

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

11.12.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

This week more managers come and go, if you don't know Yoshinobu Yamamoto you soon will, salaries through the years, and a lookback on the 2018 fight between Tigers announcers.

With the off-season upon us, anecdotes slow down so it is an opportunity to offer more Longer Reads. This week Gold Gloves then and now, a fun story about Geddy Lee of the band Rush and his baseball memorabilia collection, the day Juan Marichal and Johnny Roseboro fought, and Lou Piniella's Hall of Fame case.

Its 27 degrees in Maine this morning. Pour yourself a hot cup and enjoy. Thanks for reading.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Three seasons he hit 60+ HRs. He is Not in Hall of Fame. Is he:

Pete Alonso, Barry Bonds, Aaron Judge, Roger Maris, Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa?

Only five players have won Rookie of the Year and later an MVP with another team.

1956 Reds, 1966 Orioles

1958 Giants, 1967 Cards

1964 Phillies, 1972 White Sox

1977 Expos, 1987 Cubs

2012 Nationals, 2021 Phillies

When I was a kid knowing everyone in the 500 HR club was easy.

Hank Aaron	755
Babe Ruth	714
Willie Mays	660
Mickey Mantle	536
Jimmie Fox	534
Ted Williams	521
Ernie Banks	512
Eddie Mathews	512
Mel Ott	511

Since then, 19 more players have reached 500. How many of those 19 can you name? Career total listed and the year he retired noted to help guide you.

762 home runs, retired 2007

703, 2022

696, 2016

630, 2010

612, 2012

612, 2007

586, 1976

583, 2001

573, 1975

569, 2005

563, 987

555, 2011

548, 1989

541, 2016

521, 1980

521, 2008

511, 2023

509, 2009

504, 1997

I was the first Canadian-born player to win the AL or NL Rookie of the Year award.

Played for San Diego, Boston, Mets and Seattle.

Won Rookie of the Year award as a Pirate in 2004.

Righthanded hitting left fielder.

Over my 11-year career played 1278 games, hit 222 HRs, batted .266.

Played in the post-season with the Red Sox in 2008 and 2009 but never played in the World Series.

In a three team trade involving the Red Sox, Dodgers and Pirates in 2008 (**Manny Ramirez** went to the Dodgers). **Who am I?**

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Goodbye David Ross, Hello Craig Counsell.

Just like in the winter of 2014 when **Joe Maddon** suddenly became available, the Cubs pounced on the best manager on the market. Maddon was absolutely the guy they needed to withstand the attention and pressure of that situation, but he also unwittingly answered the long-debated question: How would a World Series-winning Cubs manager be treated? The answer was not that much different than the rest of them. Maddon only got three more seasons after a title before the Cubs ushered him out the door.

Counsell is 53. He's a two-time World Series winner as a player with the Marlins and Diamondbacks, and as the manager of his childhood team, he went 707-625 (.531) in nine seasons. He took over for **Ron Roenicke** early in the 2015 season and went 61-76. He had a 73-89 record the next season and in the next six full seasons, not including the fraudulent pandemic year, the Brewers had winning records, finishing first or second in the NL Central. The Brewers made the playoffs four times out of those six years. (They had a 29-31 record in 2020 and still made the expanded postseason.)

Counsell's job is going to change, just like it did for Maddon going from Tampa Bay to Chicago: 5 years/\$40 million. Now Counsell has to win in the postseason. Milwaukee made it to the NLCS in 2018, where they lost in seven games to the Dodgers, but they've won one total playoff game since. The Cubs hired Counsell to get back to the World Series.

The manager carousel continues to spin (over 20% of big-league managers will be new to their teams in 2024).

Angels went old school, hiring **Ron Washington**.

Guardians went unknown, hiring **Stephen Vogt**.

Craig Counsell \$8 million per year

Carlos Mendoza \$1.5 million per year.

Quick-name the five Angels managers since 2018

Mike Scioscia	2000-2018
Brad Ausmus	2019
Joe Maddon	2020-2022
Phil Nevin	2022-2023
Ron Washington	2024-?

There are just four former major league players running baseball operations: **Jerry Dipoto** (Mariners), **Chris Getz** (White Sox), and **Chris Young** (Rangers) joined by new hire **Craig Breslow** (Red Sox).

GOLD GLOVES

(please also see the Gold Gloves now & then in Longer Reads below).

Winners are determined by a combination of voting from managers and coaches, as well as the SABR Defensive Index. All 30 MLB managers and up to six coaches from each team cast a vote for a pool of players from their league, excluding players from their own team.

The manager/coach vote counts for 75 percent of the vote total. The SABR Defensive Index makes up the remaining 25 percent of the vote.

Here's the full list of 2023 MLB Gold Glove winners:

American League

C: Jonah Heim, Texas Rangers

1B: Nathaniel Lowe, Texas Rangers

2B: Andrés Giménez, Cleveland Guardians

3B: Matt Chapman, Toronto Blue Jays

SS: Anthony Volpe, New York Yankees

LF: Steven Kwan, Cleveland Guardians

CF: Kevin Kiermaier, Toronto Blue Jays

RF: Adolis García, Texas Rangers

P: José Berríos, Toronto Blue Jays

Utility: Mauricio Dubón, Houston Astros

National League

C: Gabriel Moreno, Arizona Diamondbacks

1B: Christian Walker, Arizona Diamondbacks

2B: Nico Hoerner, Chicago Cubs

3B: Ke'Bryan Hayes, Pittsburgh Pirates

SS: Dansby Swanson, Chicago Cubs

LF: Ian Happ, Chicago Cubs

CF: Brenton Doyle, Colorado Rockies

RF: Fernando Tatis Jr., San Diego Padres

P: Zack Wheeler, Philadelphia Phillies

Utility: Ha-Seong Kim, San Diego Padres

The Blue Jays and Rangers both had three winners from their five nominees. The Chicago Cubs led the NL with three winners, followed by the National League champion Arizona Diamondbacks with two. In San Diego, second baseman Ha-Seong Kim became the first Asian-born infielder to win a Gold Glove.

Aaron Nola (Phillies), **José Berríos** (Blue Jays) and **Dylan Cease** (White Sox) are the only pitchers with 32 or more starts each of the last three seasons.

The Red Sox have not had a Gold Glove winner since **Mookie Betts** in 2019.

In 1954, playing for the Reds, **Ted Kluszewski** led the majors with **49** homers—he struck out just 35 times. His 141 RBI also led MLB that season.

But he finished a distant 2nd in the MVP voting to **Willie Mays** in Mays's breakout year. Mays led baseball in BA (**.345**), SLG (**.667**), & WAR (**10.4**)

Kluszewski homered in his first two World Series at bats. In Game 1 of the 1959 Series Kluszewski homered in the 3rd and 4th innings of a 11-0 win for the White Sox.

Who will be the most sought-after free agent this offseason not named Shohei Ohtani?

It could be Japanese right-handed pitcher Yoshinobu Yamamoto, and the 25-year-old showed exactly why on Saturday in Game 6 of Nippon Professional Baseball's Japan Series.

Yamamoto fired a 14-strikeout complete game on 138 pitches to lift the Orix Buffaloes over the Hanshin Tigers, 5-1. He allowed only one run with no walks, and his 14 K's set a Japan Series record.

He retired 17 of the final 20 batters he faced, with three harmless singles sprinkled in between. On his 132nd pitch, he fired a 98 mph fastball past Kento Itoharu for his 13th strikeout. He then froze pinch-hitter Ryo Watanabe for No. 14.

He has won three consecutive Sawamura Awards, the NPB's version of the Cy Young. He finished each of those years with the pitching Triple Crown after leading the Pacific League in wins, strikeouts and earned run average. He went 16-6 with 169 strikeouts and a 1.21 ERA across 164 innings during the regular season this year.

The 25-year-old Orix Buffaloes ace will be posted by his Nippon Professional Baseball club this offseason, which would allow him to sign with an MLB team. Yamamoto will instantly become one of the top pitchers on the free-agent market -- arguably *the* top pitcher, considering how much younger he is than fellow free-agent aces **Blake Snell** and **Aaron Nola** (both 30).

Yamamoto will likely join the long line of dominant NPB pitchers to jump to the Majors, following the likes of **Kodai Senga**, **Masahiro Tanaka**, **Yu Darvish** and, of course, **Shohei Ohtani**.

Yamamoto fast facts:

Position: RHP

Ht/Wt: 5-foot-10, 176 pounds

Age: 25

DOB: Aug. 17, 1998

Born: Bizen, Japan

NPB team: Orix Buffaloes

NPB seasons: 7

2023 stats: 23 games, 16-6, 1.21 ERA, 169 K, 164 IP

And here are seven things to know about Yamamoto.

1) He has won three straight Triple Crowns

Only three Major League pitchers have won three Triple Crowns: **Sandy Koufax, Walter Johnson and Grover Cleveland Alexander**. But over in Japan, Yamamoto has won three *in a row*.

Pitching in NPB's Pacific League, Yamamoto has led the league in wins, ERA and strikeouts in each of the last three seasons:

Yamamoto's Triple Crown run

- **2021: 18-5, 1.39 ERA, 206 K**
- **2022: 15-5, 1.68 ERA, 205 K**
- **2023: 16-6, 1.21 ERA, 169 K**

Just totaling that up, that's a 49-16 record, 1.44 ERA and 580 strikeouts for Yamamoto over the last three seasons.

Many Japanese aces who jumped to MLB have won Sawamura Awards. Tanaka and **Kenta Maeda**, for example, won two each; Darvish, **Daisuke Matsuzaka and Hideo Nomo** each won one. None of them won the award as many times as Yamamoto before they came to the Major Leagues, let alone three times in a row.

Everywhere he's pitched, Yamamoto has won.

In NPB, his Orix Buffaloes won the 2022 Japan Series, defeating the Tokyo Yakult Swallows in a clash of Triple Crown winners and reigning MVPs: Yamamoto on the pitching side for Orix, Munetaka Murakami on the hitting side for the Swallows.

And internationally, Yamamoto has won two gold medals. There was Japan's gold in this year's WBC, and Yamamoto also won gold at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. He was even named to the All-Olympic Team.

Dick Drago died this week.

Dick Drago, a righthanded pitcher who made 206 appearances for the Red Sox in two stints with the team from 1974-80, died Thursday in Florida. He was 78.

An Ohio native who attended the University of Detroit, Drago signed with the Tigers in 1964 and was selected by the Royals in the 1968 expansion draft.

The Red Sox traded for Drago after the 1973 season, sending righthander **Marty Pattin** to Kansas City.

Drago pitched three scoreless innings in Game 2 of the ALCS against Oakland to earn a save. He also saved Game 3 to clinch the pennant, getting the last five outs. Drago appeared twice in the World Series. He took the loss in Game 2, allowing two runs in the ninth. Drago pitched three scoreless innings in Game 6 — with help from **Dwight Evans**.

Drago was on the mound in the 11th inning when **Joe Morgan** hit a ball deep to right field that Evans snared with a remarkable catch before hurling the ball toward first base.

