

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

8.13.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

In this week's edition Free Kevin Brown, Another No-Hitter, **Vic Wertz, Moonlight Graham,** Fernando mania.

In Longer Reads Comparing pitching mounds, The HOF case for Zack Greinke, Never got an At Bat.

Enjoy.

Some interesting responses to last week's request for improvement ideas:

- Links to highlights – the challenge is how to keep yahoo mail from thinking I am a spammer
- More classic columns from sports writers—first one is this week
- You make the call (rules situations and what the right call is) – upcoming.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Who Am I?

I played 17 seasons for 2 teams in the American League as an infielder.

1716 of my 1925 games I played 2B.

6 All Star games, a silver slugger, 4 Gold Gloves. In 1973, I set an all-time major league fielding record for 2B with a .995 fielding percentage, and 12 seasons later in 1985, broke the record again (.997).

I did not play in the only World Series (my rookie season, 1970) my team made.

I led the AL in assists and putouts as a 2B 1973-74-75. Set an AL 2B record with 484 putouts in a season (1974)

In 1979 when my team made the playoffs former President Richard Nixon came into the club house—I dumped a beer on his head.

In 1981 I led the AL in home runs. First second baseman to lead AL in home runs since **Nap Lajoie** (1901) and in either league since **Rogers Hornsby** (1929).

I signed a (then) large free agent contract in 1976 and headed west for 11 seasons.

Over 17 major league seasons, batted .266, with 320 doubles, 47 triples, 224 home runs, 864 runs batted in (RBI), 1,033 runs, 1,833 hits, 1,087 bases on balls, 104 stolen bases, and a .371 on-base percentage in 2,008 games played.

Only **Joe Morgan** hit more home runs as a 2B during my career 1970-1986.

Elected to both my team's Hall of Fames. Though many of my advanced stats would make a good case for the Baseball Hall of Fame, I didn't receive 5% in my only year on the ballot, 1992.

MLB has had 10 players win a total of 12 Triple Crowns since RBIs became an official statistic in 1920. How many can you name?

2012 -- Baseball's first Triple Crown in 45 years by batting .330 with 44 homers and 139 RBIs. First of his consecutive MVP awards.

1967 -- In the year before 1968's "Year of the Pitcher," won the second of his three batting titles (.326) while leading the league in homers (44) and RBIs (121) for the only time in his 23 seasons. All three numbers were career highs for the Hall of Famer, who also topped the AL in on-base percentage (.418), slugging (.622), runs (112), hits (189) and total bases (360) while earning a Gold Glove Award and the AL MVP Award.

1966 -- Traded December 1965, for his new club was hit .316 with 49 homers and 122 RBIs, while also leading the AL with a .410 OBP, a .637 slugging and 122 runs. Those efforts earned him an MVP Award for the second time, giving him one in each league after he also won in 1961.

1956 -- Took batting average (.353) and RBIs (130) by fairly narrow margins, but blew away the field in home runs. His 52 homers were 20 more than **Vic Wertz's** 32 and nine more than NL leader **Duke Snider's** 43. Captured the first of back-to-back AL MVP Awards, and first of three for his career.

1942 and '47 -- A year after he became the last Major League player to bat at least .400, as a 23-year-old hit .356 with 36 homers and 137 RBIs in 1942. He then sat out three full seasons to

serve in the military, but he didn't miss a beat when he returned in '46, finishing a measly second in the AL in all three categories while winning the AL MVP Award. Returned to Triple Crown glory the next year, batting .343 with 32 homers and 114 RBIs. In his six seasons between 1941-49, he led the league in average four times, homers four times and RBIs three times.

1937 -- It's now been more than 80 years since the NL's last Triple Crown. The Hall of Fame left fielder set career highs with a .374 average, 31 homers and 154 RBIs, also leading the league in slugging (.641), runs (111), hits (237) and doubles (56). Though his homer total was actually tied for first with the Giants' **Mel Ott**, drove in 39 more runs than any other NL player.

1934 -- At 31-year-old won his only batting title, at .363, and he also topped the AL with a .465 OBP and a .706 slugging. In the power department, his 49 homers tied a career high, while his 166 RBIs marked one of seven seasons in which he eclipsed the 150 mark.

1933 -- One of two players to grab a Triple Crown this year and earned a second straight AL MVP Award. The Hall of Famer had walloped 58 homers and driven in 169 runs the year before, coming up a batting title short despite a .364 mark. He got the job done in '34 by hitting .356 with 48 homers and 163 RBIs, surpassing **Babe Ruth** by 14 long balls and Gehrig by 23 RBIs.

1933 -- Not only did baseball have two Triple Crown winners in 1933, but so did the city of Philadelphia. He batted a robust .368, and while his 28 homers and 120 RBIs were well short of Foxx's prodigious totals, they were good enough in the NL. Also took the league's top spots in OBP (.422), slugging (.602), hits (223) and doubles (44), though he finished second in the NL MVP Award race after winning the year before. Amazingly, the Phillies traded him to the Cubs after the season.

1922 and '25 -- The only NL player to take multiple Crowns. From 1920-25, he led the league in average, OBP and slugging every year, batting at least .370 each time and topping .400 on three occasions. His two Crowns coincided with the only home run titles of his career, as he hit .401 with 42 homers and 152 RBIs in '22 and .403 with 39 homers and 143 driven home in '25. The latter year, he took the first of his two NL MVP Awards.

Name the seven men to win a World Series as both a player and manager since the start of division play in 1969:

1981 player, 2002 manager

2007 player, 2018 manager

1996, 1998, 1999 player, 2009 manager

1966, 1970 player, 1986 manager

1977, 1978 player, 1990 manager

2004 player, 2020 manager

1981, 1988 player, 2002 manager

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Some families just naturally are jerks. Knicks fans have the Dolans. For the Orioles it is the Angelos. Peter Angelos once fired Hall of Fame broadcaster Jon Miller for not being enough of a homer. The latest comes from his son John. Popular broadcaster Kevin Brown was suspended this week for pointing out (reading from the game facts supplied by the team PR department) that the O's this year have already won more games against the Rays than in the last two seasons. Angelos took that as negative and had Brown pulled from the booth, leading to "Free Kevin" chants at Camden Yards.

Meanwhile, the Orioles have gone 76 series without being swept. a run that dates back to when they lost three in Detroit from May 13-15 last season. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, it's the fourth-longest such streak in AL/NL history.

Most consecutive multigame series without getting swept

1. 1942-44 Cardinals: 125
2. 1903-05 Giants: 106
3. 1922-24 Yankees: 83
4. 2022-present Orioles: 76

There are 12 teams in Nippon Professional Baseball, all in the same time zone, who play a 143-game schedule. Monday is almost always a day off and there are no doubleheaders.

Five of the teams play either in or close to Tokyo. More road trips are made via high-speed train than by flying.

Toronto Blue Jays legend **José Bautista** will sign a one-day contract and retire with the franchise. In 2010, Bautista set the single-season franchise record of 54 home runs that still stands. Toronto acquired Bautista in a trade with the Pittsburgh Pirates in August 2008, and he had a breakout 2010 season that earned him his first All-Star selection and his first Silver Slugger Award.

From 2010 to 2015, Bautista hit more home runs than any other player in MLB. He went on to win two more Silver Slugger Awards (2011, 2014) and appear in five additional All-Star Games. His 288 home runs as a Blue Jay trail only **Carlos Delgado** for the most in club history.

In 2015, Bautista helped lead the Blue Jays back to the postseason for the first time in 22 years. Bautista delivered the most iconic moment of his career in Game 5 of the American League Division Series against the Texas Rangers with a seventh-inning tie-breaking three-run home run and a subsequent bat flip that sent fans into a frenzy. It remains one of the greatest bat flips in MLB history.

Bautista retires with a career .247 batting average and 344 home runs across 15 major-league seasons.

Yesterday he joined Blue Jays greats **George Bell, Dave Stieb, Joe Carter, Cito Gaston, Tony Fernandez, Pat Gillick, Tom Cheek, Paul Beeston, Delgado and Roy Halladay** in the Level of Excellence.

Best subscriber question of the week--name the player with the longest on-base streak. That's hits, walks and hit by pitch. No dropped third strikes, no reached-on-error, no fielder's choice.

At 84 games that would be **Ted Williams** in 1949. Makes sense—at .482 he has the highest career OBP in history (during the streak his OBP was .518). He reached base 209 times in the 84 games—think about that. I'd guess that it escaped the press at the time but why hasn't MLB grabbed this and publicized it was an impressive feat.

Joe DiMaggio has the second longest on base streak at 74. Williams had streaks of 73 games in two more seasons. (since 1900 there have been 48 streaks of 50 games or more). If you have a few minutes this video celebration of that streak is fun watching.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YRQP8g12K8>

New Braunfels, Texas -- a suburb on the north side of the Greater San Antonio area -- has always been a baseball town, but not exactly a traditional hotbed for Major League talent. Yet, on one spring day circa 2011, something special happened there, even if it wasn't evident then.

Two future big leaguers, both 12 at the time, took each other deep in consecutive half-innings.

Bryce Miller and **Jordan Westburg** recalled it the exact same way 12 years later as 24-year-olds.

In the third inning of a scoreless game, Westburg homered off Miller. The next half-inning, Miller homered off Westburg.

Miller and Westburg -- childhood friends who grew up in the same neighborhood, competed throughout Little League and played together at New Braunfels High School -- could face off again. Only this time, it would happen on the field at Seattle's T-Mobile Park, where Miller is scheduled to start for the Mariners in the finale of a three-game series against Westburg's Orioles.

New Braunfels High didn't have a track record for producing big league players until recent years. Right-hander **Ralph Garza Jr.** became the first former Unicorn to reach MLB when he debuted for the Astros on May 29, 2021.

Three more have followed in Garza's footsteps, each breaking into the big leagues this year: Miller (May 2), Westburg (June 26) and Royals righty **James McArthur** (June 28).

Both played college ball in the SEC -- Miller at Texas A&M and Westburg at Mississippi State -- they never went head-to-head in an Aggies-Bulldogs matchup. They played whiffle ball in each other's backyards and here they are facing each other in the majors.



Vic Wertz. You probably know him as the batter in the 1954 World Series who hit the ball that **Willie Mays** caught over his shoulder in deep CF—one of the most famous catches of all time. Wertz went 4 for 5 in the game. The catch kept Wertz from becoming the first hitter to have 5 hits in a World Series game. It would be 28 more years until **Paul Molitor** got 5 hits against the Cards in the 1982 World Series.

Wertz played 17 seasons as an OF/1B for the Tigers, Red Sox, Orioles and Indians. He had a career average of .277, hit 266 HRs and drove in 1178 runs with 1692 hits in 1862 games.

Miguel Cabrera, a day after passing **Tony Gwynn** and tying **Robin Yount** with a two-hit night on Tuesday, passed Yount in Wednesday's 9-5 win with his 3,143rd career hit, a third-inning single off Twins starter Bailey Ober. Cabrera finished the night 3-for-4, leaving him with 3,145 career hits.

Cabrera now sits 19th in hits in Major League history.

His career may be winding down as a part-timer but Cabrera over a ten-year period hit .327 with 330 homers and won four batting titles and two MVP awards. He is lock to be a first ballot Hall of Famer.

The Orioles are now 126-87 (.586) when **Adley Rutschman** starts a game, a 95-win pace per 162 games.

The Twins are a sub-.500 team outside the division and in nine-inning games. They have a 3.30 ERA against AL Central teams, and a 5.48 mark against everyone else.

