

## What do I mean by “Tenured Teammates”?

Quite simply, any group of two or more players who have been with the same franchise across at least two consecutive seasons qualify as tenured teammates. Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig were tenured Yankees teammates for 12 years in 1934. Anthony Rizzo, Kyle Hendricks, and Javier Baez were tenured Cubs teammates for 7 years in 2021. Tim Anderson, Lucas Giolito, Aaron Bummer, Reynaldo Lopez, and Yoan Moncada are 7-year tenured teammates on the White Sox right now. You get the idea.



# THE PHENOMENON OF LONG-TENURED TEAMMATES IN MODERN MLB HISTORY



Presented by Chuck Hildebrandt at SABR 51, Chicago, July 5-8, 2023

## The 1970s Detroit Tigers: Home of the Long-Tenured Teammates



The 1952 Detroit Tigers, losers of 104 games, had ten players on the roster who'd been together for at least seven years, itself the most players of that tenure length in history up to that point.

By 1954, having undergone what we might call “roster retooling”, Detroit was down to a single player who'd been with the franchise even five years. Their future Hall of Famer, Al Kaline, who would become the anchor for the long-tenured teams of the 1970s, was in his second season.

In 1960, Detroit acquired Norm Cash in trade and promoted Dick McAuliffe from the farm system. In 1963, the Tigers harvested a bumper crop of great prospects all at once: Gates Brown, Bill Freehan\*, Willie Horton, and Mickey Lolich. The following year, the franchise promoted Jim Northrup and Mickey Stanley. Together with Kaline, these nine players would serve as the core of the 1968 World Champions.

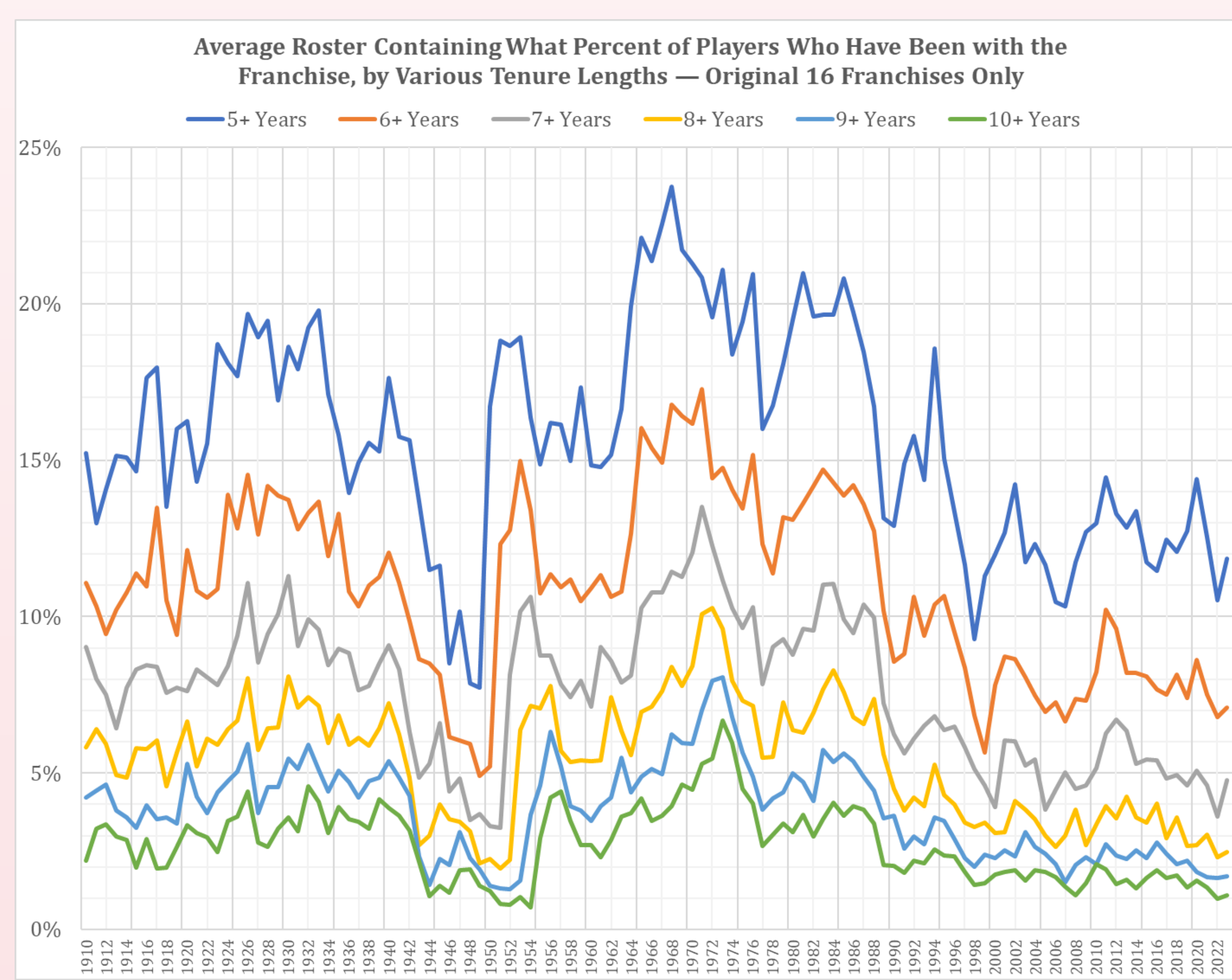
In 1973, these same nine players spent their tenth straight season together. No other franchise has had as many as nine tenured teammates across ten consecutive seasons. The second most was eight—by the 1972 Tigers. The third most was seven—by the 1974 Tigers. No other team has had even as many as six, the most recent of which was the 1986 Baltimore Orioles (Mike Flanagan; Rick Dempsey; Dennis Martinez; Tippy Martinez; Scott McGregor; Eddie Murray).

