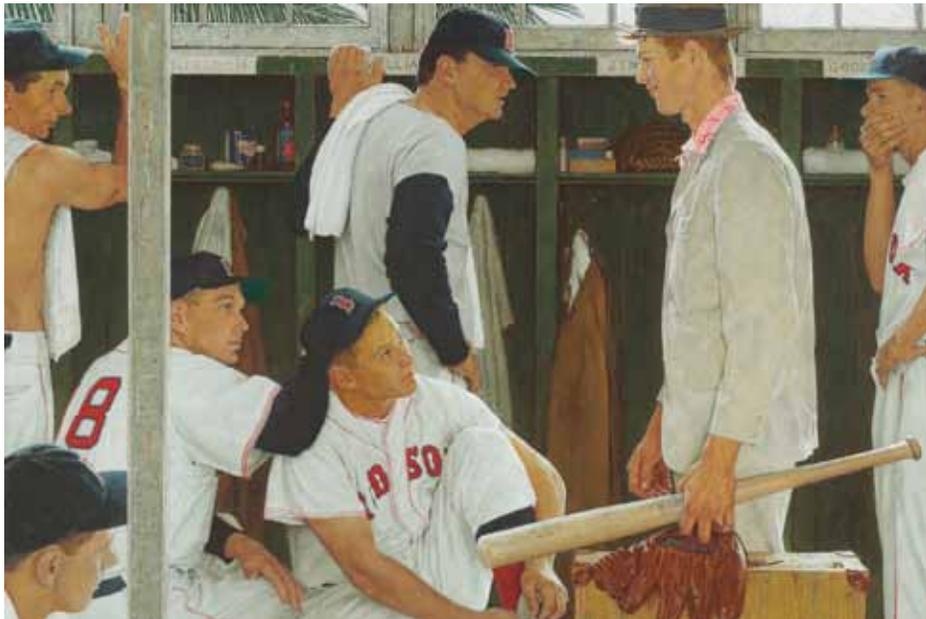


The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

The Youth Movement



The Rookie, Norman Rockwell, 1957

2014 Edition

Walter H. Hunt
Mark H. Bloom

All 24 Teams Analyzed
Using the T.Q. System

The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

by

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the TBL baseball annual

Welcome to the 2014 *TBL Baseball Annual*. This is the nineteenth year of the *Annual* in the book format. Last year's book was an abbreviated work, what could be managed under the circumstances. This year's book returns to the standards we have previously set, with some graphic advice from a talented young professional-in-training. Regrettably we don't have the Vegas Line this year; hopefully it'll be back next year for us.

Youth and talent is a combination every team in TBL wants to build and maintain on its roster. This year we discuss the component of team-building that the T.Q. System does not cover: the people on the roster that will be part of the team two or five or more years from now. We bring you articles and metrics to illuminate what little we know about it.

We hope you enjoy our work, and TBL's new season.

Walter, Mark
May, 2014

The T.Q. System

Shamelessly stolen from the Mazerowski annual, the T.Q. System assigns points to each area of the team's expected performance and totals the result. The maximum score under the T.Q. System is **50**, divided as follows:

Pitching:	20 points
Offense:	17 points
Defense:	8 points
Bench:	5 points

The T.Q. System does not take age or prospect value into account, only present capability. It does, however, consider usage (available games, at bats and innings).

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the youth movement

by Bob Jordan



Welcome to the 2014 *TBL Baseball Annual!*

This year the usual suspects sneered at life-threatening illness, braved killer weather and ignored our wives and children to bring you this – the greatest fantasy baseball annual on this or any planet. In this amazing edition, we will bring you every twist and turn, stone cold truth and subtle nuance of TBL 2014 – our 33rd year of competition.

But before we render the regular season irrelevant with our fearless prognostications, we should acknowledge a few of our brethren that made 2013 memorable, starting with our ...um ... usual TBL Champion – Richard Meyer and his Elders of Zion. This is Rich's 57th TBL title, for those – like me - who are too lazy to check the stats archive and count them up. Rich found the better mousetrap against Brian Hanley's Whitman River Rats, who had a spectacular season, winning 105 games with a 2.94 team ERA. No matter – Rich took them out in five games, beating Clayton Kershaw twice in the process.

While Rich was reinforcing his TBL Hall of Fame credentials, TBL was changing the guard in the front office. Paul Harrington – longtime owner and our Commissioner of Vice for the last several seasons, now owns The Big Hat as commissioner of TBL. Paul succeeds Darrell Skogen, who served with humor, patience and compassion for the past four years. TBL thanks him for his time and his leadership, and we hand the keys to the company car and the big paycheck to Mr. Harrington in this, his first year.

TBL owes a word of thanks to some other folks whose dedication and passion make this well-oiled machine run smoothly. Tip of the fedora goes to our genius in residence Steve Stein, who maintains our stats archive, and builds and manages our online draft room. Thanks also go

to our rules committee, who keep the flame alive when the winds of controversy blow, as they do from time to time.

Thanks go once again to our amazing editor Walter Hunt, whose work and commitment to this publication is a blessing to all of us who enjoy it every year. We are also obliged to thank Walter's talented daughter Aline Hunt for her help on our graphics this year, which is a stark indicator that none of us are getting any younger.

Youth Movement or, The Rules in My Neighborhood

Northboro is in the midst of a hard rebuild – the kind of cliff dive that everyone tries to avoid. We've been defoliating for a couple of years now, and we made the painful decision to trade away David Ortiz a year ago – a move that put us in a position to draft two guys who are younger than my kids in the first round of the 2014 draft – Jurickson Profar and Mike Zunino. When you make the decision to go young at the expense of all else, you discover that there's a different set of values at work. The end goal is the same – we're all looking for a TBL title. But the path sometimes leads through dark valleys and furious storms, and you make decisions based alternative criteria that are unique to a small class of truly bereft clubs.

Current value is meaningless. When you live in the real world you look at the cards in depth before you draft anyone. In my neighborhood, the cards are still in shrink wrap on draft day. Current value has no meaning at all in Northboro – all your prospective draftees are evaluated entirely on their minor league numbers and the number of games, innings and starts.

Usage is King. Starters with a full season of starts are incredibly valuable. In fact, hard rebuild-

ers draft starters over relievers, just because you have to have 162 starts, and someone will always take starts off your hands in a trade. In 2012, Steve and I traded a couple of nice relievers – Ernesto Frieri and Huston Street – to Portland for Ian Kennedy. Trading Frieri and Street was a no-brainer for a team in our position. What use are Grade 20*+ relievers to a team that will fail to reach 60 wins? Kennedy looked like a guy we could plug into the rotation for the next several years, and he could be a solid piece of a good staff. But last year he pitched terribly, and in the land of the living we would have been kicking ourselves for getting scorched in a trade with a division rival. But the bad Grade (6), the scary peripherals (C-26 HR-23) and the big number of starts (29) was perfect for us this year – an example of through-the-looking glass value.

One of the tricks is to collect high-usage scrubs to fulfill position requirements. This offseason, we added Macier Izturis and Kevin Frandsen for short money this offseason – two guys who have no value at all unless you're belly-down in the mud. Guys that have 100+ games and cover a number of positions are very valuable to those teams looking to restart the engine. If you don't have to pick players for specific positions, you can draft for upside, even at the expense of present value. Jeff Francoeur has always been useful because, even though he's a poor offensive player, he never seems to get hurt – perfect filler for a rebuild.

The role of the innocuous player rule is critical here, because it expands the number of fringe players who are valuable to fourth world franchises like Northboro. Without the innocuous player rule, most teams in our position would struggle mightily just to field a club for all 162 games.

With the additional usage built into very poor cards, TBL is effectively allowing poor franchises to draft for value instead of usage. The innocuous player rule is a critical tool when you are bootstrapping a club that has hit bottom.

Relievers are a first-world problem. The other reason that basket cases draft starters is that you can use a starter as a reliever in TBL. That means that if you have your starts covered, and some extra starter you have stunk the joint out for an extra 110 innings (take a bow, Dylan Axelrod), that becomes a valuable card. One hundred and ten innings means you need *one* slot to cover those relief innings instead of *two*. The extra slot becomes a lottery ticket on draft day.

Drafting starters, The Melrose Method, and Midwest 2009. The prevailing wisdom is that drafting starters when you suck like a black hole is not a sound idea. The thinking is that hitting needs to be in front of the pitching on the journey from 50 to 100 wins. The last pieces to fall into place are the bullpen and the top end of the starting rotation. This is the Melrose Method, perfected by Mark Freedman. (Let me be among the first to suggest that Mr. Freedman needs to be on the short list for the next TBL Hall of Fame manager.)

Part of the reason that this makes sense is that all pitchers are point-in-time commodities. Jose Fernandez was Joe's pick at #4 in this year's draft, and that was seen as a sound idea for Brobdingnag 2014. For Brobdingnag 2015, he will show up for April, then become part of the grounds crew while his torn ulnar collateral ligament heals.

All of this wisdom was tossed in the ash can by Darrell Skogen when he won the 2009 TBL Championship. Darrell loves pitching, and he is very vocal about it. When he inherited a pitching-starved Northboro franchise, his first pick was a flame throwing reliever named Franky Rodriguez (who had 5 innings). The next year, he picked Brandon Webb with the #1 pick (a guy named Miguel Cabrera got snubbed – he went #3 to Greater Ohio that year) and Jose Valverde at #11. In 2005, he won 93 games, and the legend of Midwest's backward rebuild was born.

The other half of the conventional wisdom is that if your pitching gets ahead of your hitting, you contend too soon and end up on the 80-90 win hamster wheel, trying to build a good team into a great team by picking from the middle of each draft round. Lost in the Guru's legend is that this is exactly what happened to Midwest.

From 2005 through 2008, Darrel won 93, 83, 83, and 83 games. What happened in 2009 was (1) everyone stayed healthy; (2) Ervin Santana turned back into a good starter after a year or two of injuries; (3) Ryan Dempster went from a mediocre reliever to a 32 start beast thanks to a rare instance of the Chicago Cubs doing something right; and (4) Taylor Buchholz turned in the year of his life.

As a result, Darrell dropped a Grade 30* Joey Devine at the back of his bullpen (the Freedman Method), and squashed every offense in the league all the way to the World Series. The real trick here was not building the pitching first. The real trick was enduring four years of mediocrity and having the patience to wait for everything to come together. Oh – and being a fine game manager didn't hurt either.

Lessons From Joe

Joe Auletta is always a great show around draft day. His careful measurements of the talent on the board, the conditions of the teams drafting, and his ability to turn one draft pick into two and two into four are unparalleled in our league. The underlying tool is the same one that won Darrell his championship – preternatural patience. Take Chris Davis as an example. Davis had 80 pretty nice games for the Rangers as a 22 year old in 2008. But from 2009 through 2011, he never had an OPS over .708, and he struck out more often than Charlie Brown. No matter. Joe sat on him, and he's hit 86 home runs in the last two seasons.

So when we traded with Joe to go get Jurickson Profar at #1 in the 2014 draft, we in Northboro

were trying to take the lesson. Profar is a big steaming pile of projection right now – a future in every sense of the term. But without a dominant middle infielder or two, we would end up burning draft every year to trade for plugins in the second base and shortstop positions. If Profar lives up to his press clippings, we won't have to draft another second baseman until after 2025. Mike Zunino is a similar story – he's so young that we cannot expect immediate return, but the upside is there.

The filler that we picked up in Izturis and Frandsen made the upside picks possible – Corey Dickerson, Kole Calhoun, and Cody Asche. Third base is another position that can emerge as a sink hole. Taylorville has to be pinching themselves over Nolan Arenado right about now. But we have to wait a couple of years before we know what we have here. This season, we will stink out the league from sea to shining sea. But we're not an old team anymore. We are paying now so we can collect later – and having a lot of fun in the process.

So, a cruel winter has finally lost its grip and faded like a nightmare in the first rays of morning. The Patriots draft is in the books, the Bruins are battling the Canadiens in the NHL playoffs, and the crabapple tree is in full bloom.

TBL is back. We have 32 seasons of history to look back on – an astonishing feat of camaraderie and endurance. We should treasure these days when the league is full of good men and fierce competition. It's easy to be complacent, and believe that something that has lasted for so long cannot help but last forever. As older folks, we know that is not true, so on behalf of Walter, Boomer, and all the folks that bring you the *Annual*, here's to you guys. Have a great season.



manager roll call

Munich Marauders	Mantle Division	<i>Paul Montague</i>	31st year
Hudson Generals	Mantle Division	<i>Clay Beard</i>	30th year
Elders of Zion	Mantle Division	<i>Richard Meyer</i>	30th year
Gotham City Batmen	Mays Division	Anton Greenwald	29th year
Knoxville Outlaws	Williams Division	Pat Martin	28th year
Maracaibo Rumrunners	Aaron Division	<i>Walter Hunt</i>	28th year
Brobdingnag Barbarians	Ruth Division	Joe Auletta	26th year
Dallas Eagles	Ruth Division	Steve Powell	25th year
Grand Cayman Havens	Mays Division	Mark Bloom	24th year
Portland Possum	Aaron Division	Ray Murphy	23rd year
Melrose Avengers	Mantle Division	Mark Freedman	21st year
Blue Hill Mudslides	Clemente Division	Mark Ludwig	19th year
Greater Ohio Chia Pets	Mays Division	Devlin Toth	19th year
Whitman River Rats	Clemente Division	Brian Hanley	19th year
Las Vegas Gamblers	Williams Division	Paul Harrington	18th year
Portland Possum	Aaron Division	Jonathan Brinkmann	17th year
Taylorville Red Raiders	Williams Division	Bruce Taylor	17th year
Northboro Phoenix	Aaron Division	Robert Jordan	15th year
Taylorville Red Raiders	Williams Division	Glenn Taylor	13th year
Midwest Mongrels	Williams Division	Darrell Skogen	13th year
Northboro Phoenix	Aaron Division	Steve Stein	12th year
Rye Herons	Mays Division	Craig Musselman	10th year
New West Whiskeyjacks	Ruth Division	Jim Jeatt	10th year
Columbus Jets	Clemente Division	Vic Vaughn	8th year
Kansas Koyotes	Aaron Division	Bill Schwartz	7th year
Fair Oaks Giants	Clemente Division	Jack Chapman	6th year
Detroit Stars	Ruth Division	Dave Jaskot	3rd year

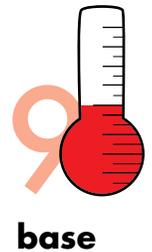
Hall of Fame managers in ***Bold Italic.***



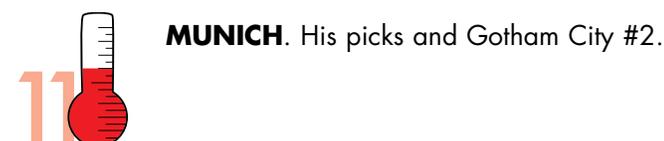
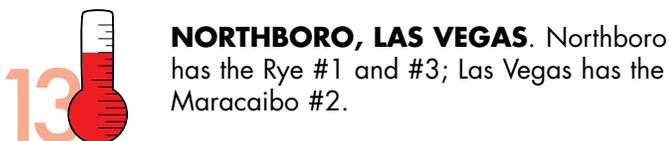
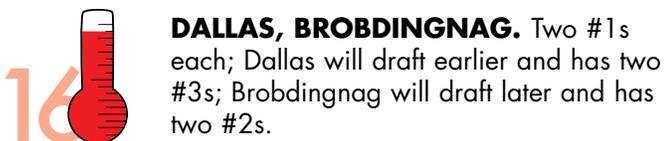
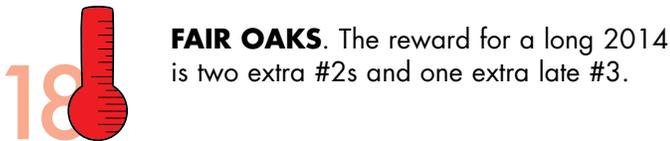
future drafts

In many cases, what's on the field isn't the whole story. Some of our teams have quite a bit to say in future drafts, and any evaluation should properly take that into account.

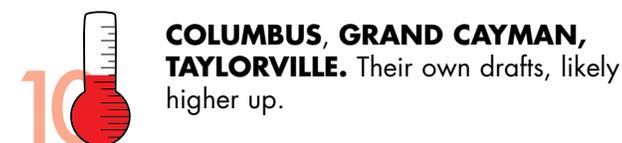
The graphical displays below show how much each team has in the tank. The middle mark on the thermometer (9) represents a full draft (picks #1-#3) in 2015; above the middle line is excess, while below means something's missing.



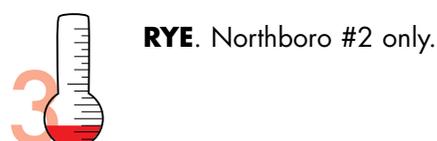
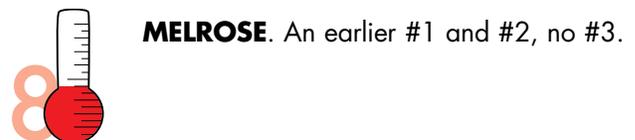
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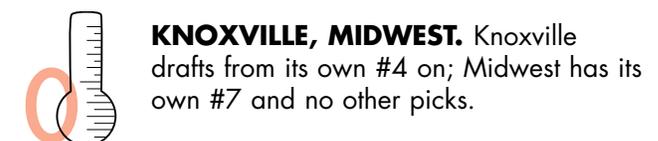
balanced



have nots



all in



These indicators also appear at the bottom of each team article, for your convenience.

t.q. summary

TEAM (DIVISION) OFFENSE DEFENSE PITCHING BENCH TOTAL

The Cream of the Crop



Brobdingnag (Ruth)	16.0	7.0	16.5	3.0	42.5
Portland (Aaron)	14.5	6.5	12.5	4.0	37.5
Whitman (Clemente)	12.0	5.5	14.0	3.5	35.0
Zion (Mantle)	10.0	5.0	13.5	3.5	32.0
Knoxville (Williams)	10.5	6.0	12.0	3.0	31.5

The Solid Performers



Maracaibo (Aaron)	10.5	4.5	11.5	3.5	30.0
Midwest (Williams)	10.5	5.0	11.5	2.0	29.0
Greater Ohio (Mays)	12.5	4.0	10.0	2.0	29.0
Gotham City (Mays)	8.5	4.0	11.5	3.0	27.0
Rye (Mays)	12.0	4.0	9.0	1.5	26.5
Munich (Mantle)	9.0	6.0	9.5	2.0	26.5
Detroit (Ruth)	11.0	4.0	8.5	2.0	25.5

The Transitional Teams



Kansas (Aaron)	8.0	6.5	7.5	3.0	25.0
Hudson (Mantle)	9.0	4.0	9.0	2.5	24.5
Taylorville (Williams)	7.0	6.0	9.0	2.0	24.0
Grand Cayman (Mays)	9.0	3.5	8.0	2.5	23.0

The Rebuilders



Melrose (Mantle)	5.5	5.5	6.0	2.5	19.5
Columbus (Clemente)	6.5	4.0	7.0	1.5	19.0
Las Vegas (Williams)	6.0	4.0	6.0	2.0	18.0
Dallas (Ruth)	4.0	3.5	8.0	2.0	17.5
Blue Hill (Clemente)	6.0	4.5	5.0	2.0	17.5
Northboro (Aaron)	5.5	4.5	3.0	2.5	15.5
Fair Oaks (Clemente)	5.0	4.0	3.5	2.0	14.5
New Westminster (Ruth)	3.0	3.0	6.5	2.0	14.5

International	291.5 (24.3 average)
National	315.0 (26.3 average)

Division Totals

Aaron (NC)	108.0	Williams (NC)	102.5
Mays (IC)	105.5	Ruth (IC)	100.0
Mantle (NC)	104.5	Clemente (IC)	86.0

Over the last several years we've worked at trying to quantify the status of a team. TQ shows what's on the roster now; the Future Drafts page above shows what a team has "in the bank" for next year.

This year, since we're focusing on teams and their youth, we present information on relative age, as well as noting the Shiny New Thing each team has on display. The roll of teams is listed from youngest to oldest. For each team we list the number of carded players under or at age 25; the number age 30-34; and the number age 35 or older. The gaps indicate where there is significant difference between

positions; all teams grouped together are only slightly different in average age. This is a very rough estimate based on carded players only.

Age 25 players are those born on or before August 1, 1989.

Age 30-34 players are those born between August 1, 1979 and August 1, 1984.

Age 35 and older players are those born before August 1, 1979.

I know. August 1, 1979 doesn't seem so long ago, does it?

TEAM	SNT	< 25	30-34	35 >
1. Munich	<i>Trevor Rosenthal, RP</i>	12	7	0
2. Grand Cayman	<i>Julio Teheran, SP</i>	5	6	1
3. Northboro	<i>Michael Zunino, C</i>	8	7	2
4. Dallas	<i>Travis D'Arnaud, C</i>	9	9	4
5. Hudson	<i>Gerrit Cole, SP</i>	4	9	2
6. Las Vegas	<i>Josh Donaldson, 3B</i>	2	8	2
7. Blue Hill	<i>Christian Yelich, OF</i>	4	11	2
8. Knoxville	<i>Shelby Miller, SP</i>	3	10	2
9. Brobdingnag	<i>Jose Fernandez, SP</i>	3	11	3
10. Kansas	<i>Yasiel Puig, OF</i>	4	12	3
11. Melrose	<i>Jose Iglesias, IF</i>	5	15	2
12. Taylorville	<i>Nolan Arenado, 3B</i>	2	12	2
13. Gotham City	<i>Michael Wacha, SP</i>	2	13	2
14. Portland	<i>Khris Davis, OF</i>	0	9	3
15. New Westminster	<i>Brad Miller, SS</i>	2	13	3
16. Zion	<i>Scooter Gennett, 2B</i>	4	15	3
17. Maracaibo	<i>Mark Melancon, RP</i>	3	7	8
18. Fair Oaks	<i>Zach Wheeler, SP</i>	4	8	9
19. Columbus	<i>L. J. Hoes, OF</i>	1	16	4
20. Greater Ohio	<i>Jordy Mercer, SS</i>	3	8	9
21. Whitman	<i>Raul Ibanez, OF</i>	1	12	8
22. Detroit	<i>Prince Fielder, 1B</i>	0	18	5
23. Midwest	<i>Jimmy Rollins, SS</i>	2	9	11
24. Rye	<i>Jhonny Peralta, SS</i>	0	15	12

[It's pretty clear that Rye didn't get the Youth Movement secret memo. - Ed.]

2014 computer pre-play

by Clay Beard

Here's the setup for this thing. I used Duke Robinson Jr. to manage all the teams. I checked Fatigue only under Fatigue and Injury Rules. I also checked all three of the options at the bottom; Automatic AIM Subs, Enforce BFP, and that No PR > 930 thing, which provides some innocuous usage. Something new this year is some "platoon awareness" thing which I checked. All players were active for the whole season. These settings basically allow the season to be played with usage similar to that of the MLB season with some innocuous help. Then I just pushed the button and played the season 10 times. The won/loss records below indicate the average of the 10 seasons. As always take this with a grain of salt as Duke is basically the village idiot.

It's a bit of a snooze-fest in the International this year, as half of the conference enters the season with no shot. The only decent race will be three teams for two spots in the Mays. In fact, Gotham City, Greater Ohio and Rye finished in a three-way tie once. Brobdingnag could make a run at the league record for wins. (they had 122 in one replay.) They will be aided in that quest by playing 37 games versus the doormats in their own conference. As dominant as the Barbarians were, how-

ever, Detroit still snuck in there for the division once.

It's a much different story in the National with 10 teams having a shot. There are solid division favorites but no division is sewn up.

The big story all year will be the wild cards. Going by average wins, four teams tied for the two spots at 85-77. (OK, if you go with the 1,620 game season, Kansas won 851, Maracaibo and Munich won 848 and Knoxville won 846.) My Generals were a statistical fluke, or perhaps just annoyingly consistent. At 83-79, we're obviously in the thick of it, but Hudson didn't get to the post season in any of the 10 seasons, missing out by just one game four times, while teams finishing behind them got there 3 and 4 times.



Obviously this isn't nearly as scientific as Steve's work (thanks Duke). But I like this because it shows you the possibilities if things break your way or not. Plain old dumb luck is a huge factor.



International Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Clemente	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
WHITMAN	96	66	--	107	80	10	0
COLUMBUS	74	88	22	86	63	0	1
BLUE HILL	71	91	25	82	58	0	0
FAIR OAKS	59	103	37	69	50	0	0

Mays	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
GOTHAM CITY	92	70	--	105	82	5.3	2.3
GREATER OHIO	89	73	3	97	84	4.3	2.3
RYE	83	79	9	94	73	0.3	4.3
GRAND CAYMAN	77	85	15	83	69	0	0

Ruth	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
BROBDINGNAG	111	51	--	122	92	9	1
DETROIT	94	68	17	105	86	1	9
NEW WESTMINSTER	60	102	51	68	51	0	0
DALLAS	54	108	57	59	45	0	0

National Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Aaron	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
PORTLAND	95	67	--	102	88	9	1
KANSAS	85	77	10	96	79	1	3.5
MARACAIBO	85	77	10	94	73	0	5
NORTHBORO	54	108	41	74	42	0	0

Mantle	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
ZION	95	67	--	108	84	6.5	1.5
MUNICH	85	77	10	93	77	2.5	1.5
HUDSON	83	79	12	89	77	0	0
MELROSE	79	83	16	93	59	1	2

Williams	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
MIDWEST	93	69	--	102	82	7.5	0
KNOXVILLE	85	77	8	90	73	1	3.5
TAYLORVILLE	80	82	13	89	60	1.5	2.5
LAS VEGAS	65	97	28	82	45	0	0

fractions reflect ties.

* Highest number of wins recorded
† Lowest number of wins recorded

‡ Division Championships (in 10 seasons)
§ Wild Card appearances (in 10 seasons)

hall of fame enshrinees 2014

Randy Johnson, SP 1990-2010
Rochester/Columbus

The Big Unit was originally a Barbarian, like so many others, but for two decades was the photogenic face of the Rochester Express even after its move to Columbus. He was an incredible workhorse, leading the league in starts and innings pitched 10 times, including 278, 282, 273, 256, 254, 235 and 224 from 2000 to 2007 (with a gap in 2004 when he was injured). He struck out 300 or more batters four times and 200 or more 13 times. He won 304 games and struck out 4,568 in 4,288 innings. His most dominant season was 1996, when he went 26-4, 1.83, with 17 CG and 353 Ks.



Ken Griffey, Jr. 1990-2010
Brodingnag, Wakefield, Blue Hill

One of the first players drafted by the Prince of Darkness, the Kid had an inauspicious beginning, but starting in 1994 was one of the dominant hitters in TBL. He recorded seven seasons with 40 or more homers and eight seasons with 100 or more RBI, four of those with 150 or more. His most dominant year was 2000, when the Barbarians won only 67 games and he recorded a .304-67-154 line with 88 walks, a Giancarlo Stanton-on-the-2013-Marlins performance. He finished with 582 homers, 1,804 RBI, 2,634 hits and was a great defensive player as well.



John Smoltz, SP-RP 1989-2008
Hudson, Portland, Munich, Rochester and others

John Smoltz had a long career as a durable starter, interrupted by four years as a stellar reliever. He pitched for many contenders, with his best years in 1997 for Portland (26-6, 2.36, 7 shutouts, 297 Ks in 271 innings) and 2004 for Rochester (6-3, 27 saves, 0.96, 62 Ks and only 7 walks in 56 innings). He had 237 lifetime wins, and was among the best in the league for many years.



for your consideration



Left to Right: Mike Piazza, Wade Boggs, Pedro Martinez, Trevor Hoffman

Mike Piazza, C 1994-2008

Minnesota/Knoxville, Maracaibo, Oklahoma City/Lewiston-Auburn, Rochester/Columbus

Like many other players in TBL, Mike Piazza's services were in demand; he played for several different teams, adding punch to contending lineups. He hit more than 30 home runs eight times, ending with a career total of 409, tops among catchers. His best season was 1998, when he led the league with 200 hits and a .354 average to go with 34 homers. *He fell just short of election in 2012 and 2013.*

Pedro Martinez, SP 1994-2010

Mahopac, Portland

A dominant pitcher in his prime, he led the league in strikeouts 11 times in 12 years, with his injury year of 2002 only lacking. He led the league in CG 10 times and wins 7 times, striking out 3,372 batters in 3,168 innings, and finished with a 3.00 lifetime ERA. His best year was 1998, when he recorded 24 complete games and 9 shutouts en route to a 22-7, 1.74 campaign with 349 strikeouts. *His case for election is strong, but he lacked support in his first two years of eligibility.*

Wade Boggs, 3B 1991-2004

Amherst, Raleigh/Winston-Salem, Jessup/Boston, Cape Cod, Diamond Point, Whitman.

A contact-hitting machine, Boggs was a lifetime .307 hitter, sixth in TBL history as of this writing. He recorded 2,517 hits and 1,123 walks in 16 seasons (with only 835 strikeouts), leading to a lifetime .390 OBP. From 1986 to 1990 he had five straight 200-hit seasons for Amherst, the North Carolinian franchises, and the Jessup club. *Boggs' candidacy has been eclipsed by other candidates, but he remains a strong choice.*

Trevor Hoffman, RP 1994-2010

Munich, Brobdingnag, and others

Relievers are hard to judge unless they are very good; Hoffman was very good, recording a lifetime 2.63 ERA and 873 Ks in 896 innings. He recorded a sub-2.00 ERA five times and a sub-3.00 ERA nine times. His most dominant season was 1999, when he recorded five wins and 38 saves, with 78 Ks in 71 innings. *Largely overlooked by the voters, he may be worthy of consideration this year.*

Players with carryover votes: P. Martinez 7; Piazza 5; Boggs 4; Molitor, C. Finley, 3; M. Ramirez, Mussina, Sheffield, J. Gonzalez 2; W. Clark, Belle, Henke, Mattingly, Sosa, Burks, Schilling, Eckersley, Foulke, Gooden, Myers, Saberhagen, D. Wells 1.

the zen of youthness

by Paul Montague

This is not a nutsy-boltsy article. It's not about how to scout, or how to rebuild, or similar 'mechanical' things. Rather, it's about how to create a *philosophy* for determining the right players for your team. Not for *my* team – *yours*.

TBL worships youth. The cup-o-coffee, glimmer-of-future star comes off the draft board far earlier in our rookie drafts than in most other leagues. I've been a key practitioner – I love me some prospects . . .

But *is* younger always better? How *should* we think about age in a ballplayer, really? What's the optimal age for a TBL team? Is younger always better? Let's consult the wisdom of Mr. Miyagi¹ to develop an answer – or rather, 24 answers.

Begin

First stance: "Go, find balance" (Miyagi-san)
(If you prefer Shakespeare: "To thine own self be true".)

What are your goals for TBL involvement? Before you fire back 'to win the pennant, of course', stop and consider. Is that really it, for *you*? Or is your goal less competition than enjoyment? Or something else entirely? Over the last couple of years, I've heard quite a few comments from TBL owners indicating that while a pennant would be nice, they really prefer just rolling the dice and sharing baseball talk. Or that it's more important to be "in" most games each season than to generate 100+ wins, if that means suffering 100+ losses sometimes. We don't all have the temperament for a Deep Rebuild.

Only you can say for yourself what your goals are – but KNOW them. Find *your* balance. Without this self-understanding, you can't know what age or kind of player you need to

go after. Example: Darrell-san is a well-known proponent of 'small-ball' and pitching; I doubt he would be happy winning a league title if the only way to do so was to gather a bunch of hulking old lead-footed sluggers.

Second stance: "Look eye! Always look eye!" (Miyagi-san)

Are you really working toward your goals, or just drifting? *Every* player move you make should contribute to your goals. If you don't believe me, read *Moneyball*, or *The Extra 2%*. Even small moves should have a direction and purpose. (I haven't batted 1.000 on this one by any means – but am trying to improve my average!)

In general, getting a roster younger will move you toward a goal of winning a pennant *eventually* – but if your goal is winning one *this year* (and it's realistic in terms of your roster before the off-season), then player age is almost irrelevant. Joe-san's acquisition of David Ortiz a year-plus ago is a perfect example – Brob was ready to contend, and Ortiz had high current value with enough left in the tank that he wasn't going to be a one-year piece of cardboard. Youth is relative.

Third stance: "Sometimes what heart know, head forget" (Miyagi-san)

So, you know your goals, you've assessed your team's relation to those goals, you're making calculated moves to reach your goals – and then you mess up, or a key rookie (or three) doesn't pan out, or real life intervenes and you miss some chances to improve your roster. Time to dig out your samurai swords and commit seppuku? Not at all – don't obsess, remember this is supposed to be a fun activity. Mr. Miyagi was still working on catching a fly with chopsticks, not discouraged at all by not having done it yet.

1 Of Karate Kid fame

Change

First movement: "Nature rule, Daniel-san, not mine" (Miyagi-san)

One reason it is important to know your goals is that they form the framework for all player acquisitions. If Northboro's goal was winning a pennant this year, then Jurickson Profar was not the right rookie to pick up (of course we know that Steve-san and Bob-san are far wiser than this); conversely, Scott Kazmir might have been a good pick (though not with *that* early a draft choice!).

The key is remembering that like us, the players have an aging process². Very young ones often need some time to ripen on the vine before they can be keys to a TBL pennant. Very old ones may have one last star season in the tank (*cough*Marlon Byrd*cough*) – but can't be counted on if your time-to-contend is a few years in the future.

Players get older; after a certain age that means their performance on the field falls off. Take this into account, if it affects your ability to achieve your goals; but if one of your goals is to own a favorite player for his entire career, then get him and hold him, regardless of the aging effect!

Second movement: "You too much TV" (Miyagi-san)

Hopefully, we all enjoy watching our players in TV-ball (or even in person) when we can. And, watching for oneself can help one in rookie scouting, or in evaluating a potential trade. But don't rely on your own eyes – none of us are trained scouts, and even if we were, we'd be foolish not to use the mass of player data that is available today. Stats and scouting reports can help us assess the actual value-versus-age³ of a player, far better than our subjective eyeballing. The key is not just getting a young player, or even a young player who looked superb in that spring training game we happened to see – it's

assessing which young player (or not-so-young one) is the right fit for our team given our goals, our roster, and our timeline. (Obviously, if there were enough Mike Trouts – historic talents producing at incredibly young ages – this wouldn't be an issue. Since there's only one Mike Trout, and Joe-san snagged him, the rest of us need to do the homework.)

Third movement: "Wax on, wax off" (Miyagi-san)

We need to assess not just which players to acquire, and how young they should be, but also at what point they cease to be relevant to our goals. That point may be years before they are ready to retire in real life – and may in fact be when they are in their primes, and therefore have value to some other TBL team that has different goals.

Be willing to hold someone who still has use to your team, but also ready to trade or cut a player who does not. As Kenny Rogers sang, "you gotta know when to hold'em, know when to fold'em" – and that point will differ from player to player, team to team, and season to season. Practice waxing on and waxing off in seasons when you aren't near a goal yet, so you're ready to make the right moves as the time becomes ripe for you.

Conquer

Final posture: "Not to worry. Will feel good ... When finish." (Miyagi-san)

Measure success not by how many games or pennants you win. Measure it by making progress toward your goals. There's only one pennant per season; but every season can carry you toward your goals, if you know what they are and honestly assess your progress. The key is not how young your TBL team is, but staying young by pursuing the things that make you feel good about being in TBL to begin with.

2 See "The New Aging Curve" (next page)

3 See "Effective Age" (next page)

Sidebar: The New Aging Curve

We're probably all familiar with the standard aging curve for baseball players that someone researched a couple decades ago. It posits that players' performance generally improves until about age 27; with one or two explosive upward steps in that period if the player breaks into the majors young enough. Performance then plateaus from about age 27 to 30, and then declines through the thirties.

There are some caveats and variations (for example, batting eye tends to age better than stolen-base speed). And the exact ages and pattern obviously vary for individual players (e.g. Jose Bautista clearly didn't hit his peak until age 30, and it was an unexpectedly high peak at that). But that's the presumed normal curve.

Only, very recently, some Fangraphs research indicates that the curve may have changed since about the 2005 season. Specifically, this research leads to the claim that for the population as a whole, a player's peak will start as soon as he breaks into the majors, and he will only ever decline from there. (More accurately, players who reach the majors in their early 20's will perhaps plateau at peak for a few years, but even those players will as a group show decline starting about age 25 or 26.)

This is clearly counter-intuitive. I have some questions about it, but can't poke a hole in their methodology. But, if their research is accurate, it will change how we assess players, perhaps radically.

Except that the key will still be determining which players will follow the pattern and which will break the pattern. . .

Sidebar: Effective Age

How do you determine a player's age? Well, duh, Paul – look it up on the baseball website of your choice, or calculate it from his birthday, of course!

Not so fast, grasshopper! That gives us his chronological age. But there is another number, less precise but more important – his "effective age" (EA). EA assesses the player's chronological age and current skills (not his "tools", which are only potential, but his "skills", which measure actual performance in MLB games), and compares them to your team needs.

I haven't gotten this down to a precise formula yet. But the essence of the concept is that (presuming your goal is to win a TBL pennant at some point, and you have an idea of how many years in the future that point is) you want to match your roster's average EA to your team's competitive horizon (CH).

In other words, if you believe you have a good base, but it will take three years to turn it into a top-rank TBL roster and be ready for the World Series, then your CH is three years and you'd like your roster's average EA to be 27 to 30 *in three years*. If you're going for it this year, you want that EA value *now*.

EA lets you determine that one player is only 24 chronological years old, but maybe is already operating at his peak – either because the new aging curve is correct, or because he has matured faster than the standard aging curve. Then treat him as having an EA of 27 for purposes of figuring his value compared to your team's CH. On the other hand, maybe a 32-year-old is still turning in monster cards – assign him an EA of 29-and-holding when comparing to your team's CH. (Dwight Evans would be an example of a guy who stayed at EA 29 for quite a while.)

Players whose EA's are still clearly pre-peak will need to get an estimate as to when they may reach their personal peak years – this will clearly be a guess, and will be more art than science.

In any case, the ideas of EA and CH may help you formulate your team's plans a little more clearly. If not – "pay no attention to that man behind the curtain"!

commissioner's report

by Paul Harrington



With the turning of the calendar a new season of TBL is now upon us and, once again, our august organization has demonstrated its commitment to democracy by the peaceful transition of power from one administration to another. Gone are the days of the Skogen crew and all hail the Harrington regime!

For the most part you'll find me a benevolent despot, as long as I'm thoroughly supplied with rum, sweetmeats and nubile, young women for my harem! HA, HA, HA!!! ALL WILL SERVE LORD HARRINGTON OR DIE IN FLAMING AGONY! HA, HA, HA... Whoa, wait a minute! Where was I? I kinda lost my train of thought there for a moment. What was I talking about? Oh, yeah... the new TBL season. It's always the best time of the year. Everyone is equal at 0-0 and everyone has dreams of me handing them the Montague Trophy (*yeah, I went there... you're welcome, Monty!*) as the newest league Champs! It doesn't always work out that way, but nothing can stop a dream... not even the cold, hard sting of reality setting in. I want to continue the themes of the previous administration such as committing to keeping the lines of communications open by keeping your opponents and your beloved Commissioner informed of any problems with your monthly responsibilities, timely execution of said responsibilities when possible and courtesy towards your fellow managers.

Proper and consistent use of the Schedule Tracker will also help everyone to track monthly races better and to see who might be falling behind in their schedules. I want everyone to get comfortable using it on a regular basis, so please make that extra effort there. It will be much appreciated.

As always there will be teams that aren't expected to do well that confound expectations and thrive, as well as teams expected to compete

that fold their tents and then need to regroup. And, as always, life will unexpectedly intrude into our little TBL world, usually at the worst possible time. That is why we all must try to be patient with one another. Try to understand that nobody in our little circle is trying to purposely mess with your timely schedule and that if they are late and unresponsive to emails, that there is probably a good reason for it and it is usually not good news for the other guy.

We all need to take a break and a deep breath when this does occur. Count to ten as you slowly exhale and then drop a line to your friendly, neighborhood Commissioner, because that's why I get paid the bucks! I'll do what I can to find out what the problem is and try to expedite the situation to its proper conclusion. I know it has been said many times over the year, but I think it bears repeating as this new season grows ever closer. This is a hobby, a pastime, a way to pass the summer hours while we wait for MLB baseball to come on our TV's and radios. It is not life or death, so please don't think of it as such.

April can't come fast enough! Have fun and good luck to all!

Paul J. Harrington
Las Vegas Gamblers
TBL Commissioner



Sleepwalking

There was a little bit of competition in the Clemente Division last year, just about the same amount as there was in 2012.



There's *Brian Hanley's Whitman River Rats*, and there's usually someone else 15 or 20 or 25 games out.

Sometimes the other team gets a Wild Card spot; sometimes not. But in 2012, and in 2013, that was the way it was. This year, it'll be different; instead of waiting to see who emerges from the division scrum, the Rats can sleepwalk all the way to the playoffs.

This is evidenced by the *Annual's* choice for second place. *Vic Vaughn's* Columbus Jets flash some talent: Jay Bruce, Jason



Kipnis, Ben Zobrist. Unfortunately, there aren't any corresponding pitchers: and the club, which is supposedly rebuilding, ranks 19th overall in age.

Is it a rebuild? Well, it's pretty clear it's not a contender. Unlike last year Columbus won't get a sniff at 90 wins; but by Clemente standards, they're in good shape.

2013 Clemente Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Whitman*	105	57	.648	—
Columbus †	90	72	.556	15
Blue Hill	65	97	.401	40
Las Vegas	53	109	.327	52

* Lost to Zion in the World Series.

† Lost to Detroit in the Wild Card round.

Much younger, but still in the midst of righting the ship – still, as in Year 6 – is *Mark Ludwig's Blue Hill*



Mudslides. The rumor, which really does bear recounting, is that the Prince of Darkness offered him four #1 picks for the one that took Bryce Harper. The cornerstone of the franchise didn't have his apotheosis in 2013, but at least he's plenty young enough to build around. It will be a long summer . . . but not as long as . . .

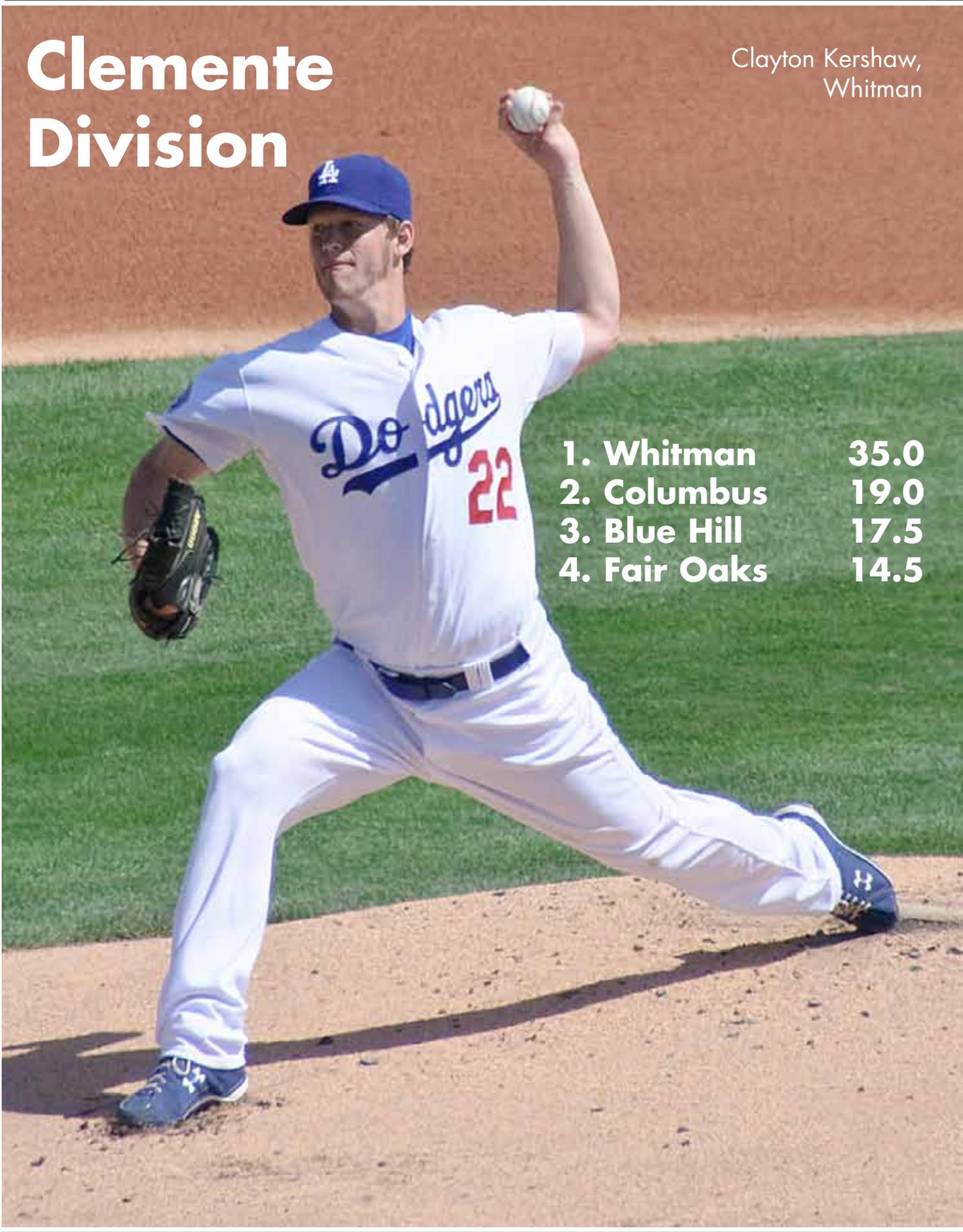
The one that *Jack Chapman* will be having out in the fog in California. The *Fair Oaks Giants*, late of the Williams Division (where they won 96 games as a preface to being paved by the champions in Zion) have



executed a textbook suicide performance. This club is aggressively bad, and is also old. There should be plenty of early drafts ahead.

