

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

12.31.2023

Good morning baseball fans,

The year-end edition is always fun as there are so many summary articles available looking back on highlights and oddities from last season. Then throw in more Hall of Fame discussion and plenty of miscellaneous stats and facts.

In Longer Reads -- Orioles ownership and **Mike Garcia**, forgotten 1950's Indians starter.

Who needs to celebrate New Year's? We are past the 'baseball solstice'—more than half way between the end of the World Series and Opening Day.

We added 36 new subscribers this year—more are welcome, send your friends. Keep those ideas and your feedback coming.

Happy New Year.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE

(answers at bottom)

MLB players who have had a season with 20 or more home runs, whose fathers ALSO had a season with 20 or more home runs

Son—Blue Jays (2019-present)

Father-Expos, Angels, Rangers, Orioles (1996-2011)

Son-Padres (2019-present)

Father-Rangers, Cards, Expos, Orioles, Mets (1997-2010)

Son-Brewers, Tigers, Rangers (2005-2016)

Father-Blue Jays, Tigers, Yankees, Angels, Indians (1985-1998)

Son-Pirates, Expos, Marlins, Astros, Cubs, Giants, Mets (1990-2008)

Father-Giants, Braves, A's, Yankees, Expos, Brewers (1958-1974)

Son-Pirates, Giants (1986-2007)

Father-Giants, Yankees, Angels, White Sox, Rangers, Indians, Cards, Cubs (1968-1981)

Son-Mariners, Reds, White Sox (1989-2010)

Father-Reds, Yankees, Angels, Mariners (1973-1991)

Son-Indians, Rangers, Reds, Astros (1972-1989)

Father-Pirates, Reds, Mets, Braves (1950-1964)

Son-Indians, Cards, Mariners, Giants, Phillies, Brewers (1995-2006)

Father-Indians, Rangers, Reds, Astros (1972-1989)

Son-Blue Jays (2019-present)

Father-Angels, Brewers, Rockies, Reds, Red Sox (1988-2001)

Son-Royals, Cubs, Mets, Rockies, Blue Jays (1990-1999)

Father-Reds, Royals (1968-1987)

Son-Astros, Dodgers, Pirates, Nationals, Braves, Cubs (1998-2008)

Father-Twins, Rangers, Yankees, Tigers (1979-1990)

Son-A's, Rays, Brewers, Cubs (1997-2005)

Father-Senators, Rangers, Mets, Cards (1970-1979)

Four pitchers, each won multiple Cy Youngs, threw multiple no-hitters and won multiple World Series championships.

Lefty, 1955-1966

Righty, 2007-2016

Righty, 2008-present

Righty, 2005-present

I played 18 years in the majors.

Six time American League All-Star infielder, all with my first team.

I was traded for a future Hall of Famer in 1972.

Never played in the post-season.

I still hold an AL west team record for career triples with 70. Until the late 1980's I held the team record for career games (1,429), hits (1,408), doubles (219), runs (691), and runs batted in (546).

Later managed 4 teams (3 AL) for over 2,100 games.

I managed the NL league champs in 1993 who were victims of **Joe Carter's** World Series walk-off.

Who am I?

MORE 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Texas Rangers notched their first World Series Championship in their 62nd year of franchise existence. During their postseason campaign, they went undefeated on the road with an 11-0

record, topping the previously held MLB record of 9-0 set in multiple seasons prior by the New York Yankees.

In his ninth major league season, **Corey Seager**, shortstop for the Texas Rangers, became the first infielder in MLB history to be named the World Series MVP in both leagues, just three years after being named the 2020 World Series MVP with the Dodgers.

Corbin Carroll, outfielder for the Arizona Diamondbacks, became the first rookie in franchise history to be named the Rookie of the Year.

Carroll became the first rookie in MLB history with at least 20 homers and 50 stolen bases in a season. He ended up with 25 home runs and 54 stolen bases, raising the bar even higher. The prior mark for most stolen bases in a rookie season with at least 25 home runs was 49, by **Mike Trout** in 2012.

Carroll was the ninth player to be an All-Star and play in the World Series the year he won Rookie of the Year, joining 2017 **Cody Bellinger**, 2010 **Neftali Feliz**, 2008 **Evan Longoria**, 2003 **Dontrelle Willis**, 1981 **Fernando Valenzuela**, 1975 **Fred Lynn**, 1962 **Tom Tresh** and 1949 **Don Newcombe**. Of that crew, only Carroll and Valenzuela started that All-Star Game as a rookie.

Elias Diaz, outfielder for the Colorado Rockies made history as the first player in franchise history to be named the All-Star Game MVP.

Gerrit Cole, ace for the New York Yankees, secured his first Cy Young by a landslide, earning 100% of the votes for the 2023 American League Cy Young. Cole joined **Ron Guidry** as the second ace in New York Yankees history to win the award unanimously. Cole led the AL with a 2.63 ERA. He was the first Yankees pitcher to lead his league in ERA since **Rudy May** in 1980. Cole was the sixth Yankees pitcher to win Cy Young and first since **Roger Clemens** in 2001. In '22, Cole set a Yankees single-season record with 257 strikeouts. On July 16, he set a franchise mark with his 24th game with at least 10 strikeouts since joining the Yankees, surpassing Guidry's 23. By the end of the season, he'd pushed the record to 26.

Thirty-year-old veteran ace **Blake Snell** was named the National League Cy Young, his second Cy Young award with a second team and second league. Snell became the seventh pitcher in MLB

history to earn this feat, alongside **Gaylord Perry, Pedro Martinez, Randy Johnson, Roger Clemens, Roy Halladay and Max Scherzer**. Snell earned his first Cy Young in 2018 with the Tampa Bay Rays.

Veteran relief pitcher, **Will Smith**, won his third World Series Championship in as many years with as many different teams. You read that right. In 2021, Smith won a World Series Championship with the Atlanta Braves, in 2022 with the Houston Astros and in 2023 with the Texas Rangers. He is the only player in MLB, NFL, NBA and NHL to play for three different champs in three seasons.

Three-time National League Manager of the Year, **Dusty Baker**, announced his retirement after his second season with the Houston Astros. In his 26-year managerial stretch, Baker led his teams to three World Series appearances and tallied 2,183 regular-season wins, ranking him the seventh winningest manager in MLB history.

Houston Astros' two-time American League MVP and second baseman, **Jose Altuve**, became the first player in the expansion era to hit four home runs in four consecutive at-bats.

Rangers manager **Bruce Bochy** came out of retirement after a four-year stint off, and did so in style when he led the Rangers to their first World Series Championship, his fourth. Bochy is one of just three managers to have won a World Series Championship in both leagues.

Ronald Acuña Jr., outfielder for the Atlanta Braves, joined the ranks of **Jose Canseco, Barry Bonds, Alex Rodriguez and Alfonso Soriano** when he became the fifth player and the first Venezuelan to record at least 40 home runs and 40 stolen bases in an MLB single season. He also is the only player in MLB history with at least 40 home runs and 70 stolen bases in a single season. While the round-number feat is 40-70, Acuña was already in an exclusive club the moment he got to 29 homers and 59 stolen bases, which nobody else has ever done. But he didn't stop there, finishing with 41 home runs and a Braves' Modern Era-record 73 stolen bases. And by the way, Acuña's 41 homers were the most out of the leadoff spot in a season.

After 19 seasons, 484 home runs and eight teams, designated hitter and outfielder, **Nelson Cruz**, hung up his cleats for retirement. Cruz was a seven-time all-star and completed seven seasons with 90 or more RBI.

In his eighth season in the bigs, single-season American League home run record holder and Captain of the New York Yankees, **Aaron Judge**, rose to the top as the fastest player in MLB history to reach 250 home runs. Judge became the first Yankee to hit 3 HRs in multiple games in a season, the 26th player ever to do it. Judge needed 801 games to record his first career three-homer effort. He finally did it on Aug. 23 against the Nationals, going 3-for-4 with six RBIs in a 9-1 win. One month later, he notched his second, collecting four hits altogether and driving in six of New York's seven runs in a win over Arizona.

The Baltimore Orioles claimed the American League Division title for the 10th time in franchise history, the team's first since 2014. The O's finished the season with a 100-59 record, their first season with 100 or more wins since 1980.

Longtime Cleveland Guardians Manager, **Terry Francona** "Tito", announced his retirement after 11 years in Cleveland. During his 19 year managerial tenure, he won 1,950 games and lost 1,672, a winning percentage of .538, per Baseball Reference. He made 11 postseason appearances and was the winningest manager in Guardians history.

Cards righty **Adan Wainwright** finished his career with a record of 200-128, a 3.53 ERA, three All-Star appearances, two Gold Glove awards, one World Series and 11 career shutouts. At 42 years and 19 days old, he became the oldest Cardinals pitcher with a scoreless outing of at least seven innings. He surpassed a 41-year, 210-day old **Jim Kaat**, who threw a 10-inning shutout on June 4, 1980.

Miguel Cabrera completed his 21st and final season as a Detroit Tiger.

During his MLB tenure, he amassed 3,174 hits, 511 home runs, 1,881 RBI and several awards. Of those home runs, he tallied 25 or more home runs in 12 seasons. His awards include MVP (2), 12 All-Star appearances, seven Silver Slugger Awards and one Triple Crown. He was a 2003 World Series Champion with the Florida Marlins. Cabrera became the 33rd member of the 3,000 hit club, and in his final season, he climbed the all-time hits list even more. He entered

the year with 3,088 hits, which ranked 24th all time. He finished his career with 3,174 hits, good for 16th all time, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Along the way, he passed **Ichiro Suzuki (3,089 hits)**, **Dave Winfield (3,110)**, **Alex Rodriguez (3,115)**, **Tony Gwynn (3,141)**, **Robin Yount (3,142)**, **Paul Waner (3,152)**, **George Brett (3,154)** and **Adrián Beltré (3,166)**.

Cabrera is one of only three players in baseball history with 500 homers, 3,000 hits and a .300 career average. Cabrera hit .306 with 511 homers and 3,174 hits in his 21 seasons with the Marlins and Tigers, joining **Hank Aaron (.305, 755, 3,771)** and **Willie Mays (.301, 660, 3,293)** in an exclusive club.

Yordan Alvarez and Fernando Tatis Jr.: 100 career home runs

This one happened early in the season and then again in August. Alvarez entered 2023 with 98 home runs in just 368 career games. He hit No. 99 on Opening Day and his 100th on April 3, in his 372nd career game. Tatis entered with 81 homers and hit No. 100 on Aug. 2 in his 362nd game. Tatis and Alvarez, respectively, mark the fifth-and-sixth-fewest games to 100 career home runs. Only **Ryan Howard** (325 games), **Pete Alonso** (347), **Gary Sánchez** (355) and **Aaron Judge** (371) reached the mark in fewer games.

Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander: 11th and T-12th all time in strikeouts

The two entered the season as teammates, again, and ranked 12th and 13th all time in career strikeouts. Verlander was 12th with 3,198 and Scherzer was 13th at 3,193, both within striking distance of 10th all time. By the end of the year, they were no longer teammates and had flipped in order on the all-time list. Scherzer is 11th with 3,367 strikeouts and Verlander has 3,342, tied with **Phil Niekro** for 12th. Looking ahead, **Greg Maddux** is 10th, with 3,371 strikeouts.

Craig Kimbrel and Kenley Jansen: 400 saves

Each of these prolific closers joined an exclusive club. Before Jansen and Kimbrel, only six pitchers had amassed at least 400 saves. Kimbrel entered '23 with 394 saves and Jansen with 391. Jansen got there first, on May 10, and Kimbrel followed suit on May 26. Coincidentally, both did so in games in Atlanta -- and both are former Braves closers. Baseball! For Kimbrel, the Phillies were the seventh team he recorded a save with. For Jansen, the Red Sox were his third.

Mookie Betts and Acuña: most and 2nd-most leadoff spot RBIs

Betts finished with 107 RBIs, the most RBIs out of the leadoff spot in a season (RBIs official since 1920). Acuña was right behind with 106, next on the list. Before '23, there had been two 100-RBI leadoff hitters: 2017 **Charlie Blackmon** (103) and '00 **Darin Erstad** (100). This season gave us three, with Betts, Acuña and **Marcus Semien**, who had 100 on the dot.

