

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

8.6.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

In this week's edition a bonus 4th trivia question, another no-hitter, **Icebox Chamberlain**, lots of Asian players.

In Longer Reads the History of the Walk, the amazing 1909 Pirates, Intentional Foul Balls.

Time for Reader Feedback. Every week I try to balance anecdotes, trivia, history, analysis. What would you do to improve the newsletter? What sources would you suggest for more interesting content? We now have 150 subscribers. It's your valuable time—what would you find more interesting? I will share your best ideas in future editions.

Its peach & almond scones with coffee this morning in Maine. Pour yourself a cup and enjoy.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Six father-son combos combined for more than 500 big league homers. Four of the fathers played for the Yankees. Name them.

1094 HRs, father played 1968-1981 for 3 NL teams and 5 AL teams.

782 HRs, father played 1973-1991, played in 1975 and 1976 World Series

638 HRs, father played 1985-1998, led MLB in HRs 1990-1991, batted .391 in 1996 World Series.

570 HRs, father played 1996-2011, 2004 AL MVP, Hall of Fame.

538 HRs, father played 1958-1974 for 6 teams, later 14 years as a NL manager.

536 HRs, father played 1961-1983, 1967 Triple Crown and MVP.

Who was the last player to win a league MVP Award and the World Series in the same season?

Homered and had a stolen base in winning 2018 World Series.

Led MLB in runs (129), BA (.346) and SLG (.640).

Two years later finished second in MVP voting for his current team.

Played in the 2020 World Series with his current team.

Mariano Rivera is obviously the Yankees all-time saves leader with 652.

Can you name the next four?

Lefty, 224 Yankee saves from 1979 to 1990, later 24 saves in the NL.

Lefty, 153 Yankee saves from 2016 to 2022, earlier 146 saves in the NL.

Righty, 151 Yankee saves from 1978 to 1983, saved another 159 games for 8 other teams.

Lefty, 141 Yankee saves from 1973 to 1978, 1977 AL Cy Young Award winner.

Since 1960, five MLB teams have had four former MVPs on their roster at the same time. How many can you name?

2021 Dodgers

2022 Dodgers

1978 Reds

1982 Angels

1996 Red Sox

(answers at the bottom)

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

The Rangers have not been in the post season since 2016. The Angels since 2014.

Wednesday marked the 44th anniversary of **Thurman Munson** crashing his private plane and dying at the Akron-Canton airport. On that same day, the White Sox hired unknown **Tony La Russa** as interim manager and Edward Bennett Williams bought the Orioles for \$12 million. This marked Lucchino's entry to Major League Baseball. Lucchino was Williams's trusted aide-de-camp at the Williams & Connolly law firm in Washington.

The Cape Cod Baseball League, which had 373 alumni playing in the majors last summer, is celebrating its 100th anniversary. The league has honored more than 180 individuals in its Hall of Fame.

Only Marlin to win a batting title--**Hanley Ramirez** (hit .342 in 2009). **Luis Arraez** is hoping to be the next—he leads **Ronald Acuna Jr.** for the NL batting lead by 38 points.

Not many baseball fights get beyond the hugging stage. Tim Anderson of the White Sox and Jose Ramirez of the Guardians really got it on last night. <https://twitter.com/i/status/1687991780149497856>



Houston Astros second baseman **Jose Altuve** notched his 200th career home run Saturday, hitting a solo shot off Yankees' left-hander **Nestor Cortes**. Here's what you need to know:

- After falling behind 1-2 in the count with two outs in the third inning, Altuve crushed a flat cutter from Cortes 403 feet into the left field seats.
- Altuve becomes the fifth player in franchise history to hit 200 home runs with the Astros, joining **Craig Biggio**, **Jeff Bagwell**, **Lance Berkman** and **Jimmy Wynn**.

- Saturday's home run was also Altuve's 1,979th career hit. If and when he reaches 2,000, he'll join just Bagwell and Biggio as Astros who've reached the milestone.
- Altuve struck just 21 home runs in his first four major-league seasons when he made his name as a contact hitter who slapped singles with uncanny bat-to-ball skills. The 5-foot-6 second baseman unlocked his power in 2015 and hasn't looked back.
- He's hit 179 of his 200 home runs since 2015, including a career-high 31 homers in both 2019 and 2021.

NO NO NOTES

Framber Valdez needed just 93 pitches to complete his no-hitter for the Astros against the Guardians this week. That's the fourth fewest pitches thrown in a no-hitter

Player	Pit	Date	Team	Opp
Darryl Kile	83	1993-09-08	HOU	NYM
David Cone	88	1999-07-18	NYN	MON
Jim Bunning	89	1964-06-21	PHI	NYM
Framber Valdez	93	2023-08-01	HOU	CLE

Valdez, 29, struck out seven and walked just one, needing just 93 pitches for his second shutout of the season.

Valdez (9-7) has been the ace of Houston's staff this season after **Justin Verlander** signed with the Mets following the Astros' championship season. Verlander was sent back to the Astros in a blockbuster trade-deadline deal Tuesday

Valdez retired the first 12 batters, with six strikeouts, before **Oscar Gonzalez** walked to open the fifth. But Valdez still faced the minimum in that inning thanks to a double play.

Catcher **Martín Maldonado** caught the third no-hitter of his career. On Aug. 3, 2019, he caught a combined no-hitter from **Aaron Sanchez, Will Harris, Joe Biagini and Chris Devenski**. And on June 25, 2022, he was behind the plate for a combined effort from **Cristian Javier, Héctor Neris and Ryan Pressly**. Maldonado's three no-hitters caught are tied for the third most in MLB history, behind only **Carlos Ruiz and Jason Varitek**, with four each, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. He's the 18th player to be the starting catcher in at least three no-hitters.

The no-hitter was the third in the majors this season. Yankees righthander **Domingo Germán** pitched a perfect game at Oakland on June 28, and **Matt Manning, Alex Lange, and Jason Foley** of the Tigers threw a combined no-no against Toronto on July 8.

It's Houston's first no-hitter in the regular season since **Cristian Javier, Hector Neris, and Ryan Pressly** combined to no-hit the Yankees on June 25, 2022, and the first by a single pitcher since Verlander against Toronto on Sept. 1, 2019.

Valdez got 16 whiffs on those 93 pitches, and went to a three-ball count on just two hitters, Gonzalez included, all night. He got 12 groundball outs, including a double play, and has comfortably answered any questions about whether his ailing calf has healed.

Valdez's 93-pitch shutout was also a Maddux, of course, the term coined by Jason Lukehart for shutouts on fewer than 100 pitches.

It was the 16th no hitter in Astros history, the 12th by a single pitcher, the first by a lefty.

That's the most no-hitters thrown by any club since the Astros' first season in 1962. The next most by any club in that span is 13, by the Dodgers.

Valdez is just the second Dominican-born left-hander to throw a no-hitter and the ninth lefty born outside of the 50 states to do so, according to Elias. Valdez joins 2018 **James Paxton** (Canada), 2012 **Johan Santana** (Venezuela), 2011 **Francisco Liriano** (Dominican Republic), 2009 **Jonathan Sánchez** (Puerto Rico), 1991 **Wilson Alvarez** (Venezuela), 1990 **Fernando Valenzuela** (Mexico), 1987 **Juan Nieves** (Puerto Rico) and 1882 **Tony Mullane** (Ireland).

Dusty Baker has now managed five no-hitters, tied for the fourth most in MLB history with **Fielder Jones, Connie Mack, Leo Durocher and Bruce Bochy**, according to Elias. Only **Walter Alston** (seven), **A.J. Hinch** (six) and **John McGraw** (six) managed more.

This week in 1938, the Dodgers and Cardinals played a doubleheader using an experimental, differently colored baseball. Yellow. While using the balls in a game was the idea of Dodgers president Larry MacPhail, the concept for the yellow ball itself came from Frederic H. Rahr, the president of a New York color research company. Rahr had been inspired to create a higher visibility ball after Tigers catcher **Mickey Cochrane** was hit in the head by a pitch the year before, ending his career.

Giants manager **Gabe Kapler** also presides over a 16-member coaching staff that includes a director of pitching, a pitching coach, an assistant pitching coach, and a bullpen coach. There's also a quality assurance coach and a director of video coaching. The Giants have so many coaches they all can't be in the dugout at the same time.

It works. The Giants are 62 games over .500 under Kapler over four seasons

Kenley Jensen of the Red Sox had a one-pitch loss against the Giants last Saturday, giving up a home run to **J.D. Davis** leading off the bottom of the ninth inning.

It was the first time in his long career (14 seasons, 805 games, 415 saves) that Jansen had a one-pitch outing.

Rich Hill was traded from the Pirates to San Diego. The left-hander has been in the Majors since 2005, and with his trade from the Pirates to the Padres ahead of Tuesday's Trade Deadline, Hill will have appeared for 13 of the 30 MLB teams once he makes his San Diego debut. The 43-year-old Hill doesn't quite have the record for playing with the most franchises, but the Padres would make him just the third to check 13 off his list.

Edwin Jackson, RHP, 2003-2019: 14

Over 17 years in the Majors, Jackson's resume featured appearances for the Dodgers, Devil Rays, Tigers, D-backs, White Sox, Cardinals, Nationals, Cubs, Braves, Marlins, Padres, Orioles, A's and Blue Jays. Jackson, who announced his retirement in September 2022, made his final big-league appearance with the Tigers in 2019. He's the first Major Leaguer to play for 14 teams in his career.

Hill is tied with **Octavio Dotel, RHP, 1999-2013: 13**

Dotel capped off his 15-year Major League career with the Tigers in 2013. The Mets signed Dotel as an amateur free agent in 1993, and he debuted for New York six years later on June 26. Knowing all about changing places, the Dominican-born hurler played for the Astros (five years), A's (two years), Tigers (two years), White Sox (two years) and the Royals, Mets, Rockies, Pirates, Braves, Cardinals, Dodgers, Yankees and Blue Jays each for one year. Dotel's five-year reign as the all-time leader in games played for most teams finally came to an end with Jackson's start for Toronto.

