

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL CARDS

THE LEAGUE RETURNS

MLBC SEASON TWO

2023 GAME LOG



SEASON PREVIEW

MLBC returns with history attached to every expectation. Philadelphia owns the first championship and the target that comes with it. Houston remembers reaching the World Series and stopping one step short. San Francisco won twenty-eight games before losing a two-game NLCS lead; Boston carried the American League's best regular-season record into October and never reached the pennant. The Dodgers and Yankees still look built for larger stages, while Toronto, Atlanta, St. Louis, San Diego and the rest now understand exactly how little room a forty-game season gives them. Season One proved that a terrible start can be rescued, a great record can disappear in a weekend, and reputation guarantees nothing once elimination arrives. Season Two begins with everybody wiser and nobody safer. The league has a past now, which means every new game can answer an old question, reopen an old wound or create the next piece of history. A championship exists to defend. A standard exists to chase. And for thirty clubs, the clock starts again.

Because three of the best words in sports are...

It's Opening Day!

MLBC — WEEK 1

GAMES 1-4 • OPENING WEEK

SAN FRANCISCO STARTS PERFECT

Season Two opens with one unbeaten club, a shelf of ace performances, and no shortage of late drama.

THE LEAD Season Two opened with Philadelphia defending the first MLBC championship and Houston carrying the memory of a World Series loss, but nobody carried a standing into Opening Week. The schedule immediately supplied heavyweight tests: Boston at New York, Atlanta at the Mets, San Francisco across the Bay against Oakland, and Toronto opening against Baltimore. Minnesota debuted a reshaped club, Texas arrived in Anaheim with major additions, and the Dodgers began another season trying to make their talent match the expectation. Four games were enough to establish urgency without establishing certainty.

THE WEEK San Francisco made the cleanest statement, going 4-0. Buster Posey erased a 4-1 deficit against Oakland with a Grand Slam, then won the same game with a 2-run HR in the 12th. The Yankees and Red Sox opened by trading blows in New York, splitting a series in which each team scored 14 runs. Toronto opened behind Alek Manoah's 3-hit shutout with 12 strikeouts, only to be swept by the Yankees later in the week. Jacob deGrom answered with a 2-hit, zero-walk shutout and 13 K, while Spencer Strider struck out 14 in 7½ scoreless innings. Colorado supplied the first true surprise, starting 3-1 behind Jon Gray's shutout of Los Angeles. Philadelphia avoided an ugly opening when Kyle Schwarber turned a 4-1 deficit into a 5-4 win with one huge Slam. Texas scored 22 runs in two games at Anaheim, Cincinnati swept the Cubs, and late drama seemed to be everywhere before the standings had even learned their shape.

THE STAKES The Giants leave the first four games alone at 4-0. Nine clubs sit at 3-1, including the Yankees, Twins, White Sox, Rangers, Phillies, Brewers, Cardinals, Rockies and Dodgers. Detroit, Chicago and Arizona are already 0-4, a dangerous place in a forty-game season. Toronto's 2-2 start contains both a dominant opening sweep and a sobering Yankees answer; Colorado's 3-1 says the same thing in reverse about preseason assumptions. Week 2 sends Cleveland into Yankee Stadium, Toronto through Tampa Bay and Chicago, the Dodgers into San Diego, and San Francisco home to Colorado before traveling to San Diego. Four games cannot prove a season. They can absolutely establish what needs proving next.

TOP OF TABLE
SFG • 4-0CHASE PACK
9 clubs • 3-1EARLY TROUBLE
DET / CHC / ARI • 0-4ONLY PERFECT
SFG • 4 straight

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK

GOLD WILLIE STARGELL • PIT

3 HR • 6 RBI

SILVER KYLE SCHWARBER • PHI

2 HR • 6 RBI • Grand Slam

BRONZE BUSTER POSEY • SFG

Grand Slam • walk-off 2-run HR

PITCHER OF THE WEEK

GOLD JACOB deGROM • NYM

CG SHO • 2 H • 0 BB • 13 K

SILVER ALEK MANOAH • TOR

CG SHO • 3 H • 12 K

BRONZE SPENCER STRIDER • ATL

7½ scoreless IP • 14 K

MLBC — WEEK 2

GAMES 5-8 • EARLY SEPARATION

THE FIRST SEPARATION

St. Louis and San Francisco reach 7-1 while Toronto, the Angels and the Cardinals all sweep the week.

THE LEAD San Francisco entered Week 2 as the league's lone 4-0 club, with nine teams tucked behind at 3-1. Toronto had Tampa Bay and the White Sox, the Dodgers went to San Diego, St. Louis moved through Pittsburgh and Milwaukee, and the Giants hosted Colorado before heading south to San Diego. At the bottom, Detroit, Chicago and Arizona needed proof that Opening Week had not already become a hole. The second four-game block was the first chance for an early surprise to become position.

THE WEEK Toronto, the Angels and St. Louis all went 4-0. Bo Bichette powered the Blue Jays with four HR, while the Angels answered their opening disappointment by sweeping Houston and then the Dodgers. Patrick Sandoval shut out the Astros, Shohei Ohtani helped beat Justin Verlander in extra innings, and Los Angeles finished the week with a 10th-inning win at Dodger Stadium. San Francisco split with Colorado, then swept San Diego to finish 3-1 and match St. Louis at 7-1. St. Louis had needed some late theater of its own during a perfect week. Atlanta found Chipper Jones in spectacular fashion: after an 0-for-20 start, Jones went 8-for-10 against Miami and hit three HR in a 17-run eruption. Dylan Cease threw his second 1-hit shutout in two starts, Blake Snell blanked the Dodgers with 10 strikeouts, Steven Kwan hit for the cycle in a loss, and Seattle needed seventeen innings to finish a home win over Texas. Week 2 did not simply reward the fast starters; it introduced several different ways to recover.