Trea Turner maybe having an off year at bat but he is 22-for-22 stealing bases. The record for steals without being caught over a full season is 23, set by **Chase Utley** in 2009.

The Marlins haven't won a playoff game since 2003. As they chase a wild card spot, some random stats: The Marlins lead baseball with 26 one-run wins and are a .722 team in one-run decisions, .425 in all other games.

WILD CARD STUFF

Since August 1 the Angels, Yankees, Guardians, Reds and Diamondbacks — have seen their playoff chances slashed by more than half, and a sixth (the Red Sox) has gone from 24.6% to 13.8%. Meanwhile, the Rangers responded to a late-July skid with an eight-game winning streak, the Cubs doubled their playoff odds with series wins over the Reds and Braves, the Phillies played their way into the top Wild Card spot in the National League, and the Mariners swept the Angels and Padres to leapfrog New York, Boston, and Los Angeles in the AL Wild Card race. It's been quite the shuffle for a ten-day stretch.

Per Vegas, in two weeks the Cubs increased their playoff odds from 24% to 50%, the Phillies from 66% to 88%, the Mariners from 19% to 39%.

Arizona was one of the best teams in baseball in the first half, separated from the Dodgers for the NL West lead only by percentage points. In the second half, the D-Backs have been the worst team in baseball at 5–19, including an 0–8 start to August.

The Marlins and Reds had the fourth- and eighth-best records in baseball in the first half, respectively, despite both having negative run differentials. But after staying relatively quiet at the deadline, the Reds have gone 1–8 in August, not only losing their division lead but also falling out of playoff position altogether. Meanwhile, the only thing keeping the Marlins in the third Wild Card spot (and with comparably high 41.1% playoff odds as of now) is that the Diamondbacks and Reds have been worse.

Two of the six teams with the longest timespan since they reached the postseason are currently in first place: The Orioles and the Rangers, neither of whom has made the playoffs since 2016. (The Tigers and Angels currently own the longest droughts, having not made it since 2014.). 2014 was the last time both the Yankees and the Red Sox missed the post-season.

The Minnesota Twins have lost a flabbergasting 18 consecutive postseason games! Is it worse to have lost 18 straight postseason games or to have never made the postseason at all? (The Twins' most recent postseason win was Game 1 of the 2004 ALDS against the Yankees. Johan Santana pitched seven scoreless innings.)

The Padres lead the NL in ERA. They are also five games under .500 and fifth in line for the final playoff spot.

Some of this you can explain with math — the Padres are 6-18 in one-run games this year and an almost impossible 0-10 in extra-inning games. But there is more to it.

Here's how the league hits in different leverage situations:

Low leverage: .245/.316/.410

Medium leverage: .250/.319/.416

High leverage: .253/.330/.412

You can see, things tend to go up for hitters a bit based on the importance of the moment. This is true this year, it was true last year, it was true 10 years ago, the numbers always show a tick upward as the leverage gets higher.

Here's how the Padres are hitting in different leverage situations:

Low leverage: .255/.346/.435

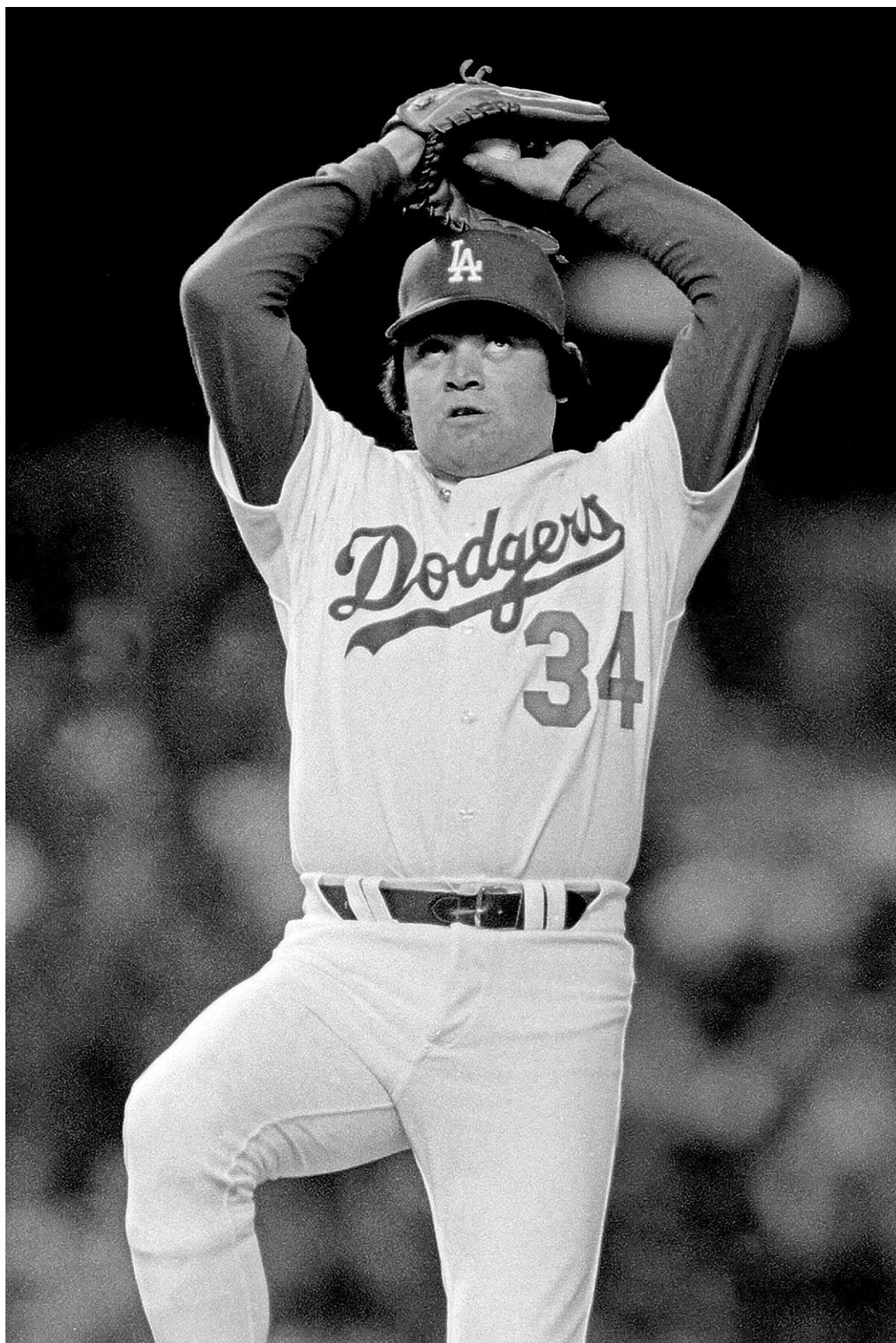
Medium leverage: .238/.320/.420

High leverage: .201/.288/.328

Big payroll, great attendance, beautiful ballpark in a nice city. Need to learn to be clutch.

Ha-Seong Kim of the Padres went 2-for-5 with an RBI and a run in a win over Arizona, extending his hitting streak to 16 games. Not only is that the longest active hitting streak in the Majors, but it's tied with **Shin-Soo Choo** for the longest MLB hitting streak by a player born in South Korea. (Choo's streak came in 2013 for the Reds.)

Orioles number one ranked prospect Jackson Holliday's lock on that top spot was only strengthened by going 5-for-6 in Bowie's 9-7 win over the Richmond Flying Squirrels on Friday night. The highlight of the night for last year's first overall pick came in the seventh inning when he swatted a triple off the center-field wall, plating two runs. The 19-year-old also stole his 21st base of the season in the sixth, showing off both his 70-grade hit and 60-grade run tool in short order. It was his third 5 hit game of the season. He's tallied 29 multi-hit efforts in 88 games played this season. Since his promotion to AA he's hitting .386 with a 1.049 OPS, a continuation of his performances in High-A and Single-A where he posted a .940 OPS and a 1.182 OPS, respectively.



Despite it not being retired for over 30 years, no Dodgers player has worn the No. 34 since **Fernando Valenzuela** donned it from 1980-90.

That decision was made by the Dodgers in order to still honor Valenzuela without officially retiring his number. Remember, the Dodgers have an organizational rule that requires a player to be in the Baseball Hall of Fame before having his number retired at Dodger Stadium.

But in February, the Dodgers waived that rule for Valenzuela, a player who has made as big of an impact as any in the organization's storied franchise. At FanFest, it was announced Valenzuela would have his jersey retired during a "Fernandomania" weekend.

No Dodgers player will ever wear Valenzuela's No. 34, as "El Toro's" number was officially retired by the organization, joining **Pee Wee Reese, Tommy Lasorda, Duke Snider, Gil Hodges, Jim Gilliam, Don Sutton, Walter Alston, Sandy Koufax, Roy Campanella, Jackie Robinson and Don Drysdale**.

His rise during the '81 season has been well-documented and it's one of the most successful stretches of any player in Major League history. The Mexican left-hander was a member of two World Series teams during his career, won the 1981 NL Rookie of the Year and Cy Young Awards, was selected to six All-Star teams and took home two Silver Slugger Awards as he became one of the best-hitting pitchers in the Majors.

But Valenzuela's impact extended well past the diamond. He served as the perfect connection between the Dodgers and the large Mexican population in Los Angeles, creating a new wave of baseball and Dodgers fans throughout his career.

Valenzuela pitched 17 seasons in the majors, 11 of them with the Dodgers. He went 173-153 in 453 games pitched, 3.54 ERA, 2074 strikeouts in 2930 innings pitched. He was 5-1 in post-season games including a complete game World Series win over the Yankees in 1981.

Dusty Baker. Connie Mack has the all-time record of 3,731 managerial wins. Baker entered the year 10th on the all-time list with 2,093 wins, and with 66 more this season, he's now passed Hall of Famers **Joe McCarthy** and **Bucky Harris**. Baker needs 35 more victories to match **Sparky Anderson's** 2,194 for sixth all time, but doing so would require the Astros to win 35 of their final 47 games and finish with 101 wins.

In his 26-year managerial career, Baker-led teams have won 100 or more games twice: in 1993, his first season with the Giants, and last year, when the Astros won a career-high 106 regular-season games. It was in Baltimore last September that Baker became the fourth manager in MLB history to win 100 games in a season in both leagues.

The Yankees have had 30 straight winning seasons. The Cards are second with 15. The Rangers have had losing seasons 2017-2022. The Baltimore Orioles were excluded from the postseason the past six years, three times losing at least 108 games. All those streaks are in jeopardy.

