

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

7.23.2023

Good morning baseball fans.

Hall of Fame induction day. Congrats to **Fred McGriff and Scott Rolen**. Both played for at least four franchises and made at least five All-Star teams. Both reached the World Series twice, winning once. McGriff is the 26th first baseman in the hall. Rolen is the 16th third baseman.

In this week's edition—a great pitch clock idea, **Tommy John** for the Hall of Fame? the Reds and the Orioles continue to excite, Nicknames, Balls in Play.

In Long Reads a fun Hall of Fame quiz, **Carl Erskine** of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Ghost Runners.

Plus four Trivia Questions.

Pour yourself a cup and enjoy.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Name Him

First player to hit twenty home runs in season for five different major league teams.

He set the National League record when he led off eleven games in one season with a home run.

Over 14 seasons this right-handed outfielder batted .268 with 332 HRs and 1024 RBI.

Struck out 1757 times, led majors in whiffs 4 times.

461 stolen bases, stole over 40 seven times. 30 HRs/40 SB four times.

Here is previous stadium—name the current stadium

Memorial Stadium replaced in 1992

Huntington Avenue Grounds replaced in 1911

Astrodome replaced in 1999

Municipal Stadium replaced in 1993

Cinergy Field replaced in 2002

Mile High Stadium replaced in 1994

Memorial Coliseum replaced in 1961

County Stadium replaced in 2000

Veterans Stadium replaced in 2003

Three Rivers Stadium replaced in 2000

Qualcom Stadium replaced in 2003

RFK Stadium replaced in 2007

ACTIVE PLAYERS WITH MOST GAMES PLAYING FOR ONE FRANCHISE

NL Central 1B, 2010 MVP

NL West Shortstop, bats left/throws right

AL West 2B, 2017 MVP

AL West CF, multiple MVPs

NL West Outfielder, lefty

NAME HIM

He was a 236 game winner, Hall of Famer

Won a Cy Young in the 1960s.

Led the AL in wins and winning % three times.

Third in 1963 MVP voting behind **Elston Howard and Al Kaline**.

Second in the 1950 Rookie of the Year voting to **Walt Droppo**.

Pitched in 11 World Series.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Here we are post All-Star break. As teams reach the 100 game mark we have almost 60% of the season complete (we will be just past 60% at the trade deadline August 1).

A's, Rockies, Royals, Nationals are done

Cardinals and Pirates both 10+ games out of wild card—probably done.

Mets, Padres, White Sox, Cubs need to get real hot right now if they are done.

10 out, leaving 20 teams within 6 games of a play-off slot. Probably what the Lords of Baseball are shooting for.

Only two men since 1900 ever started more games in the cleanup spot than **Fred McGriff: Honus Wagner and Eddie Murray.**

McGriff hit .284 with 493 home runs and 1,550 runs batted in. Only nine players who made their debuts before him matched all of those statistics: **Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Foxx, Mel Ott, Ted Williams, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, Frank Robinson** and Eddie Murray. All of them (except Ott, incredibly) were elected to the Hall on the first ballot.

The Braves had a 23 game HR streak broken this week. All-time record is 2019 Yankees at 31 straight games. **Austin Riley** contributed 5 HRs in 13 at bats vs. Milwaukee including 4 straight games.

You'll love this hustle play—in your face **Cole Hamels.**

<https://www.facebook.com/MLBonFOX/videos/bryce-harper-steals-home-after-being-drilled-by-cole-hamels/519063058773829/>

The Angels swept the slumping Yankees this week—first time the Halos had swept a series with New York since 2009.

Yu Chang set a record for games by a player born in Taiwan on Wednesday. It was his 221st game, one more than righthander **Wei-Yin Chen** (2012-19).

Chang joins a club that includes such notable players as **Xander Bogaerts** (Aruba), **Rod Carew** (Panama), **Didi Gregorius** (Netherlands), **Andruw Jones** (Curacao), **Rafael Palmeiro** (Cuba),

Albert Pujols (Dominican Republic), **Edgar Renteria** (Colombia), **Aurelio Rodriguez** (Mexico), **Ichiro Suzuki** (Japan), **Omar Vizquel** (Venezuela), and **Joey Votto** (Canada).

The Tampa Bay Rays are the **ONLY** American League team still playing on their first field / first ballpark.

Juan Soto hit two HRs Friday night in Detroit—447 feet and 463 feet—910 feet of HRs. Same night **Kyle Tucker** of the Astros bombed 3 HRs against the A's.

Major League Baseball will produce and distribute all locally distributed Diamondbacks games beginning Tuesday when Arizona faces the Braves at 7:20 p.m. ET, the league announced.

The change comes after a bankruptcy court judge approved Diamond Sports Group's rejection of its Diamondbacks deal, Front Office Sports reported Tuesday.

MLB previously took over broadcasts of San Diego Padres games in May after Diamond missed the deadline for its rights fee payment with the team.

Candidate for worst contract - **Anthony Rendon's** seven-year, \$245 million deal with the Angels is particularly brutal. Rendon has played only 200 of a possible 483 games over four seasons while hitting .249 with a .758 OPS.

Shohei Ohtani went into the weekend leading the majors in home runs and triples. The last player who led the majors in those categories this late in the season was **Jim Rice** in 1978. Rice

led the majors with 46 homers and 15 triples that season. Since 1900, the only other player to do that was **Willie Mays** in 1955. He had 51 homers and 13 triples that season.

Through 96 games

	<u>Judge 2022</u>	<u>Ohtani 2023</u>
AVG	.292	.307
HR	36	35
RBI	79	76
OBP	.373	.392
SLG	.643	.680
OPS	1.016	1.072

Joe Morgan was the sparkplug who powered Cincinnati's Big Red Machine to world championships in 1975 and 1976. The Hall of Fame second baseman was named the National League's Most Valuable Player in both of those seasons, after finishing among the top eight vote-getters in each of the previous three MVP races (1972-1974).

Morgan led the NL in on-base percentage four times between 1972 and 1976. His cumulative OBP for that five-year period was .431, which was 24 points superior to the next-best mark in either league, .407 by fellow Hall of Famer **Rod Carew**.

Morgan won five straight NL Gold Gloves between 1973 and 1977. Morgan played 2649 games, batted .271 with 268 HRs, 1133 RBI, 689 stolen bases, 1650 runs scored and was elected to 10 All-Star games.

Morgan was one of two Modern Era second basemen to rap more than 2,500 hits and also generate more than 2,500 runs during his career. (**Craig Biggio** was the other).

The Mets' .462 winning percentage would be the second-worst by an AL/NL club following a 100-win season since 1918.

I was surprised—**Rod Carew** played more games at first base (1,184) than second (1,130).

A family reunion this weekend with the Mets at Fenway, as Red Sox manager **Alex Cora's** brother, **Joey**, is the Mets third base coach.

