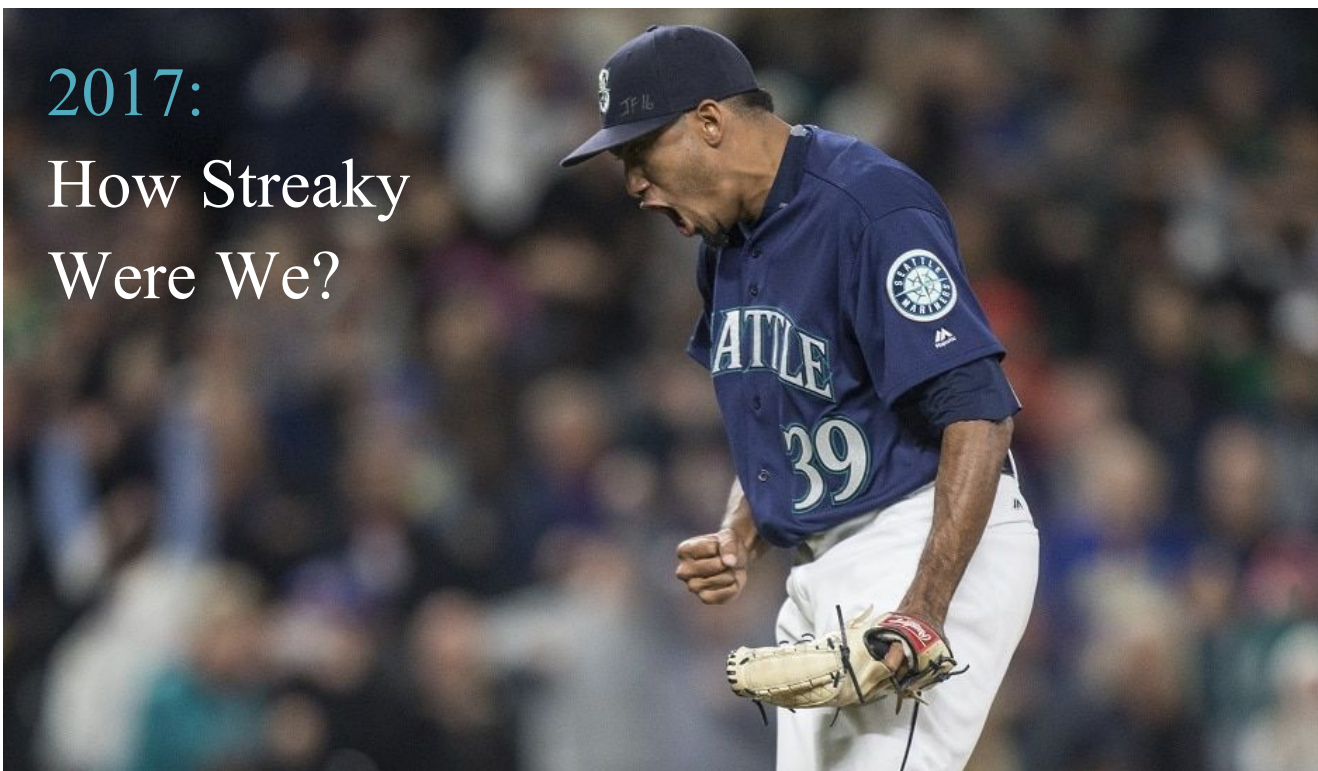


The Mariner Muse

Your (off)-daily source for Seattle Mariners commentary and general thoughts on baseball

2017: How Streaky Were We?



M M

*It felt like W's and L's only
came in chunks last year...*

Anthony Davis

For every Mariner Muse released last season, we tracked our happiness according to 5 different team categories. Eventually, we charted the results, which essentially showed that the Mariners were a C-grade baseball team in 2017. (For more on the chart, go to marinermuse.com: "The Good, The Bad, & The WTF").

This exercise was unique and revealed many things, but what stuck with me most was it showed how streaky my feelings toward the team

Happy Off-Day!

Well alright, it's not really an off-day...it's the off-season! But since it's been a while since you've had your fill of baseball, we figured we'd give you a little taste of Nerdom to appease you through this cold January.

This is the first of bback-to-back January Muse Newsletters (Museletters), with the second coming next Monday, January 15. And while the next will take a look at what's ahead for the 2018 Ners, this MM looks back at 2017...and beyond.

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were. At one point in the season, I texted my fellow editors: “This is the greatest team ever, we are winning the World Series” – but then there was also that time when four pitchers from the original rotation were on the DL, and I actually looked forward to Yovani Gallardo starts. With little to think about after the season, I started wondering whether the 2017 team was actually that streaky, or if I had simply always been hyperbolic toward the Ners and had just never seen it physically tracked.

