

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

6.18.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

Happy Father's Day. This week Corbin Carroll is hot in Arizona, a catcher hits for the cycle, whoopie pies, a rain out in Houston?

In longer reads father-son rankings, pitch clock vs. injury rates, crazy high school field dimension, more thoughts on records that may never be broken.

Pour yourself a coffee and enjoy.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Father's Day Special—rank these father-son combinations by most combined HRs.

Felipe Alou, Moises Alou

Bobby Bonds, Barry Bonds

Cecil Fielder, Prince Fielder

Ken Griffey Sr., Ken Griffey Jr.

Going back a third of a century (1990), 11 lefties won Cy Young Awards. One is pretty easy—he won 1995, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002.

The others, some are not so easy:

1991 and 1998 NL, Hall of Fame, 305 game winner.

2002 AL, only 20 win season in 15 year career, 6-3 in post season games with A's and Giants.

2004, 2006 AL, later threw a no-hitter for the Mets.

2007 AL, later threw 11 seasons in New York.

2008 AL, second straight Indians winner, later pitched 5 seasons for Phillies.

2011, 2013, 2014 NL, plus 2014 MVP

2012 AL, pitched in World Series for Rays and Red Sox.

2015 AL, only 20 win season, pitched in 2017 World Series for Astros, later disappointing free agent with White Sox.

2018 AL, another Rays winner, now lives in NL west

2021 AL, led league in innings pitched, strikeouts and ERA for Blue Jays, have pitched in post-season for D'backs, Jays and Mariners.

I am known more for something off the field than on it.

I pitched for 6 teams over 26 seasons.

I won 288 games including back-to-back 20-win seasons for the Yankees.

I was Cy Young runner-up in 1977 with the Dodgers.

I pitched in 2 World Series for the Dodgers against the Yankees, and a World Series for the Yankees against the Dodgers.

My first All-Star game was 1968 with the White Sox.

I'm a lefty, started 700 games, struck out 2245.

Who am I?

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

The Giants and Cardinals will play a regular-season game next year at historic Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Ala., where the Birmingham Black Barons of the Negro Leagues used to play. The game represents another step into history for MLB, which began playing Field of Dreams games in Dyersville, Iowa, two years ago. The game will honor **Willie Mays**, the Giants legend who previously played for the Barons.

Anthony Rizzo, the Yankees first baseman who has been plunked 207 times in his career, tops among M.L.B.'s active players.

His career on-base percentage of .366 would drop to .345 if he had been hit at the average rate — a difference so vast that he would drop from 11th in the majors since 2011 (among players with 5,000 or more plate appearances) to a tie for 24th.

Want to feel old? Michael Lewis' book Money Ball is 20 years old. The movie Bull Durham was released 35 years ago.

From the 'no surprise' file, since 1961 two players hold the record for most 5-hit games in a season--**Tony Gwynn** (1993) and **Ichiro Suzuki** (2004), with four 5-hit games.

I don't appreciate **Zack Wheeler** enough. The Phillies righthander hit the 10-year mark in service time this week. At 33 years old, he's still among the best in the game, and has thrown more innings than all but three pitchers since signing his contract before the 2020 season. His

2.96 ERA mark over that stretch is eighth-best in the game. Most wins in a season -- 14 with the Phils in 2021 when he led the majors in innings pitched.

Break up the A's? Entering this week's 7 game winning streak, the A's had a .194 winning percentage. Now, their seven-game winning streak is tied for the longest by a team to enter with a sub-.200 win percentage (minimum 25 games into a season), according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

The other two teams? The 1895 Louisville Colonels (.192 winning percentage) and the 1885 Detroit Wolverines (.190).

Making that streak all the more impressive is the fact that all seven victories have come against teams currently above .500 (Brewers, Pirates, Rays).

Phillies catcher **J.T. Realmuto** hit for the cycle this week against Arizona. He became just the 6th Phillies player since 1901: **David Bell** (2004), **Gregg Jeffries** (1995), **Johnny Callison** (1963), **Chuck Klein** (1931 and 1935) and **Cy Williams** (1927).

Realmuto is the 16th catcher in baseball history to hit for the cycle and the first backstop since Milwaukee's **George Kottaras** in 2011.

Braves won the NL West in 1993. The San Francisco Giants finished second with a record of 103-59 to the Braves' 104-58 mark.

Let that sink in. After 103 wins, the Giants did not make the playoffs. How did those fans handle that?

This was not the only time a 100-win team did not make the playoffs. It occurred in 1980 with the Orioles finishing second (100-62) to the Yankees (103-59). In 1962, the Giants (103-62) edged out the Dodgers (102-63). The year before, the Detroit Tigers (101-61) were good but not good enough to defeat Mantle, Maris, and the Yankees (109-53).

Remember those unstoppable Yankees teams in the early 1950s? Cleveland Indians (111-43) found a way to stop them in 1954. The Yankees finished with only 103 wins -like the '93 Giants. The 1942 Dodgers and 1909 Cubs each won 104 games and neither team made the playoffs. The Cardinals won 106 in 1942 and the Pirates won 110 in 1909.

A subscriber wrote in response to last week's question about who came closest to hitting .400 after **Ted Williams** did it in 1941. The question should have said "and qualified for the batting title". **Bob Hazel** is the only MLB player to bat .400 in more than 110 plate appearances since Ted Williams' .406 season in 1941. In 1958, Hazel was called up to the Braves to replace injured outfielder Bill Bruton and went on to finish the season and played in Milwaukee's 7 game World Series win over the Yankees.

He played in 41 games that season with 155 AB's. He never had another season batting average over .241.

On Friday night, the Portland Sea Dogs had their cake and ate it, too. The Double-A affiliate of the Red Sox suited up as their original alternate identity -- the Maine Whoopie Pies -- and also set out to earn a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Although the club awaits official word on whether or not they'll get that spot, it's a fairly safe bet they did something that has never previously been done.

The team lined up 2,129 whoopie pies (a delicacy of disputed origin, involving two chocolate, cakey lumps sandwiching a cream frosting center) side-by-side in front of Hadlock Field for an uninterrupted block stretching 665 feet.

At the time of Portland's attempt, there existed no record for longest line of whoopie pies at all, but the team had reason to believe they would need at least 1,000 in a row to be considered for recognition as a Guinness World Record holder. They carefully documented the evening's confectionary conga line and sent all of their evidence off for certification.

Meanwhile, Whoopie Pies broadcasters Emma Tiedemann and Rylee Pay quite possibly set another record in the booth by sampling a different flavored whoopie pie from sponsor Wicked Whoopies each inning.

Whoopie pies are the official state treat of Maine, per a 2011 legislative act, although ownership of the sweet treat is subject to a bitter debate. Pennsylvanians also claim it as their own, and the Reading Fightin Phils -- Eastern League rivals of the Sea Dogs -- played as the Reading Whoopies in 2017, two seasons before the debut of the Maine Whoopie Pies ballclub.

Rays went into San Diego this week. Last time they were there was a neutral site ALDS and ALCS in 2020.

Shane McClanahan, who first stood on a Major League mound during that 2020 ALDS, tossed 6 2/3 innings of one-run ball to become MLB's first 11-game winner this year, and 2020 ALCS MVP **Randy Arozarena** had a three-run home run and an RBI single as the Rays improved to an MLB-best 51-22.

Arozarena's homer was more of a Statcast showcase. The right-handed slugger clobbered seven homers in the 12 postseason games at Petco Park in 2020, and he went deep again on the first pitch of his third at-bat Friday against **Yu Darvish**. He hit it a projected 402 feet, into the left-field seats, with a 109.4 mph exit velocity.

The Rays are only 22 homers shy of their total for all of last season, when they ranked 25th in the Majors with 139.

McClanahan, meanwhile, held the Padres scoreless until **Nelson Cruz** ended his night with a solo home run in the seventh. The left-hander lowered his MLB-best ERA to 2.12 while improving to 11-1. He yielded only three hits, struck out five and walked three.

The Oakland Athletics cleared a major hurdle for their planned relocation to Las Vegas after the Nevada Legislature gave final approval on Wednesday to public funding for a portion of a proposed \$1.5 billion stadium with a retractable roof.

The deal that backers said will help further establish Las Vegas as the new "entertainment and sports capital of the world" still needs the governor's signature, and MLB still must approve the A's move to the Las Vegas Strip, but both are anticipated.

The Assembly approved the final version of the bill with \$380 million in taxpayer money on a 25-15 vote after making minor changes to the measure the Senate approved on a 13-8 vote Tuesday just hours before the Vegas Golden Knights won the Stanley Cup.

The new 30,000-seat baseball stadium (the smallest in MLB) is planned along the Las Vegas Strip not far from the Knights' T-Mobile Arena and another stadium that's home to the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders, who also left Oakland for Vegas in 2020.

The Athletics would be the first team to relocate since the Expos left Montreal and became the Nationals in 2005. Before that you have to go back to 1972, when the Washington Senators became the Texas Rangers when **Ted Williams** was their manager.

With a single in the first inning off the Mets' **Carlos Carrasco, Andrew McCutchen** collected the 2,000th hit of his Major League career and became the 291st player in MLB history to do so, per Elias, joining **Miguel Cabrera, Nelson Cruz, Joey Votto and Elvis Andrus** as the fraternity's only active members.

Freddie Freeman and Jose Altuve will likely join the club later this year.

Player	Hits	From	To
Miguel Cabrera	3111	2003	2023
Joey Votto	2093	2007	2022
Nelson Cruz	2043	2005	2023
Elvis Andrus	2027	2009	2023
Andrew McCutchen	2000	2009	2023
Freddie Freeman	1992	2010	2023
Jose Altuve	1951	2011	2023
Evan Longoria	1906	2008	2023
Paul Goldschmidt	1821	2011	2023

Since the last major realignment in Major League Baseball before the 1994 season ushered in the Wild Card era, it has been almost as likely that a World Series champion holds the best record in the league (seven World Series winners can claim this) as the worst record among playoff qualifiers (five times).

