

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

4.23.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

A shorter edition this Sunday morning as I got to hang with good golf friends for the past week in sunny Tucson. In this morning's edition TV blackouts, A's to Vegas, ball doctoring, great Yankee Stadium moments and once again Amazing Ohtani. Please grab a coffee and enjoy.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Which four players hit 200 or more home runs at the original Yankee Stadium?

Last HR in 1968

Last HR as a Yankee in 1934

Last HR in 1938

Last HR as a Yankee in 1963

The Oakland A's won three straight World Series 1972-73-74 when I was in high school (Westfield NJ Blue Devils class of '74)

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We are looking for the position players who played the most games for the A's over those three seasons and the five pitchers with the most innings pitched. How many of the 13 can you get?

C

1B

2B

SS

3B

LF

CF

RF

P

P

P

P

P

Pete Alonso is the only Met to lead MLB in home runs in a season (53 in 2019). Who are the other three Mets who led the NL?

1991 switch hitter

1988 lefty outfielder

1982 righty 1B

(answers at the bottom)

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Gerrit Cole pitched a 2-hitter gem for the Yankees against Minnesota this week. Two hours and seven minutes, it tied for the shortest nine-inning game ever at New Yankee Stadium, which opened in 2009. He's 4-0 with an 0.95 ERA and he hasn't allowed a homer all season.

Cody Bellinger had himself a weekend, huh? Last Friday, he picked up a time violation because he took a moment to acknowledge the appreciative cheers of Dodger fans. That same night, he forgot to leave tickets for his parents. The next day, he remembered to leave tickets for them. On Sunday he homered, stole a base, stole a home run and led the Cubs to a 3-2 victory over the Dodgers.

Clayton Kershaw hasn't thrown a complete game since 2017.

Justin Verlander (244), **Zack Greinke** (223), **Max Scherzer** (203) lead active pitchers in wins.

Clayton Kershaw became the 121st pitcher with 200 wins when he beat the Mets Tuesday. His career ERA of 2.48 is the lowest of any 200-game winner since 1927, and his career .694 win/loss percentage is the best of the modern era for any pitcher with 200 wins. Kershaw is also #1 in Dodgers all-time strikeouts 2833, #1 in WHIP 1.00, 2nd in ERA 2.48 and 3rd in wins at 200 behind **Don Sutton** (233) and **Don Drysdale** (209).

Adam Wainwright (195 wins) will likely join them soon.

200 wins/3 Cy Young awards, all for one team — It's just Kershaw and **Jim Palmer** (Orioles).

200 wins/2,800 strikeouts, all for one team — It's just Kershaw, **Walter Johnson** (Senators) and **Bob Gibson** (Cardinals).

200 wins/150 ERA+, for any team(s) — It's just Kershaw and **Pedro Martinez**.

But from there win total really falls off. Here are the active pitchers with 100 + wins. Besides **Gerrit Cole**, not seeing these guys passing 200 wins.

Johnny Cueto, 143

Madison Bumgarner and **Gerrit Cole**, 134

Lance Lynn, 123

Charlie Morton, 118

Chris Sale, 115

Corey Kluber and **Stephen Strasburg**, 113

Carlos Carrasco, 104

Ian Kennedy, 104

Wade Miley, 101

So many of us remember when 300 wins was the gold standard. All these guys reached 300 wins since I was a younger fan.

Gregg Maddux 355

Roger Clemens 354

Steve Carlton 329

Nolan Ryan 324

Don Sutton 324

Phil Neikro 318

Gaylord Perry 314

Tom Seaver 311

Tom Glavine 305

Randy Johnson 303

Do you see anyone on the 100 wins list except for Cole reaching 200?

Gerrit Cole is just the eighth NL/AL pitcher since 1901 to start a season with four straight wins, 30+ strikeouts, and no home runs allowed.

Player	Team	Year	SO	HR	W
Gerrit Cole	NYN	2023	32	0	4
Zack Greinke	KCR	2009	36	0	4
Roger Clemens	BOS	1991	34	0	4
Fernando Valenzuela	LAD	1981	36	0	4
Tom Cheney	WSA	1963	38	0	4
Dizzy Dean	STL	1937	33	0	4
Christy Mathewson	NYG	1908	34	0	4
Rube Waddell	PHA	1904	33	0	4

Gerrit Cole is the second Yankees starting pitcher in the last 65 years to post an ERA that low through four games, joining **Tommy John** (0.83 ERA in 1979).

Cole is also just the third Yankees pitcher in the last 39 years to win each of his first four starts, joining **Mike Mussina** (won his first seven in 2003) and **David Cone** (won his first four in 1995).

Cole rank in lowest ERA in first 5 starts in Yankee history

1951	Eddie Lopat	0.60
1946	Spud Chandler	0.60
2023	Gerrit Cole	0.79
1945	Hank Borowy	0.80
1999	David Cone	0.82

Monday marked the 11th anniversary of **Jamie Moyer** becoming the oldest pitcher to record an AL/NL victory. At 49 years and 150 days old, Moyer, then pitching for the Rockies, was the winning pitcher against the Padres on April 17, 2012 and broke the previous record of 49 years and 70 days old held by **Jack Quinn** of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Moyer's feat broke a 79-year-old record that will, in all likelihood, not be broken for quite some time, if ever.

Moyer tossed seven innings of two-run ball (both runs unearned) against the Padres. In the process, he became the oldest pitcher to ever record an AL/NL win. Just for good measure,

Moyer beat his own record a month later when he defeated the D-Backs on May 16th, 2012 at 49 years and 180 days old.

Moyer's signature moment is the perfect encapsulation of his unique career. Few pitchers have displayed Moyer's longevity and durability. Moyer pitched for 25 seasons across four decades from 1986-2012. **Nolan Ryan** (27 seasons) and **Tommy John** (26 seasons) are the only pitchers to have appeared in more seasons. Moyer's 638 career starts are bested only by 15 pitchers in MLB history. When he reached 4,000 innings in 2010, he became the 40th, and most recent, member of that club. In all likelihood, he will be the last pitcher to reach 4,000 innings.

What makes Moyer's career even more fascinating is that he was roughly a league-average pitcher during most of it. Of those 40 pitchers to reach 4,000 innings, Moyer's career 103 ERA+ ranks 39th ahead of only **Gus Weyhing** (102 ERA+). He had more seasons with a below-average ERA+ (13) than seasons with an above-average ERA+ (12). As a result of his combination of superb longevity and average production, Moyer allowed the third-most earned runs (1,926) in MLB history. No pitcher allowed more home runs (522).

With his first-inning double against the Red Sox in last Saturday's 9-7 loss at Fenway Park, **Mike Trout** became the fourth player all time with at least 300 career doubles, 300 career homers and 200 stolen bases by his age-31 season. And he joined some impressive company, as **Barry Bonds**, **Alex Rodriguez** and Hall of Famer **Willie Mays** are the only other players to reach those marks before turning 32.

Trout, a three-time AL MVP and 10-time All-Star, went 3-for-4 with two doubles and a walk and is hitting .300/.462/.580 with three homers, five doubles and nine RBIs in 14 games this season. In his 13-year career with the Angels, Trout has 353 homers, 301 doubles and 204 stolen bases in 1,421 games.

It's too early to say **Corey Kluber** is toast, but the 37-year-old righty is 1-8 with a 7.36 ERA and 1.66 WHIP in his last nine starts going back to last season.

Opponents have hit .329 in those games with eight home runs. Kluber has averaged 7.58 strikeouts per nine innings, which is below league average.

There's really no such thing as a bad one-year contract, but the \$10 million the Sox invested in Kluber may have been better spent on another starter.

Most Valuable Player...when he played (Fewest games in an MVP season)

	Year	Games
George Brett	1980	117
Mickey Mantle	1962	123
Willie Stargell	1979	117
Barry Bonds	2004	130

George Brett and Barry Bonds were clearly the best players in their respective leagues in the years they won. In 1980, Brett hit .390 in the last real push anyone has made at hitting .400. Bonds had a .529 OBP and was intentionally walked in more than 10% of his plate appearances. Mickey Mantle led the AL in OBP and SLG, lapping the field in offensive value in the first year his legs really chipped away at his defense.

Willie Stargell's MVP award, which he shared with Keith Hernandez. MVPs while missing 20% of the season.

Anthony Volpe as of Tuesday 7 for 7 in stolen bases. Volpe is the fourth Yankee in the last 34 years to steal at least seven bases through the club's first 16 games of a season, joining **Jacoby Ellsbury** (seven in 2014), **Brett Gardner** (eight in 2010) and **Derek Jeter** (seven in 1998).

In New York's 6-1 win on Saturday, Volpe became the youngest Yankee to swipe three bases in a game.

Volpe swiped 50 bases in 57 attempts last season, including a 44-for-50 showing with Double-A Somerset that helped him become the Minors' first 20-homer, 50-steal performer since the Braves' **Andruw Jones** in 1995.

At 5 hours plus the three times rain delayed Red Sox game on Patriots Day took more than twice as long as the winners of the Boston Marathon that day needed to run 26 miles. The Angels beat Boston 5-4.

