

PHILLIES REVIVAL

Baseball in Philadelphia from 1976-83



The late 1970s and early 1980s were a great time to be a Philadelphia Phillies fan. From 1976 through 1983, the franchise won five NL East titles, two National League pennants and a World Series crown.

The Phils had been on hard times for the better part of a quarter-century before this revival era began. They had not seen the World Series since 1950. Even a winning season had been elusive since 1967. And the great sports fans of Philadelphia had never seen their beloved Phillies win it all.

Danny Ozark took the managerial reins in 1973. By 1975, the Phils finally won more than they lost. They had a rising star in third baseman Mike Schmidt, who eventually became this franchise's greatest player and one who belongs in any credible conversation about the best third basemen of all-time. They had acquired another future Hall of Famer, left handed pitcher Steve Carlton. And the winning kicked into another gear.

TheSportsNotebook.com has individual articles on all eight regular seasons the Phils had during the 1976-83 stretch. There are separate articles on the eight postseason series they played. The 16 articles are pulled together and edited to create this compilation.

You'll read about it all. From the greatness of Schmidt and Carlton. To the power of Greg Luzinski, to the scrappiness of Larry Bowa, to the defensive wizardry of Garry Maddox to the bullpens anchored by the colorful Tug McGraw to the consistency of "The Sarge", Gary Maddox. They're all here.

So are the pennant races, from the moments it seemed like promising seasons would slip away to the moments when the Phils asserted themselves. You'll read about the highs, the lows and everything in between in this great era of the Phillies Revival.

1976

The Phillies were aiming to overtake the Pittsburgh Pirates, the traditional power in what used to be the National League East. Prior to 1994, both leagues had just two divisions, an East and a West and the winner went directly to the League Championship Series. The Phils and Pirates were joined by the Chicago Cubs, St. Louis Cardinals, New York Mets and Montreal Expos (today's Washington Nationals) in the NL East.

Philadelphia would have the second-best offense in the National League in 1976 and the Phils were balanced—second in both on-base percentage and slugging percentage.



Mike Schmidt, a 26-year-old third baseman beginning a Hall of Fame career, posted a stat line of .376 OBP/.524 slugging and hit 38 home runs. Greg Luzinski, their 25-year-old left fielder put up a .369/.478 season with 21 home runs.

The Phils had players who could get on base. Center Fielder Garry Maddox hit .330 and played impeccable defense. Right fielder Jay Johnstone had an excellent year, at .373/.457 and set the stage for his finest hour, a cameo appearance in the 1989 police comedy, *The Naked Gun*. Bob Boone, a 28-year-old catcher who would send his kids, Aaron and Bret,

on to good big-league careers, had a .348 OBP.

Then you mixed in the veterans. Dick Allen was 34-years-old and no longer the power threat of his heyday, but he hit 15 dingers. Larry Bowa, age 30 at shortstop, providing defense and a feisty spark plug to the line.

Steve Carlton was the anchor of the pitching staff, and the lefty ace with the nasty slider won 20 games in 1976. Jim Lonborg won 18, and the Phils backed them up with a solid veteran bullpen. Ron Reed, Tug McGraw and Gene Garber were all reliable, battle-tested relievers.

One more starting pitcher was realistically needed, and Philadelphia hit the trade market in the offseason. The acquired 37-year-old Jim Kaat from the Chicago White Sox. Despite his age, Kaat was coming off two straight seasons of 20-plus wins and his arrival looked to make this team complete. Now they just had to do it on the field.

If the Phils were looking at their opening two-game set at home with the Pirates as a chance to make a statement, it couldn't have gone much worse. In spite of seven good innings from Kaat on Opening Day, and a three-run rally to take a 4-3 lead in the eighth, McGraw surrendered the lead in the ninth and Pittsburgh won in the 11th. Carlton was hit hard the next day in an 8-3 loss.

No one really jumped out strong in the NL East though, and by the end of April, Philadelphia's 8-6 record had them a game up on the Pirates and only two back of the first-place New York Mets. It was the end of April, where Philly really started to send some warning signals to the rest of the division.

The Reds, fresh off their World Series title of 1975, came into old Veterans Stadium in Philly. In the series opener, light-hitting Phillie second baseman Dave Cash had four hits, Schmidt homered twice and the Phils won 10-9. After the Reds grabbed the middle game, Boone hit a three-run shot to key a 7-6 win in the rubber match. Philadelphia took the momentum from this series win and promptly won five more in succession, getting their first taste of the division's top spot on May 5.

May 14 was the date the Phils took first place for good. They won consecutive games over the Mets in Shea Stadium, including roughing up staff ace and future Hall of Famer Tom Seaver. The Mets soon paid a return visit for a four-game set. The Phils again knocked Seaver around, with Johnstone touching him for four hits and a home run. Philadelphia took three of the four, Carlton mixed in a shutout, and New York was pushed 6 ½ games off the pace, with Pittsburgh five back.

Another series victory over the Big Red Machine awaited over June 18-20. Allen and Schmidt homered to lead the way in the opener and even with Carlton losing the middle game, the pitching combo of Kaat, Reed and Garber was enough in closing out the 6-1 win in the finale.

Philadelphia's lead ballooned to eight games by the time they paid a visit to Pittsburgh for a four-game set over Fourth of July weekend. This was the chance for the Pirates to get back in the race, with single games Friday and Saturday and then a doubleheader on Sunday the Fourth.

When Pittsburgh took the opener 10-9, in spite of a late Phils' rally to force extras, there was reason for the young frontrunner to be nervous. The Saturday game was tied 2-2 in the ninth, when Cash singled and moved up to second with two outs.

Schmidt showed the kind of clutch player he was already becoming, with an RBI single to give his team a win they needed. Philly came out Sunday and gave Carlton ten runs in the first game, and even though the Pirates took the nightcap, the split clearly favored Philadelphia. All

was good in the City of Brotherly Love when they hosted the All-Star Game, with Luzinski starting and Schmidt, Boone, Cash and Bowa on hand as reserves.

In late July, Philadelphia appeared to put the fork in Pittsburgh when the Phils took four of five from the Pirates in the Vet. The lead was eleven games and got as high as fifteen. But a trip to Cincinnati on August 26 began the last anxious spell of the regular season.

Cincinnati took three of four, which by itself was not all that disturbing. But the Phils lost 10 of the next 15, and Pittsburgh turned on the afterburners in a last desperate push. They cut the lead to six games with 21 still to play, and then hosted the Phils for two games on September 15-16.

The two-game set didn't go as anyone in Philly had hoped. Kaat was chased in the third inning of the opener and the Phils lost 7-2. The Pirates took the second game 7-6, and now the lead was down to four games. Philadelphia lost two of three to the lowly Chicago Cubs at Wrigley Field, but Pittsburgh didn't take advantage and the four-game margin held.

It was a home series with another NL East doormat that really finished the job. St. Louis was in town, and Allen delivered three hits and a home run to win the opener 5-1. Then in the second game, trailing 4-1 in the eighth, the Phils managed to score eight runs without a single extra-base hit! Carlton gave eight good innings in the finale to close the sweep and it was all but over.

The Phils formally clinched in Montreal, when they won the first game of a doubleheader 4-1 thanks to a three-run homer by Luzinski and a complete game win from Lonborg. They had broken through and won the NL East. The Big Red Machine from Cincinnati loomed in October.

1976 NLCS

The LCS round was best-of-five from its inception in 1969 through 1984, and homefield was done on a rotation system rather than merit. This year, that meant the first two games would be in Philadelphia, at Veterans Stadium, before going to Cincinnati and the Riverfront for the balance of the series.

Philadelphia had Carlton to pitch Saturday's Game 1 and he was promptly greeted with a double by Pete Rose. The Reds loaded the bases with one out, but Carlton struck out George Foster and got Johnny Bench to pop up.

The Phils got their own leadoff double from Cash, and they—no pun intended—cashed in. Maddox moved Cash up with a ground ball and Schmidt picked up the run with a sac fly.

Rose got after Carlton again with a triple to lead off the third, and Ken Griffey immediately walked and stole second. The Reds again left runs on the table. Tony Perez was able to tie the game with a sac fly, but after three innings, the Phils could have been in a lot worse shape than tied 1-1. The pattern continued in the fifth when Griffey lashed a one-out triple, but was doubled off on an ensuing line drive out by Cincinnati's MVP second baseman Joe Morgan.

Gullett was keeping the Philadelphia bats under control through, and in the top of the sixth, the Reds' work against Carlton finally began to bear fruit. Foster homered with one out to break the tie. With two outs, Dave Concepcion doubled and a key error by Schmidt kept the inning alive. Gullett helped his own cause with an RBI base hit to make it 3-1.

The game was broken open in the top of the eighth. When Bench and Concepcion reached to start the inning, Carlton was removed. Gullett again did the work with his bat, drilling a two-run double and Rose promptly doubled the pitcher home.

Philadelphia got two runs in the ninth, to make it 6-3, and had two runners aboard with one out. They had two cracks with the tying run at the plate against Cincy reliever Rawly Eastwick, but it was the bottom of the order due up. Eastwick got pinch-hitters Bobby Tolan and Tom Hutton to close out Game 1.

The Phillies had lost at home with their ace on the mound, but they didn't roll over and die. Lonborg took the hill in Game 2 and pitched well, keeping Cincinnati quiet for five innings. Philadelphia picked up a run in the second, but after the bases were loaded and no one out, the 1-0 lead was a little disappointing. Greg Luzinski added a two-out homer in the fifth to give Lonborg a 2-0 lead.

In the sixth, Cincinnati got rolling. Concepcion drew a leadoff walk, moved up on a ground ball out and scored on a single by Rose. Griffey singled, and then took second when the throw from the outfield went to third. Morgan was intentionally walked to load the bases and bring up Perez.

Perez hit the ball sharply to first base, where it was mishandled by Allen. Rose and Griffey both scored and Cincinnati had the lead. Foster's ground ball to the right side picked up Morgan and after having been contained for five innings, the Big Red Machine was suddenly ahead 4-2.

Philadelphia never got another rally going, as the Cincinnati bullpen closed it out, with help from two insurance runs on the seventh, with Rose, Griffey and Perez again at the heart of the action.

It would be 1982 before a team would win an LCS after losing the first two games, and with the best team in baseball going home with three chances, it seemed unlikely this series would set a new precedent. Of course, from the perspective of history, we know that rallies from 0-2 down have become more common and the good baseball fans of Cincinnati lived through three consecutive home losses in 2012, at the hands of the San Francisco Giants.

All of which is to say that while history makes Cincinnati's roll through October seem almost pre-ordained, there was no reason to see it that way leading up to Tuesday night's Game 3, an outstanding back-and-forth baseball game in which Philadelphia seemed to be getting momentum, only to have the veteran Reds rip it from their grasp.

Kaat was brilliant, and he cruised through the first six innings, pitching shutout baseball. Philadelphia got a run in the fourth when Schmidt and Luzinski each hit consecutive doubles. In the seventh, Bowa drew a leadoff walk, and with two outs, it was Maddox and Schmidt who hit consecutive doubles. It was 3-0 when the Reds finally got going into the bottom of the seventh.

Griffey singled and Morgan walked, resulting in Kaat's removal for towering righthander Ron Reed. The reliever was not effective. Perez singled in a run and with runners on the corners, Foster hit a sac fly. Philly still held a 3-2 lead with two on and two out. Cesar Geronimo then tripled in two runs.

With their season down to six outs, the Phillies could have been forgiven if they would have just called it a great year and mailed it in. But they didn't, showing the comeback tenacity that would bear its ultimate fruit when a lot of this core group won the World Series four years later.

