

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

7.2.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

Luis Arraez wrapped June batting .390.

In this week's issue: **Domingo German's** perfect game, historic power in Atlanta, **Freddie Freeman** and the milestones parade, LSU wins the College World Series.

In longer reads what its like to be a pitch clock operator, can Chicago support two teams?

This morning it's a bear claw with my coffee. Enjoy.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

He was the first player in MLB history to homer in the Wild Card, Division Series, League Championship Series and World Series in the same postseason.

He and only one other player have won Most Valuable Awards for different teams before their thirtieth birthdays, both in the NL.

Active, bats left, throws right. Was 2012 Rookie of the Year.

Name Him.

In 1998, four players reached 30 home runs before the All-Star break.

Right-handed 1B, 37 HRs at the All-Star break. He led the majors in HRs, RBI, SLG, OPS, OBP in 1998.

Lefty Half of Fame outfielder, 35 HRs

Righty NL outfielder, 33 HRs

Righty NL outfielder, hit a career best 50 HRs that year for San Diego, 30 at All-Star break.

18 players have hit 4 home runs in a game. The list includes Hall of Famers **Lou Gehrig, Ed Delahanty, Chuck Klein and Gil Hodges**. 11 have done it since I was born in 1955. Some are well known, a few obscure. Let's see how many of the 11 you can come up with.

1959 Indians outfielder hit 42 HRs that season to led AL

1961 Giants Hall of Fame outfielder, 2x MVP

1976 Phillies led NL in HRs that season, one of his 7x

1986 Braves 1978 Rookie of the Year as 3B, played 9 of his 10 seasons for the Braves.

1983 Cards Journeyman outfielder played for 8 teams, 105 career HRs, wrapped career in Cleveland in 2000.

Blue Jays, Indians, Cards, Red Sox, Phillies, Braves, Mariners, Yankees, Indians

2002 Dodgers lefty 1B/OF, hit 328 career HRs, played 7 years with Blue Jays before Dodgers, wrapped his career in 2007 with Mets.

2002 Mariners 17 seasons, 278 HRs/295 SB., righty CF, another journeyman.

White Sox, Mariners, Mets, Padres, Brewers, Red Sox, Marlins

2003 Blue Jays lefty batting 1B, 475 career HRs, he led the majors with 145 RBI in 2003, second to Arod in MVP voting.

2012 Rangers short 10-year career for this lefty OF, 2010 AL MVP, played in 2 World Series with the Rangers.

2017 Reds 2B, played 4 seasons with Milwaukee before moving to the Reds, shares nicknames with a Yankee shortstop.

2017 Diamondbacks righty DH/OF, led majors in RBIs in 2018 with Boston, played in post season in 2014 with Tigers, 2017 with D'backs, 2018, 2021 with Red Sox.

Answers at bottom

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Welcome to July.

(excluding the 2020 strike season) Since 1996, the first full season with at least one Wild Card, 103 of 156 eventual division champions held at least a share of that division lead entering July 1. That's 66 percent of division winners.

Take note, Rays, Twins, Rangers, Braves, Reds and D-backs fans -- those are the teams that currently lead their divisions.

Last season, three of the six division leaders on July 1 went on to win their divisions. In the American League, the Yankees and Astros each won their divisions, while the Twins, who led the AL Central entering July, missed the postseason entirely. In the NL, the Dodgers won their division, but the Mets and Brewers, who led the East and Central entering July, respectively, did not. The Mets were a Wild Card, but the Brewers missed the playoffs.

Since 1996, 17 of the 26 World Series winners, excluding 2020, led their divisions entering July. Before the Astros last year, the last winner in a full season to do so was the 2018 Red Sox.

The AL East has a combined .573 winning percentage, which would be the highest by a division in a single season. The current record for a five-team division? .541 by the 2022 AL East.

On the flip side, the Twins lead the Central at 41-42, a .494 winning percentage. The lowest winning percentage by a division winner in a full season was .506, by the 82-80 Padres in the 2005 NL West.

Of this year's current division leaders entering July, each has had at least a share of that lead entering July at least once since 2015, except the Reds – who were last in this spot in 2012. Each of the three current AL leaders and the Braves have won their divisions at least once since 2016. The Reds last did so in 2012, the D-backs in '11.

Of the current leaders, only Atlanta won its division last year. Since the split to six divisions, there's just one instance of a year-to-year turnover of at least five winners. That from 2006 to 2007, when all six division winners were different – with the Yankees, Twins, A's, Mets, Cardinals and Padres in '06 and the Red Sox, Cleveland, Angels, Phillies, Cubs and D-backs in '07.

Nice career start for Marlins rookie **Eury Pérez who** scattered four hits and struck out nine in six dominant innings on Sunday to lead the Marlins to a 2-0 win in Miami over the Pirates.

Pérez (5-1) extended his scoreless string to 21 innings. The righthander has allowed one run over 28 innings in five starts this month. His ERA dropped to 1.34 since being promoted from Triple A on May 12.

At 20 years and 71 days old, Pérez became the youngest player since at least 1901 to record three consecutive scoreless outings of six-plus innings. Since his debut on May 12, Pérez has stunned the masses with a 1.34 ERA -- that's the lowest ERA through a Major Leaguer's first nine career starts (minimum 40 innings) since **Steve Rogers'** 1.20 ERA in 1973. Pérez's one run allowed over his past six games (33 innings) marks the fewest runs allowed by any player age 20 or younger over a six-game span in a season since 1901 (minimum 30 innings).

Cards-Cubs in London two-game attendance figure was 110,227, which is 8,491 less than the two-game tally from 2019 when the Yankees and Red Sox played in the MLB's European debut. **There will be more international games next year.** The Dodgers and Padres are reportedly going to play a series in Korea, and the London series will return next June, when the Mets and Phillies make the trip. Planning has started for a series in Paris in 2025.

Five pitchers this century with the most starts in which they gave up zero earned runs-- **Clayton Kershaw** (104), **Zack Greinke** (92), **Justin Verlander** (89), **Max Scherzer** (84), **Jon Lester** (80).

Last weekend the Rockies won their series with the Angels despite a -20 run differential. According to ESPN, it's the second-largest such gap in MLB history. Only the 1897 Louisville Colonels (-23) did better/worse.

Some interesting stats at mid-way through the season:

JD Martinez leads the NL in slugging.

4 hitters with more than 100 hits—Marlins 2B **Luis Arraez**, Blue Jays SS **Bo Bichette**, Braves OF **Ronald Acuna** and Dodgers 1B **Freddie Freeman** (with **Shohei Ohtani** and **Marcus Semien** close behind).

Acuna, Semien and Freeman are 1-2-3 in hits.

Juan Soto (75) is 19 walks ahead of runner-up

The Reds lead the majors with 30 come from behind wins.

The Athletics are 40 games below .500 at 20-60, tying for the ninth-worst record through 80 games in major league history. It's the worst 80-game start since Detroit opened 19-61 in 2003. Saturday the A's drew a crowd of just 9,235, their 25th under 10,000 in 43 home games.

I had some fun this week poking around <https://thisdayinbaseball.com>, worth checking out. Ditto Horsehide Trivia – a blog wit daily trivia questions.

Sluggo the Sea Dog was elected to the Mascot Hall of Fame on Friday. The first minor league sports mascot to be so honored, Sluggo entertains fans at Portland Maine's Hadlock Field, the

home of Boston's Double-A affiliate. Syracuse University's "Otto Orange" is this year's other inductee.

George Frazier, a right-handed reliever whose big-league career comprised the 1978-1987 seasons, died earlier this week at age 68. Later a broadcaster for the Rockies, Frazier played for the Cardinals, Yankees, Indians, Cubs, and Twins. He won a World Series ring with Minnesota in 1987, and was the losing pitcher in three World Series games with New York in 1981.

Dick Hall, a right-handed pitcher who was converted from an outfielder four years into his big-league career, died last Sunday at age 92. Featured here at FanGraphs in 2020, Hall played from 1955-1971 and was at his best in 1964 when he went 9-1 with nine saves and a 1.85 ERA with the Baltimore Orioles.

The list of career leaders in triples is topped by players who performed either in the dead-ball era or in the offense-fueled 1930s. Most triples since 1940? **Stan Musial**, with 177 triples. **Roberto Clemente** had 166, which ranks second-most since 1940.

Yusei Kikuchi of the Blue Jays has allowed 19 home runs, the most in the majors. He's thrown 77 innings. **Sonny Gray** has thrown 81 innings and allowed two home runs.

Larry Walker slashed .381/.462/.710 with 154 home runs in 2,501 plate appearances at Coors Field.

Mike Sweeney drove in at least one run in 13 consecutive games from June 23-July 4, 1999. The Kansas City Royals first baseman finished the season with 102 RBIs. The following year he had 144 RBIs.

Jack Taylor threw complete games in 187 consecutive starts from June 20, 1901 to August 9, 1906. The New Straitsville, Ohio native pitched for the Chicago Cubs and the St. Louis Cardinals, and had a career record of 152-139 with a 2.65 ERA and 279 complete games in 287 starts.

The Red Sox had five complete games last year, or as many as **Roger Clemens** had in his first 20 major league starts in 1984. Through 79 games this year, they await their first.

Another random stat of the day-- **Adam Dunn** went 8 for 13 against **Clayton Kershaw**.

The Rangers have an otherworldly, 133-plus run differential.

The Mets have a \$344.1 million luxury-tax payroll — \$67.8 million more than the second-place Yankees. The Padres (\$246 million), Phillies (\$242 million), Dodgers (\$227 million) round out the top 5.

Royals rookie reliever **Austin Cox**, who started his career the way no reliever in the expansion era ever had — by allowing zero hits to the first 39 hitters he faced in the big leagues.

The Red Sox are 2-13 against National League teams (Cardinals, Marlins, Pirates, Reds, and Rockies) at Fenway this season and have been outscored by 30 runs.

Jayson Stark uncovers the best stuff for The Athletic:

The two active players who are both older than Justin Timberlake — **Nelson Cruz and Rich Hill** — got to face each other Tuesday night. And guess what happened?

So how often has a hitter as old as Cruz (42 years, 361 days old) and a pitcher as old as Hill (43 years, 108 days) hooked up in an at-bat that resulted in an RBI hit?

Date Batter (age) Pitcher (age)

5/4/2007 Julio Franco (48-254) Randy Johnson (43-236)

9/9/2006 Barry Bonds (42-47) David Wells (43-112)

8/22/1998 Paul Molitor (42-00) Dennis Eckersley (43-323)

Luke Weaver's last six starts for the Reds:

41 hits, 27 earned runs in 26 2/3 innings, for a 9.11 ERA. *And the Reds won all six of them!*

Clarke Schmidt's last six starts for the Yankees before Thursday:

Seven earned runs in 32 innings, for a 1.97 ERA. *And the Yankees lost all six of them.*

FREDDIE FREEMAN, MILESTONES

Freddie Freeman collected a pair of doubles in the Dodgers Sunday loss to Houston to reach the 2,000-hit milestone. At 33, he's an MVP candidate this year and is one of just three active players — Joey Votto, Miguel Cabrera and Nelson Cruz — in the 2,000/300 club.