Consecutive seasons at or above .500

- 1. Yankees (1993-2022), 30
- 2. Cardinals (2008-2022), 15
- 3. Dodgers (2011-2022), 12
- 4. Braves (2018-2022), 5
- 4. Rays (2018-2022), 5
- 6. Blue Jays (2020-2022), 3
- 6. White Sox (2020-2022), 3
- 8. Astros (2021-2022), 2
- 8. Brewers (2021-2022), 2
- 8. Giants (2021-2022), 2
- 8. Mariners (2021-2022), 2
- 8. Phillies (2021-2022), 2

Consecutive seasons below .500

- 1. Angels (2016-2022), 7
- 2. Rangers (2017-2022), 6
- 2. Royals (2017-2022), 6
- 2. Tigers (2017-2022), 6
- 5. Pirates (2019-2022), 4
- 5. Rockies (2019-2022), 4
- 7. Diamondbacks (2020-2022), 3
- 7. Nationals (2020-2022), 3
- 9. Cubs (2021-2022), 2
- 9. Marlins (2021-2022), 2
- 9. Twins (2021-2022), 2

Consecutive seasons in playoffs

- 1. Dodgers (2013-2022), 10
- 2. Astros (2017-2022), 6
- 2. Yankees (2017-2022), 6
- 4. Braves (2018-2022), 5
- 5. Cardinals (2019-2022), 4
- 5. Rays (2019-2022), 4

Consecutive seasons out of playoffs

- 1. Angels (2015-2022), 8
- 1. Tigers (2015-2022), 8
- 3. Pirates (2016-2022), 7
- 3. Royals (2016-2022), 7
- 5. Orioles (2017-2022), 6
- 5. Rangers (2017-2022), 6
- 7. Diamondbacks (2018-2022), 5
- 8. Rockies (2019-2022), 4
- 9. Nationals (2020-2022), 3
- 10. Athletics (2021-2022), 2
- 10. Cubs (2021-2022), 2
- 10. Marlins (2021-2022), 2
- 10. Reds (2021-2022), 2
- 10. Twins (2021-2022), 2

It was fun to see the Pirates get off to a hot start before they faded. The Reds, Marlins, D'backs (the Diamondbacks are 7-22 since July 2, worst in baseball) and Angels all teased us into thinking they could make a surprise playoff run (the Reds still have a shot).

Then there are the Orioles. After last weekend's sweep of the moribund Mets, the Orioles stood at 70-42, atop the A.L. They are doing it with a \$70 million roster — only Pittsburgh and Oakland spend less.

It's been an up and down time for Oriole fans. Over 20 seasons through 1983, they won three championships, six A.L. pennants and 100 more regular-season games than any other franchise. In the four decades since, the Orioles have never returned to the World Series and rank 26th of 30 teams in winning percentage, at .468. The worst of it came recently, with at least 108 losses in each of the three full seasons from 2018 through 2021. No team since the expansion Mets of the early 1960s had endured such epic futility in such a short period. As recently as 2018 they were 45-117.

Davis Schneider -- rated Toronto's No. 28 prospect by MLB Pipeline -- loudly announced his arrival as a Major Leaguer.

Just two days after his promotion from Triple-A Buffalo, Schneider was bumped up to third in the lineup and continued his torrid start, connecting for his second career home run, a Statcast-projected 425-foot blast that cleared everything in left field and landed on Lansdowne Street.

The second baseman went 4-for-5 with four RBIs, becoming the first player in MLB history to collect nine hits and two home runs over his first three big league games.

Cody Bellinger. You want to talk up and down. 2019 NL MVP batted .305 for the Dodgers. Then 2021 he hit .165—7th lowest batting average for a player with 300 or more at bats in over 100 years. Fast forward to this season with the Cubs. His batting average is .331. His slugging percentage is .557. Rather than trade him at the deadline the Cubs hung onto him for the playoff push. He and the Cubs have a mutual option for \$12 million. Be interesting to see if they work out a deal or if Scott Boras takes the 27 year-old full free agent and tries to cash in.

From the "wait, what?" file:

The Rockies drew three consecutive bases-loaded walks Tuesday in the 10th inning in Milwaukee — *on 11 pitches*. Yeah, really: four-pitch walk ... three-pitch walk (with a clock violation) ... four-pitch walk.

The D'backs stole 8 bases last Sunday against the Twins and lost. Hey, the Reds lost a game in June and they stole 9 bases.

In a July 30 Albuquerque-Sacramento game, those Albuquerque Isotopes gave up 11 runs in the fifth inning — *and still won* (17-16). Now here's the weird/wild part: It's not even the first time in team history they've given up 10 runs (or more) in an inning and won. They also did it in a 2008 game in Las Vegas (and won, 18-16).

Jeimer Candelario, Washington National: Goes 59 games in a row without a four-hit game, then gets traded to the Cubs.

Jeimer Candelario, legendary Cub: Goes 4 for 5 in his first game as a Cub ... then goes 4 for 4 in his second game as a Cub.

So how many other players since 1900 have gotten eight hits in their first two games with a new team after changing clubs in midseason? That would be zero

Sean Casey, hitting coach, Aug. 7-8: Under Casey the coach, the Yankees strike out 29 times in 69 at-bats.

Sean Casey, hitting savant, April 26-Oct. 3, 2004: Meanwhile in his previous life, Casey the player strikes out 29 times on his own, in 502 at-bats.

The Orioles have scored 7 or more runs in an inning three times against the Yankees this season. Last time that happened to New York was 1959.

Lane Thomas of the Nationals in extra innings this year-- 5-for-5, 2 HR, 7 RBIs. Only one player in the wild-card era (1995-2023) has hit 1.000 in extra innings for a whole season, with more hits than that: **Todd Zeile**. Went 6 for 6, plus a walk, in seven extra-inning trips to the plate for the 2000 Mets.

Reds pitcher **Ben Lively** had an off day August 1 at Wrigley. 4 IP, 13 H, 13 R, 13 ER, 2 BB, 2 K, 4 HR, 1 HBP, 94 pitches to get 12 outs.

--13 earned runs, 13 hits — but didn't get 13 outs. Hasn't been done in over 80 years.

- 13 earned runs and four homers — never

- 13 earned runs against the Cubs at Wrigley — last time was 1918.

- 94 pitches, only 12 outs? On that very same day, **Framber Valdez** threw a no-hitter — and got all 27 outs *on 93 pitches!*

The Twins' **Sonny Gray** just won his first game since April. In those three months between wins — none in May, June or July ... *he made the All-Star team*. And he did that while pitching *for a first-place team ... and never missing a start* (15 of them). No pitcher in history had gone winless in May and June and made the All-Star team.

Yandy Diaz, Tampa Bay Rays

Hitting .322/.403/.514 with 22 doubles, 15 homers, 68 runs scored in 96 games.

If you went into a bar (say Chrones Tavern in Mountainside, NJ) and announced that you had a trivia question and asked: What active player is leading the American League in batting average right now, how many people do you think would know it's Yandy Diaz?

Might also hit them up with this:

Fewest AB/HR lefty batters career

Babe Ruth	11.8
Barry Bonds	12.9
Yordan Alvarez	13.3
Joey Gallo	13.4
Jim Thome	13.6

(minimum 1,000 at bats)

Three Atlanta Braves second basemen have hit 30 home runs in a season. Tops on the list is the bizarro season **Davey Johnson** had in 1973. Davey had played for the Orioles the previous eight years, and the most home runs he'd hit in a season was 18. After 1973, Johnson played another four seasons for three different teams and the most home runs he hit in a season was 15.

But in 1973, Davey Johnson hit 43 home runs. That year, the Braves became the first team in baseball history to have three players hit 40 home runs — Davey hit 43, **Darrell Evans** hit 41 and **Henry Aaron** hit exactly 40. When Aaron hit his 40th, Darrell Evans called it one of the great days of his life because, "this is the only way I'm ever getting into the Baseball Hall of Fame."

Two other teams have had three players hit 40 home runs:

(perhaps unsurprisingly) both were Colorado Rockies teams, pre-humidor. In 1996, **Andres Galarraga** hit 47 home runs and **Vinny Castilla** and **Ellis Burks** each hit 40. The next year, Galarraga (41) and Castilla (40) repeated the feat, and **Larry Walker** joined in with his insane .366/.452/.720 season with 46 doubles, 49 homers and 33 stolen bases.

On Aug. 4, 2007, eight days after his 32nd birthday, **Alex Rodriguez** became the youngest player in MLB history to hit 500 home runs. A-Rod was 32 years, eight days old when he hit No. 500. **Jimmie Foxx** was 32 years, 338 days old when he hit his 500th on Sept. 24, 1940.

Rodriguez had to wait longer than he would have liked for the milestone homer. He knocked No. 499 more than a week earlier July 25, but then found himself mired in a terrible slump. He went 22 at bats before his next hit, the worst hitless streak of his career to that point, before finally getting two hits Aug. 2. Having broken out of the slump, Rodriguez hit his historic homer in the first inning of a game against the Royals on the first pitch he saw from **Kyle Davies**.

Coincidentally, Rodriguez hit his 600th career homer exactly three years later, on Aug. 4, 2010. He's also the youngest player to reach that milestone, passing **Babe Ruth** by about a year and a half.

Reds rookie Lyon Richardson makes dubious history in eventful debut

The first two pitches of his major league career were hit for home runs.

Elias Sports Bureau only has records on individual pitches going back to 1999 and nobody's done it since then. The Marlins' **Sandy Rosario** gave up back-to-back homers to start his career in 2010, allowing two homers in his first three pitches against the Milwaukee Brewers' **Rickie Weeks** and **Prince Fielder**.

Lyon Richardson's first big-league pitch was a 95.5 mph fastball up in the strike zone over the middle of the plate. Shortstop **C.J. Abrams** crushed it 405 feet halfway up the stands in right field for a 1-0 Washington Nationals lead. The next pitch, a 96.7 mph fastball, was in a similar spot and **Lane Thomas** hit it one foot farther, out to center field.

The third pitch of his career wasn't exactly what anyone would call a success: a curveball that didn't find any part of the plate, but at least it didn't find an outfield seat.

After going down 3-0 to Washington's **Joey Meneses**, Richardson threw a 97.6 mph fastball for a called strike. Meneses fouled off his next pitch and then a borderline call went against the rookie, putting a runner on base.

In a day with little luck, Richardson broke **Keibert Ruiz's** bat with a changeup, but the ball found the outfield. After a groundout, **Jake Alu** hit another changeup straight into the ground, in what would've been a double play had the runners not advanced on the groundout, but instead went by the drawn-in infield for a two-run single. In his three innings, Richardson threw all five of his pitches, including a 98 mph fastball.

The last time a Reds pitcher gave up homers to the first two batters he faced in the big leagues was in 2018, when **Zack Weiss** allowed a pair of homers to **José Martinez and Yadier Molina** of the Cardinals.

Unlike Richardson, Weiss didn't get an out in his outing. He was designated for assignment a couple of days later and had an infinite ERA until he returned to the big leagues in 2022, more than four years after his debut.

Roy Sievers won rookie of the year in 1949 with the St. Louis Browns, the only ROY in the team's existence (1902-1953). Sievers also won the AL HR crown with the Washington Senators in 1957 with 42. Seivers was a 5x all-star 1B/OF. In his 17 year career Sievers hit 318 HRs, drove in 1147 runs and batted .267. in 1187 games.

Pitch clock, larger bases, limited pickoff attempts weren't the only new rules for 2023.

After a record number of position players pitched in 2022, MLB further restricted when managers can bring in a position player to pitch. Teams must be down at least eight runs for a position player to pitch, instead of the six runs that had previously been required.

Cole Hamels announced his retirement this week. Hamels was attempting a comeback in the Braves organization – he hadn't pitched in the majors since 2020. Hamels pitched in 423 games, went 163-122. The lefty had a career ERA of 3.43. He struck out 2526 batters in 2698 innings

pitched. Hamels won 15 games for the 2007 Phillies and for the 2016 Rangers. He made the All-Star game 4 times and received Cy Young Award votes in 4 seasons.

He went 7-6 in 13 post season series, won a World Series game for the Phils over the Rays in 2008, lost one for the Phillies against the Yankees in 2009. Hamels was the 2008 NLCS and World Series MVP.