Johnston doubled, setting up a first-and-third with one out situation. Bowa doubled to tie the game, and Cash hit a sac fly to give the Phils the lead. When a Johnstone triple in the top of the ninth led to a run that made it 6-4, it looked like we'd come back for Game 4 and a little bit of pressure on the Reds.

But Reed, still in the game, immediately gave up home runs to Foster and Bench to open the ninth and just like that, the game was tied. Concepcion singled, Geronimo walked, and they were bunted up. With one out, Rose was intentionally walked. The speedy Griffey chopped the ball in the infield and Concepcion came home with the run that brought Cincinnati its fourth pennant of the 1970s.

There was no MVP of the League Championship Series named at this point, but Rose would have been the certain choice, with his .429 average for the three games and big hits at so many key moments. A huge shout-out has to go to Philadelphia's Johnston, who went 7-for-9 with a walk and whose Game 3 heroics should have bought his team another day to breathe.

1977

The future was bright in Philly. The optimism was validated by the 1977 Philadelphia Phillies when they again won 101 games and made it back to the National League Championship Series.

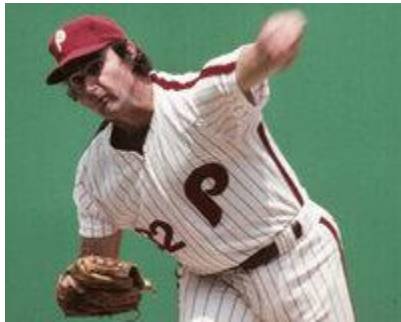
The power tandem of third baseman Schmidt and Luzinski anchored the best offense in the National League. They combined for 77 home runs and 231 RBIs. Each had an on-base percentage over .390 and a slugging percentage over .570. Though Schmidt would have a much better career, it was "The Bull", as Luzinski was nicknamed, that was actually a little bit better with the bat.

Two key personnel additions further strengthened the lineup. Philly signed first baseman Richie Hebner away from the Pittsburgh Pirates in the offseason, and Hebner had a .381 OBP/.484 slugging. And in June, a trade with the St. Louis Cardinals brought right fielder Bake McBride to Philly. McBride's numbers were .392/.564 after the trade.

Further contributions came from Johnstone, second baseman Ted Sizemore and Boone. Defensively, the Phils were strong up the middle with Bowa at short and the rangy Maddox in center.

Pitching was more of a question mark. The staff ERA was fourth in the National League, but there was a lot of uncertainty in the rotation. Four of the five starters finished with ERAs over 4 and two were over 5. Kaat and Lonborg were each into their late thirties and in obvious decline.

It put a lot of pressure on the Phillie bullpen, and four key relievers helped pick up the slack. Garber and Reed combined for the saves. McGraw and Warren Brusstar all helped carry the load. All four pitchers had ERAs at 2.75 or lower.



The work of the pen, along with the offense helped cover for the four weak spots in the rotation. And the one strong spot, at the top of the rotation cured even more ills. Carlton, 32-years-old, with a nasty slider, went 23-10 with a 2.64 ERA in 283 innings of work. Carlton was a runaway Cy Young Award winner.

It was anything but an easy ride for Danny Ozark though. Four straight losses started the season and the Phils were seven games back on May 12. They didn't get over .500 for good until May 21. The Pirates were off to a hot start, but Philadelphia was able to take a series from their rivals, part of an 8-3 stretch that moved the Phils past Pittsburgh...only now the Chicago Cubs were catching fire.

From June 17 to July 7, Philadelphia played excellent baseball, going 15-4 and cutting the Cubbie lead to three games. The Phils were in second place and had the Pirates in the rearview mirror, with a 5 ½ game lead on the rival who had dominated the NL East prior to Philadelphia's run of 1976.

In early July, a weekend visit to Pittsburgh was a disaster. The Phils led the opener 7-3 in the eighth inning, but McGraw, Garber and Brusstar all combined to cough it up in an 8-7 loss. On Saturday, Philadelphia lost 9-8 in 12 innings—the winning hit coming with two outs off the bat of Mario Mendoza, the same player whose hitting ineptitude remains legendary today with use of “the Mendoza line” to mark the line a hitter dare not sink below.

Sunday's doubleheader went even worse. Pittsburgh rolled to a 5-1 victory in the opener. Then the Phillie pitching problems cost them in the nightcap. They led a slugfest 10-7 after seven innings, but Reed melted down and the Pirates completed a sweep with a 12-10 win.

Philadelphia was still a manageable five games back of Chicago when the wipeout ended, but now Pittsburgh was right back in it, and hungry to show that 1976 was just an aberration.

Things started to turn for the better in mid-July, as the Cubs came to Philadelphia for another four-game weekend set, including a Saturday doubleheader. The Phils trailed the opener 2-0 in the sixth when Luzinski hit a two-out, two-run blast to left and Philadelphia went on to win 4-2. Then they took the opener of the doubleheader 9-2, with six players getting multiple hits.

Chicago grabbed the second game of the twinbill, but Carlton was lying in wait for Sunday. The lefthander gave eight strong innings, Johnstone homered twice and the 4-2 win moved the Phillies to within 2 ½ games of the lead for the All-Star break.

August was when Philadelphia finally got firm control over both the Cubs and Pirates. The Phils won 19 of 20, and that included a devastating four-game sweep of the Cubs in Wrigley. Philadelphia unloaded for ten runs in each of the first three games, hitting a combined 11 home runs in the process. Then they won a 4-2 game behind Lonborg to finish the sweep that broke the backs of Chicago. By the time the 19-1 streak was over, the Phillies had a 7 ½ game lead.

Pittsburgh didn't go as quietly, and they chipped the lead down to 3 ½ games by the end of August. Fans could look ahead to a three-game set between the two teams starting on Labor Day in Pittsburgh, and then a return trip to Philadelphia the following week. But sometimes in baseball, what happens before and after the hyped showdowns is what proves decisive.

The Phils won five straight leading into Labor Day and the Pirates weren't able to answer, pushing the lead out to seven games. Even though Pittsburgh won two of three head-to-head, the Phils came right back with six straight wins. Their lead was at nine games and the NL East race was all but over.

It's fitting that this offensive-minded team clinched in a wild slugfest. It came on the Tuesday of the season's final week, on an afternoon in Wrigley Field. The Phils broke open a 4-2 game with seven runs in the seventh inning, a grand slam by starting pitcher Larry Christenson being the big blow. McGraw didn't make his life easy—he gave five runs back in the bottom of the eighth, but when “the Tugger” got Dave Rosello to tap back into a 1-6-3 double play in the ninth, the 15-9 win—and the NL East race—were in the books.

The Phils were going back to the NLCS and this time a new opponent awaited. The Los Angeles Dodgers had displaced Cincinnati in the NL West, and 1977 would start a new postseason rivalry.

1977 NLCS

Game 1 was a battle of the top two finishers in the Cy Young voting. Carlton was ready for Philadelphia, while runner-up Tommy John was going for Los Angeles. In spite of the pitchers on the mound, it was the bats that would tell the tale in the opener.

With two outs in the top of the first, Dodger shortstop Bill Russell committed an error to keep the inning alive. Luzinski made it costly, with a home run that staked Carlton to a 2-0 lead

The score held through four, when Carlton—who had already singled—was hit by a pitch to lead off the top of the fifth. McBride grounded into a force out and replaced the pitcher on the bases. Russell booted another grounder, and with two outs, Davey Johnson (the future manager of the 1986 New York Mets and elsewhere) hit a two-run single to center. John was chased and the Phils were on top 4-zip.

Los Angeles got to Carlton in the fifth when Lee Lacy hit a one-out single, was balked to second and scored on a base hit by Davey Lopes. But the Phillie pitcher again did it with his bat in the top of the sixth, delivering an RBI single.

Everything was cruising along for the Phils, up 5-1 in the bottom of the seventh. Then two walks and a Lopes single loaded the bases with two outs. Ron Cey came to the plate. The Dodger third baseman hit 30 home runs in the regular season and he hit another one now. The grand slam tied the game and sent Carlton to the showers.

Elias Sosa had a 1.98 ERA all year for the Dodgers and came in on the ninth, but didn't have it. McBride, Bowa and Schmidt all hit consecutive one-out singles that broke the tie, and then a balk brought in an insurance run. Philadelphia had a 7-5 win. Their time out west was a success no matter what, and they could put an early stranglehold on the series if they won Game 2.

Los Angeles' rookie manager Tom Lasorda turned to 32-year-old vet Don Sutton. McBride got him for a home run in the third that gave the Phils a 1-0 lead, and the Dodgers desperately needed to shift momentum. They started doing it immediately in the bottom of the inning, when Rick Monday hit a leadoff double and then scored on a two-out single from Lopes to tie up the game.

Philadelphia had Lonborg on the mound. The Dodgers nailed him in the fourth. Russell and Reggie Smith singled, and were bunted over. Steve Garvey took a walk. Then left fielder Dusty Baker, then a 28-year-old power hitter, unloaded with LA's second grand slam of the series.

This time, there was no Philadelphia comeback. Sutton was locked in and threw a complete game. Los Angeles got two-out RBI hits from Steve Yeager in the sixth and Reggie Smith in the seventh, wrapping up a 7-1 win that evened the series.

Philadelphia still had the NLCS where they realistically wanted it—down to a best two-of-three at Veterans Stadium for the weekend. They sent Christenson to the mound, while LA countered with Burt Hooton. Neither starter was effective.

Baker continued his hot hitting, with an RBI double in the second, and then scored on a two-out single by Yeager. Hooton ripped a double, but Yeager was thrown out at the plate, keeping the score 2-0. The Phils quickly answered—or, more accurately, Hooton answered for them. With two on and two out, Hooton issued four straight walks, was removed from the game, and just like that it was 3-2 Philadelphia.

Christenson couldn't make it through the fourth. After a Cey double and another RBI single by Baker, the Phillie starter was pulled. With one out and the bases loaded, new Dodger pitcher Rick Rhoden lofted a fly ball to right. McBride made the catch and gunned down Baker at the plate, keeping the score 3-3.

The first four innings of Game 3 had already seen a lot of what-ifs and changes of fortune. And we were just getting started.

In the bottom of the eighth, Sosa came in for Los Angeles and again couldn't get it done. Hebner ripped a double and scored the lead run on a single from Maddox, who went all the way to third on a bad throw. When Cey booted a Boone grounder, Maddox scored and Boone went all the way to second, still no one out. Boone was not able to come around. It didn't seem to matter in the moment, but it would prove to be enormous.

Philadelphia's Gene Garber got the first two outs in the ninth. Lasorda summoned Vic Davalillo to pinch-hit for Yeager. Davalillo was 40-years-old and in August had been playing in Mexico, out of the majors since 1974 when the Dodgers added him for the stretch drive. The veteran kept Game 3 alive by dropping down a bunt single.

Manny Mota then hit a long double to left. The tying runs were in scoring position, and Lopes singled to center. Stuningly, the game was tied. It got worse. An errant pickoff throw sent Lopes to second base, where he was able to score on a single to center from Russell.

Game 3 is one of the truly underrated gems in LCS history. Because it wasn't a deciding game, and neither team ended up winning the World Series, it gets forgotten. But the comeback was stunning, the Davalillo plot twist inspiring and it was the final momentum reversal in this NLCS.

Carlton and John hooked up again for Game 4, with a light drizzle hitting the field. As the game went on, the rain would become oddly symbolic of the Philadelphia mood. Los Angeles kept their momentum, as Baker hit a two-run shot in the second. The Phils had good chances to score in the second and fourth, with two on and one out. They did get a run in the fourth, but in both cases, Tim McCarver struck out for the second out and John escaped with a 2-1 lead still intact.