THE STAKES St. Louis and San Francisco now share the best record at 7-1. Toronto and Minnesota are 6-2, and the Blue Jays own the early AL East lead. The AL West is already compressed, with Seattle and the Angels at 5-3. The Dodgers have fallen to 3-5 after being swept in San Diego and then twice by the Angels, while Houston's offense has opened quietly enough to create its first question. Week 3 brings Boston to Toronto, Minnesota to Cleveland, Cincinnati through Milwaukee and Atlanta, and San Francisco into Dodger Stadium before hosting St. Louis. Eight games are enough to create distance. They are also enough to show which teams can answer when the first version of their season goes wrong.

TOP OF TABLE STL / SFG • 7-1	PERFECT WEEK TOR / LAA / STL • 4-0	AL EAST TOR • 6-2	ROUGH WEEK LAD / PIT • 0-4
---------------------------------	---------------------------------------	----------------------	-------------------------------

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK GOLD CHIPPER JONES • ATL <i>8-for-10 • 3 HR • 7 RBI</i> SILVER BO BICHETTE • TOR <i>4 HR • 7 RBI</i> BRONZE LARS NOOTBAAR • STL <i>3 HR • 6 RBI</i>	PITCHER OF THE WEEK GOLD DYLAN CEASE • CHW <i>CG SHO • 1 H</i> SILVER CORBIN BURNES • MIL <i>CG SHO • 3 H</i> BRONZE BLAKE SNELL • SDP <i>CG SHO • 4 H • 10 K</i>
--	---

MLBC — WEEK 3

GAMES 9-12 • TWO AT THE TOP

TWO TEAMS TAKE THE TOP

Toronto and San Francisco reach 10-2 while four perfect weeks scramble both leagues beneath them.

THE LEAD St. Louis and San Francisco started Week 3 at 7-1, Toronto and Minnesota at 6-2, and the middle of the standings remained broad enough for one sweep to change a division. Toronto drew Boston and Texas, Cleveland saw Minnesota and Boston, Cincinnati had Milwaukee and Atlanta, and San Francisco hosted St. Louis after a trip to Dodger Stadium. The Dodgers were already 3-5 after entering the season with enormous expectations, while Houston's quiet opening had created its first real question after a World Series appearance. The Cubs entered at 2-6 and Boston at 4-4, already close to the point where a bad week could become an identity.

THE WEEK Toronto, Tampa Bay, Cleveland and the Cubs all went 4-0. The Blue Jays climbed to 10-2 and San Francisco matched them, taking a road split from the Dodgers before sweeping St. Louis. Chicago supplied the sharpest reversal: the Cubs swept St. Louis and Washington to climb from 2-6 to 6-6, while the Cardinals fell from 7-1 to 7-5. Cleveland swept Minnesota and Boston, scoring 20 runs in the Minnesota set before taking two more at Fenway. Anthony Santander won consecutive games against the White Sox with 11th-inning walk-off HRs, Jesse Winker drove in seven for Cincinnati, and Buster Posey homered in three straight games. Jacob deGrom worked nine scoreless innings before the Mets won in the 11th; Drew Rasmussen threw a 2-hit shutout. Boston, Texas, Miami and St. Louis all went 0-4, proof that one week could still rearrange an entire quarter of the table.

THE STAKES Toronto and San Francisco now share baseball's best record at 10-2. Cleveland and Cincinnati are 8-4, while Atlanta, the Mets and Philadelphia sit together at 7-5 in the NL East. Boston has fallen to 4-8 and St. Louis has tumbled all the way from 7-1 to 7-5. Chicago, meanwhile, has turned 2-6 into .500 before the season's first quarter can harden into a verdict. Week 4 brings Boston to Houston and Atlanta, the Angels into Yankee Stadium, the Dodgers to the Mets, San Francisco to Chicago and Milwaukee, and a Subway Series in Queens. The fast starters still own the top. The more important development is how many clubs have already demonstrated that the table can move violently underneath them.

TOP OF TABLE TOR / SFG • 10-2	PERFECT WEEK 4 clubs • 4-0	NL EAST ATL / NYM / PHI • 7-5	REVERSAL STL • 0-4
--	---	--	-------------------------------------

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK GOLD JESSE WINKER • CIN <i>3 HR • 7 RBI</i> SILVER EDGAR MARTINEZ • SEA <i>2 HR • 6 RBI</i> BRONZE BUSTER POSEY • SFG <i>3 HR • 4 RBI</i>	PITCHER OF THE WEEK GOLD JACOB deGROM (2) • NYM <i>9 scoreless IP • 4 H</i> SILVER DREW RASMUSSEN • TBR <i>CG SHO • 2 H</i> BRONZE YORDANO VENTURA • KCR <i>CG SHO • 7 H</i>
--	--

MLBC — WEEK 4

GAMES 13-16 • COMPRESSION

THE RACES COMPRESS

Nobody goes 4-0, the Subway Series turns blue and orange, and three clubs leave tied for the league lead.

THE LEAD Toronto and San Francisco entered Week 4 at 10-2, with Cleveland and Cincinnati two games back and the NL East packed at 7-5. This was the first week without much room for a soft landing. Boston had Houston and Atlanta. The Angels went to New York. The Dodgers met the Mets. San Francisco faced a surging Cubs club and then Milwaukee. The Yankees and Mets closed the week against each other at 7-7, one rivalry series carrying two seasons that still lacked definition. Behind the leaders, the season had begun producing genuine danger zones: Boston was already 4-8 and St. Louis had fallen from 7-1 to 7-5.

THE WEEK Nobody went 4-0, but that did not make the week quiet. The Mets supplied the loudest local statement, sweeping the Yankees in Queens and scoring 24 runs in two games as Pete Alonso hit three HR. San Francisco finally gave ground: the Giants were swept at Wrigley, including a 14-inning loss, then split in Milwaukee to finish 1-3 and fall back toward the field. Houston went into Toronto and swept the 11-3 Blue Jays, another reminder that the defending AL champion's slow start had not erased its weight. Baltimore kept climbing behind Grayson Rodriguez's 3-hit shutout and Adley Rutschman's power. Evan Longoria drove in eight for San Francisco despite the losing week, while Spencer Strider threw a 3-hit, 13-strikeout shutout in San Diego. Philadelphia swept Pittsburgh to move into first in the NL East, and the Dodgers briefly found momentum before Washington swept it away.

