

The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

The Game Has Changed

1949 to 1950

Rate: Right Throws: Right
Height: 5-10 1/2 Weight: 187
Born: 3-5-11 Fairdale, Ala.
Walter Howard, Jr.
"Big-Hey"
MAYS
(P) Outfielder (D) (1949) (1950) (1951)

11-1	21-8	51-9
12-21	33-22	52-27
13-14	38-4	53-17
14-30	34-21	54-22
15-11	35-14	55-9
16-28	38-23	56-12
17-30	41-28	57-14
18-2	42-14	58-20
19-12	43-22	59-31
20-22	44-9	60-12
21-8	45-14	61-23
22-31	46-20	62-1

1949 to 1950

Rate: Right Throws: Right
ALONSO
First baseman (D)
Year: 6 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60
2010 2020 2030 2040 2050 2060 2070 2080 2090 2100
Height: 6-2 Weight: 245
Born: 12-7-18 Tampa, Fla.

11-1	31-18	51-9
12-20	32-20	52-27
13-14	33-9	53-16
14-30	34-21	54-22
15-8	35-22	55-8
16-13	36-14	56-24
17-13	41-24	61-27
18-5	42-41	62-13
19-12	43-29	63-13
20-13	44-8	64-13
21-9	45-14	65-20
22-13	46-13	66-1

Rate: Right Throws: Right
Height: 6-6 Weight: 232
Born: 7-25-06 Van Horn, Colo.
Donald Scott
"Society"
DRYSDALE
Catcher & Pitcher (D) (P) (D)

11-7	31-22	51-20
12-23	32-20	52-27
13-12	33-8	53-13
14-20	34-21	54-22
15-9	35-19	55-9
16-28	36-20	56-24
17-15	41-24	61-24
18-8	42-13	62-13
19-12	43-20	63-23
20-20	44-9	64-12
21-21	45-14	65-23
22-13	46-21	66-1

1949 to 1950

Rate: Right Throws: Right
STRASBURG
Stephen James "The Soul Crusher"
Grade B Pitcher (D) (P)(D) (D)
Year: 6 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60
2010 2020 2030 2040 2050 2060 2070 2080 2090 2100
Height: 6-8 Weight: 226
Born: 7-20-09 San Diego, Ca.

11-7	31-26	51-23
12-25	32-20	52-27
13-13	33-8	53-13
14-20	34-21	54-22
15-9	35-13	55-9
16-28	36-23	56-24
17-20	41-13	61-27
18-8	42-13	62-13
19-12	43-29	63-20
20-13	44-9	64-13
21-21	45-14	65-20
22-13	46-13	66-1

2020 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:

Darrell Skogen
Joe Auletta
Rich Meyer
Jim Dietz

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the TBL baseball annual

Welcome to the 2020 *TBL Baseball Annual*. This is the twenty-sixth year of the *Annual* in the book format. This year we're looking at the way in which APBA – and the sport itself – has changed in recent years. We have three excellent articles from the most insightful of our members, an analysis of this year's very deep draft, as well as our regular features, including a poetic tribute to the great Al Kaline.

As always, we are pleased to bring this product to you.

Enjoy the *Annual* and enjoy the season.

Walter, Robert, Mark
May, 2020

On our cover: two stars from two different eras.

	G	AB	XBH	HR	BB	SO	SB	BA
1964 Willie Mays	157	665	77	47	82	72	19	.296
2019 Pete Alonso	161	597	85	53	72	183	1	.260

	G	GS	CG	W-L	IP	BB	SO	HR	ERA
1964 Don Drysdale	40	40	21	21-5	321.1	68	237	15	2.46
2019 Stephen Strasburg	33	33	0	18-6	209.0	56	251	24	3.32

The T.Q. System

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

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




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

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE

	Aaron Division	<i>Go the Distance</i>			82
	Las Vegas	84	Melrose	88	
	Kansas	92	Calusa	96	
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future drafts

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

The graphical displays below show how much each team has in the tank. The middle mark on the thermometer (9) represents a full draft (picks #1-#3) in 2021; above the middle line is excess, while below means something's missing.



haves



GRAND CAYMAN. Two #2s (theirs and NW's); four #3s.



BROBDINGNAG. Two #1s (theirs and NW's); two #3s (theirs and MAR).



WARRENTON. #1; Two #2s; two #3s.
HUDSON. Two #1s; two #2s.



MARACAIBO. Their #1 and two #2s (theirs and Las Vegas').

balanced



NORTHBORO, GOTHAM CITY, RIVERWOOLF. Their own drafts, likely upper half.

DETROIT. Their #1; two #2s.



MIDWEST, HOBOKEN, ZION, NEW WESTMINSTER, RYE, WHITMAN, NORTHBORO, COLUMBUS, KANSAS. Their own drafts.

CALUSA. Their earlier #1; two #3s.

have nots



STRONG CITY. Their and Melrose's #1.



KNOXVILLE. Their own #1 and #3.



STRONG CITY. Their and Melrose's #1.



BLUE HILL. Just a #1.



MUNICH. Two #3s.

all in



LAS VEGAS. Two #4s and two #5s.

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



Broddingnag (Ruth)	14.0	6.0	18.5	3.0	41.5
Hoboken (Ruth)	14.0	6.0	13.0	3.5	36.5
Las Vegas (Aaron)	12.0	4.0	15.0	3.5	34.5
Melrose (Aaron)	12.0	6.0	11.5	2.0	31.5
Blue Hill (Clemente)	14.0	6.0	9.0	2.5	31.5
Knoxville (Ruth)	9.0	4.0	15.0	3.0	31.0

The Solid Performers



Columbus (Mantle)	14.0	4.0	10.0	2.5	30.5
Rye (Mays)	12.0	6.5	8.5	2.5	29.5
Midwest (Ruth)	11.0	4.5	11.0	2.0	28.5
Whitman (Clemente)	8.0	6.0	11.0	2.5	27.5
Strong City (Clemente)	8.5	6.0	10.0	2.5	27.0

The Transitional Teams



Munich (Mantle)	9.0	6.0	9.0	2.5	26.5
New Westminster (Mays)	9.0	3.5	10.5	3.0	26.0
Detroit (Mantle)	10.0	3.5	9.0	3.0	25.5
Kansas (Aaron)	8.0	4.0	10.0	2.5	24.5
Zion (Williams)	8.5	3.5	8.0	2.0	22.0

The Rebuilders



Maracaibo (Mays)	6.0	6.0	5.5	2.0	19.5
Gotham City (Mays)	7.0	4.0	6.0	2.5	19.5
Hudson (Mantle)	7.5	3.5	5.5	2.5	19.0
Grand Cayman (Williams)	7.5	4.0	4.5	2.5	18.5
Northboro (Williams)	7.0	3.5	5.0	2.5	18.0
Calusa (Aaron)	5.0	4.0	5.0	2.5	16.5
Warrenton (Williams)	6.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	15.0
Riverwoolf (Clemente)	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.5	10.5

Division Totals

International	276.5 (23.0 average)
National	282.0 (23.5 average)

Ruth (IC)	135.5	Clemente (IC)	96.5
Aaron (NC)	107.0	Mays (IC)	94.5
Mantle (NC)	101.5	Williams (NC)	73.5

manager roll call

Munich Marauders	Mantle Division	<i>Paul Montague</i>	37th year
Hudson Generals	Mantle Division	<i>Clay Beard</i>	36th year
Elders of Zion	Williams Division	<i>Richard Meyer</i>	36th year
Gotham City Batmen	Mays Division	Anton Greenwald	35th year
Knoxville Outlaws	Ruth Division	Pat Martin	34th year
Maracaibo Rumrunners	Mays Division	<i>Walter Hunt</i>	34th year
Brobdingnag Barbarians	Ruth Division	<i>Joe Auletta</i>	32nd year
Hoboken Zephyrs	Ruth Division	Steve Powell	31st year
Grand Cayman Havens	Williams Division	Mark Bloom	30th year
Melrose Avengers	Aaron Division	Mark Freedman	27th year
Blue Hill Mudslides	Clemente Division	Mark Ludwig	25th year
Whitman River Rats	Clemente Division	Brian Hanley	25th year
Las Vegas Gamblers	Aaron Division	Paul Harrington	24th year
Northboro Phoenix	Williams Division	Robert Jordan	21st year
Midwest Mongrels	Ruth Division	Darrell Skogen	19th year
Northboro Phoenix	Williams Division	Steve Stein	18th year
Strong City Statesmen	Clemente Division	Eric Sheffler	17th year
Rye Herons	Mays Division	Craig Musselman	16th year
New West Whiskeyjacks	Mays Division	Jim Jeatt	16th year
Columbus Jets	Mantle Division	Vic Vaughn	14th year
Kansas Koyotes	Aaron Division	Bill Schwartz	13th year
Warrenton Giants	Williams Division	Jack Chapman	12th year
Detroit Dragons	Mantle Division	Dave Jaskot	9th year
Calusa Indians	Aaron Division	Gordon Rodell	6th year
Riverwoolf Sharks	Clemente Division	Daniel Dumont	4th year

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

Hall of Fame managers in *Bold Italic*.



2020 computer pre-play

by Clay Beard

Another year, another micro-manager. Gustave Robicheaux has been dispatched for another Cajun skipper; Kingfish Boudreau. The limits look to be in the neighborhood and he uses the right pitcher at the end of a close game. His only quirk seems to be constant lineup juggling. It looks like a different guy puts the lineup together every day. But they're all reasonable so I might stick with him for a while.

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. I also checked *Platoon Awareness*. 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.

In the National Conference all three division races have a clear favorite, but have a serious challenger sitting in the

second position. However there ain't no wild card coming out of the four-car pile-up that is the Williams. Visions of Gate City.

It's a different story over in the International. Brobdingnag can start printing the playoff tickets and Riverwoolf can start checking out who the first pick will be. They should stock up on ice and Ace bandages while they're at it.

But once you get past the two outliers, Wow! There are eight sold contenders within eight games of each other for the other four playoff spots. That looks like fun. And before you completely count Gotham City and Maracaibo out, there was one replay that had the Mays Division separated by four games, top to bottom. Once again, this exercise doesn't just deal with the probable, it deals with the possible.



International Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Clemente	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
BLUE HILL	92	70	--	105	82	6	0.5
WHITMAN	86	76	6	99	76	2	2
STRONG CITY	86	76	6	95	79	2	1
RIVERWOOLF	38	124	54	52	22	0	0

Mays	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
RYE	85	77	--	97	76	5	0
NEW WESTMINSTER	83	79	2	90	78	5	1
GOTHAM CITY	72	90	13	79	65	0	0
MARACAIBO	67	95	18	79	58	0	0

Ruth	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
BROBDINGNAG	113	49	--	121	107	10	0
KNOXVILLE	87	75	24	101	83	0	7
MIDWEST	87	75	26	95	80	0	6
HOBOKEN	85	77	28	93	79	0	2.5

National Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Aaron	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
LAS VEGAS	101	61	--	112	95	7	3
MELROSE	92	70	9	102	82	3	4.5
KANSAS	79	83	22	87	70	0	1
CALUSA	73	89	28	83	57	0	0

Mantle	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
MUNICH	102	60	--	118	97	9	1
COLUMBUS	95	67	7	107	84	1	8
DETROIT	82	80	20	90	63	0	2.5
HUDSON	70	92	32	78	58	0	0

Williams	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
ZION	78	84	--	84	73	7	0
NORTHBORO	73	89	5	80	84	3	0
WARRENTON	57	105	21	70	51	0	0
GRAND CAYMAN	57	105	21	67	49	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 2020



Todd Helton, 1B 1998-2014
Hudson

There aren't many players who remain with a single team throughout their TBL career, but Helton was a lifer with the Generals. He had 2,555 hits and 397 homers in an outstanding 17 year career, winning two batting titles in 2004 and 2006, and finishing with a .304 lifetime average. His best season was 2004 (.355-35-139).

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.



Alex Rodriguez, SS-3B 1995-2016
Brobdingnag, Portland, Hudson

Recent real-life events mar his legacy, but the numbers don't lie: he had 2,923 lifetime hits, 639 homers, and 1,872 RBI. He hit 50 homers four times and 40 or more seven times. In his prime he was the greatest player in baseball, and produced some of the best cards TBL has ever seen.

Joe Auletta *Manager, 1989-Present*
Brobdingnag (6 Championships, 9 World Series)

If any manager has changed the way we draft, we trade, and we look at general management, it's Joe Auletta. He was dubbed "The Prince of Darkness" at a memorable draft at West Point 30 years ago, and it's stuck – but there are few more knowledgeable, insightful, or generous with their time. Congratulations to our newest Hall of Fame manager.



for your consideration



Left to Right: Joe Nathan, Gary Sheffield, David Ortiz, Andy Pettitte

Joe Nathan, P 2000-2014
Richmond, New West, Hudson, Rye

For most of his career, he was an elite closer, recording five seasons of 30 or more saves and seven years with an ERA below 2.00. He is currently second overall in saves (238), one of the five pitchers with 200 or more.

This is his fourth year of eligibility. He appeared on 9 ballots in 2019.

Gary Sheffield, 3B-OF 1996-2014
East Anglia, Richmond, Northboro, New West, Whitman

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 fourth year of eligibility. He appeared on 10 ballots in 2019.

David Ortiz, 1B/DH 1998-2017
Melrose, Brobdingnag, Melrose, Melrose/Northboro

One of the most fearsome power hitters in recent baseball history, "Big Papi" left at the top of his game, hitting .302-37-163 for the Barbarians. He had more than 30 HR ten times, and more than 100 RBI nine times. His 543 career home runs ranks sixth overall; he is among all time leaders in BB (7th), 2B (5th), and RBI (6th).

This is his second year of eligibility. He appeared on 5 ballots in 2019.

Andy Pettitte, SP 1990-2010
Amherst/Melrose, Richmond, Mahopac/Kansas

A steady performer for eighteen years, he was the cornerstone of rotations for a decade and a half. He won 198 games in TBL, second among retired pitchers not already enshrined. He struck out 2,574 batters, currently 13th all-time. In 2006 he led the league in wins, going 20-10, 2.88 for Northboro.

This is his eighth year of eligibility. He appeared on 8 ballots in 2019.

Players with carryover votes: Gary Sheffield 5; Joe Nathan 4; Andy Pettitte 3; David Ortiz, Tim Hudson, Dennis Eckersley, Trevor Hoffman, Don Mattingly, Juan Gonzalez, Andy Pettitte 2; fifteen players with 1.

the game has changed (1)

by Darrell Skogen

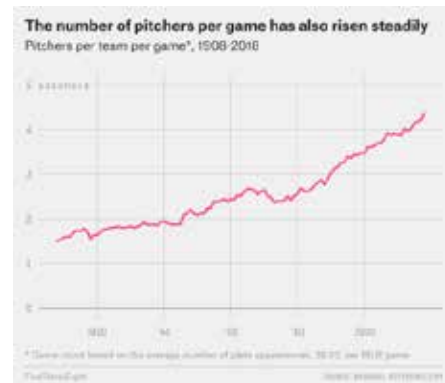
[For an overview of the evolution of Major League Baseball and APBA, the *Annual* staff has decided to turn to the most experienced player in our ranks: the Guru. This thoughtful article asks and answers some excellent questions. –Ed.]

Things Change

The way MLB is currently played is changing rapidly. As a league, we have been trying to deal with questions about whether we should change long-established practices in advance of, or as a result of, these changes. In the past year, we have discussed changes related to roster size, pitcher usage, and two way player usage just to name a few.

This essay centers on several changes that could affect how we play the game. First, there has been a trend toward further shortening of innings for starting pitchers. Should we be doing anything about fatigue factors and use of ‘openers’ as MLB employs more of them in so-called “bullpen games?” Second, as we consider the resulting increase in innings for relievers, how great a problem do we have with relief innings on our tablespots, and what, if anything, should we start to think about compensating for that? Third, we should examine the effect that increasing efforts to raise launch angles has on the game. Are we headed back to an age like the steroid period, and if so, how might a manager best think about rostering his team?

Let us begin with some data compiled from a few sources. Shorter duration of starters in games is hinted at in this chart, compiled by Nate Silver of 538, that shows the historical trend for number of pitchers used in a game:



Recent data found in Baseball Reference confirms that a large change in innings pitched per start has developed:

MLB Average Starting Innings Per Game			
2019	5.2	2005	6.0
2018	5.4	2004	5.9
2017	5.5	2003	5.9
2016	5.6	2002	5.9
2015	5.8	2001	5.9
2014	6.0	2000	5.9
2013	5.9	1995	5.9
2012	5.9	1990	6.1
2011	6.0	1985	6.2
2010	6.0	1980	6.3
2009	5.8	1975	6.5
2008	5.8	1970	6.4
2007	5.8	1965	6.3
2006	5.8	1960	6.4

From the 1960s through 2014, the standard centered around 6 innings pitched by starters per game. Over the past five years there has been a rapid drop, reaching 5.2 innings per starter last season. Clearly, the use of pitch counts for starters, limits placed on starters coming back from seasons lost to injury or surgery, and the rise in use of openers are all influencing this trend.

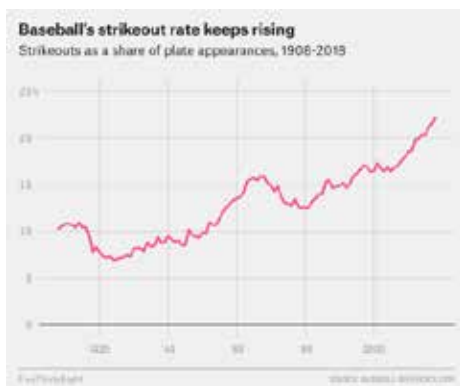
Further, it appears that this works even more efficiently as teams use more relievers. Silver provides this chart, related to pitchers who serve as both starters and relievers, in terms of their strikeout rate, data taken from Fangraphs.

Starters supercharge their K rate when working in relief: statistics for MLB pitchers who worked as both starters and relievers, 2016-18.

	AS STARTER	AS RELIEVER
Strikeout rate	18.4%	20.6%
Fastball velocity	91.6 mph	92.5 mph
Share fastballs	54.1%	55.1%
Share sliders	13.9%	15.0%

Observations are weighted by the lesser of the number of batters a pitcher faced in the two roles from 2016 to 2018. For example, a pitcher who faced 500 batters as a starter and 200 as a reliever would receive a weight of 200. Pitchers who averaged fewer than 15 batters per start, i.e., who served as “openers” or tandem starters, are excluded from this analysis.

One more graph compiled by Silver shows the rise in strikeout rates per plate appearance over time:



The strikeout data goes a long way toward explaining why MLB managers might prefer to use pitchers for shorter periods of time, allowing them to center on two pitches in particular (according to Silver, the fastball and slider) to create one of the three true outcomes of impor-

tance — the strikeout. Runners can't advance easily if batters swing and miss so often.

Batter response is clear, as seen by this chart, again compiled myself from data in Baseball Reference:

Year	HR/G	K/G	Year	HR/B	K/G
2019	1.39	8.81	2005	1.03	6.30
2018	1.15	8.48	2004	1.12	6.55
2017	1.26	8.25	2003	1.07	6.34
2016	1.16	8.03	2002	1.04	6.47
2015	1.01	7.71	2001	1.12	6.67
2014	.86	7.70	2000	1.17	6.45
2013	.96	7.55	1995	1.01	6.30
2012	1.02	7.50	1990	.79	5.67
2011	.94	7.10	1985	.86	5.34
2010	.95	7.06	1980	.73	4.80
2009	1.04	6.91	1975	.70	4.98
2008	1.00	6.77	1970	.88	5.75
2007	1.02	6.62	1965	.83	5.94
2006	1.11	6.52	1960	.86	5.18

Hitters are buying into the mentality that swinging for the fences is the way to go; it remains to be seen how much of the homerun increase is related to other factors such as juiced baseballs, defensive shifts, or just flatly bad pitching as starters make it to the major leagues with fewer minor league innings than in earlier times. What is clear is that the second true outcome, homeruns, is up over the long term, and is even rising above the level of the steroid period.

Answering the Three Questions

How do we approach the three questions posed at the beginning of this analysis?

First, there is the issue of the decline of starting innings, the increase in relief innings, and the greater use of openers. In the short term, we are going to be depending on relief pitching more

than we have in the past. I personally faced this issue several years ago. Having traded away draft picks over several years in order to remain competitive, I found myself drafting lower and lower, often having no first round pick. Trading to fix holes offensively gave me full time players at most positions, allowing me to expand the roster of bullpen pitchers. Those spots could have been used to draft young starters, but young starters generally do not help you in the short term as they learn their craft; bullpen members have often played their way into that role by failing as starters first, or by grooming in the minor leagues to pitch an inning at a time.

I have no data to back this up, but it seems to me that one-inning pitchers, throwing in the middle of the game, succeed at that more often than young starters do. TBL rewards those who enjoy that success by turning middle relievers into closer-quality studs. My plan became one of drafting younger pitchers who looked like they could be relievers for several years before their arms fell off. Right or wrong, once again, I came to a value judgment that guided my actions. It seemed that the *best* relievers pitched well two out of every three years. If you drafted several relievers with promise over several years of drafting, while you had no access to top offensive players (“best available young player”), you could create a loaded staff that would give you a staff of 10 or more relievers you could depend upon to find six or so who would be functional in any given season.

Can that really be done? Well, I won 88 and 89 games over the past two seasons. I had two previous seasons of 50-plus wins, with bad draft position left over from my previous run of success. The bullpen was fixed through the draft (which was cheaper than trading for it), and the offense was fixed through trading for several more years, extending the draft shortage a bit longer. Yes, it created the silliness that

Rich Meyer noted in last year’s *Annual*, and I suppose one could argue that there are smarter ways to build back. But it worked, and the expectation is that my season will be strong again; Walter tells me I have the best fourth place projected team in any division in TBL! The Dawgs are competitive in a very tough division, and have been so over the past two seasons, outplaying the projected finishes at the draft.

Can that be sustained throughout the league? Well, no. There are not enough relievers. What works for *one* team cannot be expected to work for all twenty-four.

Solutions

Thus, we need to address the issue of relief usage. Clay made some proposals last year that I see now in retrospect as solid. It could be argued, however, that we have other tools that would continue to allow us to play with the set of 900 cards we presently use. We could change the parameters on starter fatigue to encourage greater length of starter usage in games; we could increase the fatigue for relievers so that their grades don’t get lowered as quickly as they do now; we could arbitrarily set a multiplier for relief innings, based on the grades of relievers, to increase middle relief innings.

It seems to me we have covered blowout innings well enough with our current innocuous relief provisions. But if we wanted to monkey with that, we could allow *more* innocuous relief pitchers on the roster than we do at present, combined with raising the grade at which that “innocuousity” kicks in. These are only a few suggestions. We play tabletop baseball, and some of the things we do already skew the results we receive. Tweaking the fixes we already have in place could solve our problem without blowing things to kingdom come.

In reference to the question about how launch angles and juiced baseballs might create a return to the age of steroids and the effect that this might have on rosters: at this point I don't think we have a problem. If we have to increase our pitching staff numbers to deal with increased relief innings in the age of specialization, then we might worry about how we could have enough game/plate appearance coverage for the nine spots in the batting order.

Using my own team as an example once again, you can see that over the past several years I have carried more pitchers than hitters on my roster. We can't all get full time players at all positions. That is not the way MLB plays the game nowadays. The emphasis on super-subs allows real life teams to carry few bench players. My efforts have centered on getting as close as I can get to five starters and 10 to 15 relievers on the roster. That leaves 15 offensive players on my roster and *no* uncarded players. As others have noted in our league discussions, this could well add to a greater gulf between winners and losers in TBL if everyone tried to build their team as I have.

My first preference, therefore, would be to play with tweaks to relief innings in order to keep pitching rosters down. Nate Silver, whose graphs I included, argued in his writing that the number of relief pitchers on MLB rosters is the problem; he used his data to suggest one way teams could create a balanced ten man pitching staff that would not have starters throwing 300 innings or closers 150 (see <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/relievers-have-broken-baseball-we-have-a-plan-to-fix-it/>).

However, if we *don't* do something about relievers, we *could* tweak the nature of innocuous hitters to increase usage of part-time players already on our rosters. We could change the combinations that are used to make hitters innocuous in such a way that we had more of them avail-

able for more games. .240 batting average and .340 OBP could be increased to .250/.350. The fielding ratings could be eliminated, arm ratings changed, batting shifts moved downward. Much like the Federal Reserve Board uses an arsenal of weapons to fine-tune the economy, we could do some fine tuning here. However, it is more difficult to do without changing a delicate balance in the game; perhaps an even better approach would be to suggest changes to relief usage in conjunction with changes to innocuous hitting. For me, everything comes back to the specialization issue in pitching; hitting changes in regards to pitching and defense, but roster change at present seems to be all about more available pitchers in MLB in any particular season.

As you can see, I don't pretend to have guaranteed answers to what may or may not be a problem. There are trends for us to watch, however, that include the greater specialization of pitching roles, the increase in home run and strikeout rates, and the changes that MLB makes to keep the game moving forward. We need to see what effects the changes in roster size and the three batter rule have on relief innings as what I think is the major key to our player usage issues.

We have 20-plus minds out there all with varying degrees of statistical thinking ability given the nature of our stat freak addiction to APBA.

My goal here is to get you to see that thinking out of the box is fine, just doing what we have always done is not necessarily the best solution, and stubborn insistence on no change will likely cause us issues down the road.



Very simply, this has been the most difficult *Annual* article to write. With all the interesting — and occasionally strange — things MLB has been talking about for the past year I at first thought it would be easy. But the more I beat my head against the writer's block, the more I realized I was bruising my forehead and brain but making no impression on the stone block. Then, out of frustration, I gave up. I put it aside. I wrote draft after draft. Let it sit. Let it marinate. Rearranged, modified, twisted, and renovated. To no avail. I would either write something, look at it, and think, *There is no new insight here, this has been rehashed already.* Or I would think, *Has MLB gone off the deep end? There is no logical reason for TBL to do this.*

For those of you who have raised a brandy in Vlad's private study, you know he is a stubborn man by nature, and while I am not as obstinate and pig-headed (wouldn't bison-headed be a better term given their head butting prowess?) I am also stubborn. I do not like giving up. And in due time that stubbornness resulted in this essay. I will leave it to you to decide if you think that is a good thing or not.

Part I: Philosophizing

Let me spend at least a little time talking about the things MLB is talking about now for inclusion in its next season, whenever that is. We have already talked about the 3-hitter rule, the 26 man roster, and having enough G/PA/IP for our season. I truly don't know that any of that is a major state change, and *I hope we do not overreact.*

The truth is those things are fundamentally different from the increase in strikeouts, walks, and homers. The K/BB/HR change is tactics — all based upon a belief that a hard throwing average arm going all-out for a few batters is better than even the all-star pitchers after five

innings. Tactics. Based upon what MLB managers think is the best way to squeeze out a few more wins. Maybe they are right, maybe not, but it is what they believe will win games and thus keep their jobs.

But this round of "other rules changes" has nothing to do with winning games, managing teams, or anything like that. This round of changes is about things TBL honestly *doesn't care about*, and that is why they make no sense to me as I try to talk baseball. The deal with pace of the game. Union negotiations. Dead time during pitching changes. The common denominators: money. Fans in the seats, TV revenue, money going to the players. The Steinbrenners care deeply about such things but I know Vlad pays everyone minimum wage. I am guessing Boomer Wells does too (see, he and Vlad agree on some things after all!). No fan ever left their seat at Valhalla Stadium because the game went too long, and no fan ever turned off the TV because there were five minutes of commercials every time a relief pitcher was brought in.

But back to the thesis question: how do these rules affect us? For the most part—unlike the 13/14/1 changes—it is largely up to us. Do we need to implement the "3 batter minimum" rule? No. If we don't, does it make any playability issue for TBL? And tactical advantage? Any disruption of decades of TBL wisdom? No. No. No. If we adopt it, again no state change.

Cut down on the quick-turn trips between the majors and minors? Since we only allow changes at the beginning of the month, that does not impact us. It could — if we allow moves up and down more frequently, like at the beginning of each series, but that would undo much of what we have implemented with the five-man rotation and does not seem worth the extra bookkeeping it would cost us.

The 26 man roster? Again, I would argue that it too is not a big deal for us either way. It would give everyone more flexibility, but I strongly suspect MLB is only doing it as a concession to the union so they don't push back on the other changes. The TBL union has a much greater dread about the collective power vested in the owners, so we have not had a significant union problem as long as I have been here. In other words, we have the freedom to adopt or reject each of these as we care to.

But these are not without some amount of impact upon TBL. There are two areas in which we do need to decide. Both have been discussed in the chatter of group e-mails, but as soon as is reasonable we need to add something to our constitution. One is easy, one far less so.

Since MLB is likely to make more changes based upon dollars rather than wins (such as the contraction of the minors), we need to decide how, when, and under what basic principles will we automatically default to "adopt their changes", automatically default to "reject them", or someplace in between.

The more vexing problem is available usage. The majors do not know how these changes will truly affect roster sizes, 900 player card decks, nor do they likely care. This is their unintended consequence that we need to live with, but they do not. As Clay pointed out with us replaying the 1982 season, *if* MLB changes result in a significant change to MLB usage, then whether we like it or not it *will* affect us. We can start a letter writing campaign on behalf of all APBA teams and tell MLB they should cease and desist with such detrimental changes, but I suspect they would callously reject our wise insights. So we should be thinking and exploring our options before MLB does something truly disruptive – such as not play a 2020 season.

Part II: The Retrospective

As I struggled with this essay it became more and more clear that my struggles were largely

due to déjà vu. The more I realized it, the more I panicked about ripping up the last draft and starting afresh. Until, one dark and stormy night as the caffeine high was subsiding (one must always have coffee to write) I gave in, looked at my reflection in the china cabinet glass, and forced myself to be honest with myself. All I was doing for weeks was plagiarizing what was already essentially pondered two years ago in the 2018 *Annual*. I could pull out other excerpts, but the key quote is this one from the 2018 article:

"Traditionally grade and starts/innings have been the dominant discriminator (for immediate value), with peripherals as a secondary factor. ... 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."

So I decided that instead of reshaping and rewording it into a "new and better" version of the same idea, it would be better to ask if our 2018 forward-looking articles still make sense in 2020. We certainly do not know all the long term consequences. We do not know how long the "fad" of Three Sure Outcomes will last, though for now we know the trend is not reversing — and depending upon future manufacture of baseballs, it may be increasing. However we do have a little data. So what does the data say has happened, and do we have an idea where the changes are taking us and our TBL teams? I think we can start to get some hypotheses and maybe identify trends to keep watching for longer term confirmation, though we have far from enough data to tell for certain.

How much has the increase in walks and homers affected scoring, and has it affected MLB and TBL roughly the same?

Here is some aggregate data from TBL seasons 2014-2019. MLB 2014 season is on the same line with the 2015 TBL season. MLB-TBL negative numbers say there was more scoring in TBL that season.

