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Pitchers Failing to Retire a Single Batter in an Outing

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Taking Your LUMPs

*Major League Baseball's History of Pitchers Failing to Retire
a Single Batter in an Outing*

JOSH CHETWYND

From Hall of Famers to hurlers who threw just once in the big leagues, Lamentably Unproductive Mound Performances (LUMPs) are a thing.

A popular baseball aphorism is that it's a sport built on failure. Famed journalist George Vecsey put it succinctly: Baseball "acknowledges daily failure."¹ Hall of Famer Cal Ripken Jr. went into more detail: "Baseball is a game of frustration and failure in many ways," he explained in an 2016 interview.² "As a hitter, you fail 7 out of 10 times, so you have to figure out how to deal with failure quite a bit."

But if that general point is accurate for hitters, it's fair to say that the mirror opposite is true for pitchers. Consider that the league-wide average on base percentage in 2019 was .323.³ Even accounting for sacrifice hits and players who reach on errors, pitchers are typically successful in retiring opposing hitters well more than 60 percent of the time.

For that reason, when a player in the starting line up goes 0-for-4 or a pinch hitter strikes out in his only at bat, we may sigh with disappointment, but it certainly doesn't feel odd. After all, we all remember that baseball hitters are set up for failure.

But what about when pitchers have comprehensively failed appearances? In other words, they come into a game and were unable to get a single out before being pulled.

This type of failure *is* unexpected.

Still, over the years it's happened thousands of times at the major league level. A pitcher entered a contest, faced at least one batter, and failed to retire even one hitter. In the past, some have called this type of pitching performance a "no outer" or, if a run was scored off that unsuccessful pitcher, an "infinite ERA."⁴

However, for purposes here, these situations are named LUMPs (Lamentably Unproductive Mound Performances). The reason for this sobriquet is that if there's an expectation that pitchers will offer even the minimum utility of registering a single out, there should be a term which serves as a type of onomatopoeia to describe the ignominy of this difficult and disappointing experience.

With the terminology established, this article aims to offer a survey of Major League Baseball's long history of LUMPs. The first thing to know about these situations is that, for the most part, pitchers who've experienced LUMPs at baseball's highest level should not be defined by those moments. Thankfully, most aren't.

Consider this: More than two dozen Hall of Fame starting pitchers suffered at least one LUMP in their playing days. Luminaries such as Sandy Koufax, Early Wynn, Red Ruffing, Rube Marquard, Bob Lemon and Red Faber all had at least two in their distinguished careers.

Of course, for these greats—and probably many others—there can be extenuating circumstances for such terrible days. For instance, Nolan Ryan, who took three LUMPs in his career, suffered his final no-out start in his last appearance ever on September 22, 1993.⁵ The Ryan Express faced just six Seattle Mariners batters, allowing them all to reach base—two via hits and four through walks. That said, Ryan may have avoided the LUMP if not for the fact that in the midst of that effort he felt a pop in his elbow, forcing him to leave the mound for the very last time.

Similarly, Tom Glavine got a LUMP when he departed against the Chicago Cubs on May 16, 1989, after just four hitters—all of whom collected hits.⁶ But he would have probably stuck around if not for spraining his ankle.

Off-the-field influences can also lead to such performances. Take Whitey Ford's LUMP on May 10, 1954, against the Cleveland Indians.⁷ The New York Yankees great gave up three runs on a hit and two base-on-balls. He didn't get an out and gave way to reliever Bob Kuzava, who promptly delivered his own LUMP, yielding four hits and a walk (and five runs) without retiring a hitter.

Perhaps it was coincidence, but the next day in papers across the United States, well-known syndicated writer Dorothy Kilgallen included the following juicy tidbit in her "Kilgallen's Voice of Broadway" column: "Baseball insiders say Yankee stars Mickey Mantle and Whitey Ford might be doing better on the playing field if they weren't so lively after hours."⁸

For relievers, their LUMP destinies have often been as much a product of managerial strategy as poor effort. From the late 1990s to 2019, many skippers employed LOOGYs (left-handed, one-out guys).⁹ These southpaws were gen-

erally brought into games to leverage lefty-on-lefthanded hitter matchups. The margin of error for such a specialist could be thin because if he didn't get that one hitter out, the reliever could be yanked from the game. (Not surprisingly, the only two pitchers to register more than 100 career LUMPs—Mike Myers [124] and Randy Choate [104]—were both primarily LOOGYs.)

Certain managers proved a proclivity for a quick hook in these situations. In the history of baseball only thirteen pitching staffs have suffered through at least 30 LUMPs in a season. All of those years occurred during the era of the LOOGY (the earliest was the 2004 San Francisco Giants and the most recent was the 2019 Chicago Cubs). Three managers—Bruce Bochy, Tony La Russa and Joe Maddon (two seasons each) accounted for six of those years. Interestingly, a LUMP-heavy team didn't necessarily mean failure as seven of the thirteen teams finished with records over .500—and one, the 2011 St. Louis Cardinals, won a World Series championship despite registering 32 LUMPs during that campaign.

While injuries, extra-curricular activities, or managerial approaches can explain away some LUMPs, it does remain a difficult experience for the media and players to swallow.

