

WHITEYBALL

The St. Louis Cardinals of the 1980s



The St. Louis Cardinals are one of baseball's most consistently successful franchises, but the period immediately following baseball's realignment in 1969 weren't standout years. After winning the World Series in 1967 and nearly doing so again in 1968, the St. Louis Cardinals basically took the decade of the 1970s off. But one of the National League's most historically successful franchises never made the postseason. Then Whitey Herzog came to town and the 1980s St. Louis Cardinals started painting the town red again.

St. Louis won three National League pennants under Herzog in the 1980s. All three times the World Series went seven games and they won one title. They were a part of some epic pennant race battles with the New York Mets back in the day when both teams were in the NL East and only division winners could advance to the postseason.

Herzog did it with a unique style of play—the Cardinals ran, ran again and then ran some more. It was like a team of sprinters, constantly on the move. But they were more than fast. They were disciplined at the plate. They hit the ball in the alleys. And they played defense. The only thing they didn't do was hit home runs—although ironically one of their pennants came on two of the decade's most notable long balls.

The 1980s was an electric time for St. Louis Cardinals baseball. It was the era of Willie McGee, Ozzie Smith, Tommy Herr and Vince Coleman. It was a time for Jack Clark, George Hendrick and Darrell Porter. There were pitchers like Joaquin Andujar, John Tudor and Bruce Sutter all having great moments. And of course there was the irascible Whitey, orchestrating it all.

There are ten articles below, all published individually on TheSportsNotebook.com. There's narratives on the regular seasons of 1981, 1982, 1985 and 1987. You'll also see game-by-game recaps of both the NLCS and World Series in '82, '85 and '87. The articles have been pulled together and edited for this compilation.

1981

Herzog had spent a year out of baseball after turning the Kansas City Royals into a winner and he wasted no time in turning the roster upside down. It started by bringing in free agent Darrell Porter, his catcher in KC. Herzog then shipped six players to San Diego, the most notable of which was catcher Terry Kennedy and got a haul back that included Hall of Fame closer Rollie Fingers.

So you would think Whitey was set in his bullpen, right? One day later he pulled the trigger on a deal with the Chicago Cubs for *another* Hall of Fame closer in Bruce Sutter. This one cost the Cardinals corner infielders Leon Durham and Ken Reitz.

Great closers were a lot harder to come by in the early 1980s, when the position was still coming into vogue and you didn't have every team with a ninth-inning guy that saved 30 games a year. Herzog now had an abundance of riches and he reached out to a team in desperate need of bullpen help.



St. Louis moved Fingers, along with Hall of Fame catcher Ted Simmons and future Cy Young Award winner Pete Vuckovich to Milwaukee. The Brewers sent back two of the most prized prospects in all of baseball, outfielder David Green and pitcher Dave LaPoint, along with a reliable starter in Lary Sorensen and a proven right fielder in Sixto Lezcano.

It was a dazzling array of moves and to be fully candid, the trades don't look incredibly great on paper from the vantage

point of history. But Herzog had shaken up his roster and positioned himself for an even bigger trade that would come after this season was over.

For now, the offense was built around right fielder George Hendrick and first baseman Keith Hernandez. Hendrick posted a stat line of .356 on-base percentage/.485 slugging percentage. Hernandez's stat line was .401/.463. He also hit 27 doubles in a strike-shortened season that saw the Cardinals play just 112 games.

Ken Oberkfell was a solid third baseman with a .353 OBP and Porter's OBP ended up at .364. Lezcano's power fell off sharply playing the more expansive Busch Stadium, but he still ended up with a .376 OBP. Gene Tenace, a part of the package that came from San Diego was on base consistently with an OBP of .416.

Even with a bad year from shortstop Garry Templeton, St. Louis put enough runners on the base paths. The Cardinals finished second in the National League in on-base percentage and second in the bottom line of scoring runs.

The pitching was a little dicier. There were no obvious weak points. Sorensen, Bob Forsch, John Martin and Silvio Martinez all finished with ERAs in the 3s. But none got below 3. So the Cardinals lacked an ace and they also lacked depth, with Sutter being the only consistent arm out of the bullpen. St. Louis' staff ERA ranked 8th in the 12-team National League.

The Cards came blazing out of the gate. An early eight-game winning streak keyed a 12-3 start and included a 5-0 mark against the Cincinnati Reds, who were on their way to the best record in baseball. St. Louis was rolling along to a narrow early lead in an NL East that included the Cubs and Pirates, along with the New York Mets, the defending World Series champion Philadelphia Phillies and the contending Montreal Expos (today's Washington Nationals).

Between May 22 and May 27, the Cardinals lost five of six in a series against the lowly Mets and the Expos. On the final weekend in May, St. Louis played a three-game set in Philadelphia.

Hendrick got the party started on Friday night with a three-run jack, the Cards took a 7-0 lead and cruised home 11-4. But Sorensen was hit hard in a 10-2 loss on Saturday and the offense could only get five singles in a 6-1 loss to the great Steve Carlton on Sunday.

In a normal year this would be a little bit of a disappointing stretch, but a blip on the radar. In the strange baseball world of 1981 it would be decisive. Even though St. Louis won their next three series, they were a game and a half back of the Phils when the strike hit on June 12.

Two months were ripped out of the season. When play resumed in August, MLB decided to adopt a split-season format to rejuvenate fan interest. The teams in first place as of June 12 were declared "first-half champions." Everyone would reset and the "second-half champion" would meet the first-half winner in the first installment of the Division Series come October.

So Philadelphia was in and St. Louis was starting from scratch. If nothing else, there was less competition. There was no reward for a team winning both halves—if that happened, the

second-place team in the second half would qualify. So the Phils had nothing to play for and played like it. The Cardinals and Expos were the only teams in the NL East that played winning baseball in the second half.

For much of the second half, St. Louis looked on their way to a date with Philadelphia in the Division Series. But losing to bad teams would be a problem. The Cardinals lost three straight at home to the Cubs and saw a 2 ½ game edge over Montreal be wiped out. St. Louis responded by going north of the border to Quebec and winning three times in a five-game set. They nudged their lead over the Expos back out to 3 ½ games by September 18.

Then the Cardinals lost three in a row in New York. They lost three straight in Philly. The lead was gone. St. Louis was able to open the final week by sweeping a two-game set from Montreal. If only the Cards could have played as well against the bottom-feeders as they did against their principal rival.

The two-game sweep gave them a 26-21 record, with Montreal at 26-22 and five games to play. But in this strange year, that extra game the Expos had played would prove decisive. St. Louis split their next four games. Montreal won their next four. By the last day of the season, the Expos were a game and a half up and the race was over.

Even though Montreal lost and St. Louis won on the final day to close the final margin to a half-game there was no extra game scheduled in to make sure each team played the same number of games.

The injustice the Cardinals suffered is even worse when you consider that their 59-43 composite record over both halves was the best in the NL East. The strange circumstances of 1981 had denied them the playoffs. And if you want to make matters worse, they aren't even first on the list of teams that got robbed in 1981—the Reds, of the aforementioned best record in baseball, suffered the same fate in the NL West, including losing one half by a half-game.

Unlike Cincinnati, who collapsed after this season, St. Louis fans can look back and hopefully laugh about the circumstances a little. In the coming offseason they leveraged Lezcano in another deal with San Diego, whose centerpiece was swapping Templeton for Ozzie Smith. On this trade, St. Louis crushed it, getting a Hall of Fame shortstop who anchored their defense. And in 1982, they won the World Series. The good times under Herzog were just getting started.

1982

St. Louis was one of the most unique offensive teams in baseball in 1982. The Cardinals were fifth in the National League in runs scored, and they did it without a single player hitting 20 home runs and only one batting over .300. St. Louis was, in one respect, the original *Moneyball* team—they did it with on-base percentage and just getting runners on base, at a time when taking a walk was still seen as something a little less than manly.

But in another important respect, the Cardinals were decidedly anti-Moneyball. The statistics-driven philosophy preaches against the stolen base, believing it a play that's on the wrong side of the risk-reward equation. The Cardinals swiped 200 bases and led the National League.

Lonnie Smith, the team's one .300 hitter, led the way with a .381 OBP and he stole 68 bases. Ozzie Smith, the defensive whiz at shortstop, had a .339 OBP and good speed. Second baseman Tom Herr and Oberkfell were consistent at getting on base and center fielder Willie McGee provided another great speed threat.



The middle of the lineup might not have had home run hitters, but that should not be mistaken with a lack of talent. Hernandez, one of the best all-around first basemen of his day, had a .397 OBP. Hendricks hit 19 home runs and drove in 104 runs. Darrell Porter, the catcher, hit 12 home runs and a .347 OBP. It wasn't a conventional offense, but it was deep and they had a good manager overseeing everything.

St. Louis' pitching was even better, ranking third in the National League in ERA. Joaquin Andujar won 15 games with a 2.47 ERA and logged 265 innings. Forsch won 15 games with a 3.48 ERA. Pitchers ranging from Steve Mura to John Stuper and Dave LaPoint were steady in filling out the rest of the rotation. And in relief stood one of the great closers in the game at a time when that position was starting to really come into vogue—Sutter, with his split-fingered fastball, saved 36 games with a 2.90 ERA.

The Cardinals came out of the gate fast, with a 12-game winning streak in April, and they went 5-1 against the Philadelphia Phillies, who had won the NL East four of the previous six years, the World Series in 1980 and won one of the "halves" in 1981.