Paul Skenes, first pick in last week's draft by the Pirates (via LSU) signed for a cool record \$9.2 million bonus. Since the draft began, 18 pitchers have been chosen with the first pick. The No. 1 pick in 2007 by the Rays, **David Price** posted a 157-82 record with a 3.32 ERA in 14 big league seasons, good for 40.3 bWAR. **Gerrit Cole** (2011 Pirates, 37.8 bWAR) could eclipse him by the end of the year, however. **Stephen Strasburg** (2009 Nationals, 32.3 bWAR) ranks third and **Andy Benes** (1988 Padres, 31.5 bWAR) comes in fourth. Strasburg and **Luke Hochevar** (2005 Royals, 3.7 bWAR) are the only two of the 18 pitchers selected 1-1 before Skenes who won a World Series with the club that drafted them.

The previous high bonus went to Detroit Tigers first baseman **Spencer Torkelson** in 2020 (\$8.1463 million).

Carlos Delgado hit 473 home runs in his big-league career — just two fewer than **Stan Musial** and **Willie Stargell** — and drove in more runs than **Mickey Mantle**, and he didn't even get five percent in his one time on the Hall of Fame ballot.

Great from Dan Shaughnessy Glob of the Boston Globe-- Nazzan Zanetello, the Red Sox' second pick in the 2023 MLB Draft, played shortstop for Christian Brothers College High School in Missouri. Christian Brothers' pitching coach is former Sox hurler **Al Nipper**, who started Game 4 of the 1986 World Series against the Mets at Fenway Park. **Darryl Strawberry** homered off Nipper in Boston's Game 7 loss at Shea, and Nipper didn't forget the sight of Strawberry stylin' around the bases. Nipper plunked Strawberry the first time they faced one another in spring training, 1987, prompting a rare, Grapefruit League benches-clearing episode.

HE'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE SURGERY

1. **Tommy John**, 604 double plays induced
2. **Jim Kaat**, 462 double plays
3. **Gaylord Perry**, 451 double plays
4. **Phil Niekro**, 433 double plays
5. **Warren Spahn**, 428 double plays
6. **Greg Maddux**, 322 double plays

What's interesting about the list? Pitchers 2-6 are in the Hall of Fame.

Tommy John went 288-231. 3.34 ERA in 4710 innings pitched. He struck out 2225. He threw 162 complete games. Twice he led MLB in winning %, 3 times in shutouts (he threw 46 shutouts). He finished second in the Cy Young voting twice. He was 12-6 in post-season games including 6-2 in the World Series. He pitched 26 seasons.

I'm not arguing that he's better than any of the 5 pitchers below him in double-plays served up, or that double plays behind you is a critical stat. But Tommy John never topped 32% in Hall of Fame voting in 15 tries before falling off the ballot. I think he has a better case than that.

Sports Illustrated had some notes on great potential cut short:

Mark Prior – at age 23 in 2003 Prior went 18-8 with 2.43 ERA and led Cubs to within five outs of the pennant. That year Prior exceeded 120 pitches 10 times, including four times more than 130, and averaged 125 over his final nine starts. He started the next year on the injured list with elbow soreness and an Achilles tendon strain, and was never the same.

Stephen Strasburg – Two months after leading the Nationals to the 2019 title, Strasburg, then 31 with a 3.17 career ERA, signed a seven-year \$245 million contract. Since then he has pitched just 8 times.

Brandon Webb – His sinker was truly a wonder. From 2006-2008 Webb was 56-25 in 101 starts with a 3.13 ERA for Arizona. Finished first once and second twice in Cy Young voting. Then on Opening Day 2009 he gave up six runs in four innings and would never pitch again. He retired after multiple shoulder surgeries.

Josh Johnson – The fourth pitcher to undergo three Tommy John surgeries, Johnson made the two All-Star teams and won an ERA title with the Marlins between surgery 1 (2007) and surgery 2 (2013).

Smokey Joe Wood – Nobody threw harder but he could not stay healthy. After starting his career 81-43 with a 1.95 ERA by age 22, Wood sustained a broken thumb, appendicitis and a bad shoulder. He was essentially done by age 25 (in 1915), pitching on 7 games after that.

Which brings us to

Jacob deGrom, arrived in the majors in 2014 with a fastball that averaged 94. His velocity climbed every season, hitting an average of 99 in 2021. But that's when his body began to break down. In his last 32 starts deGrom was 14-6 with a 2.03 ERA and 14.1 strikeouts per nine innings. Trouble was it took him three seasons to make those 32 starts.

deGrom had more strikeouts in his first 215 games (1652) than any pitcher ever. His ERA during that period (2.53) is better than any starter in the Live Ball Era. Career numbers: 0.993 WHIP, 1,652-to-307 strikeout to walk. Since 2018, batters are hitting .187/.231/.298 against him, and he has a 7-to-1 strikeout-to-walk ratio.

JAYSON STARK (AS USUAL) HAS A GREAT IDEA

From The Athletic

I'm proposing that three times in every postseason game, a team can play "Kill the Clock" — and opt to shut off the timer for the most important, most dramatic plate appearances of the most critical games of the year, because why the heck not? We're talking about games that will decide championships and define careers. That's all.

I'm thinking about at-bats like these, just within the past nine months:

Mike Trout versus Shohei Ohtani — OK, not a postseason moment, but it was the at-bat that decided the World Baseball Classic final. Did anyone care if that battle lasted three minutes or 23 minutes?

Bryce Harper versus Robert Suarez — Remember this one, from Game 5 of the 2022 NLCS, Phillies–Padres, the Padres six outs from forcing the series back to San Diego? This was a classic, pulse-racing, seven-pitch, eighth-inning duel that ended with Harper's epic, lead-flipping home run that sent the Phillies to the World Series. Both guys *took a little time between pitches*. Nobody noticed!

Yordan Alvarez versus Robbie Ray — What a moment. Game 1 of the 2022 Astros–Mariners ALDS. Astros trailing by two. Two on. Two outs in the ninth. The reigning American League Cy Young Award winner trotting in from the 'pen to face one of baseball's most feared mashers. It would take only two pitches for Alvarez to author an all-time postseason walk-off memory. But the electricity of that duel was unforgettable.

So ... get my point? Isn't it possible to be a huge fan of the clock but also be a huge fan of moments like those ... where the essence of baseball has always been the drama that hangs over every pitch ... every hitter heaving his deepest breath ... every pitcher trying to calm his pounding chest and focus on a pitch with the potential to change, well, everything?

So let's lean into those moments ... three times a night. Kill the clock. That's all I'm asking. For drama. For the humans in the middle of that drama. And, very possibly, for history.

The Athletic recently polled players on all sorts of topics — and nearly 61 percent of them think a few seconds should be added to the pitch clock in the postseason.

Violations, he reported, are down to well under one per game.

And more than 60 percent of all games are now played with no clock violations.

THERE IS TALK OF AN OLD-TIMERS HOME RUN DERBY

So far, it appears that **Ken Griffey Jr., Albert Pujols, David Ortiz and Jim Thome** would be willing to participate. The current format (“swing as many times as possible in two minutes”) wouldn’t work for the old-timers, but they *could* use the original format: Everything that isn’t a home run is an out, and they play nine “innings.” In that case: two teams of four, two “innings” each, then each team could pick their hottest hitter to represent them in the ninth?

Think about the possibilities. It’s being held in Texas — could **Adrián Beltré** make a cameo? If not, **Rafael Palmeiro** was playing indie ball as recently as a few years ago; surely he’d be game. **Alex Rodriguez** is still just 47 ... and that immediately leads me to this thought:

Barry Bonds reconciliation tour??

