Another memorable September leads to back-to-back playoff appearances

Though it wasn’t a carbon-copy run to the pennant like they engineered in 2018, the Brewers still put themselves in position to make September as memorable as the previous one when they captured the National League Central Division crown and came within one victory of returning to the World Series.

Milwaukee posted its second straight 20-7 September to finish the year 89-73. It claimed its second straight postseason invitation, this time as the second Wild Card team, marking the second time in franchise history it had qualified for the playoffs.

“This group fed off each other. It was a unit that believed in its abilities,” Brewers President of Baseball Operations and General Manager David Stearns said following the season. “I’m incredibly proud of the effort our team put forth this season, and further proud of the support from the entire organization to get us back to the playoffs.”

“We know how challenging it is to make the playoffs in this league and to do it in back-to-back seasons for only the second time in franchise history is incredible. It’s not something we take for granted. It’s special each and every time you do it,” Stearns added.

In late August, the Brewers clawed their way into contention when they were only two games above .500 by opening the final month on a 14-3 run that included winning eight games from their division rivals, the Chicago Cubs and the St. Louis Cardinals.

“I felt that as we approached September that we were in a good place to break out offensively,” said Brewers Manager Craig Counsell, who won his 400th game as Milwaukee’s skipper on September 20. “There were good signs of that throughout the second half, but in September we put it all together.”

The Brewers erased a 7.5 game deficit in the division on September 5, by winning 18 of their last 23 games, falling just two games short of repeating as NL Central champs.

“We had our ups and downs, but the main recollection for me will be packed houses at Miller Park throughout the month of September watching real exciting high-quality pennant race baseball,” added Counsell.

The team accomplished this milestone despite losing the services of MVP Christian Yelich, who fractured his knee-cap on September 10 and missed the final stretch of 18 games. Yelich wound up winning his second straight batting title after hitting .329 while adding 44 home runs with 97 RBI.

“Christian is a special player,” Counsell said. “It’s a joy to watch him play every day. He’s the best at what he does.”
But once we got the awful news, we had to move forward. It was disappointing for him but we had to respond. And that’s what we had to do the rest of the way. We found ways to do it and guys stepped up.”

Stearns concurred. “Certainly losing Christian the way we did was a blow,” he added. “But we have a team that is capable, a team with a lot of accomplished players. Despite the news, the team refused to back down. They were ready to compete for the remainder of the year, which showed that this is a really good team.”

When the year opened, the Brewers were considered among the favorites to return to the postseason. With the offseason signing of free agent catcher Yasmani Grandal and the return of infielder Mike Moustakas, who was instrumental in leading the Brewers to a division crown in 2018, the lineup and defense were reinforced. Together with a resurgent Ryan Braun and Eric Thames, Milwaukee had one of the top slugging teams in the league.

“Moose and Yaz are two guys who know what pennant race baseball and playoff baseball are all about. Their veteran presence is not fazed by the pressure,” Stearns said. “Eric and Ryan were very consistent this year on the offensive side of the ball. They are two guys we really counted on for quality at-bats. Both won games for us in the late innings.”

In addition, Milwaukee solidified its depth in the bullpen which was already considered one of the best in baseball. The acquisition of right-handed pitcher Bobby Wahl in an offseason trade with the Mets gave Counsell and his staff more options.

“During Spring Training we felt we were in a good place with our pitching depth,” Counsell said. “But once the season began things changed.”

Instead of having four bona fide closers, the Brewers began the year with just one – Josh Hader – due to injuries to Corey Knebel, Jeremy Jeffress and Bobby Wahl.

“Our bullpen starts with Josh and everything is structured around him,” Stearns noted. “Josh set a really high bar for himself last year and he’s done his best to meet that high standard and in certain cases exceeded it. We put a lot on him this year.”

“Josh is an incredibly important pitcher for us. We rely on him in very high leverage moments to get the outs. He has one of the best fastballs in all of baseball. He’s tough to square up on. It’s high octane at the top of the zone. He’s had a lot of success.”

The expected return of starters Jimmy Nelson and Brent Suter to the rotation following reconstructive arm surgery was put on hold. So, Milwaukee opened the year with three youngsters, Brandon Woodruff, Freddy Peralta and Corbin Burnes in the rotation. Woodruff emerged as the staff ace, joining Zach Davies, Gio Gonzalez and Chase Anderson in the rotation.