The worst record of a division winner since divisional play began in 1969 was the 2005 San Diego Padres, whose 82-80 mark was a half-game worse than the 1973 New York Mets, who went 82-79 when the final game of the season was rained out.

The only team to ever qualify for the playoffs with a losing record was the 1981 Kansas City Royals, who had a full-season record of 50-53 but made the playoffs on the strength of a 30-23 record in the second half of the season to battle Oakland in what was the forerunner of the divisional round.

The skies opened and rain began to pour moments before the Rockies **Ryan McMahon**'s dramatic game-tying home run in the bottom of the ninth. Then, after a rain delay of an hour and 25 minutes, **Nolan Jones**, Rockies outfielder/first baseman left no doubt in ending the game against the Padres Sunday, crushing a 472-foot walk-off home run. That's the longest walk-off homer tracked by Statcast (since 2015), surpassing **Byron Buxton**'s 469-foot walk-off on April 24, 2022. He has two 470-plus-foot homers this month, tied for the second most in a calendar month tracked by Statcast, behind only **Trevor Story**'s three in September 2018.

Fenway Park is where Eduardo Pérez will go to work as a broadcaster for ESPN on Sunday night.

It used to be his playground.

Pérez was 10 when his father, Hall of Famer **Tony Pérez**, joined the Red Sox in 1980 for what proved to be a three-year stint. His family lived at the Brook House apartments in Brookline, only a mile and a half from the ballpark.

Stanford used senior lefthander Quinn Mathews for nine innings and 156 pitches to beat Texas in a NCAA Super Regional game last Sunday.

No major league pitcher has thrown that many pitches since **Tim Wakefield** threw 169 against the Brewers on June 5, 1997. He went $8\frac{2}{3}$ innings in a 2-1 victory.

Arizona's 22 year old outfielder **Corbin Carroll** is breaking his own mold.

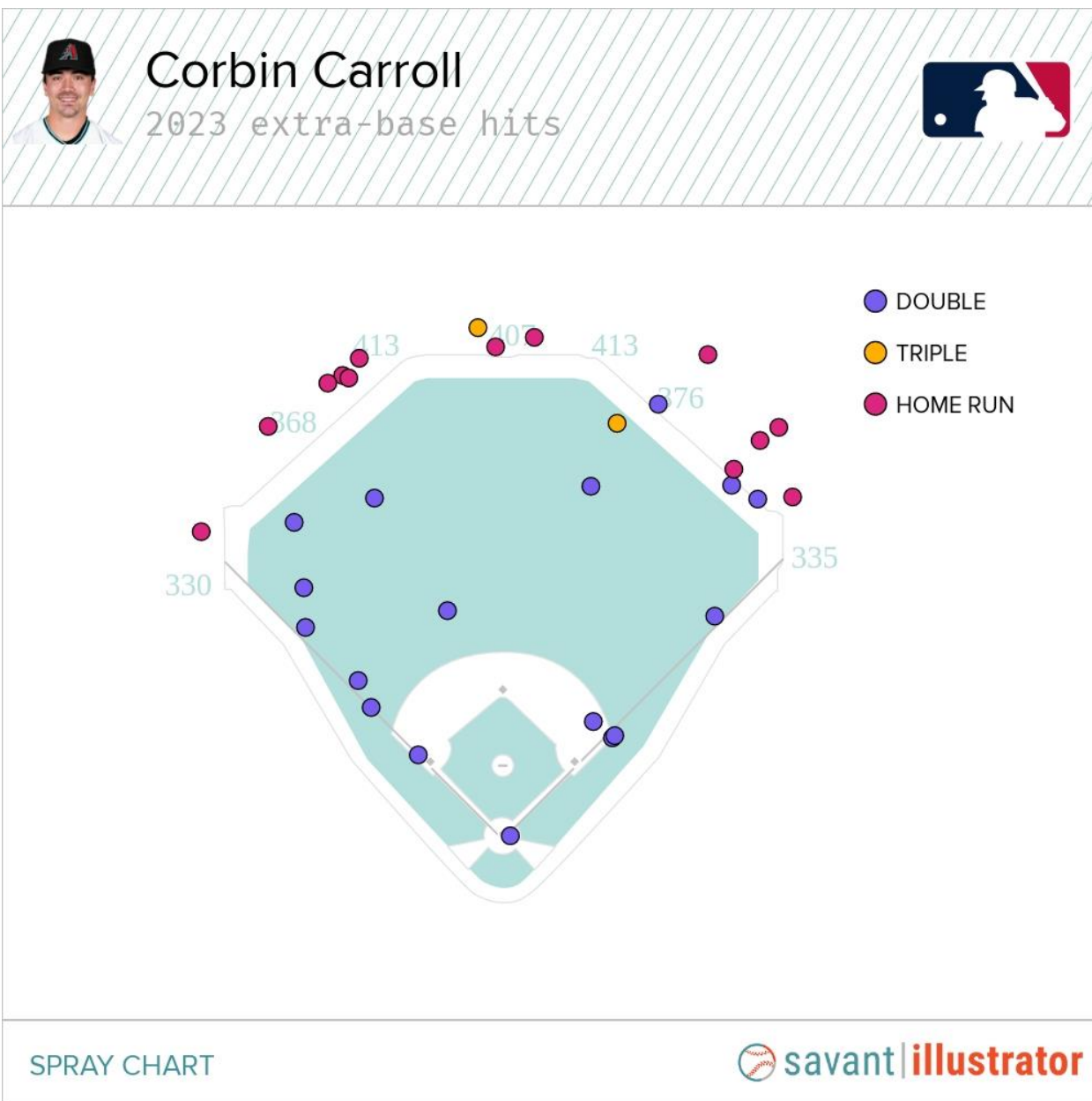
He looks like someone went into a baseball lab and designed a pure speedster, a player who'd hit triples and steal bases and beat out infield singles and wreak havoc.

The D-backs' rising star is one of the smallest players in the Majors at 5-foot-10 and 165 pounds. He's one of the very fastest players in the Majors, topping Statcast's sprint speed leaderboard in 2022 and ranking in the top 5 in 2023. He has a flat, short, slashing left-handed swing that seems engineered to slap singles and let his legs put the pressure on the opposing team.

But if that's all he had, Carroll would be prime **Billy Hamilton**. Instead, he's also slugging like prime **Joey Votto**.

Carroll is one of the best all-around players in the National League right now and an MVP frontrunner alongside **Ronald Acuña Jr., Freddie Freeman and Luis Arraez**. He just took over the league lead in both Wins Above Replacement (3.3) and OPS+ (168). He has a .313/.397/.589 slash line, a .986 OPS, 13 home runs and 19 stolen bases.

Look at the spray chart of Carroll's 33 extra-base hits this season. Someone so purely fast shouldn't be able to drive the ball to every part of the ballpark like that. It's not fair.



Carroll has five pulled home runs, five opposite-field home runs and three home runs hit straightaway. That's the type of symmetrical power you'd expect from a Votto or a Freeman or a J.D. Martinez. Not a 165-pounder who runs like the wind.

Carroll has 18 barrels and 47 bolts this season. Barrels measure elite contact -- they're balls hit with the ideal combination of exit velocity and launch angle to produce home runs and extra-base hits. Bolts measure elite speed -- they're runs at 30 ft/sec or faster, the threshold for top-tier MLB speed.

That makes for this fun Statcast nugget: Carroll's 65 combined barrels and bolts are by far the most of any National League player -- 10 more than his kindred spirit among slugging speedsters, Turner, and 20 more than his fellow MVP frontrunner, Acuña. **Bobby Witt Jr.** with the Royals is the only player in the Majors with a higher barrel/bolt total than Carroll.

Most combined barrels + bolts in 2023

79 -- Bobby Witt Jr. (26 barrels, 53 bolts)
65 -- Corbin Carroll (18 barrels, 47 bolts)
55 -- **Trea Turner** (14 barrels, 41 bolts)
52 -- **Esteury Ruiz** (5 barrels, 47 bolts)
48 -- **Julio Rodríguez** (20 barrels, 28 bolts)
45 -- Ronald Acuña Jr. (37 barrels, 8 bolts)
42 -- **Mike Trout** (26 barrels, 16 bolts)

Carroll is also one of just 10 players with double-digit barrels and bolts this season, along with Witt, Turner, Rodríguez, Trout, **Byron Buxton**, **Jeremy Peña**, **Fernando Tatis Jr.**, **Jose Siri** and **Lane Thomas**.

The bolts are no surprise after Carroll led MLB with a beyond-elite 30.7 ft/sec average sprint speed in 2022. (He's at 30.2 ft/sec so far in 2023.)

Carroll is dangerous everywhere. He's slugging .754 when he pulls the ball, .581 when he hits it to straightaway center and 1.023 when he goes to the opposite field. Only a handful of Major Leaguers have showcased the combination of pull-side and opposite-field power this season that Carroll has.

.700+ SLG to both pull and oppo in 2023

Min. 30 batted balls to each field

Pete Alonso -- .892 to pull, .729 to oppo
Jarred Kelenic -- .803 to pull, .710 to oppo
Randy Arozarena -- .783 to pull, .829 to oppo
Corbin Carroll -- .754 to pull, 1.023 to oppo
J.D. Davis -- .700 to pull, 1.000 to oppo

Bobby Miller danced around some early trouble Saturday afternoon before settling in to continue his historically dominant run to begin his career. The 24-year-old right-hander tossed six scoreless innings to lower his ERA to 0.78 -- and to lead the Dodgers to a 9-0 win over the Phillies at Citizens Bank Park.

In doing so, Miller became just the fourth pitcher in AL/NL history to go at least five innings and allow no more than one run in each of his first four career games. The last to do so was **Kenta Maeda** in 2016 (also with the Dodgers), while **Cody Anderson** also did so in 2015 with Cleveland, as did **Cliff Markle** for the Yankees from 1915-16.