Carl Yastrzemski caught the ball in foul territory and flipped it to shortstop **Rick Burleson**, who was alertly covering the bag, for a double play.

Drago was traded to the Angels before the 1976 season then returned to the Sox as a free agent in '78. He was 21-17 with a 3.52 ERA in 133 games over three seasons. That included getting an out in the top of the ninth inning of the 1978 tiebreaker game against the Yankees.

Drago was 108-117 with a 3.62 ERA over 13 seasons with five teams.

When the Royals participated in the expansion draft, they leaned heavily on pitchers taken from two successful organizations, the Baltimore Orioles and the Detroit Tigers. Both of those teams had assembled powerhouse squads in the late 1960's that the baby Royals hoped to emulate. With the 31st pick in the draft, Cedric Tallis selected one Richard "Dick" Drago off the roster of the Tigers. In 1966, while pitching for the Tigers affiliate in Rocky Mount, N.C., Drago threw a seven-inning no-hitter against Greensboro. In the nightcap of the doubleheader, his roommate, Darrell Clark, threw another no-hitter. Based on my research, I believe this is the only time in baseball history where no-hitters were thrown in both games of a double header.

Drago started the 1969 season in the Royals bullpen, but soon moved into the starting rotation and became a workhorse. He threw the first complete game in Kansas City history in his first start, a five hit, 3-2 win against the Angels on May 2nd, 1969. Drago threw nine complete games in that inaugural season. Drago threw 53 complete games in his five-year Royal career, which still ranks as fifth best all-time.

Drago, known for his great control, quickly became a mainstay in the Royals rotation. At one stretch in his career, from 1969 to 1973, he only threw 12 wild pitches in 921 innings.

On September 1, 1972, Drago held Boston hitless for the first three innings before he took a line drive off the jaw from Carl “bleeping” Yastrzemski. Drago suffered a hairline fracture of his jaw and lost a tooth. Yastrzemski eventually scored in what became a 1-0 Royals loss. Drago missed one start, then came back to throw a complete game win on September 10th against the Twins.

In 1973, Drago was one of many Royals to clash with manager **Jack McKeon**. Unfortunately, the Royals kept McKeon and traded Drago to the Boston Red Sox in October of 1973 straight up for another character, Marty Pattin.

Drago pitched nine more seasons, mostly in relief, going 47-47 with 8 WAR. Drago did find success in the Red Sox bullpen, where he became their key fireman for the 1975 pennant winners. He also pitched the ninth, tenth and eleventh innings of the 1975 classic World Series game six, only allowing one hit to the powerful Cincinnati Reds. The Sox of course, won that game on a **Carlton Fisk** home run, which everyone remembers. What people forget is the titanic, two-out, three-run home run **Bernie Carbo** hit in the bottom of the 8th inning, to tie the score at six. That set the stage for Drago, who then shut down the powerful Reds to set the stage for Fisk’s heroics.

Drago closed his Kansas City career with a record of 61-70 with a 3.52 ERA and 13.5 WAR. He still holds a place in the Royals Top Ten all-time in innings pitched, walks per nine innings, complete games, games started, shutouts thrown, career ERA, batters faced and FIP. He also holds the club record for most complete games without issuing a walk with five in his 1971 season. Drago also holds the distinction of giving up **Hank Aaron’s** 755th and final career home run in 1976. He said the toughest hitters he ever faced were **Tony Oliva and George Brett**. He had the most success against Milwaukee slugger **Gorman Thomas**, who went 0-22 against the Godfather.

When Hall of Fame outfielder **Andre Dawson** retired, only he (438 HRs, 314 stolen bases) and **Willie Mays** (660/339) had both 400 career HRs and 300 stolen bases.

Since then they have been joined by **Barry Bonds** 762/514, **Arod** 626/329 and **Carlos Beltran** 435/312.

Kim Ng departed the Marlins front office in mid-October, and now the **Marlins** have hired Peter Bendix, formerly the GM of the **Rays**, to take over baseball operations in Miami.

Bendix is just the latest member of the Andrew Friedman crew to take over baseball operations elsewhere, following the recently fired Chaim Bloom in Boston, James Click (who departed Houston after 2022), and Matt Arnold, who is still in Milwaukee. Friedman's departure preceded theirs; he took over the Dodgers' baseball operations after the 2014 season.

Bendix had been with the Rays since joining the organization as an intern in 2009.

The Texas Rangers 5-0 victory over Arizona to clinch their first championship drew the largest audience of this World Series. However, it was not enough to prevent the five-game series from being the least-watched Fall Classic in recorded TV history.

Nielsen and Fox said Thursday the World Series averaged 9.11 million viewers, less than the 9.79 million average from the 2020 series, when the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Tampa Bay Rays in six games.

It was a 23 percent decline from last year's series, when the Houston Astros beat the Philadelphia Phillies in six games and averaged 11.78 million.

Baseball and network executives figured this year's series might face a tough audience because of two teams that don't have much national appeal. The expanded playoffs also meant it was a series matching the teams with the seventh- and 11th-best records.

HOW DO YOU KNOW A GOOD MANAGER?

Joe Posnanski

Lots and lots of managerial things are happening around baseball right now, but two things in particular caught my attention.

One, I read some stuff musing whether or not four-time World Series champion **Bruce Bochy** is, in fact, the greatest manager ever.

Two, the ultimate Milwaukee guy, **Craig Counsell**, left the Brewers for a \$40 million windfall with the Chicago Cubs, making him, by far, the highest-paid manager ever.

I'm not sure these two things are related, but for some reason, they connected in my mind. Here's why: I've come to believe that the baseball manager job is the most mysterious of all coaching jobs in sports. It's the only one of our major American sports where you don't really design plays, and you can't really set things up to put the game in the hands of your best players, and timeouts don't play an important role in the game's action, and, as often as not, the less you do during the game, the better off your team will be.

Andy Reid or Gregg Popovich or Jon Cooper or Jurgen Klopp can transform their teams, game by game, have them play different styles depending on the opponent. Bruce Bochy or Craig Counsell, mostly, cannot. They are, in so many ways, prisoners of the moment, dependent on how their starting pitcher pitches, how the bottom of their lineup fares, how reliable the bullpen happens to be on a given day, how well the ball happens to be carrying, the dice-rolling randomness of their best hitters coming up at exactly the right times.

I'm speaking a bit more definitively here than I feel in order to make the point: The things that separate the best baseball managers in 2023 are not easily observed or seen. Sure, every now and again, a hit-and-run will work perfectly or a pitching change will backfire or a lineup shift will seem to spark the whole team.

Still, for the most part, baseball managers these days follow the same game principles. **Torey Lovullo's** Diamondbacks bunted a little bit more than some other teams, and **Terry Francona's** Guardians intentionally walked a few more batters than some others, and **David Bell's** Reds stole a few more bases than some others, and **Gabe Kapler's** Giants had one more complete game (4!) than any other team ... but all of this is on the margins.

You could recognize a Marty Schottenheimer football team.

You can recognize an Erik Spoelstra basketball team.

I don't know that you could watch any team in baseball play and recognize the particular style of that team's manager.

This is not to downplay the importance of baseball managers, but to say, instead, that it isn't easy to understand what makes them succeed or fail. Almost exactly one year ago, **Buck Showalter** won Manager of the Year and was the toast of New York. Today, Buck Showalter doesn't have a job and would probably have to buy his own beer in New York.

What I'm saying is:

I could not tell you what makes Craig Counsell worthy or unworthy of the biggest managerial contract ever. I have never once watched the Milwaukee Brewers play and thought: "Now, THAT is a Craig Counsell move right there." I take it on faith that he's very good at running a clubhouse, dealing with internal issues, projecting calm and fire when those are needed, injecting confidence in his players while always letting them know he has their backs. The Brewers have had high-level starting pitching, so I think he must be very good in handling starters. He's pretty anti-sacrifice bunt and intentional walk, so I like that. And you will hear players talk about his "winning attitude."

There have also been repeated playoff failures. I'll get back to those in a minute.

Add it all up and ... well, I'm not sure what it means. I think Counsell is a fine manager. The Cubs were willing to make the big bet because, well, they tried this once before, and it worked beautifully. In 2014, the Cubs felt they were on the cusp of something special. And at the end of that season, they rather cold-heartedly dumped loyal manager **Rick Renteria** when **Joe Maddon** came on the market. Theo Epstein has told me that was hard, but he felt like the team had one chance, and only one chance, to hire a manager as dynamic as Maddon, and they couldn't miss the opportunity. Maddon immediately guided the Cubs to the NLCS, and the next year they won the World Series. So that worked.

Now, the Cubs might again feel on the cusp of something; by all logic, they should have breezed into the playoffs this year, as they outscored opponents by 96 runs. And Craig Counsell was there to be wooed, so they dumped loyal manager David Ross and gave Counsell the record-

breaking deal, and they're hoping it pays off big again. It might. It might not.* As I say, I have no idea.

**I can't help thinking that, well, I don't know if Maddon was a BETTER manager than Counsell — I'm not sure such comparisons are even useful — but I do think Joe Maddon cut a much larger persona than Craig Counsell. I mean, Joe is a big personality, someone out of the old-school of managers, the kind of guy you might see kibitzing with celebrities, the kind of guy who brings elephants on the field to loosen things up, a jokester and a stir-things-up sort, a direct descendant of the bigger-than-life managers like Tommy Lasorda and Sparky Anderson and Whitey Herzog. I don't get any of that from Counsell. He does get thrown out of his fair share of games; though David Ross seemed to have that covered in Chicago.*

Counsell's postseason troubles are well-known in Milwaukee:

2018: Swept the Rockies in the NLDS but lost to the Dodgers in seven games in the NLCS.

2019: Blew a 3-0, early-inning lead and lost the wild-card game to the Nationals.

2020: Swept by the Dodgers in a best-of-three wild-card series.

2021: Won Game 1 of the NLDS, but then lost three straight to Atlanta, twice getting shut out.

2023: Blew two multi-run leads and got swept by Arizona in the wild-card series.

Now, can you make anything out of that? Hard to say. The Nationals, Dodgers and Braves all went on to win the World Series and were, it can be reasonably said, the superior teams. The Diamondbacks' loss this year was more surprising and harder to explain away, but, hey, it was just two games, plus Arizona just had some magic and kept on going all the way to the World Series.

But ... well, this is where we come back to Bruce Bochy. It seems way off to call Bruce Bochy the greatest manager in baseball history or anything close. He has a losing regular-season record, for crying out loud. He has never managed a team that won 100 games in a season and only once has managed a team to 95 wins. Here's something crazy: He has never managed a single

team to the best record in the league. Heck, in two of his four World Series seasons, his team didn't even win the division.

That said: None of those regular-season things mean what they used to mean. It's true that Bochy in 26 years of managing has never won what you might call a "natural pennant" — finishing with the league's best record — but what matters now, pretty much to the exclusion of everything else, is October, and Bochy's record in October is beyond remarkable.