Julio Rodríguez: first with 25-25 in each of first two seasons

Rodríguez became the first player in MLB history with at least 25 home runs and 25 stolen bases in each of his first two seasons of his career. In '22, the Mariners star became the first to reach those marks in his first MLB season, meaning he was also the first to have the chance to do this a second time in his second season. He ended up with 32 homers and 37 stolen bases.

In the opening round of the Home Run Derby, Rodríguez was paired with multi-time winner **Pete Alonso**, but he had the backing of an enthusiastic crowd and all the energy of a young man in his element. He crushed a record 41 homers that round, breaking the 40 mark held by **Vladimir Guerrero Jr.**, who ended up finishing off a tired Rodríguez in the next round. But for that one shining round, as he was homering on just about 70 percent of his swings and averaging 404 feet on each of his homers.

Shohei Ohtani: 40 homers and 10 wins

We can't talk about milestones and feats without discussing Ohtani, who crushed 44 homers to accompany 10 wins as a pitcher. He became the first player with at least 40 home runs at the plate and 10 wins on the mound in a season. The prior most homers in a 10-win season was 34 ... by Ohtani in 2022. Before that? Eleven, by **Babe Ruth** in 1918.

Ohtani became the first man in National League/American League history to join the 20-Steal/10-Pitching Wins Club since the unforgettable **Adonis Terry** did it for the 1890 Brooklyn Bridegrooms.

On June 27 he struck out 10 White Sox and gets three hits including two homers. In the division-play era with a double-digit strikeout game and a multi-homer eruption in the same game: **Rick Wise (1971)**, **Madison Bumgarner (2017)**, **Zack Greinke (2019)** and ... Ohtani.

July 27 against the Tigers Ohtani throws a 1 hit shutout in the first game of a doubleheader, homers twice in the nightcap. Shutout in first game, even one homer in second game—never been done before.

Trayce Thompson of the Dodgers on April 1 hit a grand slam, a three run homer and a solo homer. First Dodger ever. He proceeded to hit .147 for the rest of the season with just 3 more homers. Thompson who shined the brightest by becoming the third player in Dodgers history with three home runs and eight RBIs in a single game, joining **Adrián González (2016)** and **Gil Hodges (1950)**.

The Reds Elly **De La Cruz**. On June 23, he **hit for the cycle** — in the 15th game of his career.

On July 8, he ***stole for the cycle*** — by stealing second, third and home in the same inning.

In the second game of a doubleheader on Aug. 13, the dynamic Elly De La Cruz hit his 10th home run of his career. He entered the game with 17 stolen bases, becoming the second-fastest player by games played to reach 10 career home runs and 15 career stolen bases since 1900. De La Cruz needed 58 games to reach those marks, one more than **Barry Bonds**, who got there in 57.

And we need to mention his arm. De La Cruz's 99.8 mph relay throw on July 20 was the fastest tracked assist by an infielder tracked by Statcast (since 2015), and he had the second-and-third-fastest, too. He had eight 95.0+ mph assists as an infielder, twice as many as anyone else in a career under Statcast (**Fernando Tatis Jr.**: four).

The Cubs combined to score 36 runs across two games on Aug. 1-2, with 20 in the first game and 16 in the latter. That was their most runs in a two-game span since 1897. It was the third time since 1900 that the Cubs scored at least 15 runs in consecutive games, also done in 1930 (three straight) and 2003.

Julio Rodriguez had the most hits ever in a 4 game span going 17 for 22 August 16-19.

Aug. 16: 4 hits

Aug. 17: 5 hits

Aug. 18: 4 hits

Aug. 19: 4 hits

He reached base in 17 straight balls in play. Only one other player in the modern era — **Milt Stock**, for the 1925 Brooklyn Robins — has ever ripped off four hits or more four games in a row. And even Milt Stock didn't mix in a five-hit game in the middle of all that.

Trea Turner went 30 for 30 in steals.

Blake Snell became the first pitcher since ERA became a stat in 1913 to lead the league in ERA and walks.

The D'backs became the first team ever to hit 4 HRs in a post season inning.

Alex Verdugo of the Red Sox became the third player ever to lead off three consecutive games with a HR.

Twins rookie **Royce Lewis** hit 4 grand slams in an 18 game span-a franchise record for slams in a season and the shortest span in MLB history.

Over a stretch from late August to mid-September, Lewis became the first player to hit four grand slams in a span of 18 games or fewer. The prior shortest span in which a player had hit four grand slams was 39 games, by **Don Mattingly** in 1987. The fourth slam in that stretch marked his 16th career home run, fifth career slam and fourth of the season. He became the first player with five grand slams within his first 16 career home runs.

The Dodgers became the sixth team in the last 50 seasons with two players (**Freddie Freeman and Mookie Betts**) in the top three among position players in WAR in a season.

They joined the 2010 Rays (**Carl Crawford and Evan Longoria**), 1996 Mariners (**Alex Rodriguez and Ken Griffey Jr.**), 1988 Red Sox (**Mike Greenwell and Wade Boggs**), 1982 Expos (**Andre Dawson and Gary Carter**) and 1974 Reds (**Joe Morgan and Johnny Bench**).

Oriole **Adley Rutschman** became the first catcher since 1900 to have 5 hits on opening day.

Nicky Lopez of the Braves became the first player since 1920 to have 4 hits, 5 RBIs and at least one inning pitched.

The Cubs scored 36 runs in 2 games (most for the Cubs since 1897), first MLB team ever with 10 extra base hits and 5 HRs in back-to-back games.

The Rays 13-0 start tied the 1987 Brewers and 1982 Braves for hottest start ever.

No team had lost 196 games over two seasons and then won the World Series until the Rangers. The Rangers lost 102 games in 2021. Only two other teams have won the World Series two years after losing at least 100 games: the 1969 Mets and 1914 Braves. Each also did so two years after a 101-loss season.

Davis Schneider of the Blue Jays became the first player ever with 9 or more hits and 2 or more HRs in his first 3 MLB games.

Esteury Ruiz of the A's broke **Kenny Lofton's** 1992 AL rookie stolen base record with 67. That set a record for the most stolen bases by an AL rookie, passing Lofton's 66 from 1992. Overall, it was the fifth-most stolen bases by a rookie since 1900. **Vince Coleman** had 110 in 1985 for the Cardinals, **Benny Kauff** had 75 in 1914 for the Federal League's Indianapolis Hoosiers, **Juan Samuel** had 72 in 1984 for the Phillies and **Tim Lincecum** had 71 in 1981 for the Expos.

Chris Taylor of the Dodgers became the first player ever to hit a grand slam for his first career HR and for his 100th career HR.

Josh and Bo Naylor of the Guardians became the first pair of brothers to hit multi-run homers in the same inning for the same team. The Naylor's became the sixth pair of brothers to homer in the same inning since 1900, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. They joined the Uptons (April 6, 2013, and April 23, 2013, Braves), **Billy and Cal Ripken** (Sept. 15, 1990, and May 28, 1996, Orioles), **Hank and Tommie Aaron** (July 12, 1962, Milwaukee Braves), **Lloyd and Paul Waner** (Sept. 4, 1927, and Sept. 15, 1938, Pirates) and **Rick and Wes Ferrell** (July 19, 1933, Rick with Boston and Wes with Cleveland). For the Ferrells, Rick's homer came against his brother Wes.

Twins **Tyler and Taylor Rogers** of the Giants became the first pair of Twins to pitch in a series against the Twins.

August 1, the Mets bring in reliever **Josh Walker** to replace **Grant Hartwig** against the Royals. Two outs in the 10th. Walker balks in the winning run without throwing a pitch. Since MLB started keeping track of pitch counts for the past 36 seasons, in the 80,000 games or so in those 36 seasons, only one other pitcher has ever managed a no-pitch "balk-off" to end any game: **Mike Stanton**, for the Nationals, on July 15, 2005.

Lucas Giolito pitched for the White Sox, the Guardians and the Angels last season. He found a way to allow at least eight runs in a game *for all three of those teams*. First time that's happened since 1899.

Michael Lorenzen was traded by the Tigers to the Phillies on Aug. 1. He no-hit the Nationals eight days later.

Steve Carlton — spent 15 years pitching for the Phillies, won three Cy Young awards, led all left-handers in baseball in WAR over those 15 seasons, made the Hall of Fame ... *and pitched zero no-hitters*.

Lorenzen — had spent eight days as a Phillie, had never thrown a pitch for the Phillies in Philadelphia before that night, was out of the rotation five weeks later with a n ERA over 8.00.

From May 31 to July 8 **Luke Weaver** started 8 games for the Reds. ERA 8.66. Opposing hitters batted .342 against him. The Reds won all 8 games.

September 10 **Corbin Burnes, Devin Williams and Abner Uribe** no-hit the Yankees for 10 innings. But the Brewers didn't score either and the Yankees won 4-3 in 13.

What would you have said was the over/under? There were 20 shutouts thrown in the majors in 2023.

Ryan Mountcastle of the Orioles had a 9 RBI game against the A's in April. Mountcastle tied a franchise record previously set by **Jim Gentile** in 1961 and matched by **Eddie Murray** in 1985. Seven of those RBIs came on a pair of clutch homers -- a three-run shot in the fifth and a grand slam in the seventh -- as the O's came back from a four-run deficit in an eventual 12-8 win.

Framber Valdez was nearly perfect in his no-hit effort vs the Guardians on August 1, issuing just one walk and becoming the first Astros pitcher to face the minimum 27 batters in a no-hitter. The left-hander punched out seven Cleveland hitters, induced 12 ground balls and only threw 93 pitches. The left-hander's 93 pitches were the third fewest in a no-hitter since pitch counts have been tracked (1988), behind only **Darryl Kile's** 83 on Sept. 8, 1993, also for the Astros, and **David Cone's** 88 in his perfect game on July 18, 1999.

It was the fifth no-no managed by **Dusty Baker**, tied for fourth most in MLB history with **Fielder Jones, Connie Mack, Leo Durocher and Bruce Bochy**, according to Elias. Only **Walter Alston (seven), A.J. Hinch (six) and John McGraw (six)** managed more.

In June **Jayce Peterson** (then playing for Oakland) joined Hall of Famer **Al Simmons** as the only players in franchise history to go 5-for-5, homer twice and drive in five runs in a single game.

Adolis García put together two of the best postseason performances in MLB history en-route to the Rangers' first World Series title. While García's walk-off home run against Arizona in Game 1 of the World Series was his top moment, his performance in Game 7 of the ALCS vs. the Rangers' divisional and in-state rival Astros was his best. Following home runs in each of the previous three games and the drama of Game 5, García helped put the finishing touches on the Rangers' AL pennant with four hits and two home runs in Game 7.

Luis Arraez, Marlins second baseman went 22-for-41 (.537 average) over his first 12 games, capped off by the first cycle in Marlins history on April 11 against the Phillies. Prior to Arraez's banner performance, the Marlins were the last of the 30 MLB franchises without a cycle. Arraez became the 4th player since 1900 to have 3 five hit games in a month, the first since **Dave Winfield** in 1984.

Arraez won a batting title for the second straight season. In taking the 2022 AL batting title with the Twins and the '23 NL crown with Miami, Arraez became the second player since 1900 to win a batting title in both leagues, joining **DJ LeMahieu**. But LeMahieu didn't do it in consecutive seasons, as Arraez did. Arraez had *seven* four-hit games, the most in a season in Marlins history, surpassing 2007 Hanley Ramírez's five.

Francisco Lindor of the Mets became just the seventh player in the Modern Era (since 1900) to record a homer and multiple triples in a five-hit game in July.

Luis García had the only 6 hits game in the majors last season. García, who went 6-for-6 with two RBIs and three runs scored in Washington's 12-10 win over the Royals in May. He became just the third player in Expos/Nationals history to tally six hits in a game, joining **Rondell White** (in 1995) and **Anthony Rendon** (in 2017).

Paul Goldschmidt tore up the Tigers on May 7 at Busch Stadium, slugging solo homers in the first and third and a two-run shot in the eighth. He also stole third base in the sixth as part of a double steal, making him the only player in 2023 with three homers and at least one swipe. The contest was Goldschmidt's third career three-homer game, a total surpassed by only 17 players in AL/NL history.