From mid-April to June 23, St. Louis stayed in first place, by as many as 4 ½ games. Along with the Phils, the Montreal Expos were in the hunt. Montreal had won the division in 1981 and with a slew of young talented players, led by catcher Gary Carter, were a popular pick to go the distance.

The three teams stayed fairly close together through the summer. St. Louis ranged anywhere from two games up to two games into early September. Then they won two important series that opened up the division.

On Labor Day, the Cardinals hosted the Expos to open a three-game series. St. Louis won two of the games, and both wins were by 1-0 counts. Their aces, Andujar and Forsch came up with complete-game wins. In mid-September, St. Louis won two of three in Philadelphia, again both wins being shutouts. Stuper and Sutter combined on a five-hit whitewashing and Andujar added another complete-game gem.

By September 17, St. Louis had a three-game lead and they never looked back. They got up by as many as 6 ½ games and clinched the NL East on the Monday that began the regular season's final week. The clinching win came in Montreal, representing a symbolic changing of the guard in the NL East.

1982 NLCS

LCS play was best-of-five through 1984 and home field was determined by a rotation system. The Cardinals would host the first two games and the Braves would get the balance of the series at home. Joe Torre was just starting to build the managerial chops that would come to full fruition in the Bronx fourteen years later, as he led Atlanta.

Game 1 on Wednesday might have been seen as an ominous foreshadowing for Atlanta. Veteran knuckleballer Phil Niekro threw four shutout innings when the rains came and washed the night away. Had this happened today, play would likely have just resumed in the fifth inning. In the more antiquated world of 1982, MLB rigidly adhered to regular season policy, even in the playoffs.

Had the Braves gotten three more outs, it would have been an official game. Because it wasn't, the four innings were wiped off the books and Game 1 started fresh on Thursday night. Pascual Perez pitched for Atlanta against Forsch.

Both pitchers cruised through the first two innings perfectly. The Cards broke through in the third when McGee led off with a triple and then scored on a sac fly from Ozzie Smith. In the top of the sixth, the Braves got a leadoff single from Claudell Washington. But he was promptly wiped out on a stolen base attempt by Porter. It was a signature moment when the game decisively swung.

St. Louis came up in the bottom of the sixth and broke Game 1 open. Lonnie Smith, Hernandez and Hendricks led off with consecutive singles, making the score 2-0 with runners on first and second. Torre came to get Perez and gave the ball to reliever Steve Bedrosian, a pitcher who had a bright future ahead of him.

Bedrosian's future was better than his immediate present. He walked Porter, then gave up consecutive singles to McGee and Ozzie Smith. It was now 4-0, the bases were still loaded and Forsch helped the cause with a sac fly. With two outs, Oberkfell knocked in another run. It was 6-0 by the time the inning was over. Forsch cruised home, the Cards tacked on another run and won 7-0.

Another day of rain pushed Game 2 to Saturday night and wiped out the travel day originally scheduled. The teams would leave this game and go immediately to Atlanta for a four-games-in-four-days that qualifies as grueling in the postseason.

Niekro was back on the mound for Atlanta, while Herzog turned to Stuper. And the Cardinals kept their momentum going with a quick run in the bottom of the first. Hernandez walked, took third on a single by Lonnie Smith and scored on a wild pitch.

Atlanta finally scored their first officially recognized run of the NLCS in the third. Bruce Benedict worked a leadoff walk and was bunted up by Niekro. With two outs, shortstop Rafael Ramirez singled him in and then an error in centerfield by McGee kept Ramirez running. He didn't stop running until he had an inside-the-park-home run (albeit one officially scored as a single) and the Braves had a 2-1 lead.

Niekro escaped a jam in the fourth when the Cardinals got a man to third with none out. The old knuckleballer struck out Hendricks and McGee and ultimately escaped. The Braves had some momentum now and added to the lead in the fifth. Glenn Hubbard singled, went to third on a double by Benedict and Niekro was doing it all—the pitcher hit a sac fly for a 3-1 lead.

St. Louis got a run back in the sixth when Hernandez singled and scored on an RBI double from Porter. Hendricks beat out an infield hit and even though Porter couldn't move up, the Cards were poised to tie the game. After a McGee strikeout, Ozzie Smith singled to right. But Washington came up throwing and gunned down Porter at the plate, keeping the game at 3-2.

Atlanta missed a big chance when they put runners on first and second with none out. Cleanup hitter Bob Horner struck out and then Dale Murphy, NL MVP, tried to steal third and was caught. The rally died and it stayed a one-run game.

Gene Garber was now on in relief for Atlanta and with one out in the eighth, issued a walk to Porter. Hendrick singled, putting runners at the corners and a productive ground ball out from McGee tied the game. Garber was back on the mound in the ninth and no more successful. He gave up a leadoff single to David Green, who was bunted up and then scored on a game-winning hit by Oberkfell.

It was a disheartening sequence of four days for Atlanta. They'd had an early lead in one game that got washed out and a late lead in another game that they'd blown. Niekro had to be especially frustrated after his stellar work. All it added up to was that St. Louis was one win from a pennant and Atlanta was going home needing to win three straight.

Game 3 on Sunday night proved to be anticlimactic. St. Louis jumped Atlanta starter Rick Camp early. In the top of the second, Hernandez singled, Porter walked, Hendricks knocked in a run with a single and McGee slashed a two-run triple. Ozzie Smith finished it off with a base hit for a quick 4-0 lead. St. Louis added to the lead in the fifth with a leadoff double from Herr and a two-out base hit from Hernandez.

Andujar was rolling on the mound for St. Louis. Atlanta didn't seriously threaten until the bottom of the seventh. Washington and Horner singled to put me on the corners. But Andujar got Chris Chambliss to ground into a double play. It might have scored on a run through the backdoor, but it killed a potential big inning. Because Murphy singled, moved up on a wild pitch and scored on a Hubbard single. But Herzog summoned Sutter, to kill the threat and keep the game at 5-2.

McGee tacked on one more run for St. Louis with a ninth-inning home run. Sutter set down all seven batters he faced. Chambliss, who had ended the 1976 ALCS for the Yankees when he hit a walk off home run, ended this one in less dramatic fashion. A flyout to leftfield sent the Cardinals to their first World Series since 1968.



Porter was named NLCS MVP. He went 5-for-9 with three doubles, was a part of important rallies and his throwing out of Washington in Game 1 was a series turning point, to the extent there can be one in a three-game sweep. He was a worthy choice, although you could make a good argument for Ozzie Smith (also 5-for-9), along with Hernandez (4-for-12 and an instigator of key rallies). Sutter also threw 4 1/3 innings of perfect baseball and had won Game 2.

St. Louis was on their way to the “Suds Series”, against the Milwaukee Brewers, featuring two of America’s great brewing cities, as well as the teams at the heart of the big trade prior to the 1981 season.

1982 WORLD SERIES

The National League held home field advantage by virtue of the rotation system that existed prior to 2003, and the trade-off was that American League rules were used throughout the Series—there would be a DH in all games.

Two veterans, Mike Caldwell for Milwaukee and Forsch for St. Louis got the call, and Milwaukee wasted no time getting after Forsch in the first inning. With one out, the Brewers’ MVP shortstop Robin Yount singled and Cecil Cooper followed with a walk.

With two outs, an error by the normally sure handed Hernandez let in a run. Then Gorman Thomas, a big burly slugger had an RBI in an atypical high—he beat out an infield hit. Caldwell took the mound with a 2-0 lead.

The Brewer lefty was razor-sharp and his team kept after Forsch. In the top of the fourth, Charlie Moore doubled down the left field line, was bunted to third and scored on a single by Paul Molitor. One inning later, Simmons homered. In the sixth, Milwaukee broke it open. With two outs, Jim Gantner singled to right. Then Molitor singled to left. Yount looped a double down the right field line, it was 6-0 and all but over.

Milwaukee still added four more runs in the ninth inning. Molitor finished with a World Series record of five hits and Yount, who followed him in the lineup, had four hits. Caldwell threw a complete-game three-hitter and the 10-0 road win put St. Louis in a quick hole.

The Brewers looked in command for another reason—they were turning to Don Sutton for Game 2, who had been outstanding since his acquisition at the end of August and delivered great outings in must-win spots in the regular season finale and in the ALCS.

Milwaukee staked Sutton to an early lead, getting after Stuper. In the second inning, Molitor continued his hot hitting, with a two-out double that scored Thomas. In the third, Molitor singled, stole second, took third on a wild pitch and scored on a RBI groundout from Yount. With two outs, Simmons homered again. It was 3-0 and St. Louis was in serious trouble.

But in the bottom of that third inning, the Cardinals finally awoke. Dane Iorg, in the lineup as the DH singled to right. He was replaced on the bases by McGee after a ground ball forceout, and McGee stole second. A double by Herr scored St. Louis' first run of the Series, and Oberkfell then drove in Herr with a single to cut the lead to 3-2.

Yount chased Stuper with a leadoff double in the top of the fifth. Jim Kaat, a crafty veteran and former starter in his prime came on, but Cooper greeted Kaat with an RBI single.

Two months earlier the specter of Fingers might have started to loom in this game as it went to the sixth inning. Closers regularly came in as early as the eighth inning at this time and in a game like this, the seventh was a possibility. But Fingers had been sidelined with an elbow injury at the beginning of September, an injury that would ultimately end his career. The prospect of turning to him with a lead or in a tie game was not something Milwaukee manager Harvey Kuenn had at his disposal.



