

# Little League Magazine 2017

LittleLeagueMagazine.org



PRESENTED BY



2016 LLWS  
Highlights



Tips from  
MLB's  
best



Play Ball  
anytime,  
anywhere

## STARBOY

Astros phenom and Little League grad Carlos Correa is skyrocketing to the top of the game



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# AROUND THE HORN

## RUTHIAN JOURNEY >

This April, the most complete Babe Ruth game-worn uniform in the world is heading back to the Bronx for a short stay at the New York Yankees Museum. Stored year-round at the World of Little League in Williamsport, Pa., the uniform display includes a game-worn jersey, pants, pair of socks, and hat, plus a baseball with Ruth's signature from the 1920s.

The uniform will return to Williamsport in plenty of time for the 2017 Little League Baseball World Series.



## ^ ZOOM IN

The annual Canon Little League Photo Contest powered by PIXMA Printers gets underway again in May 2017! Last year, Emmy Award nominee Candace Cameron Bure (pictured, center) unveiled the winning photos at the World of Little League Museum. Thanks to Canon U.S.A., Inc., fans at the 2016 LLBWS had the unique opportunity to win a chance to meet her. Visit [LittleLeague.org/CanonPhotoContest](http://LittleLeague.org/CanonPhotoContest) all season long to submit your best photos.



## ^ HALL OF EXCELLENCE

The Little League Hall of Excellence recognizes Little League grads who've had successful careers in their chosen professions and made positive impacts in their communities. In 2016, three individuals earned Little League's highest honor:

**TOM COUGHLIN (WATERLOO, N.Y., LL):** After playing as a fullback on the Syracuse University football team, Coughlin coached in both college and the pros. He was the head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars from 1995-2002, and later coached the New York Giants, with whom he won two Super Bowls in 12 seasons.

**TORII HUNTER (PINE BLUFF, ARK., NATIONAL LL):** A five-time MLB All-Star and winner of nine Gold Gloves, Hunter played for the Twins, Angels and Tigers during his 19-year career, and was inducted into the Twins Hall of Fame in 2016. He's a strong supporter of the Little League Urban Initiative.

**CAT OSTERMAN (BEAR CREEK, HOUSTON, LL):** Now a softball coach at Texas State University, Osterman has quite a resume. After being named Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year in high school and USA Softball National Player of the Year three times at the University of Texas, she played for Team USA, winning Olympic medals in 2004 (gold) and '08 (silver). She also starred in the National Pro Fastpitch league.



## ^ PRIMETIME

Since 2015, Little League, MLB and ESPN have invited local Little League teams to experience "Sunday Night Baseball" and appear on ESPN's "Baseball Tonight: Sunday Night Countdown." During their visits, Little Leaguers interact with MLB players and ESPN talent.

Last year, the following clubs welcomed local Little Leaguers for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity:

- CHICAGO CUBS:** Archer Manor LL, Warren Park LL
- LOS ANGELES DODGERS:** Manhattan Beach LL
- NEW YORK METS:** Parkchester LL
- NEW YORK YANKEES:** Throgs Neck LL
- PITTSBURGH PIRATES:** Avonworth LL
- SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS:** Stockton Eastern LL, Leagues from California Districts 3, 39 & 44
- ST. LOUIS CARDINALS:** Godfrey Park LL, Hillsboro R-3 LL

Tune into "Baseball Tonight: Sunday Night Countdown" and "Sunday Night Baseball" on ESPN this season to catch local Little Leaguers at Major League ballparks once again.

## A PERFECT PARTNER

In 2017, DICK'S Sporting Goods became the official retail and league technology partner of Little League. With its Sports Matter program and community efforts, DICK'S Sporting Goods is looking forward to working with Little League to make the local league experience even better for players around the world.



## < GET EQUIPPED

Little Leaguers at all seven Little League World Series events in 2017 will be equipped with the latest and greatest bats, helmets, catcher's gear, and more, courtesy of Easton Baseball/Softball. During the 2017 LLBWS in Williamsport, fans can be among the first to swing all-new bats at Easton's Hit Lab at the Family Fun Zone.

## HIGH FIVE!

For the past five years, the Little League Intermediate (50/70) Baseball Division has given players ages 11-13 the opportunity to have fun on a larger field with more conventional baseball rules. Established in 2013, the division now boasts more than 3,000 teams worldwide, which will each compete for a spot at the fifth Little League Intermediate (50/70) World Series, held from July 30 to Aug. 6, 2017, in Livermore, Calif.

## < PLAYING KETCHUP

Before the first pitch of the 2016 LLBWS, players on the 16 participating teams gathered for the Heinz Player Dinner at the dining hall inside the Dr. Creighton J. Hale International Grove. The hungry competitors chowed down on hot dogs and burgers loaded up with Heinz ketchup, mustard and other sauces.



## WORLD LEADERS >

Believe it or not, the Little League World Series isn't the only baseball tournament that brings together teams from around the globe. Every four years, Major Leaguers experience international passion of the LLWS variety at the World Baseball Classic (WBC). During the 2017 WBC, countless superstars represented their native countries: MLB All-Stars Giancarlo Stanton and Eric Hosmer (Team USA, pictured); World Series champs Javier Baez (Puerto Rico) and Salvador Perez (Venezuela); and even Little League graduates Carlos Correa (PR.) and Jurickson Profar (Netherlands).

This year, fans saw surprising performances from Italy and Israel. Colombia won its first WBC game ever, and the Netherlands made the semifinals again, proving that it's a team to be feared on the international scene. In the end, Team USA defeated Japan and Puerto Rico edged the Netherlands to advance to the final. And with a stunning 8-0 victory, the U.S. laid claim to its first WBC title.

## DRESS TO IMPRESS

Russell Athletic and Little League annually create new, customized uniforms with designs that incorporate a "futuristic and fresh look" for all participants in the Little League World Series tournaments. In 2016, each team donned a distinct color to represent its region. LLWS players will have a new look again this year, and limited edition replica jerseys and caps will be on sale at [LittleLeagueStore.net](http://LittleLeagueStore.net).



## < PLAY BALL WEEKEND

In May 2016, lucky kids around the country had the chance to play a game with two Dodgers stars on the beach in L.A. (pictured), host a kids-only press conference in Kansas City, tour the clubhouse in Tampa Bay, and exchange caps with players at Wrigley Field. The events were part of MLB's first-ever Play Ball Weekend, during which MLB teams encouraged kids to visit the ballpark, be active and learn about the game.

Play Ball Weekend returns this year on June 3 and 4, and plenty more fun is in store. Find out about events in your area at [playball.org](http://playball.org).

## PITCH, HIT & RUN >

Test your core baseball and softball skills when you compete in Pitch, Hit & Run (PHR), the official youth skills competition of Major League Baseball. The free program, which just celebrated its 20th season, provides four levels of competition for players ages 7-14. Local champions advance to sectionals, and team championships are then held at MLB ballparks. The 24 winners from that level advance to the national finals during MLB All-Star Week, which will be held this July at Miami's Marlins Park.

