

## **Sunday Baseball Tidbits Newsletter – interesting and random stuff, fodder for bar bets.**

10.15.2023

Good morning baseball fans. A short edition this week thanks to a strained back—typing isn't pretty. So please be patient with any typos.

Lots of playoff notes, your favorite baseball names, **Baker vs Bochy**.

In Longer Reads Pitchers **Sandy Alcantara**, volume and injuries.

Please grab yourself a coffee and enjoy.

### **THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE**

(answers at bottom)

14 pitchers have won 10 or more post-season games. Teams they played for and Years played.

19 wins. Yankees, Astros, 1995-2013

16 wins. Tigers, Astros, 2005-present

15 wins, Braves, Red Sox, Cards, 1988-2009

14 wins, Braves, Mets, 1987-2008

13 wins, Dodgers, 2008-present

12 wins, Red Sox, Blue Jays, Yankees, Astros, 1984-2007

11 wins, Cubs, Braves, Dodgers, Padres, 1986-2008

11 wins, Orioles, Astros, Phillies, D'Backs, Red Sox, 1988-2007

10 wins, Blue Jays, Cards, 1997-2012

10 wins, Pirates, Astros, Yankees, 2013-present

10 wins, Yankees, 1950-1967

10 wins, Indians, Brewers, Yankees, 2001-2019

10 wins, Dodgers, Rangers, Phillies, A's, Blue Jays, 1978-1995

10 wins, Blue Jays, Tigers, Reds, Orioles, Yankees, White Sox, Paes, Red Sox, Dodgers, 1987-2007

Name the 8 franchises that have won 5 or more world series

Three pitchers hold the single season strike-out record for multiple teams.

Right hander, AL 2019 and AL 2022

Right hander 1997 NL and 1999 AL

Left hander AL 1993 and NL 2001

## **PLAYOFF NOTES**

The teams with the FIVE best records in baseball are now out, and none of them really came even close to advancing. As a group, Atlanta (104 wins), Baltimore (101 wins), Los Angeles (100 wins), Tampa Bay (99 wins) and Milwaukee (92 wins) went 1-13 in their playoff games.

They were outscored 82-31.

They were outhomered 31-8.

All three National League division winners are out. Two of the three American League division winners are out.

The Rangers, Phillies and D'backs all came to play. The Astros made it 7 straight LCS appearances. It's a good if unexpected final four.

Joe Sheehan newsletter-- When a great regular-season team loses we want to understand why. It is rarely more complicated than "they got outplayed." That's playoff baseball. Billy Beane's lament that his stuff didn't work in the playoffs wasn't an excuse. His stuff -- everyone's stuff -- is designed for the regular season, for the long haul, the large sample. Despite the mythology we create around certain players, teams, managers, and executives, there is no way to ensure that a group of players will play well, or at least not play poorly, over the next 96 hours. That is not how baseball goes.

### **ASTROS OVER TWINS**

Astros make LCS for 7<sup>th</sup> straight season. They won 90 games (their fewest in a full 162-game season since 2016) and won the AL West via the tiebreaker over the 90-win Rangers.

Through game 3, **Yordan Alvarez** had a homer and two doubles. There are just 23 players who have had 200 postseason plate appearances in their teens and twenties; Alvarez is 26 and has had 208 postseason PA. Among that group, Alvarez is fifth in OBP (.375) and fifth in SLG (.528).

Thru game 3 v twins-- Yordan Alvarez (two doubles and a fourth homer in three games). Alvarez's four homers are tied for the third-most in a best-of-five postseason series, behind only **Juan Gonzalez** (five in the 1996 ALDS) and **Ken Griffey Jr.** (five in the '95 ALDS). The four homers also are tied for the most in a player's first three playoff games, along with Gonzalez and **Bob Robertson** ('71).

Alvarez had the two biggest hits of last year's World Series run for the Astros -- a three-run walk-off homer to beat the Mariners in Game 1 of the ALDS and a 450-foot, three-run blast to put the Astros ahead in Game 6 of the World Series against the Phillies.

**Reggie Jackson** and Alvarez are the only players in history with at least six extra-base hits and at least four homers in a three-game span in any postseason, according to OptaSTATs.

For the Twins **Carlos Correa** has cast off his forgettable regular season to once again become a titan of the postseason, moving into a tie with **David Justice** for third in American League/National League history in postseason RBIs with an RBI double and two-run single that powered the Twins to their 6-2 victory over the Astros.

That made it 63 postseason RBIs for Correa, who passed Hall of Famers **David Ortiz and Derek Jeter** with his heroics and is now tied with David Justice, trailing only **Bernie Williams** (80) and **Manny Ramirez** (78) in the leaderboard.

### **D'BACKS OVER THE DODGERS**

The Dodgers trailed in 25 of 27 innings in being swept by Arizona.

