

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

11.5.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

I hope you got to enjoy the World Series. Not my teams but some fun games.

This week lots of Post-Season notes, **R.I.P Frank Howard**, the D'backs swimming pool, agenda for the GM meetings in Scottsdale.

In Longer Reads Team Records broken in 2023, MLB Offseason schedule for contracts, awards and free agency, All Post-Season Team.

Its raspberry/white chocolate scones this morning here in Maine. Grab a coffee and dive in.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

(answers at bottom)

Bruce Bochy became the 6th manager to win 4 World Series titles. Here are the years, name the manager.

7 World Series titles—1932, 1936-1939, 1941, 1943

7 World Series titles--1949-1953, 1956, 1958

5 World Series titles—1910-1911, 1913, 1929-1930.

4 World Series titles—1955, 1959, 1963, 1965

4 World Series titles—1996, 1998-2000

Twelve times a batter has hit 3 homeruns in a post season game.

Chris Taylor (Dodgers 2021), **Kike Hernandez** (Dodgers 2017), **Jose Altuve** (Astros 2017), **Adirian Beltre** (Rangers 2011), **Adam Kennedy** (Angels 2002), **George Brett** (Royals 1978), **Bob Robertson** (Pirates 1971) all did it in the playoffs.

These three batters (one did it twice) hit three HRs in a World Series game.

2012 NL 3B switch hitter

1977 AL OF lefthanded batter

1926 and 1928 AL OF lefthanded batter

This pitcher-catcher duo is 5th in games started together with 283 (**Adam Wainwright** and **Yadier Molina** are 1st with 325).

The righthanded pitcher won a Cy Young in 1962.

The catcher won 5 Gold Gloves.

The pitcher won 209 games.

The catcher batted lefthanded, hit 104 career HRs.

They played together in the 1959, 1963, 1965 and 1966 World Series, winning 3.

One of them is in the Hall of Fame.

Name Them.

POST-SEASON NOTES

I hope you watched the clinching 5th game of the World Series.

As Levi Weaver put it in Sports Illustrated, for eight innings, it looked like an instant classic.

- **Zac Gallen's** performance was Swan Lake, all balance and elegance and perfectly executed power disguised as pirouettes. For four innings, he was perfect, until a **Nathaniel Lowe** walk in the fifth. Through six, he still hadn't allowed a hit. Gone was the D-Backs chaos; here was magnificence.
- But if Gallen was ballet, **Nathan Eovaldi's** night was a circus act set to Norwegian death metal, a plate-juggler in a mosh pit, diving to keep the projectiles in the air. Each of Eovaldi's first five innings ended with runners in scoring position, but beyond all belief, nobody stepped on the plate.

Both performances were art, and both — somehow — were equally effective through six innings. But in the seventh, the Rangers broke through when (who else) Series MVP **Corey Seager** singled, later scoring the game's first run on a **Mitch Garver** single. It remained 1-0 until the top of the ninth, when the dam burst. The Rangers scored four runs, capped by a two-run home run from **Marcus Semien**.

In the bottom of the ninth, closer **José Leclerc** was fully warm and looking on from the bullpen, but it was **Josh Sborz** who delivered the Rangers and their fans their first-ever World Series victory.

Sborz, he of the career 5.08 ERA. Sborz, who was optioned to Triple A *six* times in 2022, then finished the year on the 60-day IL. Sborz, who hit the IL this year with an ankle sprain, then right biceps tendinitis, then a left hamstring strain, finally activated for the final time on Sept. 27.

Sborz, who then roared into the postseason, posting an 0.75 ERA in 12 innings pitched.

THE TEAMS

The six teams that played in the previous three World Series combined for one sacrifice bunt in 18 games. The Diamondbacks dropped three sac bunts Saturday and one on Friday.

How many other teams have dropped four sacrifice bunts in the first two games of any World Series in the DH era? Exactly one: **Bert Campaneris'** 1974 Oakland A's, who sprang four on the Dodgers just in Game 1 of that World Series.

Now here's the Weird and Wild part: Oakland's pitcher, **Ken Holtzman**, did bat that day — but laid down none of those bunts.

The Diamondbacks (56 errors) and Rangers (57) made the fewest and second-fewest errors in baseball. In 2022, the Rangers committed 96 errors, more than all but seven teams.

First all-state World Series.

The Texas (not Dallas) Rangers facing off against the Arizona (not Phoenix) Diamondbacks. Never before have both clubs in Major League Baseball's season-ending series carried the names of states, rather than their home cities.

Game 4 - Rangers first team ever with back-to-back 5 run innings in World Series.

First World Series ever to open with three errorless games.

D'backs first World Series team to steal 4 or more bases in three straight games.

Rangers won their first championship in franchise history with the same manager — **Bruce Bochy** — who beat them in their first World Series *appearance* in franchise history, back in 2010. That team featured **Madison Bumgarner**, who played for the Diamondbacks *this year*.

Interesting suggestion from Joe Posnanski: instead of the seven-game World Series being played over nine days — like it is now — it was played over 10 days or even 11? For example, what if you play Game 1, off-day, Game 2, off day, Game 3, Game 4, off day, Game 5, off day, Games 6 and 7. That's 11 days.

And this way, you could have your No. 1 starter go in Games 1, 4 and 7 on regular rest. You could have your No. 2 starter go in Games 2 and 5 and be available to pitch in the seventh game. You'd have to figure out Games 3 and 6, but every team should have a reasonable No. 3 starter — it's when you get down to the No. 4 and 5 starters that we start getting into these goofy bullpen games.

On April 15, 1972, the Texas Rangers played their first game under their new moniker, having become the *second* version of the Washington Senators to rip out the hearts of the fans in D.C. by moving to a new state and assuming a new identity (the first iteration went north to become the Minnesota Twins).

Dick Bosman threw eight shutout innings for Texas in Anaheim that night, but when he went back out for the ninth inning, the Angels immediately loaded the bases, which led manager Ted Williams to make a pitching change. **Paul Lindblad** came into the game in relief and promptly threw a wild pitch that allowed the walk-off run to score.

51 years later - The Texas Rangers, at long last, are World Series champions.

Bruce Bochy managed his fourth team to a title. Texas general manager **Chris Young** will add a World Series ring to a collection that already includes the ring he won as a player with the Kansas City Royals in 2015.

The Rangers were resilient. They refused to fold when \$185 million offseason addition **Jacob deGrom** required Tommy John surgery after only six starts. The team refused to fold when the Houston Astros captured the American League West on the final day of the regular season and later blitzed Texas for three consecutive defeats in the AL Championship Series. The team refused to fold when outfielder **Adolis García** and starter **Max Scherzer** suffered season-ending injuries in Game 3 of the World Series.

The Rangers are champions, a title that slipped from their grasp 12 years ago in St. Louis. Twice in that Game 6 they stood one strike from glory, and twice it disappeared. No need to rehash the ghastly details. After 4,388 days, fortune has finally shined — big and bright — on Texas.

The Rangers started as the expansion Washington Senators in 1961, replacing the flagship American League franchise of the same name. That team — that very season — became the Minnesota Twins.

The new Senators, then, were like a rebound relationship, frivolous and short-lived. By 1972 they had migrated to Arlington, Texas, with a very famous manager, **Ted Williams**, and a very thin roster. The Rangers averaged just 8,610 fans per game on their way to 100 losses.

The second season was even worse — a 105-loss debacle that started with **Whitey Herzog** as manager and ended with **Billy Martin** — but the Rangers would win more than they lost for the rest of the decade. Attendance rose steadily at Arlington Stadium, a converted minor-league park.

The Rangers always seemed to have brand names — **Fergie Jenkins and Gaylord Perry, Bobby Bonds and Toby Harrah, Buddy Bell and Rusty Staub, Al Oliver Juan Gonzalez** — but no post-season success.

A feisty young manager, **Bobby Valentine**, came along in 1985 and spent most of eight seasons pushing for innovations: weight training for pitchers, a satellite dish for video scouting, biomechanical imaging to study players' movements. **Nolan Ryan** arrived for a late-career flourish, and construction began on a spiffy new home, originally called The Ballpark in Arlington. But the team still fell short.

By the time the Rangers won their first division title, in 1996, every other expansion team had already reached the playoffs. And winning brought only more anguish — the teams of Juan González and **Iván Rodríguez** were appetizers for the dynastic Yankees, bowing in the division series in 1996, 1998 and 1999.

A pennant in 2010 led to another in 2011, with **Adrián Beltré** joining a slugging core of **Michael Young, Kinsler, Josh Hamilton and Nelson Cruz**. Beltré homered in that fateful Game 6 in St. Louis — before **Neftalí Feliz and Scott Feldman** blew saves in the ninth and 10th — and was haunted for years by the heartbreak.

In the clinching game the D'backs left 11 men on base. Only 4 other teams have ever left that many runners on base and been shutout in a post-season game and it is the most ever in a World Series game. The Orioles left 14 on base in a 1997 ALCS shutout loss, the Reds (13 in 2020, the Dodgers 13 in 1981 and the Cards 12 in 2012).

Rangers went 13-4 against playoff-caliber teams, including an unbelievable 11-0 in road games. (Four franchises don't have ten road playoff wins in their entire history.) They outscored their opponents 97-67. In ten of their 13 wins, the Rangers scored the first run of the game and never gave up the lead. The Rangers hit -- 30 home runs and scored nearly six runs a game.

Arizona made this run with a core that will be back. Of the players who played in the Series, only **Lourdes Gurriel Jr. and Evan Longoria** aren't under control for 2024. **Corbin Carroll** will be 23 next year, **Gabriel Moreno** 24, **Geraldo Perdomo** 24, **Alek Thomas** 24, **Brandon Pfaadt** 25, **Zac Gallen** 28. **Jordan Lawlar** is a top-ten prospect and will be 22. They're projected to be more than \$100 million below the tax threshold, so they can build out their rotation and go into the market for a big bat to play left field or DH. They arrived a year early, and they're not as good as "National League champs" makes it sound, but the Diamondbacks are for real.

The Rangers were the 11th team in the last 13 world series to clinch on the road.

Rangers won 11 straight road post-season games.

Game 1: Texas 4, Tampa Bay 0

Game 2: Texas 7, Tampa Bay 1

Game 3: Texas 3, Baltimore 2

Game 4: Texas 11, Baltimore 8

Game 5: Texas 2, Houston 0

Game 6: Texas 5, Houston 4

Game 7: Texas 9, Houston 2

Game 8: Texas 11, Houston 4

Game 9: Texas 3, Arizona 1

Game 10: Texas 11, Arizona 7

Game 11: Texas 5, Arizona 0

The longest regular season, by the way, belongs to the 1983-84 Tigers — mostly the 1984 Tigers. The 1983 Tigers won their last four road games, highlighted by a three-game sweep in Baltimore. But then the '84 Tigers, you might remember the incredible start they had that year, won their first SEVENTEEN road games, a crazy thing that had not been seen in baseball since the 1916 Giants of **Fred Merkle and John McGraw**. The funny thing about that Giants streak: They literally won them all in a row; they went on a TWENTY-ONE game road trip in May and won the first 17.

Eleven teams finished within five games of the 90-72 Rangers this year, and this team became the ninth different outfit to win a ring in the last 10 years, with only Houston doubling up.

