

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

12.17.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

In this issue lots of stuff about **Shohei Ohtani**'s contract, celebrating Yankee trades, more unbreakable records

In Longer Reads remembering the Japanese players who paved the way for Ohtani, and who recalls the Continental Baseball League? (I didn't).

Enjoy your Sunday.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

(answers at bottom)

Can you name the MVP winners who never played in the World Series?

1952 Cubs outfielder

1958 Cubs infielder

1971 Cards catcher/infielder

1972 White Sox infielder

1974 Rangers outfielder

1977 Twins infielder

1983 Braves outfielder

1984 Cubs infielder

1985 Yankees infielder

1987 Blue Jays outfielder

1987 Cubs outfielder

1994 White Sox infielder
1995 Red Sox infielder
1997 Mariners outfielder
1998 Rangers outfielder
1998 Cubs outfielder
2001 Mariners outfielder
2002 A's infielder
2006 Twins infielder
2009 Twins catcher/infielder
2010 Reds infielder
2011 Brewers outfielder
2013 Pirates outfielder
2014 Angels outfielder
2015 Blue Jays infielder
2017 Marlins outfielder
2018 Brewers outfielder
2020 White Sox infielder
2021 Angels pitcher/DH
2022 Cards infielder
2022 Yankees outfielder
2023 Braves outfielder

National League catchers **Bubbles Hargrave** .353 in 1926 for the Reds; **Ernie Lombardi** .342 in 1938 for Cubs & .330 in 1942 for Braves & **Buster Posey** .336 in 2012 for the Giants all won batting titles.

We are looking for the only AL catcher to win a batting title.

He won three AL batting titles. 2006-2008-2009. His .347 in 2009 led the majors.

He was named Baseball America's Minor League Player of the Year in 2003. In his final minor league season, he hit .339 w/5 HR & 85 RBIs, splitting time between Class A & AA.

He won 3 Gold Gloves, 5 Silver Sluggers, 6x All-Star.

Can you name the Major League Baseball players (post-1940) who played at least 20 seasons with one team and ONLY one team? (I'm counting on you to get at least 10)

1955-1972 Orioles

1981-2001 Orioles

1953-1974 Tigers

1977-1996 Tigers

1973-1993 Royals

1995-2014 Yankees

1982-2001 Padres

1961-1983 Red Sox

1988-2007 Astros

1974 – 1993 Brewers

1962-1982 Pirates

1941-1963 Cards

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

MLB added 261 new players in 2023. 23,144 players have appeared in a major league game. 22,768 runs were scored last season. 2,177,996 have been scored in history. (some of us are old enough to remember the race for MLB's millionth run—**Bob Watson** of the Astros scored it).

Phillies manager **Gene Mauch**, when asked if a young **Richie Allen** might have trouble with the high fastball responded: "I'm more worried about the fast highball."

Juan Soto has already had success at Yankee Stadium in limited time there. In just seven career games in the Bronx, Soto has four home runs and a 1.219 OPS in 28 plate appearances. As a 19-year-old rookie with the Washington Nationals in 2018, Soto became the fifth-youngest player in MLB history to record a multi-home run game when he hit two in front of over 45,000 fans in Yankee Stadium.

Since the Diamondbacks' championship in 2001:

- No team has repeated as World Series champion.
- Only the Red Sox, Giants, Cardinals and Astros have won multiple titles.
- Sixteen different franchises have won the Series, compared to 13 champions each in the NFL and NHL and 11 in the NBA — all salary-cap leagues.

Jung Hoo Lee, the KBO star who signed this week with the Giants, has never hit for an average below .318 in any of his seven seasons in Korea's major league.

He is the son of former KBO MVP Lee Jeong-beom, who in 1994 hit .393 and stole a KBO-record 84 bases. In 1997, he had a 30-60 season. They called him "Son of the Wind." And now they call Jung-hoo "Grandson of the Wind."

Jung-hoo is a lifetime .340 hitter in his seven KBO seasons and has hit as high as .360. He's a line drive machine, a doubles machine, he rarely strikes out, he controls the strike zone.

In 2004, **Adian Beltré** had 200 hits for the Dodgers, but none where he ended up on third base. He is the only National Leaguer ever with 200 hits/0 triples. His MLB-leading 48 HR that year, coupled with his finishing a strong 2nd to **Barry Bonds** in both WAR and NL MVP votes in the season.

Six AL seasons -- 200 hit/0 triples:

Mike Sweeney, 2000

Miguel Tejada, 2002 and 2006

Maglio Ordonez, 2007

Derek Jeter, 2012

Miguel Cabrera, 2012

Dale Murphy is the youngest back-to-back MVP, 1982-1983 with the Braves. He also had the second longest consecutive games played streak during **Cal Ripken's** record streak of 2,632 game at 740.

Think they are getting grumpy in Boston? Dan Shaughnessy in the Boston Globe--While the Dodgers and Yankees behave like teams intent on spending to win championships (**Shohei Ohtani**, **Juan Soto** anyone?), the once-proud Red Sox continue to dumpster dive and insult their fans with feeble efforts to get involved for high-priced talent. The Red Sox are Kings of Interest, always making you think they are competing for top talent when they are not. The message seems to be: "Come to Fenway. Sing 'Sweet Caroline.' We will rest on our four championships, promise you the illusion of contention (12 of 30 major league teams make the playoffs these days), and continue to behave like a middle-market franchise while you pay the highest ticket prices in baseball."

It should be clear to all that the Red Sox are an increasingly insignificant part of the Fenway Sport Group portfolio. Absent a real investment in a real talent (still possible), one can only conclude that ownership is taking loyal fans for granted, hoping you buy into the "baseball's most beloved ballpark" and the phony plan of winning 84 games, then getting hot in the playoffs.

In the same week in which the Yankees traded for Soto and the Dodgers committed \$700 million to Ohtani and traded for starter **Tyler Glasnow**, the Sox signed newly released righthander **Cooper Criswell** (career ERA 5.97) while getting outbid by the Kansas City Royals on a three-year deal for **Seth Lugo**. It's downright Bloomanesque. This is the kind of middle-market fishing that produced three last-place seasons in four years.

In 1979 **Keith Hernandez** became the first infielder to win a Gold Glove and a batting title in the same season. At age 25 for the Cards, Hernandez batted .344 and shared the NL MVP with **Willie Stargell**.

From Joe Posnanski

(editor's note—I've mentioned baseballreference.com many times. Its free, its amazing-do yourself a favor and check it out)

Baseball-Reference has something super-fun called "Random Pages." You click on it, and, as the title suggests, it gives you a random page. (or just tap "random" into the search box.)

So, like, I just clicked on it and it took me to a Cleveland-Angels box score from 1963. The Angels won that game 7-3. **Dean Chance** pitched a complete game and struck out 11.

Click it again: It takes me to the page of **Leo Magnum**, a 1920s-era sidearm pitcher who went 11-10 with a 5.37 ERA for three teams. That's in the big leagues. He won 210 games in the minors; he pitched for 19 seasons.

Click it again: A box score from 1939, Athletics at Tigers. **Dick Siebert** homered for the A's. **Hank Greenberg** went 3-for-4 in a losing cause.

Click it again: I'm on the 1974 Minnesota Twins pitching stats page. **Bert Blyleven** that year went 17-17 with a 2.66 ERA and 2.37 FIP. Sheesh. He lost two 1-0 games and three 2-1 games. Somebody help a Blyleven out.

Todd Helton is the only player in the history of the majors to have a season with at least 200 hits and 100 each of runs, RBI, walks and extra base hits and play in more than one hundred fifty-five games. He is also the only major leaguer in the Expansion Era (since 1961) to have consecutive seasons of more than four hundred total bases each.

Prior to 1961 the only ones to have consecutive 400 total base seasons earlier are **Chuck Klein** (1929-30); **Lou Gehrig** (1930-31); & **Jimmie Foxx** (1932-33).

Three additional players did it more than once, but not in back-to-back years: **Babe Ruth** (1921, 1927); **Rogers Hornsby** (1922, 1929); & **Sammy Sosa** (1998, 2001)

Helton was replaced at QB for Tennessee by Peyton Manning.



Vic Davalillo, a two-time World Series champion with the Pirates (1971) and Athletics (1973) who became the first Venezuelan-born player to win a Gold Glove during a 16-year career, died Dec. 6. He was 84 or 87, depending on conflicting sources.

Davalillo, an outfielder who played for six teams in a career that spanned the 1963-1980 seasons, was used frequently as a pinch-hitter (390 plate appearances) the Cabimas, Venezuela

native had his best year in 1972 when he slashed .318/.367/.413 with a 123 wRC+ for Pittsburgh.

Davalillo signed with the Cincinnati Reds organization in 1958 at age 18, starting as a left-handed pitcher in minor league ball. But he was eventually prized more for his bat and increasingly used in the outfield. His contract was sold to the Cleveland Indians organization in 1961, and the next year he won the batting title of the Triple-A International League with a .346 average.

He made his major league debut on opening day in 1963 against the Minnesota Twins, in Minnesota, as the Indians' leadoff hitter against **Camilo Pascual**.

Davalillo got his first hit the next day off the future Hall of Famer **Jim Kaat** and went on to hit .292 with seven homers and 36 runs batted in. His rookie season was interrupted on June 12, when a pitch by **Hank Aguirre** of the Detroit Tigers struck his forearm, breaking it. The injury sidelined him until Aug. 10.

Davalillo won a Gold Glove award as an outfielder in 1964.

He was an All-Star in 1965, when he hit .301 with five homers, 40 RBIs and 26 stolen bases, finishing third in the American League batting race behind **Tony Oliva** of the Twins and **Carl Yastrzemski** of the Boston Red Sox.

He was traded to the California Angels in June 1968, part of a big league career that took him to the St. Louis Cardinals (1969-70), the Pittsburgh Pirates (1971-73), the Oakland Athletics (1973-74) and the Los Angeles Dodgers (1977-80).

Davalillo hit a three-run homer in his first at-bat for the Cardinals on June 1, 1969. That season he made his only two major league pitching appearances, on June 30 and July 3, failing to retire any of the four batters he faced.

Davalillo finished with a .279 average, 36 homers, 329 RBIs and 125 stolen bases, winning World Series titles with the 1971 Pirates, when they defeated the Baltimore Orioles in seven games; and the 1973 Athletics, when they beat the New York Mets in seven. He had a .323 average in 22 postseason games, including going 4 for 20 in the World Series.

In Venezuelan Winter League ball, Davalillo won seven titles over 30 seasons, from 1957-58 through 1986-87. He became the league's first .400 hitter over a full season, in 1961-62, the Society for American Baseball Research said, and won four Venezuela batting championships.

He had a .325 career average in the Venezuelan league with a record 1,505 hits.

Another career moment--a 1963 **Dick Stuart** Fenway Wall-ball that clanged off Davalillo's head, resulting in an inside-the-park homer for Boston's cement-footed first baseman. Stuart hit 42

homers that season. Editor's note--Why such a long tribute to Vic Davalillo? His baseball card seemed to be in every other pack I opened.