Ace **Walker Buehler** wasn't able to return from last year's Tommy John surgery as initially expected. Fellow starters **Tony Gonsolin** and **Dustin May** also sustained season-ending injuries. **Julio Urias** suspended for beating on his girlfriend. It was a hodge-podge staff with the following result:

- G1 starter **Clayton Kershaw**: 6 runs, 1/3 inning
- G2 starter **Bobby Miller**: 3 runs, 1 2/3 innings
- G3 starter **Lance Lynn**: 4 runs, 2 2/3 innings

### **Highest percentage of home runs per batter (min. 800 batters faced):**

1. Lance Lynn, 2023, 5.45%
2. **Bronson Arroyo**, 2011, 5.38%
3. **Jose Lima**, 2000, 4.36%
4. **Eric Milton**, 2004, 4.99%
5. **Jamie Moyer**, 2004, 4.95%

Kershaw has been famously shaky in the postseason — his postseason ERA in 32 starts is a full two runs higher than his regular-season ERA.

But the Dodgers big hitters did not show up either.

In the series finale the first three hitters in the L.A. lineup (**Mookie Betts**, **Freddie Freeman** and **J.D. Martinez**) were a combined 0-for-12 with four strikeouts. The super-duo of **Mookie Betts** and **Freddie Freeman** went a combined 1-for-21 for the series. As a team, they managed just four extra-base hits (and just one home run) in the series.

The Diamondbacks won with brawn in this one, slugging a postseason-record four homers in the third off Lance Lynn, all solo shots from **Geraldo Perdomo**, **Ketel Marte**, **Christian Walker** and **Gabriel Moreno**. The previous mark of three homers in a postseason inning had been accomplished 12 times, most recently by the Dodgers against Atlanta in 2020.

Lynn finished the regular season with a gory home-run total (44) that ranks as the sixth most in a season in major-league history.

The Dodgers and Braves had the same cold offense at the worst possible time. This is ugly:

|         | Runs/Game | BA   | OBP  | SLG  | HR | RISP |
|---------|-----------|------|------|------|----|------|
| Dodgers | 2.0       | .177 | .248 | .250 | 1  | .235 |
| Braves  | 2.0       | .186 | .255 | .264 | 3  | .167 |

Game 1 at Dodgers. Arizona **Alek Thomas** fell behind right-hander **Michael Grove**, 1-2. Thomas would foul off the next 10 pitches. After he watched a curveball in the dirt for ball two, Thomas finally forced Grove into a mistake on the 14th pitch of the at-bat -- a belt-high 2-2 slider. Thomas turned on the offering, walloping a no-doubter into the right-field pavilion at Dodger Stadium, giving the D-backs a 10-0 lead and sending fans to the exits. At 14 pitches, Thomas' at-bat was the longest at-bat to end with a postseason home run since pitch counts have been tracked (beginning in 1988). **Jayson Werth**'s walk-off homer against then-Cardinal and current Dodger Lance Lynn in the 2012 NLDS came on the 13th pitch.

**Clayton Kershaw** is 5-6 with a 6.13 ERA in 12 Game 1 starts and has only four quality starts. Among pitchers with at least five Game 1 starts, only **Chris Sale** (6.43) has a higher ERA.

**John Smoltz** (1.58 over six starts), **Madison Bumgarner** (1.73 over five starts), and **John Lackey** (2.18 in five starts) are on the other end of the spectrum. Lackey made the All-Star team once and received only one Hall of Fame vote in his only year on the ballot. But he was one of the all-time playoff horses, going 8-6 with a 3.44 ERA over 29 games and winning championships with three teams

### **RANGERS OVER THE ORIOLES**

Game 2. Corey Seager first post season player with 5 walks in a game. Seager has never walked 70 times in a season, he walked 40 times in 2023. Then 5 times in one game. Rangers first team to get 7 hits and 7 walks in first 3 innings of a post season game.

Seager walked 9 times in three games. That ties him for most walks ever in a best of five series with Jimmy “the Toy Cannon” Wynn in the 1974 NLCS. Wynn got his walks in four games—Wynn twice led the NL in walks.

MLB leader in walks was Juan Soto with 132. The AL leader was JP Crawford of Seattle with 94. Seager had 40. Then 9 in three playoff games.

The Rangers bullpen blew more saves in 2023 than it converted.

**Nathan Evoldi** has a 2.70 ERA in 13 career playoff appearances, with his team winning 10 of those games.

Texas finished the regular season with a seven-game trip to Anaheim and Seattle, going 3-4 and squeezing into the postseason. The Rangers then flew across the country to play Tampa Bay and won two games at Tropicana Field before going on to Baltimore and winning twice at Camden Yards. They clinched the Division Series on Tuesday in their first home game since Sept. 24. In all it was a 11-game, four-city trip over 14 days that covered roughly 7,600 miles.

From 1969 to 1993, the Orioles, by virtue of those 101 wins, would have gone to the American League Championship Series.

The Orioles entered the postseason having not been swept in a series since May 13-15, 2022, when they lost three games at Detroit. Then they lost three in a row against the Rangers and were knocked out of the playoffs after winning 101 games in the regular season.

Texas led the AL West for 148 of the first 149 days this season, and 159 overall. But when the Rangers lost at Seattle on the final day of the regular season, a day after clinching a playoff spot, and Houston won to match them at 90 wins, the Astros had another division title and a first-round playoff bye.

### **PHILLIES OVER THE BRAVES**

The Phillies are 5-1 in the playoffs. They've allowed two runs or fewer in five of their six postseason games, ten all told. Their pitchers have a 50/12 K/BB in six games, with just three homers allowed. They have the best bullpen of any team that won a series in these playoffs, with a 1.45 ERA in 18 2/3 innings.