Local competitions begin in May, so sign up now! And remember that some former PHR participants, including Royals first baseman and World Series champ Eric Hosmer, have even become Big Leaguers. Visit [pitchhitrun.com](http://pitchhitrun.com) for details.



## < JR. HOME RUN DERBY

The Home Run Derby is a highlight of MLB's All-Star Week every year. But lucky for you, the Jr. Home Run Derby affords boys and girls ages 14 and under an opportunity to swing for the fences while competing against one another. The free national competition spans from the beginning of the youth season through July, and top performers at the local level advance to regional competitions. Winners from each age group (12U and 14U) earn a spot in the national finals, which will take place before the 2017 MLB Home Run Derby at Marlins Park in Miami.

Visit [JrHRD.com](http://JrHRD.com) for more info and to sign up to participate today!

## MLB LITTLE LEAGUE CLASSIC

Little League is going big this summer. On Aug. 20, during the 2017 Little League World Series, the Pirates and Cardinals will descend upon Williamsport, Pa., to play ESPN's "Sunday Night Baseball" game at BB&T Park at Historic Bowman Field, home of the Minor League Williamsport Crosscutters. That day, several Major Leaguers also plan to attend the LLWS. The occasion will be a homecoming for Cardinals outfielder Randal Grichuk and pitcher Lance Lynn, both of whom competed in the LLWS.

"To witness the energy and excitement of the Little Leaguers and their family and friends," said St. Louis Manager Mike Matheny, "will take us all back to our baseball roots and the special memories that the game provides."

ALEX TRAUTMAN/WBC/MLB PHOTOS; HOSMER, PETCO PARK; ROB LETTER/MLB PHOTOS; JR. HRD; JUAN OCAMPO/LOS ANGELES DODGERS; PLAY BALL; RANDON IMEANS/MLB PHOTOS



## GAME ON!

When you take the field this season, do it with authority. And what better way is there to earn recognition than by playing **R.B.I. Baseball 2017** alongside the reigning National League Rookie of the Year?

Dodgers slugger Corey Seager is the cover star of this year's iconic MLB game, while Blue Jays outfielder Kevin Pillar — a supporter of the Little League Challenger Division — is the face of the Canadian cover. Play on one of their teams, or for any of MLB's other 28 clubs. R.B.I. Baseball 2017 includes all of your favorite players, teams and ballparks for an authentic Major League experience.

- Ease into the game with exhibition contests before Opening Day.
- Play like a pro in a nine-inning game, then compete for MLB's best regular-season record.
- Along the way, track stats by team, player and league leaders.
- Postseason play rewards the league's top teams.

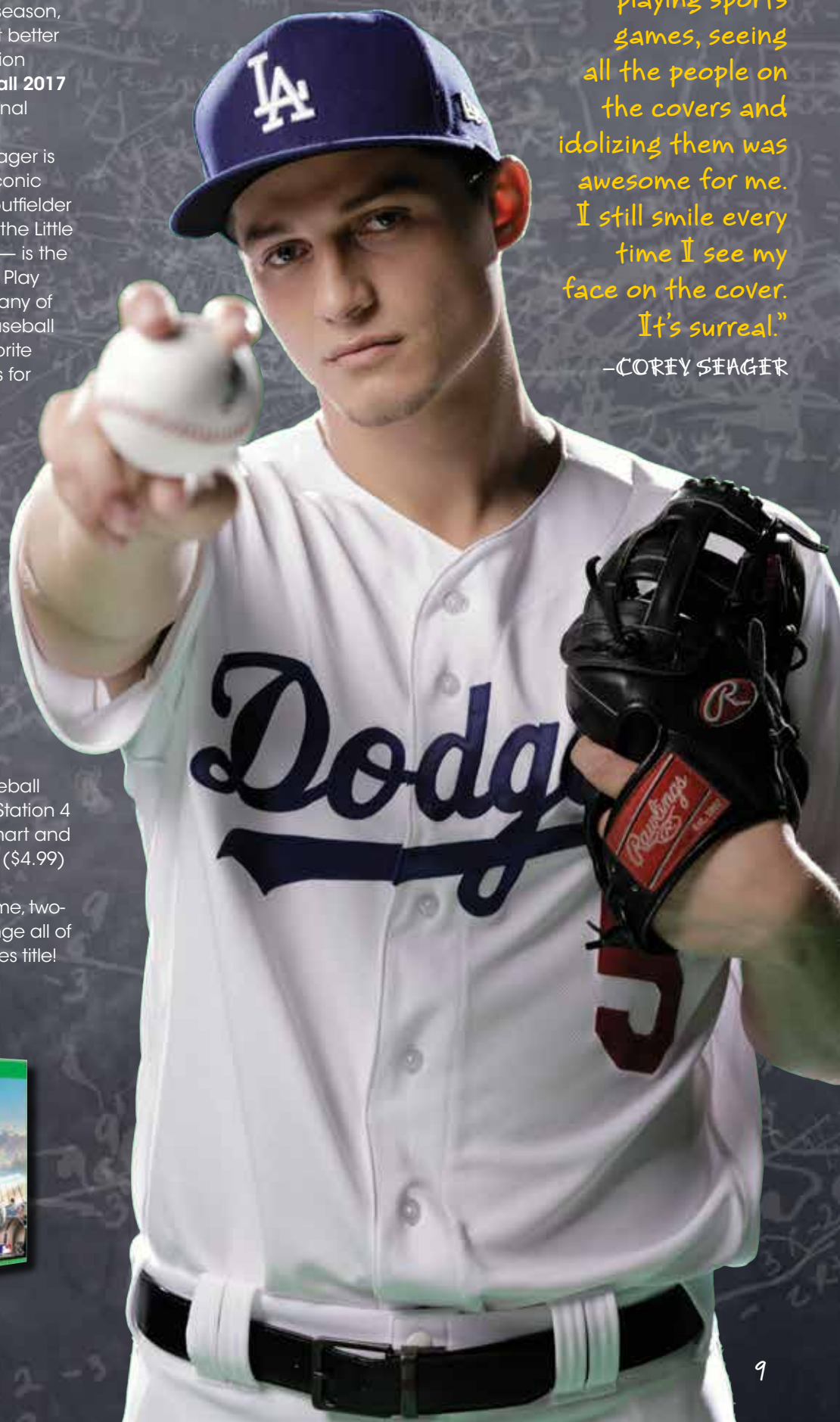
Get your hands on R.B.I. Baseball 2017 for Xbox One and PlayStation 4 (\$19.99) at GameStop, Walmart and Target, or for mobile devices (\$4.99) at [RBIgame.com](http://RBIgame.com).

Once you've brought it home, two-player mode lets you challenge all of your friends for the World Series title!



*"Growing up playing sports games, seeing all the people on the covers and idolizing them was awesome for me. I still smile every time I see my face on the cover. It's surreal."*

**-COREY SEAGER**







Baseballs fly whenever Carlos Correa, one of the best shortstops in the Majors, takes the field.

