

The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

The TBL Draft

Round 1			Round 2		
1	LV	BRYANT, Kris	25	LV	SHAW, Travis
2	HOB	LINDOR, Francisco	26	HOB	PISCOTTY, Matt
3	BRO	CORREA, Carlos	27	IND	DUFFY, Joe
4	HUD	SANO, Miguel	28	HUD	ROSS, Joe
5	ZIO	SEAGER, Corey	29	DET	TRAVIS, Steven
6	DET	SYNDERGAARD, Noah	30	ZIO	MATZ, Aaron
7	COL	SCHWARBER, Kyle	31	COL	NOLA, Kestel
8	NW	RUSSELL, Addison	32	NW	HERRERA, Robert
9	TAY	PILLAR, Kevin	33	TAY	MARTE, Robert
10	MAR	FRANCO, Joc	34	BRO	OSUNA, Jung Ho
11	BRO	PEDERSON, Joc	35	NBO	KANG, Jung Ho
12	IND	BUXTON, Byron	36	BH	HEANEY, Dan
13	SW	WILHART, Blake	37	WHT	RYE, Deshaun
14	ALM	MUTO, J. J.	38	JVE	KAN, Butler
15	ERS	Lance	39	KAN	MARTELA
16	LOS		40	MAR	MID
17			41	MID	IRI

2016 Edition

Walter H. Hunt

Robert Jordan

Mark H. Bloom

All 24 Teams Analyzed
Using the T.Q. System

The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

by

Walter H. Hunt
Robert Jordan
Mark H. Bloom
with contributions from TBL's managers

and extra help from:

Joe Auletta
Clay Beard
Jim Dietz
Paul Montague
Gordon Rodell

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the TBL baseball annual

Welcome to the 2016 *TBL Baseball Annual*. This is the twenty-first year of the *Annual* in the book format. This year we're looking at the TBL Draft, and we have four different perspectives: our lead article, this year penned by Mark Bloom; analysis pieces by Paul Montague and Joe Auletta; and a first-timer's view by Gordon Rodell. In addition, each team article includes some insight into its draft history and strategies.

We have lots of our usual features, including the Vegas Line, the Pre-Play, a look at the new Hall of Fame enshrinees and the ballot for the coming year, Breakthroughs and Futures, and a piece honoring the late, great Yogi Berra.

The recent work by a scholarly group, examining the nature of our milieu in general and TBL in particular, has made us even more aware of the high standards we've sought to achieve, and which our readers have come to expect. You'll find an update on that project in the back matter. As always, we hope you enjoy our work, and TBL's new season.

Walter, Robert, Mark
April, 2016

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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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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	Whitman	30	Blue Hill	34	
	Warrenton	38	Columbus	42	
	Mays Division	<i>Frictionless Surface</i>			46
	Gotham City	48	Calusa	52	
	Rye	56	Grand Cayman	60	
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NATIONAL CONFERENCE

	Aaron Division	<i>Central Time</i>			86
	Kansas	88	Maracaibo	92	
	Northboro	96	Statesmen	100	
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	Munich	106	Melrose	110	
	Hudson	114	Zion	118	
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	Knoxville	124	Taylorville	128	
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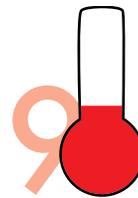
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future drafts

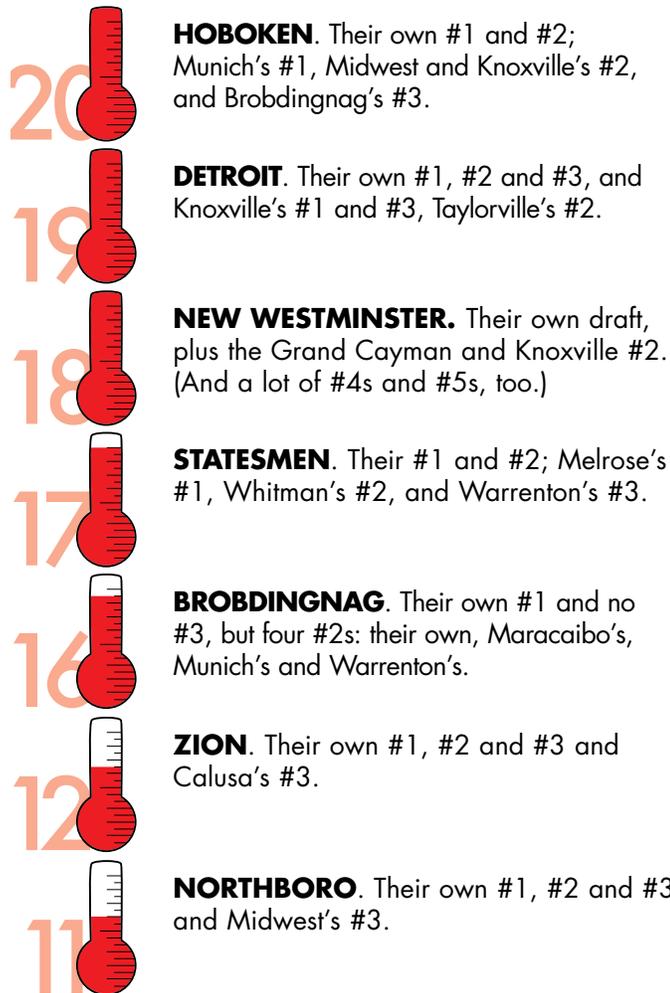
In many cases, what's on the field isn't the whole story. Some of our teams have quite a bit to say in future drafts, and any evaluation should properly take that into account.

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 2017; above the middle line is excess, while below means something's missing.



base

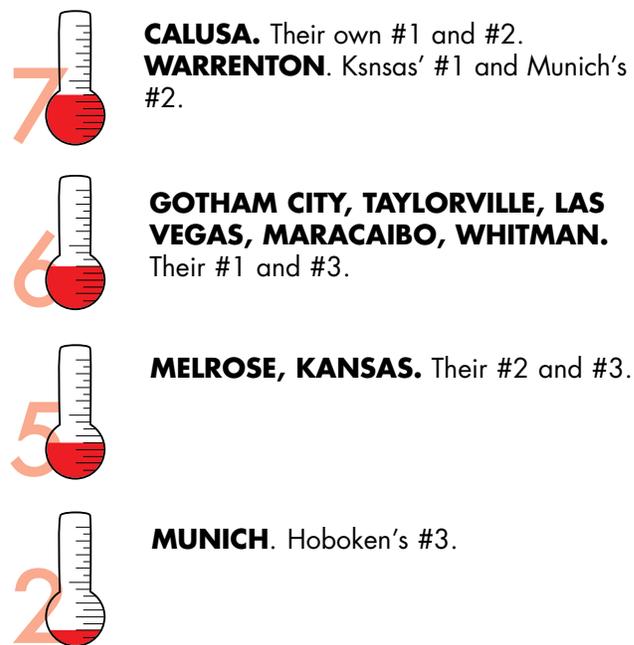
haves



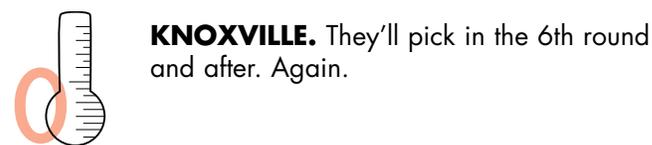
balanced



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



Munich (Mantle)	14.0	7.0	15.5	4.0	40.5
Melrose (Mantle)	12.5	6.0	13.5	3.0	35.0
Knoxville (Williams)	12.0	6.0	12.5	3.5	34.0
Taylorville (Williams)	10.5	5.5	15.0	2.5	33.5
Whitman (Clemente)	11.0	6.0	11.5	3.5	32.0

The Solid Performers



Kansas (Aaron)	8.5	4.0	14.5	3.0	30.0
Gotham City (Mays)	10.0	5.0	12.5	2.0	29.5
Las Vegas (Williams)	11.0	5.0	10.5	2.5	29.0
Maracaibo (Aaron)	10.0	5.5	10.0	3.0	28.5
Hudson (Mantle)	11.0	4.5	10.0	2.5	28.0
Northboro (Aaron)	7.5	4.5	12.0	2.0	26.0

The Transitional Teams



Brobdingnag (Ruth)	11.0	5.5	5.0	2.0	23.5
Statesmen (Aaron)	9.0	5.5	5.0	3.0	22.5
Blue Hill (Clemente)	8.0	5.5	7.0	2.0	22.5
Calusa (Mays)	7.5	4.5	7.0	3.0	22.0
Rye (Mays)	8.0	2.5	8.5	2.5	21.5
Grand Cayman (Mays)	8.0	3.5	7.5	2.0	21.0
Zion (Mantle)	6.0	3.0	9.5	2.0	20.5

The Rebuilders



New Westminster (Ruth)	6.0	3.5	7.0	2.5	19.0
Warrenton (Clemente)	7.5	3.0	6.0	1.5	18.0
Hoboken (Ruth)	7.0	3.5	5.0	2.5	18.0
Columbus (Clemente)	6.5	3.0	5.5	2.0	17.0
Midwest (Williams)	5.5	3.0	4.5	2.0	15.0
Detroit (Ruth)	5.0	4.0	2.5	2.0	13.5

National	345.5 (28.7 average)
International	256.5 (21.4 average)

Division Totals

Mantle (NC)	123.0	Mays (IC)	93.5
Williams (NC)	115.5	Clemente (IC)	88.5
Aaron (NC)	107.0	Ruth (IC)	74.0

manager roll call

Munich Marauders	Mantle Division	<i>Paul Montague</i>	33rd year
Hudson Generals	Mantle Division	<i>Clay Beard</i>	32nd year
Elders of Zion	Mantle Division	<i>Richard Meyer</i>	32nd year
Gotham City Batmen	Mays Division	Anton Greenwald	31st year
Knoxville Outlaws	Williams Division	Pat Martin	30th year
Maracaibo Rumrunners	Aaron Division	<i>Walter Hunt</i>	30th year
Brobdingnag Barbarians	Ruth Division	Joe Auletta	28th year
Hoboken Zephyrs	Ruth Division	Steve Powell	27th year
Grand Cayman Havens	Mays Division	Mark Bloom	26th year
Melrose Avengers	Mantle Division	Mark Freedman	23rd year
Blue Hill Mudslides	Clemente Division	Mark Ludwig	21st year
Whitman River Rats	Clemente Division	Brian Hanley	21st year
Las Vegas Gamblers	Williams Division	Paul Harrington	20th year
Taylorville Red Raiders	Williams Division	Bruce Taylor	19th year
Northboro Phoenix	Aaron Division	Robert Jordan	17th year
Taylorville Red Raiders	Williams Division	Glenn Taylor	15th year
Midwest Mongrels	Williams Division	Darrell Skogen	15th year
Northboro Phoenix	Aaron Division	Steve Stein	14th year
The Statesmen	Aaron Division	Eric Sheffler	13th year
Rye Herons	Mays Division	Craig Musselman	12th year
New West Whiskeyjacks	Ruth Division	Jim Jeatt	12th year
Columbus Jets	Clemente Division	Vic Vaughn	10th year
Kansas Koyotes	Aaron Division	Bill Schwartz	9th year
Warrenton Giants	Clemente Division	Jack Chapman	8th year
Detroit Stars	Ruth Division	Dave Jaskot	5th year
Calusa Indians	Mays Division	Gordon Rodell	2nd year

TBL welcomes back long-time manager Ray Murphy as non-playing Commissioner.

Hall of Fame managers in *Bold Italic*.



2016 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.

There are some surprises from Duke. But remember, it's Duke. In the National Munich looks like a

cinch, averaging 107 wins and winning over 100 all ten times. While Melrose gets a wild-card every time, they're not quite the dominant team anticipated. Taylorville looks solid in the Williams, but much to my surprise Knoxville doesn't grab a single division crown. There's a good race in the Aaron and a donnybrook for the second wild-card.

The only division race appears to be in the Mays where Calusa will push Gotham City. As in the National, the best race will be for the second wild-card, with only defending champ Warrenton and Detroit are out of the picture.



International Conference

TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Clemente	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
WHITMAN	94	68	--	103	83	9	1
BLUE HILL	85	77	9	97	71	1	7.5
COLUMBUS	71	91	23	84	54	0	1
WARRENTON	58	104	36	64	48	0	0
Mays	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
GOTHAM CITY	89	73	--	100	77	6.5	2.5
CALUSA	83	79	6	99	73	3	2
GRAND CAYMAN	75	87	14	83	65	0	2
RYE	74	88	28	81	65	0.5	1.5
Ruth	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
BROBDINGNAG	99	63	--	107	92	10	0
HOBOKEN	76	86	23	89	70	0	1.5
NEW WESTMINSTER	73	89	26	81	62	0	1
DETROIT	63	99	36	72	53	0	0

National Conference

TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Aaron	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
KANSAS	91	71	--	100	83	6	1
NORTHBORO	83	79	8	95	70	4	1
MARACAIBO	82	80	9	89	76	0	1
STATESMEN	67	95	24	76	55	0	0
Mantle	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
MUNICH	107	55	--	114	102	10	0
MELROSE	92	70	15	96	88	0	10
HUDSON	80	82	27	88	70	0	1
ZION	72	90	35	78	63	0	0
Williams	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
TAYLORVILLE	99	63	--	109	87	8.5	1.5
KNOXVILLE	88	74	17	101	75	0	4
LAS VEGAS	85	77	14	89	76	1.5	1.5
MIDWEST	59	103	40	65	63	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 2016



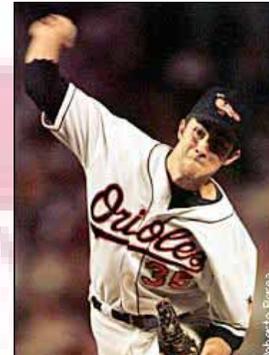
Vladimir Guerrero, OF 1993-2009
Las Vegas

The face of the Gamblers franchise for more than a decade, Vlad was a tremendous performer, crushing 450 homers and driving in 1,564 runs in his 15 year TBL career. His best season was 2003, when he hit .329-46-144 with 33 steals, but he had several outstanding seasons, including four years of 40 or more homers, seven with 100 or more RBI (four times over 140), and eight .300 seasons.



Mike Mussina, SP 1993-2009
Minnesota, Knoxville, Melrose, Rochester, Columbus, Richmond

A clockwork-regular starter, the Moose pitched 200 innings and started at least 30 times every year from 1995 to 2004. He won 251 games in his TBL career, fifth all-time, pitched 3,634 innings (sixth all time) and recorded 122 complete games (sixth) and 46 shutouts (fifth).



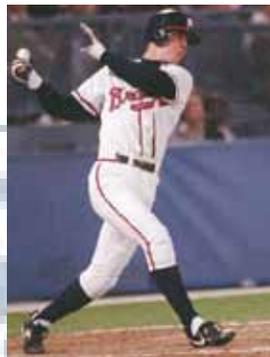
Wade Boggs, 3B 1991-2004
Amherst, Raleigh/Winston-Salem, Jessup/Boston, Cape Cod, Diamond Point, Whitman.



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.

HALL OF FAME

for your consideration



Left to Right: Mike Piazza, Jim Thome, Chipper Jones, Jason Giambi

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 2012-2015. Will someone cut this guy a break?*

Chipper Jones, SS-3B-OF 1996-2013
Council/Summit Glen/Oklahoma City, Mahopac,
Maracaibo

One of the steadiest performers in TBL for a decade and a half, he hit 452 HR and drove in 1,617 runs, with a career slash of .283/.370/.499. He hit .301-45-128 in 2000, .308-51-121 in 2002 with 203 hits, and .335-36-98 in 2003 with 224 hits. Four times he hit 40 or more doubles. *This is his first year of eligibility.*

Jim Thome, 1B-DH 1994-2013
Munich, Rochester/Columbus, Brobdingnag.

For many years Thome was one of the most dangerous lefthanded power hitters in the game. He hit 568 homers, drove in 1,629 runs, and walked 1,602 times with a lifetime slash of .270/.391/.542. His two best seasons were 2002 and 2003 with Rochester; in 2002 he hit .319-51-170; in 2003, .278-51-141. He drove in 100 or more runs 7 times and walked 100 or more times 6 times. *This is his first year of eligibility.*

Jason Giambi, 1B-DH 1996-2012
East Anglia, Brobdingnag, Munich, Whitman.

A dangerous power hitter, Giambi hit 451 home runs in his TBL career, and walked 1,214 times. From 2000 to 2003 he hit 30 homers or more, and from 2001 to 2006 walked 100 times or more five times. His best season was 2001, when he hit .321-55-168 with 151 walks, slugging .687, leading East Anglia to a 114-win season. *This is his third year of eligibility.*

Players with carryover votes: Mike Piazza 7, Manny Ramirez 6, Gary Sheffield 5, Curt Schilling 5, Ivan Rodriguez 5, Chuck Finley 3, Juan Gonzalez 2, 13 players with 1.

the vegas line

by Paul Harrington



Mr. Harrington's short takes on our TBL teams also appear in the team articles for your convenience.

(2001). In 2016 a great rotation and good bullpen are offset by a weak offense (especially at 3rd, 1st and OF) and less than half a season from Giancarlo Stanton. Probably still makes the playoffs.



BLUE HILL MUDSLIDES. The 20 year TBL history of the Mudslides franchise is a bit like the planet Jupiter – never quite achieving enough mass and energy to burst forth into a sun. But with Bryce Harper as its nucleus, perhaps Blue Hill will soon become a shining playoff star!



GRAND CAYMAN HAVENS. Mark Bloom is another GM who gets the most out of his players, and that skill will be put to the test in 2016. His starting catcher is an OF1 (and a legacy C5) and most of his players have only about 50-70 games available! You'll really need a scorecard for Havens home games!



BROBDINGNAG BARBARIANS. The 2016 offense is spectacular. The top six most days will be Dee Gordon, Mookie Betts, Mike Trout, Chris Davis, Manny Machado and Carlos Correia! 73 wins got them the Ruth crown in 2015. They'll probably win about 30 more in 2016.



HOBOKEN ZEPHYRS. Winning the Ruth Division in 2012 with 93 wins and losing to Gotham City in the IC championship was the high water mark for the Zephyrs in recent years. Only 77 wins in 2013 and only 102 wins total in 2014/2015! A good offense will help change that, but almost non-existing pitching will be a big hindrance.



CALUSA INDIANS. Gordon Rodell did the league a huge favor by helping us pick up the pieces from the Chia Pets fiasco and leading them to the finish line in 2015. 2016 is the 1st year in Central Florida as the Calusa Indians. Despite a great draft, it will be many moons before they are a fearsome tribe.



HUDSON GENERALS. 2015 was only the 3rd time in General's history that they had 100 losses. And 2016 shouldn't be the 4th. Despite having to go to war with Melrose and Munich 28 times this year, Hudson should have a decorated campaign.



COLUMBUS JETS. Vic Vaughn picked up the pieces from the Suter cliff diving experience in 2006 and made the Jets his team, with various levels of success. They've had some good drafts, but still seem to need a real superstar to build around and to take them to the next level. Still a possible WC team in 2016.



KANSAS KOYOTES. After a few up and down seasons our old friend from the Midwest, Bill Schwartz, has guided the Koyotes on an ever increasing path of success. They are the cream of the Aaron in 2016. With 137 starts of Grade 14 and above they hope to be more than a speed bump in the road for MEL/MUN.



DETROIT STARS. Dave Jaskot's team is faring better than its namesake city, but not by a lot. After 90+ win seasons in 2014 and 2014, last year's 64 wins was a setback. They'll probably struggle to get that many wins for 2016. Not fun.



KNOXVILLE BLUE THUNDER. Easily still the best in the Williams for this year, The Outlaws are going to find it tough to steal a spot in the World Series, trying to sneak past Melrose and/or Munich. Good luck, Pat!



GOTHAM CITY BATMEN. Dr. Anton has won in TBL. 14 playoff appearances, 4 World Series berths, with one win



LAS VEGAS GAMBLERS. After three years of failure, Las Vegas is ready for respectability. With Bogaerts, Donaldson and, now, Kris Bryant leading the charge, The Gamblers seem poised to shine brighter than anything else on the Strip.



MARACAIBO RUMRUNNERS. Everyone's favorite Mason, Walter Hunt, after losing in the conference finals to MID in 2014, has been quietly accumulating premium, young talent to make a big playoff run...probably in 2017. This year he should be in the WC mix.



MELROSE AVENGERS. In the last seven seasons, Melrose had 4 years of 110 or more wins, been to 3 World Series and won 2 of them. They should be just as successful in 2016 and, after last year's bitter defeat by WAR, they should be twice as dangerous!



MIDWEST MONGRELS. It's the Guru's first actual rebuild, and we all know that those are never easy or quick. A few more drafts of stockpiling talent and the Mongrels should return to their winning ways.



MUNICH MARAUDERS. After a stellar 2015 campaign which brought in 103 wins, Munich is ready to start marauding across TBL once again. With all due respect to KAN and KNX, Munich may be all that stops MEL from another WS appearance.



NEW WEST WHISKEYJACKS. After winning 102 games in 2010 things haven't gone so smoothly for our only Canadian manager, Jim Jeatt. But recent drafts have brought in a much needed boost of talent that will soon pay big dividends...hopefully.



NORTHBORO PHOENIX. Despite having a very good starting rotation and a cast of dozens in the 'pen, NBO just doesn't have enough talent on offense yet. Reaching .500 would be a big win for them in 2016.



RYE HERONS. Craig Musselman has a WS win from 2010 under his belt, and that championship team has aged mightily ever since. Many managers would have traded Javier Lopez (Grade 27*), Nelson (1-1-0-0) Cruz, or even Zack Greinke for the picks needed for another run. Craig held pat, hoping for one more season in the sun.



THE STATESMEN. Mr. Sheffler, beginning his 2nd year in his 2nd stint in TBL, has inherited a franchise that has won 95 or more game six years in a row! That streak ends this year. A major tradeoff of aging talent saw to that. But a good 2016 draft and a bulging load of 2017 picks brings new hope in The.



TAYLORVILLE RED RAIDERS. A much improved Red Raiders squad, trying to fend off both Maracaibo and Las Vegas for a WC berth. Having the best starter in the league (Arrieta) for 33 starts should help.



WARRENTON GIANTS. What a three year ride it's been for Jackson Chapman. A winning season and a good playoff run in 2013, a massive plummet in wins (49!) and a plummet to the bottom of the league in 2014 and then a rapid ascent in wins (60!) and a WS title last year. 2016 will be somewhere in between these extremes.



WHITMAN RIVER RATS. Brian Hanley has had a lot of success since entering TBL as an expansion team in 1996. He's always been a master at getting the most out of limited resources. His resources aren't limited for 2016, so another great season is expected.



ELDERS OF ZION. 858 more wins than losses, 15 conference championship appearances, 8 World Series appearances with 6 wins there. There is a reason Rich Meyer is called "The Sensei". He's had more WS wins than all but two teams have had appearances! But 2015 was dismal and 2016 won't be any better.



[Welcome to the 2016 TBL Baseball Annual! As always, we're glad to have the chance to bring you key analysis, baseball insight and – we hope – some entertaining reading. This year's lead article comes from Mark "Boomer" Bloom, the newest addition to our staff. He leads a very talented set of contributors to the newest edition of our yearly dive into the minutiae of TBL. Enjoy. – Ed.]

The annual Rookie Draft is the highlight of the TBL year, and not only because it's commonly when the World Series is played. Every owner in the league looks forward to it. It's a chance to talk about a game played on green fields under warm summer skies while we're in the midst of a blizzard. It's the one opportunity every year to see most of the league's owners all in one place. It's a weekend of strategizing, camaraderie and drinking.

But I'm not going to write about any of that. Instead, I want to discuss the finer points of the draft. I want to dissect its worth, reveal its value, and untangle its complexities. By the end of this article, you'll have a better understanding of the draft, including just how much we all rely on those 10 picks that come to us every year (assuming you've earned your Bonus pick).

The Draft as a Nebula

A nebula is the place where stars are born. Before science made this announcement, though, we all thought stars were born in San Pedro de Macoris in the Dominican Republic. But the TBL Draft is similar to a nebula in many ways:

- Seen from a great distance, the whole draft is considered a valuable entity.
- Baseball stars are often born in the draft, although many don't gain their full radiance until some years later. Like Carlos Martinez.

- Some baseball stars explode out of the gate to become super giants, while others fizzle out in a stream of useless energy that eventually dissipates into nothing. Tommy Hanson comes to mind.
- Every draft has black holes. These pockets can sometimes invade the third round.
- The draft, like a nebula, is surrounded by dust, so it's often difficult to tell the stars from the fuzzy balls of protoplasm. Kind of like Ian Stewart.
- The chance of picking a baseball star out of the draft after the first round is about the same as identifying a new star inside a nebula. But it can happen, obviously.
- Some drafts look deep and talented. And then you get to the fifth round and realize you still have five more rounds to go.

The Importance of Drafted Players

Contrary to popular belief and Trader Jack Chapman wisdom, we all build our teams through the draft. An unscientific analysis of current TBL rosters reveals that, on average, a 35-man roster contains 25 players that team took in the draft. While this figure includes players taken by picks acquired by trade, the players were still drafted.

In fact, one of the teams with the highest percentage of players acquired by trade is not Jack's team (at least not this year), but Eric Sheffler's Statesmen. They have 14 players acquired by trade ... which means they still have 21 drafted players (or two-thirds of the roster). The King of the Draft is not Joe Auletta, but The Sensei Rich Meyer, who has only one player on his current roster whom he traded to get (Alex Cobb).

The Value of the Draft

Maybe it's unfair to analyze the draft in this way. After all, trading for draft picks is an art that many TBL owners practice. Most of us have traded to get that coveted first-round pick. Many of us have traded a first-rounder for that key player. And there's a long, long list of trades made that involved nothing but draft picks.

One thing I've been contemplating recently is the value of a draft pick. What is a third-round pick really worth? How valuable is a late first-rounder? Obviously, these are biased questions that vary year to year. They may ultimately prove unanswerable. But I've made some observations and can point out some interesting facts.

Disclaimer: I am going to name players, but not teams. I mean no disrespect, but to make my point, I feel I must give examples. We've all looked like geniuses and idiots. For example, Cory Kluber was taken in the fifth round (genius!) and Kyle Blanks in the first round (idiot!)

Fact #1: Perception

A draft pick is far more valuable before the draft than after. The perception of the value of a draft pick — especially a first-rounder — is out of line with reality. For example, a second-round pick is way more valuable than, say, second-round pick Jemile Weeks. Not to put down Mr. Weeks: he was once a prospect. But before that draft, that pick was worth a lot more. Even immediately after that draft, you couldn't trade Weeks for a second-rounder.

I'd like to present some enlightening trades of the past. All include draft picks, which will illustrate the perceived value of picks, compared to the players taken with those picks:

- Some of us might trade a Bonus pick for a #3 & a #4, right? But in one trade, that Bonus pick became Tyson Ross, while the other picks became Brooks Conrad and Tony Abreu.

- In a generous trade, a #1 went for two #2s and a Bonus pick. While the largesse became Jose Ramirez, Zach Putnam, and Arodys Vizcaino, the #1 was Jacob DeGrom.

- Matt Holliday was traded for a big package, including a #1 & a #2, but those picks became Vance Worley and J.P. Arencibia.

- Yoenis Cespedes is worth a #1 & a #2, right? But those picks became Tony Cingrani and Jonathan Villar.

- On the other hand, we'd all agree that Brian McCann is worth a #1 and a #2, especially a few years ago. But what if I told you that the #1 turned into Stephen Strasburg and the #2 turned into Chris Sale?

What's it all mean? Well, obviously, the placement of the picks in question is important. It matters whether it's a high first-rounder or a low first-rounder. Or does it?

Fact #2: Keeper Territory

You'd think that having one of the top eight picks in the draft (the top third) would guarantee you a "keeper," a player who'd be valuable for years to come. But the real odds are less than 90 percent.

Examining recent drafts, there always seems to be that one player who didn't make it (meaning he didn't become a star). The reason might be injuries (e. g., Jurickson Profar), or the player just never developed (e. g., Jesus Montero).

Instead of pointing fingers and naming names from past drafts, I want you to consider that every year, at least one player taken in the Top Eight won't make it. Given the picks in the most recent draft, who will be that player (or will the 2016 draft be the exception)?

1. Kris Bryant
2. Francisco Lindor
3. Carlos Correa
4. Miguel Sano
5. Cory Seager
6. Eric Syndegaard
7. Kyle Schwarber
8. Addison Russell

Fact #3: Danger Zone

The middle eight picks of the first round are sort of a known quantity. Sometimes, you need a player at a particular position (such as J. T. Realmuto). Sometimes, you reach for a prospect who really did nothing to help this year (such as Byron Buxton). Sometimes, you take the card you need (e.g., Kevin Pillar). Basically, you take your best shot and hope for the best.

But the last eight picks in the first round are a real crapshoot. You might strike gold (Paul Goldschmidt, 2012) or you might strike out (Matt LaPorta, 2010). The point is, even though these are first-round picks, they are inherently not as valuable as those in the Keeper Territory. And these are the picks that are traded most often.

So considering the picks from the most recent draft, which ones do you think won't be on a TBL roster in five years?

17. Carlos Rodon
18. Taylor Jungmann
19. Michael Conforto
20. Taijuan Walker
21. James McCann
22. Raisel Iglesias
23. Eduardo Rodriguez
24. Eddie Rosario

What's a Pick Worth?

So let's go back five years and reevaluate the picks. This is admittedly an arbitrary choice, but five years seems like a reasonable number

of years to establish talent. How many players taken in the 2011 TBL Rookie Draft are still on rosters today?

- *Round 1:* 19 of 24 are still on rosters, and five became stars. Two starters became relievers, but this list also includes Jeremy Hellickson, Logan Morrison, Justin Smoak, and Domonic Brown, who are no longer first-round material.

- *Round 2:* 18 of 24, but J.P. Arencibia is currently uncarded. There is only one star (Chris Sale, who was a reliever), but plenty of everyday players.

- *Bonus Round:* 14 of 24, but two are currently uncarded. Tyson Ross, Jake Arrieta, and Lorenzo Cain came from this round.

- *Round 3:* 5 of 24, several of which (Brett Wallace and Felix Doubront) came back through the most recent draft. Jon Jay is the "star" of this set.

- *Round 4:* 9 of 24, including Josh Tomlin, who made his reentry in the 2016 draft. Gregor Blanco has had the most lasting power from this round.

- *Round 5:* 5 of 24, with some real steals, including Antonio Bastardo and Lucas Duda.

- *Round 6–10:* 3 players are still on rosters. That's not to say some of the others didn't offer immediate (and disposable) value. Most just didn't make it.

So what's a pick worth? If you were skilled and/or lucky enough to get one of the stars, that player is now worth more than what you paid for him (a single pick, even a first-rounder). Otherwise, the player you selected either: performed admirably, worth the selection, or the player did not play up to expectations.

What's on Your Roster?

Now examine your own roster. You know how you got each player — and if you don't, you

need to keep track, since those who don't learn from their history are doomed to repeat it. Would you now trade any of your players for what you used to acquire them? It's an exercise in value judgment.

Another way to look at your roster is to see how many current players were taken with a fifth-round pick or lower. On the Grand Cayman Havens roster, that number is five:

- Two from the most recent draft (too soon to judge)
- Justin Grimm (genius!)
- Jesse Chavez (pure luck)
- Jumbo Diaz

On your roster, I'd bet most will be like Jumbo Diaz — in other words, middle relievers. Now ask yourself, "What is a fifth-round pick worth?" Unless you're an extraordinary judge of baseball talent, and some of you are, then you'd be better off trading those lower picks for a player you like or a player you need.

Engineering the Draft

And that brings me to my final point: how can you use the draft to get what you want? That's the trick, isn't it? You have your eye on many players entering the draft, knowing that you won't get all of them, but hoping you get one or two of your favorites. Is there anything you can do to ensure you get more of the guys you want?

Unfortunately, this subject is worthy of its own article. Fortunately, Joe Auletta, the master of draft pick manipulation, has written about it before. Check out the 2007 *TBL Annual*, and the next article in this one. Let me add that attending the draft in person provides ample opportunities. When an owner pauses before making a selection, you can jump in and make your pitch to get that pick. It may cost you, but you get the guy you want, and that's definitely worth something.

So now I hope you have a better idea of the value of a draft pick. Use this information wisely, and you can build your team with the draft and judicious trades. Weigh the value of that second-round pick you're trading to get before you pull the trigger. See you at the next draft!

2015

- 1.(NBO#1) NBO: ABREU,Jose
- 2.(WAR#1) MID: SANTANA,Danny
- 3.(HOB#1) MID: ODOR,Rougned
- 4.(BH#1) BH: VENTURA,Yordano
- 5.(TAY#1) TAY: HARRISON,Josh

2014

- 1 (LV #1): NBO: PROFAR, Jurickson
- 2 (KAN #1): KAN: PUIG, Yasiel
- 3 (MUN #1): MUN: MYERS, Wil
- 4 (NBO #1): BRO: FERNANDEZ, Jose
- 5 (BH #1): BH: YELICH, Christian

2013

- 1 (BH #1): BH: HARPER, Bryce
- 2 (MUN #1): MUN: DARVISH, Yu
- 3 (NW #1): BRO: MACHADO, Manny
- 4 (KNX #1): KNX: MOORE, Matt
- 5 (DET #1): DET: ROSARIO, Wilin

2012

- 1 (BRO #1): BRO: HOSMER, Eric
- 2 (GOH #1): GOH: FREEMAN, Freddy
- 3 (MID #1): BRO: TROUT, Mike
- 4 (HUD #1): MUN: LAWRIE, Brett
- 5 (ZIO #1): ZIO: MONTERO, Jesus

2011

- 1 (MUN #1): MUN: HEYWARD, Jason
- 2 (BH #1): MUN: POSEY, Buster
- 3 (MID #1): MID: SANTANA, Carlos
- 4 (MAR #1): MAR: CASTRO, Starlin
- 5 (GC #1): GC: STANTON, Giancarlo

the art of the draft

by Joe Auletta



It all begins with the draft. There is no more optimistic day to be found in the TBL calendar, whether for the teams looking to cap the past season with a World Series title, the teams looking for a key trade or selection to move from contender to champion in the coming season, or rebuilding teams with a fist full of draft picks and a gleam in the eye to contend in three years. On every level that optimism will be fulfilled or will wither based primarily upon the success or failure in the draft — that compilation of hundreds and thousands of numbers that give the appearance of analytic precision, but which, at its core, is a black art. Trades are useful tools, but unless there is a steady stream of talent selected in the draft — or a huge amount of luck — trades are built on good drafting.

When Walter asked me to write an article about draft day I thought, “This will be easy. But can I even write enough to fill a page?” Several drafts later the question is, can I limit it to three pages. As with so many “simple” topics, the onion is many layered indeed. This is not a text book, but rather an introductory treatise, almost any paragraph of which could be examined and explored and debated in paragraphs if not pages of its own.

Part I: The Preparation

“Plans are nothing; planning is everything.”

– Dwight D. Eisenhower

The likelihood of a successful draft cannot be assured by good planning, but the absence of planning will almost always lead to a Bob Hamelin Moment. A few years ago I wrote an article on draft preparation, and I will not bore people by republishing that paper, but I will hit some of the high points and refer people to that article for elaboration if the reader wishes.

1. Understand where you are and what your goals are. Are you a contender? If so, how committed are you? Look at Columbus in Vic’s first year, or Melrose in any season Mark is contending. The focus is on current value and the future be damned. Contrast that to Munich in February 2015, a contender, yes, but not all-in. The goal was 2016, while 2015 was a pleasant precursor. Are you instead a rebuilder? If so, how much current pain can you endure? Brobdingnag’s threshold of pain during rebuilding is much higher than Maracaibo’s. Where is your event horizon — at what point do you want to bring together critical mass: this season? Next season? Three years out? These questions have no right answer — but a truthful answer is critical to success.

2. Know how you will measure success when we all go for dinner Saturday night. Is success acquiring one certain player you lust after? Filling a specific area of need, such as the rotation? Adding at least four quality young prospects? It is hard to be successful if you do not know what success looks like.

3. Understand the battlefield and the bank account. Evaluate all the players—by whatever scientific or Delphic methods you choose. Understand your 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 10th choice for every hole you identified above. Know which players you care about specifically, and which ones are interchangeable faces. Do you care whether you acquire McCullers vs. Severino?

If you do, is the difference a lot or a little? This becomes the basis for later deciding if you are willing to risk losing a Severino in the hand for a McCullers in the bush plus some vig — and how much vig you need to do it. At a minimum you need to know where the Shelves of Indifference are for each position you care about. This tells you the richness/scarcity of the positions, and how much you want to prioritize you selec-

tions. In general, catchers go a round before they “should” because of positional scarcity while an outfielder is generally discounted a round. Look at Swihart and Conforto in this last draft: why did the .712 OPS hitter go before the .841 OPS hitter? It is nice to balance Shelves of Indifference across positions, but that is difficult indeed.

4. Understand the enemy. Or in this case, the twenty-three enemies out there. What are their situations, what are their needs and the size of their war chests? Know which of them are truly your competitors for key players because they have the same needs, and which ones are relatively benign because their needs differ—maybe even in-draft trading partners.

5. Set realistic goals. Count your needs. Count your draft picks. Look at your Shelves and realistically see what you might get. Measure that against your definition of success in #2 above. Can you live with it? If you can, great. You are now looking for opportunities to turn a decent draft into a good or great one.

If you gag upon the realistic expectation — what are you going to do about it? Do you have more picks than needs, but not high enough picks? Who can you deal with who needs more volume? Or do you need to add picks because 12 guys on your roster died? Who out there has more picks than they can likely roster? These kinds of numbers game deals are generally best done before the draft.

Part II: The Logistics

“My logisticians are a humorless lot ... they know if my campaign fails, they are the first ones I will slay.”
- Alexander the Great

From the obvious — at least some years — first pick until the selection of Mr Irrelevant is on the order of 200+ names and 5+ hours. Mind- and body-numbing. Someone picking the — literally

— .239 hitting dead guy. The 487th groan-inducing pun from the Mongrel brain trust. The 17th time someone tried to draft a guy who went four rounds earlier. Everyone in every draft does the aboriginal walkabout at some point. They get up to get some coffee, use the rest room, or walk the hall to pump blood back into lifeless legs.

No matter the cause or the remedy those are opportunities to get out of synch with the draft or off-track with your plan. Logistics won't turn poor preparation into a great draft, but they can minimize the pain and limit the walkabout.

1. Energize. Have a good breakfast. Know and procure your preferred form of caffeine, and contemplate what if anything you will do about lunch.

2. Select a seat on the tactical high ground. Preferably next to someone you can turn to and ask an opinion about that key 5th round pick when you are stumped, and someone who you just enjoy chatting with to pass the time when the draft hits the doldrums. A place where you can keep half an ear on the multiple conversations and hopefully filter the nugget of intelligence from the ocean of babble.

Part III: The Tactical Battlefield

Observe, Orient, Decide, Act.

Your mission, Mr Phelps, should you decide to accept it, is to get the players you want — not to stroke your ego. It is not about getting revenge on the Taylors for swiping Howie Kendrick from under your nose (*no nursing a grudge here a decade later — no, not me!*), but it may be about moving ahead of Zion to get the shortstop you want but think he is likely to take before you.

It's not about selecting first and getting the newspaper cover photo — not if you can trade back, get the same guy you want at #6 and pocket an additional pick that becomes your set-up re-

liever. It's knowing your total pile of assets and matching them to your shopping list.

1. The early rounds (1st through Bonus most years). With rare exception these rounds should be about Best Value. I abhor using these picks to fill holes, though when a contender is missing one key piece (Jose Fernandez, Dellin Betances) it may bend the fabric of the draft universe some.

Best value is a subjective term, but most often the top 50 or 60 players should be lined up in a linear fashion in the Plan. With the 10th pick I will skip over #10 to take #12 or #13 based upon need, but I cringe at the thought of taking #20 there for any reason. If I "need" to take #20, then I need to see who in the 16-20 range wants the player on the board enough to move up. And what if I lose #20 to someone in the drop-down? Am I willing to take that risk? How much of a drop is it to Plan B?

2. The mid rounds (Bonus through 5th). There are hardly any Must-Have shiny toys in this range. John Lamb may theoretically become an All-Star, it just isn't the bet to wager your franchise on. This league is too good to allow too many studs to slip out of the top 80 picks.

This is the place to fill holes. Get the serviceable player who might well give you a few useful — not star — seasons. The back-up catcher, the pinch runner who was 18-3 in stolen bases, the 27-year-old late bloomer who fills 75 OF games you need. The pinch-hitting toy with 65 PAs.

And of course the bullpen and 4th/5th starters. These are the guys who make you legal and give you needed depth. Important pieces — because if you don't get them now you will need to get them in the late rounds — likely multiples of "them" — each one costing you a 35 man roster spot to keep some phlegm you would rather not use that roster spot on. My goal is always to be completely legal by the end of the fifth round.

3. The late rounds (6th through 9th). Time to hit the craps table. First priority — get legal if not already. Second priority — select the guys who will allow you to jettison the 47 year old .184 hitting middle infielder you really want to avoid keeping. Third priority — find players who have some redeeming social value, preferably some skill that they might blossom around. They throw 100 mph but can't hit the barn wall from the inside. They have power but strike out 57% of the time and hit .210. Once you run out of those three categories, hope that you have also run out of picks.

As I go through these phases, I am always aware of the pulse of the draft. The Plan is nothing. If I grabbed a player too good to let slip but I wasn't expecting to take, do I need to acquire an additional pick? If so, where in the draft? Who has an extra pick there? What do I have to offer — can I trade down to generate an additional pick, or will I need to reach into the next season? Do I have a spare part player?

Is one position going quicker than I expected? Do I need to try and move up? If so, how far? Who are teams that have what I need, and are they looking for what I can offer?

Is some other position disappearing more slowly? Has the run on third basemen come and gone, and now no team needs one — so I can slip my targeting a third baseman from round 4 to round 5? Does this allow me to trade down my 4th round pick — if so, how far and still get one of the three acceptable players? Do I need the vig this season, or is it time to try and roll it to next season?

Only when my last hole is filled, the last player with any hope of making my roster is gone, and my last draft pick spent — or otherwise disposed of — do I stop tracking, take a breath, and start making a list for the next season's draft.

Part IV: Licking the Wounds

*“When planning for a year, plant corn.
When planning for a decade, plant trees.”*

– Chinese Proverb

I have never seen a perfect draft. I have seen “perfect picks”, even drafts that filled everything I set out to do. But every draft surprises me in some way, every draft unfolds differently than the way I thought it would.

Dinner Saturday and the flight home on Sunday include a lot of conversation and thinking about “why did that happen?” I am not talking about Matz taken ahead of Nola when I might have swapped them — that is in the noise and is personal preference. But why did Javier Baez slip as far as he did? Or Archie Bradley? What is the 2016 TBL discount for a front-line pitching prospect who laid an egg? Did he slip into the 4th round because this draft was so unusually deep, or has the league as a whole adjusted their risk tolerance for pitchers?

Likewise, have some managers selected unexpectedly — contrary to their established pattern? Has Zion changed its type of pitching prospect? Has Melrose fallen off the walks and power template? Do I need to make adjustments for next year’s mock draft to reassess where players will likely go? This is almost always a slowly changing trend — but trends do exist. Managerial preferences do change over time.

So I write myself some notes, adding to the notes pages from 2014, 2013, etc., and file it away in the folder labeled “2017 Draft Prep”. It is never too early to start planning.

SNTs

Shiny New Things for 2016

Blue Hill:	Lance McCullers, SP
Brobdingnag:	Carlos Correa, SS
Calusa:	Noah Syndergaard, SP
Columbus:	Kyle Schwarber, C-OF
Detroit:	Devon Travis, 2B
Gotham City:	Hunter Strickland, RP
Grand Cayman:	Michael Conforto, OF
Hoboken:	Francisco Lindor, SS
Hudson:	Taijuan Walker, SP
Kansas:	Joaquin Benoit, RP
Knoxville:	Prince Fielder, 1B
Las Vegas:	Kris Bryant, 3B
Maracaibo:	Maikel Franco, 3B
Melrose:	Will Harris, RP
Midwest:	Aaron Hicks, OF
Munich:	Miguel Cabrera, 1B
New Westminster:	Addison Russell, SS-2B
Northboro:	Joc Pederson, OF
Rye:	J. T. Realmuto, C
Statesmen:	Blake Swihart, C
Taylorville:	Kevin Pillar, OF
Warrenton:	Madison Bumgarner, SP
Whitman:	Troy Tulowitzki, SS
Zion:	Corey Seager, SS



tbl draft: first timer

by Gordon Rodell



The DRAFT! Ah, yes, draft day. The mere mention of this day gets the blood flowing and the heart pounding of APBA baseball league participants. This is the opportunity to match wits with your fellow leaguers, to demonstrate your acumen for the game, and most of all, your chance to rub your fellow leaguers' noses in their pitiful intellect in judging baseball talent. There's nothing subtle about draft day. It's a chance to pick *THE GUY* everyone else in the room overlooked: the guy who later becomes an All-Star and you smile and think, *yeah, I picked THAT GUY*. Total domination; cue Queen's *We Are the Champions* as soon as Mr. Irrelevant's name is called. Yeah, The Draft – it's a blood sport.

I became a member of the esteemed TBL in July 2015. This gave me the chance to finish the 2015 season and to play my team that would lose 103 games. Let me say that again, *lose 103 games*.

There was a good core to build around, but major improvements had to be made if we were going to compete. What to do? A couple of trades, yeah; and yes, The Draft. *Dominate The Draft*, baby! I have been around the block a few times so the TBL Draft would not be my first rodeo: yeah, I can do this. A few more trades to acquire draft picks and it's time to prepare.

Buy some periodicals, check. Order the 'secret weapon'. I have used the 'secret weapon' for 11 years. With the 'secret weapon' in my possession, the esteemed TBL leaguers will have no chance. I can visualize Freddy Mercury stepping up to the mike. Note to self: watch Brian Kenny on the MLB Network. I bet none of the esteemed TBL guys have ever heard of Fanalytics or can even spell the word. Oh yeah, domination. Next step, compile cheat sheets. Practice a few mock drafts. Formulate the Strategic Plan matching the strength of the draft to team needs. Research

the internet, analyze other league drafts, refine the Strategic Plan. It is now January and preparations are progressing nicely.

The Stat Drunk Computer Nerd Looks at the 2016 Draft arrives. Hmm, Hoboken has three first round picks? Well, it does say Calusa has a strong draft position along with five other teams. No matter, they don't have the 'secret weapon'. According to the Nerd, I should take Joc Pederson at pick #6. *Really?* And at #22 Domingo Santana. Interesting, does the Nerd have a paradigm that supersedes the 'secret weapon' and all current draft models? After all, he is the Stat Nerd. Back to the drawing board to re-evaluate. Maybe I was too hasty in my assessments. More work to do.

A week later comes *Giuseppi's 2016 Tip Sheet*. Total panic. Freddie Mercury has left the building. First I have to research who Kyle Bryant is and figure out what *BAP* means. I'm supposed to draft *BAP* on each round.



THOR

Even Mr. Giuseppi mentions Joc Pederson. Is Mr. Giuseppi really the Stat Nerd, or is the Stat Nerd really Mr. Giuseppi? Take a breath. He does say I take *THOR*. I had not considered that

possibility. That would work. Good-bye Joc. Develop Strategic Plan Bravo to include THOR at #6, yeah; I like that.

My wife figures out BAP means Best Available Player. Stupid, look at the top of the second page. More work figuring BAP at #219. I finally determine Kyle is actually Kris Bryant. Beginning to wonder if these so called *draft info sheets* aren't some form of fiendish psychological warfare perpetrated by the esteemed TBL leaguers. [They are. – Ed.] Mess with the new guy's psyche to throw him off his game. I vow not to read any more propaganda from the TBL about The Draft.

Next I receive *Whitey's Rap Sheet*. The skinny on the TBL draft. Don't open it, don't open it ... OK ... open it. *WHAT?* Thor goes #1? Addison Russell at #2? I'm supposed to take *Delino DeShields*? Is there no limit to the esteemed TBL Leaguers' torment? Rather than suffer any more angst, I decide to revert back to Strategic Plan Alpha. That projection of Syndergaard at #6 was just a smoke screen. I am now wise to their plot. Just trust the 'secret weapon'.

