

The Pitch



**Selling
Baseball
to Every
Audience**

by Lisi Schauer

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Lisi Schauer, "Trick pitch," 2025.



Alex Rodriguez (@arod). 2023. "Decided to start writing my book on lessons learned in business & baseball." Instagram, February 19, 2023.

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Introduction

Dear Hiring Manager,

I am writing to apply for the position of Chief Marketing Officer for Major League Baseball. My professional background, educational achievements, and specific interest in popularizing the sport of baseball among new audiences make me exceptionally well-suited for this role.

While studying sports media at the University of Southern California, my dream was to work in baseball. At the time, the big question was how to keep the sport relevant, and I thought I could be the answer. Across two internships with the USC Athletic Department and a summer working for the Double-A Richmond Flying Squirrels, I took on countless sports-related odd jobs. I ran team social media accounts. I operated Jumbotron cameras. I conducted postgame interviews. I wore a peanut mascot costume and raced four other people, also wearing nut costumes, down the left field line between Flying Squirrels innings. I've done it all.

I've also applied to hundreds of positions and written hundreds of cover letters telling tales of my commitment, my work experience, my education, my accolades. I was highly qualified, just like the thousands of other people who dreamed of working in sports and submitted applications exactly like mine. When I graduated, I put my baseball aspirations on hold and explored other industries — academic research, influencer marketing, music. Then, while pursuing my master's degree in communications design at Pratt Institute, I realized the solution to my own career woes could be the same as the solution to keeping baseball relevant. When there are infinite exciting things out there fighting for limited precious attention, the only way to stand out is by trying something unconventional. For my thesis, I designed a marketing campaign that rebranded baseball as not just palatable, but exhilarating to an audience of people who couldn't care less about sports (in this case, art students).

I began by investigating the storytelling systems that exist within sports and considering how baseball narratives could be delivered to the uninitiated in more accessible ways. I then researched fan communities outside the sports world and designed interactive digital tools that linked their interests to baseball. Finally, I tested the theories that had emerged from my initial research by creating a fictional Pratt Baseball team and promoting it with a combination of traditional and experimental approaches primarily targeted at non-sports fans.

This process has led me to one conclusion: it's time we stop depending on home runs and mascot races to capture fan attention. There are endless untapped opportunities for making any audience care about baseball, and if given the opportunity, I'll prove it to you.

Sincerely,
Lisi Schauer



Lisi Schauer, "Lincecum Career Scarf," 2024.

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Lisi Schauer, "Taylor Swift outfit memes," 2024.

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Lisi Schauer, "Biblically accurate rally cap," 2025.

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National Association of Professional
Base Ball Leagues

Explanatory Notes on the Playing
Rules and Marginal Index

In Convenient Detachable Form for Ready Reference

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WIN & CO. New York.

Baseball



US

noun

noun: **inside baseball**

expert knowledge about baseball.

"he taught New York baseball fans a good deal of inside baseball"

• **INFORMAL**

esoteric or highly technical information.

"there's probably too much inside baseball to appeal to mainstream audiences"

“Inside Baseball” for baseball outsiders

Dear Hiring Manager,

If you’re still here, go away. This part is not for you. Non-hiring managers...*hello*. You’re probably wondering what “baseball” is. Please allow me to break it down for you.

THE GAME

The actual game of baseball is so easy, even children can play it. Here are main things you need to know:

1. Baseball games are measured with innings, rather than a clock — 20th century American writers love to wax poetic about this. Games are typically nine innings long but since they can’t end in ties, if both teams have the same score at the end of the ninth inning they will continue to play extra innings.
2. Every inning is split into two halves, with the visiting team’s chance to score being in the top (first half) of the inning and the home team’s chance to score being in the bottom (second half) of the inning. Each team tries to score as many runs (points) as possible before making three outs, which marks the end of the half-inning.
3. A “run” is a good outcome for your team. If you hit a home run, meaning the baseball leaves the ballpark in fair territory, you have automatically scored a run. Good job! Alternatively, you can score a run by getting on base and hoping your teammates bat well enough for you to keep advancing until you reach home plate.
4. An “out” is a bad outcome for your team. The most common ways to make an out are striking out, flying out, grounding out, being tagged out, or being forced out.* If you ever find yourself playing a high stakes professional baseball game, try to avoid doing any of these things.

Major League Baseball (MLB) tweaks the rulebook’s finer details every now and then in an effort to make games more exciting, but these are the basics and they aren’t going anywhere.

THE PLAYERS

Each of the two teams competing in a game has a starting lineup of nine players. This includes a pitcher, a catcher, a first baseman, a second baseman, a third baseman, a shortstop, a left

fielder, a center fielder, and a right fielder. The lineups represent just a fraction of each team’s 26-man active roster. Anyone from the active roster can be substituted in at any point in a game, but no take backsies: the player they replace cannot re-enter that game once they are removed.

When it’s your team’s half of the inning to score, every player in the lineup becomes a batter (except for the pitcher, who gets a designated hitter (DH) to bat for them because pitchers generally suck at hitting). When it’s the other team’s half, your team will take the field and play in their aforementioned positions.

The most common way to quantify a pitcher’s success is by using their earned run average (ERA). The lower this is, the better the pitcher is at keeping other teams from scoring.

For a position player, meaning anyone who isn’t a pitcher, offensive output is generally summarized with three main percentages:

1. A batting average, which tells you how often they get hits
2. An on-base percentage, which tells you how often they reach base either by getting a hit or some other way, such as drawing a walk or getting hit by a pitch
3. A slugging percentage, which tells you if they are big and strong by factoring extra-base hits (such as home runs) into their batting average

A general rule of thumb is that good batters have something like a .300/400/500 line. This means they have gotten 300 hits per 1000 chances (batting average), reached base 400 times per 1000 chances (on-base percentage), and they hit for power (the math is slightly more complicated so just trust that a slugging percentage of at least .500 means they are big and strong).

Contracts decide which team a player is on as well as how much that team pays them. As of November 2024 when I am writing this, the average salary of a major leaguer is about \$5 million.¹ The current most lucrative contract in baseball history belongs to Shohei Ohtani, who signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers in the 2023-24 offseason for 10 years, \$700 million.^{2**} Part of Shohei Ohtani’s value comes from being the only two-way player in MLB today — this means he’s a pitcher who swings the bat well enough to be his own designated hitter. He’s my hero.

THE SEASON

The MLB regular season is 162 games long. It begins in late March or early April every year and concludes in early October. It is preceded by Spring Training (practice games that don’t count towards the season record or standings) and followed by the Postseason (put a pin in that).

There are 30 MLB teams. They are split evenly across two leagues: the National League

and the American League. In each league, there are three divisions: East, Central, and West. If my math is right, that makes six divisions, each with five teams.

Throughout the season, a team will play every other team in its own league at least once, and the majority of its games will be against other teams within its division. Unlike most other professional sports, teams don’t just face each other for one game at a time before playing other teams. Rather, they will play in a series that is typically three or four games long. A “homestand” refers to any stretch of time in which a team plays multiple consecutive games at their own ballpark.

THE POSTSEASON

As of 2024, 12 teams can get into the MLB postseason. This includes the six division winners plus three wild card teams from each league — these are the teams that didn’t win their divisions but have the next best three records within their leagues. There are four rounds in the playoffs: the best-of-three Wild Card Series, followed by the best-of-five Division Series, followed by the best-of-seven Championship Series, followed by the best-of-seven World Series.

Some teams (like the New York Yankees) have won the World Series a lot (27 times). Others (like the Milwaukee Brewers, Tampa Bay Rays, Colorado Rockies, San Diego Padres, and Seattle Mariners) have never won the World Series (0 times). Some teams (like the Boston Red Sox and Chicago Cubs) have endured long droughts with no championships (86 years and 108 years, respectively) that their fans have attributed to capital-C Curses (of the Bambino and of the Billy Goat, respectively) until they finally ended with World Series wins in the 21st century (2004 and 2016***). That reminds me, we’ll need to go over...

THE HISTORY

Various games resembling baseball have existed at least since the Middle Ages and likely earlier — the Egyptian archaeological site Deir el-Bahari³ shows ancient depictions of an activity involving bats and balls. For the purposes of this project, however, we’re going to be focusing on the version that cropped up in North America midway through the 19th century. This is the baseball I’ve already begun telling you about, the one with the outs and the runs and the balls and the bases. By the end of the 1800s, the National and American Leagues

* I don’t have time to cover each of these terms in depth right now. If it really means that much to you, please just Google them or email lis1222@gmail.com and I’ll explain.

** The future most lucrative contract in MLB history will depend on how well negotiations go after I am offered the position of Chief Marketing Officer. Don’t worry – the hiring manager isn’t reading this part so we can speak freely here.

*** respectively

were both established, as well as a handful of teams that are still around today.

The 20th century began with the Dead-ball era. This was a two decade-long period in which hitting and run scoring were extremely low, which likely made games a little boring. Still, baseball had its fair share of intrigue — the 1919 season was defined by the infamous Black Sox Scandal, in which players from the Chicago White Sox conspired with gamblers to throw the World Series against the Cincinnati Reds. The men involved were punished with lifetime bans from the sport, only to stage their comebacks as ghosts seventy years later in a cornfield with Kevin Costner.⁴

In 1921, batting averages and home run rates mysteriously picked up again. With no clear explanation for this sudden change, some theorized that the league had secretly introduced a livelier “rabbit” ball with an internal core more conducive to getting pummeled. The baseball’s composition had indeed changed over the years, but its most recent update was over a decade earlier in 1910, when the once-rubber center was replaced with cork.⁵ Now *that’s* Inside Baseball™.

Anyway. The golden age came next. Even if you’ve never made a conscious effort to pay attention to baseball, this era will probably sound the most familiar. Especially if you’ve seen *The Sandlot*. Think Babe Ruth calling his shot, radio broadcasting, the Yankees winning a bunch of World Series titles, Lou Gehrig, bubblegum, Americana. Far less widely covered by American pop culture were the Negro Leagues, with stars like Josh Gibson, Bullet Rogan, and Buck Leonard, who were shut out of the AL and NL for their entire careers because they were Black. In 1947, Jackie Robinson broke the color line to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers. This inarguably changed the sport for the better, but MLB still had more work to do in addressing its history of segregation. It wasn’t until 2020 that the Negro Leagues were officially recognized as part of Major League Baseball and generations of overlooked Black players were finally acknowledged in the MLB record books.⁶

In addition to Robinson, baseball had other champions of social change. In 1969, center fielder Curt Flood challenged the reserve clause, a contractual rule that prevented players from leaving or switching teams voluntarily. His case went all the way to the Supreme Court in 1972, and though he lost, the clause was ultimately struck down in the years following because of Flood. Today, he is known as the father of free agency.⁷

In the 1980s, disputes about free agent compensation and pensions prompted players to go on strike.⁸ In 1994, players went on strike again until the following season, meaning no World Series that year. ‘94 also marked the beginning of another chapter — MLB was

in her steroid era.⁹ While anabolic steroids were technically banned throughout the nineties, they were undeniably prevalent during this period.¹⁰ Guys got beefy and veiny. They chased (and then broke) home run records, which helped baseball bounce back from the strike as popular as it had ever been. It took until the mid-aughts for the league to start seriously cracking down on performance enhancing drugs.

By this point, teams were seeking out other, less illegal avenues to gain a competitive edge, and the Oakland Athletics found one. Stuck with one of the lowest payrolls in the league,¹¹ the A’s turned to advanced baseball statistics — also known as sabermetrics* — to reevaluate what it takes to build a winning team. The *Moneyball* revolution, named after Michael Lewis’ book chronicling the Athletics’ 2002 season,¹² popularized the notion that superstars are overvalued, batting averages are overrated, and contrary to traditional scouting beliefs, it’s Oakland A-okay if a player looks and/or moves weird as long as he puts up the right numbers on paper. A’s general manager Billy Beane, who I’ll let you know right now was played by Brad Pitt in the *Moneyball* film adaptation and was once described by A’s short-stop Hiroyuki Nakajima as “extremely sexy and cool,”¹³ predicted at the time that other teams would take sabermetrics more seriously once they saw the Athletics’ success. And he was right — today, every major league team has an advanced statistics department of its own.

Baseball’s extensive history provides context for the sport’s more recent storylines. The Red Sox and Cubs’ aforementioned drought-ending World Series titles can be attributed in part to Theo Epstein, a front office executive for both teams at the time of their championship wins whose sabermetrics-based decisions followed in the footsteps of the *Moneyball* A’s.¹⁴ The Black Sox and steroid era get brought up every time baseball gets a new scandal — in 2017, the Houston Astros illicitly used hidden cameras and dugout trash cans¹⁵ to win the Fall Classic,** and in early 2024, MLB investigated Shohei Ohtani after his interpreter was alleged to be embezzling money to pay off millions of dollars in gambling debts.¹⁶ Speaking of Ohtani, the two-way player’s achievements are regularly compared to those of golden age two-way players Bullet Rogan and Babe Ruth.¹⁷ In 2023, Ohtani broke two separate records previously held by Ruth in back-to-back months.***

Still, the game today faces its own unique challenges. Television ratings have been trending downward, with average World Series viewership in the 2020s down 27% from the 2010s, 40% from the 2000s, and 58% from the ‘90s.¹⁸ Average opening night viewership since 2020 is 26% lower than it was the previous decade.¹⁹ Baseball also struggles with inclusivity — the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport

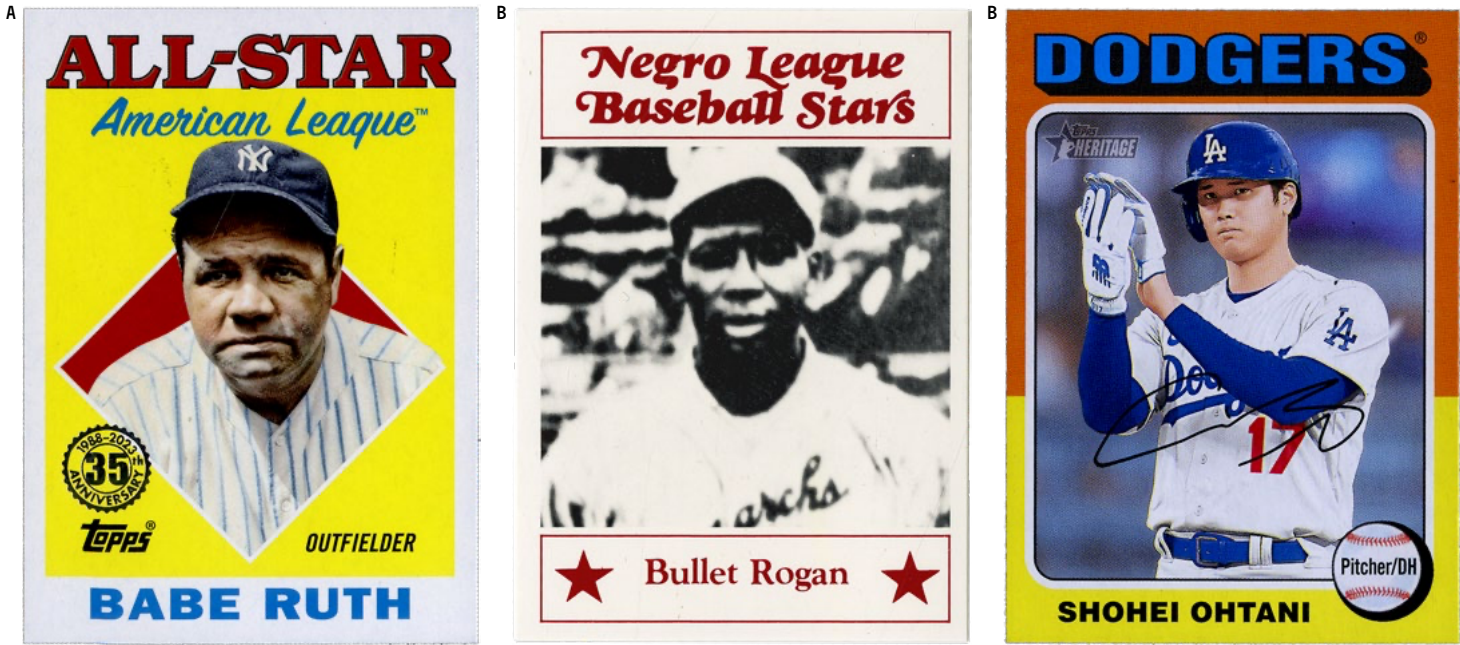
(TIDES)’s 2023 Racial and Gender Report Card graded MLB a C+ for its hiring practices. According to this report, players of color made up over 40% of rosters, however only 6.2% of players were Black, the lowest percentage since the 1991 season. In addition, women and people of color were vastly underrepresented in front office positions.²⁰ MLB teams and the league itself have also received fair criticism, especially over the past decade, for shortcomings regarding the treatment of female fans. At best, these shortcomings look like out-of-touch Ladies’ Night promotions featuring manicures and wine,²¹ and at worst, they look like inappropriate responses to the ongoing issue of domestic violence involving athletes.²²

Baseball has come a long way over the last century-plus, but there is still plenty of room to grow. Part of that process will involve fostering a more welcoming environment for fans of all backgrounds and levels of familiarity with the game.

* “saber” here is referring to SABR, the Society for American Baseball Research

** another name for World Series

*** On May 9, Ohtani reached 502 career pitching strikeouts, the most from a player who had also hit at least 100 home runs.²³ On June 29, Ohtani hit his fourteenth home run of the month, which was the most by a player who had also started a game as a pitcher in the same month.²⁴



A “2023 Topps Series 2 1988 All-Star Babe Ruth,” baseball card, New York City: Topps, 2023, 88AS-31, personal collection.

B “Fritsch Negro League Baseball Stars Singles: Bullet Rogan,” baseball card, Stevens Point: Larry Fritsch Cards, 1986, #32, personal collection.

C “2024 Topps Heritage Shohei Ohtani Los Angeles Dodgers,” baseball card, New York City: Topps, 2024, #371, personal collection.

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I want a Tim Lincecum Angels jersey

Tim Lincecum’s Major League Baseball career had already been over for eight years when it took over my life for about a month in 2024. How do I explain Tim Lincecum to those who don’t vaguely remember him? He was drafted by the Giants back in 2006 when he was 22 and baby faced on top of being short and skinny for a guy who could throw 98 mph.¹ He had this weird delivery that he’d worked out with his dad where he launched himself off the mound, taking an

absurdly long stride and rotating his hips so the momentum snapped the rest of him forward. He called himself a freak of nature. He grew his hair long and won back-to-back Cy Youngs and got busted for smoking weed. He brought San Francisco its first World Series title and said the f word on live TV.² And they all loved him. They called him Timmy.
He played for the Giants for nine seasons, was great for the first five of them. But the

years of tricking physics, torquing and sling-shotting his body around to squeeze every last bit of velocity he could into his fastball caught up to him eventually. His pitching declined. He was diagnosed with a degenerative condition in both hips in 2015, just as his contract was coming to an end.³ He became a free agent that offseason. The only team he’d ever known no longer had room for him in their starting rotation.⁴

So Lincecum signed with the Angels. It didn’t go well. In those last nine games of his big league career, he gave up run after run. His fastball dropped all the way down to 88.⁵ And then he disappeared.
I want a Tim Lincecum Angels jersey. The first time I actively sought one out was at Angel Stadium in 2017, already a year too late if the Anaheim gift shops had ever carried them to begin with. It must have started as a joke, albeit kind of a mean one — the idea that despite being a Giants franchise legend there could be some sort of wearable artifact floating around out there commemorating Timmy’s lousy last hurrah with some other random team. I had to have it. It loomed in the back of my mind every time I went to thrift stores while living in LA. I searched online every once in a while but found nothing available, no old ones circulating and certainly no new ones being made.
There’s an old joke about developing nations having a false history of the Buffalo Bills winning the Super Bowl every year, because every time they lost in the ‘90s all their premade victory T-shirts got shipped overseas. This is something that still happens — professional sports organizations like to partner with non-profits to move the championship apparel of losing teams out of the country as donations.⁶ When the odd misprinted item does find its way back stateside, it can resell on Ebay for hundreds of dollars.
This memorabilia has a special kind of value. The most expensive baseball cards on the market are the T206 Honus Wagner and the 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle — the former supposedly stopped being produced by the American Tobacco Company because Wagner didn’t want them using his likeness to sell cigarettes,⁷ and the latter came from a set that was so unremarkable at the time, all the unsold cards including the Mantles were dumped in the Hudson River.⁸ These are objects with stories behind them, things we treasure because they take some specific level of understanding to appreciate.
Isn’t that the point of all sports merchandise though? People wear jerseys around to advertise which teams they like, and when



Vintage Super Bowl XXIX T-Shirt ~ Buffalo Bills. PRINT ERROR

Midwestfreestyle (373)
100% positive · Seller's other items · Contact seller

US \$499.99

No interest if paid in full in 6 mo on \$149+ with PayPal Credit*

Condition: New with tags

Buy It Now

Add to cart

Add to Watchlist

People are checking this out. 4 have added this to their watchlist.

San Francisco Giants NEW 2002 World Series Champions Error Cap Hat

longdukdong (251)
100% positive · Seller's other items · Contact seller

US \$99.99

Condition: New

Quantity: 1 Last one

Buy It Now

Add to cart

Add to Watchlist

People are checking this out. 8 have added this to their watchlist.

Popular item. 2 have already sold.