The marathon had a Boston Red Sox angle-- **Brock Holt**, who played seven seasons as a utilityman for the Red Sox ran. So did pitcher **Ryan Dempster**, a 16-year MLB veteran who played his final season in Boston. Holt and Dempster were members of the 2013 Red Sox team that won the World Series just months after the bombing at the marathon that killed three people and injured more than 250 others.

Dempster told Boston.com that he was inspired to enter the race as he reflected on the emotions he felt 10 years ago. He's running in support of the Lingzi Foundation, a charity founded in memory of bombing victim Lingzi Lu. Holt is supporting the Jimmy Fund, a Boston-based cancer charity that he worked with during his time with the Red Sox. Longtime MLB reliever **Mike Myers**, who was part of Boston's curse-breaking World Series team in 2004, ran for the second time (supporting an ALS charity). Kourtney Turner, the wife of current Red Sox player **Justin Turner**, also ran.

Doug Flutie, former NFL quarterback who won the Heisman Trophy in 1984 at Boston College. (He's running in support of his Doug Flutie Foundation, which benefits people and families affected by autism. And former Bruins defenseman Zdeno Chára (who stands 6'9") is one of several former sports stars participating in the 127th edition of the nation's most famous road race.

Chára, 46, retired after last season following a 24-year NHL career. He's running in support of two charities, one that benefits people with cerebral palsy and one that benefits people with paralysis. (About 20% of Boston Marathon participants earn their spot in the field by raising money for charity.)

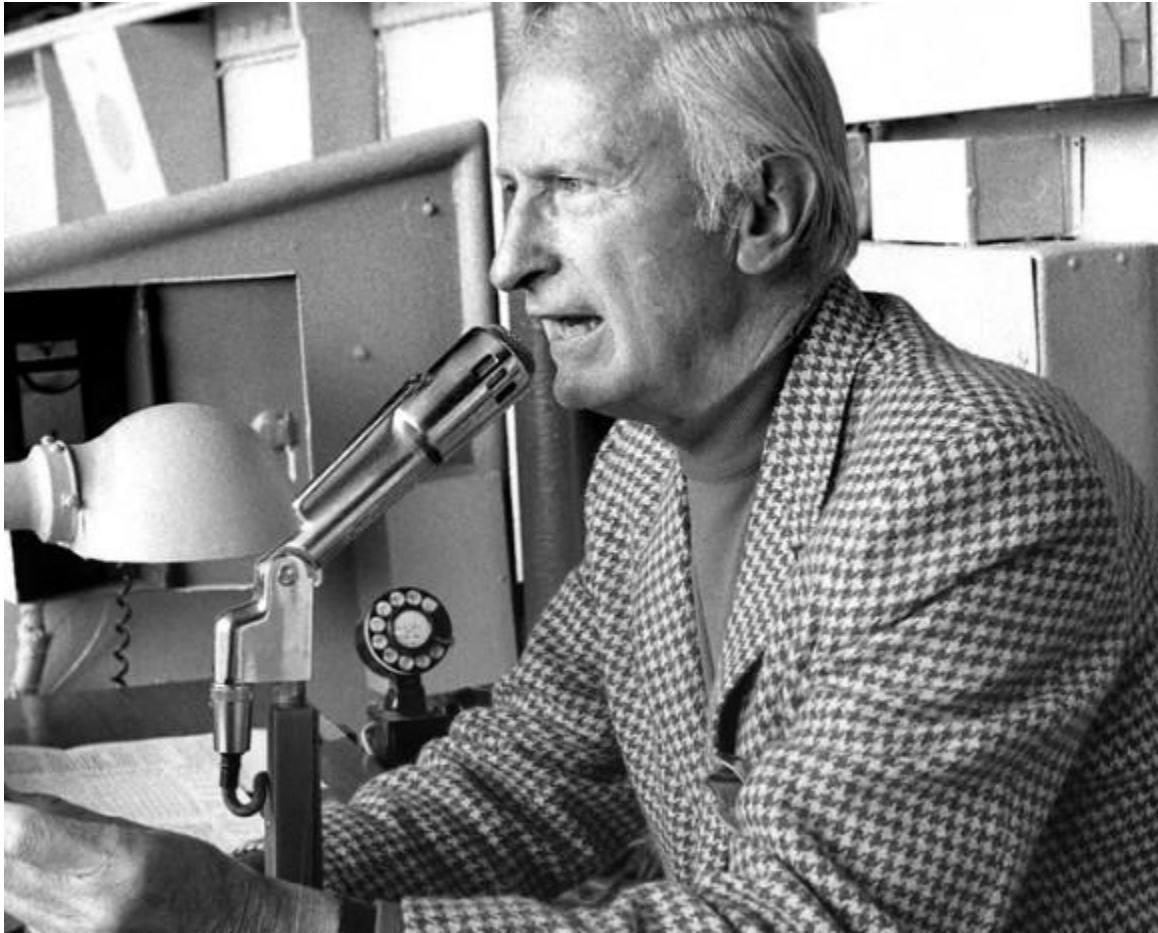
Tony Kubek went deep in his final Major League at-bat on Oct. 3, 1965, homering off **Dick Radatz** of the Red Sox in New York's 11-5 win. Only Yankee to HR in his final career at bat.

Yikes. Two of baseball's best pitchers made early exits Monday night: Milwaukee's **Corbin Burnes** left in the sixth after straining his left pec. Burnes was NL Cy Young in 2021 and had a sparkling 2022 as well. Texas' **Jacob deGrom**, meanwhile, threw four no-hit innings against the Royals before leaving with the dreaded forearm stiffness, though the team labeled it as a precaution. Precaution or not, "forearm tightness" is never a phrase you want to see typed out for a pitcher, and it's an issue deGrom has dealt with before.

Burnes gets \$10 million for the season from Milwaukee. deGrom's base salary is \$30 million.

On April 17, 1951 — For the first time, in a career that will span more than half of a century, public address announcer Bob Sheppard announces the Yankees' lineup. The 'Voice of God's' introduction of the Bronx Bombers will include the memorable names of **Mickey Mantle**, playing his first game in pinstripes, **Phil Rizzuto**, and **Yogi Berra**, but the first player's name announced will be DiMaggio — Dom DiMaggio, the leadoff batter for the visiting Red Sox. Such began a career that lasted 57 years and nearly 4,000 games, the final one coming on Sept. 5, 2007 — a 10-2 Yankees win over Seattle that occurred about a month shy of Sheppard's 97th

birthday. Although Sheppard passed away in 2010, his voice was the only one ever announcing **Derek Jeter** at Yankee Stadium.



Madison Bumgarner will forever be remembered as a World Series MVP/workhorse during his time as a San Francisco Giant. His work since then has been...regrettable. The Diamondbacks — who signed Bumgarner to a five-year, \$85 million deal in 2020 — designated the pitcher for assignment yesterday, ending his tenure in Arizona with \$37 million left on his contract. Bumgarner finishes his Dbacks tenure with a 5.23 ERA.

Fernando Tatis Jr., who hasn't played since 2021 (563 days) due to a combination of injuries and a PED suspension, is eligible to return today and will join a Padres team that has seriously loaded up in the time he's been sidelined.

While Tatis was rehabbing a broken wrist last season (the result of an offseason motorcycle crash in the Dominican Republic), Tatis was suspended 80 games for testing positive for the steroid Clostebol. He's also **undergone three surgeries since he last played an MLB game** (two on his wrist and one on his shoulder, which he injured in 2021), but he's healthy now, and his suspension is up, meaning he's ready to join a Padres team that looks a lot differently from the last time he took the field.

Tatis sure looks ready to pick up where he left off. **He played eight games at Triple A El Paso** to prepare for his return and hit the cover off the ball in 39 plate appearances, **posting an outrageous .515/.590/1.212 slash line**. Seven of his 17 hits were home runs.

He led the NL with 42 home runs in 2021 (four more than **Adam Duvall** in second place)

Did you know **Todd Jones**, righthander reliever who pitched 16 seasons in the majors, is 22nd in career saves with 319, more than Hall of Famers **Goose Gossage** (310) and **Bruce Sutter** (300)?

From Jayson Stark

The A's and Cubs on Wednesday gave us the first game ever to feature the rarified Pitch Clock Daily Double. So what the heck is that?

They racked up a Strikeout Not Looking on a hitter (on Oakland's **Aledmys Díaz**) and a Sleepwalk by a pitcher (on the Cubs' **Keegan Thompson**) *in the same game*. Good times! (See what we did there?)

- Go figure. Blue Jays hitters in their first 18 games of the season: 701 hitters digging into the old batters box ... 2,770 pitches thrown their way ... and *zero* pitch-clock violations.

Then those same Blue Jays in Game No. 19, Wednesday in Houston: *three* pitch-clock violations (Vlad Guerrero Jr. in the first, **Whit Merrifield** in the fifth, **Bo Bichette** in the eighth). Baseball! It's weird (but also wild).

- The Tigers and Guardians played an entire doubleheader Tuesday — that's two full games, 18 innings, 503 pitches, 137 batters marching to home plate, 31 hits, 40 base runners — in a *total time* of 4 hours, 13 minutes.

