

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

10.29.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

Pre-season Vegas odds of a Rangers/Diamondbacks World Series were 1790-1.

Unexpected pairing but two entertaining games. Adolis Garcia of the Rangers sure has a knack for performing on the big stage but the D'backs refuse to go away.

This week lots of post-season notes, welcome to Boston **Craig Breslow** and a **Rogers Hornsby** record.

In Longer Reads the Battle for the Top of the Strike Zone, a fun story about relief pitcher **Jim Kern** and broadcasters nominated for the Hall of Fame.

Pour yourself a cup and enjoy.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

(answers at bottom)

Dusty Baker failed in his effort to become the fifth manager since 1960 to lead his team to three consecutive World Series appearances. Name the four he was attempting to join.

1998-2001

1988-1990

1969-1971

1961-1963

MLB MVP winners without an appearance in the World Series in their playing career.

1952 NL outfielder, righthanded batter, Cubs

1958-1959 NL ss/1B, righthanded batter

1971 NL 3B, righthanded batter

1972 AL 1B/3B, righthanded batter

1974 AL outfielder, righthanded batter, Rangers

1977 AL 1B/2B, lefthanded batter

1982-1983 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

1984 NL 2B, righthanded batter

1985 AL 1B, lefthanded batter

1987 AL outfielder, righthanded batter, Blue Jays

1987 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

1993-1994 AL 1B, righthanded batter

1995 AL 1B, lefthanded batter

1997 AL outfielder, lefthanded batter

1996, 1998 AL outfielder, righthanded batter

1998 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

2001 AL outfielder, lefthanded batter

2002 AL shortstop, righthanded batter

2006 AL 1B, lefthanded batter

2009 AL C/DH, lefthanded batter

2010 NL 1B, lefthanded batter

2011 NL outfielder/DH, righthanded batter, Brewers

2013 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

2014, 2016, 2019 AL outfielder, righthanded batter

2015 AL infielder, righthanded batter, Blue Jays

2017 NL outfielder, righthanded batter, Marlins

2018 NL outfielder, lefthanded batter, Brewers

2020 AL 1B, righthanded batter, White Sox

2021 AL, pitcher/DH, lefthanded batter

2022 AL outfielder, righthanded batter.

2022 NL 1B, righthanded batter, Cards

POST-SEASON NOTES

The Teams

The World Series matches two wild-card teams that each lost 100-plus games two seasons ago. You could have made big bucks in Vegas before the season picking Rangers-D'backs.

Arizona-- The Diamondbacks wound up losing 110 games in 2021.

Last season, Arizona improved by 22 wins, but still finished only 74-88

How we got here-- Texas swept the Tampa Bay Rays and the Baltimore Orioles—the top two teams in the American League—before upsetting the defending-champion Houston Astros to clinch the pennant. Arizona dispatched the Milwaukee Brewers, the Los Angeles Dodgers and the red-hot Philadelphia Phillies.

Rangers began the Series as +140 favorites. 56% of bets/53% of the handle are with the Rangers.

Braves 104-58. Gone.

Dodgers 100-62. Gone.

Brewers 92-70. Gone.

Phillies 90-72. Gone.

84-78 D'backs alive for the World Series.

The Diamondbacks' negative-15 run differential (746 scored, 761 allowed) would usually have led to a sub-.500 record. Instead, they were 84-78 and became just the second team to reach

the World Series after giving up more runs than it scored. Good news for Arizona: The other, the 1987 Minnesota Twins, won the championship in seven games over St. Louis.

The two teams have the lowest combined winning percentage in World Series history:

1. Arizona-Texas, 2023: .537
2. Oakland-New York Mets, 1973: .545
3. San Francisco-Kansas City, 2014: .546
4. Detroit-St. Louis, 2006 and Cleveland-Florida, 1997: .551
5. Minnesota-St. Louis, 1987: .556

There have been an average of 1.4 steals per game through the League Championship Series, up from 0.8 through last year's LCS. The Arizona Diamondbacks lead all postseason teams with 1.6 steals per game.

The overall postseason batting average has climbed from .213 to .241, and the average game time is 3 hours, 2 minutes, a decrease from 3:22 for nine-inning games during the first three rounds of the 2022 postseason and from 3:40 in 2021 through the LCS.

Just seven pitch clock violations have been called through 36 postseason games.

Stolen base attempts are up significantly, rising from 1.1 per game to 1.6. The success rate has climbed from 77.8 percent to 84.5 percent.

The postseason figures follow a regular season in which the average time of nine-inning games dropped from 3:04 to 2:40, its lowest since 1985.

MLB, over the objections of the players' association, instituted a pitch clock set at 15 seconds with the bases empty and 20 seconds with runners on base. The postseason average of one violation per five games was down from one per four games in the final month of the regular season, which overall averaged just under one per two games.

No club has won consecutive World Series since the New York Yankees took three straight from 1998-2000.

The Rangers are 8-0 on the road in the playoffs, joining the 1996 Yankees as the only teams to win their first eight road games in one postseason.

The first 100 World Series had at least one thing in common: None of them were played in the state of Texas.

Now, it's true that most of those Series were played before Texas had a team. But Houston went 43 seasons before winning its first pennant, and the Metroplex (Dallas/Fort Worth) went 38. the fifth World Series in a row to feature games in Texas. It's the ninth time the event has come to the state since 2005, when the Astros of **Jeff Bagwell, Lance Berkman and Craig Biggio** broke through.

The Chicago White Sox swept the Astros in that 2005 World Series, and five years later the Rangers had their own bittersweet introduction, losing in five games to the San Francisco Giants. That was tame compared to the next October, when the Rangers twice came within a strike of clinching a title in Game 6 in St. Louis. They blew both leads and lost in seven.

The Astros did in 2017 and again last fall. Houston also lost the World Series in 2019 and 2021, and Arlington hosted a neutral-site World Series in 2020, when the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Tampa Bay Rays in six games.

One state that's been curiously quiet at World Series time lately: New York. The Empire State was the last to host the World Series in five consecutive years, from 1960 to 1964, but those days are a sepia-tinted memory.

By the end of this World Series, Texas will have hosted at least 29 World Series games — and as many as 31 if this series goes the distance — since 2005. In that same time, New York has hosted just six World Series games: three by the Yankees in 2009 and three by the Mets in 2015.

The Diamondbacks don't have the Rangers' offensive thump, but they did steal 166 bases this season (second-most in the game) while leading the majors with 44 triples. These guys can and will run wild — they stole four bases in decisive NLCS Game 7

The latest to fail to win in consecutive years is the Astros. They now represent the only team in any of the four major North American sports leagues to win all the road games in a seven-game series and be eliminated by losing all the home games. Twice.

They did so in dropping the 2019 World Series to the Nationals — **Max Scherzer** the opposing starter for Washington in the decisive Game 7.

We are now at 23 seasons without a champion going back-to-back since the 1998-2000 Yankees three-peated.

The NBA, NHL and NFL have had at least one repeat champion this century. So has the WNBA, major men's and women's college basketball and major college football.

But not MLB. Not since **Jeter and Rivera and Tino and Bernie and El Duque**.

Every team that has bounced the Brewers in the postseason has played in the World Series. 1981 Yankees lost WS, 1982 Cardinals won WS 2008, Phillies won WS 2011, Cardinals won WS 2018, Dodgers lost WS, 2019 Nationals won WS, 2020 Dodgers won WS, 2021 Braves won WS, 2023 D-backs tbd.

Hats off to the D'backs. they took two must-win games against the defending National League champions in one of the most hostile environments in baseball. Remember--Arizona went down 2-0 in the series, the second loss a crushing 10-0 rout. They were two and a half innings from going down 3-0, and one inning from going down 3-1.

Philadelphia held series leads of 2-0 and 3-2 and failed to win Games 6 and 7 at home.

No team in baseball history had ever finished with a losing home record and then made it to the World Series. The Astros had a shot going 39-42 at home.