Through four starts, Miller is holding opposing hitters to just 1-for-13 (.077) with five strikeouts with runners in scoring position. Miller is the only pitcher in AL/NL history to go 3-0 with a sub-1.00 ERA while compiling at least 23 strikeouts and allowing fewer than 15 hits in his first four games.

It was no secret that he had a big-time fastball -- he maxed out at 100.4 mph on his four-seamer and averaged 98.5 mph with his sinker on Saturday -- but it's the other pitches that have allowed Miller to thrive. Along with getting four whiffs and nine called strikes with his powerful sinker, Miller forced five swings and misses with his slider, four with his curveball and two with his changeup.

The last Dodgers starting pitcher to win NL Rookie of the Year was **Hideo Nomo** (1995).

Last Thursday, **Clayton Kershaw** went seven scoreless. It was his 63rd career scoreless start of seven innings. That tied **Don Sutton** for the most such starts by a Dodger since 1900. **Don Drysdale** is next on the list, with 53.

Mets catcher **Francisco Alvarez** hit his 12th home run of the season on Saturday. That's the most home runs by a primary-position catcher at age 21 or younger in his first 45 games played in a season, one ahead of 1969 **Johnny Bench**'s 11. Alvarez's 12 long balls are already the fourth-most in age-21 season or younger by an AL/NL catcher, behind only 1969 Bench (26), 1973 **Darrell Porter** (16) and 1968 Bench (15).

Brandon Crawford of the Giants played 1,564 games in the field, all at shortstop, before debuting on the mound on Sunday. That's the second-most fielding games at only one position prior to a player's first career pitching appearance among players to debut since 1900, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Only **Mark Grace** had more, with 2,113 games at first base before pitching on Sept. 2, 2002. In that 2002 game, **David Ross** hit his first career homer off Grace. In the opposing dugout on Sunday? Ross, managing the Cubs.

With his 461-foot homer on Wednesday, **Ronald Acuña Jr.** now has 11 home runs of at least 460 feet in his career. That's two more than anyone else in MLB since the start of 2018 and the second most by any player tracked by Statcast (since 2015), behind only **Giancarlo Stanton's** 18. His six 450-plus-foot homers are the second-most before July in a single season under Statcast behind Stanton's eight in '15. The most in a season in that span is 10, by Stanton in '17.

Shohei Ohtani's home run Wednesday had a 116.1 mph exit velocity -- and it went to the opposite field. It was the hardest-hit opposite-field homer by a lefty tracked by Statcast, by a lot. The prior such mark was 113.0 mph by **Joey Gallo** on Sept. 25, 2017. It was Ohtani's eighth home run with at least a 116 mph exit velocity since the start of 2021, second-most in MLB in that span, behind only **Giancarlo Stanton**, with 10. Nobody else has more than three.

Ohtani last season became the first player to finish among the league's top 15 in both homers and strikeouts since the mound was moved to its current distance in 1893.

The Ohtani magic continued last night. Ohtani crushed his Major League-leading 23rd home run of the season in the Angels' 10-9 loss Saturday during the seventh inning off **Taylor Clarke**, a Statcast-projected 437-foot laser to center that left his bat with an exit velocity of 110 mph. The blast extended his hitting streak to 14 games, the longest active streak in the Majors. Over that span, Ohtani has six multihit games. He finished with two RBIs and added a walk in addition to the homer Saturday.

The homer was the 150th of his career, marking the fastest (637 games) any Angels player has reached that milestone.

Time Keeps on Ticking, Ticking

How rare is it that we get a baseball conspiracy that calls into question the very fabric of space-time? No, we're not talking about **Elly De La Cruz** ignoring the limits of physics. This is all about one question: when is 15 seconds not 15 seconds?

In Philadelphia, players have been intimating all year that the pitch clock might be a little fast — as in, the timer is started earlier there than it is in other ballparks. Now there's data to support their suspicions, thanks to Matt Gelb and Eno Sarris.

Over the weekend, they published their findings, and it turns out there have been *way* more pitch-clock violations in Philadelphia than anywhere else.

- It's not just that the Phillies are unwilling to adjust to the clock. Despite playing eight more road games than home games when the story was published, they'd earned 14 violations at home and only five on the road.
- Consider this graph from the story: *"The Phillies, according to team sources, submitted concerns to the league office more than a month ago. MLB officials said they would investigate. They told the Phillies they found some inconsistencies in how the timer was operated and that it would be addressed. It's unclear if that happened. Once the Phillies returned from a three-city, 10-game road trip earlier this week, the difference in how the clock was run at Citizens Bank Park was stark to the players. This prompted another Phillies inquiry to the league office."*

It would be a bigger deal if this inconsistency served as a home-field advantage for the Phillies. But — in the most Philadelphia thing ever — the clock itself seems to be booing the home team. Only *five* of the 25 violations have been levied on the opposing team.

The Cardinals not-so-special brand of baseball

Remember in 2021, when the Cardinals became the first club to produce five individual Gold Glove winners? How about '22, when they won their second straight team Gold Glove award?

Those days are gone. The Cardinals are the biggest disappointment in the majors, and that's saying something when two of the three highest-priced clubs, the Mets and Padres, also are underachieving. As *The Athletic's* Katie Woo writes, the reasons are many for the Cardinals' descent into the team with the worst record in the NL and third worst in the majors. But defense might be the biggest reason of all.

In both 2021 and '22, the Cardinals' pitching staff ranked 28th in strikeout percentage. The defense, however, was so good, the Cardinals both times won 90 or more games and reached the postseason. In '23, the Cardinals rank 24th in strikeout rate, a little better, actually, than the previous two seasons. The problem is, the team's defense cannot handle all the balls in play.

Consider the Cardinals' decline in three leading defensive metrics from 2022 to '23:

- In Statcast's Outs Above Average, the Cardinals ranked 14th last season at plus-two. This season, they're 23rd at minus-7.

- In Defensive Runs Saved, the Cardinals tied for fourth last season at plus-67. This season, they're tied for 28th at minus-26.
- In Defensive Efficiency, the percentage of balls in play converted into outs, the Cardinals ranked 12th last season at .702. This season, they're last at .660.

Oh, and in case you're wondering about the impact of **Yadier Molina's** retirement, consider that the Cardinals removed his \$87.5 million replacement as their starting catcher after 35 games, only to restore him to the position a week later. Their ERA with that replacement, **Willson Contreras**, is 4.73. With **Andrew Knizner**, it's 4.02.

Now about those five Gold Glove winners from 2021 ...

One of them, center fielder **Harrison Bader**, went to the Yankees at last year's trade deadline for left-hander **Jordan Montgomery**, the Cardinals' most consistent starting pitcher. Another, left fielder **Tyler O'Neill**, has been on the injured list since May 5, with a lower back strain.

Tommy Edman, who won his Gold Glove in '21 at second base, is now playing center due to the rash of injuries in the Cardinals' outfield. First baseman **Paul Goldschmidt** remains a plus defender, but third baseman **Nolan Arenado**, a 10-time Gold Glove winner and six-time Platinum Glove winner as the best fielder in his league, is not the same. From 2022 to '23, he dropped from second to 17th in DRS and second to 28th in OAA.

Oh, and the Giants swept the Cards in St. Louis this week for the first time in 25 years.

Giancarlo Stanton's 24 home runs at Citi Field are the most by any opposing player at the venue -- 10 more than **Bryce Harper**, **Anthony Rendon** and **Chase Utley**.

Stanton has 384 career home runs, and he's only 33 years old. It's funny, I think of Stanton as being injured all the time and his career being badly truncated, but he has actually played enough to put up a mountain of stats. He has more home runs at age 33 than **Ernie Banks**, **Willie McCovey**, **Reggie Jackson**.

From the 'what could have been' file... **Jacob deGrom, 2021.**

1.08 ERA, 146 Ks, 11 walks in 92 innings.

The man gave up 3.9 hits per nine innings.

His WHIP was 0.554.

On April 23, 2021, in a start against the Washington Nationals, deGrom set a record for most strikeouts in the first four starts of a season with 50. He pitched a complete game shutout with a career-high 15 strikeouts, only 2 hits, and no walks. In addition, deGrom went 2–4 at the plate with 2 runs and an RBI.

On June 5, deGrom threw seven scoreless innings against the San Diego Padres, lowering his earned run average to 0.62, the lowest by any pitcher in history through nine starts. On June 11, deGrom pitched six scoreless innings against the Padres, improving his earned run average to 0.56, the lowest by any pitcher through his first ten starts of the season. DeGrom had also thrown 100 strikeouts in just 61+2/3 innings, achieving the mark in the fewest innings since the mound was moved to its current distance from home plate in 1893.

At that point in the season, deGrom also had more runs batted in on the year (6) than earned runs allowed (4). Through 12 starts, deGrom's walks plus hits per inning pitched was 0.51. Since at least 1901, no major league pitcher has had a 'walks plus hits to inning pitched ratio' that low during 12 consecutive starts. He was named to the 2021 Major League Baseball All-Star Game, his fourth career nomination, although he announced he did not play. On July 7, deGrom earned his 1,500th career strikeout against Brewers shortstop **Willy Adames**. He achieved it in 198 career starts, becoming the 2nd-fastest pitcher to reach the mark behind **Yu Darvish** who did it in 197 career starts.

On July 18, deGrom began to feel tightness in his forearm during a bullpen session and was subsequently placed by the Mets onto the 10-day injured list. Later in the month, deGrom also started feeling soreness in his elbow. An MRI revealed inflammation in his elbow, but with no structural damage. On August 20, deGrom was transferred to the 60-day IL to make room for relief pitcher **Heath Hembree**. deGrom did not pitch for the remainder of the 2021 season.

On June 15, 1976, a game at the Houston Astrodome was postponed for what unusual reason?

Rain

Yes, a rainout at the Astrodome. Well, sort of.

Although the weatherproof indoor stadium kept the field dry, biblical rain in Houston prevented fans, stadium employees and—most crucially—umpires from getting to the dome for the game.

