Blue Jays: 50 most significant moments to celebrate 50 years

1. October 23rd 1993: Joe Carter's homerun wins the world series
   This is, and likely always will be, the Blue Jays greatest moment as a franchise. Although there was a moment on November 1st when I thought we were going to witness only the third homerun to end a world series. But it was not to be, so "touch 'em all Joe, you'll never hit a bigger homerun in your life!
2. October 11th 1992: Alomar's homerun off of Eckersley in game 4 of the 92 ALCS
   Many have argued that this is actually the most significant homerun in Blue Jays history. It's important to remember how many good Bluejays teams before 1992 failed to break through. The team had lost 3 ALCS's, and lost 2 division titles on the last day of the season. This Alomar homerun off of one of the best closers of all time tied the game, which the Bluejays won in extra innings. With a thrilling comeback win, and a strangle hold on the ALCS, it finally felt like this year would be different.
3. October 20th, 2025: George Springer's homerun in game 7 of the ALCS
   Nothing tops Carter's homerun to win the world series, but George Springer's homerun in the 7th inning of game 7 of the ALCS is pretty close. Both were three run shots that turned a deficit into a lead. It meant that the 2025 team had gone further than any other Blue Jays team in 32 years, and a whole generation of Blue Jays fans saw their team in the world series for the first time. And it capped off what is possibly the best comeback year for a Blue Jays player in franchise history. I will always remember Chris Laroux's awe struck voice on the radio broadcast. " You've got to be kidding me Ben. that is the best moment in sports I've ever seen."
4. October 18, 1992: Ed Sprague's go-ahead homerun in game two of the 92 world Series
   And from such an unlikely player. Ed Sprague later had a 36 homerun season for the Jays, but he was a bench player in 92, and only had 3 plate appearances in the entire series. But this ninth inning homerun turned a one run deficit into a lead, and the series was suddenly tied at one going back to Toronto. The 92 world series never gets mentioned when talking about the greatest world series of all time, but look at the four Blue Jays wins. All by one run, with one extra innings win, one walk off win, and one come from behind in the 9th inning win. Another moment from this world series, like Devon White's great catch, or Dave Winfield's extra inning double, could have made this list. But it's Sprague's homerun that turned the series around.
5. October 14th 2015: The bat flip game
   George Springer's homerun may have been bigger, but I think this was the most exciting Blue Jays game since the 1993 world series. It's so famous it has it's own name. What other Blue Jays game can you say that about? It's not just the epic Bautista homerun, but all the unusual action in the 7th inning of that game. From Russel Martin's throw back to the mound in the top of the inning, to the three straight errors by the Rangers in the Bottom of the inning.
   Remember how tense things were in the stadium before the Bautista homerun. The delayed umpire's call on Texas's go-ahead run made it feel like the game was being manipulated to keep the only Canadian team away from the world series. For those watching in the stadium, we didn't find out the umpire's got the call right until later. If the Blue Jays lost, there might have been a riot. Instead though, Bautista's homerun released 22 years of fan anticipation and

frustration into one massive roar that shook the stadium. It felt like we would blow the roof off. It will probably always be the most exciting game I ever attended.

6. October 5th 1985: Blue Jays beat the Yankees 5-1 to clinch their first division title
   Ernie Witt, Lloyd Moseby, and Willie Upshaw hit solo homeruns early, and Doyle Alexander pitched a complete game. This game was the Blue Jays 99th win of the season, which is still the franchise record. It followed two 89 win seasons in 83 and 84. The Blue Jays had arrived as one of MLBs best teams, and the optimism must have been boundless, as the team had not yet experienced any of it's memorable late season collapses at this point. There was a core of young players, who had long careers with the Blue Jays, and are still some of the most recognized names in team history.
7. September 24th to October 4th 1987: Tigers comeback to win division over Blue Jays
   Long time Blue Jays fans know this history well. The Blue Jays, leading the Tigers by half a game in the Eastern division race, played them in 7 of the last 10 games of the season. The Blue Jays won the first three games at exhibition stadium in wildly exciting action. All three wins were comebacks, and two of them were walk offs in the bottom of the ninth. If events had worked out differently, role player Juan Beniquez might be on this list for his 3-run walk off double on September 26th.
   But of course that's not how things went. The Blue Jays lost in 13 innings the next day, were swept by the Brewers, and lost the last three games at Tiger stadium. So why is this so high up on my list? Maybe it made the world series win 5 years later feel all the sweeter because it took so long to get there. But mostly, I think it's a top ten moment because so much of the experience of baseball for a team and their fans is how to cope with losing. We feel it as much as the wins and it's part of what bonds us to other fans and the team. Ask the Red Sox, who turned late season collapses into the stuff of legends and curses. And there is a life time of memories burned into the minds of fans from those 11 days. Bill Matlock's dirty slide that broke Tony Fernandez's elbow, Ernie Witt cracking his ribs a few days later in almost the same place on the field, Gibbson's game tying homerun off of Henke on Sept 27th, Manny Lee's errors in the game on October 3rd, Cecil Fielder (CECIL FIELDER) caught steeling in the last game, Mike Flanigan pitching 11 innings in a loss. Mostly, I can't imagine what it was like to watch that last game where Jimmy Key and the Blue Jays lost 1-0. It must have felt like a long inevitable walk into darkness.
8. September 2nd 1990: Dave Steib's no hitter
   Many Blue Jays pitchers have taken no hitters into the 9th inning, and three Blue Jay pitchers have lost a no hitter with two outs in the 9th. And this game is the only No hitter in team history. Of course, this story is even more remarkable for all of Steib's near misses. He threw 5 one hitters before this game, a couple of which come up later on this list. The headline in the Toronto Star the next day read "FINALLY!"
9. August 29th, 2004: Tom Cheek's celebration
   Reds hall of fame broadcaster Marty Brennaman, in an argument with Ken Griffey Jr that was picked up by the media, said "I was here before you, and I will be here after you." Tom Cheek was here for us for 4306 straight games, from opening day in 1977 to June 3rd 2004. That's almost 1,700 more games than Cal Ripken Jr. In a game where the team's players change so frequently, the constant presence of a hall of fame broadcaster keeps the team feeling welcoming and familiar. As a kid I often tried using some of his folksy expressions in regular

conversation, the nerve of a cat burglar, dying a rag dolls death, all the ducks are on the pond, and of course touch 'em all. Tom and Jerry's voices, (Jerry comes up later on the list), are always in my head when I think of the Blue Jays. Watch that Tom Cheek ceremony online again and try not to shed a tear.

10. Nov 1st, 2025: Dodgers vs Blue Jays, game 7
    In time I think Blue Jays fans will cherish this world series, in the same way Red Sox fans fondly remember the 1975 series. In the 9th inning of that game, I thought I would be putting this at number 1 or two on the list. But a world series game 7 is always significant to baseball history in general, and more so when it's a nail biter of a game. What a roller coaster! I felt nervous but hopeful in the top of the 9th, screamed with joy because I thought they had won the game at 3 points in the bottom of the 9th, was sure they were going to lose it in the 10th, and thought they would tie it in the 11th and the season would never end. And then the game ended so suddenly. I will always remember the shocked murmuring of the crowd as it took a few seconds for everyone to realize the game was over. And then everyone quietly filed out for the long trip home.
11. October 4th, 2016: Edwin walks the parrot to beat the orioles in the wild card game
    So many Blue Jays seasons, especially between 1994 and 2015, were so mediocre, that it's surprising to me that it took until number 11 before this moment came up. Edwin Encarnacion hit a walk off homerun in a winner take all playoff game, and is only the fourth major league player to accomplish that particular feat. For how many teams would this moment be in the top three? On a personal note, this was also the night my wife went into labour with our first child. Bautista's homer for the first run of the game happened while we were still at home, And Encarnacion's game winning homerun came while we were in the waiting room of the maternity ward. Our daughter was actually born the next day, which is why her name isn't Edwina. Kidding of course. My wife proof read this.
12. October 9th, 2016: The Donaldson dash
    Only five days after Edwin's homerun, improbably the Blue Jays walked off another playoff series when Donaldson scored from second base on a ground ball in the 10th inning. Including the final two games of the regular season, this was the Blue Jays sixth win in a row. They had struggled in September, giving up the division lead to the Red Sox, and were at risk of missing the playoffs entirely on the final weekend of the season. But two wins at Fenway, Edwin's heroics in the wild card game, and a sweep of the Rangers in the ALDS, recaptured that 2015 feeling. Just 10 days later, this era of Blue Jays baseball came to a quiet end. We didn't know it at the time, but this game also featured the last homerun that Encarnacion hit as a Blue Jay.
13. April 7th, 1977: Game one in the snow at exhibition stadium
    This is the only thing I know about the expansion era Bluejays. Zamboni's had to clear the snow off the field, Anne Murray sang the national anthem, and Doug Alt hit two homeruns as the Blue Jays won their first game 9-5 over the White Sox. I'm sure there are other moments between 1977-82 that could be on this list, but I just don't know about them. Although I was too young to be a fan in the 80s, lots of those games have popped up online over the years, and Tom and Jerry talked about those teams regularly on the broadcast. So even though I never watch Bell, Barfield and Moseby live, I know something of them. But the Jays from 1977, not a clue. But it takes a lot of work to land a major league team, and I know there were bumps along the way.

