

New York Yankees starting pitcher Gerrit Cole (45) delivers to the Boston Red Sox in the first ... [+]
inning of the American League Wild Card playoff game at Fenway Park, Tuesday Oct. 5, 2021, in
Boston. (AP Photo/Charles Krupa)

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At times through his first season with the Yankees, Gerrit Cole looked like a lock to win the Cy Young
Award. Other times he hardly looked the part.

The good outweighs the bad for Cole and it is why Monday he was announced as one of the finalists
in the AL Cy Young race. He is competing with Toronto Blue Jays left-hander Robbie Ray and
Chicago White Sox right-hander Lance Lynn and should Cole get the award, he would be the first
Yankee to win since Roger Clemens in 2001.

Cole was 16-8 with a 3.23 ERA in 30 starts. He placed third among qualifiers for ERA and his 243
strikeouts were five fewer than Ray's league-leading total.

Cole's second season of a nine-year, \$324 million deal with the Yankees had some speed bumps
such as a few struggles following the ban on foreign substances in June. He also turned in a
disastrous start July 4 against the Mets when the Yankees were a .500 team, again on July 29 in
Tampa Bay and then on Sept. 19 against Cleveland when the Yankees were in a scramble to get the
wild-card spot.

Before the memo on foreign substances on June 15, Cole posted a 2.68 ERA in 18 starts. After the
memo he pitched to a 4.14 ERA in 12 starts, including his dud against Cleveland that was among the
games costing the Yankees a chance to host the wild-card game.

That start against Cleveland was part of a season-ending stretch where he went 2-2 with a 6.15 ERA
in five starts. Those starts also came after he tweaked a left hamstring pitching against the Blue Jays
on Sept. 7.

As for Ray, his connection to the Yankees is being part of the three-team trade that sent Didi
Gregorius to succeed Derek Jeter at shortstop. He was dealt to Toronto on Aug. 31, 2020 and then
dominated in his contract year, so it is unsurprising the Blue Jays extended a qualifying offer to him.

Toronto Blue Jays starting pitcher Robbie Ray at Fenway Park, Wednesday, July 28, 2021, in Boston.
... [+] (AP Photo/Charles Krupa)

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Ray was 13-7 with a 2.84 ERA and 248 strikeouts, numbers that helped the Blue Jays win 91 games and nearly reach the playoffs. Unlike Cole, Ray was strong down the stretch, going 6-3 with a 2.53 ERA after the All-Star break and getting 98 of his strikeouts during his final 12 starts.

That included a four-game stretch from Aug. 20-Sept. 5 when he fanned 45 of the 106 hitters he faced to help Toronto launch a September surge that was highlighted by a dominating four-game sweep at Yankee Stadium.

Besides the strikeouts, Ray is coming of a season that featured a career-high 193 1/3 innings along with a 6.7 mark in wins above replacement. He also posted career lows in walks/hits per inning pitched (1.045) and walks per nine innings.

Ray is an obvious fit for the Yankees and Blue Jays in free agency.

He bonded immensely with pitching coach Pete Walker at a time when the Blue Jays have only one guaranteed contract beyond the 2023 season. Now it's a matter of if the Jays believe what they saw from Ray is indicative of future success.

Ray's number likely prompted those in the Bronx to take notice, especially in a rotation with a few question marks beyond Cole's reliability most of the time. The Yankees are expecting Luis Severino to return to some form of his pre-surgery self but after that there are questions and Ray might be able to answer some of those questions depending on how far the Yankees are willing to go financially either before the CBA expires next month or whenever a near deal is hashed out.

The other finalist is Lynn, who seemed to harken back to the old-school era of pitching with five starts of at least seven innings, 11 starts of at least 100 pitches and 10 starts where he faced at least 25 hitters, which is two-thirds of the way towards completing four trips through the batting order.

Lynn was the veteran anchor on a pitching staff that had the second-best earned run average in the AL and allowed the second-fewest homers while getting other noteworthy individual pitching performances such as Carlos Rodon's no-hitter on April 14.

Lynn was a sterling 11-6 with a 2.69 ERA in 28 starts. He compiled 176 strikeouts also allowed three runs or less in 24 starts and did not allow more than eight hits.

Chicago White Sox starting pitcher Lance Lynn (33) delivers during the first inning of a baseball ... [+] game against the Detroit Tigers, Friday, Oct. 1, 2021, in Chicago. (AP Photo/Matt Marton)

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Lynn also helped the White Sox to their first division title since 2008. Team success and how the pitcher impacts it can also be a factor and Lynn is going up against two pitchers who pitched a combined 31 games against AL East opponents.

The award will be revealed on Nov. 17 and each of the three finalists boasts a compelling argument for winning

Source: [Yankee Ace Gerrit Cole Is An AL Cy Young Finalist And Not Necessarily The Favorite](#)