



Society For American Baseball Research Baseball Records Committee

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Not everything that counts is counted; not everything that is counted is worth counting. ---Albert Einstein

EVEN MORE SIBLING RIVALRY

In the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 newsletters, we presented details of games where two brothers had homered in the same game—for opposing teams. Courtesy of Elias Sports Bureau, this time we present the list of batters who hit a homer directly off of their own brother on the mound, with one of these rare occurrences happening just this year:

Bradley Zimmer, CLE, Sept. 27, 2021 (off **Kyle Zimmer**, KC)
Joe Niekro, HOU, May 29, 1976 (off **Phil Niekro**, ATL)
Rick Ferrell, BOS, July 19, 1933 (off **Wes Ferrell**, CLE)
George Stovall, CLE, October 7, 1904 (G1) (off **Jesse Stovall**, DET)

Of course, this was also Joe Niekro's *only* major league homer.

SOTO...SO-SO?

From September 21 to September 24, 2021, **Juan Soto** of the **Nationals** reached base safely in 12 consecutive plate appearances. An impressive feat—but turns out it's been done more than 40 times in the past by other batters.

The record was long thought to be 16 times on base safely in a row by **Ted Williams** of the **Red Sox** from September 17 to September 23, 1957, a stretch during which he went 6-for-6 plus 9 walks and 1 HBP.

But several years ago, the unheralded **Frank "Piggy" Ward** was found to have held the record all along, having reached base safely in 17 straight plate appearances in 1893. In addition to holding this incredible record, Ward also switched teams in the middle of the streak, reaching in his last 4 plate appearances with the old **Orioles** and then his first 13 with the **Reds**. Ward went 8-for-8 with 8 walks and 1 HBP during the streak.

Other than this one hot stretch, Ward's career was remarkable only in how unremarkable it was. He played for over 30 different major and minor league organizations in his career.

DODGERS/PADRES MAKE A MOCKERY OF THE EXTRA-INNING RULE

On August 25, 2021, something very unusual happened: the **Padres** and **Dodgers** played a 16-inning game. What's so unusual? Under MLB's COVID extra-inning rule (where a runner starts on second base in each extra inning), such games were supposed to be a relic, confined to the boring old days before the end of games turned into a carnival-style hockey shoot out.

So how did they do it? Primarily, they just stopped scoring: neither team crossed the plate in the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, or fourteenth innings. They both pushed across two runs in the fifteenth. And the Dodgers pulled ahead by 2 in the sixteenth, with the Padres putting up a big zero to end the game.

If you count the ghost runners who were stranded, the two teams combined to leave over 25 runners on base *just during the extra innings!*

In several prior newsletters, we predicted—and then later confirmed—that this rule would save only a few seconds per game, on average. That's because there typically aren't that many exceedingly long extra-inning games anyway.

Using the Padres/Dodgers game as our reference point: if 2020 (60-game season) and 2021 (162-game season) had been played under the old rules, statistical models predicted that there would've been between 5 and 6 games total that went at least 16 innings. But under the COVID rule, the models predicted that there would be, on average, 0.07 such games over 2020 and 2021. That is about the same number of 22-inning games we would've expected to see under the old rules.

That means we would've had to play all of 2020 and 2021 over again 14 times just to expect to see *one* game of 16 or more innings. Hopefully the 41,765 paid attendees at the Padres/Dodgers game on August 25 all stayed to the end—and appreciated what a rare event they had just witnessed.

News reports indicate that the extra-inning rule is unlikely to survive into 2022.

SERVING IT UP

Committee member **Dan Hill** sends along this interesting fact about the hapless **Orioles**: they are the first team in MLB history to feature five pitchers who made at least 10 starts and finished with an ERA of at least 6.00. Comprising Baltimore's quintet are **Keegan Akin** (6.63 ERA, 17 starts); **Matt Harvey** (6.27, 28); **Dean Kremer** (7.55, 13); **Jorge Lopez** (6.07, 25); and **Spenser Watkins** (8.07, 10). What makes Harvey's season all the more remarkable is that he had a 21-inning scoreless streak this season—and still ended up with an ERA over 6.00!