At a tie game was exactly what we had by the end of six. Oberkfell singled and George Hendrick drew a two-out walk. Darrell Porter doubled into the left field corner to score both runs and it was 4-4.

In the bottom of the eighth, Milwaukee had lefty Bob McClure on the mound. He could not get two left-handed hitters, as Hernandez worked a walk and Porter singled. Pete Ladd, the right-hander and nominal closer came in and issued consecutive walks to Lonnie Smith and Steve Braun and St. Louis was ahead 5-4.

The inning might have been worse, but a line drive out off the bat of McGee was followed by Braun being called out after getting hit with a batted ball by Ozzie Smith, what would have been an RBI single. When Molitor started the top of the ninth with a bunt single, it looked like the lack of an insurance run might be big. But Porter completed his big night by throwing out Molitor on a stolen base attempt and Sutter slammed the door.

Milwaukee was alive for the first World Series games the city had seen in 25 years, when the Braves played there. This writer was living in the west suburbs and was at old County Stadium on a crisp, but pleasant Friday night. But for Brewer fans that night was anything but pleasant.

Pete Vuckovich was on the mound for Milwaukee and facing Andujar. Both pitchers put up zeroes through four innings. It was Vuckovich, the Cy Young Award winner, that cracked first. In the fifth, Lonnie Smith doubled with one out. An error by Cooper was followed by a three-run blast from McGee, a pure contact hitter not known for his power.

McGee wasn't done. In the seventh inning, after Lonnie Smith had tripled and scored, McGee homered again. Milwaukee got two runs back in the eighth, when Cooper hit a two-run shot. But St. Louis added an insurance in the ninth against Vuckovich, still in the game. In the bottom of the ninth, McGee completed his dream night by robbing Thomas of a home run and the game ended 6-2.

Milwaukee had its turn getting a one-game lead in the World Series and then immediately taking the lead the next game. Now it was St. Louis' turn to come within a hair of putting a chokehold on the Series, only to let it slip away in Game 4.

Moose Haas was an inconsistent righthander on the mound for the Brewers, and the Cardinals got after him immediately. Oberkfell doubled with one out in the first and Hendrick singled with two outs to pick up the run. In the second, McGee got rolling again with a one-out single and stolen base. A walk and wild pitch set up second and third. Herr then lifted a fly ball to deep center. It not only scored one run, and it scored *both*. Ozzie Smith, on second base, never stopped running and it was 3-0. Before the inning was over, Oberkfell had walked, stolen second and scored on a Gantner error.

The teams traded runs in the bottom of the fifth and top of the sixth, finally chasing Haas with the score 5-1. Dave LaPoint, one of the pitchers Milwaukee had traded to St. Louis in the Fingers/Simmons deal, was cruising along. He was into the seventh, got one out, and induced Ben Ogilvie to hit an easy ground ball to first base. And then, the roof fell on in the Cardinals.

LaPoint was covering first base on the grounder and simply dropped the ball. It was followed by a single from Don Money. With two outs, Gantner doubled to score one run. LaPoint came out and righty Doug Bair came in. He walked Molitor to load the bases, and Yount singled in two runs to cut the lead to 5-4. Runners were on first and third and Cardinal manager Whitey Herzog summoned Kaat to stop the bleeding. He couldn't. Cooper singled to tie the game.

With runners on first and second, a wild pitch prompted Herzog to make another pitching change, this one in mid-batter. After an intentional walk to Simmons, Thomas—whose pop-out had started this inning—completed the rally with a two-run single to make it 7-5.

It was a stunning turn of events and the Brewer bullpen made it stand up. Jim Slaton worked two clean innings and McClure retired the last five batters to tie the World Series at two games apiece.

Caldwell and Forsch rematched their Game 1 meeting and this one was a much better game. The Brewers still got to Forsch quickly though. With one out in the first, consecutive singles from Yount and Cooper singled, an error on a pickoff throw moved both runners up. Simmons grounded out, but picked up the run and it was 1-0.

St. Louis finally solved Caldwell for a run in the third, when Green tripled and scored on a Hernandez double. Milwaukee immediately answered when Molitor walked, Yount doubled and Cooper picked up the run with a productive out.

Molitor was again in the middle of a rally in the bottom of the fifth. After Moore had doubled to start the inning, Molitor drove him in with a base hit. Caldwell wasn't nearly as dominant as Game 1—he gave up 14 hits in this game—but the lefty was finding ways to work himself out of trouble and the game went to the seventh still 3-1.

The Smiths—Ozzie and Lonnie—started the top of the seventh with a walk and a single. With two outs, a Hendrick base hit cut the lead to 3-2. Yount promptly answered in the bottom of the frame with an opposite-field home run for a 4-2 lead. The Brewers added two more runs in the eighth. With runners on first and second, Moore and Gantner hit consecutive RBI singles and the cushion was 6-2.

Cushion was needed, because the Cardinals rallied in the ninth. Green and Hernandez hit successive one-out doubles, Hendrick singled and it was 6-4, chasing Caldwell and bringing in McClure. Porter singled. The lead run was at the plate in the person of McGee. McClure got him with a strikeout. Tenace then hit the ball hard to left field, but it was an out and Milwaukee was now back in control of the World Series.

Sutton would get the chance to close out a title when the Series went back to St. Louis for the back end. But the future Hall of Famer just didn't have it in Game 6. In the second inning, doubles by Iorg and Herr were sandwiched around a Yount error and the result was two St. Louis runs. In the fourth, Hernandez singled, Porter homered, then Hernandez tripled and scored. It was 5-0 and the rout was on.

Stuper threw a four-hitter. Hernandez hit a two-run homer in the fifth and the Brewers fell completely apart in the sixth, as the Cardinals used five hits, two wild pitches and a walk to score six runs. Milwaukee avoided the shutout in the ninth, but that was their only bright spot in a 13-1 win for St. Louis.

Vuckovich and Andujar were on the mound, each with normal rest for Game 7. Once again, they both pitched well early and it was scoreless in the fourth when St. Louis picked up a run. McGee and Herr started the inning with singles, and then on an infield hit, McGee scored all the way from second.

After St. Louis manufactured a run, Milwaukee answered with one swing in the top of the fifth—Ogilvie homered to right. In the sixth, the Brewers took the lead. Gantner doubled, then Molitor laid down a bunt. Andujar came off the mound and fired an errant throw to first. It scored the lead run and put Molitor on second base, where he was able to score on a Yount infield hit and Cooper sac fly.

Trailing 3-1, the Cardinals came right back at Vuckovich in the bottom of the inning. With one out, the Smiths got it going. Ozzie singled and Lonnie doubled, setting up second and third.

McClure was brought in for Vuckovich. A walk to Tenance loaded the bases, then successive singles from Hernandez and Hendrick made it 4-3.

Andujar gave way to Sutter in the eighth, and the Brewers couldn't touch the St. Louis closer. The Cards still got two more runs in the bottom of the eighth, removing any drama from the ninth and Sutter closed out the 6-3 win and the World Series title for St. Louis.



Porter was named Series MVP. The nicest thing I can say about this is that it's one of the most poorly considered MVP votes in Series history. He had a notable night in Game 2, but for the Series he only hit .286 with an on-base percentage of .310. A far better choice would be Andujar, who beat the AL Cy Young Award winner twice, including in Game 7, and only gave up two runs in 13 innings of work.

The notable performers for Milwaukee were Molitor and Yount, who hit .355 and .414 respectively, along with Caldwell, who had the two wins and a 2.04 ERA and was only two outs short of a pair of complete games.

St. Louis was back in baseball's elite. And they would be a fixture in October throughout the 1980s.

1985

The St. Louis Cardinals had slipped after winning the World Series in 1982. Whitey Herzog's team finished under .500 a year later and then were a distant third place in the NL East in 1984. Personnel changes followed—the Cardinals parted ways with closer Bruce Sutter, dealt a package of four players for power-hitting first baseman Jack Clark and traded key outfielder Lonnie Smith in May. Those moves, combined with a very big rookie outbreak and some good pitching put the 1985 St. Louis Cardinals back into the World Series.



Herzog had a young outfielder and 23-year-old Vince Coleman electrified all of baseball with his play in left field and in the leadoff spot. Coleman won Rookie of the Year as he stole 110 bases and keyed a speed attack that saw St. Louis steal 314 bases as a team. To put it in perspective, that number not only led the league, but the margin over the second-best team was the same as the gap between the #2 and #11 teams.

Willie McGee, the 24-year-old centerfielder who had been a key part of the '82 run, finished with a .384 on-base percentage/.503 slugging percentage, while stealing 56 bases of his own. McGee won the MVP award. Another young outfielder, Andy Van Slyke posted a stat line of .353/.439.

St. Louis didn't have a conventional #3 hitter, as second baseman Tom Herr did not have home run power. But he made up for it by driving the ball in the alleys. With 38 doubles, and a .379 OBP, Herr was able to drive in 110 runs as he batted behind Coleman and McGee. Following Herr in the order was Clark, the true power bat in the lineup. Clark posted a .393/.502 stat line and hit 22 home runs.

Ozzie Smith continued to provide the best defense in baseball at the shortstop position, and "The Wizard", as he was nicknamed, began to showcase an improved bat. The OBP was .355 and Ozzie swiped 31 bases. St. Louis not only stole bases, they got on base constantly, leading the NL in on-base percentage.

The pitching staff was anchored by a pair of 21-game winners, John Tudor and Joaquin Andujar. The latter was a mainstay. Tudor, at age 31, was a complete surprise, in his first year with the Cardinals.

