidates to get 3,000 hits — Knoblauch was actually a little bit ahead in that race. Biggio was a little bit different, because he was a converted catcher, but they seemed more or less like the same guy to me.

Chuck Knoblauch's 1996 season. That year he hit .341, walked 98 times, scored 140 runs, led the league with 14 triples, stole 45 bases

And then Knoblauch went to the Yankees, he got the yips, every part of his game declined rather quickly and he was done at 33.

I shoot for a few "wow, really?" items each week. Try this one. In 1986 **Vince Coleman** hit .232 with a .301 on-base percentage and still stole 107 bases.

If you count the number of times Coleman reached on an error, he reached base a total of 209 times that season. Eight of those were triples, so we won't count those since he didn't steal home that year. That makes 201 times he reached. There had to be a bunch of times when someone was on base in front of him, removing the steal opportunity. But best case he reached base with the possibility of a steal 201 times.

He tried to steal 121 times — successful 107 times, caught 14. That's an 88% success rate. More than 60% of the times he was on base he attempted a steal.

Mississippi State true freshman -- and switch-pitcher -- **Jurrangelo Cijntje** (pronounced SAIN-ja) struck out seven Louisiana-Monroe hitters in four scoreless innings during his first collegiate start. He permitted just one hit and one walk. Six of his K's came as a right-hander, but he ended the third by turning southpaw and firing a 92 mph fastball past a left-handed hitter.

Ambidextrous pitchers are rare, but there is a precedent for them in baseball. What makes Cijntje a true one-of-one is the velocity he possesses in each arm. He is a natural lefty who can reach 92 mph from that side. But he can pop 96 mph and has better stuff from the right side. There will be absolutely no platoon advantage when facing this 5-foot-11 unicorn.

The Rookie of the Year Award was first issued to **Jackie Robinson** in 1947 and expanded to honor one player from each league in '49. **Gil McDougald**, a second and third baseman, became the first Yankee to win the award in '51 when he batted .306/.396/.488 with 14 homers and 63 RBIs in 131 games. **Willie Mays** won the NL ROY that year.

Bob Grimm (1954), **Tony Kubek** (1957), **Tom Tresh** (1962), **Stan Bahnsen** (1968), **Thurman Munson** (1970), **Dave Righetti** (1981), **Derek Jeter** (1996), **Aaron Judge** (2017) all won the award as Yankees. Players who won ROY and later were major Yankee contributors include **Lou Piniella** (1969 Royals), **Chris Chambliss** (1971 Indians), **Dwight Gooden** (1984 Mets), **Ichiro Suzuki** (2001 Mariners).

Sandy Koufax threw 27 complete games in 1965 and again in 1966. **Clayton Kershaw** has 25 complete games—in his career.

For people who want to know everything (or have too much time on their hands), “Under the Knife” by Will Carroll. <https://undertheknife.substack.com/> is a newsletter with in-depth info on MLB injuries and recovery. Want to know how serious **Frankie Montas**’ shoulder surgery was as you ponder a Yankees futures bet? This is where you get the answer. I received a free copy as a promo to subscribe—email if you’d like to see it.

Cal Ripken Jr. Of course you think of the streak, and his offense. But he also led the league in assists seven times, in putouts seven times, in double plays eight times.

They combined for 80 seasons, wound up separated by just 116 career hits.

David Ortiz 2472

Jim Rice 2452

Dwight Evans 2446

Carlton Fisk 2356

Adding **Manny Ramirez** (2574 hits) makes it 99 combined seasons, the five players separated by 218 hits.

More fun stuff from scrolling the career hits leaders:

Pete Rose with 4256 hits is basically **Don Mattingly** 2153 and **Yogi Berra** 2150 combined.

I was surprised that **Greg Nettles** 2225 had more hits than **Joe DiMaggio** 2214

2128 career hits. Half of Pete Rose. **Dale Murphy** 2111, **Paul O'Neil** 2105, **Harmon Killebrew** 2086, **Johnny Bench** 2048 all had less than half as many hits as Rose.

Did you know **Buddy Bell** 2514, **Steve Finley** 2548, **Garrett Anderson** 2549, **Johnny Damon** 2769 are all in the top 100 in MLB career hits?

Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder **Mookie Betts** said he was aware that the 2018 Boston Red Sox were using live video feeds to steal signs.

"Yeah," Betts said Sunday per Dylan Hernández of the *Los Angeles Times*. "Everybody was."

Betts was a member of that team, winning the American League MVP award en-route to leading the Red Sox to a five-game World Series victory over the Dodgers.

This year's Dodgers team now employs J.T. Watkins, who served as the Red Sox's video replay coordinator, to help with hitting game planning. He played a key role in Boston's sign-stealing scheme, which Hernández explained:

"Before and after games, Watkins was tasked with decoding opponents' signs, which was legal. As the team's video replay coordinator, however, he also used his access to live game feeds to 'supplement or update' his work, according to the commissioner's office. This in-game use of video to decipher signs was illegal.

"The details gathered by Watkins were passed to the bench and used by runners who reached second base, who in turn would steal the catcher's sign and signal to the hitter the kind of pitch that was about to be delivered. Therefore, the commissioner's office concluded, 'The information was only relevant when the Red Sox had a runner on second base.'"

Watkins was suspended for the entire 2020 season. As Hernández noted, he was the only member of the Red Sox staff to receive any punishment.

The league office also noted that the Red Sox scheme, "by its very nature, was far more limited in scope and impact" than the one conducted by the 2017 Houston Astros.

Betts also noted that the Red Sox did not use the sign-stealing system during the World Series. He further said that the team didn't use the system on a daily basis.

"No!" Betts said as he smiled. "This is what I'm trying to say. People are trying to make it like we're cheating. Give us credit. We had a good team. Give us some credit. We had Cy Young winners. We had MVPs. We had Gold Glove winners. We had Silver Sluggers. We had all that. Take that into account."