THE STAKES Toronto, San Francisco and Cincinnati all exit at 11-5. Cleveland and Philadelphia are 10-6, and eight more clubs remain within two games of that line. The AL West has Seattle and Houston tied at 9-7; the NL East has Philadelphia one game ahead of Atlanta and the Mets. San Francisco's 1-3 week matters because the first real cushion at the top disappeared without anyone else needing to dominate. Week 5 takes everyone to the halfway checkpoint, with Baltimore visiting Houston, the Angels going to Toronto, Minnesota visiting Seattle, Los Angeles heading to Philadelphia, and Atlanta drawing Pittsburgh before a trip to Los Angeles. Sixteen games have produced leaders. None has produced safety.

TOP OF TABLE TOR / SFG / CIN • 11-5	NO PERFECT WEEK every club takes a loss	NL EAST PHI • 10-6	SUBWAY SERIES NYM sweeps NYY
---	--	------------------------------	--

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK GOLD EVAN LONGORIA • SFG 2 HR • 8 RBI SILVER PETE ALONSO • NYM 3 HR • Subway sweep BRONZE ADLEY RUTSCHMAN • BAL 2 HR • 4 RBI	PITCHER OF THE WEEK GOLD SPENCER STRIDER • ATL CG SHO • 3 H • 13 K SILVER WALKER BUEHLER • LAD CG SHO • 2 H BRONZE CHARLIE MORTON • ATL 8 scoreless IP
---	--

MLBC — WEEK 5

GAMES 17-20 • HALFWAY

TORONTO OWNS THE MIDPOINT

The Blue Jays reach 15-5, four clubs sweep the week, and the halfway standings finally show real distance.

THE LEAD The midpoint arrived with Toronto, San Francisco and Cincinnati tied at 11-5 and a crowded layer of contenders directly behind them. Four games remained before every team could look at exactly half a season. Toronto had the Angels and Kansas City, Baltimore drew Houston and Washington, Atlanta saw Pittsburgh and Los Angeles, and the Yankees faced Texas and Minnesota. Boston entered 6-10 before beginning the week's work, close enough to the edge that a turnaround had to become visible immediately.

THE WEEK Toronto, Baltimore, Boston and Atlanta all went 4-0. The Blue Jays reached 15-5 and became the first club to create real distance over the field, with Alek Manoah moving to 5-0 with a 1.70 ERA and Bo Bichette reaching ten HR. Baltimore surged to 13-7 behind two more wins over Washington, including Cal Ripken Jr.'s 11th-inning walk-off HR, and Atlanta swept Pittsburgh and Los Angeles to reclaim the NL East. Boston completed the week on a five-game winning streak, climbing from 5-10 to 10-10 and turning a near-collapse into a second-half invitation. San Francisco and Cincinnati held at 14-6. Max Fried threw a 2-hit complete-game shutout, Kodai Senga a 3-hit shutout, and Jacob deGrom a 1-hitter. Houston, the Angels and Arizona went 0-4. At the midpoint, the league finally had a leader and several equally convincing examples of how quickly a season could still reverse.

THE STAKES Toronto owns the halfway line at 15-5. San Francisco and Cincinnati are 14-6; Atlanta and Baltimore are 13-7; Tampa Bay, the Mets, Cleveland and the Cubs sit at 12-8. Boston has dragged itself back to 10-10. Meanwhile, the Yankees reach the break at 9-11 and last in the AL East. The AL West remains the opposite of separation, with Seattle first at only 11-9. Week 6 opens the second half with Toronto at Cleveland, the Yankees visiting Oakland and Seattle, Atlanta hosting San Francisco after its Boston series, the White Sox crossing town to Wrigley, and the Mets finishing the week in Colorado after San Francisco. Twenty games remain. From here, a four-game sweep no longer changes only the standings; it consumes one-fifth of the schedule that is left.

TOP OF TABLE TOR • 15-5	PERFECT WEEK TOR / BAL / BOS / ATL	NL CHASERS SFG / CIN • 14-6	AL WEST SEA • 11-9
----------------------------	---------------------------------------	--------------------------------	-----------------------

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK GOLD MIGUEL CABRERA • DET <i>2 HR • 5 RBI • Grand Slam</i> SILVER MATT OLSON • ATL <i>2 HR • 5 RBI</i> BRONZE MIGUEL SANÓ • MIN <i>2 HR • 4 RBI</i>	PITCHER OF THE WEEK GOLD MAX FRIED • ATL <i>CG SHO • 2 H</i> SILVER KODAI SENGU • NYM <i>CG SHO • 3 H</i> BRONZE JACOB deGROM • NYM <i>1-hitter • one run allowed</i>
--	---

MLBC — ALL-STAR BREAK

20 GAMES COMPLETE • MIDSEASON CLASSIC

THE STARS TRADE SHUTOUTS

A 1-0 American League classic, a 4-0 National League answer, and a split at the midpoint.

THE STAGE The first showcase opened with one of the season’s best possible pitching pairings: star rookie Spencer Strider for the National League against unbeaten Alek Manoah for the American League. Strider arrived at 4-0 with a 0.95 ERA and 60 strikeouts in 38 innings; Manoah was 5-0 with a 1.70 ERA for the 15-5 Blue Jays. Both delivered three dominant innings, and the game stayed scoreless while Félix Hernández, Jacob deGrom, Grayson Rodriguez, Clayton Kershaw, Gerrit Cole and Max Scherzer turned the middle innings into a parade of aces.

THE SERIES Game 1 finally moved when Salvador Perez doubled off Scherzer and Robinson Cano drove him home with an RBI 1B. The 1-0 lead reached rookie Jhoan Duran in the 9th, and Duran survived Eric Davis and Ryan Braun reaching base before striking out Buster Posey for the final out. Perez was named All-Star Game MVP for the second straight year. The National League answered immediately in Game 2. Nolan Arenado and Sammy Sosa produced first-inning RBI, Mike Yastrzemski homered in the 3rd and later singled, and Will Smith added another run. Luis Castillo opened with three scoreless innings, the NL defense turned a highlight-reel double play behind Yu Darvish, and the bullpen completed a 4-0 shutout. Shohei Ohtani appeared as both a hitter and pitcher, striking out two during his mound work.