MLB Year	Runs Per Game		MLB-TBL
	MLB	TBL	
2014	4.07	4.21	-.14
2015	4.25	4.36	-.11
2016	4.47	4.58	-.11
2017	4.65	4.60	+.05
2018	4.45	4.56	-.11
2019	4.83	TBD	TBD

There is some apparent correlation: each season, if MLB runs go up, so do TBL runs. The one season MLB runs went down, so did TBL runs. The range of runs per game is wider in MLB (0.58 runs per game difference between 2014 & 2017), while about half that (0.39 between 2014 & 2017) in TBL. Is that significant? I don't know, but I would think not in any meaningful game-play way. Is that attributable in part to our resetting the average pitching grade each season? I again I don't know but it might be. It would be an interesting exercise to track this backwards to the last round of TBL expansion, which I would like to have done but did not have the time.

What about the walks, homers, and hits?

I will not address the stolen base impacts because while they are certainly impacted my MLB strategies that cause more or less attempts, it is also heavily influenced by TBL manager strategy towards steals and hit and run. That — and because Walter the Draconian threatens decapitation if I exceed my allotted page count for this article — I will instead focus on the walks, hits, and homers. *[I am neither Draconian, nor have there been threats. – Ed.]* But we already know

the trends: hits down, walks and homers up. Offenses are built more around the Earl Weaver school of offence: less outs running the bases, thus more “potent” home runs. Well, read on grasshopper. (See the table at the bottom of this page.)

A steady upward trend in walks, in both MLB and TBL, with TBL being consistently a little more walk prone than MLB — slightly surprising given the increased emphasis by TBL managers to go for positive control pitchers. All that applies to home runs as well, though to be honest the MLB and TBL home run numbers are essentially the same, equating to about one additional HR per TBL team per season than in MLB. This is probably the single number I am most interested in seeing for our current TBL season: there was a *huge* 21% jump in MLB homers. This is not a gradual increase, and I am curious to see if our HR go up roughly the same amount (they will undoubtedly go up, the question is how much?). It may well give us a clue whether we need to adjust our pitchers' HR numbers.

But oddly — at least surprisingly to me — hit numbers have acted differently. MLB hits per game have actually been drifting up from 2014-2019, even accounting for a one year drop in 2018. In 2019 the MLB number was back up to 8.65 H/G. The TBL numbers have been gradually going in the opposite direction.

So far, a minor eyebrow-raiser for MLB hits, but nothing surprising. More importantly, nothing that would make be adjust my TBL strategy beyond the 2018 *Annual*. So we will look at the numbers one additional way.

MLB Yr	MLB H/ Gm	TBL H/ Gm	MLB-TBL H	MLB BB/ Gm	TBL BB/ Gm	MLB-TBL BB	MLB HR/ Gm	TBL HR/ Gm	MLB-TBL HR
2014	8.56	8.61	-.05	2.81	2.88	-.08	0.86	0.88	-.02
2015	8.66	8.55	.11	2.89	2.90	-.00	1.01	1.02	-.01
2016	8.70	8.61	.09	2.98	3.10	-.12	1.15	1.18	-.03
2017	8.69	8.48	.21	3.20	3.26	-.05	1.26	1.26	-.00
2018	8.44	8.36	.08	3.16	3.23	-.07	1.15	1.17	-.02

Has the value of different scoring components changed?

Now let's look at three other related numbers: Runs/H, Runs/BB, Runs/HR. Is there anything there to be learned? Homers are up, runs are up, but are they staying parallel? Of course the key data point will be the TBL 2020 season which we do not have yet, but we can look at the data we do have. (See the table at the bottom of this page.)

Now that is a bit different from what I expected. First, all the red ink. Over the past five years, TBL has produced more runs per hit, runs per walk, and runs per homer than MLB. Not a lot, I grant you, and far from statistically significant, but enough to make one say, "Oh?" and look deeper when time permits.

Second, the three things show a slight difference in how they track. Hits track very consistently — MLB versus TBL — year to year. But the gap is noticeably smaller for HRs the last three seasons than it was in 2014 and 2015. For walks it has bounced up and down — likely random fluctuation. To be honest, *all* of this could be random fluctuation. All this article is really doing is pointing out some very early observations that some poverty stricken grad student might pick up as a thesis topic. (I know, not likely.)

The one I find interesting are the two columns highlighted in yellow: how potent were the home runs? There is clearly *something* that changed from 2014-15 to 2016-18. The run/HR ratio dropped well over half a run, in other words the home runs were increasing faster than the runs.

Baserunners (as estimated by H+BB) is only up slightly over that span, base running seems

more conservative, so the first thought is there should be more runs driven in on home runs (I did not have the data nor the time to actually test this hypothesis, it is left for the reader to do as an exercise). If that is the case, then the only way for that to happen is if there are *far* fewer runs scoring in other ways now.

Implication? With stolen bases down, and a larger fraction of runs ambling home on home runs, *speed doesn't matter as much*. Yes, it is still good to keep out of some DPs, to move from first to third, and so on, but it is worth less now, even in TBL, than five years ago. And if speed matters less, one can assume it will be drafted less — which implies a slow reduction in average team speed — especially if APBA starts to look at "runs scored other than on a home run" to develop speed numbers. And if speed is less important, I can get away with less OF arm strength to keep them playing station to station.

In the end, how far does this take us? Will the trends remain? Are there other inherent balances that negate half or two thirds of what I have said here? To be determined. But not too early to think about, since the players we draft now largely set out paths for 5+ years.



MLB Yr	MLB R/H	TBL R/H	MLB-TBL R/H	MLB R/BB	TBL R/BB	MLB-TBL R/BB	MLB R/HR	TBL R/HR	MLB-TBL R/HR
2014	0.48	0.49	-0.01	1.41	1.50	-0.09	4.72	4.80	-0.07
2015	0.49	0.51	-0.02	1.47	1.51	-0.04	4.21	4.29	-0.08
2016	0.51	0.53	-0.02	1.44	1.53	-0.09	3.88	3.87	0.01
2017	0.53	0.54	-0.01	1.43	1.43	-0.01	3.70	3.65	0.04
2018	0.53	0.55	-0.02	1.38	1.44	-0.07	3.87	3.91	-0.03

the game has changed (3) by Richard Meyer

ROSTER BUILDING IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

For baseball as I remember it is on life support...

What's that, you say? Baseball isn't sick, it's just evolving to a new paradigm? Sure, and Blake Snell isn't the second stupidest personality to ever open his mouth (*say thank you to the governor of Georgia, Blake, for keeping first place out of your grasp.*) At a time where baseball, the game whose age demographic is following the same trend as horseracing and boxing, could unite and return sports to our TV screens and earn the attention of a lot of eyeballs that haven't been looking its way for quite a while, offering a lifeboat to us sports-fans; this moron with his \$50 million contract in hand opines how he couldn't possibly take a temporary pay cut for going out there 'on the front lines' while 33 million Americans are *out* of work and hundreds of thousands of doctors and nurses are *actually* risking their health every day. It takes a special kind of tone deaf to misread actual conditions so severely (*but I digress . . .*).

Welcome to baseball 2019-2020, where offenses have sold out so heavily to the three true outcomes that it's hard to find a hitting card off your bench that can even have a fighting chance of driving in a run versus a typical grade 12-14 middle reliever, much less a closer -- Where our fear of pitcher injury has led to average starting pitcher fatigues of 23 or 24, which not only don't get you through six innings but may on some days not even make it through five -- and where the constant shuttling of hurlers up and down from the majors to the minors means that many APBA carded relievers now have only 30-49 innings of usage for an entire season, and precious few relievers even reach 70.

The pitching carousel that has become nearly universal for all 30 MLB teams (even ignoring

for the moment the abomination of the 'opener') means that starting pitchers with 200+ innings are a dying breed (15 in 2019, 13 in 2018), and even starters with 180+ innings are nearly as rare -- 18 in 2019, 19 in 2018. So the average TBL team is starting at least 2-3 pitchers whose IP game is less than 5-1/2 innings. This means that despite the Constitutional requirement that each team needs to have 400 relief innings on roster, the actual number needed to finish the season properly has probably moved to the high side of 500. And even 500 innings probably only works if your first two highest quality starters can somehow go 7 innings or more in the majority of their starts.

So we all need more relievers on our 35 man overall roster than before. Well, there's good news and bad news on that front. On the positive side, there were seemingly a countless number of relievers available in this year's draft -- essentially enough to fill half the overall picks in the draft. The bad news is that the reason there are so many new relief pitchers is that every major league team is shuttling relievers up and down to the minors in a constant search for fresh or more effective arms. So while many of these new potential recruits has usable grades, they also often came with limited usage (40-49 IP, 30-39 IP, and even another 20-30 cards with less than 30 innings of use.) So to reach 500 innings, the odds are your team had to roster anywhere from 10 to 12 reliever cards to reach that total.

So what does all this mean for our month to month 25 man roster construction? Here are a few of the paradigms that have probably shifted.

1. More pitchers on the roster.

More 25 man month-to-month rosters will start to shift to 12 P and 13 position players. I've held out for the current year at 11 (possibly out of

stubbornness, but more due to image limitations on some position cards). I was actually surprised to find that as of April rosters, 11 (or 10) pitchers were up on 13 of 24 TBL rosters, a very slight majority. Ten teams were at 12 and 1 (Midwest) at the same in MLB, 13.

2. Flexibility becomes more important.

As the shift progresses to more pitchers on the roster, some personnel options may become more important and more highly sought after. For example:

(A) a Grade 11-14 reliever who can eat 70-80 innings may be considerably more valuable for a roster spot than a Grade 16* or 17* with 40 innings. I should think most teams will find having at least two guys besides your closer that can have an identified role in your bullpen every month, as opposed to having a complete mix and match group every time you write instructions, a real boon.

(B) A grade 8+ starter with 80-100 innings that are not committed to your rotation (i.e., beyond your 162 scheduled starts), to fill the long man role for the entire season so that real relief innings are not wasted in those situations;

(C) at least one (if not two) true Swiss army knife utility position players who can play at least 2 infield positions at Fielding Two, plus a couple of other positions at Fielding Three (like SS or OF). If said utility guy can also help fill other roster needs (for example, as a secondary PR or a platoon shift starting lineup choice), the value of Mr. 'C' increases exponentially. And of course, if he has one of those occasional fluke years where he can actually contribute to the daily offense while supplying versatility, I say to ye "Sing Hallelujah!!"

(D) a Catcher *And*. Once an active roster moves to 12 or 13 pitchers, position player roster moves are constricted. Since most teams will not be carrying 3 catchers on the 25 man roster from month to month, using the second C as a

PH or defensive replacement leaves your bench vulnerable in the event of a fluke injury. This means that the second C can almost become a dead roster spot on the road. However, if you have a Catcher *And* player (whether he's a real utility man like Kiner-Falefa or Astudillo; a DH-type who catches just enough to keep a fielding rating (Schwarber, Gattis), or a backup C who dabbles just enough to have position eligibility elsewhere (like a Kyle Farmer or Austin Barnes); that's an extra asset. If said card can actually hit better than an Oompa Loompa, so much the better . . .

3. Follow on roster issues.

Using more 35-man roster spots on bullpen bulk are likely to leave more holes in the potentially useful boxes that your position player bench can fulfill than our benches a few years ago. This is particularly true as real MLB's efforts to turn their entire ball clubs into free swinging all or nothing producers reduces the number of pieces of APBA cardboard available who used to fill roles like – (A) an 11 or more hits bench guy with low ABs but above average chances to get an RBI single when needed; (B) a bulk PR with 20 or more steals to run for starting C, 1B, and other plodders, or (C) a true all-glove no-hit defensive replacement at C or SS.

4. The revolving door.

Since relievers are in general the biggest crapshoot to repeat their primary skill year after year, and since many more of the relievers we draft or trade for will be short innings guys that represent an even *bigger* crapshoot, the amount of players each of our teams is going to need to replace each year is going to increase in future years. Will this further exacerbate the ups and downs and boom and bust cycle that a number of our GMs appear to be adopting in recent years? Time will tell on that one, though the short answer suggests the affirmative.

draft analysis

by Mark Bloom



2020 TBL Draft Analysis: Round One

The 2020 TBL Rookie Draft has been called one of the deepest in recent memory. Given that the game is changing, I thought it would be an interesting exercise to review the first round of this draft in the context of the new trends. My goal is to determine whether the changes have affected the way we draft, especially since we had a particularly deep draft class.

How deep? Sandy Alcantara, a 24-year-old hyped Grade 11 starting pitcher with 32 starts, wasn't taken this year until Round Two.

Tommy Edman, a 24-year-old power-speed guy who hit over .300 for more than half a season and plays three positions competently, lasted even longer. These and other players seemed to drop a half round or more from where, in other years, they ordinarily would have been taken.

How the Game Has Changed

Given the deep draft, let's examine how the game is changing. The most obvious change involves measuring launch angles and exit velocities. Yes, power hitting has become not just the norm, but the goal of nearly every hitter. Every team now seems to have at least one feared slugger, even if he's got a low batting average and no speed. In other words, most hitters are becoming — or trying to become — Dave Kingman or Rob Deer, slave to the Three Outcomes: homer, walk, or strikeout.

The same is true on the mound. Power pitchers strike out a batter an inning are becoming

the norm, but as a consequence, they rarely get past the fifth inning. Finesse pitchers no longer crack prospect lists. It's more about the speed of the pitch than its ultimate swing-and-miss potential. The trend is to send pitchers to the mound to throw as hard as they can for as long as they can.

An Emphasis on Power

The changes may be obvious to some of you, but there are consequences of the latest trends. The emphasis on power means a de-emphasis on stolen bases. Strikeouts have increased dramatically, too. A strikeout used to be considered an empty at-bat, since it did nothing to help the team score, especially if there were men on base already. Today, a strikeout is merely considered a temporary setback in the pursuit of another homerun.

Comparing the 2019 MLB season to 2009, homeruns (1.39 per game to 1.04) and strikeouts (8.81 to 6.91) are up significantly. Meanwhile, batting averages (.252 to .262), stolen bases (0.47 to 0.61), and sacrifices (0.16 to 0.34) have dropped. Is a .250 hitter with power more valuable than a .300 hitter? While a power-hitter can change a game with one swing, you may have to wade through many outs before that swing appears in a game.

With these trends and changes in mind, let's turn to the first round of the TBL Rookie Draft just completed. I'll call out particular players, but without regard to the team that drafted the player or the needs that team sought to

address. Since we've all noted the new trends in baseball, you'd think that power-hitters and power pitcher should, therefore, be at the top of most everyone's lists.

Round 1 Review

Of the 24 players taken in the first round of February's draft, 18 were hitters. Of those, only five had an MLB OPS of less than .800. All five (Vladimir Guerrero, Jr., Victor Robles, Gavin Lux, Francisco Mejia, and Cavan Biggio) could be considered prospects. No first-round hitter was older than 25, and 11 of the first 15 were age 23 or younger. As noted, this was a talented pool of rookies.

Of the five starters taken, two — including the first picked, Mike Soroka — owned a less than 9.0 strikeout rate in MLB. While he was the youngest starter taken in the round, the last two selected were 27 and 26 years old, respectively. Perhaps pitchers mature later than hitters.

The one reliever taken in the round is a 31-year-old who had the best overall MLB season for a reliever who was available in the draft. He also had the eighth-best strikeout rate among relievers. It was no surprise he was the first reliever taken in the draft, despite his age.

Round 1 Surprises

Not every pick resembles Pete Alonso, the poster child of the way the game is changing. While there were many hitters in the Three Outcomes mode, perhaps the least like that was Luis Arraez, a contact hitter with stellar on-base skills. A power-hitter, he ain't. Other

hitters who don't project as pure power hitters include Mejia, Biggio, and Bryan Reynolds — and these four hitters constitute just 22 percent of all the hitters taken.

The first round did see a sampling of power pitchers taken, but surprisingly, the first, Mike Soroka, bucks the trend. He struck out just 7.3 batters per nine innings, which is somewhat pedestrian by today's standards. Also, the last pitcher taken, John Means, was likely selected because he has more immediate usefulness, in terms of starts and peripherals, than other starting pitchers not taken. But he's not the prototype for a power pitcher.

Conclusion

So it's my conclusion that TBL is following MLB's trend. Or maybe MLB is catching up to TBL's trend of taking power, both at bat and on the mound, in the draft. There will always be exceptions, but everyone is looking for power, and the teams that have the most of it will likely go deeper into the playoffs than those who don't.



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 2020.

Blue Hill Mudslides:
Brobdingnag Barbarians:
Calusa Indians:

Spencer Turnbull, P
 Giovanny Gallegos, P
 Garrett Hampson, 2B

Columbus Jets:
Detroit Dragons:
Gotham City Batmen:

Merrill Kelly, P
 Cavan Biggio, 2B
 Giovanny Urshela, 3B



Grand Cayman Havens:
Hoboken Zephyrs:
Hudson Generals:

Yordan Alvarez, OF
 Liam Hendriks, P
 Bryan Reynolds, OF

Kansas Koyotes:
Knoxville Blue Thunder:
Las Vegas Gamblers:

Francisco Mejia, C
 Mitch Garver, C
 Charlie Morton, P



Maracaibo Rumrunners:
Melrose Avengers:
Midwest Mongrels:

Eloy Jimenez, OF
 Chris Paddack, P
 David Price, P

Munich Marauders:
New West. Whiskeyjacks:
Northboro Phoenix:

Hyun-Jin Ryu, P
 Fernando Tatis, Jr., SS
 Will Smith, C



Riverwolf Sharks:
Rye Herons:
Strong City Statesmen:

Austin Riley, 3B
 Matt Joyce, OF
 Vladimir Guerrero, Jr., 3B

Warrenton Giants:
Whitman River Rats:
Elders of Zion:

Kyle Tucker, OF
 Aristides Aquino, OF
 Keston Hiura, 2B



commissioner's report

by Ray Murphy

Some years ago, I showed a prior edition of this esteemed publication to my then-boss at *BaseballHQ.com*, Ron Shandler (true author of the so-called "Murphy book"). He said (paraphrasing), "You guys have created a true alternate reality".

Never has that been more true than it is right now.

As this edition of the *Annual* goes to press, the 2020 TBL season is in full swing. The season is nearly a quarter complete; pennant races are taking shape. All is normal in the TBL world.

Back in the real world, literally nothing is normal. There is no 2020 baseball season; not yet and maybe not ever. Of course, the lack of a major league season will eventually catch up with TBL. If there's no MLB in 2020, there won't be any rookies to draft in March 2021, no new cards to sort, no season to play.

But that's the beauty of an alternate reality: we aren't bound by any of the laws of the real world. We can bend our own reality in whatever direction we choose. There are all sorts of good proposals floating around the league about what to do in 2021 TBL-land if MLB doesn't provide a season. We can replay an old season: maybe something from the 1960s. Maybe 1982, in an attempt to extend the history of TBL contiguously in the other direction. Maybe there is a year-long, tournament-style event with our favorite teams and/or card sets.

The possibilities are endless. There is almost

too much green field to work with. But I have complete confidence that this group will sort it all out, and come up with a creative, well thought-out, and (most importantly) fun way to keep the league going next season. (Heck, some of the ideas being floated might even bring me out of retirement!)

It's another statement about the strength and durability of this group of people: the novel coronavirus has impacted the entire world. Collectively, TBL thumbs its nose at it.

Individually, of course, the story can be different: the impacts of the global pandemic are myriad, with threats to our physical, mental, and financial health. Sadly, back in the real world, we can't thumb our collective nose at those threats. So, until we are together again in a draft room -- be it in Kansas City in 2021, or a Zoom conference room -- I wish each of you good health (in all senses).

TBL remains a remarkable community, and I am thrilled to continue to maintain my association with all of you.



Champ and Challengers

The first TBL championship for *Brian Hanley* was in some ways long overdue. The club was better than advertised: we thought they'd win the division, but we rated three other International Conference teams (all in the Ruth Division) as better. But they were very good, especially on the mound. Now it's a matter of trying to do it again.



We think they're good again but not quite good enough to win the Clemente Division again – or, indeed, the big prize. The division at least should belong to *Mark Ludwig's Blue Hill Mudslides*. After

some years of struggle, the team has come into its own: this will be the third straight winning season. The roster is replete with young and exciting talent both in the lineup and on the mound. The manager (and, indeed, the general manager) don't have anything left to prove: they only have something left to achieve – not just the Clemente, but a star turn in the World Series.

Not to be overlooked, and certainly not to be underestimated, are the *Whitman River Rats*. Their off-season was focused on remaining in the hunt. Some of the best players already on the roster underperformed in 2019, but there's still lots of talent and lots of depth. We're in no doubt regarding the talent of the management: thus, while the TQ rating places Whitman above the median but a long way from the "Cream of the Crop," there is a lot of room for the club to reach the postseason.



2019 Clemente Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Whitman*	111	51	.685	—
Blue Hill†	91	71	.562	20
Strong City	49	113	.302	62
Riverwoolf	48	114	.296	25

* Won World Series over Hudson.

† Lost to Brobdingnag in the Conference playoff.

Meanwhile down in *Strong City*, the *Statesmen* are making a strong recovery from the low point of the Bounce – a TBL championship in 2018, a 49-113 campaign in 2019 – and are out on the periphery of the playoff hunt in 2020. This was certainly helped by the addition of three players in the top ten of the recent draft – Vlad Jr., Bichette Jr., and pitching ace Mike Soroka. There's a fair amount of talent for *Eric Sheffler* to call on, and some draft to look forward to. It's not exactly classic Freedman/Auletta bounce, but it should be a fun season.



Not so much fun up north in *Riverwoolf*, where the *Sharks* will be looking up from the bottom of a very deep well in 2020.



The 2018 grab for a trophy cost them dearly in 2019, and 2020 looks like more of the same for *Daniel Dumont*. Always interested in a trade, Riverwoolf management may have to sit tight and hope for the best

as the club rebounds from the fastest-moving revolving door in TBL – perhaps the fastest in TBL history. The recent draft made them younger and added some future talent, but it will be a while before we know how it turned out.

Clemente Division

Christian Yelich,
Blue Hill

1. Blue Hill	31.5
2. Whitman	27.5
3. Strong City	27.0
4. Riverwoolf	10.5

2019 blue hill MUDSLIDES in review

A better season than expected.

by Mark Ludwig



2019 in Review

Final Record: 91-71 (2nd, Clemente)

Blue Hill had a better season than expected finishing 91-71 which was good enough for second place in the Clemente Division and a second straight playoff appearance. The Mudslides were able to fend off Midwest in a tough 7-game wild card series and advance to the Conference semi-finals. That is where the good news ends as the Barbarians from Brobdingnag rudely swept us away.

What went right?

Trevor Story had another great year and set a Mudslides franchise record with 135 RBI and second all time with 55 doubles. A couple of other franchise records were set as Christian Yelich scored 124 runs and Bryce Harper drew 115 walks which contributed to a team record of 601 free passes. The team also set a franchise record in home runs that was just set last year, knocking 228 out of the park.

Chase Anderson led the team with 13 wins. Edwin Jackson tied the franchise high with 68 appearances. Aroldis Chapman was great again at the back end with 33 saves and 11.73 K/9.

What went wrong?

Blue Hill continues to strike out too much which makes it hard to move base runners along and hit and run like we like to do. Once again the stolen bases weren't there as Yelich led the team with only 16 SB. The Mudslides struggled on the road only going 41-40 and

didn't compete very well against the rival River Rats going 4-10 which eliminated any thought of competing for the division title.

Once in the playoffs the pitching and especially the bullpen wasn't up to the likes of a team like Brobdingnag who manhandled the overmatched Mudslides.



Story: Another great year

3 Things

- 1. Competition ahead.* It should be a challenging year as Blue Hill has its sights on wresting the Clemente title back from Whitman, fighting both them and the Statesmen. The head to head matchups against these two foes this year will be key!
- 2. Top offense.* This looks like it could be the best offense Blue Hill has ever had when all the regulars are in the lineup. We are expecting big things out of Devers, McNeil, Story and Yelich. They will strike out a lot but that should be offset by the runs they put across the plate.
- 3. New rotation; old bullpen.* We had to literally rebuild the starting rotation in the draft; there is no real ace, as 149 of the games will be started by a Grade 10, 9 or 8. The bullpen is anchored once again by Aroldis Chapman but it is not very strong. So we know offense is going to be the key to any success.

blue hill MUDSLIDES

Mark Ludwig (25th year)

Maybe the third time will be the charm.



We have written dozens of column inches about the Blue Hill Mudslides. They came into the league in 1996, when TBL expanded from 20 to 22 franchises; the other newcomer was Whitman – and a lot can be said about equal chances and unequal results; but we’re not going to say any of it. Blue Hill’s success or absence of success can not, and should not, be defined by how Whitman has done. We compete, of course, but except for people with Yankee-Cap Mentality™ there is more than just winning it all: there’s the competition against oneself, the team building over a number of years, the idea of a plan coming together.

The Blue Hill experience has had ups and downs – and this is definitely an up period. The last two years have been near misses. Maybe the third time will be the charm.

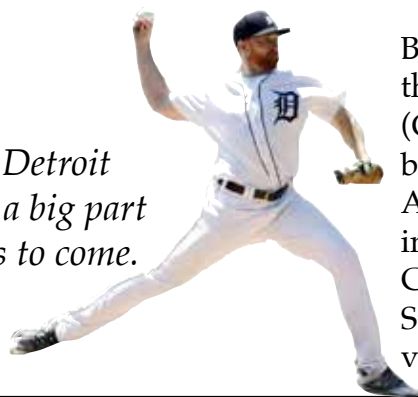
Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Matt Albers, Anthony Bass, Aaron Brooks, Harold Castro, Alex Dickerson, Mike Ford, Luis Garcia, Marco Gonzales, Jordan Lyles, Austin Nola, Robert Stephenson, Josh Tomlin, Spencer Turnbull.

Departed: Jason Adam, Aaron Altherr, Jorge Bonifacio, Carson Fulmer, Jamie Garcia, Edwin Jackson, Pierce Johnson, Steve Pearce, A. J. Reed, Chris Rusin, Jaime Schultz, Brent Suter, Alex Wood.

SNT: Spencer Turnbull.

A pleasant surprise in the Detroit rotation this year, he will be a big part of the Blue Hill one for years to come.



Pitching: 9.0 Middling rotation, good bullpen.

The Blue Hill instructions make it clear that this is a team built around offense and not pitching. Still, it’s good enough to compete. Some recent acquisitions fill out the staff and, particularly in the bullpen, will help keep that fine offense in games.

ROTATION. Most of the starters are cut from roughly the same cloth: #2 or #3 starters on deep staffs. There are five main guys: Chase Anderson (Grade 10 HR-13), Jordan Lyles (Grade 10 C-15 HR-15), newcomer Marco Gonzales (Grade 9 lefty C+22 HR+24 – his 34 starts and good peripherals make him the number one guy), Zach Eflin (Grade 8 C+23 HR-14) and rookie SNT Spencer Turnbull (Grade 8 C-14 HR+35). These take up all but a handful of starts that are presently assigned to Jose Urena (Grade 3 C+22). The latter has a very quick hook, and may be replaced by the stretch.



Chapman: Stopper

This isn’t a top flight rotation by any means, but it is serviceable.

BULLPEN. The stopper continues to be the hard-throwing Aroldis Chapman (Grade 20* lefty C-34 HR+46). He will be helped by a trio of draft acquisitions: Anthony Bass (Grade 17* HR+24), short innings guy Aaron Brooks (Grade 18* C+15 HR-15) and hard thrower Robert Stephenson (Grade 15*). These three provide 198 innings of solid relief and are all



blue hill MUDSLIDES

substantially better than the starters. Adam Morgan (Grade 14*) is the only available lefty at this level, but has only 30 innings to add.

After this crew there is a raft full of middle innings guys. Blake Parker (HR-25) and waiver pickup Luis Garcia (C-44 HR-21) are both Grade 11* righties; Cory Gearrin (Grade 10* C-26 HR+34), Matt Albers (Grade 9* C-32), Justin Anderson (Grade 9* C-62 HR+23) and the ageless Josh Tomlin (Grade 8* C+52 HR-23) round out the group.

That’s roughly 360 innings, and all are about as good as the starters they’ll replace.

Mr. Ludwig is rightly expecting a lot of 8-6 games, and this bullpen will keep them in those after the starters have been battered (and/or fried).

Offense: **14.0** Now the fun begins.

It’s easy to know where to start talking about the Mudslides’ offense: Christian Yelich, the all-around superstar (11 hits, 4 walks+22, 1-1-5-5-6, 32 SBA with a 35 SSN, L-9 R+3). That’s one heck of a card. The L-9/R+3 will probably not be much of a hindrance. But he’s one of *three* cards with five power numbers on the roster, and there are four on nearly every other regular card.

Trevor Story comes next before us. (10 hits, 3 walks+22, 1-0-0-0-0, 29 SBA with a 29 SSN). There are “only” eight 13s which, along with the average, are steps in a positive direction. Add in Rafael Devers (11 hits, 2 walks+22, 1-0-0-0-0, L-8/R+2), who showed that he is indeed the real deal. These four – with Yelich – will play almost every day.



Devers: Real deal

Bryce Harper, who was one of the first players to legitimately be the “face of the franchise”, clocks in with a very solid card (9 hits, 5 walks+22, 1-0-0-0, 18 SBA with a 32 SSN). Jeff McNeil (11 hits, 2 walks+42+22, 1-5-6-6) will also get lots of regular time.



McNeil: Regular time

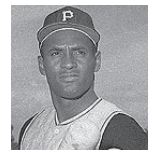
There are some nice cards at other positions, with a little more mix and match involved. Luke Voit (9 hits, 5 hits+42, 1-5-6) and Mike Ford (9 hits, 4 walks+42, 1-1-5-6, L+11 R-7) platoon at first base; half the time catcher will be occupied by Kurt Suzuki (10 hits, 2 walks, 1-1-6); and a resurgent Hunter Pence (10 hits, 3 walks+22, 1-1-6-6) and Alex Dickerson (10 hits, 2 walks+22, 1-4-6-6) will occupy the other outfield position.

There’s enough offense that a glove man with a light bat – Yolmer Sanchez (9 hits, 3 walks+22) – can bat ninth. He’s the primary candidate for the occasional sac bunt.

This is an outstanding, powerful offense; not the best in the league, but by far the best in the Clemente, and they should absolutely rip sub-par pitching.

Defense: **6.0** In places outstanding.

This club is not as young as it used to be, but maturity is reflected in the outstanding defense at some positions. The outfield has two stars: Yelich (OF3, 31 arm) and Harper (OF3, 36 arm). Behind the plate both Suzuki and Manny Pina are C8s, but neither can throw well (Suzuki is, in fact, a Th-4; he’ll mostly throw the ball back to the pitcher.) Rafael Devers has been promoted by APBA to a 3B4, and Voit when in will be a 1B3, so the corners are average.



Sanchez, Story: Defensive standouts

The big story defensively is the double play combination of Yolmer Sanchez (2B9) and Trevor Story (SS9). Teams strong up the middle don't win more games through defense – they simply don't lose games they might have otherwise won.

McNeil (3B4, 2B7, OF1) doesn't need to play in the field; unfortunately Pence (OF1, 35 arm) often does. Alex Dickerson (OF2, 30 arm) is at least average. Mike Ford, when playing first, is subpar (1B2). Both Ford and Pence can be replaced in late innings.