The 2020 National League MVP became the 13th player to get their 2,000th career hit while with the Dodgers and is the sixth active MLB player to reach the milestone.

There are now 98 players in major-league history who have logged 2,000 or more hits and 300 or more home runs in their career — both thresholds that Freeman has crossed over the course of this season.

Freeman, a six-time All-Star, is in his second year with the Dodgers after spending the first 12 years of his career in Atlanta.

He led MLB with 199 hits and 47 doubles last season, posting a .325 batting average, and led the NL with 117 runs and a .407 OBP. Freeman leads the majors with 27 doubles this year.

Freeman is the 22nd player in major league history to have at least 2,000 hits and 300 home runs through his age-33 season.

Player	H	HR	From	To	Age
Freddie Freeman	2000	306	2010	2023	20-33
Albert Pujols	2347	492	2001	2013	21-33
Miguel Cabrera	2519	446	2003	2016	20-33
Álex Rodríguez	2531	583	1994	2009	18-33
Vladimir Guerrero	2136	392	1996	2008	21-33
Adrián Beltré	2227	346	1998	2012	19-33
Ken Griffey Jr.	2080	481	1989	2003	19-33
Cal Ripken Jr.	2227	310	1981	1994	20-33
Jim Rice	2163	351	1974	1986	21-33

Player	H	HR	From	To	Age
Eddie Murray	2168	353	1977	1989	21-33

Others in the group include **Orlando Cepeda, Hank Aaron, Billy Williams, Ron Santo, Frank Robinson, Al Kaline, Eddie Mathews, Mickey Mantle, Willie Mays, Lou Gehrig, Mel Ott, Jimmie Foxx**. Pretty good company.

The last player before Freddie Freeman to collect his 2,000th career hit in a Dodgers uniform was Adrián González (8/22/2017)

It has been a Dodgers milestone season.

Clayton Kershaw won his 200th game.

With two homers in the Dodgers' 5-0 win over the Rockies on Tuesday at Coors Field, JD Martinez became the 156th player in Major League history to hit 300 career homers.

He's the sixth player to hit his 300th homer with the Dodgers, joining Duke Snider, Gil Hodges, Gary Sheffield, Adrián González and Freeman. Martinez is also the first player since Miguel Cabrera (a former teammate) on July 22, 2012, to reach the 300-homer mark with a multi-homer game. Martinez now has 18 homers in 62 games. He had just 16 over 139 games with the Red Sox in 2022.

Continuing our Milestones theme:

Francisco Lindor hit homer No. 200 in the Mets' 7-2 win over the Brewers.

Kevin Gausman struck out his 1,500th batter in the Blue Jays' 3-0 loss to the Giants.

George Springer moved into second place on baseball's career list with his 55th leadoff home run, **Yusei Kikuchi** pitched a season-high seven innings, and the Blue Jays beat the Athletics, 12-1, Sunday.

Springer went 2 for 3 with a walk and two RBIs, including a sacrifice fly. His game-opening drive broke a tie with Alfonso Soriano and gave the 2017 World Series MVP sole possession of second

place on baseball's all-time list. Hall of Famer **Rickey Henderson** leads with 81 leadoff home runs.

LSU WINS COLLEGE WORLD SERIES

LSU claimed the national title Monday night with a win over Florida in Game 3 of the championship series.

Game 1: LSU 4, Florida 3, final

Game 2: Florida 24, LSU 4, final

Game 3: LSU 18, Florida 4, final

LSU claimed its seventh national title and its first since 2009.

The Tigers improved to 7-1 in the championship series (their one loss was to Florida in 2017).

LSU had 24 hits in Game 3, tying the CWS record that Florida set Sunday in its 24-4 win in Game 2.

The first two games of the Men's College World Series final could not have been more different. Game 1 saw LSU win an extra-innings nail-biter that felt like a Super Bowl. Yesterday, Florida bashed the Tigers' pitching staff, 24-4. A tight early game quickly turned into a shocking rout.

The 24 runs? The most ever scored by one team in a MCWS game, and the 20-run margin of victory tied for the second-largest ever. LSU winning the national title with a negative run differential in the MCWS. Think about it:

Thanks to the blowout loss, LSU's differential in Omaha sits at -7 right now. The last title winner in the negative was Virginia in 2015, and it was just -1.

LSU pounded 24 hits, a single-game CWS record, and hoisted the crown for the seventh time in program history, passing Texas for the second most in NCAA history behind USC's 12.

Thatcher Hurd paced LSU on the mound. He threw six innings and did not allow a hit after Wyatt Langford's two-run homer in the first before Hurd had recorded an out.

Reliever Gavin Guidry recorded the final out, getting Colby Halter on a swinging third strike to ignite a celebration that turned into a dogpile on the grass between third base and the pitcher's mound.

Florida right fielder Ty Evans homered against LSU reliever Riley Cooper in the seventh inning — Evans' fifth homer at this College World Series (and his ninth of the season).

That's a CWS record. Eleven players previously hit four in one series.

Eight of the first 14 games of this College World Series were decided by one run.

All 14 together were decided by 29 runs.

In the final two games here, with three innings to play, that number is 28 runs.

It was LSU's second national championship this year—LSU also won the women's national basketball championship.

The final drew 3.58 million viewers on ESPN.

Dylan Crews put up video game numbers this season at LSU — slashing .426/.567/.713 -- showed up big in the final game, going 4-for-6 with a triple. Crews hit .426 this year, slugged .713 and led Division I in walks. The top-ranked Draft prospect also won the 2023 Golden Spikes Award, which is given to the best college baseball player that season.

Florida's Wyatt Langford was launching moonshots all tournament long and is now the record holder for both the longest and second-longest taters ever hit in Charles Schwab Field history. The longest came on June 16, when he crushed a 456-foot dinger against the University of Virginia, and he then walloped another on Sunday night that traveled 449 ft. Langford showed off his power once again in Game 3, crushing a first inning home run. He finished going 7-for-13 across the three games in the finals with two big flies and three doubles.

OHTANI CONTINUES TO AMAZE

From various sources including the Joe Posnanski newsletter

Shoei Ohtani on Tuesday night--He struck out 10 batters on the mound and hit two home runs to give him 28 on the season, most in the majors.

Ohtani pitched 6 1/3 innings, gave up four hits, one run and he struck out 10.

Ohtani also hit two massive, 400-foot home runs.

The last pitcher to strike out 10 in a game and hit two home runs (**Zack Greinke** in 2019 for the Diamondbacks) or the last starter to go at least six innings, give up one or fewer runs and hit

two homers (**Walt Terrell** for the Mets in 1983) or the last pitcher to do all of it, six innings, one or fewer runs, 10 strikeouts, two homers (**Milt Pappas** in 1961, pitching for the Orioles against **Pedro Ramos***).

**Pedro Ramos had two two-homer games as a pitcher. Here's a leaderboard of pitchers with the most two-homer games:*

1. **Wes Ferrell**, 5
2. **Don Newcombe**, 3
3. **Ramos, Rick Wise, Dick Donovan, Red Ruffing, Jack Harshman, Tony Cloninger, Lew Burdette**, 2.

One name you won't see on there, alas, is **Babe Ruth** — as I've written many times, he was hardly ever BOTH a pitcher and a hitter. In 1921, he had his only two-homer game as a pitcher, but he only lasted five innings and he gave up four runs.

At the moment, Shohei Ohtani leads the American League in homers, RBIs, slugging, OPS and total bases. At the moment, Shohei also leads the American League in fewest hits per nine innings and strikeouts per nine innings.

The hits just keep on coming...on Saturday Ohtani hit a 493-foot home run Friday night — the longest of his major league career — to become the ninth player to reach 30 homers in a season by July 1.

The Los Angeles Angels' two-way superstar drove a slider from Arizona Diamondbacks left-hander **Tommy Henry** to right field in the sixth inning. It was the longest home run in the majors this year. **Babe Ruth, Ken Griffey Jr. and Sammy Sosa** each did it twice. The others are **Mark McGwire, Barry Bonds, Luis Gonzalez, and Albert Pujols**. Bonds had 39 by July 1 in 2001 en-route to setting the single-season record with 73.

Ohtani has hit 15 home runs in June. Besides being an Angels record for the most in any month, he is the fourth player in American League history to hit at least 15 in June, joining Babe Ruth (1930 Yankees), **Bob Johnson** (1934 A's), and **Roger Maris** (1961 Yankees).

Ohtani's three longest homers have come at Angel Stadium. His previous best was a 470-foot drive off Kansas City's **Kris Bubic** in 2001.

Friday night's home run was also Ohtani's fifth long ball this week.

POWER IN ATLANTA

The Braves have already set a franchise season record for most five-homer games. They have produced three such games this month.

Just one other MLB club entered Tuesday having tallied three five-homer games all season. So, it was business as usual for the Braves as they tallied five home runs through their first 10 plate appearances of a 6-2 win over the Twins on Tuesday night at Truist Park. The Giants were the only other MLB club who entered Tuesday with three this season.

Ronald Acuña Jr. padded his MVP resume as he accounted for two of those home runs that were hit before Minnesota starter **Joe Ryan** recorded his fourth out. Acuña surpassed **Freddie Freeman** for the most regular-season homers at Truist Park with his second jack (No. 72).

Acuña hit his 29th career leadoff homer on Ryan's first pitch of the game, then he watched as Riley and **Sean Murphy** tallied their own solo shots in Atlanta's four-run first. This raised the Braves' MLB-leading first-inning home run total to 25. They also lead the way with 75 first-inning runs, 11 more than any other club.

At mid-week the Braves had hit 56 home runs while going 19-4 this month. That total is two shy of the single-month franchise record, which the 2019 team set in June. The franchise has just eight 50-homer months in history. This is the second straight month this season's club has reached that total.

Matt Olson (eight), **Eddie Rosario** (eight) and **Ozzie Albies** (seven) have led the Braves in homers this month.

The breakthrough came Saturday. Matt Olson enjoyed his latest two-homer game and the Braves tallied another five-run first inning on the way to increasing their National League East lead with a 16-4 win over the Marlins on Friday night. This marked the second straight Friday that both of these events occurred. Olson hit a team-high nine homers in June and now leads the NL with 28 homers, two behind **Shohei Ohtani's** MLB lead. The Braves' first baseman finished a double shy of the cycle on Friday and exited the contest having hit .333 with 10 homers and a 1.000 OPS over 58 plate appearances going back to June 15.

The Braves belted 61 homers in June, the most ever recorded by an NL team in any month. The 61 homers hit by the Braves this past month was the third highest monthly total in AL/NL history, trailing only the Yankees, who hit 74 in August 2019 and the Blue Jays, who hit 66 in September/October 2021. This year's Rays also hit 61 homers in March/April.

