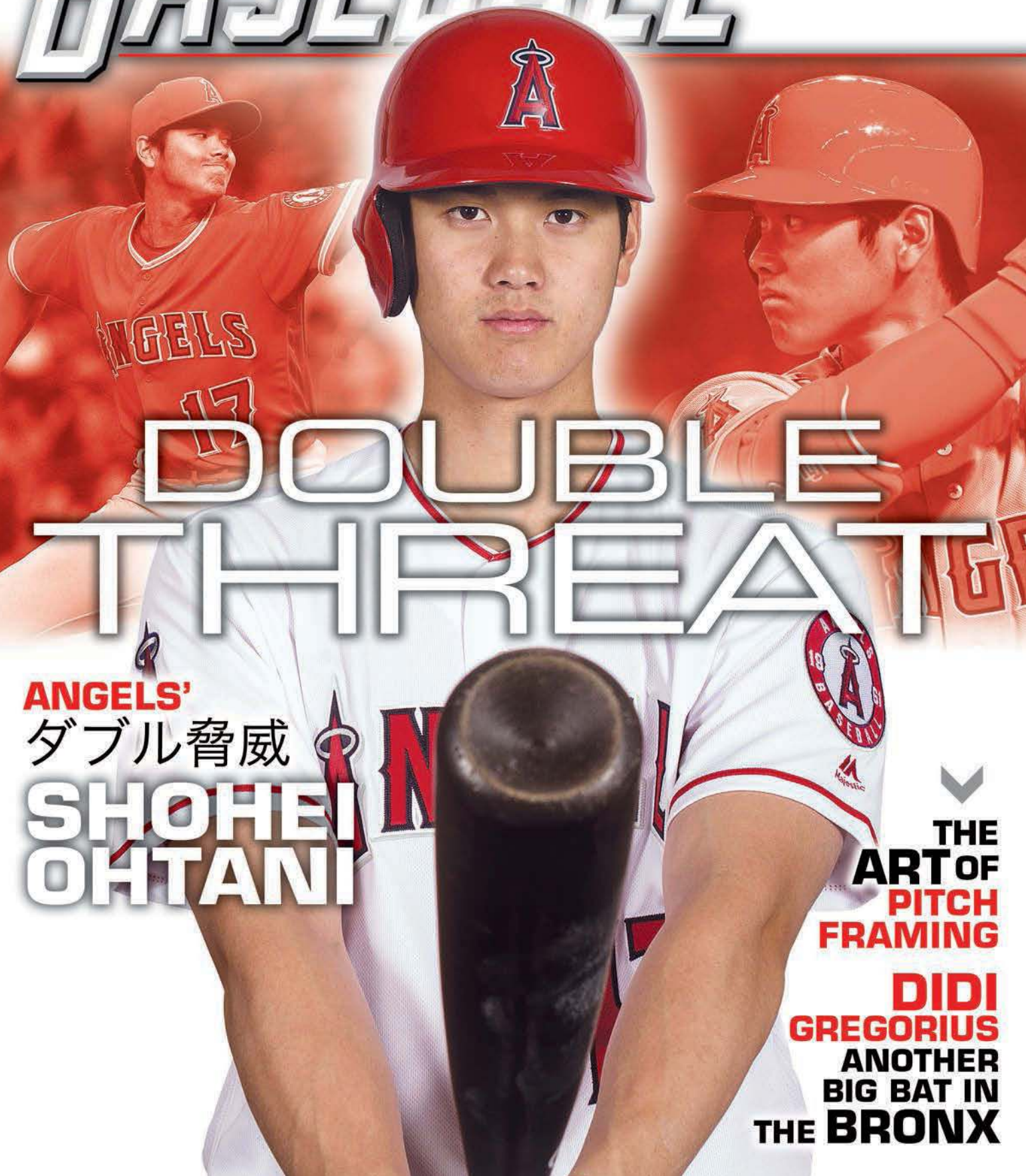


A PLAYER'S BODY LANGUAGE > WHAT DOES IT CONVEY?

BASEBALL DIGEST®

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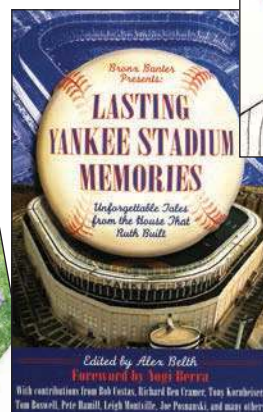
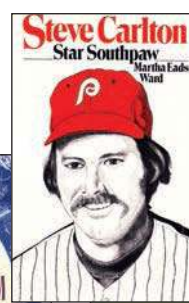
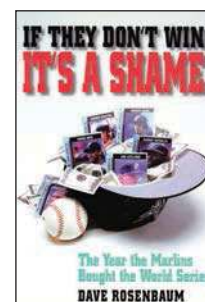
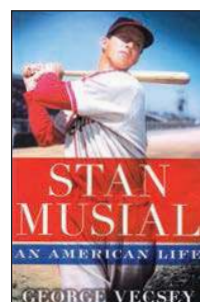
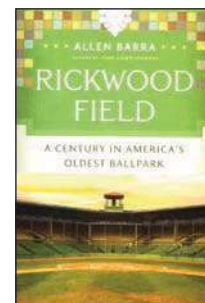
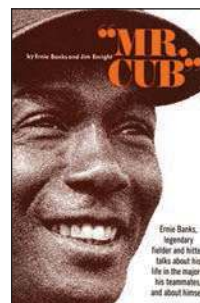
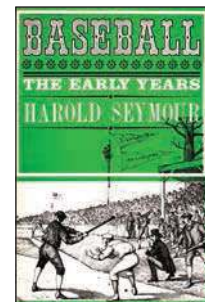
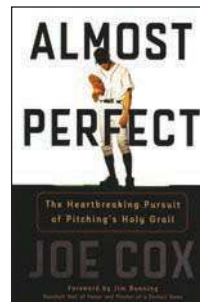
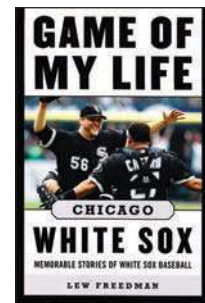
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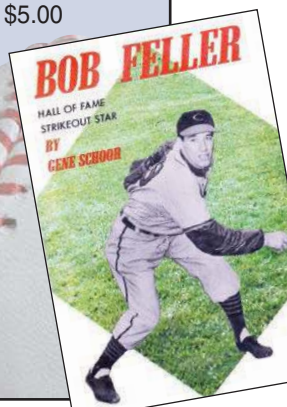
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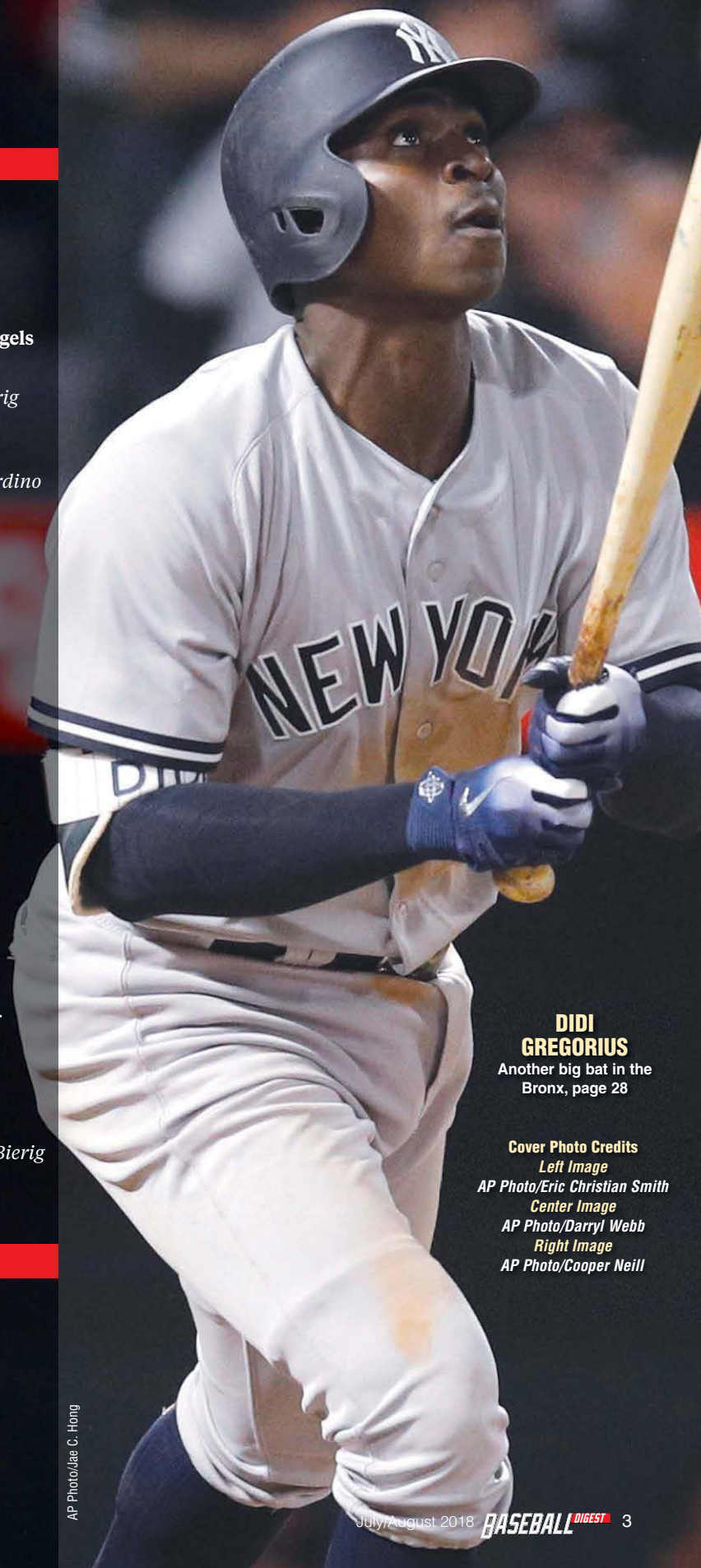
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DIDI GREGORIUS

Another big bat in the Bronx, page 28

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Players with Most Home Runs Before the All-Star Break

Since 1933, when the All-Star Game began, and through the 2017 campaign, 28 different players on 36 occasions have hit 30 or more home runs by the All-Star break. Five players—Mark McGwire (4), Ken Griffey, Jr. (3), Willie Stargell (2), Barry Bonds (2) and Sammy Sosa (2)—have reached 30 by the break multiple times.

YEAR	PLAYER, TEAM	HR	TOTAL
		AT BREAK	HR
2001	Barry Bonds, Giants	39	73
1969	Reggie Jackson, A's	37	47
1998	Mark McGwire, Cardinals	37	70
2013	Chris Davis, Orioles	37	53
1998	Ken Griffey, Jr., Mariners	35	56
2001	Luis Gonzalez, Diamondbacks	35	57
1969	Frank Howard, Senators	34	48
1994+	Ken Griffey, Jr., Mariners	33	40
1961	Roger Maris, Yankees	33	61
1987	Mark McGwire, A's	33	49
1994+	Matt Williams, Giants	33	43
1998	Sammy Sosa, Cubs	33	66
1994+	Frank Thomas, White Sox	32	40
1999	Sammy Sosa, Cubs	32	63
2009	Albert Pujols, Cardinals	32	47
1954	Willie Mays, Giants	31	51
1989	Kevin Mitchell, Giants	31	47
1979	Mike Schmidt, Phillies	31	45
1997	Mark McGwire, A's/St.L.	31	58
1999*	Jose Canseco, Devil Rays	31	34
2006	David Ortiz, Red Sox	31	54
2011	Jose Bautista, Blue Jays	31	43
1964	Harmon Killebrew, Twins	30	49
1976#	Dave Kingman, Mets	30	37
1969	Willie McCovey, Giants	30	45
1971	Willie Stargell, Pirates	30	48
1973	Willie Stargell, Pirates	30	44
1996	Brady Anderson, Orioles	30	50
1997	Ken Griffey, Jr., Mariners	30	56
1998	Greg Vaughn, Padres	30	50
2000@	Mark McGwire, Cardinals	30	32
2003	Barry Bonds, Giants	30	45
2006	Jim Thome, White Sox	30	42
2007	Alex Rodriguez, Yankees	30	54
2013	Miguel Cabrera, Tigers	30	44
2017	Aaron Judge, Yankees	30	52

CHRIS DAVIS

+ Strike-interrupted season

* Jose Canseco had back surgery that forced him to miss 51 games

Dave Kingman missed 33 games after he tore a ligament in left thumb on July 19

@ Mark McGwire missed 73 games due to a knee injury



BARRY BONDS

AP Photo/Ben Margot

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Pitchers with Most Strikeouts at the All-Star Break (1933-2017)

Only four pitchers have fanned 200 or more batters by the All-Star break, with Nolan Ryan's 234 first-half strikeouts the most. The chart features the first-half leaders and their final strikeout totals. For those who made the leaderboard in years during which two All-Star games were played (1959-62), their strikeout total at the first break is listed.

YEAR	PITCHER, TEAM	Ks	
		AT BREAK	SEASON TOTAL
1977	Nolan Ryan, Angels	234	341
1973	Nolan Ryan, Angels	233	383
1999	Randy Johnson, D-backs	211	364
1962	Sandy Koufax, Dodgers	202	216
2001	Randy Johnson, D-backs	202	372
1972	Steve Carlton, Phillies	201	310
1974	Nolan Ryan, Angels	201	367
2000	Randy Johnson, D-backs	198	347
1965	Sandy Koufax, Dodgers	195	382
1946	Bob Feller, Indians	190	348
1971	Vida Blue, A's	188	301
1988	Roger Clemens, Red Sox	186	291
2002	Curt Schilling, D-backs	186	316
1999	Pedro Martinez, Red Sox	184	313
1970	Sam McDowell, Indians	183	304
1998	Curt Schilling, Phillies	180	300
1970	Tom Seaver, Mets	178	283
2017	Chris Sale, Red Sox	178	308
2017	Max Scherzer, Nationals	173	268
1993	Randy Johnson, Mariners	171	308
2002	Randy Johnson, D-backs	171	334
1998	Randy Johnson, Sea./Hou.	170	329



NOLAN RYAN



RANDY JOHNSON

AP Photo

AP photo/Elise Amendola

Most RBI at the All-Star Break

Major leaguers have recorded 90 or more RBI by the All-Star break 13 times (1933-2017). Among those players, only Hank Greenberg and Juan Gonzalez collected 100 RBI before the break.

PLAYER, TEAM	YEAR	RBI	
		@BREAK	SEASON TOTAL
Hank Greenberg, Tigers	1935	101	170
Juan Gonzalez, Rangers	1998	101	157
Carlos Delgado, Blue Jays	2003	97	145
Manny Ramirez, Indians	1999	96	165
Josh Hamilton, Rangers	2008	95	130
Miguel Cabrera, Tigers	2013	95	137
Chris Davis, Orioles	2013	93	138
Harmon Killebrew, Twins	1969	91	145
Preston Wilson, Rockies	2003	91	141
Lou Gehrig, Yankees	1934	91	165
Tommy Davis, Dodgers	1962	90	153
Tony Perez, Reds	1970	90	129
George Foster, Reds	1977	90	149



HANK GREENBERG

AP Photo



JUAN GONZALEZ

AP photo/John Dunn

In 2013, when Chris Davis clubbed a career-high 53 home runs for the Orioles, he had 37 at the All-Star break.

FANS SPEAK OUT



AP photo/Susan Regan

NOLAN RYAN

PITCHERS WITH 2B, 3B, SB

With the emergence of the designated hitter, it appears that Nolan Ryan was the last pitcher to record a double, triple and stolen base in both leagues. Ryan logged five doubles, one triple and two stolen bases in the N.L. and five doubles, one triple and one SB in the A.L.

Am I correct that Ryan and Cy Young are the only pitchers to do this?

**Tim Murphy
Pendleton, NY**

Besides Cy Young and Nolan Ryan, 18 other pitchers have recorded a double, triple and stolen base in both leagues. Seventeen of these pitchers (Bill Carrick, Jack Chesbro, Jack Coombs, Red Donahue, Frank Foreman, Clark Griffith, Earl Hamilton, Harry Howell, Joe McGinnity, Irv Young, Cy Young, Dock White, Happy Townsend, Willie Sudhoff, Sherry Smith, Jack Quinn and Wiley Piatt) accomplished the feat between 1884 and 1933. Only three pitchers have picked up a double, triple and stolen base in both leagues since then: Joe Bowman, Jim Kaat and Nolan Ryan.

Among this group of 20, Chesbro, Griffith, Howell, Kaat, Cy Young and Smith are the only pitchers to also hit a homer in each league.

MLB SCHEDULING

Interleague games wreak havoc on the schedules. Early in the season, teams were forced to stop over on an off day and make up a game that was rained or snowed out in a city where only one visit is made each year. And we have intra-division teams making two road trips in April to the same city that they visit three times a year!

Moreover, the Texas Rangers' longest homestand of the year is eight games, while the Twins have a 14-day (12-game) homestand. Also, the Friday through Monday series is another blemish on the scheduling.

Interleague play has overstayed its welcome. The novelty has worn off.

**Mike Burgess
Americus, GA**



AP photo/Gene J. Puskar

FERNANDO RODNEY

HOMERS VS. STRIKEOUTS

The Stat Corner in the May-June issue was most interesting. I created a chart that shows career stats of some of the listed players who finished with more home runs than strikeouts in a single season.

Joe DiMaggio's record was remarkable.

**Walter Dunn Tucker
Henrico, VA**

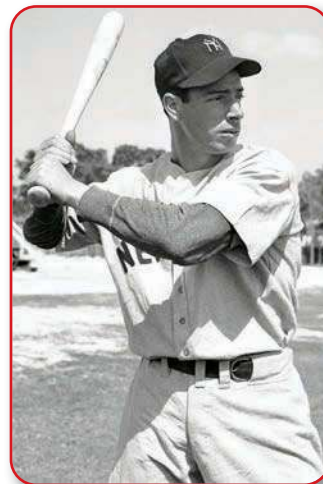
Yes, Joe DiMaggio's numbers were remarkable. He almost hit a home run for every career strikeout. Despite drawing only 790 walks in 7,672 plate appearances, the Hall of Fame center fielder still managed to post a lifetime batting average of .325, a .398 OBP and a .579 slugging mark.

The players included in your chart had impressive totals—DiMaggio, Lefty O'Doul, Yogi Berra, Ted Kluszewski, Ted Williams, Bill Dickey, Johnny Mize, Ken Williams, Stan Musial and Lou Gehrig. We've added others who certainly deserve recognition.

HOME RUNS VS. STRIKEOUTS (CAREER)

Player	HR	SO	HR/SO
Joe DiMaggio	361	369	.978
Lefty O'Doul	113	122	.926
Yogi Berra	358	414	.865
Ted Kluszewski	279	365	.764
Ted Williams	521	709	.735
Bill Dickey	202	289	.699
Johnny Mize	359	524	.685
Ken Williams	196	287	.683
Stan Musial	475	696	.682
Lou Gehrig	493	790	.624
Chuck Klein	300	521	.576
Mel Ott	511	896	.570
Hank Aaron	755	1,383	.546
Babe Ruth	714	1,330	.537
Albert Pujols +	621	1,179	.527

+Through May 30



AP Photo

JOE DIMAGGIO

THREE HOMERS/ONE DOUBLE

Last May 26, Mike Trout of the Angels hit a homer and three doubles in a game against the Yankees at Yankee Stadium. How many other players have hit a homer with three doubles in the same game?

**Cliff Pedersen
Albany, N.Y.**

Since 1908, a MLB player has collected three doubles and one home run in a game 81 times. The feat has been accomplished by 78 players with Hal McRae (1971, 1974), Miguel Tejada (2004, 2005) and Aaron Rowand (July 14 & 17, 2007) the only players to do it multiple times.

NO-HITTERS

Through May 28, the San Diego Padres have yet to have a pitcher credited with a no-hitter. My question is what team has tossed the most no-hitters since 1900?

**Ryan Finley
San Diego, CA**

Since 1900 and through May 28, 2018, the franchise with the most no-hitters is the Los Angeles Dodgers with 21. Next are the Chicago White Sox and Boston Red Sox with 18 each, followed by the New York/San Francisco Giants (17), Cincinnati Reds and Cleveland Indians (14), and the Philadelphia/Kansas City/Oakland A's (12).

5-HIT GAMES

Earlier this year, I was at the Mariners game in Seattle when Dee Gordon went 5-for-5 against the A's. My friends and I were wondering what player holds the record for most games with five or more hits in a season?

**Mitch Rudin
Bellevue, WA**

From 1908 through May 2018, the most games with five or more hits in a season by one player is four, a total set by Ty Cobb (1922), Stan Musial (1948), Tony Gwynn (1993) and Ichiro Suzuki (2004).

Players who produced five or more hits in three games are George Sisler (1921), Tris Speaker (1923), Edd Roush (1929), Fred Lindstrom (1930), Al Simmons (1932), Heinie Manush (1933), Eddie Waitkus (1950), Luis Aparicio (1966), Jorge Orta (1974), Don Mattingly (1984), Dave Winfield (1984), Keith Hernandez (1985), Joe Carter (1986), Kenny Lofton (1997), Charlie Blackmon (2014), Yunel Escobar (2015) and Ender Inciarte (2017).

Ernie Banks was the first black player in Chicago Cubs franchise history when he debuted in the major leagues on Sept. 17, 1953, at Wrigley Field.

PITCHING FROM THE "OLD DAYS"

Your article on pitching in the May/June 2018 issue of *Baseball Digest* was wonderful!

Pitching is my favorite part of the game and I used to enjoy comparing stats of the great hurlers. Tom Seaver was my all-time favorite growing up and even now at 70 years old.

But the game is no longer the same and I am saddened by that. Now we watch two games.

The first is my favorite; starting pitchers dueling it out the way it used to be, Seaver vs. Gibson, Palmer vs. Hunter, etc. The second is inevitable, unfortunately, and I agree with Seaver and many other former major-league pitchers who indicate that the reason starting pitchers do not go beyond 100 pitches in a game is that they can't do it, having never been trained that way.

They cannot get out of a tough situation because they have no experience. Nowadays a pitcher gets into trouble and it's goodbye to them in favor of one of the many relief specialists who take over.

I don't enjoy the game as much anymore and long for the "old days."

**Alan Greenhalgh
Woodstock, NY**

AP photo/Elaine Thompson

TEAM INTEGRATION DATES

Recently I read the book *Opening Day* by Jonathan Eig, covering Jackie Robinson's 1947 entry into MLB. We know Robinson was the first to integrate MLB and that Larry Doby was the second for the Cleveland Indians. The Boston Red Sox were the last team to integrate, when, in 1959, Pumpsie Green was the first black player in franchise history.

Could you please list in order the teams, player names and years when all teams in the majors integrated?

**Larry Jacobellis
Danbury, CT**

Listed are the first black players to join each of the 16 major-league teams, and the date of their debut game.

TEAM	PLAYER, POS.	DEBUT	PERFORMANCE
Brooklyn Dodgers	Jackie Robinson, 1b	April 15, 1947	0-for-3 with sac. and run
Cleveland Indians	Larry Doby, ph	July 5, 1947	Struck out as PH
St. Louis Browns	Hank Thompson, 2b	July 17, 1947	0-for-4 with error
New York Giants	Monte Irvin, ph	July 8, 1949	Walked as PH
	Hank Thompson, 2b	July 8, 1949	0-for-3 with BB, sac. and run
Boston Braves	Sam Jethroe, cf	April 18, 1950	2-for-4, HR, 2 runs, 2 RBI
Chicago White Sox	Minnie Minoso, 3b	May 1, 1951	2-for-4, HR, 2 RBI
Philadelphia A's	Bob Trice, p	Sept. 13, 1953	Took loss with 8 IP, 5 ER, 2 SO
Chicago Cubs	Ernie Banks, ss	Sept. 17, 1953	0-for-3, BB, run, error
Pittsburgh Pirates	Curt Roberts, 2b	April 13, 1954	1-for-3, triple
St. Louis Cardinals	Tom Alston, 1b	April 13, 1954	0-for-4, SO
Cincinnati Reds	Nino Escalera, ph	April 17, 1954	1-for-1, pinch-hit single
	Chuck Harmon, ph	April 17, 1954	0-for-1
Washington Senators	Carlos Paula, lf	Sept. 6, 1954	2-for-5, double, 2 RBI
New York Yankees	Elston Howard lf	April 14, 1955	1-for-1, RBI
Philadelphia Phillies	John Kennedy, pr	April 22, 1957	Pinch-ran for Solly Hemus in 8th
Detroit Tigers	Ozzie Virgil Sr., 3b	June 6, 1958	1-for-5, double, RBI
Boston Red Sox	Pumpsie Green, pr/ss	July 21, 1959	Pinch-ran for Vic Wertz in 8th

ERNIE BANKS

JACKIE ROBINSON

AP photo/John Rooney

AP photo/Harold Filan

30-GAME WINNERS

In 1934, Dizzy Dean of the Cardinals posted a 30-7 (.811) mark and was penciled in at the top of the leaderboard in victories. Look beyond the positive exteriors and one will discover in four of those triumphs, Dean had been summoned from the bullpen.

Three years earlier, Lefty Grove, the fireball artist and member of the Philadelphia A's pitching staff, finished 31-4 (.886). Let's bring to the table his four victories, plus five saves in relief, and question the guidelines and methodology used in calculating the "pitcher of record" status.

Just how many fractional innings did Dean and Grove need to throw to achieve credit for an auxiliary win where often times as many as four or five others could have mightily contributed to the way a game played out?

The historic treatment and feel-good references seem to be overdone in preserving the reputations of these two pitchers. Some of their tales grow ever taller with the passing years. It's time to dispel any lingering legends and myths attached to the pair with this bold statement—the only genuine and legitimate 30-game winner, excluding the dead-ball era of pre-1921, comes from the throwing arm of the world champion Detroit Tigers standout, Denny McLain.

In 1968, he went 31-6 (.838) and earned those victories the hard way, generated only through games started. The insightful facts from his MVP season furnish eye-popping figures that seemingly jump out when comparing the four most outstanding seasons in succession for Grove, Dean and McLain.

**Roger Leonard
Quincy, MA**

During the four-year span you list in your charts, when Lefty Grove, Dizzy Dean and Denny McLain were arguably the most dominant starters in their leagues, Grove (1930-1933) made 60 relief appearances that generated 143.2 innings in the A.L. Dean (1933-1936) pitched 105.1 innings in 62 relief appearances in the N.L. McLain (1966-1969) worked only one game (1.1 IP) as a reliever.