Fernando Tatis Jr. of the Padres became the first AL/NL player in the Modern Era (since 1900) with a home run, three extra-base hits, two runs scored, two stolen bases, a walk and an outfield assist in the same game in June against Cleveland. The five-tool superstar started his game with a solo home run and ended it with an outfield assist in the ninth inning.

C.J. Cron wasted no time in producing the Rockies' best individual performance of 2023. On Opening Day in San Diego, Cron crushed two homers, recorded four hits and drove in five runs. In the process, he became just the eighth player in AL/NL history to record that stat line on Opening Day and the first since **Dmitri Young** did it for the Tigers in 2005.

Kevin Gausman, Jays' ace, finished third for AL Cy Young and led the AL with 237 strikeouts. It was the fifth time a Blue Jays pitcher led his league in strikeouts. **Robbie Ray** did so in 2021, as did '08 **A.J. Burnett** and **Roger Clemens** in 1997-98.

Rafael Devers three 30-homer seasons are tied for the most by any player in Red Sox history through his age-26 campaign, with **Jim Rice** and **Ted Williams**. It's also tied for the third-most such seasons as a third baseman through his age-26 season, behind only **Eddie Mathews (six)** and **Manny Machado (four)**.

Bobby Witt Jr.'s power and speed continued to distinguish his game in his sophomore season. After tallying 20 home runs and 30 stolen bases in Year 1, he had 30 and 49, respectively, in his second campaign. Witt became the first player in MLB history to have at least 20 home runs and at least 30 stolen bases in each of the first two seasons of his career. He's one of just six shortstops with a 30-30 season, along with 2023 **Francisco Lindor**, 2008 **Hanley Ramírez**, 2007 **Jimmy Rollins**, 1998 **Alex Rodriguez** and 1996 Barry Larkin.

The Tigers threw a no-hitter on July 8, as **Matt Manning** (6 2/3 innings), **Jason Foley** (1 1/3 innings) and **Alex Lange** (1 inning) combined to hold the Blue Jays hitless. It was the 20th combined no-hitter in MLB history and ninth no-hitter in Tigers history. It was the Tigers' second no-hitter in the past three seasons, after **Spencer Turnbull** authored a solo effort on May 18, 2021, against the Mariners. It was their first at home since a 24-year-old **Justin Verlander** no-hit the Brewers on June 12, 2007, the only other no-hitter to take place at Comerica Park.

Luis Robert Jr. of the White Sox was an All-Star for the first time. Among his career-highs were 38 home runs and 20 stolen bases. He became the second player with at least 30 homers and 20 stolen bases in a season in White Sox history, joining 2001 **Magglio Ordóñez**. He was also the third Cuban-born player with at least one such season, along with **José Canseco (1998, '91 and '88)** and **Rafael Palmeiro ('93)**.

Kodai Senga's Mets debut season in MLB lived up to the hype, as did his oft-discussed signature pitch, the ghost fork. In 163 opposing at-bats ending on the pitch, he allowed just a .110 batting average and .147 slugging percentage. He induced a whopping 59.5% whiff rate on swings against the pitch, the highest for any starter against a single pitch type in a season in the pitch-tracking era (since 2008, min. 200 swings at pitch type).

Then-22-year-old **CJ Abrams** hit a grand slam on April 27 for the Nationals, tying an age-related record for a franchise that's had its fair share of notable young sluggers. At 22 years and 206 days old, Abrams tied **Ryan Zimmerman** (on April 22, 2007) as the youngest player in Nationals/Expos franchise history with a grand slam.

When the Brewers clinched a playoff spot on Sept. 22 in Miami, they did so in decisive fashion - winning by 15 runs. That was tied with 2018 Cleveland for the third-largest win by a team on the day they clinched a playoff berth, according to Elias. Only the 2001 Braves and 1996 Yankees had bigger such wins, by 17 runs each. **Rowdy Tellez** pitched the ninth, becoming the first position player to finish a game on the mound for a team the day they clinched a playoff spot.

With 26 home runs in 2023, **Nolan Arenado** has now tallied at least 25 in eight straight full seasons. His eight career 25-homer seasons when playing primarily third base that year are tied for fifth most, behind only **Mike Schmidt (12)**, **Eddie Mathews (12)**, **Aramis Ramírez (10)** and **Adrián Beltré (nine)**.

The Cubs combined to score 36 runs across two games on Aug. 1-2, with 20 in the first game and 16 in the latter. That was their most runs in a two-game span since 1897. It was the third time since 1900 that the Cubs scored at least 15 runs in consecutive games, also done in 1930 (three straight) and 2003.

Logan Webb of the Giants had a strong season, leading the Majors in innings pitched at 216 with a 3.25 ERA as he finished second in the NL Cy Young race. It was the fourth time since the club moved to San Francisco that a Giants pitcher led MLB in innings, along with 1969-70 (**Gaylord Perry**) and 1963 (**Juan Marichal**). Many of Webb's innings were tense, too, as the

team scored either zero or one run total in 12 of his starts, tied for the third-most such starts by a Giants pitcher in single season (since 1901), behind only 1968 **Ray Sadecki (16)** and 1933 **Carl Hubbell (13)**.

Mets' payroll this year: \$343.6 million*

Gap between Mets' payroll and next biggest ever: \$65.6 million*

Mets' record this year: 75-87

Average record of the next four biggest payrolls ever: 100-62

Last time the biggest spender in MLB finished 12 games under or worse: **Al Leiter's** 1995 Blue Jays (\$49.8 million!) staggered back from the strike and somehow finished 32 games under (56-88).

Biggest payroll before these Mets to finish 12 games under or worse: **Gorkys Hernandez's** 2018 Giants had a \$208.5 million payroll and finished 16 under (73-89). *So the 2023 Mets outspent them by \$135 million!*

Derek Law of the Reds arrives on the mound, inherits a Zombie Runner on second, dishes up a game-winning home run to **Sean Murphy** on the first pitch he flips up there. His line went like this: 2 runs, 1 pitch. Only pitcher since the introduction of the extra innings ghost runner to give up a first pitch HR.

The Astros went 1-8 in extra innings but still won 90 games and their division. Fewest extra inning wins for a division winner ever.

How about **Evan Carter** of the Rangers? Carter had quite a post-season. He was 21 years old. He'd been in the big leagues for three weeks when this Octoberfest began. Then all he did was hit .306/.413/.645 for The Team that Won the World Series. Of the first 21 times Carter ever came to bat in a postseason game, he reached base in 13 of them. And did you know he has already been on base more times in the postseason (30) than **Ken Griffey Jr. (29)**.

Corey Seager of the Rangers became the second player to win World Series MVP awards for two teams, joining **Reggie Jackson**. Jackson was World Series MVP for the A's in 1973 and the Yankees in 1977.

For you hard core trivia people (looking at you Neal B), Arizona hosted the Super Bowl and the clinching game of the World Series in 2023. What is the only other city/region to do this in the same calendar year? San Diego hosted the Super Bowl (Broncos versus Packers) and the final game of the World Series (Yankees versus Padres) in 1998. Minnesota came close, hosted the World Series clincher in 1991 and the Super Bowl in January 1992. The Los Angeles area hosted both events in 1977, but the final game of the World Series was in New York. Houston hosted both events in 2017, but the final game of the World Series was in Los Angeles.



Drew Maggi got his first major league hit. Over 4,000 plate appearances in the minor leagues over 13 years, and not one taste of the big leagues. He was finally rewarded by the Pittsburgh Pirates with six precious major-league plate appearances in April. And he got a hit. An up-the-middle plenty-hopper. They can never take it away.

MORE MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Last Sunday's David Laurila's column in Fan Graphs included his opinion that **Joey Votto** should retire rather than sign with a team other than the Cincinnati Reds, thus making him a one-franchise player. This week he had an interesting suggestion-- Being of the belief that players sticking with one team is a good thing — I think most fans would concur — what if tweaking the Competitive Balance Tax in a manner that would incentivize teams' ability to re-sign their free agents might be possible. For instance, if player X were to sign a one-year \$20M contract with a

new team, the entire amount would factor into the team's payroll. Conversely, if Player X re-signed with his old team, a lesser amount (\$10M?) would count toward it.

Think about **Mookie Betts**. With their superstar outfielder one year away from free agency, and the CBT an acknowledged factor, the Red Sox traded Betts, along with **David Price**, to the Dodgers, thereby slashing over \$40M from their forthcoming 2020 payroll. The deal put them a reported \$18M below the threshold. Whether or not Betts would have opted to re-sign with Boston is another question, but the CBT clearly played a role in his departure.

Last week we showed the progression of highest paid player in MLB. Here is the largest contract each of the 30 MLB teams has ever signed.

- **Dodgers: Shohei Ohtani** – 10 years, \$700MM. Signed 12-9-23.
- **Angels: Mike Trout** – 10 years, \$360MM. Signed 3-21-19.
- **Yankees: Aaron Judge** – 9 years, \$360MM. Signed 12-7-22.
- **Mets: Francisco Lindor** – 10 years, \$341MM. Signed 3-31-21.
- **Padres: Fernando Tatis Jr.** – 14 years, \$340MM. Signed 2-22-21.
- **Phillies: Bryce Harper** – 13 years, \$330MM. Signed 2-28-19.
- **Marlins: Giancarlo Stanton** – 13 years, \$325MM. Signed 11-18-14.
- **Rangers: Corey Seager** – 10 years, \$325MM. Signed 12-1-21.
- **Red Sox: Rafael Devers** – 10 years, \$313.5MM. Signed 1-4-23.
- **Tigers: Miguel Cabrera** – 8 years, \$248MM. Signed 3-31-14.
- **Nationals: Stephen Strasburg** – 7 years, \$245MM. Signed 12-9-19.
- **Mariners: Robinson Cano** – 10 years, \$240MM. Signed 12-12-13.
- **Rockies: Nolan Arenado** – 7 years, \$234MM. Signed 2-26-19.
- **Reds: Joey Votto** – 10 years, \$225MM. Signed 4-2-12.
- **Braves: Austin Riley** – 10 years, \$212MM. Signed 8-1-22.
- **Diamondbacks: Zack Greinke** – 6 years, \$206.5MM. Signed 12-8-15.
- **Twins: Carlos Correa** – 6 years, \$200MM. Signed 1-10-23.
- **Brewers: Christian Yelich** – 7 years, \$188.5MM. Signed 3-6-2020.
- **Cubs: Jason Heyward** – 8 years, \$184MM. Signed 12-15-15.
- **Rays: Wander Franco** – 11 years, \$182MM. Signed 11-27-21.
- **Orioles: Chris Davis** – 7 years, \$161MM. Signed 1-21-16.
- **Giants: Buster Posey** – 8 years, \$159MM. Signed 3-29-13.
- **Astros: Jose Altuve** – 5 years, \$151MM. Signed 3-20-18.
- **Blue Jays: George Springer** – 6 years, \$150MM. Signed 1-19-21.
- **Cardinals: Paul Goldschmidt** – 5 years, \$130MM. Signed 3-24-19.
- **Guardians: Jose Ramirez** – 7 years, \$129MM. Signed 4-6-22.
- **Pirates: Bryan Reynolds** – 7 years, \$100MM. Signed 4-26-23.
- **Royals: Salvador Perez** – 4 years, \$82MM. Signed 3-21-21.
- **Athletics: Eric Chavez** – 6 years, \$66MM. Signed 3-18-04.
- **White Sox: Andrew Benintendi** – 5 years, \$75MM. Signed 12-16-22.

Most 3 HR games in AL history – 5.

Carlos Delgado, Mookie Betts, Joe Carter, Arod

Which position (right field, center field, and left field counted separately) has accounted for the most MVP awards? The answer to the quiz is first base, with a total of 37 MVP seasons. Right fielders are second, with 30 MVP seasons.

The Boston Globe's Matt Porter wrote about New England-based sports teams that almost relocated to other cities — as well as a few that actually did. His mention of the Boston Braves, who moved to Milwaukee prior to the 1954 season, included a fact I was aware of but had never really put much thought into: **Henry Aaron** debuted that year, and had he done so in Boston, both he and **Ted Williams** would have played in the same city at the same time.