When the Chicago White Sox's Doc White came in to relieve Buck O'Brien in the sixth inning against the New York Yankees on July 11, 1913, the results were catastrophic. He gave seven runs (on four hits and a walk) without getting an out.¹⁰ The *Chicago Examiner* explained the event the following day in this way: “[T]he manly form of Doc White was close to serious injury as the result of drives that were speeding through the diamond, the canned music even lost its pepper. The music chest does not contain any funeral dirges so the machine was compelled to remain quiet during the remainder of the afternoon. It would have been sacrilegious to have turned out merry, tingling, mirthful melodies such as we are treated to when the conditions on the South Side are closer to normal.”¹¹

While newspapers could be tough, pitchers have often been their own worst critics. After suffering through a particularly bad LUMP on April 9, 2003, (0 IP, 3 H, 7 ER, 4 BB)¹² against the San Francisco Giants, San Diego Padres starter Dennis Tankersley was found by journalists after the game in the clubhouse still wearing his full uniform (minus his jersey). “I’ve been sitting here for two hours trying to figure it out,” he responded when asked about the performance.¹³

That feeling of befuddlement was echoed by Cincinnati Reds hurler Paul Wilson on May 6, 2005.¹⁴ After giving up five hits, including two home runs and a walk, while failing to retire a single batter in a start against the Los

Angeles Dodgers, Wilson said, “I’ve got to go out and stop the bleeding, not make it worse . . . I thought I could keep it close, but I just couldn’t stop it.”¹⁵

Other pitchers have succinctly owned it. New York Met Steve Matz took a bad LUMP on April 16, 2019, facing eight Philadelphia Phillies, getting none of them out while being charged with eight runs.¹⁶ His response was simple: “Poor effort tonight. Just got to wash it.”¹⁷ Two decades earlier, another New York Met was equally clear in his assessment of a LUMP. Al Leiter suffered one in the deciding Game Five of the 1999 National League Championship Series versus the Atlanta Braves.¹⁸ After the loss, Leiter simply called it “the poorest start of my career.”¹⁹

For teammates who have been on the field during a LUMP, the reaction often appears to be less anger and more a sense of helplessness. Oakland A’s Mike MacFarlane epitomized that emotion after catching Blake Stein during a LUMP on August 31, 1998.²⁰

“You can’t describe the feeling of inadequacy that you have behind the plate that you can’t help your pitcher,” he said after Stein unsuccessfully faced eight batters, giving up eight runs in the process.²¹

In late 2019, Major League Baseball made a rule change that would suggest a lesser likelihood of LUMPs. The league decided to require pitchers to throw to a minimum of three batters (unless there is injury or illness) or pitch to the end of a half-inning. This change was intended to speed up games, but it also means a pitcher will no longer trot in from the bullpen to face a single batter, fail to get him out and leave the game—a situation that has yielded a large number of LUMPs in recent decades.

However, that doesn’t mean the end of the LUMP. In fact, in 2020, 96 LUMPs occurred during the regular season (despite the league’s truncated 60-game schedule). While that is definitely a drop from 2019, when 489 LUMPs took place (during a full 162-game slate), the total suggests this quirky moment is certain to live on.

The following is a statistical look at Major League Baseball’s LUMP records (through 2020).

CAREER

Nothing but Lump

If Moonlight Graham is the romantic notion of the briefest brush with the major leagues, then *nothing but LUMP* is the pitcher’s *Nightmare on Elm Street* version.

Archibald “Moonlight” Graham, who featured in both the film *Field of Dreams* and the movie’s source material, W. P. Kinsella’s *Shoeless Joe*, was a real person who played in the field for one game for the New York Giants in 1905 but never got an at bat.²²

For the tortured souls on this LUMP list, their major league careers also consisted of a singular outing, but, when given a chance to face at least one batter—in many cases more than one—they were unable to experience the joy of recording a single out. Since 1900, eighteen pitchers’ whole careers fall into this category (at least another five, according to Stathead.com, met this result in the 1800s as well—though statistics are not as detailed during that period.)

Perhaps the most ghastly on this list is Elmer Joseph “Doc” Hamann, who on September 21, 1922, got the call to come in from the bullpen for manager Tris Speaker’s Cleveland Indians against the Boston Red Sox.²³ The New Ulm, Minnesota native was part of a group of young players brought up right at the end of the season, who the front office believed might add a bit of energy to the middling ball club.

With the score 8–1, the 6-foot, 1-inch right-handed toed the rubber for what Chris Rainey, writing for the Society For American Baseball Research (SABR), describes as “arguably . . . the most ineffective debut of all [time].” The twenty-one-year-old would face six batters, allowing three hits, three walks and six runs before being lifted. Beyond that, the result, according to Rainey, could have been worse; George Winn, who relieved Hamann, “coaxed a double play that cleared the last of Hamann’s baserunners.”²⁴ While Hamann was offered a spot at spring training in 1923, he turned it down to return to college, leaving this one appearance as his only major league legacy. No other nothing-but-LUMP pitcher since the start of the twentieth century faced as many batters as Hamann did in his solo outing.

As far as starting pitchers go, Marty Walker holds the distinction for the longest nothing but LUMP. On the final day of the 1928 season, he got the nod for the Philadelphia Phillies against the Brooklyn Robins.²⁵ Walker gave up two hits, three walks and four runs (two unearned) before getting yanked by skipper Burt Shotton.

In addition to these pitchers, there have been instances of positional players, some who enjoyed long or notable careers in the field and at the plate, experiencing a nothing-but-LUMP pitching line. Examples include the famed outfielder-turned-evangelist Billy Sunday (1890)²⁶ and, more recently, journeyman Gerardo Parra (2019).²⁷

However, the greatest major leaguer ever to nothing but LUMP was Hall of Famer Stan Musial. The Cardinal great’s one pitching appearance was a

weird one. On the final day of the 1952 season,²⁸ Musial was leading the league in batting average with Chicago Cub Frankie Baumholtz in second place. By chance, the Cardinals hosted the Cubs that day. Harvey Haddix was the Cards' starter, but when Baumholtz came to the plate in the first inning, the situation called for a "bit of whimsy," according to the Associated Press.²⁹

Haddix headed out to outfield and Musial came in to face his closest rival in the batting race. Musial walked Baumholtz in the only batter he ever faced at the big-league level and then switched back with Haddix. Musial may have lost the battle (and earned a lifetime LUMP), but he won the war, taking the hitter crown with a .336 average compared to Baumholtz's .325 mark.