\*Freehan had a late-season “cup of coffee” call-up in 1961 but stayed in the minors for 1962, which interrupted his tenure streak.

## How did I come up with the idea for this poster, anyway?

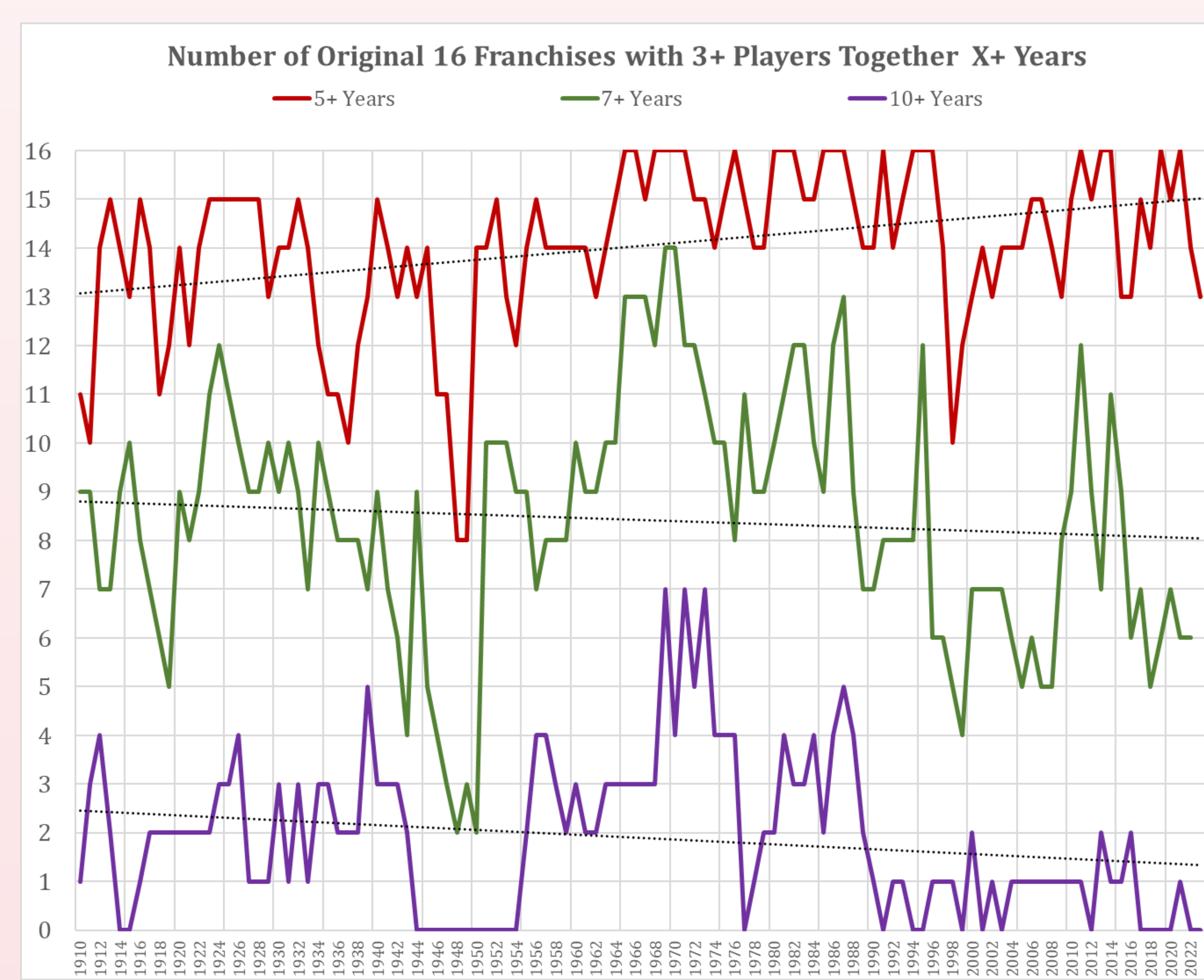
Thinking one day about one of the early versions of my favorite franchise—the Detroit Tigers of the late 1960s to mid 1970s—I was suddenly struck by the realization of how many of those guys stayed together on the team for so long. When I looked up the actual length of time, I was flabbergasted. Crunching the data for all of modern big-league history (i.e., since 1901), I found no other franchise in any period in modern big-league history that kept so many players with them for as many years. As I dug deeper into the data, I found some fascinating tidbits, some of which I'm sharing here.