Porter didn't present this specific scenario in his column, but can't help but wondering what might have happened had the relocation — driven by economic factors which included attendance issues — not happened when it did. The Braves were coming off a pair of losing seasons when they departed Boston, but promptly won 92 games after arriving in Milwaukee. Moreover, by the end of the decade they'd played in two World Series, winning one of them. The roster on the championship club included not only Aaron, but also fellow Hall of Famers **Eddie Mathews, Warren Spahn, and Red Schoendienst**, as well as eight-time All-Star **Del Crandall**.

As for Boston's other team, the Red Sox were routinely middle of the pack during this period — despite the presence of The Splendid Splinter — and never seriously contended at a time when the New York Yankees were dominating the American League. With that in mind, suppose a young superstar like Aaron had been leading a high-quality, Boston-based National League squad while the Red Sox were treading water in the junior circuit? Might the Braves still be in Boston and the Red Sox elsewhere? Or could the city have continued to support two teams? If so, for how long? We'll never know.

Most hits in the majors 1950-1959. **Richie Ashburn** with 1875. He led the majors in 1951 (221) & 1958 (215) & led the NL in 1953 (205). Over the course of his entire career (1948-1962), no player had more total hits than his 2,574 during that 15-season span (**Stan Musial** was 2nd with 2,549).

Ashburn played 12 years with the Phillies, two with the Cubs and then onto the Mets. Ashburn was voted team MVP for the woeful expansion 1962 NYM who finished with a Modern Era

record 120 losses. For his efforts, he was gifted a motorboat which sank soon after Ashburn launched it. The boat never made it out of the harbor.



Ashburn played in 2189 games, had a career average of .308 and was a five time All-Star.

Speaking of Phillies, **Kyle Schwarber** became the first man in the modern era to roll up at least 500 leadoff plate appearances *in a season in which his average never made it to the Mendoza Line*. (Previous record for lowest full-season average: .211, by **Eddie “Sparky” Lake**, for the 1947 Tigers.)

His OPS leading off games still wound up at 1.056. The highest OPS, as the first batter of the game, *in the history of a franchise that has been around since 1883 ...* leadoff walks (21) and leadoff Schwarbombs (11).

Schwarber piled up massive amounts of homers (47), RBIs (104), runs scored (108) and walks (126). You know who has had *that* season?--**Babe Ruth** (six times), **Mark McGwire** (twice), **Lou Gehrig**, **Mickey Mantle**, **Barry Bonds** and **Aaron Judge** (once).

He had 100 more whiffs (215) than hits (115) ... but still led his team in runs scored. He hit .197 ... and still led his team in runs scored—only time its happened.

Nellie Fox was one of the top second basemen in the American League during the 1950s. He led the Chicago White Sox to an unexpected league title in 1959, winning the Most Valuable Player Award in the process.

Fox’s most notable skill was his ability to put the bat on the ball. He hardly ever took a third strike. He struck out just 216 times in 9,232 at-bats, which translated to **a contact rate** of .977. (Contact rate, which is abbreviated as CT, is the share of at-bats that did not end in strikeouts.)

No postwar ballplayer in the Hall of Fame could come close to Fox's contact rate, so it's unsurprising that everybody in the free-swinging 21st century falls short. Yet there are a few batters who still demonstrate an ability to avoid strikeouts.

Luis Arraez, the amazing hitting machine who won back-to-back batting titles in the American League in 2022 and the National League this season, topped the majors in 2023 with a .941 contact rate.

Arraez won the National League's 'Fox Award', while the .882 CT for left fielder **Steven Kwan** of the Cleveland Guardians secured the honor in the American League.

Listed below are the 15 batters who made at least 502 plate appearances and finished with the highest contact rates in each league.

American League CT leaders

- 1. Steven Kwan, Guardians, .882
- 2. **Jose Ramirez**, Guardians, .881
- 3. **Alex Bregman**, Astros, .860
- 4. **Masataka Yoshida**, Red Sox, .849
- 5. **Andrew Benintendi**, White Sox, .842
- 6. **Kyle Tucker**, Astros, .840
- 7. **Marcus Semien**, Rangers, .836
- 7. **Gleyber Torres**, Yankees, .836
- 9. **Vladimir Guerrero Jr.**, Blue Jays, .834
- 10. **Alex Verdugo**, Red Sox, .830
- 11. **Adley Rutschman**, Orioles, .828
- 12. **Yandy Diaz**, Rays, .821
- 13. **Corey Seager**, Rangers, .816
- 14. **Whit Merrifield**, Blue Jays, .815
- 15. **Bobby Witt**, Royals, .811

National League CT leaders

- 1. Luis Arraez, Marlins, .941
- 2. **Jeff McNeil**, Mets, .889

- 2. **Keibert Ruiz**, Nationals, .889
- 4. **Ronald Acuna Jr.**, Braves, .869
- 5. **Nico Hoerner**, Cubs, .866
- 6. **Alec Bohm**, Phillies, .832
- 7. **Bryson Stott**, Phillies, .829
- 8. **Dominic Smith**, Nationals, .827
- 9. **Cody Bellinger**, Cubs, .826
- 10. **Tommy Edman**, Cardinals, .825
- 11. **Ozzie Albies**, Braves, .820
- 11. **Nolan Arenado**, Cardinals, .820
- 13. **Mark Canha**, Mets-Brewers, .818
- 14. **Mookie Betts**, Dodgers, .817
- 15. **TJ Friedl**, Reds, .816

FROM THE RANDOM FACTS FILE

San Diego Padres batters had 1,316 hits and 1,311 strikeouts this past season. Minnesota Twins batters had 1,336 hits and 1,654 strikeouts.

Minnesota Twins pitchers had 1,560 strikeouts and allowed 1,294 hits. Colorado Rockies pitchers had 1,129 strikeouts and allowed 1,599 hits.

Chase Utley had 1,885 hits, 3,189 total bases, and 61.6 fWAR.

Robin Ventura had 1,885 hits, 3,133 total bases, and 56.7 fWAR.

Ken Griffey Jr. had 1,662 runs scored and 1,836 RBIs.

Rafael Palmeiro had 1,663 runs scored and 1,835 RBIs.

Vinny Castilla batted .304 with 40 home runs, 113 RBIs, and a .548 slugging percentage in 1996. He batted .304 with 40 home runs, 113 RBIs, and a .547 slugging percentage in 1997.

Robin Yount had 21 home runs, 103 RBIs, 19 stolen bases, nine triples, and nine GDPs in each of the 1987 and 1989 seasons.

David Wells had two stints with the Yankees. Starting in 1997 Wells was 34-14 over his initial two years in pinstripes. Wells went on to have a second two-year stint with the Yankees and went an identical 34-14 from 2002-2003.

1978-1980 **Omar Moreno** of the Pirates stole 71, 77 and 96 bases. He was the first 20th century player to have 70+ steals in three consecutive seasons. Moreno led the NL in steals in 1978 and 1979. But his 96 steals in 1980 was beaten by the Expos **Ron LeFlore** with 97. **Rickey Henderson** led the majors that year when he stole 100 for the A's.

Vin Scully called a game managed by **Connie Mack** born in 1862 and a game started by **Julio Uriah** born in 1996.

This season the Braves had a higher team slugging pct. (.501) than **Bryce Harper** (.499), **Rafael Devers** (.500) and **José Ramírez** (.478) had by themselves.

Roger Craig (1930-2023) pitched twice in an all-New York World Series and later managed in an all-Bay Area World Series. **Jose Canseco** played in the 1989 World Series for the A's (against the Giants) and in the 2000 World Series for the Yankees (against the Mets).

You can probably win a beer knowing **Jimmy Rollins** was the last switch hitter to win the NL MVP—2007.

Willie Hernandez (1984 Tigers) and **Sparky Lyle** (1977 Yankees) are the only relief pitchers to win a Cy Young and the World Series in the same season.

Jose Ramirez of the Guardians is the only player in the last 10 years with 200+ HRs (216) and 200+ stolen bases (202).

Rickey Henderson played for nine teams. Henderson played for the A's, Angels and Mariners in the AL West, the Yankees, Blue Jays and Red Sox in the AL East, the Padres and Dodgers in the NL West and the Mets in the NL East — but the stolen base king never played for a team in either central division.

Adam Wainwright, Jon Lester and Chuck Finley all ended their careers with the St. Louis Cards. All retired with exactly 200 career wins.

Dusty Baker managed 5 teams. Baker managed the Giants, Cubs, Reds, Nationals and Astros. He took all five to the post-season.

Ron Hassey is the only player to catch two perfect games. Hassey caught **Len Barker's** perfect game for Cleveland in 1981 and **Dennis Martinez's** perfect game for Montreal in 1991.

Bartolo Colon has the most career victories (247) of any pitcher who played for both the Mets and Yankees.

Joe Mauer's .306 career average is the highest ever for a No. 1 overall draft pick (minimum 1,000 plate appearances). Who is the only other No. 1 overall pick with a .300 career average (min. 1,000 plate appearances)? **Chipper Jones** hit .303 in his Hall of Fame career.

Craig Counsell was the Brewers' career leader in wins by a manager when he left in November to manage the Cubs. Who is the only other current manager who leads his franchise in victories? **Torey Lovullo** has 495 wins for Arizona, well ahead of **Kirk Gibson**, who is second with 353.

The World Champion Texas Rangers, went 50-52 in their final 102 games, blew more saves than they converted, lost the division lead they'd held for most of the year, and then went 11-0 on the road in the postseason to win the first title in franchise history.



Jim Pagliaroni played in parts of 11 seasons, caught in 859 games 1955-1969.

Pagliaroni caught a no-hitter thrown by **Bill Monbouquette** of the Red Sox August 1, 1962. He also caught **Catfish Hunter's** perfect game May 8, 1968.

More than 60 catchers have caught more than 1 no-hitter.

The Braves are taking a \$10 million bet on the reclamation of **Chris Sale**. The Red Sox get six years of control of a strong 2B prospect **Vaughn Grissom**. Grissom played 23 games for the Braves

HOW MUCH FOR THAT NUMBER?

Dodgers pitcher **Joe Kelly** gave up his number 17 to **Shohei Ohtani**... and in gratitude, Shohei gave a Porsche to Kelly's wife, Ashley, who had waged a social media campaign to get Ohtani to the Dodgers by offering the number AND offering to change the name of their baby, Kai, to ShoKai.

In 1991, **Mitch Williams** signed as a free agent with the Phillies and he REALLY wanted number 28, because he'd always worn that number, and his wife "had lots of jewelry with number 28 on it."* Well, **John Kruk** wore 28 for the Phillies. Mitch Williams bought the number for two cases of beer.**

**Two years later, after a divorce, Mitch Williams took number 99, because coaches kept saying that he did everything at 99 mph. It was the highest number in Phillies history. Obviously.*

***It was actually the fourth time that Kruk had changed his number. He wore 44 as a rookie, then, in his third year, briefly switched to No. 8, and then when he was traded to the Phillies, he took number 11. In 1990, he switched to 19, and then in 1991, he switched to 28. Basically, he didn't care.*

"It's going to be hard for the team to retire your number," a reporter told him.

"That all right," he said, "I'll be dead by then anyway."

Adrian Beltré so desperately wanted his number 29 that he actually had it written into his contract when he signed with the Rangers. That didn't stop him from giving **Pedro Borbon** a Rolex for ceding the number without complaint.

Actually, Rolexes might be the gift of choice for your jersey number. **Jim Thome** gave **Alexi Casilla** a Rolex for giving up number 25 with the Twins.

Tom Glavine, if given the choice, would have taken a different number than 47. But that was the number the Braves gave him when he was called up in August of 1987, and, you know, you get attached to such things. When he signed with the Mets, **Super Joe McEwing** was wearing No. 47. He gave it up, and Glavine paid for the construction of a McEwing baby nursery.

The story goes that **Rickey Henderson** got No. 24 in Oakland for going to an autograph session in place of veteran catcher **Ron Hassey**.