In the mid- to late-'50s, the A's, who were playing in Kansas City, controversially functioned almost as a farm team for the Yankees. The two teams cooperated on several trades during that period, the majority of which were lopsided in New York's favor.

December 11, 1959 the Yankees received **Roger Maris** in a seven-player deal in which the A's sent him, **Joe DeMaestri and Kent Hadley** to New York in exchange for **Hank Bauer, Don Larsen, Norm Siebern and Marv Throneberry**. Larsen, famous for his perfect game in the 1956 World Series, had the worst season of his career in '60 with the A's. Throneberry was an average hitter who Kansas City traded away less than two years later. Bauer was an aging player who lasted two seasons with the A's before retiring. Siebern developed into a good player who made three All-Star teams (two with K.C.), but Maris was so excellent in New York that the trade looks shockingly terrible in retrospect.

Maris took a big leap forward in his first season in pinstripes, leading the AL with a .581 slugging percentage and winning his first MVP. The next year, of course, was his record-setting 61-homer MVP season. The A's finished tied for last in the AL that year.

You probably can win a beer asking this question--2x All-Star, 3 teams, most HRs by a pitcher not named Shohei Ohtani since 2000?

I guessed **Madison Bumgarner or Zack Greinke**. Nope. **Carlos Zambrano** who hit 24 homers in a 12 year career.

Flashback to December, 2017. The Marlins traded away a member of their starting lineup three times in the span of a week.

Miami's fire sale began Dec. 7, when it traded **Dee Strange-Gordon** to the Mariners. On Dec. 11, it sent **Giancarlo Stanton** to the Yankees. On Dec. 13, it moved **Marcell Ozuna** to the Cardinals. Finally, on Jan. 25, it sent **Christian Yelich** to the Brewers.

The mass exodus was triggered by the team's sale to a new ownership group led by Derek Jeter, which had been finalized Aug. 15, with the new owners seeking to slash costs. The Marlins

trimmed their payroll from \$115 million in 2017 to \$99 million in '18. Agent Scott Boras, who represented Ozuna at the time, blasted the new owners for not trying to field a winning team.

“You would hope that [with] ownership—new ownership—that MLB would screen the ownership, so that we have an ownership that comes in and provide additions,” Boras said. “[Instead], they come in and they redirect, so you're not a jewelry store that’s coveting your diamonds. You now become a pawn shop that is trying to pay the rent of the building.”

The Stanton, Yelich and Strange-Gordon trades didn’t pay off particularly well for the Marlins. Neither did the trade they made the following offseason sending **J.T. Realmuto** to the Phillies. But in the Ozuna trade, Miami acquired two standout players: 2022 Cy Young winner **Sandy Alcantara** and **Zac Gallen**, who was later flipped to the Diamondbacks in a trade for **Jazz Chisholm Jr.** But still, trading away five star players and getting only two future stars in return shows the dangers of holding a fire sale.

Roger Clemens has the most wins (354) among modern-era (since 1901) pitchers not in the Hall of Fame. Which modern-era pitcher not in the Hall of Fame has the second-most wins. The answer is **Tommy John**, with 288 wins. There are 23 pitchers in the Hall of Fame with more than 288 wins, and 65 with fewer than 288 wins.

Willie Mays’s annual salary when he won the National League’s MVP award in 1954 was \$12,000, which is roughly equal to \$137,000 in today’s dollars. Mays was worth 10.3 WAR and helped lead the New York Giants to a World Series title that year.

Salvador Perez batted .255, homered 23 times, and drew 19 walks this year. He batted .254, homered 23 times, and drew 18 walks in 2022.

Ted Williams won six batting titles. His walk totals in those seasons were 147, 145, 162, 126, 119, and 98. **Rod Carew** and **Tony Gwynn** combined to win 15 batting titles. Their walk totals in those years ranged from 35 to 82.

Hall of Fame right-hander **Bob Lemon** logged 37 career home runs. He went a combined 10-for-15 with six doubles and a home run against **Don Larsen** and **Phil Marchildon**, and 10-for-17 with two doubles against **Dick Fowler**.

In 1931, Boston Red Sox right-hander **Wes Ferrell** faced 1,227 batters and allowed nine home runs. He came to the plate 128 times and hit nine home runs.

Wee Willie Keeler had 13 triples and 12 doubles for the National League's Brooklyn Superbas in 1899. Teammate and fellow Hall of Famer **Hughie Jennings** had 10 triples and three doubles.

Carlton Fisk did not play in the big leagues on a regular basis until he was twenty-four-years-old, yet he set the Major League record for most games caught.

The California Angels traded **Jim Fregosi** to the New York Mets in exchange for **Nolan Ryan** and three other players in 1971. Fregosi went on to log 318 hits, including 36 home runs, over the remainder of his career. Ryan went on to log 295 wins and 5,221 strikeouts.

Pat Murphy, who replaced **Craig Counsell** as manager in Milwaukee, was the team's bench coach for eight seasons. He was 42-54 as interim manager of the Padres in 2015 after managing five years in their farm system and won 1,000 games as a college coach from 1983-2009.

Murphy coached **Dustin Pedroia** at Arizona State.

MORE RIDICULOUS BASEBALL STATS

Overtimeheroics.net

Barry Bonds's 2004 Season

Intentional Walks

If you want to talk about ridiculous baseball stats, **Barry Bonds's** 2004 season is full of them. First off, Barry Bonds drew more intentional walks than the the AL leader had in just walks. Bonds was intentionally walked 120 times. The AL leader, **Eric Chavez**, had 95 walks.

Reaching Base

In his preposterous 2004 season, Bonds reached base more times than he took an at-bat. He took 373 at-bats. Bonds walked 232 times, had 129 hits, was hit by a pitch 9 times, and reached base by error 6 times. Adding that all together, Bonds reached base 376 times. He reached base three more times than he stepped up to the plate.

Statistic Leaders

Now he never won a triple crown, but Barry Bonds led the MLB in WAR, Offensive WAR, On-Base %, Slugging %, On-Base Plus Slugging, Walks, Adjusted OPS+, Runs Created, Intentional Walks, Adj. Batting Runs, and Adj. Batting Wins. Leading in all of these statistics gives Bonds a case for the best offensive season of all time.

He did not lead the league in average, but hit .362. He also did not lead the league in RBIs and Home Runs, but hit 41 dingers with 101 runs batted in. It's tough to lead in those categories when you are getting walked on almost 40% of his plate appearances.

Just an Extra Tid Bit on Bonds's 04' Season

If you go 2-5 with a single and a home run every single game of the season, you'll end up with a worse OPS than Barry Bonds in 2004. With the 2-5 each game with a single and a homer, that is a 1.400 OPS, Bonds had a 1.422 OPS.

Bonds actually owns the top 3 most walks in a season spots. In 2001, Bonds broke **Babe Ruth's** 78-year-old record of **170** when he was walked **177** times in 2001. He then extended it with **198** BB in 2002 and finally, in 2004, set the bar so high at **232** that many historians mention it with other Modern Era single-season records considered "unbreakable". [For example, pitcher **Jack Chesbro's** 41 wins in 1904; **Ichiro Suzuki's** 262 hits in 2004; **Owen Wilson's** 36 triples in 1912; or **Joe Sewell's** miniscule 3 strikeouts in a season by a batter who qualified for the batting title, in 1930 and 1932.]

An INSANE Jamie Moyer Statistic

Percentage of All MLB Hitters Faced

When he retired, **Jamie Moyer** had face 8.9% of all MLB hitters ever. By the time Jamie Moyer retired, about 19,000 different hitters have played in the MLB. Moyer faced 8.9% of them, that's roughly 1,700 different batters faced. 1,700! That's the type of stat you get when you pitch for 25 years.

Tony Gwynn

You could probably write a 50 page thesis talking about how dominant a hitter **Tony Gwynn** was in his hay day.

Gwynn's Career Batting AVG.

'Mr. Padre' hit .338 over his entire career. Every other hitter that hit at least .338 over their career started before 1940.

Getting His Career AVG to Dip Below .300

For Gwynn's career average to drop below .300, Gwynn would have to add 1,183 hitless at-bats to his career, roughly the equivalent of two full seasons.

Gwynn's Streak of Not Striking Out

Eleven times Tony Gwynn did not strike out in 20 games straight. The longest streak of which was 39 games straight without a strikeout in 1995.

Gwynn's Batting Average with Two Strikes

With two strikes in the count, Gwynn hit .302. Now that stat was introduced in 1988, but Gwynn has the best career average since its introduction. The next closest? **Wade Boggs**, hitting 42 points lower than Gwynn.

Four Hit Games vs. Multi-Strikeout Games

Gwynn had 45 career four-hit games. Eleven more games than his 34 multi-strikeout games, per Big League Stew.

Rickey Henderson

The All-Time Steals Record

On the all-time steals list, the difference between number 1 all time (**Rickey Henderson** – 1406) and number 2 (**Lou Brock** – 938) is the same as Brock and number 46 (**Jimmy Rollins** – 470).

Mariano Rivera

Postseason Runs Allowed

More men have walked on the moon (12) than the amount of earned runs given up by **Mariano Rivera** in the postseason (11).

Greg Maddux

3-0 Counts

Greg Maddux faced 20,421 batters in his career. Only 133 of them saw a 3-0 count.

1994 Quality Starts

Maddux made 24 quality starts in 1994. He started in 25 games.

Sorry Bronson Arroyo...

Maddux allowed as many home runs in his first five seasons with the Braves (1156 innings) as **Bronson Arroyo** did in 2011.

A 76 Pitch Complete Game

Maddux once threw 76 pitches in a complete game. 83 percent of those 76 pitches were strikes. He went to a two-ball count only twice, and he did not throw a ball in the third or fifth innings.

All Maddux stats acquired via sbnation.com

Nolan Ryan

Amount of Different Batters that Ryan had Struck Out

Entering the 2019 season, 354 pitchers in MLB history struck out at least 1,183 in their career. **Nolan Ryan** struck out 1,183 DIFFERENT batters in his career.

Nolan Ryan struck out 163 different batters at least 10 times

Yes, you read that correctly.

Edgar Martinez against Nolan Ryan

Edgar Martinez struck out in 53% of his at-bats against Nolan Ryan. He struck out in 17% of his at-bats against everyone else.

All of these crazy stats, and more Nolan Ryan crazy stats can be found on 80sbaseball.com.

2023 All-MLB Teams:

FIRST TEAM

C: **Adley Rutschman**, Orioles
1B: **Freddie Freeman**, Dodgers
2B: **Marcus Semien**, Rangers
SS: **Corey Seager**, Rangers
3B: **Austin Riley**, Braves
OF: **Ronald Acuña Jr.**, Braves
OF: **Mookie Betts**, Dodgers
OF: **Corbin Carroll**, D-backs
DH: **Shohei Ohtani**, Angels
SP: **Gerrit Cole**, Yankees
SP: **Zac Gallen**, D-backs
SP: **Blake Snell**, Padres
SP: **Shohei Ohtani**, Angels
SP: **Spencer Strider**, Braves
RP: **Félix Bautista**, Orioles
RP: **Josh Hader**, Padres

SECOND TEAM

C: **Jonah Heim**, Rangers
1B: **Matt Olson**, Braves
2B: **Ozzie Albies**, Braves
SS: **Francisco Lindor**, Mets
3B: **José Ramírez**, Guardians
OF: **Aaron Judge**, Yankees
OF: **Adolis García**, Rangers
OF: **Kyle Tucker**, Astros
DH: **Yordan Alvarez**, Astros
SP: **Kevin Gausman**, Blue Jays
SP: **Sonny Gray**, Twins
SP: **Nathan Eovaldi**, Rangers
SP: **Jordan Montgomery**, Rangers
SP: **Kyle Bradish**, Orioles
RP: **Devin Williams**, Brewers
RP: **Emmanuel Clase**, Guardians

The Rangers led the way with 6 selections, the Braves had 5.