THE HINGE The two leagues leave the break even at one game apiece and with completely different versions of an All-Star win: the American League surviving a 1-0 pressure game, the National League controlling a 4-0 answer from the opening inning forward. Twenty regular-season games are complete and twenty remain. Toronto owns the best first-half record at 15-5, but the showcase underlined how much elite pitching sits throughout both leagues. The break does not move a single club in the standings. It does something more useful for the story of the season: it draws a line. Everything before it is now the first half. Everything after it has half the runway.

SERIES 1-1 SPLIT	GAME 1 AL 1 • NL 0	GAME 2 NL 4 • AL 0	MVP SALVADOR PEREZ
---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

ALL-STAR MOMENTS

GAME 1 SALVADOR PEREZ • AL MVP for the second straight year • double before the winning run	GAME 2 MIKE YASTRZEMSKI • NL solo HR + 1B in the 4-0 National League win
---	--

MLBC — WEEK 6

GAMES 21-24 • SECOND HALF

THE CUBS BREAK THROUGH

Chicago owns the only perfect week, Toronto stays clear, and the second half rearranges the National League.

THE LEAD Toronto began the second half at 15-5, with San Francisco and Cincinnati one game behind and Atlanta and Baltimore at 13-7. The Cubs have crawled to 12-8 from 0-5. The schedule immediately put the leaders into traffic: Toronto visited Cleveland, the Yankees headed west, Atlanta hosted San Francisco after opening against Boston, the White Sox crossed town to Wrigley, and the Mets moved through San Francisco before finishing the week in Colorado. Twenty games had created a hierarchy. Week 6 asked how much of it could survive contact with the second half.

THE WEEK Chicago supplied the only perfect answer. The Cubs went 4-0, climbed to 16-8 and completed a remarkable transformation from their 0-5 opening, winning sixteen of nineteen after that start. Toronto went 3-1 and remained comfortably first at 18-6; Baltimore also reached 16-8, while the Mets moved into first in the NL East at 15-9 after sweeping the Giants. Shohei Ohtani produced one of the season's most complete individual games, striking out 14 while also hitting two HR and driving in five. Adam Jones authored a different kind of history for Baltimore, going 6-for-6 and extending a run to ten consecutive at-bats with hits. Eric Chavez drove in six runs with a triple and two HR in Oakland's 7-6 loss to Boston, an extraordinary performance that still was not enough to win. Justin Verlander answered on the mound with a 5-hit, 11-strikeout shutout, while Brandon Woodruff and Blake Snell also threw complete-game zeroes.

THE STAKES Toronto leaves Week 6 at 18-6, two games clear of San Francisco, Chicago and Baltimore at 16-8. The Mets, Cleveland and Cincinnati are 15-9. Seattle still leads the AL West at 13-11, the only club in that division above .500. The Cubs have changed the NL Central without waiting for Cincinnati to collapse; Baltimore is no longer simply a surprise; and Toronto continues to make everybody chase the same moving target. Week 7 turns toward rivalry and pressure: Mets-Yankees, Minnesota-Houston, Cleveland-Cincinnati, Seattle-Boston, Philadelphia-San Francisco, Cubs-White Sox and Seattle-Toronto. Sixteen games remain. The standings are no longer a snapshot. They are a clock.

TOP OF TABLE
TOR • 18-6

ONLY 4-0
CHC • 16-8

NL EAST
NYM • 15-9

AL WEST
SEA • 13-11

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK

GOLD ERIC CHAVEZ • OAK

2 HR • 8 RBI

SILVER MATT WILLIAMS • ARI

3 HR • 7 RBI

BRONZE SHOHEI OHTANI • LAA

3 HR • 7 RBI

PITCHER OF THE WEEK

GOLD JUSTIN VERLANDER • HOU

CG SHO • 5 H • 11 K

SILVER BRANDON WOODRUFF • MIL

CG SHO

BRONZE BLAKE SNELL • SDP

CG SHO • 5 H • 10 K

MLBC — WEEK 7

GAMES 25-28 • TORONTO BREAKS AWAY

TORONTO PULLS AWAY

The Blue Jays reach 22-6 while Atlanta and Boston surge and the AL West sinks into a four-team scramble.

THE LEAD Sixteen games remained, and Toronto owned the one luxury nobody else had: room. The Blue Jays entered 18-6, while San Francisco, Baltimore and Chicago sat two games behind. After that group, the Mets led Atlanta by only 1 game and Cleveland led Minnesota by 3. Rivalries dominated the week. The Yankees and Mets renewed the Subway Series, the Cubs and White Sox met across Chicago, Cleveland and Cincinnati fought for position, and Seattle faced both Boston and Toronto. The second half had reached the point where a four-game week could no longer be described as merely good or bad. It could materially decide October.

THE WEEK Toronto kept separating. Alek Manoah and Kevin Gausman remained unbeaten at a combined 11-0, Jordan Romano continued converting late leads, and the Blue Jays reached 22-6. The Yankees supplied the week's loudest reversal. After being humiliated by the Mets earlier in the season, New York swept the return Subway Series by a combined 18-5, even getting to Jacob deGrom as the rivalry swung completely the other direction. Boston continued its resurrection behind Rafael Devers, whose move down to seventh in the order preceded another offensive response and helped keep the Red Sox in the Wild Card chase. Around the league, the contenders kept trading position rather than conceding it. Toronto's advantage was not simply that it kept winning; its rotation and bullpen were making ordinary comeback windows disappear.