Three rookies to win World Series MVP Awards. **Larry Sherry**, Dodgers (1959), **Livan Hernandez**, Marlins (1997) and **Jeremy Peña**, Astros (2022)

The Royals have never had a player with 30 homers and 30 stolen bases in the same season. **Carlos Beltrán** (29 HRs, 35 SBs in 2002) came closest.

Bad Teams

The 1989 Tigers suffered 103 defeats — 45 more than their 1984 predecessors

Detroit Tigers (1989)

- Record: 59-103
- Manager: **Sparky Anderson**
- Stars: Second baseman **Lou Whitaker** led the Tigers with 28 home runs and 85 runs batted in. Designated hitter **Keith Moreland** batted .299. **Frank Tanana** anchored the pitching staff with a 10-14 record and a 3.58 earned run average.
- Bottom line: Yes, as noted above, the Tigers were great in 1984, and they were reasonably strong as late as 1987, when they won the American League East with a 98-64 record. But they plummeted to 103 losses just two years later. Detroit's 1989 squad dropped into last place for good in early June.

New York Yankees (1990)

- Record: 67-95
- Manager: **Bucky Dent** and **Stump Merrill**
- Stars: Center fielder **Roberto Kelly** batted .285 and stole 42 bases. Right fielder **Jesse Barfield** led the club with 25 homers and 78 RBIs. Closer **Dave Righetti** managed to secure 36 saves for a team that won only 67 games.
- Bottom line: The Yankees have finished above .500 every year since 1993, but they were saddled with losing records in the four seasons prior to that. Their worst year during that stretch was 1990 at 67-95, a record that mired New York in last place in the AL East.

David Wright had 12 opening day starts for the Mets (**Tom Seaver** and **Bud Harrelson** had 11). Wright was an 11 time all-star, won 2 silver sluggers and 2 gold gloves, received MVP votes in 6 seasons and in 2007 hit 30 HRs and stole 34 bases.

Best lines of the week

The 2023 Mets are Michael Bloomberg's presidential campaign.

It happened in late July last season when Toronto scored 40 runs over three games at Fenway. This year they were held to 25. Maybe that's part of all the progress Chaim Bloom keeps mentioning.

After dipping out on the **Carlos Correa** deal and missing out on **Aaron Judge**, the Giants sprayed money around in free agency to little effect.

Yankees roster is Cole and Judge and whole lot of sludge.

MLB's career leader in wins among pitchers born in Latin America is **Bartolo Colon**. He has 247 career wins, two more than **Dennis Martínez's** 245. Colon, who hails from the Dominican

Republic, passed the Nicaragua-born Martínez on Aug. 7, 2018, when he pitched seven innings for the Rangers against the Mariners. He won his next start, too, which ended up being the final win of his big-league career. Despite repeatedly expressing hopes of catching on with another team, Colon did not pitch after that season. He said last year that he was retired and will officially retire as a member of the Mets in September.

The Latin America-born pitcher with the third-most career wins is **Juan Marichal** (243), followed by **Luis Tiant** (229), **Pedro Martínez** (219) and **Dolf Luque** (194).

On Aug. 9, 1976, **Cal Hubbard** became the first—and thus far only—person inducted into both Baseball and Pro Football Hall of Fames. Hubbard (6'2", 250 pounds) was among the biggest players in the NFL in his day, but was renowned for his impressive speed at that size. He used his combination of speed and size to pioneer the modern linebacker position in addition to playing offense as a left tackle. He won four NFL championships (one with the Giants and three in a row with the Packers) during a 10-year career from 1927 to '36. He's considered one of the finest linemen in the history of the NFL.

Hubbard spent his football off-seasons umpiring baseball games. After retiring as a player, he immediately took a job umpiring in the American League. He was known for his ability to call balls and strikes with accuracy, and was respected by players and coaches for not losing his temper and knowing the rules. When a hunting accident permanently damaged his vision in 1951, Hubbard moved into a new role as the AL's supervisor of umpires.

Hubbard was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1963 and the Baseball Hall of Fame in '76, becoming the fifth umpire to receive the honor.

WORLD SERIES GAME 7 FUN FACTS

Five World Series game 7's have gone to extra innings. 4 of the 5 were won by the home team. The lone road victory came in the finale to the 2016 World Series, when the Cubs beat the Indians, 8-7, to clinch the title.

Bill Mazeroski's game-winner for the Pirates off Yanks pitcher **Ralph Terry** in 1960 is the only game 7 walk off HR.

Bob Gibson was the only pitcher in history to win multiple Game 7s. Gibson conquered the Yankees by winning his third start of the 1964 World Series on just two days' rest, and then he defeated the Red Sox with 10 strikeouts and two runs allowed in the final game of the 1967 Fall Classic.

Gibson is the only pitcher with multiple complete Game 7 efforts, having done so three times to end the 1964, '67 and '68 World Series.

Four pitchers have turned in a double-digit strikeout performance in a Game 7. **Roger Clemens** (2001 World Series), Gibson (1967 World Series), **Sandy Koufax** ('65 World Series) and **Hal Newhouser** ('45 World Series) share the record with 10.

No pitcher has saved more than one Game 7 in his career. The most innings pitched to save a Game 7 were the five scoreless frames hurled by **Madison Bumgarner** in his instant-classic performance to close out the Giants' 2014 World Series victory over the Royals.

Hall of Famers **Willie Stargell** (1979 World Series) and **Max Carey** (1925 World Series) are the only players to club at least three extra-base hits in a winner-take-all Game 7. Both did so to help deliver the Pirates a world championship.

No player has appeared in more Game 7s than Hall of Famer **Mickey Mantle**. The Yanks great played in eight winner-take-all World Series finales throughout his 18-year career -- one more than fellow Yankees **Yogi Berra** and **Elston Howard** -- and New York won four of them. Mantle hit a combined .300, slugged .533 and tallied two home runs and seven RBIs in those eight pressure-cooker games.

Yogi Berra and **Moose Skowron** of the Yankees hit 3 game 7 World Series HRs. Berra hit 2 in 1956 and one in 1960. Skowron connected in 1956, 1958, 1960.

ANOTHER WEEK, ANOTHER NO-HITTER.

It took 18 years, and 2,926 games, but the Washington Nationals were finally no-hit in last night's 7-0 loss to **Michael Lorenzen** and the Philadelphia Phillies. Lorenzen, 31, in his first start in Citizens Bank Park after he was acquired from Detroit at the trade deadline earlier this month, walked four, struck out five, and threw 124 pitches, 76 for strikes, generating a total of 13 swinging and 22 called strikes in the outing.

There were some well-struck balls, but Lorenzen got seven groundouts, and 12 fly ball outs from the 31 batters he faced in the 14th no-hitter in Phillies' franchise history.

Michael Lorenzen dominated Washington in his second start for Philadelphia after being acquired at the trading deadline. (it was cool that MLB network cut to in-game action to show the 9th).

Lorenzen's outing was the fourth no-hitter of the season and came just eight days after the previous one, in which **Framber Valdez** of the Houston Astros allowed only one baserunner and faced the minimum number of hitters against the Cleveland Guardians.

He entered the ninth inning with 111 pitches, already a season high, and had already walked four batters.

He completed the no-hitter by getting Nationals first baseman **Dominic Smith** to fly out to center fielder **Johan Rojas**. Lorenzen ended up with 124 pitches, passing the Los Angeles Angels right-hander **Griffin Canning** for the most thrown by any pitcher in a game this season. It was the 14th no-hitter in Phillies history. The last was by **Cole Hamels** (who retired this week) on July 25, 2015. Hamels was traded by the Phillies to Texas less than a week later. He never threw another pitch for the Phils.

Lorenzen made his major league debut with Cincinnati in 2015, starting 21 games before becoming a full-time reliever over the next six seasons with the club. An outfielder in college at Cal State, Fullerton, Lorenzen even occasionally pinch hit and played the outfield with Cincinnati. He has a career .233 average with seven home runs and made six starts in center field in 2019.

His moonlighting as an outfielder faded in 2020 and 2021, with the introduction of the designated hitter in the N.L. and Lorenzen injured for portions of 2021. Seeking to be a full-time starter, he joined the Angels in 2022 and left two-way exploits to someone else (**Shohei Ohtani**).

Lorenzen faced the Nationals thirteen times in his career before last night, twice as a starter, with one of the outings last season, but only two current position players on the club faced him before the third of four in CBP, **Lane Thomas and Keibert Ruiz**.

Across two starts for Philadelphia, here's Lorenzen's line: 17 IP, 6 H, 2 ER and 10 K.

before this night, Lorenzen's dream had never come close to coming true.

He'd never thrown a complete game in the major leagues.

Only once had he gotten an out in the ninth inning of a big-league start (May 1, 2022, as an Angel).

His longest scoreless start was seven innings, less than three weeks earlier — a July 20 start for the Tigers in which he gave up three hits in Kansas City.

And then, in the first game in Philadelphia, he pitched a no-hitter.

Michael Lorenzen, All-Star — How many players who played in this year's All-Star Game were traded at this trade deadline? Exactly one. Michael Lorenzen. And two starts later, he threw a no-hitter.

Michael Lorenzen, best pitcher in baseball — It's no secret that the season didn't start in July. It started in March. But since July 1, who has the lowest ERA of any starter in baseball? Yup. Michael Lorenzen.

His ERA in six starts since the beginning of July: 1.11. That lands him just ahead of the Padres' **Blake Snell**, whose ERA in that span is 1.22 (minimum 30 innings).

Dealt at the deadline — Since the trading deadline was moved to late July in 1986, only one other pitcher has changed teams at the deadline and then thrown a no-hitter for his new team. That was **Mike Fiers**, the only other pitcher in the past 50 years to throw a no-hitter after switching teams midseason. Fiers threw a no-no against the Dodgers for the Astros Aug. 21, 2015, after starting the season with the Brewers.

Buy this man a cheesesteak — How rare is it for any pitcher to twirl a no-hitter in his first start at home for any franchise? Maybe this will sum that up:

Lorenzen was just the second to do it *in the last 125 years*. And he's the first in more than six decades.

According to MLB.com's Sarah Langs, via the Elias Sports Bureau, only four pitchers besides Lorenzen have pitched a no-hitter in their first start at home with a team:

- **Don Cardwell**, Cubs: May 15, 1960
- **Jay Hughes**, Orioles: April 22, 1898
- **Bumpus Jones**, Reds: Oct. 15, 1892
- **Ed Cushman**, Milwaukee Cream Citys: Sept. 28, 1884

Only two teams — the Braves (two) and Diamondbacks (three) had been shut out fewer times this season than the Nationals (four, before this game). They'd never been no-hit once in their 19 seasons in Washington.

Also, entering this game, just five teams in the majors had a higher team batting average this season than the Nationals (.259).

Lorenzen's 124 pitches were by far a career high. His previous high was 107 — more than eight years ago (April 29, 2015). He'd surpassed that pitch total before the end of the eighth inning (with 110).

Lorenzen's 124 pitches was is the 4th-most in a no-hitter since 2015.

Rk	Player	Pit	Date	Team
1	Mike Fiers	134	2015-08-21	HOU
2	Mike Fiers	131	2019-05-07	OAK
3	Cole Hamels	129	2015-07-25	PHI
4	Michael Lorenzen	124	2023-08-09	PHI
5	Justin Verlander	120	2019-09-01	HOU

John Kruk was in the Phillies broadcast booth. In the eighth inning, play-by-play man Tom McCarthy noted that this was the deepest Lorenzen had gotten into a start without allowing a hit. Kruk, normally loquacious, went silent for fifteen seconds. After a pause, McCarthy cut back in. “Hey, why are you looking at me like that?” he prodded Kruk.