Clemente Division

Clayton Kershaw,
Whitman

- 
- | | |
|--------------|------|
| 1. Whitman | 35.0 |
| 2. Columbus | 19.0 |
| 3. Blue Hill | 17.5 |
| 4. Fair Oaks | 14.5 |

2013 whitman RIVER RATS in review



It's about time Brian Hanley gets a nickname.

2013 in Review

Final Record: 105-57 (1st, Clemente)

After four division titles in five year, after eleven playoff appearances, and after a turn in the World Series last year, we at the *Annual* think that it's about time Brian Hanley gets a nickname. We have the Sensei, the Guru, and the Prince of Darkness – there must be something comparable for Mr. Hanley.

Really, he's earned it. Whitman became an above .500 team in 1998, its third season; the following year the team was added to the newly-formed Clemente Division, in which zip code it has put up five 100+ win seasons and six division titles. Three times before Whitman has gone to the conference championship; this year the club went seven games and defeated Greater Ohio, reaching the Series for the first time.

Suggestions are welcome, but Brian has practically become the Mayor of the Clemente, so maybe that might work. Check back next year to see what we pick.

What went right?

Lots of things. Paul Konerko delivered one more time, hitting .332-34-123 with 196 hits and 38 doubles. .332 was fourth-best in TBL, and the RBI total was third-best. It was a fitting swan song for the veteran first baseman, burnishing possible Hall of Fame qualifications. Nick Markakis, who recorded a .335 average, finished just ahead in the batting race; Paul Goldschmidt hit .285 with 23 homers and 52 doubles. A. J. Pierzynski hit 34 homers. Ben Revere stole 34 of 41 and hit .300; Juan Pierre, 37 of 43, .279. Overall the club hit .270 (fifth overall), striking out only 1079 times (23rd overall).

On the mound, though, the club shined even more. Clayton Kershaw was outstanding at 17-9, 2.65, striking out 249 in 244 innings; David Price went 14-10, 2.60, with 239 Ks; but Kyle Lohse was the staff leader

with an 18-2 record and a 2.29 ERA (winning percentage and ERA both second in TBL). Jesse Crain recorded 45 saves with 68 Ks in 48 innings. Whitman's staff ERA was best in the league, forty points ahead of the second-place team, striking out 1,365 batters while walking only 403 (also tops in the league).

What went wrong?

Obviously, they didn't win the World Series. The pitching was stellar, and the club hit for a decent average; but it didn't get on base enough (.319 OBP; only 409 walks) and didn't have a lot of power (157 homers, but only a .416 SLG). They ran well and fielded well, but only scored 753 runs – it looks like there weren't a lot of big innings. In the playoffs, big innings are life or death.

3 Things

1. *Saying good-bye to Konerko.* Acquired from Brobdingnag after the 2009 season, he had four solid seasons in Whitman, with the last three outstanding – 101 homers, .296, .326 (to lead TBL), and .332 averages, 142 RBI twice (both league best) and 123 this year. But it was time for him to go.

2. *That old-time religion: pitching and defense.* Whitman clubs, if they resemble anything, look like Dodgers teams from the mid 1960s. There are only a few big mashers; the outfielders go get the ball and the infielders catch it; there's speed and hits (though not a lot of walks). More Manny Motas, fewer Darrell Evanses. If the pitching is solid, that leads to lots of 3-2 wins.

3. *Solid management and innovation.* Brian Hanley's innovation is the 'relief valet', where a subpar starter is assigned a specific reliever who will rescue him. This requires good instructions and careful usage management. Whitman uses everything on the roster to win. This year should be no different, even though some of the problems (like OBP) haven't been addressed.



Konerko: One more time

whitman RIVER RATS



Brian Hanley (19th year)

The team's hopes of returning to the Series rest largely on [Kershaw's] left shoulder.

2008 was a long time ago. It was also the last time the River Rats finished under .500. Since then, Mr. Hanley has enjoyed consecutive winning seasons and playoff berths. Yet in that stretch, and in every year since the team's inception in 1996 as an expansion team, one prize had eluded Mr. Hanley: a visit to the TBL World Series.

Last year, the team finally accomplished that feat. They swept aside the Columbus Jets to take on a Greater Ohio team that had beaten the loaded Barbarians. It took seven games, but the River Rats prevailed. Yes, they lost to Zion in the Series, but it was a season and postseason that Mr. Hanley will treasure for years to come.

Pitching: 14.0 **Exceptional at the top.**

ROTATION. Few can match up against ace Clayton "The Claw" Kershaw (Grade 18 C+23 HR+35). Even Brobdingnag's shiny rookie Jose Fernandez can't match his peripherals or his number of starts (33). All by himself, he makes Whitman's rotation a team strength, and the team's hopes of returning to the Series rest largely on his left shoulder. Interestingly, he's also nearly the youngest pitcher on the team.

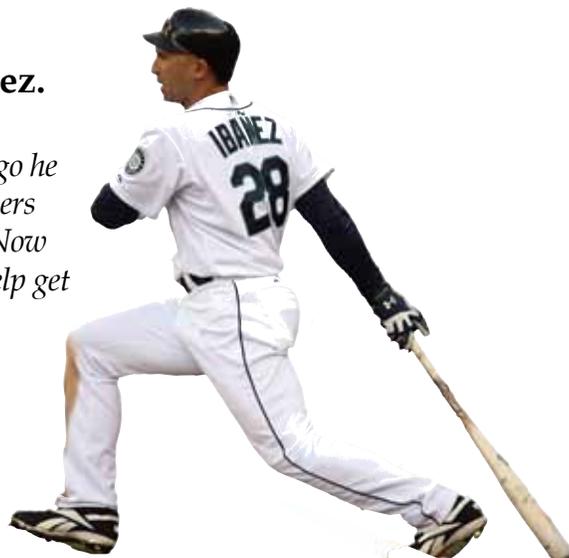


Kershaw: Nearly youngest

But Kershaw's rotation mates aren't exactly pushovers. David Price (Grade 10 C+41 HR+21) had an off year and is still pretty darn good with exceptional control. Kyle Lohse (Grade 9 C+32) and Matt

SNT: **Raul Ibañez.**

A few years ago he belted 58 homers for the Rats. Now he's back to help get them over the top again.



Garza (Grade 9 C+21) also found above-average control. Newcomer Andy Pettitte (Grade 8 C+21 HR+21) adds positive peripherals into the mix for what will be his last hurrah.

Those starts account for all but 17 games. Fifteen of those games belong to Carlos Villanueva (Grade 7). Youngster Andre Rienzo (Grade 8 C-46 HR-31) gets the final two. This is a fairly strong, deep rotation — although not exceptional, except at the very top — that in most games should give its team a chance to win.

Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Willie Bloomquist; Colin Cowgill; Charlie Culberson; Jake Diekman; Mark Ellis; Raul Ibañez; Chris Johnson; Ryan Lavarney; Blake Parker; Andy Pettitte; Matt Reynolds; Andre Rienzo; Shane Victorino; Kolten Wong.

Departed: Henry Blanco; Mark Buehrle; Tim Byrdak; Matt Dominguez; Mike Fontenot; Eric Hinske; Cesar Izturis; Paul Konerko; Felipe Paulino; Mark Reynolds; Ryan Theriot; Chad Tracy; Brayan Villareal; DeWayne Wise.



Whitman RIVER RATS

BULLPEN. When your bullpen starts with over 133 innings of Grade 20+, you know the rest of the news won't be very bad. Sergio Santos (Grade 25* C+51 HR+43) has everything going his way, but only for 25.7 innings. Luckily, Jesse Crain (Grade 21* HR+62) has joined Tyler Clippard (Grade 22* C-21 HR-22) as late-inning reinforcements. All three may save games before the season's out.

The set-up crew is led by Jim Henderson (Grade 16* C-25 HR-21), whose peripherals, like Clippard's, make him a trick-or-treat kind of pitcher. He has 60 innings to make Mr. Hanley sweat. Rookie Blake Parker (Grade 13*) handles the right-handed middle relief, while the two short-inning lefty specialists — Jake Diekman (Grade 13* C-23 HR+53) and Matt Reynolds (Grade 13* C+36 HR+22) — will be effective against port-siders. These pitchers bring the total to about 305 relief innings of 8-eating goodness and lots of flexibility.

The bottom of the 'pen is composed of Villanueva (Grade 12*) when he's not starting, Troy Patton (Grade 9*), and an ugly Tony Sipp (Grade 8* C-54 HR-23). The whole bullpen, at about 438 total innings, seems more than a bit shy of optimal, even with Kershaw leading the charge, but under Mr. Hanley's watchful gaze, we wouldn't bet against them.

Offense: 12.0
Lots of hits.

There are a lot of hits on this team, including many, many 7s. In fact, four players — Chris Johnson (6-6-0, 12 hits, L+5, R-3), Wil Nieves (6-6, 11 hits, and Willie Bloomquist (0-0, 12 hits, 2 walks+22) — have four 7s each. But these players reflect a deeper problem: a surprising lack of power.



Goldschmidt: Don't face

Paul Goldschmidt (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 4 walks, 2 10s, 160 games) is the guy no one wants to face with the game on the line. But Raul Ibañez (1-1-0-0, but 9 hits, 3

walks, 124 games) and Ryan Lavarney (4 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk+42, 82 plate appearances) are the only other hitters on the team with four power numbers. Chris Johnson, Shane Victorino (1-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+42, R-3), A.J. Pierzynski (1-6-6, 10 hits, 1 walk+42), and Kelly Johnson (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) join them as the other players with above average power.

Another potential issue is a dearth of walks. No one besides Goldschmidt has as many as four. The table-setters — like Jacoby Ellsbury (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, 2 11s, 35 SSN for 56 attempts, L-8 R+3), Ben Revere (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 28 SSN for 30 attempts L+7, R-4), and Juan Pierre (2 0s, 10 hits, 1 walk+22, 2 11s, 31 SSN for 29 attempts, 3 31s, L-10) — favor hits and speed over walks. Will it work? It will take timing and luck. With the speed guys, they can score a run on a single hit, but to score more than that will require men on base when the few boppers come to bat.

Defense: 5.5
Excellent at the end.

When the best defense is out there, this team is top-notch. All the catchers are C8s with positive arms, and starter Pierzynski leads with a Th+3. Goldschmidt (1B5) anchors the infield, and Nick Markakis (37 arm), Ellsbury (33), Victorino (36), and Revere (only 25) are all OF3s. If there's one weakness, it's third base, where the Johnsons (Chris and Kelly) are both 3B3s.

But the best defensive alignment may only appear when the team leads in late innings. Mark Ellis (2B9) is slated to play as an SS8, leaving second

base to average Bloomquist and Kelly Johnson (2B7s). Brendan Ryan (SS9) can move Ellis to second, but as Mr. Hanley notes: "His bat sucks."



Pierzynski: Top glove and arm

Bench: Built for winning.

3.5

Mr. Hanley's bench has everything he needs to win, short of a defensive third baseman. He has pinch hitters in Lavarney, Bloomquist, and Nieves. He's got pinch-runners in the spare outfielders, including Charlie Culberson (32 SSN for 6 attempts). He's got an extra OF3 and an SS9 on the bench. He can even play with shifts, although he plays the computer game at home.

Flexibility on the roster doesn't make a team a contender, but a few extra options in a few extra games can make a huge difference – especially in the playoffs.

1st

Given their divisional competition, the River Rats should walk away with their third straight division crown. Easily. This team is poised to go deep into the playoffs, too.

Whether they reach the World Series again or not may be determined by how they line up against a Brobdingnag team that has much more power up and down the lineup. But Mr. Hanley has done more with less. Over his time in TBL, his teams have almost always been competitive; getting to the playoffs has never been an issue when the talent was there. Getting past the divisional rivals has been a challenge, but hardly an insuperable one.

But the question poised at the beginning remains: what will it take to gain the championship?



whitman:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

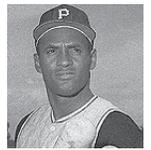
Team Age Rank: 21

The River Rats are not a young team; it's a team put together to win now. That said, it's not a team with many key players heading for the cliff. Pierzynski, Pierre, Ellis, and Victorino are aging gracefully in place. Only Ibañez, brought in to fill a hole and a need, is an ancient import. There's nothing wrong with that.

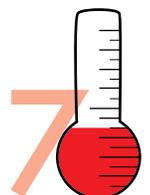
On the mound, untested Rienzo is the youngest pitcher on the staff, while Kershaw's just three months older. Price is the next-youngest starter, but the rest are 30 and older. There are a few youngsters in the pen, but only Clippard fills an important role, as he has done for several years now. On offense, Goldschmidt again stands out as the young player to build around. Of the regulars, only Revere is younger. The other youngsters — like Lavarney, Culberson, Kolton Wong, and Collin Cowgill — are either bit players or still waiting for their chance.

It's interesting to note that the team hasn't traded away all of its future to get here. Mr. Hanley has judiciously kept his top two picks in next year's draft, meaning he can still get raw, young talent ... or that older missing piece to complete next year's puzzle. When you're winning, age isn't always the first priority.

TQ: 35.0



**whitman
RIVER
RATS**



2013 columbus JETS in review



The offense was hit or miss – and too much miss.

2013 in Review

Final Record: 90-72 (2nd, Clemente)

It is always encouraging to see a team on a parh that leads upward. This has been the case for the Columbus Jets since the franchise bot-tomed out a few years after moving there. In 2008 the team went 54-108; other than a slight 2011 retreat, the team has improved each year, reaching the 90-win level in 2013; this led to a playoff turn against division rival Whitman. Even though it ended quickly, it was a milestone – it had been since 2007 that the club had done anything in the postseason other than prepare for the draft.

What went right?

The Jets were a challenging oppo- nent in 2013, both at bat and on the mound. Corey Hart was on the roster all year and hit .277-26-94 with 45 doubles (third in TBL), his third straight solid season. Jay Bruce hit 36 homers and drove in 108, with 34 doubles. Jason Castro hit .290 in half a season; Carlos Lee, in his final season, hit .279 with 29 doubles. Jason Kipnis stole 25 in 29 attempts. Late in the season a trade brought Josh Hamilton, who hit 15 homers and drove in 50 runs in only 42 games, en route to a .291-43-112 campaign.

On the mound, Wandy Rodriguez won 17, and Doug Fister and Bronson Arroyo won 15 each. Fister recorded a 3.04 ERA and struck out 169 in 183 innings. Brandon McCarthy went 8-3, 2.85 in 18 starts. The bullpen was very good: Charlie Furbush saved 39 with 60 Ks in 45 innings, with a 2.40 ERA; Darren O'Day had a 1.22 ERA and five relief wins, with only 39 hits and 69 Ks in

67 innings. David Robertson recorded a 2.54 ERA and gave up only 42 hits in 60 innings.

What went wrong?

The team struck out. A lot. *Eight* regulars struck out more than 100 times. Hamilton whiffed 157 times between Columbus and Taylorville; Bruce 174; Hart, 140; Kipnis 132; Maxwell 131 (in 372 at-bats); Andrus 129; Zobrist 114; and Descalso 101. The 1,286 total is near the middle of the team totals in TBL, but when combined with a .244 team average and a .313 team OBP, the offense was hit or miss – and too much miss.

The pitching was capable, but didn't strike out a lot of opposing batters, and surrendered 176 homers and 1,525 hits (though it walked only 379, tops in the league). They just hit a lot of bats.

3 Things

1. *Josh Hamilton.* Even knowing that there was an inferior card coming, adding Hamilton clearly put the team in the playoffs. He'll play this year, and assuming he's healthy he'll put up nice stats in 2014.
2. *Assembling talent is good.* When he inherited the team, Vic Vaughn had a mess on his hands. He's built around Bruce, Zobrist, Kipnis, Andrus, and some solid pitchers so that the team can compete. They need to get younger still, but there's still time for that.
3. *Staying the course is also good.* Columbus has resisted trading away some of those core players. The question is whether they get old before it all comes together.



Hart: Third solid season

columbus JETS

Vic Vaughn (8th year)

This rotation could lead the team to 90 wins again ... or to 70.



Last season, Mr. Vaughn enjoyed his first taste of the postseason since 2007. That the eventual conference champion Whitman River Rats swept the team in the first round cannot detract from the success of the 2013 Columbus Jets. They won more games (90) than any Jets team before, more wins than Mr. Vaughn has ever managed before, more wins than any for this franchise since Dave Suter's farewell tour in 2005.

The Jets did it largely with pitching. They boasted a team ERA of 3.99, highlighted by double-digit wins from four starters and 39 saves from the superb Charlie Furbush. Jay Bruce and Corey Hart paced the offense, joined in September by trade acquisition Josh Hamilton, who slugged 15 homers in 42 games.

But the trajectory of the team is still unknown. Was 2013 a trend or an aberration? Given this year's analysis and an examination of the team's youth movement, the *Annual* staff has a few answers, which are laid out below.

Pitching: 7.0 **Who really knows?**

ROTATION. On paper — or should we say cardboard? — this is not a very impressive lot.

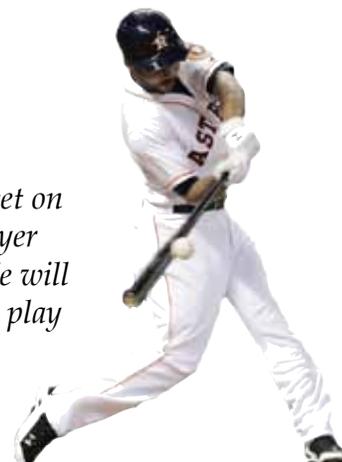


Arroyo: Won 15

Yet it bears more than a passing resemblance to last season's 90-win team. Wandy Rodriguez (Grade 9 C+33 HR-26) won 17 games last year as a Grade 9 with slightly positive peripherals. Doug Fister (Grade 7 C+31 HR+33) won 15 as a Grade 10 with decent peripherals. Bronson Arroyo (Grade 8 C+35 HR-31) won 15 with an almost

SNT: L. J. Hoes.

A contact hitter who can get on base, he's the youngest player on the Columbus roster. He will have lots of opportunity to play for the Astros, which will translate to playing time for Columbus as well.



identical card. Even Michael Leake (Grade 9 C+23) won 11 as a Grade 5 with good control.

So really, who knows what this crew could do this year? Rick Porcello (Grade 7 C+25) takes a big step forward this year, but 26 games are started by the likes of Kevin Slowey (Grade 4 C+31) and Brandon McCarthy (Grade 2 C+42). That certainly does not bode well. Still, this rotation could lead the team to 90 wins again ... or to 70.

BULLPEN. Now that Furbush (Grade 14* C-32 HR+26) has returned to mortal status and a set-up role, the closer crown has been handed back to David Robertson (Grade 17* HR+25), who saved 43 games in 2012. Still, neither his grade

Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Manny Corpas, Casey Fien, Caleb Gindl, J. C. Gutierrez, Jesus Guzman, L. J. Hoes, Paul Konerko, Adam Rosales, Ramon Trancoso, Neil Wagner.

Departed: John Baker, Duane Below, Scott Cousins, Tom Layne, Carlos Lee, Kameron Loe, Luis Marte, Scott Moore, Jason Pridie, Chance Ruffin



columbus JETS

nor his peripherals inspire a lot of confidence. Former closer Darren O'Day (Grade 16* C+23) and lefty Randy Choate (Grade 15* HR+62) join Furbush as the set-up men. The good news is that's almost 229 innings to throw into close games.

The best of the rest include rookie Casey Fien (Grade 11* C+36 HR-22), Burke Badenhop (Grade 8* C+42), and J.C. Gutierrez (Grade 8* HR+22). These relievers contribute another 180 innings. Short-inning relievers Neil Wagner (Grade 9*), Ramon Troncoso (Grade 9* C-45), and waiver wire pick-up Manny Corpas (Grade 7*) bring the bullpen total to 518 innings, all of which are useful and well matched to the rotation. In Mr. Vaughn's hands, this bullpen could rescue a lot of games.

Offense: 6.0
Too many empty at bats.

This is what we like to call a patchwork offense. It starts with two sluggers, all-stars Jay Bruce (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Jason Castro (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks). But there is exactly one player with 11 hits: rookie L.J. Hoes (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 34 SSN for 8 attempts, but only 47 games). Some of the supporting players are solid: Elvis Andrus (0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, 2 11s, 32 SSN for 50 attempts), Ben Zobrist (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, 30 SSN for 14 attempts), and Jason Kipnis (6-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN for 37 attempts).



Bruce: All-Star

Unfortunately, the lineup continues from there with several mediocre cards: a diminished Josh Hamilton (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks), Jesus Guzman

(1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks), Sean Rodriguez (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42), and waiver wire pickup Paul Konerko (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22), who's a shadow of his former self. Then there are two others with four power numbers: starting third baseman Daniel Descalso (4 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) and part-timer Justin Maxwell (4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22). Rookie Caleb Gindl (1-4-6, 8 hits, 5 walks) chips in with some skills.

Although this group has some power and some speed, it may have too many empty at bats of 8- and 9-hit cards. While most cards have some redeeming value, not enough of them frighten the horses, let alone the opposing pitchers. Mr. Vaughn will require some luck, and some good dice rolling, to score a lot of runs.

Defense: 4.0
A few highlights.

The Jets have a few highlights, like Bruce (OF3, 37 arm) in right field, Zobrist (2B9), and Castro (C8, Th-0).

Hamilton (OF2, 36 arm), Andrus (SS8), Descalso (3B4), John Buck (C7, Th+2), or any of the 1B3s won't embarrass themselves out there, but Gindl (OF1), Hoes (OF1, but with a 35 arm), and the 3B3s will be entertaining to watch – and not in a particularly good way (at least from the perspective of Columbus Jets fans.)



Zobrist: Highlights

By and large, this team is average with its glove work, which will hurt the pitching staff over the course of the season. Even with highlights, that won't keep some long innings. Given a team like the Jets, who could use every advantage it can muster, this defense will not turn this borderline team into a contender. In fact, a mediocre defense may do just the opposite.

Bench: **1.5** Konerko helps tremendously.

Even Mr. Vaughn claims that usage is tight on this team, although that was before the acquisition of aging Konerko. He helps tremendously, even if he's lost his power stroke and can hit mostly lefties. He may yet get to play a lot of first base, freeing versatile Sean Rodriguez to help elsewhere.

Having Adam Rosales on this roster, despite his 1-6 power, does little to help this team win.



Konerko: One more time

2nd This Jets team should finish well back of the River Rats in the divisional race. They may have a fight for second place with a rejuvenated Blue Hill team, but the *Annual* believes that the Jets will finish ahead of the River Rat-less pack, but too far back to claim a playoff berth.

There's enough talent here to prove us wrong, as we were last year, but too many things have to fall perfectly for this team to contend. The starting pitching has to hold for five innings most games, in order to let the relievers take over. That could happen against inferior opponents; but against the better teams in TBL, Grade 9s and 7s with bad HR ratings could dissolve in a puddle of grade reduction long before they would qualify for a win.

In order for the team to win – even if the suspect pitching holds up – the power hitting has to come with men on base. The speed has to pay off.

In the end, we believe, there just isn't enough consistency for this team to move forward. Consequently, this is a step backward for Mr. Vaughn.



columbus: YOUTH MOVEMENT

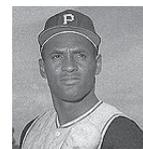
Team Age Rank: 19

That's what this version of the team is supposed to be, isn't it? A youth movement? An attempt to put younger players on the field and watch them blossom into stars? That's often the plan of a rebuilding team.

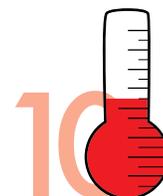
The Jets have some youth. Mike Leake and Rick Porcello are key parts of the pitching staff and are 26 and 25, respectively. Charlie Furbush, an important part of the bullpen, is 28. But most of the rest of the staff is over 30. The league just experienced a rookie draft loaded with young arms. Where are they? The youth movement is more apparent on offense, where rookies L. J. Hoes and Caleb Gindl join young veterans Elvis Andrus, Jason Castro, Jay Bruce, and Jason Kipnis. All are 27 or younger. If either of the rookies can grow into a full-time starter, the Jets have the makings of a solid foundation for the future. As long as the pitching can catch up. But there just isn't enough youth here for a youth movement – they rank 19th overall, in the same range as some TBL contenders.

Still, there are several players without a long-term future (*hello, Mr. Rosales and Mr. Konerko!*) that are taking up space. This youth movement is far from over, which may mean several more years left to go in the current rebuild. When will it end? *When a 90-win season becomes the norm rather than the exception.*

TQ: 19.0



columbus JETS



2013 blue hill MUDSLIDES in review



Bryce Harper, as it turns out, is actually All That.

2013 in Review

Final Record: 65-97 (3rd, Clemente)

Note the article we provide for your entertainment on the following pages: we have nice things to say about the Blue Hill club, which dropped below 100 losses in 2013 but still wound up in last place in the Clemente, a long way from the top. There has been lots more of that than winning in the eighteen years of the club's existence; there was a lot of that last year. But things are looking up.

What went right?

Bryce Harper, as it turns out, is actually All That. He turned in a very nice rookie season (.286-23-93, with 35 doubles and 10 triples and 11 steals in 12 tries). If this is what the team is to be built around, it's damn solid. His was the best performance in the lineup by far. They did walk 518 times, 74 more than its pitching staff gave up.



Harper: All that

On the mound, the bullpen was very capable. Mitchell Boggs recorded 5 saves and a 1.63 ERA; Josh Collmenter saved 22 with a 2.45 ERA, striking out 93 in 102 innings. Matt Belisle struck out 70 in 75 innings with a 3.01 ERA. Among starters, Tim Hudson won only 9 games in 22 starts, but had a 3.09 ERA.

What went wrong?

The team hit .227 with a .294 OBP, striking out 1,354 times, second- and fourth-worst respectively. Chase Headley hit 30 homers and drove in 94, but struck out 180 times and hit .224.

Gregor Blanco played way too much (.213-10-42) as did Gordon Beckham (.206-8-38). Yonder Alonso (.249-15-74) but had 122 Ks; Elliot Johnson hit .230 and 18 homers (somehow), but struck out 157 times.

They recorded a 4.58 team ERA; other than Hudson, no starter had an ERA less than 4.00. Jeff Francis and Liam Hendriks were textbook examples of surrender pitchers; Francis went 4-15, 5.94, with 262 hits in 159 innings, while Hendriks was 5-13, 8.76, surrendering 198 hits and 30 homers in 127 innings. The workhorse starter, Phil Hughes, wasn't too bad (12-13, 4.49) but he surrendered 30 homers as well.

3 Things

1. *Patience.* He needs it. It should not be necessary to recite the names of the many draft picks that have not worked out right, the injuries that have struck the veterans, and so forth. Blue Hill has not gotten to the point of blowing it up and rebuilding; there have been enough problems that there's never been enough to blow up.
2. *Bryce Harper.* The guy has an ego. His APBA card may have an ego too. Enough said.
3. *Focus on the goal.* Keeping Chase Headley, Gordon Beckham, Yonder Alonso, and others is far more important than trading away Tim Hudson, Danny Valencia and others. Knowing what's important is a key part of a rebuild. We don't give Blue Hill management enough credit for that.

blue hill MUDSLIDES

BH

Mark Ludwig (19th year)

The victim of a dastardly plot that could only have been hatched by some underground conspiracy theorist.

This club has lost 90+ games every year since winning the Clemente Division in 2008. There is not a single player from that championship team left on this roster. And that's a good thing: most of them are out of baseball now.

In their place is a collection of talent that is slowly coming together. Slowly. This is not to cast aspersions on Mr. Ludwig. He's been the victim of a dastardly plot that could only have been hatched by some underground conspiracy theorist. Unexpected injuries. Prolonged slumps. Tired arms. Suddenly, a once-promising prospect is struggling to make the roster.

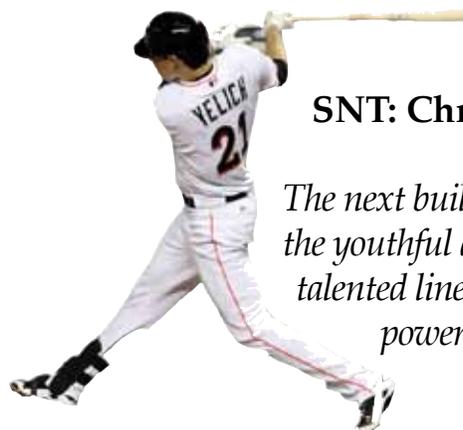
Through it all, Mr. Ludwig has shown extraordinary patience, building up his team and trying to gain an advantage. He'd be the first to tell you that winning is better than losing, and he'd be among the first to trade for a superstar who could help the team. He's gone that route. He's drafted can't-miss prospects. He's tried it all.

Slowly, slowly, this team is starting to take shape. There are players on the roster that any team would want (and many have already asked for them.) Come on, Mark; we're all waiting with you and rooting for you.

Turnover Rate: 34%

Arrived: Heath Bell, Jose Cisnero, Jarred Cosart, Nate Freiman, Chia-Jen Lo, Seth Maness, T. J. McFarland, Ross Ohlendorf, J. B. Shuck, Kurt Suzuki, Alex Wood, Christian Yelich, Barry Zito.

Departed: Mitchell Boggs, David Cooper, Manny Corpas, Chad Durbin, Jeff Francis, Marwin Gonzalez, Liam Hendriks, Wade LeBlanc, Alex Liddi, Gaby Sanchez, Jonathan Sanchez, Danny Valencia.



SNT: Christian Yelich.

The next building block in the youthful and increasingly talented lineup. Speed is here; power will follow.

Pitching: 5.0
Not sure this helps.

It goes without saying that we don't expect it to happen this year. This pitching staff is not going to help the team be successful.

ROTATION. But it won't be this year. Not with this motley collection of arms. At the top of the heap is youngster A.J. Griffin (Grade 11 HR-31, 32 starts), who comes with that awful HR rating *and* who just recently announced he will undergo Tommy John surgery. He goes from being a stalwart to being another casualty.

Veteran swingman Chad Gaudin (Grade 11 C-26 HR+31) turns in a fine card, and rookie Alex Wood (Grade 10 HR+44) has the local fans abuzz about his velocity. Veteran Ross Ohlendorf (Grade 10 C+24 HR-21) makes an occasional appearance on the mound, but Dillon Gee (Grade 8



Gaudin: Swingman

BH

C+22, 32 starts) is around all season long. And that, dear reader, is all the good news, all 94 starts of it.

That leaves 68 games unaccounted for. To fill those starts are batting practice pitchers Juan Nicasio (Grade 4), Phil Hughes (Grade 3 C+22 HR-22), and Barry Zito (Grade 1 C-23). OK, let's consider this staff. Zito is out of baseball. Gaudin remains unsigned through April. Ohlendorf is on the 60-day DL, but was far from a sure thing. Why are these three pitchers on a rebuilding team? All but Zito would have brought some value in return.

BULLPEN. Every team needs a closer, and the Mudslides have one in converted starter Jarred Cosart (Grade 18 C-62 HR+42). Shades of Mitch Williams! The set-up crew includes Chia-Jen Lo (Grade 13* C-62) for a minute (19.3 innings), former starter Josh Collmenter (Grade 12*), and rookie control artist

Seth Maness (Grade 10* C+46 HR+25). That's 233.3 innings of pitchers who can steal hits (except 10s) without a shift.

The deepest part of this bullpen comes at the end: Jose Cisnero (Grade 7* C-22), Tim McFarland (Grade 6* HR+22), John Axford (Grade 6* HR-23), Matt Belisle (Grade 5* C+32), and Lucas Luetge (Grade 4* C-21 HR+42). Waiver wire acquisition Heath Bell (Grade 5* C+24 HR-33) fits right into this group. They add 356 innings, not counting any innocuous additions. We're not sure this helps the team.

Offense: 6.0
Surprising, in a sad way.

When it comes time to review a team's offense, we lay out all the cards and take stock. How many have four or more power numbers? How many have 11 hits? This team is easy to size up because

there's two and two. Bryce Harper (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, 28 SSN for 15 attempts, L-9) is the obvious place to start, as he's the cornerstone of this club. Stephen Drew (4 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-11, R+4) is the other "power hitter." Daniel Nava (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+42, L-9) contributes a fine card, as does rookie J.B. Shuck (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks).



Harper: Cornerstone

That's only four players, but no one else on the team has first-column power or more than 10 hits. That's surprising, in a sad kind of way. This team may often need to string together three hits in an inning to score. The good news is that this team can draw a walk. In addition to three of the four players above, there's prized rookie Christian Yelich (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, 35 SSN



Beckham: Mix and match

for 10 attempts, L-16, R+7), Chase Headley (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+42), A.J. Ellis (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks), and Gregor Blanco (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks).

The rest of the bunch is a mix-and-match lot. Gordon Beckham (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-11) was having a career year before his injury.

Yonder Alonso (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-6) is not exactly the standard power-hitting first baseman. At least Nate Freiman (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, R-14) provides a capable platoon partner.

Defense: 4.5
Strong up the middle.

The Mudslides have exactly three highlights: Blanco (OF3), Florimon (SS9), and Ellis (C9, Th+6). You could say they're strong up the middle. Johnson (2B8) and Alonso (1B4) are above average. Conger (C6), Freiman (1B2), Shuck

(OF1), and Moore (OF1) are subpar. The rest are average, which is about where this team ends up.

Bench: 2.0
Doesn't contribute offensively.

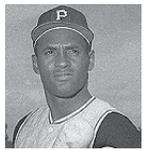
The best players will be on the field as often as possible. That's a good thing for any team, but especially good for the Mudslides. Backup catchers Hank Conger (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) and waiver wire pick-up Kurt Suzuki (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) are nearly identical, which is not to say effective. Tyler Moore (3 0s, 9 hits), Pedro Florimon (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks) and Eliot Johnson (2 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks) do not contribute offensively. Florimon at least is a SS9.

3rd This is not a good team, but it has several bright spots to build around. On the pitching mound, there's Wood and Cosart, along with other pitchers – such as the injured Griffin, as well as Gee, Collmenter and the hard-throwing but frustrating Axford.

In the field, Harper along with Yelich and Headley form the middle of a powerful lineup in the future. It's just that there should be more names to add to this list. Again, this isn't a knock on management, which has been beset by unforeseen tragedies left and right. Griffin is just the latest disappointment.

But this team is not bereft of talent. It has pieces to turn its fortunes around. All it will take is some luck, finally, to come this way and stay for a little while.

As long as Blue Hill continues to take the young players who will contribute in the future in significant ways, this team will gradually retake its place atop the division. Let's hope it happens soon.



blue hill:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 7

For the most part, management has done an admirable job bringing youth to this team. Wood, Cosart, Griffin, Nicasio, Hughes, and Gee are all well under 30. If they can stay healthy and be productive, they'll comprise the foundation of a solid rotation. In the bullpen, McFarland, Cisnero, Maness, Luetge, Lo, and Collmenter are young arms with upside. It's not inconceivable that this group could develop into serviceable relievers with long careers ahead of them.

That's why it's so perplexing to find pitchers like Gaudin, Ohlendorf, and Zito on this team. We understand a team has to fill starts and count relief innings. But a rebuilding team should try to devote as many roster spots to upside as possible. These three will likely contribute nothing to the team next year, let alone when it's ready to contend again.

On offense, Harper remains the youngest player on the team and a godsend, if we can evoke that phrase for a baseball player. Yelich is a young star on the cusp. Conger and Shuck are young with some untapped potential. Alonso, Moore, Freiman, Florimon, and Beckham should all be enjoying their prime years. We can only hope these late bloomers supply better cards in the future.

TQ: 17.5



blue hill MUDSLIDES

fair oaks GIANTS



We thought he'd finish last, so yay us.

2013 in Review

Final Record: 96-66 (1st, Williams)

Some people arrive with their own nicknames (unlike Whitman, whose manager we want to anoint; see above.) Sometimes they're even appropriate. Jack Chapman called himself "Trader Jack" and did his best to live up to the moniker; he sent his middle infield (Robinson Cano, Elvis Andrus) packing; he went out and acquired Giants and A's (we love guys who want the home team players; see the Williams Division below).

Every new manager looks to put his stamp on his own team; Jack made a big splash. It led to a division title in the Williams in 2013. We thought he'd finish last, so yay us.



Pagan: Stellar

What went right?

The starting rotation pitched way over its head. Rookie Wade Miley put up great numbers (15-8, 3.33, 4 shutouts); Kendrick was pretty good (9-9, 3.40); Zito, Burnett and Harrison all won 16 games. The rotation had 37 complete games in total, which is a big number in TBL. In the bullpen, Scott Atchison recorded 31 saves and a 1.51 ERA with 52 Ks in 48 innings. The club put up a 3.88 ERA en route to its 96 wins.

Carlos Ruiz hit .337 with 40 doubles. It is hard to imagine writing that line, and impossible to conceive of ever writing it again. Angel Pagan was stellar (.317-17-105, 19 triples, 18 for 25 stealing). Hunter Pence hit 29 homers, 7 triples and 27 doubles. Kendrys Morales hit .279 with 27 homers and 40 doubles. Yoenis Cespedes,

acquired from Grand Cayman for the stretch, hit .287 with the Giants and .291-22-72 overall, with 34 doubles and 9 triples. Fair Oaks hit 179 homers and scored 871 runs, second only to Portland.

What went wrong?

Glossing over the 4-game sweep by eventual champion Zion, the team overperformed to win 96 games and score 871. Six regulars struck out 100 times or more (Pence, Trumbo, Morales, Chris Johnson, Pagan, Peralta). Raul Ibanez led the team in walks with 49. The top draft pick, Pete Kozma, hit .417 in very limited play, but was a waste of at bats for St. Louis, and now looks like a glove with no bat. (Both Ibanez and Kozma have left town. So have Johnson and Peralta, for that matter.) It takes a serious squint to figure out how they won 96. But it was more fun than the result we expected.

3 Things

1. *Home town guys.* Acquiring Giants and A's is a Thing. Everyone should have a Thing.
2. *It doesn't take a Weatherman.* By the end of the season, Trader Jack knew exactly what he had (and didn't have). The unbuild began almost at once, with no restraint. Going from 96-66 to 66-96 should be easy.
3. *Course change.* At the 2014 draft, where most of the league members met him for the first time, Jack was unapologetic and not bothered by the rebuild. Being able to change course and live with the result is refreshing.

fair oaks GIANTS



Jack Chapman (6th year)

This team overpowers you like mold in a two-month container of sour cream. It leaves a stench.

Mr. Chapman, aka “Trader Jack,” cemented his friendship with the league — while showing off his larger-than-life persona — by finally attending the TBL Winter Meetings this past year. He was as advertised, and more.

Fair Oaks surprised TBL in 2013 by capturing the Williams Division crown in its first year. The team hit a healthy .277, led by Hunter Pence’s 29 dingers and 116 RBIs. The pitchers owned a 3.88 team ERA, and the staff featured a trio of 16-game winners and a 15-game winner. Still, in the playoffs they were no match for the eventual TBL champion Elders of Zion.

Mr. Chapman didn’t rest on his laurels; he sent them packing instead. He completed some 14 trades during the off-season. Some were big; many were small, but most were designed to rebuild the team in his image. That means Bay-area players, primarily, although there are some exceptions for Guys He Likes. We hope he likes them, because there won’t be much else to root for in 2014.

Pitching: 7.5 **112 starts of “firestarters”.**

This section should not be read during meals, as it will cause worse physical reactions than extra Sriracha™.

ROTATION. Zach Wheeler (Grade 12 C-41) broke in with the New York Mets, but the San Francisco Giants traded him for Carlos Beltran. That makes him an honorary Bay-area player. Regardless, he is both a welcome addition to the Fair Oaks Giants and a bonafide ace-in-waiting. He joins Wade Miley (Grade 9), last year’s first-round draft pick, as the only starters capable of stealing hits without help.

SNT: Zach Wheeler

One of the top arms in the most recent draft, he is a dominant hard thrower who will be a #1 starter in the majors. For now he’s the leader of the Fair Oaks “staff”.



For the rest of the 112 games, Fair Oaks will send out a quintet of pitchers who can best be described as “firestarters.” Mark Buehrle (Grade 6 C+24) is the best of the lot because he’s actually close to stealing some hits. Then there’s Kyle Kendrick (Grade 3 C+23), Brandon Morrow (Grade 3 HR-36), Brandon Maurer (Grade 1 HR-24), and Alfredo Figaro (Grade 1 C+33 HR-42). There’s a lesson here: just because the Phillies gave Kendrick 30 starts doesn’t mean you should.



Buehrle: Fairly close

BULLPEN. This team actually has two closers: a real one in Louis Coleman (Grade 25* C+32 HR+46) and a poor one who will most of the opportunities in J.J. Putz (Grade 17* C-54). Word on the street is that “Trader Jack”



will be looking to trade Coleman in September, so he may be inactive until then. Putz has delivered in the closer role before, but his grade, negative peripherals and 34.3 innings suggest he won't help much. Then again, this team may not need a closer much of the time.

The "set-up man" — who may have to close if the team burns through all of Putz's innings — is Kevin Gregg (Grade 12* C-52). He has almost as many innings as the two closers ahead of him. Then there's split-grade Figaro (Grade 10*), who goes to the pen in the months he's not in the rotation.

The rest of the bullpen isn't very deep or talented, but they're still an upgrade on the end-of-the-rotation arms. Luis Ayala (Grade 7* HR+32) will get the most out of his 33 innings. Fernando Salas (Grade 6* C+33), Scott Atchison (Grade 6*), George Kontos (Grade 5*),

and Shawn Camp (Grade 1* HR-62) round out the pen. Camp is so bad, he risks being pounded out every time he enters a game. We're guessing Mr. Chapman missed the waiver wire deadline by accident because there were many arms better than Camp's available. Yet he selected no one. All told, counting Kontos' and Camp's innocuous

Turnover Rate: 51%

Arrived: Tony Abreu, Jackie Bradley Jr., Mark Buehrle, Matt Dominguez, Jake Elmore, Alfredo Figaro, Marwin Gonzalez, Kevin Gregg, George Kontos, Marc Krauss, Brandon Maurer, Mike Morse, Nick Noonan, Carlos Peña, Derrick Robinson, Gaby Sanchez, Marco Scutaro, Zack Wheeler.

Departed: Jairo Asencio, Willie Bloomquist, A. J. Burnett, Sean Burnett, Freddy Galvis, Matt Harrison, Raul Ibañez, Paul Janish, Chris Johnson, Pete Kozman, Jose Lobaton, Kendrys Morales, Jhonny Peralta, Brett Pill, Omar Quintanilla, Ricky Romero, Shane Victorino, Barry Zito.

innings, there are 420.7 relief innings. That means most of the poor starters will have to pitch much longer than is desirable — or wise. This is how you construct a 3.5-point pitching staff.

Offense: 5.0
Waiting for lightning to strike.

Surprisingly, this team has some pop, if not a lot of hits. Hunter Pence (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, 34 SSN for 25 attempts, L+5, R-4) and Mark Trumbo (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+6, R-4) are the main power threats, the only regulars on the team with four power numbers.

Utilityman Tony Abreu (3-5-6, 10 hits, 1 walk+22, but only 53 games), youngster Matt Dominguez (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22), Yoenis Cespedes (1-4-5, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+5 R-4), and Justin Ruggiano (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+5 R-4) have solid power when they connect. Marwin Gonzalez (6-0, 9 hits) and Michael Morse (1-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks) are *really* waiting for lightning to strike.

Marco Scutaro (2 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks), Angel Pagan (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks), and Carlos Ruiz (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L+6, R-4) can still hit. Gaby Sanchez (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, L+9, R-8) can still draw a walk. You may have noticed a certain proclivity of many batters to only want to hit against left-handed pitching. Unfortunately, the team needs *someone* to hit against righties.

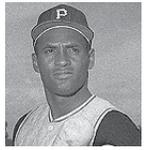
Defense: 4.0
Extraordinarily good news.

Here is an interesting tidbit: Abreu (SS6) is scheduled to play versus lefties. On the plus side, Ruiz and Jeff Mathis are both C8s, and Mathis has a Th+3. But Sanchez (1B4) is the only other above average fielder, although Pence has a 35 arm. The good news is that there are no defensive holes (besides Abreu). That's extraordinarily good news for a team looking for any good news. The players who could help — Carlos Peña (1B5) and Derrick Robinson (OF3)

— at least begin the year in the minors.

**Bench:
Limited.**

3.5



**fair oaks
GIANTS**

Due to limits — only Pence, Trumbo, Dominguez, and Cespedes have 135 games or more — the bench is pretty thin because many players have games to play. Luis Valbuena (1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks+22, L-5) and Marc Krauss (4 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, L-9) offer power off the bench.