Texas topped Houston 11-4 in the clincher, and will head to the World Series for the first time since 2011. The Rangers' 11 runs scored is tied for the second most ever in a Game 7:

Rk	Team	Date	R	Rd.
1	ATL	1996-10-17	15	NLCS
2	TEX	2023-10-23	11	ALCS
3	BOS	2007-10-21	11	ALCS
4	KCR	1985-10-27	11	WS

Rk	Team	Date	R	Rd.
5	STL	1934-10-09	11	WS
6	NYG	1912-10-15	11	WS

Arizona finished the regular season with an 84-78 record. Its 78 losses are tied with the 2006 Cardinals for the second most ever by a league champion.

Rk	Season	Team	Lg	L
1	1973	NYM	NL	79
2	2023	ARI	NL	78
3	2006	STL	NL	78
4	1987	MIN	AL	77
5	2022	PHI	NL	75
6	1997	CLE	AL	75

The Players

Evan Carter of Rangers became the second youngest player ever to bat third in World Series, trailing just Mickey Mantle 1952. The 21-year-old Carter has just 75 regular-season plate appearances in the big leagues

Corbin Carroll is the youngest player to lead off World Series since 1924-99 years. The 23-year-old is a shoo-in for National League Rookie of the Year and has a tremendous blend of speed (54 stolen bases) and power (25 home runs).

Only two players have appeared in 200 games for both the Diamondbacks and the Rangers (**Rod Barajas and David Dellucci**), and only two pitchers have logged 200 innings for both (**Doug Davis and Brandon McCarthy**).

38-year-old **Evan Longoria, D'backs third baseman**, hasn't played in a World Series since his rookie year with the Rays in 2008.

34-year-old Rangers reliever **Will Smith**, who is in pursuit of his third in a row title (all with different teams). Smith, the veteran lefty reliever, closed out the World Series for the Braves in 2021, was active on the Astros' roster in 2022 (though he did not appear in a game) and now pitches for the Rangers. Smith will become the third player ever to appear on the World Series roster for three different teams in consecutive seasons. The others: **Don Baylor** (1986 Red Sox, 1987 Twins, 1988 A's) and **Eric Hinske** (2007 Red Sox, 2008 Rays, 2009 Yankees).

If the Rangers win this World Series, **Max Scherzer** would join **Sandy Koufax, Tim Lincecum and Justin Verlander** as the only pitchers in MLB history with multiple Cy Young awards, no-hitters and World Series championships.

Nolan Ryan was the first player to go into the Hall of Fame with a Rangers logo on his cap, and **Randy Johnson** holds that distinction for the Diamondbacks.

Nathan Eovaldi. Since 1969, the first year of the League Championship Series, only four starters have won two or more games on the road with quality starts (six or more innings, three or fewer earned runs):

- **Steve Avery**, 1991
- **Dave Stewart**, 1993
- **Roy Oswalt**, 2005
- **Eovaldi**, 2023

Avery, Stewart and Oswalt all were LCS MVPs. Texas' Eovaldi was not, thanks in part to **Adolis García** setting a postseason record with 15 RBIs in a series to take the award.

*Of the five players who struck out five times in a postseason game, only one was in the World Series. Three of them — **Jose Siri, Harrison Bader and Andrés Giménez** — did it in wild-card games. **Reggie Sanders** did it in the National League Division Series in 1995, the Reds rolled to a 10-1 victory over the Dodgers so it didn't really matter. But Reggie struck out three times against **Hideo Nomo**, once against **John Cummings** and once against **Antonio Osuna**. Although it didn't matter in that game, it did portend bad things as Reggie was helpless against Atlanta in the NLCS, hitting .125 and striking out 10 times in 16 at-bats.*

*But the only man to strike out five times in a World Series game was a pitcher, **George Pipgras**, in Game 3 of the 1932 World Series. And if that game sounds familiar, well, it should: That is the **Babe Ruth** Called Shot Game. Pipgras — known as the Danish Viking — pitched eight innings, gave up five runs and got the win. He also struck out five times against three Cubs pitchers, three of them looking. I suspect he didn't mind too much. "I loved the game," he told one interviewer. "I'd rather throw that ball than eat."*

Kyle Schwarber's five homers tied the NLCS record set by the Dodgers' Corey Seager in 2020 and is one short of the major league LCS record held by the Rangers' **Nelson Cruz** from 2011.

Schwarber whomped five home runs in five games in this series. Five homers in five games might seem like standard Schwarbarian material — but not at this time of year. Only seven other men have hit five home runs (or more) in *any* postseason series.

World Series: Reggie Jackson (1977), Chase Utley (2009) and George Springer (2017).

LCS: Nelson Cruz (six, in the 2011 ALCS) and Corey Seager (2020).

LDS: Ken Griffey Jr. (1995) and Juan Gonzalez (1996).

Schwarber's five rockets have traveled a combined 2,085 feet — and *averaged* 112 mph in exit velocity.

Most Post Season HRs

Manny Ramirez	29 HR	493 post season plate appearances
Jose Altuve	26	466
Bernie Williams	22	545
Derek Jeter	20	743
Kyle Schwarber	20	251

Average HR ratio of the other four — one HR every 23.7 PA

Schwarber's slightly different HR ratio — one HR every 12.6 PA

Bryce Harper was the first Phillie ever to steal home in a postseason game, or that he became the sixth player ever to steal home in a League Championship Series.

Did Bryce Harper just become the first player ever to steal home and homer in a postseason game? Nope. But he did become the second, joining **Randy Arozarena**, who did it for the Rays in Game 1 of the 2021 American League Division Series.

Zack Wheeler became only the fifth pitcher to start Game 5 of a best-of-seven LCS that was tied two games apiece, then spin off seven innings or more, give up one run or none and strike out eight (or more). Check out the other four men to do that:

- **Nolan Ryan (Astros), 1986 NLCS** (9 IP, 2 hits, 1 run, 12 K)
- **Liván Hernández (Marlins), 1997 NLCS** (9 IP, 3 hits, 1 run, 15 K)
- **Masahiro Tanaka (Yankees), 2017 ALCS** (7 IP, 3 hits, 0 runs, 8 K)
- **Clayton Kershaw (Dodgers), 2018 NLCS** (7 IP, 3 hits, 1 run, 9 K)

Aces don't let their teams lose on nights like this. As always, Wheeler got the memo.

Phillies post-season solo HR streak hit 16 set an MLB record.

Longest previous solo act — 12 in a row, by **Joe Morgan's** 1972-73 Reds and a decade's worth of Astros teams (2005-15).

Longest previous solo act in the same postseason — 10 in a row, by last year's Padres team that lost in the NLCS to ... the Phillies.

Here are the winner-take-all games that **Bruce Bochy** has managed in his career — we'll put the victories in bold:

1. **2012 Division Series (Giants): Beat the Reds 6-4**
2. **2012 NLCS (Giants): Beat the Cardinals 9-0**
3. **2014 Wild Card (Giants): Beat the Pirates 8-0**
4. **2014 World Series (Giants): Beat the Royals 3-2**

5. **2016 Wild Card (Giants): Beat the Mets 3-0**

6. **2023 NLCS (Rangers): Beat the Astros 11-4**

Now, here are the winner-take-all games that **Dusty Baker** has managed in his career (again, wins in bold):

1. **2002 Division Series (Giants): Beat the Braves 3-1**

2. 2002 World Series (Giants): Lost to the Angles 4-1

3. **2003 Division Series (Giants): Beat the Braves 5-1**

4. 2004 NLCS (Giants): Lost to the Marlins 9-6

5. 2012 Division Series (Reds): Lost to the Giants 6-4

6. 2012 Wild Card (Reds): Lost to the Pirates 6-2

7. 2016 Division Series (Nationals): Lost to the Dodgers 4-3

8. 2017 Division Series (Nationals): Lost to the Cubs 9-8

9. 2020 ALCS (Astros): Lost to the Rays 4-2

10. 2023 NLCS (Astros): Lost to the Rangers 11-4

OK, so since 2012 — Bruce Bochy is 6-0 in Winner-Take-All Games, and Dusty Baker is 0-7 in Winner-Take-All Games,

Ketel Marte was named Most Valuable Player of the League Championship series after totaling 12 hits and slashing .387/.406/.581.

Marte through the LCS also recorded 19 hits this postseason, which is tied for the most ever by a Diamondbacks player in a single season.