NWS Super Bowl LIV San Francisco 49ers Champions Shirt Fanatics S Misprint NFL

Zach's Trunk Show (3222)
100% positive · Seller's other items · Contact seller

US \$200.54

or Best Offer

No interest if paid in full in 6 mo on \$149+ with PayPal Credit*

Condition: New

Buy It Now

Add to cart

Make offer

Add to Watchlist

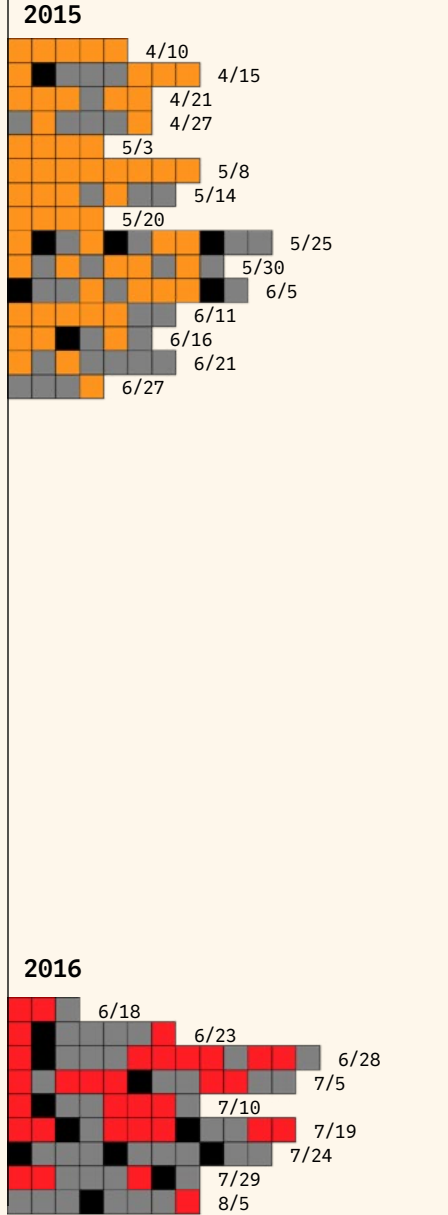
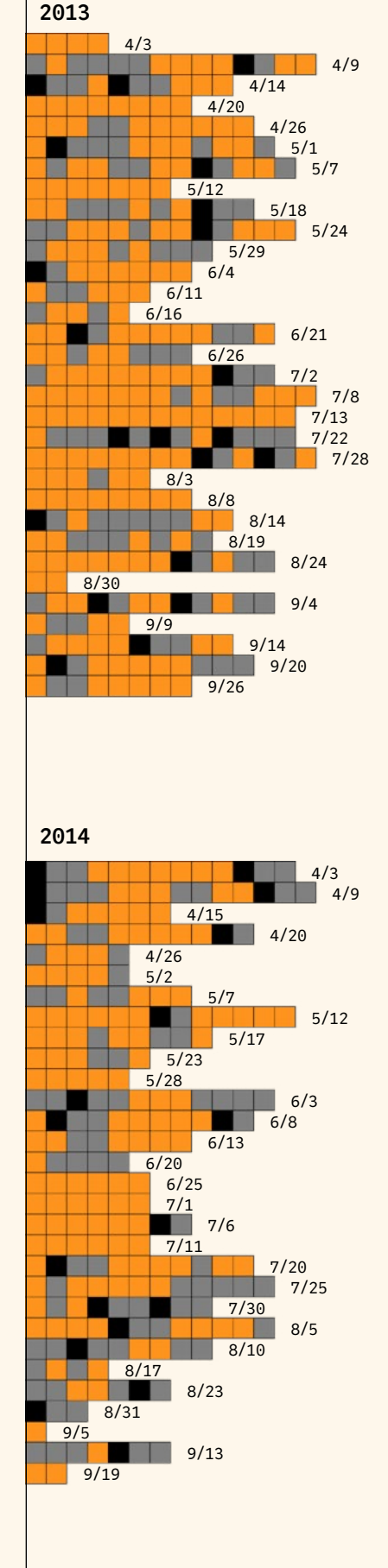
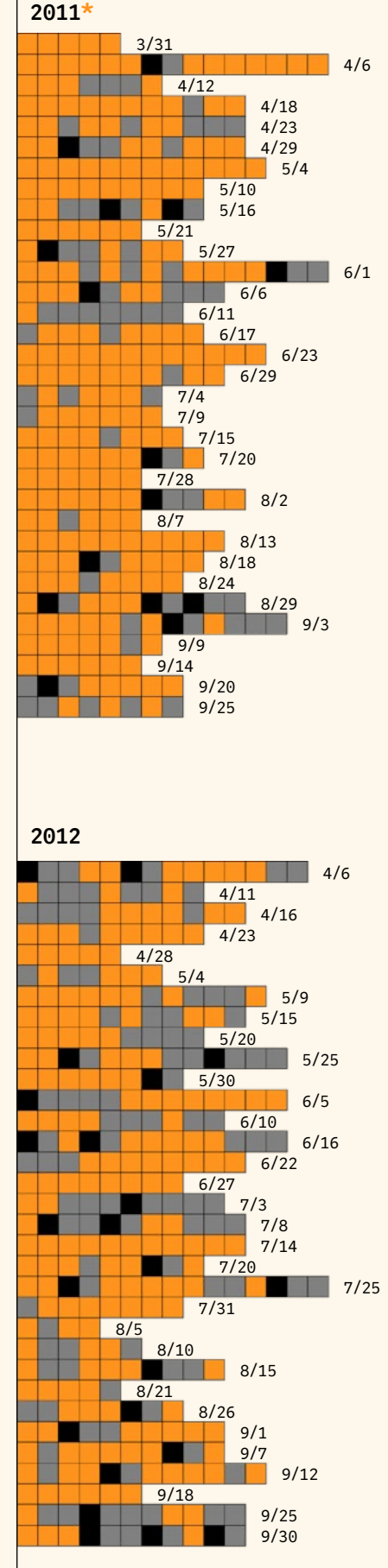
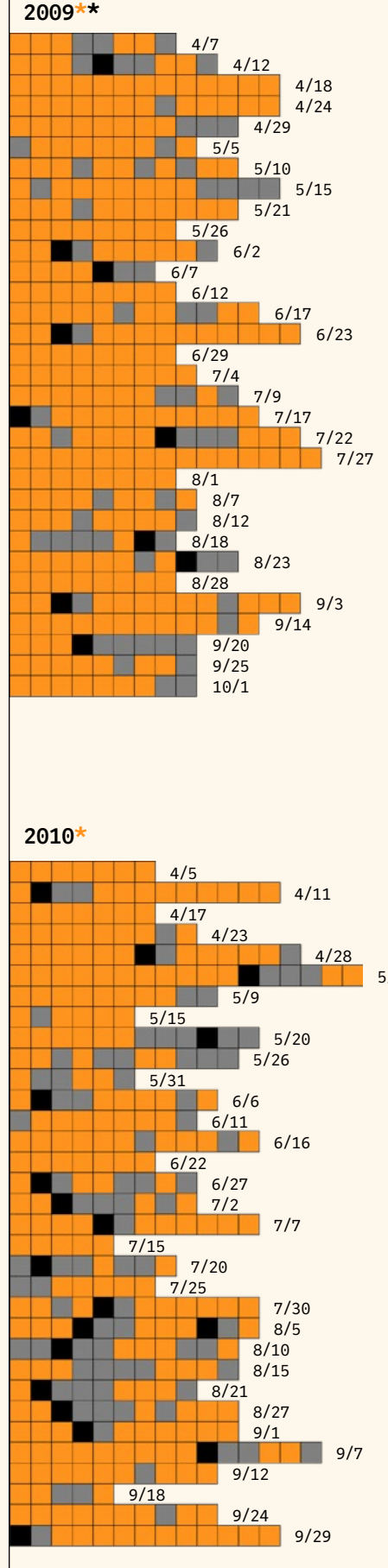
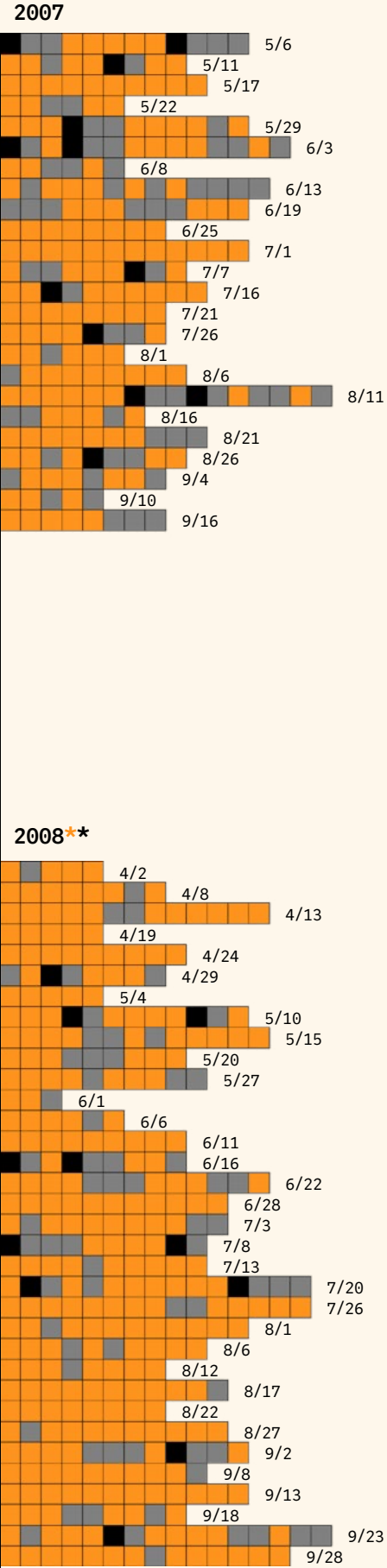
People want this. 14 people are watching this.

those jerseys have a player's name on the back of them it tells us that that player is significant in some way. Most of the time, it's just 'cause they were good. That's what a Tim Lincecum Giants jersey tells us. It doesn't reveal anything about the long hair or the Cy Youngs or the f-bombs, but it signals to other Giants fans that you know about all that stuff. A Tim Lincecum Angels jersey is more existentially troubling. A Tim Lincecum Angels jersey is a memento mori. A Tim Lincecum Angels jersey tells us that you either retire a hero or you stick around long enough to find yourself languishing in Anaheim.

This is what I became fixated on in September 2024, after another night of trying and failing to find an authentic Lincecum Angels jersey available for sale on any of my go-to sites. I realized that if I wanted something that captured the forgotten parts of his career, I'd have to make it. I went to Baseball Reference and combed through a decade's worth of old game logs. The nice thing about baseball is there's no shortage of data at your disposal, and the nice thing about textiles is that they can be designed to communicate data. I decided to keep my dataset simple, devising a system to code Lincecum's best outcomes (strikeouts), less ideal outcomes (runs allowed), and worst outcomes (home runs given up). By charting these three stats, game by game, I could loosely map out his entire career.

- Strikeout recorded as a Giant
- Strikeout recorded as an Angel
- Earned run allowed
- Home run given up
- All Star season
- Cy Young Award-winning season

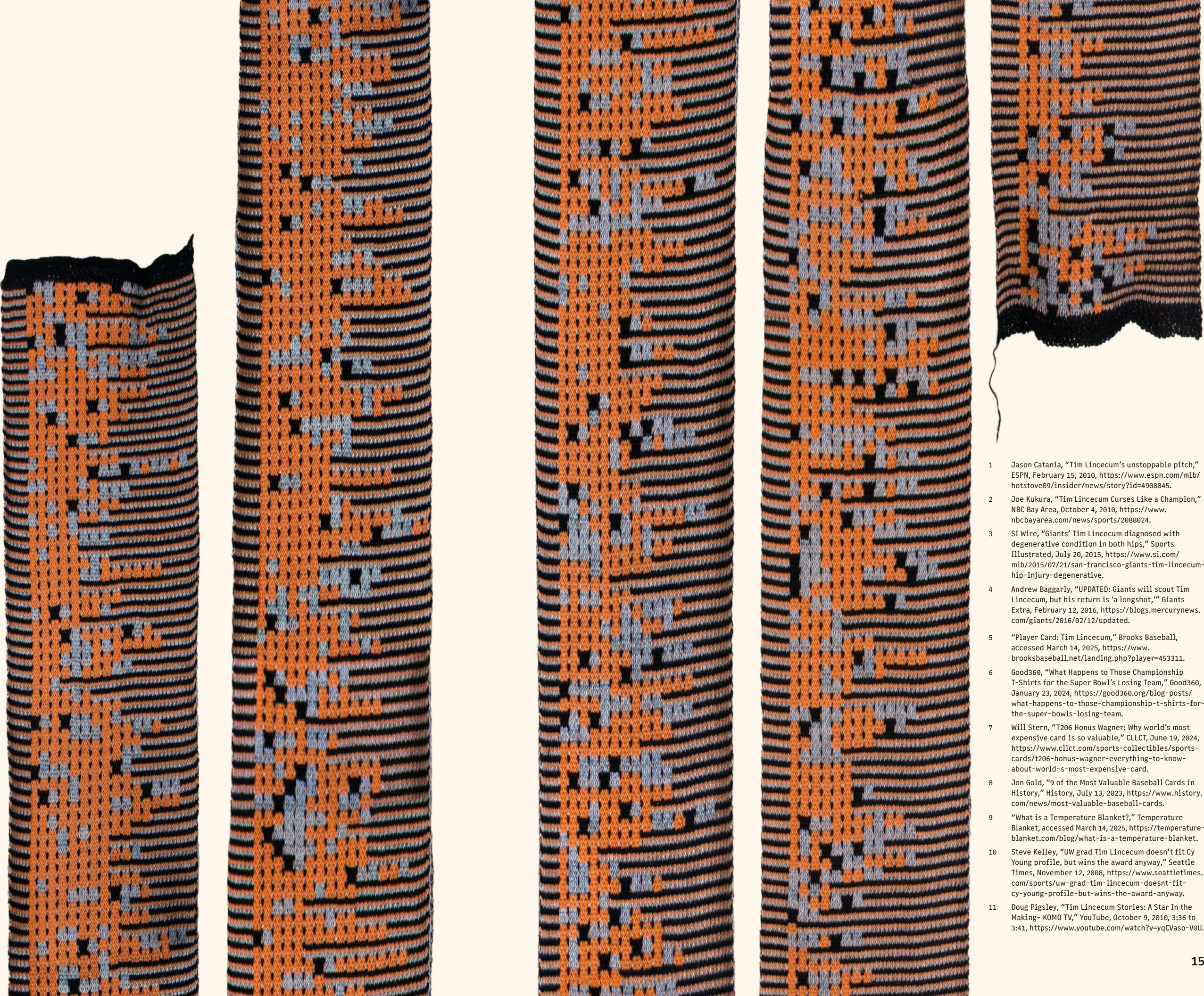
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At first I experimented with stringing together two different colors of beads, but quickly realized that I could produce a larger textile more efficiently using a knitting machine. Half-inspired by temperature blankets, which use fiber arts to visualize the weather on each day of any given year,⁹ I let each row of my pattern represent one game Lincecum appeared in. Squares within the rows depicted sequences of strikeouts, home runs, and total runs allowed. By the time I had finished laying out 2007-2016, the textile had taken on the proportions of a long, thin scarf rather than something that could be fashioned into a jersey. Some of the rows showed far more successful outings than others, but it was all there.

I don't know why it had to be Lincecum. It's not like his trajectory was all that uncommon; plenty of ballplayers are good through their twenties before injuries force them into early retirement. Maybe it just seemed like he was supposed to be different. "Tim can throw all day and never get hurt," his dad had told the local news, way back at the beginning.¹⁰ This was the man who taught him how to pitch, who had utter faith that it was all going to work. "Seriously I think he'll make the Hall of Fame," he once said. "He lasts any length of time, he'll make the Hall of Fame."¹¹

Tim Lincecum did get hurt. He isn't in the Hall of Fame. I don't think it matters.



Lisi Schauer, "Lincecum Career Scarf," 2024.

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Lisi Schauer, "Alternate Realities T-shirt series," 2024.

The dead currency of winning and losing

Sports is storytelling. It has to be, or else we're just watching a bunch of sweaty strangers in matching outfits throw and kick balls around for no reason. If you turn on a broadcast, you'll hear commentators working out the narrative significance of each event in real time. If you prompt a fan to tell you about their favorite team, they'll probably share some championship-related franchise lore. If you ask how that team is doing currently, the status update will be delivered to you in the form of a story — either how they're going all the way this year because of this guy and this guy and this guy, or how it was all doomed from the start 'cause of injuries or dumb trades or bad calls. The cosmic pendulum of sports fanaticism swings eternally between IT'S SO OVER and WE'RE SO BACK.

The most popular (and easiest) way to construct a sports story is by hinging everything on the built-in stakes of wins and losses. And while it's become cliché to say that sports are about more than just winning and losing, it's still rare to see a plotline that doesn't treat them like a priority. Rocky doesn't win at the end of the first movie, but every scene before the finale fuels anticipation that he *might*. People also froth at the mouth for an underdog story — "underdog story" here referring to when a team that's supposed to lose pulls off an unlikely win, or when a team that's expected to win achieves said win but then says things like "nobody thought we could make it here" or "we had our backs against the wall" in postgame interviews anyway. I get it. It's hard to express why any given in-game outcome is important if it doesn't ultimately contribute to some monumental win or devastating loss. But if the goal of sports media is to drive as much attention as possible towards sports, then it's grossly overvaluing win-loss-based narratives.

This is for two reasons. The first is that a large part of the sports fan experience involves not winning. The baseball season, for example, consists of 162 two-and-a-half-to-three-hour-long games and at the end of it, only one of thirty teams can secure the big World Series win that makes all the other wins mean something. If someone only watched sports to see wins, then following almost any team would be a terrible investment of their time. But that's not why most people watch sports. There are moments between the wins and losses — moments that are rarely spotlighted or recognized as anything other than color commentary — that make sports fans stick around.

The second reason is that wins and losses mean nothing to people who aren't already fans. If someone has lived in the world long enough to know what sports are and decided that sports are not their cup of tea, they're probably not going to change their mind after some dramatic recounting of how one team snatched victory from the jaws of defeat, or whatever. They know what wins and losses are, and they've decided that simply isn't enough incentive to make them bite. But the other stuff, the moments in between, are a different story.

Jon Bois is the patron saint of these moments in between. Bois, who could be described as some combination of filmmaker/sportswriter/statistician/internet personality/auteur, has been finding unique ways to tell sports stories for his entire career. One example: in 2015, Bois launched *Chart Party*, a video series that used advanced metrics, data visualizations, and Google Earth backdrops to explore questions like, what would the 2015-16 NBA season look like if there was no three point line?¹ And, what was,

statistically, the saddest punt of all time?² In 2019, the series culminated in *The Bob Emergency*: a study of athletes named Bob.³ As you may have guessed from the title, this two-part episode which spans roughly ninety minutes in total maps over 10,000 Bobs across the history of organized sports while recounting their shockingest, silliest, and most life-affirming feats. The point of *The Bob Emergency* is not just to showcase championship wins or hall of famers. "If there's a lesson," Bois narrates at the end of Part II, it's that "there are no dull stories. People are full of wonder. No matter how you study our history, you will always, always find it."⁴

According to an r/Jon_Bois reddit poll conducted in 2023, *The Bob Emergency* was voted Bois' second best video work by his fans.⁵ It was topped only by *The History of the Seattle Mariners*, a 2020 six-episode YouTube documentary series that Bois directed, illustrated, animated, and co-wrote with frequent collaborator Alex Rubenstein. At the time of its release, the Mariners were the only Major League Baseball team who had never made it to the World Series (let alone won a title), and were the unfortunate owners of the longest postseason drought across all four major North American professional sports.⁶ In a media landscape that only loves underdog stories if they have the potential to end with wins, Bois and Rubenstein were inspired to take on the project because they "realized no one in a thousand years would do a movie on the history of the Mariners."⁷

In the first installment of the series, Bois warns his viewers, "If you choose to appreciate sports simply in terms of winning and losing, there is nothing for you here."⁸ Instead, the story of the Mariners as told by Bois and Rubenstein involves 140 acts of arson, a biohazardous stadium, a missing person, two toilets full of Jell-O, something called "blurping," cheating with thumbtacks, cheating with vaseline, and cameos from JFK and OJ Simpson. Somewhere amid the oddball anecdotes are introductions to franchise heroes including Ken Griffey Jr., Ichiro, and Felix Hernandez. Bois and Rubenstein spend plenty of time quantifying and contextualizing these players' on-field success, but more importantly, they also characterize them as real people with their own motivations, fears, attitudes, senses of humor, and dreams. At some point over the course of the nearly four



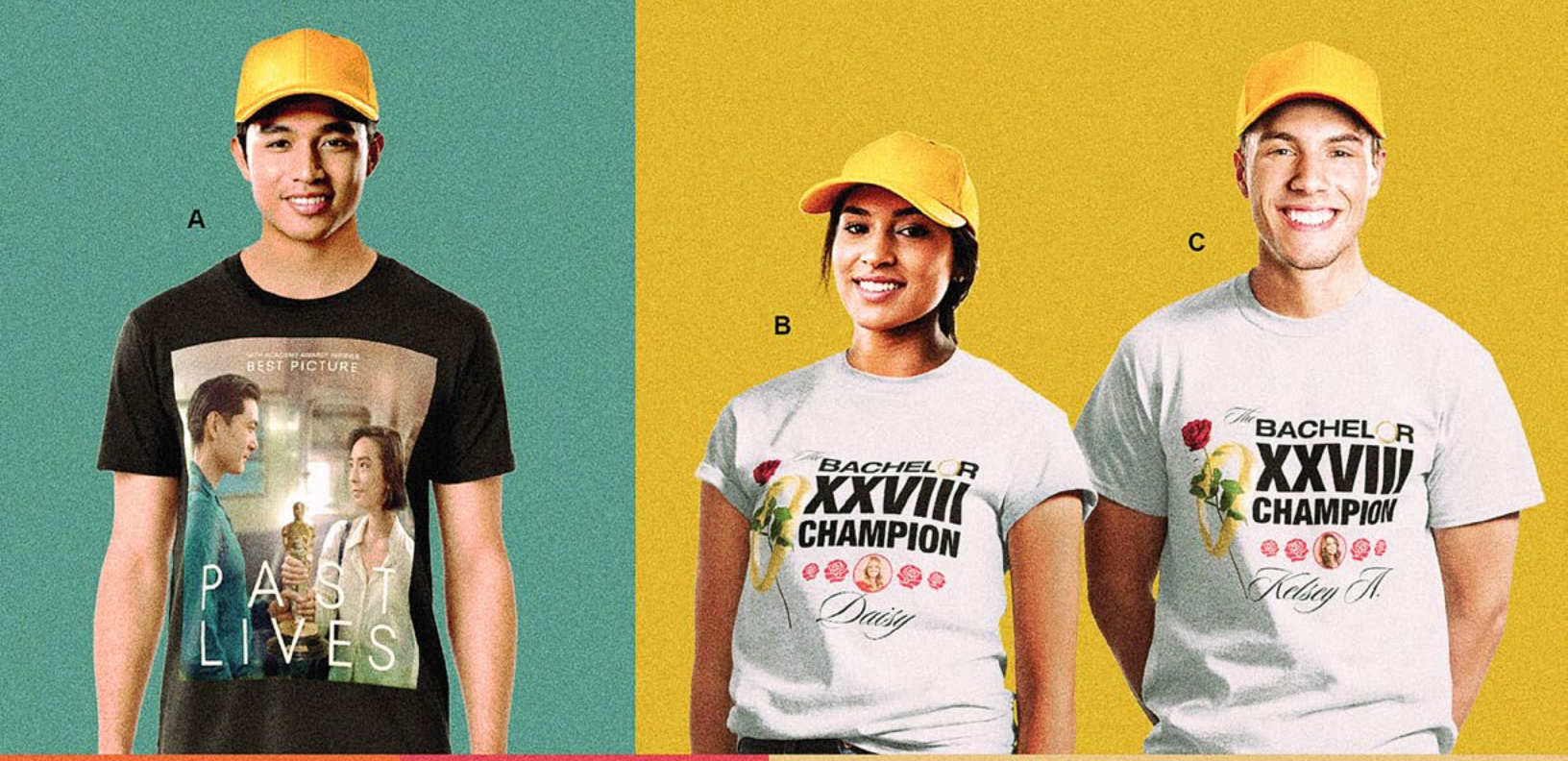
It's so over.