THE STAKES The Blue Jays are now 22-6 and have created the first truly imposing record of Season Two. Everything beneath them remains much less settled. Nowhere is that stranger than the AL West, where the Mariners and the Angels are tied for 1st at 13-15. San Francisco is still controlling the National League race, Chicago has turned its early disaster into a division lead, and Boston and the Yankees have both recovered enough to keep the AL East from becoming a one-team story beyond Toronto's dominance. Twelve games remain after this week. Week 8 is the last full block before the final eight, and the Wild Card positions are beginning to matter as much as the division races. Toronto has built room. Everyone else is running out of it.

TOP OF TABLE TOR • 22-6	PERFECT WEEK TOR / BOS / ATL • 4-0	NL EAST ATL • 18-10 • +1	AL WEST SEA / LAA • 13-15
----------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------------

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK GOLD SALVADOR PEREZ • KCR 4 HR • 14 RBI SILVER BYRON BUXTON • MIN 2 HR • 5 RBI BRONZE WILLIE STARGELL • PIT 2 HR • 5 RBI	PITCHER OF THE WEEK GOLD CARLOS CARRASCO • CLE CG SHO • 14 K SILVER DREW RASMUSSEN • TBR CG SHO • 4 H • 11 K BRONZE CARLOS RODON • SFG 7⅓ scoreless IP
---	--

MLBC — WEEK 8

GAMES 29-32 • EIGHT TO GO

THE WILD CARD RACES IGNITE

Six clubs go 4-0, Boston and Los Angeles charge, and eight games remain with nearly every race still moving.

THE LEAD Twelve games remained, with Toronto holding the league's best record and almost every race underneath it compressed. San Francisco and Chicago controlled the National League's strongest positions, Boston and the Mets were surging, Seattle was trying to create a real AL West lead, and the Dodgers had finally worked themselves back toward relevance. Atlanta had just surged to 18-10 and taken the NL East by a game over the Mets. Week 8 arrived as the last chance to make a major move before the schedule shrank to single digits.

THE WEEK Six clubs went 4-0, and the standings moved with them. Toronto reached 24-8. Seattle's sweep week pushed the Mariners to 17-15 and made them the first AL West club in weeks to stand clearly above .500. Minnesota swept Cleveland and tightened the Central; Boston beat the Yankees twice, including an extra-inning game won by David Ortiz, and kept climbing after its terrible opening. Sammy Sosa delivered the week's signature eruption, hitting four HR in one game and six across the week. Mickey Tettleton nearly matched the spectacle in a different form, hitting three HR, a game-tying double and totaling fourteen bases in one enormous performance. Brandon Lowe drove in ten for Tampa Bay, while Nick Castellanos piled up seventeen total bases in one Cincinnati series. Carlos Rodon threw a 3-hit, 12-strikeout shutout; Shohei Ohtani a 5-hit, 13-strikeout shutout; and Gerrit Cole struck out sixteen while allowing one run.

THE STAKES Toronto is 24-8. San Francisco and Chicago are 21-11, with the Mets and Boston at 20-12 and five more clubs sitting 19-13. Seattle leads the AL West at 17-15. The Dodgers have surged to 19-13, only two games from the NL West lead, and San Diego remains close enough to threaten the Wild Card field. Eight games remain. Week 9 brings Tampa Bay to Baltimore, Toronto to New York, Houston through Oakland and Seattle, Philadelphia to the Mets, Chicago through Atlanta and Cincinnati, and San Diego to San Francisco. At this point a sweep can create a playoff position, erase one, or turn a routine head-to-head series into the most important baseball a club has played all year.

TOP OF TABLE
TOR • 24-8

PERFECT WEEK
6 clubs • 4-0

NL TOP
SFG / CHC • 21-11

DODGER SURGE
LAD • 19-13

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK

GOLD SAMMY SOSA • CHC

6 HR • 9 RBI

SILVER BRANDON LOWE • TBR

3 HR • 10 RBI

BRONZE NICK CASTELLANOS • CIN

3 HR • 17 TB in one series

PITCHER OF THE WEEK

GOLD CARLOS RODON • SFG

CG SHO • 3 H • 12 K

SILVER SHOHEI OHTANI • LAA

CG SHO • 5 H • 13 K

BRONZE GERRIT COLE • NYY

16 K • one run allowed

MLBC — WEEK 9

GAMES 33-36 • STRETCH RUN

ATLANTA MAKES ITS MOVE

The Braves go 4-0, the Central races tighten, and every remaining game acquires postseason weight.

THE LEAD Eight games remained. Toronto stood above the league at 24-8, while San Francisco and Chicago were 21-11 and a large collection of clubs remained packed between nineteen and twenty wins. Cleveland led Minnesota by one, while Seattle held a 2-game lead over Houston. The Dodgers had won seven of eight to surge back into the postseason picture, but San Diego remained only a game behind them for the final NL Wild Card spot. The final two weeks would decide almost everything underneath the Blue Jays: the AL Central, the AL West, the NL East, the National League Wild Cards and the order of October itself.

THE WEEK Kansas City became an unexpected force in the AL Central race by stealing two ninth-inning wins from Minnesota, results that kept the Twins from taking sole possession of first place. Spencer Strider continued turning his rookie season into something larger, reaching 104 strikeouts even in a game Atlanta needed thirteen innings to win. Chicago stumbled twice in Atlanta, then answered by sweeping Cincinnati, a perfect example of how quickly a bad opening to the week could still be rescued. The Cubs entered Atlanta on a three-game winning streak, and their recovery afterward kept the Central in their hands. Toronto continued adding victories without drama, while San Francisco remained positioned for the National League's top seed. Every late result now carried two meanings: what it did for the club that won and what it quietly did to somebody else's bracket.

THE STAKES Four games remain after this week. Toronto has all but removed suspense from the AL East, but the rest of the postseason field is still being assembled in public. Minnesota and Cleveland remain entangled in the Central. Seattle still has to finish the AL West. Atlanta and the Mets are separated by almost nothing in the East, while the Dodgers' late surge has made the National League even tighter, as they now hold a Wild Card position. The final week will not be about trends. It will be about ownership: who owns a division, who owns a Wild Card, who owns a bye and who has to watch October begin without them.