Phillies. They held Atlanta, perhaps the greatest offense in the history of the sport, to seven runs in four games. The Braves tied a major-league record for regular-season homers. The Phillies out-homered them 11-2 in four games.

The 2020s are starting to feel like the 1990s for the Atlanta Braves: Another dazzling regular season; another flop in the postseason.

After tying a major league record with 307 homers, the slugging Braves went down meekly to the rival Philadelphia Phillies in the National League Division Series for the second year in a row.

Other than a stunning comeback in Game 2, when the Braves overcame a four-run deficit with a pair of two-run homers and a remarkable double play for a 5-4 victory, the Phillies dominated the best-of-five series.

They handed the Braves their first shutout all season at Truist Park, 3-0 in the series opener. They blasted six homers in a 10-2 rout in Game 3. And they ended Atlanta's season far sooner than anyone expected with three more homers for a 3-1 clincher in Game 4.

In the 1990s, the Braves began a record-setting run of 14 straight division titles that included only one World Series title.

They are now in the midst of six straight NL East titles, but a 2021 World Series title is the only time the postseason didn't end in disappointment.

Take out **Austin Riley**, who hit .353 (6 of 17) with two homers, and the remaining Braves batted .161 (18 of 112) with one homer and only one other extra-base hit over four games.

Most notably, MVP favorite **Ronald Acuña Jr.** was held to a measly pair of hits after becoming the first player in big league history to post 40 homers and 70 stolen bases in a season.

Acuña's historic season (.337 average with 41 homers, 106 RBIs, 73 stolen bases and 149 runs) was augmented by first baseman Matt Olson setting franchise records for homers (54) and RBIs (139).

**Marcell Ozuna** bounced back from a dismal start to hit 40 homers with 100 RBIs, **Ozzie Albies** had 33 homers and 109 RBIs, and Riley slugged 37 homers with 97 RBIs while playing stellar defense.

Unfortunately for the Braves, those impressive numbers didn't add up to much in the playoffs.

Sounds familiar.

**Nick Castellanos** had hit four home runs in two nights. No one had ever done that in postseason history. The fourth came on a two-strike, 100 mph fastball from the best strikeout pitcher in baseball. "I gave Castellanos my best fastball there and he hit it," **Spencer Strider** said. No Phillies hitter since 2008, when MLB implemented its pitch tracking, had ever homered on a 100 mph fastball. He went 7-for-15 with two walks and only one strikeout.

We all know baseball is about adjustments. He saw 29 pitches out of the strike zone. He swung at five of them. That's a 17 percent chase rate.

During the regular season, Castellanos swung at 41 percent of the pitches out of the zone.

Castellanos hit two more home runs than *the entire Braves team*.

He finished the NLDS slashing .467/.529/1.267 in 15 at-bats over 4 games.

Four different Phillies players hit a home run last night in game 3 — **Trea Turner, Bryce Harper (2), Nick Castellanos (2) and Brandon Marsh**. It was also the 4th time ever that a team had multiple players with two or more HRs in a postseason game!

| Team | Date       | Count | Player List                          |
|------|------------|-------|--------------------------------------|
| PHI  | 2023-10-11 | 2     | Nick Castellanos, Bryce Harper       |
| LAD  | 2021-10-21 | 2     | <b>AJ Pollock, Chris Taylor</b>      |
| SDP  | 2020-10-01 | 2     | <b>Wil Myers, Fernando Tatis Jr.</b> |
| NYN  | 1932-10-01 | 2     | <b>Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth</b>         |

**Zack Wheeler.** Phillies ace and free agent to be. He entered game 2 with the lowest WHIP of any starter in postseason history (0.73) among pitchers with seven starts or more. He exited this game *with an even more microscopic WHIP* (0.72) that is still the lowest of any starter in postseason history with eight starts or more.

The names right behind him are **Christy Mathewson** (0.84 in 11 starts) and **Bob Gibson** (0.89 in nine starts).

Wheeler also entered this game with the lowest opponent batting average (.162) of any starting pitcher in postseason history ... *and then got within 10 outs of pitching a postseason no-hitter.*

Wheeler got 20 outs against that terrifying Braves lineup, allowed just three hits and struck out 10. Did you know that during the regular season, only one starting pitcher went that deep in a game, while allowing that few hits and piling up that many K's against the Braves. And that pitcher was ...Zack Wheeler! (Eight innings, three hits, 12 whiffs, on May 27.)

Braves 205-119 in the last two regular seasons but 2-6 in the playoffs.

This is the eighth Atlanta Braves team to win 100-plus games, and none of them have won the World Series. Only one even made it that far. Four were bounced in the NLDS.

The Braves score 947 runs this season. They scored more runs this year than any National League team since the 1953 Dodgers.

Last year's team hit .180 and was outscored 24-13 in the four games. This year's team hit .186 and was outscored 20-8 — after a regular season that saw them score 947 (5.8 per game). They hit 307 homers in the regular season. They hit three in the NLDS (compared with the Phillies' 11).

If you missed the **Michael Harris** catch/double play from game two its worth it—link below.