40 players have played for 10 or more franchises in MLB history.

The Cubs scored 20 runs on Tuesday and followed up with 16 runs on Wednesday, burying the Reds 20-9 and 16-6. The 36 total runs set a Cubs record for most runs scored in consecutive games since 1901. The two big wins were part of a 11-3 run for the Cubs.

The Red Sox moved **Nick Pivetta** from the bullpen to a spot start in Seattle this week. Pivetta had 43 strikeouts in July with only one start. It was the most strikeouts by a pitcher with one or fewer starts in a month since **Dick Radatz** had 45 in May of 1964. Radatz averaged 65 appearances and 122⅔ innings from 1962-66.

MLB Network's research determined that 573 prospects were traded from 2013-22 around the trade deadline. Only 17 of those players became what the network labeled as "impact players" with an additional 45 becoming regular contributors (11%).

Ice Box Chamberlain. Pitcher/outfielder 1886-1894. 157-120 with a 3.57 career ERA. He played for Louisville, Cleveland, Columbus, St. Louis, Philadelphia and Cincinnati. Three times he threw over 400 innings in a season. In 1888 in the American Association championship against the New York Giants won 2 and lost 3. And he occasionally alternated which arm he pitched with—left-handed to lefties and right-handed to righties.

The Dodgers now have twice as many members of the 2018 Red Sox (**Mookie Betts, Ryan Brasier, Joe Kelly, and J.D. Martinez**) as the Red Sox (**Rafael Devers and Chris Sale**)

Mariners 26 year old rookie **Cade Marlowe** is in his second week in the majors. With the Mariners down 3-1 in the top of the ninth inning, Marlowe was the hero when he deposited a

go-ahead grand slam into the right-field bleachers of Angel Stadium, helping secure a 5-3 victory in the series opener.

Marlowe is the first Mariners rookie with a go-ahead grand slam in the ninth inning or later, according to Elias.

He also is the first Mariner with a go-ahead grand slam in the ninth inning or later with his team trailing since **Richie Sexson** on Sept. 19, 2005, in Toronto.

Perhaps most impressive, Marlowe hit his grand slam on an 0-2 count against a 99.8 mph fastball from All-Star closer **Carlos Estévez**. That's the third-fastest pitch hit for a grand slam in the pitch-tracking era (since 2008), trailing only **Bobby Witt Jr.** (101.8 mph) and **Matt McLain** (100.9 mph), who hit their grand slams in July.

The Braves have had four 7 game winning streaks this season.

Shohei Ohtani is the third player since 1900 with a HR, SB and scoreless pitching outing in the same game, joining **Pablo Sandoval** (1 IP in 2019) and **Christy Mathewson** (9 IP in 1905).

A subscriber noted that the Padres started 3 Asian-Americans against the Dodgers Friday night—**Yu Durvish, Ha-Seong Kim and Ji Man Choi**

While I couldn't answer the question of how many times there have been 3 Asian-American starters, there was a lot of stuff out there on Asians and MLB.

Besides **Shohei Ohtani**, there have been plenty of Asian Americans in Major League Baseball over the last couple of seasons:

Travis d'Arnaud

Catcher, Atlanta Braves, Philippines

Dane Dunning

Pitcher, Texas Rangers, South Korea

Yu Durvish

Pitcher, San Diego Padres, Japan

Tommy Edman

Second Base, St. Louis Cardinals, South Korea

Kyle Higashioka

Catcher, New York Yankees, Japan

Keston Hiura

Infielder, Milwaukee Brewers, China & Japan

Hyun Jin Ryu

Pitcher, Toronto Blue Jays, South Korea

Connor Joe

Outfield / 1st Base, Colorado Rockies, China

Gosuke Katoh

Infielder, New York Mets

Isiah Kiner-Falefa

Third Base, New York Yankees, Samoa, Japan

Steven Kwan

Outfielder, Cleveland Guardians, Japan, China

Lars Nootbaar

Outfielder, St. Louis Cardinals, Japan

Kim Ng

General Manager, Miami Marlins, China

Tommy Pham

Outfielder, Arizona D'backs, Vietnam

Rob Refsnyder

Second Baseman, Boston Red Sox, South Korea

Dave Roberts

Manager, Los Angeles Dodgers, Japan

Kodai Senga

Pitcher, New York Mets, Japan

Kurt Suzuki

Catcher, Los Angeles Angels, Japan

Mitch White

Pitcher, Los Angeles Dodgers, South Korea

Connor Wong

Catcher / Utility, Boston Red Sox

Kolten Wong

Second Base, Milwaukee Brewers, China, Philippines

Kean Wong

Second Base, Los Angeles Angels, China, Philippines

Jordan Yamamoto

Pitcher, New York Mets, Philippines

Christian Yelich

Right Field, Milwaukee Brewers, Japan

Masataka Yoshida

Outfielder, Boston Red Sox, Japan

This year On April 21, **Connor Joe, Mark Mathias and Robert Stephenson** combined in the first game that Pittsburgh featured three Asia-Americans.

Joe, who identifies as Chinese American, reached base four times and scored twice. Mathias, who also identifies as Chinese American, recorded a two-run single. Stephenson, who identifies as Filipino American, pitched a scoreless seventh inning, recording his third hold in a Pirates win over the Reds.

The presence of Asian Americans in Major League Baseball dates back to 1956, when **Bobby Balcena** (Filipino American) became the first Asian American to play in the league, a trailblazer who set the table for more Asian Americans in the coming decades.

In 1983, **Lenn Sakata** (Japanese American), became the first Asian American to participate in -- and win -- a World Series. In 2008, **Don Wakamatsu** became MLB's first Asian American manager. Whether it's Lincecum winning multiple Cy Young Awards, Yelich winning an MVP or Dave Roberts and Travis Ishikawa (Japanese American) orchestrating two of the millennium's most memorable postseason moments, Asian Americans continue to leave their mark on the game.

Asian American Baseball Timeline

- **1872** Baseball is introduced in Japan by American school teacher Horace Wilson. By the end of the century, it becomes Japan's most popular team sport.
- **1878** Shiki Masaoka organizes the first baseball club in Japan—the Shimbashi Athletic Club.
- **1897** Cleveland Spiders manager Oliver “Patsy” Tebeau attempts to sign a Japanese outfielder known in the press only as “the half-brother of Japanese wrestler Matsuda Shorakichi.” The status of the Japanese outfielder's signing is never reported.
- **1899** The first recorded Japanese American baseball team—soon to be renamed the Excelsiors—is formed in Hawaii by Reverend Takie Okumura. Baseball in Hawaii quickly explodes in popularity, with organized leagues flourishing by the early 1900s.
- **1903** The First Japanese American baseball team on the mainland is founded by Chiura Obata —the Fuji Athletic Club in San Francisco.
- **1905** Steere Noda organizes the Hawaiian Japanese American team, the Hawaiian Asahi, which became one of the longest lasting teams west of the Rockies.
- The Waseda University baseball team arrives in San Francisco to begin the first in a series of baseball exchanges with American universities.
- New York Giants manager John McGraw invites Japanese outfielder Shumza Sugimoto to try out for the team in Hot Springs, AR. The press acknowledges “the color line” potentially drawn against Sugimoto, so he chooses to play for the semi-pro New Orleans Creoles in LA.
- **1906** Several players from Waseda join the Green Japanese of Nebraska, a barnstorming team in the Midwest, becoming the first professional baseball players of Japanese ancestry in the U.S.
- **1907** The Hawaiian St. Louis team becomes the first foreign team to play ball in Japan. Keio University is their host team.
- **1913** The Alameda Taiiku-Kai semipro team is formed.
- **1913** The all-black 25th Infantry is stationed at Schofield Barracks in Honolulu and begins competing against the Island's top Japanese and Chinese ball clubs.
- **1913** The “Chinese University” ball club, a squad comprised of Chinese and Japanese players from Honolulu, barnstorms the U.S. and finishes the tour with a 120 wins and 20 losses.
- **1914** The Asahi Club from Seattle becomes the first Nisei baseball team to play baseball in Japan.
- The Florin Athletic Club is formed.
- A steady flow of teams travel to Japan (including Nisei teams) and Japanese university teams regularly travel to the U.S.
- Waseda outfielder Goro Mikami joins J.L. Wilkinsen's “All-Nations” barnstorming club.
- **1915** The Hawaiian Asahi embark on a tour competing with teams from Japan, Korea, and China.
- 1915–17 Japanese American baseball teams are forming on the mainland.
- **1919** Fresno Athletic Club is organized.
- **1920** Stockton Yamato Athletic Club is organized.

- **1920** Kenichi Zenimura leaves Hawaii for the U.S. mainland.
- **1920s** During this decade the Northern California Japanese Baseball league forms semipro teams and many semiprofessional “A” teams are established. This decade also sees the formation of teams for Japanese American women who make their mark on the diamond.
- **1923** Kenichi Zenimura recruits the top players from Hawaii and encourages them to settle in cities throughout central California to help boost the level of competition for Japanese American baseball leagues.
- **1925** Formation of the Hawaiian Baseball League (HBL).
- **1927** The Aratani company team, the Guadalupe Packers, is sent on a goodwill tour to Japan.
- The Fresno Athletic Club and the Philadelphia Royal Giants (all-stars of the Negro leagues) compete in Japan for a mythical championship.
- On a barnstorming tour following their World Series victory, Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig play an exhibition game in Fresno including Nisei all-stars, Johnny Nakagawa, Kenichi Zenimura, Fred Yoshikawa, and Harvey Iwata.
- **1928** Bozo Wakabayashi joins an all-Nisei team from Stockton en route to a goodwill tour in Japan. As a result he stays in Japan to attend school and becomes a professional player for the the Osaka Tigers.
- **1930s** The Golden Age of Nisei baseball continues as the Japanese Athletic Union is founded and important teams such as the San Fernando Nippon (later renamed the Aces) and the Nisei Athletic Club in Oregon are formed.
- **1932** Kenso Nushida becomes the first Japanese American to play professional baseball in the U.S. above the “D” level when he signs with the Pacific Coast League Sacramento Solons (Senators).
- **1934** Matsutaro Shoriki forms Japan’s first pro team the Yomiuri Shimbun Professional Baseball Team.
- Babe Ruth arrives in Japan for an eighteen-game barnstorming tour.
- **1935** Shoriki renames his professional team the Tokyo Giants at a suggestion from Lefty O’Doul and the Tokyo Giants make their first tour to the United States to play semipro and professional teams.
- **1937** The Alameda Kono All-star team makes its last tour to Japan, Korea, and Manchuria.
- **1942** More than one hundred and twenty thousand Americans of Japanese descent are relocated into detention camps and they immediately form Assembly-center teams. Later in the year when Assembly-center internees are reassigned to permanent camps, the first thing they do is to build baseball diamonds and form teams.
- **1943** Kay Kiyokawa becomes the starting pitcher for the University of Connecticut.
- **1945–55** Postwar, many new teams and leagues are formed such as the Little Tokyo Giants, the LA Tigers, the Nichiren Orions, the Stockton Asahi, the San Francisco Traders, and the Sacramento All-Stars.
- **1947** Jackie Robinson breaks the color barrier and joins the Brooklyn Dodgers.
- **1949** Lefty O’Doul’s San Francisco Seals of the Pacific Coast League arrive in Japan for a ten-game series.