He not only won 21 games, but finished with a 1.93 ERA and worked 275 innings. Any other year that wins you a Cy Young Award in a landslide. This year, with New York Mets ace Dwight Gooden having one of the great pitching seasons of all-time, it didn't even get Tudor a single first-place vote.

Andujar was also a workhorse, logging 269 innings with a 3.40 ERA. The rotation's #3 starter, Danny Cox, went 18-9 with a 2.88 ERA, numbers that make you an ace a lot of places. Herzog filled out the rest of the starts with mediocre Kurt Kepshire and veteran Bob Forsch.

Sutter was gone from the bullpen, but a committee approach kept the late innings secure for St. Louis. Jeff Lahti saved 19 games with a 1.84 ERA, while Ricky Horton, Ken Dayley and 36-year-old Bill Campbell all had reliable seasons. Later in the year, Herzog called up hard-throwing Todd Worrell, who saved five games down the stretch with a 2.91 ERA.

The season did not start well, with four straight losses, including two in walkoff fashion at New York in the opening games with the Mets. The Cardinals lost four straight to the Montreal Expos and dug themselves a five-game hole by mid-April. But St. Louis stabilized, got back to .500 and on Memorial Day they were 21-20 and within 4 ½ games of the Chicago Cubs, who had captured the NL East in 1984. Nestled in between the Cubs and Cards were the Mets and Expos.

On June 7, St. Louis began to take off. They won three of four in old Shea Stadium over the Mets. That was followed by a three-game sweep of the Cubs in Wrigley Field. St. Louis then swept both the Cubs and Mets when they made return visits to Busch Stadium. It was the most significant part of a 26-9 stretch that closed the first half. By the All-Star break, the Cardinals were 52-33 and leading the Mets by a 2 ½ games. The Expos were 4 ½ out and the Cubs were fading fast at 7 ½ out.

St. Louis and New York separated themselves from the pack through late July and August and on Labor Day, the Cards were still plus-two games on the Mets. By September 10, it was a dead heat and the teams met for a big three-game series in New York.

Cox pitched the Tuesday night opener and didn't have it, giving up five runs in the first inning. The Cards nearly came all the way back, but lost 5-4. Tudor and Gooden went toe-to-toe in an epic battle on Wednesday, matching zeroes all the way through nine innings. Gooden left after nine, and St. Louis pinch-hitter Cesar Cedeno hit a solo home run. Tudor closed out the ten-inning 1-0 shutout win.

Andujar was hit hard early in the Thursday finale, giving up six runs in the first two innings. But, just like the in opener, the Cardinals stopped the bleeding and began chipping their way back. When McGee homered in the ninth it was tied 6-6. But the Mets grabbed a run in the ninth and had the win and the NL East lead.

Herzog once said that it's usually more important to look at how a team plays coming out of a big series like this than it is to look at the series itself. And was that ever true in 1985. The Cardinals just picked up where they left off, sweeping the Cubs in Wrigley, sweeping the Pirates, sweeping Montreal and getting a full head of steam. Meanwhile, the Mets were up and down. When the season's final week arrived, St. Louis held a commanding three-game lead.

There was still one more Mets-Cardinals battle, a three-game set in St. Louis to begin the final week. It was generally assumed that just one St. Louis win would all but salt away the division title.



Tudor did the unbelievable and *again* threw ten shutout innings in the series opener. This time it was Ron Darling matching him zero for zero, but this time the game lasted long enough for the Mets to get into the bullpen. Dayley gave up a solo home run to Darryl Strawberry in the 11th and St. Louis lost 1-0. Gooden beat Andujar 5-2 the next night and suddenly the St. Louis lead was down to a single game.

Cox pitched six good innings in the finale and Coleman came through offensively. The rookie delivered three hits and two RBIs, and the Cardinals survived with a 4-3 win. The lead was two games going into the final weekend.

St. Louis was hosting Chicago and in the opener, Forsch pitched eight strong innings, while Coleman had two hits and the Cardinals won 4-2. The Mets also won, but St. Louis was now assured of at least a one-game playoff and needed only one more win. They got it on Saturday. Appropriately, Tudor was on the mound and a 1-1 tie was broken when the Cards scored two runs in each of the sixth, seventh and eighth innings. With the 7-1 win, Herzog and St. Louis were returning to the postseason.

1985 NLCS

MLB expanded the LCS format to a best-of-seven in 1985, after going best-of-five in this round since its inception in 1969. The Dodgers held home field advantage in the 2-3-2 format by virtue of a rotation system between the divisions.

A great pitching matchup between Tudor for St. Louis and Fernando Valenzuela for Los Angeles opened the series and the game was scoreless into the fourth. Bill Madlock reached on an error in the fourth, stole second and scored on a single by Pedro Guerrero. In the sixth, the Dodgers opened up some breathing room, again with Madlock in the middle of it.

The veteran third baseman doubled with one out. After Guerrero was intentionally walked, Mike Scioscia hit a two-out RBI single that moved Guerrero to third. A bunt single scored another run, and a double by Steve Sax brought Scioscia around for a commanding 4-0 lead.

St. Louis rallied in the seventh, with singles from Terry Pendleton, Ozzie Smith and Tito Landrum to bring one run with only one out and the tying run at the plate. The Dodgers brought in closer Tom Niedenfuer, who promptly got a double play ball. Inning over, and for all practical purposes, game over. Los Angeles won 4-1.

The following night the Dodgers had 19-game winner Orel Hershiser, in his first October appearance, facing Andujar.

Hershiser looked vulnerable early, allowing Coleman and McGee to reach base in the first inning. Scioscia bailed his pitcher out by gunning both runners trying to steal.

The Cards were able to pick up a run in the third, with McGee singling, moving up to second after a walk and then coming all the way around on a wild pitch. But it didn't long for the Dodgers to have an answer in their own half of the third.

Sax singled with one out and a bad pickoff throw sent him all the way to third. Hershiser helped his own cause with a game-tying single. With two outs, Ken Landreaux ripped a double that scored a run and then he came around on a base hit by Madlock. The Dodgers got two more in the fourth when Scioscia bunted his way on and Greg Brock homered. In the fifth, a Landreaux double and RBI single from Mike Marshall made the score 6-1 and it was all but over.

Madlock and Guerrero drove in add-on runs, and the Cards added a meaningless run in the ninth, as Hershiser closed out the complete-game 8-2 rout. The series went to the Midwest for the weekend with Los Angeles in firm command.

On Saturday afternoon, St. Louis turned to Cox against Los Angeles' Bob Welch. The Dodgers had a chance to quickly put pressure on the Cardinals when Landreaux doubled in the first and there were runners on second and third with no one out. Then Cox got Madlock, got a break when Marshall's line drive found the glove of Ozzie Smith and the Dodgers failed to score. It's not unreasonable to look back and say that this missed chance was the big turning point of the 1985 NLCS.

In the bottom of the first, Coleman singled and quickly stole second. McGee drew a walk, and a bad pickoff throw cost two bases, as Coleman scored and McGee took third. After there was one out, Pendleton's productive ground ball out made it 2-0.



St. Louis' speed forced more mistakes in the second inning. Coleman singled, and when Scisocia tried to pick him off, the ball skipped away and Coleman took third. McGee singled him home. Even though McGee was caught stealing, Herr followed with a home run and a 4-0 lead.

Los Angeles' bullpen quieted St. Louis down, and the Dodgers got a run in the fourth on consecutive doubles from Guerrero and Marshall, but Marshall died on third with less than two outs.

In the seventh, Sax singled, moved up on a groundout and scored on a two-out hit from Landreaux. Cox departed, having done his job and a bullpen-by-committee of Horton, Worrell and Dayley closed out the 4-2 win.

On Sunday night, everyone tuned in to Game 4 to find out that the biggest news happened in the pregame warmups. In a bizarre incident, a runaway tarp had run over the leg of Coleman while he was stretching. The Rookie of the Year was gone for the duration of the postseason.

It certainly didn't matter much in this game. Dodger veteran Jerry Reuss was on the mound and had nothing. In the second inning, the Cardinals hit seven singles, drew two walks, and along with one error, they scored nine times. Landrum had the biggest night, with four hits and 3 RBIs, while Clark and Pendleton drove in three apiece. Tudor pitched on three days' rest and coasted to a 12-2 win.

Monday afternoon brought the pivotal Game 5 and this series most memorable moments were ahead. Valenzuela was on the hill for LA, while St. Louis hoped Forsch could match up.



The Cards got on the board quickly, with McGee and Ozzie Smith drawing walks, and then scoring on a Herr double. Another bad pickoff throw put Herr on third, but Clark lined out, and Valenzuela struck out Cesar Cedeno, enabling the Dodger lefty to escape with the score 2-0. Valenzuela escaped again, when Pendleton doubled and got to third with one out. Fernando struck out McGee to key the escape.

Those missed chances loomed large, as Valenzuela settled down and worked eight innings, not allowing another run. Los Angeles tied it up in the fourth when Landreaux's single was followed by a Madlock home run. The game was tied 2-2 when the ninth inning arrived.

Niedenfuer was on the mound for the Dodgers when Ozzie Smith came to the plate. The shortstop launched a shot toward right field. It cleared the fence. The Cardinals won 3-2 and radio announcer Jack Buck shouted “Go crazy folks! Go crazy!” It’s that line that continues to live on in baseball montages today.