In a surprise to no one, Ohtani and Acuna Jr. took the Hank Aaron Award. The Hank Aaron Award, which was established in 1999, annually recognizes the best offensive performer in the American and National League.

YANKEE SWAPS

The **Juan Soto** trade had a bunch of Yankees fans looking back on other big trades:

Yankees got from Marlins: RF Giancarlo Stanton

Yankees gave up: 2B Starlin Castro, SS Jose Devers, RHP Jorge Guzman

Date: Dec. 11, 2017

A power-hitting right fielder was not on the shopping list as they entered the offseason of 2017-18, not with Aaron Judge already on the roster, but Stanton proved too appealing to pass on. The reigning National League MVP, Stanton said he would waive his no-trade clause only for the Dodgers or Yankees. In his first season with New York, Stanton led the team with 38 homers and 100 RBIs.

Yankees got from Rangers: SS Alex Rodriguez

Yankees gave up: IF Alfonso Soriano, IF Joaquin Arias

Date: Feb. 16, 2004

Rodriguez was coming off an MVP campaign when the Yankees grabbed the game's highest-paid player, swooping in after an agreed-upon trade with the Red Sox was nixed. Rodriguez waived his no-trade clause and agreed to move to third base, winning the American League MVP in 2005 and '07, then the '09 World Series. His career marked a series of dizzying highs and lows. Rodriguez was suspended for all of 2014 for performance-enhancing drug use and retired with 696 homers, fourth all time.

Yankees got from Blue Jays: RHP Roger Clemens

Yankees gave up: IF Homer Bush, LHP Graeme Lloyd, LHP David Wells

Date: Feb. 18, 1999

Coming off a franchise-record 114 wins, the Yankees seemed to be locks to repeat when they added Clemens to their formidable rotation. Clemens had gone 20-6 with a 2.65 ERA the previous year, winning his second consecutive AL Cy Young Award and fifth overall. Over five seasons with New York from 1999-2003, Clemens went 77-36 with a 3.99 ERA in 157 starts, then returned for a cameo in '07. Wells was nine months removed from pitching a perfect game in pinstripes and, after a pair of strong years in Toronto, returned to the Yankees from 2002-03.

Yankees got from Athletics: 3B Scott Brosius

Yankees gave up: LHP Kenny Rogers

Date: Nov. 18, 1997

The Yankees were looking to unload the disappointing Rogers, who'd logged a 5.65 ERA in 1997, when they found a match with Oakland. At best, Brosius could be the starting third baseman,

but they also were prepared for the possibility that he'd be a utility infielder. Brosius produced an All-Star season in 1998, hitting .300 with 19 homers and 98 RBIs, then batted .471 in a World Series sweep of the Padres to secure MVP honors. Brosius played his final four seasons in pinstripes, winning three titles and four pennants.

Yankees got from Mariners: 1B Tino Martinez, RHP Jim Mecir, RHP Jeff Nelson

Yankees gave up: 3B Russ Davis, LHP Sterling Hitchcock

Date: Dec. 7, 1995

Taking over at first base following **Don Mattingly's** retirement, Martinez became a fixture in the heart of the Bombers' order, slugging 175 homers with 690 RBIs from 1996-2001. He finished second in the 1997 AL MVP race and earned a reputation for delivering in games that counted most, cracking a grand slam in Game 1 of the 1998 World Series and a dramatic game-tying homer in Game 4 of the 2001 Fall Classic. A bonus to the trade was Nelson, whose nasty slider helped set up **Mariano Rivera** during the dynasty years.

Yankees got from Blue Jays: RHP David Cone

Yankees gave up: RHP Mike Gordon, RHP Jason Jarvis, RHP Marty Janzen

Date: July 28, 1995

Cone had seen plenty of action when he arrived midseason, then proved that there was a lot left in the tank. The 1994 AL Cy Young Award winner, the wily Cone went 9-2 with a 3.82 ERA in 13 starts at the end of '95, then stuck around for the budding dynasty. Cone was 64-40 with a 3.91 ERA over six years with the Yanks, including a 20-win season in 1998 and a 1999 perfect game over the Expos.

Yankees got from Reds: RF Paul O'Neill and 1B/OF Joe De Berry

Yankees gave up: CF Roberto Kelly

Date: Nov. 3, 1992

The acquisition of the intense, left-handed-hitting O'Neill is remembered as a crucial move for the late 1990s dynasty, with general manager **Gene Michael** credited for targeting O'Neill due to his excellent plate discipline. Though parting with Kelly had not been popular at the time, O'Neill flourished, posting a terrific .359/.460/.603 slash line during the strike-shortened 1994 season and hitting .303/.377/.492 over his entire Yankees career from 1994-2001. Kelly lasted less than 1 1/2 seasons in Cincinnati, playing for eight teams in a 14-year career.

Yankees got from Athletics: CF Rickey Henderson, RHP Bert Bradley

Yankees gave up: LHP Tim Lincecum, RHP Jay Howell, OF Stan Javier, RHP Eric Plunk, RHP Jose Rijo

Date: Dec. 5, 1984

One of the most electrifying stars of the 1980s, Henderson largely played up to expectations during his 4 1/2 seasons in pinstripes, though the future Hall of Famer's contributions are

frequently overlooked because the team failed to make the playoffs. An All-Star in each of his four full seasons with New York, Henderson batted over .300 twice, led the AL in runs twice and in stolen bases three times. He amassed 326 stolen bases, establishing a franchise record that stood until Derek Jeter broke it in 2011, and hit 78 homers.

Yankees got from Athletics: RF **Roger Maris**, SS **Joe DeMaestri**, 1B **Kent Hadley**

Yankees gave up: RF **Hank Bauer**, RHP **Don Larsen**, 1B/OF **Norm Siebern**, 1B **Marv Throneberry**

Date: Dec. 11, 1959

Teamed with **Mickey Mantle**, Maris pursued Ruth's single-season record of 60 home runs during the 1961 campaign, connecting for his 61st homer on the season's final day to establishing a mark that would stand until 1998. A Yankee through 1966, Maris was the AL MVP in each of his first two seasons in New York, hitting 100 homers and driving in 253 runs over that span. He won a Gold Glove in 1960 and was selected to both AL All-Star teams in '60, '61 and '62.

Yankees got from Red Sox: RF **Babe Ruth**

Yankees gave up: \$125,000, plus a \$300,000 loan

Date: Jan. 3, 1920

Ruth played six seasons with the Red Sox, leading them to three championships on the mound and at the plate. Taking over a sixth-place club, owner Harry Frazee sold Ruth, using some of the cash to finance his Broadway interests. Ruth led the Yankees to seven pennants and four championships, including hitting a remarkable 60 home runs in 1927. He ended his 22-year career with 714 home runs, a mark that stood until 1974. The Red Sox didn't win another title until 2004.



On April 27, 1975, the New York Yankees make a fruitful trade with the Cleveland Indians, acquiring first baseman **Chris Chambliss** and pitchers **Dick Tidrow** and **Cecil Upshaw** for four players, including starting pitchers **Fritz Peterson** and **Steve Kline** and two relievers, **Fred Beene** and **Tom Buskey**. Chambliss and Tidrow will become key contributors to the Yankees' pennant-winning teams from 1976 to 1978.

Greg Nettles played three seasons at 3B for the Indians before he was acquired with **Jerry Moses** by the New York Yankees for **John Ellis**, **Charlie Spikes**, **Rusty Torres** and **Jerry Kenney** at the Winter Meetings on November 27, 1972.

OHTANI CONTRACT

Projected 2024 Dodgers lineup:

Mookie Betts, 2B
Freddie Freeman, 1B
Shohei Ohtani, DH

Will Smith, C
Max Muncy, 3B
James Outman, CF
Chris Taylor, LF
Jason Heyward, RF
Gavin Lux, SS

For those counting, that's a combined four MVP awards, 22 All-Star appearances, 12 Gold Gloves, 11 Silver Slugger awards, one Rookie of the Year winner and an NLCS MVP.

The contract average annual salary (ignoring deferments for the moment) that is larger than the entire current projected 2024 payrolls of **eight different teams** (Guardians, Marlins, Royals, Brewers, Reds, Pirates, Orioles, A's).

So yeah, saying it's a ton of money is an understatement (\$700 million in hundred-dollar bills would weigh 7.72 tons).

Ohtani is deferring \$680M total; he'll be paid \$68M yearly from 2034-43.

In 2024, he'll be the 17th highest-paid Dodger, giving LAD flexibility to build a winner around him.

Article XVI of the CBA states there are 'no limitations' on how much deferred money a contract can have.

Ohtani will receive just \$20 million of his \$700 million contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers over the next 10 years, with \$680 million payable from 2034-43 in an unusual structure that gives the team greater payroll flexibility in coming seasons.

Ohtani's record-setting deal, agreed to Saturday, calls for annual salaries of \$70 million, according to details obtained by The Associated Press. Of each year's salary, \$68 million is deferred with no interest, payable in equal installments each July 1 from 2034-43.

For purposes of baseball's luxury tax, the contract is valued as a yearly addition to the Dodgers' payroll of about \$46 million. Under the collective bargaining agreement, for the calculation of a team's tax payroll the value of deferred money is discounted at the federal mid-term rate. For all agreements this offseason, the discounting will be at the October 2023 rate of 4.43 percent.

Ohtani's contract, combined with those of **Mookie Betts** and **Freddie Freeman**, raises the Dodgers' total of deferred money owed to the three to \$857 million from 2033-44. Betts has a

\$365 million deal covering 2021-32 that includes \$115 million in deferred salaries payable from 2033-44 and has the final \$5 million of his signing bonus payable from 2033-35.

Freeman has a \$162 million, six-year deal for 2022-27 that includes \$57 million in deferred money payable from 2028-40.

Los Angeles' high points of the deferred payments are 2038 and '39, when the trio will be owed \$83 million, and 2040, when they will be due \$84 million.

By receiving the vast majority of the money when he presumably will not be living in the United States, Ohtani also figures to have a tax benefit. California's top tax rate for residents is 13.3 percent.

Ohtani's total dollars are 64 percent higher than baseball's previous record, a \$426.5 million, 12-year deal for Angels outfielder **Mike Trout** that began in 2019.

His \$70 million average salary is 62 percent above the previous high of \$43,333,333, shared by pitchers **Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander** with deals they struck with the New York Mets. Ohtani's average salary nearly doubles the roughly \$42.3 million he earned with the Angels. It also exceeds the entire payrolls of Baltimore and Oakland this year.