And during the first half, Woodruff and Davies combined for a 15-2 record before injuries forced them out of the rotation for a period. Then in stepped Adrian Houser, who gave the Brewers some quality starts the rest of the way as the staff had its ebbs and flows.
“For the first five months we played inconsistently, though we had periods throughout that span where I thought we were a really good baseball team,” Stearns said. “Early in the season, we played a tough schedule and did very well. During the heart of the summer, we had a lot of ups and downs. We battled injuries and battled some inconsistent performances. But we were still able to keep ourselves close enough to have a good run back to the playoffs.”

The Brewers were also sparked by the arrival of rookies Keston Hiura and Trent Grisham who flashed some pop, giving the team quality at-bats while playing sound defense.

“It’s reassuring as a franchise when you’re able to produce that type of talent that can get to the big league level and contribute immediately,” Stearns said. “Keston is a player we expect to hit at every level. He rose through the system quickly and contributed at the big league level faster than anticipated. We needed him in our lineup.”

“Trent is a former first-round draft pick who had some challenging years during his minor league development and had it all click for himself this year.” said Stearns. By the time he got to June he was emerging as a potential Major League option. He climbed to Triple-A and had the best six weeks that he could possibly have, forcing his way to the big leagues.”

On defense, Lorenzo Cain not only anchored the outfield but dazzled the opposition with leaping game-saving catches against the outfield wall. Though he was nagged by injuries most of the second half, Cain was a valuable asset to the Brewers overall success.

“It was a challenging year for Lorenzo,” Counsell said. “The thumb injury hurt him from a production standpoint. In August he started to show signs that he was getting healthy and the numbers improved. In my opinion, his defense was better this year than last year if that’s possible. His defense won us a number of games.”

In the end the Brewers lost to the Washington Nationals in the Wild Card Game, however, there was something good to reflect upon.

“This was an imperfect season,” Stearns said. “But there was a lot of positive that came from it. Many players we were not expecting to play a major role made significant contributions in high leverage situations to put us in a playoff spot.”

“As we move forward, I’m very optimistic about where we are as an organization. I’m optimistic and proud of what we’ve accomplished, and optimistic about the future and where we are headed. We are energized as an organization to get back to work and build another contending Brewers team.” Stearns concluded. “That’s where our focus is right now.”
2019 Brewers Award Winners

Josh Hader - N.L. Reliever of the Year
Lorenzo Cain - N.L. Gold Glove Center Fielder
Christian Yelich - Silver Slugger

Milwaukee BWAA Awards
Christian Yelich - Most Valuable Player
Brandon Woodruff - Most Valuable Pitcher
Yasmani Grandal - Top Newcomer
Junior Guerra - Unsung Hero
Chase Anderson - Good Guy

2019 Brewers Player of the Month
April: Christian Yelich – Batted .353 with 14 homers and 34 RBI
May: Mike Moustakas – Batted .270 with 8 homers and 21 RBI
June: Christian Yelich – Batted .365 with 8 homers and 18 RBI
July: Keston Hiura – Batted .355 with 6 homers and 18 RBI
August: Keston Hiura – Batted .273 with 5 homers and 16 RBI
September: Ryan Braun – Batted .271 with 4 homers and 18 RBI

2019 Brewers Pitcher of the Month
April: Zach Davies – Posted a 3-0 mark and 1.38 ERA in 6 starts
May: Brandon Woodruff – Posted a 4-0 mark and 1.36 ERA in 5 starts
June: Josh Hader – Posted a 0.68 ERA with 7 saves in 9 games
July: Chase Anderson – Had a 2.90 ERA with 24 strikeouts in 31 innings
August: Jordan Lyles – Went 3-1 with a 2.63 ERA in 5 starts
September: Brent Suter – Was 4-0 with a 0.49 ERA in 9 games

2019 National League Player of the Week
March 28-31: Christian Yelich – Hit home runs in each of the first four games of the year, batting .500 with a .667 on-base percentage and a 1.583 slugging average. Scored 6 times with 8 RBI
April 15-21: Christian Yelich – It’s the second time he’s been named within the first month of the season. Yelich batted .417 (10-for-24) with 9 runs, 8 home runs and 16 RBI in 7 games
July 15-21: Keston Hiura – The rookie infielder hit .517 with one homer and 8 RBI for the week. He scored 7 runs and slugged .966 with a 1.514 OPS

2019 National League Relief Pitcher of the Month
May: Josh Hader – Posted a 0.71 ERA with 6 saves and 21 strikeouts in 12.2 innings
June: Josh Hader – Posted a 0.68 ERA with 7 saves
September: Brent Suter – Was 4-0 with a 0.49 ERA in

2019 National League Rookie of the Month
July: Keston Hiura – Batted .355 with 6 home runs and 18 RBI in 25 games
A Hall of Fame pitcher who finished an illustrious career in Milwaukee along with two Brewers’ prized prospects of the early-2000s who helped end a long losing drought and were instrumental in leading the team to its first postseason appearance in 26 years were enshrined on the prestigious Brewers Wall of Honor on Saturday, August 9, 2019 at Miller Park.