Acuña got Saturday's victory started when he singled and scored in the first. The top MVP candidate has tallied 32 hits and scored 27 runs in the first inning. He is just six first-inning runs away from matching the franchise record **Chipper Jones** set in 1999. He reached the halfway

point with 37 stolen bases and 20 homers. He's the first player to have 20-plus homers and 35-plus stolen bases before the All-Star break.

The Braves are explosive in the first inning: 81 runs, 27 HRs, 114 hits, +15 run differential—best in MLB in any inning. Olson's 10 first-inning homers put him three shy of matching the record **Hank Aaron** set in 1971. Riley's eight opening-frame homers also have him positioned to break Aaron's mark.

The Braves have scored 81 first-inning runs through the season's first 81 games. The 1999 club set the franchise record with 127 such runs and the 2000 Cardinals set the NL record by scoring 147 times in the opening frame.

The Braves' 54 wins are their most through 81 games since the NL went to a 162-game schedule in 1962. The club's previous best halfway win total was 52, reached in 1995, 1997 and 1998. The Braves have won 23 of their last 27 games and lead the second-place Marlins by eight games in the NL East.

MORE AMAZNG STATS

How's this for impressive dominance:

Cy Young

1892 36-12 with a league-leading 1.92 ERA.

1895 led the league in wins, shutouts, WHIP and FIP.

1896 one of the two times he led the league in strikeouts and, like always, he led the league in fewest walks. He led the league in fewest walks FOURTEEN times.

1901 won the pitcher triple crown with 33 wins, a 1.62 ERA and 158 strikeouts.

1902 won 30 games for the fifth and final time in his career.

Barry Bonds 1990-1998

hit .290/.411/.556, won three MVP awards, eight Gold Gloves, was the only player in baseball history to hit 400 homers and steal 400 bases, and he posted 99.9 WAR, placing him right

between **Joe Morgan and Carl Yastrzemski**. He led the league in WAR seven times between 1990 and 1998. He was probably the best defensive leftfielder in baseball history.

Barry Bonds 1999-2007

hit .316/.505/.712 with four MVPs and put up some of the most jaw-dropping single-season numbers in the history of the game, including 73 homers (2001), an .863 slugging percentage (also 2001), a 268 OPS+ (2002), a .609 on-base percentage (2004) and 120 intentional walks (also 2004).

DOMINGO GERMAN THROWS 24TH PERFECT GAME IN MLB HISTORY

Over the 140 years of Major League Baseball history, and over 235,500 games played, there have been 24 official *perfect games*

Yankees starting pitcher **Domingo Germán** achieved greatness in Oakland on Wednesday night, throwing the 24th perfect game in MLB history and the fourth perfect game in Yankees history.

For the Yankees, **Don Larsen** threw a perfect game in Game 5 of the 1956 World Series. **David Wells'** perfect game came in 1998. **David Cone** threw the most recent Yankees' perfect game in 1999. Germán has added his name into Yankees lore, becoming the fourth pitcher in team history to throw a perfect game.

The 30-year-old had been torched in his two previous starts, lasting just two innings and giving up seven runs on June 16 at the Red Sox before coughing up eight earned runs in 3 1/3 innings versus the Mariners. Germán faced 23 hitters that day, gave up 10 runs in 3 1/3 innings, and never even retired three in a row. Then, in his very next start, he faced 27 A's and retired all 27 in a row? Germán's start before the Seattle debacle also was no predictor of future perfection. In that one, June 16 at Fenway, he faced 15 hitters *and seven of them scored*. He didn't retire three in a row at any point in that start, either. The 10 runs/10 outs/4 HRs effort—only happened 10 times in MLB history.

It also came in a season in which Germán was suspended 10 games for violating the league's sticky stuff policy for using too much rosin on his pitching hand.

German needed 99 pitches and struck out 9 across 9 innings.

Reported attendance in Oakland was 12,479. For reference **Catfish Hunter** perfect game in 1968 in Oakland—6,298 paid attendance. Further reference—**Don Larsen** perfect game in 1956 World Series—64,519 at Yankee Stadium.

MLB hadn't seen a perfect game since the Mariners' **Félix Hernández** in 2012. That's the longest drought between perfect games since the span from Catfish Hunter's on May 8, 1968 for Oakland to **Len Barker**'s for Cleveland on May 15, 1981.

Germán's perfect game was the third in the history of the Oakland Coliseum, tying that venue with the old Yankee Stadium for most in AL/NL history. The other two perfectos that took place at the Coliseum were thrown by Catfish Hunter (May 8, 1968 vs. the Twins) and **Dallas Braden** (May 9, 2010 vs. the Rays). Braden was on the call for the A's telecast during Germán's perfect game.

The 11 runs scored behind German are the most in any perfect game, topping the Giants' 10-0 victory in **Matt Cain**'s. The only Yankees no-hitter with a larger margin of victory was the team's 13-0 win in **Monte Pearson**'s on Aug. 27, 1938.

Germán didn't just throw a perfect game; he also threw a Maddux -- a shutout in fewer than 100 pitches. Germán threw 99 pitches, becoming the first pitcher to throw a Maddux in a perfect game -- a Madduxfecto, if you will -- since **Philip Humber** threw 96 pitches in his perfect game on April 21, 2012.

23 perfect games had been thrown in AL/NL history prior to Germán's perfecto; none had been done by a pitcher born in the Dominican Republic. Germán also became the first Latino-born pitcher to throw a no-hitter for the Yankees.

In his previous start against the Mariners on June 22, he surrendered 10 runs on eight hits. That outing now has a place in history, because, of all 24 perfect games in AL/NL history, Germán's is the first to come on the heels of a 10-plus run outing, per the Elias Sports Bureau. Entering Wednesday, only two pitchers had given up six or more runs in the start preceding their perfect game -- **Roy Halladay** gave up seven on May 23, 2010, and David Cone gave up six on July 7, 1999. Just four previous no-hitters have followed 10+ run starts, the most recent before Germán's being **Bill Dietrich**'s on June 1, 1937.

Germán became the first pitcher to throw a no-hitter of any kind while wearing the number zero. He is one of four pitchers to ever have worn that number on the mound, along with **Adam Ottavino, Marcus Stroman and Kent Emanuel**.

The last individual no-hitter against the A's was thrown by none other than the no-hit king, **Nolan Ryan**, on June 11, 1990 in Oakland. It was the sixth of Ryan's MLB record seven no-hitters. Ryan walked two and struck out 14 on 130 pitches.

German went into the game with a 5.10 ERA. That is second highest for a perfect game pitcher, behind David Wells who had a 5.23 ERA when he was perfect in 1998.

German wears 0. He becomes the first single digit uniform number to pitch a no-hitter. The old record for lowest number: No. 11, by **Hideo Nomo and Dwight Gooden**.

The A's had a picturesque record of 21-60 entering this game — and then had a perfect game thrown against them. That .259 win percentage sets the all-time record for lowest by any team heading into a game where they had a perfect game tossed against them.

The old record: .286, by **Lu Blue**'s 1922 Tigers, who were 4-10 (.286) when **Charlie Robertson** perfectoed them for the White Sox on April 30.

The Yankees have pitched the most perfect games of any franchise (four), and they've all been thrown by pitchers whose first name started with a D!

Don Larsen ... David Wells ... David Cone ... Domingo Germán.

Between Felix Hernandez' 2012 perfect game and Germán's gem Wednesday, 3,969 days had gone by. Per The New York Times' Tyler Kepner pointed out, in those 10 seasons in between, a whole bunch of less-than-perfect pitchers combined to throw 22,765 imperfect games.

Here's how you do it:

First: 11

Second: 14

Third: 10

Fourth: 17, including a full count against **Ryan Noda**

Fifth: 10

Sixth: 12

Seventh: 8

Eighth: 11, including a full count against **Jonah Bride**

Ninth: 6

99 pitches

Mike Fiers' second career no-hitter in 2019 stood as a milestone -- the 300th no-hitter in Major League history, including playoffs. With Domingo Germán's recent perfect game, there have been 319 no-hitters in Major League history.

How rare is a perfect game? German's was the 24th in MLB history.

500+ Home Runs – 28 players

3,000 hits – 33 players

Bat .400 – 38 times by 33 players

300 wins – 24 players

Hit for the cycle – 343 times

4 HRs in a game – 18 players

50 HRs in a season – 47 times by 32 players

10 or more times stealing home – 39 players

24 Perfect Games

Domingo Germán (Yankees)

June 28, 2023 at A's

Félix Hernández (Mariners)

Aug. 15, 2012 vs. Rays

Matt Cain (Giants)

June 13, 2012 vs. Astros

Philip Humber (White Sox)

April 21, 2012 at Mariners

Roy Halladay (Phillies)

May 29, 2010 at Marlins

Dallas Braden (A's)

May 9, 2010 vs. Rays

Mark Buehrle (White Sox)

July 23, 2009 vs. Rays

Randy Johnson (D-backs)

May 18, 2004 at Braves

David Cone (Yankees)

July 18, 1999 vs. Expos

David Wells (Yankees)

May 17, 1998 vs. Twins

Kenny Rogers (Rangers)

July 28, 1994 vs. Angels

Dennis Martinez (Expos)

July 28, 1991 at Dodgers

Tom Browning (Reds)

Sept. 16, 1988 vs. Dodgers

Mike Witt (Angels)

Sept. 30, 1984 at Rangers

Len Barker (Indians)

May 15, 1981 vs. Blue Jays

Catfish Hunter (A's)

May 8, 1968 vs. Twins

Sandy Koufax (Dodgers)

Sept. 9, 1965 vs. Cubs

Jim Bunning (Phillies)

June 21, 1964 at Mets

Don Larsen (Yankees)

Oct. 8, 1956 vs. Dodgers (World Series)

Charlie Robertson (White Sox)

April 30, 1922 at Tigers

Addie Joss (Cleveland Naps)

Oct. 2, 1908 vs. White Sox

Cy Young (Boston Americans)

May 5, 1904 vs. A's

John Ward (Providence Grays)

June 17, 1880 vs. Buffalo Bisons

Lee Richmond (Worcester Ruby Legs)