As far as how often the Red Sox used the system, Betts said: "Every now and ... it's kind of hard to remember."

The 29-year-old Betts is a six-time All-Star, six-time Gold Glove winner and two-time World Series champion. He hit 35 home runs with 82 RBI and a .873 OPS last year.

Only two pitchers in history with 300 wins, 3,000 strikeouts and 25 saves—**Phil Neikro and Walter Johnson.**

Oldest pitchers to throw a shutout:

Jamie Moyer age 47

Phil Neikro 46

Charlie Hough 46

Satchel Paige 46 (twice)

There was plenty of talk about workarounds to the anti-shift rules, such as shifting the offside outfielder into the rover position. If it happens, it will be an extreme rarity.

“We’ve thought about it,” says one executive. “And there may be a time or two where you might do it, but those are going to be very, very rare situations. I’m not expecting to see it much.”

Say an extreme pull hitter like **Joey Gallo** is up with the bases empty, especially with two outs, in a trailing situation. You might go to the “outfield shift” because Gallo is swinging for extra bases, you want to defend the pull side and you want to tempt Gallo to get outside his comfort zone. Gallo had eight opposite-field hits all of last year, half of which were mishit balls.

But those are narrowly defined moments. And even then, it might not be worth the risk. With left field left uncovered, one of those mishit balls becomes two or three bases, a huge gamble especially in a one-run game.

Four pitchers with 3,000 strikeouts and less than 1,000 walks:

Curt Schilling

Pedro Martinez

Greg Maddux

Ferguson Jenkins

Brent Musburger umpired in the Midwest League—after leaving Northwestern after his freshman year. He said he needed to find another career after blowing a home run call in 1958 as the second base umpire with Michigan City, Ind., righthander **Juan Marichal** on the mound.

Musburger said he ejected three players in the ensuing argument and needed a police escort out of the ballpark. As Musburger said in 1978, "It was that point in my young life that I decided to go into sports writing because I could use the eraser when I made a mistake."

In 1985 he told *The Dallas Morning News* he had an offer to umpire the next season in the Eastern League, but returned to Northwestern to be a sportswriter.

Angels relief prospect **Ben Joyce** first turned heads pitching at the University of Tennessee, where he threw a fastball that registered 105.5 mph to set the record for the fastest pitch in college baseball history.

The Angels took him in the third round of the 2022 Draft and he excelled with Double-A Rocket City, posting a 2.08 ERA with 20 strikeouts and four walks in 13 innings. Joyce, ranked as the club's No. 12 prospect, is in Major League camp and is expected to reach the big leagues this season.

Phillies owner John Middleton is unabashed in his desire to bring a championship to Philadelphia. "How much did the '27 Yankees make? Or the '29 A's? Or the '75-76 Big Red Machine. Does anybody know? Does anybody care?" he told the Philadelphia Inquirer.

"Nobody knows or cares whether any of them made any money or not. And nobody cares about whether I make money or not.

"If my legacy is that I didn't lose any money owning a baseball team on an annual operating basis, that's a pretty sad legacy. It's about putting trophies in the cases."

In the latest example of teams unnecessarily angering their players, the Blue Jays renewed **Alek Manoah's** contract with only a \$50,000 raise after he went 16-7 with a 2.24 ERA over 31 starts and finished third in the Cy Young voting. Don't think Manoah and his agent won't forget.

10-15-1964. Yankees-Cards World Series game 7. **Clete Boyer and Ken Boyer** become the first brothers to HR in the same World Series game.

9-9-1965. **Sandy Koufax** throws a no-hitter for the fourth consecutive season—this one a perfect game against the Cubs.

“Every hitter likes a fastball just like everybody likes ice cream. But you don’t like it when someone’s stuffing it into you by the gallon. That’s how you feel when Ryan’s throwing balls by you.”

—Reggie Jackson

“I had pretty good success with Stan by throwing him my best pitch and backing up third.”

—Carl Erskine

YOU KNEW IT WOULD HAPPEN

Saturday’s Red Sox-Braves spring training game ended with an automatic third strike called on Atlanta batter **Cal Conley** for not getting set in the box before the pitch clock hit eight seconds. Here’s what you need to know:

- With two outs, the bases loaded and the game tied at 6-6 in the bottom of the ninth inning, Conley had worked a 3-2 count and was called for a pitch clock violation, which triggers an automatic strike. Atlanta had scored three runs in the inning to tie the game.
- Under new rules introduced this season, pitchers have 15 seconds to begin their delivery when no runners are on base and 20 seconds with runners on base. Batters are awarded a ball if the clock expires and a strike if they are not set in the box and alert to the pitcher by the time the clock reaches eight seconds.
- “This is going to be all over SportsCenter,” Braves manager **Brian Snitker** said of the controversial ending, noting that Conley was still looking at Boston’s catcher, who didn’t appear to be ready for the pitch. “You’ve got to forget about (what the catcher’s doing), you better be attentive to the pitcher like the rule says. And that’s distracting.”

On Friday, Padres star **Manny Machado** committed the first pitch clock violation of this year’s spring training, starting an at-bat 0-1.

KIPNIS CALLS IT A CAREER

Congrats to **Jason Kipnis** upon his retirement for an outstanding 10-year major-league career. He grew up in Northbrook, Ill., hitting imaginary home runs in his backyard with a bat and acorns, dreaming of hitting a World Series home run 21 miles away at Wrigley Field.

He grew up rooting for **Sammy Sosa** during the great 1998 home run chase, lived down the block and rode the same school bus as Steve Bartman, and attended Glenbrook High North, the alma mater of director John Hughes, who used the school as a backdrop in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, which included the famous day of playing hooky at Wrigley.

Kipnis hit a dream home run—and what might have been one of the most famous home runs in Cleveland baseball history—in Game 4 of the 2016 World Series. Kipnis smashed a three-run homer, this time for real with no acorns, to blow open a close game and put Cleveland one win away from winning the World Series for the first time since '48. It was the first three-run World Series homer by a visitor at Wrigley since **Babe Ruth** hit his “called shot” in '33.