The defense is outstanding in places, adequate in others, with only a few holes. They'll keep the team in games.

Bench: Some supersubs.

2.5

With most of the lineup fixed, there are very constrained roles for the bench players. Blue Hill management has optimized the roster by keeping players who can do a lot of things.

Sean Rodriguez (3B4 1B2 OF2) is useful for defense, but is a Bearded Lady (7 hits, 5 walks+42, 1-0-0); newcomers Harold Castro (11 hits, 2 0s, L-12 R+1, OF2 2B7 3B3 SS7 1B2) and Aaron Nola (C6 1B3 2B6 3B3 OF1, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 1-5-6) are versatile all over the diamond as well. There should be no reason to see either former star Yonder Alonso (1B4, no real offense) or Daniel Palka (no real anything) at any time before November, and then just to drive the team bus.

1st

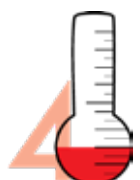
Whitman and Strong City are capable teams, and both have better pitching; but the Blue Hill offense is pretty relentless, with power and speed and a lot of on-base percentage. They should score a lot of runs, and when they face inferior pitching – and there's certainly some of that around TBL – that'll go double (and triple and home run).

Can they go all the way? It's hard to tell, though in a short series they could be dominant. Pitching will be the key. In the long run they need someone like Eflin or Turnbull to step into the ace pitcher role and lead a contending pitching staff. Still, this will be a fun ride.



Harper: Former face

TQ: 31.5



blue hill MUDSLIDES

2019 whitman RIVER RATS in review



It's more about what the club needs to do to accomplish the feat again.

2019 in Review

**Final Record: 111-51 (1st, Clemente)
TBL Champion**

It is always interesting to review the past year of a team that has won the championship, especially after winning 111 games and ranking among league leaders in many categories. If the Year in Review is anything, it's an opportunity for managers to look back at the past season and figure out what they need to do to win. In this case, it's more about what the club needs to do to accomplish the feat *again*. In the meanwhile, Mr. Hanley has an opportunity to enjoy the fruits of victory – which are at once permanent and fleeting.

What went right?

A lot. The pitching staff was led by a performance that was reminiscent of Hall of Famer Greg Maddux: ace Blake Snell was dominant (23-4, 1.83, 316 Ks and *only 107 hits* in 241 innings; 14 complete games, 9 ShO). Price went 18-9, 2.64; Kershaw 13-7, 3.22, and rookie Joey Lucchesi won 16 with an ERA under 4. Pedro Strop saved 42 games with a 1.52 ERA. Overall the staff struck out 1,407 batters, pitched 18 shut-outs and had a 2.99 ERA and a 1.05 WHIP.

Jose Ramirez had an outstanding season (46-114-.273, 102 walks, 37 doubles, 19 steals). Paul Goldschmidt hit 28 homers. The team scored 797 runs, eighth-best in TBL. The offense was less of a story than the pitching staff, but it was enough when it counted; 190 homers was a fair number, but the other offensive indicators were modest at best. The stats suggest that hitting was incredibly timely.

What went wrong?

As one might discern, very little. The team didn't strike out a lot, but some players had high totals (Goldschmidt 187, CarGo 155); the OBP and SLG were very modest. Lance Lynn was disappointing (4-7, 5.26), but so what. The Bill James model suggests that when a team gets results (i.e., wins) that are more than the stats would predict, it will regress to the mean the following year; thus, this is about managing upcoming expectations.

3 Things

1. *The names are the same but it's a year later.* Whitman's management was able to make some offseason moves – adding a new closer and a guy with three 1s – but a lot of the team is holdovers. Can the team perform the same efficient wizardry that happened in 2019?

2. *It's about pitching.* Really, in Whitman, it's always been; the team has been offensively sound, but rarely dominant – but every contending Whitman team has been a pitching leader. Last year was no exception. Kershaw and Price were keys to that level of performance for many years. Kershaw is older but still capable, Price is gone – now it's Snell and new bullpen guys. Don't expect this to change.

3. *Youth movement.* There are five players on the roster 27 and younger; the youngest is 25. Especially in the lineup, there will have to be some "cliff management" over the next year or two to avoid a precipitous drop. Enjoy it while it lasts!



Snell: Dominant

whitman RIVER RATS



Brian Hanley (25th year)

Now let's not get ahead of ourselves: Whitman is still very sound.

As noted at left, the fruits of victory are both permanent and feeling. They are permanent in the way that Grantland Rice says in his poem *Game Called*: "It stands forever in the Guide." Our statistics website will always show that World Series victory. But it is also fleeting: we put old APBA cards away and sort out the new ones; and this year's versions of last year's heroes have the same birth dates and are a year older.

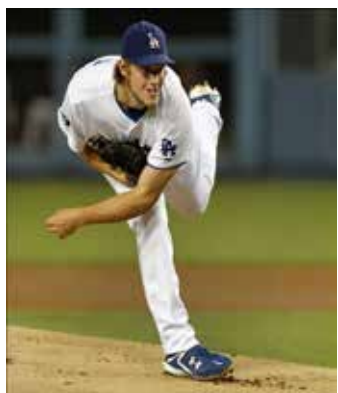
All contenders become rebuilders eventually. Some rebuilders become contenders again, by a variety of methods. Now let's not get ahead of ourselves: Whitman is still very sound and can well get to the postseason, where their pitching can make a lot of difference. It's not quite time to pack the tent and shoot for a high draft pick. But there aren't many youngsters on the roster.

Is it enough to get them back to the finals? Let's see.

Pitching: 11.0
Key part of the team.

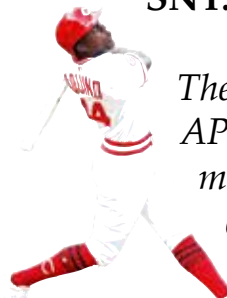
Once again, the pitching staff is a key part of the team – Whitman's staff, if it pulls its weight, will be the difference in the club's attempt to return to the post-season. The *Annual* thinks it is likely that they'll succeed.

ROTATION. After the Year of the Snell, Clayton Kershaw has returned to #1 in the Whitman rotation. He's solid again (Grade 14 C+24). The Snell himself is quite a bit down from last year's sublimity, and only makes 23 starts (Grade 11



Kershaw: Back to #1

SNT: Aristides Aquino.



The slugging sensation has the APBA mystical "1-1-1". He might be this good, and if so he can pump up Whitman's offense for years to come.

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Dario Agazal, Aristides Aquino, Cam Gallagher, Avisail Garcia, Adam Haseley, Nicky Lopez, Yoan Lopez, Brad Miller, Adam Ottavino, Max Stassi, Daniel Stumpf

Departed: Matt Duffy, Robbie Erlin, Carlos Gonzalez, Ryan LaMarre, Brett Phillips, David Price, Rene Rivera, Anthony Swarzak, Troy Tulowitzki, Richard Urena, Nick Vincent.

C-14 HR+15). Lance Lynn is an improvement, however (Grade 11 C+16 HR+31), and so is Joey Lucchesi (Grade 11 HR+12). Mike Foltynewicz, a trade acquisition down the stretch last year, has 21 competent starts (Grade 9 C+14 HR-23), and Ross Stripling has 15 better ones (Grade 11 C+26 HR+16). Rookie Dario Agrazal and Tyler Clippard pick up the last few starts.

This rotation has no really bad starts in it. Normally we make snarky remarks about relying on lefty starters due to the board splits, but this has never been a problem in Whitman.

BULLPEN. Time moving on has made it necessary for Whitman management to change roles and bring in some new faces. The top man is a closer of years past: Tyler Clippard (Grade 19* C+34 HR-16) is designated by instructions. He



Whitman RIVER RATS

has help: Emilio Pagan is nearly identical (Grade 19*K C+34 HR-16), and Adam Ottavino has been brought in to help (Grade 21* C-62 HR+41). These three have nearly 200 innings (though Clippard may make some starts). They are supported by 80 excellent innings of Seth Lugo (Grade 15*K C+41 HR+24), and about 160 innings of medium weight guys for the middle frames: Jake Diekman (Grade 13* C-62 HR+52), Yoan Lopez (Grade 12* C+23 HR-22) and former closer Pedro Strop (Grade 11* C-35 HR+12). Stripling has about 20 more innings. About 50 more bulk innings from Tony Sipp and Dan Stumpf complete the bullpen.

As Whitman’s instructions say, the bullpen is strong and “some nice pieces.” The depth is adequate, and the quantity of innings should be enough. As noted, this is a key part of the team’s success.

Offense: 8.0
Steady run production.

The centerpiece of the Whitman offense is, once again, Jose Ramirez (9 hits, 3 walks, 1-5-5-6, 28 SBA with a 33 SSN) is the offensive leader, though not quite the force he was last year. His sidekick in 2020 is the surprise homecoming queen, Tim Anderson (12 hits, 1 walk+22, 1-0-0-0 and 22 SBA with a 30 SSN). This performance came out of nowhere, really, and will be there most of the season either at DH or at shortstop. Then, of course, there’s the potential-monster Aquino card (9 hits, 2 walks, 8 13s, but 1-1-1-0-0 – the poster child for Three Outcomes).

After that, there aren’t really any scary cards. There’s a bit of a slump for Paul Goldschmidt (9 hits, 4 walks,



Ramirez: Leader

1-5-5); Hunter Renfroe has power but doesn’t get on much (8 hits, 3 walks, 1-1-5-6); Avisail Garcia (10 hits, 2 walks+22, 1-5-6), Nick Markakis (10 hits, 4 walks, 3 0s), Avisail Garcia (10 hits, 2 walks+22, 1-5-6 but two 10s), and Adam Haseley (10 hits, 2 walks+22, 3 0s, L-10)all have useful cards for one or another situation.

Still, Kolten Wong is a step up from previous cards (10 hits, 3 walks+42, 3 0s, 28 SBA with a 33 SSN). Miguel Rojas (10 hits, 2 walks+22, 3 0s); Brock Holt (10 hits, 3 walks+22, 3 0s, L-11); and Yadier Molina (10 hits, 2 walks+22, 3 0s, L+7) are all serviceable. Brad Miller (9 hits, 3 walks+22, 1-1-5-5, L-9) provides occasional pop for half a season.

This is an offense that will generate steady run production, but with a few exceptions isn’t one of the relentless ones with massive power everywhere; there is no card with 11 hits on the roster. The majority of the lineup is 10 hits and 3 walks – good enough, but short of both Strong City and Blue Hill. They may not be able to handle the best pitching staffs in the league.

Defense: 6.0
See the ball, catch the ball.

The Whitman defense is predominantly Fielding One. There are four full time or mostly full time players who anchor the team in the infield. From left to right: Jose Ramirez (3B5), Kolten Wong (2B9) and Paul Goldschmidt (1B5) catch everything that comes their way; the fourth guy in the infield will sometimes be Tim Anderson (SS8), whose bat will always be in the lineup, or Miguel Rojas (SS9) who fits right in with the group. The fourth top defender is Yadier Molina,



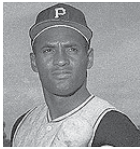
Wong: Step up



2nd

Probably, but Strong City will make a good run at the second spot in the Clemente. Whitman's pitching is overall more solid, but offense wins games in the regular season.

At the *Annual* we've always expressed our admiration for Mr. Hanley's skill as a manager, but Mr. Sheffler is also a veteran in TBL. This should be an excellent pennant race.



Whitman RIVER RATS

Ramirez, Goldschmidt: Molina, Wong: Four Fielding Ones who sports a C9 with a Th+1. You almost can't do better. Wong will have to give way on occasion to Brock Holt (2B7).

In the outfield, Hunter Renfroe turned in an OF3 (30 arm), but most of the defenders are OF2s with average arms. Aquino (35 arm) and Garcia (36 arm) are both superior.

No one builds a team based on pitching and defense (well, except Darrell, we suppose); but there's nothing wrong with having it, and it makes the team more competitive.

Bench: 2.5 Versatility is the key. Again.

The Whitman outfield will be a mix and match affair, and will also occasionally include Andrew Cave (9 hits, 3 walks+42+22, 1-4-6), who is much like the other choices. The infield is more stable, but having Brock Holt and Miguel Rojas gives Whitman some additional versatility. Young rookie Nicky Lopez (9 hits, 3 0s, 2B8 SS8) is available but probably has no role at the moment.

The only real bench weakness is the catching game behind Molina (who won't play forever and is now 38). Neither Cam Gallagher (8 hits) nor Max Stassi (5 hits) offers much on offense or defense.

Ages of players on the Whitman roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 37: Molina
- 36: Markakis, Sipp
- 35: Clippard, Strop
- 34: Ottavino
- 33: Diekman, Lynn
- 32: Goldschmidt, Kershaw
- 31: Holt, M. Rojas
- 30: Lugo, B. Miller, Stripling
- 29: A. Garcia, E. Pagan, Stassi, Stumpf, Wong
- 28: Foltyniewicz, J. Ramirez, Renfroe
- 27: Cave, Gallagher, Y. Lopez, Lucchesi, Snell
- 26: T. Anderson, Aquino
- 25: Agrazal, N. Lopez
- 24: Haseley

TQ: 27.5

2019 strong city STATESMEN in review



The turnaround should be coming into view soon.

by Eric Sheffler

2019 in Review

Final Record: 49-113 (3rd, Clemente)

From the Mountaintop to the Cellar

While 2018 was the pinnacle season for the Statesmen, 2019 was almost the exact opposite. A 112-win season and TBL Championship was followed immediately by a tear down which resulted in pitiful 49-win season. With a handful of first round picks the turnaround should be coming into view soon.

To help facilitate a change in atmosphere there were key changes to the coaching staff along with a minor front-office change. CJ Sheffler went from being on the field to assisting GM Carlton Fisk. Ray Lankford, former Statesman, who is in the top 10 of multiple club records, was brought on to be the first base coach as well as the running guru. Dave Winfield, top 3 in Statesmen history in 12 different offensive categories, joins Rich Dauer's staff as the new hitting coach. The new third base coach is another Statesman legacy player, Mr. Wally World himself, Wally Joyner. Joyner stands atop 12 Statesman offensive career categories. All of the additions bring skills in multiple areas to help the young talent infused into the club.

What went right?

There were a few bright spots. Daniel Murphy hit .302 in half a season; Nolan Arenado hit 34 homers, 34 doubles and drove in 87. Dee Gordon stole 30 bases and Billy Hamilton swiped 29, helping the team to a fifth place showing in steals.

The pitching was generally poor, but there were a few bright spots: stalwart Carlos Carrasco won 13, striking out 241 in 218 IP, and Andrew Cashner won 10.

What went wrong?

A 113-loss campaign means that a lot went wrong. The team hit .228 with only 151 homers; five players struck out more than 100 times, led by Justin Upton with 168. Past Carrasco and Cashner the rotation was pitiful. The bullpen was overworked and gave up many runs.



Carrasco: Stalwart

3 Things

1. *A welcome return.* On the field, mainstays Arenado, Grandal, Murphy, Carrasco, Miller, and Upton will join forces with Newman, Frazier, Mondesi, Bichette, Soroka, Wheeler, Clase, and the #1 pick in this year's draft, Vlad Jr.
2. *Return of some old friends.* Management also brought back some key players to help energize the sagging fan base at the end of last season. Returning to Strong City will be a true fan favorite, David "Freight Train" Peralta. Joining him will be the team career leader in HR, Chris "Khrush" Davis.
3. *The future is bright.* The additions of youth and veteran all seem to point to a bright future for the Statesmen.

strong city STATESMEN

Eric Sheffler (17th year)

Damn skippy.



When a team is able to make three draft selections in the top ten, it's a good day. Losing 113 games helps you draft early – but it takes a lot of maneuvering to get three *early* selections – and to still have the likes of Nolan Arenado, Adam Frazier, Raul Mondesi, David Peralta, and Zack Wheeler on the roster. It says a lot about Eric Sheffler's skill as a general manager.

It also says a lot about the year we're reviewing when Bo Bichette, a 22-year-old shortstop with 11 hits and 5 power numbers for a third of a season, isn't the SNT – and neither is Mike Soroka, a 22-year-old full season Grade 13 starter. These two and Vlad Jr. are an even bigger haul than Acuna and Soto last year, or the time that Munich took Buster Posey and Jason Heyward in the same draft. Three franchise players? Absurd. But that's where we are.

In this strange time where the Williams Division is flawed and the Clemente Division is largely solid, this retooled Statesmen team – one year from 49 wins and two years from winning the whole thing – might not get past third place, and might miss the playoffs. Mr. Sheffler will cry in his beer then, with his pals named Guerrero, Soroka, Bichette, Arenado, ... and so forth. As the Year In Review says: *the future looks bright*. Damn skippy it does.

Pitching: 10.0
Quite a bit to like.

There is quite a bit of pitching on this roster, though it admittedly has its flaws. The rotation is a full competent starter short of being competitive for the full season (though it will do fine in a playoff); and the bullpen isn't quite as deep as will be required to rescue the lower grade starters. Still, there's quite a bit to like.

ROTATION. The best grade among the starters belongs to Frankie Montas (Grade 14 C+25 HR+34), whose season was curtailed by a PED suspension, and only has 16 starts. Prize pick Mike Soroka (Grade 13 C+25 HR+34) has a full season, though, so more than one fourth of the Strong City starts steal 8s.



Soroka: Prize pick

The next tier is competent. Michael Pineda (Grade 10 C+34), Zack Wheeler (Grade 8 C+25 HR+23) and Daniel Norris (Grade 8 C+23 HR-13) fill 86 more. That leaves, essentially, one

Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Bo Bichette, Emmanuel Clase, Kris Davis, Jarlin Garcia, Vladimir Guerrero, Jr., Ender Inciarte, Brett Martin, Adalberto Mondesi, David Peralta, Hector Rondon, Antonio Senzatela, Travis Shaw, Mike Soroka, Taijuan Walker.

Departed: Andrew Cashner, Alex Claudio, Zach Duke, Brian Flynn, Zack Godley, Dee Gordon, Billy Hamilton, Chris Owings, Albert Pujols, Jose Quintana, Fernando Rodney, Addison Russell, Taylor Ward.

SNT: Vlad Guerrero, Jr.



He was the #1 pick a year ago at this time, and was taken #1 a few months ago. He's just one of the shiny new things on the Strong City roster.



strong city STATESMEN

more rotation spot, which will be filled by Carlos Carrasco (Grade 5 C+35 HR-26, 12 starts), a few turns of Drew Pomeranz (Grade 3 C-24 HR-23) and Antonio Senzatela (Grade 1 C-16) for the rest. These will need to be rescued, likely earlier than when the instructions call for it.

BULLPEN. The Statesmen are going with a five-arm bullpen, which might not be enough. The closers are a 58-inning combination of John Hicks (Grade 20* C-26 HR+36) and Drew Pomeranz (Grade 24* C-34 HR-23). These are one-inning guys, and expect only one to be on the roster at a time.

The bulk of the relief corps is a solid group of middle relievers. Cam Bedrosian (Grade 15* C+35 HR-16) and Emmanuel Clase (Grade 15* C+22 HR+34) have 84 innings between them; Jarlin Garcia (Grade 14* C+15 HR+34), Sergio Romo (Grade 13* C+25 HR+22), Hector Rondon (Grade 12*) and the much more mortal Andrew Miller (Grade

12* C-41 HR-23) have about 225 innings, with Garcia and Miller the lefties. The rest of the innings go to Luis Perdomo (Grade 9* C+24 HR+33) and waiver pickup Brett Martin (Grade 5* C+25 HR+26). They both have a lot of usage.

This relief staff will have to work hard, though the top end of the rotation will ease things somewhat.

Offense: 8.5
Lots of options.

It seems only logical to start with Nolan Arenado (1-1-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks), just *because*. The best overall player on the roster, on both sides of the ball, he will play every available game and bat cleanup. Makes sense.

He has friends, though not enough of them. Daniel Murphy (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+4 R-3) will be the regular first baseman; Kevin Newman (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 26 SSN for 24 SBA) will play some outfield giving way when available to rookie Bo Bichette (1-5-5-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L+6 R-4, 46 games). David Peralta (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22) has a nifty card as well.

The regular shortstop is speedy Raul Mondesi (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 33 SSN for 50 SBA). He and Adam Frazier (3 0s, 10 hits, L-5) will anchor the middle infield, while Leury Garcia (yes, really! 3 0s, 10 hits, L+3 R-3) will be the starting right fielder. Ender Inciarte (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks+42) is at least an on-base card. SNT Vlad Guerrero (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-7) has a decent, if not



Arenado: Just because

eye-popping card, but the most important number on it is "99" – the year of his birth. Yasmani Grandal (1-5-6, 8 hits, 6 walks) will get on base and slowly move around.

This is a very solid offense with lots of options. There are some batting shifts, which won't show up quite as severely on the computer. (Though the Statesmen have returned to the boards this year. Good for them.)

Defense: 6.0
Can really pick it.

We begin this section with Arenado (3B6), just *because*. The coveted top rating is a natural

for the best third baseman in baseball; and this year he has plenty of guys to play with him. Shortstop Adalberto Mondesi (SS9) will be a lock in the field most of the year, with Bichette, Mercer and Newman (all SS8s) picking up the slack; and Adam Frazier (2B9) appears to be the real thing at second base. Daniel Murphy and the seldom-used Travis Shaw (who has the most useless 3B5 in baseball) are both 1B3s. Behind the plate Grandal and Kevin Plawecki are both C8s.

In the outfield, Ender Inciarte and David Peralta are both OF3s with above-average arms, and Leury Garcia (yes, really!) is an OF2 with a 33 arm. In order to get his bat into the lineup, Kevin Newman (OF1, 33 arm) may have to be in left field some days. Justin Upton (OF2, 35 arm) can rescue him.

This defense can really pick it, both in the infield and outfield, and is among the best in TBL.

Bench: 2.5
So much flexibility.

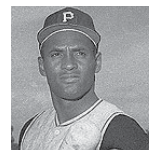
There is so much flexibility on this roster, made partially possible by carrying 15 position players, that the bench is also excellent. As well as the starters, Jordy Mercer (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+6 R-3) will get some opportunities to play; Justin Upton (1-0-0, 7 hits, 5 walks, L-9 R+2) has evolved into a bearded lady at bat, but still has use on defense. Former boom stick Khris Davis (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+9 R-5) and former capable major leaguer Travis Shaw (2 0s, 6 hits) dream of better days. Kevin Plawecki (8 hits, 3 walks+42) is here because there are missing games at catcher.



Garcia: No, really

3rd

We think so. Whitman's pitching is definitely better; the Statesmen may struggle at times due to a lack of innings, or the need to nail a starter to the mound.



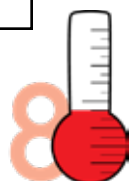
Frazier: Real thing

Overall, however, this is a very good team; it's not Blue Hill, and the question is whether it's as good as, or better than, two of Hoboken, Whitman, Knoxville, and Midwest. There is the International Conference in a nutshell, with three likely division winners and a group of also-rans to the north and south. They have a chance.

Ages of players on the Whitman roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 37: Romo
- 35: A. Miller, Murphy
- 33: Carrasco, Mercer
- 32: K. Davis, D. Peralta, H. Rondon, J. Upton
- 31: Grandal, Pineda, Pomeranz
- 30: Shaw, Wheeler
- 29: Arenado, L. Garcia, Inciarte, Plawecki
- 28: Bedrosian, Frazier
- 27: J. Garcia, Montas, Norris, Perdomo
- 26: Newman
- 25: B. Martin, Senzatela
- 24: Mondesi
- 23: Hicks
- 22: Bichette, Clase, Soroka
- 21: Guerrero

TQ: 27.0



strong city STATESMEN

2019 riverwoolf SHARKS in review



There was not very much good news.

by Daniel Dumont

2019 in review

Final Record: 48-114 (4th, Clemente)

It was a tough season north of the border, as the club rebounded from their attempt to win the Clemente in 2018. Trades, both of players and of draft picks, has to be paid for eventually; and 2019 was the beginning of that payback.

When a team loses 114 games and finishes last in average and OBP, and next-to-last in ERA, there's not a lot to take away; best to file the cards away with the knowledge that they never have to come out on the table again.

What went right?

The Sharks did hit some home runs; the leader of the club was Nelson Cruz with 33, and Edwin Encarnacion chipped in 28 – the team slugged 178, just under the middle of the league.

There were a few spotlights on the mound as well: Zach Britton managed to record 16 saves, a third of the total club victories. Jacob Barnes pitched well (3.69 ERA), as did Jim Johnson (3.55). Alex Wilson was outstanding with 8 relief wins and a sparkling 1.62 ERA.

What went wrong?

And that was about it. There was no regular above .244, and no one on the team hit higher than .257. Cruz' 33 homers came with a .211 average and 129 strikeouts, and no one in the mix and match lineups hit much at all. Encarnacion hit .209; LeMahieu .223; Brantley .244; Riddle .207; Bradley .196. There was no team speed at all: the club stole exactly nine bases in eighteen

attempts, "led" by Brantley and Bradley with 3 each. The team OBP was .272, and the club only walked 384 times. The offense was 9 hits, 2 walks, with a G20 – leading to only 524 runs.

The pitching was even more disturbing. Aside from the creditable bullpen performances, no starter won more than 7 games; the seven-man rotation combined to go 35-94, with the best ERA 4.66 for Felix Hernandez. Marco Estrada was the most futile, recording a 1-16, 7.41 mark in 19 starts. There was not very much good news.



Cruz: Power, at least

3 Things

1. *It wasn't entirely the roster.* The team underperformed, especially on offense. There wasn't enough talent on the 2019 roster, but there was *some* – but almost no one came through, and even when they did it was flawed – Nelson Cruz provided power at least but not much more, for example.
2. *Don't do the crime if you can't do the time.* (Ed. Note – not sure if 'Beretta' was on TV in Canada.) To compete in 2018, some steps were taken that got paid for in 2019, and will be paid for in 2020. Any team that reaches for the brass ring will have to compensate for that at some point.
3. *The next few seasons will be tough, but . . .* There is nowhere to go but up, and the team is beginning to gather talent for a return to respectability – but it will be some time before that bears fruit. Sometimes it just takes time (and luck).

riverwoolf SHARKS



Daniel Dumont (4th year)

Every off-season will continue to be an adventure.

Mr. Dumont, our Francophone manager from North of the Border, has hit two new milestones that have never been seen before in TBL: a turnover rate over more than 90%, and making seven picks in the waiver draft. One results from the other: the massive turnover during the waivers skews the percentage (based on counting players departed since the end of last year) but it's still an amazing number.

One assumes that all property in Rivière-du-Loup is for rent only, and the lockers at the stadium are like hot desks in a shared office (no name plates, no personal effects).

Where does this all lead? It's hard to tell. The most recent regular draft (as opposed to the waiver event) brought in some good new talent, and the team has definitely gotten younger. But the light at the end of the tunnel is still quite distant, and it'll require a lot more work to get the team back in contention.

In the meanwhile, every off-season will continue to be an adventure.

Pitching: **2.0** **The cards say "Pitcher."**

There once was a team in East Anglia, managed by our long time friend Don Nipps. It had a year like 2018 Riverwoolf, and then became a train wreck of epic proportions. That team had a pitching staff worse than this one – thus, the Sharks won't set *that* record.



Lester, Nova: "Aces"



ROTATION. The top spots in the rotation belong to Jon Lester and Ivan Nova, who are The Best

Turnover Rate: 91%

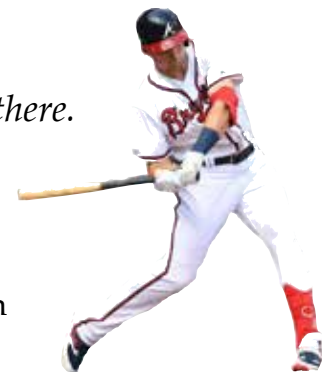
Arrived: Jake Bauers, Matt Beaty, David Bote, Keon Broxton, Jhoulys Chacin, Nestor Cortes, Jr., J. P. Crawford, Isan Diaz*, Mauricio Dubon*, Robbie Erlin, Carlos Estevez, Derek Fisher, Kyle Freeland*, Austin Hedges, Jeff Hoffman, Andrew Knapp*, Jon Lester, Dawel Lugo, Russell Martin, Hernan Perez, Tanner Rainey, Austin Riley, Rio Ruiz, Dwight Smith, Jr., Bubba Starling*, Andrew Suarez, Charlie Tilson, Cole Tucker*, Framber Valdez, Gabriel Ynoa.

* Also departed in waiver draft.

Departed: Jackie Bradley, Jr., Michael Brantley, Zach Britton, Nelson R. Cruz, Isan Diaz, Mauricio Dubon, Edwin Encarnacion, Marco Estrada, Tyler Flowers, Kyle Freeland, Cam Gallagher, Alen Hanson, Adeiny Hechevarria, Jim Johnson, Andrew Knapp, Matt Koch, D. J. LeMahieu, Devin Mesoraco, Pat Neshek, Jacob Nix, Clayton Richard, J. T. Riddle, Bubba Starling, Marcus Stroman, Blake Swihart, Mark Trumbo, Cole Tucker, Danny Valencia, Alex Wilson.

SNT: Austin Riley.

*The power is definitely there.
The only question is
how much contact he
will make.*



There Is with full season Grade 5s; they have almost identical peripherals (C+26, C+25 and HR+0, HR+11). These two, along with runner-up Aaron Sanchez (Grade 5 C-36 HR+14) make 92 of the 162 needed starts.

There are 23 starts of Vince Velazquez as a Grade 7 (HR-26), which helps a little, though he turns into a pumpkin after 21 batters.



That means that the 50+ remaining trips belong to a collection of waiver acquisition Jhoulys Chacin (Grade 4 C-24 HR-32), Framber Valdez (Grade 4 C-62 HR+24), Jeff Hoffman (Grade 3 C-26 HR-52), and the animated corpse of Felix Hernandez (Grade 2 HR-25). The upside is that there are no Grade 1s in the lot; the downside is that the peripherals – especially the HR- ones – will make it an equally challenging (perhaps better phrased as toxic) pitching environment.

And by the way, the starters are expected to go 6. Let's see if they make it that far.

BULLPEN. The instructions are mercifully brief on what to do with the collection of relief arms. One thing is certain – they'll get a lot of work.

Justin Wilson is the closer. Closer? Yep. He has 39 fairly decent innings (Grade 15* lefty, C-36 HR+25). He even has a caddy: hard throwing rookie Tanner Rainey (Grade 15*K C-62 HR+21, 48 more innings). If the Sharks lead, they'll get the ball and they'll provide some scary final innings. (And given the fact that dice/random numbers are involved in our game, they'll get through a few of those successfully).

Following the two top guys, there is an assortment of people whose card says "Pitcher".

Carlos Estevez (Grade 10* C+14), Brad Boxberger (Grade 9* C-62 HR+26) and Framber Valdez (Grade 9* C-62 HR+24) are the best of the lot, with 135 innings of crunchy goodness; then there are the Innocuous Ones – Nestor Cortes (Grade 5* C-16 HR-26), Gabriel Ynoa (Grade



Wilson: Closer? Closer

5* C+31 HR-36, and Andrew Suarez and Robbie Erlin as Grade 1*s. It's like a Phillies staff of the early 1970s, except there's no Steve Carlton and Mac Scarce is a wild lefty.