“You know, I try to help you and educate you, and it just falls on deaf ears,” Kruk finally responded. He didn’t even say what he meant; the meaning was implied. You can’t say anything about the fact that there are no hits. It’s a rule! You could feel Kruk’s indignation in his delivery. He carefully avoided saying anything else, McCarthy let the matter drop, and the rest is history.

Foreshadowing? This is the first time since April 2016 that the Yankees this week had back-to-back games with at least 12 runners left on base. The Yankees missed the playoffs in 2016; this season is trending that way, too.

Gerrit Cole and Aaron Judge make \$76 million

Rays entire roster makes \$77 million.

THIS WEEK IN SHOHEI OHTANI MAGIC

Shohei Ohtani threw six strong frames without any issues in a 4-1 win over the Giants on Wednesday night at Angel Stadium, giving the Angels a much-needed series win over San Francisco and helping Ohtani make more history. With the victory, he became the first player in MLB history to tally 10 wins and hit 40 homers in the same season.

The overwhelming favorite to win the AL MVP Award for the second time in three seasons, Ohtani gave up one unearned run on three hits and three walks to improve to 10-5 with a 3.17 ERA in 22 starts this season. He also struck out five and has 165 strikeouts in 130 2/3 innings.

Ohtani has been intentionally walked 4 times this season in games he was pitching. No other pitcher in baseball history has been intentionally walked 4 times—not in a season, in a career. (Babe Ruth was intentionally walked once in a game he was pitching).

The last pitcher to be intentionally walked in a game he was pitching was **Jim Kaat**, in 1970.

It happened to him in the 11th inning of a Twins–Brewers game on Sept. 1, 1970. Kaat (who did have 15 hits that year) got intentionally walked with runners on second and third and one out. Which probably seemed like a great idea to the Brewers ... until **César Tovar** whacked an RBI single and **Harmon Killebrew** whomped a grand slam. But otherwise ...

Kaat had spent a half-century as the only man who could say he'd been intentionally walked in a game he was pitching in.

Ohtani Triple Crown?

It isn't beyond the realm of imagination.

Batting average .305 5th in league, trails **Bo Bichette** at .321

Home Runs 1st in league with 40

RBI 3rd in league with 83, trails **Ardolis Garcia**, Rangers with 89

Bichette, who is currently on the injured list with a right knee tendinitis, leads the AL with a .321 average (144 hits in 459 at-bats). He currently has 471 plate appearances and needs 502 (3.1 per team game) to officially qualify. (Reminder: Plate appearances and at-bats are two different things, as at-bats do not include walks, hit by pitches, sacrifice flies or sac bunts).

These six players would have been crowned Triple Crown winners had RBIs been a recognized stat.

1912 -- Heinie Zimmerman, Chicago Cubs (NL): .372, 14 homers, 104 RBIs *

1909 -- Ty Cobb, Detroit Tigers (AL and MLB): .377, nine homers, 107 RBIs *

1901 -- Nap Lajoie, Philadelphia Athletics (AL): .426, 14 homers, 125 RBIs *

1894 -- Hugh Duffy, Boston Beaneaters (NL): .440, 18 homers, 145 RBIs *

1878 -- Paul Hines, Providence Grays (NL): .358, four homers, 50 RBIs *

1887 -- Tip O'Neill, St. Louis Browns (NL): .435, 14 homers, 123 RBIs *

* RBIs were not an official statistic before 1920

THE INVENTION OF WHO'S WIFE (1946 OR SO)

Abbott and Costello's classic "Who's on First" plays on a loop at The Baseball Hall of Fame. It has been reprised and updated by countless people. Jerry Seinfeld, among others, calls it the greatest comedy bit ever written.

The bit came directly out of 1930s vaudeville when wordplay was king. It was a time of sketches such as "Who Dyed" (about a dye factory with an owner named Who) and "The Baker Scene" (about a shop on What Street) and the 1931 movie "Cracked Nuts" where two men discuss battle plans over a map with the town of What.

First man: For your army to attack me, you proceed to the town of What.

Second man: What?

First man: That's right.

Second man: What's right?

First man: What's right.

Second man: That's what I said, What's right?

First man: Well, I agreed with you, didn't I?

Second man: On what?

First man: Yes.

Lou Costello was a huge sports fan, so he is almost certainly the one who came up with the idea of taking that sort of repartee and applying it to baseball. In 1938, Abbott and Costello first performed “Who’s on First,” about a baseball team filled with players that have funny names.

Costello: Can you tell me the guy’s names on the team?

Abbott: Who’s on first, What’s on second, I Don’t Know’s on third.

Costello: That’s what I want to find out. I want you to tell me the names ... **Abbott:** I’m telling you. Who’s on first, What’s on second, I Don’t Know’s on third.

Costello: You know the fellas’ names?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: Well, then who’s playing first?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: I mean the fella’s name on first base.

Abbott: Who.

Costello: The guy on first base.

Abbott: Who is on first.

Costello: Well, what are you asking me for?

For years, Abbott and Costello played around with the routine, added to it, streamlined it, expanded it, and even created entirely new sections. They were particularly happy with the “Naturally” section — this comes in after Costello, entirely flustered about the name of the first baseman, angrily asks if he can play catcher. When told yes, he comes up with a scenario where the batter bunts and he picks up the ball and throws it to first base.

“Now,” he asks, “Who gets it?”

“Naturally,” Abbott says, leading Costello to believe for a while that the first baseman’s name is “Naturally.”

But as great as Naturally is, I think the greatest addition to the routine, the one that put it over the top, involves salaries and the first baseman’s wife.

It goes like so.

Costello: When you pay off the first baseman every month, who gets the money? **Abbott:** Every dollar of it. Why not? The man's entitled to it.

Costello: Who?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: So who gets it?

Abbott: Why shouldn't he? Sometimes his wife comes down and collects it.

Costello: Who's wife?

Abbott: Yes.

Pure, unadulterated genius.

By the way, here's the defensive lineup for the Abbott and Costello team. It's notable that they never named a rightfielder:

Pitcher: Tomorrow

Catcher: Today

First base: Who

Second base: What

Third base: I don't know

Shortstop: I don't give a darn

Leftfield: Why

Centerfield: Because

Rightfield: Unnamed. Frank Deford, when writing about the routine for *Sports Illustrated*, concluded: "All along, surely, the right fielder in the routine was God."

RED SMITH – THEY CAN'T LOSE FOR WINNING

Among the people who are supposed to be competent judges—meaning baseball managers and players and umpires and writers and fans and the neighbor who is getting rich running hot toilet tissue and Rinso—the consensus is that the Dodgers are not good enough to win a pennant.

This practically guarantees the National League championship to the Cardinals or Cubs except for one purely technical detail: i.e., the fact that the Dodgers are, and have been, and give every appearance of intending to remain in first place.

What keeps them up there is one of those questions like how long is a piece of string. On the surface, they appear to have four ball players. There is a Mr. **Pete Reiser** who is, gimp shoulder and all, about as fine a ball player as a human being can be. There is a Mr. **Dixie Walker**, having pretty close to the best season of a blameless life. There is a Mr. **Pee Wee Reese**, a peerless shortstop and incomparably discerning literary critic. There is a Mr. **Ed Stanky**, a compact little bundle of distilled malice.

Along with this quartet, there is an assortment of characters who wander into the lineup and out again, and a slew of pitchers who win one day and are strictly dog-meat the next. It is a virtual certainty there won't be a twenty-game winner in the lot, and it could very well be nobody will win more than fifteen. The leader of this band is a little lefthanded cutie of the sort scouts make a career of ignoring.

What the Dodgers have is a strong weakness for winning. Call it chutzpuh or opportunism or elan or moxie or, to go first class like Funk and Wagnall, the guts of burglars. Whatever the word is, they've got it. And they win the big ones.

That was the point Tuesday night when the Cardinals came to Ebbets Field. St. Louis was second by two and a half games. A sweep of the three-game series would mean first place for the Cards. They tossed in **Howie Pollet**, whom the Dodgers hadn't beaten, against **Rube Melton**, who hadn't beaten anybody. And the Dodgers won the big one, 2 to 1. This was the key game. It made the series a "lock" for Brooklyn. It robbed yesterday's St. Louis victory of its meaning. It left the Cards with no place to go but away, still in second place.

Brooklyn was lucky to win, which is no rap. In a game as tightly contested as this, it usually is the luckier team which wins. Pollet had beautiful control and walked only one batsman, yet it was his wild pitch that put the winning run in position to score.

He'd given a sample of his control just before. Reese had opened the home seventh with a triple and Pollet, pitching with painful caution to Reiser, missed the plate with his first three throws. Nevertheless, he had enough to work the count to three-and-two and then make Reiser pop up. After Walker singled Reese home for a tie, Pollet threw one into the dirt and Dixie took second, whence he scored when Furillo's drive bounced into the left field seats. Save for the wild pitch, Walker would have been stalled at third on Furillo's ground-rule double.

Everybody wrote that Stanky saved the game in the ninth. He did. With **Stan Musial** on second, Whitey Kurowski on first and one out, **Harry Walker** slashed one over the mound, which Stanky chased into short center, overtook, and flung backwards as he raced toward the fence. His under-arm throw forced Kurowski.

Sometimes you see an infielder run down a ball like that, but not once in a hundred times can he complete a play on it. True, the ball ticked **Hank Behrman's** glove, which slowed it down just enough to give Stanky a chance. But the point was, the little guy never quit on the ball, hopeless though the effort seemed.

There was an earlier play that stirred less comment but was equally important. After **Slats Marion** opened the sixth with a walk, Pollet grounded to Reese. The ball hopped high as it reached Pee Wee—and for a second or so he couldn't pluck it out of his glove. Still groping for the handle, he ran to cover second himself, stepped on the bag, then got the ball free and threw for a double play. **Red Schoendienst** then doubled, but instead of setting off a big inning the hit only got him exercise.

This pedestrian took a ride yesterday in the glittering maroon Cadillac of another of baseball's proved pros, one **Leroy Satchel Paige**, who pitches for the Kansas City Monarchs against the New York Black Yankees in Yankee Stadium tonight.

The Satchel, who's been wheeling the high hard one through there for nineteen years, says he's only thirty-nine and good for six, seven more years of almost nightly work averaging four innings per hitch eight months a year. He's a blithe and cocky sliver of midnight without a touch of gray in mustache or poll.

"It's runnin' a club makes you gray-headed," he says. "Could you age whisky like you age a manager, you have 2,000 proof inside of a week."

Kansas City pays Satchel \$1,000 a month plus ten per cent of gates in all big parks, bringing his possible earnings to \$20,000 and up. He'd still like a big-league chance but not at a rookie's salary.

"Ain't no doubt I could win pitchin' relief every day. Name off one of you guys can hit three deliveries like I throw, overhand, sidearm and underhand."

His first manager, **Bill Blakewell**, taught him control, making him warm up with a baseball as his target instead of a plate. "If I'd be five inches off center, why, that'd still be a strike but he'd give me hell. Today I can lay a cigaret paper down and pitch across it seven times out of eight. Never been sore but once down in Mexico in 1937. Like Joe Louis, only one arm like this comes along in fifty years."