The rain that day was some of the worst Houston had ever seen. It began around 12 p.m., and, by the time it subsided seven hours later, 7.48 inches of rain were recorded downtown, while near the shipping channel on the east side of the city, 13.06 inches had fallen. The heavy rainfall flooded streets all around the area. The Pirates' bus ride to the stadium, which should have taken 10 minutes, took three times as long. Astros players arrived in their own cars to get ready for the game, but it soon became clear that the weather would prevent it from being played. The four-man umpire crew called at around 4 p.m. to say their car had stalled out in the floodwaters and they'd be unable to get to the game.

The game was postponed not long after that, but that didn't mean the players could go home. Conditions outside the stadium had continued to deteriorate, with many roads still impassable. But the players made the most of it, with stadium workers setting up tables behind second base for members of both teams to have dinner together. Some Astros players, after post meal drinks in the press club, decided to explore the stadium's catwalk.

"After half an hour or so, [fellow Houston pitcher] **Tom Griffin** and I decided to explore the catwalk that went from the sky boxes to the gondola at the top of the building," Astros pitcher **Larry Dierker** told *Texas Monthly* last year. "It wasn't scary because it was encaged. We had to crawl the last fifty feet or so. I suppose we are the only players who ever went up there."

Once the rain stopped and the floodwaters subsided, players slowly started to trickle home. But not all of them. Second baseman **Rob Andrews** and pitcher **Mike Cosgrove** spent the night sleeping in a luxury suite.

More season stats

Time of game: 2:40. This has been the consistent time throughout the year — and it's 26 minutes quicker than the game was last year, 31 minutes quicker than it was in 2021, and the fastest pace since 1984.

Attendance: Up almost 700 fans per game! That might not sound like a lot, but it's essentially the first increase in attendance in more than a decade.

2012: 30,451 average attendance

2013: Down 355

2014: Down 106

2015: Up 4

2016: Down 218

2017: Down 223

2018: Down 1,249

2019: Down 456

2020-2021: COVID

2022: Down 1,637

2023: Up 678

Attendance is up even with everything that's happening in Oakland.

Batting average: Up five points. Sure, a .248 batting average is still very low by historical standards, but it will probably tick up a little bit in the summer months and, anyway, it's a lot better than last year's .243.

Average exit velocity chart going back to 2020:

2020: 88.0 mph

2021: 88.1 mph

2022: 88.1 mph

2023: 88.7 mph

MLB's six-day Draft Combine starts Monday at Chase Field in Phoenix. 323 players accepted invitations.

Orioles rookie infielder **Gunnar Henderson** hit a 462-foot home run to right field at Camden Yards last Sunday off Kansas City righthander **Jackson Kovar**. According to the Orioles, the shot was the longest onto Eutaw Street during a game. **Ken Griffey Jr.** set the record with a 465-foot drive that hit the warehouse on the fly during the 1993 Home Run Derby.

Three of the Astros projected starters, **Lance McCullers Jr., Luis Garcia and José Urquidy**, have thrown a combined 54 2/3 innings this season. Yet the Astros rank third in the majors with a 3.24 rotation ERA. **Hunter Brown, Brandon Bielak, J.P. France and Ronel Blanco**, who essentially ranked sixth through ninth on the Astros' depth chart at the start of spring training, have combined for a 3.50 ERA in 141 1/3 innings as starters.

This week's birthdays

Billy Williams	86
Dave Concepcion	75
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HAPPY FATHERS DAY. BLEACHER REPORT RANKS FATHER-SON PAIRS

Joel Reuter, Bleacher Report, 2014

There is something to be said for having good genes when it comes to being a baseball player, as there has been no shortage of father-son combinations in Major League Baseball.

More times than not, one member of the family is far more productive than the other, but there have been a handful of cases where both father and son were big league stars.

Here on Father's Day, we take a look back at the 10 greatest father-son duos in MLB history. We also provide a lengthy roster of honorable mentions and a peek at who could be challenging for a spot on this list in the years to come.

We ranked the duos on the balanced production of both father and son, so while guys like **Tony Gwynn, George Sisler, Yogi Berra and Tony Perez** had Hall of Fame careers and sons who reached the majors, they don't crack the list with the sons falling well short of the fathers' numbers.

**All stats courtesy of Baseball-Reference, unless otherwise noted.*

Honorable Mentions

10. Ray Boone, Bob Boone, Bret Boone and Aaron Boone

3B/SS Ray Boone (1948-1960)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,373	.275/.361/.429	1,260	162	46	151	737	645	21	25.7

The first in what would be three generations of Boones, Ray Boone spent the bulk of his career with the Cleveland Indians and Detroit Tigers. He was a two-time All-Star, topped the 20 home run mark four different times and led the American League in RBI in 1955 with 116.

C Bob Boone (1972-1990)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
2,264	.254/.315/.346	1,838	303	26	105	826	679	38	27.3

One of the best defensive catchers in baseball history, Bob Boone won seven Gold Glove awards over the course of his 19-year career. He won a World Series with the Philadelphia Phillies in 1980 and earned MVP consideration in both 1978 and 1982.

2B Bret Boone (1992-2005)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,780	.266/.325/.442	1,775	366	28	252	1,021	927	94	22.6

A late bloomer of sorts, Bret Boone turned into one of the best offensive second basemen in the game during the second half of his 14-year career. He finished third in AL MVP voting in 2001, when he posted a .950 OPS with 37 home runs and an AL-high 141 RBI. He ranks in the top 15 all-time among second basemen in home runs (252, seventh) and RBI (1,021, 14th).

3B Aaron Boone (1997-2009)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,152	.263/.326/.425	1,017	216	17	126	555	519	107	13.5

Though not quite as prolific offensively as his brother, Aaron Boone brought a good mix of power and speed to the Cincinnati Reds lineup in his prime. He turned in back-to-back 20-20 seasons in 2002 (26 HR, 32 SB) and 2003 (24 HR, 23 SB), making his lone All-Star appearance in '03. His enduring legacy will be his walk-off home run for the New York Yankees in Game 7 of the 2003 ALCS against the rival Boston Red Sox.

9. Gus Bell, Buddy Bell, David Bell and Mike Bell

OF Gus Bell (1950-1964)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,741	.281/.330/.445	1,823	311	66	206	942	865	30	15.3

A staple in the middle of the Cincinnati Reds lineup throughout the 1950s, Gus Bell made four All-Star teams in five years from 1953 to 1957. He topped 100 RBI four different times and had a career-high 30 home runs in 1953 when he finished 20th in the NL MVP voting.

3B Buddy Bell (1972-1989)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
2,405	.279/.341/.406	2,514	425	56	201	1,106	1,151	55	66.1

The best of the Bell family, Buddy Bell ranks 11th all-time among third basemen with a 66.1 WAR. His numbers were never eye-popping, as he topped 20 home runs and 100 RBI just once apiece, but he was a consistent offensive producer and one of the better defensive third basemen of his era. His 2,405 games are the fourth-most among players with zero postseason appearances.

3B David Bell (1995-2006)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,403	.257/.320/.396	1,239	267	18	123	589	587	19	15.2

A utility player for the St. Louis Cardinals early in his career, David Bell joined the Seattle Mariners when they traded Joey Cora at the deadline in 1998 and settled in as the everyday third baseman the following season. He was never a star, but from 1999 to 2002 he averaged a .260/.322/.416 line with 17 home runs and 66 RBI as a serviceable regular.

3B Mike Bell (2000)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
19	.222/.323/.444	6	0	0	2	4	5	0	0.2

The No. 30 pick in the 1993 draft by the Texas Rangers, Mike Bell played 13 minor league seasons, hitting .265/.331/.427 with 1,196 hits and 135 home runs. His only big league action came in 2000, when he hit a pair of home runs over a 19-game stint.

8. Dizzy Trout and Steve Trout

RHP Dizzy Trout (1939-1952, 1957)

G/GS	W-L	ERA	ERA+	WHIP	BB/9	K/9	IP	WAR
521/322	170-161	3.23	124	1.353	3.5	4.1	2,725.2	46.1

The Detroit Tigers' No. 2 starter during the 1940s behind Hall of Famer **Hal Newhouser**, Paul "Dizzy" Trout was one of the best pitchers of the decade. He ranked fourth in wins (129) and fifth in strikeouts (930), complete games (132) and shutouts (27), and he helped the team to the 1945 World Series title.

LHP Steve Trout (1978-1989)

G/GS	W-L	ERA	ERA+	WHIP	BB/9	K/9	IP	WAR
301/236	88-92	4.18	96	1.494	3.5	3.9	1,501.1	13.3

Steve Trout was originally a member of the Chicago White Sox, but they traded him to the crosstown Cubs in 1983, and he enjoyed the best season of his career the following year. He finished 13-7 with a 3.41 ERA in 190 innings, helping the Cubs to their first postseason berth since 1945 in the process. He was a serviceable starter throughout his career, but that season was by far his best.

7. Sandy Alomar, Roberto Alomar and Sandy Alomar Jr.

SS/2B Sandy Alomar (1964-1978)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,481	.245/.290/.288	1,168	126	19	13	282	558	227	10.5

A versatile infielder who played for six different teams over his 15-year career, Sandy Alomar never did much with the bat, but he was a plus defender up the middle. He made the AL All-Star team in 1970 while playing for the Angels, hitting .251/.302/.293 and stealing 35 bases. The following season, he had a career-best 5.2 WAR.

C Sandy Alomar Jr. (1988-2007)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,377	.273/.309/.406	1,236	249	10	112	588	520	25	13.7

A staple behind the plate for the great Cleveland Indians teams of the 1990s, Sandy Alomar Jr. won AL Rookie of the Year honors in 1990 and also made the first of what would be six All-Star appearances that season. His home run in the 1997 All-Star Game won him MVP honors, and he had his best all-around numbers that year as he hit .324/.354/.545 with 37 doubles and 21 home runs to finish 14th in AL MVP voting.