GUEST AUTHOR: DAN HILL, *GREATEST COMEBACK SEASONS*

Dan Hill sends along this longer piece, highlighting the best seasons by players who had missed the entire previous season (since 1961). Naturally this research is inspired by the shortened 2020 COVID season, although it turns out that not every 2021 comebacker was COVID-related.

Buster Posey and Mitch Haniger in 2021 emphatically shook off the rust from missing 2020, lifting teams to pennant-race relevance. They arguably produced two of the five best campaigns among established expansion-era position players returning to action after not playing Major League Baseball (MLB) the previous season.

Posey, who had a .390 on-base percentage (OBP) to help San Francisco win a franchise-record 107 games, sat out the 2020 season for health reasons amid the coronavirus pandemic after his family adopted newborn twins.¹ Seattle, which was in wild-card contention until the final day of the regular season, got 39 home runs (HR) and 100 runs batted in (RBI) from Haniger following his 2020 absence due to further complications from a June 2019 injury.² San Francisco and Seattle missed the 16-team postseason a year ago.

These returns helped the 2021 season set an expansion-era standard of eight established position players making comebacks of at least 100 plate appearances (PA) after missing the entire previous season. Players must have qualified for a batting title – 502 PA is the threshold – at some point previously in their careers to be considered established. The years 1969 and 1996 previously shared the record with six players apiece.

Four players from the class of 2021 – Posey, Haniger, Philadelphia’s Odúbel Herrera and Washington’s Alcides Escobar – have earned spots among the top 35 in the upcoming subjective ranking of comeback performances by players since 1961. Unranked class members are:

- The Chicago Cubs’ Matt Duffy, who was in the Texas and New York Yankees’ organizations in 2020 but didn’t make the majors;³
- Oakland’s Jed Lowrie, who missed most of 2019 and all of 2020 with a knee injury;⁴
- Baltimore’s Trey Mancini, who completed chemotherapy last fall after being diagnosed with colon cancer;⁵
- and Washington’s Ryan Zimmerman, who was concerned about his family’s health – including his mother’s multiple sclerosis⁶ – amid the coronavirus pandemic.

In the 61 completed seasons since expansion, there have been 105 established players combining for 112 comeback seasons, as seven qualifiers twice missed full MLB seasons and recorded 100 PA the following year. Top-35 rankings considered several factors, including longtime offensive measuring sticks such as batting average, home runs, runs batted in and runs scored; sabermetric tools such as on-base plus slugging percentage-plus (OPS+) and wins above replacement (WAR); and durability, primary position played and level of team success.

OPS+ accounts for league and ballpark factors while looking at a player’s raw OPS. It then adjusts so a league average OPS+ is 100, an OPS+ of 120 is 20 percent better than the MLB average and an 80 OPS+ is 20 percent below the MLB average.⁷ WAR is a statistic designed to combine offensive and defensive statistics with adjustments for home ballparks, position played and playing time in hopes of arriving at one number to summarize a player’s contribution to his team.⁸ All unreferenced MLB, minor-

league and foreign-league statistical and biographical information is courtesy of www.baseball-reference.com.

Here's the top-35 summary followed by a complete list, organized alphabetically, of the 112 expansion-era "comeback" seasons:

No.	Name/Year	Age	PA	BA/OBP/SLG	HR-RBI-R	OPS+	WAR
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1	Ron Gant '95	30	493	.276/.386/.554	29-88-79	146	3.3
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Something more: Injured while off-road dirt biking⁹ in early 1994 after helping Atlanta to three consecutive postseasons, the outfielder sparked Cincinnati to the National League (NL) Central title and finished 11th in NL Most Valuable Player (MVP) voting by finishing among the top 10 in the NL in home runs (HR) and walks in a strike-shortened, 144-game season.

2	Buster Posey '21	34	454	.304/.390/.499	18-56-68	140	3.5
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Something more: The three-time World Series winner and 2012 NL MVP walked in a career-best 12.3 percent of his plate appearances (PA) and batted from second through fifth in the order in 90 of his 103 starts. The catcher also reached base in 24 of his 60 of his PA against NL West rival Los Angeles, which was forced to enter the playoffs as a 106-win wild card.