The Rangers put up a four-spot in the last inning of this postseason. Their list of four-run and five-run innings was shockingly long:

4-5-4-5-4-5-4-5-5-4

As Rangers radio voice Jared Sandler reported, the Rangers had as many five-run innings *in two innings* Tuesday as the 11 other playoff teams had combined, in the entire postseason: Phillies one, Diamondbacks one, Rangers five.

And what about those 10 innings of four runs or more? According to Katie Sharp, that's the most innings of four runs or more — by far — that any team had ever scored in a single postseason. The old record was only seven, by **David Ortiz's** 2004 and 2007 Red Sox, and by **Eric Hosmer's** 2015 Royals.

It was an unconventional journey.

The team that won the World Series *had a losing record in its last 102 games* (50-52) after a sizzling 40-20 start. You know who had a better record than the Rangers over those last 102 games? Oh, only the Tigers ... and Reds ... and Marlins ... and Padres (among others).

The team that won the World Series lost 102 games two years ago and 94 last year. And how many teams had ever lost 196 games in the two seasons before they won the World Series? Right you are. That would be none.

The team that won the World Series had a bullpen with more blown saves (33) than actual saves (30). And how many teams have ever won a World Series (or even a postseason game) with a bullpen like that? Once again, that would be zilch.

The team that won the World Series led its division for 149 straight days, blew that lead in August ... fell all the way to third place in September ... then charged back to lead again by 2 1/2 games with four to play, only to blow that lead, too, on the final day of the season ... and lost its first-round bye in the process ... which meant having to fly 2,582 miles to Tampa to open a wild-card series it thought it wasn't going to have to play ... then found a way to win an American League Championship Series in which it managed to *lose all its home games* ... and then, in the middle of the World Series, lost a guy (**Adolis García**) who was pretty much hitting a home run every at-bat ... and then, after all that, that team ...*Still won the World Series!*

This is a franchise that has lost more games (5,217) since it first came into being, in 1961, than any other team in baseball — and would be a mere 839 games behind the Yankees if we were keeping track of the last 63 seasons as if they were one never-ending season.

Until Wednesday night, not a single franchise in baseball had been in existence as long as the Rangers/Senators without winning at least one World Series.

Only two franchises in baseball have ever gone longer, from the invention of the World Series (in 1903) to their first title, than the 63 seasons it took the Rangers to do that — the Phillies (78 seasons, from 1903 to 1980) and Orioles/Browns (64 seasons, from 1903 to 1966).

Just one franchise in this sport is still suffering through a longer title-free stretch than this one. And that would be Drew Carey's Cleveland Guardians, currently looking forward to season No. 77 since that last title in (gulp) 1948.

Only one other franchise in *any* major North American professional sport — those Minnesota Vikings — has been in existence as long as the Rangers/Senators without winning at least one championship.

THE PLAYERS

Game 1 **Adolis Garcia's** 11th inning walk off HR was the first game 1 walk off since **Kirk Gibson** for the Dodgers in 1988.

How the Rangers won:

- Game-tying home run in the ninth inning.
- Walk-off home run in extra innings.

Take a second to think about all the spectacular endings you've seen in your lifetime watching World Series games — whether that's five years or 50. Now consider this: In the history of the World Series, *only one other game has ever had that ending.*

And somehow or other, the Diamondbacks lost that one, too: Game 4, 2001 ... the **Curt Schilling** “mystique and aura” game ... gets turned upside-down on **Tino Martinez's** spine-tingling game-tying homer in the ninth ... then ends on **Derek Jeter's** fabled Mr. November homer in the 10th ... both off haunted Arizona closer **Byung-Hyun Kim**.

Garcia homered in five straight post-season games. He had never homered in more than 3 straight games in his career.

He drove in a run in 6 straight post-season games—career best was 5 straight regular season games.

From his last at-bat of ALCS Game 6 through the end of World Series Game 1 he went 8 for 10 with 5 HRs. He has never had 8 hits over 3 games.

Game 2 – Arizona's **Tommy Pham** became the first World Series DH ever to get 4 hits in a World Series game (not World Series DH's **David Ortiz, Dave Winfield, Paul Molitor, Vlad Guerrrero Sr., Bryce Harper or Reggie Jackson**). The only players to produce five-hit games in the World Series were Molitor in 1982 and **Albert Pujols** in 2011. Pham tied Albert Pujols with three post-season 4 hits games.

The only player to have multiple four-hit games in the World Series — **Robin Yount**, and he had them in the SAME World Series, his only World Series, 1982 against the Cardinals. He had four hits in Game 1, which the Brewers won 10-0. Then he had four hits in Game 5, and the Brewers won that one to take a 3-2 lead. Alas, he managed only one hit in the final two games, through, and the Cardinals took the series in seven.

Ketel Marte stretched his consecutive game post-season hit streak to 20—longest ever.

Longest post-season hitting streaks

Ketel Marte	2017-2023	20 games
Hank Bauer	1956-1958	17
Derek Jeter	1998-1999	17
Manny Ramirez	2003-2004	17

Longest post-season hitting streaks by a select list of decent hitters:

Joe DiMaggio — 7

Pete Rose — 9

Tony Gwynn — 8

Ty Cobb — 7

Paul Molitor — 8

Corey Seager (10 years, \$325 million) and **Marcus Semien** (seven years, \$175 million) don't look like bad investments now.

Arizona's starter **Merril Kelly**:

Game 2, World Series — 3 hits, 7 IP

Game 6, NLCS — 3 hits, 5 IP

Game 2, NLCS — 3 hits, 5 2/3 IP

Game 1, NLDS — 3 hits, 6 1/3 IP

Makes Kelly the first starting pitcher in history to string together four starts in a row of three hits (or fewer) in the same postseason. He was the first pitcher since 2019 to throw 7 or more innings in a World Series start.

Texas game two starter **Jordan Montgomery** was the 12th starting pitcher ever to work at least six innings in a World Series game and strike out zero hitters. But six of them were between 1918 and 1925 (including **Babe Ruth**)

Only two others had done it in the previous 50 World Series. Those two were **Jimmy Key** (Game 2, 1996 Yankees) and **Dave Stewart** (Game 4, 1988 A's).

No strikeouts for Montgomery, *but also no unintentional walks*. (His only walk all night was intentional, to Lourdes Gurriel Jr.) So how many other starters in World Series history have had

a start like that — no whiffs but also no walks (other than intentional passes)? Just one: **Jim Bagby**, who intentionally walked* **Zack Wheat** in his Game 2 start for Cleveland in 1920.

Montgomery has thrown close to 3300 pitches this year, 500 more than he did a year ago, which was itself a career high. He's never pitched this long into a year or thrown so many high-stress pitches in September and October. Might be a discussion point in his free agent negotiations.

Insights from the Joe Sheean newsletter--

Corey Seager hit the hardest ball of Game Three, 114.5 mph off the bat, at an angle of 22 degrees. It went 421 feet for a two-run homer that was the decisive blow in the game.

Ketel Marte hit the second-hardest ball of Game Three, 114.4 mph off the bat. His ball, however, came off the bat at -3 degrees, and it went about 125 feet into the glove of Seager, who started a double play that ended the Diamondbacks' last rally.

Infield defense has become so good that we don't think about it any more. We just expect plays to be made on these rockets, expect balls that don't get through the dirt to become routine outs. Infielders now turn double plays with lethal efficiency, with even players we don't immediately think of as wizards, like Seager, able to make plays. I mentioned using a time machine on **Merrill Kelly**, taking him back to the 1980s. Do the same with Seager, an average shortstop in our game, and he'd challenge **Ozzie Smith** for Gold Gloves each year. The baseline level of athleticism has risen slowly over time so that we don't notice it. Today's infielders, today's infields, are out machines, though, even hampered by ill-conceived rules that dictate they position themselves poorly.

The lesson? Hit the ball up. You have to hit the ball up. Seager and Marte hit the same rocket last night. One hit it up for two runs, the other hit it down for two outs. Groundballs are death. Hit the ball up.

Corey Seager Shines

For the second time in his career, **Corey Seager** is the World Series MVP.

The Texas Rangers shortstop was named the 2023 World Series MVP after helping his team seal a 5-0 series-clinching win in Game 5 of the Fall Classic on Wednesday night at Chase Field.

Seager is the second player in MLB/NBA/NFL/NHL history to win the championship MVP award for 2 different teams in a span of 4 seasons. The other is LeBron James.

Seager also won the World Series MVP award in 2020 as a member of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The 29-year-old is now just the fourth player in Major League Baseball history to win multiple World Series MVP trophies since the award's inception in 1955. He joins Hall of Famer's **Sandy Koufax, Bob Gibson and Reggie Jackson** as the only players to win the award twice.

Seager first SS with three HRs in one series.

Seager was brilliant in this year's Fall Classic, slashing .286/.375/.762 with three home runs, six RBI and 16 total bases on six hits in five games.

The two-time Silver Slugger also delivered the team's first hit in the seventh inning of Game 5 to break up **Zac Gallen's** no-hitter. The hit was the first of three consecutive hits by the Rangers that resulted in the team taking a 1-0 lead.

Seager, who is in his second season in Texas, signed a blockbuster 10-year, \$325 million deal with the Rangers in December 2021 as a free agent. To Texas fans, he's certainly already lived up to that contract.

Seager was dominant in the regular season for the Rangers, slashing .327/.390/.623 with 33 home runs, 96 RBI and two stolen bases in 119 games. Through the entire 2023 postseason, he hit .318/.451/.682 with six home runs and 12 RBI in 17 games.

Reggie Jackson: 77 games, 318 PAs, .278/.358/.527, 14 2Bs, 1 3B, 18 HRs, 41 runs, 48 RBIs, two World Series MVPs.

Corey Seager: 78 games, 346 PAs, .254/.350/.508, 17 2Bs, 1 3B, 19 HRs, 55 runs, 48 RBIs, two World Series MVPs.

Those are pretty similar numbers, aren't they? But if you want to be fair to the greatness of Mr. October, you need to look at their World Series numbers.

Corey Seager is hitting .294/.402/.588 with six homers, 17 runs and 15 RBIs in 18 World Series games. That's obviously incredibly good, especially when you consider that he really struggled in his first World Series, striking out nine times in seven games.

BUT ... look at Reggie: .357/.457/.755 with 10 homers, 21 runs, and 24 RBIs in 27 World Series games. That's obviously the stuff of legend, and the big reason why Reggie Jackson is a legend.

Seager now has 15 career RBIs in the World Series. That puts him one behind **Pee Wee Reese** for the most ever by SS in World Series history!

Rk	Player	RBI	Rd.
1	Pee Wee Reese	16	WS
2	Corey Seager	15	WS
3	Dave Concepción	12	WS
4	Carlos Correa	12	WS
5	Frankie Crosetti	11	WS

Game 3 and the number 3—Rangers start 3-time Cy Young winner **Max Scherzer** against rookie **Brandon Pfaadt** who was sent to the minors 3 times this season.

Tom Verducci in Sports Illustrated described Pfaadt as an elite mover with hyper flexibility. He has 80th percentile extension (letting the ball go nearly seven feet in front of the rubber) with a low release point (about 5.5 feet off the ground), a combination that gives superb ride to a four-seamer with average velocity (93.7 mph). It's a tremendous physical package to confuse hitters.