- A game marks the appearance of the first all-Nisei battery in U.S. professional history when Jiro Nakamura and Hank Matsubu signed contracts with the Modesto Reds, a Pittsburg Pirates farm team.
- **1951** Wally Yonamine becomes the first foreigner to play professional ball in Japan when he signs with the Yomiuri Giants.
- **1952** Fibber Hirayama is signed by the Stockton Ports and plays for one year in the professional leagues.
- 1953–56 Major league teams such as the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers travel to Hawaii to play teams in the Hawaiian Baseball League.
- **1954** Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe arrive in Japan for their honeymoon and a series of batting clinics. Nisei Kenshi “Harvey” Zenimura serves as interpreter for DiMaggio and his Hiroshima Carp teammates.
- **1961** Sacramento Solons of the Pacific Coast League are purchased by Nick Morgan and move to Honolulu as the Hawaiian Islanders. Over the years they serve as a farm team for several major league teams including the Chicago White Sox, the Washington Senators, and the San Diego Padres.
- 1964 Bozo Wakabayashi is the first American Nisei to be inducted into the Japan Hall of Fame.
- **1965** Masanori Murakami becomes the first Japanese national to play in the major leagues by signing with the San Francisco Giants.
- Frank and Henry Ota each captain the baseball team for their class at Dartmouth.
- **1968** George Omachi joins the New York Mets as their California scout.
- **1974** Hawaiian Asahi upsets world champion Cuba in an exhibition game in Tokyo.
- **1975** Sansei Ryan Kurosaki signs with the St. Louis Cardinals and becomes the first Japanese American to play in the major leagues.
- **1977** Lenn Sakata is called up to play with the Milwaukee Brewers.
- **1983** Lenn Sakata is the first Japanese American to participate in a World Series Game.
- **1991** Don Wakamatsu becomes the first Yonsei to play in the majors when he is called up to the Chicago White Sox.
- **1995** Hideo Nomo from Osaka is named National League Rookie of the Year with the Los Angeles Dodgers.
- **1996** Diamonds in the Rough exhibit opens in Fresno. And, the first major league tribute to Nisei baseball is conducted at Candlestick Park by the San Francisco Giants.
- **1997** The Los Angeles Dodgers honor Nisei legends including teammates Al Sako and Tom Tomiyama who are reunited for the first time in seventy-five years.
- **1998** The National Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown displays the exhibit, Diamonds in the Rough: Japanese Americans in Baseball and honors surviving Nisei baseball pioneers.
- **1998** Don Wakamatsu is named Class “A” Minor League Manager of the Year with the Diamondbacks organization.
- **1999** The Japan Hall of Fame in Tokyo honors Nisei ballplayers with the opening of the Diamonds in the Rough exhibit at the Tokyo Dome.
- **2000** Debut of Onan Masaoka from Hilo, Hawaii with the Los Angeles Dodgers.
- **2001** The Ichiro-era begins

- **2006** Kenichi Zenimura is elected into the Baseball Reliquary Shrine of the Eternals with Fernando Valenzuela and Josh Gibson.
- **2006** Warner Brothers releases the major motion picture American Pastime, detailing the importance of baseball to the Japanese American internment camp experience.
- **2008** Don Wakamatsu is named the skipper of the Seattle Mariners, and in doing so becomes the first Asian-American manager in MLB history.
- **2010** Travis Ishikawa of the San Francisco Giants joins Lenn Sakata as just one of two Japanese American ballplayers to play in, and win, a World Series. Ishikawa played in a total of 10 games during the 2010 postseason, including one start at first base during Game 4 of the World Series. He finished 2 for 10 at the plate with two runs, a double and an RBI during the 2010 postseason.
- **2023** Stephen Nelson joined the Dodgers TV booth this *season* and is the only *Asian* American play-by-play announcer in *MLB*.

Joe Sheehan Insights

Consider, as one data point, the combined in-season bWAR of the top five players traded at recent deadlines:

Deadline, Indeed (top five bWAR at time of deadline trade, 2021-23)

2023 **12.9** (Candelario, Civale, Giolito, Montgomery, Verlander)

2022 **14.9** (Soto, J. Bell, L. Castillo, Benintendi, Drury)

2021 **17.7** (Gallo, T. Turner, Scherzer, K. Gibson, Frazier)

Two years ago, five players having three-win seasons were dealt. In the first year of the expanded playoffs, that dropped to three, and this year, to one. The dearth of movement was especially felt on the hitter side. **Jeimer Candelario** posted 3.3 bWAR with the Nationals. The next-best hitters traded, **Carlos Santana**, **Mark Canha**, and **Jake Burger**, were all at 1.5 bWAR and below. Extend this study past the top five traded players, and the difference only grows more stark. **Starling Marte** was the sixth-best player traded two years ago. He'd have been second this year.

The inaction of teams either in or near playoff position stands out. The Orioles, Twins, Guardians, Reds, and Brewers spent the deadline period in or right around first place in their respective divisions. They added, in total, a mid-rotation starter in **Jack Flaherty**, a lefty reliever in **Sam Moll**, and some average bats in Canha and Santana. The Twins and Guardians sat on their hands, despite being in a race that ends in home-field advantage in the first round.

Teams chasing the wild cards also were oddly passive. The Yankees, Red Sox, Mariners, and Giants added little-to-nothing, seemingly unsure how seriously to take themselves. The Giants were 2 1/2 games out in the NL West yesterday afternoon and settled for a couple of DFA candidates from the Mariners.

MLB expanded the playoffs because that's where the guaranteed television money split 30 ways is found. That's what MLB cares about above all else: central fund revenues. In letting 40% of the league into the playoffs, though, MLB seems to have confused its teams, many of which now get two-thirds of the way through the season and don't know whether they're coming or going. We already know the cost of expanded playoffs is felt in a lack of exciting races in September, but we seem to be paying for them at the July trading deadline as well.

Blake Snell of the Padres is having one of the craziest years in memory. Snell, who hasn't allowed more than two runs in a start since May, and who has allowed more than one just once in his last 13 outings, is grinding out all this run prevention in the face of remarkably poor control. Snell's 13.9% walk rate, should it hold, would be the highest of any qualified starting pitcher this millennium.

In six July starts, Snell walked 26 batters, or 18.7% of the ones he faced. Somehow, just two of those walks came around to score.

Snell walked close to one in five batters in July and managed a 0.56 ERA. How? Well, allowing no homers on 32 fly balls and line drives helped, but this is all about dancing through the raindrops. Of the 48 baserunners Snell allowed, just three scored. His 86% strand rate leads the majors (in 2018 with the Rays he had a strand rate of 88%, one of the best seasons ever).

METS OWNER STEVE COHEN IS PLAYING BY DIFFERENT RULES.

Tom Verducci, Sports Illustrated

The Mets included up to \$88.5 million in sweeteners in deals to make **Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander** go away. The two veteran pitchers wanted out of New York as soon as they learned Cohen was no longer "all in" on this season and the next.

Cohen paid down their salaries not just to accommodate the two pitchers he recruited with a "win at all costs" promise, but also to ensure that he received top prospects in return from the Rangers and Astros. The Mets essentially bought prospects with Cohen's checkbook. Smart move.

Including luxury tax payments and money the Mets paid for players to go away (**James McCann**, **Eduardo Escobar**, etc.), New York is spending about \$210 million in dead money. The Mets' dead money would rank as the 14th highest payroll in baseball.

More staggering numbers: the Mets paid Scherzer and Verlander \$188.4 million to go 26–14 over 58 starts—\$7.2 million per win. (The tab includes half of Verlander's 2025 salary if his player option vests with 140 innings next season.)

JULY 29: Mets traded Max Scherzer and \$36.6 million to Rangers for SS **Luisangel Acuña**

AUG. 1: Mets traded RHP Justin Verlander and \$35 million to Astros for OF **Drew Gilbert** and OF **Ryan Clifford**

Two three-time Cy Young award winners gone in 3 days.

The Mets are actually the third team in history to trade two Cy Young winners "in midseason" in the same year. But A) it's been a while, B) they're the first that wasn't looking to unload any Perry brothers and C) the Mets are still in a class by themselves, but I'll get to that. First, here are those other two teams:

1980 Rangers: Traded **Gaylord Perry** (two Cys) to the Yankees on Aug. 14 and **Sparky Lyle** (one Cy) to the Phillies on Sept. 13.

1975 Indians: Traded *both* Perry brothers – **Jim Perry** (one Cy) to the A's on May 20 and Gaylord (one Cy) to the Rangers on June 13.

But has any other team in history ever traded two pitchers with multiple Cy Youngs at the deadline? Has any other team ever traded two future Hall of Fame multi-time Cy Youngs at the deadline? Has any other team ever done that in the same week (or even month)? That would be a big no.