Closer Trevor Hoffman, who became the sixth uniformed player and the eighth Brewers representative to be elected to the celebrated National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2018, and J.J. Hardy and Rickie Weeks, who formed a formidable double-play combination in the Brewers infield for six seasons, became the 64th, 65th, and 66th members inducted to the Brewers Wall of Honor since the exhibit was christened in 2014.

Hoffman, who is second on the all-time Major League list with 601 saves, spent his final two seasons with the Brewers (2009-10) in an impressive 18-year career. He was named to the last of his seven National League All-Star teams during his first campaign with the Brewers, in addition to posting a 3-2 record with a stingy 1.83 ERA and 37 saves in 55 appearances. Hoffman recorded his 600th career save during his second season in Milwaukee on September 7, 2010, earning it against the Cardinals. He was the first Major League pitcher to reach the milestone.


In their first season together, Hardy and Weeks anchored the 2005 Milwaukee infield and guided the team to its first .500 campaign in 13 years. Three years later, they guided the Brewers to the franchise’s first National League Wild Card berth – a return to the postseason for the first time since 1982 when the Brewers won the American League Championship and a berth in its lone World Series. The 2008 Brewers won 90 games, the most franchise victories in 16 seasons.

Last summer, Hoffman, who retired following the 2010 season as the all-time Major League leader in saves (later passed by the Yankees’ Mariano Rivera), joined Hank Aaron (1982), Rollie Fingers (1992), Don Sutton (1998), Robin Yount (1999) and Paul Molitor (2004) as the only Brewers’ uniformed players elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Brewers broadcaster Bob Uecker is also recognized by the National Baseball Hall of Fame with the Ford C. Frick Award in 2003, as is former owner and Commissioner Emeritus Allan H. (Bud) Selig, who was elected by the Hall’s Modern Baseball Era Committee in 2017.

Selected in the 11th round of the 1989 June Free Agent Draft by the Reds, Hoffman was picked by the Marlins in the 1992 MLB Expansion Draft and made his big league debut on April 6, 1993. Three months later, he was packaged in a trade to the Padres where he would spend the next 16 seasons where he earned six All-Star nominations and finished runner-up twice for the Cy Young Award. He led the NL in saves twice, including posting a personal-best 53 saves in 1998.
Hardy was the 56th overall selection in the 2001 June First-Year Player Draft while Weeks followed as the No. 2 overall pick in the 2003 Draft.

A 13-year veteran, Hardy spent the first five seasons with the Brewers, maintaining a .262 batting average with 75 of his 188 career home runs and 265 of his 688 career RBI. In 2007, Hardy was named to the National League All-Star team and finished the season with a .277 average, 26 homers and 88 RBI.

In the 2008 National League Division Series against the eventual world champion Phillies, Hardy led the Brewers with a .429 batting average, collecting six hits in 14 at-bats. The following season, he was traded to the Twins for Carlos Gomez. In 2010, he was dealt to the Orioles and went on to have seven productive seasons where he won three Gold Gloves. In 2011, Hardy had a personal-high 30 homers with 80 RBI, and in 2013 he was named to the AL All-Star team.

Weeks spent 11 of his 14-year career with the Brewers, batting .249 with 148 of 161 career homers while driving in 430 of 474 runs in a Milwaukee uniform. In 2011, Weeks was named the starting second baseman for the NL in the All-Star Game and became the first Brewers player to steal a base in the Mid-Summer Classic.

Weeks was part of the Brewers’ 2008 and 2011 postseason teams, but his finest year with the Brewers came in 2010 when he led the NL with 764 plate appearances, 651 at-bats and 25 hit-by-pitches while posting personal-bests in nearly every offensive department including 112 runs scored, 175 hits, 29 homers and 83 RBI. Weeks went on to play with the Mariners, Diamondbacks and Rays before retiring following the 2017 season.

The Wall of Honor is a permanent display located on the third-base side of Miller Park adjacent to the Hot Corner entrance. Honorees on the wall each have a photo plaque with a brief synopsis of their career. The plaques are designed by Matthews International, designers of the plaques for the National Baseball Hall of Fame as well as the plaques on the Milwaukee Braves Wall of Honor at Miller Park.