The giants nearly moved here and Toronto could have been a national league team. That's an interesting alternative history.

14. December 5th, 1990: Blue Jays trade McGriff and Fernandez for Carter and Alomar
    I think there is an alternative version of this list that could focus a lot more on front office moves. Fans don't get to experience that first hand though, and I wanted the list to be about fans biggest memories of the team. So this is only one of two front office trades that made my list. Because wow! What a Trade! Two hall of famers in Fred McGriff and Roberto Alomar, The Blue Jays all time WAR leader in Tony Fernandez, and a perennial 100 RBI man in Joe Carter. I wonder how many trades in baseball history have featured four players of that caliber? This trade, along with other moves (the trade for Devon White, the departure of George Bell), completely changed the make-up of the team, and a new era had begun. The star players from the 80s were mostly gone, and the star players of the 90s had arrived.
15. October 8th 2025: Da Yankees Lose!
    Was this the moment where the Blue Jays became Vladdy's team? Certainly us fans have put all our hopes and expectations for this era of Blue Jays baseball on his shoulders, and he was being paid like a superstar. But I think for most of his career, he's been a likeable player, who was always good, and sometimes great. But we questioned, would he show up when the lights were the brightest? It hadn't felt like that in his all be it brief other playoff appearances. Boy, how that narrative changed just over four games against the Yankees. In the series, Guerrero went 9 for 17, with 3 homeruns, 9 RBIs, and 5 runs scored. Our first playoff win in nine years, topped off with a great John Stirling impression.
16. September 25th 2003: Carlos Delgado's 4 homer game
    Even though I ranked Steib's no hitter higher, this was a greater accomplishment. Four homer games are much rarer. It has only happened 21 times in MLB history, while there have been 322 no hitters thrown. Obviously, Delgado holds the record for most total bases in a single game (4 homers = 16 bases).
    The other great thing about this game was, it was a great game. The final score was 10-8, and Delgado's 8th inning homerun tied the game. Mike Bordick, who only hit 382 fewer homeruns than Delgado, actually hit the winning homer. Only 13,408 were their to see one of the greatest regular season games in team history. Sadly, I missed it as well. It was the first month of my first year of university, and I was distracted by classes and adjusting to residence life. But every baseball fan has been there. With a game nearly every day for six straight months, it's almost impossible to see it all. And how often does your team do a great thing the moment your back is turned?
17. May 15th 1989: Blue Jays appoint Cito Gaston as interim manager
    The Blue Jays were 12 games under 500 when Gaston was appointed manager. He was only supposed to be the interim manager, and there were regular rumours the first month or so on who would replace him. It was a slow climb back, the Blue Jays didn't go over the 500 mark for good until mid-August, before clinching the division on the next to last day of the season. Cito exasperated segments of the fan base with his bullpen management, not using his bench enough, and not employing aggressive base running plays. But he is the winningest manager in history, with four division titles and two world series wins. No other Blue Jay manager comes close to those accomplishments, and so Cito Gaston needs to have a place somewhere on this list.

18. October 12th, 1993: Blue Jays defeat White Sox to go to their second straight world series
    I was surprised at how far down this list I went before mentioning this game. It is one of only three times the Blue Jays have clinched the American League pennant. But of all the playoff series the Blue Jays have won, I'm pretty sure this is the least talked about. There are two reasons I think this is the case.
    The first is that the series itself lacked the drama of so many other playoff series the Blue Jays and their fans have experienced. Although none of the games were blowouts, there were no decisive homeruns or late lead changes that would have fans talking for years afterwards.
    The second thing is that their was a certain feeling of inevitability that existed around the 93 team that has not been there before or since. Before 92 they had never won it all, and after 93 there were so many mediocre years, that a whole generation of fans didn't know what it felt like to be in first place. But you can hear it in the commentary about the team when watching an old broadcast, and the season played out in a way that confirmed that feeling. 16 times the Yankees tied the Blue Jays for first place, and every single time the Blue Jays pulled back ahead. The October 12th game was a microcosm of that entire season. The White Sox managed to keep the game close, but never lead, and then the Blue Jays pulled away with 3 runs in the ninth.
19. June 5th 1989: First game at the Sky Dome:
    Jimmy Key threw the first pitch, Paul Molitor got the first hit, Fred McGriff hit the first homerun, and the Blue Jays lost 5-3. Perhaps though, the highlight moment was actually two games later, when the Blue Jays won their first game at the new stadium, and the roof closed mid game for the first time. The game was actually paused so everyone could watch the roof close, and it was the first time a baseball game began outdoors and finished indoors.
    What I find interesting though is how attitudes have shifted about the stadium over the years. About ten years ago, a strong narrative emerged that the sky dome, now Rogers Centre, was worn out and was not an attractive destination for casual sports fans. It had no character when compared with Canden Yards in Baltimore, or the other new ballparks that followed. In particular, there was lots of hand ringing about the artificial surface looking fake, leading to player injuries, and can we either have real grass or tare the stadium down and start again.
    This was completely opposite to the narrative about the stadium only 25 years earlier when it opened. Broadcasts from the first couple of years described the roof as the 8th wonder of the world, and gushed about the hotel, restaurants, and other amenities. On Sunday night baseball, John Miller said, and I'm paraphrasing, in the 19th century you built a ballpark in a community, and for the 21st century the Blue Jays built a community inside a ballpark. For opening day the following season, President George Bush and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney were there to throw out the first pitch. It was a magical place in the first few years, and it's nice that the stadium is getting some love again after the recent refurbishments. For my part, it has always been a great place to go watch a game. .
20. September 28th, 1990: Blue Jays lose the opening game in a crucial series against the Red Sox
    The collapse was not as epic as the 1987 pennant race, but it may have been more consequential. With six games remaining, the Blue Jays and Red Sox were tied for first place when they met at Fenway for a three game series. The first game was an absolute classic, seesawing back and forth until the Red Sox walked it off. The Blue Jays overcame a four run deficit in the 7th inning, Kelly Gruber made two throwing errors in the 8th to give Boston the lead,

Junior Felix hit a 2-run homerun to give the Blue Jays the lead in the top of the ninth, and then Tom Henke gave up two runs in the bottom of the inning for the Red Sox win.

The Blue Jays lost two out of three that weekend, and the Red Sox clinched with a win on the final day of the season, leading to what I think is a very interesting what if. What if Tom Henke nailed down the save in this game, and the Blue Jays won two out of three. They likely win the division and go to the ALCS against the Athletics in a rematch of the 1989 ALCS. Run differential predicted the Blue Jays should have won the division easily that year, with 92 wins to the Red Sox 85. And if they had won, would Pat Gillick have felt the need to trade his All Star shortstop and future hall of famer first baseman? What would the Blue Jays story of the 1990s been with McGriff and Fernandez and not Alomar and Carter. We will never know, but two world series wins a couple of years later probably means it worked out for the best.

21. July 6th 1983: Dave Steib starts the all-star game

    For most baseball fans from that era, the 83 all Star game is remembered for Fred Lynn's grand slam and a blowout win by the American league, breaking a long national league winning streak. But Blue Jays fans might remember this as the time that the Blue Jays began to be noticed by the rest of major league baseball. It was the first year of 11 straight seasons playing over 500, and being part of the AL east playoff race nearly every year. Later that month, the Blue Jays were featured on ABC's Monday night baseball for the first time, where Howard Cosell made a speech about how one day their would be a world series between the Blue Jays and the Expos.

    Speaking of the Expos, they had 5 players in the 83 All Star game, 3 of them future hall of famers, and were the winningest team in MLB from 1979-82. But 1983 was the first of several underachieving years for that club, and the Blue Jays surpassed them in popularity and became Canada's team.

    But Back to the All Star game. Steib pitched 3 hitless innings, striking out four and earning the win for the American League.

22. September 23rd, 2010: Jose Bautista hits his 50th homerun

    At the end of the 2009 season, Roy Halladay was traded, JP Riccardi was fired, and players were anonymously complaining about Cito Gaston's management of the team. Nothing good was supposed to happen in the 2010 season, yet that year appears on this list 3 times. The most awesome thing about it was that Jose Bautista came out of nowhere to hit 54 homeruns. His 50th came on A Thursday afternoon at Rogers centre off of future hall of famer Felix Hernandez. His first inning homerun was the only run of the game, and he remains the only Blue Jay to crack the 50 homer mark. It also marked the beginning of a new ear in Blue Jays baseball. For the next 7 years, Jose Bautista's hitting prowess and personality defined the Blue Jays more than any other player, and this was his team.