Would you believe that Justin Verlander has made more All-Star teams than all the position players traded at this deadline combined?

Verlander — 9 All-Star teams

Deadline hitters — 8 All-Star teams

Does that seem hard to comprehend? It's an actual fact. Here's the list of 2023 bats traded who have ever made *any* All-Star team:

Jean Segura — 2

Josh Bell — 1

Garrett Cooper — 1
Paul DeJong — 1
AJ Pollock — 1
Carlos Santana — 1
C.J. Cron — 1

Salaries to players on Mets 2023 active roster — \$150.1 million

Salaries to players no longer on that roster — \$156.5 million

Players the Mets are paying not to play for them at the moment include not just Verlander and Scherzer but also ... **Robinson Canó, Gary Sánchez, Chris Flexen and Darin Ruf.**

Not included, by the way, are **Bobby Bonilla ... and Bret Saberhagen!** Yes, they both get checks from the Mets every year — \$1.2 million or so for Bobby Bo, \$250,000 for Saberhagen.

That \$156 million exceeds the payroll of contenders like the Reds, Brewers, Marlins, Orioles, Guardians, Rays.

Last winter, the Mets spent nearly \$550 million on contracts for Verlander, **Brandon Nimmo, Edwin Díaz, Kodai Senga, Jeff McNeil, José Quintana, Omar Narváez, Dave Robertson and Tommy Pham.**

The Yankees haven't had a 20-game winner since 2011, when **CC Sabathia** led the American League with 21 victories, posting a 3.18 ERA in 34 starts.

Think the Yankees have trouble catching up with fast balls?

Vs. Pitches 95+ MPH, 2023 Age Average

Giancarlo Stanton	33	.178
Anthony Rizzo	33	.209
D.J. LeMahieu	35	.143
Josh Donaldson	37	.048
MLB Average		.242

On Aug. 1, 1998, **Bronswell Patrick** became the first pitcher in nearly 30 years to hit a home run for the Brewers. Milwaukee was in its first season in the National League. The last Brewers pitcher to hit a home run was **Skip Lockwood**, who went deep in 1971, the second to last season before the implementation of the designated hitter.

Patrick, a rookie reliever for Milwaukee, hit his homer leading off the fifth inning of a game against the Diamondbacks to give the Brewers a 4–3 lead. While Patrick threw two scoreless innings, **Chad Fox** gave up the lead in the eighth, and Milwaukee lost.

That wasn't the most memorable homer Patrick was involved in that season, though. In mid-September, he was the one who gave up **Sammy Sosa's** 61st of the season.

In the last decade, the Dodgers have won 73 more games than any other franchise, making the playoffs every season and reaching three World Series, winning one.

Hitting his Stride

A little more than 14 months since making his first career start, **Spencer Strider** has already twice secured a 200-strikeout season quicker than anybody else in MLB history.

Strider broke his own record as he surpassed the 200-strikeout mark while helping the Braves claim a 5-1 win over the Angels on Tuesday night at Truist Park. His historic outing was backed by **Michael Harris II's** second multi-homer game of the season. The Braves have won 18 of the 22 games he has started this year.

Strider etched his name in another portion of the record book when he got **Shohei Ohtani** to swing and miss an 0-2 changeup in the first inning. It was his 200th strikeout, and it was notched in just 123 1/3 innings. The 24-year-old hurler set the most recent MLB record last year, when he needed just 130 innings to record 200 strikeouts.

Strider joins **John Smoltz** (five times), **Phil Niekro** (three times) and **Charlie Morton** (twice) as the only Braves pitchers in modern history to record multiple 200-strikeout seasons. he is now one of five pitchers since the mound was moved to its current distance in 1893 to collect at least 200 strikeouts in his first two full Major League seasons. The others to do this were **Yu Darvish**, **Hideo Nomo**, **Dwight Gooden** and **Herb Score**.

Strider joins John Smoltz (2006), **Javier Vázquez** ('09), **Mike Foltyniewicz** ('18), Charlie Morton ('21 & '22) with 200+ K's for the Braves since 2000.

David Eckstein holds the American League record for number of times hit-by-pitch in a rookie season. Was HBP **21** X in 2001 to lead the AL. That tied WSH's **Bucky Harris**, who had set the AL record in 1920. The following season, Eckstein's **27** led the majors. The NL rookie record is held by WAS's **Victor Robles** who had 25 in 2019. The all-time major league record is held by **Tommy Tucker**, who got plunked 29 times for BAL of the AA in 1887. During all ten seasons he spent in the majors, no major leaguer stepped into a batter's box or threw a pitch from the mound, who shorter than he is 5'6".

The Red Sox lead the majors with 74 errors, seven more than the Tigers. Their 45 throwing errors are eight more than any other team.

Max Scherzer has been one of my favorite pitchers. Bulldog tough, a guy you want in a big game. But old pitchers are a big risk. The Rangers I'm sure considered Scherzer turned 39 this week. Since his last 200-inning season in 2018, Scherzer has been sidelined with hamstring, groin, oblique, and, most recently, neck issues. He came up with a dead arm in 2021 that limited his availability during the Dodgers' playoff run. Scherzer is going through the process most older players do, his body slowly rebelling against the demands of playing baseball at the highest level.

Even when he can get on the field, Scherzer isn't carrying the same set of weapons he once did. His four-seam fastball is now just an average pitch, coming in at 93.6 mph, losing a little pace each year since 2019. Of greater concern is his slider, which has in 2023 fallen below the 85-mph threshold that defines the best sliders, and subsequently been battered. Scherzer allowed five homers on more than 1800 sliders from 2019 through 2022. He's allowed nine this year on 306 sliders, Scherzer's walk rate is his highest in a full season since 2017, his strikeout rate his lowest since 2011 and he is in the bottom 15% of all pitchers in barrel rate. He's allowed 23 homers this year, most of any NL pitcher.

In 2017, **Rafael Devers** of the Red Sox turned around a 102.8 MPH **Aroldis Chapman** fastball for the fastest pitch to be hit out of any ballpark measured during the Pitch-Tracking Era (from 2008).

Rays 2023 month-by-month averages in runs per game:

March/April	6.72
May	5.00
June	5.15
July	3.36

Tampa Bay Devil Rays	10 seasons	.399 winning pct.
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Tampa Bay Rays	15 seasons	.544 winning pct.
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The Dodgers pitching has been decimated. **Walker Buehler, Clayton Kershaw, Dustin May, and Ryan Pepiot** are all on the IL, with just Pepiot and Kershaw likely to return this year. **Julio Urias and Tony Gonsolin** have worked around injuries, with lessened effectiveness. A well-regarded crop of young Dodgers pitchers has tanked. The Dodgers have used four rookie starters this year. They have a 6.17 ERA in 32 starts. Joe Sheehan described them as like a 20th-century Red Sox team, trying to outhit its pitching. So far they are sitting in first place.

Another Sheehan note—Orioles reliever **Michael Baumann** has a shot at a weird bit of history. He is 8-0. The record for most wins without a loss (AL/NL) is 12, set by **Tom Zachary** in 1929. Just four pitchers have gone 10-0 or better in the AL or NL, most recently **Aaron Small** for the Yankees in 2005. Three others have reached 9-0, and Baumann joined a group of eight at 8-0.

Baumann fits the bill here; he's not good enough to be a high-leverage reliever who gets used when his team leads, so he doesn't risk losses very often. He pitches for a team with a low-volume rotation and a good offense, so opportunities for relief wins abound. He's pitched well enough to keep the second job, but not so well as to be a candidate for the first.

As a parting gift, **Justin Verlander** earned his 250th career win in a 5-2 Mets victory over the Nationals on Sunday.

In June 1973, Phillies starting pitcher **Ken Brett** homered in four consecutive starts. Take that, Ohtani!

Wednesday's 7-2 win over the Rays was the ninth time this season that **Gerrit Cole** started after a Yankees loss. The Yanks are 9-0 in those games, with Cole going 6-0 with a 2.18 ERA (57.2 IP, 14 ER) in those starts.

MID-SEASON ACQUISITIONS

July 29, 2008

Details: **Mark Teixeira** to the Angels; **Casey Kotchman** and Minor Leaguer Stephen Marek to the Braves

In 54 games, he had a .358/.449/.632 slash line with 13 homers. The Angels advanced to the American League Division Series against the Red Sox, and Teixeira continued to contribute, going 7-for-15 with four walks and four runs scored.

July 31, 1998

Details: **Randy Johnson** to the Astros; **Freddy Garcia**, **Carlos Guillen** and a player to be named (**John Halama**) to the Mariners

Johnson went 10-1 with a 1.28 ERA in 11 starts, giving up just 12 runs on 57 hits with 26 walks and 116 strikeouts in 84 1/3 innings. He went on to allow just three earned runs with 17 strikeouts in 14 NL Division Series innings spread over two starts.

July 7, 2008

Details: **CC Sabathia** to the Brewers; **Matt LaPorta**, **Zach Jackson**, **Rob Bryson** and a player to be named -- **Michael Brantley** -- to Cleveland

Sabathia pitched an absurd 130 2/3 regular-season innings for Milwaukee in 83 days. He threw seven complete games, including three shutouts, and allowed just 24 earned runs in all. He made each of his last three starts on three days' rest.

July 31, 2008

Details: **Manny Ramirez** to the Dodgers; **Andy LaRoche** and **Bryan Morris** (from L.A.) and **Craig Hansen** and **Brandon Moss** to the Pirates; **Jason Bay** to the Red Sox

In 53 games, Manny turned Hollywood into Mannywood by contributing a ridiculous .396/.489/.743 slash line with 17 home runs in 53 games, as the Dodgers won the NL West.

In the playoffs, Ramirez had a .520/.667/1.080 line, helping the Dodgers to their first postseason series win in 20 years before they lost to the eventual World Series champion Phillies in the NLCS.

Despite playing just two months in the NL, Ramirez finished fourth in NL MVP Award voting.