Rk	Player	H	Season
1	Steve Finley	19	2001
2	Ketel Marte	19	2023
3	Tony Womack	17	2001
4	Luis Gonzalez	16	2001
5	Mark Grace	14	2001
6	Reggie Sanders	14	2001

Last year, 21 year-old **Evan Carter** was coming off a season in which he performed so well that he was rewarded with six games in Double A. In game 7 he hit third in a Rangers lineup that scored 11 runs to clinch the AL pennant.

Other Post-Season Stuff

Since 2005. In that same time, New York has hosted just six World Series games: three by the Yankees in 2009 and three by the Mets in 2015.

It's not as if those teams haven't tried. According to research by *The Athletic's* Jayson Stark — via Cot's Baseball Contracts — the Yankees and Mets have combined to spend more than \$6.64 billion in player payroll to host those six World Series games. That's a tidy cost of about \$1.1 billion per World Series game.

Former President George W. Bush tosses the ceremonial first pitch before Game 1 on Friday night, he'll extend his lead on Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Jimmy Carter for most presidential first pitches at the World Series.

Bush has done it before Game 3 in 2001, Game 4 in 2010, Game 4 in 2011 and Game 5 in 2017. His father, former President George H.W. Bush, joined him in 2010 and 2017.

The others to do it:

- Woodrow Wilson: Game 2, 1915 (Philadelphia)
- Calvin Coolidge: Game 1, 1924 (Washington)
- FDR: Game 3, 1933 (Washington) and Game 4, 1936 (New York Giants)
- Dwight Eisenhower: Game 1, 1956 (Brooklyn)
- Carter: Game 1, 1992 (Atlanta) and Game 6, 1995 (Atlanta)

Bush, 77, headed the group that bought the Rangers from Eddie Chiles in 1998 and was general partner through November 1994, when he stepped down as he prepared to become Texas governor.

Retractable-roof technology came to the majors in 1989, when the Toronto Blue Jays opened what was then known as SkyDome. Somehow, the feature never became standard for new

ballparks (it's kind of pricey), but we finally have our first World Series with two retractable roofs.

There are seven such venues in MLB, but three — in Seattle, Milwaukee and Miami— have never hosted the World Series. The Blue Jays and Astros have hosted multiple times, but never against a similar roof-optional opponent.

This will also be the first World Series contested entirely on artificial turf since the Blue Jays and Phillies met in 1993. The Diamondbacks switched from grass to turf in 2019.

It took a long time, but there's precedent for a ballpark hosting another team in the World Series before actually hosting its occupant. That time, though, it wasn't a neutral-site Series necessitated by a pandemic.

In 1915 and 1916, the Boston Red Sox left Fenway Park to hold their World Series home games at nearby Braves Field, which held more fans. (**Babe Ruth** pitched a 14-inning complete game against Brooklyn there in 1916.) The Boston Braves would not play World Series games at Braves Field until 1948 against Cleveland.

Bruce Bochy will be at the All-Star Game next July, managing the AL team against Lovullo's NL squad. At least Bochy won't need to go very far: The game will be played in Arlington, making Bochy the first manager to use his own office for the All-Star festivities since the Braves' **Bobby Cox** managed in Atlanta in 2000 after winning the pennant the year before.

Dallas has NFL, NBA and NHL teams as well as the Rangers. The Cowboys, Mavericks and Stars have all won championships, the Rangers none. It's the opposite in Phoenix. The D'backs won a World Series while the Arizona Cardinals, Suns and Coyotes have not.

Bill Miller and Alfonso Márquez will be joined by five first-time World Series umpires when the series begins Friday night. Miller and Márquez each will be working his fifth World Series. Miller will be the umpire crew chief and would work the plate for a Game 7.

Márquez was at first base in the opener, joined by **D.J. Reyburn** behind the plate, **David Rackley** at second, **Brian Knight** at third, **Vic Carapazza** in left field, and Miller in right. **Quinn Wolcott** was the reserve umpire for the opener and called balls and strikes for Game 2. He will be followed behind the plate by Márquez, Rackley, Knight, and Carapazza.

Wolcott, 37, was the most accurate at balls and strikes this season at 96 percent among umpires working the plate for more than one game, according to umpscorecards.com. Miller was at 94.1 percent, Knight 94 percent, Rackley 93.9 percent, Carapazza at 93.7 percent and Márquez and Reyburn at 93.5 percent each.

Miller, 56, also worked the Series in 2010, '13, '17, and '20, and he was crew chief in 2020. Márquez, 51, umpired at the Series in 2006, '11, '15, and '21.

Knight is 49, Reyburn 47, Carapazza 44, and Rackley 42.

Todd Tichenor and Lance Barrett will be the video review umpires at MLB's office in New York.

Among players with the best 10 selling jerseys this season, five missed the playoffs: **Shohei Ohtani and Mike Trout** of the Los Angeles Angels, **Aaron Judge** of the New York Yankees, **Fernando Tatis Jr.** of the San Diego Padres and **Julio Rodríguez** of the Seattle Mariners. Three others—**Mookie Betts, Ronald Acuña Jr. and Matt Olson**—failed to make it out of the division series.

There is only one player in this World Series who ranked in the top 20 in 2023 jersey sales: **Corey Seager**, who came in at No. 14.

Joe Sheehan on the Phillies-- Over the last two nights, the Phillies had 15 high-leverage plate appearances. They went 0-for-12 with five strikeouts, two walks and a sac bunt. That's not the whole story, but it is most of it. The Phillies just didn't do anything with their opportunities. **Rob Thomson** let **Johan Rojas** bat with the bases loaded and two outs in the fourth yesterday, and he was overmatched. That's the kind of tradeoff you can make when everyone else is combining for three homers a game; it's much more costly when they're not.

Even with all that, the Phillies came tantalizingly close. In the bottom of the seventh, **Bryce Harper** came up with the tying run on first, down 4-2, against **Kevin Ginkel**. He worked the count to 2-1 then jumped on a four-seamer up and out over the plate, hammering it at 107.6 mph off the bat. He just missed it, though, and the ball landed in Alek Thomas's glove, just 331 feet from the plate. The difference between F8 and pandemonium couldn't have been an inch. It may not have been millimeters. Harper said, "He beat my barrel by a tenth of a second."

It's at-bats like that why I reject all the woo we attach to the postseason. The Phillies didn't go 7-1 to start October because of vibes and chemistry and they didn't lose because they're chokers. They won because the millimeters, the tenths of a second that separate F8 and HR

went their way for two weeks, and then they lost when they didn't for a week. That's not character, and it's barely skill. It's just baseball.

More Phillies-- The nail in the coffin was the Phils going 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position. The inability to come through with runners on was a theme throughout the series. **In their 10–0 blowout win in Game 2, the Phillies were 5-for-7 with runners in scoring position. In the six other games, 6–37. That's a .162 batting average.** The Phillies made up for the lack of clutch hitting by clobbering home runs (24 homers in 13 games this postseason, including 11 in this series) but hit just one homer in the final two games.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

The year end carousel spins. **Bob Melvin** leaves Padres to manage the Giants. **Dusty Baker** retires as Astros manager. Brewers manager **Craig Counsell** interviews for the Mets job. Angels, Guardians, Mets, Padres all looking for new managers.

Leading one's league in wins, ERA and strikeouts isn't exactly a walk in the park. Even with **Shane Bieber** accomplishing the feat in 2020, it has only happened six times since the turn of the century.

In the entire decade of the 1980s, **Dwight Gooden** was the only pitcher to win the Triple Crown. In the '70s, **Steve Carlton** was the lone hurler to do it. And other than **Sandy Koufax** -- a three-time Triple Crown winner from 1963-66 -- no pitcher led his league in all three categories from **Hal Newhouser** in '45 until Carlton's epic '72 season.