Baker started the action again in the fifth, with a leadoff walk and then Yeager singled him to third. With two outs, a wild pitch scored a run and Yeager ended up on third base, where he could score on a bunt single from Russell.

The 4-1 lead was plenty for John. The Phils were able to get the tying run to the plate in the eighth inning, but had the pitcher's spot due up and John got pinch-hitter Jerry Martin to ground out. Los Angeles closed out the game and the series with minimal incident.

Baker was named NLCS MVP, the first time such an honor had been given (the American League would not follow suit until 1980). He had a series on-base percentage of .438, a slugging percentage of .857 and countless key hits, including the Game 2 grand slam that was the first of the two big momentum shifts for his team.

Cey had a good series, at .400/.615 and Lopes always seemed to be around at big times, but Baker was a good choice. Noteworthy in a less positive way was Schmidt for Philadelphia, as he went just 1-for-16.

1978

The 1978 Philadelphia Phillies won the franchise's third straight NL East title, but it didn't come easy, as they held off a final push by the Pittsburgh Pirates before clinching and moving on to the National League Championship Series.

Philadelphia's offense was down a little bit from its NL-leading form of 1977, a reason why the Phils slipped from 101 wins to 90. But they were still third in the league in runs scored, and the pitching was pretty good too, coming in fourth in the NL in ERA.

Schmidt had the best career of any player in the regular lineup and he had a good year, with 21 home runs and 78 RBIs. But the best hitter in 1978 was Luzinski, with an on-base percentage of .388, 35 home runs and 101 RBIs.

The Phils got further contributions from Hebner (.369 OBP/.464 slugging percentage), and catcher Boone (.347/.425). It was an off-year from McBride and a horrible year for second baseman Ted Sizemore that explained the overall dip in production.

One man who never needed too many runs to win games was Carlton. The future Hall of Fame lefty won 16 and posted a 2.47 ERA to lead the staff. Christenson and Randy Lerch were effective starters, the former with a 3.96 ERA the latter at 3.24.

The two aging veterans at the back end—Kaat and Lonborg struggled, but the Phils swung a deal in June to acquire Dick Ruthven, who made 20 starts in Philadelphia and went 13-5 with a 2.99 ERA. Ruthven came at a cost—a good reliever in Garber—but the Phils had depth in the pen, with Reed, McGraw and Brusstar all having good years.

Philadelphia started the season slowly, sitting on .500 at Memorial Day, but no one in the NL East could really get hot. The Chicago Cubs were in first place, but after the Cubs had sizzled and then faded in the summer of 1977, the Phils had to be confident only being 3 ½ games out.

June was an up-and-down month. There was an eight-game win streak at home, when they swept the best two teams in the NL West, the Los Angeles Dodgers and the San Francisco Giants. There was a tough return trip out west, where the Phillies lost six of seven. But the month ended with a four-game sweep of the Cubs at the Vet. By the All-Star break, Philadelphia had moved past Chicago, enjoying a 4 ½ game lead, while the Pirates were seven games back.

By rights, Philadelphia should have put this race to bed in August. They beat Pittsburgh six times in seven games, but the inconsistency in other games allowed the Pirates that ground back and more. The Cubs were also still hanging around. On Labor Day, Philadelphia led by only two games over Pittsburgh and 3 ½ over Chicago.

The Cubs were up first, with two-game sets at each time's park over a one-week span. The Phils took the first two games, one in which they trailed 2-0 in the seventh, but rallied to win 5-3. Ruthven also got a big win, and McBride made the biggest mark on an otherwise disappointing year when he hit a home run and had three RBIs in an 11-5 win. Chicago faded from the picture.

Philadelphia continued to go up and down, letting the lead over Pittsburgh get down to a single game at one point, then answering with a six-game win streak. As the Phils tested the stress levels of their fans, they entered the final weekend of the season with an 89-69 record. The Pirates were 85-72. The teams would play four games against each other in Pittsburgh, starting with a Friday doubleheader. The stakes were simple—Philly was in with a win. If they lost, the Pirates would be a ½ game ahead and have to play a Monday makeup game to try and clinch.

Friday's doubleheader was tailor-made for a team that only needed to win once, but it ended with the markings of disaster written over it. With the first game tied 4-4 in the ninth, Pittsburgh catcher Ed Ott hit a triple and then kept coming all the way home, scoring on an error by Maddox—only one of the best defensive center fielders in the game.

Carlton was on the mound in the nightcap and pitched extremely well, but the bats went quiet and the score was 1-1 in the ninth. A double by Pittsburgh right fielder Dave Parker was followed by two intentional walks. Brusstar, on to pitch, balked in the winning run.

Yes, the Phillies lost consecutive games on the catcher circling the bases and a bases loaded balk. Anyone in Philadelphia that could see the collapse coming, couldn't be blamed. Especially when Pittsburgh opened up on Saturday by scoring four times in the first inning.

The Phils then showed their mettle. Lerch got settled down on the mound, and then he got things turned around with his bat. He homered twice, further adding to the weird quality of this whole series. Luzinski blasted a three-run shot. McBride and Maddox each had three-hit games. Philadelphia led 10-4 in the ninth.

It wouldn't be the 1978 Philadelphia Phillies if they simply closed the door. Pittsburgh scored four more times and had two chances with the tying run at the plate. The last one was by Willie Stargell. One year later, "Pops" Stargell would be an October hero with a big home run in Game 7 of the World Series. But that would be next year. This time Reed struck him out and the Phils had another NL East title. The Phils would get another chance at the Dodgers.

1978 NLCS

The NLCS opened in Philadelphia. The rotation system for home field called for two games at old Veterans Stadium on Wednesday and Thursday night, followed by the balance of the series over the weekend at Dodger Stadium.

Carlton was out of commission until Friday. The Phils instead turned to Christensen to pitch the first game against the Dodgers' 19-game winner, Burt Hooton. It didn't go well for Christensen.

The Phils were able to score first, with Luzinski tripled in the second inning and scored on a sac fly from Schmidt, but in the third, the Dodgers broke through. Davey Lopes led off with a double. Schmidt booted a grounder off the bat of Bill Russell. Reggie Smith tied the game with an RBI single and Steve Garvey unloaded with a three-run shot. It was 4-1 and Los Angeles was on its way.

LA added a run in the fourth when Rick Monday hit a leadoff triple. Christensen got the next two outs and looked like he might escape, when Lopes homered. Somehow the Phillie starter was still in the game for the fifth inning, as though Ozark was unaware that starters can't just chew up innings as though this were the middle of August. Garvey tripled and scored to make it 7-1.

The decision to let Christensen continue (he came out after the Garvey triple) looked worse when Philadelphia got its offense going in the fifth. Four singles with one out produced two runs and had runners on first and second. Luzinski popped out, but Hebner drove in a run with a single that made it 7-4.

Schmidt was coming to the plate as the tying run, but Dodger skipper Tommy Lasorda managed the game with an appropriate amount of urgency. He pulled Hooton, brought in 21-year-old Bob Welch and Welch got Schmidt to fly to center. Los Angeles got solo home runs from Steve Yeager in the sixth and Garvey in the eighth, winning the game 9-5.

Dick Ruthven shouldered Philadelphia's hopes for Game 2, facing Los Angeles' veteran lefty Tommy John, who had pitched the clinching game here at the Vet in the 1977 NLCS.

Ruthven and John traded zeroes for three innings on Thursday night, when Lopes hit a solo shot to start the top of the fourth.

Dusty Baker hit a leadoff double for the Dodgers to start the fifth and scored on a single from Yeager. The LA catcher then stole second base and scored on a two-out single from Lopes. Ruthven was gone and the score was 3-0.

Lopes made yet another mark on the game, hitting a two-out triple in the seventh to drive in Monday. Meanwhile, John was dominating with his sinker. The only remote Philly threat came in the seventh, with leadoff singles from Maddox and Luzinski, but John promptly got Boone to hit into a double play. The Dodger starter allowed just four hits—all singles—and two walks—in a 4-0 shutout.

Philadelphia's odds were long, needing three straight road wins but they didn't nail it in and they had Carlton on the mound. Los Angeles had a quality veteran of their own in Don Sutton, but this time it was the Phillies who attacked early and often.

Schmidt doubled with two outs in the top of the second. After Tim McCarver drew a walk, Sizemore singled in a run. Carlton, a good-hitting pitcher, jacked a three run bomb and it was 4-1.

Los Angeles got something going in the bottom of the inning, as Cey and Baker walked, and Bill Russell doubled them in. But with runners on second and third and one out, Carlton struck out Yeager and got Sutton to kill the threat with just one run. The Dodgers further chipped away in the third. With two outs, a sequence of a Reggie Smith single, a Garvey double and Cey single produced two runs and it was a 4-3 game.

But Philadelphia had a two-out rally of their own waiting. In the sixth, Lopes committed an error and the Phils made him pay. Sizemore singled, and Carlton drove in both runs with a base hit of his own, chasing Sutton. Jerry Martin, a good pinch-hitter, doubled for a 7-3 lead. The Phils added a run in the seventh, Garvey and Luzinski traded solo home runs and Philly was still breathing with a 9-4 win.

The sun splashed over Dodger Stadium on Saturday afternoon for Game 4, as the home team sent the underrated Doug Rau to the mound to face Lerch.

Philadelphia fans got a bad omen early—they loaded the bases with none out, but Luzinski struck out. Then Jose Cardenal hit a line drive right at the shortstop Russell. They got no runs, and in the second, the Dodgers got on the board with a double from Cey and an RBI single from Baker.

Luzinski made amends in the third, hitting a two-out two-run homer for a 2-1 lead. Cey answered with a solo home run and Garvey went deep in the bottom of the sixth. It was 3-2 Dodgers and they were nine outs from a pennant. But with Rick Rhoden on in relief of Rau, McBride picked his team off the mat with a two-out solo home run in the seventh to tie the game 3-3.

Garvey led off the eighth with a single, but was gunned down stealing by Boone. The out negated a pair of two-out singles. But Rhoden, in spite of the home run, was pitching well and turned in four solid innings. The game went to the 10th, a battle between LA closer Terry Forster and McGraw.

There were two outs in the bottom of the tenth when Cey drew a walk. It looked harmless enough when Baker lofted a fly ball to centerfield. Maddox muffed the ball. Russell then hit a line drive single to center and Cey came flying in with the run that won the pennant.

Garvey was named 1978 NLCS MVP, hitting .389 for the series, with four home runs and seven RBIs. It's tough to argue against anyone with those numbers, but Lopes also hit .389 (7-for-18), drove in five runs and controlled Game 2, the game in which the pendulum of the series decisively swung.

It was frustration continued for Philadelphia, their third straight NLCS loss and second to Los Angeles. And it was frustration continued for Schmidt individually, as the great third baseman continued what was now a pattern of postseason non-performance, batting .200.

1979

The Phillies were clearly established as a part of baseball's power elite. And they made a big move to try and take the next step in October. The Phils signed Pete Rose, a key part of the great teams in Cincinnati throughout the 1970s. Expectations were high. But the 1979 Phils failed to deliver and the Ozark Era came to an end.

It wasn't for lack of trying. In addition to Rose, there were other moves to get over the hump. An offense-first team, the Phillies traded a good bat in Richie Hebner to the New York Mets for starting pitcher Nino Espinosa. Philadelphia picked up Doug Bird, a competent reliever from Kansas City. But at the end of 1979, the pitching was still stuck at 10th in the 12-team National League for staff ERA.