Pitching coach **Brent Strom** moved the righthander from the third-base side of the rubber to the first-base side of the rubber. Why? With his lower, slingshot arm slot, Pfaadt was releasing the ball in line with the chalk of the right-handed batter's box. He wasn't getting enough chase swings because hitters did not see the ball starting in the zone. By moving a foot to the first-base side, Pfaadt released the ball so that it was in line with the strike zone as it left his hand. Now, hitters would need to read whether the pitch that began in line with the zone stayed straight (four-seamer), moved right (two-seamer), left (sweeper) or down (change and curve).

Pfaadt had a habit of pulling the ball out of his glove at the top of the delivery and then putting it back in as his leg came down. Showing the baseball at any point in a delivery can sometimes lead to pitch-tipping in this age when teams use AI and base coaches to decipher any "tells."

Using his usual "ball-out-of-glove" timing mechanism in Game 1 of the Wild Card series against Milwaukee, Pfaadt gave up three runs on seven hits. Strom got Pfaadt to adjust—now the ball stays in the glove until the front leg has come down and kicks out. Since then, Pfaadt has a 1.29 ERA and has held batters to a .170 batting average. He is keeping the ball hidden from cameras and base coaches.

Counting the postseason, **Marcus Semien** finished with 835 plate appearances. That broke the record of 833 set by **Lenny Dykstra** of the Phillies in 1993.

Semien started all 179 games Texas played this season and over the last three seasons has played in 485 of 486 regular-season games for the Blue Jays and Rangers.

From the weird connections file:

Consider this:

- Oct. 27, 2011, Game 6 of the World Series: The home team (St. Louis Cardinals) is trailing by two in the ninth. There's a strikeout swinging, a double, and a walk, then the home team scores two to tie it on a huge hit (**David Freese** triple). The runs score because the Rangers' right fielder — a late-bloomer who had a breakout season at age 28 after being DFA'd from an NL Central team (**Nelson Cruz**) — fails to make a play at the wall. In the 11th inning, immediately after a pitching change, the home team blasts a walk-off home run (Freese).
- Oct. 27, 2023, Game 1 of the World Series: The home team is trailing by two in the ninth. There's a walk, then a strikeout swinging, and then the home team scores two to tie it on a huge hit (**Corey Seager** home run). The Rangers' right fielder — a late-bloomer who had a breakout season at age 28 after being DFA'd from an NL Central team (**Adolis García**) — *makes a nice defensive play at the wall in the ninth inning*. In the 11th inning, immediately after a pitching change, the home team blasts a walk-off home run (García).

Need more? Oh, there's more. The NL Central team the Rangers claimed García from? The St. Louis Cardinals, of course. And that home run by García was his 22nd this postseason, a new single-postseason record. Guess who he passed? Freese, of course.

The number-three hitters in this World Series are not what you'd expect — they're both rookies with very little big-league experience. Look at the number-three hitters in Game 3s of World Series past:

1923: HOF **Frankie Frisch** (Giants) vs. HOF **Babe Ruth** (Yankees)

1933: HOF **Bill Terry** (Giants) vs. HOF **Heinie Manush** (Senators)

1943: HOF **Stan Musial** (Cardinals) vs. **Billy Johnson** (Yankees)*

Obviously, this was when **Joe DiMaggio and company were at war.*

1953: **Hank Bauer** (Yankees) vs. HOF **Duke Snider** (Dodgers)

1963: **Tom Tresh** (Yankees) vs. **Willie Davis** (Dodgers)

1973: **Sal Bando** (Athletics) vs. **Rusty Staub** (Mets)

1983: HOF **Cal Ripken Jr.** (Orioles) vs. HOF **Mike Schmidt** (Phillies)

1993: HOF **Paul Molitor** (Blue Jays) vs. **John Kruk** (Phillies)

2003: **Jason Giambi** (Yankees) vs. HOF **Ivan Rodriguez** (Marlins)

2013: **Dustin Pedroia** (Red Sox) vs. **Matt Holliday** (Cardinals)

And this year, our number-three hitters are **Gabriel Moreno**, 23 years old, 136 big-league games, eight career home runs vs. Texas' **Evan Carter**, just turned 21, 23 big-league games, five career home runs.

Speaking of Evan Carter. He is one of just 15 players to have 2 or more multi-hit World Series games at age 21 or younger.

1	Jimmy Sebring	1903	1903 3
2	Jimmie Foxx	1929	1929 3
3	Dib Williams	1931	1931 3
4	Mickey Mantle	1952	1952 3
5	Tony Kubek	1957	1957 3
6	Edgar Rentería	1997	1997 3
7	Juan Soto	2019	2019 3
8	Ty Cobb	1908	1908 2

9 Amos Strunk	1910	1910 2
10 Freddie Lindstrom	1924	1924 2
11 Joe DiMaggio	1936	1936 2
12 Willie Mays	1951	1951 2
13 Andruw Jones	1996	1996 2
14 Xander Bogaerts	2013	2013 2
15 Evan Carter	2013	2

But wait, there's more...

Rangers OF Evan Carter hit 9 doubles during the 2023 playoffs, which is the most by a player in a single postseason.

Rk	Player	2B	Season	G
1	Evan Carter	9	2023	17
2	Mookie Betts	8	2020	18
3	David Freese	8	2011	18
4	Albert Pujols	8	2011	18
5	Ben Zobrist	8	2015	16

He also joined **Joe DiMaggio** as the only players to hit 3+ doubles in a World Series at age 21 or younger.

Then Carter batted clean-up.

Youngest cleanup hitters in World Series history

Miguel Cabrera	2003	20 years, 183 days
Ty Cobb	1907	20 years, 294 days
Juan Soto	2019	20 years, 362 days
Evan Carter	2023	21 years, 62 days

Nathan Eovaldi became the fourth pitcher to win 5 games in one post-season

Randy Johnson, D'backs 2001

Francisco Rodriguez, Angels 2002

Stephen Strasburg, Nationals 2019

All four won the World Series.

Eovaldi was 5-0 with a 2.95 earned run average in six postseason starts with Texas winning all six games.

Eovaldi is 9-3 with a 3.05 ERA in 17 playoff appearances, with the Red Sox and Rangers winning 14 of those games. In 12 starts, Eovaldi is 9-2 with a 2.73 ERA.

Eovaldi is one of 26 pitchers with at least 75 innings in the postseason this century. He's ninth in wins, 10th in ERA, and eighth in WHIP.

Four months ago, **Josh Jung** started the All-Star Game for the AL at third base. Wednesday night, Josh Jung started for the Rangers at third base on the night they won the World Series.

Rookies who started an All-Star Game and won a World Series in the same season:

Joe DiMaggio, 1936

Fernando Valenzuela, 1981

Josh Jung, 2023

Texas manager **Bruce Bochy** won his fourth title 13 years to the day after his first, which came in 2010 when the Giants beat the Rangers he now leads. He also won titles with San Francisco in 2012 and 2014.

Bochy's career postseason record in even years: 44-13.

Bochy's career postseason record in odd years before this one: 0-3. (He'd never won a game in an odd year. Not *even* one!)

When Bochy arrived in San Francisco, the Giants had never won a World Series since exiting New York. So much for that! Their 2010 title ended that 52-year drought.

Then he came to Texas this year *and wiped out another 52-year title drought* (62 if you count the years in Washington).

And how many other managers in history have finished off *two* droughts that long, with two different franchises? Not a single one.

His teams have won 15 of their last 16 postseason rounds! This amazing Bochy streak began with the Giants' ouster of **Jonny Venters'** 2010 Braves, on a game-winning single by **Cody Ross**, in the 2010 National League Division Series. ... The only loss along the way was to the 2016 Cubs. ... And now here's the important part:

How many other managers have ever won 15 out of 16 postseason series? Once again, that would be *nobody!* Obviously. Only the **Joe Torre** Yankees came close, from 1996 to 2001, with 14 of 16.

Along the way, Bochy's teams beat juggernauts managed by **Bobby Cox, Charlie Manuel, Ron Washington, Dusty Baker (twice), Mike Matheny (twice), Jim Leyland, Clint Hurdle, Matt Williams, Ned Yost, Terry Collins, Kevin Cash, Brandon Hyde and Torey Lovullo**. They topped at least one former manager of the year in every one of those postseasons except 2016.

The last three managers to win the World Series:

2023 — Bruce Bochy, age 68

2022 — Dusty Baker, age 73

2021 — **Brian Snitker**, age 66

It's the first time in history that three different managers, all age 60-plus, won the World Series in three consecutive years.

Bochy is the third manager to win a World Series in both leagues, joining **Sparky Anderson** (1975-76 Reds; 1984 Tigers) and **Tony La Russa** (1989 Athletics; 2006 and 2011 Cardinals).

Rangers reliever **Will Smith** became the first player in MLB history to win three World Series in a row with three different teams. Smith was a key piece of Atlanta's bullpen in 2021 when the Braves won the title and was also on the Astros' roster for last year's Fall Classic win.

Josh Sborz closed out the Series for Texas.

On one hand, the Rangers' trusty right-hander had himself a fantastic postseason (43 hitters faced, *four* hits allowed and a 0.75 ERA). But on the other hand ...

How many games did Sborz save all season? 0. What was the ERA this season of The Guy Who Saved the Last Game of the World Series? That would be ... 5.50.

Sborz's 5.50 regular-season ERA was the highest in history, by the pitcher who saved the World Series finale, by more than half a run.

The old "record-holder": **Will McEnaney**, of the 1976 Big Red Machine, at 4.85.

Pudge Rodríguez, Juan Gonzalez and Michael Young never made it to this magic moment.

The bubbly never did spray for **Toby Harrah, Rusty Greer or Adrián Beltré**.

The parade floats never stopped to pick up **Danny Darwin, Rick Helling or Neftalí Feliz**.

Jayson Stark of The Athletic -- I didn't write those words Wednesday night. I wrote them (or at least most of them) *12 years ago*, sitting in a press box in St. Louis, watching the 2011 Rangers almost finish that job the 2023 Rangers finally polished off Wednesday.

But then **David Freese** happened to that team. And those words remained frozen in alternate-history laptop time, for all these years.

But, finally, the Rangers won it all.

OTHER POST-SEASON NOTES

October Heros (Joe Posnanski newsletter)

Adolis Garcia. LCS Games 6 and 7, he went 5 for 10 with three home runs and nine RBIs

This is the power of the postseason ... **Sandy Koufax** is Sandy Koufax because of the World Series. **Reggie Jackson** is Reggie Jackson because of the World Series. **Joe Carter** is better remembered than scores and scores of Hall of Famers, **Jack Morris** is in the Hall of Fame in large part because of one remarkable World Series game, **Bill Mazeroski** is in the Hall of Fame in large part because of one swing of the bat in the World Series, **David Freese** will always be a baseball hero (even if he doesn't always feel like he deserves it).

October has always created baseball legends ... but it's truer now than it has ever been. And as more teams get added to the postseason — and let's not kid anybody, we're headed for 16 postseason teams sooner rather than later — the month of October (and now going into November) will come to define every player. Oh, sure, **Mike Trout** will go to the Hall of Fame even if he never wins a single playoff game.