The next day Cleveland led 1–0 in the fourth inning of the possible clincher before **Trevor Bauer** coughed up three runs. Cleveland never held another lead while dropping three straight games.

Kipnis retires as one of only five left-handed-hitting second basemen with 125 homers and 125 steals. The others are **Chase Utley, Lou Whitaker, Joe Morgan and Charlie Gehringer**. Kipnis made two All-Star teams, hit 126 homers, had 1,147 hits, 1,833 total bases, a 102 OPS+ and earned \$53 million. In 2020, Kipnis finished his career as a Cub.

HOW MUCH ARE THE METS SPENDING

Starting pitchers: \$130 million

Relievers: \$45 million

Catchers: \$9 million

Infielders: \$75 million

Outfielders: \$62 million

Via free agency: \$190 million

Via trade: \$81 million

Via draft: \$51 million

Via amateur international free agency: \$0

The Mets' player payroll is about \$340 million. Its luxury tax payroll, which is calculated on the average annual value (AAV) of player contracts rather than what a player makes in a specific

year and which includes money directed toward nebulous player benefits, sits just below \$375 million.

The Mets' postseason rotation in 2015 earned less than \$2 million; the quartet of Matt Harvey, **Jacob deGrom, Noah Syndergaard and Steven Matz** were all pre-arbitration. New York's top two pitchers this season will each surpass that \$2 million mark the day after the home opener.

Money committed under the Wilpons: \$20.25 million (all to **Robinson Canó**)

Money committed under the Cohens: \$287 million

As of right now, the Mets' player payroll (the smaller number instead of the one used for luxury tax calculations) is 28 percent higher than the second-highest payroll, that of the Yankees. On a relative basis, that's the biggest gap between No. 1 and No. 2 since ... 2021, when the Dodgers' payroll was 28 percent higher than the second-place Yankees.

The Mets' payroll is more than double the league average and the league median — the first time that's happened in the league since the 2015 Dodgers.

The Mets are still not outspending the league at the same rate the Yankees did in the aughts. Let's look at some historical payroll numbers courtesy of the Associated Press. From 2003 to 2010, the Yankees spent at least 30 percent more than any other major-league team, topping out in 2005 when they spent 69 percent more than any other team. The Yankees had the highest payroll in the game for 15 consecutive years (1999 through 2013), and in 11 of those seasons their payroll was more than double the league average and the league median. (In 2005, it was triple the league median.)

Had the Mets and **Carlos Correa** gone through with the 12-year, \$315 million deal they initially agreed to in late December, New York's luxury tax payroll would have just slipped under the \$400 million mark. (I'd have it at \$399.35 million.) Its luxury tax fees would have increased to about \$125 million.

The Mets would have been right up against the "Cohen Tax" fourth tier of the 2024 luxury tax threshold with Correa onboard, even before diving into arbitration raises. New York would have had close to \$100 million in luxury tax payroll committed for the 2030 team had it signed Correa.

35 HOME RUNS/35 STOLEN BASES

Alfonso Soriano, 2006 (46 HR, 41 SB)

Alfonso Soriano, 2003 (38 HR, 35 SB)

Alfonso Soriano, 2002 (39 HR, 41 SB)

Barry Bonds, 1996 (42 HR, 40 SB)

Barry Bonds, 1997 (40 HR, 37 SB)

Jose Canseco, 1988 (42 HR, 40 SB)

Alex Rodriguez, 1998 (42 HR, 46 SB)

Willie Mays, 1956 (36 HR, 40 SB)

Willie Mays, 1957 (35 HR, 38 SB)

Bobby Bonds, 1973 (39 HR, 43 SB)

Bobby Bonds, 1977 (37 HR, 41 SB)

Ken Williams, 1922 (39 HR, 37 SB) *St. Louis Browns*

Eric Davis, 1987 (37 HR, 50 SB)

Darryl Strawberry, 1987 (39 HR, 36 SB)

Howard Johnson, 1989 (36 HR, 41 SB)

Shawn Green, 1998 (35 HR, 35 SB)

Vladimir Guerrero, 2002 (39 HR, 40 SB)

Carlos Beltran, 2004 (38 HR, 42 SB)

Matt Kemp, 2011 (39 HR, 40 SB)

Ronald Acuna Jr. 2019 (41 HR, 37 SB)

Soriano, Bonds, Canseco and ARod are the only four who reached 40-40.

JUSTIN VERLANDER MAY BE THE LAST 300 GAME WINNER

As Mike Lupica recently wrote—**Justin Verlander** has won three Cy Young Awards -- including last season, 11 years after his first. He has two World Series titles and one Most Valuable Player Award and 3,198 career strikeouts and counting. But the number to think about is 40.

He just turned 40 with 244 victories in the books already, which means he is 56 wins from one of the game's enduring magic numbers: 300. If he gets there, he might be the last one to do it for a long time, and maybe forever, in baseball.

Verlander makes you remember the old **Reggie Jackson** line when he signed as a free agent with the Yankees, when he said he didn't need New York City to make him a star, adding, "I'm bringing my star with me." It is a little like that now that Verlander reunites with **Max Scherzer**. Three Cy Youngs pairing up with three Cy Youngs -- even though their combined age will be 78, with Scherzer turning 39 in July.

Now we see what he does after the age of 40. **Phil Niekro** won 121 games starting with his age-40 season, throwing knuckleballs. **Greg Maddux** won 70 starting with his age-40 season, but Maddux was a master of spin and working the corners and all that jazz. **Warren Spahn** won 75 games after 40, **Nolan Ryan** won 71 and **Randy Johnson** won 73. **Roger Clemens** won 61. There is no reason why Justin Verlander, still a power pitcher, can't be one of those guys, coming off a post-Tommy John Cy Young Award at the age of 39.