The most versatile player has to be Jacob Elmore (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks), who can do everything but steal. The rest of the names: Jeff Mathis, Nick Noonan, and Jackie Bradley, Jr. have cards best worth hiding.

4th It will be a long season for Mr. Chapman, especially after tasting postseason play last year. We know he has a sense a humor; let's hope he keeps it after this season.

The enormity of what he has created, the monster that is the 2014 Fair Oaks club, is something you have to hold in your hands to appreciate. The bad pitching grades. The few hits. The fewer walks. The large shifts versus right-handed pitching. The average defense. The lack of a bench. This team overpowers you like mold in a two-month container of sour cream. It leaves a stench.

fair oaks:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 18

We hate to encourage others to follow in the path laid out by Mr. Chapman. When a team is this bad, we hate to admit there was an underlying plan. Not when Shawn Camp is still on the roster after the waiver draft for no apparent reason. However, this team *is* able to boast some youth. Some of them may also be capable of becoming undeniable stars.

Wheeler, the youngest player on the team, is definitely a pitcher to build around. Miley and prospect Maurer are still young enough to blossom into solid starters. Coleman, if he's not traded, might be the real closer this team could use. On offense, Bradley and Krauss are young studs who could become something special. In addition, Dominguez, Trumbo, and Cespedes are all young everyday players. They're already good, yet they still have room to grow.

Meanwhile, Elmore, Gonzalez, Noonan, Robinson, Valbuena, Kontos, and Salas are all young too. For them, we've had to dig up a special quote from the master of baseball wisdom. No less a sage than Casey Stengel said once: "Someday they have a chance to be 30." He could have been talking about these players.

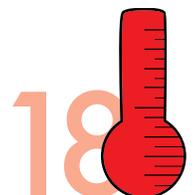


Pence: Power



Trumbo: Other Power

TQ: 14.5



Keeping It Real

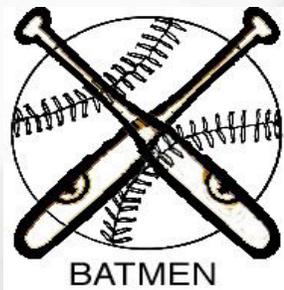
Despite our unreal fascination with youth and player development, there is still the need for contenders to contend. Consider, if you will, the Mays Division - likely the closest pennant race in TBL. This is in part due to the extent to which the four teams therein residing have spent their future draft to get, stay, or recover from contention. They're keeping it real, reminding other parts of the league Why We Play This Game.



The division could easily go to *Devin Toth's Greater Ohio Chia Pets*, looking to repeat their Mays pennant from 2013, when they got past the juggernaut Barbarians and lost a tough seven game conference championship

series to Whitman. They're better all around and have the Best Hitter in Baseball.

Second and third place in the Mays will be a dogfight between two veteran teams - *Craig Musselman's Rye Herons* (who either win or go home: in this case, the Old Age Home) and *Anton Greenwald's Gotham City Batmen*



2013 Mays Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Greater Ohio*	85	77	.525	—
Rye	78	84	.481	7
Gotham City	73	89	.451	12
Grand Cayman	69	93	.426	16

* Lost IC Championship Series to Whitman

(with a roster mostly consisting of "not getting any younger. No. Really". Both have won before, and both have an incentive to win now. We give the nod to Gotham City, but not by a lot. Gotham City is not quite as elderly: there's Giancarlo Stanton, and there's Michael Wacha, and there are some other folks.

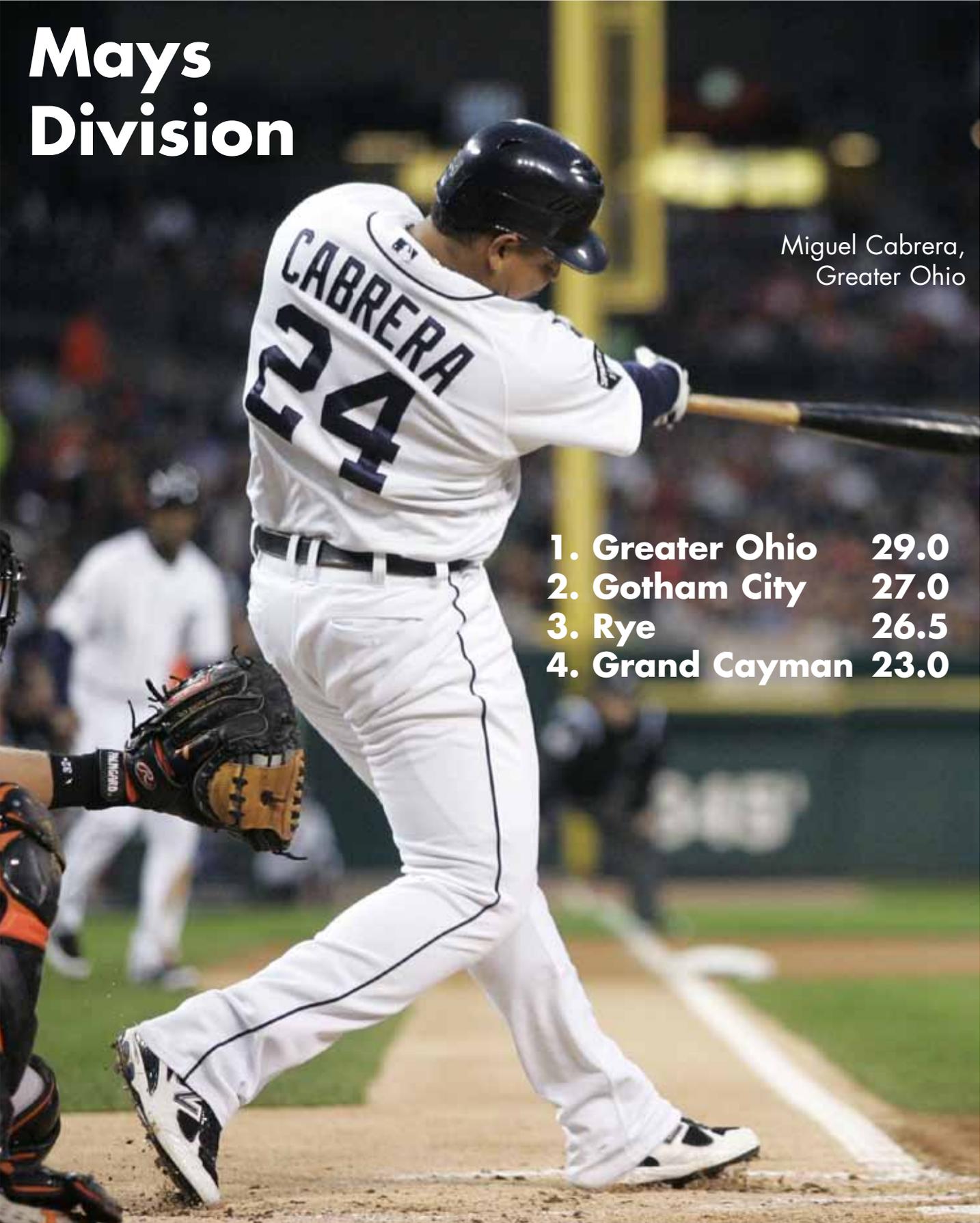
As for Rye: they have their own category on our relative age chart (see Page 12 of this fine publication). Rye's SNT is 32 years old, and it's possible that someone dialed back the odometer on Jhonny Peralta's knees before sending him along.

The bottom of the Mays Division likely belongs to *Mark Bloom's Grand Cayman Havens*. The rebuild has been on throughout the offseason; still, it's far and away the best fourth place team in TBL. They won't contend, but they'll win their share of games, and they're the second-youngest club in the league. Better days are ahead, and they even have a nifty new logo.



Mays Division

Miguel Cabrera,
Greater Ohio

- 
- A photograph of Miguel Cabrera in a white Detroit Tigers uniform, captured in the middle of a batting swing. He is wearing a black helmet and his jersey has "CABRERA" and the number "24" on the back. The background is a blurred baseball stadium at night.
1. Greater Ohio 29.0
 2. Gotham City 27.0
 3. Rye 26.5
 4. Grand Cayman 23.0

2013 greater ohio CHIA PETS in review



*If life imitates art, which is imitating life,
then Rye will surge this year and Greater Ohio will disappoint.*

2013 in Review

Final Record: 85-77 (1st, Mays)

Greater Ohio's success in 2013, compared to the *Annual's* predictions, can be attributed to two things: the team overperformed, and the team we thought would win – the Rye Herons – underperformed. If life imitates art, which is imitating life, then Rye will surge this year and Greater Ohio will disappoint. So much for this publication's oracular analysis.

We'll talk about Rye in their own article. As for the Pets themselves – the team simply turned in a performance that was unexpectedly good. To top it off, they got past the juggernaut from Brobdingnag before losing in seven games in the conference championship. Our prediction – “This is not a *this year* team” – was almost given its comeuppance by a trip to the TBL World Series.

What went right?

Miguel Cabrera was the Whole Thing in 2013. Just as in MLB, he won the Triple Crown with a .341-49-133 line, recording 40 doubles and 60 walks (11 intentional). He was the best player in a lineup that hit 192 homers but only .255 overall. Andy Dirks hit 11 homers and notched a .324 average in half a season. Freddie Freeman hit 24 homers.

But the pitching staff was extraordinary. Cliff Lee was dominant (19-8, 2.73, 238 Ks and only 34 walks in 231 innings); but Scott Diamond (*Scott Diamond?*) went 12-7 and *led the league* with a 2.27 ERA. Jason Hammel was 10-5, 2.29 with 145 Ks in 145 innings. Jonathon Niese won 11 games with a 3.31 ERA. Drew Storen (19

saves, 1.50 ERA) and Wesley Wright (1.91 ERA) led the bullpen. The team had a 3.42 team ERA, fourth in TBL.

What went wrong?

The club pitched over its head during the regular season, but the lineup – other than the sublime Cabrera – was fairly hollow. The regulars struck out a lot. Andre Ethier whiffed 162 times, and hit only .250 with only 11 homers; Freddie Freeman struck out 139 times and also hit only .250; Zack Cozart hit .218 and struck out 126 times; Jarrod Saltalamacchia hit 21 homers, but recorded only a .208 average and struck out 128 times in 380 at-bats.

3 Things

1. *Adding young talent.* We always like to see this. Chris Archer and Jordy Mercer are great additions to the roster; Scott Diamonds don't appear very often (and he crashed in MLB and has been released); drafting a young, talented arm is a much more reliable course. Enough Maicer Izturis; Jordy Mercer is a nice guy to add to Cozart and Evan Longoria.
2. *Betting on the short term.* Greater Ohio wants to win this year, and we think they will; Michael Young and Luke Scott were added to help that happen. Both evaporate at the end of the year. Hopefully they'll give enough back to make that worth it.
3. *But the clock is ticking.* The current composition has less time than you might think. The key guys are 'mature' and there isn't a lot of really young ones to replace them.



Lee: Dominant

greater ohio CHIA PETS



Devlin Toth (19th year)

The Annual has always held that a powerful, plodding lineup is far more dangerous than a fast, spray-hitting one.

Last year's Chia Pets won the Mays Division and then stunned everyone – including, we would not be surprised to learn, Mr. Toth himself – by winning a tough seven-game series against the Brobdingnag Barbarians, a team that scored almost 200 more runs and won 24 more games than they did. (Admittedly, Brobdingnag gave up 3 more runs than the fine Pet pitching staff . . . but that's not the statistic you'd pick out if you were placing bets on that series.)

It took seven games for the other top gun in the International Conference to send them home. A successful season? It's hard to think otherwise. Indeed, other than the 2011 swan dive (48-114: it's what put Freddie Freeman on the roster) the club has been above .500 for several years,

SNT: Jordy Mercer

At the moment he's sharing second base in Greater Ohio, but he might be the short-stop long term. It depends on his glove and Zack Cosart's bat. But it's great to have middle infield talent.



Turnover Rate: 43%

Arrived: Chris Archer, David Carpenter, Bartolo Colon, Will Harris, Cesar Hernandez, Ian Krol, Brandon League, Jordy Mercer, David Purcey, Chad Qualls, Austin Romine, Hector Rondon, Luke Scott, Donnie Veal, Michael Young.

Departed: Brennan Boesch, Alex Burnett, Scott Diamond, Freddy Garcia, Chris Getz, Jason Hammel, Maicer Izturis, John Lannan, Josh Lindblom, Chris Marrero, Jonathan Niese, David Phelps, Scott Sizemore, Jordanny Valdespin, Jemile Weeks.

hanging around in contention, with two playoff runs. This year they want more than to hang around - and they want more than 85 wins too.

They haven't gone all in like some teams; there's still a 2015 draft. It might yet be used if the race is close enough - or if the Pet brain trust determines that it's the only way to get past the other heavy hitters in the conference. The other teams have gotten better. So has Greater Ohio. There's a superior rotation, a brand-new closer, and the best card in the set (and some friends).

The question is whether it'll be enough.



Lee: Still top lefty

Pitching: 10.0
Solid - but only one lefty?

ROTATION. Greater Ohio has a tradition of left-handed pitching that goes back to their earliest days. On the boards that's often a disadvantage - really good lefties can hold their own in this league, but if the south-paw is only average, look out. Somehow the rotation has only one lefty in 2014: Cliff Lee (Grade 12 C+36, 31 starts). Along with him there's a solid right-handed crew with no bad starts. Rookie Chris Archer (Grade 13 C+13) has 23 starts with a 23 fatigue;



Andrew Cashner is very capable (Grade 12 C+15 HR+24, 26 starts with a 26 fatigue); Grade 10s Bartolo Colon (C+36 HR+26) and Scott Feldman get 30 starts each, and Zach McAllister (Grade 9 C-14 HR+16) will get the rest. These guys will go to the mound in expectation of pitching deep into the ballgame.

BULLPEN. Which is a reasonable thing to expect, because there is too little at the top end to improve on them. There's a new closer: David Carpenter (Grade 19* C+13 HR+16, 60 innings) has 25 more innings of help from lefty David Purcey (Grade 18* C-54 HR+26). So far so good. The setup man is Jose Veras (Grade 15* righty C-13 HR+15). Thus ends the relief innings Grade 13* and above.

Then things get interesting. Chad Qualls (Grade 12* C+25 HR+25) and rookie Will Harris (Grade 11* C+14

HR+33) have 114 innings between them. The next pitcher on the stack is former closer Carlos Marmol (Grade 10* C-62 HR-21), who is scarier than usual. The only usable lefties are Wesley Wright (Grade 9*) and Donnie Veal (Grade 10* C-55 HR-14), who have about 80 innings between them; rookie Grade 7*s Ian Krol (lefty, C+16 HR-34, 27 innings) and Hector Rondon (righty, C-22, 54 innings) handle the mop. The total inning count is reasonable, but the relief grades don't help the starting grades enough. Without a usable lefty, and mediocre setup, innings five through seven may decide many close games – and not necessarily in Greater Ohio's favor.

Offense: 13.0
Power and walks . . . to a point.

It will warm the cockles of all Shadow Pets to lay out the awesome card of Miguel Cabrera (1-1-5-6, 12 hits, 4 walks+22) every day. When accompanied



Cabrera: Cockles warmed.

by Freddie Freeman (1-5-6, 12 hits, 3 walks+22), Evan Longoria (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Jarrod Saltalamacchia (1-6-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) and the very interesting Jose Tabata card (106 games, 3-5-6, 11 hits; watch out for that 15 on dice number

13) there's the core of a powerful lineup. This is a year where power is a little more thin on the ground, so this counts more than in the recent past.

That covers between four and five lineup positions. The remaining ones are a mixed bag. Andre Ethier (0-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L-10 R+2) is capable, at least against righties. Jordy Mercer (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks) has a very solid 103 games, though the platoon shift (L+17 R-7) will complicate things; he'll mostly play second base, sharing time with trade acquisition Michael Young (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, no platoon) while Zack Cozart (3 0s, 10 hits, no platoon) will be the shortstop. In the outfield, Luke Scott (1-4-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) and Andy Dirks (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) will get too much playing time.

When we lay out cards, we always try to identify cards that Frighten Us. Miguel Cabrera and Freddie Freeman fall into that category; there are a few others that make them harder to pitch around. This may lead to big innings as well as empty ones – let's see whether the latter outnumber the former.

Defense: 4.0
Some high spots, some comedy.

Greater Ohio features three strong defensive positions. Zack Cozart confirmed APBA's opinion of him as a rookie by turning in a strong second season as an SS9. At the corners, Freddie Freeman (1B4) and Evan Longoria (3B5) provide

Fielding One defense. When he plays, Mercer (SS8, 2B7) is adequate, and Ethier, Tabata and Dirks are OF2s with decent arms.



Young: Comedy

That leaves 2 ½ positions. Luke Scott (OF1, 30 arm) will have some futile innings in the outfield; Alexi Amarista carries his glove. Behind the plate, Saltalamacchia is a full-time C6, Th-1, with only a little help from the bench. Fortunately, Miguel Cabrera (3B3) will not need to take the field this year. Then there's second base: according to Mr. Toth's instructions, the primary occupant will be Michael Young (2B6). Amarista and Mercer can both help here, but Young was acquired to fill a role, and this is it. The C6 behind the plate and the 2B6 in the middle of the infield may be too much comedy for a contender to handle.

Bench: 2.0
Let the starters play.

The addition of Young has ultimately placed the versatile, if unimpressive, Alexi Amarista on the Pets' bench. He plays several positions (OF2, 2B7, SS7, 3B3) but can only fill in at one at a time, and doesn't have much punch (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks). There are two extra catchers: Tyler Flowers (C8, Th-0, 1-0-0, 8 hits) and Austin Romine (C7, Th-1, 3 0s, 8 hits). Cesar Hernandez (OF1, 2B6, 0-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-6 R+2) has a nice card, but very little usage. He can pinch-hit. This bench is at best an admonition to let the starters play. It could use a solid defensive replacement at outfield, second base or catcher or a pinch-runner. Few games will be changed by bench moves.

erful, plodding lineup is far more dangerous than a fast, spray-hitting one. Good thing, because the Pets don't run much at all – but their best hitters are powerful. The rotation, and the top of the bullpen, will help a great deal, but other contenders with good pitching (even ones without Cabrera, which is, you know, *all the others*) should make things difficult. Still, they're a stride ahead of the rest of the Mays.



greater ohio:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 20

And as Alex Trebek used to say, *the answer is . . .* not so much. There are three players at or under the age of 25: Freddie Freeman, bench guy Cesar Hernandez, and lefty reliever Ian Krol. About half of the key players on the roster are in the 25-30 range: Saltalamacchia, Longoria, Mercer, Ethier, Tabata, Archer, Cashner, Feldman Carpenter, Storen; the other half are older – Cabrera, Dirks, Veras, Qualls – or actually *old* – Colon, Lee, Scott, Young.

We are accustomed to thinking of guys like Evan Longoria and Andre Ethier as bright young talent, but Longoria is 28 and Ethier is 32. Generally speaking the pitching staff is older than the lineup, but there are parts that will start falling off in the next few years. As this team – with Cabrera and Longoria and Freeman and the good pitching – is above average at least, there will be a cliff sometime in the future.

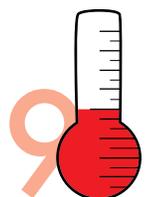


greater ohio CHIA PETS

1st

We don't pick contenders or knock them out due to defense, and the *Annual* has always held that a pow-

TQ: 29.0



2013 gotham city BATMEN in review



What really went right was what happened in real MLB.

by Anton Greenwald

2013 in Review

Final Record: 73-89 (3rd, Mays)

This was a rebuilding year for Gotham City. The starting rotation had two pitchers who knew what they were doing, and four who did not. There was enough bullpen to save the good pitchers, but not the poor ones. So the two good starters won about half of their games; there were a few odd wins for the rest of the staff (there were some very bad teams out there who could be beaten by lousy pitchers) and we came in at 45% win share – within reasonable expectation.

What went right?

Offensively, Stanton had a very good year (.295-44-119, 43 doubles) about as expected, and Escobar did better than expected, stealing many bases but few homers (.296, 21 steals, 43 doubles, 204 hits).

What really went right was what happened in real MLB – my first pick (Matt Carpenter) turned out better than anyone expected, hitting .272 with 29 doubles and 11 homers; my catcher (Jonathan Lucroy), a second round pick from an earlier year, turned out better than expected (.336-15-69, 20 doubles) and one of my busted pitchers returned to be useful.

What went wrong?

Gotham City performed much as expected, falling just short of 90 losses. Felix Hernandez (16-11, 2.93, 246 Ks in 246 innings, 9 CG, 3 shutouts) and Justin Verlander (15-11, 2.61, 243 Ks in 262 innings, 10 CG, 3 shutouts) were

standouts in the rotation; no one else won more than 8 games. Other than Carpenter, Stanton, Escobar and Carpenter, the lineup was fairly unproductive; Will Venable stole 14 bases, but had little power. Nick Swisher hit 22 homers but struck out 179 times and hit .230.

As the TBL team performed as expected it was the action in real MLB that was disappointing for some players. Ryan Howard was injured again, Giancarlo Stanton was injured, Matt Joyce had a bad year, all three of my shortstops had a bad year (Escobar, Barmes and Tejada). My second baseman of the future (Carpenter) was shifted to third base – but there, at least, I still needed a 3rd baseman as my choice for that spot (Juan Francisco) was shifted to first base.



Stanton: Very good year

3 Things

1. *Patch it.* Missing 2 starting pitchers, we traded for one, drafted another, and patched up a team with 2 other trades (for 2B and SS) that could compete for a wild card spot (maybe).
2. *Rely on the stalwarts.* As I write this note, at the start of the season, Stanton, Joyce, Lucroy, Kinsler, Carpenter look to be good. Other outfielders and all of the shortstops (again) have had rough starts.
3. *At least there's pitching.* Of the pitchers, four starters (Verlander, Hernandez, Hudson, and Wacha) are doing well, very well, and the other three – one is down now and the other two are working on it.

Can they turn it around? Will we have enough to face Brobdingnag next year? TBD.

gotham city BATMEN



Anton Greenwald (29th year)

Maybe it was a steely-eyed evaluation of the opposition; maybe it was years of experience watching the effects of entropy on aging rosters.

A few years ago Dr. Anton provided us with an interesting strategy article, a sort of guide to contenders. It was his thesis that, in order to win in TBL, a team has to have at least 15 solid roster spots – pitchers and position players. If you don't have that much weight on the team, you don't have a chance.

Coming into the offseason, and coming off a disappointing year in which the team was outscored by 70 runs, struck out more than 1300 times and had a porous defense (almost 100 unearned runs given up, or the pitching stats would have been even worse) – the Gotham City roster had six pitchers: three starters (Ubaldo Jimenez, Felix Hernandez and Justin Verlander) and three relievers (J. P. Howell, J. J. Hoover, and S. R. LeCure); and four position players (Jonathan Lucroy, Matt Carpenter, Will Venable, and two half-seasons of Giancarlo Stanton and Ryan Howard). Would this be enough, given the draft and the opportunities to fill major holes in the rotation, the bullpen, and the middle infield – or was this a time to step back and try to consolidate?

Decisions, decisions. Maybe it was a steely-eyed evaluation of the opposition; maybe it was years of experience watching the effects of entropy on

Turnover Rate: 23%

Arrived: Fernando Abad, Erick Aybar, Grant Green, Tim Hudson, Ian Kinsler, Caleb Thielbar, Nick Vincent, Michael Wacha.

Departed: Greg Dobbs, Octavio Dotel, Philip Humber, Daisuke Matsuzaka, Dioner Navarro, Chris Resop, Ruben Tejada, Vance Worley.

SNT: Michael Wacha

Not every playoff phenom turns into a reliable major leaguer, but this one looks like a sure thing.



aging rosters. Whatever the case, Gotham City's acquisition of Tim Hudson to start and Ian Kinsler to play second base were sure indicators of the direction the club was headed. Their 2014 draft had the 10th, the 58th, and the 81st picks; the first choice, Michael Wacha, would have limited impact this year; but Caleb Thielbar and Nick Vincent were useful additions to lead and prop up the bullpen, and the late acquisition of Erick Aybar to play shortstop got the team close to the fifteen roster spots that confer contender status.

Will it be enough? Maybe. Like so much in the Mays Division, there is a mix of skill and dysfunction – enough that there are opportunities and pitfalls for three of the four teams.

Pitching: 11.5
A talented crew.

ROTATION. As noted above, Gotham City's first overall pick, late-season phenom Michael Wacha (Grade 14 HR+21), only gets 9 good starts this year, but clearly the most important



Still the King.

number on his card is "91" – the year he was born. Along with Jeanmar Gomez (Grade 15 HR+22), who gets 8 starts of his own, this half-season is the top grade in a very solid rotation. They are followed by four full-season veterans: Ubaldo Jimenez (Grade 13 C-26 HR+23), Felix Hernandez (Grade 12 C+24 HR+26), Justin Verlander (disappointing at Grade 10 HR+23, but still very capable), and lefty Jorge De La Rosa (Grade 9 C-15 HR+26). These 127 starts will feature all season. The remaining starter, brought in to complete the season, is Tim Hudson (Grade 9 C+15 HR+21, 21 starts), is more the sort of person brought in by a contender. There is not a bad start in the rotation.

BULLPEN. One of the key objectives in the draft was the acquisition of a closer. Rookie Caleb Thielbar (Grade 24* C+21 HR+14, 46 innings) fits the bill, though he'll take a few months off to stretch his usage. Lefty J. P. Howell (Grade 17* C-16 HR+45, 62 innings) and rookie righty Nick Vincent (Grade 15* C+32 HR+53, 46 innings) will fill that role when he's unavailable; otherwise they'll be part of the setup crew. Sam LeCure (Grade 14* C-33 HR+26) adds 61 additional solid innings. These all help the rotation, and Dr. Anton will use them properly and judiciously.

Gotham City also brings almost 250 additional innings to the table, all Grade 10* and 11*. Al Alburquerque (C-62), Matt Albers (HR+52), Marc Rzepczynski (C+23 HR+32), Jonathan Papelbon (C+34)

and 45 innings of Gomez have a variety of skills and peripherals, and will take turns being available during the season. Fernando Abad (Grade 7* lefty C+16 HR+22) was added in the waiver draft.

Overall, this is a very good rotation with a decent bullpen, including a strong top end. The only question is if the latter will come up short innings, forcing too many 10*s and 11*s to pitch in games that matter.

Offense: **8.5**
Versatile; will require care.

In the face to face league we played in long ago, we had a member who (like the much-derided John McNamara here in Boston) basically put the same nine guys on the field every day, rarely pinch-hitting or pinch-running. We assumed that his field manager was the famous Pat Lineup. Having Pat Lineup in charge is great, if you have nine full-time players, give or take, and can send them out to play – particularly on the road.

Gotham City has no such luxury this year; and in order to succeed on the road, they'll have to be handled carefully. This is in part due to the platoon shifts, and in part due to missing games for key players. With only a few exceptions, there are options – and obstacles – at every position; Will Venable (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, D30 for 28 attempts) will be in center field every day, trade acquisition Erick Aybar (3 0s, 11 hits) is the regular shortstop, and Jonathan Lucroy (1-4-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) will be regularly behind the plate. All three have small platoon shifts. But that's where Pat Lineup has to hang up his cleats.

- *First Base.* Stalwart power hitter Ryan Howard has half a season of decent power (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-14 R+4); he'll share time with a platoon partner, Nick Swisher (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L+6 R-5). Swisher, a switch-hitter, has no such problem on the computer.
- *Second Base.* Trade acquisition Ian Kinsler (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 2 10s) should get most of

the reps, but he'll be spelled by Matt Carpenter (4 Os, 11 hits, 4 walks+22), who has the best everyday card on the roster.



Carpenter: Best everyday

- *Third Base.* Carpenter will play here, too, but against some righties,

Juan Francisco (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks, 10 13s) appears in certain lineups, either at third or at DH.

- *Outfield.* Giancarlo (formerly Mike) Stanton had a tough two-thirds of a year, but still has a dangerous card (L+6 R-4 1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks, but 8 13s); Jeff Baker has a great half season (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks) marred by a serious platoon shift (L+6 R-18); Jarrod Dyson's half season gives the Gotham lineup the only decent speed, but it's a weird card (3-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 11-11-10, A33 for 40 SBA, L-8 R+1).

There's a lot of Matt Joyce but it's a little weak (1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, E27 for 10 SBA, L-14 R+1).

- *Designated Hitter.* The primary occupant is Dayan Viciedo (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 walks), but others will certainly get a chance.

This is going to be a lot of mix and match, and it'll take some skill with the series-specific instructions to get the most out of them.

Defense: 4.0
Not here for their gloves.

The Batman will put a few Fielding One players on the field. Jonathan Lucroy is a C8, Th-1; Nick Swisher is a 1B4 when in the lineup; Ian Kinsler is a 2B8. Giancarlo Stanton is an OF2 but has a fine 36 arm; Michael Saunders can come off the bench as an OF3. The rest of the outfielders are all OF2s. Matt Carpenter is solid Fielding Two (3B4, 2B7) as are Erick Aybar (SS8) and Ryan Howard (1B3). Clint Barmes is an SS9, but won't be in many games where he has to swing a bat. Derek Norris, the spare catcher, is a C7 Th-1. Overall, these players are not here for their gloves.

Bench: 2.5
Lots of options.



The variety of offensive choices means that there are lots of options on the bench. The rest of the bench can do one, or perhaps two, things; Derek Norris can hit a little (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, but L+9 R-15); Alcides Escobar (2 Os, 9 hits, 1 walk, SS8, E35 for 22 SBA) cannot, but at least can run. Clint Barmes (3 Os, 8 hits) can do neither.

2nd It might be 3rd if Rye has a surge during the season and Gotham City falters. But overall the Batman have a solid pitching staff and a versatile, if idiosyncratic, offense while the Herons may be stretched to the limit. Both can use the 2015 draft to make moves.



gotham city:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 13

The presence of some good young talent makes this a less desperate "win now" situation than down in Rye; but some of the key parts of the team have reached their maturity. The choice to contend is a good one; there aren't so many cracks in the foundation that it couldn't happen again in 2015. Adding Wachu and others (instead of cardboard, particularly in this draft) is a commitment to more long term stability. But they want to win *now*, and the window won't be open forever.

TQ: 27.0



gotham city **BATMEN**

2013 rye HERONS in review



Even if there's a cliff ahead, there is no need to stop running.

2013 in Review

Final Record: 78-84 (2nd, Mays)

We thought they'd win the Mays pennant. The arguments were compelling, except that the club didn't get that memo. (Apparently Craig Musselman has trouble with memos; he didn't hear that, you know, youth is *good*. It's a bit of a puzzle to determine how the club managed not only to fall short of the pennant our TQ said they'd win, but to fall short of .500. The pitching was better than we said it would be: but the lineup simply didn't perform.

What went right?

Aramis Ramirez had a great year. He hit .303-37-99 with 44 doubles and 5 triples, as well as 18 hit batsmen; he was the team leader in all of those categories. Matt Kemp hit .276 and he and Alfonso Soriano hit 25 homers each.

Zack Greinke only won 10 games, but he had 8 CG and 221 strikeouts in 231 innings, recording a 3.32 ERA. Joe Nathan recorded 5 wins and 31 saves, but the setup guys – Mickey Storey, Ryan Mattheus, Joe Thatcher and Rafael Betancourt – were tremendous, recording 15 wins and 4 saves with ERAs of 1.35, 1.95, 2.01 and 2.08 (We'd made fun of his bullpen in the 2013 *Annual*. Just saying). Overall, the team surrendered only 1,372 hits in 1,488 innings and had a respectable 3.88 ERA, in the top half of TBL.

What went wrong?

But. Marco Scutaro hit .289 but made 32 errors. Torii Hunter hit .281, but only hit 10 homers and

struck out 135 times. Nelson Cruz hit .220-21-95 with 145 strikeouts. Soriano had 173 Ks (and only 27 walks). His 25 homers went with a .216 average. The team had a .309 OBP; there must have been many empty innings – which, for a team that was touted as having a devastating offense, would have been very frustrating for Mr. Musselman.



Ramirez: Led in everything

3 Things

1. *Fix it. What the hell.* Given the need to replace missing parts, Rye went out and acquired Jerry Blevins from Northboro, Kendrys Morales and Jhonny Peralta from Fair Oaks, and Jake Peavy from Brobdingnag. The top draft pick in 2014? Juan Uribe, a great full-season card, completely absent from any youth movement.

2. *Understanding the dynamics.* As if this horse hasn't been beaten to death already, Rye is a very old team – 24th in TBL, with the 23rd oldest some distance away. All of the drafted players are cardboard: Fife, Hand, Recker, and Claiborne (and possibly Federowicz, though he is young enough that he could matter when Rye comes out of the bunker after falling off the cliff in 2015 or 2016.) But Craig Musselman knows what winning feels like, and will keep enjoying the feeling until the clock strikes midnight.

3. *Last year is last year.* The disappointment of 2013 is a matter of statistical record. There is no need to revisit it; whatever lies ahead is what's important. Even if there's a cliff ahead, there is no need to stop running.

rye HERONS

Craig Musselman (10th year)

Evidently Craig Musselman didn't get the memo.



Bill James, at whose sabermetric shrine we all worship, asserted many years ago that major league players peak when they're 27. The boundary between young talent and the sort of really young talent that we're describing in this year's Annual is somewhat earlier – 23, say, or 24; but players in their prime at 27 are still young, and no one in TBL would turn his nose up at a roster composed of such guys. Still, it's always good to have some roster spots occupied by players younger than the peak, hoping for better days to come.

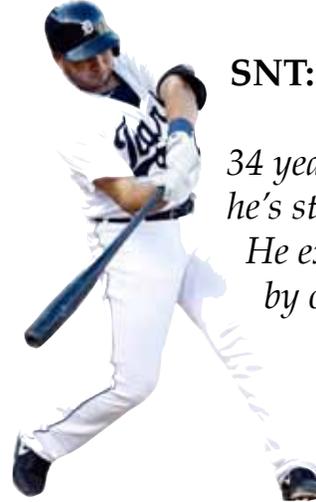
Evidently Craig Musselman didn't get the memo. A quick perusal of his roster reveals one player age 25 (Will Smith), one who just turned 26 (Preston Claiborne), and two more (Eduardo Nuñez and Tim Federowicz) who will turn 27 this year. What's more, those four are not what you might call core players. *Those* guys are older. Nelson Cruz is 34. Draftee Juan Uribe is 35. Soriano? 38. Hunter? 39. Utley? 35. Nathan? 39. Greinke, Peavy, Weaver, Shields? 30, 33, 31, 32. Samardzija is 29, Kemp is 30; they might survive the crash and be a part of the next team when it painfully, inevitably rebuilds. But Morales, Peralta, Keppinger, Blevins, Neshek, Hawkins . . . not so much.

The team on the field is good, maybe better than Gotham City, possibly good enough to tangle with

Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Jerry Blevins, Preston Claiborne, Tim Federowicz, Stephen Fife, Donovan Hand, Kendrys Morales, Jake Peavy, Jhonny Peralta, Anthony Recker, Juan Uribe.

Departed: Rafael Betancourt, Michael Bowden, Brandon Inge, Adam Kennedy, Ryan Mattheus, Guillermo Moscoso, Miguel Olivo, Marco Scutaro, Chris Seddon, Mickey Storey.



SNT: Jhonny Peralta

34 years old this summer, he's still a hitting machine. He extends the Rye lineup by one more fine bat.

Greater Ohio. It will be a fun summer, but it may be a cold winter as the clock ticks forward.

Pitching: **9.0** Four starters and not much in the pen.

In the first year Mr. Musselman was in TBL, he worked at rebuilding the caricature of a pitching staff that his predecessor had left him. Ten years on, the staff that he assembled is still going strong.

ROTATION.

Rye has four solid starters to cover more than half of the season. Zack Greinke (Grade 13 C+15 HR+22)

is the leader of the pack; Jered Weaver (Grade 12 C+22), Big Game James Shields (Grade 11 HR+22) and Jake Peavy (Grade 10 C+21 HR-15) back him up. That's 109 starts of goodness, all right handed. After that, things fall to slightly less capable arms. Jeff Samardzija, the kid of the pitching staff, has a



Greinke: Leader of the pack.



RYE HERONS

full season as a Grade 7 C-16; rookie Donovan Hand (Grade 6 HR-23), Stephen Fife (Grade 5) and the last moments of Jake Westbrook (Grade 4 C-26 HR+33) fill the rest.

The presence of the four strong starters overall make this a good rotation. When we make evaluations we generally count the first hundred starts; good teams, even very good teams, have handled a full TBL season with a dog going to the mound thirty or forty times. In any case, in the playoffs, those pitchers don't see the light of day.

BULLPEN. It starts with a top notch closer. Joe Nathan will bring down the hammer for 64 innings (Grade 25* HR+51); when Rye has the lead in the final inning, that shouldn't be a problem.



Nathan: Hammer

It's getting to him that will be a challenge. Will Smith (Grade 15* C+25 HR-33, 33 innings, who also makes one start) is the scary righty setup man, while there are a hundred innings of lefty pitchers – Javier Lopez

(Grade 16* C+32 HR+52) and Jerry Blevins (Grade 14* C+21).

The rest of the bullpen is a large squad of Grade 8*-10*s. LaTroy Hawkins (Grade 9* C+44 HR+14) and Tim Stauffer (Grade 10* C+13) are the 140 reliable righty innings; Joe Thatcher (Grade 9* C+16) is 39 good lefty innings. Pat Neshek (Grade 10* HR-16), Donovan Hand (Grade 10* HR-23) and Preston Claiborne (Grade 8* C+31 HR-15) give 160 less reliable ones. Mike Adams, formerly reliable, is just plain scary (Grade 10* C-43 HR-41) and won't likely be used.

Nathan aside, this bullpen will be best used sparingly, and mostly to rescue the lesser starters.

Offense: 12.0
They'll score runs like veterans.



Soriano: Power and speed

This year there is less overall power in Major League Baseball. A great deal of it seems to be concentrated on the Rye roster. Let's start with Alfonso Soriano (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, C26 for 27 SBA) and Nelson Cruz (1-1-0-

0, 10 hits, 3 walks). Torii Hunter (12 hits) and Jhonny Peralta (11 hits, 3 walks) each have 4 0s. Cruz and Peralta each miss a third of the season (for the same reason; that's a side argument here, as we're only interested in the cards).

Most of the rest of the lineup isn't too shabby either. Some contender was going to add Juan Uribe (1-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks); Omar Infante (3 0s, 12 hits) is very solid as well. Chase Utley (1-4-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+42), Aramis Ramirez (1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+42 for 92 games), and Kendrys Morales (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) fill out this powerful lineup. Even the half season of Matt Kemp (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22), on a down year, is useful, as is part-time infielder Eduardo Nuñez (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, E30 for 13 SBA). The only real weak spot is behind the plate: Yorvit Torrealba (0-6, 9 hits), Humberto Quintero (1-6, 9 hits) and rookies Tim Federowicz (3 0s, 9 hits) and Anthony Recker (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks) fill the spot in the lineup opposing teams can pitch around.

The veteran lineup walks and hits for power. They don't run much at all, also characteristic of veterans. There will have to be some mix-and-match, and there's really nothing to be done about the catchers, but they will score some runs.

Defense: 4.0
Not too many highlights.

Juan Uribe is a 3B5, and is the only full time Fielding One player on the roster. It goes without saying that Mr. Musselman did not draft him for that reason: it's just a nice side effect. In the meanwhile, the rest of the veterans – which is just about everyone with regular playing time – has drifted

into the territory of Fielding Two. Chase Utley and Omar Infante are 2B7s, Nuñez and Peralta are SS8s; every outfielder on the team is an OF2, with good

arms (Kemp has a 37, Hunter a 35). Morales is a 1B3. Jeff Keppinger is a Fielding Two utility-man (2B7, 3B4, 1B3). The catchers are capable – Yorvit Torrealba, C8 Th+2 – to competent; the rest are C7s. Tim Federowicz' arm is Th+2, and Humberto Quintero's is Th+4.

There are no truly bad fielders; Aramis Ramirez is a 3B3, but he won't have to use his glove very often. Overall, this defense won't do much to affect the won-loss record of the ball club.

Bench: 1.5
Stretched pretty thin.

There aren't too many spare at bats or games on this roster. It actually takes three of the four catchers to cover the season, meaning that there isn't much ability to pinch-hit for the weakest spot in the lineup. Missing games at every infield and outfield position will lead to a lot of mixing and matching to fill out lineups.

The extra bench players are Lance Berkman (0-6, 8 hits, 5 walks) and Jeff Keppinger (2 Os, 10 hits, 2 walks). As Craig says, "it is what it is," and



Uribe: Went to a contender

encourages opposing managers to use anyone who is available. It's still stretched pretty thin.



3rd They could win the pennant. They probably can't win as many as 95 games, but they could out-perform Gotham City and Greater Ohio. Contenders could also expose their pitching weaknesses and chew up their limited innings. It'll be a fun – or scary – summer on the New Hampshire coast.



rye:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 24

Of the 24 TBL teams, Rye's average age is 24th – and it's almost two years older than the team in position 23. This is a talented, veteran ballclub which will hold together exactly as long as duct tape and cortisone shots keep it functioning.

There is no hint of criticism from the *Annual*. Off season and draft moves – acquiring Peralta, Peavy, Uribe; keeping the band together (Cruz, Hunter, Utley, Infante) and relying on the strong and talented rotation makes this a better team than many younger ones . . . of course.

The bottom line is that the Rubicon wasn't crossed in this offseason; the course was set two or more years ago. There is no youth movement here, and Rye management is unapologetic. We certainly agree.

TQ: 26.5



rye HERONS

2013 grand cayman HAVENS in review



Only a modest offense kept the team from a complete collapse.

by Mark Bloom

2013 in Review

Final Record: 69-93 (4th, Mays)

Hey, the team improved. By one win. At this rate, it'll be the year 2045 before the Grand Cayman Havens win 100 games. In 2013, the Havens had the worst pitching staff in the league, giving up 932 runs. The Havens had the most porous defense, committing 160 errors. Only a modest offense kept the team from a complete collapse.

What went right?

Edwin Encarnacion had a monster season: .289, 49 homeruns (tied with Miguel Cabrera for the league lead), 114 runs scored, and 109 RBI, plus 10 steals and 80 walks, all unintentional. Four hitters (Encarnacion, Billy Butler, Matt Holliday and Kyle Seager) slugged 24 or more homers after no one hit more than 17 in 2012. There was also some team speed. Drew Stubbs (26 of 28) and Emilio Bonifacio (25 of 26) stole efficiently.

Clay Buchholz anchored the rotation with 13 wins to lead the team, and Wilton Lopez earned 23 saves with a sterling 2.07 ERA. The biggest surprise was Jason Marquis (a Grade 4) leading the team with four shutouts. Jason Bay hit three homers in 18 at-bats for a last hurrah.

What went wrong?

Marquis went 5-12, despite the shutouts. The team had a 5.20 ERA, as only Lopez and Mark Rogers managed ERAs under 4.00. The offense also disappointed, again, as only Encarnacion, Cespedes (traded at the deadline), and November

call-up Matt Adams (in 23 at-bats) hit over .270. Billy Butler dropped to .269, though he did hit 27 homers and drive in 108, and Matt Holliday slipped all the way to .249, striking out a team-leading 145 times.

Even with the one-game improvement, it wasn't hard to close the books on this campaign.



Encarnacion: Monster season

3 Things

- 1. Improve the Pitching Staff.* The plan going into the 2014 rookie draft was to restock the rotation. There were quality pitchers to be had, and a staff of journeymen and disappointments forced the team to ignore other prospects for young arms. In that sense, the draft was a success, netting Julio Teheran, Tony Cingrani, Tyler Skaggs, Brad Peacock, and Justin Grimm. Three of them, at least, should develop.
- 2. Don't Pull the Trigger.* Whitey would have done it, but the team's current General Manager, David "Boomer" Wells, didn't. He almost traded Matt Holliday (several times), Matt Adams, Clay Buchholz, Drew Smyly, and Billy Butler. Still, things had better come together quickly.
- 3. Take a Purposeful Step Forward.* The draft, as well as a series of targeted trades, added much-needed depth to nearly every position, not only to the starting rotation. It's not inconceivable that the 2014 Havens could reach the next rung of the ladder. Is a .500 season too much to expect? With a little luck and some expected growth, the team should improve and might actually have some surplus in 2015.

grand cayman HAVENS

Mark Bloom (24th year)

9 hits is not as good as 10 hits.



The anchorman team in the Mays Division provides an interesting counterpoint to the veterans up in Rye. Grand Cayman is two full seasons away from a seventh game loss to Whitman in the Wild Card round; since then there have been a lot of bad pitching performances and inferior offensive efforts – two 90-plus loss campaigns. In the meanwhile, management has worked hard to bring in a new core of young players. (It's good to know that *someone* decided to play along with this year's *Annual* theme.) This is a much younger team: and it's not a basket case either, neither on the mound or in the lineup.

Does this get the Havens back to contention? Not quite yet – certainly not this year: there are still some bumps in the road. But this team shouldn't lose 90-plus games. They might lose more than they win, but there will be some surprises. And in a few years . . . watch out.

Pitching: 5.0
Some learning experiences.