Draft weekend finally arrives. Fly to Boston during the season's first big snowstorm. My wife decides I have progressed from just being weird to completely crazy. Meet esteemed TBL Leaguers Pat and Darrell at the airport. The big difference with the esteemed TBL Draft and other league drafts I have participated in is this; the esteemed TBL Draft is conducted face to face.

The night before is spent meeting fellow leaguers who would be in the room. I meet The Prince of Darkness, the Master of Zion, the Doctor, Trader Jack among others and learned about the dreaded **"FORGET SOMETHING"** sign. This is presented when the consensus of the room thinks one has made a less than optimal pick. Great, I'll probably get this on my first selection. I keep repeating; *I am not intimidated, I am not intimidated: OK, maybe a little.*



Draft day dawns, breakfast, time to take my place at the table. A former leaguer arrives. I meet Ray and his very cute twin daughters. Ray is carrying a box; in the box are copies of, OMG, the 'secret weapon'! Turns out, Ray is Ray Murphy, co-editor of Ron Shandler's *Baseball Forecaster*. He gives copies to all the esteemed TBL Leaguers. So much for the 'secret weapon'.

Well, I still have the Strategic Plan. The draft starts. Kris (*a. k. a.* Kyle) Bryant goes first. The picks proceed rapidly and then all eyes are turned in my direction.

TIME TO PICK! Both Syndergaard and Russell are still on the board. My heart and the 'Strategic Plan' both say take Addison. My brain says don't get the **"FORGET SOMETHING"** sign, take Syndergaard. Heart, brain, heart, brain.

I don't remember saying anything, but when I look at the screen streaming The Draft I see Noah Syndergaard. I guess the brain won the debate. So much for the 'secret weapon', so much for the Strategic Plan. The rest of The Draft was spent flying by the seat of the pants.

Oh yeah, Freddie Mercury went on vacation that weekend. He knew he wouldn't be needed.



plotting the portfolio trajectory

by Paul Montague



Looking Toward 2019

How's your portfolio looking? No, I'm not asking about stocks and bonds, or your retirement outlook. I'm talking your TBL portfolio – your team. And I'm not asking about the 2016 season – the rest of the *Annual* has you covered for that. I'm talking three years or so down the road. Sounds like a tough thing to do, but let's investigate.

Ron Shandler¹ gave us a starting point with his latest book. (It's called "Ron Shandler's Other Book.") In it, Shandler argues that trying to micro-analyze individual players to determine who to draft in a fantasy baseball format of any sort is a fool's errand. Instead, he says, we should try to build a solid "portfolio" of total team value versus risk factors.²

So, let's see if we can adapt his approach and add an additional "fool's errand," trying to think three years ahead. Forget the words "predict" and "project" – what this is, is an exercise in trying to look at the trajectory each team is on for the next three years, based on measurable factors we know now. Let's call this "total value plus three years" or *TV+3*. *TV+3* is *not* an attempt to say "Team X will definitely be this good/bad"; but rather, "if Team X doesn't do anything to significantly affect its trajectory (for good or bad), this is about where it should be in three years"³. Team X's owner(s) can then choose to be more (less) active in shaking the roster up, if he/they wish(es). (Or, equally logically, Team X's ownership could say "*TV+3* is a

piece of doo-doo, not worth paying attention to." YMMV.)

The methodology is basically this: Take a team's current value, multiply it by measures that account for the entirety of the roster/portfolio that will affect its value in the future, and add/subtract value for variables that are individual (i.e. that affect the portfolio but are based on specific players rather than the portfolio as a whole).

We'll start with each team's 2016 *TBL Annual* assessment total value (16TV). We need a starting number, and Rich and Walter have a well-earned status as card-valuation wizards, so we will begin with the numbers they give us for this year.

To this there is applied a 'portfolio adjustment' (PA). The PA is expressed as a multiplier against 16TV, because it measures factors that are based on the overall shape of a team's roster. The assessment of individual players is done to get the 16TV, so the PA accounts for factors that are cumulative. For example, we can't necessarily predict which players will grow into superstars from a group of youngsters, or which current stars will decline at what rate, but we know that a group of (good) youngsters will generally get better for a few years, and that a group of aging vets will have some decline due to retirements, injuries, and plain old reduced skills. So, the PA represents how the portfolio should grow or shrink based on these kinds of group factors.

-
1. *Founder of Baseball HQ and the "Baseball Forecaster" books. Shandler is no longer with Baseball HQ, which is now in the capable hands of TBL's very own Ray Murphy. But Shandler is still a respected and imaginative baseball analyst.*
 2. *I won't try to recreate Shandler's entire philosophy and methodology. Go to ronshandler.com if you're interested ...*
 3. *More precisely: "this is about the center of the curve of potential team values, as best we can tell, in three years".*
-

PA is the sum of these elements:

Entropy (E) – If nothing else is done (no draft picks added, no trades), rosters will degrade over time. A fixed value for every team – the effects of time are what they are.

Age (A) – Is the team portfolio’s age curve slanted toward youth, or is it full of the geriatric set? This factor counts players under age 26 (now) versus those over 30 (now), with those 22 and under, or 35 and over, counting double. Age contributes up to +0.9 to -0.5 (positive if the roster favors youth, negative if it favors age; there is a cap on the plus multiplier based on the teams’s current 16TV – teams with lower 16TV’s have more “growing space” available).

Playing Time (PT) – TBL teams with mostly full-time players have less likelihood of having players benched or demoted by their MLB teams than do ones with lots of part-time or platoon players. At the same time, as Bob ably described in last year’s *Annual*, they have more flexibility to phase in prospects than roster-bound teams. This factor contributes up to another +/-0.2 (positive for more full-timers, negative for fewer).

Roster Depth (RD) – Teams with more than one MLB starter at multiple positions are buffered against effects of injuries, aging, etc. Conversely teams that are thin at most positions are subject to more sudden declines if their starters get hurt or age out; the starters may be very good, but the lack of backups represents risk to the portfolio. This (subjective) factor contributes up to another +/-0.2.

The 16TV multiplied by PA is then further modified by other “individual variables” (IV). The IV factors are added/subtracted because their effects are not on the portfolio as a whole but on individual elements (players) within it, representing things not already adequately accounted

for. If/when a Byron Buxton fulfills his promise, he contributes by raising the TV directly, not by multiplying other players’ values; and his effect on 16TV is minimal due to lack of playing time and production during 2015, while the way Age is calculated understates Buxton’s ceiling – so he gets an adder. Similarly, having a Troy Tulowitzki continually missing large chunks of each season reduces his value directly. That Buxton may not turn into a Hall of Famer, and that Tulowitzki may suddenly stay healthy, is what accounts for the cap on these factors. The individual variables making up IV are:

Prospects (P) – up to +2 points per “top prospect” whose future value is not already accounted for in 16TV or team Age, up to 5 points total. (“Top prospect” is a bit subjective, but like art, we probably know it when we see it.)

Draft (D) – For the next draft only (because that’s the only one we know about at this point), +2 per extra 1st round pick, +1 per extra 2nd rounder; -2 or -1 for missing picks. Max +/- 5

Injury History (IH) – players with significant history of losing time to injury, subtract -1 each, up to -3 points (because intuition tells me there is a limit to how much “history” contributes to injuries). Injuries can obviously hit harder than this sometimes (just ask New Westminster). But, we can’t predict when, and exactly which players, will get hurt by how much. At best, we can try to measure which teams have more than an average risk in this area across their rosters as a whole – this is what IH is trying to give us.

The final ‘equation’ then is:

$$16TV * (1.0 +/- PA) + IV = TV+3$$

... with a few adjustments. Teams facing a serious aging/injury cliff have their PA’s capped at -0.5, to keep the TV+3’s within a reasonable range of the *Annual*’s spread of team values. A couple of the individual elements of PA and IV have caps on the positive side, as my sense is

that they have a ‘point of diminishing returns’ factor.

The table shows how I evaluated each factor for each TBL team to arrive at a set of 24 TV+3’s, along with a brief comment on each TBL portfolio.

One might expect that TV+3 would mostly reinforce our general sense of what teams are headed which way, as depicted in the Annual’s traditional “clock” assessment for example. In some cases, this was true.

However, there are TBL teams with nice-looking (i.e. youth-oriented) age curves that have other factors that impose extra risk on the portfolio, thus sapping the value that their youth gives them. Conversely, there are some teams with less youth on their rosters, but with positives that mitigate the age risk, such as excellent roster depth that will buffer them against key injuries, extra draft picks, or a less-than-average set of injury history factors.

Adding it all up, we can group TBL into tiers of TV+3 trajectory:

Significant Risers:

BRO, CAL, HOB, HUD,
KAN, LV, NW, STM

Risers:

CAY, DET

Holding Steady:

BH, COL, MUN, NBO, WHT

Falling:

MID, ZIO

Seriously Falling:

GC, KNX, MAR, MLR,
RYE, TAY, WAR

This was an interesting exercise, and I already have some ideas about tweaking the TV+3 system. For example, I think the system as it stands understates the trajectory of at least a couple of TBL teams. While the overall shape of the equation ‘feels right’, a couple of factors may need to be adjusted slightly.

For now, I’ll leave you with this – be afraid of Brobdingnag, even more so than the usual kidding about “Vlad” would indicate . . . Consider: Trout, Betts, Buxton, Machado, Correa, Fernandez, Strasburg, Sanchez – that’s an 8-man core that could well dominate MLB top-20 lists for a decade, and *all* but Trout are age 22 or under (Trout of course, is an “old man” of 23....). TV+3 may well understate this concentration of youth+skills significantly. Consider that if Joe has ZERO draft picks in the next three drafts (I’ll leave the likelihood of that happening as an exercise for the reader), BRO still will have an age factor at the maximum that TV+3 allows for. Be afraid. Be. Very. Afraid.



16TV	PA		IV		TV+3		Comments					
	A	PT	RD	PA	P	D	IH	IV				
BH	22.5	-0.2	0.5	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.0	-0.5	-0.5	22.0	Holding pattern, barring the pilot adjusting the instruments.	
BRO	23.5	-0.2	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.5	3.0	-3.0	5.0	40.3	Only thing that can derail this train is brittle pitching staff.	
CAL	21.5	-0.2	0.6	-0.1	0.2	0.5	3.0	0.0	-3.0	0.0	32.3	Gordon's got it going on, in Calusa or Indianapolis or wherever.
CAY	21.0	-0.2	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	1.0	0.0	-1.0	0.0	25.2	Slight upward trend, are islanders injecting too much "mañana, mon"?
COL	16.0	-0.2	0.6	-0.1	-0.2	0.1	2.0	0.0	-2.0	0.0	17.6	Positive age curve, but offset by some health concerns
DET	13.5	-0.2	0.4	-0.2	0.2	0.2	2.5	3.0	-3.0	2.5	18.7	Right direction, but too much "mix and match" for the long haul.
GC	29.5	-0.2	-0.1	0.1	-0.1	-0.3	1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	19.7	The Batmobile may need some time with the mechanic.
HOB	18.0	-0.2	0.7	-0.2	0.1	0.4	4.0	4.0	-2.0	6.0	31.2	The rebuild is working, if Steve stays patient.
HUD	28.5	-0.2	0.5	0.2	-0.1	0.4	5.0	0.0	-2.5	2.5	42.4	The next Beast of the East.... Er Mantle....
KAN	30.0	-0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	2.0	-2.0	-1.5	-1.5	40.5	The rotation shines. Can Bill assemble shiny offense before arms deteriorate?
KNX	34.0	-0.2	-0.5	-0.2	-0.1	-0.5	0.0	-3.0	-3.0	-6.0	11.0	"Cliff, meet Knoxville; Knoxville, this is Cliff" (PA capped at -0.5)
LV	29.0	-0.2	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.5	2.5	-1.0	-0.5	1.0	44.5	Already good, Gamblers are odds-on to get even better... Better. Better.
MAR	28.5	-0.2	-0.5	0.1	-0.1	-0.5	1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	13.3	The Revenooers are coming for the Rumrunners... (PA capped at -0.5)
MLR	35.0	-0.2	-0.4	0.1	-0.1	-0.5	0.5	-2.0	-3.0	-4.5	13.0	Age/Injury clock is winding down. (PA capped at -0.5)
MID	15.0	-0.2	0.0	-0.2	-0.1	-0.5	0.5	0.0	-1.0	-0.5	7.0	Dead flat age curve - but 'there is no there there' ...
MUN	40.5	-0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.0	-3.0	-2.5	-5.5	43.1	Core will still be <32, so window still open; wolves are gaining, though.
NW	19.0	-0.2	0.7	0.0	0.1	0.6	1.5	2.0	0.0	3.5	33.9	Another turn-around is happening. Jim should be encouraged.
NBO	26.0	-0.2	0.5	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	1.0	0.0	-3.0	-2.0	24.0	PT/PD/IH risks counter decent age curve (TV+3 doesn't reward extra 1B's).
RYE	21.5	-0.2	-0.5	-0.1	-0.2	-0.5	0.0	0.0	-2.0	-2.0	8.8	The age chasm yawns - then gobbles. (PA capped at -0.5)
STM	22.5	-0.2	0.6	0.2	-0.1	0.5	3.0	3.0	0.0	6.0	39.8	Eric said he was going for younger - it's working.
TAY	33.5	-0.2	-0.2	0.2	-0.1	-0.3	0.0	-1.0	0.0	-1.0	22.5	Remarkably healthy core, but age creeps in on little cat feet....
WAR	18.5	-0.2	-0.5	0.0	-0.1	-0.5	1.0	0.0	-2.0	-1.0	8.3	MadBum and Posey can't do it all by themselves. (PA capped at -0.5)
WHT	32.0	-0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	-1.0	-1.0	-2.0	33.2	Perfect storm of middle-age-ness. TWENTY players age 28-31 are key.
ZIO	20.5	-0.2	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-0.4	3.0	0.0	-2.5	0.5	12.8	Does the Sensei have a youth potion in his bag of holding?

Ticking Clock

The balance of the Universe has been restored, at least as far as the *Annual* is concerned; after a year's respite, *Brian Hanley's Whitman River Rats* have been restored to their place at the top of the Clemente Division. The club has added star power in Tulowitzki and Gonzalez; they're not Munich or Melrose, but in the underpowered International Conference they might have enough to get to the World Series. It is beginning to look like the clock is ticking: best do it now while the team is still together – the cliff beckons.



Our predictive capacity is sometimes tinged with hope for teams that have traveled some distance to get here. So it is with the *Blue Hill Mudslides*. We have given the team our share of encomiums for the patience *Mark Ludwig* has shown in the long rebuilding effort. The TQs say that the process continues – but there is enough talent to at least hint at the possibility of a breakout in 2016. Adding another solid starting pitcher certainly helps; there are worlds to conquer just in reach.



2015 Clemente Division Final Standings

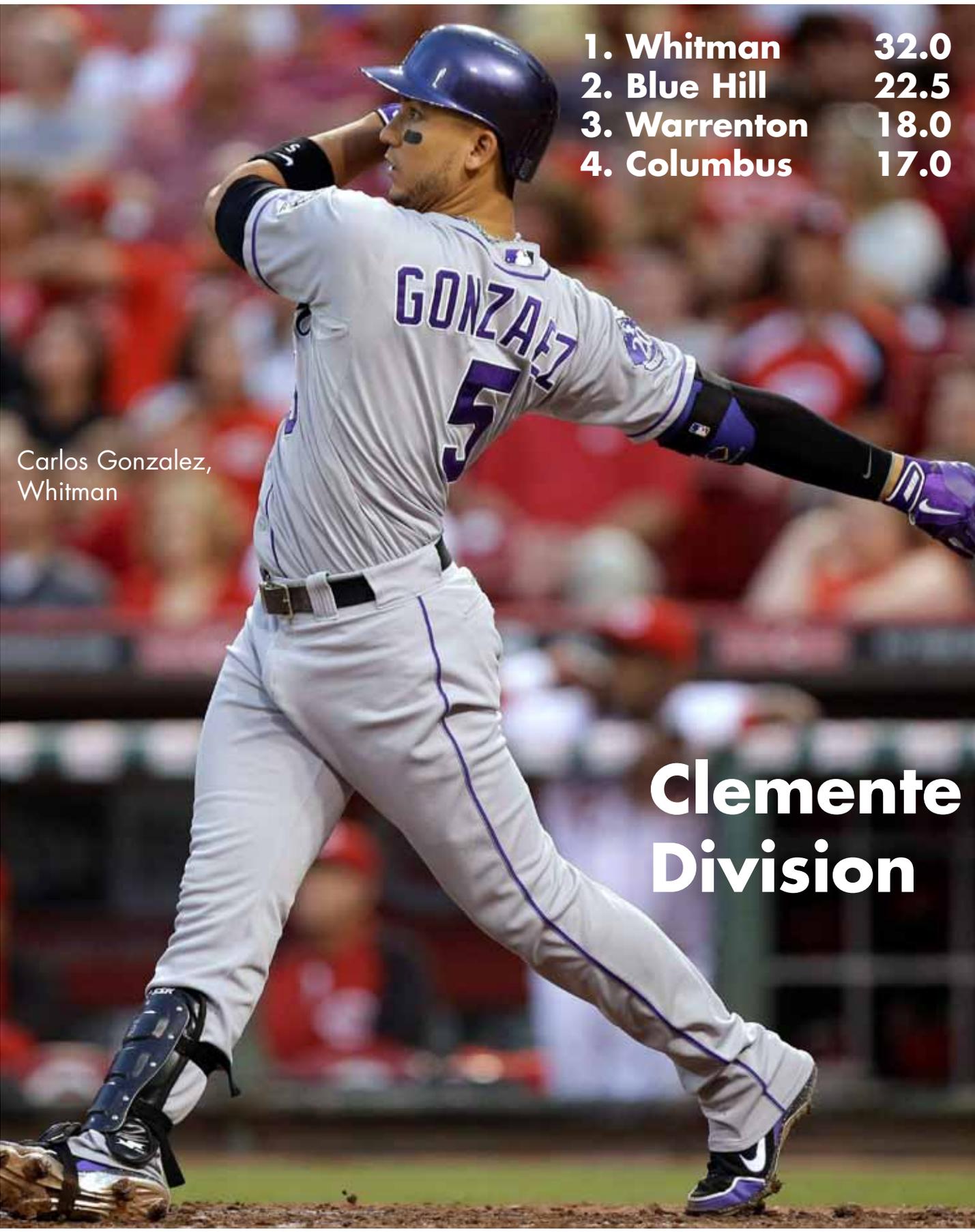
Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Warrenton*	107	55	.660	—
Whitman	80	82	.494	27
Blue Hill	79	83	.488	28
Columbus	65	97	.401	42

* Won TBL World Series over Melrose.

The gold standard for The Bounce, the mystical transformation of First to Worst to First, is the performance of clubs led by Mark Freedman. He's done it more than once, and his efforts are a testament to fortitude and a steady hand. But *Jack Chapman* shows more bounciness than Tigger, and he's in the process of having an off year. If everything works out, he'll be a 2017 contender. This year, however, is going to be a struggle.



There is no easy way to soften the troubles facing *Vic Vaughn's Columbus Jets* this season; it's going to be a long one. The Tanaka bet was a good one, but there aren't enough friends on the pitching staff or support in the offense to make the club more than a spectator, even in a soft year in the IC.

- 
- A photograph of baseball player Carlos Gonzalez in a batting stance. He is wearing a white uniform with purple accents, a purple helmet, and purple batting gloves. The name "GONZALEZ" and the number "5" are visible on his jersey. He is positioned on a baseball field with a blurred crowd in the background.
1. Whitman 32.0
 2. Blue Hill 22.5
 3. Warrenton 18.0
 4. Columbus 17.0

Carlos Gonzalez,
Whitman

Clemente Division

2015 whitman RIVER RATS in review



It would be a massive letdown if this team does not make a deep playoff run.

by Brian Hanley

2015 in Review

Final Record: 80-82 (2nd, Clemente)

After making a few strong runs it was time for a bit of rebuilding Whitman style. Very little future capital was spent on the 2015 club that would not project to help the 2016 team. After a few very strong arms, the pitching staff was strung together to get us through the season. The lineup lacked any real punch at all with only one power bat. Still a roster full of speed, the defense also took a step back in 15.

What went right?

The outfield was better than advertised as Revere hit .300, scored 100 runs and stole 52 bases; but the big surprise was Ellsbury who hit .293 with a whopping 27 HR, 104 RBI and 91 runs scored. The pitching staff performed as expected as Price won 16 games with a sub-3 ERA and struck out almost 300. This team won 80 games so I would say that was a good year given the lack of real offense.



Ellsbury: Surprise

What went wrong?

The team only hit 108 HR while surrendering 168, walked only 317 times while allowing 469 and scored 652 runs while allowing the opposition to score 681. Sounds like a .500 squad to me. The biggest disappointments were Goldschmidt, who slashed .282/.372/.478 with 16 HR in 109 games. and Kershaw who had a sterling 2.46 ERA but a final record of 10-14. Ultimately this team could not produce enough

offense and had some trouble protecting leads during the course of the game.

3 Things

1. *Win now.* Some major deals were made to address management's dissatisfaction with the offense. Future was spent for present; several of the players obtained have a relatively short expiration date, so winning now is critical since the window for this particular group may be small.

2. *Matchups.* We made a concerted effort to create a lineup and a bench that has a bit of everything, making it difficult for opponents to benefit from matchup. The every-day lineup has power, speed and defense and the batting shifts for the regulars will require frequent bullpen moves to counter. The bench will have sufficient pieces to counter the first few, making later ones more difficult.

3. *Bullpen.* As so often happens, the bullpen is the key to success. With most resources required to fill half a season of starts, two holes in the lineup and the revamping of the bench, very little was left over to add to the pen. It's deep, but there aren't dominant grades. Rotation upgrades will help.

This team will not be truly dominant in any one area. There is good defense, unprecedented team speed, OBP at the top, power in the middle and very solid bats all the way through. The rotation is anchored by two monsters and is solid throughout; the bullpen has depth. The bench has some nice pieces and plenty of usage. It would be a massive letdown if this team does not make a deep playoff run in 2016.

whitman RIVER RATS



Brian Hanley (21st year)

There are different monsters to slay in 2016.

The season just past was an aberration. That has to be the party line for River Rats management and River Rats fandom (*which is actually one person wide; see the Rye Year in Review*): dropping to .500 was an outlier, Warrenton's run to the championship was a one-off – and now, in 2016, all is right with the world.

But just to make sure: Troy Tulowitzki, Carlos Gonzalez, Yovani Gallardo to join Clayton Kershaw, David Price, Jacoby Ellsbury and Paul Goldschmidt. Blue Hill is better, but not ready; Warrenton has regressed past the norm to the rebuild stage; and Columbus . . . it'll be more than a year before that matters.

Do they want this? Yes they do. *Oh, yes.* Like Zion, they want to go back to 2013. The 107 wins. The charge through Columbus and Greater Ohio and right into the World Series. If only they could do that again and face Zion again in 2016. (*Which would be great: Zion is terrible this year! It's like the old joke about Ty Cobb, when he was asked, thirty years after he retired, how he'd hit these days; and when he was challenged about his answer – .310 – he said, "hell, I'm seventy years old."*)

There are different monsters to slay in 2016. The boys are older, both those newly arrived and those with long-established spots in the locker room. The clock, as we say in the division summary, is ticking.

Pitching: 11.5 Following the formula.

Two things are characteristic of Whitman pitching. The starters are strong, especially at the top of the rotation; and the bullpen is wild. It's hard to walk away from a winning formula, and Mr. Hanley hasn't done so. Starters strong; relievers wild. But there are quite a fair number of each.



Brian Hanley has had a lot of success since entering TBL as an expansion team in 1996. He's always been a master at getting the most out of limited resources. His resources aren't limited for 2016, so another great season is expected.



SNT: Troy Tulowitzki.

In the biggest blockbuster of the offseason, Whitman added two veteran superstars from The Statesmen's sinking ship. He's not what he once was, but he's still a big game player.

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Joey Butler, Andrew Cashner, Tony Cruz, Yovani Gallardo, Carlos Gonzalez, Boone Logan, Jefry Marte, Justin Miller, Fernando Rodriguez, Miguel Rojas, Ervin Santana, Jesus Sucre, Troy Tulowitzki.

Departed: Willie Bloomquist, Maikel Cleto, Collin Cowgill, Kyle Lohse, Wil Nieves, Lyle Overbay, Chris Perez, Anthony Ranaudo, Andre Rienzo, Brendan Ryan, Josh Thole, Shane Victorino, Kirby Yates.

ROTATION. It starts with the guy who just keeps on coming: Clayton Kershaw (Grade 17 C+31 HR+26, 33 starts). and his trusty sidekick David Price (Grade 14 lefty, C+25 HR+25, 32 starts). Few teams in TBL have one guy like that; Whitman has two.



Kershaw: Keeps coming

The rest of the rotation is somewhat more pedestrian, but there are no bad starts. Jesse Hahn (Grade 11 C+16 HR+42) goes 16 times; Ervin Santana and Yovanni Gallardo (C-23 HR+26) are solid Grade 9s for 50 starts; and Andrew Cashner fills in the remaining 31 as a Grade 7 C-15 HR+13.

The instructions expect the aces to go deep, but generally there is a quick hook available. That makes the rotation a strong one.



BULLPEN. The closer we'd start with is lefty Tony Sipp (Grade 17* C+13 HR+16, 54 innings). Whitman instructions assign the role to J. J. Hoover (Grade 18* C-53), with Tyler Clippard (Grade 17* C-34) to set him up. They have 135 innings between them. Note that Sipp is not only the best control rating of the three: he's the best control rating *in the entire bullpen*. As we noted: it's the formula that Whitman has pretty much always followed.



Hoover: Closer role

It carries through the middle relief corps. Justin Miller (Grade 15* C-23 HR+32, 33 innings); Carlos Villanueva (Grade 14*, 61 innings); Fernando Rodriguez (Grade 13* C-33 HR+33, 58 innings); and lefty Jacob Diekman (Grade 11* C-61 HR+24, 58 innings) will all be put to use. Boone Logan (Grade 7* C-34 HR+25) provides a few more innings of lefty relief.

This relief crew is not as good as the top notch bullpens elsewhere in TBL, but most of those teams don't have the kind of top-end starters that Whitman has. The team will benefit from Mr. Hanley's exceptional skill in handling them.

Offense: 11.0
Some great assets.

The Whitman offense benefits from the addition of a full-season power card from Carlos Gonzalez (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-16 R+4); but even that card is not as fierce as the resident monster, Paul Goldschmidt (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 5 walks, 31 SSN for 26 SBA).



Goldschmidt: Fierce

The power-speed combo is a pretty rare thing – and there is no pesky platoon shift.

That's the middle of the lineup. There is a good collection of support cards behind, but no obvious third big bopper. Troy Tulowitzki, added

in the offseason, is solid (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-3) but not eye-popping; Ben Revere (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 31 SSN for 38 SBA) is a solid leadoff hitter; Kolten Wong (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L-9 R+2, 25 SSN for 23 SBA) has grown up nicely; Kelly Johnson (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks), Brock Holt (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 34 SSN for 9 SBA); A. J. Pierzynski (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L-6); Joey Butler (1-6-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 28 SSN for 7 SBA); Nick "what happened to my power?" Markakis (6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-8 R+1) – they all offer decent offensive punch, and can be mixed and matched. But all of them can be pitched to.

There's a fair amount of speed among the regulars, but past Gonzalez and Goldschmidt there's a real lack of power. Particularly at catcher, but in the case of some of the missing games around the infield, there will be some bad matchups and some weak innings. This is a good offense because of Goldschmidt and Gonzalez and the number of choices available. The question is whether it's better because it's flexible or hollow. We're guessing the former, but the latter is certainly possible.

Defense: 6.0
Some great assets.

There are some great defensive assets on the roster. Goldschmidt is a 1B5; Wong a 2B8 (as is Eric Sogard off the bench); Tulowitzki an SS9; and two OF3s – Markakis (37 arm) and Jacoby Ellsbury (33 arm). The remaining outfield spots will be occupied by OF2s, with only Ben Revere an inferior flipper. Third base is a 3B4 when Holt or Jose Ramirez is there, and a 3B3 otherwise; there are a few SS8 choices during the thirty-odd games when Tulowitzki is unavailable.

Catcher is a problem though. As with every team that has carried A. J. Pierzynski as its primary catcher, he is a liability (C7 Th-3); cards don't have emotions, so Whitman doesn't have to worry about his toxic clubhouse attitude. When he's not in, the choice is the batless Jesus Sucre (C7 Th+4) or Tony Cruz (C8 Th-2).



Markakis: Asset

Bench: There's almost too much.

3.5

To go with Pierzynski, Whitman has two catching alternatives: Jesus Sucre (2 Os, 6 hits, L+14 R-10; C7 Th+4); and Tony Cruz (3 Os, 8 hits, L+3 R-2; C8 Th-4). Neither can hit, obviously, and even if Sucre can mess up any lefty in TBL, it doesn't make him an attractive platoon option for A. J.



Ellsbury: Time off

The bench also includes Jacoby Ellsbury, who misses a third of the season, and isn't really that exciting (2 Os, 9 hits, 3 walks, 27 SSN for 30 SBA). He'll get lots of time off. Miguel

Rojas (3 Os, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-8 R+2, SS8 2B7) is an interesting extra part; former top pick Jose Ramirez (3 Os, 8 hits, 3 walks, 28 SSN for 14 SBA, Fielding Two around the infield) can pinch-run; Billy Butler (3 Os, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) should be on someone else's bench, and Jefry Marte (who will be eating sushi in 2016) has 1-5-6 power and a L+7 R-8 platoon. Eric Sogard (2 Os, 9 hits, 2B8 SS8) and Chris Johnson (2 Os, 10 hits) are just spare parts.

It's a very good bench: it does a lot of things, though obviously only a subset of these players can be on the roster at any time. If one or more of the spare parts is having a good 2016 season, it might be an option to shift them in September to someone else in exchange for bullpen innings with good peripherals or a power pinch-hitting card.

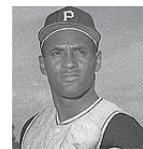
1st

There isn't much of a race in this division this year, so predicting Whitman to win it isn't one of the great challenges of the analyst's art. With the competition in the Clemente – and in the conference in general – 90 wins is a cinch, 95 is likely, and 100 is not out of the question.

The real question is what happens next – which may include what happens in season. Gotham City is a challenge, but there isn't another International team that can keep them from having a shot at the World Series. Now *there's* a challenge.



whitman:
TBL Draft



whitman
RIVER
RATS

It can't be overlooked that the River Rats drafted Clayton Kershaw and David Price and Jacoby Ellsbury (and Matt Garza, who is not getting any major league looks this year). They also drafted Paul Goldschmidt (in 2012) and Kolten Wong (in 2014).

But a review of the last five years' drafts is a fairly thorough collection of Guys. In some cases the Guys in question were players we liked at the time. Josh Thole, Barry Enright and Sergio Santos in 2011; Ben Revere, Robert Andino and Carlos Villareal in 2012; Matt Dominguez, Troy Patton, DeWayne Wise and Kole Calhoun (in the 7th round) in 2013; Andre Rienzo in 2014; Jose Ramirez, Allen Webster and Anthony Ranaudo in 2015.

Even more interesting: Thole and Goldschmidt are the only first-rounders, and there hasn't been a #1 since Goldschmidt. Why? Simple answer – it's tied up in players and pitchers that helped get the club to contention and keep it there. Billy Butler; A. J. Pierzynski; Andrew Cashner; and, of course, Gonzalez and Tulowitzki and Gallardo and any number of others who have come, and gone – Paul Konerko, Raul Ibanez, Mike Fontenot, and numerous others. Over the last several years this has been the Whitman draft strategy: tokens to spend to get the next Konerko, the next Ibanez, the next Gonzalez, the next Tulowitzki.

It's a formula, and it makes sense, like the strong rotation and the wild bullpen. Go with what works, until you need to change the formula.

TQ: **32.0**



2015 blue hill MUDSLIDES in review



A step in the right direction.

by Mark Ludwig

2015 in Review

Final Record: 79-83 (3rd, Clemente)

Blue Hill improved over the previous season with 23 more wins but fell shy of the goal of finally having a winning season at 79-83. Still, it represents a step in the right direction for a team with a very youthful core.

What went right?

The pitching staff was much improved led by rookie ace Yordano Ventura (15-6, 2.64). Josh Collmenter had 13 wins. The Mudslides posted a team ERA of 3.51, which was almost a 2 run improvement over the previous season. Brad Boxberger recorded a 2.00 ERA with 5 wins, and Roman Mendez had 21 saves.

Adam LaRoche led the Mudslides with 23 HRs and Kurt Suzuki had a nice offensive year hitting .287 with 44 doubles. Rajai Davis added some speed with 38 steals.

What went wrong?

Unfortunately Bryce Harper had a down year. His bat, if it was more like the one he'll be flashing this season, could've pushed Blue Hill over the .500 mark and maybe a playoff berth if he was able to contribute.

The Mudslides had some struggles offensively with a team BA of .245 and slugged .366. The starting staff was satisfactory, but the bullpen

blew too many leads and had 25 losses and the closers, Buddy Carlyle and Roman Mendez, did not pitch as well as expected.

3 Things



Ventura: Rookie ace

1. *Bryce Harper!* If nothing else it will be fun watching the offensive numbers he should put up this season. Most of the offense is in the first four batters in the lineup, so Harper is going to have to produce in key situations for the Mudslides to compete.

2. *Youth in the pitching staff.* The pitching rotation is young and coming together. Lance McCullers, Jordano

Ventura and Alex Wood are all under 25 and hopefully will continue to improve. The club will need the starters to be good, because there really aren't any stoppers in the bullpen.

3. *A strong defense.* The team defense is strong up the middle and it will be nice to have Nick Ahmed (SS-9) getting to most of the balls hit his way. I am going to need the pitching and defense to keep it close as the offense is going to struggle in the games Harper doesn't carry us.

blue hill MUDSLIDES



Mark Ludwig (21st year)

There are still problems ahead, and still more work to be done.

We work on our memes here at the *Annual*. (It should be noted that such effort once got us into some trouble, but we are – as noted – kinder and gentler now.) We talk about the Bounce, the Cliff, the Prince of Darkness, the Sensei, the Guru, the Relief Valet, the Landrum Effect, and the Bearded Lady. Some of our best and most memorable work has been in the creation and cultivation of memes.

But there's more to the content of our publication than doing that, as fun and as self-aggrandizing as it is. Some of our work is the ongoing observation and approbation of team rebuilds. In the case of the Blue Hill Mudslides, we've enjoyed the ride, and we're pretty sure Mr. Ludwig has enjoyed it so far. It's not over – there are still problems ahead, and still more work to be done.

But they're lots better. The roster has a number of players that other teams would love to have (and won't be getting). They weren't a walkover last year and will be even more competitive this year. It would be a surprise if the club got into the postseason, but it's not absurd.

Pitching: 7.0 **Starters young, relievers numerous.**

In the offseason, Blue Hill made improvements to its pitching staff, both in the rotation and in the bullpen. Two new starters have joined the existing ones, and the relief group has been extended to help it out. Neither compees with the top groups in the league, but there will be some better pitchers on the mound.

ROTATION. The Mudslides will have to rely on a number of pitchers in its starting rotation this year. The best grade belongs to rookie SNT Lance McCullers (Grade 13



SNT: Lance McCullers.

Another addition to a young and talented pitching staff helps the Mudslides take a big step toward respectability.

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Nick Ahmed, Neal Cotts, Kendall Graveman, Lance McCullers, Adam Morgan, John Ryan Murphy, Scott Oberg, Chaz Roe, Zac Rosscup, Chris Rusin, Jerry Sands.

Departed: Gordon Beckham, Drew Butera, Buddy Carlyle, Joba Chamberlain, Hank Conger, Dillon Gee, A.J. Griffin, T.J. McFarland, Roman Mendez, Tyler Moore, Daniel Nava.

C-15 HR+25, 22 starts), and the second best comes from an addition from last year, Mike Bolsinger, who turned in 21 decent starts of his own (Grade 11 C-26 HR+13).

The next sixty starts belong to two full-season guys: sophomore phenom Yordano Ventura (Grade 9 C-21 HR+24) and lefty Alex Wood (Grade 8 HR+24). There are 13 starts from Jarred Cosart (Grade 10 C-46 HR-16). That gets the club through three-quarters of the season.

The bottom of the rotation isn't too bad either; it's in the hands of two rookies, lefty Adam Morgan (Grade 7 C+26 HR-25) and righty Kendall Graveman (Grade 7 C-12 HR-12). The numbers for the starters are solid, but there are an even more important set of



Bolsinger: Addition



blue hill MUDSLIDES

numbers next to the *Born:* label on the cards. Bolsinger (1/1988) is the old man of the group – and McCullers (10/1993) is barely old enough to buy beer.

BULLPEN. The relievers are neither as young nor as capable as the starters, but teams don't bulk up the bullpen until the rest of the team is in place. (That being said, Blue Hill selected Brad Boxberger as a Grade 22* last year, so what do we know.)

In any case, Josh Collmenter has become the de facto closer this year as a Grade 17* (C+32 HR-22, 52 innings). He has a deep middle relief crew, but no bona fide setup man. Edwin Jackson (Grade 14* C-25 HR+25), Boxberger (Grade 13* C-41 HR-15), Matt Belisle (Grade 12* C+25 HR+52) and ageless lefty Neal Cotts (Grade 12* C-12 HR+33) give Blue Hill about 210 solid middle innings that help most of the starters and should help the team stay in games.

Beyond that group is a quintet of decent, though flawed, bulk relievers. Zac Rosscup (Grade 10* C-51 HR-31, 26 innings), John Axford (Grade 10* C-53 HR+31, 55 innings), Oliver Perez (Grade 9* HR+16, 41 innings), Scott Oberg (Grade 8* C-53 HR-24, 58 innings) and Chaz Roe (Grade 7* C-23 HR+21, 41 innings) will either soak up innings or extend them. Still, there are at least a fair number of them.

Offense: 8.0
Good speed, scattered power.

We reported in the pages of this publication a few years ago that Mr. Ludwig was offered a couple of #1s for Bryce Harper, and declined. Last year's card was subpar, but



Harper: Boy howdy

boy howdy has he made up for that this year (1-1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 6 walks, L-5). He had an enormous MLB season and will have one for Blue Hill as well. He rates his own paragraph in this article, and rightly so.

There really isn't another card to go with the Harper one, but there is a nice one for Christian Yelich (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-5, 29 SSN for 21 SBA; he'll hit near the top of the order, as will Gregor Blanco (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 28 SSN for 18 SBA). Eduardo Escobar turned in another surprisingly good card (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) and will hit in the middle. Rajai Davis has an interesting power/speed card with very little home run pop (2-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 27 SSN for 26 SBA): though he has very good speed, the instructions call for him to bat in the middle.



Escobar: Once again

The rest of the regulars are less exciting. First base will be split between Yonder Alonso (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, L-5) and Jerry Sands (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-9); Chase Headley (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22) mans third; and the starting shortstop is rookie Nick Ahmed (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+7 R-4), who is in the lineup for his glove. Behind the plate, it would be great to put rookie catcher John Ryan Murphy out there all the time (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22), but he has only 67 games; the rest will have to be handled by Kurt Suzuki (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22). Neither of them are in there for *their* gloves. The regulars have good speed and scattered power, and any inning in which Harper comes to the plate is likely to be fun for Blue Hill; but good pitching staffs, particularly with a lefty on the mound, will be tough on them.

Defense: 5.5
No true liabilities . . . well, one.

At many positions, these guys can pick it. Yonder Alonso is a 1B5 (though Sands is only a 1B2 when he plays); Nick Ahmed is an SS9; and there are two OF3 regulars (Gregor Blanco

and Christian Yelich) and an OF2 with a superior arm (Bryce Harper has a 36). Jayson Werth is an OF3 with a 36 arm, but his poor bat will make him only a defensive replacement. Rajai Davis is mostly expected to DH, but he's an OF2 as well. At catcher, Kurt Suzuki is a C8 and John Murphy a C7; but neither has a solid arm. Chase Headley (3B4) and Eduardo Escobar (2B7) are Fielding Two in the middle, with a little help available on the bench. There are no true defensive liabilities except behind the plate, where a more serious contender would want a nice glove to come in the late innings.

Bench: 2.0
A little thin.

Missing games and platoon shifts make the bench a little thin. Jayson Werth only helps on defense (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22); Carlos Sanchez (3 0s, 9 hits) has a 2B8 and will help on defense and to pinch-run, but unfortunately not to steal. Elian Herrera (4 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-5) has an interesting card; Stephen Drew (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks) really doesn't. The regular players will get most of the overall playing time, and that's probably just as well.

2nd

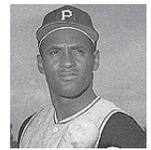
They can't catch Whitman. Neither the *Annual* nor Mark Ludwig are under any illusions about that; we certainly get predictions wrong, but ten points of TQ is a pretty wide margin. Similarly, the gap between Blue Hill – arguably a rebuild, but with a decent amount of innings, no bad starts, decent defense and some interesting hitters and *Bryce freaking Harper* – and the deep rebuilds of Warrenton and Columbus is significant enough to make us confident that they'll finish solidly second. Indeed, that's not even the question, which really is whether a run at a wild card spot is realistic. A full 2017 draft and the presence of *Bryce freaking Harper* makes us believe that it might just be possible.



The 20 year TBL history of the Mudslides franchise is a bit like the planet Jupiter – never quite achieving enough mass and energy to burst forth into a sun. But with Bryce Harper as its nucleus, perhaps Blue Hill will soon become a shining playoff star!



blue hill:
TBL Draft



blue hill MUDSLIDES

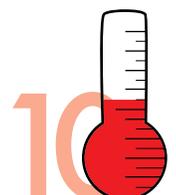
There are teams, such as Whitman or Knoxville, that give us scant data with which to analyze draft strategy. Such clubs have frequently used their picks as commodities to acquire present value to get them into, or keep them in, contention. Which is fine, and their success proves that it's a valid strategy.

For a team that has been out of the spotlight as much and for as long as Blue Hill, the draft itself has been key. What's remarkable is how many of those picks remain with the club. John Axford and Matt Belisle remain from 2011 (they were both much better at the time); Yonder Alonso and Josh Collmenter in 2012; *Bryce freaking Harper* and Gregor Blanco in 2013; Christian Yelich, Alex Wood, Jarred Cosart, and Seth Maness in 2014; Yordano Ventura, Brad Boxberger, Carlos Sanchez, and Elian Herrera last year. And those are the guys he *kept*. They've taken others who have come and gone for various reasons, but this is an indication of Mr. Ludwig's acumen, confidence in his own evaluations, loyalty to his core players, and his long-term view.

The best part about watching this all come together is the knowledge that the club as presently built is fairly young. When your team is built around solid, recently drafted players, it portends good things for the future.

And there's *Bryce freaking Harper*. I mean, really.

TQ: **22.5**



2015 warrenton GIANTS in review



Trader Jack has made his mark here, and we are lucky to have him.

2015 in Review

Final Record: 107-55 (1st, Clemente)

For strong-minded TBL managers bursting onto the scene after making their mark in other leagues and occupations, the expected behavior is that they will “put their stamp on the team.” No one defined this transaction more starkly than Trader Jack Chapman in 2015. Jack drafts or trades for his beloved San Francisco Giants, and plays without the DH, because he believes strongly that that is how baseball should be played. And he wins. At the end of June, Warrenton’s record was 48-12. He won the 2015 TBL World Series despite trailing in Game 5 while down 3 games to 1 to Mark Freedman. This was an absolutely astonishing managerial performance.

What went right?

First, the trade for Buster Posey gave Jack the one thing this team needed – an absolute stud around which he could build his offense.

Posey posted an audacious .348/.404/.551 slash line with 23 homers and 117 RBI. Hunter Pence was also a monster contributor – 118 runs scored and 122 RBI, but this was Posey’s show. Overall, Warrenton scored a solid 826 runs as a team, and they did it with hard work – Warrenton hit only 126 home runs all year, but they were second in the league in hits, and a hyper-efficient 70 for 78 stealing bases. This is reminiscent of Mr. Hunt’s winning offensive formula.

On the pitching side there were similar results. Jack had no 20 game winners, but he had 39 complete games. The bullpen had 8 pitchers with ERAs of 1.55 or lower. Ken Giles had 27 saves, giving up 18 hits in 42 innings.



Posey: Monster

What went wrong?

Nothing. They won their division by 27 games and beat a 122-win Melrose team in the TBL World Series.

3 Things

1. *Trading for Buster Posey.* The deal sent 2015 WAR#1, 2016 WAR#1 and 2016 WAR#2 to Munich. Judging from the road grader that Paul is fielding in 2016, this seems to have worked for both teams.

2. *Going for the repeat.* Jack traded off his entire 2017 draft to Midwest for Madison Baumgarner, Jordan Zimmerman and Adam Jones. Jack is obviously doubling down this season, and staying with his team building philosophy of stockpiling San Francisco Giants.

3. *Rewriting the rule book.* Jack and Darrell Skogen have changed the definition of what a championship offense looks like. In contrast to the thunder offenses of the 1990s and 2000s, Darrell won in 2009 with a pressure offense, moving baserunners, avoiding strikeouts and double plays. Meyer and Hunt built the framework, but Jack took it to extremes, scoring runs and winning with no DH.

Twenty five years ago, a guy named Auletta joined us. His friend Steve Powell famously warned “He will make you change your rules.” Joe has worked over the rulebook and posted spectacular results. Jack has won the right to play with no DH. His is a principled stance and to be respected. And now we consider a new division with teams that will play National League style baseball. Trader Jack has made his mark here, and we are lucky to have him.

warrenton GIANTS



Jack Chapman (8th year)

You earn your nickname.

Bravado comes with the job, it seems. When we bring a new manager into TBL, he's often had some success in some other league: we don't grudge that – there are plenty of competitive leagues out there, some with far greater challenges and stresses than we offer. But before a guy's resume matters, he has to do something here in the league. Ask Darrell Skogen about that. He had to *earn* his nickname.

So. Well, there are guys and guys. When you're a new guy who loves to make trades, and is very interested in acquiring members of his home team, there are points at which the *Annual* gets to make witty comment. When you decide that you like the idea of playing without a DH in a league that allows it, the commentary ascends to a new level.

And when you do all that and beat what might have been the best team in TBL in a tight seven game World Series, *you earn your nickname.*

Welcome to the winners' circle, Trader Jack. It's going to be a long 2016 in Warrenton, but you know he'll be back.

Pitching: 6.0 **Rotation decent; bullpen dicey.**

This is not the staff of a World Series contender, even in a weakened conference. But it's added one of the best pitchers in baseball: Madison Bumgarner. As noted, he's someone you'd want to build your staff around – and he'll be a part of the Warrenton club when they're good again. But why isn't he a part of the *Midwest* club, waiting for better days? Only the Guru and Trader Jack know. We'll find out if Darrell made the right move, probably within a year. Stay tuned.

SNT: **Madison Bumgarner.**

He's a Giant, like many others on Warrenton's roster. But he's also one of the best in baseball.

Getting him makes sense – but how on earth did Trader Jack get Darrell to part with him?

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Madison Bumgarner, Eddie Butler, Scott Carroll, Wilmer Flores, Mayckol Guaipe, Adam Jones, Mike Morse, Enny Romero, Evan Scribner, Jake Smolinski, Bobby Wilson, Rafael Ynoa, Jordan Zimmermann.

Departed: Scott Atchison, Erick Aybar, Darwin Barney, Tony Cruz, Dana Eveland, Nate Freiman, Ken Giles, Marwin Gonzalez, Nick Hagadone, Roberto H. Hernandez, James Jones, Don Kelly, Chris B. Young.



ROTATION. Meanwhile, Bumgarner (Grade 13 lefty C+33) has the top 32 starts in a fairly decent starting rotation. He and righty Jordan Zimmermann (Grade 9 C+32 HR-13) have both arrived from Minnesota to anchor the starters, joining last year's ace Collin McHugh (Grade 8 C+16 HR+21) and veteran lefty Mark Buehrle (Grade 7 C+36) to make up 129 of the 162 needed starts. Instructions call for them to go as deep as possible, which is complicated by the Warrenton decision to forego the DH. Of the quartet, only Bumgarner (1-1-6-6, 10 hits) is much of a hitter. There aren't any bats among the two starters that fill out the rest of the games: Jake Peavy (Grade 11 C+23) and Wade Miley (Grade 7 lefty HR-14). But they should be a serviceable group.



warrenton GIANTS

BULLPEN. Here's where things go off the rails. Half of the relevant relievers on the Warrenton staff are on the San Francisco staff (and that's not counting Grade 1* Jeremy Affeldt and former Giant Jean Machi). But they weren't as good in 2015 as in 2014, so the closing effort is in the hands of George Kontos (Grade 15* C+42 HR-15) and the Beard to Fear, Sergio Romo (Grade 12* C+36 HR+36). Nice names, but they're not going to get in done – they'd fare better as a contender's setup men.