June 12, 1880 vs. Cleveland Blues

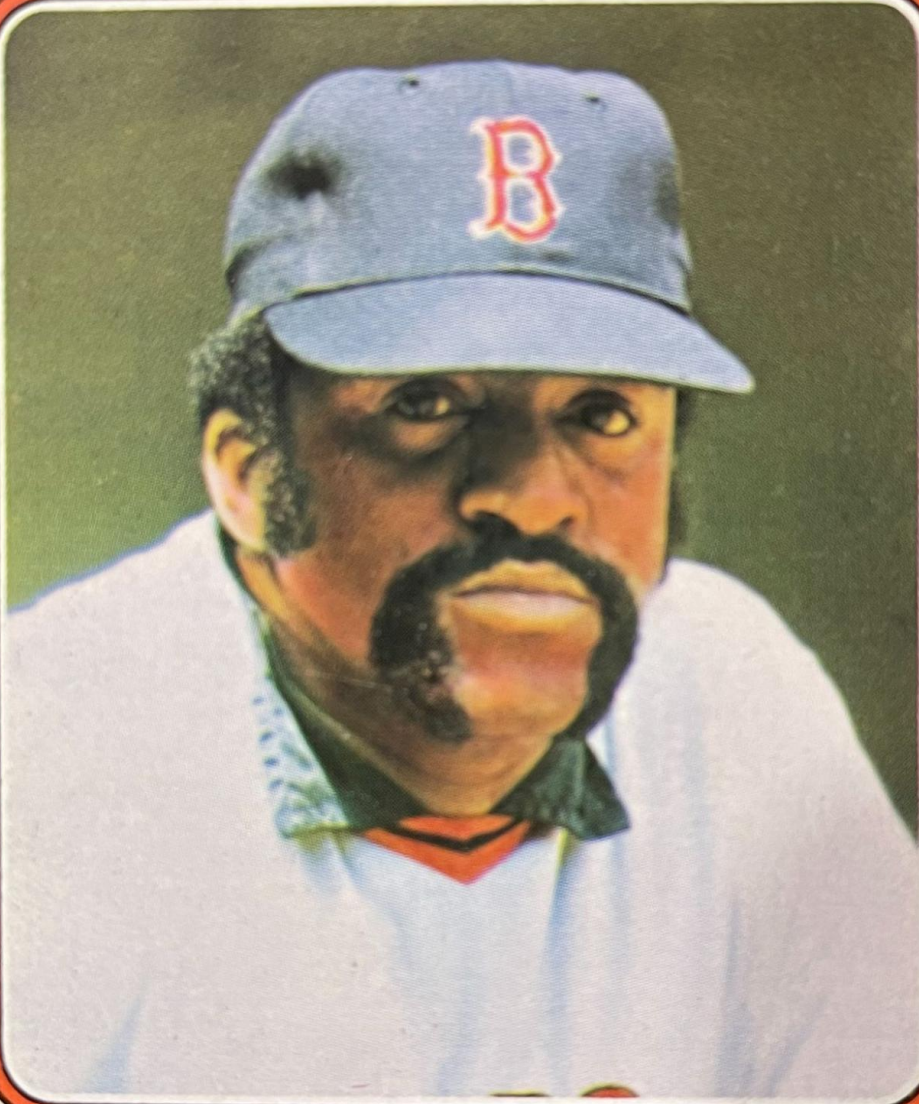
The Worcester Ruby Legs were members of the NL from 1880-82, and in that first year, Richmond pitched in 74 of the team's 85 games, totaling 590 2/3 innings. (Both of those statements are true). He became the first man to throw an official perfect game in the AL or NL

The A's snapped a 5,010-game streak of not being no-hit, which was the ninth longest streak by a franchise since 1901. The new longest active streak is 3,776 games by the Washington Nationals, who were last no-hit (as the Montreal Expos) on July 19, 1999.

Team	Streak	Streak Started	Streak Ended
CHC	7920	1965-09-10	2015-07-24
CIN	7109	1971-06-24	2016-04-20
PIT	6541	1971-08-15	2012-09-27
STL	6313	1919-05-13	1959-09-23
KCR	5550	1973-05-16	2008-05-18
CHC	5412	1917-05-03	1952-06-18
NYG	5051	1915-08-31	1948-09-08
NYN	5026	1958-09-21	1990-07-08
OAK	5010	1991-07-14	2023-06-27

BOSTON

PITCHER



LUIS
TIAN

RED SOX

167

**LUIS CLEMENTE
TIANI (VEGA)**

Luis Tiant

- ★ Set A.L. mark for most K's in 10-inning game with 19, 7-3-68.
- ★ Named The Sporting News A.L. Comeback Player of Year, 1972.

Hgt: 5'11" Wgt: 195
 Throws: R. Bats: R.
 Born: 11-23-40
 Havana, Cuba
 Home: Mexico City
 Mexico

MAJOR LEAGUE PITCHING RECORD								
Year	Club	G	IP	W	L	SO	BB	ERA
1964	Indians	19	127	10	4	105	47	2.83
1965	Indians	41	196	11	11	152	66	3.54
1966	Indians	46	155	12	11	145	50	2.79
1967	Indians	33	214	12	9	219	67	2.73
1968	Indians	34	258	21	9	264	73	1.80
1969	Indians	38	250	9	20	156	129	3.71
1970	Twins	18	93	7	3	50	41	3.39
1971	Red Sox	21	72	1	7	59	32	4.88
1972	Red Sox	43	179	15	6	123	65	1.91
1973	Red Sox	35	272	20	13	206	80	3.34
Maj. Lea. Tot.		328	1818	118	93	1479	650	2.93



**LUIS SPORTS
A FU MANCHU
MOUSTACHE.**

* © T.C.G. PRD. IN U.S.A.

On June 23, 1994 **Bobby Witt**, father of **Bobby Witt Jr.**, was denied a perfect game by an umpiring mistake similar to the one **Jim Joyce** made in **Armando Galarraga's** 2010 perfect game bid.

He was pitching for the A's, coincidentally against the Royals, where his son, Bobby Jr., currently plays.

The game was the best of Witt's career by a wide margin. He threw 11 complete-game shutouts, but in all of the other 10 he allowed at least four baserunners. In that game against Kansas City, though, Witt struck out 14, walked none and allowed just one hit.

But the hit really shouldn't have been a hit. In the sixth inning, **Greg Gagne** hit a grounder to first base. **Troy Neel** fielded and threw to Witt, who was covering the base. First-base umpire **Gary Cederstrom** ruled that Gagne won the race to the bag. Television replays showed otherwise.

“Obviously, by the replays, the man is out at first,” Witt said after the game. “I think he missed the call. But there’s nothing I can do about it now, and I can’t speak out about it.”

Because it occurred in the sixth and not with two outs in the ninth, Witt’s near-perfecto isn’t as famous as Galarraga’s, but it still bothers him.

“I think about it,” Witt told *The Mercury News* in 2010 after the Galarraga game. “You see a perfect game, like when **Roy Halladay** did it, and you start thinking, ‘What if? What if?’”

ALL-STAR DROUGHTS

The two most recent expansion teams (the D-backs and Rays), are tied for the fewest All-Star voting winners since 1970, with six apiece. And Tampa Bay has never had a player come out on top at first base, second base or shortstop. (In fact, because of a few who missed out due to injury, only three Rays position players have ever actually started a Midsummer Classic.)

Shortstop is the one position where the Blue Jays have never fielded an All-Star starter.

Given their market size, prominence and success, one might expect that the Dodgers would dominate All-Star voting. But that’s not really the case. The franchise ranks tied for 10th in voting winners since 1970, and most of its recent winners have been outfielders. Its longest drought actually comes at third base -- since **Ron Cey** in 1977

Dodgers haven’t had a starting All-Star first baseman since **Steve Garvey** went on a seven-year streak from 1974-80.

35 Braves have won the All-Star vote at their positions since 1970, **Walt Weiss** is the only one to do so at shortstop in 1998. That was Weiss’ first and only All-Star selection, and it came at age 34.

Arizona has never had a catcher or shortstop start the game, and the club’s only outfielder was **Luis Gonzalez**, who in 2001 was on his way to launching 57 home runs.

Arod spent three seasons in Texas (2001-03) and won the fan vote in each of them. He's the only Rangers shortstop besides **Toby Harrah** (1976) to accomplish the feat. Only one Texas player has won a starting position in the past nine All-Star Games (**Hunter Pence** at DH in 2019)

The NL All-Star team's starting catcher has been a Dodger 12 times in total, with Hall of Famers **Roy Campanella** (1950-54) and **Mike Piazza** (1994-97) both going on streaks of at least four seasons. But Piazza was traded prior to the 1998 Midsummer Classic, and **Russell Martin** in 2007 is the only Dodger to do the honors behind the plate since then.

AN ALL-STAR GAME WITHOUT ANY YANKEES? IT WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST TIME

With **Aaron Judge** injured and **Gerrit Cole** not guaranteed to pitch, the Yankees could be shut out of the All-Star Game box score for only the third time in the event's history.

There will be some Yankees at the game, of course. Every team is guaranteed at least one player on the All-Star roster, and the Yankees most likely will have at least two. Aaron Judge, the team's otherworldly outfielder, will probably be elected as a starter despite being out indefinitely with a toe injury. And it is a safe bet that pitcher Gerrit Cole, the team's ace, will be named to the team as well.

But pitcher rest is tricky. Cole has been selected to an All-Star team five times — once with the Pirates, twice with the Astros and twice with the Yankees — but he has appeared in the game only once, throwing a scoreless inning in 2015.

A box score shutout would be quite a feat: It has not happened to the Yankees since 1991, when Scott Sanderson was the team's lone representative at the game in Toronto and did not pitch. Sanderson, who joined the Yankees before the 1991 season, was a bright spot in a horrible stretch in which the team finished with a losing record in four consecutive seasons. He was 9-3 at the 1991 All-Star break but with only a few days of rest after his last start of the first half, he did not get into the game as the A.L. manager, **Tony La Russa** of the A's, used four starters (**Jack Morris, Jimmy Key, Roger Clemens and Jack McDowell**) and three relievers (**Jeff Reardon, Rick Aguilera and Dennis Eckersley**).

The only other time the Yankees were shut out of an All-Star Game box score was in 1943, and that time it was about proving a point.

Joe DiMaggio was away for military service, and the team, which went on to win the World Series that year, was represented at the game by catcher **Bill Dickey**; second baseman **Joe**

Gordon; the outfielders **Charlie Keller and Johnny Lindell**; and the pitchers **Tiny Bonham and Spud Chandler**.

None of the six Yankees representatives got into the game, which was held at Shibe Park in Philadelphia. Their exclusion was especially notable since the roster decisions were made by Joe McCarthy — the manager of the Yankees.

Overall, at least one Yankees player has appeared in 90 of the 92 All-Star Games.

MORE ROGER CRAIG

Some items from an appreciation after **Roger Craig**'s funeral by Scott Miller in The New York Times

Craig's legacy gleamed as the central cog of a group of three men who together spanned the past 111 years of Major League Baseball. Craig had been the starting pitcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers' final game in 1957 and then was the starter for the Mets in the expansion franchise's first game in 1962. His manager with the Mets, the ineffable **Casey Stengel**, made his debut with Brooklyn in 1912. Craig, who went on to success as both a pitching coach and a manager, was a mentor for, among others, **Bob Melvin**, the current manager of the San Diego Padres. From 1912 to 2023--Stengel to Craig to Melvin.

Alan Trammell was in Detroit for all five of Craig's seasons as the pitching coach for **Sparky Anderson** — a run that culminated with the Tigers' 1984 World Series title. The easygoing Trammell was appreciated by Craig when **Jack Morris**, another Hall of Famer, was pitching.