3	Bobby Tolan '72	26	667	.283/.334/.386	8-82-88	110	4.9
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Something more: Cincinnati sandwiched NL pennants in 1970 and 1972 around Tolan's season of absence, as the outfielder suffered a torn Achilles tendon before the 1971 season while playing a charity basketball game with his Reds teammates.¹⁰ He finished 1972 with 42 stolen bases and the highest WAR of any player in a comeback season.

4	Eric Soderholm '77	28	516	.280/.350/.500	25-67-77	129	4.4
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Something more: Signed as a free agent by the White Sox after missing 1976 with rib and knee injuries suffered falling into a storm drain,¹¹ the third baseman helped the "South Side Hit Men" finish 90-72. He batted .500 (16-for-32) with two HR and 11 runs scored against American League (AL) West champion Kansas City.

5	Mitch Haniger '21	30	691	.253/.318/.485	39-100-110	122	2.9
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Something more: On his way to hitting more HR and scoring more runs than any other expansion-era comeback qualifier, the outfielder went 4-for-5 with five RBI in Seattle's penultimate game of the season to keep it in postseason contention. A foul ball hit off of his groin on June 6, 2019, led to a ruptured testicle, as well as core and lower-back injuries and three surgeries – the final of which was discectomy surgery – that kept him out of MLB action until 2021.¹²

6	Rico Carty '69	29	339	.342/.401/.549	16-58-47	164	3.1
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Something more: The left fielder rebounded from tuberculosis¹³ in 1968 to help Atlanta win the first-ever NL West championship, batting .376 with five HR and 25 runs batted in (RBI) in September. He finished 13th in NL MVP voting.

7	Mark Ellis '05	28	486	.316/.384/.477	13-52-76	128	4.7
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Something more: The Oakland second baseman finished 10th in the AL in batting average and first in the defensive metric called total zone runs (TZR) among AL second basemen after missing 2004 with a torn labrum in his dislocated right shoulder.¹⁴

No.	Name/Year	Age	PA	BA/OBP/SLG	HR-RBI-R	OPS+	WAR
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8	Moises Alou '00	33	517	.355/.416/.623	30-114-82	151	2.6
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Something more: After tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee by falling off a treadmill prior to the 1999 season,¹⁵ the Houston outfielder returned in 2000 to finish among the top 10 NL players in batting average, on-base percentage (OBP) and slugging percentage on the way to a 20th-place finish in NL MVP voting.

9	Julio Franco '96	37	499	.322/.407/.470	14-76-72	123	3.0
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Something more: The first baseman, who spent 1995 playing in the Japan Pacific League, helped Cleveland win the AL Central by batting .388 with 25 RBI in 49 PA with two outs and runners in scoring position. He is the only player with two postseason appearances in comeback seasons, as he played for the NLCS-bound Atlanta Braves in 2001 after missing the 2000 MLB campaign.

10	Salvador Perez '20	30	156	.333/.353/.633	11-32-22	161	2.1
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Something more: The longtime Kansas City catcher recorded the third-best OPS+ and best slugging percentage among all expansion-era comeback qualifiers. He returned from an injury to his right elbow and Tommy John surgery¹⁶ to make the most of a pandemic-shortened, 60-game season, finishing a career-best 17th in AL MVP voting.

11	Alex Rodriguez '15	39	620	.250/.356/.486	33-86-83	129	3.0
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Something more: The New York Yankees bolted to a seven-game lead in the AL East before settling for a wild-card berth a year after the designated hitter served a 162-game suspension for his role in a performance-enhancing drugs scandal.¹⁷ His team-best 33 HR came in his penultimate season.

12	Andres Galarraga '00	39	548	.302/.369/.526	8-100-67	123	1.2
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Something more: The "Big Cat" provided a power bat in the middle of Atlanta's NL East championship lineup a year after battling non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.¹⁸ The first baseman drove in at least 100 runs in his fifth consecutive active season.