By Brian McTaggart

# HOUSTON, WE HAVE LIFTOFF

He's one of the game's hottest young stars, and at just 22 years old, Astros shortstop Carlos Correa has already accomplished far more than most of his peers. ¶ Correa, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2012 MLB Draft, debuted with the Astros in June 2015 at age 20 and promptly won the American League Rookie of the Year Award. Last year, in his first full Big League campaign, he followed that performance by hitting .274 with 20 home runs and 96 RBI over 153 games. ¶ After adding veterans like Josh Reddick, Brian McCann and Carlos Beltran this offseason, the Astros expect to contend for a playoff spot in 2017. And Correa, in just his second full season, is primed to compete for a World Series title. The graduate of Villa Blanca Little League in Caguas, Puerto Rico, recently spoke with us about his formula for success and goals for the future.

WHEN YOU WERE A KID, YOU ATTENDED A CLINIC AT WHICH CARDINALS CATCHER YADIER MOLINA OFFERED SOME ADVICE. WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU GIVE KIDS WHEN YOU TALK TO THEM?

I just encourage them that it can be done. Anybody can get to the Big Leagues and play at this level — you just have to sacrifice some things and be able to put in the work.

I encourage kids to sacrifice a lot, forget the parties and focus on the long run. Whether you want to be a pop star, a baseball player or a teacher, set that goal and work toward it.

YOU DEBUTED WHEN YOU WERE 20. WHAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU LEARNED FROM BEING IN THE SHOW AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE?

Hitting is what you learn the most. Just having a better approach, being more selective in the strike zone — all those things make you a better hitter.

WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR GAME DID YOU WORK THE HARDEST ON

*"Anybody can get to the Big Leagues and play at this level — you just have to sacrifice some things and put in the work. Whether you want to be a pop star, a baseball player or a teacher, set that goal and work toward it."*

DURING SPRING TRAINING TO PUT YOURSELF IN A POSITION TO SUCCEED THIS SEASON?

All I did was work on mechanics, my approach and the things that clicked for me throughout 2015 and '16. I also tried to fix the little things that have made me struggle.

I'm trying to last 162 games without getting tired, working on my endurance and trying to get faster, stronger. And, obviously, my offense. I want to be a better hitter than I already am, and I feel like I can get so much better.

THE ASTROS REACHED THE PLAYOFFS IN 2015, YOUR DEBUT SEASON. FOLLOWING THAT SUCCESS, HOW

DISAPPOINTING WAS LAST YEAR'S THIRD-PLACE AL WEST FINISH FOR YOU AND YOUR TEAMMATES?

Last year was not the year we wanted to have, so this year, with the additions the team has made, I'm sure we'll make a great run. Having my first full season under my belt gives me more experience and gets me more prepared for this season. I'm really excited about this entire year.

WHAT DID IT MEAN TO YOU TO REPRESENT YOUR HOME COUNTRY, PUERTO RICO, IN THE WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC THIS MARCH?

It was really exciting. Ever since I signed to play professional baseball, I've wanted to represent my country,



MIGUEL TOVAR/GETTY IMAGES



so I finally got to do that. To wear my Team Puerto Rico uniform for the first time was probably the proudest moment of my baseball career.

**ENTERING 2017, YOU'VE ALREADY HIT MORE HOME RUNS THAN ANY SHORTSTOP IN ASTROS HISTORY (42 IN 252 GAMES). HOW DOES THAT FEEL?**

It's surprising. It's very special. But hopefully I can hit a lot more.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE TO PLAY ALONGSIDE REIGNING AMERICAN LEAGUE BATTING CHAMPION JOSE ALTUVE, WHO'S UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE BEST HITTERS IN THE GAME?**

It's something special. When you see that guy consistently getting two hits a day, it's special to watch. Two-hundred hits for three years in a row, an All-Star, a Silver Slugger, a two-time batting champion — you name it. It's really special to watch him play.

**YOU CLEARLY HAVEN'T LET FAME GO TO YOUR HEAD, AND YOU DO A LOT OF CHARITY WORK DURING THE OFFSEASON. WHY IS GIVING BACK SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

For me, it's not only about me and the people around me; it's about helping others and creating an impact in our community. Right now, my community is Houston, Texas, so I feel like I need to help there.

When I get to spend time with local kids and bring a little bit of joy to their lives, it's a great feeling. I'd rather do stuff like [that] than hit a home run. I'm not making people's lives better; I'm making people's lives happier.

**AS BASEBALL PLAYERS, YOU HAVE A GOOD AMOUNT OF FREE TIME WHEN YOU'RE ON A ROAD TRIP. HOW DO YOU GET AWAY FROM THE GAME?**

When I'm not playing baseball, I'm at the movie theater, playing some PS4 or hanging out with my girlfriend. I also play with my dog, Groot. He's my baby boy.

**SPEAKING OF GROOT, YOU ADOPTED HIM NOT LONG AGO, AND BASED ON THE PHOTOS YOU POST TO SOCIAL MEDIA, HE'S BECOME A**

**FOCAL POINT IN YOUR LIFE. TELL US HIS STORY.**

He's a pomsy (a Pomeranian Husky mix). I got him from Akron, Ohio. My girlfriend and I were discussing it. I don't want kids for a long time, so I said, 'Let's get a dog,' even though I wasn't big into dogs. We got Groot a few months ago, and it's been a blessing.

**FANS ARE EXPECTING BIG THINGS FROM THE ASTROS IN 2017. HOW DO YOU THINK THE TEAM WILL RESPOND?**

We know that we have a great team,

a team that can contend and go all the way. So it's all about staying focused and being able to compete as a group and win some games.

I've got a guy (Jose Altuve) hitting .340 in front of me. If I'm hitting fourth in a lineup that has George Springer [and Alex] Bregman in front of me, I expect to drive in a lot of runs. Our team is young and talented, and we should be good for years to come.

*Brian McTaggart has covered the Astros for MLB.com since 2009.*





SIGNED, SEALED,

DELIVERED

Teams from every corner of the globe recorded thrilling photo finishes to the nine Little League Baseball and Softball tournaments in 2016.

Little League  
Baseball World  
Series

Members of the Mid-Atlantic Region team from New York autographed an oversized bat to commemorate their victory over the Asia-Pacific Region team from South Korea in the LLBWS championship game. Maine-Endwell Little League's 2-1 win at Williamsport's Lamade Stadium gave the Empire State just its third ever title in tournament history.



ALEX/ITALY/MLBPHOTOS





1

2

3

4

5

**1. Senior League Softball World Series**

Cape Coral Little League proudly waved its championship banner after taking home the title in Sussex County, Del. Pitcher Nicole Rodriguez fired a shutout, holding Canada District 7 to just one hit while striking out 13.

**2. Intermediate (50/70) Baseball World Series**

Khaku Dudoit reached base twice and struck out five opponents to propel Central East Maui Little League to a 5-1 victory over West Seoul. The West Region representatives lost only once in the entire tournament, which took place in Northern California.

