

Complete games have gone nearly extinct in MLB

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — The complete game is nearly completely gone from baseball. Shutouts are vanishing, too.

The numbers are striking. Go back to 1978, and there were more than 1,000 complete games in the majors. Move to 2003, and the total was about 200. In 2018, though, there were only 42 — the lowest total in the sport’s history, according to Baseball-Reference.com — and just 19 of those were shutouts, the fewest since the 1870s.

Or to put it a different way: Roughly every other game featured a starter who



AP Photo/Jeff Roberson

In this Feb. 16, 2019, file photo, Washington Nationals pitcher Max Scherzer starts his windup while throwing a bullpen session in West Palm Beach, Fla.

went the distance 40 years ago, whereas about one in every 55 games did last season. Stars of the 1960s

and ‘70s such as Bob Gibson, Steve Carlton or Jim Palmer would top 20 complete games in a year. In the

‘90s, Pedro Martinez, Greg Maddux and Randy Johnson would get to 10 or 12 or so.

Last year, no one threw more than two complete games. No one delivered more than one shutout.

“The special, elite guys are still able to achieve it and want to achieve it,” Washington Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo said. “I don’t think we’ll ever see it disappear completely, but it’s definitely becoming a rarity.”

So what happened? Various factors contributed to the decline of dominant, nine-inning performances on the mound, from injury fears to an increased emphasis on accumulating bullpen arms, from the new “opener

strategy of using a reliever to get things underway to protecting young pitchers in such a way that they never build up an ability to stay in until the end of games.

Still, the basic sense around the sport is that it’s not that pitchers are no longer born with shoulders or elbows capable of producing complete games, but that their teams simply won’t let them even try and generally don’t properly prepare them to do so.

“Everyone,” Atlanta Braves right-hander Kevin Gausman said, “is obsessed with pitch count now.”

It’s a trend that seemed to gain steam in the 2000s, not coincidentally as more and more pitchers were getting

elbow injuries that required Tommy John surgery.

Don’t let most guys throw too hard for too long, the thinking goes.

“There’s a general pull-back in the industry, because they couldn’t comprehend why so many people were getting hurt. The biggest mass effect you can have is workload,” Houston Astros righty Gerrit Cole said. “Just overall, clubs are kind of doing a risk analysis. ... They are trying to be smarter about it and disburse the load a little bit to some other guys.”

Merely six starters averaged at least 100 pitches per outing last season, down from 43 in 2011, per Team-Rankings.com.

SCOREBOARD

LOCAL SLATE	
THURSDAY, MARCH 28	
Baseball	
Mac-Hi vs. Junction City (at Madras Tournament), 2 p.m.	
Softball	
Knappa at Irrigon (DH), 1 p.m.	
NWAC Baseball	
Treasure Valley at Blue Mountain, 1 p.m.	
Tennis	
Mac-Hi at College Place, 3:30 p.m.	
Hermiston at Hanford, 3:30 p.m.	
Track and field	
Hermiston at Hanford, 3 p.m.	
Golf	
Hermiston Girls at Yakima, 10 a.m.	
Mac-Hi at Walla Walla, 2:30 p.m.	
FRIDAY, MARCH 29	
Baseball	
Stanfield/Echo at Irrigon (DH), 1 p.m.	
Richland at Hermiston (DH), 4 p.m.	
Softball	
Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii vs. Warrenton (at Union Spring Bash), 11 a.m.	
Umatilla vs. Astoria (at Seaside Tourney), 1 p.m.	
Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii vs. Colton (at Union Spring Bash), 1:30 p.m.	
Southridge at Hermiston (DH), 3 p.m.	
Rainier at Mac-Hi/Helix, 3:30 p.m.	
Stayton at Mac-Hi/Helix, 5:15 p.m.	
Umatilla at Seaside, 7 p.m.	
NWAC Softball	
Spokane at Blue Mountain (DH), 2 p.m.	
Tennis	
Mac-Hi at Stanfield/Echo, 3 p.m.	
Golf	
Hermiston Boys at Yakima, 10 a.m.	
Boys soccer	
Walla Walla at Hermiston, 7 p.m.	
SATURDAY, MARCH 30	
Softball	
Junction City at Mac-Hi/Helix, 9 a.m.	
Umatilla vs. North Marion (at Seaside Tourney), 1 p.m.	
Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii vs. Bonanza (at Union Spring Bash), 1 p.m.	
Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii vs. North Douglas (at Union Spring Bash), 3 p.m.	
Yamhill-Carlton at Mac-Hi/Helix, 3 p.m.	
NWAC Baseball	
Blue Mountain at Columbia Basin (DH), 1 p.m.	
NWAC Softball	