13	Larry Hise '73	26	618	.272/.351/.422	15-64-88	114	3.4
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Something more: After being traded by Philadelphia, the Los Angeles Dodgers and St. Louis in a 14-month span while playing in the minor leagues, the Minnesota outfielder batted .429 with three HR and 10 RBI against eventual World Series champion Oakland.

14	Ryne Sandberg '96	36	621	.244/.316/.444	25-92-85	97	3.2
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Something more: Coming back to the Chicago Cubs after retiring before the 1995 season,¹⁹ the Hall of Fame second baseman finished sixth in the NL with a defensive WAR score of 1.7 and drove in at least 90 runs for the third time in his career.

15	Eric Davis '96	34	496	.287/.394/.523	26-83-81	140	3.1
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Something more: His 1994 season ended with a second operation for a herniated disk in his neck and an intention to retire,²⁰ but the outfielder resurfaced in 1996 with his first MLB team – Cincinnati – and hit 18 of his 26 HR against teams with winning percentages of at least .500.

16	Jody Gerut '08	30	356	.296/.351/.494	14-43-46	133	3.4
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Something more: The San Diego outfielder arguably was at his most productive after the All-Star Game, batting .323 with 10 HR in 127 at-bats before spraining the middle finger of his left hand²¹ on Aug. 27. After missing the 2006 and 2007 seasons with knee injuries,²² he excelled defensively by finishing second among NL outfielders in TZR.

No.	Name/Year	Age	PA	BA/OBP/SLG	HR-RBI-R	OPS+	WAR
17	Rocco Baldelli '06	24	387	.302/.339/.533	16-57-59	122	3.2
	<i>Something more:</i> Knee and elbow injuries ²³ kept the Tampa Bay outfielder off the field in 2005 after recording a combined 329 hits in his age-21 and -22 seasons. He mashed first pitches for a .431 batting average (22-for-51) in his final campaign with at least 170 PA.						
18	Tony Fernandez '97	35	442	.286/.323/.423	11-44-55	91	2.2
	<i>Something more:</i> The shortstop-turned-second baseman batted .357 (15-for-42) with 10 RBI in postseason play after helping Cleveland win the AL pennant. He had a season-ending elbow injury during a spring-training game with the 1996 Yankees. ²⁴						
19	Victor Martinez '13	34	668	.301/.355/.430	14-83-68	113	1.2
	<i>Something more:</i> AL Central champion Detroit benefited from the designated hitter's career-best 159 regular-season games played and .405 postseason batting average (17-for-42) after missing the 2012 campaign with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee. ²⁵						
20	Daniel Murphy '11	26	423	.320/.362/.448	6-49-49	126	2.8
	<i>Something more:</i> After two knee injuries took away his 2010 season, ²⁶ the New York Mets benefited from his offensive and defensive versatility. He batted in every spot in the order from second to eighth and manned four positions – first, second and third bases and left field.						
21	Matt Duffy '18	27	560	.294/.361/.366	4-44-59	104	2.9
	<i>Something more:</i> The Tampa Bay third baseman helped his team finish 90-72 in an AL East with a pair of 100-win teams. A pair of Achilles heel surgeries ²⁷ prevented him from playing in 2017.						
22	Danny O'Connell '61	32	591	.260/.361/.331	1-37-61	92	2.7
	<i>Something more:</i> After playing a full season for the Triple-A Tacoma Giants in 1960, he split time at third and second bases for the Washington Senators and finished 10th in the AL with 15 stolen bases in 1961.						
23	Franklin Gutierrez '15	32	189	.292/.354/.620	15-35-27	167	2.6
	<i>Something more:</i> An outfielder primarily known for his defensive prowess, he wasted little time displaying a power stroke for Seattle after missing the 2014 season with gastrointestinal issues. ²⁸ He has the best OPS+ and HR per PA ratio (12.6) of any expansion-era player in a comeback season.						
24	Davey Johnson '77	34	186	.321/.408/.545	8-36-23	149	1.7
	<i>Something more:</i> The first baseman returned after a season in the Japan Central League to give NL East champion Philadelphia elite production against left-handed pitching (.361 batting average, 25 RBI in 97 at-bats).						
25	Gregor Blanco '12	28	453	.244/.333/.344	5-34-56	94	2.1
	<i>Something more:</i> After playing in the minor leagues with the Kansas City and Washington organizations ²⁹ in 2011, the outfielder recorded 59 plate appearances and starred defensively throughout a postseason that concluded with his San Francisco Giants as World Series winners.						
26	Gabe Kapler '08	32	245	.301/.340/.498	8-38-36	119	1.9
	<i>Something more:</i> Milwaukee, 28-15 when the outfielder was in the starting lineup, earned a NL wild-card berth despite an injury to his right shoulder ending his season ³⁰ Sept. 10. He spent 2007 as a minor-league manager in the Boston organization. ³¹						