Here is the list of 28 pitchers who have won the Triple Crown, including just 23 since 1901:

- Shane Bieber, 2020, Indians (8 wins, 1.63 ERA, 122 K's)
- **Justin Verlander**, 2011, Tigers (24 wins, 2.40 ERA, 250 K's)
- **Jake Peavy**, 2007, Padres (19 wins, 2.54 ERA, 240 K's)
- **Johan Santana**, 2006, Twins (19 wins, 2.77 ERA, 245 K's)
- **Randy Johnson**, 2002, D-backs (24 wins, 2.32 ERA, 334 K's)
- **Pedro Martinez**, 1999, Red Sox (23 wins, 2.07 ERA, 313 K's)
- **Roger Clemens**, 1998, Blue Jays (20 wins, 2.65 ERA, 271 K's)

- Roger Clemens, 1997, Blue Jays (21 wins, 2.05 ERA, 292 K's)
- Dwight Gooden, 1985, Mets (24 wins, 1.53 ERA, 268 K's)
- Steve Carlton, 1972, Phillies (27 wins, 1.97 ERA, 310 K's)
- Sandy Koufax, 1966, Dodgers (27 wins, 1.73 ERA, 317 K's)
- Sandy Koufax, 1965, Dodgers (26 wins, 2.04 ERA, 382 K's)
- Sandy Koufax, 1963, Dodgers (25 wins, 1.88 ERA, 306 K's)
- Hal Newhouser, 1945, Tigers (25 wins, 1.81 ERA, 212 K's)
- **Bob Feller**, 1940, Indians (27 wins, 2.61 ERA, 261 K's)
- **Bucky Walters**, 1939, Reds (27 wins, 2.29 ERA, 137 K's)
- **Lefty Gomez**, 1937, Yankees (21 wins, 2.33 ERA, 194 K's)
- Lefty Gomez, 1934, Yankees (26 wins, 2.33 ERA, 158 K's)
- **Lefty Grove**, 1931, Athletics (31 wins, 2.06 ERA, 175 K's)
- Lefty Grove, 1930, Athletics (28 wins, 2.54 ERA, 209 K's)
- **Walter Johnson**, 1924, Senators (23 wins, 2.72 ERA, 158 K's)
- **Dazzy Vance**, 1924, Robins (28 wins, 2.16 ERA, 262 K's)
- **Pete Alexander**, 1920, Cubs (27 wins, 1.91 ERA, 173 K's)
- Walter Johnson, 1918, Senators (23 wins, 1.27 ERA, 162 K's)
- **Hippo Vaughn**, 1918, Cubs (22 wins, 1.74 ERA, 148 K's)
- **Pete Alexander**, 1916, Phillies (33 wins, 1.55 ERA, 167 K's)
- Pete Alexander, 1915, Phillies (31 wins, 1.22 ERA, 241 K's)
- Walter Johnson, 1913, Senators (36 wins, 1.14 ERA, 243 K's)
- **Christy Mathewson**, 1908, Giants (37 wins, 1.43 ERA, 259 K's)
- **Rube Waddell**, 1905, Athletics (27 wins, 1.48 ERA, 287 K's)
- Christy Mathewson, 1905, Giants (31 wins, 1.28 ERA, 206 K's)
- **Cy Young**, 1901, Americans (33 wins, 1.62 ERA, 158 K's)
- Amos Rusie, 1894, Giants (36 wins, 2.78 ERA, 195 K's)
- **John Clarkson**, 1889, Beaneaters (49 wins, 2.73 ERA, 284 K's)
- **Tim Keefe**, 1888, Giants (35 wins, 1.74 ERA, 335 K's)
- **Old Hoss Radbourn**, 1884, Grays (59 wins, 1.38 ERA, 441 K's)
- **Tommy Bond**, 1877, Red Stockings (40 wins, 2.11 ERA, 170 K's)

Craig Kimbrel ranks eighth in career regular-season saves (417), perhaps the all-time phony baseball statistic. Kimbrel's total would make one believe he is great at closing out tight ballgames. Unfortunately, that is a myth.

Kimbrel is a monument to the clean-inning save with a three-run lead in the top of the ninth against a bad lineup. Under those conditions, nobody was ever better. But when the game is on the line, few have been worse.

Stat guru Bill Chuck says, "Since 2016, Kimbrel has appeared in 24 postseason games, totaling 23⅓ innings, allowing 22 hits, 17 walks, with an ERA of 5.44, allowing an OPS of .848."

Janet Marie Smith, designer of Camden Yards who influenced a next generation of ball parks, was not nominated for the Hall of Fame by the era committee. Smith has built and managed renovations of several major and minor league baseball parks in the United States including Baltimore, Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles. She became one of the first women to hold an executive position with any Major League Baseball club when she was promoted to Vice President of Planning and Development with the Baltimore Orioles in 1989. Smith is best known for her work developing Oriole Park at Camden Yards, which set a new standard for ballparks "incorporating historic, old-fashioned ballpark architecture with state-of-the-art modern conveniences." Through her work, Smith has demonstrated how to seamlessly blend the best elements of the past with those of the future.

Other notable projects completed by Smith are the transformation of Olympic Stadium in Atlanta to the Braves' Turner Field and the renovation of Fenway Park in Boston—which gave new life to the oldest ballpark in the major leagues and included innovations such as the Green Monster Seats as well as the use of Jersey Street as an inside the park concourse.

Camden Yards was the first of the "Retro Ballparks," and was unique in that it honored many qualities of ballparks from the classic era ballparks like Fenway Park and Wrigley Field, but also incorporated modern elements and building techniques to improve the overall fan experience as well as the views.

Tim Anderson undoubtedly has fond memories of the period from 2019 to 2022. The shortstop for the Chicago White Sox won the American League batting crown with a .335 average in the first season of that four-year stretch, then tacked on three more plus-.300 averages. He received votes for the Most Valuable Player Award, made a pair of All-Star teams, and was acclaimed as one of the best players in baseball.

But Anderson's hot streak screeched to a sudden halt in 2023. He fell into a massive 52-for-244 (.213) slump between mid-June and early September, plunging his yearend average to a mediocre .245.

And, just as bad, his power disappeared. Anderson lofted 139 extra-base hits, including 51 home runs, during his 2019-2022 hot streak. But only 21 of his hits went for extra bases in 2023, and just one of those was a homer.

Before the 2021 season, Major League Baseball trimmed the number of minor-league clubs from 160 to 120, wiping out dozens of minor-league teams. Keep an eye on two lawsuits filed by ousted owners challenging baseball's anti-trust exemption.

*On July of 1923, **Rogers Hornsby** had 13 consecutive games with multiple hits.*

*Five different players have had 11 consecutive games with multiple hits, the most recent being **Lourdes Gurriel Jr.** of the D'backs. In July of 2018 — his rookie season — Gurriel came into his streak hitting .226. He then had at least two hits in every game through the end of the month and had lifted his average to .322 when he turned his ankle trying to stretch a single into a double. I would like to believe that if he had not turned his ankle then, he'd have had multi-hit games for the rest of his life.*

*The other four with 11 consecutive multi-hit games are **Tony Perez** (1973), **Paul Waner** (1927), **Sam Rice** (1925) and **Shoeless Joe Jackson** in 1912.*

Who holds the record for most home runs by a player who spent his entire big-league career with only one team?

The answer is **Mike Schmidt**, who hit 548 home runs while playing exclusively with the Philadelphia Phillies. **Mickey Mantle** (536 with the New York Yankees) and **Ted Williams** (521 with the Boston Red Sox) have the next highest one-team-only totals.

George Frazier made three relief appearances for the New York Yankees against the Los Angeles Dodgers in the 1981 World Series and was charged with a loss in all three, including the Game 5 clincher. The title was LA's first since 1965 when they beat the Minnesota Twins in seven games, a Series in which every winning pitcher hurled a complete game.

Stan Musial had 24 hits, 25 walks, and one strikeout in 103 plate appearances against the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1944.

Barry Bonds slashed .359/.526/.821 with 22 home runs in 255 career plate appearances versus the Milwaukee Brewers.

The 1982 Cardinals had three Hall of Famers and two MVPs on their roster, but when they beat the Brewers in Game 7 of the World Series, the series MVP was a guy many fans today probably haven't heard of. Who was it?

Answer: Darrell Porter. Not **Keith Hernandez** (the 1979 NL MVP), **Willie McGee** (the '85 MVP) or Hall of Famers **Ozzie Smith, Bruce Sutter or Jim Kaat**. Porter, a catcher who batted .286 with a homer and five RBIs in the series, took home the honor.