23. September 14th, 1987: Blue Jays hit 10 homeruns against the Orioles

    Ernie Witt hit three, George Bell and Rance Mulliniks each hit two, and Lloyd Moseby, Rob Ducey, and Fred McGriff each hit one. Ernie Witt was the one who broke the old record of eight homeruns when he hit his third of the night in the 7th inning. Despite the steroid era, and the modern day preference for power hitters over contact hitters, this record still stands. The record has been in jeopardy a few nights over the years. Most recently, the Yankees hit 9 homeruns this past August when playing the Rays at Steinbrenner Field. The game was also notable because Baltimore manager Cal Ripken sr. brought Ron Washington in to play shortstop in the 8th, replacing Cal Ripken jr. This ended his consecutive innings streak, which was over 8,200.

24. September 25th 2009: Roy Halladay shuts out the Mariners in his last home start as a Blue Jay.
    There was such a bitter/sweet feeling to this game for Blue Jays fans, and I made sure to find a way to get down to the Rogers Centre to take in the game. AT this point, fans new that Roy Halladay was not going to sign an extension with the Blue Jays, and an offseason trade was very likely. He was arguably the greatest pitcher in baseball since 2002 when he won 19 games and led the league in innings pitched and WAR. The Blue Jays highest win total during those years was 87 in 2006, and they were never in a playoff race when the calendar flipped to September. The Blue Jays had wasted the years of their best pitcher in franchise history. After the game, Roy Halladay was interviewed on the field where he spoke to a half empty stadium and classily thanked the fans. This actually wasn't Halladay's final shutout as a Blue Jay, as he pitched a complete game shutout on the road in Boston in his final start of the season. It was his 15th shutout and 49th complete game as a Blue Jay.
25. September 24th and 30th 1988 Dave Steib loses a no hitter with two outs in the ninth in back-to-back starts
    Back-to-back one hitters is a great accomplishment on it's own, and would have likely still made this list if the loan hit came earlier in the game. But it's the sheer improbability of these two starts that truly boggle the mind. RA Dickey in 2012, and a small hand full of other pitchers have thrown back-to-back 1 hitters, but no one else lost both no hitters with two outs in the final inning. How many baseball seasons would you have to play before this happened again? What's even more incredible is that less than a year later, on August 4th 1989, Dave Steib lost a perfect game with two outs in the 9th. Also, these two starts were part of a stretch of five starts where Steib only gave up 1 earned run over 44 IP. In the start before the Sept 24th one hitter, Steib pitched a four hit shutout. To open the 1989 season, he pitched eight innings and gave up one run in his first start, and then pitched another one hit shutout in his second start. I suspect no other Blue Jays pitcher, not even the great Roy Halladay, had a stretch as good as that.
26. June 4th, 1989: Blue Jays greatest comeback win in franchise history
    Just a day before the sky dome hosted it's first Blue Jays game, another of the greatest franchise moments took place. This is the date of the Blue Jays biggest comeback win of all time. Through six innings, the Blue Jays trailed the Red Sox 10-0. They scored two in the 7th, four in the 8th, and five in the 9th to take an 11-10 lead. Ernie Witt hit a go ahead grand slam off of Red Sox closer, future hall of famer, Lee Smith. But the fun wasn't over yet, as the Red Sox eked out a run to tie the game in the bottom of the 9th. David Wells relieved Tom Henke with the winning run at second, and Marty Barrot had a 17 pitch at bat before grounding out to end the inning. The eventual hero was Junior Felix, who hit a two run homerun in the 12th inning for a 13-11 victory. This was the 12th of 15 straight wins for the Blue Jays at Fenway park, a Fenway record that still stands today.
27. September 29th 1996: Pat Hentgen wins his 20th game
    Pat Hentgen and the race for the Cy Young award was the most exciting part of the Blue Jays 1996 season. The first half of the year, Hentgen's stats were good, but with a record of 8-6, his year was not receiving much attention. Then in July and August he began to rack up wins. He was 10-2, threw 6 complete games, had a 2.65 ERA, and won back-to-back pitcher of the month awards. By September everyone around the team began to talk about the Cy young award, the only major award that no Blue Jays player had ever won.

Outside of Toronto though, baseball was focused on the New York Yankees resurgence, and their young pitcher Andy Pettitte, who won his 20th game on September 4th. If Pat Hentgen and the Blue Jays were to overcome the U.S. media's Yankees bias, he would have to reach the 20 win mark as well. He won his 18th game against the Orioles on September 20th, but only had one more scheduled start before the end of the year. After consulting with his pitcher, Cito Gaston moved Hentgen's next start up by a day, allowing him to start again on the final day of the season. On September 24th, on three day's rest, Hentgen pitched 8 innings of one run ball with 10 strikeouts to beat the Tigers.

This set the stage for the game on September 29th against the Orioles. Surprisingly for a 4th place team, a lot of significant events took place during the final series of the year. The infamous Alomar spitting incident happened on Friday, the Orioles clinched the wild card with an extra innings win on Saturday, and Brady Anderson hit his 50th homerun on Sunday. The Sunday game was also the last Blue Jays broadcast for play by play man Don Chevrier, who like Tom Cheek, had been calling games for the Jays since the opening day in 1977.

Hentgen gave up one run over 71/3 innings. He left to a standing ovation from 38,000 fans, and the bullpen wrapped up a 4-1 win. Hentgen finished the year first in innings pitched (265 2/3), 2nd in ERA (3.22), 1st in complete games (10), and 1st in shutouts (3). The Cy Young was still no sure thing. I remember Joe Buck and Tim McCarver on a FOX broadcast during the playoffs specifically talking about the Cy young award, and that Pettitte should win it because he pitched in a high pressure atmosphere, for a playoff team in New York. It was very close when the BWAA's votes were counted 110 to 104, which, at the time, was the second closest Cy Young vote in history.

28. October 8th, 2022: Blue Jays blow a 7 run lead in the playoffs:

    After the Blue Jays game seven loss to the Dodgers, a couple of friends texted me saying it was the worst loss in Blue Jays history. It may have felt like that at the time, but I think the worst Blue Jays loss ever was this 2022 game in the wild card series against the Mariners.

    Of course losing game seven of the world series hurts, but it has happened to exactly half the teams that have played in game seven of the world series. And losing a game when up by a run in the last inning isn't exactly uncommon either. It happens to every team a few times a year, and it happens regularly enough in very important playoff games as well. Cleveland lost the world series in 1997 when they were up by a run in the final inning of the 7th game, and the exact same thing happened to the Yankees in the 2001 world series. The Pirates lost game 7 of the NLCS when up by two runs in the final inning. The Red Sox in 1986 and the Rangers in 2011 were a strike away from winning the world series before they eventually lost it in 7 games. Other series that come to mind that fit the same scenario are the 1986 ALCS between the Red Sox and Angels, the 1995 ALDS between the Yankees and Mariners, and the 1977 NLCS between the Phillies and Dodgers. That's just off the top of my head, I'm sure there are others.

    But to lose a playoff game when up by seven runs, that never happens, well…almost never. According to some quick internet research, it's only happened three times since the world series began in 1903. In 2007, the Rays blew a 7 run lead against the Red Sox in game five of the ALCS and lost, but they eventually won the series in seven games. You have to go all the way back to 1929 to find the only time a team blew a larger lead than the Blue Jays did on October 8th, 2022. In case you can't remember, in game four of the world series that year, the

Philadelphia Athletics scored 10 runs in the 8th inning against the Chicago Cubs to overcome an 8-0 deficit and win the game.

Very fortunately for this group of Blue Jays players and their fans, the 2025 playoff run wiped away so much of the disappointment and bitter feelings that fans held towards the team after this 2022 loss. The Blue Jays responded by improving the teams defense before the 2023 season, but they sacrificed some key offensive pieces to get this done, and two years of disappointing baseball followed. Remember the narrative that surrounded the team at the beginning of the 2025 season. No one thought the team could hit, Guererro was going to leave as a free agent, and this era of Blue Jays baseball would be over without a playoff win to show for it. Thank goodness for second chances.

29. February 12th 2018: Jerry Howarth retires

So many great broadcasters have left the game in the few years proceeding and following Jerry Howarth's retirement. Marty Brennaman (Reds), Dave van Horne (Expos/Marlins), Dick Enberg Angels/Padres), Bob Uecker (brewers), Gary Thorne (Orioles), John Sterling (Yankees), national broadcaster Bob Costus, Joe Garagiola (NBC, Diamondbacks), Mike Shannon (Cardinals), Dave Neihaus (mariners), Milo Hamilton (Astros) and of course the great Vin Scully (Dodgers). I know this list isn't complete, and I've left out important voices that fans hold dear. For so many long time fans, the experience of baseball has been diminished without these hall of fame caliber voices to describe the game.

Of all the moments on this list, this one is the one that feels the most personal. I met Jerry Howarth twice. The summer when I was 16, I wrote him a letter, and he called me up and invited me to a ball game and met with me for a few minutes before he went on the air. The second time was in 2019 at a Q and A and book signing. I tried to thank him for all the memories and tell him what the hundreds of hours of listening meant to me, but choked up and couldn't get the words out. So let me try to express them here. These are sentiments that long time fans, especially if they experience baseball through radio, will understand.