Romo: Fear this beard

Then things decline. Lefty Blaine Hardy (Grade 10* HR+56) and righty Yusmeiro Petit, another former Giant (Grade 9* C+33 HR-21) have over 130 innings between them; and then there are 150-plus of Grade 8*s Evan Scribner (C+34 HR-51) and Scott

Carroll (HR+42) and Grade 6* Machi. After that it's Grade 1s and 2s. Given the innings available – and needed – they'll be turning up during the course of the season.

Offense: 7.5
Better names than cards.

There are a number of *Far Side* cartoons that involve dogs and cats hearing people speak, and all they hear is babble with their name in the middle of that.



Blah blah blah Buster

Sometimes it's that way with Buster Posey; if you say his name, it may be all you have to hear because you know how great he is. This year is no exception (1-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, no real platoon). It's not his best, but it's very good, and the top card in the

Warrenton lineup. He even has some friends, also San Fran boys: two-thirds of a season of Joe Panik (0-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+22) who was better than we all thought, and a third of a season of Hunter Pence (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-9). There is a mostly full season of non-Giant Adam Jones (1-0-0-0, 10 hits) – also not his best card. The shortstop job has fallen to Wilmer Flores (1-0-0, 10 hits, L+9 R-4).

And then . . . things go downhill. Pedro Alvarez (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-5, 8 13s) will share first base with Michael Morse (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks). Angel Pagan (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 29 SSN for 16 SBA) has a lot of playing time and the only real speed in the lineup but isn't much use; Carl Crawford (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 12 SBA) only has 69 games but adds a little more; and third base is a black hole with Rafael Ynoa (3 0s, 10 hits) and Casey McGehee (2 0s, 7 hits, 3 walks).

It's hard to criticize a lineup with Buster Posey in it, and it's hard to find fault with a team that just took home the championship. But the names are better than the cards, and while it's great to have guys on one's favorite team when that club is tops in MLB; but when their injuries become your injuries, and their off years become yours, it looks like this.

Defense: 3.0
Only a few good defenders.

First the good news. Posey (C9 Th+3) is a top notch defender, and Joe Panik turned out to be a good call, as he's been promoted to a 2B8 in a year that the Giants weren't very good. Adam Jones, another import from Midwest, is an OF3 with a 33 arm, and Hunter Pence (OF2) has a 35 arm.



Panik: Good call

There are some Fielding Two options. Carl Crawford and Angel Pagan are both OF2s, as is Jon Jay, who won't play much. Omar Infante is a 2B7 off the bench. But Flores and Ynoa are both SS7s, and Ynoa and McGehee are both 3B3s. A few good defenders will, unfortunately, not make up for the mediocre and worse at other positions.

Bench: 1.5
It really would have helped.

With the no-DH policy, a bench would be most helpful, but there isn't much here. Injuries make it necessary for some inferior talent to play: Omar Infante (3 Os, 9 hits) isn't much help at second; Jon Jay (0, 8 hits, 2 walks+2 42s) can get hit by a pitch, but didn't use his bat for that purpose; Jake Smolinski (1-4-6, 7 hits, 4 walks, L+8 R-12) is only here for entertainment value; and backup catchers Jeff Mathis (3 Os, 6 hits, C8 Th-4) and Bobby Wilson (2 Os, 7 hits, 3 walks, C7 Th-2) are just roadkill.

3rd

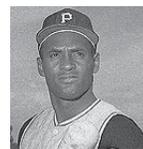
Surprisingly, this isn't a last place team in the Clemente. The problems besetting the Columbus Jets still outweigh those of the Giants, who do have some starting pitching, and do have Buster Posey and friends (but not enough pitching, and not quite enough Posey, and nowhere near enough friends).

The Vegas Line think more highly of the club than we do here at the *Annual*; we think they're going to be bad: not eyeblood-inducing bad, and not epochally bad, but enough to put them in the upper half of the draft . . . if they had their own draft, which they don't. Given the tendencies of the Chief Giant, there's some



What a three year ride it's been for Jackson Chapman. A winning season and a good play-off run in 2013, a massive plummet in wins and a drop to the bottom of the league in 2014 and then a rapid ascent in wins (60!) and a WS title last year. 2016 will be somewhere in between.

chance that they will wind up moving parts of the 2018 draft when it becomes available too. As has been observed, it is possible to use this method to stay relevant: but when the team gets old and rebuilding is needed, there's a point at which you have to take some new players. The team as presently constituted might well dip further down – and if it does, Trader Jack may have to trade his way back into the TBL Draft.



warrenton GIANTS



**warrenton:
TBL Draft**

We have had the pleasure of Jack Chapman's company at the first two drafts of his current tenure (he was in TBL about twenty years ago). When he is in the room, you know it; any and every pick he has, and most of the players he has (at least ones that don't play for his favorite club) are available. The man loves to trade, and – as we noted at the top – his success has earned him his nickname. That's great; it means outside-the-box thinking to go with the HomeMania™.

The results from the current draft are all from the sixth round and after – and to give you an idea of the state of the team, every one of those players *made the roster*. Last year's draft is a little more enlightening: Collin McHugh, Joe Panik, Ken Giles, Casey McGehee (who had a good card). In the upcoming year, Warrenton drafts with Kansas' (low) #1, their own #3, and later picks. If we were to guess, by the time we get to Draft 2017, that statement will simply be false.

TQ: 18.0



2015 columbus JETS in review

It was a collective effort.

by Vic Vaughn



2015 in Review

Final Record: 65-97 (4th, Clemente)

As the esteemed authors of this publication noted a year ago, the 2015 campaign was going to be a difficult one for the Jets. Many of our better players did not perform well in real life during the 2014 MLB season, resulting in the type of cardboard more suited to detecting fluid leaks under your car than winning APBA baseball games. As a result, we languished in the basement of the Clemente Division ending the season with 65 wins.

What went right?

Our pre-season TQ rating rightly placed us at the very bottom of the league, but we competed in every game we could (17-21 in one run games), finishing in the 7th draft position and surpassing our Pythagorean record by five games. In that context, our 65-97 record exceeded expectations. The few bright spots included David Robertson, who parlayed his grade 15* and 3.14 ERA into 33 saves. Doug Fister (10-8, 3.64) and Mike Leake (12-12, 3.47) had pedestrian seasons, but they were the best starters the 2015 Jets had to offer. Offensively, there wasn't much to see. We somehow managed to cobble together 600 runs, despite Jay Bruce being the only Jet with over 20 home runs, and Kevin Kiermaier the only Jet over 70 RBI.

What went wrong?

Well, a lot. A quick scan of the International Conference leaderboards might lead you to wonder if we were even in the league last year.

It was a collective effort, as we ended up in the bottom quarter in almost every batting and pitching statistic. Of the sixteen Jets that strode to the plate last season, only four managed a batting average over .227. The offense scored three runs or less in 87 games and was shutout eleven times. Come to think of it, maybe playing without a DH isn't such a bad idea. On the pitching side, Rick Porcello had some tough luck, losing 18 games despite a 4.01 ERA and the aforementioned David Robertson lost seven games in late inning relief.



Robertson: Parlayed

3 Things

1. *Reversing the Trend.* The last three seasons have seen the Jets win 90, 82, and 65 games. We believe we have an improved roster and should start moving in the right direction in 2016, but that's why we play the games.
2. *The Whitman Curse.* Sooner or later we're going to have to figure out how to beat those guys. Over the last four years, we've only managed a 17-43 record against the River Rats, including being swept in four games during the 2013 playoffs. Any future success is tied to solving the Whitman riddle.
3. *The Rebuilding Blocks.* We picked up a couple of players in the draft that we believe will help us rebound. New Jets Kyle Schwarber and Aaron Nola will add some much-needed power to the lineup and provide some stability to the pitching staff for the foreseeable future.

columbus JETS



Vic Vaughn (10th year)

In another year, this could be a very good team – but probably not in 2016.

Our esteemed Sensei tells the story of a team in another league that sought to rebuild by adding one key player a year. It sounded like a good idea in principle: every season there'd be someone significant available. There was only one problem, of course: in Year 10, the Year 1 guy would be nine years older.

We do not, in any way, suggest that Vic Vaughn is pursuing the course of that team (which, as we understand it, didn't make it beyond a year or two). But it must feel like it sometimes. David Robertson, Charlie Furbush, Doug Fister, Jay Bruce, Kevin Kiermaier, Masahiro Tanaka, Kyle Schwarber, Carlos Frias, Domingo Santana, Aaron Nola . . . some great names, some great picks. But as the new players come on the roster, the older ones show strains. And time marches onward, and the club continues to struggle (see what Mr. Vaughn says at left about reversing the trend.)

What we want to see here – and what we've seen in other places at other times – is for this patience and this effort to be rewarded. What that looks like is for the building blocks and the regular players to be pulling in the same direction. There isn't enough to do it in 2016 – but there should be a good chance in 2017 if the current roster guys get the memo. We're rooting for it here.

Pitching: 5.5 **Work in progress.**

Pitching staffs on rebuilding teams start with the starters and wait for contention to add relievers. If a good grade turns up, it usually finds a home in someone else's bullpen. Columbus is no exception, and the starting rotation is a team strength. As for the bullpen . . . well, it's a work in progress.

ROTATION. There are four full (or mostly full) season starters that lead the rotation. The ace is third year man Danny Salazar (Grade 12 C+12), who has his first full season with 30 starts. He is joined by sophomore Masahiro Tanaka (Grade 12 C+32 HR-25),

who fulfilled much of his expected promise while Yankee (and Jet) management held its breath waiting for his elbow to explode. He has 24 starts. The team also has 30 starts of Mike Leake (Grade 11 C+21) and 31 starts of lefty Brett Anderson (Grade 8 C+16). These four cover three-quarters of the season.



Salazar: Young ace

The bottom end of the rotation is a little more patchworky. The best – for now and possibly for the future – is rookie Aaron Nola (Grade 10 C+21 HR-21) for 13 starts; he's not quite 23 and should be a key part of next year's rotation. Carlos Frias (Grade 7 HR+21) gets 13 starts of his own; Doug

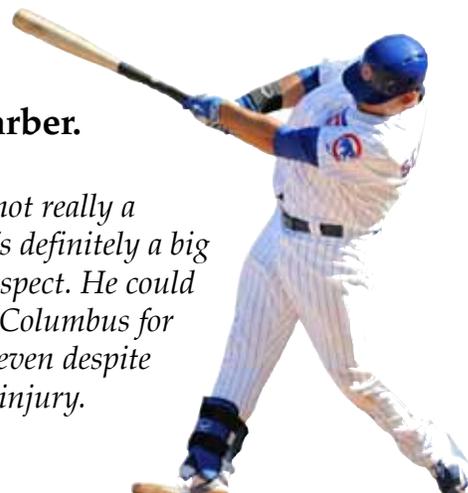
Turnover Rate: 34%

Arrived: Matt Boyd, Carlos Frias, Adonis Garcia, David Hernandez, Rymer Liriano, Mark Lowe, Mike Napoli, Aaron Nola, Williams Perez, Domingo Santana, Kyle Schwarber, Miguel Socolovich.

Departed: Bronson Arroyo, Daniel Descalso, Javy Guerra, J.C. Gutierrez, Corey Hart, L.J. Hoes, Erik Kratz, Efen Navarro, Wandy Rodriguez, Adam Rosales, Moises Sierra, Kevin Slowey.

SNT: **Kyle Schwarber.**

He's probably not really a catcher, but he's definitely a big time power prospect. He could be slugging in Columbus for years to come, even despite the early 2016 injury.





columbus JETS

Fister (Grade 5 C+26 HR-14) has 15; and Rick Porcello (a disappointing Grade 4 C+24 HR-15) has a few at the end.

BULLPEN. In order for a relief crew to be effective, it's important for the grades of the pitchers to improve on those of the starters. This is largely true in the Columbus bullpen.

The closer role falls to two pitchers with very short innings. Charlie Furbush (Grade 21* C+35 HR+14) has 21 innings; rookie Miguel Socolovich (Grade 17* HR+51) has 29. They have a good setup man in veteran Mark Lowe (Grade 16* C+24 HR+26, 55 innings) and a decent middleman in former closer David Robertson (Grade 14* C+32). If the team has a lead after 7, this group has a fair chance of keeping it.

There is a group of bulk relievers to fill the middle innings. Daniel Hudson (Grade 10* C+15, 67 innings), Casey Fien (Grade 9* C+42 HR+16, 63 innings) and David Hernandez, back from the dead (Grade 9* C-13 HR-31, 33 innings) are the best of the lot. Burke Badenhop (Grade 7* C+21 HR+34) and the ageless Randy Choate (Grade 7* lefty, C+31 HR+26, 27 innings – in 71 appearances!) are the next tier, and then there are a whole lot of innings for starter-as-reliever rookie Williams Perez (Grade 6 C-34, 116 innings, no +5 bonus). While the top end is good, if the starter is blown out early there may be some long middle innings.

Offense: 6.5
Most rolls not appealing.

Mr. Vaughn must be thrilled to see Jason Kipnis come back to form with a very nice card (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L-9 R+3). That's the best regular card in the set, joining sophomore Kevin Kiermaier (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 30 SSN for 23 SBA) and rookie SNT Kyle Schwarber's half season (1-1-6, 8 hits, 5 walks, L-17 R+4).



Kipnis: Back to form

There's also a nice 58 games for rookie third baseman Adonis Garcia (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, L+7 R-5). Garcia is already 31, so that's cardboard, but it's at least it's good cardboard – it might be trade bait in September. And speaking of cardboard and possible trade bait, there's half a season of Ryan Raburn (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, with an unfortunate L+2 R-12 platoon shift) and Chris Coghlan (1-4-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, 32 SSN for 13 SBA, but a L-19 R+1 split).

Beyond the highlight players, the best everyday guy is shortstop Elvis Andrus (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 28 SSN for 34 SBA). Josh Hamilton was limited to 50 games but turned in a useful card (1-5-6, 10 hits). Mike Napoli (1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, L+8 R-7) has a little pop against lefties, but may give up some at bats to Sean Rodriguez (3 0s, 9 hits) on the other side of the platoon. Yangervis Solarte (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-5) is useful. Jay Bruce, despite some power, really isn't (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, 7 13s); neither is the regular catcher, Jason Castro (1-6-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, L-7) – but only he and Schwarber are rated behind the plate.

There's a fair amount of isolated power in the lineup, but there will also be some very long innings. Napoli, Bruce, Castro, and Rodriguez are fine if Mr. Vaughn rolls 11s and 33s and 66s, but the remaining 33 rolls are much less appealing.

Defense: 3.0
Doesn't help very much.

The best performers on defense for the Jets are in the outfielders. Jay Bruce, whose moment to be pictured during the last few years has been to show his glove, is an OF3 with a 36 arm; Kevin Kiermaier does him one better with an OF3 with a 37 arm. Behind the plate, things are good most of the time with Jason Castro (C8 Th+2); Kyle



Bruce: His moment



Vic Vaughn picked up the pieces from the Suter cliff diving experience in 2006 and made the Jets his team, with various levels of success. They've had some good drafts, but still seem to need a real superstar to build around and to take them to the next level. Still a possible WC team in 2016.

Schwarber (C6 Th-4) not so much. At first base, both Mike Napoli and Sean Rodriguez are 1B4s.

The middle infield is strictly Fielding Two. Jason Kipnis (2B7) and Elvis Andrus (SS8) have both turned in better ratings, but are only adequate this year. Third base is a liability – it's 3B3s all around except for Rodriguez as a 3B4; so is the last outfield spot, where Hamilton and Santana are OF1s.

It's just not a defense that helps very much, though there's still a chance for them to come together in the future.

Bench: 2.0 **Not a lot of bench flexibility.**

There are some games missing, reducing the amount of bench flexibility. Raburn, Santana, Rodriguez, and Coghlan have the ability to permit Columbus to move guys around. The team doesn't have a lot of speed, and there's no bench pinch-runner to speak of. What's more, there are people in the starting lineup that simply cannot be replaced – Bruce, Castro, and Rodriguez/Napoli just have to play.

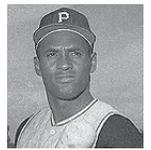
The platoon shifts present additional problems. There are things that can be done: when Coghlan is forced out by a big lefty, Columbus can turn to Ryan Raburn; Adonis Garcia can be used in spots. But it's not enough to make the starters much better.

4th We think Warrenton is better because of the flaws in the regular lineup, the thin bullpen – though Warrenton's is even thinner – and the absence of a Buster Posey or Madison Bumgarner. But understand that the difference is not that great – one TQ point, which is 3-4 wins in the regular season.

We don't think this is a team that will rack up 100 losses. It's better than last season's squad, and Mr. Vaughn has to take some encouragement from the obvious improvement in various areas. Does that mean he'll enjoy managing the 2016 Columbus Jets? Well, with modest expectations, maybe: your humble editor has had a chance to manage teams that were nowhere good enough to go far, but were fun to play. That's worth a lot.



columbus: **TBL Draft**



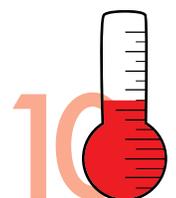
columbus JETS

It is an old chestnut that it is much more fun to win than to lose; accordingly, the Columbus club has made an effort to get into the Clemente Division mix (with some disappointing results: see Vic's year in review where the rivalry with Whitman is mentioned). Looking back at the last few years, there are two distinct periods: the years before 2013, when the club added Daniel Hudson, Mike Leake, Jason Castro and others in 2011 and Jason Kipnis, Brandon McCarthy, Charlie Furbush and others in 2012; and the last two years, when Masahiro Tanaka, Kevin Kiermaier, Yangervis Solarte, Chris Coghlan arrived in 2015 and Kyle Schwarber, Miguel Socolovich, Aaron Nola, David Hernandez, Mark Lowe, Adonis Garcia this year.

In between are the 2013 and 2014 drafts, which were basically sounds of Michigan wild crickets. That is due to two trades; one brought Josh Hamilton and Burke Badenhop, and the other Elvis Andrus and Doug Fister. Only Casey Fien remains of the thin 2014 crop of selections. Andrus, it should be noted, is still the short-stop, and Fister, Badenhop and Fien are still on the roster – but the acquisition of a very fine Hamilton card (which did hit .297 with 15 HR in 42 games, helping the club to 90 wins and into the second round of the playoffs) would have been far better if he had continued to perform at that level. Columbus – and the Texas Rangers – feel the same pain here.

The fact is, Mr. Vaughn has demonstrated very good ability in selecting good talent in the draft, and the players he has added there have performed well. If we were to offer any worthless advice, it is for him to keep doing that – and not jump too soon. In another year, this could be a very good team – but probably not in 2016.

TQ: 17.0



Frictionless Surface

The path to the post-season begins early in the Mays Division this year, as there seems to be little ardor and even less competition for a ticket. This is truly an International Conference phenomenon (see the Ruth Division for positive proof); but here the route seems to be a frictionless surface: an easy glide, with three of the four teams offering little resistance.

The exception to the rule is the *Gotham City Batman*. Anton Greenwald's club acquired the pitching it needed to go deep in the post-season, and is ready, willing and able to contend, with the added bonus of having the three other teams taking the opposite course. The real challenge will be in the playoffs, where there are a few potential bumps.



Mark Bloom's *Grand Cayman Havens* won 100 games last year, but it doesn't look like it's in the cards in 2016. It's hard to figure this team out: with names like Encarnacion and Gattis and

Teheran and (Wade) Davis, you might think that there were the makings of a contender; but Mr. Bloom evidently felt that there just wasn't enough critical mass to warrant the try. They'll be competitive, but it may be a long, hot summer on the Islands.



Welcome to TBL, Gordon Rodell. The 2015 season was one of the labors of Hercules; and to strain the metaphor even further, the off-season was something like the cleaning of the Augean stables – starting with one of the legendary cornerstones of the Chia Pet franchise, Miguel Cabrera, who will now be trying to get a ring with the Munich juggernaut. The newest manager in TBL will now be looking to remake the *Calusa Indians* in his own image. He's on the hunt for the fiercest of fierce people to staff it, but it may take some time.

Up in New Hampshire, Craig Musselman is under no illusions about what has happened to his *Rye Herons* – many other teams have trod this road, and at least a few perennials will be rebuilding in 2016. We're pretty sure



that he's equal to the task, but there's nothing that can be done about the inexorable aging or the second law of thermodynamics – the one about entropy. It may be 2018 before he contends.

2015 Mays Division Final Standings

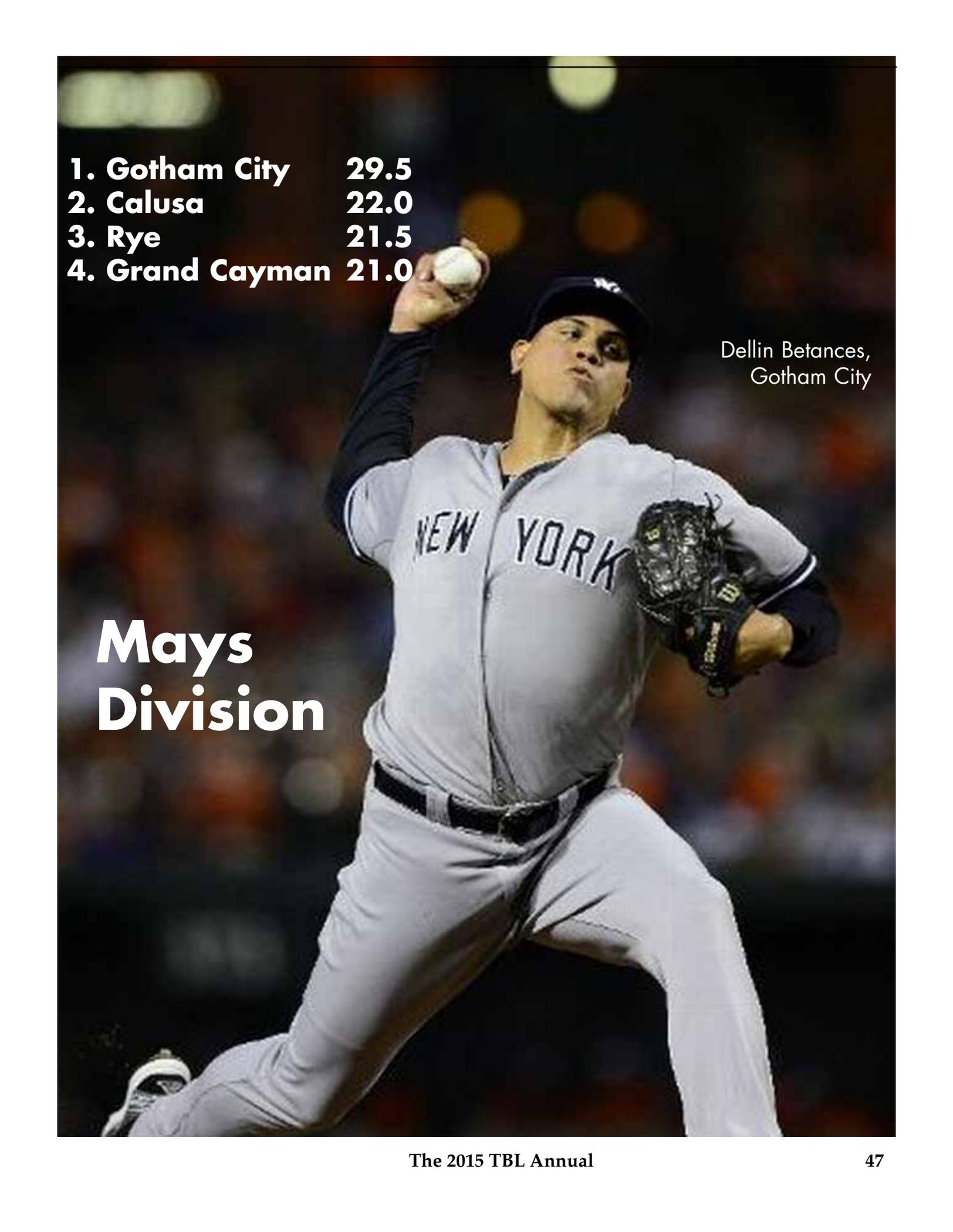
Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Gotham City*	107	55	.660	—
Grand Caymant	102	70	.630	5
Rye%	84	78	.525	23
Greater Ohio	59	103	.348	58

* Lost to Warrenton in IC final.

† Lost to Rye in Wild Card playoff.

% Lost to Gotham City in conference semi-final.



- 
1. Gotham City 29.5
 2. Calusa 22.0
 3. Rye 21.5
 4. Grand Cayman 21.0

Dellin Betances,
Gotham City

Mays Division

2015 gotham city BATMEN in review



What happened in 2015 that was wrong was what happened in real baseball.

by Anton Greenwald

2015 in Review

Final Record: 107-55 (1st, Mays)

2015 was a good year for the Batmen. Predicted to take the Mays Division with heavy competition from Grand Cayman, the Batmen went into overdrive mode and tied for conference lead with 107 wins. The team crushed our first opponent in the playoffs and then faced off against Warrenton where we stumbled, losing the conference series to the eventual World Series champion.

The year started with the 2015 draft where we were stymied in our pursuit of better offense but took an alternate path, building a bullpen that really could slam a door in the opponent's face. With the 17th draft pick we took what was available and built from there. The team sometimes stumbled, occasionally unable to score any runs, especially against good control pitching, but generally had the power to pull it out, as evidenced by our record.

What went right?

Tying for conference lead was something that went right. My everyday players did not exceed expectations by a huge margin but some who were somewhat protected against hitting their weaker side did pretty well (Chirinos, Stanton). The pitching, protected by a huge bullpen, did very well with a team ERA just over 3.00.

What went wrong?

What happened in 2015 that was wrong was what happened in real baseball. Injuries plagued our ballplayers. Stanton, Lucroy, Hudson and Verlander all lost significant playing time to injury reducing total team value and forcing draft decisions we do

not like to have to make. In addition, Kuroda and Francisco went to Japan and Vicedo, never getting to appear in the majors in 2015, joined them at the end of that year. Joyce and all of the infield backups fell apart offensively and are useless for 2016.

3 Things

1. *The 2016 Draft.* While prognosticators thought GC would go after Kang for our first draft pick, and he was available, we couldn't take him while needing 33 starts. First-rounders should last 10 years; if available in the second, we would have taken him. Hudson was just ahead of us with the same needs, complicating things more. Instead, we came away with three good choices including a bonus round lottery ticket.

2. *A few extra games.* At the start of the draft we had exactly one player-game extra for fielders beyond the minimum needed. With the draft and one post-draft trade we added 360 games and could drop the almost innocuous (minor league signed) Joyce and may not need to play Howard – still performing below par. We are a bit tight for substitutions but have good left-right platoons, a rotation that features mostly Grade 11 and 12, and a bullpen to support them. There are only a few defensive weaknesses.

3. *Total offense.* Our most important offensive player only has half a season. Frequently, four players will not have a first column "1", distinctly not like the GC teams of the past. One innocuous player will see too much playing time. Our pitching is good and our defense looks OK. Total offense will determine if we can get to the post-season.



Stanton: Performed

gotham city BATMEN

Anton Greenwald (31st year)

It will be a formidable opponent.



A hundred and seven wins is as many as anyone managed to record in the International Conference last year, as many as Warrenton (our eventual champion) had. Only one team had more than that and – like Gotham City – didn't wind up winning either. That puts the club in some rarified territory.

When a team reaches the level of the 2015 Gotham City club and doesn't win, there are usually two outcomes. One involves doing everything possible to get back to that level, with the expectation that this time it'll turn out better. The other involves a build down, most often in the form of a complete disassembly. (Once you get started, it's hard to stop.)

Dr. Anton has chosen outcome #1. A third of the starting catcher is missing; half of the demigod (e.g., Giancarlo Stanton) is absent. It's been necessary to go find some starts and to bolster the bullpen and to accept that the core players are a year older – at least those that haven't left the team so that the team could stay in its current flight path.

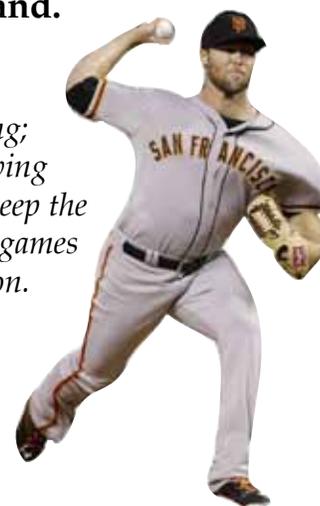
Sometimes the decision to stay the course or take it apart is the choice of the manager. Sometimes it's a matter of situation or circumstance. Another year, another conference, another draft – it might be different. Instead, it's more of the same.

Pitching: 12.5
Solid starts, good top end bullpen.

Last year's draft yielded a top-flight reliever – because that's what Gotham City was able to take. This year it provided starters, and by trade a setup man. It is still all about pitching; it has to be, because that's how you get to the postseason. There's a veteran manager on hand, and he'll

SNT: Hunter Strickland.

Dellin Betances can't pitch every critical bullpen inning; adding this fine hard throwing reliever will be enough to keep the Gotham City staff in more games - especially in the postseason.



Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Ehire Adrianza, Enrique Burgos, Mark Canha, Ivan DeJesus, Jr., Nathan Karns, Franklin Morales, Colby Rasmus, Nolan Reimold, Eduardo Rodriguez, Hunter Strickland, Pedro Villarreal.

Departed: Jeff Baker, Juan Francisco, Grant Green, Matt Joyce, Hiroki Kuroda, Kirk Nieuwenhuis, Gregorio Petit, Marc Rzepczynski, Blake Treinen, Dayan Viciedo, Nick Vincent.

get maximum utility from what he has. At least some of the names are familiar.

ROTATION. After a short respite, Justin Verlander has returned to be the ace (Grade 12 C+21 HR+15, the best starter on the roster though he only has 20 starts). He's one of three Grade 12s: Michael Wacha and rookie Nathan Karns (C-25 HR-12) provide 56 more, while King Felix and Jorge de la Rosa (C-35) have 57 starts as Grade 11s. That gets Gotham City to 133 solid starts for the season.



Verlander: Ace again

The rest of the trips to the hill belong to rookie Eduardo Rodriguez (Grade 9 HR+14)



gotham city BATMEN

with occasional appearances by the former great Tim Hudson (Grade 6). All in all, though there's no big stud, it's a very capable rotation.

BULLPEN. As we like to say, *not much wrong with that.* After a breakout 2014, Dellin Betances turned in another

outstanding campaign in 2015 (Grade 27* KX C-54 HR+31, 84 innings). He's wild as hell, but he'll also get lots of folks out. Just Betances wasn't enough, of course; the setup man, Hunter Strickland, was a valuable post-draft addition (Grade 18* C+26 HR+21, 51 IP). The former top closer, Jonathan Papelbon (Grade 15* C+35) has been reduced to #3. J. P. Howell (Grade 15* HR+32) and Franklin Morales (Grade 11* C+23 HR+34) are the lefties; Sam LeCure is a Grade 14*, but there are only 20 innings; last year's surprise ace, lefty Fernando



Papelbon: He's #3.

Abad, is a Grade 10* with some problems (C-15 HR-43); draft acquisition Pedro Villareal (Grade 8* C+26) is helpful, while the rest of the innings - Al Albuquerque (Grade 9*) and Enrique Burgos (Grade 8*) have bad control but good homers.

The real problem is that rescuing most of the starters falls into the lap of the big three, plus the lefthanders. Too much reliance on them may leave Gotham City in need of bulk innings later in the season.

Offense: 10.0
Some high-scoring games.

We've gotten used to calling him Giancarlo instead of Mike; if this card was available for the entire season, it would be the centerpiece of the offense. Instead it'll be only available for 74 games and will be scary (1-1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-3). The best everyday cards belong

to Matt Carpenter (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, L-7) and Ian Kinsler, who's still very much in his prime (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 25 SSN for 16 SBA). Ben Paulsen turned out to be a nice addition (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, L-9, 116 games) and helps keep the Batmen from having to look much at Ryan Howard (who's still here with his 1-0-0-0, 9 hits, and a L-15 R+3); when Paulsen's shift is a problem, Mark Trumbo (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+2 R-3) is capable.

Now things get a little less happy. Jonathan Lucroy is decent behind the plate (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-4) but is missing 60 games; his platoon partner is Robinson Chirinos (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, L+2 R-3) who looks good if you squint. Alcides Escobar is the fastest guy in the regular lineup (30 SSN for 24 SBA) but only has 2 0s and 10 hits. The rest of the at-bats have their flaws: Mark Canha (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-8 R+2) as part-time DH, Colby Rasmus (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks) in the outfield, and Ivan DeJesus, Jr. (3 0s, 9 hits) to stall the offense as needed.



Kinsler: In his prime

Missing games and platoon shifts make the lineups more mix-and-match than a serious playoff team usually sees; this will present more problems in the postseason than during the regular one, as good teams with deep bullpens will put them off-balance. But there's good power and walks, and they'll have some high-scoring games.

Defense: 5.0
Strong up the middle; weak corners.

This is an interesting mix. Up the middle the team is superb: Kinsler is in his prime in the field as well (2B9) and Escobar is top-notch (SS9); Stanton (OF2, 36 am) is the best of the outfielders, and Lucroy (C8, Th-1) is Fielding One behind the plate. The problem is that while second base and

shortstop are excellent, the corners of the infield are average at best (Paulsen and Trumbo are 1B3s but Carpenter is a 3B3, as are all other players on the roster with a 3B rating). The other outfielders are OF2s other than weak-armed Jarrod Dyson (OF3, 28 arm) and Ivan DeJesus (OF1). Chirinos is a C7 with a negative Th.

The lack of a defensive sub and the weak corners keep the defense from being top notch, though the double-play combo will gobble up everything hit their way.

Bench: 2.0
Tight use makes it problematic.

Because of the lack of games in certain areas, there won't be very many options. DeJesus may be the most versatile extra player; Jarrod Dyson (3 Os, 10 hits, 34 SSN for 29 SBA) is a great pinch runner. Canha and Nolan Reimold (1-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) may be useful situationally, and Ehire Adrianza (6-6, 7 hits, 4 walks+42) is just here. This is not a terribly strong bench and could use a defensive substitution or a pinch-hitting toy.

1st In the National Conference the team would be involved in a struggle to make the playoffs. In the International, the team should have a fairly easy path to the Mays Division pennant and will have a good chance to go through the playoffs, possibly all the way to the World Series.

Does the team have flaws? Yes, of course: every team not located in Munich has flaws this year. The rotation is solid, though it's not as good as the one in Kansas; the lineup is capable, but it'll need to be more Ian Kinsler than Mark Canha. But it will be a formidable opponent.



Dr. Anton has won in TBL 14 playoff appearances, 4 World Series berths, with one win (2001). In 2016 a great rotation and good bullpen are offset by a weak offense (especially at 3rd, 1st and OF) and less than half a season from Giancarlo Stanton. Probably still makes the playoffs.



**gotham city:
TBL Draft**

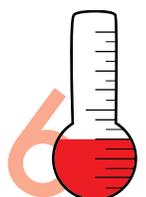


Dr. Anton says in his Year in Review that a first-rounder should be good for ten years. The last five first rounders taken by the team are: Dellin Betances, Michael Wacha, Matt Carpenter, Vance Worley and Giancarlo Stanton. Other than Worley they've been cornerstone players, and all are still with the team. So are Verlander, Escobar, Papelbon and Howard, all selected early in years past.

The rest of the recent picks have been less useful, but interestingly enough a number of them (Chirinos, Paulsen, Albuquerque, LeCure, Lucroy) are also still on the roster. Gotham City makes trades: Strickland, Trumbo, Hudson, and others have been added, while others drafted have left. But it seems clear that the team looks for players that fit into a long-term roster.

Building a team from scratch requires a strong constitution; it's a different mentality than a gradual restructure or what is required to keep a team in contention for years at a time. Gotham City has had its down years, dropping into win totals in the 70s, but it has also won 100 or more games 4 times and 90 or more 6 additional times in the last twenty years, with only one basket-case season (2005, when the team went 50-112). Judicious drafts and holding on to players for the long term has a lot of success to show for it. The *Annual* doesn't expect that strategy to change.

TQ: 29.5



gotham city BATMEN

2015 greater ohio CHIA PETS in review



"That's life, that's what all the people say.

You're riding high in April, shot down in May" – Frank Sinatra

by Gordon Rodell

2015 in Review

Final Record: 59-103 (4th, Mays)

If you substitute baseball for life, 2014 for April, and 2015 for May; those lyrics pretty much summarize the last two seasons for the Pets. Going from 93 wins in 2014 to 53 wins demonstrates how fickle a game baseball can be. Two years ago, the *Annual* suggested the club was aging and there would be a "cliff" sometime in the future. 2015 proved to be the year of the abyss when the Pets started April with a 4-16 won/lost record. The Pets' demise was sealed by injuries and diminished effectiveness to several key 2014 contributors.

What went right?

Not all was doom and gloom. Freddie Freeman had an MVP type year slashing .300/.504/.393. He hit 21 homers and 53 two-baggers, generating 103 RBI. Miguel Cabrera and Evan Longoria each had 21 homers. Alexi Amarista, "The Little Ninja," led the league with 14 sacrifice hits. Hey, we're trying to stay positive here. Then there was October's W-L record of 13-6. Did I mention Freddie Freeman's season?

On the mound, Andrew Cashner (10-7, 3.33), Scott Feldman (12-11, 4.95), and Cliff Lee (7-5, 4.37) managed winning records. More on Cliff Lee later. Drew Storen led the pen. Before his mid-season trade, he had secured 20 saves with a microscopic 0.75 ERA. But a team losing over a hundred games doesn't require a closer of such skill. And even though he didn't have a winning record, Chris Archer also won 12 games, had a 3.96 ERA, threw 218 innings which solidified his claim of 'future ace'.

What went wrong?

If Miggy was a mere mortal he would have had a solid year. But he is not: he is Miggy. A slash line of

.274/.476/.339 was not up to his superman standard. Add to that Longoria's .218 BA, a team OBP of .306, only 24 stolen bases, and a whopping 1310 strikeouts; and scoring 575 runs while allowing 771. The coup de grace was Bartolo Colon losing 24 games. You have to be a really good pitcher to lose twenty games in the majors; Colon's 2015 season made him an all-time great.

3 Things

1. *Cliff Lee's final season.* His career stats – 12 years, 319 starts, 144 wins, 2,222 IP, 1828 Ks and a 3.87 ERA



Freeman: Slashed

– probably fall short of the TBL HOF. However, that's a solid career by any standard and pitching with only guts and guile, he finished his career with a 7-5 record. That's a winner. Good-bye Cliff; good luck with the golf game.

2. *Move to Florida.* Unlike the team in the movie *Major League*, the Pets were successfully moved from Ohio to Florida; they were renamed for an obscure tribe the Spanish called the 'Fierce People' because they impaled more than one Spaniard. New ownership expects that the spirit of the ancient Calusa will aid the franchise in achieving never-before realized success in the TBL.

3. *Trading Miguel Cabrera.* It's better to trade a player a year too early, rather than a year too late. In Miggy's case, it might more than one year too early. Still at his age, 33, who knows? The trade returned Carlos Santana, Raisel Iglesias, and Carlos Perez. Best case scenario is Santana matches Cabrera in home runs and OBP. Iglesias becomes a solid #3 in a dynamite pitching staff and Perez becomes a dependable back-up catcher. If the spirit of the Calusa smiles on the team then the next lyric might be "*I'm gonna change that tune, when I'm back on top, back on top in June (2017)*".

calusa INDIANS



Gordon Rodell (2nd year)

For a club that traded away one of the best hitters in baseball, they are fairly competitive.

New manager; new team name, new location. As is so often the case in TBL (or, indeed, any draft league) the coming of spring means a makeover; not much can be done during a transition year, but once it's over . . . boy howdy.

The biggest change is, of course, the absence of Miguel Cabrera. For many years previous management had concentrated on drafting pitchers, and Miggy was the outstanding exception – a formidable talent that will now be going for a TBL ring with Munich. It goes without saying that there is no equivalent bat to replace him – but overall there is a lot of new talent, an upgraded pitching staff (consider the young man pictured at right, for example) and a new outlook by an experienced manager.

The instructions say that the goal is .500. It's not out of reach, particularly given the anemic competition in the Mays Division and the International Conference in general. The question is whether the Indians are sufficiently fierce to reach their stated goal.

Pitching: Half and half.

7.0

Calusa's pitching staff is really a tale of two staffs: the "A" team and the "B" team. It's hard to be too critical of a starting rotation that has Chris Archer and Noah Syndergaard at the top of it; but it does take six others to complete all 162 games. Similarly, there is a very short-innings 24* and a good lefty setup man in the bullpen – but the rest of the relievers are a vast collection of mix-and-match, and they'll do most of the duty once the starters have left the building.



Archer: Not alone

SNT: Noah Syndergaard.

Thor will fit right in, giving the Indians a great 1-2 punch with Chris Archer. People will be misspelling his name, though, for years to come.



Turnover Rate: 57%

Arrived: Aaron Altherr, Matt Andriese, Justin Bour, Billy Burns, Xavier Ceden, Adam Conley, Matt Duffy, Jerad Eickhoff, Mike Foltyniewicz, Dalier Hinojosa, Raisel Iglesias, Ryan Mattheus, Trevor May, Cameron Maybin, Jake McGee, Carlos Perez, Carlos Santana, Rob Scahill, Noah Syndergaard, Melvin Upton.

Departed: Arismendy Alcantara, Alexi Amarista, Christian Bergman, Miguel Cabrera, David Carpenter, Andrew Cashner, Bartolo Colon, Andy Dirks, Andre Ethier, Tyler Flowers, Ian Krol, Brandon League, Cliff Lee, Zach McAllister, Jordy Mercer, Yohan Pino, Jose Tabata, Ian Thomas, Daniel Webb, Wesley Wright.

ROTATION. Last year our picture of staff ace Chris Archer (Grade 13 C-13 HR+22 was titled

Out alone; this year he's one of two fine top-of-the-rotation starters. His 34 starts are joined by 24 more by prize rookie Noah Syndergaard (Grade 13 C+26 HR-15). Two more rookies, Jerad Eickhoff (Grade 15 C+14, 8 starts) and Raisel Iglesias (Grade 11 HR-16) get Calusa through half a season.

Then comes the juggling act. Rookie lefty Adam Conley (Grade 10) and righty Matt Andriese (Grade 9 C+16) are



joined by veterans Kris Medlen (Grade 9 HR+14), Scott Feldman (Grade 7 C+21) and John Danks (Grade 5 lefty HR-13), with Trevor May making four spot starts as a Grade 4. Danks is a full season guy (30 starts), which won't be pleasant; the others are competent if uninspiring, and it takes quite a bit of roster acrobatics to get them arranged.

BULLPEN. When we examine a team's bullpen at the Winter Meeting Sensei Smackdown, one of our criteria is: how much do the relievers help the starters? Once again, this is a half-and-half situation.

The upper half of the pen is a great help to the top starters. Rookie Dalier Hinojosa (Grade 24* C-34 HR+44) is only here for 24 innings, but he will get people out; his sidekick is lefty Jake McGee (Grade 16* C+26 HR+24, 37 innings), acquired late in the post-draft trading period by outbidding Maracaibo for his services. He turns out to be really needed, as the next step down from Hinojosa would otherwise be lefty Xavier Cedeño (Grade 14* C+14 HR+22, 46 innings). After that, there are 60 Grade 11* innings of Trevor May and Rob Scahill and about 100 innings of Juan Nicasio (Grade 9* C-42 HR+61) and Chad Qualls (Grade 8* C+34).

The biggest challenge is that there really aren't enough innings. Stretching out the starters will be key, or the second half of the season will be very, very long. Truly, it may be a very long season for the pitching staff overall: the starters don't go all that deep into games, and may just have to pitch fatigued when the game isn't close.



McGee: Needed

Offense: 7.5
Not terribly scary (or fierce).

Let us begin with the Good News. Freddie Freeman will be very fine when in the lineup (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, but L-8 R+1 and only 118 games); he has some help in rookie Justin Bour (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, though still L-10). Carlos Santana has an interesting card with no real platoon shift (3 0s, 8 hits, 6 walks); Evan Longoria has lost a bit of power but is still solid (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+8 R-5) and Ender Inciarte (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, D26 for 31 SBA though L-12 R+3) and Billy Burns (0-6, 11 hits, D30 for 34 SBA) provide great speed in the outfield. At shortstop Zack Cozart has some power (1-0-0-0, 10 hits) but only for 53 games; Eugenio Suarez (1-6-6, 10 hits) picks up the slack the rest of the time. That covers between 5 and 6 of the lineup spots.

Then things get a little less functional – though not a lot. Second base is shared by Cesar Hernandez (2 0s, 12 hits, D31 for 24 SBA) and the out-of-position Matt Duffy (3 0s, 11 hits). The rest of the outfield games are covered by Cameron Maybin (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, D31 for 29 SBA) and the nearly-identical (and weird-looking) cards of Alejandro De Aza and Melvin Upton (3-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks). Upton can run (D29, 12 SBA); DeAza has a Lefty Problem (L-14). Behind the plate Jarrod Saltalamacchia has power but little else (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, L+7 R-4); Carlos Perez is a Guy (3 0s, 9 hits, L-9 R+2). They platoon and just barely cover the full season.



Freeman: Fine

This is not a bad offense: it's just not a terribly scary (or fierce) one. The Freeman/Cabrera part of the order is now Freeman/Some Guys. It remains an open question whether the significant team speed can make up for the missing punch.

Defense: 4.5
Some outstanding; some not.

As with so much on this team, there's a sense of "half and half". There are some outstanding defenders: Freeman (1B4) and Longoria (3B5) anchor the infield corners, while Cozart (SS9, when available) and Chris Owings (2B8) are excellent up the middle, as is Inciarte (OF3, 33 arm). But the secondbaseman

will be most often a 2B7 (Duffy, Hernandez) and the shortstop will be an SS7 (Suarez) with occasional help from Owings as an SS8. The rest of the outfielders are OF2s, and the catchers are both C7s (Salty has a tasty Th-4). The team will have some adventures in the field.



Longoria: Anchor

Bench: 3.0
Solid in transition.

At certain positions, such as catcher, there's no real help. At others, there are platoon swaps to be made, such as with Bour, Upton, Burns, De Aza, and rookie Aaron Altherr (1-4-4-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, D29, L-8 R+3), and Owings (3 Os, 10 hits, D31). Matt Duffy's first rating is 3B5, though he won't displace Longoria.

For a team with a TQ that qualifies it as in transition, this is a solid bench – there's no contender hitting toy, but there are some good bats on the bench; there's no exclusive pinch-runner, but there's plenty of speed. The defensive replacements, however, do help the starters.



Gordon Rodell did the league a huge favor by helping pick up the pieces from the Chia Pets fiasco and leading them to the finish line in 2015. 2016 is the 1st year in Central Florida as the Calusa Indians. Despite a great draft, it will be many moons before they are a fearsome tribe.



We think they're a little ahead of Rye and Cayman, but not a lot. They could finish fourth if the bullpen innings run out in

August, or reach their goal of .500 if the speedsters get on base enough to make a difference. For a club that traded away one of the best hitters in baseball, they are fairly competitive.



calusa:
TBL Draft

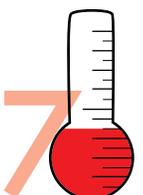
Past performance is no indication of future expectations, given the arrival of new management. This issue of the *TBL Annual* provides some first-person insight into the mind of our newest manager; some things are clear – he likes young pitching, and apparently is fond of speed (trading for Maybin and Upton; drafting Burns, Altherr). He also is willing to part with a key part of the club to get the things he needs, and likes to be competitive (who doesn't?)



Fierce enough?