With this staff, many days will be very long.

Offense: 3.0
Misfit toys redux.

Last year, the wiseasses here at the *Annual* dubbed the majority of the Riverwoolf roster as "misfit toys." The same moniker can be applied once again, though of course it's a *completely different collection* of such things. We never tire of this. No, really.

The overall best card on the roster is probably Tommy LaStella, whose half season is pretty solid (11 hits, 2 walks, 1-0-0, L-6 R+1). He and Melky Cabrera (11 hits, 3 0s) are the two cards with 11 hits on the team (which is exactly two more than the Whitman club has, by the way). Matt Beaty's half season (10 hits, 2 walks+22, 1-6-6-6, L-16 R+2) will be good most of the time as well.



LaStella: Team leader

Then it becomes the Island of Eight Hits with Occasionally Nine. Austin Riley (a half season of 8 hits, 2 walks+42, 1-1-0-0, L+8 R-4, 11 13s) is the very embodiment of hit-or-miss; Eric Thames gets on a little better (8 hits, 4 walks+42, 1-5-5-6) for a full season. Dwight Smith, Jr. (9 hits, 2 walks+22, 1-4-6) will bat too often in leverage situations, as will Alex Gordon (9 hits, 3 walks+42); David Bote (9 hits, 4 walks+42, 1-6-6) is the most acceptable of the remaining IF spots, while Rio Ruiz (8 hits, 4 walks, 1-0-0), J. P. Crawford (9 hits, 4 walks, 3 0s, L-11 R+3) and Hernan Perez (8 hits, 2 walks, 1-0-0) are less so. Behind the plate Russell Martin (8 hits, 4 walks+42, 2 0s) is ok, but Austin Hedges (6 hits) really is not.

The difference between a 60-win team that is fun to play and a 40-win team that isn't is that ninth and tenth hit, but altogether too often the 8s are just not going to be good. They'll struggle against middling pitching staffs and be at sea against the really good ones.

Defense: 3.0
A few bright spots.

We begin our examination with Alex Gordon, who is getting on it years but is Still Getting It Done (OF3, 34 arm).

The catchers are also okay, though Russ Martin has a rag arm (C8 Th-4), while Austin Hedges (C9 Th-1) is superior but as noted above has what we like to call "a good bunting card." Among the infielders Hernan Perez (2B8 3B4 SS8 OF2) is average and exceptional at second.



Gordon: Still getting it done

The rest of the position players are average at best. Smith, Cabrera, Charlie Tilson, Derek Fisher and Keon Broxton are all OF2s with mediocre arms; Thames, LaStella, Beaty and Jake Lamb are 1B3s, Bote is a 2B7, LaStella is a 2B6, Ruiz and Dawel Lugo are 3B4s, Crawford is an SS8, and the rest are 3B3s and OF1s. Getting Beaty, Thames and Riley in the same lineup means someone has to play the field at a place that he'll be Fielding 3. It's a defensive team that will not do the hurlers very many favors.

Bench: 2.5
There are some choices.

Though there are few players with especially good cards on the roster, there are at least some choices. This will be necessitated by the limited playing time for the best ones. In addition to the regulars, there are some others of potential interest that will allow some variations.

Jake Bauers, whose best cards are ahead of him, can hit a little (8 hits, 4 walks, 1-0-0); Derek Fisher (7 hits, 5 walks, 1-0-0, 9 13s, 6 SBA with a 32 SSN), Charlie Tilson (8 hits, 2 walks+42, 4 SBA with a 34 SSN) and Keon Broxton (6 hits, 3 walks, 16 SBA with a 25 SSN) can run a little; Dawel Lugo (9 hits, 3 0s) can play third base a little. Jake Lamb (6 hits, 5 walks+42, 3 0s) is still working on the comeback album with a new backup band.

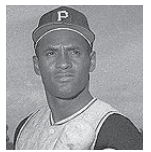
Still, when combined with the various choices for regular lineups, there should be some ability to show different looks depending on the opponent's pitcher. That's something.

4th

The prediction of the team's finish is something that is worthy of Captain Obvious. We assume they're fitting some fortunate young player for his #1 Draft Pick jersey now. The early results reinforce what we know: this team is a project, one that will have some work to do to come back to respectability.

On the positive side, the 2020 draft helped *a lot*. Austin Riley, Tanner Rainey, Dwight Smith, even Rio Ruiz, Dawel Lugo and J. P. Crawford have a chance to blossom, as do David Bote, Derek Fisher, Dwight Smith and Matt Beaty. But on the negative side, the constant turnover (and, seemingly, the constant *need* to turn over) makes the ascending path hard to predict. But we think that this can only get better.

TQ: 10.5



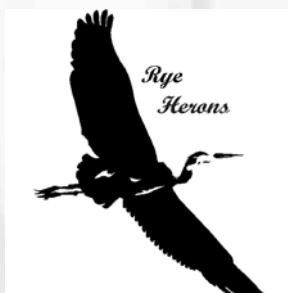
riverwolf SHARKS



We Are All Regrouping

A quick taking of temperature during the offseason among the four members of the Mays Division would reveal that each team was convinced that this was a year to recover, regroup, and reorient. Not enough pitching; injuries to key players; graying of the ones who remained. This isn't like the 1998 Clemente Division (see the Williams essay for *that* comparison) – but this isn't exactly the Ruth powerhouse either. This is a division that may overperform due to cunning and experience, but it'll be a long season regardless.

The leader of the pack is the *Rye Herons*, which has a respectable staff and a very solid lineup. *Craig Musselman*, who won 100 games a year



ago with much the same roster, will be demonstrating his managerial acumen in getting the maximum mileage. He will be pursued all season by *Jim Jeatt's New Westminster Whiskeyjacks*; they added some talent of their own in the draft, and will win far more than 50 games during the coming season. Both clubs have gotten much younger, and should have quite a race.



2019 Mays Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Rye*	100	62	.617	—
Gotham City	81	81	.500	19
Maracaibo	77	85	.475	23
New Westminster	50	112	.309	50

* Lost to Whitman in conference semi-final..

Down the road in *Gotham City*, the *Batmen* have some challenges. Poor performances, aging and random injuries makes *Anton Greenwald's* team an also-ran in 2020; hopefully brighter days are ahead, but in the meanwhile there are the current days, which may be long and difficult. Still, the team is no pushover, having added some bats in the draft.



The same may be fairly said of *Walter Hunt's Maracaibo Rumrunners*. 2019 was extremely unkind to them in MLB; the pitching staff, particularly the rotation, had to be rebuilt almost from scratch. With their All-Star catcher missing for a year and pieces missing all over the place, this promises to be a difficult year for the club. However, like an ace pitcher who doesn't have a fastball but "knows how to pitch," Maracaibo may be able to hold its own at least part of the time – while giving up on some games just because of usage. 2021 can't come fast enough.





Mays Division

- | | |
|--------------------|------|
| 1. Rye | 29.5 |
| 2. New Westminster | 26.0 |
| 3. Gotham City | 19.5 |
| 4. Maracaibo | 19.5 |

J. T. Realmuto,
Rye

2019 rye HERONS in review



If the playoffs are reasonably in reach, getting there is worthwhile. by Craig Musselman

2019 in review

Final Record: 100-62 (1st, Mays)

After three consecutive losing seasons without crashing, the Rye Herons were back in 2019, winning 100 games for the first time since their now-distant championship season in 2010. The team played up to its potential all year long. At the start of the season, Rye viewed itself as a modest playoff contender, likely to get into the playoffs, but without anywhere near the talent level of some other teams. Modest teams reaching the playoffs have a shot in a short series. If the playoffs are reasonably in reach, getting there is worthwhile. Rye lost to Whitman in a 4-2 semi-final series.

What went right?

Chris Sale was an ace with a stellar 19-4 record and a 2.23 ERA, the second best ERA in the 36 year history of the franchise. Alex Bregman heard those trash can lids well, delivering 132 RBI, 107 runs scored and 33 homers. The pitching staff was solid, with a 3.63 team ERA and five starters in double figures for wins. Jared Hughes was pressed into closer duty, and had a 2.15 ERA with 41 saves, the second highest save total in franchise history.

It was a solid performance. As a team, Rye was tied for sixth in ERA, and was fifth in runs scored. Rye could run the bases, leading the TBL in stolen bases with 106. It was a fine baseball team, and fun to manage.

What went wrong?

Not a lot went wrong. Two players underperformed; Paul DeJong hit .189 and Roberto Ozuna hit .209.

The Rye braintrust failed to bolster the roster during the September trading period, believing that sacrificing for the future wasn't worthwhile in view of the daunting talent on other playoff contenders. Other playoff teams did so, and in no small part it resulted in Rye's early exit from the playoffs.

3 Things

1. *Seven of Nine.* Heading into 2020, the team's offense solidified with seven of the lineup spots now virtual plug-ins with good, young hitters - a solid offense for the next several years. The pitching staff has, however, completely fallen apart. Chris Sale was not ace-like, Jameson Taillon had Tommy John (then Sale too) and the back end of the starting pitching is not of playoff-contender quality.
2. *Strong bullpens win games.* Rye has assembled a fine high end bullpen for close games, and, taking a page from a Midwest playbook, assembled a ton of innings of caddies to pitch for short inning starters.
3. *Déjà vu all over again.* Rye is a again playoff contender, without the full talent level of the other likely contenders. With 2021 being a TBL dark-hole, this may be the year to pick up in September anyone on the many crashing TBL teams who might help Rye if the playoffs appear within reach. Outreach from the feeble Rye braintrust may start in June.



Sale: Stellar

I have learned with age never to preface remarks by saying I will make three points, because I always forget the third . . .

rye HERONS

Craig Musselman (16th year)

There are some weaknesses that Mr. Musselman had to plug, but the team is poised to win another Mays Division crown.



Mr. Musselman's Rye Herons won 100 games for only the second time, and yet the team couldn't make it past the eventual World Champions in Whitman. So what does he do for an encore? He goes looking for more of the same. Unfortunately, 100 wins may not be in the cards for 2020.

But that's not to say this team won't win. It will, and the *Annual* predicts another Mays Division championship. But there are some weaknesses that Mr. Musselman had to plug, which brought about SNT Joyce. He's obviously not a long-term draft selection. He had a strong season by anyone's standards, but because of his age, he fell nearly to the end of the third round. He's just what this team needed.

Pitching: 8.5
It will take finesse.

Despite having the highest reliever grade in the set, this team can't point to its pitching as the team strength. The starting staff has middling grades and falls off hard at the end. The rotation still features some names every team would like to be able to own, but it's not a particularly young staff, nor is it filled with guys you can't wait to blossom.

SNT: Matt Joyce.

Sometimes, a SNT isn't a 21-year-old phenom. Sometimes, it's the last piece of the puzzle that makes the team work. That's Joyce, a 35-year-old addition.



The rotation is functional, period.

The bullpen is deep in numbers, but shallow at the top. The set-up crew just isn't that strong. It's also an odd mix, as most of the highest-rated relievers are righthanded, and all the lower grades are lefthanded. If Mr. Musselman can mix and match his relievers, they can get to the beast at the top, but it will take finesse. They'll have to work at it all year long.

ROTATION. The ace this year is a rejuvenated Jeff Samardzija (Grade 12 C+23). He's followed by erstwhile ace Chris Sale (Grade 11 C+23), who suffered through a down year. Andrew Cashner (Grade 9 HR+21) enjoyed some success, and Joe Musgrove (Grade 8 C+26) is still trying to put it all together. That's 111 decent starts.



Samardzija: Rejuvenated

The rotation slowly drops off a cliff after that. Adrian Houser (Grade 7) is useful for half a season, but then Trevor Williams (Grade 4 C+21) has to make way too many starts (22). In November, Jaime Barria (Grade 4 HR-44) and

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Victor Alcantara, Andrew Cashner, Roenis Elias, Ty France, Dustin Garneau, Adrian Houser, Marr Joyce, Josh Osich, Glenn Sparkman, Ranger Suarez, Marcus Walden.

Departed: Chasen Bradford, Nick Delmonico, Josh Fields, T. J. McFarland, Adalberto Mejia, Kendrys Morales, Tyler Olson, Martin Prado, Edubray Ramos, James Shields, Jeffrey Springs.



rye HERONS

Glenn Sparkman (Grade 3 C+21 HR-23) get to make a few cameos. With a caddy system, they shouldn't have to pitch deep into any game.

BULLPEN. The beast at the back end is Brandon Workman (Grade 29* C-62 HR+62), but Houser (Grade 24*) acts as the closer when in the pen due to Workman's lack of control. That's 102 innings of closer goodness. The set-up duties belong to Nick Wittgren (Grade 15* C+23), Marcus Walden (Grade 14* C-22 HR+36), and Jared Hughes (Grade 13* HR-22). They contribute another 207 innings, thankfully.



Workman: Beast

has exceptional on-base skills. No other team boasts two cards like this.

But there's much more. J.T. Realmuto (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 34 SSN for 10 attempts) is a stud, and Jose Abreu (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L+7 R-4) adds another power bat. Marcell Ozuna (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walk, 33 SSN for 14 attempts, L-5) and Paul DeJong (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+42) extend the power down the lineup.

Whit Merrifield (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 26 SSN for 30 attempts), David Fletcher (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 28 SSN for 11 attempts), and Mallex Smith (6-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, 32 SSN for 55 attempts) add dimension to the lineup as effective table-setters. Even Austin Slater (4 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L+4 R-6) and Delino DeShields (6-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 31 SSN for 30 attempts, L+3 R-3) can hit vs. lefties.

The bottom of the pen is mostly left-handed. Roenis Elias (Grade 11* HR-21), Josh Osich (Grade 10* C+31 HR-32), Ranger Suarez (Grade 9* C+32), and Paul Fry (Grade 9* C-36 HR+24) add almost 224 innings. Righties Cashner (Grade 9* HR+21), and Victor Alcantara (Grade 8*) add a few more. There's certainly lots of relief innings. The question is whether they'll be good enough, especially considering the negative HR ratings.

There's good power up and down the lineup. This may also be one of the fastest teams in the league, with many good baserunning skills (and steal numbers). They're run (literally) by a seasoned manager with a World Series win under his belt. They'll score runs. They'll manufacture runs. And they'll win a bunch of games.

Offense: 12.0
Fastest team in the league?

Defense: 6.5
Best defense in the league.



Bergman: All-World

The conversation has to start with All-World Alex Bregman (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 6 walks+22, L+5 R-4). The shift may hurt his average a bit, but the power makes him a presence reminiscent of Mickey Mantle seasons. SNT Matt Joyce (1-6-0, 10 hits, 6 walks, L-5) doesn't have the raw power, but

The best defense in the league will help this team win. The amazing Realmuto (C9, Th+6) is as good as it gets. DeJong (SS9) and Merrifield (2B8) are rock solid up the middle. Bregman (3B5 and SS9) can seemingly do it all. Abreu (1B3) is only average, the only weakness in the infield.



Realmuto: Good as it gets

The outfielders are all average OF2s, but only SNT Joyce and the ultra-versatile Fletcher (3B5, 2B8, SS8, OF2) have above-average arms (33).

Most of the key players have a full season of usage, so opponents better to used to seeing the best defense. It's true that a top notch defense in the absence of any other strength will not win you many games, but a competitive team that can catch the ball won't extend many innings.

Bench: 2.5
Not too much exciting.

The bench is well-stocked with starters who aren't in the lineup that day. This provides a great deal of flexibility. The rest of the bench players have just 8 hits apiece. Dustin Garneau (1-6-0, 4 walks+42+22, L+4 R-5

) has the unenviable task of backing up Realmuto, who plays almost every day. Ty France and John Hicks have power (1-5-6), but not much else. Guillermo Heredia (3 0s, 3 walks+42, L+5 R-9) could contribute vs. lefthanded pitching. Not much exciting here.

1st Compared to the rest of the division, the Herons are the clear champions. If their pitching gets hit hard, though, New Westminster could sneak in for an upset. Mr.

Musselman will have to finesse the staff to perform give his team the chance to win. And any team whose offense start with two 10-hit, six-walk cards has the potential to create some long innings. This is a strong team, which will play stronger during the regular season. While a playoff spot is all but assured, it's unsure if this team will go farther than last year's.

The Game Has Changed. Power. That's what every team wants now: the ability to change the texture of a game with one swing. And while Rye has good power, it also has outstanding

speed. In the right hands, that speed can win games all by itself, and Mr. Musselman knows how to use it. Last year's team stole over 100 bases. Four players stole 10 or more bases.

But that's not how the game has changed. For every roll on a power-hitter's card, it takes four or more to threaten with a speed demon. Mr. Musselman likes to roll the dice.

As an afterword: a few years ago the *Annual* made a show of pointing out the age of the Rye roster. In the list below, it's obvious that the team, particularly the key players, are much younger. This team could stay together for a few years.

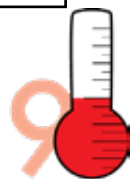
Ages of players on the Rye roster, as of 07/01/2020:

35: Joyce, Samardzija
34: J. Hughes
33: Abreu, Cashner
32: Garneau
31: Elias, Merrifield, Osich, Sale, Walden, Workman
30: J. Hicks
29: Heredia, Ozuna, Realmuto, Wittgren
28: T. Kemp, Musgrove, Sparkman, T. Williams
27: S. Alcantara, DeShields, Fry, Houser, Slater, M. Smith
26: Bregman, DeJong, Fletcher, D. Robertson
25: France
24: R. Suarez
23: Barria

TQ: 29.5



rye HERONS



2019 new westminster WHISKEYJACKS in review



by Jim Jeatt

Second place is no longer good enough.

2019 in review

Final Record: 50-112 (4th, Mays)

The 2019 season was a step back for the New Westminster Whiskeyjacks. It was more about the frustration of the 2018 season. After seeing a decent 85-win season the club not make the playoffs, a season after making the playoffs with 86, management acted. Many critics in the local media were concerned that the trades were haphazard and slipshod. The results will be seen in the next few seasons.

Fifty wins was the lowest total since 2006 when the Whiskeyjacks won a mere 38 games. The Pythagorean formula also showed 50 wins. The offense had the 20th best batting average and was one of only three teams not to score 600 runs. The pitching staff was 19th in ERA.

What went right?

Odubel Herrera led the offense with 23 homers and 74 RBI. He had a career year but those are low numbers in the new home run era. Nick Ahmed also had a career year with 22 homers and 70 RBI. The problem with career years is they must be good to count for something. Max Stassi was the true star of the offense; in 71 games he hit 14 homers drove in 25 and slugged .505.

What went wrong?

As a team the club hit .219, which is the lowest since 2001. A disaster of historical proportion. Robbie Ray was the "Ace" of the staff going 7-10 with a 4.28 ERA. Three pitchers combined for 47 losses. Guerra and Newcomb lost 16 each and Stratton lost 15. Domingo German had a

less than outstanding first season stumbling to a 1-10 7.39 season. Overall starters were 30-87. It is tough for a bullpen to help when the starters are so bad. Ryan Buchter still found 13 saves among the 50 wins.

3 Things

1. *The draft.* Many draft picks were accumulated and used over the past two years. The club has gotten younger over this time. The youth has some room to grow both in talent and maturity. Too many domestic violence charges and injuries have slowed development.
2. *The Mays is beginning to be a one-team division.* Second place is no longer good enough. The division winner seems to be the only ticket to the post season. Rye have developed a monster club and are going to be hard to beat for the next few years.



Ahmed: Career year

3. *Not borrowing from the future.* The most important thing for New West has been working to make the club stronger going forward without mortgaging the future. The draft future for 2021 is still decent and the club has purged most of its older players. A core may be forming to build around. On offense Tatis, Calhoun, Verdugo, and Vazquez has the makings of a decent offense. For the pitchers German, well New West has German.

New Westminster enters the 2020s full of hope whether it ends in frustration – it's why we play the games.

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS



Jim Jeatt (16th year)

This team can stand toe-to-toe with most of the teams in the league and should beat up the weaker teams like a schoolyard bully.

2019 was supposed to be a temporary step backward after two successful campaigns. It turned out to be more like slipping off a diving board backward, and landing with a face plant on the surface of the water. The team plunged to a 112-loss season, the worst in franchise history since 2006. But having survived to reap the rewards of that season, the team now gets to look ahead.

What's left is a pretty, pretty, pretty good team. It may not be able to keep up with match Rye for the division crown, but this team can stand toe-to-toe with most of the teams in the league and should beat up the weaker teams like a schoolyard bully. Even more impressive is the talent Mr. Jeatt is accumulating. SNT Tatis may be the Golden Goose for the team, but he has company as the team continues to evolve.

Pitching: 10.5 **The peripherals may come to matter.**

The pitching on this team has good base grades: 23, 21, 17, 15, 14, 13, and 12. 12 is a big number for the Whiskeyjacks, as the team has five starters and one reliever who are 12s. 19 is another informative number. That's the number of pitchers on the 35-man roster. Only three

Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Chris Bassitt, Michael Chavis, Garrett Cooper, David Hale, Ryan Helsley, Tim Lincecum, John Means, Hector Neris, Jose Suarez, Fernando Tatis, Jr., Sam Tuivailala, Alex Verdugo, Jacob Webb, Alex Young.

Departed: Tim Beckham, Miguel Castro, Lonnie Chisenhall, Phillip Ervin, Doug Fister, Dustin Fowler, Odubel Herrera, Trevor Hildenberger, Phil Maton, Jefry Rodriguez, Yangervis Solarte, Max Stassi, Chris Stratton, Dan Winkler.



Means: First 12

other teams in the league are carrying more.

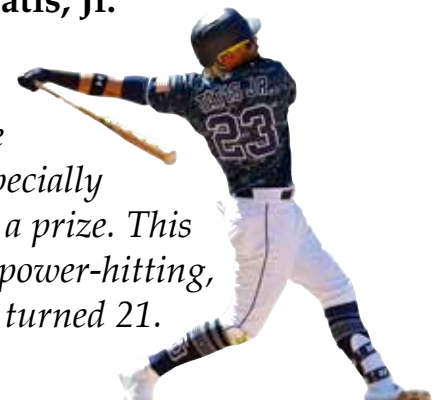
Other numbers aren't so positive – in fact, they're negative. These numbers are the majority of the peripherals on the pitching staff. There are many negative or just slightly positive peripherals throughout, and that may cause some of those bigger numbers to perform more like smaller numbers. Still, luck plays a role, and a manager's skill for bringing in the right pitcher at the right time also matters.

ROTATION. Do you like 12? There are 124 starts of Grade 12 this season for New Westminster. The best may be first-round pick John Means (Grade 12 C+24). But there's also second-round pick Chris Bassitt (Grade 12), and third-round pick Alex Young (Grade 12). They're followed by Domingo German (Grade 12 C+21 HR-24) and Robbie Ray (Grade 12 C-35). Three of the five are southpaws.

The second shelf only has to make 38 starts, and they're not all that bad, either. Jason Vargas (Grade 9 C-23) is another lefty and Adam Plutko

SNT: Fernando Tatis, Jr.

When you have the third pick in an especially deep draft, you get a prize. This year, the prize is a power-hitting, shortstop who just turned 21.





new westminster WHISKEY JACKS

(Grade 7 C+31 HR-22) complete the season. That means rookie Jose Suarez (Grade 1 HR-36) gets to learn how to keep the ball in the park down in the minors all year. All in all, this is a competent starting crew that should keep the team in the game almost every day.

BULLPEN. There's a two-headed monster at the back end of the bullpen: Sam Tuivailala (Grade 23* C-45 HR+52) and Jacob Webb (Grade 21* C-21). Together, they provide 53 innings, which may be enough.

The deep set-up crew includes Hector Neris (Grade 17*), Alex Colome (Grade 17* HR+23), and Junior Guerra (Grade 15* C-26) for 212 important innings.

Lefties Ryan Buchter (Grade 14* C-34), Jerry Blevin (Grade 14* C-31), and Sean Newcomb (Grade 13* C-24 HR+22) contribute 131 more innings.

At the bottom of the pen are Ryan Helsey (Grade 12* C+21), Sam Gavilglio (Grade 10* C+25), and peripheral king David Hale (Grade 10* C+41 HR+46) for 170 more. The sheer depth is impressive and useful, but again, the peripherals may come to matter.

Willie Calhoun (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-5). Both players unfortunately have only a half season to shine.

Rookie Alex Verdugo (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22) solidifies the outfield, while Christian Vazquez (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks) has blossomed into a fine hitter. Nick Ahmed (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, 31 SSN for 10 attempts, L+7 R-4), Brian Goodwin (1-5-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 27 SSN for 10 attempts), Mike Kingery (1-5-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, 30 SSN for 19 attempts), and even Niko Goodrum (4 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN for 15 attempts L+8 R-4) all display power and speed.



Verdugo: Solidifies

That leaves Jonathan Schoop (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, L+4 R-3) as the last four-power-number card on the team. Others have power too, like Garret Cooper (1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-9 R+2), Ryan McMahon (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks), Michael Chavis (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-4) and Dexter Fowler (1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks+22, L-4 24 SSN for 13 attempts).

You should have noticed by now how much speed there is on this team in addition to the deep power. While there are only two players with 11 hits, and both are game-limited, this team is capable of scoring runs in bunches, and it can still manufacture a run when needed. While there are maybe too many 9-hit-3-walk cards, it should be a fun team to manage.

Offense: 9.0
A display of power and speed.

Defense: 3.5
No weaknesses.

This team flashes a lot of power. Nine hitters have four power numbers, not that all nine get to play in the same lineup. The joy ride starts with SNT Tatis (1-1-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 28 SSN for 22 attempts, L+13 R-5). He's dynamite, especially at a skill position. He's joined by

Vazquez (C9, Th+3), Ahmed (SS9), and Schoop (2B8) up the middle is a formidable start to any defense, but of course, Tatis (SS8) will play all his games at short, with Ahmed providing late-inning help when needed. McMahon (3B4) is average at the hot corner, as are both Cooper



Vazquez, Ahmed: Formidable

There's always been a faction within baseball preaching pitching and defense. Those things still matter of course, but those voices have been drowned out by the ones screaming for homers and more homers.



and Chavis (1B3s) across the diamond, but at least there are no weaknesses. All the outfielders are average, but only Verdugo has an above-average arm.

Bench: 2.0
Strong bench.

There is enough usage of the regulars to allow for some shift-managing, which may not matter as much at home on the computer.

In addition to Goodrum, who can play almost anywhere, Timothy Locastro (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+3 42s, 35 SSN for 17 attempts) makes an excellent fourth outfielder. Pedro Severino (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, R-4) is the backup catcher (C8, Th-2), but might start on other teams. The less said about Lewis Brinson, the better. This is a strong bench.

2nd

And with ease, as the other two clubs in the Mays are much more in the rebuilding mode in 2020.

This version of the Whiskeyjacks shouldn't be able to catch the Rye Herons, but at the *Annual*, we fully expect to see the team in New Westminster tally a winning record in 2020. They have power, speed, and a deep pitching staff.

With luck (as always), this team can beat up on lesser teams and at least spar with the monsters of TBL. Will it be good enough for a playoff spot? What a Cinderella story that would make after their 112-loss season.

As with Rye, this team has more speed than most, which goes against the grain. Still, it's a useful ingredient for a winning team, especially on one that already has good power. Let's see if it works.

Ages of players on the New Westminster roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 37: J. Vargas
- 36: Blevins
- 35: J. Guerra
- 34: Fowler
- 33: Buchter
- 31: Bassitt, Colome, Neris
- 30: Ahmed, Gaviglio
- 29: Cooper, Goodwin, C. Vazquez
- 28: Plutko, Ray, Schoop
- 27: German, Goodrum, Locastro, Means, Tuivailala
- 26: Brinson, Kingery, Newcomb, P. Severino, Webb, A. Young
- 25: Calhoun, Helsley, McMahan
- 24: Chavis, Verdugo
- 22: J. Suarez
- 21: Tatis

TQ: 26.0



2019 gotham city BATMEN in review



What will happen in 2020?

by Anton Greenwald

2019 in review

Final Record: 81-81 (2nd, Mays)

As I write this summary of my fantasy team, Gotham City, I am listening to the news that College sports might begin in the Fall with empty stadiums and massive testing. I wonder what will happen to MLB?

In 2019 I thought that Gotham City would be about a .500 team and that is exactly what happened as we finished 81-81. There were some standout performances – Betances got a bunch of saves and Stanton hit a bunch of home runs. Freeland won 14 games but Junis lost 16. Carpenter hit just a tad under .300 with lots of power but collectively my catchers barely hit .200 with no power. What will happen in 2020? The key results are what happened in MLB in 2019.



Carpenter: Lots of power.

Surprisingly, Pham and Canha were named to the most under-rated team in MLB. Everything else went downhill.

What went wrong?

I predicted that Kinsler and A. Escobar were in the end-phase of their careers and by golly, that happened. I thought Lucroy and Carpenter would do better in 2019 and that did not happen. Jankowski, who I drafted to add future speed, broke his hand in spring training and is uncarded for 2020 as is Gyorko. Unfortunately, Stanton was also injured and uncarded.

Pitching was flushed down the drain. My first draft choices for four of the previous five years were injured last year. Besides Stanton this list includes Betances, Reyes, and Montgomery. Will they return? Meanwhile, Eovaldi was injured again; Anibal Sanchez seems to have recovered from injuries but is really old, Wacha is showing signs of aging, Freeleand wasn't worth keeping.

Dreams, no things

Gotham City went for rebuilding in 2020 draft. Not a complete gut the team move (as our best talent was uncarded and could not bring full value) but a clear go for the future move. I replaced virtually the whole middle infield and with any luck for pitching, this could be a good team next year – if MLB plays any games.

What went right?

At the end of April 2019 I noted my dream team. I looked at Steve's card computer output found that my seventh round pick in 2019 draft, Tom Murphy, backup Seattle catcher, was predicted to have 14 hits, 4 walks, and 1-1-0-0-0-0 power numbers. My eight round pick, Daniel Volgebach, backup Firstbaseman/DH in Seattle, was predicted to have 10 hits, 7 walks, and 111566 power numbers. Current backup catcher Chirinos was predicted to have 9 hits, 4 walks, 42, and 1-6-6-6-6 power. All of these late round draft choices wound up the season doing very well, but not that well. First round pick Adames became a regular SS9, second round pick Choi did OK but is mostly a DH, and third round pick Smith did OK as a Grade 16* now.

gotham city BATMEN

Anton Greenwald (35th year)
Gotham City is never a pushover.



Gotham City continues to stock talent a year after claiming the title “The Best Team in the International Conference that Didn’t Make the Playoffs.” While that may seem like a dubious title, it reflects Mr. Greenwald’s consistent approach to put the best team possible on the field. He doesn’t give up, and he doesn’t boom and bust.

This team would be in a much different place right now if not for a string of unfortunate injuries, which have disabled former SNTs and derailed several careers. Regardless, Gotham City is never a pushover, as they always seem to have lots of walks and power, a Mr. Greenwald specialty. If the game has changed, it’s changed to more closely resemble his team-building philosophy, which is a compliment.