What sport thrives more on nostalgia than baseball? Can you imagine a ninth inning featuring Griffey vs. Bonds? **Mark McGwire vs. Sammy Sosa**? Hometown hero Beltré looking for 2011 World Series revenge vs. Pujols?

In Cincinnati, **Christian Encarnacion-Strand** will not only be the longest name in MLB history, but he’ll also be the latest Cincinnati youngster to join names like **Spencer Steer, Andrew Abbott, Matt McClain, Elly De La Cruz, Alexis Díaz** and 2021’s rookie of the year **Jonathan India** on the young-and-fun Reds. Some of these are second-year players, but Encarnacion-Strand will be their *12th* MLB debut this year.

During Thursday afternoon’s 5-1 victory over the Giants at Great American Ball Park, De La Cruz zinged a 99.8 mph heave to the plate to nail Wilmer Flores trying to score. It was the fastest infield throw ever recorded by StatCast. In a career spanning only 37 big league games so far, De La Cruz is already tied as the career leader in most 95-plus mph infield assists -- four -- with the Padres’ **Fernando Tatis Jr. (Oneil Cruz (3) and Didi Gregorius (2)** also have topped 99 multiple times.

De La Cruz’s throw was harder than any made by any of the three Giants pitchers or two Reds pitchers used in the game. San Francisco reliever **Mauricio Llovera** maxxed at 97.4 mph. (Shocking to many, the fastest outfield assist ever recorded by StatCast was **Aaron Hicks**, 105.5 mph for NYY on 4/20/2016)

Speaking of Cincinnati—check out this short video on how not to handle the tarp.

https://twitter.com/br_betting/status/1681115249108295680?lid=t89eznq0uebp

The Diamondbacks beat the Braves 16-13 on Tuesday. Arizona had lost 123 games in a row that they gave up 12 or more runs.

That night was crazy. July 18 was an absolutely historic night for offenses across the sport, as four separate games ended with both teams scoring at least 10 runs, tying the all-time MLB record for the most such games in a day. The other two instances of this came on July 4 and July 9 of 1894 -- a season during which the average team scored 7.38 runs per game (compared to 4.60 in 2023), and a season that was only MLB's second one using the current mound distance of 60 feet, six inches.

Besides Arizona-Atlanta the Mets beat White Sox 11-10. Royals beat the Tigers 11-10. Giants beat the Reds 11-10. Outside of these four games -- none of which required extra innings -- the Dodgers, Guardians, Cubs and Twins also all scored at least 10 runs, meaning that a staggering 12 teams finished the day with run totals in the double digits. This set the MLB record within the Modern Era (since 1900), via the Elias Sports Bureau, though the all-time mark is 13 teams doing so on July 4, 1894.

What makes Tuesday's offensive outburst more remarkable is the difference in the league-wide offensive environment compared to the last time it happened. In 1894, National League teams (the American League had not yet been formed) scored an average of 7.39 runs per game, compared to 4.60 runs per game this season.

The Orioles have now gone 70 straight series without being swept, entering the weekend. That's the eighth-most consecutive series of multiple games without being swept, per Elias. They trail only the 1942-44 Cardinals (125), 1903-05 Giants (106), 1922-24 Yankees (83), 1904-06 A's (74), 2003-05 Braves (72), 1997-99 Padres (72) and 1921-23 Browns (72).

All teams — even the Royals and Athletics — win more games than they lose when they take a lead into the sixth. The overall winning percentage with a lead going into the sixth is .807.

But it is about closing the deal...

Most leads entering the sixth:

59: Rangers

55: Rays and Braves

47: Astros

46: Dodgers and Padres

43: Orioles, Marlins, Mariners

The Orioles have been the best in baseball at converting those sixth-inning leads. They are 40-3 when leading going into the sixth.

Best winning percentage when leading going into the sixth:

1. Orioles, .930
2. Red Sox, .917
3. Phillies, .897
4. Dodgers, .891
5. Reds, .868

Luis Arraez continues to lead the Majors with a .375 batting average. Last Saturday was Arraez's sixth four-hit game of the season. That's the most in a season in Marlins history, breaking a tie at five with **Hanley Ramírez** in 2007. And Arraez did so by July 15.

Gerrit Cole set a Yankees single-season record with 257 strikeouts. On Sunday, he set a franchise mark with his 24th game with at least 10 strikeouts since joining the Yankees, surpassing **Ron Guidry's** 23. Cole now has 44 games with at least 20 swings and misses since the start of 2018, the most in MLB in that span, one ahead of **Max Scherzer's** 43.

With Boston's win on Sunday, every AL East team has at least 50 wins -- and each got there before playing its 95th game. The 2023 AL East is the first division to have each of its teams reach 50 wins in fewer than 95 team games.

Wilmer Flores had quite the two-game stretch from Monday to Tuesday, with two doubles and a homer in the first game, which was suspended and resumed Tuesday, and then two homers in Tuesday's scheduled game. That's eight total bases in each game. Flores became the first Giants player with at least eight total bases in back-to-back games since **Barry Bonds** on April 2-3, 2002.

Francisco Alvarez hit his 18th and 19th home runs of the season on Tuesday. That's the second-most home runs by a primary-position AL/NL catcher in his age-21 season or younger, behind only 1969 **Johnny Bench**'s 26. It was his third multi-homer game, tying **Ed Kranepool** for second most before turning 22 in Mets history, behind **Darryl Strawberry**'s four.

The Braves acquired catcher **Sean Murphy** from Oakland in the off-season. Previous starter **Travis d'Arnaud** slid into the back-up role—he just signed an extension through 2024.

It's working: At the catching position, the Braves rank first in home runs (25), on-base percentage (.372), slugging percentage (.559) and, thus, OPS (.931).

Reggie Jackson, Catfish Hunter, Rollie Fingers

All born in 1946.

All three Hall of Famers were teammates for back-to-back-to back World Series wins in 1972-73-74.

Hunter by the way pitched in six World Series—1972-73-74 for the A's and 1976-77-78 for the Yankees.

Johnny Bench and **Carlton Fisk** were born 19 days apart in 1947.

July 20, 1965: Yankees pitcher **Mel Stottlemyre** hit an inside-the-park grand slam against the Red Sox at Yankee Stadium enroute to a 6-3 win. He is one of four Yankees pitchers to hit a grand slam, and the most recent (also **Don Larsen**, 1956, **Spud Chandler**, 1940 and **Red Ruffing**, 1933).

In celebration of the Hall of Fame induction... There will be 342 people in the Baseball Hall of Fame after this upcoming induction. That's probably more than you were thinking ... and it doesn't even include the 47 announcers who have won the Ford Frick Award, the 75 writers who have won the BBWAA Career Excellence Award (formerly known as the Spink Award) or the four people who have won the **Buck O'Neil** Award. That's another 125 people (Buck O'Neil himself would be listed twice), bringing the grand total to 467.

271 of the people in the Hall of Fame are players. From 1876 (the birth of the National League) through this week there have been 20,421 major league players. That's .013%. 132 players were elected by the baseball writers votes. The rest came in via other channels. 59 players were elected the first year they were on the ballot.