Espinosa, who won 14 games with a 3.65 ERA and Randy Lerch, whose ERA finished at 3.74, were respectable and had other pitchers held to their typical form, there would have been improvement.

But Steve Carlton finished with a relatively high 3.62 ERA. Even though Carlton won 18 games, any staff who doesn't have a single starter with an ERA under 3.50 isn't going anywhere. Dick Ruthven, a usually reliable #2, only made 20 starts and was mediocre when he did take the mound.

The bullpen was worse. Tug McGraw, normally a solid closer, finished with a 5.16 ERA. So did Bird. Rawly Eastwick and Kevin Saucier were mediocre. And while Ron Reed won 13 games and worked over 100 innings out of the pen, he ended with a 4.15 ERA.

In short, if the '79 Phils were going to win, they would have to outslug people to do it. That had worked in prior years, thanks in no small part to Mike Schmidt. And Schmidt kept ringing up numbers in 1979, hitting 45 home runs, posting an on-base percentage of .386 and exceeding the century mark in both RBI and runs scored.

Rose also delivered as advertised, with a dazzling OBP of .418. Bob Boone put up a .367 OBP from the catcher position. Greg Gross was a part-time player, but his .422 OBP gave Ozark depth.

It wasn't getting people on base that was the problem. It was power that failed the Phillies. Greg Luzinski, normally one of the game's top power hitters in left field, only slugged .427. Bake McBride had an off-year in right field. So did shortstop Larry Bowa and center fielder Garry Maddox.

Philadelphia had also traded away steady second baseman Ted Sizemore to the Chicago Cubs, part of a bigger package of players that brought Manny Trillo back in return. While this trade eventually panned out big-time for the Phils, 1979 was a hiccup. Trillo had an awful year at the plate. And this offense, previously one of the National League's best, finished just seventh in the NL in runs scored.

The problems weren't immediately apparent. In the first part of April, Philadelphia swept a pair of two-game series from the Pittsburgh Pirates. And in what would prove to be one of the most exciting moments of the season, the Phils swept the Dodgers three straight at home in late April, every win a walkoff.

Trailing 3-2 in the series opener, Schmidt tied the game with a single in the eighth, then won it with a single in the 10th. The second game was tied 6-6 in the 10th. Reed, having already worked two shutout innings, came up with two outs and no one aboard. He doubled, then Bowa singled him in for the win. In Wednesday night's finale, the Phils trailed 4-3 in the ninth. Trillo and Gross singled, Bowa drew a walk and Rose delivered a base hit to left that won the game 5-4.

Philadelphia went west and did more damage to a Dodger team that would also fall off the pace in '79, winning three of four. By May 17, the Phillies had a 3 ½ game lead in the NL East and all was normal in the baseball world of eastern Pennsylvania.

But a home series with up-and-coming Montreal was a bad harbinger. The Phillies lost all three games. They hit the skids. Seventeen losses in 23 games piled up, including another three-game sweep at the hands of the Expos. By June 10, it was Montreal and St. Louis who shared the division lead. Philadelphia and Pittsburgh were each three games off the pace.

There was still plenty of time and certainly no reason for a veteran team to panic. The Phils stabilized for the next month, helped by another sweep of the Dodgers. Going into the All-Star break, the Phils were still within three games, with a record of 50-41. Montreal was still setting the pace, St. Louis had been replaced by Chicago in second and Pittsburgh was four games back.

Some middling play out of the break left the Phils at 56-50, five games out and a big schedule stretch ahead. They would play ten games against the Pirates, including three doubleheaders. This would be the stretch that would define the season for both teams and not in a way anyone in Philadelphia preferred to remember.

On the first Friday evening in August, at Pittsburgh's old Three Rivers Stadium, the Phils lost both ends of the doubleheader, scoring just four runs in the two games. The bats stayed silent on Saturday, mustering only six hits in a 4-0 shutout loss. The lineup came alive in the first game of Sunday's twinbill, with a Luzinski grand slam giving the Phils an 8-7 lead in the eighth.

But the fact this game was still close, when Carlton had been on the mound underscored half of Philadelphia's problem. The other half was underscored when the Pirates ripped off five runs and won 12-8. The Phils went meekly in the nightcap, losing 5-2.

It was an unmitigated disaster that was about to get worse. Pittsburgh made the return trip to the Old Vet in Philly. The Phils were able to grab the opener of Friday's doubleheader, 4-3 in 12 innings, but then wasted a good outing from Carlton in a 3-2 loss.

Could it get worse? Yep. Philadelphia staked young starter Dickie Noles to an 8-0 lead on Saturday...and lost 14-11. They got hammered one more time in the finale, losing 9-1. There are a lot of little indicators that tell a team when it's not their year. I'm going to take a wild guess that losing eight of nine games to your archrival in August is one of them.

By the time the carnage was complete, the Phils were 60-58 and eight games out. They never got closer than 7 ½ the rest of the way. Ozark was fired at the end of August with the record having slipped under .500 at 65-67.

Dallas Green took over and Philadelphia did play with some pride down the stretch. They got back on the winning side of the ledger and finished with a record of 84-78. They played spoiler, with Carlton throwing a shutout at Montreal in the season finale, a result that handed the division title to Pittsburgh.

But when the nicest thing you can say about a season is that helped your hated rival win a pennant—and that rival goes on to do what you haven't been able to do and win the World Series—well, that's a rough year.

The good news is this—the Phils wouldn't stay down for long. 1979 was just an unfortunate aberration.

1980

The 1980 Philadelphia Phillies carried the banner for a franchise and a fan base that was marked with frustration, both short-term, long-term and even beyond the baseball diamond. The Phillies had not won a World Series since 1915. They had lost the National League Championship Series each year from 1976-78.

And within the framework of 1980 in Philadelphia sports, the 76ers in the NBA and the Flyers in the NHL had each reached their respective Finals and come up short (and if we could look ahead, the Eagles were on their way to losing the Super Bowl). *Somebody* in Philadelphia had to win a title didn't they? It was up to the Phillies.

Hitting was the Phils' cornerstone, and they were second in the National League in runs scored, excelling equally at getting men on base and hitting for power. No one was better than Schmidt who hit 48 home runs, drove in 121 runs and won the NL MVP award.

Schmidt's big numbers supported an array of other players who had various areas of strength, but no standout stars. Rose, now 39-years-old, finished with a .352 on-base percentage. McBride posted respectable numbers of .342 OBP/.453 slugging. Luzinski, the big leftfielder, saw his power dip, but still hit 19 home runs.

Philadelphia was very good defensively. Boone, Maddox, Bowa and Trillo made the Phillies the classic team that's strong up the middle. None of them hit very well, though Trillo's .334 OBP was respectable, but when you look back on how many close games the Phillies won it's hard not to look at this consistent defense.

The pitching made a big leap forward, jumping from 11th in the National League in ERA in 1979 to 3rd in 1980. When you have one of the great pitchers of your generation, it goes a long way toward making improvement.

Steve Carlton was now 35-years-old, but the lefthander still had the nasty slider that ultimately took him to the Hall of Fame. And in 1980 he won 24 games, worked over 300 innings and posted a 2.34 ERA. It was good enough for the Cy Young Award, as the Phils swept the two major individual awards.

The back end of the bullpen was in the hands of another capable 35-year-old. Tug McGraw had the best year of his career, with a 1.46 ERA and saving 20 games.

With Carlton and McGraw as his anchors, Green was able to piece the rest of the staff together. Ruthven was a reliable #2 starter, winning 17 games and finishing with a 3.55 ERA. The bullpen was aided by one young arm, Saucier and one veteran, Reed.

The rotation was filled out by mostly mediocre performances from Bob Walk, Lerch, Espinosa and Christenson. But the Phillies got a big lift from 21-year-old Marty Bystrom who came up late in the season, made six starts and went 5-0 with a buck-fifty ERA.

It took a month and a half for the team to get untracked. Philadelphia was under .500 on May 13 when they won seven of nine games against the Cincinnati Reds and Houston Astros, each contenders in the NL West. By Memorial Day, the Phillies were 20-15 and just a game out of first place.

The pace in the NL East was being set by the defending World Series champion Pittsburgh Pirates and not far behind was the Montreal Expos, who had chased Pittsburgh to the final weekend in 1979.

Philadelphia then lost nine of sixteen games and fell four games back. A six-game win streak against NL West competition stabilized the Phils and they pulled into a first-place tie on June 18. They hovered within a game or two of first place and they reached the All-Star break with a pedestrian 41-35 record, but one that was only a half-game back of the Expos with the Pirates just one game out. The NL East race was red-hot.

The period right after the All-Star break was not kind to the Phillies. They had a 4-7 stretch against the Reds and a poor Atlanta Braves team. Philadelphia went to Pittsburgh for a four-game set and got it handed to them, losing all four games and by a combined score of 21-8. On August 10, the Phils were six games out before a 9-2 stretch—highlighted by a five-game sweep of the lowly Mets in old Shea Stadium pulled Philly back to within 1 ½ games.

On Labor Day, the basic dynamic of the race had not changed. Montreal was in first place, Philadelphia was one game out and Pittsburgh was in hot pursuit, only two back.

The Phillies beat the Pirates in a two-game set, the second a 14-inning walk off. It started the fade of the defending champs and the race narrowed to Philadelphia and Montreal. They met in Philly on the season's penultimate weekend for a three-game set, with the Phils up by a half-game.

Ruthven pitched the opener and went seven solid innings, departing with the game tied 1-1. McGraw held the fort for two innings and McBride won it with a walkoff blast. But the rest of the weekend didn't go quite as well.

Carlton took the mound with a chance to put his team firmly in control of the race, but gave up four runs in seven innings, losing 4-3. And Walk was hit hard in the finale, with Saucier and Dickie Noles unable to stop the bleeding out of the bullpen. The 8-3 loss left Philadelphia a half-game back with a week to go.

The good news was that at least the Phillies controlled the half-game. So even though the Expos swept the Cardinals in a three-game sweep, the Phils were able to counter with a four-game sweep of the Cubs. The NL East race was tied, with Philadelphia and Montreal poised to settle it head-to-head with a three-game series north of the border.

Ruthven again pitched a Friday opener and again pitched well, though he came out in the sixth inning with a 2-1 lead, keyed by two hits from Rose and a home run by Schmidt. Sparky Lyle, a veteran lefty and former Cy Young winner with the Yankees in 1977 had been acquired in September for games like this.

Lyle got four big outs when the Expos were threatening, and McGraw threw two more shutout innings. The 2-1 lead stood up. Philadelphia needed just one more win and they had Carlton reserve for Sunday.

Christenson started on Saturday and pitched six good innings, though he trailed 2-1. In the top of the seventh, Rose, McBride and Schmidt all singled to load the bases with one out. Luzinski delivered a two-run single to give the Phils the lead, but in a bizarre baserunning circumstance, both he and Schmidt were thrown out on the bases on the same play.

The game stayed at 3-2 and it looked like that might be costly, because Ron Reed and Lyle gave the lead back in the bottom of the inning. Philadelphia trailed 4-3 in the bottom of the ninth.

Rose drew a walk to start the inning and was replaced on the bases by McBride after a force out. McBride moved up to second on a ground ball out, and with two down Boone singled in the tying run.



The game stretched to the 11th inning and one more time Rose was in the middle of things. He led off with a single. Schmidt came to the plate with one out and put the punctuation mark on his MVP campaign. He homered to left. McGraw slammed the door in the bottom of the inning and the Phillies were NL East champs.

The drama was just beginning for the Phillies.