## What are the Historical Trends Regarding Franchises Keeping Multiple Teammates Together for Many Years?



The NY franchise, which started in 1903, is considered an equally original, mature franchise along with the other fifteen, and thus is reflected on these charts.

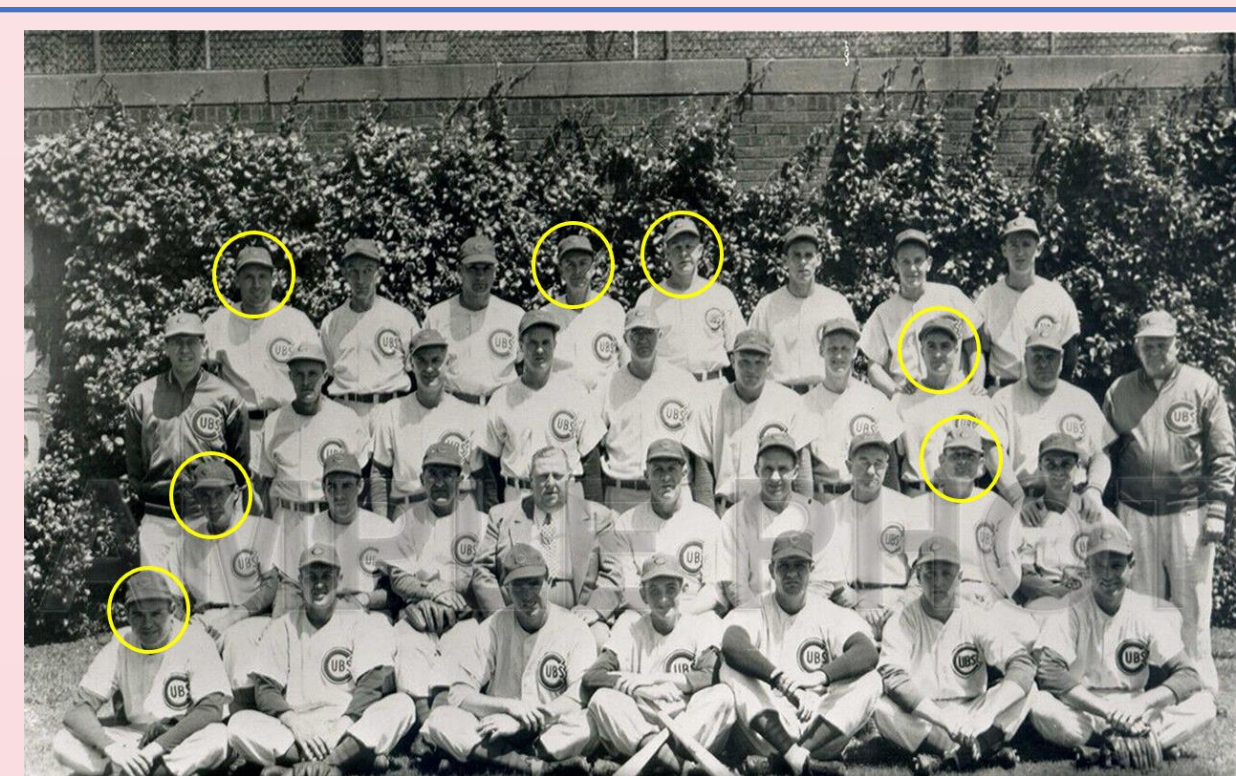
The chart to the left, which shows the average percentage of active rosters that contain players of franchise-tenure lengths ranging from 5+ to 10+ years, for Original 16 franchises only and throughout modern history, shows three historical patterns emerging: (1) the very lowest levels of tenure occurred just following World War II, during which many players' tenures were interrupted by service; (2) the highest levels were during the 1970s, just before free agency was implemented; and (3) the 21st Century reflects a wax-wane pattern that has settled to become the lowest sustained levels in history, a reflection of both increased free agency player movement, and an all-time-high level of roster churn by franchises.