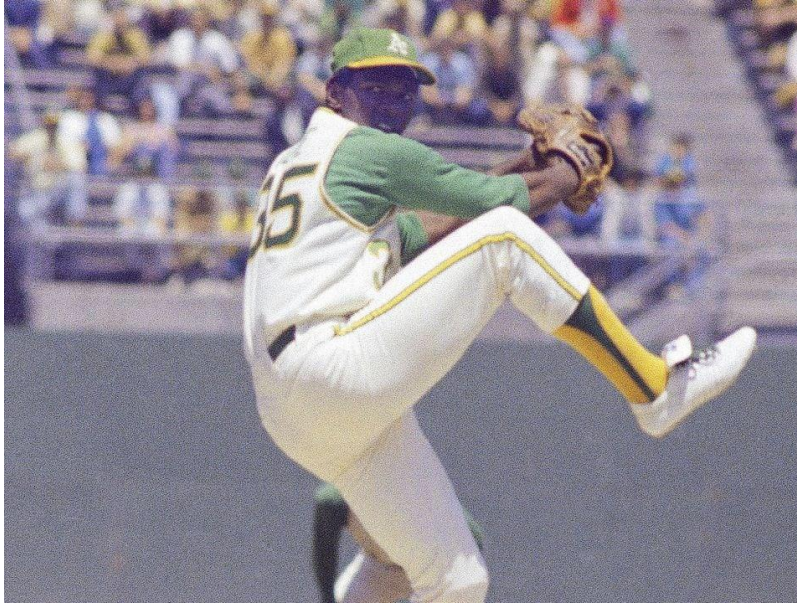
And then there's **A.J. Burnett**, who wanted number 34 when he signed with the Pirates. Another pitcher, **Daniel McCutchen**, had the number, and, it just so happened that at that time, he and his wife were expecting a baby daughter. Burnett created a college fund for her.

REMEMBERING THOSE WE LOST IN 2023

Jesus Alou - Outfielder who hit .280 for four teams over 15 years and was the youngest of the three major league Alou brothers.

Sal Bando - Third baseman and captain of the Oakland A's three World Series champion teams in the 1970s. Bando finished in the top five of MVP voting each year. He later served as general manager of the Brewers, the team he finished his career with.

Vida Blue - Fireballing ace on the three Oakland A's champion teams of the 1970s who was AL MVP and Cy Young winner in 1971. He made six All-Star teams, winning three World Series with the A's. He remains the youngest pitcher to throw a no-hitter in the Live Ball Era. Later in his career, he'd be a part of another one in relief.



Bill Campbell - Closer who recorded 31 saves for the Red Sox in 1977 after being the first big-money free agent ever signed by the team.

Nate Colbert - The first star of the Padres expansion team, Colbert made three All-Star Games at 1B for the Padres. He once hit five home runs and drove in 13 runs in a doubleheader. He is actually still the Padres' all-time home run leader (163), though **Manny Machado** is just 25 homers behind him.

Pat Corrales - Catcher for four major league teams who also managed the Rangers, Indians, and Phillies

Roger Craig - Pitcher for three champion teams (1955 and 1959 Dodgers, 1964 Cardinals) who started the first game in Mets history, managed the Giants to the 1989 NL pennant, and was a renowned pitching coach.

Vic Davalillo - Outfielder for 16 seasons with six teams who played on World Series winners with the 1971 Pirates and 1973 A's.

Don Denkinger - An umpire who was selected to work four World Series in his career (1974, 1980, 1985, 1991) and was behind home plate for the legendary pitchers' duel between future Hall of Famers **Jack Morris** and **John Smoltz** in Game 7 of the 1991 Fall Classic. He was, unfortunately, most widely known for a missed call in Game 6 of the 1985 World Series.

Dick Drago - Reliever/closer for the 1975 AL champion Red Sox, part of a 13-year major league career that included two separate stints in Boston.

George Frazier - Relief pitcher for five teams over 10 years, including the 1981 AL champion Yankees and the 1987 World Series champion Twins.

Dick Groat - Shortstop on the 1960 World Series champion Pirates who also was NL MVP that season and was an All-American basketball player for Duke in the 1950s. One of only 13 athletes to be a collegiate All-American in both baseball and basketball, Groat made his name on the diamond, playing 16 seasons at shortstop, most notably as double play partner to **Bill Mazeroski** in Pittsburgh. He also played in the NBA for one season and was the radio analyst of the University of Pittsburgh basketball team for 40 years.

Cliff Gustafson - Baseball coach who won more than 1,400 games and two national championships at Texas.

Dick Hall - Relief pitcher on two Baltimore Orioles World Series champion teams.

Willie Hernandez - Detroit Tigers closer who was AL MVP and Cy Young winner for the 1984 World Series champions.

Ron Hodges - Catcher who spent his entire 12-year career with the New York Mets and was on their 1973 NL champions.

Frank Howard - Hulking slugger who played right field for the 1963 World Series champion Dodgers and made four All-Star teams with the Washington Senators. He won the Rookie of the Year Award in 1960, led the AL in homers twice and made four All-Star teams. He was later a well-traveled and much-beloved manager and coach around the majors for more than 40 years.

Ted Lerner - The primary owner and managing principal partner of the Washington Nationals for 15 years, Lerner, who had served as an usher at Griffith Stadium as a child watching his beloved Washington Senators, oversaw the team's evolution from a burgeoning franchise in a new city to, ultimately, a champion. The Nationals won four National League East titles with Lerner as owner and, in 2019, their first World Series championship. At the Nationals' championship parade, Lerner said, "They say good things come to those who wait. Ninety-five years is a pretty long wait. But, I'll tell you, this is worth the wait."

Tim McCarver - All-Star catcher who played on two World Series champions with the St. Louis Cardinals and became a Hall of Fame broadcaster more than 40 years in the broadcast booth, including working as the television analyst for 24 World Series.

Ryan Minor - Orioles infielder who took over at third base after **Cal Ripken** ended his record consecutive-game streak in 1998.

Albie Pearson - 5-foot-5-inch outfielder who was the 1958 AL Rookie of the Year for the Senators and an original Los Angeles Angel in 1961.

Joe Pepitone - All-Star Yankees first baseman of the 1960s who gained acclaim for a flamboyant lifestyle that included wearing hairpieces in games and posing nude for a ladies magazine.

Gary Peters - Lefthander who won 91 games for the White Sox — including 20 in 1964 — and finished his career with 33 wins for the Red Sox (1970-72). A member of the White Sox All-Century team, he won a Rookie of the Year Award, led the AL in ERA twice and was one of the best hitting pitchers of all time with 19 career homers.

Brooks Robinson - Hall of Fame third baseman whose defensive excellence in a 23-year career for the Orioles set the standard at the position. He won two World Series and 16 Gold Gloves, and he was named an All-Star 18 times.

Peter Seidler - The grandson of Walter O'Malley, the man who brought the Dodgers to Los Angeles, Seidler wanted nothing more than his beloved Padres to win a World Series ... and was willing to spend to do it. Seidler dreamed of bringing San Diego its "first championship parade," and while they did not get there in his lifetime, the success the team had under his leadership was nearly unprecedented for the franchise. Seidler was also a passionate philanthropist, who was a tireless advocate and fundraiser for the homeless population in San Diego.

Mike Shannon - Outfielder/third baseman on two Cardinals World Series champions in the 1960s who became a popular broadcaster for the team, becoming Jack Buck's broadcasting partner and analyst for the team for more than 50 years.

(the other) Frank Thomas - Slugging outfielder/first baseman/third baseman who made three All-Star teams with the Pirates and was an original New York Met in 1962.

Tim Wakefield - Knuckleballer who compiled 200 major league victories and played on two World Series-winning Red Sox teams, then became a champion of the Jimmy Fund and other charities. The knuckleballer has the third-most wins in Red Sox history (186), behind only **Cy Young** and **Roger Clemens**, and pitched for the team for 17 seasons, all the way through his 45th birthday. (Wakefield was of course one of the signature members of the 2004 World Series champion Red Sox.) A winner of the Roberto Clemente Award, he was deeply beloved off the field and was a broadcaster for the team after he retired in spring of 2012.

HALL OF FAME

The only pitchers in the Modern Era with 14 consecutive seasons of 200 innings are **Mark Buehrle**, **Christy Mathewson (1901-14)**, **Warren Spahn (1947-63)**, **Gaylord Perry (1966-80)**, **Greg Maddux (1988-2001)**, **Phil Niekro (1967-80)** and **Don Sutton (1966-80)**.

Six of those seven pitchers are in the Hall of Fame. The other is Buehrle.

Buehrle's streak came to an end in his final season in 2015 with the Blue Jays -- when he pitched "only" 198 2/3 innings. With four more outs, he would have joined Spahn, Perry and

Sutton -- all of whom pitched decades earlier than Buehrle -- as the only pitchers with 15 straight 200-inning seasons.

Just how rare was it for Buehrle to do *what* he did *when* he did it? His 3,232 innings from 2001-15 were not only the most in the Majors during that span, but he pitched 243 1/3 more innings than any other pitcher (CC Sabathia was second with 2,988 2/3). In other words, Buehrle essentially pitched more than an entire season's worth more innings than any big league pitcher during his remarkable 14-year run.

Overall, Buehrle finished his career with a 3.81 ERA and 214 wins over 518 games (493 starts) and 3,283 1/3 innings. The only other pitchers with at least 200 wins and 500 appearances since 2000 are **CC Sabathia and Zack Greinke**.

Buehrle allowed only 59 stolen bases over his 16-year career -- and never more than eight in a single season. He combined with his catchers to throw out 81 attempted base stealers during that same span, resulting in a caught stealing percentage of 57.9%. That's not only double the league average of 29% during his career, but it's the sixth best by any qualified pitcher since that data was first tracked in 1974.

And while any pitcher needs help from his catcher to slow the running game, Buehrle certainly did his part. He picked off 102 baserunners during his career, which ranks fourth since 1974, behind only **Steve Carlton (118), Mark Langston (105) and Andy Pettitte (103)**.

Despite his league average groundball rate, Buehrle forced opposing hitters into ground into 362 double plays. That's the fourth most by any pitchers since the stat was tracked in 1974, trailing only **Greg Maddux (422), Tom Glavine (421) and Pettitte (363)**.

Buehrle, one of those moments came when he tossed a complete-game victory against the Angels in Game 2 of the 2005 ALCS on his way to helping the White Sox win the World Series. on April 18, 2007, when he faced the minimum in a no-hitter against the Rangers. The only blemish was a fifth-inning walk to **Sammy Sosa**, who was promptly -- and unsurprisingly -- picked off by Buehrle. Two years later, Buehrle became just the 18th pitcher in AL/NL history to throw a perfect game when he retired all 27 Rays batters in a July 23, 2009, game at U.S. Cellular Field. Tampa Bay's lineup that day included **B.J. Upton, Carl Crawford, Evan Longoria, Carlos Pena, Ben Zobrist and Pat Burrell**, among others.

Buehrle remains one of only 23 pitchers to throw a perfect game -- and one of only seven to throw both a perfect game and another no-hitter.

The other six are **Sandy Koufax, Cy Young, Roy Halladay, Randy Johnson, Jim Bunning and Addie Joss**.

All six are in the Hall of Fame.

Billy Wagner is in his ninth year on the Hall of Fame ballot. He has two chances left, and he's getting close. Here's his case for getting into Cooperstown.

Wagner was one of the most dominant closers ever. The flamethrowing left-hander notched 422 saves in his 16-year career with the Astros, Phillies, Mets, Red Sox and Braves. He racked up 1,196 strikeouts. He had a 2.31 ERA. He was a seven-time All-Star and the NL Reliever of the Year in 1999, and he helped lead his teams to the postseason seven times.

The BBWAA voters seem to be coming around on Wagner, too -- he's made big gains on the ballot in recent years, up to a career-best 68.1% share of the vote last year. Wagner only needs a little more to reach the 75% threshold needed to make the Hall of Fame. He's trending toward election in his final years of eligibility.

Some reasons why Wagner would be a deserving Hall of Famer.

Wagner struck out hitters at one of the highest rates in history, and he allowed hits and baserunners less often than nearly any other pitcher.

Wagner struck out a third of all the batters he faced in his career and fanned almost 12 batters per nine innings. No one who's pitched as many innings as Wagner has a higher strikeout rate or K/9.