Pitching: **6.0** **Just a bunch of guys.**

There aren’t many bad grades on this staff, but there’s no one you can really point to as the ace or stud of the staff, either. Even if you scan through the names of the pitchers, they’re just a bunch of guys who’ve had some level of success, either now or in the recent past. It’s just not a staff that invokes fear ... or confidence.



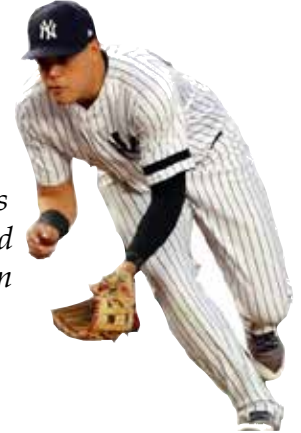
Rodriguez: Ace this year

That’s not news to Mr. Greenwald, as this staff has been riddled with devastating injuries.

It’s not that the pitching is bad because it’s not. It’s a very competent staff. They’ll get the job done on some days, and on others, well, as they say:

SNT: **Giovanny Urshela.**

Not exactly part of a youth movement, Urshela provides immediate punch and should hit in the middle the Gotham City lineup for several solid years.



Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Matt Andriese, Luis Arraez, Brandon Dixon, Wilmer Font, Greg Garcia, Chi Chi Gonzalez, Nick Goody, Shed Long, Anthony Santander, Giovanny Urshela.

Departed: Jarrod Dyson, Alcides Escobar, Kyle Freeland, Jedd Gyorko, Heath Hembree, Travis Jankowski, Ian Kinsler, Wandy Peralta, Jose Pirela, Hunter Strickland.

You can’t win ‘em all. And the 2020 Gotham City Batmen will definitely *not* win them all. In fact, it will take a lot of luck and all of Mr. Greenwald’s considerable skills to get them to where they finished last season: 81-81.

ROTATION. It starts with solid mediocrity, and doesn’t vary too much from there. That’s the good news. The bad news is that the peripherals don’t help much. The ace this year is Eduardo Rodriguez (Grade 11 HR+23), who’d be a solid #3 on a contending team. He’s followed by Danny Duffy and the ageless Anibal Sanchez (both Grade 10s). They make 87 starts.

Wilmer Font (Grade 9 HR-23) and the explosive Chi Chi Gonzalez (Grade 9 C-46) take another 29 starts. That leaves 46 starts for Jakob Junis (Grade 6) and Michael Wacha (Grade 6 C-21 HR-23), who have been better and may be better, but right



gotham city BATMEN



Petit: Closer by default

now are what they are. Nate Eovaldi (Grade 6 C-44 HR-26) gets to add bulk to the bullpen.

BULLPEN. Yusmeiro Petit (Grade 16* C+44) is the new closer by default, since injuries have hit this team harder than most. At least he provides 83 innings, which gives the team a chance to protect the late leads. He's set up by lefty Will Smith (Grade 16*) and righty Nick Goody (Grade 16* C-52), but their 106 innings look light in comparison, which means getting to the closer may become an issue.

The middle innings belong to Chaz Roe (Grade 11* C-56 HR+45), Font (Grade 11* HR-23), and Matt Magill (Grade 9*). They contribute another 151 innings and may have to see some set-up time. The bulk innings belong to Matt Andriese (Grade 7* HR+23), Eovaldi, and innocuous lefty Richard Bleier (Grade 3* C+51 HR+25). They also have the bulk of the relief innings with 216. They'll be used. A lot.

Offense: 7.0
A far cry from the past.

This offense starts with SNT Urshela (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22). He bats second or third in every lineup and brings instant credibility to the team as the "Guy You Don't Want to Face" with the game on the line. Tom Murphy (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+9 R-10) and Shed Long (1-4-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+6, R-4) will crush lefties on the boards.

Rookies Anthony Santander (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks) and Brandon Dixon (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 6 attempts) are the only other players with four power numbers. It's a far cry from the dominant Batmen teams of the past. Another aspect that seems to be MIA is steal attempts. They've been consolidated in perennial all-star Tommy Pham (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, 33 SSN for 29 attempts, L+7 R-4).

But this isn't a one-dimensional team. Rookie Luis Arraez (3 0s, 11 hits, 4 walks, L-6) gives the team 92 games of a player with extraordinary on-base skills. There are two players besides Pham who successfully combine power and on-base in typical Batmen fashion: rejuvenated Mark Canha (1-5-5, 9 hits, 5 walks+42+22, L-6) and Ji-Man Choi (1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, L-9).



Arraez: On-base

Robinson Chirinos (1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, L+8 R-4), Ryan Zimmerman (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+9 R-5), and Willy Adames (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-9 R+3) all add a little pop, along with bearded lady Daniel Vogelbach (1-5-5, 7 hits, 6 walks, L-9 R+2). Then there's #9 hitter Jonathan Lucroy (6-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22), who adds outs.

Defense: 4.0
Mostly average.

The obvious strengths are Adames's SS9 and Pham's OF3 with a 33 arm, but it's the only above-average OF arm on the team. Zimmerman (1B4) and Urshela (3B4) are OK on the corners, and Lucroy (C8, Th-1) is apparently there for his glove.

Long (2B6) is a black hole when he plays, but that's covered by Greg Garcia (2B8) off the



Adames: Strength

bench. Murphy does have a nice Th+4, but the team only takes advantage of it when he starts versus lefties. Everyone else is mostly average, reflecting the team's rating.

Bench: 2.5
Eminently useful.

Besides some availability among the starters, the bench features on-base powers of Greg Garcia (2 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks+22, L-8) and Matt Carpenter (1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks+22, 33 SSN for 6 attempts). Both of these players are eminently useful and have lots of games to contribute.

With some extreme shifts on the team, Mr. Greenwald will have to work the bench to maximize its value. He's proven he can in the past.

3rd A bad team? Hardly. A winning team? Again, hardly. There are enough weaknesses to limit the offense, and the mediocre pitching staff will likely keep them from a winning record, even with Mr. Greenwald's proven managerial expertise.

While this team would compete for a division crown in the handicapped Williams Division, in the Mays, it's an afterthought. Mr. Greenwald understands the team's limitations, and he's content to ride out the season and dream of better times. If the injured pitchers return to form and the current roster keeps improving, he may not have to dream for long.

Speed has rarely been a Batmen strength. Last season, Travis Jankowski led the team with 12 steals. Jarrod Dyson used to be the perennial team leader in this category. Both players have moved on. The team has been known for its imitation of Earl Weaver: *walk, walk, homer!* Today's game has changed to more closely align with Mr. Greenwald's philosophy of power and on-base proficiency. With five World Series appearances, he's been ahead of his time and maybe even ahead of the curve. The question becomes: Will the rest of the league catch up in the New Normal, will the Batmen simply up the ante, or does the future hold a new philosophy for the Batmen? Our money is on Mr. Greenwald staying the course.

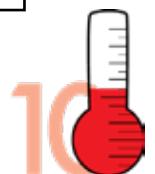


gotham city BATMEN

Ages of players on the Gotham City roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 36: Chirinos, A. Sanchez
- 35: Y. Petit, Zimmerman
- 34: Carpenter, Lucroy
- 33: Bleier, Roe
- 32: Pham
- 31: Canha, Duffy
- 30: Andriese, Eovaldi, Font, G. Garcia, Magill, W. Smith
- 29: Choi, Murphy, Wacha
- 28: Dixon, Goody, C. Gonzalez, Urshela
- 27: Junis, E. Rodriguez, Vogelbach
- 25: Santander
- 24: Adames, Long
- 23: Arraez

TQ: 19.5



2019 maracaibo RUMRUNNERS in review



... the not quite a train wreck that is the Maracaibo Work In Progress.

by Walter Hunt

2019 in review

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

The reward for mediocrity and rebuilding is supposed to include the blossoming of young talent and a return to contention. You take enough potential, some of it will get the message and become competent.

Instead, some of the young talent missed the bus. Some of it got hurt. Some of the rest just retired, or became useless, or didn't play, or got sent to the minors, or ...

So this will be year three of the not-complete rebuild, the not quite a train wreck that is the Maracaibo Work In Progress. Let's hope we have it right.

What went right?

The pitching staff kept the Rumrunners close to .500 all year. Rookie closer Seranthony Dominguez struck out 63 in 47 innings and saved 26. Arrieta and Hamels won 13 games each and German Marquez was 10-11 with 226 Ks. Overall the team turned in a respectable 3.67 ERA, sixth in TBL, and finished fourth in strikeouts (1,367) and fifth in runs allowed (622).

At the plate it wasn't such good news, though the club did score 688 runs. Lorenzo Cain was the star of the show (.307, 25 for 26 steals), and Starling Marte (40 doubles, .270) and Maikel Franco (17 homers) were major contributors.

What went wrong?

But the offense was really a popgun affair. The team was last in the league in homers (118), 21st

in walks (432), recorded a .301 OBP (tied for 23rd) and slugged .412. It was a whole team of 9 hits and 2 walks. It's a wonder they won 77 games, much less scored 688. Only one player had more than 20 HR (Mitch Moreland, who hit a robust .215). Seven regulars struck out more than 100 times, led by Starling Marte at 134. Ian Desmond (.188-7-37) was an exercise in absolute futility.

3 Things

1. *Let it go.* It's time to let go of the pretense that this is a temporary aberration. The days of John Lackey and Ichiro Suzuki are on the "TBL Statistics History" page now. The team belongs to Starling Marte, Lorenzo Cain, Eloy Jimenez, Diego Castillo and Sandy Alcantara. Without taking everything apart and losing 110 games, there won't be many top five choices in the drafts to come, and management isn't interested in losing 110.

2. *Sometimes picks don't work out.* Pick someone else. This might come as a corollary to item 1. Bradley

Zimmer, James Pazos, Heath Fillmyer, and their ilk were good ideas at the time, but they didn't work out. One must be ruthless like Vlad (not Guerrero: that Impaler guy out in Brobdingnag).

3. *Patience.* Unless one is building for a single year, which is not Maracaibo style, more patience will be required. The current roster has some filler and meat by-products, but has also added some good talent and acquired some other talent to go with it. 688 runs is possible, though 77 wins is probably unthinkable. It's got to be a matter of faith that better times are ahead.



Cain: Star of the show

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS



Walter Hunt (34th year); Hall of Famer

There isn't enough rum in all of Maracaibo to think this team will contend in 2020.

The Maracaibo Rumrunners continued their amazing run of never losing triple-digit games, the only TBL franchise to be able make that claim. It's as impressive an accomplishment as Mr. Hunt's three World Series runs. But now, as the focus turns to the present, the team looks like it's switched from rumrunning to soft-drink peddling.

That's not to say there aren't some highlights waiting to happen. This team has a combination of established stars and young faces, including SNT Eloy Jimenez. But at the moment, there are more of the former than of the latter. There isn't enough rum in all of Maracaibo to think this team will contend in 2020. And worse: the odds of a 100-loss season may be no better than even money.

Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Sandy Alcantara, Tyler Beede, Jalen Beeks, Colten Brewer, Jeff Brigham, Dylan Cease, Adeiny Hechavarria, Clay Holmes, Eloy Jimenez, Dylan Moore, Luis Rengifo, Danny Santana, Sam Travis, Jose Trevino.

Departed: Ryan Braun, Wilmer Difo, Michael Dunn, A. J. Ellis, Heath Fillmyer, Jeanmar Gomez, Josh Harrison, Nate Jones, Peter O'Brien, Gerardo Parra, Hernan Perez, Dan Straily, Sam Tuivailala, Bradley Zimmer.

SNT: Eloy Jimenez.



After a slow start, this youngster played up to his hype. In some years, he'd have been a consensus #1 pick. This year, Mr. Hunt scooped him up with pick #9.

Pitching: 5.5 A relatively young staff.

Mr. Hunt knows the strengths and weaknesses of every team he puts together. Last year's pitching staff overachieved to record a 3.67 team ERA, and yet this year's squad will feature some key new faces intended to rejuvenate what has been a team strength. Apart from three long-time Rumrunners and one recent acquisition, this is a relatively young staff.

Three promising young arms join the rotation. As a consequence of that youth, not all the grades rise to the level that Mr. Hunt would normally put on the field. Still, exactly because of that youth, the odds of improvement keep increasing. The staff could gel in 2022 or even 2021. But despite the potential, this year's staff isn't likely to repeat last year's success.



Alcantara: Rookie ace

ROTATION. The new ace of the team is rookie Sandy Alcantara (Grade 11 C-21 HR+22), of whom big things are expected. Veteran Cole Hamels (Grade 10 HR+22) follows, giving the team 65 solid starts that cover just over a third of the season.

The next level includes German Marquez (Grade 7 C+34), Jake Arrieta (Grade 6), and rookies Tyler Beede (Grade 6) and Dylan Cease (Grade 6 C-33 HR-21). That leaves nine starts for opener Matt Strahm (Grade 4 C+41 HR-22). Hamels, reliever



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

Jalen Beeks and swingman Strahm are the only lefties on the team. While the rotation does include some positive peripherals, a Maracaibo stable, these starters will have to rely on the bullpen ... often.

BULLPEN. Another trademark of any Rumrunner team is a deep bullpen. Check. Keone Kela (Grade 20* C-21 HR+24) reprises his role of a short-inning closer. Setting him up is Greg Holland (Grade 14* C-62) and Castillo (Grade 13* HR+23). They have but 135 innings between them, though. It's not enough by a long shot.

The deepest part of the bullpen lies in the next level. Strahm (Grade 11* C+41 HR-22), Colton Brewer (Grade 10* C-62 HR+31), Wander Suero (Grade 9* HR+41), Joe Kelly (Grade 9* HR+23), Jeff Brigham (Grade 9* HR-26), Mark Melancon (Grade 8* C+25 HR+44), lefty Jalen Beeks (Grade 8* HR+25) and waiver pickup Clay Holmes (Grade 8* C-62 HR+33) contribute 458 innings. This is a lot of innings, which will help the bottom of the rotation, at least.

Hechavarria (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+3 R-3) is a power-hitter.

Starling Marte (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 31 SSN for 31 attempts, L-5) and "rookie" Danny Santana (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 30 SSN for 27 attempts) are excellent two-way threats. But where did all this power come from? This is essentially the same team that hit 118 HR last year, dead last (by 32 homers) in TBL. They'll hit more this year.

The rest of the lineup isn't as fearsome. Maikel Franco (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) flashes occasional power. Leadoff man Lorenzo Cain (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, 27 SSN for 26 attempts) is the best of the bunch, although Jose Trevino (5-6-6, 10 hits, a walk, L+8 R-7 and 5 24s) has a funky card — although he has a second 31 ... on 24.



Cain: Best of the bunch

Orlando Arcia (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, 24 SSN for 13 attempts) and rookie Luis Rengifo (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-5) round out the batting lineups. Only five hitters have as many as three walks, which may actually be an improvement over years past. While this team will hit for more power, they'll also see their share of 1-2-3 innings.

Defense: 6.0
Santana the only weakness.

This version of the club has one of the better defenses in the league, another Maracaibo trait. This version is led by Arcia (SS9), Hechavarria/Rengifo (both 2B8s), and Cain (OF3, with a 34 arm) up the middle. In addition, Wieters (C8 with Th+5) and Trevino (C7, Th+1) are strong behind the dish. Desmond and Marte both have above-average arms (34). Finally, Moreland (1B5) is The Man at first base.

Offense: 7.0 Where did this power come from?

Mitch Moreland (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-11 R+1), SNT Eloy Jimenez (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-3), and even Matt Wieters (1-1-6, 8 hits, 2 walks) are all aiming for the fences this year. Ian Desmond (1-4-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-7) has outstanding power. This season, even Adeiny



Moreland: Fences

The only weakness is Santana (3B3 and 1B3). Franco (3B4) offers some coverage at the hot corner, but Santana has to play somewhere to get his bat in the lineup. With the departure of Gerardo Parra to SushiLand™, he may get time in the outfield as well.



Arcia: Leads defense

Bench: 2.0
Multifaceted and ever-useful.

This year's Rumrunner team doesn't have that many unruly batting shifts, but there'll be some extra usage from the regulars.

On top of those games, the team can count on the multifaceted Dylan Moore (1-4-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, 22 SSN for 20 attempts) and the ever-useful Isiah Kiner-Falefa (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, L-6). There's enough here to help the team win a few extra games over the season in Mr. Hunt's capable hands.

4th It'll be a dogfight for last place in the Mays Division between the Rumrunners and the Batmen. Both teams have different strengths and weaknesses. Both have competent, proven managers. Maracaibo's team will compensate for subpar rotation with a deep bullpen and lots of power.

Win or lose, Mr. Hunt should enjoy the offense this team generates when it's on and the doubles are flashing like a display case of World Championship trophies. The next championship has to wait ... for now.

Extraordinary power is now part of every team's makeup. Maracaibo finally caught up to that trend, and SNT Eloy Jimenez definitely pushes the team in that direction. The 1982 St. Louis Cardinals that won the MLB World Series would

be a third-place finisher, at best, in these new times. The run-and-gun offenses that sometimes appear can't keep up with the bruising beasts TBL has seen in recent years. Still, a few years ago the Minnesota Guru, Darrell Skogen, piloted a team that was much more like one of those teams than the common run and won a TBL World Series with it.

Drafting pitching, power and on-base finesse will help Maracaibo reach the next level and keep up with the rest of the league. Without it, a 100-loss season isn't just probable; it's likely.



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

Ages of players on the Maracaibo roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 36: Hamels
- 35: Melancon
- 34: Arrieta, Cain, Desmond, G. Holland, Moreland, Wieters
- 32: J. Kelly
- 31: Hechavarria, S. Marte
- 29: Santana
- 28: Brigham, Strahm, Suero
- 27: Beede, Brewer, Franco, Holmes, Kela, D. Moore, Trevino
- 26: Beeks, D. Castillo, Travis
- 25: O. Arcia, Kiner-Falefa, Marquez
- 24: S. Alcantara, Cease
- 23: Jimenez, Rengifo

TQ: 19.5



Why We Roll The Dice



After more than thirty years, we should be used to this. When our newest Hall of Fame manager, *Joe Auletta*, decides that his club should contend, the

Brobdingnag Barbarians are very, very good. This year's edition might require a few extra 'very's added to that statement. There is no team within 5 TQ points (10-12 wins), and the only one that's even in the ballpark is in the same division and right behind. They'll not be printing the playoff tickets by Memorial Day, but there's already a playoff spot ready and waiting.

The next best club in TBL is clearly the *Hoboken Zephyrs*, and *Steve Powell* has built a very capable club – part through the draft and part through trades. They have solid pitching and a powerful lineup to go with it. It's taken a while for the team to get to this point: there were some trying years prior to the present, seasons that are best forgotten.



The question isn't whether they're good: it's whether they can be even better than their division rivals.

2019 Ruth Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Brobdingnag*	114	48	.704	—
Midwest †	89	73	.549	25
Hoboken	80	82	.494	34
Knoxville	78	84	.481	36

* Lost to *Whitman* in conference championship.
† Lost to *Blue Hill* in Wild Card playoff.



In the meanwhile there are two other teams in the division, either of which could win in at least two other divisions in the league. How-

ever, they're here in the Ruth, and despite impressive power and one of the best starting pitchers in TBL, it'll be an uphill climb for *Pat Martin's Knoxville Outlaws* to have a strong showing in this division. Nonetheless, there might be a playoff spot waiting for them.

Every year there's a competitive division in TBL that provides one team with the title "best fourth place team in the league." This year's cup winner is the *Midwest Mongrels*. *Darrell Skogen* is never one to step away from a fight, and despite the expectation of a fourth- (or possibly third-place) finish in the toughest division in TBL, he's put a solid team together with enough to get to the post-season. . . if everything goes just right.



- 
- | | |
|----------------|------|
| 1. Brobdingnag | 41.5 |
| 2. Hoboken | 36.5 |
| 4. Knoxville | 29.0 |
| 3. Midwest | 28.5 |

Ruth Division

Ronald Acuña, Jr.,
Brobdingnag

2019 brobdingnag BARBARIANS in review



Against a very sound Whitman team, it wasn't enough.

by Joe Auletta

2019 in review Final Record: 114-48 (1st, Ruth)

After a disappointing 2018, the Barbarians traded away baseball's best player, went heavy into the draft with three of the first four picks, and added two veteran starting pitchers in Verlander and Morton. In uncharacteristic fashion the veteran starters carried the team (team ERA of 2.85 led the league) to allow the young position players to come along without the pressure to be starters from day one. The offense was solid but not spectacular, scoring 861 runs, tied for second but more than 100 runs behind Melrose. The defense was a sieve, giving up almost 100 unearned runs and ended in the bottom three for team errors. The mix was good enough to win the Ruth by 25 games and sweep Blue Hill in the first round of the play-offs, but the defensive lapses and lack of timely hits resulted in losing the Conference finals to Whitman 4 games to 1.



Verlander: Outstanding

What went right?

First, the decision to anchor the rotation around two veterans. Justin Verlander (20-6, 2.96, and 271 Ks) was outstanding, and Charlie Morton (16-8, 3.46) was very good. Rookie Walker Buehler (12-4, 2.83) provided a third reliable starter.

Second, the loss of Mike Trout was made more palatable by an MVP quality season from CF Mookie Betts (.349 / .425 / .638, all three leading the conference by a large margin, along with 34 HR, 123 RBI, and 108 runs). Finally, the Trout trade worked out, at least for one season. The haul that came back for him produced 157 runs, 171 RBIs, and 48 homers (Acuna and Soto) — as well as 34 starts, 21 wins, and a 2.42 ERA (Strasburg, Buchholz, and Oliver Perez). Craig

Kimbrel ceded his closer role in 2019 to Colin McHugh, but still managed 15 saves to become the fifth TBL pitcher with 200+ saves.

What went wrong?

For 166 games, very little. Then the Conference Finals started. The pitchers continued to pitch well enough to reach a tenth World Series, but the offense sputtered to get key hits, and the defense made miscue after miscue. Against a very sound Whitman team, it wasn't enough. Carlos

Santana was added in the off season but instead hit .185 / .324 / .317 in 152 games. Expected starting shortstop Carlos Correa was limited to 110 games because of injuries, and still was 2nd on the team with 24 errors; as a group the starting infield committed 87 errors.

3 Things

1. *Will the rotation be dominant?* Most seasons three starting pitchers with Grades 19+ would without doubt be dominant. They will be good, but as good as in other seasons? How will the plethora of cards with huge power play vs the high grades?

2. *Can regular season success carry into the the play-offs?* Last year's team was on paper, best in the Conference — but dice and the River Rats emphatically showed that paper is not the final word. Success is not the playoffs, but a much deeper run.

3. *Should a 2B for now have been drafted?* This draft was incredibly deep in 2B, but the team got Brandon Jennings for the future. We had enough picks to package a couple and move up to have a shot at a Gavin Lux or Cavin Biggio, but decided to stay with a much lighter-hitting Caesar Hernandez.

brobdingnag BARBARIANS



Joe Auletta (32nd year; Hall of Famer)

There are no holes.

It is never much of a surprise when Joe Auletta emerges from a busy offseason with a powerhouse. This newly-minted TBL Hall of Famer (congrats!) has won 100 games or more 14 times in his amazing career. What is surprising is how many times he has lost big – 5 seasons of 100 losses or more. Nine seasons with over 90 losses.

These are controlled explosions, of course. The point for most clubs when they step off the ledge is to jostle for position to maximize value for each draft pick. For Joe Auletta, it sometimes seems like he's building his roster two years out. But the Prince of Darkness' clairvoyance notwithstanding, when the *Annual* asked him what he thought about the current outfit, he said that this is one of the most complete teams he's had in his career. "There are no holes," he intoned. His instructions include this line. "We are going for the Rochester win record."

That is not good news for the Ruth Division.

Pitching: 18.5
As strong a staff as we've seen.

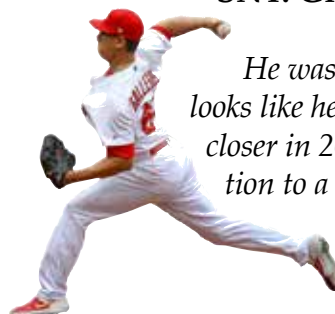
We used this section title in the 2019 *Annual*, and it's even better this year. There are really no weaknesses here – as with other parts of the team. We can only stand back and admire.



Verlander: Real

ROTATION. The top of the rotation consists of Justin Verlander (Grade 19 C+32 HR-14, 34 starts), Stephen Strasbourg (Grade 14 C+22 HR+21, 33 starts), and Walker Buehler (Grade 12 C+32 HR+22, 30 starts). Real

SNT: Giovanni Gallegos.



He was dominant in 2019, and looks like he could be the St. Louis closer in 2020. He's a nice addition to a strong bullpen, and Joe grabbed him with both hands in Round 2.

Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Nelson R. Cruz, Jarrod Dyson, Giovanni Gallegos, Javy Guerra, Brendan Rodgers, Casey Sadler, Jacob Stallings, Melbrys Viloría, Brandon Woodruff.

Departed: Jose Briceno, Clay Buchholz, Jonathan Holder, Joe Mauer, Charlie Morton, James Pazos, Jace Peterson, Christian Villanueva, Melbrys Viloría.

starters. The kind who pitch deep into games and devour starts in a short series.

Then, we have the MLB 2020 openers: Ryne Stanek (Grade 21 C+41 HR+13, 27 starts, 6/6* fatigue) and Tyler Glasnow (Grade 21 C+23 HR+41, 12 starts, 19 fatigue). The only question here is the fatigue numbers, but the bullpen is spectacular so it's more of a concern for the road manager than for Joe.

That's 136 starts. The other 26 go to Brandon Woodruff (Grade 11 C+23 HR+25, 22 starts), Collin McHugh (Grade 7 C-22, 1 start, 33 IP, 27/7* Fatigue), and Casey Sadler (Grade 15 C+25 HR+25, 4/8* fatigue, 45 IP).

McHugh makes one start, which means for 161 starts, the weakest Barbarian starter is a very respectable grade 11. It doesn't get much better than this.



brobdingnag BARBARIANS

BULLPEN. The relievers will occasionally find work despite the fact that the starters are rocking 110 starts of Grade 14 or better. Some of that work may involve doing card tricks to entertain the bleacher creatures when Brobdingnag is winning yet another blowout.

When they actually get to pitch, there's a lot to like. Will Harris (Grade 21* C+23 HR+25, 60 IP) is the closer, and he has been here since 2017. Folks can be forgiven for not noticing his arrival – he came over in a deal that included David Ortiz.

The co-closer is Giovanny Gallegos (Grade 20* C+32 HR+13, 74 IP), so the double-headed close monster has 134 innings – about one inning per win this season.

There are two excellent setup men. Roberto Osuna (Grade 17* C+33 HR+16, 65 IP) and Casey Sadler (Grade 15* C+25 HR+25, 45 IP) will bolt down the seventh and eighth innings. Joe prefers the better control numbers in leveraged situations.

Colin McHugh has 33 innings as a Grade 17* to burn here. Scott Oberg (Grade 18*, C-23 HR+31, 58 IP) is relegated to middle relief because of his control. That gives Brobdingnag 290 innings to convert close and late situations.

Then there's the never ending lefty - Ryan Yarborough (Grade 11*, C+44 HR+24, 18 fatigue, 141 innings). For teams that can't hit lefties, his presence will prove most unpleasant. He also is the Valet when a starter gets pounded out early. (It might happen...maybe...)



Harris: Closer

The rest of the guys will sell bobbleheads at the concession stands most of the year. Ollie Perez (Grade 10* C+24 HR+22, 41 IP), Javy Guerra (Grade 7* C+32, 68 IP), and Craig Kimbrel (Grade 6* C-55 HR-62, 21 IP) man the mops at the back end of the pen.

This group will matter a lot in the playoffs, and will see their share of action because of the short fatigue numbers in the starting rotation. Should they be needed, they'll be ready.

Offense: 14.0
Sleepless nights for pitchers.

In 1997, The Brobdingnag Barbarians hit 322 homers and scored 1180 runs. Their leadoff hitter was Frank Thomas (OBP .423). Alex Rodriguez scored 160 runs for that team. This year's unit is not as ludicrous as that offense, but there will be some sleepless nights among opposing pitchers.

The outfield consists of elder statesman Mookie Betts (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 5 walks, 32 SSN for 20 SBA), Ronald Acuna (1-1-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN for 43 SBA), and Juan Soto (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 6 walks, 35 SSN for 13 attempts). Every one of these guys has either won an MVP award or will win one eventually. Acuna and Soto are 23 and 22 years old, respectively. Betts will not turn 28 until October.



Betts: Elder

The designated hitter is Nelson Cruz (1-1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks) no matter the pitcher. He bats fourth all year. Carlos Santana (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks, L+2) plays first base. Carlos Correa (1-1-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, 75 games) and Manny Machado (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+11 R-5) platoon at shortstop. Machado does not crack

the lineup at third base because of Yoan Moncada (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks).

Not everyone is eyeball-scorching cardboard. The catchers are Omar Narvaez (1-0-0, 10 Hits, 3 walks) and Jacob Stallings (1-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+10 R-5). The second baseman is Cesar Hernandez (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks). They're solid, and that's plenty good enough considering the rest of the lineup.

Defense: 6.0
Where is Omar Vizquel?

They are very good defensively when they want to be. Cesar Hernandez (2B8) and Carlos Correa (SS9) would be a great middle infield tandem for a championship run, but Correa has only half a season. Manny Machado (3B5, SS8) plays short for more than 80 games. Yoan Moncada (3B4) plays third pretty well, and Machado can slide over for defense. Carlos Santana (1B3) is usable at first.

The catching tandem is Omar Narvaez (C7, Th-4) – who will catch them when they stop rolling – and Jacob Stallings (C8, Th+5) who will probably play more in the playoffs than he does in the regular season.

The outfield is outstanding. Juan Soto (OF2, 31 arm), Mookie Betts (OF3, 35 arm) and Ron Acuna (OF3, 33 arm) are solid. Jarrod Dyson (OF3, 28 arm) can come in for defense. When they need to catch the ball, they will.

Bench: 3.0
Everyone has a role to play.

The reason this team is so fearsome offensively is because of this unit. Austin Hays (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, 68 ABs, R+12) is a deluxe pinch hitter. Brandon Nimmo (1-6-6, 7 hits, 6 walks+42, 69 games) will get on base to start rallies late. Jarrod Dyson (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, L+3, 34 SSN for 33 SBA) will most likely use all of his steal attempts. David Freese (1-1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks,

R+5, 79 games) is half a season of decadence off the bench. Joe limits him by plate appearances, so he'll be on the team all year Willans Astudillo (3 0s, 10 hits, 1 walk + 42) and Brendan Rogers (6, 8 hits, 2 walks) will cash their paychecks every week. This is probably the best bench in the league.

1st With a vengeance. After a surprise exit in the playoffs last year, the Barbarians have left their ceremonial war weapons behind as they raze villages all over the league. Joe is looking for TBL World Series ring #7. Nothing less will satisfy Vlad this season.