This chart, which shows how many Original 16 franchises had at least three players together for periods of five, seven, or ten years throughout modern history, reflects the same basic historical patterns, but also reflects stark differences among tenure lengths. The number of teams with 3+ teammates together for 5+ years are historically at their highest, as shown by the trend line, but at 7+ and especially 10+ years, they are at their historical lows, especially since 1991. This essentially reflects franchises' response to free agency, for which players become eligible as they reach six years of major league service.

## Interesting Stories about Tenured Teammates in History

The Chicago Cubs somehow managed to keep seven players together through the entirety of World War II and into 1947. Only one other franchise had as many as four. Given that their record that season was 69-85, perhaps the Cubs could have benefitted from a bit of a “roster retooling” of their own.



1947 Chicago Cubs  
 Front Row: **Yan**, **Lake**, **Shannon**, **Watts** (catcher), **Livingston**, **Heene**, **Peffer**.  
 Second Row: **Shannon**, **Livingston**, **Peffer**, **Shannon**, **Livingston**, **Peffer**, **Shannon**, **Livingston**, **Peffer**.  
 Third Row: **Shannon**, **Livingston**, **Peffer**, **Shannon**, **Livingston**, **Peffer**, **Shannon**, **Livingston**, **Peffer**.  
 Fourth Row: **Shannon**, **Livingston**, **Peffer**, **Shannon**, **Livingston**, **Peffer**, **Shannon**, **Livingston**, **Peffer**.

In 1953, the St. Louis Browns used 38 total players to finish their final season in St. Louis with a 54-100 record. The following season of 1954, their first in Baltimore, they again used 38 players, nineteen of them holdovers from Mound City, to finish, again, 54-100. By 1956, however, the turnover was almost complete: of 48 total players, only one had played on any of the franchise's previous teams: Chuck Diering, who was gone by June 24. This was the fastest turnover of a franchise's roster in big-league history. The '56 team finished 69-85. A decade later, the Orioles won the first of several pennants on their way to becoming one of the America League's elite franchises.

It is very rare for a franchise to carry the same ten players together for at least six consecutive seasons. Of the 2,494 teams in modern big-league history that were part of franchises that had been in operation for at least six seasons, only 54, or 2.2% of them, had carried at least ten of the same players for six straight seasons. Manny Mota was on two of these teams: the 1968 Pittsburgh Pirates, and the 1975 Los Angeles Dodgers. He is the one player who's been on two teams with as rare a tenure profile as this. The most recent franchise to carry ten or more of the same players for six straight seasons was the 2018 Cleveland Indians, the first franchise that had done so in thirty years.

Connie Mack was well-known for building up champions and then stripping them down. The first time he did this was after winning four pennants in five years between 1910 and 1914. Nine players on the '14 squad had been teammates for at least seven years. Starting with 1915, the A's embarked upon seven straight cellar dwellings, preceded by selling off stars in what's been fairly characterized as a fire sale. By 1918, there was not a single player left from the championship years, and indeed, only one player who'd been with the franchise for even three years. Unlike the mid-50s Orioles, who stripped down to build up, Mack happily took the franchise in the opposite direction for reasons.