Los Angeles still had two games at home and Hershiser on the mound for Game 6, in a rematch with Andujar. The Dodgers grabbed the early lead. Mariano Duncan led off the home half of the first with a double and scored on another big hit by Madlock. In the second, after Brock drew a walk, both Hershiser and Duncan singled and it was 2-0.

Andujar got himself back in the game when he doubled in the top of the third and then scored on Herr’s two-out single. But Madlock kept haunting the Cardinals. After Los Angeles got a manufactured run on an error, stolen base and two productive outs, Madlock gave a run the easy way—he homered and it was 4-1.

St. Louis finally cracked Hershiser in the seventh. Darrell Porter and Landrum singled, then moved up on a ground ball and scored on a single by McGee. Ozzie Smith lashed a triple and the game was tied 4-4. Niedenfuer came on and kept the game tied by striking out Clark and Van Slyke.

Los Angeles looked ready to take the lead right back in their own half of the seventh when Duncan hit a leadoff triple. Worrell, a young reliever with a good fastball got Landreaux to pop out and after an intentional walk, Worrell solved the riddle of Madlock—he got him to hit into an inning-ending double play. But when Marshall homered to start the bottom of the eighth, it looked like we were still heading for a Game 7.



Niedenfuer was still on the mound for the ninth. With one out, McGee singled and stole second. Ozzie drew a walk. Herr grounded out, both runners moving up. With two outs and an open base, it was assumed that Los Angeles manager Tom Lasorda would intentionally walk Clark, the only home run threat in the St. Louis lineup.

Clark also had a deserved reputation for clutch hitting. But on the flip side, it was only a one-run game, and Van Slyke was a productive hitter himself—one who had good plate discipline in a spot where a walk would also tie it. I understand the argument both ways, and if it were up to me, I’d have pitched to Clark—who had struck out his previous at-bat against Niedenfuer.

It’s debatable what was crushed harder—Lasorda for his decision to pitch to Clark, or the ball that Clark hit. A no-doubt-about-it blast to left field gave St. Louis a 7-5 lead. The crowd was stunned, and Dayley closed the bottom of the ninth in order. The Cardinals had completed the turnaround to win the pennant.

Later that night, the state of Missouri completed the parlay--the Kansas City Royals won the American League pennant. It would be a "Show-Me Series" or an "I-70 Series", depending which Missouri reference you wanted to use.

1985 WORLD SERIES

The series opened in Kansas City, per the league rotation system that existed prior to 2003. St. Louis had Tudor, ready, to face Kansas City's Danny Jackson, a young lefty with a good hard slider. A pitcher's duel ensued.

Kansas City picked up an early run in the second when Jim Sundberg drew a one-out walk, followed by base hits by Daryl Motley and Steve Balboni. With runners on the corners, Motley was thrown out trying to steal home to help keep the game 1-0.

What seems at first glance like a foolhardy play, has some logic. Light-hitting shortstop Buddy Biancalana was at the plate and Jackson was due up next. There was no DH in play in the 1985 World Series, as the rules at the time said that whatever league did not have home field advantage used its rules for the entire series.

St. Louis tied it in the third, when Pendleton and Porter hit consecutive singles and McGee picked up the RBI with a groundball. In the fourth, Landrum and Cedeno hit back-to-back doubles for a 2-1 lead.

Tudor settled in and worked seven sharp innings. St. Louis added an insurance run in the ninth and Worrell closed out the 3-1 win.

Another pitcher's duel followed in Sunday night's Game 2, as Cox worked for St. Louis against Kansas City's Charlie Liebrandt. The Royals grabbed two runs in the fourth, when Willie Wilson singled and George Brett and Frank White each doubled. Liebrandt was locked in and it was still 2-0 in the ninth as he looked to close the complete game.

McGee opened the ninth with a leadoff double, but Liebrandt got the next batters. Even when Jack Clark singled and Landrum doubled, Liebrandt still had the 2-1 lead, with runners on second and third. Showing how much differently games were managed then, Kansas City manager Dick Howser let Liebrandt stay in the game, even with closer Dan Quisenberry available. After an intentional walk, Pendleton lined up a double into the left field corner. The bases cleared and St. Louis had a 4-2 win.

The combination of the heartbreaking loss, along with the fact St. Louis had two straight wins on the road seemed to indicate this Series was already all but over, as the teams traveled I-70 to play the next three games at Busch Stadium. But Kansas City had won the final two games of the 1985 ALCS on the road in Toronto, and they would not fold in the face of the road crowd in St. Louis.

Kansas City ace, and soon-to-be Cy Young Award winner, Bret Saberhagen was on the mound for the must-win Game 3. He was facing Andujar. But Andujar had struggled in his two starts in the 1985 NLCS and that continued here.

After three scoreless innings, the Royals got to Andujar, starting with a light rally. Sundberg drew a walk and Biancalana beat out an infield hit. After two were out, Lonnie Smith—ironically traded from St. Louis to Kansas City earlier in the season—ripped a double into the gap for two runs. In the fifth, George Brett singled and Frank White homered. It was 4-0 and Andujar was out.

St. Louis mustered a run in the sixth on consecutive singles from Ozzie Smith, Herr and Clark, but Saberhagen finished off a complete-game six-hitter, the Royals added two runs in the seventh and the 6-1 final made the Series competitive again.



Tudor was on the mound for Game 4, and seemed to just as quickly turn the lights off on this whole Series. He was dominant, throwing a complete-game five-hitter. Landrum and McGee hit early home runs and St. Louis coasted to an easy 3-0 win. Only in the seventh, when the Royals loaded the bases with two outs, did Tudor face trouble. He got Hal McRae to ground to third, ending the threat.

St. Louis was in command, but if you wanted to look for signs of trouble, they weren't hard to find. The Cardinals weren't hitting at all. They had 11 runs in four games and four of those runs had come in a single inning, the late rally of Game

2. And with two home games still ahead, if KC could somehow survive Game 5, this Series could be put back in play.

The middle three games at Busch Stadium had been defined by great pitching and that continued in Game 5. Jackson joined Saberhagen and Tudor in throwing a dominant complete game, as he kept Kansas City alive.

KC eased the pressure on themselves with a run right away in the first inning, as Lonnie Smith and Wilson each singled, followed by productive outs from Brett and White for a 1-0 lead. St. Louis was able to tie it with consecutive doubles from Herr and Clark in their own half of the first, but Jackson shut it down from that point forward, throwing five-hitter.

The Royals essentially finished the game in the top of the second. Sundberg doubled and Biancalana singled off St. Louis vet Bob Forsch. After a Lonnie Smith walk, Wilson tripled and the game was 4-1. It stayed that way most of the night, until KC tacked on runs in the eighth and ninth for their second 6-1 win in three games.

Game 6 back in Kansas City on Saturday night would become legendary—or infamous if you lived in St. Louis. Cox and Liebrandt staged a reprise of their Game 2 pitchers' duel. The Royals missed an earlier opportunity when a Lonnie Smith double resulted in him reaching third with less than one out and Brett at the plate. But in a rare occurrence, Brett failed to come through in

October, striking out. The Cards missed a chance in the sixth when Cox was unable to get a bunt down after the inning started with consecutive singles.

Not until the eighth did a run score and it was the Cardinals who broke through. With one out, Pendleton singled and Cedeno walked. With two outs, Brian Harper came up to pinch-hit and appeared to make himself a World Series hero with an RBI base hit that put St. Louis six outs from a championship.

Dayley handled the eighth, and Worrell came on for the ninth. Jorge Orta was at the plate to start the Royals' final chance.

Orta hit a bouncer to Clark at first base. The ball was fielded cleanly, tossed to Worrell who beat Orta to the bag by a good couple steps. Don Denkinger called Orta safe. The Cardinals exploded, and rightly so. Replay clearly showed Orta was easily out. Denkinger later said he was watching Orta's foot, while listening for the sound of the ball hitting Worrell's glove—a common umpiring practice. But the crowd noise prevented him from hearing it.

Denkinger had committed a big blunder, but it also needs to be said that from this point forward, the 1985 St. Louis Cardinals ceased to be a functioning baseball team. The next hitter, Steve Balboni, hit a harmless pop-up into foul territory. Clark completely misplayed it, and Balboni followed with a single.

Sundberg tried to bunt, but the Cards got the force out at third. Even now, if Worrell could simply get two outs, Denkinger would be forgotten. Instead, a passed ball ensued, moving both runners up. Dane Iorg came to the plate and singled to right, scoring both runs for a 2-1 win.

Game 7 should have been a baseball delight, as the aces, Tudor and Saberhagen matched up. But Tudor had nothing, and St. Louis was still furious over the Denkinger call. The game was perhaps the worst Game 7 ever played in any sport by any team.

Tudor was gone by the third, the Royals were up 5-0 and in the fifth inning the Cardinal meltdown went on full public display.

Kansas City hit six singles, a double and ripped through five St. Louis pitchers in scoring six more runs. One of them was Andujar who got upset at a ball-strike call, and exploded off the mound in a fury—not coincidentally, the home plate umpire was Denkinger. Andujar was suspended for the first ten games of 1986. The Royals won the game 11-0.

The St. Louis interpretation of the 1985 World Series is that if Denkinger makes the correct call, they close it out in Game 6. That's reasonable—getting the leadoff man aboard in a one-run game isn't exactly insignificant. But it also has to be said that the Cardinals completely lacked championship toughness in how they responded to the adversity.