Morris, whose career took off when Craig taught him the splitter, ran hot on the mound. When things got tight, Anderson would send Craig out to dispense words of wisdom. Craig dutifully obeyed, knowing the volcanic Morris wanted no part of it. So the pitching coach often would simply chat with Trammell instead, completely ignoring Morris. Eventually, Morris would lose patience and order them off his mound.

Craig would return to the dugout, assure Sparky that his ace was good and the game would proceed.

His major league debut was in 1955, when Brooklyn called him up from Class AAA Montreal for a spot start. He did so well, throwing a complete-game three-hitter against Cincinnati, that Manager **Walter Alston** told him to take a couple of days and move his family from Montreal to Brooklyn. Reading the uncertainty on Craig's face, a veteran teammate offered, "Come on, kid, I'll give you a ride to the airport."

It was **Jackie Robinson**.

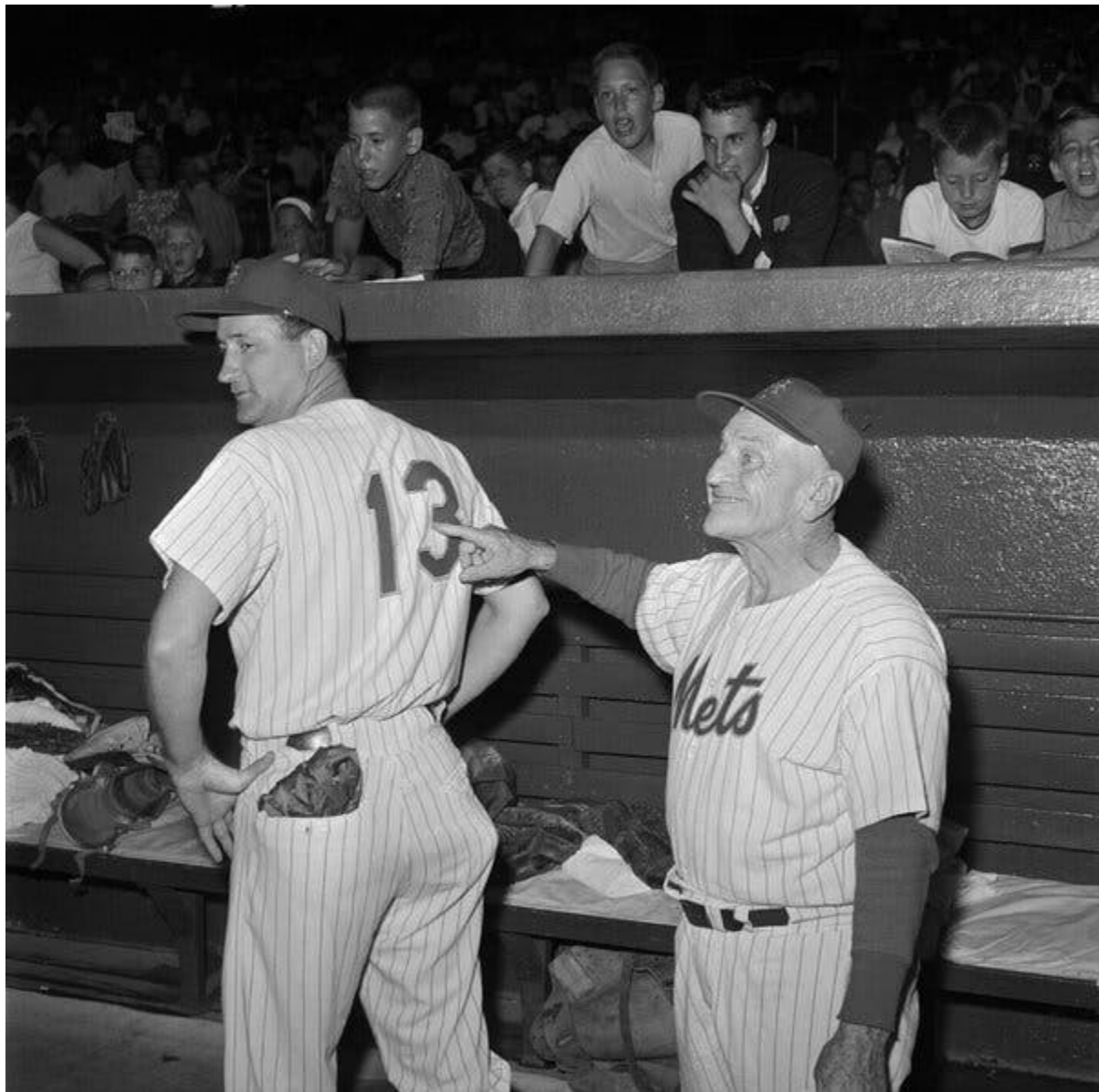
"It was my first day in the big leagues," Craig said. "And Jackie Robinson is taking me to the airport.

"He never said one word about what he went through. And I saw a lot of it. He just told me, 'Kid, you're going to be a great pitcher.'"

That autumn, Craig was the winning pitcher in Game 5 of the World Series as the Dodgers defeated the Yankees in seven games for their only championship in New York.

At age 32 the expansion Mets drafted Craig. The team went 40-120. Craig started 33 games and relieved in 9 more. Craig led the majors with 24 losses.

Craig earned three World Series rings as a player (1955 and 1959 Dodgers, 1964 Cardinals) and one as a pitching coach (1984 Tigers).



Manager Casey Stengel relied on Craig as both a starter and a reliever in his time with the Mets. A long losing streak by Craig led him to change his number to shake up his luck. As a member of the expansion Mets staff, Craig went 10-24 in 1962, leading the majors in losses. Then he led the majors with another 22 losses in 1963.

AS WE APPROACH THE TRADE DEADLINE AND THINK ABOUT BUYERS AND SELLERS THERE IS HOPE—SOME SUCCESSFUL DEADLINE TRADES

From mlb.com

2008 Jose Bautista.

Blue Jays Bautista from Pittsburgh for minor league catcher **Robinson Diaz** and just two years later, Bautista set a new club record with 54 home runs and carried the franchise forward to a new competitive era.

David Justice (2000)

The Yankees had won three of the last four World Series, but they appeared to have a championship hangover in June 2000, showcasing a flagging offense and a record that hovered around .500. Enter Justice, who was already a three-time All-Star. Cleveland's asking price was significant, costing the Yanks pitchers **Zach Day and Jake Westbrook** along with outfielder **Ricky Ledee**. It was worth it: the 34-year-old Justice was an absolute force, batting .305 with 20 home runs and 60 RBIs in 78 regular-season games for the Yanks. Justice won MVP honors in the 2000 AL Championship Series vs. Seattle, then helped the Yankees to their 26th World Series championship in a victory over the Mets.

Ben Zobrist (2015)

Zobrist, whom the Royals acquired from the A's for pitching prospects **Aaron Brooks and Sean Manaea**, turned into a linchpin for that team, playing second base and the outfield, and helped the Royals clinch their first World Series title in 30 years. He hit .284 with 37 runs scored, 16 doubles and seven homers after the Royals acquired him on July 28, 2015. In the postseason, Zobrist batted .303 with two homers and six RBIs.

Joe Ryan (2021)

The Rays needed a big bat, and the Twins offered two months of **Nelson Cruz**. Tampa Bay sent over Ryan, who was throwing almost exclusively fastballs at the time and wasn't universally considered a slam dunk to become an MLB starter. Well, the Twins finished Ryan's development as he found two legit secondary pitches, and he's now arguably the best starter in one of the Majors' best-performing rotations.

Mark Teixeira (2008)

The 2008 Angels remain the only club in franchise history to reach 100 wins in a season and they did it with the help of Teixeira, who was acquired at the Trade Deadline from the Braves for a light return that included first **baseman Casey Kotchman** and pitcher **Stephen Marek**, who never reached the Majors. Teixeira hit .358/.449/.632 with 13 homers, 14 doubles and 43 RBIs in 54 games after the trade. He also went 7-for-15 against the Red Sox in the AL Division Series, but the Angels lost in four games. They tried to re-sign him in the offseason, but he ultimately left to sign with the Yankees. It wasn't all bad, however, as the Angels received Draft pick compensation as a result and took superstar **Mike Trout** with that selection in 2009.

Justin Verlander (2017)

The Astros pulled off a last-second deal to acquire Verlander from the Tigers at the Aug. 31 deadline in exchange for prospects. Verlander helped the Astros win the World Series that year -- he was the MVP of the ALCS -- and went on to win two Cy Young Awards, two World Series titles, throw his third no-hitter and reach 3,000 career strikeouts in five-plus terrific years in Houston.

Elvis Andrus, Neftalí Feliz, Matt Harrison (2007)

Probably the best trade of the Jon Daniels era, Texas received three future All-Stars and two key pieces of the 2010-11 teams that reached the World Series when the club sent Mark Teixeira to Atlanta. Andrus was a cornerstone of the franchise, spending 12 years as the Rangers'

shortstop. Feliz and Harrison earned All-Star selections on the '11 team that ultimately fell to the Cardinals in the World Series.

Brewers: CC Sabathia (2008)

Sabathia spent only three months in a Brewers uniform but he is one of the most beloved players in franchise history because he was the key to ending a postseason drought that had spanned nearly three decades. Acquired from Cleveland, he went 11-2 with a 1.65 ERA in 17 regular-season starts for Milwaukee, including seven complete games. One of them was one of the biggest victories in Brewers history -- a win over the Cubs in the 2008 finale that clinched the NL Wild Card. Sabathia's final three starts of the regular season and his start in Game 2 of the NLDS against the Phillies all came on three days' rest. Then-GM **Doug Melvin** called it the most unselfish act he'd ever seen from a player.

Cardinals: Scott Rolen (2002)

It's rare when a team can say it traded for a future Hall of Famer, but that's what the Cardinals did on July 29, 2002, when they dealt **Placido Polanco, Mike Timlin and Bud Smith** to the Phillies for **Doug Nickie** and the slick-fielding Rolen. The All-Star third baseman won four of his eight career Gold Glove Awards while with St. Louis. He also teamed with **Albert Pujols and Jim Edmonds** to help the Cardinals reach two World Series and win one in 2006.

Cubs: Jake Arrieta (2013)

The Cubs moved early with this trade, pulling off what wound up being a lopsided swap with the Orioles on July 2, 2013. In order to acquire future ace Arrieta along with reliever **Pedro Strop**, Chicago sent righty **Scott Feldman** and catcher **Steve Clevenger** to Baltimore. Arrieta blossomed into one of the best arms in baseball by 2015, when his historic second half led to a Cy Young Award. Strop developed into an elite setup man and one of the great relievers in club history. Without this trade, maybe the Cubs don't hoist that World Series trophy in 2016, ending the club's 108-year title drought.

