

It's been nearly eight years since the Houston Astros won their first-ever World Series in 2017, a title which captivated the sports world as it occurred on the heels of Hurricane Harvey, a storm which devastated the franchise's home city just over a month prior to the final out of that series. Of course, the trash-can shockwaves of the cheating scandal revealed a couple of years later soon stripped any goodwill left over from that storybook-worthy championship and quickly turned a team of All-Stars into villains.

In 2022, those now-hated Astros captured lightning in a bottle and climbed the mountaintop again to win their second World Series, proving they could hoist a trophy the clean way. The run felt improbable given how the team lost superstars Gerrit Cole, George Springer and Carlos Correa over three consecutive offseasons leading into that 2022 campaign, but Houston just kept winning in scrappy fashion to defy the doubters even without key pieces from their prior championship run.

Fast-forward once more to the 2025 offseason — the Astros lost not one, but *two* icons of their dynastic run to seven straight ALCS appearances when Alex Bregman departed via free agency and Kyle Tucker was traded away to avoid paying him a looming mega-contract likely to make team owner Jim Crane blush. With those stars' shoes left unfilled in the lineup, franchise icon Jose Altuve entering his age-35 campaign and the team suffering an early exit in the prior postseason's Wild Card, a chorus of chants proclaiming the end of the Astros' reign of terror continued to grow louder by the day.

Those premonitions looked accurate through the opening months of the season as Houston sat 17-18 on May 6 with superstar Yordan Alvarez freshly sidelined due to a hand injury. However, that was the last day the Astros' record remained below the .500 mark as they proceeded to flip a switch and become the hottest team in baseball since that point.

Are we noticing a trend, folks?

As we travel on this 850-word Odyssey, I advise you to shield thine eyes, MLB fans — I regret to inform you all that the demise of the Houston Astros has once again been greatly exaggerated.

Since May 7, the 'Stros are 38-17. They scored just five runs in three games against the NL East-leading Phillies yet still swept the league contenders in the series. Houston then scored 29 runs in three contests against Shohei Ohtani's Dodgers, emerging with a standout series sweep over many sportsbooks' World Series favorite. All in all, the Astros are a combined 13-2 with a series win against every other division leader in baseball.

At 54-36 with a top-three record in the MLB, one would think the team is stacked with talent as they were in their peak years. If you assumed such a thing, though, you'd be flat-out wrong.

Houston has the equivalent of an entire starting rotation (and then some) on the injured list between Ronel Blanco, Hayden Wesneski, Spencer Arrighetti, Christian Javier, J.P. France and Luis Garcia, several of whom are in various stages of recovery following Tommy John surgery. Meanwhile, star shortstop Jeremy Pena remains sidelined with a rib fracture suffered days before being voted to his first MLB All-Star Game. Outfielders Pedro Leon and Zach Dezenzo haven't made appearances since June 3. As mentioned earlier, slugger Yordan Alvarez still hasn't played a game since May 2.

They've been punched in the mouth more times than one can count with their string of injury woes (whether at the hands of plain-old bad luck or a medical staff's malpractice, though that's a conversation for another time). They keep losing star-caliber talents who move on for greener pastures, though it turns out those pastures are typically lathered with Sherwin-Williams paint and a far cry from the rich grass of a ballpark now christened "Daikin" rather than "Minute Maid."

Yet to quote Bill Murray in one of film history's greatest motivational speeches depicted in the 1979 flick *Meatballs*, "It just doesn't matter." Somehow, some way, by the very grace of the Good Lord himself or whatever hellfire-birthered demon they source their unnatural power from... the team down in the humid swamps of Houston, Texas just refuses to die.

The Astros turned an expiring Kyle Tucker contract into Isaac Paredes and Cam Smith, a pair of everyday contributors both batting above .270 of whom the former paces the team in home runs and the latter looks like a Bonafide young star to extend their window of contention. Home-grown starter Hunter Brown earned his first All-Star nod with the MLB's best ERA, a top-four WHIP and the seventh-most strikeouts among all pitchers. A bullpen which appeared shaky at best before the season's start now performs on par with the league's most elite units.

Oh, and did I mention Jose Altuve is still doing his damn thing?

Some organizations just know how to win despite even the poorest circumstances. Clearly, this is one of them. If you cut off one head, two new ones sprout anew from the cursed Hydra's neck — the Houston Astros are simply inevitable.