North Idaho at Blue Mountain (DH), noon	
Track and field	
Mac-Hi at Yakima, 10 a.m.	
Hermiston, Pendleton at Hanford, 10:30 a.m.	
NCAA TOURNAMENT GLANCE	
EAST REGIONAL, Semifinals	
Friday, March 29	
Michigan State (30-6) vs. LSU (28-6), 4:09 p.m.	
Duke (31-5) vs. Virginia Tech (26-8), 6:39 p.m.	
SOUTH REGIONAL, Semifinals	
Thursday, March 28	
Tennessee (31-5) vs. Purdue (25-9), 4:29 p.m.	
Virginia (31-3) vs. Oregon (25-12), 6:57 p.m.	
MIDWEST REGIONAL, Semifinals	
Friday, March 29	
North Carolina (29-6) vs. Auburn (28-9), 4:29 p.m.	
Kentucky (29-6) vs. Houston (33-3), 6:57 p.m.	
WEST REGIONAL, Semifinals	
Thursday, March 28	
Gonzaga (32-3) vs. Florida State (29-7), 4:09 p.m.	
Michigan (30-6) vs. Texas Tech (28-6), 6:39 p.m.	

NBA STANDINGS				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
Atlantic	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Toronto	52	23	.693	—
x-Philadelphia	47	27	.635	4½
x-Boston	44	31	.587	8
Brooklyn	38	37	.507	14
New York	14	60	.189	37½
Southeast	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	37	38	.493	—
Miami	36	38	.486	½
Charlotte	35	39	.473	1½
Washington	30	45	.400	7
Atlanta	27	48	.360	10
Central	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Milwaukee	56	19	.747	—
x-Indiana	45	30	.600	11
Detroit	37	37	.500	18½
Chicago	21	55	.276	35½
Cleveland	19	56	.253	37
WESTERN CONFERENCE				

Southwest	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Houston	47	28	.627	—
San Antonio	43	32	.573	4
New Orleans	31	45	.408	16½
Memphis	30	45	.400	17
Dallas	29	45	.392	17½
Northwest	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Denver	50	23	.685	—
x-Portland	47	27	.635	3½
Utah	44	30	.595	6½
Oklahoma City	44	31	.587	7
Minnesota	33	41	.446	17½
Pacific	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Golden State	51	23	.689	—
x-L.A. Clippers	45	30	.600	6½
Sacramento	37	37	.500	14
L.A. Lakers	33	41	.446	18
Phoenix	17	58	.227	34½
x-clinched playoff spot				
y-clinched division				

Wednesday's Games	
Golden State 118, Memphis 103	
Oklahoma City 107, Indiana 99	
Portland 118, Chicago 98	
Washington 124, Phoenix, 121	
Utah 115, L.A. Lakers 100	
Thursday's Games	
Brooklyn at Philadelphia, 4 p.m.	
Orlando at Detroit, 4 p.m.	
Dallas at Miami, 4:30 p.m.	
Toronto at New York, 4:30 p.m.	
Denver at Houston, 5 p.m.	
L.A. Clippers at Milwaukee, 5 p.m.	
Sacramento at New Orleans, 5 p.m.	
Cleveland at San Antonio, 5:30 p.m.	
Friday's Games	
Indiana at Boston, 4 p.m.	
Portland at Atlanta, 4:30 p.m.	
Denver at Oklahoma City, 5 p.m.	
Golden State at Minnesota, 4 p.m.	
Washington at Utah, 6 p.m.	
Charlotte at L.A. Lakers, 7:30 p.m.	