TOP OF TABLE TOR • 26-10	ONLY 4-0 ATL • 23-13	AL CENTRAL CLE / MIN • 20-16	NL WILD CARD LAD 21-15 • SDP 20-16
-----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------------

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK

GOLD EUGENIO SUÁREZ • CIN

4 HR • 10 RBI

SILVER WILLIAM CONTRERAS • ATL

4 HR • 6 RBI

BRONZE ALBERT PUJOLS • LAA

2 HR • 7 RBI • Grand Slam

PITCHER OF THE WEEK

GOLD TYLER GLASNOW • TBR

CG SHO • 1 H • 1 BB

SILVER JUSTIN VERLANDER • HOU

CG SHO • 1 H

BRONZE JOHNNY CUETO • SFG

CG SHO • 13 K

MLBC — WEEK 10

GAMES 37-40 • FINAL WEEK

THE FIELD IS SET

Toronto sets the wins record, San Francisco secures the NL's top seed, and the last four games choose October.

THE LEAD Four games remained. Toronto needed only to finish its record-setting regular season. San Francisco still had to hold off Los Angeles for the NL West and the league's top National League seed. Atlanta led the Mets by one game. Cleveland and Minnesota were tied in the AL Central, with the Twins also fighting the Yankees and Tampa Bay for the final Wild Card. Seattle still had an AL West title to secure. The Dodgers had won six of eight to turn the NL West into a final-week chase. The schedule had reached its cleanest form: almost every game either clinched something, eliminated something or changed somebody else's path.

THE WEEK Toronto won three of four to finish 29-11 and set a new MLBC wins record. The Blue Jays' 28th victory matched San Francisco's previous high; number twenty-nine moved the record forward. San Francisco stumbled once in Colorado, but Johnny Cueto ended the suspense with a 3-hit, 11-strikeout shutout and the Giants secured the NL's #1 seed at 26-14. Atlanta won the NL East after the Mets were swept in Miami, including Jesús Luzardo's 2-hit shutout. Cleveland took the AL Central, Seattle held the West and Chicago won the NL Central. Minnesota captured the final AL Wild Card when Byron Buxton hit a playoff-clinching Grand Slam, his record twentieth HR. Gerrit Cole finished his Cy Young closing argument with a third consecutive 2-hit complete game, this one a 14-strikeout shutout of Baltimore. The save race had its own late exchange: Garrett Whitlock and Jordan Romano reached fourteen, Whitlock moved to fifteen, and Romano answered by matching fifteen.

THE STAKES The regular season is complete. Toronto and Cleveland receive the American League byes; Boston hosts Baltimore and Seattle hosts Minnesota. San Francisco and Atlanta receive the National League byes; Los Angeles hosts the Mets and Chicago hosts Cincinnati. Toronto owns the best record in MLBC history at 29-11. San Francisco owns the National League at 26-14. Byron Buxton's final-week Grand Slam is the difference between a record-setting individual season ending at forty games and continuing into October. The standings have finished their work. From here forward, only series scores matter.

BEST RECORD
TOR • 29-11

NL #1 SEED
SFG • 26-14

FINAL AL BERTH
MIN • 21-19

PLAYOFF FIELD
12 clubs remain

WEEKLY HONORS

HITTER OF THE WEEK

GOLD BYRON BUXTON • MIN
2 HR • 5 RBI • *clinching Grand Slam*

SILVER RYAN ZIMMERMAN • WSH
6 RBI • *late-week surge*

BRONZE HOWIE KENDRICK • WSH
6 RBI • 3-run HR in finale

PITCHER OF THE WEEK

GOLD GERRIT COLE • NYY
CG SHO • 2 H • 14 K

SILVER JESÚS LUZARDO • MIA
CG SHO • 2 H • 1 BB • 11 K

BRONZE JOHNNY CUETO • SFG
CG SHO • 3 H • 11 K

MLBC — WILD CARD ROUND

GAMES 41-43 • BEST-OF-THREE

OCTOBER OPENS ON THE EDGE

Three series reach a deciding game, Cincinnati sweeps a rival, and late swings decide who gets to keep playing.

THE FIELD Boston hosted Baltimore, Seattle hosted Minnesota, Los Angeles hosted the Mets, and Chicago hosted Cincinnati. Toronto and Cleveland waited with American League byes, while San Francisco and Atlanta watched from the National League side. The short series left no room to settle in. The Mets brought Jacob deGrom to Los Angeles, while Cincinnati and Chicago turned a season-long division fight into a best-of-three rivalry series. Seattle entered with a division title, Chicago with 25 wins, and Boston with momentum, but forty games of position had only earned a playoff matchup, not immunity. Three of the four series immediately became elimination tests.

THE ROUND Boston survived Baltimore 2-1. Jason Varitek repeatedly helped Boston answer Baltimore's scoring in the decider, and Xander Bogaerts ended the series with a 9th-inning walk-off RBI double. Minnesota recovered from an 8-1 opening loss in Seattle, forced Game #3 and broke the decider open with Miguel Sanó's Grand Slam. The Mets won the opener in Los Angeles behind Jacob deGrom, but the Dodgers answered with a twelve-run eruption and then survived an extraordinary scoreless Game #3 until Joc Pederson hit a 12th-inning walk-off HR. Cincinnati never needed a decider. Luis Castillo carried eight shutout innings in the opener, and the Reds followed with a 1-0 win to sweep Chicago.

THE STAKES Eight teams remain. Boston moves on to Cleveland. Minnesota gets the largest assignment in the league: Toronto and its 29 wins. Los Angeles advances to Atlanta after twelve scoreless innings with its season hanging on every pitch. Cincinnati heads to San Francisco. Seattle had a division title; Chicago had 25 wins; the Mets had deGrom. None guaranteed another round. October has already stripped away the comfort of the regular-season résumé. The four survivors advance carrying four different kinds of momentum: a walk-off, a comeback from an 8-1 opening loss, a twelve-inning escape and the round's only sweep. The bye teams now enter against opponents who have already had to survive the thing they were waiting to feel.