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

Had the ball fallen, **Bryce Harper** very likely would have scored from first base, tying the game. The Phillies were already up 1-0 in the series against the heavily favored Braves, and had led the game until just an inning before, when **Austin Riley**'s home run gave Atlanta their first lead.

The series could have gone back to Philadelphia with the Phillies up 2-0, needing just one win to slay a giant and both of Atlanta's top starters (**Spencer Strider and Max Fried**) already burned. Instead, Harris caught the ball, Riley backed up the throw, and the Phillies were left to ponder a million little "what-ifs."

Game two Braves snuff Phillies rally in th 9<sup>th</sup> with an 8-5-3 DP—Bryce Harper doubled off 1B after Michael Harris II to Austin Riley to

There has never *been* another 8-5-3 double play in postseason history. Not merely to end a game. Not at any other juncture of any game. But also ...

- Let's surgically remove the 8-5-3 portion of this equation. It's hard to remember *any* outfielder starting *any* kind of double play at that point of a game, isn't it? Well, there's an excellent reason for that, too. I ran this past the gang at STATS, and they tell us Harris was the first outfielder in history to start a double play that ended any postseason game. That's any DP started by an outfielder at any position ... and any size, shape or flavor of double play.

Speaking of Harper, the guy does ok in October

Last year Harper was lifting the Phillies to a shocking trip to the World Series with one of the great postseasons of the past 50 years (.349/.414/.746/1.160, with six homers, 13 extra-base hits).

This year he is slashing .353/.500/.882/1.382 in this postseason (going into Saturday).

The list of players with a 1.000 OPS and as many career postseason homers as Harper (14) consists of three men: **Babe Ruth**, **Carlos Beltrán** and Harper.

- The list of players with as many homers as Harper and a slugging percentage as good as Harper (.635) consists of only two men: Harper and Ruth.

- He has hit a home run in eight postseason games since joining the Phillies. The Phillies are 8-0 in those games. And according to the Elias Sports Bureau, that is tied, with longtime Braves catcher **Javy Lopez**, for the longest postseason streak in history by any player to start his career with a single team.

If you go back to his days with Washington, Harper's teams now have ripped off nine straight victories in games he's homered. Only **Carlos Correa** (10) and **Bernie Williams** (10) have had a longer streak with any team, at any point in a career, according to Elias.

- And over these last two postseasons with the Phillies, Harper leads every player in baseball (minimum 40 plate appearances) — even the fearsome **Yordan Alvarez** — in OPS (1.210), home runs (nine), slugging (.770), extra-base hits (16).

### **MORE PLAYOFF NOTES**

Searching the historical database for every matchup in playoff history where one team had a layoff of four or more days while their opponent had a layoff of two or fewer days, there have been 35 of these games in baseball history.

**The team with more rest has gone 24-11 in them.**

Astros-Rangers. This will be only the 10th postseason series featuring teams from the same state in baseball's divisional era (since 1969). It will be the first outside of California since the New York Mets and New York Yankees played in the 2000 World Series, which was a year before the Astros and Rangers had even met in a regular-season game.

Ken Rosenthal, The Athletic

There have been no easy answers since 1969, the start of the divisional era. From that moment, the teams with the best regular-season records in each league no longer were assured of playing in the World Series.

Major League Baseball thought it accounted for everything with its new system: first-round byes for the two top finishers in each league, home games for only the higher-seeded teams in the wild-card round. But the addition of the best-of-three wild-card series created a five-day layoff for the teams with byes. A layoff of that length might — repeat, might — be too much.

For more than four decades in the divisional era, the threat of rust from an extended layoff did not exist. From 1969 to '93, the division champions advanced directly to the League

Championship Series. From 1995 to 2011, each league had only one wild card, with the Division Series starting right away.

Maybe we should reframe that debate about tweaking the MLB playoff format. It's easy to look at the Braves, Dodgers and Orioles — who won 100 games each and couldn't survive a five-day postseason layoff — and say they deserved better. But what if this was the NFL? Do we freak out if a 12-5 team loses to a 9-8 team in the playoffs? Or a No. 1 seed losing in the NCAA Tournament? We love it when that happens. The fan base might stress, but that's just normal business. This should be, too.

The trouble began with the addition of a second wild card in each league, which led to the creation of the wild-card game and a three-day layoff for the division champions from 2012 to '19, and again in '21. The current five-day layoff is longer than teams get at the All-Star break, amounting to a true anomaly for an everyday sport.

A two-year sample is hardly large enough for anyone to form adequate conclusions. The bye teams still could up winning the majority of the four Division Series. But as much as those clubs tried to create competitive environments during their respective layoffs — the Braves, Dodgers, Orioles all played simulated games in front of fans — their efforts might prove futile. Which only would raise more questions.

**Austin Riley** was a lone highlight for the Braves with his game 2 HR.

It was the 13th lead-flipping home run, with two outs in the eighth inning or later, in postseason history. And what a list. The other 12 homers on the list include, not surprisingly, some of the legendary October home runs in history: **Kirk Gibson** off **Dennis Eckersley** ... **Dave Henderson** off **Donnie Moore** ... **Jack Clark** off **Tom Niedenfuer**. So just because it's amazing to rip through these names, check out the five others from the past 30 years.