However, for the luxury tax he will count only slightly more than Aaron Judge, who is a \$40 million annual charge to the Yankees' payroll as he enters the second season of a \$360 million, nine-year contract.

Instead of being charged \$70 million per year against the tax, the present day value of Ohtani's contract will be \$46.06 million annually. The team can use that yearly savings of nearly \$24 million to build around Ohtani.

Ohtani won't be pinching pennies on his relatively meager \$2 million salary while waiting for that first big payday in 2034. **He's expected to earn \$50 million in endorsements next season,** up from the \$40 million he made this year.

The previous record for deferred compensation was 50% by Max Scherzer on his seven-year, \$210 million contract he signed with the Nationals in 2015.

Other ways to measure the size of the deal? Ohtani's contract is worth:

- 1.64 Mike Trout contracts (Trout's \$426.5 million was previously the largest in the sport's history).

- **1.4 Corey-Seager-plus-Marcus-Semien contracts.**
- 1.096 AL Centrals. As in, the combined payrolls of all five AL Central teams last year was \$638.8 million.

Ohtani has 171 career home runs, all with the Angels. No player has hit at least 20 homers for both the Angels and Dodgers -- at least, not yet. One player has 19 with each: **Frank Robinson**, 50 with the Angels and 19 with the Dodgers.

At 10 years and \$700 million, this is believed to be the largest contract in professional sports history. The prior largest baseball contract by total value was Mike Trout's 12-year, \$426.5 million extension with the Angels in 2019. This is \$273.5 million more than that, almost the value of Alex Rodriguez's then-record \$275 million deal entering '08.

For MLB free agents, the prior largest deal had been Aaron Judge's nine-year, \$360 million contract prior to the 2023 season. Ohtani's contract sets that record by \$340 million, the exact value of **Fernando Tatis Jr.**'s extension with the Padres entering '21.

He's just the fourth reigning MVP to change teams that offseason, joining 2017 **Giancarlo Stanton**, who was traded from the Marlins to the Yankees; 2003 Rodriguez, who was traded from the Rangers to the Yankees; and 1992 **Barry Bonds**, who went from the Pirates to the Giants in free agency.

Ohtani was the fifth player to be granted free agency the offseason after winning MVP, a unique and small group. As noted above, Bonds was the only other of those to change teams. The three who re-signed with the same team were 2022 Judge with the Yankees, 2007 Rodriguez with the Yankees and 1989 **Robin Yount** with the Brewers.

Ohtani is the reigning MVP and has won the award twice in the AL. It's fair to wonder whether he'll add another to his trophy case with the Dodgers. Only five players have won an MVP award with two franchises since the BBWAA began voting in 1931. They are Robinson (Reds, Orioles), Bonds (Pirates, Giants), Rodriguez (Rangers, Yankees), **Jimmie Foxx** (Athletics, Red Sox) and **Bryce Harper** (Nationals, Phillies). Of those, only Robinson won in both leagues.

Mookie Betts, Freddie Freeman & Shohei Ohtani (Dodgers)

This is not just the best trio currently but potentially one of the best all time. Three Hall of Fame-caliber players. Three MVPs. Three multi-time Silver Sluggers. Three guys who ranked

first (Ohtani, 184), sixth (Betts, 163) and eighth (Freeman, 161) in OPS+ (where 100 is league average) among those with at least 150 plate appearances last season.

If they were to all finish with at least a 160 mark (60% better than league average) again in 2024, the Dodgers would become the fourth team in the modern era with three such players (min. 400 plate appearances), joining the 1929 Yankees (**Lou Gehrig, Tony Lazzeri**, Babe Ruth), 1963 Giants (**Orlando Cepeda, Willie Mays, Willie McCovey**) and 2000 Giants (Barry Bonds, **Ellis Burks, Jeff Kent**).

The 2024 Dodgers will be the fifth team to begin a season with three players who each finished in the top three in MVP voting in the previous season (either league), joining the 1942 Dodgers (**Dolph Camilli, Pete Reiser, Whit Wyatt**), 1960 White Sox (**Nellie Fox, Luis Aparicio, Early Wynn**), 1967 Orioles (Frank Robinson, **Brooks Robinson, Boog Powell**) and 2004 Yankees (Alex Rodriguez, **Jorge Posada, Gary Sheffield**).

Ohtani explored these kinds of contract structures with every team he negotiated with, so this wasn't just a Dodgers-exclusive thing. It seems that Ohtani wants to win and has agreed to structure his deal so that his chances of doing so are as high as possible. He'll take home far less money now in order to make the team stronger during the course of his playing career.

Ohtani agreed to take just a \$2 million salary per year over the entire length of the 10-year contract. After that, the Dodgers will pay him \$68 million per year — with no interest accrued on that amount — for the following 10 years.

The Dodgers save money threefold:

- First, in the immediate term, by saving \$68 million per year to spend on other players.
- Then there are the luxury tax savings, as Ohtani's official average annual value will be \$46 million, which is many millions less than \$70 million. That helps the bottom line, and makes me wonder if any other executives might raise an issue with the whole thing.
- Long term, due to inflation, paying him \$68 million in 2043 will mean less than paying him \$68 million in 2024 would've. The proverbial can is far, far down the road.

For Ohtani, it may come out in the wash:

- Yes, that \$68 million per year will be worth less in a decade, but he can establish his residence anywhere and, according to the AP, theoretically avoid California's higher tax rate on that \$68 million. He has a long time to figure that out.

During the first 10 years, he will be subject to state income taxes on his annual \$2 million salary in California and other states where the Dodgers play. But by the time he starts receiving the \$68 million payments, he may be able to avoid state income taxes by living someplace like Florida without an income tax, or by moving back to Japan.

The contract will also have implications for the Dodgers' payroll under MLB's luxury tax rules, which calculates its average annual value based on actual yearly salary (\$2 million, in this case) and the present day value of the deal (roughly \$44 million). As a result, the Dodgers will take a \$46 million hit against their luxury tax payroll each season, a record-setting annual average value, but a steep decrease from a \$70 million per year hit if the salary were paid out in full during the course of Ohtani's contract.

When he suits up for the Dodgers on opening day of the 2024 season, Ohtani will be making less than Mets infielder **Joey Wendle**, Seattle reliever **Andrés Muñoz** and Twins' pitcher **Randy Dobnak**, who was driving an Uber when Ohtani moved to Major League Baseball in 2018.

In total, 210 MLB players will be making more than Ohtani's \$2 million base salary. So will some 400 NBA players, 752 NFL players and 87 players on the PGA Tour. Somehow **Ken Griffey Jr.**, who retired in 2010, will earn more next season than baseball's highest-paid player.

Ohtani's deferrals create several potential risks. For one, sustained high inflation could erode the value of the deal.

He also may find himself caring a lot about decades of tax policy debates in the U.S. Congress. Today's top marginal federal income-tax rate is 37%, and unless Congress acts, it will climb to 39.6% in 2026. (If you're scoring at home, 2.6% of \$680 million is \$17.68 million.)

Republicans want to keep the current rate and Democrats, including President Biden, have floated a variety of proposals that would take top tax rates even higher than 39.6%.

Those risks could be outweighed by state tax benefits. Starting in 2024, California's top tax rate will effectively be 14.4%, which is significantly greater than the 0% in Washington state, Texas, Florida and Nevada, all of which have (or will soon have) MLB teams.

As with other pro athletes, Ohtani's annual salary will be taxed for state purposes, generally depending on where the Dodgers play their games. That would mean higher tax rates for home games as well as road games against the Giants, Angels, Padres, Mets and Yankees, among others.

But with the deferrals, Packard said, Ohtani may be able to take advantage of a 1996 federal law that bans states from imposing their income taxes on certain retirement and deferred-

compensation plans. That prohibition can apply if someone is receiving roughly equal annual payments over at least 10 years.

On the eve of a scheduled introductory press conference with the Dodgers to present history's first \$700 million athlete, Ohtani set yet another mark -- according to Fanatics, his No. 17 Dodgers jersey set a record for sales within 48 hours of a jersey release.

Ohtani jerseys flew off the shelves -- both physical and digital -- at a rate that more than doubled the previous record holder's, soccer megastar Lionel Messi. In third place is another soccer jersey, that of Cristiano Ronaldo. NFL quarterback Justin Fields' Bears jersey ranks fourth, and Phillies superstar **Bryce Harper's** No. 3 is fifth.

On March 8, 1930, Babe Ruth signed a two-year, \$160,000 contract with the New York Yankees. This is probably the first famous sports contract in American history, but what is not as well remembered is that Ruth actually *settled* for that contract. He had stubbornly held out for months and had already turned down this exact contract. He wanted a three-year deal at \$85,000 a year.

But as spring training began, Ruth began to waver. Sportswriters were in his ear telling him that owner Jacob Ruppert — famously known as “the Colonel” — would never give in to his demands and that \$80,000 was a whole lot of money.

And on March 8, Ruth showed up at the Yankees’ spring training facility in St. Petersburg, Fla. — in cream-colored golf knickers, gray stockings, black-and-white-striped shoes and a dark jacket, according to the New York *Daily News* — and humbly tapped Ruppert on the shoulder and said: “My dear Colonel, could I see you for about 10 minutes?”

Five minutes later, they emerged from the meeting and Ruppert grandiosely pronounced: “Gentlemen, all I have to say is that Mr. Ruth has agreed to that two-year contract.”

It was the biggest sports contract ever signed to that point — about \$1.35 million in today’s dollars about \$10,000 more per year than Ruth had been making. The big-city and small-town newspapers across the country — to offer some perspective about how much money that was

— pointed out that Ruth would be drawing \$5,000 more per year than President Herbert Hoover himself.

As the years went on, the contrast between Ruth's salary and Hoover's led to one of baseball's all-time stories, one you've probably heard. Supposedly, Ruth was confronted with the fact that he would be getting paid more than President Hoover. He huffed and responded, "Hell, why not? I had a better year than he did."

In 1930, Babe Ruth made \$5,000 more per year than the President of the United States.

In 2024, Shohei Ohtani will make — I kid you not — 175 times more than the President of the United States.

"It was in line with expectations," said one head of baseball ops who had wondered about the deferrals. "I think they dressed it up to get that shock value, that big number. But when you actually factor in the present value with the deferrals, it's in the range you would have expected."

When a team defers salary, they must pretty quickly put the money aside, so to speak. They are required to start allocating the present value of the deferred money — discounted by five percent — by the second July 1 after the season it was owed.

For example: Ohtani is deferring \$68 million in 2024. By July 2026, the Dodgers must fully fund the present value of that \$68 million.

But the Dodgers appear to have considerable freedom as to how to allocate that money. Per the CBA, the team could keep it in cash, or stocks, or "unencumbered assets." The CBA also allows the league and union to agree on an alternative form, if the parties wish.

"If you ask any hedge-fund guy or real-estate guy if they think they can double their money in 10 years, they're going to say absolutely," a third player agent said. "If you're looking at this from the Dodgers' standpoint only, there is no doubt in their mind, in their ownership's mind, that this is probably the most favorable deal they could have ever imagined."