Porter was an above-average player when he signed with the Cardinals before the 1981 season. He'd been named to four All-Star teams and gotten MVP votes in '78 and '79. His '82 season wasn't up to the level of his peak in Kansas City, but he shone in the World Series.

Porter had a clutch game-tying double with two outs in the bottom of the sixth in Game 2, then had an RBI single in the eighth inning of Game 7 that extended St. Louis's lead.

Kyle Schwarber is on a run. He's hit 104 homers in the past two seasons. This Hundred-aires Club is another exclusive group. Over the past two years, Schwarber has now fired off 93 home runs in the regular season, plus another 11 in the postseason. Does 104 home runs seem like a lot?

Only five other sluggers in history have smoked that many homers over a two-season span (postseason included), if you filter out everyone who is suspected of using performance-enhancing drugs:

Babe Ruth	119	1927-28
Jimmie Foxx	106	1932-22
Albert Belle	104	1995-96
Ken Griffey Jr.	112	1997-98
Ryan Howard	106	2006-07

Davey Johnson began his career in major league baseball as a player, most notably with the O's. He spent eight years in Baltimore earning three of his four all-star selections, three gold gloves and won two World Series with the Birds. He split the last five years of his career between the Atlanta Braves, Philadelphia Phillies and Chicago Cubs. Even though Johnson was a very good player, he receives his nomination as a manager where he had an even more successful second career in the majors.

Johnson managed five major league franchises and had success with each of them. His managerial career began with the New York Mets (1984-90). His time in New York included two division titles (winning 100 or more games in both seasons), and a World Series Championship in 1986. Johnson's next job came with the Cincinnati Reds (1993-95).

In those three years he won two more division titles including a worst to first turnaround from 1993-94. After leaving Cincinnati, Johnson returned to Baltimore for the 1996 season. The O's finished second in Johnson's first season, then won the division with a wire-to-wire performance in 1997.

Johnson left the Orioles after having irreconcilable differences with Peter Angelos. He managed the Los Angeles Dodgers from 1999-2000, then was talked out of retirement in 2011 by the Washington Nationals. He spent three years with the Nats, winning another title in 2012, before retiring for good following the 2013 season.

Overall, Johnson won six division titles and a World Series as a manager. He was a two time manager of the year (1997, 2012). His career record of 1,372-1,071 gives him a .562 winning percentage. Johnson is one of eight managers with win Manager of the Year in both the American and National Leagues.

The last player on the Giants to lead the National League in hitting before **Barry Bonds** did it in 2002---Willie Mays. Mays hit **.345** in 1954 to lead MLB. It was his only batting title.

Mays at various times in his career, led the majors in each of the following categories at least once: hits, triples, home runs, stolen bases, slugging, OPS+ and TB. Eleven times did he play every inning of an All-Star game.

Yogi Berra holds the Yankees record for most post-season hits.

Berra collected 71 hits in 295 World Series plate appearances across 14 Fall Classics (1947, '49, '50, '51, '52, '53, '55, '56, '57, '58, '60, '61, '62, '63). The Yankees won 10 championships during Berra's playing tenure.

Dusty Baker made his MLB debut as an outfielder on Sept. 7, 1968 for the Braves against the Astros—the team he would manager to a World Series title 54 years later. He went on to make two All-Star games in a 19-year career split between Atlanta, the Dodgers, the Giants, and the Athletics.

Baker went on to a distinguished career leading San Francisco, the Cubs, the Reds, the Nationals and Houston. He made the playoffs with every team he led, culminating in a World Series title with the Astros in 2022.

2,183 wins (seventh all-time), three pennants, a World Series, he managed five different teams and took all of them into the postseason at one time or another.

Which pitcher got the final out when the Marlins beat the Yankees in the World Series on Oct. 25, 2003? That would be **Josh Beckett**. Pitching on three days' rest, Beckett threw a complete game shutout (107 pitches).

Manager **Jack McKeon**'s decision to start Beckett was a controversial one. He was the team's best pitcher all season, but starting him on short rest seemed like a rash decision when the team wasn't facing elimination. Rookie **Dontrelle Willis** could have gotten the start after throwing one inning in relief in Game 5, or McKeon could have chosen veteran **Mark Redman**, who, despite getting knocked around in Game 2, had had a solid regular season and looked better early in the playoffs.

McKeon made the decision on the afternoon of Game 5. Beckett played long toss in the outfield that day, two days after throwing 108 pitches in a Game 3 loss. McKeon decided that if Beckett reported he was feeling good during that work out then he would get the ball in Game 6, regardless of how Game 5 turned out.

Beckett was outstanding in his Game 6 start, allowing just five hits and two walks while striking out nine. Of the 107 pitches he threw, 71 were strikes.

The final out came when Beckett got **Jorge Posada** to hit a weak grounder up the first base line. Beckett fielded it and tagged Jorge Posada to end it.

Theo Epstein and Red Sox CEO Sam Kennedy were baseball teammates at Brookline (Mass.) High School and started their front office careers together in the 1990s, working for Larry Lucchino's San Diego Padres.

The only pitcher ever to lose a World Series game to the San Diego Padres is **Dan Petry**.

The Padres have been to the World Series twice--1984 vs. Detroit and were swept 1998 by the Yankees. San Diego won game 2 1984 & lost the series 4-1. Petry played for DET 1979-80; 1981-1987; & 1991.

Rangers right fielder **Adolis Garcia** is having an eventful postseason. He became the first player to hit a grand slam against the same team (the Astros) in the regular season and the postseason. He also was the first player to hit a grand slam in a playoff game after striking out four times. Not bad for a player Texas designated for assignment during spring training in 2021. Garcia passed through waivers and was outrighted to Triple A. He was put back on the roster on April 13 and has 97 home runs and a .777 OPS since.

Jordan Montgomery has a 2.95 ERA when **Mike Maddux** has been his pitching coach, and 3.84 otherwise.

Welcome to Boston. The guy hasn't been there long enough to find the men's room but here is a greeting via the Boston Globe.

The Red Sox needed someone with more experience than Chaim Bloom, and in Craig Breslow they ended up with someone with less

By Christopher L. Gasper Globe Staff

The Red Sox have their man. He just doesn't have the experience to inspire total confidence in the choice.

It's entirely possible the Sox' "robust" process found the perfect person for their Impossible Dream Job of chief baseball officer in **Craig Breslow**, the former relief pitcher who won a World Series ring here in 2013. Or they were forced to hire the best candidate willing to step into the line of fire after several experienced executives left vapor trails rebuffing them.

It's hard to fathom that when the Sox pulled the plug on Chaim Bloom Sept. 14 their aim or expectation was to end up with a successor with less experience. That was not the industry expectation. Globe sources felt that, given the market pressures and on- and off-field complications of the job, finding someone with experience to head baseball operations was important.

Industry chatter was that the Sox saw it similarly. However, a string of rejections delivered a sobering message about the desirability of replacing Bloom. This gig should come with a Geiger counter; it's radioactive. At least nine potential candidates declined interviews or removed themselves from the process.

Boston is a brutal place for on-the-job training. The learning curve can be as steep as the Monster Seats.

The brilliant Breslow is precocious for sure, and he sports the imprimatur of former Sox general manager Theo Epstein, the baseball ops beau ideal the Sox are forever chasing. Epstein hired Breslow, a fellow Yale graduate, with the Cubs in 2019 as director of strategic initiatives.

But Breslow has less experience and enjoyed less responsibility than Bloom had before becoming CBO in 2019.

Bloom was a 1A executive for the Rays, spending 15 seasons there, the final six as vice president/senior vice president of baseball operations before coming here to spread the seeds of sustainability.

Working remotely from Massachusetts while parachuting into Chicago for a week or two at a time, Breslow rose to a No. 3 role for the Cubs under president of baseball operations Jed Hoyer. While Breslow was involved in the day-to-day decision-making and big-league roster construction as assistant GM/senior vice president/pitching, it's still a Bob Beamon leap to now being responsible for building the Next Great Red Sox Team with the club riding three last-place finishes in four years.

It's the equivalent of asking Ceddanne Rafaela to be the MVP version of **Mookie Betts** instantly.