- In San Diego, yes, his teams went 8-16 in the postseason but did go to the World Series in 1998.
- In San Francisco, his teams were a remarkable 36-17 in October, winning three World Series.
- In Texas, as you know, his team set a record for consecutive road wins, went 13-4, and won the franchise's first World Series.

Add it all up, that's a 57-37 postseason record, five pennants, four World Series, all this with teams that never went into the playoffs as a favorite.

This Bochy witchcraft, like so many of the managerial traits we've been talking about here, is not easy to explain. Bochy's presence inspires confidence, and he seems more or less unshakeable, and he doesn't seem unduly tied to tradition or blind loyalty or anything else that might prevent him from winning TODAY'S game. And, I mean, you just like the guy, which can't hurt.

But does he run wild like **Whitey Herzog's** teams did? No. Does he preach the gospel of great defense, starting pitching and the three-run homer as **Earl Weaver** did? No. Does he mix and match and experiment and follow his gut and entertain the sportswriters like **Casey Stengel** did? No. Does he work over his bullpen so much that people call him "Captain Hook" the way they did with **Sparky Anderson**? No.

Maybe you can DESCRIBE the baseball philosophy of Bruce Bochy in that sort of pithy way. I find it hard to do.

But there's something happening with Bochy, something that every team in baseball wants now. If a franchise could hire a steady manager who will squeeze the most out of a team's

talents over the regular season, or a mercurial manager who will give them the best chance to win in October, I imagine most teams right now would choose the second. That is, if teams could identify such things.

I don't think they can. I'm very happy that Craig Counsell has reset the market for managers; by baseball standards I think they were underpaid. I'm very happy that Bruce Bochy put himself among the elite managers by winning his fourth World Series. And I'm not sure I understand any of it. That might not be a bad thing, though. Baseball is a wonderful mystery, after all.

Manny Ramirez and Chipper Jones share the record for most post-season walks—72.

Love him or hate him, tough to ignore **Barry Bonds** hit 30 or more home runs in 13 straight seasons.

Aaron Judge was given the **Roberto Clemente** award for community service. The first Yankee to win it was **Ron Guidry** in 1984. **Derek Jeter** won in 2009.

August 3, 1958. Playing for the Kansas City A's **Roger Maris** hit a double, a triple, an inside the park HR and a grand slam homer. His hometown of Hibbing, MN is birthplace of two Hall of Famers – Bob Dylan (Rock n Roll HOF) and Kevin McHale (basketball HOF).

The Boston Red Sox endured the Curse of the Bambino for more than 80 years before winning the World Series in 2004. The Chicago Cubs finally shook the Curse of the Billy Goat after 71 seasons when they won it all in 2016.

Now what might be baseball's last great curse has been broken. The Hanshin Tigers defeated the Orix Buffaloes 7-1 in a decisive Game 7 Sunday night at Osaka's Kyocera Dome to win their first Japan Series title in 38 years. It was just the second championship for the Tigers since Nippon Professional Baseball adopted its two-league system in 1950 and their first since 1985.

Longest run with a single team and not in the Hall of Fame—**Mel Harder** played 20 seasons with the Cleveland Indians (1928-1947). NL record is **Dave Concepcion**—19 years with the Reds (1970-1988).

Other long runs include **Lou Whitaker** (19 seasons with Tigers) and **Ed Kranepool** (18 seasons with the Mets).

Mickey Mantle went to 12 World Series in his first 14 seasons.

Andy Pettitte's 19 postseason wins are the most in MLB history. **Tom Glavine** with 16 has the most postseason losses. **Greg Maddux** has the second-most postseason losses with 14.

HE MADE HOW MUCH?

- The highest-paid MLB players in 2023 are **Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander**.
- They will each make a salary of \$43,333,333 this season.
- In 1874, the highest-paid player was Fergus Malone, whose salary was \$2,800.

Baseball is an expensive business, and mega contracts via free agency are becoming more and more common, but just how much are the top players across the league pocketing each season?

Back in 1874, the highest-paid player in MLB was **Fergus Malone** of the Chicago White Stockings, whose salary of \$2,800 would be equivalent to approximately \$73,195.44 today. In 2023, New York Mets pitchers Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander top the list, each slated to earn \$43.3 million this year.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PLAYER</u>	<u>TEAM</u>	<u>SALARY</u>
1874	Fergus Malone	Chicago White Stockings	\$2,800
1876	Al Spalding	Chicago White Stockings	\$4,000
1885	Jim O'Rourke	New York Giants	\$4,500
1886	Fred Dunlap	St. Louis Maroons/Detroit Wolverines	\$4,500
1887	Charles Radbourn	Boston Beaneaters	\$4,500
1888	Fred Dunlap	Pittsburgh Alleghenys	\$5,000
1888	Buck Ewing	New York Giants	\$5,000
1904	Joe McGinnity	New York Giants	\$5,000

1906	Nap Lajoie	Cleveland Naps	\$8,500
1911	Ty Cobb	Detroit Tigers	\$9,000
1912	Roger Bresnahan	St. Louis Cardinals	\$10,000
1912	Jimmy Callahan	Chicago White Sox	\$10,000
1912	Hugh Jennings	Detroit Tigers	\$10,000
1912	Honus Wagner	Pittsburgh Pirates	\$10,000
1913	Fred Clarke	Pittsburgh Pirates	\$15,000
1914	Ty Cobb	Detroit Tigers	\$15,000
1914	Tris Speaker	Boston Red Sox	\$15,000
1915	Fred Clarke	Pittsburgh Pirates	\$15,050
1916	Ty Cobb	Detroit Tigers	\$20,000
1920	Babe Ruth	New York Yankees	\$20,000
1920	Tris Speaker	Cleveland Indians	\$20,000
1921	Ty Cobb	Detroit Tigers	\$25,000
1922	Babe Ruth	New York Yankees	\$52,000
1927	Babe Ruth	New York Yankees	\$70,000
1930	Babe Ruth	New York Yankees	\$80,000
1936	Mickey Cochrane	Detroit Tigers	\$36,000
1937	Lou Gehrig	New York Yankees	\$36,000
1938	Lou Gehrig	New York Yankees	\$39,000
1941	Hank Greenberg	Detroit Tigers	\$55,000
1942	Joe DiMaggio	New York Yankees	\$43,750
1947	Hal Newhouser	Detroit Tigers	\$70,000
1949	Joe DiMaggio	New York Yankees	\$100,000

1951	Ted Williams	Boston Red Sox	\$90,000
1957	Yogi Berra	New York Yankees	\$65,000
1958	Mickey Mantle	New York Yankees	\$65,000
1959	Willie Mays	San Francisco Giants	\$75,000
1960	Willie Mays	San Francisco Giants	\$80,000
1961	Willie Mays	San Francisco Giants	\$85,000
1962	Mickey Mantle	New York Yankees	\$90,000
1962	Willie Mays	San Francisco Giants	\$90,000
1963	Willie Mays	San Francisco Giants	\$105,000

1966 Sandy Koufax	Los Angeles Dodgers	\$130,000
1969 Willie Mays	San Francisco Giants	\$135,000
1971 Carl Yastrzemski	Boston Red Sox	\$167,000
1973 Dick Allen	Chicago White Sox	\$200,000
1974 Dick Allen	Chicago White Sox	\$250,000
1975 Hank Aaron	Milwaukee Brewers	\$240,000
1977 Mike Schmidt	Philadelphia Phillies	\$560,000
1979 Rod Carew	California Angels	\$800,000
1980 Nolan Ryan	Houston Astros	\$1,000,000
1981 Dave Winfield	New York Yankees	\$1,400,000
1982 Mike Schmidt	Philadelphia Phillies	\$1,500,000
1983 Mike Schmidt	Philadelphia Phillies	\$1,652,333
1984 Mike Schmidt	Philadelphia Phillies	\$1,989,875
1985 Mike Schmidt	Philadelphia Phillies	\$2,096,967
1987 Jim Rice	Boston Red Sox	\$2,412,500
1989 Orel Hershiser	Los Angeles Dodgers	\$2,766,667
1989 Frank Viola	Minnesota Twins/New York Mets	\$2,766,667
1990 Robin Yount	Milwaukee Brewers	\$3,200,000
1991 Darryl Stawberry	Los Angeles Dodgers	\$3,800,000
1994 Bobby Bonilla	New York Mets	\$6,300,000
1995 Cecil Fielder	Detroit Tigers	\$9,237,500
1997 Albert Belle	Chicago White Sox	\$10,000,000
1998 Gary Sheffield	Florida Marlins/Los Angeles Dodgers	\$14,936,667
1999 Albert Belle	Baltimore Orioles	\$11,949,794

2000 Kevin Brown	Los Angeles Dodgers	\$15,714,286
2001 Alex Rodriguez	Texas Rangers	\$22,000,000
2005 Alex Rodriguez	New York Yankees	\$26,000,000
2007 Jason Giambi	New York Yankees	\$23,428,571
2008 Alex Rodriguez	New York Yankees	\$28,000,000
2009 Alex Rodriguez	New York Yankees	\$33,000,000
2015 Clayton Kershaw	Los Angeles Dodgers	\$31,000,000
2018 Mike Trout	Los Angeles Angels	\$34,083,333
2019 Stephen Strasburg	Washington Nationals	\$38,333,333
2020 Mike Trout	Los Angeles Angels	\$37,766,667

2023 Max Scherzer	New York Mets	\$43,333,333
2023 Justin Verlander	New York Mets	\$43,333,333

When an offseason begins, baseball teams typically have at least a general sense of their target payroll for the following year. The wrinkle this winter is that 11 teams, roughly one-third of the league, still have their TV rights deals wrapped up in a bankruptcy case.

11 teams whose TV rights are still owned by one of several Bally regional sports networks. The parent company of Bally filed for bankruptcy, a process that led to MLB taking over both the San Diego Padres' and Arizona Diamondbacks' broadcasts in 2023.

The Minnesota Twins, had its TV rights deal expire. That could mean that next season, MLB will handle its broadcasts like the league did the D-Backs and Padres. However it shakes out, without a TV deal at present, the Twins intend to trim payroll. Not knowing how much TV revenue to count on makes it tough for GMs to decide how much budget they have for team payroll.

Only two managers have led their teams to the LCS in each of their first two seasons at the helm—**Mike Matheny** of the 2012-2013 Cards and **Rob Thomson** of the 2022-2023 Phillies.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED BETWEEN DETROIT TIGERS MARIO IMPEMBA AND ROD ALLEN

Anthony French, Detroit Free Press

(originally published in 2018)

At the beginning of the end of Mario and Rod, there was an early afternoon interview on the schedule. There was a comfortable chair in the visiting television booth at Guaranteed Rate Field in Chicago.

There was a pregame argument, a postgame argument that, depending on who you talk to, may or may not have ended in a choke hold, and a long-standing tension that finally boiled past the point of no return in the hallway nearby.

A little more than a month later, the end is here: The Detroit Tigers' TV broadcasting team of Mario Impemba and Rod Allen is no more. Impemba and Allen — who worked together for nearly 17 full seasons — will not return to the Fox Sports Detroit airwaves in 2019, according to multiple persons with knowledge of the situation.



