

The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

The New Normal

St-N Sp-4 WP2 --- MF-0 G Q3*

Kenley Geronimo 22' 6-6
JANSEN 6-6

(S) Grade A&C* Pitcher (2) (KXY)(Z)

Year	G	GS	IP	W	L	SV	ERA	BB	SO	HR
2017	65	0	66	5	0	41	1.32	7	109	5

Height: 6-5 Weight: 275
Born: 9-30-87 Willemstad, Curacao
Bats: Both Throws: Right LAN

11- 6	31- 9	51- 9	-31
12- 25	32- 26	52- 27	"Joey"
13- 36	33- 6	53- 13)
14- 30	34- 31	54- 32	3-3) (OF-1)
15- 8	35- 21	55- 8	IB BA SLB OBP
16- 13	36- 13	56- 13	7 .209 .327 .333
21- 24	41- 24	61- 24	Ht: 235
22- 7	42- 23	62- 31	erson, NV
23- 12	43- 29	63- 24	ight TEX
24- 24	44- 7	64- 13	51- 14
25- 8	45- 14	65- 35	52- 27
26- 24	46- 24	66- 6	53- 19
J-1 (23*)	5A-15:1	© 2017 APBA Games	54- 32
	16- 28	36- 33	55- 8
	21- 13	41- 13	56- 13
	22- 5	42- 22	61- 39
	23- 12	43- 13	62- 13
	24- 13	44- 8	63- 13
	25- 14	45- 14*	64- 13
	26- 13	46- 13	65- 35
J-1	PR 37:1	© 2017 APBA Games	66- 1

2018 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
Ray Murphy
Jim Dietz

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This book was produced using a Macintosh with Adobe InDesign and Adobe Photoshop.

I can be reached by mail at

**3306 Maplebrook Road,
Bellingham, MA 02019**

or by e-mail at

hotc@walterhunt.com.

the TBL baseball annual

Welcome to the 2018 *TBL Baseball Annual*. This is the twenty-third year of the *Annual* in the book format. This year we're looking at what we call *The New Normal*: hitting cards, and offenses, based on power with lots of strikeouts. One of our most insightful colleagues, Joe Auletta, gives us some excellent analysis on how things have already changed and what we should make of it all.

Our usual features are mostly here, but we don't have the Vegas Line this year due to our friend and colleague Paul Harrington's illness. We hope to have it back next year.

Enjoy the *Annual* and enjoy the season.

Walter, Robert, Mark
June, 2018

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).

table of contents




FRONT MATTER

Future Drafts				6
TQ Summary				7
Manager Roll Call				8
2017 Computer Pre-Play		<i>Clay Beard</i>		9
Hall of Fame				10
The Sky Is Falling (Or Not)		<i>Joe Auletta</i>		12
SNTs / The New Normal				15
A Contrarian Perspective		<i>Joe Auletta</i>		16

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

	Clemente Division	<i>Shark Tank</i>			18
	Riverwoolf	20	Calusa	24	
	Blue Hill	28	Whitman	32	
	Mays Division	<i>Fight Club</i>			36
	Gotham City	38	New Westminster	42	
	Maracaibo	46	Rye	50	
	Ruth Division	<i>Likely Not One and Done</i>			54
	Hoboken	56	Midwest	60	
	Knoxville	64	Brobdingnag	68	
	2017 World Series Report		<i>Mark Bloom</i>		72

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

	Aaron Division	<i>All IN</i>			74
	Strong City	76	Kansas	80	
	Las Vegas	84	Melrose	88	
	Mantle Division	<i>Photo Finish</i>			92
	Hudson	94	Columbus	98	
	Munich	102	Detroit	106	
	Williams Division	<i>Back From the Brink</i>			110
	Northboro	112	Zion	116	
	Grand Cayman	120	Warrenton	124	

FINAL WORDS

Breakthrough				128
Future				129
Editorial				130
Commissioner's Report		<i>Ray Murphy</i>		131
Justin K.		<i>Jim Dietz</i>		132

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 2019; above the middle line is excess, while below means something's missing.



haves



WARRENTON. Two #1s, their own and Riverwoolf's; three #2s; four #3s. They also have many picks in rounds 4 to 7.



BROBDINGNAG. Three top-half #1s; Knoxville's #2; two #3s. Another chance for Prince of Darkness machinations.



MARACAIBO. Their own and Strong City's #1s; three #2s; their own #3. Maracaibo's biggest draft in years.



DETROIT. Their own #1; three later #2s; their own #3.

balanced



RYE, MUNICH, BLUE HILL, WHITMAN.

Their own drafts, likely higher up.



GOTHAM CITY, HOBOKEN, HUDSON, MELROSE, NORTHBORO, KANSAS.

Their own drafts.

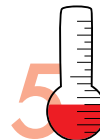
have nots



CALUSA. Their own earlier #1 and #3.
NEW WESTMINSTER. Their own #1 and #2.
GRAND CAYMAN. Their #2, two #3s.



LAS VEGAS, COLUMBUS, ZION.
Their #1 and #3.



KNOXVILLE. Hudson #2 and their own #3.

all in



RIVERWOOLF, MIDWEST. Riverwoolf drafts in rounds 8 and 9; Midwest drafts in round 7.

STRONG CITY. Nada.

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



Strong City (Aaron)	14.0	5.5	17.0	3.0	39.5
Kansas (Aaron)	10.0	5.0	15.5	2.5	33.0

The Solid Performers



Northboro (Williams)	8.0	4.5	14.0	2.5	29.0
Hoboken (Ruth)	12.5	5.5	8.0	3.0	29.0
Hudson (Mantle)	10.0	4.5	9.5	3.5	27.5
Gotham City (Mays)	11.0	4.5	9.0	3.0	27.5
Columbus (Mantle)	10.0	5.5	8.5	3.0	27.0
Zion (Williams)	10.0	4.5	8.5	3.0	26.0
Riverwoolf (Clemente)	7.0	4.0	12.5	2.5	26.0
New Westminster (Mays)	9.0	6.5	7.0	3.0	25.5
Midwest (Ruth)	7.0	3.5	11.0	2.0	23.5

The Transitional Teams



Las Vegas (Aaron)	9.0	4.5	7.5	2.0	23.0
Maracaibo (Mays)	7.0	6.5	7.5	2.0	23.0
Melrose (Aaron)	10.0	5.5	5.0	2.0	22.5
Grand Cayman (Williams)	7.0	5.5	7.0	2.0	21.5
Blue Hill (Clemente)	7.0	5.0	6.5	2.0	20.5
Munich (Mantle)	6.0	6.5	6.0	2.0	20.0
Calusa (Clemente)	8.0	4.0	5.0	2.5	19.5

The Rebuilders



Detroit (Mantle)	7.0	4.0	6.5	1.5	19.0
Rye (Mays)	5.5	4.0	6.5	2.5	18.5
Knoxville (Ruth)	5.0	4.0	6.5	2.0	17.5
Whitman (Clemente)	4.5	4.0	6.0	2.0	16.5
Brobdingnag (Ruth)	6.0	4.0	3.5	2.0	15.5
Warrenton (Williams)	4.0	4.0	2.5	2.0	12.5

National	301.5 (25.2 average)
International	262.5 (21.8 average)

Division Totals			
Aaron (NC)	118.0	Williams (NC)	90.0
Mays (IC)	94.5	Ruth (IC)	85.5
Mantle (NC)	93.5	Clemente (IC)	82.5

manager roll call

Munich Marauders	Mantle Division	<i>Paul Montague</i>	35th year
Hudson Generals	Mantle Division	<i>Clay Beard</i>	34th year
Elders of Zion	Williams Division	<i>Richard Meyer</i>	34th year
Gotham City Batmen	Mays Division	Anton Greenwald	33rd year
Knoxville Outlaws	Ruth Division	Pat Martin	32nd year
Maracaibo Rumrunners	Mays Division	<i>Walter Hunt</i>	32nd year
Brobdingnag Barbarians	Ruth Division	Joe Auletta	30th year
Hoboken Zephyrs	Ruth Division	Steve Powell	29th year
Grand Cayman Havens	Williams Division	Mark Bloom	28th year
Melrose Avengers	Aaron Division	Mark Freedman	25th year
Blue Hill Mudslides	Clemente Division	Mark Ludwig	23rd year
Whitman River Rats	Clemente Division	Brian Hanley	23rd year
Las Vegas Gamblers	Aaron Division	Paul Harrington	22nd year
Northboro Phoenix	Williams Division	Robert Jordan	19th year
Midwest Mongrels	Ruth Division	Darrell Skogen	17th year
Northboro Phoenix	Williams Division	Steve Stein	16th year
Strong City Statesmen	Aaron Division	Eric Sheffler	15th year
Rye Herons	Mays Division	Craig Musselman	14th year
New West Whiskeyjacks	Mays Division	Jim Jeatt	14th year
Columbus Jets	Mantle Division	Vic Vaughn	12th year
Kansas Koyotes	Aaron Division	Bill Schwartz	11th year
Warrenton Giants	Williams Division	Jack Chapman	10th year
Detroit Stars	Mantle Division	Dave Jaskot	7th year
Calusa Indians	Clemente Division	Gordon Rodell	4th year
Riverwoolf Sharks	Clemente Division	Daniel Dumont	2nd year

Ray Murphy is serving his third year as our non-playing Commissioner.

Hall of Fame managers in *Bold Italic*.



2018 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.

The first thing that draws my attention is all the .5's. There appears to be a real good chance of game 163. There are some interesting division races this year and for a change no team runs away with a division. The biggest spread between a first and second place team is in the

Mantle, which the "knock-down" had as air tight at the meeting. So who knows what mysterious strategies Duke employed.

The two best races are the Mays, where Gotham City eeked it out 88.5 to 87.7, and the Williams, where Northboro and Zion will tangle all year. As usual, the race for the second wild-card is tight in both conferences.

Only three teams made it to the post-season dance in all ten seasons; Strong City, Columbus & Hoboken.

Only four teams never made to at least game 163. As for Warrenton? Mission accomplished, I guess.



International Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Clemente	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
RIVERWOOLF	88	74	--	101	81	4.5	3
BLUE HILL	83	79	5	95	73	3	2
CALUSA	78	84	10	89	68	1	0.5
WHITMAN	77	85	11	97	69	1.5	1

Mays	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
GOTHAM CITY	88	74	--	98	82	4	4
NEW WESTMINSTER	88	74	--	96	77	4.5	3
RYE	80	82	8	90	72	1.5	1
MARACAIBO	76	86	12	90	65	0	1

Ruth	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
HOBOKEN	91	71	--	106	80	8.5	1.5
MIDWEST	82	80	9	91	74	1.5	2.5
BROBDINGNAG	67	95	24	77	61	0	0
KNOXVILLE	65	97	26	72	55	0	0

National Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Aaron	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
STRONG CITY	101	61	--	117	91	9	1
KANSAS	93	69	8	99	87	1	7.5
LAS VEGAS	75	87	26	87	65	0	0.5
MELROSE	67	95	34	79	60	0	0

Mantle	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
COLUMBUS	98	64	--	109	90	7.5	2.5
MUNICH	87	75	11	101	74	2	2
HUDSON	86	76	12	94	78	0.5	4
DETROIT	72	90	26	82	61	0	0.5

Williams	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
ZION	88	74	--	94	82	5	1.5
NORTHBORO	86	76	2	97	73	4.5	0
GRAND CAYMAN	78	84	10	90	67	0.5	0.5
WARRENTON	50	112	38	65	34	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 2018



Mariano Rivera, RP 1996-2014
East Anglia, Knox/Sox/Richmond, Maracaibo

A top flight closer, Mo notched 464 saves in his 19-year career, making him the all-time leader by a considerable margin; nine times he exceeded 30 in a season and twice exceeded 40. He averaged a strikeout an inning over more than 1,100 innings, allowing only 645 hits and only 58 home runs and recording a 1.74 lifetime ERA.

Elected in his second 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.

Elected in his second year of eligibility.



HALL OF FAME

for your consideration



Left to Right: Derek Jeter, Gary Sheffield, Chipper Jones, Ivan Rodriguez

Derek Jeter 1996-2015
Cape Cod/Gate City, Hudson, New Westminster

A dynamic player, his 3,399 hits is tops in league history. He scored 100 runs a year until age slowed him down, and was always among league leaders in games played and hits, hit .287-.271-1328 lifetime and stole 311 bases. He was a superior-caliber defender. *This is his second year of eligibility.*

Gary Sheffield, 3B-OF 1990-2010
Amherst/Melrose, Richmond, Mahopac/Kansas

He hit 499 home runs in his long career, with his best season coming in 2001 with Melrose (.309-.61-134, 166 runs scored). His .273 lifetime batting mark is modest, but he struck out only 1,291 times in over 10,000 plate appearances - remarkable for a slugger of his production. He also stole 162 bases.. *This is his second year of eligibility.*

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 second year of eligibility.*

Ivan Rodriguez, C 1992-2012
Amherst/Melrose, Northboro, Hudson, Melrose, Las Vegas

Ivan Rodriguez was a very solid hitter (.282-.321-1409) for 21 years for various teams, particularly with Melrose. He is best known for being the top defender at catcher; he made only 62 errors in 2,517 games. His best season was 2003 with Northboro (.326-.26-79 in only 108 games), and he hit .305 in 1997 with 57 doubles.. *This is his second year of eligibility.*

Players with carryover votes: Derek Jeter 8; Gary Sheffield, Ivan Rodriguez 5; Todd Helton 4; Chipper Jones 3; Tim Hudson, Dennis Eckersley, Don Mattingly, Juan Gonzalez 2; 13 players with 1.

The Sky is Falling (Or Not)

by Joe Auletta



It was a quick exchange of e-mails that pulled me into this morass of an article. *“Simple,” Walter said. “Just a couple pages on the New World Order, you know, the fundamental shift in real-life baseball, and how it affects the TBL draft. No sweat!”*

Unfortunately I was still traversing the Southwest, not yet settled into my mundane retired state. Three weeks living out of suitcases had addled my senses and left me susceptible to Walter’s subtle but devious trap. Only after I had muttered, grunted, or otherwise made some half-conscious sound that he took as, “Sure! No problem at all, I can whip this one out in an hour.” did some lingering voice whisper, *“You dolt! How are you going to write a believable, useful essay of the NWO when the reality is we don’t know what it is yet!”*

I am loath to admit when I am careless, when I speak before thinking, and most especially when I agree to do something I know is bound to be wrong. But I had agreed, so here we are, taking our best guess as seen through a very turbulent crystal ball.

First off, what do we actually know? Less than we might first believe. We know that for our 2018 season the number of 1s, 13s, and 14s in the set is up. We know that based upon our years — decades — old assessment rubric the 2018 draft was weak. We know that our ability to predict the relative strength of many TBL teams is in serious doubt. I would argue that is about all we actually know. Oh, except for Newton’s 5th Law:

MLB stats drive APBA cards

APBA cards drive TBL performance differently than MLB performance

TBL performance should drive our drafting

At least I am sure that would have been his 5th law if baseball had caught on in England by 1700. But what conclusions can we actually draw?

First of all, one season, i. e., one data point, is not statistically significant. Early MLB data for 2018 indicates the trend is not a one year anomaly, but its life expectancy is unknown. Every trend is eventually countered, as this one will be, but in a season, three seasons, ten seasons? That large unknown — if we could accurately predict what it will be — significantly would affect how we would/should draft. There are a number of players in this past draft who have the All-Or-Nothing skill set that will get them significant playing time so long as that is the perceived formula for success. The risk being, when the formula changes, many of those Chris Davis, Adam Dunn clones are likely to not have the tools to fit the new success formula, thus significantly reducing their perceived value and playing time. The starting LF/clean-up hitter you draft in Round 1 may be a bench hugging role player two seasons later, not because of injury or reduced skills, but because of reduced demand.

Second, even if the present formula is enduring, how should we adjust our drafting to accommodate it? When the post-draft team-by-team analysis was conducted, Rich at least three times opined, “I know this team will score runs, but I don’t know how many and I don’t know how to evaluate them.” If the Sensei doesn’t know, then mere mortals are unlikely to know. And if we don’t know how to assess the offensive performance of a gaggle of bearded ladies, then how do we tell what adding one more to the mix is really worth? We can’t. We can guess, and we can decide that a 8 hit/6 walk card is better than a 7 hit/5 walk one, but the value comparisons between hitters and pitchers has been confused. This does not matter when filling a specific need, but when selecting the “best

available”, it is a much bigger subjective component. That also implies that there is a greater diversity of opinions about players in the draft pool, therefore fewer people all targeting the same player(s), which in turn should mean a decreased urgency to move up in the draft before “your guy” is taken. (More on this later.)

Third, speaking of uncertainty, what about the pitchers? Traditionally grade and starts/innings have been the dominant discriminator (for immediate value), with peripherals as a secondary factor. We all have our own “formula” whether a Grade 12 C+36 HR+36 is equivalent to a neutral peripheral Grade 14 or 15 or 16, but it generally is two or three grades up or down in most cases. But that scale is quite different with fewer singles and more walks and homers. But how much? The reality is we will know better after a season or two, but for now it is a guess. Several seasons ago Zion did very well with several high-single-digit starters who had big positive peripherals, and that is likely to be a precursor of what we see. Regardless, Chad Green’s Grade 25* C+16 HR+41 goes before Brandon Morrow’s Grade 17* C+33 HR+62, but will the next Jose Leclerc also go ahead of the next Brandon Morrow? If the trend continues, I think not. The big peripherals blur even the Grade 17/Grade 18 divide we have always had in our minds. And if the lower batting averages remove more and more 8s in favor of 14s, the Grade 12/Grade 13 shelf will become less and less meaningful.

So far we have said the ‘NOW’ of the TBL Draft is a lot of confusion, and a lot of “to be determined”. But what can we say with some decent probability? I think there are a few things.

To start, some commodities have become more scarce, thus their value should rise. Hitters who can — or can project to— hit for a good to decent average. Hitters who will likely keep their two 31s and be able to hit and run — we collectively love our H&R. As peripherals become more important in building a TBL team,

causing mid-grade +/+ pitchers to be used more, that also increases the value of those hitters who do have a high hit count. To be honest, that was the thinking behind drafting Brandon Nimmo ahead of Derek Fisher and Dominic Smith who are more “classic Barbarians”. There were several near-interchangeable Fisher/Smith types, but few if any other Nimmos. It is the same as we have seen in drafts with few closers, or little catching — we just have not seen it applied to the second and third tier hitters before.

And to close, let us consider trades. There are logical arguments to be made that the 1/13/14 trend will increase trades:

- If a commodity gets scarcer in the draft pool, then teams seeking that commodity will migrate to having to trade for it, or
- They will have to move up to select it, also increasing trades

But the same arguments can be made to predict fewer trades in such a universe:

- When there are a lot of double-1 .235 hitting outfielders with 5 walks and 12 Ks, why spend draft currency to pick one over another? More and more draft strategies will include a large dose of “whichever one falls to me is fine.”
- Trades are made when both teams believe they are improving themselves by making the trade. So long as the evaluation of players is clouded, it should put a damper on trades. This force may be temporary — only until we develop a new value rubric — but in the short term it will likely work to reduce trades.

But other things also affect the volume of trades, the two biggest ones being the temperament of managers — *Clay will never trade as often as Jack* — and which teams see themselves as contenders, growing, or rebuilding.

Growing teams believe they have the core of a contender in place, but it is not their time. They may trade, but they are working at the margins — not trading of the aging players with value (they already likely did that), but not picking

up the cardboard that will move them from “contending for a wild card” to “serious World Series contender.”

However the “serious contenders” *do* drive the trade tempo. Without them there is no high demand for the high value older guys that rebuilders want to trade. Without them, there is less demand for the 40 year old Grade 19* reliever or the toy hitting card who already signed to play in Japan. Or, on a grander scale, the final card of Big Papi. For the 2018 season, the Statesmen’s and the Sharks’ push for a title both fueled the trade market, and also likely dampened the enthusiasm of others to stretch for the gold ring. Net effect? Unknown.

However, in this case — trade volume — we may see something in the numbers: the hypothesis is, the *now* of MLB and TBL cards will slow trades, at least for this season.

The data in number of trades (from Steve’s awesome data on the web site):

Draft Year	Sept Trades	Nov-Draft Trades	Post Draft Trades
2018	14	88	27
2017	15	60	24
2016	14	44	25
2015	11	54	17
2014	9	56	23
2013	2	70	16
2012	8	44	19
2011	8	50	30

Clearly, the data for the 2018 draft does not support the hypothesis. In fact, it makes the hypothesis look downright ignorant. The September trades are mostly contenders looking to gain an edge, and if they have draft implications that is usually secondary. And for September 2017, the 14 trades is in line with the nine year trend.

The Post Draft trades are generally end-of-the-roster finagling, and 27, while slightly above the nine year average, is not particularly noteworthy.

However the 88 trades between the end of the season and the end of the draft is eye opening. That is well above any other year listed in Steve’s data — and if we exclude the 2013 previous high of 70, it is a huge 46% increase over the other seven seasons. That seems to be well above random fluctuations.

Granted there are explanations beyond the ones hinted at above. There were three very active franchises in Statesmen, Riverwolf, and Warrenton. There was the MadBum phenomenon. But there have been draft-happy teams before, and MadBum Hysteria only accounts for a small part of the increase.

So where does this all leave us when discussing the impact of a bearded lady infestation on the draft? The only definitive answer is that it is too early to be definitive. Several considerations and possibilities to ponder, and most likely an actual shift that needs to be accounted for, but too early to tell in what direction the shift will be—or more importantly too early to know the proper market strategy to employ in order to profit. But the three indicators I will be looking at during the season:

1. Has the historic correlation between TBL runs scored, AVE, OBP, and SLG changed appreciably? We already can predict batting averages will be down, isolated power will be up — but where will runs scored head when plotted against these?
2. Will there be an increase in the standard deviation when looking at TBL ERA vs pitching grades, i.e. will the grade matter less than historical correlations, and the peripherals more than historically?
3. Does MLB do anything (tactically, rules changes, etc.) that is likely to make the 2017 MLB season an anomaly or a trend?

Check back in three years!

SNTs

SNTs, or Shiny New Things, are players that have newly arrived on a team's roster. Each should be a major contributor to that team's success, and is highlighted on the first page of the team article.

The following players are the SNTs for 2018.

Blue Hill Mudslides:	Rafael Devers, 3B
Brobdingnag Barbarians:	Yoan Moncada, 2B
Calusa Indians:	Austin Barnes, C
Grand Cayman Havens:	Chris Archer, P
Columbus Jets:	Rhys Hoskins, 1B-OF
Detroit Stars:	Dinelson Lamet, P
Gotham City Batmen:	Jordan Montgomery, P
Hoboken Zephyrs:	Brad Peacock, P
Hudson Generals:	Sean Doolittle, P
Kansas Koyotes:	Chris Taylor, OF
Knoxville Blue Thunder:	Ozzie Albies, 2B
Las Vegas Gamblers:	Hyun-Jin Ryu, P
Maracaibo Rumrunners:	German Marquez, P
Melrose Avengers:	Ian Happ, OF-2B
Midwest Mongrels:	Clay Bellinger, OF-1B
Munich Marauders:	Kyle Schwarber, OF
New West. Whiskeyjacks:	Sean Newcomb, P
Northboro Phoenix:	Marwin Gonzalez, UT
Riverwoolf Sharks:	Kyle Hendricks, P
Rye Herons:	Paul DeJong, SS
Strong City Statesmen:	Danny Murphy, 2B
Warrenton Giants:	J. T. Riddle, SS
Whitman River Rats:	Hunter Renfroe, OF
Elders of Zion:	Jaimer Candelario, 3B

The New Normal

This year's *Annual* puts a spotlight on the "New Normal" – the development of pitchers who throw very hard (and often with poor control) for short periods of time, or of batters with good power and . . . shall we say . . . less discrimination in what they swing at. We are highlighting one player for each team that fits this description on the last page of the team article.

Blue Hill Mudslides:	Trevor Story, SS
Brobdingnag Barbarians:	Chris Davis, 1B
Calusa Indians:	Tim Beckham, 2B
Grand Cayman Havens:	Wade Davis, P
Columbus Jets:	Jay Bruce, OF
Detroit Stars:	Joey Gallo, OF
Gotham City Batmen:	Ryan Schimpf, 3B
Hoboken Zephyrs:	Javier Baez, IF
Hudson Generals:	Randal Grichuk, OF
Kansas Koyotes:	Pat Valaika, IF
Knoxville Blue Thunder:	Miguel Sano, 3B
Las Vegas Gamblers:	Adam Duvall, OF
Maracaibo Rumrunners:	Brandon Moss, OF
Melrose Avengers:	Ian Happ, OF-2B
Midwest Mongrels:	Roughned Odor, 2B
Munich Marauders:	Kyle Schwarber, OF
New West. Whiskeyjacks:	Robbie Ray, P
Northboro Phoenix:	Joc Peterson, OF
Riverwoolf Sharks:	Mike Clevinger, P
Rye Herons:	Keon Broxton, OF
Strong City Statesmen:	Andrew Miller, P
Warrenton Giants:	Scott Schebler, OF
Whitman River Rats:	Todd Frazier, 3B
Elders of Zion:	Shin-Soo Choo, OF



For the past thirty years in real life I have been a consultant to all sorts of decision makers in the government. At our first meeting, they usually expect me to have answers — or, more often, they are looking for some allegedly independent person (supposedly me) to give them a head nod that what they already want to do is the right thing. They aren't looking for advice or input as much as a testimonial they can point to for sales purposes when they go to Congress for money. I usually disappoint them because I tell them I don't provide answers, I ask dumb questions. I tell them they haven't asked the right questions yet, and that is what I am there to help them do.

When Walter mentioned the topic for this year's *Annual*, *How does the new world order in major league baseball affect TBL?* I responded with an article to answer that from one perspective. Hopefully it is an interesting reading and might generate some thoughts and opposing perspectives. But as I was writing it I kept coming back to my real-world basics and kept thinking, *I'm not sure that is the right question.* In reality, it is a right question, but I want to pose another one that I think is related: *Which league is actually setting the trend?*

I will hypothesize it in reality is TBL leading major league baseball in the evolution of managerial thought. Let me address four specific points.

Point 1:
The Three Certain Outcomes

Long before the 2017 – or even 2016 – trend in major league baseball to value walks and

home runs over singles, TBL had people loudly proclaiming this. The most vocal advocate of this perspective is Mark Freedman. Go back to 1993 when Mark put one of the best teams in TBL history on the field — what was it based upon? Roberto Alomar, 95 walks and a .406 OBP. Gary Sheffield, 38 HR and a .375 OBP, Fred McGriff 97 walks and 43 HRs. In 2001, winning 119 games, Melrose's success was based upon 335 home runs and a .364 OBP.

Lest one think this was an anomaly, ask those who were at the 2011 & 2012 league meetings and heard Mark analyze his chances against Ray Murphey's brutally powerful Portland teams. "On paper" almost everyone told Mark that his teams were good, but Ray's were better.

Mark never wavered in his objections. Paraphrasing, he said over and over, "Home runs and walks are what beats good pitching". And while Ray won 225 games in 2011 and 2012, Mark walked away with titles in both seasons. As a side note: Portland's dominance was based on much the same formula as Mark's, hitting a ridiculous 559 homers in the two seasons.

Point 2:
Tear It Down To The Ground To Build Up

Oh yes, the Cubs and the Astros have discovered a new formula for success! Actually, *no*. Long before the 2016 Cubs or the 2017 Astros there were the 1989 and 1990 36-win Barbarians that built the 1993-95 316-win run. There was the 1997 48-win Rochester team that begat 7 straight 100-win seasons. The 51-win Portland team in 2009 was the precursor to

the 336 wins in 2010-12. And it continues as we see the Mongrels win 48 and 54 wins in back to back years, but now be poised for a rise from the ashes (with apologies to Northboro for that analogy).

What I find interesting about this point is that TBL has been discussing and looking to find ways to deal with this strategy for thirty years. The actual major leagues are just now waking up to the fact that it may affect how they look at and address the fundamentals of competition. It will be curious to see how they move forward — but again, TBL leads major league baseball in this issue. *(Though it should be noted that TBL doesn't have to deal with selling actual tickets to actual fans. —Ed.)*

Point 3:
***Use Your Best Relievers In
The Highest Leverage Situations.***

No, the realization that games can be lost in the 5th inning did *not* start with Andrew Miller. It was only more widely noticed by the uninitiated outside of TBL when the Cleveland Indians used him that way. Anyone who has listened to the wise words of the Sensei every winter knows that it has been a staple of his guidance to new managers for longer than I have been in the league. It is subtly — and *not* so subtly — bellowed across the table at least once during every post-draft analysis session. It has been put down in scripture in articles he has written for the *Annual*.

The first time I remember being subject to the wrath of a closer bludgeoning the life out of a rally was in the 1994 World Series against Dave Suter (the *true* Prince of Darkness). I had my one and only lead of the ill-fated four game sweep and was mounting a moderate threat to extend the lead. It was the third inning if I remember, Game 1, against his ace. In

from the pen walks this hulking, foaming at the mouth, Grade 20*+ reliever who shouldn't have even seen the bullpen until the 8th inning (I think it was Roger McDowell, but there were several monsters lurking in that swamp of a bullpen). He snuffed out the rally, demoralized the young, impressionable Barbarians, and I believe we scored two runs in the remaining 30+ innings.

McDowell may not have had as good a career as Miller, but the guiding principle was in effect in TBL when Miller was still in third grade.

Point 4:
***The “Earth Shattering” Revelation That Batting
Your Best OBP Hitter Leadoff Is Smart.***

Twenty-two years ago, Mo Vaughn, 124 runs scored. Frank Thomas. Gary Sheffield. Mike Trout. And in each of these named cases, the team went to the World Series even without speed in the lead-off spot. The list in TBL is long, and existed decades prior to Aaron Judge or Bryce Harper.

So, hopefully as we read the other articles in this year's *Annual*, articles that most likely tell us how we should think about — and react to — the “new” realities of MLB I would hope we do not overreact, and realize that much of the “new” really isn't.



Shark Tank

This will be an interesting year in the Clemente. The team with the best left-handed pitcher in baseball may well bring up the rear; a perennial also-ran is edging closer to contention; the team that won 109 games and the Clemente pennant has hit a pitching wall; and the likely winner of the division has engaged in a trading frenzy that hasn't been seen since the days of the Ybor City Smokers (whose many transactions had to be reconstructed when his wife threw out his notes. Ah, those halcyon analog days.)



The *Riverwoolf Sharks*, *Daniel Dumont's* entry from our Neighbors to the North, have been almost completely transformed from the 61-101 club of

2017. That's probably a net positive, because there's nothing fun about losing 100 games; but there *might* be such a thing as too much trading. Still, their pitching is one of the top five in TBL. The question is whether they have enough bats, and can catch enough balls, to contend past the first round of the playoffs.

Mark Ludwig's Blue Hill Mudslides have had consistent difficulty pulling it all together, and this year's squad is no exception. It's a little short on pitching and has a passable, but not outstanding, offense: still, there are some pitchers, and there are some bats. Is that



2017 Clemente Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Calusa*	109	53	.673	—
Whitman†	104	58	.642	5
Riverwoolf	61	101	.377	48
Blue Hill	58	104	.358	51

* Lost to Whitman in Conference playoff.
† Lost to Calusa in the Wild Card playoff.

enough to secure a Wild Card spot? The Magic 8-Ball says no, but they could surprise. Lots of teams are diving for the basement this year.



Ah, *Calusa*. The *Indians*, like most clubs in TBL, are a reflection of the manager, and *Gordon Rodell* is nothing if not a competitor. The pitching staff cratered somewhat

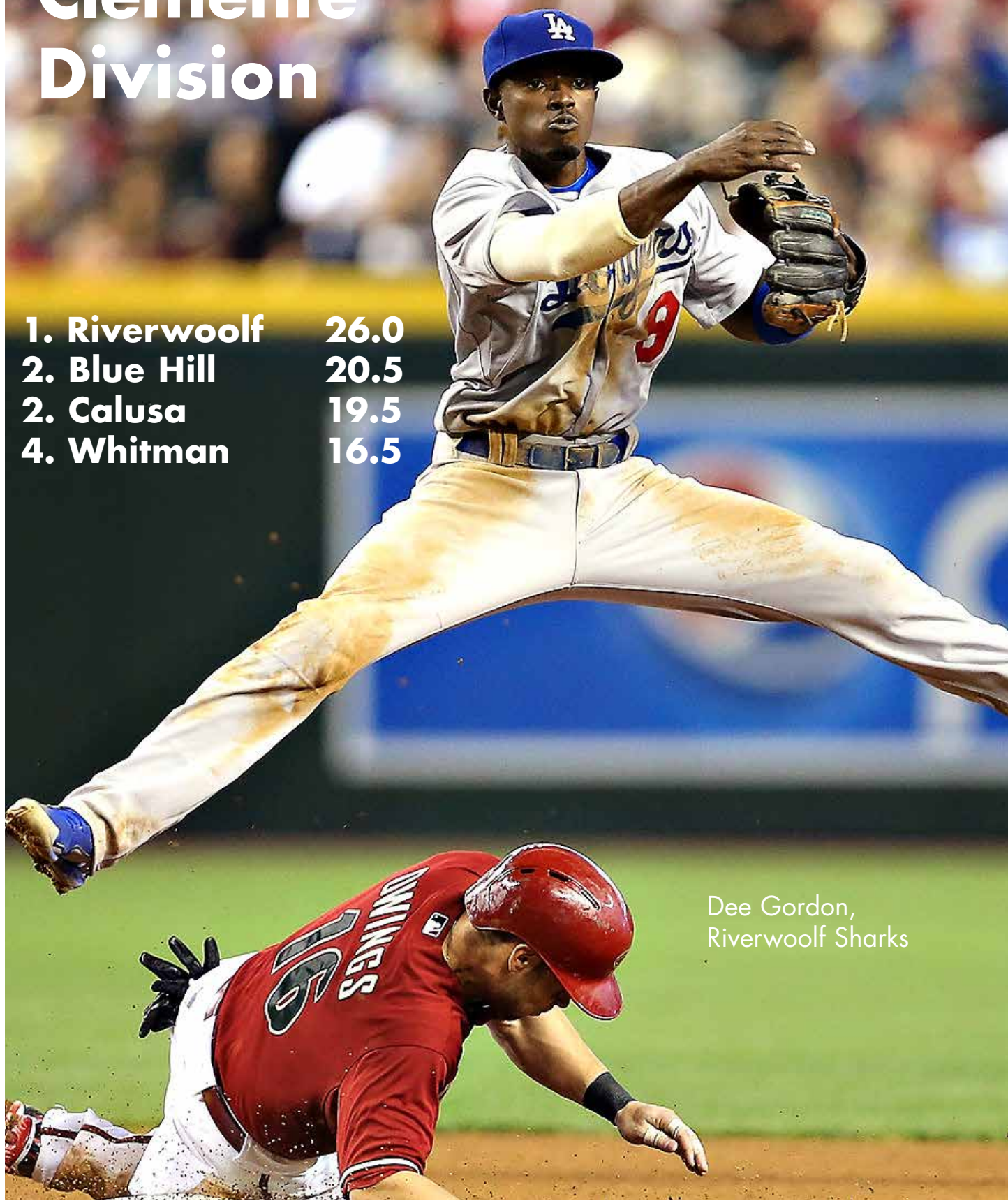
from last year – a year that ended in disappointment at the hands of the usual pennant winner. The offense is the best in the division, but that's probably not enough to keep them in the running. Still, the *Annual* expects them to work hard to try.

Which leads us to *Whitman*. *Brian Hanley's* rebuild had to happen sometime; the team has been so good for so long that entropy made it almost inevitable. Criticism of a staff with Clayton Kershaw on it is a bit arch, even for us: but he can't pitch every day, and you can't win if you can't score runs. This will be a high draft pick ball club for the first time in a generation.



Clemente Division

1. Riverwoolf	26.0
2. Blue Hill	20.5
2. Calusa	19.5
4. Whitman	16.5



Dee Gordon,
Riverwoolf Sharks

2017 riverwoolf SHARKS in review



We're waiting to see if this is a trend.

2017 in Review

Final Record: 61-101 (3rd, Clemente)

We had quite a bit to say last year about Daniel Dumont's effort in taking apart the Franchise Formerly Known as Taylorville. This is expected; new broom sweeps clean, and so forth. The results from the first year, based on a build-down and a stronger 2018 draft, were about as expected: a 100-loss season, in preparation for better days to come.

Accordingly, this was a year with more bad news than good. Also not surprising is the number of players shortly to be mentioned who are no longer with the team. In order to have a higher turnover rate than Riverwoolf managed between 2017 and 2018, you have to be in Warrenton, which for all intents and purposes has started over. It might be said that Riverwoolf has done so as well. Again. We're waiting to see if this is a trend.

What went right?

Jonathan Villar, one of the players who will be wearing a different uniform in 2018, was the best all around player on the roster. He hit a robust .291 with 78 walks and 47 steals, and also had 18 homers and 30 doubles. He was a high point in an offense that didn't have too many of them. Hernan Perez stole 20 bases in 22 tries; Matt Adams had 23 homers and 57 RBI, leading the team in each category.

On the pitching side, Santiago Casilla (26 saves, 2.40 ERA) was a capable closer. Hector Santiago led the team in wins with 9, and no pitcher lost 20 games. Joe Musgrove (6-2, 3.48) and Andrew Triggs (5-1, 1.90) were excellent in very limited usage. Musgrove remains; Triggs has moved on.

What went wrong?

The team excelled at poor performance. Even Villar's excellent performance was marred by 176 K's, just nosing out David Freese's 172 to go with a .196-11-151 line. The club struck out 1,408 times and hit just 160 homers.

On the pitching side, the bullpen was all right but the regular starters were very porous. Doug Fister (6-13, 5.14), Santiago (9-19, 5.19), Hisashi Iwakuma (9-15, 5.26), Jaime Garcia (7-17, 5.53) and Matt Wisler (5-14, 6.02) were reminiscent of the 1930 Phillies – and didn't have Chuck Klein and Lefty O'Doul to score runs for them.

3 Things

1. *No sentimentality, and always look to get better.* Mr. Dumont has shown no hesitation to trade anyone, and to trade for anyone, he feels can improve his club. We may have to take "Trader" away from Chapman and give it to our newest manager instead.

2. *Keep it simple.* The instructions provided are clear and straightforward, and don't involve a lot of complex changes. The team is built for a pennant run, and what you see is what you get.

3. *Live for today.* The frenzied pace of trading practically since the moment the club moved to Rivière-du-Loup is unlikely to subside as we move forward. We may be wrong, but that suggests a certain amount of focus on the present, rather than constructing any sort of elaborate multiyear plan for world domination. We'll see.



Villar: All around

riverwoolf SHARKS



Daniel Dumont (2nd year)

The ride should be an interesting one.

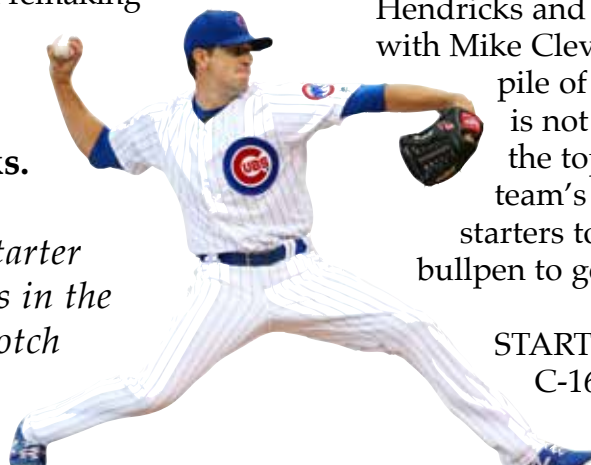
This time last year the *Annual* was mildly concerned, and professionally skeptical, about the idea of turning over more than 70% of the roster of a team that, admittedly, clearly needed to be rebuilt. We had our issues, beginning with sending Nolan Arenado away for any price. Our conclusion was that it sometimes works out and sometimes it doesn't.

Our assumption was that it would be like many such radical rebuilds in the past: a new manager, placing his own stamp on his new team, would move on from this action to do what we all do – get younger, cultivate a style for the team, and some time afterward become a contender. Rye is an example of this; several years after inheriting a '73 Chevelle, they drove a nice Tesla to the TBL championship. That they're passing through a rebuild now appears with that backdrop, and Craig Musselman's success in the past is prelude for a likely contender not too far in the future. What Riverwoolf did a year ago, we thought, would lead to the same sort of development.

But *nooo*. A year after turning over 70% of the roster, Mr. Dumont decided that he'd do it *again*. The best explanation for it is that he likes to trade. Who doesn't? Most of us do. But, *really*. He spent the entire offseason remaking his roster, then remaking his remade roster, and

SNT: Kyle Hendricks.

The best full-season starter acquired by the Sharks in the offseason, he's a top notch pitcher in his prime.



Turnover Rate: 77%

Arrived: Jacob Barnes, Buddy Baumann, Zach Britton, Mike Clevinger, Jacoby Ellsbury, Tyler Flowers, Dustin Garneau, Ryan Goins, Gio Gonzalez, Dee Gordon, Robbie Grossman, Alen Hanson, J. A. Happ, Kyle Hendricks, Aaron Hicks, Lance Lynn, Jordy Mercer, Mike Napoli, Omar Narvaez, Pat Neshek, Scott Oberg, Yusmeiro Petit, Enny Romero, Adam Rosales, Ross Stripling, Alex Wilson, Justin Wilson.

Departed: Tim Anderson, Joe Biagini, Blaine Boyer, Santiago Casilla, Brian Ellington, Doug Fister, Jaime Garcia, Phil Gosselin, Hisashi Iwakuma, Max Kepler, Ian Krol, Brett Lawrie, Jeff Manship, Brian McCann, Brandon McCarthy, Kevin Pillar, Hansel Robles, Kyle Ryan, Jarrod Saltalamacchia, Hector Santiago, Scott Schebler, Andrew Triggs, Jonathan Villar, Stephen Vogt, Matt Wisler, Chris R. Young.

then remaking *that*, up to, during, and after the draft. What he has now is a contender; it's likely a 90-win team, based on the pitching alone. It might well be good enough to be in the mix in 2019 too, or it could all fall apart after this season. But, whatever the path to get here, he has what he wanted: a team that certainly won't go 61-101.

Pitching: 12.5
In the top five.