As of Thursday, since June ended, **Manny Machado** has looked like the planet's most dangerous hitter, slashing .327/.431/.836 and leading the majors in both home runs (nine) and RBIs (21). With their payroll the Padres are desperate to get back into the playoff chase. Machado is doing his part.

One way to look at it

Sandy Koufax, 1961-66: 137-60, 147 ERA+, 1,910 Ks, 512 walks, three Cy Youngs.

Johan Santana, 2002-2010: 130-66, 150 ERA+, 1,785 Ks, 458 walks, two Cy Youngs.

Encinal High School (Alameda, CA) produced **Jimmy Rollins**, **Willie Stargell**, **Tommy Harper**, **Dontrelle Willis** & **Chris Speier**.

Tough week on dugout accessories. Yankees reliever **Tommy Kahnle** maimed an innocent fan (the appliance kind, not the human kind). Mariners outfielder **Jarred Kelenic** fractured his foot on a water cooler Wednesday night after he struck out in the ninth inning.

DIMENSIONS

The Tigers brought center field in from 420 feet to 412. They lowered walls around the outfield to a standard 7 feet, including a big drop from the previous 13 feet in right-center. Yet after 45 games within the refurbished confines, Comerica has not played as a fundamentally different park. Home runs and overall run scoring are up slightly but remain similar to past years.

Before the 2022 season, the Baltimore Orioles made a drastic change to their left-field wall. The Orioles pushed the left field wall at Camden Yards back nearly 30 feet and raised the wall 5 feet, so it is now about 13 feet high.

In one season, Camden Yards went from ranking first in home runs to 23rd. This year, it ranks 17th.

the Blue Jays raised wall heights around most of their park, though center field decreased from 10 feet to 8 feet. The heightened walls (for example: 11 feet, 2 inches in left-center and 12 feet, 7 inches in right-center) coincided with also bringing those walls in. Left-center is now 368 feet compared to 375 before the change. Right center is 359 feet instead of its previous 375.

Although still a small sample, the heightened walls have so far inhibited offense more than the smaller dimensions have bolstered it. Rogers Centre had a run-scoring factor of 106 last season, and it's down to 98 so far this year. Home runs have gone from an above-average park factor of 117 to a below-average 95.

At Citi Field, the Mets brought in the right-field wall more than 8 feet this offseason, among other changes. The results have been in line with what one might expect: Home runs have increased in relation to the league average, from a Park Factor of 85 last season to 106 this year, the biggest year-over-year change in MLB this season.

Data from recent years also shows more than sheer dimensions can influence how a park plays. Weather patterns, for instance, can have an impact a park from year to year. This is relevant for the Mets, who also added a monstrous, 17,400-square-foot scoreboard, which was three times the size of the previous visual aid.

Data from Baseball Savant indicates balls at Citi Field traveled 3.8 feet less than average last season. This season, that number has gone to only 0.5 feet shorter, with further data suggesting environmental factors such as wind and humidity have aided balls at Citi Field much more than in the past.

Shorter walls could also be part of what is creating the decline in triples — no more balls hitting off the top of the wall or bouncing off an outfielder's glove and bouncing several feet away. (Rogers Centre did not touch its center-field dimension, but the shorter gaps seem to have killed triples. Citi Field and its shorter right field, meanwhile, has seen a stark decrease in triples while home run totals have risen.)

This year's lack of triples could be an anomaly that corrects itself, perhaps even by the end of the year as balls travel farther in the summer.

That, of course, is one of the grand caveats of park data. These numbers often take time to stabilize, which is why they are often analyzed through three-year rolling windows.

NICKNAMES

Several of us kicking around favorite nick names—who would you add?

1. Henry "Hammerin' Hank" Aaron
2. Luke "Old Aches and Pains" Appling,
3. George "Sparky" Anderson
4. Frank "Homerun" Baker
5. Johnny "Dusty" Baker
6. Steve "Bye Bye" Balboni
7. Ernie "Mr. Cub" Banks
8. James "Cool Papa" Bell
9. Lance "Fat Elvis" Berkman
10. Lawrence "Yogi" Berra
11. Dennis "Oil Can" Boyd
12. William "Gates" Brown
13. Mordecai "Three Fingers" Brown
14. John "Candy Man" Candelaria
15. Orlando "Baby Bull" Cepeda
- Ron 'the Penguin' Cey
16. Roger "Rocket" Clemens
17. Ty "the Georgia Peach" Cobb
18. Clarence "Choo Choo" Coleman

19. Vince "Vincent van Go" Coleman
20. Andre "the Hawk" Dawson
21. Jay Hannah "Dizzy" Dean
22. Paul "Daffy" Dean
23. Joe "The Yankee Clipper", "Joltin' Joe" DiMaggio
24. Leo "The Lip" Durocher
25. Lenny "Nails" Dykstra
26. Rapid" Robert "Rapid Robert", "the Heater from Van Meter" Feller
27. Mark "The Bird" Fidyrch
28. Carlton "Pudge" Fisk
29. Whitey "The Chairman of the Board" Ford
30. Frankie "The Fordham Flash" Frisch
31. Jimmie "Double X" Foxx
32. Andrés "Big Cat" Galarraga
33. Rich "El Guapo" Garces
34. Lou "The Iron Horse" Gehrig
35. Jim "Diamond Jim" Gentile
36. Dwight "Doc" Gooden
37. Thomas "Flash" Gordon
38. Leon "Goose" Goslin
39. Rich "Goose" Gossage
40. Jim "Mudcat" Grant
41. Vladimir "Vlad the Impaler" Guerrero
42. Ron "Louisiana Lightening" Guidry
43. Doug "Eye Chart" Gwosdz
44. Roy "Doc" Halladay
45. Mike "the Human Rain Delay" Hargrove
46. Rickey "Man of Steal" Hendrson
47. Orlando "El Duque" Hernández
48. Félix "King Felix" Hernández
49. Orel "Bulldog" Hershiser
50. Rogers "Rajah" Hornsby
51. Al "the Mad Hungarian" Hrabosky
52. Jim "Catfish" Hunter
53. "Shoeless" Joe Jackson
54. Reggie "Mr. October" Jackson
55. Randy "the Big Unit" Johnson
56. Walter "Big Train" Johnson
57. Willie "Hit 'em Where They Ain't" Keeler
58. George "High Pockets" Kelly

59. Dave "Kong" Kingman
60. Bill "Spaceman" Lee
61. Garry "The Minister of Defense Maddox
62. Mickey "The Commerce Comet" Mantle
63. Gary "Sarge" Matthews
64. Hideki "Godzilla" Matsui
65. Don "Donnie Ballgame" Mattingly
66. Willie "the Say Hey Kid" Mays
67. Calvin Coolidge Julius Caesar Tuskahoma "Bus" McLish.
68. Willie "Stretch" McCovey
69. Oddibe "Young Again" McDowell
70. Sam "Sudden Sam" McDowell
71. Fred "Crime Dog" McGriff
72. Joe "Ducky" Medwick, Ducky
73. Fred "Bonehead" Merkle
Gene "Stick" Michael
74. Johnny "the Big Cat" Mize
75. Wilmer David "Vinegar Bend" Mizell
76. John "the Count" Montefusco
77. Stan "the Man" Musial
78. Johnny Lee "Blue Moon" Odom
79. David "Big Papi" Ortiz
80. LeRoy "Satchel" Paige
81. Dave "the Cobra" Parker
82. "Sweet" Lou Piniella.
83. John "Boog" Powell
84. Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe
85. Tim "Rock" Raines
86. Iván "Pudge" Rodríguez
87. Kenny "the Gambler" Rogers
88. Mariano "Sandman" Rivera
89. John "Mick the Quick" Rivers
90. Phil "Scooter" Rizzuto
91. Brooks "the Human Vacuum Cleaner" Robinson
92. Pete "Charlie Hustle" Rose
93. Lynwood "Schoolboy" Rowe
94. Amos "the Hoosier Thunderbolt" Rusie
95. George Herman "Babe", "The Sultan of Swat" Ruth
Nolan "The Ryan Express" Ryan
96. Marc "Scrabble" Rzepczynski
97. Gary "Kraken" Sanchez