Highest K/9 of all time

Min. 900 innings pitched

1. **Billy Wagner: 11.9**
2. (tie) **Blake Snell / Chris Sale: 11.1**
4. (tie) **Robbie Ray / Jacob deGrom: 11.0**

Highest K% of all time

Min. 900 innings pitched

1. Billy Wagner: 33.2%
2. Jacob deGrom: 30.8%
3. Chris Sale: 30.5%
4. Blake Snell: 29.7%
5. **Max Scherzer: 29.4%**

Notice that all those other pitchers are still active. Wagner is surrounded on the K% and K/9 leaderboards by present-day pitchers, who get to pitch in the highest-strikeout era of baseball history.

There's also Wagner's .187 career batting average allowed and 0.998 career whip. Going by the same innings-pitched baseline, his batting average is the lowest allowed by any pitcher ever, and his WHIP is third-lowest behind just deGrom and **Addie Joss**, who pitched in the Deadball Era.

He's one of only eight members of the 400-save club, and one of only 14 pitchers with 1,000 or more strikeouts as a reliever.

400-save club members

- **Mariano Rivera**: 652 saves
- **Trevor Hoffman**: 601 saves
- **Lee Smith**: 478 saves
- **Francisco Rodríguez**: 437 saves
- **John Franco**: 424 saves
- Billy Wagner: 422 saves
- **Kenley Jansen**: 420
- **Craig Kimbrel**: 417

Wagner's 422 saves rank sixth all-time. His 1,196 strikeouts as a reliever rank fourth all-time and are a record for lefty relievers (only **Hoyt Wilhelm**, **Goose Gossage** and Smith are ahead of him).

And there's only one closer in MLB history with both more saves *and* more K's than Wagner. That's Smith, with 478 saves and 1,225 K's as a reliever, who was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2019.

Wagner debuted in the 1990s, after **Dennis Eckersley** had ushered in the era of the ninth-inning closer. And starting in the mid-'90s, year after year, there was Mariano Rivera, Trevor Hoffman and Billy Wagner.

Wagner recorded nine 30-save seasons. Since Eckersley's first year as a true closer in 1988, only Rivera (15) and Hoffman (14) have had more. Among current closers, only Jansen, Kimbrel and **Aroldis Chapman** (eight each) are approaching Wagner.

Wagner also recorded four 100-strikeout seasons, a rarity for a ninth-inning closer. Since 1988, only **Dellin Betances** (five) has more. Wagner's 10 seasons with at least 75 K's as a reliever are tied for second-most of any closer since 1988 behind Jansen (11).

The strikeouts were Wagner's biggest edge over his contemporaries in the Hall of Fame. Rivera only had one 100-K season and four 75-K seasons. Hoffman had two 100-K seasons and five 75-K seasons.

Best season by every newcomer to the Hall of Fame ballot in 2023-24.

José Bautista

2011 (Blue Jays): .302/.447/.608, 1.056 OPS, 43 HR, 103 RBIs

Though he hit a career-high 54 home runs just one season earlier, Bautista's all-around production in 2011 gives this season the edge. Not only did he lead the Majors in homers for a second straight season, but Bautista also paced all players in walks (132), slugging percentage (.608), OPS (1.056) and OPS+ (182). He finished third in AL MVP Award voting, behind winner **Justin Verlander** and runner-up **Jacoby Ellsbury**.

Adrián Beltré

2004 (Dodgers): .334/.388/.629, 1.017 OPS, 48 HR, 121 RBIs

While many will remember Beltré for the final eight seasons he spent with the Rangers, he initially made his mark while playing his first seven big league seasons for the Dodgers. That includes the 2004 season in which he led the Majors with 48 home runs -- the only 40-homer campaign in his 21-year career. It also accounted for Beltré's lone 200-hit season, not to mention his career highs in RBIs, average, on-base percentage, slugging percentage, OPS, OPS+ and total bases.

Bartolo Colon

2002 (Cleveland/Montreal): 20-8, 2.93 ERA, 8 complete game, 3 shutouts

Colon was named the AL Cy Young Award winner in 2005, but that was actually his eighth-best season in terms of WAR. At a time when individual pitcher wins were perhaps a bit overvalued, his AL-best 21 wins helped him win the Cy Young, despite a 3.48 ERA for the Angels. Colon had multiple better seasons on a personal level, including in 2002 when he went 20-8 with a 2.93 ERA, eight complete games and three shutouts over 33 starts between Cleveland and Montreal. It was a close call between this season and his '13 campaign with the A's (18-6, 2.65 ERA) -- each of which resulted in a 147 ERA+.

Adrián González

2011 (Red Sox): .338/.410/.548, .958 OPS, 27 HR, 117 RBIs, 45 doubles

Though González hit a career-high 40 home runs for the Padres in 2009, his performance for the '11 Red Sox was far more well-rounded. He hit a career-best .338 while pacing all players with 213 hits -- his only 200-hit season. González also racked up 45 doubles and a career-best 345 total bases, all while earning his first career Silver Slugger Award and one of his four Gold Glove Awards.

Matt Holliday

2007 (Rockies): .340/.405/.607, 1.012 OPS, 36 HR, 137 RBIs

Much of the talk around Holliday's 2007 season will forever center on whether he actually touched home plate when he scored the winning run in Game 163 to send the Rockies to the postseason -- but that was just the final play of a truly remarkable regular season. Along with winning the 2007 NL batting title, Holliday also led the NL in RBIs, hits (216) and doubles (50). He paced all players with 386 total bases. Each of those numbers proved to be a personal best for Holliday over his 15-year career.

Victor Martinez

2014 (Tigers): .335/.409/.565, .974 OPS, 32 HR, 103 RBIs

Martinez had a major resurgence at the age of 35, when he posted a number of career highs for the 2014 Tigers. Along with a personal-best 32 home runs, he led the AL with a .409 on-base percentage and the Majors with a .974 OPS – both career highs. Martinez was so dialed in that he was intentionally walked 28 times – the most by any player in the Majors. He was rewarded with his second Silver Slugger Award (the first came 10 years earlier in 2004), while also finishing second in AL MVP voting behind **Mike Trout**.

Joe Mauer

2009 (Twins): .365/.444/.587, 1.031 OPS, 28 HR, 96 RBIs, 171 OPS+

There was no doubt about this one. Mauer's 2009 campaign not only earned him near-unanimous AL MVP honors (he received 27 of 28 first-place votes), but it was on a completely different level than any of his 14 other seasons. Mauer's 28 home runs were more than twice as many as he hit in any other season, while his 1.031 OPS was nearly 100 points higher than any other full season (.936 in 2006). That season marked one of his three batting titles, one of his three Gold Glove Awards and one of his five Silver Slugger Awards.

Brandon Phillips

2007 (Reds): .288/.331/.485, .816 OPS, 30 HR, 94 RBIs, 32 SB

Phillips' best season, in terms of WAR, actually came in 2011, when he hit .300 with 18 homers, 14 stolen bases, an .810 OPS and a career-best 118 OPS+. But still, we're giving the edge to his breakout '07 campaign, when he joined the 30-30 club on his way to receiving down-ballot NL MVP Award votes.

José Reyes

2006 (Mets): .300/.354/.487, .841 OPS, 19 HR, 81 RBIs, 64 SB, 122 runs

It was tough not to go with 2011 when Reyes won the NL batting title, but his all-around performance in '06 gets the nod. He led the Majors in both stolen bases and triples (17) while also posting career bests in home runs, RBIs and runs scored. That was good enough for Reyes to finish seventh in NL MVP Award voting and earn his lone Silver Slugger Award.

James Shields

2011 (Rays): 16-12, 2.82 ERA, 225 strikeouts, 11 CG, 4 shutouts

One season doesn't make a Hall of Famer, but if it did – Shields would be a first-ballot option. Just look at those numbers from his 2011 season: 11 complete games, four shutouts and 225 strikeouts over 249 1/3 innings. The only other pitchers with 11 complete games, four shutouts and 200 strikeouts in a season over the last 35 years are **Pedro Martinez (1997) and Roger Clemens (1991 and '92)**.

Chase Utley

2007 (Phillies): .332/.410/.566, .976 OPS, 22 HR, 103 RBIs

You could probably make a case for any season from 2005-09 -- a span in which Utley's 39.7 WAR trailed only Albert Pujols (44.6). Utley had a career-high 105 RBIs in '05. He hit .309 with 32 homers and 102 RBIs in '06. He had a career-high 33 homers in '08, then followed it up with 31 home runs and a career-best 23 steals in '09. But with very little to separate any of these seasons, we're siding with his career-best .976 OPS from '07. Utley actually posted career bests in average, on-base percentage and slugging percentage on his way to finishing eighth in NL MVP Award voting.

David Wright

2007 (Mets): .325/.416/.546, .963 OPS, 30 HR, 107 RBIs

You could have gone with either 2007 or '08 for Wright -- his two Silver Slugger-winning seasons. Though his career highs in home runs (33) and RBIs (124) each came in '08, Wright posted career bests in average, on-base percentage and slugging percentage in '07. He finished fourth in '07 NL MVP Award voting, while also winning the first of his two Gold Glove Awards. His 8.3 WAR was also the best of his 14-year career (he had a 6.9 WAR in '08).

Andruw Jones. There have been 15 non-pitchers who won 10 or more Gold Gloves. Only 4 of them hit 400 HRs. **Willie Mays, Ken Griffey Jr., Mike Schmidt** and Jones.

Jones won 10 gold gloves. The only other outfielders with more than 10 are **Roberto Clemente and Mays**. Outfielders with exactly 10 were **Al Kaline, Ichiro Suzuki** and Griffey.

Carlos Beltran. The Puerto Rican-born Beltrán was, after all, a Rookie of the Year winner (1999), a nine-time All-Star and a three-time Gold Glove honoree.

Only 38 players in AL/NL history have reached the 1,500 mark in both runs scored and runs batted in. With 1,582 runs and 1,587 RBIs, Beltrán is one of them.

Of those, 29 have been enshrined in the Hall of Fame -- and that does not count **Miguel Cabrera, Albert Pujols** and the now-eligible **Adrián Beltré**, each of whom should be a first-ballot electee.

That leaves only the following names not in Cooperstown: **Alex Rodríguez, Manny Ramírez, Gary Sheffield, Barry Bonds and Rafael Palmeiro** -- a group of superstars who have all been connected to performance-enhancing drugs in some form.

Put simply, if a player scores and drives in 1,500 runs, Hall of Fame induction usually follows.

500 Doubles, 400 Home Runs and 300 Stolen Bases

Even more rare is the 500/400/300 club.

Only five players in AL/NL history have achieved 500 doubles, 400 homers and 300 steals in their careers. Here's the list in full: Rodríguez, Bonds, **Andre Dawson**, Willie Mays ... and Beltrán, who has 565 two-baggers, 435 dingers and 312 thefts. That is a collection of the most dynamic power-speed threats baseball has ever seen.

What's wild is that even if you remove the qualifier for 500 doubles, the list remains unchanged: It's the same five players -- and only them. If you want to boil down Beltrán's case to a single stat, this is as persuasive as any.

Unparalleled Stolen Base Rate

Speaking of swipes, Beltrán's career stolen base success rate is *the* best among all players with at least 200 career steals in the Live Ball Era (since 1920).

Highest SB% in the Live Ball Era (minimum 200 SB)

1. Carlos Beltrán: 86.43% (312 SB, 49 CS)
2. **Trea Turner**: 86.09% (260 SB, 42 CS)
3. **Mike Trout**: 84.77% (206 SB, 37 CS)
4. **Tim Lincecum**: 84.70% (808 SB, 146 CS)
5. **Jarrod Dyson**: 84.44% (266 SB, 49 CS)

Beltrán accrued 70.1 career wins above replacement by Baseball Reference's measure. That puts him in the top 10 among center fielders.

Of the 64 position players to reach 70 career WAR in AL/NL history in the Modern Era (since 1900), all but 10 -- including Beltrán -- are Hall of Famers.

The nine others? Many of the names already have been mentioned: Pujols, Beltré, Rodríguez, Bonds and Palmeiro. The four remaining are **Lou Whitaker and Bobby Grich** -- a pair of second

basemen who are two of the most overlooked players in the history of Hall voting -- as well as **Pete Rose** and, none other than Mike Trout, who of course still is active and almost certainly will be a first-balloter.