**3. Big League Baseball World Series\***

Members of the Tao-Yuan County Little League from Chinese Taipei bowed to their fans before the Big League Baseball World Series began. The Asia-Pacific Region champs went on to defeat Hawaii's Kihei Little League to take home the title.

**4. Big League Softball World Series\***

The Latin America Region team celebrated after rallying to win the Big League Softball World Series. The final was a back-and-forth affair that featured six lead changes, but Leslean Marrero's two-run single in the sixth gave her squad an edge it wouldn't relinquish.

**5. Junior League Baseball World Series**

Huddle up! The Asia-Pacific Region representatives from Chinese Taipei clicked on all cylinders in the final game to earn a 9-1 victory over Hawaii's Kawaihau Community Little League. Chao Wei Huang had two hits and four RBI in the win.

LITTLE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL (6)



6



**6. Little League Softball World Series**

Texas's Greater Helotes Little League captured the Little League Softball World Series crown thanks to an impressive combination of hitting and pitching. After taking an early lead with a five-run third inning, the team remained in control and toppled North Carolina's Rowan Little League, 5-1. They finished the tournament with a perfect 7-0 record.

**7. Junior League Softball World Series**

Latin America's ASOFEM team took down British Columbia's Hampton Little League for the Junior League Softball title. The winners got off to a five-run first inning, thanks to a two-run single from Shalis Torres, an RBI from Jairian Leon and a two-run base hit from Paola Perez. They withstood a late comeback attempt by Hampton to hang on for the W.

**8. Senior League Baseball World Series**

Clear Ridge Little League from Illinois grabbed an early lead in its tourney and never looked back. The Central Region squad exploded for three-run outbursts in both the second and fourth innings, capped by Gage Olszak's two-run triple, to secure a 7-2 win over Australia's Southern Mariners Little League.

8



7





Grab a glove and follow these tips to play ball anytime, anywhere.

# WANNA HAVE A CATCH?

The basics of baseball and softball are simple: Just grab a ball and a glove and get outside! Even if your teammates are nowhere to be found or you can't get to your local field, there are still plenty of ways to get in the game. Check out some suggestions here, and find tons more at [playball.org](http://playball.org).



## How to break in your glove

New baseball gloves are stiff and rigid — and using one without properly breaking it in can lead to fielding errors. Rangers first baseman Mike Napoli wants to make sure that his, and your, gloves have that perfect pocket:

“Obviously you like to shape it to your hand. A tool called a glove shaping mallet helps you create a pocket — you just bang it in where you want the ball to go. I also put shaving cream on my glove, and then I’ll stick a ball in it, wrap the glove up and leave it overnight. I used to put it under my mattress when I was a little kid and then sleep on it. Just play catch with it every day. Beat it up — I beat mine up with my bat to make it softer. Once I break one in, it feels perfect for my hand, so I don’t even want to get a new one.”



## Catching contests

Once your glove is ready to go, try out these games to practice your skills:

**FLIP:** This game is a good way to warm up before playing catch. Stand in a circle, a few feet apart from your friends. Flip the ball to one another using only your glove. A player who lets the ball hit the ground without successfully flipping it to the next player gets a strike. Three strikes and you’re out. The last player standing wins.

**500:** One player, the designated thrower, launches the ball high into the air in the direction of the catchers, assigning a point value to each throw. The first catcher to collect 500 points wins, and becomes the thrower for the next round of the game.

## Dos and don'ts of good glove work

Once your glove is perfectly molded to your hand, you’re ready to get out in the field. Wherever you play, keep these tips from [playball.org](http://playball.org) in mind:

**DON'T** pound your glove before receiving the ball. This is an unnecessary step, and often a fielder will pound his or her glove late, which causes a rush to get the glove down in the proper fielding position.

**DO** receive the ball out in front of your body, keeping your glove at a comfortable distance.

**DON'T** wait for the ball to come to you. Reading the ball off the bat will tell you if you should stay back to field it on a long hop, or charge in to field it on a short hop. Getting a good read greatly decreases the instance of a bad, or “in-between,” hop.

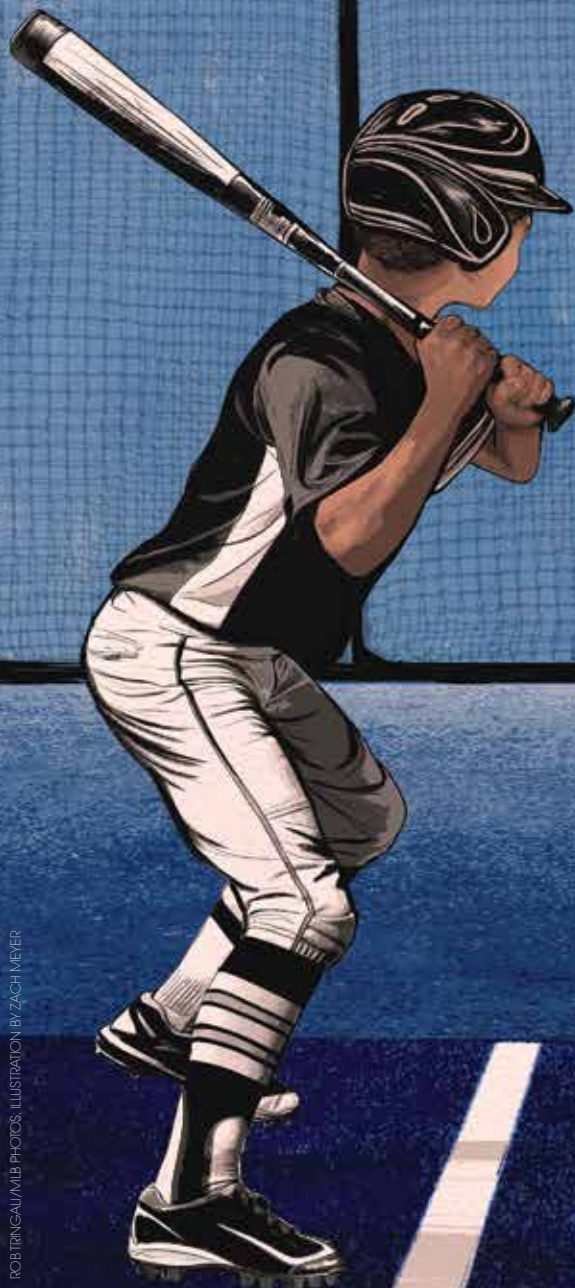
NAPOLI



ALEX TRAUTWIG/MLB PHOTOS (LITTLE LEAGUE); ALEX TRAUTWIG/MLB PHOTOS (FIELDING); KELLY GAVIN/TEXAS RANGERS



## PLAYING THE GAME



ROBTIRINGALI/MIB PHOTOS; ILLUSTRATION BY ZACH MEYER

## Mike Trout on Sharpening Your Swing



By many measures, reigning AL MVP Mike Trout is still just a kid. But at 25 years old, he's already accomplished more than most adults. In 2012, he won the AL Rookie of the Year Award after scoring 129 runs, still a career high. Two years later, he took home AL MVP honors. And in 2016, he led MLB in on-base percentage (.441) and runs scored (123) to win the award a second time.