Gio Gonzalez is back. Jay Happ is back. Kyle Hendricks and Lance Lynn have arrived, along with Mike Clevinger, as well as with a great big pile of bullpen led by Pat Neshek. This is not the best staff in TBL, but it's in the top five. It's good enough that the team's instructions actually limit some starters to five innings, relying on the deep bullpen to get to the finish line.

STARTERS. Gio Gonzalez (Grade 15 C-16 HR+21, 32 starts), who was traded away last year, has returned to become the staff



ace of an excellent rotation. Mike Clevinger (Grade 16 C-46 HR+23) has the best base grade, but he only has 21 starts and a limited fatigue. Kyle Hendricks (Grade 13 C+16) and Lance Lynn (Grade 14 C-23) add 57 more starts 13 or above. J. A. Happ has 25 starts as a Grade 10, and Ivan Nova (Grade 7 C+35 HR-14) rounds out the rotation.

It's a very solid starting rotation. If the bullpen wasn't strong, it might have been a flawed one due to the fatigue limits – but that's not an issue. Nova and Happ, who are close to the league average, are the only weakness; and they'll hold down some of the mediocre offenses diving for the basement this year.

BULLPEN. Like most teams jumping to contention, this crew was built on the fly this year. The short-innings top grade is actually one of the few holdovers: Joe Musgrove (Grade 21* C+24 has 31 innings). The actual closer, though, is new arrival Pat Neshek (Grade 18* C+51 HR+44). His caddies are righthanded Yusmeiro Petit (Grade 15* C+36 HR-23) and lefthanded Justin Wilson (Grade 16* C-62 HR+32). That's 244 innings at the top end, including Musgrove.

That would be fine, except there's a bit of a gap to the next group, Jacob Barnes (Grade 13* C-24 HR+16) is the best of the middlemen; then there's lefties Zach Britton (Grade 11* C-35 HR+55) and Enny Romero (Grade 11* C-13 HR+14), and righty Ross Stripling (Grade 10* C+32): 235 innings total. Buddy Baumann is a short innings 17*, but the HR-42 is a bit scary and he isn't a part of the plan. The impression overall is that the pen could use one more solid middleman, but it's not as crucial because the rotation is good.



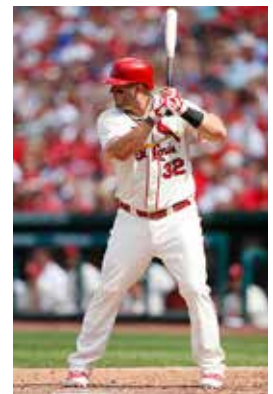
Gonzalez: He's back

Offense: 7.0 The Dumont Trading Frenzy™.

To contend in TBL, as in the major leagues, the object is to outscore the opponent. With a good pitching staff, the bar for the offense is lower, of course. The Guru, the estimable Mr. Skogen, demonstrated that if you have enough pitching, you can actually employ the bunt.

When we lay out a team for analysis, we look for cards that an opponent would be afraid to face with the game on the line. For the Sharks, there are several cards that in the right situation, against the right pitcher, can be mighty scary – but there is no card that in every situation, against *any* pitcher, will be the guy you don't want to see. It means that in order to succeed, the club will have to be carefully managed to make it all work.

The best power on the club belongs to Matt Adams (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-14 R+1) and Logan Morrison (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks+22, L-5). Morrison is the regular first baseman, and will probably turn in a Darrell Evans style year: lower average, serious walks, good power. Adams' platoon shift will be a problem and knocks him out against lefties. Instead, you'll see the surprising Hernan Perez (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, D30, L+4). Against either side, you'll also get Avisail Garcia (1-4-6, 12 hits, 2 walks+42, L+7 R-4 – he'll get hurt by the shift, but 12 hits is 12 hits. Gerardo Parra (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22) has a very nice card that will play two-thirds of the season. If he had a fourth power number he'd be the best card in the lineup – in fact, he might well be the best card.



Adams: Best power

There is some speed, especially leadoff man Dee Gordon (2 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk+22, 3 11s, 76 SBA with a 30 SSN, L-5) and part time outfielders

Jacoby Ellsbury (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 34 SSN for 24 SBA) and Aaron Hicks (1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks, 26 SSN for 15 SBA). Hernan Perez (17 SBA, 30 SSN) runs some as well. The rest is unimpressive. David Freese (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+42), Jordy Mercer (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) and the catchers, Omar Narvaez (2 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks) and Tyler Flowers (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+2 42s) are not very scary at all.

What goes without saying is that a whole lot of other people passed through this roster during the Dumont Trading Frenzy™, and it's unclear whether this set of players are better than any intermediate one.

Defense: 5.0
Above average.

The strength of the team is the Fielding One players at first base, second base, and half of the outfield. Logan Morrison (1B4) and Dee Gordon (2B8) play every day, as does Gerardo Parra (OF3, 34 arm). Aaron Hicks (OF3, 36 arm) has about half a season. Tyler Flowers (C8, Th-1) is half the catcher.

The rest of the regulars are Fielding Two. Jody Mercer (SS8) and David Freese (3B4) fill out the infield; Jacoby Ellsbury and Hernan Perez (OF2) play lots of outfield games; Matt Adams and Avisail Garcia are OF1s; Garcia's arm is a 36 but he may not need to play the field. Omar Narvaez (C7 Th-2) is the other half of the catcher. Waiver pickup Dustin Garneau (C8 Th+4) is a bonus defender. Overall the defense is above average, and there are a number of players with enough games to substitute for the few deficiencies.

Bench: 2.5
Flexible.

The flexibility of the starting players is an advantage – Ellsbury, Perez, Adams, and the catchers, including Garneau as the defensive replacement. Mike Napoli adds some silly bearded lady power (1-1-6, 7 hits, 4 walks) and

is a 1B4. Robbie Grossman (3 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks) and spare infielder (3 0s, 9 hits) add a little flexibility.



1st

We have had teams make huge jumps forward this offseason including the Boys From Rivière-du-Loup. But this team is weird. Walk back a year and see Jake Arrieta and Nolan Arenado and some other talents leave town, and our reasonable conjecture is that Mr. Dumont would do what we've seen every team that has jumped to contention since the Shangri-La Nowheremen. It's pretty clear that he did that – but he went through a bunch of intermediate versions of the team during the offseason. come back? Why isn't there something like David Ortiz here, even if it's just for one year?

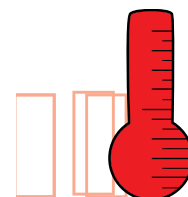
They'll win the Clemente. It's unclear if they can get past Hoboken or Gotham City – and it could all fall apart in a year. Fortunately, Sharks management loves to trade, and they'll do whatever they want and need to do in whatever direction the team needs to go. In the meanwhile, the ride should be an interesting one.

riverwoolf:
The New Normal



Mike Clevinger, SP. 60 walks, 137 strikeouts in 122 innings, 22 fatigue. This is his age 27 year, and he throws very hard. In the new world of the majors, starters go five or six, throw 100 pitches and leave. This leads to twelve-man pitching staffs, which means that full season players and high inning relievers are helpful for roster management.

TQ: 26.0



riverwoolf SHARKS

2017 blue hill MUDSLIDES in review

Harper, Story and Yelich are all coming into their own.

by Mark Ludwig



2017 in Review

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

After several years of high draft picks Blue Hill is starting to see the emergence of its young stars. This year's team has some power in the middle of the lineup and will score runs. The rotation is led by Wood (Grade 14) and Urena (Grade 12) but the rest are average so the Mudslides will need those runs! The bullpen is much better this year so we'll see how that works out.

What went right?

Christian Yelich had a breakout season in 2017, slugging .431 with 43 doubles and 17 home runs. Trevor Story settled in as the everyday short-stop and led the team with a .526 SLG that included 26 HR. This year he is a SS-9.



Yelich: Breakout

Although not close to his monster 2016 season, Bryce Harper did hit 27 doubles and 27 HR, led the team with 102 runs scored, 109 walks and tied for the team lead with 20 SB. Chris Rusin was excellent as a closer, saving 29 of the 54 Blue Hill wins with a 2.07 ERA.

What went wrong?

The pitching staff had a team ERA of 5.09 and WHIP of 1.52 with Kendall Graveman being the only starter with a winning record (15-8, 3.65). The rest of the starters were awful; Adam Morgan went 4-18, 6.80; Cody Reed 2-14, 8.37.

The bullpen was not much better, recording 22 losses.

There were a lot of empty outs in the lineup, which hit only .222, last in TBL. Seven regulars struck out 100 or more times, with Yelich and Story whiffing 145 times each. The team hit only 145 home runs, also last in the league.

Putting this team away will not cause Blue Hill management to shed very many tears.

3 Things

1. *The offense is coming together.* Harper, Story and Yelich are all coming into their own as very good hitters, with some additional support players as well. Hopefully Rafael Devers will be joining them soon.
2. *Wood and McCullers are continuing to develop.* Good young starters are hard to find and we think we've got some excellent ones. Aroldis Chapman has been added to bring some stability to the bullpen.
3. *Consistency is something to anticipate.* If the young players continue to improve and a couple of the veterans stay reliable Blue Hill should start to see itself closer to the division lead instead of the cellar for a change.

blue hill MUDSLIDES

Mark Ludwig (23rd year)

This is a very likeable team.



No more essays on works in progress. What we have here, interestingly enough, is a team that has a chance to be good enough to get to the wild card – or mediocre enough to face another draft challenge next off-season. For years, Mr. Jordan has made it an article of faith that certain teams and certain managers – notably Mr. Hunt and Mr. Meyer – make good out of fair, and something out of nothing – and that any team of theirs anywhere close is an imminent threat to go all the way.

This is very amusing, and at least part nonsense, but Mr. Jordan is a writer and given to bouts of hyperbole, and so must be forgiven. But if there's something to it, then the opposite must be true; there are managers, and teams, in TBL that have had trouble taking advantage of being good enough to take it to the next level. But this team has the kernel of a contender. It's unclear to us here at the *Annual* if this is the year – but it could be. If it is, we will enjoy watching. And if so – why not?

Turnover Rate: **37%**

Arrived: Jorge Bonifacio, Aroldis Chapman, Odrisamer Despaigne, Rafael Devers, Clint Frazier, Juan Graterol, Fernando Salas, Hector Santiago, Jose Urena, Luis Valbuena, Luke Voit, Chase Whitley, Tony Zych.

Departed: Cristhian Adames, John Axford, Brad Boxberger, Wei-Yin Chen, Josh Collmenter, Jared Cosart, Coco Crisp, Rajai Davis, Eduardo Escobar, Phil Hughes, Seth Maness, Omar Narvaez, Cody Reed.

Pitching: Things start well.

6.5

Things start well, with some solid starting pitching and a few good relievers. In the process of getting through a season, an ace – or a couple of good starters – does a lot to break up losing

streaks and start winning ones. Similarly, having a few solid guys in the bullpen stops opposition rallies. There isn't enough here, of course: but if the team can stay in the hunt, down the stretch pitching is usually the easiest commodity to add.



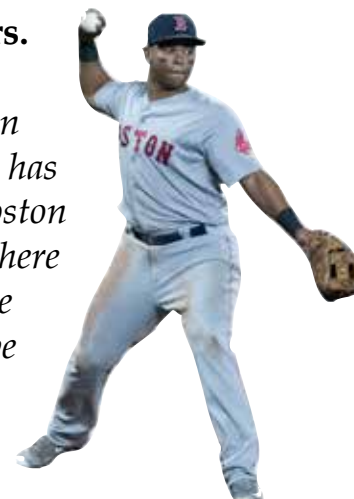
Wood: Came into his own

ROTATION. Lefty Alex Wood (Grade 14 C+31 HR+22, 25 starts) came into his own this year, and will be the ace of the Blue Hill staff. Late in the off-season, he got a buddy: Jose Urena (Grade 12, 28 starts), who is a solid #2. Lance McCullers (Grade 9 HR+42) and Odrisamer Despaigne (Grade 9 C-16 HR+45) have 30 more capable starts, getting the team through just over half the season.

The rest of the starts are workmanlike. Kendall Graveman (Grade 7 C+14 HR+21, 19 starts), Hector Santiago (Grade 7 C-31 HR-25) and Luis

SNT: Rafael Devers.

Highly sought after in the offseason, Devers has the starting job in Boston and should have one here for years to come. The bat is solid – the glove is the only issue.





Perdomo (Grade 6 C-14 HR+23) take up the majority of them, with some from the eternal journeyman Edwin Jackson (Grade 5) and a few by Zach Eflin (Grade 1). The top end starters will help make those less relevant.

BULLPEN. This area of the team will have to be improved for it to improve its position. Tony Zych (Grade 17* C-35 HR+46) is a short innings closer (41 IP), with a lot of the late innings work leaning on Aroldis Chapman (Grade 15* C-14 HR+43, 50 IP). Their setup men are very much a Blue Hill tradition – lefty Chris Rusin (Grade 13* C+31 HR+16) and righty Matt Belisle (Grade 12* C+16 HR+15) have a lot of innings – 145 between them. Below that tier are a pair of Grade 10*s – righty Matt Bowman (C+21 HR+36) and lefty Adam Morgan (C+15 HR-23) add another 11, and there are 33 innings of lefty veteran Oliver Perez (Grade 8*) for spot duty. They probably need about 50 more good innings, or 10 more good starts. But it’s the core of a capable pitching staff. It’s not as good as Riverwoolf, but it’s better than many rebuilders.

Offense: 7.0
Power hitters and on-base guys.

Blue Hill begins with one thing Riverwoolf simply lacks: a huge monster card. Bryce Harper



Harper: Huge monster

returned to his former identity after a year’s respite with a very nice set of numbers (1-1-6-6, 11 hits, 5 walks, L-9 R+2). There are only 111 games, and there is that lefty shift, but this is a guy you don’t want to pitch to. For half the season, he even has an opposite-shift counterpart:

Kurt Suzuki (*Kurt Suzuki?* 1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L+11 R-5).



Alonso: Solid

The power hitters and on-base guys continue. Trevor Story has some holes in his swing (11 13s) but has power (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+11 R-6). Yonder Alonso came into his own (1-5-5, 9 hits, 5 walks, L-12 R+1); and Christian Yelich (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, 34 SSN for 18 SBA) gets on base. Rafael Devers (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+12 R-5) adds 58 pretty solid games. That covers about half of the needed games for the season. On the boards the wild shifts are going to be an issue; fortunately Blue Hill plays its home games on the computer, so some of those big numbers will be smaller numbers.

Things get a little more mix-and-match after that. Chase Headley will take reps at third base (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, a little speed); Manny Pina (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22) will catch a lot; and rookie Jorge Bonifacio (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) will get time in the outfield; and the Best Yolmer in MLB, Yolmer Sanchez (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22) will play mostly at second. Missing games will give Jayson Werth (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks), Darwin Barney (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) and the silly Luis Valbuena (1-1-6, 7 hits, 4 walks, L-11) too many at bats.

The best offensive lineup doesn’t get on the field often enough, but when it does it’s potent – still, the platoon shifts, particularly the large righty ones, will hamper the team’s production. They could use a contact hitter to bat second.

Defense: 5.0
Won’t extend innings.

We’re fond of teams that are strong up the middle. Blue Hill qualifies: Trevor Story (SS9)

and Sanchez and Barney (2B8) are Fielding One in the infield; Christian Yelich (OF3, 31 arm) is in CF; Kurt Suzuki (C8 Th-1) is Fielding One behind the plate. Pina (C7 Th+3) is a more than adequate catcher on the day he starts; Yonder Alonso (1B4) is fine at first, as is Chase Headley if needed (he'll normally be a 3B4); Bryce Harper is an OF2 with a 36 arm. The rookies Devers (3B3) and Bonifacio (OF1, 33 arm) leave something to be desired. Jayson Werth, once top notch, has slipped a little (OF2, 35 arm).

Overall, this is a solid defense, and the best team in the field is good where it needs to be. They'll not extend a lot of innings.

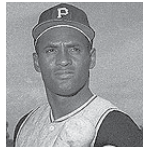
Bench: 2.0
A little thin.

Due to the need to carry extra pitchers and missing games, the Blue Hill bench is going to be a little thin. That means that some of the batting shifts will be left out to twist. There are a few extra players on the pine to help out, in addition to the platoon usage noted above. All are rookies. Luke Voit (1B3; 1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42) has no real platoon shift; Clint Frazier (1-2-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) has some funky power; and Juan Graterol (C7 Th+2, 0-6, 8 hits) is here for his glove.

2nd This is a very likeable team that doesn't come out well in the numbers. Their top rivals in the Clemente have some serious flaws, and so do they: one wonders if Mr. Ludwig came into the draft season with a notion that he was close to .500, and with a little help could be good enough to be in the playoffs.

The addition of Aroldis Chapman and Jose Urena hints at it, but the team continued to hedge its bets by drafting young players. That makes sense, of course: this isn't likely The Year, but likely is a year that builds toward The Year.

We think they could win 75-85 games. There are 6 TQ points between Blue Hill and Riverwoolf, and most of that is in the pitching staff. If Pat Neshek had been traded here instead of there, and one more decent starter was in the rotation, the positions might well be reversed. It should be an interesting race.



blue hill MUDSLIDES

**blue hill:
The New Normal**

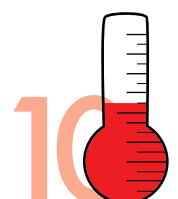
Trevor Story is a poster boy for what the new normal is all about. Four power numbers, 9 hits, 3 walks, and 11 13s. You can drive a lot of balls a long way if you go up there swinging.

His large platoon shift could make any reasonable batting average difficult to achieve.



Chapman, Urena: Hints

TQ: 20.5



2017 calusa INDIANS in review



The party's over.

by Gordon Rodell

2017 in Review

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

*"Turn out the lights, The party's over.
They say that all Good things must end.
Call it an unfinished season.
And 2018 starts the Party all over Again!"*

(Apologies to Willie Nelson)

Is Indians' Manager Frenchy Fry the TBL version of Dusty Baker? He can get a team to the party, but can't close the deal. For the second year in a row, Calusa made the playoffs, but lost in the Conference semifinals. The culprit again was the offense. Even after a much heralded upgrade in the off-season, the team didn't hit in the playoffs. Losing the deciding game 1-0, 1 to bleepin 0!!! (Sorry, I apologize, I thought I was over it, but I guess not.)

The regular season was a party. The Indans' broke from the gate, 15-5 and never looked back.

What went right?

Everything, but the playoffs. Freddie Freeman rebounded nicely from 2016 to slash .306/.395/.594, good for 39 home runs and 123 RBI. When Cruz wasn't in the Seventh House, he was good for 51 home runs and collected 143 RBI. Murphy justified his acquisition. He slashed .342/.381/.604, which resulted in 32 home runs. Longoria also rebounded from 2016, .277/.314/.492. I could go on, but you get the idea. It was a good offensive year and was very fun to play. As a team, the Indians slashed .273/.330/.470. and hit 237 home runs. When Thor and Archer weren't busy guiding the planets and steering the stars, they both won twenty. The last time Colon was an Indian, he lost twenty. He returned to win sixteen. Jason Hammel, was also good for sixteen wins. Raisel Iglesias ruled the ninth inning, earning 32 saves and a 1.21 ERA.

What went wrong?

In the immortal words of, well a lot of people, "S___ HAPPENS!" Alka-Selsky Time was a bust. Batting solely against LHP, he hit .219, even though he sported a +8 hitting advantage. Drafted primarily to bat against Kershaw and Price in the playoffs, he was a perfect 0 for 5, with three Ks. Mid-season trade acquisition. Hunter "I eat pizza with a fork" Pence? In the infamous playoff game, Pence was a perfect 0-4, with four Ks. The catching position combined to hit .198/.312/.458.



Murphy: Justified

3 Things

- 1. Injuries!** Injuries derailed the "Age of Calusa!" With Syndergaard's season wiped out and Freeman's season cut short, it became painfully obvious there would be no trip to the playoffs in 2018. Though not injured, sub-par years in MLB by Archer, Colon, and Hammel cemented the Indians' fate.
- 2. Love It or List It?** Having sold out the last two seasons to make the playoffs, there was no help coming from the draft to off-set the injuries and poor performance by key players. So what to do? The Statesmen provided the answer when they offered to trade for: Pennant Fixer Upper, Inc. (Cruz, Murphy, Archer among others) This was not a complete tear down, but a chance to get back in the draft and add some pieces to fuel the "Age Of Calusa, Pt II" In for a penny, in for a dollar. Eight more trades accelerated the Love It.
- 3. Trusting the Secret Weapon.** Or why I traded for Wilmer Flores. "...FB% held up, and power metrics surged across the board." With regular playing time, the Forecaster predicts "UP: .280 BA, 30 HR". After digesting this, Fate sent me an email from Trader Jack and Wah-Lah!! Flores became an Indian. This trade will be Hairii's greatest or not. Either way blame the Secret Weapon!

calusa INDIANS



Gordon Rodell (4th year)

A Morris-dance a little below .500.

The Calusa Indians won 109 games last year, capturing the Clemente Division pennant from its perennial possessor, the Whitman River Rats. Whitman ultimately prevailed in the post-season, but 2017 has to be considered a success. The club scored 851 runs and hit 237 homers, both among the best in TBL – but the performance of the team was also due to its outstanding pitching staff, led by two 20-game winners, Noah Syndergaard and Chris Archer, and an outstanding bullpen that recorded 17 wins and 58 saves.

Thor got hurt. Chris Archer has left town. The bullpen is not what it was. Some of the key offensive contributors – Daniel Murphy, Evan Longoria, Nelson Cruz – are gone as well, in offseason deals that the *Annual* politely would characterize as restructuring. But in Gordon Rodell's description in his standard instructions, he considers the team he has crafted for 2018 as designed for one thing: survival.

It may be somewhat melodramatic – not that Mr. Rodell is any stranger to melodrama – but it does point up the fact that the things that brought the team 109 wins in 2017 are far less potent in 2018. It will be an interesting spectacle to see how far they will get with what they have.

Pitching: 8.0
Pop riveter and Super Glue.

The previous edition of the Indians featured five strong starters who made 157 starts. This year's will be a more patchwork affair. As for the bullpen, there is no ace, and there are not enough solid innings to keep the club in some games. Calusa's pitching coach will have the pop riveter and the Super Glue ready on days when the starter will have to take one for the team.

Turnover Rate: 57%

Arrived: Austin Barnes, Tim Beckham, Brett Cecil, Rajai Davis, Miguel Diaz, Wilmer Flores, Josh Harrison, Joe Jimenez, Jordan Lyles, Russell Martin, Juan Minaya, Rick Porcello, Sal Romano, Danny Salazar, Joe Smith, Drew Steckenrider, Adam Wainwright, Luke Weaver, Matt Wieters, Jesse Winker.

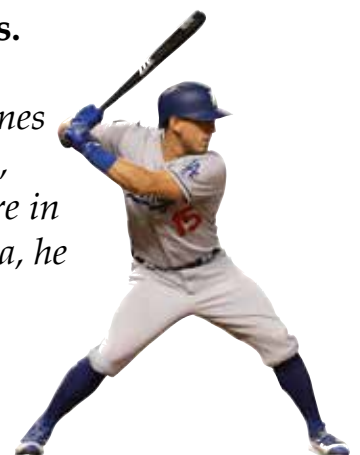
Departed: Alexi Amarista, Chris Archer, Jacob Barnes, Tony Barnette, Buddy Boshers, Billy Burns, Xavier Cedeno, Aroldis Chapman, Bartolo Colon, Nelson R. Cruz, Scott Feldman, Luke Hochevar, Evan Longoria, Ryan Madson, Daniel Murphy, Carlos Perez, Austin Romine, David Ross, Steve Selsky, Melvin Upton.

ROTATION. Stealing hits is the job of the pitcher, and the club has 45 starts that take 9s. Danny Salazar (Grade 11 C-31) is the best of them for 19 starts; he is accompanied by Luke Weaver (Grade 9 C+22 HR+15, 10 starts) and rookie Sal Romano (Grade 8 C-21 HR+24, 16 starts). That's a starter and a half of "ace".

The rest of the starters are more tenuous. Jerad Eickhoff (Grade 6 C-13 HR+15), Rick Porcello (Grade 5 C+26 HR-21) and Jason Hammel (Grade 4 C+24) have all come back to earth, and

SNT: Austin Barnes.

The versatile Mr. Barnes has a lot of raw talent, and has a bright future in the majors. For Calusa, he fills a major hole.





Adam Wainwright (Grade 4 HR+21), an ace in years past, struggled. Porcello is a full season starter, and is a likely candidate for regular application of the Super Glue – the others are all missing some part of the year, and will be shuttled on and off the roster. It’s going to be a long season for the Calusa rotation.



Iglesias: New year, same picture

BULLPEN. Last year’s closer returns to reprise his role, with a lesser grade and more innings. Raisel Iglesias (Grade 16* HR+36) with a little help from flame-throwing rookie Drew Steckenrider (Grade 16* C-43 HR+16) will be on the mound when the team

leads, and they have 111 innings between them. There are also a pair of excellent middlemen in Juan Nicasio (Grade 15* C+22 HR+35) and Joe Smith (Grade 12* C+35 HR+34) for 72 and 54 innings respectively. While it would be nice to have a closer grade at the top, this is a good group, and in games where the team leads, this quartet should help preserve them.

There are two lefties and two righties who will get lots of use, especially when rescuing the lesser starters. George Kontos (Grade 12* C+21) and Juan Minaya (Grade 11* C-41) are the righties; Daniel Coulombe (Grade 12* C-25 HR+35) and Brett Cecil (Grade 9* C+33 HR+21) are the lefties. These four add up to about 230 innings. There are a few innocuous arms at the tail end, but they’re there to soak up innings for the games out of reach.

Offense: 8.0
There will be good days.

The cards of Nelson Cruz and Daniel Murphy have made their way elsewhere, but perennial team leader Freddie Freeman is still here (1-0-0-0-0, 11

hits, 4 walks+22, L-7). He qualifies as the Guy We Don’t Want To See with the game on the line; he’s missing about a third of the season, but will be potent when present. The team can also count every day on the outstanding Ender Inciarte (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 31 SBA with 28 SSN).

The next tier of offensive players have a good mix of power and speed, though there aren’t enough games for the best lineup to be on the field every day. Wilmer Flores (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks) is Longoria’s replacement for 110 games; Josh Harrison (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 16 SBA with a 29 SSN) will be in the lineup most days; Carlos Santana (1-6-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22) will get on base with annoying regularity; and Cesar Hernandez (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, 20 SBA with a 29 SSN), Chris Owings (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks), Asdrubal Cabrera (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+7 R-4) and Tim Beckham (1-4-5, 10 hits, 2 walks+22) have various talents in various circumstances. There’s a lot of flexibility here.



Freeman: Perennial

The remaining outfield positions will be shared by Owings, who is better out there than in the infield, as well as Hunter Pence (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Rajai Davis (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 36 SBA with a 31 SSN). Behind the plate, Matt Wieters (3 0s, 8 hits) has a new partner, Austin Barnes (1-6-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+42). They’ll keep Russell Martin from having to bat.

This is a good offense, the best in the division. If it was paired with Riverwolf’s pitching staff, it would make a 100-win team. Since that’s not happening, it will be closer to 75. But they’re scrappy, and there will be good days. There will also be less good days.

**Defense:
Serviceable.**

4.0

There are four regular Fielding One positions on the roster. Josh Harrison (2B9) is as good as it gets; first base will be a 1B4 every day with Freddie Freeman and Carlos Santana; Ender Inciarte is an OF3 with a 33 arm; and the catchers are mostly Fielding One as well (Wieters is a C8 Th-0; Russell Martin a C9 Th-1. Austin Barnes is only a C7 with a Th-2, and isn't in the default lineups, but a few months of Martin and Wieters will make Mr. Rodell want to have Barnes in the starting lineup.



Harrison: As good as it gets

After that it's mostly Fielding Two. Beckham (SS8 2B7), Cabrera (SS8 3B4 2B8 – he'll be the second baseman for some of the games where Harrison has to sit), Hernandez (2B7) and Owings (2B7) will occupy games in the middle infield. Only Wilmer Flores (3B3) is a liability, but he can be upgraded when Calusa leads. In the outfield Hunter Pence, Rajai Davis and Owings are all OF2s with reasonable arms. It's a serviceable defense.

**Bench:
A few choices.**

2.5

Given the number of infielders who can play multiple positions, Calusa actually has a few choices, and other than those principals missing games (Harrison, Freeman, Flores) there'll be some versatility for pinch hitting or pinch running. Russell Martin is a good defender but won't see a lot of bat time, hopefully (1-6, 7 hits, 5 walks+42, L-8). Rookie Jesse Winker (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, L-16 R+5) has a funky card but limited usage. He may be available later in the season.

3rd

This is the best offense in the division, and by no means the worst pitching staff. It's got some solid arms in the bullpen, some power, and a surprising amount of team speed.

The departure of key parts of the 109-win team was based on a pragmatic evaluation of their chances this year; but if it was headed for a truly epic rebuild, there would not be such useful assets as Cabrera, Davis, Harrison, Hernandez, Santana, or the middle bullpen guys. Poor performance this summer might send them away anyway, especially if MLB gives Mr. Rodell bad news. Otherwise, this will be a Morris-dance a little below .500 all year.



calusa INDIANS

**calusa:
The New Normal**

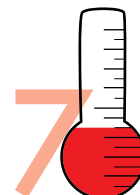


Tim Beckham, a light-hitting middle infielder, turned up the power last year, hitting 22 homers. His 1-4-5, though, comes with 9 13s. Players that have a number of strikeouts seem to have a magnetic effect on the dice; if he plays every day, as he's penciled in to do, that total could approach 150.



Still Iconic

TQ: 19.5



2017 whitman RIVER RATS in review



Finding any specific deficiency is very hard.

2017 in Review

Final Record: 104-58 (2nd, Clemente)

It is no coincidence that the *Annual* is using the same picture as the backdrop for this Year in Review: like the remarkable player depicted, the Whitman River Rats' performance in 2017 was very similar to that of all but one of the last eight seasons – first or second in the Clemente, 96 or more wins (100 or more in all but one of those seasons); top pitching, a solid lineup . . . it's kind of monotonous, a testament to the managing skills and excellent judgment of Mr. Brian Hanley over the last decade.

It has not, however, brought home a World Series victory. They've been in the big dance twice, in 2013 and 2016, but each time fell a little short. Last year, Whitman's *bete noire*, Brobdingnag, halted their season after a tough series. This coming year unfortunately, will be nothing like it. It remains to be seen how long it will take to come back.

What went right?

Paul Goldschmidt (.304-26-88, 43 doubles, 22 steals in 24 tries) was an offensive standout, as was Jose Ramirez (.321-13-101, 220 hits, 51 doubles, 17 steals in 18 tries). Carlos Gonzalez (.281-41-146, 53 doubles) had an extraordinary power season. Whitman scored 873 runs and hit .271.

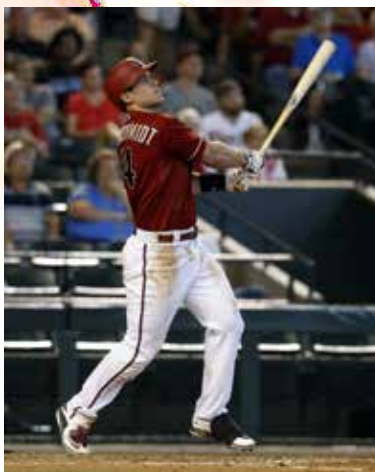
Clayton Kershaw (15-3, 1.88, 225 Ks in 117 IP) was fantastic. Ervin Santana (16-8, 2.94) and David Price (17-10, 3.20, 251 Ks in 244 IP) were great all season. Boone Logan (32 saves, 0.97 ERA) and Tyler Clippard (11-2 in relief) led a deep and capable bullpen.

What went wrong?

They didn't get past the eventual champion, but did take them seven games. They had the best ERA in the league and led in doubles, finishing third in BA and second in runs scored. It's hard to complain about a 104-win season, except in the final result: but Whitman management has never engaged in Yankee-cap mentality, counting no season successful except ones with a championship; we don't think anyone would account Whitman as unsuccessful, though, so that's a metric that can't and simply shouldn't apply. Finding any specific deficiency is very hard – the team was very good.

3 Things

1. *As in contention, so in rebuild.* The head man in Whitman is as able to function with a last place team as with a contender, and there's no sign of panic. It's going to take a little while, possibly more than one season and draft, to get back to where they were. This season has some patches and some deficiencies, but the expectations are not high either.
2. *Fix everything, but not all at once.* A crash, for whatever reason, makes some managers blow it all up and start again. This hasn't happened – some talent has left, some other talent has arrived, and patient management will see if these guys work out.
3. *Clayton Freaking Kershaw.* We just like saying that. So does Whitman. He's still here.



Goldschmidt: Standout

whitman RIVER RATS



Brian Hanley (23rd year)

You place your bets and see how things go.

Another successful year for Whitman doesn't appear to be leading toward an encore. This certainly happens from time to time, though it's been a decade since the 68-94 and 70-92 Rats led to the drafts that landed the likes of Jacoby Ellsbury, Nick Markakis and Clayton Kershaw. Jacoby is long gone; Markakis is still here, but time and wear have diminished him to a shadow of the guy Mr. Hanley drafted. As for Clayton Kershaw . . . well, he's become *Clayton Freaking Kershaw*. At 6-4, 228, he's even less equipped than his Dodger ancestor Fernando Valenzuela to be divided into two competent pitchers to cover two starting rotation vacancies – and honestly, he looks out of place on the team for which he now pitches. When he goes to the ball park each day he must be wondering who most of these guys are.

Still, you know. *Kershaw*. At least those days should be good. But there will be lots of other days that will not be so good. This is going to be a long campaign.

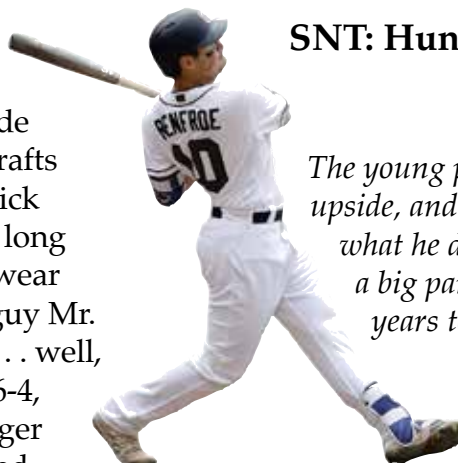
Pitching: 6.0
Make the best of it.

ROTATION. We start with the best news. There are 106 decent to excellent starts in the Whitman rotation, beginning with the somewhat

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Tim Anderson, Eddie Butler, Santiago Casilla, Matt Duffy, Todd Frazier, Dillon Gee, Nick Goody, Daniel Gossett, Phil Maton, Ricky Nolasco, Emilio Pagan, Hunter Renfroe, Nick Williams.

Departed: A. J. Achter, Billy Butler, Jacoby Ellsbury, Matt Garza, Jesse Hahn, Kelly Johnson, Boone Logan, Jefry Marte, Clayton Richard, Joey Rickard, Fernando Rodriguez, Travis Wood, Michael Ynoa.



SNT: Hunter Renfroe.

The young power hitter has enormous upside, and if he can do in the majors what he did in the minors, he could be a big part of Whitman's offense for years to come.

more mortal, but still formidable, Mr. Kershaw (Grade 16 C+34, 27 starts). His right-handed tag team partner is Ervin Santana, who has 33 starts of a Grade 13 (C+15). If David Price (Grade 12 HR+23) had not been hurt and limited to only 11 starts, this would be formidable. Blake Snell (Grade 12 C-35 HR+21) is the third guy, and while he's no Price, he does make 24 starts. Eddie Butler (Grade 11 C-41 HR+35) has 11 more.

All but a few of the remaining starting opportunities belong to Yovani Gallardo (Grade 6 C-31 HR-13) and Ricky Nolasco (Grade 5 C+14 HR-22). These guys seem to wind up as bulk starters for different teams every year, either because they fit this role or the management thinks that one of these days they'll turn into Ervin Santana or something.

BULLPEN.
Closing duties belong to none other than Nick Goody (Grade 17*, 55 innings). That in itself is not confidence-inspiring;



Clayton Freaking Kershaw.



Whitman RIVER RATS

what's more, his setup man is the only other reliever over Grade 13*, Emilio Pagan (Grade 14* C+36, 50 innings). They'll not be much help for the good starters, and won't have enough innings for the poor ones. The instructions assign occasional spot duties to Price as a reliever, but that doesn't help a lot either as he's to be used for one batter only.

From there it's a succession of mostly untrustworthy middle relievers: Tyler Clippard (Grade 12* C-44), Nick Vincent (Grade 10* C+44 HR+46, the best of the bunch), Phil Maton (Grade 10* HR-41), J. J. Hoover (Grade 9* C-56), Santiago Casilla (Grade 9* HR+13), Dillon Gee (Grade 9* C+22 HR+15, his 49 innings to include four starts) and Tony Sipp, the only lefty (Grade 7* C-14 HR-26). They add up to 305 innings, plus whatever Gee provides above his starting duties, apparently in the Whitman-developed role of "caddy".

While we know Mr. Hanley will make the best of it and thus this bullpen will overperform, it's still going to have trouble.

Offense: 4.5
Sea of mediocrity.



Goldschmidt: Top notch

The Kershaw analogy can be used to describe the Whitman offense, which generated 873 runs last year. There are a few truly outstanding cards, surrounded by a lot of outs. Paul Goldschmidt (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks+22, 30 SSN) is a top notch performer by any measurement; across the diamond, Jose Ramirez (1-4-5-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, 30 SSN) had The Year. They will be formidable, and cards op-

posing staffs will not want to pitch to. The third member of the troika, who used to fall into that category, is pretty much the third best card in the lineup, Carlos Gonzalez (4 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-12 R+2). He had a big time fall to earth (though, that being said, it makes him merely mortal).

Looking at the roster, we recognize several names of players who were much better when they were a part of earlier Whitman clubs. Todd Frazier (1-5-5, 7 hits, 5 walks+42) is a bearded lady; Nick Markakis (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) has gone from a doubles machine to a league-average Guy; and Troy Tulowitzki, once one of the greatest players in the game, is a pale shadow (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 66 games). It led to the acquisition of Tim Anderson (1-4-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+5 R-4) to pick up the slack. Anderson is roughly ten years younger and is the shortstop of at least the near future. Ben Revere (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-16 R+2, 30 SSN) is still a speedster, but the batting shift makes him even less potent than in the past.

The retrenchment toward youth began in the last few years, but it's clearly got a ways to go. Kolten Wong (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42) gets lots of reps at second base; Miguel Rojas (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) plays all infield positions; and rookies Nick Williams (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L-5) and Hunter Renfroe (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+13 R-6) are the forerunners of future Whitman teams.

Behind the plate, young and old, there's not much news. Sal Butera (2 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks), Tony Wolters (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-9) and Chris Stewart (7 hits) are around to end innings.

Even with the two excellent cards, this offense will drag down the team's performance this year. Overall this is a bit of a patchwork effort, with older versions of former stars, current placeholders without a lot of punch, and future seeds of potential stars who can only contribute so much right now. There will be two outstanding performances surrounded by a sea of mediocrity.

Defense: 4.5
A strength, for what it's worth.

The corners again shine with Goldschmidt (1B5) and Ramirez (3B5). Kolten Wong (2B8) is also a Fielding One defender, but his counterparts (Tulowitzki SS8, Rojas SS8, Anderson SS7) are less appealing. When Wong is out of the lineup, Ramirez can shift over and be a 2B8, with Frazier (3B4) slipping into the lineup.



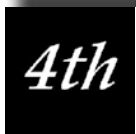
Ramirez: Shining

In the outfield, it's consistent OF2s (Revere, Gonzalez, Williams, Markakis) with decent to good arms; Revere lost a rating point, but can somehow throw a little now (28 arm). Only Hunter Renfroe (30 arm) will get reps in the outfield as an OF1. The catchers are competent: Stewart and Butera are C8s with bad arms, but Wolters, only a C7, has a nice Th+5.

It's a team strength, for what it's worth.

Bench: 2.0
Slightly less ill-suited.

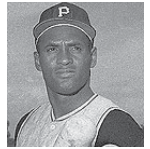
Some of the excess players, particularly the infielders, gives Whitman some flexibility. But the really good players, somewhat game restricted, don't need to be replaced, and the replacing is largely one mediocre player for another slightly less ill-suited to the game situation. Nonetheless, Mr. Hanley will get as much out of them as anyone can.



The numbers bear out what Whitman management already knows: the current edition of the team will have to give way to a newer one.

The club has not built up the 2019 draft, so what you see is much of what you'll get, and the bulk of the principal players are simply not that young anymore: Revere is 30, Kershaw 30,

Goldschmidt 31, Gonzalez 32, Frazier 32, Vincent 32, Gallardo 32, Price 33, Clippard 33, Tulowitzki 33, Markakis 34, Santana 35; the young players coming into their prime – Anderson 25, Renfroe 26, Ramirez 26, Snell 26, Pagan 27, Goody 27 – are just about as good as they're going to be.



In this competitive environment you place your bets and wait to see how things go. The big bets on the club are still on Kershaw, Goldschmidt, Ramirez, Price, and to a lesser extent Anderson and Renfroe. The question is: if the team still has structural problems a year from now, will some of those key players – Kershaw or Goldschmidt, for example – be sold off as part of a continued rebuild? Time will tell.

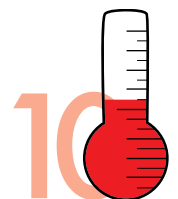
Whitman RIVER RATS

whitman:
The New Normal



Todd Frazier's unpleasant 2017 card is the sort that a generation ago would get you replaced by some younger, cheaper player. Instead, because there were 27 homers and 76 RBI, it got him two years and \$17M from the Mets. He peaked a few years ago and now looks more and more like Rob Deer – and it's not a good look.

TQ: 16.5



Fight Club

There are no truly dominant teams in the Mays this year, but it's clear that all four of the clubs have some strengths – and some deficiencies. Over in *Gotham City*, **Anton Greenwald** talks of rebuilding the *Batmen*, but appears to be the best in the division again; there is nothing quite like having three of the best cards in the set in the middle of his lineup.



Meanwhile, **Jim Jeatt's** up and coming *New Westminster Whiskeyjacks* continue to have an excellent pool of younger talent that should get them into the postseason for a few years to come. But we thought that was the case last year, and something happened (well, in some sense, *Maracaibo* happened: folks still shake their heads, especially since the club seemed to give up during the trading period instead of shoring up deficiencies and trying to get into the playoffs.) This year's club isn't as good as last year's, and faces the same situation: a Fight Club style scrum, with a possibility of getting to the playoffs if things go right. Wait and see.