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The unhappy ending was a foregone conclusion since that dramatic day on Sept. 4, which climaxed in a physical altercation following the Tigers' 8-3 win over the White Sox. Two days later, FSD announced neither would be scheduled on telecasts for the remainder of the season.

There are two sides to every story, and the embarrassing final chapter to Impemba and Allen's tenure is no different. After speaking with more than a half-dozen persons with knowledge of the situation — many of whom requested anonymity because they were unauthorized to speak publicly on the matter — the Free Press has gathered a collaborative timeline of events leading up to the incident. Some viewpoints on the motivations of those involved are contrasting; that a comfortable computer chair is seen as a central figure in the story is semantics.

Though non-friendly, the relationship between Impemba and Allen produced years of quality broadcasts on FSD and earned themselves — together — a spot in Tigers' lore. That they kept their relationship intact for so long is a credit to each man's professionalism and tolerance, two traits that were ultimately ignored in the heat of the moment on the night when years of frustration and disrespect went face-to-face, just outside the booth.

Pregame

Earlier in the day on Sept. 4, Allen was scheduled for a pregame interview with outfielder Jim Adduci. Because he had been medically advised to limit his time at the ballpark as much as possible — he deals with lower back pain — he asked a FSD producer if he could re-schedule the interview for the weekend, when he was scheduled to work analyst duties at Comerica Park.

The producer obliged Allen's request; it is unclear whether that was communicated to Impemba, who was seated inside the booth doing his pregame preparation when Allen arrived.

What began with a seemingly innocuous request — if Allen could have that chair, the comfortable one — ended in an argument. Impemba did, indeed, give up the chair. Who initiated the argument is not known, but Impemba's silence indicated a certain annoyance: He deals with a bad hip and Allen sat in the chair the previous night.

The conversation — said to be heated and profane — turned to Allen not showing up early for the Adduci interview.

Immediately afterward, Allen walked over to the home radio booth to speak with White Sox radio analyst Darrin Jackson, a longtime acquaintance dating back to their minor league baseball days in the early 1980s.

Jackson, like many, was well-aware of the Impemba-Allen dynamic. They aren't friends. In 16 seasons together, one person said, the two might have shared two dinners, at most.

"It's not an easy working environment when your broadcast partner and you aren't friendly," Jackson said. "And I thought, over all these years, it's been amazing how professional they've both been about the broadcast, because you know, the evidence was there from everybody that the two really weren't friends.

"If it's going to be set off by a simple thing like a chair prior to a game that leads to something, there's a lot more percolating under the surface that anybody would have ever known."

There was. To this, FSD deserves a lion's share of the blame, for allowing such a tenuous work environment to continue, at the risk of an incident which would embarrass themselves, the Tigers, and ultimately, their broadcasters.

Postgame

What followed after the uncomfortable broadcast was foreshadowed roughly a decade ago, when Allen ignited an argument inside the broadcast booth during a game, the point in which their relationship was considered severely fractured.

“Nothing was done about it the first time,” one FSD employee said. “Nothing was done about it this time.”

In the minutes after the game on Sept. 4, Jackson — making his customary quick departure at home — walked by the FSD booth. Allen was coming up the stairs.

“Hey, what’s going on?” he asked. “How did everything go, alright?”

“Man, it wasn’t a great game,” Allen said to Jackson. “I gotta talk to Mario, man. I just gotta talk to him. Because this game, it doesn’t have to be like this. It’s gotta be a better game.”

Jackson asked if he was alright. Allen said he was.

“I looked at him and I go, ‘OK,’ and I stood there, looked him right in the eye and said, ‘Alright,’” Jackson said. “I’ve talked to him enough over the years to know he’s been very, very conservative in dealing with this situation.

“From there, I looked over there, thinking nothing of the fact that those two wouldn’t be able to sit there and have a talk about what happened. Only to find out later. ... Are you kidding me?”

A couple of conclusions could be formed in researching their relationship. First, it was laced with a lack of respect, most notably with Impemba’s discontent for Allen’s inconsistent work ethic. A similar view was passed along unsolicited to the Free Press by a FSD camera man who believes Allen is good at his job but also that his lack of preparation had begun affecting the quality of broadcasts. Another is that Allen was always open to mending the fence; executives who had failed to eliminate this problem in multiple face-to-face meetings over the years felt that Impemba was just not willing to let Allen in.

Perhaps that was the reason Allen was standing in the hallway, waiting for Impemba to leave the booth. But instead of simmering the situation, whatever was said between the two at that moment only amplified things.

The argument centered on Allen’s frustration with Impemba questioning his professionalism. It continued with Impemba’s finger in Allen’s face and ended after Allen put his arms above Impemba’s shoulder, below his chin, pushing him up against the wall before the two were separated by a freelance TV producer who had heard the commotion.

It was not a chokehold, Allen's agent, Tom Shaer said last month, a claim confirmed by two other persons with knowledge of the situation. Whether it was or not is also semantics; there were no police reports filed.

The blame for the situation, while mostly focused on Allen's fingerprints and the sensationalism of a broadcast booth brawl that wasn't, rests with these final truths in the story of a bad relationship within a good broadcast team:

Allen couldn't take it anymore, didn't control his emotions and Impemba pushed the last button that detonated their successful run in Detroit.

LONGER READS

THE DAY JUAN MARICHAL AND JOHNNY ROSEBORO BATTLED

Kevin Stone, ESPN.com

On Aug. 22, 1965, a season-high crowd of 42,807 packed Candlestick Park for a key National League matchup between baseball's biggest rivals. With two future Hall of Famers on the mound, it promised to be a memorable afternoon.

It certainly was, but not because the San Francisco Giants beat the first-place Los Angeles Dodgers 4-3 or because of the pitching performances by **Sandy Koufax and Juan Marichal**. And not because the game featured four future Hall of Famers (the two aces along with the Giants' **Willie Mays and Willie McCovey**) and four members of the that year's NL All-Star team (Dodgers shortstop **Maury Wills**, Koufax, Mays and Marichal).

The contest is still remembered for arguably the ugliest moment in MLB history. In the bottom of the third inning, Marichal infamously clubbed Dodgers catcher **John Roseboro** over the head with a bat, an action never seen before or again on a major league field.

On the 50th anniversary of that incident, here are 10 things you should know about a game that left a permanent scar on the face of baseball:

1. It was an important matchup in the pennant race

The Dodgers, Giants and Milwaukee Braves were in a heated battle for the NL lead at the time. San Francisco's win that day pulled them even with the Braves for second place, half a game behind the Dodgers. The Braves collapsed down the stretch and finished in fifth place, 11 games out. The Dodgers wound up edging the Giants by two games for the pennant and went on to beat the Minnesota Twins in the World Series.

2. Trouble was brewing early

Dodgers-Giants games were always intense, and emotions were high during the previous three games of the four-game series. Wills led off the series finale with a bunt single, and when he came to the plate again in the second inning, Marichal knocked him down with a high-and-tight fastball. Koufax sent a return message in the bottom of the second, firing a fastball over Mays' head to the backstop. Marichal responded in the top of third with an inside fastball that sent **Ron Fairly** sprawling. That prompted home plate umpire **Shag Crawford** to issue a warning that the next close pitch would result in an ejection.

3. Roseboro buzzed Marichal's head with a ball

Roseboro didn't want Koufax to get ejected -- and Koufax didn't like throwing at hitters -- but the catcher didn't want Marichal to get away with dusting his teammates. When Marichal led off the bottom of the third, he took the first pitch for a strike. Koufax's second pitch was a ball inside that Roseboro dropped. He moved behind Marichal to pick it up and whizzed the ball back to Koufax close to the batter's face (Roseboro admitted in his autobiography that it was no accident).

Marichal, who said the throw actually clipped his ear, turned to confront Roseboro. Expletives were exchanged and Roseboro stepped toward Marichal, who raised his bat and brought it down on Roseboro's head.

"I was afraid he was going to hit me with his mask, so I hit him with my bat," Marichal said in an apology issued the next day.

Benches emptied, and chaos ensued. As in most baseball fights, some of those involved played peacekeeper and others threw punches.

4. Mays kept things from getting worse

An enraged Roseboro, who had boxing and martial arts training, went hard after Marichal. Roseboro was briefly knocked to the ground in the ensuing melee, while Marichal, who had continued swinging his bat, was tackled from behind by Crawford, the umpire. Roseboro continued after Marichal until getting stopped by Mays, a good friend despite their teams' rivalry. Mays helped get the bleeding Roseboro under control and escorted him away from the fighting, even tending to his friend's wound.

"They can thank Mays that there wasn't a real riot out there," Dodgers outfielder **Lou Johnson** told the Los Angeles Times. "If it wasn't for Willie Mays it could have been a lot worse. Willie did a hell of a job stopping the battle."

The Times' game story said the incident delayed the game for 14 minutes.

5. Marichal's penalty seems paltry by today's standards

Marichal was ejected and Roseboro left the game injured (he would need 14 stitches to close the gash on his head). Roseboro would miss the next two games before returning to action. Marichal was suspended for eight game days (10 games because of doubleheaders) and fined a then-record \$1,750 (which translates to about \$15,000 today). Roseboro would sue Marichal for \$110,000 in damages, and the case was eventually settled with Roseboro receiving \$7,500.

6. There was some collateral damage

Roseboro wasn't the only one to sustain an injury in the melee. After being tackled by Crawford and disarmed, Marichal defended himself from the ground with kicks. He spiked Dodgers reliever **Howie Reed** in the thigh and Johnson in the ankle. Crawford's hand was cut when somebody stepped on it.

7. Both pitchers were was shaky after the incident

Koufax entered the day with a 21-4 record. Later during the inning in which the fight occurred, he walked two batters before allowing a three-run homer to Mays that gave the Giants a 4-2 lead they wouldn't relinquish. Koufax also lost his next two starts. It was the only losing streak he sustained that year, when he finished 26-8 and won the second of his three career Cy Young Awards.

After missing two starts because of his suspension, Marichal went 3-4 over his final nine appearances of the season to finish at 22-13. His ERA was 1.78 before the fight and 3.55 after it.

8. The rest of the game: Bullpen bailed out Giants

Rookie infielder **Bob Schroder** completed the at-bat for Marichal and struck out after inheriting a 1-1 count. **Ron Herbel** relieved Marichal and pitched $5\frac{1}{3}$ innings to get the victory, and **Masanori Murakami** got the final two outs for the save. A year earlier, Murakami had become the first Japanese-born player to appear in a major league game. Roseboro was replaced in the Dodgers' lineup by **Jeff Torborg**, who would go on to manage five major league teams and win the AL Manager of the Year Award with the Chicago White Sox in 1990.

9. Marichal and Roseboro had other things on their minds

Real-world events had been a distraction for both players. Marichal was concerned about the civil war that raged in his native Dominican Republic for much of the 1965 major league season. Roseboro, meanwhile, was an African-American man who had just witnessed the Watts riots not far from his home in South Central Los Angeles. A week earlier, smoke from fires set during the riots was visible from Dodger Stadium during games.