AL DECIDER BOS def. BAL • 2-1	AL COMEBACK MIN def. SEA • 2-1	NL WALK-OFF LAD def. NYM • 2-1	ONLY SWEEP CIN def. CHC • 2-0
--	---	---	--

ROUND RESULTS

AMERICAN LEAGUE BOS def. BAL, 2-1 <i>Bogaerts: walk-off RBI 2B in Game #3</i> MIN def. SEA, 2-1 <i>Sanó: Grand Slam in the deciding game</i>	NATIONAL LEAGUE LAD def. NYM, 2-1 <i>Pederson: 12th-inning walk-off in Game #3</i> CIN def. CHC, 2-0 <i>Reds win the clincher, 1-0</i>
---	---

MLBC — DIVISION SERIES

GAMES 44-48 • BEST-OF-FIVE

TORONTO REFUSES TO GO HOME

The Blue Jays escape 0-2, Boston sweeps, and both National League series become tests of ace pitching.

THE FIELD The four bye teams finally entered. Toronto had set the MLBC wins record at 29-11. Cleveland had survived the AL Central. San Francisco owned the National League's #1 seed, and Atlanta had taken the East. Their opponents arrived already sharpened by elimination baseball: Minnesota, Boston, Cincinnati and Los Angeles. Toronto entered carrying the league's 29-win record, but Minnesota arrived having already survived an 8-1 Wild Card loss and a winner-take-all comeback in Seattle. Boston had already played a three-game series against Baltimore and then drew Cleveland, while Cincinnati arrived as the only Wild Card club that had not needed a deciding game.

THE ROUND Boston never let Cleveland settle, winning twice on the road before Alex Verdugo's Grand Slam helped finish a 3-0 sweep at Fenway. Toronto faced the exact opposite experience. Minnesota stunned the Blue Jays twice in Toronto, 5-0 and 5-2, and the best regular-season team in league history suddenly stood one loss from becoming a footnote. Toronto answered 9-4 and 5-1 in Minnesota, with Bo Bichette and José Bautista at the center of the offensive response, then returned home and won Game #48, 6-4. Three straight elimination wins erased the 0-2 hole. Los Angeles beat Atlanta 3-1, closing with a 1-0 victory. San Francisco survived Cincinnati 3-2; Madison Bumgarner stacked fifteen scoreless innings across the series before the Giants won the decider 7-0. Wilmer Flores supplied the exclamation point in that decider, coming off the bench to hit a series-clinching Grand Slam in the eighth inning.

THE STAKES Four teams remain. Toronto gets Boston after surviving the first true crisis of its season. Boston arrives rested by a sweep and already knows it can win inside the AL East. San Francisco gets the rivalry that has been sitting behind the entire second half: Los Angeles, with the pennant attached. Boston enters the ALCS having won five of six postseason games, while Los Angeles reaches the NLCS after surviving two elimination rounds and now gets the opponent it spent the season chasing. Toronto's comeback changes the meaning of its 29-win season. The record no longer looks like insulation from pressure. It looks like the foundation that allowed the Blue Jays to survive when every ounce of insulation disappeared.

SWEEP BOS def. CLE • 3-0	ESCAPE TOR def. MIN • 3-2	NL ROAD WIN LAD def. ATL • 3-1	DECIDER SFG def. CIN • 3-2
---	--	---	---

SERIES RESULTS

AMERICAN LEAGUE BOS def. CLE, 3-0 <i>Red Sox score 23 runs in the sweep</i> TOR def. MIN, 3-2 <i>Blue Jays win three straight facing elimination</i>	NATIONAL LEAGUE LAD def. ATL, 3-1 <i>Dodgers close the series with a 1-0 win</i> SFG def. CIN, 3-2 <i>Bumgarner: 15 scoreless IP in the series</i>
---	---

MLBC — CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

GAMES 49-53 • BEST-OF-SEVEN

THE #1 SEEDS CLAIM THE PENNANTS

Toronto turns its escape into an AL title while San Francisco finally gets past Los Angeles and reaches the World Series.

THE MATCHUPS Top-seeded Toronto came out of its five-game escape against Minnesota and immediately met Boston, a club that had swept Cleveland and spent the second half recovering from its own disastrous start. Toronto survived three consecutive elimination games. In the National League, the season's most natural collision finally arrived: San Francisco and Los Angeles, rivals separated by two regular-season games, with the pennant on the line. Both #1 seeds had home field. Neither series felt safe enough to trust it.

THE ROUND Toronto won the first two at home, Hyun-Jin Ryu carrying a shutout deep into Game #49 and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hitting a 3-run HR in the 1st inning of Game #50. Boston stole an 11-inning classic in Game #51 on late heroics from David Ortiz and Alex Verdugo, but George Springer hit two HR in Game #52 and Toronto closed the series 4-1 in Game #53. San Francisco and Los Angeles split the first two before the Giants took both games at Dodger Stadium: Mike Yastrzemski delivered a 2-out RBI single in the 9th of Game #51, and LaMonte Wade's 2-run HR helped win Game #52. Back home, Brandon Belt, Brandon Crawford and Wade went back-to-back-to-back in the clincher. San Francisco also won the series 4-1. Both #1 seeds ultimately turned home-field advantage into pennants, though Boston did force Toronto to answer an extra-inning loss, while Los Angeles made San Francisco win twice at Dodger Stadium before the Giants could finish the rivalry at home.

THE PENNANTS Toronto is the American League champion. San Francisco is the National League champion. The Blue Jays arrive after setting the wins record and then surviving three consecutive elimination games. The Giants arrive one year after letting an NLCS lead disappear, this time beating the Dodgers in the rivalry series that had shadowed their season. Both #1 seeds have reached the World Series, but by very different emotional routes. Toronto has already survived catastrophe. San Francisco has finally finished unfinished business. Now the two best regular-season teams play for the championship. The result is the World Series matchup the season had been pointing to all along.