Let's say St. Louis lost because Orta was bunted up, a bloop single tied the game and Kansas City won in, say, 11 innings. And then won a tough 4-3 game in Game 7. If that happens I'd be all for blaming the bad call, because you can't overcome everything. But when you follow a bad

call, by blowing a popup that a Little Leaguer would be embarrassed by, allowing a passed ball to move the winning run into scoring position and then completely melting down for a national audience the next night, you've demonstrated that your ability to handle adversity is not that of a champion.

Kansas City showed they could handle all the adversity. They had come from behind to win the AL West race, the ALCS and now the World Series. Saberhagen was Series MVP, for his two gems, one in Game 7 and the other a virtual must-win spot on the road in Game 3. That's the right choice, with honorable mention also going to Brett (10-for-27), Balboni (8-for-25), and Wilson (11-for-30).

St. Louis had enjoyed a magnificent season. They won one of the decade's most sizzling pennant races, produced two of its iconic moments in the NLCS home runs from Ozzie Smith and Clark. They won three World Series games and got to within two outs of closing the deal. They got genuinely robbed on a bad call, then handled it incredibly poorly, but that shouldn't overshadow everything that came before it.

1987

The Cardinals had some amends to make. The lingering hangover of the '85 World Series led to a sub-.500 year in 1986. The '87 Cards made those amends, getting back to the postseason and almost winning a World Series.



St. Louis continued to be a running team. Vince Coleman swiped 109 bases and finished with an OBP of .369. Ozzie Smith, in addition to being a Hall of Fame defender, stole 43 bases, had a stellar OBP of .392 and finished second in the MVP voting.

The Cardinals were the best in the National League in on-base percentage. Terry Pendleton's OBP was .360 and he drove in 96 runs. Tom Herr, the steady second baseman, had an OBP of .346. Jose Oquendo was a utility man whose OBP was .408 in his 300-plus plate appearances.

And no one was better at getting on base than the one man who also provided some power—Jack Clark finished with a dazzling OBP of .459, while also hitting 35 home runs and 106 RBI. Willie McGee wasn't a home run hitter, but he drove in 105 runs. St. Louis was second in the NL in runs scored.

The pitching wasn't quite that good, but they were more than acceptable. Danny Cox, Greg Mathews and John Tudor all finished with ERAs in the high 3s and each won double-digit games. Bob Forsch was an 11-game winner with a 4.32 ERA and 22-year-old Joe Magrane gave the team 170 innings and a decent 3.54 ERA.

Todd Worrell anchored the bullpen and saved 32 games. Whitey Herzog had two reliable lefties to turn to in Ricky Horton and Ken Dayley. The Cardinals were fifth in the National League in ERA.

The New York Mets were coming off a 108-win season and a World Series title. The Mets were young and had a lot of pitching. They were seen as unbeatable and this division race was seen as a foregone conclusion. St. Louis had other ideas and quickly made that plain when the Mets came to Busch Stadium for a three-game weekend series in mid-April.

Tudor and Horton combined to scatter twelve hits and win the opener 4-3. Saturday's game was a wild affair. Cox pitched poorly and gave up five runs in the fourth. St. Louis answered with five of their own in the bottom of the same inning. They led 6-5 in the ninth and had two outs when a two-run RBI put them in a 7-6 hole. In the bottom of the ninth, Ozzie Smith worked a walk, was bunted up, stole third and came home when the throw went wild.

In the 10th inning, the Cardinals looked done again when a wild pitch put the Mets in front. In the bottom of the frame, they got three singles and a walk to tie it 8-8. Herr came to the plate and hit a grand slam that ended the amazing 12-8 game. On Sunday afternoon, McGee and catcher Tom Pagnozzi each homered early and a 4-2 victory completed the sweep.

St. Louis made a return trip to New York and won two of three. They went on a 12-4 run through the teams of the NL West in May and by Memorial Day they were 26-14 and in first place. The lead was only a game, but more significant than their edge on the Chicago Cubs (who ended the season in last place) was the 7 ½ game margin the Cardinals had on the Mets.

The fade of the Cubs began when St. Louis went to Wrigley Field in early June to win three of four. They swept three straight when Chicago made a return visit to Busch. Even though the Cards lost a series to the Mets in Shea at the end of June, they won 10 of the last 11 games before the All-Star break. At the midway point, St. Louis was soaring at 56-39, up nine games on the Montreal Expos and 9 ½ on New York.

At the end of July the race began to tighten and it happened when the Mets again came to town for a three-game set. The Cards took a 4-2 lead in the opener, but Worrell was unable to hold the lead for Magrane in the eighth inning and they lost 6-4. St. Louis looked ready to return the favor the next night when they trailed 4-3 in the ninth. Coleman singled, stole second and scored on a base hit by Herr. But the Cards fell in extra innings. In Thursday's finale, Mathews was chased early, giving up three runs in the first and losing 5-3.

The sweep was part of a seven-game losing streak that included four losses in San Francisco against the eventual NL West champion Giants. In August, St. Louis lost 11 of 17 and their lead shrunk to 2 ½ games. An 11-4 run against the NL West stopped the bleeding, but when Labor Day arrived St. Louis still clung to a 3 ½ game lead over the Mets and the Expos lurked at five back. The race to the finish line was on.

A trip to Montreal was nothing short of a disaster, as the Cardinals lost three straight by a combined score of 21-6. They were battered and bleeding as they went to New York for a highly

anticipated three-game weekend series. The margin was down to a game and a half. Tudor gave up three runs in the first inning of the opener and they trailed 4-1 in the ninth. St. Louis might be in first place, but they had taken on the appearance of the team doing the chasing.

The momentum took a sudden turn back the other way. The Cardinals scraped out one run, had another man aboard and brought Pendleton to the plate. He stunned the Shea Stadium crowd with a game-tying home run. In the 10th, Coleman, Ozzie and Herr all singled to produce two more runs and an amazing 6-4 win.

St. Louis carried it over to the next day, scoring five runs in the top of the first. Mathews pitched a complete-game 8-1 win. Even though Cox lost the finale 4-2, the Cardinals had survived and nudged their lead back to 2 ½ games, with the Expos sitting three games back.

Over the next two weeks, St. Louis played non-contenders in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Chicago. The race stayed exactly the same and set the stage for a big final week. The Cardinals might have the edge and might be playing at home, but Montreal was coming in for four games to start the week and New York would be here for the final weekend.

Instead of a thrilling finish, the Cards took the drama out of it. They won two of the first three games over the Expos, while the Mets lost two of three in Philadelphia. St. Louis had the chance to clinch on Thursday against Montreal.

Cox got the ball and met the moment, with a complete game, allowing just five hits. Ozzie, Herr and Dan Driessen combined for six hits and a walk. Leading 3-2 in the seventh, the Cardinals broke it open with five runs. When Cox induced Tim Foley to hit a comebacker to the mound for the final out, the NL East race was finally over. The Cardinals had dethroned the mighty Mets.

St. Louis wasn't done and nor was Cox. San Francisco was up next in the NLCS. But the Cardinals would face a big obstacle--Clark was injured and unavailable.

1987 NLCS

In the 21st century, the Cardinals and Giants have combined for seven National League pennants and four World Series titles. On three occasions (2002, 2012 & 2014) they've gone head-to-head in the postseason. That wasn't the case in 1987, when these two historic franchises were meeting for the first time in postseason play.

The NLCS opened on a Tuesday night with Giant veteran Rick Reuschel facing Mathews. It didn't take long for San Francisco to get rolling and for the impact of Clark's injury to show up. His replacement, Dan Driessen, a veteran of Cincinnati's Big Red Machine, made a first-inning error. It was followed by a base hit from Kevin Mitchell, productive outs from Jeffrey Leonard and Candy Maldonado and a quick 1-0 Giants' lead.

St. Louis tied it up in the bottom of the second with an RBI single from Coleman, driving in Tony Pena, who had singled and been bunted up by Mathews. The seesaw continued in the fourth. Leonard homered for the Giants, but the Cards answered with a leadoff triple from Ozzie Smith

and a two-out single from McGee picking up the run after two failed attempts threatened to kill the inning.

It was still 2-2 in the sixth, when St. Louis broke through. Driessen doubled with one out. The speedy McGee beat out an infield hit. Pendleton and Curt Ford each singled and it was now 3-2 with the bases loaded and one out. Reuschel got Pena to pop out and was poised to escape the inning. Herzog even seemed to indicate as much in letting Mathews bat for himself. Instead, Mathews singled to center, drove in two runs and gave himself a comfortable 5-2 lead.

San Francisco made one last rally in the eighth. Robby Thomson drew a one-out walk and Herzog turned to Worrell. With two outs, Leonard singled and Maldonado doubled, making it 5-3 with the tying runs on second and third. Herzog yanked Worrell with San Francisco's great lefty hitter Will Clark coming to the plate. Dayley was summoned from the pen and got Clark to fly to right. The ninth ended without incident and the Cardinals had taken Game 1.

A battle of lefthanders, San Francisco's Dave Dravecky and Tudor for St. Louis was on tap for the following afternoon. Clark quickly made amends for coming up short in Game 1, hitting a two-run blast in the second. Leonard homered in the fourth and Dravecky had a 3-0 lead.

Each team missed opportunities in the middle innings. In the bottom of the fourth, Ozzie Smith walked and Herr singled to start the inning. Dravecky got flyouts from Pendleton and McGee to keep the shutout. In the top of the fifth, Jose Uribe doubled for the Giants and when Dravecky laid down his bunt, he beat out...but Uribe got hung up between third and home and was foolishly picked off. In the top of the sixth, San Francisco put runners on first and second with one out, but Tudor was able to get Clark.