ROTATION. It's going to take nine pitchers to fill out the rotation this year. However, discounting the 13 scary starts of 37-year-old Freddy Garcia (Grade 7 C+25 HR-45) and the full season of 34-year-old lefty Eric Stults (Grade 6 C+32), the starters are very young. 25-year-old lefty Tony Cingriani (Grade 16 C-36 HR-22) and 23-year-old Julio Teheran (Grade 10 C+24 HR-14) were both added in the first round in the 2014 draft. Nathan Eovaldi (Grade 10 C-16 HR+26, 18 starts) and Esmil Rogers (Grade 5 HR-16) return. The mentioned pitchers bring the starts total to 132.

The last thirty trips belong to three rookies, also added in this year's draft. Brad Peacock (Grade 8 C-35 HR-25), Tyler Skaggs (Grade 5

Turnover Rate: 46%

Arrived: Brad Brach, Jesse Chavez, Tony Cingriani, Justin De Fratus, Evan Gattis, Justin Grimm, David Hernandez, David Lough, Brad Peacock, Chris Perez, Marcus Semien, Tyler Skaggs, Chris Stewart, Eric Stults, Julio Teheran, Jonathan Villar.

Departed: Jason Bay, Kyle Blanks, Emilio Bonifacio, Alberto Cabrera, Tommy Hanson, Rich Harden, Wilton Lopez, Mark Lowe, Jason Marquis, Chris Narveson, Luis Perez, Drew Pomeranz, Tyler Robertson, Mark Rogers, B. J. Rosenberg, Vernon Wells, Bobby Wilson.

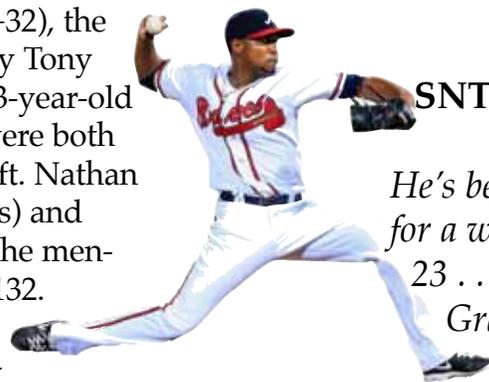
HR-33) and Justin Grimm (Grade 1) will make them. Skaggs is a child of 23; the other two are a little older.

This rotation is going to give up some runs, particularly the far end. Cingriani, Teheran and Eovaldi are all capable, though flawed; Peacock and Stults are less capable and more flawed, while Skaggs, Garcia and Grimm are, well, soft targets. Still, the majority of the pitchers have youth on their side.

BULLPEN. The best starter in the card set will be acting as the closer without the +5 bonus:

SNT: Julio Teheran

He's been on our futures list for a while, and he just turned 23 . . . he'll be the ace of the Grand Cayman contenders for sure.





grand cayman HAVENS

Clay Buchholz (108 innings, Grade 20 C-21 HR+45). He will be supported by lefty Drew Smyly (Grade 14* C+25 HR+36) and righty Tommy Hunter (Grade 13* C+36 HR-14), who add 160 innings between them. This is a lot of quality bullpen – and it still might not be enough to keep the inferior starters in the game.

To go with the top bullpen, there are several lesser pitchers, all right handed. Jesse Chavez (Grade 10* C+15 HR+42), David Hernandez (Grade 10* C-13 HR-26) and rookie Justin DeFratius (Grade 9* C-44 HR+32) have 165 innings between them.

Waiver acquisitions Chris Perez (Grade 8* HR-33), Brad Brach (Grade 8* C-62), Esmil Rogers (Grade 7*), and Joba Chamberlain (Grade 6* C-62 HR-25) fill out the bullpen.

Mr. Bloom is a very capable manager, and he'll make use of the whole staff.

Offense: 9.0
If only the first basemen could play shortstop. Or catch.

The first card that jumps out of the envelope is Edwin Encarnacion (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks+22). During the off-season, Havens management resisted every offer to pry him loose; instead



Encarnacion: Jumps out

he'll be hitting the hell out of the ball all season out on Grand Cayman. He's joined in most lineups by Matt Holliday (1-5-6, 11 hits, 4 walks+22), who Uncle Boomer tried all off-season to move along, without success. Matt Adams (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-11 R+1) will join in when a righty

is on the mound; Billy Butler (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks) is another nice bat.

The only problem is that Encarnacion, Adams and Butler are all first basemen, and Holliday is an OF1; three of them can get into the lineup at once. If only one of them could play shortstop. The 2014 draft also brought a new catcher-outfielder: Evan Gattis (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks). He and David DeJesus (4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-15 R+1) fill out the power portion of the lineup.

Most of the remaining lineup spots have a similar profile: 9 hits, 3 or 4 walks. Kyle Seager (1-6-6, L-6 R+1) plays third base; Neil Walker (1-4-6, L-11 R+1) plays second; Jonathan Villar (2 0s) and Brandon Crawford (3 0s, L-7 R+1) play shortstop. Drew Stubbs (3 0s, L+3 R-3) gets reps in the outfield. That leaves one piece of good news: David Lough (3 0s, 11 hits) adds some speed (but not much on base) to the lineup; Alex Avila (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-13 R+2) and Chris Stewart (1 0, 8 hits, 3 walks+42) will have to catch when Gattis is in the outfield or unavailable. Stubbs, Villar, and to a lesser extent Seager, can run.

This lineup has more weak points than strong points, but at least there are a lot of choices for management – they do different things.

Defense: 3.5
Zero sum.

The traditional wisdom is that a team should be defensively strong up the middle. This is true for Grand Cayman. David DeJesus and Drew Stubbs are both OF3s; Neil Walker is a 2B8, a truly great glove; and Alex Avila (Th-2) and Chris Stewart (Th+3) are both C8s. Evan Gattis, though, is a C6 with a Th+2 when he's behind the plate.

Other than that part of the defense, Grand Cayman is mostly Fielding Two. Kyle Seager (3B4), Brandon Crawford (SS8) and Edwin Encarnacion and Matt Adams are 1B3s. David



Walker: Great glove

Lough is an OF2. Beyond that, Jonathan Villar is an SS7, Holliday and Gattis are OF1s. Butler is a 1B2, but won't need to get on the field very often.

This defense won't save many games, but it won't cost too many either. It's sort of a zero sum.

Bench: 2.5
Lots of LEGO® pieces.

With so many options in the lineup, and lots of extra games and at-bats, this is a very full bench. As previously stated, there are plenty of players to DH and play first base, so there's mix and match against various kinds of pitching. There are two shortstops, three catchers, and several outfielders.

In addition, Cayman has two extra players: Logan Forsythe (8 hits, 2 walks, a little speed) and Marcus Semien (1-6-6, 10 hits, but only a few plate appearances). They can pinch run and pinch hit, though there are more weaknesses against lefties than righties. Still, considering that the team is (1) a rebuild and (2) getting much younger, it will be a much more fun experience than almost any other 4th-place team in TBL.

4th The pitching staff is not as good as the rest of the ones in the division, and 9 hits is not as good as 10 hits.

On the other hand, this is a very young club. All things being equal – and they never are, of course – in a year or two they'll be much better than their competitors. In the meanwhile, this will be a learning experience. But at the *Annual*, we believe that it'll be a good one.



grand cayman:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

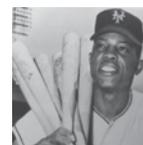
Team Age Rank: 2

It almost goes without saying that a team that is second in TBL on the youth chart, and that has been able to add a fine group of young pitchers and some key lineup parts like Walker, Avila, Villar and Gattis, is very much in sync with the *Annual's* theme.

How hard is this? Harder than it looks. The last five years in the off-shore haven have yielded 68, 69, 87, 68 and 69 wins. (The 2011 team went to the Wild Card and was built on sand: there were some ephemeral talents that just weren't as good the following year. This is truly a "teachable moment" – when it's time to rebuild, the teams that do it right and make it stick don't jump too early.)

In order to undertake a true rebuild, embracing a youth movement like Grand Cayman is doing, requires a number of things from management. First, there has to be good evaluation of talent. (Check.) Second, there must be patience – it rarely happens overnight, and even if the Bounce is successful, it usually leads to a bounceback. (Also check.) Third, the team has to identify a very small number of core players and have no loyalty to any others. Sentimentality has little place. (Check.) But fortunately a sense of humor is vital.

TQ: 23.0



grand cayman HAVENS



The Great Divide

“There is a tide in the affairs of teams,” to misquote a famous passage from Shakespeare; “which taken on the flood, leads on to fortune.”

Entropy is a powerful force, and if anyone knows it, it's *Joe Auletta*; the *Brobdingnag Barbarians*, who are either powerful or powerless (but rarely in between) have come together this year, and the Prince of Darkness intends to win. He appears to have

everything he needs to do so. If there is any indication of his earnest in this regard, just take a peek at the thermometers for future drafts – Brobdingnag doesn't have two full ones in 2015.

Some considerable distance behind can be found the *Detroit Stars*. *Dave Jaskot* is still a TBL newcomer, but he's worked hard at building a team to compete and contend.

Nobody – well, not most people – come into a competitive environment with the intention of being uncompetitive, unless they're handed a basket case; winning is more fun than losing, and Mr. Jaskot wants to win. Are they good? Yes, certainly – there are some powerful bats, but there may not be



2013 Ruth Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Brobdingnag*	109	53	.673	—
Detroit †	94	68	.580	15
New Westminster	79	83	.488	30
Dallas	77	85	.475	32

* Lost Conference playoff to Greater Ohio.
† Lost Wild-Card playoff to Columbus.

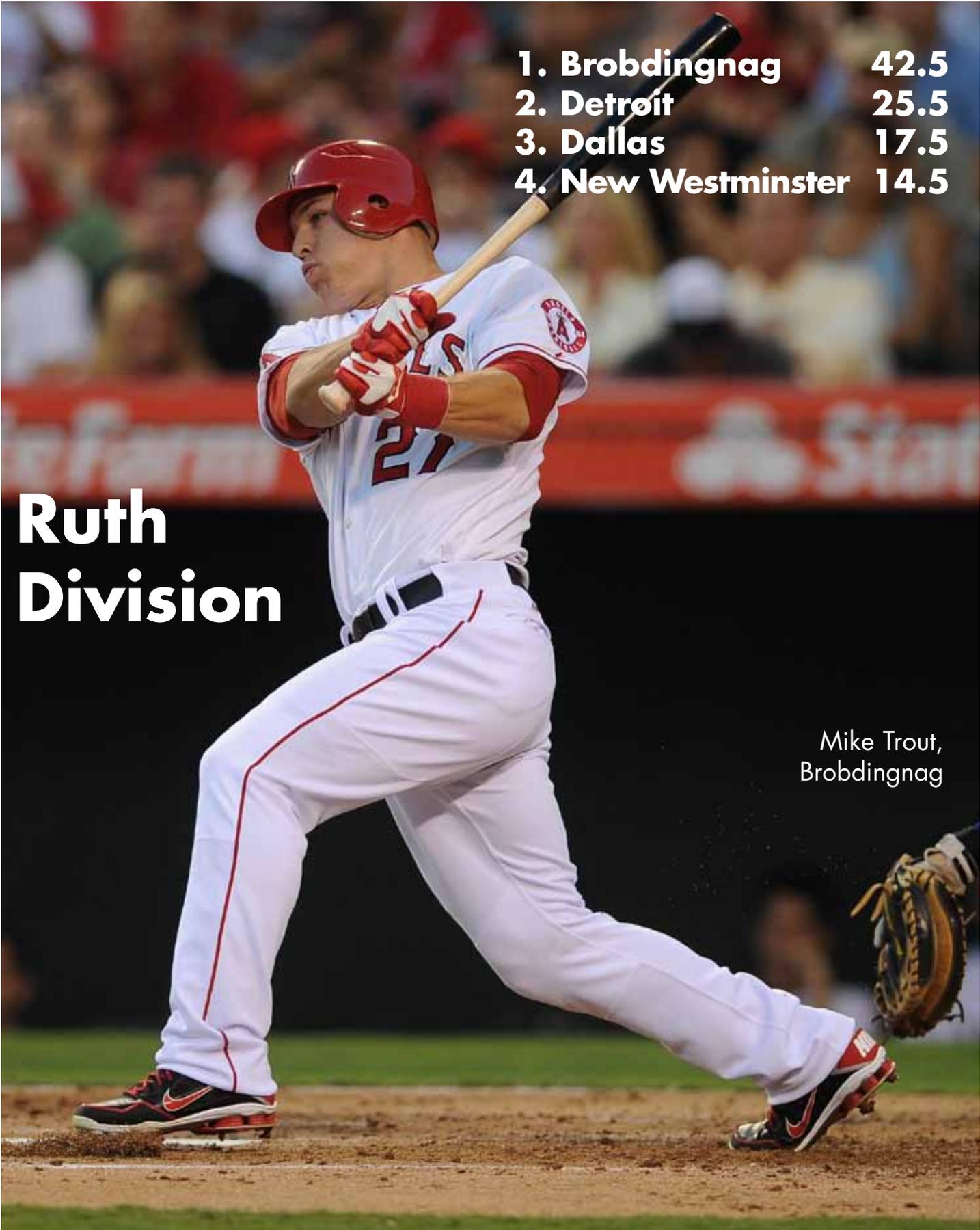
enough pitching. In the major leagues, pitching and defense win games, but offense is the key in TBL and it may be enough. This year the club has a chance to go far. It's not clear it can go all the way.



The tide has washed out for the *Dallas Eagles*. *Steve Powell's* team peaked and got hurt and got old, and he's had to part with what's left to prepare for the next version of the team. This is a difficult task in the best of circumstances – and coming off a contending period is the opposite of that.

The tide has *really* washed out for *Jim Jeatt's New Westminster Whiskeyjacks*. Some of the wounds to the roster are self-inflicted: the best of the contending version of the team has been sent away. The key question, which we're not sure we can answer, is whether what came back – and what's coming back in the future – will be the core of a new contender, or if the tide will remain out for some time to come.



- 
- A photograph of baseball player Mike Trout in a batting stance. He is wearing a white uniform with red accents, a red helmet, and red batting gloves. He is holding a wooden bat. The background is a blurred stadium crowd.
1. Brobdingnag 42.5
 2. Detroit 25.5
 3. Dallas 17.5
 4. New Westminster 14.5

Ruth Division

Mike Trout,
Brobdingnag

2013 brobdingnag BARBARIANS in review



They only had one bad 10 day stretch . . . in December.

by Joe Auletta

2013 in Review

Final Record:109-53 (1st, Ruth)

Averages don't really tell the story. For eight months this team had a very successful 2013 season, beating out the Detroit team for the Ruth Division crown and staying ahead of Whitman for the Conference's best record. A winner had returned to Brobdingnag. They only had one bad 10 day stretch losing 4 of 7 to Greater Ohio, but those ten days occurred in December and completely soured the previous eight months. This team was built to have a five year contending plane from 2013 through 2017 or so -- the first years showed promise, but the second year needs to show results and all the moves this past winter reflect that sense of immediacy.

What went right?

Jake Peavy pitched very well (2.61 ERA and 181 Ks in 213 innings), but also had some incredible luck as he went 21-1 in the regular season.

First year Barbarian Alex Rios had a monstrous year hitting .306/.355/.509 with 28 HRs, 112 RBI and 102 runs scored. Chris Davis delivered 34 homers of his own, and Adam Dunn hit 35, walking 94 times. Brobdingnag also unleashed an unexpected weapon in the form of the stolen base; The foursome of Mike Trout, Everth Cabrera, Alex Rios, and Alex Rodriguez were a combined 121 for 131 in stolen bases, with two (Cabrera and Trout) more than 40 each.

It was a team game: the roster was deep with players who could contribute. The average game used 16+ players. Eleven scored or drove in 45+ runs, and 17 pitchers won games, led by Peavy and Stephen Strasburg (16-3, 2.45, 208 Ks in 191 innings). Craig Kimbrel was unhittable (4-3, 1.31, 49 saves).

What went wrong?

The team was susceptible to good left-handed pitching all year, and when faced with Greater Ohio's strong LH rotation the Barbarians were unexpectedly ousted in the first round of the playoffs.

The back three-fifths of the starting staff was very average to poor. The team won 109 games, but the Homer Bailey – Justin Masterson – Derek Holland trio was 23-29 with a 5.12 ERA.



Peavy: Incredible luck

Overall the team hit very well, with 209 homers and a .271 average, but Chris Davis (197) and Adam Dunn (179) piled up prodigious strikeouts. Even Mike Trout (120) whiffed more than might be acceptable.

3 Things

1. *Can the back end of the pitching staff improve?* The top six starters return from last year, along with question marks Jose Fernandez, Tanner Roark (both rookies), and Michael Pineda (injury). All are young, and their progress will be critical. In the meanwhile, the current rotation is more than satisfactory – but Vlad always thinks long term.
2. *Can stability be found at second base?* The perpetual sore point in the Barbarian line-up for most of the last quarter century, spring training has seen the complete collapse of last year's starter Chris Nelson, the continued struggles of Dustin Ackley, and the arrival of good glove/no hit Chris Getz. *Someone* needs to step up and produce.
3. *It's a lock.* This team should make the playoffs by June, but will the 2014 team be able to get past the early rounds and deep into the playoffs?

brobdingnag BARBARIANS



Joe Auletta (26th year)

They should go far in the playoffs . . . or else.

“This is a simple game,” Vlad says in the mood statement. “I opened the check book to give you the best players money can buy, now see to it you do your part. Winning isn’t everything – it’s the only thing. Just win, baby. *Or else.*” It’s a bold direction to a team that won 109 games last year – which would normally be accounted a success, but dropping a seventh game in the first round of the playoffs means that it’s just a line in the record books for Vlad.

The ace of the staff went 21-1; the closer saved 49 and notched a 1.31 ERA. The team hit 209 homers, scored 844 runs, and even stole 144 bases (two guys stole more than 40). How do you improve on that? Well, add a 22-year-old Grade 18, 110 innings of closer grade relief, and a season and a half of power bats. Watch your prize 2013 rookie put up the only 3B6 on the roster, your prize 2012 rookie put up a second outstanding season, your prize 2005 rookie hit .324 and receive a C9/Th+6 just before becoming a full time first baseman, your prize 2009 rookie hit 53 homers . . . you improve on it by being even better and more powerful. If there was a stone unturned before, it has hopefully been dealt with over the winter.

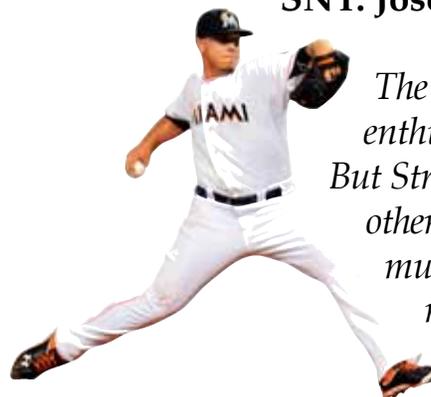
They are going to win, and – if all goes well – they are going to get past that Game 7.

Or else.

Pitching: 16.5
There isn’t a staff that matches it.

ROTATION. Begin with Jose Fernandez (Grade 18 C-14 HR+31). He’s hurt in 2014, but for this season, Brobdingnag gets to send the best pitcher in the card set to the mound 28 times. Other than Whitman, no one else has a pitcher like that. But

SNT: Jose Fernandez



The injury dampens enthusiasm somewhat. But Strasburg and many others have come back much stronger. In the meanwhile – he’s terrific.

that’s not all: Stephen Strasburg (Grade 14) and Justin Masterson (Grade 13 C-26 HR+33) add 59 additional Grade 13+ starts.

The rest of the rotation is solid. Homer Bailey (Grade 11 C+16), Chris Tillman (Grade 11 C-12 HR-24) Jhoulys Chacin (Grade 9 HR+33) get the other half of the starts. There isn’t a bad start all year.

BULLPEN. There are 700 relief innings, as the instructions say. The top guy is slightly less impressive than last year, but is still superior: Craig Kimbrel (Grade 24* HR+26) has 67 innings. New draftees Tanner Roark (Grade 19 C+23 HR+54) and lefty Neal Cotts (Grade 24* HR+46) add 110 more closer-grade innings to back him up.

Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Neal Cotts, Jose Fernandez, Chris Getz, Dee Gordon, Aaron Loup, Donnie Murphy, Dioner Navarro, Hanley Ramirez, Tanner Roark, Brandon Workman.

Departed: Lonnie Chisenhall, Kevin Frandsen, Tim Hudson, Adam Lind, Chris Nelson, Jake Peavy, Cesar Ramos, Alex Rodriguez, David Ross, Wilson Valdez.



broddingnag BARBARIANS

Then come the middlemen. Bobby Parnell (Grade 15* C+31 HR+54) and Casey Janssen (a slightly less effective 15* C+23 HR+35) come first, with Grant Balfour (Grade 16* C-31) backing them up; there are 164 innings between them.



Strasburg: #2 starter

Antonio Bastardo (Grade 16* lefty, C-52 HR+41) will get a chance to pitch as well. Aaron Loup (Grade 12* C+43 HR+26), Sergio Romo (Grade 12* C+36 HR+15) and lefty Derek Holland (Grade 10 HR+16), who would be in most teams' rotations, are almost ornamental after all the rest.

Pitching staffs in other years, for other teams, have been better than this one. But there isn't one anywhere else in TBL this year that matches it.

Offense: 16.0
Yeesh.

Begin with Chris Davis. He's finally turned into the player he was drafted to be (1-1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-12 R+5). He's in the middle of every lineup, every day. When he comes to bat there will be people on base: Mike Trout (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 5 walks+22, 42 SBA with a 32 SSN); Joe Mauer (4 0s, 11 hits, 4 walks); off season trade acquisitions David Ortiz (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 4 walks,



Davis: He's arrived

L-12 R+5) and Hanley Ramirez (1-1-4-6-6, 12 hits, 3 walks+22, 12 SBA with a 32 SSN, for about half a season); Alex Rios (3 0s, 10

hits, 2 walks, 49 SBA with a 33 SSN, L+5 E-); Manny Machado (4 0s, 11 hits); and Jayson Werth (1-5-6, 11 hits, 4 walks, L+6 R-3, 11 SBA with a 35 SSN). Not every bat will be available in every lineup due to usage restrictions, but still . . . *Yeesh.*

Of particular note is the amount of power on the roster. Two players with two 1s and five power numbers is like a 1994 flashback, while some of the guys with four power numbers would otherwise be good enough to bat cleanup on other rosters. In addition to those listed above, Donnie Murphy (1-1-5-6, 9 hits) is available for a third of the season, and Dioner Navarro (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22) is an acceptable alternative for the third of the season when Mauer has to sit. Everth Cabrera (0-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 49 SBA with a 29 SSN, L+8 R-5) is at least fast, while Chris Young (1-4-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, 13 SBA with a 30 SSN) and Dustin Ackley (2 0s, 9 hits) are the only spots that anyone will want to pitch to.

This lineup will score runs in bunches. It has few significant platoon shifts, with Davis and Ortiz the most obvious exceptions, but it's hard (particularly in Davis' case) for that to affect the choice of lineup. In any case, it is truly reminiscent of the power-laden batting orders of twenty years ago.

Defense: 7.0
Insult to injury.

Begin behind the plate. Joe Mauer may be moving to first base in 2014, but this year he's as good as it gets (C9 Th+6), though every third day he'll step aside for Dioner Navarro (C7 Th-0), which isn't as good.

The infield is superior on the corners. Chris Davis (1B4) is Fielding One, and Manny

Machado (3B6) is really *really* Fielding One. In the middle, the best defenders, Dustin Ackley (2B8) and Everth Cabrera (SS9), can really pick it, though Donnie Murphy (2B6) will be a couple of months of challenge, and Hanley Ramirez (SS8) is only average.



Machado: Really really Fielding One.

In the outfield, Jayson Werth (OF3, 36 arm) and Mike Trout (OF3, 33 arm) are excellent; Chris Young (OF3, 32 arm) is very good when he plays, and Alex Rios (OF2) is only Fielding Two but his arm is 36.

Adding a fine defense to the superior offense is really adding insult to injury. Mature teams – and this set of position players is pretty mature, aside from Trout and Machado – tend to be slower and less capable in the field, but it's clearly not true in this case.

Bench: 2.0
If there was a need . . .

If there was a need for a bench, the deficiency in this part of the roster would be something to complain about. There really isn't; Young is the extra defender in the outfield; Ramirez shares shortstop with Cabrera, but there aren't enough games for defensive substitution. Chris Getz (2B8, 19 SBA with a 32 SSN, but 8 hits, 3 walks) can pinch run and play defense, and Adam Dunn (1-1-6, 8 hits, 4 walks) has a full season, but appears only useful for comic relief.

1st As if there was any doubt. This team will win more than 100 games, though it isn't good enough to break the all-time wins record even with a few dozen games against punching-bags in the division and conference. They will be even better in the playoffs, where usage restrictions matter less,

and the pitching staff is top notch. They should go far in the playoffs.

Or else.



brobdingnag:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 9

When a team dominates the draft for a couple of years – and a glance at the last few issues of the *Annual* to see the bulging thermometers next to the team name proves it – the idea that this dominant club is in the top half on the youth chart shouldn't be surprising. But it doesn't make us feel much better. (All we can say is, *Thank God it isn't Harper and Puig and Myers and six other guys too.*)

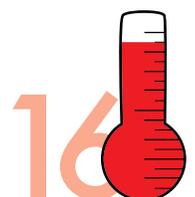
The club isn't completely youngsters. There are some veterans – but not in the rotation (Masterson is 29, and he's the oldest); only somewhat in the line-up (Trout will be 23 this year; Machado will be 22; Davis is 28; Ackley is 26; Cabrera is 27; Mauer is 31; Ramirez and Young are 30. But Rios is 33, Werth is 35 and Ortiz 38). Only the bullpen, the last thing Auletta builds, is a real veteran group (Kimbrel is 26, Roark 27, but most of the other principals are older.)

The takeaway is this: the key parts of the team will be together, and will be a force, for some time to come. Now all they need to do is win.

TQ: 42.5



brobdingnag BARBARIANS



2013 detroit STARS in review

The cardboard, and the legitimate talent, performed pretty well in 2013.



2013 in Review

Final Record: 94-68 (2nd, Ruth)

We said last year that the roster was full of cardboard, other than a few outliers – Robinson Cano and rookie Wilin Rosario, C. C. Sabathia and the older, but talented, members of the starting rotation. Building a perennial contender on the likes of Eric Chavez, Josh Willingham, Jesus Guzman and the like is a direction we disdain here at the *Annual*. (We prefer the far more sound process of acquiring solid talent and waiting for the time they all come together. You know, like Dallas. So this year Dallas is in deep rebuild mode, and Detroit is looking at another playoff run. So what do we know.)

Anyway. The cardboard, and the legitimate talent, performed pretty well in 2013. The club hit only .249 but did club 206 homers; they turned in a 3.51 ERA (sixth in TBL) and struck out 1,330 opposing batters (fifth in TBL), giving up only 608 runs while scoring 745. They won 94 games; the bottom two teams in the Ruth finished below .500 and the Barbarians won 109, so their second place finish was pretty much assured as we had predicted. They went out in seven games to Columbus, which happens. And this year they're back again.

What went right?

Robinson Cano was as good as expected (.283-27-84, with 42 doubles). Wilin Rosario had a powerful rookie season (.280-34-80). Eric Chavez evidently had a coffin of native soil; he hit .263 and smacked 20 home runs. Josh Willingham hit 28, and Cody Ross hit 22.

C. C. Sabathia won only 13 games, but notched 214 strikeouts in 217 innings and pitched 9 complete games. Hiroki Kuroda was very good (16-6, 3.05, 6 CG and three shutouts). Chad Billingsley won 13; R. A. Dickey 12, with 226 Ks in 232 innings). Jared Burton (5-2, 31 saves, 1.85 ERA) was lights out as a closer, with help from various others.

What went wrong?

The .249 BA came with a .306 OBP. The team struck out three times as many times as it walked. The team leader in steals was Rafael Furcal with 6; Detroit stole 17 bases *all year*. This was never going to be a huge part of the offense, but it seems extreme. Again, this seems evidence that the team was built to do this in the regular season but wouldn't go far in the playoffs. That turned out to be true.



Rosario: Powerful rookie

3 Things

1. *Go get more bats.* The team is a contender now; might as well ride this horse as far as it can. Thus Prince Fielder, Danny Valencia. Most of the bats from last year are here this year, so it comes down to filling in gaps.
2. *We don't need no stinking bullpen.* Because the starting rotation is good, Detroit has dispensed with the need to have anyone to replace them. Gorzelanny and Torres, as noted, have the number 20* on their cards; that's apparently good enough.
3. *There are still moves to make.* Detroit has its first and second rounder in 2015. Going out in the Wild Card is unacceptable; will they make a move down the stretch? We think maybe yes.

detroit STARS

Dave Jaskot (3rd year)

It may happen again again.



Jaded observers of TBL, which is more or less all of us, have specific ideas about the way in which the business of team building is done. Or, more particularly, the way in which the business of team building is *not* done. This franchise has had its share of attempts to do it the way we think is unwise: spending future drafts to build the present roster.

It's happening again, though the club still has a 2015 first and second rounder, so it may happen *again* again. Assuming there isn't a 2002 East Anglia extinction event, there will be holes to fill and problems to patch . . . but even sooner than that, because, you know, winning is *fun*, the Stars may look at expending those resources to try and get to the finish line *now*. It's not a young team: there's one 25-year-old, one 26-year-old, and one 27-year-old. Might as well try to win now.

Pitching: 8.5 **Deficient in certain critical ways.**

Now back to your regularly-scheduled iconoclasm regarding the way it's done. TBL cognoscenti, and this publication, believe that bullpens win games. It doesn't hurt a bit to have a solid rotation, but having the right guys in the last three innings decide close contests.

Based on what ended up on the roster, it seems apparent that Mr. Jaskot (whom we have never met) has a different opinion. He *did* trade for Carlos Torres to add a scary 37 innings to the end of the bullpen, but sent away the best lefty – Andrew Miller – away a few days later. The relievers are really not going to help the starters. Will that make a difference? We think it will.

ROTATION. Hisashi Iwakuma (Grade 14 C+33) turned in a pretty fine season, and will make 33

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Jordan Danks, Danny Espinosa, Prince Fielder, Tom Gorzelanny, Pete Kozma, Jean Machi, Darren Oliver, Yasmiero Petit, Clayton Richard, Ryan Sweeney, Miguel Tejada, Carlos Torres, Danny Valencia.

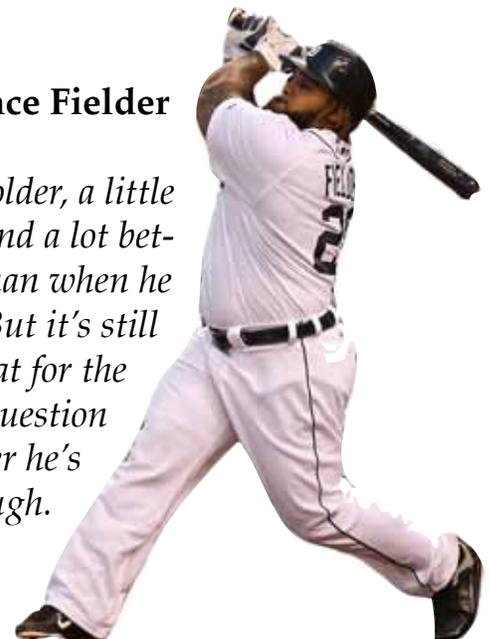
Departed: Bobby Abreu, Andrew Brown, Jesus Guzman, Tony Gwynn Jr., Ryan Hanigan, Travis Ishikawa, Brad Lincoln, Matt Lindstrom, Jose Lopez, Andrew Miller, C. C. Sabathia, Josh Willingham.

starts at the head of a solid rotation. His tag team partner, Francisco Liriano (Grade 13 lefty, C-32 HR+33), has 26 more, fulfilling the promise that the Zen Master saw in him in 2007.

The next 94 starts are manned by right handed Grade 10s. R. A. Dickey (HR-22), Hiroki Kuroda (C_26 HR+14) and sophomore Miguel Gonzalez (HR-15) are all solid. Yusmeiro Petit, who must have "flashes of brilliance" tattooed on his fore-

SNT: Prince Fielder

He's a little older, a little heavier, and a lot better paid than when he broke in. But it's still an impact bat for the Stars. The question is whether he's durable enough.





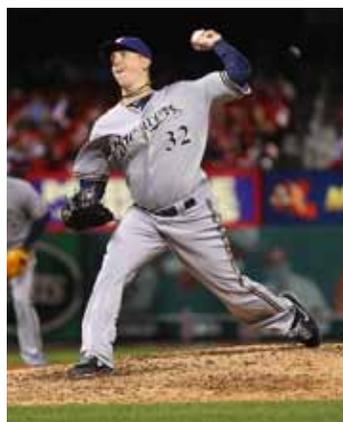
detroit STARS

head, adds 7 more (Grade 9 C+26 HR+14). Overall, it's a very solid group; the question is how deep they can get in to games.

BULLPEN. Years of watching the Red Sox gives the *Annual* staff a strong stomach for the ninth inning (though not anymore in the Koji Era). Detroit Stars management will have to acquire the same tolerance. Carlos Torres (Grade 20* C+31 HR-34) from the right side and Tom Gorzelanny (Grade 20* C-22 HR-16) from the left have 37 innings each. Mr. Jaskot may have to take blood pressure medicine by the time this season is over.

The setup guy is a solid rookie, but there should be two or three pitchers with better grades. Still, Jean Machi (Grade 12* C+33 HR+43) has 53 good innings; he may even serve as the closer for part of the year.

Then there's the bulk relief. There's a lot of it: Jared Burton (Grade 10* C+21 HR+21, 66 innings) and Matt Lindstrom (Grade 9* C-16 HR+52, 60 innings) are the best of the group (well, actually, Lindstrom was part of the best: he was released after April in exchange for the hope that Clayton Richard would return to form); the others – all Grade 10*s – are not as good: Rafael Soriano (C+23), James Russell (C+21 HR-22) and lefty Darren Oliver (C+13) have almost 170 innings to go with it.



Torres, Gorzelanny: Blood pressure medicine

And that's it. Brian Duensing (Grade 6* HR+34) has some lefty innings, and Gorzelanny and Torres are Grade 4s when their "good" innings run out.

This pitching staff is good, but deficient in certain critical ways. If the starter gets crushed, and the offense can't come back, there are going to be problems.

Offense: Boy howdy.

11.0

There is no number an offense more likes to roll than a '1'. And boy howdy, there are certainly plenty of them on the table.

Brandon Moss is certainly a nice card (1-1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-11 R+1; look out for the error number on dice number 13). The half season of Ryan Raburn (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L+4 R-6) is very good; so is Danny Valencia (1-5-5-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L+6 R-13, 52 games), and Mike Carp (1-5-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-7, 86 games). Colby Rasmus (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 9 13s) is showing the potential once seen in him. Eric Chavez (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks) has jumped back to 2005 for half a season. But the best card on the roster, one of the best players in baseball – the kind you usually can't trade for because they stay with the team that drafted them – is Robinson Cano (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L-6 R+2, 8 SBA with a 34 SSN).

That's about half the lineup positions. The rest are not as powerful, and are a mix of good and bad news. Behind the plate, Wilin Rosario (1-5-6, 11 hits, L+4 R-3) turned in a good sophomore season; but Ryan Doumit (3 0s, 9 hits) fills in the balance. Ryan Sweeney (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) is a good half season; Prince Fielder (1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+22) is good, but isn't exactly vintage Prince Fielder. Cody Ross' half season (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+12 R-8) is a decent role player. Only shortstop, shared between Cliff Pennington (6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Pete Kozma (8 hits), is a black hole.

There are some platoon problems (though the instructions say “let them play through their shifts” due to missing games.) The best cards might not be able to get into play at the same time very often.



Cano: One of the best

Defense: 3.5
Could use some options.

The good news starts with Robinson Cano (2B8). He’s the Fielding One regular in the lineup. Sometimes Ryan Sweeney (OF3, 33 arm) will get to play in the field, and Pete Kozma (SS9) will give Detroit some reason to put him in the lineup. Danny Espinosa (2B8) is a Fielding One defender as well, but there’s no place for him to play.

The rest of the defenders are Fielding Two or worse. Fielder and Carp are both 1B3s, as is Moss; Pennington is an SS8 when he plays; Chavez is a 3B4, and the rest of the outfielders are OF2s with mediocre to above-average arms. The catchers are both C6s; Rosario’s arm is positive (Th+1), while Doumit’s is negative (Th-1).

Bench: 2.0
A little thin.

The need to swap out to fill the season makes the bench a little thin. There are a few extra players; Brian Bogusevic (OF2, 37 arm, 1-5-6, 10 hits, L-12) has a little usage; Miguel Tejada’s swan song (2B7, 2 Os, 11 hits, L-5 R+3) can pinch-hit; and Jordan Danks has 9 steal attempts, which the most on the roster. A few options more would be welcome.

With two intense rebuilds going on at the bottom of the division, and the mighty juggernaut at the top, there’s no place else for Detroit to finish. They could be very good, but could

also be boxed out by good opposing staffs. The absence of a contender bullpen should be an obstacle, especially in the playoffs; the downside might be 86 wins. On the other hand, there are a lot of bad teams to beat up on. That may be where the playoff berth is won – or lost.



detroit:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 22

OK. We get this. Last year’s brief review suggested that Detroit management might be looking at a bad hangover and a regrettable tattoo – in other words, buyer’s remorse. We said that the 2013 roster was “full of cardboard”, and it was, and it still is. Detroit is an *old* club. Not quite Rye old, but still, 23 carded players age 30 and over is quite a burden.

As stated in the opening, there are three guys aged 25, 26 and 27 that represent the youth movement on this club; but Cano is 31, Fielder is 30, Moss is 30, Raburn is 33, Chavez is 36. The rotation, youngest to oldest, is 30, 30, 33, 39 and 39. The bullpen is less of a worry because there doesn’t seem to be one.

Don’t get us wrong. At the Annual we love Robinson Cano, we like the starters, we appreciate the Prince Fielder experience. We realize that Detroit isn’t all in for next season; there’s still a #1 and a #2 in the 2015 draft. But they won’t be early, and they’ll have to take present value. At some point, it all comes to end. Enjoy the ride.

TQ: 25.5



detroit STARS

2nd



2013 dallas EAGLES in review



There won't be any need for a magic 8-ball in 2014.

2013 in Review

Final Record: 77-85 (4th, Ruth)

We feel better for having covered our butts in the 2013 *Annual*. So are they good enough? We wrote. *When the difference between second and fourth is a point and a half of TQ, it's clear that the answer is unclear – you should shake your magic 8-ball and ask again.* That turned out to be fairly prophetic. Detroit was a little better than expected; New Westminster and Dallas were a measure worse. In hindsight, Dr. Steve might have wanted a little better result, since 77 wins won't be in reach next year, or possibly the year after. There won't be any need for a magic 8-ball in 2014.

What went right?

Tyler Colvin's power surge was the best news in the lineup (32 homers, 10 triples, 40 doubles, 98 RBI). Mark Teixeira and Ryan Zimmerman also cleared the 20 home run barrier, and Mike Morse hit 13 in two-thirds of a season. Josh Reddick managed 19 homers.

The top end of the bullpen – Jeremy Horst (16 saves, 1.76 ERA), Brandon League (2.25 ERA), Joel Hannahan (7 saves, 2.28 ERA), Scott Downs (4 wins, 2.41 ERA), Boone Logan (2.45 ERA), and Jose Mijares (2.57 ERA) kept Dallas in many games. Grant Balfour's ERA wasn't quite as good but he did record 18 saves. C. J. Wilson led the team with 11 wins.

What went wrong?

My goodness. Colvin hit only .262. Alejandro De Aza hit .299 to lead the team, but had little

power and stole only 11 bases in 21 tries. Chris Denorfia (.261-1-36) stole 11, but played way too much. Teixeira and Zimmerman hit .243 and .242; Brandon Phillips hit .241. Reddick hit .190 and struck out 156 times, one fewer than Colvin's 157.

The starters were uniformly weak. Karstens won 6 in a part-time role, but Josh Johnson went 10-16, 4.45; C. J. Wilson, 11-14, 4.75; Clayton Richard, 7-10, 4.96; and Bartolo Colon, 8-8, 5.09.

3 Things

1. *When things fall apart, you have to let them drop.* There was a time that the Dallas roster was full of Guys We Like: Crawford, Phillips, Zimmerman, Teixeira, Wilson, Johnson, Haren. The ones that didn't break have largely left the building now. Sentimentality and familiarity are fine, but when the situation becomes acute, management must be ruthless.
2. *There are no sacred cows.* In keeping with Thing 1, there isn't – or shouldn't be – anyone who can't be relocated to another team, or cut from the roster if they have no further use. Two-thirds of the 2013 players are simply gone from Dallas to other teams or to the waivers. See you later; nice to know you.
3. *Get young.* We are a little confused by the approaches taken by some teams trying to get their act back together, but not by the Dallas approach. They're fourth youngest in TBL now. That's the way you do it.



Colvin: Power surge

dallas EAGLES



Steve Powell (25th year)

The most important numbers are the dates of birth.

There is a tide in human affairs, as the clichéd phrase begins. There certainly is: catching that tide and riding it to championships is the point of the exercise in which we are engaged. The problem is that when the tide goes out, things are often left in disarray. It leads, one might say, to misfortune.

Our experienced friend Dr. Steve was observant enough to know this was coming. A rash of injuries and other symptoms of an aging core were sure signs that it was time to point the team the other way. Therefore – gone are Brandon Phillips and Ryan Zimmerman; Bartolo Colon and C. J. Wilson; Jason Grilli (who had a good year for, you know, Jason Grilli) and Josh Johnson. Arrived are some new young players who haven't yet reached their full potential: Oswaldo Arcia, Travis d'Arnaud, Jacob Marisnick and Marcell Ozuna, Robbie Erlin and Jonathan Pettibone. If they work out – if Mark Teixeira comes back and Carl Crawford and Starlin Castro return to form – if Jacob Turner makes progress and Dan Haren pitches like, you know, *Dan Haren* – and if next year's draft, which includes two 1s and two 3s, yields good results . . . then the next version of the team will take form. Two-thirds of the preceding version is gone, the highest percentage in TBL (see box at right).

In the meanwhile this season is what we here at the *Annual* call a "learning opportunity."

Pitching: **8.0**
Not the problem.

Teams looking to disassemble often dispose of all pitching that could help another team. The departure of Wilson and Colon, among others, certainly follows that pattern. But it didn't all

SNT: Travis d'Arnaud

Catchers sometimes take a little while to develop, but D'Arnaud has all the tools – power, plate discipline and a good arm and glove.



leave. Indeed, this pitching staff isn't a contender, but is competent. There isn't enough of it; but there are no truly appalling starts and there are some good innings. In short, this is *not* the problem.

ROTATION. It takes nine starters to get through the season. That's a bit of a misleading number: most of the starts belong to six pitchers, three full time and three half-time and over, with the last twenty-plus in the custody of spot guys. There will be some difficult days, but there aren't any truly bad starts.

Turnover Rate: 66%

Arrived: Oswaldo Arcia, Mike Aviles, A. J. Burnett, Starlin Castro, Kevin Chapman, Travis d'Arnaud, Matt Davidson, Ryan Dempster, Derek Dietrich, Robbie Erlin, Jason Hammel, Aaron Hicks, Michael Kohn, Jake Marisnick, Bryan Morris, Lyle Overbay, Marcell Ozuna, Jonathan Pettibone, David Phelps, Cesar Ramos, Travis Snider, Adam Warren, Rob Wooten.

Departed: Heath Bell, Pedro Ciriaco, Bartolo Colon, Tyler Colvin, Alejandro De Aza, Shelley Duncan, Dee Gordon, Jason Grilli, Joel Hanrahan, Jeremy Horst, Josh Johnson, Jeff Karstens, Brandon League, John McDonald, Jose Mijares, Mike Morse, Brandon Phillips, Clayton Richard, Bryan Shaw, Kelly Shoppach, Moises Sierra, C. J. Wilson, Ryan Zimmerman.



dallas EAGLES

The three full timers are led by A. J. Burnett (Grade 11 C-15 HR+33, 30 starts). Now 37, Burnett has continued to pitch competently. The other two are less competent: Ryan Dempster (Grade 8 C-36 HR-16) ate innings for the Red Sox in 2013, and will do so for Dallas as well; Dan Haren (Grade 5 C+33 HR-31) spent 2013 off planet for some reason – between the two there are 59 more starts. Then come the pitchers who are available part of the season. Jacob Turner (Grade 9 C-33 HR+13, 20 starts) is last year’s first rounder, and the hope of the next iteration of the staff; Jason Hammel (Grade 5 HR-21) and rookie Jonathan Pettibone (Grade

6 C-15 HR+14) provide 41 more starts. Rookie Robbie Erlin (Grade 8 lefty), David Phelps (Grade 6 C-24 HR+22) and a couple from Adam Warren (Grade 10 C-16) fill out the rest.

BULLPEN. There is no real closer to lead the relief corps, which does include about 400 innings (again, scattered among nine pitchers). Kevin Chapman (Grade 20* lefty, C-62 HR+62, 20 innings) is the best grade, but the bulk of the end game innings belong to two Grade 14*s: Andrew Bailey (C-36 HR+52) and Michael Kohn (C-44), who have 81 between them.