Nothing but LUMP Pitchers (since 1900)

*Frank Dupee, Chicago White Sox, 1901

*Pat McGehee, Detroit Tigers, 1912

Jim Scoggins, Chicago White Sox, 1913

*Harry Heitmann, Brooklyn Robins, 1918

Lou Bauer, Philadelphia Athletics, 1918

Will Koenigsmark, St. Louis Cardinals, 1919

Sid Benton, St. Louis Cardinals, 1922

Doc Hamann, Cleveland Indians, 1922

Art Gardiner, Philadelphia Phillies, 1923

Bill Moore, Detroit Tigers, 1925

*Joe Brown, Chicago White Sox, 1927

*Marty Walker, Philadelphia Phillies, 1928

*William Ford, Boston Bees, 1936

Mike Palagyi, Washington Senators, 1939

Jim Schelle, Philadelphia Athletics, 1939

Gordie Sundin, Baltimore Orioles, 1956

Fred Bruckbauer, Minnesota Twins, 1961

Zach Weiss, Cincinnati Reds, 2018

* starting pitcher; does not include hitters who registered a LUMP in only pitching performance but registered offensive statistics.

All Time

It takes a special type of pitcher to get dozens upon dozens of opportunities to LUMP in their career. Specifically, it requires being a left-handed pitcher—and for the most part, serving as a LOOGY throughout your career. The LOOGY became a regular bullpen arm beginning in the 1990s when managers began bringing in a left-handed specialist to face a particularly tough left-handed hitter. If the southpaw got the batter out, great, but if he didn't, he'd often be pulled. The margin for error for these pitchers was typically wafer-thin (as discussed above, the LOOGY will effectively disappear with new MLB rule changes).

With that in mind, it shouldn't be surprising that each member of the top ten in lifetime career LUMPs are left-handed pitchers—and nearly all of them were LOOGYs.

The all-time king of LUMPs is Mike Myers, who registered 129 of them in his thirteen-year, 883-game career. In LUMP outings, Myers gave up a staggering seventy-five runs. To put that into context, Myers's career ERA was 4.29; if he had never suffered a LUMP, that number would have plummeted to a far more palatable 3.04.

Along with Myers, the rest of the top five are all recognizable names for anyone who is familiar with the LOOGY dark arts: Randy Choate (104), Javier Lopez (86), Jesse Orosco (80) and Paul Assenmacher (76).

A two-time All-Star, Orosco, of course, was not a LOOGY throughout his career, but the creation of the LOOGY role was undoubtedly a key factor in him becoming Major League Baseball's all-time leader in appearances with 1,252 (and also the reason he made this list). Bob McClure, who is tied for eighth with 65, is the oldest pitcher to make the top ten. His career spanned from 1975 to 1993.

While a LUMP may be the pinnacle of the unproductive pitching performance, for LOOGYs, it was just part of the job. To that end, when journalist Jayson Stark created an imaginary LOOGY Hall of Fame in 2019, Myers, Choate and Lopez were all inductees despite their weighty LUMP numbers.

One thing is for certain: These pitchers—and their families—understood their role. "Sometimes [my wife] wouldn't even show up until the sixth inning," Myers told Stark. "She'd sit there and watch me warm up a little bit, throw two or three pitches, get out of the game. Then she'd leave."³⁰

 Most LUMPs (Career)

1. Mike Myers (1995–2007) 129 (1 World Series win)
 2. Randy Choate (2000–2015) 104 (1 World Series win)
 3. Javier Lopez (2003–2016) 86 (4 World Series wins)
 4. Jesse Orosco (1979, 1981–2003) 80 (2XAS, 2 World Series wins)
 5. Paul Assenmacher (1986–1999) 76
 6. Trever Miller (1996–2011) 68
 7. Dennys Reyes (1997–2011) 67
 8. Bob McClure (1975–1993) 65
Boone Logan (2006–2018) 65
Buddy Groom (1992–2005) 65
-

All Time (Starters)

Somedays starting pitchers just don't have their stuff, and this list proves that happens to even the best of them. Consider this: Eleven pitchers have registered five or more LUMPs as a starter in their career. Combined, that group has accounted for: one Hall of Fame induction, one Cy Young Award, one Major League Player of the Year Award, one Rookie of the Year Award, two ERA titles, twelve All-Star Game selections and eight World Series titles.

No pitcher started a game and left without retiring a batter more times than Vern Law, who did it seven times in his career. The two-time All-Star, who was a Cy Young Award winner as the ace of the 1960 World Series champion Pittsburgh Pirates, enjoyed a career that spanned from 1950 to 1967. As for the timing of his LUMPs, he spread them out. He had three early on (1951, 1954, and 1955) and the last four right near the end of his tenure—two in 1964 and two in 1966. The right-hander truly took it on the chin when he suffered a LUMP. In those seven games, he went 0–5, allowing twenty-seven hits and twenty-eight earned runs. Interestingly, it wasn't his control that got the best of him in those instances (he only walked two in LUMP outings.)

