

Imperfect Perfectos

Update — 2020-2025

Herm Krabbenhoft

In my May 20, 2020, Retrosheet Research paper I introduced the concept of the Imperfect Perfecto and provided the complete details for the 82 regular-season Imperfect Perfectos ascertained according to my research (with significant help from Dave Smith and Tom Ruane) for the period from 1901 through 2019. In this Update, I provide the complete details for [A] the only post-season Imperfect Perfecto and [B] the regular-season Imperfect Perfectos achieved during the 2020-2025 seasons.

Here is some introductory information and the definition of Imperfect Perfecto:

According to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, the definition of “perfecto” is “a cigar that is thick in the middle and tapers at each end.” That is the only meaning given for “perfecto” in *Webster's*.

However, according to *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*, “perfecto” is a “Synonym of perfect game.” Dickson defines “perfect game” as “A no-hitter in which all 27 opposing batters fail to reach first base, either by a base hit, base on balls, hit batter, fielding error, or any other means.”

According to *Webster's*, the definition of “imperfect” is simply “not perfect.”

An “Imperfect Perfecto is defined as a game in which one (or more) pitcher(s) faces only 27 opposing batters in a 9-inning shutout victory — with one or more opposing batters getting on base, but subsequently being retired on the base path.

So, while a perfect game mandates that each of the 27 batters is retired directly, i.e., without reaching first base, an “Imperfect Perfecto” is a game in which one or more batters do get on base, but do not score and are not left on base.

[A] The First and Only Imperfect Perfecto in Post-Season Play

In Game-6 of the 2016 National League Championship Series between the host Chicago Cubs and the visiting Los Angeles Dodgers, Kyle Hendricks was on the mound for the Wrigley Fielders. In the first inning, he gave up a single to the leadoff batter, Andrew Tolas. But then, Hendricks induced the next batter, Corey Seager, to hit into ground ball double play (second to first). Hendricks then retired the next batter to complete an imperfect three-up-three-down inning. In the second stanza, after retiring the first Dodgers batter, the next one, Josh Reddick, reached first on an error by the Cubs keystone. Then, after striking out Joc Pederson, Hendricks (with Yasmani Grandal at bat with a 1-2 count) picked Reddick off first to complete another imperfect three-up-three-down inning.

For the next five frames Hendricks was perfect — from the third inning through the seventh Hendricks fashioned bonafide three-up-three-down innings. He began the eighth inning by

retiring the first-up batter before yielding a single to Reddick. With the score 5-0 in the Cubs favor, Chicago manager Joe Maddon decided to not take any chances, even though Hendricks had thrown only 88 pitches — he summoned Aroldis Chapman from the bullpen to close out the game and the series.

Chapman fired strikes on the first two pitches to Howie Kendrick. On the third pitch, Kendrick grounded into a 4-6-3 double play. In the ninth inning, with one out, Chapman walked pinch hitter Carlos Ruiz. Then he got Yasiel Puig to hit into a 6-4-3 game-ending double play, thereby advancing the Cubs to the World Series and securing the Imperfect Perfecto.

Table A presents a summary of the first and only Imperfect Perfecto accomplished in post-season play.

Table A. The First and Only Imperfect Perfecto in Post-Season Play

Year	Date	Game	Pitcher(s)	Tm	Opp	Base Runners					
						On				Out	
						Tot	H	W+	E	CS+	DP
2016	10-22	NLDS-6	Kyle Hendricks (23 BF) Aroldis Chapman (4 BF)	CHN	LAD	3 1	2 —	— 1	1 —	— —	3 1

NOTES: (1) In the “Pitcher(s)” column, the number of batters faced by the pitcher is shown in parentheses. (2) The “W+” column gives the number of players who got on base via a walk or by having been hit by a pitched ball. (3) The “CS+” column gives the number of base runners put out via caught stealing or having been picked off a base.

The Hendricks-Chapman combined Imperfect Perfecto was the ninth one achieved by the Cubs and the first one since Jon Lieber accomplished the feat in 2001.

[B] Imperfect Perfectos Accomplished during the Regular Season (2020-2025)

There were no Imperfect Perfectos achieved during the 2020-2022 seasons. Since then there have been five Imperfect Perfectos. Table B provides nuts-and-bolts summaries of these five Imperfect Perfectos. Complete details for the five are given here:

[83] Michael Kopech and Kendall Graveman; Seby Zavala (Catcher) [May 19, 2023] — Michael Kopech of the Chicago White Sox hurled perfect ball for the first five innings against the Kansas City Royals. In the sixth stanza he gave up a one-out single to Michael Massey. Then he got the next batter, Jackie Bradley, Jr., to hit into a 4-6-3 double play. Kopech resumed tossing perfect innings for the seventh and eighth frames, before turning the mound over to Kendall Graveman who then came through with a perfect three-up-three-down effort to complete the Imperfect Perfecto. This was the eighth Imperfect Perfecto accomplished by the Pale Hose and the first one since Mark Buehrle tossed one in 2007.