Next year's draft will lack a #3 (the price of Jake McGee), but there are some lottery tickets on the roster (Iglesias, Hinojosa, Suarez, Altherr, Perez) and potential comebacks (Medlen, Cozart, Upton, Santana) so the 2017 team could be much better heading into the draft. With one example of strategy, it's hard to tell what we should expect . . . other than Sinatra lyrics. We will wait to see if the current roster is fierce enough to make it interesting.

TQ: 22.0



calusa INDIANS

2015 Rye HERONS in review



The Rye Herons . . . competed once again.

by Craig Musselman

2015 in Review

Final Record: 84-78 (3rd, Mays)

The Rye Herons, the over-the-cliff, oldest team in the TBL, competed once again. Their 84-78 record resulted in a playoff berth by a margin of four games over Whitman, and led to a completely unexpected, and somewhat shocking, four game sweep of Grand Cayman in the first round of the playoffs. The team wasn't really competitive in the TBL, and the next round loss to the Gotham City Batmen, a sweep, was not unexpected, and was not close. Still, it was a good year, and the fans (the "s" is delusional) were engaged and had fun. That's the measure of a fine year.



Neshek: Superb

What went right?

Zack Greinke had a fine year, going 19-10 with a 2.65 era over 248 innings, an intro to much better things to come, at least for next year. Four starters had double digit wins. Sidewinder Pat Neshek was superb out of the bullpen, with 37 saves, 2nd in the TBL, and a 0.94 ERA. Relievers Jared Hughes and Joe Beimel over-performed, having been solid in the bullpen. The team ERA of 3.44 was decent, 7th in the 24 team league.

The pitching staff had good control, yielding 407 walks, the fourth fewest in the TBL. Pitching kept Rye in a lot of games. Nelson Cruz hit 32 home runs (a bit of an underperformance, seemingly throughout the year, and by that stat) and knocked in 109 runs. Matt Kemp had a decent year, before his decline, leading the team among regulars in batting average at (.276)(!) with 20 homers, 83 rbi's and 86 runs scored. Three Rye Herons were in the top ten in getting hit by the pitch. These guys are either fearless or stupid, likely a little of both.

What went wrong?

Father Time marched on. The TBL's oldest team got another year older, and, as the song goes, deeper in debt. A team with marginal and aging talent made the playoffs once again, won a play-off series in fine fashion, and then went down

swinging. The hitters generally under-performed, but that happened to a lot of players in the TBL. The offense was about in the middle of the pack, overall, with 697 runs scored. The team gave up only 644 runs, perhaps indicating that the team's finish at six games over .500 might have been a bit of an under-performance.

3 Things

1. *Full drafts.* For the first time in many years, Rye had all of its 2016 draft picks, and has all of its picks in 2017. The team got younger in 2016, picking up youth at catcher and in the outfield.
2. *The infield and the core of the team are still older than the hills.* Rye has hung onto its early 30's pitching staff and its late 30's hitters, as the franchise attempts a soft landing. The question is whether it leads to prolonged mediocrity or a return to competitiveness.
3. *One more dance.* Despite weakness, the club looks to compete. Success will be making the playoffs again, and taking its chances in a round one playoff game. Not making the playoffs won't be surprising, nor will it be considered failure. Rye is hamstrung by two debilitating problems – the fans' demand (there's that delusion again) to win as much as possible every year, and the fact that management continues to be enamored with players who are beyond their prime. But both management and the fan are having fun, so, what the heck.

rye HERONS



Craig Musselman (12th year)

*Everyone's hairline has crept a little bit back,
and everyone's age has crept a few years forward.*

We won't belabor the point regarding the cliff, and how it has been lovingly embraced by the club up on the New Hampshire coast. We *know* that. *He* knows that. The five-year run of great teams – with the 2010 championship in the middle of it (“that was fun”, Mr. Musselman remarked at the time) is a few years ago, and the teams have been around .500 since then. There aren't many personnel changes in Rye, except that everyone's hairline has crept a little bit back and everyone's age has crept a few years forward.

When he came into the league, the Herons' manager was forced to construct a pitching staff from scratch. Since then, it's been all about contending and staying in contention; that meant compromise with regard to, well, taking young players as opposed to, ahem, *mature* ones. So the key performers are closer to 35 than 25. A few years ago we observed in this publication that Rye was, on average, about two years older than the second-oldest team in the league: if we did the same survey now the conclusion might well be the same. Logic suggests that all this should eventually come to a crashing halt: but it hasn't yet, and it simply may never happen. But we're betting it will.

Just not this year.

Turnover Rate: **26%**

Arrived: Elvis Araujo, Delino DeShields, Jr., Jim Johnson, Tyler Lyons, J.T. Realmuto, J.B. Shuck, Steven Souza, Kelby Tomlinson, Tyler Wilson.

Departed: Mike Adams, Jerry Blevins, Tim Federowicz, Chris Heisey, Munenori Kawasaki, Jose Molina, Joe Nathan, Anthony Recker, Tim Stauffer.

Pitching: Zack and his friends.

8.0

Pitching ratings in the TQ system are pretty simple to explain. A solid rotation, a closer, a good number of innings – that's a contender. A weak set of starters that have to go too deep into games – that's a rebuild. Usually it's one or the other.



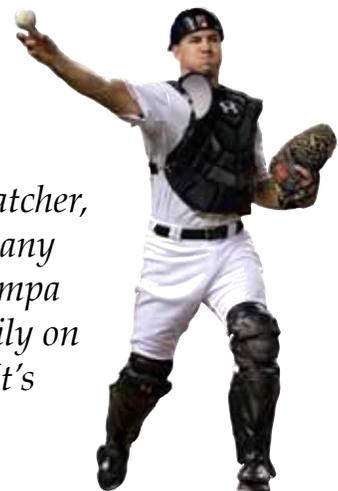
Greinke: Ace

A problem arises when a team has a bona fide ace like Zack Greinke. He makes us think twice about downgrading a staff that also includes a full-season Grade 5, a most-of-the-season Grade 6, three jigsaw puzzle pieces, and far too few good innings to help any of them. Say what you want about any of that, but every fifth day it's . . . Zack Greinke.

ROTATION. The ace is a thing of beauty (Grade 20 C+31 HR+31, 32 starts). Some rebuilding teams might have found a new home for Zack

SNT: J. T. Realmuto.

*The club needed a catcher,
and there weren't many
choices. Rye, like Tampa
Bay, is betting heavily on
continued success, It's
not a bad bet.*





RYE HERONS

Greinke in preparation for an *actual* rebuild, but it's hard to fault Craig for wanting to trot that out there 32 times and not worry. He'll have plenty to worry about when the other guys start. They include "Big Game" James Shields (Grade 11 C-25 HR-24); lefty Roenis Elias (Grade 10 C-24 HR-22); Jeff Samardzija (Grade 5 C+23) and Jered Weaver (Grade 6 C+31 HR-16). This quartet makes 111 starts. The remaining 20 or so takes three part-timers to fill: 5 by Tyler Wilson (Grade 8 HR+53); 8 by Tyler Lyons (Grade 10 C+36 HR-25); and the rest by "Not Tyler, but Kyle" Kendrick (Grade 1 HR-43).

BULLPEN. The relief corps is led by a veteran

lefty now – remarkably – in his sixth year in Rye: Javier Lopez, who has a serious grade (27* C-26 HR+52), but has only 39 innings. He would be an excellent spot lefty on a team like Munich or Melrose. Instead, he gets the ball in close games, without much help to set him up. Will Smith is the best of the rest (Grade 15* C-24 HR+23), along with Jared Hughes (Grade 12* C+16 HR+43) and rookie lefty Elvis Araujo (Grade 14* C-61 HR+43). There are about 180 innings between them.



Lopez: Serious grade

Things get thin after that. Pat Neshek is reduced to a middle innings role (Grade 11* C+25 HR-16) along with septuagenarians Joe Beimel (Grade 8* C+12 HR-25) and LaTroy Hawkins (Grade 7* C+35). Joe Thatcher is useful as a wild Grade 11* lefty, but for very few innings, and there are bulk ones to fill out.

Overall, when Zack's friends are pitching, it'll be fireworks days for the Herons.

Offense: 8.0 Little of this, little of that.

There's still some punch left in the Rye lineup. In particular, Nelson Cruz (1-1-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L+7 R-5) is still scary, as is Kendrys Morales (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L-4). They get to play every day. In the past we'd put Matt Kemp here as well; he has a decent card (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 33 SSN for 14 SBA) but it isn't what we associate with that name. For example, it doesn't out-hit the half season of Eduardo Nunez (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 26 SSN for 12 SBA, L-9 R+2), which is something we never thought we'd write in the *Annual*.



Cruz: Still scary

Once those names are behind us, however, things get murky. Jhonny Peralta is adequate (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-4), as is rookie J. T. Realmuto (3 0s, 10 hits) – a far sight better than veteran Carlos Ruiz (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+13). Torii Hunter (1-0-0, 9 hits,

2 walks) is still here, and Delino DeShields, Jr. gets playing time (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 29 SSN for 33 SBA – the fastest guy on the team). J. B. Shuck (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks) and Steven Souza (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, 26 SSN for 18 SBA) will get some experience in the outfield as well.

Juan Uribe (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) gets most of the reps at third base, which relegates Aramis Ramirez (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) to a bench role. Chase Utley is a caricature of his former self (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-5) but has to play two-thirds of the season, only occasionally relieved by rookie Kelly Tomlinson (0-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L+5 R-4).

It's really a "little of this, little of that" offense, which will likely perform better at home when Rye management can get guys good matchups.

Defense: Not so much.

2.5

There was a time, and it seems not so long ago, when the Rye club had very good gloves on the field. That time is not this time.

Pitchers aside, there is not a single Fielding One player on the roster, and in many cases there'll be a Fielding Three defender (Kemp and Cruz are OF1s and appear to be needed in the outfield; Morales is a 1B2) or a Fielding Two (both catchers are C7s with negative arms; both second basemen are 2B7s; Uribe is a 3B4; all of the other outfielders, even former glove man Torii Hunter, are OF2s). There isn't much to write about, except to note that innings will be prolonged by some of these deficiencies.

Bench: Not much good news.

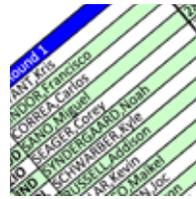
2.5

The presence of Tomlinson, Ramirez, Kennys Vargas (1-6, 9 hits, L+10 R-7), and the variety of outfielders means that there are games and at-bats (and even a few steal attempts) to spare. It's not a terrific bench, but it will help in games that the pitching staff can keep close.

3rd

Or, possibly, fourth. We think Calusa is good enough to keep ahead of Rye all season, and that Cayman isn't quite good enough to catch them.

But it's going to be a long season up there. The 2017 draft is there in full, and we would not be surprised if it was supplemented by the departure of a few bits and pieces in the September trading period. Greinke is likely not going anywhere, nor Cruz or Morales – but there are some role players who could leave town in exchange for future considerations. Still, like the old pick-up truck in the garage, Craig Musselman can say: "don't laugh – it's paid for."



rye:
TBL Draft



rye HERONS

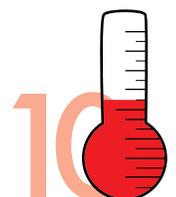
Evidence of the Rye draft strategy is a little hard to come by, at least for the past few years. The selections made are usually space-fillers (Travis Ishakawa, Jake Westbrook) or lucky breaks (Will Smith, Jared Hughes), with the occasional older impact player (Juan Uribe, who appeared out of nowhere with four power numbers and a 3B5). Reviewing the draft worksheets for the last five years more often than not reveals other teams' names next to the Rye selections.

It's more informative to consider what Rye has obtained for those selections. Kendrys Morales, Aramis Ramirez, Torii Hunter, James Shields, LaTroy Hawkins, Javier Lopez ... that's what Rye's drafts have brought. In our feature article, Mr. Bloom notes that the worth of a pick is volatile, so it's difficult to judge whether this strategy is viable for every team – indeed, for someone who arrives on draft day as prepared as Craig Musselman, it's a shame he doesn't get to make more picks. But it's clearly worked for Rye. It remains to be seen, now that the team is in rebuild, how the draft strategy might change.



Craig Musselman has a WS win from 2010 under his belt, and has aged mightily ever since. Many managers would have traded Javier Lopez (GR 27), Nelson (1-1-0-0) Cruz, or even Zack Greinke for the picks needed for another run. Craig held pat, hoping for one more season in the sun.*

TQ: **21.5**



2015 grand cayman HAVENS in review



A disappointing denouement.

by Mark Bloom

2015 in Review

Final Record: 102-60 (2nd, Mays)

The Grand Cayman Havens enjoyed a phenomenal season — my second best ever — capped by a strong finish (33-9 over the last two months). Bud Norris even threw an October no-hitter at home against Brobdingnag.

The regular season success, however, didn't carry over into the postseason, as the team didn't win a single playoff game. Four and out against the Rye Herons was a disappointing denouement to the season.

What went right?

Despite mediocre starting pitching (aside from Julio Teheran, who won 19 games with a 2.98 ERA), the Havens finished with a 3.29 ERA. I've never seen that kind of team pitching in my TBL career. Wade Davis saved 42 games with a 1.09 ERA, but almost every reliever pitched better than expected. And the offense rocked: 211 homers, 508 walks, ninth-inning heroics. This team rarely gave up.

What went wrong?

It's easy to pick the one most disappointing player on the team: Matt Holliday. A .211 average with a team-leading 21 GIDP was not what I expected.

Bad dice didn't help, either. Despite winning 102 games, the team had a losing record at home as late as the end of September, which

included losing every home game against Gotham City. If I had managed six more home victories, I might have watched the Wild Card series, not lost it.

3 Things

1. *I can't fix everything.* Almost every player on the team took a step backward for the coming season. I plugged some holes before the draft, but I knew going in that I wouldn't be able to solve all the problems. So I decided to keep the core, get a few more talented pieces, and wait it out.

2. *Survive the year.* The team has enough starts, relief innings, and position games for the entire season. But there's not much left over, and the bottom third of the roster is filled with guys who did not impress: John Lamb, Alex Avila, and Anthony Cingrani, for example. So I'm digging in to survive the year with what I have.

3. *Who has the best chance to excel in 2017?* With a few notable exceptions (Bartolo Colon and Roberto H. Hernandez come to mind), I kept the players who have the best chance to shine next year. Among those on the roster are three uncarded pitchers, which further limits the 2016 team. But trading for Colon allowed me to take low-usage prospects like Tyler Duffey and Colin Rea. I'll see next year if the research and the gamble pay off.



Teheran: Standout

grand cayman HAVENS

Mark Bloom (26th year)

It's far too talented to be a doormat.



Mr. Bloom does not pull punches nor wax nostalgic about his team, coming off a 100-win season that did not progress far into the post season. This year – the Year in Review and the standard instructions both insist – is about *survival*.

It sure is: there is a lot of talent here, a few quite decent cards, some great relief innings and some capable starts; but it's more about who these guys are than what they can do. Get a lead with Grand Cayman, and the last few innings will be very tough for any opponent; get behind, especially in those games where the inferior starters are on the mound, it's not worth expending the relatively few substitutions available to try and come back. So, in some ways, this is the classic rebuild: not starting from scratch, but far more focused on the future than the present. But in other ways it's far too talented to be a doormat, and could easily finish .500 if the two teams we predict to finish directly above it flop.

Pitching: 7.5
Very capable, for a rebuild.

The name was on contenders' shopping lists going into the off-season – Wade Davis, who was absolutely lights out for the World Champion Royals. Havens management set a high price and no one met it, so a team that could have a top ten pick in next year's draft has the best relief grade in the set. He – and two other closer-grade pitchers – will be backing up a rotation that is competent for three-quarters of the season.



Wade Davis: Lights out

ROTATION. The best grade among the starters belongs to lefty Drew Smyly (Grade 13 HR-24),

SNT:
Michael Conforto.

On draft day he was on everyone's list. He adds to a growing base of young talent that will carry the Havens forward.



Turnover Rate: 34%

Arrived: Norichika Aoki, Kyle Barraclough, Bartolo Colon, Michael Conforto, Tyler Duffey, Roberto H. Hernandez, Travis Jankowski, John Lamb, Brandon Morrow, Hector Neris, Colin Rea, Scott Van Slyke.

Departed: Michael Cuddyer, Justin De Fratus, David DeJesus, Dominic Leone, David Lough, Daisuke Matsuzaka, Josh Outman, Brad Peacock, Martin Prado, Cory Rasmus, Dan Robertson, Drew Stubbs.

but he only has 12 starts, making the staff ace more properly Julio Teheran. He's a little bit down from last year but is still quite capable (Grade 10 C-22 HR-15), and makes 33 starts. The team also has rookie Tyler Duffy (Grade 11 C-21 HR+33) for 10 appearances.

The rest of the rotation is very much an open casting call. Jesse Chavez has 26 starts as a Grade 7, but Grand Cayman went out and rented economy size bulk starter Bartolo Colon, who turned in another competent season (Grade 6 C+46 HR-14, ZZ in the Master Game). The rest of the starts go to rookies Colin Rea (Grade 9 C-21 HR+33) and John Lamb (Grade 3 C-53 HR-22) and veterans Roberto Hernandez (Grade



6) and Vance Worley (Grade 2). Bud Norris and Anthony Cingrani make single appearances.

BULLPEN. This part of the staff is surprisingly strong. Wade Davis (Grade 29* C-13 HR+43) is sublime for 67 innings, and has wild help from rookie Kyle Barraclough (Grade 23* C-62 HR+43) as well as Justin Grimm (Grade 22* C-62 HR+22) and Antonio Bastardo (Grade 17* C-41 HR+26). They total 130 innings between them. Any team that falls behind after 6 should start thinking about the post-game spread, because that might be the best part of their day.

There are some additional innings. Worley has 29 as a Grade 13*; Hector Neris (Grade 10* C+16 HR-35) and Jumbo Diaz (Grade 9* C+16 HR-22) have 100 scary ones between them; and Tommy Hunter (Grade 7* C+26) and Anthony Cingrani (Grade 6* C-62 HR+22) can mop up for about 100 more.

While they'll have a tough time with power-and-walks lineups, this pitching staff will keep the club in games.

**Offense:
Consistency, at least.**

8.0

There is truly something to be said for consistency, regardless of what Ralph Waldo Emerson said. (Really, how many TBL championships did he win?) There's nothing quite like a steady performer giving MOTS (more of the same), and over the past few years Edwin Encarnacion has been giving quite a lot in that department. This year's card packs a punch (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L-5) and will play every day. There's some power to go



Encarnacion: MOTS

with him: Evan Gattis (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks), Brandon Crawford (*Brandon Crawford?* 1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42); and, for a third of the season, SNT Michael Conforto (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks). All, including Encarnacion, give up a few points to lefties on the boards.

Beyond those 3½ lineup positions, there are 2½ quite competent ones and then some space fillers. 3B Kyle Seager (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22) and 2B Neil Walker (6-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-8) are good everyday cards, as is the half-season of Matt Holliday (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks+42).

That leaves a sort of salad of mixed greens to make up the rest. Gattis will catch a fair number of games as a legacy C5, which will keep the black hole semi-bearded-lady card of Alex Avila (2 0s, 7 hits, 6 walks, L-9) away from the lineup; Matt Adams (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-7) will get some starts at first base; Marcus Semien (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-4, 27 SSN for 16 SBA) will DH some games; and the outfield will be manned by platoon combinations of Scott Van Slyke (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+3 R-5); Nori Aoki (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 29 SSN for 19 SBA); and Gregory Polanco (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 28 SSN for 28 SBA).

The lineup has a few guys who can run, but is mostly plodding, and there are probably enough empty at-bats to cause some pointless innings. They may have trouble actually manufacturing runs when the big power guys don't happen to deliver.

**Defense:
Some good spots, but . . .**

3.5

Relying on a legacy C5 is going to lead to some unpleasant fielding rolls, as is the need to place Matt Holliday (OF1, 28 arm) in the outfield when he plays. But there are some good spots in the defense. Avila is a C8 with a Th+1 for late



Mark Bloom is another GM who gets the most out of his players, and that skill will be put to the test in 2016. His starting catcher is an OF1 (and a legacy C5) and most of his players have only about 50-70 games available! You'll really need a scorecard for Havens home games!

game defense; Kyle Seager is a 3B5 and Brandon Crawford (*Brandon Crawford!*) is an SS9. Matt Adams is a 1B4, and Encarnacion is a competent 1B3. The outfielders other than Holliday are all OF2s with good or better arms (Aoki is a 35, Polanco a 37). Neil Walker has declined to a 2B7, and Semien is only an SS7 and thus no help as a utilityman.



Kyle Seager: Goes after it

Even with an SS9 and a 3B5, this is not quite a team strength.

Bench: 2.0
Tight usage makes this a problem.

Nor, indeed, is the bench. Missing games from key performers like Holliday and some of the other outfielders and the need to place Gattis at catcher reduce the number of available options for Uncle Boomer when it's time to make moves. Tony Cingrani is listed as a PR, as is rookie Travis Jankowski (which is good, because he can't do much else – 3-5, 8 hits, 2 walks). The lineup, particularly many of its best hitters, is vulnerable to lefties, and there's little that can be done about it.

4th Or third, or second, depending on how the dice roll and if any of the three Mays Division also-rans make moves in September either to unload or bulk up. Betting against a team that has Edwin Encarnacion in the middle and Wade Davis in the 9th inning is tough to do on any given day: but there are 162 given days in the TBL schedule, and on some of them, the Havens won't be close after six innings. We shall see.



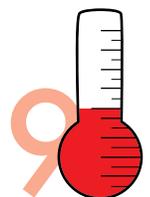
grand cayman:
TBL Draft



Evaluating the draft patterns of Grand Cayman is a little tricky, as the team has had some bad luck with some folks that were highly regarded at the time. We show the "Forget Something" sign [see Gordon Rodell's article, this issue. – Ed.] when someone jumps too early for a player that is not so highly regarded; we don't recall the sign ever being flashed for Boomer. When he selected Anthony Cingrani and Gregory Polanco and Julio Teheran, no one thought it was a bad idea. Kyle Seager turned out to be a *great* idea. Nathan Eovaldi? The jury is out, but the Yankees - and Eric Sheffler – think there's something there. Dominic Leone? Seemed like a good pick when it was made.

In the long view, we saw the same pattern with the Blue Hill drafts ten to fifteen years ago. Activity during the draft takes place in a bubble: there are copies of analysis books, there are spin documents from the usual suspects, there is punditry of all kinds – and, of course, there are the cards themselves. As with trades over time, it's difficult to tell *at the moment* whether things will work out – and when a team is in the hunt for the post-season, decisions are made that are independent of anything other than present value. So overall, we believe that the Cayman brain trust has been judicious and insightful. It is likely to continue thus into the future.

TQ: 21.0



grand cayman HAVENS

New Gate City

The year was 1998, and there were titans roaming the earth – or, at least, TBL. The contenders had familiar names: Brobdingnag, Maracaibo, Rochester, Munich (with 114, 114, 109 and 98 wins); Richmond won 106; and Flint led the Williams with 100 wins of its own.

And then there were the Gate City Bombers. They were the best team in a division that was in its entirety hell bent on rebuilding. But such is our playoff system that the division winner gets to go to the playoffs. So while Blue Hill (50-112), Greater Ohio (60-102), Las Vegas (65-97) went home in December and faded out of sight, Gate City (68-94) got to go to the playoffs. Because We Play The Games, they curiously took eventual champ Brobdingnag 7 games in the conference semi-finals before they too faded out.



This year's Ruth is not quite as rebuilding-minded as that, but it's not far away. Three clubs with a good chance of top 10 picks in the 2017 draft will be the only competition

for a *Brobdingnag* club that is not up to *Joe Auletta's Barbarian* standards. That's not to say that there isn't some talent there – but it's a long way from a deep playoff run.

Second, and maybe by less than the TQ indicates, is a younger, more talented *New Westminster* club. Only a little ways from

2015 Ruth Division Final Standings

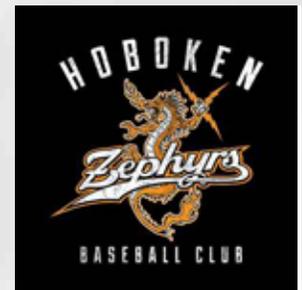
Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Brobdingnag*	73	89	.451	—
New Westminster	66	96	.407	7
Detroit	64	98	.395	9
Hoboken	54	108	.333	19

* Lost to Warrenton in conference semi-final.



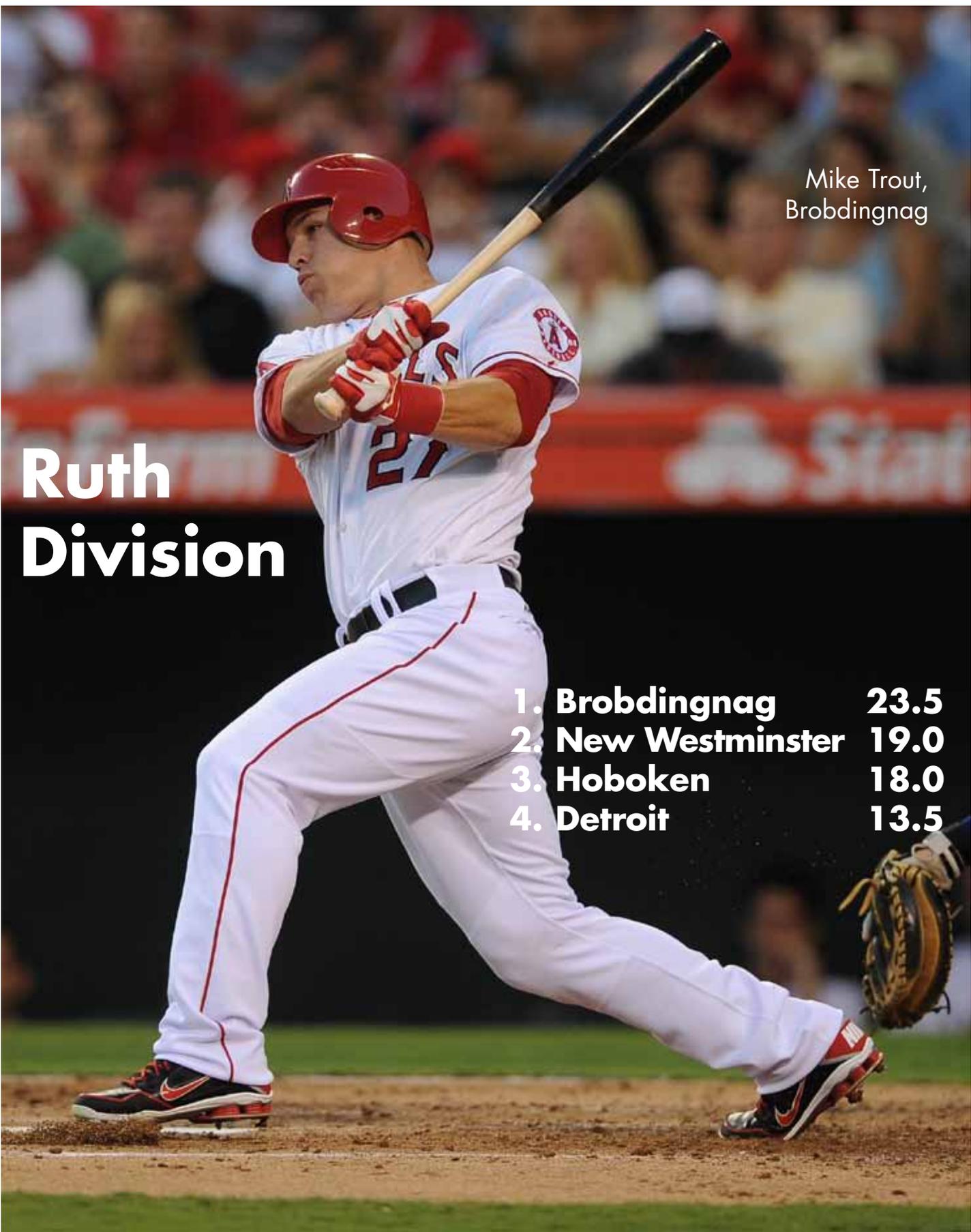
complete collapse, *Jim Jeatt* has been slowly acquiring young talent; the team's not ready for a big season but it might only be one year away. .500 is not that far out of reach.

2016 is one step forward, two steps back for *Steve Powell's Hoboken Zephyrs*, who had a good draft but sold off some older parts of the club to help the rebuild. This version of the team may or may not avoid 100 losses, but it'll be calling off names early in 2017.



Time and trades have pretty much caught up with *Dave Jaskot's Detroit Stars*. We thought they might have one more decent season in them in 2015, but the results (64-98) were only a foretaste of what is already anticipated to be a very long year in the Motor City.





Mike Trout,
Brobdingnag

Ruth Division

- | | |
|--------------------|------|
| 1. Brobdingnag | 23.5 |
| 2. New Westminster | 19.0 |
| 3. Hoboken | 18.0 |
| 4. Detroit | 13.5 |

2015 brobdingnag BARBARIANS in review



Structural weakness (otherwise known as lack of talent) was exploited.

by Joe Auletta

2015 in Review Final Record: 73-89 (1st, Ruth)

No surprises in 2015, not really. The roster had too many solid pieces – especially on the pitching staff – to be bad, and “not bad” meant they were the best in the Ruth by default. Though Detroit and New West stayed within hailing distance for half the season, the Barbarians won the Division comfortably if in somewhat bumbling fashion. When they faced Warrenton in the playoffs their structural weakness (otherwise known as lack of talent) was exploited and the Barbarians bowed out in five games.

What went right?

Start with the move of two starters — Fernandez and Pineda — to the bullpen. Joining hard throwing closers Kimbrel and Sanchez, the quartet made Brob formidable in the 7th+ inning: 172 appearances, 15-6 with 42 saves. The best of the rotation were Chris Tillman (14-12) and Steven Strasburg (13-14) winning double digit games on a sub-.500 team.



Kimbrel: Hard throwing

Offensively most highlights revolved around Mike Trout who belted 40 homers to accompany 113 RBI, 93 runs scored, 84 walks, and a .934 OPS — all of which led the team, most by a large margin. Josh Willingham (16 HR and 50 RBI in a half season) and Dee Gordon (93 runs, 15 triples, 50 steals) played solid supporting roles.

The next wave of young talent showed promise. Besides the above mentioned Gordon, Mookie Betts was unspectacular but neither was he overpowered. Andrew Susac hit .308 in spot duty, and Mike Olt displayed awesome power (13 HRs in part time duty).

What went wrong?

Too many off years. Chris Davis' homers and RBI dropped over 50%. Hanley Ramirez' OPS nosedived

300 points. Jose Fernandez went from Ace (23-3) to Not-Ace (4-1). Masterson and Bailey — both part of the 2014 Championship rotation — combined for a 17-30 record and a 5.96 ERA. Both ended the season facing TJ surgery and will miss 2016 entirely..

Combine those with the pre-season departure of the middle of the line-up bats Big Papi & Jason Werth as well as over half the bullpen, and the fall-off was inevitable. The youngsters brought in were highly regarded and may develop, but they were not ready to replace that amount of production. The seven new bats combined to hit a paltry .206 and slug only .364.

3 Things

1. *The Youth Movement continues.* Already the youngest roster going into the draft, the Barbarians bolstered their position with their first four selections — Correa, Buxton, Norris, and Osuna — none of them are older than 22. Inexperience and potential both abound but will it produce enough to be competitive in 2016?
2. *The end of an era.* After a decade of stability behind the plate Joe Mauer moves on to become a first baseman/DH, leaving a huge unsettled hole at catcher. Navarro, Susac, and new acquisition Cameron Rupp will man the spot this year but it is unclear if any are the long term solution.
3. *Can any starter avoid Tommy John surgery?* Seven of the eight starters in the Barbarian rotation were high draft picks, but so far none has managed to avoid the knife. What “should” have been a dominating rotation by now is still a huge question mark going into 2016.

brobdingnag BARBARIANS



Joe Auletta (28th year)

A year is coming soon when this club should be a . . . young juggernaut.

On Draft Day, Joe Auletta owns the room. No one moves up and down the draft boards, adding drama and heartbreak to draft day like the Prince of Darkness. He has an eye for talent – later in this article, we'll go over some of his picks in the last five years.

But being a Master of the Draft, and a shoo-in TBL Hall of Famer, does not immunize you from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

This year, the Barbarians will exceed the 73 wins that garnered them the Ruth Division title last year – a year when the Ruth was one of the most pathetic divisions in TBL's 33 year history. Some of the hitters have recovered from what ailed them – check out Chris Davis and his 47 bombs last year. But the pitching is suspect after a few big names and Joe could be looking at another playoff one-and-done, if everyone follows the script.

Pitching: 5.0
Nothing wrong with the names.

ROTATION. There's nothing wrong with the names. Aaron Sanchez (13/21* C-51 HR+15, 11 starts, 26 IP) is the ace if you look strictly at the grade. But his 11 starts are a foreshadowing of

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Cam Bedrosian, Jonathan Broxton, Byron Buxton, Arquimedes Caminero, Carlos Correa, Greg Holland, Daniel Norris, Roberto Osuna, Cameron Rupp, Ruben Tejada, Jose Urena, Pat Venditte, Brett Wallace.

Departed: Everth Cabrera, Jhoulys Chacin, Jaime Garcia, Casey Janssen, Rymer Liriano, Justin Masterson, Eric O'Flaherty, Mike Olt, Bobby Parnell, Stolmy Pimentel, Alex Rios, Josh Willingham, Brandon Workman.

things to come. Jose Fernandez (11 C+23 HR+33) is a guy everyone would love to have, but he also has only 11 starts.

Stephen Strasburg (11 C+25, 23 starts) hangs around for

almost six months, hits the showers and stands there under the running water through the next two months. Dan Norris (11 HR-16, 13 starts) is another good arm with a near-term expiration date. The staff horse is Wei-Yin Chen (10 C+24 HR-16, 31 starts), who pitches the entire season.

The top of the Ro gets you 89 very solid starts, and the promise of far more positive production in years to come. Then, the clowns are sent in. Chris Tillman (6 C-23, 31 starts) has a full season of line drives punctuated by a few too many walks. Michael Pineda (5 C+14 HR-13, 27 starts) looked awesome at the end of last season for the Yankees, but not awesome enough to save his season. Jose Urena (3 C-22 HR+24, 9 starts) makes all his starts and then some.

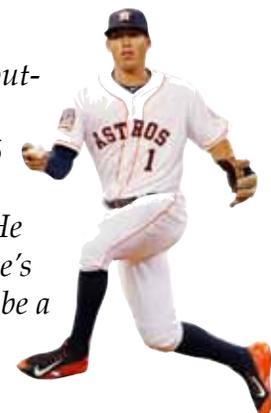
This staff is aimed toward 2017 and beyond, and they will get eventually be one of the strongest

SNT: Carlos Correa.

Carlos Correa was one of three outstanding shortstops collected by Ruth Division clubs in the 2016 draft. He does everything, and he's barely old enough to vote (He won't be 22 until September.) Joe's only concern is that he may not be a long-term shortstop.



Strasburg: Hangs around





brobdingnag BARBARIANS

staffs in the league. Add a dab of patience here.

BULLPEN. The relief staff starts with one of the best closers anywhere. Craig Kimbrel (18* C-25, 59 IP) will hold up his end of the bargain when the game is close and late. Twenty year old Roberto Osuna (16* C+24 HR+13, 69 IP) will set up Kimbrel capably, but will have to sit out this year's Barbarian Booze Cruise team building event. These guys have 128 very solid innings between them.



Kimbrel: Holds up

The middle relievers are Arquimedes Caminero (12* C-23 HR+15, 74 IP) and Greg Holland (12* C-62 HR+45, 44 IP). And Pat Venditte (12* C-41 HR+14, 28 IP) and Pat Venditte. He gets to be mentioned twice because he throws with both hands, of course. He's a wild, short-inning grade 12*, but switch pitchers are just cool. The 12s have 146 innings to hold the fort.

When the fort is burned to the ground in the early innings, Joe can toss out gasoline wielders like Jonathan Broxton (7* C-21, 60 IP), Cam Bedrosian (3* C-51 HR+25, 33 IP), Derek Holland (6 C+15 HR-32, 58 IP) and Aaron Loup (5* C+35, 42 innings).

The total of 467 innings will get used by the starting staff that's missing 70 starts. This won't be pretty.

Offense: 11.0
Six and a half outstanding.

The offense is ahead of the pitching, which is the way heaven intended a rebuild to work, despite what Darrell Skogen will tell you.

There are 6 and a half outstanding young hitters here. Start with Baltimore slugger

supreme Chris Davis (9 hits, 4 walks, 1-1-5-6, R+1). Davis has had a yoyo-like stretch over the last three years, hitting 53, 26 and 47 homers in that stretch. He is 30 now, and he will be here for a few more years. Mike Trout (10 hits, 4 walks, 1-1-4-6, 18 speed number) will spend the year looking for the eleventh hit on his card. He's still special.

Dee Gordon (13 hits, 1 walk, 2 0s, 3 11s, 29 SSN for 61 SIAs) and 2016 #1 pick Carlos Correa (10 hits, 3 walks, 1-0-0-0, 99 games) form one of the best middle infield tandems in the league. Manny Machado (10 hits, 4 walks, 1-5-5, 28 SSN for 28 attempts) is a stud at third.

In the outfield, Mookie Betts (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, 30 SSN for 27 attempts) and the jaw-dropping Jackie Bradley, Jr. (9 hits, 4 walks, 1-4-5-6, 18 speed number, 74 games) give Brobdingnag a season and a half of outstanding play and rock solid hitting production. No one I know saw Bradley's performance coming. Boston fans had long since given him up as being Ken Berry. But he started hitting in late July and kept mashing straight through spring training this year. Joe picked him up for his defense – serendipity. He only has half a season, but he'll matter for those 4 months.



Davis: Yo-yo

Joe Mauer (10 hits, 3 walks, 3 0s, 3 31s) and Brett Wallace (10 hits, 3 walks, 1-0-0-0, 64 games) share the DH duties. Dustin Ackley (9 hits, 3 walks, 1-4-6, 108 games) plays the outfield when Bradley is out. The catching is a combination of Dioner Navarro (9 hits, 3 walks,



The 2016 offense is spectacular. The top six most days will be Dee Gordon, Mookie Betts, Mike Trout, Chris Davis, Manny Machado and Carlos Correia! 73 wins got them the Ruth crown in 2015. They'll probably win about 30 more in 2016.

30s) and Andrew Susac (8 hits, 3 walks, 3 0s, L+7). They will score a bucketload of runs, and the lineup is full of guys who won't see 30 years old for a while. Pity the rest of the Ruth – this is only going to get better.

Defense: 5.5
Some really outstanding defenders.

Manny Machado (3B5) and Dee Gordon (2B9) are outstanding defenders in key positions. The outfield includes Mike Trout (OF3, 33 arm) and Mookie Betts (OF3, 32 arm) every day.



Gordon: Outstanding

Things get pretty decadent when Jackie Bradley Jr. (OF3, 33 arm) is playing. Backup outfielder and 2016 rookie Byron Buxton (OF3, 36 arm) is even better than those guys. Chris Davis (1B4) is a good solid defender. Joe Mauer (1B4) will fill in capably for the 2 games that Davis has to sit. Brobdingnag is average at short with rookie Carlos Correa (SS8). The catchers are all C7s. Navarro and Carlos Rupp both have positive throwing arms (Th+2).

Bench: 2.0
Not much going on.

There is not much past the starters. Cameron Rupp (9 hits, 2 walks, 1-6, L+10) looks nice against lefties, but there's not much going on there. Hanley Ramirez (9 hits, 2 walks, 1-0-0) had a completely lost season at every level. He's here to try again as Boston's first baseman, and not much else. Byron Buxton (8 hits) is a nice defensive sub for a team that doesn't really need one. Ruben Tejada (10 hits, 3 walks, 3 0s) is the most important player on the bench because he won't be on the bench for 63 games.

finish 4th, but won 92 games and finished first instead. That could happen here.



brobdingnag:
TBL Draft

#1s: Carlos Correa and Byron Buxton (2016) ... Mookie Betts (2015) ... Jose Fernandez (2014) ... Joe has been looking to add youth and build for the future while riding the pitching waves up and down.

There are three characteristics of Joe's drafting that set him apart from other owners in the league.

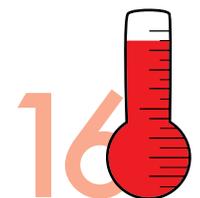
- First: *communication*. Joe typically talks to everyone in the league in the off-season, gathering views and opinions from all over. He walks into the draft room with a solid idea of who needs what position, and where they intend to draft for that position.
- Second: *a willingness to gamble*. Mike Trout was a high #1 with an unspectacular 135 AB. He panned out beyond Joe's wildest dreams. This year it was Byron Buxton at 12. If he lives up to his press clipping, he'll be special. Joe spent the 12th pick in the 2016 draft on him.
- Third: *optimization*. He can move up and down the draft as required. He will not take someone in round 1 if they can be had in round 2, and he will get a payment for moving back and taking the target player. No one else in the league drafts like this.

Some injuries to Strasburg and Fernandez have slowed him down considerably. But a year is coming soon when this club should be a juggernaut. A *young* juggernaut.

TQ: 23.5



brobdingnag BARBARIANS



1st

This team harkens back to an Oklahoma City club a few years back that had an oversized hitting attack supported by good, but thin pitching. That team was picked to

2015 new westminster WHISKEYJACKS in review



Year 19 was a long strange trip.

by Jim Jeatt

2015 in Review

Final Record: 66-96 (2nd, Ruth)

2016 marks the 20th anniversary of the New Westminster Whiskeyjack franchise and the 13th north of the border. Year 19 last year was a long strange trip.

What went right?

A brief rebound for the team saw a 7 win improvement over 2014 and remarkably a 2nd place finish just 7 games behind the Barbarians. They also managed to over perform by about 7 wins based on old Pythagorean theory.

Pitching ranked 16th in ERA at 4.02. Johnny Cueto had a fine season going 19-9 with a 2.25 ERA and 240 IP with 8 CG. Anthony Varvaro suffered from lack of opportunity but finished with a 1.41 ERA and 9 saves in 51 IP. Clay Buchholz had a great year pitching over 200 innings for just the 2nd time in his career but finished a disappointing 7-21.

What went wrong?

The main starters Maholm, Locke, Buchholz and Martinez were a combined 25-55, but hitting or lack thereof was the key to trouble for the Whiskeyjacks. The team slashed .228 / .286 / .350. A case of a lot of old players and others who were not good enough. Derek Jeter ended his career with 144 games of .251 / .296 / .396. Tommy Medica led the team with 16 homers while hitting just .202. Conor Gillaspie drove in 70 RBI while hitting .259 and slugging 3.16. Dexter Fowler was the team MVP hitting .316

with 82 runs scored, 60 RBI and 12 homers and led the team in slugging at .471. Four players hit below the Mendoza line and all played at least half the season.

3 Things

1. *There is nothing pretty* about a bad team trying to work itself back to mediocrity. The management



Cueto: Fine

has continued the time-honoured tradition of moving players in and out as the team finds itself with 7 new pitchers and 10 new hitters. New West has taken a bit more serious look at the draft as they selected 25 players in the last two drafts who are on their roster and another 4 in trade in the last two seasons. New West has loaded up for the next draft with 7 picks in the 2017 draft.

2. *The acquisition of Justin Morneau* has created a great deal of buzz in New Westminster. Morneau at the end of his career is coming home. (Yes: New Westminster is a real place after all.) Morneau went to high school in the Royal City, and lived near the mighty Fraser River and Queen's Park where Hyack Stadium is now located. He will move into the manager's chair depending on if he can play an additional season.

3. *New West in 2016 is all about development.* A new double play combo in Russell and Schoop, a new center fielder in Herrera, and a rotation with some potential with Hendrick and, May along with veterans Cueto and Estrada. Changes could still be coming but hopefully this edition of the Whiskeyjacks can create the core to get to the next level. Then again, maybe not.

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

Jim Jeatt (12th year)

New West looks to step off the treadmill they've been on for five years.



TBL's resident Canadian Jim Jeatt is experiencing some real growing pains as he tries to get some kind of traction in his rebuild. Since 2011, New West has win totals of 56, 57, 79, 59 and 66. This is a grind, and Jim's mood music for this season begs the heavens for 72 wins.

They may get there because their pitching staff is not bad at all. The problem that the hitting attack is pretty anemic. They are, however, young and anemic, which means that this club is playing a waiting game. Many of the players that will help

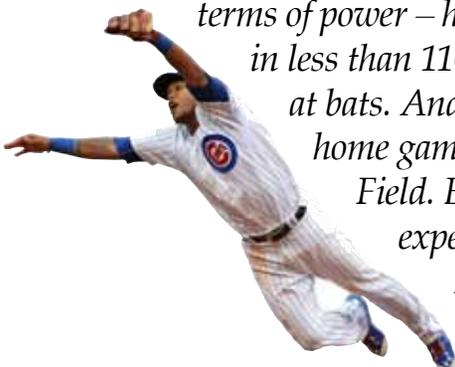
Turnover Rate: 49%

Arrived: Pedro Baez, Manny Banuelos, Clint Barmes, Matt Barnes, Tim Beckham, Alex Colome, Erik Goeddel, Odubel Herrera, Justin Morneau, Paulo Orlando, Jace Peterson, Alex Rios, Addison Russell, Tyler Saladino, Keyvius Sampson, Blake Treinen, Preston Tucker

Departed: Michael Choice, Phil Coke, Carlos Corporan, Aaron Crow, Ross Detwiler, Conor Gillaspie, Jeanmar Gomez, Derek Jeter, Paul Maholm, Evan Marshall, Tommy Medica, Chris Parmelee, CC Sabathia, Luis Sardinas, Anthony Varvaro, Jonathan Villar, Eric Young., Jr

SNT: Addison Russell.

Addison Russell was the 8th pick of 2016 draft, and the fourth shortstop taken in the first eight picks. He may have the highest upside in terms of power – he had 115 XBH in less than 1100 minor league at bats. And he will play his home games in Wrigley Field. Big things are expected from this 22 year old.



this team throw a scare into the International Conference are in the envelope already. Like the rest of us this spring, the Whiskey Jacks are waiting for the fruit to ripen.

Pitching: 7.0
Can't laugh at this bunch.

This is an improvement over last year, when Johnny Cueto was just about the only pitcher of consequence. There's a good rotation, though the bullpen – which, admittedly, is the last thing a rebuild looks to shore up – leaves something to be desired.

ROTATION. The strength of the club starts with a nice Grade 15 – Marco Estrada (15 C-11 HR-14, 28 starts). The 24 fatigue number will cause him to hit the showers a little earlier than one would like, and his age (33) would point to him not making it to the end of the season. But in the meantime, New West will use Estrada to torture opponents.



Estrada: Torturer

Estrada is followed in the rotation by the outstanding Johnny Cueto (11 C+24 HR+13, 32 starts), lefthander Robbie Ray (11 C-23 HR+31, 23 starts), and the rock solid Kyle Hendricks (10 C+21 HR+14, 32 starts). That's 115 starts in double digits. Add in Clay Buchholz (9 C+25 HR+42, 18 starts) usual good half-season, and you have 133 starts of guys who will steal hits. Jeffrey Locke (7 C-13 HR+21, 30 starts) finishes up the last 29 starts.

You have to love the durability – filling all 162 starts with 6 guys is the kind of position efficien-



cy that every rebuilding team dreams of. The fewer starters you need, the more slots you can use for lottery tickets and flyers.

BULLPEN. If you squint a little, Erik Goeddel (16* C+23 HR+51, 33 IP) looks a little like a closer. He steals 8s and has beautiful peripherals. The short innings number makes him a no-show for the month of June and probably at least one other month as well, if standard usage rates apply.

The instructions, however, do not call for Goeddel to stand tall all season. Jim is calling on owners to use +5 waves to protect leads close and late. To do this, you need a stack of guys that are pretty good – and here they come. Blake Treinen (11* C-33 HR+34, 67 IP), Pedro Baez (Grade 11* C+26 HR+23, 51 IP), Ryan Webb (11* C+25 HR+25, 50 IP), and Alex Colome (12* C+16 HR+24, 40 IP) throw from the right side, while Robbie Ross (Grade 9*, 60 innings) and a whopping 125 innings of Nick Martinez (8 C-15) from the left side. Martinez is a starter with no starts, so no +5 for him, but the rest of these guys steal 8s against the first hitter when they are spotted up correctly. Some managers have made this work – Rich Meyer had a great time shuffling grade 15*s on his way to a huge season a few years ago.