It would make sense to pair Breslow with a veteran baseball exec who can serve as an aide de camp.

A story in The Athletic stated that "Breslow's cerebral style wasn't always for everyone." Yikes.

He's going to have to be Fenway's funambulist-in-chief, juggling different factions and relationships without alienating anyone in a position of power. With the Red Sox, that's far too many folks.

The Yalie that Breslow is going to have to emulate most isn't Epstein. It's George W. Bush, because this job is as political as it is analytical. You can't choose your manager. It's Alex Cora. President/CEO Sam Kennedy is loyal to longstanding baseball ops members such as Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero (who interviewed for Breslow's job), and Raquel Ferreira.

Breslow will have to manage expectations and manage up and down. He will have to convince ownership when it's time to push forward financially and, possibly, when it's time to punt. "Sell" is viewed as the ultimate four-letter word in this market.

Media messaging around convoluted and conflicting team-building decisions tripped up Bloom. There was the disastrous Winter Weekend where he was booed along with principal owner John Henry (who also owns the Globe). Then his "underdogs" comment referencing the odds the Sox faced to make the playoffs at this year's trade deadline, explaining the team's lack of aggressiveness.

The fan base lost interest and faith in the Bloom-print, evidenced by dollar-store prices for a Red Sox-Yankees game in September days before he was removed. That ultimately contributed to ownership feeling the same.

Breslow will face far more scrutiny as the man responsible for the Red Sox roster than for any pitch he threw during his 12-year career as a major league middle reliever.

One tip for you, Craig: Don't say, "We're going to do this. It's going to be awesome," or use the word "multifactorial." A sincere Bloom was mocked for saying the former while announcing the Rafael Devers extension in January. Ben Cherington said the latter in his introductory press conference.

The perception around baseball is that Sox upper management and ownership is tougher to please than a Marine drill sergeant. They're always searching for some ideological silver bullet.

With Dave Dombrowski, it was restoring star power. The buzzword surrounding Bloom was "sustainability." For Breslow, it's his acumen as a pitching guru. That's the area where he contributed most to the Cubs, turning around their pitching development.

He's a proponent of maxing out velocity and then working on pitch shape and command. According to The Athletic, Cubs minor league pitchers ranked first in average fastball velocity this season and second in "stuff" metrics.

That's appealing to a Sox organization that has encountered problems maximizing its arms outside of **Brayan Bello** and ranked 27th in innings by starters.

Still, with Bloom leaving an advantageous foundation behind, the situation begged for a more experienced hand.

But proven baseball execs didn't heed Kennedy's clarion call from the team's wrap-up press conference Oct. 2.

"If you want to run a baseball organization, this is where you want to be," he said. "Why? Because it matters here more than anywhere else, so if you're not up for that challenge, thanks but no thanks."

The Sox got a lot of "thanks but no thanks." They ended up with Breslow, who will be presented as their first choice all along.

"Despite the results, over the past few years, substantial efforts have been made and considerable organizational progress has occurred behind the scenes, but not at the major league level," said Henry in a statement announcing Breslow's hiring. "We feel strongly that Craig is the right person at the right time to lead our baseball department."

Guess we won't be hearing Jimi Hendrix's classic "Are You Experienced" over the Fenway sound system next season.

Hiring a former player to run the baseball operations is nothing new for the Red Sox. **Joe Cronin** (1948-58), **Pinky Higgins** (1963-65), and **Haywood Sullivan** (1978-83) all played for the Sox before moving into the front office.

Total American League pennants there: zero.

Dusty Baker has retired as manager of the Houston Astros, ending an illustrious 26-year career as a big-league skipper highlighted by a World Series win last season. finished his career ranked ninth with 2,183 victories in 4,046 regular-season games. He was the 12th manager in major league history to reach 2,000 wins and the first Black man to accomplish the feat.

Ten of the other 11 managers who have accumulated at least 2,000 wins are in the Hall of Fame. **Bruce Bochy** (2,093), who is still managing the Texas Rangers and isn't yet eligible, is the only exception.

Baker began managing in 1993 after a 19-year playing career as an outfielder. He played with **Hank Aaron** in Atlanta and won a World Series with the Dodgers in 1981.

Baker managed San Francisco, the Chicago Cubs, Cincinnati, and Washington before coming to Houston. He's the only manager in major league history to take five different teams to the postseason.

He came to the Astros to help clean up their image in the wake of their sign-stealing scandal that cost manager **A.J. Hinch** his job.

Baker posted a 320-226 record with the Astros, leading them to the playoffs in each of his four seasons and winning the pennant twice.

He is one of three Black managers to win a World Series, joining **Dave Roberts** (Dodgers, 2020) and **Cito Gaston** (Blue Jays, 1992 and 1993).

Baker made two World Series trips before winning it all with Houston last season. Baker and the Astros fell to the Braves in six games in 2021 after his most crushing defeat in the Fall Classic in 2002.

Baker's San Francisco Giants starring **Barry Bonds** entered Game 6 against the Angels a win away from a title. As the road team for the last two games of that series, the Giants squandered a five-run lead in a 6-5 loss in the sixth game before the Angels won the title with a 4-1 victory in Game 7.

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS

Al Leiter	58
Pedro Martinez	52
Ichiro Suzuki	50
Robinson Canó	41
Juan Soto	25

LONGER READS

THE NEW BATTLE FOR THE TOP OF THE ZONE, AND HOW ITS SHOWING UP IN THIS YEAR'S PLAYOFFS

Eno Sarris, The Athletic

There was once a battle for the bottom of the zone. **Leo Mazzone** made a brand of the low-and-away fastball on those successful Braves teams of the early '90s.

"I'm not telling them to throw every pitch down and away, but as long as you have that pitch, you're always going to be good," the pitching coach said in a 2005 interview with ESPN.com.

In 2013, no team threw more high-and-inside fastballs to lefties than the Pirates. So, to preserve the low fastball, the high-and-tight fastball became a weapon. But it still wasn't great news for the low sinker. Between the onset of pitch-tracking and 2014, cutters (often thrown from righties to lefties in that high-and-tight area) increased by 20 percent, and sinker usage across the league dropped by 50 percent. The percentage of low-and-away sinkers thrown by righties to lefties has fallen by half during the pitch-tracking era. Teams that espouse the down-and-away fastball seem behind the times.

The pitch-tracking era itself spurred changes in pitch movement and usage. "Ride" on a fastball is hard to detect with the human eye, but the machines could tell us which four-seamers dropped less than others, and research into the link between pitch movement and results — research on "stuff" — quickly found that ride was important.

"The human eye cannot detect the rise effect," tweeted **Carlos Peña** this week.

And because of that, and since the machines started tracking it, there's been a clear trend towards more fastball ride every year.

As the use of the high four-seamer is higher than ever in the pitch-tracking era, there's a chance not all of those fastballs are good four-seamers. And, oh yeah, the hitters are starting to train for the four-seamer like they used to train to hit the low-and-away sinker.

In this year's ALCS, while the Rangers were beating the Astros' **Cristian Javier** — whose fastball has top-20 ride over the last three years — broadcaster **John Smoltz** talked about Texas bench coach **Donnie Ecker**'s advice to his players to hit the top of the ball as if the fastball was three baseballs higher coming in.

We've been hearing about this adjustment from hitters for a bit, so maybe it's not surprising that they did better on high four-seamers this year than they had in seven years. There's some evidence that what was once considered good ride is not getting the results it used to. The worm is turning in the battle for the top of the zone.

In these playoffs, we're seeing an adjustment from pitchers facing hitters who can increasingly get on top of the riding four-seamer at the top of the zone: high sinkers and sliders. We saw a couple of good examples of it over the past week.

The Phillies' **Ranger Suárez**, who threw a four-seamer 20 percent of the time and threw it more often than he threw his sinker to righties this season, sent a high sinker to Arizona's **Tommy**

Pham. Pham swings over the top of it, suggesting he thought it might be a four-seamer up. Texas' **Jordan Montgomery** has thrown a few for called strikes that have actually dropped into the zone.