Johnny Vander Meer was another great with a lot of LUMPs—six to be exact. The four-time All-Star, who is best known for throwing back-to-back no-hitters, gave up sixteen hits, seven walks and eighteen runs in those six starts. In some cases, a tendency toward LUMPs may have actually reflected the true value of the pitcher. Case-in-point: Jesse Haines. Despite five career LUMPs, Haines was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1970. However, some

argue he is the worst pitcher to ever earn enshrinement into the Hall, and, just maybe, this stat lends more credence to that assertion.³¹

One final point: Whether it's because pitchers no longer get the quick hook as often or starters who have a penchant for LUMPs don't enjoy long enough careers in our current era, no starting pitcher who has thrown as recently as the 1990s has suffered through even four LUMPs in a career.

Most LUMPs (Career by a Starting Pitcher)

1. Vern Law (1950–51, 1954–1967) 7 (Cy Young, 2XAS, 1 World Series win)
 2. Johnny Vander Meer (1937–1943, 1946–1951) 6 (4XAS, 1 World Series win, 1XML POY)
Lee Meadows (1915–1929) 6 (1 World Series win)
 4. Johnny Schmitz (1941–1956) 5 (2XAS)
Gary Peters (1959–1972) 5 (ROY, 2XAS, 2XERA Champ)
Jay Hook (1957–1964) 5
Jesse Haines (1918, 1920–1937) 5 (Hall of Fame, 2 World Series wins)
Fred Frankhouse (1927–1939) 5 (1XAS)
George Earnshaw (1928–1936) 5 (2 World Series wins)
Nelson Briles (1965–1978) 5 (2 World Series wins)
Vern Bickford (1948–1954) 5 (1XAS)
-

All Time (Walk Offs)

While LOOGYs may have cornered the market when it comes to quantity of LUMPs, closers are typically responsible for those of the most dubious quality. It's bad enough to not get a single out, but it's most heartbreaking when that happens in a walk-off fashion.

Lindy McDaniel, who was a two-time All-Star and led the National League in saves three times, holds this record with nine in his career. His first occurred in 1956 with the St. Louis Cardinals.³² He came in with no outs in the bottom of the ninth and the bases loaded against the Philadelphia Phillies. He worked the count to 2-2 to Frank Baumholtz but ultimately gave up a single. His last took place in his final season in 1975 while pitching for the Kansas City Royals.³³ With two outs in the bottom of the twelfth inning and runners on first and second, Sal Bando smacked a game-winning double for the Oakland A's.

McDaniel is not alone in suffering through a number of these dispiriting moments. Cy Young Award winner (1977) Sparky Lyle is tied with two others right behind McDaniel with eight each in their careers. And Hall of Famers Goose Gossage and Trevor Hoffman are two of a group of twelve relievers who tallied seven career walk-off LUMPs.

Most Walk-Off LUMPs (Career)

1. Lindy McDaniel (1955–1975) 9 (2XAS)
 2. Jeff Russell (1983–1996) 8 (2XAS, 1 Roloids Relief Award)
 Sparky Lyle (1967–1982) 8 (Cy Young Award, 3XAS, 2 World Series wins)
 Jim Brewer (1960–1976) 8 (1XAS, 1 World Series win)
-

All Time (Postseason)

Being a career LUMP leader in this category is often bittersweet. On the one hand, nobody wants to deliver a comprehensively unproductive outing at the most important juncture of a season. Then again, if you've committed that transgression in the postseason at least it means you've pitched at the most critical time of the year. For three of the four pitchers at the top of the list, their frequency in the postseason may have meant LUMPs, but it also translated into championships.

Jeff Nelson, the only right-hander here, took six LUMPs in his playoff career—two in divisional series play, two in championship series and two in the World Series. The good news for Nelson, who was mainstay in the New York Yankees' bullpen during their late '90s through early 2000s dynastic run, was that his LUMPs did little damage. The Bronx Bombers went 4–2 in games where Nelson LUMPed. Overall, Nelson was a strong postseason performer, registering a 2.65 ERA in fifty-five outings (54.1 innings pitched). He also earned four World Series rings with the Yankees ('96, '98, '99, '00).

Javier Lopez and Jesse Orosco took five LUMPs apiece in their playoff careers. Lopez won four World Series titles ('07 with the Boston Red Sox; '10, '12, '14 with the San Francisco Giants) and Orosco was a member of two title teams: '86 New York Mets and '88 Los Angeles Dodgers.

The biggest hard-luck postseason LUMPer was Paul Assenmacher. Like Lopez and Orosco, Assenmacher registered LUMPs in five playoff games. Alas, while he'd pitch in the postseason in six different years and make the World Series twice with the Cleveland Indians ('95 and '97), he never won a championship.

 Most Postseason LUMPs (Career)

1. Jeff Nelson (1992–2006) 6 (1XAS, 4 World Series Wins)
 2. Javier Lopez (2003–2016) 5
 Jesse Orosco (1979, 1981–2003) 5
 Paul Assenmacher (1986–1999) 5
-

SEASON

The Season of the LUMP

As expected, LOOGYs dominated the single season record for LUMPs. The biggest culprit: Randy Choate. He not only delivered the single season highest total (20 in 2015) but also tied for the third-highest (with 15 in 2012). Despite such superlatively sad LUMP totals, Choate actually had reasonably good overall numbers in each of those campaigns. In a 2012 season split between the Miami Marlins and Los Angeles Dodgers, he led the National League in appearances (eighty) and posted a 3.03 ERA. In 2015, which was his final year, he went 1-0 with a 3.95 ERA in seventy-one games (although just 27.1 innings pitched).

Not surprisingly, high usage correlated with inclusion on this list. In 1998, when Detroit Tiger Sean Runyan topped the American League with eighty-eight appearances, he also delivered the second-highest single-season LUMP total with 17. George Sherrill (seventy-two games in 2006) and Bob McClure (sixty-eight in 1997) tied with Choate's 15. As was the case with career numbers, lefties make up the complete top ten.