The New Jersey native, whose father played in the Minors, grew up around the game. Now, he's eager to share what he's learned on his way to the top.

### Imitation Game

My dad played baseball, so once I touched a bat, it was [like] an instinct. I'm competitive, so I wanted to be good at it and play to win.

When I was a kid, I played Wiffle Ball in the front yard. Ken Griffey Jr. always had that sweet swing, and I would [practice his] stance every once in a while.

### Hit 'Em All

When you're in the cage, you've got to have fun. Hitting off a tee gets a little boring after a while. If you add something to it, like a target game, it will help. My teammates and I actually put up targets, and you get points if you hit them. You can also put another tee somewhere else in the cage, and try to hit the tee.

Our team is always thinking of new games to play in the cage. That way, you're working on your swing, but you're still competing while you're doing it.

### Warning Track Workout

The best part of the game to practice is hitting. I love to take BP. And when I'm in the field during BP, I get to rob home runs.



# BIG LEAGUE SUPERSTAR



## CARLOS CORREA

Shortstop

Villa Blanca

Little League,  
Caguas, Puerto Rico

Houston Astros

No. 1 Overall Pick,  
2012 MLB Draft

2015 American League  
Rookie of the Year

2015 American League  
Rookie of the Year

2015 American League  
Rookie of the Year

2015 American League  
Rookie of the Year



# BASH BROTHERS 2.0

Corey and Kyle Seager bat around some questions.

By Alyson Footer and Doug Miller/MLB.com

Major Leaguers Corey and Kyle Seager both hail from North Carolina and play for clubs on the West Coast, but they tear up opposing pitchers along both shores — and everywhere in between. Kyle, 29, is a six-year Mariners veteran, and enjoyed his family's undivided attention until Corey, now 22, debuted for the Dodgers in September 2015. Last season, the pair put on a synchronized slugfest, becoming the first MLB brothers ever to finish with more than 25 homers apiece in the same year. Corey even won the NL Rookie of the Year Award for his performance. Recently, the fearsome duo — whose middle brother, Justin, plays in the Minor Leagues — spoke with us about their baseball background.



COREY



KYLE

<p><b>What's your earliest recollection of playing sports together?</b></p>	<p>I don't know how old I was, but ever since I can remember, I was trying to hang out with my older brothers — with anything, not just sports. "Man, I want to be like you" kind of stuff.</p>	<p>[Corey] always tagged along. He was unbelievably athletic at a young age. We would play basketball and football together. It was usually him matching up with Justin, and us guarding each other.</p>
<p><b>Did you get along growing up?</b></p>	<p>I'm sure I was the annoying kid brother. Justin and I were really competitive with each other. We were so close in age, and basically the same size. Kyle was a little older and just beat us in anything.</p>	<p>We always got along well. I think if you ask Justin, Corey and I would gang up on him more than anything.</p>
<p><b>Who was the troublemaker in the family?</b></p>	<p>Kyle was definitely the instigator. He was really good at manipulating Justin and me into fighting. He gets that one.</p>	<p>I get accused of that often. Personally, I'm going to go with Justin.</p>
<p><b>Mariners versus Dodgers: What does your mom do?</b></p>	<p>She's going to hate me for saying this, but Kyle was her favorite growing up. So she might be wearing a Mariners jersey.</p>	<p>Hopefully she's not rooting against either of us. Hopefully [she's] not too torn.</p>
<p><b>You both played high school basketball. Who wins at H-O-R-S-E today?</b></p>	<p>He wins in a game of H-O-R-S-E; I win one-on-one. He was a better shooter, but I'm just bigger.</p>	<p>I would win at H-O-R-S-E; he would win in a pickup game. I was a better shooter, and he's a better all-around player.</p>



## PLAYING THE GAME

### Andrelton Simmons on Being a Vacuum Cleaner in the Infield



Angels infielder Andrelton Simmons grew up playing Little League in Curacao, an island nation in the Caribbean. Throughout most of his childhood, the shortstop shared a field with Didi Gregorius and played against Jurickson Profar, both of whom are now in the Majors, too.

Since debuting with Atlanta at age 22, Simmons has earned a reputation as a defensive star, winning two Gold Gloves. Young middle infielders can learn a lot from the veteran, who shared these tips.

#### Learn to Listen

Listen to your coaches and trust in what they say. If you don't listen, it's disrespectful. One thing my coaches always taught us was to show up on time.

#### Repeat After Me

Everybody is a little different, but the more you repeat a task, the more you learn how you do it best. Get some ground balls coming your way. They don't have to be hit; they can be thrown. For a shortstop, work on the backhand. Make sure that you're rounding the ball so that when you're ready to make the throw, you're lined up toward first base.

#### The Lowdown

Catching balls in your glove hand but without a glove is another good drill. Doing that makes you go low to field the ball, because you can't reach the ground without a glove if you don't get low. Using your legs is important.

#### Lead By Example

There are other kids who want to be where you're at, and you should set an example. Put the work in, because talent alone is not going to get you all the way.

HANNAH FOSLIEV/MIB PHOTOS; ILLUSTRATION BY ZACH WIEVER





# INSIDE ACCESS

*Sneak into The Grove to see how players in the Little League World Series let loose.*

*Photos by Alex Trautwig*

Every year, players from 16 Little League teams around the globe descend upon Williamsport, where they'll stay for nearly two weeks, living and breathing the game during the Little League Baseball World Series. While they get plenty of playing time on the field and airtime on television, they build some of their best memories in The Grove — the dormitories adjacent to Lamade Stadium, far away from the chaos and crowds.

The Grove is an exclusive place where players from different cultures and countries bond over shared meals, swims in the pool and intense games of ping-pong. The best part? No parents allowed.

Only those who earn a spot in the Little League World Series typically have access to this space — until now. Follow us behind the scenes to see how these players spend their down time.



Little Leaguers lucky enough to win a trip to the LLWS arrive to find a jam-packed schedule that includes at least three games, plus countless more practices and even press conferences. But the tournament isn't all work and no play. Teams would be silly not to take advantage of the chance to cool off from the pressure in the swimming pool, and Little League provides all of the players' meals in the communal cafeteria, where they can bond over picky eating habits. And let's not forget an iconic part of the Williamsport experience: pin trading. Just like the fans, players collect and exchange these treasures to document the experience of a lifetime.







Although the Little Leaguers are arguably the guests of honor during the tournament, plenty of high-profile visitors drop in to see what Williamsport is all about. In 2016, that included five-time MLB All-Star Torii Hunter. "While I was there, I tried to encourage the kids to soak in the moment," Hunter said. "This is something that's going to be with you for the rest of your life, whether you give up a home run or hit a home run. To see the camaraderie you build with people from all over the world, from different cultures and different nationalities, it's amazing."