Offense: 6.0
The lights are out; no one's home.

Here comes trouble. The closest Jim has to a scary card is Justin Morneau (11 hits, 2 walks, 3-5-6-7-7-7, 49 games), who sits for 2/3 of the year. His lack of games forces the hideous Clint Barmes (9 hits, 1 walk, 3 0s) into the lineup on a regular basis. Paulo Orlando (1-4-4-6, 10 hits), Jonathan Schoop (4 0s,



Herrera, Fowler: Motion outfielders

10 hits, 86 games) and Preston Tucker (9 hits, 2 walks, 1-0-0-0, 98 games) provide a little power. Dexter Fowler (9 hits, 4 walks, 29 SSN for 27 attempts) and Odubel Herrera (11 hits 2 walks, 3 0s, 17 Speed) are nice motion outfielders who will produce, but these are not stars. No one will hit .300 or hit 25 homers.

The biggest hole is one that should not be there at all. Jorge Soler (9 hits, 3 walks, 3 0s) shows up to his age 24 season as a below average hitting outfielder. He was one of those no-brainer draft picks from a couple of years back, but he did not come close to being the hitter everyone thought he would be last year. But at least he plays some games – in that Cubs lineup he could emerge at any time.

Caleb Joseph (9 hits, 3 walks, 1-6-6, 100 games) and third baseman Brad Miller (9 hits, 3 walks, 3 0s, 30 SSN for 17 attempts) are OK, but certainly not impact players. Joseph could be a very nice regular if his power is not an optical illusion. The everyday shortstop is the exciting Addison Russell (9 hits, 3 walks, 3 0s) – another Cub. This offense will really struggle. They have no one with 14 on base numbers or more. They have only three players with a first column 1. They will need good dice to get to 700 runs.



After winning 102 games in 2010 things haven't gone so smoothly for our only Canadian manager, Jim Jeatt. But recent drafts have brought in a much needed boost of talent that will soon pay big dividends... hopefully.

Defense: Define that, please?

3.5



new westminster:
TBL Draft



Butterfingerted fielders are everywhere, but let's emphasize the positive. Caleb Joseph (C8, Th+0) is a good receiver and will be an asset for 100 games. The backup is Tucker Barhart (C7, Th+0). In the outfield, Paulo Orlando (OF3, 33 arm) is a smooth operator. Tyler Saladino (3B5) is terrific, but only plays later in the season. Addison Russell is great (2B8, SS9) but can only play one position at a time. The rest of the Little League infield consists of sub-par performers. Brad Miller (3B3) will use his chest to stop grounders. 2B Jonathan Schoop (2B7) is dead average. Barmes (1B3) makes up for his awful bat with point-and-laugh caliber glove work.

The other outfielders are competent, if unspectacular. Dexters Fowler (OF2, 30 arm) and Odubel Herrera (OF2, 32 arm) will make most of the plays. Alex Rios (OF2, 36 arm) is a good fielder and plays in some lineups. Overall, this defense will not be a help to a team that's struggling to score runs.

Bench: Pinch hitters are anonymous.

2.5

Alex Rios (3 0s, 10 hits, 35 SSN for 9 SBA) is a nice bench option – he can play some defense and run a little. Tim Beckham (1-4-5, 9 hits, 2 walks) has a little pop. Jim calls for some defensive substitutions when the games are close. There is one line in his instructions about pinch hitting, but tellingly, no names are mentioned.

2nd

The *Annual* grades out New West a hair better than Hoboken, but well behind Brobdingnag for the division. Jim's pitching will keep the team close while they struggle to produce runs. Like Northboro, they have a structural problem where the pitching is well ahead of the hitting. Jim is hoping for the kids to mature and live up to the elevated expectations. Soler, Russell, Herrera, and several other players promise a brighter future as New West looks to step off the treadmill they've been on for five years.

Jim gets to the draft but rarely because his place of residence is just south of the North Pole. He typically enlists the help of Walter Hunt to be his in-draft-room aide for trades and maneuvers. His last few years have garnered him some very nice young players such as Addison Russell and Jorge Soler. Jim grabbed a closer in 2013 with the fifth pick in the draft – Ryan Cook. Not moment of clarity, although he put up some sweet numbers that season for the 'Jacks.

In general, Jim seems to draft with a toe on the line of orthodoxy, but he is a tactical drafter – he takes what he needs when it is available, and does not take wild chances. He's had several whiffs in the last few years. This can happen to anyone – Rich Meyer took Jesus Montero the same year that Jim drafted Desmond Jennings. Jennings probably returned more value.

Jim tends to do well later in drafts – Trevor Plouffe was an excellent third round pick in 2012. Jim traded him to Darrell Skogen eventually, but the pick showed real foresight.

Eventually, all these early picks will start to move the team forward. But this game is not gentle and kind, and waiting can be difficult.

TQ: **19.0**



new westminster WHISKEY JACKS

2015 hoboken ZEPHYRS in review



There is no big book to follow or chart to refer to.

by Steve Powell

2015 in Review

Final Record: 54-108 (4th, Ruth)

The TBL Baseball Annual rated Hoboken as a sub-20 rated team and we performed as predicted checking in at 54-108. Slim pickin's for a group that didn't record their tenth win until June 7, but there were a few surprises.

What went right?

On the offensive side, 2014 waiver claim Travis Snider showed respectable power by leading the team in HR (24), RBI (79) and slugging (.457). Rookie 3rd baseman Nick Castellanos held up well with a steady .270 average and 39 doubles. Starlin Castro hit 18 homers and had the best regular batting average at .273.



Snider: Team leader

As far as the pitching staff goes, only one name is really worth mentioning: Adam Warren. The 2nd year middle reliever proved his durability appearing in 68 games and working 79 innings to a very solid 2.28 ERA.

What went wrong?

Easy to pick on the offense as the reason for losing 108. We hit .230 and got on base at a .290 rate. In the Ruth Division last year, add some decent pitching to that offense and you find yourself in contention, possibly even 80 wins. The painful reality was how little support the starting rotation actually provided. No starter

worked more than 200 innings or won more than 8 games. The best of this bunch was rookie David Buchanan who went 7-10 in 20 starts with an ERA a notch over 4.00.

3 Things

1. *Let the kids play.* Basically, because we have little choice. During the past three years we have restocked with drafted players and it's time to see who will be here three years from now.
2. *Stay on the rebuilding course.* Far as I know, there is no big book to follow or chart to refer to instructing how to proceed or when building a contender is completed. It's completely dependent on timing when talent becomes available and having the means to acquire it. Clearly some luck helps too – when a player unexpectedly becomes a star (or drops off the edge and disappears).

3. *Buying low just might work.* Three of the six starting pitchers acquired this offseason are coming off bad years, and we need them to return to form.

hoboken ZEPHYRS

Steve Powell (27th year)

All this is working, but it's hard.



Here's an interesting exercise for the student of TBL rebuilding. New Westminster and Northboro are about a year apart in their rebuilds. Because of circumstances and karmic whimsy, their pitching is ahead of their hitting. Here in Hoboken, Dr. Steve Powell is building a team from the bottom up, and there is no such problem – his hitting attack is coming along nicely but his pitching is suffering from severe neglect.

The question before the court: which of these three rebuilders gets to the second round of the playoffs first? Getting a team to the dance is not much of a trick – Brobdingnag won a division with 73 wins last year. Getting to round 2 is the test. Getting to the second round of the playoffs means you are good enough to beat a playoff caliber team head-up. That's the bar that every rebuild is reaching for.

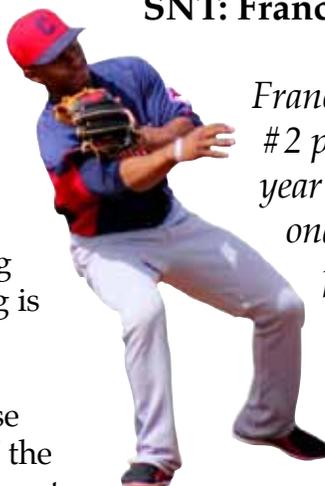
Our money is on Hoboken to get there first.

Pitching: 5.0
Note to self: Draft more of this.

Steve Powell knew the pitching needed work, and work he did. Hoboken acquired 113 of this season's starts either through offseason trade or through 2016 draft picks. The results are not inspiring, but at least they won't be losing with the same guys as last year.

ROTATION. Hoboken has two competent pitchers in the starting rotation: Chris Heston (Grade 10 C-21 HR+16, 31 starts) and Carlos Rodon (Grade 11 C-55 HR+31, 23 starts). Between them, there is a third of a season when they could put up a fight.

SNT: Francisco Lindor.



Francisco Lindor was a surprise #2 pick over Carlos Correa in this year's draft, but there's just no second-guessing this pick. Lindor is a pure shortstop, a smooth fielder with a plus bat and speed. He is 22. Nothing but love for him here at the Annual.

Turnover Rate: 51%

Arrived: Jose Alvarez, Greg Bird, Archie Bradley, Brandon Cunniff, Freddy Galvis, Steve Geltz, Chris Heston, Francisco Lindor, James Mccann, Matt Moore, Jonathon Niese, Wily Peralta, Stephen Piscotty, Carlos Rodon, Jason Rogers, Ryan Tepera, Josh Tomlin, Giovanni Urshela.

Departed: David Buchanan, A.J. Burnett, Alberto Callaspo, Dan Haren, Aaron Hicks, Michael Kohn, Jake Lamb, Kyle Lobstein, Martin Maldonado, Brandon Morrow, Adrian Nieto, Shane Robinson, Shae Simmons, Craig Stammen, Jacob Turner, Adam Warren, Jerome Williams, Chris Young.

Things get a little dicey after that. Jon Niese (Grade 7, 29 starts) is durable but not particularly effective. David Phelps (6 HR+14, 19 starts) will show up for five months – give him credit for that. Wily Peralta (4, 20 starts) is always a candidate for the “does the least with the most” award. Great stuff, bad results. Matt Moore (3 C-15 HR-14, 24 starts) gets in lots of work as an innocuous starter. Archie Bradley (5 C-62 HR+24, 8 starts) and Vidal Nuno (4 C+23 HR-24, 10 starts) finish off the year with flush. They're not supposed to win, and they won't.



hoboken ZEPHYRS

Archie Bradley is a nice prospect and Steve is hoping he and several others can save him from another offseason chasing starters.

BULLPEN. The relief staff consists of guys that walk too many and guys that give up too many homers. So says Steve Powell, who does not even define roles for this group in his instructions. There are two guys who could close. Vidal Nuno (16* C+23 HR-24, 38 IP), when he isn't starting, will be a decent bullpen performer. Steve Geltz (15* C-23, 67 IP) has plenty of innings and will pitch the eighth and ninth all season long.

There are guys who look like closer possibilities, but their peripherals make them unfit for family viewing. Ryan Tepera (15* C+31 HR-34, 33 IP) and converted starter Josh Tomlin (15

C+42 HR-41, 65 IP) can help set things up for the theoretical closers, but their home run ratings make them unusable in close and late situations. Hoboken may be better off with the lower-grade middle relief crew. Jeremy Jeffress (12* C+16 HR+25, 68 IP) has positive peripherals on both sides, which does not happen anywhere else on this roster. Avery Morris (Grade 10* C-32 HR+43, 63 IP) has the big homer number, and he could see some spot duty as an eighth inning guy. Cesar Ramos (10* HR+46, 52 IP) also is effective at defeating the homer. Jose Alvarez (11* HR+31, 67 IP) and Brandon Cunniff (Grade 12* C-62, 35 IP) add another 102 innings of general purpose work. Working this group to leverage matchups and manage situations is going to be necessary. And there is no natural closer in the bunch, so labor is required.

Offense: 7.0
Step forward.

It is not usually a good sign when the best hitter in the envelope is a 36 year old first base-

man coming off multiple injury-filled seasons. If it seems like Mark Teixeira (9 hits, 4 walks, 1-1-5-6, 111 games) has been here forever, it's because he has. Last year, Teixeira managed to hold it together physically, and he had something of a revival season, hitting 31 homers in only 111 games.



Teixeira: Here forever.

Not everyone who has a plus card is on the downhill side of this career. Francisco Lindor (12 hits, 2 walks, 1-4-6, 33 SSN for 14 attempts) won't be 23 until after the season ends, and his rookie cards is a beauty. Steve made him the #2 pick in the 2016 draft, and he will be the shortstop here for a generation. Nick Castellanos (10 hits, 2 walks, 4 0s, L+10 R-4) is the starting 3B without challenge, as Jake Lamb got traded to Maracaibo in the offseason. He will strike terror into the hearts of left-handed pitchers.

Hoboken has a rare hitting catcher behind the plate. Travis d'Arnaud (10 hits, 3 walks, 1-0-0-0, L+11) is only around for 67 games, but he will make the Zephyrs unpleasant to face with a lefty starter. James McCann (10 hits) will be the regular catcher due to his superior glove. This is the pattern with this team. The regulars are mediocre cards, but the bench is stacked with monsters.

Among the everyday players, right-fielder Josh Reddick (10 hits 3 walks, 1-4-6, 32 SSN for 12 attempts) will make steady contributions at the dish. Starlin Castro (10 hits, 3 0s, 16 speed) is the regular DH, and is just starting to deliver on some of his early promise. He is off to a terrific start for the Yankees as of this writing. Freddy Galvis (10 hits, 2 walks, 2 0s, 151 games) is the



Winning the Ruth in 2012 with 93 wins and losing to Gotham City in the IC championship was the recent high water mark for the Zephyrs. Only 77 wins in 2013 and only 102 wins total in 2014/2015! A good offense will help, but almost non-existing pitching will be a big hindrance.

starting second baseman. Someone has to be ... Steve Piscotty (11 hits, 3 walks, 1-0-0-0, 63 games) and Jason Rogers (11 hits 3 walks, 3 Os, 86 games) form a nice platoon in left field. Jake Marisnick (9 hits, 2 walks, 3 Os, 28 SSN for 33 attempts) and Marcell Ozuna (10 hits, 2 walks, 3 Os) are the platoon in center field.

Look for this group to take a step forward in the next twelve months. What's here isn't completely dismal, but they don't come close to Brobdingnag offensively.

Defense: 3.5
Some real bright spots.

Hoboken has a number of nice defensive players. Francisco Lindor (SS9) is a great shortstop, and even if he does not hit .322 every year, he should be a plus defender for a very long time. James McCann (C8, Th+3) is another terrific draft pick who will contribute on defense. In the outfield, Josh Reddick (OF3, 37 Arm) is a superior defender. Jake Marisnick (OF3, 35 arm) is also sublime. Mark Teixeira (1B4) is a smooth fielder.

Several other outfielders are OF2s – Piscotti, Ozuna, and backup Travis Snyder. The only poor defender is Jason Rogers (OF1). Nick Castellanos (3B3) will struggle at third as well. Freddy Galvis (2B7) is average and there is no 2B8 in sight. This is a pretty solid defense with some real bright spots.

Bench: 2.5
Some promise.

How about this for a hitting toy - Greg Bird (9 hits, 4 walks, 1-1-6-6, 46 games). Bird needs to get healthy after suffering a torn labrum in his shoulder – he will be out all of 2016. Christian Colon (11 hits, 3 walks, 6-0, 43 games) will play in September and October, so he really is not a bench option. Javier Baez (11 hits, 1 walk, 5-6-6, 76 AB) may have his moments as a pinch hitter this year. Baez' minor league numbers indicate that it is only a matter of time here – he's a beast in training. Chris Denorfia is Jason Rogers' glove for most of the year.



They may be able to stay ahead of New West, but neither team will crack 75 wins. This club is well positioned to start moving solidly ahead as the kids mature.



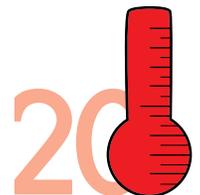
**hoboken:
TBL Draft**

Steve is executing on the plan over the last few drafts. He is a proponent of the orthodox "hitting first, pitching later" school of drafting. Over the last four drafts, he has collected 9 position players and three pitchers. The preponderance of the position players have been infielders, and of those, six were middle infielders, third baseman or catchers.

Over-drafting in positions that are hard to fill is part of the Powell formula. He took Travis D'Arnaud in 2014, and came right back and took James McCann two years later. In 2015, he took Nick Castellanos and Jake Lamb. Steve also drafts upside. Few folks were enraptured with Javier Baez after his disastrous 2015 offseason, but Steve took a flyer on him. Last year, Baez had 11 hits on his card and some power. He could be Juan Samuel if everything falls right. Mr. Powell will be patient as the kids grow up.

All this is working, but it's hard. This team will not content for a wild card spot this year. They have not had a winnings season since 2012, when they won their division with 93 wins. If the part-time kids with the great cards can keep it going for full seasons in 2016, this textbook rebuild could be one we study for years.

TQ: 18.0



hoboken ZEPHYRS

2015 detroit STARS in review

Age became a factor and several Stars lost their glow.

by Dave Jaskot



2015 in Review

Final Record: 64-98 (3rd, Ruth)

Not too much went right for Detroit in 2015 but not much was expected of the team coming out of the draft. The Stars finished with a weak 64-98 record and 3rd place in the extremely weak Ruth Division, tied for 19th overall in the TBL.

What went right?

Hisashi Iwakuma headlined the pitching staff with 14 wins and a 2.60 ERA over 204 innings followed by Miguel Gonzalez with 10 wins and a 3.98 ERA. However, Iwakuma was the only starter with a better than .500 record for the year. Carlos Torres pitched 92 innings of relief with a fine ERA of 2.04 while Blain Boyer put up a 1.49 over his 36 relief innings. Phil Klein led the staff with 20 saves. The pitching staff overall finished with a 3.96 ERA for the year.



Iwakuma: Headliner, again

The offense produced only 606 runs. Hitters smacked 136 HR, led by Brandon Moss with 25 and Yoenis Cespedes with 22. The team finished with a .231 / .294 / .365 slash line. The Team MVP and batting average leader was Robinson Cano at .306. Moss and Cespedes led the team in slugging at .463 and .462. Cano fell just four hits short of a 200 hit season.

What went wrong?

After a strong 2014 season the wheels simply came off the Motor City Stars as expected in 2015. Age became a factor and several Stars lost their glow.

Detroit's poor defense led to 124 errors and 88 unearned runs. The team also hit into 99 double plays. The Stars also struck out 1,316 times compared to drawing 446 bases on balls. The Detroit starters combined for a 47-77 won-loss record for the year. The team batting average was a poor .231 and slugging, if that is what you can call it, was at .365.

3 Things

2016 will be another dismal season for Detroit with newly drafted players hoping to make a positive effect for 2017 and beyond.

1. *New regulars.* Newly acquired double play combination of Ketel Marte and Devin Travis as well as sleek outfielder Michael Taylor and Cuban transplant Hector Olivera lead the way.

2. *Holdovers.* They will join outfielders Yoenis Cespedes, Anthony Gose and Will Myers hoping to put up better seasons for the future stars.

3. *A young starting staff.* Starting pitchers will be key if any of the young acquisitions will be able to put up good numbers to be effective in 2017. These include Chase Anderson, T.J. House, Robbie Erlin, Shane Greene, Anthony DeSclafani and Chad Bettis.

Only time will tell.

detroit STARS

Dave Jaskot (5th year)

He's working on a hard rebuild, so basic building blocks are the order of the day.



Manager Dave Jaskot is a realist when it comes to his Detroit Stars. He states at the outset that the short-term prospects for this club are inelegant. Coming off a 64 win season, Detroit is spending a year in the fetal position due to some very unsightly pitching issues. Dave's instructions describe his club as 'poor' and set expectations for a win total in the 50s.

That's probably about right, but it's hardly the point. Dave enters rebuild season #2 in 2016 with a couple of shiny young objects in the center of his infield – 2016 draft picks Devon Travis and Ketel Marte. He also seems to have caught a break with Yoenis Cespedes who emerged as a star last season after flashing monster ability for a couple of years, but not quite delivering. (Cespedes is a two time winner of the All Star Game's Home Run Derby, and pretty much has muscles on his muscles.)

All this bodes positive for a team that not long ago almost ended the season of a 122 win Brobdingnag team, taking them to seven nail biting games. That was 2014. This year is tax we all pay to have those playoff opportunities.

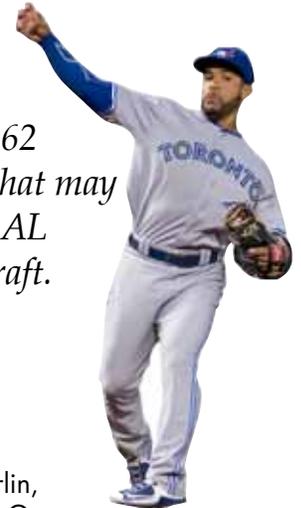
Pitching: 2.5
Yeah . . . well.

ROTATION. The 'aces' are Chad Bettis (8 C-15 HR+15, 20 starts) and Anthony DeSclafani (8 C+14 HR+16, 31 starts). Fifty one starts of guys who steal hits in the starting rotation. The good news from a rebuilders' perspective is that the remaining starters are durable and cover 160 starts. Chase Anderson (7 C+16 HR-12, 27 starts) and Miguel Gonzalez (6 C-15 HR-23, 26 starts) will struggle through their assignments.

Mike Pelfrey (4 C+15 HR+34, 30 starts) and Shane Greene (1 C+15 HR-16, 26 starts). Tanner

SNT: Devon Travis.

Devon Travis wore out AL pitching over the course of 62 games. A shoulder injury that may have cost him a shot at the AL ROY let him slide in the draft.



Turnover Rate: 43%

Arrived: Austin Adams, Chase Anderson, Chad Bettis, Robbie Erlin, Tyler Flowers, Trevor Gott, Shane Greene, Jose Lobaton, Ketel Marte, Hector Olivera, Adam Ottavino, Mike Pelfrey, Tanner Roark, Michael Taylor, Devon Travis.

Departed: Chad Billingsley, Robinson Cano, Jordan Danks, R.A. Dickey, Prince Fielder, Tom Gorzelanny, Hisashi Iwakuma, Phil Klein, Pete Kozma, Hector Noesi, Colby Rasmus, James Russell, Rafael Soriano, Eric Stults, Ryan Sweeney.

Roark (Grade 5 C+25 HR-23, 2 starts) finishes the season. This is a rebuilders' rotation. There will be some long innings in Detroit this year – for the other guys.

BULLPEN. Missing a closer. Missing a setup squad too. When you are rebuilding, you don't burn precious resources on amenities like a closer. And so it comes to pass that Trevor Gott (12* HR+45, 47 IP) is the man to toe the rubber in the ninth inning.



There is also Blaine Boyer (12* C+22 HR+26, 65 IP) who

Gott: Toes the rubber.



detroit STARS

has the same grade and decent peripherals.

Behind those two heroes are Chris Hatcher (11*, 39 innings), Mr. Everything Tanner Roark (Grade 9* C+25 HR-23, 12 starts, 45 IP) who relieved whenever he's not starting, and the durable Fernando Salas (8* C+45 HR-12, 63 IP).

Carlos Torres (6* C+25 HR+21, 57 IP) is the mop. Austin Adams (Grade 7* C-24 HR+41, 33 IP) is pretty good. The 339 innings seems a little thin, especially given the flammable starting rotation But survival is the only goal here.

Offense: **5.0** Cespedes, Valencia and some guys.

Yoenis Cespedes (11 hits, 2 walks, 1-0-0-0-0, R+1) is the cleanup man all year. Now 30 years old, his emergence as a top-tier performer was a nice surprise after several seasons when he struggled to keep his OBP above .300. He bats cleanup all season for Detroit. The #3 hitter is Danny Valencia (11 hits, 3 walks, 1-5-5-6, no shift) only plays 105 games but will be the best hitter in the lineup those days. Ryan Zimmerman (9 hits, 3 walks, 1-5-6-6, R-6, L+11) will bat behind Cespedes every day. The righty shift is a serious problem, but he will assassinate lefties.



Cespedes: Top tier

Brandon Moss (8 hits, 3 walks, 1-5-6) bats 6th in the everyday lineups. Michael Bourn (9 hits, 3 walks, 2 Os, 28 SSN for 24 attempts) is the leadoff man every day. The shortstop Cliff Pennington (8 hits, 4 walks, 2 Os) bats second against right-

ies. None of that is good news if you're of the opinion that guys at the top of the lineup should actually get on base. Against lefties, Danny Espinosa (9 hits, 3 walks, 1-6-6, L+1) bats second. Espinosa is the nominal starter at 2B because of his sparkling defense, but rookie Devon Travis (11 hits, 3 walks, 1-6-6-6) will make his presence felt when he's in the lineup.

The everyday catcher is the painfully pedestrian Tyler Flowers (9 hits, 2 walks, 0-6). He has 112 starts. A.J. Ellis (8 hits, 5 walks, 1-0-0, R-6) will suffer from the bad shift but perform well as the backup catcher. Michael Taylor (9 hits, 2 walks, 1-6, 34 ssn for 19 SBAs) is the surprise starter in left field. Anthony Gose (9 hits, 3 walks, 3 Os, 35 SSN for 34 attempts) looks to have the better card. Perhaps the lure of Taylor's first column 1 accounts for the decision.

This club will struggle to score runs, but they will have fun watching Cespedes rack up numbers.

Defense: **4.0** Nice for a rebuild.

This is a very good defensive team, especially for a rebuild. Danny Espinosa (2B9) is outstanding at a critical defensive position and he's backed up by Travis (2B8). The outfield is all OF3s and then some – Cespedes (OF3, 37 arm), Michael Bourn (OF3, 32 arm), and Michael Taylor (OF3, 34 arm) are all excellent. They are backed up by Anthony Gose (OF3, 35 arm). Ryan Zimmerman (1B4) will also make all the plays with the leather.

Two of the catchers – Flowers (C7, Th-4) and Jose Lobaton (C7, Th-2) – are defensive liabilities, but they are backed up by A. J. Ellis (C8, TH-1). Chad Pennington (SS8) is average. The only real hole is third baseman Danny Valencia (3B3). There is no better third base defensive rating on the roster, so the hole will be as big as Pablo Sandoval all year.

2015 playoffs

We had a wild playoff season that led to a very exciting 7-game World Series. For some teams it was the last hurrah before a rebuild; for others, it provided motivation for a return in 2016. And for one club's manager, it was a victory lap that he – and we – won't soon forget.

Wild Card Round



International Conference Rye vs. Grand Cayman

These two Mays Division rivals played each other 14 times over the regular season. Grand Cayman won the regular season series 8-6 and held the home field advantage for the playoff series. It didn't matter. Rye won two close games in Grand Cayman on their way to a four-game sweep to push aside the 102-win favorite.



National Conference Munich vs. Midwest

Midwest lost the first two games, but was able tie up the series. After Munich won Game Five, the Mongrels took a 2-1 lead into the 9th inning of Game Six, but Carlos Santana hit a game-tying homer off Greg Holland. Jason Heyward won it in the 13th with an RBI single. Chris Sale faced Madison Bumgarner twice, and Munich won both in 1-run victories.

International Conference Semi-Final Round



Rye vs. Gotham City

Rye looked to repeat the magic of the Wildcard Round, but Gotham City's bats wouldn't comply. They battered Jeff Samardzija in Game One to win 6-3. Hiroki Kuroda fired a shutout in Game Two to win 3-0.

Inspired, Gotham City won Game Three and then came from behind to beat Jered Weaver in Game Four for the sweep.



Brobdingnag vs. Warrenton

Defending league champion Brobdingnag managed just 73 wins but still made the playoffs by default in an extremely weak division.

Warrenton, playing without a DH, barely won Game 1 on a 2-out double by Angel Pagan in the 12th. They went on to win the next two games on their way to a decisive five-game series win.

Thanks to Mark Bloom for providing summaries of the playoff series.

National Conference Semi-Final Round



Munich vs. Knoxville

Knoxville opened in fine form behind a Danny Duffy shutout in Game One, but Munich scored 19 runs to cruise in Game Two.

Francisco Liriano shut out Knoxville in Game Three, but Knoxville's offense carried them to a Game Four victory. Jose Bautista won Game Five with a walk-off shot, and Munich pounded the ball in Game Six to win 12-6.



Statesmen vs. Melrose

Melrose led the league with 114 wins and was a decided favorite in this series. They won the first two games at home with pitching and only 1 home run.

The Statesmen won Game Three behind Lance Lynn, but Melrose came back to win a close game; their bullpen was overpowering throughout the series. The won Game Five with a two-run 9th inning, but Melrose survived a nail-biter to win Game Six, 8-6.

International Conference Championship



Gotham City vs. Warrenton

Due to a better head-to-head record, Warrenton had the home field advantage for this series, pitting the two best International Conference teams against one another. Game One, despite a Collin McHugh vs. Felix Hernandez matchup, was a slugfest won by Warrenton, 10-6. Game Two was a back-and-forth affair, but the Giants had more rallies to come out on top.

True to form, Game Three featured another back-and-forth nail-biter, but Warrenton pulled it out, 6-5, to take a commanding 3-0 lead in the series. With their backs against the wall, Gotham City woke up their bats for an 11-0 walloping, with a Wacha CG shutout. Game Five witnessed an historic moment, as McHugh pitched a no-hitter, allowing only one baserunner (a walk).

National Conference Championship



Munich vs. Melrose

Two impressive offenses meet two nasty pitching staffs in a "Clash of the Titans." In Game One, Melrose spotted Munich three runs before storming back first to tie it up and then go ahead. The Melrose pen held off a comeback to win 7-5. In Game Two, J. D. Martinez hit his second 2-run homer of the series, and Jon Lester pitched a complete game shutout to propel Melrose to a 2-0 lead.

In Game Three, the Melrose bats jumped on Francisco Liriano for a 4-0 lead and held on to win 5-1. Munich came out swinging in Game Four and came out swinging, building a 2-0 lead after four innings. But Melrose chipped away, tying it in the 6th inning on a Ryan Braun HR. Todd Frazier hit the solo blast to put Melrose ahead in the 7th, and the bullpen made it stand for a four-game sweep.

2015 TBL world series

by Walter Hunt
(based on accounts
by Jack Chapman)



Melrose vs. Warrenton

We were not surprised to see the Melrose Avengers in the World Series. What did surprise us was their opponent: Jack Chapman's Warrenton Giants, who had gotten off to a blistering 48-12 start and finished the season with 107 wins. They tore through the playoffs, but despite momentum had to be considered underdogs. But this is why we play the games . . .

Game 1 at Melrose McHugh vs. Ross

First blood in the World Series belonged to Melrose's David Ortiz, who hit a solo shot to give the Avengers a 1-0 lead in the second inning; but in the third inning Warrenton put up three runs using little-ball: an error, a hit-and-run single, a bunt, an RBI groundout and a single. Russell Martin, who committed the error, delivered his own solo homer to make the game 3-2 after three innings. Melrose's own little-ball tied the game after five innings.



Giles

In the sixth inning, Warrenton's offense delivered three runs to put them ahead 6-3, but Melrose's relentless attack came back in the ninth: Ken Giles stole Ortiz' second homer, but his double, another by Michael Bourn, and an error that

brought him across got Melrose within a run. It wasn't enough as Giles closed out the game.

Warrenton 6, Melrose 5

WP: McHugh LP: Ross S: Giles

Game 2 at Melrose Wheeler vs. Lester

The game began with frustration for the Avengers, looking to tie the Series. They loaded the bases in the first inning and had first and second with one out in the second, each time failing to score; but a walk and two two-out singles plated a single run in the third.



Ortiz

The Giants responded with a run in the fourth, featuring a Jon Jay double, to tie the game, but the Melrose offense delivered two runs of its own the next inning, and a pair of doubles in the seventh extended the lead to 4-1. Warrenton managed a single run against Lester late, but the Melrose bullpen shut them down for Melrose's first win.

Melrose 4, Warrenton 2

WP: Lester LP: Wheeler S: Ramos

Game 3 at Warrenton Kazmir vs. Peavy

After two days of relative calm, the Melrose finally received its shipment of bats on the road. In the second inning, the Avengers erupted for six runs, batting around and chasing Jake Peavy. Anthony Rendon and David Ortiz were the hitting stars, while Scott Kazmir mowed down the opposition. With a 6-1 lead Melrose piled it on in the last three innings, adding nine more while Warrenton could only manage to score a pair. Melrose closed out this laughter to take a 2-1 series lead on the road.



Rendon

Melrose 15, Warrenton 3

WP: Kazmir LP: Peavy

Game 4 at Warrenton Paxton vs. Cain

The Avengers, veterans of a number of TBL World Series, took until the fifth inning to go to work, coming from a 1-0 deficit to score one run, and then followed it up with two solo home runs by Adrian Gonzalez and Ryan Braun to go up 3-1. In the eighth inning, Gonzalez added another solo shot to close out the scoring.



Gonzalez

Melrose 4, Warrenton 1

WP: Paxton LP: Cain S: Ramos

Game 5 at Warrenton Ross vs. McHugh

With a 3-1 lead in the Series, Mr. Freedman must have smelled blood. As in Game 4, the Giants struck first, scoring a first-inning run to go up 1-0; but this time it was J. D. Martinez coming back with a three-run homer to give Melrose a 3-1 lead. But today the Giants were not to be denied.



McGehee

In the fourth inning, a leadoff single by Casey McGehee, followed by a double by pitcher Collin McHugh (no DH for the Warrenton boys!) brought them within one, and two innings later McGehee crossed the plate with the tying run. Whether there was some sense of inevitability, only the two managers could say; but when Erick Aybar hit a leadoff double in the seventh inning and scored on a Buster Posey single, the Avengers must have wondered what happened. That was the end of the scoring, and Warrenton stayed alive with a 4-3 win.

Warrenton 4, Melrose 3

WP: Affeldt LP: Broxton S: Giles

Game 6 at Melrose Wheeler vs. Lester

The series moved back to Melrose with the Avengers holding a 3-2 lead and still in control. Once again Warrenton scored first, and once again Melrose responded to take the lead. But this time little ball produced two runs, and the next inning two doubles led to two more, giving the Giants a 5-2 lead after 4 1/2 innings.



Posey

Melrose scored a third run to make it 5-3; and just when it looked as if the Avengers were ready to mount a comeback while their bullpen held off the Giant offense, Buster Posey cranked a three-run homer to put it out of reach. All of a sudden, Melrose had given up its 3-1 series lead,

bringing everything down to one final game at home to determine the champion.

Warrenton 8, Melrose 4

WP: Wheeler LP: Lester

Game 7 at Melrose Kazmir vs. Peavy

TBL has seen its share of dramatic Game 7s: your editor remembers Maracaibo's surge against Roger Clemens of Brobdingnag years ago, and the recent extra-inning extravaganza between Gotham City and Munich. This one would be one for the ages, with everything on the line and Warrenton – at Melrose – after two elimination games and at the tail end of its bullpen, while the Avengers were still loaded and ready.

Melrose scored first due to a first-inning error, but it could have been more: first and third with one out results in no more scoring. Things remained this way – a tight 1-0 game – until the top of the seventh inning, when singles by Hunter Pence and Buster Posey put runners at the corners with no outs. An infield grounder by Marwin Gonzalez drove Posey home, but again no further damage could be done, leaving the game tied.



Pence

In the ninth inning, Hunter Pence hit a one-out double. Posey was intentionally walked, but Warrenton management ran for Pence with James Jones. He had hit only .229 as a rookie, but had stolen 21 of 22 bases, and what happened next was exactly as expected: he broke for third. Unfortunately for Melrose the throw from Martin sailed into left field, allowing Jones to score the go-ahead run.

With only one relief inning left for Giles, Warrenton looked to protect its slim lead to win it all. With one out he walked Alex Gordon – but this time the dice were with the defensive club, and the tying run was thrown out stealing, leaving Jimmy Rollins to strike out and end the 2016 classic.

Warrenton 2, Melrose 1

WP: Petit LP: Ramos S: Giles

Series MVP:

Hunter Pence

He clinched the honor by going 3-for-4 in Game 7 with a double.

Central Time

2015 Aaron Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Statesmen*	95	67	.586	—
Maracaibo	88	74	.543	7
Kansas	86	76	.531	9
Northboro	78	84	.481	17

* Lost to Melrose in conference semi-final.

The Aaron Division has been about Portland and Maracaibo for a long time, at least ever since it was about Rochester. Last year's pennant winner was the last dance for the former Possum in nice new uniforms, and they were taken apart in a big way in the offseason.

So this year the power moves westward into Central Time, and it's up to *Bill Schwartz* to put it all together after several years' effort to build the



Kansas Koyotes into a top-shelf performer. Some of the road to this season has been hindered by injuries and plain bad luck. But Mr. Bill has a good eye for pitching,

the sort of patience that we New Englanders rarely demonstrate, and years of APBA dice rolling. The road to a pennant isn't as direct as it might be in the Clemente or the Ruth, but this is Kansas' pennant to win.

The 2015 *Maracaibo Rumrunners* did better than expected, but fell just short of a gambler's chance in the post-season.

It probably didn't matter, given the competition, but it was still a disappointment for veteran *Walter Hunt*. He may have not expected to win 88, but winning 91 would have been so much sweeter.



This year the club is a year older, and while the top few picks were very much oriented toward

the future, they've also made some moves to make sure Kansas will have a fight on its hands as the season progresses.

What to make of *Robert Jordan* and *Steve Stein's Northboro Phoenix*?

Predicted for good to great things in recent years after seasons of struggle, they too used their draft resources to build for the future and made some trades that contenders don't necessarily make. But there are still a good number of strong players on the roster. They are too good for a rebuild-er: the question is whether they're good enough to get in on the post-season festivities.



Way down in the scenic city of *The*, *Eric Sheffler* has made the *Statesmen* his own, in part by sending a large number of players to other clubs that were a part of the long-time contender that so recently won an Aaron Division pennant. As with most rebuilds, it's going to be a few years before we can tell if it was a good idea.





Aaron Division

Dallas Keuchel,
Kansas

1. Kansas	30.0
2. Maracaibo	28.5
3. Northboro	26.0
4. The Statesmen	22.5

2015 kansas KOYOTES in review



It ended up being somewhat of a feeling of overachievement.

by Bill Schwartz

2015 in Review

Final Record: 86-76 (3rd, Aaron)

In 2015, the Koyotes got off to a fast start, leading the Aaron after April, and finished with an 86-76 season, missing the playoffs by 4 games when an 8-12 November doomed them to also-ran status. But having been picked to finish last in the Aaron and sixth worst in the TBL and then ending up drafting in the #15 spot, it ended up somewhat of a feeling of overachievement.

What went right?

Led by a solid bullpen and a superb year from Max Scherzer (15-6, 2.30, 9 CG, 5 ShO, 263 K's), Kansas reversed their 2014 record, going from 77-85 to 86-76 - first time over .500 since 2010.

Kevin Quackenbush had a stellar year (4-0, 0.83, 54 RIP) as setup man to Neftali Feliz (4-3, 3.16, 23 saves).

He even had 18 saves when called on to close due to Feliz' limit of 31.3 RIP's. Joakim Soria (4-1, 1.93) backed them up and innings eater Todd Redmond chipped in with a 7-1, 2.93 record.

One of the few bright spots on this offensively challenged team was Yan Gomes, whose 89 RBI .283 BA, and .486 SA led the team. Mark Reynolds led the team with 25 HR and drove in 67 despite his anemic .178 BA. And not to be forgotten was what is believed to be a franchise record 27 game hitting streak from Dustin Pedroia in July & August.

What went wrong?

In what has become a common theme in Koyote land, too many Mario Mendoza type hitting

numbers didn't make for a lot of crooked numbers on the scoreboard. No less than 7 hitters, representing over 2000 AB's, hit under .210.

Not that it wasn't expected, but 47 starts of grade 4 and lower is an invitation to things going wrong. The 12-21 record in those starts was a major contributor to a failed playoff run.



Scherzer: Superb

3 Things

1. *Formidable rotation.* With their starters finally all healthy, the Koyotes are hoping that this is that "next year" that the Dodgers of old were always waiting for. With first round pick Luis Severino's grade 14 added to Dallas Keuchel's 15 and Scherzer, Matt Harvey & Sonny Gray's 14's, the Koyotes are excited to see what

might be in 2016 with 137 starts of grade 14+. The hope is that winning will become more than "the occasional thing".

2. *Improved bullpen.* With an excellent starting rotation in place, the Koyotes needed to upgrade their rather pedestrian bullpen and decided to mortgage away some of the future by trading the 2016 Bonus pick and 2017 #1 to pick up a closer in grade 22 Joaquin Benoit and a setup man in grade 17 Ken Giles.

3. *These are not your father's Koyotes.* With the 2016 roster containing no less than 13 cards with a 66-1, headed by Franklin Gutierrez' monster partial-season (59 g) card (1-1-5-5-6), Kansas is looking to score a lot more often than Koyote teams of late.

kansas KOYOTES



Bill Schwartz (9th year)

This could be the best Kansas team ever.

The Kansas Koyotes have arrived — the culmination of Mr. Schwartz' efforts and patience. Steadily improving since bottoming out with 53 wins in 2013, the Koyotes finished over .500 last year for the first time since 2010. And in 2016, they should be even better. With some new additions, some career years, and Matt Harvey's return, this could be the best Kansas team ever.

Now the question becomes: are they good enough to reach the World Series? They may find that a Koyote looks like a Cairn Terrier named Toto to the wicked witches of the National Conference. In the playoffs, they may find they're "not in Kansas anymore."

Pitching: 14.5 **All the king's horses.**

Not since the glory days of the Midwest Mongrels has the league seen a starting rotation as stacked as this one. The rotation deserves a subtitle, like: The Four Aces of the Apocalypse. The Young Guns. All the King's Horses. And horses they are, as they should pitch deep into games.

The bullpen was bolstered by trade acquisitions SNT Joaquin Benoit and Ken Giles. Since the starting grades are so good, it's likely that the

Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Joaquin Benoit, Pedro Ciriaco, Jeff Francoeur, Ken Giles, Franklin Gutierrez, Leonys Martin, Ivan Nova, Branden Pinder, Luis Severino, Steven Wright

Departed: Scott Carroll, Tyler Colvin, Coco Crisp, Steve Delabar, David Huff, Ramiro Pena, Todd Redmond, Paco Rodriguez, Matt Shoemaker, Anthony Swarzak..

bullpen's peripherals, both positive and negative, will come into play. But there's plenty of relief innings (over 530) available.

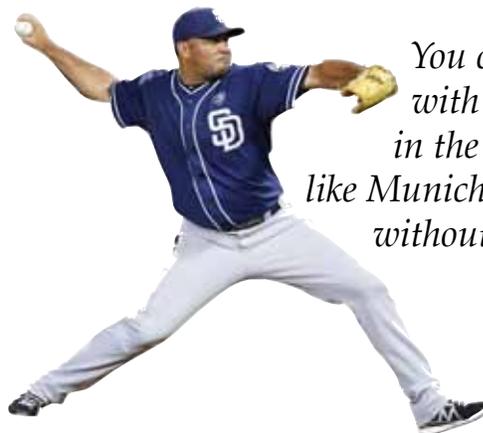


Scherzer: One of the horses

ROTATION. Where Midwest had Brandon Webb, Johan Santana, Ryan Dempster, and Ervin Santana, Kansas has Dallas Keuchel (Grade 15 C+22 HR+26), Max Scherzer (Grade 14 C+36), Sonny Gray (Grade 14 HR+24), and Matt Harvey (Grade 14 C+31). Combined with rookie Luis Severino (Grade 14 C-23 HR-16), the team has 137 starts of ace-quality awesomeness.

The remaining 25 starts are covered by bullpen-enabling Steven Wright (Grade 10 C-24 HR-23) and Ivan Nova (Grade 5). As luck or planning would have it, the bullpen is well suited to this work. Given the top end of this exceptional rotation, these two munchkins probably won't have to throw many innings.

SNT: Joaquin Benoit.



You can't compete with the big guns in the conference like Munich or Melrose without a closer.



KANSAS KOYOTES

BULLPEN. Peripherals matter. SNT Joaquin Benoit (Grade 22* C-24) is the new closer. While his grade and the "X" strikeout letter are closer-worthy, his peripherals are less so. One-run games may become nail-biters. Giles (Grade 17* HR+53) has the stuff, if not exactly the grade, to close games, but he's set to work the 8th inning.

The set up men include righty Joaquin Soria (Grade 15*) and lefties Brian Matusz (Grade 15* C-22 HR+14) and Zach Duke (Grade 15* C-52 HR-16). The middle relievers are all right-handed — the good: Liam Hendriks (Grade 11* C+35 HR+43); the OK: Kevin Quackenbush (Grade 10*); and the ugly: Branden Pinder (Grade 12* C-45 HR-14). Jason Motte (Grade 8* C+43 HR+22) and Luis Garcia (Grade 9* C-35 HR+35) also contribute.

Offense: 8.5
Isolated power.

One of the prettiest cards in the set belongs to second-round pick Franklin Gutierrez (1-1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, R-3). He'll bash, but only for 59 games. His tag-team partner is Chris Colabello (1-0-0-0, 12 hits, 2 walks+22) for 101 games. That's a full season of a Guy You Don't Want to Face.

Michael "Moose" Moustakas (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42) finally put it all together, and Justin Smoak (1-5-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks) offers isolated power. Neither has much of a shift. Enrique Hernandez (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, but a crazy +16/-13 shift) has enormous entertainment value.

The lineup has lots of power, but it comes at a price: base hits. Rejuvenated Jeff Francoeur (1-5-6, 10 hits, a walk, L-4) and Yasiel Puig (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22 L+6 R-4) are the only two in this group with a 7 on 22. Curtis Granderson (1-5-6,



Moustakas: Together

9 hits, 5 walks+22, L-13 R+2, E25 for 17 attempts), George Springer (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L+3 R-4, E31 for 20 attempts), Miguel Montero (1-6, 9 hits, 4 walks), Yan Gomes (1-6-6, 9 hits, a walk+42, L-5), and Mark Reynolds (1-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+22) will get lucky sometimes.

The lineup somehow squeezes in a couple table-setters at the top and bottom: Dustin Pedroia (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks) and Jean Segura (2 0s, 10 hits, a walk+22, L+2, R-2, D31 for 31 attempts). Segura, the fastest man on the team, is ironically tied for the most 24s on his card (with Colabello).

Defense: 4.0
Mostly dead average.

The good news is mostly at the corners. Moustakas (3B5) is a vacuum, and the combination of Smoak and Reynolds (both 1B4s) will catch most of what come their way. Pedroia (2B8) and Montero (C8, but Th-3) are both above average when they play.

Everyone else is dead average. Segura (SS8) plays almost every day. Gomes (C7, Th+1) and Hernandez (2B7) play against lefties. All the outfielders are OF2s, except when Reynolds gets



Pedroia: Still solid

to shag flies in LF. Francoeur (37) and Puig (38) have outstanding arms.

Bench:
Some useful skills.

3.0

While some key players have limited usage, there is some flexibility on the roster, even though the instructions don't call for much pinch-hitting or -running. In addition to the usual suspects, Pedro Ciriaco (3 0s, 10 hits, a walk+22, L-5) and Leonys Martin (OF3, C29 for 19 attempts) can contribute useful skills, unlike Domonic Brown.

1st

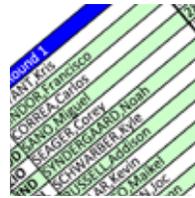
It's a coming-out party for Kansas, but while they'll likely make the playoffs, they can't waltz to a division championship. Maracaibo and even Northboro may chase them all the way to the end. While the Koyotes' starting rotation is extraordinary, a team still has to score runs, make the plays in the field, and successfully close out games to win consistently. How well the team executes will determine its fate.



Colabello: Don't want to face



After a few up and down seasons our old friend from the Midwest, Bill Schwartz, has guided the Koyotes on an ever increasing path of success. They are the cream of the Aaron in 2016. With 137 starts of GR14 and above they hope to be more than a speed bump for MEL/MUN.



kansas:
TBL Draft



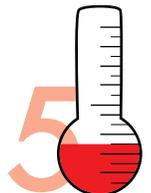
kansas KOYOTES

We think it's safe to say that Mr. Schwartz has built his team though the draft. In fact, the excellent draft he enjoyed in 2013 netted Harvey, Keuchel, Segura and Gomes. That's two starters at important skill positions and two aces to head the rotation. In 2014, Gray and Puig came on board. And in 2015, Springer was the top pick.