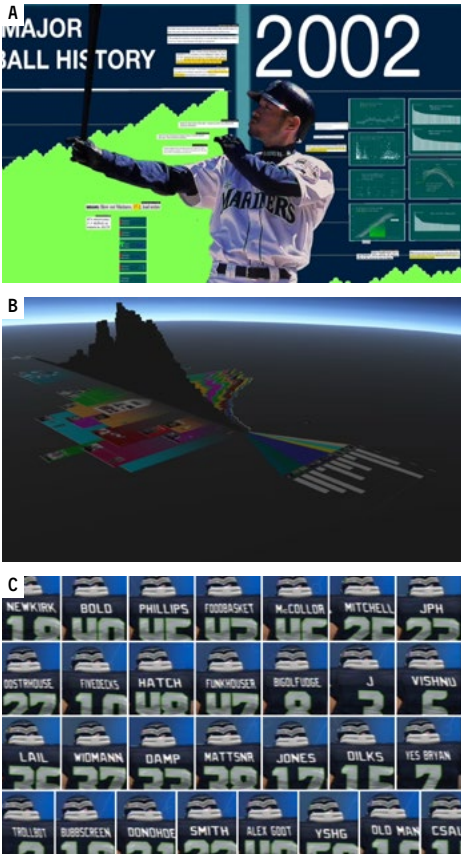
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Alternate Realities T-shirt series

- A. **Past Lives T-shirt**
Commemorative shirt from *Past Lives* winning Best Picture at the 96th Academy Awards
- B. **Daisy Bachelor T-shirt**
Championship T-shirt celebrating Daisy's Bachelor season 28 win
- C. **Kelsey A. Bachelor T-shirt**
Championship T-shirt celebrating Kelsey A's Bachelor season 28 win
- D. **I Survived The National League Wild Card Play-In Round Robin Tournament T-shirt**
Souvenir shirt from the first round of the 2016 MLB postseason, in which five National League teams finished the regular season with the same record and had to compete for two Wild Card spots
- E. **Rangers Puck Shuffle T-Shirt**
Promotional item for fans who correctly identified the puck in the Jumbotron Puck Shuffle video shown between periods at the New York Rangers game on March 23, 2024

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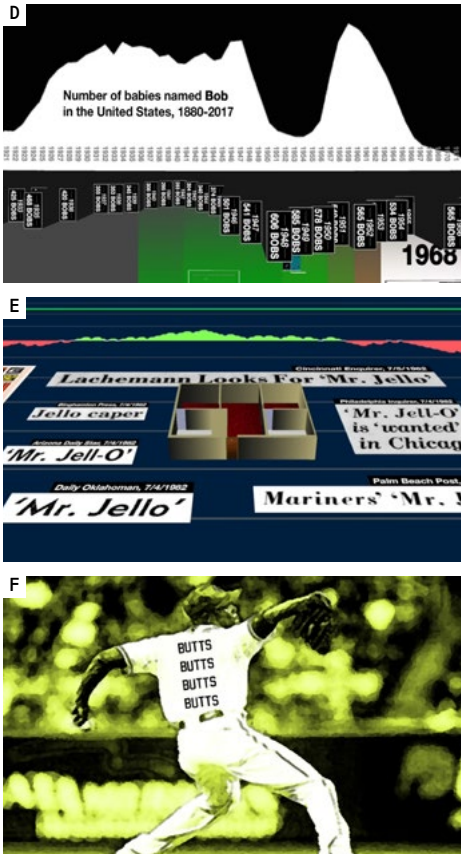




hour-long docuseries, these players start to feel like old friends.

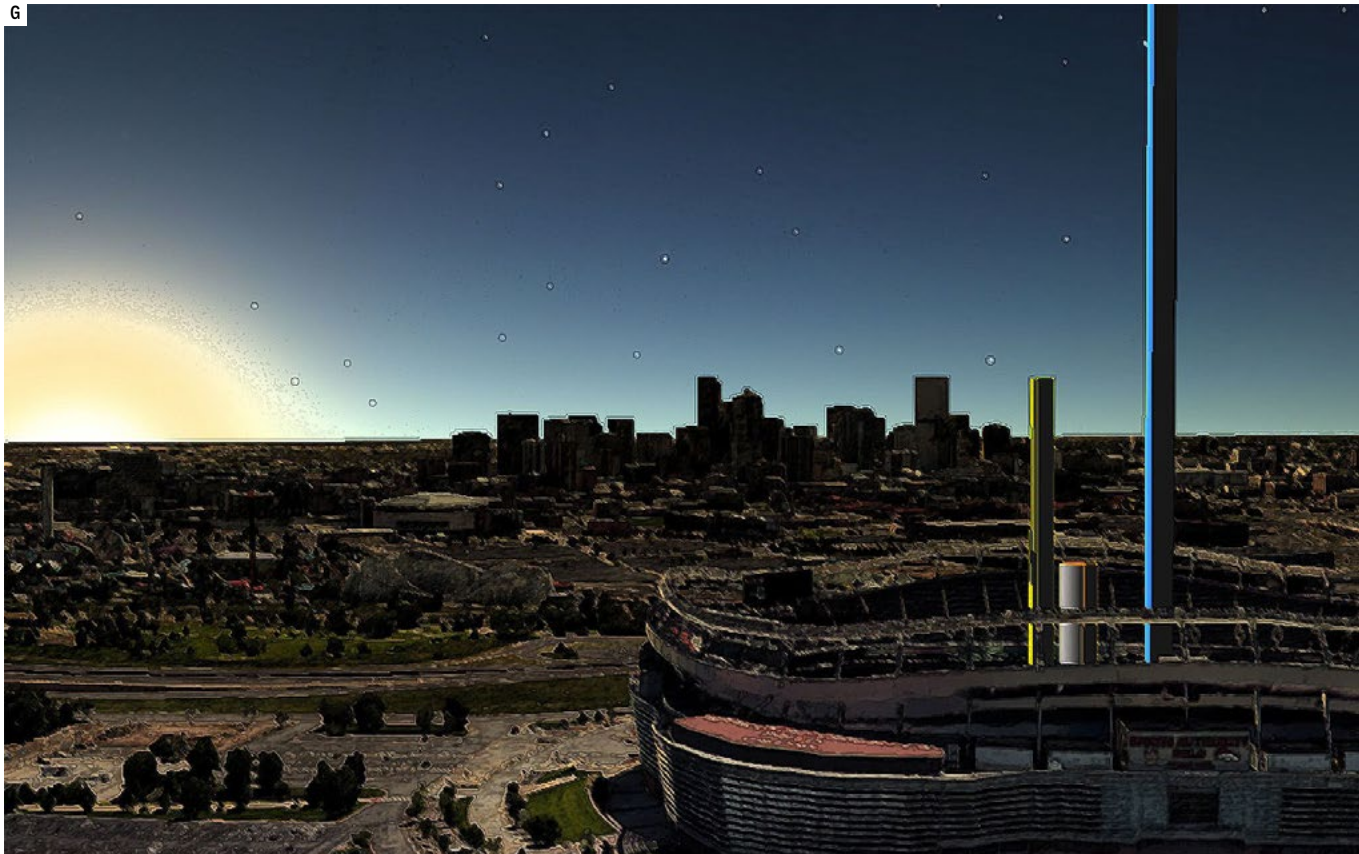
By part five, *The History of the Seattle Mariners* reaches the team’s aforementioned playoff drought and Bois reiterates his first episode warning. “If you’re only interested in winning and losing,” he begins, “this is the end of the story.”⁹ After acknowledging that the Mariners, even at their best, had never managed to bring home a title, he invites the audience to imagine an alternate reality — one where the Mariners made it to the 1997 World Series and won. The screen pans across fake headlines and postgame celebration photos while Bois recalls made-up spectacular plays from each of the team’s stars. “If that’s what you wanted, you got what you wanted. Now, of all these stories,” Bois continues as the camera zooms out to reveal the full timeline of the Mariners’ history, “what’s your favorite? What’s the story you’re telling first?”¹⁰ It is at this point that he makes the documentary’s thesis explicitly clear: “The Mariners aren’t special on account of their lack of success, it’s just that success is entirely irrelevant. We’ve entered another realm here. One that’s far larger, and doesn’t operate on the dead currency of winning and losing.”¹¹

Chart Party and *The History of the Seattle Mariners* capture real events (or at the very least, somewhat plausible hypotheticals rooted in reality), but Bois has also used speculative fiction to examine the intrinsic value of sports. Perhaps his most famous work, *17776* is



a multimedia web epic that imagines a futuristic world in which war, poverty, disease, and death have been eradicated, and, faced with eternity, humanity has nothing left to do but play football.¹² Here, Bois takes football and its reason for being to their most extreme conclusions. In one game, the end zones are stationed at the Mexican-American and Canadian-American borders and haven’t been reached by either team in over 12,000 years. In another, a series of rulebook loopholes allowing teams to claim land ownership on their territory leads to the construction of skyscrapers, rental units, alternate end zones, and a Bojangle’s right on the field, resulting in a late-stage capitalist mess that prevents the game from ever progressing. These games are convoluted because they have to be, because the characters in *17776* are desperate to distract themselves from the existential horror of their own immortality. Although *17776* is ostensibly a story about football, it doesn’t concern itself with wins or losses. No one even scores a touchdown.¹³

In a 2022 profile, Bois identifies “people who don’t watch sports” as his target audience. “I find it not only a great honor but also a hell of a lot of fun to be able to bring this cool, weird, often stupid world of sports to somebody who otherwise didn’t get the invite,” he tells Calum Marsh of the *New York Times*.¹⁴ This is evident in the care Bois puts into making his work accessible. *Chart Party* may be an entire series dedicated to sports statistics, but Bois explains every metric in layman’s terms as he uses them



to craft his stories. And unlike a documentary on any one specific team (which, let’s face it, isn’t likely to get made unless it’s a championship retrospective), *The History of the Seattle Mariners* is not just for Mariner’s fans. In fact, a top comment under the supercut reads, “This documentary single-handedly made me feel emotions for a team and a sport I’ve never had any real interest in before.”¹⁵ *17776*, similarly, is not designed just for people who enjoy watching and already understand the rules of football. Instead, it reimagines new versions of the game that could fascinate anyone. It’s a labor of love. An acknowledgement at *17776*’s end reads, “Dedicated to: Y’all.”¹⁶

Bois occasionally calls on his audience to actively participate in his storytelling. *Breaking Madden*, one of his earlier projects, is an episodic series of articles in which Bois toys with the settings of the video game *Madden* in order to simulate bizarre and chaotic NFL matchups.¹⁷ For both season finales, any reader who donated to a charity of their choosing and sent Bois a receipt was entered in a random drawing for the chance to name a player in that year’s *Breaking Madden* Super Bowl.¹⁸

In 2015, Bois gathered his followers to simulate the “greatest game of baseball ever played.”¹⁹ As with *Breaking Madden*, participants had the freedom to name players, but it didn’t stop there. Everyone involved filled out a survey with the outcome they wanted to contribute, be it offensive, defensive, or something else entirely — for example, users could also opt to

cheer from the simulated stands or steal from cars in the simulated parking lot. After compiling survey data from about 1,500 respondents, Bois wrote up the highlights: the game ended with a score of 121-27, it would have taken an estimated 19 hours to complete, and over half the fielders were crying.* *Breaking Madden* and the simulated baseball experiment are notable because in addition to opening avenues for nontraditional sports narratives, they replicate the communal and participatory elements of sports so new, less familiar audiences can enjoy them.

Jon Bois’ innovative storytelling methods and ability to look beyond wins and losses have not only yielded extraordinary work, they also raise the bar for the entire sports media industry. Not all stories must be driven by the pursuit of championships, and creativity can extend past trying to spin winners as underdogs. Instead, we can look to statistical deep dives, odes to forgotten teams, speculative hyperliterature, and interactive fan collaborations to better appreciate sports and provide points of entry to those on the outside.

* One of the survey questions specifically asked users if they would like to be crying or not while making their defensive plays.

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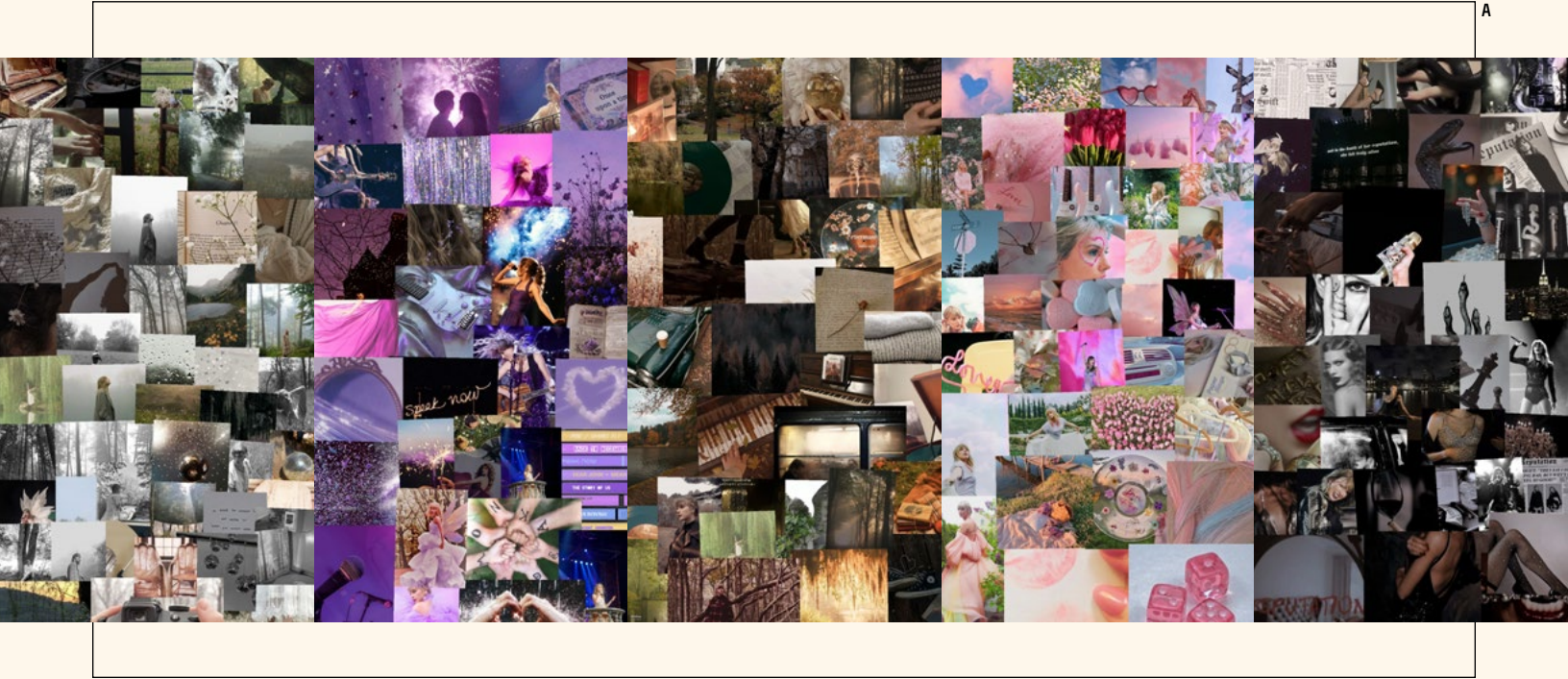
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Outside

Baseball



Recreating Taylor Swift in the aggregate

OCTOBER 2024
A Dodgers vs. Yankees World Series was every-thing Major League Baseball was hoping for. The two teams, based in Los Angeles and New York respectively, play in the two largest Amer-ican TV markets.¹ Aaron Judge of the Yankees and Shohei Ohtani of the Dodgers were both likely MVPs,* as well as the closest modern MLB players can get to being household names. Fur-thermore, Ohtani was already a superstar in Japan before coming to play in the United States, and continued support from his home country had already boosted the postseason's popular-ity on a global scale. *Forbes*,² *MSNBC*,³ *ESPN*,⁴ *Newsweek*,⁵ *Sports Illustrated*,⁶ Yahoo Sports,⁷ and countless others all specifically used the words “dream matchup” to describe what this series could mean for baseball at large. USA To-day called it MLB and Fox’s “holy grail.”⁸ Sure enough, the series averaged 15.8 million view-ers across its five games, which was a 67% in-crease over the Texas Rangers vs. Arizona Di-amondbacks matchup the previous year, and the highest World Series viewership since 2017.⁹

This all looks like great news for base-ball until one puts the numbers in perspective. The last time the Dodgers and Yankees faced off in the Fall Classic was in 1981, and that se-ries averaged 41.4 million viewers.¹⁰ In 2024, with all the stars aligning in the most lucra-tive markets and MLB getting the matchup of its dreams, viewership was less than half of that. If anything, that World Series doesn’t in-spire optimism — it shows us where baseball’s ceiling is. It’s not like the Dodgers and Yankees can face off every year, and even if they could,

it wouldn’t be enough to dethrone baseball’s biggest competition.

Earlier in 2024, Super Bowl LVIII aired for an audience of 123.4 million viewers, making it the most watched TV event of all time.¹¹ News outlets including the *LA Times* and *Washington Post*¹² have attributed the NFL’s extra attention to Taylor Swift and her relationship with Travis Kelce. For those who don’t follow sports, Kelce is a tight end for the Kansas City Chiefs and, after winning LVIII, a three-time Super Bowl champion. As for Taylor Swift, there’s nothing I need to fill you in on. Whether or not you lis-ten to her music, you know who she is.

The intensity of Taylor Swift’s fame has something to do with longevity, which has something to do with her ability to keep rein-venting herself. Each of her 11 studio albums has not only its own distinct theme and visu-al aesthetic, it comes with its own version of Taylor. This is all showcased by her brazen-ly self-referential Eras Tour, the pop culture event that took the world by storm during its 21-month run. Swifties (fans of Taylor Swift, obviously) have developed widely agreed-upon symbols and color schemes that correspond to each era. These can be seen in friendship bracelets¹³ exchanged at concerts and mood boards¹⁴ circulated online. Some have become so familiar with Taylor Swift’s wardrobe cy-cles that they participate in *Fantasy Swiftball*,¹⁵ a fan-made online game that prompts players to guess in advance of every live performance which outfit Swift will wear for each song. Taylor Swift has never been more relevant. She is the queen of the rebrand.