D-backs: J.D. Martinez (2017)

GM Mike Hazen's trade for Martinez in 2017 paid immediate dividends. The D-backs sent Minor Leaguers **Jose King, Sergio Alcantara and Dawel Lugo** to the Tigers for Martinez. Hazen jumped the gun on the deadline, completing the deal on July 18, which gave the D-backs an extra two

weeks of production. Martinez hit 29 homers for Arizona after the trade, including four in one game at Dodger Stadium, as the D-backs rode his hot bat to the top NL Wild Card Spot.

Dodgers: Max Scherzer and Trea Turner (2021)

The Dodgers, especially under president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman, have made plenty of big trades at the Deadline. In 2018, they acquired **Manny Machado** from the Orioles. 10 years before that, Los Angeles got **Manny Ramirez** from the Red Sox. But of all the really impactful trades the Dodgers have made, it's tough to argue with the '21 deal with the Nationals that landed them Scherzer and Turner. Scherzer gave the Dodgers another ace atop the rotation. Turner was a perfect addition to the Dodgers' lineup and he was one of the top hitters in the NL during his year-and-a-half stint in L.A. It didn't result in a championship, but the deal did help the Dodgers secure a combined 217 regular-season wins.

Padres: Fernando Tatis Jr. (2016)

It wasn't exactly "the Tatis trade" at the time. The Padres sent veteran right-hander **James Shields** to the White Sox in a deal that netted righty **Erik Johnson** and a scrawny, unknown shortstop prospect who quickly developed into one of the game's most exciting players. The Padres have since pulled off a handful of deadline blockbusters under general manager A.J. Preller, including deals for Juan Soto and **Josh Hader** last summer. But the Tatis trade remains a coup for the Padres, who sold high on Shields to a White Sox team looking to get out in front of the trade market.

SINGING THE BLUES IN QUEENS

I wonder if this chart pops up on Steve Cohen's screen every morning?

- \$43 million to **Justin Verlander**, who is 2-4 with a 4.50 ERA in 9 starts.
- \$43 million to **Max Scherzer**, who's better (7-2, 3.95 ERA) but not Cy Young.
- \$33 million to **Francisco Lindor**, who is hitting .221 with a .306 OBP.
- \$20 million to **Starling Marte**, who has an 82 OPS+.
- \$19 million to **Brandon Nimmo**, who is doing Brandon Nimmo things.
- \$15 million to **Kodai Senga**, best starter on the team with a solid 118 ERA+.
- \$15 million to **Pete Alonso**, who has 24 homers and 27 singles.

- \$14 million to **Carlos Carrasco**, who has a 6.19 ERA and is all but unpitchable.

Also, they are paying \$32 million to **Jose Quintana and Edwin Diaz**, who are both hurt, though Quintana did make another rehab start on Sunday.

That right there is \$234 million for 10 players — just that is more than, say, the Dodgers' entire payroll.

And the Mets are 35-42, 15 games behind Atlanta in the National League East, and coming off an absolutely ridiculous 7-6 loss to their soon-to-be London mates, the Philadelphia Phillies. In that loss, the Mets took a 6-3 lead into the bottom of the 8th inning, and then this happened:

- Pitcher **Josh Walker** walked **Bryce Harper**
- **J.T. Realmuto** singled Harper to second.
- Walker walked **Bryson Stott** to load the bases.
- **Jeff Bringham was brought in to pitch.**
- **Alec Bohm** grounded to third, but third baseman **Brett Baty** double-clutched the throw and pulled Jeff McNeil off the bag. **Harper scored. Mets 6-4.**
- Bringham walked Brandon Marsh. **Realmuto scored. Mets 6-5.**
- Bringham struck out **Kody Clemens**. One out.
- Bringham hit **Kyle Schwarber** with a pitch. **Stott scored. Game tied 6-6.**
- Bringham hit **Trea Turner** with a pitch. **Bohm scored. Phillies 7-6.**

That's how you give up four runs on one hit. That's how a \$330-million team loses a game behind a 28-year-old league-minimum pitcher, a 31-year-old league-minimum pitcher, and a talented but still raw league-minimum rookie third baseman.

AND IF YOU THINK METS FANS ARE FRUSTRATED, PADRES HITTING WITH RUNNERS IN SCORING POSITION

An example of the analysis you get in the Joe Sheehan newsletter every day—worth considering a subscription

Now we do get to the Padres, whose fans have been railing about the team's performance with runners in scoring position all year long. A team that, overall, is hitting .232/.322/.398 -- itself a problem -- is hitting .204/.299/.255 with RISP. That's MLB's lowest RISP batting average by 17 points and one that would, in fact, be historically notable. Baseball Reference lists RISP splits back to 1914.

Unclutch (lowest RISP BA, 1914-2022, min. 1000 RISP PA)

Padres	1969	.200
Phillies	1942	.202
Mets	1968	.204
Senators	1963	.207
Mets	1981	.210

All these numbers come with an asterisk of one sort or another. The 1969 Padres were an expansion team, and the 1963 Senators a third-year team. The 1942 season was a war year. 1968 was a war-on-hitters year. 1981 was a war-on-fans year. (The strike cut seven weeks of warm-weather baseball from the schedule.) None of these caveats apply to the 2023 Padres, of course. Almost all these examples of bad RISP averages date to Deadball II or the period just after it, so the Padres do stand alone.

We have tools that can get at this, of course. We can adjust for run environment, and we know that batting average isn't everything. Splits can be adjusted for context, just as full-season stats can, just as individual stats can. The Padres' OPS+ with runners in scoring position is...OK, it's really bad, 75. This year, **Myles Straw** has a 74 OPS+. **Anthony Volpe** has a 76. The Padres, at the halfway mark, are actually carving out new space on Mt. Chokemore.

Really Unclutch (lowest RISP OPS+, 1914-2022, min. 1000 RISP PA)

Phillies	1920	76
Tigers	1940	77
Mets	1962	77
Indians	1987	81
Mets	1981	82
Athletics	1921	82

These are the teams that, relative to the league, were the worst ever at hitting with runners in scoring position. The Padres, through 778 PAs with RISP, are even worse than that. They feel a little like those 1987 Indians, one of the most famous disappointments in baseball history, who went from the cover of *Sports Illustrated* to the worst team in baseball in six months.

It's 2023, so we can dig a little deeper. I wanted to see how much of the Padres' numbers are performance versus luck. They are getting unlucky, we know that; their expected RISP batting average, based on their quality of contact, is .225, versus an actual .204. The gap between those two numbers is second in MLB to the Braves. For slugging, it's .355 versus .382, the fifth-highest gap in the game. Throwing all this into the wOBA machine, we find that the Padres are underperforming their projected wOBA with runners in scoring position by 27 points, third in the majors to the Yankees and Braves. (Yes, as incredible as the Braves hitters are, they're getting a little unlucky.)

Now, those expected BA and SLG figures with RISP still rank just 28th and 20th in MLB, which would drag the Padres out of the all-time cellar, but still be bad. Their xwOBA with runners in scoring position is still just 22nd in MLB.

They do strike out a bit more with runners in scoring position, jumping from 22.6% to 24.2%, which is notable because the league strikes out a little less with runners in scoring position this year (about 0.5% less). The Padres' strikeout rate increases by 1.6% with RISP, which is seventh-most in MLB. Looking at all teams, I don't see much correlation between a change in K rate and RISP performance, though. It's probably more noise than signal.

Padres fans won't believe this, but their boys aren't even the worst team with runners in scoring position this year. The Royals are hitting .228/.300/.337, for a 71 OPS+ that, if it holds up...er, down...would be the worst in baseball history.

The frustrating thing about a team that's not performing with runners in scoring position is that there aren't action items. You can't say "trade for RISP guys" or "bench the unclutch guys" because RISP performance isn't an actual skill individuals have -- over time, players will hit in any situational subset what they hit overall. **Xander Bogaerts** is hitting .197 with RISP, **Manny Machado** .206. You're not going to start hitting **Rougned Odor** (.269) for them in big spots. All you can do is be patient, because the Padres aren't going to hit .200 with runners in scoring position all year.

SLUMPING SUPERSTARS

Notes from a Tom Verducci piece in Sports Illustrated

Bryce Harper has gone 32 days and 25 games without a home run. Eighteen of his 22 hits in that span have been singles. His pull-side power has gone missing. Harper's launch angle has dropped to a career-low 7.8 degrees, and his pull percentage to a career-low 31.5%.

This month **Giancarlo Stanton** is hitting .042 against fastballs (1-for-24, not including cutters). The problem has been particularly acute all season against elite fastballs. Against fastballs 95 mph and higher, Stanton is hitting .130 with no home runs.

Stanton is 33, deploys a unique if awkward swing, and has seen velocity continue to rise over the course of his career. Since he won the NL MVP in 2017, average fastball velocity has jumped from 92.8 to 93.8, batting average against fastballs has dropped 11 points and the number of pitchers who can throw 100 has increased from 40 in a full season to 44 in just half a season.

Stanton vs. Fastballs

Avg. SLG

2015–21 .307 .612

2022–23 .186 .380

Josh Donaldson is hitting .121 against fastballs, including .067 against 95-plus.

Carlos Correa vs. Fastballs (not including cutters)

Avg. MLB Rank

2022 .347 4 of 124

2023 .192 136 of 139

Julio Rodríguez, Mariners

He is hitting the ball slightly harder (92.6) than he did last year when he was AL Rookie of the Year (92.0). But his downturn is not a matter of bad luck. It's a matter of chasing more. Rodríguez simply swings too much to be a great hitter.

Mariners manager **Scott Servais** says it's a classic case of a young player trying to do too much and to satisfy the many demands on his time and profile. Rodríguez's chase rate has increased from 33.5%—already too high, which put him in the bottom 19th percentile—to 37.4%, which puts him in the bottom ninth percentile.

Rodríguez by Pitch Location

In Zone Out of Zone

2022 .343 .155

In Zone Out of Zone

2023 .294 .138

Rodríguez has made 81 outs this year on pitches out of the zone. Only 10 players have more.

Francisco Lindor, Mets

He is on pace for a 30-homer, 100-RBI season, but his batting average (.223) and OBP (.305) are career lows. The problem comes down to two words: swing decisions. Lindor is hitting .161 on breaking pitches, down from .247, and the drop is largely due to trying to hit spin out of the zone.