1980 NLCS

Philadelphia clinching on Saturday had another big benefit--Carlton was available to start Game 1. The Houston Astros, winners of the NL West, missed the same opportunity for their ace Joe Niekro. Houston missed three chances to clinch before finally turning to Niekro to win a one-game playoff on Monday. The Astros arrived in Philly for Tuesday's game and would start Ken Forsch.

Forsch stepped up and pitched well, and the Astros scored first, on a two-out RBI single from Gary Woods in the third inning. But Forsch had been victimized all year by poor run support and that trend continued. Houston never scored again. In the bottom of the sixth, Rose led off with a single and then Luzinski hit a two-run shot to give the Phils a 2-1 lead.

The Phillies got an insurance run in the seventh when Maddox singled, was bunted over and scored on a two-out pinch-hit from Gross. McGraw nailed down the last six outs. The 3-1 win was a good game...but little did anyone know that it was actually the *worst* of the five games in the 1980 NLCS.

Houston turned to veteran fireballer Nolan Ryan for Game 2 on Wednesday night, while Philadelphia sent Ruthven to the mound. Once again, the Astros scored first in the third. Craig Reynolds drew a walk, moved up on a bunt and scored on a base hit by Terry Puhl.

Philadelphia again countered with two runs, this time coming back in the fourth inning. Schmidt and Luzinski hit consecutive doubles to start the inning, and Maddox later picked up Luzinski with an RBI single.

The 2-1 score held to the seventh when Ryan somehow worked a walk with two outs. Puhl ripped a double and Ryan booked it all the way around, to score the tying run. In the bottom of the inning it looked like Philly would get the lead right back, with runners on second and third with one out. Houston manager Bill Virdon first summoned lefty Joe Sambito, who struck out McBride. Then Virdon called on his righty, Dave Smith, to strike out Schmidt.

Houston took the lead with a double by Joe Morgan, who came around on a single by Cruz, but Philadelphia immediately countered, with Luzinski singling, moving up on a bunt by Trillo and scoring on a base hit from Maddox. The Phils were then poised to win it in the ninth, with three straight one-out singles to load the bases. Houston reliever Frank Lacorte struck out Trillo and escaped.

The Astros broke it open in the tenth. Puhl singled and was bunted over. After an intentional walk, Cruz drove in the lead run, and an error by McBride in the outfield left runners on second and third. A productive out by Cesar Cedeno added another run. Before it was over, a Dave Bergman triple added two more and Houston was up 7-3. But it turned out they needed that insurance.

Bowa singled to start the bottom of the 10th, and Bob Boone drew a walk. With one out, Rose grounded into a force play, and an error on the double play turn brought in a run. McBride drew a walk. Houston fans watched nervously as the bases were loaded and Schmidt came to the plate as the lead run. He lifted a fly ball to right, but it stayed in the park. Houston had an exhausting 7-4 win.



The teams took a day off—certainly needed for the Astros, who had been playing high-intensity games without a break for six straight days and went to Houston for Friday afternoon's Game 3. Niekro made his first appearance of the NLCS, and staged a big-time pitchers' duel with Christenson.

Through ten innings, the only remote threat came in the third inning, when Rose was thrown out trying to score from third on an infield groundout. In the bottom of the 11th, Morgan came to the plate.

Both Morgan and Rose had been integral parts of Cincinnati's Big Red Machine of the 1970s, which won four pennants and the World Series in 1975 and 1976. Their return to the postseason on opposite teams was one of the big storylines of this NLCS.

Rose played better during the series, but Morgan struck the biggest blow—he tripled to start the 1st and scored on Denny Walling's sac fly. Houston was one game from the pennant. And a series that was already tense, full of back-and-forth, was about to go to a new level.

Carlton came back on three days' rest with his team's season on the line, while Houston gave the start to Vern Ruhle, a good young pitcher who had already beaten future Hall of Famer Tom Seaver in a key game down the stretch. Ruhle was again the equal of a future Hall of Famer in Carlton.

The game was scoreless through three, and the fourth inning got eventful. After consecutive singles to start the inning, Maddox hit a soft, low liner to the mound that Ruhle either caught or trapped, and threw to first. The ruling on the field was "no catch", which would have meant Maddox was out, and runners were on second and third. Seems simple enough, doesn't it?

Only Houston had gone ahead and doubled off each runner just in case. The umpires conferred and determined Ruhle had caught the ball. They declared the runner at first to be doubled off, infuriating the Phillies, who put the game under protest. They also decided to leave the runner at second base, infuriating the Astros, who put the game under protest. It was a completely illogical solution and sounds like the kind of thing you come up with in a backyard game to split the difference.

In the bottom of the inning, Houston scored, with a leadoff double from Enos Cabell, who eventually came around to score on a sac fly from Art Howe. On that play, Woods, who had

drawn a walk, was thrown out trying to take third and the game stayed at 1-0. Houston added another run in the fifth when Luis Pujols tripled and Rafael Landestoy singled him in.

Houston was ready to add a third run in the sixth. The bases were loaded with one out. Woods was on third and when Pujols flied to right, Woods tagged and scored. Only he left third base too soon, and the Philadelphia appeal was upheld. It was a double play, and quite unnecessary—there was no reason to think Woods wouldn't have scored had he waited.

The game stayed 2-0 into the eighth, when the Phillies made the mistake hurt. Gross and Lonnie Smith singled to start the inning, and Rose cut the lead in half with an RBI single. The throw foolishly went home, and allowed Smith to go to third and Rose to take second. Schmidt singled to tie the game. Sambito came in with no one out and again struck out McBride in a big situation.

Trillo hit a sac fly to give the Phils the lead, but again a runner—this time Schmidt—was thrown out elsewhere on the bases to end the inning. To call this game “weird” understates the case.

But to call it “exciting” understates the case too. Landestoy drew a ninth-inning walk, was bunted over and Puhl singled in the tying run. We were going extras again.

Rose singled with one out in the top of the 10th. With two outs, Luzinski and Trillo each doubled and the score was 5-3. McGraw closed the deal and we were going to a Game 5 in prime-time on Sunday night.

Now it was the Phillies' turn to have a staff running on empty and they were left with unproven Marty Bystrom to go up against Ryan in the decisive game. Houston got on Bystrom early. Puhl singled to start the home half of the first, stole second and scored on a two-out hit from Cruz. The lead didn't last though—Trillo singled with one out in the second, and after a walk, and a productive out moving both runners up, Philly got their own two-out hit, from Bob Boone and it was 2-1.

Houston was poised to tie it right back up in the second, as Pujols drew a one-out walk. He looked to score on a double by Craig Reynolds, but a McBride-to-Trillo relay gunned Pujols at the plate. More of the same happened in the fifth—Cabell, on second base, tried to score on an error by Trillo, but Rose threw out Cabell at the plate. The 2-1 score held into the sixth.

The Astros finally tied the game when Luzinski committed a two-base error, and Alan Ashby picked up the run with a base hit. One inning later, Houston opened up offensively.

Puhl hit a leadoff single, and Cabell bunted the runner up. With two outs, Jose Cruz drew a walk. Walling delivered a single that put the Astros in front. Cruz moved to third and scored on a wild pitch. Then Howe ripped a triple and it was 5-2, and for the second straight game, Philadelphia was down to their last six outs and trailing by multiple runs.

Bowa, Boone and Gross hit successive singles off Ryan to load the bases and Rose worked a walk to make it a 5-3 game, the bases still loaded and no one out. Sambito was summoned. A ground ball force play made it 5-4. Forsch was summoned to face Schmidt.

Forsch's strikeout of the MVP third baseman looked like it might be a pennant-saving K. But Del Unser delivered the two-out RBI single to the game and Trillo then slashed a triple. In a matter of two batters, the Phillies had gone from elimination to a 7-5 lead.

Houston didn't just roll over and die. They got consecutive singles with one out in the eighth, Puhl again at the heart of the action. The right fielder hit .526 for the series, routinely hitting smooth line drives to both fields. With two outs, Landestoy and Cruz each singled and the game was again tied, this time at 7-7.

For the fourth and final time, the 1980 NLCS was going extra innings. Unser hit a one-out double, and with two outs, Maddox also doubled. The Phils had the lead. Ruthven had pitched a clean ninth, and now he did the same in the tenth. This incredible series was finally over and Philadelphia was going to the World Series.

Trillo was named NLCS MVP, going 8-for-21. He was the best choice of players on the winning team. I think this was a case where a choice from the losing team would have been appropriate. Puhl completely dominated this series from the leadoff spot, going 10-for-19, drawing three walks and constantly getting rallies started.

But the Phils had won what remains the greatest League Championship Series ever played. They were finally going to the World Series.

1980 WORLD SERIES

Homefield advantage for the World Series belonged to Philadelphia based on the rotation system. It would also be the first all-artificial turf World Series.

Kansas City had swept the ALCS so their rotation was fresh, with aces Dennis Leonard and Larry Gura set to go for the first two games. Philadelphia was drained and they sent lightly regarded Bob Walk to the mound.

The Royals took advantage early as veteran center fielder Amos Otis hit a two-run homer and first baseman Willie Mays Aikens hit another as Kansas City built a 4-0 lead. Aikens would not have a long career in baseball, but he was a tough out in this series, as this early home run indicated.

The Phils' comeback capacity was already becoming a national story though, and they did it in Game 1. In the bottom of the third, Bowa singled with one out, stole second and scored on a double from Boone. Lonnie Smith drove in Boone and the lead was quickly cut in half. Even though Smith was out trying to stretch a hit into a double, the rally continued. Rose was hit by a pitch, Schmidt drew a walk and McBride homered to right. Philadelphia was suddenly ahead 5-4.

Leonard couldn't recover and he gave way early to Renie Martin. The Phillies added runs in the fourth, on a two-out RBI double from Boone, and in the fifth, McBride singled and eventually came around on a sac fly from Garry Maddox.

Kansas City tried to get back in it—George Brett doubled and Aikens homered again to cut the lead to 7-6, but McGraw came on and closed the door on the Game 1 win.

It was the battle of lefthanders for Game 2, as the Phils sent Carlton to the mound, with his nasty slider. The Royals countered with 18-game winner Larry Gura, a finesse pitcher who could get ground ball outs as well as anyone. Both pitchers controlled the game early, before Trillo delivered a key hit that gave the Phils a 2-0 lead in the fifth.

What Trillo had given with his bat, he quickly gave back with his glove. An error on a ball hit by Aikens created an unearned run for KC. In the seventh, the Royals got a bases-loaded double from Otis, scored three times and turned the game over to their excellent submarine-throwing closer Dan Quisenberry.

The closer would be no mystery to Philadelphia throughout this series though, and consecutive doubles from McBride and Schmidt keyed a four-run eighth. The game ended 6-4 and Philly had held serve at the Vet.

One of the more amusing stories in this series was that Brett was suffering from a case of hemorrhoids and it was wondered if he would be able to play. He had to leave in the sixth inning of Game 2 due to the pain. The third baseman said he would be in the lineup and joined the national chorus of jokes by saying "All my troubles are behind me."

Brett proved it with a home run in the first inning of Game 3 in Royals Stadium, but Philadelphia immediately answered in the second inning with singles from Trillo and Bowa, with Smith ultimately tying the game with an RBI groundout.

The punch-counterpunch dynamic stayed all the way through the game. Aikens tripled and scored in the fifth to put the Royals up 2-1. Schmidt homered to lead off the fifth and tie it. Otis hit a solo home in the seventh. Bowa singled with one out in the eighth, and with two outs, stole second and scored on a base hit by Rose. The game went to extra innings tied 3-3.