MLB appears to be attempting something of a rebrand itself. Since using the pandem-ic-shortened 2020 season as a testing ground for long-controversial rule changes including automatic baserunners to speed up extra in-nings and universal implementation of the DH,¹⁶ commissioner Rob Manfred has contin-ued to push increasingly aggressive updates to the game each year. MLB’s recent “Baseball is Something Else” campaign¹⁷ leaned into this with videos of players demonstrating how the new season’s larger bases, defensive shift lim-its, and pitch clocks would inject more action into the games and speed up pace-of-play. The same campaign also has videos of actor Brian Tyree Henry playing a baseball scout and say-ing stuff like, “I’ve seen things you wouldn’t believe. But this? *This* I have not seen.”¹⁸ Never mind that the ad is intercut with footage of home runs and diving catches, the two most popular types of baseball highlight that get showcased in every MLB promotional cam-paign every year. Baseball is *different* now.

So is the rebrand working? Midseason reports from 2024 showed that attendance is higher than it was a year before, the average age of ticket buyers has been dipping lower since 2019, and nationally televised MLB broad-casts are 23% more popular in the 18-34-year-old demographic.¹⁹ However, these statistics ar-en’t as promising when viewed in the context of the broader professional sports landscape. A re-cent Gallup poll revealed that only 5% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 named baseball their favorite sport to watch, tying it with ice hockey and placing it behind football



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* Baseball, the sport that can never end in a tie, awards the title of Most Valuable Player to two players each season - one in each league.

(28%), basketball (13%), and soccer (8%).²⁰ Even at its highest stakes, MLB can’t compete with the NFL — since 2022, the World Series has been scheduled to deliberately avoid Sunday and Thursday games so as not to lose viewers to regular season football.²¹ Compared to other sports, baseball has never been less relevant.

Let’s take another look at Super Bowl LVIII. There are a handful of non-Swiftie reasons that could explain its record-breaking ratings, including the fact that the game went into overtime and that it set the stage for the Chiefs to become the first repeat champions since 2004. On the other hand, a flash survey from Numerator found that 20% of viewers were rooting for the Chiefs and Travis Kelce because of his relationship with Taylor Swift.²² Other statistics suggest a possible viewership bump from her fanbase: Sports Media Watch reported that women aged 18-24 saw the highest year-over-year Super Bowl viewership gain of any demographic with a 24% increase, and that girls 12-17 saw an 11% jump.²³

So let’s say Taylor Swift does contribute a non-negligible amount to the NFL’s growing popularity. Who cares? It’s not like every other professional sports organization can just grow its own Taylor Swift in a lab, sign her or set her up with one of their athletes, and wait for the millions of new fans to roll in. What part of this is actually replicable?

I’d like to direct you to *New Heights with Jason and Travis Kelce*, a podcast hosted by Taylor Swift’s boyfriend and Taylor Swift’s boyfriend’s brother. In September 2023, just days after Swift had attended a Chiefs game and the new couple’s relationship was officially confirmed, the brothers Kelce dedicated the “No Dumb Questions” segment of their podcast to their new Swiftie audience.²⁴ Between patiently answering questions like “what’s a field goal,” and “what is a down” from obvious Taylor Swift stan** accounts, they created an environment that sports communities don’t often offer. This is an environment where watching a game to catch glimpses of your favorite musician in the audience is taken seriously as a way to engage with the sport. It’s one where the “community” part of the sports community is not gatekept behind the “sports” part. And football ultimately gained viewers because of it.

If Major League Baseball wants a fighting chance in the popularity contest of American professional sports, it must move beyond trying to rebrand itself as something it’s not: a fast-paced, action-packed sport like football or basketball. We’ve tried that for years, and it isn’t working. What MLB needs is to speak to new audiences — including, and especially, the ones who don’t know anything about sports. That doesn’t necessarily mean Rob Manfred should add Shohei Ohtani, Taylor Swift, and each of their significant others to a conference call and try to negotiate some sort of 1973 Yan-

kees-style wife swap²⁵ (although that certainly would get *my* attention). It isn’t about Taylor Swift. It’s about what she represents. There is a whole world out there of terrifying, devoted fan communities just frothing at the mouth to see their own interests spotlighted in new arenas (literally). We’ve seen glimpses of this already, with the KPOP groups aespa and (G) I-DLE performing at MLB’s Seoul Series to open the 2024 season.²⁶ If MLB can keep up this energy every year, it’s got something better than Taylor Swift.



** For the uninitiated, “stan” = superfan.
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Bananas, Brats, Hamilton

Taylor Swift’s impact on the NFL demonstrates that MLB could broaden its reach by rallying established fan communities from unlikely industries. This raises the question: How can we grab the attention of these fans, especially if they’ve already written off sports as inaccessible or uninteresting? Lucky for us, there are precedents for brands using unorthodox methods to bring in previously untapped audiences—one of which is a baseball team that completely reimaged what the game could be.

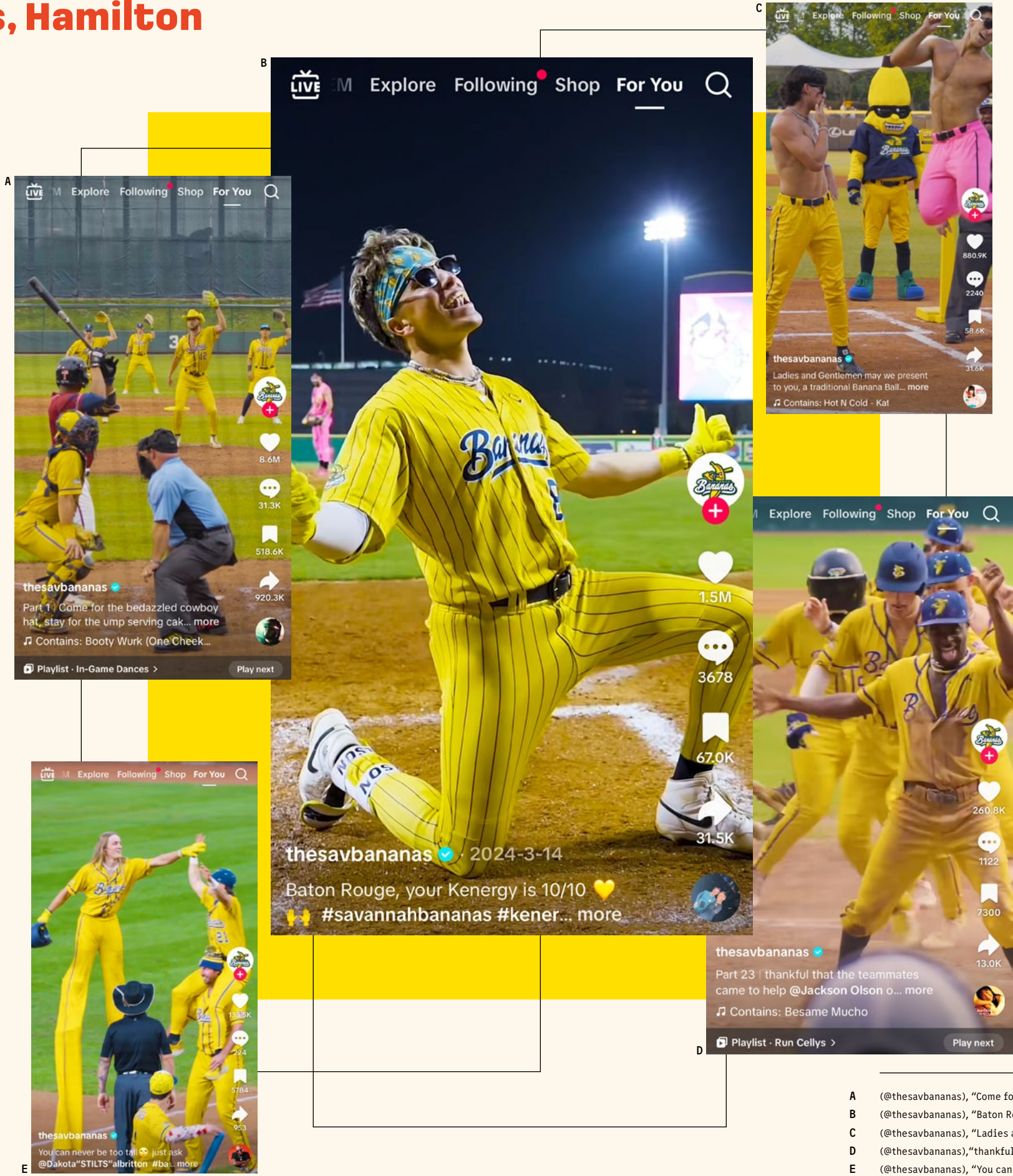
Jesse Cole, the owner of the Savannah Bananas, has been focused on accessing new audiences for years. When his exhibition barnstorming baseball team* was profiled by the *New York Times* in 2022, Cole explained, “We want people who used to say ‘I don’t like baseball’ to say, ‘I have to see the Bananas.’”¹ For those who aren’t in the know, the Savannah Bananas were founded in 2016 as a collegiate summer team competing in the Coastal Plain League (CPL) and gained popularity for, in their own words, “making baseball fun.”² This entails unique innovations they’ve made to the ballpark-going experience, such as their senior citizen dance team known as the “Banana Nanas,” their “Dad Bod Cheerleading Squad” known as the “Man-Nanas,” and the “Banana Baby”: a title bestowed upon one infant each game, who is then dressed in a banana costume and lifted into the air, Lion King-style. Their players, coaches, and umpires do coordinated song and dance numbers on the field. They also famously developed an alternative version of baseball, which is of course called “Banana Ball.”

Designed to promote fan engagement and speed up the pace of an actual baseball game, Banana Ball has its own distinct set of rules. Among them: no game is to last longer than 2 hours, foul balls caught by fans are to be counted as outs, and rather than the winner of a game being decided by cumulative runs scored across nine innings, each inning serves as its own mini-game where whichever team scores more is awarded one point (except for the ninth inning, in which every point counts).** Banana Ball originated as an intrasquad exhibition game that the Bananas would play during homestands in the CPL, but by 2022 its popularity had grown to the point that the team announced it would be exiting the league in order to play Banana Ball full time.

Then Banana Ball stopped being the organization’s main export. Their @thesavbananas

* “Exhibition barnstorming” is the official classification of the Savannah Bananas - think Harlem Globetrotters, but for baseball.³

** Cole compares it to match play in golf, because if you don’t know enough about baseball for Banana Ball to make sense, then using golf terms should clear everything up.⁴



TikTok account exploded in popularity, reaching 2.5 million followers in May 2022 for more than double their follower count from March.⁵ By February 2023, the Bananas were nearing 4 million.⁶ As of this writing in November 2024, they’re closing in on nine. For reference, the Golden State Warriors of the NBA only have 6 million followers and that’s the most of any American professional sports team.⁷ How did the Bananas manage to dominate the short form video platform? “Cute boys,” explains Savanah Alaniz, their marketing coordinator who first pitched the idea of a team TikTok account as a college intern in early 2020.⁸ “We had a 70% female audience that first summer because we were posting shirtless players dancing.” As the Bananas’ audience grew and its gender breakdown evened out, the team’s social media strategy started to lean more on “Banana-fying” existing TikTok trends — this most often means players dancing or lip syncing to the platform’s top songs and audio clips.

All of these factors — the ballpark experience, the faster-paced design of Banana Ball, and the team’s commanding TikTok presence — have prompted the media to come to the same conclusion: that the Savannah Bananas are setting an important example for MLB. To Alden Gonzalez of *ESPN*, the Bananas’ games are “part circus and part professional wrestling...and maybe Major League Baseball can learn something from it.”⁹ Jason Gay of *The Wall Street Journal* writes that Banana Ball may be “extreme,” but it addresses what “a lot of long-time baseball fans are saying about the sport: it needs to enliven itself, aggressively.”¹⁰ AJ Willingham at *CNN* wonders if “Major League Baseball could learn a thing or two from the charming personalities and social media magic” of the Bananas.¹¹

And it would appear that Major League Baseball has. They’re clearly aware of the Savannah Bananas and have been for some time now — in 2023, former major leaguers from the MLB Players Alumni Association played the Bananas in a three-game Challenger Series,¹² and in 2024 MLB began opening its stadiums to host Banana Ball for the team’s world tour.¹³ As for the actual product on the field, Banana Ball may have put additional pressure on MLB to do something about the pace of play concerns that had been plaguing the sport for years. The organization had already been tinkering with rule changes in the minor leagues, but it wasn’t until 2023 that the pitch clock — a

crucial component of cutting down game times — was integrated at the major league level.¹⁴ Sure enough, this change shortened the average length of a nine-inning game to 2 hours and 40 minutes, a 24-minute decrease from 2022.¹⁵ Regular season attendance that year was the highest it had been since 2017,¹⁶ and these rule changes have continued to pay off as attendance saw a 1% uptick in 2024.¹⁷

NOT JUST KICKING A BALL AROUND
So where do we go from here? The pitch clock proved effective but was also a change that the league had spent the better part of the last decade testing,¹⁸ so it’s hard to imagine the more radical Banana Ball rules being added to the MLB rulebook anytime soon. Major league teams could try to adopt elements of the Bananaland ballpark experience at their own stadiums, although it’s difficult to envision seasoned players, coaches, or umpires at the highest level of the game agreeing to learn, and then perform, goofy little dances in between doing their actual jobs. When we consider what MLB still has to learn from the Savannah Bananas, the game of baseball itself is no longer relevant. In fact, baseball hasn’t been relevant to the Bananas since TikTok became their largest audience.

That TikTok audience doesn’t care about sports. The majority of them don’t live near Savannah, have never been to a Bananas game, and due a waitlist of three million people, will never go to a Bananas game.¹⁹ They are unconcerned with the fine-tuning of the rules of baseball, and many don’t even know that the rules of Banana Ball are at all different. Carolina, a student at Pratt who suggested I research the Bananas, sees them as “this baseball team that doesn’t care about being good. They’re more performance-based, so they film TikToks and thirst traps, and it’s very much about the show, not the sports.” She first discovered the team in 2023 when they danced to a trending Taylor Swift song on her feed and likes their content because “it’s this acknowledgement that sports is about being hot and entertaining and not just kicking a ball around. It’s really fun.” These Savannah Bananas are not Jesse Cole’s creation; they are Savanah Alaniz’s. They’ve captured their audience with thirst traps, movie scene recreations, timely memes, lip syncs, and coordinated dances to trending TikTok songs. These are the Savannah Bananas that MLB should focus on.

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There's a tempting takeaway here, and it's that the Savannah Bananas' TikTok success can be attributed to their ability to recognize and adapt to trends. This all seems great for MLB — if the league can't add any more game-shortening rule changes or Bananafy the stadium-going experience, it can just copy the Bananas' social media strategy and call it a day. Maybe this was the missing piece all along, and by simply harnessing the right TikTok trends (supplemented generously by footage of shirtless dudes), baseball will slingshot itself into first place as the most popular professional sport. Maybe. But I'm not convinced.

BRAT SUMMER AND THE ANTI-TREND

Let's talk about trends. Social media, particularly TikTok, has amplified the urgency of trends by opening new avenues for their creation, shortening their lifespans, and encouraging them to evolve in unexpected ways. Trends are elusive. Trends make brands anxious. Trend forecasting, which was once a future-focused hallmark of the fashion industry, has been re-appropriated as a marketing buzzword that promises to save any brand from digital irrelevance. As someone who has spent most of the 2020s thus far in trend forecasting positions, I've found that employers and clients prefer a lot less actual "forecasting" and a lot more scrounging around on TikTok for trends that are already gaining traction to assess whether they're worth co-opting. Nobody wants you to soothsay on company time anymore — they think it's too risky. And marketing agencies tend to be excruciatingly risk averse.

Besides, trying to stay on top of fleeting TikTok trends already poses a challenge for large companies. In the amount of time it takes a marketing team to coordinate, produce, and get all necessary approvals to post content, the trend they had initially identified is probably on its way out. Even if your social media strategist is blessed with the gift of trend foresight, a trend can only take you so far. A perfectly timed TikTok synced to a trending sound at its peak might rack up a couple million views, but nobody's growing a Savannah Banana-sized following just because they managed to make it to the party on time.

The secret to accessing a new audience is not following all the right trends. In fact, it's much closer to the opposite. Every American cultural event that has transcended the bounds of its own industry to reach entirely new audiences has achieved this by subverting the established trends and traditions within that industry.

A recent example of this is *Brat* by Charli xcx. You didn't need to listen to the album to know that Summer 2024 was Brat Summer. The iconic, obnoxious lime green of its cover was inescapable — it took over profile pictures, runways, food brands, beauty brands, and a pres-

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idential campaign. TikTokkers shared their *Brat*-inspired outfits and freaked out over the extensive roster of It Girls featured in the 360 music video.²⁰ The music itself certainly didn't hurt — Pitchfork rated *Brat* an 8.6 and named it one of the best pop albums of the year²¹ — but this level of acclaim for Charli's work wasn't unprecedented. *True Romance*, her 2013 debut studio album, received an 8.3,²² and her 2017 mixtape *Pop 2* received an 8.4.²³ While both were embraced by Charli's established fans, neither release kicked off anything close to the wide-spread cultural impact of *Brat*.

Brat was always going to be different. The aforementioned album cover, which Charli xcx herself describes as an "offensive, off-trend shade of green" was deliberately chosen to "trigger the idea of something being wrong."²⁴ Designer Brent David Freaney, who collaborated with Charli and her creative director Imogene Strauss to develop the cover, explains that their goal was for it to not feel "like it has any taste."²⁵ He reports that the team looked through hundreds of shades of green to find one "that couldn't really be associated with anything else." This rejection of trend, taste, and association contributed to *Brat*'s aesthetic power, which caught the attention of unlikely audiences. Fashion sociologist Viv Chen didn't consider herself to be part of Charli's target demographic of club kids or hyperpop fans prior to *Brat*, "but when i saw it drop on spotify, something about the brashly simple arial-narrow-font-on-puke-green album cover made me want to listen."²⁶ Chen, along with other fashion reporters from *British Vogue*,²⁷ *Teen Vogue*,²⁸ *Marie Claire*,²⁹ and *Surface*,³⁰ compares Brat green to Prada's Spring 1996 "Ugly Chic" runway show, which was highly influen-

tial and widely imitated because it recognized industry trends of the time and leaned into bad taste instead.

Brat green was not the only component of the album that broke away from trends. From the beginning, Charli xcx didn't want her face to appear on the cover "because I knew it would be more of a conversation to not physically be there, especially if I pushed into this anti trend kind of wormhole I wanted to go down."³¹ This set her aside from other big name pop divas like Taylor Swift, Sabrina Carpenter, Beyonce, Billie Eilish, and Ariana Grande, who had all released albums in 2024 with cover art displaying their own likenesses. Furthermore, Charli had a greater vision for *Brat* that went beyond the music and the album art — Brat was a lifestyle. In one video, she describes Brat as "that girl who is a little messy and likes to party and maybe says dumb things sometimes. Who feels herself but maybe also has a breakdown. But kind of like, parties through it, is very honest, very blunt. A little bit volatile."³² In another, she says that a Brat summer "can go quite luxury," but can also be "so trashy. Just like a pack of cigs, and like a Bic lighter, and like a strappy white top with no bra."³³ It's easy for audiences to latch onto the hyper-specific yet somehow universal Brat identity, to absorb Brat into their vocabulary and reference Charli's commandments to determine what else is Brat or is not Brat. Under Chen's analysis of the green album cover, commenter rachel writes, "i was also getting a little green screen – an empty expanse that everything and anything can be projected upon."³⁴ Industry trends and traditions would have Charli xcx use her latest album to tell us how we should view her. Instead, *Brat* provided a new way for us to view ourselves.

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT HAMILTON

While *Brat* is one of the latest instances of trend-breaking as a gateway into accessing new audiences, it isn't the only one. Nearly a decade ago, Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton* became a pop culture phenomenon that surpassed the impact of any other Broadway show in recent memory. After selling out its extended off-Broadway run,³⁵ *Hamilton* brought in almost \$30 million in advance ticket sales prior to its Broadway opening at Richard Rodgers Theatre.³⁶ There was some initial uncertainty as to whether the show would translate well to a wider audience, with a *New York Times* preview pointing out that *Hamilton* "does not have the ingredients of the typical success: It has no film stars, no special effects, no tap dancing — nor the kind of familiar, movie-linked branding that has made a hit out of 'The Lion King,' 'Aladdin' and other musicals that appeal to families."³⁷

None of that ended up mattering. *Hamilton* took off, and everyone wanted to see it.

Celebrities including Beyoncé, Meryl Streep, and then-President Barack Obama were spotted in the audience,³⁸ which elevated live attendance to the ultimate status symbol. Tickets were in such high demand that they were regularly listed for thousands of dollars on the resale market.³⁹ Audiences who wanted to engage with the show but couldn't manage to get in instead listened to its recording, which in 2023 became the best selling cast album of all time.⁴⁰ More ambitious fans sought out bootleg videos of the stage production⁴¹ and cultivated an online ecosystem for circulating *Hamilton* memes, headcanons, and Miku Binder Thomas Jeffersons (iykyk).⁴²

In 2019, the show broke an all-time Broadway box office record when it grossed over \$4 million in a single week.⁴³ In 2020, the film version of *Hamilton* was added to Disney+, which caused 266 thousand new users to download the streaming app.⁴⁴ It was viewed by 2.7 million U.S. households in its first 10 days on the platform, making it the most watched title

from any streaming service during that span⁴⁵ and surpassing the total number of people who had seen it live on Broadway.⁴⁶ Where musical theater productions used to only matter to people who already cared about musical theater, *Hamilton* ushered in an audience of new fans clamoring to participate with the show in any way they could.