Did you know there were five *nine-inning games* last year that went 4:13 or longer? Truth! A toast to that pitch clock anyone?

The Red Sox really just play an entire nine-inning game at Fenway Park in (gasp) 1 hour, 57 minutes? Yeah, they did — Sunday against the Angels. It was the swiftest game at Fenway *in 34 years* — since **John Dopson** outdueled **Jaime Navarro** and the Brewers in 1:50 on Oct. 1, 1989.

The Padres lost a 1-0 game to Milwaukee on Sunday in a way no team had ever lost a 1-0 game before. Pay attention now!

Bunt single ... followed by a **Yu Darvish** stepoff because of a PitchCom glitch, followed by a pickoff throw to first ... so that's two disengagements, but that's news to Darvish, who never got the memo about the first one.

OK, are you following this? Number of disengagements on the little disengagement scoreboard in Darvish's head: one. Number of disengagements in real life: two. So does this seem like trouble? Ho-ho-ho. What do you think? You get only two disengagements before they call in the balk police. Which means *of course it's trouble*. ... Now back to our regularly scheduled programming.

Catcher **Austin Nola** then punches the “pickoff-throw” button on PitchCom when he means to punch the pitchout button ... oops! ... whereupon Darvish throws over to first again (that's disengagement No. 3) ... which (much to Darvish's shock) balks the runner to second. ... Hoo boy. Told you it was trouble. Now, you know what's coming next?

Yep! Steal of third ... sacrifice fly ... and that's your only run scored in a 1-0 major-league game

Bruce Bochy's career totals looks this way: 77 ejections, 77 postseason games managed! But now that ejections have re-taken the lead, the list of managers with at least as many postseason games as ejections (and at least 70 postseason games) looks this way:

<u>Manager</u>	<u>Post Season Games</u>	<u>Ejections</u>
Joe Torre	138	70
Dusty Baker	97	25
Jim Leyland	84	73
Dave Roberts	81	10
Terry Francona	78	47

Red Sox-Angels game: One in the second inning, on Red Sox catcher **Connor Wong**. Then two more — *in a span of three hitters* — on Angels backup catcher **Matt Thaiss**, as huge moments in the Red Sox's game-winning three-run rally.

How wild is two in one inning? Only two other two-catcher's interference innings in the Baseball Reference database — both to the Yankees, both in fact to Judge and Stanton (July 29, 2020, and June 27, 2022).

Ah, but how weird is three in one game? *no other games like that* in the Baseball Reference database.

OHTANI CONTINUES TO AMAZE—THE FREE AGENT PRICE KEEPS GOING UP.

Friday night against Kansas City **Shohei Ohtani** struck out the side in the first inning en-route to an 11-strikeout performance over seven scoreless frames in a 2-0 win at Angel Stadium. Ohtani also finished his outing with a flurry, striking out the final six batters he faced, while making Kansas City hitters look foolish with his array of 100 mph fastballs, unhittable sweepers and knee-buckling curveballs. His 11 strikeouts were a season high, and he now leads the Majors with 12 games of at least 10 strikeouts dating back to last season. Ohtani allowed just two hits and two walks while lowering his ERA to 0.64 through 28 innings, which is an Angels record through the first five starts of a season. He has a 0.64 ERA, 0.82 WHIP, .092 opponent batting average and .115 opponent slugging percentage. He also has four homers, including a 116.7 mph one this week at Yankee Stadium, and a hard-hit rate above 50%.

He's allowed just an .092 opponent batting average this year. That's the lowest in a pitcher's first five starts in a season since the mound was moved to its current distance in 1893, per the Elias Sports Bureau (with a minimum of 10 innings pitched, to isolate traditional starters). The prior record was .102, by **David Cone** in 1999.

- Just to dive deeper on that batting average, let's go to the counting stats. He's allowed just eight hits, out of 105 batters faced. That's the fewest in a pitcher's first five starts of a year since at least 1901 (min. 20 innings).

Of those eight hits, just two have gone for extra bases — both doubles. He's allowed just a .115 opponent slugging percentage this year. And, you guessed it: that's the lowest in a player's first five games pitched in a season (since at least 1916, min. 20 innings).

- And this isn't new. Ohtani has now allowed three hits or fewer in each of his last nine starts dating to last season. That's the second-longest such streak among traditional starters since 1893, behind only 2021 **Jacob deGrom** (10), per Elias.

- Ohtani now has 12 games with at least 10 strikeouts since the start of last season. That's the most in MLB in that span. Again, this man also hits baseballs at 118-plus mph.

Friday the Rays improved to a perfect 11-0 at home on the year, extended their season-opening home-run streak to a record-tying 20 games (tying the 2019 Mariners), and became just the 13th team in the modern era (since 1901) to win at least 17 of its first 20 games. It's the best start to the season for any club in the Majors since the Red Sox (also 17-3) in 2018.

They've hit 45 home runs, the second-most through 20 games in AL/NL history behind only the 2000 Cardinals (47)

BYE BYE OAKLAND, HELLO VEGAS

The **A's move to Las Vegas** now seems fait accompli, according to multiple reports out of Nevada that were confirmed by team president Dave Kaval and MLB commissioner Rob Manfred. Sadly for the team's loyal fans in Oakland, the outcome of this 20-year saga seems to be the one A's owner John Fisher wanted all along.

The franchise has signed a binding agreement to purchase 49 acres of land (with the option to add more) near the Las Vegas Strip. (The news was first reported by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.) The team says it hopes to have a 35,000-capacity, billion-dollar stadium with a retractable roof built by 2027. That could include up to \$500 million in public financing, per the *Nevada Independent*. (The team's lease in Oakland expires after the 2024 season;

The A's \$56.8 million Opening Day payroll ranked 30th in the majors. The team is 3-16. Its minus-86 run differential is by far the worst in the league.

In one neighborhood, the Blue Jays, Dodgers, Mets, Padres, Phillies, and Yankees all have payrolls in excess of \$200 million and are run by ownership groups determined to win. On the other side of town are the Athletics, Reds, and Rockies, teams with proud histories that have alienated their respective fan bases.

Oakland went into the weekend 3-16 with seven consecutive losses. It equaled the worst start in the history of a franchise that goes back to 1901. The Athletics were outscored by an average of 4.5 runs in those 19 games.

The Bay Area is the sixth-largest media market in the country, with a population of 7.7 million. Las Vegas is 40th and has a population of 647,000.

This is a money grab for owner John Fisher. Those 49 acres are big enough for three ballparks. He's in it for the development rights.

Under Fisher and president Dave Kaval, the Athletics have run a barebones operation, slicing the payroll below \$60 million while raising ticket prices.

Oakland averaged 11,623 fans for a recent six-game homestand. Athletics management is so inept that the visiting television booth couldn't be used by the Mets announcers last week because a possum had taken up residence in the walls and the stench of its droppings made the room uninhabitable.

The A's have won four World Series since coming to Oakland in 1968, one more than the Giants have in San Francisco since 1958. But the Giants have a beautiful ballpark, committed fans, and a healthy future.

In Cincinnati, the Reds have played 12 home games, and seven drew fewer than 14,000 fans. Monday's game against the Rays had an announced crowd of 7,375, the smallest in the 20-year history of Great American Ballpark outside of 2020.

The Reds haven't won a playoff series since 1995, and CEO Phil Castellini, the owner's son, told a fan group before the season that baseball's economic system was stacked against the Reds.

Rockies fans are fed up, too. Colorado finished a homestand Wednesday having lost eight straight while giving up 64 runs. Wednesday's game against the Pirates, a 14-3 loss, drew 18,511 at Coors Field, the smallest crowd in more than a decade.



Thousands of fans disguised as empty seats.

THE ONLY GOOD NEWS IN OAKLAND

OAKLAND -- **Mason Miller** lighting up the radar gun with 102 mph fastballs in a big-league stadium seemed unfathomable considering where he was just five years ago.

While struggling to put on weight as a 6-foot-5, 150-pound sophomore pitcher at Division III Waynesburg University, Miller submitted a drug test for a summer internship that revealed his blood sugar level was abnormally high.

On April 18, 2018, he was diagnosed with Type 1 juvenile diabetes.

After finding the right diet and strength training program, Miller bulked up to 220 pounds. With that weight gain came added velocity to his fastball. Selected by the A's in the third round of the 2021 MLB Draft, Miller fast-tracked his way through the Minors by overpowering hitters at each level. Making his Major League debut in a 12-2 loss to the Cubs on Wednesday -- five years and one day since his diabetes diagnosis -- Oakland's flamethrowing **No. 3 prospect** electrified the Coliseum over 4 1/3 innings, holding Chicago to two runs on four hits and a walk while striking out five.

Miller's dazzling fastball was in full effect. He threw the four-seamer for 53 of his 81 pitches, generating 27 swings and six whiffs with it. The fastball averaged 99.3 mph, maxed out at 102.5 mph and registered at 100 mph or higher 15 times, making him just the 10th starting pitcher in the Statcast era to reach the mark 15 or more times in a game.