Lupica has a point. Here are the 19 Active career wins leaders with over 100 wins—see any other threats to 300 wins? Maybe Cole can average 17 wins for 10 more years but it's not a lock.

	Wins	age
Verlander	244	40
Zack Greinke	223	38
Max Scherzer	201	37
Clayton Kershaw	197	34
Adam Wainwright	195	40
Cole Hammels	163	38
David Price	157	36
Johnny Cueto	143	36
Madison Bumgarner	134	32
Gerrit Cole	131	30
Lance Lynn	120	35
Charlie Morton	116	38
Anibal Sanchez	116	38
Chris Sale	114	33
Corey Kluber	113	36
Stephen Strasburg	113	33
Carlos Carrasco	104	35
Ian Kennedy	104	37
Dallas Keuchel	101	34

There are only 24 pitchers who have reached 300 career wins.

1888-1900 (6) reached 300 career wins

Pud Galvin	1888	364
Kid Nichols	1900	362
Tim Keefe	1890	342
John Clarkson	1892	329
Charles Radbourne	1891	310
Mickey Welch	1890	307

1901-1924 (5)

Cy Young	1901	511
Walter Johnson	1920	417
Grover Cleveland Alexander	1924	373
Christy Mathewson	1912	373
Eddie Plank	1915	326

1924-1982 (3)

Warren Spahn	1961	363
Lefty Grove	1941	300
Early Wynn	1963	300

1982-1990 (6)

Steve Carlton	1983	329
Nolan Ryan	1990	324
Don Sutton	1986	324
Phil Neikro	1985	318
Gaylord Perry	1982	314
Tom Seaver	1985	311

1990-2023 (4)

Greg Maddux	2004	355
Roger Clemens	2003	354
Randy Johnson	2009	309
Tom Glavine	2007	305

14 seasons since the last pitcher reached 300 wins.

All but Clemens are in the Hall of Fame.

Cy Young's 511 wins will never be broken.

Bobby Mathews won 297 after the major leagues were established in 1871—his wins for teams prior to 1871 are not counted by MLB.

Four players won their 300th game as Giants—Keefe, Mathewson, Welch in New York and to my surprise, Randy Johnson for the San Francisco Giants in 2009.

Clemens and Neikro won their 300th playing for the Yankees.

Glavine won his 300th pitching for the Mets.

Seaver won his 300th pitching for the White Sox.

Justin Verlander--We're talking about a guy who went 18-4 last year at age 39 ... had a sub-2.00 ERA (1.75) ... posted an incredible 220 ERA+ ... led the AL with a sub-1.00 WHIP (0.83) ... and had the lowest opponent OPS in his league by 65 points.

How dominating was *that* season? So dominating that in the Cy Young Award era (1956-present), only one pitcher has ever put up that set of numbers: Greg Maddux, in 1995. Age hasn't caught up with him yet. He needs 56 wins. Don't bet against him.

VALUE

Premise-- in terms of *value*, batting average is actually meaningless. It adds nothing whatsoever. He will say that if you know a player's on-base percentage and slugging percentage, then batting average might give you a sense of the player's STYLE but it will not offer anything new about the player's WORTH.

Evidence-- **Don Mattingly** vs. **Darryl Strawberry** comparison.

Here are their age 21-29 seasons:

Mattingly: .317/.363/.504

Strawberry: .263/.359/.516

The compelling number at the time — and to this day — was Mattingly's batting average. He had 54-point edge over Strawberry in batting average, and thus Donnie Baseball was widely regarded as one of the best, perhaps even the best, hitter in baseball, while Straw was generally viewed as a disappointment.

But by pure value, Strawberry was — as their on-base and slugging percentages suggest — at least the equal of Mattingly. This is fairly easily explained: Mattingly's 300 or so extra singles are certainly worth quite a lot more than Strawberry's 300 or so extra walks. But Strawberry makes up the difference (and then some) because his 111 extra home runs easily trump Mattingly's 79 extra doubles.

But now let's talk about style points for a minute because they matter. A lot.

Baseball is at its best, in my view, when there is a balance between Mattingly and Strawberry, between high-average gap hitters and low-average sluggers, when you have different sorts of hitters contributing in different ways. It may be true that a .236/.350/.500 hitter is every bit as *valuable* as a .310/.350/.500 hitter, but that doesn't make them the same. Baseball needs variety. Life needs variety.

I don't think being a .300 hitter is a particularly big dream these days. It used to be EVERYTHING in baseball. Everybody wanted to hit .300. Everything revolved around a .300 batting average — salaries, All-Star Game voting, magazine covers, fan admiration. When you hit .300 you were royalty. When you hit .299 you were ... you know, fine.

Obviously, that was all kind of silly, but it did inspire many, many generations of ballplayers to strive for .300.

And now, we know, hitting .300 is not the point. Getting on base is the point. Hitting with power is the point. Creating runs — THAT is the biggest point. I miss .300 hitters mattering not because I think batting average matters. I miss them because .300 hitters give the game spice, they give the game variety, they connect the game to the past.

Who was the best of these three players — **Tony Gwynn, Tim Lincecum, Dwight Gooden**?

History has given a clear answer. Gwynn was elected first-ballot to the Hall of Fame with 98% of the vote. Lincecum got elected only after many years. Gooden fell off the ballot quickly and still has not been elected.

The answer is perhaps not as clear when you look at the advanced metrics; their career WARs, whether FanGraphs or Baseball Reference, are pretty close to identical. Lincecum got on base as

much as Gwynn and was the superior baserunner. Evans hit with more power and was probably the superior outfielder. Gwynn wins on style points. But it's really close.

Editor's note—we won't know the impact of the rule changes until they are up and running and we have some data. That hasn't stopped strong opinions. Here you go from Joe Sheehan's newsletter. A column on the shift rule, plus an interesting alternative to the ghost runner in extra innings.