We've seen glimpses of it in the playoffs, but there was more hard evidence in the regular season. This season, there were nearly 3,000 more sliders and sinkers in the top third of the zone than last season, and those are traditionally pitches you want in the lower third of the zone. In the last two seasons, high sinkers have performed better than they ever have in the Statcast era. As a percentage of sinkers, the top-third-of-the-zone sinkers in 2023 were at a Statcast-era high — a complete reversal of where we started 30 years ago.

The cycle is clear, and as one coach recently told me, it's happening more quickly in the era of pitch-tracking and ubiquitous public analysis. The competitive advantage a team might have on something new, like discovering sweepers, is less than two seasons. Sweepers were great! But not against opposite-handed guys. And maybe not too often, as hitters are getting better at them every year.

High-riding fastballs are great! Hitters know that. They've been training for that. You better have something else you can work off of that high fastball that moves in a different direction. One hitting coach said having a sinker and a four-seamer was a "cheat code" for just this reason — train to hit the four-seam three baseballs above the pitch, get a high sinker instead, and you'll swing right over the top of it.

We had years of "down and away" and then a shorter time of "let it ride." So, what's the name for the current state of successful pitching strategy? "Everything, everywhere, all at once," maybe?

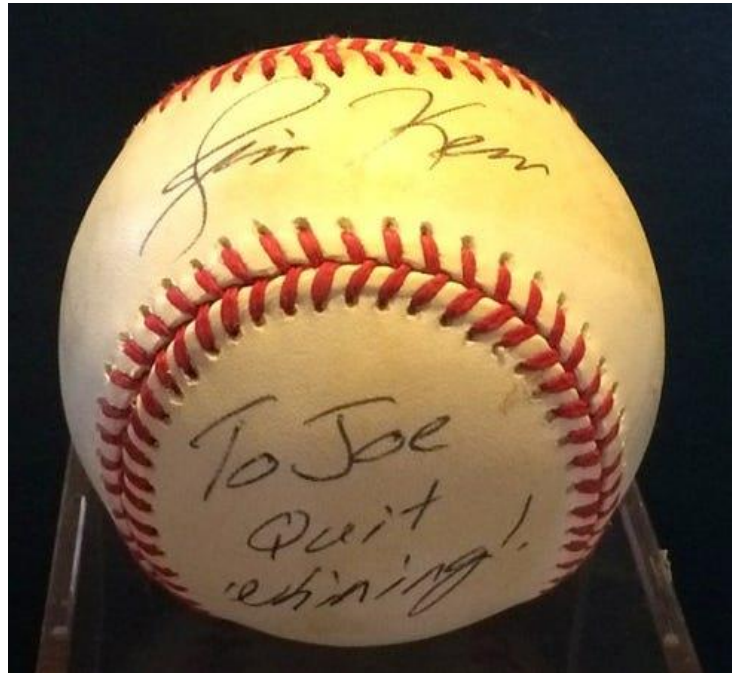
JOE POSNANSKI--A GREAT STORY AND BROADCASTERS

(as always, I recommend a subscription to Posnanski's newsletter—he former Kansas City Star columnist puts out great stuff every day).

Jim Kern was a power reliever for Cleveland in the 1970s, when I was a kid. At one of my first games at Cleveland Municipal Stadium, I saw a few Cleveland players were signing autographs for some other kid, so I rushed over with a few scraps of paper and a pencil and tried to get in on the action. I'm going to guess this was 1975 or 1976, I was probably 8 or 9, and I had never gotten an autograph before.

I was effectively boxed out by the other kids — I was really small — and slowly it began to occur to me that the players were leaving. Jim Kern was the last one signing, and I was desperate to get his autograph, and he said: “Sorry guys, I gotta go,” and I began bawling. It’s not my proudest moment, but there you go. Jim saw me crying and rushed back, quickly scrawled his name on one of my pieces of scrap paper and raced off. And with that, I was the single happiest kid on planet earth, and I rushed back to the seat to show my Dad the autograph and ... well, what do you think? I couldn’t even find it. You don’t have people sign autographs in PENCIL, and he had rushed through, and the autograph was so light that you couldn’t even see it.

OK. Maybe 30 years later, I wrote about this story. And not long after, a friend handed me a baseball autographed by Jim Kern. And the ball read:



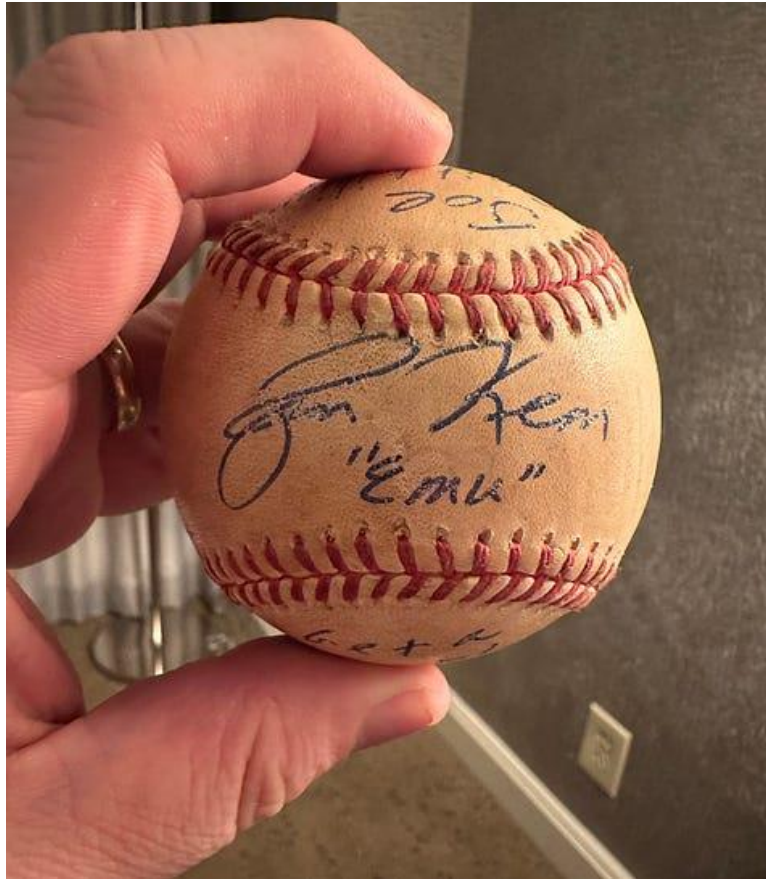
As you might imagine that became one of my absolute prize possessions.

But, as many of you might know, the story doesn’t end there ... because a few years ago, our dog, Westley, got hold of that baseball. And, well ...

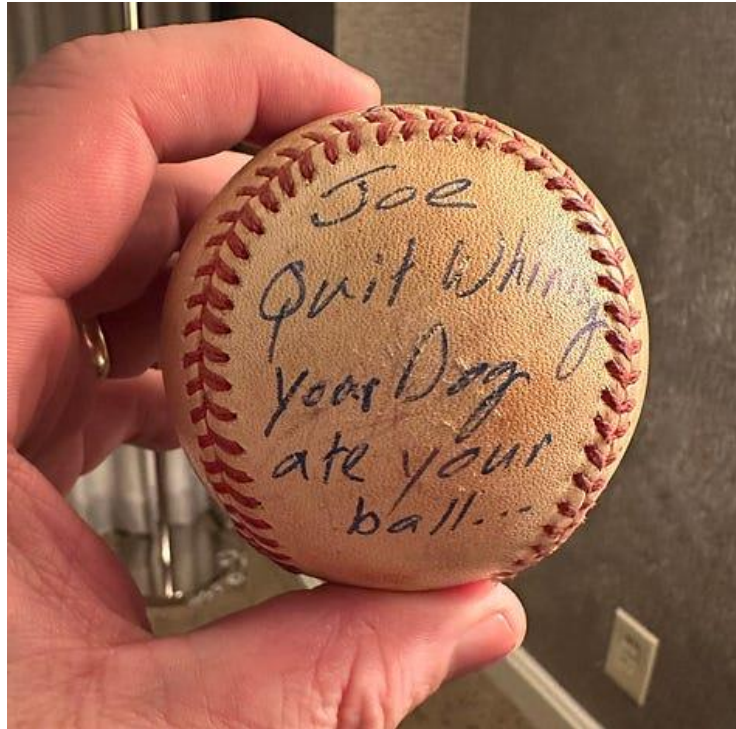


Yeah. So, anyway, I told that story again. And suddenly Robert — like he was Ralph Edwards from “This is Your Life” — says something like: “Well, Joe, we have a surprise for you.”