Dodgers star Joc Pederson and his family have turned their motto into a lifestyle.

# LIVE LIKE A CHAMP

Dodgers outfielder Joc Pederson and his siblings were born and bred in a baseball family. Even more specifically, a Dodgers family.

Since the Los Angeles club drafted Joc's dad, Stu, in 1981, the Pedersons have had a special bond with the team, and it's only gotten stronger with time. In 2010, Joc — the third of the family's four kids — was drafted by the same team that selected his dad. The Dodgers then picked Tyger, Joc's older brother, in the 2013 Draft. And when Joc arrived in the Major League clubhouse in 2014, trailing right behind him was Champ, his oldest brother and fiercest advocate.

Along with sister Jacey, the baby of the family and the only girl, all four Pederson siblings grew up playing in Palo Alto (Calif.) Little League, where both of their parents coached. Champ, who has Down Syndrome, played in the Little League Challenger Division. "The Challenger program is an important part of Little League," says Stu. "Tyger, Joc and Jacey were all part of the Challenger program [too], helping on the field, and supporting Champ and his teammates. The joy, smiles, happiness at Challenger games is unbelievable."

During their Little League years, Joc — now 6 foot 1 and 220 pounds — was far from the biggest or the best player on the team.

"People always ask me how many home runs Joc hit in Little League," Stu says. "He didn't hit one. At 12 years old, Joc was only 5 foot and 105 pounds."

But he dedicated himself to the sport, becoming a household name by the time he was 24 thanks to a pair of 25-plus home run campaigns with the Dodgers. In 2015, his first full MLB season, he even participated in the Home Run Derby during All-Star Week, reaching the final round against another Little League grad: Todd Frazier. Rooting for Joc all the way was Champ — but his brother wasn't the only slugger he was there to see.

"I like Albert [Pujols] so much," Champ said from the field at Cincinnati's Great American Ball Park. "But my heart is set on Joc."

Despite ultimately losing to his brother, Pujols embraced Champ after the Derby (pictured). The 16-year veteran's daughter, Isabella, also has Down Syndrome, and the Pujols Family Foundation is dedicated to helping families of those with the genetic disorder.

"You know that [Champ] and other people with Down Syndrome would do anything to just go out there and play," says Joc.

Away from the field, Champ focuses his efforts on his "Live Like a Champ" brand, creating gear to benefit Best Buddies International, a nonprofit that provides social, employment and leadership opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In that undertaking, the roles are reversed, and Joc is Champ's biggest supporter.

"You can never take this for granted," Joc says. "He's an everyday reminder of how fortunate I am, how blessed I am to play a game every day."

STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES (CHAMP); JOHN GRESHAM/MLB PHOTOS (PUJOLS); ALEX TRAUTMAN/MLB PHOTOS



## PLAYING THE GAME



## Cat Osterman on Perfecting your Pitch



Softball star and Little League Hall of Excellence inductee Cat Osterman is a two-time U.S. Olympic medalist, a three-time NCAA National Player of the Year and a four-time All-American at the University of Texas. And although her playing career is over, the longtime pitcher is now a coach, and she's eager to share her shutdown secrets with the sport's young aces.

### Snap, Crackle, Pop

The wrist snap drill is important to progress to a higher level. For this, you're positioned about 5 to 8 feet from the catcher. You should be perpendicular to her, in the open position. If you're left handed, you're facing what would be first base; if you're right handed, you're facing what would be third.

Stay in that position; nothing should move except your arm and your wrist. Bring your arm straight up overhead, so that your bicep is almost right next to your ear. Then basically just let your arm drop down nice and loose, so it falls into the zone where you want to release the ball. After you do that, make sure your wrist and fingers snap behind the ball as hard as possible. See how much you can make the ball spin before it gets to the catcher, and make sure each pitch is spinning the way it should. Work on your pitches for about 10-15 reps each.

### K's for Days

The second drill that I make all of my pitchers do, no matter their age, is called the "K" drill. That's when you incorporate your legs into the wrist snap. You're positioned the same way, but now, when your arm goes up, make sure your weight is on your back foot. Pick up your front foot, take a step toward the catcher, and then, as your arm drops and you get to your release zone, snap your wrist and hips toward the catcher.





Learn about the new youth bat standard, which strives to help hitters optimize their performance at the plate.

# HEY, BATTER BATTER

MURPHY

A baseball player's bat is a highly personal possession. From Little League through the Majors, ballplayers develop particular preferences for the bats that they choose to swing.

But come next season, youth baseball players, including Little Leaguers, will be able to rely on scientific evaluation to help them choose their new bats. USA Baseball is establishing a new method for measuring youth bat performance, which will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2018, for almost all of youth baseball, including Little League. Here's what anyone who will be stepping up to the plate needs to know about the new bat standard:

- It affects Little League Baseball only (Junior League Baseball Division and below). Little League Softball bat regulations will not change.
- The newly approved bats will be designed to perform like wood bats, although they will not be made of wood.
- Bats complying with the new standard will not have a drop-weight limit, so you can use bats made with lightweight materials.
- Starting on Jan. 1, 2018, all bats must be marked with the USABat label in order to be used during both practices and games.
- Umpires are required to inspect all bats before every game.
- Bats that meet the USABat Standard should be available for sale beginning in September 2017.
- You can find a USABat-approved bat list at [USABaseball.com](http://USABaseball.com).



## WHEN IT COMES TO CHOOSING A BAT, THESE BIG LEAGUERS HAVE LOFTY STANDARDS:

### DANIEL MURPHY

**Washington Nationals, 2016 NL OPS leader**

Bat preference: "I use a 33.5-inch C243 Louisville Slugger model.

"Certain bats work to certain strengths. I tried a smaller bat to see the pitch as long as I could. I also tried a C271 Louisville Slugger, but I asked them to make the handle smaller. When you step into the box, you have to feel comfortable."

### CHRIS DAVIS

**Baltimore Orioles, 2015 MLB HR leader**

Bat preference: "35 inches and 33 ounces. Not as big as Babe Ruth's. His bat makes mine look like a twig."

### ALBERT PUJOLS

**Los Angeles Angels, likely to join 600 HR club in 2017**

Bat preference: "34.5 inches, 32 ounces against left-handed pitchers. 34 inches, 32 ounces against right-handers."





# TRUE TO HERSELF

One inspirational softball player proudly showcased her culture during the Senior League Softball World Series.



Salma Mohamed is a special individual, both on and off the field.

An outfielder for Beacon Hill Little League in Victoria, British Columbia, she had the opportunity to play in the 2016 Senior League Softball World Series in Lower Sussex, Del. There, Mohamed stood out among her peers — but not just for her performance, which helped the Canada Region representatives reach the championship game.

Mohamed also proudly wore a hijab, a covering for the hair and neck traditional among Muslim women, to represent her family's culture. Both of Mohamed's parents were born in Sri Lanka, but they moved to Canada before Salma was born.