It is a staple argument here at the *Annual* (but not by *Rumrunner* management) that *Maracaibo* consistently outperforms its talent. That was certainly the case last year, when the club won 89 games and a Mays pennant when they thought they were just scuffling. This year's club isn't as good as last year's – does this sound familiar? **Walter Hunt** thinks he's rebuilding. Can he be wrong again?

A team that actually *is* rebuilding is the *Rye Herons*, which not too long ago was far and away the oldest team in TBL. That sort of thing has only one outcome, what we call *the cliff* – the team becomes a bunch of Guys, waiting for a few drafts to start moving the team forward again. The last few years have been good for drafting, and **Craig Musselman's** team is a lot younger now. Pretty soon – watch out.



2017 Mays Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Maracaibo*	89	73	.549	—
New Westminster†	86	76	.531	3
Gotham City	78	84	.481	11
Rye	59	103	.364	30

* Lost to *Brobdingnag* in Conference playoff.
† Lost to *Whitman* in Wild Card playoff.

Mays Division

1. Gotham City	27.5
2. New Westminster	25.5
2. Maracaibo	23.0
4. Rye	18.5

Giancarlo Stanton,
Gotham City

2017 gotham city BATMEN in review



We reversed track and became sellers.

by Anton Greenwald

2017 in Review Final Record: 78-84 (3rd, Mays)

At the beginning of 2017, Gotham City thought it had a chance to contend, perhaps for a wild card spot in the playoffs. Both Gotham and Maracaibo were well behind New Westminster in the preseason analysis, but there was still a path to the playoffs.

By the time of the midseason trading period we were a few games behind – not a difference that couldn't be made up but enough to require mortgaging a lot of future picks to win so we reversed track and became sellers getting extra picks for 2018. Instead we dealt away Trumbo and Verlander and coasted to 78-84.

I can't point to any specific reason for the failure in performance, just bad die rolling.

What went right?

The team that remained did have some good results. The top performer was Jonathan Lucroy (.299-25-81); he led the team in many categories. Jarrod Dyson stole 28 bases in 29 tries; Verlander won 15 before leaving the club, and Trumbo hit 33 homers while still in a Gotham City uniform. Alex Reyes recorded 30 saves; he'll be recovering in 2018, waiting for next year.

Our draft in 2017 had spectacular results. While the jury may still be out on our first round pick due to injury, we had a waiver wire pick (Grade 1) turn into a Grade 24* reliever, a 5th round pick, Cory Gearrin (Grade 10*), turn into a Grade 19* (so we traded him for a 2nd round pick this year), another 5th round pick (Pham) who is a full time standout at CF for the

Cardinals, a weak trade exchanging two near innocuous players led to Zimmerman having the best year in his career.

What went wrong?

The team struck out 1,455 times, with eight players having 100 or more. Michael Saunders was an exercise in futility; he hit 23 homers, but whiffed 156 times and hit .192. Other than Verlander, no starter won more than 9 games. It was a frustrating and difficult season.

3 Things

1. *Overloaded with starters.* Having our starting staff blow up (literally) this year we are overloaded with starters and hope to not have to draft any next year.

2. *Riding the big cards.* The top hitters on the Gotham City roster should be enough to keep the team in contention. Then it will be up to the pitching to keep the team moving forward. There is enough of that to outpace New Westminster – we hope.

3. *Turning the page on the past.* Justin Verlander and Mark Trumbo have left the team; Alex Reyes is missing. The coming year is about Ryan Zimmerman and Giancarlo Stanton and the hope that there's lots more of Felix Hernandez; that Danny Duffy is as good as the best he's been. By the time the 2019 draft comes around, we'll be reinforcing the strengths of the team and building toward another - or possibly yet another - championship.



Lucroy: Top performer

gotham city BATMEN



Anton Greenwald (33rd year)

Would TBL really be TBL without Anton Greenwald? Let the discussion commence.

It is time to break the seal on the argument – does Anton Greenwald belong in the TBL Hall of Fame? The raw numbers: Thirty-three years as a member in good standing. Nine division titles. Four World Series appearances. One World Series title. He was not a founding member of the league, but he was there in year 2, and his consistency, humor and love of the game and the league are second to none.

He is a critically important member of the rules discussion every year. When we were working through the rules document cleanup, it was frequently Dr. Greenwald who remembered the reason for some of the phrasing, and that understanding helped us to tighten the language considerably. If there is a storehouse of institutional memory, Anton is clearly part of that.

There are only a handful of managers with this level of accomplishment, and this level of contribution, to our league, and several of them have already been inducted. But the best reason to add our friend Anton to the Hall could be the man himself.

Would TBL really be TBL without Anton Greenwald? Let the discussion commence.

Pitching: 9.0 **Solid rotation, beautiful bullpen.**

The primary competition for the Mays Division title this year is New Westminster, which is trying to finesse its way with one outstanding starting pitcher and a collection of wild things. Gotham City has similar challenges. It does not have the killer at the top end, but it has better quality down the stack.

Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Danny Barnes, Josh Edgin, Kyle Freeland, Craig Gentry, Jakob Junis, Dixon Machado, Jordan Montgomery, Jose Pirela, Anibal Sanchez, Paul Sewald.

Departed: Jabari Blash, Jose Dominguez, Ivan Jr. DeJesus, Gavin Floyd, Cory Gearrin, Chris Heisey, J. P. Howell, Collin McHugh, Ben Paulsen, Michael Saunders

ROTATION. Every starter has a Grade between 11 and 8. The 'staff leader' is Jordan Montgomery (Grade 11, 29 starts). He gets help from Red Sox lefty Eduardo Rodriguez (Grade 10 C-13 HR+12, 24 starts).

Then there are five guys who may all wear the same number. Danny Duffy (Grade 9 C+16 HR+12, 24 starts) and longtime ace Felix Hernandez (Grade 9 C+14 HR-24, 16 starts) have the best grades. Kyle Freeland (Grade 8 C-13 HR+22, 28 starts), Jacob Junis (Grade 8 C+24 HR-11, 16 starts) and Michael Wacha (Grade 8 C+13 HR+23, 30 starts) cover the rest of the schedule in functional mediocrity.

Gotham City is not giving anything away here. The instructions say to protect leads after the

SNT: Jordan Montgomery.

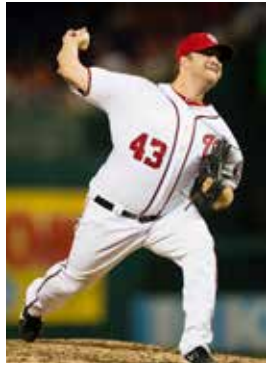
The young lefty is a nice addition to a staff that has begun to show its age.





gotham city BATMEN

fifth, so the bullpen better not be drinking the early innings away. Comparing to New Westminster, a slight – very slight – advantage to Gotham City in the starting rotation.



Albers, Betances: No comebacks



Offense: 11.0
Three of the best, and more besides.

Gotham City has three of the best hitters in baseball playing for them this year. It all starts with the best card in the set. Giancarlo Stanton (1-1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks) hit 59 home runs

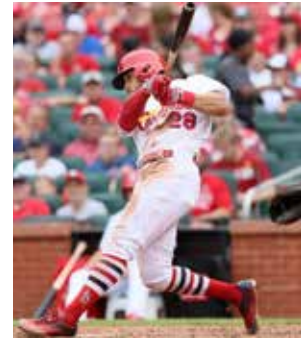
BULLPEN. This unit is one of the strongest in TBL. It starts with two monster grade closers. Matt Albers (Grade 24* C+14 HR+21, 61 IP) and Dellin Betances (Grade 22* C-62 HR+46, 60 IP) have 121 innings between them. Gotham City will be almost impossible to come back against after the seventh inning.

Betances does have the ugly control number, so Richard Bleier (Grade 14*, C+41 HR+26, 63 IP) may be more important to the close and late staff than might be apparent on first glance. Anton specifically includes instructions on Base Loaded situations, and Bleier is listed there.

There is plenty of middle relief. Danny Barnes (Grade 15* C-15 HR-16, 68 IP) will get regular sixth and seventh inning work. Hunter Strickland (Grade 13* C-23 HR+41, 61 IP) also will do time bridging from the starter to the closing staff. Fernando Abad (Grade 12* C+14 HR+31, 44 innings) is the second lefty in the pen, after Bleier. Josh Edgin (Grade 10* C-32 HR+34, 37 IP) and Paul Sewald (Grade 10* C+15 HR+13, 65 IP) add their innings to long relief and mop duty. Jacob Junis (Grade 8) also helps here.

They could probably use another Grade 18+ for the playoffs, but this is a beautifully crafted relief staff with enough horse power at the back of the pen to bring home those hard-earned victories.

for Miami last year on his way to the Big Apple to play for the New York Wallets. We have not seen a lot of full season cards with three 1s since the Steroid era ended in the early 2000s. Stanton is only 28, so Anton will have this monster in the middle of his lineup for years to come. Two other jaw-dropper cards hit the table every day. Ryan Zimmerman (1-1-6-6, 11 hits 3 walks) plays first and bats cleanup this year. The electrifying Tommy Pham (1-5-6, 10 hits, 5 walks+42, 16 speed, 30 SSN for 32 attempts) could be TBL's best leadoff man.



Pham: Electrifying

After those three guys, Gotham City could line up members of the Arlington Chess Club and still be competitive; but there's more. Part-timers Robinson Chirinos (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L+11) and Jose Pirela (1-4-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 83 games) will contribute bigly in limited time. Jedd Gyorko (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) and Jarrod Dyson (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, 19 speed, 31 SSN for 35 attempts) are regulars in the everyday lineups. Matt Carpenter (1-5-6, 8 hits, 6 walks, R+1) has a strange card, but he gets on base a lot and hits for some power (23 homers last year). Then there are some slightly underpowered generic cards. Ian Kinsler (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 29 SSN for 19 attempts) is still playing well at age 36. He plays 2B every day. Jonathan Lucroy (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 3 24s) is the regular catcher.

Alcides Escobar (3 0s, 10 hits) plays shortstop and bats ninth all year.

The three beasts make this a very solid offense. It does not have top-to-bottom power like some of the elite teams in TBL (check out the Statesmen...) but they will score enough to have a very good season.

Defense: 4.0
Only a few weak spots.

Gotham City has a number of outstanding fielders in the regular lineups. Ian Kinsler (2B9) has developed into a very sure handed infielder in the later stages of his career. Jonathan Lucroy (C8, Th-1) is excellent behind the plate. Jedd Gyorko (3B5) picks up everything at the hot corner. Giancarlo Stanton (OF3, 36 arm) has an argument as the best defensive corner outfielder in baseball. Tommy Pham (OF3, 33 arm) is the center fielder, and a really good one. Jarrod Dyson (OF3, 28 arm) is a good outfielder who can't throw at all. Jose Pirela (OF1, 2B6, 1B2, 3B3) stands in left field for some games.

There are only a few weak spots. Alcides Escobar (SS8) and Ryan Zimmerman (1B3) are about average at their positions. In this division, a small problem like this cedes ground to New West and Maracaibo, who have exceptional fielders everywhere.

Bench: 2.5
Not a lot of extra goodies.

There are not a lot of extra goodies in the envelope past the regular lineups. Guys like Mark Canha (4 0s, 8 hits 1 walk+42), Craig Gentry (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 17 speed), Dixon Machado (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 3 24s) and Ryan Schimpf (1-1-5, 6 hits) will have their uses, but there hardly seems a reason to move aside better players for them. Gentry can pinch run, and Schimpf is there strictly for his power.

Still, there is some flexibility in the starting lineup, allowing different arrangements based

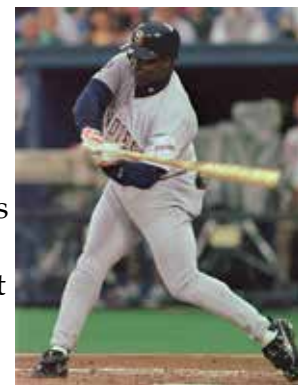
on batting shifts. Dr. Greenwald gets a lot out of his roster, and will make use of what's here.



1st The outstanding bullpen and the monster cards of Stanton, Zimmerman and Pham should bring home another division title for Dr. Greenwald. This will be a battle, though. The distance between this club, New Westminster, and the always dangerous overachievers in Maracaibo is small. The Mays promises to be very entertaining this season.

gotham city: The New Normal

Scarcely any player characterizes the New Normal more accurately than third baseman *Ryan Schimpf*, whose card shows the extremes of bearded-lady-ism. (Is that even a word?) 1-1-5 power, 6 hits, 5 walks plus a 22, 11 13s. Clearly an all or nothing proposition. He got more playing time on last year's club – 87 games, 354 plate appearances, 44 EBH including 20 homers, and 114 strikeouts en route to a .209 average. This was peak Schimpf, and it's clear he learned nothing about contact or bat control. He's a long way from Gotham City HOfer Tony Gwynn. But that's the New Normal for you.



Gwynn: Better than Old Normal

TQ: 27.5



gotham city **BATMEN**

2017 new westminster WHISKEYJACKS in review



by Jim Jeatt

It is hard to find a lot of negatives in 86 wins.

2017 in Review Final Record: 86-76 (2nd, Mays)

Much was promised in the 2017 season as New Westminster had grown a solid rotation of Hendricks, Estrada, Guerra, Cueto and Buchholz. In anticipation of a big year the Whiskeyjacks added Braun, Molina and Abreu. The team was a can't miss pick and looked to be one of the elite teams in the league.

A quick start made it look easy, The team hit the highwater mark of 19 games above .500 August 17 at 58-39. From that point to the end of the season New West went 28-37. Not a Bostonian collapse but enough of one to allow Maracaibo back in the race and eventually pass them for the pennant in the Mays. A solid patient job from Walter at the helm. The second wild card spot was the reward for New West and they battled Whitman to seven games before losing.

What went right?

The starting staff was for the most part as advertised. The big three, Hendricks, Estrada and Straily, combined for a 42-25 record and 585 IP with an ERA of 3.49. Bobby Abreu, brought in for his bat, led the team at .282-27-91. Molina led the team in average at .297. Odubel Herrera scored 89 runs, with a total of seven players at 69 or more runs scored.

What went wrong?

For a franchise known more for 66 win seasons, it is hard to find a lot of negatives in 86 wins. This was the second most wins in franchise history

and only the third above 500. Ryan Braun did not bring his 30 homer bat to town, finishing with a disappointing .266-19-67. Johnny Cueto made 24 starts before being traded and racked up a 5-13 record; Clay Buchholz and Robbie Ray combined for 7-10, with a 5.92 ERA. The offense at key times struggled being shutout with alarming regularity.

3 Things

1. *The rise of the super teams has left New West pondering its future. The offense should be good, but lack of a strong bullpen and starters makes progress a bit tricky.*

2. *Several pitchers have been jettisoned. Hendricks, Cueto and Estrada. Though a great pitcher, Hendricks brought Jose Martinez, Sean Newcombe and Chris Stratton. Last*

year's disappointment may have coloured the management's vision of what it takes to win. An attempt to bring in younger pitchers to go with a younger offense will hopefully prolong the uptick in wins.

3. *The composition of the roster continues to lack balance. Patience ran out on Soler and several other marginal prospects. Trades were made to bolster the infield ranks. Difo and Ahmed add depth as New West continues its search for an everyday thirdbaseman. The bullpen continues to be a patchwork and now the starting rotation is a long list of question marks.*

New West has chosen not to blow it up. There is enough talent here to be competitive maybe just not this season.



Abreu: Brought in

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

Jim Jeatt (14th year)

This should be a real dogfight.



Jim Jeatt has to be feeling better about life after his 86 win campaign in 2017. His club emerged from a 6 year visit to the seedy part of town (last winning season: 2010), and snagged the second wild card slot in the International Conference thanks to some excellent pitching. The offense got dragged along – these guys made the playoffs despite scoring only 696 runs – but in the postseason they fell in 7 games to a very strong Whitman club.

Not a bad year at all. The best news for this year is that last year happened with the 2018 draft largely untouched. So, in addition to being a winning team, New West is starting to stockpile kids and get younger. This is the kind of forward momentum every team wants to develop.

Pitching: 7.0 **Not many days off for the pen.**

ROTATION. If you think of the best starting pitchers in baseball, it takes a while before you get to Robbie Ray (Grade 17 C-32, 28 starts). Despite working in obscurity in the Arizona desert, Ray has developed into a lethal performer and staff ace for the Whiskeyjacks. He is missing some starts, and his fatigue number (24) and

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Nick Ahmed, Johnny Barbato, Ryan Buchter, Wilmer Difo, Sam Gaviglio, Brian Goodwin, Trevor Hildenberger, Mark Jr. Leiter, Jose Martinez, Sean Newcomb, Robert Stephenson, Chris Stratton, Jason Vargas.

Departed: Jake Barrett, Tim Beckham, Clay Buchholz, Marco Estrada, Erik Goeddel, Kyle Hendricks, Justin Morneau, Jarrett Parker, Jace Peterson, Robbie Ross, Tyler Saladino, Jorge Soler, Preston Tucker.

lack of control are not a good omen, but those are nits – he’s a Grade 17 starter and should be able to reproduce the 15-5 record he posted for the Diamondbacks last year.



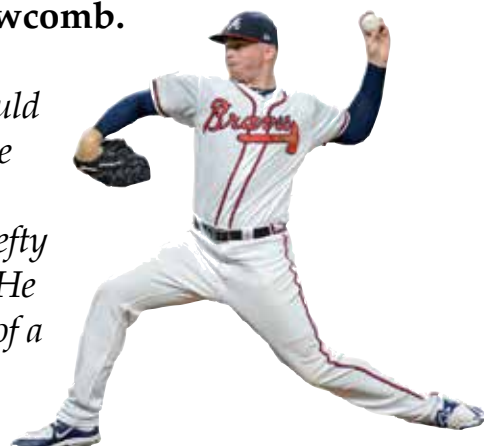
Ray: A 17, apparently

Being wild and having poor fatigue numbers is thematic – and concerning – for Jim’s boys this year. Similarly challenged are Chris Stratton (Grade 11 C-36, 10 starts, 22 fatigue), Treasure Island author Robert Stephenson (Grade 11 C-62, 11 starts, 23 fatigue), and Junior Guerra (Grade 11 C-62 HR-42, 14 starts, 23 fatigue), and Sean Newcomb (Grade 9 C-43 HR+25, 19 starts, 25 fatigue). There are 82 good starts here, but for the bullpen, there are not going to be many days off.

Outside of Ray, the good news in the starting rotation is that Dan Straily (Grade 9, C+14 HR-21, 33 starts) and Jason Vargas (Grade 9, 32 starts) are here to sop up starts and innings. Both of these guys have 24 fatigues as well, but at least they are not beaming the mascot or

SNT: Sean Newcomb.

Jose Martinez could have been a choice here, but we’re going for rookie lefty Sean Newcomb. He has the makings of a future ace.





new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

throwing the ball on the backstop all afternoon. Add in Sam Gaviglio (Grade 9 HR-32, 13 starts) and New West has 158 starts of guys that steal hits without help. Seth Lugo (Grade 5 C+26, 18 starts) takes the rest. This is a deep rotation, but the grades and control issues will keep this unit from being a team strength.

Fortunately for the underpowered starting rotation, there is a huge steaming pile of bullpen to rescue them. The closers are Ryan Buchter (Grade 18* C-22 HR-14, 65 IP) and Alex Colome (Grade 12* C+24 HR+43, 67 IP). Buchter should make it through the season as the save guy, but Colome's peripherals make him a good situational option. Pedro Baez (Grade 14* C-24, 64 IP) and Matt Barnes (Grade 13* C+26 HR+24, 70 IP) are the late setup men. Jake McGee (Grade 12*, C+15 HR+34, 57 IP) also helps out here. The close and late crew have 323 innings between them.

The middle relief crew includes veteran lefty Jerry Blevins (Grade 14* C-31 HR+33, 49 IP), the surprisingly effective Trevor Hildenberger (Grade 11* C+51 HR+25, 42 IP), and Mark Leiter (Grade 13* C+13 HR-25, 30 IP). Blake Treinen (Grade 8* C+16 HR+34, 76 IP) and Johnny Barbato (Grade 12*, C-62, 29 IP) work the long afternoons when the game is going badly.

Offense: **9.0**
Lots of plus bats.

This part of the team was a bit of a drag on the festivities last season. After some nice work at the draft, things should be better this season. The problem is that some games are missing from a few key hitters.

There are no problems at all with the sublime Jose Abreu (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+42). Abreu plays all day, every day, and will bat cleanup for New Westminster. Also clocking in every day is the outstanding 2B Jonathan Schoop (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, 2 31s).



Abreu: Sublime

The depth of this lineup depends on who is available after those two studs. Ryan Braun (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 15 speed, 29 SSN for 16 attempts, 104 games), 2018 second round draft pick Jose Martinez (1-5-6-7-7, 11 hits, 4 walks, 106 games), and Brian Goodwin (1-0-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 15 speed, 35 SSN for 6 attempts, L+7, 74 games) are also impact bats, but they are missing portions of the season. Lonnie Chisenhall (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks,, 82 games) and Dexter Fowler (1-0-0-0, 9 hits 4 walks, 15 speed, 118 games) will also be big contributors when they are available.

There are three other full-time players who will help keep the offense purring. Center Fielder Odubel Herrera (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks), the extraordinary catcher Yadier Molina (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 27 SSN for 13 attempts), and third baseman Adam Frazier (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42) will pull their weight with the bats. The same could be said of backup catcher Christian Vazquez (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks), though his playing time will be limited by being stuck behind Molina.

The only position that does not have a plus bat is shortstop, where Addison Russell (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, 15 speed) is the starter with backup help from Nick Ahmed (1-4-5, 9 hits, 2 walks, 15 speed). Yangervis Solarte (1-5-6, 9 hits 2 walks) has a short card and a bad lefty shift (L-7), but is slated to spell Frazier on days the WhiskeyJacks face a lefthander.

This is a really deep offense with plenty of power, and enough speed to keep the pressure on all afternoon. They should exceed their anemic run totals of last year without much effort.

Defense: 6.5
May be the best defense in TBL.

New West can really flash some serious leather. At catcher, they have Yadier Molina (C8, Th+4) and the excellent Christian Vazquez (C8, Th+5). The shortstops are Addison Russell (SS9) and Nick Ahmed (SS9). Jonathan Schoop (2B8) is terrific at second. Odubel Herrera (OF3, 32 arm), Ryan Braun (OF3, 31 Arm), and Dexter Fowler (OF3, 30 arm) will run down everything hit to the outfield.



Russell: Serious leather

If there is a weakness it lies at the infield corners. First base Jose Abreu (1B3) will do his best, and Adam Frazier (3B3, OF2, 31 arm) will try not to get himself killed out there. Wilmer Difo (SS9, 2B7, 3B4) is a young bench asset with a good glove – he may see some time as a defensive sub.

This may be the best defensive team in TBL.

Bench: 2.5
Must be used carefully.

The bench options must be used carefully because many of the starters are missing 50 games or more. Difo will be used heavily as a defensive sub and as a pinch runner. Christian Vazquez (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks) can be used as a pinch hitter when the game is close – a maneuver that not many folks saw coming when this player first came up. The shifts among the starting lineups are not drastic, so there will be limited chances to play matchups against New West.

For the most part, the starters should be able to get the job done.



The Mays division title looks to be a close race this season. Gotham City is the preseason favorite, but there's enough in the envelope for Jim to make a run at a division title.

The offense is better: there's no Giancarlo Stanton – but there is Jose Abreu. The starting rotation is a little light (though it's overall better than Gotham City). This should be a real dogfight.

new westminster:
The New Normal



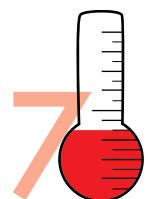
Robbie Ray certainly qualifies in this category; he's a hard-throwing lefty with negative control (C-32) and high strikeouts (K), based on 71 walks and 218 strikeouts in only 162 innings.

We are also drawn to take note of infielder *Brad Miller*, who has turned in some four power cards but who put out a real stinker in 2017: 3 0s, 7 hits, 5 walks, 8 strikeouts – though clearly not swinging at everything, he swung through a lot of pitches and didn't drive them far often enough. This is one of the final states for a New Normal hitter – even one with good power: over time, pitchers tend to figure him out.

TQ: 25.5



new westminster WHISKEY JACKS



2017 maracaibo RUMRUNNERS in review



The model for a major rebuild suggests hard choices.

by Walter Hunt

2017 in Review

Final Record: 89-73 (1st, Mays)

The followup to the 101-win 2016 campaign was supposed to be a competitive team that had some chance to reach the postseason. There was plenty enough pitching, but there were some problems in the lineup – particularly the ability to get on base in some positions.

Expectations weren't high: Maracaibo expected to be looking up at the Boys From the North all season. Somehow, though, the club stayed in contention all year, bought a power hitter for the stretch (Mark Trumbo) from Gotham City, and at the end of the year they'd won a divisional pennant. They even took eventual champ Brobdingnag to seven games. So all in all, this counts as an unexpectedly upbeat season.

What went right?

The pitching was outstanding, both in the rotation and in the bullpen. John Lackey (17-4, 2.84, 227 K in 199 IP, 4 shutouts) was top notch; the number two guy, J. A. Happ, went 16-8, 3.21. Mark Melancon had a 2.07 ERA with 35 saves, at the head of a very capable pen; Nate Jones struck out 90 in 70 innings as the setup man, and the relievers won 25 games.

On offense, Jake Lamb delivered 30 HR and a .270 average; Lorenzo Cain, Starling Marte and Brandon Phillips had 40 or more doubles; and Marte led all Rumrunner hitters with a .315 average and 16 steals.

What went wrong?

The club simply didn't get on base enough. A .294 OBP as a team ranked Maracaibo 21st in TBL. The 1,376 team strikeouts was seventh-most in the league, with seven regulars striking out 100 or more times (Ian Desmond's 188 led the team and tied for second most in the league). That's a lot of fresh air for a team with only 159 homers all season. The team simply couldn't generate enough offense with enough consistency to make the team a serious contender.

Despite the outstanding performances, the bottom end of the rotation got beat up (Hamels had a disappointing 9-14 season; Tom Koehler went 9-13, 5.29; Ubaldo Jimenez 4-10, 6.91).

3 Things

1. *Getting old.* Particularly on the mound, Maracaibo's roster needs to get younger. Lackey's 2017 season might be his last; Hamels is in middle age. These two have been the core of the rotation for a very long time. This year and next year's draft will be strongly oriented toward newer and younger pitchers.

2. *Letting go of old friends.* Brandon Phillips and Ichiro Suzuki will not be with the team past the upcoming year. Those are gaps that have to be filled as well.

3. *Commitment to rebuild.* Maracaibo has never lost 100 games, and 2018 is probably no exception; but the model for a major rebuild suggests hard choices. Can we do it? Hard to say.



Lackey: Top notch

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS



Walter Hunt (32nd year); Hall of Famer

It is going to take a couple of years to polish this gem.

Walter Hunt is rebuilding. Seriously.

Walter Hunt is good at this game, as he is most games. And that typically means that he underestimates his team's performance to some extent. In some years, a modest club with clear weaknesses will somehow sneak its way into the playoffs. In some years, a decent team will win its division and scare the daylights out of some World Series-bound team in the playoffs. (This happened last year when the Rumrunners took Brobdingnag to seven games before succumbing.)

Then there are the years when Walter builds his kind of club – big bullpen with huge homer numbers, 11 hit cards everywhere, and steals from top to bottom. Walter and Rich Meyer are the masters of motion offense – no wasted outs,

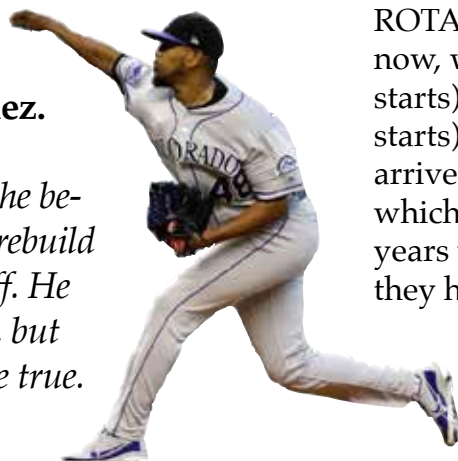
Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Carlos Asuaje, Jesse Chavez, Brandon Drury, Michael Dunn, A. J. Ellis, Doug Fister, Jaime Garcia, Greg Holland, German Marquez, Brandon Moss, James Pazos, Daniel Stumpf, Andrew Triggs, Bradley Zimmer.

Departed: Erick Aybar, Curt Casali, Hunter Cervenka, Wilmer Difo, Andre Ethier, Marwin Gonzalez, J. A. Happ, Drew Hutchison, Ubaldo Jimenez, Colby Lewis, Pat Neshek, Bruce Rondon, Justin Wilson, Chris B. Young.

SNT: German Marquez.

The young Marquez is the beginning of Maracaibo's rebuild of its aging pitching staff. He has to pitch in Colorado, but that might not always be true.



Hamels, Lackey: A long time limit strikeouts, hit and run constantly, and multiple paths to victory. (People underestimate how much power Walter's good teams have. And underestimating Mr. Hunt is not sound strategy in TBL.) With that winning profile in mind, let's see how this rebuild thing is going.

**Pitching:
Waiting mode.**

7.5

The Mays Division has certain guidelines for starting pitching this season: starters between Grades 8 and 11, please. No gaudy double digit starters. (What are you doing here, Mr. Robbie Ray? Don't you have somewhere else to be?) Walter Hunt has compiled a Mays-compatible rotation.

ROTATION. It starts, as it has for a long while now, with Cole Hamels (Grade 11 HR+15, 24 starts) and John Lackey (Grade 9 C+16 HR-32, 30 starts). Lackey has been here since 2006. Hamels arrived in 2007. They have been the rocks on which Walter's clubs have rested. Each has had years when they simply had to produce, and they have.

Last year it was Lackey's turn, and he went 17-4, pretty much pitching Maracaibo into the playoffs by himself.



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

The third man in is Jaime Garcia (Grade 9, C-15 HR+16, 27 starts) – another veteran. It should be noted that the top three grades and the first 81 games of the staff are manned by pitchers who are well into their 30s. In fact, Lackey turns 40 in September.

There are 27 starts of Grade 8. Andrew Triggs (Grade 8 C+16, 12 starts) and Doug Fister (Grade 8 C-21 HR+26, 15 starts) will be serviceable for their outings. Then comes the 23 year old German Marquez (Grade 7 C+24 HR-13, 29 Starts) and some 35 year old Jesse Chavez (Grade 5 HR-23, 21 starts). Tom Koehler (Grade 2) will start a handful of games that will be rated PG. Outside of Marquez, these guys won't be here in two years.

BULLPEN. There is a new closer. Keone Kela (Grade 24* C-35 HR+22, 39 IP), a fireballing righty from Texas, will pitch only in classic closer situations. At 25 years old, this could be his job for a while. Joe Kelly (Grade 17* C-41 HR+45, 58 IP) and veteran Greg Holland (Grade 16* C-34, 57 IP) set up Kela.

Sergio Romo (Grade 14*, HR-16, 56 IP) and Michael Dunn (Grade 12*, C-56, 50 IP) are the bridge club here in Maracaibo. They are backed by another 92 innings of Jimmy Pazos (Grade 11*, C-31 HR+15, 54 IP) and Daniel Stumpf (Grade 10*, C-15, 38 IP).

The top six in the bullpen have 342 innings between them – pretty respectable for a team trying to get through the season with their dignity intact. J. J. Johnson (Grade 5*, C-14, 57 IP) and Mark Melancon (Grade 4*, C+34 HR+24, 30 IP) show up when dignity has flown the coop.

This is a serviceable group for a team in waiting mode.

Offense: 7.0 **Will not bash anyone to death.**

The hitting starts with Lorenzo Cain (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, 17 speed, 35 SSN for 28 attempts). This is a typical Maracaibo player – a fast contact hitter with plus speed. You know it's a rebuilding year because Cain is the only hitter in the lineup with 14 or more on base numbers. The new kid in town is second baseman Brandon Drury (1-6-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks). That is a beautiful card for the 26 year old. Drury will be forcing Walter to cheer for the Yankees this year.



Cain: Bellwether

There are several interesting support cards. Jake Lamb (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks, 149 games) starts against righties all year. Starling Marte (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 18 speed, 32 SSN for 25 SBA) leads off in the computer lineups. Ian Desmond (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 16 speed, 30 SSN for 19 SBA) leads off on the boards. Mitch Moreland (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks) plays first every day. Thirty-seven year old Brandon Phillips (3 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk) bats second in all lineups. Bradley Zimmer (3 0s, 9 hits 3 walks, 19 speed number, 35 SSN for 19 SBA) is a talented young outfielder.

Maikel Franco (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) is a bomb waiting to go off. He hit 24 homers last year and is entering his age 26 season this year. Salvador Perez (1-0-0-0, 10 hits) is one of the best hitting catchers in baseball. This is a bit of a down year for him. Orlando Arcia (1-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 15 speed) solves the shortstop question for the Rumrunners for the next decade.

This is not a lineup that Melrose or Brobingnag would tolerate – they will not bash anyone to death. But they will apply pressure, score without hits, and give the Rumrunners a chance against pitchers with good grades. And they will get better as the kids mature.

Defense:

6.5

Good times, bad times.

Maracaibo is excellent defensively. Orlando Arcia (SS9) is the shortstop, and he is a good one. His glove is ahead of his bat at age 24. Brandon Drury (2B8) has a sexy defensive rating to go with his sexy card. Mitch Moreland (1B5) looks lovely in leather, and Salvador Perez (C9, Th-1) is just a terrific defender. Brandon Phillips (3B4) will do the job at third base, keeping both Franco and Lamb (3B3s) off the field.



Arcia: Glove ahead

In the outfield, Lorenzo Cain (OF3, 34 arm), Starling Marte (OF3, 34 arm) and backup Bradley Zimmer (OF3, 33 arm) are all as good as it gets – but not as good as Ichiro Suzuki (OF2, 36 arm) was when he was younger. Keep in mind that Suzuki is now 44 – the man is just special. This defense matches up with almost any team in the league.

Bench:

2.0

Some assets.

Most of the bench is lottery tickets. Mark Trumbo (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, is one example. You may recall he led the majors in homers a couple of years ago. Carlos Asuaje (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) is getting a chance to show off in San Diego this year. A. J. Ellis (C8, Th+2) will fill in for Perez at catcher occasionally. Ichiro Suzuki (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 15 speed) is still a useful bench player on his way to the Hall of Fame. Brandon Moss (1-1-6, 8 hits) is around when only a long ball will do. This is not a bench to make one stop and stare, but there are some assets.

3rd

It is going to take a couple of years to polish this gem and smooth out the rough spots, especially given the age of some of the regulars. But Mr. Hunt knows his business, and has stockpiled draft picks for 2019 to go after the missing pieces.

In the meantime, Gotham City and New Westminster will be looking over their shoulders.

maracaibo: The New Normal

He doesn't have a long term life with the Rumrunners, and hasn't managed to find any suitors in MLB as yet, but *Brandon Moss* fits the mold of the New Normal. He has isolated power (1-1-6) but doesn't get on very much and has 10 13s on the card. He is the very epitome of feast or famine.



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS



Ichiro: Special

TQ: 23.0



2017 rye HERONS in review



There is a lot to process.

2017 in Review

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

It was a difficult year in Rye, as the record of the team dropped to 58-104. Lineup and pitching both performed poorly, and there weren't very many bright spots. This year's team will be better, but there's still a long way to go.

What went right?

J. T. Realmuto had the best batting average on the team, hitting .290. He also chipped in 12 homers. Kendrys Morales was the leader again, turning in a .250-34-98 line. Matt Kemp hit 29 homers and drove in 99. Keon Broxton went a perfect 22-for-22 in stolen bases.



Morales: Leader, again

Chris Sale was an iron man, winning 14 games with 11 complete games, striking out 247 in 240 innings. Will Smith saved 15 games in limited innings. Jeff Samardzija had a tough season with a losing record, but struck out 195 in 210 innings.

What went wrong?

Most everything. The rest of the rotation other than Sale had a rough season. Samardzija went 6-16, 4.29; Zach Neal 8-13, 5.53; Tyler Wilson, 6-15, 6.34. The team had a 4.65 ERA overall, and surrendered 887 runs.

On the offensive side, the team struck out 1,346 times and hit .233 overall. Most of the regulars, and many of the part timers, hit under 250. Matt Kemp hit .228. Chase Utley hit .234. Steven Souza turned in a .179 average in almost 500 futile plate appearances.

All in all, it's not the least surprising that the team lost 104 games. It is, unfortunately, a long time since there was much to cheer about up on the New Hampshire coast.

3 Things

1. *There is a lot to process.* Rye began to alter its course with the Greinke trade a few years ago.

Now there's Chris Sale to replace him, and the pitching staff's way forward leads through Jameson Taillon, Ben Lively and Trevor Williams. There's also J. T. Realmuto, Alex Bregman, Paul DeJong, Mallex Smith and Aaron Altherr. The team is built around youth, as it should be, but it is unclear what remains to be done.

2. *Lineup before pitching.* So it is written, so shall it almost always be, unless you're Darrell Skogen. What has been fixed? Catcher (Realmuto), shortstop (DeJong), at least part of the outfield (Altherr, Smith, Souza, Broxton); at least one other infield position (Nunez, Merrifield). Building the team slowly, there's a chance that entropy gets in the way; but the additions are good so far.

3. *This is not the final form.* Sale, DeJong, Bregman, Taillon – those are guys who will be here in two or three years. It's unclear what else on the roster will be here then. Mr. Musselman has shown veins of ice, though: no one is unavailable, the talent scouts are looking for any opportunity. When they put it all together, watch out.

rye HERONS



Craig Musselman (14th year)

Craig Musselman has been up to the mountaintop.

Craig Musselman has been up to the mountaintop – his Rye Herons won the 2010 TBL Championship. He has taken the Bus to Chelsea – his 58-104 record last year was the worst of his excellent TBL career. In his 12 years in the league, he has won 90 or more games five times and posted winning records 7 times.

All this is a long-winded way of saying that this is a team in firm control of its future, whether they are going for the Pot of Gold or taking the necessary ice bath, like they did last year.

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Simon Castro, Grant Dayton, Paul DeJong, Josh Fields, John Hicks, Ben Lively, T. J. Mcfarland, Adalberto Mejia, Daniel R. Robertson, Austin Romine, Robby Scott, Trevor Williams, Brandon Workman.

Departed: Tim Adleman, Trevor Brown, Joel De La Cruz, Alex Dickerson, Matt Kemp, Colton Murray, Zach Neal, Jhonny Peralta, Rob Refsnyder, Will Smith, Michael Tonkin, Jered Weaver, Tyler Wilson.

SNT: Paul DeJong.

An absolute perfect selection for Rye, DeJong steps in as an everyday power source right away, and with a .496 minor league SLG over several seasons, it's likely that the power will be there for a long time.



It is year 3 of the deep rebuild here in Rye. The outline of a fearsome club is taking shape – and they won't win the same way that Craig's championship teams did five years ago. This time, they are looking more like Zion and less like Melrose, with a motion offense and power pitching. They are still a year or two away, but they are moving forward instead of backward for the first time since 2015.

Pitching: 6.5
Things get entertaining.



Sale: Clown on a beach

ROTATION. In the starting rotation, one name stands out like a clown on a beach. Chris Sale (Grade 15 C+31 HR+16, 32 starts) went 14-15 with 11 complete games for this team last year – the only starter to win more than 8 games. For the Red Sox on the Fields of Grass, he blew the American League away. Rye goes into the 2018 season with a true ace.

There are 93 more competent starts before things get a little too entertaining. Trevor Williams (Grade 9 C+13 HR+25, 25 starts) and Jeff Samardzija (Grade 8 C+42 HR-13, 32 starts) will compete nicely most days. Samardzija's fine control number will be a welcome relief on a staff that will certainly walk



RYE HERONS

its share. Ben Lively (Grade 8 C+23 HR-12, 15 starts) is a notch below the others with similar grades, but he should be serviceable. James Shields (Grade 8 C-25 HR-33, 21 starts) steals hits without help, but those peripherals are rated PG-13. Despite misgivings here and there, Rye has 125 starts of grade 8 or better. This team lost 104 last year, so this is a sea change.

The other 37 starts come from guys like Jameson Taillon (Grade 6 C+13 HR+33, 25 starts) and Adalberto Mejia (Grade 7 C-21, HR+15, 21 starts). The back end of the rotation does not contain a Pit of Despair – no one below a Grade 6 toes the rubber for this club at the start of the game. Credit the management with a nice job of rebuilding the starting rotation.

BULLPEN. Like a lot of teams in rebuilding mode light attention is paid to the relief staff, but the cupboard is not entirely bare. The closest thing Rye as to a closer is Tyler Lyons (Grade 16* HR+43, 54 IP), whose nice homer number gives him the ninth inning work over 33 year old Josh Fields (Grade 16* C+22 HR-24, 57 IP). Also in the mix in close and late situations is Jared Hughes (Grade 14* C+11 HR+35, 60 IP). These three combine for 171 innings of respectable late inning work.

The seventh inning role is combined between lefty Robby Scott (Grade 17*, C-14 HR-31, 36 IP) and righty Brandon Workman (Grade 12*, C+25 HR-22, 40 IP). Scott's wacky peripherals should lead to some hijinks, but these two add 76 decent innings.

Behind the lead dogs are Ed Ramos (Grade 9* C-25 HR+36, 58 IP), Grant Dayton (Grade 12* C-36 HR-32, 24 IP) and Simon Castro (Grade 11* C-22 HR-23, 37 IP), who will serve as the relief valet / mop for this year. Nick Wittgren (Grade

6*, C+21 HR+15, 42 IP) and Timothy McFarland (Grade 2*, C+33 HR+35, 54 IP) are around in case no one else in the stadium wants to pitch.

There are 271 innings of Grade 12*+ relief here, which is quite respectable for a club on the rebound. This will help the starters, and maybe prevent the win total from dropping below 60 again.

Offense: 5.5
They can run.

The hallmark of this club at this point in their construction is the speed on the roster. Almost everyone can run, and this may mean that this offense over-performs its raw numbers.