U.L. Washington led off the home half of the tenth inning with a single off McGraw. Willie Wilson drew a walk, but Washington was quickly wiped out trying to steal third. The inning was going to get away from Kansas City when Wilson stole second with two outs. Aikens singled to score the winning run and this time the rules prevented the Phils from immediately tying it back up.

The sun splashed over Kansas City for Game 4, as prior to 1985, Games 4 & 5 were day games on Saturday/Sunday, in the early afternoon and late afternoon respectively. For Royal fans, the start to Game 4 added to the sunshine.

Christenson had nothing and only got one out, after Wilson singled to start the bottom of the first. After that, Brett tripled and Aikens homered for a 3-0 lead. McRae and Otis hit back-to-back doubles and Kansas City had staked Leonard to a 4-0 lead.

One pattern didn't stop, it was the inability of Royal pitchers to have a shutdown inning Philadelphia got a run back in the second. A throwing error on a double play attempt moved Trillo to scoring position and Bowa singled him in with two outs. But Aikens homered *again* in the bottom of the second and Leonard settled in.

To the credit of Phillies' long reliever Dickie Noles, the game stayed at 5-1 into the seventh. The Phils picked up a run in the seventh, when Trillo doubled and came around on a sac fly from Boone. In the eighth, Rose doubled and Quisenberry came in for Leonard. The run scored thanks to productive outs, but Quisenberry closed the door on the 5-3 win without further incident. It set the stage for a pivotal Game 5 on Sunday.

Bystrom pitched for Philadelphia, while Gura followed Leonard in taking the ball on short rest. The Royals missed a chance in the third inning, when they had runners on first and second, no outs and the top of the order up. But Wilson, Frank White and Brett couldn't get the job done. In the top of the fourth, a defensive miscue by Kansas City was costly—Aikens made an error at first and Schmidt hit a two-run shot the other way for a 2-0 Philly lead.

The Royals manufactured a run in the fifth, with singles from Washington and Wilson, a sac bunt from White and an RBI groundout from Brett. KC tied it an inning later the easy way—a home run from Otis. Then they took the lead when Clint Hurdle and Darrell Porter singled and Washington hit a sac fly. But another Kansas City mistake came when Wilson doubled to right and Porter was thrown out at the plate.

Quisenberry came on early, with one out in the seventh inning. Schmidt beat out an infield hit, and then Unser ripped a double into the right field corner that tied the game. He was bunted over to third. With two outs, Trillo then beat out an infield hit. With only one ball hit into the outfield, the Phils had scored two runs and taken a 4-3 lead.

McGraw was on for the save and he made sure it got interesting. He went walk/out/walk/out/walk, to give Jose Cardenal a chance to be a hero for Kansas City. McGraw struck him out and the Phils were going home with two chances to clinch the World Series.

Game 6 shaped up as Philadelphia's best shot—Carlton was pitching on full rest against Kansas City's Rich Gale, a decent starter who had done well in Game 3, but certainly not in Carlton's class. The Royals could turn to Leonard in Game 7 and could probably squeeze a couple innings out of Gura if they needed. The Phillies had to see Tuesday night as their moment.

Carlton was razor sharp and for seven innings, the Royals never seriously threatened scoring. Schmidt delivered a two-run single in the third for the game's first runs. In the fifth, Smith doubled and scored on successive productive outs. In the sixth, with Gale out and lefty Paul Splitorff in, Bowa doubled and scored on a single from Boone.

Kansas City started to make headway in the eighth. John Wathan walked and Cardenal singled. Carlton was removed for McGraw. White fouled out, but Wilson walked to load the bases and Washington picked up the first KC run with a sac fly. In a key moment, Brett singled, but Cardenal had to stop at third. Consequently, McGraw was able to get McRae and keep the game 4-1.



In the top of the ninth, Aikens worked a walk with one out. Wathan singled, ensuring Kansas City had two chances with the tying run at the plate. Cardenal singled. The security police were lined up around Veterans Stadium on horses to keep the crowd from celebrating. Was it really possible that Kansas City would do the work for Philly's finest?

White was at the plate and he popped up behind home plate. Boone moved behind it. The ball popped out of his mitt. This is normally the kind of moment that haunts a franchise. But not when an alert player like Rose in effect "backs up" his catcher.

Rose was near the play and he snagged the ball before it hit the ground. McGraw struck out Wilson, the record 12th strikeout for the Royal leadoff hitter and the Phillies were champions.

It was a long wait fulfilled for the Phillie Faithful. They were finally the champs.

1981

The 1981 Philadelphia Phillies came out swinging the bats well and returned to the postseason, but pitching problems and the chaos of a year broken up by a long players' strike led to an early exit.

Philadelphia returned to its offense-heavy ways of the late 1970s, and went to extremes that even some of those division-winning teams never imagined. The Phils had the best offense in the National League, but the worst pitching.



Mike Schmidt won the MVP award and in a season where barely more than a hundred games were played, the third baseman hit 31 home runs and batted .316.

Pete Rose was now 40-years-old, but the first baseman could still hit and he batted .325. Gary Matthews hit .301, while middle infielders Manny Trillo and Larry Bowa found ways to keep getting on base. Manager Dallas Green also worked young outfielder Lonnie Smith into the mix frequently, and Smith hit .324.

Steve Carlton was still reliable at the top of the rotation, going 13-4 with a 2.42 ERA. Tug McGraw, the feisty lefthander in the bullpen was still good, with a 2.66 ERA and ten saves. It was the depth that killed Philadelphia's pitching.

Dick Ruthven struggled to a 5.15 ERA and Nino Espinosa was even worse, at 6.11. The bullpen had problems, and neither Dickie Noles, nor Sparky Lyle could give any consistency.

Green found a little bit of stability with veteran Larry Christenson, who had 3.54 ERA, but only won four games. An experiment in giving Marty Bystrom nine starts worked reasonably well, while another experiment with Mark Davis was less effective.

The Phils still started the season well, and from April 24 to May 5, they went 9-2. From that point forward, they stayed within a game or two of first place, with the St. Louis Cardinals leading and the Montreal Expos not far behind.

On May 31, Philadelphia tied for first and then went 7-2 to start the month of June. This included a three-game home sweep of the Houston Astros, the first meeting between the two teams since their incredible 1980 NLCS battle. Normally, this would be just a nice June run into the division lead, and not anything major in the historical record. In the world of 1981 MLB, it was decisive.

The players went on strike on June 12, and when they returned in mid-August, MLB decided they would change the playoff format. 1981 would see a "split-season" be introduced.

MLB's split-season format declared the teams leading at the strike to be champions. They would play whichever team won the "second half", in which everyone would start from scratch and play out the balance of the schedule.

And what if the same team won both halves? Instead of allowing teams like the Phillies to play their way directly into the LCS by winning both halves, MLB ruled that the inaugural Division Series must go on. In that event, the runner-up from the second half would play the winner of the first half.

The only reward Philadelphia had to chase during the second half, was the prospect of one extra home game in the Division Series—instead of playing two on the road to open, they would only play one. That's not a lot of incentive when other teams are fighting for their lives, and the Phils played like it. They lost 13 of 19 after the strike and finished the second-half 25-27.

The Expos nipped the Cardinals to win the second half. That great finish to the 1980 baseball season, when Philadelphia and Montreal went head-to-head for the NL East title, would get a sequel in 1981.

1981 NLDS

The format of the Division Series called for second-half champs to host the first two games, with the balance of the series held at the home of the first half winners. Philadelphia went to Montreal.

Game 1 was a battle of aces with the Phillies' sending Carlton to the mound. The Expos had their own #1, Steve Rogers, ready to go. Montreal got to Carlton immediately with a first-inning single from Warren Cromartie. After Jerry White hit into a force out, he stole second, and scored on a hit by Gary Carter.

The Phils quickly tied it in the second on a home run by Keith Moreland, but the Expos peppered Carlton again in the second, with consecutive doubles from Tim Wallach and Chris Speier. Wallach had the chance to do more damage in the third when he came to the plate with the bases loaded and one out, but he popped out and Carlton escaped with the score still 2-1.

Montreal just kept coming in the fourth. Speier drew a walk, was bunted over by Rogers and scored on a double by Cromartie. In the fifth, they had a chance to add to the lead when Andre Dawson led off with a triple. But Carlton got Carter and Larry Parrish, escaped the inning and it was still 3-1.

The missed chances might have haunted Montreal, given Carlton finally settled down and the Expos didn't threaten again. But Rogers was locked in.

Not until two outs in the ninth, when Moreland and George Vuckovich each singled, did the Montreal pitcher finally lose it. He was lifted for the talented young closer in Jeff Reardon, who got Manny Trillo to line out to left. It was another 3-1 final, again going to the home team.

The Expos had a deep rotation in 1981 and Bill Gullickson had an even better ERA than Rogers when he took the mound for Game 2. Ruthven went for the Phils.

Montreal capitalized on an error by Schmidt and the pesky Speier drove in an unearned run in the second inning. In the third, Cromartie doubled, Carter homered and the Expos had an early 3-0 lead.

Gullickson picked up where Rogers left off and dominated. Not until the eighth did the Phils start to mount a threat. With two outs, Lonnie Smith doubled and scored on a single by Pete Rose. Bake McBride doubled, and with runners on second and third, Expo fans had reason to be nervous.

Reardon was again summoned. After intentionally walking Schmidt—the MVP third baseman was so feared that it was worth putting him aboard as the lead run—Reardon got Gary Matthews to pop out. The ninth went without incident and it was another 3-1 final.

Philadelphia was in a 2-0 series hole. They would have to summon a whole lot of the comeback magic that had defined their October push in 1980.

The Expos looked ready to continue their momentum when they scored first in Game 3, in the second inning off Christenson. Once again, the normally light-hitting Speier came through, with an RBI single that followed a double by Carter. But in the bottom of the inning, the Phils began to awaken.

Matthews and Moreland started with singles off of Ray Burris. Trillo tied it with a one-out single, and a throwing error on Dawson brought in a second run. The game settled in and went to the sixth still at 2-1 Philadelphia. The Phils then got some breathing room.

Moreland singled, after which a bunt and intentional walk ended Burris' day. Montreal went to veteran lefthander Bill Lee, once a cornerstone of the rotation for the 1975 Boston Red Sox. Lee couldn't get Vuckovich in the lefty-lefty matchup, as a single made it 3-1. Rose tacked on another base hit for a 4-1 lead.

Montreal threatened in the seventh, getting two on with one out against Lyle. Lyle still had some veteran moxie and he got a double play ball to escape the inning

Schmidt doubled in the bottom of the seventh off Elias Sosa and it started a two-run inning that put the game out of reach. Montreal got a run in the eighth, but never made it interesting in a 6-2 final.

In an NLDS that produced a lot of good games, but mostly pitchers' duels. Game 4 of the Expos-Phillies was the best back-and-forth game of this entire round, a great matchup on a beautiful Saturday afternoon in Philly.

The Phils got after Scott Sanderson quickly, doing everything after two outs in the first inning. McBride singled and Schmidt homered for a 2-zip lead. Philadelphia got two more in the third. After Rose singled and Schmidt walked, a double play grounder appeared ready to get Sanderson out of it. But second baseman Jerry Manuel didn't handle the exchange and while he got one out at first, there were runners on second and third. Moreland, never a great player in his career, but having a great series, singled with two outs and it was 4-0.

Montreal began coming back off Noles in the fourth when Carter homered. When two walks followed, Green quickly went to his bullpen and Brusstar kept it 4-1. Speier made things happen in the fifth, hitting a leadoff double and scoring a sac fly from White.