To snag this audience, *Hamilton* needed to take risks rather than follow trends. This may not have been obvious at first — plenty of earlier hit shows like *1776* and *Oklahoma!* had retold snapshots of American history through song and dance. And while *Hamilton*'s hip-hop-heavy tracks depart from the typical stylings of a Broadway musical soundtrack, Miranda had worked with that sound before in his debut musical *In the Heights*. However, *Hamilton* stood out by fusing the elements of modern rap, R&B, and pop with what author Andrew Schocket calls the "American Revolution Rebooted" play genre.⁴⁷ This unexpected combination helped lead the show to unexpected success, including



being the first cast album to reach no. 1 on the Billboard Rap Albums chart.⁴⁸

Hamilton also defied tradition with its casting. Broadway had long been known to have issues with diversity, and a musical about the founding fathers would ordinarily open yet another opportunity for predominantly white producers to put together a predominantly white cast. If this weren’t the case, another adaptation of the story might employ colorblind casting, or the practice of hiring actors without regard to their race. This would superficially inject diversity into the production without meaningfully engaging with POC perspectives or unpacking the systemic racism in the United States (or Broadway). Rather than either of these, *Hamilton* used color-conscious casting that deliberately ensured all of the founding fathers be played by people of color to emphasize one of the show’s overarching themes: that this country was built by marginalized people and immigrants. It is, to Miranda, “a story about America then, told by America now.”⁴⁹ *Hamilton*’s casting ethos and representation of more contemporary genres not only helped make the show a triumph, it likely impacted Broadway for the better — more recent smash hits like *Six* and *Hadestown* are clear examples of this. Both musicals appear to follow in *Hamilton*’s footsteps by looking to bring in new audiences through better representation and exploring previously underutilized genres.

Hamilton rejected the expectations of its industry, and thus was no longer restricted to its industry. It made itself known to people who otherwise had no business paying attention to Broadway, and I can think of no better way to prove it than to let you in on this little secret: I have never seen *Hamilton*. I’m not much of a musicals person, so I never sought it out in any format or listened to any of its songs voluntarily. However, this show was so revolutionary that it forced its way into my consciousness through sheer cultural osmosis and then became the sole point of reference that comes to mind when someone says ‘Broadway.’ There is not a single other live production that I could tell you this much about, because as far as I’m aware, none of them have taken swings as big as *Hamilton*. I know, I know, I’ll watch it at some point. I just need someone to sauce me the login information to their Disney+.

FOLLOWING THE SAVANNAH BANANAS INTO THE FUTURE

This long digression all goes to say that Brat and *Hamilton* succeeded not by following trends within their industries, but by questioning the norms of these industries and offering new narratives in their place. In the same way, the Savannah Bananas amassed their fanbase not by following TikTok trends but by redefining what baseball could be on every level. In the most literal sense, the Bananas redefined the

baseball rulebook by developing a shorter, faster, and more action-packed game. They redefined baseball as a participatory event by creating a wonderfully bizarre ballpark experience that doesn’t require attendees to have any knowledge of or interest in the sport. And perhaps most importantly, they redefined baseball’s image to make it, in Carolina’s words, “hot and entertaining.”

Major League Baseball has good reason to be excited about the Savannah Bananas. But keep in mind that if the Bananas succeeded by surging beyond the bounds of their industry, that makes MLB the industry that got left behind. The league, which is made up of 30 professional teams, currently has less than 8 million followers on TikTok, which puts it a full million short of the following the Bananas have grown on their own. No team in the majors has a ticket waitlist three million people deep, either. To achieve the same trajectory as the Savannah Bananas, *Brat*, and *Hamilton*, MLB must zoom out even further to examine the broader industry it exists within — the sports industry — and redefine the narrative.

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It's Not Sports, It's Baseball!



A To test the theory of whether I could win over a new audience by breaking the conventions of traditional baseball marketing, I launched a campaign called “It’s Not Sports, It’s Baseball.” I already had a large group of people at my disposal on whom I could test my ideas: the Pratt MFA Communications Design class of 2025. The vast majority of this group was female, but it also spanned a significant range of nationalities, experiences, and interests. For the most part, everyone shared a key factor in common: not caring about baseball.

Rather than trying to sell this audience on all of baseball from the jump, I hypothesized that a more effective way in would be to match each person with an MLB team specific to their identity. This way, their assigned favorite team could serve as an entry point to learning more about baseball, and their connection to this team might feel more meaningful than defaulting to the proximity-based New York Yankees or Mets. Furthermore, opening up the pool to 30 teams could make it more exciting for people to find others with who were assigned the same favorite team.

B

gonna havta ask my mother again..but i think i was born around this time of the morning..so like 8:15/ 8:30am

Reply Retweet Favorite More

@niallOfficial you were born at 8:04. You Missed it already.

Reply Retweet Favorite More

@SerenaasVedka how do u know that

Reply Retweet Favorite More

ALLSTARS

To assign these teams, I started by considering interests that overlapped with fan communities outside the sports world. For example, it’s common for astrology-minded stans to keep track of their favorite celebrities’ birth dates so they can calculate star charts and compatibilities.

In keeping with this pattern, I decided to chart the sun, moon, and rising signs of all 30 MLB teams, then build a tool that would calculate the astrological compatibility of a user

with each team. For those who don’t follow astrology, the data needed to make a star chart are a person’s birth date, time, and location. I first considered using the date, time, and city of each team’s first game for these calculations, but soon realized that this would make every team’s chart look extremely similar (due to the season starting around the same time every year) and leave out the majority of signs. To get around this, I decided that every team’s “birthday” would be the date that they became their most current incarnation. For instance, teams

that moved cities or changed their names were “born” when these changes were approved (or when they played their first game in their current city or under their current name, if approval information was not available). Times of birth corresponded to game times or defaulted to noon local time if information was not available. I used an online chart calculator to plug in the finalized data,¹ which resulted in all 30 teams having their own unique star charts and all 12 sun signs represented by at least one team.

DIVISION	TEAM	LOCATION	REASON	DATE	SUN	MOON	RISING
AL EAST	Yankees	New York	approved in AL	3/12/1903	20° 57' Pisces	10° 20' Virgo	10° 40' Cancer
AL EAST	Red Sox	Boston	name chosen	12/18/1907	25° 38' Sagittarius	14° 7' Gemini	0° 10' Aries
AL EAST	Orioles	Baltimore	move approved	9/28/1953	5° 15' Libra	20° 38' Gemini	16° 37' Sagittarius
AL EAST	Blue Jays	Toronto	name chosen	8/12/1976	20° 2' Leo	21° 25' Pisces	24° 26' Libra
AL EAST	Rays	St. Petersburg	approved	3/9/1995	18° 39' Pisces	21° 42' Gemini	22° 56' Gemini
AL CENTRAL	White Sox	Chicago	moved to chicago & joined AL	3/21/1900	0° 40' Aries	1° 1' Sagittarius	20° 32' Cancer
AL CENTRAL	Tigers	Detroit	first official game	4/25/1901	4° 48' Taurus	5° 26' Leo	15° 46' Leo
AL CENTRAL	Twins	Minneapolis	move approved	11/26/1960	4° 29' Sagittarius	18° 21' Pisces	11° 53' Aquarius
AL CENTRAL	Royals	Kansas City	awarded as an expansion team	1/11/1968	20° 35' Capricorn	5° 32' Gemini	25° 51' Aries
AL CENTRAL	Guardians	Cleveland	name change made official	11/19/2021	27° 34' Scorpio	1° 12' Gemini	1° 23' Aquarius
AL WEST	Astros	Houston	name changed	12/1/1964	9° 35' Sagittarius	14° 7' Scorpio	25° 21' Aquarius
AL WEST	Rangers	Arlington	approved	9/21/1971	28° 3' Virgo	20° 50' Libra	26° 57' Scorpio
AL WEST	Mariners	Seattle	awarded as an expansion team	2/6/1976	17° 10' Aquarius	29° 53' Aries	11° 50' Gemini
AL WEST	Angels	Anaheim	first game under current team name	4/4/2016	15° 43' Aries	12° 16' Pisces	15° 5' Libra
AL WEST	A's	Oakland	vegas deal announced	5/15/2023	24° 41' Taurus	6° 22' Aries	16° 19' Leo
NL EAST	Phillies	Philadelphia	first game	5/1/1883	10° 56' Taurus	29° 4' Aquarius	18° 49' Leo
NL EAST	Mets	Queens	formally awarded	10/17/1960	24° 16' Libra	19° 28' Virgo	21° 19' Sagittarius
NL EAST	Braves	Atlanta	first game in atlanta	4/12/1966	22° 39' Aries	26° 13' Capricorn	6° 59' Scorpio
NL EAST	Marlins	Miami	awarded as an expansion team	6/10/1991	19° 16' Gemini	23° 25' Taurus	1° 38' Virgo
NL EAST	Nationals	Washington DC	move approved	12/3/2004	11° 52' Sagittarius	26° 57' Leo	28° 55' Aquarius
NL CENTRAL	Pirates	Pittsburgh	first game under current team name	4/22/1891	2° 15' Taurus	15° 14' Libra	9° 5' Leo
NL CENTRAL	Cardinals	St. Louis	name change	4/29/1900	8° 56' Taurus	16° 3' Taurus	17° 28' Leo
NL CENTRAL	Cubs	Chicago	first game under current team name	4/11/1907	20° 41' Aries	8° 6' Aries	6° 23' Leo
NL CENTRAL	Reds	Cincinnati	name changed back to reds	4/9/1959	19° 5' Aries	6° 9' Taurus	24° 1' Cancer
NL CENTRAL	Brewers	Milwaukee	move from seattle approved	3/17/1970	26° 43' Pisces	28° 11' Cancer	17° 56' Cancer
NL WEST	Giants	San Francisco	move approved	5/28/1957	7° 9' Gemini	28° 26' Taurus	26° 27' Leo
NL WEST	Dodgers	Los Angeles	move announced	10/8/1957	15° 16' Libra	14° 28' Aries	1° 44' Capricorn
NL WEST	Padres	San Diego	NL voted to expand to SD	5/27/1968	6° 31' Gemini	11° 44' Gemini	28° 50' Leo
NL WEST	Rockies	Denver	approved	7/5/1991	13° 12' Cancer	21° 0' Aries	28° 35' Virgo
NL WEST	Diamondbacks	Phoenix	voted into NL	1/16/1997	26° 42' Capricorn	8° 28' Taurus	28° 32' Aries


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```

Once I had this information, I needed to set up a tool that could use it. I started this process by feeding all 30 team charts, plus my own, into ChatGPT. I then asked ChatGPT to rate the compatibility between my chart and each team's with a score from 1 to 100. Once I knew that ChatGPT was capable of doing this, I asked it to code me a website where users could plug in their birth information and then, without having to see any of the complex number crunching, be told which team was their most astrologically compatible match.

This is where I started to run into issues. The first was that actually calculating a star chart based on birth dates, times, and locations is more complicated than it seems, and requires use of an API. This kicked off a couple of hours of me learning what an API actually is ("Application Program Interface"), trying to find one I could use for calculating astro-

logical charts, testing all the free options that Redditors recommended only to learn none of them worked, and ultimately deciding it wasn't worth it to buy one. The main objective of my website wasn't to calculate users' star charts anyway, so instead of prompting them to input their birthdays I prompted them to input their sun, moon, and rising signs, which they could calculate on an external site if needed.

While testing my now functional prototype, I identified the next problem: the compatibility scores that ChatGPT used to rank teams based on user inputs were sometimes the same between multiple teams. This was because ChatGPT's compatibility algorithm was based on the elements of each star sign,* rather than the signs themselves. Without a more advanced compatibility algorithm, teams that had the same element permutations for their sun, moon, and rising signs would have

tied compatibility scores, even if the specific astrological signs in their charts were different. This kicked off another couple hours fiddling with the code in order to establish tiebreakers so that all 30 of the teams would be feasible results depending on the inputted star charts. I wanted to avoid having one team automatically take priority in the event of a tie because that would make the other team in that tie an impossible result. I also wanted to avoid any randomizing because, just like with astrological charts, I needed users to always get the same result if they selected the same inputs. With both of these concerns in mind, I experimented with adding degrees, followed by implementing a tiebreaker matrix that assigned specific point values to every possible star sign pairing.

As you can imagine, this all got exceedingly complicated and still wasn't even solving

my problem with the tied outputted scores. So I went back to my original team data. I identified the handful of team groupings that shared the same sun, moon, and rising elements and decided that I would put my finger on the scale a little to differentiate them. Besides, the only thing I had to change to make them elementally unique were some rising signs, which are calculated by birth times that I had arbitrarily entered as noon for most teams anyway. Once I adjusted these times enough for every team to have a distinct element profile, my spreadsheet looked like this:

DIVISION	TEAM	LOCATION	REASON	DATE	SUN	MOON	RISING
NL CENTRAL	Cubs	Chicago	first game under current team name	4/11/1907	20° 41' Aries	8° 6' Aries	6° 23' Leo
NL EAST	Nationals	Washington DC	move approved	12/3/2004	11° 52' Sagittarius	26° 57' Leo	28° 55' Aquarius
AL CENTRAL	White Sox	Chicago	moved to chicago & joined AL	3/21/1900	0° 40' Aries	1° 1' Sagittarius	20° 32' Cancer
NL EAST	Braves	Atlanta	first game in atlanta	4/12/1966	22° 39' Aries	26° 13' Capricorn	6° 59' Scorpio
NL CENTRAL	Reds	Cincinnati	name changed back to reds	4/9/1959	9° 0' Aries	5° 10' Taurus	28° 23' Gemini
AL WEST	Angels	Anaheim	first game as an org	4/11/1961	21° 38' Aries	6° 14' Pisces	20° 44' Cancer
AL EAST	Blue Jays	Toronto	name chosen	8/12/1976	20° 2' Leo	21° 25' Pisces	24° 26' Libra
AL CENTRAL	Twins	Minneapolis	move approved	11/26/1960	4° 37' Sagittarius	20° 2' Pisces	2° 14' Taurus
AL WEST	Astros	Houston	name changed	12/1/1964	9° 40' Sagittarius	15° 8' Scorpio	7° 43' Aries
AL EAST	Red Sox	Boston	name chosen	12/18/1907	25° 38' Sagittarius	14° 7' Gemini	0° 10' Aries
AL CENTRAL	Tigers	Detroit	first official game	4/25/1901	4° 48' Taurus	5° 26' Leo	15° 46' Leo
AL WEST	A's	Oakland	vegas deal announced	5/15/2023	24° 45' Taurus	7° 22' Aries	7° 4' Virgo
NL WEST	Diamondbacks	Phoenix	voted into NL	1/16/1997	26° 37' Capricorn	7° 22' Taurus	13° 29' Pisces
NL CENTRAL	Cardinals	St. Louis	name change	4/29/1900	8° 56' Taurus	16° 3' Taurus	17° 28' Leo
AL CENTRAL	Royals	Kansas City	awarded as an expansion team	1/11/1968	20° 40' Capricorn	6° 32' Gemini	6° 13' Gemini
NL CENTRAL	Pirates	Pittsburgh	first game under current team name	4/22/1891	2° 20' Taurus	16° 15' Libra	2° 41' Virgo
NL EAST	Phillies	Philadelphia	first game	5/1/1883	10° 56' Taurus	29° 4' Aquarius	18° 48' Leo
AL WEST	Rangers	Arlington	approved	9/21/1971	28° 3' Virgo	20° 50' Libra	26° 57' Scorpio
AL WEST	Mariners	Seattle	awarded as an expansion team	2/6/1976	17° 10' Aquarius	29° 53' Aries	11° 50' Gemini
NL WEST	Dodgers	Los Angeles	move announced	10/8/1957	15° 16' Libra	14° 28' Aries	1° 44' Capricorn
NL WEST	Giants	San Francisco	move approved	5/28/1957	7° 19' Gemini	13° 36' Taurus	17° 20' Libra
NL EAST	Mets	Queens	formally awarded	10/17/1960	24° 16' Libra	19° 28' Virgo	21° 19' Sagittarius
NL EAST	Marlins	Miami	awarded as an expansion team	6/10/1991	19° 16' Gemini	23° 25' Taurus	1° 38' Virgo
NL WEST	Padres	San Diego	NL voted to expand to SD	5/27/1968	6° 19' Gemini	9° 16' Gemini	24° 35' Gemini
AL EAST	Orioles	Baltimore	move approved	9/28/1953	5° 15' Libra	20° 38' Gemini	16° 37' Sagittarius
NL WEST	Rockies	Denver	approved	7/5/1991	13° 12' Cancer	21° 0' Aries	28° 35' Virgo
AL EAST	Yankees	New York	approved in AL	3/12/1903	20° 57' Pisces	10° 20' Virgo	10° 40' Cancer
NL CENTRAL	Brewers	Milwaukee	move from seattle approved	3/17/1970	26° 43' Pisces	28° 11' Cancer	17° 56' Cancer
AL EAST	Rays	St. Petersburg	approved	3/9/1995	18° 34' Pisces	20° 43' Gemini	21° 30' Taurus
AL CENTRAL	Guardians	Cleveland	name change made official	11/19/2021	27° 34' Scorpio	1° 12' Gemini	1° 23' Aquarius

```

{ name: "Braves", sun: { degree: 22.39, sign: "Aries" }, moon: { degree: 26.13, sign: "Capricorn" }, rising: { degree: 20.50, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Pirates", sun: { degree: 2.15, sign: "Taurus" }, moon: { degree: 15.14, sign: "Libra" }, rising: { degree: 20.50, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Tigers", sun: { degree: 4.48, sign: "Taurus" }, moon: { degree: 5.26, sign: "Leo" }, rising: { degree: 20.50, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Cardinals", sun: { degree: 8.56, sign: "Taurus" }, moon: { degree: 16.03, sign: "Taurus" }, rising: { degree: 20.50, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Phillies", sun: { degree: 10.56, sign: "Taurus" }, moon: { degree: 29.04, sign: "Aquarius" }, rising: { degree: 20.50, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "A's", sun: { degree: 24.41, sign: "Taurus" }, moon: { degree: 6.22, sign: "Aries" }, rising: { degree: 20.50, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Padres", sun: { degree: 6.31, sign: "Gemini" }, moon: { degree: 11.44, sign: "Gemini" }, rising: { degree: 20.50, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Giants", sun: { degree: 7.09, sign: "Gemini" }, moon: { degree: 28.26, sign: "Taurus" }, rising: { degree: 26.27, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Marlins", sun: { degree: 19.16, sign: "Gemini" }, moon: { degree: 23.25, sign: "Taurus" }, rising: { degree: 1.38, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Rockies", sun: { degree: 13.12, sign: "Cancer" }, moon: { degree: 21.00, sign: "Aries" }, rising: { degree: 28.35, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Blue Jays", sun: { degree: 20.02, sign: "Leo" }, moon: { degree: 21.25, sign: "Pisces" }, rising: { degree: 24.26, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Rangers", sun: { degree: 28.03, sign: "Virgo" }, moon: { degree: 20.50, sign: "Libra" }, rising: { degree: 26.57, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Orioles", sun: { degree: 5.15, sign: "Libra" }, moon: { degree: 20.38, sign: "Gemini" }, rising: { degree: 16.37, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Dodgers", sun: { degree: 15.16, sign: "Libra" }, moon: { degree: 14.28, sign: "Aries" }, rising: { degree: 1.44, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Mets", sun: { degree: 24.16, sign: "Libra" }, moon: { degree: 19.28, sign: "Virgo" }, rising: { degree: 21.19, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Guardians", sun: { degree: 27.34, sign: "Scorpio" }, moon: { degree: 1.12, sign: "Gemini" }, rising: { degree: 1.23, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Twins", sun: { degree: 4.29, sign: "Sagittarius" }, moon: { degree: 18.21, sign: "Pisces" }, rising: { degree: 11.53, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Astros", sun: { degree: 9.35, sign: "Sagittarius" }, moon: { degree: 14.07, sign: "Scorpio" }, rising: { degree: 25.21, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Nationals", sun: { degree: 11.52, sign: "Sagittarius" }, moon: { degree: 26.57, sign: "Leo" }, rising: { degree: 28.55, sign: "Aries" },
{ name: "Red Sox", sun: { degree: 25.38, sign: "Sagittarius" }, moon: { degree: 14.07, sign: "Gemini" }, rising: { degree: 0.10, sign: "Aries" },
```

Thankfully that worked, which means I now have a fully functioning website that matches users to baseball teams based on their astrological signs. I call it ALLSTARS.**

This was the first dynamic website I had ever built as well as one of the first times I ever used ChatGPT for a project. While I initially just got the AI tool involved so I could build a prototype quickly and efficiently, it was during this process that I understood its true value. I have friends who are advanced coders that I could have asked for help setting up the site, and I have friends who know far more about astrology than I do who could have guided the compatibility logic, but I don't know a single

person who belongs to both of these groups. ChatGPT was able to provide all the specialized knowledge I was missing for these niches that rarely intersect, and I, in turn, learned how to check its work and yell at it when I got frustrated.

Next!

* In astrology, each sign is part of an element group. Fire signs (Aries/Leo/Sagittarius) are more compatible with air signs (Aquarius/Gemini/Libra), while water signs (Pisces/Cancer/Scorpio) are more compatible with earth signs (Taurus/Virgo/Capricorn). Sun sign compatibility carried the most weight in the score calculations, followed by moon signs and then rising signs.²

** <https://prattbaseball.com/allstars>

THE PITCH

TAYLOR, AGAIN

We talked about Taylor Swift earlier, so I don't need to reiterate how or why she is popular. But the reason you're reading her name again now is because I needed to make another team assignment tool, because there are still people out there who don't care about baseball and don't care about astrology either. But at least some of them care about Taylor Swift.