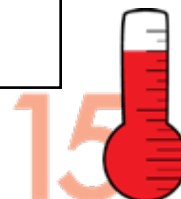
Ages of players on the Brobdingnag roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 40: N. Cruz
- 38: O. Perez
- 37: Freese, Verlander
- 35: Dyson, Harris
- 34: Guerra, C. Santana
- 33: Beckham, McHugh
- 32: Kimbrel
- 31: Strasburg
- 30: C. Hernandez, Oberg, Stallings
- 29: Sadler
- 28: Astudillo, Gallegos, Narvaez, Stanek, Yarbrough
- 27: Betts, Machado, Nimmo, Woodruff
- 26: Glasnow
- 25: Buehler, Correa, Moncada, R. Osuna
- 24: Hays
- 23: Rodgers
- 22: Acuna
- 21: Soto

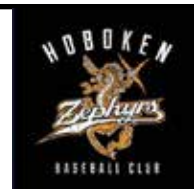
TQ: 41.5



brobdingnag BARBARIANS



2019 hoboken ZEPHYRS in review



It pays off in 2020.

by Walter Hunt

2019 in review Final Record: 80-82 (3rd, Ruth)

In 2019 it was clear that the Hoboken Zephyrs weren't going to run with the big dogs. Even so, the *Annual* wrote in praise of the talent: players that other teams coveted, younger and better pitching, the core of a very good team that had not quite come together.

They played to the level expected. Outscoring their opponents 733-724, the team was the very epitome of a .500 team. Their 4.00 ERA placed them right in the middle; the team hit only .239 but was above average in HR (209) and slugging (.416). Convenient hindsight suggests that it was all in preparation for this year.

What went right?

Javier Baez (.267-36-115, 88 XBH) put together a year of remarkable power. Francisco Lindor contributed 35 HR of his own, Stephen Piscotty hit 29, and David Dahl 24 in half a season (.301, 60 RBI).

The bullpen worked very hard, as evidenced by the mere 12 CG and the low starter win totals. Jeremy Jeffress was lights out (5 wins, 41 saves, 2.11 ERA, 88 K in 77 IP), and the bullpen recorded a third of the team's wins.

What went wrong?

Making contact was a real challenge. Six regulars struck out more than 110 times, led by Baez (183) and Aaron Judge (147 in 408 AB).

The team hit only .239 and had an OBP of .302, which made the lineup look like a group of guys with 9 hits and 3 walks (and 6-7 13s). They managed only 28 steals in 48 attempts, and hit into more than 100 double plays. No regular hit more than .267; when it wasn't an extra-base hit, it was a part of an empty inning. The team also made 103 errors, led by Starlin Castro's 23.

Two starters – Dereck Rodriguez and Carlos Rodon – recorded 9 wins each, to lead the team.

The starters were amazingly ineffective, and struck out only 1,217 batters (more than 100 less than Hoboken's own total.)

3 Things

1. *No panic button.* Despite offers from contenders, Baez, Lindor, Judge, Bell and others have remained on the team; at no point did management push the panic button.

2. *Looking for the long term.* Last year's and this year's draft are aimed at taking players to keep the ball in the air. Shane Bieber, Luis Castillo, David Dahl . . . this isn't just cardboard. Hoboken management reflects Dr. Steve's careful, deliberate approach to team building. It pays off in 2020, and for some years to come.

3. *Play your own game.* It would be easy to concede the year to the Brobdingnag juggernaut. The offense can go toe to toe, but Barbarian pitching is out of this world; but it's a long season, and the playoffs are a whole new ballgame (to coin a phrase). Hoboken will be there.



Baez: Power

hoboken ZEPHYRS



Steve Powell (31st year)

Hoboken will crush teams all year.

It is often said that timing is everything. In TBL, the success of any rebuilding period can often be defined by the vacillations of other teams around them. In 1997, TBL Hall of Famer Walter Hunt rolled out a juggernaut. Maracaibo won 113 games that season, but they ran into the legendary 1997 Brobdingnag Barbarians in the playoffs. Undeterred, Mr. Hunt regrouped and won 114 games in 1998, only to lose to Brobdingnag again in the 1998 International Conference championship.

Dr. Steve Powell can relate. In 2011, Mr. Powell's Dallas Eagles waited until the entire Ruth Division decided to rebuild all at once, and fielded one of the best teams he has ever had – a 110 win luxury yacht outfit with three 19 game winners in the starting rotation (Josh Johnson was 19-3,

Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Aaron Bummer, Liam Hendriks, Jay Jackson, Elvis Luciano, Andrew Munoz, Josh Naylor, Daniel Ponce de Leon, Connor Sadzeck, Justin Shafer, Donovan Solano.

Departed: Greg Bird, J. T. Chargois, Sam Freeman, Matt Grace, Blaine Hardy, Jeremy Hellickson, Jeremy Jeffress, Austin Pruitt, Cody Reed, Ryan Tepera.

SNT: Liam Hendriks.



Dr. Steve went down under for a closer this year, as Hendriks is from Perth, Australia.. But see our note on this quip.

1.95) and a 943 run offense. They crushed the conference but faced off in the World Series against Mark Freedman's Melrose Avengers, who won 123 games that year. The result – for Dallas – were less than satisfactory. (Melrose won in five).

This year, Steve is riding high again, but Joe Auletta is thinking about how to get to 125 wins to surpass Dave Suter's regular season record. The *Annual* is picking Hoboken second in the Ruth. They are certainly the second best team in TBL.

Pitching: 13.0
They will win a lot of games.

ROTATION. The Zephyrs have 40 starts of Grade 15 - Luis Castillo (C+31 HR+21, 32 starts) and 8 starts of Daniel Ponce De Leon (C-44, HR+16).



Bieber: Dividends

They are followed by 77 starts at Grade 13. Shane Bieber (Grade 13 C+34, 33 starts) paid immediate dividends on that 2019 first round pick. Yonny Chirinos (Grade 13/9*, HR+32 HR-15, 18 starts, 29 RIP) and Kenta Maeda (Grade 13/13*, 26 starts, 17 RIP) will be rock solid in the rotation, then go help out in the bullpen. All together, Hoboken has 117 starts at Grade 13 and above.

Brad Peacock (Grade 12, 15 starts) and Trevor Richards (Grade 10, C-14 HR+13, 23 starts) add 38 more competent outings before Derek Rodriguez (Grade 4 HR-24, 7 starts) is thrown to the wolves.

It's to be noted that there are no Openers here. Hoboken has build a traditional pitching staff



hoboken ZEPHYRS

around good major league starters with fatigues of 22 and better. They will win a lot of games.

BULLPEN. Mr. Powell had exactly one job when he arrived in Framingham for the 2020 draft: build a bullpen. His first round pick was Liam Hendricks (Grade 19* C+33 HR+43, 86 IP). His second round pick was Aaron Bummer (Grade 21* HR+43, 68 IP). That's called Focusing on your Objective, people! Connor Sadzeck (Grade 18* C-62 HR+23, 24 IP) was somehow hanging around in the seventh round, giving the Zephyrs 178 IP of Grade 18 and above.

The middle men are Andres Munoz (Grade 15* C-42 HR+33, 23 IP) and rubber armed Archie Bradley (Grade 12* C-36 HR+42, 72 IP).

Blaine Hardy (Grade 11* C-15 HR-31, 44 IP), Justin Shafer (Grade 11* C-45 HR+14, 40 IP) and 20 year old Elvis Luciano (Grade 7. C-62 HR+26, 34 IP) pitch in non-leverage situations. Elvis Luciano was born on February 15, 2000. He is the first player in TBL history to be born in this millenium.

While talented, this is not an unlimited bullpen. Hoboken has 437 relief innings to play with including Chirinos and Maeda. It should be enough with the strong starters but careful management will be required here.

Offense: 14.0
Should approach 900 runs.

It's nice to have a five power number stud to plant in the middle of your lineup. Hoboken has *three*. And none of them bat cleanup! The trio of



Castellanos, Bell, Baez: None batting cleanup

mashers consists of Nick Castellanos (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, R-4, L+11), Josh Bell (1-1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, R+2) and the dynamic Javier Baez (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+4). All three of those guys shuffle aside for the terrifying Aaron Judge (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks, R-5, L+6, 102 games), when Judge is healthy.

There's more bats that follow. Francisco Lindor (1-5-5-6, 10 hits 2 walks) is a wonderful shortstop and plays every day. David Dahl (1-4-6-6, 11 hits 3 walks, 100 games) starts in center field for five months. Donovan Solano (3 0s, 12 hits, 2 walks, 3 7s, 81 games) is the starting second baseman for half the season. James McCann (1-0-0-0, 10 hits 2 walks, 118 games, L+3) is the regular catcher. Josh Reddick (3 0s, 10 hits 2 walks, L+3) starts in right field. Starlin Castro (1-4-6, 10 hits) is the starting third baseman.

There are some shift issues here against righties, but they will terrify lefthanders wherever they go. There's plenty of depth to work with on the bench. You can pitch to Reddick and Castro, but the other seven lineup spots are just terrific. They should approach 900 runs.

Defense: 6.0
Very strong.

The Zephyrs are very solid here. Francisco Lindor (SS9) is one of three SS9s on the club. Donovan Solano (2B8, SS7, 3B3) is the second baseman for half the year. Javier Baez (2B8) is the second baseman for the months when Solano is in the minors. The third baseman – Starlin

Castro (2B7, 3B4, SS7) – plays all 162 games. The Catchers are all C8s – James McCann (Th+1) and Travis d’Arnaud (Th-1) with occasional appearances by Austin Romine (Th-1). McCann gets the nod as the starter due to his better arm.

Josh Bell (1B3) plays first. No one is better over over there, and his bat has to be in the lineup. The outfield boasts two fabulous arms - Aaron Judge (OF3, 36 arm) and Josh Reddick (OF3, 36 arm). David Dahl (OF2, 33 arm) is the regular center fielder, and he doesn’t do badly with the leather either. If Hoboken wants to beef up the outfield defense in a close game, Jake Marisnick (OF3, 35 arm) can help.

This is a very strong team defensively.

Bench: 3.0
Embarrassment of riches?

Hoboken is hoarding excellent shortstops. Freddy Galvis (1-5-6, 10 hits 2 walks) is a nice player who could be a bargaining chip if Hoboken needs a goody for the playoffs. Travis d’Arnaud (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, R-5, L+4, R-5) is the backup catcher and an option against lefties. Stephen Piscotty (1-0-0, 9 hits 3 walks, L+12, 93 games) is also a lefty killer.

Most of the really great cards play in the lineups. Jake Marisnick (1-4-6, 8 hits, 2 walks + 42, D30 for 14 attempts) can run some when a steal is needed.

They are missing the 80 at bat freak show card that contenders always seem to have as a pinch hitter. Maybe that’s because their freaky-good cards play every day instead.

2nd With their loaded lineup and airtight pitching, Hoboken will crush teams all year. Brobdingnag may be slightly better in the TQs, but Hoboken is going to be very difficult to beat for the division and in a playoff series. Dr. Steve should be gunning to pass his personal record of 110 wins.

Submariners

Our comment about Dr. Steve going Down Under to get his bullpen ace – Liam Hendricks is from Perth, Australia – originally But the know-it-all in this league, I thought, would probably think of Dan Quisenberry, whose down-under deliveries helped Kansas City win a World Series in 1985.

Then we realized that Walter Hunt and Darrell Skogen are in this league, and those guys would remind me of the first great submariner – Ted Abernathy. In 1967, Ted Abernathy pitched in 78 games for the Cincinnati Reds. He went 6-3, 1.27 with 28 saves. He pitched 106 innings. In 1968, the Reds - apparently unconcerned about workload - threw him out there for 135 innings of relief. He won 10 games with a 2.46 ERA. He was 35 years old. In the next three seasons, he threw 85, 83 and 81 innings for several teams, including the Kansas City Royals. In 1972, as a 39 year old, he threw only 58 innings for the Royals, but posted a sparkling 1.70 ERA. For some reason he decided to retire after that.

Liam Hendricks is not a submariner, and has been pitching well for Oakland for a few years. But he’s never posted numbers like this before: 85 innings pitched with a 1.80 ERA. Ted Abernathy would be proud.



TQ: 36.5



hoboken ZEPHYRS

2019 Knoxville BLUE THUNDER in review



What can we use to build for long term consistency?

by Pat Martin

2019 in review Final Record: 78-84 (4th, Ruth)

The youth of the past two drafts on offense have stepped up to form a solid core that will help return the Blue Thunder to relevance. If Buxton and Sano can finally remain healthy, then the wait will finally pay off. Cole stepped up to be the ace we had hoped he would be, and Gibson remained as a solid piece of the rotation.

What went right?

Four of the starters had double digit victory totals. Gerrit Cole (13-10, 3.11, 267 K in 229 IP), Kyle Gibson (12-9, 3.18) were among the best in the league. Ryan Pressly (6 wins, 9 saves, 2.09 ERA) led a very active and strong bullpen.

On offense, Matt Chapman (44 doubles, 31 HR, 85 RBI) led an offense that hit a lot of doubles and struck out less than average. The run differential (665-695) reflected the team's overall record, but the offense was fairly efficient.

What went wrong?

The hope is that your clean up hitter will come close to being a force in the lineup. When you have to send him to the minors for two months because he can't find the Mendoza line, the plan falls apart quickly.

3 of the 5 starters had double digit losses, and a fourth was traded away before he reached that

plateau. The bullpen turned out to be solid but unreliable. Ottavino had 23 saves before leaving town, but also had a 4.50 ERA, far above what had been expected.

3 Things

1. *Trading, trading, trading.* When we saw that we were falling well short of expectations, the trading bug bit and we were able to move ourselves back into a decent draft position and pick up some valuable players that will help in 2020 and beyond.

2. *Youth and trades are finally paying off.* The last few drafts have seen the focus shift from immediate need to "what can we use to build for long term consistency?" Also, the last few trading seasons have seen us have to pivot from what we can do to win now to what can we do to become relevant again.

3. *Twins and Hope.* While we have always leaned towards taking a Twin when all things are considered equal at the time of picking during the draft, this year was a step back in that philosophy. The Hope is that the core we have in place will be solid enough to have us in contention for a wild card.



Chapman: Leader

knoxville BLUE THUNDER



Pat Martin (34th year)

Knoxville would really like this to be a Dr. Jekyll type season.

In Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson spun a resonant tale about a lawyer whose experiments – on himself - resulted in a split personality. The book is so well known that it has become part of English vernacular. It was written in three days by Stephenson in the midst of a serious illness. It may have been inspired by his friendship with an Edinburgh-based French teacher who was convicted of poisoning his wife with opium.

Knoxville would really like this to be a Dr. Jekyll type season, and they are going to be one of the best teams in TBL when they can gather their entire team together. They last had a winning season in 2015, when the team won 105 games. Since then, they have been an afterthought in the Ruth.

Whether you're happy to see Knoxville pop up on your schedule or not should depend on the time of year. A spring encounter with Pat's boys will feature some good pitching, which they have in abundance, but a questionable lineup. Then, the All Star break happens, and this club turns into a monster.

Pitching: 15.0
Playoff-quality staff.

ROTATION. No openers in Knoxville. The Blue Thunder are throwing it old school, starting with the best pitcher in baseball. Gerrit Cole (Grade 18 C+24, 33 starts) had a pretty good year last year. For Houston he went 20-5, 2.50, allowing 142 hits in 212 innings with 326 strikeouts. The year was timely, since he was a free agent. He got a 9 year, \$324 million contract from the New York Yankees. Knoxville paid less than that, acquiring him from Hudson for perennial All Star Jake Faria.

Behind that gentleman are full seasons of Patrick Corbin (Grade 13 HR+21, 33 starts) and Michael Fiers (Grade 12 C+15, 33 starts). So you get to start #100 before Knoxville throws out anything less than a solid 12.



Cole: Old school

Jay Happ (Grade 8 C+15 HR-24, 30 starts) and Kyle Gibson (Grade 7 HR+15, 29 starts) will need some help in their starts. The last few outings go to Erik Swanson (Grade 7, C+34 HR-46, 58 IP, 8 starts). This is a good rotation, but falls short of Brobdingnag and Hoboken.

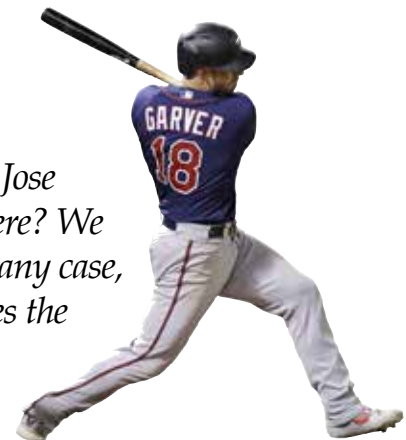
Turnover Rate: 31%

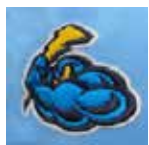
Arrived: Austin L. Adams, Nick Anderson, Luis Cessa, Travis Demeritte, Tyler Duffey, Wilmer Flores, Grayson Grenier, J. A. Happ, Ryne Harper, Kevin McCarthy, Erik Swanson.

Departed: Justin Bour, Dylan Covey, Charlie Culberson, Evan Gattis, Matt Kemp, Bud Norris, Fernando Romero, Hector Santiago, Kohl Stewart.

SNT:
Mitch Garver.

*What in the name of Jose Canseco happened here? We don't quite know. In any case, the **Annual** welcomes the new Mike Piazza to TBL.*





KNOXVILLE BLUE THUNDER

BULLPEN. Knoxville management spent most of the 2020 draft building a bullpen. The top 4 picks were Tyler Duffey (Grade 16* C+24 HR+14, 58 IP), Nick Anderson (Grade 13*, C+26 HR+15, 65 IP), the practically unlimited Luis Cessa (Grade 11* C-14, 81 IP), and Austin Adams (Grade 18*, C-53 HR+16, 32 IP).

None of those guys gets to close games. Ryan Pressly (Grade 18* C+25 HR+23, 54 IP) and his nice peripherals is the closer. Duffey and Trevor May (Grade 18* C-22 HR+22, 64 IP) are the bridge guys.

There is a very healthy 150 innings of Grade 18* relief here, and 273 innings of Grade 13* relief. This will certainly complement the the nice rotation. The only nit is that Knoxville does not have any late relievers that will defeat the homer consistently – Pressley’s HR+23 is the best they have here, which is why he’s closing. Other than that, they are looking good.

There is some bulk relief for handling situations when Knoxville has their starter knocked out or the weaker starters need a valet. Andrew Chafin (Grade 10*, HR+23, 53 IP) and Ryne Harper (Grade 9*, C+35 HR+16, 54 IP) are the best of that bunch. PGA veteran Lou Trivino (Grade 8*, C-35 HR+25, 60 IP) also will show up to fill up the middle innings. Then there are some Guys. Robert Gsellman (Grade 7*, HR+24, 64 IP) and Kevin McCarthy (Grade 6*, C+25 HR+43, 60 IP) are here. Jesse Biddle (Grade 1*, C-62, 26 IP) and former closer Wade Davis (Grade 1*, 43 IP) will mop up.

This is a solid, serviceable unit that will help the Blue Thunder close out wins and stay competitive against good lineups. Knoxville did nice job constructing this group on the fly at the draft.

Offense: Great cardboard.

9.0



Buxton: Scorching

There is some truly eyeball scorching cardboard in this stack. How about we start with Byron Buxton (1-0-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 20 Spd, E32 for 17 attempts, 87 games)? Six power number cards with this much usage do not happen often. And how many guys with this kind

of power have a 20 speed number? Oh – and everyone knows that catchers don’t hit much, right? Well, there’s Mitchell Garver (1-1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 93 games) back there for half a season. There’s more. Matt Chapman (1-5-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+42), who bats third all year. Wilmer Flores (1-0-0-0, 12 hits, 2 walks, 3 24s, 89 games) is slated to start against lefthanders early in the season, but will play every day later in the year. Miguel Sano (1-1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks, L+2, 105 games) is another member of the wrecking crew who bats cleanup against righties.

At this point, you can see the pattern. Great cardboard, but only for 100 games or less. Chapman and the electrifying Ozzie Albies (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, E30 for 20 attempts, R-4, L+9) are the only regulars who don’t take a month or two off. The early results – Knoxville went 6-13 in April – reflect the fact that the team is back-loading. In July, they will have as good a lineup as any in TBL.

Other regulars are around for the full year, but are a notch below the half season beasts. Eddie Escobar (1-0-0-0. 10 hits, 3 walks) is the DH to start the season. Kevin Pillar (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, E29, 19 SSN) and Colin Moran (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) play in the outfield. Jorge Polanco (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, R+1) is the everyday shortstop.

Have your fun with this team if you are lucky enough to face them early. They will be extremely imposing by August.

Defense:
Solid defensive team.

4.0

The lineups emphasize the offense over the defense, so you have to take some time to realize that this team can field. As an illustration, Mitch Garver (C7 Th-4) is a mess behind the plate, but Tony Walters (C8 Th+3), who will play almost as many games as Garver, is very good.

There are several guys that are as good with the leather as anyone in baseball at their respective positions. Ozzie Albies (2B9) is already



Chapman: Spectacular

a top shelf second baseman at the age of 23. Matt Chapman was spectacular in the field last year, and has brought us a 3B6. Eduardo Escobar (3B5) can slide out there when Chapman sits down, which will not happen often.

Byron Buxton (OF3, 36 arm) is excellent in the outfield. Kevin Pillar (OF3, 34 arm) is also very good out there. Harrison Bader (OF3, 35 arm) and Manuel Margot (OF3, 31 arm) are on the bench, which is good because Colin Moran (LF1) starts in left field.

Miguel Sano (1B3) and Wilmer Flores (2B6, 1B3) will play first, but not very well. And finally, Jorge Polanco (SS8) is the everyday shortstop. He'll be ok, but he'll extend a few innings too.

This is a solid defensive team. They have soft spots in left and at catcher, but depth to shore things up when they are trying to win.

Bench:
Flexibility and some resources.

3.0

There are some resources here, but the instructions are to go the distance with the starting lineups. There are a lot of speed guys, like Harrison Bader (1-0-0, 7 hits, 4 walks+42,

30 SSN with 15 SBA) and Manuel Margot (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, 32 SSN with 23 SBA, L+10). Margot can also be effective against some lefties, if the team wanted to use him that way. Jose Peraza (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks + 42, 17 Spd) is another burner and a former first round draft pick now playing in hitter friendly Fenway.

Tony Walters (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) is the backup catcher and will play a lot, since Garver only has 93 games.

3rd

Knoxville is clearly better than Midwest, but they will struggle the first couple of months. If they can keep the wheels from completely coming off in April, May, and June, they could compete for a wild card berth.

Ridiculous

We selected Mitch Garver for the SNT because it was the most impactful card that wasn't important in 2019. We don't know where this power came from: he had 51 home runs in 2121 minor league at bats – one dinger for every 41.5 at bats. In 2019 with Minnesota, Garver his 31 homers in 359 at bats – one every 11.5 at bats. He was so good that he won the American League Silver Slugger award as the best hitting catcher in the league despite playing only 93 games. Ridiculous. But apologies from Pat Martin for this explosive emergence seem to have been delivered to the wrong address. So we keep our fingers crossed for Pat that we have a real improvement here. Catchers that hit like this...well, there are no catchers that hit like this.



KNOXVILLE BLUE THUNDER

TQ: 29.0



2019 midwest MONGRELS in review



It will be a fun season for the Dawgs and their 14 season ticket holders.

by Darrell Skogen

2019 in review

Final Record: 89-73 (2nd, Ruth)

The Dawgs reached local expectations by winning 89 games despite a horrendously weak starting pitching staff. The bullpen was magnificent, and the offense was just good enough to make most games fun and exciting. For the second straight season the Dawgs played for the Wild Card; once again, it finished second in division despite another prediction that they were the fourth best time in their grouping. A late season trade brought in Adam Ottavino, and he filled the void in October and November as an over-worked bullpen faced innings limitations.

What went right?

Some laughed at the draft when the Guru predicted 89 wins, a wild card spot, and playoff appearances for a second straight season. 89 wins. 'Nuff said, as we say out here in flyover land.



Berrios: Grew into an ace

This team was about pitching, once again, as the Dawgs featured a 3.64 ERA and allowed only 654 runs while scoring 706. Jose Berrios grew into an ace, with 17 wins and 172 strikeouts in 200 innings. MadBum was magnificent in limited duty at 13-2, 3.18. Gio Gonzalez went 15-10 despite a 5.12 ERA.

Eight bullpen stalwarts carrying the day pitched massive innings and had ERAs under 3.50. Ottavino was superlative after coming over from Knoxville, pitching 40 innings in the final two months as a Dawg. With any kind of hitting at all, this team could have been special.

What went wrong?

Once again the offense was a pop-gun approach. Cody Bellinger dropped back to 14 HR and hit .224. Collectively, the team hit only 158 homers, and its slugging percentage of .389 was pitiful. Trea Turner's .252 batting average was helped by 25 doubles, 25 homers, and 45 SBs, but otherwise it was bleak at best. If the pitchers did not hold the opposition close, it was impossible to get back into a game.

3 Things

1. *Bad draft position once again forced a key decision.* Rather than trade away the future one more year to compete in 2020, the Guru decided having a full draft next year was essential. Some patching took place, but it will take hard work to win one of the wild card spots this season.
2. *Hitting will be better.* We expect a return of the power to this group, and the defense and pitching should be good enough to keep us in most games.

3. *How will injuries be overcome?* Trea Turner will miss the first two months — can Ronny Rodriguez deliver enough offense to keep things afloat until Turner returns in June? Will Victor Reyes be able to spell Eddie Rosario and Max Kepler as they deal with playing time shortages?

Can we slip past Knoxville and Hoboken into the second spot in the Ruth Division this year? Who knows? Can we finish third and still win the second wild card spot? Time will tell. But once again, it will be a fun season for the Dawgs and their 14 season ticket holders.

midwest MONGRELS



Darrell Skogen (19th year)

A quiet year in Minnesota.

The fallow times are over in Midwest as Darrell Skogen and his Dawgs have posted two solid seasons in a row. Last year, they won 89 and snagged a wild card berth. They have talent – particularly in the pitching staff. They are young. They are piloted by one of TBL's savviest managers.

The problem is that they've reached a plateau. And they have a rocky overhang above them in the division – Hoboken and Brobdingag look like they are going to be leaning forward for the next few years, and they are loaded with talent. Knoxville has quietly amassed some remarkable cardboard as well.

So now what? A quiet year in Minnesota. The deep 2020 draft added some bullpen help but because the Dawg's first pick was #98 the youth added this year is unlikely to provide much traction towards a Division title or a third conference championship. One thing stands out when you take a look at the 2021 draft grid: Midwest has every one of their own draft picks. Watch the Guru in the next twelve months as this team shifts it into gear.

Pitching: 11.0 **Quite a stockpile.**

ROTATION. Midwest management is terrific at stockpiling pitching. The starting rotation of this club is the best unit on the team. It starts with Jose Berrios (Grade 11 C+23 HR+16, 32 starts) who was added in a trade with Hoboken after the 2017 draft. Oft-traded Madison Bumgarner (Grade 10 C+33, 34 starts) is also here. Zach Davies (Grade 10 HR+16, 31 starts) is the third starter.

The highest grade in the stack belongs to Gio Gonzalez (Grade 13 C-31 HR+25, 17 starts, 20

fatigue). Gonzo is only around for half the season and suffers from being left-handed. (If you don't think that's a problem feel free to peruse the shifts of the Hoboken

and Brobdingag hitters. We'll wait.) David Price (Grade 9, C+15 HR+15, 22 starts) and his low fatigue (21) will try to walk to the mound without stopping to catch his breath.

Then there's Chad Green (Grade 11/9* C+22), who will open games starting in June. He's joined in the Opener Brigade by Andrew Kitteredge (Grade 1/12*, C+25 HR+14), Derek Law (Grade 9, C-62 HR+23) and Jose Alvarez (Grade 8, C+25 HR+14). They follow the 135 starts of Grade 9 and above. In a normal division

Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Brandon Brennan, Corbin Burnes, Elias Diaz, Andrew Kittredge, Derek Law, Nick Margevicius, David Price, Ronny Rodriguez, Tyler Webb, Stevie Wilkerson.

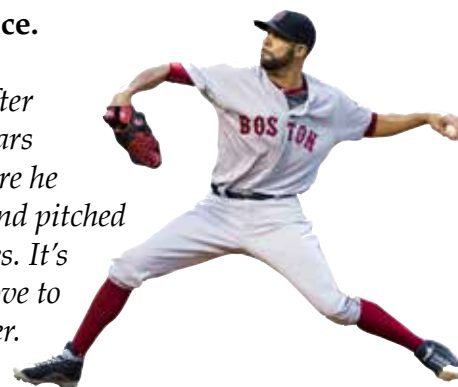
Departed: Scott Alexander, Jake Faria, Chad Kuhl, Victor Martinez, Adam Ottavino, Edgar Santana, Magneuris Sierra, Eric Skoglund, Sammy Solis.

SNT: David Price.

He arrives here after ten productive years in Whitman, where he won 144 games and pitched 58 complete games. It's hoped that the move to LA helps his career.



Berrios: Top of the stockpile





midwest MONGRELS

that would be excellent. In this powerhouse division, it is enough to keep from having a bad year, but not nearly enough to compete.

BULLPEN. When Midwest is ahead, they plan to stay ahead. Kirby Yates (Grade 22* C+32 HR+54, 61 IP) is their closer with his sweet combination of a lock-down grade and huge peripherals. He has help. Pedro Baez (Grade 18* HR+32, 70 IP) and Tyler Webb (Grade 17* C-21, 55 IP) will capably handle the seventh and eighth innings.

After that 186 innings, there is exactly one reliever in the envelope that steals 8s without help. Brandon Brennan (Grade 14*, C-32 HR+16, 47 IP) gets to hold the bridge for the 'finishers'. Beyond that, there are a few competent performers:

Richard Rodriguez (Grade 10*, C+14 HR-25, 65 IP) will be making appearances all year in non-leveraged situations. Chad Green (Grade 9*) and Andrew Kitteredge (Grade 12*) have 87 relief innings between them.

Then there is an entire utility close of mops, like former closer Edwin Diaz (Grade 6*, HR-42, 58 innings), Shawn Kelley (Grade 5*, C+35 HR-34, 47 IP) and three Grade 1s. This bullpen will finish games when the Dawgs are ahead. They will help out when the weaker starters exit the game – there is an elaborate Valet system in the instructions. The pen has a ridiculous 781 innings - so bring those guys in starting right after the National Anthem. Against the super teams in the Ruth, this pen won't save them, but they will certainly give weaker teams around the league a challenge.



Yates: Sweet

Offense: 11.0 Capable, but good enough?

When Midwest takes a guy early, he is usually superb. A year ago, he took Cody Bellinger (1-1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 5 walks, 17 Spd, E29 for 20 attempts) who turned into the kind of cornerstone player you can build a championship around. In 2017, the Guru took Trea Turner (1-4-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, 19 Spd, D34 for 40 attempts), and that also seems to have worked out very well, thank you.

Not every one of Midwest's sluggers is a high draft pick. Yuli Gurriel (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, 144 games) was a waiver pick in 2017. Max Kepler (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) was a trade acquisition from Riverwoolf.