 Most LUMPs (Single Season)

1. Randy Choate (2015, St. Louis Cardinals) 20
 2. Sean Runyan (1998, Detroit Tigers) 17
 3. George Sherrill (2006, Seattle Mariners) 15 (1xAS)
 Bob McClure (1977, Milwaukee Brewers) 15
 Randy Choate (2012, Miami Marlins/Los Angeles Dodgers) 15
 6. Javier Lopez (2016, San Francisco Giants) 14
 7. Mike Myers (1997, Detroit Tigers) 13
 Mike Myers (2001, Colorado Rockies) 13
 Aaron Loup (2017, Toronto Blue Jays) 13
 Jason Christiansen (2004, San Francisco Giants) 13
-

Season (Starters)

Only four times in major league history has a starting pitcher put up three LUMPs in a single season. For two of them (James “Tex” Carleton in 1938 and Leon Cadore in 1921), it came in the twilight of their careers. For a third, Vern Bickford, it came in his rookie 1948 season.

In astonishing contrast to those pitchers—all of whom might have been expected to struggle at those points in their careers—is Johnny Sain, who tallied a three-LUMP year in 1946. Returning to the Boston Braves after missing three seasons due to military service, Sain’s no-out duds were massive aberrations in an otherwise stellar campaign. Sain went 20-14 with a 2.21 ERA and a league-leading twenty-four complete games. While he finished fifth in the MVP balloting, one has to wonder whether he would have placed higher if not for his LUMPs. After all, he gave up twelve earned runs in those three outings. If you were to subtract that damage from his overall 1946 totals, his ERA would have been an even more impressive 1.80.

 Most LUMPs (by Starter in a Season)

1. Johnny Sain (1946, Boston Braves) 3 (3XAS, 3 World Series wins)
 Tex Carleton (1938, Chicago Cubs) 3 (1 World Series win)
 Leon Cadore (1921, Brooklyn Robins) 3
 Vern Bickford (1948, Boston Braves) 3
-

Season Walk Offs

If any series of circumstances could derail a relief pitcher’s career, Calvin Schiraldi’s 1986 World Series performance should certainly qualify. After a great season, in which he put up a 1.41 ERA, he was implicated in the Boston Red Sox’s Game Six and Game Seven World Series meltdowns to the New York Mets that played a role in costing them their first title since 1918. Overall, his ERA in that series was 13.50. With that in mind, it’s nearly tragic to point out that in the following season, Schiraldi became one of only three pitchers, and only the second at the time, to ever record four walk-off LUMPs in a single year.

 Most Walk-Off LUMPs (Season)

1. Calvin Schiraldi (1987, Boston Red Sox) 4
 Cecilio Guante (1988, New York Yankees/Texas Rangers) 4
 Neil Allen (1982, New York Mets) 4
-

Single Postseason

Three relievers in history have had as many as three LUMPs in a single postseason. New York Yankee Adam Ottavino set the record in 2019 with four—two in the American League Divisional Series against the Minnesota Twins (he walked the only batter he faced in both) and two in the League Championship Series versus the Houston Astros (he gave up two hits, one walk and two earned runs in those outings).

Anaheim Angel Scott Schoeneweis is the one pitcher on this list to be part of a World Series champion despite three LUMPs in the 2002 playoffs—including one in Game One of the World Series against the San Francisco Giants.

 Most LUMPs in a Single Postseason

1. Adam Ottavino (2019, New York Yankees) 4
 2. Scott Schoeneweis (2002, Anaheim Angels) 3
 - Jesse Orosco (1996, Baltimore Orioles) 3
-

Season by a Team

As discussed earlier, some managers during the height of the LOOGY movement were fine to quickly pull their lefty specialists. In addition, doing so didn't necessarily mean failure in a season.

 Most LUMPs in a Season by a Team (30 or More)

1. 2016 San Francisco Giants (Bruce Bochy, 88–75) 44
 2. 2004 Giants (Felipe Alou, 91–71) 43
 3. 2009 Tampa Bay Rays (Joe Maddon, 84–78) 36
 - 2007 Cincinnati Reds (Jerry Narron/Pete Mackanin, 72–90) 36
 - 2007 Chicago White Sox (Ozzie Guillen, 72–90) 36
 6. 2011 Pittsburgh Pirates (Clint Hurdle, 72–90) 35
 7. 2011 St. Louis Cardinals (Tony La Russa, 90–72, World Series Champs) 32
 - 2014 White Sox (Robin Ventura, 73–89) 32
 - 2015 Atlanta Braves (Fredi Gonzalez, 67–95) 32
 10. 2012 Houston Astros (Brad Mills/Tony DeFrancesco, 55–107) 31
 11. 2015 Cardinals (La Russa, 100–62) 30
 - 2015 Giants (Bochy, 84–78) 30
 - 2019 Chicago Cubs (Maddon, 84–78) 30
-

Streaks

Amazingly, two pitchers have performed *five* consecutive LUMPs in one season and still kept their jobs. Longtime LOOGY Trevor Miller's situation illustrates just how that could happen and not be career-limiting for a left-handed specialist. In 2011, from April 17 to April 28, Miller faced a grand total of five batters in those five contests for the St. Louis Cardinals.³⁴ He was charged with just two runs on two hits and three walks in that stretch. (It's worth noting that while Miller didn't get released on the back of that run, he was traded to the Toronto Blue Jays in July, then released in August, before being picked up by the Boston Red Sox, for whom he pitched the final three games of his career to end that season.)

Joey Eischen's also experienced a five-game LUMP steak in 2005 for the Washington Nationals.³⁵ He faced six batters, allowing two runs on three hits, two base-on-balls and a hit by pitch. Despite that poor run, Eischen still went 2-1 with a 3.22 ERA for the year.