The remaining bullpen will be available in waves. Dallas’ instructions call for seven relievers on the staff each month. Boone Logan (Grade 13* lefty C+22 HR-32) may get closing opportunities; and Scott Downs (Grade 11* lefty C-25 HR+55) and rookies Bryan Morris (Grade 11* C-23 HR-15) and Adam Warren (Grade 10* C-16) come next. These four have more than 220 innings, and every inning will be used. Lefty Cesar Ramos (Grade 8* C+23 HR+22) and righty David Phelps (Grade 6*) have about 90 more.

As with the starters, there aren’t really bad innings. But every inning will likely be used.

Offense: **4.0** Punchless is too complimentary.

The Dallas lineup has been a powerful force in the past, though it was always prone to strikeouts. Last year’s club hit 173 homers, and in 2011 they got to the World Series hitting .276 with 212 round trippers.

All that is but a fading memory. The number of players with a fourth power number is exactly *one* (Matt Davidson). The number of players with an eleventh hit is exactly *one* (Carl Crawford). Rookies Oswaldo Arcia (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-5) and Derek Dietrich (1-5-6, 8 hits, 2 walks+42, L+3 R-3) share DH and the cleanup spot. Mr. Crawford will be the leadoff hitter when the lefty shift doesn’t cripple him (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, E30 for 17 SBA, L-11 R+2); Chris Denorfia (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, E35 for 11 SBA, L+3 R-4) will have the duty the rest of the time. Those and rookie OF Marcell Ozuna’s half season (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, F32 for 6 SBA) are the majority of the offense.

The infield – most days – will be the uninspiring combination of Lyle Overbay (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-9 R+1) at first; Yuniesky Betancourt (3 0s, 8 hits, 1 walk) at second; Starlin Castro (3 0s, 9 hits, 2

walks+22) at shortstop; and Mike Aviles (3 0s, 10 hits, 1 walk+22) at third. Behind the plate Martin Maldonado (3



Arcia, Ozuna:

The date of birth numbers are the ones that matter here.



0s, 7 hits, 2 walks+22), Travis d'Arnaud (2 0s, 7 hits, 4 walks, L-5 R+2) and George Kottaras (1-0-0, 6 hits, 7 walks+2 22s, L-6) barely cover all the games. Note that Kottaras is the best hitter of the bunch. The pride of Scarborough, Canada may never again have that said about him in any context; we should relish the moment. The final offensive piece – a little Annual double entendre there for you – is Josh Reddick (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, E31 for 11 SBA).

It is too complimentary to describe this offense as punchless, particularly since there is very little maneuverability due to missing games and short seasons. Some of these cards are innocuous, which will permit even more usage of them, adding to the entertainment. They'll have a tough time scoring 500 runs this year.

Defense: 3.5 **Not much help for the pitchers.**

Another area that used to be the pride of the team. The bright spots are Reddick (OF3, 36 arm) and Overbay (1B5); Martin Maldonado (C8 Th+2) is fine when he's available, which is only 67 games. The other infielders are all Fielding Two: Kottaras (C7 Th+1) and d'Arnaud (C7 Th-1); Betancourt, Dietrich and Aviles (2B7); Castro and Aviles (SS8); Aviles (3B4). The outfielders are all OF2s with average arms, and Arcia (OF1) will probably never have to flash a glove. The defenders won't give the pitchers too much help, and the last thing Dallas needs to do is give other clubs a chance to extend innings.

Bench: 2.0 **Platoons and space fillers.**

The waiver draft added a useful space-filler in Travis Snider (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, L-10 for 111 games). If he could catch he'd play almost every day. Aaron Hicks (3 0s, 7 hits, OF2, 36 arm) can run a little bit; Jake Marisnick (2 0s, 6 hits) can as well. None of them can hit. Matt Davidson

can (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 8 13s) but only has 88 plate appearances; when available he's the viable option off the bench. Other than that, the bench supplies the other parts of platoons in left field, DH and catcher.

3rd

Though the team is disturbingly underpowered, the pitching will be enough to keep them ahead of a team that is even more appallingly bad (New Westminster). Still, the idea of being pummeled by Brobdingnag and Detroit (and, less frequently, Whitman, Rye, Greater Ohio and Gotham City) will be enough to bring them close to the top of the 2015 draft.



dallas:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 4

As we so frequently say, on a team like this the most important numbers on the are the dates of birth. That's the ray of hope that will keep Dallas going this season.

As with other teams, it will take a while to see if this total transform is successful. The former team was beginning to fray around the edges but wasn't at the cliff: it could have followed the Detroit or Rye model. Instead, there are 9 players age 25 or less, and they rank fourth on the youth chart. This is therefore a work in progress; but the *Annual* sees it as rebuilding done right.

TQ: 17.5



dallas EAGLES



2013 new westminster WHISKEYJACKS in review



It really was a question of what was not on the roster.

2013 in Review Final Record: 79-83 (3rd, Ruth)

It really was a question of what was not on the roster. The pitching staff, we thought, was good enough to finish second, or third, and the offense was strained enough to finish third, or fourth. They finished fourth, by two games. Then it started to fall apart, and what wasn't already showing cracks was dealt away. Now it's a mess.

What went right?

Prince Fielder is big – very big. Bigger than ever before. He put up very big numbers too (.301-42-115, 80 walks). He's been the center of gravity in the New Westminster lineup for years, and earned all of his imaginary Canadian dollars last year. Hanley Ramirez and Ryan Ludwick each chipped in 20 homers; Trevor Plouffe hit 16 before being sent off to Hudson for the ghost of Derek Jeter. Desmond Jennings stole 13 in 13 tries to lead the team.

Ryan Cook (5 wins, 31 saves, 2.21 ERA) and Wade Davis (5 wins, 1.64 ERA, 78 Ks and only 31 hits in 66 innings) were outstanding in the pen. Robbie Ross (2.78 ERA) was solid. Ryan Dempster had the best ERA of the starters (11-8, 3.39); Johnny Cueto went 12-13, 3.89; Paul Maholm, 15-8, 4.06.

What went wrong?

They struck out a lot (1,371 times, second in the league behind Portland). Six players struck out more than 100 times, led by punchless Danny

Espinosa (.241, 184 Ks), speedy but ineffective Dexter Fowler (8 for 8 stealing, 13 triples, but 150 Ks), and J. P. Arencibia (148 Ks and only 10 homers). Other than Fielder, none of the rest of the regular players struck fear into any pitchers' hearts; they hit 176 homers, but only 277 doubles, suggesting many innings with three singles and two strikeouts and a ground ball.

The starting staff only had 13 complete games (though 11 were shutouts). The pitchers overall

weren't terribly susceptible to the home run, though the relievers did give them up, probably at the worst times: New Westminster outscored opponents 706-697, and finished near .500 – less than expected, given that the first round pick was a closer.



Fielder: Big

3 Things

1. *Giving up.* It was clear that the team had crossed the bridge to non-contention, based on the performance of its players in MLB 2013. Deciding to rebuild is always tough when a team has Guys It Likes, but sometimes it has to be done.

2. *Trading the key chips.* Many of the former key guys are gone. Prince Fielder is now with division rival Detroit; Hanley Ramirez is part of the Barbarian offense; Ryan Cook is on the Portland roster; Ryan Dempster is with Dallas. Time will tell if the Whiskeyjacks got enough for them.

3. *Get younger.* This is clearly an effort in progress; the club is in the older half of the league at the moment. If we were to guess, the *Annual* would assume that there's more of this to come.

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

Jim Jeatt (10th year)

Stuff happens.



Agreeably to our kinder and gentler attitudes in these latter days of the *Annual*, we are far more inclined toward commiseration than invective when a team falls on hard times. Over the last two decades the supply of metaphors for this sort of thing has been drained almost to the bottom; clubs that have taken their place in contention and then been forced to regroup – or, more drastically, rebuild – are often critiqued for the methods and means and judged by the results. (But not by us, of course.)

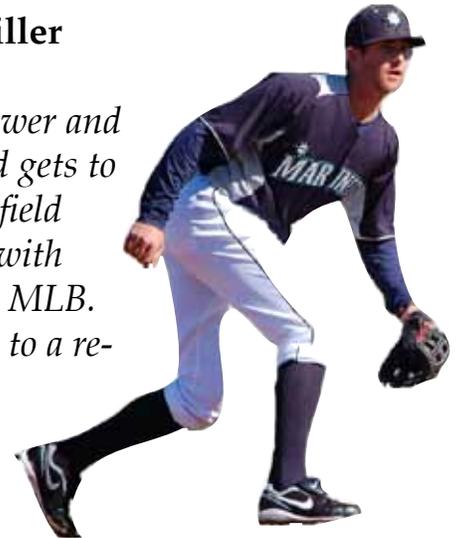
Consider, as a case in point, the New Westminster Whiskeyjacks. Just a few years ago – 2010, as it happens – the team racked up 102 wins, hit 173 homers and scored 879 runs (third most in TBL). The team ERA was 3.58, fifth in the league. Hanley Ramirez, Prince Fielder, Matt Holliday, Dexter Fowler, Russell Martin, Joel Piniero, Joe Nathan, Johnny Cueto, Jonathan Broxton . . . they wore 'Jacks uniforms.

But stuff happens. Injuries, aging, the need to fill gaps and ultimately the decision to rebuild have sent many of those players away. Holliday, Martin, Nathan, Broxton and Piniero are gone. In this offseason so are Ramirez and Fielder, as well as much of the pitching that had been painstakingly assembled for a playoff run that never quite happened. What's left is . . . well, it's a few familiar names (Cueto, Fowler, 2011 rookie J. P. Arencibia, 2012 rookie Desmond Jennings) and some new draftees. And a whole lot of space fillers.

The pitching, interestingly enough, is not abysmal. But the lineup, compared to the anemic one in Dallas, has one fewer player with eleven hits (there are none) and one fewer player with four power numbers (there are none). And there will be a high #1 pick waiting in the 2015 draft, along with two #2s and three #3s. Things will look a

SNT: Brad Miller

He has some power and some speed, and gets to share middle infield and the lineup with Robbie Cano in MLB. A nice addition to a rebuilding team.



Turnover Rate:
46%

Arrived: David Aardsma, Lonnie Chisenhall, Dane de la Rosa, Conor Gillaspie, Scott Kazmir, Jeff Locke, Tyler Lyons, Brad Miller, Joe Ortiz, Josh Outman, Chris Parmelee, Omar Quintanilla, C. C. Sabathia, Anthony Varvaro, Ryan Webb, Josh Willingham.

Departed: Jose Arredondo, Ryan Cook, Kevin Correia, Tony Cruz, Ryan Dempster, Danny Espinosa, Prince Fielder, Bryan La Hair, Brent Lillibridge, Mark Melancon, Andy Pettitte, Hanley Ramirez, Clay Rapada, Alfredo Simon, Brandon Snyder, Eric Stults.

lot better after those selections – which won't be hard. They look pretty unpleasant now. As Jim Jeatt says in the instructions: "If you lose to us we apologise not just because we are Canadian."

Pitching: **6.5**
A bit too grizzled.

The pitching staff for New Westminster is deep and not entirely without talent. There's a lot of it: 18 pitchers wear the Whiskeyjack Of Shame on their backs this year; the rotation ranges from good grades (91 Grade 8 and above) to ugly (24 starts of a Grade 2), while the bullpen has nearly



new westminster WHISKEY JACKS

600 innings ranging from Grade 15* to Grade 6*. Many of the current staff arrived in the 2014 draft, where there were a lot of young arms available. Remarkably few of them made it to this roster, however; in the *Annual's* opinion, they're just a bit too grizzled for a rebuilding team.

ROTATION. Many years ago we noted that a club featuring a poor staff but having Grade 18 Fernando Valenzuela would benefit if the 270-pound fellow was split into two 135-pound Grade 9s. New Westminster's most frequent starter, C. C. Sabathia (who weighs in at 290, apparently) would only yield two 145-pound Grade 3s. As a lefty Grade 6 for 32 starts, he may have trouble reproducing his MLB 14-13, 4.78 result. Johnny Cueto, the injured once and future ace, will do better in his 11 starts (Grade 15 HR-15), as will Marco Estrada (Grade 10 C+22 HR-25), rookie lefty Jeff Locke (Grade 12 C-52 HR+26) and 2014 draftee lefty Scott Kazmir, back from the scrap heap (Grade 8). This quartet has 91 starts among them, leaving 39 shared between lefty Paul Maholm (Grade 5) and surrender righty Wade Davis (Grade 2 C-24 HR+14).

Sabathia, Estrada and the two tail gunners have decent fatigue numbers, but on the boards Cueto, Locke and Kazmir will tire in the middle innings and will have to be rescued by the relievers. Fortunately, there are a lot of them.

BULLPEN. The absence of a closer should not be a great surprise; the club will be mixing and matching whenever

they're in the game. Rookie Dane De La Rosa (Grade 15* C-23 HR+44, 72 innings) is the most capable; he'll have help from Ryan Webb (Grade 12* HR+31), Tom Wilhelmsen (Grade 12* C-51 HR+51) Anthony Varvaro (Grade 11* HR+43), Aaron Crow (Grade 10* C-25) and lefties Robbie Ross (Grade 10* C+15 HR+34) and Oliver Perez (Grade 11* C-35). That's almost 450 innings of quality relief that could be setting up on contending clubs. Other than Ross, however, none of these guys is younger than 28. The bulk innings – David Aardsma (Grade 8* HR-32), and three lefties – Joe Ortiz (Grade 7* C+33), Tyler Lyons (Grade 7) and Josh Outman (Grade 6* C-25 HR+35) are much the same.

Offense: 3.0
Subpar, with bouts of mediocrity.

After arranging the cards on the table for a while and taking a walk around to clear our heads, we decided that the best place to start was with the players who are in the lineup the whole year. (In some cases, the club will be swapping one player for another part way through the season due to usage). Martin Prado is the best card on the roster (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+4 R-3), which is a statement in itself. Desmond Jennings (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, D28 for 28 SBA, L+4 R-4) is of comparable quality. Those should be the 3-4 hitters all year. Dexter Fowler (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, L+3 R-3, D26 for 28 SBA) is capable, but missing a third of the season.

The next tier includes rookie Conor Gillaspie (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-14 R+1) who will be the regular first baseman and #5 hitter. The platoon split is an insoluble problem; theoretically Prado could shift to first base with a legacy rating with glove man Casilla replacing him at second, but that would mean Casilla would bat; that's worse than Gillaspie's anemic power. Eric Young (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, C31 for 57 SBA) will also be in the lineup all season; he's the biggest speed threat on the team, with Nate McLouth (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-7, D31 for 37 SBA) also contributing. The trick will be to get them on base.



Sabathia: Better as 2 3s

The rest of the lineup is mix-and-match. Rookie shortstop Brad Miller (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) is a competent half-season; Omar Quintanilla (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks) is an incompetent other half. Lonnie Chisenhall (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-12 R+1) is the better half of the third base combination, with anemic Placido Polanco (6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 3 31s) covering the rest. Josh Willingham (1-0-0, 7 hits, 5 walks+42) is a bearded lady, covering missed games. Behind the plate, J. P. Arencibia (1-0-0, 8 hits, 1 walk) and Carlos Corporan (1-6, 8 hits, 2 walks+42) make little impact. There will be occasional bursts of mediocrity, particularly against teams with poor pitching, but there are going to be a lot of short innings and long games.

Defense: 3.0
Dead average at best.

Fielding Two prevails everywhere in the lineup, though the outfield is strong with Jennings and McLouth as OF3s; Young, Fowler, and the bench players are all OF2s as is Prado. The infield – Arencibia/Corporan (C7, Th+1 and Th-0), Gillaspie (1B3), Prado (2B7), Miller/Quintanilla (SS8), and Polanco/Chisenhall (3B4) – are all dead average. Alexei Casilla (2B9, SS8) is the defensive replacement if needed. There aren't too many high spots, but there are no serious deficiencies either.

Bench: 2.0
Starters largely stapled.

Usage will govern how much the manager can do to affect the outcome, as some players will be unavailable for part of the year, so the starting nine will largely be stapled to their positions. There are only a few spare players. Alexi Casilla (8 hits, 3 walks, C31 for a few steal attempts) is best as a pinch-runner or defensive replacement; Ryan Ludwick (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks L+4 R-3) may be on the roster during the year; Chris Parmelee (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-9 R+1) has, one supposes, entertainment value.

4th

Overall Dallas is more competent, but that doesn't really say very much, and it's possible

that a run of good luck (which, in a rebuilding year, counts as bad luck) could push the New Westminster boys past them into third place, a long way from contention. More likely this is a long season, close to or exceeding 100 losses, out on the tundra in western Canada. And if your club loses to them, they will certainly apologize.



new westminster:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 15

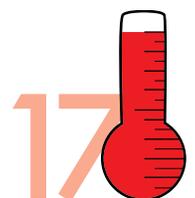
The team was looking at a cliff. We get that. The absence of pitching arms, the need to fill roster spaces, the long rebuild all dictated certain imperatives in the off-season. But – taking middle aged middle relievers, a lot of them? Seriously?

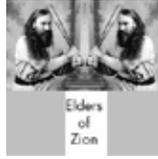
De La Rosa, chosen about 70 picks into the draft, is 31. Webb, taken a few picks earlier, is 28. Varvaro, taken a round later, is 29. Each has 70-80 innings, which bulks up the bullpen; but Webb could have been Yoervis Medina or Justin Wilson or Danny Farquhar. (For that matter, Kazmir could have been Kevin Gausman or Tyler Skaggs.) It leads us to wonder if the structural rebuilding will simply have to be done again in a year. This is just one symptom, and it may apply to other parts of the team. So – things happen. We get that too. But there's still lots of work to be done.

TQ: 14.5



new westminster WHISKEY JACKS





Zion vs. Whitman

Richard “The Sensei” Meyer, winner of five TBL championships (not counting his championships with the Maracaibo franchise), brought his Elders of Zion back to the TBL World Series for the first time since 2003. Zion posted an 8-1 postseason record, including a five-game win over the favored Portland Possum.

Brian Hanley and his Whitman River Rats were making their very first World Series appearance since joining the league back in 1996. Whitman swept Fair Oaks before surviving a seven-game series vs. Greater Ohio, who had beat the favored Brobdingnag Barbarians.

Despite the historical differences, however, the River Rats were favored entering the Series, as Whitman won more games during the season to secure the home field advantage. Plus, Whitman featured a trio of tough left-handed starters, who could potentially tie some of Zion’s best hitters into knots.

Game 1 at Whitman Parker vs. Kershaw

Zion opened the scoring in the 2nd inning, the big hit Jesus Montero’s hit-and-run single to set up a ground-out RBI. Both starters pitched out of jams until the 5th, when rookie Parker allowed a 2-out double to Ben Revere. Juan Pierre’s RBI single tied the game. Both starters escaped rallies, and neither team could break through. Eventually, the bullpens took over.

Tyler Clippard started the 8th for Whitman. Zion countered with pinch-hitter Quintin Berry. Berry caught an outside pitch and sliced it just inside the third-base line for a triple. Montero followed with a double to give the Elders a 2-1 lead. After a successful sacrifice, Whitman catcher A.J. Pierzynski picked Montero off to prevent another run. In the bottom of the inning, the River Rats came right back to tie the game on Chad Tracy’s RBI single.

Aaron Hill, whose error contributed to the Whitman run in the 8th, walked to lead off the 9th, but

Pierzynski threw him out attempting to steal. It was the last threat in regulation baseball. In the 10th inning, Adrian Beltre lashed a double off southpaw Tim Byrdak, and Allen Craig followed with an RBI double. One out later, pinch-hitter Garrett Jones singled in an insurance run off Matt Garza. In the home half, Zion closer Kenley Jansen allowed a Dewayne Wise double and walking Pierzynski. With the tying runs on base, Jansen settled down, getting Nick Markakis, Paul Goldschmidt, and Tracy to earn the save.



Craig

Zion 4, Whitman 2

WP: Uehara LP: Byrdak S: Jansen

Game 2 at Whitman Latos vs. Buehrle

Veteran Mark Buehrle took the hill, as David Price was still fatigued from his Game 7 win over Greater Ohio for the Conference Championship. In the 1st inning, Craig launched a two-run homer to start the scoring, but Whitman responded with Paul Konerko’s two-run blast in the bottom of the inning. Zion scored three unearned runs in the 2nd, thanks in part to a three-base error by Pierre. Craig Gentry, Roger Bernadina, and Franklin Gutierrez each contributed with two-out singles. Wise smacked a solo homer in the bottom of the inning to make it 5-3.



Latos

Pierzynski led off the 4th inning with a single, but Montero picked him off before Wise doubled, preventing a sure run.

Buehrle ran into trouble in the 5th. With two out, Zion strung together four straight singles to stretch its lead to 7-3. Matt Garza started the 8th inning, but Yunel Escobar’s one-out RBI double widened the lead. Latos lasted into the 8th, but a Revere single sent him to the showers. The Zion bullpen (Koji Uehara and Ronald Belisario) retired the final six batters.

Zion 8, Whitman 3

WP: Latos LP: Buehrle

Game 3 at Zion Price vs. Cobb

Desperately needing a win, Whitman broke on top in the 1st inning on a Konerko RBI double. Both teams threatened in the next few innings, but the starters proved up to the task. In the 4th, the River Rats added four runs courtesy of a Cesar Izturis RBI triple, a Pierre RBI double, and two RBI singles by Revere and Konerko, although not in that order.



Price

The Elders got one run back in the bottom of the inning thanks to a one-out Irving Falu RBI triple, but Zion stranded him there. With one out in the 6th, Whitman rallied again. Konerko delivered a two-run triple (the third triple of the game) off Zion reliever Tony Watson to make it 7-1. Price pitched around trouble, but retired the last nine Elders in order to complete the five-hitter. His nine strikeouts were icing on the cake.

Whitman 7, Zion 1

WP: Price LP: Cobb

Game 4 at Zion Lohse vs. Sanchez

Whitman continued its momentum in the 1st inning. Pierre singled, stole second base, and then advanced to third on a groundout. Beltre, starting his first game at third base, booted a grounder for unearned run. Zion came right back in the home half on Shin-Soo Choo's RBI groundout after a Bernadina double.

In the top of the third, Whitman loaded the bases on a single, a walk, and a catcher's interference call to bring up Pierzynski. He delivered a two-run single for two more unearned runs and a 3-1 lead. But in the 5th inning, Beltre singled, and Jones followed with a two-run dinger. All of a sudden, it was a tie game and the momentum had shifted.



Jones

In the bottom of the 5th, Choo delivered a tie-breaking single, and Beltre plated him with a hit-and-run double to make it 5-3. Whitman did not surrender. Matt Dominguez singled to lead off Whitman's 7th, and Ryan Theriot moved him over with a hit-and-run groundout. One out later, Revere plunked a Texas Leaguer to left field. Pinch-runner Brendan Ryan headed home, but Gentry's throw stunned the visitors, nailing him by a step. In the 9th, closer

Jansen surrendered a Goldschmidt double, followed by a Theriot single to put the tying runs on base, but Izturis struck out to end it. Zion had built a 3-1 series lead.

Zion 5, Whitman 3

WP: Sanchez LP: Lohse S: Jansen

Game 5 at Whitman Parker vs. Kershaw

Whitman had their backs to the wall in a rematch of the Game 1 aces, and they started strong. Pierre and Markakis smacked back-to-back RBI doubles in the 1st for an early 2-0 lead, but Parker avoided further damage. The Elders touched Kershaw for three straight one-out singles to get a run back. In the 2nd, Whitman scored on Revere's RBI groundout. Zion loaded the bases with one out in the bottom of the inning, but Kershaw induced a 1-2-3 rally-killing double play.

In the 4th, Goldschmidt doubled and moved to third on a groundout. On Dominguez fly ball Goldschmidt tagged up and headed home. Gutierrez uncorked a perfect throw to the plate to end the rally. Parker walked Ryan to start the 5th, and Revere's hit-and-run single put runners at the corners. On Parker's wild pitch a run scored and Revere reached third base. But he died there, as Whitman could not capitalize on the opportunity. With a three-run lead, Kershaw seemed in command, but momentum shifted again. Hill walked to lead off the home 5th, and then Craig sent a rocket into the bleachers to make it a one-run game. Zion wasn't done. Bernadina walked, stole second, and advanced to third on Kershaw's wild pitch. Montero's fly to spaghetti-armed Pierre tied the game.



Escobar

Leading off the 8th against Byrdak, Beltre stroked a single. One out later with Clippard pitching, Escobar smacked a hit-and-run double to give Zion its first lead of the day. Uehara got two quick outs in the 9th before giving way to Jansen. Pinch-hitter Wise walked and stole second, but Jansen induced a groundout to nail down the save and secure the victory for the Elders.

Zion 4, Whitman 3

WP: Uehara LP: Byrdak S: Jansen

Series MVP: Allen Craig. His 5-for-19 performance with 2 key HR and 5 RBI was outstanding.

The Sisyphus Race

It seems like forever that the rest of the Aaron Division has been looking up at *Ray Murphy's Portland Possum*. Since the rebuilding years of 2007-2009, when they came off their World Series sweep of Greater Ohio and scraped the bottom of the division so as to play the Early Draft Game, they have won four straight pennants, winning 98, 107, 118 and 111 games. That none of those fine seasons has led to a return to the World Series

has been no real consolation to divisional opponents, to which the pursuit of the Portland dynasty has become a race of Sisyphian proportions.

Consider, for example, the *Maracaibo Rumrunners*. *Walter Hunt's* club has been adrift since 2005, when they won an exciting World Series against a previous version of the Barbarian juggernaut (the kind that arises, kraken-like, every few years and devours drafts and regular seasons and sometimes the playoffs as well. Maracaibo has won 92, 89, 99, 90 and 93 games, more or less alternating with 70, 70 and 69 win seasons. Their claim to fame is they have never lost 100 games in a season – but they've never drafted first overall either. This year is an "up" season – the first time in several years there have been two in a row – and almost all the old guard is gone. The bullpen has been bulked up and trades have transformed the lineup. But there is no illusion that this will lead to more than second place.



2013 Aaron Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Portland*	111	51	.685	—
Maracaibo†	93	69	.574	18
Northboro	63	99	.389	48
Kansas	58	104	.358	52

* Lost to Zion in NC championship.
 † Lost to Portland in conference playoff.

Meanwhile, Yankee fan *Bill Schwartz's Kansas Coyotes* are still looking for their place in the sun. When he took over the team, Mr. Schwartz had some success (two 91-win seasons in his first three years) but since then it's been a drift toward mediocrity (79, 75 wins) followed by a complete train wreck last year (58, which in Spanish can be translated as "Yasiel"). There are still some obvious holes on the roster: and this year's ace is next year's Tommy John surgery. We stress the need for a plan; but sometimes the team goes into Jekyll and Hyde mode, defying all attempts to push it in the right direction.



If there's anything M*A*S*H taught us thirty years ago, it's that even if suicide isn't painless, it damn sure brings on many changes. What's old is new again for *Robert Jordan* and *Steve Stein* up in *Northboro*, where the *Phoenix* look to take control of the cliché and begin to rise from the ashes of the team they needed to take apart. It was already in decline last year, when it slipped from also-ran to re-builder; this year it's a swan dive, and not pretty.



Aaron Division

Carlos Gonzalez,
Portland

1. Portland	37.5
2. Maracaibo	30.0
3. Kansas	25.0
4. Northboro	15.5

2013 portland POSSUM in review



Stop us if you've heard this one before.

by Ray Murphy

2013 in Review

Final Record: 111-51 (1st, Aaron)

Another highly successful regular season for the Possum, followed by a disappointing playoff exit. (*Stop us if you've heard this one before.*) 336 regular-season wins over the past three years haven't yielded so much as a conference title in Portland, and the fans are more than a little restless.

What went right?

A 111-51 regular season lends itself to a lot of individual superlatives. The offense scored 900+

runs without a superstar performance. Still, 5 batters hit 20+ HR even though nobody hit 30. David Wright (105) and Scott Hairston (99) were the only batters to clear 90 RBI, but nine hitters had 67 or more. Joey Votto hit .355 in 108 games, with 16 HR, 34 doubles and 74 RBI. Carlos Gonzalez had a great year, leading the team with 120 runs scored, hitting .325-23-73 with 14 steals in 18 tries. Daniel Murphy hit .321 and stole 9 bases in 10 tries. David Wright hit .305-28-105 and scored 117 runs, leading the team with 198 hits.

On the mound, the story was the starting pitching, where Matt Cain (20-5, 2.36, 203 Ks) and Gio Gonzalez (17-4, 2.76, 214 Ks) formed a two-headed ace. Yovani Gallardo went 18-9 and struck out 198. Lance Lynn went 13-7, 3.57, and struck out 184 in 191 innings.

The bullpen was solid through the regular season; Ernesto Frieri won 11 and saved 9 with a 1.84 ERA; Huston Street saved 34 in 39 innings with a 2.08 ERA. Joe Smith and Jeremy Affeldt had 5 relief wins each. Unfortunately, the pen

cracked in the playoffs against Mr. Meyer's dice.

What went wrong?

Other than an eye-popping 1386 hitter strikeouts, not much at all until the post-season, when the Possum faced off against Zion in the conference finals. After dropping Game 1 at home, and then barely scraping out a critical Game 2 win, the series went to Zion tied. Once there, the Elders' magic was too much, and the series ended in 5 games. This was the third straight season where Portland has fallen in the conference finals.

3 Things

1. *Reload, not rebuild.* Portland thought about pulling back to consolidate its core, but instead will be pushing forward and looking to burst through that World Series door that has been locked since 2006.

2. *Lengthen the pen.* it was the bullpen that undid Portland's postseason in 2013, so significant fortifications have been made to try and fill that hole. Luis Avilan and Ryan Cook arrived in the draft; Tanner Scheppers has become the pitcher we hoped he would be.

Check back in the postseason for results.

3. *Win more than we lose.* it took a sustained run of success, but last season's strong record pushed the franchise's all-time winning percentage over .500, at 2426-2378 (.505). At least some of team performance is based on perception: Portland should be viewed as a winner.



Cain: One of the heads

portland POSSUM



Ray Murphy (23rd year) / Jonathan Brinkmann (17th year)

The Possum are once again loaded like an Uzi with a full magazine.

Last year in this space, we implored Mr. Murphy and Mr. Brinkmann to “go win.” They did; boy, did they ever, racking up a league best 111 wins during the season. But the team ran into the Zion express on its way to the championship. It was a result no one saw coming, emphasizing how anything can happen in a short series. Did this ending leave a sour taste in the mouth after such a successful regular season? Only Mr. Murphy and Mr. Brinkmann can answer that.

Now it’s a new season, and the *Annual* has the same words of advice. The Possum are once again loaded like an Uzi with a full magazine. The trigger is cocked and the sights are aimed at the prize: a TBL championship. There’s tough competition again this year, as Zion is back, Maracaibo is strong again, and Knoxville and Midwest are gunning for the same prize. So let us repeat our advice: go win.

Pitching: 12.5
More work; just as formidable.

ROTATION. Poor Bud Norris (Grade 7 C-21 HR+21). He only gets to make two starts all year, which if you’re scoring at home, is three less than he got to make in 2013. When will he get smart and demand a trade? Many of the 23 other teams could use all of his 30 available starts.

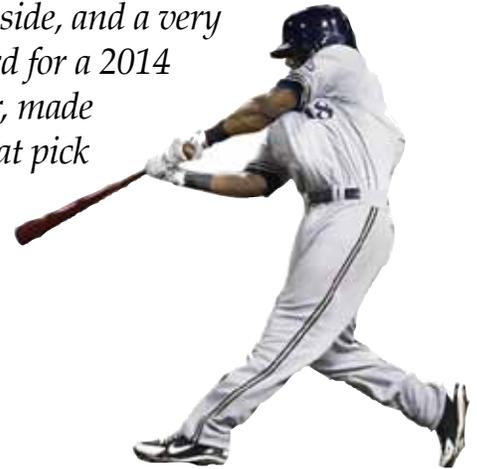
Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Luis Avilan, Carlos Carrasco, Ryan Cook, Khris Davis, Danny Farquhar, Ryan Goins, Don Kelly, Alex Rodriguez, Darin Ruf.

Departed: Erik Bedard, Wilson Betemit, Jamey Carroll, Christian Friedrich, Nick Hagadone, Scott Hairston, Brandon Lyon, Darren Oliver, Ian Stewart.

SNT: Khris Davis

Power upside, and a very useful card for a 2014 contender, made him a great pick for the Possum.



The rest of the rotation is handled ably by a solid quintet. Gio Gonzalez (Grade 12 C-26) is back, although not as strong as last year, to lead this year’s crew. Adam Wainwright (Grade 10 C+41 HR+26) made a nice comeback to restore order to the universe. Matt Cain (Grade 10), however, took a sizable step backward. Lance Lynn (Grade 9 C-24 HR+25) is as dependable as ever, but Yovani Gallardo (Grade 8 C-22) drops to the fifth starter this year.

Thanks to the strength of this rotation, Carlos Carrasco (Grade 1 HR+25) gets to help the popcorn vendor all year. As solid as these arms are, however, they aren’t as dominant as they were last season. They may not be able to pitch as deep as into games as last year. They may need to be rescued from time to time. Luckily, there’s the ...

BULLPEN. Like every contending team, Portland has a talented and deep bullpen. They’ll have to work hard with this year’s diminished rotation, but they appear up to the



portland POSSUM



Avilan: New closer

task. The new closer is rookie Luis Avilan (Grade 21* HR+56), a lefty, although either one of the right-handed set-up men can also close, if needed: Tanner Scheppers (18* HR+23) and Joaquin Benoit (Grade 18* HR+25). These three offer over 208 innings of immensity. That means opponents may face one of these guys as early as the sixth or seventh inning.

The middle relievers are mostly impressive: Joe Smith (Grade 15* HR+24), Huston Street (Grade 15* C+21 HR-51), Ryan Cook (Grade 13* HR+53), and Ernesto Frieri (Grade 13* C-34 HR-22). These arms add another 256.7 innings of 8-eating effectiveness, although one wonders how Street and Frieri got here, given their peripherals.

At the end of the 'pen are Danny Farquhar (Grade 11* HR+46) and lefty Jeremy Affeldt (Grade 11* C-22 HR+32). Counting these mere mortals, the bullpen has 553.7 quality relief innings, more than enough to cover for the lower starting grades. It may be more work to manage, but the end results will likely be just as formidable.

Offense: 14.5 Power up and down the lineup.

It should come as no surprise that this team is an offensive juggernaut. They have the best power card short of Chris Davis', and they feature power potential up and down the lineup. They can put a power card at every position except second base. Let's take a look and drool:

Carlos Gonzalez (1-1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, 34 SSN for 24 attempts, L-4) is awesome. David Wright (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks+22, 33 SSN for 20 attempts, L+7, R-5) has an unfortunate shift, but who cares? Troy Tulowitzki (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks, for 126 games) is back. Mike Napoli (1-5-6-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22) has actually pushed Joey Votto (1-4-6, 10 hits, 6 walks, L-7) off first base. Oh, and we almost forgot rookie Khris Davis (1-1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+42).



Tulo: He's back

You want more power? There's Jonny Gomes (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42), Darin Ruf (1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L-7), Justin "Remember me?" Upton (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L+7 R-4), Alex Rodriguez (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-6), and Matt Wieters (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+6, R-4). You want hits? There's Dan Murphy (0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, 34 SSN for 26 attempts, L-6). This team almost do it all, although except for a few burners, there isn't much stolen base speed. Maybe they won't need it.

Defense: 6.5 Seems terrific.

It *seems* terrific with Tulo (SS9), Wright (3B5), and Wieters (C9 with a +4 arm). CarGo, both Uptons (with matching 35 arms), and Don Kelly are all OF3s. Votto and Napoli are 1B4s, Ryan Goins is a 2B8, and backup catcher Devin Mesoraco is a C8 with a Th+2.

It sounds airtight, doesn't it? There's a catch.

B.J. Upton rarely bats; an OF1 (Ruf, Gomes, or Davis) starts everyday in LF. Goins is a defensive replacement; Murphy (2B6), Rickie Weeks (2B6), or Kelly (2B7) starts. Also, Wright only has 112 games, opening the door to A-Rod or Kelly

(3B4s). Tulo gives way to Adelny Hechavarria (SS8) for about a third of the season. These cracks in the armor, especially at second, will prolong innings, which will hurt the rotation especially. Still, it's hard to complain too much about the gloves and arms.



Wieters: Top notch

Bench: 4.0
Everything but speed.

There should always a power bat and some defensive replacements on the bench. Since there are some natural platoons, the other half is often available for in-game moves. The one thing Mr. Murphy hasn't added to the team is an effective pinch-runner. If the team really needs a stolen base, it may not be able to conjure it out of thin air. Then again, it might be easier for the team to deliver a double.

1st Maracaibo may stay close, but the *Annual* crystal ball clearly predicts another Aaron Division crown for this juggernaut.

This team will simply overpower lesser clubs, which includes most of the league. Sure, its starting pitching isn't as dominant as it was last year, but this team excels in almost every other area, and it has enough bullpen to cover the weaker rotation. Its power is a cut above, and it's a cut that will cause some bleeding ... to other teams. Superb talent evaluation, careful trading, and excellent on-field management has made Portland a perennial contender.



AARP-Rod.



portland:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

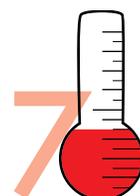
Team Age Rank: 14

This team isn't as young as it used to be. That said, it is far from decrepit. There are few creaky bones, and A-Rod is the only member of this team who qualifies for an AARP card (figuratively). So unless they're hit by a rash of unpredictable injuries (a la Blue Hill or Kansas), this team will continue to be formidable into the near future.

The youngest pitcher on the roster is the new closer Avilan. The oldest is set-up man Benoit. But there's depth everywhere to cover his loss if he suddenly ages like Dorian Gray. Wainwright is now 32. Wow: that means he only has four or five more years at his peak.

On the offense, Napoli is 32, Wright is 31, and Votto is 30. These are the oldest everyday players on the team. But youth is not a weakness. Many of the players are now in peak-performing years. Many are in fact performing at that peak. Recent drafts have brought in Hechavarria and Mesoraco (25 years old), and both play key positions. It's absolutely no surprise that Mr. Murphy and Mr. Brinkmann are doing the right things — drafting youth when possible — while still competing.

TQ: 37.5



portland POSSUM

2013 maracaibo RUMRUNNERS in review



[They were] a fun team to manage, and it was a fun season to play.

by Walter Hunt

2013 in Review

Final Record: 93-69 (2nd, Aaron)

Benjamin Franklin once observed that whenever a speaker begin his remarks with the words “without vanity” – today, we might say “I don’t mean to brag, but . . .” – he would always then say something very vain.

So. Truly, I don’t mean to brag, but even though the season ended in defeat at the hands of Portland (a better team, to be sure), it was as predicted in the 2013 *Annual*: a fun team to manage, and it was a fun season to play. Getting past the Midwest Mongrels in the Wild Card round was a pleasant surprise. Winning 93 games with the likes of Felix Doubront and Chris Capuano in the rotation was pretty satisfying. It was a well-rounded team: it had decent hitting and good pitching (we led the league in pitcher strikeouts, and even had a no-hitter by Colby Lewis). It had good team speed. There were all kinds of contributions from all kinds of people. And it was clear that while it wasn’t going to go all the way, there was better fun to come.

What went right?

It is an article of faith in TBL that left handed starters have all kinds of problems due to platoon differentials, particularly when the Grade is mediocre. Cole Hamels was an exception last year; in his dream season he went 19-3, 2.83, with only 43 walks and 229 Ks in 226 innings. Aaron Harang went 12-11; Junichi Tazawa was excellent as a closer (31 saves, 1.45, 6 walks and 59 Ks in 43 innings) with help from Jordan Norberto (1.83 ERA), Steve Cishek (1.99 ERA) and several others.

Starlin Castro led the regular players with a .306 average, 18 triples, and 14 steals in 15 tries. Salvador Perez hit .326 in his half season; Scott Podsednik – Mr. Cardboard – hit .350 with 8 homers in 183 at-bats and 7 for 7 stealing. Ichiro Suzuki stole 27 and hit .294; Josh Rutledge hit .292 in half a season with 34 doubles; Ian Desmond hit 32 homers and drove in 91, leading the team in both categories.



Hamels: Dream season

What went wrong?

Despite the playoff defeat, really not much. Carlos Quentin’s 20 homers were offset by a .211 average; Cam Maybin hit only .203, and Chipper Jones only .202. The starters other than Hamels were fairly ineffective, making the relievers work hard. Even the disappointing performers (Ian Desmond’s 139 Ks, David Freese’s limited offense) still contributed.

3 Things

1. *It don’t mean a thing.* . . . Some of the past Rumrunner teams had high expectations, and weren’t terribly fun to manage. So as was said in this book last year, *It don’t mean a thing if you don’t got that swing.* They did, and it was fun to play them.
2. *Contend when you can.* In 2013, and again in 2014, Maracaibo is “going for it” because it’s indicated by the roster. That means compromises: trading for less young talent, drafting Marlon Byrd at his age, et cetera. What the hell: it’s why we’re here.
3. *Prize the young core.* There are a few young players on the roster who won’t contribute this year. We’re going to try and hold on to them anyway.

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS



Walter Hunt (28th year); Hall of Famer

Winning is its own reward.

Mr. Hunt has his share of TBL championships. More than his share, actually. So he knows a thing or two about how to play this game. He knew exactly what he had last year: a playoff team who might not be able to get past the Portland juggernaut. He was absolutely correct. His team rose to the occasion, finishing with 93 wins, dusted off Midwest, then fell to Portland in six games — certainly no shame in that.

Last season followed a recent pattern of winning every odd year. What does that mean this year, 2014? The *Annual's* prediction suggests the Maracaibo can break out and sustain last season's gains, but it remains to be seen if the end result will be the same. That's not to imply that this year's (or last year's) team is an exercise in futility. Winning is its own reward, and the league needs more teams willing to take the Marlon Byrds on draft day to field a competitive team. 2014 will add to Mr. Hunt's winning career percentage.

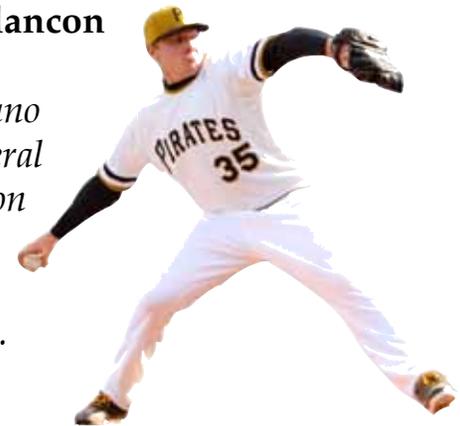
What's wrong with that?

Pitching: 11.5
Turning weakness to strength.

ROTATION. Sometimes it's better to be lucky than good. Not that Joe Kelly (Grade 13 HR+21) was a poor selection when Maracaibo drafted him in 2013. But even he didn't count on 15 terrific starts from the right-hander. He'll take it, though. Following Kelly is rookie Dan Straily (Grade 11 C-23), veteran John Lackey (Grade 10 C+26) in a nice comeback season, and a trio of decent lefties in Cole Hamels (Grade 9 C+25), Erik Bedard (Grade 9 C-46), and Felix Doubront (Grade 8 C-34 HR+26). Aaron Harang (Grade 4 HR-26)

SNT: Mark Melancon

In the post-Mariano era, there are several potential closers on the roster. Mark Melancon could easily fit that role.



Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Erik Bedard, Emilio Bonifacio, Marlon Byrd, Santiago Casilla, Freddy Galvis, Jon Jay, Yoervis Medina, Mark Melancon, Brayan Peña, Brandon Phillips, Scott Rice, Moises Sierra, Dan Straily, Justin Wilson.

Departed: Daniel Bard, Chris Capuano, Starlin Castro, Michael V. Gonzalez, Jerry Hairston Jr., David Hernandez, Chipper Jones, Luis Mendoza, Jordan Norberto, Scott Podsednik, Hector Sanchez, Luke Scott, Jose Valverde, Michael Young.

only needs to start five games, which he's done already.



Lackey: Nice comeback

While having Kelly certainly helps, this is far from an overpowering lot. Still, the grades and peripherals will keep the team in the game more often than not. Given the strengths of this team, that may be enough. The bullpen arms, many of whom are better than all of the starters, can rescue their lesser rotation mates as early as the fifth inning. That's how



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

you turn a potential weakness into a strength.

BULLPEN. If Mark Melancon (Grade 16* C+44 HR+61) were named Rivera, he'd be five grade points higher. As it is, he may not have a closer's grade, but he's got some of the best peripherals in the league. He's Mr. Hunt's choice to become the new Rumrunner closer. He has big shoes to fill.

Fortunately, Melancon has a powerful set-up crew that's five relievers deep: Steve Cishek (Grade 15* C+21 HR+41), Santiago Casilla (Grade 16* C-32 HR+43), Yoervis Medina (Grade 16* C-52 HR+31), lefty Justin Wilson (Grade 18* C-26 HR+33), and Jason Frasor (Grade 16* C-21 HR+23). The Rumrunners will stifle late-inning rallies all season long, as this crew delivers 381.3 innings, almost as much as some TBL teams have in total.