First of all, when listening on radio, baseball sounded the same, and evoked the same emotional responses from me, as when I was 12 years old. There was a hole left when Tom Cheek was no longer in the booth, but that string connecting me back to my childhood was not cut until Jerry Howarth had left as well. During my summers as a teenager, I probably spent more time listening to Tom and Jerry than I did to any other adult. That doesn't mean I was expecting them to give me parental advice, or to even know that I existed, but that they were a trusted and familiar presence.

But Jerry Howarth was much more than a friendly uncle-like figure that I got to spend time with. His play by play was consistent, and of a very high quality. As a blind person listening to the game, I knew exactly what happened at the same time as every other fan. Whether I was by myself, or listening from a seat in centre field at the Rogers Centre, I never missed a thing. He used his stock phrases very precisely, so when fans heard "call a two," "scoooorrrrres," "hooking hooking" (also used with the words slicing, running, and dropping), and of course "there she goes!", they knew the specific play that had just happened, even if they missed the rest of the call. Not actually seeing the game never diminished the experience one iota when Jerry Howarth was at the microphone.

30. July 28th-31st 2015: Alex Anthopoulos goes all in at the trade deadline

I was in bed just after midnight on July 28th, listening to a podcast of Jeff Blair and Kevin Barker breaking down the Blue Jays latest loss. It was cathartic listening to them catalogue all the things the Blue Jays were doing wrong, because they had just finished a frustrating road trip where poor defense and a leaking bullpen had given games away. It was another year like all the others that had proceeded it, where a promising Blue Jays team would finish around 500 and be nowhere near a playoff race come September. Then my phone buzzed and announced that the Blue Jays had traded for Troy Tulowitski.

The Jays lost to the Phillies that night, moving their record to 50-51, 8 games behind the first place Yankees. Years of mediocrity meant I was unable to imagine what would happen next. Troy Tulowitski joined the team the next day, and hit a homerun in a Blue Jays 8-2 win. In the following days, Anthopoulos added star pitcher David Price, Left fielder Ben Revere, and a couple of relievers. Two months of Blue Jays baseball bliss followed. An 11 game win streak at the beginning of August moved them into first place, and winning 5 out of 7 crucial September games against the Yankees meant they stayed there. From Tulowitski's first game to the day they clinched the division, the Blue Jays went 42-15. Along the way there were big homeruns, clutch pitching performances, and walk off wins. I was among a whole generation of Blue Jays fans who hadn't ever seen a first place Jays team. Those are my best Blue Jays memories. The fans in Baltimore, on the night the Blue Jays clinched, couldn't have said it any better. "Thank you, Alex!"

31. October 16th, 1985: Sundberg triples off the wall

    This was the only game 7 the Blue Jays ever played in until the 2025 season. Although the Blue Jays jumped out to a 3-1 lead in the series, they were hanging on by their finger nails when the sixth inning of game 7 rolled around. The Blue Jays were trailing 2-1, when with the bases loaded and two out, a tiring Dave Steib gave up a wind blown three run triple to Royals Catcher Jim Sundberg. When that ball hit high off the wall and bounced away from Jesse Barfield, I think that was the moment where the Blue Jays and their fans knew the season was over.

    In the Blue Jays only other game 7 loss, the fans, the media, and the players spent much time debating what the one play was that could have turned a series loss into a win. Although we discussed Jeff Hoffman's pitch selection to Miguel Rojas, and Barger's double sticking in the padding of the wall in game six, the consensus choice is IKF's lead off of 3rd base in the bottom of the ninth. But was there a moment like that in the seven game series in 1985?

    I don't think there is, at least not in that final game. But Bob Costus and Tony Kubek discussed the series on NBC's game of the week when they featured the Blue Jays and Royals early in 1986. Costus reminded listeners how close the Blue Jays were to sweeping the series. They won three of the first four games, and two of those wins were exciting comebacks in the final inning. Game two is actually one of the most exciting Blue Jays playoff wins of all time. But in the one loss in those first four games, George Brett won the game for the Royals almost by himself. He went 4 for 4, with two homeruns, a double, 3 RBIs, and four runs scored. Should Bobby Cox have called for an intentional walk of Brett in the 6th, the inning he hit a two run homer to tie the game? We saw how the Blue Jays pitched to Aaron Judge, Cal Raleigh, and Shohei Ohtani in the 2025 playoffs, and would a similar approach with George Brett have led to the Blue Jays first world series appearance? We will never know.

32. September 6th 2003: Roy Halladay pitches a 10 inning shut out

Roy Halladay is the best pitcher the Blue Jays have ever developed, and was the best pitcher in baseball from his breakout year in 2002 until 2011 when he was with the Phillies. He could have won multiple cy Young awards with the Blue Jays but it was not to be. In 2005, he was 12-4 with a 2.41 ERA when a line drive off the bat of Kevin Mench broke his leg and ended his season. His 2008 season was in some ways even better than 2003, but he was slightly outpitched by Cliff Lee, who took the award that year. So 2003 was his only Cy young season with the Jays, and this September start against the Tigers was his best start of that season.

On that Saturday afternoon, Halladay only needed 99 pitches to get through 10 innings. He didn't give up a hit until 2 outs in the top of the 8th, and only surrendered 3 hits overall. It was the first extra inning shutout in the major league since Jack Morris's famous performance in game 7 of the 1991 world series. I remember the game vividly, as I was listening to the game alone in my dorm room at University, waiting for classes to begin on Monday. It was his best game in his best Blue Jays season, as the best Blue Jays pitcher of all time. But was it his best Blue Jays start ever?

The answer is, I don't know, because Roy Halladay had so many starts like that over his 10+ seasons with the Jays. In just his second major league start, on the last day of the 1998 season, he was only one out away from pitching the Blue Jays second no-hitter. He pitched a two hit shutout against Cleveland at the end of the 2001 season. In 2005, in a game that took less than two hours, he won a great pitcher's duel against Zack Grenke of the Royals. He pitched another 10 inning complete game win over Detroit in 2007, and later that year pitched a 3 hit shutout against the Mariners. He pitched a 2 hit shutout against the Yankees in 2008, and a one hit shutout against the Yankees in 2009. In June that year, he threw 133 pitches and struck out 14 in a complete game win over the Angels. And of course he ended that year, and his Blue Jays career, with back to back shutouts in his final two starts. Some of these games I remember clearly, and some I barely remember, and I know this is only a partial list. He had the potential for true greatness every time he pitched, and I was so sure that I would one day see him pitch a no-hitter. I did of course, but unfortunately for Blue Jays fans it was in the 2010 playoffs for the Philadelphia Phillies.

33. July 9th, 1985: Buck Martinez turns a double play after breaking his leg

We all know Buck Martinez from his role on the Blue Jays broadcast team on television, but long time fans will remember his stint as manager in 2001-02, and even longer time fans will remember his stint as a Blue Jays player from 1981-86. Altogether, he has actually been with the team longer than any other broadcaster, even when taking into account his seven year absence from the team from 2003-09.

It is from his time as a player where we can find a top 50 franchise moment. Double plays are a regular baseball occurrence, but not a 9-2-7-2 double play, and definitely not a 9-2-7-2 double play when breaking a leg and dislocating an ankle. Here is how it happened.

The Blue Jays were at the King Dome playing the Mariners. With Phil Bradley on second, Gorman Thomas grounded a ball into right field. It was picked up by the Blue Jays all time leader in outfield assists, Jesse Barfield, who threw the ball home in plenty of time for Buck Martinez to tag out Bradley. But instead of sliding, Bradley ran over Buck Martinez in an old school attempt to dislodge the ball from his glove. Martinez fell backwards onto the plate with Bradley on top of him, and his ankle bent back on an unnatural angle. The play would have been illegal today, and maybe if Buck Martinez was as famous as Buster Posey, they would have changed the home

plate rule earlier. In any event, Martinez held on to the ball and Bradley was out. Thomas, who went to second on the throw home, saw Martinez was down and thought he could make it to third. From a sitting position, Martinez threw the ball to third, but the ball skipped by Garth Iorg into left field. Thomas then took off for home, and George Bell, remarkably, made a pinpoint accurate throw to Martinez at home, who caught the ball while still on all fours. He was right where Bradley left him, still blocking the plate, and right where he needed to be to put the tag on Thomas for the double play.

Watch the play online and enjoy the call from Mariners long-time broadcaster Rick Rizzs, who sounds absolutely stunned by the end of the play. We know Canadian sports fans love their hockey players, and I wonder if Buck Martinez ever talked to Bobby Baun about this play. Maybe this gutsy double play is the biggest hockey play in Blue Jays history? But then of course, there is George bell.