"When I'm on the field, I honestly don't think about it that much," says Mohamed. "I feel like I'm just another kid on the field because everyone around me doesn't treat me any differently. At the same time, I know it's a great way to represent my religion."

Salma started playing Little League Softball when she was 10 years old, and, with the support of her coaches,

teammates and family, she gained the confidence to start wearing a hijab in the sixth grade, when she was about 12.

"When I first started wearing it, I was definitely a little insecure because I really cared what people thought,"

**"When I first started wearing [a hijab], I was insecure. ... Since I've been playing Little League for so many years, it has become a part of my identity."**

Salma says. "But honestly, I haven't really had to face any discrimination, especially while playing sports. Everyone has been very thoughtful and mindful, so I've had a really good experience."

In addition to softball, Mohamed also plays volleyball and basketball,

and takes piano, dance and gymnastics lessons.

"My mother just wanted me to try out everything that she didn't get to do as a kid," says Salma. "Both of my parents have been really supportive of me playing sports."

While having the confidence to own one's identity doesn't always come easily, Mohamed is lucky to have a growing number of female role models in sports — in particular, fencer Ibtisam Muhammad, who became the first Muslim woman to represent the United States while wearing a hijab during competition at the 2016 Summer Olympics.

"When I was younger, I didn't really have anyone to look up to at the highest level of competition in sports," says Mohamed. "For girls who are younger than me just getting into sports, this shows them that nothing is holding you back."

"Since I've been playing Little League for so many years, it has become a part of my identity. Yes, I'm Salma, I wear a hijab, but I also play sports and do all of these other things."



LITTLE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL



# BOYS OF SUMMER

**ALBERT PUJOLS • DESIGNATED HITTER • LOS ANGELES ANGELS**

I started playing baseball when I was 5, but I played more organized ball when I was about 9. I played basketball, too. In my childhood, everything was just about hanging out with my friends. We used to play catch or a pickup game in the street. Those are the memories that are going to stick in my heart forever.

You can't forget where you come from. Every time I go back to the Dominican Republic, I always visit my friends. But now we play softball instead of baseball.

**TYLER CLIPPARD • PITCHER • NEW YORK YANKEES**

I started playing baseball when I was 4. I have a brother who's three years older, so I thought, "I want to do what he's doing." He was always a little bit stronger, faster — just better. We were always in the backyard competing against each other. We'd play anything — football, soccer, baseball, hockey, the list goes on. Trying to be as good as my brother helped me become a better baseball player. I remember growing up in a very competitive Little League and always wanting to get to Williamsport. You have those dreams when you see the games on TV. We had very good teams, but we never made it at that level. But the same group played together until we were 15 and 16, and we actually went to the Senior League World Series. We ended up winning, so that was definitely a highlight of my youth baseball experience.

**KRIS BRYANT • THIRD BASE • CHICAGO CUBS**

My favorite Little League memory is hitting my first home run. It was in practice for my team at Peccole Little League [in Las Vegas]. My dad had told me that if I hit a home run, he'd give me \$100. I thought, "\$100? I can get so much with that!" When I hit it, I started running around the bases and saw my dad waiting for me at third base. He picked me up and gave me the biggest hug. I don't even think I crossed home plate. My parents never told me to get out there and practice. I always played baseball because I just loved the game. I would go out in the yard with my friends and play 3-on-3 Wiffle Ball. Doing that helps your hand-eye coordination begin to develop. All of that practice really helped me transition into playing more seriously.

**CODY BELLINGER • FIRST BASE/OUTFIELD • LOS ANGELES DODGERS' NO. 1 PROSPECT**

When I was in Little League, we got to play in front of almost 30,000 people at the Little League World Series. I remember looking around and thinking, "Wow, this is crazy." We had our own segment of "Baseball Tonight" on ESPN. That was unbelievable. [Williamsport] was pretty Big League, with the fans and even the girls chasing you a little bit. I still talk to most of the guys from that team. You create memories and friendships that will last a lifetime. And I still watch the LLWS every year. It brings back all the great memories I had.



RON VESELY (PUJOLS); ALEX TRAUTMAN (BRYANT); PHOTOS (PUJOLS); JIM MCALPIN (CLIPPARD); CITY IMAGES (BELLINGER); CLIPPARD)



# FUN & GAMES

Every year, Little League International surveys the 200 or so players participating in the Little League Baseball World Series on a variety of topics, from favorite food and subject in school, to favorite MLB teams and players. The results from last year's tournament questionnaire are incorporated into these games.

## STATHEADS

Little Leaguers overwhelmingly chose math as their favorite school subject, and it's not much of a surprise. Numbers, after all, are an integral part of baseball. See how much of a stathead you are by solving the statistical problems below.

**1** In 2016, Cubs third baseman Kris Bryant knocked **176 HITS**, earned **75 FREE PASSES**, collected **THREE SAC FLIES** and was hit by **18 PITCHES** over **603 AT-BATS** on his way to winning the NL MVP Award. What was the slugger's on-base percentage (round to the nearest thousandth)?

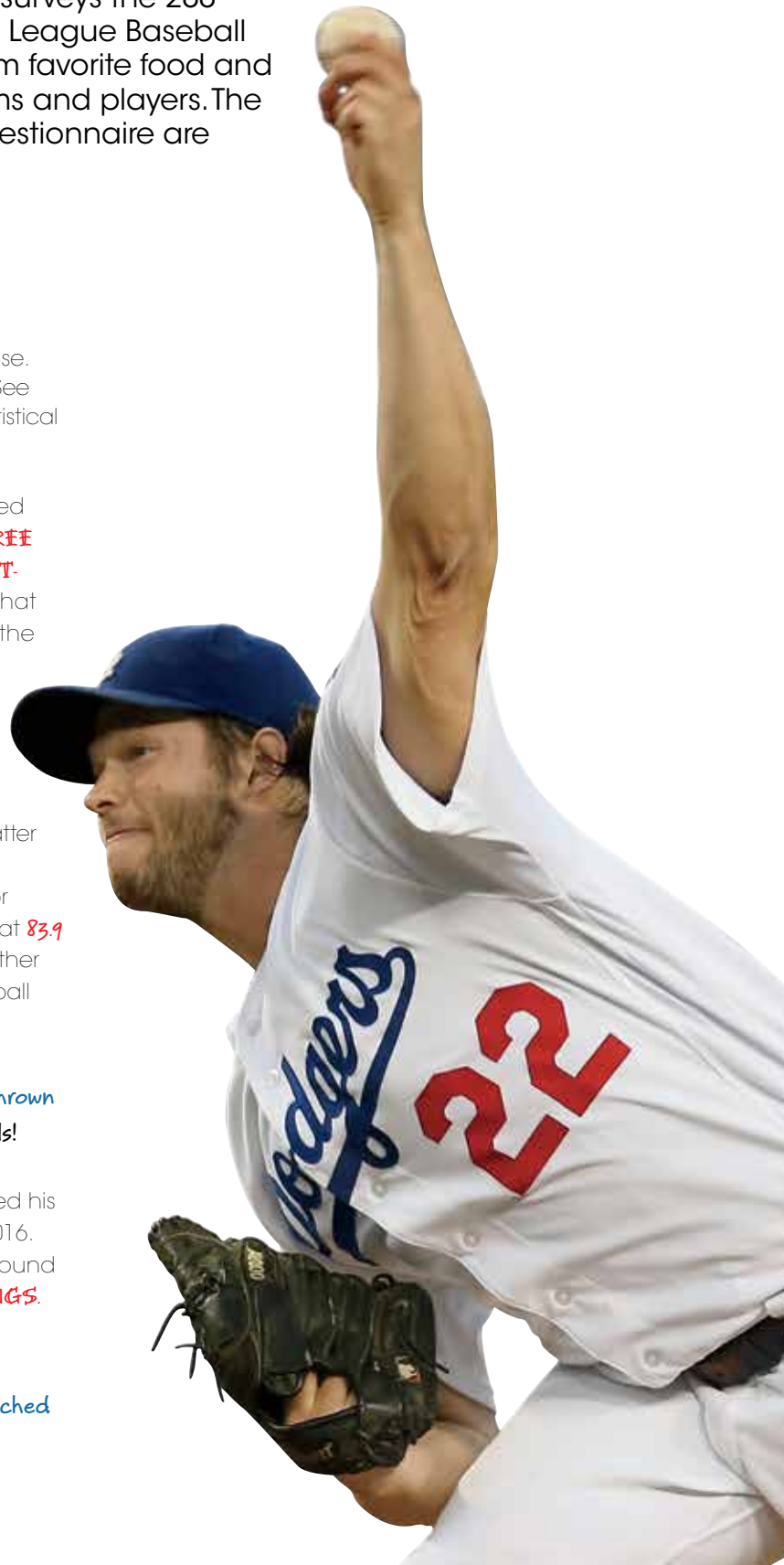
**HINT:**  $OBP = (Hits + Walks + HBP) / (At-Bats + Walks + HBP + Sacrifice Flies)$