—August 1, 1946

From 2000-2009 future Hall of Famer **Mike Mussina** led the Yankees in strikeouts. The righthander racked up 1,278 strikeouts with the Bombers in the 2000s, placing him ahead of **Andy Pettitte's** 1,013. **Roger Clemens** (851 with the Yankees) and **Mariano Rivera** at 669.

Tip of the cap if you knew

Mickey Rivers (70 SB in 1975) holds the Angels' single-season record for stolen bases?

Or

Eric Hinske (24 in 2002) holds the Blue Jays' single-season rookie home run record

Or

The only three rookies to win World Series MVP Awards are **Larry Sherry**, Dodgers (1959), **Livan Hernandez**, Marlins (1997) and **Jeremy Peña**, Astros (2022)



A five-time All-Star, Mel Stottlemyre had the misfortune of joining the Yankees' rotation just as the 1950s and early 1960s dynasty was ending. The righty finished the 1966 season with a 12-20 record and 3.80 ERA across 37 games (35 starts). He was the last Yankees pitcher with 20 losses in a season.

From 1968 to 1982 — 15 consecutive years — at least one of the Cy Young Award winners would end up in the Hall of Fame. Hall of Famers are in all caps:

1968: **BOB GIBSON**, Denny McLain
1969: **TOM SEAVER**, Denny McLain
1970: **GIBSON**, Jim Perry
1971: **FERGIE JENKINS**, Vida Blue
1972: **GAYLORD PERRY, STEVE CARLTON**
1973: **SEAVER, JIM PALMER**
1974: Mike Marshall, **CATFISH HUNTER**
1975: **SEAVER, PALMER**
1976: Randy Jones, **PALMER**
1977: **CARLTON**, Sparky Lyle
1978: **GAYLORD PERRY**, Ron Guidry
1979: **BRUCE SUTTER**, Mike Flanagan
1980: **CARLTON**, Steve Stone
1981: Fernando Valenzuela, **ROLLIE FINGERS**
1982: **CARLTON**, Pete Vuckovich

from 1983 to 1990 — eight seasons — NONE of the Cy Young Award winners would be elected to the Hall of Fame. Zero.

1983: LaMarr Hoyt and John Denny
1984: Willie Hernandez and Rick Sutcliffe
1985: Bret Saberhagen and Dwight Gooden
1986: Roger Clemens and Mike Scott
1987: Roger Clemens and Steve Bedrosian
1988: Frank Viola and Orel Hershisier
1989: Bret Saberhagen and Mark Davis
1990: Bob Welch and Doug Drabek

This week's birthdays

Rocky Colavito 90
Andy Messersmith 78

Jose Cruz	76
Ted Simmons	74
Edgar Renteria	47
Mike Trout	32

LONGER READS

JOE POSNANSKI ON THE CASE FOR ZACK GREINKE

When you look at the century we're in, there have clearly been six pitchers who I believe stand above the rest. They are, in order of their combination WAR:

1. **Justin Verlander**: 80.2 WAR
2. **Clayton Kershaw**: 76.1 WAR
3. **Max Scherzer**: 72.2 WAR
4. **Zack Greinke**: 68.7 WAR
5. **CC Sabathia**: 64.2 WAR
6. **Roy Halladay**: 63.5 WAR

In separating these six, I am passing on pitchers who have been, for stretches of the century, the best pitchers in baseball: **Johan Santana**, **King Félix Hernández**, **Tim Lincecum**, **Jacob deGrom** and so on. Their careers were unhappily short (we're still hoping on deGrom), and the Baseball Hall of Fame voting — probably to its detriment — tends to demand reliable durability (or durable reliability) over brief spans of blinding brilliance. Was **Dwight Gooden**, in his electric first three seasons, a better pitcher than all but a handful of Hall of Famers? Absolutely. But they endured. And he did not.*

People who want to see brilliant short-career pitchers like Johan considered for the Hall will inevitably point to the career of **Sandy Koufax. I have. Koufax won just 165 games in his career and yes, he had only six Hall-of-Fame-caliber seasons. Santana probably had six Hall-of-Fame-caliber seasons, too! But it's not a fair comparison, and we're being dodgy when we say that it is. Koufax's true greatness came in the World Series. Koufax's true greatness came in pennant*

racers. Koufax's true greatness came in the unforgettable moments he created, such as his perfect game. Johan was a great, great pitcher for the few years when he was healthy. But he was not Koufax. No one was or will be Koufax. His time, his place, his impact, his very name, all of it is incomparable. I'm now of the belief that no pitcher's Hall of Fame case will ever be helped by comparisons to Sandy Koufax.

So, it's six pitchers in the 21st century so far. I don't need to say much about Justin Verlander, Max Scherzer or Clayton Kershaw. They each won at least three Cy Young Awards. They each have become legends in their times. They are all first-ballot, no doubt, Hall of Famers.

The next three, though, merit discussion. Well, we don't have to discuss Halladay — he was elected first-ballot with more than 85% of the vote. CC Sabathia will come on the ballot in 2025, along with surefire Hall of Famer **Ichiro**, and it will be interesting to see how Sabathia's voting goes. I hear theories that he will sail into the Hall with little to no drama. I hear theories that it will be a fight. We'll see.

And then, in the middle of it all, is my guy Zack Greinke.

He spent the first seven seasons of his career pitching for hopeless Kansas City Royals teams. In his second season, he went 5-17 with a 5.80 ERA for one of the most dysfunctional teams I've ever been around. Zack quit the game for a time after that season; he was having trouble dealing with his social anxiety and depression. He thought about becoming a professional golfer.

His return to baseball was slow and steady — I've always believed the way the Royals supported him during that rough time was admirable and I believe Zack has always been extremely grateful, which explains why he returned to Kansas City for the end of his career. In 2009, he had one of the great seasons of the century. He pitched 229 innings, and had a league-leading 2.16 ERA and league-leading 2.33 FIP. He struck out a career-high 242 batters and allowed just 11 home runs. He won the Cy Young Award going away, even though he won only 16 games and pitched for a terrible team. He'd win it unanimously today, I think.

Best pitching seasons of the century by combo WAR:

1. **Pedro Martinez**, 2000, 10.6
2. **Randy Johnson**, 2001, 10.3
3. Zack Greinke, 2009, 9.6
4. Randy Johnson, 2002, 9.4
5. Jacob deGrom, 2018, 9.3

He fell off in 2010 and then began a globetrotting life — over the next decade he pitched for the Brewers, Angels, Dodgers, Diamondbacks and Astros. Along the way, he signed not one but TWO gigantic deals — a six-year, \$147 million deal with the Dodgers in 2013 and a six-year, \$206.5 million deal with the Diamondbacks in 2016. The second of those deals was, at the time, the highest annual salary ever given any player — pitcher or hitter.

Those contracts tell you how good Greinke was as well as anything. He was a distinctly modern pitcher. In his three years with the Dodgers, for example, he threw just two complete games. But he went 51-15 with a 2.30 ERA over those seasons, he had a 555-to-129 strikeout to walk, a 1.027 WHIP and he received Cy Young votes each season. His 2015 season was particularly magical.

Lowest WHIP seasons this century (min. 200 innings pitched):

1. Pedro Martinez, 2000, 0.737
2. Justin Verlander, 2019, 0.803
3. Zack Greinke, 2015, 0.844
4. **Jake Arrieta**, 2015, 0.865
5. **Corey Kluber**, 2017, 0.869

Magical was the word for Greinke, because he did not dominate with a 100-mph fastball like Verlander or the I'll-huff-and-puff-and-blow-you-away intensity of Scherzer. He changed speeds and changed speeds again and changed speeds again. He mixed in sliders and curveballs and sinkers and changeups. He hit spots. He fielded anything and everything hit up the middle. When I look at Zack Greinke's 2015 Dodgers season, I think, man, that looks familiar:

19-3, 1.66 ERA, 32 starts, 222⅔ innings, 200 Ks, 40 walks, 0.844 WHIP.

Where have I seen that before? Oh yeah:

19-2, 1.63 ERA, 28 starts, 209⅔ innings, 181 Ks, 23 walks, 0.811 WHIP.

Right. That was Greg Maddux's 1995 season.

Greinke was a little bit of **Greg Maddux**.

After that 2015 season, Greinke opted out of his first huge contract and signed his second, this time with Arizona, and he was really good — he went 55-29 with the Diamondbacks with a 130 ERA+. In 2017, he finished fourth in the Cy Young voting. Then he was traded to Houston and went 8-1 for the Astros down the stretch and made two short but mostly effective starts in the World Series. He left both games with the lead, though the Astros ended up losing Game 7 after **Will Harris** gave up a go-ahead homer to Washington's **Howie Kendrick**.

Anyway, though Greinke's stuff was in clear decline, he pitched decent baseball for the Astros in 2020 and 2021. In his third World Series start, he pitched four innings without allowing a run and he also got two hits. I'd say he's prouder of the second thing than the first. Zack always preferred hitting.

Then Greinke returned to Kansas City for his final act — he pitched OK last year. This season, well, the less said about it, the better.

Bill James has often talked about how players who switch teams a lot are harder to see clearly. He talks about how camouflage works because it disrupts the outline and color pattern — the point being that when a player disrupts the career by playing for numerous teams, their value as a player is often camouflaged.

If Greinke had played his entire career for the Dodgers, for example, or if he'd split his career between the Dodgers and Astros, I don't think this essay would even be necessary. He'd be a slam-dunk Hall of Famer.

But he has played for a whole bunch of teams, had a whole bunch of ups and downs, and I suspect much of his value is hidden to most people.

I'll show you two lines:

Player 1: 203-105, 3.38 ERA, 2,749 IP, 2,117 Ks, 592 walks, 3.39 FIP, 1.178 WHIP.

Player 2: 205-104, 3.22 ERA, 2,775 IP, 2,590 Ks, 640 walks, 3.30 FIP, 1.131 WHIP.

That's awfully similar, no?

Player 1 is Roy Halladay's entire career.*

Player 2 is Zack Greinke between the time when he quit the game and the time when he returned for his Kansas City farewell tour.

**This does include Halladay's disastrous 2000 season, when he had a 10.64 ERA; but that was only 67 innings' worth.*

Greinke definitely roughed up his career stats when he was 21 and struggling with his mental health and again this year as a 39-year-old when he's 1-12 with a 5.53 ERA. But those seasons are a part of his incredible baseball story. Zack always did it his way. I don't know how much longer he will keep going — he's 45 strikeouts shy of 3,000 — but he's already a Hall of Famer. He's one of the great characters and great pitchers of any time.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PITCHING MOUND? MLB PITCHERS DISH ON THEIR FAVORITES

Eno Sarris, The Athletic

It's preposterous really, the whole idea. There's no other thing like it in sports. You mean a professional athlete climbs a little hill made of dirt and then does his job from there? And this mound of dirt has to be precisely the same in every major-league ballpark? Ridiculous.

Watch a game of baseball, and the mound probably isn't one of the things you'll think about. We've gotten over how unique it is because it's just there, every game. And that might be a shame, because each mound has its own character. No mound is exactly the same, not if you ask the pitchers that use them. The mound deserves some consideration.

We spoke to twelve veteran pitchers — four from the National League and eight from the American League — and asked them for their three favorite mounds around the game. That request sparked conversations about the definition of a good mound, which provided a

fascinating look into the delicate interaction between a pitcher, his confidence level, and his physical space on the field.

“One thing that people don’t really realize ... is about mound heights around the league,” Blue Jays starter **Chris Bassitt** said this spring. “Tampa? It’s an absolute mountain.”