[84] Framer Valdez; Martin Maldonado (Catcher) [August 01, 2023] — The only blemish on Framer Valdez’s hill work against the Cleveland Indians was a base on balls to Oscar Gonzalez leading off the fifth inning; the free pass came on a 3-2 pitch. Then, after retiring the

next batter, David Fry, on a flyout, the Astros hurler got Will Brennan to hit into a 4-6-3 ground double play. Valdez then resumed his pure-perfect pitching for the remainder of the game, ending up with a 2-0 no-hit triumph. Valdez's gem was the third Imperfect Perfecto achieved by the Houston franchise, the first two having been by Bob Knepper (1988) and Roy Oswalt (2008).

Table B. Imperfect Perfectos Accomplished during the Regular Season (2020-2025)

#	Year	Date	Pitcher(s)	Tm	Opp	Base Runners					
						On				Out	
						Tot	H	W+	E	CS+	DP
83	2023	05-19	Michael Kopech (24 BF) Kendall Graveman (3 BF)	CWS	KCR	1 —	1 —	— —	— —	— —	1 —
84	2023	08-01	Framber Valdez (27 BF)	HOU	CLE	1	—	1	—	—	1
85	2024	09-10	Keider Montero (27 BF)	DET	COL	3	3	—	—	—	3
86	2024	09-15	George Kirby (21 BF) Trent Thornton (3 BF) Eduard Bazarido (3 BF)	SEA	TEX	1 — —	1 — —	— — —	— — —	— — —	1 — —
87	2025	03-30	Nick Pivetta (21 BF) Jason Adam (3 BF) Jeremiah Estrada (3 BF)	SDP	ATL	1 1 —	1 — —	— 1 —	— — —	— — —	1 1 —

NOTE: The “#” column gives the number of the Imperfect Perfecto beginning with the first one (# 1) in 1902.

[85] Keider Montero; Jake Rogers (Catcher) [September 10, 2024] — Keider Montero, a rookie with the Detroit Tigers, tossed a complete-game shutout against the Colorado Rockies, giving up but three singles in his outstanding outing; he struck out five in his 96-pitch effort; he didn't issue any walks and didn't hit any batters. And, fortunately, each of the batters who did hit safely was put out on the base path via a double play. Montero gave up a single to Ryan McMahon leading off the second inning. Then, after striking the next batter, he induced Brendan Rodgers to ground into an inning-ending double play. In the seventh session, Montero was touched for a one-out single by Ezequiel Tovar, who was then eliminated from the base path on an around-the-horn double play hit into by Brenton Doyle. In the eighth inning, Aaron Schunk connected for a single but was immediately doubled off on a liner to first hit by Michael Tolia. Montero completed his Imperfect Perfecto by fanning Jordan Beck for the third out in the ninth. Montero's Imperfect Perfecto was the fifth one for the Detroit Tigers, Justin Verlander having executed the previous one in 2011.

[86] George Kirby, Trent Thornton, and Eduard Bazarido; Mitch Garver (Catcher) [September 15, 2024] — Ezequiel Duran, the Rangers' number-five batter, connected for a second-inning one-out single off George Kirby, the Mariners' starter. Duran's time on the base path was very brief — he was sent back to the Texas dugout when the next batter, Carson Kelly, hit into an around-the-horn 5-4-3 twin killing. Texas would have no more base runners for the remainder of the game. Kirby set down the Texas batters in perfect order in the third through seventh innings. Then Trent Thornton relieved and turned in a perfect three-up-three-down performance in the eighth. And Eduard Bazarido completed the Seattle mound effort with

perfect one-two-three job in the ninth. The Imperfect Perfecto accomplished by the Kirby-Thornton-Bazardo triumvirate was the just the second one in Mariners' history, the first one having been effected by Mike Moore in 1988.