Ohtani could run into trouble if the Dodgers were to go bankrupt before the bulk of his money is to be paid out. Yet, that scenario seems quite unlikely.

A player agent questioned the precedent Ohtani was setting, however. Not in terms of CBT, but in a perceived personal sacrifice to lighten the Dodgers' payroll.

It is, from one perspective, noble that Ohtani wanted to position the Dodgers to add more talent around him by taking so little money up front. But the agent argued that players should not be taking on that burden in baseball's market system.

"I think it is a bad deal for Ohtani, a bad deal for baseball players," the agent said. "Putting the best team on the field, that's ownership's issue. Ohtani is not participating in the increase in the Dodgers franchise value, any of that stuff. He shouldn't be essentially funding the way they can operate the team. And that's what he's done. He's taking pride in doing that."

Ohtani agreed to defer \$680 million of his \$700 million deal with the Dodgers. The annual competitive balance tax (CBT, or luxury tax) figure for the Dodgers is expected to be around \$46 million. The CBT is a penalty tax on payrolls in MLB that hits teams when they clear certain thresholds. A team's payroll for CBT purposes is calculated in terms of average annual value. For players on long-term contracts, their exact salary in a given season is not what's relevant. For instance, a player on two-year, \$20 million contract who's paid \$5 million in year one and \$15 million in year two is nevertheless a \$10 million CBT hit in both years because that's the average annual value of his contract. In Ohtani's case, his AAV is not \$70 million – \$700 million over the stated 10 years of the contract – but something around \$46 million because of those massive deferrals spread across many years.

As another example, Max Scherzer signed a seven-year contract worth \$210 million with the Nationals in 2015. That's \$30 million per year, on average. However, Scherzer agreed to defer half his salary each year, which lowered the present day value to approximately \$185 million. That lowered his annual CBT hit to \$26.4 million or so.

The CBT threshold payroll for 2024 is \$237 million, as agreed upon by the players union and MLB. Teams who exceed that figure will be penalized as follows:

- **First year:** 20% tax on payroll above CBT threshold
- **Second consecutive year:** 30% tax
- **Third consecutive year or more:** 50% tax

As well, teams are penalized for the extent to which they exceed the threshold figure in a given year:

- **\$20 million to \$40 million:** 12% surcharge

- **\$40 million to \$60 million:** 42.5% surcharge for first year; 45% for each consecutive year after that
- **\$60 million or more:** 60% surcharge

There is a clause stating, "if specific change in Dodger personnel, player may opt out of contract at end of season the change occurs." This opt out will trigger if either president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman or controlling owner Mark Walter loses his role with the team

This past season, Ohtani made approximately \$40 million in endorsement deals, according to the Los Angeles Times. He has agreements with New Balance, Fanatics, Topps, plus scores of companies in Japan. That \$40 million is on top of the \$30 million salary the Angels paid him. Ohtani's endorsements will only grow, both in quantity and value, with the Dodgers. Given how much he banks each year in endorsements and given that his off-the-field earning power is likely to increase with the flagship Dodger brand behind him, Ohtani was uniquely positioned to defer all but \$2 million in salary each year.

No player in the sport generates revenue like Ohtani. He sells tickets and jerseys, and opens the door to new Japanese sponsors and fans. According to the Los Angeles Times, Ohtani made the Angels \$10 million to \$20 million a year in advertising, marketing, and whatnot. The Dodgers, a more global brand that outdrew the Angels by nearly 15,000 fans per game in 2023, figure to make substantially more in Ohtani-related revenue. There's a reason they invested \$700 million in him. They expect him to generate multitudes more for them.

Ohtani's contract stipulates that he'll donate to a Dodgers charity in an amount that will not exceed 1%

Ohtani gets a personal suite for all regular-season and postseason while also being provided an interpreter

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from the Ohtani Opt-Out is the control the Dodgers were willing to give him, which cannot be quantified. The opt-out recalls a similar clause **Joe Maddon** had as manager of the Rays. Maddon's clause, too, allowed him to escape if Friedman, his boss at the time, departed. When Friedman left for the Dodgers in October 2014, Maddon exercised the clause and bolted for the Cubs.

HALL OF FAME

(Editor's note—Hall of Fame votes continue to roll in. Feel free to send along your ideas.)

From one subscriber this week—Pete, here is my list of 10 votes:

The best baseball players on the list with or without PED questions:

1) **AROD** - 3X MVP and top 10 7 other years, 3X MLPOY, 14X all star, 10X SS, 2X GG, 1X Batting Champ, 1X WS Champ. 696 career HR, 1338 RBI.

2) **Manny Ramirez** - 10X MVP top 10, 12X all star, 9X SS, 1X Batting Champ, 2X WS Champ. 1813 RBI including 165 in 1999 with 555 HR and career .312 BA

Let them both in now! Why? Because they were “must see TV” just like Bonds and Clemens. The owners made money, the fans spent money, everyone was entertained and you can credit the HR chases and what came after as saving baseball from the 94/95 strike. They won individual HR, RBI and batting average titles. They won gold gloves and multiple World Series titles. The era is tainted just as every other era with its own warts. Some legal at the time, and then illegal after. **Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb** never faced a colored pitcher while **Cy Young** never faced a colored batter. In the 40s we hear about the games lost by **Ted Williams** serving his country, but what about all the “fill in players” pitching, batting and fielding who were not worthy, but all those stats counted against those non-MLB players. The 60s were full of “greenies” and mounds that were 6” too high making us look at **Sandy Koufax, Don Drysdale, Bob Gibson, Denny McLain, Juan Marichal, and Whitey Ford** dominating all hitters. The 70s were the start of players on coke through the 80s and we let **Keith Hernandez and Tim “Rock” Lincecum** in. The steroid era was legal until it wasn't after 2006, so why aren't **Roger Clemens and Barry Bonds** in? Most everyone else with 500+ HR and 1500 RBI or multiple Cy Youngs and MVP are in. Then of course you have other suspected PED users in the HOF already with **David Ortiz, Jeff Bagwell, and Pudge Rodriguez** leading the charge. So, let them all in I say! The era itself has an asterisk, just as all the other eras do

The rest - None of them to me are in the class of first ballot HOFers like **Derek Jeter and Ken Griffey Jr or Mariano Rivera**, but with the comparison to others who have made it for various reasons (e.g., **Harold Baines, Jim Rice, Ted Simmons, Fred McGriff and Scott Rolen**) you have to vote these guys in:

3) **Adrian Beltre** - The best of the newcomers; probably not a first ballot HOFer, but year two for sure based on offense and defense. 5X GG, 2X Platinum Glove, 4X SS, 4X All Star. 5X top 10 MVP with a 2nd and 3rd place. Possible PED use, but WHO CARES! We have racists and drunks and wife beaters and drug addicts and PED users already in those Halloween halls.

4) **Joe Mauer** - Second best of the newcomers; MVP, 3X Batting titles, 5X SS, 3X GG, 6X All-star. Not year 1, but year 2!

5) **Billy Wagner** - 7X AS, 1X RR w/ 422 career saves with 86% conversion rate

6) **Andruw Jones** - 10X GG, 5X AS, 1X ML POY, 1X SS

7) **Todd Helton** - 5X AS, 4X SS, 3X GG, 1X Batting Champ and 3X top 10 MVP, w/ 1406 RBI and 369 HR and .316 career BA. I don't care if he played half his games in CO, then don't put a team in CO. Do we argue that RF at Yankee Stadium is a 3/4 pitching wedge from home and hold back records or votes for that? Nope.

8) **Gary Sheffield** - 9X AS, 5X SS, 1X ML POY, 1X Batting Champ, 1X WS Champ, 6X top 10 MVP including a 2nd and 2 3rds, 509 HR and 1475 RBI, 253 SB and more BB than SO

9) **Omar Vizquel** - 11X GG, 3X AS, with career stats are comparable to Ozzie; 10 points higher BA, 400 more hits, 150 more RBI with 404 SB

10) Vacant - I know I can't but I want to write in Bonds and Clemens. The hall is void without those dominant players of the last 30 years. And I'd add **Pete Rose** too.

Not HOF material:

Andy Pettitte - not until **Luis Tiant** is in; 5 WS and 25 more wins on great Yankee teams does not compare to complete games, innings pitched, higher era and Tiant 2X ERA titles. The hall is an individual accomplishment and not a team accomplishment.

Jimmy Rollins - good and steady, but not HOF

Chase Utley - good not great with only 259 HR, 1025 RBI, 6X AS, and never an MVP higher than 7th and no GG

David Wright - maybe if he stuck around healthier for 5 more years

Jose Reyes - just not good enough after his age 25 season

Victor Martinez - not as a catcher and not as a DH; he makes **Harold Baines** look great!

Matt Holliday - Just not enough despite 7X AS and 4XSS and a batting title

Carlos Beltran - excellent start to a career at bat and in the field, then faded and was just a DH.

Torii Hunter - mostly all defense

Bobby Abreu - good player, never great.

Everyone else - pass

Hope that is helpful and entertaining.

LONGER READS

OHTANI'S RECORD DEAL A MILESTONE FOR JAPANESE-BORN MLB PLAYERS, ICHIRO, NOMO AMONG LUMINARIES WHO PAVED THE WAY

Manny Randhawa, mlb.com

Japan was a land of mystery to American baseball fans for many years, but it's safe to say the perception has changed -- a Japanese-born player just agreed to the richest contract in the history of sports.

The success of many players from the Land of the Rising Sun -- from Hideo Nomo to Ichiro Suzuki to the \$700 million man, Shohei Ohtani -- has proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that Japanese players have what it takes to excel in America's Major Leagues.

In the wake of a historic moment in baseball history involving a Japanese player who has risen to the status of greatest baseball talent in the world, here's a look at some of the most significant Japanese players who have come to MLB:

Shohei Ohtani, RHP/DH, 2018-present

Ohtani arrived in America with plenty of hype as he aimed to be the Majors' first full-time two-way player since **Babe Ruth** a century earlier. After a tough first Spring Training, Ohtani proved doubters wrong with brilliance on the mound -- including a one-hit outing in his second MLB start -- and massive power at the plate.

The Japanese sensation finished his 2018 American League Rookie of the Year Award-winning campaign as the first player since Ruth to pair 20 home runs as a hitter with 10 appearances as a pitcher.

Injuries hindered Ohtani's two-way prowess over the next two seasons. He underwent Tommy John surgery at the conclusion of the 2018 campaign, which made him a full-time designated hitter the next year. Ohtani tried to return to the mound in 2020, but made only two starts before a forearm strain shut him down as a pitcher.

But then came a healthy 2021 season, which became one of the greatest individual seasons in baseball history -- Ohtani was named AL MVP after posting a .965 OPS with 46 home runs at the plate, while also pitching to a 3.18 ERA with a 29 percent strikeout rate in 23 starts on the mound.

Following another sensational season in 2022, when he launched 34 home runs at the plate and finished fourth in AL Cy Young Award voting for his exploits on the mound, Ohtani somehow outdid himself in '23.

That's when he put together his finest offensive season to this point, winning his second AL MVP honor after leading the Majors in slugging (.654) and OPS (1.066) while belting 44 home runs. Ohtani did all of that while also pitching to a 3.14 ERA with a 31.4 percent strikeout rate on the mound.