- 98. Pablo "Kung Fu Panda" Sandoval
- 99. George "Twinkletoes" Selkirk
- 100. James "Big Game" Shields
- 101. Ozzie "the Wizard" Smith
- 102. Willie "Pops" Stargell
- 103. Daniel "Rusty", "Le Grand Orange" Staub
- 104. Norman "Turkey" Stearnes
- 105. Dick "Dr. Strangelove" Stewart
- 106. Noah "Thor" Syndergaard
- 107. Frank "the Big Hurt" Thomas
- 108. Shane "The Flyin' Hawaiian" Victorino
- 109. Frank "Sweet Music" Viola
- 110. Honus "the Flying Dutchman" Wagner
- 111. Lloyd "Little Poison" Waner
- 112. Paul "Big Poison" Waner
- 113. Mitch "Wild Thing" Williams
- 114. Ted "the Splendid Splitter" Williams
- 115. Walt "No Neck" Williams
- 116. Jimmy "Toy Cannon" Wynn
- 117. Carl "Yaz" Yastrzemski
- 118. Don "The Gerbil" Zimmer

FROM THE JOE POSNANSKI NEWSLETTER

(you should consider a subscription)

Balls in Play

One of the hopes among baseball insiders — and they admitted it was probably more of a wish than a hope — was that the new rules would slightly increase balls in play. Nobody thought it was a fix, but the dream, as I understood it, was that (1) The pitch timer might push hurlers to pitch to contact more; (2) The banning of the shift might coax batters into putting more balls in play in the hope of getting hits; (3) The bigger bases, by slightly reducing the distance between home and first, might inspire just a little bit more bunting and small-ball type strategies.

Well, balls in play are actually slightly DOWN this year.

Balls in play:

2023: 24.31 per game

2022: 24.41 per game

Now, balls in play are up from the nadir of 2020-21, when they dropped below 24 per game.

But historically, 2023 balls in play are at their third-lowest mark ever.

Offense IS up this year — batting average, singles, doubles, triples, home runs, they're all up from last year. But so are strikeouts. The hopeful theory that batters would (or even can) shorten up and put more balls in play against the vast array of 100-mph relief pitchers to take advantage of the new rules seems faulty at best. MLB will have to attack the strikeout explosion in a different way.

The prevailing theory I keep hearing is that the only way to cut strikeouts is to limit the number of pitchers teams use in a game.

Pitchers per game:

1973: 2.37 (5.24 Ks per game)

1983: 2.60 (5.15 Ks per game)

1993: 3.27 (5.80 Ks per game)

2003: 3.74 (6.34 Ks per game)

2013: 3.84 (7.55 Ks per game)

2023: 4.22 (8.60 Ks per game)

If you assume that limiting the number of pitchers is at least part of the solution — and you're actually willing to change the rules to do so — how would you do so? You could put a limit on the number of pitchers a team can carry on the roster. MLB has already placed a limit of 13, which is too high, in my view. But how low can you go? Twelve seems possible, but I'm not sure that would have much impact. Would the players accept 11? I'm skeptical. Ten? Doesn't feel likely to me.

You could place a limit on number of pitchers a team is allowed to use in any given game. But what would that limit be? And what would be exceptions? It just doesn't feel like an especially elegant solution if it's even possible.

One idea I heard was that teams lose the DH after they pull their starter. That's kind of intriguing and has some connection to the game's history, but it feels like one of those ideas that sound better than it actually is. Would managers actually stay longer with their starters in order to get one more at-bat from their DH? Or would it just mean fewer times getting to see **Shohei Ohtani** bat?

Being honest, I'm not sure I've heard anything that I feel confident would change the balls-in-play dynamic. And I remain skeptical that batters are going to figure out ways to put more balls in play against pitchers that have better and better stuff.

There is one other possible solution I keep hearing about ...

Mud and Guts

You probably know all this, but when a new baseball comes out of the box, it's shiny and slick. You can't use it in a big-league game. Throwing that ball, as one baseball insider says, is like throwing a cue ball.

For more than 80 years, the solution has been to rub each and every baseball with Lena Blackburne Rubbing Mud that — like Bruce Springsteen, Martha Stewart, various real housewives and the game Monopoly — comes from New Jersey. Between the Jersey mud and the rosin bags placed on the mounds (and various more dastardly methods), pitchers have managed to make the ball sticky enough to control their pitches and, yes, put some ungodly spin rates on the ball.

For years now, MLB has been trying to come up with a tackier baseball that would eliminate the mud and rosin and any other substance. That effort, as I understand it, has double in urgency. They want a new baseball.

From a traditionalist standpoint, this doesn't sound too great — I mean, you HAVE to have the New Jersey mud on the baseball, no?

But from a larger perspective, the possibilities are intriguing. I should say that MLB has let me hold some of the newer, tackier baseballs and ... they're not there yet. To me, they don't feel even close to there yet. But if they really could get a tacky baseball right, that could absolutely get rid of all outside substances and put a limit on just how much spin rate a pitcher can get on the ball, which would give hitters a better chance. And I keep hearing that there might be ways to mark a baseball so that it would be a little bit easier for batters to pick up.

I realize that some of this might make some traditionalist fans uncomfortable — they should be hitting the same ball that **Pie Traynor** hit! — but I think MLB owes it to the game to take this down the line and see where it leads. I think the strikeout problem will probably get worse. I think even the seven-inning starter is becoming a dinosaur. I think the game will only draw more **Felix Bautistas and Matt Brashes and Tanner Scotts** who strike out the world. I don't know if building a new, tackier baseball gets at the problem, but MLB needs to find out.

WHO IS THE BEST HITTER VS. EACH PITCH TYPE?

Cole Jacobson, mlb.com

Which hitters have been most successful when going up against certain pitch types so far?

To answer this, we'll once again focus primarily on Statcast's Run Value metric. Feel free to glance at this page for a more detailed definition, but to summarize, the premise of Run Value is that it accounts for the impact of each individual pitch based on the runners on base, outs, and ball and strike count. This is important because many other existing advanced metrics only account for certain subsets of pitches -- e.g., whiff rate only includes pitches that were swung at, while batting average and xwOBA only consider the final pitch of any plate appearance. But, of course, taking a pitch to turn an 0-0 count into a 1-0 count still is a positive outcome for the batter, an outcome which Run Value accounts for.