Also important: she has at least 30 well-known songs. I had ChatGPT help me assign MLB teams to each of them based on win-loss records, historical success, public perception, colors, aesthetics, lyrical allusions to regions or numbers of significance, and general vibes. You could argue that none of this is a precise science, that this approach is far less data-driven than the ALLSTARS compatibility algorithm. But you can't look me in the eye and tell me that "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" is not the Chicago Cubs in song form.

I set up a basic HTML site* that assigns users to an MLB team based on their album and song selections. Then I stayed up all night collaging 30 Polyvore-style outfit moodboards for all my Taylor Swift song/MLB team pairings. As one does.

* <https://prattbaseball.com/swifties>





Lisi Schauer, "Taylor Swift outfit memes," 2024.

MLBTI

The third and (for now) final iteration of this idea is a classic personality quiz. I based it on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), originally developed by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers, because it is the most well-known of its kind.*³ The MBTI tests for four categories: “extraversion-introversion,” “sensing-intuition,” “thinking-feeling,” and “judgment-perceiving,”⁴ resulting in 16 possible combinations, or personality types. The process began the same way as with the Taylor Swift project. I asked ChatGPT to assign all 30 MLB teams to Myers-Briggs personality types and then made adjustments as needed.

I then tasked ChatGPT with drafting a Myers-Briggs-like personality quiz that, based on a user’s answer path, would lead them to the MLB team that corresponded to their personality type.

Then, while checking the logic flow of the quiz ChatGPT gave back to me, I realized there was a big issue: ChatGPT cannot count higher than, like, 20. It gets confused. It would skip question numbers and teams, and leave dead ends in the quiz logic that made some of the results impossible to attain. I tried repeatedly to point out these errors, but fixing them always opened up other ones. I mapped ChatGPT’s logic on paper:

Then I realized what the issue was and felt like a fool for wasting so much of my time with ChatGPT. The AI tool was planning the quiz from the top down and opening up pathways as it went, then hitting some kind of processing limit and calling it quits before it had linked a path to every team. What I should have done from the beginning, knowing I needed the quiz to have 30 possible results, was draw it from the bottom up:

Here’s a Myers-Briggs type assignment for the 30 MLB teams based on team history, recent success/failure, and the vibe of the city or region. I aimed to limit the number of teams assigned to the same personality type and provide a mix of team legacy, performance trends, and cultural associations.

INTJ (The Architect)

Strategic, forward-thinking, and decisive.

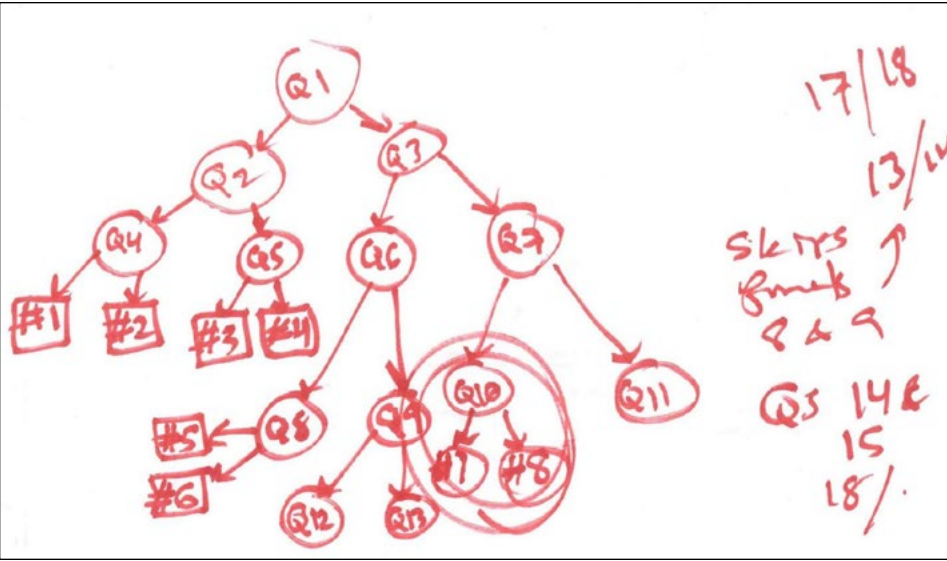
- 1. **Houston Astros** – Known for their analytical and data-driven approach (like the controversial sign-stealing scandal), the Astros embody the strategic thinking of an INTJ. Despite setbacks, they’ve remained competitive.
- 2. **Tampa Bay Rays** – Always operating on a tight budget, the Rays rely heavily on analytics and resourcefulness to remain competitive in the AL East, representing the calculated, long-term strategy of an INTJ.

Q14. What kind of environment do you thrive in?

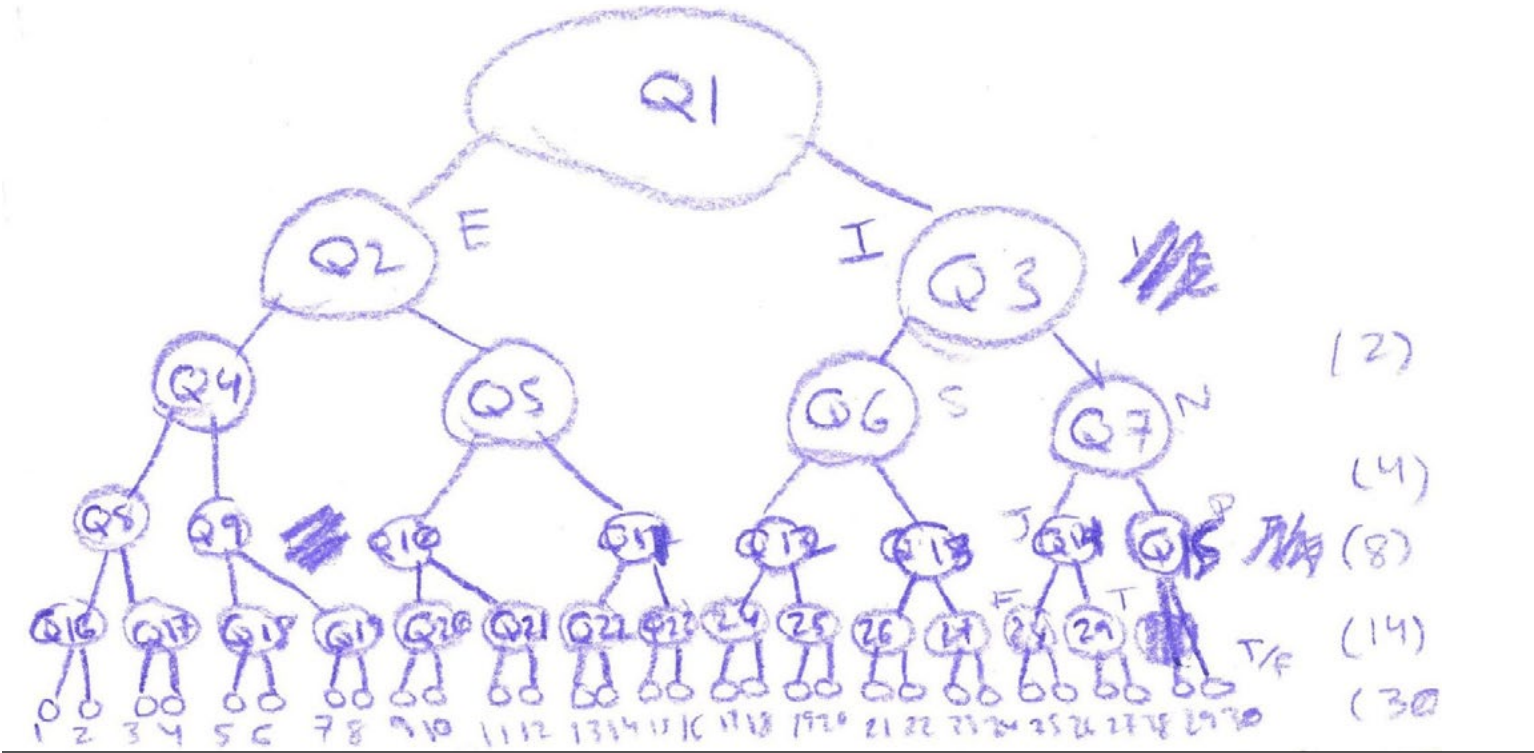
- A) A creative, open-minded environment where I can explore new ideas. → Go to Q16
- B) A structured, predictable environment with clear expectations. → Go to Q17

Q15. Are you more comfortable when...

- A) You can take things one step at a time, sticking to the plan? → Result: Pittsburgh Pirates (ESFJ)
- B) You can stay flexible and make adjustments as needed? → Result: San Diego Padres (ENFP)



* And because “MLBTI” is the best title I could come up with.



This not only cleared up how to make the quiz functional, it made it much easier to map Myers-Briggs traits onto the questions. Since there were five tiers of questions, each of the first four tiers could test one MBTI category and the fifth could serve as a tiebreaker for teams that shared the same type.* This also showed me that I only needed one question for each MBTI category because users who selected the introversion path in tier one would never see the extraversion path, and thus never know that its sensing-intuition, thinking-feeling, and judgment-perceiving questions were the same.

With all the grown-up human thinking out of the way, I returned to ChatGPT for help wording the questions:

- Q1: How do you like to celebrate the end of a long week?**
[Determines introversion-extraversion]
- A) Going out to an event or gathering with a lively atmosphere
[extraversion route]
 - B) Enjoying a quiet evening at home or spending time with a small group
[introversion route]
- Q2: What do you find more rewarding?**
[Determines sensing-intuition]
- A) Focusing on the details that make something function smoothly
[sensing route]
 - B) Exploring creative ideas and brainstorming for future possibilities
[intuition route]
- Q3: How do you feel about planning a big project or trip?**
[Determines judgment-perceiving]
- A) I prefer to map out the steps and stick to a schedule
[judgment route]
 - B) I like to dive in with some flexibility, adapting as things unfold
[perceiving route]
- Q4: When approaching a disagreement, what is your main focus?**
[Determines thinking-feeling]
- A) Finding the most logical and fair solution for everyone
[thinking route]
 - B) Making sure people feel understood and valued in the process
[feeling route]⁵

* Since there are 30 teams, the Arizona Diamondbacks (ISTP) and the Seattle Mariners (ISFP) are the only teams with those MBTI types and therefore required no fifth tiebreaker tier of questioning. This is why the questions are ordered to place thinking-feeling last.

Next, I needed to come up with tiebreaker questions for the 28 teams that paired up to share fourteen personality types. This was another ChatGPT task that took more hands-on guidance from my end:

Once my quiz was done, I gave it a website.**

THE OUTSIDE PITCH

Each of these websites uses an outside-baseball interest as the first step toward bringing new fans to the game. And these three don't have to be the end — there could be hundreds of them. The point is that as long as there are non-baseball topics about which people feel passionate, we can harness these topics to direct their passion toward baseball.

Once someone has a favorite team, there are endless ways to pull them deeper down the baseball buy-in funnel. On each of the three sites, I've implemented fields where users can email their results to themselves and their friends. As noted by disclaimers on these sites, I have also been able to see which teams have been linked to each email address and send team-specific marketing emails to those who have taken the quizzes. This can all be expanded further: ALLSTARS could become a hub for finding baseball-themed personal horoscopes and astrology-based preseason predictions for every user's favorite team. The Taylor Swift site logic, team assignments, and Polyvore outfit memes could be recreated for any musician. MLBTI could present favorite team fun facts and spotlight players based on users' distinct personality types. All three of these existing quizzes could have their results pages redirect to an online environment where freshly indoctrinated baseball fans can customize little avatars decked out in their new favorite teams' merch and interact with other fans of those teams. Like *Sims*.

Beyond this, there are no limits. Major League Baseball already has an official app where these types of tools could easily be integrated.⁶ The more financially motivated perspective of someone desperate to get a job might point out that these tools could also loop in sports betting apps, which would rake in tons of money. It's all possible. It all starts with looking outside.

** <https://prattbaseball.com/mlbti>

To differentiate the **Boston Red Sox** and **Atlanta Braves** based on their recent performances, team histories, and the cultural vibe of Boston and Atlanta, here's a personality-style question that reflects different approaches to ambition, achievement, and team identity:

- Question:**
When you think about achieving success, which of the following resonates more with you?
- A) I'm driven by resilience and tradition, seeing value in pushing through challenges even when things get tough. Building on past achievements, I aim to create something that both respects history and redefines success on my terms.
 - B) I focus on building consistent momentum with an adaptable, forward-looking mindset. I prefer making adjustments and finding efficient paths to reach success, balancing tradition with a drive for future growth.

write me a different question that is more concise, more fun, and not overlapping with anything that might be asked to determine Myers-Briggs personality traits

- Question:**
If you had a day to explore a new city, how would you spend it?
- A) I'd dive into the iconic spots, savoring the classics and maybe catching a show or game. It's all about soaking up the legacy.
 - B) I'd mix things up, checking out some hidden gems and hitting a few hotspots. I love a mix of the known and the unexpected.

1	"Chart Calculator," Astrological Association, accessed December 8, 2024, https://www.astrologicalassociation.com/chart-calculator .	4	K. Nowack, "Is the Myers Briggs Type Indicator the Right Tool to Use?," Performance in Practice, American Society of Training and Development, Fall 1996, 6.
2	Aliza Kelly, "The Trick to Understanding Astrological Compatibility," The Cut, September 21, 2022, https://www.thecut.com/article/zodiac-sign-compatibility-meaning.html .	5	OpenAI, ChatGPT, wording outputted from a prompt to write basic questions and answers that would reveal MBTI categorizations, October 30, 2024.
3	Adam Stamm, "14 Personality Tests You Should Know in 2023," Center for Internal Change, October 29, 2024, https://internalchange.com/list-of-personality-tests-and-personal-development-assessments .	6	"The MLB App," MLB.com, accessed December 8, 2024, https://www.mlb.com/apps/mlb-app .

Inside

Outside

Baseball



NOVEMBER 2024

It’s become trendy among my generation to claim imposter syndrome. The term, originally coined by psychologists Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes,¹ refers to when high achieving individuals (often women) doubt their own success and fear that they will be found out, despite being qualified for their current positions. These days, most people throw it around to describe feeling a little unsure of themselves, a little wary of how much they know, a little out of their element. There’s a lot of that feeling going on when you start to identify as a sports fan, especially if you’re already an adult, and especially if you’re a woman. Being able to understand what’s happening when you’re watching a game on TV is not the same as feeling comfortable speaking the language, making the right predictions, and knowing which players you’re supposed to heckle. And it certainly doesn’t help when the existing members of your new sports community have years of experience you’ll never be able to compete with.

There are upsides to the cultural saturation of this new meaning of “imposter syndrome,” though. I’m not going to name names, but I will say it might make one feel more empowered to overstate her credentials, to act as an actual imposter and get away with it. To stretch the truth on her resume about how proficient she really is at HTML/CSS/JavaScript and Python, when in actuality, artificial intelligence is behind the scenes doing her coding dirty work.

I know what you’re thinking. And it’s okay — a lot of people are suspicious of AI tools because they seem inherently shady. Fraudulent, even. We’ve all heard the horror stories of high schoolers giving ChatGPT free reign on their English papers, turning them in without so much as a proofread, and missing the parts where the AI language model totally rats them out. It’s also understandably frustrating to pour tuition dollars and years of your life into mastering a skill that now, thanks to artificial intelligence, any clown can fake at a mediocre level. But the beauty of it being such a new technology is that it’s new to everyone. Unlike your typical fast-paced industry, resume-friendly hard skill, or die-hard fan community, your experience with AI tools can’t be that far behind anyone else’s.

What possibilities does that open up, not just on the individual level, but for every brand, across every industry? What are the benefits of a space where no one feels like an imposter?

¹“PRATT WINS OPENER, 20-3,” New York Times, April 10, 1927, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1927/04/10/96642518.html>.

Lisi Schauer, “Biblically accurate rally cap,” 2025.

PRATT WINS OPENER, 20-3.

Castrovinci Hits Three Homers as Cooper Union Is Swamped.

The Pratt Institute baseball team opened its season by defeating Cooper Union, 20 to 3, yesterday at Pratt Field. Castrovinci of the winners was the hitting star of the game, making three home runs and getting five hits out of five times at bat. Cannon, who started in the box for Pratt, struck out nine batters.

The box score:																					
COOPER UNION.											PRATT.										
											ab.r.h.po.a.e.										
Weiss, ss...	4	0	1	2	0	0					Hall, lf....	2	3	2	0	0					
Bolbin, lf....	3	0	0	0	0	0					Chuisano, lf..	1	0	0	1	0	0				
Smith, rf....	2	0	0	0	0	0					Swanson, rf..	4	1	1	0	0	0				
Wickman, cf..	1	1	0	1	0	0					Herold, rf....	0	1	0	0	0	0				
Schmiss, 3b..	2	1	1	0	2	1					Anderson, c...2	2	1	1	2	0	1				
Miller, 1b...	3	0	0	8	0	1					Nelson, c....	0	1	0	5	0	0				
Posner, 2b...	3	1	1	2	1	0					Castrovici, 3b.5	4	5	0	0	0	0				
Berg, c.....	3	0	1	5	0	0					Watson, cf...2	2	0	0	0	0	0				
Kaufman, p..	1	0	0	0	0	0					Lincoln, cf...2	1	1	0	0	0	0				
Delhanty, p..	2	0	0	0	0	0					St. Clair, 2b.3	2	1	0	1	0	1				
Total											Pedersen, ss.2	1	0	0	0	0	0				
											Zyckwicz, 1b.5	1	2	3	0	0	0				
											Cannon, p....2	0	0	0	0	0	0				
											Sanford, p...1	0	0	0	0	0	0				
											Nicols, p....0	1	0	0	0	0	0				
											Total										
Cooper Union											0 0 0 8 0 0 0—3										
Pratt											1 7 6 0 1 5 ..—20										

Two-base hits—Zyckwicz, St. Clair, Lincoln. Home runs—Castrovinci 3, Hall. Sacrifice—Nicols, Wickman, Schmiss. Left on bases—Nichols, Wickman, Schmiss. Left on bases—Pratt 4, Cooper Union 2. Double plays—Chuisanb and Zyckwlez; Posner and Miller. Struck out—By Cannon 9, Sanford 3, Nicols 5, Kaufman 3. Bases on balls—Off Cannon 2, Sanford 1, Nicols 1, Kaufman 5. Hits—Off Sanford 4 in 2 innings, Kaufman 7 in 2, Delhanty 6 in 4. Umpire—Mitchell.

This 1927 clobbering of Cooper Union is the most recent evidence I could find of a Pratt baseball team.

MAKING THE TEAM

In 2024, Pratt Institute did not have a baseball team at the nationally sanctioned or club level. In fact, I couldn’t find any evidence of an official Pratt baseball team since 1927. So I made one.

I went to the NCAA D1 Baseball homepage,² where I copied the names of the 2024 season’s top 250 players by batting average and top 200 players by earned run average, and pasted all 450 names into a spreadsheet. I then separated their first and last names, randomized the columns to create 450 new fake names and selected the 34 most interesting or most realistically boring sounding ones to create a roster. I randomly assigned positions and class years based on what seemed like reasonable distributions for an NCAA 34-man roster, then pulled hometowns at random from various existing college baseball teams. Then, because I forgot to do it while pulling hometowns, I Googled high schools with baseball programs in each of those cities and assigned those as well.

If this sounds extremely arbitrary, that’s because it was. It was fun picking the names, deciding my fake baseball team would have a Trey Favors and a Luke Pooser and a Griffin Kuntz,* but none of these fake people really came to life for me. That is, until I got artificial intelligence involved.

Using FireflyAI, Adobe’s generative AI tool, I typed in prompts like this:

Prompt

Photorealistic profile picture roster headshot for a college baseball player named Trey Favors who is an 18-year-old freshman infielder, 5’11, from San Diego, California

And I got back results like this:



And then suddenly they were alive. And maybe some of them looked a little too old to be college students, and if you stared too long they could be terrifyingly uncanny, but somehow giving faces to the 34 names clicked everything into place. They were my children. From my fingertips, I gave birth to them. I made some little adjustments to the data that, before, was meaningless. Like, of course I had to change Griffin Kuntz from a right-handed outfielder to a left-handed pitcher. This is him:



I bought the domain prattbaseball.com and set up an online roster to house my 34 off-spring.** If you squint, it looks like it could be a real NCAA roster, with real guys from real cities with real athlete bios that, in reality, were generated with ChatGPT. Pratt Baseball may be a team of imposters, but that’s the point. They don’t come with any of the history or the potential for gatekeeping that might scare newcomers away from existing sports teams. They are a blank slate on which my target audience of non-baseball fans at Pratt can write new narratives and enjoy the sports community in whatever way they please.

This brought to light another idea. If this team was initially designed for Pratt students, these students should feel like they had a hand in its creation. I wanted to make Pratt Baseball feel more participatory to ensure my audience would buy in before I implemented the next phase of my plan — simulating an entire season to overlap with the 2025 NCAA schedule, with randomly generated fake game results and regularly updating fake player statistics. Instead of me dictating the 34-man roster for the Pratt Baseball season, I decided to launch

* and, although this name combo wasn’t randomly generated but I saw the first and last names separately in my database and couldn’t resist, a Reese Witherspoon

** <https://prattbaseball.com/roster>

a Pratt Baseball Preseason, where students would have a month to look through a pool of 68 hopeful players, read their bios, and vote their 34 favorites onto the final roster to represent Pratt Institute. So I expanded.