JOE SHEEHAN

SHIFT

New Rule: *At the time the pitcher releases the baseball, the defensive team must have four defenders with their feet on the infield dirt or infield grass, and two infielders on each side of second base. If a batted ball occurs with a team in violation of these limits, the batting team can choose to accept the result of the play, or send the batter back to the plate with an additional ball added to the count. Infielders may not go "in motion" to gain position, and may not change positions across second base (i.e., from third base to second base) once an inning has begun.*

Data-driven defensive positioning has been the most visible manifestation of "analytics" in baseball over the last decade. With perfect information on where batters most often hit the ball, teams aligned their defenses to best turn batted balls into outs. Each season, teams grew more confident in their positioning, more teams adopted these approaches, and more pulled balls became 4-3s. The league batting average on balls in play was between .298 and .306 in every year from 2004 through 2019. That dropped to .295 in 2020 and 2021, and .293 in 2022 -- the latter its lowest since 1992. Left-handed batters were being particularly hurt; their batting average on grounders and line drives dropped from .379 in 2019 to .368 last year.

More relevant to this change, many fans just didn't like it. They did not like infields with three men to one side of second base, one of them in short right field. They didn't like the way it looked when a hard grounder up the middle became an easy 6-3. Complaining about the shift was a common trope for broadcasters, especially ex-player analysts removed from the data revolution and committed to what baseball "should" be like based on when they played.

MLB gave away the game early on this change, saying it was designed to "restore traditional outcomes" on batted balls. In other words, to make baseball look like what it did in 1987. Me, I'd like to see baseball restore traditional outcomes on pitched balls, which is an actual problem, but I'm getting nowhere with that. So we get teams more or less forced to play bad defense, to ignore information at their disposal that would help them get outs. The new rule

takes strategy out of the game, as variance in shift usage was one of the real remaining differences in an increasingly homogenous game.

The fig leaf is that the new rule will bring athleticism back to the game by forcing infielders to run more. I don't think that will be the case. I watch as much baseball as any three people you know, and I didn't notice a dearth of highlight plays, a struggle for MLBN or ESPN to fill sizzle reels, in the shift era.

Teams will still be free to line up their infielders laterally in an optimal fashion. Third basemen will often be 30-40 feet away from the bag, and second basemen will be positioned to grab pulled grounders. The holes created by the rule, at least against left-handed batters, are unlikely to be covered by any level of athleticism -- the space behind the second baseman and in front of the right fielder, and the space ranging from 10 to 20 feet to the right of second base. We could see some additional attractive plays made by the shortstop moving to his left on batted balls in the latter area, but the primary effect of the new rule will be to turn short line drives to right field from outs to hits. **Joe Morgan** with a jetpack and a pogo stick isn't making plays on those. The new rule is an entitlement program for dead-pull left-handed batters.

There will be some hits taken back by the defense under the new rules, mostly balls hit, really mis-hit, to the left side that a shortstop now positioned left of the bag can get to. Softly hit balls to the right side, now hits against infielders positioned far too deep to make a play, may become outs. Teams may find it easier to convert double plays with the shortstop now almost always in position to make a turn, as opposed to the occasional need to have the third baseman do so, or confusion as to whose responsibility it was. The odd plays where no one was covering third base will mostly be eliminated.

Those ten or so points of BABIP lost in recent years aren't all coming back, though. Some were lost to the change in baseballs, some were lost to an increase in flyball rate. With the caveat that MLB can mess with this figure anytime it wants by manipulating the baseball, I estimate the rule change as worth about six points of BABIP, and therefore batting average, league-wide. 99% of the hits being created will be singles, and maybe 80% of those will be singles to short right field. A league that hit .243 last year may hit .249 or .250 this year -- still well below the historical norm.

There will be absolutely no effect on batter approaches. As I have said again and again, this rule change is an incentive for batters to keep hitting the way they have, trying to pull fly balls and line drives, because it takes away the penalty for doing so. The incentives for them to hit differently were the wide-open spaces created by the shift, and the additional outs created by hitting balls into it. Those have been removed. Swing away, **Corey Seager**!

Seager is one of the players most cited as a beneficiary of the new rules. Per Baseball Savant, Seager faced a shift in 93% of his plate appearances last year. Kyle Tucker, Kyle Schwarber, and **Joey Gallo** were among those hitters facing shifts in 90% or more of their PA. When he batted left-handed, Jose Ramirez saw shifts in 94% of his PAs. The benefits of this new rule will accrue

to players like this. One reason this rule offends me is that it effectively puts the thumb on the scale for a specific type of player and specific type of gameplay, something I don't think the league should be doing -- and damned sure not this particular style of gameplay.

We might see some small effects on the margins on strikeouts and walks. Russell Carleton found that pitchers pitching in front of a shift walked more batters than would be expected, and strikeouts were up as well. It's unlikely to make a big difference, but a game drowning in strikeouts can use all the help it can get lowering the number.

This new rule is hard to defend from a baseball standpoint. It favors a specific set of players, it actually makes baseball's gameplay problems a bit worse, and it is largely designed to get good press coverage. It does, by brute force, turn maybe 1500 outs into singles, in much the same way that forcing the left fielder to wear ankle weights would. Mostly, though, it panders to the people who didn't like the way the shift looked, didn't like the impact of data-driven positioning on what they were seeing. This rule change reflects a bad process, no matter the outcome

EXTRA INNINGS

While free baseball remains awesome, if we take at face value that MLB really just wants to reduce as many extra innings as possible, why not sudden death? It ups the drama, with a high likelihood of a walk-off every night, and everyone's already fine with the home team getting the option for a walk-off in the bottom of the inning. You want games to end faster? Equalize that for visitors: if tied after nine, first run wins.

Anything short of that seems woefully inefficient and gets us stuck in trying to figure out why MLB insists on ghost runners over any other option (and we're not prepared to waste any more time parcelling out that level of illogic).