But we're not finished. They have this one extraordinary pitcher with extraordinary control, who gets one

more round in the league: Mariano Rivera (Grade 13* C+51). He will do "pretty well" supplementing the above pitchers while filling a middle relief role, surely unfamiliar spot for a reliever who has amassed 464 saves in his TBL career (more than twice as many as anyone else). So far. It's not unfair to



Rivera: Does pretty well

speculate that Mr. Hunt may try to add a few to that number during the year.

Lefty Scott Rice (Grade 11* C-46 HR+55) and righty Junichi Tazawa (Grade 10* C+35) round out a bullpen that has an astounding 564.7 innings. Given the rotation, they may have to

use them all. In fact, anything less would be a disappointment.

Offense: 10.5
Some pop, some flash.

At the head of the list when examining this offense is recent draft pick Marlon Byrd (1-4-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4 R-4), who comes home to the club that originally drafted him. Byrd makes the lineup a contender. While he has impressive power, it's not isolated. Ian Desmond (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 30 SSN for 27 attempts) and Carlos Quentin (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, half a season) help out too.



Byrd: Back home

But — other than Mitch Moreland (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) — that's all the exceptional power on the team. The catching tandem of Salvador Perez (3 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk+22, L+4) and Brayan Pena (0-0-0, 11 hits, L-6 R+2) add the only other 11-hit cards on the team. Starling Marte (6-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42+22, 28 SSN for 56 attempts), though, brings some flash to the lineup.

Jon Jay (6-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, 26 SSN for 15 attempts, L-6), Brandon Phillips (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22), Ichiro (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 3 31s, 32 SSN for 24 attempts, L+4), David Freese (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+3), Lorenzo Cain (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, 27 SSN for 20 attempts), Emilio Bonifacio (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 30 SSN for 36 attempts, L-4) can all contribute ... occasionally.

Defense: 4.5
A mixed bag.

One strength of this defense lies in its outfielders: Cain, Marte, and Ichiro are all OF3s with strong arms. Ichiro remains elite with a 36 arm. However, only two of the three start in any given game, because Byrd (OF2) has to play. Another strength: its catchers. Perez, Peña, and

Jose Molina are all C8s. Perez has a Th+4 arm, Molina a Th+2. In addition, Phillips (2B8) and Moreland (1B4) are above average. Desmond (SS8) is only average. Then there's third base, where Freese and Bonifacio are both 3B3s, and both see time at the hot corner.



Perez: Strength

This is a decent defense, but mostly average despite the highlights. The outfield is good, but Jay (OF2) has to get some PT, too, so it's a mixed bag. Some days they'll get lucky; some days they won't. Third base is the only real hole, but it's not just about the errors that will surely come, it's also about the missed double plays.

Bench: **3.5**
Enough to help?

Mr. Hunt knows a thing or two about building a bench. He's put several bats in Peña and the spare outfielders, although no one with better than average power. He has some defensive replacements, such as Freddy Galvis (the only 3B4) and certainly plenty of speed on the bench. Mr. Hunt also knows a thing or two about using the bench, and he'll get as much out of it as anyone. The question is: is there enough to help?

2nd The Possum will win the division. That seems like a given. But the Rumrunners might be able to stay with them for a while. A month, maybe four.

They certainly have good odds on making the playoffs again, and as everyone who has had the opportunity knows: playing baseball in November is wo-o-o-nderful. And to reiterate, winning is always better than losing, and Mr. Hunt has a long career of winning.



maracaibo:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 17

Rivera. Ichiro. Molina. Frasor. Byrd. Bedard. Lackey. Harang. What do these players have in common? Yes, they're all over 30, but then so are Casilla, Phillips, Rice, Quentin, Peña, and Freese. No, the players in the first group were all born before 1980. Do you remember the 1970s? It was a little while ago.

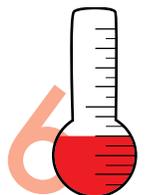
So that's a significant collection of older players. But Mr. Hunt has the team moving in a more youthful direction — with the exception of Byrd, a concession to contending that he could not pass up. For example, here's a list of the players 25 and younger: Perez, Galvis, Rutledge, Straily, Marte, Medina, and Kelly. These players have their careers ahead of them.

Still, the team will have to continue to acquire younger players or risk the familiar trek to the cliff. There are still a few core players in the list of those over 30. Eventually, Mr. Hunt will have to replace Byrd, Lackey, Phillips, and Quentin. Not immediately, of course, but eventually. Building with players like Perez, Straily, Marte, Medina, and Kelly is only the start.

TQ: 30.0



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS



2013 kansas KOYOTES in review



And then there are the Tommy John surgeries!

by Bill Schwartz

2013 in Review

Final Record: 58-104 (4th, Aaron)

2013 was a season filled with frustrations. Ever-optimistic management, after reading dire preseason predictions of a Kansas team which would only finish ahead of five other TBL teams, nonetheless went into play hoping for a close to .500 record. A 37-43 record at the halfway point seemed to justify their optimism and heightened hopes for a respectable campaign. But a 4-16 August (with 10 of the losses by 3 runs or less) followed by a duplicate 4-16 September dashed any misguided hopes and left the Koyotes playing out the string to see just how high they would be picking in the February draft with the answer being that their final 58-104 record earned them the #2 spot.

What went right?

Not much! Coco Crisp did follow up his 35-0 2012 stolen base season with a 31-2 mark, but left 10 SBA on the table thanks to his team's failure to provide him with enough close games – hard to run when you're always behind! Curtis Granderson lived up to expectations with 39 HR and led the team with 95 runs scored and 89 RBI's. Blake Beavan (he of grade 5Z fame) overachieved with an 8-11 mark despite a 5.25 ERA, no doubt the product of a little luck. Dustin Pedroia provided superb defense and a steady bat (.273 BA including 47 doubles) and Jean Segura hit .297 and showed signs of giving the Koyotes the other half of a future stellar keystone combo.

What went wrong?

Mediocrity started with the fact that Neftali Feliz and Matt Harvey, who had 17 starts between them of Grade 18 and 17 respectively, ended up with a combined 3-9, 3.77 record. An ongoing Koyote trademark, lack of power, made for an anemic offense. Only 4 hitters had over 3 power numbers, with two of them, Rick Ankiel



Pedroia: Steady

and Laynce Nix, being part-timers and another (Pedroia) being only slightly over 3 at 3.2. Their .232 BA ranked 22nd in the league and .376 SA not much better at 21st. 15 blown saves didn't help matters, as Jason Motte (Grade 16* C+22 HR-16) blew 6 saves and dropped 4 decisions while saving 16. Jim Johnson's 4-11 record with 6 blown saves also contributed to a rather mediocre pen.

And then there are the Tommy John surgeries! What team can match the string of injuries to potential aces that Kansas has endured? Harvey, in the midst of a superb MLB season, went down with the latest Koyote TJ occurrence, as he followed Feliz, Motte and Joakim Soria on the operating table. And how about the case of James McDonald. Once considered a bright Kansas prospective mainstay, he has disappeared – I suspect another TJ encounter.

3 Things

1. *Puig.* Having Yasiel Puig at the top of the draft list after watching him go 7 for 8 with 5 EBH in two spring training games management attended and then watching him fall into their hands after Jurickson Profar went #1 sent waves of elation through the Koyote camp. We will live with his idiosyncrasies and current lack of baseball sense and look forward to his maturing process.
2. *New hope for the pitching staff.* Drafting Sonny Gray in the first round to add to Max Scherzer and Matt Harvey, after his hopefully successful TJ surgery, also gives Koyote fans reason for hope. Those three young studs at the front of the rotation for the next few years should provide light at the end of the tunnel.
3. *Can the good outweigh the bad?* With 68 starts of Grade 15 in Harvey, Scherzer and Gray, it remains to be seen how the rest of the staff can perform. 57 starts of grade 5 and 3 leave Koyote fans wondering.

kansas KOYOTES



Bill Schwartz (7th year)

The result is a Jekyll and Hyde team that alternates between dominating and submitting. There is still more work to be done here.

Mr. Schwartz is an optimist. Every year, he believes in his club. Last year, he said he hoped for a .500 season. He had the hits of Dustin Pedroia (.273). He had the power of Curtis Granderson (39 homers). He had Jason Motte (2.24) at the back of the bullpen. He had Max Scherzer (3.89) for 32 starts. It didn't translate to a .500 team. In fact, the team lost 102 games.

On the bright side, this unintentional trip to the basement netted him the second overall pick in the draft. So he followed up a solid 2013 draft class (Harvey, Segura, Delabar, Yan Gomes) with another round of youthful talent (Puig, Gray, Paco Rodriguez, Redmond). The result is a Jekyll and Hyde team that alternates between dominating and submitting. There is still more work to be done here.

Pitching: **Jekyll and Hyde.**

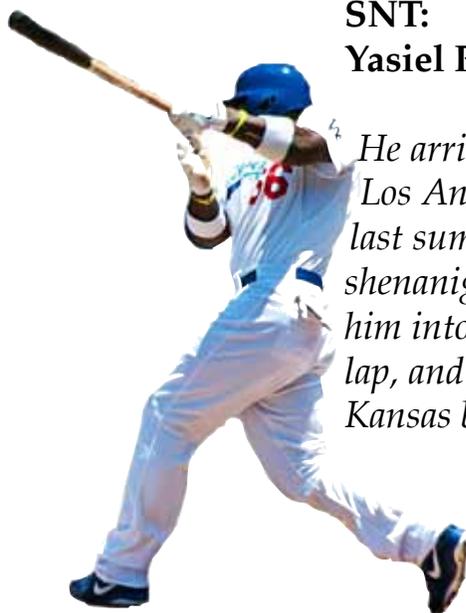
7.5

ROTATION. For 68 starts, this rotation is nearly as good as it gets. A trio of young Grade 15 starters throw heat past opposing bats this year and promise to continue into the future. Rookie Sonny Gray (HR+34) joins veteran Scherzer (HR+22) and young Matt Harvey (C+32 HR+42),

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Kevin Correia, Chris Colabello, Luis Garcia, Sonny Gray, David Huff, Jason Marquis, Ramiro Peña, Yasiel Puig, Todd Redmond, Mark Reynolds, Paco Rodriguez, Matt Tuiasosopo, Vernon Wells.

Departed: Rick Ankiel, Blake Beavan, Phil Coke, Mark Ellis, Jon Garland, Alex Gonzalez, Casey Kotchman, James McDonald, Miles Mikolas, Laynce Nix, Ramon Ramirez, Chris Stewart, Casper Wells.



SNT: **Yasiel Puig**

He arrived and took Los Angeles by storm last summer. Some draft shenanigans dropped him into Bill Schwartz' lap, and he'll be taking Kansas by storm as well.

who was having a breakout season to remember when he was felled by injury. He'll miss all of next year, but this year, he is simply awesome. Few teams can match this rotation's top end.

The next level is more pedestrian. In fact, they may get walked on quite a bit. Jason Marquis (Grade 10 C-62 HR-23), Todd Redmond (Grade 9 HR-25), and Travis Blackley (Grade 9 C-21 HR-51) have the grades to be decent, but not the peripherals. The final 57 starts, though, hurt the most. Kevin Correia (Grade 5 C+23) and Dallas Keuchel (Grade 3) pretty much undo all the good will built up by the Harvey-Gray-Scherzer trio.

As a result, this is a rotation of both Jekyll and Hyde. Who will win out in the end? Jekyll? Hyde? Perhaps they'll tie, and the team will finally finish at .500, as Mr. Schwartz predicted. The *Annual* believes otherwise. This pitching staff is heading in the right direction, but until it's past needing a Correia, it still has room for improvement.



kansas KOYOTES

BULLPEN. We like that Kansas went out and got a closer — and a good one at that. Paco Rodriguez (Grade 21*) is a 23-year-old hard-throwing lefty who has the talent to be effective for years. Paco is set up by a couple of righties: Joakim Soria (Grade 14* C-56 HR+23, but only 24 innings) and strike-out artist Steve Delabar (Grade 13* C-32 HR+33). There are 136.7 innings between these three. While they're good innings, there simply aren't enough of them. Even the better starters will have to pitch as until fatigued, and the late innings of close games will be challenging to manage.



Rodriguez: Effective

The middle-inning relief will be busy, especially on days when Mr. Hyde pitches. Anthony Swarzak (Grade 12* C+24 HR+26), Vin Mazzaro (Grade 11* HR+43), lefty Brian Matusz (Grade 11* HR+35), Jim Johnson (Grade 10* C+31 HR+31), and rookie Luis Garcia (Grade 10* C-62) provide 322.3 needed innings to help everyone in the rotation except the 15s. At the back end are Blackley and waiver wire pickup David Huff (Grade 7* C+25 HR-34), who add another 79.7 innings. In all, there are 538.7 relief innings, but it's light at the top. If the team needs two or three middle relievers in the sixth inning to stop a rally, they may not have the arms to stop another rally in the eighth. This could be a fun team to manage ... or a total horror movie.

Offense: 8.0
Can mash the ball.

Led by the #2 overall pick in this year's draft, Yasiel Puig (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+42), the

Koyotes can mash the ball. Yan Gomes (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+42, R-4), Domonic Brown (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-5), and Coco Crisp (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN for 26 attempts, L-7) can back up the swagger. Mark Reynolds (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22) and Curtis Granderson (1-4-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN for 10 attempts) can chip in occasionally.

Jean Segura (0-0-0, 11 hits with two 11s, a walk+22, 30 SSN for 57 attempts, L+4) and Dustin Pedroia (0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks, 30 SSN for 22 attempts, L+6, R-5) add speed and batting average to the top of the lineup.

But three bats reinforce the Jekyll and Hyde character of this team: Vernon Wells (0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, R-4), Mike Moustakas (0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-6), and Miguel Montero (0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-9). Lineups versus right-handed pitchers feature three 8-hit cards. Out-out-out. The question is how much the bottom end will end what the top end starts. There aren't that many teams that are dangerous from 1 to 9: a good field manager decides who he wants to pitch to, and thus who he's willing to let hurt him. If the wrong part of the order comes up with the game on the line, then it doesn't matter how good the rest of it is.

Defense: 6.5
Strong. Period.

Some teams claim to be strong up the middle, but Kansas definitely is. Both catchers are C8s with positive arms. Gomes has a Th+5 cannon. Segura (SS9) and Pedroia (2B9) are elite. Crisp (OF3) completes the pretty picture.



Gomes: Cannon

But the good news doesn't end there. Wells and Granderson are both OF3s, and Reynolds (1B4) is above average. Puig is average, but with a cannon of his own (a 38 arm).

Even Moustakas (3B4) is at least average. This is a strong defense, which will help shorten opponents' innings.

Bench: 3.0
Will get creative.

There are no big bats on the bench. There may be some speed, but the SSNs are less than optimal. With the platoons in the lineup there are extra hitters, but the team will have to get creative at some point this season to fill the infield spots. The only real backup infielder is Ramiro Pena (3B5/2B8/SS8), but he's at-bat limited and Moustakas has to miss 26 games and Segura 16.

This limitation may open the door to Wells (1B2/3B3/2B5), Matt Tuiasosopo (1B2/3B3), or Reynolds (3B3/2B6) experiencing hard-hit ground balls coming right at them. "I was wondering why the ball kept getting bigger ... then it hit me."

3rd If this team had more Dr. Jekyll than Mr. Hyde, they could challenge Portland for the division crown. As it is, Mr. Hyde rears his ugly head too often to allow this team to compete with Maracaibo for second place. When Jekyll is operating his magic, this club can play with anyone. When it's Mr. Hyde's turn, however, they may more resemble a cellar-dweller than a champion. That's the nature of this team. There is very little middle ground.

There's not much evidence that Kansas management is inclined toward mid-season trades – bolstering a playoff run by a key September acquisition can mean the difference between a playoff spot and an early tee time, but the Koyotes haven't really indulged. If they *do* stay close, this might be the year to consider it; Maracaibo – and Munich – and Midwest are all talented but flawed, and they, like Kansas, could get past the obvious juggernauts if the stars were right. But if things aren't close, it's wait till next year.



KANSAS KOYOTES

kansas:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 10

Harvey and Gray are the pitchers to build on. Scherzer is in his prime right now; he turns 30 in July. That's not old in baseball terms, but it means that every year the future is *now*. Keuchel is still young enough to develop, but Harvey and Marquis will miss most if not all of next year, and Correia is but a placeholder. In the bullpen, only Paco is extraordinarily young. Garcia, Matusz, Mazzaro, and Swarzak are all under 30, so they should hang around for a few years. It's the rotation that needs the attention.

On offense only Puig and Segura are babies, and they are the foundation for this club, performing year in and year out for the next ten or more years. Moustakas, Brown, and Gomes are just entering their prime years. If Moustakas can claim his hype, he'll justify Mr. Schwartz's patience. If not, that leaves only four players who can be counted on. That's not many.

On the other end, Crisp (34), Granderson (33), Montero (30), and Pedroia (30) are all mature. If one or more of these four players suddenly ages, then they'll leave a hole in the lineup. So if it's going to come together for the Koyotes, Mr. Schwartz ought to plan for the sometime in the next three years.

TQ: 25.0



2013 northboro PHOENIX in review



It's a brave new world in Northboro.

by Steve Stein

2013 in Review

Final Record: 63-99 (3rd, Aaron)

We had been good, but not good enough. We were old, getting thin, pieces failing one by one. The time had come, in the way of the Phoenix, to burn.

We would be bad, get better draft positions for a couple of years, and rebuild with an eye down the road a bit – 2017 or so. Anyone who wouldn't be around to help us then was expendable. We sold off what we could sell in return for draft picks. We got bad. But – surprise! Not bad enough! (Incredibly, there were 3 teams *worse!* *Curses, foiled again!*)

What went right?

The starting pitching was pretty bad. We gave up 893 runs, second worst in the league. Newcomers Corey Kluber (3-15) and Jeremy Hefner (7-14) had ERAs over 6. The rest of the starters (Ian Kennedy, Carlos Zambrano, Johan Santana) had ERAs over 5, except for Roy Halladay, who was the ace at 8-11, 4.44 ERA.

Some of the offense shared in this decrepitude – only 4 batters managed to hit over .250. Carlos Pena “contributed” 157 games of a .169 batting average, striking out 185 times. Jeff Francoeur also failed to break the Mendoza line, giving us 116 games of .196 performance.

What went wrong?

We won 63 games! How could that happen? I blame Jerry Blevins. 23 saves and 5 wins – 1.50 ERA. *Too good.* Addison Reed, 1.54 ERA in a

setup role. *Too good.* On the offensive side, 7 teams scored fewer runs than we did. Melky Cabrera – half a year of an awesome card – tried to suck, but still hit .290, slugged .425 – *too good.* Brandon Belt, our #1 pick, contributed 145 solid games. Our defense was still fielding 1 in most places and we had the 5th fewest errors in the league. *Way too good.*



Cabrera: Tried to suck

3 Things

It's a brave new world in Northboro. No more bashing our head against the formidable Portland squad. If we're lucky, we'll arrive just about the time they're leaving.

1. *Wave goodbye to the remnants of glory.* Roy Halladay, Scott Rolen, Carlos Zambrano, Carlos Pena, Ian Kinsler are leaving this year or gone already. Very little remains. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*
2. *The target is 2017.* Until then, we must accept that we will be bad – sometimes *very* bad. It's tough to endure a string of 100 loss seasons, but that's what lies ahead.
3. *Draft wisely.* We have gone from one of the oldest teams in the league to one of the youngest in the space of 2 years. We are thin in a lot of places, but that should not dissuade us from choosing value in the top rounds and filling our needs with temporary cardboard later. But even in later rounds, we can find gems. We have high hopes for Garrett Richards, 4th round 2013 and Corey Kluber, 5th round, 2013.

northboro PHOENIX



Bob Jordan (15th year) / Steve Stein (12th year)

It's as if someone let the oil leak out of the pan, and all that's left is the scum, the slick residue of something that once was.

Hell is a place for teams who take their own lives, like the 1989–90 Brobdingnag Barbarians. This version of the Phoenix isn't in hell. It's in that place after death where the ashes of the past glories are spread out over the land. Maybe it's called purgatory in some cultures. It's waiting for rebirth, when further player development, future draft picks, or a blockbuster trade bring new hope. As it waits, it lays dormant, regrouping its energies, waiting for the time when the wings of the bird again reach for the sky.

Ah, to hell with poetry. We were never really very good at it in the *Annual*. This bird is *dead*, Jim. *Dead*. Poke it with a fork. Club it like a baby seal. This bird ain't going anywhere. The team was bad last year, but still managed 66 wins to finish ahead of Kansas. This year's team won't be so fortunate. Watch, Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein, watch what thou hath wrought upon the league. Watch, and weep. (And look forward to a better future.)

Pitching: 3.0
Some learning experiences.

ROTATION. The trio of "aces" on this club would better serve as the back end of someone else's rotation. It's not that they're bad, per

Turnover Rate: 43%

Arrived: Cody Asche, Kole Calhoun, Carter Capps, Chris Capuano, Corey Dickerson, Kevin Frandsen, Leury Garcia, Maicer Izturis, Munenori Kawasaki, Jurickson Profar, Cory Rasmus, Alex Sanabia, Burch Smith, Alex Wilson, Mike Zunino.

Departed: Jerry Blevins, Dallas Braden, Cody Eppley, Clay Hensley, Ramon Hernandez, Brett Jackson, Ian Kinsler, Dustin Moseley, Will Ohman, Andy Parrino, Carlos Peña, Scott Rolen, Freddy Sanchez, Ryan Wheeler, Carlos Zambrano.

se; it's just that they're not suited to the role. Corey Kluber (Grade 8 C+24), Tyler Chatwood (Grade 8 HR+42), and Garrett Richards (Grade 8 HR+24) bring 61 decent starts to the team. It's too bad they'll probably be going up against much better pitchers.

Ian Kennedy (Grade 6 C-26 HR-23) and Jeremy Hefner (Grade 6 HR-24) at least have a chance of stealing a hit. In other words, they can provide some innings. They add 54 more starts. Then the rotation gets downright ugly. Roy Halladay (Grade 4 C-62 HR-34) has since moved on to a new career. Chris Capuano (Grade 3 C+33) has since moved on to the bullpen. Burch Smith (Grade 2 C-61 HR-51) and Dylan Axelrod (Grade 1 HR-25) split the final six starts. Why? Because why punish one over the other.

While the top trio may have some success in keeping their team in the game, every other starter is just as likely to be clubbed to death as to last seven innings. This won't be pretty, or easy, or pleasant. If the path to the first overall draft pick in 2015 leads directly through the starting rotation, this is a yellow brick road.



SNT:
Mike Zunino

A deep rebuild lets Northboro take a player who is strictly future. But given the upside, they'll be happy with the result . . . just not immediately.

BULLPEN. It may be hard to believe, but this team actually has a real live Major League Baseball closer on its roster: Addison Reed (12* HR+23). Sure, he's no Mariano Rivera, but few are. Reed isn't even a Bob Stanley. Not yet, at least. He's also the only reliever on the roster who can help every starter.



Reed: Real live closer

When not in the starting rotation, Richards (Grade 5*) acts as a set-up man, along with Erasmo Ramirez (Grade 5 HR-22). Ramirez gets no +5 bonus to help. That's too bad; he needs it. These fine pitchers, remember, are the set-up men, the relievers that bridge the gap in late innings to get to the closer. Good luck with that.

The rest of the bullpen is worse. Cory Rasmus (Grade 5* C-44 HR-53), Alex Wilson (Grade 3* C-36 HR+62), Carter Capps (Grade 2* HR-32), and Ryan Mattheus (Grade 1* C-26 HR+53) at least get the +5 bonus. Alex Sanabia (Grade 2 C-24 HR-32) does not. Some of these pitchers are still prospects. Some are not. Either way, they all have some learning experiences to look forward to this year.

Offense: 5.5
Young power.

With the high turnover, the best power hitters on the current team are the ones who have arrived via the TBL rookie draft in the past two years: Brandon Belt (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L-6), Corey Dickerson (3-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-9), Kole Calhoun (1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+3), Cody Asche (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-6), Chris Carter (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks), and Mike Zunino (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22).

There are two exceptions, veterans who have remained through the housecleaning: J.J.

Hardy (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks) and Seth Smith (6-6-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-6). Melky Cabrera (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6) can still hit, Jordan Schafer (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 30 SSN for 28 attempts, L-15) can still run, and Chris Iannetta (3 0s, 8

hits, 6 walks, L+4) can still get on base. Everyone else, including the first-overall pick in the rookie draft, Jurickson Profar (0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-5), is either innocuous or pretty darn close.

You may have noticed a lot of negative shifts against lefties. Ordinarily, that would pose a problem, but it just doesn't matter much with this team. They'll struggle to score runs and won't come back against good pitching if they're down.

Defense: 4.5
Some highlights, actually.

Like Fair Oaks, this team scores more Annual points for its defense than it does for its pitching. Since fielding isn't a team strength, that says more about the team's pitching than it does about its glove work. Teams aren't built around fielders: but it does help if the defense isn't completely porous.

The Phoenix do have some highlights, however, like Hardy (SS9), Schafer (OF3), Belt (1B4), and Iannetta (C8, but with a Th-2). All the catchers, in fact, have negative arms. There are no other stand-outs, although Jeff Francoeur has a 37 arm, which is apparently the only reason he's still on the club. Calhoun (OF1) is a mistake waiting to happen, and Frandsen (3B3) is black hole at the hot corner.



Hardy: Highlights

**Bench:
Waiting for 2020.**

2.5

There are a few straight platoons, but only Hardy, Belt, and Carter have more than 119 games, so many of the bench players are needed to play. The instructions call for no pinch-hitting or pinch-running.

Given the roster, that probably doesn't hurt the team. There will be games when it feels like the players are just waiting for it to end. They *are* waiting. For 2020 or so.

4th

After surviving this year, Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein, bloodied and bruised, will be rewarded, if they've been extremely "lucky," by being able to say whatever name they want to say. But it's not a sure thing, as others want that prize too. After reviewing this roster, though, we at the *Annual* aren't sure that the reward justifies the agony of watching this team play all year long. It's as if someone let the oil leak out of the pan, and all that's left is the scum, the slick residue of something that once was.



Profar: Won't wait for 2020

Still, there's something to admire in the determination to go through with the process. Managers have looked at rosters before and decided that it's time to blow it all up before everyone is on Social Security; these efforts require will, a strong stomach – and a plan. This won't take until 2020, at least Northboro hopes it won't. Fortunately, some talent – like Jurickson Profar – won't have to wait that long to blossom.



northboro:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 3

Youth for youth's sake is not a cure-all. While younger players have the time (and are often given the time) to succeed, Cody Acshé, to pick a name, isn't going to become the next Mike Schmidt even given more time. That may sound unfair, and it *is*, but the point is youth without ability is an empty value.

So players like Profar, Zunino, Leury Garcia, Capps, Acshé, Ramirez, Burch Smith, Chatwood, Dickerson, Sanabia, and Richards — some of the many players on this team who are 25 or younger — must still go out and prove themselves. They might have all the potential in the world, but not all prospects make it. Some will: others won't. Of all the players on the team 25 or younger, in fact, only Belt and maybe Reed have so far proven themselves.

So the work is far from complete. Luckily, this team will keep getting opportunities to take quality young prospects through the rookie draft. Because it will be a few years before this team can compete again. That will be the day that the Phoenix once again rises out of the ashes that we see today.

TQ: 15.5

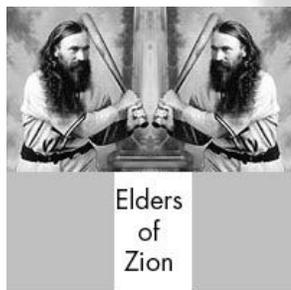


northboro PHOENIX

Defend Against All Comers

We have a mantra about winning. *Build a team. Close the deal. Win the games. Then do it again.*

Winning a championship in TBL isn't as hard as doing it in the real major leagues; our players are cardboard, our rules are less rigorous, and we don't have to deal with any unpleasant flaws of character or problems with salary and contracts. Our league more closely resembles the 1950s. Still, any championship is an accomplishment, and *Rich Meyer* has eight of them



Elders of Zion

in TBL, mostly with the *Elders of Zion*. The 2013 title was similar to that won by the Red Sox: a bit out of the blue, but in retrospect not quite as surprising. Can he

repeat? Well, in the Mantle he sure can. His competition in the rear-view mirror isn't closer than it appears – maybe the other way around.

We still have to play the games, of course, but *Paul Montague* has created a borderline contending rebuild (if such a thing can be imagined) with his *Munich Marauders*. The youngest team in TBL by some margin, it's still got talent and will be very competitive. Still, there are flaws that may keep Munich from getting to or going far in the post-season.



2013 Mantle Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Zion*	101	61	.623	—
Melrose	73	89	.451	28
Hudson	72	90	.444	29
Munich	62	100	.383	39

* 2013 TBL Champions.

The *Hudson Generals*, meanwhile, are the same thing drawn a little less broadly. They're clearly not doormats, but they too have flaws. Of the two, the *Annual* staff can more easily imagine Munich making a move if it stays in contention; *Clay Beard* may be content to just let it ride, following the trend toward youth that, he hopes, will lead the club back into contention. He's done it before (in this division, they've *all* done it before – multiple times.)



And speaking of the rear-view mirror, how much does *Mark Freedman* have to squint to see that 123-win season?

Or the 110-win championship that happened afterward? (That's in the do it again category; see above.)

Not really that much. The *Melrose Avengers* won, defended against all comers and won again, and this is the only the second year of splat. The objective is to get younger and broaden the talent base. Captain America isn't going to wait forever to see them win again.



Mantle Division

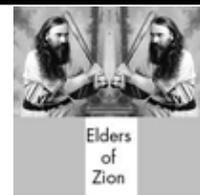


Koji Uehara,
Zion

1. Zion	32.0
2. Munich	26.5
3. Hudson	24.5
4. Melrose	19.5

2013 ELDERS of zion in review

It was a textbook example of Sensei Fu.



2013 in Review

Final Record: 101-61 (1st, Mantle)

We eat crow at the *Annual* on regular occasions, believe it or not. We usually blame this on Clay Beard, but other teams have overperformed or failed to perform, making us look foolish. It's all right; hindsight is easier than foresight, and this is the baseball analysis equivalent of Iron Chef.

So it's always good to see when we get a chance to be right. We couldn't imagine that they would not win the Mantle. Fine –

they won the Mantle. (“Meyer’s dice don’t roll that way.”) But then we said, quote: “*Can they stay with Portland? Maybe. It takes talent and will to get in the position to win Championship #8, but good dice help too.*” Aha! Touché! They were very good; Portland was very good. Even Ray Murphy, in his team review above, indicates that the Meyer dice appeared. After that, it was in the bag. Congratulations. (And a tip of the hat to your favorite TBL publication.)



Beltre: All-world

What went right?

Adrian Beltre was all-world for Zion last year (.337-30-108), with stellar defense – only 7 errors. Aaron Hill was outstanding as well: 33 HR, 126 RBI, 43 doubles, .398. Shin-Soo Choo hit .289 with 14 steals in 16 attempts. Garrett Jones hit 23 homer. Allen Craig (.319-19-80, 40 doubles) was a key contributor.

Anibal Sanchez led the starting rotation with fine numbers (17-7, 2.77, 180 Ks); Mat Latos won 21 and lost only 5 with a 3.52 ERA. Shaun Marcum

went 14-1, 3.16 in two-thirds of a season after being acquired during the 2013 draft. The bullpen was stellar: Kenley Jansen saved 36 with a 2.34 ERA and 77 Ks in 58 innings. Jake McGee notched a 1.52 ERA with 52 Ks in 47 innings; Koji Uehara was at 1.95, Tony Watson at 2.31.

What went wrong?

Truly, not much. This wasn't the best Zion team, and in fact wasn't a particularly characteristic

team for the Elders. They hit a lot of doubles (314) and a fair number of home runs (180), but only stole 63 bases. The closer went 0-5. Four players struck out 110+ times (though no one whiffed more than 120 times). This was a case of taking the team and running with it; rather than bashing and crushing in Brobdingnag fashion, the club dodged and darted like a skilled running back, sprinting past Fair Oaks, outdueling Portland, and then taking

Whitman to school in its first visit to the Fall Classic. It was a textbook example of Sensei Fu.

3 Things

1. *Meyer magic.* Grab Rodney and he goes lights out. Take Koji and watch him become a 29*. He's got a good record here.
2. *Grit your teeth.* A number of Zion pitchers have already gotten hurt in MLB 2014. *But it's not 2014 yet.*
3. *Go at it with enthusiasm.* It's good to see Mr. Meyer excited and interested as in days of yore. Welcome back.

ELDERS of zion

Rich Meyer (30th year); Hall of Famer

This team might be even stronger than the team that just won the TBL World Series.



Wait. Haven't we been here before? As Yogi Berra once famously quipped: "It's like déjà vu all over again." The 2013 edition of the Elders were certainly good, but arguably not overwhelming. Their 101 win total was likely inflated by playing in a division that had no other team with more than 73 wins. Mr. Meyer won the division by 28 games.

But they swept Fair Oaks and beat a powerful Portland team in five games. It took that long to win what is Mr. Meyer's record-setting eighth TBL title. We *have* been here before. Ordinarily, we'd write about the difficulty of the year ahead, how it's harder to repeat ... except he's done it before. And the Elders return with a team that could conceivably repeat. In fact, the 2014 edition of the team might be even stronger than the team that just won the TBL World Series. Now there's something to consider...

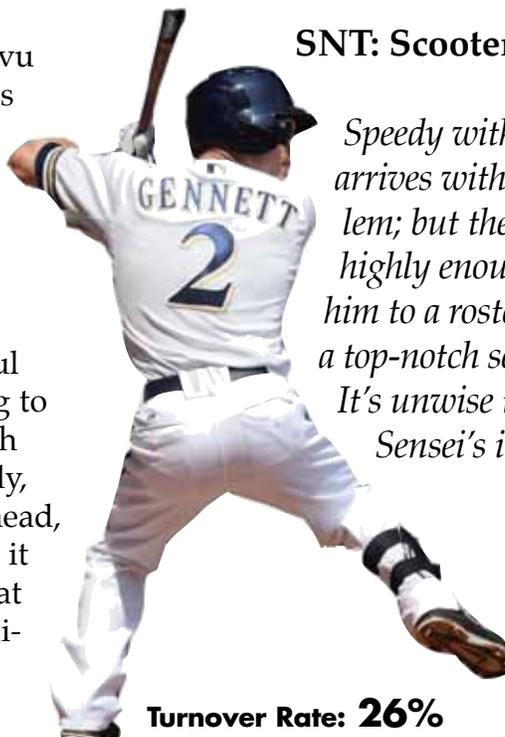
Pitching: Uehara makes it strong.

13.5

ROTATION. The ace of the staff is Anibal Sanchez (Grade 14 HR+42) for 29 starts, although Alex Cobb (Grade 14) pulls his weight for 22. That's 51 starts of high-quality octane.

The Elders then turn to a trio of Grade 10s: Mat Latos (HR+26), rookie and token lefty Hyun-Jin Ryu (C+21), and last year's first round pick Jarrod Parker. Randall Delgado (Grade 7 C+32, HR-44), the weak link, picks up the final starts. This is a comparatively strong rotation in TBL, aided by the top end.

BULLPEN. There must be some league memo or administrative letter that states the Elders



SNT: Scooter Gennett

Speedy with a quick bat, he arrives with a platoon problem; but the Sensei thinks highly enough of him to add him to a roster that already has a top-notch second baseman.

It's unwise to bet against the Sensei's instincts.

Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Charlie Blackmon, Mark DeRosa, Sam Fuld, Scooter Gennett, Dustin McGowan, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Josh Satin, Logan Schafer, Chris Withrow.

Departed: Ronald Belisario, Roger Bernadina, Quintin Berry, Irving Falu, Travis Hafner, Erik Kratz, Shaun Marcum, Chris Perez, Chris Young.

must always have a strong bullpen. They seem to strike gold year after year, and Mr. Meyer is adept at getting the most of it.

In 2014, the relief-god of the moment is named Koji Uehara (Grade 29* C+45 HR+25). He's like a security blanket you throw over the game once the team leads in the 8th. It's conceivable that Uehara could challenge the TBL record for saves in a season (57), set by Scott Williamson, another Zion reliever, in 2000. His emergence follows the theme: good last year, great this year.



ELDERS of zion

Uehara is joined by Kenley Jansen (Grade 19* C+21), who could close for any other team, but here he acts as a supreme 8th-inning man. Lefty Tony Watson (Grade 15* C+34 HR+23)



Jansen: 8th inning

is the late-inning situational guy with enough innings to be effective all year. Rookie Chris Withrow (Grade 20* C-34 HR-25) for a spell (34.7 innings) and Dustin McGowan (Grade 17* C-32 HR+31) make up the next short wave, as neither has many innings. That's 283 top-end innings.

The back of the bullpen isn't bad either, with youngster Kelvin Herrera (Grade 12* HR-22), along with port-siders Jake McGee (Grade 11*) and Dan Jennings (Grade 8* C-21 HR+53). Either of these two could compensate for Delgado's starts. All told, there are over 444 innings. That's not a huge number, but Uehara makes this whole staff stronger.

Offense: 10.0 Will score runs in bunches.

Theoretically, the Elders could play a lineup in which only the shortstop didn't have a first-column 1. Realistically, that will likely never happen, but what could happen is a lineup with three 12-hit cards and two 11-hit cards. That's scary.



Beltre: Destroys pitching

Where to start? How about Adrian Beltre (1-5-6, 12 hits, 2 walks+22), who has 161 games to destroy opponents' pitching? How about Shin-Soo Choo (1-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks+42+22, SSN 25 for 31 attempts,

L-14, R+4)? How about Aaron Hill (1-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L+4, R-3)? How about Josh Satin (5-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks, L+3, R-5)?

You want hits? How about Charlie Blackmon (4 0s, 12 hits, 1 walk+22, L-5)? How about prize rookie Scooter Gennett (3 0s, 12 hits, 2 walks, L-22 R+4)? How about Allen Craig (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+42, L-5)? Even Jonathan Herrera (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-9) can hit. You want OBP? How about Craig Gentry (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, 34 SSN for 27 attempts, R-3)? How about John Jaso (6-0, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, L-13)?

Then there's the decent Yunel Escobar (0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks) and, don't laugh, Mark DeRosa (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L+3, R-9). There are several hit-or-miss cards that have to play in Garrett Jones (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-13) and Nick Hundley (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-6). Oh yes, and Franklin Gutierrez (1-1-5-6, 10 hits, L-6 R+2, but only 41 games) deserves a category all his own.

OK, so there are *only* three players with four power numbers (and one of them is Blackmon). OK, so there are more than a few large shifts versus left-handed pitching. Don't let these shortcomings fool you. This team will score runs in bunches, with the Sensei playing the matchups with virtuoso skill.

Defense: 5.0 One definite weakness.

Mr. Meyer likes defense, and his team reflects that. Escobar (SS9) and Hill (2B8) are strong up the middle, although Hill is game-limited this year. Gentry, Gutierrez, and Sam Fuld are all OF3s, although none of them starts regularly. Craig is a 1B4, but is needed in the outfield. He can move to first in the late innings.

Beltre at third, Gennett at second, Hundley at catcher (with a +1 arm), and the OF2s in the

outfield are all average. But apparently Jesus Montero (C7 with a Th-4) and Jaso (C6 with a Th-3) will be trotting out the tools of ignorance. That's a definite weakness.

Bench: 3.5
Plenty of usage.

This is definitely a contending bench. Though there are some limits to key players, there are a lot of Guys. There are seven outfielders. There are eight infielders. There are even three catchers.

Mr. Meyer will likely be using frequent flyer miles to shuttle bodies back and forth to and from the minors all year, but he knows the needs of his team. The bench will always have options available: for hitting, running, defense. It's another signature of a Zion team. What they could use is a defensive catcher, but there's the September trading period to address that problem. The division will be sewn up long before then.



Craig: Versatile

1st The Elders of Zion stack up well against the rest of the Mantle Division. The prospective second-place team, Munich, is capable but really not of this caliber. Even competitors are pleased to see renewed enthusiasm from Zion management. This has been a long time coming; the club was a perennial powerhouse in the Maddux Era, but the drought has been a long one. It appears to be over now.

Perhaps the TBL champ can be dethroned. Maybe he can't. But it's why we play the games, isn't it?



zion:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 16

Not surprisingly, DeRosa is the oldest member of this club. What is surprising is that Uehara is the second oldest. While this team has brought in some talented young talent in recent years — Gennett, Delgado, Herrera, Montero, and Withrow are the youngest five — these are not yet cornerstone players. In fact, some may still fail.

Meanwhile, *actual* cornerstones like Uehara, Beltre, Jones, Hill, and Choo are all over 30. Uehara just turned 39. While Jansen is in line to inherit Uehara's role and while many of the starters are well under 30, Craig turns 30 this year, joining Gentry, Jaso, and Escobar in the over-30 crowd. The offense may get old before the pitching.

That's not to say this team is facing a cliff — at least not immediately. Uehara turned in a pretty decent year, regardless of his age. Most of the others will continue to produce, too. A few, such as Jones, are slowing down, so it may become a juggling act for Mr. Meyer. But he's been adept at finding young replacements before. If he can keep doing it, he can continue to win division crowns ... and potentially more.

TQ: 32.0



ELDERS of zion

2013 munich MARAUDERS in review



The word rebuilding has gotten old for Munich fans.

by Paul Montague

2013 in Review

Final Record: 62-100 (4th, Mantle)

Another “meh” season; in fact, Munich fans have started calling them the “Meh-rauders”. The 2013 season began with hopes of contending for a wild card due to a good rotation front end, a decent bullpen, and an average offense. But it didn’t all *fall apart* because it never came together to start with. A 5-14 April set the tone, and the young roster never gained its stride, finishing 62-100 with only one month at even a .500 record.

What went right?

Closeness. At least most of the games were close. There were few blow-outs, and even some losses that ended lopsided were tight until the late innings. Previous years with 100+ losses have typically involved a lot of games that were out of hand early; in 2013, Munich was in almost every game. Buster Posey was the team leader in many categories, putting up a respectable .275-16-66 with 72 walks and stellar defense (2 errors).



Posey: Team leader

What went wrong?

Upside-Down Pitching. The ‘good rotation front end’ (Brandon Morrow, Yu Darvish, Chris Sale) combined for a 19-33 record and a disappointing 4.18 ERA (barely better than the team’s overall 4.43 mark) to torpedo any playoff hopes. Then, when team management decided to deal away Morrow (plus J.J. Putz and his 7.10 ERA), scrub Hector Noesi put up a 4-1 record with a 2.93 ERA in six starts. The better relievers produced very ordinary stats while late-pick rookies George Kontos and Evan Scribner sparkled (1-1-3 / 1.31 and 4-0-4 / 2.04 respectively).

3 Things

1. *Pitchah-pitchah-pitchah.* The 2014 rookie draft resulted in an influx of young arms – Danny Salazar and Kevin Gausman for the rotation, Trevor Rosenthal and Carlos Martinez for the bullpen, plus hope-they-develop Bruce Rondon and Nick Tepesch. Then a couple of minor late trades brought in injury lotto tickets Josh Johnson and Jon Niese. Added to the Darvish-Sale front-end and the existing solid bullpen, Munich followers are hopeful the staff will become the team strength for years to come.

2. *Youngsters.* The word *rebuilding* has gotten old for Munich fans. However, the plan is working; Munich should not finish last in 2014, and should contend in 2015 and beyond. The average age of the batters on the 2013 roster is only 25, and the pitching staff is 26 on average. If their skills develop as expected, *Marauders* may become a meaningful nickname once again. For this season, the Marauders hope to finish near .500.

3. *Deefense!* Quietly, Munich’s roster has filled up with players who provide excellent defense (OF-3’s Jason Heyward and Leonys Martin, with possible future 3’s Adam Eaton and Wil Myers; 2B-8 Jose Altuve; perennial C-8 Buster Posey; should-be 1B-5 Anthony Rizzo; should-be 3B-5 Brett Lawrie; and of course the new ‘wizard’ SS-10 Andrelton Simmons). Young flame-throwers on the pitching staff appreciate the young glove-flashers behind them.

If the offense can mature to match the defense, Munich fans should soon be able to discard “Meh-rauders” from their vocabulary.

munich MARAUDERS



Paul Montague (31st year); Hall of Famer

Mr. Montague decided to regroup.

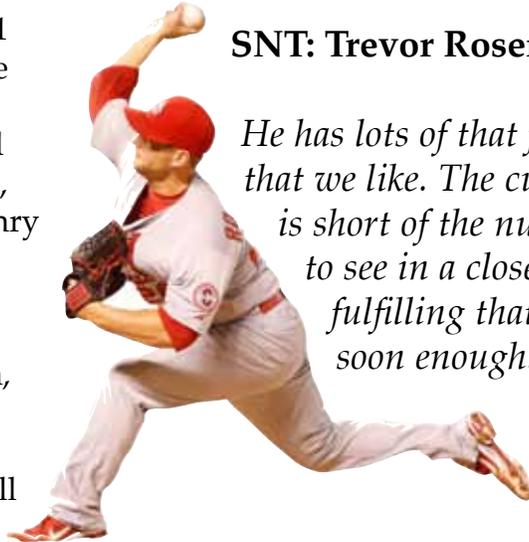
This year's rookie draft reminds us of the 2011 Munich one. That was the year he stunned the TBL world by landing both Jason Heyward and Buster Posey. But that year, he also loaded up on young pitchers: Wade Davis, Chris Sale, Jennry Mejia, Jordan Walden, Tyson Ross, Henry Rodriguez, and Ivan Nova. This past year, he selected Wil Myers at the top, then: Danny Salazar, Trevor Rosenthal, Carlos Martinez, Kevin Gausman, Bruce Rondon, Nick Tepesch, and Ian Krol.