2B Roberto Alomar (1988-2004)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
---	------------	---	----	----	----	-----	---	----	-----

2,379 .300/.371/.443 2,724 504 80 210 1,134 1,508 474 66.8

One of the best second basemen to ever play the game on both sides of the ball, Roberto Alomar was enshrined in the Hall of Fame in 2011. He ranks among the all-time leaders at the position in hits (seventh), doubles (sixth), RBI (10th), runs (eighth) and steals (fifth) while also taking home 10 Gold Glove awards and making 12 All-Star Game appearances. He also won a pair of World Series rings with the Toronto Blue Jays in 1992 and 1993.

6. Cecil Fielder and Prince Fielder

1B/DH Cecil Fielder (1985-1998)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,470	.255/.345/.482	1,313	200	7	319	1,008	744	2	17.1

In 1990, Cecil Fielder became the first player since George Foster in 1977 to hit 50 home runs in a season, as he led the AL with 51 long balls and 132 RBI to finish second in AL MVP voting. That began a seven-year stretch where he averaged 37 home runs and 114 RBI, as he became one of the most feared sluggers in the game. He also made an impact down the stretch for the 1996 World Series-winning New York Yankees after being acquired at the deadline that year.

1B Prince Fielder (2005-Present)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,364	.285/.388/.522	1,389	277	10	288	886	755	18	23.2

Prince Fielder launched 230 home runs during his seven seasons with the Milwaukee Brewers, including an NL-best 50 back in 2007, before leaving for Detroit on a huge nine-year, \$214 million deal. After two decent seasons in Detroit protecting two-time reigning AL MVP **Miguel Cabrera** in the order, the Tigers shipped him to Texas this offseason. Following a slow start he was lost for the year to neck surgery.

Still just 30 years old, he should surpass his father statistically across the board within the next couple seasons.

5. Jose Cruz and Jose Cruz Jr.

OF Jose Cruz (1970-1988)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
2,353	.284/.354/.420	2,251	391	94	165	1,077	1,036	317	54.2

One of the first great Puerto Rican-born players in MLB, Jose Cruz spent 13 of his 19 big league seasons with the Houston Astros. A two-time All-Star, Cruz is among the franchise leaders in WAR (51.2, third), batting average (.292, sixth), hits (1,937, third), RBI (942, fourth), runs (871, fifth) and total bases (2,846, fourth). The Astros retired his No. 25 in 1992.

OF Jose Cruz Jr. (1997-2008)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,388	.247/.337/.445	1,167	252	36	204	624	713	113	19.5

Jose Cruz was one of the top prospects in baseball while coming up through the Seattle Mariners system after being taken with the No. 3 pick in the 1995 draft, but Seattle traded him to the Toronto Blue Jays midway through his rookie season. He never quite reached the superstar level many expected him to, but he brought a terrific mix of power and speed throughout his career, including a 30-30 campaign in 2001.

4. Mel Stottlemyre and Todd Stottlemyre

RHP Mel Stottlemyre (1964-1974)

G/GS	W-L	ERA	ERA+	WHIP	BB/9	K/9	IP	WAR
360/356	164-139	2.97	112	1.219	2.7	4.3	2,661.1	40.6

The elder of what would be the winningest father-son pitching combination in baseball history, Mel Stottlemyre spent all 11 of his seasons in the big leagues as a member of the New York Yankees. A five-time All-Star, he won 20 games three different times and led the league in complete games twice. He went on to become a solid pitching coach once he retired, serving in that role for some very good Yankees teams from 1996 to 2005.

RHP Todd Stottlemyre (1988-2002)

G/GS	W-L	ERA	ERA+	WHIP	BB/9	K/9	IP	WAR
372/339	138-121	4.28	100	1.376	3.4	6.5	2,191.2	21.1

Todd Stottlemyre was a member of the Toronto Blue Jays rotation during their back-to-back World Series titles in 1992 and 1993. But he actually had the best season of his career with the team in 1991, when he went 15-8 with a 3.78 ERA. His 118 wins during the 1990s rank as the 18th-most for the decade.

3. Felipe Alou and Moises Alou

OF Felipe Alou (1958-1974)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
2,082	.286/.328/.433	2,101	359	49	206	852	985	107	42.2

A 5.0-WAR player or better five different times, Felipe Alou not only had a son who turned into a big league star, but he also played alongside his brothers Jesus and Matty during his 17-year playing career. His best season came in 1966, as a member of the Atlanta Braves, when he hit .327/.361/.533 with 31 home runs and 74 RBI. He also had NL bests in hits (218) and runs (122) that year.

OF Moises Alou (1990-2008)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,942	.303/.369/.516	2,134	421	39	332	1,287	1,109	106	39.7

Despite suffering a severe ankle injury in his second full big league season, Moises Alou still quietly turned into one of the more productive hitters of the steroid era. He was a six-time All-Star, and he topped 30 home runs three times and 100 RBI five different times while playing for seven different teams during his 17-year career.

2. Ken Griffey and Ken Griffey Jr.

OF Ken Griffey (1973-1991)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
2,097	.296/.359/.431	2,143	364	77	152	859	1,129	200	34.4

One of the lesser heralded members of the Big Red Machine, Ken Griffey actually led the team in hitting during the 1976 season. He finished that year with a .336/.401/.450 line and added 111 runs scored with 34 stolen bases to finish eighth in NL MVP voting. He wrapped up his 19-year career with the Seattle Mariners, where he played alongside his son. They made history on Sept. 14, 1990, when they hit back-to-back home runs.

OF Ken Griffey Jr. (1989-2010)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
2,671	.284/.370/.538	2,781	524	38	630	1,836	1,662	184	83.6

Were it not for a number of injuries costing him a good chunk of the prime of his career, Ken Griffey Jr. may very well have retired as the all-time home run leader. As it stands, he's still one of the best to ever play the game and was the face of MLB during the 1990s. A 13-time All-Star, Griffey ranks sixth in career home runs and 15th in career RBI.

1. Bobby Bonds and Barry Bonds

OF Bobby Bonds (1968-1981)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
1,849	.268/.353/.471	1,886	302	66	332	1,024	1,258	461	57.7

Few players have brought the mix of power and speed to the game that Bobby Bonds did, as he was just the second player to join the 300-300 club and is one of just eight guys to ever accomplish that feat. He had five 30-30 seasons, nearly establishing the 40-40 club in 1973 when he had 39 home runs and 43 steals while leading the NL in runs (131) and total bases (341).

He managed to stick on the Hall of Fame ballot for 11 years, though he never received more than 10.6 percent of the vote.

OF Barry Bonds (1986-2007)

G	BA/OBP/SLG	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	SB	WAR
2,986	.298/.444/.607	2,935	601	77	762	1,996	2,227	514	162.4

While he is certainly a controversial figure, from a purely statistical standpoint Barry Bonds is obviously one of the best to ever play the game. The all-time home run king was a 14-time All-Star and seven-time MVP winner. His 1.051 OPS is fourth-best all-time, and his 162.4 career WAR trails only **Babe Ruth** (163.0). He and his father hold the father-son record for home runs, RBI and steals.

HONORABLE MENTION

- **Tony Armas and Tony Armas Jr.**
- **Jim Bagby and Jim Bagby Jr.**
- **Floyd Bannister and Brian Bannister**
- **Yogi Berra and Dale Berra**
- **Jeff Burroughs and Sean Burroughs**
- **Doug Drabek and Kyle Drabek**
- **Tom Gordon and Dee Gordon**
- **Tom Grieve and Ben Grieve**
- **Tony Gwynn and Tony Gwynn Jr.**
- **Randy Hundley and Todd Hundley**
- **Fred Kendall and Jason Kendall**
- **Dave LaRoche and Adam/Andy LaRoche**

- Vern Law and Vance Law
- Gary Matthews and Gary Matthews Jr.
- John Mayberry and John Mayberry Jr.
- Hal McRae and Brian McRae
- Tony Perez and Eduardo Perez
- Jeff Russell and James Russell
- George Sisler and Dave/Dick Sisler
- Steve Swisher and Nick Swisher
- Andy Van Slyke and Scott Van Slyke
- Eric Young and Eric Young Jr.
- Tom Walker and Neil Walker
- Gary Ward and Daryle Ward
- Maury Wills and Bump Wills
- Clyde Wright and Jaret Wright

DATA SHOWS NO CLEAR CORRELATION BETWEEN PITCH TIMER AND INJURIES

Anthony Castrovince, mlb.com

When MLB had its usual spate of pitching injuries at the start of the 2023 season, some questioned the impact of the pitch timer. But updated data and historical trends both throw cold water on the theory that the pace created by the timer is to blame for ailing arms.

Pitching injured list placements in the first 75 days of the regular season were in line with 2019 and 2022 and down significantly from 2021.

INJURED LIST PLACEMENTS, DAY 2 THROUGH DAY 75 OF THE REGULAR SEASON

GROUP	2019	2021	2022	2023
PITCHERS	143	195	157	146
POSITION PLAYERS	127	193	125	127
TOTAL	270	388	282	273

The same goes for pitcher injured list placements in the month of May:

INJURED LIST PLACEMENTS (PITCHERS), MAY 1-31

YEAR	COUNT
2019	62
2021	90
2022	60
2023	65

While injured list placements are up year over year going back to the start of Spring Training, that data is inherently skewed by an earlier spring start date when compared to the COVID-impacted 2021 season and the lockout-impacted 2022 season.

“You can’t prove [the pitch timer is to blame for injuries],” said Glenn Fleisig, research director for the American Sports Medicine Institute and injury research advisor for MLB, “because we don’t live in a world in which only one thing changed from last year to this year.”

What has changed from year to year – once again – is the average velocity in MLB. The average four-seam velocity at this point in the season has increased from 93.8 mph in 2022 to 94.0 mph in 2023. The average breaking ball velocity has increased slightly from 82.6 mph to 83.0.

Fleisig said velocity is a much clearer injury culprit than the pitch timer.