Last but certainly not least, there's Beltrán's incredible October résumé.

In his postseason career, he slashed .307/.412/.609 -- good for a 1.021 OPS that checks in among the top 10 in AL/NL history.

Highest Postseason OPS (minimum 100 PA)

1. **Lou Gehrig**: 1.214 OPS
2. **Babe Ruth**: 1.214 OPS
3. **Randy Arozarena**: 1.104 OPS
4. **Lenny Dykstra**: 1.094 OPS
5. **Hank Greenberg**: 1.044 OPS
6. **Paul Molitor**: 1.026 OPS
7. **George Brett**: 1.023 OPS
8. Carlos Beltrán: 1.021 OPS
9. **Bryce Harper**: .996 OPS
10. Albert Pujols: .995 OPS

Beltrán's most memorable playoff performance came in 2004 with the Astros, when he hit eight homers to tie Bonds' 2002 run for most in a single postseason (since surpassed by Randy Arozarena's 10 in 2020). But Beltrán also crushed in the 2006 NLCS with the Mets (despite the lingering memory of that showdown being his infamous series-ending strikeout looking) as well as in the 2012 and '13 playoffs with the Cardinals.

All told, Beltrán finished with 16 career postseason home runs and more walks (37) than strikeouts (33) in 65 games.

LONGER READS

THE SUCCESSION DRAMA GRIPPING ONE OF BASEBALL'S MOST STORIED TEAMS

Baltimore Orioles owner Peter Angelos wants the team to be sold when he dies, but his oldest son isn't planning to give up control.

By Lindsey Adler and Jared Diamond, WSJ

Peter Angelos, the 94-year-old owner of the Baltimore Orioles, has made it clear what he wants to happen with his team upon his death: His family should sell.

John Angelos, Peter's oldest son and the Orioles' chief executive, appears to have other plans.

With his father incapacitated by illness, and with a motivated suitor lurking in the background, John Angelos has indicated privately that he intends to keep the club moving forward, potentially throwing the future of the franchise into turmoil.

This wrangling over the direction of the Orioles is the latest chapter in a bitter and complicated drama that has gripped one of Baltimore's most prominent families.

The acrimony features an ailing patriarch suffering from dementia whose wishes may or may not be heeded, an explosive lawsuit that pitted John Angelos and his mother against the family's younger son and a controversial real-estate project that now hangs in the balance. All the while, there is another local billionaire who has had his eyes on the Orioles for many years, waiting to pounce if the opportunity arises.

At stake is the fate of a proud franchise that has called Baltimore home for the past seven decades but hasn't reached the World Series since a 23-year-old **Cal Ripken Jr.** led them there in 1983.

John Angelos's desire to hold on to the family team might have something to do with ambitions that go beyond bringing a championship to Baltimore. He envisions the Orioles' downtown ballpark as the center of a large, mixed-use development complex, joining the growing list of sports owners who see value in using their franchises to anchor some even loftier real estate aspirations.

Angelos says his project will focus on serving Baltimore with community facilities. In addition, there would be the usual mix of hotels, bars, restaurants, offices and apartments familiar to anyone who has visited places like the Battery, an entertainment district surrounding Truist Park in suburban Atlanta that has resulted in enormous financial success for the Braves' owners.

Angelos and representatives from Maryland Gov. Wes Moore's office even traveled to the Battery in March to take a look at the possibilities for a similar project around the ballpark in Baltimore.

"What I'm trying to do is create a road map—a living, breathing document for the next quarter-century," John Angelos told The Wall Street Journal in August. "To not do that, to me, is like malpractice."

Last week, the team took a step toward clarity—but not necessarily the one they wanted. After long, contentious negotiations, the Orioles signed a lease that could keep them in Baltimore for the next three decades.

Though announced as a 30-year commitment, the actual agreement has a giant string attached. It gives the Orioles four years to negotiate a separate deal with the state for the right to use private funding to develop the state-owned land around Camden Yards, the site of their stadium since 1992. If they fail to obtain those rights, they can opt out of the lease after 15 years.

The Orioles had initially said they wouldn't sign any lease that didn't give them the right to develop the land but relented following objections from lawmakers.

All of this means that John Angelos is positioning himself as a vital figure in shaping the future of baseball in Baltimore for a generation to come. His father, an attorney who earned his fortune representing thousands of workers in asbestos-related compensation claims, led a group of investors who bought the Orioles in 1993 for \$173 million. The team John Angelos now runs is likely worth upward of \$1.5 billion.

"The wealth is obviously an accident, or an opportunity of birth," John Angelos said in August. "It's a problematic thing, obviously, because it's where everyone wants to be, and you are lucky to be. But then, OK, you're gonna die like everyone else. And at the end of it, you're gonna ask yourself, 'What did I do with it?'"

Court filings from last year revealed that before his health problems, Peter Angelos believed his surviving heirs should sell the Orioles so that his wife, Georgia, "could enjoy the great wealth they had amassed together."

But in an emergency phone call with Moore earlier this month, John Angelos said that the team isn't for sale, people familiar with the matter said.

This fraught period off the field comes at a time when the Orioles appear to be entering a golden era on it. They stunned the baseball world last season by toppling the juggernauts of the sport to finish with the best record in the American League, winning more than 100 games for the first time since 1979. With a roster filled with burgeoning young stars and a farm system loaded with heralded prospects, the Orioles seem poised to compete for championships for the foreseeable future.

The lease agreement was of great relief to Orioles fans, who have long feared that John Angelos could look to relocate the team to Nashville, Tenn., where he owns a home. Earlier this year, John Angelos said, "as long as Fort McHenry is standing watch over the Inner Harbor, the Orioles will remain in Baltimore."

John Angelos officially took over as Major League Baseball's "control person" of the Orioles from his father in 2020, giving him full rein of the team.

As Peter's health deteriorated, the friction within the family ramped up, resulting in a public and ugly struggle for power among the heirs. In June 2022, Louis Angelos filed a lawsuit alleging that his brother and mother conspired to push him out of the family's fortune, including a stake in the Orioles. Georgia Angelos later filed a suit of her own, accusing Louis of wrongfully taking control of Peter's law firm.

It was those court filings that said Peter believed the Orioles should be sold, though the decision "was ultimately Georgia's to make."

The parties dropped their lawsuits in February, but the revelations contained in them show that the family isn't entirely in agreement about how to proceed with the team they own.

At least one person is ready to talk if the Angelos family is interested in selling. Investor David Rubenstein, a Baltimore native and co-founder of the

Carlyle Group

, has long expressed interest in purchasing the Orioles, a person familiar with the matter said. His interest burst into public view this month, when Bloomberg reported that Rubenstein was "in talks" to acquire the club.

Though nothing is imminent, the person familiar with the matter said, Rubenstein's lingering presence caused a snag in the Orioles' lease negotiations, with lawmakers bristling at proceeding with the team's ownership potentially in flux. That prompted John Angelos to call Moore to affirm that the Orioles weren't for sale.

People familiar with the matter said it is extremely unlikely that the Orioles are sold while Peter Angelos is still alive, because it would leave the family subject to hundreds of millions of dollars in capital-gains taxes. The tax burden would be significantly lessened upon his death.

MIKE GARCIA—THE FORGOTTEN STARTER ON THE GREAT INDIANS STAFFS IN THE 1950'S

From Society of Baseball Research



Most of you could rattle off **Bob Feller**, **Early Wynn** and **Bob Lemon** as the impressive starters for the Indians.

How about **Mike Garcia**?

For a few years Garcia was at least the equal of his Hall of Fame stablemates, but the righthander known as “The Big Bear” burned out early.

Edward Miguel Garcia was born in San Gabriel, California, on November 17, 1923. When he was two years old his father Merced, a Mexican immigrant, moved the family to the tiny farming community of Orosi, in the San Joaquin Valley. Merced owned a ranch and trained and bred horses. Mike said later, “I was one darned good vaquero.” He weighed less than 100 pounds when he was 13 and wanted to be a jockey. He rode in one quarter-horse race for \$5, but the horse threw him. He soon outgrew his riding dream.

He played for three years at Orosi High School and then transferred to the larger Visalia High for his senior year. A Cleveland scout, Willis Butler, saw him pitching semipro ball in Tulare and signed him for the Appleton Papermakers in the Class D Wisconsin State League.

Garcia posted a 10-10 record in 1942 and then was called into World War II. He spent the next three years stringing telephone wires for the Army Signal Corps, including service in Europe.

After his discharge, the 22-year-old was assigned to Bakersfield in the Class C California League, close to home, in 1946. Called “Ed” Garcia by *The Sporting News*, he won 22 games and led the league in ERA and strikeouts. The next year he spent spring training with the Indians, who had figured out that his name was actually “Mike,” but their veteran coach **Bill McKechnie** pronounced him not quite ready. He went to Class A ball in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, of the Eastern League. He made the post-season all-star team with 17 wins and a 3.24 ERA.

In 1948 Garcia moved up to the AA Texas League with Oklahoma City. He pitched a one-hitter and a two-hitter among his 19 victories for a losing team. Cleveland called him up in September and he made his big-league debut in the last game of the regular season. The Indians were playing for the pennant that day, but they fell behind Detroit’s **Hal Newhouser** and Garcia and another rookie, **Ernie Groth**, mopped up. Cleveland finished tied with the Red Sox, beat Boston

in a one-game playoff and won the World Series, but Garcia, as a September call-up, was not eligible to play.

He made the Indians in 1949 and got his first start on May 22 against the Philadelphia Athletics. "Gosh, but I was terrible," he recalled. He was lifted after he walked three men in the first inning. He pitched out of the bullpen until June 12, when he made an emergency start against the Yankees after the scheduled starter, Early Wynn, came down with hives. Garcia held New York to one run before 77,543 fans at a Sunday doubleheader in Cleveland Stadium.

That performance won him a slot in the starting rotation, and he was soon one of the better pitchers in the league. He led the circuit with a 2.36 ERA, pitched five shutouts, won 14 games and was named to *The Sporting News* rookie all-star team.

Because he spoke Spanish, Garcia was assigned to watch over another rookie, Mexican-born infielder **Roberto Avila**, who spoke little English. They were roommates for several years.

His veteran teammate **Joe Gordon** nicknamed him "Bear." Garcia explained that he wore his black hair cut short and "maybe I walk a little like a bear." Maybe he was built a little like a bear, too. He stood 6'1" and is listed in baseball encyclopedias at 195 to 200 pounds, but he said his actual playing weight was between 215 and 220.

In 1950 Garcia fell off to an 11-11 record as his ERA swelled to 3.86. He struggled with knee and shoulder injuries and his mother died during the season.

The 1950 Indians featured a pitching Big Three of future Hall of Famers Feller, Lemon and Wynn. In 1951 Garcia made it a Big Four, beginning a four-year run as one of the game's best pitchers.

His game was power. His first manager, **Lou Boudreau**, said, "I didn't see Bob Feller at his fastest, but there can't be many of them as fast as Mike right now." When he broke into the majors he had a slider to go with his fastball, but said he didn't become successful until pitching coach **Mel Harder** taught him a curve. He liked to work to the inside and outside corners of the plate, "east-west" instead of "north-south" in pitcher-speak. The Indians' longtime catcher, **Jim Hegan**, said Garcia's fastball bore down and in on righthanded hitters. Manager **Al Lopez** recalled, "He threw such a 'heavy' ball, when you hit it, it felt like you were hitting a rock." **Ted Williams** accused him of throwing a spitball, and many years later pitching coach Harder told a reporter that Garcia had "a really good spit ball."

When Lopez replaced Boudreau as manager in 1951, Cleveland began a six-year chase of Casey Stengel's Yankee dynasty. The Indians won only one pennant, but finished second every other season. The Yankees claimed five straight world championships from 1949 through 1953, and then won four more American League pennants, and two World Series, from 1955 through 1958.

In 1951 Cleveland finished five games behind the Yankees as Feller, Wynn and Garcia each won at least 20 games and Lemon won 17.