No.	Name/Year	Age	PA	BA/OBP/SLG	HR-RBI-R	OPS+	WAR
27	Kendrys Morales '12	29	522	.273/.320/.467	22-73-61	119	2.1
	<i>Something more:</i> After landing awkwardly on home plate to turn a 2010 walk-off celebration into a year-and-a-half of recovery and rehabilitation for his left ankle, ³² the designated hitter helped the Angels finish with an 88-74 record.						
28	Odúbel Herrera '21	29	492	.260/.310/.416	13-51-59	95	1.8
	<i>Something more:</i> Left off Philadelphia's 2020 roster after being suspended in 2019 for violating MLB's domestic-violence policy, ³³ the outfielder struck out in a career-low 15.7 percent of his PA in 2021 and finished 4-for-12 at Atlanta in a final-week series that eliminated the second-place Phillies from the NL East race.						
29	Jim Edmonds '10	40	272	.276/.342/.504	11-23-44	125	1.9
	<i>Something more:</i> The outfielder, who was traded by Milwaukee to Cincinnati on Aug. 9 of his comeback season, scored multiple runs in 12 games despite starting just 58. He signed with Milwaukee as a free agent Jan. 28, 2010, after going unsigned ³⁴ throughout 2009.						
30	Rick Burleson '86	35	312	.284/.363/.391	5-29-35	107	0.9
	<i>Something more:</i> "Rooster" split time between designated hitter and shortstop while helping the California Angels win the AL West, returning to action after a dislocated shoulder ³⁵ prevented him from playing in 1985.						
31	Fernando Tatis '08	33	306	.297/.369/.484	11-47-33	124	1.3
	<i>Something more:</i> Called up from Triple-A New Orleans by the New York Mets on May 13, the outfielder batted .392 with four HR and 36 RBI in 74 at-bats with runners in scoring position until suffering a season-ending shoulder injury ³⁶ Sept. 16. The Mets, 41-25 in his starts, finished one game out of a NL wild-card berth. He spent the full 2007 season at New Orleans. ³⁷						
32	Luis Polonia '99	35	355	.324/.357/.526	10-32-46	123	1.2
	<i>Something more:</i> A 40-for-101 stretch through May and June and a .450 OBP leading off games made the designated hitter/outfielder a helpful player for Detroit after two seasons in the Mexican League.						
33	Aaron Boone '05	32	565	.243/.299/.378	16-60-61	82	1.5
	<i>Something more:</i> The third baseman helped Cleveland to 93 wins and postseason contention until the season's final weekend after missing 2004 with a knee injury suffered playing basketball during the 2003-04 offseason as a New York Yankee. ³⁸						
34	Endy Chavez '11	33	274	.301/.323/.426	5-27-37	97	1.0
	<i>Something more:</i> The outfielder, who needed a season-and-a-half to return after suffering anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and medial collateral ligament (MCL) injuries in June 2009, ³⁹ started 66 games for the AL champion Rangers, including 13 in September as they secured the AL West title. The left-handed hitter batted .357 (15-for-42) against left-handed pitching.						
35	Alcides Escobar '21	34	349	.288/.340/.404	4-28-53	105	1.5
	<i>Something more:</i> After a combined two-and-a-half seasons in the Japan Central League and the minor leagues – with Kansas City and the Chicago White Sox – the middle infielder resurfaced in Washington to start 75 games and bat .379 (25-for-66) with runners in scoring position.						

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