AL PENNANT TOR • 4-1	NL PENNANT SFG • 4-1	AL TURN Springer • 2 HR in G52	NL CLINCHER SFG • 3 straight HR
-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------------	------------------------------------

LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

AMERICAN LEAGUE TORONTO BLUE JAYS <i>Defeated Boston, 4-1</i> Series seal <i>Toronto wins Game #53 at home</i>	NATIONAL LEAGUE SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS <i>Defeated Los Angeles, 4-1</i> Series seal <i>Three consecutive HR in Game #53</i>
---	--

MLBC — WORLD SERIES

GAMES 54-58 • THE FALL CLASSIC

TORONTO FINISHES THE CLIMB

The league's winningest team beats San Francisco in five and becomes the second champion in MLBC history.

THE STAGE The World Series put the two #1 seeds together. Toronto entered with the best regular-season record in MLBC history, a 29-11 mark that had survived an 0-2 Division Series deficit. San Francisco had won the NL West, the National League's top seed and finally the pennant after stopping one round short the year before. One year earlier, Toronto had missed the postseason at 19-21 while San Francisco won 28 games only to lose a two-game NLCS lead. Madison Bumgarner faced Kevin Gausman in Toronto with the entire season reduced to one best-of-seven series.

THE SERIES Game #54 stayed 1-1 into the bottom of the 9th, when Teoscar Hernández opened the World Series with a walk-off solo HR. San Francisco answered violently: Logan Webb threw a 4-hit complete-game shutout and Barry Bonds hit a Grand Slam in an 8-0 Game #55 win. Toronto took the series west and seized control. Alek Manoah carried a no-hitter into the 7th in a 5-1 Game #56 victory. In Game #57, Bonds turned a 3-1 deficit into a Giants lead with a 3-run HR, but Toronto answered in the 7th and Jordan Romano closed a 6-4 win. Back in Toronto for Game #58, Webb protected a 1-0 lead until George Springer hit a 2-run HR in the 6th. It was Springer's first hit of the World Series, arriving at the exact moment Toronto needed one swing to turn a deficit into a championship lead. Romano handled the final three outs of the 2-1 championship clincher. The 4-1 series score makes the final look easier than it was; four games turned on one swing, one late inning or one ace protecting almost nothing.

THE CHAMPIONS Toronto wins the World Series 4-1. Bo Bichette is the official World Series MVP, adding the championship award to an October in which the Statbook also recognizes him as Playoff MVP. Romano completes the postseason without allowing a run in twelve appearances, the quiet backbone beneath Toronto's October survival. San Francisco's season ends one round short, but the Giants finally claimed the pennant they missed a year earlier. Toronto's achievement is different: the league's regular-season giant entered October, nearly fell immediately, then proved it could win after its margin for error had completely disappeared. Season Two did not crown an underdog. It crowned the favorite after the favorite learned how to survive. Toronto, you are the 2023 MLBC champions, forever.

SERIES TOR def. SFG • 4-1	OPENING DRAMA TOR • walk-off G54	GIANTS ANSWER SFG 8 • TOR 0	CLINCHER TOR 2 • SFG 1
-------------------------------------	--	---------------------------------------	----------------------------------

WORLD SERIES HONORS

CHAMPIONSHIP TORONTO BLUE JAYS <i>2023 MLBC World Series Champions</i> Series result <i>Defeated San Francisco, 4-1</i>	OFFICIAL HONORS WORLD SERIES MVP • BO BICHETTE <i>Official MLBC Statbook award</i> POSTSEASON MARK • JORDAN ROMANO <i>12 appearances • 0 runs allowed</i>
--	--

MLBC — SEASON IN REVIEW

2023 • SEASON TWO

THE SEASON TORONTO FINISHED

Forty games produced a new wins record. Forty-three postseason games turned it into a championship.

THE SEASON Toronto set the league's regular-season standard. The Blue Jays reached 10-2 after twelve games, 15-5 at the midpoint, 22-6 after Week 7 and finally 29-11, setting the MLBC wins record. San Francisco finished 26-14, claiming the NL's #1 seed. Byron Buxton won AL MVP after a record-setting 20-HR season with 43 runs and 128 total bases; Evan Longoria won NL MVP after leading the league with 33 RBI and 30 runs. Gerrit Cole won AL Cy Young after a dominant finish; rookie Spencer Strider won NL Cy Young and NL Rookie of the Year.

THE TURN Toronto's championship came through October danger. The Blue Jays lost the first two Division Series games at home to Minnesota and stood one loss from turning a record season into trivia. They won twice in Minnesota, then completed the escape at home in Game #48. They took the first two ALCS games from Boston, won the pennant in five and met San Francisco in a World Series between #1 seeds. The Giants broke through by beating the rival Dodgers 4-1 after falling one round short the year before. Season Two changed the standard again: regular-season dominance mattered because Toronto found another identity when dominance stopped protecting it.

THE LEGACY Toronto won the World Series 4-1, clinching on George Springer's 2-run HR and Jordan Romano's scoreless 9th in Game #58. Bo Bichette won official Playoff and World Series MVP; Romano allowed no runs in twelve postseason appearances. San Francisco's lone win paired Logan Webb's 4-hit shutout with Barry Bonds's Grand Slam. Season One crowned a 1-7 survivor; Season Two crowned the giant that nearly fell. MLBC now had two champions and two paths for future contenders to inherit.

AL MVP
BYRON BUXTON

NL MVP
EVAN LONGORIA

AL CY YOUNG
GERRIT COLE

NL CY YOUNG
SPENCER STRIDER

POSTSEASON HONORS

PLAYOFF AWARDS

PLAYOFF MVP • BO BICHETTE*TOR • official MLBC Statbook award***POSTSEASON MARK • JORDAN ROMANO***TOR • 12 appearances / 0 runs allowed*

WORLD SERIES AWARDS

WORLD SERIES MVP • BO BICHETTE*TOR • official MLBC Statbook award***CLINCHING SWING • GEORGE SPRINGER***TOR • 2-run HR in Game #58*

PENNANTS & CHAMPIONSHIP

AMERICAN LEAGUE CHAMPION
TORONTO BLUE JAYS

NATIONAL LEAGUE CHAMPION
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

2023 MLBC WORLD SERIES CHAMPION

TORONTO BLUE JAYS