BAD MAX

SAN FRANCISCO -- **Max Scherzer's** sticky substance saga reached its conclusion on Thursday, when Major League Baseball suspended Scherzer 10 games and fined him an undisclosed amount "for violating the prohibitions on foreign substances" in such a manner that led to his ejection Wednesday in Los Angeles.

Citing the club's ongoing rotation issues, Scherzer said he elected not to appeal because "the best thing for the Mets ... is to accept the suspension." Scherzer is eligible to return to the mound on May 1. In the interim, he can remain with the team but cannot be in the dugout during games.

According to a league release, MLB "reviewed relevant video and first-person reports, including a report from the umpiring crew" at Dodger Stadium before handing down its suspension. Specifically, the league is punishing Scherzer for the amount of sticky substance on his hand prior to the fourth inning, when umpires **Dan Bellino** and **Phil Cuzzi** checked him for the third time in the game.

"Based on the umpires' training to detect rosin on a pitcher's hands, they concluded that the level of stickiness during the fourth inning check was so extreme that it was inconsistent with the use of rosin and/or sweat alone," the report read, echoing Bellino's assertions to a pool reporter after Wednesday's game.

Scherzer has maintained that he used nothing more than "sweat and rosin" -- both legal substances, provided they are applied in accordance with MLB rules. Specifically, in a memo distributed to teams last month, the league wrote that rosin "used excessively or otherwise misapplied (i.e., to gloves or other parts of the uniform) ... may be determined by the umpires to be a prohibited foreign substance, the use of which may subject a player to ejection and discipline."

Bellino and Cuzzi contended that the level of stickiness on Scherzer's hand was above and beyond anything they had seen this season. Although Scherzer did not deny that assertion on Thursday, he expressed frustration at the subjective nature of sticky substance checks.

"There's no uniform stickiness," Scherzer said. "There's no objective, quantifiable measurement of stickiness, of tackiness. And so what can be deemed legal one inning can be deemed illegal

the in the next inning just by applying sweat. That's my problem with this. That's what happened."

Scherzer added that in the future, he would like to see the league use technology to track spin rate spikes for pitchers suspected of applying illegal substances (or legal substances in excess).

"When you apply the rosin, there's not a test where you can say, 'Oh, I'm at seven units,' or 'Oh, I'm at 10 units,'" Scherzer said. "You don't know exactly how sticky it's going to get once I hit the sweat. It's an inexact science. Obviously, Phil deemed I was using too much, but how am I supposed to know? Where is that line?"

Despite Scherzer's protestations, he accepted the suspension without appeal because his hearing would have been in front of an MLB panel, not an independent arbitrator. (Scherzer indicated that he did negotiate a reduced fine.)

The 10-game suspension weakens a Mets rotation that was already missing injured starters **Justin Verlander** (right teres major strain), **Carlos Carrasco** (bone spur in right elbow) and **José Quintana** (recovery from rib surgery). Verlander is likely to return in early May. Carrasco could do the same if he responds well to treatment, but he also stands a chance of missing significant time. Quintana won't debut until July at the earliest.

Without those pitchers, the Mets are relying heavily on **David Peterson** and **Tylor Megill**, who entered Spring Training as the team's sixth and seventh starters. Complicating matters is the fact that the Mets cannot replace Scherzer on the active roster while he is suspended; instead, they must play shorthanded. The team intends to call up left-hander **Joey Lucchesi** on Friday to make his first MLB outing since 2021, and it will need to find another pitcher to take Scherzer's spot on Tuesday. (**José Butto**, who started last Sunday in Oakland, is not an option unless the Mets place someone on the injured list.). **Kodai Senga**, who pitched Thursday's series opener in San Francisco, is the only member of the club's original rotation still standing.

PITCH COUNT NOTES FROM JOE POASNANSKI

In 1988, the pitch count became an official MLB statistic, and most teams across baseball did try to protect pitchers — particularly young pitchers — by somewhat limiting the number of pitches they threw. The guide then, based on stories from the time, seemed to be about 120 pitches. That wasn't a limit — almost 600 pitchers that year threw 120 or more pitches in a game — but it was a guide.

And very slowly, the number of starters throwing 120 pitches in a game came down.

1988: 598 pitchers threw 120 pitches

1990: 484 pitchers threw 120 pitches

1992: 511 pitchers threw 120 pitches

1996: 455 pitchers threw 120 pitches

1998: 498 pitchers threw 120 pitches

The drop is even bigger than it looks here because, you have to remember, four expansion teams were added between 1988 and 1998.

Anyway, right around 1998, a massive shift in thinking happened. It probably came down to a handful of things that converged right around that time. One, Dr. James Andrews began to say that it was right around 100 pitches (not 120) that an arm begins to tire and be at greater risk of injury. That, too, made sense to people, and it seemed a nice round number, 100 pitches.

Two, my old friend Rany Jazayerli invented something called “Pitcher Abuse Points,” that measured how much a pitcher was abused in any given game based on how many pitches he threw. If a pitcher threw fewer than 100 pitches, there were 0 abuse points. But between 101-110 pitches, it was 1 abuse point per pitch, between 111-120 it was 2 abuse points per pitch, between 121-130 it was 3 abuse points per pitch and so on.

So, as Rany wrote, a 115-pitch outing was 20 PAPs — 10 points for pitches 101-110 and 10 more for pitches 111-115.

And obviously, the pitchers with the most PAPs were the ones most at risk of injury.

Rany’s study — along with others like it — put pressure on teams to do a better job of protecting pitchers. And then, three, the big one, right after he did his study, the most exciting young starter in baseball, **Kerry Wood**, blew out his arm after throwing quite a lot of pitches at age 20.

And the 120-pitch outing began to disappear

2000: 466 pitchers threw 120 pitches

2002: 230 pitchers threw 120 pitches

2004: 185 pitchers threw 120 pitches

2006: 120 pitchers threw 120 pitches

2008: 73 pitchers threw 120 pitches

And so on. Last year, there were only three games where a pitcher threw 120 pitches.* The 120-pitch game is basically gone.

Interestingly, not one of the three actually completed the game. Then-Red **Luis Castillo threw 123 pitches in a six-inning outing in Chicago. The Dodgers' Tyler Anderson had a one-hit shutout going into the ninth and he was pulled at 123 pitches when **Shohei Ohtani** cracked a triple. **Miles Mikolas** threw 129 pitches against the Pirates because he had a no-hitter going; he was pulled when **Calvin Mitchell** hit a ground-rule double with two outs in the ninth.*

The 110-pitch game is disappearing, too; there were only 79 of them last season. Frankly, the greater-than-100 pitch outing is probably on its way out as well. Between 2009 and 2017, the number of pitchers who threw more than 100 pitches in a game was sliced in half, and since 2017 that number has been sliced in half again.

HERE ARE THE FIRST HITTERS TO ADVANCE TO THE BIG LEAGUES FROM THE LAST 10 DRAFTS

2012: **Mike Zunino**, C, Mariners (first round, No. 3 overall)

2013: **Kris Bryant**, 3B, Cubs (first, No. 2)

2014: **Kyle Schwarber**, OF/C, Cubs (first, No. 4)

2015: **Alex Bregman**, 3B, Astros (first, No. 2)

2016: **Austin Hays**, OF, Orioles (third, No. 91)

2017: **Keston Hiura**, 2B, Brewers (first, No. 9)

2018: **Nico Hoerner**, SS, Cubs (first, No. 24)

2019: **Andrew Vaughn**, OF, White Sox (first, No. 3)

2020: **Spencer Torkelson**, 1B, Tigers (first, No. 1)

2021: no position player thus far

Xavier Nady was the last position player to play his first pro game in the Majors. Nady entered 2000 as the top-rated prospect in the Draft, but a slightly disappointing season at California and his high bonus demands dropped him to the Padres in the second round (49th overall). He held out until Sept. 17 before signing a four-year big-league contract worth a guaranteed \$2.85 million, including a \$1.1 million bonus. He debuted 13 days late in San Diego, pinch-singling off **Onan Masaoka** in a 10-2 loss to the Dodgers. Nady never became a star but did play parts of 12 seasons in the Majors.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES, BEER REVENUE

JAY BUSBEE, Yahoo News

What's better than a day at the ballpark? Nothing, that's what. You know how this American tradition goes: You drive (or take mass transit, if you have a sensibly planned city) to the ballpark, walk past the dudes selling water bottles for a tenth of the price inside, scalp a ticket for a couple bucks, hear the national anthem being played inside, get through the metal detectors, hit the bathroom, grab a beer and a dog, find your way to your seat, check out the scoreboard to see what you've missed ...

... and it's the middle of the fourth inning! What the hell? What happened to all the baseball?

As you've seen by now, baseball is in the midst of adjusting to its most revolutionary changes in decades, in part by not allowing the players to do any adjusting themselves. The pitch clock has tightened the screws on batters and pitchers alike, leading to a speedier game that's much more steak, much less fat.

Games are shorter by roughly a half-hour, which is great news if you're watching on television, and good news if you're watching in your seat. But here's where the Law of Unintended Consequences comes into play.