GROVE VS. DEAN VS. McLAIN

LEFTY GROVE

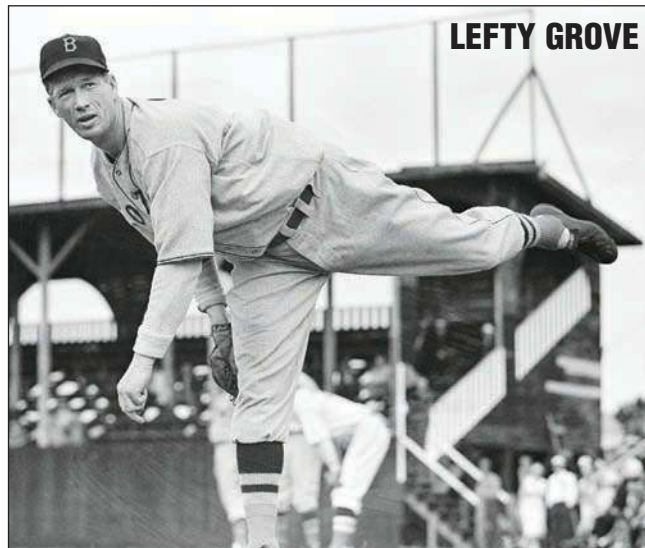
STARTING											RELIEF	
Year	G	GS	CG	W-L	Pct.	IP	SO	BB	ShO	ERA	W-L	Svs.
1930	50	32	22	28-5	.848	291	209	60	2	2.54	5-2	9
1931	41	30	27	31-4	.886	288	175	62	4	2.06	4-1	5
1932	44	30	27	25-10	.714	291	188	79	4	2.84	3-2	7
1933	45	28	21	24-8	.750	275	114	83	12	3.20	6-2	6
Totals	180	120	97	108-27	.800	1,145	686	284	22	2.65	18-7	27

DIZZY DEAN

STARTING											RELIEF	
Year	G	GS	CG	W-L	Pct.	IP	SO	BB	ShO	ERA	W-L	Svs.
1933	48	34	26	20-18	.526	293	199	64	3	3.04	1-3	4
1934	50	33	24	30-7	.811	311	195	75	7	2.66	4-2	7
1935	50	36	29	28-12	.700	325	190	77	3	3.04	4-3	5
1936	51	34	28	24-13	.649	315	195	53	2	3.17	2-3	11
Totals	199	137	107	102-50	.671	1,244	779	269	15	2.98	11-11	27

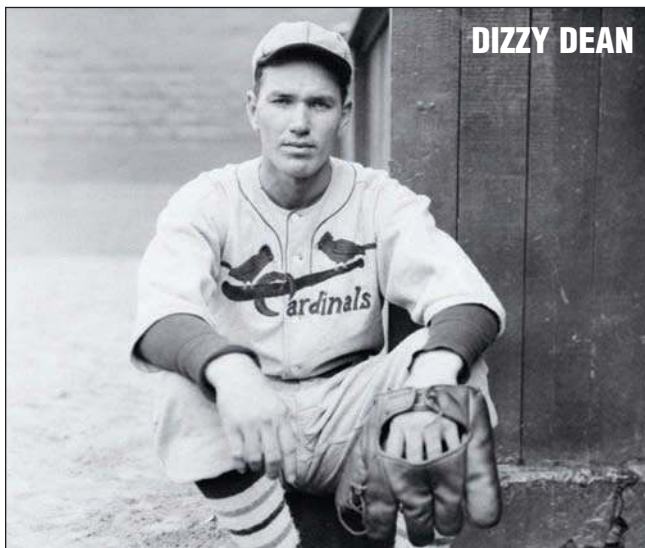
DENNY McLAIN

STARTING											RELIEF	
Year	G	GS	CG	W-L	Pct.	IP	SO	BB	ShO	ERA	W-L	Svs.
1966	38	38	14	20-14	.588	264	192	104	4	3.92	0-0	0
1967	37	37	10	17-16	.515	235	161	73	3	3.72	0-0	0
1968	41	41	28	31-6	.838	336	280	63	6	1.96	0-0	0
1969	42	41	23	24-9	.727	325	181	67	9	2.80	0-0	0
Totals	158	157	75	92-45	.621	1,160	814	307	22	3.01	0-0	0



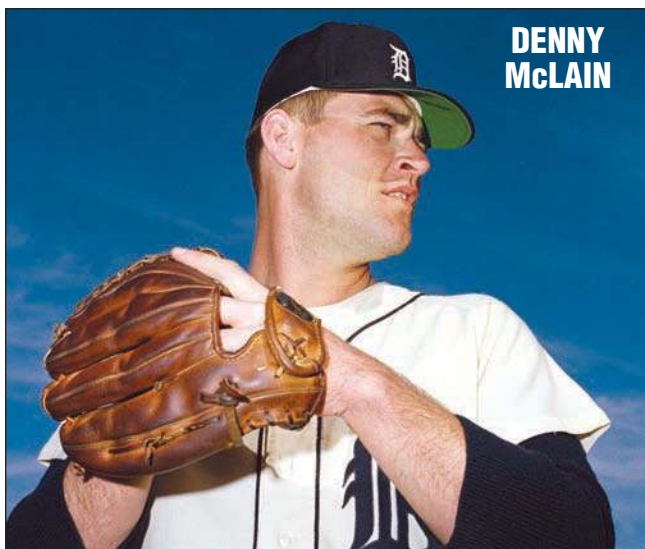
LEFTY GROVE

AP Photo



DIZZY DEAN

AP Photo



DENNY McLAIN

AP Photo

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MEMORIES LAST A LIFETIME

You flip the calendar back through 31 memory-filled years and the names and events come cascading out of the past.

They are your souvenirs from personal involvement in the glittering world of Major League Baseball.

You begin to meld the names with the events . . . and you remember.

YOU REMEMBER that first season covering the game (1987) when Roger Clemens, 25, was with the Red Sox and establishing himself as the most dominant pitcher in the game, earning his second consecutive American League Cy Young Award with a 20-9 mark, 18 complete games and seven shutouts.

Durability and stardom were etched on the minds of all who watched Clemens when he took the mound and former

manager John McNamara echoed those traits.

After winning his 18th game of the season with a 9-2 complete-game victory over the Brewers in Milwaukee on Sept. 25, McNamara was approached by a young reporter who asked how good can his young ace become.

"The sky's the limit," McNamara said. "He's big, strong and durable. We believe we are going to win every time he takes the mound. He has that kind of presence and command. Roger can dominate a game when he has his best stuff and knows how to pitch to keep us in a game when his fastball and breaking ball don't have that overpowering bite.

"If he maintains his health and continues to have that drive of success to be the best, he'll be one of the best pitchers in the game for a long time."

The Rocket would pitch another 20 years in the majors and finish his career with 354 wins, seven Cy Young awards and 4,672 strikeouts.

YOU REMEMBER the day at old Comiskey Park in Chicago, when being introduced to two Hall of Fame pitchers.

It was during pregame warm-ups that two reporters went to the Bard's room to grab a bite to eat before a White Sox game. Your mentor, John Kuenster, was waved over to a table by Hall of Fame pitchers Don Drysdale, who was also a White Sox broadcaster, and Early Wynn.

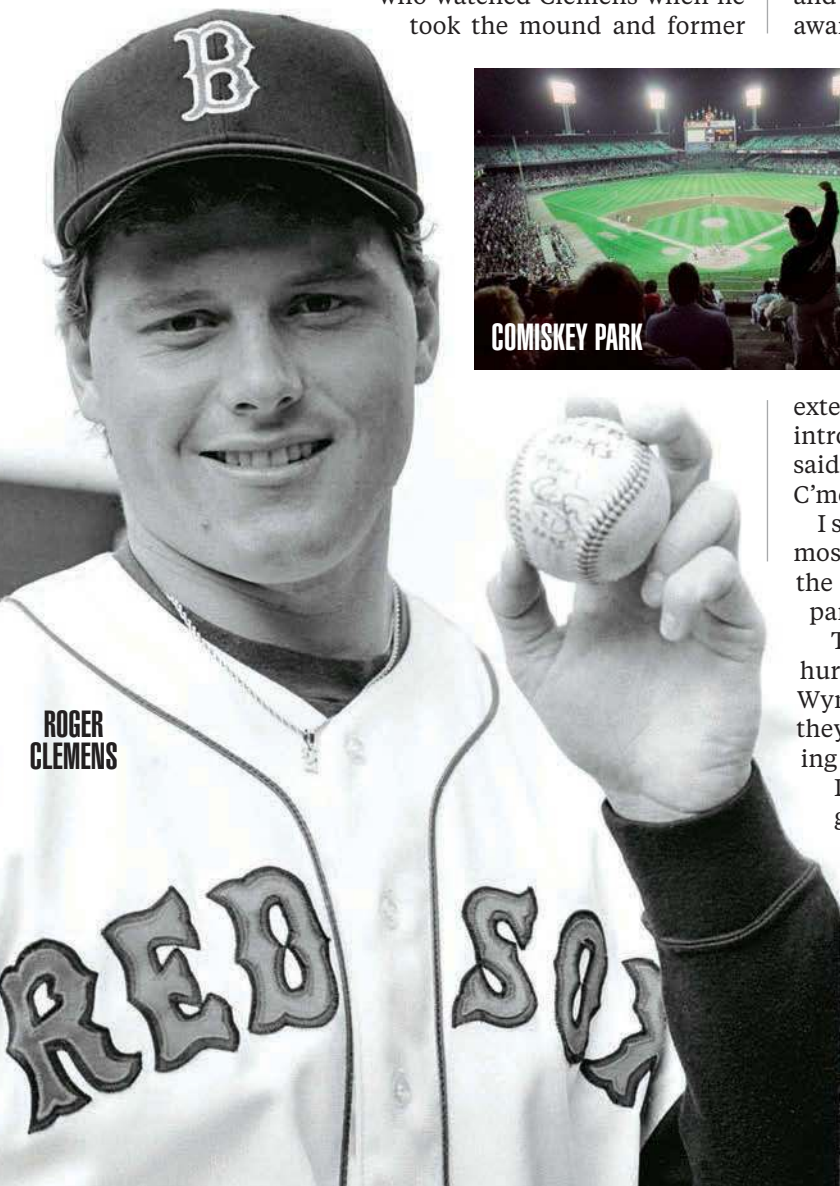
"John, how are you?" they said as they extended their hands for a firm, friendly shake. I was introduced to these two legends and Drysdale smiled and said, "Sit down with us. We're talking about pitching. C'mon John, you know a lot about pitching."

I sat in silence and listened intently as two of the game's most respected pitchers discussed with a veteran reporter the differences in pitching in the 1950s and 1960s compared to the current era (1987).

The main topic, as most would guess, was the failure of hurlers to pitch inside. "It's a different game today," said Wynn. "No hitter watched his home runs 25 years ago like they do today. If a hitter did that, he knew what was coming next time up."

Drysdale nodded in agreement, saying, "The young guys today need to pitch inside and take the inner part of the plate. Pitch inside; use that to establish pitches on the outer half of the plate. And when the hitter leans in, you back him off and put him on his ass."

The veteran reporter recalled a story that White Sox manager Al Lopez shared with him when Wynn was pitching with the White Sox: "One day in a game at Kansas City, Joe DeMaestri, the A's light-hitting shortstop, stepped to the plate to face



AP PHOTO/Mark Ellis

AP PHOTO/Elise Amendola

you (Wynn). In a twinkling, you threw a tight pitch that sent DeMaestri sprawling to the ground.

Lopez trotted out of the Sox dugout to the mound, where he asked you: ‘What are you throwing at this guy for? He’s only hitting about .219.’

‘Yeah,’ you responded, ‘but he looked like he was trying to hit the ball back through the middle.’”

The three men laughed and almost in unison said, “Those were the good old days.”

YOU REMEMBER the telephone interview with the great Stan Musial in 1994. After a short introduction, the conversation gravitated toward baseball. “What was your biggest thrill?” the reporter asked.

“Getting into my first World Series in ‘42,” said Musial. “I was just a youngster. The Yankees beat us the first game, and then we won four in a row.”

Musial paused a moment. “My 3,000th hit was something special, too. I remember we just finished a three-game series with the Cubs in St. Louis and traveled to Chicago for another two-game match at Wrigley Field. I was two hits away from 3,000. In the first game of the series, I had one hit, leaving me one away. In the second game, I was not in the lineup. Manager Fred Hutchinson, the Cardinals and myself wanted our home fans in St. Louis to have a chance to witness the 3,000th hit,” Musial said.

“But as the second game in Chicago, I believe it was May 13, went on, we were losing, 3-1, in the top of the sixth when I was called on to pinch-hit for pitcher Sam Jones. With a runner on second, I hit a double off right-hander Moe Drabowsky’s curveball on a 2-2 pitch down the left-field line for my 3,000th hit.

“The crowd at Wrigley Field gave me a tremendous ovation and third-base umpire Frank Dascoli retrieved the ball, gave it to me and offered congratulations.

“It was special not only because of the milestone I reached, but it contributed to a four-run inning and we won the game, 5-4.”

YOU REMEMBER, too, the first time you witnessed Nolan Ryan pitching live at the ballpark. It was August 1987, when “The Express” was with Houston, and the Astros defeated the Cubs, 4-2. Ryan was impressive to watch and his fastball appeared blinding, even at age 40. In that game, Ryan fanned seven Cubs batters in five innings—bringing his career total to 4,474!

YOU REMEMBER the crazy things . . . standing in the Cubs dugout in a new pair of shoes when manager Don Zimmer was chatting on the bench with a reporter and spit a stream of tobacco juice inches from your shoe. Then the pudgy-faced Zimmer looked at you with a smile and said, “Nice shoes.”

YOU REMEMBER meeting former White Sox manager Al Lopez at U.S. Cellular Field and asking him, “What outfielder had the best throwing arm he had ever witnessed?”

Lopez responded with a short story: “We were playing Pittsburgh in a spring training exhibition game, and our first baseman, Earl Torgeson, hit a deep drive to right. I don’t know how far, but it went a long, long way. Roberto Clemente quickly retrieved the ball in the corner. Torgeson was on his way to third—and he was a pretty good runner—when Clemente threw the ball to third all the way from the right-field corner on a fly and Torgeson was out by 15 feet. Torgeson felt a breeze go by his ear and knew he didn’t have a chance. Clemente had the most powerful arm I have ever seen.”

YOU REMEMBER the sixth game of the NLCS in 2003, when the Cubs were six outs away from capturing their first pennant in 58 years. Looking outside Wrigley Field, a mob of fans began to gather around the park anticipating victory.

The first thought fluttering in my head was how I would walk my dad, age 79, safely through the rambunctious crowd to our parked car in a nearby neighborhood. As I thought out a plan, catastrophe struck. The Cubs blew a 2-1 lead over the Marlins—after left fielder Moises Alou tried to make a leaping catch at the left-field wall on a foul ball that Steve Bartman and other fans lunged for—and lost the game, 8-3, forcing a Game 7 and eventually losing the pennant.

Our walk back to the car was quite peaceful.

YOU REMEMBER Major League Baseball historian Jerome Holtzman always going out of his way to talk with you at the ballpark. Telling you stories of times on the road with your father and spending time on train rides with ballplayers, playing cards and chatting about baseball activities. And the time Holtzman asked you to help him with research on drugs in baseball when the steroid scandal was big news.

During that research, you remember a call to your office from the great Dom DiMaggio, who was asking for a back issue of *Baseball Digest* with a story featuring him in it.

As opportunity knocked, you asked DiMaggio, “Did any players use a stimulant during your playing career in the majors?” DiMaggio paused, and then said, “I can’t remember the name, but several players used a cough syrup. I never tried it, but it was common among some players during long road trips and a heavily-scheduled season to use this cough syrup as a pick-me-up before some games.”

YOU REMEMBER conversations with Jimmy Piersall and former Yankees executive Arthur Richman, which were for your ears only and kept you smiling with the curse words these men frequently sprinkled throughout their animated storytelling.



Singer Eddie Vedder, who was born and spent his early childhood years near Wrigley Field in Evanston, Illinois, is a lifelong Cubs fan.

SportPlus/David Duronchik

YOU REMEMBER the Cubs breaking their World Series drought with one of the greatest Fall Classics ever played. The games at Wrigley Field, played in front of frantic, packed crowds, and the closeness of a Cubs team that truly enjoyed winning together.

AND, YOU REMEMBER the fun . . . postseason games, All-Star games, banquets and the honor of being eligible to vote for the Hall of Fame . . . the opportunity to interview Musial, Lopez, Bob Feller, Dom DiMaggio, Andy Pafko, Steve Carlton, Mike Schmidt, Pete Rose, Ernie Banks, Don Drysdale, Hawk Harrelson, Andre Dawson, Greg Maddux, Cal Ripken, Billy Williams and so many more, including today's gala of stars.

And beyond the talent, you remember the class of all the writers you were able to converse with: Holtzman, George Vass, Joe Falls, Furman Bisher, Bob Broeg, John Steadman, Paul Sullivan, Bruce Levine, Joel Bierig, Phil Rogers, Larry Stone, Jerry Crasnick, Tyler Kepner, Susan Slusser, Alyson Footer, Carroll Rogers, Lisa Winston, Paul Hoynes and Tim Kurkjian, to name a few. And the club media relations personnel who are wonderful to work with: Tim Mead, Jim Trdinich, Bob Beghtol, Mike Swanson, Jason Zillo, Josh Rawitch, Brian Bartow, Bonnie Clark, Rob Butcher, Bart Swain and Jay Horwitz, among a list of many more.

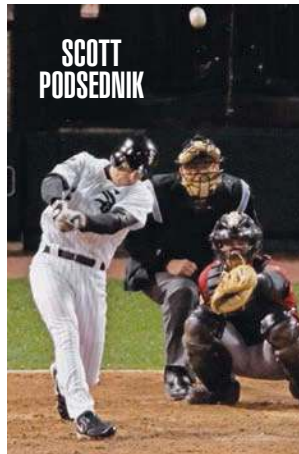
YOU REMEMBER meeting celebrities at the ballpark, especially musician Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam at Wrigley Field during the 2015 NLCS. The talented singer approached as we made eye contact and asked what publication I was with. As I began to tell him, he grabbed the credential around my neck and read, "Baseball Digest! I used to get that as a kid. Do you

remember the cover with Jose Cardenal on it?" I laughed and told him I did, and we chatted on the field during batting practice, reminiscing about the old Cubs teams and Wrigley Field.

Vedder is without question the coolest celebrity I have ever met.

LASTLY, YOU REMEMBER your greatest memory. It was Game 2 of the 2005 World Series. The White Sox had won Game 1 against the Houston Astros. Dad and I were covering the game. The Sox had always treated my father with such respect, and although he was always neutral when writing about MLB clubs, he was certainly pulling for the White Sox to win a World Series during his lifetime.

We were seated in the left-field auxiliary press box, and with the score tied at six in the bottom of the ninth inning, Scott Podsednik clubbed a walk-off homer to give the White Sox a two-game Series lead. The expression on the old writer's face when the ball landed in the center-field bleachers was worth every heartache the game ever gave me. It was priceless. **BD**



AP photo/Darron Cummings



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Shohei Ohtani's first six MLB home runs averaged 410 feet and he clubbed a batting practice homer at Angel Stadium that was measured at 513 feet. In his first seven appearances as a pitcher, he went 4-1 with a 3.35 ERA and 52 strikeouts in 40.1 IP.



AP Photo/Eric Christian Smith

AP photo/Eric Christian Smith

DOU THR

Shohei Ohtani's ability to hit a ball 500 feet and throw a pitch 100 mph has drawn enormous

By Pedro Moura

During the 2017 World Baseball Classic, Angels shortstop Andrelton Simmons and his wife roamed around Tokyo looking for food late in the night, joined by Texas Rangers infielder and fellow Curaçao native Jurickson Profar. The Netherlands' game against Japan wasn't for another day, so the search continued until finally, around midnight, they found a bar that was still serving food.

The first two patrons they saw inside were wearing Japanese jerseys with an unfamiliar name written on the back: Ohtani. Simmons and Profar started to talk to the folks wearing them, who expressed massive excitement about this player who was new to them. The fans told

Simmons and Profar that this Shohei Ohtani wouldn't play in the Classic because of an ankle injury, but he could hit and pitch and do them both well. The fans described a young man who could throw faster than anyone in Nippon Professional Baseball and a young man who could hit baseballs farther than anyone in Nippon Professional Baseball, with a beautiful left-handed swing. It was the same person, and Simmons and Profar were surprised, confused, and amazed.

"Yeah," Simmons said, recounting the story. "That's when I first heard about him."

All of the Angels have their own stories of when they first learned of Ohtani. Matt Shoemaker pitched against



AP photo/Alex Gallardo

BLE EAT

attention during his debut season, but his focus on adjusting and improving is equally impressive

him during an offseason tour of Japan, put on by MLB. Mike Trout and Kole Calhoun saw him hit huge home runs in popular YouTube videos. Garrett Richards saw videos somewhere online of his fastball and breaking ball. Never, though, did it feel all that real. Major leaguers hear about top prospects tearing up the minors all the time, and rarely does that hold at the highest level. They're jaded.

But then the Angels saw Ohtani in person in spring training, and they realized why they had heard so much about him. Essentially every player on the team was envious of something Ohtani could do—hit the ball hard and far, or throw the ball fast and firm.

"He seems happy," Calhoun said shortly after meeting him. "If I was him, I'd be happy too. Throw 100 miles an

hour, hit a ball 500 feet. That's impressive."

Now, three months into the major-league season, Ohtani is replicating that process with every team he comes across, 25 times a series. Every opponent has advance notice of his arrival, and yet every opponent concludes a matchup against Ohtani amazed at his abilities.

It happened in Oakland, where the Angels began their season. It happened against Cleveland, when Ohtani began to club extra-base hits against good pitching. It happened again in Seattle, where he dominated both Mariners hitters and pitchers over one weekend, prompting Felix Hernandez to quip that he, too, could once do the same—in Little League. The homers and the quality starts piled up in the season's first weeks, and praise from the



AP photo/Mark J. Terrill

competition followed it.

"There's another guy in that clubhouse who is a really good player," Minnesota Twins first baseman Logan Morrison told reporters after Ohtani shut down him and his fellow hitters in May. "But to me, with what he does on the mound and with the bat, he's probably the best player in the world."

Of course, Morrison was referring to Trout as the really good player. Trout has never stopped being baseball's best player as long as he's been healthy since 2012, and he again carried the Angels to begin this season. With how much time Ohtani must rest to prepare for his outlay of effort as a starting pitcher, he may never be able to best Trout or Mookie Betts for Most Valuable Player honors.

The Angels have been starting him only once a week on the mound, and fewer than three times a week at designated hitter. That's going to limit him to around 130 innings and roughly 300 plate appearances, which will tamp down his value. Of course, if that keeps him healthy, nobody is going to complain. The Angels have already adjusted much of their rotation plan to accommodate Ohtani's pitching schedule from Japan. In the years to come, it should surprise few if they adjust it again to maximize his talent in some way.

Ohtani turned 24 on July 5. The Angels will have him under their control through at least the 2023 season, meaning the earliest he can become a free agent will be at age 29. At that time, who knows if Ohtani will still be the only man in the majors capable of both pitching and hitting well, but for now, he is both a novelty and revelation. The Tampa Bay Rays promoted their two-way top prospect Brendan McKay to high Class-A Charlotte in mid-May, after McKay dominated as both a left-handed pitcher and first baseman at a lower level. The Cincinnati Reds opted to develop their top young two-way prospect, Hunter Greene, as only a pitcher for now, not a shortstop. The second overall pick in last summer's

AP photo/Jae C. Hong

draft, Greene has struggled as a one-way player.

It's difficult to do both, obviously, but major-league scouts say the difficulty probably lies more in the development of both skills than the execution of them. More than anything else, they say, it takes time to maintain skills in-season, and time is short in Major League Baseball. It also takes a willingness to process and move on from failure without becoming discouraged.

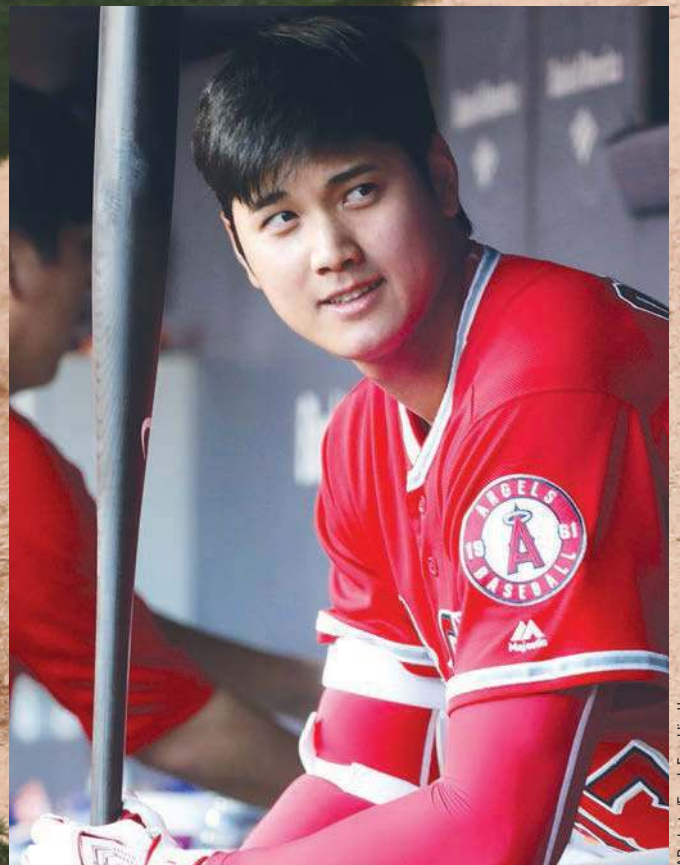
That is more difficult to do, but Ohtani already demonstrated during spring training that he was able. His first Cactus League could not have generated worse results, as a hitter or as a pitcher. Fans clamored for him to begin the season in the minor leagues. Scouts doubted whether he'd ever succeed at this sport's peak. Yet he remained resolute throughout that he would do it.

He did it. He did it remarkably quickly, too.

In that regard, Ohtani's toughest tasks—and the Angels—are behind him. Clearly, he is already at least competent in both facets. He may yet get better at his early age, but even if he never does, even if this is his peak, some teams would be happy to pay him dozens of millions per season pretty much in perpetuity. A left-handed power bat for 300 plate appearances and a right-handed power arm for 130 innings? Sign everyone up.

That is not to minimize the difficulty of this pursuit, of what he has already done. It requires constant maintenance, a rare dedication to detail, from both the player and the organization.

And here's a question to ponder: If Ohtani only turns out to be above average at both of these, will the public care?



AP photo/Frank Franklin II

Already it seems that sports fans lose interest every day he does not homer or throw seven shutout innings. But a double and a walk against a vicious left-handed pitcher, after two days of not hitting, might be professional sports' most impressive feat, whether the public notices or not.

"It's not easy to do when you're not out there every day, but he's playing enough to where I think he stays with his timing and we keep him in rhythm," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's doing a really good job in the batter's box."

For as much as we want to draw conclusions out of his rookie season, for as much as we want to pronounce this experiment finished, it is still so early. Let's put it this way: If he is as good as he looks, 95 percent of Ohtani's major-league career may be in the future. And things are changing. He arrived in America with the reputation of a hitter who could not handle inside fastballs, then quickly disproved that. Surely, opponents will, in time, figure out he is vulnerable to another pitch in another location. Then it

Through his first seven starts, Ohtani's average pitch velocity was 97 mph, and his high mark was 101. He also averaged 11.6 Ks per 9 IP during his first two months with the Angels.

will be up to him to combat that.

"I'm still making little adjustments every day, each at-bat," Ohtani said through an interpreter in May. "Sometimes, it goes bad, and that's where I need to fix it. I don't feel like I've adjusted perfectly. Earlier in the year, I feel like they were throwing me inside a lot more than now, but I was still able to hit the ball pretty well. I still had a good average. Maybe they're trying to test pitching me away.

"I feel like they still don't know how to pitch me, and I feel the same way, like everything's still in process."

He is right, of course, and the same goes for his pitching.

In time, his lack of command may hurt him, but for now hitters are still so unfamiliar that it may be working to his advantage. Either way, we wouldn't make any judgments about any other rookie hitter or pitcher after this little exposure.

But, with Ohtani, his opportunities are so spaced out. It will take years before he racks up enough plate appearances and innings that we can know how good he truly is, as a pitcher or a hitter.

We know this much for sure: His baseline is pretty high. Because, as Morrison insinuated, the very fact that he's attempting this at all elevates him above most of his competition. **SD**



AP photo/Jim Mone

"There's another guy in that clubhouse who is a really good player. But to me, with what he does on the mound and with the bat, he's probably the best player in the world."

—Logan Morrison

For a player to survive, let alone thrive, under the glare of the major-league spotlight, a light must come on within him. It is, one might say, the last step toward truly making it as a big leaguer. In rare instances, the light burns brightly from the start. More often, however, it does not.

At 25, Chicago Cubs second baseman Javier Baez, who is best described as both exciting and excitable, remains a work in progress—four years after first setting foot on the big-league stage.

“The moment Javy starts laying off the down-and-away slider, he’s Manny Ramirez,” Cubs manager Joe Maddon proclaimed early this season, mentioning his precocious young right-handed hitter in the same breath with a 12-time All-Star who batted .312 lifetime and hit 555 home runs.

That’s saying something. After being promoted from Triple-A Iowa in 2014, Baez was so undisciplined—and seemingly uncoachable—that, despite hitting three homers over his first three games, he finished at .169, striking out 95 times in 213 at-bats. Now, let’s fast forward briefly to 2018. There was Baez, breaking out of the gate like a Triple Crown-caliber hitter—bashing four homers over a two-day period in April while establishing himself as an early contender for the major-league RBI title. Nonetheless, at least at the outset, he was struggling below .200 against left-handed pitching, against which he had hit .293 over his first three-plus seasons.