10. Roseboro and Marichal became friends

Both men put the incident behind them even though they were often reminded of it. Marichal played for the Dodgers in 1975, his final major league season, and he was reunited with Roseboro in 1982 at an old-timers' game. At the time, Marichal hadn't yet been elected into the Hall of Fame through two years of eligibility, in part because of what he'd done to Roseboro. The men became friends, and Roseboro made it known that he held no grudge against Marichal, who is now 77.

"There were no hard feelings on my part, and I thought if that was made public, people would believe that this was really over with," Roseboro told the L.A. Times in 1990. "So I saw him at a Dodger old-timers' game and we posed for pictures together and I actually visited him in the Dominican. The next year, he was in the Hall of Fame.

When Roseboro died at age 69 in 2002, Marichal was an honorary pallbearer and a speaker at the funeral.







THE HALL OF FAME CASE FOR LOU PINIELLA

Jay Jaffe, FanGraphs

2024 Contemporary Baseball Era Committee Managers/Executives/Umpires ballot, covering candidates in those categories who made their greatest impact from 1980 to the present. The eight candidates will be voted upon at the Winter Meetings in Nashville on December 3, and anyone receiving at least 75% of the vote from the 16 committee members will be inducted in Cooperstown on July 21, 2024 along with any candidates elected by the BBWAA.

2024 Contemporary Baseball Candidate: Manager Lou Piniella

Manager	G	W-L	W-L%	G>.500	Playoffs	Pennants	WS
Lou Piniella	3548	1835-1713	.517	122	7	1	1
AVG HOF Mgr*	3662	1968-1674	.540	294	7	6	2.6

SOURCE: Baseball-Reference

* Average based on the careers of 21 enshrined AL/NL managers from the 20th and 21st centuries

Lou Piniella

Lou Piniella spent even more years managing in the majors (23, between 1986 and 2010) than he did playing the outfield (18, between 1964 and '84). To both, "Sweet Lou" brought a flair for the dramatic and a fiery intensity — his dust-kicking, hat-stomping, base-throwing tirades became the stuff of legend — as well as tremendous baseball acumen. Like fellow Contemporary Baseball candidate **Davey Johnson**, he won championships in both phases of his career, but his failure even to reach the World Series a second time as a manager cast a long shadow on every successive stop. Unlike Johnson, however, he came close to election, missing by just one vote on the 2019 Today's Game Era Committee ballot from which **Harold Baines** and **Lee Smith** were elected.

A native of Tampa, Florida, Piniella was signed by Cleveland as an amateur free agent in 1962. Before getting a foothold in the majors, he passed through the hands of the Washington Senators, Baltimore Orioles (for whom he played four games in 1964), Cleveland (again, with a brief 1968 cameo) and Seattle Pilots. He spent spring training with the expansion Pilots, where he caught the attention of **Jim Bouton**, who memorialized the rookie's hot temper (and baseball's wonderful terminology for such a case) in *Ball Four* by writing, "Lou Piniella has the red ass." More, from less than a week later:

"Piniella is a case. He hits the hell out of the ball. He hit a three-run homer today and he's got a .400 average, but they're easing him out. He complains a lot about the coaches and ignores them when he feels like it, and to top it off he's sensitive as hell to things like **Joe Schultz** not saying good morning to him. None of this is supposed to count when you judge a ballplayer's talents. But it does."

The Pilots ended up trading Piniella to the AL's other expansion team, the Kansas City Royals, on April 1. Piniella pulled himself together, winning AL Rookie of the Year honors with the Royals in 1969. A high-average contact hitter who didn't have a ton of patience or power (as his .291/.333/.409 line suggests), he was particularly potent as a lefty-masher. He made the AL All-Star team in 1972, and after being traded to the Yankees in December '73, he would contribute to four pennant-winning teams, including their '77 and '78 championships.

His reputation preceded his arrival in the Bronx. "Yes, I had a bad temper," Piniella said in 1974, his first spring as a Yankee. "I guess I was trying to succeed too much. I probably was trying to exceed my capabilities and was expecting perfection all the time. When I couldn't reach it, I'd get mad at myself... Last year, they had a wire mesh screen around the water cooler at the new park in Kansas City so I couldn't kick that one."

A left shoulder ailment limited Piniella's playing time late in his career, so he became the Yankees' hitting coach under manager **Yogi Berra** in 1984 while still a reserve outfielder. By mid-June, he decided to retire as a player so as to take over first base coaching duties as well. In 1986, he became the team's manager, that during an era when owner George Steinbrenner was eating managers for breakfast *and* lunch. **Billy Martin**, in his fourth of five stints managing

the Yankees, had gone 91–54 in guiding the Yankees to second place in relief of Berra in 1985, but he was fired yet again, this time after an infamous late-September brawl with pitcher **Ed Whitson**. With 25-year-old **Don Mattingly** hitting a sizzling .352/.394/.573 in the follow-up to his MVP-winning campaign, Piniella's Yankees won 90 games in 1986 but finished second, 5.5 games behind the Red Sox.

After New York slipped to fourth despite winning 89 games in 1987, general manager **Woody Woodward** resigned. Steinbrenner rehired Martin for the final time and “promoted” Piniella to general manager. The job was not a fit. “After 25 years in uniform, I wasn't used to the office aspects of it, the confinement,” he told *The New York Times*. “I enjoy the baseball part of it very much. When I talked to other general managers about talent, I enjoyed that aspect.”

Piniella resigned as GM on May 29, 1988, downplaying rumors of clashes with Martin over personnel, though within the organization there was awareness of the friction. Less than a month later, with the team in a slide, Martin ran out of rope via a series of alcohol-related incidents, including one that left him with 40 stitches following an altercation in a topless bar in Texas. Steinbrenner fired him for the fifth and final time, and Piniella returned to the dugout. After the Yankees went just 45–48 under him en-route to an 85–76 finish, Steinbrenner fired Piniella with two years remaining on his contract, the first of which he spent in the Yankees' TV booth.

In November 1989, Piniella escaped from New York to become the manager of the Reds. Replacing **Pete Rose**, who had just received his lifetime ban for gambling, he inherited a team driven by stars **Barry Larkin** and **Eric Davis** as well as the “Nasty Boys” bullpen of **Norm Charlton**, **Rob Dibble**, and **Randy Myers**. His first year in Cincinnati was the most successful one of his managerial career: the Reds went 91–71 and won the NL West (the Senior Circuit's screwed-up geography somehow had both Cincinnati and Atlanta in the West and St. Louis and Chicago in the East) and the World Series, the last by sweeping the heavily favored A's, the defending champions.

The Reds collapsed to just 74 wins in 1991, and despite rebounding to 90 wins in '92, Piniella resigned at season's end, just weeks after brawling with Dibble. His departure owed less to the fight than to owner Marge Schott's lack of support when he was sued for defamation by umpire **Gary Darling**. Following the reversal of a home run call in a 1991 game, Piniella had publicly proclaimed that Darling was biased; Schott refused to pay for a lawyer, forcing Piniella to do so out of his own pocket. The suit was eventually settled out of court, and Piniella issued a statement of apology, retracting his comments and praising Darling and umpires in general. “But I got no backing,” he said of Schott, who by the time of his comments had been suspended for a year due to racially insensitive remarks. “It got in my craw. That was the big thing.”

Piniella wasn't out of a job for long. In November 1992, he reunited with Woodward in Seattle, where the Mariners had finished with a winning record just once in 16 years. With young **Ken Griffey Jr.**, **Randy Johnson**, **Edgar Martinez**, and later **Alex Rodriguez**, he oversaw the most successful stretch in franchise history. The Mariners went 82–80 under Piniella in '93, the first

of seven times in 10 seasons (through 2002) that they'd post a winning record. They made the playoffs four times on his watch but have done so just once since then.

Piniella's 1995 team overcame a 12.5-game deficit to finish the lockout-abbreviated season tied with the Angels atop the AL West. The Mariners won the one-game tiebreaker, then beat the Yankees in a thrilling five-game Division Series that ended with Martinez bringing Griffey home with the winning run via The Double. The excitement of the moment helped generate the groundswell of support that secured the Mariners a new taxpayer-funded stadium within a week of the series' end. Piniella won the first of his three Manager of the Year awards that year.

He took the Mariners back to the playoffs in 1997, 2000 (after Johnson and Griffey had been traded in advance of their free agency) and '01 (after Rodriguez had departed via free agency). Fueled by the arrival of **Ichiro Suzuki**, the 2001 Mariners tied the major league record with 116 wins, and Piniella garnered his second Manager of the Year award. Yet his Mariners teams never advanced past the ALCS, falling at the hands of the Yankees in both 2000 and '01. Often, they were limited by horrible bullpens, and Piniella made matters worse; the 1997–99 units all finished with ERAs of 5.44 or above and totaled an AL-low 0.7 WAR over that span, squandering the last years of the Johnson/Griffey/Rodriguez nucleus.

After winning 93 games in 2002, Piniella, who still had one more year under contract, decided he wanted to go home to Tampa to help care for his ailing mother. The Mariners obliged by trading him and infielder **Antonio Perez** to the Devil Rays in exchange for outfielder **Randy Winn**, who was coming off his lone All-Star season. Though Piniella guided the expansion team to its first 70-win season in 2004, the Devil Rays weren't able to progress further, and he became frustrated by the team's minimal payrolls. After agreeing to a buyout with one year remaining on his deal, he became the manager of the Cubs in October 2006, succeeding **Dusty Baker**.

With a cast led by **Derrek Lee, Aramis Ramirez, Alfonso Soriano, and Carlos Zambrano** (a man with an infamous temper of his own), Piniella's Cubs won back-to-back NL Central titles in 2007 and '08. He won his third Manager of the Year award in the latter year after leading the Cubs a league-high 97 wins, but in both of those seasons, his squads were swept out of the Division Series. The Cubs declined to 83 wins in 2009, and in August of the following year, with the health of his mother again in mind, he stepped down for the final time.

Because he managed for 21 full seasons plus two partial ones, Piniella ranks high in managerial counting stats. He's 16th in games managed, fifth behind the still-active **Bruce Bochy, Baker, Gene Mauch, and Terry Francona** among skippers outside the Hall. Piniella is 17th in wins, trailing only Baker, Bochy, Francona, and Mauch among those not enshrined, and tied for 16th with seven playoff appearances, a total aided by a career spent mostly in the Wild Card era; even so, 10 contemporaries have as many or more such appearances. Due in part to his time in Tampa Bay, he's a modest 122 games above .500, tied for 43rd all-time; even if you wave off his time there (200–285, .412), he'd rank just 28th.