Bregman: Just fine

For some guys on the club, the raw numbers are just fine, thank you. Alex Bregman (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, 30 SSN for 22 SBA) is 24 years old and is well on his way to becoming one of the best third basemen in the game. 2018 first round draft pick Paul DeJong (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks) will add some thunder to a lightning-filled lineup. His 12 on-base numbers means he will bat seventh for Rye. Eduardo Nunez (4 Os, 12 hits, 30 SSN for 31 SBA, 16 speed) was marvelous for the Red Sox in a utility role last year. He can't play defense at all, so he will be the DH here in Rye and bat cleanup.

J.T. Realmuto (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 15 speed, 141 games) is the everyday catcher. (We are trying to remember the last catcher to play more than 141 games in a season.) And of course he has 15 speed, because that's what catchers are like here in Rye. Aaron Altherr (1-4-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, 15 speed) can hit and can run, but can't hit-and-run, so he bats eighth every day. Whit Merrifield (1-4-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, 18 speed, 31 SSN for 42 attempts) had an astonishing year for the Royals

last year, and pretty much stands as the prototype for this offense – young, blazing fast with modest power. How fast do you have to be to lead off for a team like this? We can ask Mallex Smith (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 19 speed, 29 SSN for 21 SBA) and Delino DeShields (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 19 speed, 30 SSN for 37 SBA) that question. Smith bats first against righthanders, DeShields starts things off against lefties. Steve “Manimal” Souza (1-5-5, 8 hits, 5 walks, 16 speed, 31 SSN for 20 SBA) bats second every day. Only the first basemen do not run on this team. Kennys Vargas (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 3 24s) and Kendry Morales (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks) finished tied for last in the preseason 40 yard dash.

The team is very young – there are only 3 players here over 30 years of age. It’s hard to understate what a change this is from few years ago, when Rye was the oldest team in the league.

Defense: 4.0
Time will tell.

This is not a team strength, but Rye will be functional with the leather this year. Alex Bregman (3B4) and Whit Merrifield (2B8) are excellent. Almost everyone else is dead average. Paul DeJong (SS8) and Jacob Realmuto (C7, TH+2) are serviceable in two very important positions. The entire outfield (Souza, Altherr, DeShields, and Smith) are all OF2s, despite the blazing speed. At first base, Vargas (1B3) is a little better than Morales (1B2). Neither will be picking up a Gold Glove anytime soon.

DeJong looks like a terrific player, but will he give Craig the SS9 he needs to win divisions and in the playoffs? Ditto Realmuto – where is the ceiling? Time will tell what this promising groups deliv-



Merrifield: Excellent

ers on defense. Right now, it’s not the big issue that it will be two years from now.

Bench: 2.5
Doesn’t add much.

There’s not much on the bench past the semi-regulars. John Hicks (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) has the best card of the bench guys and Guillermo Heredia (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, 16 speed) has an L+7 shift, and may see some pinch-hitting opportunities. Also hanging around is living fossil Chase Utley (4 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, 127 games), promising (if redundant) speed merchant Keon Broxton (1-4-5, 8 hits, 3 walks, 29 SSN for 28 SBA), Kelby Tomlinson (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks). It’s not that these guys can’t play. It’s just that there not much difference between their skill sets and those of the starting lineups. But – at least Rye is covered if there are injuries.

4th

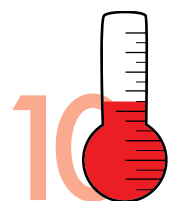
Rye is not quite done paying the rebuilding tax as yet, but this is a far better team than the one that lost 104 games last year. They will compete most days, particularly when Mr. Sale is starting.

rye:
The New Normal



Keon Broxton has a wealth of talent, but his power and speed is offset by no real plate discipline (11 13s). He’ll have to sort that out if he wants to stay in the majors.

TQ: 18.5



rye HERONS

Likely Not One and Done

We here at the Annual like it when good things happen to good people. Case in point: *Steve Powell*, who has quite a team put together for 2018. There should not be a lot of Ruth Division competition for the *Hoboken Zephyrs* this season, partly because they're pretty good for the



coming season, and partly because there are two out-and-out rebuilders and one borderline club in the Ruth. In head-to-head play, the team should not find much of a

challenge, and it is very much the equal of teams like Gotham City and Riverwoolf. The best news is that the *Zephyrs* are likely not one and done – the team is so young they'll be together for a while.

Coming off a 54-108 season, the *Midwest Mongrels* are going to be much more fun for *Darrell Skogen* to play. Madison Bumgarner is back after a whiplash-inducing series of trades, and rookie Cody Bellinger has been added to a much-improved lineup; but this team is likely short of what it would take to catch Hoboken. Is there enough to get to the Wild Card? Hard to say.



2017 Ruth Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Brobdingnag*	114	48	.704	—
Hoboken	76	86	.469	38
Knoxville	58	104	.358	56
Midwest	54	108	.333	60

* Won World Series against Grand Cayman.



Meanwhile, elsewhere in Minnesota, *Pat Martin's Knoxville Blue Thunder* has built up the young offense and added some hard-throwing

arms to the bullpen, making them a team which – even if not a contender – should be taken seriously. Management states that this year is only the beginning of the route back to contention, making it clear that the club expects to draft in the 2019 upper half.

Which leads us to *Brobdingnag*. *Joe Auletta's Barbarians* have another World Series title to polish for Vlad, but circumstances – including the actual real-life death of two fifths of the rotation – have caused the Prince of Darkness to take some giant steps back. They're big players in the 2019 draft, and this year's team is going to be fairly forgettable even though it has Trout, Correa, Machado, Betts and Strasburg on its roster. The only question is how bad they will be.

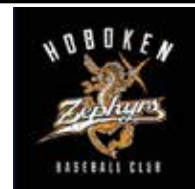


- 
- 1. Hoboken 29.0
 - 2. Midwest 23.5
 - 3. Knoxville 17.5
 - 4. Brobdingnag 15.5

Aaron Judge,
Hoboken

Ruth Division

2017 hoboken ZEPHYRS in review



Nothing was as consistent as inconsistency.

2017 in Review Final Record: 76-86 (2nd, Ruth)

Steve Powell might well be having a laugh with the *Annual*. We asked at this time last year whether the Hoboken Zephyrs, who had the behemoth of Brobdingnag above them in the Ruth Division, could improve on the 2016 record of 76-86. Did they disappoint? Yes. Did they fall short? No. *They piled up the exact same 76-86 record*, and they did it in much the same way – an inconsistent offense and merely average pitching.

That is clearly over. It doesn't need a Magic 8-Ball to tell that Hoboken will be much better in 2018. (This isn't Hudson, after all.) In the meanwhile, the 2017 team – a stepping stone to the current one – had some good indications of what is to come.

What went right?

Nick Castellanos (.308-21-72) had a pretty solid year at the head of the offense. Francisco Lindor had a great first full year (.303-20-76, 19 for 21 in steal attempts). Javier Baez hit 18 homers and drove in 66 runs, and Matt Joyce walked 109 times, just short of the league lead.

Kenta Maeda was as good as the hype. He had an outstanding rookie season (13-6, 2.82, 215 Ks in 214 innings, 6 CG, 3 shutouts). The bullpen had 25 wins, with David Phelps recording 19 saves to lead the team, striking out 88 in 77 innings.

What went wrong?

Nothing was as consistent as inconsistency. Joyce's 109 walks came with 142 strikeouts and a .190 average. He was one of four players with 130 or more strikeouts. The starting lineup was largely filled with players hitting around .220 with 20 walks and 80 or more strikeouts.

The starting rotation other than Maeda were largely laborers in futility. Carlos Rodon (9-11, 4.31) was the best of them, but Josh Tomlin (11-11, 4.96), Archie Bradley (5-15, 5.52) and Matt Moore (8-16, 5.77) gave up about 350 runs between them.

3 Things

1. *No one in the way.* Realignment and the big run of the Barbarians have relegated the Zephyrs to also-rans in the 76-86 seasons; but that's in the past now. There are competent teams with decent managers, but there are really no competitors for the division pennant.
2. *Collect the gems.* Careful work in the last few drafts have built this team. Francisco Lindor was a no brainer, but Aaron Judge was a risk; so was Javier Baez; so was Archie Bradley. Those three names are prominent in the 2018 team.
3. *But wait, there's more.* Hoboken will draft low in 2019; but unlike some contenders, and some also-rans, they will draft. This is a team clearly on the rise.



Maeda: Staff leader

hoboken ZEPHYRS

Steve Powell (28th year)

Its young players are that good.



The cosmos occasionally throws us a curve ball by having good people catch a major break. Steve Powell has been with us since 1995, and has played in exactly one TBL World Series – his Dallas Eagles lost to Melrose in 2011 after a spectacular 110 win season.

Fast forward to the 2017 TBL draft. In round three, names like Bruce Maxwell, Matt Bowman, Kyle Ryan and Sammy Solis were tossed out. With the 86th pick, Steve Powell took a breath and chose Aaron Judge, a Yankees outfielder who may or may not have had a job, and was pretty much guaranteed to strike out a ton given regular playing time. Strike out he did – it was his performance in the at bats where he did not strike out that made this pick a game changer – 52 homers, 79 XBH, 127 walks, a 1.049 OPS. Judge turned 26 this year.

Other good things happened for Hoboken last year as well. They stayed healthy. Guys with little name recognition performed quietly but effectively all over the roster. The pitching was decent and more high-grade stuff fell into Steve's lap during the 2018 draft. The result: Hoboken emerges from a stretch of 6 straight losing seasons as one of the most dangerous teams in TBL.

Pitching: 8.0
No 'dead-ball dice.'

Steve Powell entered the 2018 draft needing to build an entire starting rotation from his draft picks. He was fortunate, because pitching was just about the only commodity that was abundant in 2018.

ROTATION. Two 2018 draft picks lead the staff. Luis Castillo (Grade 16, 15 starts) and

SNT: Brad Peacock.

Aaron Judge would certainly belong in this space, but Brad Peacock turned in an excellent season and will contribute heavily to Hoboken's success this year.



Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Parker Bridwell, Luis Castillo, Sam Freeman, Matt Grace, Hoby Milner, Brad Peacock, Brett Phillips, Austin Pruitt.

Departed: Jose Alvarez, Luis Cessa, Kyle Crockett, Brian Flynn, Steven Moya, Vidal Nuno, Ryan O'rourke, Wily Peralta, Rob Scahill.

Brad Peacock (Grade 16, C-34 HR+35, 21 starts) have about a season's worth of excellent starts between them. There follow 65 solid starts from Parker Bridwell (Grade 11 C+22, 20 starts), Carlos Rodon (Grade 11 C-34 HR-15, 12 starts), Austin Pruitt (Grade 9 C+25 HR+15, 8 starts) and Kenta Maeda (Grade 10 C+24 HR-16, 25 starts). That's 101 good to excellent starts.

Jeremy Hellickson (Grade 7 C+21 HR-32, 30 starts) has 30 serviceable starts behind the top group, which turns out to be critically important, because Matt Moore (Grade 4, 31 starts) will be run out there with a caddy warming up in the bullpen.

This is not a withering, 'dead-ball dice' style of rotation. (Tip of the cap to Darrell for that.) But



hoboken ZEPHYRS

it will get them through the regular season and into the playoffs, where the weaker grades at the back of the staff won't matter at all.

BULLPEN. Archie Bradley (Grade 19* C+21 HR+42, 73 IP) is the closer for Hoboken. His solid grade, large innings total and big homer number should give him a chance to lead the league in saves this year. He gets capable late-inning help from Sam Freeman (Grade 16* C-25 HR+45, 60 IP), Jose Ramirez (Grade 16* C-36, 62 IP), Hoby Milner (Grade 15* C-23 HR+41, 31 IP) and Ryan Tepera (Grade 14* C-14 HR+31, 78 IP). That's 304 innings of Grade 14+ relief, which will help the back half of the rotation significantly and allow Hoboken to win when they are ahead.

David Phelps (Grade 12* C-25 HR+26, 56 IP) and Matt Grace (Grade 8* C+21 HR+42, 50 IP) are also here to bail out the starters early. Jeremy Jeffress (Grade 7* C-33, 65 IP) is around for Mop duty.

This group will definitely help the low-end starter by allowing them to be removed early with more competent relief. The top-end relief is playoff ready – the big homer numbers are exactly what a World Series contender needs.

Offense: 12.5 **One of the deepest in the league.**

Well, there's this... Aaron Judge (1-1-5-5, 9 hits, 6 walks, 13 SBA with 27 SSN). Judge exploded onto the scene last year, and adds stamina to his other qualities – Hoboken will park this mass in the middle of his lineup for 155 games.

Judge has plenty of help. The leadoff man – and one of the most important players in Hoboken's

rebuilding effort – is shortstop Francisco Lindor (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 18 SBA with 32 SSN, 17 speed). Josh Reddick (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks) bats second in the regular lineups. Marcel Ozuna (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks) is the regular number three hitter for this wrecking crew.



Judge: This

Things throttle back a notch after Judge. Nick Castellanos (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks) and Josh Bell (1-4-5, 9 hits, 4 walks) follow Judge in the lineup. Starlin Castro (1-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, 113 games) plays second and bats seventh. The number eight hitter is Javier Baez (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 13 SBA with 30 SSN). The talented Travis D'Arnaud (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) bats ninth.

The strength of this offense is at the top of the lineup and on the bench – this is one of the deepest offenses in the league, as we will describe later. They should score plenty of runs and apply pressure to teams throughout the season. Judge could have 100 RBI by Labor Day.

Defense: 6.5 **Taking no chances.**

Taking no chances over the last couple of years, the Zephyrs stockpiled three SS9s: Francisco Lindor (SS9), Javier Baez (SS9, 2B8, 3B5) and Freddy Galvis (SS9), who is apparently here just to oil the gloves. Baez plays third every day – and does it very well. The outfield not only can go get the ball, but can really throw, too - Aaron Judge (O3, 36 arm), Josh Reddick (OF3, 36 arm) and Marcel Ozuna (OF3, 33 arm) are the starters. Jake Marisnick (OF3, 35 arm) and Brett Phillips (OF2, 37 arm) are looking for opportunities to play.

Josh Bell (1B4) is solid over at first. Travis D'Arnaud (C8, Th-3) and James McCann (C7,

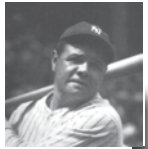
Th+0) are the catching combination. Solid – but no all stars here. Starlin Castro (2B7) is the everyday second baseman.

This is a well above average team defensively. On balance, the defense should be a help to the pitching staff.



Baez: Plays very well

iterations further on as well – its young players are that good. What’s more, the team has its full draft in 2018, so it can get even better.



hoboken ZEPHYRS

Bench:
Few have this depth.

3.0

hoboken:
The New Normal



There are few teams in the league that have the depth that Hoboken has. Consider that Freddy Galvis (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 19 SBA with 29 SSN, SS9), Matt Joyce (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) and Jake Marisnick (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, 106 games) are not starters here.

These cards are available to match up against specific pitchers, or come in when there’s an injury or a period when a starter is resting. Albert Almora (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks) is 11 hits with nothing to do. Stephen Piscotty (3 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks) is a nice card that may never start.

This is one of the strongest benches in TBL.

Aaron Judge’s power and generous number (9) of 13s would qualify him for this honor, but he also has 6 14s, likely due to an unwillingness to put anything in his wheelhouse. Therefore the poster boy for the New Normal is *Javier Baez*, whose first really good card (1-0-0-0, 10 hits) comes with some downside as well (1 14, 9 13s). Baez has learned that, like San Pedro de Macoris, you can’t walk out of Puerto Rico, and he’ll swing at anything he can reach.

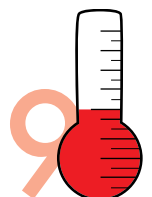
1st There is no one close to the Hoboken Zephyrs for the division – the other three teams may not even finish .500. The question with Hoboken is whether they get to the World Series this year. Riverwolf may be their primary competition in the International Conference, though Gotham City may provide some competition as well.

This team is incredibly young – they have nine players over the age of 30 on the entire roster, and only two of those are position players (see inset). They will still be a powerhouse when Brobdingnag fixes its pitching in a few years – and those pennant races are going to be something special. The core parts of this team should be still here a few Las Vegas or Munich

Players born after 1990 (13): Almora, Baez, J. Bell, Bird, Bradley, Bridwell, Castellanos, L. Castillo, Galvis, Lindor, Marisnick, Bre. Phillips, Rodon.

Players born from 1988 to 1990 (13): S. Castro, D’Arnaud, Grace, Judge, Maeda, J. McCann, Milner, M. Moore, Ozuna, Peacock, Piscotty, Pruitt, J. Ramirez.

TQ: 29.0



2017 midwest MONGRELS in review



Bragging rights in the state of Minnesota.

by Darrell Skogen

2017 in Review

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

Part two of the plan went into effect in 2017. The Dawgs improved from 48 wins to 54, and still “won” the rights to the first round pick in the 2018 draft. Team batting average improved by 15 points, while ERA dropped by half a run. The boys scored 621 runs but still yielded 943, however — the ERA was boosted by a whopping 143 unearned runs due to 172 errors by the Dawgs’ “defense.”

What went right?

Zach Davies (11-12, 3.96) and Ricky Nolasco (10-15, 3.84) were actually consistent starters. Diaz struck out 62 in 49 innings as a good sign for the future. Eric Hosmer hit .259 but did crank out 25 doubles and 24 homers. Roughned Odor only hit .236, but that included 38 doubles and 28 homers. Rookie Trea Turner hit .278 with 15 doubles, 5 triples, 16 homers, and 10 stolen bases in 71 games. Victor Martinez came back to .263, 33 doubles, and 20 homers.

What went wrong?

Pitcha, pitcha, pitcha. Jhoulys Chacin (3-17, 7.97), Chad Kuhl (1-10, 6.53), Edwin Diaz leading in saves with only 12. On offense, only 21 bunts as the boys struck out 1,222 times, with four guys over 100 (Odor, Hosmer, Hicks, Rosario), a very un-Guru like offensive effort. Team OBA at .285 and slugging percentage at .392 despite 172 home runs. Eddie Rosario’s .202 featured 13 doubles, 1 triple and 16 homers, but that was a big drop from his rookie season.

3 Things

1. *The starting pitchers have to live up to their hype.* Mike Clevinger is gone via trade, but there is great hope for Jose Berrios and newcomers Charlie Morton and the returning MadBum. Improvements from Chacin, Kuhl, and Davies can all stand the Dawgs in good stead.

2. *The emphasis is still on getting younger.* This is the second year of the plan. At the draft, we picked up another diamond in Cody Bellinger, but we also picked up another future closer in Chad Green, as well as starting hopeful Morton. On offense, in addition, trades netted the return of Adam Jones and a young Max Kepler to give the Dawgs a real outfield. Kevan Smith should be a major upgrade at catcher, and some utility help comes from Leury Garcia and Danny Valencia.

3. *David Wright continues as the manager this season.* Martinez steps into an assistant GM position and will serve as hitting coach as his designated hitting duties are restricted by age and health issues. A late spring in Minnesota means the boys need to round into playing shape by May, and a good start is necessary to have an impact season within their division.

The outlook is rosy. With the backsliding in Brobdingnag, the Dawgs hope to compete with the big boys in Hoboken while vying with Knoxville for bragging rights in the state of Minnesota. Time will tell.



Hosmer: Cranked

midwest MONGRELS



Darrell Skogen (17th year)

Now they're poised to . . . well, what are they poised for?

There is a bit of prevailing wisdom in TBL, which is of course a generalization that does not apply everywhere, and not everyone believes ... that in order to be dominant you have to plumb the depths. In other words, to contend, you have to suck. Joe Auletta supposedly taught us that thirty years ago, and Munich taught us that over and over, and Melrose too (except at a much greater speed). Everyone knows that: *go big or go home* and all that.

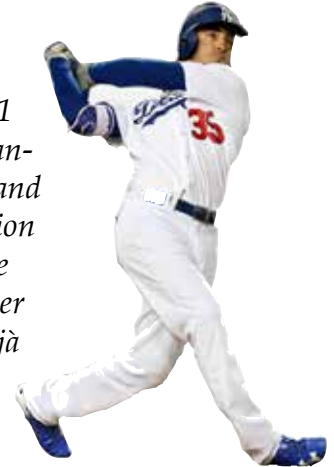
Mr. Skogen clearly believes this dictum at least in part. Except for the weird 83-79 Era (three straight years of exactly the same record from 2006-2008), Midwest has rocketed from periods of serving as an extreme doormat to periods of extreme competence. Each period lasts 2-3 years, which is about right: we can borrow one draft in the future, and as players age, a team can patch once or twice and then it's time to check out. Midwest management seems content with this.

So, the last two years have been doormat years. The final year in the Williams and the first year in the Ruth have resulted in 48 wins and 54 wins and, not incidentally, in (among other players) Trea Turner and Cody Bellinger. It's also brought Madison Bumgarner and Adam Jones back, and Chad Green and Charlie Morton and Max Kepler too. The Dawgs were active in the trade market, and now they're poised to . . . well, what are they poised for? This isn't a 100-win club. It has a tough opponent in Hoboken, and it will have to get through them or Gotham City or Riverwoolf or whoever makes it out of the scrum and into the Wild Card in order to have a shot at the World Series again.

We think it's more likely they manage an 83-79 Sargasso. Hopefully it's only one year this time.

SNT: Cody Bellinger.

The Bellinger selection at #1 in the 2017 TBL draft was announced before Christmas, and no one could possibly question this one. We said exactly the same thing about Trea Turner last year, so it's not your déjà vu acting up.



Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Jose Alvarez, Cody Bellinger, Madison Bumgarner, Bartolo Colon, Leury Garcia, Chad Green, Adam Jones, Shawn Kelley, Max Kepler, Jose Lobaton, Charlie Morton, Kevan Smith, Sammy Solis, Danny Valencia.

Departed: Dario Alvarez, Matt Andriese, Ramon Cabrera, Juan Centeno, Mike Clevinger, Carlos Estevez, Ryan Garton, Yulieski Gurriel, Aaron Hicks, Tony Kemp, Mike Morin, Ricky Nolasco, Alexei Ramirez, Braden Shipley.

But in any case this is much more a Midwest team than what has come before. Or, to be more accurate, more like a good Midwest team. How far they go is in part up to them.

Pitching: **11.0** Solid rotation – powerful pen.

The pitching staff is very good this year, one of the top five in TBL. After posting a brutal 5.06 ERA last year, this is a breath of fresh air. The worst start is a Grade 8; there are two closers and a whole pile of relief innings. If anything will get the Midwest boys to the playoffs, it's going to be this portion of the team. It will keep the club in most games.



ROTATION. An indication of the Guru's earnest in trying to win this year is the acquisition of Charlie Morton (Grade 12 HR+26), who at age 34 has arrived and will now have 25 very good starts for Midwest. He's the front end of a solid rotation; Jhoulys Chacin (Grade 12 C-14 HR+22), Jose Berrios (Grade 11 HR+24) and half a season of Madison Bumgarner (Grade 11 C+41 HR-15) cover about three-fifths of the season. The rest of the starts belong to Chad Kuhl (Grade 9 C-24 HR+22) and last year's ace Zach Davies (Grade 8 C+22 HR+22). That's a pretty solid crew.



Morton: Arrived

BULLPEN. Midwest surprised a number of contenders by their early (pick #8) selection of Chad Green (Grade 25* C+16 HR+41), the best closer on the market. His 69 innings will team up with lefty Felipe Rivero's 75 (Grade 22* C+21 HR+43) and shut down the ninth (and likely the eighth) inning in games where the Mongrels lead.



Green: Shutdown

Heading the setup crew is Edwin Diaz (Grade 17* C-41) who throws very hard, and Tommy Hunter (Grade 16* C+22 HR+22) who does as well but with a better idea where it's going. Scott Alexander (Grade 14* lefty C-26 HR+51) and former closer Fernando Rodney (Grade 13* C-31 HR+43) fill up the middle relief, along with the slightly scary Kirby Yates (Grade 13* HR-34). Together they provide nearly 250 solid relief innings. Jose Alvarez (Grade 8* C+42) and Sammy Solis (Grade 9* C-44) add another 75. This is a real powerful bullpen.

Offense: 7.5 Tiers of capability.

There is no place better to start than SNT rookie Cody Bellinger (1-1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 13 SBA with 30 SSN), who has the best card on the roster.

It's the card that you'd least like to see with the game on the line, but it's not the only card that is threatening. Eddie Rosario (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-7 R+1) is very solid. Trea Turner (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 54 SBA with 33 SSN) isn't quite as scary as his freshman card, but the speed is top notch.



Rosario: Very solid

That's the extent of the dangerous cards in the lineup. There are some very decent ones behind that: Eric Hosmer (1-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-7 R+1) is the everyday first baseman; Adam Jones (1-5-6, 11 hits) is a regular outfielder; and rookie Kevan Smith (3 0s, 11 hits, L-6 R+2) gives half a solid year at catcher.

Then we have some problems. Leury Garcia is decent for half a season (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 10s, 1 walk+42); Max Kepler (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) has lots of upside, but a very pedestrian card; and Roughned Odor is beginning to look more and more like a bearded lady (8 hits, 2 walks, 2 walks+22, 21 SBA with 28 SSN). He gets some relief from Andrew Romine (3 0s, 9 hits), who can play absolutely anywhere. Rene Rivera, who plays the rest of the season at catcher, is similarly unimpressive (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22). Danny Valencia (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+3 R-3) is another space filler.

Thus, the offense consists of tiers of capability: a few excellent cards and a few decent cards, some mediocre ones, and some . . . others. While no one would turn their nose up at the best cards, it's overall just above average.

Defense:
Overall below average.

3.5

Trevor Plouffe (1-6, 7 hits) does even less. Jose Lobaton is a C8 with a Th-3, but cannot hit.



The bench gets a little help from extra games among the regulars, but it's not enough to make it useful.

The traditional small ball offense – and who other than the Buntin' Skogen is a greater exponent of small ball? – has pitching and defense. Midwest has gotten the pitching right, but there are some weaknesses in the field.



Hosmer: Fielding One

2nd

Mr. Skogen will get as much as he can out of this crew, but Midwest isn't comparable to Hoboken.

The Mongrels are Fielding One at first: Hosmer is superb (1B5), pushing 1B4 Bellinger to the outfield (OF2, 32 arm). Rosario (34 arm) and Kepler (30 arm) are both OF3s; Adam Jones (32 arm) and Leury Garcia (33 arm) are both OF2s, but Garcia will get some time as an SS7 when Trea Turner (SS8) is unavailable.

They should have no trouble getting near .500, and should easily keep ahead of Knoxville and Brobdingnag. But this year is about having gathered Players He Likes, such as Bumgarner, Jones, Kepler and, of course, Bellinger. The cupboard is bare, though, with their draft starting in Round 7. They need their regulars to meet or exceed 2017, or it may push the team back into rebuild land.

At third base Danny Valencia (3B3) is a problem, with a little help from Romine or Tejada as 3B4 replacements. Second base – Romine again – and Odor are both 2B7s; Rivera and Smith are both C7s, with one good arm (Rivera Th+3) and one poor one (Smith Th-4). They are overall below average, and could really use a defensive guy. Maybe a 2019-useful card will be moved for such a player if the Dawgs are in the race.

Bench:
Guys. Definitely Guys.

2.0

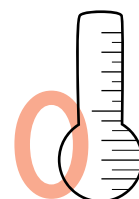
midwest:
The New Normal



He's 24, but *Roughned Odor* has started to show evidence of the New Normal with this card (1-5-5, 8 hits, 2 walks+22, 7 13s, L-11 R+2). He has some power – 30 HR is nothing to sneeze at – and some speed too; but there's some concern that the major league off speed stuff is a real problem. If this keeps up, Odor may play himself right out of the major leagues by the time he is 26.

Jordan came up with a term a few years ago to indicate a player who was interchangeable with a number of others: "Guy with 'Guy' on the back of his jersey." What's on the bench is a bunch of Guys. Cheslor Cuthbert (3 Os, 9 hits, 2 walks) is a Fielding 3 performer with no speed but no platoon penalty; Danny Santana (4 Os, 8 hits, 1 walk+22, 35 SSN for a few steals) has power and speed and little else; Ruben Tejada (2 Os, 8 hits) is Fielding Two in the infield; Victor Martinez (3 Os, 9 hits) does nothing special;

TQ: 23.5



midwest MONGRELS

2017 Knoxville OUTLAWS in review



It was a long season in Knoxville.

2017 in Review Final Record: 58-104 (3rd, Ruth)

It was a long season in Knoxville, as expected and as predicted. There was a race to the bottom in the Ruth between Pat Martin's and Darrell Skogen's clubs, and some part of the four game difference might be attributed to the 6-1 record of Shawn Kelley; but that seems like a misuse of statistics to which we at the *Annual* would never be prone.

Instead, looking at the final tallies, it's pretty clear that the Knoxville lineup performed pretty well overall, and the pitching dragged them down – while the Mongrels were poor on both sides of the ball. That's all right: it might have been more fun that way. 2018 will still be a slog, but things seem to be moving in the right direction.

What went right?

Justin Turner was still the best news on offense. He turned in a stellar year (.317-20-67 in only 103 games) before a trade. Before leaving for Brobdingnag in the trading period, Sean Rodriguez (.286-33-73) was having the best year of his life. Robbie Grossman hit 26 homers (in 98 games), as did rookie Tommy Joseph (in only 95).

Kelley's 6-1 mark came with 22 saves and a 1.34 ERA. The bullpen overall won 15 of Knoxville's 58 games. Kyle Gibson won 13 as a starter.

What went wrong?

Knoxville's pitching was overall the worst in TBL, giving up 985 runs and 508 walks, to the tune of a 5.67 ERA. The starters were no help. Gibson won 13, but recorded a 6.38 ERA; Gerrit

Cole was 4-12, 6.42; Michael Fiers 5-13, 6.58. Mike Foltyniewicz, that bane of scorekeepers everywhere, went 5-12, 5.29, the "best" of the rotation.

There were some subpar performances on offense, though few to equal the pitching staff. Andrew McCutchen (.180-15-43) couldn't get out of town fast enough; Peter Bourjos (.243, 8 homers, 128 strikeouts) was no help. Byron Buxton had an acceptable BA (.250), but walked 13 times, struck out 114, and hit only 7 homers in 90 games. Jordy Mercer (.231-10-66) drove in a lot of runs, but wasn't much good otherwise; he also made 22 errors.

3 Things

1. *Know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em.* Dealing away such players as Turner, Rodriguez, Cutch, Neal Walker, Steven Pearce, and others who had once been favorite parts of the team is recognition that the future trumps the past.

2. *Losing is no fun; let's put on a show instead.* Taking Ozzie Albies was a no-brainer in the 2018 draft, but the team also added some bullpen grades and some other young players. This will be a much more fun ride, even though the club will draft in the upper half in 2019.

3. *Twins, Twins, Twins.* Miguel Sano arrived via trade last season and Byron Buxton, Kyle Gibson, Ryan Pressly and Chris Gimenez are back. Adding Jorge Polanco, Eduardo Escobar, Alan Busenitz and Mitch Garver seems a bit over the top – but root, root, root for the home team, as they say during the Stretch.



Turner: Still the best news

knoxville BLUE THUNDER



Pat Martin (32nd year)

Knoxville's speed would be far better if the cards had 10 hits instead of 9, or 11 hits instead of 10, or even 3 or 4 walks occasionally.

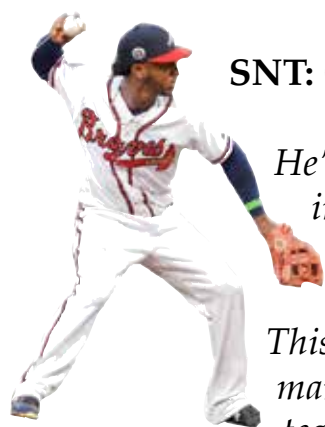
We said: "this could be a shorter than average bounce." We may have underestimated by a bit, though this year's this club is a step forward from last year's – especially the pitching staff. It's not world beating, and indeed some of it might be trade bait for the September stretch, but it's a big improvement from 2017. As for the lineup, it has a deal of the New Normal to it, but there are some young, talented players that will be here for a while to come.

Pitching: Will be better.

6.5

As noted at left, this was the most painful part of the Knoxville team last year. Some work has gone into improving it for 2018. There will be many subpar starts, but no truly awful ones, and there are some real bullpen contributors (who, as noted, may be trade bait.) Still, we like this staff, and expect it to perform reasonably well.

ROTATION. There is a part-time rookie with a higher grade, but Gerrit Cole (Grade 9 C+22 HR-14, 33 starts) is still the ace of the Knoxville staff. He's demonstrated some exceptional talent over the last few years and is now on the MLB defending champs. The better grade belongs to



SNT: Ozzie Albies.

He's too young to drink in most states, but he's already shown what he can do in the majors. This is a building block for many future Knoxville teams.

Jake Faria (Grade 14 C-35 HR+14), who only makes 14 starts.

The rest of the rotation is mediocre – but, as noted, not appalling. Patrick Corbin returns to full season usage (Grade 7 C+21) to lead the crew. Mike Fiers (Grade 7 C-22 HR-25) is a more chancy full season. Mike Foltynewicz (Grade 6), the best excuse in the card set for copy and paste, and former ace Kyle Gibson (Grade 5 C-14) round out the set.



Cole: Still the ace

BULLPEN. This is a pleasant surprise, led by 33-year-old Blake Parker (Grade 20* C+22 HR+21, 67 IP). He has some help: Cory Gearrin (Grade 19* C-41 HR+42) and rookie Alan Busenitz (Grade 19*) add 100 more closer innings.

In the setup crew, Sam Tuivailala, Foltynewicz wannabe, leads (Grade 14* C+31 HR+23); there's also lefties Brian Duensing (Grade 13* C+21 HR+24) and Andrew Chafin (Grade 11* HR+24) and righty Ryan Pressly (Grade 10* C+24 HR-15). Justin Grimm and Robert Gsellman

Turnover Rate: 54%

Arrived: Ozzie Albies, Christian Arroyo, Alan Busenitz, Matt Chapman, Brian Duensing, Eduardo Escobar, Jake Faria, Mitch Garver, Cory Gearrin, Robert Gsellman, Chris Herrmann, Matt Kemp, Manuel Margot, Trevor May, Blake Parker, Kevin Pillar, Jorge Polanco, Sam Tuivailala.

Departed: Peter Bourjos, J. T. Chargois, Michael Dunn, Jeanmar Gomez, Robbie Grossman, Shawn Kelley, Jeff Mathis, Jordy Mercer, Zach McAllister, Derek Norris, Steven Pearce, Dalton Pompey, Tyler Skaggs, Luis Valbuena, Neil Walker, Blake Wood.



knoxville BLUE THUNDER

(what is this? Minnesota spelling bee?) mop up the remaining innings.

Both the rotation and the bullpen are a big step up. They'll keep Knoxville in more games this year.

Offense: 6.5
You can't steal first.

The Knoxville offense has some punch, led by the very good power of Justin Bour (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-6, who has two thirds of a season. His tag-team partner is power hitting strikeout machine Miguel Sano (1-1-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L+5 R-3). Rookie Matt Chapman (1-5-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, 84 games) provides additional power. Those are the most dangerous cards in the lineup.

There are some decent offensive supporters. Prize rookie Ozzie Albies (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, (SBA with a 35 SSN) has about a third of a season; there's a full one for last year's big rookie Jose Peraza (2 0s, 10 hits, 31 SBA with 29 SSN). Manny Margot, also acquired in the draft, has some speed (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 24 SBA with 28 SSN). Brian Buxton (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 30 SBA with 35 SSN) can also burn up the base paths. This speed is a big part of the offense, and if it can be put into play. You can't steal first, but you can sure steal second with this crew.



Bour: Good power

The other components of the lineup are more pedestrian. Tommy Joseph (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) is down power from last year; Matt Kemp (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 6 24s) is a pale echo of former greatness; Eduardo Escobar (1-4-5,



Parker: Rookie closer

9 hits, 2 walks+22) has quirky power; Jorge Polanco (0-0-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 2 10s, 18 SBA with 28 SSN) is a light bat, as does Kevin Pillar (0-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, 21 SBA with

a 28 SSN); and catchers Chris Hermann, Chris Gimenez, and Jett "Chris" Bandy each have seven hits. They will not be making much contribution.

There are some high points in the lineup, and some choices – where games are missing, there are players to replace them. But overall while there's good speed and some amount of power, there are many, many strikeouts and the OBP is overall subpar. It means some good days and bad days – sometimes they'll simply have no traction in scoring runs, some days they'll be annoying as hell.

Defense: 4.0
Speed helps.

The speedy outfielders contribute to some exceptional fielding in places. Byron Buxton, Manny Margot, and Kevin Pillar are all OF3s and will cover most of the games out there. Matt Kemp (OF1) should not have to carry a glove most days. Jose Peraza (2B8) and Ozzie Albies (2B8) cover sec-



Margot: Speedy

ond base, and Justin Bour (1B4) are the Fielding One news in the infield, which is otherwise solidly Fielding Two (SS8s in Peraza, Polanco and Escobar; 3B4s in Sano, Escobar and bench man Christian Arroyo). All of the catchers are C7s, with negative arms other than Gimenez (Th+2). Chapman is a 3B5 when he's on the roster.

There are no really deficient defensive positions, but other than the outfield and second base there isn't anything outstanding. Still, speed helps, and there is some hope of improvement.

**Bench:
Not so much.**

2.0

The opportunity to mix and match in the lineup gives a few bench options, and some of that has to do with limited-usage players who will come up to the team over the course of the season. Albies (2B8) and Chapman (3B5) will probably be regulars when they are on the roster.

Eduardo Escobar is versatile enough to play in a couple of places, and Jose Peraza can slide to shortstop when Albies is at second. The catchers are all awful, but that gives many opportunities for pinch hitting and pinch running.

There's also a fourth catcher for some reason – oh, wait, he's a Minnesota Twin: that explains it; he has seven hits, but one of them is a first-column 2, not something you see on a catcher's card too often.

But the most interesting, though presently not very useful, bench card belongs to Christian Arroyo, who just turned 23. He may be the best sleeper prospect pick of the 2018 draft.



Arroyo: Sleeper

3rd

The intentional crash of the Brobdingnag club gives yet another chance for Knoxville to not finish last; but truly, the amount of speed and pitching on the roster means that it won't be a struggle of clowns like in 2017 – Knoxville should score a win total in the 70s, while Brob seems determined to be at or close to the top pick in 2019.

What to say about this club? We are fairly confident that power trumps speed, at least in TBL; small ball teams work if they get lots of guys on base and move them around, but if the OBP is low then that defuses the effort. By comparison big offense teams will either have buckets of runs or nothing at all. Knoxville's speed would be far better if the cards had 10 hits instead of 9, or 11 hits instead of 10, or even 3 or 4 walks occasionally.

As Mr. Martin says, this is the beginning of "the slow process of returning to contender status." It's hard to say when that process will be complete. There are lots of choices on the club, but the best choice is free swinger *Miguel Sano* (1-1-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22,

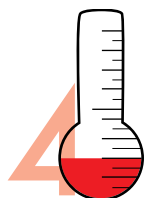
10 13s). There are more walks than the usual New Normal guy, but some of that surely is pitching around his big power bat. This is never going to be a high average player. The question is if there will be enough fastballs for him to turn on in future.

**knoxville:
The New Normal**

TQ: 17.5



KNOXVILLE BLUE THUNDER



2017 brobdingnag BARBARIANS in review



Sometimes plans work, and sometimes they don't. This plan did.

by Joe Auletta

2017 in Review

Final Record: 114-48 (1st, Ruth)

During the winter of 2017 the team was evaluated and the "Plan" was put together. Almost all of the 2017 draft was used for immediate help and even some of the 2018 draft was uncharacteristically dipped into—the result was a clean-up hitter (Ortiz), a catcher (Leon) and a bullpen. Sometimes plans work, and sometimes they don't. This plan, fortunately for Brobdingnag, did and the result was Brob's 6th championship. But now the piper must be paid — two starting fielders and four starting pitchers need to be replaced and many others ate too many rubber chickens over the winter.

What went right?

The hired guns delivered. Ortiz had a big year hitting .302 with 92 EBH and 163 RBI. Sandy Leon hit .380 and was crucial in containing the running game of Whitman and Cayman in the playoffs. Sean Rodriguez did little in the regular season after coming over from Knoxville in October, but he shined in the World Series, hitting .370 with 5 HR and being named its MVP.

The relief staff was strong all season. The 9 relievers won 42 games, saved 54, and had a combined 2.29 ERA, and the team ERA was second best in the league. Eight relievers recorded saves, led by Seung-hwan Oh's 34. Very few games were lost after the 6th inning.

Jackie Bradley came up with a huge 2-run homer to beat Clayton Kershaw in the conference finals; without that win there is no trip to the World

Series. Whitman was the worst matchup for the Barbarians because they started 5 lefties, and losing both starts to Kershaw would likely have been too big a hole to overcome.

What went wrong?

When you win the title, there couldn't have been too much that went very wrong though the fielding wasn't great — not so much the errors, but the many missed DPs. The middle infield of Correa and a trio of 2B-7s gave up a significant number of runs.

3 Things

1. *The hired guns moved on.* 12 players turn over most notably Ortiz, Ventura, Rodriguez. How quickly will the newcomers, mostly rookies and salvage projects, become productive? Based upon spring training it is unlikely to be this season.
2. *Revamping the rotation.* Only one of last season's 5 starters is expected to produce well this year. The draft provided one high risk/high upside rookie in Tyler Glasnow, and the 2019 draft might add another, but that is still two short. Where will the others come from long term?
3. *Hoping the 2019 draft class is better/deeper than the 2018 one.* The 2018 roster has a lot of band-aids, and the "plan" counts on a big 2019 draft check book to recover. If it is a repeat of the recent draft, the down cycle could be significantly longer in Brobdingnag.



Ortiz: Big year

brobdingnag BARBARIANS



Joe Auletta (30th year)

This could be a club for the ages in 2019, but this year is going to be a real struggle.

Joe Auletta drafted, traded, maneuvered and intimidated his way to his sixth TBL World Series championship in 2017. He scored 952 runs and allowed only 592. They had four players score over 100 runs. Mookie Betts scored 135. Mike Trout scored an incredible 141. In the playoffs, Brobdingnag won three seventh games over Maracaibo, Whitman, and Grand Cayman.

For the Barbarians, it was a great year on the tabletop, and a disaster on green fields of Major League baseball. Mike Trout got injured. Manny Machado went through an inexplicable early season slump. Mookie Betts suffered the Sophomore Year with no Papi Blues. David Ortiz did not un-retire. Jose Fernandez and Yordano Ventura (Dead Men Winning) did not come back to life.