Perhaps there will be fewer potholes for Shohei Ohtani, the Los Angeles Angels’ two-way rookie phenom from Japan who turns 24 on July 5. Upon arriving in the big leagues this spring, Ohtani hadn’t achieved total illumination as a hitter, but he was, perhaps, like that flickering light bulb in your refrigerator—simply in need of tightening.

After watching Ohtani struggle against high, inside fastballs throughout spring training, Eric Hinske, the Angels’ hitting coach, asked him to ponder a change. Would the youngster consider replacing his pronounced, high leg kick with just a toe tap? After all, Ohtani is 6-foot-4 and, in Hinske’s estimation, powerful enough to consistently drive pitches with his foot down.

Forget the fact that Opening Day was just three days away. Hinske felt his pupil had the capacity to make a quick adjustment. Ohtani tried it in batting practice—and liked it.

“He was hitting homers all over the field,” Hinske said.

“OK, I’m in,” Ohtani reportedly told his coach.

“And that was it,” Hinske related.

Seemingly so, at least as the season got under way. Consider that in 11 spring-training games, Ohtani hit .125 with no homers and one RBI. In his first 11 regular-season contests, he batted .333, knocking three homers and driving in 11 runs. Though not nearly as epic as walking on the moon, that one small step Hinske had recommended was being hailed as one giant leap for Ohtani’s career.

According to Cubs manager Joe Maddon, when Javier Lopez learns to lay off the down-and-away slider more consistently, he will become a more productive offensive player.



The future, of course, may ultimately decide otherwise. Opposing pitchers likely will have the final say on whether the change in footing will be Ohtani's final step—literally—toward becoming an established major-league hitter.

Alas, just when you think you've got it, the game is apt to retaliate by saying "gotcha." Consequently, for anyone who makes his living writing out a lineup card and not peering into a crystal ball, predicting when the light bulb will go on—and stay on—is a risky proposition.

Take pitcher Rich Hill, now 38 years old and in his third season with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Not long ago, no major-league team would take a chance on him. At 35, and after stints with nine different big-league organizations, Hill had to pitch in an independent league just to keep his career alive, let alone prove he should start instead of relieve. Shortly thereafter, while toiling for Boston's Triple-A affiliate late in the 2015 season, he met a novel thinker in former major-league pitcher Brian Bannister, a sabermetrics geek who had been named Boston's director of pitching analysis and development.

Bannister, who since has added the role of assistant pitching coach for the Red Sox, suggested that, maybe, if Hill bucked convention and entrusted his fate almost exclusively to his wicked curveball—using it even when behind in the count and making his four-seam fastball a secondary pitch—he could put a fairy-tale spin on his career. Indeed, a curve-

ball thrown from a deceptive delivery, with a mixture of speeds and arm slots, could be made to resemble several different offerings.

And guess what? After four dominating starts for the Red Sox in the final month of the 2015 season (his first starts since 2009), Hill went on to big-league employment (though not with Boston) worth a whopping \$54 million from age 36 through 39. Moreover, the oft-injured career journeyman suddenly saw the potential to pitch into his Medicare days. Call him the ultimate spinmeister, but he clings to his newfound belief that a pitcher's spin ages better than his velocity.

"Without struggle, there is no progress," Hill said during a speaking engagement in January 2017, several weeks after landing a three-year, \$48-million contract with the Dodgers. "Without failure, there is no progress." Nor, should we say, without Billy Beane. It was the maverick front-office chief of the Oakland Athletics who took a one-year, \$6-million flyer on Hill in 2016, then packaged him in a late-season trade for Dodgers prospects after Hill had gone 9-3 with a 2.24 ERA in 14 starts.

Premier hitters such as Jose Bautista and Justin Turner—and Hall of Fame pitcher Randy Johnson, a 303-game winner—might agree with Hill's assessment that struggle and failure are part and parcel of success. All were pushing 30 and basical ly just hanging on when various twists—or, more accurately, tweaks—of fate rescued them from mediocrity

THE LAST STEP

Players discuss skills they needed to refine to make permanent impact in the majors



AP photo/Charles Rex A. Poggiast



“Without struggle, there is no progress. Without failure, there is no progress.”

—Rich Hill

AP photo/Kelvin Kuo

and propelled them to stardom.

For Johnson, the turning point was a chance meeting with all-time strikeout king Nolan Ryan and Texas Rangers pitching coach Tom House. It occurred in early August 1992 in Seattle’s Kingdome, hours before a game between Johnson’s Mariners and Ryan’s Rangers. Ryan had just finished a throwing session, and Johnson passed him on his way in from running laps. They had a conversation that helped the 6-foot-10 Johnson learn how to harness his delivery.

“At my height, you’re dealing with more arms and legs,” the gangling southpaw said, and the tweak that came from Ryan, the Hall of Famer, eventually delivered Johnson to Cooperstown’s doorstep.

“The one thing about landing on the ball of my foot as opposed to the heel of my foot was what helped me the most,” Johnson told Ryan several years later. “I was always throwing the ball hard, but early on I was never consistent with my mechanics.”

Before that pivotal meeting with a then 45-year-old Ryan, who would retire after the next season, Johnson, 29, had a 44-46 record. Afterward, Johnson went 259-120 and, like Ryan, managed to pitch past his 46th birthday. Johnson’s career 4,875 strikeouts are second to Ryan’s 5,714.

In 2009, Bautista was in his sixth big-league season—and with his fifth organization—when his Toronto Blue Jays batting coach, former major-league outfielder Dwayne Murphy, encouraged him to try increasing his pull power by shortening his swing and beginning it with a high leg kick rather than just waiting on the ball. Bautista, who had never hit more than 16 homers in a season, erupted for 54 and 43, respectively, the next two seasons and averaged 34 over an eight-year period.

In 2013, Turner was a 28-year-old reserve infielder with the New York Mets when he and teammate Marlon Byrd took to discussing hitting. Byrd mentioned having worked with a Los Angeles-area hitting instructor to overhaul his swing. He and Turner spent the coming winter working together with that coach, Doug Latta. Turner had always used a leg kick, but now he was being encouraged to begin his weight transfer—and ultimately his move toward the pitcher—sooner.

“Gaining ground, catching the ball out in front rather than catching it deep, where I’d always been,” Turner told MLB.com. “You’re still staying behind the ball . . . You’re just

moving your contact point out a little in front of you.”

Turner had been cut loose by the Mets. That winter, just a few weeks before spring training, he finally landed a minor-league contract with the Dodgers. Back then, he was a .260 career hitter who had homered once every 105 at-bats. Entering this season, he had batted .303 in four years with L.A. and had averaged 21 homers a year from 2015-2017. And if that isn’t rich, consider this: Turner now is the owner of a four-year, \$64-million contract that runs through 2020.

You might think George Springer of the Houston Astros would feel reasonably comfy these days—having avoided arbitration over the winter by signing a two-year, \$24-million contract. At 28, he was MVP of the 2017 World Series, during which he hit .379 with five homers. That performance followed a regular season in which the Astros’ dynamic leadoff hitter had established career highs in all major offensive categories (.283 BA, 34 HR, 85 RBI, .367 OBP, .889 OPS).

But guess again.

“I still don’t have everything figured out yet,” Springer said. “Last year was a big stepping stone for me in that I was able to do some things I hadn’t necessarily done early in my career. You learn the league better and get a better understanding of what works and what doesn’t work for you. Still, you have to keep learning every day.”

In order to succeed, or to keep from failing?

“Baseball is a game of failure,” Milwaukee Brewers third baseman Travis Shaw said. Never mind that Shaw had a breakout season last year at age 27, hitting 31 homers and driving in 101 runs after Boston had traded him to Milwaukee.

“You’re pretty much going to fail most of the time,” Shaw said, invoking the standard adage that baseball’s best hitters—those who hit at least .300—make outs in 70 percent of their at-bats. “Fortunately, I figured out how to get through it and what I needed to do to make adjustments to make myself better.”

Shaw has come a long way from his personal rock bottom—a .221 Triple-A average in 2013. Last season, when he put up those big power numbers and made the Red Sox regret trading him, Shaw also batted a career high .273. Still, as a lifetime .261 hitter, he can’t be blamed for feeling as if adversity is always waiting around the corner. The solace is that he finally feels prepared to deal with it.

“For me, it was more than just about learning to use the whole field,” said the left-handed-hitting Shaw. “Sure, when teams don’t shift on me, respecting the fact that I can go the other way, that’s a good sign for me at the plate. But the key is also to just worry about things within your control—coming to work every day with a routine that works for you and puts you in a good spot at the plate every night. In the minor leagues, you always worry about stuff like when you’re going to get called up. But you can’t. I kind of figured that out after 2013.”

Is complete and final mastery even possible in a game known to require constant adjustment?

The Cubs’ Jason Heyward is among the many who surely must wonder. Six years after establishing career highs in homers (27) and RBI (82) at age 22 with the Atlanta Braves, he still is searching for his lost run-production magic. Heyward has spent the past couple of winters working tirelessly with several different batting instructors, including Hinske when he was the Cubs’ assistant hitting coach to John Mallee. Heyward’s struggles weren’t the sole reason for the team’s head coaching change last winter from Mallee to Chili Davis. Even so, the jury remains out on whether Heyward can improve the numbers he has averaged in his first two seasons in Chicago: .243, 9 HR, 54 RBI.

The outfielder’s defensive prowess, along with hope that he might yet find his batting stroke, has not only saved Heyward’s career but made him wealthy. If not for winning five Gold Gloves, including four in a row, he likely wouldn’t be playing regularly, let alone possess an eight-year, \$184-million contract, which the Cubs bestowed on him before the 2016 season.

For those younger or without such contractual security, the process of finding oneself typically requires a return trip (or perhaps several) to the minor leagues. Just ask Kyle Schwarber or, for that matter, Anthony Rizzo. It was Rizzo, by that time a three-time All-Star, who counseled Schwarber from personal experience when the young Cubs slugger—a 2016 World Series hero—was sent back to Triple-A Iowa for 11 games in late June last season. By then, Schwarber’s .412 batting average in the Fall Classic had become a faded memory. So had the prodigious home run he hit in the 2015 N.L. Division Series—a storied blast that landed atop the right-field scoreboard in Wrigley Field and was encased there for posterity.

At the time of his demotion, Schwarber was batting an anemic .171 and carried the emotional baggage of a failed trial as the Cubs’ leadoff hitter.

“I’ve been in your shoes,” said Rizzo, who had been sent to Triple-A Tucson in 2011 after hitting .143 in 35 games for the San Diego Padres.

Rizzo, then 21 and getting his first whiff of the big leagues, had whiffed 36 times in 98 at-bats, an almost 200-strikeout pace over a full season.

“To be candid, I don’t think I did Anthony any favors when I was GM of the Padres. It was too early, and it was a mis-

take on my part,” said Jed Hoyer, who tried to make it up to Rizzo in January 2012 by trading for him after becoming general manager of the Cubs.

Rizzo was thankful to join an organization that was rebuilding and that had nothing to lose by running the left-handed-hitting first baseman out there every day, against both right- and left-handed pitching. Even so, Hoyer employed a more conservative approach with Rizzo than he had in San Diego. The Cubs had Rizzo start the 2012 season in the minors even after the first baseman hit .364 in spring training. They didn’t bring him up until late June, after Rizzo had played 70 games for Triple-A Iowa, hitting .342 with 23 homers.

Rizzo still remembers the Cubs delaying his debut by a day to keep him from facing the New York Mets’ tough left-hander, Johan Santana, right out of the chute. Rizzo had played in nine games, going 11-for-35 (.314), before getting to challenge Santana when the Cubs traveled to New York. Rizzo went 2-for-3 against the veteran southpaw that day, collecting an infield hit and a three-run homer, as part of a 4-for-5 performance.

“The Cubs developed me into a big leaguer and, most important, an everyday big leaguer, not a platoon guy,” said Rizzo, who hit .196 against lefties over his first two Cubs seasons (he batted .278 against southpaws over the next four). “A lot of guys come up nowadays and don’t get that chance.”

Better still, talk with Mike Trout.

Ohtani’s teammate, who turns 27 in August, is widely considered the best player in the game. The Angels outfielder already is a two-time American League Most Valuable Player and five-time Silver Slugger winner, not to mention a Rookie of the Year.

Yet his first taste of the majors, in 2011, was more bitter than

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sweet. Promoted from Double-A Arkansas to the majors a month before his 20th birthday, Trout was sent back down after hitting .163 with one homer and six RBI in 14 games. Recalled again three weeks later, he fared a bit better but finished with a paltry .220 batting average and a subpar .281 OBP in 80 games.

It wasn't until the following season, which he began by tearing up the Triple-A Pacific Coast League, that Trout came into his own as a major leaguer. After joining the Angels on April 28, 2012, he earned Rookie of the Year honors by compiling a .326 batting average, .399 OBP, 30 homers and 83 RBI. Perhaps most impressively for a 6-foot-2, 230-pounder, Trout led the majors in stolen bases with 49 (as well as in runs, with 129).

The key to unlocking Trout's true abilities? "Slowing the game down," he said.

With that, Trout might be speaking for everyone who has ever played the game—including the many who've fallen by the wayside without being able to identify their problem, let alone find a solution.

"When you first get up here, the game is sped up and your job is to slow it down and play your game," Trout said last year. "That's the biggest thing for me. The first few weeks I was up here in '11, everything was moving so fast. (You have to) just take a deep breath, calm yourself down. See stuff before it happens."

Angels manager Mike Scioscia wasn't surprised that Trout blossomed in 2012.

"Once you see the beast, see the challenge, see what major-league pitching is . . . he had a taste of that and understood what it was about," Scioscia said. "When he came back, he was prepared for the challenge."

Cubs manager Joe Maddon considers the slow-it-down formula that worked for Trout to be a broad-based, over-the-counter remedy that can ease the pain of virtually every struggling player. Maddon continues prescribing it to the Cubs' vast assemblage of young talent, including outfielders Schwarber, Albert Almora Jr. and Ian Happ, catcher Willson Contreras, shortstop Addison Russell, second baseman Javier Baez and even third baseman Kris Bryant, who already has Rookie of the Year and league MVP awards in his den at age 26. Baez (2011), Almora (2012), Bryant (2013), Schwarber (2014) and Happ (2015) all are first-round Cubs draft picks, while Russell (2012) was an opening-round selection by Oakland.

Slowing it down has helped Baez, though clearly not overnight. Maddon was so enamored of Baez' tools—which include acrobatic defense and sixth-sense instincts on the bases—that he wanted him on the Opening Day roster in 2015, despite Baez' propensity for striking out. The front office overruled the manager, however, keeping Baez with Triple-A Iowa until a Sept. 1 callup. When Baez returned to the majors, he showed better discipline, hitting .289 and fanning once every 3.2 at-bats, compared with every 2.2 the year before.

Nevertheless, before the 2016 season, the Cubs signed veteran utility star Ben Zobrist, who had evolved primarily into a second baseman, to a four-year, \$56-million contract. Zobrist has his own story about what it took to make it as a major leaguer. And even though he has exceeded 100 games in his career at each of four positions—and has appeared at eight different spots, counting DH—Zobrist's tale transcends the multiple gloves in his locker. But more on that later.

By bringing Zobrist aboard, the Cubs ensured Baez' maturation would occur methodically and in spots. Baez' 2017 sea-



AP Photo

NOLAN RYAN

"At my height, you're dealing with more arms and legs. The one thing about landing on the ball of my foot as opposed to the heel of my foot was what helped me the most. I was always throwing the ball hard, but early on I was never consistent with my mechanics."

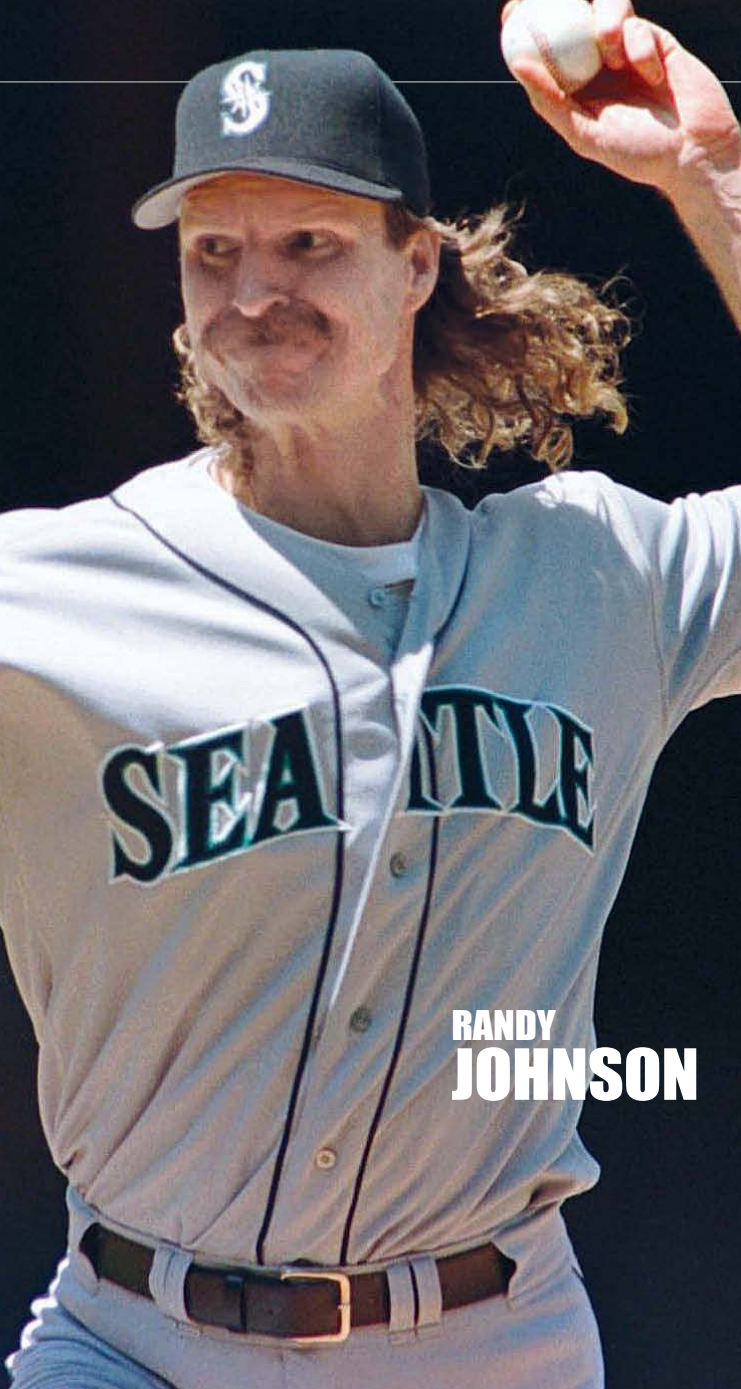
—Randy Johnson

son—.273, 23 homers, 75 RBI—whetted fans' appetites, though 144 strikeouts and a .317 OBP showed the need for improvement.

"For the last couple of years, if you watch Javy in batting practice, he rips balls to right-center and between first and second," said Maddon. "But there comes the game, and that approach leaves. Why? Because he's 20-some years old, and when the game starts everything speeds up and you tend to just go into protection mode and, in a sense, just try to survive.

"When you're finally able to slow those thoughts down and take those batting-practice thoughts into the game, it makes a difference," explained Maddon. "The ball gets bigger and slower, and your movements get more defined and no so out of control, because you've practiced it and now you're able to take it over the line. That's where Javy's getting to right now."

Sometimes, as the likes of Eric Thames and Miles Mikolas can attest, the search for salvation can involve distancing



AP photo/Duane Burrisson

oneself from a situation and journeying to faraway lands, such as Korea and Japan. Both players had spent time in the majors and minors without distinguishing themselves, leaving their careers on the bubble by their mid-20s.

At age 30, Thames parlayed a three-year stint in Korea—where he averaged .349 and 41 home runs—into a three-year Brewers contract worth a guaranteed \$16 million. Last season, his first in Milwaukee, he hit 31 homers—10 more than he had hit in his previous two big-league seasons combined. Thames batted just .247, but his .359 OBP ranked 25th in the National League, and his 75 walks placed him 11th. They underscored the selectivity and discipline he had developed in Korea against a dizzying array of split-fingered pitches and breaking balls.

“I feel like if I stayed here, I probably would have gone on the same path I was on,” said Thames, who got off to another quick start this season—seven homers in his first 17 games—

before needing surgery for a torn ligament in his left thumb. “I was the kind of player that put too much pressure on myself, tried to do too much.” In Korea, he said, he could focus on the process and not worry so much about the results.

Mikolas had a similar experience in Japan, where he pitched for three seasons after being let go by Texas at age 26. At the time of his release, the right-hander had posted a 5.32 ERA over 91.1 big-league innings and already been property of three different organizations. Mikolas was known as the “Lizard King” because he consumed a live reptile on a dare while playing in the 2011 Arizona Fall League. Baseball people, however, questioned his ability to eat up innings, let alone devour the opposition.

That was before Mikolas turned heads in Japan, posting a three-year record of 31-13, along with a 2.18 ERA. The St. Louis Cardinals signed him to two-year, \$15.5-million deal this past winter, and he justified their faith by pitching deep into games when this season started.

“The last year in Japan, I was really mixing my pitches well, changing speeds, and realized how effective that can be with hitters,” said Mikolas, 29. “For me, a lot had to do with repetition and realizing I didn’t have to try to do too much with my pitches, just let my body and the grips do the work and not try to muscle up on everything. The hitters in Japan are very disciplined. You see them change their approach per the count or the at-bat, whereas a lot of the hitters here, if they’re home-run hitters, that’s kind of the one thing on their mind. Hitters there take a much more two-strike, contact-oriented approach, and as a pitcher you have to adapt and know how to get those guys out, which helps a lot coming back here.”

Needless to say, the answer to finding inner peace and a sense of belonging, let alone success, is as varied as the major-league populace. It can be physical or psychological, requiring a change in mechanics or even a change in teams. After years of trying to be the pitcher whom others wanted him to be, Jake Arrieta was liberated with a trade from the Baltimore Orioles to the Cubs, who allowed him to be himself—which eventually was a Cy Young Award winner.

Arrieta was 27 and still bouncing between the majors and minors when the Cubs acquired him in mid-2013. He didn’t arrive in the majors to stay until one month into the following season, but a year after that, in 2015, he won the Cy Young with a 22-6 record and 1.77 ERA.

In Chicago, Arrieta finally found a pitching coach who understood him in Chris Bosio (now with the Detroit Tigers), who also helped turn soft-tossing young Kyle Hendricks into a major-league ERA leader. Based on Arrieta’s unsurpassed work ethic and fitness regimen, the Cubs came to agree that he could succeed despite his unorthodox habit of throwing across his body instead of in a straight line to the plate.

In general, such a crossfire delivery is considered hazardous to a pitcher’s command, to say nothing of his physical well-being. Still, from 2015-2017, Arrieta had more victories than any other pitcher in the game, going 54-24 and throwing two no-hitters while averaging a yeoman-like 31 starts per season. He cashed in on his success this past winter by signing a three-year, \$75-million deal with the Philadelphia Phillies.

“I’ve learned to be my own coach and trust my gut, instead of trusting everybody I come in contact with,” Arrieta once said of his struggles. “I knew for a long time I could pitch my way and have success, but it was hard to do that. You have to be coachable and try to listen and learn from people, but

everybody normally doesn't have all the information. Sometimes you have to be your own coach and try to figure it out on your own."

Zobrist, 37, understands. Despite learning multiple positions to increase his value, the switch-hitting shortstop didn't manage to play a full season in the majors until age 28. No one has appreciated Zobrist's versatility more than Maddon, who also was his manager then with Tampa Bay. Both agree, however, that developing some offensive pop was what finally made Zobrist, who became MVP of the 2016 World Series, an impact player instead of just a handy reserve.

In five minor-league seasons, Zobrist had hit just 23 home runs. "Being more aggressive and learning how to drive the ball was the key," said Zobrist, who hit 12 homers in 198 big-league at-bats in 2008, then added 20 or more in three of the next four seasons.

"I had failed so much that I said I'm going to fail my way or be out of the game," he said. "I had never hit an 'oppo' (opposite-field) home run in my life until I got to the big leagues. I did things that I never had before, Little League included. You have to have the courage to take that last leap of faith, that last risk that you were never willing to take before."

Only 24 last season, Schwarber was younger than Arrieta and Zobrist had been when they reached their career crossroads. He needed more direction, and the Cubs hierarchy provided it. President of baseball operations Theo Epstein basically told him: "You're a hitter first. If you go back and look, you had 600 plate appearances in the minor leagues and were a .333 hitter. You're not just some all-or-nothing slugger. You're a hitter who has power. The answer is not home runs. It's more how consistent your approach is, how hitter-ish it is, your ability to handle different parts of the zone, hit the ball to all fields, hit line drives, be a tough out—to resemble the hitter you've been your entire life."

After his brief reboot in the minors, Schwarber was able to resurrect his season, finishing above the Mendoza Line at .211 and totaling 30 homers to go with an underwhelming 59 RBI, 150 strikeouts and .315 OBP. Not necessarily considering himself cured, he continued his reassessment over the winter. It included shedding 20 pounds off a 6-foot, 235-pound frame—not just to become quicker at the plate, but to aid the converted catcher on the basepaths and in the outfield.

Yet, for all the things Schwarber needed to remember, the most important was learning how to forget.

"There are always going to be guys who are 0-for-20 or 0-for-30," said Schwarber, whose OPS the first month of this season was a robust .969, compared with a weak .677 in 2017. "I've been there. That's where you've got to be able to have that short memory. You've got to be able to laugh off that error in the outfield in Game 1 of this season. (Schwarber let a single get past him for a costly miscue, but later hit a home run to help cement a Cubs victory.) I'm mad for the first five minutes because I want to make the play for Jonny (starter Jon

Lester), but, hey, I'm over it. It's the same with an O-fer. You're going to come out of it at some point."

Schwarber shrugged.

"It's a day-to-day fight where you've got to be able to stay right in the middle," he said. "If you're feeling sexy, keep that rolling, but when things are bad, that's where the true character test comes in, to be able to stay that same guy and forget about things."

While Schwarber was another in a long line of Ruthian prospects who had to learn to make better contact, Bryce Harper and Tommy Pham had to find better contact lenses.

"I don't know how you ever hit before. You have some of the worst eyes I've ever seen," Keith Smithson, the Washington Nationals' team optometrist, told an 18-year-old Harper in 2011, when the touted prospect was hitting .231 in low Class-A ball. A new pair of contact lenses—Harper had worn contacts

in college, after abandoning them in high school because of headaches—helped make him a Rookie of the Year in 2012 and a league MVP in 2015.

"It was like I was seeing in HD," Harper remarked.

Pham was a 20-year-old outfielder in the Cardinals system when he was diagnosed with keratoconus. It's a degenerative eye condition that produces structural abnormalities in the cornea and causes visual distortion. Pham underwent a breakthrough surgery to stop the erosion. And while it's not uncommon for players to go through a variety of bats and gloves, Pham continues to do the same with contact lenses. He's determined to battle his impairments and stay on top of them.

Because of his vision issues and a series of non-related injuries (Pham also has asserted that the Cardinals organization didn't properly believe in his ability),

he didn't make his major-league debut until 2014, eight years after he was drafted. He continued to shuffle between the majors and the minors until May 5 of last season.

That's when he began a breakout campaign at age 29, finishing with a .306 batting average, 23 homers, 73 RBI, 25 steals and a .411 OBP. Finally convinced Pham was for real, the Cardinals traded away Stephen Piscotty and Randal Grichuk, two more highly regarded prospects who had stood in Pham's way. Pham's immediate response? A .327 average and .445 OBP through his first 29 games.

Perhaps Ohtani will have the good fortune of Victor Martinez, who is featured in this issue's "Game I'll Never Forget." Martinez' epiphany came sooner rather than later. In 2004, he was in his first full season with the Cleveland Indians when his batting coach, Hall of Famer Eddie Murray, told him no good could come from trying to hit the ball 700 feet. Murray suggested swinging with only 65 to 70 percent force. That simple piece of advice turned Martinez into almost a .300 career hitter.

That said, all major leaguers—Shohei Ohtani included—are advised to proceed with caution. That perceived aha moment can dissipate into a ha-ha one, with the game enjoying the next chuckle—though hopefully not the last laugh. **BD**



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PITCHf/x data attempts to measure and explain the value in a catcher's ability to frame pitches.