That outstanding 2023 campaign was his Angels finale. He agreed to a record 10-year, \$700 million contract with the crosstown Dodgers.

Kenta Maeda, RHP, 2016-present

After eight seasons with the Hiroshima Carp, Maeda jumped to MLB, signing an eight-year deal with the Dodgers that began with his age-28 season. Maeda finished third in the NL Rookie of the Year race after posting a 3.48 ERA over 32 starts in his debut campaign.

After three more solid seasons in pitching-rich L.A., Maeda was traded to the Twins in February 2020. Although his first year in Minnesota was shortened by the COVID-19 pandemic, Maeda took his game to another level, posting a 2.70 ERA and AL-best 0.75 WHIP over 11 starts. He then finished second in AL Cy Young Award voting.

Maeda struggled in an injury-shortened 2021 season, pitching to a 4.66 ERA over 21 starts for Minnesota before having to undergo Tommy John surgery. He returned in '23, posting a 4.23 ERA, though he gave up three or fewer earned runs in 18 of his 21 starts.

Masahiro Tanaka, RHP, 2014-20

Tanaka was brilliant over seven NPB seasons with Rakuten, finishing with a sterling 1.27 ERA in both 2011 and '13 (his ERA in '12 was 1.87). The Yankees signed him to a seven-year, \$155 million contract in '14, after paying a \$20 million fee under a revised posting system.

That contract, which expired after the 2020 season, mostly worked out well for New York. Tanaka went 78-46 with a 3.74 ERA over those seven years, while making 173 starts. He was an All-Star twice, including in his rookie season, when he posted a 2.77 ERA.

Tanaka also had success in the postseason. In his first seven MLB playoff starts, spanning 2015-19, he went 5-2 with a 1.32 ERA, never allowing more than two runs. However, in what was his final Yankees outing, he took the loss in Game 3 of the 2020 AL Division Series.

Yu Darvish, RHP, 2012-present

Darvish became one of the greatest pitchers in NPB history during his seven seasons with the Nippon Ham Fighters. In 2012, a year before Ohtani would make his debut for the Fighters, Darvish made the jump to MLB after the Rangers made a record \$51.7 million posting bid. Texas signed the right-hander to a six-year, \$60 million contract.

Darvish didn't disappoint, posting a 112 ERA+ and 11.2 strikeouts per nine innings in his rookie season. The next year, he struck out an MLB-best 277 batters and finished as the AL Cy Young Award runner-up. Darvish was an All-Star for the third straight year in 2014, but his season was cut short due to an elbow injury. After missing the entire 2015 season recovering from Tommy John surgery, he returned midway through the '16 season and pitched well.

In 2017, Darvish was again an All-Star and reached the 1,000-strikeout plateau faster than anyone in AL/NL history (812 innings). Texas traded him to Los Angeles at the non-waiver Trade Deadline, and he helped the Dodgers reach the World Series for the first time in 29 years.

Darvish then went on to sign a six-year, \$126 million free-agent deal with the Cubs. His tenure in Chicago began poorly, but Darvish found his groove during the 2019 season, and in '20, he finished as the NL Cy Young Award runner-up after posting a 2.01 ERA over the course of the shortened schedule.

The Cubs traded Darvish to the Padres following the 2020 season, and the veteran right-hander struggled in his first year with San Diego, finishing with a 4.22 ERA over 30 starts. He bounced back in '22, finishing eighth in NL Cy Young Award voting after pitching to a 3.10 ERA over 194 2/3 innings.

On Aug. 14, 2023, Darvish set a new MLB record for most strikeouts by a Japanese-born pitcher, passing Hideo Nomo with his final strikeout against the Orioles at Petco Park, the 1,919th strikeout of his Major League career.

Hisashi Iwakuma, RHP, 2012-18

Iwakuma played 11 NPB seasons between the Kintetsu Buffaloes and the Rakuten Golden Eagles before joining the Mariners in 2012. Over his first four MLB seasons, he was a very dependable starter for Seattle, posting an ERA no higher than 3.54 each season. In 2013, Iwakuma was an All-Star and finished third in AL Cy Young Award voting, finishing with a 2.66 ERA and a 1.01 WHIP over 219 2/3 innings. He also threw a no-hitter against the Orioles on Aug. 15, 2015. Iwakuma opted to return to Japan after a shoulder surgery sidelined him for the entire 2018 season.

Koji Uehara, RHP, 2009-17

Uehara spent 10 seasons with the Yomiuri Giants before signing with the Orioles at age 34 in 2009. His finest season came in '13 after signing as a free agent with the Red Sox. Uehara appeared in 73 games and posted a 1.09 ERA. He also struck out 101 batters and walked just nine, becoming the first pitcher in MLB history to strike out more than 100 while walking fewer

than 10 in a single season. Taking over the closer role after injuries to **Andrew Bailey and Joel Hanrahan**, Uehara was named the 2013 AL Championship Series MVP, and he struck out the Cardinals' **Matt Carpenter** to end the 2013 World Series at Fenway Park.

Hiroki Kuroda, RHP, 2008-14

After a long stint with the Hiroshima Carp, a 33-year-old Kuroda signed with the Dodgers before the 2008 season. He didn't miss a beat. Kuroda wound up spending seven seasons in the Majors with the Dodgers (2008-11) and Yankees (2012-14) before returning to Hiroshima for two final seasons. He had an above-average ERA+ in all seven of those campaigns and finished with a career mark of 115, while averaging 188 innings.

Daisuke Matsuzaka, RHP, 2007-14

Matsuzaka dominated NPB from 1999-2006 with the Seibu Lions before the Red Sox signed him in December 2006, a signing that included a then-record \$51.1 million posting fee. "Dice-K," as he came to be known, turned in a strong rookie campaign in 2007 with 201 strikeouts in 204 2/3 innings. In the postseason, he helped Boston win its second World Series title in four years, becoming the first Japanese-born pitcher to win a World Series game (Game 3 at Coors Field against the Rockies).

In 2008, Matsuzaka finished fourth in AL Cy Young Award voting, posting a 2.90 ERA and 8.3 strikeouts per nine innings. Though he wouldn't be able to replicate his early success thereafter, he was named MVP of the 2009 World Baseball Classic, his second consecutive Classic MVP Award.

Kazuo Matsui, SS/2B, 2004-10

Kaz Matsui (no relation to Hideki) hit .291 over nine seasons with the Seibu Lions, amassing more than 2,000 hits, 201 homers and 362 stolen bases before signing a three-year, \$20.1 million contract with the Mets. He homered on the first pitch of his MLB career, but he never developed into an All-Star stateside, although he was a key contributor for the 2007 NL pennant-winning Rockies.

Hideki Matsui, LF/DH, 2003-12

A star for 10 seasons with the Yomiuri Giants in Japan, Matsui signed a three-year, \$21 million deal with the Yankees. Following an All-Star rookie campaign, he posted a .298/.390/.522 slash line with 37 homers in 2004, again earning selection to the AL All-Star team. In seven seasons with New York, Matsui hit 140 home runs and was named the 2009 World Series MVP after hitting .615 with three homers against the Phillies.

Matsui played for the Angels, A's and Rays before retiring in 2012.

Ichiro Suzuki, RF, 2001-19

Ichiro became the first position player to make the transition from NPB to MLB when he joined the Mariners in 2001. After becoming a superstar in Japan with the Orix Blue Wave, he became the second player in MLB history to win the AL Rookie of the Year Award and the AL MVP

Award in the same season, posting a .350/.381/.450 slash line with an MLB-leading 242 hits and 56 steals.

That season marked the first of 10 consecutive All-Star selections for Ichiro, as well as 10 consecutive Gold Glove Awards in right field.

Ichiro would amass 200 or more hits in each of his first 10 MLB seasons, and he set the single-season hits record with 262 in 2004. In 2012, he was traded to the Yankees, for whom he played through the '14 season. Ichiro later signed as a free agent with the Marlins, and on Aug. 7, 2016, he became the 30th member of the 3,000-hit club, tripling off the right-field wall against the Rockies at Coors Field.

Following his illustrious playing career, Ichiro transitioned to the Mariners' front office midway through the 2018 season, returning for two final games with Seattle in the 2019 season-opening series in Tokyo, where he made an emotional farewell.

Kazuhiro Sasaki, RHP, 2000-03

Sasaki joined the Mariners as a free agent in 2000, following 10 seasons in NPB, and he made an immediate impact. With veteran right-hander **Jose Mesa** struggling, Sasaki became Seattle's closer. He posted a 3.16 ERA with 11.2 strikeouts per nine innings and saved 37 games, earning the AL Rookie of the Year Award.

Sasaki would play three more MLB seasons, being named an AL All-Star in 2001 and '02. For his career, he had a 3.14 ERA and 129 saves for the Mariners.

Hideki Irabu, RHP, 1997-2002

Irabu pitched for the Lotte Orions (who later became the Chiba Lotte Marines) from 1988-96. He then wanted to make the transition to MLB, but he was still under contract with the Marines. So Chiba Lotte sold Irabu to the Padres, with whom the Marines had a working relationship at that time. But he refused to play for San Diego, instead wanting to pitch for the Yankees.

Irabu eventually got his wish when the Padres received two prospects (including outfielder **Ruben Rivera**, once considered among the top prospects in MLB) and \$3 million from the Yanks for the right to negotiate with him. The 28-year-old right-hander signed a four-year, \$12.8 million contract with New York in May 1997.

Irabu's refusal to play for an MLB team he was sent to without his consent helped bring about the current posting system, whereby MLB teams pay a negotiating fee to an NPB player's club if that player is still under contract in Japan. (Players who begin their careers in NPB can become true free agents after nine seasons.)

As the first Japanese player to don a Yankees uniform, Iwabuchi was greeted with much fanfare. Anticipation and expectations were high, and while he showed flashes of excellence, he struggled throughout a six-season MLB career.

In three seasons with the Yankees, Iwabuchi posted a 4.80 ERA. He was traded to the Expos, for whom he pitched two seasons and had a 6.69 ERA in 14 starts. In 2002, Iwabuchi made 38 appearances (two starts) for the Rangers, posting a 5.74 ERA and surrendering 11 home runs in 47 innings.

After his MLB career was over, Iwabuchi returned to NPB and pitched for the Hanshin Tigers from 2003-04. He had personal struggles off the field, and on July 27, 2011, he was found dead of an apparent suicide in his Southern California home.

Hideo Nomo, RHP, 1995-2008

Though Masanori Murakami was the first Japanese-born player to play in the Majors, it was Nomo who opened the door to more Japanese players making the transition from NPB to MLB. Following an uneven 1994 season with the Kintetsu Buffaloes, Nomo found himself in a contract dispute with the club. His agent found a loophole in NPB's rules that enabled a player who "retired" to become a free agent when he returned to active status, so that is what Nomo did before signing with the Dodgers in February 1995.

Nomo made his MLB debut on May 2, 1995, against the Giants at Candlestick Park, tossing five scoreless innings and giving up one hit while walking four and striking out seven. In doing so, Nomo introduced to the Majors a deceptive windup dubbed "the Tornado."