It was a short and sweet run. In 2018, Joe will watch his three 2019 #1s turn into stars. In the meantime, there's a season to play. And therein lies a few issues.

Pitching: 3.5
Holy Rick Wrona, Batman!

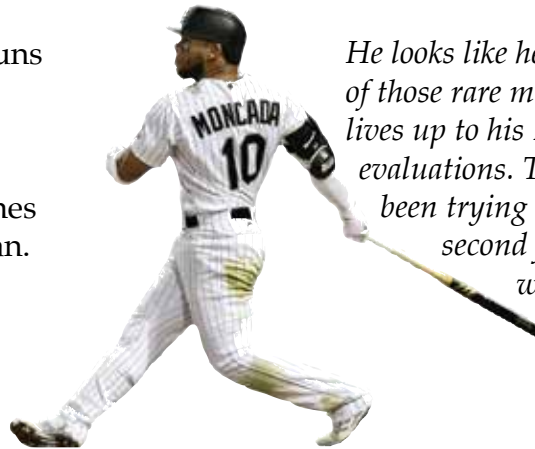
ROTATION. Stephen Strasburg (Grade 16 C+22 HR+33, 28 starts) went nowhere this offseason, and will be a cornerstone of the next great



Strasburg: Soul Crusher

Brobdingnag team, once that team shows up to play. Strasburg turns 30 this year, and he turned in his best season just in time to be the lone survivor in the rotation.

SNT: Yoan Moncada.



He looks like he's going to be one of those rare minor leaguers who lives up to his Baseball America evaluations. The Barbarians have been trying to fill a sinkhole at second for years, and he will thrive there.

Turnover

Rate: 37%

Arrived: Allen Cordoba, Derek Fisher, Tyler Glasnow, Austin Hays, Jonathan Holder, Phil Hughes, Ian Krol, Devin Mesoraco, Keynan Middleton, Yoan Moncada, Frankie Montas, Brandon Nimmo, Jonathan Villar.

Departed: Nick Ahmed, Oswaldo Arcia, Ryan Buchter, Stephen Drew, Jose Fernandez, Ryan Goins, Dee Gordon,

After Joe wins all 28 of 'The Soul Crusher's' starts, he will try to find a way to win another 28 games with guys like Aaron Sanchez (Grade 8 C-52 HR-11, 8 starts), Michael Pineda (Grade 7 C+31 HR+26, 17 starts) and Daniel Norris (Grade 4 C-16 HR+22, 18 starts). That gives Brobdingnag 71 starts of pitchers who are not Grade 1.

Yes, dear Reader, you read that correctly. The last 91 starts come from Homer Bailey (Grade 1 C-23 HR+16, 27 starts), Phil Hughes (Grade 1 C+33 HR-26, 23 starts), Chris Tillman (Grade 1 C-45 HR-34, 28 starts), and Tyler Glasnow (Grade 1 C-62 HR-23, 13 starts). Holy Rick Wrona, Batman! This show will be rated M for Mature.

BULLPEN. There's not a thing wrong with having Craig Kimbrel (Grade 28* C+25



broddingnag BARBARIANS



Kimbrrel: Nothing wrong

HR+25, 69 IP) as your closer, unless you lack for closing opportunities – which could actually happen here. Kimbrrel will get competent help from Will Harris (Grade 14* C+36 HR-14, 45 IP), Alex Claudio (Grade 13* C+42 HR+41, 83 IP), and Roberto Osuna (Grade 13* C+42 HR+45, 64 IP). The total of 261 innings of Grade 13* and above will be quite adequate this season.

Cam Bedrosian (Grade 10* C-13 HR+22, 45 IP) and Kenyan Middleton (Grade 9* C+16 HR-23, 58 IP) steal hits without help for 103 innings. Then comes the four-headed Mop Monster - Jonathan Holder (Grade 6* C+35 HR+15, 39 IP), last year's closer Seung-Hwan Oh (Grade 6* C+32 HR-16, 59 IP), Frankie Montas (Grade 2* C-62 HR-51, 32 IP), and Ian Krol (Grade 7* C-25 HR-14, 49 IP).

With Kimbrrel at the back of the pen, they will win the games they lead late, but that situation may be rare, given the rest of the personnel here.

Offense: 6.0
Will need Vlad bobbleheads.

Mike Trout (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 6 walks, 18 speed, E32 for 25 attempts, 114 games) is an amazing player. Unfortunately, even the greatest players get injured – Babe Ruth once got a bellyache after eating too many hot dogs. (Apparently, overeating and a bad case



Trout: Amazing

of VD are a nasty combination.) Trout will sit out April and May. Carlos Correa (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks, 109 games), similar to teammate Trout, has a killer card but misses almost three months.

The rest of the lineup is much less intimidating, but there's plenty of power here. Manny Machado (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Mookie Betts (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 34 SSN for 31 attempts) and both special players just entering their primes. Hanley Ramirez (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Chris Davis (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks) will play Home Run Derby all season.

Then there are the guys that are here because somebody has to play. Jackie Bradley, Jr. (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 17 speed) and Derek Fisher (1-6, 7 hits, 4 walks+42, 17 speed) add speed and some pop to the lineup. Rookie phenom Yoan Moncada (1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks, 54 games) and Brandon "Finding" Nimmo (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks, 69 games) will have an impact in part time work.

Sandy Leon (3 0s, 8 hits 3 walks) is done proving that anyone can have a long hot streak at the plate. Cameron Rupp (1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, 11 13s) is the 'hitting' catcher. Jonathan Villar (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 9 13s) will play all his games. Joe is hoping 23 year old Yoan Moncada is the starter at second next year.

This lineup won't score 800 runs, let alone the 950+ they scored last season. They'll have to give out a lot of Vlad bobbleheads to keep the turnstiles spinning in Broddingnag.

Defense: 4.0
Still good.

Despite Joe's self-deprecating evaluation of his defense in his emergency instructions, this is still a good defensive team. The outfield is outstanding – Mike

Trout (OF3, 33 arm), Mookie Betts (OF3, 34 arm) and Jackie Bradley, Jr. (OF3, 34 arm) are as good as it gets out there. Sandy Leon (C8, Th+4) is an exceptional receiver. Manny Machado (3B5) is in a duel with Nolan Arenado for the title of the best third baseman in baseball. Chris Davis (1B4) is very solid at first.



Machado: One of the best

There are average fielders elsewhere. Carlos Correa (SS8) and Jonathan Villar (2B7) are the regular double play tandem. Yoan Moncada (2B7) will serve for now.

This defense will not save Brobdingnag from the bludgeoning they'll take because of the starting pitching, but it won't extend a lot of innings, either.

Bench: 2.0
Not really here.

There is no bench. Devin Mesoraco (1-0-0, 7 hits) and Austin Hays (5-6, 8 hits 1 walk, 8 13s, 3 24s) may not get any playing time unless Joe loses a card in the wash or something. Allen Cordoba is here because he's 22.

4th The starting pitching is an absolute car crash, and the hitting, though stacked with terrific names, is game limited and a bit thin. With better health and a few breaks on the pitching side, this could be a club for the ages in 2019, but this year is going to be a real struggle.

All of this comes as no surprise. Two of the five starters were not coming back in 2018 – or ever: their tragic deaths prefigured some of the current freefall. But, obviously, there are other factors: Ortiz was acquired for his final season, Sanchez quickly checked out for the year very early, Trout lost a quarter of his season, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Auletta knew more than six months before the draft that this was going to be this kind of year. The good news is that he relishes this; the mild surprise is that he held tight to Strasburg, to Kimbrel, to some

other guys. We are not surprised he held tight to Trout (thirty years ago it was Eric Davis, after all), or Betts or Manny Machado or Carlos Correa. In a way this is a less ruthless, perhaps more sentimental, Prince of Darkness. At the *Annual*, this makes him a little harder to predict. Who knows - that might be a good thing.

brobdingnag:
The New Normal



At his best, he's a devastating power hitter you'd never want to face. But *Chris Davis* more and more represents the New Normal (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks, 11 13s). Some of the walks can be viewed as pitchers unwilling to get beat by someone who's hitting .215; he seems to swing at everything. The year he hit 53 homers he struck out 199 times in MLB. The year he hit 47, he struck out 208 times. The next year the average dipped to .221 and he struck out 219 times. Last year it was 195. (In TBL the numbers were similar or worse.) There's a point that he simply fades from view.

TQ: 15.5



brobdingnag BARBARIANS



Brobdingnag vs. Grand Cayman

The 2017 World Series pitted the preseason favorites from each Conference against each other, but they arrived via different paths. But both were in the top five in runs scored and in fewest runs allowed.

The Grand Cayman Havens won the Williams Division by a modest 6 games over Northboro and 8 over Zion, but when the playoffs started they were not taken to the brink by either Detroit or by Las Vegas. Cayman won both series 4 games to 2. They were well rested and were able to set their rotation to have ace Justin Verlander pitch up to three starts.

Meanwhile the Brobdingnag Barbarians coasted to a 38 game lead in the Ruth but were severely tested by both Maracaibo and then Whitman as they had to come from down 3 games to 2 in each of those series.

Game 1 at Grand Cayman Strasburg vs. Verlander

After a quiet first inning the offensive pressure was relentless in innings 2, 3, and 4, though the pitching turned aside several threats by each side. Cayman scored first with a bases loaded RBI single by Maybin, and later a 2-run homer by Toles made it 3-0. Two dropped tags at home by Gattis let Brob cut the Cayman lead to 3-2. Both starters settled down in the 5th through 7th and gave up no hits, but walks and errors still produced scoring chances—but no scores. By the 8th both starters were gone. In the home half a Correa double and Trout single tied it, and it stayed that way through the 10th and into the 11th. Both teams were mounting up the Ks until with two out and no one on in the bottom of the 11th, back to back doubles by Rupp and Betts gave the Barbarians their only lead and the win, 4-3.



Betts

Brobdingnag 4, Grand Cayman 3
WP: Kimbrel LP: Cingrani

Game 2 at Grand Cayman Sanchez vs. Lester

The Havens started the game with a bit of a hangover from losing game one the way they did. Neither the pitching nor the hitting was sharp as CAY threatened but couldn't get the clutch hits, and Brob was building their lead with single runs in the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th. After another fruitless Havens threat, the score was 3-0 Brob after six. The visitors struck quickly in the 7th: pinch hit double by Jankowski, walk, and a two run double by Maybin – down to a one run game. In the top of the 8th the barrage continued: leadoff double by Aoki, Encarnacion HR off Oh to go up 4-3, and Evin Gattis added an insurance homer for a 5-3 Cayman lead. The vaunted Brob relief staff was in shock. Dan Otero cruised through the 8th and 9th to save it.



Encarnacion

Grand Cayman 5, Brobdingnag 3
WP: Neris LP: Oh SV: Otero

Game 3 at Brobdingnag vis vs. home

Both sides used their legs to score once in the first four innings. Three Barbarian hits and a walk produced a run in the 3rd and left the bases loaded. After earlier aborted rallies, the Havens scored on a Polanco RBI triple before he was gunned down on an attempted steal of home. A single and three walks forced in the go-ahead run for Brob in the 5th and added one more in each of the 6th and 7th. The Brob lead was 4-1 and Fernandez was going strong. He went into the 9th before an Encarnacion homer chased him and cut the lead to two. Closer Oh got the last two outs without and further damage.



Fernandez

Brobdingnag 4, Grand Cayman 2
WP: Fernandez LP: Teheran SV: Oh

Game 4 at Brobdingnag Verlander vs. Tillman

Verlander was going on only three days rest, and never looked quite as sharp. He worked out of a few jams, but solo homers by Rodriguez in both the 2nd and the 4th had him down 2-1. A Kyle Seager homer had accounted for the Havens' run. Tillman was outpitching Verlander through three and a half. In the home 5th, hired gun Brian Dozier cracked a two-run shot off Tillman and the Havens finally took the lead 3-2, and a Barbarian error helped Cayman push across an insurance run in the 7th, and then two Cayman hits with yet one more Brob error made it 5-2. A bases loaded Mookie Betts double in the 9th drove in two and put the tying run on 3rd, lead run on second, but Otero struck out two of the next three hitters for his second save and a 5-4 Cayman win.



Dozier

Grand Cayman 5, Brobdingnag 4
WP: Verlander LP: Tillman SV: Otero

Game 5 at Brobdingnag Rea vs. Strasburg

Compared to the other starters in the series, Rea had pitched sparingly during the year, and not as well. But today that didn't matter. He did his part keeping the game scoreless through four when he left for the pen. Maybe he should have stayed in. The relief staff got into immediate trouble with wildness, capped by a Trout grand slam for a 4-0 lead. But the Barbarian relievers were just as flammable. Bedrosian entered and did his best Buddhist monk bent on self-immolation impersonation as he gave back



Maybin

3 runs immediately. After another Rodriguez homer made it 5-3, single Haven runs in the 7th and 8th tied it. Threats in the 9th, but no score. Brob scored in the top of the 10th on a Betts sac fly, but Maybin did him one better with a bases loaded double in the bottom of the 10th to win it, 7-6, and give Cayman a 3 games to 2 lead. The fourth game out of five where the team that scored first, lost.

Grand Cayman 7, Brobdingnag 6
WP: Cingrani LP: Norris

Game 6 at Grand Cayman Sanchez vs. Lester

A Cabrera single and Seager double had Cayman threatening in the first with one out, but could not get the run scoring hit – a missed opportunity that would cost dearly. Brobdingnag scored a single run in the 5th, and, capped by a Hanley Ramirez homer, added three in the 6th. Facing a 4-0 hole, today there was no comeback as the Havens managed only two hits after the first inning. Brobdingnag tied the series at three games each, and the 2017 season came down to a single game seven.



Ramirez

Brobdingnag 4, Grand Cayman 0
WP: Sanchez LP: Lester

Game 7 at Grand Cayman Fernandez vs. Verlander

The best pitcher each side had, and for once the results matched that as there were few scoring opportunities for either side. Cayman threatened in the 4th but Dozier was thrown out at home trying to score from first on an Encarnacion double. In the home forth, Trout walked, Ortiz doubled, and Rodriguez—bane of Grand Cayman—hit his 5th homer of the series, a three run shot. That was the third — and last — hit the Barbarians got. But Fernandez and Oh allowed only one more hit themselves, and Dozier in the 4th was the last Haven to reach as far as second base. Brob won their third seven game series of the playoffs, and the 2017 season became history.



Rodriguez

Brobdingnag 3, Grand Cayman 0
WP: Fernandez LP: Verlander SV: Oh

Series MVP: **Sean Rodriguez**

The versatile utilityman went 10 for 27 with five home runs, a double and 8 RBI.

All In

The Aaron Division is the qualitatively best division in TBL this year, and not for its pennant race: it has the two top teams in the league, who will be Duking It Out all summer for our entertainment.



The first, and very likely pennant-winning, club is the *Strong City Statesmen*. **Eric Sheffler** has amassed a huge pile of pitching, a very strong offense with bench players who would likely start

on any other team, and has gone all in to do it. It won't be the first time a nearly 100 loss team has jumped to the top of the pile, and it won't be the first time that all of two drafts was spent to accomplish the feat. This is not a very old team, but it's also not an early stage Brobdingnagian young dynasty; so what you see here is what you'll get this year and next.

The second team, just as worthy of praise, is the *Kansas Koyotes*. **Bill Schwartz'** club has the best starting pitcher in the set, and an impressive rotation; the bullpen is lighter and the offense, while much improved, isn't as solid as the team above. But they will certainly be a contender well into the postseason.



As for *Melrose*: they find themselves at the bottom looking up. **Mark Freedman's Avengers** have great big piles of power, but have basically three positions that scarcely hit at all. The pitching staff consists of four guys and about fifteen Guys, so a lot of 9-6 games will be won or lost all this summer. It probably doesn't get them to .500.

2017 Aaron Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Las Vegas*	95	67	.586	—
Kansas	80	82	.494	15
Strong City	63	99	.389	32
Melrose	57	105	.352	38

* Lost to Grand Cayman in NC Conference final.

Last year's division winner, the *Las Vegas Gamblers*, are in a tough position. We view this as one more replay of the classic TBL dilemma – try to hang together, or take it apart and start again? **Paul Harrington** has done both during his two decades in the TBL. One thing is for sure: there's some talent on the roster, and they should not be either underestimated or overlooked. How far that takes them is presently unclear. (Our magic 8-ball is out for dry cleaning.)



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- 
1. Strong City 38.5
 2. Kansas 33.0
 3. Las Vegas 23.0
 4. Melrose 22.5

Aaron Division

Nolan Arenado,
Strong City

2017 strong city STATESMEN in review



In which Sheffler totally ignores our format.

by Eric Sheffler

2017 in Review

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

Change. It had to occur. After two seasons of 63 wins and 99 losses Owner Eric Sheffler had seen enough. Oddly enough, it wasn't the team leadership that he changes as is usually the case. It was the players.

The 2017 season saw the addition of one of the top 3B playing today, Nolan Arenado. He did not disappoint in his inaugural campaign with the club. Arenado led the club in multiple categories: GP (162), AB (628), R (78), H (156), RBI (111), HR (38), BB (62), Total Bases (306), Slugging % (.487), OPS (.803), and oddly enough, Errors (13). All except R, BB, and OPS were season records for the Statesmen. He tied Khris Davis for the Statesmen club record of 8 HRs in a month in the opening month of 2017.



Arenado: Led club

There were other players on the team who did achieve throughout the year. For example, Billy Hamilton set the Statesmen record for successful SB in a year at 60. Pitching was basically ugly to watch at any point in 2017 but a few did occasionally shine. Adam Wainwright threw a no-hitter at Kansas in April but came undone as the year progressed. Brandon Finnegan had three CG in May with two of them being SHO. Danny Salazar spun two SHO himself in November. Salazar also set a monthly record of strikeouts by fanning 46 in June. Almost everyone else on the team underperformed. It was just not a good season.

Owner Eric Sheffler and GM Carlton Fisk had multiple closed-door meetings as the season was ending. Many thought Manager Rich Dauer and his staff were out at years end. Think again. The team announced nine trades in one day as

soon as the season was over and trading season opened. Four more trades soon followed. Then on draft day, two more. Gone were underachievers like Gio Gonzalez and Adam Wainwright. Young players and pitchers with bright futures were moved as well. Willson Contreras, Luke Weaver, Joey Gallo, Kyle Schwarber, and Brandon Drury were traded away. Even some players received in the trades like Chris Archer, Ricky Nolasco, Jacob Barnes, and Marco Estrada never even put on a Statesmen uniform. All the trades left the club without any draft picks this year or next. That is a concern but the hope (and prayer) is that the players they do have on the 2018 roster remain healthy so that the club can play with little resources coming to the team in 2019.

So, who joined the club? Daniel Murphy has returned to hit and play 2B. Nelson Cruz and Yasmani Grandal were also added to go with returning players Arenado, Zack Cozart, Khris Davis, Adam Lind, Joe Mauer, David Peralta, and Justin Upton. Many runs should be scored this upcoming season. The leadership wanted to improve the pitching staff with reliable veterans who can use their experiences in the regular and post seasons to guide the younger pitchers. Veteran pitchers arriving this season are Justin Verlander, Andrew Cashner, Steve Cishek, Ryan Madson, Andrew Miller, and Trevor Rosenthal. Also, Chase Anderson and Zack Godley will join a completely revamped starting rotation.

It has cost an immense amount of future to bring in (buy?) a team that can win in 2018. No one can dispute that. The preeminent desire that Sheffler and Fisk have is to play in the 2018 postseason. 2019 will take care of itself next offseason. Will their desire be quenched? Let's enjoy the season and watch to see the answer unfold.

strong city STATESMEN

Eric Sheffler (15th year)

A tough combination to beat.



The offseason for the Strong City Statesmen – a 63-win team in 2017 – began with a demonstration of Eric Sheffler’s earnest in trying to go all the way. On the day that trading opened, the Statesmen announced *nine* trades. Not two or three: nine. It’s almost like there was a master plan in place, concocted over those long summer nights in Kansas.

Almost all of the 2018 draft, and all of the 2019 draft including the ninth round (it belongs to Warrenton) has gone to build this monster team. It has the best pitching in TBL, and the strongest offense. The second best team is in the same division, and there should be a great pennant race – but Mr. Sheffler has done everything he needs to do to get the team to the postseason. Now it’s time to roll the dice.

Pitching: **17.0** Best in the league.

“Ownership considers every game to be winnable.” He means it, and the pitching staff has been built to keep the club in every game. They won’t go 162-0, of course, but 100 wins seems like a very modest goal. Most starts are Grade 12 and above; nearly every relief inning is Grade 13* and above. This is the best staff in the league.

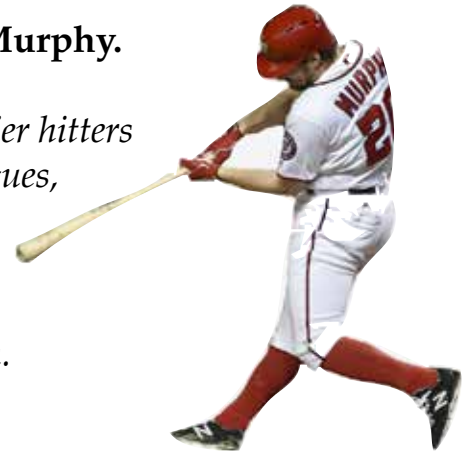
ROTATION. In the mercenary tradition of Roger Clemens, Justin Verlander (Grade 13, 33 starts) has come to this year’s top team to help anchor the rotation. He has the most starts, but not the best grade: that belongs to Chase Anderson (Grade 15 C+15 HR+22). Zack Godley (Grade 14 HR+23) also turned in a fine sea-



Verlander: Mercenary

SNT: Daniel Murphy.

One of the premier hitters in the major leagues, he’s come to Strong City to help carry them to the postseason.



Turnover Rate: **66%**

Arrived: Alexi Amarista, Chase Anderson, Chris Bassitt, Austin Bibens-Dirkx, Andrew Cashner, Steve Cishek, Nelson R. Cruz, Scott Feldman, Zack Godley, Yasmani Grandal, Dan Jennings, Ryan Madson, Jhan Marinez, Jefry Marte, Jeff Mathis, Andrew Miller, Daniel Murphy, Albert Pujols, Trevor Rosenthal, Pablo Sandoval, Justin Verlander, Matt Wisler, Jimmy Yacabonis.

Departed: Brett Cecil, Willson Contreras, Brandon Drury, Danny Farquhar, Brandon Finnegan, Joey Gallo, Gio Gonzalez, Josh Harrison, Andrew Heaney, Tom Layne, Brandon Maurer, Devin Mesoraco, Zach Putnam, Danny Salazar, Kyle Schwarber, Joe Smith, Blake Swihart, Junichi Tazawa, Arodys Vizcaino, Adam Wainwright, Luke Weaver, Rickie Weeks, Matt Wieters.

son, and these two add 50 starts. Carlos Carrasco, who might be a staff ace on many teams in the league, is the *fourth* starter here (Grade 12 C+25 HR+22, 32 starts). Soft-tossing Andrew Cashner (Grade 12 C-21 HR+32) has 28 of his own. Scott Feldman (Grade 7 C+15 HR-24) fills up the back of the rotation, perhaps just to make it sporting.

BULLPEN. Because one closer grade wasn’t enough, Strong City brings out four. The best



strong city STATESMEN

grade belongs to lefty Andrew Miller (Grade 27* C-14 HR+45), who is also on the gypsy path, moving from contender to contender; he'll serve as the closer. He has lots of help. Hard throwing Carl Edwards (Grade 25* C-62 HR-24) isn't quite ready for prime time with *Those Peripherals*, but veterans Steve Cishek (Grade 22* C+12 HR+36) and Ryan Madson (Grade 20* C+44 HR+52) are much more reliable. That's 233 innings of Grade 20+ relief. It hardly seems fair; all of these guys can rescue all of the starters, our regular criterion for an effective bullpen.



Miller: Gypsy path

The rest of the relievers are pretty solid too. Anthony Swarzak (Grade 16* C+23 HR+32), Trevor Rosenthal (Grade 14* C-25 HR+41) and lefty Dan Jennings (Grade 13* C-22 HR+14) provide almost 190 more very capable

innings. Jimmy Yacobonis (Grade 11* C-62, 21 innings), Jhan Marinez (Grade 9* C-15 HR+24, 58 innings) and Feldman when not starting seem more like an afterthought.

Offense: 14.0
Earl Weaver would be proud.

There are so many excellent cards on the roster it's hard to know where to start. The most obvious choice is Nolan Arenado (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L+14 R-6). The platoon shift might be a problem some days, but no opponent will want him at bat when the game is on the line. He's bracketed by two big power hitters: Khris Davis (1-1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) and Nelson Cruz (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+42). There's also Adam Lind (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-7) and SNT Dan Murphy (1-5-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-6) and

Zack Cosart (1-4-5-5, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L+4 R-3) and Justin Upton (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 19 SBA with a 29 SSN) and Yasmani Grandal (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Joe Mauer (3 0s, 11 hits, 4 walks, 3 31s). David Peralta's solid card (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-6) seems almost mundane by comparison.

The starting lineup has a ton of power – the instructions describe it as an “Earl Weaver” offense, and that's a pretty solid description – in the words of Dr. Anton, “walk, walk, homah!” There'll be a lot of that this year. There is not a lot of speed (though there is some on the bench), but this is an offense built on doubles and homers. Strong City fans won't be tuning in to watch highlights of bunting and base stealing.



Cruz: Bracketing

Defense: 5.5
Some excellent defenders.

There is only one player rated 3B6 in the set – Nolan Arenado, the Brooks Robinson of our era. It's very much deserved. On the other side of the diamond, Joe Mauer (1B4) is a Fielding One defender; behind the plate, Grandal and Jeff Mathis are both C8s with Th+1.

The middle infield, at least the starters, are only average. Dan Murphy has been promoted to 2B7, and Zack Cosart has been demoted to SS8. Each has a caddy: Adelyny Hechevarria is an SS9, and Alexei Amarista is a 2B8.

In the outfield, Justin Upton (OF3, 35 arm) is flanked by two OF2s (Khris Davis, 31 arm and David Peralta, 32 arm). Billy Hamilton can come off the bench with an OF3 and a 34 arm. All of

this keeps Nelson Cruz from having to carry a glove to the ballpark.

Overall this is a good team in the field with some excellent defenders.

Bench: 3.0 **Here to fill in gaps.**

The starters miss a few games, and the instructions mostly account for that by substituting in mid game. Jeff Mathis (C8, Th+1) is no loss on defense, but doesn't hit much (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+22). Billy Hamilton is the big stealing threat (72 SBA with a 32 SSN and Speed 20) but has 2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, and a L-7 keeping him out of the starting lineup. Adam Lind would start in most places (1-0-0-0, 11 hits) but is just a bench guy here. The same is true of Adelnny Hechevarria (3 0s, 10 hits, SS9); he's here for defense only, and to fill in some games when Cozart can't play.

The remaining bench players don't do much. Amarista (SS8, OF2) has 3 0s and 9 hits, but is here to carry Murphy's glove; Pablo Sandoval (1-0-0, 8 hits) and Albert Pujols (1-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) are on the roster to make sure the young guys understand what happens when you get old.

1st Though Kansas is very good and will provide excellent competition all summer, this pennant almost certainly belongs to the Statesmen. The offense and the pitching are both the best in the league by TQ, and as far as the *Annual* is concerned that's a tough combination to beat.

Are there weaknesses? Yes, but not many. The regular lineup has a Fielding Two middle infield. They don't easily manufacture runs, so a run of rolls of 52 and 26 won't be something that can be fixed – but that's true of any team, any day. Can they be beaten? This is baseball, so any team can be beaten on any given day, and at least a quarter of their games will be lost in

this way: this club probably doesn't make it to the league record in wins, but 110 victories seems highly likely.

We also think it's likely they'll get near, and quite possibly to, the World Series this year. But there are a few other teams in the National Conference that will have something to say about that. What *is* true is that they've pushed all the chips into the middle, and other than moving a Lind or a Hamilton in September this is likely the team you'll see at the end of 162 games. The core is very solid, so this will be the 2019 team as well.

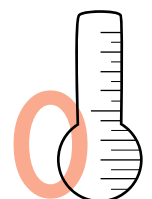
strong city: **The New Normal**



For years, APBA had three strikeout ratings: X, Y and XY. (Well, actually, there was the absence of any rating at all). But the New Normal among flame throwing pitchers, especially relievers, required a change a few years ago. For pitchers who relied on finesse, there was a new R rating, and for those who got up over 11 Ks per 9 innings, there was the new K rating.

It seemed custom-designed for *Andrew Miller*, whose slider has made him into an elite reliever. In 2017 he struck out 95 men in 63 innings, almost 15 K/9, earning him a KY rating. (Carl Edwards, 94 Ks in 66 IP last year, is a very worthy runner up for this category.)

TQ: 39.5



strong city STATESMEN



2017 kansas KOYOTES in review



They persevered.

by Bill Schwartz

2017 in Review Final Record: 80-82 (2nd, Aaron)

In 2017, the Koyotes were the definition of a .500 team. After a lackadaisical first half, falling to 10 games under .500 in August, they rallied back to .500, persevered, and played .500 ball the rest of the year, never varying more than two games over or under that mark for the last 2 ½ months, ending up at 80-82. Avoiding being swept was a key, as only at Gotham City were the Koyotes swept.

However, in September, with a playoff berth highly unlikely, the decision was made to move some chips at the trade deadline. With a likely strong starting rotation, but needing relief arms for 2018, Steven Wright, Ivan Nova and Zack Duke were sent off to contenders and potential 2018 bullpen stalwarts Adam Warren and Luis Avilan were picked up in exchange.



Scherzer: Stellar

a .276 BA with 29 SB's. Their 2B-8, SS-9 defense often proved to be a pitcher's best friend, also. George Springer's 26 HR's led the Koyotes in that category.

What really went right was the fact that in the real world, Scherzer, Luis Severino, Dallas Keuchel and Sonny Gray were putting up impressive years, pointing to a sterling rotation for 2018.

What went wrong?

In a theme that has become all too familiar in Koyote land, too many Mendoza line hitting numbers didn't make for a lot of runs crossing the plate. No fewer than 8 hitters, representing over 1700 AB's, hit under .205.

With only Scherzer's 34 and Wright's 16 starts before he was shipped off being above a Grade 8, Kansas found itself fighting from behind all too often.

What went right?

For a team that was described as "don't watch till next year" by the *Annual*, an 80-82 year might be considered as "what went right".

Max Scherzer continued his stellar career, posting a 19-10, 2.49, 7 ShO, 326 K record with a workhorse-like 14 CG's and 271 IP. The 2.49 ERA led the league and the K total ranks 9th all-time in TBL annals.

Despite lacking a true closer grade, the pen turned in a respectable 25-19, 3.26 season, led by Grade 16* Matt Bush's 32 saves and 2.31 ERA in 62 RIP. Kevin Quackenbush chimed in with 5-0, 2.57.

In the hitting department, very little "went right". Dustin Pedroia led the team in batting average at .288 and his keystone partner, Jean Segura, registered

3 Things

1. *Formidable rotation.* 125 starts are covered by full seasons of Scherzer (Grade 19), Severino (15), Keuchel (15), Gray (13) and trade acquisition Alex Meyer's 15. Will this be enough to overcome being matched up in realignment with Strong City, who, true to their name, are very strong?

2. *Bullpen Makeover.* The Koyotes added five arms to the bullpen, which now has 322 innings of Grade 13* and above, though four have W ratings.

3. *Infield defense.* Will Segura's and Pedroia's short seasons (125 and 105 games respectively) be an albatross? By not adding a defensive backup in the draft or via trade, 2B-6 and SS-7 are the only options.

kansas KOYOTES



Bill Schwartz (11th year)

We roll the dice and play the games, and pride goeth, etc.

The instructions for the Kansas Koyotes express a desire for a “deep run” in the playoffs, based on the team’s power and strong rotation. This is no forlorn hope: it is based on a very realistic evaluation of the team’s progress from a .500 club in 2017 to what is arguably the second best team in TBL in 2018.

It would have been ideal if the one team considered better was in the other conference – and it would have been helpful if that club was in another division. But *no*, no indeed: Melrose is in hibernation preparing for a bounce, and defending division champ Vegas is scuffling a little bit ... but right there, right in the way, is Strong City – a club that made nine trades on the first day of the offseason trading period and has moved everything available to build a dominant club.

But we roll the dice and play the games, and pride goeth, etc. Everyone has to go through 162 and there are five playoffs spots in each conference. The Statesmen could stumble, and even if they don’t, a team with power and pitching can get through the Wild Card and the Conference semis, and a lot can happen in a seven game series. Et cetera. Whatever the case, this will be an enjoyable and entertaining year, as the Battle of Kansas takes us into the postseason.

Pitching: 15.5 **A Big Thing.**

ROTATION. Mr. Schwartz demonstrated from the beginning (has it really been a decade since he entered our company? Apparently.) that pitching was a Big Thing for him. Most of that decade ago, he took Max Scherzer in the first round, and now he’s the best pitcher in the set (Grade 19 K C+16



Scherzer: Best grade, same pic

HR+14, 31 starts). We like him so much we use the same picture again and again. He lacks Randy Johnson’s photogenic qualities, but he has a very com-

parable fastball. He has plenty of friends: Luis Severino has 31 excellent starts (Grade 15 C+21 HR+22), and lefty Dallas Keuchel has 23 (Grade 15 HR+23). Add Sonny Gray (Grade 13 HR+16) and pre-injured rookie Alex Meyer (Grade 15 C-62 HR+32) for 40 more, and that’s 125 of 162 games with a Grade 13 or above.

Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Stephen Drew, Matt Garza, Ariel Hernandez, Jose LeClerc, Alex Meyer, Jason Motte, Jose Osuna, Jesus Sucre, Chris Taylor, Pat Valaika.

Departed: Gordon Beckham, Neftali Feliz, Jeff Francoeur, Christian Friedrich, Franklin Gutierrez, Jeremy Hazelbaker, Bryan Holaday, Leonys Martin, Kevin Quackenbush, Jordan Walden.

SNT: Chris Taylor.

A power/speed guy with a good out-field glove. He’s not extremely young, but is the perfect addition to a contending team in a tough pennant race.





kansas KOYOTES

It's our usual rule that the last 30-40 starts don't really impact the pitching rating. Some years ago the Elders of Zion, with an excellent bullpen, had a Grade 1 for a full season and did just fine, thanks. So in a way the low end is fairly inconsequential. Matt Garza (Grade 6 HR-12) and A. J. Griffin (Grade 5 HR-42) make up the rest of the starts; they're somewhat troublesome, but the superior end of the rotation should keep them in other games, allowing a quicker hook for these two.

BULLPEN. Comparison to the dominant relief staff across the state is unavoidable, but there are some good arms here too. There are three closers: Adam Warren (Grade 19* C+23 HR+35), Ken Giles (Grade 18* HR+41) and rookie Jose Leclerc (Grade 19* C-62 HR+33) have 166 innings

between them. That's a real solid start, and there



Warren, Giles, Leclerc: Three closers

should be someone to wrap up the game every time the team leads.

The next tier is a little more shaky. Jason Motte (Grade 16* C-44 HR-13) has returned to join holdover lefties Chasen Shreve (Grade 15* C-43 HR-15) and Luis Avilan (Grade 13* C-26 HR+46) are the middle relievers. Avilan is the only one that seems trustworthy. Joakim Soria (Grade 11* HR+61) might be a better bet against a powerful lineup. Liam Hendriks (Grade 11* HR+23), Joaquin Benoit (Grade 11* C-25) and Matt Bush

(Grade 8* HR+15) provide some bulk innings. There are about 380 altogether for the lower tier. Overall, this is a decent bullpen, but one more solid pitcher – especially one with excellent peripherals – might have to be acquired for the stretch run and the playoffs.

Offense: 10.0
Very solid, but will strike out.

The Kansas club had some trouble generating runs in 2017. That's behind them now, and the best evidence of that is Mike Moustakas (1-1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks), who is back for a full season. On the other side of the infield, Justin Smoak had a career year (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L+4). In the outfield, George Springer (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+22) and newcomer Chris Taylor (1-4-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) extend the lineup.



Moustakas: He's back

Kansas has also added two part-time pieces of cardboard through the draft. These guys might turn into genuine players or might be one-year wonders, but they're here now: Jose Osuna (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, L+2 R-4) and Pat Valaika (1-1-0-0-0, 10 hits, L+4 R-5). Neither is without flaws, but power numbers are power numbers. Kike Hernandez (1-4-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, L+8 R-11) returns and has similar bearded-lady tendencies, but will be very helpful against board lefties; Curtis Granderson (1-0-0-0, 7 hits, 5 walks, L-6) is the same from the other side of the plate.

The other positions have less power. The best performance belongs to the excellent Jean Segura (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 30 SBA with 29 SSN); he'll be the shortstop most days. Yasiel Puig (1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-10 R+2, 21 SBA with 28 SSN) will be good in some lineups; 2B Dustin Pedroia (2 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, L+8 R-3)

had a disappointing year due to injury. Catcher is shared by Yan Gomes (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+42) and Jesus Sucre (1-0-0-, 10 hits). They are more important in the field than in the lineup.

This is a very solid offense, though it will strike out a whole lot. That seems to be pretty much par for the course this year.

Defense: 5.0
An interesting mix.

Kansas has an interesting mix of defenders. The catching position is very strong: it's what Yan Gomes is here for (C8 Th+5); Sucre is also a C8 with a more mundane Th+1. Justin Smoak is world class at first (1B5), and Russ Springer (33 arm) and Yasiel Puig (38 arm) are both OF3s.



Gomes: What he's here for

Dustin Pedroia retains his 2B8, but due to injury and the strong pull of those two first-column 1s Pat Valaika (2B6) will be pulling down some games in the field. He may also get some reps at shortstop (SS7), though Segura (SS8) is the best defender. Mike Moustakas is a 3B4; that's also Kike Hernandez' best position. Chris Taylor (34 arm) and Curtis Granderson (30 arm) are both OF2s. The bench could really use an extra glove, if only to keep Valaika at the DH position.

Bench: 2.5
A few extra toys.

Though the lineups will have to be juggled due to some missing games, the starters do have some flexibility for platooning. In addition, there are a few extra toys on the bench.

The best one - which might be trade bait later in the season - is Mark Reynolds, who turned in a

surprisingly decent card (1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks). He could spell Smoak on occasion. Stephen Drew (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) appears ageless; he can play the three infield positions acceptably. Miguel Montero (1-6, 8 hits, 4 walks) is here merely to increase the ex-Cub count on the roster.

2nd

We believe there'll be a good pennant race in the Aaron this year, but there is some daylight between Kansas and Strong City.

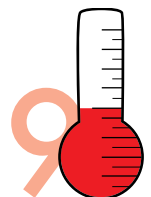
This is a team that – given the many rebuilding and retooling teams – has a decent chance of winning 100 games. They should be considered the favorite for the first Wild Card in the National Conference – and a deep playoff run seems certainly in the cards.

kansas:
The New Normal



Though *Curtis Granderson* characterized the New Normal long before all the cool kids were doing it, this year's poster child for the style is *Pat Valaika*, who turned in a solid 5 power number card that seems to be a perfect fit for a high-power offense. But check carefully before moving on: yeah, 1-1-0-0 and 10 hits. But there's only one walk and 8 13s. How many times will Mr. Schwartz get dice number 13 and see a strikeout before he gets tired of the New Normal? Wait and see.

TQ: 33.0



2017 Las Vegas GAMBLERS in review



He has no lack of heart.

2017 in Review

Final Record: 95-67 (1st, Aaron)

The Las Vegas Gamblers won their second straight Aaron Division title in 2017, taking advantage of a period of quiet contemplation in the rest of the Aaron to win the division by 15 games over Kansas. The playoffs got them a dream matchup with Northboro, who had no idea what to do against Vegas' teamload of left-handed starters. Then came Grand Cayman and the National Conference championship. Cayman was on a mission all year, and Vegas fell to them in six games.

What went right?

The offense finished seventh in TBL in runs with 820. They blasted 215 homers, led by Josh Donaldson (40), Robinson Cano (32) and Kris Bryant (32). Xander Bogaerts had 202 hits and hit 50 doubles.

On the pitching side, raise your hand if you knew that Adam Conley would be a key contributor on a Division-winning TBL team last season. Conley (15-5) tied with Jose Quintana for the team lead in wins. Zack Britton, acquired from Knoxville before the season started, turned his Grade 28* into 5 wins and 38 saves.

What went wrong?

Las Vegas built its offense around the three run home run, resulting in a deep playoff run. The finer points of the offensive game were not seen in Vegas in 2017. They stole only 20 bases all season. They were in the middle of the pack in sacrifice hits (12) and sacrifice flies (28). And they struck out almost 1,300 times. This is the 'three true outcomes' nightmare that will cost

Major League Baseball its under-40 audience. The problem is that it works – to an extent. The biggest differentiator between this club and eventual National Conference champion Grand Cayman was team speed. (Cayman was second in the league in steals with 101.)

3 Things

1. *Trading for Robinson Cano.* Riverwoolf, always in a rage to churn its roster, traded Cano to Vegas before the 2017 season, giving Paul Harrington the quality second baseman he needed to pair with Xander Bogaerts. Cano piled up 32 homers and 41 doubles, scored 112 runs and drove in 114.



Donaldson: Home run leader

2. *Trading for Zach Britton.* The Britton deal with Knoxville gave Vegas a true terminator for the late stages of their games, but also turned them into a scary playoff opponent. Britton was set up all year by the excellent Brad Hand, who pitched 73 innings and allowed only 50 hits with 7 wins and a 2.03 ERA.

3. *This trade:* DET trades 2018 DET#BonA (Luis GARCIA), 2018 DET#6 (Gorkys HERNANDEZ), 2018 DET#7 (Elias DIAZ) and 2018 DET#8 (Craig BRESLOW) to LV for 2019 LV#2 ... When Mr. Harrington tries to win, he throws all caution to the winds. Live for today and all that. This deal shows that, despite a significantly diminished pitching staff, and a division that includes the best two teams in TBL, Paul is *still* trying to go for a wild card berth. As Paul's cardiac surgeon will attest, he has no lack of heart.

Las Vegas GAMBLERS



Paul Harrington (22nd year)

Mr. Harrington is no stranger to the rebuild. . . [but] the team on the table for Las Vegas is neither fish nor fowl.