So...Sudden Death Extra Innings. How is that not infinitely better than ghost runners? Every extra-inning pitch could end the game. They want drama? That's drama.

I would happily take this over the stupid runner. It's a little like the single-elimination playoffs idea I proposed: It will never happen, mostly because of a failure of imagination. I think this would immediately make extra innings must-watch baseball, and the various strategies it could compel would make for great fodder.

MLB GEARING UP TO REFOCUS ON 'STICKY STUFF' ENFORCEMENT

Jayson Stark in The Athletic

For the third straight season, Major League Baseball is gearing up to address the use of "sticky stuff" by pitchers across the sport.

Major-league sources told *The Athletic* that message emerged loud and clear over the past week at MLB's annual spring meetings with clubs being updated on new rules and other changes for the coming season. In those meetings, sources say, MLB has informed club officials it will encourage umpires to refocus on the use of sticky stuff this season.

Teams have not been told yet of every step umpires could take as part of that effort. But according to those sources, who have knowledge of MLB's meetings with the clubs, this is what could happen:

- Umpires' inspections of pitchers' hands and fingers, which began last season, would be more thorough than the often-perfunctory inspections that umpires performed last year.
- Those inspections would also be more random, as opposed to last season, when inspections of starting pitchers were generally performed after the same innings every game. Hitters have suggested that pitchers were using stickier substances in innings when they knew they wouldn't be checked. And as *The Athletic's* Eno Sarris has written, inning-to-inning variation in SVR (Spin to Velocity Ratio) has raised eyebrows.
- Umpires also could resume checking pitchers' caps, gloves and belts — a practice they employed in 2021 but abandoned in 2022 in favor of more streamlined inspections of hands and fingers.
- Most significantly, umpires would be empowered to be more aggressive about inspecting pitchers than in the past. So if an umpire observed a pitcher wiping his hand in the same spot repeatedly, for example, the ump could go to the mound, to perform an inspection, in the middle of an inning.

Team officials were told these moves are not in response to any particular incident, such as Mets manager **Buck Showalter's** celebrated request that umpires check the ears of Padres pitcher **Joe Musgrove** during last year's postseason. Instead, this effort is a response to data that shows spin rates have ticked up steadily since MLB's much-ballyhooed June 2021 crackdown on Spider Tack and other high-potency sticky stuff.

As Sarris wrote in another story last September, that data seems like a clear indication pitchers have found substitutes for Spider Tack that are less detectable and easier to mask or wipe away. What does that data show? Take a look at how average spin rates, for four-seam fastballs, spiked just before the crackdown in June 2021, dipped dramatically after the crackdown, and now have crept back up in the months since.

MONTH	SPINS RATE RPM	MPH
9/2019	2299	93.5
9/2020	2303	93.4

5/2021	2324	93.7
7/2021	2240	93.7
4/2022	2256	93.7
9/2022	2292	94.0

5/2021 is the month before the crackdown.

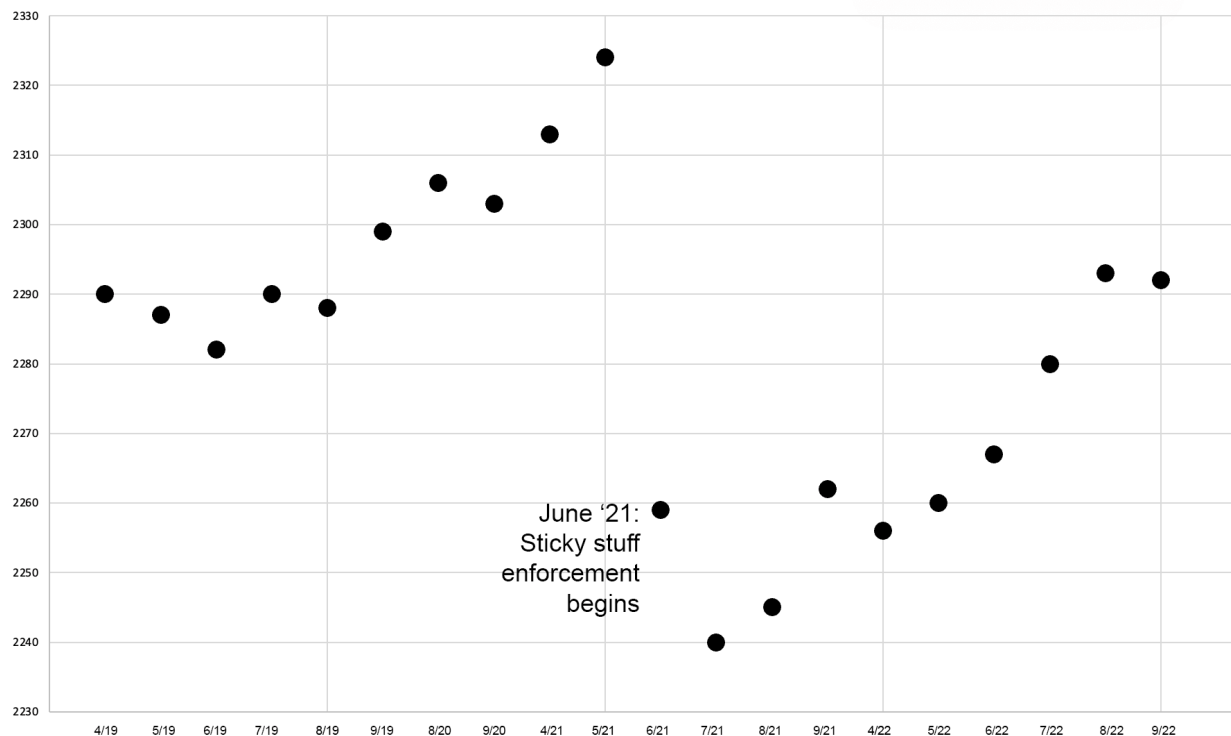
7/2021 is the month after the crackdown

4/2022 MLB starts inspecting pitchers' hands and fingers

Spin is creeping back into the game

Average four-seam fastball spin rate (rpm) across the game, per month, since 2019

5/15/2022



As that chart demonstrates, the original crackdown was highly effective in reducing spin rates, leveling off the strikeout rate and getting more balls in play. Since then, spin rates haven't quite returned to their pre-crackdown rates. But their continued rise has attracted MLB's attention, particularly at a time when the league is introducing a flurry of new rules, largely designed to get more balls in play.