34. June 23rd, 1985: The George Bell karate kick:

    I never saw George Bell play. What I've learned about him I've gleaned from watching old games and listening to the stories of broadcasters and former teammates. So I knew enough to know there would be a George Bell story on the list, and for a while it was going to be about his three homerun game on the opening day of the 1988 season. That story encapsulates everything I know about George Bell, his productive hitting, the fiery personality, and the so-so defense. That game is a central part of the story of Bell's year long feud with Manager Jimmy Williams, which began when the Blue Jays wanted to move Bell out of left field and make him the team's primary designated hitter.

    But after a little more reading up on George Bell, I think fans that watched him play would pick a different moment. I had heard of the infamous George Bell Karate kick, but didn't know the context. The Blue Jays played the Red Sox in a four game series at Exhibition stadium, a week after they were swept by the Red Sox in a four game series at Fenway Park. Throughout both series, the Red Sox pitchers threw inside a lot and several Blue Jays were plunked. A particular offender was Red Sox starter Bill Hison, who was known for pitching inside. He had thrown at many of the Jays when he pitched for the Angels, and he nearly hit Bell in the Fenway series. The Blue Jays won two of the first three games at the Ex, and Hison started the Sunday finale for Boston.

    The Blue Jays players had a meeting before the game, and Bell told everyone what he would do if Hison hit him. In the 2nd inning, Hison threw a pitch behind Ernie Witt's head. In the 4th inning, he hit George Bell in the shoulder, and finally tempers boiled over. Bell charged the mound, Karate kicked Hison, then turned and threw punches at Red Sox catcher Rich Gedman. The benches emptied, the game was delayed for nine minutes, and the crowd loved it.

    Not having witnessed this game, and learning about the 1980s Blue Jays after the fact, a three homerun game felt more consequential than a bench clearing brawl. But the accounts of fans and players who watched the game, or participated in it, have led me to a different conclusion. The event is seen as a turning point for the young Blue Jays to so many people who witnessed it. A young team was being bullied by the bigger, badder, more veteran Red Sox, so they went out and showed the Red Sox and the rest of baseball that they wouldn't be pushed around. I'm not sure if this is true, maybe this is our Canadian hockey mindset talking, and the Blue Jays won simply because they had the best players. But it's a very powerful narrative, and I remember

how emotionally I responded when the Blue Jays and Rangers had their own big bench clearing brawl in 2016.

But hey, if you prefer a non violent response, Ernie Witt came up in the sixth inning and hit a grand slam off of Hison to put the game out of reach. Witt chirped and gestured at Hison on his trip around the bases, and Hison was booed off the field when the Red Sox made a pitching change shortly afterwards. The Red Sox finished 18 and a half games behind the Blue Jays that year.

35. August 2nd, 1993: John Olerud chases .400

    On this day, the Blue Jays, in first place with a one game lead over the Yankees, began a crucial 4 game series in the Bronx. The first game was an eventful pitcher's duel between Todd Stottlemyre and Jim Abbot. Proceedings became tense while fans were still finding their seats. In the top of the 1st, Homeplate umpire Joe Brinkman, in the mistaken belief that 44,000 fans had come to Yankee Stadium to watch him, ejected Roberto Alomar and Cito Gaston for arguing balls and strikes. The Yankees had a number of scoring chances in the first few innings, while Jim Abbot set down the first 12 Blue Jays he faced. Finally, Devon White broke a scoreless tie in the 6th with a two run homer, putting the Blue Jays on their way to a 4-0 win. And John Olerud went 1 for 4, dropping his season average to an even .400.

    I would have said he quietly went 1 for 4, except for John Olerud's batting average was at this point a bigger story than the first place Blue Jays. Local and national media were requesting so many interviews that the Blue Jays asked Olerud if he would rather do a press conference. I can understand the excitement. I remember how I obsessively followed Tony Fernandez's every at bat when he was hitting over .400 in 1999, and that was only in June of that year. How difficult is it to hit .400? Of course baseball fans know that no one has achieved that particular feat since Ted Williams hit .406 in 1941. But I think Mike Wilner explained it best in a Toronto Star article a couple of years ago. To hit .400 means you need to average 2 hits every five at bats. In other words, you must have a multi-hit game, every game you start. That makes Joe DiMaggio's 56 game hitting streak, thought to be an unbreakable record by some, seem quite easy by comparison. Getting one hit in 56 straight games seems more likely than two hits in about 150 games.

    The next day, Olerud went 0 for 3 with 2 walks, and his average dropped to .397. He would not go over the .400 mark for the rest of that season. His average was at or over the .400 mark for 58 games (more than 1/3 of the season), and he is the only player to have a .400 average in August since Ted Williams. I don't know if this was the best offensive season for a Blue Jays player in team history. Carlos Delgado had a couple of monster seasons in 2000 and 2003, but Olerud's is certainly up there. His average of .363. and his on base percentage of .473 are the best in club history. He also set career highs in homeruns (24), doubles (54), and RBIs (107). When I became a more avid fan in 1995, a couple of baseball fan teachers told me that Olerud's season was incredible, but a bit of a fluke, and he would never come close to those numbers again. The Blue Jays likely agreed, as they traded Olerud and Cash to the New York Mets for pitcher Robert Person. (who?) after the 1996 season. Maybe that's the worst one for one trade the team has ever made. Anyways, Olerud did do it again. In 1998, he hit .354, with 22 homeruns, 93 RBIs,an OBP of ,447, 197 hits, and 96 walks to only 73 strikeouts.

36. July 12th, 1997: Roger Clemens returns to Fenway

    This is more a Roger Clemens moment than a Blue Jays moment. In fact, it's probably a bigger Boston Red Sox memory than a Blue Jays memory. But along side Roy Halladay, Roger Clemens was the most remarkable pitcher I ever saw pitch in a Blue Jays uniform. Like Halladay, every time Clemens took the mound in his two seasons with the Jays, it felt like something truly special

could happen that game. This was the case on July 12th, 1997, when Clemens pitched at Fenway Park for the first time since leaving the Red Sox. The game was sold out, and the fans saw a vintage Roger Clemens performance.

He began the game by giving up two singles, and hitting a batter, and then was almost unhittable for the rest of the afternoon. He gave up 1 run on four hits over eight innings, while striking out 16, a franchise record at the time. In August 1998, Clemens would set the franchise record again by striking out 18 Kansas City Royals.

When watching this game though, the greatest highlight was actually the Boston fans. They relentlessly booed their own left fielder, former expos Will Cordero, because of a recent domestic assault charge. They gave John Valentine a mock cheer in the 9th after a routine play because he missed two throws earlier in the game. And they saved their best for Roger Clemens. The reception was loud when he took the field in the bottom of the first inning, and was about evenly split between cheers and boos. As the game went on, and Clemens began racking up strikeouts, the cheers became louder and the boos disappeared. Finally in the bottom of the 8th, as Clemens struck out the side on 10 pitches, the Boston fans rose to their feet and cheered as if he was pitching for the Red Sox in a playoff game. Has this ever happened before or since? When Roy Halladay returned to pitch against the Blue Jays in 2011, he received a well deserved standing ovation, but this was a fan base rapturously cheering against their own team! It is one of the most incredible things I've ever seen happen at a baseball game.

37. June 12th 1986: The fog game, and Kelly Gruber's inside the park homerun

An inside the park homerun might be the most exciting play in baseball. They are also rare, happening between 10 to 20 times a season according to Wikipedia. I had been watching baseball for four seasons before I remember seeing my first one. It was hit by Shannon Stewart against the Texas Rangers on July 28th 1998. Inside the park home runs are often quirky, resulting from unusual circumstances, like the ball taking an unexpected bounce away from the defense, or a ball lost in the lights, or a defender is injured on the play, or, as was the case with Kelly Gruber in 1986, the weather. In the 7th inning of the game against the Tigers on June 12th, Gruber lifted a routine fly ball to centre field. But Detroit outfielder Pat Sheriton couldn't find the ball in the heavy fog, and it dropped and rolled to the fence. It was a three run home run for Gruber, and the game was called shortly after.

So why this inside the park home run, and not Junior Felix's inside the park grand slam at Fenway, or Devon White's extra inning inside the park homerun in the Metrodome, or any of the others Blue Jays players have hit over the years? Because this inside the parker is a great way to talk about Exhibition stadium, and all the strange things that happened there in the 12+ seasons the Blue Jays called that park home.

Paul Beaston called it the worst stadium in all of sports. Many of the seats in the outfield were extremely far away (up to 820 feet from home plate) and did not face the field. Only the very furthest seats had any protection from the elements. And it's location next to lake Ontario meant it was often windy and cold at the beginning and end of the season. Yet attendance was solid, and there must be many fans today who still fondly remember going to games there, especially when the team became competitive in the early 80s. Several Blue Jays stars had there best years playing at that ball park, and the Blue Jays could not have been awarded a franchise if it wasn't for the availability of Exhibition stadium.