The window opened, and then it closed, and the 95-win division champion is, as they say, one with Nineveh and Tyre. Yet much of that club remains. The departures are the folks you'd expect; the arrivals are a combination of players fixing a need, maybe prospects, and place holders. Las Vegas is light in the 2019 draft, and most of its key players are hovering around age 30 (or older) with a few key exceptions. Though there's some pitching and some very good offensive cards, this is every bit a team in transition.

Pitching: 7.5 **Only hints at contending.**

The pitching staff is diminished from last year. The rotation is heavily left-handed, and its key parts are aging, but it does provide three quarters of a season of competent starts. The bullpen is much the same; there is a very capable closer, but there aren't enough innings and the key parts are growing old.

ROTATION. The ageless C. C. Sabathia (Grade 11, 27 starts) has taken on the role of staff ace. Hyun-Jin Ryu (Grade 10 HR-21) and the best



SNT: Hyun-Jin Ryu.

Though not a young pitcher, he fills an important need for the club: 24 solid starts added to the starting rotation.

Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Elias Diaz, Oliver Drake, Luis Garcia, Deolis Guerra, Gorkys Hernandez, Deven Marrero, Tim Mayza, Dustin McGowan, Dovydas Neverauskas, Ryan Rua, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Craig Stammen, Jose Torres, Zack Wheeler

Departed: Michael Blazek, Zach Britton, Tyler Cravy, Sam Dyson, Blaine Hardy, Marco Hernandez, James Loney, Tommy Milone, Shawn O'Malley, Josh Phegley, Francisco J. Rodriguez, Carlos Ruiz, Ross Stripling, Mark Teixeira.

younger pitcher on the staff, Jose Quintana (Grade 10 C+14 HR+14) provide 56 more good left-handed starts. The fourth member of the capable quartet, R. A. Dickey, has a full season as a Grade 9.



Quintana: Best younger

After that things get more chancy. Zack Wheeler is back after a year of injury, and has a half season of starts (Grade 6 C-31 HR-15). The remaining starts belong to Martin Perez, who is a placeholder (Grade 4 HR+16).

He is, however, the youngest pitcher in the rotation and among the youngest one on the roster.

BULLPEN. As noted, there's a good closer on the roster. Lefty Brad Hand (Grade 18* C+23, 79 innings) is the man; he'd be much more effective if he had some better setup guys to get to him. There are roughly 150 innings to fill the late innings, spread between Craig



Las Vegas GAMBLERS

Stammen (Grade 14* HR-14) and Luis Garcia (Grade 14* HR+46). That about does it for relievers of Grade 13* and above.

Deolis Guerra (Grade 12* C-44), Koji Uehara (Grade 12* C+31 HR-16), Jeurys Familia (Grade 11* C-41 HR+52), Dovydas Neverauskas (the best Dovydas in baseball; Grade 10* HR-15) and lefty Jose Torres (Grade 10* C+25 HR-25) comprise just under 200 innings, and will be available a few at a time. Dustin McGowan (Grade 8* C+16 HR-16), Josh Smith (Grade 7* C-23 HR+33 and Oliver Drake (Grade 6* C-21 HR+23) add another 180, and are only better than the lesser starters.

Overall, the pitching staff gives the hint of a contending one, but the numbers don't add up.

Offense: 9.0
A talented core.

Any discussion of the Las Vegas offense, now and likely for several years in the future, has to start with Kris Bryant (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 5 walks+42), the team's best young star. He can play first, third and the outfield. For now, at least, his best pal is the big power hitter Josh Donaldson (1-1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22). He only has 113 games. Travis Shaw (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 10 SBA with 35 SSN) can play either infield corner. In the middle of the infield things have declined since last year, though the names are the same: Xander Bogaerts (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22) and Robinson Cano (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2



Bryant: Young star; Donaldson: Big power



walks+22, L-12 R+3) will be the everyday shortstop and second baseman respectively. Behind the plate Caleb Joseph (1-6-6, 10 hits) has a decent hitting card; Francisco Cervelli (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks+42) not as much.

There are some good bats in the outfield. In addition to Bryant on occasion, Austin Jackson (4 0s, 11 hits, 4 walks, L+5 R-7) has a good part time card, Adam Duvall (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+5 R-3) was pretty solid as a sophomore, and Corey Dickerson (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks) is a solid everyday player. Juan Lagares (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) will pick up the slack in CF, though the days Jackson plays will be much more pleasant.

This is a good offense, particularly in the middle of the lineup, with solid power, but it leaves something to be desired in on base percentage. Still, it's behind the first two teams in the division.

Defense: 4.5
Took some hits.

Last year's team flashed some solid leather, but while there are still some good fielders here there are some declines and some outright deficiencies. The Fielding One performers are at catcher (Caleb Joseph, C8 Th-2), at second base (Robinson Cano, 2B8) and in the outfield (Lagares, Duvall and Jackson are all OF3s with good to superior arms).

When Joseph isn't in, though, catching falls to Cervelli (C7 Th-2) or Elias Diaz (C6 Th+2). All the third basemen are 3B4s and all the first basemen are 1B3s. But the biggest issue is Xander Bogaerts, who got an SS7 from APBA. Deven Marrero's SS8 is on the roster just to address this.

Bench: 2.0 Constrained by usage.

In addition to having Bryant available at three places, and the need to platoon Lagares and Jackson and the catching tag team, there are a few bodies on the roster to substitute.

Deven Marrero (2B7 SS8 3B4, but 8 hits and L+14 R-8) is only useful for his glove; Gorkys Hernandez (6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, 16 SBA with 29 SSN) is primarily a pinch runner; Elias Diaz (3 0s, 8 hits) is a spare catcher who will mostly drive the team bus; and Ryan Rua (OF2 1B3, 3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, 11 13s) is . . . the best player in the majors named Rua.

3rd

And while they'll work hard to contend, the only route to the playoffs is an outside chance at a wild card.

Las Vegas has some great names on the roster, some of which will be here in a few years - Bryant and Bogaerts certainly, Quintana, Shaw and Duvall likely, and a few others possibly. But the team is aging and some of the key players will have to be replaced.

Mr. Harrington is no stranger to the rebuild. Indeed, he has made it a bit of an art form during his 20+ years in TBL. The last few years have been seasons of 90+ wins and playoff runs. As we know, entropy and the need to shore up deficiencies while in contention eventually catch up with you, making perennial contenders all the more remarkable; the team on the table for Las Vegas is neither fish nor fowl, neither quite a contender nor really a rebuild.

Without direct knowledge of management's off season plan, it seems possible, even likely, that there was simply not enough to sell off to make the idea of a rebuild that feasible. Trading Donaldson, or Quintana, or Cano (or all three: once you start, it's hard to stop) would make it



Shaw: Likely part of the next cycle



Las Vegas GAMBLERS

clear that the team was preparing for the next cycle – and it would lead to the sale of a number of other commodities and next thing you know it's back to 52-110. But compromises made in 2015, or 2016, or 2017 might make the next rebuild deeper and longer; in the meanwhile, being able to roll the dice for Bryant and his friends would be much more enjoyable. Sitting behind two big dogs instead of playing in a division full of scuffling teams – the Mays, perhaps – makes this more difficult still. In the meanwhile, the club will have a fun summer. A year from now . . . well, that's next year's problem.

Las Vegas: The New Normal



Players with good power, low OBP and lots of strikeouts are the poster boys for the New Normal; the best exemplar on the Las Vegas roster is *Adam Duvall*. His 1-5-6-6 power is the gaudy upside, but the 9 hits, 2 walks+22, and 8 13s will create a fair number of outs to go with it.

TQ: 23.0



2017 melrose AVENGERS in review



Reality sets in.

2017 in Review

Final Record: 57-105 (4th, Aaron)

Patience:

The march of time. Even the best of players must bow to the grand master of us all, and as one generation of Avengers moves on to grand pastures and creaky porch swings, the new generation must take up the call.

Then reality sets in. Patience is the key word around Avenger Mansion. Jarvis whispers it whenever he sweeps away the empty scotch bottles or mops the snow from the grand foyer. Braun, Lester, Uggla and Youkilis are gone. Only Gonzalez' remains shuffle the hallways, muttering to himself.

Patience. The team has taken its lumps before and risen from the ashes. We were hoping for a rebound this year. It didn't happen but talent pool has expanded. The team is younger. Maybe next year is the start of another run.

What went right?

There isn't much to say about what went right. Since this was a rebuilding year, and we were paying for the previous year's run at another Championship appearance, expectations were low. We expected to finish high in the draft and the team responded by finishing with the 2nd worst record in the league.

J. D. Martinez (.313-20-67) was a superhero again, leading the team's offense. Logan Forsythe had a very good season as well (.302-21-61). Anthony Rendon hit 23 HR and walked 83 times, Adrian Gonzalez hit 26, and Todd Frazier chipped in 26 of his own.



Martinez: Superhero

A. J. Ramos had a very capable year as the closer, recording 23 saves on a club that won only 57 games. There wasn't much good news on the pitching staff overall, though it did have 41 CG, led by Scott Kazmir with 13.

What went wrong?

Plans that never worked out. We hoped that 2017 would be an aberration and we'd be able to contend in 2018. That didn't happen as injuries ravaged the team like a bad flu. Martinez and Conforto were on their way to full season greatness before injuries derailed them and Marcus Semien missed the first half of the season. Logan Forsythe was up and down all year, Drew Smyly never threw a pitch and age finally caught up with long time Avenger stalwart Adrian Gonzalez. Tyler Anderson pitched well, but in real life was derailed by the injury bug.

3 Things

1. *Hope for Health.* Two straight years of injuries really hurt...Pun intended. The team is younger, health should be better.
2. *Look for the next group of superheroes.* Paxton needs to go 30 starts; other members of the staff need to step forward. Between Anderson, Lopez, Finnegan and Ross' return to San Diego, there is hope. There are now a lot of hard throwing arms in the pen. Pitchers other than Ramos and Strop need to emerge.
3. *A good core still exists.* J. D. Martinez is the old guy in the lineup with Rendon, but the rest of the core is young. Conforto and Semien need to play 140+ games, Nomar Mazara needs to take a step forward, as does Austin Hedges; both are young enough to do so. If the new youngsters evolve as hoped, we should be back in 2019.

melrose AVENGERS



Mark Freedman (25th year)

Not to be too cliché, it's probably the best last-place team in TBL.

For most teams, there's a bright line between rebuild and contend. When rebuilding, you take youth, you avoid cardboard, you make sure that you don't score too many runs or have too much pitching. No one demonstrates the contortionist path to the Bounce than Mark Freedman, who has gone from famine to feast to famine fast enough that you could hire a late-night ambulance chasing lawyer to sue him for whiplash.

So this year, in a division with the two best-rated teams in TBL – a circumstance that was known months ago – the Avengers went into the offseason and the draft with rebuild in mind. Adding Ian Happ, 1-1-4-6 notwithstanding, made good sense. But . . . Matt Olson? Yulieski Gurriel? And J. D. Martinez, one of the biggest impact cards still on the market, stayed *off* the market and remains on the roster. The pitching was not enough, and it remains not enough (though there is a full season of James Paxton, a Grade 13 that would look good in a contender's rotation).

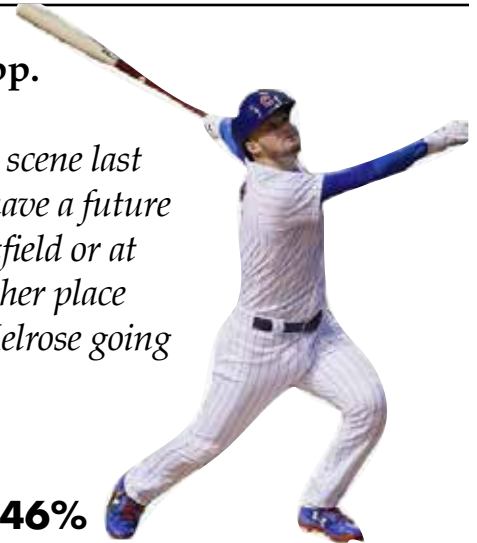
So there are two choices. On one hand, Melrose is moving toward a 2019 contention, with 2018 representing merely a speed bump, a trough that will be soon behind them. We know that Mr. Freedman likes his players (in a way that, for instance, Mr. Auletta never permits himself to do); we know that Mr. Freedman knows How To Do This.

And on the other hand, there is a Cunning Plan either to mortgage the future or sell off the present, a plan that has not yet been completely realized.

Either is possible, and the *Annual* staff is reticent and unwilling to decide which way the team might be going. As with Las Vegas, the team is in transition. Unlike Las Vegas, things might get better before they get worse. Wait and see.

SNT: Ian Happ.

He burst on the scene last year, and may have a future either in the outfield or at second base. Either place will work for Melrose going forward.



Turnover Rate: 46%

Arrived: Jorge Alfaro, Matt Andriese, Miguel Castro, Brandon Finnegan, Jarlin Garcia, Yulieski Gurriel, Ian Happ, Jeff Hoffman, Reynaldo Lopez, Brandon McCarthy, Kevin McCarthy, Wade Miley, Matt Olson, Junichi Tazawa, Stephen Vogt, Chris B. Young.

Departed: Aaron Blair, Andrew Cashner, Louis Coleman, Tyler Collins, Todd Frazier, Eric Fryer, Jason Grilli, Scott Kazmir, Lance Lynn, Russell Martin, Paulo Orlando, Drew Smyly, Geovany Soto, Drew Storen, Trayce Thompson, Logan Verrett.

Pitching:

5.0

Let's put on a show!

If any part of the roster looks like a rebuilding team, it's the Melrose pitching staff. We always say that it's the last thing you work on (unless you're the Guru), and Melrose management seems to believe that. There are a few good parts, including an ace in James Paxton, but they will not have an easy time of it, especially against the high octane offenses.



Paxton: Ace



melrose AVENGERS

ROTATION. The staff ace, for two-thirds of the season, is the talented James Paxton (Grade 13 C+16 HR+41), who must remind Melrose management of Jon Lester, since moved to greener pastures. His big disadvantage is the 23 fatigue; he won't get much past five or six innings.

After Paxton, things are much less cohesive. It takes eight additional pitchers to fill out all of the starts: Jake Thompson (Grade 9 C-33 HR-22, 8 starts); Brandon McCarthy (Grade 9 C+15 HR+43, 16 starts); Matt Andriese (Grade 8 C+13 HR-21, 17 starts); Tyler Anderson (Grade 7 C+14 HR-24, 15 starts); Reynaldo Lopez (Grade 7 C+15, 8 starts); Wade Miley (Grade 5 C-56, 32 starts); Jeff Hoffman (Grade 4 C-15, 16 starts) and a lot of Tyson Ross (Grade 1). It's sort of like "let's fix up the old barn and put on a show!" In a year half of these guys won't be here, but it's hard to tell which half.

BULLPEN. The designated closer is A. J. Ramos (Grade 13* C-56 HR+15, 59 innings), but the key to the whole thing is Pedro Strop (Grade 16* C-26 HR+36, 60 innings). He is likely to be here in a year, as he's a Freedman favorite whom he resisted trading even a year ago when this period of restructuring began. After that it's 66 innings of rookie Miguel Castro (Grade 14*

C-16 HR+15), the lefty-righty combo of Jarlin Garcia (Grade 9* HR+16) and Kevin "the other" McCarthy (Grade 9* C+16 HR+32) for 96 more, 55 bulk innings of Junichi Tazawa (Grade 6*), and as much Tyson Ross as you can stand. There are not enough innings, so



Strop: Key

starters will be stapled to the mound (instructions say "try to get them through 7"; good luck with that). With Paxton and the better part-time starters, and Ramos/Strop/Castro they'll do all right from time to time; but this pitching staff is going to have many long nights.

Offense: 10.0
A lot of power on most days.

To old time APBA fans, the idea of a card with three 1s was a matter of legend – it was a Babe Ruth thing, or (after 1973) a Henry Aaron thing. Even the 52-homer campaign by George Foster in 1977 wasn't three 1s. Then came Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa and Barry Bonds, and us old timers felt old.

But still, it's an unusual sight. What's even more unusual is seeing two cards in a set. Even more rare is two such cards *on the same roster*. Yet here they are: J. D. Martinez (1-1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, L+11 R-5) and rookie Matt Olson (1-1-1-5, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L-11 R+2). The platoon splits probably put them into different lineups at different times, but it means that there'll be a guy with three 1s in the lineup *every day*.



Martinez: 1-1-1

What's more, there are two other cards with two 1s: Ian Happ (1-1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) and Michael Conforto (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L-12 R+2); and two other regulars with four power numbers: Yulieski Gurriel (1-6-6-6, 11 hits) and Anthony Rendon (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks+22, L+6 R-3). That's a lot of power on most days.

After that, though, things transition to mediocre and then to inferior. Nomar Mazara (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-8 R+1) and Jose Iglesias (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) represent mediocrity, while Austin Hedges (1-5-6, 8 hits, 2 walks), Alex Gordon (3 0s, 7 hits, 3 walks+42) and Logan Forsythe (2 0s,

7 hits, 6 walks, L+7 R-6) are out machines. The power hitters will drive them in occasionally, but the low-end guys will end a lot of rallies.

Defense: 5.5
Good, sometimes very good.

The Avengers actually catch the ball very well. In the infield and behind the plate, there can be a Fielding One player at each position. Logan Forsythe (2B8), Jose Iglesias (SS9), Anthony Rendon (3B5) and Austin Hedges (C9 Th-0) will play regularly; Yulieski Gurriel (1B3) can be replaced by Adrian Gonzalez (1B5).

In the outfield, Mazara, Conforto and Happ are all OF2s with average arms, while Alex Gordon (OF3, 34 arm) is superior. Chris Young (OF3) can be used as a defensive replacement. Neither Olson nor J. D. Martinez (both OF1s) have to do any fielding. If Melrose finds Forsythe's bat unsatisfactory, Happ (2B7) can play there, and Marcus Semien (SS8) will take some starts at shortstop.

This is a good, sometimes very good, defense.

Bench: 2.0
A few interesting choices.

There are a few interesting choices on the bench, in addition to the platoon positions. The most interesting is young catcher Jorge Alfaro, who has limited use but a nice card (1-5-6, 12 hits, 1 walk+42, L-10 R+6; C6 Th-0). He has some real future upside.

Marcus Semien (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 13 SBA with 35 SSN, SS8) will start a quarter of the games at shortstop, but is the best PR on the roster. Stephen Vogt (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-8, C7 Th-4) is the backup catcher, but doesn't offer much more than the starter; Adrian Gonzalez (5-6-6, 9 hits, 1B5) is a pale shadow; and Chris Young (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, OF3) is, other than defense, a poster boy for diminishing returns.

4th

Even with the low end of the lineup, this team will score runs – likely more than Las Vegas, its closest rival. But the pitching staff will cost them handfuls of wins. This is not a 100-loss team, though: indeed, and not to be too cliché, it's probably the best last-place team in TBL. Win or lose, it'll be a fun team to play, but it'll win *and* lose a lot of 9-6 games. We think that in the end they'll wind up trailing the other three teams in the Aaron.

melrose:
The New Normal

There are lots of choices on this roster, including *Michael Conforto*, *Matt Olson* and *J. D. Martinez*; but they all are a little too talented hitters to really meet the New Normal criteria.

Instead, we settle on *Ian Happ*, who turned in a terrific power card (1-1-4-6) that may have a future in Melrose (or elsewhere) either in the outfield or at second base. There are 3 walks on the card, but only 9 hits and 9 13s to go with them. To the *Annual*, this is ample evidence of going up there to swing no matter what. In MLB that sort of thing will catch up with you, and it'll show up in TBL a year after that.

TQ: **22.5**



melrose AVENGERS



Photo Finish

2017 Mantle Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit*	93	69	.574	—
Munich†	92	70	.568	1
Hudson	85	77	.512	8
Columbus	77	85	.475	16

* Lost to Grand Cayman in NC playoffs.

† Lost to Northboro in the NC Wild Card.

The *Annual's* Magic 8-Ball, which has been known to give bad information in the past, has suggested that we should expect a very close race in the Mantle this year.

Surprisingly (given the long history of the division and its opponents) we believe that Munich is not a part of this contest: it's between two other teams, and we give the very slight nod to *Clay Beard's Hudson Generals*.

They've put together a very fine pitching staff and a capable, serious offense that should carry them by just a hair to a pennant, and a post season meeting with the titans up in the Aaron.



Meanwhile, *Vic Vaughn* may have a thing or two to say about the outcome. He has not gathered quite as much pitching as the *Generals*, but the up and coming *Columbus Jets* have a dynamic offense that should keep pace with the boys up in *Hudson*. We've seen the club be successful before over in the Clemente Division; this is a different environment and a new challenge that should test managing skill.



Speaking of managing skill, there isn't much that hasn't been said in that area about *Paul Montague*, whose *Munich Marauders* look to be at the end of a few years' run of strong contention. There's still some gas left in the tank – some talent on the roster – but there is only so much managing can do to make them perform. More likely this is a lull, or a prelude to a rebuild. The team has seen lots of those in its long and storied history.



Last year's surprise division champion – we'll admit it, our Magic 8-Ball didn't give any hint – is trailing the pack this year. *Dave Jaskot's Detroit Stars* lack the pitching necessary to contend, and some of their key players miss games; it will be hard to put the best lineup on the field as often as they'd like. But the club is very, very young, and with a deep 2019 draft coming they won't be long out of contention. We'll get the 8-Ball fixed before then.



Mantle Division

Rich Hill,
Hudson

A photograph of a Los Angeles pitcher in mid-throw. He is wearing a white uniform with "Los Angeles" in blue script and the number "46" in red. He is wearing a blue cap and a black glove. The background is a blurred stadium crowd.

1. Hudson	27.5
2. Columbus	27.0
3. Munich	20.0
4. Detroit	19.0

2017 hudson GENERALS in review



They teased me.

by Clay Beard

2017 in Review

Final Record: 85-77 (3rd, Mantle)

2017 was another disappointing finish for the Generals, as they finished 85-77 after being picked to win the Mantle pennant. They teased me by getting back in the race only to lose the last six games. The team played well on the road – 45-36 – but only went 40-41 at home. Despite predictions of divisional success, Detroit got past both Munich and our club, leaving us out of the playoffs.

What went right?

The Generals were led on offense by Carlos Beltran (.283-26-96). Wilson Ramos chipped in 20 HR and drove in 88. D. J. LeMahieu managed a slash line of .305/.377/.413 – really disappointing considering the card. In limited usage, Lucas Duda demonstrated what happens when you have a +3 every time you play: his line was .331/.423/.551.

On the mound, Carlos Martinez was the leader with a 18-10, 3.47 record. Kevin Gausman went 14-10 3.41; Brad Brach recorded a 2.30 ERA and 32 saves, striking out 103 in just 78 innings. Overall the pitching staff struck out 1,491 opposing batters, just behind Whitman for the league lead. Six pitchers had 100 or more, and Gausman and Martinez had 198 and 188 respectively.

What went wrong?

Grade 21* Cody Allen went 3-10, 2.91, not exactly what we had hoped. Grade 18 Rich Hill went 8-7, 3.95 in 20 starts, though he did strike out 149 in 132 innings. Other than Gausman and Martinez, the starters were pedestrian at best.

On offense, there were a lot of empty outs recorded by the lineup. The team hit 171 homers, but no one more than Beltran's 26. Didi Gregorius (.234-18-58, 17 walks and 119 Ks); C. J. Cron (.234-15-70, 24 walks and 101 Ks); and Randal Grichuk (.227-17-54, 38 walks and 147 Ks) were all a part of the stuttering offense. Miguel Sano struck out 130 times in 319 at-bats with only 9 homers, hitting .160, before being shipped off to Knoxville.



Martinez: Leader

4 Things

1. *First round maneuvering with KNX to get a closer. We got Josh Hader.*
2. *Wishing I could find enough time to roll dice. It would allow us to avoid the humidior.*
3. *The ability to manage some nasty shifts. They're not there in the humidior, but still ...*
4. *Health in 2019. Hoping to find some players that aren't on the DL.*

HUDSON GENERALS

Clay Beard (34th year); Hall of Famer

Our Magic 8-Ball says: Unclear, ask again later.



No one needs to tell Clay Beard that patience is a virtue. It's been a few years since the team had its last retrenchment (2015, 62-100), and the last two seasons have been examples of the work in progress. 2017 featured a one-year surge by the Detroit Stars, and the last year of Munich's contention cycle - and there wasn't enough for the club to make an impact.

Well now. *That's over.* Detroit needs to rebuild, and Munich has decided to rebuild. Columbus is a definite threat; a Hudson pennant is by no means guaranteed. That's probably good for the *Annual's* Magic 8-Ball; for those just tuning in, whenever we confidently predict an outcome for Hudson, Mr. Beard seems invariably to do the opposite. If we hedge our bets, therefore, we can take credit whatever he does.

In the meanwhile, we like what Hudson has done, and we expect the club to be charging toward a playoff spot at the end of the season. Please, Mr. Beard: make us look good.

Pitching: **9.5**
Very functional.

Hudson's pitching staff has been built up over the last few years, with the clinching moves in the recent offseason. Now there's a solid rotation and a capable, fairly deep bullpen that will be put to good use by the Hudson management. Key parts of the staff are young, too; so this staff will be here for a while.

ROTATION. Rich Hill (Grade 15 C-14) leads the starters, with 25 trips to the mound. He's on either his third or fourth life now; we've lost



Martinez: Established

track. Carlos Martinez (Grade 12, 32 starts) has established himself as one of the best young pitchers in the game. That is a valid description for Marcus Stroman (Grade 11 HR+23, 33 starts) and Taijuan Walker (Grade 11 HR+22, 28 starts). That's a very solid quartet, covering three quarters of the season.

The remaining starts are a patchwork. Matt Shoemaker (Grade 10 C-14 HR-23) has 14 starts; rookie Antonio Senzatela (Grade 9) has 20; and Kevin Gausman (Grade 6 C-15) makes up the rest. The deep bullpen will help a great deal here.

Turnover Rate: 23%

Arrived: Al Albuquerque, Brian Anderson, Johan Camargo, Sean Doolittle, Josh Hader, Boone Logan, Kevin Plawecki, Antonio Senzatela.

Departed: Chris Bassitt, Carlos Beltran, Donnie Hart, Aaron Hill, Hyun Soo Kim, Dae-Ho Lee, Pablo Sandoval, Kevin Siegrist.

SNT: Sean Doolittle.

The hard throwing lefty is a big part of the rebuilt Hudson bullpen. He's a nice acquisition from a former contender, and will make a major impact here.





BULLPEN. Sean Doolittle (Grade 17* C+34 HR+22, 51 innings) is a key part of the relief corps here, primarily setting up the rookie closer Josh Hader (Grade 25* C-42 HR+26, 48 innings) with 18 innings' help from wild thing Al Alburquerque (Grade 18* C-43 HR+62). Mychal Givens (Grade 16*), Brad Brach (Grade 15* C-21 HR+23) and Cody Allen (Grade 14*) provide more than 210 additional good innings. Marc Rzepczynski, Boone Logan and Luke Gregerson add another 110 mopup innings as well.

This pitching staff, particularly the rotation, is very functional and will help keep Hudson in most games.

Offense: 10.0
More punch.

This year's Hudson offense has more punch than in the past. It starts with secondbaseman

D. J. LeMahieu (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, 3 31s, L+7 R-4), who became a top notch hitter a few years ago. His platoon shift will be problematic, but he'll be in every lineup. He has friends: A. J. Pollock returns after an injury year with a nice card (1-4-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 26 SBA with a 30 SSN). Justin Turner (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks+42+22, L+9 R-6) is terrific as well, though again the platoon thing will cause problems. Didi Gregorius (1-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-7 R+1) hasn't quite reached a Jeter level of performance, but he'll do. Then there's Andrew McCutchen (1-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, 16 SBA with a 27 SSN, L+10 R-5 – this



Pollock: Returns

qualifies as an off year for Cutch.) Jed Lowrie (4 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks) also has a nice full season card. Randal Grichuk (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-8) has power with a platoon shift from the other side.

For half a season, Welington Castillo (1-1-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+5 R-3) has good power; the rest of the catching games are taken up by Wilson Ramos (1-5-5, 10 hits) and Kevin Plawecki (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+42). Greg Garcia will get some time at third base (2 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks+42, L-15 R+2); there's about half a season of rookie Johan Camargo (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L+14 R-8). First base is shared between Lucas Duda (1-1-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-8 R+1) and C. J. Cron (1-5-6, 9 hits).

We have often felt the need to poke fun at Mr. Beard's assertion that he plays the game with 25 guys, but it'll be particularly necessary this year due to the platoon shifts up and down the lineup. It will be less onerous on the computer than on the boards, but it will still require some skill to put the right guys in the right place.

Defense: 4.5
Keeps them in the game.

The Hudson team in the field has some real standouts. The leader is D. J. LeMahieu (2B9), who is as good as it gets. Welington Castillo (C8 Th+6) wins the catching arm prize this year, while an outstanding arm from last year, Wilson Ramos, is a C8 but has dropped to Th-3; Plawecki is a C8, Th+1. A. J. Pollock turns in an OF3 with a 33 arm.

It's pretty much Fielding Two everywhere else. At third base Garcia, Turner and Camargo are 3B4s; at first, both Duda and Cron are 1B3s; Gregorius



LeMahieu: Leader

is an SS8; Grichuk and McCutchen are OF2s (though the standard instructions will place Camargo out there as an OF1 some days).

The Hudson defense will keep the team in the game.

**Bench:
25 guys.**

3.5

A hallmark of a good contender is the ability to make moves. This club has lots of guys to make moves with; in addition to the players who get to start, there's a very decent pinch running/pinch hitting card in Ezequiel Carrera (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 11 SBA with a 35 SSN, L-15 R+1), and a short usage hitter who works against righties in rookie Brian Anderson (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-5 R+3).

The biggest obstacle to offensive continuity will be the righty minuses in the regular lineup – LeMahieu, Turner, McCutchen – but there are choices to counter it. The bench will certainly help.

1st

So, yeah, we think so, but we think it will be close. Hudson has assembled a pretty solid team, with some excellent hitters, a very solid rotation, some real depth in the bullpen, and a flexible roster that will provide bench opportunities in every game. It won't overpower opponents the way that Strong City will, but it's an overall younger club that

will mostly be here in two years. Without additional effort – and with the moves that have already been made – Hudson will be in contention all summer. It's not going to be easy with Columbus in the hunt for postseason position, but Mr. Beard has some experience here.



HUDSON GENERALS

Is there something that could be added? Obviously almost any position can be upgraded for the right price; you can never have too many relievers, too much power, or whatever. The *Annual* believes, however, that the ever-conservative Mr. Beard may only make moves at the edges. Is that enough to win? Our Magic 8-Ball says: *Unclear, ask again later.*

**HUDSON:
The New Normal**

A pretty solid representative of the New Normal is outfielder *Randal Grichuk*, who has undeniable power, some amount of speed and a pretty good glove. But it comes with little on base (9 hits, 2 walks, adding up to a .285 OBP in the majors last year) and a whole lot of 13s (9, by our count). Rolling 42 and getting a strikeout is annoying enough. It's the one at 13, and the row of them on the right side of the card, that will frustrate the most.



Unclear: Ask again later

TQ: 27.5



2017 columbus JETS in review



Timing is everything.

2017 in Review

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

At the end of the 2015 season, Vic Vaughn had a problem. His offense had scored on 600 runs in the previous season. The Jets hit .229 for the year with a .649 OPS. You do not have to be Ray Murphy to know that you won't be playing any December baseball with that level of offense. So Vic went to work.

Two years later, when the 2017 season ended, the Jets had posted these numbers: 768 runs scored, 198 home runs, and a team OPS of .728. Coupled with decent pitching, that's a Wild Card contender's offense. This year, Columbus is ready to make a serious run at the Mantle Division title.

What went right?

Two large factors contributed heavily to the dramatic turnaround on offense. One is health – Jay Bruce, Joey Votto and other offensive studs in the lineup were present and productive all season. Columbus had five offensive players that played 145 games or more. The second was the shocking emergence of Elvis Andrus as an offensive juggernaut at shortstop. Prior to 2017, the highest slugging percentage Andrus had posted in any TBL season was .369 in 2016. In 2017, Andrus slugged .520 with 71 XBH.

Along with Andrus, Joey Votto was a wrecking crew again – a .313/.414/.510 slash line with 26 HR and 106 runs scored. Jay Bruce hit 40 HR.

The pitchers took advantage of all those runs. Masahiro Tanaka, Michael Fullmer, and Rick Porcello combined for 41 wins, and the team

posted a respectable 3.90 ERA for the season – good for tenth in the league.

What went wrong?

Timing is everything. Vic made his first major step forward in several years in a year when every other team in the division finished over

.500. He also went 4–10 against Mantle Division winner Detroit, 4-10 against Hudson and a dismal 3-11 against Munich. That's 11-31 against teams in the division. That's something that won't happen this year.

3 Things

- 1. More Andrus.* Andrus took another step forward for Texas in 2017 – he hit 20 homers for the first time in his career. Suddenly, the Columbus Jets are rocking one of the best two-way shortstops in TBL.
- 2. Trading Rick Porcello.* Here's one that might not work out. The club traded Porcello to Calusa for a 2018 bonus a and a 2018 #5. As Red Sox fans, we understand the frustration with Porcello, who got beaten like a rug all last season. But Ricky is 29 and is a great pitcher when he's right. Vic may second guess this one later.
- 3. Rhys Hoskins.* The #1 pick in 2018 is this monster hitter from Philadelphia. If this kid develops – and there's nothing in his career to indicate that he won't – this could be an elite offense in 2019 and beyond.



Andrus: Juggernaut

columbus JETS

Vic Vaughn (12th year)

Entropy and randomness are strong forces.



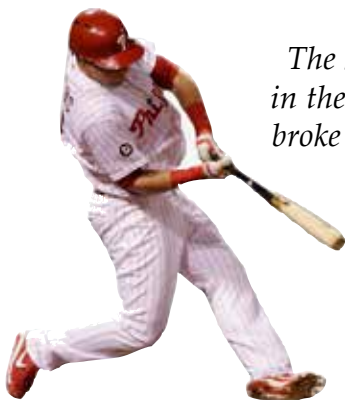
There are any number of useful clichés that can be dragged out here, in keeping with mediocre sports writing. Of course, we here at the *Annual* aspire to be better than that. But suffice it to say that during the past decade, Mr. Vic Vaughn has been trying his best to do what we all want to do: build his team into a perennial contender.

At the outset, it meant large scale restructuring; in more recent years, it has been a matter of broadening the pool of talent rather than merely shoring up deficiencies. Adding players such as Michael Fulmer, Sean Manaea, Ivan Nova, Joey Votto, Kevin Kiermaier, Jay Bruce, Jason Kipnis have slowly brought the team closer and closer to contention. Last year's team managed to fight its way to 77 wins, in part through much improved pitching. This year's team is poised to take the next step. The real question is whether this club is good enough to get into the postseason. Mr. Vaughn would like to answer that question (and Mr. Beard would like to know that as well). We think there's a chance.

Pitching: 8.5
Good peripherals; will carry them.

As noted, last year's successes rested on pitching success, particularly in the starting rotation. The starters aren't quite as good this year (though, honestly, they're not bad); but the Jets have a much more solid

SNT: Rhys Hoskins.



The hot prospect came up late in the year for the Phillies, and broke or challenged all kinds of records. His impact this season is limited by games, but his ceiling in future is very high.

bullpen to go with it – good innings, and a lot of them, and almost all of them better than almost all of the starters. The instructions say “don't be shy” – and that will be the key to Columbus pitching success.

ROTATION. The top starter is Ivan Nova (Grade 11 C+16 HR+21), who has definitely arrived as a solid starter. He's just 25 years old, so he should be a part of the club for some time to come. He joins Michael Fulmer (Grade 10 C+25 HR+34), last year's rookie addition; together they make 52 starts.



Nova: Arrived

After those two, every remaining start belongs to a Grade 7. Sean Manaea (HR+23) is the sole lefty; Mike Leake (C+35 HR+21), Masahiro Tanaka (C+26 HR-24) and Johnny Cueto (HR-12) are the righties. This is not a world beating rotation, but it's very competent with no bad starts and few bad peripherals. It will get Columbus into the middle innings most days.

BULLPEN. The leader in the pen is David Robertson (Grade 25* K C+15 HR+36), who will overpower opposing batters and has 68 innings to do it. He could use another high grade setup man (and the

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: John Brebbia, Nick Delmonico, Rhys Hoskins, Greg Infante, JaCoby Jones, Wade LeBlanc, Mikie Mahtook, Daniel Nava, Eric Sogard, Jorge Soler, Eugenio Suarez.

Departed: Brett Anderson, Chase D'Arnaud, Adonis Garcia, Deolis Guerra, Daniel Hudson, Rymer Liriano, Dustin McGowan, Mike Napoli, Rick Porcello, Ryan Rua, Vince Velasquez.



columbus JETS

club may want to pursue one during the trading period if it's in contention.) Instead, the setup innings belong to two Grade 16*s: Peter Moylan (C-22 HR+36) and rookie John Brebbia (C+41 HR-15). They have 120 or so innings between them.

The middlemen are numerous. Gregory Infante (Grade 13* C+14 HR+35) has the best grade, but David Hernandez (Grade 12* C+35 HR+34), Brandon Kintzler (Grade 12* C+32 HR+35), Bryan Shaw (Grade 11* C+22 HR+41) are almost as good; all told, they have 258 very useful innings. Lefty Taylor Rogers (Grade 12* C+15 HR+23) adds 56 more. There are two other lefty Grade 9*s: Aaron Loup (C-22

HR+42) and Wade LeBlanc (C+25 HR-13), adding an additional 124 innings. That's an excellent group, again with very solid peripherals.

Offense: **10.0** Joey and his friends.

The Columbus offense is led, as it was last year, by the sublime Joey Votto (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 6 walks+22, only 3 13s). He is if anything the poster kid for the "Old Normal" – power, on-base (.454 in MLB last year) and very few 13s. He is a terrific hitter and is about halfway to Hall of Fame numbers; he'll bat second every day.



Votto: Old Normal

In front of Votto is leadoff hitter Domingo Santana (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, 19 SBA with a 30 SSN). Behind them is Howie Kendrick (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 17 SBA with a 27 SSN). For a third of the season,

rookie Rhys Hoskins (1-1-1-6, 8 hits, 6 walks+22) will be high up in the lineup; all season, Jay Bruce (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-7 R+1) will provide serious power. So will Elvis Andrus (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, 35 SBA with a 28 SSN; he's gone all Kirby Puckett in the middle of his career, developing power *and* speed.)



Robertson: Overpower

doesn't get on base a lot but can drive the ball (1-3-6, 10 hits, 2 walks); and Daniel Nava (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, L-11 R+2) is useful in platoon situations. Even the catchers can hit some: Tucker Barnhart (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-6) and Jason Castro (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+22) will share the position.

This is a really solid offense with a lot of power and a surprising amount of speed. With the number of offensive options, Columbus should be able to compete against a variety of pitchers.

Defense: **5.5** Joey and his other friends.

There are some pleasant surprises on defense. Joey Votto scored a 1B5; Kevin Kiermaier is once again an OF3 with a 37 arm. Michael Brantley is also an OF3, but his arm is only a 30. Despite becoming a power/speed hitter, Elvis Andrus has reacquired his SS9. And behind the plate, Tucker Barnhart scored the perfecta: he won a Gold Glove in MLB, and has a C9 with a Th+6. (Castro is a mere C8 with a Th+0.)



Barnhart: Gold glove

The rest of the outfielders are Fielding Two with average arms, except Jay Bruce's 36. In the infield, Suarez is a 3B4 and Kendrick a 2B7, as is Jason Kipnis; Eric Sogard is the defensive upgrade at second (2B8).

This is a very capable defense, which will support the pitching staff.

Bench: Very useful.

3.0

We have listed thirteen offensive players above, and though some are game limited, there is a lot of flexibility there. In addition, some of the extra players will be on the roster during the year.

Eric Sogard (2B8) is primarily here for his defense, but he can hit a little also (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, L-5). Jason Kipnis had an off year, but still has some power (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, L-4). Nick Delmonico has a cute hitting card (1-1-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22). Jorge Soler and JaCoby Jones are here because they are 26 years old, and thus can use their foot speed to fetch macchiatos for other members of the club.

This is a very useful bench, and there will be plenty of choices. It's another indication that this is very much a contender.

2nd

We lean toward Hudson for the Mantle pennant because they have better pitching overall, but the strong offense and defense argues for Columbus' case. In

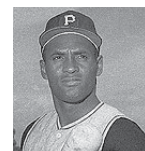
the Hudson article we fell on the Magic 8-Ball analogy and our hackneyed excuse of being unable to predict Hudson outcomes over the years; but the truth is that both of these teams have significant advantages.

Hudson has better starters and higher quality (but lesser peripheral) relievers; Columbus has a very deep pen with much better peripherals. Both have high-grade closers, though Columbus' is right handed which makes a big difference on the boards.

Columbus' advantage is speed. There are runners, and hit-and-run motion, throughout the lineup. They have more of an ability to generate offense, while Hudson may have some empty innings. With the teams so evenly matched, it may come down to head-to-head competition.

A year ago we looked at youth on the team, noting that there were eight players born in 1991 or after, and sixteen from 1987 to 1990. We updated the list, moving the earliest date on the second list to 1988, to count players 30 or under. Conclusion: they've not gotten a lot older, but a lot of 1987 guys have

fallen off. That makes the count 8 and 7 (see right). It suggests that the team has retained at least some of its youth while jumping to contention. But entropy and randomness are strong forces, and this window won't remain open forever.



**columbus
JETS**

columbus: The New Normal

Criticism of *Jorge Soler* (3 0s, 5 hits, 3 walks, 10 13s) is merely cruel, and *Domingo Santana* (9 13s) doesn't quite fit the model since he draws walks.

Accordingly we direct your attention to *Jay Bruce*. He had a bit of a recovery in 2017, but he still has only 2 14s and 7 13s, meaning that he is a clear example of the New Normal – a real hit or miss player who swings very hard, perhaps harder against lefties (L-7). Still, he has not descended into true Rob Deer, and it remains to be seen whether he might develop some better plate discipline in his new home of Citi Field.