THE ART OF PITCH FRAMING

Stealing strikes now
has a statistical
measure, though not
all catchers are
on board with it

By Mike Berardino



Bobby Wilson is a realist. With a career batting average of .213 across parts of nine seasons in the major leagues, the journeyman catcher knows it's not his bat that keeps him in the game at age 35.

Instead, it's his defense behind the plate; in particular it's his pitch-framing ability.

"That's how I've continued to get jobs is because the pitch-framing metrics say, 'This guy is getting strikes called that are balls and not having balls called that are strikes,'" says Wilson, now backing up rookie Mitch Garver with the Minnesota Twins. "It's not really the eye test anymore that tells you if a guy is receiving the ball well. It's how the numbers are, so you have to pay attention to it."

In conversations with modern-day catchers, the topic of pitch framing tends to be a hot-button issue. If the metrics are kind to that particular catcher, he's probably on board with the idea of leaning on PITCHf/x data to determine which catchers provide the most influence on borderline pitches.

On the flip side, those who regularly rank near the bottom of publicly available pitch-framing metrics such as *Baseball Prospectus* and *StatCorner* view the data with a bit more skepticism.

"I try not to look at the numbers," says Martin Maldonado, coming off his first Gold Glove season with the Los Angeles Angels. "I don't check it. I just go out there and do my job and try to catch as well as I possibly can. Try to present the pitch to the umpire, try to be in the right spot at the right time. Numbers-wise, at the end of the day you're going to be where you want to be. That's just something I don't look into too much."

That's probably a good idea considering Maldonado, who broke in with the Milwaukee Brewers in 2011, ranked 74th out of 84 qualifying catchers through May 21 with minus-2.2 framing runs, according to *Baseball Prospectus*.

Maldonado shakes his head when asked if there are any special framing drills he prefers in order to improve his rating.

"I just do exactly what I've been doing," he says. "I think it's just about being as quiet as possible back there. You have to present it well to the umpire. I don't try to move too much."

Tucker Barnhart, Maldonado's 2017 Gold Glove counterpart in the National League, has his reservations about pitch framing as well. That's no surprise considering Barnhart, at minus-1.8 framing runs for the Cincinnati Reds, ranked 72nd overall (two spots ahead of Maldonado) in the early-season pitch-framing data.

"I look at it obviously because it's a factor now," Barnhart says. "It's more of a factor than it ever has been. I just think there's so many variables that go into it that it's hard to really quantify it in a number, in my opinion. Everybody's out there trying to get as many strikes as possible, sure. Do I necessarily agree it costs a team runs? Now there I'm not sure."

Barnhart is able to speak freely after signing a four-year, \$16-million extension this offseason, which includes a pair of club options through 2022. Generously listed at 5-foot-11, he admittedly spent time this winter and into spring training working to improve his pitch-framing form in order to boost his metrics in that arcane area.

"Because I am a smaller guy, I don't have as big a frame

times because it looks like it's high. For the majority of guys that catch that ball at their mask, it is high. That's the thing."

Barnhart shrugs and smiles. He knows pitch framing as a concept and as a measuring tool is probably here to stay, so why fight it?

"You've got to pay attention to it because it's a current stat and you'd be naïve not to do so," Barnhart says. "Then again, there's only so many things I can do because of what's God-given."

That whole catcher-size dichotomy is on display, game in and game out, for a team like the Toronto Blue Jays.

Russell Martin is the starter, all 5-foot-10, 210 pounds of him. Renowned for his handling of a pitching staff and ability to block balls in the dirt, he's the one with a 2007 Gold Glove and a five-year, \$82-million contract that runs through next season.

Across the room is his heir apparent, 27-year-old Luke Maile. At 6-foot-3, 225 pounds, the 2017 waiver claim from the Tampa Bay Rays is starting to show some hitting ability to go along with a pitch-framing knack that placed him



"I just do exactly what I've been doing. I think it's just about being as quiet as possible back there. You have to present it well to the umpire. I don't try to move too much."

—Martin Maldonado

to maybe block the umpire out, but I'd like to make it look like more pitches are in the middle of my body," Barnhart says. "If you catch a pitch in the center of your body, there's a good chance most of the time you're going to get that pitch called a strike. If you have to reach at all, that's when you start to find umpires aren't giving you as many strikes. I feel like with my size, there are times I have to reach on pitches that other guys don't."

As pitching coaches and advance video scouts have begun to preach the merits of the high strike amid the launch-angle revolution, smaller catchers like Barnhart must make adjustments in that realm as well. By definition they should be good at framing the low strike, but the one at the belt can be problematic.

"With my stance on the high pitch, we've changed it a little to get a little taller, so it makes it look more like it's at the center of my body as opposed to my mask," Barnhart says. "Truly, if I'm behind the plate and I'm sitting in my regular stance, the ball that's at my mask is a strike. I just don't get it many

third in the majors at 3.5 framing runs.

Only Tony Wolters of the Colorado Rockies and Mike Zunino of the Seattle Mariners ranked ahead of Maile through the first third of the season.

"I put a lot of stock in it and I put in a lot of time," Maile says. "When I was coming up, I came up with Tampa and that was always one of the big things that was talked about over there. Jose Molina was kind of the guy over there when I got drafted, and he was obviously one of the best ever."

Maile, who also had highly rated pitch framers such as Wilson and Ryan Hanigan in Rays spring camps along the way, credits his former Rays catching coordinators, Jamie Nelson and Paul Hoover, and Triple-A manager Bill Evers for instilling proper fundamentals and respect for pitch framing.

"The great thing about them was they all had their own style and their own philosophies with it," Maile says. "But it all came down to general principles: working underneath the ball, presenting the pitch to the best of your abil-

ity, and not being too herky-jerky back there.”

Martin ranked 16th in the majors at 2.1 framing runs, so Maile has another role model to watch as he works toward becoming an everyday option in the coming years.

“We haven’t had too many conversations about it, but I think being a catcher for as long as we have, you know good catching, good fundamentals when you see it,” Maile says. “There’s certainly some things he’s done where I haven’t needed to have the discussion. I can just tell what he’s trying to do and why he does it. I think the biggest thing with it is you have to find a style that works for you. There’s different ways to do it.”

Twins catcher Jason Castro is out for the season following surgery to repair torn meniscus in his right knee, but it was largely his pitch-framing skill that led a 103-loss team to woo him with a three-year, \$24.5-million contract following the 2016 season.

Castro, who came up through the Houston Astros system and helped lay the groundwork for a championship-level pitching staff, ranked 19th at 1.6 framing runs at the time of his injury. When the 6-foot-3, 215-pounder explains pitch framing, he uses terminology such as “angling” and “body position” while not-

“If you catch a pitch in the center of your body, there’s a good chance most of the time you’re going to get that pitch called a strike. If you have to reach at all, that’s when you start to find umpires aren’t giving you as many strikes. I feel like with my size, there are times I have to reach on pitches that other guys don’t.”

—Tucker Barnhart

ing the importance of maintaining a running dialogue with the plate umpire in order to ensure optimal sightlines.

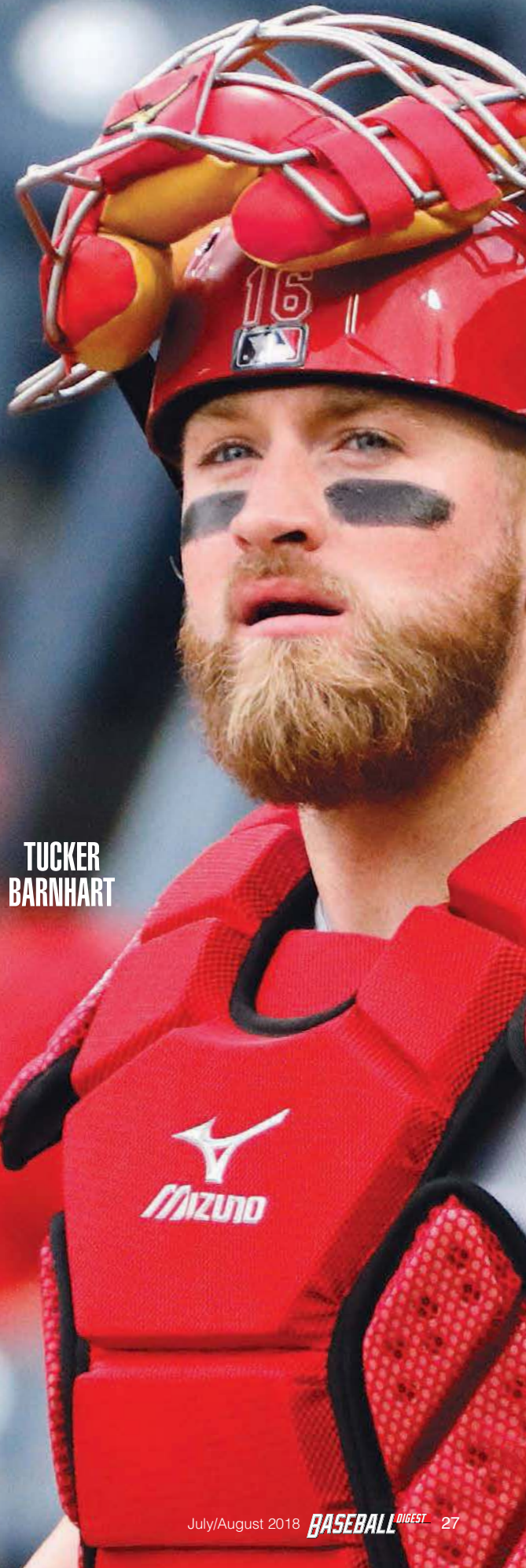
Wilson, Castro’s injury replacement, thinks in those same terms despite being listed at 6 feet and 230 pounds.

“The umpire and I are back there together,” Wilson says. “I’m trying to protect them and also give them the best visual I can possibly give them to make their job easier. We’re working together. If there’s something I can do as far as setting up lower or setting up more on the plate, I’ll ask them, ‘What can I do to make this pitch look better for you?’ It’s a little game between us.”

Wilson enjoys the byplay and takes great pride in his pitch-framing skills. He chuckles at a suggestion that pitch framing might just be a fad, pondering for a moment what could render it into oblivion.

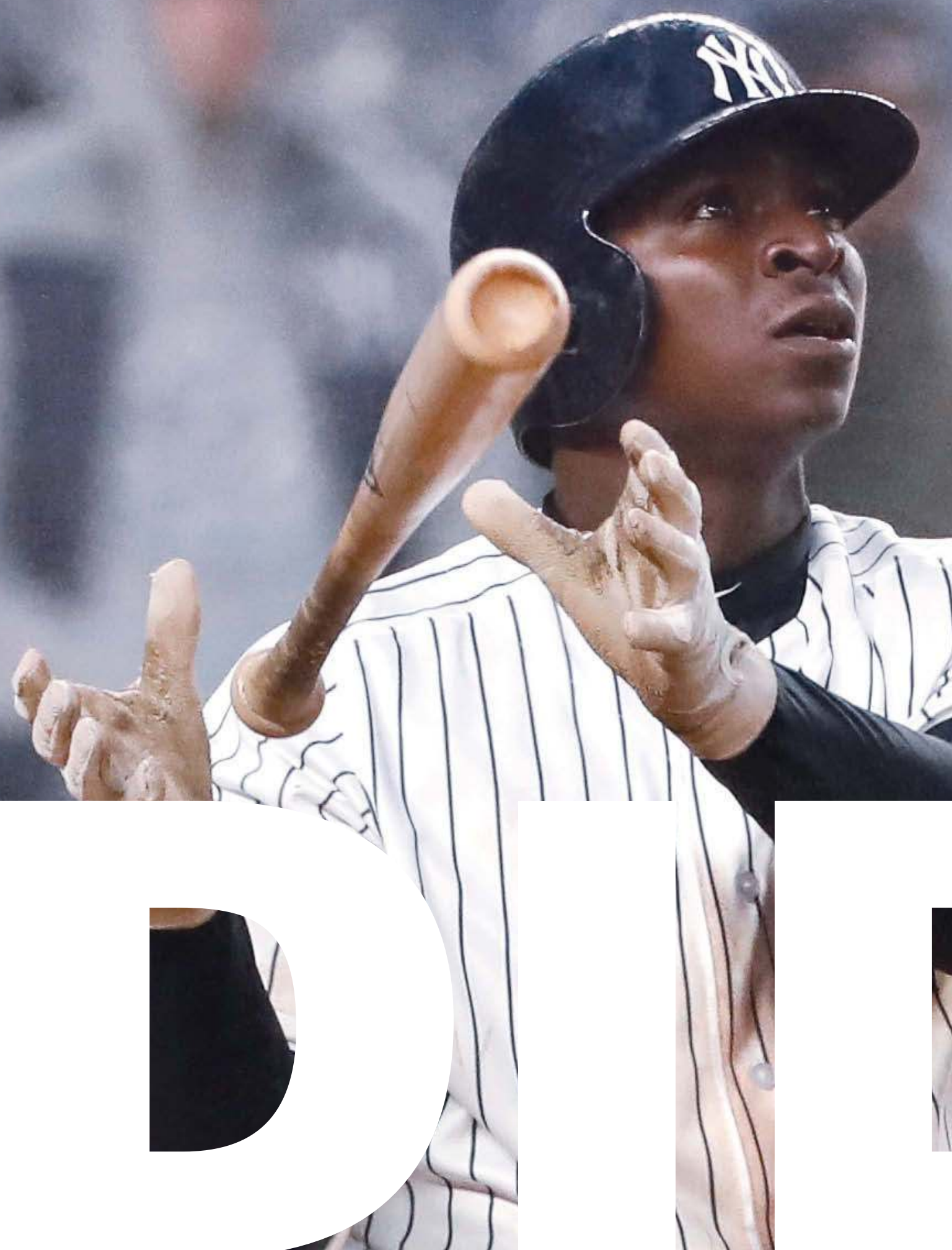
“They could decide they want to go to an electronic strike zone,” Wilson says. “Then you could put a hockey goalie back there, I guess.” **BD**

Mike Berardino writes about baseball and the Minnesota Twins for the St. Paul Pioneer Press



**TUCKER
BARNHART**

AP photo/Gene J. Puskar



By Tyler Kepner

By the time he turned 28 years old, Derek Jeter had earned four championship rings as the shortstop for the New York Yankees. He had won the Most Valuable Player awards of the All-Star Game and the World Series. He had hosted “Saturday Night Live,” dated Mariah Carey, filmed a Visa commercial and signed a \$189-million contract.

Didi Gregorius turned 28 this February. He has done none of those things—and Yankees fans love him, anyway. Yes, they can be demanding, but they are also savvy enough to recognize there is only one Jeter. And while most fans might not want to say it, they all know this, too: Gregorius has been a substantial upgrade over Jeter at the end.

By the 20th season of his storied career, in 2014, Jeter was a singles hitter with painfully limited range on a team that did not make the playoffs. He deserved his elaborate send-off, but it was awkward, at times for a franchise that reveres its past but lives for the moment. It also gave his successor a fighting chance to win the fans over.

Gregorius has done that by steadily improving across four seasons in pinstripes. He raised his batting average and OPS in each of his first three years.

Making His Mark in New York

Replacing a fan favorite and future Hall of Famer was not an easy task, but **Didi Gregorius** has more than fulfilled his role as Yankees shortstop

In each of his first four seasons as Yankees shortstop, Didi Gregorius has improved offensively and defensively, making him a dependable performer.

AP photo/Kathy Willens

He vaulted the Yankees to the American League Championship Series last fall with two home runs off Cleveland's Corey Kluber in the Division Series clincher. He started this season with 10 home runs in April.

"I'm not a good player," Gregorius insisted after one of them, by his locker at Yankee Stadium. "I'm *trying* to be a good player. In my head, if I know that I can always be better, then I can always be better. So when people ask me, 'How did your day go?' it could always be better."

When Yankees general manager Brian Cashman traded for Gregorius in December 2014, he believed strongly in that potential. To that point in his career, Gregorius had played parts of three seasons for the Cincinnati Reds and the Arizona Diamondbacks, hitting .243 with a .680 OPS, not much better than Jeter had been in that creaky farewell season. But Gregorius had room to grow.

He was just 24 when he joined the Yankees and had never spent a full season in the majors. Born in the Netherlands, Gregorius grew up in Curacao, an island that has produced Andruw Jones and other stars, including his boyhood friend Andrelton Simmons of the Los Angeles Angels. But baseball is not nearly as prevalent there as it is in the United States or the Dominican Republic, and talent tends to be raw.

"Generally, when guys haven't played a lot of baseball, regardless of where they're from, it gives you some level of belief—cautious optimism let's call it—that there's a high amount of upside there," said Angels general manager Billy Eppler, who was Cashman's assistant in 2014.

The Reds signed Gregorius for \$50,000 in 2007. His father was a pitcher and his mother was a softball player on the Dutch national team. Jim Stoeckel, a former coach of the Dutch baseball team who helped sign Gregorius for the Reds, said Didi had been a pitcher, too, but hoped to forge his own path in the pros.

"He made it clear he wanted to be a shortstop," Stoeckel said. "So, the first thing that stood out about him was his arm strength."

The Reds gave Gregorius only a brief look in the majors—eight games in 2012, when they were champions of the National League Central. Eager to maximize their window to win, the Reds dealt him to Arizona after that season as part of a three-team trade that brought veteran outfielder Shin-Soo Choo from Cleveland.

Two years later, with a logjam of shortstops in Arizona, the Diamondbacks swapped Gregorius to the Yankees in another three-team deal. They got good value, obtaining left-handed starter Robbie Ray, a future All-Star, from the Detroit Tigers. From the Yankees' perspective, though, the trade was a steal.

Unable to pry Gregorius from the Diamondbacks, Cashman told Dave Dombrowski, then the Tigers' general manager, that he would give him pitcher Shane Greene if Dombrowski could get Gregorius for the Yankees. As a former 15th-round draft pick with ordinary minor-league numbers, Greene profiled as a pitcher with limited potential.

But he had dazzled the Tigers twice that August, allowing just two runs in 15 innings.

Dombrowski, who was trying to keep the Tigers atop the A.L. Central, believed Greene could help his rotation quicker than Ray could. He made the move and the Yankees had their future shortstop—though Cashman acknowledged he was no sure thing.

"Didi was a very good defender, but he had not been able to establish himself as a hitter against left-handed pitching," Cashman said. "He was still developing with the bat, and he wasn't a finished product. It was matter of a lot of pro scouts applying his ceiling."

Cashman stressed that the deal was not as lopsided then as it turned out to be. Greene had indeed made a strong impression as a Yankees rookie, going 5-4 with a 3.78 ERA and more strikeouts than innings pitched. New York planned to keep him in its rotation.

"At the time, I felt like we were pitching-deficient, and we were depleting one area of need to shore up another area of need," Cashman said. "It was a difficult decision. I was

so desperate for a shortstop, I had to step up and put an important piece on the table to get it done."

Even Stoeckel, who knew Gregorius better than anyone with the Yankees, did not expect this kind of production. In an interview after the trade, Stoeckel guessed that Gregorius could hit .240 to .250, with 10 to 15 home runs. He would handle the bat well and show good instincts as a baserunner, Stoeckel added.

"If you just go by the five tools—hit, power, speed, arm and field—his arm is exceptional and the other things are O.K., kind of average in the big leagues if you're evaluating him," he said. "But when you put it all together and see the whole package, over time, it's going to be impressive. I



AP photo/Julie Jacobson



AP photo/Jae C. Hong

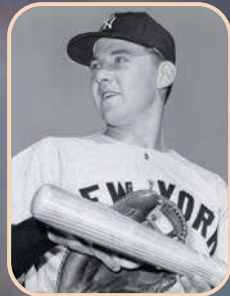
Primary Yankee Shortstops With 20-HR Seasons (1901-2017)

Four players in Yankees history have played the majority of his games at shortstop and had a 20-homer season. Derek Jeter and Didi Gregorius are the only Yankees to hit all 20-plus homers in a season as a shortstop.

Year	Shortstop	HR	HR Notes
1962	Tom Tresh	20	Hit 15 HR in 111 games at SS and 5 HR as LF
1982	Roy Smalley	20	Belted 16 HR in 89 games as SS and 4 HR as 3B
1999	Derek Jeter	24	Clubbed all 24 HR as a SS
2001	Derek Jeter	21	All 21 HR came as a SS
2004	Derek Jeter	23	Each of his 23 HR came as a SS
2016	Didi Gregorius	20	Hit 19 HR as a SS and one as a PH
2017	Didi Gregorius	25	Every one of his 25 HR were hit as a SS



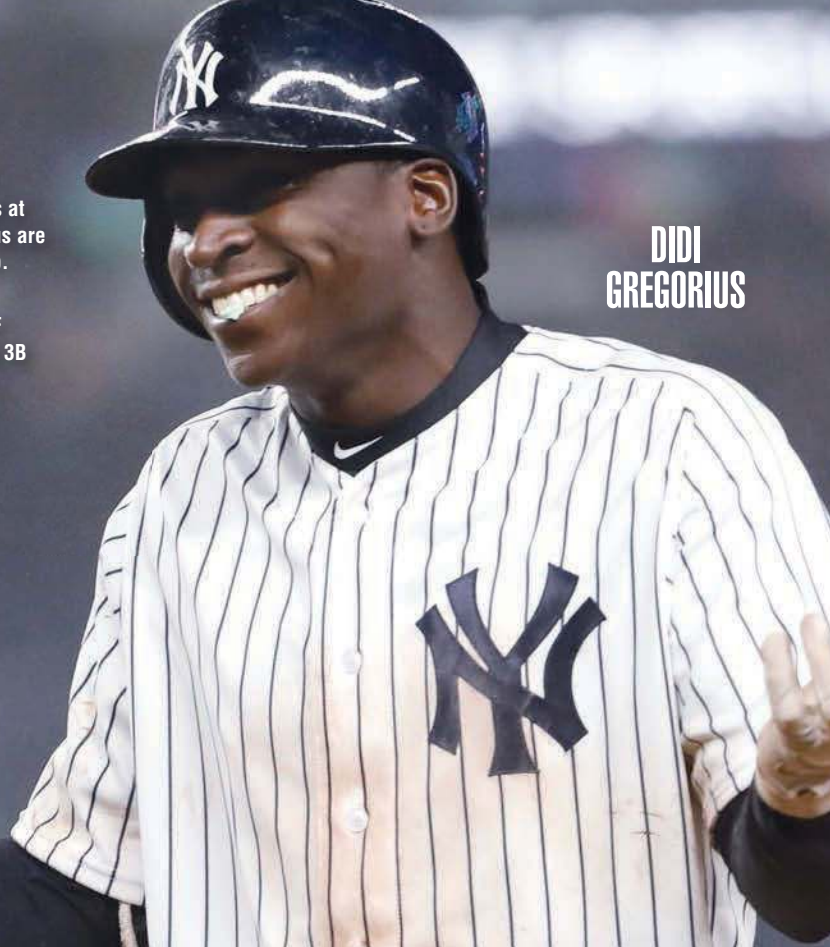
DEREK JETER



TOM TRESH

AP Photo

DIDI GREGORIUS



AP photo/Kathy Willens

don't think he'll disappoint anyone."

On that point, Stoeckel was perfectly accurate. After a rocky first three months with the Yankees in 2015, Gregorius hit .289 with a .752 OPS from July 1 through the rest of the season, helping the Yankees win a wild-card spot. In 2016, Gregorius proved his second-half surge had been no fluke: he had a nearly identical OPS, .751, while hitting .276 with 20 homers.

Last season, Gregorius' 25 homers set a record for a Yankees shortstop. Then he connected against Minnesota in the wild-card game, before his heroics off Kluber in the next round. That night, after the champagne celebration in the visiting clubhouse at Progressive Field, Gregorius reflected on the challenge of replacing Jeter—who, for all his greatness, never hit two homers in a postseason game.

"The question never gets old," Gregorius said. "To be honest, it was just: after he played his long, successful career in New York, I'm the guy to follow him up. It's amazing for me to be in this organization and just being awesome with all these guys. Everybody's here helping each other. Everybody wants each other to be good. I think that's the motto since I got here, since '15. The first day, I was really comfortable with all these guys. I got a warm welcome from everybody."

Gregorius hit third that night in Cleveland, and someone asked him how it felt to be such a run producer. After all, most people had expected Gregorius to be little more than a glove man.

"Well, this is the thing," Gregorius said. "There's a lot of times guys put a label on a person without letting the person develop; this guy can only play defense or this guy can only play offense. But you don't know how hard a guy works to

get where he wants to be, to stay where he wants to be, and to keep making adjustments every year to try to get better."

Those improvements have been clear to the Yankees' new manager, Aaron Boone. He knew Gregorius from his years as an ESPN analyst, but said he never appreciated how much Gregorius loves to play, or all the ways he could get better.

"He's taking some pride in earning walks and working deep counts while always on the hunt to do damage, which has shown up in the extra-base hits and the home runs," Boone said. "And then in the field, he's so steady, and it's fun—with how great his arm is, you don't see it all the time. So, he can kind of play at about 60, 70 percent and it's accurate and strong. Having the arm that he does allows him to play with a lot of confidence and have a really good clock out at shortstop."

Besides his usual stellar defense, Gregorius had 21 walks through May 25, compared to just 25 in all of 2017. He is generating more hard contact—and more power—by keeping his front shoulder closed against left-handers, allowing himself to get his bat head out in front and drive balls with more backspin.

Gregorius might never be captain of the Yankees, and he might never win World Series rings for every finger of one hand. He'll probably never match Jeter as a celebrity, either, or join him in the 3,000-hit club. The fact is, he never had to.

All Gregorius had to do was be better than Jeter was at 40. It was a low bar, and Gregorius has soared above it to heights nobody expected. He is a star on his own, much more than the guy who replaced a legend.

"We don't even bring him up anymore," CC Sabathia said of Jeter. "Didi's been that good." **BD**

AP photo/Jae C. Hong



After thwarting a Fernando Rodney save opp with an RBI double in 2014, Mike Trout mimicked the then-Seattle closer's game-closing arrow shot.



BODY

FERNANDO
RODNEY

AP photo/Ted S. Warren

A PLAYER'S



LANGUAGE

TELLS A STORY

Emotions often are on display during a game and for some players it can be self-destructive and hinder performance

T.R. Sullivan/MLB.Com

Astros reliever Ken Giles was furious with himself after giving up four runs in the ninth inning of a 4-0 loss to the Yankees on May 1.

Giles stormed off the mound after being pulled by manager A.J. Hinch. He ended up punching himself in the face and slamming a bat down in the dugout.

It was not hard to read his body language.

"It's a tough look for someone coming out of competition like that," Hinch said. "I understand the frustration. I understand how much these guys put into it, but in an ideal world you handle it a little more calmly without the violence."

That can be difficult at times in an emotional game. Baseball is not played with the same violence as pro football, the speed of hockey or the sheer athleticism of basketball. It is a sport steeped in tradition and often it is frowned upon to show emotions on the field.

But that is hardly the case. Emotions flow, tempers flare, players get upset over their own performance and baseball has produced some of the most memorable brawls ever seen in a sporting venue. Few will ever forget the 2000 World Series when Yankees pitcher Roger Clemens picked up Mike Piazza's cracked bat and flung it back into the ground.

Piazza took exception and tempers flared on the national stage. Nationals outfielder Bryce Harper once found himself in a fight in his own dugout with teammate Jonathan Papelbon. Veteran pitcher John Lackey was renowned for having difficulty controlling his emotions when something bad happened on the field. Yet the Cubs drank a toast to Lackey after clinching the N.L. Central last September.

"I know he wants to win just as much as everybody else here," teammate Jon Lester told the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "That's something you can't teach. You can't



AP photo/Gary Hershorn/Pool

Roger Clemens and Mike Piazza exchanged words in Game 2 of the 2000 World Series after Clemens threw Piazza's broken bat back towards the Mets catcher.

teach competitiveness. You can't teach balls. You can't teach that fire."

It is all part of the game, something managers must deal with in their own players and watch for in opponents.

"It goes overlooked oftentimes," Mariners manager Scott Servais said. "I've often said of our guys, I'm OK with them showing emotion. I don't have a problem with a fist pump, or a slap of the glove. I love what Dee Gordon does, it's all about Dee Gordon and our team, it's never to show up the other team.