So let's remember some of the strange things that happened there over the years. Fans know that Blue Jays baseball began with the field completely covered in snow in 1977, but that was not the only exhibition stadium oddity that season. In a September game, Orioles manager Earl Weaver took his team off the field because he felt the bricks holding down the tarp near the bullpens along each base line was a tripping hazard. It led to a win by forfeit for the Blue Jays, and is the only time in the last 110 years that a team has deliberately forfeited a game. Earl Weaver used to also quiz his players during the game on the batters count, as players couldn't see the scoreboard from the dugout.

In April 1984, a game against the Texas Rangers was called off after six pitches due to high winds. Two Texas batters complained about dirt swirling in their eyes, and Blue Jay pitcher Jim Clancy was actually blown off balance several times. Several other high scoring games over the years suggest that wind may have aided the offence. Of particular note, the Blue Jays lost a 15-14 decision to the Yankees in June 1987. Due to it's location next to lake Ontario, Seagulls were a constant presence at exhibition stadium, and sometimes impacted the game. More on that later. And although it wasn't a baseball game, the 1982 grey cup at Exhibition stadium was the game that helped kick the discussion of a dome stadium into high gear. A record TV audience of nearly 8 million watched as heavy rain soaked the field and all the fans who were completely exposed to the elements.

38. September 25th 1997, an September 4th 2001: Their final homerun

Fans don't always know when the time of a beloved player is coming to an end. This list has already referenced a few of them. We knew that it was Roy Halladay's final home start at the end of 2009. But no one knew they were seeing Edwin Encarnacion's final homerun when he hit it during the 2016 ALDS. It's a special memory for a fan base when they see the final great moment for a veteran player, and know that it is happening. Two such moments stand out in my mind.

The first was Joe Carter's last Blue Jays homerun on the 4th last game of the year. It was a Thursday night against the Orioles, and I was lucky enough to be at the game because of a school trip. The Orioles had clinched the division the night before, and the Blue Jays were playing out the string in a last place season. the game meant nothing as far as the standings were concerned, but I think it was very special for the 28,000 fans that were there that night.

Cito Gaston had just been fired after managing the team for almost 9 seasons. As a tribute, Joe Carter wore Cito's #43 instead of his usual #29. It was a close game and the normally sedate Toronto crowd was rather feisty, as we loudly booed Roberto Alomar who had a homerun and four hits. Joe Carter's homerun came in the 6th inning off of Mike Mussina. It was his 21st homerun of the season, and one that Tom and Jerry had been anticipating all year. It was his 203rd homerun as a Blue Jay, moving him one past George Bell to make Carter the all-time Franchise leader. The crowd gave him a standing ovation, and chanted his name until he stepped out of the dugout to acknowledge the applause. Although Carter's average and homeruns had dropped that year, he still reached the 100 RBI mark, which is what he was most known for. Fans knew Carter's time with the team was coming to an end, and they gave him another standing ovation in the final game of the season when he came up to bat in the 7th inning against the Red Sox and drew a walk.

Four years later, long time Blue Jay Tony Fernandez was back for his fourth stint with the Blue Jays, when he signed in June after being released by the Brewers. Despite being a four time gold

glove recipient, Fernandez could no longer play passible defense and was used as a pinch hitter and occasional DH. He actually set the Blue Jay record for pinch hits with 16 of them in 2001, and one of them came on September 4th, in the 7th inning against Ted Lilly and the Yankees. The crowd gave him a standing ovation as he stepped in to bat for Shannon Stewart in a 9-0 game with the bases loaded and two out. Fernandez was not a homerun hitter, and in fact only had two more homeruns then triples in his career. Nevertheless, he worked the count full before hitting a grand slam, only the second pinch hit grand slam in team history (we of course all remember that Addison Barger hit the 3rd pinch hit grand slam in team history). Fernandez received another standing ovation and was dragged out of the dugout for a curtain call.
It was the first day of school, and I was listening to the game on the radio in my room. The thing I actually remember most was they played his walk up music over the public address system after the grand slam. In his final years with the team, his walk up music was an inspirational Christian song, which I have only ever heard when he came up to bat, and have never been able to find the title of, and have never heard again since he retired. But that song, combined with Jerry Howarth's call and the cheering crowd gave me chills, and must have been a very special moment for the 20,000 fans at Skydome that night.

39. July 30th, 2021: The Blue Jays return to Canada
    This game against the Royals was the first game at Rogers Centre in nearly two years. Although baseball continued during the pandemic, it was strange listening to games with no fans, or watching home games in Florida and Buffalo where the home fans were cheering for the other team. This was a special occasion that was difficult to categorize. It was bigger than a home opener, but lacking the tension of a playoff game. It was a celebration of baseball, but more familiar and intimate than an All-star game. It was as close to a perfect night of baseball that I can think of.
    There were some great defensive plays, clutch pitching, and timely hitting. The Jays always led, but the score was close throughout the night. Just the right amount of tension. A game that the fans could watch with interest while still having time to look around and enjoy the communal experience. Like Fred McGriff at the first game in the Sky Dome, Teoscar Hernandez opened the scoring in the 2nd inning with a homerun. Bo Bichette added a two run homer in the 7th just as it looked like the Royals might comeback. And Santiago Espinal made a barehanded catch on a short pop-up to left field that ended the game. It was a 6-4 Blue Jays win.
40. June 20th, 2010: John Macdonald homers on father's day
    John Macdonald might be one of the most beloved Blue Jays in team history. At one point, a fan poll on Sportsnet picked him as the most popular Blue Jay, even ahead of Roy Halladay. Mostly, it was for his defense. There was a time around 2007-08 that he seemed to make a highlight reel play every night. He spent parts of 7 seasons with the Jays, always starting as a back up infielder, but often finding himself as the starting Shortstop before the season was over. Maybe it's similar to how hockey fans love a 4th line player, who is the hardest working guy, and is not afraid to go into the corners to make a play. That was John McDonald, throwing his body all over the field and somehow coming up with the ball every time.
    The story of John McDonald's father's day homerun is one that baseball romantics would particularly enjoy. These are the fans who see baseball as more than just a game, but as a metaphor for life, or at least something that teaches life lessons. These are the fans who loved the movie field of dreams, and are nostalgic for the Brooklyn Dodgers, even though they never

saw them play. I read Joe Posnanski's book "why we love baseball," as the Blue Jays were progressing through the playoffs this past October. It's what inspired me to write my own 50 moments of Blue Jays baseball. In his book, which encompasses the entire history of professional baseball, he ranked this John Macdonald moment 20th in his list of 50 moments that define the game. It's a moving story of John Macdonald and his life long relationship with his father, who died of cancer in June 2010. Read his chapter for the full story, but Macdonald's father asked him to dedicate his next homerun to him by pointing to the sky when crossing home plate.

John McDonald only hit 28 homeruns in his major league career, but Cito Gaston brought him in as a defensive substitution in a blow out game on father's day, His first game back with the team after his bereavement leave. In his first chance to hit in the bottom of the 9th, he hit the homerun on the second pitch. Unfortunately, I missed the whole thing. The Jays were losing 9-3 so I had turned the game off. He had also been interviewed about his father and father's day on the radio pregame show, and I missed that as well. I've occasionally looked online for the interview over the years, but have never found it.

41. October 20th, 1993: 15-14 Toronto!

    One of my rules while making this list was to only have one moment from every playoff series, so as to leave enough room for all the regular season stories that have happened over the years. But the Blue Jays won the highest scoring game in world series history, so one exception had to be made. The game had 29 total runs, 32 hits, 37 at bats with runners in scoring position, and took 4 hours and 14 minutes to play. The best part of course is the top of the 8th, where the Blue Jays scored 6 runs to take a 15-14 lead, which ended up the final score. Tony Fernandez had five RBIs, and Devon White had four, including a two run triple that drove in the tying and winning runs. What a game, and too bad I was asleep.

    Growing up listening to old time broadcasters, and watching the Ken Burns documentary, I had the impression that a true baseball fan loves a classic pitchers duel, when two ace starters go head to head for nine innings. But nothing beats a back and forth slugfest that eventually goes your team's way. I would quote Gregg Maddux and Tom Glavine from that MLB commercial and say "chicks dig the long ball," except the Blue Jays scored all those runs that night without hitting a homerun. This would have been the number one story in most world series, but of course Joe Carter made sure it was not a couple games later.

42. May 11th-12th 1996: The Legacy of Epy Guerrero

    Epifanio (Epy) Guerrero was the Blue Jays super scout, who is largely responsible for the Blue Jays huge presence in Latin America throughout the 80s and 90s. He came over to the Blue Jays from the Yankees with Pat Gillick in 1977 and worked for the team until 1995. Although he was no longer there in 1996, his fingerprints were still all over the team. Carlos Delgado, Domingo Cideneo, Giovanni Carrara, Tony Castillo, Juan Guzman, Tilson Brito, Robert Perez, and Sandy Martinez were all players on the 96 squad that Guerrero either signed or, in the case of Guzman, recommended they trade for.