I took my existing list of 450 scrambled first and last names and fed it through ChatGPT with instructions to rearrange the letters of each name, spelling out 450 brand new ones. Even when ChatGPT added or removed a couple letters to make the new names phonotactically viable, most results were still total gibberish. I tried to keep my selections at least somewhat reasonable.

MARKETING THE TEAM

Laying the groundwork to promote my AI baseball team has so far entailed some bot-like behavior. I thought it would be handy to have a legitimate-looking social media presence before the season got started, so I set up Pratt Baseball accounts on Instagram and the site formerly known as Twitter, then began to grow their followings with platform-specific strategies.

In the United States, Instagram skews more female³ and women tend to be more active users.⁴ Being an American woman myself, I posted the type of content that looked most similar to what typically appeared on my personal feed. This is where the Taylor Swift Polyvore memes I brought up earlier came in handy. I mapped out a content schedule to stagger these posts and tagged them with the appropriate Swift and baseball-related hashtags.* I read that on Instagram, a user could follow up to 200 accounts within a 24 hour span before being flagged as a potential bot,⁵ so I was careful to stay under that limit. I followed a combination of MLB meme accounts, Taylor Swift fan accounts, and outfit inspiration accounts. This grew my own following to around 500 within two weeks, until the account was flagged and then permanently disabled for not following Community Guidelines. I had never commented or directly messaged anyone and never went above 200 follows a day, so this was likely because I had set up the account using Pratt’s name and official logo as a profile picture. Oops.

I haven’t been banned yet on FKA Twitter, but that account only has around 200 followers. I discovered that above sharing original content, posting about baseball, or mass following, there was a far more effective way to grow my numbers. I began sporadically tweeting that I wanted to learn more about NFTs, crypto, or blockchain and then watched the bot followers roll in. This does, unfortunately, result in a lot of bots also sliding into my DMs to send lewd bot-generated messages to this account I’m running like a bot so that once its bot following is large enough I can use it to promote my AI-generated fake baseball team. It’s all very complicated.



Lexy Adnhea is a 19-year-old sophomore outfielder, 5 ‘10, from San Antonio, Texas.



Coin Klank is a 20-year-old junior left-handed pitcher, 6 ‘2, from Reno, Nevada.



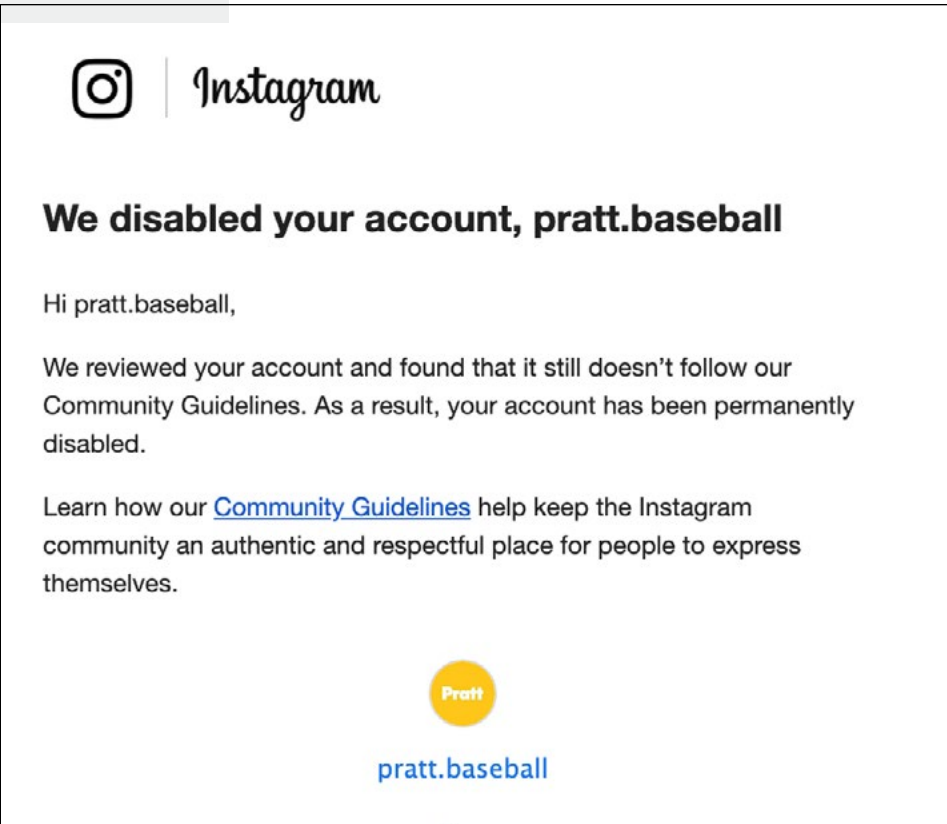
Luffin Grikintz is a 22-year-old senior left-handed pitcher, 6 ‘1, from San Jose, California. He’s also Griffin Kuntz’s Wario.

Believe it or not, my intention with Pratt Baseball is not to deceive. This team is meant to serve as an example of how new technologies can be used to remove the barriers to entry for potential new audiences. My goal is to create a design fiction that stirs excitement about baseball first for Pratt students, and ultimately for everyone.

* This was all taking place in October during the MLB postseason and some of Taylor Swift’s last U.S. Eras Tour performances, so while I had a lot of content to compete with, it was also the perfect time to lean into the general excitement of both fan groups.

- A ‘Photorealistic profile picture roster headshot for a college baseball player named Trey Favors who is an 18-year-old freshman infielder, 5 ‘11, from San Diego, California’, image generated by Adobe Firefly, October 4, 2024.
- B ‘Photorealistic profile picture roster headshot for a college baseball player named Griffin Kuntz who is a 22-year-old senior outfielder, 6 ‘1, from San Jose, California’, image generated by Adobe Firefly, October 4, 2024.
- C ‘Photorealistic profile picture roster headshot for a college baseball player named Lexy Adnhea who is a 19-year-old sophomore outfielder, 5 ‘10, from San Antonio, Texas’, image generated by Adobe Firefly, November 10, 2024.
- D ‘Photorealistic profile picture roster headshot for a college baseball player named Coin Klank who is a 20-year-old junior left-handed pitcher, 6 ‘2, from Reno, Nevada’, image generated by Adobe Firefly, November 10, 2024.
- E ‘Photorealistic profile picture roster headshot for a college baseball player named Luffin Grikintz who is a 22-year-old senior left-handed pitcher, 6 ‘1, from San Jose, California’, image generated by Adobe Firefly, November 10, 2024.

- 1 Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, “The Imposter Phenomenon in High Achieving Women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention,” *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice* 15, no. 3 (1978): 241–247, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0086006>.
- 2 “Baseball,” NCAA, accessed December 8, 2024, <https://www.ncaa.com/stats/baseball/d1>.
- 3 Stacy Jo Dixon, “Distribution of Instagram users in the United States as of October 2024, by gender,” Statista, November 28, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/530498>.
- 4 “Instagram Statistics: Key Demographic and User Numbers,” Backlinko, November 21, 2024, <https://backlinko.com/instagram-users>.
- 5 EngageDM, “Instagram Follower Limits – Your Questions Answered,” Engage Digital Media, February 13, 2024, <https://engagedm.co.uk/2024/02/13/instagram-follower-limits>.



- #1 Beau Alvarez
C
- #2 Kyson Frost
OF
- #3 Garret Smink
UT
- #4 Bryce Ready
INF
- #5 KJ DeBarge
INF
- #6 Tanner Swain
INF
- #7 Trey Favors
INF
- #8 Tatsunori Schmidt
UT
- #9 Walker Mendez
INF
- #10 Clyde Babee
RHP
- #11 Khal Valdez
RHP
- #12 Tressa Scar
OF
- #13 Reese Witherspoon
RHP
- #14 RJ Zimbardo
C
- #15 Dalton Seeker
OF
- #16 Dean Devine
LHP
- #17 Griffin Kuntz
LHP
- #18 Clayton Krauss
RHP
- #19 Blake Blanco
OF
- #20 Yorks Font
OF
- #21 Carter Sass
OF
- #22 Michael Vu
RHP
- #23 Tyler Quinlan
OF
- #24 Jordan Mallory Jr.
OF
- #25 Aaron Toole
RHP
- #26 Kellen Mercer
RHP
- #27 Nick Driscoll
RHP
- #28 Kenneth Couture
LHP
- #29 Niko Serrano
INF
- #30 Kermit Grastan
UT
- #31 Chris McCrystal
LHP
- #32 Jurrangelo Kryszczuk
RHP
- #33 Mitch Grinsell
C
- #34 Matt Pennington
INF
- #35 Linzora Shatzman
LHP



- #36 Dom Compton
RHP
- #37 Melvin Carroule
C
- #38 Luke Pooser
LHP
- #39 Travis Desandro
1B
- #40 Leighton D'Amato
INF
- #41 Maina Dogsta
1B
- #43 Brent Tracer
RHP
- #44 Donnisa Chilsick
LHP
- #45 Elmo Stich
INF
- #47 Reed Clonne
OF
- #48 Mony Coblas
RHP
- #49 Whres Eet
INF
- #51 Lanny Mandon
C
- #52 Leona Rotor
RHP
- #53 Laren Pyton
UT
- #54 Cassio Farrane
RHP
- #55 Nilo Socc
INF
- #57 Mavis Shen
OF
- #60 Warren Saint
INF
- #62 Reneck Mellet
RHP
- #63 Ebolda Huntin
INF
- #66 Dante Info
C
- #67 Wren Pagon
INF
- #69 Cumnong Hamdic
INF
- #71 Luffin Grikintz
LHP
- #75 Lexy Adnhea
OF
- #77 Coin Klank
LHP
- #78 Jolka Bot
RHP
- #82 Tucketh Norene
LHP
- #84 Blon Narkel
RHP
- #88 Nutpuck Minimick
RHP
- #92 Rokie Sarnon
INF
- #99 Yonk Ribell
OF

MARCH 2025

Here’s something I learned over the last three months: single-handedly creating and promoting an entire baseball team and accompanying season with regularly scheduled games and continuously updating player statistics takes a really, really, painfully long time. But thanks to sunk cost fallacy and a half-guilty sense of obligation to all my friends’ dads who steadfastly kept up with Pratt Baseball as if it were real, I somehow got it done.

Let’s rewind: the last time we checked in, I had 68 AI-generated college baseball players and a half-baked plan to make Pratt students care about baseball. Over the holidays, I set up a webpage* that displayed all 68 players and invited users to vote for their ideal teams. I realized that people might not feel all that strongly about any one player over another if they only had access to some names and AI-generated faces (except for those who told me they were voting based on hotness), so I populated the preseason voting site and accompanying roster** with each player’s Pratt major, favorite foods, interests, and fun facts. The food and entertainment preferences were based on popular responses I gathered from real D1 sports rosters. That’s why I made so many Pratt players’ favorite book *The Great Gatsby* — for some reason, almost every male college athlete who opted to include a favorite book in his roster bio went with *The Great Gatsby*. Teenage boys love to read “*The Great Gatsby*.”



Clyde Babee
Freshman | 6'2" | Houston, TX

Major: Drawing

Favorite food: Spaghetti and meatballs

Interests: Adventure Time (TV), The Great Gatsby (movie), Bon Iver (music), The Great Gatsby (book)

Fun fact: Still trying to make money on Gamestop shares he bought in 2021

I coded parameters into the preseason survey to ensure that people voted for half of the available players for each position (e.g. of 6 total catchers select 3, of 12 total outfielders select 6, etc.) to whittle the team from 68 back down to 34, the standard roster size for a D1 college baseball team.¹ I also ensured people’s submissions would populate on a spreadsheet that I could then use to compare vote totals between players.

On January 1st, 2025, I posted a short video to Instagram promoting the preseason voting site. I then went back to the ALLSTARS data I had collected last fall, grouped users by their results, and emailed each group the names of astrologically compatible Pratt Baseball players. These emails also included reminders to vote in the preseason, in the hopes that users would vote for the players they were astrologically aligned with. Once I was back on campus near the end of the month, I printed preseason promotional fliers to hang up around the school. These also went on Instagram.

I kept the survey open until the end of the month so that by February, I could pivot to promoting the regular season, which was scheduled to begin on the 14th. In advance of this announcement, I had spent a week preparing a Valentine’s-themed Pratt Baseball dating simulator.^{***} This game aimed to accomplish several things:

- 1. Access non-baseball fans through the alternative interest of online gaming



Yorks Font
Junior | 6'0" | Corona, CA

Major: Architecture

Favorite food: Acai bowls

Interests: Spikeball, New Girl (TV), Tame Impala (music), Underworld (book)

Fun fact: Commutes around the city on a bike he stole from an SVA student



- 2. Remind potential new fans that the first Pratt Baseball game of the season would be on February 14th
- 3. Give people something Pratt Baseball-related to keep them busy for two weeks while I gathered my data and figured out how I was actually going to set up the season

On February 1st, I posted a video to the new, not-yet-banned Pratt Baseball Instagram account inviting users to play the dating sim until the regular season began on Valentine’s Day.



Reese Witherspoon
Sophomore | 6'2" | San Antonio, TX

Major: Illustration

Favorite food: Jalapeño poppers

Interests: Westworld (TV), Fast & Furious (movie), Country (music), The Great Gatsby (book)

Fun fact: Won an academy award for Walk the Line



So how does one actually simulate a fake college baseball season? In the 2025 schedule I had planned, Pratt Baseball was set to face local art school rivals like the School of Visual Arts and Parsons, which also do not have baseball teams in real life (plus some nearby Ivies like Columbia and Yale, which do). Creating even more AI-generated teams for these other schools was absolutely not feasible in the amount of time I had. Instead of worrying about opponents, then, Pratt’s offensive and defensive performances in each game would be determined by probability.

Remember when I said I collected all that voting data during the Pratt Baseball preseason? It seemed only fitting that the players who got the most votes should then have the most favorable odds in the simulated games, while the players who snuck onto the team with the fewest votes would be a little shakier.

To accomplish this, I located a table that listed the 2024 statistics from 2,227 D1 college batters and 673 D1 college pitchers² and assigned Pratt Baseball players to specific rows. The Pratt Baseball position player who received the most preseason votes was assigned to the #1 batter of 2024, while the Pratt position player who made the team with the fewest votes was assigned #2,227. Every Pratt player in between was assigned a real player from the 2024 rankings based on where their vote totals sat proportionally between the most voted-for and least voted-for players. I applied the same logic to the pitchers.

After assigning each Pratt Baseball player to a real D1 player’s 2024 statistics, I had to turn these stats into probabilities that could be used to shape the upcoming season. Common baseball metrics include batting averages, on-base percentages, and slugging percentages, but none of these numbers tell us the specific breakdown of how often each baseball outcome has happened. To get this information,

* <https://prattbaseball.com/preseason>
** <https://prattbaseball.com/roster>
*** <https://prattbaseball.com/date>

A-C Lisi Schauer, “Pratt Baseball Preseason,” 2025.
D-E Lisi Schauer, “Pratt Baseball Preseason posters,” 2025.
F Lisi Schauer, “Pratt Baseball Preseason video,” 2025.
G Lisi Schauer, “Dating Simulator logic map,” 2025.
H Lisi Schauer, “Pratt Baseball Dating Sim video,” 2025.
I Lisi Schauer, “Pratt Baseball Dating Simulator,” 2025.









hi heyyy





yes no



"I'll be there!" "I'll think about it" (fully intending to not go)

I collected each of the real reference players’ raw numbers for the following outcomes:

I added up all the raw numbers in the list and turned each outcome’s frequency into a proportion out of 1000. I then used those proportions to create outcome-specific number ranges within a larger range of 1-1000. I could use the same math from the batting side on the pitching side because they’re just inverses of each other (e.g. a home run is a positive outcome for a batter and a negative outcome for a pitcher). Here’s what that looked like for the best and worst-ranked Pratt players:

BEST BATTER PROBABILITIES			
RANK 1 LANNY MANDON	OUTCOME	RANGE	.js
	0.188 Walk	1 188	if (number >= 1 && number <= 188) { return "Walk"; } else if (number >= 189 && number <= 323) { return "Strikeout"; } else if (number >= 324 && number <= 362) { return "HBP"; } else if (number >= 363 && number <= 375) { return "Reached on error"; } else if (number >= 376 && number <= 449) { return "Flyout"; } else if (number >= 450 && number <= 587) { return "Single"; } else if (number >= 588 && number <= 661) { return "Groundout"; } else if (number >= 662 && number <= 727) { return "Double"; } else if (number >= 728 && number <= 801) { return "Lineout"; } else if (number >= 802 && number <= 804) { return "Triple"; } else if (number >= 805 && number <= 878) { return "Popout"; } else if (number >= 879 && number <= 1000) { return "Home run"; }
	0.135 Strikeout	189 323	
	0.039 HBP	324 362	
	0.013 Reach on error	363 375	
	0.074 Flyout	376 449	
	0.138 Single	450 587	
	0.074 Groundout	588 661	
	0.066 Double	662 727	
	0.074 Lineout	728 801	
	0.003 Triple	802 804	
	0.074 Popout	805 878	
	0.122 HR	879 1000	
	1.000		

WORST BATTER PROBABILITIES			
RANK 20 TREY FAVORS	OUTCOME	RANGE	.js
	0.154 Walk	1 154	if (number >= 1 && number <= 154) { return "Walk"; } else if (number >= 155 && number <= 382) { return "Strikeout"; } else if (number >= 383 && number <= 500) { return "HBP"; } else if (number >= 501 && number <= 515) { return "Reached on error"; } else if (number >= 516 && number <= 612) { return "Flyout"; } else if (number >= 613 && number <= 693) { return "Single"; } else if (number >= 694 && number <= 790) { return "Groundout"; } else if (number >= 791 && number <= 797) { return "Double"; } else if (number >= 798 && number <= 894) { return "Lineout"; } else if (number >= 895 && number <= 896) { return "Triple"; } else if (number >= 897 && number <= 993) { return "Popout"; } else if (number >= 994 && number <= 1000) { return "Home run"; }
	0.228 Strikeout	155 382	
	0.118 HBP	383 500	
	0.015 Reach on error	501 515	
	0.097 Flyout	516 612	
	0.081 Single	613 693	
	0.097 Groundout	694 790	
	0.007 Double	791 797	
	0.097 Lineout	798 894	
	0.002 Triple	895 896	
	0.097 Popout	897 993	
	0.007 HR	994 1000	
	1.000		

Once each player had their own set of probability ranges, I copied these ranges into 34 separate JavaScript files. I set up a page called prattbaseball.com/fate.html with two view options (offense and defense) and nine random number generator boxes in each view. These boxes could be linked to any player’s JavaScript file and switched out easily during or between games, depending on who was included in the starting lineup or who was pitching. A note about the random number generators: I realize that there are countless random number generating options online. I did not build them, and therefore I don’t know how they work, and therefore I don’t trust them because unfortunately that’s just the type of gal that I am. My random number generators are technically counters that rapidly tick up from 1-1000, looping infinitely. Clicking a box once

Flyout*	Groundout	Lineout	Popout
Strikeout	Walk	Reached on error**	Hit by pitch
Single	Double	Triple	Home run

* Since specific flyout, groundout, lineout, and popout totals weren’t listed online, I subtracted strikeouts and hits from at-bats to calculate outs on balls in play, then divided that number by four.

** Reached on error (ROE) totals were calculated by subtracting walks, strikeouts, hit by pitches (HBP), outs on balls in play, and hits from plate appearances. These numbers aren’t exactly accurate (for instance, they don’t take sacrifice bunts or flies into account), but they are close enough approximations to work here.