With all of that being said, here are the best hitters against each of the six most common pitch types so far this season. While Run Value is the primary determinant of these choices, there were some other underlying metrics that were considered as well (whiff rate, wOBA, xwOBA, etc.).

All numbers are entering July 20

4-seam fastball: Freddie Freeman, Dodgers

+21 Run Value

Freeman doesn't just have MLB's highest Run Value against 4-seam fastballs -- his +21 output against 4-seamers is six more runs than any other hitter against any pitch type this season. His raw numbers against 4-seamers are elite across the board, with a .380 batting average, .736 slugging percentage and .473 wOBA. But such dominance is nothing new for the seven-time All-Star. In each of the past eight seasons (including 2023), Freeman has had at least a .298 batting average and at least a .530 slugging percentage against 4-seamers.

Sinker: Corbin Carroll, D-backs

+9 Run Value

Carroll's remarkable rookie season has been among MLB's biggest storylines all year, and the ability to hit sinkers is one of the many skills that he's shown off so far. Though Carroll ranks just behind **Mookie Betts** in Run Value against sinkers, he ranks in first place in OBP (.500), slugging percentage (.795) and wOBA (.533) among 131 players to have at least 50 plate appearances end in sinkers. But, perhaps even more impressively, Carroll's +9 here isn't even his highest Run Value against a pitch type. Thanks to a .352 batting average and .716 slugging percentage, he also has a +13 against 4-seamers, for good measure.

Cutter: Brent Rooker, A's

+6 Run Value

While the sample size of cutters is much smaller across the sport than it is for 4-seamers or sinkers, Rooker has still stood out with his elite performance against such pitches, one reason that the 28-year-old was a surprise All-Star after being claimed off waivers in the offseason. Beyond ranking near the top of MLB in Run Value, Rooker has five homers against cutters this season, tied for most in MLB with the Twins' Max Kepler. This has led to a .500 batting average and a preposterous 1.700 slugging percentage on such pitches for Rooker, numbers that jump off the page even when accounting for the smaller sample. His slugging percentage and .764 wOBA lead all players with at least 15 plate appearances ending in cutters.

Slider: Ronald Acuña Jr., Braves

+11 Run Value

Acuña actually isn't quite MLB's leader in Run Value against sliders, as he ranks in second, slightly behind the Rangers' **Adolis García**. But Acuña's underlying metrics are stronger, giving him the slight nod here. Against sliders, Acuña's batting average (.324), OBP (.398), slugging percentage (.649), wOBA (.439) are all better than García's, as are his expected values in each of those four metrics. Acuña also has a remarkable average exit velocity of 96.8 mph against sliders this season, a full 1.5 mph higher than the next-closest player with at least 25 batted balls against sliders (**Gunnar Henderson**). While the overwhelming NL MVP favorite has been

effective against pretty much every pitch type this season, the way he has feasted against sliders stands out the most.

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS

Joe Torre	83
Don Kessinger	81
Dave Steib	66
Terry Pendleton	63
Bobby Thigpen	60
Bengie Molina	59
Nomar Garciaparra	50
Torii Hunter	48
CC Sabathia	43
Stephen Strasburg	35

THIS WEEK IN BASEBALL HISTORY

1936 **Carl Hubbell** starts his 24 game winning streak with a 6-0 win over the Pirates.

1941 **Joe DiMaggio's** consecutive games hitting streak ends at 56.

1974 **Bob Gibson** fans the Reds' **Cesar Geronimo** to become the second hurler after Walter Johnson to strike out 3,000 batters

1987 **Don Mattingly** of the New York Yankees becomes the first American League player to hit home runs in seven consecutive games

LONGER READS

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR HALL OF FAMERS

By Tyler Kepner, The New York Times

(answers at the bottom with our Weekly trivia Challenge answers)

The language used to describe players on plaques at the Baseball Hall of Fame has evolved over the years. Can you pick out who is who from the first sentence describing them?

There has always been an art to the language used on the plaques at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y. The language, however, has evolved over the years, from spartan descriptions in the early days to stat-stuffed entries in more recent years.

The plaques for this year's Hall of Famers, **Scott Rolen and Fred McGriff**, will be revealed this weekend, and they will surely tell tales of Rolen's fielding prowess and McGriff's consistent power.

But how identifiable are other Hall of Famers based on what was written about them? To test that, we are asking you to pick the Hall of Famer based on how he is described in the first line of his plaque.

"Conceded to be fastest ball pitcher in history of game."

Old Hoss Redbourn, Walter Johnson, Bob Feller, Cy Young.

"A disciplined hitter whose commanding knowledge of the strike zone made him one of baseball's toughest outs."

Wade Boggs, Derek Jeter, Tony Gwynn, Paul Molitor

"An imposing figure at the plate and in the field, combined powerful swing and exceptional batting eye to become one of the game's most feared hitters."

Dave Winfield, Jim Rice, Frank Thomas, Harmon Killebrew

"An exuberant on-field general with a signature smile who was known for clutch hitting and rock-solid defense over 19 seasons."

Gary Carter, Johnny Bench, Roy Campanella, Ivan Rodriguez

“Combined bat-shattering fastball and darting slider to save 478 games, topping the all-time list for more than a decade.”

Mariano Rivera, Trevor Hoffman, Lee Smith, Rollie Fingers

He was eventually surpassed by multiple closers, including Rivera and Hoffman.

“Unprecedented combination of power and defense with unusual mixture of strength, coordination and speed made him one of the game’s greatest third basemen.”

George Brett, Mike Schmidt, Brooks Robinson, Eddie Mathews

“A powerful and productive switch-hitter whose consistency over 21 seasons led to 3,255 hits.”

Chipper Jones, Mickey Mantle, Roberto Alomar, Eddie Murray

“A beacon of serenity and stature in the dugout. ...”

Connie Mack, Joe Torre, Walter Alston, Bobby Cox

“Great National League pitcher for two decades with Phillies, Cubs and Cardinals starting in 1911.”

Christy Mathewson, Eddie Plank, Grover Cleveland Alexander, Mordecai “The Finger” Brown

“Intimidating presence between the lines and charismatic patriarch in clubhouse and dugout.”

Willie Stargell, Stan Musial, Jim Thome, David Ortiz

HONORING THE LAST OF THE ‘BOYS OF SUMMER’

Carl Erskine was a champion with the 1955 Brooklyn Dodgers, but what came after that is what will be celebrated with an award from the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Tyler Kepner, The New York Times

It is the first inning, you might say, and Carl Erskine does not have his best stuff. A camera crew has set up in his living room, and a filmmaker, Ted Green, gently tries to guide Erskine through a short speech. This is hard work for the old Brooklyn Dodger, who needs several takes.

Erskine apologizes; he is not at his sharpest, he says. But when he gets it, he nails it, as he was bound to do. There has always been something inviting about Erskine, a welcoming look that draws you in warmly and melts away the decades.

“He’s a 96-year-old guy,” Green says, “with 12-year-old eyes.”

Soon the eyes are dancing and the memories come rushing back. An interview starts and the game rolls along, like a no-hitter at Ebbets Field (he threw two), complete with the playing of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” — on harmonica. Erskine keeps one beside the lamp on the end table, an out pitch he can always reach.