**2** In the 2016 National League Wild Card Game, Mets ace Noah Syndergaard struck out the first batter of the game on four pitches, and MLB's Statcast technology recorded each pitch of the at-bat. Thor threw one four-seamer at **97.4 MPH**, one curveball at **83.9 MPH** and two sinkers — one at **97.1 MPH** and the other at **98.1 MPH**. What was Syndergaard's average fastball velocity (round to the nearest tenth)?

**HINT:**  $Average\ Fastball\ Velocity = (Velocity\ 1 + Velocity\ 2 + Velocity\ 3, etc.) / Number\ of\ Fastballs\ Thrown$   
Remember, four-seamers and sinkers are both fastballs!

**3** Dodgers pitcher Clayton Kershaw (pictured) led his club to the playoffs for the fourth straight year in 2016. The southpaw exhibited pinpoint control on the mound and allowed just **28 EARNED RUNS** over **149 INNINGS**. What was Kershaw's ERA last season (round to the nearest hundredth)?

**HINT:**  $MLB\ ERA = (9 \times Earned\ Runs) / Innings\ Pitched$



## DRAW THE LINE

The 2016 LLWS participants ranked the teams below as their 10 favorites. Can you match the club with its top all-time player?

1. JEFF BAGWELL



2. GEORGE BRETT



3. DON DRYSDALE



4. CHUCK FINLEY



5. WILLIE MAYS



6. IVAN RODRIGUEZ



7. BABE RUTH



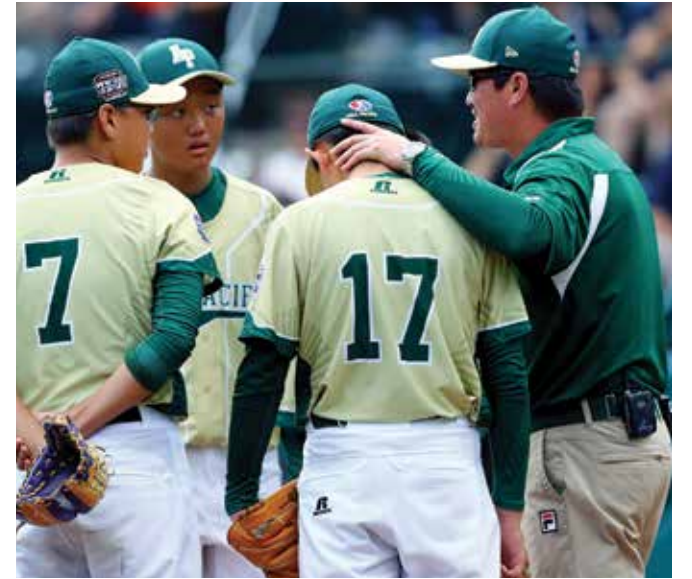
8. RON SANTO



9. DAVE STIEB



10. TED WILLIAMS



## YOU MAKE THE CALL!

1. You started the game on the mound and struck out the side in the first inning. But in the second, you struggle to get an out. Your manager has already been out to talk to you twice, but when your opponents load the bases, he asks the umpire for a time out to visit you again. After his pep talk, the manager intends to leave you in to pitch.

### WHAT'S THE CALL?

- A. This is illegal. If the manager or coach comes out to visit three times in the same inning, the pitcher must be replaced.
- B. He is allowed to visit a third time, but if he returns for a fourth trip to the mound, the pitcher must be replaced.
- C. The manager is allowed to visit the mound as many times as he pleases without replacing the pitcher.

2. With one out and runners on first and second, you (the batter) hit a pop-up to the shortstop. The ball falls to the ground after it hits her glove. The third baseman retrieves the ball and completes a double play. But the umpire nullifies the results of the play, ruling that you are out as the result of the infield fly rule and returning the runners to the bases they occupied at the time of the pitch.

### WHAT'S THE CALL?

- A. The double play stands because the umpire forgot to call an infield fly while the ball was in the air.
- B. The umpire is correct. The infield fly rule is in effect, and only the batter is out.
- C. You get to redo the at-bat, and the runners may return safely to their bases.

ANSWERS: STATHEADS 1) .385 OBP 2) 27.5 mph, 3) 1.69 ERA  
DRAW THE LINE 1) HOU, 2) KC, 3) LAD, 4) LAA, 5) SF, 6) TEX,  
7) NY, 8) CHC, 9) TOR, 10) BOS YOU MAKE THE CALL 1) A, 2) B





# FIELD OF DREAMS

Don't miss the excitement of the 2017 Little League World Series Tournament Season!

More than 100 games on the ESPN family of networks. Thousands of fans packing the stands and the iconic Lamade hill. Nearly 100 teams from leagues around the world competing for one of seven Little League World Series championship banners. Thousands of Little Leaguers just like you get the chance to participate in Little League World Series events. And the best thing is, the games they're playing in late August are just like the ones that millions of you play on your home fields every day during the year. Don't miss a moment of the 2017 Little League World Series tournament season. Visit [LLBWS.org](http://LLBWS.org) and follow #LLWS for all the World Series action.