It's worth noting that a low winning percentage isn't itself disqualifying for the Hall of Fame; many a great manager has found himself stuck in a noncompetitive situation for years at a time but offset that with their success. **Connie Mack** (.486) and **Bucky Harris** (.493) are in the Hall despite sub-.500 records, **Wilbert Robinson** is right at .500, and **Casey Stengel** finished at .508. But Stengel won 10 pennants and seven World Series, all with the Yankees after years piloting mediocre NL teams. Mack won nine pennants and five World Series between teardowns of the team he owned, and Harris won three pennants and two World Series. Robinson's total of two pennants without a championship is something of an outlier in this context, but he was a larger-than-life personality for a team that was often severely outmanned.

Anyway, the positives for Piniella's case boil down to his longevity, a championship in Cincinnati, a memorable run that legitimized major league baseball in Seattle, and one hell of a highlight reel for his tantrums. His playing career, with 12.4 bWAR, doesn't add much of a bonus if one wants to think along those lines; if we start playing that game, he loses ground to managerial giants like **John McGraw**, Stengel and contemporary **Joe Torre**, to name just a few. Piniella's positives are offset by his lack of postseason success beyond 1990 — his teams won just three series in his final 18 full seasons — and a comparatively unexceptional winning percentage. Even if you exclude his lost-cause Devil Rays stint, his .533 would rank 33rd among managers with at least 1,500 games.

Ultimately, Piniella's case as a Hall of Fame manager rests more on longevity, which fellow candidates Johnson and **Cito Gaston** lack, than it does sustained success. As I wrote when he stepped down in 2010, "In a world where **[Whitey] Herzog** and **[Dick] Williams** — two innovators who won multiple pennants and made the playoffs more frequently without benefit of the wild card — needed a quarter of a century to gain election via the Veterans Committee, I just don't see how Piniella has got enough to get into Cooperstown." Despite my own affinity for him, that feeling is even stronger as I eye the possibility that Baker, Bochy and Francona, all much more decorated, could be elected when this ballot cycles around in three years.

That said, I'm not the one with the vote, and Era Committee members have generally supported Piniella. He received seven votes on the 2017 Today's Game ballot from which John Schuerholz and Bud Selig were elected, then 11 two years later. Since then, three of the four candidates who fell one vote short in an Era Committee vote — **Ted Simmons**, **Marvin Miller**, and **Tony Oliva** — were subsequently elected, with **Dick Allen** again falling short by one vote. On a ballot that lacks any slam-dunk candidates, he might be the most likely honoree, or at least second behind **Joe West**, the longevity king among umpires. Maybe the two can have a full-blown argument as part of their induction speeches.

GOLD GLOVE WINNERS THEN AND NOW

Joe Posnanski

So the Gold Glove winners are out, and I thought it would be fun to look at this year's winners compared to those from 40 years ago. I don't know if it actually WILL be fun ... but I've already started, so away we go!

First base

2023: AL — **Nathaniel Lowe**, Texas; NL — **Christian Walker**, Arizona.

1983: AL — **Eddie Murray**, Baltimore; NL — **Keith Hernandez**, St. Louis and Mets

OK, so first let's talk about this year's choices —

by the stats, Walker is a clear choice in the NL. He led all first basemen in Outs Above Average (OAA) this year, and he has been a high-level defender for a good while. He also won the Gold Glove in 2022.

Lowe is more of a surprise. He was a pretty clear defensive liability in 2022 — dead last in the league in OAA — but the stats do show him improving dramatically defensively even while his offense has tapered off a bit. Thing is, there really wasn't another especially compelling Gold Glove candidate in the league. **Anthony Rizzo** is an excellent defender, but he played only 99 games this year, many of those while dealing with undiagnosed concussion symptoms.

Forty years ago — well, Keith Hernandez defensively revolutionized the position and is pretty widely acknowledged as the greatest defensive first baseman ever. Eddie Murray won three Gold Gloves in his career, and it's funny — while he was Steady Eddie as a hitter, he was actually a super-aggressive defensive player who made quite a lot of errors but also made a lot of terrific plays.

Defensive advantage: I'll go with 1983.

Second base

2023: AL — **Andrés Giménez**, Cleveland; NL — **Nico Hoerner**, Cubs

1983: AL — **Lou Whitaker**, Detroit; NL — **Ryne Sandberg**, Cubs

Giménez is a defensive savant. He might be the best defender in all of baseball, any position. Statistically, he led the league in OAA, Defensive Runs Saved (DRS) and pretty much any other

defensive stat you can come up with. He just gets to more balls and makes more plays than any other second baseman in baseball. And he's so much fun to watch.

Hoerner's case is less clear. There were serious candidates out there — San Diego's **Ha-Seong Kim**'s defense was so good that for a while he was leading the league in total bWAR.*

Philadelphia's **Bryson Stott** is fantastic. I can't quite figure out what to do with the stats of San Francisco's **Thairo Estrada**, who led all second basemen in OAA (remember this is Outs Above Average) but had a negative DRS (that's Defensive Runs Saved — I'll explain all this in a minute). So who knows? Hoerner was a certainly fine defender, and he combined marvelously with Gold Glove shortstop **Dansby Swanson**.

**Kim did win a Gold Glove as a utility fielder.*

Forty years ago, Sweet Lou and Ryno each won their first Gold Gloves, breaking the holds of Kansas City **Frank White** and Philadelphia's **Manny Trillo**. I think in Whitaker's case, it took the voters too long to realize what a good defensive second baseman he was, and by the time they finally started to recognize him, well, he wasn't as good. That year, 1983, was just when his range started to go down.

As for Sandberg, he was a fantastic fielder as a 23-year-old, and he became a Hall of Fame offensive player, so he would win Gold Gloves for the next *seven* years even as his actual defensive production and value faded. That's one thing I don't think happens as much anymore: Players don't win as many Gold Gloves on pure reputation.

Defensive advantage: For pure defense, I'm going with the 2023 Gold Glovers, even though the 1983 winners are both all-time greats.

Shortstop

2023: AL — **Anthony Volpe**, Yankees; NL — Dansby Swanson, Cubs.

1983: AL — **Alan Trammell**, Detroit; NL — **Ozzie Smith**, St. Louis

OK, we should briefly explain the defensive stats, because we're mainly using two of them — Statcast's "Outs Above Average" and Baseball Info Solution's "Defensive Runs Saved."

OAA is the most futuristic statistic imaginable — it uses all of the Statcast™ cameras and data-gathering tools to measure catch probabilities and distance covered and the speed of the runner and arm strength and pretty much anything else you can imagine to determine how many outs above average a defender saves (or how many he costs the team).

DRS is Baseball Info Solution's version, and they do roughly the same thing but in a more observational way — they use errors, range, outfield arm, double-play ability and repeating viewings to try and determine how many runs a defender save (or costs) the team. DRS is what you see used in Baseball-Reference defensive WAR.

It is striking to me, based on their similar missions, how much OAA and DRS can be in conflict.

Take Kansas City's **Bobby Witt Jr.** He led the American League in OAA (+14). But by DRS he was WAY below average (-6). He was not even listed as a finalist, left off the ballot for veterans **Corey Seager and Carlos Correa**, neither one of whom was anywhere close to Witt in OAA. That seems to suggest that as of now, voters lean more toward DRS.

Volpe tied for the league lead in DRS with **Wander Franco**, who was obviously not going to win the Gold Glove. At the same time, Volpe had only one Out Above Average. I imagine that if you're a Royals fan, at least this year, you will scream "OAA is a much more reliable measure of defense!" and if you're a Yankees fan you will scream back "No way! DRS forever!" So it goes. Volpe becomes the second rookie shortstop to ever win a Gold Glove, after **Jeremy Peña** won it last year.

As for Swanson, he's the best defensive shortstop in baseball no matter what stat you happen to be looking at — he led everyone in OAA *and* DRS.

Alan Trammell was a superb defensive shortstop, no question about it, but 1983 was very much a down year for him defensively. I don't know why. Maybe he was hurt. Maybe he'd lost a step or a little bit off his arm. Whatever, his range dropped precipitously. Meanwhile, in Baltimore, a 22-year-old shortstop named **Cal Ripken Jr.** was a revelation — he led the league in assists, double plays, range factor per game, etc. The voters missed it, probably because they had it in their minds that he was too big to be a shortstop. They didn't catch on to Ripken's awe-inspiring defense for another EIGHT YEARS.

Ozzie was Ozzie was Ozzie, the best there has ever been.

Defensive advantage: As good as Swanson is and Volpe will be ... give me Ozzie and 1983, of course.

Third base

2023: AL — **Matt Chapman**, Toronto; NL — Ke'Bryan Hayes, Pittsburgh

1983: AL — **Buddy Bell**, Texas; NL — **Mike Schmidt**, Philadelphia

And here again, the DRS leaders in the two leagues win the award. Statcast™ is not *quite* as impressed with Chapman, as he ranks below several other third basemen, including Texas' **Josh Jung** and Kansas City's **Maikel Garcia**. But he still put up a solid 4 OAA and has a long history as a defensive dynamo.

Hayes was by all metrics the best defensive third baseman in the game, and he needed to be to break the 10-year hold that **Nolan Arenado** had on the award. Arenado also fell off some defensively this year; I do wonder, if Arenado had a typical Arenado defensive season, would he have won the award anyway, even with Hayes passing him by? It doesn't matter. Hayes is a wonder at third base and it's great to see him finally win the award he probably should have won the last two seasons.

From 40 years ago: Buddy Bell was such a great defensive third baseman. He really was like a shortstop at third. Schmidt is the best third baseman of all-time, and even if he was not *quite* the defensive wizard by 1983 that he had been, he was still the best in the league.

Defensive advantage: Super-close, but I'm going to go with 1983.

Leftfield

2023: AL — **Steven Kwan**, Cleveland; NL — **Ian Happ**, Cubs

1983: AL — **Dave Winfield**, Yankees; NL — **Willie McGee**, Cardinals

Kwan is so terrific — like the best defensive leftfielders, he could definitely play center. He led baseball in both OAA and DRS. This is his second straight Gold Glove.

Happ, on the other hand, is something of a mystery. I'm sure there are Cubs fans out there who will tell you that they watched him every day and he had a brilliant defensive season. I did not watch him every day and so cannot and would not argue. But the defensive metrics showed him to be average defensively at best — OAA has him well below average — and that's certainly the general impression I've gotten when watching him. He did lead leftfielders in assists, which is nice, though he doesn't really have a great arm and it suggests that everybody tries to run on him.

It's Happ's second straight Gold Glove; I think he had a much better case last season but, again, maybe the stats undervalue his defense and, anyway, there wasn't really an obviously better option in the NL. Only two other guys played 135 or more games in left, and neither San Diego's **Juan Soto** nor Milwaukee's **Bryan de la Cruz** was a viable Gold Glove candidate.

You can't compare these players to 1983 because back then, they chose three outfielders, regardless of position, and neither Dave Winfield nor Willie McGee played a single game in leftfield that year.

Defensive advantage: 2023.

Centerfield

2023: AL — **Kevin Kiermaier**, Toronto; NL — **Brenton Doyle**, Colorado.

1983: AL — **Dwayne Murphy**, Oakland; NL — **Dale Murphy**, Atlanta

Keirmaier is, at this point in his career, a defensive legend. Doyle is only a rookie, who hit .203 for the Rockies. But by the stats, the voters got this exactly right; they led each league in OAA and DRS.