"On the flip side of that, the negative emotion you're talking about, it's when the pitcher throws a pitch and he doesn't get it in the right spot, but the guy fouls it off. And you see the guy shake his head (like) that's terrible—the hitter doesn't know you weren't trying to throw the ball there. That's bad body language. That's defeatist-type language. You'll see younger guys do it, but you won't see the veteran guys do it very often. They've been corrected at some point in their career."

Sometimes players are just having fun with each other. Rangers third baseman Adrian Beltre and Mariners pitcher Felix Hernandez have been engaging in a playful feud for years ever since they were teammates in Seattle.

Every at-bat between Beltre and Hernandez becomes great theater with the two harping and talking smack incessantly like a couple of Little Leaguers.

"It is fun but we always want to beat him even though I know if he gets the best out of me, I'm going to hear from him after the game," Beltre said. "It goes both ways. In the beginning I was getting the upper hand on him but the last couple of years he has found it easy to get me out. But it is always fun. I always hope, even though I love the guy, I am always going to try and beat him."

The Rangers don't have to worry about Beltre. He is a 20-year veteran who knows how to handle himself on the field. He takes the game seriously but also knows how to have fun while doing it. His body language reflects that.

Harper has been among those who have been vocal about allowing players to be more outgoing and emotional on the field. Others agree with him.

"I think people do get a little too sensitive about how we show emotion and stuff," Rays pitcher Chris Archer said. "There's no problem. If you do something that genuinely

gets you excited—maybe a late-inning home run or a strikeout—it's only human nature to be excited."

It's hard not for a reliever to get excited when closing down a ballgame in the ninth inning and the game seems to have become accustomed to Fernando Rodney shooting off an imaginary arrow into the sky after a save. You better learn to take it though.

Mike Trout once shot an "arrow" right back at Rodney after the Angels rallied in the ninth inning against Rodney when he was the Mariners closer.

Beltre said there is a wrong way and a right way to do.

"You don't want to show up anybody," Beltre said. "It's all right to show emotion; you just don't want to be disrespectful to the game or the other team."

All players give off different vibes with their emotions and body language. Studying and ascertaining what a player's body language says is a big part of a manager's job.

"You can tell a lot from your own players, other players," Rangers manager Jeff Banister said. "When things go wrong, the average human crouches down, tries to get small. Guys who are experienced and have been through it know how to slow things down, stand up, shoulders broad, eyes up and wide, and confident. There is a lot in body language.

"Yes, we pay attention to all those things. There are multiple things. You can gauge his emotion. If he is walking around the mound faster, different cadence. There is the guy who stands on the mound and waits for the ball back, there is no emotion. That tells you, too."

Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said pitchers are easier to read than hitters.

"If you've seen them misfiring and start walking around the mound and pacing, yes, you can tell a guy's not comfortable, whether he's tired or he's just misfiring and losing it," Gardenhire said. "Yeah, pitchers are probably the easiest to read because the situation starts evolving as

Mariners pitcher Felix Hernandez and Rangers third baseman Adrian Beltre have had a history of friendly bantering since the two were teammates (2005-09) in Seattle.



AP photo/Richard W. Rodriguez

they're going and facing people.

"But hitters, it's a little harder," noted Gardenhire. "You just don't know what they're thinking. You can see some guys that they're a wreck, a train wreck, and they're swinging at everything and have no clue that day—and you might want to have somebody ready to hit when they come up."

Managers want players to be themselves, but they also don't want them tearing themselves down to the point where it gets self-destructive.

"Everybody responds to success and failure differently," Hinch said. "You don't want it to be counterproductive. You want it to be channeled in the right area and used in the right way, and ultimately maximize their potential by being constructive, not destructive."

Former All-Star first baseman Rafael Palmeiro was taught a valuable lesson early in his career by longtime major-league infielder and coach Toby Harrah. If Palmeiro came back to the dugout mad or frustrated about an at-bat, it would send the wrong message.

Harrah explained to Palmeiro that if other players saw one of the Rangers' best hitters get mad or frustrated about the opposing pitcher, then they would think they had no chance either.

"Some players are fierce competitors and they love to be in the fight," Banister said. "They want it on their shoulders. They want to be the contributing factor. Sometimes you have to take a step back and allow yourself to relax and compete the way you are designed to compete. It's not for the lack of want-to. Guys have a tremendous amount of want-to. There is a lot of time you have to dial it back and allow yourself to compete within your authentic self."

Scouts have learned to study body language when observing high school, college and international prospects. How a player reacts on the field to different situations can reveal as much to a scout as bat speed, arm



John Lackey, who pitched 15 years in the major leagues, was known for his angry outbursts when umpires' calls of balls and strikes did not go his way.

AP photo/Charles Rex Arbogast

strength, a radar gun or a stopwatch.

"How different players handle different situations, we talk about it," Banister said. "Everything on the field: there is an event, there is an outcome and there is a response to it. It is the response that is most important. The event has already happened. It's how you handle the response. Some guys handle the response extremely well, others don't.

"That's why we watch these guys" explained Banister. "That's why we watch the tape. That's why we tune in and see who they are and what they are. It's an old-school scouting style of who they are and what they are as opposed to new-school metrics and what shows up in a computer program that you see as a number. The ability to blend the two, based on what your eyes are telling you and what the numbers are telling you, is important." **BD**

AP photo/Elaine Thompson



AP photo/Elaine Thompson

FELIX
HERNANDEZ

By Stuart Shea

Major League Baseball's All-Star Game was first played in Chicago in 1933 after noted *Chicago Tribune* columnist Arch Ward made a concerted effort to push for a midseason spectacle. Whether the All-Star Game remains relevant in these days of interleague play is debatable, but it is unequivocally true that 85 years of midsummer competition have provided plenty of great moments.

Eighty-eight All-Star contests have been played in these 85 years. In 1959, 1960, 1961 and 1962, the leagues played two games per year in order to increase the players' pension fund.

Following the 2017 contest, the National League and American League stood—improbably—equal, each having won 43 times. Two games have ended in ties (one of those due to rain), and there was no game played in 1945.

In the early years of competition, the leagues were fairly even in All-Star play. The N.L. then went on a string of winning 19 of 20 games from 1963 through 1982. But beginning in 1988, the A.L. has dominated, with a 23-6-1 record in the last 30 games.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Where have the most games taken place? How about California, with 12?

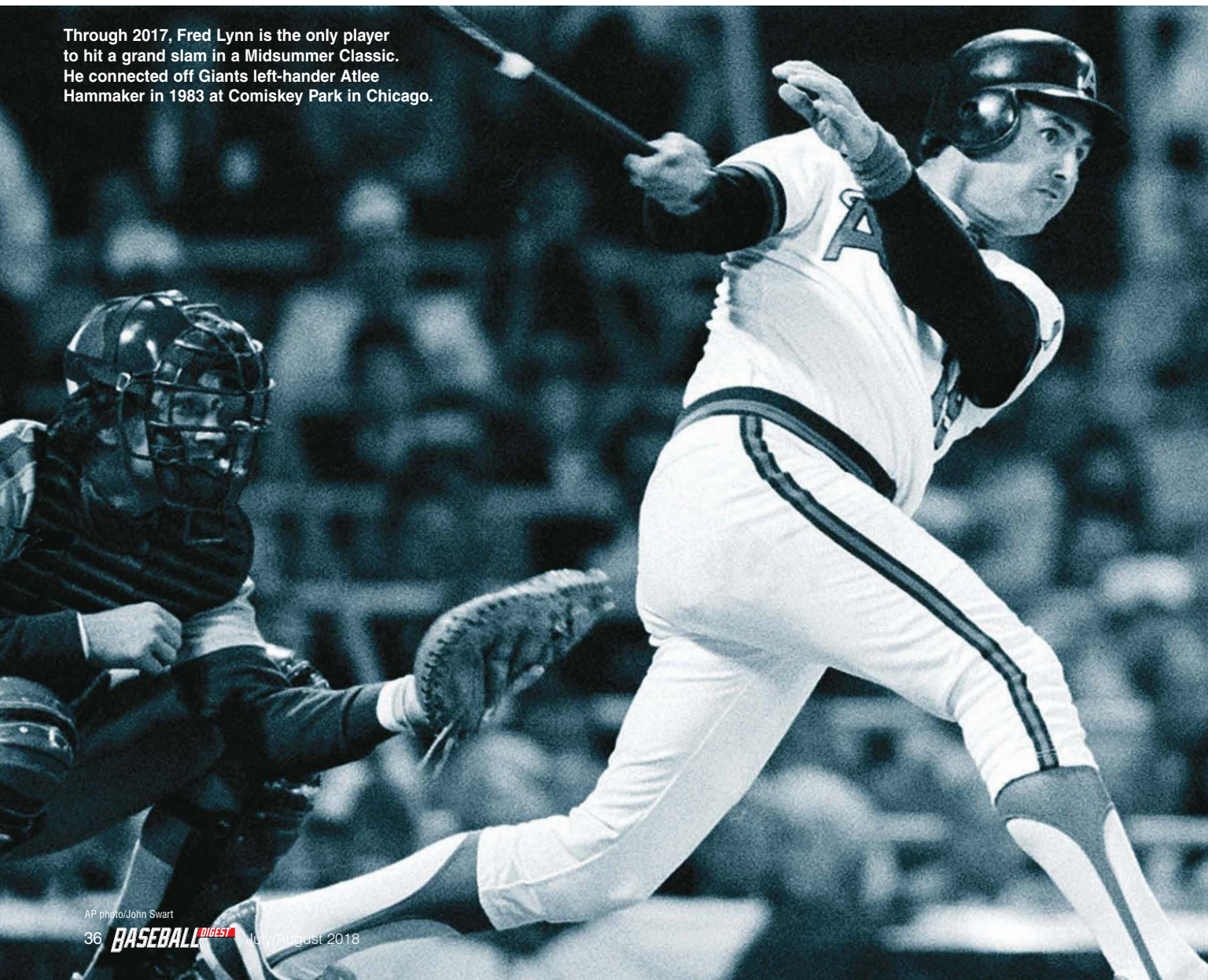
The Los Angeles Dodgers hosted two, one in Memorial Stadium and one at Dodger Stadium. The Giants had three in San Francisco (two at Candlestick Park and one at AT&T Park). The Angels have had three at Anaheim Stadium, the Padres have hosted three—two at San Diego Stadium and one at Petco Park—and the A's have had one at Oakland Alameda County Coliseum.

The Indians have hosted five games, four at Cleveland Stadium and one at Progressive Field. The Cincinnati Reds have hosted five games in three different parks, as have the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Detroit has laid out the welcome mat four times in two different parks. The St. Louis Cardinals have hosted three All-Star games, each in a different stadium, while the A's have hosted three games, each one in a different city: Philadelphia, Kansas City and Oakland. The Yankees hosted four games in 'old' Yankee Stadium while the White Sox have held four in two different parks.

The only current major-league city since 1933 not to have

Through 2017, Fred Lynn is the only player to hit a grand slam in a Midsummer Classic. He connected off Giants left-hander Atlee Hammaker in 1983 at Comiskey Park in Chicago.





AP Photo



AP Photo/Carlos Osorio



AP Photo

ALL-STAR

HIGHS AND LOWS

THE
GOOD, THE BAD
AND THE UGLY
ABOUT BASEBALL'S
MIDSUMMER CLASSIC

AP Photo



Willie Mays, Juan Marichal, Dick Groat and Stan Musial celebrate after the N.L. defeated the A.L., 3-1, in the 1962 All-Star Game, played in Washington, D.C.

hosted the All-Star Game is Tampa, and at press time no game at Tropicana Field has been scheduled.

AMAYSING

Willie Mays holds the record for stolen bases in All-Star play with six. Then again, Mays holds many ASG records, including plate appearances (82), runs (20), hits (23) and triples (3).

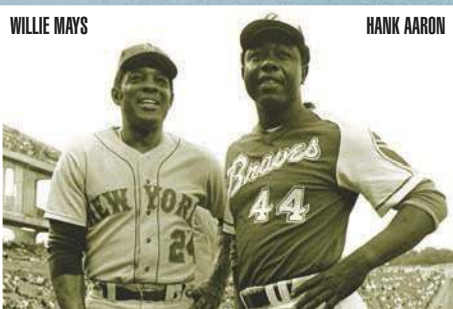
Not only was Mays an All-Star every year from 1954 through 1973, he also played both games in 1959, 1960, 1961 and 1962 ... and back in the day, the starters played most of the game. He started every game in center field for the N.L. from 1957-66, again in 1968, and from 1970-72. He has scored nine more runs than anyone in the history of the Midsummer Classic.

In 1962, Maury Wills won the first All-Star MVP Award. Mays has won two of the trophies, in 1963 and 1968, and remains tied for the top total with four other noted big-game players: Steve Garvey, Gary Carter, Cal Ripken and Mike Trout.

HAMMERED

Mays, Musial, and Hank Aaron played in 24 All-Star games. Aaron, however, was named to 25 All-Star teams, a record that may never be broken. Oddly, "The Hammer" did not excel in the Midsummer Classic, hitting but .192 with two homers in 67 at-bats.

Among the 30 players with 30 or more All-Star at-bats, Musial and Williams stand above the crowd in overall productivity. "Stosh" batted .317 with six homers and 10 RBI, while "The Splendid Splinter" hit .304 with 11 walks (producing a .439 OBP), four homers, and an all-time ASG record 12 RBI.



WILLIE MAYS

HANK AARON

AP Photo

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Not everybody needs an infinite amount of opportunities to show off what he can do in the Midsummer Classic. Speedy outfielder Kenny Lofton swiped five bags, tied for second best in All-Star play, in only six games.

Another multi-tooled outfielder, Hall of Famer Dave Winfield, played 12 All-Star games and clubbed seven doubles, while nobody else in the history of the game has hit more than three, which is fairly stunning given the parade of baseball immortals who have suited up in the Midsummer Classic.

A third multi-tooled outfielder, Fred Lynn, had "just" 20 All-Star at-bats, but used them well, driving four home runs, which ties for second in ASG annals with Ted Williams, two behind Stan Musial.

TAKE A WHIFF

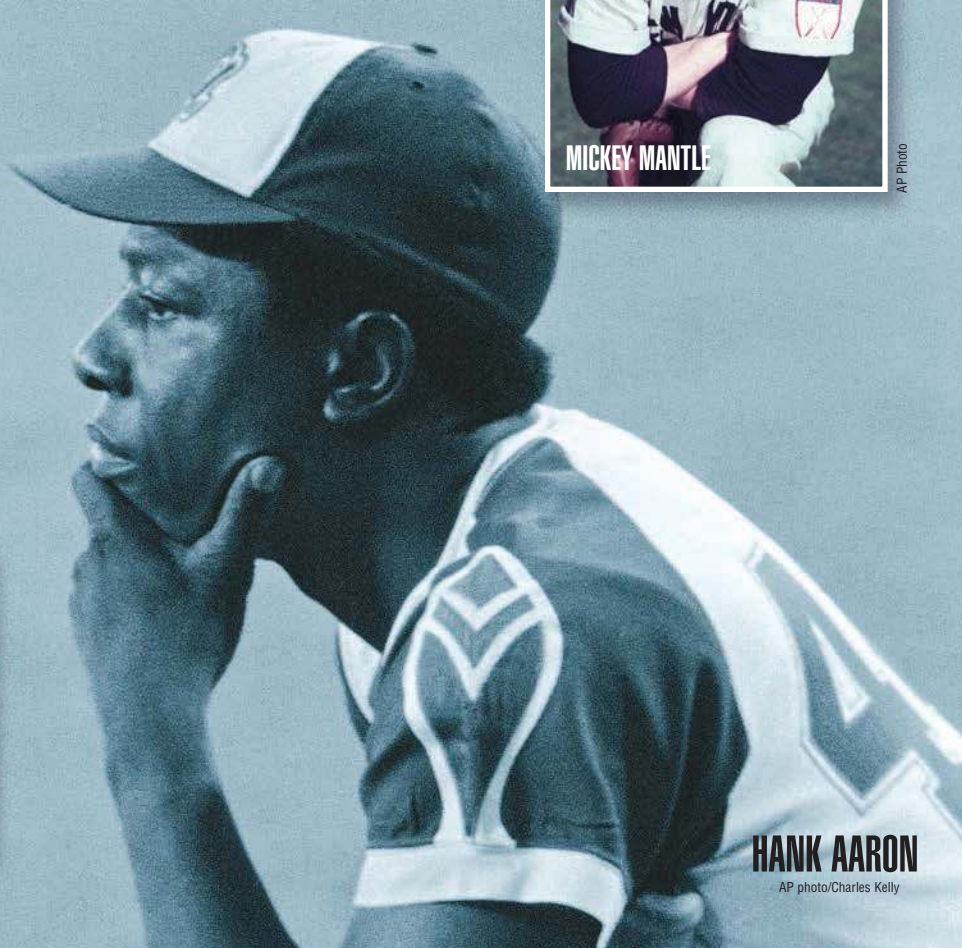
Mickey Mantle holds the record for most strikeouts by an All-Star, fanning 17 times in 43 at-bats. Mays ranks second with 14, while Williams and Alex Rodriguez are tied for third, each striking out 10 times. Amazingly, A-Rod "accomplished" his "feat" in only 26 at-bats.

Mickey Mantle struck out 17 times in All-Star competition against pitchers Robin Roberts, Sam Jones (2), Bob Friend, Warren Spahn (2), Johnny Antonelli, Clem Labine, Stan Williams, Mike McCormick, Sandy Koufax, Stu Miller, Don Drysdale (2), Turk Farrell, Fergie Jenkins and Tom Seaver.



MICKY MANTLE

AP Photo



HANK AARON

AP photo/Charles Kelly

UNIQUE, SELECT & SUPERSTAR ITEMS - ALL ITEMS ON THIS PAGE AT LEAST VG!

Note: Cover listed 1st followed by other articles in () – Note: Not all covers listed

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Gehrig: (1) **Sporting News June 38** (Gehrig pre-diagnosis: "Not What He Used to Be") 5 photos B Ruth \$145; (2) **June 39** Gehrig Mayo Clinic Disease Report VG \$145; (3) **BB Mag May 37** (Gehrig steak – spine tape) \$75; (4) **July 39** (Gehrig steak ends; some interior tears) Rare issue \$45; (5) **Aug 41** Ted W (Gehrig death, tribute; recap Gehrig Day) \$75; (6) **June 42** ("Pride of Yankees" Gehrig movie) \$55; (7) **89 Gehrig stamp 1st Day cover** \$25; (8) **89 Gehrig legal size 1st Day Cover & 50th Anniversary HOF** \$20

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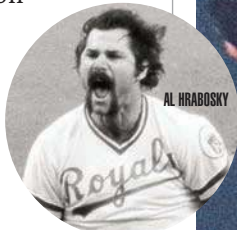
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YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHY I'M HERE

Quiz: Which of these 20 players was NOT selected to an All-Star team?

Toby Atwell, Lance Carter, Kosuke Fukudome, Wayne Gross, Al Hrabosky, John Hudek, Al Javery, Eddie Kazak, Bryan LaHair, Ray Lamanno, Jason Marquis, Stu Martin, Mark Redman, Bob Schmidt, George Sherrill, Junior Spivey, Steve Swisher, Wayne Twitchell, Ty Wigginton, Frankie Zak.

Answer: Al Hrabosky finished fifth and third in Cy Young voting in 1974 and 1975, but never made an All-Star squad.



AP photo/Ray Stubblebine

ONE AND DONE

If you're only going to have one All-Star at-bat, do it right. In 1940, Max West of the Braves clubbed a three-run homer in his only All-Star at-bat, in 1940, before leaving the game with an injury suffered when he crashed into the right-field wall.

Lee Mazzilli of the Mets tied the 1979 contest with a solo home run in the eighth, and his bases-loaded walk in the ninth gave the NL a 6-5 win.

Jeff Conine of the Marlins had just one All-Star at bat, in 1995. He used it to deliver the game-winning hit, a solo homer off Steve Ontiveros in the eighth, and took home the MVP trophy for his trouble.

Finally, Brian Dozier has had just one time up in the ASG, in 2015, and smacked a pinch-hit solo shot in the eighth against Mark Melancon.



AP photo/Alan Diaz

EASY LIVIN'

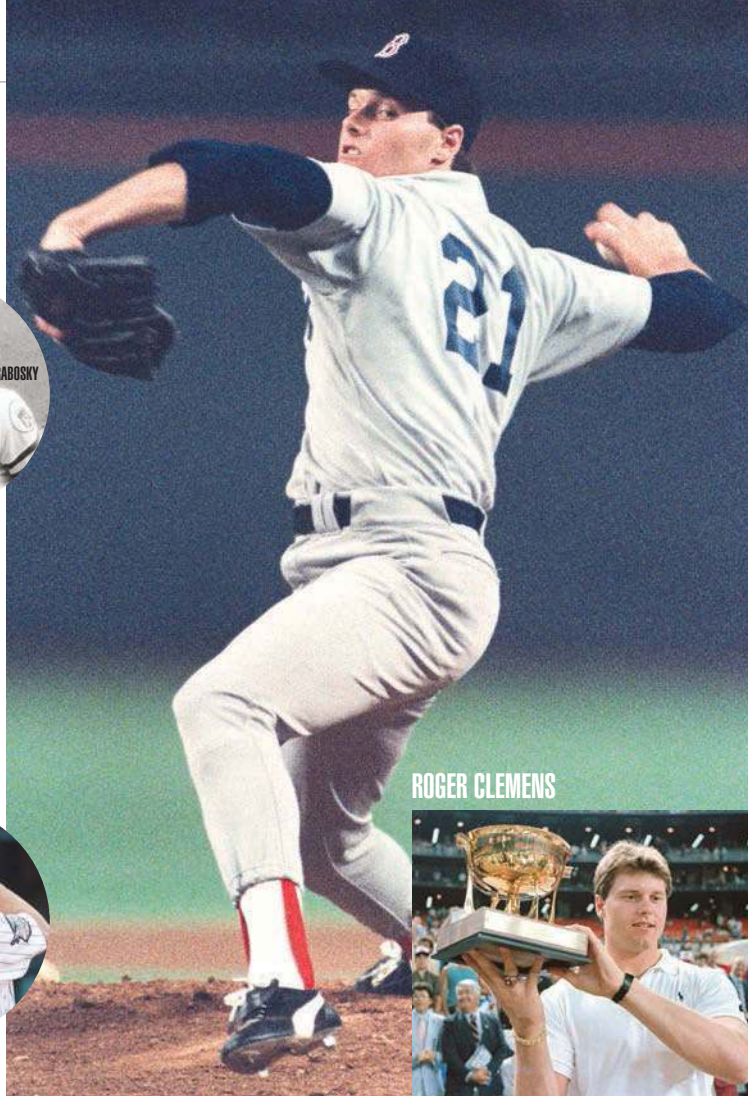
Rookie southpaw Dean Stone of the Senators entered the 1954 contest in the top of the eighth with the A.L. trailing 9-8 and runners on first and third with two out. As Duke Snider batted, Red Schoendienst of the Cardinals tried to steal home. Stone threw to catcher Yogi Berra to retire Schoendienst, and despite protests by N.L. coaches Charlie Grimm and Leo Durocher that Stone had balked, the call stood. In the last of the eighth the A.L. scored three times and held on for an 11-9 win. Stone, who left for a pinch-hitter during the rally, was credited with the victory despite not retiring a batter.

BETTER RED THAN...

While he wore goat horns in 1954, Schoendienst—a 10-time All-Star—had been the hero of 1950's game at Comiskey Park in Chicago. Entering the game in an 11th-inning double switch, second baseman Schoendienst led off the top of the 14th and busted a 3-3 tie with a home run to left field off Detroit's Ted Gray. Red's winning homer ended the longest All-Star Game, in terms of innings, until 1967.

JUAN ON TOP?

It would be difficult to contradict the argument that Juan Marichal of the San Francisco Giants is the game's greatest All-Star pitcher. The hard-throwing righty appeared in 10 games between 1962 and 1971. In his 18.1 innings he allowed but two runs, one earned, on seven hits and a pair of walks. He fanned 12.



ROGER CLEMENS

AP photo/F. Carter Smith

AP photo/John Gappas III

FORD CRASHES

On the other side of the coin, perhaps the least successful longtime All-Star moundman is Yankees Hall of Famer Whitey Ford. In his 12 innings, spread over 10 games between 1952 and 1964, Ford was tagged for 13 runs, 11 of them earned. N.L. batters clubbed three homers off Ford.

THIS IS GOOFY

New York Yankees righty Lefty "Goofy" Gomez was the American League's premier pitcher of the 1930s. He started five of the first six All-Star games for the Junior Circuit and was credited with the victories in 1933, 1935 and 1937. In those three games he pitched 12 innings, giving up just one run on six hits. In the 1935 contest, he went six innings, the highest single-game total ever. Gomez remains the only pitcher to post three ASG wins.

WHO'S THE SKIPPER HERE?

Casey Stengel holds the record for most All-Star games managed with 10, accomplished between 1950 and 1960 (except for 1955) with the Yankees. He was 4-6 in those contests. Walter Alston, who managed N.L. teams nine times during his career with the Dodgers, ranks second and was an impressive 7-2. The active manager with the most All-Star managerial assignments is Bruce Bochy of the Giants with three. He's 1-2.

WAKE ME WHEN IT'S OVER

Some pitchers who got only one chance at the Midsummer Classic probably regretted even going to the park.

In the 1954 game, Sandy Consuegra of the White Sox came in to pitch the fourth inning at Cleveland. After Consuegra set down the leadoff man, N.L. batters rapped out four straight singles and Jackie Robinson slugged a two-run double. Bob Lemon then took the hill and allowed the fifth run of the inning to score on another double, this one by Don Mueller. One-third of an inning for Consuegra and a 135.00 ERA.

Some 30 years later, with the game taking place in Chicago, the N.L.'s Atlee Hammaker was knocked around unmercifully by the A.L. Hammaker led the N.L. in ERA in 1983, but you couldn't tell by his performance in the bottom of the third.

Jim Rice immediately greeted him with a home run. After a triple and a pop-up, Hammaker was battered for two singles before getting the second out on a flyball. Rod Carew's RBI single and an intentional walk followed before Fred Lynn delivered the crushing blow—a grand slam to right field. Hammaker exited having given up seven runs in two-thirds of a frame.

DRY COUNTY

The 1968 season, known as “The Year of the Pitcher,” was certainly not the most exciting time for fans of offense. On April 15, the Mets and Astros played a 24-inning, six-hour 1-0 game in Houston, which remains the game's longest shutout. And the season's All-Star contest—also at the Astrodome—was another 1-0 affair, though mercifully quick at just 2:10. Perhaps fittingly, the only run scored on a first-inning double-play ball hit by Willie McCovey. The two leagues' offenses combined for just eight hits and six walks while fanning 20 times; the American League collected only three baserunners. It's the only 1-0 All-Star Game.

ONE GAME, ONE DOG

The sole player to collect three or more hits in his only All-Star appearance was outfielder Lance “One Dog” Johnson of the 1996 Mets. Halfway through a season in which he led the N.L. in hits and triples, Johnson doubled and scored, singled twice, stole a base, and was caught stealing in four trips to the plate in a 6-0 N.L. victory. This was the Senior Circuit's last All-Star win until 2010.

Lance Johnson receives congratulations from outfielders Gary Sheffield and Ellis Burks after final out of 1996 All-Star Game.



AP photo/Charles Rex Arbogast

TURN IT OFF!

If you want to score runs, go where the runs are plentiful. The thin air of Denver's Coors Field was the setting for the 1998 classic, which proved to be the highest-scoring All-Star tilt. In a 13-8 A.L. triumph, few pitchers distinguished themselves; 10 different moundsmen were tagged for at least one run. The two leagues combined to rap out 31 hits and draw 11 walks. Three players (Roberto Alomar, Ivan Rodriguez and Devon White) had three hits, but the attacks were balanced; 21 different players collected at least one knock. Ironically, starters David Wells and Greg Maddux each fired two scoreless innings before the deluge.

BEEN A LONG TIME

Roger Clemens started three All-Star games in his career, the first two coming 15 years apart! In 1986, during a season in which he went 24-4 for Boston, The Rocket pitched three perfect innings to gain the 3-2 win at the Astrodome. Fast forward to 2001 in Seattle, where Clemens—now a Yankee—tossed a pair of perfect frames in an eventual 4-1 A.L. victory.