BEST PITCHER PROBABILITIES			
RANK 1 REESE WITHERSPOON	OUTCOME	RANGE	.js
	0.040 Walk	1 40	if (number >= 1 && number <= 40) { return "Walk"; } else if (number >= 41 && number <= 333) { return "Strikeout"; } else if (number >= 334 && number <= 336) { return "HBP"; } else if (number >= 337 && number <= 340) { return "Reached on error"; } else if (number >= 341 && number <= 458) { return "Flyout"; } else if (number >= 459 && number <= 583) { return "Single"; } else if (number >= 584 && number <= 701) { return "Groundout"; } else if (number >= 702 && number <= 738) { return "Double"; } else if (number >= 739 && number <= 856) { return "Lineout"; } else if (number >= 857 && number <= 858) { return "Triple"; } else if (number >= 859 && number <= 978) { return "Popout"; } else if (number >= 977 && number <= 1000) { return "Home run"; }
	0.293 Strikeout	41 333	
	0.003 HBP	334 336	
	0.004 Reach on error	337 340	
	0.118 Flyout	341 458	
	0.125 Single	459 583	
	0.118 Groundout	584 701	
	0.037 Double	702 738	
	0.118 Lineout	739 856	
	0.002 Triple	857 858	
	0.118 Popout	859 976	
	0.024 HR	977 1000	
	1.000		

WORST PITCHER PROBABILITIES			
RANK 14 BRENT TRACER	OUTCOME	RANGE	.js
	0.066 Walk	1 66	if (number >= 1 && number <= 66) { return "Walk"; } else if (number >= 67 && number <= 208) { return "Strikeout"; } else if (number >= 209 && number <= 253) { return "HBP"; } else if (number >= 254 && number <= 274) { return "Reached on error"; } else if (number >= 275 && number <= 373) { return "Flyout"; } else if (number >= 374 && number <= 603) { return "Single"; } else if (number >= 604 && number <= 702) { return "Groundout"; } else if (number >= 703 && number <= 757) { return "Double"; } else if (number >= 758 && number <= 856) { return "Lineout"; } else if (number >= 857 && number <= 867) { return "Triple"; } else if (number >= 868 && number <= 966) { return "Popout"; } else if (number >= 967 && number <= 1000) { return "Home run"; }
	0.142 Strikeout	67 208	
	0.045 HBP	209 253	
	0.021 Reach on error	254 274	
	0.099 Flyout	275 373	
	0.230 Single	374 603	
	0.099 Groundout	604 702	
	0.055 Double	703 757	
	0.099 Lineout	758 856	
	0.011 Triple	857 867	
	0.099 Popout	868 966	
	0.034 HR	967 1000	
	1.000		

starts its counter, which is hidden from view as it loops through the numbers. Clicking that same box a second time pauses it and reveals a number, along with that number’s corresponding baseball outcome determined by the linked JavaScript file’s probability range. For example, if a number generator box assigned to Lanny Mandon (the position player who received the most preseason votes) were to pause on 900, it would mean that she hit a home run. If I re-assigned that box to Trey Favors (the position player who made the team with the fewest preseason votes), 900 would mean a popout. Once I had run the generators for all nine boxes, I could click each box a third time to populate its result in a spreadsheet that I would later reference when piecing together the full game. Thanks to AI help from GitHub Copilot, the number generators and fate.html didn’t

take all that long to set up. However, digital tools couldn’t save me from the absolute slog of simulating each game. That incredibly manual process went like this:

- Setting the lineups. This meant choosing nine position players from the roster as well as a starting pitcher, plugging them all into fate.html, and copying their names into the four spreadsheets where I logged game data.
- Running the random number generators. Or, as they could more accurately be called, the rapid number counters. As a needlessly thorough added measure to make sure I couldn’t subconsciously time my start/stop clicks to unfairly influence games, I usually did this while watching TV and just clicked start/stop whenever someone on screen blinked. As you may

remember, this is unfortunately just the type of gal I am. Once, as a fun little experiment, I had my Pratt classmates participate in the simulation process. Each time through the batting order, a new person was responsible for starting and stopping the number generators. To prevent people from being able to game the generators, they had to make a blind contour drawing of each player between that player’s start and stop clicks. Here are the results of that game:

I typically ran the counters about three times through the batting order on the offense view and twice through the order for defense/pitching without paying attention to what was going on. After that, I’d open my outcome spreadsheets and start to figure out how many innings had been completed and how many runs had been scored. At some point, depending on how close the game was and how many batters the starting pitcher had faced, I would replace the starter’s linked .js file with a reliever’s.***

- Making the game logs. After all the game outcomes were fully generated (i.e. 24-27 outs had been made on each side, depending on whether the home team was leading going into the ninth), I compiled play-by-play logs resembling the format used by baseballreference.com. In cases where an individual player outcome could have different game results (such as a groundout with a runner on first or a single with a runner on second), I decided that randomly generated odd numbers would benefit offense and even numbers would benefit defense. For instance, if Lanny’s number generator landed on 451 while a runner was on second base, her resulting single would allow that runner to score. If the generator landed on 450 instead, Lanny would still have a single, but that runner would stop at third base.
- Updating the team and individual stat spreadsheets, calculating earned run averages and batting lines, and making box score graphics. I published all of these to the Pratt Baseball homepage around 7:30pm on each game day.

If I had to guess, I’d estimate that simulating and then documenting these games took around two hours apiece. So like, almost the length of a real baseball game. Look, old sport, I’ll admit I got a little lost in the sauce here. I was so committed to seeing this thing through to the end of the season that my process got away from my own argument about how to sell new audiences on baseball. Pratt students eagerly participated in the preseason voting,



GAME 4 FEB 21 2025												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
Pratt	2	0	1	7	0	2	0	1	0	13	19	0
Parsons	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	12	1
WP: Reese Witherspoon (2-0)												

the dating sim, and the blind contour drawing game because these were the times that Pratt Baseball came to them and offered something beyond just wins and losses. This audience was less interested in the straightforward baseball games with no creative promotions and no interactive opportunities. With more time, I would have made the season longer and more absurd — less focus on the play-by-plays and statistics and more on the weird parts of baseball that get people talking. Bench-clearing brawls. Extra innings hijinks. Fans getting hit with flying pizza.³ I would also pull in more tools like ALLSTARS to further test the theory that people can fall in love with baseball when it reaches them through their pre-existing interests.

Still worth mentioning: Pratt did go 22-8 and sweep RISD, Parsons, and SVA as part of an eight-game winning streak to end the season. I may have simulated all the games, but I swear I didn’t rig anything. That was just fate.

Lisi Schauer, “Game 4 summary,” 2025.

*** Pratt Baseball games have pitching changes but no pinch hitting because I don’t have the patience to deal with that.

1 “How Baseball Scholarships Really Work,” NCSA College Recruiting, accessed April 3, 2025, <https://www.ncsasports.org/baseball/scholarships>.
2 “National Statistics,” D1Baseball, accessed March 19, 2025, <https://d1baseball.com/statistics/?season=2024>.
3 Matt Monagan, “The story behind the Fenway pizza throw,” MLB.com, April 15, 2023, <https://www.mlb.com/news/the-fenway-park-pizza-throw-story>.



I suppose it's time to address the elephant in the room. Why do *I* like baseball?

In the eighth inning of game 5 of the 2014 National League Championship Series, San Francisco Giants pinch hitter Michael Morse drove a solo home run to left field to even the score against the St. Louis Cardinals.

To understand why this is significant, there are a few things you must know. First, you should know that a Championship Series, of which there are two — one in the National League (NLCS) and one in the American League (ALCS) — is a best of seven contest in which the first team to win four games secures its league's pennant, meaning that team will go on to compete in the World Series. Assuming a Championship Series goes to seven games, the first and last two games are played at the ballpark of whichever team had a better regular season record (in this case, the Cardinals). The middle three are played at the other team's park. The Giants entered game 5 leading the series three games to one and were looking to clinch the pennant at home.

Second, you should know that a “pinch hitter” is a player who is called into a game to bat in the place of a teammate, often at a critical moment, and often for the express purpose of hitting a home run. With the Giants down by one run late in the game, this is exactly what Michael Morse was there to do. At six-foot-five and 250 pounds, he was a premier power hitter for the Giants, and this is the moment the team's front office was envisioning when they offered him a one year contract for the 2014 season. However, a September oblique strain had made this moment unlikely. His injury had sidelined him for nearly the entire last month of the regular season and the initial rounds of the postseason, and though he was added to the NLCS roster he still hadn't recovered enough to play the outfield for the length of an entire game.¹ Hence: pinch hitter.

Finally, you should know that the Giants had history with the Cardinals, and there was narrative significance to a 3-1 series lead. Just two years before, the roles had been reversed, and the Giants were at a 3-1 deficit in the 2012 NLCS against the same team. However, they defeated the Cardinals in three consecutive games and ultimately went on to win the World Series that year. So these teams and their fans, of all people, were well aware of how quickly momentum could change.

Michael Morse's unlikely game-tying pinch-hit home run set the stage for the Giants to later win that game and with it, the pennant. This brought them to the 2014 World Series, which they also won. For all these reasons, this is probably somebody's favorite baseball moment. But it isn't mine. Not only was I not even watching the game while this happened, but baseball was barely on my radar.



In some ways, I had no reason to ever care about baseball. I didn't play team sports growing up or have any desire to watch them on TV. I was born and raised in Charlottesville, Virginia, a baseball swing state (no pun intended) where the few people I knew who identified as baseball fans all rooted for different teams, usually whichever ones were linked to the places they lived before moving to Charlottesville. My parents' northern California ties technically made us a Giants household, but baseball wasn't a priority sport on our TV set, especially because living outside the Bay Area market meant Giants broadcasts rarely reached us.

In other ways, I had every reason to care about baseball. The Giants won World Series titles when I was ages 11, 13, and 15, which seem like they should have been my prime baseball buy-in years. For each of these championship runs, I'd been in the living room while my dad was watching the team do exciting, highlight-worthy things, but I never remembered any of them the next day. The baseball interest didn't take.

Then in 2016, I flew out to San Francisco to visit my extended family. They took me

to a Giants game which was pleasant; nothing life-changing, no revelatory earth-shattering realizations regarding this thing that was about to become an obsession. Back at my grandma's apartment and almost certainly out of boredom, I started Googling the players whose names I faintly recognized from the past half decade, just to see if they were still on the team. These searches took me to fan blogs, introduced me to writing from people like Grant Brisbee and Carmen Kiew. This is how I got hooked.

The bloggers I found weren't like the sports broadcasters or analysts I had grown up hearing as background noise. They were funny. They were melodramatic. Through GIFs and shitposting, they had built a whole little world online. Their words added context and emotional stakes to postseason highlights I had never cared about previously. These were the people I idolized, and when I started watching Giants games every day it was so I could keep up with their inside jokes.

I followed all my favorite Giants writers on Twitter, and then all the non-Giants baseball people they interacted with as an extension

of that, and then all the non-baseball-specific sports people *they* interacted with as an extension of *that*. I wanted to be in the know. I started watching the Simpsons so I could better understand the references and niche memes of the sportswriters I followed, who were mostly men in their forties.

At some point, my reasons for watching baseball started to include the actual game of baseball. The Giants' World Series success from earlier in the decade suddenly became fascinating. I had a wealth of information and YouTube highlights at my disposal. I was out here literally binge watching old postseason games like they were a TV show. Once when I was a freshman in college, I had a game playing in the background while my roommate and I were getting ready for a party. Out of habit, I pointed out that Barry Zito was about to bunt for a hit and drive in a run. Then, after Barry Zito bunted for a hit to drive in a run and my roommate asked how I knew that was going to happen, I had to explain to her that, oh, this isn't a live broadcast. This is game 5 of the 2012 NLCS, which originally aired five years ago. I'm just rewatching it.


THE PITCH

Michael Morse had only signed a one-year contract with the Giants back in 2014, so he spent his next season playing for the Miami Marlins, who traded him to the Los Angeles Dodgers, who immediately traded him to the Pittsburgh Pirates. After going hitless for the first six games of the 2016 season, the Pirates released him from the team. He wasn't the same player he used to be. He settled in to retire.


In November 2016, while attending the wedding of his former teammate Hunter Pence, he ran into the Giants' general manager Bobby Evans and convinced the GM to offer him a minor league contract for 2017.² He was called up to join the major league roster in late April. At this point, I was nearing the one year anniversary of my relationship with baseball. I'd caught up on all the important Giants history by now; I'd even experienced my first postseason heartbreak watching the team get eliminated by the Cubs the previous October. I was still in Charlottesville, but not for long — this was the weird interim period between the last of my high school classes wrapping up and my official graduation. I'd been watching every Giants game religiously and often late into the night, because a first pitch scheduled for 7:15 in San Francisco translated to 10:15 in Charlottesville.

In the eighth inning of a home game against the Dodgers and with the Giants trailing by one run, Morse was brought in to pinch hit. Not only was this his first plate appearance since returning to the team, it was his first plate appearance at the major league level in over a year. He wasn't the same player he used to be. Still, all of us online were thinking the same thing.


After that game, it didn't matter that the Giants would lose to the Dodgers the very next day. It didn't matter that they'd go on to finish 2017 with the worst record in baseball while the Dodgers, their rivals, would win the pennant. It didn't matter that injury would end his season early again, or that this would be the last home run of Michael Morse's career. His pinch-hit solo blast, driven to left center field to even the score while I watched at midnight from my laptop in my parents' kitchen, is my favorite baseball moment. This time, I understood its significance. I was there.

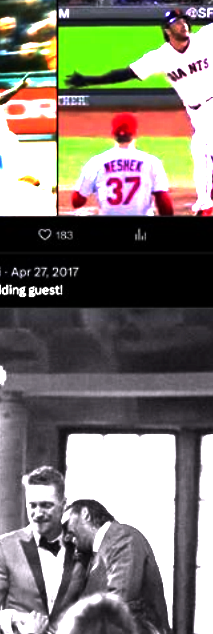
 **Grant Brisbee** @GrantBrisbee · Apr 27, 2017
Replying to @GrantBrisbee
"I love every last one of you this much" - Michael Morse"

- Grant Brisbee



3 47 183

 **Alexis Pence** @LetsGetLexi · Apr 27, 2017
Now that's what I call a wedding guest!




SFGiants @SFGiants · Apr 27, 2017
MOOD:




12 830 2.2K

Andrew Baggary @extrabaggs · Apr 27, 2017
Michael Morse did it again. Home run. Tie game. Who says you can't live in the past?



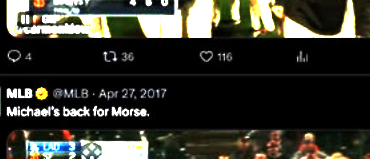
10 118 565

Carmen Kiew @carmenkiew · Apr 27, 2017
THE BROMANCE IS BACK




4 36 116

MLB @MLB · Apr 27, 2017
Michael's back for Morse.




17 760 1.6K

Ally Williams @allywilliams · Apr 26, 2017
Kuip: "They need a little life in that clubhouse."
Kruk: "Michael Morse is life."



17 78

Grant Brisbee @GrantBrisbee · Apr 27, 2017
Morse has been workshoping a few things since he's been gone.



11 89

Céspedes Family BBQ @CespedesBBQ · Apr 27, 2017

honestly I just hope the NL West is this much of a mess all year long

8

15

136

Carmen Kiew @carmenkiew · Apr 27, 2017

Morse is living his best life



23

103

John Shea @JohnSheaHey · Apr 27, 2017

Good thing for Giants that Pence invited Morse to his wedding.

2

163

820

Andrew Baggarty @extrabaggs · Apr 27, 2017

Finally checked. He isn't.

Andrew Baggarty @extrabaggs · Apr 26, 2017

(Looks up whether Pat Neshek is on Dodgers roster.)

3

24

Cut4 @Cut4 · Apr 27, 2017

"Don't you say that. Don't you ever say that. Stay here. Stay here as long as you can."



13

267

1K

Grant Brisbee @GrantBrisbee · Apr 27, 2017

Replying to @GrantBrisbee

I mean, 14 is just ludicrous, forget about "that"

3

5

62

Grant Brisbee @GrantBrisbee · Apr 27, 2017

Replying to @GrantBrisbee

well, there's no way they'll get to 13 tonight, just no way

6

7

50

SFGiants @SFGiants · Apr 27, 2017

4th career pinch hit home run for Michael Morse.

#SFGiants



20

437

1.6K

Andrew Baggarty @extrabaggs · Apr 27, 2017

Arroyo off Romo. Man. There's a whole lot of past, present and future in that confrontation.

4

119

468

SFGiants @SFGiants · Apr 26, 2017

We're thiiiiiii excited to have you back at @ATTPark, Michael Morse!

#SFGiants



19

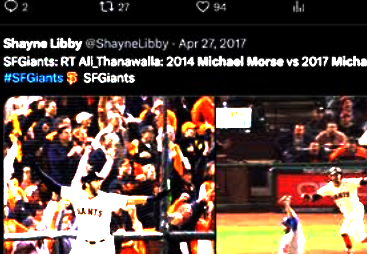
256


1K

Grant Brisbee @GrantBrisbee · Apr 26, 2017

Kelby Tomlinson is back and OH MY STARS IS THAT MICHAEL MORSE. HI MICHAEL, HOW ARE YOU, HI!!! mccoverychronicles.com/2017/4/26/1544...

dan haren @throw88 · Oct 8, 2014
I miss you Baseball. I also hate you Baseball.
131 1K 1.1K

Alex Pavlovic @PavlovicNBCS · Apr 27, 2017
Morse celebrated like this is an NLCS game and you can't blame him. His career was over until he attended Pence's wedding.

2 27 94


Shayne Libby @ShayneLibby · Apr 27, 2017
SFGiants: RT AJ Thanawalla: 2014 Michael Morse vs 2017 Michael Morse.
#SFGiants SFGiants

3 4 38

Andrew Baggarty @extrabaggs · Apr 27, 2017
Bochy, pregame, on Michael Morse: "Our secret weapon. He'll be ready."
3 4 38

Brandon Bronzan @BrandonBronzan · Apr 27, 2017
Michael Morse ties it up with a HR, then the crowd starts into a #BeatLA chant. Love it. Go #SFGiants
1 4

Alex Pavlovic @PavlovicNBCS · Apr 27, 2017
Michael Morse ties it up and pumps his fist as he rounds first. Unbelievable.
8 122 495

Batting Stance Guy @BattingStanceG · Apr 27, 2017
I ❤️ Michael Morse.
3 3 46

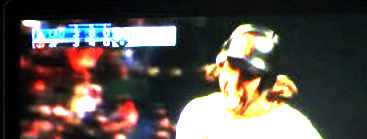
LOL KNBP @LOLKNBPHosts · Apr 27, 2017
WELCOME BACK MICHAEL MORSE!!

6 30

Alex Pavlovic @PavlovicNBCS · Apr 27, 2017
Hunter Pence wins it. Giants had been 0-13 when trailing after seven. And then Michael Morse showed up.
11 171 676

Grant Brisbee @GrantBrisbee · Apr 27, 2017
Giants come from behind with homers from Christian Arroyo, Michael Morse mccoveychronicles.com/2017/4/26/1544...
7 7 33

Thomas B @BaseballThomasB · Apr 27, 2017
Back when Michael Morse went legend in the 2014 NLCS #SFGiants
[youtube.com/watch?v=SKCg9Y...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKCg9Y...)
1 1


Dallas @Dalmcm · Apr 27, 2017
GIANTS ARE 1-0 IN THE 2017 MICHAEL MORSE ERA
1 8

Christine Pelosi @spelosi · Apr 27, 2017
Welcome home (run) Michael Morse!!
Tie game! #SFGiants 3-3


The image is a screenshot of a Twitter thread. At the top is a video player showing a baseball game with the text "THAT'S HIT DESP! IT'S TIED UP!". Below the video is a tweet from Pat Gallagher (@pgalla) dated April 27, 2017, stating "Michael Morse's dream comes true. #pinchhitr #notdoneyet #swingaway #smile" with 12 replies, 830 retweets, and 2.2K likes. This is followed by a large circular parody of the Twitter logo with the text "CROIX DE TWITTER" at the top and "VENI • VIDI • TWEETY" at the bottom. Below the logo is a tweet from Daniel Rathman (@DanielRathman) dated April 27, 2017, saying "When Michael Morse represents the tying run at the plate." followed by a retweet from Adam Schefter (@AdamSchefter) dated April 27, 2017, with a "00 00 00 00" timer. The thread continues with tweets from Candlestick Will (@CandlestickWill), NapaValleyWine&Cigar (@nwineandcigar), and John Dickinson (@JJohnDickinson), all dated April 27, 2017, celebrating Morse's performance. The final tweet is from Dians (Taylor's Version) (@PuercoConejo) dated April 27, 2017, saying "Michael Morse!!!!!! #Oddyearmagic" and includes a photo of two players, Michael Morse and another, celebrating on the field.

I'm telling you all this now because I don't think I am an outlier. People are looking for something to get excited about, and if you meet them halfway, they will do the rest of the work to catch up. Look at Jon Bois, who makes people emotional about sports they'd never thought to care about. Look at the Swifties tuning into Chiefs games. Look at the Savannah Bananas and their followers, all nine million of them.


Major League Baseball doesn't need to change its product to inject more action or speed up pace of play, or to pull off a slick rebrand that tricks other sports fans into thinking baseball is something it's not. What baseball needs is to extend its little world to the non-fans, the people online, the people at home. Regardless of who they are, the baseball community has something for them. And if you build that community, they will come.



Grant Brisbee @GrantBrisbee · Apr 27, 2017

GET ISHIKAWA ON THE PHONE

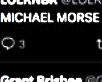
14 156 513



LOLKNBR @LOLKNBR · Apr 27, 2017

Jon Miller: "AT&T PARK IS DELIRIOUS!"

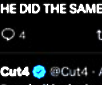
15 119



LOLKNBR @LOLKNBR · Apr 27, 2017

MORDECAI MORSE IS A GOD DAMN MOTHER FUCKING GIANTS LEGEND


3 128 440



Grant Brisbee @GrantBrisbee · Apr 27, 2017

HE DID THE SAME ARM THING


4 43 211



Cut4 @Cut4 · Apr 27, 2017

Baseball is the best.

2 141 348



Alex Pavlovic @PavlovicNBCS · Apr 27, 2017

Morse's mindset as he rounded bases: "I was like, I hope I didn't strike out and I'm just running around the bases."

13 76 392



- A Grant Brisbee, “Denard Span is scared of birds, but there’s no way that will be a problem in San Francisco,” SB Nation, January 7, 2016, <https://www.mccoveychronicles.com/2016/1/7/10734476/denard-span-sf-giants-ornithophobia>.
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- D Nhat V. Meyer, East Bay Times, April 26, 2017, <https://www.eastbaytimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/sjm-giants-0427-0241.jpg>.

1 Grant Brisbee, “The greatest home runs in San Francisco Giants history: Nos. 15 to 11,” The Athletic, May 14, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/1812113/2020/05/14/the-greatest-home-runs-in-san-francisco-giants-history-nos-15-to-11>.

2 Dave Sheinin, “How Michael Morse revived his baseball career at Hunter Pence’s wedding,” Washington Post, March 1, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/sports/wp/2017/03/01/how-michael-morse-revived-his-baseball-career-at-hunter-pences-wedding>.

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