Like in his 2011 catch, some of the pitchers will work out and some won't, at least not soon enough for Mr. Montague. Some may even work out better than expected (see Sale). It's a calculated strategy that may work, given time. It will be a few years before any of us know whether this was a brilliant draft or a bust. And that's ultimately the point: Mr. Montague decided to regroup rather than challenge Zion for the division when he already had some capable pitching and hitting going into the draft. But that doesn't mean that Munich is a pushover: far from it. They'll get some outs and score some runs, but there may be too few of one and not enough of the other to get to the postseason.

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Tony Cruz, Kevin Gausman, Josh Johnson, Carlos Martinez, Andrew Miller, Wil Myers, Jonathan Niese, Bruce Rondon, Trevor Rosenthal, Danny Salazar, Ruben Tejada, Nick Tepesch, Stephen Vogt.

Departed: Erick Ayabar, George Kontos, Derek Lowe, Christian Martinez, J. D. Martinez, Nyjer Morgan, Hector Noesi, Lyle Overbay, Elvin Ramirez, Henry A. Rodriguez, Joe Saunders, Chris Snyder, Ty Wigginton.



SNT: Trevor Rosenthal

He has lots of that fastball stuff that we like. The current Grade is short of the number we like to see in a closer, but he'll be fulfilling that role in TBL soon enough.

Pitching: 5.5
A solid foundation.

ROTATION. Last year's first-round pick turned out pretty darned good. Yu Darvish (Grade 17 C-26 for 32 starts) turned in a solid sophomore season. As scary as it is to consider, he might not yet have reached his peak. Following Darvish are rookie Danny Salazar (Grade 13) and young Chris Sale (Grade 12 C+26). Ricky Nolasco (Grade 8 C+24 HR+21) closes out the top end of the rotation, accounting for 105 starts. That's a solid foundation for any rotation.

The final 57 starts aren't so pretty. Jon Niese (Grade 6 HR+25) takes his potential to the mound 24 times. Rookies Nick Tepesch (Grade 5 C+22) and Kevin Gausman (Grade 3 C+24 HR-24) round out the rotation.

Substitute a high-grade starter for one of these guys, and



Darvish: Solid soph



you've got competitive starting pitching.

Instead, Mr. Montague waits in a holding pattern to see if any of these young pitchers will develop. We're not implying his draft was a mistake. He wants to wait until his team is loaded before making a push. It makes sense. Unless enough of the youngsters don't develop or become injury-prone. Then he's waiting longer, and Darvish's magnificent season becomes an "if only..." moment.

BULLPEN. Munich has a closer, but it's not who you might think it is. Rex Brothers (Grade 19* C-62 HR+23) has the grade, but his scary control and left-handedness make him less than ideal. Craig Breslow (Grade 17* HR+41) could have handled the role, but the team wanted a right-hander. So the closer becomes Brad Ziegler (Grade 14* C+23 HR+42). His grade is a little suspect, even though his

peripherals are exemplary. We've seen this kind of thing before: Grand Cayman used Wilton Lopez (a Grade 12* with outstanding peripherals) last year, and he turned in a 2.07 ERA and 23 saves.

With Ziegler at the top, Brothers and Breslow become superior set-up men, joined by a third lefty, Andrew Miller (Grade 16* C-62 HR+21, but for only 30.7 innings). Prized rookie Trevor Rosenthal (Grade 13* HR+34) joins the top tier of the bullpen. These relievers deliver 306 effective innings.

At the back end of the pen are Jordan Walden (Grade 11* C+24), Bruce Rondon (Grade 10* C-23 HR+32), and Evan Scribner (Grade 8* C+21), who bring the total of relief innings to 408.3 innings, with the innocuous innings of Carlos Martinez (Grade 2* HR+46) thrown in for good measure. More innings of Rondon or Scribner would have helped, but this bullpen will definitely help the rotation.

**Offense:
Many Guys We Like.**

9.0

There are many Guys We Like on this team. Rookie Wil Myers (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks) joins the slightly disappointing Jason Heyward (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22). Mr. Montague keeps waiting for Heyward to justify his selection as the #1 overall pick in 2011. Leonys Martin (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 31 SSN for 45 attempts, L-7) is a speed demon whose problem is getting on base. Since Adam Eaton (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42) had such an injury-shortened season that the team must rely on Norichika Aoki (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 25 SSN for 32 attempts) to round out the outfield.



Myers: Top rookie

The infield offensive stars start with Buster Posey (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22) and little Jose Altuve (6-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, 28 SSN for 48 attempts). The infield corners are Anthony Rizzo (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-7) and Brett Lawrie (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-6). Justin Smoak (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-9 R+3) offers some pop. Alberto Callaspo (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks) offers some on-base, while Andrelton Simmons (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) offers neither.

But Myers is as close as the team gets to a big bruiser. He and Rizzo are the only cards with four power numbers. There are a few cards who should be (and likely will get) better. There are many big lefty shifts that have to play. This team may have trouble scoring against better pitching.

**Defense:
We really like it.**

6.0

We really like this defense, especially due to the presence of the only SS10 in the set – Andrelton Simmons. Altuve (2B8), Posey (C8 with a +2 arm),

Rizzo (1B4), Martin, and Heyward (both OF3s with a 33 arm) also get to play every day. Lawrie, Aoki, Eaton, and Myers are average, as is backup catcher Stephen Vogt (although he has a Th+3).

The only knock is that Callaspo (3B3) will have to put in some time at the hot corner. But overall they'll help the pitchers get through innings.



Simmons: The SS10

Bench: 2.0
Not the expected depth.

Vogt (3 Os, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-5), Callaspo, and whichever outfielders aren't starting offer some flexibility. Logan Morrison (3 Os, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-11, R+2) doesn't appear to have much a role on the club. Neither does Ruben Tejada (6-6, 8 hits 2 walks, L+9, R-6), although it's more deserved in his case. Tony Cruz (C8 with a +3 arm) may not see much time because his lack of a bat. For a team with six players who have 147+ games, it doesn't seem to have the depth you would expect.

2nd Maybe in a dogfight. Neither Munich nor Hudson can catch the Elders, at least as the TQ ratings read. We think Munich is better, but it's hard to be sure.

Mr. Montague took an intentional sideways step this season and loaded up on young talent instead of pushing ahead to try to challenge for the division crown. As a result, his team is good, but despite solid pitching, doesn't threaten Zion. Despite the regrouping, the team will win its share because of its pitching, and its hitting is good enough. Mr. Montague has an extra #2 in next year's draft to try again.



munich:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

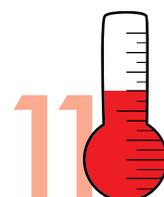
Team Age Rank: 1

"Youth" should be Paul Montague's middle name. This is the youngest team in TBL; the current Munich team is all about youth, with 27 of the 35 players under age 30. That's an enormous ratio. More than that, something like 13 players are 24 or younger: Altuve, Gausman, Heyward, Lawrie, Martinez, Myers, Rizzo, Rondon, Rosenthal, Salazar, Sale, Simmons, and Tejada. That's downright scary for the rest of the league.

But that's what Mr. Montague does, and he does it well. When he's not competing, he collects young talent, and both words of that phrase ("young" and "talent") are equally important. Some of that talent hasn't developed as fully or as quickly as he would like, but he has a decent track record over the past four drafts (and a superb one over the thirty-plus years since he founded our league).

Will this trend continue when he's ready to compete? History suggests no, but that's no reason to disparage this strategy. Paul has become the poster child of the Youth Movement.

TQ: 26.5



munich MARAUDERS

2013 hudson GENERALS in review



The team should rise in the standings like life insurance rates after an accident.

2013 in Review

Final Record: 72-90 (3rd, Mantle)

We observed last year that Hudson has been working on this odd-and-even-year thing over the last decade. 2013 was an odd year, and the team responded appropriately, dropping from 101 wins to 72. They overperformed, actually, due to the run differential (618 vs. 784); we may be able to ascribe this, and their 3rd place instead of 4th place finish (as we predicted), to the performance of Munich. We thought *they* would be the anchorman in the Mantle Division, and though their run differential also predicted 62 wins (which they achieved), Mr. Montague noted above that many games were close.

Does that mean that the team is going to surprise and bounce back? Indicators say that not enough has happened to make that possible. But there are some serious rebuilders in the conference (Northboro, Fair Oaks) and even in the division (Melrose), and no one ever accused Mr. Beard of failing to squeeze the last measure out of whatever talent came to hand. So we'll see.

What went right?

Carlos Beltran turned in good power numbers last year (27 homers, 74 RBI, 28 doubles). Ike Davis hit 36 homers with 29 doubles. Rajai Davis stole 25 bases. Wellington Castillo was clearly well platooned, and turned in a .290 average.

On the mound Mike Minor led the team with 10 wins and a 3.88 ERA, and Vinnie Pestano was a big time closer (6 wins, 24 saves, 86 Ks in 70 innings). Brandon Beachy went 6-3, 2.96 in 13 starts.

What went wrong?

Everything else. Beltran struck out 157 times; Ike Davis, 193. Lucas Duda (.198, 131 strikeouts in 394 at-bats) was a marvel of futility. Pablo Sandoval (.257-14-42) was replacement-level. Jose Bautista (.213-23-60) was even worse. Derek Jeter had a decent, if uninspiring, season in progress and was then dealt off to New Westminster; his replacement, Trevor Plouffe, hit 12 homers in 39 games, and hit 28 overall; but he also struck out 100 times and recorded a .230 average – he is, after all, *Trevor Plouffe*.

Other than Minor, Beachy, Pestano and a few other middle relievers, the pitching was a mess. Trevor Cahill went 9-12; Edwin Jackson 9-11, 4.90; Henderson Alvarez 4-11, 6.41; Tim Lincecum 7-16, 6.54.



Pestano: Big time

3 Things

1. *Eternal optimism.* Even after a season like this, Mr. Beard moves ever forward, trying to build the next 101-win club. He never stops trying, regardless of the team's skill.
2. *Every part of the team gets attention.* At any TBL draft, no one is more focused in Round 5 . . . Round 6 . . . Round 7. Every pick is carefully considered, even at the point at which any choice is as good (or bad) as any other. If our rosters were full of humans instead of APBA cards, they'd be thrilled to know that Clay cared.
3. *Back to the win column.* A winning season would make us look good again. We're all for reputation.

HUDSON GENERALS

Clay Beard (30th year); Hall of Famer

*Can Mr. Beard mold this team of misfits into a playoff-caliber contender?
... We wouldn't bet against him.*



The *Annual* pegged it right last year: a down year for the Generals. Since this is an even-numbered year, we predict an up year. After all, that's been the well-established pattern. And the estimable Mr. Beard may have the cards to back it up. To get to the post-season this year, though, he'll have to manage as he never has before in his Hall-of-Fame TBL career. The pitching staff is a little short, and his offense is a mix-and-match lot.

Can he do it? Can he mold this team of misfits into a playoff-caliber contender? It's a team with players who have nicknames that would give Abbott and Costello fits: The Freak, Joey Bats, Kung Fu Panda, Cole Train, and the Toddfather. They have an A.J., a D.J., and a Didi. Mr. Beard will have his hands full. But we wouldn't bet against him.

Pitching: 9.0
No more than average.

ROTATION. Hudson's rotation this year is a bit flat. There's no high-end ace, but there's also no dregs taking up starts because there's no one else. In Mr. Beard's case, he went out and got someone to replace the low end. As a result, Edwin Jackson (Grade 3) can work on his golf swing at AAA all year.

It starts with Ivan Nova (Grade 11 HR+34), followed closely by Mike Minor (Grade 11 C+23), rookie Gerrit Cole (Grade 10 HR+31), Henderson "No-Hitter" Alvarez (Grade 9 HR+55), Trevor Cahill (Grade 9 C-35), and Tim Lincecum (Grade 8). That's 145 competent starts. Not great, not dominant, but they will keep the Generals in the game most days.



Minor: Following closely

SNT: Gerrit Cole

He impressed in his major league debut, and should be a part of the Hudson rotation for years to come.



Turnover Rate: 23%

Arrived: Andrew Albers, Gerrit Cole, Didi Gregorius, Taylor Jordan, Brandon Kintzler, Jake Petricka, Kevin Siegrist, Scott Van Slyke.

Departed: Brandon Beachy, Josh Edgin, Cory Gearrin, Javy Guerra, Brock Holt, Jon Rauch, Matt Reynolds, Kurt Suzuki.

For the remaining few starts, waiver wire acquisition Andrew Albers (Grade 6 C+45) and Taylor Jordan (Grade 5 C+25 HR+33) split the load. They aren't awful, but they may need early help. This is no more than an average rotation, but if handled well, it could compete.

BULLPEN. In order for the rotation to compete, it needs the support of a good bullpen. What they get is a short-inning closer and some missing set-up, but a solid middle crew acting as set-up. At the top is rookie closer Kevin Siegrist (Grade 30* C-52 HR+52, but only for 39.7 innings). While his grade is as good as it gets, his control problems and left-handedness might not translate to locked-down games.



HUDSON GENERALS

Setting up Siegrist is the trio of Luke Gregerson (Grade 14* HR+41), Sean Doolittle (Grade 13* C+32 HR+34), and Brandon Kintzler (Grade 12* C+31 HR+52). That's 252 innings of mostly positive peripherals.

The middle relievers are Cody Allen (Grade 14*) and Ed Mujica (Grade 11* C+54 HR-24). Jake Petricka (Grade 10* C-42 HR+62) and Vinny Pestano (Grade 10* C-62 HR-23) will "get some work" at the end of the bullpen. Unfortunately, both have short innings. The total number of innings, then, is 441.7, adequate, but not much more than that.

The lack of a full-time closer may hurt. The short innings of the mop crew may force Mr. Beard to get creative. The middle and set-up relievers will be busy rescuing starters.

Despite playing his home games on the computer, Mr. Beard is not a push-button manager. He'll have to prove once again his

Offense: 9.0
A deep roster.

acumen in 2014.

Hudson has *nine* outfielders. That's like having a separate team hiding in the pasture. Plus, few on the roster have fewer than 100 games. This is a deep roster. It starts with Mr. Dependable, Carlos Beltran (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-7). This year, he has help. Nate Schierholtz (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-9) finally flashed real power. Jose Bautista (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks) and Jed Lowrie (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks) have some pop. But that's not all.

Wilson Ramos (1-5-5, 10 hits, 2 walks), A.J. Pollock (6-6-0, 10 hits but 2 10s, 2 walks, 31 SSN for 15 attempts), Lucas Duda (1-5-6, 8 hits, 5



Beltran: Mr. Dependable; Schierholtz: Flashing power

walks+42, L-8), and Scott Van Slyke (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks+22) have some power in supporting roles. Todd Helton (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) contributes one more time in a swan song season. Even Chris Heisey (1-5-6, 9 hits, a walk+42, L+5, R-6) has a role to play. But *that's* not all.

D.J. LeMahieu (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 28 SSN for 25 attempts) and Welington Castillo (0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42) will get on base their share of the time. Rajai Davis (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 34 SSN for 51 attempts, L+8 R-6) has the green light whenever he's on. The third base platoon of Pablo Sandoval (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-4) and Trevor Plouffe (3 0s 10 hits, 2 walks, L+6, R-3) fit like a glove. If only they flashed more of the power both are known for. This team should score some runs.

Defense: 4.0
Like ring toss.

There are some highlights. Castillo is a C8 with a Th+2. Helton (1B5) and LeMahieu (2B9) make all the plays on the right side of the infield when they're

playing. Pollack (OF3 with a 33 arm) is the best of an otherwise average outfield, although there are above average arms



LeMahieu: Makes all the plays

throughout. Gregorius (SS8) and Ramos (C7, but with a +2 arm) are average when they play.

Unfortunately, both Sandoval and Plouffe are 3B3s, and Lowrie, who plays a lot, is average at 2B, but a SS7 when he plays there. Having several outstanding defensive players surrounded by mediocrity is like the ring toss at a carnival. You hope to get lucky on defensive rolls. Sometimes they'll win. Most times, they won't. Mr. Beard better hope they at least hit like they're supposed to.

Bench: 2.5
A deep roster, remember?

Mr. Beard famously uses 25 players to win every game. This year, he has a deep roster to play with. There are lots of extra outfield games. The other third baseman is always available. The middle infield can mix and match. Only at catcher is the team a little limited.

3rd While there's no designated hitting toy unless you count Anthony Gose (2-5-6, 10 hits, 1 walk, L-11, R+3), there's lots of hitting. Davis will be on the bench enough to offer his services as a pinch-runner. When there are moves to make, Mr. Beard will have the players to make them.

But it'll be close, perhaps closer than the TQ difference would indicate. Still, the *Annual's* crystal ball predicts that this Generals team will fall short of Munich.

The pitching isn't good enough. The many bats are impressive, but only nine can play at a time, and they can't all be outfielders. It's entirely possible that this team will have a hard time scoring as many runs as they give up. It's also possible, however, that — under Mr. Beard's guidance — this team could surprise.



hudson:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 5

It's not that Mr. Beard doesn't like youth; it's that he prefers to win. It also isn't that he hasn't the patience to build from within — he's ridden down that road several times (sometimes defying our predictions for poor performance). But since his 2012 trade for noted power hitter Jose Bautista, he mostly built by adding young players awhile maintaining his foundation. Beltran, now 37, is still on the team, although he has been half-heartedly shopped around.

Some of the young players Hudson has held on to, like Gose and Ike Davis (remember Ike Davis?) haven't worked out as hoped. But there's still hope. Others, like Pollock and LeMahieu have probably exceeded expectations.

Most of the starting pitchers are young; Edwin Jackson is the old man at 30. The relievers are all 30 or younger. Helton will take his well-earned farewell bow this year. Beltran may also bow out in the next several years. So while much of this team is still young, there are several key players advancing in age: Lowrie and Schierholtz just turned 30. Bautista and Davis — both born on the exact same day, by the way — are 34. Let's hope they age gracefully.

TQ: 24.5

HUDSON GENERALS



2013 melrose AVENGERS in review



If things had broken right the Avengers would have won 87 but still missed the playoffs by a good margin.

by Mark Freedman

2013 in Review

Final Record: 73-89 (3rd, Mantle)

Amazingly little went right. Captain America and Wasp disappeared into the Pacific and the team just fell apart.

The culprit was the pen. Sure there was no monster closer or wall of 18s but on paper it didn't look bad. 9-19 doesn't do the failure just as inherited runners scored at will. The 73 wins was a significant disappointment. The upside? If things had broken right the Avengers would have won 87 but still missed the playoffs by a good margin.

What went right?

The offense generated 806 runs with a .265/.339/.469 triple slash. Ryan Braun hit .306-41-119; he also stole 16 of 17 bases. Jimmy Rollins added 28 homers of his own, drove in 96, and stole 27 of 29; David Murphy hit .284-25-90 with 51 doubles. Adrian Gonzalez hit .312 to lead the team and added 55 doubles. Amazingly Alex Gordon led the team with 63 two-sackers. Eight Avengers had 20 or more homers.

Kris Medlen went 11-3, 1.71 in limited starts. He was joined by Vogelsong's 16-9, 3.99. Raul Valdes, acquired just before rosters were set, recorded 3 relief wins, 22 saves and a 1.57 ERA. Among the starters only Medlen had an ERA below 3.00.

That's the good news.

What went wrong?

Other than Jepsen (1.54 in 35 IP) and Valdes, the bullpen was dreadful. The starting pitching

was thin, with the low end recording 4.33, 5.08 (Staff Ace Jon Lester), 6.70, 9.18 and 9.34 ERAs.

Dan Uggla hit .209, Russell Martin hit .229, and Kevin Youkilis was boom or bust with a .215 BA but 20 HRs in 116 games. Nine players struck out more than 100 times – effectively every regular player – led by Gordon and Uggla with 167 and Braun with 142. This was too much to overcome, even with a league-leading 233 home runs and .469 SLG.

3 Things

1. *2014 hasn't started and already 2015 looks like a lost year.* Kris Medlen and Jose Iglesias are done for the year. Geovanny Soto, Jonathan Broxton and Jaime Garcia are on the DL. Nick Franklin and Bob Brantly are in the minors. If you include Josh Edgin and Ryan Pressly, that's 20% of the team missing for the start of the 2014 season. Ross Detwiler and Alexei Ogando have moved to the bullpen, leaving us with five healthy starters, while after the draft we had nine.
2. *A team doesn't get a year older: it gets 25 years older.* In the draft we added much youth in Franklin, Rendon, Paxton, Lake and Iglesias. Todd Frazier, Peter Bourjos and Wily Peralta are part of the youth movement. Youth has to prove our faith in drafting them.
3. *Can the key players return to form?* Can Braun, Bourjos, Frazier, Murphy, Peralta and even Gordon and Gonzalez improve on their 2013? The 2014 TBL season is one of survival. If the core of the team doesn't rebound or we suffer more injuries the 2015 will be lifeboat – a *leaky* lifeboat.



Gonzalez: Led the team

melrose AVENGERS

Mark Freedman (21st year)

Will the next contending Melrose team come together quickly? That depends on whom you ask.



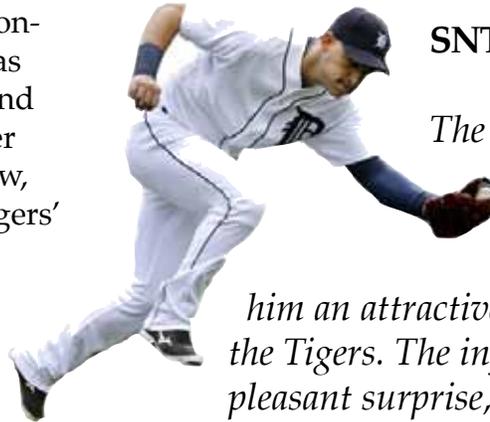
You can tell when a team doesn't intend to contend. Just look at the bullpen. A contender has at least one closer grade, plenty of innings, and lots of positive peripherals (New Westminster is something of an outlier; but then, you know, *Canada*.) Then there's the 2014 Melrose Avengers' bullpen. Two years removed from sweeping the Gotham City Batman in the TBL World Series, this team has stumbled backward, finishing with only 73 wins last year and now picked to finish last, according to the *Annual's* magic 8-ball.

Yet, despite the fact that the last championship was only two years ago, only 15 players from that club remain on the roster. And it's not because those other 20 retired. Many were traded away. The remaining 15 aren't getting any younger, but the team is definitely retreating. Will a complete makeover be next? Or will the next contending Melrose team come together quickly? That depends on whom you ask. This report documents the *Annual's* determination.

Pitching: 6.0 **The rotation's the good news.**

ROTATION. It starts off promising enough. Rookie James Paxton (Grade 22 C+24 HR+21) takes his four trips to the hill, followed by Tyson Ross (Grade 14 HR+25) and Alexi Ogando (Grade 14 C-26). These three contribute 38 high-quality, 8-stealing starts.

The next wave of starters include righties Kris Medlen (Grade 10 C+22) and Wily Peralta (Grade 7 C-24) and lefties Jon Lester (Grade 9 HR+22) and Jaime Garcia (Grade 8). They add 105 more starts that will give their offense a



SNT: Jose Iglesias

The glove was always there, and the bat arrived last year – making him an attractive acquisition for the Tigers. The injury is an unpleasant surprise, but his youth will keep him on the roster for years to come.

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Alejandro De Aza, Ross Detweiler, Josh Edgin, Nick Franklin, Jose Iglesias, Jason Kubel, Junior Lake, Ed Lucas, James Paxton, Ryan Pressly, Anthony Rendon.

Departed: Robert Andino, Mike Baxter, Michael Fiers, Jair Jurrjens, Josh Lueke, Ryan Madson, Jimmy Rollins, Eric Thames, Raul Valdes, Andrew Werner, Kevin Youkilis.

chance. In theory, at least. The final 19 starts will be learning experiences for two veteran pitchers who should have much left to learn: Ross Detwiler (Grade 2 C+35 HR+26) and Ryan Vogelsong (Grade 1 HR-21).

We suppose the top end of the rotation outweighs the bottom end, but the bottom end helps no one but the opponents. The real battle will be in the starts made by the middle grades. How well, or how poorly, they



Ogando: 8-stealing



melrose AVENGERS

pitch will determine the fate of this version of the Avengers.

BULLPEN. The rotation is the *good* pitching news. Now for the rest of the news. The new closer for Mr. Freedman’s team is Jamey Wright (Grade 12* HR+35). That’s correct; you read that right. That he does nothing to help the better starting pitchers, but he looks better than those starters fatigued. That’s what they’re telling him, anyway.

The set-up crew and the middle relievers are interchangeable, in more ways than one. Few have any semblance of control, but all try to keep the ball in the park. The wildest is Tim Collins (Grade 12* C-52 HR+41). The late-inning lefty is Manny Parra (Grade 12*). The there are Nate Jones (Grade 10* HR+33), Ryan Pressly (Grade 10* HR+33), Pedro Strop (Grade 10* C-32 HR+22), Josh Edgin (Grade 9* HR+24),

Jonathan Broxton (Grade 9*), and Ross (Grade 9*) when he’s not in the rotation.

Kevin Jepsen (Grade 5* HR+25) is around for innocuous mop-up duty. They bring the total to 538 innings, which is an example of quantity over quality. But there is enough here to rescue the bad starters and offer some middle relief for the rest. To stop late rallies, though, they’ll need all hands on deck, as they make use of the +5 bonus again and again. Can it be done? Of course, but only if this team has the will to win.

Offense: 5.5
No prodigious power source.

The pride of this team is still Ryan Braun (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, L+7 R-5), but this year, thanks to that shift and a bad drug test, he’s been reduced to a role player. The only other player with a fourth power number is backup catcher Geovany Soto

(1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-8 R+3). There is other power, but none of it is prodigious – especially *Melrose* prodigious.

Adrian Gonzalez (1-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks), rookie Junior Lake (6-6-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22 L+8 R-5), and Alex Gordon 1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22 30 SSN for 14 attempts, L+4 R-4) have solid cards. Todd Frazier (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42), Russell Martin (1-6-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, 25 SSN for 14 attempts, L-4), and Nick Franklin (1-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-4) can contribute. Dan Uggla (1-5, 6 hits, 5 walks+42), on the other hand, has sunk to a new low.

The table-setters remain effective, though. New shortstop Jose Iglesias (0-0, 11 hits, a walk+42), Anthony Rendon (0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22 L+4 R-3), Alejandro De Aza (0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 28 SSN for 28 attempts, L+3 R-3), and Peter Bourjos (0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42) can all get on base. Ed Lucas (0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+10 R-6) and David Murphy (0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks) add little. This is not an elite offense, but it’s deep and should score some runs, although there are quite a few bad shifts against right-handed pitching.

Defense: 5.5
Superior without Uggla.



Braun: Pride of the team

There’s lots to like here. Iglesias (SS9), A-Gone (1B5), and Martin (C8 with a Th+5) stand out in the infield. The outfield boasts no fewer than four OF3s: Bourjos, Braun, Gordon, and Murphy.

De Aza is average, as is Rendon and Franklin (2B7), Frazier and Lucas (3B4), and the other catchers. Brantly (Th+1) and Soto (Th+2) have positive throwing arms. Of course, it looks as if Franklin (SS7) will have to cover about 53 games. That doesn’t help. As long as Uggla

(2B6) doesn't have to play the field, and it doesn't look as if he does, this is a pretty good defense.

Bench:
We're all waiting.

2.5

As is usually the case when Mr. Freedman's teams aren't competitive, the bench is slim. Instructions call for few bench maneuvers. Infield games are tight, except for utilityman Lucas. De Aza, Gordon, and Murphy play the outfield almost every day, though, so the other outfielders should be available, although someone has to DH.

There may be plenty of pieces of cardboard, but they're all waiting for an opportunity or splitting time with another player. We're all waiting, Mr. Freedman, because Lake, Franklin, and Rendon represent the next wave for this team.

4th

Is this the bottom for the Avengers? Will they start to climb after this season? No one can yet say, not even the *Annual*. The only sure thing is that this team is a long way from the team that won the World Series just two years ago, winning 123 regular season games and paving the opposition in the fashion to which we have been accustomed.

The Avengers have shed some weight and added some youth, but they aren't yet ready to rebound. It could be a year, or it could be 10, before it all comes together again for Mr. Freedman. As is true with other veteran managers in our fine league, he has demonstrated patience when rebuilding (consider 2004-2008 when he inherited the team): but Melrose has never been known for long rebuilds – the entire narrative of "The Bounce" is based on Melrose's first-to-worst-to-first in 2009-2010-2011. We'll see.



melrose:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 11

Paxton, Peralta, and Ross represent the next wave of starting pitchers. Garcia, the next youngest starter, will be 28 in July. The bullpen has Collins and Pressly, but they aren't the type of talents that can likely make an impact. That means all the other pitchers are starting to age. *That* means Mr. Freedman is hoping the team comes together soon.

On offense, the team has added four potentially important young pieces in Franklin, Iglesias, Lake, and Rendon. While the pitchers mature, these are the replacement players that, if they develop as expected, could propel the Avengers back into contention. But with most young players, you never really know for sure if they'll be able to take that next step.

Meanwhile, Mr. Freedman has some key players in their prime years: De Aza, Braun, A-Gone, Gordon, and Martin. Bourjos and Frazier are just entering their prime years. If this group of hitter keeps producing, the Avengers will always have a chance. But it's the youngsters who will determine the fate of this team. Will they regroup in time? Or will he have to tear it all down and start again? Watch the young players' trajectories for the answer.

TQ: 19.5



melrose AVENGERS

The Song Remains The Same

We fall into patterns, even as evaluators – analysts, if you please, or simple examiners of APBA cards that fall (or might fall) onto our rosters. Without question we each have tendencies and habits. If it were not so, much of the inside baseball so lovingly addressed by this publication would be less witty and insightful than it purports to be. With each passing year it is more so. We know who builds up and crashes, who is slow and steady; who likes pitching, who likes speed, who likes Twins. Case in point: the Williams. Knowing the managers as we do, it seems like we've written all of this before. Never fear: we'll write it again.



There will be a tussle at the top of the division this year, with *Pat Martin's Knoxville Outlaws* enjoying a slight edge. It's taken a while for the club to come back together; there was a

World Series appearance in 2008 and a trip to the conference semis in 2010, but the last three years have been rebuilding and misery. Now should come some payback.

The other side of the tussle will be former Commissioner *Darrell Skogen's Midwest Mongrels*. If anyone's song is the same, it's the Guru: pitching, defense, and the sac

2013 Williams Division Final Standings

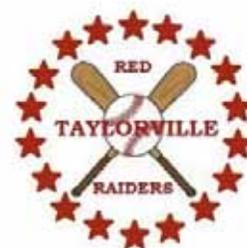
Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Fair Oaks*	96	66	.593	—
Midwest †	94	68	.534	2
Taylorville	75	87	.463	21
Knoxville	69	93	.426	27

* Lost to Zion in conference playoffs.
† Lost to Maracaibo in Wild Card playoff.



bunt (and, of course, Minnesota fandom) are his hallmarks. Our numbers say that he is a little less impressive than his friendly rival, but time will tell.

Down in *Taylorville*, the rebuild continues for the *Red Raiders*, with the offense below its usual capabilities, and not enough pitching – but there is still some talent on the roster. This is the second year for the tag team of *Bruce and Glenn Taylor*, who were division rivals for many years before.



Taylorville should have no trouble finishing ahead of the newcomer to the division, the *Las Vegas Gamblers*, which has sent much of its 2012 and 2013 talent packing in order

to prepare for a brighter 2015. Our new TBL Commissioner, *Paul Harrington*, has his work cut out for him in returning the club to contention.



Williams Division

Yadier Molina,
Knoxville



1. Knoxville	31.5
2. Midwest	29.0
3. Taylorville	24.0
4. Las Vegas	18.0

2013 Knoxville OUTLAWS in review



Lassie didn't get a rest.

2013 in Review

Final Record: 69-93 (4th, Williams)

We thought Knoxville was mediocre and that Fair Oaks was bad. Fair Oaks turned out to be an overperforming mediocre team, and Knoxville was a mediocre team that played badly. The prediction was wrong in another way. We said: *for goodness' sake, Timmy has fallen down the well a lot; it's about time Lassie got a rest. . . [the team] could be better in a year, or back down the well goes Timmy.* Lassie didn't get a rest, but a funny thing happened: while the club floundered in TBL, the 2013 MLB season produced a lot of good results. This year they are a contender, and this year we think they'll fight Midwest all year and pull out the pennant in the end.

Check back in this space in a year, and we'll find out if Lassie has finally gotten some shuteye.

What went right?

Knoxville had a very functional bullpen, given that the team only won 69 games. Jared Hughes recorded 10 wins and a 2.41 ERA; Brad Brach had 6 and a 2.64 ERA (with 67 Ks in 61 innings); Craig Stammen closed out 31 games with a 2.91 ERA; Xavier Cedeño contributed 30 good innings with a 1.82 ERA. Among the starters, Kevin Millwood's swan song consisted of 11 wins with a decent ERA (4.19), and Anthony Bass had a 3.05 ERA in fifteen starts (though he went 1-8).

Andrew McCutchen's nice numbers (.303-23-90) led the offense. Denard Span stole 11 bases and hit .316, though with negligible power; Jose



McCutchen: Nice numbers

Reyes led the team with 23 steals and hit .295; he also walked 64 times. Yadier Molina hit 20 homers, Jason Kubel 23.

What went wrong?

But they need a baserunning coach up in Knoxville. McCutchen stole 11 in 24 attempts; Reyes' 23 steals came with 10 caught stealing. Michael Brantley stole 9 of 13; no one else really ran at all. Jason Kubel struck out 141 times; McCutchen 135; and Pedro Alvarez must have contributed to tornado season, with 185 whiffs in 540 at bats.

The starting pitching was porous. Rookie Matt Moore went 11-10 but had a 4.65 ERA; Wei-Yin Chen was 9-18, 4.98; Patrick Corbin's half season gave him a 2-10, 5.40 ERA. Jordan Lyles turned in a 7.14 ERA, Joe Blanton a 7.96; both went out there to get beaten, and they didn't disappoint.

3 Things

1. *Oh, those Twins.* And ex-Twins. Span, Turner, Kubel, Young, Morneau, Dozier . . . it goes on and on. There's no cure for it.
2. *Patience.* We've said this about other teams, but the willingness to draft, and trade, and wait, leads to years like this when things come together. (We'd like to see a few of them get strung together.)
3. *Use the team.* The depth on the current roster needs to be used – pat lineups are for rebuilders, not contenders.

knoxville OUTLAWS



Pat Martin (28th year)

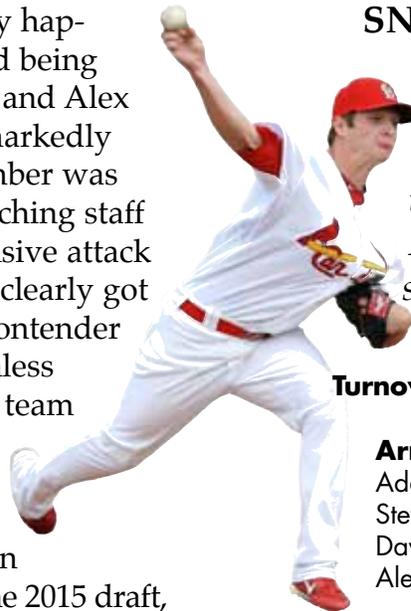
The team wants to win now.

It was a fun winter meeting for long-time TBL veteran Pat Martin. The draft usually happens right about on his birthday, and being able to add Shelby Miller (see right) and Alex Torres to a roster that was already markedly better than the one he had in November was a very nice way to celebrate. The pitching staff has some young talent, but the offensive attack has become more mature; while Pat clearly got the memo about youth, building a contender that's full up on youth is difficult unless you're Joe Auletta. It means that the team wants to win *now* and will need to make the most of this opportunity. Good thing: some key parts are already hurt in MLB 2014, so no reason to delay, and the team is "all in" for the 2015 draft, with little flexibility during the trading period.

We'd like to see this team be good for a sustained period. A few years ago, some *Annual* author went off on a jeremiad with regard to the team building skills of Mr. Martin, who has been in TBL for three decades, enjoying only rare winning seasons; this will certainly be another of them. While speculating on the 2015 or 2016 editions might be entertaining – it would be great if they were contenders too – it is our job to talk about the team on the field in 2014. They will be very good, and should win the division: not in a walk, but certainly in the end.

Pitching: 12.0 **The question is will it be enough?**

The Outlaws' instructions note the improvement in team pitching this year. Certainly true; it seems unlikely that the club will be outscored 812-639 again. There are four solid starters (though three full season lefties will cause more



SNT: Shelby Miller

We think was the Guy He Wanted, the latest in a series of top shelf Cardinal stud pitchers. He joins a quality rotation that should serve Pat Martin well.

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Brandon Barnes, Josh Fields, Adam Lind, Shelby Miller, Brett Oberholtzer, Steven Pearce, Nick Punto, Sandy Rosario, David Ross, Hector Sanchez, Bryan Shaw, Alex Torres, C. J. Wilson.

Departed: Joe Blanton, Brad Brach, Ronny Cedeño, Xavier Cedeño, Francisco Cervelli, Rhiner Cruz, Jesus Flores, Johnny Giovatella, Jared Hughes, Jason Kubel, Kevin Millwood, Franklin Morales, Travis Snider.

problems on the boards than Knoxville might like); there are closer grades from both left and right (though they could use a little more late setup, and the next tier of relievers are a little suspect as well). But this is a contending staff.

ROTATION. Five times, the Outlaws will be able to roll out Danny Duffy (Grade 18 lefty, C-62 HR+62), but the heart of the rotation will be the four full time starters – lefties Matt Moore (Grade 15 C-53 HR+21),



Matt Moore: Top starter



knoxville OUTLAWS

C. J. Wilson (Grade 11 C-23 HR+32) and Patrick Corbin (Grade 10 C+15) and rookie righty Shelby Miller (Grade 12 C-14 HR-13). That's 123 additional solid starts (though Duffy, Moore and Miller all have short fatigue). Brett Oberholtzer (Grade 12 C+33 HR+14) and lefty Wei-Yin Chen (Grade 8 C+15) round things out, essentially sharing the last rotation spot. This is a very fine group; Moore is a little wild but a genuine ace, and there isn't a bad start in the bunch.

BULLPEN. Luke Hochevar (Grade 22* C+21) found himself in the bullpen last year, and is joined by rookie southpaw Alex Torres (Grade 24* C-16 HR+56). Between them, their 128 closer innings lead a good bullpen. The setup men are used in two capacities: first, in the usual way to get to the closers; and second, as

"relief valets" or "caddies", with Bryan Shaw (Grade 13* C-15 HR+41) and Craig Stammen (Grade 11* HR+36) ready to pick up the slack for Miller, Moore and Duffy when they falter. The other reliever above Grade 13*, lefty Michael Dunn (Grade 15* C-23 HR+22) is available in the usual late-inning



Hochevar: Your closer

role. Dunn and Shaw have 142 innings between them, and Stammen adds another 80.

While not mentioned in the instructions, there are about 130 more innings on the roster: Sandy Rosario (Grade 11* C-22 HR+53), Shawn Kelley (Grade 10* C-26 HR-21) and Josh Fields (Grade 10* C-23 HR-41). Rosario is useful because of his homer rating; the other two are a little scary.

This is basically a five man bullpen; the question is whether it'll be enough.

Offense: 10.5
A nice front four; no real clunkers.

The obvious place to start is with Andrew McCutchen (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks+22, D28 for 37 SBA, L+9 R-4), the most exciting young player on the roster. Bill James wrote that age 27 was the breakout year for talent: if so, an even more exciting version of McCutchen is coming in 2014. Along with him, Yadier Molina (4 0s, 12 hits, 2 walks) are a very effective 3-4 position in the lineup. Michael Brantley (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, E31 for 21 SBA, L-4) bats in front of them, and for a little over half the season, Jose Reyes (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, E28 for 21 SBA, L-5) will bat in front of him. That's a nice front four.



McCutchen: Exciting

The rest of the positions are more pedestrian. Adam Lind (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-15 R+2) is very good when the platoon doesn't kill him; Delmon Young (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22) is a decent replacement. Denard Span (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, E30 for 26 SBA, L-9 R+1) will share with rookie Brandon Barnes (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, 9 13s, L+6 R-5). There's plenty of each, so they can be swapped for each other.

Pedro Alvarez showed plenty of power at last, but there's quite a lot of famine to go with the feast (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 9 13s, L-10 R+2). Brian Dozier (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, 2 10s, L+11 R-5) turned in a card that will be alternately functional and frustrating. Steve Pearce (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42) will get reps against lefties, with most of the first base games going to Justin Morneau (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-11 R+3) who is useful but not what he used to be. Someone will have to pick up the slack for Jose Reyes, but there are acceptable alternatives on the bench.

The best parts of this lineup are very good, and there are no real clunkers; still, the team might strike out a lot, leaving some empty innings and some men on base.

Defense: 6.5
Some outstanding defenders.

Knoxville has some outstanding defensive players. The consensus best defensive catcher in baseball is Yadier Molina (C9 Th+6); he's as good as they come. He misses about a fifth of the season, but his replacement David Ross (C8 Th+5) picks up the slack. At first base Justin Morneau (1B5) is top notch; Steven Pearce (1B3) is only average, but won't play much. Brian Dozier (2B9) is very nice, and most days there will be three OF3s – McCutchen, Brantley and Span. Brandon Barnes is an OF2, and there will be no need for Delmon Young or Adam Lind to carry a glove.

The few remaining positions are no more than adequate. Jose Reyes (SS8) will be Fielding Two for 60% of the season; the Outlaws can use a bat in Justin Turner (SS7) or a glove in Nick Punto (SS8, also 3B4 and 2B8) to replace him. Pedro Alvarez is a 3B3 in the Harmon Killebrew tradition, with Turner (3B4) or Punto to back him up.

Bench: 2.0
Mostly the platoons.

The CF and DH platoons have plenty of games to cover them, so there will be the ability to substitute as pitchers change. The 1B platoon less so, as Pearce is limited in usage (138 PA), but Morneau's defense is probably more important than his platoon shift even late in games. Ross (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, 11 13s) and Hector Sanchez (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42) are uninspiring when Molina has to sit. Turner (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-3) and Punto (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks) are useful substitutes for Reyes' missing games. But most of the action will be with the starting nine to twelve players.

1st

We think they'll win. This is a better lineup than Midwest's, but the difference may come down to pitching. As

with other parts of that Minnesota rivalry, the song does indeed remain the same.



knoxville:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 8

They're still young. The majority of the team is 30 or younger; the rotation is particularly youthful (Chen, the last of the five top starters, is 29; Wilson is 33; the others are 25, 25 and 24). Luke Hochevar is 30, and hurt, but Alex Torres is only 26.

Among position players, Molina is 32, Reyes 31; Morneau is 33, Span 30. But Brantley, Pedro Alvarez and McCutchen are all 27, as is Dozier. The 2014 off-field injuries to one of the big five starters (Moore) and the closer (Hochevar) complicate plans and make Mr. Martin want to win now, while the band is all together.

But they're definitely all in with no margin for improvement. What you see is what will be on the roster all year, and unlike this year when more than a third of the players were turned over, the 2015 roster may look a lot the same.

TQ: 31.5



KNOXVILLE OUTLAWS



2013 midwest MONGRELS in review



The Dawgs expect to be in a battle royal.

by Darrell Skogen

2013 in Review

Final Record: 94-68 (2nd, Williams)

The Dawgs expected to win the Williams Division but came up two games short to the FOG.

Undaunted, the team has doubled down for the new season, with strong opposition expected from Knoxville's Blue Thunder. This will be the first time since the Dawgs joined the league that both teams will be competitive for a division championship.

What went right?

Starting on offense, Adam Jones hit .271-31-85. Carlos Gomez hit .269-28-90 and stole 30 bases. Luis Cruz hit .312 in a half season at 3B. Carlos Santana hit .247-17-66.

But the strength was the pitching staff. Starters: Bumgarner 17-5, 3.26; Hellickson 13-9, 3.93; Zimmermann 13-10, 3.82; Detwiler 11-6, 3.40; Williams 7-4, 2.78 as spot starter and middle reliever. In the pen, the Dawgs were seriously good. Rodney saved 43 games and had a 0.94 ERA; Holland earned a 1.14; Perkins a 1.56; Peralta a 1.97; Marshall 3.60. Lots of strikeouts, very few walks, and a plus margin of 131 runs prevented compared to runs scored by the Dawgs. A 94-win season was the result, but the offense was just too weak to make a good playoff run this season.

What went wrong?