## The Most Years Having Tenured Teammates, by Franchise

Original 16 franchise names are bold-faced to provide better historical context

Franch Yrs Tgth	Team	Players	Franch Yrs Tgth	Team	Players	Franch Yrs Tgth	Team	Players
ARI 9	2022 ARI	David Peralta, Nick Ahmed	LAA 11	1999 ANA	Chuck Finley, Gary DiSarcina	SFG 16	1943 NYG	Mel Ott, Carl Hubbell
ATL 13	1963 MLN	Warren Spahn, Lew Burdette	2004 ANA	Tim Salmon, Garrett Anderson	STL 12	1926 STL	Rogers Hornsby, Jack Smith	
	1964 MLN	Warren Spahn, Eddie Matthews	2006 LAA	Garett Anderson, Darin Erstad		1971 STL	Bob Gibson, Julian Javier	
	1966 ATL	Eddie Matthews, Hank Aaron	LAD 15	1961 LAD	Gil Hodges, Duke Snider		1975 STL	Bob Gibson, Lou Brock
BAL 14	1974 BAL	Brooks Robinson, Boog Powell	MIA 8	2005 FLA	Luis Castillo, Alex Gonzalez		1979 STL	Lou Brock, Ted Simmons
BOS 16	1989 BOS	Dwight Evans, Jim Rice	MIL 17	1992 MIL	Robin Yount, Jim Gantner	TBR 7	2006 TBD	Toby Hall, Travis Harper, Aubrey Huff
CHC 15	1940 CHC	Gabby Hartnett, Charley Root	MIN 18	1932 WSH	Joe Judge, Sam Rice		2012 TBR	Melvin Upton Jr., James Shields, Ben Zobrist
CHW 15	1928 CHW	Ray Schalk, Red Faber	NYM 13	1977 NYM	Ed Kranepool, Bud Harrelson		2014 TBR	Ben Zobrist, David Price, Evan Longoria
CIN 14	1983 CIN	Johnny Bench, Dave Concepcion	NYJ 19	2013 NYJ	Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera	TEX 9	1970 WSA	Eddie Brinkman, Jim Hannan
CLE 13	1940 CLE	Willis Hudlin, Mel Harder	OAK 13	1930 PHA	Cy Perkins, Jimmy Dykes		1999 TEX	Juan Gonzalez, Ivan Rodriguez
COL 10	2011 COL	Ted Helton, Aaron Cook		1932 PHA	Jimmy Dykes, Eddie Rommel		2002 TEX	Ivan Rodriguez, Rusty Greer
DET 19	1995 DET	Alan Trammell, Lou Whitaker	PHI 15	1986 PHI	Steve Carlton, Mike Schmidt	TOR 11	1992 TOR	Dave Stieb, Rance Mulliniks
HOU 15	2005 HOU	Craig Biggio, Jeff Bagwell	PIT 17	1972 PIT	Roberto Clemente, Bill Mazeroski		2009 TOR	Roy Halladay, Vernon Wells
KCR 18	1990 KCR	George Brett, Frank White	SDP 10	1991 SDP	Tony Gwynn, Garry Templeton	WSN 11	1984 MON	Steve Rogers, Gary Carter
			SEA 14	2001 SEA	Edgar Martinez, Jay Buhner		1990 MON	Tim Lincecum, Tim Wallach

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## Longest-Tenured Teammates by Franchise in 2023

Through games of July 2

Team Yrs+ Players	Team Yrs+ Players
ARI 7 Nick Ahmed, Christian Walker, Ketel Marte	MIL 6 Brandon Woodruff, Adrian Hauser, Christian Yelich, Corbin Burnes, Freddy Peralta
ATL 7 Max Fried, Ozzie Albies, A.J. Minter	MIN 9 Jorge Polanco, Byron Buxton, Max Kepler
BAL 6 Anthony Santander, Cedric Mullins	NYM 7 Brandon Nimmo, Tomas Nido
BOS 6 Rafael Devers, Ryan Brasier	NYJ 8 Aaron Hicks, Aaron Judge
CHC 7 Kyle Hendricks, Ian Happ	OAK 5 Ramon Laureano, Seth Brown
CHW 7 Tim Anderson, Lucas Giolito, Aaron Bummer, Reynaldo Lopez, Yoan Moncada	PHI 6 Aaron Nola, Ranger Suarez
CIN 6 Joey Votto, Lucas Sims	PIT 5 Brian Reynolds, Mitch Keller
CLE 8 Jose Ramirez, Shane Bieber	SDP 4 Manny Machado, Austin Nola, Jake Cronenworth, Luis Campusano, Tim Hill, Trent Grisham
COL 8 Charlie Blackmon, German Marquez	SEA 5 Marco Gonzales, Dylan Moore, J.P. Crawford
DET 5 Miguel Cabrera, Jose Cisnero, Tyler Alexander	SFG 7 Brandon Crawford, Austin Slater
HOU 8 Jose Altuve, Alex Bregman	STL 7 Adam Wainwright, Jack Flaherty, Paul DeJong
KCR 6 Brad Keller, Hunter Dozier, Scott Barlow	TBR 6 Brandon Lowe, Tyler Glasnow
LAA 6 Mike Trout, David Fletcher, Jamie Barria, Shohei Ohtani, Taylor Ward	TEX 4 Taylor Hearn, Adolis Garcia, John King, Leody Taveras
LAD 9 Clayton Kershaw, Austin Barnes	TOR 5 Danny Jansen, Bo Bichette, Cavan Biggio, Jordan Romano, Vlad Guerrero Jr.
MIA 6 Garrett Cooper, Sandy Alcantara	WSN 5 Victor Robles, Patrick Corbin