Most Outs Without a Hit on Chase Breaking Balls, 2023

AB H

1. Francisco Lindor, Mets 30 0

Leads MLB

José Abreu, Astros

At 36, Abreu suddenly has lost bat speed, at least through the first half of this season. After six straight years ranking in the top 89th percentile or greater in exit velocity—elite range, Abreu is down to the 48th percentile—mediocre. From 92.2 mph to 89.2, Abreu is among the biggest losers in exit velocity:

Biggest Drop Exit Velocity, 2023 from 2022

MPH

1. **Alejandro Kirk**, Blue Jays -3.9
2. **Andrés Giménez**, Guardians -3.8
3. **Byron Buxton**, Twins -3.1
4. José Abreu, Astros -3.0
5. **Willy Adames**, Brewers -2.8

Four-seamers generally expose a loss in bat speed. Check out Abreu's decline against four-seamers since his MVP season:

Abreu vs. 4-Seamers

Avg. SLG HR

2020 .352 .667 4
2021 .295 .596 11
2022 .270 .404 4
2023 .221 .338 2

Mike Trout, Angels

Trout's slugging percentage has dropped from .630 to .480. Only **Jean Segura** (-.153) has lost more pop than Trout. Pitchers continue to pound him with heaters, and Trout still has not been able to adjust. Trout sees more fastballs this year than any hitter in baseball except **Myles Straw**, a go-right-at-him approach pitchers usually deploy against singles hitters.

Trout by Month vs. Fastballs

Pct. Avg.

April 58.5% .273
May 63.4% .200
June 68.2% .200

Most Fastballs, June

No. Avg.

1. Mike Trout, Angels 302 .200
2. **Nathaniel Lowe**, Rangers 254 .189
3. **Spencer Steer**, Reds 246 .180

KEN ROSENTHAL ON OPTIMISM FOR THE ANGELS

Don't count out the Angels

It's time to flip the conversation on the Angels. Rather than lament the possibility that **Shohei Ohtani** and **Mike Trout** again will miss the playoffs, consider this question: **How dangerous might the Angels be if they get in?**

Pretty dangerous, is the answer. And don't look now, but the Angels (44-37) are in possession of the third American League wild card, a half-game ahead of the Blue Jays and a game ahead of the Astros, and a mere five games back in the AL West.

FanGraphs puts the Angels' odds of capturing the AL West at only 17.2 percent behind the Rangers (57.1) and Astros (21.6). The Angels' overall odds of making the playoffs, behind an offense that ranks sixth in the majors in runs per game, are much better at 46.1 percent. And with the wondrous Ohtani presumably starting one of the games in a best-of-three wild-card round, the Angels would enter with an immediate edge.

The rest of the team's postseason rotation might be formidable as well. Left-hander **Reid Detmers**, who had a 5.15 ERA on June 1, has gotten hot, producing a 1.05 ERA in his last four starts. And while lefty **Patrick Sandoval**, after two strong months, has struggled in June, his 1.23 ERA in two starts for Mexico in the World Baseball Classic demonstrated his ability to handle big-game pressure.

The Angels' bullpen is more of a question. True, it's sixth in the majors in ERA, but that ranking is deceptive. Angels relievers are allowing the ninth-highest OPS in the majors, and their percentage of stranding inherited runners is the league's worst. The eventual returns of **Matt Moore** (oblique) and rookie **Ben Joyce** (ulnar neuritis) should help, and general manager Perry Minasian could further bolster the relief corps at the deadline.

Fans who expect the Angels to trade Ohtani simply are not paying attention. Minasian's trades for infielders **Eduardo Escobar** and **Mike Moustakas** last weekend were the latest reflection of the team's urgency in Ohtani's final season before he becomes a free agent.

During the offseason, Minasian added left-hander **Tyler Anderson**, outfielder **Hunter Renfro**, infielders **Brandon Drury** and **Gio Urshela** and relievers Moore and **Carlos Estévez**. Once the season began, Minasian made shortstop **Zach Neto** and Joyce the first players from the 2022 draft to reach the majors and also promoted righty **Sam Bachman**, the team's first-rounder from '21.

The Escobar and Moustakas moves, prompted by injuries to Neto, Urshela and third baseman **Anthony Rendon**, did not require an increase in payroll. The Mets paid down Escobar's \$9.5 million salary to the league minimum. The Rockies already were paying Moustakas the league minimum, with the Reds covering the rest.

The Angels have not reached the postseason since 2014. They have not won a playoff game since '09. Minasian is going to keep pushing. And October could be even more interesting than usual if his team gets in.

MEET WILLARD “HOMERUN” BROWN



Hall of Fame Negro Leagues outfielder **Willard Brown** was born on this week in 1915.

According to the National Baseball Hall of Fame, Brown, one of the great power hitters of his time, got his nickname from the legendary **Josh Gibson**. Brown's plaque in Cooperstown bears another nickname, too: "Ese Hombre." In the Puerto Rican winter league, he was such a feared hitter that he was known simply as "That Man."

Brown spent most of his career with the Kansas City Monarchs, playing 13 seasons with the team (including two before the formation of the Negro American League). Midway through the 1947 season, the St. Louis Browns signed Brown and his Kansas City teammate **Hank Thompson**. But Brown, who'd been crushing the ball for Monarchs that year, struggled in 21 games for St. Louis. His SABR biography posits that the unwelcoming atmosphere created by racist teammates and the Browns' decision to bring them to St. Louis without a stint in the minors to adjust to integrated ball proved challenging. He was released after 21 games and never appeared in the integrated majors again.

Brown continued to crush the ball wherever he went. Playing in Puerto Rico the winter after his stint with St. Louis, Brown won the league's triple crown with a .432 batting average, 27 homers and 86 RBIs in a 60-game season.

Brown continued playing professional baseball into his 40s. One of his best seasons came in 1954 when, at the age of 39, he had 35 homers and 120 RBIs in 140 games in the Texas League.

This week's Birthdays

Chris Speier	73
Rick Honeycutt	69
Mark Grace	59
Jeff Conine	57
Jim Edmonds	53
Carlos Delgado	51
Garrett Anderson	51
Derek Jeter	49
Jason Kendall	49
Nelson Cruz	43

LONGER READS

WHAT ABOUT THE WHITE SOX?

It's time to face facts: Chicago might not be a two-team city

G. Scott Thomas, *Baseball's Best and Worst*

The American and National Leagues have coexisted under Major League Baseball's umbrella throughout the life spans of you, me, and all present-day fans.

It might seem a reasonable assumption that both sides have lived peacefully for eternity, but such a deduction would be dead wrong. The truth is that the AL exploded onto the scene in 1901 as a so-called “outlaw” league, triggering a bitter two-year war with the established NL.

“We have grown large and strong enough not to be dictated to,” declared the American League’s founder, Ban Johnson. His clubs raided National League rosters with impunity, and the NL raided right back. Salaries for players escalated dramatically.

The combatants finally signed a peace agreement prior to the 1903 season. Several of the treaty’s nine points dealt with the disposition of players and their contracts, the matter of primary concern (then and now) to most big-league owners. But the pact also contained a seemingly innocuous geographic provision: “There shall be no consolidation in any city where two clubs exist.”

And that’s why Chicago still has a pair of major-league teams today.

The American League had established five of its eight franchises in National League cities by 1903, the easiest way to wage direct war against its stronger foe. These were the multi-club battlegrounds (followed by their 1900 populations):

- New York (3,437,202)
- Chicago (1,698,575)
- Philadelphia (1,293,697)
- St. Louis (575,238)
- Boston (560,892)

The final three cities were too small to comfortably support a pair of big-league franchises, yet the 1903 agreement specifically prohibited mergers. Logic called for the consolidation of Boston’s two clubs, given the weakness of the city’s NL squad (second-worst in the majors in attendance in 1902). But the treaty required every team to push ahead on its own.

The resulting dilemma would become painfully apparent after the onset of the Depression. The AL’s St. Louis Browns drew only 1.18 million fans to their home games between 1930 and 1939. (That’s not an annual average; it’s *a 10-year total* of 1.18 million.) Five other clubs attracted

fewer than 4.1 million patrons during the 1930s, including four in multi-team markets — both Philadelphia clubs, the NL's Boston Braves, and the other St. Louis franchise, the NL's Cardinals.

"It is not exactly a secret that St. Louis cannot support two major-league clubs," observed Branch Rickey, who possessed special knowledge of the market's inadequacies, having spent three decades as a player, manager, and general manager for both St. Louis teams. His observation applied equally well to Boston and Philadelphia.

The problem finally resolved itself in the 1950s, when clubs belatedly began to flee to new markets. The first three cities to lose teams were Boston (Braves to Milwaukee in 1953), St. Louis (Browns to Baltimore in 1954), and Philadelphia (Athletics to Kansas City in 1955).

That left only two multi-club cities — New York and Chicago — from the original five.

New York's holdings would briefly be cut to a single franchise, the AL's Yankees, after the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants fled west in 1958. But the National League's eventual return to the city was taken for granted, an expectation fulfilled by the creation of the Mets in 1962.

But what about Chicago? Did it really deserve to be a two-team city?

Those attendance figures from the 1930s certainly raised a few questions. The National League's Cubs were a box-office powerhouse, attracting 8.79 million fans between 1930 and 1939. (The only team that drew better was the Yankees at 9.09 million.) But the American League's White Sox lagged far behind at 4.11 million.

The balance of power has been remarkably consistent ever since. Neither team succeeded on the field — the Cubs won their last World Series of the 20th century in 1908, the White Sox in 1917 — but it was the Cubs who always owned Chicago's heart.

The White Sox were reduced to making occasional threats about leaving town. They came reasonably close to leaving for Milwaukee in 1969, Seattle in 1975, and Tampa in 1988, but they never pulled the trigger.

Perhaps they should have called the moving vans.

Recent stats indicate that the Cubs are as dominant as ever in the Chicago market, relegating the White Sox to the status of an afterthought:

- The Cubs have outdrawn the Sox in every single season since 1993. Total home attendance from 1993 through 2022 (excluding the Covid seasons of 2020 and 2021): Cubs 79.15 million, Sox 54.17 million.
- The ultimate test of Chicago's loyalty came in 2005, when the Sox won their first world championship in 88 years. They attracted 2.34 million fans, putting them 17th in big-league attendance. The Cubs were thoroughly mediocre on the field (79-83) that season, yet were 32 percent busier than the Sox at the box office (3.10 million).

The majors currently have four multi-team markets. All of the franchises in New York and Los Angeles are financially strong. Nothing wrong in either of those regions. San Francisco-Oakland, on the other hand, is much too small for two ballclubs. The Athletics may soon resolve that problem by moving to Las Vegas.

That leaves Chicago. We take it for granted that an area so massive (metropolitan population of 9.44 million as of 2022) deserves to be represented in both the American and National Leagues. But let's face facts. Chicago is considerably smaller than the New York (19.62 million) and Los Angeles (12.87 million) areas, and it has virtually ignored one of its two teams for decades.

Ban Johnson not only made a demographic decision when he granted a franchise to Chicago; he also made a military move. He had a war to fight.

That was 12 decades ago, though, and the smoke has long cleared from the battlefield. The time may have come for the American League to raise the white flag and search for a better home for the White Sox.

THE ANONYMOUS CLOCK-WATCHERS BEHIND MLB'S PITCH-CLOCK GAMBIT

Jen McCaffrey, The Athletic

Five levels above the field, in the far corner of the Fenway Park press box, sits a person who quite literally dictates the pace of play in each night's Red Sox game.