Nominees for the Brewers Wall of Honor must meet one or more of the following:
- 2,000 or more plate appearances
- 1,000 or more innings pitched
- 250 appearances as a pitcher
- Winner of a major award (MVP, Cy Young, Rookie of the Year, or Fireman of the Year)
- Manager of a pennant-winner
- General Manager for 10-plus years and postseason appearance
- Individuals memorialized as a statue on the Miller Park Plaza
- Members of the National Baseball Hall of Fame who have played or managed for the Brewers
- Also alum who donned a Brewers uniform for any length of time, and who served as a primary broadcaster for a minimum of 20 seasons with the team

**Members of the Brewers Wall of Honor**

In Memoriam

Ray Peters (1970) - May 4, 2019 (72)

Freddie Velazquez (1969) - May 21, 2019 (81)

Jim Bouton (1969) - July 10, 2019 (80)

Alex Grammas (1976-77) - September 13, 2019 (93)
Manager

Dick Foster (1990-91) - September 11, 2019 (82)
Scouting Director

On June 19, Jerry Augustine, Jim Gantner and Gorman Thomas served as bartenders for West Bend Insurance at Miller Park’s Local Brew’s Bar.

Brewers alumni Larry Hisle, Ken Sanders, Greg Vaughn and Jim Gantner visited with Season Seatholders at the Johnsonville Party Deck on July 12.
The Nellie Global award is in honor of former player, coach and Brewers broadcaster Davey “Nellie” Nelson. He was a dedicated board member, supporter and contributor to Open Arms Home for Children in South Africa, an organization benefiting children orphaned by AIDS.

To keep Davey’s mission alive, the Brewers recognized an individual who has made a global contribution that impacted others in an extraordinary way. On June 20, The Nellie Global Award was awarded to Merle Franks of Janesville, WI was recognized for his outreach efforts in Brazil.

On August 10, Brewers coaches Andy Haines and Robinzin Diaz joined Brewers alumni Bill Castro and Larry Hisle at The Miracle League of Milwaukee to serve as coaches during their All-Star Championship game.

On August 27, the Brewers, Bucks and Packers announced that they are sponsoring three planeloads of Wisconsin veterans on the Stars and Stripes Honor Flight’s 55th mission scheduled for October 19. This “Flight of Champions” honored about 240 World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans from southeastern and east-central Wisconsin with a one day, all-expenses paid trip to Washington D.C., to visit the memorials built in their honor and to experience a full day of honor and thanks for their service to our nation.

Two of the planes left from Milwaukee and a third left from Green Bay. Former players who were on the flights include Brewers alumni Jerry Augustine, Don August, Ken Sanders and Paul Wagner along with former Packer Jarrett Bush and former Bucks Steve Novak and Dick Garrett.
On May 25, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum saluted the start of the 2019 summer season with the Cooperstown tradition, Hall of Fame Classic Weekend. The Hall of Fame Classic is a seven-inning legends game featuring Hall of Famers and former major leaguers. Corey Hart was in attendance at this year’s classic and was the winner of the Home Run Derby.

Marcus Theatres’ CineLatino Milwaukee Film Festival took place April 10-14 and featured 15 films over three locations, and a variety of special activities which helped raise money for the community. A portion of the net proceeds were donated to local Hispanic health and education efforts; combined, the first two years of the festival raised more than $40,000 for these initiatives. Festival goers were able to enjoy the return of the Cerveceros Tailgate, presented by the Milwaukee Brewers. The tailgate featured Bernie Brewer, the Johnsonville Famous Racing Sausages and an appearance by Bill Castro.

On July 23, fans had the opportunity to purchase limited-edition beer made for the Miller Brewing Company’s Brewmaster competition. Bill Schroeder and Craig Coshun created a Mexican-style Locutores Lager competing against the Muscle & Flow IPA created by Ben Gamel and Eric Thames.

Former Brewer, Carlos Gomez and his wife Gerandy were in town on July 10 as one of the co-chairs of the LULAC Community Partners Awards Reception.
Upcoming Events in 2020

January 26: Brewers On Deck
April 10-12: 70s Weekend
May 1-3: 80s Weekend
June 25-28: 50th Anniversary Celebration
July 10-12: 90s Weekend
August 21-23: 00s Weekend
September 4-6: 10s Weekend

Alumni Suite Nights at Miller Park
April 9, June 12, September 4

If you are interested in attending any of the events listed above, have ticket requests or any other alumni needs, please contact Katina Shaw at (414) 902-4532 or via email Katina.Shaw@brewers.com