So the game stayed 3-0 into the eighth and both starting pitchers remained in the game. San Francisco got a rally going with singles from Leonard and Maldonado and a successful sac bunt from Eddie Milner. Clark was intentionally walked and Tudor struck out catcher Bob Melvin (the current Oakland A's manager). Tudor was ready to escape again when the unthinkable happened.

Ozzie, a future Hall of Fame shortstop because of his defensive prowess, booted a ground ball. Two runs came in. San Francisco's base-running foibles continued and it was Clark's turn to get hung up between third and home. But the damage was done and the score was 5-0. Dravecky closed a two-hit shutout to even the series.

After a travel day, Game 3 was on Friday at old Candlestick Park and the Giants came out fast against Cardinal starter Joe Magrane. In the bottom of the second, Chili Davis doubled, Clark singled, Bob Brenly doubled and it was quickly 2-0 with no one out. Uribe's sac fly moved Brenly to third where he scored on a wild pitch. One inning later, Leonard blasted a solo shot and it was 4-0.

San Francisco was ready to add to the lead in the fifth when they loaded the bases with one out. Davis popped out to short and the rally ended. Even though Giant starter Atlee Hammaker was rolling, it would prove to be a costly missed opportunity.

St. Louis started making it hurt in the sixth. With one out, Ozzie Smith singled to right. Jim Lindeman, a right-handed bat in at first base with the lefthanded Hammaker on the mound, homered. It was 4-2 and we had a ballgame.

The Cardinals kept coming in the seventh. Jose Oquendo singled and chased Hammaker. Don Robinson, a key member of the staff for the 1979 Pittsburgh Pirates championship team came on, but couldn't hold the lead. Ford singled. Driessen batted in the pitcher's spot and singled. Lance Johnson came on to pinch-run and stole second. Coleman singled and St. Louis now led 5-4.

Nor was the inning over. Craig Lefferts came out of the Giant bullpen, but Ozzie beat him with a bunt base hit. After a successful sacrifice from Herr, Lindemann came through again with a sac fly. The Cardinals had a 6-4 lead. That extra run—along with the one the Giants missed in the fifth proved to be the difference. San Francisco got a pinch-hit home run from Harry Spilman, but it ended 6-5 with Worrell pitching the last three innings.

St. Louis kept their momentum rolling into the early innings of Saturday night's Game 4. They peppered starter Mike Krukow with consecutive one-out singles from Ford, Pena, Cox and Coleman. It was 2-0 before Krukow got a break—a line drive off Ozzie's bat went right at Thompson at second base and resulted in a quick double play.

Cox pitched out of a third inning jam, striking out Leonard and Clark with two men aboard. It was the middle innings when the Giants got to the Cardinal starter. Thomson hit a solo home run in the fourth. In the fifth, after a two-out double from Mitchell, Leonard went deep yet again. It was enough for Krukow—he and Cox both went the distance and San Francisco got a little insurance. Brenly, the future manager of the champion 2001 Arizona Diamondbacks and later TV analyst—hit an eighth-inning home run. The 4-2 final again tied up this NLCS.

Game 5 was a 1:30 PM local start and a Reuschel-Mathews rematch from the opener. Coleman opened the game with a double and came in to score after a bunt from Ozzie and a sac fly from Herr. San Francisco had an immediate answer, with Thompson working a walk, stealing second and scoring on a base hit from Mitchell.

The seesaw continued in the third. St. Louis got consecutive singles from Pena and Mathews, who continued to do damage with his bat. Coleman put down a bunt, but as one of the fastest men in the game, he legged it out. Ozzie produced a run with a sac fly, but the inning died when Herr grounded into a double play. After grinding out that run, the Cardinals watched Mitchell tie it up on one swing in the bottom of the inning.

St. Louis reclaimed the lead in the fourth when Pendleton hit a two-out triple and then scored on an error by Reuschel. Herzog, hoping to get a shutdown inning, went to his bullpen early and summoned veteran Bob Forsch.

The move didn't work. Chili Davis and Clark singled, Brenly drew a walk and Uribe's single scored two and gave the Giants a 4-3 lead. Uribe took second on a throw home and there were still runners on second and third with none out. Mike Aldrete came on to bat for Reuschel and

picked up another run with a sac fly. Uribe stole third, but it proved unnecessary when Thomson tripled. It was 6-3 and might have been worse, had Mitchell not popped out and Leonard struck out.

This time not adding on didn't hurt San Francisco. Joe Price came on in relief and was nothing short of brilliant. He pitched five innings of one-hit ball, nailed down the 6-3 win and put his team on the verge of a pennant as the series went back to St. Louis.

But the Giant bats went cold at the wrong time—or the Cardinal pitchers were locked in at the right time, whichever way you want to look at it. Dravecky and Tudor faced off again in Game 6 and it was a brilliant pitcher's duel. The Giants missed a chance with two on and one out in the second when Uribe lined out to center, but the big missed opportunity came in the fifth.

The Cards had taken a 1-0 lead thanks to a second-inning triple from Pendleton and a sac fly from Oquendo. In the fifth, Melvin and Uribe singled. Dravecky was called on to bunt, but he failed to sacrifice and the inning died. It was the only thing Dravecky did wrong in his two starts. If he gets the bunt down and San Francisco wins, the lefty is probably named series MVP. As it was, Tudor went 7 1/3 innings, Worrell and Dayley got the last five outs and the game ended 1-0.

It had only been three years since MLB made the League Championship Series a best-of-seven rather than best-of-five. 1987 was the first time the National League went to a Game 7. It proved to be another night to watch Cardinal pitching dominate, this time with Cox.



Cox was staked to a quick lead. In the second inning, Pendleton, Pena and McGee hit consecutive one-out singles off Hammaker to make it 1-0. Oquendo then ripped a three-run blast and it was 4-0. The Giants threatened in each of the next three innings, but all three times grounded into double plays. In the bottom of the sixth, St. Louis put it away. Scott Garrelts, on in relief, walked three straight batters after two were out. Herr singled to bring in two more runs.

The game ended 6-0. Cox went the distance, scattering eight singles. St. Louis had delivered two successive shutouts to win their third National League pennant in six years.

San Francisco's offensive collapse is what makes the selection of Leonard as the NLCS MVP a little tough to swallow. The numbers were there—Leonard was 10-for-24 with four home runs, five RBI and five runs scored. But he wasn't the only Giant bat who contributed—Clark went 9-for-25 and Dravecky pitched two fantastic games. While I'm all for honoring a player from the losing team if he's truly the best, Leonard didn't carry the Giants and he disappeared with everyone else in the final two games.

One of the things helping Leonard is that there were no obvious candidates on the St. Louis side. Tony Pena had the best overall offensive performance, going 8-for-21. Cox had a 2.12 ERA in his two starts, while Tudor's was spiffy 1.76...but they had each lost one of those starts.

Even allowing for the weakness of these resumes, I'd have still picked Tudor on the ground that his shutout was absolutely needed on a night when the offense got only one run and the team was facing elimination.

St. Louis had already faced two fellow Midwest teams in the World Series, in Milwaukee and Kansas City. Now it was time to take on Minnesota.

1987 WORLD SERIES

The Minnesota Twins and St. Louis Cardinals were teams built for their homefield. The Twins had power, well-suited to the hitter-friendly atmosphere at the Metrodome. The Cardinals, playing in what was then an artificial turf-covered Busch Stadium with deep dimensions, were constructed on speed. It's appropriate that when these contrasting teams met in the 1987 World Series it was all about homefield, as home teams won all seven games.

That made the calendar as important as anything else. Prior to 2003, home field in the World Series was determined on a rotation system and it was the American League's turn. That left the 85-win Twins hosting the 95-win Cardinals to open and close the Series.

Another advantage Minnesota had was that their top two starters, Frank Viola and Bert Blyleven, were better than anyone St. Louis could answer with. Over the course of a long season, the Cardinals' depth throughout the roster made them a better team. In a short series, it's tough to beat a team who has the two best starters on either side.

One of those starters, Frank Viola took the mound for the Saturday night opener on October 17. Magrane was pitching for St. Louis and was handed an early run. In the top of the second, Lindeman led off with a double and scored on consecutive productive outs from McGee and Pena.

It was still 1-0 in the bottom of the fourth when the Twins' offense unloaded on Magrane. Gary Gaetti, the third baseman fresh off an MVP performance in the ALCS started with a single. Don Baylor, Tom Brunansky and Kent Hrbek all singled and Steve Lombardozzi drew a walk.

Minnesota had two runs in, the bases loaded and none out. Herzog had seen enough of Magrane and called on Forsch. Tim Laudner greeted Forsch with an RBI single and then Dan Gladden delivered the coup de grace with a grand slam. It was 7-1 and the Metrodome crowd was blowing the roof off.

Viola coasted home, allowing just five hits in eight innings. The Minnesota offense piled on, with Lombardozzi hitting a two-run shot in the fifth and Gladden driving in another run in the seventh. The final was 10-1.

The Twins had a future Hall of Famer in Bert Blyleven ready to go for Game 2. The Cardinals turned to Cox. This night wouldn't go as well for Cox as Game 7 of the NLCS had.