MORE HRS THAN STRIKEOUTS

	HR	K	Year
1. Johnny Mize	51	42	1947
2. Ted Kluszewski	49	35	1954
3. Lou Gehrig	49	39	1936
4. Lou Gehrig	49	31	1934
5. Ted Kluszewski	47	40	1955
6. Joe DiMaggio	46	37	1937
7. Barry Bonds	45	41	2004
8. Mel Ott	42	38	1929
9. Ted Kluszewski	40	33	1953
10. Johnny Mize	40	37	1948
11. Joe DiMaggio	39	30	1948
12. Stan Musial	39	34	1948
13. Ken Williams	39	32	1922
14. Ted Williams	37	27	1941
15. Andy Pafko	36	32	1950

THE BIG RED MACHINE



It stands uncontested as the most famous lineup in Reds history: Johnny Bench behind the plate, an infield comprised of **Tony Perez** at first base, **Joe Morgan** at second base, **David Concepcion** at shortstop and **Pete Rose** at third base with an outfield comprised of **Ken Griffey** in right, **Cesar Geronimo** in center and **George Foster** in left. It is this group that powered the Big Red Machine to consecutive World Championships in 1975 and 1976 (beating the Red Sox and the Yankees) and it is this group that made the Machine one of the greatest teams the game has ever seen.

The fabled Great Eight starting lineup was born out of a favor a manager asked of his team captain. It was May 2, 1975 and the Reds were scuffling along with a 12-12 record and manager **Sparky Anderson** sensed the need for a change to spark the club. Nothing had worked terribly well to that point of the season but Sparky was particularly unhappy with the weak hitting of third baseman **John Vukovich**. With none of the Reds hitters producing terribly well, Vukovich's struggles were magnified. Spending far too much time on the bench was George Foster, a player Sparky felt was primed for a breakout season.

And so it was that Sparky approached Pete Rose, the player Anderson had named team captain in 1970, and asked if the two-time Gold Glove-winning outfielder would be open to moving to third base. Without hesitation, Rose agreed and the next night, after spending the better part of the day fielding grounders at the position off the bat of coach **George Scherger**, Pete Rose became the Reds new third baseman. The left field position he vacated was soon filled by Foster, a move that completed the Great Eight.

One of the enduring myths surrounding the Big Red Machine is that Sparky Anderson rubber stamped his lineup card before each game with the names of Rose, Griffey, Morgan, Perez, Foster, Bench, Concepcion and Geronimo and forgot about them. The reality is that from its inception on May 9, 1975 through the end of the 1976 season, the Great Eight lineup only took the field as a unit in 63 regular season games. Sparky regularly inserted different players into the lineup both to rest his stars and to keep his bench players fresh. The postseason was a different story as the Great Eight started each of the Reds' 17 playoff and World Series games in 1975 and 1976.

But on those comparatively rare occasions when the Great Eight were in the same lineup, the results were devastating for the opposition. When postseason games are added to the regular season total, the Great Eight started a total of 80 games together in 1975 and 1976. The Reds record in those games was an astonishing 64-16, an .800 winning percentage that projected over a 162 game schedule produces a record of 130-32.

The run of the Great Eight was as brief as it was dominating. Following the 1976 season, the greatest lineup in the history of baseball was broken up when Tony Perez was traded to the Montreal Expos.

JOEL YOUNGBLOOD—LET'S PLAY TWO

Baseballbiography.com

Stuck in a platoon with **Ellis Valentine** in right field, Mets utilityman **Joel Youngblood** had clamored throughout the 1982 season that if he didn't have a regular job, he wanted to be traded. But Youngblood's contract was due to expire after the season, and despite his long tenure with the club the Mets looked to get some value in return before he left as a free agent.

Youngblood got his wish in August, when he was dealt to Montreal for pitcher **Tom Gorman** during an afternoon game in Chicago — just in time for him to join his new team in Philadelphia that evening. In doing so, he became the only major league baseball player to get a hit for two different teams in two cities in the same day.

Youngblood's day began at Wrigley Field, where he started in center field for the Mets. (**Mookie Wilson** was out of the lineup with a tight leg muscle.) In the third, Youngblood broke a 1-1 tie with a two-run, bases-loaded single off Cubs' starter **Ferguson Jenkins**. But in the fourth, Youngblood was told that he had been traded to the Montreal Expos for a player to be named later. He packed his bags in the clubhouse and left the stadium.

As Youngblood headed to Philadelphia, the Mets cruised to a 7-4 win behind the pitching of starter **Craig Swan**, who allowed three runs in six innings and hit the first home run of his ten-year career. The Mets also tied a team record by stealing six bases in the game, including two by third baseman **Hubie Brooks**.

Youngblood arrived at Veterans Stadium during the third inning of the Expos-Phillies game. Later he described the surreal nature of attending two games in one day: "I heard in the third inning that I was traded. I made plane reservations [with] minutes to spare. I had dinner in the plane and caught a cab here. It's funny, I left there in the third and got here in the third."

Montreal skipper **Jim Fanning** didn't hesitate to use Youngblood, who made his Expos debut in the sixth inning as a defensive replacement for right fielder **Jerry White**. In his only at-bat, he singled off of Phillies' left-hander **Steve Carlton**. Youngblood's effort would go to waste as the Expos lost 5-4. Carlton became the majors' first fifteen-game winner with his tenth consecutive complete game.

The trade spared Youngblood from a post-game tirade from Mets manager **George Bamberger**, who lambasted his team in a closed-door meeting in the Wrigley Field clubhouse. "This has nothing to do with Youngblood," Bamberger said. "I told him that he had been super for us, and I hope he hits .350."

Later, Mets GM Frank Cashen explained the strange timing of the trade. "We hoped to make the deal by game time," Cashen told the *New York Times*. "But there was a phone circuit problem, and we couldn't complete it. Bamberger asked me what to do with Youngblood, and I told him to go ahead and start him, we'd take a chance on his getting hurt."

Youngblood was excited about the deal, despite the strange circumstances. "I knew something would happen sooner or later," he said. "It's a good opportunity to play every day. Obviously, they [the Expos] want me to help them win the pennant."

Indeed, Youngblood made an immediate impact in the Expos' effort to catch the division-leading Phillies. The day after the trade, he drove in three runs as Montreal beat Philadelphia 9-2. But both teams faded down the stretch as the Cardinals emerged victorious in a tight race for the NL East title.

Youngblood's final line? Two teams, two cities, two positions — and two hits.

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS

Leon Durham	66
Roger Clemens	61
Kevin Elster	59

Tim Wakefield 57

John Olerud 55

Gabe Kapler 48

Madison Bumgarner 34

TWO PAINTINGS BY LANCE RICHBOURG



IN ANY
LEAGUE

JAMIN



C AVE. - EV. 5-34
BROOKLYN
SERVICE UNTIL 1A

the soft collars

Van Heus

CENTURY
CENTURY Shi



won't wrinkle...e

LONGER READS

THE LOST ART OF FOULING THE BALL OFF (ON PURPOSE)

Spoiling difficult pitches to stay alive was equal parts strategy and party trick. The modern approach to hitting has left it behind.

Zach Buchanan, The New York Times

He stood 5 feet 7 inches tall and had an unforgettably French Canadian name — Pierre LePage — but his skill with a bat was what made a lasting impression. His hand-eye coordination beggared belief, and it was matched with his barrel control. In three seasons at the University of Connecticut, he batted .336. In his junior year, he took 248 trips to the plate and struck out only three times.

LePage never made it past Class A in the minor leagues, but a few guys in the majors still remember him fondly. Nick Ahmed, the shortstop of the Arizona Diamondbacks, and Pete Fatse, Boston's hitting coach, were LePage's teammates at UConn, and both, from time to time, think back on the show that LePage would put on when he stepped into a batting cage.

Instead of tape-measure blasts, LePage would show off a much more unorthodox skill.

"He could foul the ball straight back during batting practice on command," Ahmed said. "Just a different level of bat control."

Like many college standouts, LePage could not find his footing in pro ball. Over the last decade, as teams have chased exit velocity and the long ball, the value of such high-contact, low-impact hitters has tanked. **Luis Arraez** of the Miami Marlins has tantalized the baseball world this season by flirting with a .400 batting average, but his singularity only emphasizes a reality observed by nearly every other hitter: adapt or be left behind.

Ahmed, who still marvels at LePage, is one of the batters who adapted. Where he once emphasized contact, he is now "trying to move to the other end of the spectrum."

With the slow elimination of the nettlesome contact hitter, it seems, the game has also lost one of its more esoteric arts. It was once common for batters to intentionally fight off pitches at the edge of the strike zone, sending them into the crowd as foul balls to keep themselves alive and wait for something they could hit more cleanly. Now, fewer hitters of that stripe earn regular at-bats, and others have changed their tactics in a sport awash with batted-ball data.

The ability has survived — perhaps not on LePage's level — but the willingness has evaporated.

“The game is making us change our approaches,” said **Wilmer Flores**, an infielder for the San Francisco Giants. “My approach was not to strike out and put the ball in play with two strikes. Put it in play wherever it is. Then I would chase bad pitches. This game, if you slug or if you take a borderline pitch, it’s OK. If you walk, it’s a victory. At the end of the year, no one’s going to see ‘He put the ball in play with two strikes and brought the runner home from third base.’”

Twenty years ago, even during the heart of baseball’s steroid age, priorities were different.

“In my era, we were embarrassed if we struck out,” said **Mark Grace**, a Chicago Cubs star who retired in 2003 after a 16-year career. With two strikes, hitters would choke up and protect the plate. “**Barry Bonds** choked up, **Barry Larkin** choked up,” Grace said.

Many of today’s hitters, by contrast, feel uncomfortable without a finger or two on the knob of the bat.

Grace is not bemoaning the state of the modern game as much as appraising the shift in its cost-benefit analysis. Around the time he retired, teams began to value on-base percentage more than batting average. More recently, technology has allowed teams to boil down hitting to its component parts. The metric with the tightest correlation to offensive production is exit velocity. So, even with two strikes, why take a different swing that is engineered to make worse contact?