Nomo would go on to post a 2.54 ERA and lead the NL with 236 strikeouts, earning the NL Rookie of the Year Award. The next season, he would throw the first of two career no-hitters, blanking the Rockies at Coors Field on Sept. 17, 1996. It remains the only no-hitter thrown in that ballpark.

Masanori Murakami, LHP, 1964-65

Murakami initially reached the Giants' Minor League system in 1964 as part of a player development agreement between San Francisco and NPB's Nankai Hawks. He was one of three Hawks players sent to the Giants and was assigned to San Francisco's Class A affiliate in Fresno.

Murakami impressed enough to be promoted to the Major League club in September, becoming the first player of Japanese descent in MLB history at just 20 years old. He struck out two batters in an inning of work in his debut, which came on Sept. 1, 1964, at Shea Stadium against the Mets.

That winter, Murakami was at the center of controversy. The Giants wanted him back because he had pitched so well and they claimed they controlled his rights, while Nankai officials had convinced him to return. The dispute was settled by a compromise between then-Commissioners Ford Frick (MLB) and Yushi Uchimura (NPB), who determined that Murakami

was contractually obligated to pitch for San Francisco in 1965, but had the option to return to NPB in '66.

In 54 appearances (89 1/3 innings) in 1965, Murakami posted a 3.43 ERA and 10.1 strikeouts per nine innings before returning to Nankai for the rest of his playing career, which ended in 1982.

THE DAMNDEST MESS BASEBALL HAS EVER SEEN

That's what Ford Frick thought the big leagues had avoided, thanks to Walter O'Malley. A lot of people thought it was an exact description of baseball's last four months

Roy Terrell, Sports Illustrated, December 1960

For months the major leagues had argued the subject of expansion. Now, in the lobbies and dining halls of the squat Chase and towering Park Plaza hotels, which rise like Mutt and Jeff on the edge of Forest Park in St. Louis, the big leagues gathered last week to settle this problem for once and all. The most pressing matter was whether or not to admit the American League into Los Angeles. There were smiles of greeting between American and National League owners, who stretched forth one hand in a gesture of friendship while testing the blade edge behind their backs with the other.

Then they got down to business. The American League met in the Stockholm Room on the mezzanine of the Park Plaza, the National League in the Tiara Lounge on the 26th floor. In between, where he has been for 10 years, sat Baseball Commissioner Ford Frick, in a suite on the 22nd floor.

Occasionally, someone—Nate Dolin of the Cleveland Indians, John Galbreath of the Pittsburgh Pirates, Dan Topping of the New York Yankees, Lou Perini of the Milwaukee Braves—would pop out of one room and race to the other, swiveling like a potbellied Joe Bellino past the clutches of newsmen seeking a hint of just what in the name of Abner Doubleday was going on. Occasionally, one of the self-appointed committees would stop off to visit Ford Frick, a nice gesture, everything considered, since Frick, despite his exalted title, was never the dominant figure here. That honor belonged to Walter Francis O'Malley of the Dodgers. O'Malley, who hides the shrewdest mind in baseball behind assorted chins and a black cigar, spoke softly, smiled pleasantly and stated his position simply: he wanted the American League to keep its cotton-pickin' hands off Los Angeles. For three days this gentle-seeming man repelled all advances as if he were personally responsible for defending the City of Angels against the Hun.

Eventually, however, placating words and genuflection prevailed, and O'Malley told the American League O.K., come ahead. The terms, in general, were that the new Los Angeles

Angels, owned by a syndicate headed by ex-Stanford football hero, Bob Reynolds, and the singing cowboy, Gene Autry, could put a ball club in L.A. in 1961. The Angels must pay indemnities amounting to approximately \$350,000 to O'Malley, although one could see that the mention of cash was repugnant to his Irish soul. The Angels may televise not more than 11 out-of-town games and none from L.A. They may not play in the huge Coliseum but must play in neat little Wrigley Field, which seats only slightly more than 20,000. And when O'Malley's new Chavez Ravine ball park is completed in time for the 1962 season, the Angels will move there for a minimum of four years at an undisclosed rental. There were also a few minor clauses. In all, it was an arrangement which made Reynolds and Autry very happy and is guaranteed to cost them several million dollars in the next few years.

When all was settled the owners asked Ford Frick to make the announcement. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, the commissioner responded very well. "I want all of you to know," he told the assembled journalists, emotion quivering in his voice, "that without the complete cooperation of Mr. O'Malley, baseball would have been in one of the damndest messes ever seen."

It was not very clear how the commissioner appraised the monumental foul-up just ended, during which major league baseball threatened to devour itself with an incredible display of stupidity and greed.

The trouble really began with the formation a year and a half ago of the Continental League, which concerned itself with the admirable project of putting a second team in New York, now that the Dodgers and Giants were gone, and extending the major leagues to other cities so far unblest: Houston, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Toronto, Dallas, Fort Worth, Denver, Atlanta and Buffalo. The major leagues, talking fast out of both sides of their two mouths, put to death the Continental League in Chicago last August 2. "If you will go away and forget all about it," the Continental League was told by a major league expansion committee on that day, "then we will recommend that four of your cities be admitted to our sacred circle." This was good enough for the Continental League, which failed to read the small type, and that still-unborn body breathed a sigh of relief and expired.

So now the major leagues had made a promise, of sorts, and now they had to act, not so much because of the promise, which normally would influence big league baseball owners not a bit, but because of Senator Estes Kefauver and Congressman Emanuel Celler. Kefauver and Celler are the watchdogs of major league expansion, and although they have done little except talk, the words they use most frequently are "monopoly" and "restraint of trade." The very threat of congressional legislation is enough to make baseball club owners quiver like custard pudding. "All right," said Warren Giles, whose National League had voted against expansion a year before, to Joe Cronin, whose American League had indicated that it might give the matter serious thought, some day. "Let's get together and expand." The American League agreed. So the National League scurried off and expanded, without bothering to invite the American League.

The cities selected by the National League were New York, quite naturally, and Houston, considered by many the ripest plum available for plucking by big league baseball. The official announcement that the two new teams would begin play in 1962 was made on October 17. "The National League," screamed headlines across the country, "has stolen a march." Frick was downcast. "I wish you boys had got together on this thing," he said.

Now that the National League jumped the gun, making the American League look ridiculous, the American League struck back—and managed to look even more ridiculous. On October 26 it voted to move into Los Angeles, and all the righteous denials that followed failed to convince anyone that this wasn't partly in reprisal for the National League's proposed invasion of Yankee territory in New York. It voted to allow Calvin Griffith to move his Washington Senators to Minneapolis-St. Paul, cutting off altogether the old Continental League franchise seekers in the Twin Cities. It voted to "expand" back to Washington, a move absolutely necessary to placate Capitol Hill. And it voted to let these new clubs play not in 1962, as had the National League, but in 1961.

"This is not expansion," thundered Branch Rickey, whose Continental League had been ignored. "The dictionary definition of perfidy has now been confirmed."

What the American League really wanted was plain to see. First, since Calvin Griffith had been begging for years to be allowed to move from Washington to Minneapolis-St. Paul and since it was apparent that the American League was finally going to go into that valuable territory, why not let one of the original club members get the gravy? Second, since it was unthinkable to leave Washington without a team, one of the new teams must be located there. And, finally, since the American League wanted to stake out a claim on some of the gold being mined by O'Malley and the National League in Los Angeles, the other new team must be located there. Ford Frick had been talking for some time about classifying New York and Los Angeles as "open" cities (that is, cities with metropolitan populations large enough to support two major league teams). Thus, the road was open. With the blessings of Co-owner Bill Veeck, **Hank Greenberg** prepared to sell his stock in the Chicago White Sox and, backed by San Diego's C. Arnholt Smith, got ready to march into L.A.

Rule of O'Malley

But while the American League was meeting in New York to award its new Washington franchise to a group led by General Elwood (Pete) Quesada and to consider the applications of Greenberg's group and others for Los Angeles (see box), Walter O'Malley was leafing through the rule book. Suddenly he held up a pudgy hand.

"You guys," he said, "can't come in here."

O'Malley had found a devilish little rule in Organized Baseball's constitution, the Blue Book. It wasn't exactly a new rule, since it had been there for years, nor was it very well hidden, since it happened to be the third paragraph of Rule 1, but the other owners apparently knew nothing

about it. The reason the others knew nothing about it is because baseball owners are not very heavy readers, especially when it comes to hampering or constricting documents.

"...the circuit of either Major League," read Rule 1 (c), "shall not be changed to include any city in the circuit of the other Major League except by the unanimous consent of the clubs constituting both Major Leagues." Since all 16 major league club owners are constitutionally incapable of agreeing on even what day of the week it happens to be, O'Malley had them stopped. And certainly he was not going to agree. In order to build his new ball park at Chavez Ravine, O'Malley had already used up \$8 million of his own money; recently, he borrowed \$8 million more from Union Oil Co., the Dodgers radio and television sponsor, on a short-term loan, and despite his huge profits from baseball in the last two years, he was not about to let another ball club come to town and drain off some of the gold. When O'Malley screamed he found a sympathetic ear attached to the baseball commissioner.

"Frick has gone back on his word," howled Hank Greenberg of the Chicago White Sox. "He's been talking about Los Angeles as an open city for months and now when we try to move there he says no, we have to make O'Malley a 'fair and equitable' deal. What does Frick know about it? I've got everything I own invested in this business; we pay him a salary of \$65,000 a year, and he invests nothing. Why should Frick tell us what we can do?"

The main concern of the American League was that Frick, who resembles Kenesaw Mountain Landis only in the fact that he has gray hair, was taking any kind of a stand at all. They hadn't hired him to take stands. They had hired him to...well, somewhere in the rules it says that baseball has to have a commissioner.

But the American League decided to deal with O'Malley, and sent Del Webb, co-owner of the Yankees, West to make an offer of \$450,000 as indemnity to the Dodger owner. When Webb returned to New York reporting that O'Malley had turned him down, there were dark hints of collusion and skulduggery, for Webb, a chilly-eyed man who made his way from a job as a carpenter to a position of great power and wealth in the construction business, has long been known as a business associate and friend of O'Malley. O'Malley and Webb, wrote some columnists, have formed a dastardly pact. O'Malley has agreed to help Webb keep a National League team out of New York (Rule 1 (c) applies both ways) if Webb will help O'Malley keep the American League out of Los Angeles. The columnists were wrong; O'Malley would hardly talk to Webb. The two men have not been very friendly since Webb's bid to build the Chavez Ravine ball park was turned down by O'Malley. The two had hatched no plot. O'Malley just wasn't interested.

Ford said it

"O'Malley never mentioned indemnities," said Greenberg. "Those were Frick's words. O'Malley simply does not want the American League in Los Angeles, period."

When the American League realized that it appeared to be shut out of Los Angeles it began to look elsewhere. Dan Topping invited Jack Kent Cooke to come down from Toronto on the chance that the American League might offer Cooke an invitation to head up a 10th team. Cooke is both a millionaire and a baseball man (he owns the Toronto Maple Leafs). He has a reputation as a sound, intelligent operator; he has ballplayers of his own good enough to have won the International League championship this year by 17 games. So Cooke, who has been seeking a major league franchise for a long time, flew down—and spent half a day pressing the seat of his pants against a couch in a New York hotel lobby.