More action means less downtime, which means that the more time you spend away from the field, the more action you miss. If you decide to go grab a pretzel in the fourth inning and lines are even moderately bad, you might not get back in your seat until the seventh.

The cascading effects of the pitch clock are going to force teams to improve their operational efficiency, pronto. Fans are going to need to get to parking faster, get through security faster, get their concessions faster ... or their blood pressure is going to rise faster. Teams can charge the same ticket price for 20 percent less baseball as long as they can move fans through plodding lines 20 percent faster. (Or something like that.)

As a result of the pitch clock, some teams have extended beer sales into the eighth inning. That's not just to benefit fans; 20 percent less gametime means 20 percent less time for concession sales.

But that's exactly the wrong direction to go, Phillies pitcher Matt Strahm has argued; allowing fans to buy beer right up until the game's almost over increases the chances they'll get behind the wheel still feeling the effects of that last ballpark beer. An increase in DWIs due to a pitch clock probably isn't what MLB had in mind when it decided to speed up the game, but when you tinker with America's pastime, the butterfly effect ripples in unexpected directions.

By the time we get to the postseason, players likely will have adjusted to the faster pace of play. But long before that, we'll have summer vacation, and fans and teams are going to need to adjust, too.

So get on out to the ballpark. You'll have a great time. Just don't run late.

BAD TASTE PROMOTION OF THE YEAR



TESTING MORE RULES

Atlantic League teams will be allowed to use a designated pinch runner who is not in the starting lineup this season, one of three experimental rules Major League Baseball will test this season in the league. Here's what you need to know:

- Each club will list a designated pinch runner, who can be substituted at any point into the game as a baserunner, MLB said Tuesday.

- In another rule experiment, Atlantic League pitchers will be permitted only one disengagement from the pitching rubber per at-bat in 2023. This differs from the new MLB rule, which allows two disengagements during an at-bat.
- The “Double-Hook” designated hitter rule, which was first introduced during the 2021 season and modified for use during the 2022 Atlantic League Championship Season, is back.
- The rules will go into effect April 28.
- the league also will try what has come to be known as the “Double-Hook DH.” This is less complicated. If the starting pitcher goes five innings, his team keeps the DH. If not, they lose it for the remainder of the game.
- The idea here is to discourage the use of openers and bullpen games, and force teams to develop starters who can pitch five innings.
- Why? In 2012, starters averaged 5.88 innings. In 2022, it was 5.21. The starting pitcher is slowly fading in relevance.
- The third rule would allow pitchers one disengagement from the rubber instead of two, as is the case in the majors beginning this season. That change is designed to encourage more stolen bases.
- The first two rules would seem to be non-starters in the majors. A pinch runner coming in and out of the game would be a farce. It’s also unfair to designated hitters to have their at-bats taken away through no fault of their own.
- Players are paid based on statistics. **J.D. Martinez** or **Kyle Schwarber** shouldn’t get taken out of the game because their teammate couldn’t go five innings.
- The disengagement rule could have merit if stolen bases do not sufficiently increase in the majors this season. There is a lot to be said for getting the running game back in baseball.

YANKEE STADIUM GREATEST MOMENTS

(your fearless editor was there for two of them)

Thomas Harrigan, mlb.com

On April 18, 1923, the Yankees celebrated the grand opening of their new stadium in the Bronx, defeating the Red Sox as Babe Ruth christened the park with a home run. From that day forward, the Great Bambino and Yankee Stadium -- nicknamed “The House that Ruth Built” by sportswriter Fred Lieb -- would be forever intertwined.

The Yankees became a baseball powerhouse in the years that followed, with Ruth as the driving force behind their rise. New York won its first World Series title in the park's inaugural season and three more with the Babe in 1927, 1928 and 1932. The Yankees continued to win after Ruth's career ended, and Yankee Stadium played host to many memorable events and historic

moments across multiple sports over the years, until the team moved to a new park with the same name in 2009.

One hundred years since Ruth's momentous home run, the new cathedral in the Bronx will host three of MLB's biggest stars when **Aaron Judge** and the Yankees take on **Shohei Ohtani**, **Mike Trout** and the Angels in a three-game series starting Tuesday. MLB Network is set to broadcast all three games.

With the original Yankee Stadium turning 100, let's look back at some of the greatest baseball-centric moments that took place at the storied park, listed chronologically.

Ruth christens Yankee Stadium -- April 18, 1923

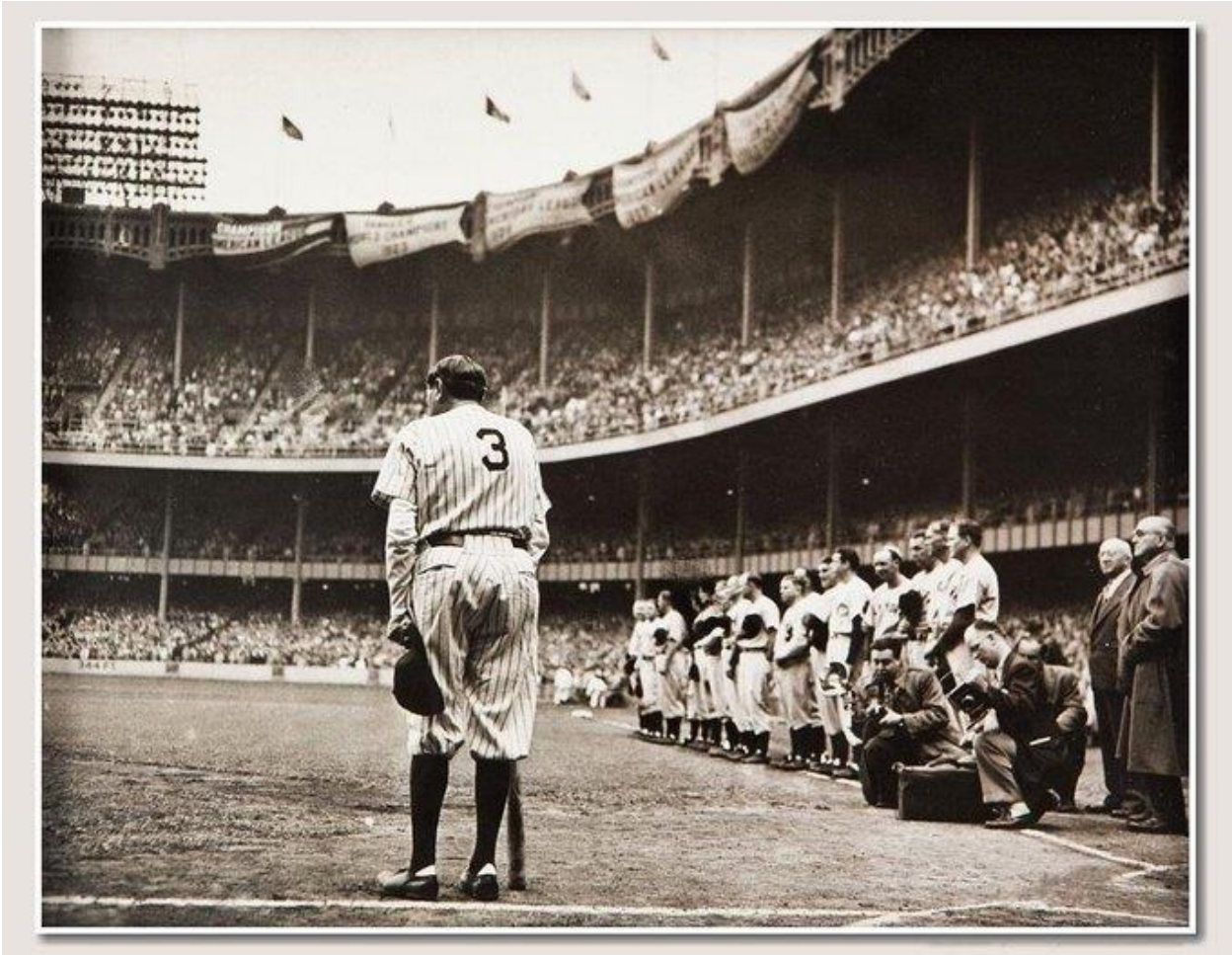
In their first game at their new stadium, the Yankees defeated the Red Sox 4-1 to open the 1923 season with a win. Ruth (who else?) slugged the park's first home run, clobbering a three-run blast to right field off **Howard Ehmke** in the bottom of the third inning. The Yanks would also finish the year with a victory, taking down the Giants in six games to win the first World Series championship in franchise history.

Gehrig's "Luckiest Man" speech -- July 4, 1939

With his production declining and his body breaking down, **Lou Gehrig** pulled himself from the Yankees' lineup on May 2, 1939, ending his Iron Man streak at 2,130 consecutive games played. He was diagnosed with ALS on June 19, 1939, his 36th birthday, and soon after the Yankees announced that Gehrig was retiring. On July 4, the team honored the Iron Horse at Yankee Stadium, and 61,808 fans watched an emotional Gehrig deliver his famous "Luckiest Man" speech. He died less than two years later, on June 2, 1941.