But, alas, because of circumstances and because the Angels have so failed him, Trout has never felt what Adolis García is feeling now, that sense of being on top of the baseball world, that feeling of invincibility that happens when you come through again and again in the season's biggest moments, that October glow with the crowd at a frenzy and the baseball nation in awe.

Adolis García has now homered in five consecutive postseason games, a streak behind only **Daniel Murphy**, who in 2015 hit homers in six straight playoff games. But Murphy's streak stopped just as the Mets reached the World Series (he hit .150 with no homers or RBIs in that World Series against Kansas City), and so it is largely forgotten except by Chicago Cubs fans, who saw him as the ultimate revenge of Murphy the goat.

Think **Zack Wheeler** is an ace? If your criteria includes performance in the post-season, here are a few numbers to consider:

61 2/3 inning across 10 post-season starts

2.48 ERA

67 strikeouts, 9 walks

36 hits allowed

Opponent's On Base Percentage allowed—first all time at .211—that's ahead of others in the top ten like **Sandy Koufax, Christy Mathewson and Mariano Rivera**.

In Cleveland, you will quickly be regaled with tales of how long it's been since the city has celebrated winning a World Series. Ditto in Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Detroit and a certain tortured borough of New York City. But despite championship droughts that have now lasted for decades, fans of the Guardians, Pirates, Orioles, Tigers and Mets can find hope in one very important fact — it's happened before, so why can't it happen again?

Five MLB franchises yet to win a World Series, now that the Texas Rangers have ended 62 seasons of darkness that began as the second incarnation of the Washington Senators.

5. Colorado Rockies

Established: 1993

Pennants: one — 2007

2023 record: 59-103

Swept by the Red Sox in the 2007 World Series after the Rockies won 21 of their last 22 games to reach the series.

4. Milwaukee Brewers

Established: 1969

Pennants: one — 1982

2023 record: 92-70

1982 up 3 games to 2 over St. Louis but lost the Series to the Cards in 7.

3. Seattle Mariners

Established: 1977

Pennants: none

2023 record: 88-74

Four postseason trips in seven years — and the heartbreak of three ALCS defeats. Their record 116-win season in 2001 ended in an ALCS Game 5 loss to the Yankees.

2. San Diego Padres

Established: 1969

Pennants: two — 1984, 1998

2023 record: 82-80

1984 lost to Tigers in World Series 4-1 and in 1998 were crushed by the Yankees 4-0.

1. Tampa Bay Rays

Established: 1998

Pennants: two — 2008, 2020

2023 record: 99-63

Lost 2008 World Series to the Phillies in five games. They lost to the Dodgers in 2020 4 games to 2.

The Mariners are the only team never to win a pennant.

PGA Tour pro Jon Rahm threw the first pitch at Game 4 of the World Series on Tuesday night, and he showed up in style. The 2023 Masters champion sported his green jacket on Halloween night.

As an alum of Arizona State University and a current Scottsdale resident, the Spaniard was the perfect choice to fire off the first pitch. However, the Diamondbacks ultimately fell to the Rangers, 11–7.

Two other Masters champions were spotted at the World Series this week. Jordan Spieth and Scottie Scheffler, alums of the University of Texas and current Dallas residents, were present at Game 1 in Arlington.

The biggest blowout in World Series history came in Game 2 of the Fall Classic all the way back in 1936 between the New York Yankees and New York Giants. The Bronx Bombers walked away with a massive 18-4 win in that game, the largest margin of victory in the history of the championship series in MLB. Interestingly enough, the Yankees actually lost Game 1 of that series to the Giants, but carried the momentum from the Game 2 blowout to win the championship in six games.

Incidentally, the Yankees were involved in the second-biggest blowout in World Series history, but on the other side. That came in the 2001 World Series against the Diamondbacks as Arizona blasted New York in Game 6 with a 15-2 victory, keeping them alive in the series and paving the way for the famous **Luis Gonzalez** walk-off off of **Mariano Rivera** to win Game 7 and the series.

The Diamondbacks were far from the first team to get shut out in the game that ended the World Series. But they did do this:

Zero runs ... 11 runners left on base.

Did you know that just one other team in history has gotten shut out in the final game of a World Series and left that many runners dancing around the bases? And that other time happened as recently as ... 1943! That was **Harry (The Hat) Walker's** '43 Cardinals, who also abandoned 11 runners on the bases, in a 2-0 shutout by Yankees ace **Spud Chandler**.

Rangers broadcaster Eric Nadel got to make his 'bucket list call' after 45 years broadcasting Texas games. He has called over 6,000 Rangers games, 10 broadcast partners, 15 managers, nine GMs and five different ownership groups. When **Nolan Ryan** notched his 5,000th strikeout, it was Nadel on the call. When they made their first postseason, 25 years after moving to Arlington, Nadel was the voice that shared the moment. When they finally won their first playoff series, in 2010, Nadel was on the call. Then World Series losses in 2010 (Giants) and 2011 (Cards).

Game 5, 9th inning, During the break, excitement and disbelief mingled in the silence. Nadel and Hicks — the duo who have chatted casually through the last 12 years of Rangers baseball — now wordlessly scribbled notes as a two-minute eternity crawled by.

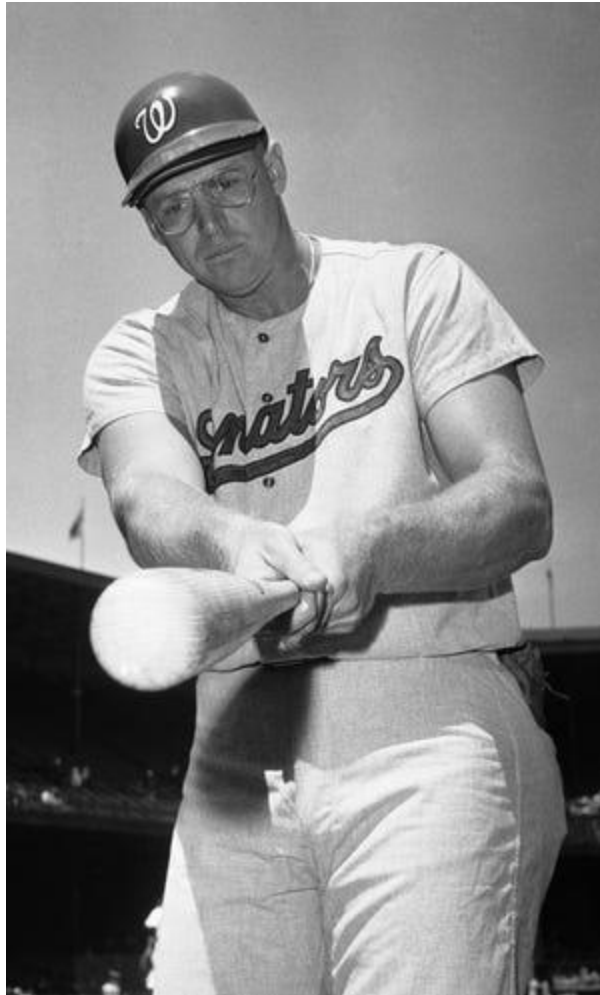
And then they were back on the air. Three outs from relief, Nadel settled back into his seat on the far right of the booth:

<https://youtu.be/wjEOmv0Cpx0>

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

R.I.P. FRANK HOWARD

Another entry in the "my baseball cards are dying".



Frank Howard died this week at age 87. He was a four-time All-Star who slugged 382 home runs during a lengthy major league career that included a World Series title with the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1963,

At 6 feet 7 inches and 255 pounds, the "Capital Punisher" was one of the biggest players of his era, which included 44-, 48-, and 44-homer seasons for the Senators from 1968-70.

Howard played seven seasons with the Washington Senators after earning NL Rookie of the Year honors with the Dodgers in 1960 and helping them win the World Series three years later. He was with the Senators when they relocated to Texas and became the Rangers, and finished his playing career with the Detroit Tigers.

Howard hit the final home run for the Senators at RFK Stadium in 1971 and the first at Arlington Stadium in April 1972 after the team moved.

Nicknamed “Hondo,” Howard played 1,895 regular-season and three postseason games from 1958-73. He spent a brief time as a manager, with the San Diego Padres in 1981 and the New York Mets in 1983.

Howard led the American League in home runs twice, in 1968 and ‘70, sandwiched around a 48-homer season that remains the most in Washington baseball history. In 1968, the year of the pitcher, Frank Howard mashed 44 home runs; eight more than anyone else in the league. The next year, he hit 48 home runs, one behind another one of my father’s heroes, Harmon Killebrew. And then in 1970, Hondo again led the league with 44 homers. He was inducted into the Nationals’ ring of honor in 2016.

He was the only player to win the American League home run title while playing for the expansion Washington Senators.

He was the first Los Angeles Dodger to win the Rookie of the Year Award.

He once hit ten (10!) home runs in a calendar week (Sunday-Saturday). In that streak, he became the first player to homer ten times in a twenty-at-bat span.

Hondo was an All-America basketball player at Ohio State; he averaged 20 points and 15 rebounds as a junior and was drafted by the NBA’s Philadelphia Warriors. But he loved baseball more.

Howard’s journey was not a straight line; he did win Rookie of the Year in 1960, but he was really too slow to play the outfield effectively (though he had a bazooka arm) and he struck out too much for the time, and so the Dodgers platooned him until he was 27 years old. Then they traded him to Washington in a seven-player deal that brought back Claude Osteen, and Hondo bashed some home runs for bad Senators teams managed by his former teammate Gil Hodges. Then in 1969, the team hired their new manager, a guy named Ted Williams, and it’s utterly REMARKABLE how much that changed Frank Howard as a hitter. Up to that point, he was a wild free swinger with a .336 lifetime on-base percentage. Under Williams, he immediately cut down the strikeouts and doubled the walks; that year he hit .296/.402/.574 with those career-high 48 homers. The next year, he led the league with 132 walks.

It wasn’t until his tenth season that **Roger Clemens** gave up a grand slam. **Gary Gaetti** of the Angels got him on September 5, 1993. Gaetti homered in his first major league at bat off **Charlie Hough** September 20, 1981.

Farewell Nelson Cruz

After 19 years, 464 home runs and eight teams, **Nelson Cruz** is calling it a career. Cruz started his MLB career in September 2005 with an eight-game stint with the Brewers, then was traded to the Rangers in July 2006. He spent eight years with Texas, where he slugged 157 home runs and drove in 489 runs while earning two American League All-Star nods. Cruz's best season with the Rangers came in 2011, when he slashed .263/.312/.509 with 29 home runs and 87 RBIs.

Cruz earned 2011 AL Championship Series MVP honors when he slugged six home runs in Texas' six-game win over the Tigers. He had his signature moment in that series, hitting a walk-off grand slam in Game 2 -- still the only walk-off grand slam in MLB postseason history.

After leaving Texas, Cruz signed a one-year deal with the Orioles, where he hit an MLB-leading 40 home runs to help lead Baltimore on a Cinderella run that ended in the 2014 ALCS. That was the first of six seasons in which Cruz earned MVP votes. After leaving the O's, Cruz spent four seasons with the Mariners and parts of three with the Twins before playing with the Rays, Nationals and Padres in his final 2 1/2 seasons.