Tampa’s mound got a lot of love from the panel of pitchers we spoke to. And it’s not just pitchers. Former Rays third baseman **Evan Longoria** — now with the Diamondbacks — mentioned the mound back in 2021 when we spoke about what makes that park so pitcher-friendly. It’s also the park that augments strikeouts the most according to Baseball Savant’s park factors, which matches players in and out of the park to see how the park affects different statistics. It’s not the only park that was favored by our panel that also boosts strikeouts.

So why is the mound in Tampa so awesome?

“It’s definitely taller,” said Oakland starter **Paul Blackburn**.

“Taller is definitely a thing,” agreed Padres lefty **Blake Snell**. “The way it holds up throughout the game is the best. The mud holds up, and it doesn’t come out, so then there’s a hole and then your foot is dragging.”

As he spoke, Snell was tending to the outer toes on his left foot, inserting a spacer between toes and changing a bandage.

“That’s why I’m all jacked up!” he exclaimed as he spoke about holes in the mound in one of his recent starts. “Now my feet are all messed up.”

When mound holes become too much of an issue, pitchers can call the grounds crew out to fix it. The mound isn’t made up of infield dirt. It’s more of a clay.

“Some mounds just have different clay, it feels like,” said Blackburn. “Some clay, San Francisco and New York particularly, it’s hard for holes to be created. Your spikes just sink in it.”

“I’m big on the way my foot feels when I push off,” said Giants ace **Logan Webb**, who voted the Yankees’ mound in his top three. “In a really good mound, I feel like I can stay in it as long as I need, and some mounds are slippery.”

According to Mets reliever **Adam Ottavino**, the Yankees’ mound is the winner: “Best clay/dirt in the league by far and also a good visual.”

That last point was an interesting theme that emerged among players. Not only is a good mound one that stays hole-free, but it’s one that has a noticeable “mound feel.” The visual that mound provides changes the way the pitcher feels on top of it.

“The appearance when you step on it — what is the aesthetic look like?” said Justin Verlander. “Does the plate look close or far away? Do you feel like you’re right on top of the hitter?”

But for this aspect of a good mound, there are interactions between the rest of the stadium and the mound itself that make it feel tall. It’s not just the properties of the mound itself.

“Target Field, there’s that backstop all the way around makes you feel like you’re in a hole, makes the whole park feel small,” said Oakland’s **Trevor May**, a sentiment that was echoed by Snell. “You feel close there,” he said.

Minneapolis wasn’t the only place where pitchers felt close to their battery mates.

“In Seattle, I feel closer to the plate. It feels like the catcher is just there,” said Blackburn.

And that closeness breeds comfort.

“There’s some places where the plate feels like it’s really close and you have a lot of confidence when that happens,” said Angels pitcher **Patrick Sandoval** while speaking about Tampa. “I don’t know what it is.”

Confidence and performance often are tough to disentangle. If you look back at that table above, you could see it two ways. Either certain mounds are physically superior in these places — they are taller and steeper and their clay is better — and that’s leading to more strikeouts, or maybe the park is generally more pitcher-friendly and that leads to the confidence to throw in the zone and get strikeouts. Take it the second way, Yankee Stadium stands out as strange, because it’s generally a tough park to pitch in, but it augments strikeouts somehow. Look at it the first way, and Oakland stands out because it’s a great place to pitch, but not for strikeouts.

“(In) Oakland, it doesn’t feel like you’re throwing as hard, maybe the gun is a little slow here — it’s ‘The Humbler,’” said May of the radar gun in Oakland. “But you also have confidence to throw it in there with that big field behind you.”

That seems to suggest an interaction between things as disparate as the radar gun, the foul ground, the closeness to the backstop, the clay in the mound and the height of the mound. It’s almost impossible to define a great mound because everyone has a different definition.

Talk to groundskeepers, and they generally disagree with the idea that there are big differences from park to park. One head groundskeeper pointed out that at the beginning of every homestand, MLB generally checks the dimensions to make sure they are the same. A mound, though, seems a little bit more complicated than a baseline.

“There are dimensions, and heights, of course, but with a slope, it seems like it might be hard to get that exactly the same in each park,” said Yankees pitcher **Clay Holmes**.

And so we should have some sympathy for the groundskeepers as they try to keep the game mound in tip-top shape. Boston's new closer **Kenley Jansen** remembered a situation in Atlanta where a few pitchers complained about the mound, and the crew went to work and fixed it. It's not super likely that a groundskeeping team would risk rebuke from MLB (or their own pitching staff) by intentionally having the mound be different.

But to say every mound is exactly the same is also definitively not true. One groundskeeper in San Francisco pointed out that there are actually differences in raw height, but not in relative height. Confused? He said it's a matter of millimeters, but the mound in San Francisco is actually a little higher than the rest of the field — for drainage reasons. Oracle Park in San Francisco is at sea level, and any little bit helps the water wick away. So what did they do to keep the relative heights the same? They raised the home plate area the same amount, as another groundskeeper in the crew confirmed. Again, millimeters, but pitchers swear they can feel these things.

"Oh, it's so ingrained," said Boston's **James Paxton**. "But we can tell. That's why you see us when we grab a baseball, if it doesn't feel right we'll toss it away because we're so dialed in. We know exactly what a normal ball feels like." The mound is the same.

Still, we trick ourselves all the time. Consider Boston. Three pitchers mentioned it as being flat. Paxton had a little more to say on that subject.

"Coming to Boston ... I always felt that this mound was a little bit flat, but now that I've thrown off it a number of times, I don't feel any difference between it and somewhere else," the lefty said. "I think our bodies are just so fine-tuned that we notice just the tiniest little differences, and once you do it a few times, you kind of lose that feel for how different it is."

Or the entire park is different, and the mound feels different, and then when the park feels familiar, so does the mound.

"I want to feel on top," said Jansen, who rated Boston as one of the top mounds (though he was alone in that). "When it's steep, you feel like you're on top. I hate mounds that are flat. You want to feel the slope. That's when you're much more in control. Command and everything is good."

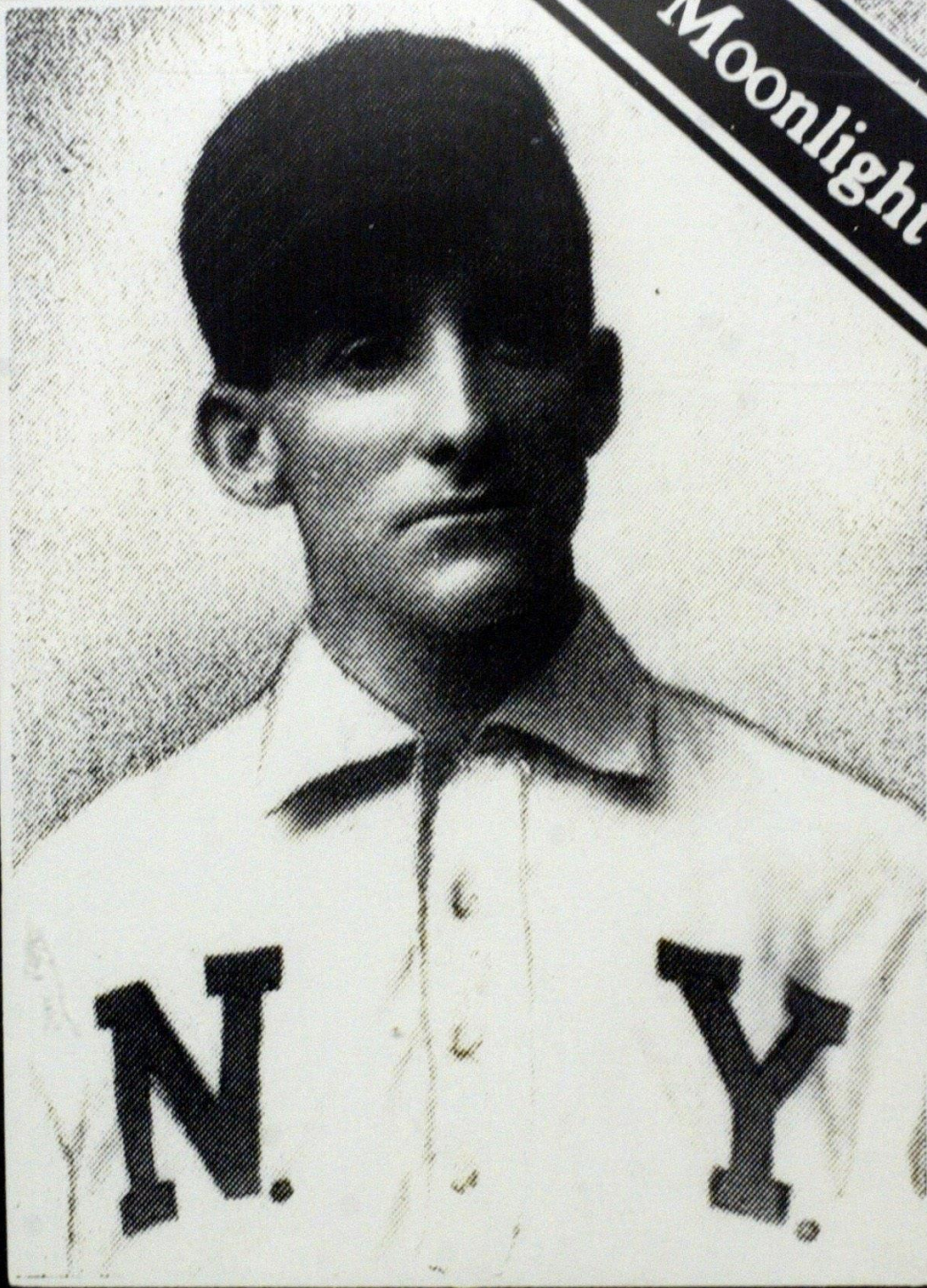
The mound could serve as a microcosm of how each human constructs their own reality. Do the mounds feel good because the people on them feel good? Or do the people feel good on the mounds because the mounds are good?

"If you think it's a problem, it's a problem," said Paxton of flat mounds. "But if you don't think it's a problem, it's not a problem."

Ah, nevertheless. From here, without the benefit of precise measurements, it's impossible to nail it down. On the other hand, it does feel like folly to ignore something that so many are completely sure is a real thing.

Said Bassitt of how tall the mound in Tampa is compared to the rest: "It's not even close."

Moonlight



ARCHIBALD W. GRAHAM
NEW YORK GIANTS - OUTFIELD 1905

"MOONLIGHT" AND HIS SUCCESSORS HAVE NO REGRETS

Like Graham, three dozen have played in Majors but never batted

By Cash Kruth, mlb.com

"Well, you know I never got to bat in the Major Leagues. I would have liked to have had that chance. Just once."

-- Burt Lancaster, as Archibald "Moonlight" Graham, in the 1989 movie "Field of Dreams."

Fred Marolewski came close.

It was Sept. 19, 1953. Marolewski entered a tied game in the 12th inning as a defensive replacement for the Cardinals. The visiting Cubs scored three runs to go up, 5-2, and St. Louis came to bat in the bottom of the inning.

After a leadoff walk, **Stan Musial** flied into a double play. **Enos Slaughter** singled, before third baseman **Ray Jablonski** struck out to end the game.

Marolewski was left standing on deck in his Major League debut.

It was the last time he would be on the field during a big-league game.