“When we have music, he’ll pick up the harmonica,” says Betty Erskine, 95, from her blue easy chair on the other side of the table from her husband. “If it’s in the wrong key, he lays it back down. But if it’s right, he’ll play along.”

Erskine plays an original piece, “The **Stan Musial** Blues,” that he wrote for the hitter he faced more than any other, often without luck. Musial, who died in 2013, played his own harmonica at the Hall of Fame ceremonies every July. Erskine is not a member, but this weekend he will have his day in Cooperstown, N.Y.

On Saturday, a day before **Fred McGriff and Scott Rolen** are inducted into the Hall, Erskine will receive the **Buck O’Neil** Lifetime Achievement Award, named for the pioneering Negro leagues star, which is given every three years for positive contributions to baseball’s impact on society.

Deep in winter for the last of Dodgers players chronicled in the book “The Boys of Summer,” Erskine remembers it all with childlike wonder.

“As a kid growing up, your imagination takes you to a lot of places, and so I always dreamed of places like this,” said Erskine, the only living player from the 1955 World Series, when Brooklyn won its only crown. “Never really thought it would happen — but then it did happen, and that made it so amazing. It’s like, ‘Was that me?’”

As a minor leaguer, Erskine talked curveball grips with **Mordecai Brown**, who was better known as Three Finger Brown. As a young major leaguer on Oct. 3, 1951, he bounced the curve while warming up in the bullpen at the Polo Grounds in Upper Manhattan. The Dodgers then called for another pitcher, **Ralph Branca**, who gave up **Bobby Thomson’s** famous pennant-winning homer for the Giants.

Stardom followed for Erskine: a 20-win season, a 14-strikeout game in the World Series (**Mickey Mantle** fanned four times), the no-hitters. He made the first start for the Dodgers in Los Angeles in 1958 and threw a strike with the first pitch.

Erskine's arm finally gave out the next June, a time so distant that the union had 49 states and the majors just 16 teams.



Erskine's name will be on permanent display at the Hall of Fame by the Buck O'Neil statue, just down a hallway and around the corner from the plaque gallery. That room honors the most

hallowed Brooklyn names — **Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Duke Snider, Pee Wee Reese, Gil Hodges** and more — and, to Erskine, sends a subtle but powerful message he has spent his life promoting.

“There’s one key factor about the plaques around that room at the Hall of Fame,” Erskine said. “They’re all bronze. They’re all the same color.”

Erskin on facing Stan Musial

“He almost never missed a swing. He always hit the ball somewhere. Sometimes they’re a line shot, sometimes they’re a bloop. But he always made contact. You didn’t really have an out pitch for him; he just hit the ball somewhere. But he got less good contact with off-speed pitches.” Erskine added that he once played a harmonica duet with Musial. “I told him later, ‘It was a lot easier to play with you, Stan, than it was to play against you.’”

Hank Aaron

“Aaron was an interesting batter because in his early years, he didn’t have very many home runs. He hit these line drives, just bullets; the term in baseball is a clothesline. But he eventually — I don’t know what changed — but he started getting the ball in the air. And when he did, he hit them out of the ballpark.”

Willie Mays

“You finally learned to pitch Mays inside because you always avoided that because he hit these upper-deck foul balls. You had to really crowd him plenty to keep him from getting the ball fair. He was a pure hitter. Those guys, there’s just a handful of them in baseball, they break all the rules about how you stand, how you grip. But they’re the best hitters in the league.”

HOW EFFECTIVE HAS BASEBALL’S GHOST RUNNER RULE BEEN IN SHORTENING EXTRA-INNING GAMES?

Julian Benbow, Boston Globe

When MLB commissioner Rob Manfred introduced the ghost runner rule in 2020 — as baseball made adjustments to navigate the tricky terrain of playing through COVID-19— reactions to the change were predictably harsh.

Before ever seeing an extra-inning scenario play out with a runner automatically starting on second base, some called the rule “goofy” and “idiotic.”

Seeing it for the first time didn't make the reactions any less extreme. When Cleveland dropped an extra-inning game to Kansas City in July 2020, Cleveland infielder **Francisco Lindor** said the rule was "cool" but "Little League-ish."

Teammate **Mike Clevinger** was less diplomatic, calling it "the wackiest [expletive] I've ever seen."

On the other hand, Royals manager **Mike Matheny**, an advocate for the rule, was pleased. "I love it. I hope we do it tomorrow," he said. He added, "I know baseball traditionalists are rolling over right now."

No matter how much traditionalists griped, the ghost runner rule has lived to see its fourth season.

Baseball started looking into the benefits of using a ghost runner in extra innings in the minor leagues in 2018. That study, according to Baseball America, showed that 73 percent of extra-inning games were decided with just one added inning with ghost runners. Before that, only 45 percent of extra-inning games ended after just one added inning.

Those numbers have held true at the major league level.

In 2019, the last year before the ghost runner was introduced, 208 games went to extra innings. Ninety-one of them (43.8 percent) ended in the 10th, 58 (27.9 percent) went 11 innings, and 22 went 12 (10.6 percent).

Once the ghost runner made its debut in 2020, the number of games that were decided with just one extra inning jumped to 69.1 percent (47 of 68 games). Fifteen games were done after 11 innings. Only four reached 12 frames, and two more went 13. No game lasted longer.

The average time of an extra-inning game in 2019 was about four hours. In 2020, it dropped to 3 hours, 46 minutes. In 2021, it ticked up to 3:49. Last season, it dipped to 3:38. This season, with the addition of more rules aimed at speeding up the game (most notably the pitch clock), the average time of an extra-inning game is down to 3:08.

Despite some of the initial backlash, Manfred was encouraged by the change.

"I think the players like it," Manfred said in 2020. "I think it's really good from a safety and health perspective that keeps us from putting players in situations where they're out there too long or in positions they're not used to playing."

What the ghost runner has done is essentially eliminate marathon games.

Games that stretched 15 innings or more weren't necessarily frequent before the ghost runner, but they were far from uncommon.

In 2019, eight games went 15 innings, three went 16, one went 17, and three went 18.

The longest game that year was a 19-inning war of attrition between the Cardinals and the Diamondbacks that stretched to extras because of a tying, pinch-hit homer by **Ildemaro Vargas** in the ninth, and ended when Vargas singled with the bases loaded 10 innings later to deliver a 3-2 win.

That game lasted 6 hours, 53 minutes. The Diamondbacks used a franchise-record 30 players. The teams combined to use 24 pitchers. It was the longest game in Chase Field history. The game ended at 1:34 a.m., and the teams played again 11 hours later.

Since 2020, no game has gone longer than 16 innings. In the first year with automatic runners, no game went longer than 13 innings. In 2021, the Dodgers had a 16-inning staring match with the Padres and won, 5-3. Last year, the Guardians outlasted the Twins, 7-6, in 15 innings. This season, two games have gone 14 innings.

Before the ghost runner rule, the Red Sox could pencil in a marathon almost every other year. In 2019, they played 17 innings against the Twins, along with 15-inning games against the Angels and Giants. In 2017, four of their games went at least 15 innings, including a 19-inning, 3-2 victory over the Blue Jays. In 2015, they were up all night for a 19-inning game against the Yankees. In 2014, they lost a 15-inning game against the Rays and a 19-inning game against the Angels.