“We’ve done studies in the biomechanics lab that have proven what is assumed to be true,” said Fleisig. “If you throw faster, it’s more torque on your elbow.”

Pitcher injury events decreased in the Minors last season -- the first with the pitch timer at every level of MiLB.

Still, the question of whether the timer influences injuries will persist every time an important arm goes down. So let’s look at the data we have and explore why we probably shouldn’t be in a rush to blame them on the timer.

1. Injury data is ... complicated.

We’ve cited injured list data in this piece, because, without access to the medical records of every player on every team, that is the best means we have of relaying injury trends.

But injured list data is skewed by the way teams manipulate the injured list.

“[The injured list] is a roster management tool,” said Stan Conte, a longtime MLB athletic trainer and physical therapist who founded Conte Injury Analytics, “not an injury database.”

Teams use the injured list to cycle players -- particularly pitchers and especially relievers -- on and off the active roster. Therefore, it is impossible to know how many of those “injuries” were serious concerns as opposed to phantom or exaggerated excuses used to stash players without losing them to the Minor Leagues or another team.

This manipulation became particularly pronounced when MLB shifted from a 15-day to 10-day injured list in 2017 (the pitcher IL expanded back to 15 days in 2022).

Furthermore, this 2023 season was the first to begin with a 13-pitcher roster limit, which also impacts the way teams utilize the injured list.

That’s a long-winded way of saying: Take injured list data with a necessary grain of salt.

With that said...

2. A longer spring skews the 2023 numbers

The raw injured list numbers as of this writing show an uptick in injuries for both pitchers and position players in 2023 (the 2020 data from the pandemic-altered year is not included in the below charts).

INJURED LIST PLACEMENTS, VOLUNTARY SPRING TRAINING REPORT DATE TO DAY 75 OF REGULAR SEASON

GROUP	2019	2021	2022	2023
PITCHERS	228	283	251	268
POSITION PLAYERS	170	224	160	167
TOTAL	398	507	411	435

INJURED LIST PLACEMENTS, FIRST SPRING TRAINING GAME TO DAY 75 OF REGULAR SEASON

GROUP	2019	2021	2022	2023
PITCHERS	218	265	237	257
POSITION PLAYERS	170	224	160	165
TOTAL	388	489	397	422

In both cases, you can see that pitching injuries have increased when compared to 2022. But because of last year's lockout, the 2022 voluntary report date was 26 days prior to Opening Day and there were only 21 days of Spring Training exhibition games. This year, with a full spring on tap and the World Baseball Classic taking place, the earliest voluntary report date was 45 days prior to Opening Day, and there were 33 days of exhibition games.

A broader comparison to the last "normal" MLB season back in 2019 shows an increase in pitcher injuries. Again, though, the pitch timer is hardly the only thing that has changed in that amount of time.

"With the pandemic, the Major League season was shortened in 2020 and there was no Minor League season," Fleisig said. "I think the data shows the trends are still recovering from this break in normal play."

There's really no telling how much the schedule has contributed to injuries. But we do know this...

3. Most of the injured players have been hurt before.

Medical experts say the best predictor of future injury is past injury. And that's definitely been the case this year.

More than 66% of the players who have been placed on the injured list in 2023 missed seven or more days in 2021 or 2022, when, of course, there was no pitch timer at the MLB level.

"There are two reasons why a player with a past injury has a higher chance of getting hurt," Fleisig said. "The past injury might still be lingering. He's not 100% healthy. The other reason is, whatever factors or behaviors that led to the first injury, he's doing the same thing. He's pitching with too little rest or poor mechanics or bad strength and conditioning."

So last year's injuries contribute to this year's injuries, which contribute to next year's injuries.

And let's not forget...

4. The MLB injury rate has been rising for decades.

If we are to subscribe to the theory that a sped-up pace is contributing to a rise in injured list placements, then how do we explain the trend in which injured list placements increased, even as the game slowed down?

Take a look at the average injured list days by position group and time period since 2005, along with average time of game:

PERIOD	POSITION PLAYERS	PITCHERS	AVG. TIME OF GAME
2005-09	9,317	15,882	2:53
2010-14	10,331	16,269	3:00
2015-19	11,606	20,750	3:05
2021-22	14,085	30,210	3:07

Prior to the pitch timer, players had all the time in the world to gather themselves, take a breath and recover from a sudden burst of athletic activity.

They got hurt, anyway.

Conte has been tracking the financial ramifications of these injuries -- the amount of money teams are paying to players on the injured list plus the cost of replacing them with another player -- for decades. He noted a milestone in 2022.

"Last year was the first time we broke \$1 billion in losses," Conte said. "The numbers just keep going up."

That's true in the big leagues and in the Minor Leagues, where, Conte notes, the number of Tommy John surgeries performed went from 68 in 2010 to 210 in 2021.

This, combined with the increased prevalence of Tommy John recipients at the amateur level getting drafted into the pros, creates a culture in which more and more pitchers arrive to the big leagues having previously been hurt.

As you can see, the increase in injured list stints over the past 30-plus years has been especially pronounced with pitchers. You know what else has seen a pronounced increase for pitchers in that time period?

That's right. Velocity. We know there is a correlation between increased velocity and increased injury risk. And from what we've seen in 2023...

5. There is no clear correlation between increased pace and injury.

For this point, we'll refer you to [this piece by Dan Szymborski of FanGraphs](#) that researched the pitchers whose pace between pitches was most and least affected by the new rules.

Szymborski's research found that, of the 447 pitchers who pitched at least five innings in both 2022 and 2023, 123 – or 27.5% -- have appeared on the injured list. Of the 50 pitchers with the largest changes of pace, nine (18.0%) have been on the IL, while eight (16.0%) of the pitchers with the smallest changes have been on the shelf. Of the 50 pitchers who sped up the most, only one – reliever **Chris Martin** – has landed on the IL this season.

In other words, there was no meaningful relationship between increased pace and increased injury.

"The bottom line, in my opinion, is there may be an adjustment period that we've undergone here, but I don't believe that pitching injury rates will be higher with the pitch timer than previously," Fleisig said. "Because I think the pitchers have enough time to recover. The 15 or 20 seconds between pitches, I don't think it's adding extra stress. The injuries happen by having bad mechanics and high effort and the accumulation of all the pitches during that game. I don't think the amount of time makes a big difference, versus how much you've thrown."

HOW A COLLEGE SENIOR'S HUNT FOR "WEIRD" HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELDS TOOK ON NEW DIMENSIONS

From a bird's eye view, the baseball diamond at Lutheran West High School in the Cleveland suburb of Rocky River, Ohio, doesn't scan as especially strange. There are cinderblock dugouts, a concessions stand and chain-link fences. There's a turf infield and a grass outfield. And there are dimensions of 356 feet to left field, 428 to center and 318 to a tree-lined short porch in right.

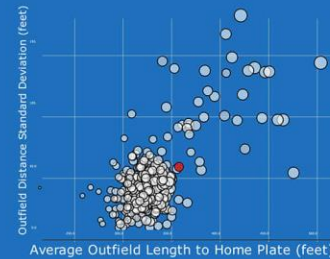
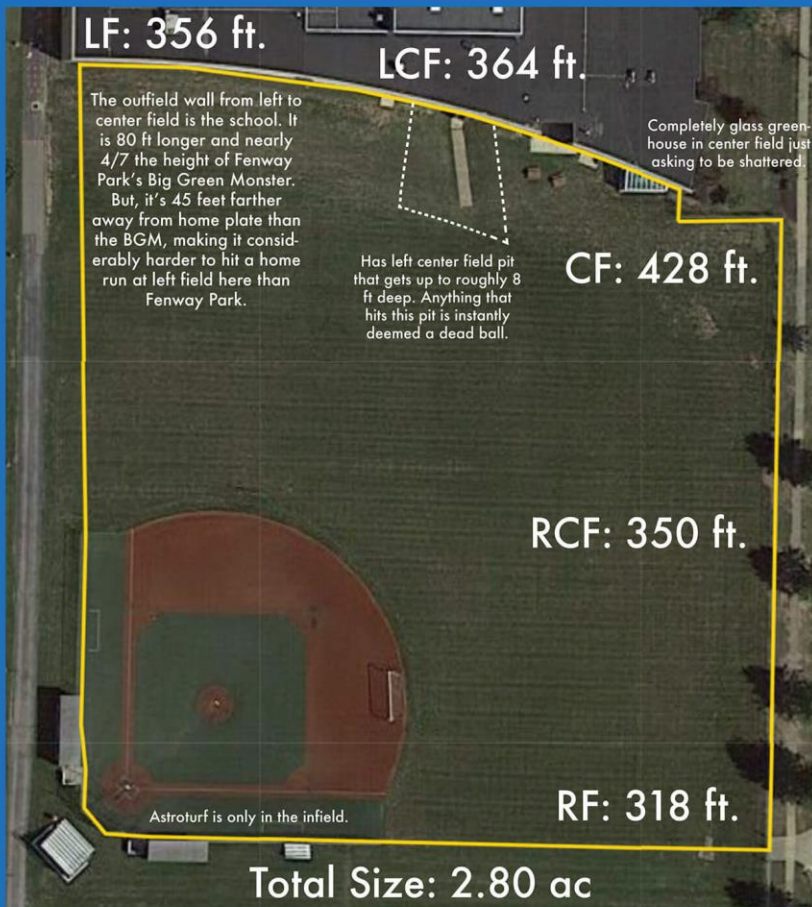
But those who play there know the field is anything but orthodox. The outfield wall, from the left-field corner to straightaway center, is the side of the school. A home run has to carry the distance and the 20-foot wall to land, irretrievable, on the roof. Along the wall are windows, an alcove for a school entrance and a glass greenhouse jutting into center field. The specter of broken glass hovers over every pitch. Then there's the magnum opus of this perilous park: a drainage gully in left-center inviting bad bounces and rolled ankles. Ground rules and common sense say any ball in the ditch is declared dead.