A third pitcher, Trevor Rosenthal, matched this feat, but his streak was a bit different. First off, he did it over a three-year period. In 2017, the St. Louis Cardinal flamethrower would face two Boston Red Sox hitters on August 16 before being pulled after giving up a home run to Xander Bogaerts and a walk to Mitch Moreland.³⁶ It turned out Rosenthal had injured his right elbow, requiring reconstructive "Tommy John" surgery.³⁷ He missed 2018 but came back in a most unsteady form in 2019, starting the season with four straight LUMPs. Unlike Miller's and Eischen's primarily one-and-done streaks, Rosenthal, who suffered through the 2019 part of the streak with the Nationals, allowed seven runs on four hits and four walks in those four games. (To Rosenthal's credit, he did bounce back in 2020, posting a 1.90 ERA in twenty-three appearances.)

 Longest Consecutive LUMP streak

1. Trevor Miller (2011, St. Louis Cardinals) 5
 Joey Eischen (2005, Washington Nationals) 5
 Trevor Rosenthal (2017, St. Louis Cardinals to 2019, Washington Nationals) 5* (1XAS)
-

* One LUMP in 2017; four LUMPs in 2019

GAME

Worst Individual Game

How should the biggest single-game LUMP be defined? Should it be earned runs allowed? Probably not, because often that damage is done in the form of inherited runners. In other words, a LUMPed pitcher leaves and his reliever can't close the floodgates.

A purer way to determine the most notorious LUMPs is by the number of batters a pitcher faced. After all, the greater the number, the more chances the hurler had to avoid such a disastrous outing.

With that in mind, Hank Borowy deserves this crown. The right-hander had a solid ten-year career. In 1943, he won a World Series with the New York Yankees and the following year he was named an All-Star with the club. Then, in 1945, after being shipped to the Chicago Cubs, he notched the National League ERA crown.

Still, there are two games that he probably wished he could forget. In Game Seven of the 1945 World Series, Borowy started for the Cubs against the Detroit Tigers.³⁸ In his defense, he was pitching on just two days rest (he'd thrown four innings in Game Six). Nevertheless, his manager Charlie Grimm surely hoped for more. Borowy yielded three consecutive singles to start the game and was pulled. All three of those batters would score en route to a five-run first for the Tigers in a 9–3 series-clinching triumph. Borowy's is the only Game Seven LUMP from a starter in Major League Baseball history.

But the worst was yet to come. On August 18, 1951, Borowy made history in a truly unlikely scenario.³⁹ His Detroit Tigers were in St. Louis playing the Browns, which was surely a cause for optimism as the American League's woeful St. Louis team would finish the season with a horrible 52-102 record. Little did he or the 4,699 in attendance that day realize it would be record-setting event in more ways than one.⁴⁰ Coming in relief in the seventh inning, Borowy would face nine batters—the most ever in a major league game without getting an out. He allowed five hits and four walks and had nine runs next to his name in the box score. It was probably cold comfort, but none of the Tigers' hurlers could do much to stop the Browns that day as St. Louis prevailed 20–9. Those twenty runs marked the highest total any team ever scored at Sportsman Park.

While that record-setting LUMP came in Borowy's final season, at least it wasn't his final game. (Borowy fans will be happy to know he threw a scoreless

frame against the Yankees on September 14 to close out his career.) Instead, that calamity fell on Bob Kammeyer in 1979. While Kammeyer wasn't a nothing-but-LUMP member, he did end his career on a particularly tough no-out outing. In 1978, he made seven appearances, but he got in only one big league game the following year on September 18 against the Cleveland Indians.⁴¹ The reliever faced eight batters, giving up seven hits, including two home runs, and hitting a batter. He never got another major league shot again.

Worst Single-Game LUMPs

1. Hank Borowy, Aug. 18, 1951 (DET v. SLB) 9 BF, 5 H, 9 ER, 4 BB (2XAS, 1 World Series win, 1 ERA title)
 2. *Paul Wilson, May 6, 2005 (CIN v. LAD) 8 BF 5 H, 8 ER, 1 BB, 2 HBP
 *Blake Stein, Aug. 31, 1998 (OAK v. CLE) 8 BF, 4 H, 8 ER, 3 BB, 1 HBP
 Bob Kammeyer, Sept. 18, 1979 (NYY v. CLE) 8 BF, 7 H, 8 ER, 1 HBP
 Jorge Rondon, May 1, 2015 (COL v. SDP) 8 BF, 5 H, 7 ER, 2 BB, 1 Reached on error
 *Paul Wilson, July 10, 2003 (CIN v. HOU) 8 BF, 6 H, 7 ER, 1 BB, 1 Reached on error
 *Steven Matz, April 16, 2019 (NYM v. PHI) 8 BF, 4 H, 6 ER, 1 BB, 1 HBP, 2 Reached on error
 Jose Paniagua, Sept. 28, 1997 (MON v. CIN) 8 BF 3 H, 5 ER, 3 BB, 2 HBP
 *Bill Krueger, June 25, 1984 (OAK v. KCR) 8 BF, 6 H, 5 ER, 1 BB, 1 Reached on error
 Doc White, July 11, 1913 (CHW v. NYY) 8 BF, 4 H, 5 ER, 1 BB, 1 HBP, 2 Reached on error (1 World Series win, 1 ERA title)
 Chasen Bradford, Aug. 29, 2017 (NYM v. CIN) 8 BF, 6 H, 4 ER, 1 BB, 1 Reached on error
 *Bobby Jones, Sept. 17, 1997 (NYM v. ATL) 8BF, 3 H, 4 ER, 4 BB, 1 Reached on error (1XAS)
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* starting pitcher

Most LUMPs in a Single Game

A lot of LUMPs in a single game generally assures it was a crazy contest. The most LUMPs in one game—six—took place on September 7, 1993, between the St. Louis Cardinals (four LUMPs) and the Cincinnati Reds (two LUMPs).⁴² The Reds won 14-13 with seven of those twenty-seven runs being charged

to pitchers who tallied LUMPs. Those half dozen pitchers also combined for two blown saves—Cincinnati Red Rob Dibble and St. Louis Cardinal Todd Burns—with a loss for Burns, who registered a walk-off LUMP when Reggie Sanders stroked a triple to centerfield to end the game.