Since 2020, though, the Red Sox haven't played a game longer than 12 innings. They have played six extra-inning games this season and all have ended in the 10th (they're 3-3).

The Red Sox' first brush with the ghost runner rule came in August 2020, when they were walked off by the Orioles, 5-4, in 10 innings. Despite the loss, then-manager **Ron Roenicke** said, "It was interesting. I kind of liked it."

Martín Pérez, the Red Sox starting pitcher that day, felt differently.

"It felt weird," he said. "I felt like we were playing Little League. But that's the rules, and we have to follow the rules."

The rule has shown its staying power and essentially eliminated marathon nights, the way Manfred imagined.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

First Tyler Kepner's NYT quiz:

"Conceded to be fastest ball pitcher in history of game."

Old Hoss Redbourn, Walter Johnson, Bob Feller, Cy Young.

WALTER JOHNSON

"A disciplined hitter whose commanding knowledge of the strike zone made him one of baseball's toughest outs."

Wade Boggs, Derek Jeter, Tony Gwynn, Paul Molitor

WADE BOGGS

While Gwynn was harder to strike out, Boggs truly was a tough out. He complemented his 3,010 hits with 1,412 walks, resulting in a stellar .415 on-base percentage for his career. In 1988 he reached base 342 times, which is tied for ninth most in a major league season.

"An imposing figure at the plate and in the field, combined powerful swing and exceptional batting eye to become one of the game's most feared hitters."

Dave Winfield, Jim Rice, Frank Thomas, Harmon Killebrew

FRANK THOMAS

"An exuberant on-field general with a signature smile who was known for clutch hitting and rock-solid defense over 19 seasons."

Gary Carter, Johnny Bench, Roy Campanella, Ivan Rodriguez

"Combined bat-shattering fastball and darting slider to save 478 games, topping the all-time list for more than a decade."

Mariano Rivera, Trevor Hoffman, Lee Smith, Rollie Fingers

LEE SMITH.

He was eventually surpassed by multiple closers, including Rivera and Hoffman.

“Unprecedented combination of power and defense with unusual mixture of strength, coordination and speed made him one of the game’s greatest third basemen.”

George Brett, Mike Schmidt, Brooks Robinson, Eddie Mathews

MIKE SCHMIDT

“A powerful and productive switch-hitter whose consistency over 21 seasons led to 3,255 hits.”

Chipper Jones, Mickey Mantle, Roberto Alomar, Eddie Murray

EDDIE MURRAY

“A beacon of serenity and stature in the dugout. ...”

Connie Mack, Joe Torre, Walter Alston, Bobby Cox

JOE TORRE

“Great National League pitcher for two decades with Phillies, Cubs and Cardinals starting in 1911.”

Christy Mathewson, Eddie Plank, Grover Cleveland Alexander, Mordecai “The Finger” Brown

GROVER CLEVELAND ALEXANDER

“Intimidating presence between the lines and charismatic patriarch in clubhouse and dugout.”

Willie Stargell, Stan Musial, Jim Thome, David Ortiz

WILLIE STARGELL

NAME HIM

First player to hit twenty home runs in season for five different major league teams.

He set the National League record when he led off eleven games in one season with a home run.

Over 14 seasons this right-handed outfielder batted .268 with 332 HRs and 1024 RBI.

Struck out 1757 times, led majors in whiffs 4 times.

461 stolen bases, stole over 40 seven times. 30 HRs/40 SB four times.

BOBBY BONDS

Bonds hit a minimum of 20 HR for each of SFG, CAL, TEX, CLE & NYY.

Here is previous stadium—name the current stadium

Memorial Stadium replaced in 1992

Camden Yards (Baltimore)

Huntington Avenue Grounds replaced in 1911

Fenway Park (Boston)

Astrodome replaced in 1999

Enron Field renamed Minute Maid Park (Houston)

Municipal Stadium replaced in 1993

Jacobs Field renamed Progressive Field (Cleveland)

Cinergy Field replaced in 2002

Great American Ballpark (Cincinnati)

Mile High Stadium replaced in 1994

Coors Field (Denver)

Memorial Coliseum replaced in 1961

Dodger Stadium

County Stadium replaced in 2000

Miller Park (Milwaukee)

Veterans Stadium replaced in 2003

Citizens Bank Park (Philadelphia)

Three Rivers Stadium replaced in 2000

PNC Park (Pittsburgh)

Qualcom Stadium replaced in 2003

PETCO Park (San Diego)

RFK Stadium replaced in 2007

Nationals Park

ACTIVE PLAYERS WITH MOST GAMES PLAYING FOR ONE FRANCHISE

NL Central 1B, 2010 MVP

JOEY VOTTO 2016 games

NL West Shortstop, bats left/throws right

BRANDON CRAWFORD 1625 games

AL West 2B, 2017 MVP

JOSE ALTUVE 1610 games

AL West CF, multiple MVPs

MIKE TROUT 1488 games

NL West Outfielder, lefty

CHARLIE BLACKMON 1460 game

NAME HIM

236 game winner, Hall of Famer

Won a Cy Young in the 1960s.

Led the AL in wins and winning % three times.

Third in 1963 MVP voting behind **Elston Howard and Al Kaline**.

Second in the 1950 Rookie of the Year voting to **Walt Droppo**.

Pitched in 11 World Series.

WHITEY FORD

A reminder to checkout sundaybaseballtidbits.com. Thanks to the efforts of subscriber (and Wesleyan baseball Wall of Famer) Todd Mogren, all back issues of the newsletter are archived and accessible. At the request of another subscriber there is a tab for all our trivia questions and a separate tab for questions with answers. No scrolling through the archives—easy access to all the trivia.

Please remember to check out

SUNDAYBASEBALLTIDBITS.COM

Over 5,000 pages of our back issues, trivia questions & answers, subscriber recommendations for best baseball books and websites. Special thanks to **Todd Mogren** for web support.

HOUSEKEEPING

Sunday Baseball Tidbits is distributed every Sunday morning. The goal is to provide “2 Cups of Coffee worth of baseball news, analysis, history and trivia” from a range of sources. All content belongs to its respective copyright holders. This newsletter is provided for the non-commercial enjoyment of our subscribers. Please email nhsuperseven@yahoo.com for a free subscription. We will never share your email address. Questions, comments, ideas, corrections and pointers to content you think subscribers would enjoy are encouraged and appreciated.

Our sources include:

The Athletic	Baseball-almanac.com
Baseballroundtable.com	Bleacher Report
Boston Globe	Mlb.com
The New York Times	Joe Posnanski newsletter
SABR.org	Sports Illustrated
Joe Sheehan newsletter	Baseballreference.com
ESPN.com	New York Post
SBNation	mlbtraderumors.com
baseballsavant.mlb.com	thebaseballcube.com
baseballthinkfactory.org	historicbaseball.com
ViSN (Vegas information and sports network)	
Atlas Obscura	statmuse.com
Fangraphs.com	atlas obscura
Baseball's Best and Worst	The drummyangle.com
Sports Business Journal	thisdayinbaseball.com
horsehidetrivia.blogspot.com	

Please check them out and support them.