Bambino bids farewell -- June 13, 1948

On the day the Yankees celebrated the 25th anniversary of the opening of Yankee Stadium, a cancer-stricken Ruth made his final appearance at the ballpark in the Bronx as the team retired his No. 3. The once powerful slugger had lost a lot of weight by this point and had difficulty walking, using a borrowed bat as a cane. Ruth passed away two months later on Aug. 16. Nat Fein's photograph of Ruth from the ceremony, titled "The Babe Bows Out," won a Pulitzer Prize.



Dodgers win first title -- Oct. 4, 1955

The Brooklyn Dodgers played the Yankees in the World Series in 1941, 1947, 1949, 1952 and 1953. They lost every one. But in 1955, "Dem Bums" finally defeated their crosstown rivals, winning the first World Series title in franchise history with a 2-0 victory in Game 7 behind a Johnny Podres shutout at Yankee Stadium.

Larsen's perfect game -- Oct. 8, 1956

The Yankees and Dodgers met in the World Series again in 1956, with the Yankees prevailing in another seven-game classic. **Don Larsen** delivered one of history's greatest pitching performances in Game 5, facing 27 batters and retiring all of them in a perfect game. It's a feat that hasn't been duplicated in the postseason, and it stood as the only playoff no-hitter until **Roy Halladay** threw one in 2010.

Maris hits No. 61 -- Oct. 1, 1961

Roger Maris' arduous quest to break Ruth's single-season home run record came down to the final day of the 1961 regular season. After tying Ruth with his 60th homer of the season on Sept. 26, Maris swatted No. 61 five days later in the bottom of the fourth inning against the Red Sox, setting a new all-time mark that would hold up until 1998.

Mantle joins 500 home run club -- May 14, 1967

The Yankees won seven World Series titles during **Mickey Mantle's** career, but by 1967, Mantle was nearing the end of the line and New York was out of the championship picture. Mantle's chase for 500 home runs gave Yankees fans something to root for, and on May 14, the slugger reached the mark, becoming only the sixth member of the 500 home run club. It was the first time the milestone was reached at Yankee Stadium; Ruth was on the road for No. 500 as well as 600 and 700. [Watch >](#)

Chambliss walks it off, chaos ensues -- Oct. 14, 1976

Chris Chambliss' walk-off homer in the winner-take-all Game 5 of the 1976 ALCS against the Royals put the Yankees in the World Series and set off a chaotic celebration, with fans swarming the field after the ball left the park. Chambliss was mobbed as he rounded the bases, and he ultimately retreated to the clubhouse without touching home plate. Chambliss later returned to the field to make the winning run official, but home plate was gone.

"I still had my uniform on, but I put a jacket on over it and took a couple of cops with me out to the field," [Chambliss said in 2016](#). "We made our way through the crowd, and people had no idea it was me. We went up to home plate, and when we looked down, there was nothing there. Someone had taken home plate. So I put my foot down where it used to be, and then we went back in."

Reggie goes for 3 -- Oct. 18, 1977

Reggie Jackson cemented himself as Mr. October in Game 6 of the 1977 World Series against the Dodgers, crushing three homers -- on three consecutive pitches, no less -- in New York's title-clinching victory. Amid thunderous chants of "Reg-gie! Reg-gie! Reg-gie!" Jackson burst out of the dugout for a curtain call after his third homer, a towering blast that landed in the black batter's eye seats in dead center field.

Guidry strikes out 18 -- June 17, 1978

In the game [credited with starting the tradition](#) of fans standing and cheering on two-strike counts, **Ron Guidry** struck out a Yankees-record 18 batters while blanking the Angels. The performance was part of a dominant 1978 campaign in which Guidry went 25-3 with a 1.74 ERA and 248 K's over 273 2/3 innings, winning the AL Cy Young Award.

Murcer, Yanks honor Munson -- Aug. 6, 1979

On Aug. 2, 1979, Yankees captain **Thurman Munson** died tragically in a plane crash at the age of 32. Hours after attending Munson's funeral four days later in Canton, Ohio, the Yankees stormed back from a 4-0 deficit to score an emotional 5-4 win over the Orioles in the Bronx. **Bobby Murcer**, who gave one of the eulogies for Munson, drove in all five runs and delivered the walk-off hit in the bottom of the ninth.

The Pine Tar Incident -- July 24, 1983

After **George Brett** hit a go-ahead homer off **Rich Gossage** with two outs in the top of the ninth inning, manager **Billy Martin** complained that Brett's bat had too much pine tar, and umpires

agreed, ruling Brett out and giving the Yankees the win. The decision prompted one of baseball's most famous outbursts as an irate Brett bolted from the dugout to argue and had to be forcibly restrained. The future Hall of Famer was ultimately vindicated after the Royals filed a protest and AL president Lee MacPhail ordered that the game be continued from the point of the home run.

"Hang on to the roof!" -- Oct. 4, 1995

The Yankees had gone 14 years -- and **Don Mattingly's** entire career -- without a postseason appearance before returning to the playoffs in 1995, so fans were ready to explode when the first baseman stepped to the plate in the bottom of the sixth inning of ALDS Game 2 against the Mariners after Ruben Sierra tied the game with a solo homer. Mattingly followed with a home run of his own -- the only postseason dinger of his career -- sending the packed house into a frenzy as announcer Gary Thorne exclaimed, "Hang on to the roof!"

Jeter's controversial homer -- Oct. 9, 1996

With the Yankees trailing 4-3 in the bottom of the eighth inning in Game 1 of the 1996 ALCS, Derek Jeter lifted a fly ball to deep right field that appeared to be bound for Baltimore right fielder **Tony Tarasco's** glove. However, a young fan named Jeffrey Maier reached over the wall and deflected the ball into the stands, and umpire Rich Garcia ruled it a home run despite the interference. New York not only won the game in 11 innings en route to a 4-1 ALCS victory but also defeated the Braves in the World Series, and Maier's name became forever etched in Yankees lore.

Girardi's Game 6 triple -- Oct. 26, 1996

The Yankees were one win away from their first World Series championship since 1978, but they had to go through **Greg Maddux** to get it. Maddux had fired eight scoreless innings in the Braves' Game 2 win, but New York jumped on the right-hander for three runs in the bottom of the second in Game 6, the first of which scored on **Joe Girardi's** triple as the crowd erupted into a celebration that seemingly shook the foundation of Yankee Stadium.

27 up, 27 down for Wells -- May 17, 1998

David Wells achieved baseball immortality on a Sunday afternoon in 1998, setting down all 27 Twins he faced in the first perfect game by a Yankee since Don Larsen's in 1956. [Watch >](#)

Tino slams Padres -- Oct. 17, 1998

Facing San Diego in Game 1 of the World Series, the Yankees trailed 5-2 heading into the bottom of the seventh inning but tied it up on **Chuck Knoblauch's** three-run blast, then loaded the bases with two outs for **Tino Martinez**. After getting a favorable call on a ball that appeared to be strike three, Martinez crushed the next pitch to the upper deck in right field for a tiebreaking grand slam, putting New York on the path to a sweep that capped off the team's historic 1998 campaign.

Cone's perfecto -- July 18, 1999

On the same day the Yankees honored **Yogi Berra** and had **Don Larsen** throw out the

ceremonial first pitch to the Hall of Fame catcher in a reenactment of the final out of Larsen's 1956 perfecto, **David Cone** threw a perfect game of his own against the Expos. [Watch >](#)

Bush's perfect pitch -- Oct. 30, 2001

In the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush conveyed a message of strength to all Americans prior to Game 3 of the World Series between the Yankees and D-backs, stepping onto the mound and throwing a strike from the rubber to Yankees catcher **Todd Greene**.

"You can use all the words to describe it. It was hair-raising, different. Just an awesome healing moment for our country," [Greene said in 2021](#).

Jeter becomes Mr. November -- Oct. 31, 2001

The D-backs were one out away from taking a 3-1 World Series lead over the Yankees when **Tino Martinez** crushed a game-tying, two-run homer off **Byung-Hyun Kim** in the bottom of the ninth inning. An inning later, moments after the clock struck midnight to usher in the month of November, **Derek Jeter** smacked the first pitch he saw from Kim for a walk-off homer that knotted up the series at two games apiece. And with that, Mr. November was born.

Déjà vu for D-backs -- Nov. 1, 2001

One day after Martinez hit a game-tying, two-run homer off Kim with two outs in the bottom of the ninth, history repeated itself when **Scott Brosius** did the same thing, sending World Series Game 5 to extras. **Alfonso Soriano's** walk-off single in the bottom of the 12th gave New York a stunning 3-2 series lead as the Fall Classic shifted back to Arizona. Although the Yankees lost the next two games, their ninth-inning magic in Games 4 and 5 further added to the aura surrounding Yankee Stadium.

Boone sends Yankees to World Series -- Oct. 16, 2003

The Red Sox had the Yankees on the ropes in Game 7 of the 2003 ALCS, holding a 5-2 lead with five outs to go, but New York rallied to tie the game in the bottom of the eighth as manager Grady Little opted to stick with a tiring **Pedro Martinez**. **Mariano Rivera** held the Red Sox scoreless over the next three innings, setting up **Aaron Boone's** series-ending home run off **Tim Wakefield** in the bottom of the 12th. Boone became the third player to hit a walk-off homer in a winner-take-all postseason game, joining **Bill Mazerowski** in the 1960 World Series and **Chambliss** in the 1976 ALCS.