This was Kiermaier's fourth Gold Glove, and he really does need to go down in history as one of the greatest defensive centerfielders ever. You have to say that because Kiermaier has played 11 season and more than 1,000 games despite never really hitting — he has a sub-100 OPS+ over that career. He played only 127 games in center, but was magnificent.

Doyle's Gold Glove would have been an impossibility not too long ago; the voters were not going to give the award to a .203-hitting rookie in Colorado no matter HOW good his defense

was. But with the data easily available and with him making news after his 106-mph throw home, he took the award over Atlanta's **Michael Harris II**, who I suspect would have won it in olden times.

The Murphys won the award 40 years ago. **Dwayne Murphy** was right in the middle of his Gold Glove streak; he won the award six years in a row. Dale ... hey, I love Dale Murphy, he's one of my all-time favorite players, and back then, they just picked outfielders and so he was one of three centerfielders chosen. He probably wouldn't win the award today with only one centerfielder.

Defensive advantage: 2023.

Rightfield

2023: AL — **Adolis García**, Texas; NL — **Fernando Tatis Jr.**, San Diego

1983: AL — **Dwight Evans**, Boston; NL — **Andre Dawson**, Montreal

Fernando Tatis was a revelation in rightfield. You never know exactly how it will work when you move an athletic infielder into the outfield. But Tatis was truly remarkable out there, leading all right fielders in OAA and DRS and everything else. He had to be all of that, I imagine, to take the award away from six-time winner **Mookie Betts**.

García, well, you saw the arm in the World Series. It's a howitzer. That's probably what made the difference between him and Boston's **Alex Verdugo**.

By 1983, **Dwight Evans** probably wasn't a great rightfielder any longer. His range, which had been declining for a while, was well below league average, and his assists were way down, perhaps because people had stopped trying to run on him and perhaps because, at 31, he couldn't throw like he once did. You know who was probably the best rightfielder in the league in 1983? You won't believe it: **Tom Brunansky**. Bruno! That year he led the league in range factor, and he had a pretty strong arm himself.

Andre Dawson was still a centerfielder and a darned good one; this was before his knees were wrecked.

Defensive advantage: 2023 by a nose.

Catcher

2023: AL — **Jonah Heim**, Texas; NL — **Gabriel Moreno**, Arizona

1983: AL — **Lance Parrish**, Detroit; NL — **Tony Peña**, Pittsburgh

The way we judge catchers now is totally different from the way we did in 1983 — catchers don't do as much calling games but do a lot more framing strikes, we look at stolen bases and leadership, etc.

Moreno was the best catcher in the game when it came to controlling the running game. He led all catchers in DRS (20). And it was all the more impressive because he was a rookie and had played in only 19 games behind the plate before this season, and it was his first year in the National League.

Heim is, I think the numbers show, a super-framer; his ability to get called strikes is at the top of the game, and that seems to be what got him the award over Toronto's **Alejandro Kirk** (who had a much higher DRS) and Baltimore's **Adley Rutschman** (whose legend continues to grow).

If Lance Parrish had played in a different time, would he be a talked-about Hall of Fame candidate today? I ask that because Parrish won three Gold Gloves, and he hit 324 home runs, and he was widely understood to be the heart and soul of those excellent Tigers teams of the 1980s. Before **Johnny Bench**, **Carlton Fisk** and **Gary Carter** changed the paradigm, a player like Parrish would have FELT like a Hall of Famer, you know, in the gut you would feel it.

Tony Peña was an outstanding defensive catcher throughout his fine career and he won four Gold Gloves. He also once hit **Roger Clemens** in the head with his glove because the Rocket wasn't listening to him.

Defensive advantage: I have no idea. Heim and Moreno are just getting started.

Pitcher

2023: AL — **Jose Berrios**, Toronto; NL — **Zack Wheeler**, Philadelphia

1983: AL — **Ron Guidry**, Yankees; NL — **Phil Niekro**, Atlanta

My feeling about pitcher Gold Gloves is this: I don't think you should give a fielding award to anybody you won't let catch a pop-up.

Unless that person is **Zack Greinke**. Give Zack all the Gold Gloves.

Defensive advantage: I'm going to give it to 1983, but only because it took extreme guts for Phil Niekro to throw those knuckleballs and stand 60 feet away.

Utility

2023: AL — **Mauricio Dubón**, Houston; NL — **Ha-Seong Kim**, San Diego

1983: Didn't exist, BUT as a super-special bonus, I'm going to give out those awards right now.

1983 (JoeBlogs): AL — **Vance Law**, Chicago; NL — **Bob Bajor**, Mets

The National League Gold Glove utility race was actually super-exciting because you had two legendary defensive seasons. Kim played at least 20 games at second, third and short, and was great at all of them. And Mookie was an absurdity at second, short and rightfield. I personally would have given the award to Betts simply because the Dodgers, with all their injuries, NEEDED him to play all those positions, and he came through brilliantly, while Kim was essentially a second baseman who just filled in everywhere because he's a unicorn Swiss Army Knife kind of defender. I'm not saying Kim is the wrong choice, I'm just saying I would have given it to Mookie.

Mauricio Dubón played every single position except catcher this year. I implore the Astros to have Dubón play every position on the field in one game the way **Bert Campaneris** did in 1965. A few things about that game you probably did not know (I didn't).

— The A's were playing the Angels, and the game was billed as "Campy Campaneris Night."

— It drew Kansas City's fourth-largest crowd of the season (21,576).

— A's owner Charlie Finely reportedly took out a \$1 million insurance policy on Campy before the game.

First inning: Campy started the game at short and didn't make a play. As a hitter, he did lead off the game with a walk, he stole second and he scored on **Ed Charles'** double.

Second inning: Campy moved to second, replacing **Wayne Causey**. He made one play; the Angels' **Ed Kirkpatrick** singled but he tried to stretch it, and Campy started a rundown that led to an out. Kirkpatrick would play a role in the game a bit later.

Third inning: Campy moved to third to replace Ed Charles. He didn't make a play.

Fourth inning: Campy moved to leftfield, replacing **Jose Tartabull**. He had a putout, catching **Jose Cardenal's** fly ball.

Fifth inning: Campy moved to centerfield, replacing **Jim Landis**. He caught **Paul Schaal's** fly ball; Schaal later became a Kansas City chiropractor.

Sixth inning: Campy moved to rightfield, again replacing Landis. He had a rough time in right; he dropped **Jim Fregosi's** fly ball, allowing a run to score. That gave the Angels a 2-1 lead.

Seventh inning: Campy moved to first base, replacing **Randy Schwartz**. I have absolutely no memory of a Randy Schwartz in baseball, but it turns out he has a pretty remarkable story. He was the first baseball All-American at UCLA, a superstar who led the nation in home runs. He was also a tackle on the football team. The A's signed him to what was described as "a substantial bonus." As a 21-year-old in A-ball, he mashed 29 home runs and won the Most Valuable Player Award in the Midwest League. The A's immediately rushed him to the big leagues for six games.

The next year, he hit 27 doubles and 22 home runs in Class AA — nobody would throw him a pitch, he walked 100 times — and came up to the big leagues for 10 games.

The A's then outrighted him to the minor leagues. It's unclear to me why, other than the A's were kind of a mess, and Schwartz struck out a lot and was very slow. It's fair to say he did not have a chiseled body. There was this sense among fans that he wasn't always giving his all, an impression that really bothered him. "People get the impression I'm dogging it out there," he told a reporter while in Class AAA Vancouver. "Hell, man, do they realize I'm the only guy on the team who has started every game this season?"

After the 1967 season, the offer to play baseball was so pitiful that he retired and went to work for a vending machine company "Baseball is a tough business," he said. "With the firm I'm

working for now, the future is a whole lot brighter. I'm making more money now than I'd ever be paid in baseball."

This year, Schwartz was inducted into the UCLA Sports Hall of Fame.

ANYWAY, Campy moved to first base, where he had a little action and once again caught a Paul Schaal fly ball. Paul was looking for him!

Eighth inning, Campy took to the mound, replacing **Jim Dickson**. He got Jose Cardenal to fly out, then walked consecutive batters and gave up a run-scoring single to Joe Adcock to make it 3-1 Angels. He did strike out **Bobby Knoop**, who struck out a lot in those days, and Jim Fregosi was thrown out trying to steal to end the inning.

And finally, in the ninth, Campy moved behind the plate, replacing **Billy Bryan**, and here's where Ed Kirkpatrick comes back in. Kirkpatrick in the ninth tried to steal home, and he bashed into Campy at the plate. Good thing Finley took out that insurance policy. Campy held on to the ball and the inning was over.

— One more crazy thing: The A's actually tied the game in the bottom of the ninth on a **Dick Green** single. Campy, though, was pulled from the game for extra innings. The game went into the 13th, where the A's lost 5-3.

HOW CANADIAN ROCK STAR GEDDY LEE OF THE BAND RUSH BECAME AN UNLIKELY ARCHIVIST OF AMERICA'S PASTTIME

Chad Jennings, The Athletic

Speaking on the phone from his home office, Geddy Lee asks if he can take a second to grab one particular baseball. He knows its story by heart but wants to get it exactly right, in its own words. Of the hundreds of baseballs Lee has collected, this ball is among the least valuable. There are items in his collection worth well over \$100,000. They are signed by U.S. presidents and baseball Hall of Famers; they have been thrown in no-hitters and hit for milestone home runs.



But Lee has reached for a ball signed by **Bert Shepard**, a left-handed pitcher who pitched exactly one game in the major leagues before fading into obscurity. When Shepard signed the ball, he found room between the seams to write his life's story.

"I lost my right leg being shot down over Germany in World War II," Lee says, reading from the ink. "I got a new leg and pitched for the Washington Senators."

At this, Lee starts laughing, but it's an emotional laugh, as if the smile is helping him choke back something more. Lee's parents were Holocaust survivors.

"And then on August 14, 1945," Lee continues, "gave up one run and three hits in five and one-third innings."

It is a box score brought to vivid, handwritten life, and when the bulk of Lee's memorabilia goes to auction next month, that ball will not be among the items for sale. How could anyone put a price on something like that?

"To me, it's kind of just a miraculous thing," Lee said.

If there is such a thing as wholesome indulgence, this is it. Lee, 70, is the singer and renowned bass player of the Canadian rock band Rush. He is in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, his signature literally etched into its walls. He is a rock star in every sense of the word.

But Lee is also a meticulous curator of the American pastime. Over many decades, Lee has filled his office with baseball treasures. He has a 1917 Chicago White Sox ball signed by **Shoeless Joe Jackson**, a 1942 Negro Leagues ball signed by **Josh Gibson**, and a **Mickey Mantle** bat that's been traced back to the 1960 World Series. He also has a ball signed by The Beatles and four signed by John F. Kennedy. It is a collection of Rock and Roll excess, but also of passion and stewardship.