“The idea is to square the ball up,” Ahmed said. “Going up there with a defensive mentality to try to spoil pitches is not productive.”

To be sure, spoiling pitches still happens. In fact, foul-ball rates have been remarkably consistent since pitch data first became available in 1988, and long plate appearances have become even more common over time. But some modern hitters question if any of those foul balls are really being hit intentionally.

If a hitter nicks a borderline pitch to extend an at-bat, that may say more about the pitcher than the hitter. “It’s just the nature of the pitch,” Flores said. “It’s hard to square up.” Batters may shorten their strides or react just a bit later in those situations to maximize their chances at contact, but they are still looking to hit the ball hard, not deflect it out of play.

“From what I know about hitting,” said **Christian Walker**, a power-hitting first baseman for the Diamondbacks, “it seems impossible that somebody’s doing that on purpose.”

Older hitters beg to differ. The former big-leaguer **Jon Jay**, now a coach with the Marlins, said he used to work on spoiling pitches in the batting cage. Grace admitted he sometimes swung for foul territory as a player, though with limited effectiveness.

“I put more balls in play trying to foul balls off than I actually fouled balls off,” he said.

Tony Gwynn was the best at it, Grace noted, though Ahmed argued that Gwynn had it easier than today's hitters. Gwynn "wasn't facing guys who were throwing 95 to 100 m.p.h. every night," he said.

The one active hitter (with the likely exception of Arraez) that multiple big-leaguers say could still do it is **Joey Votto**, a stalwart veteran on a Cincinnati Reds squad filled with talented youngsters.

"I can," Votto said in a phone interview, "but I don't do it as much."

Back when the front-hip sinker was "a part of right-handed culture," Votto, a left-handed batter, said he would purposefully foul off those pitches so he could cover the rest of the plate. No one attacks him that way anymore, so he's shelved the party trick. He bets plenty could still do it — if they wanted, big-leaguers could "attempt to hit bases" during a game, he said — but the likely outcome would not be worth the effort. There might be one plate appearance a series, he thinks, when it would pay off.

If such a feisty, contact-oriented approach has ebbed, will it ever return? Some, like Ahmed and Flores, who have abandoned that style of hitting, think it will not.

"It doesn't get you paid anywhere now," Flores said.

But baseball has undergone significant change this year, with the introduction of the pitch clock and restrictions limiting how teams position their infielders. As a result, the game is faster, stolen bases are up and holes once covered by a shift sit open. For that reason, Votto predicts a return of the pesky, indefatigable contact hitter.

"There will be a demand for guys who can control the bat and bunt and get guys over in the not-too-distant future," he said.

Fatse agrees. The home run hitter will never go out of style, but a good lineup is diverse in its skill sets.

"It's not a lost art," he said.

There are plenty of guys who can do it. He watched one in college.

LePage could foul them off with the best of them. Reached by phone, the former infielder revealed it was a skill he'd practice. Outside of team workouts, he'd head to a local batting cage, feeding quarters in the machine and then simulating different pitch locations by standing in a variety of spots. His only goal: to foul each pitch back.

"People watching probably thought I was pretty bad," LePage said.

Far from it. A 13th-round draft pick in 2010, he played two seasons in the minors, hitting .303 but not providing much pop. Then he got hurt, was released and wrapped up his playing career with one season in independent ball, where he once again teamed with Fatse.

LePage, who works in insurance these days, has few regrets. But baseball's homer- and strikeout-happy turn has left him puzzled.

"If you get a slider low and away," he said, "instead of swinging through it, wouldn't you want another pitch?"

Then again, fouling a ball off was easier for him than it was for just about anyone else.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WALK

Joe Posnanski newsletter

In the beginning, there were no walks, because there were no called balls. The idea of called balls was repellent to early baseball people, because in those days the pitcher was supposed to be almost superfluous. The whole pitcher's job was to start the action by throwing the ball "for the bat." The battle was between the hitter and the fielders.

In the earliest days, the batter was entitled to ask for a specific pitch — that is to say the batter could hold the bat in a specific spot and say, "Put one right here, huh?" like what Shoeless Joe Jackson said to Kevin Costner in "Field of Dreams." But this was a very slow process, so as the years went along, this process was streamlined and hitters were allowed only to ask for a low pitch (between the knees and waste) or a high pitch (between the waste and shoulder).

And you have to understand: Baseball at-bats could take FOREVER in those days. Pitchers did not like being told they had to give batters the perfect pitch. And hitters would wait for that pitch for as long as it took. According to perhaps the most remarkable baseball research ever done — Peter Morris' epic, two-volume *A Game of Inches*,* — at-bats would routinely go 50 or 60 pitches and often more. Morris quotes William J. Ryczek's research that in an 1860 game between the Atlantics and Excelsiors, pitchers **Jim Creighton and Mattie O'Brien** threw a combined 665 pitches in THE FIRST THREE INNINGS.

**We will be leaning heavily on Peter's incredible work in this little series when looking back at the early days of baseball.*

Something had to be done ... but nobody quite knew what.

At first, sportswriters and baseball leaders — particularly the Father of Baseball, Henry Chadwick — tried to play upon the players' sense of fair play and asked pitchers to stop purposely tossing the ball out of the zone and asked hitters to stop just waiting around for the perfect pitch. This sort of morality play didn't work any better in the 1860s than it would now; players and managers and executives in total want to win too badly to just do the right thing out of some sense of duty.*

I realize many people don't agree with me, but this has always been my big problem with focusing entirely on players who used PEDs when the game at large turned its back. No, they shouldn't have done it. But even the most rudimentary study of baseball history — and human history — tells you they would. As **Buck O'Neil so vividly said, "The only reason we didn't use 'em is because we didn't have 'em."*

In any case, once it became clear that pitchers could not be guilted into throwing the ball over the plate and hitters could not be guilted into swinging at a pitch that was even one millimeter off their spot, the "called ball" was invented. This was meant to do one thing and one thing only: Stop the pitcher from stalling.*

**If you've ever wondered why a ball is called a ball — it's because when a pitcher purposely threw the ball outside the zone, the umpire or batter would shout out "ball to the bat" as a demand that the pitcher throw one in the zone.*

The called ball was so controversial at first that nobody was even entirely clear how many balls had to be thrown to send a batter to first base. At first, it technically took three balls to draw a walk, but in practice it took many, many, many more because the umpire was supposed to give the pitcher any number of warnings before even calling the first ball. How many warnings? Well, that was apparently an individual umpire's decision; there were some umpires who would NEVER call a ball unless they felt like the pitcher was purposely stalling (the same was true of strikes, but we'll save the history of the strikeout for another entry). And there were other

umpires, call them **Angel Hernandez**'s if you wish, who would call balls with abandon, even if the ball was rather obviously in the zone.

As Morris writes: "The rule change had been intended to restore baseball to a battle between batters and fielders by reducing the pitcher's resources. Instead, it had the unintended consequence of elevating a new figure to prominence — the umpire."

Over the next two or three decades, the number of balls that it took to draw a walk changed constantly. In 1878, it took nine balls. In 1879, that was reduced to seven. In 1883, it became six. In 1886, it became five.*

**In one year, 1887, walks were counted as hits, and 11 different players hit .400 (and the Louisville Colonels set a big-league record with 19 walks in a game.*

The 1888 season, however, was a slog. Pitchers dominated the game. The whole league hit just .239. Almost 40% of the runs scored that year were related to defensive errors. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* complained about "the growing tendency of ball playing to degenerate into a 'pitcher's battle,' in which pure science takes the place of skill in handling the bat and fortune in chasing the fly ball. Various suggestions have been made looking to a change whereby the audience may be given more sport and the monotony of 'one-two-three-out' be more frequently interrupted."

In other words, the fans wanted more balls in play.

This was 125 years ago.

There was some talk about moving the pitcher's box back, but it was voted down ("It was thought," *The Boston Globe* wrote, "by putting the pitcher five feet further back ... he could watch the first base too closely, and it would do away with base running altogether"). There was talk about letting baserunners overrun second and third base the way they could first base. There was talk about once again letting hitters request high or low pitches; in this case, there would have been TWO strike zones, one if the batter asked for high pitches, the other for the batter who asked for low pitches.

In the end — and this is pretty fascinating to me — the baseball magnates announced three new rules:

Rule 1: Caught foul tips would no longer be considered outs. They had been outs since the dawn of the game ... and this made some sense before catchers were allowed to wear gloves. Seeing a catcher snag a foul tip barehanded was, the *Chicago Tribune* said, “one of the game’s prettiest features.” But with the advent of gloves and the dominance of pitchers, it was all but unanimous that the foul-tip out had to go. A few years later, the foul tip would become a strike, and a caught foul-tip would complete a strikeout.

Rule 2: The error column was removed in the official box score and replaced by sacrifice hits. I love this sacrifice hit change because it shows that even in 1888, everybody believed that players would respond to incentives. The owners truly believed that by highlighting sacrifice hits in the newspapers, batters would be more unselfish at the plate. I suspect it had little-to-no impact.

The removal of the error column, by the way, was probably the most controversial rule change of 1889. Newspaper writers and official scorers were so outraged that they sent in a written protest.

Rule 3: Four balls equals a walk.

This last rule, obviously, became one of the core principles of baseball ... but it’s fair to say that nobody really saw it that way then. The idea was to increase scoring, but few thought it would make much difference and, per the *New York Sun*, “those who thought it would did not seem to explain why.”

But runs DID increase by 25% in 1889, in large part because walks almost doubled from a little less than 2 per game to 3.5 per game. Batting average also jumped up by almost 30 points.

And, remarkably, that was it — after 1889, four balls have always been a walk. Best I can tell, there was never another effort to adjust that number.

In 1974, **Pete Rose** walked 100 times for the only time in his career. He also hit .285, the first time in almost a decade that he failed to hit .300. When Rose went into salary negotiations with

Reds executive Dick Wagner, he pointed out that even though he was not happy with his average, the walks made up for a lot of that (he'd gotten on base about as much as the year before, when he led the league by hitting .338) and he had led the league in runs scored.