Yes, he leans toward Yankees, but he's not trying to collect the whole set. He judiciously picks and trades for those players he likes. He had a chance to take A-Rod in the 2016 draft and took Gutierrez instead. Putting this team together has taken patience, and pulling the offense together is a work-in-progress, but Mr. Schwartz seems content to build piece by quality piece.

In 2017, Kansas has no first-round pick, which may limit the team's access to a frontline offensive star, especially since they'll likely be drafting in the bottom half of the round. But for the team to remain a contender in coming years, they may have to improve the offense, defense, and bullpen. Mr. Schwartz may have to up his trading acumen to accomplish his goals now that he has drafted a solid foundation.

TQ: 30.0



2015 maracaibo RUMRUNNERS in review



It was a chance to have fun, toying with the very edges of contention.

by Walter Hunt

2015 in Review

Final Record: 88-74 (2nd, Aaron)

In a classic case of exceeding expectations, the Rumrunners surged to surprising first-half success in 2015, then came back to earth with an expected thud in the second half to become the team the *Annual* said they would be: 85-90 wins, not enough walks, too little power and a few too many at-bats and innings by guys who never looked like members of a contender.

The first half was an illusion; the second half was a bit of a bad-luck streak; they only fell two games short of the second wild card, after all. But it was never going to go deep – it was a chance to have fun, toying with the very edges of contention while retooling from the age of Mariano and Ichiro and preparing for . . . whatever would come next.

What went right?

This team was carried by its pitching, led by another outstanding campaign by lefty ace Cole Hamels (18-8, 2.68, 188 hits and 237 Ks in 229 innings, with 7 complete games). Aaron Harang turned in 15 wins, 7 CG and three shutouts. Santiago Casilla was lights out (19 hits in 57 IP, 37 saves, 0.47 ERA) and Mark Melancon (8-2, 1.31) and Steve Cishek (1.31 ERA) were tremendous in setup roles for a very hard-working bullpen.

On offense, Salvador Perez hit .276-17-78; Marlon Byrd had 20 HR; and Ian Desmond stole 19 bases to lead the team and hit 16 HR. In what was likely his last full season, Ichiro Suzuki hit a respectable .272 and stole 11 of 14 bases.

What went wrong?

The best part of the offense simply wasn't very good. Six players struck out 100 times or more, led by Desmond (180), Byrd (164) and Starling Marte (150). The team struck out 1,395 times and walked only 355 times; as noted in last year's *Annual*, the team was not strong in on-base percentage, and the offense lived down to that observation, recording only a .300 OBP – it was a team of Emilio Bonifacios, with only a little more power. But only a little: the club had only 111 home runs (21st in TBL) and 305 doubles. They scored 664 runs, about average; only the pitching kept them in games. While not really championship-caliber, more was certainly expected of the hitters.

3 Things

1. *Not pulling the trigger in September.*

With titans like Munich, Melrose, Knoxville and the Statesmen in the conference, it was simply not possible to get the team from where they were to playoff-ready. Another deal might have given them the few extra wins, but that would have been all.

2. *Gradual transition.* There was no reason to panic in the offseason, though there were some problems to address: bullpen, third base, better starters. To unbuild at this point would have meant selling off favorite pieces at discount. That simply didn't seem right.

3. *Pay to play.* The biggest acquisition in the 2016 draft is Maikel Franco, and it cost a 2017 #2 to make sure the pick was a cornerstone. Though expensive, it had to be done.



Hamels: Outstanding

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS



Walter Hunt (30th year); Hall of Famer

They'll need all hands on deck.

In a year they weren't supposed to contend, they finished a scant two games behind Midwest for a playoff berth. They did it with pitching, as the team hit only 111 home runs all year, led by Marlon Byrd's 20. Cole Hamels won 18 games, and Aaron Harang (a Grade 8) won 15.

The team may hit more homers in 2016 (and Byrd is back for more), but it may not get any easier. The team is better, at least on paper, which means they may win it all, given Mr. Hunt's skill. But the Rumrunners play in a competitive division and in an even more competitive conference. They'll need all hands on deck. Many of the same faces are back, but the deck's

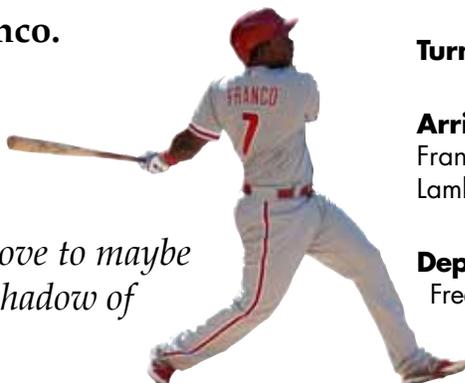
Pitching: **10.0** **New "kids" in town.**

been shuffled a bit. New kids in town take their places at the front of the rotation and at the top of the bullpen. But it's still a fairly typical Rumrunner pitching staff, meaning the pitchers have lots of big positive peripherals. Because, as Mr. Hunt knows, peripherals matter over the course of a full season.

One interesting observation about this year's staff is that it has only two left-handed pitchers: one

SNT: Maikel Franco.

Mr. Hunt traded up to draft this third baseman/stud. A strategic move to maybe finally cast off the shadow of Chipper Jones.



starter and one reliever. That may help those opponents with huge lefty shifts, at least on the boards. But Mr. Hunt always gets the most out of his pitching staff, and there's no reason to expect anything different in 2016. Besides, it may be true in TBL that it's better to have too many right-handed pitchers than left-handed ones.



Lackey: Backup

ROTATION. The new "kid" to lead the rotation is 36-year-old Chris Ryan Young (Grade 15 C-23 HR-13). While he doesn't have positive peripherals normal for a Rumrunners' pitcher, he has the big grade for 18 starts, and that's something Mr. Hunt could not resist. Backing Young are righty John Lackey (Grade 12 C+23 HR+13) and lefty Cole Hamels (Grade 11 C+12 HR+12). They contribute 65 more starts. That's a solid half a season.

Then things fall back to earth, like a baseball hit a long way. Ubaldo Jimenez (Grade 9 C-22) is the last starter able to steal hits by himself. A pair of Grade 6 starters — Colby Lewis (C+31) and Joe Kelly (C-22) — round out the rotation. Most of these starts fall to Lewis and his excellent command, but this half of the season's starts will require judicious use of the bullpen.

Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Matt Albers, Curt Casali, Andre Ethier, Maikel Franco, Marwin Gonzalez, Nate Jones, Keone Kela, Jake Lamb, Chris Young, Chris B. Young.

Departed: Clint Barmes, Emilio Bonifacio, Danny Farquhar, Freddy Galvis, Aaron Harang, Junior Lake, Cameron Maybin, Mike Morse, Carlos Quentin, Dan Straily



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

BULLPEN. The new “kid” in town to close games is 33-year-old Matt Albers (Grade 19* C+26 HR+24). He’s a real closer in grade and peripherals, but he has only 37-odd innings, so he’ll have to be handled with care. Mark Melancon (Grade 16* C+33 HR+35) turned in another great year, with over 76 innings, to set up and save when needed.

Rookie Keone Kela (Grade 14* HR+33) joins last year’s closer Santiago Casilla (Grade 14* C-24), erstwhile starter Young (Grade 15*), and lefty Justin Wilson (Grade 13* C-16 HR+42) as a very competent middle relief crew. Steve Cishek (Grade 10* C-36 HR+31) helps the bottom of the rotation, and Junichi Tazawa (Grade 6* C+26 HR+24) is the mop. Overall, they have 450 innings; it’s probably enough, but more would have helped.

Offense: 10.0
More pop than last year.

The offense starts with SNT Maikel Franco (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22). He could get even better. Like Franco, Lorenzo Cain (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+42, L+4 R-4, D32 for 34 attempts), Andre Ethier (1-4-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L-17), Mitch Moreland (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-6), and Salvador Perez (1-5-6, 10 hits, a walk+22, L-8 R+2) all have a 7 on 44. That’s some hitting, but there’s more.



Moreland: Power

Starling Marte (1-6-6, 11 hits, a walk+42, L-6, D29 for 40 attempts) does everything but draw walks. Marwin Gonzalez (1-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L+3 R-4) came out of nowhere — well, actually, he came from Warrenton — to add to the offense.

Chris Brandon Young (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+9 R-11), Marlon Byrd (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+3 R-3), and Ian Desmond (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+3 R-2, E28 for 18 attempts) all provide more pop than the team had last year. All but Desmond, who has to play a lot of the time, will likely be used to take advantage of their shifts.

But we’re not done yet. The ageless Brandon Phillips (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, no shift, E34 for 26 attempts) got his legs back at age 34. Jake Lamb (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-9) also contributes. This offense should score more runs than last year’s edition.

Defense: 5.0
One notable drawback.

This is a strong defensive team with one notable drawback. Marte and Cain are OF3s with plus arms, while Young (OF3) can sub for Ethier (OF2). Perez (C9, Th-1) is backed by Christian Bethancourt (C8, Th+5) — the less said about his hitting, the better.

Phillips (2B8) and Moreland/Gonzalez (both 1B4s) solidify the right side of the infield. That leaves Lamb (3B4) and Desmond (SS8) as average on the left side of the infield, and Franco (3B3) a liability. With a right-handed pitching staff, maybe all the ground balls will go to the right side.

Bench: 3.0
A contender’s bench.

Five power-number cards are pretty rare, and Curt Casali (1-1-1-6-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42) is the pinch-hitting toy. The aforementioned Bethancourt is a defensive weapon.

There’s some overlap in the regulars, particularly



Casali: 5 power, 3 1s

2015 northboro PHOENIX in review



by Steve Stein

The rest of the offense failed to show up.

2015 in Review

Final Record: 78-84 (4th, Aaron)

This is a very young team. 2015 was year 3 after the big teardown. We lost 214 games in years 1 and 2. The pieces are starting to fall into place, but the puzzle is far from complete. The last rusty parts of the old machine are finally failing, leaving us with big question marks at catcher and short-stop. Our secondbaseman of the future, last year's number one pick Jurickson Profar, missed the entire season with a shoulder injury. A long-term solution for catcher and third base is still elusive. Despite all that, the 2015 Northboro Phoenix had hopes of cracking .500, but wound up 3 wins shy.



Kluber: Beast

What went right?

This year's number one pick José Abreu had a brilliant rookie year. Even though he underperformed, he led the team with 27 home runs, 49 doubles and 92 RBI. Corey Dickerson and Cole Calhoun also turned in outstanding sophomore seasons. J. J. Hardy dramatically outperformed his card, turning in a .753 OPS. Some of the pitching showed up, too. Corey Kluber was a beast, winning 17 games with five shutouts, striking out 303 in 270 innings. Garrett Richards won 13 games, and equaled Kluber's 2.80 ERA. Alex Wilson was an effective closer, saving 18 games, but there was just not enough of him.

What went wrong?

The rest of the offense failed to show up. Chris Carter horribly underperformed, despite his 21

home runs. Chris Iannetta and Cody Asche lingered around the Mendoza Line all season.

The pitching was the biggest letdown, however. Jake Odorizzi turned in a 5.13 ERA, losing 15 games. Ian Kennedy was worse, losing 16 games with a 5.14 ERA. The lowest of the low points was Drew Pomeranz. The Grade 17 lefty was pounded as the substitute closer, recording a miserable 6.65 ERA before a transition to the rotation somewhat salvaged his season.

3 Things

1. *Target 2017.* When we started the rebuild, 2017 was our target year. We're about four pieces short, and they're difficult ones to find: 2B, SS, 3B and C. If everything falls into place, we'll have Spangenberg at 2B, Profar at SS, Kang at 3B, and we'll all get ponies!
2. *The pitching, once very thin, is showing some body.* The 2016 rotation is solid if not spectacular, and the bullpen is almost there. We hope enough of our pitchers stay healthy enough to not need much help next draft.
3. *Solve the catcher situation.* Chris Iannetta's successors, Mike Zunino (drafted 2 years ago) and Kevin Plawecki (drafted this year) are the same age. Maybe one of them will break out. Or maybe we'll need a catcher in the 2017 draft.

northboro PHOENIX

Bob Jordan (17th year) / Steve Stein (14th year)

This is a team that will have to work hard to overcome its inherent weaknesses.



The *Annual* picked Northboro to finish second in the Aaron Division last year. Instead, they finished last, 12 games out of the playoffs and 10 games out of second place. The pitching managed a 4.14 ERA, which isn't awful, although the team totaled just 32 saves. The offense smacked 181 homers and hit .265, also not bad. Maybe it was the 24 total stolen bases and 98 GIDPs that ruined rallies and cost wins.

Heading into the new season, it's interesting to note that those numbers represent optimistic forecasts for 2016. The pitching is still OK, but there is absolutely no team speed. Another problem, exacerbated by SNT Pederson, is the number of non-productive outs — strikeouts, Ks, a swing and a miss. This is a team that will have to work hard to overcome its inherent weaknesses.

Pitching: 12.0
Will not be embarrassed.

This year, the brain trust of the Northboro franchise — Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein — did not add significantly to the team's pitching staff. A few relievers, a low-level starting prospect, but no one of note. So they enter 2016 with many of the same faces. The good news is that they really didn't need many new faces; they're just not that bad.



Kluber: Repeat

Besides a much poorer substitute for their short-inning closer and four ugly April starts, this staff will not be embarrassed during the season. The available relief innings may be a short, meaning the starters need to all pitch into the 6th

SNT: Joc Pederson.

After adding some quality arms in recent years, the Phoenix turned to a high-risk, high-reward hitter. Is he the real thing? They hope so.



inning. But most of the time, they actually may — because the top four starters are good enough to do it.

ROTATION. Like last season, Northboro's pitching is predominantly right-handed. All but nine starts come from the starboard side. Still, despite the lack of big positive peripherals, these are pretty good starts that will give the team a chance to win. The staff is led by Garrett Richards (Grade 12 C-23), Jake Odorizzi (Grade 12), and Corey Kluber (Grade 11 C+26). They account for 92 solid starts.

Erasmus Ramirez (Grade 10 C+16) had a nice bounce-back season, and rotation workhorse Ian Kennedy (Grade 9 HR-32) returns to throw fastballs down the middle — he also has an X strikeout letter. These two add 57 more starts.

Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Aaron Brooks, Phil Gosselin, Jung Ho Kang, Corey Knebel, Adam Liberatore, Joc Pederson, Kevin Plawecki, Chasen Shreve, Cory Spangenberg.

Departed: Melky Cabrera, Chris Capuano, Kevin Frandsen, Ernesto Frieri, Leury Garcia, Matt Stites, Steve Tolleson..

Swingman Drew Pomeranz (Grade 8 C-22 HR+21) contributes his nine left-handed starts, and the final four belong to Aaron Brooks (Grade 1 C+22 HR-16), who'll work in April.

BULLPEN. Last season, five relievers recorded saves. This year, an electrifying closer in Carter Capps (Grade 26* C+16 HR+26) slams the door in the 9th inning. But he has only 31 innings. According to the instructions, the fallback option is Alex Wilson (Grade 14* C+36 HR+26), who has the peripherals, but not the grade to really be a closer. Stranger things have happened, but this is a potential weakness.

When not closing, Wilson joins righty Josh Fields (Grade 13* HR+46) and lefties Drew Pomeranz (Grade 16*) — when not starting — and Chasen Shreve (Grade 15*

C-62 HR-24) to set up.

Corey Knebel (Grade 13* HR-24), Addison Reed (Grade 9* C+22 HR+36), and lefty Adam Liberatore (Grade 9* C+33) also play meaningful roles. There are 257 innings of 13*+ relievers to support the rotation. At the bottom of the pen are Aaron Barrett (Grade 7* C+21 HR+51) and Tommy Kahnle (Grade 7* C-62 HR+23).

Offense: 7.5
Firepower and air conditioning.

As we stated last year: This team has some power. The oft-injured Corey Dickerson (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-9) put together a monster season when he was healthy, but he's limited to just 65 games. Jose Abreu (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+42, L-9) had a super sophomore season. Brandon Belt (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, F29 for



Abreu: Super sophomore

12 attempts) proved he was worth holding onto. Seth Smith (4 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks), who may only have a part-time role, rounds out the Phoenix hitters with four power numbers.

But Northboro has still more power to play. Kole Calhoun (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-5) plays every day. Rookie Jung Ho Kang (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42+22, L-6) and surprising Derek Dietrich (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42+22, L-15 R+2) add power and that rare 42+22 combination to the lineup. SNT Joc Pederson (1-5-5, 7 hits, 5 walks+22, L-5) and Chris Iannetta (1-6, 7 hits, 5 walks, L+6, R-4) will likely supply fireworks or air conditioning all summer with their hit-or-miss approach.

Rookie Cory Spangenberg (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, D27 for a team-leading 13 attempts) will set the table effectively for his two-thirds of the season. But that's the end of the good news. Kevin Plawecki (2 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+22 L-9) only has to platoon (but vs. righties, so the larger half). But poor J. J. Hardy (2 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks, L-4) has to play almost every day. That's a rally-killing dead spot in the lineup.

As Hardy and Plawecki illustrate, there aren't just weak spots in this lineup, there are black holes. The power and walks will help score some runs, but several stars are limited this year by injury, and the best players are handicapped vs. left-handed pitchers. Plus, as stated above, the Phoenix has precious little base stealing ability to play with. Fortunately, there aren't many 24s on this team's hitting cards.

Defense: 4.5
Some definite strengths.

Hardy (SS9) — and Spangenberg (2B8) when he plays — make an excellent middle infield. Belt (1B5) is at the top of his game. Iannetta (Th-2)

and Plawecki (Th-1) are both C8s with weak arms. And Calhoun (OF3) won a gold glove. The other outfielders are all OF2s with middling arms.



Hardy: Three straight years

Kang (3B4) is average (and the only other carded shortstop as an SS7). Dietrich (2B6), when he plays, prays for the ball to be hit elsewhere. This defense has some definite strengths, but it probably won't shorten that many innings. Northboro will have to hope the error rolls go to the right positions.

Bench: 2.0
Phil Gosselin: Trade bait?

With tight usage among the regulars, the bench could help, if only the bench players were better. Phil Gosselin (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+42) is a either pinch-hitting toy or mid-season trade bait. According to the Phoenix instructions, he remains in the minors until September. Chris Carter (1-5-5, 7 hits, 4 walks+22) and Cody Asche (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-5) have become pine-jockeys, and neither strikes much fear in opposing pitchers. Meanwhile, the less said about Mike Zunino, the better.

3rd The *Annual* thought Northboro's obvious power would propel them to second place last year. It didn't. Not enough has changed since then, so this year, we're predicting a third-place finish. While this team has a lot to like, there are problems that SNT Joc Pederson does nothing to address. He might become a key cog on future versions of this team, but this year, he doesn't help.



northboro:
TBL Draft



northboro PHOENIX

Only four players on the current roster were acquired by trade, and one (Tommy LaStella) is uncarded. So the draft remains the primary way Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein have decided to build the team. Given SNT Pederson and 2014 first-round pick Zunino, they aren't shy about taking high-risk, high-reward chances.

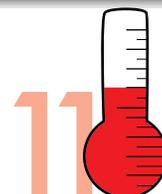
Then again, with their two first-round picks in 2015, including the first overall pick, the Phoenix took Abreu and Odorizzi, two safer picks who are now indispensable. And in 2013, Belt, Ramirez, and Kluber (in the fifth round, no less) joined the team. Was it luck or thoughtful research? Maybe a little of both, because you know these two guys do their draft homework.

In 2017, assuming the team suffers through another disappointing season this year, they'll have to reassess the weaknesses outlined in this article and decide what they'll need to compete. Some speed would help. Chances are, they'll use the draft to address the problems and to continue building a contender.



Despite having a very good starting rotation and a cast of dozens in the 'pen, NBO just doesn't have enough talent on offense yet. Reaching .500 would be a big win for them in 2016.

TQ: **26.0**



2015 STATESMEN in review

Lesson learned.

by Eric Sheffler



2015 in Review

Final Record: 95-67 (1st, Aaron)

As we start this review let's begin with the new from 2015: new ownership, new field leaders, new residence, and new uniforms to say just a few. With all of the sparkle and shine that preceded the 2015 Statesmen return to the TBL, it was the end of the year that seemed to dull the gleam. The Statesmen worked their way through the Aaron Division to post a solid 95-win season. The pitchers worked on the same level as the year before posting nearly identical stats. The hitters cut down on their strikeouts (from 1,521 in 2014 to 1,349) but this led to 80 less home runs and 146 fewer walks which only equated to a surprising -35 run differential from 2014 to 2015. While the team maintained a high-level of performance it was unfortunately still not enough to make it past the Melrose Avengers in the National Conference semifinals.



Tulo: Does what he does

posted a 2.96 ERA and a .970 WHIP with 154 K in 134 IP while only giving up 18 BBs. Adam Wainwright was once again the workhorse of the staff. His 243 IP led the team by almost 40 innings and his 214 Ks paced the team. He also led the team with 15 W, 9 CG, and 4 SHO. Joaquin Benoit compiled 39 saves, striking out 57 in 52 IP, but posted a rather high 2.42 ERA.

What went wrong?

Ownership's mid-season trade with Taylorville appears a bit injudicious in hindsight. As mentioned, Harrison came over and performed better than the team expected. Hurler Josh Beckett, acquired in the same deal, threw 46 IP to the tune of a 5.48 ERA in his seven starts. The big problem was not his 3-2 record but the neck injury sustained when watching 13 balls violently leave the park. In return Taylorville received fan-favorite Gio Gonzalez along with our 1st and 3rd round picks in the 2016 draft. Clear and delayed 20-20 vision shows a view of a desperate team who gave too much away for a 1st round playoff exit and the future. Lesson learned.

What went right?

New ownership and field leaders did not fail expectations and led the team to the playoffs. As for the players who did all the heavy lifting, when he played, Tulo did what Tulo does. He registered only 91 games played but slashed .322 / .399 / .556 with 21 HR and 63 RBI. Mid-season acquisition Josh Harrison came over from Taylorville and in 41 games hit .378, scored 25 times and knocked in 21. Rookie David Peralta showed signs of all-star talent by slashing .299 / .333 / .464 in 372 plate appearances. Fellow rookie Billy Hamilton hit a modest .254 but swiped 38 bases.

Carlos Carrasco was masterful tallying 12 wins in 22 starts. He baffled most opponents and

3 Things

1. *Lack of Continuity.* The club will face an overhaul this off-season to start a process of building a team that club management wants to see on the field.
2. *Youth.* As the team changes youth will need to be the key to that change.
3. *Continue to learn.* Lessons like the mid-season trade mentioned earlier will need to be learned quickly and avoided in the future in order for GM Carlton Fisk to retain his job beyond the upcoming season.

the STATESMEN

Eric Sheffler (13th year)

This team still has plenty of talent and the pieces may develop quickly, but this season, they'll miss Tulo, CarGo, and the rest.



Yes, there are still holdovers from the days of the Portland Possum, but last season was the team's last lap on that tank of gas. Now it's time to back off the accelerator and shift gears. Changes over the offseason mean a new direction — and a step back — for this noble franchise, as Mr. Sheffler works to put his own stamp on the team. There's certainly nothing wrong with that approach.

The /Portland hasn't finished last in the division since 2009. They bounced back to finish first in 2010. The *Annual* isn't going on record to predict that this team will bounce right back; our Magic 8-Ball is in the shop. But this team still has plenty of talent, and the new pieces may develop quickly. In the meantime, however, they'll miss Tulo, CarGo, and the rest.

Pitching: 5.0 Fasten your seat belts.

Josh Beckett, Joaquin Benoit, Matt Cain, Yovani Gallardo, Gio Gonzalez, Lance Lynn, and Huston Street: These are just some of the talent now toiling for other TBL teams. In their defense, the Statesmen still have an ace, but the rest of the rotation, with several exceptions, look like castoffs from Major League. Mostly because they are.

The bullpen has a closer at the top and a couple set-up guys, but that's the end of the good news.



Carrasco: No rash

SNT: Blake Swihart.

The first of three catchers taken in the first round, he's the fifth catcher on The's roster. But Mr. Sheffler couldn't resist the potential.



Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Hank Conger, Felix Doubront, Brandon Drury, Danny Farquhar, Brandon Finnegan, Joey Gallo, Andrew Heaney, Mike Montgomery, Bruce Rondon, Blake Swihart, Arodys Vizcaino, Ryan Vogelsong, Matt Wisler, Mike Wright.

Departed: Grant Balfour, Josh Beckett, Joaquin Benoit, Ryan Cook, Yovani Gallardo, Carlos Gonzalez, Lance Lynn, Rafael Montero, Mike Napoli, Huston Street, Troy Tulowitzki, Melvin Upton, Rickie Weeks, David Wright.

The rotation and the bullpen are fleshed out by innocuous pitchers, which portends a long season. Even with two innocuous relievers, the bullpen might still not be deep enough. Fasten your seatbelts; this is going to be tough season, as Mr. Sheffler probably knows, since the damage is from a self-inflicted wound.

ROTATION. The Statesmen still have an ace atop the rotation: Carlos Carrasco (Grade 11 C+22 HR+14), who somehow escaped the rash of trades. He's followed by rookie lefty Andrew Heaney (Grade 10 C+15 HR+23). Heaney was acquired after being selected the pick before Mr. Sheffler's pick in the second round. He must have really wanted him to trade for him afterward. Together, these two deliver 48 acceptable



the STATESMEN

starts. That's less than a third of the season.

The rest of the starts get ugly quickly: Ryan Voglesong (Grade 7 C-32), Mike Montgomery (Grade 7 C-31), Nate Eovaldi (Grade 6 HR+35), Matt Wisler (Grade 6 HR-16), Felix Doubront (Grade 3 for 23 innocuous starts!), and Mike Wright (Grade 2 HR-31). No matter how many runs you score or how deep your bullpen, a rotation like this tempers expectations. For two-thirds of the season, the starter is in danger of being pounded out. Think about that. While there a few names here who may still develop, this is a cast of characters out of sitcom. And not a good one.



Vizcaino: Last one

BULLPEN. Last year, The had five closer grades in the pen. This year, they're down to one: rookie Arodys Vizcaino (Grade 19* HR+52), but he has only 34 innings. Maybe Mr. Sheffler thinks he won't be needed that often. Maybe he's correct. Vizcaino's set-up tag team includes lefty Brandon Finnegan (Grade 15* C-45 HR-25) and righty Brandon Maurer (Grade 14* HR+34). They add 99 more innings, although Finnegan only gets the +5 bonus for 27 of his 48 innings.

The middle relievers will do the bulk of the work this year: Tom Layne (Grade 12* C-62 HR+35), Zach Putnam (Grade 11* C-31), Luis Avilan (Grade 10* C+16), and Joe Smith (Grade 9* C+22 HR+35). They contribute 215 innings. The mops are a pair of innocuous Grade 5* right-handers: Danny Farquhar (HR-25) and Bruce Rondon (C-62 HR+23). Believe it or not, they help. However, the total number of innings (487) isn't enough, given the weak rotation.

Offense: 9.0 Good power and lots of speed.

Without Tulo, CarGo, David Wright, and Mike Napoli, this is a much different offense. But it is far from a helpless one. David Peralta (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L-11, 27 SSN for 13 SBA), Kris Davis (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-5), and Danny Murphy (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-8) return with their power bats.

Old pro Joey Votto (1-5-6, 10 hits, 7 walks+22, 30 SSN for 14 SBA) is still an on-base machine. Meanwhile, Matt Wieters (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Justin Upton (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-12, E31 for 24 attempts) have some sock in their lumber, although Wieters is limited to 75 games. Darin Ruf (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L+16 R-12) and Hank Conger (1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-8 R+5) bring solid power to their limited roles.

The table setters may be effective spray hitters, but they seem to have an aversion to the base on balls. Josh Harrison (3 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk+22), Adeiny Hechavarria (6-0, 11 hits, 1 walk, L+10 R-4, 30 SSN for 9 SBA), and Billy Hamilton (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 34 SSN for 65 SBA) can make things happen. That leaves part-timers Brayan Pena (6-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-6), SNT Blake Swihart (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6), and Ryan Goins (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-6). They'll all play.

The key players are susceptible to left-handed pitching, not that it matters much this season. Still, the lineup has good power and lots of



Votto: Old pro

speed potential. It may not quite fit together yet, but Mr. Sheffler isn't *finished* yet. In the meantime, they'll still score some runs in bunches, especially against weaker pitching. They'll have to, just to keep the games close.

Defense: 5.5
Definitely high points.

The defense won't even miss Tulowitzki; Hechavarria (SS9) steps right into his spot. Votto (1B4) is still solid, while Harrison and Goins are both 2B8s, ending a long string of 2B6s. Murphy (3B3), however, transports his useless glove across the infield. Two C8s, Wieters (Th-0) and Pena (Th-4), will see the bulk of the work behind the plate, which is good news for opposing baserunners. In the outfield, Upton and Hamilton are excellent (OF3, good arms), but Peralta and Davis (OF2s) are just average. But there are definitely high points here.

Bench: 3.0
Enough flexibility to help.

Ruf can PH against lefties. There's an extra outfielder and all those catchers. Joey Gallo (1-5-5, 7 hits, 4 walks and 15 strikeouts), who is available some months, is the equivalent of a Hail Mary pass. But the regular roster has enough flexibility (and the desire to use it) to win some games. Every little bit will help.

4th

Yes, it's a fall from grace, but it's Mr. Sheffler's own doing. This year's team is obviously a work-in-progress, full of placeholders and part-timers. The offense will win some games that the pitching staff can't mess up, so it's not a total disaster. But this team is well behind, on paper, the other clubs in the Aaron Division.



Mr. Sheffler, beginning his 2nd year in his 2nd stint in TBL, has inherited a franchise that has won 95+ games six years in a row! That streak ends this year. A major tradeoff of aging talent saw to that. But a good 2016 draft and a bulging load of 2017 picks brings new hope in The



the statesmen:
TBL Draft



the STATESMEN

This is obviously an aberrant year to judge. In his second year back in the TBL fold, Mr. Sheffler sent a bunch of his boys packing. The's current roster includes 17 players either he or the previous management traded for. That may be the most in the league.

But the draft still matters to the Statesmen. Other than Upton, the rest of the outfielders are former first- and second-round picks. There are two catchers on the roster who were first-round picks. The pitching staff, currently in shambles, has no first-round picks and only two second-round picks (and one is Luis Avilan).

2016 was Mr. Sheffler's first TBL draft since 1995; he took over the team after the 2015 draft. In keeping with his team's current direction, he took mostly prospects. Swihart, Daniel Norris (since traded away), and Gallo were his first three picks. In 2017, unless something changes, the *Annual* expects more of the same. Chances are this is the first of a multi-year process.



Gallo: Hail Mary

TQ: 22.5



It Takes Two, Apparently

Like in the Williams Division, the talent-stocked Mantle has a chance to send three teams to the post-season – or perhaps only two. Each of the divisions in the National Conference may yield a team that has a very good season and is left on the outside looking in: Hudson, Maracaibo, Las Vegas. But it seems likely – almost inevitable – that there will be at least two playoff contenders from the Mantle.



Paul Montague's Munich Marauders were good enough to get to the conference finals last year, falling to the team that went seven games in the World Series. But

good enough isn't, and shouldn't be, good enough for the Beloved Founder of TBL. This year the team is even deeper and even more frightening than many of the championship-caliber Marauder clubs of the past. Monty isn't leaving anything on the table this year.

Meanwhile out in *Melrose* they want it bad as well. Maybe Warrenton was the team of destiny in 2015; maybe the dice didn't quite roll right. Whatever it was, *Mark Freedman's Avengers* want another shot at a ring with the current roster. They too have gone out and made the team even better than the 114-win monster that won almost everything last year.



2015 Mantle Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Melrose*	114	48	.704	—
Munich†	103	59	.636	11
Zion	64	98	.395	50
Hudson	62	100	.383	52

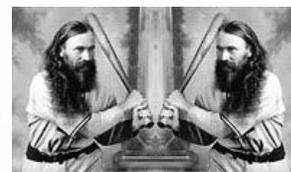
* Lost to Warrenton in the World Series.
† Lost to Melrose in NC Conference final.

Clay Beard's Hudson Generals are clearly an upper echelon team again after a few years of struggle, and they'll be nowhere near the 100-loss club of 2015.

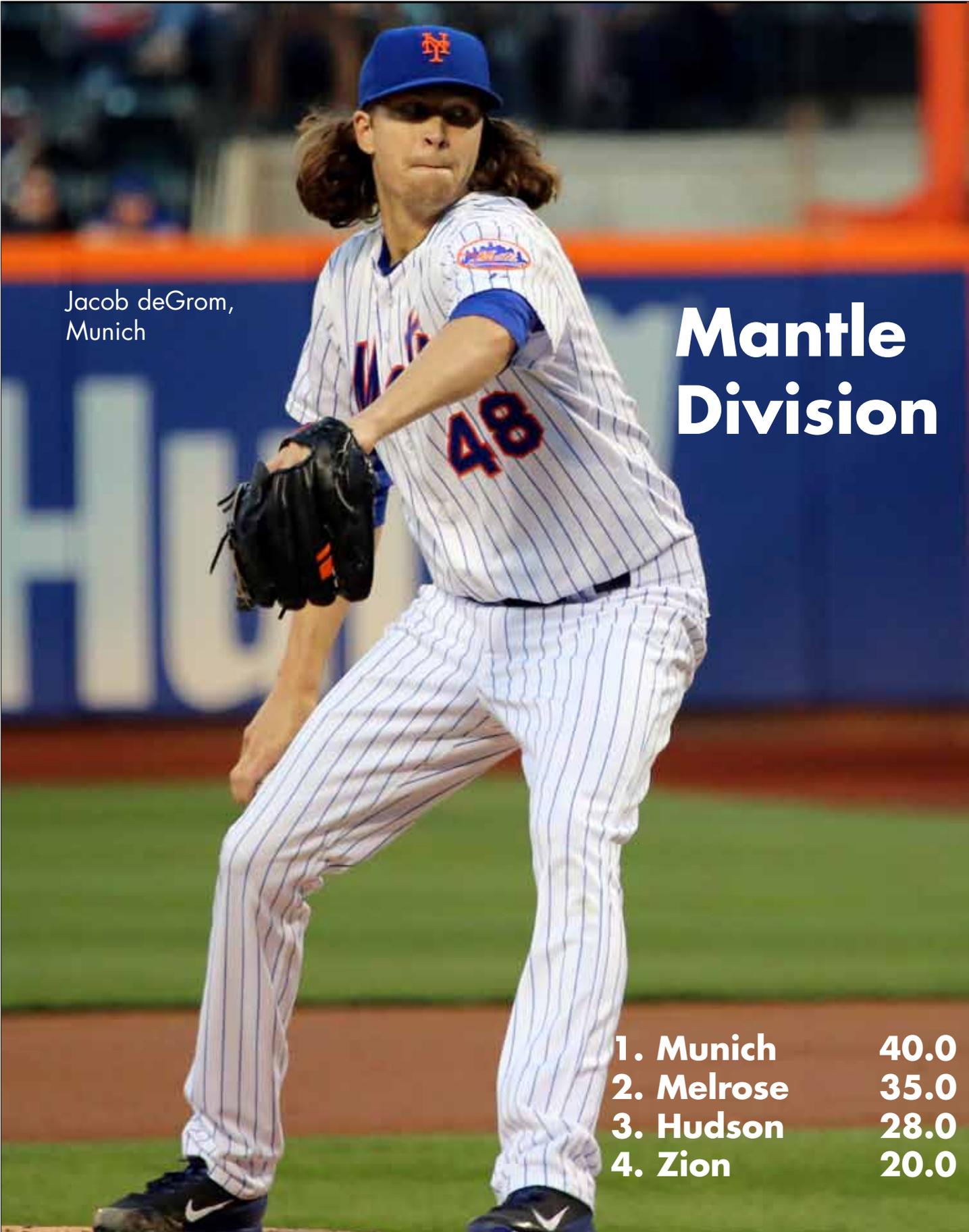


But this is a very tough division – and a very tough conference. With the new young ace (Taijuan Walker) no more than a year away from replacing the inexplicably ineffective previous ace (Tim Lincecum), they should be poised for a new run of good seasons. But will there be a playoff spot in 2016? Stay tuned.

There's no question that *Rich Meyer's Elders of Zion* have some rough sledding ahead, even with some good moving parts – including the coveted rookie Corey Seager on the roster (though for nothing more than a Venti of Colombian Roast in 2016). This is the second year of the Zion rebuild; but this is in the hands of no mere mortal, but rather a HOFer who didn't get the nickname "Sensei" for nothing. There won't be an eighth TBL championship for the big guy this season, but it likely isn't far away.



Elders
of
Zion



Jacob deGrom,
Munich

Mantle Division

- | | |
|------------|------|
| 1. Munich | 40.0 |
| 2. Melrose | 35.0 |
| 3. Hudson | 28.0 |
| 4. Zion | 20.0 |

2015 munich MARAUDERS in review



Unfortunately, the “nice improvement” was stopped in its tracks.

by Paul Montague

2015 in Review

Final Record: 103-59 (2nd, Mantle)

The Marauders went into the 2015 season with tempered optimism – having one of the top handful of teams in TBL, but with significant in-division and in-conference opposition to overcome. The season brought a tempered positive outcome – winning 103 games, making the playoffs as a wild card, but getting swept in the NC championship by Melrose. “Good, but not quite good enough!”

What went right?

Playoffs! After several years of rebuilding, it was good to be in the playoffs again. Defeating a good Midwest team in the wild card round and a very good Knoxville squad in the conference semi-finals also was a nice improvement.



Sale: Highlight

Specific highlights include:

- Nobody had 100 RBI, but five batters had at least 70.
- Six batters hit double digits in homers, with four going over 20 HR.
- Chris Sale threw a no-hitter, two one-hitters, and two two-hitters, on his way to a 15-6, 2.76 season, and recorded 225 strikeouts.
- Rookie Jake deGrom was a true “rookie sensation”, as he went 15-2 with a sparkling 1.28 ERA and 184 strikeouts in 168.2 IP.
- Munich starters had 28 starts where they recorded at least 10 whiffs, led by Sale’s ten such starts.

What went wrong?

No World Series... Unfortunately, the “nice improvement” was stopped in its tracks by Melrose in the NC Championship Series.

Several hitters under-performed their cards, including Jose Altuve hitting only .293 (his TBL OBP was about what his TV-ball batting average was . . . However, the most notable sinkhole in the lineup was shortstop, where normal starter Ruben Tejada slashed .186/.278/.234 (with a 13-OB-number card!) and Andrelton Simmons horked up a .105/.152/.145 loogy of a slashline....

3 Things

1. *Trade activity.* This was perhaps Munich’s most active off-season ever. GM Mays was energized by the playoff run, and completed over a dozen separate deals, mainly moving draft choices for improvements in the lineup and a couple rotation enhancements, including Miguel Cabrera, Martin Prado, south-paw Jaime Garcia, and swing man Adam Warren, along with super-utility man Andres Blanco (from the 2016 draft).

2. *Pitcha, pitcha, pitcha.* A combination of good seasons from existing Marauders and a couple more good arms acquired in trades and the draft gives Munich a deep and talented pitching staff. Consider that Chris Sale is the #4 starter... There is exactly one pitcher on the staff with a HR- (mop reliever Mike Fiers). Five relievers sport closer grades, and no pitcher with a single-digit grade should have to pitch for Munich this season.

3. *De-fense!* Most of the time, the infield will be 1B-5/2B-8/SS-10/3B-5, with two 8’s and a 7 to choose from at catcher. The starting outfield will normally be either 2-3-2 or 2-3-3, and a third 3 is available for defensive sub purposes in every game. So, combining top-notch pitching and top-notch defense may lead to a TBL-record low in runs allowed – time will tell!

munich MARAUDERS



Paul Montague (33rd year); Hall of Famer

They're set for another run.

Was last season a disappointment? 103 wins got them to the Conference Championship Series, where they were unceremoniously railroaded in four straight by the division champ Melrose. But it was still the dynamic season of a balanced team ultimately led by its pitching staff. A 2.82 team ERA is remarkable in this era. Four different pitchers won 15 or more games, and five pitchers combined for 47 saves.

The offense totaled 168 homers (led by Anthony Rizzo's 28), fourth best in the league. The 139 steals (led by Jose Altuve's 63), and 637 walks (led by Jose Bautista's 96) led the league. And while the core of this team returns for 2016, there have been some notable additions, such as SNT Miguel Cabrera, Martin Prado, and Andres Blanco on offense, and Jaime Garcia, Adam Warren, and Huston Street on the mound. They're set for another run.

Pitching: **15.5**
Aces and closers in spades.

The Marauders' pitching staff is so stacked, they're using a full-time starter (Mike Fiers) as a long reliever — because they don't need him in the rotation. This team's pitching is so stacked, half of their relievers have closer grades. And Mr. Montague, an astute judge of talent and a wise TBL manager, has brought many positive peripherals to the pitchers he'll be trotting out every game. Let's see, how many more ways can the *Annual* state that this is a strong staff?

While Munich had a strong staff last year, this pitching staff could be even stronger. The *Annual* rates it a full point better than last season's. It's got aces like diamonds and closers in spades.

There are very few weaknesses — a few starters are a little wild and a few relievers are very wild. Every team they face will have to work hard to score. Even with Kansas' outstanding rotation and Melrose's strong staff, this might be, overall, the best pitching staff in TBL.

ROTATION. While six starters make all 162 starts for the Marauders, half of them are by Grade 13 or better pitchers. That's impressive. Second-year starter Jacob deGrom (Grade 15 C+26 HR+16) did not have a sophomore slump. Lefty Jaime Garcia (Grade 15 C+16 HR+42) joins the team from Brobdingnag. Francisco Liriano (Grade 13 C-25 HR+23) rounds out the trio to get to exactly 81 starts.

Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Andres Blanco, Miguel Cabrera, Trevor Cahill, Jaime Garcia, Yasmani Grandal, Martin Maldonado, Martin Prado, Huston Street, Drew Verhagen, Adam Warren

Departed: Norichika Aoki, Rex Brothers, Neal Cotts, Adam Dunn, David Hale, Jonathon Niese, Bruce Rondon, Carlos Santana, Ruben Tejada, Scott Van Slyke.

SNT: Miguel Cabrera.

Mr. Montague got future Hall of Famer and acknowledged "best hitter in baseball" for his run to the championship this year.

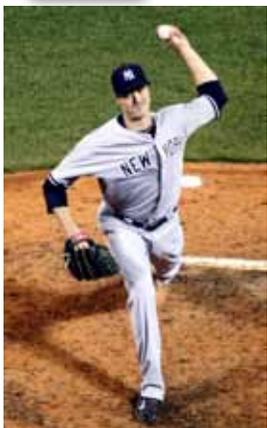




Munich MARAUDERS

The “bottom” of the rotation — and we say that in jest, since it’s as strong as other teams’ best — includes Chris Sale (Grade 11 C+25), Edinson Volquez (Grade 10 C-22 HR+26), and Adam Warren (Grade 10 HR+26). The rotation is balanced evenly between righties and lefties, although it’s admittedly lefty-heavy at the top. The team has enough flexibility to choose between Sale the lefty or Volquez the righty for any playoff series. And there *will* be playoff series.

BULLPEN. The Marauders have five relievers with closer grades, although two of them are short on innings. And any of them can be called on to save a game. Andrew Miller (Grade 23* C-14 HR+24) is the only lefty in the group. Darren O’Day (Grade 20* C+25 HR+25) and Brad Ziegler (Grade 18* C+23 HR+42) can shut it down. Jason Frasier (Grade 19* C-62 HR+51) and rookie Drew VerHagen (Grade 19* C-54 HR+46) are short-inning relievers cut from the same cloth.



Miller: Only lefty closer

The set-up crew includes lefty Brett Cecil (Grade 16* C+26 HR+26), Warren (Grade 16*) when he’s not starting, Trevor Rosenthal (Grade 15* C-14 HR+43), and Huston Street (Grade 13* C+16). That leaves long men Mike Fiers (Grade 11 C-14 HR-14) for many, many innings and Jake Petricka (Grade 7* C+14 HR+46), who probably won’t see Munich until November. There are 470 innings before you get to Fiers.



After a stellar 2015 campaign which brought in 103 wins, Munich is ready to start marauding across TBL once again. With all due respect to KAN and KNX, Munich may be all that stops MEL from another WS appearance.

Given the strength of the rotation, there is plenty of juice in the bullpen.

Offense: 14.0
Lots of everything.

Let’s start with one of the best hitters in baseball, SNT Miguel Cabrera (1-6-6, 11 hits, 5 walks, R-2). He lost a power number, and he’s limited to 119 games, but it’s still a card (and a player) every team would like in its lineup.

Anthony Rizzo (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, no shift, E29 for 26 attempts) reprised his card from last year, but added speed. Jose Bautista (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 6 walks, L-3) lost a couple hits, but gained power.



Altuve: Exceptional

Two other exceptional cards belong to Jose Altuve (6-6-0, 12 hits with 2 11s, a walk+22, 3 31s, L+7 R-5, D29 for 57 attempts) and “rookie” Andres Blanco (5 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L+4 R-4, 4 24s with only 1 31). These two have more positives than negatives, although there are few issues, such as the shifts and for Blanco, the 24s.

But wait, there’s more. Ben Zobrist (4 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, L+5 R-4) and Carlos Gomez (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-4, C26 for 27 attempts) add more power to the lineup. Stephen Vogt (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-8) and newcomer Yasmani Grandal (1-6, 8 hits, 5 walks, L+2 R-2) can also pop it out.

The table setters aren’t bad either: Adam Eaton (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L-8, E27 for 29 attempts), Jason Heyward (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-5, E34 for 29 attempts), and Martin Prado (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L+5 R-3) all contribute. That leaves Andrelton Simmons (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-5), who bats 9th every day. This lineup has lots of power, lots of hits, lots of walks, and lots of speed. Playing at home on the computer will mitigate some of the big shifts.

Defense:
Strong . . . everywhere.

7.0



munich:
TBL Draft



Simmons: An SS10 again

They're strong up the middle with Simmons, the only SS10 in the set, and Altuve (2B8). They're strong on the corners with Rizzo (1B5) and Prado (3B5), although Blanco (3B4) plays sometimes. They're strong in the outfield with Heyward, Eaton, and Gomez as OF3s, although Bautista and Zobrist (OF2s) play often. They're strong behind the plate with Grandal (C8 Th-1) and Maldonado (C8 Th+3), although Vogt (C7 Th-1) plays there sometimes. They're strong ... everywhere.

Bench:
Some pretty good players.

2.0

Despite a few starting players on games limits, there's plenty of extra usage with players like Zobrist, Prado, and Gomez. Those are some pretty good players to have on your bench. Mr. Montague will be able play with the shifts to his advantage. Jed Lowrie (1-6-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22) spends the year improving his swing in the minors.

1st

They were denied a chance at the championship last year. It seems like Mr. Montague has doubled down this year, and his TQ rating reflects that.

This is a strong all-around team. It's not an especially young team, but the key players are in their prime. We believe the recent roster additions will lead this team to live up to its name: Marauders. Take no prisoners.

Like all contenders, Munich's is made up of many players he's traded for. Even the players he's drafted often came through other teams picks Mr. Montague had traded for.

When your team is good and drafts late in every round, you have to make strategic picks that have to help the team immediately.

Furthermore, to help the team compete, some if not most of the team's picks are traded away a year in advance. And that's the case for 2017's draft as well. It's not surprising since it's what's needed to get the players that have put them over the top in the race for a championship.

And that's where Munich finds itself in 2016: over the top. Talent throughout the pitching staff. Talent up and down the lineup. Talent on the bench. Talent in the minors. Mr. Montague has enough talent to deal from strength if he needs to shore up future editions of the team. Even *without* the draft.

munich MARAUDERS

TQ: 40.5



2015 melrose AVENGERS in review



Big superhero shoes to fill.

by Mark Freedman

2015 in Review

Final Record: 114-48 (1st, Mantle)

Another successful season with 114 wins but we fell just short of the prize, falling 4-3 to the Giants in the World Series. Still, it was our third trip in five years.

What went right?

The offense generated 932 runs with a .285/.349/.474 triple slash on 220 homeruns. Six Avengers slugged 20 or more home runs lead by David Ortiz's 37 and Adrian Gonzalez's 29.