Some 300 items from Lee's collection will be auctioned by Christie's on December 6. It is being billed as "Selections from The Collection of Geddy Lee," and the auction house has estimated The Beatles ball alone to be worth upwards of \$300,000. Same for the Mantle bat and a ball signed by **Rube Waddell**. One of the Kennedy autographs could fetch \$100,000. It's a lot of money.

"If you really look at it from an abstract point of view, it's greed," Lee said. "You want to own the game. You want to own a piece of every great player, to hold in your hand a ball that was signed by **Lou Gehrig**. It just became a magnificent obsession for me."

What's telling, though, are the pieces Lee has decided to keep, and the unmistakable care with which he accumulated so many artifacts in the first place.

"Baseballs, nobody owns them," Lee said. "They're like houses. You take care of them for a while, and then they move on to the next person, the next custodian."

Lee always liked baseball, even if he was never ticketed for the major leagues. As a kid in Toronto, he tried out for a local team but didn't make it. He grew up listening to American League broadcasts from Buffalo and fell in love with **Norm Cash**, **Al Kaline** and the potent Tigers teams of the 1960s. Toronto had a Triple A team in those days — the Blue Jays wouldn't arrive for more than a decade — and Lee took a streetcar to see the pros play. He can still picture the wooden bleachers.

By the 1970s, though, Lee was a musician. Playing the game had been replaced by playing on stage, and so he toured the U.S. and Canada, sleeping in hotel rooms past noon, eating breakfast at 1 p.m., and searching the television for something worth watching in the middle of the day. What he found were Cubs games on WGN and eventually Braves games on TBS. His passion was rekindled, and Lee was wired for obsession.

When the broadcasts mentioned players from bygone eras, Lee thumbed through The Baseball Encyclopedia and thrilled at the colorful nicknames of the past. He read Hoopla by Harry Stein and The Southpaw by Mark Harris. He discovered the writings of Roger Angell and Roger Kahn. In 1979, he returned home from tour and contacted the Blue Jays — in their third year of existence and on their way to a third-straight 100-loss season — and purchased season tickets, which he shared with his brother.

“We would ride our bikes down to the old Exhibition Stadium and watch game after game,” Lee said. “As many as I could when I wasn’t on the road.”

Rush already had three albums certified gold. In a little more than a year, the band would begin recording its iconic, five-times-platinum Moving Pictures. For that summer, though, Lee was just a 25-year-old kid riding his bike to baseball games with his brother.

Perhaps he’s being coy, but Lee says he “inherited” the ball signed by every member of the 3,000-hit club. It came to him with more than 20 signatures — **Ty Cobb, Eddie Collins, Tris Speaker, Stan Musial** — and through various connections in the game, Lee’s been able to keep it up to date. **Ichiro Suzuki. Miguel Cabrera. Albert Pujols.**

“It’s a big job to keep adding to it,” Lee said. “And I’m running out of space, too!”

Lee was hesitant at first to ask for autographs. His bandmate Neil Peart was notoriously leery of the celebrity spotlight, and Lee didn’t like the idea of hassling ballplayers on the field or in the clubhouse. He came into autograph collecting by chance. His blossoming obsession led to a Blue Jays front-office connection who gifted Lee and his brother a set of baseballs signed by various American League players. With those tucked away at home, Lee was on tour in Kansas City when he stumbled upon a memorabilia shop and purchased a signed photo of **Satchel Paige** and another of **Bobby Thomson’s** “shot heard round the world.”

Soon after, he called that Kansas City shop looking for advice on obtaining a specific item.

“I got in my head — and I think this is how every collector starts — wouldn’t it be cool to have a baseball signed by **Babe Ruth**?” Lee said.

The shop owner became a dear friend and mentor who eventually got him a Ruth ball. When Lee acquired the 3,000-hit ball, it was the shop owner who encouraged him to keep adding signatures; to not just admire a piece of history but to maintain it and enhance it.

The rock star talked for a half hour without swearing until he was asked whether he’s still in the fantasy baseball league he joined in the 1980s.

“Oh, f— yeah I am!” Lee said.

In the wake of the Moving Pictures album, when Rush was bigger than ever, Lee immersed himself in rotisserie baseball at a time when the hobby required a daily check of newspaper box scores. His league has grown notoriously complex and competitive, with minor-league players, long-term keepers and defensive statistics to make lineup building as realistic as possible. Lee sounded almost embarrassed to admit he hadn’t won it since 2019. Four whole years without a trophy, when his Blue Jays are just starting their fourth decade without one.

This season, Lee said, was something of a moral victory. He got off to such a bad start that, “I actually pondered whether I was getting too old for it.” But he traded for **Pablo López**, picked up **Kodai Senga and Elly De La Cruz**, and got a strong second half from **Triston Casas**. He finished in a respectable fourth place.

“When the season ends,” he said. “My God, I miss the box scores so much.”

Truth is, Lee has his own place in baseball history. It’s a footnote in the grand scheme of things, but it exists. Rush songs have been used as walk-up music, and former Padres play-by-play man Matt Vasgersian once called a home run by singing the chorus to Fly By Night on the air. Lee threw the ceremonial first pitch for the Blue Jays’ home opener in 2013, and he sang the Canadian national anthem for the All-Star Game in 1993. With no pitch pipe and no accompaniment, Lee walked up the microphone and sang a cappella — but not before someone from the TV network told him he would be “happy to know” 80 million people were watching from home, which did little to calm his nerves.

“The whole thing wound up being a very marvelous experience for me and very memorable,” Lee said. “But it’s one of those things: Once you do it once, why would you do it again?”

Lee’s brother-in-law took a picture of him from the stands, and 30 years later, that picture is still framed in Lee’s office. He also added to his baseball collection that day, though he didn’t mean to. Marlins closer Bryan Harvey, whom Lee didn’t know, gave him a baseball before the first pitch.

“And he just said, ‘This is for your son,’” Lee said. “I mean, how sweet is that?”

Lee is a collector by nature and a student of history by choice. He has collected art and wine, he wrote a book about his collection of bass guitars and he’s recently begun collecting watches. The baseball collection, he said, has given him a greater understanding of American history. He has a 1946 Montreal Royals baseball with **Jackie Robinson**’s signature on the sweet spot.

“As a Canadian, that’s a marvelous piece,” Lee said.

As a collector, though, Lee has come to believe that “collections need to be tended, and they need to be fed.” And in recent years, Lee realized he’d stopped feeding his baseball collection. In 2008, he purchased more than 200 baseballs signed by Negro League players and immediately donated the entire set to the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. He’s made enough connections that people in the game still gift him artifacts, but he won’t sell any of the gifts. They’re priceless in their own way.

“I kept a lot of personal things, and a lot of things that I felt my grandson perhaps would be interested to take over eventually in time,” Lee said.

Lee will sell the many baseballs in his collection that are signed by U.S. Presidents (an obsession back when he was still aggressively adding). He has Kennedy, Harry Truman, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Lyndon B. Johnson, and some of the signatures are on actual ceremonial first-pitch baseballs. He will also sell the final-out balls from both of **Johnny Vander Meer's** back-to-back no-hitters, themselves historical artifacts from a different angle.

Packing his office for the sale, Lee said, was an emotional experience. Each item had a history and a story, and some of them Lee had acquired in especially memorable ways. They meant something beyond their hefty price tags. But when Lee was finished packing, he dug into his archive to better display the items he was not ready or willing to let go.

"Within three days, my wife came into the office and said, 'I thought you sold your baseballs!'" Lee said. "I said, 'Well, yeah, some!'"

Some stories, and some baseballs, just aren't for sale.

"Those are symbolic of the life of a person, to me," Lee said. "I sit in the stands as a fan, and I marvel about the beauty of the sport and the grace with which it's played. In almost every game something happens that you've never seen before. I mean, what sport can really boast that? That's baseball to me.

"The items I collected over these years, I collected with passion, I collected with love, and I just have too much! It's time to share with the world again. And that's fine."

It's kind of just a miraculous thing.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Three seasons he hit 60+ HRs. he is Not in Hall of Fame. Is it:

Pete Alonso, Barry Bonds, Aaron Judge, Roger Maris, Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa?

SAMMY SOSA hit 66 HRs in 1998, 63 in 1999 and 64 in 2001. Incredibly, he did not lead the league in any of those seasons.

McGwire hit 70 in 1998, 65 in 1999.

Bonds hit 73 in 2001, Judge hit 62 in 2022, Maris hit 61 in 1961.

Alonso never hit 60.

Only five players have won Rookie of the Year and later an MVP with another team.

1956 Reds, 1966 Orioles

FRANK ROBINSON

1958 Giants, 1967 Cards

ORLANDO CEPEDA

1964 Phillies, 1972 White Sox

DICK ALLEN

1977 Expos, 1987 Cubs

ANDRE DAWSON

2012 Nationals, 2021 Phillies

BRYCE HARPER

When I was a kid knowing everyone in the 500 HR club was easy.

Hank Aaron	755
Babe Ruth	714
Willie Mays	660
Mickey Mantle	536
Jimmie Fox	534
Ted Williams	521
Ernie Banks	512
Eddie Mathews	512
Mel Ott	511

Since then, 19 more players have reached 500. How many of those 19 can you name? Career total listed and the year he retired are noted to help guide you.

762 home runs, retired 2007

Barry Bonds

703, 2022

Albert Pujols

696, 2016

Arod

630, 2010

Ken Griffey Jr.

612, 2012

Jim Thome

612, 2007

Sammy Sosa

586, 1976

Frank Robinson

583, 2001

Mark McGwire

573, 1975

Harmon Killebrew

569, 2005

Rafael Palmeiro

563, 987

Reggie Jackson

555, 2011

Manny Ramirez

548, 1989

Mike Schmidt

541, 2016

David Ortiz

521, 1980

Willie McCovey

521, 2008

Frank Thomas

511, 2023

Miguel Cabrera

509, 2009

Gary Sheffield

504, 1997

Eddie Murray

I was the first Canadian-born player to win the AL or NL Rookie of the Year award.

Played for San Diego, Boston, Mets and Seattle.

Won the award as a Pirate in 2004.

Righthanded hitting left fielder.

Over my 11-year career over 1278 games I hit 222 HRs, batted .266.

Played in the post-season with the Red Sox in 2008 and 2009 but never played in the World Series.

In a three team trade involving the Red Sox, Dodgers and Pirates in 2008 (**Manny Ramirez** went to the Dodgers).

JASON BAY. He won in 2004, following an impressive first full season with the Pirates. Strangely, Bay was also the first Pittsburgh player to win the award. The Pirates had been the only pre-expansion MLB franchise without a Rookie of the Year winner. He remains the only Canadian player to win it. (**Joey Votto** finished second behind **Geovany Soto** in '08.)

Bay was a runaway choice for the award, earning 25 of the 32 first-place votes. The other seven votes went to Padres shortstop **Khalil Greene**, and every voter who had Greene first put Bay second. Bay had the best offensive numbers of any rookie that season, batting .282 with 26 homers and a 132 OPS+, but Greene actually had the edge in WAR (3.2 to Bay's 2.2) due to his defense at shortstop.

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