Three years after that, Clemens was with the Astros and started the ASG for the N.L. in Houston. This time, he was battered mercilessly as American League hitters scored six runs (three earned) on five hits and two walks in one inning. Manny Ramirez and Alfonso Soriano took him deep and hung him with the loss.

NO GAME TODAY

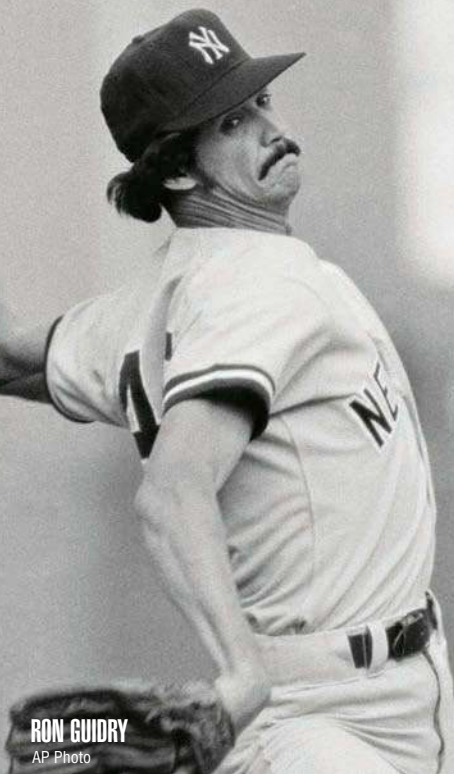
The 1945 All-Star Game was cancelled due to wartime travel restrictions. The Midsummer Classic has been held every year since, although two games were stopped early due to rain. The 1954 contest, a 3-2 N.L. win, was shortened to five innings by a storm, while the second game in 1961 was called after nine innings in a 1-1 tie.

Perhaps the low moment in All-Star history came in 2002, when the game was called after 11 innings—to the consternation of fans in the park and at home—because both teams had run out of pitchers. While having short rosters (the A.L. brought just nine pitchers) was partially to blame, it's shocking that this problem didn't occur earlier. It's now a rarity that a pitcher will even go two innings in an All-Star Game, and the only pitchers to go three innings in the last 30 years are Greg Maddux in 1994 and Aaron Cook in 2008.

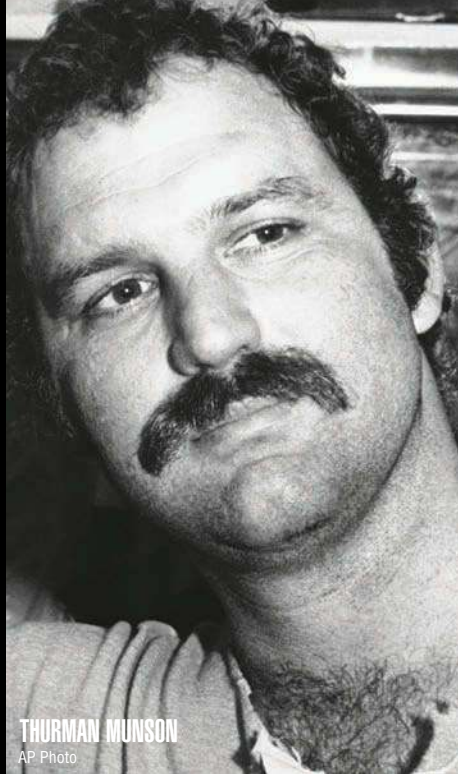


HURRY UP AND SLOW DOWN

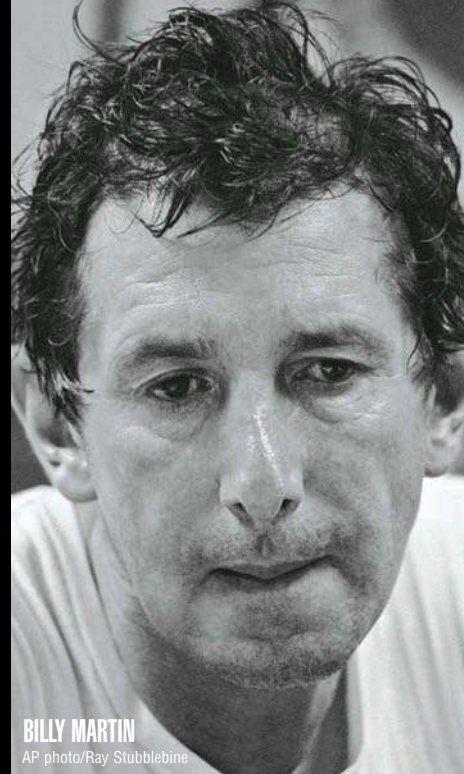
Hall of Famer Warren Spahn, who pitched an amazing 21 seasons in the majors and won 363 games, was named to 17 All-Star Game rosters, an all-time high for a pitcher. He pitched, however, just seven times, totaling 14 innings. Contrast that with Mariano Rivera, who was named to 13 All-Star teams and took the mound all 13 times. Rivera collected four All-Star saves, the highest total in history, ranking one ahead of Dennis Eckersley, who made six All-Star rosters—two as a starter and four as a reliever. **BD**



RON GUIDRY
AP Photo



THURMAN MUNSON
AP Photo



BILLY MARTIN
AP photo/Ray Stubblebine

REVISITING THE BRONX ZOO Summer

By Dan Epstein

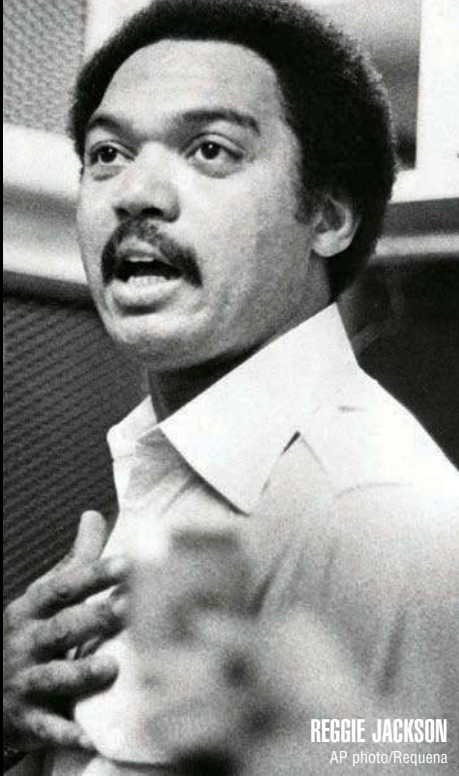
“We needed the day off today,” wrote Sparky Lyle in his diary on July 18, 1978—a diary that spawned *The Bronx Zoo*, the 1979 best-seller penned with Peter Golenbock. “But Boston won again and is 61 and 28, 14 games in front of us. Forget this season. The rest of the year is just playing out the string.”

This wasn’t how 1978 was supposed to go for the New York Yankees. Despite the well-publicized dysfunction of their clubhouse—largely resulting from the impossibly toxic triangle of manager Billy Martin, owner George Steinbrenner and right fielder Reggie Jackson—the 1977-model Bronx Bombers had banded together to win the franchise’s first World Series championship since 1962. With the core of that championship team returning for ’78, the Yankees were widely tipped to win it all again.

But by the middle of that July, things were looking bleak in the Bronx. Injuries had knocked second baseman Willie Randolph, shortstop Bucky Dent and center fielder Mickey Rivers out of the regular lineup for significant stretches,

while Catfish Hunter, Don Gullett and new free-agent signing Andy Messersmith (all of whom were supposed to be mainstays of the starting rotation) had missed much of the first half of the season due to arm and shoulder troubles. Catcher Thurman Munson, the team’s captain, was still in the lineup almost every day, but a painful cyst behind his knee was limiting his power at the plate—and made squatting behind it so miserable for him that Martin had begun experimenting with putting Munson in the outfield.

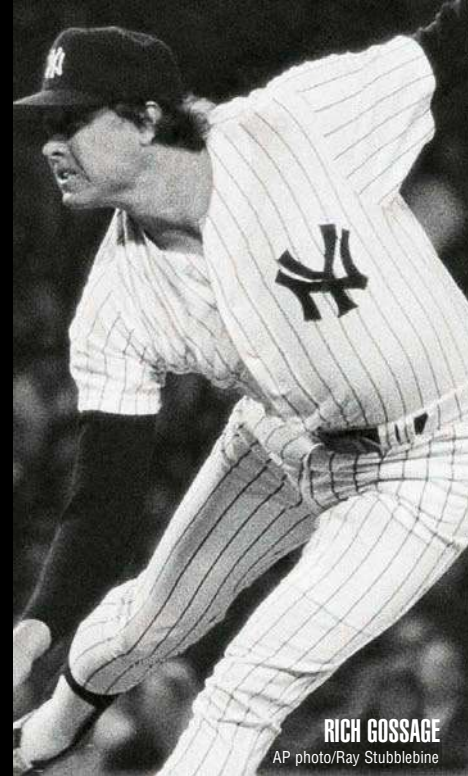
Injuries weren’t the only reason the Yankees found themselves mired in fourth place in the American League East. After putting up a 29-17 record through the end of May, the team had gone only 18-23 in June and the first half of July. Aside from Ron Guidry (on his way to a 25-3 record and a unanimous Cy Young), the Yankees couldn’t seem to get consistently solid performances from their starting pitching, and their offense wasn’t exactly firing on all cylinders, either. And as Lyle would recount in *The Bronx Zoo*, the team’s clubhouse was lousy with bad vibes.



REGGIE JACKSON
AP photo/Requena



GEORGE STEINBRENNER
AP photo/Marty Lederhandler



RICH GOSSAGE
AP photo/Ray Stubblebine

Madness

The Wild July of the 1978 New York Yankees

As in 1976 and 1977, Steinbrenner was once again demonstrating a complete unwillingness (or inability) to sit back and let Martin manage his team. Having stocked the already-loaded roster with high-priced free agents like Jackson, Gullett and reliever Goose Gossage—paying the gas-throwing fireman four times Lyle’s salary to sign with the team in November 1977, even though Lyle had just become the first relief pitcher to win a Cy Young in the American League—Steinbrenner couldn’t understand why they weren’t steamrolling every opponent they met.

Martin, who also hated to lose, dealt with Steinbrenner’s constant harassment by drinking even more than usual, eating almost nothing, and jumping on his players about everything from mental mistakes on the field to not wearing neckties on team flights.

“George is p***ing everyone off with all this crap between him and Billy,” Lyle wrote on July 9, following an

8-4 loss to the Milwaukee Brewers, the Yankees’ 10th defeat in their last 16 games. “Billy’s p***ing the players off, and those things are enough to destroy a ballclub.”

Many Yankees—including Lyle, Munson, outfielders Roy White and Lou Piniella and backup catcher Cliff Johnson—expressed their desire to be traded to another team, one where they could just enjoy playing baseball again without all the drama and distractions of life with Billy and George.

The drama intensified even further on July 17, during a game against the Kansas City Royals at Yankee Stadium. Seeing that he was penciled into that night’s lineup as the team’s DH, Jackson—who felt he’d earned a permanent place in right field—stormed off to complain about it to Steinbrenner, who usually took his side whenever the sensitive slugger and the volatile manager locked horns. This time, however, Steinbrenner sided with Martin, telling

“Billy Martin rose on the fifth day, the greatest return in almost 2,000 years.”

—Mike Farber of the Bergen Record

AP photo/Lennox McLendon

Jackson that he was an inferior fielder, then adding, “You better get your head on straight, boy!”

Incensed by the exchange, Jackson took his anger out on Martin in the 10th inning of that evening’s contest. With Munson on first, nobody out and the score tied 5-5, Martin instructed Jackson (via third-base coach Dick Howser) to bunt. To Martin, it was simply a bluff to draw Royals third baseman George Brett in a few steps, but Jackson—who hadn’t successfully bunted in a game since 1972—felt demeaned by the order. When the first pitch from Al Hrabosky sailed wide of the plate, Martin pulled the bunt sign, but Jackson defiantly ignored the switch. His unsuccessful attempt at bunting Hrabosky’s next pitch triggered a visit from Howser, who came down the line to clarify that Martin wanted him to swing away. “I was told to bunt,” Jackson replied. “I’m bunting.” He then popped the next two pitches foul for an automatic out, and the Yankees wound up losing the game, 9-7 in 11 innings.

For once, Martin, Steinbrenner and Yankees general manager Al Rosen all agreed on something—namely, that Jackson should be suspended for his insubordination, even if the five-game suspension they eventually settled on was significantly less severe than the season-ending penalty Martin sought. With Jackson gone, peace and quiet briefly reigned in the Yankees clubhouse, and the team promptly rattled off four straight road victories against the Minnesota Twins and Chicago White Sox. “The talk has shifted from b****ing and moaning to ... ‘we’re playing great,’” Lyle wrote on July 22.

But this would merely be the proverbial calm before a

storm of even greater magnitude. Jackson returned to the club in Chicago on July 23, in time for New York’s final game of the Sox series. Instead of just suiting up and taking batting practice with the rest of the team, he gave a lengthy impromptu press conference to the writers gathered in the visitors clubhouse at Comiskey Park, insisting that “I don’t feel I did anything wrong.” He also claimed, untruthfully, that Martin hadn’t spoken directly to him all season.

Martin was already fuming over a conversation he’d had the night before with White Sox owner Bill Veeck—who mis-

chievously mentioned that, earlier in the season, Steinbrenner had floated the notion of trading Martin to Chicago in exchange for Sox manager Bob Lemon—and Jackson’s comments to the press sent him completely over the edge.

That evening, while the team waited at O’Hare Airport for a plane to Kansas City following their 3-1 victory over the Sox, Martin treated New York sportswriters Murray Chass and Henry Hecht to a scotch-fueled tirade that gave full vent to his frustration with Jackson and Steinbrenner. “If he doesn’t

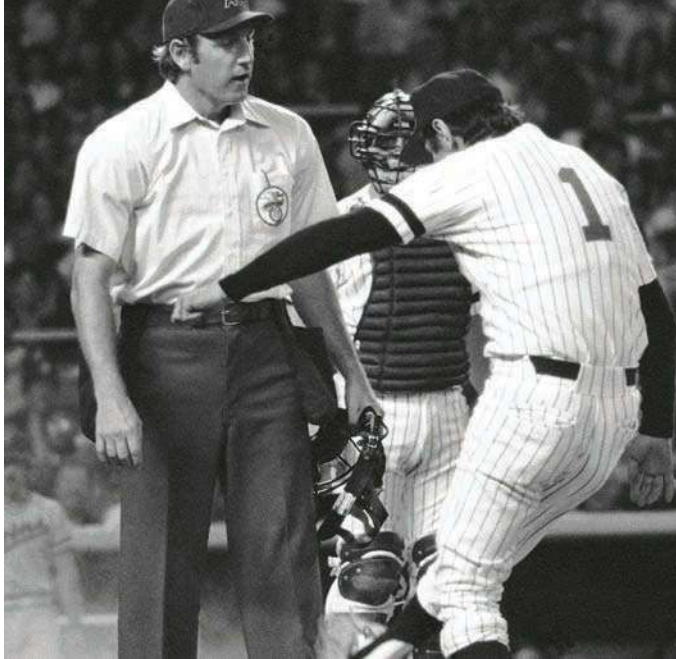
shut his mouth, he won’t play and I don’t care what George says,” he raged. “He can replace me right now if he doesn’t like it.” Further underscoring his distaste for his nemeses, Martin added, “The two of them deserve each other—one’s a born liar, and the other’s convicted.”

Having managed with his head on the chopping block all season, Martin essentially gave the executioner the green light with that last comment, which pointedly referenced the Yankees owner’s two-year suspension from baseball for making illegal financial contributions to Richard Nixon’s



Thurman Munson, playing right field, waves away smoke from a smoke bomb tossed onto the field at Yankee Stadium on July 17, 1978, during a game against the Royals.

AP photo/Ray Stubblebine



“If he doesn’t shut his mouth, he won’t play and I don’t care what George says. He can replace me right now if he doesn’t like it. The two of them deserve each other—one’s a born liar, and the other’s convicted.”

—Billy Martin

AP photo/Ray Stubblebine

1972 re-election campaign. Outraged by his manager’s outburst, Steinbrenner demanded Martin’s resignation, which the latter duly delivered on July 24 in a tearful press conference at Kansas City’s Crown Center Hotel. Body trembling, reddened eyes masked by dark sunglasses, Martin sobbed that he was resigning to salvage “my mental health and well-being,” and that he didn’t want to be a distraction to the team, which he felt still had a real shot at the pennant. He also denied that he had ever uttered the “born liar” quote.

The following day, Bob Lemon—fired by the flailing White Sox at the end of June—was brought in to manage the Yankees. Thoroughly versed in the Billy Martin way of playing baseball, the Bronx Bombers now just needed someone who could get out of the way and let them actually play it, and the affable Lemon would prove the perfect man for the job.

Under Lemon’s calm direction, the Yankees would go 48-20 over the rest of the season, tie the Red Sox for the A.L. East flag, then beat them in a dramatic one-game playoff at Fenway Park. In October, they took down the Royals again in the ALCS and bested the Los Angeles Dodgers in six games for their second straight world championship. But before all of that could happen, July still had one more wild card left to play.

On July 27, two days after Martin’s resignation, Steinbrenner began laying the groundwork to bring him back. There had been rumblings from the New York Mets that they were going to hire Martin as their new skipper—a move that would have proved immensely popular with New York fans, who were currently shorting out the

Yankee Stadium switchboard with angry calls for Steinbrenner’s head. The thought of being upstaged by the Yankees’ woeful crosstown counterparts was too much for Steinbrenner, who realized he would rather keep Martin under his thumb than risk having his ex-manager thumb his nose at him from across the East River.

After a day of secret negotiations, the two men reached an agreement wherein Martin would return to the team for a two-year managerial term beginning in 1980; Lemon would manage the Yankees through 1979, then move upstairs into

the team’s front office. Martin’s new contract was kept under wraps until July 29, when Yankee Stadium public address announcer Bob Sheppard dropped the bombshell during the team’s Old-Timers’ Day festivities. Having introduced returning Hall of Famers Whitey Ford, Mickey Mantle and Joe DiMaggio, Sheppard added, “...and the manager for 1980, and hopefully for many years to come... Number 1... Billy —“

If Sheppard actually intoned Martin’s last name, the 46,711 fans in attendance were screaming too loudly to hear it as

the prodigal skipper ran out onto the field. They gave him a deafening standing ovation that lasted for more than five minutes, inspiring Mike Farber of the *Bergen Record* to write, “Billy Martin rose on the fifth day, the greatest return in almost 2,000 years.”

“I was surprised as hell,” Lyle wrote in his diary that night 40 years ago, echoing the sentiments of his stunned teammates. “Nevertheless, I’m still skeptical that Billy will manage the Yankees in 1980.” Lyle was right: he didn’t. **BD**



During a 1978 press conference, Bob Lemon, Billy Martin and George Steinbrenner address questions about Martin’s return as Yankees manager for the 1980 season.

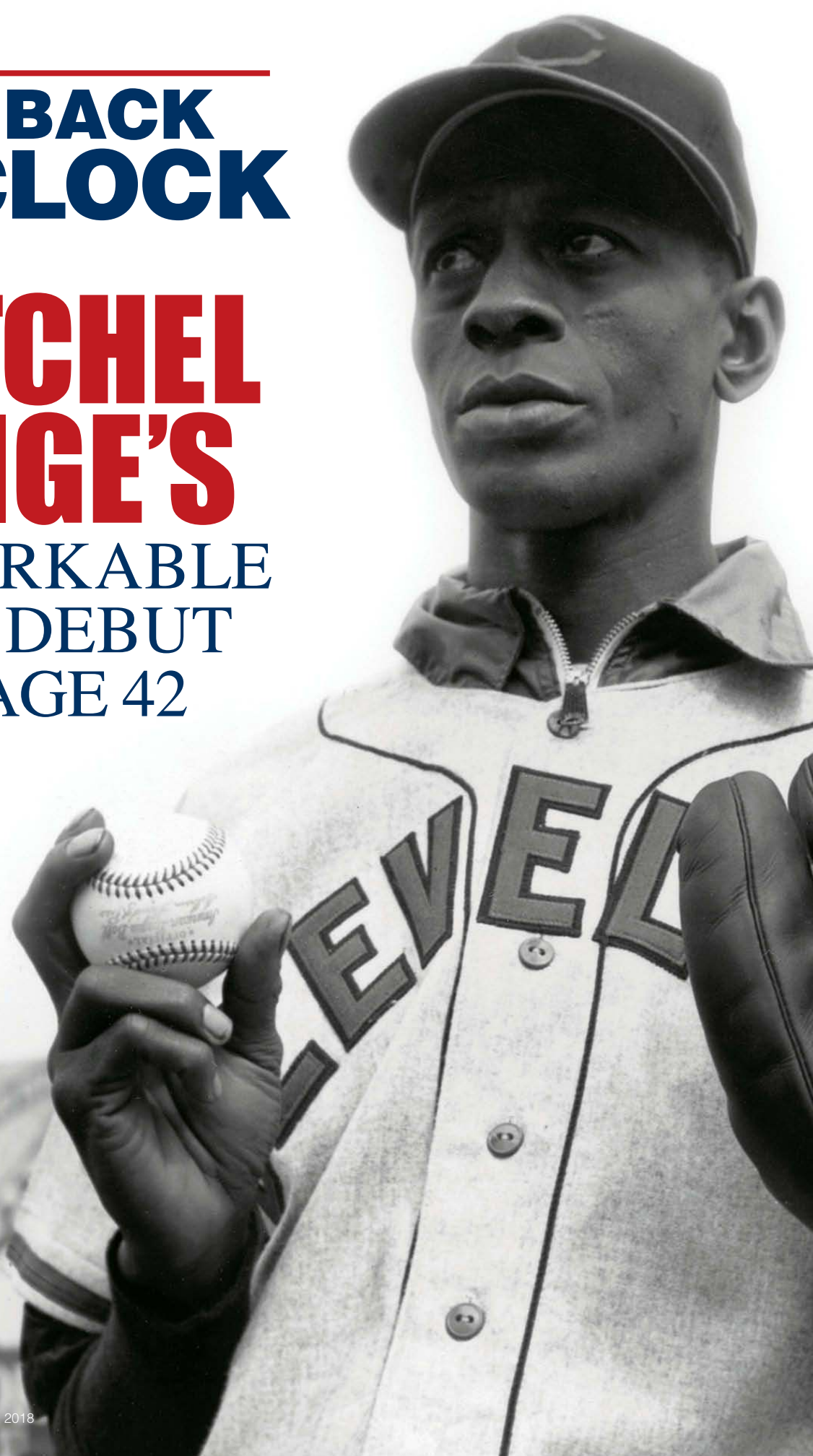
AP photo/Harris

TURN BACK THE CLOCK

SATCHEL PAIGE'S

REMARKABLE MLB DEBUT AT AGE 42

In his second big-league start, on Aug. 13, 1948, Cleveland right-hander Satchel Paige shut out the Chicago White Sox at a jam-packed Comiskey Park.



Joining the Cleveland Indians the year after Jackie Robinson's arrival, Old Satch took the majors by storm much like the Dodgers' future Hall of Famer did



AP Photo

By Thom Henninger

Seventy years ago, on July 9, 1948, Leroy “Satchel” Paige made his major-league debut two days after he turned 42. He had been one of the game’s elite pitchers for more than two decades—a status recognized by many major leaguers who had faced him on barnstorming tours—but at his age, was unlikely to ever see major-league action if not for the freewheeling owner of the Cleveland Indians, Bill Veeck.

Jackie Robinson and Larry Doby had arrived a year earlier, and Veeck, with a flair for wild promotions and fan giveaways that often upset his fellow owners, had flirted with the idea of signing Paige prior to 1948. But the audacious owner knew signing Paige, widely believed to be even older, would generate backlash that he was using the Negro leagues pitching legend as a publicity stunt. The backlash would be vicious if Paige failed, a result that many owners and sportswriters anticipated.

It wasn’t until June 1948, when Cleveland was engaged in a four-team pennant race and in need of pitching help, that Veeck seriously entertained signing Paige. Veeck had been enamored with the skinny, 6-foot-3 right-hander since 1934, when he saw him top Dizzy Dean on a barnstorming tour, 1-0 in a 13-inning pitchers’ duel, a performance the owner often called “the best I’ve ever seen.” Fourteen years later, Paige was still pitching hundreds of innings a year for the Kansas City Monarchs, the elite team of the Negro American League, and on barnstorming stops across the country.

Still, Veeck had to sell the idea of signing Paige to his farm director, recently retired Hank Greenberg, and player-manager Lou Boudreau. Greenberg was in favor of bringing Paige in for a throwing session, but Veeck anticipated that Boudreau would be resistant to the idea. So, the owner set up the clandestine session for July 6.

“One afternoon, Bill Veeck telephoned me at home and asked if I’d like to come out to the park for some hitting practice,” Boudreau explained to *Chicago Daily Tribune* columnist Arch Ward later that year. “I thought it was a gag, since I was hitting .360 at the time, but I went. When I got there, Veeck said: ‘I’ve got a surprise for you.’ The surprise was Satchel Paige.”

Boudreau donned a catcher’s mitt for roughly 50 pitches, of which all but a few were strikes. Then Boudreau stepped into the batter’s box, but first Paige gave him a folded handkerchief and told him to place it on the plate wherever he liked. “He wound up and threw 10 pitches,” Boudreau recalled, “and nine of them were right over the handkerchief. He told me to move the handkerchief to the other side of the plate, and he threw 10 more pitches the same as before. Seven or eight were right over the handkerchief, and those that missed, didn’t miss by much.”

With Boudreau in the box, Paige challenged him with his deceptive corkscrew delivery and various arm angles, from over the top to underhand. According to Veeck, in his autobiography *Veeck as in Wreck*, “Lou swung 19 times and he had nothing that looked like a base hit.” At that point, impressed with Paige’s impeccable control, Boudreau was on board with signing him.

With little fanfare, Paige inked a \$10,000 contract the following day, two days before he made his major-league

TURN BACK THE CLOCK 1948

debut. Soon he would be one of the game's biggest stories of 1948, but even Paige—who had pitched professionally for 22 years before finally getting his big-league opportunity—didn't make much of his signing as the fourth African-American player.

"I'm starting my major-league career with one thing in my favor, anyway," Paige told reporters. "I won't be afraid of anyone in that batter's box. I've been around too long for that." When asked how he would fare in the majors, he replied, "The plate's the same size."

Paige turned 42 that day, though at the time he maintained that he was a few months shy of 40. His age had been in question for years, and the speculation never waned.

It was at the center of a humorous story shared by Ward, the *Daily Tribune* columnist, in September 1948. During the season, Paige and teammate Gene Bearden, the club's phenomenal rookie southpaw, were gabbing "during a dull session in the Cleveland dugout. Paige was recalling barnstorm games of yesteryear and telling how he pitched to some of the former major-league stars. 'Just what kind of a pitch,' asked Bearden, 'was Connie Mack's weakness?'" Mack was nearly 44 years older than Paige.

As Veeck had anticipated, Paige's age generated a substantial backlash to his signing. Paul Dickson, in *Bill Veeck: Baseball's Greatest Maverick*, noted that Cleveland's owner got an earful from Tigers general manager Billy Evans at a meeting of American League team executives before the All-Star break. Evans called Veeck "a pop-off and a publicity sensationalist" and said the signing was "outright exploitation and an affront to Major League Baseball."

J.G. Taylor Spink, publisher of *The Sporting News*, unloaded on Veeck, saying that "to sign a hurler at Paige's age is to demean the standards of baseball in the big circuits . . . If Paige were white, he would not have drawn a second thought from Veeck." Veeck responded that "if Satch were white, of course, he would have been in the majors 25 years earlier."

When Paige was in his prime, it was widely believed that no one threw harder than him and Washington Hall of Famer Walter Johnson. When he signed with Cleveland, Paige's overpowering velocity had slipped a bit, but he still

threw hard, threw multiple pitches with multiple windups—including a double or triple pump of his arms—and could locate his stuff better than most of his peers.

An *Associated Press* story at the time of Paige's signing said the right-hander primarily used seven pitches when he joined Cleveland: "a sidearm curve, a sidearm sinker, sidearm fastball and four overheads—speedball, curve, knuckler and drop." His approach now focused less on velocity, and it was Negro leagues legend Cool Papa Bell who had taught him the knuckleball to give him another weapon.