Thankfully, Baseball Reference exists. And this means that pretty much any baseball stat out there exists, including the result of every single game for every season in recent history. With the data available, I just had to think of a way to measure streakiness in a season. Here’s how I did it:

A “streak” is when you string consecutive victories – or losses – together. You can have a 3-game winning streak, a 10-game losing streak,



@marinermuse

and so on and so forth. As long as the same result occurs on back-to-back games, it is officially considered a “streak.” Therefore, the minimum streak is two.

So I looked at the season in twos. Any time the Mariners won consecutive games, I counted it as a “streak win,” and any time they lost consecutively, I counted it as a “streak loss.” Any W/L or L/W combinations were not included, as they are not considered streaks. Under this approach, a longer streak – say, the Mariners 6-game losing streak in September – was considered 5 sets of “streak losses,” since that’s how many times the Ners lost consecutive games in that stretch.

I went back as far as 2001. Here’s what the data yielded:

Streak Wins & Losses: 2001-2017

<u>Year</u>	<u>Streak Wins</u>	<u>Streak Losses</u>	<u>Total</u>
2001	84	14	98
2007	53	40	93
2006	43	49	92
2010	26	66	92
2017	42	47	89
2004	26	61	87
2008	23	64	87
2011	29	57	86
2016	46	35	81
2012	34	47	81
2002	53	28	81
2003	52	28	80
2013	29	49	78
2014	44	33	77
2005	25	49	74
2009	38	31	69
2015	27	38	65

Looking at these results, it appears the 2017 squad was above average in terms of streakiness, with the 5th most streak wins or losses since 2001. (Side note: they were pretty balanced in terms of both winning and losing streaks...which I guess isn't a bad thing?)

But one thing I noticed was that two teams above the 2017 team were either really good or really bad. The 2001 team won 116 games and the 2010 team lost 101 games. This severity makes sense: when you lose a lot or win a lot, you are

inherently going to be stringing similar results together, whether they be W's or L's. The 2017 finished (kind of) near .500, which means that it's more notable that they had as many "streak wins" and "streak losses" as they did.

To attempt to make sense of this, I then divided the number of "series wins" and "series losses" by the number of total wins and losses for the season, which would show the percentage of overall wins or losses that were accumulated in a streak. The table is here:

Streak Wins & Losses by Percentage

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total W</u>	<u>Total L</u>	<u>% Of Wins on a Streak</u>	<u>% Of Losses on a Streak</u>	<u>Sum</u>
2007	88	74	0.602272727	0.540540541	1.142813268
2006	78	84	0.551282051	0.583333333	1.134615385
2017	78	84	0.538461538	0.55952381	1.097985348
2010	61	101	0.426229508	0.653465347	1.079694855
2011	67	95	0.432835821	0.6	1.032835821
2004	63	99	0.412698413	0.616161616	1.028860029
2001	116	46	0.724137931	0.304347826	1.028485757
2008	61	101	0.37704918	0.633663366	1.010712547
2016	86	76	0.534883721	0.460526316	0.995410037
2012	75	87	0.453333333	0.540229885	0.993563218
2002	93	69	0.569892473	0.405797101	0.975689575
2003	93	69	0.559139785	0.405797101	0.964936886
2013	71	91	0.408450704	0.538461538	0.946912243
2014	87	75	0.505747126	0.44	0.945747126
2005	69	93	0.362318841	0.52688172	0.889200561
2009	85	77	0.447058824	0.402597403	0.849656226
2015	76	86	0.355263158	0.441860465	0.797123623

This supports my original hunch: the 2017 Ners were super streaky. They jumped the 2001 juggernaut and the 2010 opposite-of-a-juggernaut, and proved to be the 3rd streakiest team in the ballclub's recent history. This validates my exhaustion as a fan, which came from the many peaks and valleys we all went through while watching this past season. 2017 was a hell of a weird year.

Fin.



Where Are They Ner?

Aaron Sele | Pitcher

Ner from: 2000-2001, 2005

Best Ner Moment: Aaron was a staple of the 2001 rotation that dominated everyone in baseball. Not surprisingly, he went 15-5 that year with a 3.60 ERA and tossed two complete games to boot.

Where MM Guessed he is Ner: Sele is most likely the baseball coach for a high school in rural Connecticut, or New Hampshire, or some state way out east that doesn't have an MLB team. His team is mediocre, his players think he's joking when he claims to once have been a starter in the bigs, and he is still grumbling that Warner Brothers did not select him to play James Potter for the final installment of the Harry Potter films. (Judging from the picture on the right – his Seattle signing day – who can blame him?)