Turner: Worked out

There are some Guys. Eric Hosmer (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6) is the everyday first baseman. Eddie Rosario (1-0-0-0, 10 hits) is the left fielder and cleanup hitter. Adam Jones (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks) is the DH and bats fifth. Rougned Odor (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, L+4) will swing like Charlie Brown all year from the #7 spot in the lineup. Elias Diaz (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) will not make anyone forget Joe Mauer in Minnesota.

The lineup is capable, but that might not be enough to get you a bus ticket to Chelsea in the Ruth Division this year. They should perform against weaker competition elsewhere.

Defense: 4.5 Mostly Fielding One.

There are a bunch of excellent performers with the glove here. Cody Bellinger (OF3, 34 arm) is excellent, as is Eddie Rosario (OF3, 34 arm) and Max Kepler (OF3, 31 arm). Yuli Gurriel (1B5,

3B4) and Eric Hosmer (1B4) are both solid at first, as is Bellinger (1B5). Gurriel will play third all season though. He'll get the job done there as well.

Rougned Odor (2B8) is a very good second baseman. Trea Turner (SS8) is his partner in the middle infield. Turner does so many things well that you keep waiting for the permanent SS9 to show up. Hasn't quite happened yet.

The catching is backwards. The regular catcher – Elias Diaz (C7, Th+0) – is the worst receiver on the team. Bryan Holaday (C8, Th-3) and Sandy Leon (C9, Th-2) are better behind the plate, but not at bat. They will wait and watch.

They'll be fielding one most of the season.

Bench: **2.0**
Rare usage.

If they have one, they're not using it. Darrell points to his set lineup and says that pinch hitting and pinch running will be a rare occurrence this year.

Victor Reyes (3 Os, 11 hits, 2 walks, 29 SSN for 13 SBA, 69 games) is a nice piece to have on the bench. Sandy Leon (7 hits, 65 games) is a C9 and Bryan Holaday (1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, 43 games) is a C8; Eduardo Nunez (2 Os, 9 hits, 2B7 3B3 SS7), Ronny Rodriguez (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks, (2B7 SS7 1B3 3B3 OF1), Kevan Smith (3 Os, 9 hits, 3 walks, 67 games) and Steve Wilkerson (1-6-6, 8 hits, 2 walks) will provide the Mongrels with fill-in games and subs when necessary. Meanwhile, someone has to tend the tomato plants in the bullpen garden. Adam Jones (OF2, 32 arm) is actually a pretty good outfielder, but he's not as good as the starters.

There are a couple of guys on the bench who might help out in situations, but mostly these guys will just be handing out free tickets to the family.



This is pretty good team paying off some debt after a relatively quick rebuild. They will start to kick it into gear next season after a full slate of draft picks. Meanwhile, their division opponents should beat them up pretty thoroughly.

Here's what we know for sure about Darrell Skogen, the Guru. He's very experienced with the game, with one of the longest APBA pedigrees in TBL (perhaps the longest at this point). He's a keen student of the game both in real life and on the cardboard; most new players are echoes of who he's seen before – thus, he's also well-versed in history, to no one's surprise.

Some of our good-spirited jocularity here at the *Annual* has been about his propensity for the sacrifice; while that's largely much ado about bunting, it's unclear whether the game has changed enough for that to be no longer a part of the Midwest arsenal in these days of swinging for the fences. Perhaps some subtlety is still in order.

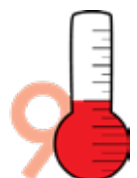


midwest MONGRELS



Much ado about bunting

TQ: **28.5**



2019 TBL world series

by Brian Hanley
and Clay Beard



Whitman vs. Hudson

This series pitted two clubs that were pretty evenly matched. The *Annual* rated them similarly prior to mid-season additions. After each eliminating quality opponents in the LCS that most thought would be vying for the championship, Hudson and Whitman met to decide who would become the 2020 World Series Champion. Both teams defeated not just one but two 100+ win squads to make it this far and would need to take down a third to claim the crown.

Game 1 at Whitman Clevinger vs. Snell

An early 2-run homer by Jake Cave put the Rats ahead, but the two aces settled down. After a



Holt

Cave double in the 5th and a run-scoring single, Brock Holt, a hero in the Brobdingnag series, delivered a crushing two-run homer. Later in that frame Nick Williams delivered a 3-run homer. Only a late inning triple

by Brian Anderson and a homer by C. J. Cron marred an excellent performance by 23-game winner Snell.

Whitman 9, Hudson 2
WP- Snell L-Clevinger

Game 2 at Whitman Hill vs. Foltyniewicz

Both starters cruised through the first two innings and this time it was Randal Grichuk who got things started with a solo shot in the 3rd to stake Hudson to a 1-0 lead. The Generals stayed on the offensive leading off the 4th as Max Muncy doubled and was driven in by a Didi Gregorius triple. After two straight outs back to back doubles by A. J. Pollock and Randal Grichuk plated 2 more increasing the lead to 4-0 Hudson.

Hill was magnificent, giving up no more than a single run caused by an error, retiring the first 9 batters, and later 11 in a row before handing the game to the bullpen.



R. Hill

Hudson 6, Whitman 1
WP - Hill LP - Foltyniewicz

Game 3 at Hudson Martinez vs. Kershaw

With the series tied at one game apiece, the action moved to Hudson, where Carlos Martinez faced off against longtime Whitman ace Clayton Kershaw. It didn't take long for things to get started. A first inning 2-run homer by Paul Goldschmidt and back-to-back doubles staked Kershaw to an early 3-0 lead. An inning later a 3-run homer by Jose Ramirez was the highlight as Whitman went up 7-0.



Kershaw

Kershaw, meanwhile, set down 13 of 14 batters through the fifth inning. In the sixth inning Martinez was finally sent to the showers. Kevin Gausman did no better. Kershaw lasted into the 8th inning, when Hudson staged a small rally featuring a Randall Grichuk homer, but it was far from enough and the Whitman club won going away.

Whitman 9, Hudson 3
WP - Kershaw LP - Martinez

Game 4 at Hudson Price vs. Peralta

Whitman sent its 18-game winner David Price against youngster Freddy Peralta, hoping to take an insurmountable lead in the series.

Hudson came out swinging. In the first inning Max Muncy delivered a two-run homer to stake them to a 2-0 lead. Both teams had many baserunners early but couldn't deliver, but



Muncy

when Whitman put two runners on in the third, Peralta departed for Josh Hader. He gave up a solo shot to Goldschmidt but held a 2-1 lead through 5. By the eighth inning the score was 3-2. When Cave reached second off closer Sean Doolittle in the ninth, Whitman management tried to steal third off Wilson Ramos, who gunned him down. Doolittle was able to retire the side for a close Hudson victory.

Hudson 3, Whitman 2

WP – Hader LP – Price S – Doolittle

Game 5 at Hudson Snell vs. Clevinger

The Game 1 starters met again in Game 5, and things got started early; after 2 innings the game was tied 1-1. An error by Didi Gregorius in the next inning gave Whitman a 2-1 lead, which Hudson nearly took back but its rally was stopped by a nifty 3-6-3 DP. The game remained quiet until the 7th, when



Snell

Miguel Rojas delivered a surprise solo shot off Raisel Iglesias, making it 3-1 Whitman; that was enough for Snell, Robbie Erlin, Pedro Strop and Seth Lugo, who shut down Hudson to give Whitman a 3-2 series lead.

Whitman 3, Hudson 1

WP – Snell LP – Clevinger S – Lugo

Game 6 at Whitman Hill vs. Foltyniewicz

Hudson now faced elimination against Whitman at home, needing a win to force a deciding Game 7. The Generals came out swinging again, with two solo homers by Muncy and Grichuk in the first and fifth innings to stake Hill to a 2-0 lead. But another Grigorius error in the home fifth led to a Brock Holt two-run double tying the game at 2 and sending Hill to the showers without a win.

For the next four innings, neither team managed to score, sending the game to extras. In the 10th, however, with Seth Lugo on the mound, Jed Lowrie delivered a leadoff double, and after he moved to third and Grichuk was intentionally walked, Brian Anderson came through with a pinch-hit two-run double. He scored on a Muncy hit, giving Hudson a 5-2 lead. Though the Rats put two runners on in the 10th, Mychal Givens was able to close it out, tying the series at 3 games apiece.



Anderson

Hudson 5, Whitman 2 (10)

WP – Doolittle LP – Lugo S – Givens

Game 7 at Whitman Keller vs. Kershaw

With the season on the line, Hudson turned to rookie Brad Keller, while Whitman sent Clayton Kershaw to the mound. Kershaw got into trouble at once, loading the bases with no outs, but somehow escaped giving up only one run. Meanwhile the rookie had more trouble: a Markakis double drove in the tying run, and back-to-back homers by Goldschmidt and Ramirez gave Whitman a 4-1 lead.

The rookie hurler was clearly rattled, as in the second inning he gave up a double to Yadier Molina and plunked Brock Holt, then surrendered a two-run double to Markakis, making the game 6-1 and sending him to the showers.



Markakis

Hudson wasn't done: Max Muncy delivered a two-run homer in the third cutting the lead to 6-3. In the fifth inning Hudson placed runners at first and third with no outs, but Robbie Erlin retired the Generals on a 9-2 double play and a fly ball to preserve the lead. It was the last offense of the day: both bullpens shut down the bats, and ultimately Whitman was able to celebrate its first-ever TBL championship.

Whitman 6, Hudson 3

WP – Clippard LP – Keller S – Strop

Go The Distance

2019 Aaron Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Melrose*	116	46	.716	—
Kansast	94	68	.580	22
Calusa	76	86	.469	40
Las Vegas	52	110	.321	64

* Lost to Hudson in conference finals.
† Lost to Munich in wildcard playoff.

We are very familiar with the *Las Vegas* form of The Bounce. It's been three years since the last time the *Gamblers* made a charge for the TBL championship, when they had back-to-back playoff turns (without a World Series appearance to show for it). It was four years since the last time, which was a few years after the previous



Las Vegas Gamblers

one . . . here at the Annual we have a good handle on *Paul Harrington's* *modus operandi*.

This year's team is, once again, charging toward destiny. It will

by no means be easy: *Kansas* still has talent and *Melrose* is a powerhouse. But the division is there for the Gamblers to take. The question remains whether they can go the distance.

It would be unwise to underestimate either the *Melrose Avengers* or their manager, the veteran Mark Freedman. After a couple of down years in 2017 and 2018, they came roaring back with 116 wins in 2019, falling just short of another World Series appearance when they were taken down by the Hudson Generals.



This team is not the equal of that one – it seems unlikely that they'll turn in a 2.94 ERA or hit 268 homers. But they're still very good and will give Vegas a run for their money.



For the last five seasons, the *Kansas Koyotes* have been climbing a difficult hill: trying to get into the postseason and then trying to get to the World Series. There

have been no pennants, three postseason visits and no Fall Classic. There's only so much gas left in the tank at this point, but Bill Schwartz can still count on a solid rotation, a capable bullpen and some middle order power. But is it anywhere near enough?

For the *Calusa Indians*, it's clearly not enough. After two outstanding seasons, the last two campaigns for *Gordon*

Rodell and his boys have been less inspirational. There are some outstanding names on the roster; they are the future building blocks of a someday contender. In the meanwhile, you have to play the cards you're dealt, and wait until next year.



Aaron Division

Xander Bogaerts,
Las Vegas

1. Las Vegas	34.5
2. Melrose	31.5
3. Kansas	24.5
4. Calusa	16.5

2019 Las Vegas GAMBLERS in review



The Gamblers wandered lost in the wilderness of losing.

by Paul Harrington

2019 in review

Final Record: 52-110 (4th, Aaron)

After taking Grand Cayman to a game seven in the 2017 NC finals before finally falling to the superior team, the Gamblers wandered lost in the wilderness of losing. Registering a combined record of 117-207 in 2018-19 led to, if nothing else, a much needed influx of young talent. Two good drafts in a row looks to start paying off for the 2020 season. A completely new rotation was drafted (and traded for). The 2019 season was a lost season for sure. The offense scored 730 runs, but the pitching allowed 1075! The team had a collective slash line of .240/ .305/ .398. The pitching was the worst in TBL for 2019, posting an ERA of 6.22, the only team over 6.00 for the year.

What went right?

For the second year in a row Adam Duvall paced the offense on the power side with 54 XBH, including 27 doubles and 25 HR. Jose Martinez had a surprisingly powerful year as well with 28 doubles and 24 HR. Corey Dickerson was probably the offensive MVP for the year. He had 58 XBH with 38 doubles and a remarkable 10 triples! He also had a .294/ .332/ .443 slash line in 131 games.

On the pitching side there were a few standouts. Tim Hill posted a 5-4 record and an ERA of 2.57 in 49.1 innings. Tim Mayza had an ERA of only 1.58 in 34.1 innings. He also recorded 7 saves. Taylor Williams, another middle relief hero, has a miniscule ERA of 1.72 in 47.2 innings. Felix Pena was the biggest surprise. The first year hurler was only 5-7 in 17 starts, but had a 3.55 ERA and four of his five wins were via shutouts!



Martinez: Surprisingly powerful

What went wrong?

Where to begin! The offense was decidedly mediocre, but the overall team record could have been better if there was some support from the pitching, but there was none in 2019. The starters were culpable here. Martin Perez and Homer Bailey, two Grade 1s, were expected to be bad, but they exceeded expectations. Combined they made 41 starts and went 6-24 with an ERA of 8.80. The biggest disappointment was Lucas Giolito. You don't expect a Grade 6 to be a world beater, but you also don't expect what he produced either: a 3-22 record, an ERA of 7.08, 35 HR and 105 walks in 206 innings over 33 starts.

3 Things

- 1. Is the rebuild over?* Obviously all teams want to get better: younger, faster, more powerful. But the 2020 edition of the Las Vegas Gamblers is ready to return to prominence. There is a solid performer at every position; a dominant rotation and a reliable bullpen. The team power is formidable and the outlook couldn't be brighter.
- 2. Draft maneuvers.* The 5th and 8th pick in the 2020 draft was turned into the 2nd and 15th. That turned into Pete Alonso and Carson Kelly. Christian Walker was a steal in the 3rd round. Management took a chance on Felipe Vazquez when he slipped down into the 4th round. Vegas is the city of second chances, so he should fit right in.
- 3. The future?* As of this writing the possibility of a 2020 MLB season is growing dimmer and TBL is debating what will take place for us in 2021. Eventually baseball will be back, whether this year or next, and TBL will be there as well. Hopefully the Gamblers will be a significant part of that comeback. Good luck to us all!

Las Vegas GAMBLERS

Paul Harrington (24th year)

What a difference a year makes. This team may be the personification of how the game has changed.



What a difference a year makes. That's a compliment to Mr. Harrington. He turned a moribund team with the fifth-worst record in the league in 2019 into a front-runner for the league championship in 2020. It was a mix-and-match development, with some improvement coming from players already on the roster, some coming from astute draft picks, and still others coming from targeted trades.

And all of a sudden, the Gamblers have the best rating from the *Annual* in the National Conference. They still have to play the games, of course, and there are monsters in the International Conference. Any contender for a World Series appearance not only has to worry about the other conference, but the competition within the conference and even, in this case, within the division. So the question becomes: Has he done enough to "go the distance?"

Pitching: 15.0
The best in the conference.

This is a strong, deep, and talented staff. The *Annual* has rated them the best in the conference. It's top three starters are all strikeout pitchers. Everyone in the rotation, in fact, can steal hits without help, a far cry from most other rotations in the league. While the peripherals aren't resolutely positive, there are only two starters who have somewhat scary HR ratings. But they aren't likely to make the playoff roster.

Yes, playoff games in Las Vegas are virtually assured. And the team's rebuilt bullpen is a big reason for that. There are three relievers with closer grades atop a deep

SNT: Charlie Morton.

For a team that already had a solid offense, this trade acquisition may prove to be the difference-maker in the quest for a championship.



Turnover Rate: 49%

Arrived: Pete Alonso, Jon Berti, Matt Bowman, Jackie Bradley, Jr., Ryan Braun, Zach Britton, Trevor Gott, Rich Hill, Carson Kelly, D. J. LeMahieu, Mike Morin, Charlie Morton, Jake Newberry, Zach Plesac, Felipe Vazquez, Stephen Vogt, Christian Walker.

Departed: Tyler Bashlor, Jake Bauers, David Bote, Adam Conley, Elias Diaz, Luis Garcia, Rosell Herrera, Austin Jackson, Caleb Joseph, Tyler Mahle, Martin Perez, Michael Perez, Travis Shaw, Andrew Suarez, Tyler Thornburg, Carlos Tocci, Taylor Williams.

pen. While two of the closers are lefthanded, their peripherals make them legit. There are lefties and righties scattered on every level, and seemingly, a reliever for every need.

ROTATION. It's nice when a gamble pays off. In this case, Lucas Giolito (Grade 15), taken



Giolito: Payoff

as a Grade 6 just a year ago. Most pitchers don't develop so quickly, marking Giolito as special. SNT Charlie Morton (Grade 14 HR+36) and trade acquisition Rich Hill (Grade 15) combine with Giolito to start 75 games. You can bet all three will be starting in the playoffs.



Las Vegas GAMBLERS

Rookie Zach Plesac (Grade 12), who is former TBL closer Dan Plesac's nephew, is the best of the rest. Homer Bailey (Grade 9 HR+21) enjoyed a bounce-back year, and solid Felix Pena (Grade 9) starts seven times. Lefty Caleb Smith (Grade 11 HR-31) has issues keeping the ball in the park for 28 starts, but the bullpen can rescue him in close games.

BULLPEN. Welcome back, Zach Britton (Grade 23* C-55 HR+46). Last seen in a Gamblers uniform in 2017, when the team came within a win of reaching the World Series, Britton returns to join righty Oliver Drake (Grade 18*) as the set-up crew to the team's new closer: the controversial Felipe Vazquez (Grade 19 C+25 HR+33). They provide 177 innings of closer-grade goodness at the back end of the bullpen.



Britton: Welcome back

The rest of the pen isn't quite as strong, but it is deep. Lefties Tim Hill (Grade 13* HR+26) and Tim Mayza (Grade 11* C-41) join righties Austin Brice (Grade 13*), Jake Newberry (Grade 13* C-32 HR-25), Matt Bowman (Grade 12* HR+43), Pena (Grade 12*), Trevor Gott

(Grade 11* HR+35), Mike Morin (Grade 9* C+33 HR+22), and mop Elieser Hernandez (Grade 8 HR-35). How these middle relievers do may determine the Gamblers' success.

Offense: 12.0
So many good things.

There are so many good things to share about this offense, it's difficult to know where to



Bogaerts, Alonso: 5 power

begin. Let's start with the six-power-number card for Corey Dickerson (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-7). The only knocks against him are the shift and a half-season of usage. Stephen Vogt (1-0-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-9) has five power numbers, but the same problems. Poor Gamblers.

Xander Bogaerts (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks) also has five power numbers, but a full season. Like Bogaerts, monster rookie Pete Alonso (1-1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks+42) and veteran Josh Donaldson (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22) play every day. Kris Bryant (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L+5 R-3) adds to the overwhelming power on this team.

But that's not all. Part-timer Adam Duvall (1-1-5-5, 10 hits, 2 walks+ 2 22s, L+8 R-7) and full-timer Ryan Braun (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 34 SSN for 12 attempts) will make their presence felt in the lineup. But wait, there's still more. D.J. LeMahieu (1-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-4) has become a power hitter. And newcomers Christian Walker (1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks+22) and Carson Kelly (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L+12 R-6) contribute to the overall awesomeness.

Yes, that's a lot of power in one lineup. Even Jackie Bradley (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, L-5), who starts vs. righties, has his share. Everyone has at least one first-column 1. While there's not a lot of speed, the game has changed, and one swing of the bat or one roll of the dice (on this team in particular) can change the outcome of a game in a heartbeat.

Defense:
As many highs as lows.

4.5

Bogaerts is only an SS8, a big disadvantage up the middle with no one to spell him. But LeMahieu (2B9) and Donaldson (3B5) will douse many rallies. Walker (1B4) is above average, at least. Bradley (OF3, 35 arm) is a highlight reel onto himself, but he's the only OF3. Other negatives include Bryant (OF1), who's slated for some right field duty, and Dickerson, who has a sub-par arm at 28. That leaves us with the poor catching duo of Vogt (C7, Th-3) and Kelly (C7 Th-4). There are as many highs as lows, which means luck is going to play a role in 2020.



LeMahieu: Douser

In an era of launch angles and exit velocity, the Gamblers are almost in a league by themselves. If power bats is the new normal, Las Vegas has them up and down the lineup.

If power pitching has pushed aside finesse, then Paul Harrington's team has stayed current with the latest trends. The top three starters have XY strikeout letters. Two of the top three relievers will likely strike out more than one per inning. This team may be the personification of how the game has changed.



Las Vegas GAMBLERS

Bench:
Has some play.

3.5

The bench has some play in it. Robinson Cano (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-9 R+2) and Ronald Guzman (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-9) offer some power, if little else. Jon Berti (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, 33 SSN for 20 attempts) and Roman Quinn (1-0-0, 7 hits, 4 walks, 35 SSN for eight attempts) provide some pinch-running options. Berti (OF2, SS8, 3B4) and Quinn (OF3) offer some defense. And Jose Martinez (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+9 R-4) offers another pinch-hitting option. There's a lot to like here.

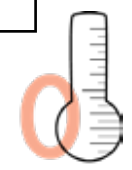
Ages of players on the Las Vegas roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 40: R. Hill
- 37: Cano
- 36: Braun, Morton
- 35: Vogt
- 34: Donaldson, H. Bailey
- 33: Drake
- 32: Britton
- 31: C. Dickerson, Duvall, LeMahieu, J. Martinez,
- 30: Berti, J. Bradley, T. Hill, F. Pena
- 29: Bowman, C. Walker
- 28: Brice, Bryant, Mayza, Morin, C. Smith, Vazquez
- 27: Bogaerts, Gott, Quinn
- 25: P. Alonso, Giolito, Guzman, E. Hernandez, C. Kelly, Newberry,

1st

A strong rotation, a superior top end of the bullpen, and more power than a Brobdingnag wet dream put Mr. Harrington's Las Vegas Gamblers in the upper echelon of the league, according to our analysis at the *Annual*. Can it go the distance? One mitigating factor is its middle relief. Once the team gets to the late innings, it'll be difficult to come back on, but those middle innings will provide the test for this team. Or maybe they'll just power past their opponents.

TQ: 34.5



2019 melrose AVENGERS in review



It's hard to call it a failed season.

by Walter Hunt

2019 in review

Final Record: 116-46 (1st, Aaron)

The Melrose Avengers were at their avenging best in 2019, rolling over opposition with a dynamite offense and a dominant pitching staff. They rolled to a 116-46 record, but fell to the Hudson Generals in the conference finals – short of what was expected. It's hard to call it a failed season; there are at least 20 teams who would exchange positions. It's just a year to have put up some records. 2020 awaits.

What went right?

Nearly everything. J. D. Martinez fell one short of 100 XBH (50 doubles, 48 homers) and hit .322. Doubles were a theme with the Avengers: Rendon stroked 50, Olson 42, Conforto 44, but Marcus Semien led the team (and the league) with 62. (That isn't a record, though: Ian Desmond still has that with 73 a few years ago for Maracaibo). Melrose's 268 homers was 36 more than the second place finisher, and the team slugged .489.

On the mound, the team finished second in ERA (2.94), and its starters went 87-34, led by Jhoulys Chacin at 19-10). James Paxton and Reynaldo Lopez won 17 each. Blake Treinen was unhittable (40 saves, 0.64 ERA, 22 hits and 72 Ks in 70 IP). Yoshihisa Hirano went 11-0 in relief, and six members of the bullpen recorded ERAs under 2.00. This contributed in no small part to the absurd differential in runs (982 scored, 496 allowed). It was a dominant season.



Martinez: 99 XBH

What went wrong?

Nothing to speak of. The lower end of the lineup didn't hit as well as hoped, but that was more than made up by the upper end. The team struck out a lot (1,350 times), with five players at 130 or more (Conforto 162, Olson 143, Martinez 139, Asdrubal Cabrera 137, Nomar Mazara 131).

But these are mere quibbles. The real failure was not getting past Hudson in the playoffs: but Avenger fans can be comforted by knowing that

this year's team, while not quite as good, will have no Hudson getting in its way – the conference champion is rebuilding in 2020.

3 Things

1. *Once more with feeling.* Most of the same folks are back, with only Mazara, Mondesi and Chacin gone from the 116-win juggernaut. Of the group, Mondesi has real star potential and trading him away may yield some regrets. But the team has backed and filled, adding Michael Brantley, Marcus Stroman and Chris Paddack. They'll be all right.
2. *Age is an issue.* The draft cupboard is bare at the moment, and some key members of the team are starting to get a bit old. The future is now; but it really always has been.
3. *Avengers Assemble!* Melrose as a contender is usually dominant. No half-measures here: it took Mr. Freedman a few years to get it going, but since 2009 they've been at 110 wins or more five times.

melrose AVENGERS



Mark Freedman (27th year)

It's a good team, but does it have what it takes to go the distance?

It's safe to say that Mr. Freedman likes to win, and he does it with a humble smile as he pummels his opponents into the earth. That's the Avengers' way. After last season's disappointing loss to Hudson in the Championship Series, he's faced with a challenge in 2020. He's put together a good team, but does it have what it takes to go the distance, both in the regular season and, more importantly, in the playoffs?

The starting pitching is good, but not dominant. The bullpen is deep, but doesn't have the lights-out closer that most playoff-bound teams acquire. And despite several monster cards, can the offense deliver what they could not last season? It remains to be seen if last year's finish was a flash of bad luck or the inevitable sign of a team on a downward trajectory.

Pitching: 11.5 **A wild, wild staff.**

While the pitching grades are mostly impressive, this is a wild, wild staff. Even with solid grades in the rotation and a plethora of set-up relievers, there are only three pitchers on the whole roster with positive control, two of whom are in the rotation. And one is only a +14. It's an obvious problem.

In the bullpen, which already lacks a traditional closer grade, the top six relievers all have negative control. It's a recipe for disaster. No matter how much Mr. Freedman mixes and matches his relievers, there's almost no one who can stop a base on balls. In fact, as many as six relievers have -44 control ... or worse. They'll not only allow walks, but create walks, extending innings and giving opponents new opportunities.

ROTATION. SNT Chris Paddack (Grade 14 C+26) is not part of the problem. He has the potential to be a rotation stopper, although a very short fatigue (22) means he can't go deep in most of his starts. He's joined at the top by Julio Teheran (Grade 13 C-35) for 33 more starts, however wild.

James Paxton (Grade 12) and Wade Miley (Grade 10) are peripheral-neutral lefties who add 62 more starts. Marcus Stroman (Grade 11 HR+31) is an important piece to this rotation for 32 starts. Lefty Steven Brault (Grade 7 C-31) handles the final 10 starts. It's a competent rotation, but it's far from overpowering.

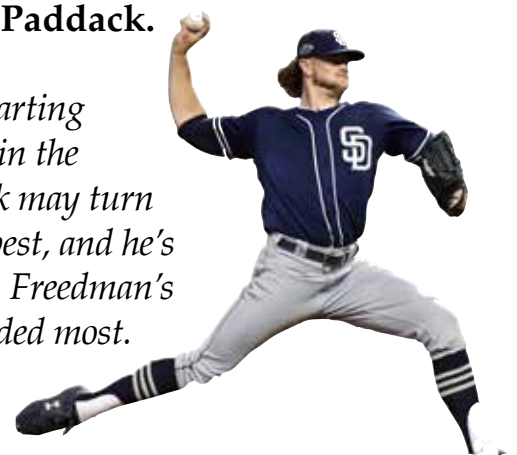
Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Michael Brantley, Zack Collins, Brandon Drury, Jandel Gustave, Evan Marshall, Chris Martin, Cameron Maybin, Chris Paddack, Lucas Sims, Marcus Stroman.

Departed: Jhoulys Chacin, Tayron Guerrero, Austin Hedges, Spencer Kieboom, Reynaldo Lopez, Leonys Martin, Nomar Mazara, Kevin McCarthy, Adalberto Mondesi, Corey Oswalt.

SNT: Chris Paddack.

The second starting pitcher taken in the draft, Paddack may turn out to be the best, and he's just what Mr. Freedman's Avengers needed most.



BULLPEN. There are 13 relievers on the roster. That's deep. But at the top is wild Reyes Moronta (Grade 17* C-62 +41). He'll make for some exciting saves. He's set up by Steve Cishek (Grade 16* C-34 HR+23), Evan Marshall (Grade 16* C-34 HR+31), Jandel Gustave (Grade 15* HR+52), and Matt Barnes (Grade 15* C-55 HR+23). That's 260 wild, top-end innings.

The rest include: righties Lucas Sims (Grade 13* C-35 HR-22), Chris Martin (Grade 11* C+52), Kyle Crick (Grade 11* C-62 HR-21), Blake Treinen (Grade 10* C-62), and Yoshihisa Hirano (Grade 8*), as well as lefties Derek Holland (Grade 11* C-44 HR-33), Tanner Scott (Grade 9* C-62), and Brault (Grade 7* C-31). They contribute 334 more innings. The question is whether this bulk will allow the team to go the distance.

Offense: 12.0
Power from top to bottom.

The Melrose Avengers always seem to have a powerful offense. This year's edition starts with Anthony Rendon (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks+42). That's five power numbers. It's a monster card that no one wants to face, ever. He's joined by Michael Brantley (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-7). These are powerful cards, but they're not the



Rendon: Starts here

most powerful cards on the roster.

J.D. Martinez (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L+16 R-7) and Matt Olson (1-1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L-7 R+2)



Teheran: However wild

have the best power on the team. But even *that's* not enough for the Avengers. Marcus Semien (1-4-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, 22 SSN for 18 attempts), Cameron Maybin (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, 24 SSN for 15 attempts, L-7), and Shohei Ohtani (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, 31 SSN for 15 attempts) are double threats.

Michael Conforto (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, L-8 R+2) and Asdrubal Cabrera (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22)

extend the lineup and the team's power profile. That leaves only Jorge Alfaro (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42) to bat ninth most of the time. That's not bad. This team has power from the top to the bottom.

There's some speed, but several plodders. A couple key players have 11 hits. Except for Maybin and Ohtani, the batters have full seasons, which limits the need for a bench, which is a good thing (as you'll see below). There are some shift issues, but shifts won't impact the power, which is the team strength.

Defense: 6.0
Strong with no weaknesses.

This has to be one of the best infield defenses in the league. The infield is all Fielding One:

Rendon (3B5), Semien (SS9), Cabrera (2B8), and Olson (1B5). It's an outstanding infield. In the outfield, Brantley and Maybin are both OF3s. Only Martinez (OF1) is a weakness when he has to play the field, although only Maybin has an above-average arm. Behind the dish, Alfaro (C7 Th+2) is more than adequate. It's a strong defense with no weaknesses when the best players are in the field.



Semien: Fielding One

Bench:
The best is on the field.

3.5

There is some help on the bench, but the best is on the field already. Curt Casali (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks) is a capable backup catcher (C7 Th-2). Rowdy Tellez (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks+42 L+4 R-4) can deliver some power. Brandon Drury (1-6-6, 8 hits, 2 walks) and Logan Forsythe (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-5) are utility infielders who can play almost anywhere.