Cruz became the 22nd member of the 400-home run club on Sept. 22, 2019, with the Twins, a season in which he won his third of four Silver Slugger Awards. He became the oldest player ever (41) to hit 30 home runs in '21, finishing with 32 between Minnesota and Tampa Bay.

He won the 2021 **Roberto Clemente** Award and represented the Dominican Republic in the World Baseball Classic four times.

A late start to his career (Cruz was 28 during his first full season) and more than half of his time spent as a designated hitter, as well as a 50-game suspension for PED use in 2013, make Cruz's Hall of Fame case tricky. Cruz undoubtedly is one of baseball's best hitters of the past decade. He hammered 18 home runs in 187 postseason at-bats, single-handedly wrecking the Detroit Tigers' chances of advancing in the playoffs when he faced them in 2011 and 2014.

But Cruz wound up producing 41.5 Wins Above Replacement, which is well below **Edgar Martínez**'s 67 WAR and the 53.2 produced by **David Ortiz**, two comparable HOFers. Cruz produced a dominant stretch from 2009 to 2021, but he didn't win an MVP award and never finished in the top five among those receiving votes.

Cruz's best argument to gain induction is the recent inclusion of **Harold Baines**, who was voted in by the veteran's committee despite finishing his career with 38.6 WAR.

Suspended 50 games for the use of performance-enhancing drugs in 2013, Cruz was forthright about his mistake during the rest of his career. One of 13 players suspended for their role in the Biogenesis scandal, Cruz said he made an error in judgment in using PEDs after losing 45 pounds because of a gastrointestinal issue during the 2011-12 offseason. He served his

suspension starting on Aug. 4, 2013, and returned to the Rangers for their Game 163 loss to the Rays.

From then on, whether in Baltimore, Seattle or Minnesota, Cruz was open with the media about his mistake. He also volunteered with each organization to advise younger teammates and minor leaguers against using PEDs.

"You have to learn to see the positives of that," Cruz said in January 2019. "I think from that mistake, I can say I'm a better person and better human being."

Cruz played 10 more seasons after his suspension, hitting 307 homers in that span with a .877 OPS. As he seemingly defied the odds late in his career, belting 37 or more homers six straight times from age 33 on, Cruz knew he'd always have skeptics.

Bip Roberts had 10 straight hits for the Reds in 1982.

The record for all-time longest consecutive AB hit streak is a 3-way tie: Cubs Johnny Kling (1902), Red Sox Pinky Higgins (1938) & Tigers Walt Dropo (1952), who all had hits in 12 straight AB.

Ted Williams holds the rookie RBI record. Williams drove in 145 in 1939 to lead the majors. His young teammate **Walt Dropo** came close to surpassing Williams for the rookie RBI record. While sitting on 144 RBI, Dropo left eight men stranded on base during his last game of 1950.

Hall of Fame umpire **Bill Klem** worked exclusively behind home plate for the first sixteen years he umpired. During his 37 years on the diamond, he was the first umpire to wear a chest protector and one of the first to use visible arm signals to coincide with his calls. Klem spent the 1st 16 years of his career behind the plate because of his superior ability to call balls & strikes. For the best view, Klem taught his fellow umpires to stand slightly to the side & work the "slot" between the catcher and the batter.

Klem was known as the "Old Arbitrator" & the "father of baseball umpires". He umped in the NL from 1905 to 1941. He worked a record 18 World Series.

Garret Anderson leads the Angels' franchise in career games, hits, RBI, doubles & total bases. Since Hall of Famer **Charlie Gehringer's** 60 doubles in 1936, only **Carlos Delgado's** 57 doubles in

2000 tops exceeds Garret's 56 of 2002. **George Kell** (1950), **Nomar Garciaparra** (2002), **Brian Roberts** (2009) & **Jose Ramirez** also hit 56 2B in a season.

From time-to-time I get to highlight subscriber performances. Michael Burns sent this note as he was reading Tidbits on flight home:

Speaking of World Series Baseball, my 55+ Boston Wolfpack team won the MSBL World Series National Division last week in Arizona. The national division is the highest division as it allows former pro level players. The two black players on my team are Mike Smith who pitched a handful of games over a couple seasons with the Orioles and the one next to me (I am #71 back row) is Big Hitten Mark Whiten of 4 HR in 1 MLB game fame. I also had a double and single off Kip Gross who pitched against us in a game. Fun tournament and of course winning always makes it more fun.

Not bad for an old guy—he also was part of our Red Sox season ticket syndicate for many years.





It even has a Pool

In 1992, with construction finishing up on a new arena for the Phoenix Suns, team owner Jerry Colangelo gave a tour of the building to Buzz Ghiz.

Ghiz's family business was the largest pool builder and retailer in Phoenix. Colangelo was trying to woo him as a team sponsor. But looking around the unfinished arena, Ghiz had another thought.

You know what could be really great here? *he told Colangelo.* A pool. A 25-meter pool right under the hardwood so you could host swim meets.

That wasn't in the cards. The building now known as Footprint Center has seen basketball, hockey, concerts and indoor football, yet it never did get a pool. But the two men kept in touch. A few years later, Colangelo became part of a group that won an MLB expansion team. And he soon decided that meant he needed someone to build a pool.

"I got a call out of the wild blue," Ghiz says. "He said, 'Now I'm one of the owners of the Arizona Diamondbacks, we're building a new stadium, and you know what, I want to put a pool in the outfield.' It kind of just brought it all back from when I'd talked about it at the Suns' arena."



The Diamondbacks celebrated in the right field pool after clinching a playoff spot this year.

Colangelo's group had been inspired by the outfield shower former White Sox owner Bill Veeck installed at Comiskey Park in the 1970s. A pool had never been done before, however, and it was a much bigger statement than a shower. Ghiz went to work. His creation in right field is now one of the most recognizable symbols of the Diamondbacks.

The pool has been a splashy landing spot for home runs since Chase Field opened in 1998. It's become the obvious choice for any celebration at the ballpark—players and executives and team staff alike cannonballing into the water to commemorate a clinch. (That has applied both to the Diamondbacks themselves and to visiting opponents.) It's inspired similar pools at venues in Miami and Jacksonville. The last time the Diamondbacks were in the World Series, in 2001, *Sports Illustrated* even had columnist Rick Reilly cover Game 6 from the water. (While the Diamondbacks did win the series at home—in dramatic fashion—they didn't mark the occasion with a dip in the pool. It would be another decade before the team started the tradition of celebrating playoff series wins by diving in.) There are other ballparks with a strong sense of place. There is perhaps none with a feature as practically and culturally symbolic of its location as the pool in Phoenix. It's been criticized by traditionalists. But it's fiercely loved by fans. And, naturally, by any celebrating players with a chance to jump in.

The Diamondbacks' season is on the brink after a bullpen game spun out of control against the Rangers on Tuesday. They now face a 3–1 deficit in the World Series. No matter what, Wednesday will be their final home game of the season, with Arizona set to go on the road for a potential Game 6 and 7. Which means it hopes the pool has already seen its last celebration of

the year. The easiest way to ensure that, of course, is for the D-Backs to win Game 5. But the team has previously gone to other great lengths to guarantee an opponent won't take a triumphant dip.

Ghiz says he never imagined that players might celebrate in the pool like this. "I thought the fans would get a great kick out of it when a home run ball hit the pool," he says. "But I'm not sure I'd thought it would ever be players jumping in the pool." His focus while building it was instead on the fan experience. This is the reason for the pool, after all: It's a place to watch the game. That was important to Ghiz during the design stage. The pool had to feel like a central part of the park—close to the action—rather than a far-flung attraction buried on the concourse.

"It was all designed strategically for good viewing and good pleasure," says Ghiz, who sold his pool company years ago and is now semi-retired.

Much like a suite, Arizona's pool can be rented on game days by groups of up to 35 people. The chance to watch a game there at this time of year doesn't come cheap. (The World Series price tag: \$26,000, per the *Arizona Republic*, with tickets, parking passes and 35 D-Backs pool towels included. That's more than five times the starting price for the regular season.) A lifeguard is on duty, and the pool is joined by a hot tub, which is elevated a few feet above the pool and offers a clearer view as a result.

Diamondbacks fans did not have much to cheer about in Game 4: Arizona was down 10-0 by the third inning. But when the team began to rally toward the end of the game, with six runs in the final two frames, there was one crowd reaction to merit inclusion on the broadcast. Of course: It was a jump in the pool.

Business side of baseball operations

In case your invite to this week's GM meetings in Scottsdale got lost in the mail, (besides discussing possible trades) here is the agenda:

From a business perspective, the GM meetings will be highlighted by the following topics:

- Review the 2023 rule changes and discuss possible future rule changes. This will include debate over either implementing a challenge system for ball and strikes or going directly to an automated strike zone.
- Evaluate the current postseason format and debate whether it should be changed, including discussing whether five days off for teams with a first-round bye (i.e., the division winners) is too much and needs to be adjusted.

- Discuss league-wide medical issues, including pitching injuries.
- Discuss MLB initiatives in the scouting space, including the combine, the draft and international amateur signings.
- Review the league's efforts to make "improvements" with minor-league affiliates and the player-development environment.
- A briefing on the possible move of the Oakland A's to Las Vegas and where they might play in the interim.

In 1952 **Ralph Kiner** broke the NL record for most home run titles with his 7th straight. **Mel Ott** had led the league 6 times. **Mike Schmidt** is the current NL record holder, passing Kiner with his 8th HR crown in 1986.

Every once in a while its good to revisit just how amazing **Steve Carlton**'s season was in 1972.

Carlton won the first of his four Cy Young Awards on Nov. 2, 1972, after winning an MLB-leading 27 games. Carlton's Phillies won just 59 games that season

They won 29 of the 41 games started by Carlton, who finished with a 27–10 record. That's a .707 winning percentage in games started by Carlton and a .352 winning percentage in all other games.

Carlton was dominant that year, to say the least. He had a 1.97 ERA and 0.993 WHIP. He led the NL in both strikeouts *and* strikeout-to-walk ratio. He also led the majors with 30 complete games, a mark only one player has reached since (**Catfish Hunter** in 1975).

Managers on next year's Hall of Fame ballot

Cito Gaston: 894-837, .516, 2 pennants, 2 World Series titles

Davey Johnson: 1,372-1,071, .562, 1 pennant, 1 World Series title

Lou Piniella: 1,835-1,713, .517, 1 pennant, 1 World Series title

Jim Leyland: 1,769-1,728, .507, 3 pennants, 1 World Series title

Think any of them deserve to be in?

Pete Rose had 8 hitting streaks of 20+ games

Games Year

44	1978	Reds
25	1967	Reds
23	1979	Phillies
22	1968	Reds
22	1975-76	Reds
21	1982	Phillies
20	1977	Reds
20	1977	Reds

Willie Keeler also had 8 20+ hitting streaks in his career 1892-1910.

Johnny Damon, who is 50. Damon hit .295 with an .803 OPS for the Red Sox from 2002-05. Damon finished his 18-year career with 235 home runs, 522 doubles, 109 triples, 1,003 walks, 408 stolen bases, 1,139 RBIs, and 1,668 runs. No other player reached those levels in all of those statistics.