Jeter flies into stands -- July 1, 2004

The Yankees and Red Sox played an absolute thriller on the first day of July in 2004, with New York coming from behind to win 5-4 in the bottom of the 13th inning. Jeter made one of the signature defensive plays of his career to end the top of the 12th, racing from shortstop to snag **Trot Nixon's** popup down the left-field line before flying into the stands at full speed. Jeter re-emerged bloodied and bruised and had to get seven stitches in his chin, but he was able to play the next day.

Red Sox complete historic comeback -- Oct. 20, 2004

After dropping the first three games of the 2004 ALCS against the Yankees, the Red Sox used **Dave Roberts'** Game 4 steal, two **David Ortiz** walk-offs and **Curt Schilling's** "Bloody Sock Game" to tie up the series. Boston finished off its comeback on the road in Game 7 behind Ortiz's two-run homer in the top of the first inning and **Johnny Damon's** grand slam in the second, becoming the first team in AL/NL history to rally from a three-games-to-none deficit to win a postseason series. The Red Sox went on to sweep the Cardinals in the World Series, at last vanquishing the "Curse of the Bambino."

Hamilton's awe-inspiring Derby performance -- July 14, 2008

After his career was nearly derailed by an addiction to drugs and alcohol, **Josh Hamilton** finally reached the Majors in 2007 and began to show why he was once the No. 1 overall pick in the Draft. Hamilton earned his first All-Star selection in 2008 and accepted an invitation to participate in the Home Run Derby at Yankee Stadium, which served as the setting for that year's All-Star festivities during the park's final season. The left-handed slugger put on an unforgettable show, setting a single-round record with 28 homers in Round 1. His mark wasn't topped until the "outs" format was eliminated in favor of a time limit starting with the 2015 Home Run Derby.

THE FUTURE OF MLB TV BLACKOUTS: IS AN ALL-30 TEAM STREAMING SERVICE POSSIBLE?

By Evan Drellich, The Athletic

"Here's a scary number for you," commissioner Rob Manfred told the room in late March. "St. Louis ... great baseball market. You know what percentage of homes in St. Louis have access to baseball right now? Anybody want to guess?"

One of the attendees at a luncheon hosted by the Paley Media Council in New York took a stab: 98 percent?

"Yeah, 15's the answer," Manfred said. "Fifteen. It's because of cord cutting and the fact that operators like Diamond have not even gotten full distribution within the traditional cable bundle."

Now, that percentage refers not to the city of St. Louis alone, but to the Cardinals' overall television territory, which stretches beyond Missouri into Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Mississippi and Tennessee. But it's still surprisingly low.

"We're gonna put the word 'reach' right over the entrance to the commissioner's office," Manfred said. "It's kind of our No. 1 thing."

Sinclair's Diamond Sports Group, the parent company of 19 Bally RSNs that broadcast 14 different MLB teams — including the Cardinals — filed for bankruptcy on March 14, and the process is rightfully driving a lot of attention. Diamond has said in court it plans to cut rights fees to three teams: the Arizona Diamondbacks, Cleveland Guardians and Minnesota Twins. MLB and the teams have filed emergency motions to intervene.

But as Manfred pointed out, the issues go beyond bankruptcy. Even in the absence of Chapter 11 proceedings, it's not ideal when a team like the Cardinals isn't distributed widely across a team's territory.

"The problem is we granted exclusivity in places where the cable distributors never actually distributed the product," Manfred said. "Those people are just out of luck right now."

All along, the Bally drama has been an entrée to a larger discussion that's been brewing for years: what should baseball's telecast distribution look like? Manfred said he first really started thinking about an altered future when he received a warning from a media mogul.

Sinclair bought the RSNs in 2019 from Disney. Sometime before that purchase, Manfred was in a green room for a FOX event, and the only other person in the room was Rupert Murdoch. The two had met just a couple times previously, so Manfred thought he might as well strike up a conversation.

"I go over, I introduce myself, we shake hands and we talk about the business for a few minutes," Manfred said. "He says, 'You're gonna have a problem with these RSNs.' And you know, that really stuck in my head. I'm thinking, 'He's in the RSN business, this is Rupert Murdoch, I don't know nothing about nothing — maybe I ought to pay attention to this.'"

Manfred and MLB actually bid on the same RSNs that Sinclair wound up buying. Whether MLB's bid represents a missed opportunity or a bullet dodged is debatable. Maybe if the league had bought the RSNs, they would have been structured better financially. The league, at least, would have had more immediate control over those teams' broadcast rights. But the league also could have been saddled with the same woes Sinclair has now.

Fast forward to this year, and Manfred has publicly shared his hope for the future.

"I hope we get to the point where on the digital side, when you go to MLB.tv, you can buy whatever the heck you want," Manfred said in February. That means a world where blackouts wouldn't be nearly the problem they are today.

The commissioner wants to see baseball become a more "national" game, and a leaguewide bundle of in-market games, whether distributed directly by MLB or a partner like Apple, would certainly serve that goal. In a way, the new balanced schedule for 2023 was introduced to further the possibility: the game's best players now play against every team every season.

“Largely, the economics of that is related to the media business,” Manfred said at Paley. “If you think about where media is going, the (RSNs) have their struggles, and the replacement — or the most obvious replacement — are the new media companies. And trust me, Apple, Amazon, they don’t want to buy the state of Wisconsin and two counties in Michigan, right? They want to buy the United States.”

Every game, in one package?

So long as it is priced affordably, an all-30 subscription service for both in-market and out-of-market games is a tantalizing idea. Ideally, the offering would be flexible, with single-game, month-to-month, or yearly options available, for example. But even if fans’ only choice were a longer and therefore more expensive commitment, it’d still be an improvement.

Whether MLB will actually get there is a question no one can answer right now, but there are two major hang-ups.

Legally, MLB is years away from being able to have any shot of making such a service happen. That’s because of the existing contracts teams have with RSNs, and the contracts that RSNs have with distributors. The exclusivity built into those deals is the first major hurdle.

An RSN pays a team for the right to broadcast games. A distributor, like Time Warner Cable or Spectrum, then pays the RSN for the right to distribute the RSN on its service. The business model is predicated on the idea that if you want to watch your team’s games in-market, then you have to sign up for the distributor’s service.

And because distributors pay a lot of money for those rights from the RSN, the RSN has historically been limited in its ability to sell its games direct-to-consumer. (There are exceptions: the Red Sox offer a monthly in-market subscription through NESN, for example, and the Yankees plan to launch one soon through the YES Network.)

But going forward, as those contracts expire, MLB and the teams have the opportunity to loosen the language to allow for streaming options.

“To the extent that we’re smart and end up with flexibility on the digital side, we’re going to massively increase the number of people who have access to those games, that’s really important,” Manfred said. “There will be this kind of hybrid model out there for a few years. I think that what will happen on the cable side is, what they pay for baseball will go down. It will be cheaper for the cable provider. In return, we’ll get digital flexibility so that we can reach fans that are outside the bundle. And I think, all in all, it will result in fans being more able to watch the game, and watch the game on platforms that they want to be on.”

In the case of the Bally RSNs, the process could be sped up. If MLB ends up taking over the rights that Bally once had through bankruptcy, then the league will have more immediate

freedom and flexibility to distribute those games how it wants — maybe even inside of this season.

But hypothetically, say MLB and the 30 teams do someday reach the point where all these contracts have been worked out favorably, and each team legally could pool together their in-market games into a new streaming service. MLB would start the all-30 service the next day, right?

Not so fast.

MLB already sells out-of-market games for every team, through the present MLB.tv offering. So if you live in New York, you can subscribe to Cardinals games, because you're outside the Cardinals' territory. But the individual teams control their digital rights inside their market. Presumably, then, to create a streaming service that lets you watch every team's games no matter where you are in the country, without territorial blackouts, all 30 teams would have to be in agreement.

"Major League Baseball has zero chance of putting all 30 teams together in a national package," said one lawyer in the sport familiar with the contracts who was not authorized to speak publicly.

The reason, the lawyer said, is that the large-market teams will not want to put their digital rights into an all-30 pot unless it makes financial sense. The most prominent teams draw the most money for their broadcast rights. The likes of Amazon or Peacock might pony up big dollars to broadcast one of the premier teams, and baseball's central office might not be able to match that offer.

As an alternative, could MLB force the clubs — say, through a three-quarters vote among the 30 owners — to pool their in-market digital rights together? Manfred declined to answer that question when approached by *The Athletic*, but suggested that any pooling would likely be done voluntarily, rather than by force.

"Look, that's a legal question and I don't really feel comfortable answering," Manfred said. "The reality is, I think any significant reform of the economics happens in some sort of consensual — if it were to happen, it would happen in a consensual process. But I'm not answering the legal question as to what's possible."

Lee Berke, an outside consultant and president of LHB Sports, Entertainment & Media, believes that "teams have to agree to it."