[87] Nick Pivetta, Jason Adam, and Jeremiah Estrada; Elias Diaz (Catcher) [March 30, 2025] — Pitchers Nick Pivetta, Jason Adam, and Jeremiah Estrada and catcher Elias Diaz collaborated to produce just the second Imperfect Perfecto in the history of the San Diego Padres. Their victims were the Atlanta Braves. Starting hurler Nick Pivetta allowed only one hit in the seven innings he tossed — Orlando Arcia connected for a leadoff single in the fourth inning; he was eliminated in a GDP hit into by Chadwick Tromp to end the frame. Jason Adam took over the hill for the eighth and issued a walk to the first-up batter, Marcell Ozuna, before striking out the next batter and then getting Michael Harris II to hit into a somewhat bizarre inning-ending double play — Harris hit the pitch back to Adam, the ball deflecting to third baseman Manny Michado, who fielded it and whipped the ball to first baseman Luis Arraez to retire Harris, Ozuna moving to second on the play and making a wide turn past the keystone, which prompted Arraez to shoot the ball to second baseman Jake Cronenworth, trapping Ozuna off second. Cronenworth then ran Ozuna toward third base, tagging him out before he could reach the safety of the hot corner station. This unusual play kept the Imperfect Perfecto alive for Jeremiah Estrada, who took over the pitcher's slab in the ninth, which proceeded in a most straightforward manner — three men up; three men struck out.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

None of the pitchers (and catchers) who participated in the five Imperfect Perfectos during the 2020-2025 time period were involved in any previous Imperfect Perfectos. The last hurler to have taken part in multiple Imperfect Perfectos was Mark Buehrle, who accomplished two, one in 2004 and another in 2007, both with the White Sox.

Two of the five 2020-2025 Imperfect Perfectos were “one-man job” performances — by Framber Valdez and Keider Montero. Since the 2000 campaign there have been 18 regular-season Imperfect Perfectos — 13 were achieved with complete game efforts; two were accomplished with two-pitcher combos; three were attained with trios of hurlers.

The “most imperfect” Imperfect Perfecto during the 2020-2025 time frame was the three-hitter assembled by Keider Montero. Thus, the still-standing “most imperfect” Imperfect Perfectos are the two “five-on-basers” fashioned by Orval Grove of the Chicago White Sox [August 03, 1946: 9 innings, 3 hits, 1 walk, 1 SOE —> 5 DPs] and Bob Milacki of the Baltimore Orioles [April 23, 1989: 9 innings, 3 hits, 2 walks —> 1 CS, 4 DPs].

Finally, to wrap up this update, Table C provides the pitchers who have achieved the most recent Imperfect Perfecto for each of the current teams (including their predecessor franchises). As can be seen, for a few teams, their most recent Imperfect Perfecto goes back many decades — Cleveland Guardians [Dick Donovan (1962)]; Minnesota Twins [Bob Porterfield (Washington Senators, 1953)]; Boston Red Sox [Mickey McDermott (1952)]; Cincinnati Reds [Si Johnson (1933)]. Perhaps even more surprising, there are five teams who have not yet assembled an Imperfect Perfecto — New York Yankees, Los Angeles Angels, Texas Rangers (including the new Washington Senators), Milwaukee Brewers (including the

Seattle Pilots, and the Toronto Blue Jays. Perhaps one or more of these five teams will join the Imperfect Perfecto fraternity during the upcoming 2026 campaign.

Table C. Most Recent Regular-Season Imperfect Perfecto for Each Team.

American League			National League		
Team	Pitcher(s)	Date	Team	Pitcher(s)	Date
Angels	— — —	— —	Braves	Dick Kelley	9-21-1966
Astros	Framer Valdez	8-01-2023	Brewers	— — —	— —
Athletics	Mike Fiers Chriss Basset	9-20-2019	Cardinals	Woody Williams	9-05-2001
Blue Jays	— — —	— —	Cubs	Jon Lieber	5-24-2001
Guardians	Dick Donovan	7-02-1962	Diamondbacks	Josh Collmenter	5-29-2014
Mariners	George Kirby Trent Thornton Eduard Bazarzo	9-15-2024	Dodgers	Mike Bolsinger Kenley Jansen	5-23-2015
Orioles	Erik Bedard	7-07-2007	Giants	Johnny Cueto Tony Watson Hunter Strickland	3-20-2018
Rangers	— — —	— —	Marlins	Edinson Volquez	6-03-2017
Rays	Matt Garza	7-26-2010	Mets	Jae Weong David Weathers Armando Benitez	6-17-2003
Red Sox	Mickey McDermott	5-29-1952	Nationals	Gary Waslewski	7-06-1969 (2)
Royals	Dennis Rasmussen	9-29-1992	Padres	Nick Pivetta Jason Adam Jeremiah Estrada	3-30-2025
Tigers	Keider Montero	9-10-2024	Phillies	Mike Grace	9-02-1997
Twins	Bob Porterfield	5-10-1953 (1)	Pirates	Wandy Rodriguez Mark Melancon Vin Mazzaro	4-19-2013
White Sox	Michael Kopech Kendall Graveman	5-19-2023	Reds	Si Johnson	5-04-1933
Yankees	— — —	— —	Rockies	Josh Fogg	6-30-2006