Ervin Santana had a horrible season, with a 6-12 record, 5.46 ERA, and 42 homers given up in 151 innings. But the real story was offense that was inconsistent as batting averages and on-base percentages were less than good. The

middle infield stunk—Barney hit .216, Aviles .209, Nix .200, Roberts .191. Hosmer dropped to a .249 singles hitter. Cuddyer was worse at .229. LaRoche hit .227, although he did add 28 homers and 87 RBI.

3 Things

1. *The bullpen will work hard.* With the starting staff down a bit by normal Dawg standards, the deep and long bullpen will have to log lots of innings and excel as it did in 2013. Hellickson and Williams enter the season with arms ready to fall off, and they will not go deep into their games given the depth of the bullpen this year.

2. *The outfield has to hit.* Jones, Cuddyer, and Gomez give the Dawgs the best offensive potential they have had since the Guru joined the league. They should hit for power and average, and Gomez and Jones should run wild on the bases.

3. *The rest of the offense has to pick up the slack.* Victor Martinez is back and will fulfill the dual role of DH-manager in 2014. Santana should get on base a bunch while providing punch from behind the plate. Rollins and Zimmerman are upgrades; 2B is sketchy, with an offensive platoon that no one fears capped by the glove of defensive whiz Barney late in the games. Hosmer needs to return to the form of his rookie year.

The Dawgs expect to be in a battle royal with Pat Martin's club this season. If the Dawgs make the playoffs, they appear to have a solid playoff team this season, which they have not had in the previous two seasons. They have four starters Grade 10+, an awesome bullpen, and a dang good offense. But can they make the playoffs? Time will tell!



Jones: 31 homers tops

midwest MONGRELS



Darrell Skogen (13th year)

The future is an object in the rear-view mirror.

The World Series win in 2009 led to two years of recovery out on the tundra, but recently the much-maligned Mongrels – sometimes maligned by the Guru himself, in witty accounts of the fickle fan base – have done pretty well, winning 93 and 94 games and participating in the post-season. *(There's enough alliteration in the last sentence to give W. Smith in Roth's **Great American Novel** a heart attack. And if you haven't read it, you certainly should.)*

Darrell Skogen knows that fate is fickle (there we go again!) but that teams built to last take time and patience, both of which he possesses in abundance. He's even more "all in" than his country cousin Pat Martin: Midwest gets its first selection in the 7th round in 2015, just as in 2014 – Ryan Zimmerman, Jimmy Rollins, and other, earlier investments will cost you draft picks. This is not a young team anymore: Eric Hosmer (25), Madison Bumgarner (25), and Eduardo Escobar (25) are the only real young guys among the carded players. So – also in lockstep with Knoxville – they need to win *now*. The future is an object in the rear-view mirror: closer than it might appear.

Turnover Rate: **29%**

Arrived: Henry Blanco, Brett Cecil, Endy Chavez, Trevor Crowe, Brandon Gomes, Jason Grilli, Jimmy Rollins, Andrew Romine, Alfredo Simon, Ryan Zimmerman.

Departed: Alfredo Aceves, Mike Aviles, Drew Butera, Luis Cruz, Ross Detweiler, Jack Hannahan, Mark Kotsay, Cory Luebke, Darin Mastroianni, Chris Parmelee.

SNT: Jimmy Rollins



A classic contender move: go get the short-stop everyone used to want, because when you're trying to win stuff, Mike Aviles Doesn't Cut It.

Pitching: **11.5** Focused on pitching.

Since the franchise first moved to its current home, management has been focused on pitching. (We have discussed the idea before of building a pitching staff first. We generally Don't Approve, and the Guru gave us our comeup-pance five years ago.)

This is a very capable staff, both starting and relieving; it's not exactly all young whiz kids anymore, and the bullpen is more wild than Darrell generally likes, but the grades are good and there are a lot of innings. The rotation and bullpen matches up very well with Knoxville, and we feel that they are almost equally strong.

ROTATION. Madison Bumgarner (Grade 15 lefty HR+21) really came into his own last year, and leads a solid rotation that includes Ervin Santana (Grade 12 C+32 HR-13), Jordan Zimmerman (Grade 10 C+31) and a half-season of veteran lefty Bruce Chen (Grade 12 C+15).



midwest MONGRELS

These four make 110 starts, a tad over two-thirds of the season.

Then come the remaining 52. These are assigned to Jeremy Hellickson, who had quite a down year (Grade 5 C+14 HR-14) but will have to pitch 31 times. Jerome Williams (Grade 4 HR-14) picks up the rest. Midwest will employ high-innings caddies for these two starters, primarily Alfredo Simon and Joel Peralta, to keep the team in the game. What that means in practice is that, in these starts, the Mongrels will either surrender the game if Hellickson or Williams is pounded early, or will go to the bullpen early and use it heavily.



Bumgarner: Into his own

but hit a lot of doubles. This club more closely resembles the 2005 squad, with four regulars with four power numbers and four with 11 or more hits, but only one top-notch running threat in Gomez (though there's some incidental speed up and down the lineup).

The offense begins with Michael Cuddyer (1-0-0-0, 12 hits, 3 walks, F30 for 13 SBA, L-5), who had a career year and won a batting title in MLB. This card will be in the lineup as often as possible, missing about a quarter of the season. He'll share the outfield with Adam Jones (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 1 walk+22, E32 for 17 SBA, L-4) and Carlos Gomez, who suddenly became a power-speed guy (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, C33 for 47 SBA, L+5 R-3). Eric Hosmer (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, F28 for 15 SBA) had a nice bounce-back year and will frequently lead off; Victor Martinez (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, only two 13s, L-4) returned from injury as a solid hitter but lacking some of his former power.



Gomez: Suddenly power-speed

Behind the plate, Carlos Santana (1-6-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22) is a solid everyday player who will get on base regularly.

BULLPEN. The pitching staff is very strong in the bullpen, led by a top-notch closer: Greg Holland (Grade 24* C+14 HR+42, 67 innings). His setup men are quite capable: lefties Glen Perkins (Grade 17* C+16 HR+22) and Brett Cecil (Grade 15* C-14 HR+33) and righties Joel Peralta (Grade 17* C-51 HR+14), Jerome Williams (Grade 16* HR-14), Fernando Rodney (Grade 14* C-52 HR+44), Jason Grilli (Grade 14* C+14 HR+16), and Alfredo Simon (Grade 14* C+13), for a total of 460 innings. Bruce Chen (Grade 11*) has 34 more when not starting, and there are two innings-eaters to help save the staff.

Offense: **10.5** Might be his best.

Is this the best offense Midwest has ever had? Maybe: the 2009 team hit 177 homers and stole 152 bases, scoring 782 runs; the 2005 team hit 174, scoring 802 – they couldn't run very much

That leaves the rest of the infield. Part of the reason for the absence of 2015 draft picks is the acquisition of veterans to fill yawning holes at third base and shortstop; Ryan Zimmerman (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) came over from rebuilding Dallas and will be a steady hitter in the middle of the lineup every day, while Jimmy Rollins (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, E30 for 28 SBA) came over from rebuilding Melrose and will, you know, play shortstop. He may occasionally contribute offensively, but will be a favorite target for Midwest's bunt fetish. That's also true of the squad of players who will take turns playing

second base: Andrew Romine (10 hits, no power or speed); Ryan Roberts (1-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+6 R-9); Jayson Nix (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, E35 for 13 SBA, L+4 R-4); and Eduardo Escobar (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks). One or more will be on the roster to keep Darwin Barney (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+22, L+6 R-4) from using a bat as much as possible. It's the only real black hole in the lineup.

This is not the 1927 Yankees by any stretch, but it's a good lineup that has some power and some speed; against bad pitching staffs they'll do very well.

Defense: 4.5
At its peak, very solid.

At its peak, this is a very solid defensive team. Gomez (OF3, 37 arm) and Jones (OF3, 33 arm) are Fielding One, and Michael Cuddyer (OF2, 37 arm) is very good. Eric Hosmer (1B5) and Darwin Barney (2B9) are top notch; defensive replacement Henry Blanco (C8 Th+2) is very good, but Midwest will want to keep Carlos Santana's bat in the lineup as long as possible, and his glove is below average (C7 Th-2). Rollins (SS8) and Zimmerman (3B4) are average, and so are the squad of second basemen (all 2B7s).

The slight edge goes to Knoxville and Yadier Molina. I'd rather have Knoxville's speed and Midwest's catchers than the other way around.

Bench: 2.5
A bunch of nondescripts.

Darwin Barney and Henry Blanco (2 0s, 6 hits, 3 walks+22) are defensive replacements who will only be at the end of games. Otherwise, the extra players are nondescripts: Reed Johnson (OF2, 3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42+22+15); Endy Chavez (OF2, 2 0s, 10 hits, L-5); Trevor Crowe (OF2, 2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, E33 for 7 SBA, L+6 R-4); Xavier Paul (OF1, 1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L-10); and Adam LaRoche (1B4, 1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-9 R+1). They are here merely to pinch-run or take up the slack where games are missing among the starters.

2nd

The deep, deep bullpen and the solid middle of the lineup makes Midwest a contender. The one-third of the season taken up by bad starts drains innings from that bullpen, and the lower part of the batting order – particularly the middle infield – may create some 1-2-3 innings that will give better teams a chance to come back or to hold off Midwest in close games. It all may come down to head-to-head matchups.



midwest MONGRELS



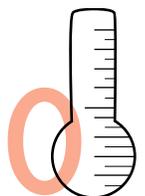
midwest:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 23

Our age ranking places Midwest next-to-oldest in TBL. Only Rye is older (but is in its own category). This is all of a piece: the team has obvious talent, but it also is "all in" for the 2015 draft (after being "all in" for the 2014 one) and will be unable to deal with any catastrophic injuries or downturns. Not that anything of the sort ever happens to middle-aged baseball players . . .

As stated at the top of this article, there are only three truly young players on the roster. Madison Bumgarner is 25; the other principal starters are 27, 28 and 31. Holland is 28; the rest of the pen is much older. Hosmer is 24; the rest of the lineup is close to 30 or is much older (Rollins, Cuddyer and Martinez are all 35). The transition to rebuilder will be abrupt, not gradual. But it won't be this year, at least.

TQ: 29.0



2013 Taylorville RED RAIDERS in review



The team transitioned from keeping up appearances to getting ready for the next version.

2013 in Review

Final Record: 75-87 (3rd, Williams)

Given the way the Williams Division diverted from our (admittedly hasty) analysis in the 2013 *Annual*, we've fallen back on quoting ourselves a great deal. The commentary on Taylorville – the first year of the happy union of the Taylor brothers – offered the metaphor of *keeping up appearances*. Any team with Pujols and Hamilton had to be taken seriously. Of course, Pujols has since shown mortality and Hamilton left the building in a trade to Columbus during the season. In some ways, last year's sub-.500 result represented a turning point in the franchise, in which the team transitioned from keeping up appearances to getting ready for the next version. As noted in the main article at right, the win total has drifted downward. Is this the bottom?

What went right?

Michael Bourn only hit .268, but made the most of it with 37 doubles, 14 triples and 14 homers. He also walked 64 times and stole 17 bases to lead the team. Will Middlebrooks turned in a pretty good half season (.290-16-43, 20 doubles); Josh Hamilton was pounding the ball (.288-28-62) when he was dealt away; Albert Pujols was mortal, but pretty good for mortal (.287-28-98); Brian McCann hit 21 homers.

On the mound, Aroldis Chapman was awesome (6 wins, 30 saves, 1.44 ERA, 84 Ks and only 30 hits in 62 innings). Brett Myers (2.27 ERA), Jim Miller (2.33 ERA), Matt Thornton (2.34 ERA), and a number of lesser relievers helped keep the



Bourn: Made the most of it

club in many games. Jason Vargas led the club with 11 wins.

What went wrong?

Even with the six months of Josh Hamilton mashing the ball before his trade, the team was power-light; it hit only 148 homers, and only hit .256 as a team. Howie Kendrick struck out 147 times, Michael Bourn 138, Gerardo Parry 111, Kirk Nieuwenhuis 101 (in 276 at-bats). Kendrick hit .255; Solano .252, Parra .239, McCann .239, Nieuwenhuis .225. The club stole only 48 bases.

The rotation was hard hit. Vargas' 11 wins came with 16 losses and a 4.39 ERA; Travis Wood went 7-12, 4.66; J. A. Happ, 8-10, 5.18; Jeremy Guthrie 5-12, 5.49; and Josh Beckett 8-16, 5.77. These five surrendered 147 homers between them, one less than the entire Taylorville team hit.

3 Things

1. *Saying goodbye to Hamilton.* This had to be a difficult decision, but in view of the subpar 2013 on the way, it was the right move.
2. *Holding on to Chapman.* This seems like a no brainer, but there must have been inquiries and offers for the hard-throwing young pitcher. The correct answer had to be: *no way*.
3. *The price of rebuilding is vigilance.* This club going forward isn't awful, but it's not a top contender. During the coming season, it may be desirable to make another deal to get younger. It's important to seize that opportunity.

taylorville RED RAIDERS



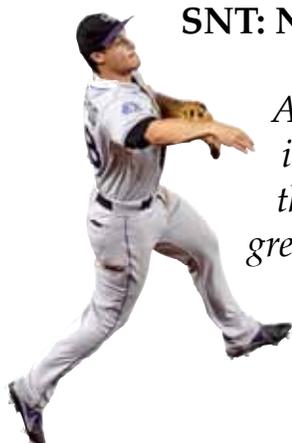
Bruce Taylor (17th year) / Glenn Taylor (13th year)

Is this a rebuild or borderline contender?

We have noted in the past that there is no way to restructure a team without losing some momentum to friction. We've been telling this story for a while: the dominance of this franchise from 2002-2009 (seven playoff appearances in eight years, including four straight Williams Division pennants) is a ways back in the rear view, and the club isn't getting younger – at least not fast enough as the win total has drifted down (from 88 to 82 to 75).

Now that the Taylor brothers are entering their second season as tag-team partners, they'll have to make a decision. Is this a rebuild or a borderline contender? There are some very solid parts; but with a few exceptions, the "talented youth" is 26, 27, 28 years old . . . which means that if this is a team trying to build toward contention with the current roster, its window is near: next year, perhaps the year after. If things go well, this will be a very good club in 2015 or 2016.

If not, the team will look a lot different in two years.



SNT: Nolan Arenado

APBA likes his glove; he is patient at the plate, and the power is still coming. A great pick for a team looking to restructure.

Pitching: 9.0 Will they run out of innings?

When we analyze teams and team parts, we try to think in categories. This is what a contending staff looks like; this is a rebuild. Sometimes it's obvious. If the rotation is strong, the bullpen's stacked, they steal hits and home runs – that's a contender. A lot of "learning experiences" and the instructions keep the starters in the game until pounded out: well . . . the challenge is to characterize and categorize the ones that lie in between. This is an example of one of those. The rotation has no bad starts: there's even a Grade 13 at the top, but there are some wild control ratings. The pen starts with Aroldis Chapman, who's got a closer grade and throws 163 miles an hour, but there are fewer innings than are needed. Is this enough to get them to the playoffs, or just to keep them from a top-ten draft pick in 2015?



Travis Wood: Best starter

ROTATION. Seven pitchers will start for Taylorville this year. The best one is Travis Wood

Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Nolan Arenado, Jeff Bianchi, Jake Dunning, Robbie Grossman, Jedd Gyorko, Ryan Hanigan, Jose Lobaton, Dan Otero, A. J. Ramos, Tyler Thornburg.

Departed: Francisley Bueno, Tony Campana, Tom Gorzelanny, Michael Kirkman, Aaron Laffey, Jim Miller, Brent Morel, Brett Myers, Kirk Nieuwenhuis.



taylorville RED RAIDERS

(lefty Grade 13 C+14). He and Jeremy Guthrie (Grade 7 C+15 HR-15) are the only full-season starters; the remaining hundred or so starts will be filled with part-timers: Hector Santiago (lefty Grade 12 C-42, 23 starts); Jake Arrieta (Grade 11 C-62, 14 starts); Charlie Morton (Grade 9 HR+35, 20 starts); Jay Happ (Grade 8 C-43 HR+14, 18 starts) and Jason Vargas (Grade 7 lefty C+13, 24 starts). The fatigue ratings are a little short given some of the control ratings, but as noted, the relievers are largely better than the starters.

BULLPEN. APBA had to invent a new rating to represent arms like Aroldis Chapman: X and Y and XY weren't enough – there's now K. For lefty Chapman, K wasn't enough either. He got all three: he's a KXY, and a Grade 21* to boot (though the C-52 is going to extend some close games). He has 63 innings to close games when Taylorville has the lead.



Chapman: All three

The guys who set him up are solid as well: rookies Tyler Thornburg (Grade 16* C-25 HR+56), A. J. Ramos (Grade 15* C-56 HR+36) and Jake Dunning (Grade 14* C-34 HR+16). Since Thornburg won't be starting, that adds up to about 170 solid (but wild) right handed innings. Another

rookie, Dan Otero (Grade 14* C+43 HR+62) has 39 more with excellent peripherals.

After that, it's a long way down. Lefty Matt Thornton (Grade 8* HR+22) and righty Logan Ondrusek (Grade 8* C+14 HR-23) provide 100 more innings to jump into games where the

starters must depart. The question, overall, isn't whether the bullpen can help the rotation – it's whether they'll run out of innings in August.

Offense: 7.5
Steady, but powerless.

Descriptions of this club's offense used to begin by extolling the virtues of Jose Alberto Pujols, perhaps the best all-around player of his generation. Last year not so much; there's only about 100 games and they're adequate but hardly Pujols-like (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-5). The best overall hitter in the everyday lineup is Howie Kendrick (3 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk+22); along with Alexei Ramirez (3 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk, D30 for 39 SBA) they'll provide the players on base for the middle of the lineup – Pujols and Brian McCann (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-10 R+2).



Gyorko: Man named Jedd.

Rookies Nolan Arenado (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+5 R-4) and Jedd Gyorko (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+2 R-3), as well as part-timers Donovan Solano (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, L-4) and Joaquin Arias (2 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk), will fill the infield games, while Michael Bourn (0-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, D26 for 35 SBA), Gerardo Parra (0-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-11 R+3) Brett Gardner (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, D29 for 32 SBA) and Shane Robinson (0, 9 hits, 5 walks, L-4 R+2) will share the outfield ones.

The above names have a variety of talents. Some can run, some can hit lefties or righties, most have decent on-base numbers. But none have four power numbers. Three – Pujols, McCann and Gyorko – have a first column 1. The best power hitter on the team – Will Middlebrooks (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, 8 13s, L+3 R-3) doesn't crack the lineup. Assuming that the right matchups are available, the team will score some runs – but it will take a lot of good rolls to assemble a big inning.

Defense:
Very capable.

6.0

The Raiders have top players in the outfield, behind the plate and at second and third base. The starting outfielders (Robinson, Parra, Gardner and Bourn) are all OF3s; Parra has the best arm at 34. Nolan Arenado was superb at third base (3B5); and Brian McCann earned his C8 (Th-0); his substitutes, Gerald Laird (C8 Th+3) and Ryan Hanigan (C9 Th+6) are even better. The listed starting second baseman, Donovan Solano (2B8) is Fielding One, though the other keystoners (Kendrick, Gyorko and Arias) are 2B7s. Alexei Ramirez is an SS8 every day, and Albert Pujols is a 1B3.

This is a very capable defense, with some high points that will help keep teams from extending innings.

Bench:
Space fillers.

2.0

Taylorville is carrying three additional catchers this year. Gerald Laird (6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, L-4 R+1) will substitute for McCann part of the year; Ryan Hanigan (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) is a defensive replacement. Jose Lobaton (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-4, C7 Th-3) has no real role. Neither do Jeff Bianchi (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) or Robbie Grossman (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+2 R-2). Middlebrooks is on the bench, but as noted, is the only power source the team has. Unfortunately, this is a collection of space fillers.

3rd

This is a club that might be good enough to get to .500, but most likely falls short of contention. They won't challenge Knoxville or Midwest this year: their finish will depend on how well they do against inferior pitching. Against better staffs, a three or four run deficit will be hard to overcome.



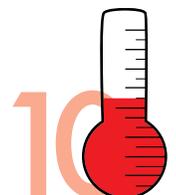
taylorville:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 12

On the one hand, Taylorville is right in the middle on the age scale. 14 of the cards in the envelope are age 30 or over, though only two of them are 35; but there are only two under age 25 (Arenado and rookie outfielder Robbie Grossman). If this was a pull down the walls, dig up the foundation rebuild, there wouldn't be enough young folks to sell the story. McCann and Gardner are 30; Kendrick, Bourn and Happ are 31; Ramirez and Morton are 32; Hanigan is 33; Pujols and Guthrie are 34.

On the other, the number of players coming into their prime – much of the pitching staff and some key hitters (including Chapman, Gyorko, Solano and Santiago at age 26, Wood and Parra at age 27) – are good enough to keep the team from being a pushover in 2014 and are young enough to be a foundation for 2015 and beyond. It's clear that Taylorville doesn't play at the same level as Knoxville or Midwest; but it's a long way from the bottom-scrappers too. Their competition for the post season is Maracaibo, Hudson, Munich and possibly Kansas. Are they the fifth-best team in the National Conference? Maybe. In either case, they have a future to look forward to.

TQ: 24.0



taylorville RED RAIDERS

2013 Las Vegas GAMBLERS in review



Switching places with Fair Oaks for 2014 will give us the chance to finish at the bottom of a brand new division.

by Paul Harrington

2013 in Review

Final Record: 53-109 (4th, Clemente)

Gamblers management knew heading into the 2012 offseason that the 2013 season would not be a very good one, but nobody there realized just how horrible it would eventually become. If the top brass had any idea that we'd finish with the worst record and, thereby, the 1st draft pick in the 2014 draft, we never would have traded said pick to Brobdingnag. That trade, along with one from Detroit, left us with three 1st round picks for 2013. We were hoping those three players would help form the nucleus of the next great Las Vegas team ... boy, were we wrong.

What went right?

When you rack up 109 losses, there is very little that you can point to as having "gone right", but there were little rays of hope here and there. Catcher of the future Yasmani Grandal, had a nifty little slash line of .276/.351/.416 in only 60 games. Skip Schumaker and Steve Lombardozzi, the second base platoon, played quite well. Schumaker hit .293 with an OBP of .341 and Lombardozzi hit .278 in 120 games – though the two combined for exactly 1 HR! Not a lot a power there.

On the pitching side, short innings closer, Josh Kinney saved 19 in only 25 IP covering 26 appearances, while posting a respectable ERA of 2.52.

What went wrong?

I might need another couple of pages to complete this section, but I'll try to be succinct. Nobody in the offense score over 70 runs and

nobody tallied more than 70 RBI. John Mayberry and Asdrubal Cabrera tied for the team lead in HR with a paltry 16 each. The offense, as a whole, posted a line of .247/.296/.379 with only 118 HR. The pitching was as equally bad. Rookie 'ace' Lucas Harrell, went a disappointing 8-16, 4.58. Fellow rookie Tommy Milone went 9-16, 4.67, but veteran leader Gavin Floyd was worst at 3-14, 4.85 – no way to teach the youngsters! Then there's middle reliever Josh Roenicke, who was called upon in middle innings to either protect small leads or preserve ties. His final record of 4-13, 5.94 attests that he sucked at that.



Cabrera: 16 homers

3 Things

1. *Bungling the draft.* We traded the opportunity to say Yasiel Puig's name at the 2014 draft to take three players in the 1st round of the 2013 draft: Tommy Milone (who might be the odd man out in Oakland); Yasmani Grandal (a little fish caught in the Biogenesis scandal, who had his knee blown out in a collision at home plate); and Lucas Harrell (who appeared to be the Houston ace for Houston when drafted; now he's both an innocuous starter and an innocuous reliever in the same season. Oh joy.)

2. *More troubles for 2014.* There is more of the same coming up this season; the pitching is probably worse and the offense only slightly better. This has also set the rebuilding process back a couple of years.

3. *New year, a new division (and a new conference).* Las Vegas is on the move again this upcoming season. Switching places with Fair Oaks for 2014 will give us the chance to finish at the bottom of a brand new division. Vegas just can't wait!

Las Vegas GAMBLERS



Paul Harrington (18th year)

The instructions call for no real management moves. Under the circumstances, just as well.

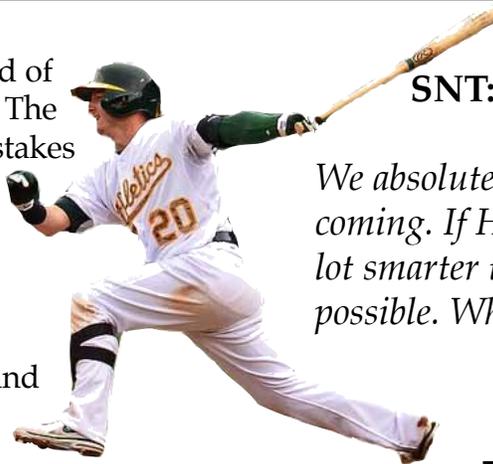
There is no question that our new Commissioner, Paul Harrington, is fond of the thematic aspects of his team name. The Gamblers' career has been like a high-stakes game – poker, blackjack, craps, take your pick – with lots of high points and low points. It has led to many free drinks, but to this point the Gamblers have never broken the bank. Two and three years ago were high points: 100 and 91 wins, two runs to the playoffs from the Clemente; it was a remarkable comeback after a successful run of four playoff appearances in five years while in the Mays. Last year's club crashed to earth with 109 losses – and when the 2013 cards came out, it became necessary to shed some present-day cardboard to keep the comeback from happening too soon.

There's still some talent on the roster. More was added in the 2014 draft, and more will be coming in 2015. In the meanwhile, the team will struggle, but they'll be fun to manage.

Pitching: 6.0
They couldn't fill the inside straight.

The Las Vegas pitching staff is built to keep the team in the game, but not much else. The rotation consists mostly of Grades 7 to 10; the bullpen has lots of innings, but they're not very good. The instructions describe the intention: to dive as far down as possible, to prepare for next year's draft. This will be painful, but Mr. Harrington has some experience with this sort of staff.

ROTATION. Jose Quintana (Grade 10 C+15) is the lefty ace of this staff, the only full time starter among eight pitchers who will work for the Gamblers this year. The other seven were



SNT: Josh Donaldson

We absolutely did not see this coming. If Harrington did, he's a lot smarter than we are, which is possible. What a great find.

Turnover Rate: 43%

Arrived: Michael Bowden, Paul Clemens, Darin Downs, Avisail Garcia, Kyle Gibson, Michael V. Gonzalez, Roberto H. Hernandez, Tom Koehler, Juan Lagares, Martin Perez, Josh Phegley, Brian Roberts, Chris Rusin, Eric Sogard, Joshua Zeid.

Departed: Ezequiel Carrera, Santiago Casilla, Cole De Vries, Matt Downs, Josh Harrison, Jon Jay, Josh Kinney, Fernando Martinez, Brayan Peña, Jerry Sands, Joe Savery, Carlos Torres, Brett Wallace, Alex White.

added in the draft. Lefties Tommy Milone (Grade 8 C+23 HR-22) and Martin Perez (Grade 9 C+13) make 46 starts, while righties Sam Deduno (Grade 9 C-23 HR+34) and Tom Koehler (Grade 7 C-23) make 41 more. Lefty Chris Rusin and righty Paul Clemens, both Grade 8s start 18 more and Roberto Hernandez (Grade 5 C+31 HR-22) – “the pitcher formerly known as Fausto Carmona” – finishes the rotation.



Quintana: Lefty ace

The instructions also call for the starters to go deep



Las Vegas GAMBLERS

into games. That will be entertaining; the modest grades will not be enough to stop strong offensive teams, and some of the fatigue ratings will sometimes reduce them before the bullpen (such as it is) can help.



K-Rod: Will attempt to close

BULLPEN. There are not enough innings; there are inferior peripherals. But why, oh why, is there no Grade 7* - what: they couldn't fill the inside straight?

It interrupts an interesting pattern. Francisco "K-Rod" Rodriguez (Grade 13* C+24 HR-23, 46 innings) is the best arm in the bullpen, and will attempt to close games. His primary setup men are Adam Ottavino (Grade 12* C-14 HR+31) and Dale Thayer (Grade 11* HR-15). They have a

bit over 140 innings between them. Then come lefty Josh Zeid (Grade 10* C-26), righty Michael Bowden (Grade 9* C-23 HR+21) and righty Josh Roenicke (Grade 8* C-46 HR+21), for another 126. But, as noted, there is no Grade 7* - there is a Grade 6*, however, Darin Downs (lefty, C+21, 35 innings). After that, the pattern goes to hell. Righty Lucas Harrell (C-54) and lefty Mike Gonzalez (C-35 HR-34) are both Grade 5*s, and Paul Clemens and Kyle Gibson will provide bulk innings.

Offense: 6.0
Trouble scoring runs.

It'll be a long season in Las Vegas. Do not: repeat, do not try to pretend that you saw this coming. At age 28, Josh Donaldson (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks+22, L+6 R-4) suddenly

Found It. .301, 76 walks, 24 homers, a full season at third base - it's the best card on the roster. We had no idea, and neither did you.

He has two good flankers. James Loney (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-4) found some of what he had lost; Austin Jackson (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-5) turned in a nice card with fewer strikeouts, but he didn't run as much as in the past (F26, 12 SBA). Also, Asdrubal Cabrera has some power (4 0s) but won't get on enough (9 hits, 2 walks+22+19, L-3, E29 with 12 SBA).

The remaining lineup spots are less promising. Rookie Eric Sogard (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, D26 for 15 SBA) and sophomore Steve Lombardozzi (3 0s, 10 hits) share second base; Jordan Pacheco (6-6, 9 hits) and Josh Phegley (2 0s, 8 hits) share catcher; and a crew of different guys share the outfield: Avisail Garcia (3 0s, 11 hits, L-6 R+1), Alex Presley (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-4), John Mayberry (1-6-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, L+2 R-2), and Juan Lagares (3 0s, 9 hits).

There are enough missing games and missing hits and walks that even with the best matchups, half of the lineup will have trouble scoring runs. That will leave the better half on base more often than desirable. Yeah, it'll be a long season on offense as well.

Defense: 4.0
Hurts more than it helps.

James Loney (1B5), Eric Sogard (2B8), Austin Jackson and Juan Lagares (OF3s) are the Fielding One assets on the roster. The 2 ½ roster spots they occupy will be supplemented by a crew of Fielding Twos: Asdrubal Cabrera (SS8), Josh Donaldson (3B4), Lombardozzi and Schumaker (2B7), and a crew of OF2s (Garcia, Mayberry, Presley, and Schumaker again).

The catching pair are both C6s: Pacheco (Th-2) and Phegley (Th+2). Even with the Fielding One positions, the problems behind the plate and up the middle don't quite balance it out. We think that this defense will hurt more than it will help.



Loney: Flanker and fielder

Bench: Bearded ladies.

2.0

The platoons will provide some alternatives against lefties and righties, and there are a few spare players on the bench. Brian Roberts (3 Os, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+1) can play second base (2B7), pinch-hit or pinch-run; Ryan Flaherty (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-5) is a sort of bearded lady; and Yasmani Grandal (6-6-6, 7 walks, 6 walks+22, L+1) is another sort of bearded lady.

The instructions call for no real management moves. Under the circumstances, just as well.



And not close. Lots of bad innings for the pitchers and for the offense will lead to lots of losses.

Will the number be high enough for Las Vegas to have the top pick in the 2015 draft? Hey, don't ask us; if we were that smart we would have been all over Josh Donaldson a year ago. It'll be a top five pick for sure, and fourth place in Vegas' new home in the Williams for sure. The fact is, this is no surprise to us or to Mr. Harrington; all of his moves in the off season were based on the idea that there was work to do and a rebuild ahead. Gamblers should be clear-headed, and he sets a good example.



Las Vegas:
YOUTH MOVEMENT

Team Age Rank: 6

This is a rebuild, so the team has gotten significantly younger. The two players age 35 or older are peripheral: Brian Roberts and Mike Gonzalez, both acquired to fill out the roster.

There are eight players between 30 and 34, but only K-Rod (33), Schumaker (34) and Loney (30) are really key participants. The bulk of the team is in the 25-30 age range, both stars and duffers.

Only three real youths (pronounced, no doubt, "yoots") – Jose Quintana (25), Martin Perez (23; ouch, with the recent announcement of surgery), and Avisail Garcia (also 23, also ouch) – wear the tumb'lin' dice on their jerseys. There are going to be more going forward, particularly given the likely finish for Las Vegas. Their #1 and #2 and Maracaibo's #2 will bring more to join them.

Mr. Harrington has been this before and knows how to do it. There is only one caution: because contention is fun, Gamblers' management has been willing to "take a chance" in the past and try to push into post-season when the team might not be ready, or when it would be necessary to borrow from the future to do it. A firm foundation may require them to walk away from the craps table for a while.

TQ: 18.0



Las Vegas GAMBLERS

breakthrough

There are fringe players on TBL rosters right now who might be important players on rosters in 2015. Some of those names appear in the list below. Some won't make it, but last year's list included Manny Machado, Andrelton Simmons, Jean Segura, Starling Marte, Matt Adams, and Tanner Scheppers in the top ten.



1 Sonny Gray, SP, Kansas.

He's already turning heads, creating buzz, and striking out established major leaguers with ease. He's a starter Kansas can count on for the next decade.



2 Michael Wacha, SP, Gotham City.

He is as advertised, and he'll add another power pitcher to Mr. Greenwald's arsenal. Best of all, he won't even turn 23 until July.



3 Jurickson Profar, 2B, Northboro.

Early season injury aside, he's a major talent. The question isn't *if*, but *when*. Eventually, he'll make the Northboro lineup something to be feared again.



4 Kevin Gausman, SP, Munich.

A hard thrower that the Marauders picked up in the 2014 draft, he'll have serious major league impact.



5 Mike Zunino, C, Northboro.

A top-rated backstop with power, there's lots of upside for this 2014 top pick. Northboro is counting on him to be the long term solution behind the plate.



6 Tyler Skaggs, SP, Grand Cayman.

A work in progress, he could be a dominant starter in the major leagues, perhaps as soon as 2014.



7 Dee Gordon, 2B, Brobdingnag.

Brobdingnag will now benefit from Gordon finally putting it all together; Dallas has waited since 2012 and maybe should have waited one more year.



8 Jordan Lyles, SP, Knoxville.

No one figured a move to Colorado would help his development, but something finally clicked. Mr. Martin was wise to hold on to him.



9 Jonathan Villar, SS, Grand Cayman.

The best shortstop prospect available in the 2014 draft. Speedy with a good glove, he'll have lots of chances to grow in Houston.



10 Lonnie Chisenhall, 3B, New West.

Another player from the 2012 draft, part of the Hanley Ramirez trade. New Westminster benefits from his newfound confidence and hitting.

Honorable mention: Fernando Abad, RP, Gotham City; Cody Asche, 3B, Northboro; Jackie Bradley, Jr., OF, Fair Oaks; Zach Britton, RP, Knoxville; Kole Calhoun, OF, Northboro; Carter Capps, RP, Northboro; Preston Claiborne, RP, Rye; Chris Colabello, 1B/OF, Kansas; Hank Conger, C, Blue Hill; Collin Cowgill, OF, Whitman; Charlie Culberson, IF/OF, Whitman; Travis d'Arnaud, C, Dallas; Corey Dickerson, OF, Northboro; Derek Dietrich, 2B, Dallas; Adam Eaton, OF, Munich; Robbie Erlin, SP, Dallas; Eduardo Escobar, IF, Midwest; Yasmani Grandal, C, Las Vegas; Grant Green, IF, Gotham; Robbie Grossman, OF, Taylorville; Aaron Harang, SP, Maracaibo; Cesar Hernandez, IF, Greater Ohio; Aaron Hicks, OF, Dallas; L.J. Hoes, OF, Columbus; Tom Koehler, SP, Las Vegas; Marc Krauss, 1B/OF, Fair Oaks; Ian Krol, RP, Greater Ohio; Juan Lagares, OF, Las Vegas; Tyler Lyons, SP/RP, New Westminster; Jake Marisnick, OF, Dallas; Carlos Martinez, RP, Munich; T. J. McFarland, RP, Blue Hill; Devin Mesoraco, C, Portland; James Paxton, SP, Melrose; Jake Petricka, RP, Hudson; Hector Rondon, RP, Greater Ohio; Chris Rusin, RP, Las Vegas; Marcus Semien, 3B, Grand Cayman; Will Smith, RP, Rye; Nick Tepesch, SP, Munich; Scott Van Slyke, OF, Hudson; Adam Warren, RP, Dallas; Kolten Wong, 2B, Whitman; Brandon Workman, RP/SP, Brobdingnag.

future

Every year we look forward to see who might be the big names in the next draft. Sometimes these predictions are prophetic, and sometimes they fall short. Last year, eight of the top ten went in the first round of the draft. Seven of the next ten went in the first two rounds. That's 15 out of 20 were drafted in the top 38 picks of the draft. Not bad for nine months in advance. You be the judge. Thanks especially to Mark Bloom for preparing this list, and Ray Murphy for his help.



1 Xander Bogaerts, SS, Boston

He turns 20 in October and promises to be something special. If he keeps developing his strike zone judgment, watch out!



6 Taijuan Walker, SP, Seattle

A 21-year-old strikeout artist, he's been anticipated for years. How good can he be? As good as King Felix, some say. We'll know soon enough.



2 Jose Abreu, 1B, Chicago (A)

This 27-year-old burst onto the stage by setting a rookie record for most homers in a single month. If he can raise his average, he can have 1.000 OPS.



7 Chris Owings, SS, Arizona

Everyone expected a protracted battle for playing time, but he simply outplayed his competition. Now that he has the job, can he keep it up?



3 Masahiro Tanaka, SP, New York (A)

Just 25, he came fully formed to the biggest media city in the world. And he's delivered the goods. The only nagging fault is his high homerun total.



8 George Springer, OF, Houston

He arrived earlier than predicted and struggled some at first, but he's a legitimate power-speed prospect.



4 Yordano Ventura, SP, Kansas City

Before his 23rd birthday, he has shown flashes of an ace in waiting, holding major leaguers to a sub-.200 average and striking out more than one an inning.



9 Drew Hutchison, SP, Toronto

This 23-year-old might have to go through a learning adjustment, but he has all the tools to succeed in an organization that needs him.



5 Gregory Polanco, OF, Pittsburgh

This 22-year-old left-handed hitter is best known for his speed and batting average, but he's developing power and refining his batting eye.



10 Nick Castellanos, 3B-OF, Detroit

We expect him to evolve into a nice power hitter in the middle of a dangerous Tiger lineup.

Honorable mention: Abraham Almonte, OF, Seattle; Mark Appel, SP, Houston; Trevor Bauer, SP, Cleveland; Dellin Betances, RP, New York (A); Archie Bradley, SP, Arizona; Kris Bryant, 3B, Chicago (N); Dylan Bundy, SP, Baltimore; Eddie Butler, SP, Colorado; Byron Buxton, OF, Minnesota; Nick Castellanos, 3B, Detroit; Michael Choice, OF, Texas; C.J. Cron, 1B, Los Angeles (A); Rafael De Paula, SP, New York (A); Roenis Elias, SP, Seattle; Jeurys Familia, RP, New York (N); Maikel Franco, 3B, Philadelphia; Alexander Guerrero, 2B, Los Angeles (N); David Hale, SP, Atlanta; Billy Hamilton, OF, Cincinnati; Andrew Heaney, SP, Florida; Erik Johnson, SP, Chicago (A); Ryan Kalish, OF, Chicago (N); Casey Kelly, SP, San Diego; Collin McHugh, SP, Houston; Rafael Montero, New York (N); James Nelson, SP, Milwaukee; Roshanev Odor, 2B, Texas; Jake Odorizzi, SP, Tampa Bay; Mike Olt, 3B, Chicago (N); Stolmy Pimentel, RP, Pittsburgh; Josmil Pinto, C, Minnesota; Evan Reed, RP, Detroit; Addison Russell, SS, Oakland; Jonathan Schoop, 2B, Baltimore; Jon Singleton, 1B, Houston; Robert Stephenson, SP, Cincinnati; Noah Syndergaard, SP, New York (N); Yangervis Solarte, 2B, New York (A); Oscar Taveras, OF, St. Louis.

This comes to you later than usual, but better than last year.

We take our cues from nature. In the winter, especially here in the Northeast, we tend to hibernate and recover. It's a very busy time for me; the two Boston principal science fiction conventions happen in January and February; it's the midpoint of the Masonic year; there are taxes to prepare, a wedding anniversary to celebrate, and so on.

It used to be February when we would go down to Lancaster, Pennsylvania to pick up our APBA cards, then drive up to West Point, New York, for the draft weekend at the Thayer Hotel. Those were *not* the good old days. The beds, or pull out couches, were already unsuitable for us unathletic guys in our thirties. The showers were rarely hot. There were two restaurants in walking distance in Highland Falls: one for Friday night, one for Saturday night.

In those days the draft was attended by two-thirds of the 20-team league. The rest would call on the phone to make their picks. We'd let them know their time was near by calling out, letting it ring twice, and hanging up, so as not to incur long distance charges at the Thayer. There were no chat rooms, no internet connections, no cell phones except toward the end of that era. It was harder to get information, but there were fewer children, surgical procedures, home and world crises. Ken Griffey was young. We knew little of the Landrum Effect; we had not named the Bounce, the Cliff, the Bearded Lady; the relief valet was not yet a Thing. Bryce Harper and Mike Trout weren't even born yet.

I mention all of this not to wax nostalgic, or even to wax on / wax off nostalgic. It is merely a reminder that baseball is still here; APBA is still here; TBL is still here; and so am I.

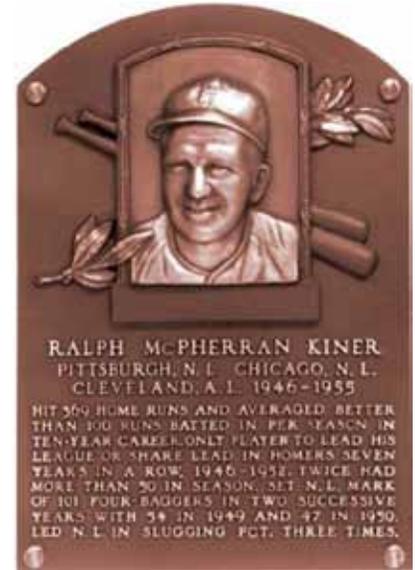
A moment of personal privilege. A year ago, after the draft and before the start of the TBL season, I was hospitalized – twice – and gave up a kidney that turned out to have a big tumor on it. Baseball, APBA, TBL, and the *Annual* became insignificant. The operation was successful, and the recovery has been all good news. About a month ago I had my one-year tests and checkup and all is well. Thanks for all of your support.

I was able to do something with the *Annual*; it was brief, ungraphical, perhaps a little more snarky and blunt than our usual suave, gentle presentation. We didn't even print it. We're printing this one, though the actual physical book will reach you in early June, when we won't look half as smart. But I wanted to do it, even though my perspective on its importance has been thoroughly scaled to its appropriate level. Half of the team articles were written by Mr. Bloom, half by me; see if you can tell the difference. Bob Jordan gives us an excellent article on this year's theme. There's a Dietz poem opposite this page on Ralph Kiner. Paul Harrington shows his humorous side (at least I hope it's humorous) and Paul Montague his Eastern philosophical side. There are even new thermometer graphics and information on the relative age of teams.

But ultimately this publication is here because it's important to me and important to all of you, and because you are all important to me as well. Not just as competitors or trade partners, but as friends – even those I know only by e-mail or phone. Once that was most of the league, but now lots of us go to the draft – not in our thirties anymore, but the showers are warmer and the beds are more comfortable and there are plenty of restaurants to pick from.

TBL is a society of friends. This year has brought home that point as never before. Play ball. Have a great season.

in memoriam



Ralph Kiner 1922-2014

A prodigious home run hitter, the best player on some very poor Pittsburgh clubs in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He was best known to younger fans as a color broadcaster for the New York Mets, where his endearing malapropisms made Kiner's Corner a segment not to be missed. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1975.

Kiner's Corner

Hello everyone reading this. Welcome to Kiner's Corner, and this is...ummmm...

Seven years, seven home run titles,

he'd tell you, "Solo homers only come with no one on base."

The Pirates finished last with him, last without him,

shipping him to the Cubs where an injury cut his playing days short.

A Hall of Famer, he loved the ceremonies

on the 31st and 32nd of July.

Fifty years in a booth, he called games sincere,

remembered for his love of the game

and wonderful quotes.

Husband and father, he'd tell you,

"There's a lot of heredity in that family."

Baseball was blessed, not just for Kiner the player,

but Kiner the fan, Kiner the broadcaster, Kiner the man.

He is gone — goodbye.

- Jim Dietz

TBL

The Transcontinental Baseball League is a 24-team, continuous ownership APBA Baseball League that plays a 162 game season using the Master Board Game and the Computer Game. We play roughly twenty games a month from April through November. TBL uses an innovative, realistic pitching system and restricts players to real-life usage.

Our members are loyal, fun-loving and astute, and we have a high rate of retention. Now in our thirty-third season, our pennant races are always competitive and exciting.

TBL is always interested in adding backup managers to its roster. To get involved, send e-mail to our Commissioner, Paul Harrington, at

pjh5000@hotmail.com

or TBL's unofficial recruiter and analyst, Walter Hunt, at

hotc@walterhunt.com.