"I sat there waiting," he said later, "for God to come out and tell me now it was my turn. And the more I thought about the plan the American League had drawn up to supply new teams with players, the less I cared for the idea. Those 28 players they were going to allow me to draft for \$2,100,000 were, frankly, bums.

"I have a working agreement with Cleveland, and I just sold **Jim King**, one of my players, to Frank Lane for \$15,000. Now, if I went in the league, they wanted to sell King back to me for \$75,000. Isn't that absurd?"

Finally Cooke got tired of waiting—no one ever did officially ask him to join the league—and he left. The reason Cooke was not offered a franchise is that the American League hated to abandon Los Angeles if there was any possible solution. O'Malley had indicated that 1961 was the year he really objected to; that in 1962, after he had reaped another year of profits as the only big league club in Los Angeles, he might not try so hard to keep the invaders out. So the American League had to come up with some stopgap plan. They could not go back to eight teams; Griffith was now installed in Minneapolis-St. Paul, from where he was not about to budge, and it was unthinkable to bring down the wrath of Washington by asking that city to stay out of the league for a year. And they could not remain at nine teams, for a nine-team league is completely impractical so far as scheduling is concerned; every day there is an idle team. Baseball businessmen can show you charts indicating that an idle baseball team is almost as expensive as an idle wife. And if there is one thing the gallant sportsmen who control baseball hate to lose more than money, it's more money.

"We had climbed out on a limb," said Frank Lane, "and sawed it off right up against the tree trunk. John Fetzer of Detroit and I fought Griffith's move to Minneapolis—we should have put a new team in there—but we were outvoted. Del Webb is trying to run this league. Too many people are trying to run this league. The ones of us who aren't aligned with the Yankees—Bill Veeck at Chicago and Fetzer at Detroit and the Baltimore people—can't seem to work together. We're all too selfish, and all we can think of is pursuing our own ends. So the Yankees control it."

What the Yankees—and eventually, the others—proposed now was to play a nine-team interlocking schedule with the National League.

"We have nine teams," said Greenberg, who has been talking about interleague play for years, "and the National League has 10. If Houston could play in 1961, instead of waiting until '62, we could pull this thing off. We can supply one team in each league with good ballplayers for '61, then add New York and L.A. in '62, when each league would go to 10 teams and drop the interleague schedule."

In all the incredible confusion which enveloped baseball in those weeks this was the most perfect demonstration of how the big leagues operate; this is why they sometimes look like a pair of octopuses with appendicitis, writhing and twisting and threatening to throttle one another in anger and greed and pain.

Interleague play is one of the most progressive ideas in baseball, an idea which would allow fans in Washington and Boston to see **Willie Mays**, which would allow fans in San Francisco and Philadelphia to see **Mickey Mantle**, which would line baseball's pockets with money. But interleague play, to work properly, must be given a great deal of careful, intelligent, even scientific planning. Yet here, on the spur of the moment, to pull themselves out of a hole, the American Leaguers were ready to adopt a plan at which most of them previously had sneered, and do so without any real planning at all.

A few people were bewildered. "I don't know why Houston was selected instead of New York," said Pete Davis, one of the New York National League team owners. "As a matter of fact, I don't know that Houston has been selected. All I know is that no one ever asked us."

O'Malley, of course, was overjoyed with the nine-team proposal, and another National League executive could see his point. "It is just possible," said the club official, "that we might go along with this idea for O'Malley's sake. What people forget is that since Jake Ruppert built Yankee Stadium in 1923, Walter O'Malley is the first man to build a ball park with his own money. He has a terrific investment out there, and I don't think the National League can afford to let him get hurt."

But by the time of the minor league meetings in Louisville the last week in November, National League sentiment was running hard against the interleague proposal.

"We have nothing to gain by going to nine teams next year," said General Manager Joe Brown of the Pirates. "We know Houston and New York can be ready by 1962, but I seriously doubt that they can be ready as early as next year. Our present plan is a good one, and we should stick to it."

"More than that, I think O'Malley is wrong. I don't see how a new American League team in Los Angeles is going to hurt the Dodgers. The Dodgers are a good ball club, and they're getting better; they've captured that town, and a losing team in the other league isn't going to take their fans away."

Even the Houston people, although flattered, were not sold on the idea, either. "If we have to play in '61," said Craig Cullinan, who owns oil wells, "we'll have to play in old Buff Stadium. In '62 we'll have our new 55,000-seat plastic-domed ball park. We want to do this thing right."

So now the American League appeared to be blocked again—but no. Up stepped Ford Frick.

"We have got to amend Rule 1 (c)," Ford Frick said, "so that unanimous consent of all 16 teams is not required, but merely the consent of each league. Then, if there is a deadlock, the commissioner can cast the deciding vote. After all, that is what the commissioner is for."

Reason for being

Having cleared up the reason for his existence, Frick went further. "The new rule," he said, "should spell out exactly the conditions under which one league can move into another league's territory, not only into Los Angeles in 1961 or 1962 but anywhere, anytime in the future. I'm not talking about indemnities alone. More important are the bona fides. By that I mean there must be assurances that the new league member will conduct operations in a fair and equitable manner—and to this moment, the American League has given me no assurance that it will. Certainly that first group that applied for a franchise didn't sound very stable. They sounded like some fly-by-night operation that might drain the territory in one year and then move off to San Diego or some place else."

Finally, it had begun to come out. Greenberg didn't approve of Frick; Frick didn't exactly approve of Greenberg. O'Malley didn't approve of C. Arnholt Smith, one of the owners of the San Diego Padres of the old Pacific Coast League, whose brother had violently opposed O'Malley's land grab in Chavez Ravine. There was, it seemed, more than baseball legality involved, more even than money. There were personalities.

The personalities began to gather at St. Louis—and they began to fight. It took a day and a half for the National League to convince the American League that it did not want to play an interlocking schedule next year. Both leagues, in executive session, wrestled with Frick's amendment to Rule 1 (c). And, finally, almost as if in defiance of the National League, the American League picked its owners for the new Los Angeles franchise which, so far, did not even exist. But those owners—Reynolds, Autry and their associates—were the key to the solution. O'Malley liked Reynolds and Autry, for they had been big Dodger fans. So, finally, he capitulated. Both major leagues passed the amendment to Rule 1 (c), unanimously, absolving Frick from the necessity of casting a tie-breaking vote. The new rule spelled out, sometimes laboriously, how one major league could go about moving into another's territory in a dignified, proper way. It was, at the end, a reasonable agreement—and Sir Walter emerged as the hero.

"Old Mad Dog O'Malley," he chuckled around his cigar, "wasn't really so bad after all. All I ever wanted was an orderly process. You don't want someone telling you they're going to move into your house and then start setting up their furniture in your living room. If they ask you and they're nice about it, that's different."

"Do you mean," someone asked, "that with some other group than Reynolds and Autry, you would have continued to be hard to deal with?"

"With one particular group," said O'Malley, "I would have been at least half a million dollars harder to deal with. But I was willing to make concessions to these people. These are people I can live with."

Home on the range

It is to be hoped that the sight of O'Malley and Reynolds and Autry and Champion and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer grazing peacefully together on the lush Los Angeles countryside will inspire all of baseball to learn to live with itself, for there are still problems to be solved. The former American Association franchise holders at Minneapolis, St. Paul and Houston must still be indemnified, and some better system must be found than the one already announced for stocking the new teams with adequate ballplayers.

Nor is this the end of expansion, for the old Continental League cities were serious in their quest to gain admission to the major leagues, and as the nation grows there will be more. It is not the job of Congress to see that expansion occurs; neither can it be left up to the rules, for rules say only how to expand, not when to expand.

What baseball needs is an attitude, one which says that this is a good game, or at least a good business, not a grubby one, and that its crises should be handled with dignity. Unfortunately, this is an attitude which baseball has seldom managed.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

Can you name the MVP winners who never played in the World Series?

1952 Cubs outfielder

Hank Sauer

1958 Cubs infielder

Ernie Banks

1971 Cards catcher/infielder

Joe Torre

1972 White Sox infielder

Dick Allen

1974 Rangers outfielder

Jeff Burroughs

1977 Twins infielder

Rod Carew

1983 Braves outfielder

Dale Murphy

1984 Cubs infielder

Ryne Sandberg

1985 Yankees infielder

Don Mattingly

1987 Blue Jays outfielder

George Bell

1987 Cubs outfielder

Andre Dawson

1994 White Sox infielder

Frank Thomas

1995 Red Sox infielder

Mo Vaughn

1997 Mariners outfielder

Ken Griffey Jr.

1998 Rangers outfielder

Juan Gonzalez

1998 Cubs outfielder

Sammy Sosa

2001 Mariners outfielder

Ichiro Suzuki

2002 A's infielder

Miguel Tejada

2006 Twins infielder

Justin Morneau

2009 Twins catcher/infielder

Joe Mauer

2010 Reds infielder

Joey Votto

2011 Brewers outfielder

Ryan Braun

2013 Pirates outfielder

Andrew McCutchen

2014 Angels outfielder

Mike Trout

2015 Blue Jays infielder

Josh Donaldson

2017 Marlins outfielder

Giancarlo Stanton

2018 Brewers outfielder

Christian Yelich

2020 White Sox infielder

Jose Abreu

2021 Angels pitcher/DH

Shohei Ohtani

2022 Cards infielder

Paul Goldschmidt

2022 Yankees outfielder

Aaron Judge

2023 Braves outfielder

Ronald Acuna Jr.

National League catchers **Bubbles Hargrave** .353 in 1926 for the Reds; **Ernie Lombardi** .342 in 1938 for Cubs & .330 in 1942 for Braves & **Buster Posey** .336 in 2012 for the Giants all won batting titles.

We are looking for the only AL catcher to win a batting title.

He won three AL batting titles. 2006-2008-2009. His .347 in 2009 led the majors.

He was named Baseball America's Minor League Player of the Year in 2003. In his final minor league season, he hit .339 w/5 HR & 85 RBIs, splitting time between Class A & AA.

He won 3 Gold Gloves, 5 Silver Sluggers, 6x All-Star.

JOE MAUER

Can you name the Major League Baseball players (post-1940) who played at least 20 seasons with one team and ONLY one team? (I'm counting on you to get at least 10)

1955-1972 Orioles

Brooks Robinson

1981-2001 Orioles

Cal Ripken Jr.

1953-1974 Tigers

Al Kaline

1977-1996 Tigers

Alan Trammell

1973-1993 Royals

George Brett

1995-2014 Yankees

Derek Jeter

1982-2001 Padres

Tony Gwynn

1961-1983 Red Sox

Carl Yastrzemski

1988-2007 Astros

Craig Biggio

1974 – 1993 Brewers

Robin Yount

1962-1982 Pirates

Willie Stargell

1941-1963 Cards

Stan Musial

Please remember to check out

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HOUSEKEEPING

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baseballsavant.mlb.com	thebaseballcube.com
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ViSN (Vegas information and sports network)	
Atlas Obscura	statmuse.com
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