Where he Really is Ner: Surprisingly, Sele is still involved in Major League Baseball, checking in as a scout for the Miami Marlins after serving over five years as a pitching instructor for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Even more surprising is that Aaron received one vote for the Hall of Fame during his eligibility, which begs the question: who on earth thought Aaron Sele was HOF worthy?

A Brief History of Recent M's Complete Games

Patrick Leary

Is it just me, or have a lot of weird guys thrown complete games for the Mariners lately?

For the past half decade or so, the Mariners' five best starting pitchers, for better or worse, have been Felix Hernandez, Hisashi Iwakuma, James Paxton, Taijuan Walker and – at the beginning of that sample – Jason Vargas. Here's a breakdown of the M's CG total since 2011:

2011: 12
2012: 8
2013: 4
2014: 2
2015: 6
2016: 2
2017: 1

That's 35 complete games in seven seasons. As you can see, the team's CG frequency has really ticked down in recent years, mostly because The King has stopped throwing full games almost entirely and the team's best pitcher is now the injury prone Paxton, who has *never* thrown a complete game thus far in his career.

You would think, seeing as complete games are usually thrown by great pitchers, that most of the 35 CGs in that sample would come from the group of five pitchers listed above. Given that Hernandez and Iwakuma have been with the team for almost that entire seven-year period and the other three have been their primary rotation mates, you'd expect north of 30 of those games to come from those five, with a little randomness probably sprinkled in between.

But only 22, or just shy of 63 percent, have come from that group of five. That means more than a third of the complete games the Mariners have thrown in the past seven seasons have come from unlikely sources. I broke it down by year to see where these 13 obscure 9-inning performances have come from.

2017: Ariel Miranda (June 4 vs. Tampa Bay Rays)

We start with the least obscure. It's not in that Ariel Miranda is a household name in baseball – even M's – lore, but if there's one starting pitcher from the 2017 Ners who displayed any sort of longevity, it was definitely Miranda.



The Little Mermaid (or NerMan) threw the Mariners' lone complete game of 2017 on June 4 in a masterful shutdown of the Rays. Ariel struck out nine, walked just one batter, and surrendered only one run on four hits in a 7-1 Mariner win.

The weirdest part of the game was definitely the former (and current) Mariners involved in the key parts of the contest. The losing pitcher in the game was Erasmo Ramirez, who allowed four runs in 4.2 innings and would wind up on the Mariners a month later. Meanwhile, the Rays' only run of the game scored in the 8th inning on an RBI groundout by Jesus Sucre, of all people.

As obscure as it is, it almost feels appropriate that Miranda had the team's only complete game in its broken 2017 season.

2016: Wade Miley (April 30 vs. Kansas City Royals)



Honestly, when I first saw Wade Miley on this list, I immediately assumed it was his final game as a Mariner, when he baffled the eventual world champion Cubs, took a no-hitter into the 7th, and somehow won a game against Jake Arrieta. (Wade would be traded to the Orioles the next day).

No, Miley's complete game came in just his fifth start in his only season as a Mariner. He carried a 7.04 ERA into the game, but nine five-hit shutout innings later Miley had dropped his ERA to 5.06. It was a decidedly Wade performance, with just four strikeouts and 45 of his 77 strikes coming through contact.

That 5.06 ERA number would prove prophetic, as after a strong May, Miley would hover around that number for the remainder of his career as a Ner, ultimately ending up at 4.98 after that final strong start. As we've covered extensively in previous Muses (see May 22nd MM), the best thing Miley ever did for the Mariners was net Miranda.

2015: Mike Montgomery (June 23 vs. KC & June 30 vs. SD)

I had forgotten about Monty's June 2015 rampage, wherein he threw two complete games in the same month that he made his major league debut. (Holy shit).

In the first game, he locked up the eventual World Series champion Royals and struck out 10

batters without surrendering a walk. Just seven days later, Monty would walk four batters but only allow one hit in a smothering of the admittedly-crappy Padres.

The complete games are a weird footnote for Monty, who would become a reliever and record the final out of the 2016 World Series for the Cubs. The games are also a weird footnote for the 2015 Mariners, who started five pitchers more frequently than Montgomery but had only one (Felix) equal his complete game total.

2014: Roenis Elias (June 1 vs. Detroit Tigers)

Another year, another rookie throwing a random complete game for the Mariners. Roenis Elias! In a year where the Ners got full seasons from Felix, Iwakuma and a resilient Chris Young – plus had James Paxton make his full-time debut – Elias was the only pitcher who started more than 10 games and threw a complete game (Walker threw the other).

Elias was always a strange fit as a major league starter, but on the first day of June 2014, he was dominant, surrendering just five base runners (three hits, a walk, and a hit by pitch) and blanking the Tigers for what remains his only career shutout *or* complete game.