Players born after 1990 (8): Barnhart, Delmonico, Fulmer, Hoskins, Mahtook, Manaea, Nola, D. Santana, Suarez

Players born from 1988 to 1990 (7): Andrus, Boyd, Brebbia, J. Jones, Kiermaier, T. Rogers, Soler, Tanaka

TQ: 27.0



2017 munich MARAUDERS in review



Onward!

by Paul Montague

2017 in Review

Final Record: 92-70 (2nd, Mantle)

A second pennant in a row was not in the works in 2017. Last year's "in review" piece predicted "should be in the mix for a wild-card spot, if not the division title." That proved to be prescient, as Munich could never quite catch up with Detroit for the Mantle Division lead. The Marauders finished one game behind with 92 wins and settled for a wild-card, then fell to Northboro in a tough "Skype to Skype" playoff series.

What went right?

Surprisingly, the offense actually improved on its numbers from the 2016 TBL Championship season. The team scored 43 more runs and hit 35 more home runs than the previous year. The offense was not why Munich won 21 fewer games than the year before.

Anthony Rizzo (.270 / .371 / .548, 37 HR, 104 R, 115 RBI) and Miguel Cabrera (.287 / .354 / .510, 34 HR, 87 R, 108 RBI) led the batters again. Yasmani Grandal (24) and Jose Bautista (23) also had over 20 homers, and another four hitters were in double-digits. Jose Altuve was second to Cabrera with a .285 batting average and stole 31 bases.

What went wrong?

The pitching went wrong, simply put. Fans couldn't expect the pitching staff to match the epic 2.51 team ERA of 2016. But as 2017 began, there was still reason to expect good things from the mound, if not historic things. Unfortunately, Munich's pitchers lost their mojo, dropping to a

4.04 team ERA. Ace Jake Arrieta was emblematic. He never pitched consistently well as he put up a mediocre 15-12 record and 3.55 ERA for his 16XG grade. Zach Greinke slumped to a shocking 5.58 ERA and 7-8 record. Yu Darvish led the starters with a fine 10-4, 2.77 record, but made only 17 starts due to nagging injuries. The rest of the starters pitched more like Greinke than like Darvish.

The bullpen was capable, but also inconsistent. Aces Andrew Miller and Tyler Thornburg



Rizzo: Leader, againt

recorded matching 2.86 ERAs, with Miller gaining 30 saves. But they also coughed up seven losses between them, as both had a number of surprising "blow ups". The rest of the 'pen followed suit.

3 Things

1. *No extremes.* During this off-season, would Munich build down (again), or bulk up? This time, the Marauders chose a middle road. They made a record-low three trades, notably dealing away relief ace Miller and 'pop-up' starter Zach Godley to get young sluggers Willson Contreras and Kyle Schwarber. Overall – a small step back for now, with hopes of a resurgence next year.

2. *Thin bullpen.* Munich has a reasonable offense in 2018 and solid starting rotation. But the bullpen lacks any closer-grade reliever, and is very thin on quality innings of any sort. Will this spell a cellar finish, or can manager Orel Hershiser work miracles and keep the team contending?

3. *Look ahead.* Munich has a complete 2019 draft to look forward to, along with a young enough roster to expect better things next year. Onward!

munich MARAUDERS



Paul Montague (35th year); Hall of Famer

At the Annual we trust his instincts.

Paul Montague is one of those guys who has a formula. He likes power hitters who walk. Last year, he had three hitters with over 30 homers. He likes power pitchers of all shapes and sizes. In 2017, the Marauder pitchers struck out 1495 batters in 1454 innings – more than one an inning for the entire season.

This works. The Founder has won three TBL World Series, and played in four others. He has won his division ten times. When you are trying to figure out when to cash all your chips and go for a World Series, you need to check on the condition of a few teams – Brobdingnag, Zion, Melrose ... and Munich. Because when those teams move forward, they typically field road graders, and it's sometimes wise to step back and let them pass.

Last year, Paul Montague won 92 games, and was nosed out for the Mantle Division crown by a fiercely determined – and beautifully managed – Detroit Stars team. There was no exfoliation here – Munich is decent again, but the 2017 season stripped some parts of the team bare.

Pitching: 6.0
Hoping 2019 looks better.

ROTATION. The starting rotation is rock solid. It starts with Zack Greinke (Grade 13 C+25, 32 starts) who will turn 35 this year, but has shown few signs of wear and tear. Then comes a whopping 109 starts at grade 12 - Jake Arrieta (Grade 12 C+13, 30 starts), Yu Darvish (Grade 12, 31 starts) and Jacob deGrom (Grade 12 C+21, 31 starts) are all the kinds of durable, bat-missing maestros that teams hope they can grab early in drafts every season. Edinson Volquez (Grade 12 C-56 HR+31,

17 starts) is also here. With that control number, he not only misses bats, but he misses everything else, too.

Along with Greinke, there are 141 very solid starts at the top of the rotation. Marco Estrada (Grade 8 C-15 HR-13, 33 starts) covers the last 21 starts in respectable fashion. Top to bottom, this is one of the strongest rotations in TBL.



Greinke: Leads staff

BULLPEN. At the *Annual*, pitching in to get Paul a *Forget Something?* tee shirt this year,

Turnover Rate: 23%

Arrived: Norichika Aoki, Willson Contreras, Marco Estrada, Amir Garrett, Andrew Heaney, Brandon Maurer, Chad Pinder, Drew Robinson, Kyle Schwarber, Blake Swihart, Arodys Vizcaino.

Departed: Andrew Bailey, Andres Blanco, Arquimedes Caminero, Zack Godley, Yasmani Grandal, Javier Lopez, Andrew Miller, Jake Petricka, Trevor Rosenthal, Ryan Vogelsong, Steven Wright.

SNT: Kyle Schwarber.

He's got impressive power, but still has some holes in his swing. Munich is the latest team to place a bet on him to have a breakout season. Bonus: he's a Chicago Cub, so Mr. Montague is already rooting for him.





MUNICH MARAUDERS

because this group is, for a contender, operatically awful.

The critical performers are Darren O'Day (Grade 16* C+23, 60 innings) and Arodys Vizcaino Grade 16* C-13, 57 innings). These guys are here to protect leads in the eighth and ninth innings.



O'Day: Critical

To get to those guys, Mr. Montague needs to perform some alchemy with the likes of Hector Rondon (Grade 11* HR-22, 57 innings) and ... no one. There are no other relievers in the pen to help bridge the gap between the starters and the closing staff. Mops we have ... in groups. Trevor Cahill (Grade 7 C-46 HR-16, 84 IP) is a mop. Francisco Liriano (Grade 5 C-46 HR+23, 97 IP), Amir Garrett (Grade 3 C-46 HR-62, 70

IP), Brad Ziegler (Grade 2*, C+31 HR+61, 47 IP) and Brandon Maurer (Grade 1*) are also around in case Munich finds itself behind in the middle of the game.

Munich management knows this is a mess. It says in instructions that the starters should be left in the game for one or two reductions to stretch them out, and that matching up the lefty relievers against hitters with serious lefty shifts may allow Munich to steal some outs. But mostly, this group is a reflection of Paul Montague's view of this team. He's lying fallow for a year, hoping the 2019 cards look better than this.

Offense: 6.0
Should produce enough to contend.

There are still some outstanding hitters in the lineup. The star is the American League MVP – Jose Altuve (1-0-0-0, 12 hits 3 walks, 42 SBA

with 32 SSN, 17 speed). A blazing fast contact hitter in an era when everyone swings like Rougned Odor, Altuve will bat third all season for the Marauders.

Batting behind Altuve in the regular lineups are two more outstanding producers - Anthony Rizzo (1-0-0-0, 9 hits 4 walks+42, 16 SBA for 28 SSN) and catcher Willson Contreras (1-0-0-0, 10 hits 4 walks, 117 games). Carlos

Gomez (1-5-6, 9 hits 3 walks+ 2 42s, 20 SBA for 28 SSN) will try not to get himself killed by a pitched ball as the number six hitter.

The new beast is emerging slugger Kyle Schwarber (1-1-0-0, 7 hits 4 walks). Schwarber is the regular DH, because he is a defensive nightmare, but he hit 30 homers for the Cubs last year. He is 25, and if he can raise his average a few points, he could be a real stud.



Altuve: Outstanding

The lineup begins with on-base machine Jon Jay (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, 16 speed) and short-stop Andrelton Simmons (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 28 SBA for 29 SSN). Jose Bautista (1-0-0, 7 hits, 4 walks) and Ben Zobrist (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks) barely hit enough to keep their jobs in the lineup, but they will hit at the bottom.

The first six spots in the regular lineup are still imposing. This offense should produce enough for Munich to contend for the division.

Defense: 6.0
Championship quality.

Munich is still a championship quality team defensively. Jose Altuve (2B8) and Andrelton Simmons (SS9) make all the plays in the middle

infield. Willson Contreras (C8, Th+0) is a very good defensive catcher. His backup - Martin Maldonado (C9, Th+3) – is one of the best defensive catchers in the game.



Simmons: Makes all the plays

Munich is also outstanding at first base with Anthony Rizzo (1B5). In the outfield, Carlos Gomez (OF3, 37 arm) is spectacular.

There are solid performers elsewhere. Jon Jay (OF2, 31 arm) is decent in center field. Jose Bautista (OF2, 33 arm) is not a strong defender, but backup third sacker Martin Prado (3B4) is a nice boost off the bench. Ben Zobrist (2B8, OF2, 33 arm) is terrific at second, but he gets to play left – and he’s competent out there.

This is a very solid defensive team. That’s good, because they can ill afford to extend innings with the short bullpen.

Bench: 2.0
A few options.

There are a very few decent bench options. Jason Heyward (3 Os, 9 hits 3 walks) could start for a lot of teams, but he’s here hoping that his 2019 card looks better than this.

Future TBL Hall of Famer Miguel Cabrera (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks) can hit some, but age may have caught up with him. Drew Robinson (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks) can play the outfield, and brings some thump to the plate as a pinch hitter. Nori Aoki (3 Os, 10 hits, 3 walks, 14 SBA for 32 SSN) is a nice pinch running option who’s been brought in for purely nostalgic reasons (so we’re told.)

Martin Maldonado (1-0-0, 8 hits, 1 walk+42) will be playing a lot – Contreras only has 117 games – and can be brought on for defense.

3rd

Munich is looking up at both Hudson and Columbus this year. Their starting pitching and good lineup should keep them around the .500 mark. How close they can get to the division will depend on Vic and Clay’s successful management.

If Munich is in the neighborhood, a late trade for relief pitching is not out of the question, as the club has its own draft (and a few extra toys like Cabrera and Heyward, who could be dealt without harm to the base lineup). Munich has been through so many of these seasons, and will know when (and if) to jump.

As noted in the Year in Review, Munich has decided to neither build up nor down, which is a little unusual; no one loves the Bounce like Mr. Montague. But at the *Annual* we trust his instincts.

munich:
The New Normal

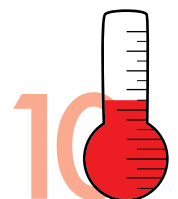


Kyle Schwarber is very much an exemplar of the New Normal, with a bearded-lady 1-1-0-0, 7 hit, 4 walk, 8 13 card. Anyone who has watched him at the plate knows that he is very much a feast-or-famine hitter. If he ever puts it together, watch out.

TQ: 20.0



munich MARAUDERS



2017 detroit STARS in review

Place your bets.



2017 in Review

Final Record: 93-69 (1st, Mantle)

Every post-season analysis is forensic: looking at the results and trying to determine how it came about. And honestly, the *Annual* is having some problems figuring that out. We said, in absolutely no uncertain terms, that this was *not the year*; adding Sanchez and Healy was great; upgrading the pitching staff was great too. Moving out of the Ruth, getting away from The Thing From Brobdingnag, that was pretty good too.

We were complimentary and polite. We wrote: *There was Not Much, then there was Go Get Some, and then there was This Isn't Working, and now there's a younger and more talented club.* Indeed there was and there is. But we had no idea it could win 93 games. Looking at the stats, especially the offense, we still have no idea how they did it – except as noted at right, that they won two-thirds of the in-division contests. So this season gets credited not to the improved pitching (which was very solid), or to the few outstanding hitters (who were largely on their own) but to Dave Jaskot himself.

What went right?

Yoenis Cespedes had a big power year (45 HR, 103 RBI, 34 doubles) to lead the team and be featured in the backdrop again. Wil Myers hit 32 homers, 38 doubles and stole 29 bases in 34 tries. Gary Sanchez had an outstanding short season (.284-13-34 in 200 at-bats).

Chase Anderson was terrific (16-6, 2.64, 6 CG, 5 shutouts). Tanner Roark won 13 with a 2.65 ERA, 7 CG, and 4 shutouts. The bullpen was

tremendous, winning 31 games – a third of the Detroit total. Ryan Dull led the crew with a microscopic 0.86 ERA, 8 wins, and 70 strikeouts in 74 innings. The team ERA was 3.21, third best in the league.

What went wrong?

The magic ran out against the Grand Cayman Havens, who drove all the way to the World Series. It's a dignified exit for a team we would never have expected to see in the playoffs.



Cespedes: Big power

It's amazing that the team had any kind of luck, given the offense. No regular hit higher than .248; no part timer hit more than .284. Seven players struck out more than 100 times, led by Wil Myers' 169. The team hit .225, 23rd of 24 in TBL, scoring a mere 681 runs (surrendering only 573: it must have been quite a humidor inside Mr. Jaskot's computer.)

3 Things

1. *Place your bets.* Sanchez and Healy were sure things, but Lamet (now injured) and Joey Gallo (still Joey Gallo) aren't. But you can't win the lottery if you don't buy a ticket.
2. *Once you've done it, anything is possible.* We are going to hesitate to call Detroit out of any pennant race, though this should be a rebuild year.
3. *"Go Get Some" is still the plan.* There are 22 players 30 and under, 14 born after 1990. This is a team on the rise.

detroit STARS

Dave Jaskot (7th year)

The team that tortured the Mantle is still here.



"In order to compete in this division, they'll have to match wits with some very good managers."

– The 2017 TBL Annual

There are different ways to win in TBL. One method, successfully executed by Detroit manager Dave Jaskot last year, is to hold your own against teams from outside your division and beat the living daylights out of your divisional rivals. Last year, Detroit went 28-14 against Munich, Hudson and Columbus, which largely accounts for their one-game margin of victory in the Mantle. For those of you keeping track, that's two Hall of Fame managers and the deeply respected Vic Vaughn that Dave rag-dolled. The division title was Dave's first as a TBL manager.

The team that tortured the Mantle is still here. Dave quietly added some pieces to the pitching staff – like Grade 13 starter Dinelson Lamet – and tacked on promising third baseman Matt Davidson in the third round of the 2018 TBL draft. The Stars got into the playoffs last year on the strength of their pitching, almost all of which took a step backwards this year. So, the Stars are in waiting mode, and are expected to be slightly off the pace in the Mantle this year.

Pitching: **6.5** **Thins out quickly.**

ROTATION. Detroit needed a staff leader, and managed to snap one up in the draft. Dinelson Lamet (Grade 13 C-35 HR-14, 21 starts) will be a nice addition to this squad and hold some long-term value while he recovers from arm surgery. Things get ordinary rather quickly after him. Ariel Miranda (Grade 10 C-22 HR-34), J. C. Ramirez (Grade 9) and Tanner Roark (Grade 8) have 83 starts between them when Detroit will



SNT: Dinelson Lamet.

A good grade with great strikeout potential was there to be taken. The Stars will have to wait a little while to see what he'll do after his injury.

Turnover Rate: 46%

Arrived: Joe Biagini, Gregor Blanco, Matt Davidson, Joey Gallo, Ben Gamel, Dinelson Lamet, Mike Minor, Andrew Moore, Brian McCann, Hansel Robles, Lucas Sims, Tyler Skaggs, Raimel Tapia, Neil Walker, Blake Wood.

Departed: Chase Anderson, Chad Bettis, Michael Bourn, Steve Cishek, Danny Espinosa, Tyler Flowers, Nick Franklin, Derek Law, Jose Lobaton, Mikie Mahtook, Brandon Moss, Ross Ohlendorf, Colby Rasmus, Fernando Salas, Danny Valencia.

compete. Along with Lamet, there are 104 starts here where hits get stolen without help.

The last 58 starts are a bit problematic. Miguel Gonzalez (Grade 7, 27 starts) and Tyler Skaggs (Grade 7, 16 starts) will try to survive for five innings. Andrew Moore (Grade 6, C+43 HR-41, 9 starts) will pitch on days where gale force winds are blowing straight out. Lucas Sims (Grade 4, 10 starts) will have to wear plate mail out there to keep the line drives from killing him.

BULLPEN. The ultimate mop is now the closer. Shane Greene (Grade 17*, C-41 HR+31, 67 IP) is the top grade in the bullpen. He will be brought on



Greene: Closer



detroit STARS

to protect leads along with the very useful Mike Minor (Grade 16*, C+22 HR+41, 77 IP). These two have 144 innings to bring home leads.

The problem is that there is no one to set them up. Joe Biagini (Grade 12*, HR+15, 31 IP) and two skanky Grade 11s - Dan Altavilia (Grade 11*, C-24 HR-22, 46 IP) Hansel Robles (Grade 11*, C-41 HR-21, 56 IP) – are trying to hide the lack of a Grade 14* or 15*.

Ryan Dull (Grade 9*, C-14 HR-14, 42 IP), Adam Ottavino (Grade 9*, C-62, 53 IP) and Carlos Torres (Grade 8*, C-26, 72 IP) will be forced to pitch in too many leverage situations. This year's Ultimate Mop is Blake Wood (Grade 4*, C-22 HR+23,

74 IP). This group thins out way too quickly.

Offense: **7.0** May be better than 2017, though.

Gary Sanchez (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, 122 games) leads the way as one of the best hitting catchers in the game. Yoenis Cespedes (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 81 games) will muscle up for half a season. Joey Gallo (1-1-5-5, 7 hits, 5 walks, 30 SSN for 9 attempts) has the type of card that tends to overperform in TBL. (See 2017 Chris Carter for further instruction). Michael Taylor (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 28 SSN for 24 SBA) does a little of everything.



Sanchez, Cespedes: One and a half serious cards

There are a number of guys who will have good days, but will struggle to get on base. Will Myers (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, 15 speed, 30 SSN for 26 at-



Gallo: May overperform

tempts) and Raimel Tapia (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) will produce in spots. Against lefties, Devon Travis (5 0s, 10 hits, 1 walk, L+8) will be a terror. Neil Walker (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, R+1) leads off most days. Ryon Healy (1-5-6, 10 hits, 1 walk) emerged as a nice hitter at third, but he won't take a walk. The same goes for Ben Gamel (3 0s, 10 hits). Gregor Blanco (4-5, 9 hits 4 walks, E35 for 16 SBA, R+2) and Mark Davidson (1-1-0-0, 8 hits 2 walks) make regular appearances along with Cliff Pennington (2 0s, 9 hits 3 walks, 15 speed).

The offense will be all right even if they're rated lower than last year; they will probably improve over the 681 runs they scored in 2017. They will have to, because the pitching staff will not be nearly as strong.

Defense: **4.0** Good in some months.

Detroit is a very good defensive team in some months. The roster is full of 2B8s - Devon Travis (2B8), Neil Walker (2B8) and Cliff Pennington (2B8, SS8) are all excellent at the keystone, but Pennington will spend the year manning shortstop.

The outfield, in some months, could have Michael Taylor (OF3, 34 arm), Yoenis Cespedes (OF2, 37 arm) and Gregor Blanco (OF3, 31 arm). Raimel Tapia (OF2, 32 arm) is decent out there as well. Will Myers (1B4) is terrific at first, though this rating is off his highs.

Gary Sanchez (C7, Th+4) is average mechanically but has a terrific arm. Third base is a soft spot, regardless of who plays. Joey Gallo (3B3), Ryon

Healy (1B3, 3B3) and Mark Davidson (3B3) will all get their opportunities. Overall, not a bad group. They are lacking the vacuum cleaner they need at short, but these guys can catch the ball.



Sanchez: Arm

**Bench:
Uninspiring.**

1.5

It's not totally empty, but depth is not a team strength. Brian McCann (1-0-0-0, 8 hits 3 walks+42, 97 games) is a nice backup catcher. Ketel Marte (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 15 speed) is a nice young speedster for pinch hitting and running help. Danny Descalso (3 0s, 8 hits 4 walks, 34 SSN for 4 attempts) will do something or other.

It's uninspiring at best.

4th

The thin starting rotation is backed by a thin bullpen. If this were a weight loss program, they'd be a title contender. But we have them getting nosed out by an equally anemic Munich team this year for third place, a way behind the two top contenders.

At the *Annual* we continue to be impressed with the work the Stars did last year. We thought they were far behind both Hudson and Munich; both of those teams performed well – Munich was one game behind Detroit when the curtain fell, and Hudson turned in an 85-77 record. So much for our predictions: their pitching was simply outstanding, led by Chase Anderson's 16-6, 2.64, 6 complete games and 5 shutouts, and Ryan Dull's 8 wins in relief. Though they hit 213 homers, the offense was relatively anemic – which leads us to believe, reasonably, that Mr. Jaskot was a master at managing the club, making a great deal of lemonade out of some very modest lemons.

Given the competition, as noted, that's a very remarkable task. There was a time that we rated instructions and management as a part of the TQ, but when we moved into the kinder, gentler phase – the least said about all of that the better – that portion of our analysis was dropped. But the skill of Stars management has to be credited for the success of the 2017 club.

So what do we have to say about the coming team? Well, it's clear that the Stars are building talent – where there were only a few solid players a few years ago, now there are several. And it's a young, young team (see inset). With that core, and their presence in the 2019 draft, this is a team on the way up.

Players born after 1990 (14): Altavilla, Davidson, Gallo, Gamel, Healy, Lamet, K. Marte, A. Moore, G. Sanchez, Sims, Skaggs, Tapia, C. Taylor, Travis.

Players born from 1988 to 1990 (6): Biagini, Dull, Greene, Miranda, Myers, Robles.



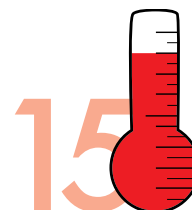
detroit STARS

**detroit:
The New Normal**



Joey Gallo is the poster boy for the New Normal, though he does get on base a little more than the average such player (1-1-5-5, 7 hits, 5 walks, 11 strikeouts) There's not even a 25 on the card – there are hardly any ground balls or fly balls to be found. It's feast or famine – and really lots more famine than feast.

TQ: 19.0



Back From The Brink

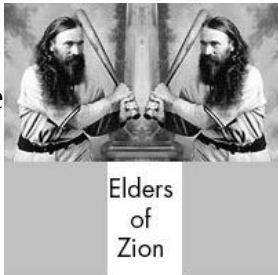
Things have been interesting in the Williams Division of late. The erratic course of the entertaining *Warrenton Giants*, the champions of “old-school” (that is, non-DH) baseball, has helped to determine what’s happening wherever they go; but this year they’re working hard at scraping the bottom, while at least two, and maybe three, of the other teams scrap for a chance to face the top teams in TBL, who all seem to be in the National Conference this year.



Our pick for pennant winner is the *Northboro Phoenix*, who once again have the talent to get to the next level – a very strong pitching staff, some great on-base guys,

good power. It is, as always, up to **Robert Jordan** and **Steve Stein** to execute on the plan. The players are there and the way is clear. It’s a long season, though.

There’s certainly a pennant race. Talent gets you so far, and then it comes down to skill and cunning, something *Rich Meyer* has in abundance. There’s lots of stuff on the roster of the *Elders of Zion* as well, and the Sensei will make it work overtime. The TQ numbers say they’re three points – eight to ten wins – behind. The



2017 Williams Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Grand Cayman*	99	63	.611	—
Northborot	93	69	.574	6
Zion	91	71	.562	8
Warrenton	73	89	.451	26

* Lost to Brobdingnag in the World Series.
 † Lost to Las Vegas in the NC playoffs

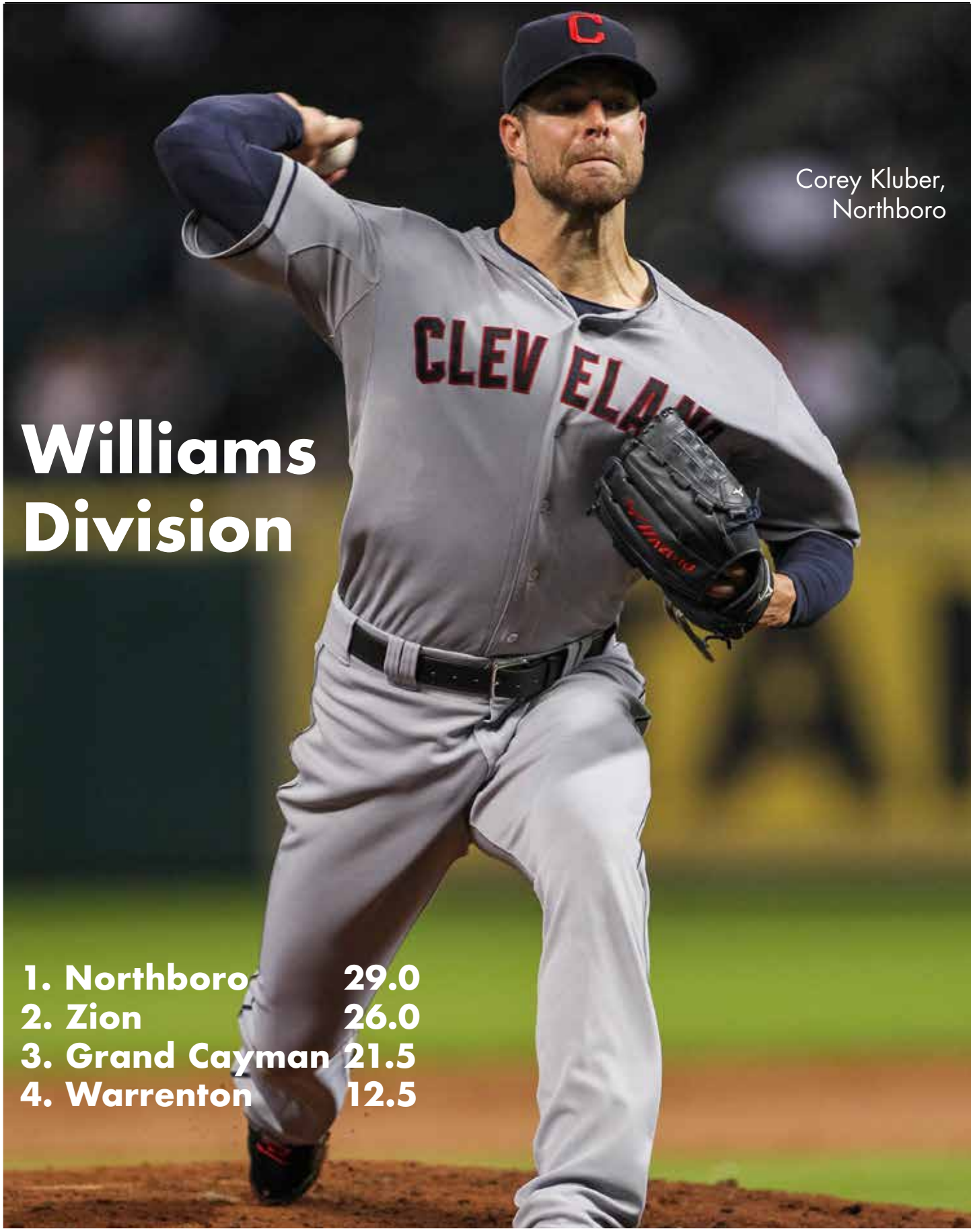
Annual doesn’t believe that any more than he does.

They went to Game 7 of the World Series against Brobdingnag a few months ago, and now it’s What Comes After for the *Grand Cayman Havens*. **Mark Bloom**’s club is not what it was, but it is what it is: there’s some power and some pitching, and the club is in the hands of a capable manager who, you know, got to Game 7. Is this a team that can make the playoffs? No . . . well, maybe . . .



. . . And if you’re looking for a team that won’t be making the playoffs: ladies and gentlemen, your *Warrenton Giants*. They came into the draft with fourteen or so carded players, and left with a significantly larger number. They swing the heaviest weight in the 2019 draft, and will draft in the top few – possibly the very top. This year is an exercise in amusement, and Jack Chapman will keep it light and fun.





Corey Kluber,
Northboro

Williams Division

- | | |
|-----------------|------|
| 1. Northboro | 29.0 |
| 2. Zion | 26.0 |
| 3. Grand Cayman | 21.5 |
| 4. Warrenton | 12.5 |

2017 northboro PHOENIX in review



by Steve Stein

Right, but just barely.

2017 in Review

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

At the beginning of last year, we wondered what would become of the team we cobbled together. On paper, it was pretty good. Not enough to challenge Grand Cayman, but it should give us a shot at the post-season. We were right, but just barely.

Because of the way the season went, let's start with

What went wrong?

We thought we had a 90+ win team, but at the half-way mark we were 40-40. And we were lucky to be so – we gave up 30 more runs than we scored. The problem was entirely the ineffectiveness of our starting pitching. Four starters gave up 18 or more HR. Our ace Corey Kluber (Grade 14, C+15 HR+21) was 7-7 with a 5.40 ERA. Our other starters were similarly bad. And even though we finally made the playoffs, we couldn't hit lefty pitching consistently, which led to our exit facing the southpaws of Las Vegas.

What went right?

All of a sudden, we caught fire in the second half. 14-6 in August. 12-8 in September. 15-7 in October. 12-8 in November. We ended up with 93 wins, just enough to make the playoffs.

Kluber was 10-3 in the second half. Pomeranz was 8-1. Our bullpen was solid throughout, with the monster addition of Chris Devenski,

who wound up with 43 saves (a franchise record) and a 1.42 ERA. And on the offensive side, Chris Carter slugged 55 HR, the most since we moved to Northboro in 2002 (with a .248 average, though, admittedly, 188 strikeouts).

While the team hit only .243, it did score 811 runs, powered in part by 222 homers and 541 walks (led by Brandon Belt's 101 and two other players – Kole Calhoun and Chris Carter – with more than 70.)



Devenski: Monster

3 Things

1. *The infield is still a problem.*

Shortstop seems to be covered for the future with Dansby Swanson. Otherwise, we have a lot of guys who play some infield, but few who are regular starters at second and third base. New arrival Marwin Gonzalez plays all over the place. Derek Dietrich is mostly an outfielder.

2. *Not enough hit numbers.* We have power and we do get on base via the walk, but there are very few hit numbers in evidence. When we face good control pitchers, even low grade ones, we have trouble scoring runs.

3. *Good health.* We have been lucky with the health of our guys in real life. But we are thin, and some of the mainstays of our franchise (Seth Smith, J. J. Hardy, and Chris Carter) are now either out of baseball or mired in the minors. We should have enough offense to make some noise this year, but next year is a real question mark.

northboro PHOENIX

Bob Jordan (19th year) / Steve Stein (16th year)



Chaos and entropy are powerful things. Ask any contender.

Stop me if you've heard this one before. Talented team has a good draft, a solid management team, and a fairly good chance at post-season competition. There's pitching; there's a good lineup. There are even teams in division to beat up on, and other teams in conference that can receive the same treatment.

So this is the year. *This is the year.* It is an article of faith that, with one exception, every team deals with the unpleasant truth that there is at least one team that, on paper, is better than they are. It doesn't matter – because in a short series anything can happen, and other clichés. It's one thing for a team that's in the middle, at the edge of contention, to look at the stiff competition and quail: but for teams that are over the edge and in the mix for the big prize, they have to take their shot while they can.

Chaos and entropy are powerful things. Ask any contender.

SNT: Marwin Gonzalez.

He plays everywhere, and had a breakout year at the plate. A great acquisition for a pennant contender in a tight race.



Turnover Rate: 20%

Arrived: Lane Adams, Jesus Aguilar, Jose Alvarado, Danny Espinosa, Marwin Gonzalez, Ryan Hanigan, Wandy Peralta.

Departed: Gregor Blanco, Chris Herrmann, Jung Ho Kang, Adam Liberatore, Anthony Recker, Sammy Solis, Alex Wilson.

Pitching: Will elevate.

14.0

Over in the Aaron Division there are two even more dominant pitching staffs, in Strong City and Kansas. But those powerhouses aside, this is the most capable group of pitchers in TBL. With a top-notch ace and a deep bullpen, this is the most dominant part of the team.

ROTATION. Begin with an ace: Corey Kluber (Grade 17 C+24 HR+21, 29 starts), a strikeout machine – a starter with a K rating on the boards. He has few rivals among starters in TBL. He has friends: Jake Odorizzi (Grade 13 C-31 HR-26), whose 28 starts will be a mixed blessing, particularly against teams with good power; Lefty Drew Pomeranz (Grade 12 C-23 HR+23) has the most starts in the rotation, but his 23 fatigue will limit him to five or six innings; the same is true of Mike Montgomery (Grade 12 C-23 HR+33, 14 starts, 21 fatigue). Tyler Chatwood (Grade 10 C-46) adds 25 good starts, and the rest of the trips belong to Ian Kennedy (Grade 8 C-21 HR-32) and Erasmo Ramirez (Grade 7 C+26 HR-15).



Pomeranz: Most starts

With Kluber at the top, and no starts with a base grade below 7, they'll keep the team in most games this season – more than that, actually. Despite the fatigue and peripherals, this is a very good rotation.

BULLPEN. And this part of the pitching staff is even better. The closer is wild but a major tal-

ent: Corey Knebel (Grade 23* C-44 HR+32, 76 innings), who will be saving a lot of games: not least because he has a good support network. It's led by 81 innings of Chris Devenski (Grade 19* C+13), and 92 innings of Mike Montgomery and Erasmo Ramirez, both Grade 17*s in relief. The solid middleman is Tommy Kahnle (Grade 14* C+22 HR+41), 63 innings who, like Knebel (and Kluber), is a "K" on the boards.



Devenski: Support

Once you get past the 300 innings of the above, there are another 150 innings of lesser lights. Addison Reed (Grade 13* C+36 HR-13) is about half of them; lefties Wandy Peralta (Grade 13* C-14) and Jose Alvarado (Grade 12* C+16 HR+53) are the rest. Other than Kluber, all of the relievers help all of the starters. And the top two guys will certainly be able to rescue the ace as well.

This pitching staff is one of the best in the league, and will elevate the team's performance all season.

Offense:
Lots of choices.

8.0

Northboro can count on a group of solid cards that combine power and speed. The catching position is shared by two of them: Mike Zunino (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) had a breakout season, while Chris Iannetta (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42) is giving a fair impression of what the Prince of Darkness saw when he drafted him. Two other power/on-base guys



Zunino, Iannetta: Power behind the plate



were added in the offseason: one by draft – Jesus Aguilar (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22), and one by trade – Marwin Gonzalez (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 11 SBA with 28 SSN). Gonzalez is overall the best card on the roster, and he'll play mostly shortstop and first base.

The second tier has some good cards as well. The half-season of Tommy LaStella (1-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks+22) adds some good at-bats; Brandon Belt (1-5-6-6, 8 hits, 5 walks, L-7 R+1) will be good against righties at least; and rookie Lane Adams (1-4-5, 10 hits, 3 walks, 10 SBA, 35 SSN) also has a good half season.

That covers about half of the lineup positions. Elsewhere it's a bit of mix-and-match. Kole Calhoun (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks), Brett Gardner (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, 28 SBA, 32 SSN, L-10 R+2 – the main speed threat) and Seth Smith (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, and surprisingly no platoon split) will share outfield games; shortstops Aledmys Diaz (3 0s, 10 hits) and Dansby Swanson (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks) have diminished cards from their rookie ones; and Derek Dietrich (1-4-6, 9 hits+42+22) will take up games at second base.

There are a lot of choices, somewhat constrained by the roster size – they can't all be available all the time, except in November – and usage limits; but Phoenix management really knows how to get good mileage out of a versatile group like this.

Defense: **4.5**
Will help.

This team is very much a Fielding Two team with Fielding One highlights, somewhat like salt and pepper hair. Both catchers, Zunino and Iannetta, are C8s, though they both

have slightly negative arms. Kole Calhoun and Brett Gardner are OF3s with average arms; and Brandon Belt (1B5) is top notch at first. Danny Espinosa (2B9) and J. J. Hardy (SS9) will be available off the bench at times.

The rest of the defense is solid average. Seth Smith and Lane Adams are OF2s, as is Gonzalez and Cory Spangenberg if used there. Gonzalez is an SS8 and 2B7; Aledmys Diaz is an SS8, though Dansby Swanson is only an SS7; Tommy LaStella (2B7, 3B4) and Derek Dietrich (2B7) are solid Fielding Two.

The defense will generally help the team protect leads. They're overall solid.

**Bench:
Useful.**

3.0

The number of choices certainly helps give the club a useful bench to make late inning moves. There are few extra guys who don't start; Hardy (3 0s, 8 hits) has slowed down at the plate, while Espinosa (2 0s, 6 hits) doesn't hit at all. Cory Spangenberg (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 14 SBA with 30 SSN, L-12 R+3) looks like he'll be behind better cards, unless rest is needed, and he's dismal in the field except OF. Chris Carter (1-5, 7 hits, 4 walks) and Joc Pederson (1-0-0-0, 7 hits, 4 walks+42) are caricatures of their former selves.

1st

Pitching really tells the story here. In some ways the club resembles Riverwolf, though not as strikingly as there are some cards (like the catchers or Gonzalez) who can turn a game around with one swing. Still, Riverwolf doesn't have a hungry, determined opponent like the Sensei breathing down its throat.

The roster has some youth, but in general this is a team of players in or near their prime. They have what is needed to get to the finish line, and – to be honest – no excuses for not doing

well. Having gone down this road before, the Stein/Jordan team knows what is expected of it – the question is whether they can deliver.

We think so. As we often say, *we've been wrong before*. But we've been right before, and here at the *Annual*, this time, we think we're right. See you in December to find out.

northboro: The New Normal

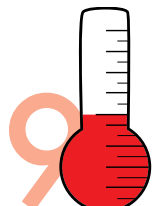


There isn't a card on this roster that looks more like the New Normal than that of *Joc Peterson*, who is a sort of walking example of feast or famine. His card is, as we noted, a caricature of the one that was drafted early in 2017; he has only six 13s, and he does get on a little more than the average player of this type (four walks and a 42); but the card (and the player it portrays) creates enough empty outs to have played its way out of regular use. It remains to be seen if that can even be reversed.

Players born after 1990 (8): Alvarado, Knebel, Pederson, W. Peralta, Profar, Spangenberg, Swanson, Zunino.

Players born from 1988 to 1990 (15): L. Adams, Aguilar, Belt, Chatwood, Devenski, A. Diaz, Dietrich, M. Gonzalez, Kahnle, La Stella, M. Montgomery, Odorizzi, Pomeranz, E. Ramirez, A. Reed.

TQ: 29.0



northboro PHOENIX

2017 ELDERS of zion in review

TBL should hold onto its collective hats.



2017 in Review

Final Record: 91-71 (3rd, Williams)

At some point, Mr. Meyer must have focused his attention on the Elders of Zion and thought, “who the hell are these guys, and how did I let this happen?” Obviously, the best laid plans, etc., etc., but to some extent that flies in the face of the Sensei’s history in TBL. More often, or so it seems, his picks have worked out, his guesses have been solid, and his team has been in the mix. We’re not fond of buckets of cold water, Especially At Our Age, and 198 losses in two years qualify as an unwanted Ice Bucket Challenge.

Well, that’s over. A pennant race lies ahead. A good year, just out of the money, lies behind. TBL should hold onto its collective hats.

What went right?

The Zion offense was very Zion-like. Corey Seager delivered the complete package (.308-30-105), and Charlie Blackmon was also excellent (.316-26-81). Adrian Beltre led the team in RBI with 127, with 49 doubles and 62 walks to go with 27 homers. Only three players struck out more than 100 times – very much contrary to the New Normal – and the team only whiffed 1,228 times, fourth-fewest in TBL.

The pitching was more pedestrian, though Kenley Jansen was his usual self (1.65 ERA, 40 saves, 102 K in 65 IP). Steven Matz went 14-3 in his 22 starts, tying for the team lead. The team ERA benefitted from 87 unearned runs.

What went wrong?

The team lacked power, hitting only 156 HR; it made more errors (162). While there were a few outstanding performances as noted earlier in this article, some of the guys wearing Zion uniforms had clearly been retained as part of a transition. One more solid hitter, especially a power hitter, might have been enough to let the club nose into the playoffs.



Seager: the package

On the mound, most of the starting pitching did not fare well. Jon Gray won 14 but turned in a 4.49 ERA; Trevor Bauer (12-9, 5.15) and Jimmy Nelson (8-12, 5.39) were hit hard. Without the porous defense, the ERAs would have been even higher.

3 Things

1. *Low turnover.* Especially after the two down years, the Sensei has demonstrated patience with the players he’s taken. This is a young team, and it continues to add youth, a little at a time.
2. *The New Normal doesn’t always work.* This is a team that hasn’t bent toward Kyle Schwarbers and Joey Gallos, as alluring as those 1s and 6s might be. The next logical jump might be to acquire a speedster – Zion powerhouses have usually been fast.
3. *Don’t trust the TQs.* We pick the Phoenix to win the Williams. As we noted, that point difference is not that great, and we’re not convinced. Neither is Zion. Should be a great race.

ELDERS of zion

Rich Meyer (34th year); Hall of Famer

This may simply be a nice ride.



2014 seems like a long time ago, when the Elders of Zion looked like, well, the Elders of Zion, with back-to-back 100 win seasons, the second more productive (although less successful) than the first. Then the bottom dropped out – the pitching failed, the power disappeared, the strange substitutes pretending to be Elders filled the uniforms, and the club went 64-98 and 62-100. It almost made us forget how formidable a team this had been, and how long it had been so.

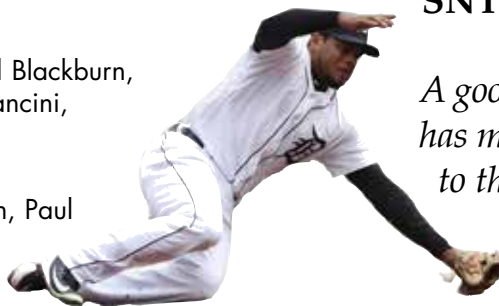
This had an upside: it came in the form of Corey Seager and Andrew Benintendi and Kenley Jansen and some others. The team hit better in 2017 (810 runs, three .300 hitters with 26 or more homers each) and pitched better overall, on the way to a 91-71 bounceback. It had some of the hallmarks of a Zion team (good overall run production; a solid bullpen) and lacked others (22 steals for the year: that seemed pretty anemic). Still not up to the Sensei's standards.