For every pitch — roughly 300 per game from both teams combined — the field timing coordinator, the person in charge of keeping the pitch clock running, has to remain locked in. No gazing at a phone or letting the mind wander or engaging in a side conversation. Even bathroom breaks between innings are hurried. Two minutes and 15 seconds. That's it. The game relies on the rhythm of this one person resetting the pitch clock after every pitch or play at Fenway, just as it does in every other big-league ballpark.

Through almost half the season, the average time of a nine-inning game sits at 2:37, down from 3:06 last year. It's the lowest average time of game since 1984, when the average clocked in at 2:35.

All those numbers have been much discussed throughout the first half of this season as proof of the clock's effectiveness at speeding up a game that had accumulated far too much lag time, and the clock has quickly become engrained in baseball life.

But who are the people actually running it, the ones behind the button that has initiated the biggest change in the game in decades?

They are professors and high school umpires, college sports information directors and software engineers. They are fans of the game and part-time employees of the league, who often work full-time jobs during the day and fight rush-hour traffic to get to the park each night only to sit for 2 1/2 hours locked into each pitch, assigned to reset the clock every 15 or 20 seconds.

"Similar to the umpires, they're kind of like the unsung heroes of this whole thing because you shouldn't see them, you shouldn't notice them and that's kind of the best-case scenario," said Joe Martinez, MLB's vice president of on-field strategy. "In many cases that's how it is and we're really pleased and happy that we got so lucky with so many of them."

Martinez, a former Boston College pitcher who pitched parts of four seasons in the majors from 2010-13, has spearheaded the pitch clock operation from a league level. It all began last year when the rules were approved and announced by MLB in September. Then began the process of finding roughly 100 people to serve as fielding timing coordinators, or FTCs. The plan was to have three-to-five people per market, depending on the number of teams per market, who could rotate through the FTC role with the idea that one person wouldn't get burned out doing it several days in a row during a homestand.

Each ballpark already hosts a handful of people working for the league in data operations, like the official scorer and the person updating the MLB Game Day app. The FTC role wasn't new per se: the position had been around since 2015 to implement the clock for pitching changes, mound visits, replay challenges and in-between-innings breaks. But this season the role came with many new responsibilities. The hiring of the additional FTCs started from within that data ops group before seeking outside applicants through postings on the MLB job opportunities page and advertising on social media. From there, applicants were pared down via a multiple-choice questionnaire about different scenarios within the game.

"The FTC, it's carved out from those other roles where it's a new set of regulations that you have to know cold, you have to understand a little more nuanced situations that come up," Martinez said. "I think part of that is having experience and having gone through the training sessions as well as someone who's good at working with umpires."

MLB denied requests from *The Athletic* to interview a field timing coordinator for this story.

Throughout the winter there were Zoom trainings and seminars to get FTCs up to speed on the new rules, with MLB officials answering questions and familiarizing everyone with the quickened pace. But just as with the players themselves, getting in-game repetitions was seen as most important. So in February, ahead of spring training, MLB hosted a weekend training session for the roughly 100 FTCs at a Division II college baseball tournament in Houston where the teams allowed MLB to use its pitch clock rules in order for the FTCs to get real-time practice.

Just a few weeks later, spring training commenced, and the FTCs and the new set of rules were put to the test. With a few blips here and there, they passed the first test run at the big-league level. The pitch clock had been implemented in previous seasons in the minor leagues, but that was no guarantee it would succeed, or be accepted, in the majors — and some well-publicized gaffes that impacted games could have soured the public on the whole project. Yet by the end of spring training, players and spectators alike remarked at how quickly the games were played — almost *too* quickly for some. Still, at that point, the new paradigm was established, and few actually wanted to return to the longer, slower games of years past.

A day in the pitch-clock life

At each regular-season game, the FTC sits in a row alongside the official scorer and two or three other data ops staffers who update the Game Day app, take notes on the game for the league, and send updates for the betting lines, which have become a big business for the sport. Especially early in the season when the rules were so new, the FTC benefitted from having a group of people that had been cross-trained on the new rules and understood the frenetic pacing of the job to bounce questions off. For the first regular-season series at every ballpark, a league official also sat with the group in the press box to make sure operations were running smoothly.

The FTC wears a headset that allows them direct communication with the home-plate umpire as well as with the league offices in New York City where replay review officials are on hand watching each game. About an hour before first pitch, the FTC heads down to the field level to meet with the umpires and make sure there's nothing that needs to be discussed beforehand. The relationship between the FTC and the home-plate umpire is a crucial one for the flow of the game. Some umpires prefer to be very communicative with the clock operator, radioing up to reset or explaining different instances between innings, while other umpires offer little communication and rely on the FTC to know the rules and follow them.

"They're on headset with the umpires all game and the umpires are obviously ultimately responsible for the operation of the clock and enforcement of the rules," Martinez said. "So if an umpire says, 'Hey, stop the clock and reset it to this,' they have to be aware and responsive and make sure they're following directions."

At the MLB offices in New York City, a team of people, led by manager of timing operations Eric Feibusch, simultaneously monitor each game every night on a series of screens.

One group in New York watching the games is focused more on the continuity of the clock and the pace of the game, including minor details the average fan might overlook like if a ball attendant fields a foul ball in an appropriate amount of time for play to resume. Another group in New York, which includes a handful of umpires on rotation, is focused on the entire game itself and any calls on the field that are challenged or need replay review.

"There's a little bit of overlap but for good reason," Martinez said of the video room in New York. "We want to make sure we have as many eyes on the games as possible."

Each week, the league gives FTC's evaluations based on each game they've clocked with notes or reminders on different plays or scenarios. There's also continuing education for the larger group on plays that might not have been anticipated that gain significant attention. For example, **Kenley Jansen's** two violations against the Cardinals' **Willson Contreras** on May 13, actually forced the league to issue a new memo to teams warning them that batters weren't allowed to deceive pitchers into quick-pitch violations as Contreras had done with Jansen.

Though the pitch clock has been a resounding success by most standards throughout the first half of the season, there are still inevitable kinks to be worked out. A report from *The Athletic* earlier this month found that there were significantly more pitch clock violations per game at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia compared to the rest of the league, according to research by STATS Perform, indicating the FTCs were perhaps triggering the clock a bit earlier than in other cities. Updated data through the end of last week showed Philadelphia still in the lead in violations per game. Boston ranked sixth behind Arizona, Miami, Seattle and Pittsburgh.

Though the clock may *seem* to operate with metronomic precision, relentlessly counting down every 15 seconds between pitches, 20 seconds with a runner on base and 30 seconds between batters, the opportunities for human error are obvious.

There are small nuances FTCs have to look for in determining when to start the clock. The rules state the timer starts the moment the pitcher receives the ball and stops the moment he goes into his motion, but the exact moment when a pitcher moves on the mound must be tracked to start the clock as closely as possible to the action. It's similar for the 30-second timer between batters. If a ball is put into play, the FTC can't start the timer until the ball is thrown back into the infield. They must also wait for a fielder to return to his position if there's a foul ball into the stands that he's raced after.

"It's really one of those things that takes some effort and attention to detail," Martinez said. "But if you can do that and really stay focused and be attentive to the umpires it's definitely doable."

There will likely be slight changes or rules adjustments once the season ends, but by and large the system has worked in speeding up the game. Across the league, the people behind the scenes making it all flow so seamlessly throughout the first 2,250 games have played no small part.



June 26, 1944: The Yankees, Dodgers and Giants played a three-way exhibition game at the Polo Grounds to promote the purchase of war bonds. Each team batted six times and played the field six times. An estimated crowd of 50,000 purchased \$5.5 million in war bonds (approximately \$95 million today!) as Brooklyn won by a score of 5 to 1 (Yankees) to 0 (Giants).

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

He was the first player in MLB history to homer in the Wild Card, Division Series, League Championship Series and World Series in the same postseason.

He and only one other player have won Most Valuable Awards for different teams before their thirtieth birthdays, both in the NL.

Active, bats left, throws right. Was 2012 Rookie of the Year.

Name Him.

Bryce Harper

In 2022, Harper went deep in the WC, NLDS, NLCS & WS—off STL's **Miles Mikolas**, ATL's **Dylan Lee**, SDP's Yu Darvish & HOU's **Lance McCullers Jr.** respectively.

Harper earned MVPs for WAS/2015 (unanimous at age 22) & for PHL/2021 (age 28). **Barry Bonds** was the 1st when he won the awards in PIT/1990, 1992 (age 25, 27) & SFG/1993 (age 28).

In 1998, four players reached 30 home runs before the All-Star break.

Right-handed 1B, 37 HRs at the All-Star break. He led the majors in HRs, RBI, SLG, OPS, OBP in 1998.

Mark McGwire

Lefty Half of Fame outfielder, 35 HRs

Ken Griffey Jr.

Righty NL outfielder, 33 HRs

Sammy Sosa

Righty NL outfielder, hit a career best 50 HRs that year for San Diego, 30 at All-Star break.

Greg Vaughn

18 players have hit 4 home runs in a game. The list includes Hall of Famers **Lou Gehrig, Ed Delahanty, Chuck Klein and Gil Hodges**. 11 have done it since I was born in 1955. Some are well known, a few obscure. Let's see how many of the 11 you can come up with.

1959 Indians outfielder hit 42 HRs that season to led AL

Rocky Colavito

1961 Giants Hall of Fame outfielder, 2x MVP

Willie Mays

1976 Phillies led NL in HRs that season, one of his 7x

Mike Schmidt

1986 Braves 1978 Rookie of the Year as 3B, played 9 of his 10 seasons for the Braves.

Bob Horner

1983 Cards Journeyman outfielder played for 8 teams, 105 career HRs, wrapped career in Cleveland in 2000.

Blue Jays, Indians, Cards, Red Sox, Phillies, Braves, Mariners, Yankees, Indians

Mark Whiten

2002 Dodgers lefty 1B/OF, hit 328 career HRs, played 7 years with Blue Jays before Dodgers, wrapped his career in 2007 with Mets.

Shawn Green

2002 Mariners 17 seasons, 278 HRs/295 SB., righty CF, another journeyman.

White Sox, Mariners, Mets, Padres, Brewers, Red Sox, Marlins

Mike Cameron

2003 Blue Jays lefty batting 1B, 475 career HRs, he led the majors with 145 RBI in 2003, second to Arod in MVP voting..

Carlos Delgado

2012 Rangers short 10-year career for this lefty OF, 2010 AL MVP, played in 2 World Series with the Rangers.

Josh Hamilton

2017 Reds 2B, played 4 seasons with Milwaukee before moving to the Reds, shares nicknames with a Yankee shortstop.

Scooter Gennett

2017 Diamondbacks righty DH/OF, led majors in RBIs in 2018 with Boston, played in post season in 2014 with Tigers, 2017 with D'backs, 2018, 2021 with Red Sox.

JD Martinez

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Baseball's Best and Worst

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Sports Business Journal

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