MLB settles lawsuits with former minor league teams, avoids U.S. Supreme Court challenge to antitrust exemption

Major League Baseball on Thursday settled a federal lawsuit and two suits in New York state court that were brought by two minor league teams, according to Jim Quinn, an attorney for those teams. The settlement avoids a potential challenge to baseball's antitrust exemption that had been appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Quinn declined an interview request. MLB declined a request for comment.

The settlement came two weeks before the state trial was scheduled to begin on Nov. 13. The plaintiffs in the cases were two of the teams MLB pushed out of its minor-league umbrella a few years ago: the Norwich Sea Unicorns of Connecticut, and the Tri-City ValleyCats, based near Albany, N.Y. (While there were two cases in state court, they were effectively combined into one.)

In the case that had been appealed to the Supreme Court, the teams argued that in an industry where typical antitrust laws apply, the 30 major league teams would need to compete with one another over the number of minor-league teams they partner with. That stands in contrast to what happened ahead of the 2021 season, when MLB and its teams collectively trimmed the number of affiliated farm teams across their ranks to 120, down from 160.

Since 1922, MLB and its teams have enjoyed protection from antitrust scrutiny that most businesses do not, a product of an anomalous Supreme Court decision that year.

The cases filed in state court in New York were related to the antitrust case, but arguments on different grounds. The teams argued MLB improperly interfered with the teams — a contracts dispute.

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS

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LONGER READS

INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM-LEVEL FRANCHISE RECORDS SET IN 2023

Tom Stone, Now Taking the Field blog

Atlanta Braves

Although they once again were bumped in the playoffs, the regular season for the Atlanta Braves—particularly on the hitting side—was truly impressive. Here are the new franchise records set or tied:

- **Individual Home Runs.** **Matt Olson** slugged 54 HR, which was three more than Andruw Jones' 51 in 2005. Both **Hank Aaron** and **Eddie Mathews** topped out at 47 each.

- **Individual Plate Appearances.** Hitting atop the powerful Braves lineup gave **Ronald Acuna Jr** 735 plate appearances, one more than **Rafael Furcal**'s 2003 total of 734. With so much overall offense this year, the Braves also saw Matt Olson get 720 PA (6th) and **Austin Riley** get 715 (9th).
- **Individual Runs.** Ronald Acuna's 149 runs scored were the most for this franchise in the modern era, far ahead of **Dale Murphy**'s 131 runs in 1983. There were four seasons from the 1890s with higher runs totals, led by **Hugh Duffy**'s 160 runs in the insanely high-offense 1894 season.
- **Individual RBI.** Similarly, Matt Olson's 139 RBI surpassed Eddie Mathews' 135 total from 1953, and only trails Hugh Duffy's 145 RBI in 1894.
- **Individual stolen bases.** And ditto for Ronald Acuna Jr's 73 SB, which surpassed **Otis Nixon**'s 72 SB in 1991. Acuna's thievery only trails old-timers **King Kelly**'s 84 in 1887 and **Billy Hamilton**'s 83 in 1896.
- **Individual pitching strikeouts.** **Spencer Strider** set the Braves modern era franchise record with 281 strikeouts, topping **John Smoltz**' 276 from 1996. Three pitchers from the 1880s had more strikeouts, but that was a time when starting pitchers had far more innings pitched.
- **Team Home Runs and SLG.** The 2023 Braves shattered their franchise HR record by clubbing 307 HR, vs. 249 by the 2019 Braves. Ditto for team SLG percentage, which came in at .501, compared with .484 in crazy 1894 season, and .483 in the shortened 2020.

Phillies

- **Individual batter strikeouts.** **Kyle Schwarber** had a very interesting season by hitting 47 HR and managing 104 RBI even with a sub-.200 batting average (.197). He also set a new Phillies franchise record with 215 strikeouts, topping his 200 total from 2022.
- **Individual stolen base success rate.** **Trea Turner** set a new Phillies standard by tying two others with a 100% SB success rate, but stealing more bases than they did. He swiped 30 bases in 2023 without being caught, while **Chase Utley** had 23 SB and 0 CS in 2009, and **Roman Quinn** had 12 SB with 0 CS in 2020.

Marlins

- **Individual batting average.** **Luis Arraez** became the first player to win the batting title in one league and then win it again the next year in another league. He was flirting with .400 for the first half of the season before settling down to a .354 mark to lead the NL, while also surpassing **Hanley Ramirez's** .342 average in 2009 as the all-time Marlins franchise leader.
- **Team pitching strikeouts.** The Marlins staff totalled 1,490 strikeouts in 2023, eclipsing their 1,437 Ks in 2022 and 1,381 Ks in 2021.

Brewers

- **Team fielding percentage.** The 2023 Brewers posted a .987 fielding percentage overall, one point better than the .986 they had in 1992.

Reds

- **Team batter strikeouts.** The Reds are a mostly young team right now, so not surprisingly their hitters struck out a lot in 2023: 1,500 times in all, surpassing their 2019 total of 1,436 and 2022 total of 1,430.

Cardinals

- **Team fielding percentage.** The disappointing 2023 Cardinals had a few silver linings, with one being a .989 overall fielding percentage, which tied what they did in 2019 and 2022.

Dodgers

- **Individual doubles.** **Freddie Freeman's** 59 doubles shattered the club record of 52 by **Johnny Frederick** in 1929.
- **Individual batter strikeouts.** Rookie **James Outman** struck out 181 times, just a bit more than the 178 that **Chris Taylor** had in 2018.
- **Team HR allowed.** The Dodgers pitching staff allowed 200 HR in 2023, breaking the franchise record of 192 in 1999.

Diamondbacks

- **Team stolen bases.** Led by rookie **Corbin Carroll**, the D-Backs stole a franchise record 166 bases, well past the 137 they had in both 1999 and 2016. Carroll's 54 SB

now ranks second all-time for the Diamondbacks, though significantly behind **Tony Womack's** 72 in 1999.

- **Team fielding percentage and errors.** One reason the Diamondbacks did surprisingly well this year was their defense. They posted a franchise record .990 fielding percentage, two points better than the .988 they had in 2013 and 2018. In terms of errors committed, that actually was a big difference: only 56 in 2023, vs. 75 in both 2013 and 2018.

Padres

- **Individual walks.** **Juan Soto's** 132 walks tied the 132 **Jack Clark** had in 1989.
- **Team fielding percentage.** The Padres posted a .988 mark, tying the .988 they had in 2010.

Giants

- **Team fewest triples.** Somehow the Giants only had 13 triples in 2023, the least the franchise has ever had -- even one fewer than the 14 they had in just 60 games played in 2020. **Joc Pederson** led the club with three this year, the only player with more than two triples.
- **Team strikeouts by hitters.** The Giants struckout 1,492 times in 2023, surpassing the 1,467 they had in 2018.

Rockies

It wasn't a good year for the Rockies, as all of the below are negative records tied or set.

- **Individual strikeouts by hitters.** **Ryan McMahon's** 198 strikeouts in 2023 surpassed the previous franchise record of 191 by **Trevor Story** in 2017.
- **Team strikeouts by hitters.** The Rockies struckout 1,543 times in 2023, surpassing the 1,503 they had in 2019.
- **Team lowest batting average.** In 2023 the Rockies tied (with 2021) their franchise low in batting average, at .249.
- **Team lowest OBP.** The Rockies did one better (worse!) by setting a new franchise record low with a .310 OBP. They almost set or tied lows in all three slash line categories, but their 2023 SLG of .405 tied their 2020 output and was at least better than the .398 SLG they had in 2022.

Not to be outdone on the downside, their pitching also wasn't very good in 2023, as their 5.67 team ERA was their second worst ever, with only the 6.01 ERA during the PED era in 1999 coming in worse.

Orioles

- **Team strikeouts by pitchers.** The Orioles in 2023 shattered their old franchise record for pitching strikeouts. They rung up 1,431 hitters in 2023, far more than the 1,248 they struck out in both 2016 and 2019. The Browns/Orioles franchise isn't one with much history of high-strikeout pitchers, as they've only had seven seasons of 200+ Ks: three by **Mike Mussina**, and one each by **Dave McNally**, **Erik Bedard**, and then **Bobo Newsom** and **Rube Waddell** from the Browns. So their team record this year came even with no single pitcher recording more than 168, which was **Kyle Bradish's** total to lead the staff.

Rays

- **Individual batting average.** **Yandy Diaz** not only took home the AL Batting Crown in 2023, but his .330 average also set a new Rays franchise record, surpassing **Jason Bartlett's** .320 mark from 2009. Diaz's .410 OBP in 2023 ranks second all-time for the Rays franchise, behind only the .411 OBP that **Carlos Pena** had in 2007.
- **SB success rate.** **Taylor Walls** had 22 SB and only 1 CS, a 95.65% success rate that tops the 93.94% rate that **Desmond Jennings** managed in 2012. **Josh Lowe** was also efficient on the bases in 2023, with 32 SB vs. only 3 CS which is a 91.43% success rate, third best in Rays history.
- **Team runs scored.** The Rays scored more runs this year than any other year in their history, notching 860 runs vs. the 857 they scored two years ago in 2021. Both of those totals are well ahead of their third best output, which was 803 runs in 2009.
- **Team home runs.** Similarly, the 230 HR they belted in 2023 was a bit more than the 228 they had in 2017 or the 222 in 2021.
- **Team SLG.** And ditto for SLG percentage with a .445 mark in 2023 compared to a previous high of .439 in 2009.

Blue Jays

- **Team fielding percentage and errors.** The 2023 Jays posted a .988 mark, tying the .988 they had in 2009. They committed only 71 errors in 2023, five less than in 2009.
- **Team strikeouts by pitchers.** The Blue Jays whiffed 1,528 batters in 2023, significantly more than the 1,468 they did two years earlier in 2021. Unlike the Orioles described above, the Blue Jays were led by four horsemen in **Kevin Gausman** (237), **Chris Bassitt** (186), **José Berríos** (184), and **Yusei Kikuchi** (181).

Twins

- **Individual double plays grounded into.** Ugh... **Carlos Correa** not only didn't have a great season after the long off-season saga, but he also set a new Twins franchise record with 30 double plays grounded into, surpassing the 28 **Harmon Killebrew** had in 1970 and the 28 **Trevor Plouffe** tied him with in 2015.
- **Team strikeouts by hitters.** The Twins absolutely destroyed their team record for strikeouts by hitters by whiffing a whopping 1,654 times in 2023, far more than the 1,430 they had in 2013 and the 1,426 in 2016. How did they win a division this year? Oh right, the AL Central.
- **Team fielding percentage and errors.** I guess good defense helped. Setting aside the short 2020 season, 2023 gave us the Twins best team fielding percentage at .988 and fewest errors with only 66 (8 fewer than the 74 they had in 2002).
- **Team strikeouts by pitchers.** The Twins whiffed far more batters in 2023 than ever before, posting 1,560 Ks vs. a former records of 1,463 in 2019 and 1,377 in 2018.

Royals

- **Individual HR allowed by a pitcher.** In 2023 **Jordan Lyles** posted a 6-17 record with a 6.28 ERA across 31 starts, and along the way set a new Royals record by giving up 39 dingers, one more than **Darrell May**'s 38 in 2004.
- **Team lowest OBP.** The Royals managed only a .303 OBP in 2023, a bit lower than their previous low mark of .305 in 2018.