This year's team represents another step forward. It's the second year in the new edition of the Williams Division. Grand Cayman is on a bit of a rebound, and Warrenton is doing its best impression of a doormat. Northboro has it all together and, if things bounce right, should lead – but over a long season, no one gets more out of his boys than Mr. Meyer. It's probably not a 100 win team – but it might see postseason play. The team might be able to go deep, especially if a deal is made for a pitcher down the stretch. If we have one motto regarding this club over time, it's Never Underestimate the Sensei.

Turnover Rate: 23%

Arrived: Ehire Adrianza, Alec Asher, Paul Blackburn, Jeimer Candelario, Dominic Leone, Trey Mancini, Brandon Morrow, Alex Presley.

Departed: Abraham Almonte, Joe Blanton, Paul Clemens, Rubby De La Rosa, Brandon Guyer, John Jaso, Jhan Marinez, Matt Szczur.



Pitching: Mostly average.

8.5

The Zion staff is mostly average this year, slightly better at the high end, with only a few bad starts. The bullpen is led by a closer who is, indeed “almost as good as it gets”, and has some serviceable innings behind him. Both parts will have to be managed carefully, but that won't be a problem.

ROTATION. The starters are, as the instructions say, “consistently mediocre.” 137 starts belong to three righty Grade 10s - Jimmy Nelson (C+21 HR+25), Alex Cobb (C+24 HR+15) and Dylan Bundy (C+13) – and two righty Grade 9s – Jon Gray (C+21 HR+26) and Trevor Bauer (HR+11). Other than Cobb, who is 30, the group is young and should be the core of a good rotation for years to come. Rookie Paul Blackburn (Grade 11 C+16 HR+32, 10 starts) and former prospect Randall Delgado (Grade 12 C+26 HR+24, 5 starts) make up most of the rest, with Grade 1 lefty Steven Matz hanging in there until he gives up a couple of runs. They'll get the team into the fifth or sixth inning most days, which is all that the Elders would want.

BULLPEN. It is a matter of some comfort for Elders management to make the call to



Jansen: Comfort

SNT: Jeimer Candelario.

A good bat and a strong arm has made Candelario of interest to the talent scouts in Zion.

He may emerge as Beltré's successor in time.



ELDERS of zion

Kenley Jansen (Grade 22* C+46 HR+32, KXY) when they lead. His 68 innings have some support: Brandon Morrow (Grade 17* C+33 HR+62) and Dom Leone (Grade 16* C+13 HR+31) have 114 innings of good grades and peripherals, and there are 32 innings of A. J. Schugel (Grade 15* C-15 HR+25) as well. That's some heavy duty relief.

Ideally there would be a little more middle relief beyond this crew; but instead there is an entire bowling team of bulk relievers to fill the middle and long roles. The righthanders are Alec Asher (Grade 11*, 30 innings), Mike Lorenzen (Grade 9* HR+22, 83 innings), Kelvin Herrera (Grade 9* C+14, 59 innings), and Delgado (Grade 9*, 38 innings). The lefties are Jorge de la Rosa (Grade 10*, 51

innings) and the "specialist", Tony Watson (Grade 9* C+34, 67 innings).

Offense: 10.0
Careful management needed.

It would be appropriate to begin our discussion of the Zion offense by talking about Adrian Beltre or Charlie Blackmon, two pillars of the lineup for the last few years. But we cannot help but give our attention to the amazing card turned in by Scooter Gennett (1-1-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-9 R+1). 27 homers is a career high. Of course, now folks will be expecting it.

Okay, back to Blackmon (1-4-5-5, 12 hits, 3 walks+22) and the 94 games of Beltre (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4



Gennett: New look



Blackmon: Pillar

walks+22, L+9 R-4). Along with the new look Scooter, these are the best cards on the roster. There are two additional very good cards: Ronald Torreyes (0-6, 12 hits) and rookie Trey Mancini (1-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L-5).

The next tier of players have a variety of skills. Mitch Haniger (1-5-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-7) has power; Andrew Benintendi (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L-7, 25 SBA with 31 SSN)

has some speed and on-base; Corey Seager (1-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks) is a solid performer; and Ehire Adrianza (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+6 R-5), T. J. Rivera (3 0s, 11 hits, 1 walks+42, L-4), Yunel Escobar (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+4 R-4) and Alex Presley (4-5, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-8) have part-time skills. Meanwhile Shin-Soo Choo (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22) is a shadow of his former self. The best of the catcher offense belongs to Nick Hundley (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, L+9 R-6).



Benintendi: #1 speedster

In order to succeed, it'll require careful management of resources, since so many of these guys are only available for 70-90 games. Other than the big three – really the big two-and-a-half, all of them do something, but they each have one or another deficiency. Like the bullpen, it will require some careful management.

Defense: 4.5
At best, very good.

The infield at its best is very good. Corey Seager is an everyday SS9; Ronald Torreyes, when playing second, is a 2B8, and when at third is a 3B4; Beltre is a 3B5 when he plays. First base is a 1B3, usually Trey Mancini, as is T. J. Rivera and Ehire Adrianza. The problem arises when Gennett plays second base as a 2B6; he used to be better in the field, but he learned to hit home runs instead,

In the outfield, Mitch Haniger is an OF3 with an average arm; Blackmon is an OF2 with an inferior

one; Presley, Adrianza, and Benintendi are all OF2s. Shin-Soo Choo's fielding is also diminished (OF1, 34 arm). Escobar and Rivera play infield positions badly. Behind the plate, Hundley (C7 Th+1) and Bruce Maxwell (C7 Th+1). Roberto Perez (C8 Th+5) is the defensive guy only (they hope).

Bench: 3.0
Closer to contention.

Because of the number of choices and the skill of management, this is a good bench that gets the club closer to contention. In addition to the choices described above, there is a spare infielder – rookie Jeimer Candelario (0-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) who can play a little at third and first. Neither Maxwell (8 hits) nor Perez (7 hits, 4 walks) provide much offense, but they give the ability to pinch-hit or pinch-run for Hundley. Adrianza, Rivera, and Torreyes can all move around to various positions.

2nd There's simply not enough pitching to overtake Northboro on paper. Zion doesn't have a Kluber, and Northboro has substantial bullpen depth, including a serious closer. With comparable offenses, the nod should go to the other guy.

Still, the Sensei has been here before and there's draft to even the score. The team has gotten younger in recent years: Benintendi, Seager, Torreyes, Mancini, Candelario, and some of the pitchers are part of the next Zion generation. They can afford to spend a little bit if they're close – and they want it this year.

That part isn't clear. There are two dominant teams, both in the National Conference, that are clearly better than Zion (and, indeed, better than Northboro). There are a couple of teams comparable to them. Making an effort to get deep into the postseason only to run into a buzzsaw – as opposed to continuing to build around the young talent – may not be a calculation Zion management may want to make. Given that, this may simply be a nice ride – and a continuing nice change of pace. By 2020, watch out.

zion:
The New Normal



ELDERS of zion

If there is anyone who avoids selecting players who typify the New Normal, it's Mr. Meyer. A careful examination of the roster has revealed very few players who look like what we're trying to describe.

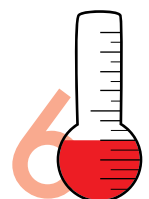
What to do? Well, there's nothing that can be done other than to pick on a player who used to be one of those power-speed-on base guys that the Sensei loves, and who isn't the player he used to be.

Shin-Soo Choo is our poster boy, primarily because in the process of losing any platoon shift, he's lost his power and some of his plate discipline (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 6 13s). Charlie Blackmon, Andrew Benintendi and Mitch Haniger are the outfielders now; others have a better claim on playing time on the newer, younger Elders.

Players born after 1990 (13): Asher, Bauer, Benintendi, Blackburn, Bundy, Candelario, J. Gray, Leone, Lorenzen, Mancini, Matz, C. Seager, Torreyes.

Players born from 1987 to 1990 (9): Adrianza, Delgado, Gennett, Haniger, K. Herrera, B. Maxwell, T. Rivera, R. Perez, Schugel.

TQ: 26.0



2017 grand cayman HAVENS in review



The 2017 team came within a couple of clutch dice rolls of winning the Series.

by Mark Bloom

2017 in Review

Final Record: 99-63 (1st, Williams)

GM Boomer Wells put together a team that had it all: solid starting pitching, a deep bullpen, power, speed, defense, and the conference's batting champ (Melky Cabrera, .332). While the team didn't quite reach 100 wins in a division with two other 90-win teams, it cruised to the best record in the conference and went toe-to-toe with Brobdingnag in a tense, seven-game World Series.

What went right?

Edwin Encarnacion once again led the team in homers (47), but this year, he was chased all season by Brian Dozier (40). The team slugged 245 HR, tying the franchise record. Julio Teheran led the team with 17 wins, but Jon Lester (16 wins) led most other categories. The closer-for-a-year Dan Otero earned 39 saves with a sparkling 1.96 ERA.



Encarnacion: Team leader

What went wrong?

It's kind of ironic that a team/manager plagued with bad dice over the years was done in by the randomized dice rolls of the TBL chat room.

After taking a 3-games-to-2 lead in World Series face-to-face play, the Havens were shut out in two straight games online. I'd bet against that ever happening again, but the games are in the books. The 2017 team came within a couple of clutch dice rolls of winning the Series.

3 Things

1. *Strong City Statesmen.* The splash that Mr. Sheffler made at the beginning of this very interesting offseason not only turned heads, but also turned teams from favorites into also-rans. As much as the Havens would have liked to continue to be competitive in the National Conference, the Statesmen's moves made it easier to take a step back, retool, and get a little younger.

2. *Chris Archer.* When we traded for Justin Verlander during the mid-season trading period, we weren't thinking of trading him away anytime soon. But considering #1 above, it made sense to explore our options. As it turned out, we made a deal with Mr. Sheffler to get a younger ace who we liked as much. And he came with extra picks that became additional prospects Pivetta and Bader.

3. *Amed Rosario.* This was something that happened only because I attended the TBL draft in person. Since my first pick in the draft was deep in the Bonus round (#69, to be exact), I didn't have to research any of the first-round prospects. (I looked at them, anyway.) When I heard Mr. Beard say he didn't really want to take Rosario, but took him because he was the best available guy, it created an opportunity that culminated in a trade the following week. Now the Havens have a shortstop of the future who could blossom very quickly.

grand cayman HAVENS

Mark Bloom (28th year)

It will be interesting to see if this team has a second act.



The rise was meteoric in Grand Cayman last year. Mark Bloom pushed all his chips to the center of the table and bet the ranch. They won the Williams over an emerging Northboro team by six games. They beat Detroit and an excellent, if unorthodox Las Vegas team to get to the World Series. Then, they took a 114-win Brobdingnag Barbarians team to seven games before falling just short.

It was a great run, but Cayman burned a good portion of their 2018 chances to supercharge their pennant chase in 2017. Their first pick – Brent Suter – was selected at the end of the bonus round with the 69th pick – and he had only 14 starts so he’s definitely an interest-bearing account. Cayman did not tear it all down, so next year looks better. But this year, the *Annual* is looking at Northboro and Zion to lead the pack on the Williams.

Pitching: 7.0
Waiting for better grades: good pen

ROTATION. There’s no top-end starter this year. Chris Archer (Grade 10, C+14 HR+13, 34 starts) and John Lester (Grade 9, C+13, 32 starts) are the studs in the rotation, but they are both off their highs. The third man in is the excellent Julio Teheran (Grade 9, C-12 HR-15, 32 starts), who is 27 and will certainly be delivering better grades than this in future years. The aforementioned Brent Suter (Grade 10, C+24 HR+24, 14 starts) gives the Havens 112 starts of Grade 9 or 10.



Teheran: Excellent

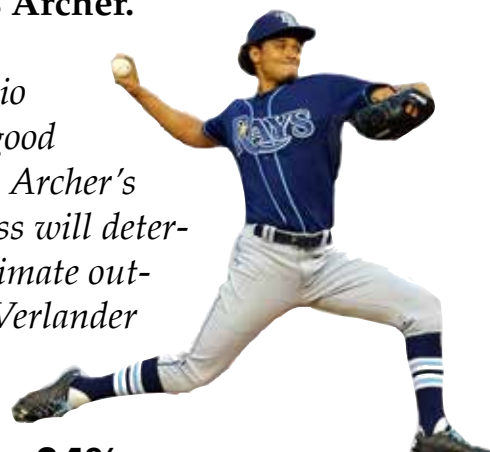
Nick Pivetta (Grade 4, C-24 HR-22, 26 starts) and Miguel Gonzalez (Grade 7, C+11 HR+12, 27 starts) will take their turns and their lumps at the back end of the rotation.

This group falls short of the division leaders, but it’s a group that could win a division next year if everything falls right. Boomer is just waiting for better grades to show up.

BULLPEN. Grand Cayman has a solid closer in this transition year. Wade Davis (Grade 19*, C-42 HR+22, 59 IP) continues to deliver good grades. His 79 strikeouts in 59 IP last year would indicate that he’s got plenty of gas left at age 33. He has a nice group of setup guys here. Kyle Barraclough (Grade 16* C-53 HR+34, 66

SNT: Chris Archer.

Amed Rosario would look good here too, but Archer’s future success will determine the ultimate outcome of the Verlander deal.



Turnover Rate: 34%

Arrived: Chris Archer, Harrison Bader, Marco Gonzales, Donnie Hart, Andrew Knapp, Francis Martes, Leonys Martin, Zach McAllister, Collin McHugh, Nick Pivetta, Amed Rosario, Dominic Smith, Brent Suter.

Departed: Norichika Aoki, Antonio Bastardo, Mauricio Cabrera, Jesse Chavez, Jumbo Diaz, Sean Doolittle, Chris Hatcher, Travis Jankowski, Dan Jennings, Colin Rea, Justin Verlander, Vance Worley.



Davis: Solid

IP) and Zach McAllister (Grade 15*, C-13, 62 IP) will steal 8s all year. Hector Neris (Grade 13*, C+14 HR+14, 75 IP) is a very useful late inning arm

with plenty of innings. The top four arms in the pen bring the heat for 262 inning of grade 13*+ relief.

The long men are numerous. Bud Norris (Grade 11*, C-21 HR+14, 3 starts, 53 RIP) starts a few games but is primarily a middle reliever here. Dan Otero (Grade 10*, C+53 HR+23, 60 IP) and Tony 'Gale Force' Cingrani (Grade 10*, C+16 HR-42, 43 IP) will help the starters early.

Chris Hatcher (Grade 9*, C+13 HR-15, 60 IP), Donnie Hart (Grade 8*, C+15 HR+22, 44 IP), James

Hoyt (Grade 8*, C+16 HR+11, 49 IP) and mop extraordinaire Francis Martes (Grade 7*, C-44 HR+16, 4 starts, 36 RIP) complete the picture.

This is a good pen with lots of innings – over 600 innings total. There's no need to watch the starters struggle. Let's burn some bullpen, shall we?

Offense: 7.0
Core of a great offense.

There's one player on this club that is really special. Brian Dozier (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 27 SSN for 23 SBA) came to these sandy shores in a trade a year ago, and here he stays waiting for the rest of his teammates to catch up. Dozier is a dynamic, powerful slugger with plus speed and an exceptional



Dozier: Special

glove at a key position – second base. Second basemen that can put up numbers like this guy are exceedingly rare, and he enters his age 31 season as one of the best two or three players at his position.

There are several other plus bats. Slugger Edwin Encarnacion (1-1-6, 9 hits, 5 walks) is the everyday cleanup hitter and first baseman. Kyle Seager (1-0-0-0, 9 hits 3 walks, no 24s) has developed into a quality third baseman. Alex Avila (1-0-0, 9 hits, 6 walks, R+1, 112 games) and Andrew Knapp (0-6, 9 hits, 5 walks, 56 games) share the catching duties and will draw a ton of walks. Evan Gattis (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 84 games) plays a catcher on TV.

Things drop off a bit after that. Burner Cameron Maybin (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, 17 speed, 31 SSN for 41 attempts) will terrify opponents when he's on base. Brandon Crawford (0-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) is the regular shortstop. Old friend Melky Cabrera (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) is still playing every day at 34. He bats second all year. Gregory Polanco (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 34 SSN for 9 attempts) plays right field in the regular lineups and bats ninth.

The core of a great offense is here. The kids - like Polanco and Amed Rosario (3 0s, 9 hits, 46 games) – will be the keys to whether this offense re-emerges next year. The roster – led by Dozier – is full of names we like.

Defense: 5.5
Overall strong.

Brandon Crawford (SS9) and Brian Dozier (2B9) are the best middle infield in TBL and certainly near the top defensively. Kyle Seager (3B5) is terrific at the hot corner. Alex Avila (C8, Th+0) is very competent behind the plate. That's four key positions where Grand Cayman is as good as anyone.

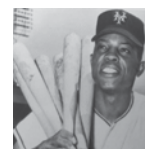
There are two high performers in the outfield. Cameron Maybin (OF3, 33 arm) puts all that speed to excellent use as the regular centerfielder. Gregory Polanco (OF2, 37 arm) is a good outfielder with an elite arm.



Crawford: Part of the best

3rd

Northboro and Zion look to be stronger



teams this year. Mark had his good run, and the core of a contender is still here. It will be

Things get a little shaggy elsewhere. Edwin Encarnacion (1B3) is there for his bat. Melky Cabrera (OF2, 32 arm) is solid but ordinary in left. Evan Gattis (C6, Th-4) will actually be asked to try and catch the ball – supposedly when lefthanded starters are facing the islanders. We'll see how long Boomer Wells puts up with that.

interesting to see if this team has a second act. A lot depends on the development of players such as Amed Rosario, Gregory Polanco, and Chris Archer, and whether they come to the fore prior to the aging out of the older core of Wade Davis, Edwin Encarnacion, Jon Lester and others.

Overall, this is a strong defense with great players in key positions.

Bench: 2.0
A few items of interest.

The bench has a few items of interest. Jose Reyes (4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+3, D31 for 30 attempts) starts against lefties and is a nice resource as a late inning pinch-hitting and running option. Andrew Toles (1-5-5, 10 hits, 2 walks, 96 at bats) has enough power to make an impact. (This guy needs a change of scenery. He's really buried in Los Angeles.) Harrison Bader (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, 17 speed, 85 at bats) is another guy who adds speed when speed is needed.

Dominic Smith (1-5-5, 7 hits) and Matt Holliday (1-5-6, 8 hits 4 walks) are here for organizational depth.

Not a terrible group. They will only lightly impact the starting lineups, however. They're on the bench for good reasons.

**grand cayman:
The New Normal**

In 2014, the Kansas City Royals converted a mediocre starter into a reliever, and the results were stunning. *Wade Davis* went 9-2, 1.00 in 2014 and 8-1, 0.94 in 2015, striking out 187 in 139 innings. The corresponding TBL years were similarly impressive (169 Ks in 131 IP). His last two years have been merely excellent, rather than simply unhittable, but the hard-throwing righty is a fine example of the New Normal.

grand cayman HAVENS

TQ: 21.5



2017 warrenton GIANTS in review



Some get to be Giants.

2017 in Review

Final Record: 73-89 (4th, Williams)

So, to be fair, we thought they might lose 100 games. The 2017 season for the Warrenton Giants was, by that metric, a success: 73-89 was a better outcome than expected.

It is, however, only palliative: by any measure the Giants' season was not unexpectedly a disappointment. It is one of those pieces of received wisdom in TBL that if you're not a contender, you should dive to the bottom – that, without fans to satisfy or tickets to sell, there is no merit to remaining in the indeterminate limbo of “around .500.” It won't even get you a pint at the TBL draft these days. But never fear: the season to come will more than make up for that oversight.

What went right?

As usual, Buster Posey was an offensive standout (.330-26-93). He was among the team leaders in most offensive categories. Adam Jones also turned in a very good campaign (30 HR, 90 RBI); Albert Pujols had one more burst of power (35 HR, 96 RBI, both tops on the team). Angel Pagan swiped 12 bases in 12 tries.

Madison Bumgarner had a terrific season, as expected – even more remarkable than expected, really, as he won 20 games and struck out an astounding 362 batters in 268 innings, pitching 11 complete games. (On a no-DH team, he also hit 7 homers; having a decent hitting card and minimal bullpen no doubt helped that CG total.) Aroldis Chapman, the minimal bullpen, recorded a tiny 1.25 ERA and 28 saves in only 38 games.

What went wrong?

Not too much on the offensive side, really. The team hit .249 with 190 homers, but only struck out 1,191 times, second-lowest in the league. There weren't too many standouts, but there also weren't too many desperately bad stat lines either. Part timers – who, remember, had to be available as pinch-hitters because Pitchers Hit Here in Warrenton – got their use, and made contributions to the offense.



Posey: Offensive standout

The team surrendered 924 runs and 234 homers, and the pitching staff recorded a 5.27 ERA. Other than Bumgarner, no pitcher won more than 7 games, and Wade Miley (7-12, 6.56) and Matt Cain (5-11, 8.55) were particularly hard hit.

3 Things

1. *Some get to be Giants.* Mr. Chapman has never hidden his affection for his favorite team, and it guides every transaction – draft or trade. Warrenton management is immune to the argument that it's better to have Giants when that team is good – that never really comes into it.
2. *No fear of failure.* The upcoming season will demonstrate beyond any shadow of doubt that the Warrenton Giants are willing to lose, and lose big. We have no expectation of failure of this prediction.
3. *This is all ephemeral.* The 2017 team, and the 2018 team for that matter, is much more like generic food – nothing worth identifying or remembering. The best times are ahead, when there might be another trophy to add to the first one.

warrenton GIANTS



Jack Chapman (10th year)

It's far more about the outcome than the journey.

It is a tenet of TBL and of TBL baseball talk – especially here at the *Annual* – that we look at what you're doing, and call it out if it's unorthodox, and sometimes make fun of it if it runs contrary to "established practice" or what passes for common sense around here. We do that, really, until it works.

Build through pitching and lionize the bunt? Got the Guru a championship. Build for one glorious year? Worked for East Anglia, worked for Melrose, worked for Munich. Refuse to go all in

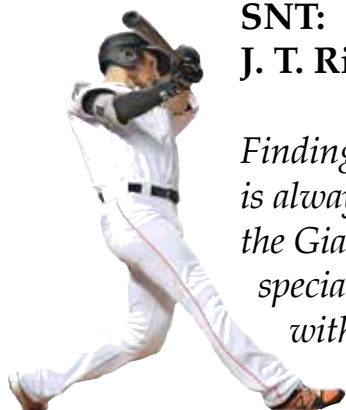
Turnover Rate: **83%**

Arrived: Erick Aybar, Ty Blach, Austin Brice, Jaycob Brugman, Aaron Bummer, Jharel Cotton, Kyle Crick, Willy Garcia, Luke Jackson, Ubaldo Jimenez, Ryder Jones, Evan Longoria, Luke Maile, Max Moroff, Josh Osich, Steven Pearce, Boog Powell, Clayton Richard, Joey Rickard, J. T. Riddle, Tyler Saladino, Warwick Saupold, Scott Schebler, Drew Storen, Eric Thames, Luis Torrens, Giovanny Urshela, Vince Velasquez, Rickie Weeks, Asher Wojciechowski.

Departed: Pedro Alvarez, Madison Bumgarner, Eddie Butler, Matt Duffy, Brett Eibner, A. J. Ellis, Ramon Flores, Wilmer Flores, Dillon Gee, Johnny Giavotella, Conor Gillaspie, Nick Goody, Adam Jones, Trevor May, Wade Miley, Angel Pagan, Jake Peavy, Gregorio Petit, Yusmeiro Petit, Albert Pujols, Enny Romero, Adam Rosales, Albert Suarez, Eugenio Suarez, Rick Tropeano, Zack Wheeler.

SNT: J. T. Riddle.

Finding a talented shortstop is always a challenge, but the Giants have something special to look forward to with Riddle.



until you could *really* go all in, leaving no doubt? That's Brobdingnag, for sure. Trade everybody, trade everybody again, try to contend, and probably trade everybody again afterward? We're in the "call it out" stage for Riverwoolf.

Play without a DH all year because you just don't like it? Well, that's Warrenton all right. And they did win a World Series by doing just that. So whatever we think of it, it's worked in the past. They have a pathologically high turnover rate – 83% – that we've never seen before (but may see again a year from now). The good news for Jack Chapman's club this year, however, is that even with a DH their offense is extremely inferior. When combined with very poor pitching, it's the worst team in TBL by a substantial margin. Indeed, it's almost as if he planned it that way.

Pitching: **2.5** Unapologetically dismal.

This is, unapologetically, a dismal pitching staff. With a few exceptions, these are space fillers and place holders, as they're not poor-graded middle-aged pitchers. With two picks in each of the first three rounds in 2019, some of next year's staff are players to be named later. We provide an accounting of the current pitchers as a courtesy.

ROTATION. The best pitcher in the starting staff is rookie Jharel Cotton (Grade 6 C-22 HR-23), who will go 24 times. The largest number of starts, however, will be made by another rookie, lefty soft-tosser Ty Blach (Grade 5 C+24 HR+22). Clayton Richard (Grade 4 C+23 HR+14) will make 32 more. That this is the best news should tell you all you need to know.



The rest of the starts – 72 more – will be shared among Matt Cain (Grade 2 C+12), Ubaldo Jimenez (Grade 1 C-16 HR-31), Jordan Zimmerman (Grade 1 C+23 HR-15) and the soon-to-be-frequently-misspelled Asher Wojciechowski (Grade 1 C+21 HR-32).

It does not seem particularly necessary to describe – or imagine – what will happen to these guys on a regular basis, particularly since all of the starters are by direction stapled to the mound for seven innings. The good news is that most of them will be unaffected by fatigue reductions.

BULLPEN. There are no specific directions for the use of the relievers. The best reason for this is that while they're generally better than the starters they replace, they are largely not very good and there are insufficient innings to make a great difference. The top grades belong to Kyle Crick (Grade 17* C-51 HR+41) and Aaron Bummer (Grade 17* C-62 HR-22), who have 54 innings between them. Wojciechowski, who will be starting for part of the season, adds 27 innings as a Grade 13*.

After that, the bulk of the pen is unimpressive, though again it's better than all of the starters. Anthony Saupold (Grade 8* C-24), Heath Hembree (Grade 8* C+16), and Vince Velasquez (Grade 8 C-33 HR-26) provide nearly 200 innings; Austin Brice (Grade 7* C+21 HR-23), Drew Storen (Grade 7*) and Luke Jackson (Grade 6* C+16 HR+34) add 139 more. Josh Osich (Grade 4* C-61) is the only lefty, and presumably gets to stay because he's a Giant.

This is not even a particularly good bowling team, and is comparable to some of the poorest staffs we've ever reviewed.

Offense: 4.0
Lots of 1-2-3 innings.

The most dangerous card in the lineup – one hesitates to designate it the “best” card – belongs to veteran/new draftee Eric Thames (1-1-4-6, 8 hits, 5 walks+22, 9 13s, L-12 R+2). He's an unusual choice for a team on the rebound, but will be the cleanup hitter every day and might prove attractive to a contender during the stretch. His tag-team partner is even more a bearded lady: Scott Schebler (1-1-6-6, 8 hits, 2 walks+42, 7 13s including one on 31). Sometimes, they'll hit home runs; other times, they'll strike out. It would be better if there were players on base to be driven in, but that won't be true often enough.



Thames: Unusual

The other offensive players worth mentioning are Buster Posey, who hit well but lacks some of his usual power (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L+6 R-4; he seems a little undercarded for .320); Evan Longoria (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22); and Joe Panik (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22). They're all playing for San Francisco this year, so, you know, no surprise. Denard Span (6-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-9 R+1) has left the Bay Area, but is still here in Warrenton.

The rest of the lineup is very pedestrian. Steve Pearce (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) is the best of the lot; Boog Powell (not to be confused with the real Boog Powell, of course; 3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks) has about 50 games who will sub in against lefties; shortstop will be divided between Erick Aybar (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, 15 SBA with 28 SSN) and rookie J. T. Riddle (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks). Joey Rickard (3 0s, 9 hits, 1 walk+22, 9 SBA with 34 SSN, L+3 R-5) will contribute many outs as well.

While there will be some outbursts of power, there's not a great deal of speed or on-base, and there will be lots of 1-2-3 innings.

Defense: 4.0
Strong in places.

The Giants will field strong players at catcher, second and third base. Buster Posey (C8 Th+2), Joe Panik (2B8) and Evan Longoria (3B5) are all top-notch defenders.

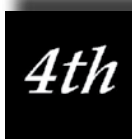
The rest of the fielders are basically average. Thames and Pearce are both 1B3s; Aybar and Riddle are SS8s; Pearce is an OF1, but Powell, Span, Schebler, Span, Rickard, and bench guys Willy Garcia and Jaycob Brugman are all OF2s with average arms. Tyler Saladino (2B8 3B4 SS8 1B3) is here for his glove, which is useful on days Longoria or Panik are unavailable.



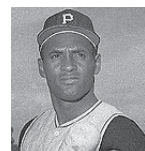
Posey: Strong

Bench: 2.0
Not a lot to do.

The extra players don't have a lot to do, which is just as well as they don't do very much. Saladino has a glove but no bat (2 0s, 7 hits, 2 walks); Max Moroff (2B7, 6-0, 7 hits, 3 walks+22), Giovanni Urshela (3B4, 2 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks) and Ryder Jones (1B2, 3B3, 2 0s, 6 hits, 2 walks+42) have neither. Jaycob Brugman (0, 9 hits, 4 walks) and Willy Garcia (4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) may be useful for pinch hitting. Luke Maile (C7 Th+4, 6 hits) and Luis Torrens (C6 Th-4, 6 hits) are here because you need to carry more than one catcher.



And by a long way. While Grand Cayman has some pretensions to trouble in the Williams,



Warrenton is very, very much the last place team in this division: it could hardly be otherwise.

Truly it is no surprise. This is a team built to be able to select Shohei Ohtani, or someone similiar, next year. 2018 will be a long year, but it's far more about the outcome than the journey. As with many such team-years, the outcome and performance is not even relevant. Assume that there will be offensive outbursts and good pitching performances for everyone who comes to Warrenton this year.

warrenton GIANTS

warrenton:
The New Normal



There are few cards that more typify the New Normal than that of *Scott Schebler*, who does a few things well and the rest poorly. The card has impressive power (1-1-6-6) and actually has a little speed – he's fast, and has a few steals with a 25 SSN. But there are only 8 hits, 2 walks (and a 42), and 7 13s (including one on dice result 31, which in our experience has an almost magnetic effect. He'll put up amusing statistics this year.

TQ: 12.5



breakthrough

There are fringe players on TBL rosters right now who might be important players on rosters in 2018. Some of those names appear in the list below. Some won't make it, but last year's list was Aaron Judge, Andrew Benintendi, Alex Bregman, Dansby Swanson, Jose Berrios, Joe Musgrove, Josh Bell, Orlando Arcia and Yulieski Gurriel, a pretty good list: and a good sized handful of other players in our honorable mentions.



1 Ozzie Albies, 2B, Knoxville.

The youngest player in the TBL draft has stepped right into the lineup in Atlanta and has been outstanding.



2 Yoan Moncada, 2B, Brobdingnag.

The primary payment for Chris Sale from Boston a year ago, he was taken second overall in the 2018 draft, and has great upside.



3 Jorge Alfaro, C, Melrose.

A power-hitting catcher, he'll be right at home in Melrose (and with the Phillies as well).



4 Rafael Devers, 3B, Blue Hill.

One of the best products of the Red Sox farm system, Devers has terrific power. He's a valuable addition to the Mudslides' roster.



5 Matt Olson, 1B, Melrose.

A great exemplar of the New Normal, his power appears to be for real, and will feel right at home in Melrose.



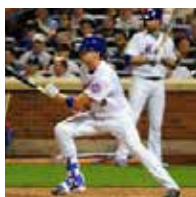
6 Reynaldo Lopez, P, Melrose.

The rebuild happening on the south side of Chicago will give Lopez plenty of opportunity to show his talent.



7 Jeimer Candelario, 3B, Zion.

Adrian Beltre's replacement either sooner or later, Candelario has very good power. He's not yet 25 and will get better.



8 Brandon Nimmo, OF, Brobdingnag.

A sleeper pick by the Barbarians, Nimmo is a power/speed guy who is getting plenty of playing time with the Mets.



9 J. T. Riddle, SS, Warrenton.

Riddle has great upside, and the way is clear for him to get playing time in Miami.



10 Marco Gonzales, P, Gr. Cayman.

He's still just 26, and after a few years of laboring in the Cardinals' system he's coming into his own in Seattle.

Honorable mention: Jose Alvarado, P, Northboro; Brian Anderson, 3B, Hudson; Christian Arroyo, 3B, Knoxville; Jaycob Brugman, OF, Warrenton; Eddie Butler, P, Whitman; Mark Canha, OF, Gotham City; Jarlin Garcia, P, Melrose; Amir Garrett, P, Munich; Sam Gaviglio, P, New Westminster; Tyler Glasnow, P, Brobdingnag; John Hicks, 1B, Rye; Rhys Hoskins, 1B, Columbus; Joe Jimenez, P, Calusa; JaCoby Jones, OF, Columbus; Tim Mayza, P, Las Vegas; Deven Marrero, IF, Las Vegas; Jefry Marte, 1B, Strong City; Dixon Machado, 2B, Gotham City; Keynan Middleton, P, Brobdingnag; Brett Phillips, OF, Hoboken; Jose Pirela, 2B, Gotham City; Nick Pivetta, P, Grand Cayman; Daniel Robertson, IF, Rye; Amed Rosario, SS, Grand Cayman; Warwick Saupold, P, Warrenton; Jorge Soler, OF, Columbus; Ross Stripling, P, Riverwolf; Dansby Swanson, SS, Northboro; Zack Wheeler, P, Las Vegas; Jesse Winker, OF, Calusa; Matt Wisler, P, Strong City; Blake Wood, P, Detroit. .

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. Our top two choices went 1-2 in the 2018 first round, and two more of our top ten were top 2018 choices. Six of our honorable mentions made it to round 1 as well. You be the judge. Thanks to Ray Murphy for his help.



1 Shohei Ohtani, P/OF, Los Angeles (A)

The Japanese two-way player has been a sensation so far, and is the odds-on favorite for first pick in the 2019 draft.



6 Lewis Brinson, OF, Miami

Speedster Brinson, the principal payment for Christian Yelich, will have lots of opportunity to play in Miami.



2 Ronald Acuña, OF, Atlanta

The 20-year-old outfielder has made a big splash early in 2018, and will be highly sought after next year.



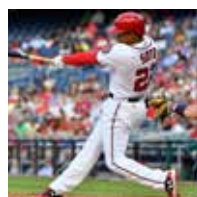
7 Scott Kingery, IF, Philadelphia

The versatile infielder has been a good part of a resurgent Phillies team. He may be a third baseman or shortstop.



3 Miguel Andujar, 3B, New York (A)

The young power hitter has forced his way into the Yankee lineup. His glove has to catch up with his bat, though.



8 Juan Soto, OF, Washington

At age 19, Soto has already made a big impact after being called up due to injury. He is very likely in the majors to stay.



4 Walker Buehler, P, Los Angeles (N)

The hard-throwing pitcher benefits from injuries in Los Angeles, and may be the best available starter in the 2019 draft.



9 Dustin Fowler, OF, Oakland

A year out from a first-game injury with the Yankees, he's slashing for the Oakland Athletics and should be in demand.



5 Gleyber Torres, IF, New York (A)

Two years out from the Chapman trade with the Cubs, he's starting to pay big dividends for the Yankees.



10 Vladimir Guerrero Jr., OF, Toronto

Another 19-year-old, he's got the power of his namesake father and is one of the top prospects in Major League Baseball. He'll arrive later this year.

Honorable mention: Willy Adames, IF, Cincinnati; Tyler Austin, 1B, New York (A); Franklin Barreto, SS, Oakland; Willie Calhoun, OF, Texas; J. P. Crawford, SS, Philadelphia; J. D. Davis, 1B, Houston; Serathony Dominguez, P, Philadelphia; Caleb Ferguson, P, Los Angeles (N); Jack Flaherty, P, St. Louis; Luiz Gohara, P, Atlanta; Jordan Hicks, P, St. Louis; Carson Kelly, C, St. Louis; Isiah Kiner-Falefa, 2B, Texas; Michael Kopech, P, Chicago (A); Tyler Mahle, P, Cincinnati; Ryan McMahon, 1B, Colorado; Tyler O'Neill, OF, St. Louis; Nick Senzel, IF, Cincinnati; Mike Soroka, P, Atlanta; Max Stassi, C, Houston; Alex Verdugo, OF, Los Angeles (N); Ryan Yarborough, P, Tampa Bay.

editorial

by Walter Hunt

We are constantly reminded of the steady, unceasing, inexorable passage of time. Players get older, and younger players appear – and each year what constitutes “young” gets younger and younger, further and further away. This is the theme of Jim Dietz’ brief poem “Justin K.” below, and it should strike a chord for all of us.

In my basement closet I have storage containers with dozens of APBA card sets, many of them holding cards that once upon a time were organized into TBL teams. Among those from the TBL era there are great players who were once young stars – Andruw Jones, Dwight Gooden, Gregg Jefferies, Rickey Henderson . . . and a thousand others who were drafted, traded for, carried on rosters until they blossomed . . . and a thousand others who we once thought would achieve the same stature and who did not.

It makes the entire TBL exercise seem ephemeral and irrelevant, because, you know, *nothing lasts forever* and *no one lives forever* – not Andruw Jones, not Ichiro Suzuki, not Kirby Puckett, not Tony Gwynn. The carefully tallied scoresheets, the memorable contests, the records set and broken all pass into history. Steve Stein’s excellent work in compiling the TBL Statistics History, like the ones that present the records of the actual major leagues, allow us to recall such things, at least in the aggregate: but after a while they all merge together and are hard to tease apart.

This is of course a self-defeating process, and if you start believing it you leave our happy company and go off to do something “important.” Letting this existentialist view take over is, in the words of *Babylon 5*’s Londo Mollari, being “nibbled to death by cats.” This is what’s wrong with These Kids Today, and they should get off my lawn and leave me alone to roll dice.

Because, of course, this *isn’t* what APBA is about and it *isn’t* what TBL is about. Years ago when Darrell Skogen drafted David Wright, I made an offhand analogy to Ken Boyer, much to Darrell’s pleasure – it recalled earlier days and earlier APBA cards, a glimpse of another time and another summer, because history rhymes. As Jim Dietz notes, APBA allows us to return to a time when Mark Fidrych’s arm was strong, when Dwight Gooden was still that amazing young man full of promise, letting Fernandez and Ventura and Gwynn and Puckett and Steve Olin and Ken Hubbs and Thurman Munson and countless others be alive again playing this glorious game in the rays of a renewed summer even when a blizzard rages outside the window.

Giving in to the inevitability, to the drudgery, to the repetition – letting existential ennui overtake us – is the very thing we seek to avoid. Every new card set is a renewal of the spring. That’s also true if your new card set is a reissue of some great year in your past – 1967 or 2004 for Red Sox fans, 1991 or 1965 for Twins fans. In APBA Willie Mays is always young and strong and hitting *that* homer or catching *that* fly ball.

So don’t feel any existential angst, if that was ever an issue. And even if other things are weighing heavy, making you feel old, be glad that you have APBA which makes players (even long gone ones) be forever young, and makes us forever young as well.

Have a great season.



commissioner's report

by Ray Murphy

Now two years into my second stint as commissioner; I still find the goings-on in the league to be utterly fascinating, even though I'm not running a team in the league.

This past offseason, from Madison Bumgarner's frequent address changes to the continued revolving door that is the Riverwolf roster, was a wild one even by TBL's high standards. (And that's with the Prince of Darkness on the disabled list for half the offseason!)

Even as a dispassionate observer, I couldn't help diving into the rabbit hole a few times, trying to figure out who was winning some of these crazy trades, what each party's motivations were, and so on.

That's the best part of this league, for me. 24 different personalities, 24 different objectives (well, one objective, but 24 different ways of getting there), infinite different ways to build a team. It's been 25+ years since I first joined TBL, and the team life cycle still captures my attention in ways that no other baseball experience does.

For that reason, it bummed me out that I couldn't join the crew in Arizona this spring. That's such a great trip to take with anyone; to escape winter and soak in some rays, some suds, and some games. Layering that with the high holy days of TBL draft weekend is just more fun than anyone should be allowed to have. I remain jealous of those of you who made the trip. Next time, folks ...

But now, it's on to the 2018 season. My approach in administering the league will continue to be rather laissez-faire, as I trust you guys to know what you need to do, when you need to do it, and to communicate with each other when the inevitable problems or delays arise.

I will call your attention to one point that I will pay particular attention to this season: please, please make sure you are playing with the right set of road instructions. Most of you are good about sending your road managers a communication with lineups, or clearance to just use the standard instructions. But, as a home manager, please don't go right to the standards without prior confirmation. Already this spring, we've had a few instances of using standard instructions when custom ones were sent (or were thought to be sent, at least). In this day and age, checking in via email is trivially easy, and should be everyone's default posture.

A second point, somewhat premature but still important, is that I will be looking to put a little more structure around the schedule for play-off rounds. Even though the draft was in mid-March this year, we almost weren't ready for a World Series by draft weekend. That shouldn't happen. Stay tuned for more on this during rules ballot season.

Other than those minor points, I do appreciate everyone's continued cooperation and support. I'm glad that we seem to be getting the league roster back to full health, and wish the same for all of your team rosters as well.

Good luck to all this year!
Ray



I know a guy who spent time
In the big leagues,
Not much, just 18 A.B.
Spread over three seasons,
Not enough to ever get an APBA card.

But those weeks in the bigs,
Just like Bull Durham said,
Hotels and planes, but mostly,
White balls for batting practice.

A catcher, collisions and concussions
Knocked him out of baseball
Before he was 30.

I haven't ever lost an APBA card for a lifetime,
'84 Gooden never finds cocaine,
Fidrych is locked forever in '76 without a bum arm,
And Jose Fernandez's card will forever
Come up with the words, 'if only.'

But what cards did I never get,
The Justin K's of baseball
Before APBA dotted everybody and
Put everyone on CD.

Have I forgotten people around me in APBA in time?
Have baseball friends become dotted cards
And then lost forever?
Yes, yes, I have.
I roll. 46. 24, 6-3.
The game goes on.

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-seventh 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, Ray Murphy, at

rmurph3@comcast.net

or TBL's unofficial recruiter and analyst, Walter Hunt, at

hotc@walterhunt.com.

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