NHL STANDINGS				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
Atlantic	GP	W	L	OT Pts
z-Tampa Bay	77	59	14	4 122
x-Boston	77	47	21	9 103
Toronto	77	45	25	7 97
Montreal	77	41	28	8 90
Florida	77	33	32	12 78
Buffalo	76	31	36	9 71
Detroit	76	28	38	10 66
Ottawa	76	27	43	6 60
Central	GP	W	L	OT Pts
z-Tampa Bay	77	59	14	4 122
x-Boston	77	47	21	9 103
Toronto	77	45	25	7 97
Montreal	77	41	28	8 90
Florida	77	33	32	12 78
Buffalo	76	31	36	9 71
Detroit	76	28	38	10 66
Ottawa	76	27	43	6 60

Metropolitan	GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA
Washington	77	45	24	8 98	264	235
N.Y. Islanders	77	44	26	7 95	212	188
Pittsburgh	77	42	24	11 95	261	228
Carolina	76	42	27	7 91	226	210
Columbus	76	42	30	4 88	232	218
Philadelphia	77	37	32	8 82	234	256
N.Y. Rangers	76	29	34	13 71	211	256
New Jersey	77	29	39	9 67	211	260

WESTERN CONFERENCE						
Central	GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA
x-Winnipeg	76	45	27	4 94	256	223
x-Nashville	77	43	28	6 92	224	202
St. Louis	76	41	27	8 90	226	206
Dallas	77	40	31	6 86	195	189
Colorado	76	34	29	13 81	240	229
Minnesota	77	35	33	9 79	203	224
Chicago	76	33	33	10 76	248	272
Pacific	GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA
x-Calgary	77	47	23	7 101	269	215
x-San Jose	76	43	24	9 95	268	240
Vegas	76	42	28	6 90	235	209
Arizona	77	37	33	7 81	200	212
Edmonton	76	34	34	8 76	221	253
Vancouver	77	32	35	10 74	211	242
Anaheim	78	32	36	10 74	185	241
Los Angeles	76	28	40	8 64	185	243

NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

x-clinched playoff spot

z-clinched conference

Wednesday's Games

Philadelphia 5, Toronto 4, SO

Boston 6, N.Y. Rangers 3

Dallas 2, Calgary 1

Colorado 4, Vegas 3

Thursday's Games

Washington at Carolina, 4 p.m.

Montreal at Columbus, 4 p.m.

Detroit at Buffalo, 4 p.m.

Florida at Ottawa, 4:30 p.m.

N.Y. Islanders at Winnipeg, 5 p.m.

Dallas at Edmonton, 6 p.m.

Los Angeles at Vancouver, 7 p.m.

Chicago at San Jose, 7:30 p.m.

Friday's Games

St. Louis at N.Y. Rangers, 4 p.m.

Nashville at Pittsburgh, 4 p.m.

New Jersey at Detroit, 4:30 p.m.

Anaheim at Calgary, 6 p.m.

Arizona at Colorado, 6 p.m.

Minnesota at Vegas, 7 p.m.

PREP ROUNDUP

Knappa hands Irrigon pair of softball losses

East Oregonian

The Knappa Loggers proved too much for Irrigon as the Knights dropped Wednesday’s home softball doubleheader, 9-7 and 11-2.

“Knappa has really good pitching,” said coach Jeff Botefuhr. “They’ll probably have some of the better pitching we’ll see all year, actually.”

But that didn’t stop Bailey Botefuhr’s success at the plate. In game one, the sophomore slugged away two home runs — the first with one RBI, and the second with two. She added two doubles to go 4 for 4 at bat.

“She’s hitting really

well right now,” said coach Botefuhr. “If she continues like this, she’ll be our big hitter.”

Senior Karrizima Luna hit 3 for 4 in game one.

In game two, Botefuhr and Luna both hit 2 for 4, but it wouldn’t be enough for a comeback.

“All in all, we’re doing much better than we were at the start of the season,” coach Botefuhr said. “Game two was closer than the scoreboard showed — we just had a few defensive errors that we needed to clean up. We didn’t get the win, but we’re headed in the right direction.”

Irrigon (2-4) hosts Yamhill-Carlton on Thursday at 3 p.m.



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