"The owner has paid for those rights," Berke said. "And any change in those would result in the league having to deal with some form of compensation to that club for taking more games."

... Or a mix-and-match future?

Even if MLB can't put together a single all-you-can-watch, 30-team streaming service, fans could still benefit in coming years.

Manfred doesn't believe the traditional cable offerings will entirely disappear, nor does he want MLB to accelerate their disappearance. But he said he is "absolutely convinced that we are past any argument about cannibalization."

The future, then, could well be "mix and match," as he put it. Every team could eventually be available digitally in-market, just through different services. Maybe one streaming service carries a bundle of teams, or another sells a different team's games à la carte, and maybe MLB.tv can move to in-market streaming for at least some teams.

While less convenient than a centralized, uniform option, this would still count as an improvement from the status quo. The goal is to be able to reach people who have moved on from traditional TV.

Financially, though, the league and teams could take a hit. Sorting through the mess is one of the tasks of MLB's economic reform committee. The cable model forces people to pay for baseball broadcasts whether they want them or not.

"The tougher challenge is the replication of the revenue," Manfred said. "It's a great business model when a whole bunch of people pay for something they don't really care if they have or not, which is what the cable bundle did for us. It's hard to replicate that."

But Manfred and the head of the Players Association, **Tony Clark**, appear to agree on one point: the financial ding wouldn't last long.

"There will be a downward tick on the revenue side. I think it's going to be a trough," Manfred said. "I firmly believe in the value of the content. And I really believe that we're smart enough to figure out a combination of distribution mechanisms that keeps that revenue stream as a growing stream. If I'm wrong — and you know, I can be wrong — if I'm wrong, yeah, the relationship between revenue and player salaries in sports is pretty clear. Even if it's not fixed in a salary cap system, our number is 48 percent (of revenue goes to players) kind of every year. ... If revenue goes down, it's bad for everybody involved."

BALL DOCTORING: A HISTORY OF EXCUSES, DENALS AND KNOWING WINKS

If baseball's history is any indication, **Max Scherzer's** suspension over ball-doctoring accusations will not affect his long-term reputation.

Benjamin Hoffman, The New York Times

For nearly as long as baseball has existed, pitchers have been using various methods, legal and otherwise, to doctor the ball. Some want the ball to spin more, some want it to spin less. Some are looking for more movement, and others are looking for more control.

Max Scherzer, the co-ace of the Mets, the highest-paid player in baseball and a superstar right-handed starter on a Hall of Fame track, is the latest pitcher to have his methods on the mound run up against Major League Baseball's rules on the use of foreign substances, and the latest to make a statement that did not exactly clear things up.

In this case, Scherzer, who was ejected from Wednesday's win over the Los Angeles Dodgers, insists he was using rosin — which is legal — and nothing more. The umpires of the game, however, claimed Scherzer's hand was stickier than any they had previously inspected.

Scherzer made little in the way of excuses or denials about the stickiness of his hands when asked about his decision to drop his appeal and serve a 10-game suspension. But he also did not admit to doing anything wrong.

"I faced the Dodgers; I know those guys," Scherzer said of the team he pitched for in 2021. "I told them, 'Hey, this is what I did.' They understood. They know me. I got my reputation in the game. The players understand."

The good news for Scherzer is that while baseball may have a long memory for players accused of using performance-enhancing drugs, pitchers caught doctoring baseballs have typically walked away without long-term consequences. In the cases of Gaylord Perry and Don Sutton, for example, admitting to the practice did not get in the way of those crafty starters being elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

In that spirit, here are some of the excuses, and admissions of guilt, offered over the years.

Nels Potter's 'Expectorating'

While spitballs and other "freak" pitches were outlawed by baseball in 1920, the use of them was grandfathered in for pitchers known for employing them. As a result, it wasn't until 1944 that baseball had its first ejection and suspension for breaking the rule. **Nels Potter**, a top starter for the St. Louis Browns, was accused of "expectorating" on the ball in a win over the Yankees and received a 10-day suspension.

The Browns' manager, **Luke Sewell**, defended his pitcher, saying Potter had a nervous habit of running his fingers across his tongue and then drying them against his uniform.

“What’s wrong in blowing on your fingers?” Sewell asked, subtly shifting the action from spitting or licking to blowing. “Several pitchers do it.” Sewell went as far as providing an example, saying **Tex Hughson** of the Boston Red Sox did the same thing.

Lew Burdette’s ‘Best Pitch’

Did **Lew Burdette** throw a spitball? Not necessarily, but he was happy for batters to think he was. The Society for American Baseball Research’s biography of Burdette, a three-time All-Star, says “On the mound, his nervous mannerisms such as fixing his jersey and hat, wiping his forehead, touching his lips and talking to himself could, in the words of one of his managers, Fred Haney, ‘make coffee nervous.’” In Burdette’s estimation, the threat of the spitter made his other pitches more effective. “My best pitch is one I don’t throw,” he said.

Gaylord Perry’s ‘Greaseball’

Gaylord Perry won 314 games, two Cy Young Awards and was an All-Star five times while making almost no attempt to hide that he was using illegal substances to improve his pitches. “Greaseball, greaseball, greaseball, that’s all I throw him, and he still hits them,” Perry said of **Rod Carew** in 1977. “He’s the only player in baseball who consistently hits my grease. He sees the ball so well, I guess he can pick out the dry side.”

Perry and Carew were inducted into the Hall of Fame together in 1991.

Perry went as far as writing a book called “Me and the Spitter” while he was an active player. “I’d always have it in at least two places, in case the umpires would ask me to wipe one off,” Perry said of his lubricants. “I never wanted to be caught out there with anything though; it wouldn’t be professional.”

Don Sutton’s Sandpaper

In 1978, **Don Sutton**, a four-time All-Star for the Los Angeles Dodgers, was ejected by the umpire Doug Harvey and suspended by the National League for “defacing the baseball.” Sutton raised a huge fuss, saying: “On the advice of my attorney, I’m to say nothing about this. I’m filing suit against **Doug Harvey**, the National League and whoever runs umpiring.” The issue ended up being settled, and the suspension was dropped.

Later, Sutton’s outrage over such accusations softened, with Sutton joking that he and Perry had a mutual understanding.

“He gave me a tube of Vaseline,” Sutton said. “I thanked him and gave him a piece of sandpaper.”

Kevin Gross's 'Fooling'

Rather than grease or spit, **Kevin Gross** of the Philadelphia Phillies was ejected from a game and suspended for 10 days in 1987 because umpires found a piece of sandpaper that was glued to his glove.

"I was caught with sandpaper in my glove," Gross told reporters the next day. "They thought I was supposedly scuffing the ball and I was ejected. I was not scuffing any ball in the game last night." Instead, Gross claimed he was just "fooling with" sandpaper and that he did not use it.

For four years Gross repeatedly requested that M.L.B. return his glove, and in 1991 it finally did.

"I'm glad to get it back, just to have it," Gross said. "I don't think the league should have kept it all this time. It's my glove."

Gerrit Cole's 'Customs and Practices'

When the use of substances like Spider Tack became the subject of an M.L.B. crackdown in 2021, one of the players that drew a great deal of criticism was **Gerrit Cole**, the ace of the Yankees, who was accused of doctoring the ball to increase his spin rate.

When asked directly if he had used Spider Tack, a remarkably sticky substance developed to help powerlifters grip huge stones, Cole cited precedent of ball doctoring rather than making anything resembling a denial.

"I don't know quite how to answer that, to be honest," Cole said in a Zoom conference with reporters. "I mean, there are customs and practices that have been passed down from older players to younger players from the last generation of players to this generation of players. I think there are some things that are certainly out of bounds in that regard."

Cole said he would support M.L.B. if the league wanted to "legislate some more stuff." He then struggled some for the rest of the season and allowed an A.L.-high 33 home runs in 2022. In 2023, however, he is back to looking like one of the game's top starting pitchers.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE-ANSWERS

Which four players hit 200 or more home runs at the original Yankee Stadium?

Last HR in 1968	Mickey Mantle (266)
Last HR as a Yankee in 1934	Babe Ruth (259),
Last HR in 1938	Lou Gehrig (251)
Last HR as a Yankee in 1963	Yogi Berra (210)

The Oakland A's won three straight World Series 1972-73-74 when I was in high school (Westfield NJ Blue Devils class of '74)

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We are looking for the position players who played the most games for the A's over those three seasons and the five pitchers with the most innings pitched. How many of the 13 can you get?

C	Ray Fosse
1B	Gene Tenace
2B	Dick Green
SS	Bert Campaneris
3B	Sal Bando
LF	Joe Rudi
CF	Billy North
RF	Reggie Jackson
P	Catfish Hunter
P	Ken Holtzman
P	Vida Blue
P	Blue Moon Odom
P	Rollie Fingers

Pete Alonso is the only Met to lead MLB in home runs in a season (53 in 2019). Who are the other three Mets who led the NL?

1991 switch hitter	Howard Johnson (380)
1988 lefty outfielder	Darryl Strawberry (39)
1982 righty 1B	Dave Kingman (37)

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