Gaetti started the scoring with a solo shot in the second and the bottom of the fourth again proved to be the undoing for St. Louis. With one out, Kirby Puckett and Hrbek each singled and Gaetti walked. Randy Bush ripped a two-run double and it was 3-0 with runners on second and third. Brunansky was intentionally walked and it looked like the move would pay off with Lombardozzi's fly out to right was too short to bring in a run. But with two outs, Laudner and Gladden both singled and the lead stretched to 6-0. Cox was pulled, Lee Tunnell came in and Greg Gagne promptly blooped a double to make it 7-0.

The rout was on again. The Cardinals got a run in the fifth, but Laudner homered in the sixth. Blyleven pitched seven strong innings and even though St. Louis scored in the seventh and twice more in the eighth, they were never in the game. The final was 8-4, Minnesota had all the momentum and they were halfway home.



But while the Twins were halfway home, the Cardinals were *going* home and that was all the difference needed in this World Series. They also had Tudor on the mound.

Minnesota's rotation quality fell off sharply at this spot, but Lee Straker proved to be outstanding on this night. The game was scoreless for five innings and it was the Twins who broke through in the sixth. With one out, Gagne and Puckett were walked and Brunansky picked up an RBI with a two-out single.

In the top of the seventh with the score still 1-0, Twins' manager Tom Kelly opted to pinch hit for Straker with two outs and no one on base. Kelly turned to his setup man, Juan Berenguer, hoping he could get the ball to their fine closer, Jeff Reardon. It didn't pan out for Kelly.

The bottom of the seventh started with singles by Jose Oquendo and Pena. They were bunted up by Pendleton and driven in when Coleman doubled. Coleman stole third and scored on a single from Ozzie Smith. Berenguer was out, but the damage was done. Herzog went to Worrell, to close the last two innings of a 3-1 win.

Viola was back out there for Minnesota on three days' rest for Wednesday night's Game 4. Greg Mathews, a steady lefthander for Herzog all year long, pitched for St. Louis.

The Twins missed a chance in the second when they put a man on third with one out before Mathews struck out Hrbek and escaped. The Twins still got a run one inning later with a home run from Gagne. The Cardinals quickly tied it in the bottom of the inning, when Ozzie Smith got a two-out walk, and came around on singles from Tom Herr and Lindeman.

Mathews had to leave the game when he aggravated a quad injury and Forsch came on. It didn't matter though, because the fourth-inning nightmare was now about to afflict Viola and Minnesota.

Again, a big rally from St. Louis started with Pena and Oquendo, who walked and singled. Tom Lawless, a heretofore faceless utility infielder, took Viola deep. After walking Coleman, Viola was pulled with just one out. Dan Schatzeder came on, to no positive effect. Coleman stole second. Kelly decided to intentionally walk Herr and face Lindeman.

This made sense—the intentional walk was used much more frequently than it is today and Lindeman was only getting at-bats because of Jack Clark's absence. But Lindemann blew up the strategy with a double, McGee followed with a single and the score was 7-1 by the time the inning came to an end.

Minnesota got a run in the fifth and loaded the bases with one out in the seventh. It was their last chance to get back in the game and Herzog brought in Ken Dayley from the pen. He struck out Gaetti, got Brunansky to pop out and then put it on cruise control, locking up the 7-2 win that evened the Series.

Blyleven and Cox met in a Game 2 rematch on Thursday night. After two scoreless innings, the Cards threatened in the third, again with Oquendo and Pena being the instigators. They both singled and Cox bunted them up to second and third. Kelly pulled the infield in, a risky move this early in the game. But the risk paid off. Coleman hit a ground ball to short and Oquendo was cut down at the plate. Blyleven got out of the inning.

Oquendo was again thrown out at home in the fifth. With runners on first and third and Cox at the plate, Herzog called for a suicide squeeze. Cox missed the bunt and Oquendo, off with the pitch, was left in no man's land. The game stayed scoreless into the sixth.

St. Louis again rallied in the sixth and this time they broke through, thanks to the speed they were built around. Coleman beat out an infield hit and Ozzie legged out a bunt. With one out, Herzog called for a double steal and both runners were safe. After an intentional walk, Curt Ford delivered a two-run single and a Gagne error brought in another run.

Blyleven gave way to Keith Atherton in the seventh, who walked Coleman and balked him to second. Coleman swiped third and then scored on an infield hit, as St. Louis speed now had them comfortably ahead 4-2.

The Twins started to make it uncomfortable in the eighth. Gladden singled and Gagne bunted his way aboard. After Puckett flied out, Herzog removed Cox and brought in Dayley to face the lefthanded Hrbek. This move worked, with a flyout to center the result, but Gaetti ripped a triple that cut the lead to 4-2. Dayley got Brunansky to end the inning.

Worrell came on in the ninth and walked two batters, giving veteran power-hitter Don Baylor a chance. He popped out to Herr. The Cardinals had completed their sweep of the middle sequence of the Series and were going back to the Twin Cities with a 3-2 lead.

Saturday's Game 6 started in the afternoon, the last time a World Series game has been played outside of prime-time. Being the Metrodome still meant no one saw the sunlight and the last

time a Series game was played outdoors in the daytime was 1984. Tudor would get a chance to clinch a championship for St. Louis, while Minnesota had to rely on Straker.

Herr homered with two outs in the first to give the Cardinals a quick 1-0 lead. But Gladden answered with a triple to start the home half of the first, Puckett tied with a single, moved up on a groundout by Gaetti and scored on an opposite field single from Baylor.

St. Louis quickly tied it back up when Pendleton drew a one-out walk, moved up on a groundout and scored on an Oquendo single. Tudor pitched around a two-base error in the second inning when he picked off Hrbek and kept it tied 2-2 .

Straker continued to struggle in the fourth, giving up a leadoff double to Driessen. McGee singled to center and while Puckett's strong throw home held Driessen at third, it allowed McGee to take second. The result was that an infield hit from Pendleton and a sac fly from Oquendo produced two runs and a 4-2 Cardinal lead. In the fifth, Ozzie walked, moved up on successive productive outs and scored on another base hit from McGee.

It was 5-2 and the Twins were in trouble. They got it turned around in the fifth. Tudor began to struggle. Puckett got it going with a one-out single and Gaetti doubled. Baylor got the Metrodome crowd roaring with a three-run blast to tie it 5-5. After a single from Brunansky, Tudor was out. Horton got a ground ball out, but Brunansky moved up and then scored on a two-out hit from Lombardozzi.

One inning later, Gagne led off the bottom of the sixth with a single. Forsch came on for Horton face the righthanded power. He walked Puckett and after a passed ball, an intentional walk loaded the bases. Forsch then got Gaetti and Brunansky to pop out. Hrbek was up and Herzog continued to empty the bullpen, calling on Dayley to replicate the matchup that had worked for St. Louis in Game 5. It didn't work this time—Hrbek unloaded with a grand slam to break the game wide open.

Minnesota added a run in the eighth and Berengueur was brilliant, throwing three innings of shutout relief. The 11-5 win set up a Sunday night Game 7—the third straight year the World Series was going the distance.

Viola got his third start of this Fall Classic, with Magrane on the mound for St. Louis. While Magrane was a respectable pitcher, this was clearly the situation the Twins would have taken had it been offered nine days earlier.

The Cardinals still took the early lead, getting singles from Lindeman, McGee and Pena to open the second inning to go up 1-0. With two outs, Steve Lake added another single for a 2-zip lead.

But Viola got settled in and Minnesota immediately started chipping back. Baylor was hit by a pitch in the bottom of the second, Brunansky singled and then Laudner singled. Coleman made a big play when he threw out Baylor at the plate, but Lombardozzi came up with a clutch two-out hit to make sure the Twins got at least one run.

Gagne beat out an infield hit with one out in the fifth and Herzog decided to go with Cox. Puckett responded with a double to right-center that tied the game 2-2. One inning later, Minnesota took the lead. Brunansky and Hrbek each worked walks to start the bottom of the sixth. Herzog correctly went to his closer at this key crunch point of the season. Worrell issued another walk, but struck out Gladden. He was set to get out of the inning until Gagne beat out an infield hit to bring in the go-ahead run.

With the tension building, Viola was locked in. He went eight innings and allowed just six hits. In the bottom of the eighth, after a one-out single from Laudner, Gladden ripped a two-out double. Reardon had a bit of breathing room at 4-2 when he came on for the ninth.

Reardon got the first two batters and McGee came to the plate. He hit a ground ball to Gaetti who threw to first. Hrbek gloved the final out and the party could start in the Twin Cities.

Viola was named Series MVP for his two wins, both of which he was dominant in. His bad fourth inning in Game 4 meant the overall series ERA was a pedestrian 3.72, but Viola was still a worthy choice.

Other notable performances for the Twins came from Gladden, who went 9-for-31 and drove in seven runs. Puckett was steady, with ten hits in 28 at-bats. Lombardozzi was 7-for-17 and had the key two-out RBI hit in Game 7 that got his team on the board. Laudner had seven hits of his own in 22 at-bats, driving in four runs and scoring four more.

On the St. Louis side, McGee had gone 10-for-27 and was the best Cardinal hitter. Dayley had been clutch in relief until the fatal grand slam to Hrbek. For the third time in six years, St. Louis had played a Game 7 in the World Series and for the second time in three years, they lost it.

If Cardinal fans look back on that with heartbreak, it's perfectly understandable. But Whitey Herzog's Cardinals were special. They were unique in the way they played. And thanks to 1982, they still brought home a ring. They were a memorable team with memorable players. If you want to understand the 1980s in major league baseball, you need to understand this team.