Lutheran West High School

Rocky River, OH

PERCENTILES

Avg OF Length: **96th** Total Area: **72nd** Outfield Variability: **92nd**



Lutheran West's baseball field may not look too unorthodox upon first glance, but its large assortment of odd quirks makes it very weird by definition.

Division: III
Chagrin Valley
Conference

David Hrusovsky, 22, played at that field for four years in high school. "It's really weird," he says, yet he says it fondly. Most who played high school ball, like those currently headed to state championships around the country, have played or practiced on a field that was beautifully, extraordinarily weird. There's a collective soft spot for them. In April 2020, a Reddit post about a bizarre baseball field spawned scores of similar threads, with users sharing their most curious finds from memory or from Google Maps. It eventually got the Jomboy breakdown treatment, a video with more than 2.5 million views.

All of this unspooled as Hrusovsky was back home in Cleveland after his freshman year at Bowling Green was cut short by the pandemic. He had an affinity for quirky high school fields, a personal connection to one and way too much free time. What he felt the threads and videos

lacked were context and comprehensiveness. How, he surmised, can you know which fields are true outliers without analyzing all of them? Hrusovsky shuddered at the idea of a wacky field going unremarked upon because it was in the middle of nowhere. So he created a spreadsheet with a row for each high school field in Ohio and opened Google Maps.

“I just went down a rabbit hole,” he says.

Over the next eight months, Hrusovsky searched for and plotted 753 high school diamonds in his home state, measuring distances and noting oddities — like the Monroe Central (Woodsfield, Ohio) field with a maximum distance of 510 feet from home plate to the outfield fence, or the since-renovated field at Open Door Christian (Elyria, Ohio) with a max distance of only 256 feet and also shortened basepaths. Hrusovsky didn’t have an end goal for the project. “I had this information but didn’t know what to do with it,” he says. But then another thought occurred to him: I should do this for the whole country.

Utah was completed next, then Hawaii, West Virginia, Alaska, Rhode Island, North Dakota, Delaware, Maine, Connecticut and, as of earlier this month, New Hampshire. Pennsylvania and Colorado are currently underway.

By now, Hrusovsky has cataloged more than 1,800 high school baseball fields and worked his way through a quarter of U.S. states, though the lift grows heavier as he moves into more populous ones. Once he wraps up a state, he makes infographics to share on social media featuring the strangest fields in each state, pointing out abnormalities and calculating each field’s percentile rank in total area, average outfield length and outfield variability. He also creates a visual overlaying all fields from a state and another combining them to make the longest and shortest possible fence distance combinations.

In his little corner of the internet, Hrusovsky’s obscure obsession is celebrated. His infographic drops spread rapidly from Twitter to Reddit and beyond.

But it wasn’t always that way. Initially, Hrusovsky sat on his mountain of data, unsure of how to share his results or if anyone would care about them. He thought about writing an article or making a video, then decided against both. He didn’t start making infographics until December 2021 and didn’t share any until May 2022, more than two years after he started the project.

“I was questioning myself, I think as most people do when they’re making something,” Hrusovsky says. “One day in May, I was like, screw it, I’ll just post it. If it bombs, it bombs.”

It did not bomb.

“I was like, oh, I should keep doing these,” he says.

Since then, Hrusovsky has perfected his process for each high school field — outline the diamond, measure total acreage and outfield distances, note any peculiarities — so that each

now takes him five to 10 minutes. Multiply that by 1,800 fields and you're talking about 150 to 300 hours of research time. If only it were that few, Hrusovsky says, because the data collection for each field is often less time-consuming than the first step: "Finding the field at all."

The states Hrusovsky has sailed through are ones where the state athletic association provides a list of schools and addresses for their baseball fields. That's the holy grail. And rare. For the others, Hrusovsky says, "it's a scavenger hunt." He'll inspect each ballpark in a certain radius of those high schools and try to whittle down to the right one. "You just have to do detective work and make really, really educated guesses." He once searched a school's name and "baseball field" on Twitter and found two students discussing where their upcoming game would be played. Another time, there were more than a dozen fields in relatively close proximity to a West Virginia school. Hrusovsky finally matched the backstop color from a photo on the baseball team's Facebook page to one of the fields on Google Maps. "That one took me a whole day to find," he says. And the kicker. "It was the most common field you've ever seen."

Some strange features aren't apparent from simply taking measurements of a field, so Hrusovsky looks for tells from the aerial view — like a long shadow from an especially tall fence, or slight changes in terrain and elevation — and jots down anything that catches his eye, then circles back later to look at photos and videos taken there. At this point in his project, he also receives submissions from people eager to nominate their favorite weird field.

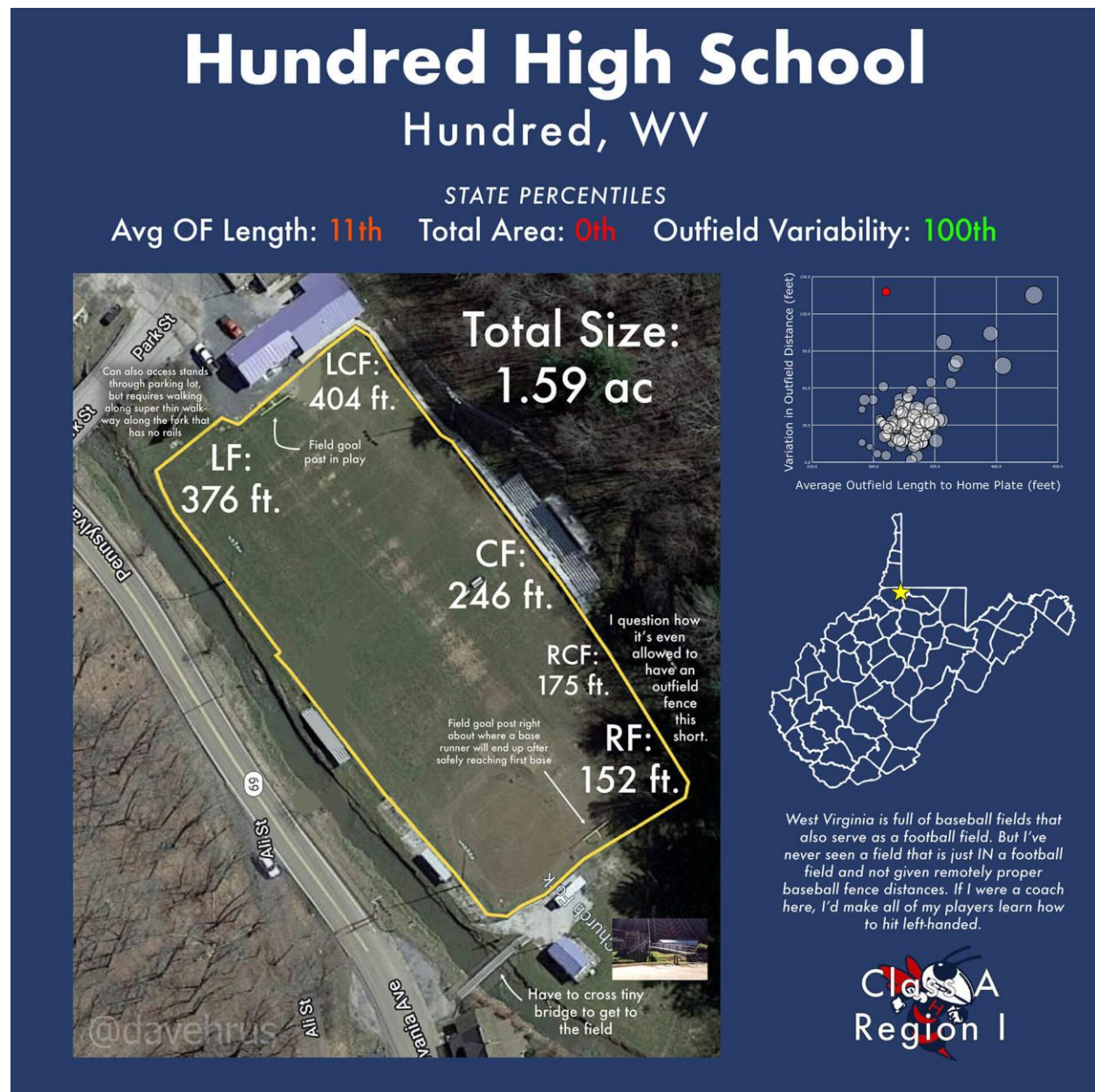
Occasionally, one that seems too strange to be true actually is. Cosgray Field in Hundred, W.Va., is 376 feet to left and 152 to right, and the two yellow uprights are in play. That's because it's a football field. There's an orange line spray-painted on the side of the mountain beyond the right-field fence to differentiate between a ground-rule double and a homer. However, after running that graphic, Hrusovsky learned the baseball team no longer plays there. He corrected the record, but reality didn't keep Cosgray Field from becoming one of his favorite (former) high school baseball fields.

Every student in Bowling Green's Digital Arts program has to complete a senior thesis prior to graduation. There are few constraints. It can be animation, game design, interactive storytelling, digital images and illustrations, almost anything at all. For some, like Hrusovsky, that freedom can also be a hindrance. He struggled to settle on a project that seemed worthy of a senior thesis.

"A lot of students don't know what to do," says Bart Woodstrup, an associate professor and division chair of the Digital Arts program, "because they're so used to us giving them all of the assignments and parameters that once they get their senior thesis and have no parameters they really are lost in what to do."

In teaching a class called "Art and Code," Woodstrup had come to learn two things about Hrusovsky. First, he excelled at using code for creative purposes. A CMYK orb clock he created for a class assignment later won an award at the school's undergraduate art show. And second, he was obsessed with sports — particularly Ohio sports. This was clear in his data visualizations

and in his classroom conversations. One day, Hrusovsky was wearing a Justin Fields Bears jersey. Woodstrup, a native Chicagoan, said, “You’re a Bears fan, too?!” Hrusovsky shook his head. He’s a Justin Fields fan because he played college football in Ohio.