    In his 40 year career, He signed 54 players who made it to the major leagues, more than any other scout. Other notable Blue Jays include Tony Fernandez, Kelvim Escobar, Damaso Garcia, Junior Felix, Louis Leal, and Nelson Liriano. In addition, he recommended the Blue Jays pick up George Bell, Manny Lee, and Kelly Gruber in the rule five draft. He advised Pat Gillick on several trades, including the trades for Fred McGriff, Candy Maldinado, and Roberto Alomar. He even

helped convert Pat Borders from a third baseman to a catcher in the Dominican winter league. In 1977, he established a baseball academy near Santo Domingo, where players were housed, fed, refined their baseball skills, and learned English. The Blue Jays began to use this complex in 1981, and other teams soon copied this model.

But back to the 1996 Jays. Although there were still some holdovers from the world series years, the Blue Jays publicly stated that it was a rebuilding year, and they were going to let their young players play. While Alex Gonzalez, Shannon Stewart, Shawn Green, and Carlos Delgado went on to have solid to spectacular careers, several other players, now mostly forgotten, had the opportunity to play as well. It was on this weekend in early May that two of them, Sandy Martinez and Robert Perez got to experience a big major league moment.

The Blue Jays played three straight high scoring, extra inning games against the Red Sox on the weekend of May 10-12. They lost 6-5 in 11 innings on Friday, won 9-8 in 11 innings on Saturday, and won 8-7 in 10 innings on Sunday. The Blue Jays had to comeback in both their wins, overcoming a three run deficit on Saturday, and a four run deficit on Sunday. Alex Gonzalez tied the game with a solo homer in the 8th on Saturday, and Charlie O'Brian tied the game with a solo homer in the 9th on Sunday. These homers set the stage for two of the Epy Guerrero signees to come through in extra innings on back to back days. Sandy Martinez had the winning hit Saturday, when he lined a ball into the gap in right centre, scoring Juan Samwell. it was Robert Perez's turn on Sunday, and with the bases loaded and one out, he drove the ball over a drawn in outfield to win the game. Epy Guerrero had moved on to work for the Brewers by this time, but no doubt he took pleasure in the Blue Jays results that weekend.

43. April 21st, 1986: Mark Eichhorn wins his first game as a Blue Jay

    This is a unique Blue Jays story that I would have been unaware of if it wasn't for a youtube channel called "look, it's baseball," which posted an in-depth video entitled "MLB's slowest pitcher was completely unhittable." It details Mark Eichhorn's rookie season in 1986, which is one of the most unusual individual seasons in Blue Jays history. For fans like me that are too young to remember those 1980s teams, Eichhorn's story bares similarities to another Blue Jays pitcher, RA Dickey.

    Both Eichhorn and Dickey began their careers as conventional pitchers, but struggled with injuries that almost ended their careers before they had any major league success. Both pitcher's had to completely reinvent their pitching styles. RA Dickey became a knuckleball pitcher, whereas Eichhorn went with a submarine, slow pitch approach. I think the current front office, which values unusual arm angles for pitchers, would have loved Eichhorn. The unusual delivery, combined with pitches that were estimated to be around 70mph, made Eichhorn completely unhittable in 1986.

    A quick glance at some old style pitching statistics bares this out. Pitching exclusively out of the Bullpen as a set-up man for Tom Henke, Eichhorn won 14 games, had a minuscule ERA of 1.72, and pitched an astounding 157 innings in 69 appearances. Starting pitchers in today's game average just over five innings a start, and therefore don't amass many more innings than Eichhorn did out of the bullpen. Even though he was exclusively pitching in relief, he was only about five innings short of qualifying for the ERA title. Roger Clemens led the league that year with a 2.48 ERA, more than half a run higher than Eichhorn. He also struck out 166 batters, more than a strikeout an inning.

However, picking a top 50 moment is difficult, because the 86 Blue Jays were never really in the playoff race, so Eichhorn was unable to work his magic in an important game. So instead, I've picked the date of his first win. This April 21st game would have been a fun one to see. Jimmy Key was rocked for six runs, and was relieved by Eichhorn in the 5th inning. Eichhorn pitched 3.1 innings of one hit ball, striking out five. The Blue Jays scored 4 runs in the 8th to comeback and win the game. That was a fairly typical Eichhorn outing, multiple innings, with no runs allowed, while making major league hitters look silly.

44. August 8th 2010: Brandon Morrow's one hitter:
    Injuries plagued Brandon Morrow throughout his five years with the Blue Jays, so he never became a household name. But it is Morrow, and not Franchise corner stones like Dave Steib, Jimmy Key, or Pat Hentghen, who pitched what is likely the best game in Blue Jays history. On this Sunday afternoon against the Tampa Bay Rays, Brandon Morrow was a pitch away from throwing the club's second no hitter. With two outs in the ninth, Evan Longoria hit a weak ground ball between first and second, that ticked off the glove of a diving Aaron Hill for the Rays only hit. But the one hit shutout, combined with 17 strikeouts, arguably puts this performance ahead of Steib's no hitter, and at the top of the list. Vernon Wells helped out by driving in the games only run in the first inning, and making a wall crashing, running catch to preserve the no-hitter in the top of the 6th.
45. October 2nd 1991:Joe Carter's other walk off hit
    This game features Joe Carter's second biggest walk off hit as a member of the Toronto Blue Jays. Remarkably, Carter was involved in the final play of four Blue Jays playoff clinching moments. He hit the game winning homerun in game six of the 1993 world series, he caught the final out at first base to end the 1992 world series, he caught the final out in right field to end the 1993 ALCS, and he hit a walk off single to clinch the Eastern division in 1991.
    The Blue Jays had a magic number of 1, they were playing the Angels, and trailing 5 to 4 going in to the bottom of the 9th. It took only five pitches for the Jays to win the game. Devon White singled on the first pitch he saw. After a swinging strike one, Roberto Alomar hit a ground ball to second. Angels second baseman, a September call up named Kevin Flora, made a diving stop but threw the ball into left field when trying to force White at 2nd. White scored to tie the game, and the winning run was on second. On the first pitch to Joe Carter, Alomar stole third. Carter then flared a ball over a drawn in infield, and the Blue Jays won the game.
46. March 31st, 2018: Kevin Pillar steals three bases in one inning
    I had been watching baseball for 23 years before I saw a Blue Jay player steal home. I'm talking about the straight steal of home, not on the backend of a double steal. It has only happened four times since I began watching the Blue Jays, and somehow I missed the first two instances. Raul Mondesi did it in April 2001, of which I have no memory. Aaron Hill did it against Andy Petit and the Yankees on May 29th, 2007. I missed it because I had a night class and didn't find out it happened until the next day. Lourdes /Gurriel Jr. Also did it during the Red Sox home opener in 2019, and I did hear that one. And I was at the game when Kevin Pillar did it on March 31st 2018. So why does the Kevin Pillar instance stand out above the others? It is because he achieved the even rarer feat of stealing three bases in one inning. It has only happened 55 times in MLB history, and the majority of those instances were during the dead-ball era before 1920, when the game was very different. Both Honus Wagner and Ty Cobb did it four times.
    A steal of home obviously is quick, and can be over before the fans even know it is happening. but that's not how events unfolded at the ball park on this particular afternoon. In the 8th

inning, with the Blue Jays up by one run, Pillar singled with one out, and created an insurance run all by himself. After Aledmys Diaz struck out, Pillar stole 2nd. Luke Maile drew a walk, and with the light hitting Gift Ngoepe up, Pillar swiped 3rd. On the next pitch Maile took off for 2nd. Suspecting a double steal attempt, Yankees catcher Gary Sanchez faked a throw and then looked at 3rd. Pillar went back to the bag. Sanchez looked at the Blue Jays dugout and shook his head, as if to say "not going to trick me." With third baseman Brandon Drewry playing well off the bag, Pillar took a huge lead, bouncing up and down. When Yankees pitcher Dellin Betances continued to ignore him, Pillar took off for home. Betances stepped off and rushed a throw home that was wild, and Pillar scored standing up.

At this point, the whole crowd had noticed what Pillar was up to, and every eye was on him when he took off for home. I've never heard such a wild crowd reaction during a regular season game, at least, not an early regular season game. And the crowd was buzzing for several minutes afterwards. It might be the coolest thing I've ever seen at the skydome/Rogers Centr.

47. August 1st, 1999: Shawn Green's hit streak ends

    Shawn Green was my favourite player in the late 90s. He could do everything well, hit for power, hit for average, steal bases, and play great defense. I think he is one of the top five players that the Blue Jays ever developed. He finally put it all together in 1998, and had two monster seasons before the Jays decided they couldn't afford to keep both him and Carlos Delgado. He was traded to the Dodgers after the 1999 season. I wonder how differently the following seasons would have unfolded if the Jays could have kept both their superstars.

    His 1999 statistics were incredible. He hit .309, with 42 homeruns, 45 doubles, 123 RBIs. He won a gold glove, a silver slugger award, and became only the 4th player to hit a homerun into the fifth deck of the Sky Dome. He set two Blue Jays franchise records that still stand today, scoring 134 runs, and the longest hit streak in club history.