"A walk is as good as a hit," Rose said hopefully.

Wagner then said the Reds were going to cut Rose's salary by \$30,000. "As you know," Wagner said, "we pay you to hit .300." Rose said he was not taking a pay cut. The Reds offered to lower the cut to \$10,000. Rose stormed out and said he would sooner sit out the season than take a pay cut.

Three days later, he quietly signed for a \$5,000 pay cut and cursed himself for bringing up those walks in the negotiations.

On Oct. 21, 1886, **Cap Anson's** Chicago White Sox played the American Association's St. Louis Browns in Game 4 of what they were calling the "World Championship Series." **John Clarkson** started that game for the White Sox.

Between 1885 and 1889, Clarkson averaged 42 wins and 543 innings per year and had a 2.54 ERA.

In the fifth inning,, with runners on second and third and only one out, one of the American Association's top hitters, **Tip O'Neill** — he led the Association in RBIs — stepped to the plate. Clarkson got ready to pitch, when all of a sudden, third baseman **King Kelly**, perhaps baseball's biggest star at the time, walked over the mound. He whispered something in Clarkson's ear and then went back to his position.

And Clarkson threw his first pitch five feet outside for ball one. He threw his second pitch five feet outside for ball two. He threw his third and fourth pitch outside for balls three and four. Remember, this was when it took five balls to draw a walk.

Cap Anson was furious. He left his first base spot, walked over to the mound and told Clarkson to throw the ball over the plate — what he was doing just wasn't SPORTING. It's a funny thing, looking back, we all now know Cap Anson as the player who refused to step on the field with an

African-American player. But in his day, Anson was viewed as the very paragon of sportsmanship.

Anyway, Clarkson did not listen, and he intentionally walked O'Neill. The move backfired — the Cardinals scored three runs to take a 5-3 lead.

In the sixth inning, O'Neill came up again, this time with runners on first and third with two outs. "Clarkson," *The Sporting News* reported, "once more displayed his terror of O'Neill by refusing to give him a chance at the ball." Again, the intentional walk backfired as the Cardinals scored two more runs.

This was not the first intentional walk in baseball history — not even close to the first — but it was, in many ways, the first one anyone noticed, because of the importance of the game. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* called Clarkson's move "contemptible."

The intentional walk was still a rarity ... but in the 1890s it became a viable strategy, thanks in large part to a combative coot called **Patsy Tebeau**. Apparently at some point in the mid-1890s, as player-manager for the Cleveland Spiders, Tebeau began insisting that **Cy Young** intentionally walk good hitters when a weaker hitter followed. The Cleveland fans hated it; they had come to the ballpark to watch Cy Young get people out.

From *The Sporting News*:

"The Cleveland bleachers wanted to see if the batter could not hit Young. They were not in the least concerned about the batter making a home run, as is the case when Ruth goes to the plate. They were strong in believing that Young could strike out any human being on earth who shouldered a bat. Their sympathy was with the pitcher."

You can probably tell from this excerpt that *The Sporting News* is actually mocking the fans, who apparently were Neanderthals who came to the park to actually watch players play and were incapable of fathoming the subtleties of baseball strategy. This nonsense has been there pretty much since the beginning. Anyway, Tebeau was not someone to let a few jeers dissuade him from unveiling his strategic genius. He kept on calling for the intentional walk, and,

according to *The Sporting News*, won over the fans, because the move was “successful more than 75 percent of the time.”

Despite *The Sporting News*’ strong approval, the intentional walk remained intensely unpopular. All the way back in 1896, **Clark Griffith** — who was still a young pitcher — had this to say about the intentional walk: “The pitcher who is afraid of any batter ought to quit the business. If he doesn’t, it will not be long before he is proved a coward, and then *will have* to quit. The crowd is not in sympathy with any pitcher who is not game enough to let any batter hit the ball, at the same time depending on his own ability.”

There were attempts made, again and again, to ban the intentional walk. The trouble then is the same as the trouble now — nobody knows how to do it. For at least 25 years, people repeatedly suggested that when a pitcher deliberately walked a hitter, the runners on base should be advanced one or even two bases even if they were not forced. The trouble was nobody could agree on how you would even know if the walk was deliberate.

In 1914, there was a fascinating *Sporting News* editorial written by “A Ball Player,” offering two suggestions to fix the intentional walk.

“The exhibition,” he wrote, “in order to thrill the spectators, must find the pitcher in ‘tight places,’ due to runners on the bases and a formidable batter facing him. It is in this stage of the game that either grand pitching, phenomenal fielding or timely hitting makes heroes and sets the fans wild.”

A Ball Player didn’t want to eliminate the intentional walk, he simply wanted to make the penalty for such a walk harsher. His first idea was that if a pitcher intentionally walked a batter, he would need to cleanly strike out the next batter to get the out. Fouls would not count as strikes.

A Ball Player liked his second idea even more — in this scenario, the manager could pinch-hit for the weaker hitter without taking the player out of the game. This is kind of interesting, especially if you could just send any batter to the plate, even one who is already in the game (but not on base). Anyway, kind of fun!

The great ballplayer **Hughie Jennings** suggested that batters should be allowed to chase intentional walk pitches by moving out of the batter's box (while catchers should not be allowed to step out from behind the plate.

And so on.

There were efforts made in 1916, 1920 and especially 1924 to eliminate the intentional walk — but none ever made it through. We should take a moment to reiterate that *The Sporting News*, the Bible of Baseball, constantly fought back against all these efforts. There is probably no rule limiting the intentional walk because of *The Sporting News*.

"The passing of good batsmen — and only such are ever passed intentionally — by pitchers is a recognized part of pitching strategy," *The Sporting News* wrote in 1924, when it looked like the owners might make a move. "It has been combated as well as can be by the present rule on intentional passing, and to go beyond that rule would simply make the prohibition impracticable and therefore not enforceable; and any rule that can't be enforced had better not 'cumber the statute books."

After the 1920s, the momentum to quash the intentional walk was pretty much gone. But there were various brief attempts made by brave souls such as St. Louis sports editor Sid Keener, who in 1937 made various suggestions to enliven the game, one of those being a new rule which would allow any batter who receives a walk on four pitches to decline the walk and just step back in the box for a new plate appearance. If walked again — intentionally or unintentionally — he would be allowed to go to second ... or he could decline the walk again and try a third time.

"The fence-buster may be passed," Keener said. "The weaker batter, however, is not accorded a similar privilege. He cannot demand a new pitcher."

Wouldn't it be funny if he could? What if he could say, "Yeah, you know what, I don't want to face this pitcher. Bring in somebody else already on the field to pitch."

On Aug. 12, 1980, the Kansas City Royals played the Baltimore Orioles in a crucial pennant-race game. The game was tied 3-3 going into the bottom of the ninth, and **Scott McGregor** started

off the inning by hitting **Frank White** with a pitch. After getting a couple of outs, he gave up a single to U L Washington, putting runners on first and second.

George Brett, who was hitting .389 on his way to .400, was up next.

McGregor and Brett grew up together in El Segundo, Calif.; they were high school teammates and close pals. In those early days, Brett owned his pal — he was 9 for 17 against McGregor and had already singled and tripled that day.*

**McGregor would turn the tables — between 1981 and 1984, he got Brett out 23 consecutive times.*

Earl Weaver took McGregor out of the game and brought in reliever **Tim Stoddard**. He then had Stoddard intentionally walk Brett to load the bases, even though first base was not open.

“If there is any way to avoid it,” Weaver had told the press before the game, “I’m not going to let Brett swing in a situation where he can beat us. If we’re going to get beat, somebody else is going to have to do it.”

Up stepped **Amos Otis**. Stoddard fell behind 2-0. Otis took a strike, and then a close pitch for a ball. After another strike to make the count full, Otis fouled back a tough pitch. The last pitch was high and inside for a walk-off walk.

The Kansas City newspaper story lead this way: “Amos Otis beat the Baltimore Orioles Tuesday night by doing nothing more than the 34,913 spectators who paid their way into Royals Stadium.”

A young Bill James was in the press box that night, and when he saw that lead the next day, he just about fell out of his chair. “But you see,” he says, “that’s the way people were trained to think in that era. The walk was something the pitcher did; the batter just happened to be there when he did it.”

Here are probably the five most famous walks in baseball history — or anyway, the five most memorable walks that quickly come to mind:

No. 5: Rickey Henderson's obvious walk, Oct. 23, 1993.

This was Game 6 of the 1993 World Series, the Phillies led the Blue Jays 6-5 going into the bottom of the ninth inning, and Rickey Henderson led off against **Mitch Williams**. What makes this walk so fun to me is that everybody — and I do mean EVERYBODY — knew Rickey would walk.

I mean, he was Rickey Henderson; he walked 2,190 times in his career, second only to **Barry Bonds**. Jim Murray famously wrote that Rickey's strike zone was smaller than Hitler's heart.

And, I mean, he was Mitch Williams. They called him Wild Thing.

Of course, Rickey walked — on four pitches no less. Three batters later, **Joe Carter** hit the touch-em-all home run.

No. 4: Andruw Jones' walkoff walk, Oct. 19, 1999.

Another Game 6, this time in the 1999 NLCS between Atlanta and the Mets. New York had trailed 5-0 after the first inning, but had come all the way back and led 8-7 going into the bottom of the eighth, but **Brian Hunter's** single scored **Otis Nixon** to tie the game. New York led 9-8 going into the bottom of the 9th, but **Ozzie Guillen's** single scored Andruw Jones to tie the game.

And then in the 11th, with the score tied, **Gerald Williams** doubled to lead off the inning. After a sacrifice bunt moved Williams to third, Mets pitcher **Kenny Rogers** intentionally walked **Chipper Jones and Brian Jordan** to load the bases. He then unintentionally walked Andruw on four straight pitches.

"I was just going out there, taking pitches until he threw me a strike," Andruw said. "He didn't."

No. 3: Barry Bonds intentionally walked with the bases loaded, May 28, 1998.