"It happens. You get a chance, and if you're lucky you get to play. If you're not lucky, you don't," said Marolewski, now 83. "Sometimes you've got to be in the right place at the right time. That's it."

Archibald "Moonlight" Graham's story was featured by W.P. Kinsella in his novel "Shoeless Joe," which was later adapted to the big screen as "Field of Dreams." Kinsella did this to highlight a player who came close to achieving every boy's dream of batting in the Majors. Graham was the first of 36 players since 1901 to appear in only one game but never step up to the plate.

Several of those players are still alive. They are not only connected in baseball history as recipients of the ultimate "cup of coffee." They also all made it to the sport's pinnacle, if only for a moment.

"A lot of guys never get a chance," said **John Lickert**, who caught a half-inning for the Red Sox on Sept. 19, 1981. "So many guys get looked over."

Joe Hietpas doesn't remember much from Oct. 3, 2004. He entered the ninth inning of the Mets' season finale, with New York trailing the Expos, 8-1. It was a blur, the now 33-year-old

admits, but it's not like he could see much anyway. It was late afternoon at Shea Stadium, and the shadows didn't always provide the clearest picture.

"The umpire, **Angel Hernandez**, came up to me and said something like, 'If you can't see the ball, no one can, including me. Good luck,'" Hietpas recalled.

Marolewski remembers standing at first base and being overcome by the enormity of Busch Stadium.

"I'd been in big parks, but never in a Major League park," Marolewski said. "I turned around and said, 'Oh, my God. What a place.'"

Jack Feller caught Hall of Famer **Jim Bunning** for a half-inning on Sept. 13, 1958. Feller, now 73, believes the Tigers were playing the Orioles (they were). That's about all he remembers.

The same goes for **Bob Hegman**, who appeared with the Royals on Aug. 8, 1985.

"It was so long ago. You don't really remember much of anything," Hegman said. "Running out on that field in the ninth inning was fun, but it was kind of anti-climactic because I didn't get to bat. It sure ended quick."

For many, their stints in the Majors lasted less than a month. The moment they realized they made it is something they'll never forget. But it's just one in years' worth of playing professional baseball.

Unlike most of the 36 players, **Bart Zeller** opened a season in the Majors, doing so in 1970 with the Cardinals. His only action came on May 21, when he played a half-inning behind the plate, but his favorite memory was Opening Day.

"It was the biggest thrill in baseball I ever had," Zeller said.

Feller hit for the cycle once. Hegman spent his final two springs in big league camp, getting to know many of the Royals who won the 1985 World Series.

But those are personal memories. Baseball is a team sport. It takes a team to attain the ultimate prize: winning a championship.

Feller's Augusta Tigers won the South Atlantic League title in 1958. The city was buzzing, and by the time the Tigers finished batting practice, fans were lined along the left- and right-field foul lines because there weren't enough seats. Police officers were called to clear the bullpen area so the starting pitchers had room to warm up.

Hietpas made the playoffs twice in the Minors. The first time, in 2003, his St. Lucie Mets won the Florida State League. Current Major Leaguers **David Wright** and **Angel Pagan** were on that

team, which Hietpas said had a "ridiculous pitching staff" led by former first-round Draft pick **Scott Kazmir**.

The American Association's Columbus Red Birds needed a right-handed-hitting first baseman for their playoff push in 1950. Marolewski was called up from Allentown, hit pretty well, and helped lead the team to the championship.

"I got a ring and a bonus check and that made me feel pretty good," Marolewski said. "More than anything, that's probably more pleasing than being called up to the Cardinals."

Most of the players remained in the Minors for another few years before injuries or the realization that they would never return to the Majors ended their playing careers.

Then their second lives began.

Lickert spoke on the phone from his home in North Scituate, R.I., balancing an interview and a rambunctious three-year-old daughter. He coached high school basketball for 10 years and college baseball for one. He thought about getting into professional coaching before opting against it.

Feller went back to school, got his teaching degree and coached high school football, basketball, baseball and golf in Litchfield and Quincy, Mich. He coached both of his sons before retiring in 1991.

Although Feller didn't become a big-league star, his grandchildren often ask him to sign various pictures from his playing days. He sometimes even gets autograph requests in the mail. He obliges both.

Marolewski spent four more seasons in the Minors after his game with the Cardinals. Two weeks after getting an offseason job at Western-Southern Life Insurance Co., he got a call from an agent. There was an opening in the Texas League and the agent wanted the 29-year-old Marolewski to go for a workout.

"I said, 'If you would've called a month earlier I'd go, but I'm not going,'" Marolewski recalled. "I'm done."

He retired in 1988 after 32 years with the company.

Hietpas graduated with a law degree from Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. He then accepted a job with SNR Denton, an international commercial law firm.

Hegman and Zeller remained in the game. Hegman is a scout for the Twins, while Zeller manages the Joliet Slammers of the independent Frontier League.

Although none of them dug into a Major League batter's box, all are thankful they made it on the field.

"When I played Little League, all I -- all everyone -- wanted to do is play baseball, and I was lucky enough to do that," Zeller said. "I stayed in baseball a lot longer than others and I enjoyed every moment of it. Getting paid to play baseball was a dream come true."

One game. Zero at-bats. No regrets. The numbers that forever bond Graham and his 35 successors in baseball history.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Who Am I?

I played 17 seasons for 2 teams in the American League as an infielder.

1716 of my 1925 games I played 2B.

6 All Star games, a silver slugger, 4 Gold Gloves. In 1973, I set an all-time major league fielding record for 2B with a .995 fielding percentage, and 12 seasons later in 1985, broke the record again (.997).

I did not play in the only World Series (my rookie season, 1970) my team made.

I led the AL in assists and putouts as a 2B 1973-74-75. Set an AL 2B record with 484 putouts in a season (1974)

In 1979 when my team made the playoffs former President Richard Nixon came into the club house—I dumped a beer on his head.

In 1981 I led the AL in home runs. First second baseman to lead AL in home runs since **Nap Lajoie** (1901) and in either league since **Rogers Hornsby** (1929).

I signed a (then) large free agent contract in 1976 and headed west for 11 seasons.

Over 17 major league seasons, batted .266, with 320 doubles, 47 triples, 224 home runs, 864 runs batted in (RBI), 1,033 runs, 1,833 hits, 1,087 bases on balls, 104 stolen bases, and a .371 on-base percentage in 2,008 games played.

Only **Joe Morgan** hit more home runs as a 2B during my career 1970-1986.

Elected to both my team's Hall of Fames. Though many of my advanced stats would make a good case for the Baseball Hall of Fame, I didn't receive 5% in my only year on the ballot, 1992.

BOBBY GRICH

MLB has had 10 players win a total of 12 Triple Crowns since RBIs became an official statistic in 1920.

2012 -- Baseball's first Triple Crown in 45 years by batting .330 with 44 homers and 139 RBIs. First of his consecutive MVP awards.

Miguel Cabrera, Detroit Tigers (AL)

1967 -- In the year before 1968's "Year of the Pitcher," won the second of his three batting titles (.326) while leading the league in homers (44) and RBIs (121) for the only time in his 23 seasons. All three numbers were career highs for the Hall of Famer, who also topped the AL in on-base percentage (.418), slugging (.622), runs (112), hits (189) and total bases (360) while earning a Gold Glove Award and the AL MVP Award.

Carl Yastrzemski, Boston Red Sox (AL)

1966 -- Traded December 1965, for his new club was hit .316 with 49 homers and 122 RBIs, while also leading the AL with a .410 OBP, a .637 slugging and 122 runs. Those efforts earned him an MVP Award for the second time, giving him one in each league after he also won in 1961.

Frank Robinson, Baltimore Orioles (AL)

1956 -- Took batting average (.353) and RBIs (130) by fairly narrow margins, but blew away the field in home runs. His 52 homers were 20 more than **Vic Wertz's** 32 and nine more than NL leader **Duke Snider's** 43. Captured the first of back-to-back AL MVP Awards, and first of three for his career.

Mickey Mantle, New York Yankees (AL and MLB)

1942 and '47 -- A year after he became the last Major League player to bat at least .400, as a 23-year-old hit .356 with 36 homers and 137 RBIs in 1942. He then sat out three full seasons to

serve in the military, but he didn't miss a beat when he returned in '46, finishing a measly second in the AL in all three categories while winning the AL MVP Award. Returned to Triple Crown glory the next year, batting .343 with 32 homers and 114 RBIs. In his six seasons between 1941-49, he led the league in average four times, homers four times and RBIs three times.

Ted Williams, Boston Red Sox (AL and MLB in '42; AL only in '47)

1937 -- It's now been more than 80 years since the NL's last Triple Crown. The Hall of Fame left fielder set career highs with a .374 average, 31 homers and 154 RBIs, also leading the league in slugging (.641), runs (111), hits (237) and doubles (56). Though his homer total was actually tied for first with the Giants' **Mel Ott**, drove in 39 more runs than any other NL player.

Joe Medwick, St. Louis Cardinals (NL)

1934 -- At 31-year-old won his only batting title, at .363, and he also topped the AL with a .465 OBP and a .706 slugging. In the power department, his 49 homers tied a career high, while his 166 RBIs marked one of seven seasons in which he eclipsed the 150 mark.

Lou Gehrig, New York Yankees (AL and MLB)

1933 -- One of two players to grab a Triple Crown this year and earned a second straight AL MVP Award. The Hall of Famer had walloped 58 homers and driven in 169 runs the year before, coming up a batting title short despite a .364 mark. He got the job done in '34 by hitting .356 with 48 homers and 163 RBIs, surpassing **Babe Ruth** by 14 long balls and Gehrig by 23 RBIs.

Jimmie Foxx, Philadelphia Athletics (AL)

1933 -- Not only did baseball have two Triple Crown winners in 1933, but so did the city of Philadelphia. He batted a robust .368, and while his 28 homers and 120 RBIs were well short of Foxx's prodigious totals, they were good enough in the NL. Also took the league's top spots in OBP (.422), slugging (.602), hits (223) and doubles (44), though he finished second in the NL MVP Award race after winning the year before. Amazingly, the Phillies traded him to the Cubs after the season.

Chuck Klein, Philadelphia Phillies (NL)

1922 and '25 -- The only NL player to take multiple Crowns. From 1920-25, he led the league in average, OBP and slugging every year, batting at least .370 each time and topping .400 on three occasions. His two Crowns coincided with the only home run titles of his career, as he hit .401 with 42 homers and 152 RBIs in '22 and .403 with 39 homers and 143 driven home in '25. The latter year, he took the first of his two NL MVP Awards.

Rogers Hornsby, St. Louis Cardinals (NL and MLB in '25; NL only in '22)

Name the seven men to win a World Series as both a player and manager since the start of division play in 1969:

1981 player, 2002 manager

DUSTY BAKER, DODGERS, ASTROS

2007 player, 2018 manager

ALEX CORA, DODGERS, RED SOX

1996, 1998, 1999 player, 2009 manager

JOE GIRARDI, YANKEES

1966, 1970 player, 1986 manager

DAVEY JOHNSON, ORIOLES, METS

1977, 1978 player, 1990 manager

LOU PINIELLA YANKEES, REDS

2004 player, 2020 manager

DAVE ROBERTS RED SOX, DODGERS

1981, 1988 player, 2002 manager

MIKE SCIOSCIA DODGERS, ANGELS

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.

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HOUSEKEEPING

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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	mbltraderumors.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	Thedrummyangle.com
Sports Business Journal	thisdayinbaseball.com
horsehidetrivia.blogspot.com	

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