**Joe Carter (Blue Jays):** Game 6, 1993 World Series, off the Phillies' **Mitch Williams**, two outs in the ninth. (Sorry to dredge that one back up, Philadelphia!)

**Marquis Grissom (Cleveland):** Game 2, 1997 ALCS, off the Orioles' **Armando Benitez**, two outs in the eighth.

**Albert Pujols (Cardinals):** Game 5, 2005 NLCS, the signature Pujols October rocket, off the Astros' **Brad Lidge**, with Houston one out from its first-ever trip to the World Series.

**Juan Uribe (Dodgers):** Game 4, 2013 NLDS, off the Braves' **David Carpenter**, two outs in the eighth (nearly 10 years ago to the day).

**Yordan Alvarez (Astros):** Game 1, 2022 ALDS, off Mariners *reliever* **Robbie Ray**, two outs in the ninth.

And now Austin Riley, off **Jeff Hoffman**.

NLDS Game 1 starter (**Clayton Kershaw**): gives up six runs in the first, gets one out

NLDS Game 2 starter (**Bobby Miller**): gives up three runs in the first, gets five outs

First time in dodgers 107-year history they had starters in back to back post season games not get out of the second inning.

1969 onward. Only at teams that did that in the same series and no openers. Six other times this happened. I'll list them in order of fewest combined outs.

1992 Braves, NLCS Games 5-6: **Steve Avery and Tom Glavine**: 12 runs, four outs!

1984 Padres, NLCS Games 1-2: **Ed Whitson and Tim Lollar**: seven runs, seven outs!

1999 Red Sox, ALDS Games 4-5: **Kent Mercker and Brett Saberhagen**: seven runs, eight outs!

2021 Red Sox, ALDS Games 1-2: **Eduardo Rodriguez and Chris Sale**: seven runs, eight outs!

2021 Astros, ALCS Games 2-3: **Luis Garcia and José Urquidy**, 12 runs (11 earned), eight outs!\*

2014 Giants, World Series Games 6-7: **Jake Peavy and Tim Hudson**, seven runs, nine outs *in Games 6 and 7 of the World Series!*

*(\*those 2021 Astros then made it three in a row, with **Zack Greinke** getting only four outs in Game 3.)*

**Five of those six teams still won that series — everyone but the 1999 Red Sox.**

**Dusty Baker vs. Bruce Bochy** is a matchup of likely Hall of Fame managers and former Giants skippers. **Max Scherzer**, if healthy, could oppose **Justin Verlander** in a matchup of future Hall of Fame pitchers, former Tigers and former Mets.

Maybe **Buck Showalter**, a former Rangers manager who started the season with Scherzer and Verlander in New York, could throw out a first pitch in Arlington.

Bochy was drafted by Houston and began his nine seasons as a big-league catcher with the Astros from 1978-80, when they were still in the National League. Their first World Series came as National League champions in 2005.

Interleague play began in 1997 with NL and AL teams from corresponding divisions playing each other. Well, the Astros were in the NL Central and it wasn't until 2001 that MLB changed things so they could play annually. They became division foes when Houston moved to the AL West in 2013.

This isn't the first postseason clash of these titans. Bochy's Giants took down Baker's Reds in a 2012 NLDS matchup, with San Francisco winning three straight in Cincinnati. Eleven years later, here they are again. Bochy and Baker are the fourth managerial duo with a postseason matchup at least 10 years after their most recent one.

Bochy met **Bobby Cox** in the 1998 NLCS and then 12 years later in the 2010 NLDS. **Dick Williams** met **Sparky Anderson** in the 1972 and then '84 World Series, with a 29-year-old Bochy going 1-for-1 in the latter. And Baker met **Tony La Russa** in the 2002 NLCS and then 19 years later in the 2021 ALDS.

What about the fact that this series is with a new team for each manager, compared to that 2012 matchup? They're the fifth duo to match up in multiple postseason series, each managing a different team. Baker and La Russa, noted above, did so with Giants-Cardinals and then Astros-White Sox, as did Williams and Anderson, with A's-Reds and Padres-Tigers. Joe Torre and Lou Piniella met twice in the postseason, helming Yankees-Mariners before a later Dodgers-Cubs series. And **Terry Francona** and **Joe Maddon** had three series, from Red Sox-Rays to Cleveland-Rays to Cleveland-Cubs, with the first and last satisfying the "totally new teams" criteria.

It isn't just the postseason. These two have 204 regular-season matchups, third-most between two managers in the Wild Card era, behind Baker-La Russa (215) and Bochy-**Bud Black** (210). This is just the second postseason series all-time between managers to have faced off at least 200 times in the regular season, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Baker and La Russa had 208 regular-season meetings prior to the aforementioned 2021 ALDS.

Along the way, these two have racked up experience and then some. Baker's 2,183 managerial wins rank seventh all-time. Bochy's 2,093 rank 10th. Only 12 MLB managers have reached 2,000 wins, and this is the second postseason series between two, each entering with at least 2,000 regular-season wins. La Russa had 2,552 wins entering the 2009 NLDS opposite Torre, who had 2,246.