A-Gone had another fine season with .287 average, 49 doubles and 131 RBIs. Ryan Braun bounced back from Tony Stark's PED incident with a .331/.375/.602 slash with 21 homers and 13 triples, that's 13 triples with 4 second column 2s.

Todd Frazier (.277/27HR/103RBI/96R), Alex Gordon (.282/22HR/88RBI/103R) and Anthony Rendon (.313/24HR/99RBI/108R) contributed to the onslaught. Russell Martin had his best season with .295/16HR/94R in 111 games.

The pitching staff was as good as the offense, otherwise we would never have out-sailed the Marauders. The staff posted a 2.86 ERA. Lester bounced back from a mediocre 2014 to post a 22-8 record with 3.30 ERA and 246K. Newcomer Scott Kazmir went 20-7 with 3.42 ERA and led the team with 6 shutouts. Wily Peralta was the third 20 game winner with a 23-6 record and 3.11 ERA, despite giving up a team high 20 home runs. Tyson Ross led the starters with a 2.42 ERA with a 17-5 record and 229 Ks.

The pen was equally strong. A.J.Ramos racked up 35 saves. Tom Wilhelmsen posted an 0-4 record but had an 0.73 ERA in 62 innings. Drew Storen didn't give up a run after coming over at the trade deadline. Jonathan Broxton (1.66 ERA) and Pedro Strop (2.28) proved excellent setup.

What went wrong?

One dice roll. The Avengers had a chance to put Game 5 and Game 7 away and win the championship but was unable to get that one roll. Don't get me wrong, Jack expertly managed his team took advantage of every misfortune that befell the Avengers, for that they deserved to win, but one roll...



Gonzalez: Fine

3 Things

1. "A team doesn't get a year older: it gets 25 years older." Or 35 years in the TBL world. This team is getting old. We'll contend in 2016. We've had a nice six year run but 2016 might be our last chance for a few seasons.

2. Who will make up the next youth movement? Big superhero shoes to fill. Most of the spandex waistlines are getting larger, many of the hairlines receding. Could we contend in 2017? Should we?

3. Tyson Ross looks like a fixture in the starting rotation for a few years. Anthony Rendon, when healthy, can be the same at 3B. J. D. Martinez should be around or a few years, but who will fill out the rest of the team?

melrose AVENGERS



Mark Freedman (23rd year)

The other National Conference contenders, and there are many, will be gunning for the defending Conference Champion.

So, Mr. Freedman, you just lost a tough World Series. What's next? A trip to Disney World? Not on your life. He expected to win that World Series, and losing it, however dramatically, is likely to make him hungrier. So he's planning a return trip to the Series for his aptly named Avengers. And he's done it before. In fact, he's one of only three TBL owners to win two titles in a row.

Melrose led the league with 114 wins last year, and Mr. Freedman has another locked and loaded Avengers team entering 2016. He's got a deep pitching staff and power to spare. But it's awfully difficult to repeat. The other National Conference contenders, and there are many (including division rival Munich), will be gunning for the defending Conference Champion.

Pitching: 15.0 **Solid, top to bottom.**

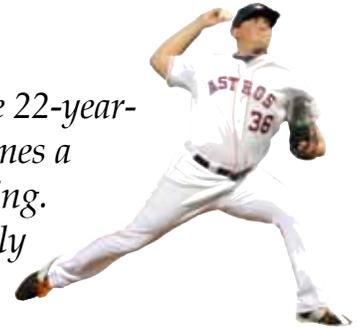
As good as this pitching staff is, it's just not as good as last year's edition. As difficult as that is to believe, given the grades and names on this staff, it's due to the peripherals. Despite the high-powered pitching on display here, only one pitcher on the entire staff has control better than +15. That's a definite weakness.

Still, the *Annual* won't bet against this pitching staff leading the team back to the World Series. However, as the numbers work out — and the numbers never lie, do they? — we aren't picking them to repeat as the Mantle Division champs. This is no slight. The 2016 Melrose Avengers is a solid team, top to bottom, and their pitching staff is no different. But as we've written before, peripherals matter.

ROTATION. Trades, including two this past off-

SNT: Will Harris.

Sometimes, it's not the 22-year-old prospect who becomes a team's Shiny New Thing. In this case, it's possibly the last piece of the puzzle.



Turnover Rate: 20%

Arrived: A.J. Burnett, Tyler Collins, Will Harris, Austin Hedges, Lance Lynn, Matt Marksberry, Trayce Thompson.

Departed: Jonathan Broxton, Trevor Cahill, Nick Franklin, Tuffy Gosewisch, Wily Peralta, Ryan Pressly, Ryan Vogelsong.

season, have bolstered the rotation. Tyson Ross (Grade 13 C-36 HR+43) came from Munich in 2013. Scott Kazmir (Grade 13 C-13) came from New Westminster in 2015. Lance Lynn (Grade 12 C-22 HR+26) came from The during the offseason. That's 95 strong starts to lead the team.



Ross: Top grade

Jon Lester (Grade 11 C+22 HR+23) has the best control on the whole staff. He and fellow lefty James Paxton (Grade 10 C-33) were both drafted by Mr. Freedman. And A.J. Burnett (Grade 9 C+12 HR+32) came over from Hoboken this past offseason. These six starters cover the entire



melrose AVENGERS

season, and there are no bad apples among them. Their fatigue ratings (all except Burnett) are a bit short, but there's a strong bullpen to come to the rescue.

BULLPEN. By our count, this bullpen has four relievers who could close on other teams. Three more have closed in previous years. But this year's closer is A.J. Ramos (Grade 20* C-32 HR+16). He's got the grade, but the peripherals are not what you'd expect from a closer on such a contender. Setting him up are Pedro Strop (Grade 20* C-24 HR+24), Kevin Jepsen (Grade 17* C-31 HR+31), and SNT Will Harris (Grade 22* C-13). That's 279 innings of closer material. Impressive.

In middle relief, they have righties Jason Grilli (Grade 13* C+13 HR+34), Drew Storen (Grade 12* C+15 HR+25), and Tom Wilhelmson (Grade 12* C-35 HR+43), as well as lefties Sam Freeman (Grade 14* C-62 HR+16) and Matt Marksberry (Grade 8* C-62 HR+24). They add another 212 innings, although the lefty innings are limited. Alexi Ogando (Grade 11* C-33 HR-31) is the long man. There are plenty of innings, well matched to the rotation, but nothing really to stop a base on balls.



In the last seven seasons, Melrose had 4 years of 110 or more wins, been to 3 World Series and won 2 of them. They should be just as successful in 2016 and, after last year's bitter defeat by WAR, they should be twice as dangerous!

Offense: 13.0
Really loaded with power.

Most teams feel fortunate to have one monster bat in their lineup. Melrose has two: David Ortiz (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, L-11 R+3) and J.D. Martinez (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, R-2). Both play every day. There's plenty more power too: Todd Frazier (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22), Adrian Gonzalez (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-3), and Ryan Braun (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+4 R-3, E33 for 28 attempts).

The next level of power hitters includes Alex Gordon (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+42) and Russell Martin (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L+7 R-3). Logan Forsythe (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L+6 R-4, F27 for 13 attempts) sets the table. Jose Iglesias (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L+8 R-4) is one of only two Avengers with 11 hits. Anthony Rendon (6-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22) has been forced by injury into a part-time role.

The Avengers certainly have enough power to win games all on its own. But there's only one everyday player with 11 hits (Iglesias), and he's slated to bat 9th. If you're not rolling the power numbers, the team may struggle against good pitching. While the team has some speed, the offensive attack may become: walk, walk, homer — similar to the champions from Gotham City in years past.

It worked for the Batman, so it could work for the Avengers, since the team is really loaded with power bats. But solo home runs can't often win games, so timing will be an issue, as will some of the key shifts against right-handed pitching, such as Iglesias' and Forsythe's. But all kvetching aside, this remains an explosive offense, one that should score runs in abundance.



Ortiz, Martinez: Two monsters

Defense:
No weaknesses.

5.5

The starting eight are mostly impressive, with one exception. Gordon and Braun are OF3s, and Martinez upgraded to an OF2, which is respectable. Martin (C9, Th+3) is a force, and his back-up Soto (C7 Th-0) is at least average. The infield is great on the right side with Gonzalez (1B5) and Forsythe (2B8), while just average on the left side with Frazier (3B4) and Iglesias (SS8). There are no weaknesses, but there's no defensive sub for shortstop or third.



melrose:
TBL Draft



melrose AVENGERS

The current roster has something like 17 players that Mr. Freedman has traded for. But when you're a contender in a race for the top, you do whatever you can to stay in the running. That's not to say that the Avengers haven't used the draft to build the core. Lester, Braun, Rendon, Frazier, and SNT Harris all came via astute draft picks.

When he's competing, Mr. Freedman loves nothing more than to wheel and deal for the pieces of the puzzle, but when he's rebuilding, he loves to draft high-end prospects. Some hit, like Anthony Rendon, and some miss, like Matt LaPorta. But he never looks back, and he loves the challenge of building and competing. He's done it multiple times in his TBL career.

Regardless how this year's race turns out, he's once again well situated to keep adding talent in the 2017 draft. A few players have to deal with injuries this year, and they're likely to add depth to his team next year. Only a few players are getting dangerously old, but they're still performing.

There is no cliff in sight.

Bench:
Some guys.

3.0

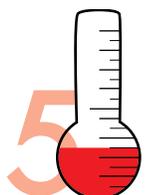
There are some guys. Geovany Soto (1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks) backs up Martin. Tyler Collins (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6) and Jimmy Rollins (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, L+5 R-3, D24 for 20 attempts) play off the bench. Rookie Trayce Thompson (1-4-4-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, L+3 R-4) contributes excellent power, but only for 44 games. David Murphy (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-3) is the only other player with 11 hits, but he starts the year in the minors. Peter Bourjos (OF3) also starts in the minors.

2nd

Last year, the *Annual* predicted a second place finish for the Avengers, too, and they went on to win the division and get to the seventh game of the World Series.

This is another very good team, but it has some issues: peripherals on the pitching staff and power over hits in the lineup. Maybe it will all work out. After all, Mr. Freedman has done it before. But before the season begins, the *Annual* numbers say second place.

TQ: 35.0



2015 hudson GENERALS in review



Dirty Al and Clay have declared that everyone will speak in the 3rd person.

by Clay Beard

2015 in Review

Final Record: 62-100 (4th, Mantle)

So you're coming off a 100-loss season. Your first and second round picks are both uncarded, as is Mr. Alvarez. Your best offensive player over the last six seasons is now a balloon in the Macy's parade and is innocuous. Sounds like impending doom. Not so fast!

Pollock has a full-time break out. Grichuk shows up with 5 power numbers for half a season. Beltran quietly has a nice comeback. LeMahieu has (probably) a career year. Duda hits lefties. In fact the shift issues that have plagued the team the last two years have pretty much disappeared. Gerrit Cole is healthy. Carlos Martinez shows up. Siegrist is back.

What went right?

Not much. The best offensive season came from Pablo Sandoval at .291, 16 HR, 63 RBI. Really, that's the best! A nice partial season from A.J. Pollock at .290 / .348 / .483. That's the only good news on the offense.

The pitching by comparison was decent, somewhere in the middle of the pack. Cody Allen was solid at the back of the pen 1.98 33 saves. Marcus Stroman had a solid debut at 10-6 2.82. The Generals were solid in the late innings; 6-5 in extras and 31-27 in one-run games. But that just shows how bad we were the rest of the time.

What went wrong?

Eeewww!

Only the third 100-loss season in team history produced a lot of offensive low-lights. Actually the most inept offense in team history with only

546 runs. The worst OBP: .286. Fewest doubles: 225. The worst road record: 27-54, The longest road losing streak *and* the longest home losing streak at 10 each.

The season is pretty well summed up by Henderson Alvarez' bizarre season. His respectable 3.44 ERA resulted in a 5-20 record (first General to lose 20 in almost 30 years), aided by 22 unearned runs.



Alvarez: Bizarre

3 Things

1. *Keeping an eye on both the future and the present.* The number 4 pick was probably pivotal for several teams. I was expecting Lindor. Seager was the consensus next pick, but that meant completely giving up on 2016, so I made Rich happy. With 60 starts missing, Syndergaard made sense, but there would be plenty of starters to pick from through the first three rounds, but certainly not a bat like Miguel Sano.
2. *This team will score.* The key will be getting the starters through 6+, instead of 5+.
3. *Selling Clay's soul.* Realizing Clay's team is young enough to absorb some age and Clay has the Macy's Panda still at 3B and there's 33 dingers waiting in the Bonus Round. Why not A-Rod. However, Dirty Al would not tolerate a "different rules for different guys" clubhouse. So everyone gets a suite on the road. Everyone gets two lockers. There's a new hire to give everyone mani-pedis and to pluck eyebrows. Dirty Al and Clay have declared that everyone will speak in the 3rd person. Clay is very much looking forward to the season.

HUDSON GENERALS



Clay Beard (32nd year); Hall of Famer

This may be the team's seventh consecutive even-numbered year in a row with a winning record.

2015 marked only the third time in 32 years (32 years!) that the Generals lost 100 games or more. That's not bad. 2015 also represented the fifth consecutive odd-numbered year in a row that the team had a losing record. That's just *weird*.

Now that it's 2016, however, the *Annual* has to pick Hudson to win more games than it loses. If the Generals manage at least 82 wins, it'll be the team's seventh consecutive even-numbered year in a row with a winning record. And that's downright amazing.

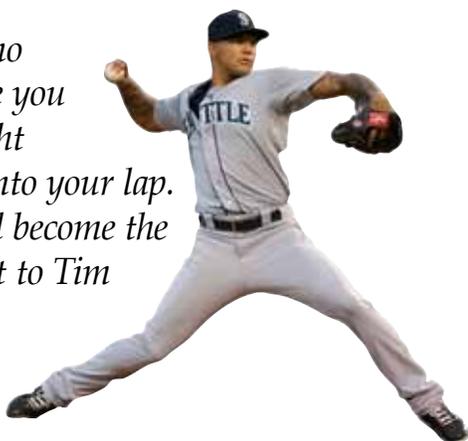
The *Annual* feels positive that that these mood swings aren't deliberate, but it does point the overall competitiveness of the franchise. Rarely are they that bad, even when they lost 100 in 2015. We believe Hudson is primed to return to form in 2016, when maybe they'll start a new trend: consistent winning.

Pitching: 10.0 **Revamped with young guns.**

While it's not quite all there yet, Hudson's pitching staff seems on the verge of breaking out.

SNT: Taijuan Walker.

Sometimes, no matter where you draft, the right player falls into your lap. Walker could become the heir-apparent to Tim Lincecum.



Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Jason Garcia, Mychal Givens, Micah Johnson, Josh Osich, Dalton Pompey, Alex Rodriguez, Joe Ross, Miguel Sano, Matt Shoemaker, Taijuan Walker.

Departed: Ike Davis, Jonny Gomes, Brandon Kintzler, Boone Logan, Leonys Martin, Edward Mujica, Ivan Nova, Nick Tepezsch, Zach Walters.

Oh, they're not bad this year, but Mr. Beard has revamped the staff with young guns. The two old holdovers from the previous "dynasty" — Tim Lincecum and Luke Gregerson — seem like relics, even though they'll both turn just 32 this summer... and still productive.

The rest of the team's pitchers are young and hungry — and developing quickly. The 2016 draft brought in key additions to complement the pitchers already here. The pitching staff will be competent this year, but neither the rotation nor the bullpen is yet deep enough to really contend in a tough division that includes two out-for-blood juggernauts Melrose and Munich.



Cole: Established

ROTATION. Here they come. Gerrit Cole (Grade 13 C+24 HR+36) established himself as an ace last year, and he's just 25. Carlos Martinez (Grade 12 HR+26) established himself as a bona fide major league starter last year, and he's just 24. 23-year-old Joe Ross (Grade 12 HR+15) joins the rotation to prove himself. Chris Bassitt (Grade 11 C-21 HR+36) and Tim Lincecum (Grade 10 C-46 HR+16) turned in useful performances. That's



HUDSON GENERALS

102 starts or about two-thirds of the season.

SNT Taijuan Walker (Grade 8 C+22 HR-16) and Kevin Gausman (Grade 8 C+16 HR-21) get to learn on the job as they work to establish themselves. Both have upside. Matt Shoemaker (Grade 7 C+21 HR-26) came over from Kansas to slide in as a swingman. The only minor issue is that they're all right-handed, which may hurt over the course of the season, but all except Lincecum are on the south side of 30.

BULLPEN. Rookie Mychal Givens (Grade 19* C+24 HR+51) enters as the closer for at least part of the year. (He has only 30 innings.) Otherwise, it's lefty Kevin Siegrist (Grade 18* C-42 HR+36). That's almost 105 innings, even if most of it is left-handed, which is less than optimal. Since the rotation is right-handed, all

the opponent's lefty-killers will be waiting on the bench. Righty Brad Brach (Grade 17* C-46 HR+22) and lefty Josh Osich (Grade 16* HR-16) add 108 more set-up innings.



Givens: Rookie closer

Former closer Cody Allen (Grade 13* C-16 HR+53)

joins Luke Gregerson (Grade 13* C+41 HR+23) in middle relief, adding 130 more innings. Jason Garcia (Grade 12* C-62 HR+21) and the third lefty Kyle Crockett (Grade 9* C-33 HR+41) contribute a few innings of early relief. Swingman Shoemaker spends most of the year in the pen as the long



2015 was only the 3rd time in Generals history that they had 100 losses. And 2016 shouldn't be the 4th. Despite having to go to war with Melrose and Munich 28 times this year, Hudson should have a decorated campaign.

man. It's a functional, well balanced bullpen designed to help the starters, but more innings would benefit the lower end of the rotation.

Offense: 11.0 Power up and down the lineup.

Last year, the *Annual* predicted the offense would struggle, and it did to the tune of a .226 team batting average, 546 runs scored, and 1366 strikeouts. That's a song the team prefers not to repeat. Fortunately, the offense looks better this year. It starts with A.J. Pollock (1-0-0-0, 11 hits including 2 11s, 3 walks, no shift, D33 for 46 attempts), who leads off every game. Randal Grichuk (1-3-5-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-4) has awe-inspiring power for two-thirds of the season.



Pollock: Leads off

In interesting splits (according to the team's emergency instructions), Carlos Beltran (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-3) plays only vs. computer opponents, and rookie Miguel Sano (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 6 walks, 11 strikeouts) plays only vs. lefties despite his L-3. The power display doesn't end there. Lucas Duda (1-5-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+42) and Dalton Pompey 4 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L+4 R-4) offer isolated power.



Rodriguez: Picked up

Mr. Beard picked up Alex Rodriguez (1-5-5, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, L+3 R-3) in the most recent TBL Draft to push Kung Fu Panda (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-10 R+3) to the bench. C.J. Cron (1-5-6, 10 hits, a walk+22), Wellington Castillo (1-5-5, 9 hits, 2 walks+22), and even Wilson Ramos (1-6, 9 hits, a walk) offer more power further down the lineup.

D.J. LeMahieu (2 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, E34 for 26 attempts) may be the perfect #2 hitter. Didi

Gregorius (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L-4) had a nice bounce-back year. Even Brett Lawrie (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4 R-3) has his uses against lefties. That leaves Will Venable (6-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-14, E35 for 17 attempts) as a part-time player and pinch-runner. The Generals will most assuredly score more runs than last year's edition in support of an improved pitching staff.

Defense: 4.5
Localized highlights.

The highlights are localized, but exceptional. The right side of the infield is strong with LeMahieu (2B9) and Duda (1B4). The outfield features two OF3s (Pollock and Grichuk), and both catchers are C8s, although Ramos (Th+3) perhaps should sub for Castillo (Th-2) in close games. Gregorius (SS8) is just average at a key spot, and Beltran (OF1) plays the field a lot, as does A-Rod (3B3). Beltran at least has a caddy in Pompey or Venable (OF2s); A-Rod has none. There are also rumors of Lawrie (2B7) playing short as an SS6. Unless LeMahieu plays there, there are no better options on the current roster.

Bench: 2.5
Not much.

Mr. Beard plays with all 25 players, and this year, the team has some flexibility and can play a little with the batting shifts. While there's no designated pinch-hitting toy, Venable will often be available as a pinch-runner. Pablo Sandoval and Micah Johnson spend all year in the minors, focusing on hitting lessons.

3rd This is an improved team, but it is still no match for the division beasts in Melrose and Munich. The Annual believes that while a winning record is possible, a playoff berth might not be. But this team fits together nicely at bat and on the mound. It's headed in the right direction, and it may not be that far away.



hudson:
TBL Draft



HUDSON GENERALS

Mr. Beard has been known to take the slow, steady route to building his teams over the years. His current team has about seven players he's traded for, a little below the league average. But when he makes trades, he often wants draft picks in return, regardless of the players involved. And he uses those picks effectively.

Hudson's picks tend toward young prospects, which means he misses sometimes. Given the state of the current team, however, he's been hitting more often than not. Marcus Stroman and Gerrit Cole were first-round choices, but so were Brandon Beachy and Trevor Cahill. (For those of you scoring at home, that's four starting pitching prospects as first-round picks, going back to 2010.)

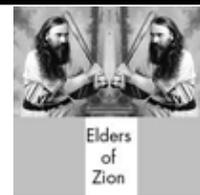
Looking ahead to 2017, Mr. Beard may pick near the middle of the draft. But he's got all his picks to keep building, and he has a solid foundation on which to build. A 32-year veteran of the league, Mr. Beard knows what he's looking for. Like the masters of draft-day manipulation, he also knows how to jump in or jump up when he sees a player he wants. The question now before him is: How many more starting pitching prospects does he need?

TQ: 28.0



2015 ELDERS of zion in review

He didn't blow it up: that was fate, and aging, and injury.



2015 in Review

Final Record: 64-98 (3rd, Mantle)

Things fell apart very quickly down under Lake Ingolstadt. The Elders won 110 games in 2014 and bowed out in the conference semi-finals to Maracaibo. When teams lose in a high-pressure playoff situation, sometimes management decides to blow it all up and start over, but that's not the M. O. of the Sensei: he has always thought long term – he has always been cool and plotting, always knowing that there is another season, another draft, new prospects and new horizons.

So, no, he didn't blow it up: that was fate, and aging, and injury. After a short run of two years (including the 2013 World Series win) the 2015 season was a difficult and painful campaign – and the statistical results don't look much like a Zion team at all. 2016 will be better, but there's a long way to go.



Beltre: No one else to show

What went wrong?

The offense was not Elders-like at all. The team stole only 42 bases and hit only 104 homers. Blackmon's 17 led the team. They scored 610 runs. The .250 average and the .361 slugging percentage pointed to a regular lineup of 9 hits, 3 walks and three weak 0s – or worse; it must have been like playing a bad stock team for 162 games, which will drive a draft-league player to distraction.

The pitching was better overall, but there were too many starts of folks like Tyler Matzek (4-12, 6.47) and Rubby de la Rosa (4-12, 5.68). Hyun-Jin Ryu and Trevor Bauer weren't much better. The bullpen was solid, but there were likely too many games that were already out of reach before it could be put into play.

3 Things

1. *Corey Seager.* It's been since Barry Larkin that Zion has had a star shortstop (Yunel Escobar notwithstanding). It's hard to overestimate the impact of a big time rookie. The last one of this magnitude might have been . . . Adrian Beltre.

2. *The magic touch.* Once Zion management had enormous success in plucking talent from the draft and from trades – Greg Maddux, the best pitcher in TBL history, was acquired in a trade. That doesn't happen by accident. It will happen again.

3. *Bullpens matter.* Rich knows that, aside from direct psychological impact on the dice, the one thing you can do in an APBA game is to use the bullpen. We saw it in 2015, and we'll see it in 2016 as well.

What went right?

Adrian Beltre had another fine season (.335-15-90), and he's almost the only one to show on this page. Charlie Blackmon hit 17 homers; Grady Sizemore had a decent half season, recording a .294 average.

The pitching was more encouraging. Kelvin Herrera (2 wins, 22 saves, 0.33 ERA) and Jake McGee (4 wins, 14 saves, 0.73 ERA) were unhittable in the bullpen, while Alex Cobb and rookie Trevor Bauer won 11 games each. For a 64-98 team, the 4.16 team ERA was actually not too bad, due to excellent manipulation of the pen.

ELDERS of zion

Rich Meyer (32nd year); Hall of Famer

This is a team in transition... to the point that the Face of the Elders, Adrian Beltre, has discovered that he is an elder himself.



This is a team in transition. In 2015, the once-proud Zion franchise came as close as it ever has to 100 losses, finishing with 98. If not for Hudson's futility, it would have meant the first last-place finish as well. The team sported a 4.16 team ERA (in the bottom third of the league), and the offense managed only 104 home runs, pathetic by Zion standards. In fact, it's the lowest total in Zion's history, by 20.

The upside for Mr. Meyer was being able to draft in the fifth spot, certainly a novelty for the man referred to as The Sensei. Over the past several years, the team has gradually become younger, to the point that the Face of the Elders, Adrian Beltre, has discovered that he is an elder himself. He's helped Zion to two TBL championships, but there may not be a third during his tenure, although he's still producing enviable cards.

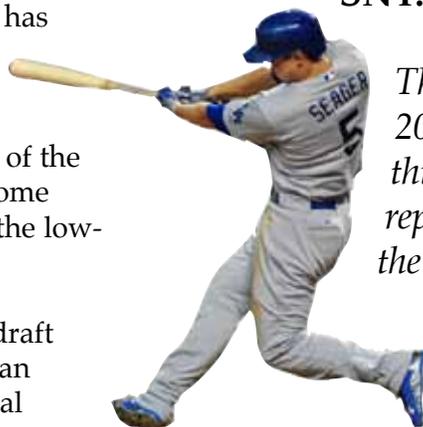
Pitching: 8.5 Not your father's Elders.

Every year brings a few new pieces to the pitching staff. In 2012, it was Randall Delgado. In 2013, it was Jarrod Parker. In 2014, it was Hyun-Jin Ryu. In 2015, the team got both Trevor Bauer and Jimmy Nelson. This year brought Steven Matz. Injuries have taken a toll, but it hasn't stopped The Sensei from going back to the well. Since Zion has never "started over" with a major rebuild, the *Annual* doesn't expect him to start now. But it's a slow process.

Zion enters 2016 with a subpar starting rotation, but with his usual powerful bullpen. As The Sensei himself states in his instructions: "There should be a number of days where hope gets extinguished early. Save the better resources we possess for the contests where we have a shot at the W." Given the current rotation, hope may get extinguished early.

ROTATION. Zion is carrying three uncarded players. All three are starting pitchers. So it's no real

SNT: Corey Seager.



The fifth overall pick in the 2016 TBL Draft (and the third shortstop taken), Seager represents the cornerstone of the next great Zion team.

Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Abraham Almonte, Joe Blanton, Michael Lorenzen, Dixon Machado, Steven Matz, Clint Robinson, Corey Seager, Aaron Thompson, Yasmany Tomas.

Departed: Eric Campbell, Allen Craig, Craig Gentry, Jonathan Herrera, Garrett Jones, Tyler Matzek, Jake McGee, Dustin McGowan, Chris Withrow.

surprise that the rotation is a bit, ahem, *thin*. It starts with prize rookie (and lone lefty) Steven Matz (Grade 14). His will be six hopeful starts, for what it's worth. He's followed by a pair of Grade 10 righties: Trevor Bauer (C-43) and Jimmy Nelson (C-16). Those are the only 66 starts that steal hits without help.

The next pair of starters are Grade 7s: Rubby de la Rosa (HR-25) and Anibal Sanchez (HR-31). At least these two have large fatigue numbers. Former ace Mat Latos (Grade 6 C+14) and rookie Michael Lorenzen (Grade 4 C-36 HR-22) have to pitch way too often. This is not your father's Elders.

BULLPEN. At last some cause for optimism. Zion always seems to have a deep pen, and this year is no different, despite trading Jake McGee to Calusa.

Righty Kenley Jansen (Grade 19* C+34) and lefty Tony Watson (Grade 18* C+22 HR+44) are co-closers,



ELDERS of zion

totaling almost 128 innings between them. Mr. Meyer will get the most out of them, too.

The set-up crew includes the ageless Koji Uehara (Grade 17* C+25 HR+26), Kelvin Herrera (Grade 16* C-24 HR+31), and "rookie" Joe Blanton (Grade 12* C+36 HR+15). They add another 167 innings. At the bottom is Randall Delgado (Grade 13* C-41), with lefties Dan Jennings (Grade 8* HR+42) and Aaron Thompson (Grade 6* HR+35). All together, there are just over 450 innings. Given the rotation, it's not enough.

Offense: 6.0
What happened?

Despite being the oldest hitter on the team, Beltre (1-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L+5 R-5) once again leads the offense. SNT Corey Seager (1-4-6-6, 12 hits, 4 walks+22, L-4) is awesome, but he's only up for a month before November. The only other players with four power numbers are John Jaso (4 0s, 10 hits, 5 walks) and Nick Hundley (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-5). These aren't the two names you want leading your power attack.



Blackmon: Not toothless

The Zion offense isn't completely toothless. Charlie Blackmon (3 0s, 11 hits including 2 11s, 2 walks+22, L-5, D30 for 57 attempts) and Yunel Escobar (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22) figure prominently in the lineup. In fact Blackmon appears frequently as the cleanup hitter, although we're not sure that's a good sign.

Rookies Clint Robinson (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L+6 R-2) and Yasmany Tomas (3 0s, 10 hits, a walk, L+3 R-3) join Scooter Gennett (3 0s, 10 hits, a walk+22, L-16) as the only other hitters with as many as 10 hits. Shin-Soo Choo (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L-7 R+2), Brandon Guyer (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+2 42s, R-4, E28 for 14 attempts), Abraham Almonte (3-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-8), Aaron Hill (3

0s, 9 hits, 3 walks L-4), Grady Sizemore (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks), and Roberto Perez (1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks, L+5, R-4) fill up the rest of the various lineups.

This isn't an impressive bunch. Blackmon supplies most of the team's stolen base attempts, and he spends most of the year batting cleanup. They seem to have two types of players: those who draw walks and those who refuse to draw walks. It's an uneven lineup that may struggle against even decent pitching. What happened to the Elders? 2013 — when Zion won its last World Series — feels like a lifetime ago.

Defense: 4.0
Some good news, but not enough.

Finally, some good news. Beltre (3B5) is rock solid at the hot corner. Both Gennett and Hill are both 2B8s. Hundley (C8 Th-1) plays great when he plays. His backup, Perez (C7, Th+3) has his strengths. Sam Fuld (OF3, with a 35 arm) can carry anyone's glove. The other outfielders are average, except Tomas (OF1). Choo, Guyer, and Tomas have plus arms. That's it for good news. Tomas and Robinson (both 1B2s) platoon with no help. Seager and Escobar (SS7s) are both subpar, although Dixon Machado (SS8) can spell them most months.



Beltre: Hot corner



858 more wins than losses, 15 conference championship appearances, 8 WS appearances with 6 wins there. There is a reason Rich Meyer is called "The Sensei". He's had more WS wins than all but two teams have had appearances! But 2015 was dismal and 2016 won't be any better.

Bench: Best bats already playing.

2.0

Zion will have five players on the bench every month, but sometimes that will include Machado (6-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+3) and Fuld (3 0s, 7 hits, 3 walks, L-10, D29 for 12 attempts). There's some usage flexibility on the roster, but only one player plays as many as 150 games. Combined with large shifts, even Mr. Meyer will have his hands full getting the most out of this group. The best bats are already playing.

4th

The magic dice won't help The Sensei this season. In fact, given the competition in the Mantle Division alone, the Elders may finally lose triple-digit games. Avoiding that outcome is the biggest challenge facing Mr. Meyer in 2016. Several players still on the roster have contributed to the decline: Hill, Sanchez, and Latos come to mind. Others now departed, fell apart all too soon: Allen Craig, Jesus Montero, and Roger Bernadina. It'll be a long season in Zion.



zion:
TBL Draft



ELDERS of Zion

Unless we missed someone, Alex Cobb is the only player on the current roster who The Sensei has traded for. It's curious, since Mr. Meyer doesn't have an aversion to trading. Hall of Famers Fred McGriff and Greg Maddux, for example, came to Zion by trade.

But it does highlight his draft strategy. When he was drafting late in each round, as has most often been the case (not counting this most recent draft), he's taken mostly starting pitching in the first round. Likely, those were the best quality picks available at the time, the "best available players." Or it could have been that starting pitching represented his greatest need. Given the strength of the Zion offense in years past, the answer might be "all of the above."

Whatever the reasons, the offense is now suffering from some neglect and the pitching is dealing with some significant injuries. As a result, Zion finds itself in rebuilding mode. The *Annual* can't blame Mr. Meyer and certainly won't question The Sensei's assessment of talent — he's not called The Sensei for nothing — but it is curious to see how far his team has fallen given his draft-only strategy.

Injuries happen to every TBL team. Top prospects become has-beens seemingly overnight. It's not that Mr. Meyer has made bad choices, but the recent misfortunes have never really hit the Zion franchise as they have recently. Suddenly, the sum of its parts is significantly less than the whole.

	Elders 2013	Elders 2016
C	John Jaso	Nick Hundley
1B	Garrett Jones	Robinson/Tomas
2B	Aaron Hill	Scooter Gennett
3B	Adrian Beltre	Adrian Beltre
SS	Yunel Escobar	Yunel Escobar
OF	Allen Craig	Charlie Blackmon
OF	Shin-Soo Choo	Shin-Soo Choo
OF	Craig Gentry	Brandon Guyer
DH	Jesus Montero	John Jaso
SP	Mat Latos	Trevor Bauer
SP	Anibal Sanchez	Jimmy Nelson
SP	Alex Cobb	Rubby de la Rosa
SP	Jarrod Parker	Anibal Sanchez
RP	Kenley Jansen	Kenley Jansen
RP	Jake McGee	Tony Watson
RP	Kelvin Herrera	Koji Uehara

TQ: 19.5



3½ Men

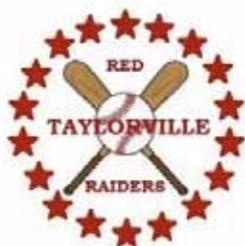
The best part about the same old song is that you know all the notes. While the IC has wild card spots that can fall to a good-sized handful of teams, the competition in the NC is going to be fierce and is almost certainly going to leave a very good team a few wins short. It might be Hudson or Maracaibo, and it might be the resurgent Las Vegas team, coming off a 110-loss season. But it's a long season, and the Williams will provide a three team race.



We thought they were the best of the crop last year, and we were right: *Pat Martin's Knoxville Blue Thunder* club is back with an old name and a new logo. Other

than the large presence of Prince Fielder it's largely the roster that won 105 games last year. They're a year older but still very good.

The question is whether they can hold off the *Taylorville Red Raiders*. They had a much tougher 2015 than we expected here at the *Annual*, but they look pretty formidable this year. Though our predictive capacity is flawed at times, we're fairly sure that this year's club will win a



2015 Williams Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Knoxville*	105	57	.648	—
Midwest†	90	72	.556	15
Taylorville	67	95	.414	38
Las Vegas	52	110	.321	53

* Lost to Munich in conference semi-final.
† Lost to Munich in Wild Card playoff.

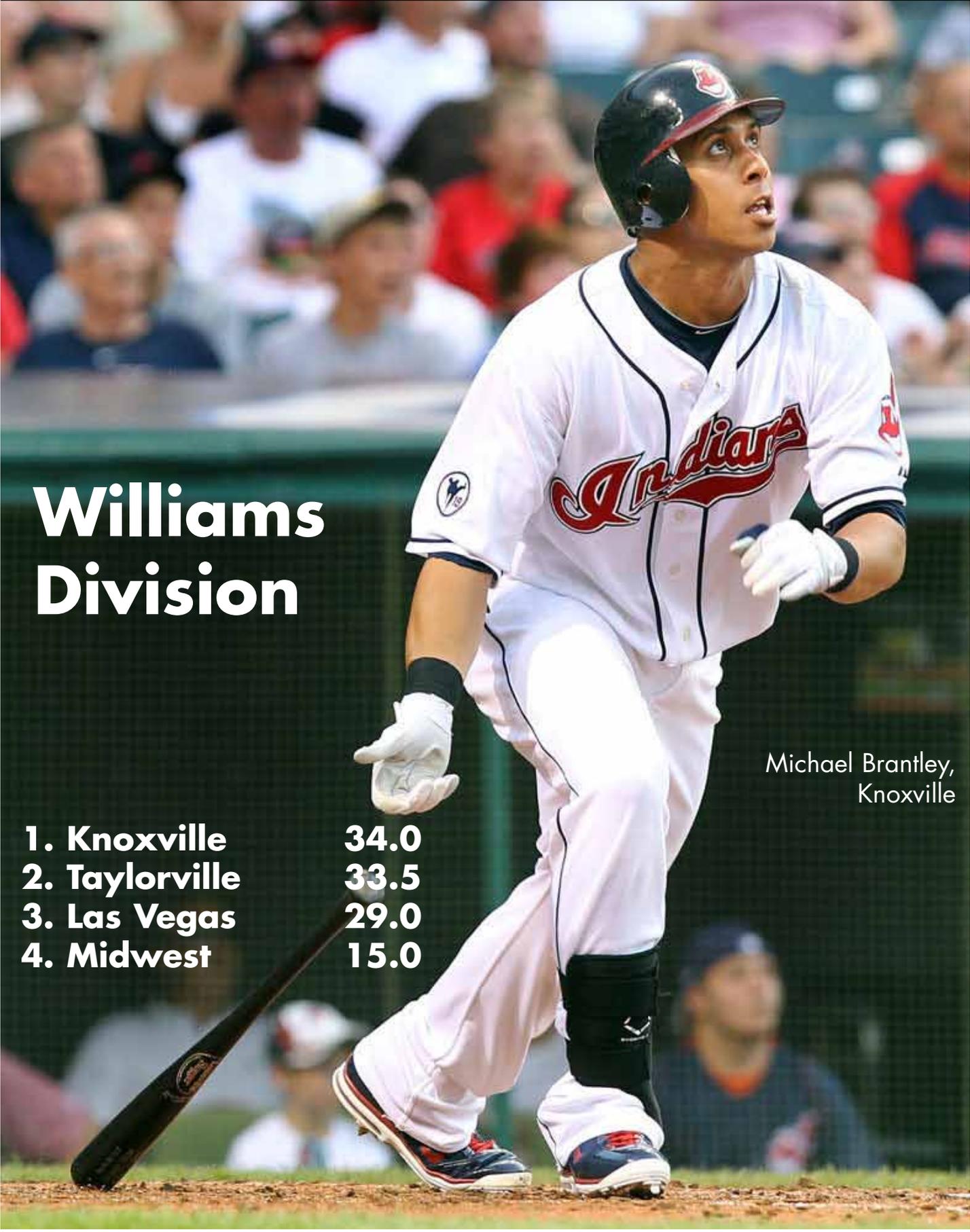
hell of a lot more games than the 67 they recorded last year.

All of which makes the season a challenging one for *Paul Harrington*. He got to say Kris (not Kyle) Bryant's name at the beginning of the draft this year, and his *Las Vegas Gamblers* have come together to be a formidable challenge for opposing teams (like Taylorville, they won't be anywhere near the 52-110 record they put up last year). But this is a tough year in the division and in the conference; there's not a lot of margin for error.



Darrell Skogen has a healthy sense of pragmatism when it comes to his club. The *Midwest Mongrels* got into the playoffs last year due in part to a Maracaibo late-season slide, but it would have taken some acrobatics to even stay at the 90-win level. Instead, the Guru has blown it up, even trading some of his prize pitching. There'll be a lot of bunting out in Maple Grove this year, and many "character-building" innings as well.



A photograph of Michael Brantley, a baseball player for the Cleveland Indians, in his white home uniform with red pinstripes and the word "Indians" in red script across the chest. He is wearing a black batting helmet and white batting gloves, and is captured in a batting stance on the field. The background shows a blurred crowd of spectators in the stands.

Williams Division

Michael Brantley,
Knoxville

1. Knoxville	34.0
2. Taylorville	33.5
3. Las Vegas	29.0
4. Midwest	15.0

2015 Knoxville OUTLAWS in review



It was nice not to anchor the yearbook for consecutive years.

by Pat Martin

2015 in Review

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

Knoxville continued to build on the success of 2014 by taking the next step and winning the Williams Division. It was nice not to anchor the yearbook for consecutive years and the hope is to stay away from that for a few years to come.

Unfortunately, Knoxville faced some tough post season opposition, and winning the Williams was the pinnacle of the season.

What went right?

Andrew McCutchen (.325-30-122) took the next step to superstardom by leading the team in every hitting category. Michael Brantley (.310, 26 steals, 122 runs) provided the leadoff quality that the Blue Thunder had been lacking. Yadier Molina once again provided defensive leadership, along with base running prowess that can only be categorized as “the speed of Molina”. Denard Span (.318, 104 runs) was an outstanding producer in the lineup. Overall, the offense scored 936 for the largest output in almost a generation.

The starting pitching finally put it together as all 6 starters registered 10 or more wins, led by staff ace Shelby Miller going 18-9. The surprise of the season without a doubt was Jordan Lyles going 10-0 in his 17 starts. Zach Britton proved to be the Shiny New Toy the *Annual* predicted

last year by recording a 5-0, 42 save season. The staff overall held teams to only 619 runs, which made life easy.

What went wrong?

The only thing that went wrong was that Jason Hammel forgot how to pitch once the playoffs begin, leading to a quick exit against the Munich Marauders.



McCutchen: Next step

3 Things

1. *Mortgaging the future.* Once again the Blue Thunder chose to mortgage the future for the present. We will see how it plays out for the season, but we still have a solid core that is young and relatively healthy.

2. *Giving up some young pitching.* We took the chance and traded some of our young pitching for immediate help. Will it pan out? Only time will tell.

3. *Enjoying the moment.* It is nice to once again be on the plus side of .500. With no cliff in sight, we are poised to be competitive for a few more years, barring injuries.

knoxville BLUE THUNDER



Pat Martin (30th year)

Mr. Martin went right back to the drawing board to figure out a way to return to the postseason. Thanks to some wheeling and dealing, he may have done it.

A powerful offense — its .287 batting average and .347 OBP are best in franchise history — drove the 2015 team to 105 regular season wins. The pitching staff's collective 3.38 ERA was the franchise's best since 1989, which might be well before Mr. Martin shaved regularly. But Munich derailed the march to the World Series in the Conference Semi-Finals. Disappointing? Yes, but it's still hard to argue over a 105-win season.

The team did almost everything right, exceeding the praise heaped on it by last year's *Annual*, as its pitching staff surpassed expectations. And yet one bad six-game series ended the season prematurely. It happens. Most owners would have returned home with their tail between their legs. Not Mr. Martin. He went right back to the drawing board to figure out a way to return. And thanks to some wheeling and dealing, he may have done it.

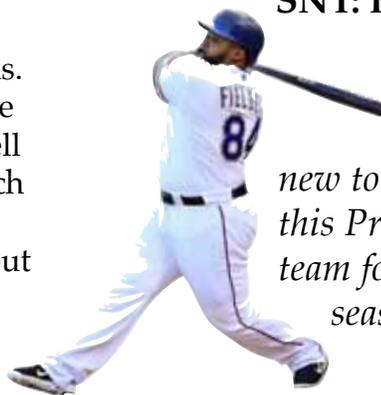
Pitching: **Do or die time.**

11.0

Last season's big trade for pitching, bringing in Jason Hammel and Hector Rondon, worked out great. They combined to contribute 21 wins and three saves. Mr. Martin has to hope this off-season's pitching acquisitions pay off as handsomely. Since most of the core returned, the Outlaws' staff didn't need much help.

It's a good thing too, since Knoxville essentially skipped the 2016 TBL draft. After trading away all his picks, Mr. Martin had to have the players and pitchers he needed to compete; help wasn't available from anywhere else. He's even already traded all of his significant (or even marginal) picks from the 2017 draft. The cupboard's bare. It's do or die time.

SNT: Prince Fielder.



A Shiny New Thing doesn't have to be new to the league. Therefore, this Prince of Bats joins a new team for a new chance at post-season glory.

Turnover Rate: 23%

Arrived: Michael Cuddyer, Prince Fielder, Jeanmar Gomez, Dan Haren, Zach McAllister, Jordy Mercer, C. C. Sabathia, Jonathan Villar.

Departed: Trevor May, Matt Moore, Justin Morneau, Kris Negron, Nick Punto, Tanner Roark, Michael Tonkin, Delmon Young.

ROTATION. There's a nice ace sitting atop the Outlaws rotation in the form of Shelby Miller (Grade 13 HR+33). He'll be counted on for 33 super starts. New trade acquisition Danny "Retiring with Grace" Haren (Grade 11 C+26 HR-26) joins lefties C.J. Wilson (Grade 11 HR+16) and Tsuyoshi Wada (Grade 11 HR-23) as the next wave, adding 58 mostly solid starts.

Hammel (Grade 10 C+24) joins lefties Danny Duffy (Grade 9 C-26) and Patrick Corbin (Grade 8 C+26) to fill out the rotation. Fortunately, CC Sabathia (Grade 5) can spend the year perfecting his buffet skills. There are no weak links; however, only Miller, Duffy, and Corbin



Miller: Nice ace



KNOXVILLE BLUE THUNDER

are on the young side. This might be the last hurrah with no picks in the next draft to help. Do or die.

BULLPEN. Two closers, righty Hector Rondon (Grade 18* C+31 HR+34) and lefty Zach Britton (Grade 17* C+24 HR+43) make the bullpen a definite strength. They have almost 140 innings to stop late rallies. They're set up by Shawn Kelley (Grade 15* C+23 HR+22) and Bryan Shaw (Grade 12*) from the right side and Alex Torres (Grade 15* C-62 HR-25) and Michael Dunn (Grade 11* C-61) from the left side. They add over 200 more innings.

At the bottom end of the pen, veteran Luke Hochevar (Grade 10*) welcomes newcomers Zach McAllister (Grade 10*) and Jeanmar Gomez (Grade 9* C+33 HR+36). They add 190 more innings. The grades are good, the peripherals, at least from the righties, are solid, and the depth is enviable. This pen helps the rotation in every respect, especially since the low end of the rotation is left-handed and the low end of the bullpen is right-handed.

Offense: 12.0
Strong without a monster.



McCutchen: Leadoff

Last year, the Outlaws boasted 10 players with 11 or 12 hits. Ah, those were the days. Not that this team is punchless. Far from it. SNT Prince Fielder (1-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L-7 R+3) is back with a full season of hits, even if his power is down a bit. Andrew McCutchen (1-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks+22,

E27 for 16 attempts) leads off most days, while Justin Turner (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L-5) hits near the top of the lineup.

Adam Lind (1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, L-12 R+1) is still the better half of a platoon — and his shift is actually half of what it was last year. Michael Brantley (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-5, F35 for 16 attempts) and Denard Span (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-14 R+3, E35 for 11 attempts) add hits and speed to the mix. Brian Dozier (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, E29 for 16 attempts) adds some pop to go along with that speed.

The rest is a little more ordinary, but this is still a strong lineup. Yadier Molina (2 0s, 10 hits including a 7 on 44, 2 walks, L-4), Jose Reyes (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, D31 for 30 attempts), and late-addition Michael Cuddyer (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22) aren't exactly easier outs, even though they don't draw walks with the same enthusiasm as their teammates.

That leaves part-timers Derek Norris (6-6-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+5 R-3) and Brandon Barnes (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-6) as the soft spots in the lineup when they play. Overall, the lineup is fairly strong, but without a monster card. Hits can be stolen; power is more difficult to neutralize. Most of the shifts play well except for Fielder's and Barnes' vs. lefties. But there's no doubt that SNT Fielder helps tremendously.

Defense: 6.0
Close to perfect.

While the Outlaws' defense isn't perfect, it's pretty close. The good news starts in the outfield, where Brantley, McCutchen, and Span (when he plays) are all OF3s. Cuddyer (OF2)



Easily still the best in the Williams for this year, The Outlaws are going to find it tough to steal a spot in the World Series, trying to sneak past Melrose and/or Munich. Good luck, Pat!

has a cannon arm (36), while Barnes (OF2) is as average as his hitting card. In the infield, Dozier (2B8) is excellent, Lind (1B3) and Reyes (SS8) are average, and Turner (3B3) is an accident waiting to happen. Molina (C9 Th+3) is still a weapon behind the dish, while Norris (C7 Th+1) is adequate. But the versatile bench can cover all the weaknesses.