So will this "refocus" initiative accomplish its mission? Remember that the inspection of pitchers' hands last year was implemented with the same goal. Instead, spin rates rose, and

there wasn't a single ejection of any pitcher all season. But will a return to cap and glove checks, plus the threat of mid-inning inspections, get pitchers' attention? It looks as if we're about to find out.

WEE WILLIE KEELER: THE BEST BUNTER IN BASEBALL HISTORY

Dan Holmes, Baseballegg.com

When you talk about **Willie Keeler**, a Hall of Fame batsman, you must discuss *names*. A premature baby, he was born William Henry O'Kelleher in 1872, but the Irish family surname was Americanized to Keeler eventually. For most of Willie's childhood he was called W.H., just like his father. But when he left school at 14 to box professionally and work in a factory, he chose to be called "Willie" because he wanted to step out from the shadow of his father. Evidently, Willie was a tiny child, and always pretty much a runt: not only short, but also very light. He weighed 105 pounds when he fought his first professional fight. Later, when he became a professional baseball player, he was dubbed "Wee Willie," a name he didn't much care for.

The Keeler family lived in Brooklyn's Bed-Stuy, an historic neighborhood that served up a number of notable people over the years. Originally Dutch farmland, the area became one of the seven districts in Brooklyn in the early 19th century. A few decades later it had blossomed into one of the first communities where free blacks owned their own homes. Positioned near bustling railroad tracks, it welcomed thousands of Irish immigrants in the last half of the 19th century, but maintained a large black population as well. **Jackie Robinson** lived there after he debuted with the Dodgers after World War II, and Jay-Z sprung up from Bed-Stuy. It's still a cultural hotbed in New York city.

Keeler was quick and clever, and he leveraged those traits to become a pesky batter. He debuted in the National League with the Giants at the age of 20 at the tail end of the 1892 season and got two hits off **Tim Keefe**, who was a future Hall of Famer. Newspaper reports of that day mentioned Keeler's fleet feet and his ability to place the ball wherever he wanted with the bat. But even in those days, 5'4 was puny, and the Giants and Brooklyn Grooms passed on Willie after giving him brief trials in 1892 and 1893.

The Baltimore Orioles were one of the worst teams in the National League in 1893, and they were in just their second season in the league, trying to establish themselves. In those days, if your team stunk, there was danger that you could be kicked out of the league, bought by rival owners, or your best players might jump to other teams who would pay them more. The Orioles looked like a ragtag team of losers, and Baltimore was one of the smallest and least desirable cities in the circuit at the time. But their baseball team had a great asset: manager **Ned Hanlon**, a Connecticut man who dressed impeccably and had strong opinions on the game of baseball. Hanlon convinced Brooklyn to trade Keeler and a first baseman named **Dan**

Brouthers on New Year's Day in 1894. The trade proved to be the spark that led to the greatest dynasty of that era.

The Daring Baltimore Orioles of the 1890s

If you could travel back in time to watch the Baltimore Orioles of the 1890s, you would recognize that they were playing baseball, but you would be shocked at the style of play. The offense took advantage of the poor field conditions and small gloves that defenders wore, by pounding the ball into the ground. Hanlon figured his hitters could run down the line to first faster than an infielder could field a well-placed high (and hard) hit grounder. He trained his team to bunt the baseball with precision, and he also taught his baserunners to use several techniques that no one had ever thought of before. Hanlon's genius earned him the nickname "The Father of Modern Baseball."

Keeler used a 30-inch bat, which is four inches shorter than batters use today, and was 4-8 inches shorter than the standard in his day. If you saw Wee Willie at the plate, you'd think he had a toy bat. He also choked up on the bat in an exaggerated manner. Outfielder **Sam Crawford**, who faced Keeler a lot after his Baltimore days, said that Willie "only used about half his bat."

The Orioles perfected the hit-and-run, the double steal, the sacrifice, the delayed steal, and what became known as a "Baltimore Chop," (where the batter pounded the ball into the ground in an effort to bounce it over the head of a defender. Since most of the Orioles were fast runners, they could also beat out infield hits that other teams couldn't, just by hitting the ball high off the hard infield surface. One report estimated that Keeler had 54 "bunt" hits in a single season, which probably also included hits made on the Baltimore Chop.

"Keeler could bunt any time he chose," **Honus Wagner** said. "If the third baseman came in for a tap, he pushed the ball past him. If he stayed back, he bunted. Also, he had a trick of hitting a high hopper to an infielder. The ball would bounce so high that he was across the bag before he could be stopped."

Hanlon's Orioles won the pennant in 1894, 1895, and 1896, and their exciting style of play helped increase attendance in Baltimore by over 300% from their first season in the National League. The roster was filled with stars: ornery third baseman **John "Muggsy" McGraw**, hard-hitting outfielder **"Jumpin' Joe" Kelley**, determined shortstop Hughie Jennings, the slugging first baseman "Big Dan" Brouthers, catcher **Wilbert "Uncle Robby" Robinson**, and Keeler, who won the batting title in 1897 and 1898. Willie averaged 219 hits in his five seasons as an Oriole. Each of those star players (McGraw, Kelley, Jennings, Brouthers, Robinson, and Keeler) would eventually earn election to the Hall of Fame. One would not be wrong to call the 1890s Orioles the greatest team of the 19th century.