That experience is quantifiable in the postseason, too. Baker has managed 101 playoff games and Bochy has managed 82. It's the second postseason series between two managers who have already managed at least 75 playoff games entering, along with that 2009 NLDS. Torre had 134 managerial games of postseason experience at that point, while La Russa had 107.

There's another way to quantify experience: Age. At 74 and 68 years old, respectively, Baker and Bochy are the two oldest active managers in MLB. This will be the third postseason series between managers who are both at least 68 years old, per Elias. La Russa was 77 years and three days old entering the 2021 ALDS against Baker, who was 72 years and 114 days old. Entering the 2003 NLDS between the Giants and Marlins, **Felipe Alou**, who had replaced Baker, was 68 years and 141 days, while **Jack McKeon** was 72 years and 311 days.

Baker has 54 postseason wins, fourth-most all-time behind Torre (84), La Russa (71) and Cox (67). Fifth on that list? Bochy, with 49. Bochy has also won 15 postseason rounds, third-most behind Torre's 19 and La Russa's 16. Cox is next with 12, followed by Baker and Dave Roberts with 11 each.

Baker's 2022 title has a statistical tie to Bochy, too. At the time, Baker had managed 3,884 regular-season games. That's the most at the time of a manager's first World Series championship, per Elias. He surpassed 2010 Bochy, at 2,574.

Last year, Baker was 73 years and 135 days old for Game 1 of the World Series, the oldest manager to reach the Fall Classic, surpassing McKeon in 2003 (72 years, 329 days for Game 1). Then Baker became the oldest manager or head coach in MLB/NBA/NFL/NHL history to win a championship, per STATS. Were he to reach or win again, he'd break his own records.

Bochy is the seventh manager to reach the LCS with at least three franchises. No manager has won an LCS with three franchises. Expanding prior to when LCS play began in 1969, only two managers have reached the World Series with three franchises: Bill McKechnie (1925 Pittsburgh, 1928 St. Louis, 1939-40 Cincinnati) and Williams (1967 Boston, 1972-73 Oakland, 1984 San Diego). Bochy is bidding to be the third -- and first to do so by winning an LCS with each club.

## **OTHER MISCELLANEOUS STUFFF**

### **FAVORITE NAMES**

Last week your intrepid editor asked for your favorite baseball names. Thanks for your contributions.

**Elvis Andrus**  
**Luis Aparicio**  
**Antonio Bastardo**  
**Earl Battey**  
**Milton Bradley**  
**Homer Bush**  
**Marlon Byrd**  
**Cecil Cooper**  
**Coco Crisp**  
**Prince Fielder**  
**Frankie Frisch**  
**Granny Hamner**  
**Raul Ibanez**  
**Harmon Killebrew**  
**Pete LaCock** (son of Peter Marshall, host of TV's The Match Game)  
**Angel Mangual**  
**Amos Otis**  
**Camilo Pascual** — because it's musical  
**Celerino Sanchez**  
**Herb Score**  
**Diego Segui**  
**Enos Slaughter**  
**Heathcliff Slocum**  
**Ed Spezio**

Almost anyone who threw the knuckleball:

**Wilbur Wood**  
**Hoyt Wilhelm**  
**Charlie Hough**  
**Tom Candiotti**

**Mike Trout**  
**Steve Trout**  
**Rob Deere**  
**Greg Bird**  
**Steve Lyons**

Forty percent of all appearances by starters this year — 1,958 of 4,860 — lasted at least six innings.

The Dodgers have led the league in attendance for each of the past 10 full seasons. Their average attendance of 47,371 this season was the highest in the majors by more than 7,000.

**David Cone's** perfect game vs. Montreal on July 18, 1999 at Yankee Stadium is the only interleague regular season perfect game. He won 20 games for the Mets in 1988. Cone's only 20+ win season in the AL W season was 1998 when he was 20-4 for NYY. Hadn't been done in pinstripes since **Ed Figueroa's** 20-9 in 1978.

**Scott Kazmir** won 108 games across 13 mlb seasons. He was a Mets first round pick. As a Houston high schooler, he tossed three consecutive no-hitters, barely missing a fourth, averaging more than two strikeouts per inning, earning him a first-round draft pick and a \$2M+ signing bonus.

Best starter ERA season this century--Since 2000 **Zack Greinke's** ERA in 2015 was a sterling **1.66**; Only non-qualifiers had better figures.

Here's a name to keep an eye on. Japanese high school baseball phenom Rintaro Sasaki has not submitted an application for the upcoming Nippon Professional Baseball draft and instead plans to play college baseball in the United States, according to multiple reports. Here's what you need to know:

- Sasaki, 6 feet tall and 250 pounds, was projected to be the top pick in the NPB draft before he made his decision to forgo it, according to the reports.
- The 17-year-old hit a Japanese high school record of 140 home runs.
- Sasaki played first base at Hanamaki-Higashi High, where his father Hiroshi Sasaki coaches. MLB superstar **Shohei Ohtani** attended the same high school and was also coached by the elder Sasaki.

Astros catcher **Martin Maldonado** is not known for his bat. He is a career .207 hitter over more than 3,800 plate appearances. Nobody in baseball history has been given that much playing time while hitting so poorly. He displaced another catcher, **Billy Sullivan** (.213), who was born

in 1875 and was the catching Dumbledore of the deadball era. Sullivan once caught three balls dropped from the top of the Washington Monument that were estimated to be traveling about 160 miles per hour.