Paige added mystery to his arsenal by naming his pitches: the 4-Day Rider, the Ally-oops, the Bat Dodger, the Step 'n' Pitch It, the Midnight Creeper, the Jump Ball and the

Wobbly Ball. Another Paige offering, noted legendary Negro leagues umpire Bob Motley in his book *Ruling Over Monarchs, Giants & Stars*, was the Be Ball, appropriately named because Paige said it would "be's where I throws it."

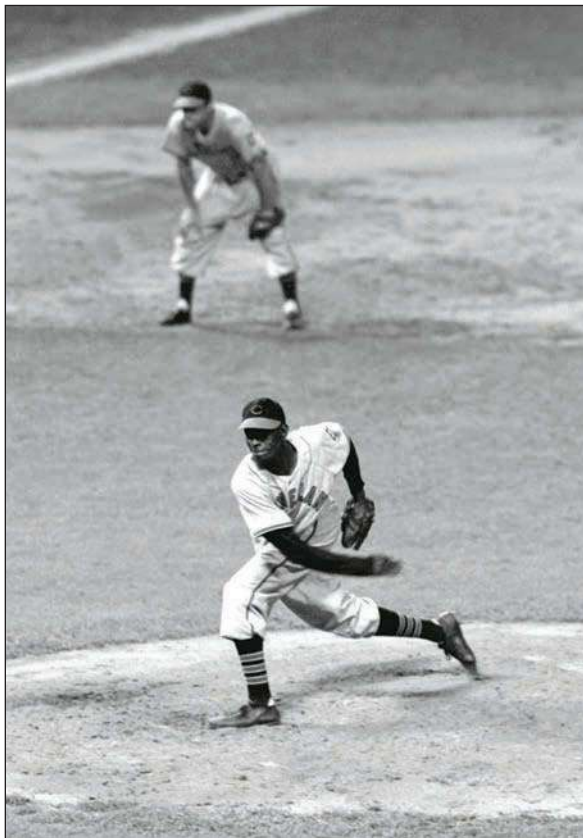
If his various offerings, pitching motions and arm angles weren't frustrating enough for hitters, Paige could throw off their timing even further with a hesitation pitch in which he stopped mid-motion with his arms held high in the air. Casey Stengel called it "the toughest pitch in baseball to hit," wrote Larry Tye in his exceptional biography, *Satchel: The Life and Times of an American Legend*. It was a pitch with which Ted Williams and other major leaguers struggled on barnstorming tours, and two weeks into Paige's tenure with Cleveland, American League president Will Harridge ruled that the pitch was illegal with runners on base.

In his July 9 debut, replacing Bob Lemon to start the fifth inning, Paige blanked the St.

Louis Browns for two innings. Browns first baseman Chuck Stevens lined a leadoff single to center field, fueling some doubts whether Paige belonged, but then the 42-year-old rookie made quick work of the Browns. He gave up two hits and fanned one in a 5-3 Cleveland loss. Tye wrote that Paige excited the crowd of 34,780 with his corkscrew, windmill windup—using one, two or three arm pumps—the hesitation pitch and a low-ceiling blooper ball.

In his second appearance on July 15 in Philadelphia, Paige again relieved Lemon, this time in the sixth with Cleveland up 4-3. The A's had scored a run and had runners at the corners with two outs, but Paige induced a lazy fly to right from A's leadoff man Eddie Joost to end the threat.

Paige later gave up a two-run homer to third baseman



In his first appearance at Yankee Stadium on July 22, 1948, Paige worked two scoreless innings in relief, allowed one hit, and struck out Joe DiMaggio and Billy Johnson in a quiet seventh inning.

AP photo/Matzy Zimmerman



Paige chats with Bob Feller in the Cleveland dugout on July 7, 1948, prior to a game with the Chicago White Sox at Cleveland Stadium.

Hank Majeski, but pitched the final 3.1 innings and earned his first “W” when Ken Keltner popped an eighth-inning home run for an 8-5 victory. A crowd of 37,684, the A’s largest draw of the season, was on hand.

“Old Satch really has it,” Boudreau said later. “He looked good in his first appearance as a relief pitcher for us ... but last night was the first time he was in there under pressure. He got us out of a tough inning.”

Paige mostly worked the middle innings that July, pitching two or three frames at a time. For the month, he gave up just four earned runs over 18 innings, good for a 2.00 ERA. That included three scoreless innings at Yankee Stadium, where he allowed only a single, fanned three without issuing a walk, and retired New York stars Joe DiMaggio and Tommy Henrich twice each.

In August, Paige joined the Cleveland rotation and successfully worked through major-league lineups—often with ease. He drew huge crowds and more than 200,000 fans witnessed his first three big-league starts.

A sellout crowd of 72,434 filled Cleveland Stadium for Paige’s first start on Aug. 3. He walked two batters and allowed a two-run triple in the opening frame before settling down and working seven innings of a 5-3 victory over the Washington Senators. Paige, the American League’s first black pitcher, didn’t disappoint on a night that ticket sellers and food vendors were overwhelmed by the large turnout.

In his next two starts, Paige pitched consecutive shutouts against the Chicago White Sox. The first one, a five-hitter by Paige on Aug. 13 at Comiskey Park, drew an official count of 51,013—the Sox’ first sellout in several years. Traffic backed up everywhere near the park, and the size of the crowd mingling outside the gates far exceeded the park’s capacity.

Veek wrote that it was a frightening scene. The crush made it impossible to move, and in time fans stormed the gates and filled every crevice of Comiskey Park. Veck thought 70,000 made it inside while another 15,000 were turned away. Boxing champs Joe Louis and Ray “Sugar” Robinson, who used Veck’s seats, were on hand to congratulate Paige after the game.

Cleveland Stadium was nearly as packed on Aug. 20, when Paige scattered three hits in a 1-0 victory over Chicago. A crowd of 78,392 was on hand—setting a new record for attendance at a major-league night game—to see Paige’s roommate, Larry Doby, single home the game’s lone run in the fifth.



Paige, in the middle row of this team photo of the 1948 World Series champion Cleveland Indians, posted a 6-1 mark and 2.48 ERA in 21 games.

TURN BACK THE CLOCK 1948

On Aug. 30, in a 10-1 romp over Washington, Paige worked his third complete game to improve to 4-0 as a starter. He nearly didn't finish the game. Paige took the mound to start the eighth, but retreated to the dugout before facing a batter, suffering from gastric pain that had become a persistent problem. Russ Christopher rushed in to take his place, but Paige returned to finish up what he'd started—to the delight of a capacity crowd of 28,051 at Washington's Griffith Stadium. Roughly 40 percent of the crowd that afternoon was African American; another 5,000 fans were turned away because of the sellout.

Plate umpire Bill Summers was impressed with Paige's outing. "How can you rate him?" Summers told sportswriters. "There are few better pitchers in baseball today. Maybe there aren't any. He had a slider that cracked like a whip and a curve that exploded. And he was plenty fast. Is there anything else?"

Paige, who finished the season at 6-1 with a 2.48 ERA in 72.2 innings, was a key contributor in a tight pennant race. Cleveland held off the Red Sox, who rode a second-half surge to a second-place finish, a single game behind the Indians. The Yankees closed two

games back. After the tight finish, Cleveland defeated the Boston Braves in a six-game World Series—the franchise's last championship.

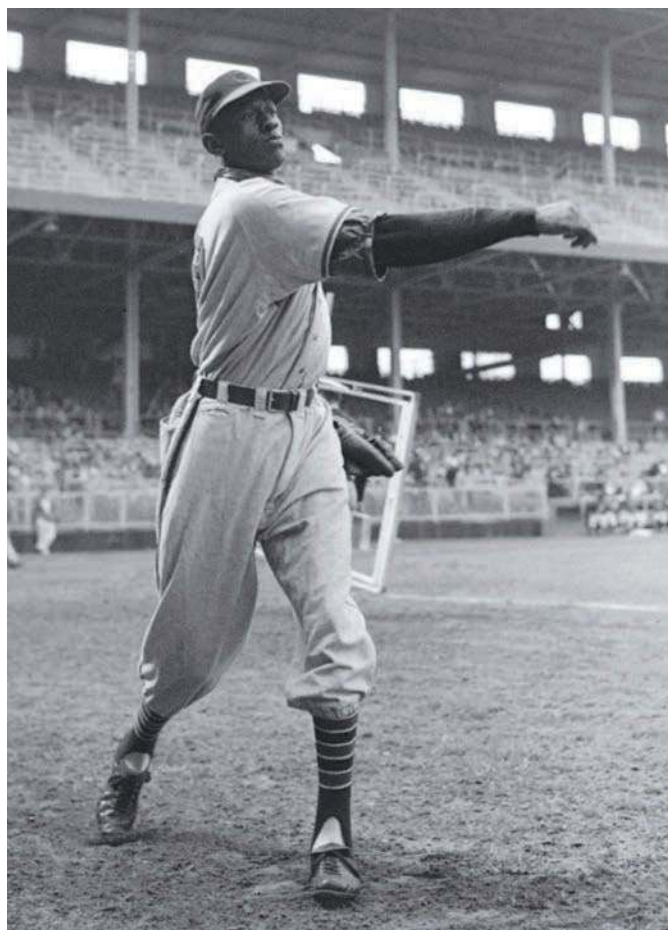
Although Paige didn't get a start against Boston, he became the first African-American to pitch in a World Series when he finally appeared in Game 5. No Cleveland hurler could shut down the Braves that day, an 11-5 Boston romp in which Paige entered in the seventh and recorded two quick outs to end a six-run rally. Cleveland rebounded to win the Series the next day.

Paige wasn't done yet, of course. After pitching for Cleveland in 1949, he joined the St. Louis Browns for three seasons, beginning in 1951—soon after Veeck had bought a majority interest in the Browns. For the Browns, who averaged 97 losses a year over that span, Paige went 16-23, posted a 3.57 ERA, and tossed 10- and 12-inning shutouts before retiring at age 47.

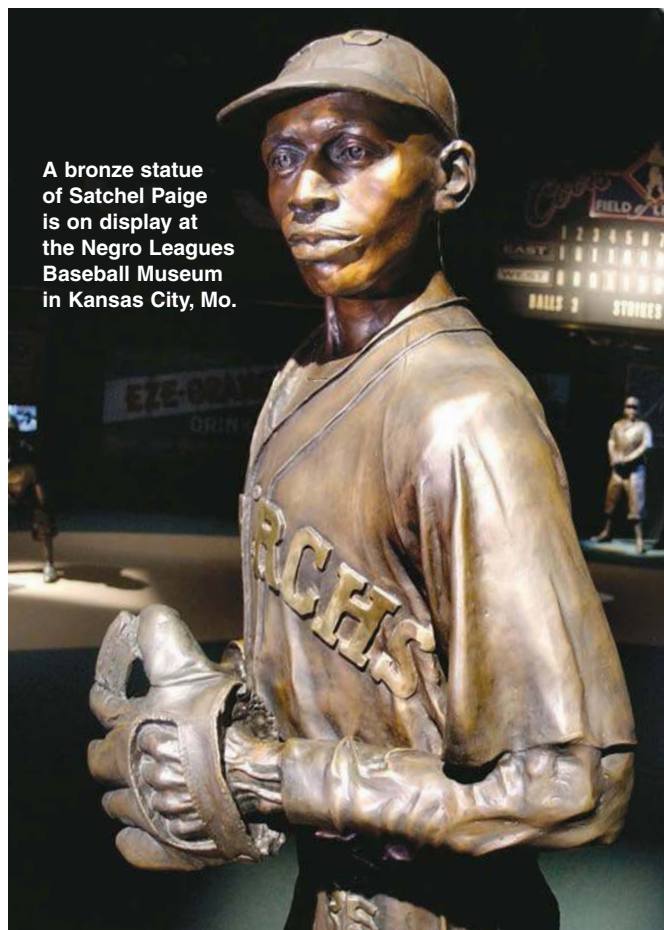
In September 1965, Kansas City Athletics owner Charlie Finley, another maverick owner enamored with the legendary pitcher, signed the 59-year-old Paige to a contract and started him against the Boston Red Sox on Sept. 25. Paige worked his magic, blanking the Red Sox on a single hit over three innings. The outing convinced the soon-to-be Hall of Famer that he could still help a major-league club. **BD**

"I'm starting my major-league career with one thing in my favor, anyway. I won't be afraid of anyone in that batter's box. I've been around too long for that."

—Satchel Paige

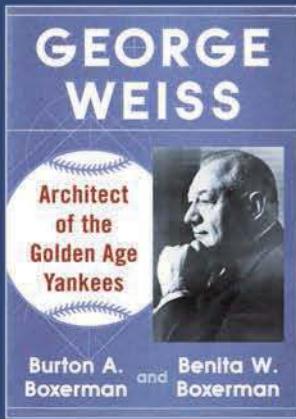


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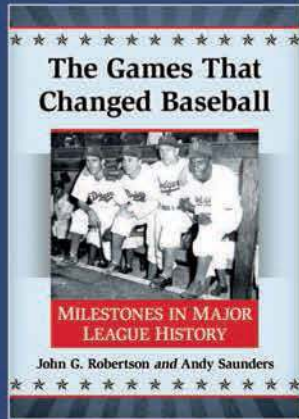


A bronze statue of Satchel Paige is on display at the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, Mo.

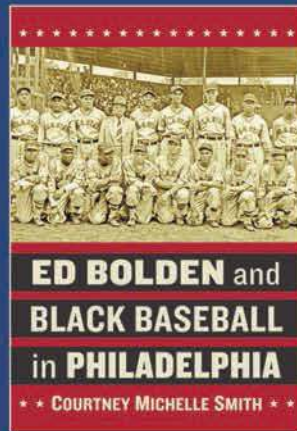
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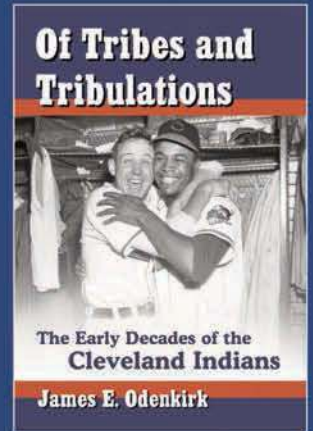
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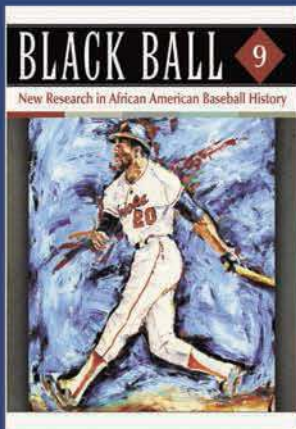
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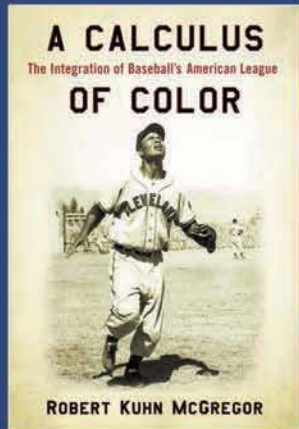
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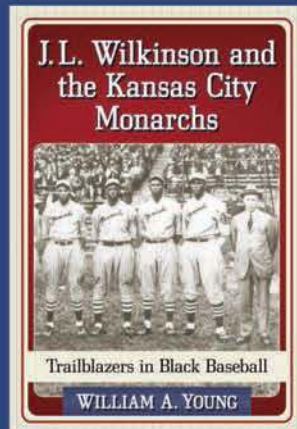
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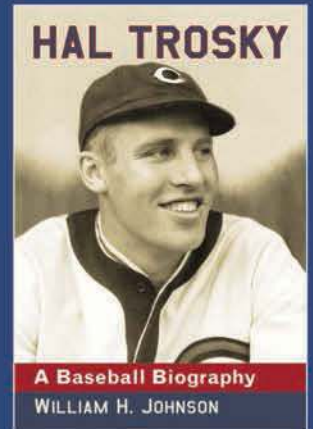
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THE GAME I'LL NEVER FORGET

By

VICTOR MARTINEZ

As Told To
Bruce Levine
and Joel Bierig

*Veteran
switch-hitter
recalls three-
homer game
with Cleveland
in 2004, when
he went 5-for-5
with a walk and
seven RBI*

Through May 30, 2018,
Martinez had a career batting
average of .297—.302 as a
right-handed hitter and .295
from the left side.

Midway through 2004, his first full season in the major leagues, Victor Martinez had reason to be proud. He had made the American League All-Star team.

"I did well in the minor leagues, so I told myself if I could do it in the minors, why not in the big leagues?" says Martinez, who had been a two-time Minor League Player of the Year in the Cleveland Indians system. "I always had a pretty good amount of confidence in myself."

Yet, as the second half of that season began, the 25-year-old catcher had lost that loving feeling at the plate. He'd gone 7-for-40 to start July, dropping his batting average from .304 to .286.

The budding star from Venezuela

was determined to figure things out—lest word spread that pitchers had figured *him* out. Fortunately, Martinez was blessed with a hitting coach on the Indians who a year earlier had been a first-ballot Hall of Fame inductee. Moreover, like Martinez, the instructor had been a switch-hitter—one whose 504 career home runs still rank second to Mickey Mantle’s 536 among players who batted from both sides of the plate.

Martinez wasn’t shy about seeking Eddie Murray’s help.

“Don’t try to kill the ball,” Murray told the youngster. “I want you to go to BP (batting practice) and swing 65 or 70 percent. If you take the same effort into the game, obviously the adrenaline is going to take you from 65 or 70 percent to 80 or 85 percent. The rest will follow from there.”

Murray offered one last piece of advice.

“You should never try to swing 100 percent,” he said.

Fourteen years later—at age 39, with more than 2,000

“Don’t try to kill the ball. I want you to go to BP (batting practice) and swing 65 or 70 percent. If you take the same effort into the game, obviously the adrenaline is going to take you from 65 or 70 percent to 80 or 85 percent. The rest will follow from there.”

—**Eddie Murray**

hits to his credit and possibly in his final big-league season—Victor Martinez, or V-Mart, as he also is known throughout the game, hasn’t forgotten the impact of that lesson.

“I remembered that, and I took it into that game,” Martinez says in recalling July 16, 2004, the night Murray’s tips paid off—quickly and handsomely—in a memorable contest at Seattle’s Safeco Field.

Martinez finished Cleveland’s 18-6 rout of the Mariners with a batting line for the ages—the best single-game performance ever by a Cleveland catcher. He went 5-for-5—hitting three home runs and two singles—while also drawing a walk and driving in a career-high seven runs.

To say that no one could get Martinez out is not an overstatement. Each of his five hits came against a different pitcher.

“I felt like I was looking at the ball almost in slow motion,” says Martinez, who hit two homers batting right-handed and one left-handed. “It was unbelievable.”

It was the start of a .486, 17-for-35 spurt that had him back on course toward season-ending statistics of .283, 23



AP photo/Mark Duncan

AP photo/John Froschauer

THE GAME I'LL NEVER FORGET

homers and 108 RBI—not to mention a .359 OBP.

Back on course toward a 16-year career that has included five All-Star selections and two Silver Slugger awards—the first as a catcher (he shared the A.L. honor with his hero, Ivan Rodriguez, in 2004) and the second as a designated hitter (2014).

Back on course toward a 2018 season that began with Martinez sporting a .298 lifetime batting average and a .364 career OBP.

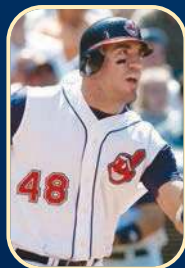
Back on course toward a career in which this keen-eyed

VICTOR MARTINEZ' THREE-HOMER GAME JULY 16, 2004

Cleveland	1	0	6	0	0	3	2	1	5	—	18	21	0
Seattle	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	—	6	7	0	

CLEVELAND INDIANS

	AB	R	H	RBI
Ronnie Belliard, 2b	6	1	1	1
Omar Vizquel, ss	3	3	2	0
Ben Broussard, 1b	1	1	1	1
Matt Lawton, lf	4	3	2	2
Mark Little, ph/lf	1	0	0	0
Victor Martinez, c	5	3	5	7
Casey Blake, 3b	5	1	3	1
John McDonald, ss	1	0	0	0
Travis Hafner, dh	4	3	2	2
Lou Merloni, 1b/3b	4	2	1	0
Jody Gerut, rf	6	1	2	3
Coco Crisp, cf	6	0	2	1
Totals	46	18	21	18

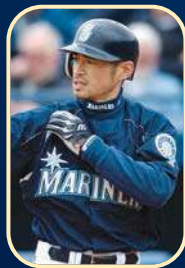


TRAVIS HAFNER

AP photo/Mark Duncan

SEATTLE MARINERS

	AB	R	H	RBI
Ichiro Suzuki, rf	3	0	1	0
Dave Hansen, 1b	2	0	0	0
Randy Winn, cf	4	0	1	0
Bret Boone, 2b	3	0	0	0
Hiram Bocachica, rf	1	0	0	0
Raul Ibanez, lf	4	0	0	0
Bucky Jacobsen, dh	2	2	1	0
Jolbert Cabrera, 1b/2b	3	2	2	0
Justin Leone, 3b	4	2	2	4
Dan Wilson, c	3	0	0	1
Willie Bloomquist, ss	4	0	0	1
Totals	33	6	7	6



ICHIRO SUZUKI

AP photo/Elane Thompson

2B: Gerut, Blake, Lawton, Hafner, Crisp, Cabrera 2, Leone; **HR:** Lawton, V. Martinez 3, Blake, Broussard, Hafner, Gerut, Leone; **SH:** Vizquel; **SF:** Wilson; **HBP:** Hafner, Lawton, Merloni; **LOB:** Cleveland 10, Seattle 4.

PITCHING CLEVELAND INDIANS

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Cliff Lee W (10-1)	6.0	4	3	3	2	6
Rafael Betancourt	1.0	0	0	0	0	1
Bob Howry	1.0	1	0	0	0	2
David Riske	0.2	2	3	3	1	0
Rick White	0.1	0	0	0	0	0

SEATTLE MARINERS

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Travis Blackley L (1-2)	2.0	7	7	7	3	0
J.J. Putz	3.0	3	0	0	0	2
Ron Villone	1.0	1	3	3	2	0
George Sherrill	1.0	3	2	2	0	1
Shigetoshi Hasegawa	1.0	2	1	1	0	0
Julio Mateo	0.2	3	4	4	0	1
Mike Myers	0.1	2	1	1	0	1

Umpires: Tim Tschida (HP), Jeff Nelson (1B), Marty Foster (2B), Joe Brinkman (3B)

Time of Game: 3:14 **Attendance:** 32,578



CLIFF LEE

AP photo/Tony Dajack

hitting machine has accumulated almost enough walks (698 entering this season) to balance out his strikeouts (842).

Back on course toward a career that includes a postseason batting average of .315 in 39 games—though regrettably none of his plate appearances has come during a World Series.

“I owe a lot of credit to Eddie Murray,” Martinez says. “He taught me how to be patient. He taught me how to hit.”

Martinez would enjoy another three-homer game 12 years later—this time for his current team, the Detroit Tigers, against the Kansas City Royals.

But his 2004 trifecta in Seattle still stands out. As Martinez, who is in the final year of a four-year, \$68-million contract, says: “I’m almost on my way out of this game, and to date it’s still the best day I’ve had in my career.”

“I’ve always been a guy that just wants to play baseball and win. Every time I cross those white lines, I want to do well and put my team in a position to win a ballgame. This is a sport that’s not about one or two players. There’s a reason why a team has 25 men on the roster, and for a team that’s going to win a championship, with everything that can happen during the year, it usually takes more than that, sometimes 30 or 35. So it’s a matter of teamwork.”

—Victor Martinez

How does he explain the events of that night?

“I wish I could tell you,” Martinez says, shaking his head. “It was one of those days when everything I hit was a hit and a few of them left the park.”

During a distinguished career with Cleveland, the Boston Red Sox and Detroit, Martinez has experienced much that defies explanation. Take, for example, the night in September 2011 when he hit into an MLB-record-tying four double plays—three on grounders, one on a line drive—in a game his Tigers won, 2-1, over the Minnesota

Twins. (Joe Torre had hit into four DPs while playing for the New York Mets in 1975, but no American Leaguer had encountered similar misfortune in 77 years.)

That game against Minnesota hardly was representative of Martinez' 2011 season. Not only did he hit .330, but he led the majors by batting .394 with runners in scoring position. He also drove in 103 runs—the fourth of five 100-RBI seasons in his career.

And in 2016, Martinez became the first player in modern major-league history to deliver a pinch-hit home run in each of his team's first two regular-season games.

Yet all this talk about homers makes the man uncomfortable. Never mind that he has hit 20 or more seven times, including a career-best 32 in 2014. (That was the year he also hit a career-high .335, drove in 103 runs and led the A.L. with a .409 OBP. He won the Edgar Martinez Award as the A.L.'s best designated hitter and finished second to the Angels' Mike Trout in league MVP voting.)

"I don't see myself as a home-run hitter," Martinez says. "I'm more of a line-drive, gap-to-gap hitter. Obviously, once in a while, if a pitcher makes a mistake, I can go deep. But I know my game—and I understood it really early in my career—so I never tried to hit homers. I just knew that if I barreled the ball—put a good swing on it—anything could happen."

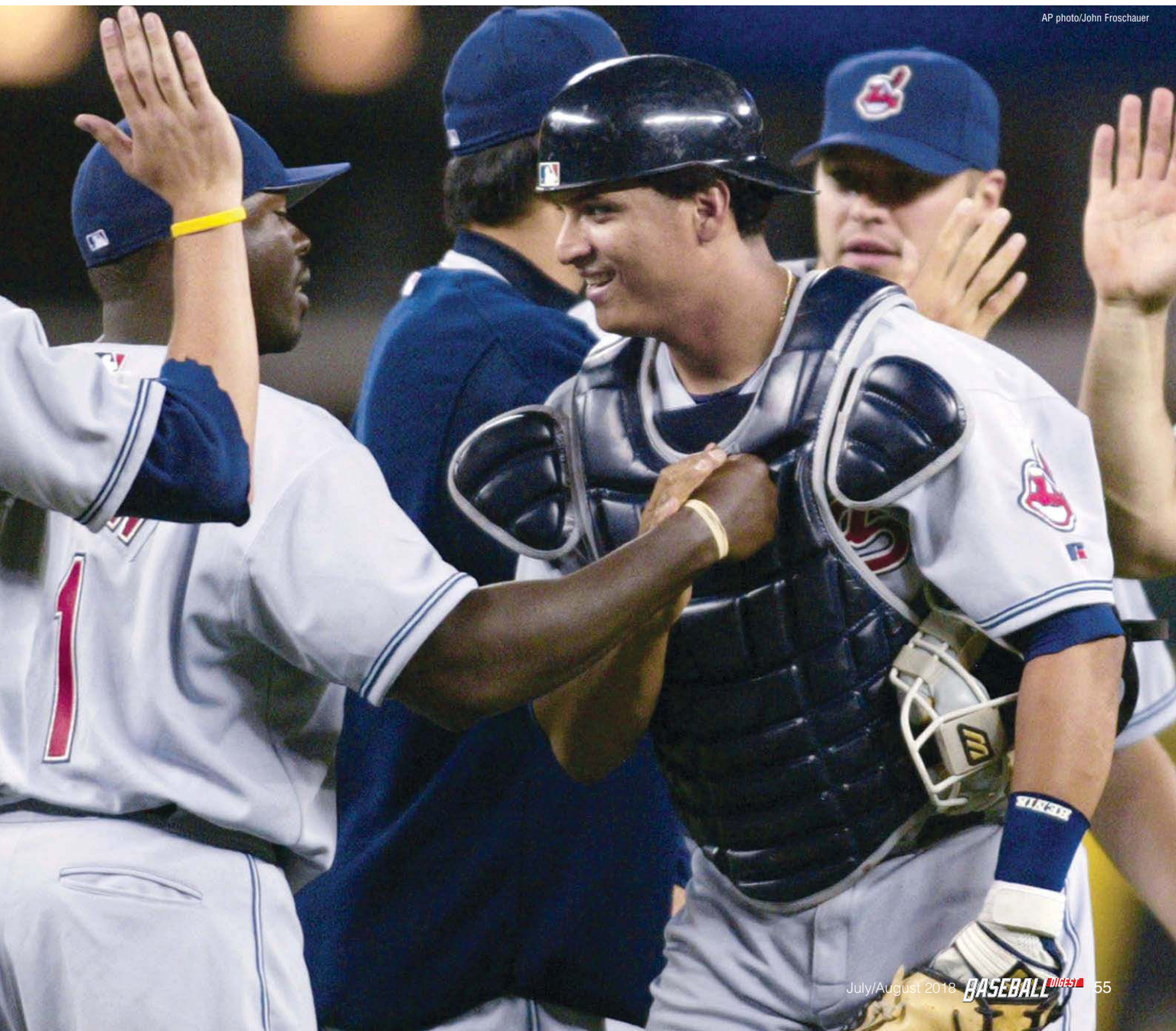
And on July 16, 2004, it did.