So Woodstrup was unsurprised when Hrusovsky first mentioned that he’d created a series of infographics analyzing all the high school baseball fields in Ohio. “I was like, of course you did,” Woodstrup says, laughing. Hrusovsky hadn’t considered turning the weird fields project into his senior thesis until a friend mentioned the idea. So he first showed it to Woodstrup and his class.

“First off, they were very confused,” Hrusovsky said. “Then they were like, yeah, you should do this.”

Next he presented the proposal to the Digital Art faculty. Woodstrup, a fan of both sports and data visualization, was on board with the idea. Others needed to be sold. Did this data visualization qualify as art? Did it meet culture in an intriguing way? Was there a story to be told about which schools had strange fields and which didn't?

"What I encouraged him to do was to allow the people viewing his artwork to complete the story," Woodstrup says, "because every person who sees this piece and loves baseball will relate their own story based on his work. And I said, 'That's your connection. That's the art. Let the audience complete the work for you.'"

Eventually, as his proposal evolved, Hrusovsky got the green light. He made a poster that showed the Ohio field outlines and also featured the state's top 10 weirdest fields off to the side. He interviewed coaches and alums to collect their stories. Then he drove to his top four strange fields in Ohio, including his own high school, and took 360-degree photos that he later turned into an interactive program to give a first-person perspective from each field.

This spring, family and friends of Bowling Green seniors stepped into the school's art gallery and were greeted by projects of all shapes and sizes. None, however, was remotely like Hrusovsky's. It was unorthodox. It was an outlier. And those are two of his favorite things. Hrusovsky knew it was a project made more for the internet than for a gallery, but it had an audience there, too.

"At the show, I seemed to take a strong hold on the dad demographic of the art exhibit viewers," he says. "There was a giant huddle of dads hanging out."

These days, Hrusovsky is back in Cleveland rooting on the Guardians — he's also the SpongeBob Kid, but that's a story for another day — and interviewing for jobs. Ideally, one day soon he'll be creating graphics for scoreboards or broadcasts, but mainly he just wants to work in sports. And however that works out, Hrusovsky still plans to spend his free time searching every high school baseball field in the country to find the weirdest and wackiest ones around.

WHAT ALL-TIME MLB STATS WILL ENDURE?

By Mark Kolier

With the emphasis in today's Major Leagues on advanced statistics, what will be the marquee stats that average fans will remember?

When **Aaron Judge** hit 62 home runs in the 2022 season, the memories of **Roger Maris**, **Babe Ruth**, **Mark McGwire**, and **Barry Bonds** were all intertwined. Babe Ruth hit 60 homers in 1927

which stood as the all-time single-season record for 34 years until Maris broke the record (using eight additional games) in 1961. Those eight additional games gave birth to the baseball asterisk. 34 years is a long time to hold any record and add to it that baseball was the preeminent sport in the U.S. for that entire time making the record even more iconic.

That's why when McGwire and **Sammy Sosa** engaged in the great home race of 1998, McGwire's 62nd was heralded even more than his 70th, which was his season-ending total. When Barry Bonds broke that record a mere three years later, the roar of the crowd was not quite as loud, and that was not because Bonds' record was tainted -- at least not yet. It happened too soon after McGwire hit 70! Today 73 homers in a season is THE number, and it's been held for more than 21 years. The longer it lasts, the more frustrated some fans will be.

Ruth retired in 1935 with 714 home runs. **Henry Aaron** finally broke Ruth's record in 1974 when he hit his 715th. The Babe's record had stood for nearly 39 years. Because of baseball's place in American society, the average non-baseball person probably knew the number 714. It's a principal reason that Ruth's name remains indelibly imprinted in the minds of all baseball fans. Fewer people today are aware that Aaron finished with 755 homers or that Barry Bonds finished with 762. Love him or not, Bonds holds what might be the most recognized and most important all-time record in baseball. You can feel free to put an asterisk alongside it, but that number is THE number.

RBIs is also an easy statistic to follow and remember. **Hack Wilson's** 191 RBIs in 1930 (a mere 93 years ago) still stands up, and dedicated American League and Yankees fans are no doubt aware of **Lou Gehrig's** 185 RBIs the next year in 1931. Aaron fans also have the reason to crow about his career best 2,297 RBIs (the recently retired **Albert Pujols** is second all-time with 2,218).

We've heard for years that RBIs are a derivative stat ultimately contingent on the team's general offensive abilities. The other players provide those RBI opportunities. Still, 2,297 is a number to remember. Active players like **Miguel Cabrera** who will finish his career this season with 1,850-plus, **Nelson Cruz** (1,318 as of May 2023), and **Evan Longoria** (1,139 as of this writing) won't be breaking the all-time record. **Freddie Freeman** (with 1,069) and **Paul Goldschmidt** (1,065) are more than 1,200 RBIs away and will be 34 and 36 respectively this September. Aaron's career RBI record seems to be safe. Even very safe.

Fans have never been interested in the player with the all-time-record for doubles (**Tris Speaker** who retired in 1928 with 792) or triples (**Sam Crawford**, who retired in 1917 with 309). Both of those records were achieved a very long time ago. Maybe that's why the record for career stolen bases (1,406 by **Rickey Henderson**, who retired in 2003) is a little better remembered.

The career hits leader, **Pete Rose** (4,256), dedicated his playing career to passing **Ty Cobb's** 4,189. Considering the fact that today there are few players who reach 200 base hits in a single season, Rose's record seems very safe. Averaging more than 200 hits for 22 years would still have a player fall short of Rose. Not happening.

How about the all-time career leader for batting average? It has not changed since Cobb finished at .366 and, like Speaker, retired in 1928. Could a player exceed .366 for his entire career of 10 years or more? With today's pitchers? I would not bet on it.

Breaking all-time career and season pitching records is even more difficult given the state of baseball today and the way pitchers are utilized. **Cy Young's** record of 511 wins and 313 losses will never be broken. Nor will there ever be a 30-game winner again, the last being **Denny McLain** in 1968 with 31. **Jack Chesbro** had 41 wins in 1904 starting 51 times for the Yankees. Too few remember or care. That record will also never be broken.

Nolan Ryan's career record of 5,714 strikeouts will surely also never be broken. Nor will his record of 2,795 walks. Both Ryan and **Cy Young** own tremendous records of achievement and ignominy.

One pitching record that might be broken is career ERA, but then again probably not. There are many dead-ball era pitchers on this list headed by Hall of Famer **Ed Walsh**, who finished with a 1.82 career ERA retiring in 1917. **Mariano Rivera** had a career 2.21 ERA. **Clayton Kershaw** has a career ERA of 2.50, the best among active pitchers. Neither are close to 1.82.

The criteria used today to evaluate player effectiveness go far beyond old-timey baseball stats and records. Not just Wins Above Replacement (WAR), but stats like OPS+ (on base average plus slugging average), Weighted Runs Created (WRC+) normalized for ballpark differences, as well as pitcher WHIP (walks and hits per inning pitched), ERA+ (earned run average normalized for ballparks), and FIP (Fielding Independent Pitching). All are better and deeper measures than pure aggregate number stats. Yet it's hard to see baseball fans remembering who led the league in WHIP, WRC+, ERA+, or OPS+, or what is the all-time-record. Will fans ever evaluate players on the basis of their batted ball exit velocity? MLB ballclubs are already doing that!

Today's fans are more knowledgeable and have more stats at their fingertips than ever before. Baseball has always been a numbers game. It's still much more fun to watch a player like Judge try to hit 74 home runs than it is to have him break the all-time seasonal record for OPS+, which is held by **Josh Gibson** at 281. Gibson also has the second greatest OPS+ season at 273, with Bonds occupying the third and fourth slots with 268 and 263.

It will take time for fans to be as facile with advanced stats as they are with good old-fashioned homers, RBIs, batting average, strikeouts and ERA. If records are made to be broken, the way fans evaluate them can be broken too.

About the Author: Mark Koler along with his son Gordon co-hosts a baseball podcast called 'Almost Cooperstown'. He also has written baseball-related articles that can be accessed on [Medium.com](https://medium.com) and now [Substack.com](https://substack.com).

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Father's Day Special—rank these father-son combinations by most combined HRs.

Bobby Bonds (332) and Barry Bonds (762)	1,094
Ken Griffey Sr. (152) and Ken Griffey Jr. (630)	782
Cecil (319) and Prince Fielder (319)	638
Felipe (206) and Moises Alou (332)	538

Going back a third of a century (1990), 11 lefties won Cy Young Awards. One is pretty easy—he won 1995, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002. **Randy Johnson**

The others, some are not so easy:

1991 and 1998 NL, Hall of Fame, 305 game winner.

Tom Glavine

2002 AL, only 20 win season in 15 year career, 6-3 in post season games with A's and Giants.

Barry Zito

2004, 2006 AL, later threw a no-hitter for the Mets.

Johan Santana

2007 AL, later threw 11 seasons in New York.

CC Sabathia

2008 AL, second straight Indians winner, later pitched 5 seasons for Phillies.

Cliff Lee

2011, 2013, 2014 NL, plus 2014 MVP

Clayton Kershaw

2012 AL, pitched in World Series for Rays and Red Sox.

David Price

2015 AL, only 20 win season, pitched in 2017 World Series for Astros, later disappointing free agent with White Sox.

Dallas Keuchel

2018 AL, another Rays winner, now lives in NL west

Blake Snell

2021 AL, led league in innings pitched, strikeouts and ERA for Blue Jays, have pitched in post-season for D'backs, Jays and Mariners.

Robbie Ray

I am known more for something off the field than on it.

I pitched for 6 teams over 26 seasons.

I won 288 games including back-to-back 20-win seasons for the Yankees.

I was Cy Young runner-up in 1977 with the Dodgers.

I pitched in 2 World Series for the Dodgers against the Yankees, and a World Series for the Yankees against the Dodgers.

My first All-Star game was 1968 with the White Sox.

I'm a lefty, started 700 games, struck out 2245.

Who am I?

Tommy John

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