**Roger Clemens** struck out 20 batters in a 9 inning game twice, only pitcher to do it. Clemens struck out 20 vs. Seattle on April 29, 1986 and Detroit on September 18, 1996.

**Pete Alonso** ranks third all-time in home runs by a player through their first five seasons; only **Ralph Kiner** (215) and **Albert Pujols** (201) have hit more than Alonso (192), who played fewer games than both.

#### **THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS**

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| <b>Enos Cabell</b>       | 74 |
| <b>Mike Morgan</b>       | 64 |
| <b>Sid Fernandez</b>     | 61 |
| <b>Orlando Hernandez</b> | 58 |
| <b>Trevor Hoffman</b>    | 56 |

### **LONGER READS**

#### **SANDY ALCANTARA'S VOLUME AND VELOCITY LEAD TO AN ALL TOO-FAMILIAR PLACE— SURGERY**

Jay Jaffe, FanGraphs

For all of the excitement about the extent to which **Sandy Alcantara** bucked recent trends by piling up innings and pitching complete games en-route to the 2022 NL Cy Young award, his combination of volume and velocity — both at the outer edge of what pitchers of recent vintage have shown they could sustain — placed him at risk for an arm injury. His season ended about a month before those of his Marlins teammates, who made it as far as the NL Wild Card Series, and on Friday the 28-year-old righty announced that he had undergone Tommy John surgery, which will sideline him for the 2024 season.

That Alcantara ended up needing Tommy John surgery is altogether unsurprising, as he's been one of the game's hardest throwers at high volume. His average four-seam velocity has led major league starters for three straight seasons, with his average sinker velocity coming within 0.1 mph of doing so — and one can certainly quibble with the 2021 rankings, as Statcast considers Gerrit Cole qualified on the basis of his meeting the total threshold of 1,500 pitches thrown, though just 25 of his were sinkers that year, compared to 873 for Alcantara.

Alcantara has been even further ahead of the pack in terms of workload. His total of 228.2 innings in 2022 is the majors' highest since '16, and one of just two seasons of the 2020s that cracks the top 25 of what we might call the Statcast era (2015 onward):

#### Highest Single-Season Innings Totals Since 2015

| Pitcher                  | Team | Season | IP    |
|--------------------------|------|--------|-------|
| <b>Clayton Kershaw</b>   | LAD  | 2015   | 232.2 |
| <b>Dallas Keuchel</b>    | HOU  | 2015   | 232.0 |
| <b>David Price</b>       | BOS  | 2016   | 230.0 |
| <b>Jake Arrieta</b>      | CHC  | 2015   | 229.0 |
| <b>Max Scherzer</b>      | WSN  | 2015   | 228.2 |
| Sandy Alcantara          | MIA  | 2022   | 228.2 |
| <b>Max Scherzer</b>      | WSN  | 2016   | 228.1 |
| <b>Justin Verlander</b>  | DET  | 2016   | 227.2 |
| <b>Madison Bumgarner</b> | SFG  | 2016   | 226.2 |
| <b>Chris Sale</b>        | CHW  | 2016   | 226.2 |
| <b>Rick Porcello</b>     | BOS  | 2016   | 223.0 |

|                     |         |      |       |
|---------------------|---------|------|-------|
| Justin Verlander    | HOU     | 2019 | 223.0 |
| <b>Zack Greinke</b> | LAD     | 2015 | 222.2 |
| <b>Corey Kluber</b> | CLE     | 2015 | 222.0 |
| Max Scherzer        | WSN     | 2018 | 220.2 |
| David Price         | DET/TOR | 2015 | 220.1 |
| <b>Johnny Cueto</b> | SFG     | 2016 | 219.2 |
| Madison Bumgarner   | SFG     | 2015 | 218.1 |
| <b>John Lackey</b>  | STL     | 2015 | 218.0 |
| <b>Jacob deGrom</b> | NYM     | 2018 | 217.0 |
| <b>Logan Webb</b>   | SFG     | 2023 | 216.0 |
| Corey Kluber        | CLE     | 2016 | 215.0 |
| Corey Kluber        | CLE     | 2018 | 215.0 |
| <b>R.A. Dickey</b>  | TOR     | 2015 | 214.1 |
| Chris Sale          | BOS     | 2017 | 214.1 |

Meanwhile, Alcantara's three-year total of 619 innings (including 205.2 in 2021) led the majors, 28 ahead of Cole and 39.2 ahead of third-ranked Aaron Nola. His six complete games from 2022 was higher than any *team* total since '19, and higher than any individual total since Chris Sale threw six in '16.

it's not surprising that Alcantara's combination of volume and velocity would carry a cost. What's striking about the increasing rarity of pitchers reaching the 200-inning plateau (just five did it this year, down from eight last year, and 15 in 2019) is that the pitchers who repeat the feat inevitably pay the price. Twenty-four pitchers have thrown 200 innings in a season multiple times since 2015. Five have had Tommy John surgery since doing so, and the attrition rates on the others at least feels high:

Most Times Reaching 200 Innings Pitched Since 2015

| Pitcher            | 200 IP From | To        |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------|
| <b>Gerrit Cole</b> | 6           | 2015 2023 |

|                        |   |           |
|------------------------|---|-----------|
| Justin Verlander       | 4 | 2016 2019 |
| Zack Greinke           | 4 | 2015 2019 |
| Max Scherzer           | 4 | 2015 2018 |
| Corey Kluber           | 4 | 2015 2018 |
| <b>Miles Mikolas</b>   | 3 | 2018 2023 |
| <b>Aaron Nola</b>      | 3 | 2018 2022 |
| Jacob deGrom           | 3 | 2017 2019 |
| Madison Bumgarner      | 3 | 2015 2019 |
| <b>Chris Archer</b>    | 3 | 2015 2017 |
| <b>Jeff Samardzija</b> | 3 | 2015 2017 |
| Chris Sale             | 3 | 2015 2017 |
| Sandy Alcantara        | 2 | 2021 2022 |
| Shane Bieber           | 2 | 2019 2022 |
| <b>Patrick Corbin</b>  | 2 | 2018 2019 |
| <b>James Shields</b>   | 2 | 2015 2018 |
| Dallas Keuchel         | 2 | 2015 2018 |
| Rick Porcello          | 2 | 2016 2017 |
| <b>Marcus Stroman</b>  | 2 | 2016 2017 |
| <b>Jon Lester</b>      | 2 | 2015 2016 |
| Johnny Cueto           | 2 | 2015 2016 |
| <b>Cole Hamels</b>     | 2 | 2015 2016 |
| <b>José Quintana</b>   | 2 | 2015 2016 |
| David Price            | 2 | 2015 2016 |

None of those retirees made it to their age-40 seasons, or came close to reaching 3,000 innings, once a common career plateau. Lester retired after his age-37 season and 2,740 innings. Price (age-36 season, 2,143.2 innings), Hamels (age-36 season, 2,698 innings), Shields (age-36 season, 2,616 innings), Samardzija (age-35 season, 1,645.1 innings), and Porcello (age-31 season 2,096.1) didn't even last that long. The book may be closed on Archer (age-33 season, 1,357 season) as well, as he didn't pitch this past season. Corbin, Keuchel, and Kluber probably aren't long for the majors judging by this year's performances, and I haven't seen a single report of anybody calling to inquire about Bumgarner once the Diamondbacks released him in late April with about \$34 million still remaining on his contract. Meanwhile, Bieber, Mikolas, and Nola didn't have anything close to their best seasons in 2023.

Aside from the future Hall of Famers (Greinke, Scherzer, and Verlander), Cole is the rare pitcher here who has not only survived but thrived, perennially throwing 200 innings while drawing Cy Young consideration, though we'll see how he holds up down the road. Cole aside, I don't think that set of outcomes bodes well for repeated trips to the 200-inning line, at least not unless conditions change to make pitching less stressful — which would probably involve deadening the ball to take away offense, and/or further limiting pitching staff sizes to put a premium on eating innings via shorter plate appearances.

## **THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS**

(answers at bottom)

14 pitchers have won 10 or more post-season games. Teams they played for and Years played.

19 wins. Yankees, Astros, 1995-2013

**Andy Pettitte**

16 wins. Tigers, Astros, 2005-present

**Justin Verlander**

15 wins, Braves, Red Sox, Cards, 1988-2009

**John Smoltz**

14 wins, Braves, Mets, 1987-2008

**Tom Glavine**

13 wins, Dodgers, 2008-present

**Clayton Kershaw**

12 wins, Red Sox, Blue Jays, Yankees, Astros, 1984-2007

**Roger Clemens**

11 wins, Cubs, Braves, Dodgers, Padres, 1986-2008

**Greg Maddux**

11 wins, Orioles, Astros, Phillies, D'Backs, Red Sox, 1988-2007

**Curt Schilling**

10 wins, Blue Jays, Cards, 1997-2012

**Chris Carpenter**

10 wins, Pirates, Astros, Yankees, 2013-present

**Gerrit Cole**

10 wins, Yankees, 1950-1967

**Whitey Ford**

10 wins, Indians, Brewers, Yankees, 2001-2019

**C.C. Sabathia**

10 wins, Dodgers, Rangers, Phillies, A's, Blue Jays, 1978-1995

**Dave Stewart**

10 wins, Blue Jays, Tigers, Reds, Orioles, Yankees, White Sox, Paes, Red Sox, Dodgers, 1987-2007

**David Wells**

Name the 8 franchises that have won 5 or more world series

**Yankees 27**

**Cards 11**

**Red Sox 9**

**A's 9**

**Giants 8**

**Dodgers 7**

**Reds 5**

**Pirates 5**

Three pitchers hold the single season strike-out record for multiple teams.

Right hander, AL 2019 and AL 2022

**Gerrit Cole, Astros 2019 with 326 K's and Yankees 2022 with 257 K's.**

Right hander 1997 NL and 1999 AL

**Pedro Martinez, Expos 1997 with 305 K's and 1999 Red Sox with 313 K's.**

Left hander AL 1993 and NL 2001

**Randy Johnson, Mariners 1993 with 308 K's and D'Backs 2001 with 372 K's.**

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## HOUSEKEEPING

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