Even weirder, Elias bested Max Scherzer on that day in June. Scherzer was not his typically dominant self, allowing RBIs to a murderer's row of Brad Miller, Michael Saunders, James



Jones, and Willie Bloomquist.

It's a strange bit of coincidence not only that Elias threw a complete game, but he formed a mini-trade tree with two of the other pitchers on this list, as he helped bring Miley to the Mariners before Miley netted Miranda.

2013: Joe Saunders (April 29 vs. Orioles & June 19 vs. Angels) & Aaron Harang (May 27 vs. SD & June 11 vs. Astros)

This is EASILY the weirdest entry on this list. Both Felix and Kuma had legitimately great seasons in 2013, but it was Safeco Joe and the Harangutan who had all four of the team's 2013 complete games.



Saunders (above) earned the "Safeco Joe" moniker after the team signed him on the back of his strong previous starts at the stadium and, in his first eight starts as a Mariner, he recorded all of his losses on the road and all of his wins at home. His second win was his first complete game, as he blunted the Orioles using 105 pitches, the only blemish a two-run Matt Wieters home run. (In another weird bit of trivia, the losing pitcher was a starter version of Zach Britton).

Saunders' second complete game is the first loss on this list. Safeco Joe went the full eight innings that day, but got a measly two hits of support from his offense, who were smothered by historic Mariner killer C.J. Wilson. The only run of the game was scored by Mike Trout on a Saunders wild pitch.

Harang's two 2013 CGs were much cleaner than Saunders', as both were shutouts and neither games were ever really in doubt. In the first, the veteran bullied the hapless Padres, who fell behind 4-0 in the first and could only muster four hits (one by future Mariner Yonder Alonso).

His second complete game was even more dominant, as he stifled a nearly unrecognizable Astros lineup that featured the likes of Brandon Barnes, Trevor Crowe, Matt Dominguez and, strangely, Ronny Cedeno. Houston only had two hits that day after the Mariners jumped on them early yet again, and both came from future all-star J.D. Martinez.



However shocking these four complete games are, what's not shocking is that in a season where the Mariners gave 54 starts to washed up versions of Saunders and Harang, they only won 71 total games.

2012: Kevin Millwood (May 18 vs. Colorado Rockies)

Seven of the Mariners' eight complete games in 2012 came from the usual suspects of Felix and Vargas. The other came from the 37-year-old Millwood, a diminished version of his former self, pitching in the final season of his near-30 WAR career.

The Rockies had no answer for Millwood that day, as he surrendered a mere three base runners and only allowed two hits, one to Marco Scutaro and one to Jordan Pacheco, both in the sixth inning. Pacheco's single even resulted in an out,

as Michael Saunders erased Scutaro trying to go to third.

Millwood started a more famous game a few weeks after his shutout, the only combined no-hitter in team history. (And somewhere along the line, he took this dashing pic below).



2011: Doug Fister (April 14 vs. Royals, June 9 vs. Tigers, & July 2 vs. Padres)

Fister was one of the unluckiest pitchers I've ever seen in 2011, going 3-12 with a 3.33 ERA before the Mariners mercifully moved him to a contending Tigers team. Perhaps the greatest illustration of Fister's misfortune is that he lost ALL THREE of his complete games with the 2011 Ners.

The first one admittedly barely counts, as Fister struggled through seven innings, allowing five runs on eight hits before the game was called due to rain. The Royals also got a complete game that day from another notorious Mariner killer, Bruce Chen.

In his second complete game, Fister was outdueled by his future teammate Justin Verlander, but needed just 87 pitches to get

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through eight innings, despite allowing four runs. All four runs came in the fifth inning, moments after Greg Halman (RIP) had scored on a Verlander wild pitch.

The third loss was Fister's unluckiest, as he allowed just one run on six hits. His offense managed just two hits in support, both from Halman, and was stymied by the combination of Cory Luebke, Chad Qualls, Mike Adams and Heath Bell.

It wasn't all bad in 2011 for Fister though. He went 8-1 in his first 11 starts for the Tigers after the trade, including 5-0 in September, and made

three starts that postseason, winning a decisive game five in the 2011 ALDS against the Yankees. (Remember, he was 3-12 with Seattle before moving to Detroit). He also looks decidedly like Dennis Quaid from *The Rookie*.

. . .

So there you have it. Weird people have thrown CGs for the Ners over the past chunk of the franchise's history. And while you can't predict where the next string of them may come from, when looking an impending season of starts from the likes of Mike Leake, Andrew Moore, and more Ariel Miranda – the question becomes...where will the next one come from?

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