To me, the craziest part of this move was that it happened BEFORE Barry Bonds became the most unstoppable force in baseball history. The popular narrative is that sometime during the 1998 season, Bonds saw the way the nation was swooning about **Mark McGwire and Sammy**

Sosa's home run chase, and he decided to start using PEDs while thinking to himself, like Jack Nicholson's Joker: "Wait'll they get a load of me."

But this walk happened DURING that 1998 season, which tells you just how good Barry Bonds was before the fall. The Diamondbacks led 8-6, and Bonds came up with the bases loaded — Diamondbacks manager **Buck Showalter** intentionally walked Bonds to face the considerably less-threatening **Brent Mayne**, who flew out to deep right-center to end the game.

That was, I believe, the third time a batter was intentionally walked with the bases juiced. The first was **Nap Lajoie** in 1901. The second was Cubs slugger **Bill Nicholson** in 1944, the year he led the league in homers, RBIs and runs.

No. 2: Eddie Gaedel walks while using toy bat, Aug. 19, 1951.

It's probably the most famous stunt in baseball history — Gaedel, who stood 3 feet, 7 inches tall — walked on four pitches against Detroit's **Bob Cain**, who had his share of control troubles even against the tallest players.

Bill Veeck, who engineered the stunt, said that Gaedel wanted to take one swing. Veeck replied that if he did, Veeck would be able to cash in on the \$1 million life insurance policy he had taken out because someone with a rifle would be on the roof ready to take Gaedel out if he even thought about swinging.

No. 1: Mike Davis draws the walk, Oct. 15, 1988.

If the Rickey Henderson walk is the most expected in baseball history, this might be the least expected. Game 1 of the 1988 World Series, Oakland vs. Los Angeles, and **Dennis Eckersley** was pitching. And Dennis Eckersley didn't walk anybody. In 1989 and 1990, he walked seven batters TOTAL, both seasons, 131 total innings, and one of those walks was intentional.

After facing **Mike Davis**, he would face 91 batters in the postseason — and he didn't walk ANY OF THEM.

And it's not like Mike Davis was **Ted Williams** or anything; he struck out more than twice as often as he walked.

But something happened in that moment. There were two outs. **Dave Anderson** was standing on deck to bat for reliever **Alejandro Peña**. This seemed routine. But for some reason, Eckersley's pitches kept sailing outside on him. "You can't walk him in that situation," Eck would say after the game. "You just can't."

But Eck did walk Davis on five pitches, and as you might know, Dave Anderson was called back for another pinch-hitter, a guy named **Kirk Gibson**.

Oh, one more thing: You will probably notice that a certain and shocking **Kevin Millar walk off **Mariano Rivera** — leading to a pinch-runner named **Dave Roberts**, leading to a sort of key stolen base, leading to a tying run, leading to a **David Ortiz** walk-off home run, leading to a pretty significant comeback, leading to the breaking of a fairly long World Series drought — is not in here.*

1909 PITTSBURGH PIRATES

110 – 42 (0.724)

Manager: Fred Clarke

Won NL pennant by 6½ games over the Chicago Cubs.

World Series: Beat the Detroit Tigers in seven games.

Had Chicago catcher **Johnny Kling** chosen to guard home plate for the Cubs in 1909 instead of taking the year off to pursue a second consecutive billiards title, his team might have been able to outpace the Pittsburgh Pirates for their fourth consecutive pennant. Instead, Kling's absence played a key role in the Pirates' newfound success against their perennial rivals. In the process, Pittsburgh won 110 games to edge out the dynastic Cubs for the NL pennant by a six-and-a-half game margin.

The Pirates started the season slowly. Ominously, star shortstop **Honus Wagner** was stopped for speeding on his way to the ballpark for Opening Day. Ten days later, Pittsburgh was 3-5 and in last place for the first time in a decade. But the Bucs soon pulled themselves out of the cellar with a well-balanced mix of strong defense, daring baserunning, and the best hitting in the league.

Two May doubleheaders at Chicago's West Side Grounds firmly established the Pirates'

dominance over the Cubs. In the first, on May 2, Pittsburgh immediately took advantage of Kling's absence. The Pirates stole two bases in the opener en-route to a 5-2 victory, and in the first inning of the second game (also won by the Bucs) they stole six. Three of those first-inning swipes belonged to Wagner, who pilfered second, third, and home; he would repeat the feat the very next day. The convincing sweep moved the Pirates into first place for good. Another sweep on May 30 helped the Pirates avoid second place.

Along with **Fred Clarke**, **Sam Leever**, **Tommy Leach**, and **Deacon Phillippe**, Wagner was one of just five players who remained from the roster of the 1902 National League champions. Wagner's large hands and powerful arm made him one of the games' best defensive shortstops; "The Flying Dutchman" also anchored Pittsburgh's lineup as the cleanup man and won his fourth straight batting title with a .339 mark. He led the league with 100 RBIs, 242 total bases, 39 doubles and a .489 slugging percentage. Still a formidable presence in the lineup at the age of 36, Clarke batted third and hit .287 with eleven triples, 68 RBI, and 31 stolen bases. He also led the league with 80 walks. Leever, 37, lost just one of his nine decisions, appearing mostly in relief.

Wagner was the lone .300 hitter for the Pirates (there were only four in the whole league) but the Bucs' lineup provided few easy outs. Pittsburgh had easily the best offense in the league, leading in runs, doubles, triples, batting average and slugging average. No regular hit below .261; with the exception of catcher **George Gibson**, all had more than 14 stolen bases. Third baseman **Bobby Byrne**, acquired from the St. Louis Cardinals in late August for light-hitting **Jap Barbeau**, was used mainly in the leadoff spot and made just two errors while hitting .256 for his new club down the stretch. Centerfielder **Tommy Leach**, batting second, led the league by far with 126 runs while finishing second with six home runs. Second baseman **Dots Miller** was charged with making teams think twice before pitching around Wagner, and he performed his duty admirably, smacking 31 doubles (third in the league), thirteen triples (fourth in the league) and driving in 87 runs (third in the league). Rookie **Ham Hyatt** was ham-handed in the field, but was valuable as an extra bat off the bench. He led the league in pinch-hits.

The Pirates pitching staff was equally well-balanced; their team ERA of 2.07 was second only to Chicago's microscopic 1.75. The main beneficiary of Pittsburgh's 110 wins was staff ace **Howie Camnitz**, who tallied 25 victories against only six losses. Impressive as it was by today's standards, his 1.62 ERA was only good enough for fourth in the league. **Vic Willis** won 22 times and threw 24 complete games, while the aptly-named **Lefty Leifield** picked up 19 wins and **Nick Maddox** chipped in 13.

The savior of the season may have been an unknown 27-year-old left-hander named **Babe Adams**. In his first full big-league season, Adams posted a 12-3 record to go with a sparkling 1.11 ERA in 130 innings. His biggest contribution came in the World Series, when Clarke turned to him three times against the Detroit Tigers. Adams responded with three victories, including a complete-game shutout in Game Seven in which he held **Ty Cobb** hitless. Thanks to Adams, the 1909 Pirates can still claim the highest winning percentage (regular season and post-season) of any modern World Series winner.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Six father-son combos combined for more than 500 big league homers. Four of the fathers played for the Yankees. Name them.

1094 HRs, father played 1968-1981 for 3 NL teams and 5 AL teams.

Bobby Bonds (332 HRs) and Barry Bonds (762 HRs)

782 HRs, father played 1973-1991, played in 1975 and 1976 World Series

Ken Griffey Sr. (152 HRs) and Ken Griffey Jr. (630 HRs)

638 HRs, father played 1985-1998, led MLB in HRs 1990-1991, batted .391 in 1996 World Series.

Cecil Fielder (319 HRs) and Prince Fielder (319 HRs)

570 HRs, father played 1996-2011, 2004 AL MVP, Hall of Fame.

Vladimir Guerrero Sr. (449 HRs) and Vlad Guerrero Jr. (121 HRs and counting)

538 HRs, father played 1958-1974 for 6 teams, later 14 years as a NL manager.

Felipe Alou (206 HRs) and Moises Alou (332 HRs)

536 HRs, father played 1961-1983, 1967 Triple Crown and MVP.

Carl Yastrzemski (452 HRs) and Mike Yastrzemski (84 HRs and counting)

Who was the last player to win a league MVP Award and the World Series in the same season?

Homered and had a stolen base in winning 2018 World Series.

Led MLB in runs (129), BA (.346) and SLG (.640).

Two years later finished second in MVP voting for his current team.

Played in the 2020 World Series with his current team.

Mookie Betts with the Red Sox in 2018

Mariano Rivera is obviously the Yankees all-time saves leader with 652.

Can you name the next four?

Lefty, 224 Yankee saves from 1979 to 1990, later 24 saves in the NL.

DAVE RIGHETTI, saved 24 for the San Francisco Giants and has been long-time Giants pitching coach. 1981 AL Rookie of the Year, Righetti moved full time to the bullpen in 1984. He enjoyed several excellent seasons in the closer's role, including a Major League-leading 46 saves in 1986, when he earned his first All-Star selection and finished fourth in the AL Cy Young Award voting.

Lefty, 153 Yankee saves from 2016 to 2022, earlier 146 saves in the NL.

AROLDIS CHAPMAN, saved 146 for the Reds before joining the Yankees.

Righty, 151 Yankee saves from 1978 to 1983, saved another 159 games for 8 other teams.

GOOSE GOSSAGE.

Lefty, 141 Yankee saves from 1973 to 1978, 1977 AL Cy Young Award winner.

SPARKY LYLE

Since 1960, five MLB teams have had four former MVPs on their roster at the same time.

2021 Dodgers

Mookie Betts, Cody Bellinger, Clayton Kershaw, Albert Pujols

2022 Dodgers

Betts, Bellinger, Kershaw, Freddie Freeman

1978 Reds

Joe Morgan, Johnny Bench, Pete Rose, George Foster

1982 Angels

Reggie Jackson, Rod Carew, Don Baylor, Fred Lynn

1996 Red Sox

Roger Clemens, Jose Canseco, Kevin Mitchell, Mo Vaughn

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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