The Expos pulled even in the sixth. Parrish singled and then Speier—who else—singled with two outs. John Milner came on to pinch-hit and cut the lead to 4-3 with a base hit. Lyle came out of the bullpen, but another pinch-hit single, this one by Wallace Johnson, tied the game 4-4.

Philadelphia got the lead back in the sixth. Montreal was already on their fourth pitcher, Woodie Fryman, who had been brilliant all year long. But Matthews got Fryman for a solo home run. Montreal immediately tied it when White drew a walk off Ron Reed and scored on a double from Carter.

The Phils looked ready to get the lead right back in the seventh with a runner on third, one out and Schmidt at the plate. But Reardon came out of the pen and got Schmidt to pop out.

Reardon stayed in, while Phils' closer Tug McGraw came on in the eighth. McGraw worked three scoreless innings and it was still 5-5 in the bottom of the 10th. Reardon had worked 2.2 IP of scoreless ball himself when Vuckovich came to the plate. He lined a home run into the right field seats and with the 6-5 win, a Game 5 on Sunday would go down.

Major league baseball had been playing pre-World Series playoff rounds since 1969 in a best-of-five format and no team had ever lost the first two and come back to win. The Phils--along with the Dodgers and Milwaukee Brewers would all try to accomplish the feat on Sunday.

Game 5 was a Rogers-Carlton rematch. Over the scope of their careers, there was no question that Carlton was the vastly superior pitcher, but in the specific year of 1981, it was much closer and this series was Rogers' moment.

In the top of the fourth, after a leadoff single by Parrish and walks by Wallach and Manuel, Rogers came to the plate with one out. It was Carlton's chance to get a punch-out and escape. But Rogers slapped a single back through the middle it was 2-0.

That was all Rogers was going to need, as he put his team on his back. In the sixth, the Expos added another run to make it 3-0. The Phils mounted their one threat in the bottom of that inning, with two on one out and Schmidt at the plate.

Rogers got the MVP to hit into a double play ball. It was all over but the shouting. Montreal turned back Philadelphia's bid at history with a 3-0 win. Of the teams that had rallied from 0-2 down to force a Game 5 in this Division Series round, only the Dodgers finished the job.

1982

The 1982 Philadelphia Phillies were a contender and by the more lenient standards of today, played playoff-caliber baseball. But after a six-year stretch where they won four NL East titles, a "second-half" title and a World Series crown, coming up short in the division race counted as at least a mild disappointment.

There was a new manager in town. Dallas Green was gone and Pat Corrales was in charge. Other notable changes took place in the lineup. Bob Boone, the veteran catcher, was sold to the California Angels. The Phils then worked a three-team deal with Cleveland and St. Louis that netted them a solid catcher in Bo Diaz, but came at the cost of Lonnie Smith.

Larry Bowa was another mainstay of the championship team and was dealt to the Cubs for Ivan de Jesus in a swap of shortstops. Bake McBride was shipped to the Indians in a deal for relief pitcher Sid Monge. Neither of those trades worked out and holding back on either one might have made the difference in 1982.

Diaz had a nice year at the plate and slugged .450. Pete Rose, now 41-years-old, had a .345 on-base percentage. Gary Matthews' OBP was .345. And the batting order always came around to Mike Schmidt. The Hall of Fame third baseman had another vintage year with a stat line of .403 on-base percentage/.547 slugging percentage and 35 home runs. But the offense, the hallmark of the Phils' success in this era, only ranked ninth in the National League in runs scored.



Pitching was often up and down for the Phils during this period of success, but one man you could always count on was Steve Carlton. The 37-year-old lefthander won the fourth Cy Young Award of his career in 1982. Carlton made 38 starts, went 23-11 and posted a 3.10 ERA.

The rest of the rotation was respectable. Larry Christensen and Dick Ruthven each made 30-plus starts and finished with ERAs in the 3s. So did Mike Krukow, who the Phils had picked up in the offseason from the Cubs. Ron Reed saved 14 games with a 2.66 ERA. The problem was depth. Philadelphia pitching was respectable, but ranking sixth in the 12-team National

League for staff ERA wasn't going to make up for the unexpected offensive shortcomings.

The Phillies started slow and didn't win a series until early May. They were heavy on losses to key NL East rivals in the Montreal Expos and the St. Louis Cardinals. Philadelphia faced a quick 8 ½ game hole.

A change in the schedule to face teams from the NL West brought a quick change. The Phils went 14-2 in a stretch that included games with contenders from Los Angeles and San Francisco. Philadelphia chipped the margin down to 4 ½ games by Memorial Day. The Cardinals were out in front, the Phils were in fourth and the Mets and Expos were in between.

The Mets were not a good team and the Phils facilitated their downfall by sweeping a five-game series. Philadelphia won four of seven games in a pair of series with St. Louis. The Phils grabbed two of three from the Dodgers.

By the All-Star break, Philadelphia was 47-38 and had pulled into a first-place tie with St. Louis. Pittsburgh, a contender who had won the World Series as recently as 1979 had gotten back into the race and was 2 ½ back. Montreal was four games out.

The Phils kept playing well out of the break, going 8-4 on a road trip that included San Francisco, Los Angeles and Pittsburgh. Philadelphia took three of four from Montreal and nudged out to a two-game lead in the NL East.

A trip to Wrigley Field to play the lowly Cubs resulted in a three-game sweep and three losses in a five-game series with the Expos brought the Phils back to earth. But on September 12 they were only a half-game behind St. Louis. Montreal was in close pursuit at 2 ½ back, with Pittsburgh 3 ½ off the pace. It was time for a decisive stretch of games with the Cardinals.

Carlton took the ball for a Monday night home game and spun a 2-0 shutout for his 20th win. Philadelphia was in first place. But little did anyone know that it was downhill from here.

Krukow pitched well the next night, but lost 2-0. Another shutout loss followed, this one 8-0. In those two games the Phils mustered just eight hits and all were singles. The Pirates came into town over the weekend and took two of three, including a loss where Carlton pitched. Philadelphia was reeling when they made a return visit to St. Louis the following Monday.

The offense picked up where they left off—aimlessly hitting scattered singles—and lost 4-1. The Philly stars stepped up the next night—Schmidt homered and Carlton pitched a complete game to win 5-2. But the two-game split was too little too late. The Phils were 4 ½ out. The Pirates and Expos had also fallen by the wayside. The Cardinals cruised home to the playoffs and eventually won the World Series.

Philadelphia rebounded and played well enough down the stretch to finish 89-73 and take second place. It was a good season. But it wasn't what this organization had become accustomed to.

1983

The 1983 Philadelphia Phillies decided to turn back the clock, reuniting three key players of Cincinnati's Big Red Machine that won the World Series in 1975 and 1976. Joe Morgan and Tony Perez joined Pete Rose, and the '83 Phils returned to the World Series.

Rose had been in Philadelphia since 1979, and though his best days were long behind him, the 42-year-old still provided vital intangibles at first base. Morgan, age 39, was acquired from the San Francisco Giants and brought a keen batting eye—he drew 89 walks and turned a .230 batting average into a sparkling .370 on-base percentage. Perez, 41-years-old, was the least productive of the trio, with his power gone.

Morgan's approach of drawing a lot of walks set the tone for the team. The Phillies led the National League in taking free passes, and it's the reason they ranked third in the NL in runs scored. The power, a staple of the late 1970s success, was mostly gone, save for Schmidt, who blasted 40 home runs and finished with 109 RBIs.

But even Schmidt knew how to get a walk (and pitchers undoubtedly were willing to oblige). He drew 128 walks and his .255 batting average ended up as a .399 OBP. Gary Matthews finished with a .352 OBP, but his power was down. Greg Gross provided valuable part-time punch with .385 OBP.

The big offseason move was a blockbuster with the Cleveland Indians. The Tribe had one of the coveted young players in the game, outfielder Von Hayes. Philadelphia wanted him so badly that they dealt *five* players to get Hayes. Those players included Manny Trillo, George Vuckovich and a good young player in Julio Franco.

Hayes finished with a .337 on-base percentage, hit for little power and never turned into what scouts expected. A trade that worked better for Philadelphia was acquiring Joe Lefebvre from the San Diego Padres, and Lefebvre finished with a .388 OBP/.543 slugging percentage.

Those weren't the only trades in what was an active offseason and early summer. As part of the Morgan deal with San Francisco, the Phils gave up starting pitcher Mike Krukow, a good young arm in Mark Davis and also got closer Al Holland back in return.

Holland saved 25 games with a 2.26 ERA and anchored a good veteran bullpen. Ron Reed worked 95 innings at age 40 and finished with a 3.48 ERA. Willie Hernandez finished with 3.29 ERA and also worked 95 frames. Tug McGraw was no longer the bullpen centerpiece, as he'd been for the World Series year, but he still finished with a 3.56 ERA.

And the starting rotation provided leads to work with. John Denny had the best year of his career, winning 19 games with a 2.37 ERA and he won the NL Cy Young Award. Steve Carlton worked over 280 innings and finished with a 3.11 ERA. Charles Hudson worked 169 innings and posted a 3.35 ERA. The Phils finished second in the National League in ERA.

Philadelphia won 16 of their first 25 games, but they lost nine of eleven, and a road trip west produced a further 1-6 stretch. By Memorial Day, they were barely over .500, at 20-18, but no one in the NL East took control, so the Phils were only 2 ½ games back of the defending World Series champion St. Louis Cardinals, and the Montreal Expos.

The early part of the summer didn't see a turnaround though The Phils lost five of seven games with the Cardinals and Expos before rebounding to take three of four at home from Montreal and they crawled back over .500, at 37-36, by the All-Star break. No one in the NL East could get traction, so this mediocre performance had them just one game out and packed in a four-team race that now included the Chicago Cubs.

Pat Corrales was in his second year of managing the Phillies and though he'd gone 89-73 in 1982, he hadn't won the division, which is something that Philadelphia had become accustomed to. When the Phils continued to be sluggish out of the break, splitting the first twelve games of the second half, Corrales was fired and replaced with Paul Owen.

It still wasn't until July 28 that Philadelphia got over .500 for good They took four of five from the Cubs, who were starting to fade. The Phils lost two of three from the Pirates, who were starting to come on. Philadelphia then won seven of nine in games against St. Louis and Pittsburgh and took a two-game lead in the division. That was followed by a 6-13 run in a home-and-home sequence against the Los Angeles Dodgers, Padres and Giants.

The Philadelphia record was 69-66 on Labor Day and Pittsburgh was now in first place by a game, with Montreal and St. Louis still in the mix.

Philly took two of three from the Pirates and nudged into the lead by a half-game. Then the Phillies won a series with the Expos and swept the Cardinals. It was enough to push St. Louis out of the race and give Philadelphia a two-game lead on both Pittsburgh and Montreal.

With two weeks left in the season, the Phils made their decisive push. They swept a makeup doubleheader with the Expos in Montreal, again swept the Cardinals and pulled out to a four-game lead with a week left. They clinched on the final Wednesday of the season, with four days to spare.

They were back in the NLCS. And a familiar foe was waiting.

1983 NLCS

This series would begin with a pair of games in Los Angeles on Tuesday and Wednesday, and then go to Philadelphia for the duration over the weekend.

Two veteran left handers took the mound in the opener. Carlton was on the mound for Philadelphia. Jerry Reuss didn't have anything close to Carlton's resume, but Reuss was a very steady pitcher in his own right.

Philadelphia jumped on top quick when Schmidt hit a two-out home run in the first inning. The two pitchers then settled into a great duel. Philly put runners on first and second with none out in the fourth, but couldn't score. In the sixth, the Dodgers got speedy Steve Sax to third base with one out. But Carlton got Dusty Baker to pop up and escaped.