At least two teams have registered four LUMPs in a single inning. On Fenway Park's opening day in 1998, the Seattle Mariners experienced a ninth inning from hell in a 9–7 loss to the Red Sox.⁴³ Seattle's Randy Johnson threw a gem through eight innings, allowing just two runs on two hits and three walks while striking out fifteen. He handed the ball over to the bullpen. But Heathcliff Slocumb (3 ER), Tony Fossas (1 ER), Mike Timlin (2 ER) and Paul Spoljaric (1 ER) all failed to get a single out. Mo Vaughn capped the dramatic comeback off with a grand slam off of Spoljaric. In what seemed to be an understatement, Slocumb summed up the performance by saying, "It's really sad. Randy did his job. He deserved to win."⁴⁴

Perhaps not as dramatic, but similarly sad was the Philadelphia Phillies 4–3 loss to the Pittsburgh Pirates on September 18, 1965.⁴⁵ The Phils held a 3–0 lead going into the bottom of the ninth. Ace Jim Bunning gave up a lead-off homer to Roberto Clemente but was able to get the next hitter, Bob Bailey, to line out. After allowing a single to Bill Virdon, he gave way to the relief staff with a two-run lead and just two outs to go. None of the four hurlers charged with that responsibility—Gary Wagner, Morrie Steevens, Ed Roebuck or Fergie Jenkins—could do it. All of them LUMPed with Steevens taking the loss and Jenkins suffering the walk-off LUMP in what was only the fourth big league appearance of his Hall of Fame career.

All-Star Game

For most of the All-Star Game's history, the purpose has been to showcase talent. While starters used to play deep into games in the contest's early days, clearing the bench has been common for many decades. When it comes to pitchers getting a quick taste of the Midsummer Classic, nine hurlers have done it without getting a batter out.

Two—San Diego Padre Gaylord Perry in 1979⁴⁶ and Philadelphia Phillie Danny Jackson in 1994⁴⁷—faced the most hitters (three) in their LUMPs. Neither were cheated as both gave up hits to all three batters they squared off against. Only one pitcher has ever suffered a walk-off LUMP in the ASG. In the bottom of the tenth of the 1994 game, Jason Bere, in his only career All-Star Game, gave up a single to Tony Gwynn to lead off the inning and then was tagged for a double by Moises Alou to end the game.

For what it's worth, LUMPs are far from determinant in All-Star Game results. Teams that suffered LUMPs from at least one pitcher, hold a 5-4 lifetime record.

All-Star Game LUMPs

Frank Lary, Detroit Tigers, 1961 (3XAS, Gold Glove)

Sandy Koufax, Los Angeles Dodgers, 1961 (HOF, MVP, 3XCy Young, 7XAS, 3 World Series wins, 5XERA title, 2XWS MVP)

Fritz Peterson, New York Yankees, 1970 (1XAS)

Gaylord Perry, San Diego Padres, 1979 (HOF, 2XCy Young, 5XAS)

Dan Plesac, Milwaukee Brewers, 1989 (3XAS)

John Smiley, Pittsburgh Pirates, 1991 (2XAS)

Danny Jackson, Philadelphia Phillies, 1994 (2XAS, 2 World Series wins)

Jason Bere, Chicago White Sox, 1994 (1XAS)

Bob Wickman, Cleveland Indians, 2005 (2XAS)

Worst Postseason

Through the 2020 season, there have been 393 postseason LUMPs. The worst playoff LUMPs (based on number of batters faced) is six hitters without locking down a single out. It's happened twice. One was New York Met Al Leiter's Game Six start in the 1999 National League Championship series against the Atlanta Braves (discussed above). He gave up five earned runs on two hits, a walk, two hit batters and an error. During Game Two of the 2011 National League Divisional Series, Arizona Diamondback Brad Ziegler surrendered four hits and two walks (leading to four runs) in a loss to the Milwaukee Brewers.⁴⁸

As far as the World Series goes, four pitchers faced five batters without getting a hitter out: Detroit Tiger John Hiller (Game Four, 1968); Brooklyn Dodger Roger Craig (Game Seven, 1968); New York Giant Dick Coffman (Game Six, 1936); and St. Louis Cardinal Art Reinhart (Game Four, 1926).