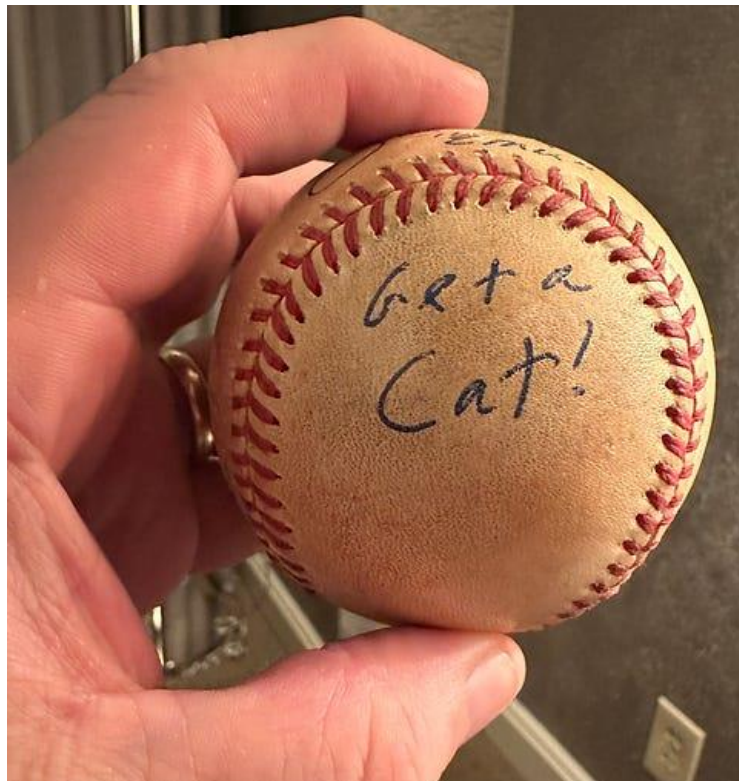
And Jim Kern stands up and walks over and hands me an autographed baseball.



And on it, he writes:



You will notice the ellipses. Well, on the other side he wrote:



Ten different baseball announcers were nominated for the Ford Frick Award this year — and I have to say, it's such an absurdly loaded ballot that my head is spinning a little bit. I'm like: Can we put them ALL in already? How are some of these guys NOT in the Hall yet?

Here is the list of nominees:

- Joe Buck. I know everybody had their view of Joe as a baseball guy, but I mean he was the voice of baseball for a quarter century. Really. He was the lead guy on Fox going back to 1996, which is wild, and he called 24 World Series, and while I very much like Joe Davis, his voice doesn't sound like October quite the way Buck's did. Of course, you have to give him time.
- Joe Castiglione. Beloved Red Sox announcer for 41 years. Just fantastic.
- Gary Cohen. Mets announcer for 35 years. Again, just fantastic. Often I will watch Mets games and think he's the best in the business. Admittedly, I do this with others as well, but Gary's so good.
- Jacques Doucet. I'm not as familiar with Jacques, obviously, since he did the French broadcast for the Expos. But I'm told he was terrific.*
- Tom Hamilton. Cleveland announcer for 34 years and, I mean, it's easy to forget just how lucky we have been with baseball announcers. Tom is truly great, too!
- Ernie Johnson Sr. Sure, I grew up listening to Ernie Johnson on the Superstation just like everybody of my generation. He called Atlanta games for 35 years.
- Ken Korach. Will admit, I haven't heard Ken much. He's been doing Oakland radio for 28 years.
- **Mike Krukow and Duane Kuiper.** OK, let me breathe for a minute — as I understand it, Krukow and Kuip are not a paired selection. I believe they are listed individually on the ballot. But they **MUST** go in together, and they **MUST** go in immediately, and if the powers that be blow this the way they blew it by not putting **Alan Trammell and Lou Whitaker** in together, I will never, ever, ever forgive them.
- Dan Shulman. Man is this ballot crazy-loaded; Dan's another guy I listen to and think he's the best in the game. He was, of course, lead broadcaster for ESPN, and

he was great, but he's been doing Toronto baseball for the last few years, and he's so ridiculously good. Just so good.

**Since I'm not too up on Jacques, let's turn to the amazing Josée Tellier, a lifelong Expos fan:*

"Let me make you a little resume! Jacques started as a beat writer in 1968 when it was announced that the Expos were coming. He replaced Jean-Pierre Roy once a week, and in 1972, he became the official radio voice for the Expos until they left after 2004. Jaques popularized and taught the actual vocabulary of baseball to us French speakers. EVERYONE that listened to baseball on the radio knows Jacques. He's truly considered the Vin Scully of Quebec. He wrote two books. One is about six inches thick, it's the entire Expos history. He described over 5,000 games in his life. He has been proactive in baseball charities, and also baseball for kids too. He's so popular, I guarantee you that when he passes away, the whole province will mourn. A truly beloved figure that has lived, loved and promoted baseball for 50 YEARS!!!! His health isn't the best right now. He deserves it."

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Dusty Baker failed in his effort to become the fifth manager since 1960 to lead his team to three consecutive World Series appearances. Name the four he was attempting to join.

1998-2001

Joe Torre (1998-2001 Yankees)

)1988-1990

Tony La Russa (1988-90 Oakland A's)

1969-1971

Earl Weaver (1969-71 Orioles)

1961-1963

Ralph Houk (1961-63 Yankees).

MLB MVP winners without an appearance in the World Series in their playing career.

1952 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

Hank Sauer, Cubs

1958-1959 NL ss/1B, righthanded batter

Ernie Banks, Cubs

1971 NL 3B, righthanded batter

Joe Torre, Cards

1972 AL 1B/3B, righthanded batter

Dick Allen, White Sox

1974 AL outfielder, righthanded batter

Jeff Burroughs, Rangers

1977 AL 1B/2B, lefthanded batter

Rod Carew, Twins

1982-1983 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

Dale Murphy, Braves

1984 NL 2B, righthanded batter

Ryne Sandberg, Cubs

1985 AL 1B, lefthanded batter

Don Mattingly, Yankees

1987 AL outfielder, righthanded batter

George Bell, Blue Jays

1987 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

Andre Dawson, Cubs

1993-1994 AL 1B, righthanded batter

Frank Thomas, White Sox

1995 AL 1B, lefthanded batter

Mo Vaughan, Red Sox

1997 AL outfielder, lefthanded batter

Ken Griffey Jr., Mariners

1996, 1998 AL outfielder, righthanded batter

Juan Gonzalez, Rangers

1998 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

Sammy Sosa, Cubs

2001 AL outfielder, lefthanded batter

Ichiro Suzuki, Mariners

2002 AL shortstop, righthanded batter

Miguel Tejada, Oakland A's

2006 AL 1B, lefthanded batter

Justin Morneau, Twins

2009 AL C/DH, lefthanded batter

Joe Mauer, Twins

2010 NL 1B, lefthanded batter

Joey Votto, Reds

2011 NL outfielder/DH, righthanded batter

Ryan Braun, Brewers

2013 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

Andrew McCutheon, Pirates

2014, 2016, 2019 AL outfielder, righthanded bater

Mike Trout, Angels

2015 AL infielder, righthanded batter

Josh Donaldson, Blue Jays

2017 NL outfielder, righthanded batter

Giancarlo Stanton, Miami Marlins

2018 NL outfielder, lefthanded batter

Christian Yelich, Brewers

2020 AL 1B, righthanded batter

Jose Abreau, White Sox

2021 AL, pitcher/DH, lefthanded batter

Shohei Ohtani, Angels

2022 AL outfielder, righthanded batter.

Aaron Judge. Yankees

2022 NL 1B, righthanded batter.

Paul Goldschmidt, Cards

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

Please remember to check out

SUNDAYBASEBALLTIDBITS.COM

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

HOUSEKEEPING

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

Our sources include:

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

Please check them out and support them.