Molina: Still a weapon

Bench: 4.5
Everything but the hitting toy.

Luis Valbuena (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-9) and Steven Pearce (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-5) offer power and defense (3B4 and 1B4, respectively). Jordy Mercer (6-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+6 R-3) is around for his glove (SS9). Jonathan Villar (3 Os, 10 hits including 2 11s, 3 walks, D30 for 9 attempts) helps with everything but defense. The team has some mix-and-match pieces of the starting lineup, but these guys certainly help make this a contender's bench. All that's missing is the big hitting toy.

1st This is a well-balanced team that lacks only a monster power card. They have decent pitching, especially with the deep bullpen. They have a relentless offense with some power and good speed. They should dominate close games. But they'll need every player to contribute. Taylorville is making some noise right behind them, and the *Annual* predicts the margin will be paper thin between these two Williams Division rivals. When the midseason trading period arrives, though, Knoxville will have nothing to offer; the future picks are gone already.



**knoxville:
TBL Draft**

What draft? Knoxville did not select even one player in the 2016 TBL Draft. Not one. Not even a 9th rounder. As a result, there are only 14 players on the current roster who came to the team through draft picks. Should we call him "Trader" Pat Martin? The title would fit.

It's like this whenever the Outlaws gear up for a pennant run. Mr. Martin likes to trade to get the pieces he feels the team needs. So when he goes all in, the draft picks go with it.

This strategy works in the short-term, as his teams are definitely better during the competitive run. But when it's over, it often takes time to regroup because all the good picks the following year are also gone.

Like most TBL cognoscenti, Mr. Martin tends to build his offense first. Once it's coming together, he flips the switch. For example, the last first-round pick he had was in 2014, and ace Shelby Miller arrived. Matt Moore and Patrick Corbin came in 2013. Zach Britton and Danny Duffy came in 2012. So you see a pattern developing here. Next year, the cupboard is bare again.

TQ: 34.0



KNOXVILLE BLUE THUNDER



2015 Taylorville RED RAIDERS in review



It was like having a team of nine slow Gary Pettises.

by Bruce and Glenn Taylor

2015 in Review

Final Record: 67-95 (3rd, Williams)

In 2015, the offense floundered while the staff performed adequately. We were not going to win the division anyway, but we could have performed much better in overall wins and losses than we showed. On at least 10 occasions, when sending the results from away series, the opposing manager wrote: "You guys just could not get a big hit when you needed it." We ran into the same issues at home.

What went right?

Pitching. Overall a very decent effort. A good ERA and a credible number of saves to support the starters. Aroldis Chapman was lights out: 6-1, 1.70, 32 saves, allowing only one home run with 83 K in 53 IP. Jake Arrieta went 12-10, 2.59, with 7 CG and 3 shutouts. The staff managed a respectable 3.97 ERA, not bad for a team that lost 95 games.

On the offensive side, Nolan Arenado hit 20 homers and drove in 68, and Brett Gardner hit 18 homers and stole 14 bases, leading an offense that, as noted, really didn't contribute very much to the team's success.

What went wrong?

The offense. An anemic team BA (.239), with a .353 slugging percentage and a .288 OBP. We stole only 36 bases (in 56 tries) – it was like having a team of nine slow Gary Pettises. That's the kind of production that wins 67 games regardless of how good the team is on the mound.

The principal players simply didn't produce. Arenado hit 20 homers, but had only a .256 BA. Gardner hit only .246, struck out 133 times, and his 14 steals – the only base stealer on the club, really – came with 8 CS. Howie Kendrick (.240-6-59) underperformed, as did Brian McCann (.221-15-45), but the most profound black hole was Gerardo Parra, whose nice card turned in a .216-11-58 season with 132 K.

Which begs the question: how many times just missing a key hit could there possibly be, when the team hit .239? The answer must be, *just about every time.*

3 Things

In 2016 we looked at the roster, and identified some key areas we needed to address. When you have Chapman in your BP and a Cy Young winner on your staff, you feel as if you had better do something to support this, both in the draft and through trades. The pitching staff is not likely to be this good next year, so we upgraded everything around them: starters, offense, bullpen. We do not think we can catch Knoxville – we are 'good' but not elite.

1. *Draft Kevin Pillar.* He'll help both on offense and defense, and should be here for a while.
2. *Strengthen the middle infield.* We traded for Aybar and Cano. Kendrick had a good year but we tabbed him for DH if we could improve at 2B.
3. *Move on.* We purposely let Bogaerts go last year, hoping Flores would fill the bill as our young SS. That did not work out as we had anticipated. Still, we might have held onto him if the pitching staff had developed a bit more slowly.



Chapman: Lights out

taylorville RED RAIDERS



Bruce Taylor (19th year) / Glenn Taylor (15th year)

Favorites don't always make it, and in the playoffs, anything can happen, especially if you have one of the two best starters in the game.

It's been five seasons since the last playoff appearance, seven since the team cracked the 90-win plateau. But the Brothers Taylor have the team locked in and ready for an assault on the National Conference. Do they have enough? Can they overcome franchise history (only one appearance in the Conference Championship, back in 1996)?

In the competitive atmosphere of TBL, teams keep trying, year after year, to get to the World Series. Favorites (according to the *Annual's* own rating system) don't always make it. In the playoffs, anything can happen, especially if you have one of the two best starters in the game. So there's a lot to like about this year's Taylorville team.

Pitching: 15.0
Yes, it's that good.

This is a strong staff. While the *Annual* rates it just a shade behind Munich's, it's close enough to be within the margin of error. Yes, it's that good. And not to take anything away from the hitters on this team, but the pitching staff is the most obvious strength of the team. It's why Taylorville is in the conversation as a World Series contender.

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Cody Anderson, Erick Aybar, Robinson Cano, Steve Clevenger, Brian Ellington, Gonzalez Germen, Johnny Giavotella, Taylor Jungmann, Jeff Manship, Shane Peterson, Kevin Pillar, Hansel Robles, Brendan Ryan

Departed: Joaquin Arias, Jeff Beliveau, Wilmer Flores, Robbie Grossman, Jeremy Guthrie, Jose Lobaton, Ed Lucas, Dan Otero, Juan Carlos Oviedo, Ramon Santiago, Donovan Solano, Jason Vargas.

It starts with a deep rotation, including arguably the best starter in the league. The quality extends to the bullpen, where two closers head a stable of arms that can dominate the later innings of a game. This staff has the grades and the peripherals to keep the team in the game, protect any lead, and force other teams to spin their wheels in fruitless machinations.



Arrieta: Cy Young

ROTATION. Jake "Cy Young" Arrieta (Grade 20 C+23 HR+42) and his XY strikeout rating takes the mound 33 times. It's like having your closer start 20 percent of your games. Will he win every time out? We wouldn't bet against him. Young Cody Anderson (Grade 13) starts 15 times, which means once during a playoff series.

The next wave includes lefty Hector Santiago (Grade 12 C-23 HR-22) and righty Taylor Jungmann (Grade 12 C-31). The grades are certainly adequate,

SNT: Kevin Pillar.

A full-season defensive standout, Pillar joins Gerardo Parra and Brett Gardner in an enviable outfield. The question is whether his bat can catch up with his glove.





Taylorville RED RAIDERS

although the peripherals may they have to be rescued earlier than expected. A pair of lefty Grade 9s – J.A. Happ (C+21 HR+16) and Gio Gonzalez (C-24 HR+43) – round out the rotation.

BULLPEN. A new face joins Aroldis Chapman (Grade 23* C-54 HR+43) at the top of the bullpen: Jeff Manship (Grade 28* HR+53). But wait! Don't forget "set-up men" Jeurys Familia (Grade 18* C+21 HR+23) and rookie Brian Ellington (Grade 17* C-45 HR+44) — they could close for other teams. That's almost 209 closer innings. If you play Taylorville, get an early lead or it's lights out.

The middle relievers lean decidedly to the left. Travis Wood (Grade 16* C-21), Cesar Jimenez (Grade 15* C-24), and Matt Thornton (Grade 15* C+26 HR+41) join righty rookie Hansel "and Gretel" Robles (Grade 15* HR-23) to complete this fairy tale. They add 176 more innings.



Chapman: Lights out

Offense: 10.5
More popgun than shotgun.

Perseverance brought Nolan Arenado (1-1-5-6, 11 hits, a walk, L-5) to Taylorville after Will Middlebrooks didn't work out, and boy was he worth the wait. He's joined by a resurgent Albert Pujols (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-3)

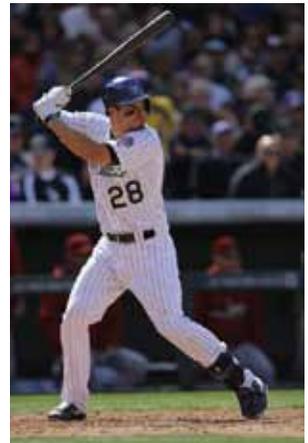
and Gerardo Parra (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L-8, E30 for 18 attempts) as legitimate power threats in the everyday lineup.

Robinson Cano (1-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-5) has lost some power, but remains a premier hitter. Brian McCann (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+42) can also hit it out when he makes contact. But that's the extent of the power in the lineup most days.

The rest of the lineup is more popgun than shotgun. Howie Kendrick (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks), Erick Aybar (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-3, E28 for 21 attempts), SNT Kevin Pillar (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, E33 for 29 attempts), and Brett Gardner (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, E31 for 25 attempts) add hits and speed to the lineup as table-setters or bottom-feeders.

Matt den Dekker (1-4-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-8) and Johnny Giavotella (3 0s, 10 hits including a 7 on 44, 2 walks) may also get some time at DH during the season. This certainly isn't a bad offense. It has some power, good speed and lots of hits, but it will work best if the hits come in bunches and the power appears when it's needed most.

Defense: 5.5
Average up the middle.



Arenado: Worth the wait



McCann: Solid

Gardner, Parra, and Pillar form a trio of OF3s. den Dekker (OF2) fills in a few games. All but Gardner have plus arms.

Behind the plate, McCann (C8, Th+2) is solid. Arenado (3B5) and Pujols (1B4) anchor the infield, which is

only average up the middle with Aybar (SS8) and Cano (2B7) — and no help on the bench. While the middle infield isn't exactly a weakness, average may simply not be good enough on a contender.

**Bench:
Potentially useful.**

3.0

Ryan Hanigan (C8 Th-1) backs up McCann adequately. Den Dekker, Giavotella, and Steve Clevenger (3 0s, 11 hits, L-5) offer pinch-hitting bats off the bench. There are no obvious stolen base threats to pinch run. Brendan Ryan (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+6 R-9) and Jedd Gyorko (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4 R-3) potentially have their uses. Shane Peterson (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-3) potentially has none.

2nd

This is a team that wants to achieve. The Brothers Taylor have made the moves and drafted the players to make the team stronger. It's worked; the team is rated neck-and-neck with the favorite Knoxville for the division crown. But there are still limitations. More power would have helped. Defensive replacements at short and second would have helped. But this team will likely ride its pitching staff into the playoffs. From there, who can say?



A much improved Red Raiders squad, trying to fend off both Maracaibo and Las Vegas for a WC berth. Having the best starter in the league (Arrieta) for 33 starts should help.



**taylorville:
TBL Draft**



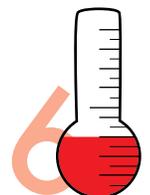
taylorville RED RAIDERS

Usually, the Brothers Taylor don't mind gambling on a prospect in the first round. Gyorko and Middlebrooks are examples who haven't worked out as planned. They also don't mind taking older players who fill a need. Josh Harrison (since traded) and Kevin Pillar are examples. It all depends where they are on the rebuilding clock. The Brothers Taylor are shrewd that way.

While the team has added a few key players through trade (Gardner and McCann, for example), the Brothers Taylor have focused primarily on the draft to build the team. Most of the players were acquired with draft picks from the first round to the Bonus round. The fact that so many of them are still on the team — and still contributing to another competitive run — is testament to the owners' skill for judging talent.

Arenado aside, however, this is not a particularly young team. The Brothers Taylor will face the age-old problem of trying to stay competitive while also trying to get younger. On the other hand, they are still well-positioned to do exactly that in future drafts.

TQ: 33.5



2015 Las Vegas GAMBLERS in review

Baby steps! Baby steps!



by Paul Harrington

2015 in Review

Final Record: 52-110 (4th, Williams)

Some recent Gamblers history. In 2011, our first season back in the Clemente Division after an eight year absence, we won 100 games and the division title, only to lose to Rye in the semifinals. The next year, 2012, we won 91 games and a wild card spot, but couldn't get past Gotham City in the Wild Card round, a familiar theme in Gambler playoff history. 2012 also marked the last year of TBL HOFer Vlad Guerrero's career. The vast power hole his departure left in our lineup was indeed telling. From 2013 thru last season the Gamblers compiled a putrid record of 165 wins and 321 losses! We are now hoping to bounce back to winning, starting in 2016, our 20th season in TBL, winning that will last well into the next decade!



Loney: Respectable

What went right?

Sam Dyson did some fine middle relief work, posting a nifty 1.89 ERA in 38 innings with a 3-1 record in 34 appearances. That record makes him the only pitcher on the staff with a record above .500. On the offensive side, James Loney was doing his best to help keep Las Vegas respectable. He anchored first base for 147 games with a decent slash line of .304 / .331 / .398 and only 5 errors. Josh Donaldson, trying his best to be the Gamblers newest power bat, slugged 62 XBH, with a team leading 23 HR. And our horrid record got us the 1st overall draft pick. That counts, correct?

What went wrong?

Recently, as alluded to in the opening paragraph, this section has been much longer than the last section. Where to begin? Staff Ace Jose Quintana made 32 starts, posting a 6-18 record and a bloated 5.09 ERA. Including Quintana, five starters had double digit losses. The only pitcher to throw over 90 innings and have an ERA under 4.50 was Sam Deduno, and his season record was 1-9! As for

the offense, the team "achieved" the slash line of .231 / .292 / .350. Six regulars had more than 110 strikeouts. We were, once again, near the bottom in most of the offensive categories and near the top of most of the "offensive" categories. And we lost 110 games. That counts too, right?

3 Things

1. *Starting a new, winning, tradition.* Vlad Guerrero is gone, but Josh Donaldson, Xander Bogaerts and Kris Bryant are here to bring back to the Gamblers their winning ways. With more draft help over the next several years, Las Vegas will be feared again!
2. *Reenergizing the fan base.* Over the last few years J. Lo, Celene Dion and even Siegfried and Roy have drawn better crowds than a Gamblers weekday home game, but not for long. With new promotions, giveaways and actually winning games, we hope to drawn back your entertainment dollars once again.
3. *Not trading the future away.* Gamblers management is trying to break their bad habit of selling away future drafts for cardboard. Once we have a winning streak, we tend to want to push all our chips into the pot and yell "Let'em ride"! Ignore the fact that we've already traded our 2017 #2 and #5 for a set up reliever. Baby steps! Baby steps!

Las Vegas GAMBLERS



Paul Harrington (20th year)

Thanks to a strong draft and some strategic trades, this team should win more games than it loses for the first time since 2012.

What a difference a year makes. The Gamblers have been in a rut lately, to put it mildly. They've lost 321 games over the past three years. So it's no surprise that Mr. Harrington announced, "Enough is enough!" Thanks to a couple strong drafts and some recent strategic trades, he's built himself a team that should win more games than it loses for the first time since 2012. Is the team ready for a return to the playoffs? Just ask Mr. Harrington.

James Loney (2007) and Asdrubal Cabrera (2008) are now the longest-tenured Gamblers. They joined a much different team then — that

SNT: Kris Bryant.

When you have the first overall pick in the TBL Draft, you get to choose a budding superstar who combines on-base ability, a high batting average, and improving power.



Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Michael Blazek, Kris Bryant, Andrew Chafin, R.A. Dickey, Frank Garces, Cole Gillespie, Sean Gilmartin, Hisashi Iwakuma, Manny Parra, Eury Perez, Hernan Perez, Bo Schultz, Travis Shaw, Carson Smith.

Departed: Chase Anderson, Vic Black, Craig Breslow, Samuel Deduno, Darin Downs, Ryan Flaherty, Yasmani Grandal, Shane Greene, Tyler Holt, John Jr. Mayberry, Adam Ottavino, Alex Presley, Esmil Rogers, Caleb Thielbar.

was back in the Vladimir Guerrero years. This is now a much younger and faster team. But this squad shares a characteristic common to the best Gamblers teams: a deep bullpen. Maybe it's not quite as deep as in previous years, but it may hold the key to the team's success in 2016.

Pitching: 10.5 Not all sevens and elevens.

When your team's short a bunch of starts, you have several options: take "pitchah, pitchah, pitchah" in the draft (to quote our esteemed Mr. Greenwald); suck it up and throw a bunch of waiver wire picks out there every other day; or go out and trade for the talent you need. Mr. Harrington chose the latter route, and as a result, the Gamblers in position to compete for the Williams Division crown.

To use a craps analogy, it's not all sevens and elevens, though. In fact, it's mostly tens and nines. But tens and nines are better than nines and sevens, which composed most of the starts in 2015. Still, the bullpen is much improved, and it'll be used early and often to rescue faltering starters and keep the games close. As a result, as mentioned above, how the pen performs will largely determine the fate of the 2016 Gamblers.

ROTATION. At the top of the rotation are three righty Grade 10s, two of whom came to the team in an offseason trade: Hisashi Iwakuma (C+35 HR-16) and R.A. Dickey (C+12). They join holdover Tom Koehler (C-32). They contribute 84 solid starts. While the lack of a bonafide ace will tax the bullpen over the course of the season, this staff is already heads and tails above last season's rotation.



Las Vegas GAMBLERS

The next wave includes right-handed Kyle Gibson (Grade 9 HR+22). He's joined by lefties Tommy Milone (Grade 9 C+14) and Jose Quintana (Grade 8 C+31 HR+26). They cover the rest of the season. That means young Martin Perez (Grade 5 HR+51) can practice off-speed pitches in AAA. The rotation has no weaknesses, and the peripherals are mostly positive,



K-Rod: Closer

which will help, but their grades fall in that range where anything can happen any day, good or bad.

BULLPEN.

Francisco "K-Rod" Rodriguez

(Grade 18* C+31) has saved 130 games in his career, and he returns to the full-time closer role. He's ably set up by a deep trio: righties

Michael Blazek (Grade 17* HR+35) and Carson Smith (Grade 16* C+14 HR+53), as well as lefty Andrew Chafin (Grade 15* HR+44). The grades and positive peripherals make this a team strength. All together, they offer over 257 innings.

Middle relief is handled by righty Sam Dyson (Grade 13* HR+36) and lefty Sean Gilmartin (Grade 13* C+22 HR+46). At the low end of the bullpen are Bo Schultz (Grade 14* C-16 HR-24), Manny Parra (Grade 8* C+35 HR+32), and Dale Thayer (Grade 9* HR-15). They all add almost 241 more innings. Not mentioned in the instructions are Brad Hand (Grade 7*), Frank Garces (Grade 7* C-62 HR-43), or Anthony Bass (Grade 6* HR+26). Given the rotation, the bullpen may get used up quickly, but to win, this bullpen has to perform. All season.

Offense: Illusions of grandeur.

11.0

Batting cleanup everyday is Josh Donaldson (1-1-6-6, 10 hits with a 7 on 44, 4 walks+22, L+3). It's a fearsome card that makes the whole lineup better. SNT Kris Bryan (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L-4, E30 for 17 attempts) is an on-base machine with power who should only get better. That's all the regulars with four power numbers.



Donaldson: Fearsome

But that's not all the power on the team. Asdrubal Cabrera (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 walks) contributes almost every day. Rookie Travis Shaw (1-5-5, 10 hits with a 7 on 44, 3 walks+22, L+5 R-5) will rock 'em and sock 'em for 65 games. Josh Phegley (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, R-4) has isolated power. But that's all for exceptional power on the team: three regulars and two part-timers. It's light for a team that has illusions of grandeur.

There are other highlights, such as Xander Bogaerts (3 0s, 12 hits, 2 walks, L+5 R-3, F32 for 12 attempts), who blossomed in his second season. He leads off most days. Francisco Cervelli (2 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L+3) and James Loney (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-7) will also get their share of hits, but most of those hits will be singles.

That leaves Austin Jackson (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, R-3, C25 for 27 attempts), Juan Lagares (6-0, 10 hits, a walk+22, L+4 R-3, E27 for 10 attempts), and Avisail Garcia (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4 R-3). These are virtually identical mediocre cards. All three, in fact, have the 22 on 13. While the bottom of the lineup don't feature automatic outs, no pitcher will pitch around any of them. With an offense in motion, though, the team should be able to generate enough runs to stay in most games.

Defense: 4.0
Somewhat improved.

This is a somewhat improved defense. The outfield features Jackson and Lagares (both OF3s) with plus arms. Even Garcia (OF2) has a cannon (36). Donaldson (3B5) and Loney (1B5) cement the infield, although Shaw (1B3) is only average when he plays. The infield also boasts Cabrera (2B8) and Cervelli (C8, but Th-3). Phegley (C7, but Th+3) ably backs up Cervelli. Bogaerts (SS8) is merely average at a most important position. There's no help on the bench, so this is as good as it gets. When everyone plays, it's pretty good.

Bench: 2.5
Will help sometimes.

Cole Gillespie (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L+4 R-3) is the pinch-hitting toy. He's a threat, but can only hit for one of the three other outfielders. Hernan Perez (3 0s, 9 hits, a walk, E32 for 6 attempts) offers some speed off the bench. Skip Schumaker (3 6s, 9 hits, 3 walks), if he gets called up, waits to bat with a man on third. This bench will help sometimes, and Gillespie should PH every game the Gamblers trail.



Despite the predicted third-place finish, this team has a chance to break the recent Gamblers trend and win more games than they lose.

The franchise is definitely headed back in the right direction, which is great to see for our most recent former Commissioner, Mr. Harrington. In reality, this is a team that could seriously overperform or seriously underperform. Its success will hinge on the success of its deep bullpen.



After three years of failure, Las Vegas is ready for respectability. With Bogaerts, Donaldson and, now, Kris Bryant leading the charge, The Gamblers seem poised to shine brighter than anything else on the Strip.



Las Vegas:
TBL Draft



Las Vegas GAMBLERS

Mr. Harrington relies on the time-tested TBL theory of building offense first. Almost all his recent first-round and second-round picks have been hitters. SNT Bryant, last year's SNT Bogaerts, Garcia, Grandal (since traded away), and Jackson are good examples.

When he finds himself with a low first-round pick, he often goes after starting pitching, such as Tommy Milone and (ahem) Lucas Harrell in 2013. To be fair, Harrell was a Grade 10 that year and seemed like a safe bet. But a prospect, he wasn't. And that highlights another draft strategy Mr. Harrington often employs: pitchers are often grades, not arms.

Finally, another successful strategy for the Gamblers has been to load up on bullpen arms, good arms, in the middle and late rounds of the draft. In this most recent draft, for example, he took Blazek, Chafin, Gilmartin, Schultz, and Parra from the Bonus round through the seventh round. All those arms will contribute significantly to the success of the team this year.

TQ: 29.0



2015 midwest MONGRELS in review



The Guru is going to have to watch an awful lot of baseball.

by Darrell Skogen

2015 in Review

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

It was a good news, bad news season in Midwest. The team overperformed and made the playoffs as one of the wild card teams, with 90 wins. But it got old, and a number of key performers were going to be lost in 2016. Time to tear things down and go for greatness in later seasons. The Dawgs are descending into the abyss and hoping for a bounce in 2017.

What went right?

The team recorded a 3.53 ERA and won 90 games despite giving up 653 runs and 647 scored on offense for the Dawgs. MadBum was a feeble 15-13 with a 4.14 ERA, but Phil Hughes was 16-11, Ervin Santana 14-9, while Alfredo Simon pitched in tough luck (11-12, 3.38), as did Jordan Zimmermann (12-14, 3.77). Greg Holland paced the bullpen with 37 saves and a 1.37 ERA, and Fernando Rodney, Glen Perkins, and Brian Duensing all did better than to be expected, at 2.76, 2.10, and 1.53 ERAs. Victor Martinez hit .309 with only 77 RBI. Martinez cracked out 70 XBH, and Jones contributed 67 more.

What went wrong?

At first glance, nothing. This team was fun to watch progress. But team BA was low at .247, with only 647 runs scored. Eric Hosmer hit .255 with seven dingers. Adam Jones underperformed at .261 with 85 RBI. No one drove in or scored 100 runs. Infield hitting: Odor .211, Rollins .217, Plouffe .224. Ouch!!

3 Things

Three things will be key for the Dawgs this season.

1. *Victor Martinez will have to manage patiently.* There is some bullpen, so when a starter does well, there is a possibility to win a game here and there. There is some offense, and the V-Mart will have to hope that hitters show up on the same day as pitchers do to guarantee that the season is not epically bad.

2. *The emphasis is on getting younger.* This is a two year plan. At the draft, we picked up some young arms that should help in the future. Next year, phase two will be determined based on TBL and real life results during the 2016 season.

3. *The Guru is going to have to watch an awful lot of baseball this season* before next season's draft. There should be two high picks in the first round, and there can't be any Danny-Santana-like mistakes in the spring of 2017.

The Guru must dig deep into his memory banks and replay the drafts during the Dawgs' back-to-back 53 and 49 win seasons back in the early days of his administration of the franchise. It gives him something to do as he makes plans to retire from his day job.

More than anything else, the Dawgs are looking to play hard, be respectable rather than totally worthless, and develop some boys for the future.



Top performer again

midwest MONGRELS



Darrell Skogen (15th year)

He knows what he's doing.

We remember a *Sports Illustrated* magazine cover from the early 1980s. It had a picture of LA Dodgers Manager Tommy Lasorda. Lasorda had been the team's manager and the face of the franchise for a decade or more. Because of his humor and open communication with the baseball press, he cut a humorous figure on the national stage. He was in the middle of managing the Dodgers through the hurricane of Fernando-mania. The cover was of a serious Lasorda, and the caption read – *Maybe this guy really knows what he's doing?*

It's time we asked this same question about our brother Darrell Skogen. In 2009, Darrell put his idiosyncratic drafting and managing style at the center of the league conversation by winning the TBL Championship. Darrel loves to bunt, stockpiles his beloved Twins, over-emphasizes pitching on draft day, and has the "Minnesota nice" thing down to a fine science. Even after the championship was in the bank, some of us dismissed that year as a little fluky – his offense wasn't that good, and he had unnaturally good dice in the championship series.

All that doubt was reinforced when The Guru struggled through a few seasons trapped in the 75–90 win washing machine that characterizes teams whose pitching gets ahead of their hitting. But then came 2014. This time, Darrell won 110 games, dominated his division, and chased a 122-win Brobdingnag team deep into the 7th game of the TBL World Series before succumbing. This was a managerial masterpiece. The Dawgs scored 819 runs but allowed only 539. Darrell went 15-15 over 52 starts with his two worst starters. He went nose-to-nose with Ray Murphy and Hall of Famer Walter Hunt and won both series to get to the big dance.

SNT: Aaron Hicks.

He's here because Darrel paid a #2 draft pick to get him. He's a nice motion outfielder with a plus glove. He's a .223 career hitter in the majors after 950 at bats. The Guru sees something.



Turnover Rate: 49%

Arrived: Melky Cabrera, Ezequiel Carrera, Zach Davies, Yimi Garcia, Alex Guerrero, David Hale, Aaron Harang, Chris Herrmann, Aaron Hicks, Kyle Lohse, Ryan Madson, Justin Nicolino, Henry Owens, Jimmy Paredes, Felipe Rivero, Eddie Rosario, David Wright.

Departed: Madison Bumgarner, Endy Chavez, Bruce Chen, Mark Ellis, Greg Holland, Reed Johnson, Adam Jones, Ricky Nolasco, Joel Peralta, Jasmil Pinto, Ervin Santana, Jordan Schafer, Oscar Taveras, Jordan Zimmermann.

Darrell's successful stint as TBL Commissioner and his 2009 Championship make him a star in this league already. But he may be building a Hall of Fame argument with every dice roll. Watch this rebuild carefully.

Pitching: 4.5 What's left when the house burns down.

ROTATION. Someone has to start all 162 games – that's the rule. Midwest will send out a young Zack Davies (14 C-45 HR+34, 6 starts) for a little over a month, and those will be the only starts this Midwest team will enjoy with a pitcher above Grade 9. Next off the pile is Justin Nicolino



midwest MONGRELS

(9 C+16, 12 starts) followed by Boston's Henry Owens (8 C-25 HR+13, 11 starts). The top 3 give the Dawgs 29 starts where the pitcher steals hits without help.

The bulk of the season is handled by the kind of veterans who show up whenever a team is trying to get legal: Aaron Harang (5 C+14 HR-21, 29 starts), Jeremy Hellickson (7 C+14, HR-21, 27 starts), Phil Hughes (4 C+46 HR-31, 25 starts) and Alfredo Simon (Grade 5, 31 starts) take the next 112. The last 21 starts are divvied up among David Hale (1 C+24 HR-26) and Kyle Lohse (1 C+16 HR-32).

This is a disaster – and a self-inflicted one at that. Darrell sold off Jordan Zimmerman, Ervin Santana and 26 year old Madison Baumgarner for parts in the offseason.

BULLPEN. There is some, but it may not be here long. The team could use 1000 innings of Grade 15+ relief, but they will settle for three decent arms to turn leads into wins. Ryan Madson (16* C+24 HR+24, 63 innings) will be the closer. He'll be 36 in August so he should rent, not buy. The wonderful Yimi Garcia (13* C+34 HR-22, 56 IP) will try to be the setup man from the right side, while Felipe Rivero (15* C+26 HR+43, 48 IP) will try to be the bridge man from the left side. They have a total of 167 innings of Grade 13+ relief. This is decent for a team that is bottoming out.



Harang: Get legal

Then comes the wave of grade 9s. Glen Perkins (9* C+41 HR-22, 57 IP) will be a solid contributor with the good control number. Brandon Gomes (9* C+23 HR-25, 59 IP) and Brian Duensing (Grade 9* C-21 HR+15, 48 IP) are usable. Fernando Rodney (9* C-33 HR-14, 62 innings) is not so, but does provide bulk.

Garcia, Rivero and Mike Morin (2*) are the only bullpen arms under 30.

This pen will be turned over a couple of times before Midwest goes for it again.

Offense: 5.5 Starting to come together.

The core of a new offense is starting to come together. There are four cards that are young and productive already. At first base, Midwest plays Eric Hosmer (11 hits, 3 walks, 3 0s) every day. At second, there is 22 year old Roughned Odor (10 hits, 2 walks+42, 1-0-0-0). At third base, Darrel traded to acquire Trevor Plouffe (9 hits, 3 walks, 1-0-0-0, 4 24s), whose only downside is a penchant for the double play. Eddie Rosario (10 hits, 1-2-0-0) - another young Twin – will be in the outfield for most of the season.



Hosmer: Every day

Midwest has one other plus card – old friend David Wright (10 hits, 5 walks, 1-6-0, L+6, 38 games). He will help against lefties in spots, but he's here to heal up and help Midwest next year. Midwest has also stashed Danny Santana (8 hits), who forgot how to hit last season, but is 25 – we like 'em young here in Rebuilding Land.

The rest of the guys are here to... get to the end. The shortstop for this year is veteran Alexei Ramirez (9 hits, 2 walks, 3 0s, 28 SSN for 24 attempts). The



It's the Guru's first actual rebuild, and we all know that those are never easy or quick. A few more drafts of stockpiling talent and the Mongrels should return to their winning ways.

catchers are Rene Rivera (7 hits) and Chris Stewart (11 hits, 1 walk, 0-6-7-7-7). Stewart would be more interesting if he was not 34 already.

The outfield sees new faces every day – almost every position is a platoon. Melky Cabrera (10 hits, 2 walks, 3 0s, 158 games) plays a lot, as does Ezequiel Carrera (10 hits, 2 walks, 0-6). Jimmy Paredes (10 hits, 2 walks, 3 0s) also sees regular action. A guy wearing a Victor Martinez (9 hits, 2 walks, 3 0s) jersey is the regular DH. They will lead the league in bunts this year.

Defense: 3.0
Oh, do we need some?

Player	Rating
Rene Rivera	C7, TH+3
Chris Stewart	C8, TH-3
Eric Hosmer	1B5
Roughned Odor	2B7
Alexei Ramirez	SS8
Trevor Plouffe	3B4
Ezequiel Carrera	OF2, 30 arm
Eddie Rosario	OF2, 34 arm
Alex Guerrero	OF1 33 arm
Jimmy Paredes	OF1 32 arm
Aaron Hicks	OF3 35 arm

The strength is at the corner infield slots with Hosmer and Plouffe. The lineups frequently include at least one poor outfielder to start the game, but Hicks is a nice defensive replacement. Otherwise – they are dead average.

Bench: 2.0
In this town, it's made of wood.

Andrew Romine (10 hits, 2 walks, 2 0s) and Mike Aviles (9 hits, 2 walks, 2 0s) are nothing to write home about offensively, but they cover the whole field as bench players. Hicks (OF3) is a nice defense and pinch running option. Not a lot here, but at this stage in Midwest's rebuild the bench is really an afterthought.



Melky Cabrera actually improves their offense, and the pitching that got them to the playoffs is now working for other people. It is going to be a long year, even with the veteran additions like Cabrera and Madson padding their fall.



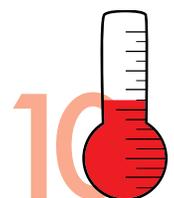
midwest:
 TBL Draft

Darrell drafts his teams backwards. In 2016, facing a steep mountain of rebuilding, he chose outfielder Eddie Rosario at the end of the first round. This was an orthodox move, choosing a young position player. But then he chose, in order, Felipe Rivero, Henry Owens, Yimi Garcia, Justin Nicolino, and 35-year-old Ryan Madson. Five straight pitchers in lieu of the position players he could really use. The galling thing is that this violation of all the rules of APBA engagement will probably work, because he's done this twice before.

He is one of the best game managers in the league, and he tends to draft players he has seen and knows well – such as the Rosario selection. His whiff on Danny Santana in 2015 was an anomaly. A better gauge is his selection of Roughned Odor in that same draft. He took Odor early, before the player had had a chance to establish himself in the majors. It worked – and Mr. Skogen has a second baseman for the next ten years at least.

Keep an eye on this space over the next few seasons. No one does it like this, but he'll make it work in his own way. He knows what he's doing.

TQ: 15.0



midwest MONGRELS

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 Mookie Betts, Jorge Soler, Carlos Martinez, Aaron Sanchez and Jake Lamb in the top ten.



1 Cory Seager, SS, Zion.

A terrific short at-bats card will translate into a great rookie season for the Dodgers. He'll be in the Elders' lineup for many years to come.



6 Joey Gallo, 3B-OF, Statesmen.

Huge power potential, with big holes in his swing. A perfect selection for a rebuilding club.



2 Luis Severino, P, Kansas.

The top pitching prospect for the Yankees is what Bill Schwartz *wanted* but didn't *need* – but it's hard to argue with the pick. Electric arm, already poised.



7 Ketel Marte, SS, Detroit.

A good glove and a mature batting eye made him pop out as a rookie. He's a good fit for the Detroit Stars, who need everything.



3 Stephen Matz, P, Zion.

The dominant left-hander started 2014 in Single-A and finished last year in a major league pennant race. He'll break out big time as a 2016 rookie.



8 Travis Shaw, 1B-3B, Las Vegas.

The power-hitting infielder has taken the Panda's job in Boston. We would not be surprised if Vegas uses him as trade bait in a year, though.



4 Raisel Iglesias, P, Calusa.

The hard-throwing righthander from Cuba was tapped as the opening day starter by the Reds. A great addition to the fierce people.



9 Aaron Nola, P, Columbus.

He doesn't turn 23 until June, and is already considered a top of the rotation guy in Philadelphia. He'll be part of the success in Columbus as well.



5 Brian Buxton, OF, Brobdingnag.

A complete player, if he can stay healthy. Not at all a reach for Brobdingnag - his top end is another Mike Trout. Look how that turned out.



10 Jerad Eickhoff, P, Calusa.

Another Phillies guy, he has a live arm and a location where he'll have lots of opportunities to succeed.

Honorable mention: Kyle Barraclough, P, Grand Cayman; Archie Bradley, P, Hoboken; Curt Casali, C, Maracaibo; Brandon Drury, IF, Statesmen; Tyler Duffey, P, Grand Cayman; Mychal Givens, P, Hudson; Trevor Gott, P, Detroit; Dalier Hinojosa, P, Calusa; Jeremy Jeffress, P, Hoboken; John Lamb, P, Grand Cayman; Rymer Liriano, OF, Columbus; Michael Lorenzen, P, Zion; John Ryan Murphy, C, Blue Hill; Hector Grand Cayman, IF, Detroit; Hansel Robles, IF, Taylorville; Tyler Saladino, IF, New Westminster; Jon Singleton, 1B, Maracaibo; Tyler Skaggs, P, Grand Cayman; Jake Smolinski, OF, Warrenton; Stephen Souza, OF, Rye; Jesus Sucre, C, Whitman; Trayce Thompson, OF, Melrose; Preston Tucker, OF, New Westminster; Giovanny Urshela, 3B, Hoboken; Tyler Wilson, P, Rye; Matt Wisler, P, Statesmen.

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 our top ten were selected in the first round in 2016. You be the judge. Thanks – once again – to Rich Meyer and Ray Murphy for their help.



1 J. P. Crawford, SS, Philadelphia.

A great glove and all-around hitting talent makes him a likely prime selection in next year's draft. On a rebuilding club like the Phillies, the door is wide open.



6 Tyler Glasnow, P, Pittsburgh.

He may be a year away, or he may find his way to the majors this year. Either way, the 6'8" righty will be dominant.



2 Lucas Giolito, P, Washington.

A high-ceiling strikeout pitcher, he has his Tommy John surgery already behind him.



7 Aaron Judge, OF, New York (A).

A linebacker disguised as a power hitter, he could be the next Giancarlo Stanton, dropping home run balls into the stands at Yankee Stadium.



3 Trevor Story, SS, Colorado.

The big story of the early season, Troy Tulowitzki's departure has created an opportunity for him to shine. The power can't keep this pace, but he's off to quite a start.



8 Kenta Maeda, P, Los Angeles (N).

A bargain signing for the Dodgers, injuries have already placed him in the rotation for them in 2016.



4 Jose Berrios, P, Minnesota.

Dominant at two levels in 2015 (AA and AAA), he has a good chance of making an impact with the big club in 2016.



9 Byung Ho Park, 1B, Minnesota.

A Korean import with terrific raw power, he's getting every chance to succeed up in the frozen north.



5 Blake Snell, P, Tampa Bay.

A dominant strikeout pitcher, his raw talent may open the door to a major league breakthrough in 2016.



10 Orlando Arcia, SS, Milwaukee.

A premiere defender who tore up the Southern League last year, he may be able to make the jump from AA to the majors this year.

Honorable mention: Anthony Alford, OF, Toronto; Tim Anderson, SS, Chicago (A); Dylan Bundy, P, Baltimore; Jose De Leon, P, Los Angeles (N); Carson Fulmer, P, Chicago (A); Jon Gray, P, Colorado; Jorge Lopez, P, Milwaukee; Mikie Mahtook, OF, Tampa Bay; Raul A. Mondesi, IF, Kansas City; Frankie Montas, P, Los Angeles (N); Tyler Naquin, OF, CLE; Peter O'Brien, OF, Arizona; Seung Hwan Oh, P, St. Louis; Hector Olivera, OF, Atlanta; Jose Peraza, 2B, Cincinnati; A. J. Reed, 1B, Houston; Alex Reyes, P, St. Louis; Joey Rickard, OF, Baltimore; Mallex Smith, OF, Atlanta; Robert Stephenson, P, Cincinnati; Tray Turner, SS, Washington; Julio Urias, P, Los Angeles (N); Kyle Zimmer, P, Kansas City.

2015 and early 2016 has been an interesting time of reflection for me. Life changes and the usual sorts of retrospection that accompanies the writing of this book have made me realize just how long we've been doing this (some of us a *very* long time indeed) and just how fragile it all is.

The longevity of TBL has been a subject of much prose in the *Annual* over the years. Leagues, especially those whose members still roll the dice and look up results on cardboard, have suffered from aging and decline; for us to survive twenty years is unusual – thirty years is nothing short of remarkable. For the lifers in TBL, we have pushed past and now take it for granted.

Which leads to the second point: fragility. We have lost managers over the years, sometimes to outside commitments (such as parenthood, or illness, or – in one case, some years ago – divorce) but occasionally because of other reasons. Last year had one of those, and almost had one or two more. What brought it about, and how it was resolved, is not important in and of itself; like other such conflicts, as the events pass out of view, the feelings become remote and often forgotten.

What *is* important is that we had a problem. We take it for granted (perhaps too much) that the things that make this league great are not only self-perpetuating, but require no maintenance. Those assumptions are fallacious. Any and all relationships are subject to entropy, particularly due to stresses outside the control of the participants; and to keep a couple dozen middle-aged men with strong personalities in harmony requires work.

We avoid some of the worst tendencies of leagues such as ours. We are friendly and forgiving to newcomers and attract very good talent when an opening appears (which isn't very

often); we have some very sharp baseball minds among our ranks, but mostly lack the "shark" mentality that sometimes pervades draft leagues; and to a great extent, from the draft to the *Annual* to the email by-play on [heytbl](http://heytbl.com), we root for each other. That's great, and I hope it continues. It's important for us to remember our best instincts and intentions when conflicts arise.

I see this happen on Facebook all the time: the most innocuous thing can descend into bitter acrimony at the drop of a baseball cap. When it happens here, it's not an indication of our baser nature, but more often a reflection of fatigue or external stress or impatience – concluding the worst rather than assuming the best. When I have had difficulties in TBL, my first inclination is to try and decide how I might be at fault. I'm not the only one who does this, of course, and our snappy repartée here in the *Annual* (and elsewhere, for example during the Sensei Smackdown at the draft) sometimes suggest otherwise; but truly, no friendship is so trivial that it's not worth a little self-examination.

I've known some of the members of TBL for twenty or more years, and some for thirty or more years. At the moment, that latter figure is more than half my life. We have watched each other's families grow, our children appear and grow up, our lives and careers change. There is no argument over a fifth-rounder or a choice of lineup or the validity of a trade offer that is more important than those friendships. Those things are fleeting – reviewing the last few years' drafts makes me realize just how much I've forgotten that at one time was right in front of me. By comparison, the best times I have had in TBL, and there are a lot of them, are clear and fresh in my memory. All of those moments include many of you, and in most cases they involve smiles.

Let it always be so.

commissioner's report

by Ray Murphy

I'm back!

After a one-year hiatus from the league, I'm very happy to have found a way to maintain a relationship with this league that has been a part of my life for more than 20 years. I must admit, I really did enjoy NOT managing a team last summer. I really did step away reluctantly, but once I committed to leaving, it did quickly become clear that I made the right choice. But, at the risk of sounding sappy, I really did miss you guys. I have so many good memories from my TBL tenure: the annual draft gatherings in New York and Massachusetts, of course. Those are touchstone events. But there are so many others, too. In no particular order:

- Playing a three-way face-to-face playoff showdown with Paul Montague and Tim Giles out at the Giles riverside compound in New York, circa winter 1997.
- Holding the Ludwig/Hanley expansion draft at Rich Meyer's house, also sometime in the 1990s. (My favorite part of that story: I thought that Rich invited Jon and I over early to watch a Patriots game or something, with the draft happening later. When we showed up several hours before the draft, Rich's wife answered the door with no idea why we were there some five hours early.)
- Dinner with Paul Montague at some restaurant in Massachusetts, where we spent a lengthy meal negotiating a trade for that year's #1 draft pick.
- Numerous other face-to-face meetings, including multiple playoff showdowns with

Clay at "our place", a pay-by-the-hour flea-bag outside of Hartford (where Clay would always check in and say "it's not like that, really"). Mark Freedman and I played a bunch of classics too... I have happier memories of the Clay meetings, since I actually won a couple of those. Never did actually figure out how to beat Mark when it mattered.

Anyway, that's just a brief list of a lot of the smile-inducing memories of my time as a manager in this fantastic league. Being a non-playing commissioner may seem odd or even silly to some, but to me this is just a way to keep a foot in the door, to give me an excuse to maintain some long-standing relationships that are valuable to me, and to watch the dynamics of the league that I know so well after 20+ years. Heck, some day down the road if I'm ready to manage a team again, this period of observation may make me a better manager.

As far as my style of "commissionering", for those of you who weren't around for my first turn in the big chair: this league mostly runs itself. I'm here to just keep the train moving down the tracks. When problems do arise, my job is to solve emerging problems while they are still small ones, before they turn into big, divisive issues. Knowing this group, I don't expect my problem-resolution skills will get a lot of use. But if you need me, I'm here. Good luck to all in 2016!



A little over a year ago I received an email from Dr. John L. Williams, a professor at California State University in Sacramento. Dr. Williams asked for copies of some past *Annuals* for a research paper he and a colleague wanted to write based on TBL. (Seriously, how cool is that?) They were intrigued by our book and how it provided an ongoing history of the league. Dr. Williams also observed that a sim league like ours is a very different creature than a “fantasy league,” Rotisserie or otherwise, because we actually mimicked the major league season – we played the games.

Over the course of the last several months, I have received updates on the progress of the project and their continued interest in our continuing TBL adventure. For example, last summer I got this comment:

I could help but notice that your team, the Maracaibo Rumrunners, needs to win 86 games in order to become the first TBL franchise to have 2900 victories.

It also appears that Detroit Stars (2744 losses), Greater Ohio Chia Pets (2726 losses), and the Knoxville Outlaws (2724 losses) all have a chance to be the first franchise to lose 2800 games.

Now that’s thorough attention to detail. (Sorry to give the bad news to Dave and Gordon, by the way; Pat will have to wait until some time in the 2016 season. We seem to have just nudged over the line in 2015, though.)

In any case, just before the TBL draft this February I received the following message from Dr. Williams – who was rooting for Warrenton in the World Series, due to the Sacramento connection, it seems:

The National Communication Association (NCA) session, which was billed as a research incubator program, gave us an opportunity to provide a brief overview of the *Annuals* and the TBL. This was followed by much mingling by those attending the session with several coming over to talk with us. They offered interesting suggestions about how we might examine the TBL’s *Annuals*.

To help them grasp the unique nature of the *Annuals* I printed, in color, the 2012 edition. The *Annual’s* pages were not bound instead they were inserted in clear plastic protective sheets and placed in a three ring binder. One person characterized it as a similar to a media guide. Another was impressed with the layout and formatting techniques you have incorporated into the *Annual’s* pages.

Based on the suggestions we received the paper that is now in progress will examine the *Annuals* using rhetorical approach. The paper will be completed in time for submission this March for presentation at NCA’s next convention, which will be held in November in Philadelphia.

I followed the TBL’s pennant races and kept up with the outcome of the post-season series. I find myself pulling for the Warrenton Giants as I believe they are based in the greater Sacramento community. It should be an interesting series, despite the fact that Warrenton defeated Melrose 3 games to 1 early in the season.

I read this email at the annual meeting in February, and look forward to seeing the final paper this fall. Being the subject of a scholarly analysis is only slightly intimidating, but it’s great to think that the *Annual* and TBL are so highly esteemed.

in memoriam

Lawrence Peter "Yogi" Berra

1925-2015



Number 8

*"Always go to other people's funerals;
otherwise they won't go to yours."*

He was a hitter, low and high, fastballs
And

Breaking
Balls,

An immigrant's son who disappointed his father
By playing baseball rather than soccer.

But could a father despise a son who
From that humble start in the Rome of the West
But grew to own the heart of New York
Or the boy who became such an icon
That he is credited with words of wisdom
Which are universal, part of America?

What of Yogi Bear, the picnic-thieving animal?

A father's pride in the greatest success
On the greatest stage for baseball's greatest team,
Or funding a college so others could have what he
Could not, an education past eighth grade.

And yet, Yogi would have told you, the highlights
Of his life were: Carmen, Larry, Tim, and Dale.
Keep in mind the malapropos and the laughs,
But remember a father's love when thinking of ol' Number 8.

- 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-fifth 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

rmurph3@comcast.net

or TBL's unofficial recruiter and analyst, Walter Hunt, at

hotc@walterhunt.com.

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