Rangers

- **Individual plate appearances.** Like Acuna Jr. for the Braves, sitting atop the very productive Rangers lineup gave **Marcus Semien** lots of chances. His 753 PAs are a franchise record, surpassing the 748 **Michael Young** had in 2006.
- **Team fielding percentage and errors.** Offense was the only plus for the Rangers in 2023, as they only committed 57 errors, significantly lower than the previous franchise record of 83 from 2021 (excluding the 2020 and 1981 shortened seasons). As a result, their fielding percentage was .990, a full four points higher than the .986 they had in 2021, 2013, 2012, and 1996.

Mariners

- **Individual HBP.** **Ty France** gets hit by pitch a lot. He set a franchise record with 27 HBP in 2021, then had 21 the following year, before significantly topping himself with an AL-leading 34 HBP in 2023.
- **Individual BB/9IP for starters.** **George Kirby** is very stingy as a hurler, with his 0.897 walks per 9 innings pitched setting a new standard for Mariners starting pitchers, supplanting **Marco Gonzalez**' 0.904 mark in the short 2020 season and **Hisashi Iwakuma**'s 1.056 in 2014.
- **Individual strikeouts by hitters.** The Mariners had two hitters take over the top spots on their franchise list for strikeouts. **Eugenio Suárez** had 214 K and **Teoscar Hernández** had 211, both significantly more than Suárez' 196 in 2022, which itself was 20 more than **Mike Cameron**'s 176 in 2002.
- **Team strikeouts by hitters.** The Mariners' 1,603 strikeouts topped their recent highs from the past few years, including the previous franchise record of 1,581 in 2019.
- **Team strikeouts by pitchers.** The Mariners' pitchers tallied 1,459 Ks, setting a new franchise record by topping the 1,391 they had the year before in 2022.

Angels

- **Individual SLG.** Not much went well for the Angels in 2023, but **Shohei Ohtani** posted a .654 SLG, higher than any of **Mike Trout**'s great seasons, including his 2019 campaign when he slugged .645.

Athletics

- **Team strikeouts by hitters.** The sad A's in 2023 set a new franchise standard for strikeouts by their hitters, but just barely as their 1,496 Ks was only a few more than the 1,491 they had in 2017.

All data is from Baseball-Reference.com, and also their subscription service Stathead.com. If you are a big sports fan, be sure to check out the latest features at Stathead and the Sports Reference family of sites.

MLB OFFSEASON SCHEDULE: THE KEY MOMENTS FOR CONTRACTS, AWARDS, FREE AGENCY

Seven weeks of spring training, 162 regular-season games, and four rounds of the postseason. Baseball takes a long time, but when a season ends, it ends in an instant. Just a few hours ago, we were watching the Fall Classic. This morning, we woke up to the start of baseball's winter. The offseason is upon us.

"This offseason is crucial," says basically everyone, every single year.

We can't tell you what your team is going to do these next three months, but we do know the order in which some of these things will happen. Here is baseball's offseason schedule, with some of the notable benchmarks that tend to guide the way.

November 2 — Eligible players become free agents

Jordan Montgomery won a World Series with the Rangers last night. Today he no longer plays for them. Players with expiring contracts become free agents the day after the World Series ends, but this seems more significant than it really is. There is a five-day window in which teams have the exclusive right to negotiate with their own free agents. This typically doesn't mean much — very few deals are signed within this window — but it exists. True open-market free agency starts in five days.

Trades are immediately back on the table, though. The big-league trade market shuts down for about three months between the trade deadline and the end of the World Series, but as of now, trades are once again fair game. Someone call Ken Rosenthal, because Jerry Dipoto probably made five deals in the past 20 minutes.

Next five days — Defining the market

A lot happens in the five days between the World Series and the start of open-market free agency, and most of it has to do with settling some of the uncertainty about player availability.

Contract options are decided

Teams and players have five days to decide on contractual options. It's widely expected, for example, that Chicago Cubs outfielder **Cody Bellinger** will decline his half of a mutual option and become a free agent. It seems also likely that Detroit Tigers starter **Eduardo Rodriguez** will trigger an opt-out clause to hit the open market, and the Cincinnati Reds will decline a team option making face-of-the-franchise first baseman **Joey Votto** a free agent. Less clear are the player option for Miami Marlins first baseman **Josh Bell**, the club option for White Sox shortstop **Tim Anderson**, and the club option for Cubs starter **Kyle Hendricks**.

Qualifying offers extended

Five days after the World Series is the qualifying offer deadline. A qualifying offer is reportedly going to top \$20 million this year. Players who accept a qualifying offer get a one-year contract at that salary. Players who decline will cost their new teams a draft pick while generating draft compensation for their former teams. Los Angeles Angels phenom **Shohei Ohtani** and Toronto Blue Jays third baseman **Matt Chapman** are easy choices for qualifying offers. Los Angeles Dodgers designated hitter **J.D. Martinez** is a more nuanced case.

No more free spaces on 40-man rosters

During this window, teams must remove players from the 60-day injured list, meaning those players will count against 40-man roster limits, forcing corresponding moves to open spots. This sort of maneuvering usually leads to a few players being designated for assignment, many of whom will ultimately elect free agency, and some of whom will be claimed off waivers.

Sunday, November 5 — Gold Glove Awards announced

Baseball writers don't vote for these. Stop blaming us! The winners will be announced on ESPN. Here are the finalists.

November 7-9 — General Manager Meetings in Scottsdale, Ariz.

There are two giant baseball meetings every offseason. One is a packed house with a ton of action that makes it a high point of the off-season calendar.

This is the other one.

The GM Meetings aren't exactly boring, but they happen so early that the action is relatively subdued compared to December's Winter Meetings. It is, however, an opportunity for heads of baseball operations to talk about the offseason ahead, and perhaps drop breadcrumbs about their plans going forward. There's also some useful chatter about potential rule adjustments and other behind-the-scenes issues.

November 9 — Silver Slugger Awards announced

Again, the writers aren't involved. Leave us alone! We, too, thought it was weird that time J.D. Martinez won a Silver Slugger at two different positions in the same year. Anyway, this year's winners will be announced on MLB Network.

November 13-16 — BBWAA Awards week

OK, these *are* on us. The big four BBWAA awards are decided by a vote of baseball writers from across the country, and in the interest of transparency, full ballots will be announced on BBWAA.com. Winners will be announced one night at a time on MLB Network.

Nov. 13 — Rookie of the Year

Spoiler alert: Baltimore Orioles third baseman **Gunnar Henderson** and Arizona Diamondbacks outfielder **Corbin Carroll** almost certainly are going to win, and it might not be close.

Nov. 14 — Manager of the Year

Votes are finalized before the playoffs, so Rangers manager **Bruce Bochy** will not see any sort of World Series bump. In fact, Baltimore Orioles manager **Brandon Hyde** is probably the favorite in the A.L. The National League is more of a wide-open affair with **Brian Snitker** (Braves), **Craig Counsell** (Brewers), **Skip Schumaker** (Marlins), **Torey Lovullo** (Diamondbacks), **David Bell** (Reds) and **David Ross** (Cubs) all worth at least some discussion.

Nov. 15 — Cy Young Award

In the American League, this should finally be the year **Gerrit Cole** gets his Cy Young. In a weird group of National League candidates, **Blake Snell** seems to be the favorite despite issuing the most walks in the majors (in his defense, he also led the majors in ERA by a healthy margin).

Nov. 16 — MVP

Despite missing time with a torn elbow ligament, Shohei Ohtani is the overwhelming favorite in the American League. The National League is more of a toss-up between **Ronald Acuña Jr.** and **Mookie Betts**. Acuña is probably the favorite — Betts had 39 homers to Acuña's 41, but it's hard to ignore those 73 stolen bases when Betts had 14 — but steals aside, the production of that pair is awfully similar.

Some other notable award announcement dates: Comeback Player of the Year: Nov. 28; Rivera/Hoffman Reliever of the Year: Nov. 29; **Edgar Martinez** Outstanding Designated Hitter: Nov. 30; **Hank Aaron** Awards: Dec. 16.

November 14 — Rule 5 protection deadline

This deadline probably causes more handwringing than it's worth, but it does matter and the ramifications are sometimes significant. Minor league players with four or five years of experience — depending on the age at which they signed — must be added to the 40-man roster or else become available to any team willing to guarantee them big-league jobs.

Among the notable players left unprotected and subsequently lost in the Rule 5 draft in recent years are Houston Astros closer **Ryan Pressly**, Baltimore Orioles right fielder **Anthony Santander** and Kansas City Royals starter **Brad Keller**. Oakland A's first baseman **Ryan Noda** was the second pick in last year's Rule 5 draft and was one of the A's best players this season.

November 17 — Non-tender deadline

To non-tender a player means to not offer him a contract for next season. This typically happens to arbitration-eligible players who are about to make more money than they're necessarily worth (or, at least, more money than their current team is willing to pay).

Generally speaking, players with between three and five years of major league service — but also a few with between two and three years — are eligible for arbitration. Stars like **Kyle Tucker**, **Vladimir Guerrero Jr.**, **Corbin Burnes**, **Zac Gallen**, and **Adolis Garcia** are arbitration-eligible this offseason and well worth the added expense. Pre-arbitration players like **Adley Rutschman** and **Bobby Witt** remain cheap and will also receive contract offers without hesitation.

For players in the middle, teams must decide by mid-November who to bring back and who to non-tender. MLB Trade Rumors provides useful arbitration projections every offseason. Do the Detroit Tigers want to bring back former All-Star **Austin Meadows** at just over \$4 million? What about the Baltimore Orioles with all-glove-and-speed shortstop **Jorge Mateo** at close to \$3 million? Players who are non-tendered will become free agents.

And it's worth noting, long-term deals are guaranteed. The Angels can't simply non-tender **Anthony Rendon** and get out of that mess.

December 4-7 — Winter Meetings in Nashville

Probably the most anticipated event of the offseason (unless you count the Ohtani introductory press conference: date and place TBD). The Winter Meetings are a perfect blend of timing and opportunity. Agents and executives gather in a big hotel, late enough in the offseason to have a real sense of the market, and it all happens with dozens of reporters patrolling the lobby digging for information. The Winter Meetings can be an offseason tipping point with a flurry of transactions. Most of what happens is unpredictable this far in advance, but there are two notable bits of housekeeping that take place during the Winter Meetings.

MLB draft lottery

The amateur draft no longer happens purely in the reverse order of the standings. There is now a lottery that gives every non-playoff team some chance of the top pick.

Rule 5 draft

This is when teams can select unprotected players from other minor league systems.

The Winter Meetings and the days that follow used to be a meaningful cutoff for most offseason signings, but in recent years, more and more transactions have been pushed to January and even February. It's a long offseason, but one day we'll all wake up to pitchers and catchers reporting to spring training. May your favorite team avoid messing everything up between now and then.

February 22 — Spring training games begin

Spring training workouts will ramp up in the first half of February, until the exhibition schedule kicks off with a Cactus League game between the Dodgers and Padres. By February 24, all 30 major league teams will be in action. It's a long offseason, but first pitch will be here before you know it.