The next season the Tribe mounted their closest challenge. Most sportswriters picked Cleveland as the pre-season 1952 favorite, because Yankee superstar **Joe DiMaggio** had retired and third baseman **Bobby Brown**, second baseman **Jerry Coleman** and pitcher **Whitey Ford** were lost to military service.

The Indians won their first seven games and swept a three-game series from New York at Yankee Stadium in early May. Fighting off injuries to four of their eight regular position players and a slump by slugging first baseman **Luke Easter**, they managed to stay close to the Yankees.

Garcia beat New York four times during the season and pitched three straight shutouts in early September, finishing each game in under two hours. Feller had skidded to the worst season of his career, so Lopez used his new Big Three to start 18 of 19 games down the stretch, with Garcia's seven starts leading the way. Cleveland won 16 of 20 games during a September home stand, but their 93 victories fell two short of the Yankees.

Lemon, Wynn and Garcia each won at least 22 games. Garcia's 2.37 ERA was second in the league to New York's **Allie Reynolds**. His six shutouts tied Reynolds for the league lead. In addition to 36 starts, the Bear relieved in ten games and saved four of them, a statistic that was not computed until years later.

The Big Three won 67 games, but Yankee catcher **Yogi Berra** noted, "Those three were all the pitchers the Indians had," while the Yankees had six effective pitchers. The Big Three posted an ERA of 2.59, but their supporting cast lagged at 4.57. In fact, the Yankee pitching staff recorded the better ERA, 3.14 to 3.32 for the Indians.

Casey Stengel said his club had another advantage that was usually overlooked: defense. The Yankees turned 199 double plays, to 141 for Cleveland — 58 extra outs for New York. (Teams with poor pitching generally make more double plays because they allow more baserunners; Stengel's Yankee teams were a prominent exception.) Cleveland writer Ed Macauley lamented the home team's "tragedy of errors." Their 155 errors tied the St. Louis Browns for most in the league. New York committed 28 fewer errors — another 28 extra outs. Those extra outs — batters the Yankee pitchers did not have to face — were more than enough to account for New York's two-win advantage.

Garcia signed his 1953 contract for a reported \$30,000, compared to \$45,000 for Lemon and \$37,000 for Wynn. Feller, once baseball's highest-paid player, took a huge cut to \$40,000, half his peak salary.

The Indians finished second for the third straight season in 1953, but there was no pennant race. The Yankees reeled off 18 consecutive wins in May and June, including a four-game sweep

in Cleveland, and wound up 8 ½ games ahead. Lemon was the team's only 20-game winner (21), though Garcia had 18 and Wynn 17.

Sporting News publisher J.G. Taylor Spink wrote, "[E]ver since they won the world championship in 1948 it has been one thing or another with the Indians. One year they had a superlative defense but not enough hitting. The next year they battered down the fences but their infield fell apart. Only the pitching has been consistent."

The planets finally aligned for Cleveland in 1954. They won 111 games, the most in American League history to that point, and finally gave the Yankees a taste of second place. Many observers, then and since, agreed with manager Lopez's assessment that his pitching staff was the greatest ever. Their 2.78 ERA was the lowest since the lively ball era began in 1920. Lemon and Wynn each won 23 and Garcia added 19, plus fives saves. (Lopez and Stengel were among the last managers to use their top starters in relief.) He led the league in ERA for the second time at 2.64 and allowed the fewest baserunners per nine innings of any AL pitcher. On May 16 he shut out the Athletics on one hit, one of his five shutouts. The victory was Cleveland's fifth straight and lifted them into first place, where, other than for a few days in June, they remained.

This time the Indians had depth behind the Big Three. A revived Feller went 13-3 and shared the fourth starting slot with newly acquired righthander **Art Houtteman**, who finished 15-7. A pair of rookie relievers, lefthander **Don Mossi** and righthander **Ray Narleski**, called the "Tiny Two," combined for nine victories and 20 saves.

On July 4 Garcia left the game against the White Sox after 1 1/3 innings with a broken blood vessel in the middle finger of his pitching hand, although he had not given up a hit. Narleski relieved, then gave way to Wynn in the eighth — with the Sox still hitless. With two out in the ninth, **Minnie Minoso** singled to break up the gem.

Garcia was chosen for the All-Star team for the third straight year, but missed the game because of the injured finger.

With the pennant clinched, Garcia took a shot at his twentieth victory in the season's last game, but he said the rest of the lineup was "all the scrubbinies." He pitched 12 innings against Detroit in a 6-6 tie before being relieved in a game the Indians eventually lost. General Manager **Hank Greenberg** later said Garcia thought he was pitching for a bonus if he won, but was being hit hard. Greenberg said called the dugout for the only time in his front-office career and asked Lopez if he was trying to get the pitcher killed. After the season, Greenberg said, he paid Garcia the bonus anyway.

The 1954 team is renowned for its great pitching, but Cleveland also finished second to the Yankees in runs scored. Lopez pointed out that he had three power hitters in center fielder Larry Doby, third baseman Al Rosen and first baseman **Vic Wertz**, a mid-season pickup: "So our game was to hold the other side with our good pitching and wait for somebody to sock one

out.” The Indians’ bench was strong enough to withstand injuries to Rosen, second baseman Avila and shortstop **George Strickland**. Doby led the league with 32 home runs and 126 RBI and Avila won the batting title at .341. (Ted Williams hit .345, but walked so many times that he did not get the 400 at-bats required to qualify for the championship. As a result, the rule was changed to count plate appearances rather than at-bats in future years.)

When the World Series opened, the Indians were heavy favorites over the National League champion New York Giants. Lopez set up a starting rotation of Lemon, Wynn, Feller, then Garcia. After New York took the first two games, the manager bypassed Feller and sent Garcia out for the third. He lasted only three innings, giving up four runs (three earned) as the Giants won 6-2. He came back in relief the next day, pitching the final two scoreless innings as the Giants swept to an upset championship.

The Indians returned to their familiar home in second place behind the Yankees in 1955 and 1956, but Garcia stumbled. In ’55 he posted an ERA above 4.00 for the first time in his career and finished 11-13, completing only six of 31 starts. He took a reported \$5,000 pay cut to \$25,000. In ’56 his ERA came down to 3.78, better than average, but his record was 11-12. He said he had shortened his delivery to try to finish in a better fielding position: “I became a great fielder and a lousy pitcher.”

Manager Lopez left the Indians after the ’56 season and the franchise began a downward spiral that did not end for more than 35 years. Under new manager Kerby Farrell in ’57, the aging team finished sixth. The 33-year-old Garcia rebounded with a 12-8 record and a 3.75 ERA. He tried out a knuckleball, but relied mostly on curves and sliders. He said, “Every fast ball pitcher sooner or later has to come to the realization that his big one is gone. I have adjusted.”

By 1958 he was the last of Cleveland’s Big Four. Feller had retired, Wynn was traded to the White Sox and Lemon’s devastating slider had finally devastated his elbow, ending his career. During spring training Garcia slipped on a wet mound in Los Angeles and hurt his back. Because there was no room for him on the disabled list — each team could have only two players at a time on the list — Cleveland released him in May.

The club reportedly paid for surgery to correct a slipped disc, and he won a roster spot the next spring. In his first start, he shut out Washington for eight innings but lost on three unearned runs in the ninth. Cleveland writer Hal Lebovitz reported, “It was spine-tingling to witness the lineup of well-wishers who visited his locker to shake his hand.” But he pitched only 72 innings that season and was released in the fall.

Garcia said he was healthy and determined to continue pitching. Within weeks he signed with the White Sox, managed by Lopez and owned by former Indians’ owner Bill Veeck. During the off-season he sliced off the tip of his right index finger while working on one of his midget racing cars, but it was healed by spring training. He quipped that the shortened finger gave him a natural slider.

His medical troubles were not over; he underwent an emergency appendectomy during spring training. The White Sox released him in May 1960, when rosters were reduced to 25. He stayed with the team as a batting-practice pitcher and was reactivated when the rosters expanded September 1. He pitched just 18 innings in relief during the season and was released again in November.

Chicago invited Garcia to spring training in 1961, but Cincinnati's **Vada Pinson** hit him with a line drive that broke Mike's leg. After recovering, Garcia worked out with the Washington Senators and was signed on July 19. He pitched 16 times in relief, but was released before the season ended. At age 37, Garcia's baseball days were over.

Over the course of his career Garcia won 142 games and lost 97. His 3.27 ERA was 17 percent better than the league average, after adjusting for the parks where he pitched, equal to that of Gaylord Perry, who had a much longer career. Garcia was a workhorse, starting and relieving and finishing in the top four in innings pitched every year from 1951-1954. He is the only one of Cleveland's Big Four who is not in the Hall of Fame, because his prime years lasted only six seasons, from 1949 through 1954. Analyst Bill James dismissed his low ERA as a product of "cold, cavernous Cleveland Memorial Stadium, which at that time had a pitcher's mound higher than the white cliffs of Dover." His more famous teammates enjoyed the same home-field advantage, but it was Garcia who recorded the staff's lowest ERA in four of those six seasons.

THIS WEEK'S TRIVIA CHALLENGE ANSWERS

MLB players who have had a season with 20 or more home runs, whose fathers ALSO had a season with 20 or more home runs

Son—Blue Jays (2019-present)

Father-Expos, Angels, Rangers, Orioles (1996-2011)

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Vladimir Guerrero

Son-Padres (2019-present)

Father-Rangers, Cards, Expos, Orioles, Mets (1997-2010)

Fernando Tatís Jr. and Fernando Tatís

Son-Brewers, Tigers, Rangers (2005-2016)

Father-Blue Jays, Tigers, Yankees, Angels, Indians (1985-1998)

Prince Fielder and Cecil Fielder

Son-Pirates, Expos, Marlins, Astros, Cubs, Giants, Mets (1990-2008)

Father-Giants, Braves, A's, Yankees, Expos, Brewers (1958-1974)

Moisés Alou and Felipe Alou

Son-Pirates, Giants (1986-2007)

Father-Giants, Yankees, Angels, White Sox, Rangers, Indians, Cards, Cubs (1968-1981)

Barry Bonds and Bobby Bonds

Son-Mariners, Reds, White Sox (1989-2010)

Father-Reds, Yankees, Angels, Mariners (1973-1991)

Ken Griffey Jr. and Ken Griffey

Son-Indians, Rangers, Reds, Astros (1972-1989)

Father-Pirates, Reds, Mets, Braves (1950-1964)

Buddy Bell and Gus Bell

Son-Indians, Cards, Mariners, Giants, Phillies, Brewers (1995-2006)

Father-Indians, Rangers, Reds, Astros (1972-1989)

David Bell and Buddy Bell

Son-Blue Jays (2019-present)

Father-Angels, Brewers, Rockies, Reds, Red Sox (1988-2001)

Bo Bichette and Dante Bichette

Son-Royals, Cubs, Mets, Rockies, Blue Jays (1990-1999)

Father-Reds, Royals (1968-1987)

Brian McRae and Hal McRae

Son-Astros, Dodgers, Pirates, Nationals, Braves, Cubs (1998-2008)

Father-Twins, Rangers, Yankees, Tigers (1979-1990)

Daryle Ward and Gary Ward

Son-A's, Rays, Brewers, Cubs (1997-2005)

Father-Senators, Rangers, Mets, Cards (1970-1979)

Ben Grieve and Tom Grieve

Four pitchers, each won multiple Cy Youngs, threw multiple no-hitters and won multiple World Series championships.

Lefty, 1955-1966

Sandy Koufax

Righty, 2007-2016

Tim Lincecum

Righty, 2008-present

Max Scherzer

Righty, 2005-present

Justin Verlander

I played 18 years in the majors.

Six time American League All-Star infielder, all with my first team.

I was traded for a future Hall of Famer in 1972.

Never played in the post-season.

I still hold an AL west team record for career triples with 70. Until the late 1980's I held the team record for career games (1,429), hits (1,408), doubles (219), runs (691), and runs batted in (546).

Later managed 4 teams (3 AL) for over 2,100 games.

I managed the NL league champs in 1993 who were victims of **Joe Carter's** World Series walk-off.

Who am I?

Jim Fregosi

Traded from the Angels to the Mets for Nolan Ryan. Managed the Phillies to the World Series.

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