In the bottom of the eighth, the score still 1-0, Los Angeles loaded the bases with two outs. Al Holland was summoned and induced a fly ball to right from Mike Marshall. Holland closed out the ninth without incident and the Phillies, with three home games still in the bank, were in control of the series.

Another big-time pitching matchup was set for Game 2. Fernando Valenzuela, the 22-year-old Dodger lefty, had won the Cy Young Award as a rookie two years earlier and won 15 games in 1983. The Phillies had the soon-to-be named Cy Young winner for 1983 to come back with, in Denny.

With two outs in the bottom of the first, the Dodgers finally got on the board, with help from the Philly defense. DeJesus booted a play that should have ended the inning. A hit batsman set up Ken Landreaux's RBI single. The Phils didn't wait long to answer—Matthews hit a leadoff home run to start the second.

Los Angeles manager Tom Lasorda got aggressive in the bottom of the fourth and it blew up. With runners on first and third with one out, a double steal didn't work, as Mike Marshall was nailed at third. But what the Dodgers couldn't create for themselves, the Phillies again gave them in the fifth inning.

Gary Maddox muffed a fly ball off the bat of Valenzuela to start the inning. For some reason, one of the great defensive center fielders of his era had his most embarrassing moments here in Los Angeles in the NLCS, with this error added to his miscue in Game 4 of the 1978 NLCS.

This error resulted in Valenzuela getting all the way to third. When he was thrown out at the plate on a one-out ground ball, it looked like Denny might escape. But with two outs, Baker drew a walk and then Pedro Guerrero lashed a two-run triple to make it 3-1.

Valenzuela was locked in and he got an insurance run in the eighth when Bill Russell drew a walk, stole second and scored on a base hit. In the top of the ninth, the Phillies finally showed signs of offensive life. Matthews singled and Gross drew a walk to start the inning. Valenzuela was removed for Tom Niedenfuer, who blew right through the 7-8-9 spots in the order with a couple strikeouts. The series was tied.

After a day off for travel, Philadelphia sent out Hudson to pitch in front of the home fans, while Los Angeles answered with Bob Welch. Lasorda had little patience for Welch though, and after consecutive one-out walks in the second, the manager went to Alejandro Pena, the fourth starter who had a nice season. A passed ball, another walk and a productive out from catcher Bo Diaz still resulted in the Phils grabbing a couple runs without the benefit of a hit.

Morgan and Rose each singled and a sac fly from Lefebvre made it a 3-0 game after three innings. Los Angeles struck back in the top of the fourth when Baker singled and Marshall homered. But Matthews again had an immediate answer—a home run to start the bottom half of the inning and it was 4-2. That was it for Pena and Lasorda turned to lefthander Rick Honeycutt.

The pitching change didn't work. Rose again got a rally going with a one-out single in the fifth. Schmidt doubled to put runners on second and third. Lasorda summoned Joe Beckwith, who struck out Sixto Lezcano. But Matthews was next, and he singled to right to score both runs and then stole second for good measure.

He didn't make it around, but it was 6-2 and Matthews had one more RBI single coming, this one in the seventh. Hudson went the distance and with the 7-2 win, the Phillies had two chances to close out a pennant on their home field.

Saturday saw Carlton and Reuss back on the mound. It didn't take long for Philadelphia to amp up the pressure on LA and once again it was Matthews doing the damage. In the bottom of the first, Schmidt and Lezcano hit consecutive two-out singles. Matthews unloaded with a three-run blast and it was quickly 3-0.



After rolling through three innings, Carlton finally showed a crack in his armor. Baker led off the fourth with a home run. Mike Marshall followed with a double. But Carlton picked him off second, then struck out Landreaux and Derrell Thomas to keep it 3-1.

And the Phils struck back in the fifth when Rose singled and scored on a double by Schmidt. After Schmidt was bunted to third, Lasorda ordered Matthews intentionally walked, but Maddox still picked up the run with an RBI ground ball.

With a 5-1 lead, Carlton was in firm control, but to remove any doubt, Lezcano followed a Schmidt single with a two-run blast in the sixth inning. The Dodgers got a run in the eighth and Holland came on for Carlton, who had been masterful in what would prove to be his final appearance in the postseason. The closer got the last five outs, striking out Russell to clinch the pennant.

Matthews and Carlton were both worthy choices for NLCS MVP. Matthews went 6-for-14, homered three times and drove in eight runs. Furthermore, those hits all came at key times, often answering Dodger successes, making their ultimate impact seem even greater. Carlton got two of his team's three wins, pitching 13 2/3 innings and giving up one run. Matthews was the one chosen as series MVP.

Other strong performances came from Rose and Schmidt, who combined for 13 hits while Lezcano went 4-for-13. On the Dodger side, only Baker's 5-for-14 hitting was at all noteworthy.

The second World Series trip in four years was on tap for Philadelphia. And they wouldn't have to travel far. An hour and a half south had seen the Baltimore Orioles win the American League pennant.

1983 WORLD SERIES

1983 was the American League's turn for homefield. The Series opened in Baltimore on a Tuesday night.

Denny was Philadelphia's starter in Game 1. Baltimore answered with their ace, Scott McGregor. In the ALCS, McGregor lost a pitcher's duel to the AL Cy Young winner, Chicago's Lamar Hoyt. This game would be *deja vu* for the Oriole lefty.

Baltimore got on the board right away when Jim Dwyer homered in the bottom of the first and McGregor cruised through five innings. But Denny was completely shutting down the Orioles and the Phils tied the game on a solo home run by Morgan in the sixth. Then in the eighth, Maddox hit a solo home run. Those three hits were the only real action of the entire night, and the Phils won 2-1.

Mike Boddicker had been in a similar situation in the ALCS—a must-win game at home—and the young Oriole righthander had pitched a shutout. He was almost as good in Game 2 of the World Series against Hudson.

The game was scoreless through three, when Philadelphia got a soft run in the fourth. Morgan beat out an infield hit and stole second. He took third on an error by first baseman Eddie Murray and scored on a sac fly. The Baltimore offense finally got untracked in the bottom of the fifth when John Lowenstein homered to tie the game 1-1.

Baltimore kept coming in the fifth, with a single by Rich Dauer and Todd Cruz bunting his way on. Rick Dempsey ripped a double to make it 2-1 and put runners on second and third. Boddicker then did it with his bat—his line drive to left was caught, but it picked up the run.

Baltimore added another run in the seventh on successive singles from John Shelby, Dan Ford and Cal Ripken and Boddicker cruised to a 4-1 win.

Everyone took a quick ride north for the weekend in Philadelphia. On Friday night, two lefties with Cy Young Awards in their trophy case took the mound. Baltimore starter Mike Flanagan won the award in 1979. Philadelphia gave the ball to Carlton.

The Phils got the early lead. Matthews hit a solo shot in the second. Morgan did the same to lead off the third. Not until the fourth, did Baltimore start chipping at Carlton. A single and two walks loaded the bases with none out. But the veteran lefty got Murray to pop up and then induced Gary Roenicke to ground into an inning-ending double play.

Flanagan came out for a pinch-hitter in the top of the fifth and Baltimore brought out their own three-time Cy Young winner and future Hall of Famer. Jim Palmer, at age 37, was no longer his old self and was pitching out of the bullpen, but he put up zeroes in the fifth and sixth and enabled his team to rally.

Ford homered in the sixth to cut the lead in half. In the seventh, with two outs, Dempsey doubled. Benny Ayala came up to pinch-hit for Palmer and drove him in with a single. Carlton was removed for Holland.

Shelby singled, and then a huge error by shortstop Ivan de Jesus gave the Orioles the lead run. The Baltimore relief corps, Sammy Stewart and Tippy Martinez, slammed the door over the last three innings and the Orioles prevailed 3-2.

Saturday afternoon was sunny in Philadelphia and this World Series game was always played in the early afternoon prior to 1985. The Phils went to Denny on three days' rest, while the Orioles used their #4 starter, Storm Davis.

It was scoreless through three innings, and Baltimore started the fourth with three straight singles from Dwyer, Cal Ripken and Eddie Murray to load the bases. With one out, Rich Dauer singled in two runs and moved Murray to third. Denny bore down and struck out Todd Cruz, escaping the inning with the score still 2-0.

The Phils immediately answered in their own half of the fourth. With one out, Rose singled and Schmidt dropped a blooper into left field. Lefebvre doubled to score a run and set up second and third. After an intentional walk, Davis got a big double play grounder from Gross and kept the 2-1 lead.

But Philadelphia kept coming in the fifth. Bo Diaz doubled to lead off the inning and Denny aided his own cause with a one-out single, taking second when the throw home went awry. With two outs, Rose doubled in Denny and Philly was up 3-2.

Now it was Baltimore's turn to punch back. A one-out single by Lowenstein was followed by a Dauer double and an intentional walk. Ken Singleton, normally the Oriole DH, was available to pinch-hit for Dempsey. Singleton drew a walk and the game was tied. Shelby picked up the lead

run with a sac fly. One inning later, Dauer had another clutch hit, a two-out RBI single to drive in Dwyer, who had doubled.

Stewart and Martinez were again controlling the late innings, though the Phils made a move in the ninth. Diaz singled, was pinch-ran for by Bob Dernier, who took second on a ground ball out and scored on a two-out single. Morgan came up and hit a line drive, but Dauer capped off his big game by pulling it in and Baltimore's 5-4 victory had them one win from a title.

The Orioles had been here before though—in 1979, they won Games 3 & 4 on the road in Pittsburgh to take a 3-1 series lead. They lost Game 5 to the Pirates and then lost two straight at home. Baltimore wasn't fitting themselves for rings just yet.

McGregor had suffered two hard-luck losses in this postseason and was just as ready to make good. After losing two straight pitchers' duels, the finesse-throwing lefty apparently decided the only way to be sure was to just give up nothing. And he dominated. Meanwhile, some quiet Baltimore bats opened up.

Eddie Murray had not been hitting in this Series, a subject of no small press attention, giving his disappearance in the final three games of the 1979 World Series. The pressure was growing on Murray, and he answered with a mammoth home run off Hudson in the second inning of Game 5. Dempsey homered in the third. After a Ripken walk started the fourth inning, Murray again unloaded a home run. Both of these were massive blasts that may not have come down until they arrived back in Baltimore.

Dempsey led off the fifth with a double, chasing Hudson, and then scored on a wild pitch and Bumbry sac fly. It was 5-0, and the 1983 World Series was all but over. McGregor went the distance and when Maddox hit a soft liner to Ripken to end the ninth inning, the party could start in Baltimore.

The 1983 World Series MVP honor went to Dempsey, for his 5-for-13 hitting and two home runs. Lowenstein also went 5-for-13 and homered, while McGregor worked 17 innings and gave up just two runs, including a clinching shutout. But I want to look somewhere else for Series MVP--how about Sammy Stewart?

The biggest difference in this World Series was that Stewart and Martinez controlled the last three innings in the close games of Games 3 & 4, and Stewart in particular threw five shutout innings in the Series overall. He got 4.1 of those innings in the Friday and Saturday games that all but secured the title. There was no one standout offensive performer--remember, Dempsey was pinch-hit for at the big moment of Game 4--and as well as McGregor pitched, he wasn't able to win Game 1. I'd give Stewart a narrow edge for this award.

Given the age of the key Philadelphia players, it was no surprise that they took several steps back after this World Series trip. The Phillies disappeared for a decade before winning the NL pennant in 1993. They disappeared again after that surprise run. Not until 2007, did the franchise begin a run resembling what they accomplished in the nine years from 1976-83.