- In the first inning, Martinez walked against Mariners starter Travis Blackley, a 21-year-old Australian then considered one of Seattle's top prospects.

- In the third, the Indians tagged Blackley for three consecutive homers—by Matt Lawton, Martinez and Casey Blake—as the Seattle left-hander failed to retire anyone, allowing six hits and hitting a batter.

- In the fourth, Martinez singled against right-hander J.J. Putz.

- In the sixth, he clubbed a three-run homer off lefty



AP photo/John Froschauer

Mariners pitcher Julio Mateo looks on in disgust as Victor Martinez (background) circles the bases after hitting his third home run of the game on July 16, 2004.



AP photo/John Froschauer

reliever Ron Villone.

- In the seventh, he added a two-run single against left-hander George Sherrill.
- In the ninth, he blasted a solo homer off righty Julio Mateo, who allowed three of four homers the Indians collected in that inning.

Cleveland finished with a club-record-tying eight round-trippers, much to the dismay of Seattle manager Bob Melvin.

"They were taking some batting-practice swings," Melvin said after the game. "You don't see too many balls go out in batting practice with the frequency you saw tonight."

Still, in the eyes of Cleveland manager Eric Wedge, the arguably suspect pitching did not diminish what his young catcher had accomplished. Especially in what was considered a pitcher's ballpark.

"Victor Martinez is the real deal," Wedge said afterward. "What I remember most is that two were right-handed and one was left-handed," Martinez says, reflecting on his home runs that night. "I remember that more than the names of the pitchers."

With that, Martinez means no disrespect. This is not a man who has spent his career taking names or tabulating personal statistics.

"I've always been a guy that just wants to play baseball and win," Martinez says. "Every time I cross those white lines, I want to do well and put my team in a position to win a ballgame. This is a sport that's not about one or two players. There's a reason why a team has 25 men on the roster, and for a team that's going to win a championship, with everything that can happen during the year, it usually takes more than that, sometimes 30 or 35. So it's a matter of teamwork."

His career has survived multiple knee surgeries—a torn anterior cruciate ligament cost him the entire 2012 season—as well as an operation last September to correct an irregular heartbeat. The heart issue had surfaced in June, causing Martinez to be hospitalized and then sidelined for almost two weeks. Upon his return, he played for almost two months before the condition mandated a season-ending cardiac ablation procedure.

Emotionally, it was a wakeup call for Martinez, whose father died of a heart attack when Victor was growing up. After losing her husband, Victor's mother had to work as a nurse in two different hospitals to support her four children.

Martinez said he hasn't faced any restrictions since receiving full medical approval to play. "The doctor said 80 percent of the people who have this surgery don't need a second one, so I am crossing my fingers," Martinez says. "Thank God I have (this) year to go out the right way. After that, we'll see how it goes, how my body feels, and go from there."

He and Miguel Cabrera, 35, a Triple Crown winner and two-time league MVP, are the elder statesmen on a Tigers team in transition. Martinez entered the season with \$18 million left on his contract and, most importantly, the belief that he still had something to give.

"I wish I could tell you I feel like I felt when I came into the big leagues," Martinez says. "Unfortunately, I don't. I think that's what comes with age. But I don't know—maybe seeing all these young kids makes you feel a little younger. You enjoy helping the young kids and making them feel they belong here—making them feel like family."

Ron Gardenhire, who became Detroit's manager this season, vowed to keep Martinez' family in mind as he considered how to best deploy the veteran hitter.

"We're going to make sure he's healthy and this doesn't take away from his life after baseball and all those things," Gardenhire said this spring. "But this guy's a gamer. He's got a lot of passion to hit, and I'm hoping I get to use him for another year or two, or whatever."

However long Martinez plays, he will heed what Eddie Murray told him 14 years ago.

"The time we all get into trouble is when we try to hit the ball 700 feet," Victor Martinez says. "That is one of the things I'll never forget." **BD**

Collect 10 points for each question answered correctly. (If you score 80 or better, you're a Hall of Famer; 70 or better, MVP; between 60 and 70, All-Star; and 40 to 60, a minor leaguer.)

1 From the start of the All-Star Game in 1933 through 2017, major leaguers have driven in 90 or more runs by the All-Star break 13 times. Who are the only two players to exceed 100 RBI before the break? Collect five points for each correct answer.

2 Hitting 30 home runs and stealing 30 bases in the same MLB season are milestones recorded 60 times by 38 players. Who are the five Hall of Famers in the 30-HR/30-SB club? Collect two points for each correct answer.

3 Since 1947, when the Rookie of the Year Award was first presented in the major leagues, eight recipients went on to collect 3,000 or more hits. Collect 10 points if you can identify five of these rookie award winners.

4 Since the start of the modern era in 1901, six players whose last name begins with the letter "L" have won a league batting title. Name three of these batting champs to collect 10 points. Clue: three did it in the A.L. and three in the N.L.

5 Which Braves pitcher never won the Cy Young Award: Warren Spahn, John Smoltz, Phil Niekro, Tom Glavine or Greg Maddux?

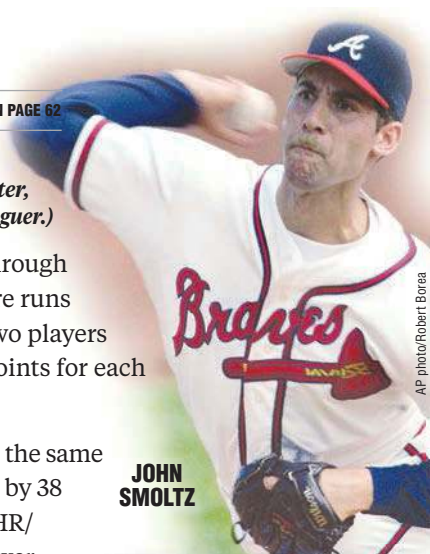
6 Besides Jackie Robinson, whose No. 42 was retired by Major League Baseball, who is the only player to have his uniform number retired by three different teams: Rollie Fingers, Reggie Jackson, Nolan Ryan or Paul Molitor?

7 Through 2017, only three major leaguers had a 50-homer season with two different teams. Collect 10 points if you can identify two of these three sluggers.

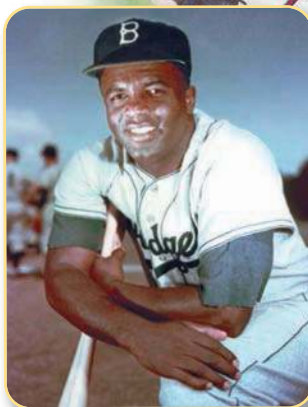
8 Randy Johnson is the only MLB pitcher to record 2,000 or more strikeouts for two different teams. True or False?

9 Don Larsen (1956), Sandy Koufax (1965) and David Wells (1998) pitched a perfect game and won a World Series contest in the same season. Who is the only other pitcher to accomplish this feat: Randy Johnson, David Cone, Matt Cain or Jim Hunter?

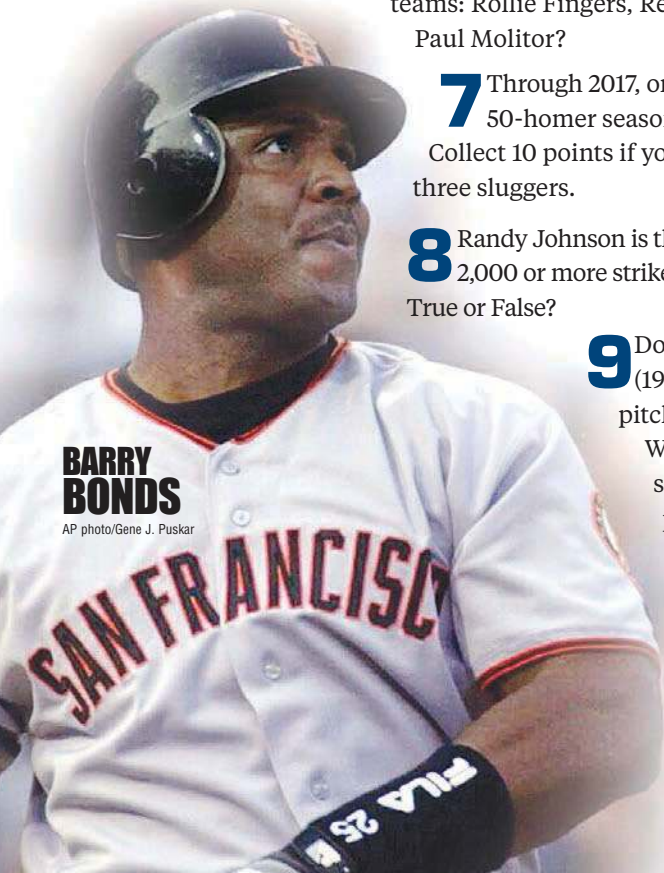
10 Who hit the most home runs in the 2000s (2000-2009) with 435: Barry Bonds, Manny Ramirez, Albert Pujols or Alex Rodriguez?



JOHN SMOLTZ



JACKIE ROBINSON



BARRY BONDS

AP photo/Gene J. Puskar

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RULES CORNER

By Rich Marazzi

Unique Plays Under Review

There were some unusual plays that piqued my interest the first few weeks of the new season. A rather obscure rule came into play in the Yankees-Orioles game at Yankee Stadium on April 6.

In the bottom of the sixth inning, the Yankees had Giancarlo Stanton on third base and Gary Sanchez on first with one out when Neil Walker tapped a grounder back to O's pitcher Richard Bleier. Bleier ran at Stanton to create a rundown. During the rundown, Sanchez reached third base. With Sanchez parked on third, Stanton ran through the base several feet down the left-

field line. O's catcher Caleb Joseph tagged Sanchez then headed for Stanton who ran beyond third base and to his left. Stanton was tagged by Joseph a good distance from the base. When that occurred, third-base ump Ron Kulpa pointed to Stanton and made the out call.

O's manager Buck Showalter wanted a double play. But the umpires met and incorrectly allowed Sanchez to remain at third base.

In a play where there is a runner (Stanton) in a rundown between home and third and a trail runner (Sanchez) reaches third base, if the lead runner (Stanton) runs through the base toward left field, the trail runner (Sanchez) is out for passing the lead runner. The lead runner can return to the base if he does so before he is out.

The rule that covers the play is 5.09 (b) (9). It reads in part, "...Before being tagged the lead runner (Stanton) runs back to and beyond third base toward left field. At this time, the trailing runner (Sanchez) has passed the lead runner as a result of the lead runner's actions. As a result, the trailing runner (Sanchez) is out and third base is unoccupied. *The lead runner (Stanton) is entitled to third base if he returns to touch it before he is out unless he is declared out for abandoning the base.*"

The umpires correctly called Stanton out but incor-



CALEB JOSEPH

GIANCARLO STANTON

rectly allowed Sanchez to remain at third base. When Joseph tagged Sanchez, he was already out for passing Stanton. And when Stanton was tagged before returning to the base, he should have been called out as well. But the O's only got one out on the play. Following the game, the umps admitted they erred.

RUNNER ABANDONMENT

Thanks to Pro rule 5.09 (b) (2), one of the strangest triple plays ever recorded occurred on April 19 at Safeco Field, where the Mariners hosted the Astros. Here is what happened.

In the top of the fourth inning, the Astros had Jose Altuve on second and Carlos Correa on first with no outs when Evan Gattis hit a hard grounder to Kyle Seager at third. Seager stepped on the bag and threw to second baseman Robinson Cano for a 5-4 double play.

Gattis made it to first base, but he thought the inning was over and walked off the bag toward the middle of the infield. The Mariners started pointing at Gattis, and first baseman Daniel Vogelbach tagged him for the third out. But the tag was irrelevant because first-base umpire Brian Gorman had already called Gattis out before he was tagged.

WHY DID GORMAN CALL GATTIS OUT?

Gattis was ruled out because he abandoned his efforts as a runner. Gorman applied rule 5.09 (b) (2) that reads, "Any runner is out when after touching first base, he leaves the base path, obviously abandoning his effort to touch the next base." The Comment to the rule adds, "Any runner after reaching first base who leaves the base path heading for his dugout or his position believing there is no further play, may be declared out if the umpire judges the act of the runner to be considered abandoning his efforts to run the bases."

Umpires are authorized to make this call if they judge the runner has progressed a "reasonable distance" toward his dugout or his position with no intent to reassert his status as a runner. The cause of the runner's actions is irrelevant, and the ball remains in play. "Reasonable distance" is umpire judgment.

Keep in mind that when a runner abandons his effort, he is not called out for running out of the baseline. The runner only has a baseline when he is avoiding a tag or is in a rundown. When Gattis was called out, he had no

restricted baseline. Also, a baserunner being called out for abandonment does not change a force play to a tag or time play on any other runner(s), but if he is forced on the play, he can be called out on appeal after he is called out for abandonment. Also, if there is a trail runner, he is not called out for passing the runner if the umpire had already ruled a runner out for abandonment.

Umpires are authorized to make this call if they judge the runner has progressed a "reasonable distance" toward his dugout or his position with no intent to reassert his

status as a runner. The cause of the runner's actions is irrelevant, and the ball remains in play. "Reasonable distance" is umpire judgment.

The rule includes any runner who abandons his basepath at any time.

TWO RUNNERS ON THE SAME BASE

The White Sox were hosting the Mariners on April 23 when the M's got caught with two runners on the same base and experienced the ultimate nightmare of both being called out.

The Mariners had Vogelbach on second and Mike Zunino on first with Ben Gamel batting when reliever Chris Beck bounced a pitch to the backstop. The pitch caromed directly back to catcher Wellington Castillo with Zunino already partway to second base. The White Sox catcher threw to first baseman Jose Abreu, who initiated a rundown on Zunino.

Abreu ran at Zunino and then threw to third baseman Matt Davidson when Vogelbach broke for third. Davidson ran Vogelbach back to second base, where he found Zunino standing on the bag. With both runners on the base, Davidson wisely tagged the two of them. Second-base umpire Alfonso Marquez made no call, at least not one that could be seen with a signaled raised arm.

Vogelbach, who had the right to the base, thinking he was out, got off the base and headed for his dugout. Davidson handed the ball to shortstop Tim Anderson, who tagged Vogelbach several feet off the base between first and second—and Vogelbach was called out by Marquez.

At this point, Zunino was still parked on second base and there only appeared to be one out on the play. A state of confusion caused the umpires to huddle, and they properly called Zunino out as well because Vogelbach had the right to the base since he was the lead runner and was not forced to advance on the play.



Mariners pitcher Marco Gonzalez watches as Evan Gattis is tagged by first baseman Daniel Vogelbach. Gattis was called out before the tag.

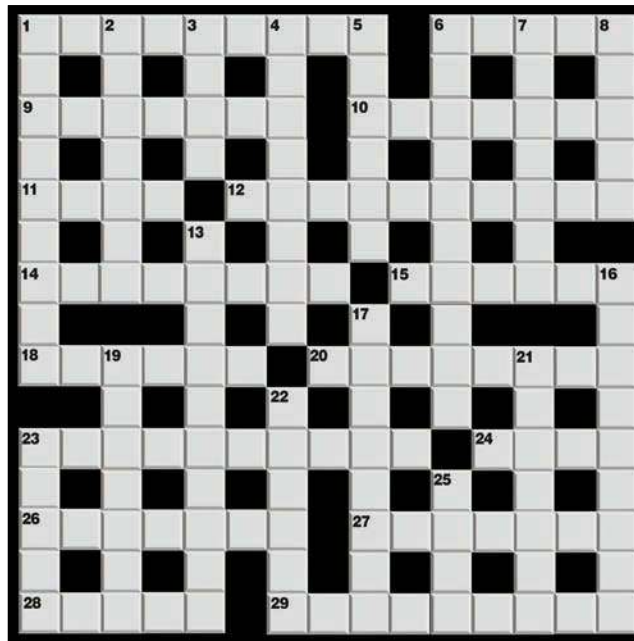
AP photo/Ted S. Warren

ACROSS

- 1** Pitcher dubbed "The Condor," he's now with Boston
- 6** ____ Doubleday Field is in Cooperstown
- 9** Strikes out: 2 words
- 10** Knuckleballs are known for their ____ (unpredictable) motion
- 11** Wraps one's arm in frozen water
- 12** "Campy" at short for teh A's
- 14** Came through in teh clutch, ____ the bell
- 15** Yanked
- 18** Catches a fly with the arm fully extended
- 20** Mark ____ and Randy Johnson were involved in a 1989 swap
- 23** He calls the shots in Frisco
- 24** ____ Hershiser was nicknamed "Bulldog" by Tom Lasorda
- 26** ____ Baseball is a variation of the game (also called Double Diamond Baseball)
- 27** Larry Doby played for this Japanese League team late in his career
- 28** Olympic Games prize
- 29** Ken ____ had a career-high 35 homers in 1979 for the Orioles

BASEBALL CROSSWORD PUZZLE

By Larry Humber



DOWN

- 1** They call Busch Stadium home
- 2** Globe Life Park is their home
- 3** He was the quickest in N.L. history to rack up 400 home runs
- 4** Claimed an infraction, such as not touching a base
- 5** Baseball is ____ from anti-trust laws
- 6** He put on a show at the 2017 Home Run Derby
- 7** Robert Redford played Roy Hobbs in *The ____*
- 8** As the season goes on, teh pennant ____ heat up
- 13** The first of just two Blue Jays named A.L. MVP
- 16** The other Jay named MVP
- 17** Took advantage of a scoring situation, ____ a run
- 19** Exploded, scoring many runs
- 21** Exhaust through overuse: 2 words
- 22** Toronto's ____ Centre has a retractable roof
- 23** Sid ____ scored late to send Atlanta on to the 1992 World Series
- 25** The World Series is the ____ Classic

ANSWERS ON PAGE 62

DETACHED EQUIPMENT VIOLATION

The Red Sox and Royals played at Fenway Park on May 1. In the top of the 10th inning with the score tied 3-3, the Royals had runners on first and second with two outs. With Lucas Duda at bat, Red Sox reliever Carson Smith fired a pitch that bounced out of catcher Christian Vazquez' mitt. The ball rolled behind the catcher's shin guard on his right leg, where he casually picked the ball up with his mask, a violation of rule 5.06 (E). When plate ump Chris Conroy called time, apparently seeing no further action, he awarded both runners one base, putting runners on second and third. The runners were stranded but it could have been damaging to the Sox, who eventually lost the game in 13 innings, 7-6.

RULEBALL COMMENT

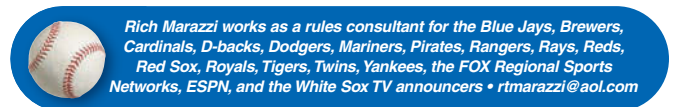
1 When the catcher uses detached equipment to field a pitched ball, the award is one base from the position of the runner(s) at the moment the ball was touched. At the time Vazquez fielded the ball with his mask, the Royals had runners on first and second, so they would each advance to second and third, respectively. The ball remains in play until there is no further action. Let's say the runner on second base attempted a steal on the pitch. If he had reached third before Vazquez handled the ball with his mask, he would be allowed to score while the runner on first would be sent to second base.

In the video provided by MLB.com (*To view the play, go to MLB.com, May 1, KC @Bos: "Vazquez uses face mask,*

ruled as balk) the violation was not a balk. Boston's television broadcasters also incorrectly referred to the play as a "catcher's balk." There is no such language as a catcher's balk in the *Official Baseball Rules*. Before the automatic base-on-balls was instituted in 2017, the pitcher had to throw four wide ones. If the catcher stepped out of the "imaginary" catcher's box early, and the pitcher delivered the pitch, a balk was supposed to be charged to the pitcher because of the actions of the catcher. However, the rule—6.02 (a) (12)—was seldom enforced. Although this was commonly referred to as a catcher's balk, there is no such language in the rule book.

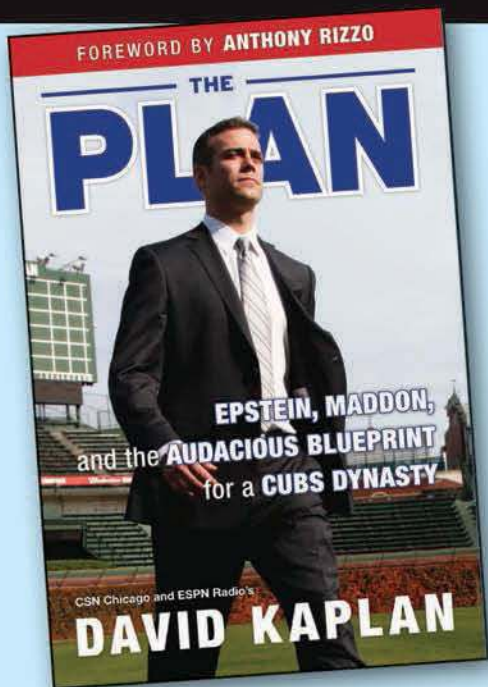
2 Another time a catcher's actions cause a pitcher to be charged with a balk is covered in rule 6.01 (g). It reads, "If, with a runner on third base and trying to score by means of a squeeze play or a steal, the catcher or any other fielder steps on, or in front of home base without possession of the ball, or touches the batter or his bat, the pitcher shall be charged with a balk, the batter shall be awarded first base on the interference and the ball is dead."

3 One caption identified the Vazquez' play as catcher's interference. This is not considered catcher's interference. It is a violation of detached equipment. **BD**



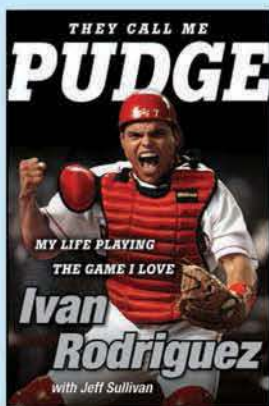


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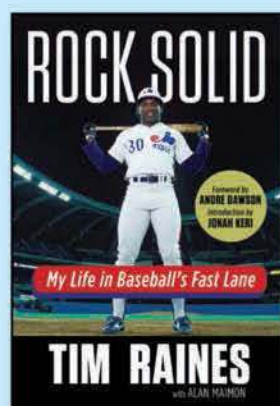
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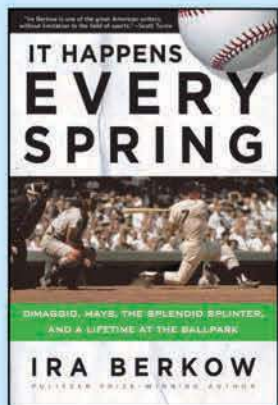
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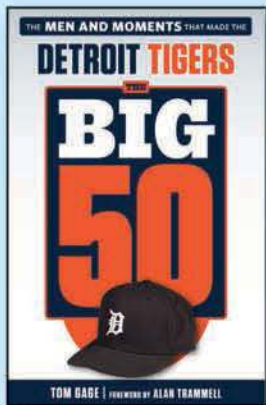
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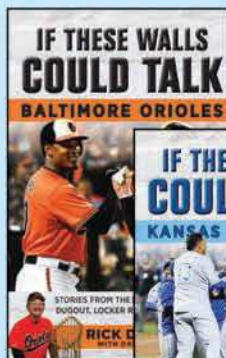
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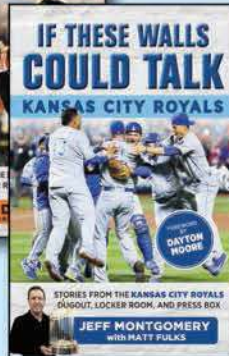


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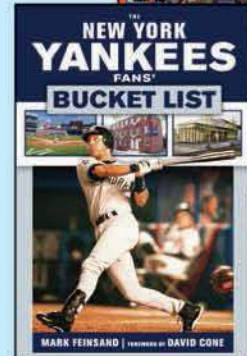
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Please include name, address, and phone number.

1 Through the 2017 season, Hank Greenberg and Juan Gonzalez are the only two players to reach the 100-RBI plateau by the All-Star break. Greenberg had 103 RBI for the Tigers before the 1935 Midsummer Classic, and Gonzalez recorded 101 first-half RBI for the Rangers in 1998.

2 The five members of the Hall of Fame to produce a 30-homer/30-steals season are Hank Aaron (1963), Jeff Bagwell (1997, 1999), Vladimir Guerrero (2001-2002), Barry Larkin (1996) and Willie Mays (1956-1957).

3 The eight Rookie of the Year Award winners who went on to collect 3,000 or more hits are Willie Mays (3,283), Pete Rose (4,256), Rod Carew (3,053), Eddie Murray (3,255), Cal Ripken (3,184), Derek Jeter (3,465), Ichiro Suzuki (3,089) and Albert Pujols (3,021 through May 30).

4 The six players whose last name begins with the letter "L" and won a league batting title are Nap Lajoie (1901-04, 1910), Fred Lynn (1979) and Carney Lansford (1981) in the American League, and Ernie Lombardi (1938, 1942), Derrek Lee (2005) and DJ LeMahieu (2016) in the National League.

5 Phil Niekro never won the Cy Young Award during his 24-year MLB career. Greg Maddux won three with the Braves (1993-95), Tom Glavine captured two (1991, 1998), and John Smoltz (1996) and Warren Spahn (1957) each won one.

6 Nolan Ryan is the only other player besides Jackie Robinson to have his uniform number retired by three major-league teams. Ryan's No. 30 was retired by the California Angels, and his No. 34 was retired by the Houston Astros and Texas Rangers.

7 The three players to have a 50-homer season with more than one team are Jimmie Foxx (1932 A's/1938 Red Sox), Mark McGwire (1996 A's/1998-99 Cardinals) and Alex Rodriguez (2001-02 Rangers/2007 Yankees).

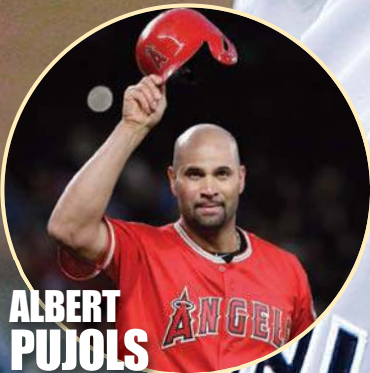
8 True. Randy Johnson is the only pitcher to strike out 2,000 or more batters with two teams. The southpaw fanned 2,162 pitching for the Seattle Mariners. He struck out 2,077 as a member of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

9 Pitching for the Yankees in 1999, David Cone tossed a perfect game on July 18 against the Expos. That October, facing the Atlanta Braves, he picked up the victory in Game 2 of the World Series.

10 During the decade of the 2000s (2000-2009), Alex Rodriguez clubbed 435 home runs to lead the majors. Barry Bonds hit 317, Manny Ramirez, 348, and Albert Pujols, 366.

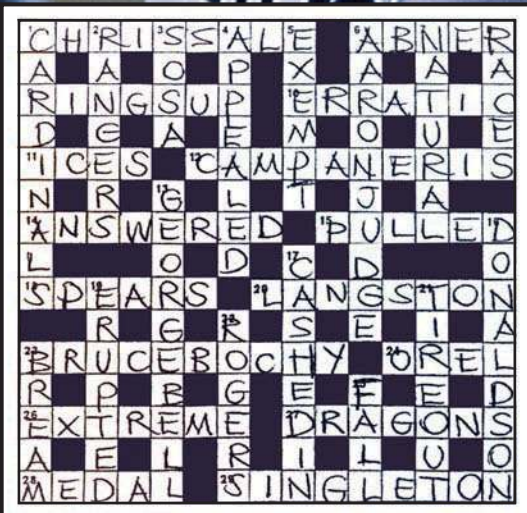
ALEX RODRIGUEZ

Alex Rodriguez topped all major-league hitters with 435 home runs from 2000 through 2009. He had three 50-homer campaigns during that span with the Rangers (2001-02) and Yankees (2007).



ALBERT PUJOLS

AP photo/Elaine Thompson



AP photo/Paul Sancya

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