    The streak began on June 29th with a 6-5 10 inning win over the Orioles. It was at 28 games and counting, when the Blue Jays played the Tigers on August 1st. Over those 28 games the Blue Jays went 21-7, and had vaulted into the lead in the American league wildcard race. Attendance at the Sky Dome, which had been dropping steadily since 1994, sharply increased. Over 38,000 fans showed up to watch the Blue Jays play the Red Sox on July 27th, when the team had been drawing just over 20,000 a month earlier. Suddenly the Blue Jays were being talked about again, in a way that hadn't happened since the world series years. It was a fun month, and I managed to talk my God-mother into taking me to three games.

    In the game on August 1st, Green hit the ball hard four times in five plate appearances, but it was not to be. In his last at bat, he lined a ball to centre field that looked like it would be a double off the wall, but Gabe Kapler made an over the shoulder catch. However, Homer Bush scored on the sacrifice fly to give the Blue Jays a 1 run lead. Fans gave Green a standing ovation when he returned to the Dugout.

    The magic would continue for only another ten days. The Blue Jays were 65-51 on August 11th, before losing 9 out of their next 10. They had fallen out of the playoff race by September. Still, that July was magical, and was the closest I had come as a fan to experiencing a playoff race until the 2015 season.

48. May 26th, 2013: I am Japanese!

    In the 2012-13 offseason, Alex Anthapoulos made a couple block buster trades that had fans excited. Vegas had the Blue Jays as the odds-on favourite to win the world series in 2013, and

fans were jumping on the ban wagon. A 10-21 start quickly deflated those perhaps unrealistic expectations. Almost nothing went right that season. But then, there was Munenori Kawasaki. Kawasaki was signed as a minor league free agent in spring training. I would bet that most fans hadn't heard of him when he was called up to fill in for an injured Jose Reyes on April 13th against the Royals. He ended up playing in 96 games for the Blue Jays, and probably was the most popular player on the team (John McDonald had left by then). It wasn't because he was getting big hits or playing great defense. It was because he reminded us that baseball was a kid's game, and lots of fun. In a year that was so disappointing, he gave fans a reason to keep watching. What's more, he made this connection with us despite speaking almost no English.
The biggest Kawasaki highlight came on a Sunday afternoon against the Orioles. The Jays trailed by 3 runs going into the bottom of the ninth but pulled out a win against Baltimore closer Josh Johnson. Kawasaki, with the outfield playing in, hit the ball in the left-centre gap for a walk off 2-run double. But that's somehow only the second biggest Kawasaki moment of the day.
After the game, Sportsnet was interviewing Mark Derosa, who scored the winning run, on the field in front of the Blue Jays dugout. He waved Kawasaki over saying "this is his interview." Kawasaki took the microphone and said three sentences that will forever go down in Blue Jays lore. "My name is Munenori Kawasaki. I am from Japan. I am Japaneeese!" He bowed to the crowd, which roared it's approval. He then began to read phrases from his English phrase book, but was interrupted with a shaving cream pie to the face and the Gatorade jug poured over his head. It was still funny then, because it didn't happen during every on field interview.
Almost a month later, on June 21st, again facing the Orioles, the fans were chanting his name when he hit his only homerun of the season. He made a curtain call, and once again bowed to the crowd. He was a back up infielder that Blue Jay fans will always remember.

49. August 4th, 1983: Dave Winfield arrested for killing a Seagull

Dave Winfield has one of the biggest hits in Blue Jays history. His 2-run double in the top of the 11th inning in game six of the 1992 world series, drove in the runs that won the game , and the Series. But that's not why Dave Winfield made this list. He made this list because on the night of August 4th, 1983, Dave Winfield was arrested by Toronto police for killing a seagull. It could be the most ridiculous story in Toronto sports history.
Winfield couldn't have known what kind of night he was about to have when just before the bottom of the 5th inning, he threw a warm-up ball to the ballboy down the right field line. His one bounce throw hit a Seagull in the neck, and the game was delayed while the Seagull was removed from the field. Fans booed Winnfield throughout the rest of the game, but his problems were only beginning.
Dave Winfield had driven in two runs, and made a leaping catch at the wall, in a Yankees 3-1 victory. But all reporters wanted to ask him about was the Seagull incident. The police were waiting outside the clubhouse to question him as well. He was taken to Metropolitan Toronto Police 14 division, where he was charged with causing unnecessary suffering to an animal under section 402.1 of the criminal code of Canada, punishable by six months in prison or a $500 fine.
There's lots of quotes from Yankees players and coaches about how unbelievable and outrageous this all was, but the most memorable were from Yankees manager Billy Martin. Martin, who as far as I can tell never had a nice thing to say about anybody, quipped "that's the first time Winfield's hit the cut off man all year." This was actually only 11 days after another strange event, the pine tar incident between the Yankees and George Brett and the Royals. So

Martain continued, “they can never get on me for pine tar when they’re talking about dead seagulls.” The Great philosopher was not finished. “I’ll tell you one thing. When Toronto comes down to New York next week, we’re going to get their four starting pitchers arrested. We’re going to have somebody call the police and say they were molested in the hotel.”(Still not funny Billy).

Meanwhile, Toronto General Manager Pat Gillick rushed down to the police station, and paid a $500 bond so that Winfield could be released. As for the bird, it was turned over to the humane society, who then sent it on to the veterinary school at the university of Guelph for an autopsy. The story was picked up by the national media, and news broadcasts had a lot of fun with bird puns. On CBC’s the national, anchorman Knowlton Nash introduced the story by saying Winfield recorded three hits in the game, “two baseball’s and a seagull.” The next day, the lawyers reviewing the case were having second thoughts. From the same CBC story, "Late this afternoon, the Crown attorney said he'll ask the court next week to drop the criminal charges because he doesn't think Winfield flew afoul of the law." (told you there were lots of puns) Toronto officials were so embarrassed that Paul Godfrey, the chair of metropolitan Toronto council, traveled to New York the next week to apologize to Winfield in person.

We don’t really know how Winfield felt about all this at the time, but his actions in the months and years to follow makes it seem like he took it pretty well. He showed up in Toronto during the offseason at a fund raiser for the Easter Seels. After making a few jokes at his own expense, he auctioned off a painting of a red maple leaf and three seagulls, that raised $32,000 for the organization. And of course, years later, he signed with the Blue Jays, and was a very important part of that 92 team, which culminated in his winning hit during the season’s final game.

50. April 25th, 2017: Willie Mays Hays

The final Blue Jays moment on this list is not about Hays, a fictional outfielder from the Major League films, but is instead about journeyman outfielder Chris Coghlan. Coghlan only appeared in 36 games for the Blue Jays. That’s less than ¼ of one season, a far shorter tenure than the players featured in the other 49 moments. Although this list is full of many players very familiar to Blue Jays fans, there are long time, accomplished Blue Jays players that barely got a mention. For Example, Jesse Barfield, Juan Guzman, and Vernon Wells were mentioned only in passing, Duane Ward wasn’t mentioned at all, and Tom Henke seemed to only come up when he blew a save. It’s 50 moments, but it doesn’t tell the whole story of the Blue Jays.

So even though Tom Henke is the Blue Jays all-time saves leader, and Jesse Barfield had 22 outfield assists in 1983, , and Juan Guzman went 40-11 to start his career,, and Vernon Wells holds the Blue Jays single season hits record with 215 in 2003, the last story is about Chris Coghlan. And it’s because Coghlan did something that baseball fans had only previously seen in the movies.

“If I get the chance to score, we’ll see who’s afraid. I don’t intend to slide.” That’s what Willie Mays Hays tells the opposing catcher as he’s batting in the pivotal game of Cleveland’s fictional season in Major League II. He draws a walk, and then scores when the next batter hits a double. As he comes home, the catcher Parkman, one of the films villains, catches the relay throw and is ready to block the plate. Hays leaps over the catcher and touches home plate. “I told you I wasn’t going to slide!”

In the 7th inning of a tie game against the Cardinals in 2017, Chris Coghlan pinch hit and drew a walk. The next batter, Kevin Pillar, hit a triple. The throw came home from the Cardinals right

fielder, and arrived in the glove of nine time gold glove winner Yadier Molina as Coghlan ran towards the plate. Joe Sittle, who was Jerry Howarth's analyst in 2017 and rarely did play-by-play, called it perfectly. "Coghlan around second, he's heading for third. Louis Rivera is waving him home. Here comes the throw to the plate by Piscotti…and he dives over the catcher Molina and is safe! What a play by Chris Coglan."

Chris Coghlan won the rookie of the year award when he played for the Marlins in 2009. After that however, his career was mostly forgettable. But this is the case for most of the players who make the major leagues. Coghlan played in the majors for parts of 9 seasons, played in and won a world series with the Cubs in 2016, and had one major league moment that will be replayed in highlight packages for years to come. That's a pretty good career, and a pretty good way to end this list.