MLB'S ALL-PLAYOFFS TEAM—THE PLAYERS WHO DOMINATED THE 2023 POST-SEASON

By Chad Jennings and C. Trent Rosecrans

The Athletic

Wednesday night, the 41-game sprint of baseball's postseason ended with the Texas Rangers earning the first World Series title in franchise history. It capped a month of thrilling baseball, from the Rangers' **Marcus Semien** flying out on the first pitch of the postseason Oct. 3 at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, Fla., to Semien hugging teammate **Corey Seager** after the final out of the 2023 season 29 days later.

There were plenty of non-Semien moments between. This postseason gave us plenty of great memories, from Bryce Harper's stare-down to **Adolis García's** walk-off in Game 1 of the World Series. Harper may be baseball's most recognizable man, but García certainly raised his profile this October. To celebrate a fantastic postseason, *The Athletic* put together its All-Postseason team for 2023, bringing together the players who made a difference, no matter how many rounds their teams managed to advance.

Catcher

J.T. Realmuto, Phillies

13 games, 12 RBIs, .825 OPS

This is basically a toss-up between Realmuto and Diamondbacks catcher **Gabriel Moreno**, but we'll give Realmuto bonus points for catching the pitching staff that had the lowest ERA in the postseason. Plus, Realmuto played an important role in the three Phillies NLCS wins.

Apologies to: Moreno, **Will Smith** and Rangers DH **Mitch Garver** if he still counts as a catcher.

First base

Bryce Harper, Phillies

13 games, 5 home runs, 1.097 OPS

Only four first basemen went deep this postseason, and only three went deep more than once (same as the number of multi-homer shortstops; imagine that two decades ago). Harper had never started a game at first base until this season, but with five homers and more walks (13) than strikeouts (11), he was the best first baseman in the playoffs.

Apologies to: **Jose Abreu**, who followed a disappointing regular season by becoming a wrecking ball in the division series. Also, **Josh Bell**, who did his best to keep the Marlins playing.

Second base

Ketel Marte, Diamondbacks

17 games, 24 hits, .914 OPS

This postseason's leader in hits got there by recording at least a single in each of the first 16 Diamondbacks playoff games, a streak that ended when he had no hits but three walks in the World Series finale. Going back to 2017, Marte had a hit in each of his first 20 career playoff games.

Apologies to: **Jose Altuve**, who had a terrific ALCS (in a losing effort), **Edouard Julien**, who had a huge division series (also in a losing effort), and Marcus Semien, who had a good World Series (and got a ring).

Third base

Austin Riley, Braves

4 games, 2 home runs, 1.059 OPS

Quantity says this one belongs to **Alex Bregman**, who had another fine postseason for the Houston Astros (four homers in 11 games), but if it were up to Riley, he would have played in more than four games. His game-winning home run gave the Braves their only playoff win, and he went deep again in the NLDS Game 4 that ultimately eliminated them.

Apologies to: Bregman, **Josh Jung**, **Gunnar Henderson**, and that one **Alec Bohm** home run.

Shortstop

Corey Seager, Rangers

17 games, 6 home runs, 1.133 OPS

Hard to believe any shortstop could have a better postseason than the Phillies' **Trea Turner**, but sure enough, World Series MVP Seager was an easy choice at the position. He had three hits (including a homer) in decisive Game 7 of the ALCS, then went deep in three of five World Series games.

Apologies to: Mostly Turner, but really **Carlos Correa**, **Willy Adames**, **Bo Bichette** and **Geraldo Perdomo** all put up good postseason numbers.

Left field

Evan Carter, Rangers

17 games, 9 doubles, .917 OPS

Every fanbase that missed the playoffs spent the past month scouring its team's Double-A roster trying to find a version of Carter who might have been called up and made this kind of difference. Carter made his big-league debut in September and became a star in October, leading the postseason in doubles and playing a key role in getting the Rangers through the first two rounds.

Apologies to: **Christian Yelich**, **Randy Arozarena** and **Austin Hayes** for that three-hit ALDS Game 2 that almost kept the Orioles' dream alive.

Center field

Alek Thomas, Diamondbacks

17 games, 4 home runs, .734 OPS

There's temptation to go with the Phillies' **Brandon Marsh** (.931 postseason OPS) but after playing mostly center field in the regular season, he played only left field in the playoffs. As for

actual center fielders, there weren't many who put up big numbers, but Thomas was awfully good (despite his defensive blunder in the World Series).

Apologies to: Leody Taveres and Michael Harris II for making catches we'll always remember but apparently will not reward.

Right field

Adolis García, Rangers

15 games, 8 home runs, 1.108 OPS

You were expecting someone else? García set a single-playoff record with 22 RBIs this postseason and six of his home runs came in a span of five games, including two home runs in the decisive Game 7 of the ALCS and a walk-off homer in the World Series opener.

Apologies to: Nick Castellanos, Corbin Carroll and every pitcher who had to face García this postseason.

Designated hitter

Yordan Alvarez, Astros

11 games, 6 home runs, 1.487 OPS

Alvarez had the highest OPS in the postseason, mostly because he slugged a whopping .977 with nine extra-base hits. He got on base in more than half of his plate appearances. Just a monstrous postseason for one of the great hitters in today's game.

Apologies to: Kyle Schwarber for having the misfortune of playing the same position as Alvarez.

Starting pitchers

Nathan Eovaldi, Rangers

5-0, 2.95 ERA, 36 2/3 IP

In clinching Game 5 of the World Series, Eovaldi earned his fifth win of the postseason as a starter, something no other pitcher has ever done. Yes, the playoffs are larger than they once were and so he got six starts, but those six are as many postseason wins as a starter as **Pedro Martinez** had in his entire career. (Martinez got a win in relief in Game 5 of the 1999 ALDS.)

Zack Wheeler, Phillies

3-0, 1.95 ERA, 27 2/3 IP

The Phillies' ace won three of his four postseason starts and also pitched 1 2/3 scoreless innings in relief in Game 7 of the NLCS. Wheeler struck out 35 and walked three. He allowed just six earned runs the entire postseason. He dominated in the one start that his team didn't win, Game 2 of the NLDS against the Braves, striking out 10 and allowing just three hits and two earned runs over 6 1/3 innings.

Merrill Kelly, Diamondbacks

3-1, 2.25 ERA, 24 IP

Kelly walked a long road to get to the World Series, and he made the most of his time in this postseason, giving his Diamondbacks a reliable No. 2 throughout the playoffs and delivering a standout start in Game 2 of the World Series.

Apologies to: Pablo López, Ranger Suárez, Aaron Nola, Jordan Montgomery, Justin Verlander and Brandon Pfaadt

Relievers

Kevin Ginkel, Diamondbacks

0.00 ERA, 15 K, 11 2/3 IP

Ginkel, a University of Arizona alum, pitched in 10 games for the Diamondbacks this postseason and didn't give up a single run, giving him an ERA of 0.00 for all you non-math majors. As a wise man once told me, run prevention is the most important thing a pitcher can do, and Ginkel prevented all the runs. That's good.

Josh Sborz, Rangers

0.75 ERA, 13 K, 12 IP

Even if he hadn't frozen **Ketel Marte** with a high curveball to end the World Series, Sborz still would've had a memorable and successful postseason. The 29-year-old right-hander appeared in 10 games and allowed just one run and four hits. In a total of 12 innings, he had 13 strikeouts and just four walks.

Zack Littell, Rays

0.00 ERA, 4 K, 2 IP

OK, Littell only pitched in one game, Game 2 of the AL Wild Card series against the Rangers. He didn't allow a hit and struck out four in two innings but did hit a batter. That's good. It's not his fault he wasn't given more opportunities.

Apologies to: Ryan Thompson, José Alvarado and especially to **Chas McCormick**, who was hit by a 104 mph fastball from **Aroldis Chapman**.

Closer

Ryan Pressly, Astros

0.00 ERA, 3 SV, 6 IP

The Astros closer was simply dominant, appearing in six games and not only not allowing a run over six innings, but giving up just two hits, both in his second inning of work in his Game 5 win over the Rangers in the ALCS. He walked just two batters and struck out 10 of the 21 batters he faced in the playoffs. He also earned a win and three saves.

Apologies to: Paul Sewald and José Leclerc, who combined for 10 saves in the postseason, but neither of whom reminded anyone of **Mariano Rivera** during their teams' runs — although admittedly, those in Arizona likely have a different memory of Rivera in the postseason than the rest of us.

Manager

Bruce Bochy, Rangers

If social media has taught us nothing else, it's that all managers are idiots and have no earthly idea what they are doing other than the one that won the World Series. Will Bochy win the Manager of the Year Award? I don't know. But if he doesn't, Rangers fans will see if they can out-whine Braves fans about it while ignoring that the voting takes place before the postseason begins. That said, Bochy gets the nod *here*, and that's what really matters, right?

Apologies to: Torey Lovullo

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Bruce Bochy became the 6th manager to win 4 World Series titles. Here are the years, name the manager.

7 World Series titles—1932, 1936-1939, 1941, 1943

Joe McCarthy. Hall of Fame, first manager to win pennants in both leagues (Cubs, Yankees). One of two managers (Bobby Cox) to manage 6 100-win teams.

7 World Series titles-1949-1953, 1956, 1958

Casey Stengel. Hall of Fame. Also two time World Series champ as a player. Only manager to win 5 straight World Series. Managed or played for all four NY teams-Yankees, Mets, Dodgers, Giants.

5 World Series titles—1910-1911, 1913, 1929-1930.

Connie Mack. Hall of Fame. He holds records for wins (3,731), losses (3,948), and games managed (7,755). Mack's victory total is 829 more than the second highest total, 2,902 wins by Tony La Russa. Mack's lead in career losses is even greater, 1,433 higher than the second highest total, La Russa's 2,515. Mack's 50-year tenure as Athletics manager is the most ever for a coach or manager with the same team in North American professional sports.

4 World Series titles—1955, 1959, 1963, 1965

Walter Alston. Hall of Fame. 2,040–1,613 as a manager.

4 World Series titles—1996, 1998-2000

Joe Torre. Hall of Fame. 2,326–1,997 as a manager. NL MVP and batting champ, 252 career HRs, led Yankees to three straight World Series wins.

Twelve times a batter has hit 3 homeruns in a post season game.

Chris Taylor (Dodgers 2021), **Kike Hernandez** (Dodgers 2017), **Jose Altuve** (Astros 2017), **Adrian Beltre** (Rangers 2011), **Adam Kennedy** (Angels 2002), **George Brett** (Royals 1978), **Bob Robertson** (Pirates 1971) all did it in the playoffs.

But three batters (one did it twice) hit three HRs in a World Series game.

2012 NL 3B switch hitter

Pablo Sandoval, Giants

1977 AL OF lefthanded batter

Reggie Jackson, Yankees

1926 and 1928 AL OF lefthanded batter

Babe Ruth, Yankees

This pitcher-catcher duo is 5th in games started together with 283 (**Adam Wainwright and Yadier Molina** are 1st with 325).

The righthanded pitcher won a Cy Young in 1962.

The catcher won 5 Gold Gloves.

The pitcher won 209 games.

The catcher batted lefthanded, hit 104 career HRs.

They played together in the 1959, 1963, 1965 and 1966 World Series, winning 3.

One of them is in the Hall of Fame.

Name Them.

Don Drysdale and Johnny Roseboro

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

Please remember to check out

SUNDAYBASEBALLTIDBITS.COM

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

HOUSEKEEPING

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