 Worst Single-Game Postseason LUMPs

1. Brad Ziegler, NLDS Gm 2, 2011 (ARI v. MIL) 6 BF, 4 H, 4ER, 2 BB
 *Al Leiter, NLCS Gm 6, 1999 (NYM v. ATL) 6 BF, 2 H, 5 ER, 1 BB, 2 HBP, 1 fielder's choice (no out) (2XAS, 2 World Series wins)
 3. Josh Hancock, NLCS Gm 4, 2006 (STL v. NYM) 5 BF, 3 H, 5 ER, 2 BB (1 World Series win)
 Arthur Rhodes, ALCS Gm 6, 2000 (SEA v. NYY) 5 BF, 4 H, 4 ER, 1 BB (1XAS, 1 World Series win)
 *Bob Moose, NLCS Gm 2, 1972 (PIT v. CIN) 5 BF, 5 H, 5 ER (1 World Series win)
 John Hiller, WS Gm 4, 1968 (DET v. STL) 5 BF, 2 H, 3 ER, 2 BB, 1 Reached on error (1XAS, 1 World Series win)
 Roger Craig, WS Gm 7, 1956 (BRO v. NYY) 5 BF, 3 H, 4 ER, 2 BB (3 World Series wins)
 Dick Coffman, WS GM 6, 1936 (NYG v. NYY) 5 BF, 3 H, 5 ER, 1 BB, 1 Reached on error
 Art Reinhart, WS Gm 4, 1926 (STL v. NYY) 5 BF, 1 H, 4 ER, 4 BB (1 World Series win)
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* starting pitcher

Dramatic World Series LUMPs

Every kid with even the slightest baseball aspirations dreams of getting a walk-off hit in a World Series game. Of course, nobody hopes to be the pitcher—especially when that pitcher loses the game without getting a single out.

Historically, if you've been a member of the Atlanta Braves' bullpen, you're most likely to suffer that infamy. In the 1990s, the Braves endured four different walk-off LUMPs. This curse began in 1991, when in Game Six, Bobby Cox sent Charlie Leibrandt into a 3–3 game in the bottom of the twelfth inning.⁴⁹ The Minnesota Twin Kirby Puckett was the first hitter to the plate, and on a 2-1 count, he connected for a game-winning home run to left-centerfield. The

Braves would go on to lose the series in one of the sport's most epic Game Sevens when Jack Morris pitched a ten-inning 1-0 shutout.⁵⁰

The following year, the Braves experienced another walk-off LUMP. This time it was Game Three against the Toronto Blue Jays.⁵¹ With the contest deadlocked 2-2 in the ninth, Steve Avery, who had pitched masterfully as the starter, began the inning for Atlanta. But the lefty gave up a lead-off single, and by the time Avery, Mark Wohlers and Mike Stanton had pitched in the inning (Stanton got the softest of LUMPs coming in to intentionally walk one hitter before departing), the bases were loaded with one out. Jeff Reardon came in to face Candy Maldonado, who hit a deep fly ball single that easily plated the winning run. Toronto would take the series in six games.

Yet again, in 1995, a Braves pitcher was forced to leave the field without getting an out while the opposing team rejoiced in a heart-pounding fashion. In this instance, Alejandro Pena was the culprit in Game Three versus the Cleveland Indians.⁵² The veteran came in to pitch the eleventh with the score knotted 6-6. Pena never had a chance, giving up a double to Carlos Baerga, then intentionally walking Albert Belle before giving up a first-pitch RBI single to Eddie Murray. However, there was a silver lining—unlike the two previous series where a LUMP preceded a series defeat—Atlanta regrouped this time, winning the series in six games.

That said, if you believe that championship broke the curse, think again. In 1999, the Braves did it again in Game Three against the New York Yankees.⁵³ Mike Remlinger was the culprit this time. He came in to start the bottom of the tenth to pitch to Chad Curtis, who hit a home run to get the win for the Bronx Bombers. There would be no comeback in this series as the Yankees would earn a four-game sweep with a win in the subsequent contest.

While the Braves have had their share of LUMP disappointments, they are certainly not alone. For instance, David Freese's memorable game-winning home run in the eleventh inning of Game Six of the 2011 World Series came on a walk-off LUMP by Mark Lowe.⁵⁴ The famed "Bill Buckner game"—Game Six of the 1986 World Series—was actually a LUMP.⁵⁵ Bob Stanley replaced Calvin Schiraldi with just one out to go for the Red Sox to break the infamous "Curse of the Bambino."⁵⁶ With runners at first and third, the New York Met Mookie Wilson stepped into the box. Stanley threw a wild pitch to allow the tying run to score and then took the blown save as the victim of Buckner misplaying Wilson's grounder down the first base line. In a sense, the event encapsulates three key LUMP facets: They are all not created equal; pitchers are not always fully to blame; and some just hurt so much more than others.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the concept of the LUMP may seem like a focus on failure, but it really should be a reminder of just how impressive it is to be successful at the solitary task of pitching. Sure, we all are constantly reminded that hitting is such a difficult undertaking. Boston Red Sox great Ted Williams encapsulated this perspective when he once said hitting was “the hardest thing—a round ball, round bat, curves, sliders, knuckleballs, upside down and a ball coming in at 90 miles to 100 miles an hour, it’s a pretty lethal thing.”⁵⁷

But pitching also deserves recognition for just how challenging it can be. It is a maze of mechanical movements that must be performed at a breakneck speed. In fact, experts have described pitching as “one of the fastest human physical movements in sports activities,” according to a 2013 study published in the *International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy*.⁵⁸

Of course, those precise, quick-twitch actions must be executed and repeated while changing grips, arm angles (on occasion) and, sometimes, battling injury. Beyond that, there’s the mental challenge. “It’s a relatively simple task that you’re doing. You’re trying to throw a ball into a glove,” Minnesota Twins pitcher Trevor May explained in 2014. “But there are so many other things going on in your head . . . Sometimes there’s other stuff going on around you, and just staying on what you’re doing, for me in the past, has been the hardest thing.”⁵⁹

Indeed, combine those taxing elements together and it shouldn’t be surprising that so many major leaguers—from baseball’s biggest stars to those who have had brief walk-on roles on the game’s greatest stage—have suffered LUMPs in their careers. More than anything, that’s a testament to just how hard a pitcher’s job is every time he takes the mound.

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