Hitting Streak Record

In 1897, Keeler started the season by hitting safely in each of the first 44 games of the season, a league record that stood until **Joe DiMaggio** eclipsed it more than four decades later. Today, we are trained to revere DiMaggio's record, but when Joe set it, not everyone was so delighted. There were many fans still breathing oxygen who preferred Wee Willie. One letter writer told the *New York Times* in July of 1941 that in Keeler's day:

"... there was no such lively ball as the batter of today wallops over short fences or into outfield stands.

And the same Keeler rooter penned that the modern home run was:

"... a travesty to those of us who recall the inside baseball that prevailed in the era of the so-called dead-ball."

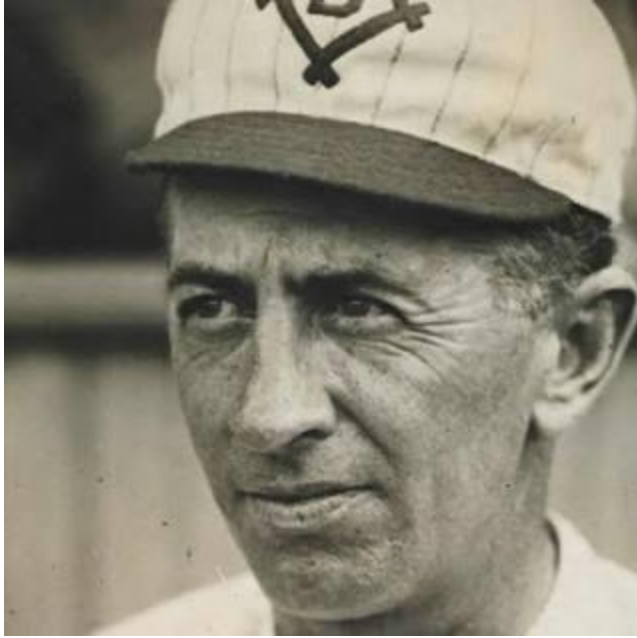
Baseball, the letter-writer said, had "sacrificed to satisfy a supposed demand for 'swat' rather than science."

Even with the different style of play in that era, Keeler's season was remarkable. He collected 239 hits in only 129 games, and only twice did he go hitless in two straight games. He also stole 64 bases and struck out just five times. His final batting average was .424, a mark that remains the highest ever by a left-handed batter.

The Orioles dynasty didn't survive the 1890s: money and infighting tore them apart just like the Oakland A's of the 1970s. Hanlon bought controlling interest of the Brooklyn team and took many of his stars with him, including Willie, who got to live in his parent's house and walk to the ballpark. He liked home cooking and batted .353 in four seasons with Brooklyn, who were known by that time as the "Superbas." He finished his career as a veteran with the New York Highlanders in the rival American League, where he earned more money and still kept getting his share of Baltimore Chop base hits. In 1905, when he was 33, Wee Willie finished second in the batting race, and the following year he batted over .300 for the 13th consecutive season. He played his final professional game in 1911 at the age of 39.

Last Days and Early Demise

After his playing career, Keeler had fortune followed by misfortune, and then untimely death. Willie had invested his money from baseball wisely, mostly in coal and iron ore mines, and amassed a nice fortune. But several business dealings with his brothers failed, and by the late 1910s he was in debt. Charles Ebbets, owner of the Dodgers, raised money to help Willie pay off his creditors, but Keeler fell ill in the early 1920s, and on New Year's Day in 1923, 29 years after he was traded to the Orioles, and only 12 years after his last base hit, Keeler died from heart disease. He was only 50 years old.



THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE—ANSWERS

4 players homered as teenager and over age 40

He debuted at age 18 in 1905 and played 22 seasons with his first team. He won an MVP and a Triple Crown. At age 41 homered for the 1928 Philadelphia A's. Better known for his average (he won 12 batting titles) than his power.

TY COBB

In 1963 at age 19 he hit his first HR with Houston. In 1985 his last HR was at age 41 for the Mets. Lefty hitter, he had 2714 career hits for 5 teams.

RUSTY STAUB

Member of the 500 HR club, he played for the 1987 World Series winner. Right-handed slugger, at age 19 he homered for the Brewers, at age 40 for the Mets.

GARY SHEFFIELD

Started hitting HRs in 1994 at age 19 and didn't stop until 2016. The 3x MVP hit 36 HRs at age 20 and 31 at age 39. And a bunch in between.

AROD

I have the most career hits for a catcher, ahead of **Ted Simmons, Carlton Fisk and Joe Torre.**

My 2844 hits are 50th on the MLB career hits list.

My 2427 games caught is first all-time.

17 of my 21 seasons were the American League.

I was 1999 AL MVP. Elected to the Hall of Fame in 2017.

I won 13 Gold Gloves, 14x All-Star, batted .300 eight straight seasons.

I am one of 8 catchers who drove in 100 runs and scored 100 runs in a season.

Who am I?

IVAN RODRIGUEZ

Boston Red Sox four World Series winners this century. Who was their winningest pitcher each season?

2018 Red Sox win 4-1 over dodgers

Improbable Cy Young winner a year earlier in 2017 when he went 22-4, this right hander led the 2018 World Series champs at 17-7.

RICK PORCELLO

2013 Red Sox win 4-2 over Cards

Lefty who won 110 games for the Red Sox. In 2013 he was 15-8 to lead the team, then went 2-0 in the Red Sox victory over St. Louis in the Series.

JOHN LESTER

2007 Red Sox win 4-0 over Rockies

Right hander who won 200 games for Boston. He is in MLB's top 80 in career games started with 463. He went 17-12 in 2007, did not pitch in Sox sweep of the Rockies.

TIM WAKEFIELD

2004 Red Sox win 4-0 over Cards

Right hander went 21-6 in 2004, second in Cy Young voting to Johan Santana. Won his only decision in sweep of St. Louis in the World Series.

CURT SCHILLING

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