Tellez: He's still rowdy

Because bench players all have to play a role, these guys will likely get a few chances to fail. But bearded lady Zack Collins (1-0-0, 6 hits, 5 walks, L-10 R+3) probably doesn't ever need to see the light of a stadium.

staff, but he never compromises on power. Welcome to the present. Welcome to Avengers baseball.

Ages of players on the Las Vegas roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 36: Hirano
- 34: A. Cabrera, Cishek
- 33: Brantley, Forsythe, D. Holland, Maybin, Miley
- 32: J. D. Martinez, Treinen
- 31: Casali, C. Martin, Paxton
- 30: M. Barnes, Marshall, Rendon
- 29: Semien, Stroman, Teheran
- 28: Brault
- 27: Alfaro, Conforto, Crick, Drury, Gustave, Moronta
- 26: Ohtani, Olson, Sims
- 25: Collins, Scott, Tellez
- 24: Paddack

2nd This is a strong offense coupled with an adequate, but problematic pitching staff. When the dice are rolling doubles, this team will score a huge bunch of runs, and that will go a long way to compensate for the pitching. The power and defense should keep the team in contention.

But bad dice have scuttled better teams. So luck will have to play a role in this team's success. And the wild bullpen will have to get lucky to protect leads, but the rest of the team has what it takes.

These Melrose Avengers have always relied on power. As the game changes away from finesse and more toward brute force, it's moving more and more toward where the Avengers have always been. In some respects, the game is catching up to Mr. Freedman's baseball philosophy.

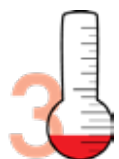
He will plug what he can into the pitching



melrose AVENGERS



TQ: 31.5



2019 kansas KOYOTES in review



It could also be said that Melrose's Aaron Division leading 116 win season . . . was "what went wrong".

by Bill Schwartz

2019 in review

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

Going into 2019 Koyote management was not as optimistic as the experts at the *Annual* ("in the conversation as a possible contender"): we were hoping for a .500 season. The experts knew what they were talking about. The Koyotes put together a 16-3 June and were in "contention" the rest of the year – for a wildcard spot behind Melrose (116 wins). Six games out with two months to go, a 15-7 October allowed them to come from behind and hold on in November to take the spot by six games over Columbus.

In 2020 there will be similar expectations as last year. A .500 season will probably be the best to be expected. It will be interesting to see if last year's overachievement can be duplicated. Maybe the "experts" will see it that way ...

What went right?

The team made the playoffs for the third time in four years, led by the Big Three of Max Scherzer, Luis Severino and Dallas Keuchel. Severino and Keuchel were co-leaders with identical 16-10 records. Scherzer, though plagued by longball issues (37 in 247 innings), chipped in with 13-12, 3.53, 330 K. The latter was good for 8th place all-time in the TBL and included 14 efforts of 12 or more. C.C. Sabathia also enjoyed a credible season (13-13, 3.92). Jose Leclerc excelled in the closer role, having one of the best relief years in franchise history with a 0.70 ERA and 38 saves (4 ER in 51.3 RIP).

Offensively, Yasiel Puig led the team with 34 HR and a .547 SLG. 11 players had double figure HR, resulting in 232 team long balls. Mike Moustakas

chipped in with 29 and Kike Hernandez with 25. Justin Smoak led the team with 93 RBI, and also saved many runs with his 1B-5 rating. Puig was a close second with 91. Jean Segura supplied a top of the order presence and paced the Koyotes with a .287 BA, scoring 98 runs from the leadoff spot with a 19-game hitting streak. Six different players scored 85+ runs as the Koyotes outscored the opposition 835-693.

What went wrong?

With 94 wins, it could legitimately be said that not too much went wrong. That is, until the Koyotes ran into Munich and Jake DeGrom in the wildcard series. It could also be said that Melrose's Aaron Division leading 116 win season, relegating Kansas to the wildcard series was "what went wrong".

3 Things

- 1. Protecting the 2020 draft.* Overachievement in 2019 led to a #18 draft slot, so most of the premium picks. However, a much-needed quality catcher, Francisco Mejia, was available. A very thin bullpen called for a plethora of relief picks.
- 2. Thin Bullpen.* The Koyotes rue the day that they dropped Liam Hendriks. Ken Giles will be a reliable closer, but it would have been nice to have Hendriks as well. After Yimi Garcia (4th round) it will get pretty dicey.
- 3. Injury to Luis Severino.* "What went wrong" could also include Severino's real life injury. Expected to be a mainstay in the Koyote rotation for years to come, the hope is that his MLB injury doesn't follow the Matt Harvey path. In the abbreviated spring training, indications have done nothing to alleviate the concern.



Smoak: Glove and home run bat

kansas KOYOTES



Bill Schwartz (13th year)

The current edition of the team once again features a robust pitching staff.

This team continues to run contrary to traditional team-building principles by focusing on pitching first. It's been working for Mr. Schwartz. From 2015 to 2019, the team has averaged 91 wins. The current edition of the team once again features a robust pitching staff, both in the rotation and in the bullpen.

That's not to say this team has a popgun offense. No, the Koyotes have a balanced attack of power and speed. What it lacks, though, is an elite contact hitter. Plus, only three hitters on the team have as many as four 14s on their cards. A general lack of on-base skills will limit the scoring and create many 1-2-3 innings. There may be enough, with the excellent pitching, to reward Mr. Schwartz with a winning record, but a play-off appearance depends on how other teams within the Aaron Division play.

Pitching: 10.0
Continued pitching dominance.

Once again, the Koyotes have an enviable pitching staff, with a formidable top end of the rotation and a strong closer at the back end of the bullpen. But the good news doesn't stop there. To say the pitching staff is this team's strength is to state the obvious, and it's always been so under Mr. Schwartz's guidance. In fact, the team hasn't had a season with a team ERA over 4.00 since the 102-loss season in 2013.

This season continues that team's pitching dominance. The names are all real; there aren't many pieces of cardboard. The rotation's been fairly stable, and the bullpen includes three or four relievers who were or are closers in MLB. This pitching staff isn't a flash in the pan, and as long

as Mr. Schwartz keeps it together, the team will always be able to win its share of games.



Scherzer: Bulldog

ROTATION.

We're going to start this review with Max Scherzer (Grade 13 C+34 HR+24) not because he has the best grade on the rotation, but because he's the bulldog who consistently puts up impressive numbers. Even in this diminished year, he's a pitcher everyone wants and no one wants to face. The true ace of this team this year is Sonny Gray (Grade 17 C-23 HR+26), who put it all together again.

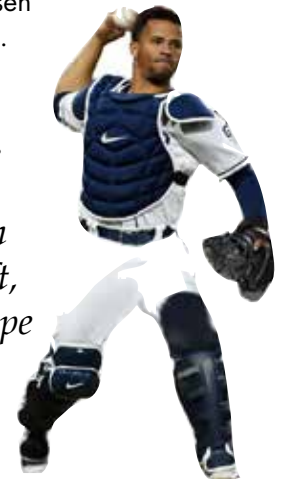
Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Tim Beckham, Aaron Civale, Taylor Cole, Yimi Garcia, Ryan McBroom, Francisco Mejia, Rafael Montero, Nick Ramirez, Drew Smyly, Michael Tauchman, Ildemaro Vargas.

Departed: Pedro Araujo, Matt Bush, Johnny Field, Curtis Granderson, Matt Harvey, Ariel Hernandez, Dustin Pedroia, Neil Ramirez, Chasen Shreve, Jesus Sucre, Adam Warren.

SNT: Francisco Mejia.

The third catcher taken in the first round of the draft, Mejia arrives with the hype of a top prospect. He can hit; can he field too?





KANSAS KOYOTES

Along with rookie Adam Civala (Grade 17 HR+41), the top shelf has 68 superb starts. The rest of the starts are taken by lefties Brett Anderson (Grade 9 C+22 HR+24), Dallas Keuchel (Grade 9), C. C. Sabathia (Grade 8 HR-33) for his final tour of duty, and explosive Drew Smyly (Grade 5 C-35 HR-42). Hector Velasquez (Grade 7 C-42 HR+23) gets a single start. Aside from Smyly's starts, this is a solid staff.



Giles: Back to form

BULLPEN. This year's closer is Ken Giles (Grade 20* HR+31 and all the strikeout letters), who's returned to form with 53 excel-

lent innings. His set-up crew is a little more problematic. Rafael Montero (Grade 16* C+35) only has 29 innings, so most of the duty falls to Jose Leclerc (Grade 14* C-55 HR+31) and Joakim Soria (Grade 13*).

The rest of the pen offers a mixed bag. Yimi Garcia (Grade 16* C+32 HR-43) has the grade, but that scary HR rating prevents using him in high-leverage situations. Lefty Brad Hand (Grade 12* C+26 HR+26) has had better seasons, but is still valuable. Nick Ramirez (Grade 11*), Velasquez (Grade 7* C-42 HR+23) and lefty Luis Avilan (Grade 7* C-26) add bulk, and waiver pickup Taylor Cole (Grade 3* HR+54) is the mop. There are more than 500 total relief innings, but the key will be how effective the set-up crew is.

Offense: 8.0
Enough to generate excitement.

This year's Koyotes don't lack the power bats to back its pitching. It all starts with George Springer (1-1-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L-3) with

a card no one wants to face with the game still in doubt. He's joined by rookie Mike Tauchman (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, L+6 R-4). Each has a handful of good steal attempts, as well.



Springer: It starts

Mike Moustakas (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22), Jose Osuna (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-8 R+2), and Chris Taylor (1-4-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) all bash as well. More power comes from two-way threat Yasiel Puig (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 28 SSN for 26 attempts), SNT Mejia (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22), Jean Segura (6-6-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 32 SSN for 12 attempts, L+5 R-3), and Enrique Hernandez (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22).

There's also Ildemaro Vargas (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+11 R-6), Yan Gomes (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+7 R-4), and bearded lady Justin Smoak (1-0-0, 7 hits, 6 walks+22, L-4), who has to play a lot. That leaves only part-timer Mark Reynolds (3 0s, 6 hits, 5 walks+22).

The bottom of the lineup is weak, but there's otherwise enough to generate excitement, especially when the doubles roll from the dice in bunches. There's no one with 11 hits, but the lineup is clogged with nine-hit cards, either. If Mr. Schwartz can get the most out of his hitters, he can take the pressure off the pitching staff. A repeat of a 94-win campaign may be asking too much, but a winning record is within reach.

Defense: 4.0
Stellar outfield defense.

The highlight on this version of the Koyotes has to be its stellar outfield defense. Three fielders have OF3 ratings, and Springer owns an above-average 33 throwing arm, Puig still has a 38 cannon. Smoak's (1B5) still earns his living in the field, and Hernandez (2B8) is dependable.

Mediocrity reigns on the other side of the diamond, as Moustakas (3B4) and Segura (SS8) are just average.

Behind the plate Gomes (C8, Th0) is solid, but SNT Mejia (C7 Th-4) is still learning.



Smoak: Earns it in the field

The one area of concern is the age of the team. Based on the list of players below, it's clear that while there are a few young players (Mejia and Civale) that have recently joined the club, almost all of the key ones are age 30

and above. We at the *Annual* aren't raising any alarms about players such as Giles, Springer, Scherzer or Moustakas, but it's a fact worth noting. We'll have to look at all of this in 2022 to see if there's a sea change we observed, but missed.

Bench: Not much to see here.

2.5

Usage appears to be a little tight among the regulars, but there is some leeway for in-game substitutions with players not named Mark Reynolds. In addition, waiver wire pickup Tim Beckham (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) can play almost anywhere. Ryan McBroom (6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22) may get some November playing time. Unless you're a huge Tim Beckham fan, there's not much to see here.

3rd Despite its obvious strengths, this team will likely finish third in the Aaron Division. That's more a result of two bigger and badder teams in the division. Even with a third-place finish, though, this team could still edge into the playoffs as a wildcard team, where its superior starting pitching could give it an advantage. As we've said before at the Annual, you can never write off a team with Max Scherzer in its rotation.

Mr. Schwartz likes his pitching. But you can't win a championship without good pitching. And he's not ignored the other players on the field. There's enough power in the lineup to keep Kansas lit up for months. So Kansas is nothing like a pitching-first team in the mold of Midwest. And this team may not far away from another huge season. It probably won't be this year, though.

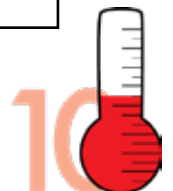
Ages of players on the Kansas roster, as of 07/01/2020:

39: Sabathia
 36: Reynolds, Soria
 35: Scherzer
 33: Smoak
 32: B. Anderson, Gomes, Keuchel
 31: Moustakas, Smyly, Velazquez
 30: Avilan, T. Beckham, T. Cole, S. Gray, Hand, J. Segura, Springer
 29: Y. Garcia, Giles, Montero, Puig, N. Ramirez, Tauchman, C. Taylor
 28: Hernandez, McBroom, I. Vargas
 27: J. Osuna
 26: Leclerc
 25: Civale
 24: F. Mejia



KANSAS KOYOTES

TQ: **24.5**



2019 calusa INDIANS in review



Break out those "Cheeseburgers in Paradise."

by Gordon Rodell

2019 in review

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

"Most games are lost, not won."

– the venerable Casey Stengel

The two goals on Opening Day were to avoid a hundred losses and to win more than 29 road games. **MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!** Yeah! **PARTY TIME!** Break out those "Cheeseburgers in Paradise."

This year's goal, a little more ambitious, be the second best last place team in the TBL! The key to success is to exceed the low standards one sets for oneself.

What went right?

Freddy Freeman. Again! Played an MVP season and slashed .336/.405/.563. He clubbed 56 doubles, 24 HR, and knocked in 129. 'The Old Perfesser' would agree Freddy can play. Miguel Andujar recorded an OPS of .822, with 52 doubles, 29 home runs, 118 RBI. Joey Wendle's OPS was .821 with 42 doubles, 10 triples.

Pitching wise, first round pick Jack Flaherty went 13-8 and Rick Porcello went 16-11 despite an ERA of 4.92. The bullpen was competent enough to finish games the Indians were losing.

What went wrong?

Injuries. Second year in a row the injury bug impacted the team's performance. Next season will not be any better. Until key performers not named Freeman can have relative healthy seasons darkness will continue to pervade Paradise.

The catching position is more dreadful than most thanks to the *secret weapon's* evaluation of Austin Barnes. "Strong plate skills. xBA of .294." Yeah, ... maybe not so much.

3 Things

1. *Injuries.* Is it possible for Freddie Freeman, Jesse Winker, Luke Weaver, Joey Wendle, Miguel Andujar, JaCoby Jones, and Michael Shoemaker to have an injury free seasons? *Together???* It could happen, but then again probably not. But it might! Most likely not though. *But then again.*

2. *Patience.* Hate to be redundant, but injuries have to be the recurring theme of the year. What to do? Exercise patience, keep the core band together for the foreseeable future. Eventually fate has to favor the Indians. And of course Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy are all real.

3. *Dadgummit!* *He did it again.* Buoyed by the success of Jonathan Villar, Hairii played the 'Dead Man's Hand' in poker again and traded for Nomar Mazara. The fact, so far, that Villar is the only high risk/high reward trade/draft acquisition to come through did not deter Hairii. When asked for his reaction to the Mazara trade, manager Frenchy Fry glumly responded, "Don't matter none. After the season, he'll probably be out for next year anyway. So what does it matter?" Cheer up, Frenchy. At least you manage in Paradise.

"Don't Worry, Be Happy." it's not Minnesota, or Massachusetts, or Canada, or New York!



Freeman: MVP, Again

calusa INDIANS



Gordon Rodell (6th year)

His is definitely a team in transition, as it seems scraped together from the useful holdovers the year past and a shortage of high draft picks..

2020 continues the downward spiral since the 109-win season in 2017. That team featured two 20-game winners, two 16-game winners, and a 15-game winner. Only one of those pitchers remains on the team. That team also hit 237 home runs. Only one of the hitters who smacked double-digit homers that year remains on the team. This is definitely a team in transition, as it seems scraped together from the useful holdovers the year past and a shortage of high draft picks.

So this season represents a forced step back from contention. This team still has several key players who'll be part of the next contending run, but currently, there just isn't enough to get there, especially in a division with other, more talented teams. Don't worry; they'll be back, as Mr. Rodell embraces the adage that it's always better to win.

Pitching: 5.0
No lead will be safe.

The news of this staff starts on a positive note, but the news soon turns sour. In the end, the resulting *Annual* pitching rating is the lowest of Mr. Rodell's tenure in TBL. Pitching hasn't always been a team strength, but it's always had an anchor in the rotation. In this, at least, this year's edition holds up. But the news gets worse from there.

The real bad news comes from the bullpen. It's almost as if the bullpen left for warmer climes and just never made it back before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. The castoffs and college players gathered up at the last minute can't really be expected to perform at professional or TBL levels, so it'll be an interesting year for Calusa, as no lead will be safe until the final out.

ROTATION. Last year's SNT has turned into the Real Deal. Jack Flaherty (Grade 16) gives Calusa a chance to win every one of his 33 starts, especially if he can record



Flaherty: Real deal

33 complete games (more on that in a minute). The next level is acceptable: lefty Tommy Milone (Grade 9 C+34 HR-26), an off-year Noah Syndergaard (Grade 8 C+24), ageless Adam Wainwright (Grade 8), and Erick Fedde (Grade 8 C-22). They take exactly 81 starts.

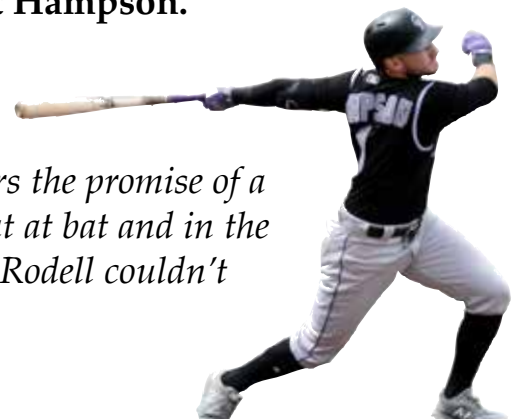
Turnover Rate: 46%

Arrived: Jason Castro, Alex Claudio, Jairo Diaz, Phillip Ervin, Mike Freeman, Trent Grisham, Garrett Hampson, Jonathan Holder, Luke Jackson, Andrew Knizner, Nomar Mazara, Tommy Milone, Albert Pujols, Cal Quantrill, Matt Thaiss, Lane Thomas.

Departed: Rajai Davis, Brandon Drury, Derek Fisher, Wilmer Flores, Robbie Grossman, Ender Inciarte, Chris Martin, Russell Martin, Juan Minaya, Matt Moore, Sal Romano, Hector Rondon, Drew Steckenrider, Jonny Venters, Drew VerHagen, Tyler White.

SNT: Garrett Hampson.

A work-in-progress, Hampson offers the promise of a two-way threat at bat and in the field, and Mr. Rodell couldn't resist.





calusa INDIANS

If only the rest of the news were as decent. Unfortunately, the remaining 48 starts belong to Paul Quantrill (Grade 6 C+24) for 18 starts and Rick Porcello (Grade 4 C+25) for the final 30. These starts will pose a challenge for Mr. Rodell, but at least there's help for the lower end of the rotation.

BULLPEN. Last year's *Annual* lamented the lack of a closer, when only Grade 17 Raisel Iglesias was available. Oh, to be able to relive those halcyon days! This year's closer is starter Luke Weaver (Grade 13 C+32 HR+31), who doesn't exactly have a traditional closer's grade. It's a gamble, but he has 64 innings and the peripherals to make it work. Still, it's far from a sure thing.

The rest of this mix-and-match bullpen reflects its lack of quality: Trey Wingenter (Grade 12* C-61 HR+31), Ariel Jurado (Grade 12* C+22), Joe Jimenez (Grade 11* HR-24), Alex Claudio (Grade 10*), Milone (Grade 10* C+34 HR-26), Jairo Diaz (Grade 8* HR+21), Luke Jackson (Grade 8*), and mop Jonathan Holder (Grade 4* C+26). Altogether, there's 545 relief innings. That's a lot of bulk.

Offense: 8.0 **Freddie Freeman and his buddies.**

Once again, this team's offense is led by the slugger who's defined this franchise since 2012: Freddie Freeman (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L-10 R+2).

New arrival Nomar Mazara (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-8 R+2), along with hold-overs Phillip Ervin (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+9 R-8), and JaCoby Jones (4 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42 L-9), join



Freeman: Big Chief

Freeman as the only players on the team with four power numbers.

Jonathan Villar (1-4-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 31 SSN for 49 attempts, L-4) reprises his role as a power-speed threat atop the lineup. Jose Iglesias (3 0s, 11 hits) reprises his role as an elite contact hitter. Todd Frazier (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+5 R-4), Jesse Winker (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L-15), and Albert Pujols (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) return as isolated power hitters.



Villar: Power and speed

Of the rest, Mike Freeman (6-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+42), rookie Trent Grisham (1-4-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-4), and SNT Hampson (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 32 SSN for 18 attempts) are the most useful, if limited in one way or another. That leaves the dynamic duo of Jason Castro (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-16 R+2) and Austin Barnes (3 0s, 7 hits, 3 walks+42, L-4) near the bottom of most every lineup.

Outside of Freddie "The Big Chief" Freeman, there's hardly a hitter you'd fear to face with the game on the line. Some lucky dice rolls will win some games, assuming the bullpen can make it stand. Freddie Freeman and his buddies will have trouble scoring against the better pitching in the league without some luck. It could be a long year in Calusa.

Defense: 4.0 **Weaknesses overpower strengths.**

Freddie (1B5) brings his elite glove to first base. Iglesias (SS9) returns to anchor the infield. But Frazier (3B4) and Villar (2B7) are only average at the other spots, although Joey Wendle (2B8) offers some late-inning help. The outfield is a mix of OF1s and OF2s, with only SNT Hampson possessing an above-average arm (and just barely at 33). And then there's the catching duo.

Not only do they carry weak bats, they won't be throwing runners out.

Castro (C8) is at least a competent fielder, but with a Th-3 arm. Barnes (C7 Th-4) is worse. The weaknesses overpower the strengths.

Bench: 2.0
Marginal usefulness.

Let's start with Wendle (3 Os, 8 hits, 2 walks+42, 28 SSN for 11 attempts, L-14 R+2) since we've mentioned him already. He has his uses. Matt Thaiss (1-5-5, 7 hits, 4 walks, L-4) has power. Lane Thomas (3 Os, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L+3 R-3) and Andrew Knizner (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-5 R+2) are extremely limited. Unfortunately, some of these bench bats get to start at times throughout the season, limiting their even marginal usefulness.

4th Unfortunately for Mr. Rodell, it looks like it will be a long season of juggling players and relievers just to make it through to November. There are young pieces here that may pay off with patience, but for this year, those pieces aren't good enough or useful enough to help.

The season may be a lesson in survival. And although the lesson may be harsh, Mr. Rodell hopes it's just a brief hiccup on the road to more wins.



Iconic – and photogenic



Wendle: Late-inning help

TBL teams are gravitating toward power hitters and power pitchers. The Calusa Indians

have only a couple of each, and that's nowhere near enough to be competitive in today's game. While there are a few prospects who may improve those numbers, this is still a team with a long way to go ... assuming that's in Mr. Rodell's vision.

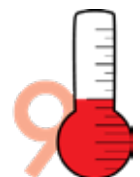
Ages of players on the Calusa roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 40: Pujols
- 38: Wainwright
- 34: Frazier
- 33: J. Castro, Milone
- 32: M. Freeman
- 31: Porcello
- 30: A. Barnes, F. Freeman, J. Iglesias, Wendle
- 29: J. Davis, Villar
- 28: Claudio, L. Jackson, Jones
- 27: Ervin, Fedde, Holder, Syndergaard
- 26: Weaver, Wingenter, Winker
- 25: Grisham, Hampson, Jimenez, Knizner, Mazara, Quantrill, Thaiss
- 24: Flaherty, Jurado, Thomas



calusa INDIANS

TQ: 16.5



Power Surge

Joe Auletta saw it coming, but he always does. He noted last fall, before the cards were out, what the *Columbus Jets'* lineup was going to look like. He was right: the offense is ranked with the best of the league. Vic Vaughn has added a capable pitching staff to that power-studded lineup, which should be more than enough to bring home another pennant for the boys from Columbus. In any case they should set some records for offensive production.



We here at the *Annual* do not want to cast any aspersions on Mr. Vaughn's tonsorial style, but we feel that P. J. O'Rourke's admonition that "Age and Guile Beat Youth, Innocence and a Bad Haircut" directly applies to the position that our Beloved Founder, Paul Montague, is in for the coming season.

They do have some age and guile. Monty has been here with his *Munich Marauders* since the Time of the Beginning, and that's brought more than 2,800 wins for the boys on the Isar. This version of the club has reached a level of *maturity*, as we say,



that puts them near the end of the current run. But as powerful as Columbus might be, they'd best watch out for the club that's seen more in TBL than anyone else.

2019 Mantle Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Hudson*	102	60	.630	—
Munich†	100	62	.617	2
Columbus	88	74	.543	14
Detroit	52	110	.321	50

* Lost to Whitman in the World Series.

† Lost to Hudson in the conference playoff.

In another division, perhaps, or in another season, what Dave Jaskot's *Detroit Dragons* can put on the field might be a borderline contender.



But this is now and this is the Mantle. It's just not going to be enough to get them past the first two clubs in the division, and though we roll the dice for all of the games for all of the teams, this is unlikely to bring a post-season appearance for the Dragons. Still, there are good signs for the future.

One game short of the triumph awaited so long in *Hudson*, the *Generals* have returned to earth for 2020. As with so many teams that have scaled the heights, there is the season that comes after. This would be that.



As always, *Clay Beard* will make the best use of his resources, and will win more than the TQ suggests. But it's going to take a little longer to get back to the World Series.

Mantle Division

Howie Kendrick,
Columbus



1. Columbus	30.5
2. Munich	26.5
3. Detroit	25.5
4. Hudson	19.0

2019 columbus JETS in review



Maybe some positive regression is headed our way in 2020.

by Vic Vaughn

2019 in review

Final Record: 88-74 (3rd, Mantle)

The Jets' 2019 campaign was really two seasons in one. Through September we were 74-46, two games out of first place in the Mantle, a six-game lead in the wild card race, and all was good. In October and November, we fell completely apart posting a 14-28 record, ending up 14 games out of first, *losing* the National Conference wild card race to Kansas by six games, and ending the season on a very sour note.

What went right?

Offensively, the team MVP was Eugenio Suarez who anchored the offense with a .292 / .374 / .529 line and led the team with 163 hits, 113 runs batted in, 34 home runs and 295 total bases. Rhys Hoskins contributed 32 long balls, and Aaron Hicks hit 28 home runs. In part time action, Domingo Santana hit .344 with 25 doubles and slugged .562 in 85 games.

On the mound, TBL Cy Young candidate Aaron Nola turned in a masterful season, posting a 20-6 record to go along with a 2.23 ERA and 246 strikeouts. Wade LeBlanc came out of nowhere to go 14-4 with a 3.22 ERA. Closer Ryan Brasier made the most of his limited availability posting 26 saves in 33 innings.

What went wrong?

As previously mentioned, October and November went wrong. It's a mystery how a team can post a .617 winning percentage for the first 120 games and then a .333 winning percentage over the final 42 contests. I guess that's why we play the games.

There were several hitters who had disappointing seasons. Elvis Andrus (.211 / .264 / .301), Jay Bruce (.217 / .294 / .328 with only 3 home runs), and Jason Kipnis (.206 / .285 / .382) were the main culprits in that regard.

On the pitching side, both Matt Boyd (10-9, 5.18) and Michael Fulmer (8-7, 5.21) had ERAs that were not up to the standards we were looking for despite each posting winning records. Masahiro Tanaka (Grade 11YL, HR-16 HR) allowed 42 home runs in 166 innings on his way to a disenchanting 7-13 record and 4.75 ERA.



Nola: Masterful

3 Things

1. *The 2019 team underperformed as a whole.* With a run differential of 808-652, our old friend Pythagoras calculated a win total of 98. Those ten wins would have made all the difference in reaching the playoffs. Maybe some positive regression is headed our way in 2020.
2. *No trades at mid-season.* We attempted to make some improvements but couldn't find a deal that we were comfortable with. Looking back, we should have pulled the trigger on some of those proposals. We know Trader Jack would have.
3. *With no first-round pick in an extremely deep draft, our new toys aren't too shiny this year.* However, the 2020 version of the Jets should be entertaining to play. We have lots of offense, but very average pitching, so we expect to be involved in a lot of high scoring games. We'll see how that plays out in a competitive Mantle Division.

columbus JETS



Vic Vaughn (14th year)

The Team No One Wants to Play In the Playoffs.

There's always that one team, quietly whispered about all season, more feared than respected, flawed but ferocious . . . it's The Team No One Wants to Play In the Playoffs.

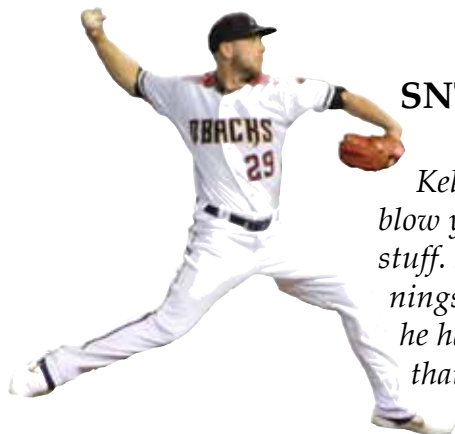
They're a matchup nightmare. You build your division winner around solid cards, airtight pitching, sticky-fingered glove work. But that fifth round draft pick with the L+11? That was for something else. Because looking at the playoffs, you knew *they* would be coming to town. And, while they may not be the best team you face this season, there is something just *wrong* when you play that club.

Last year, that team was Brian Hanley's Whitman River Rats. They had a good offense – 797 runs is respectable. But what made them Really evil was the excellent left-handed starters, beginning with the ludicrous Blake Snell. Their year end results

Turnover Rate: **23%**

Arrived: Jimmy Cordero, Chris Davis, Tyler Flowers, Kevin Ginkel, Merrill Kelly, Jacob Waguespack, J. B. Wendelken, Matt Wisler.

Departed: David Hernandez, Aaron Loup, Mikie Mahtook, Cedric Mullins, Jake McGee, David Robertson, J. B. Shuck, Austin Wynns.



SNT: Merrill Kelly.

Kelly, no kid at 32, does not blow you away with overpowering stuff. He struck out 158 in 183 innings last season for Arizona. But he has 32 starts at Grade 8 – and that's why he's here.

were pretty good – the 2019 TBL title is sitting in Brian's trophy case.

This year, we flip the script. Vic Vaughn's pitching staff is functional but pedestrian. But the hitting? Holy Stan Musial . . .

Pitching: **10.0** The bullpen picks up the rotation.

We always start by talking about the pitching, and it's clear that the team wasn't built around it. There is a little bit of a deficiency in the rotation, but the bullpen makes up for it somewhat. There may be a need to up their game late in the season, but there are resources to do that.

ROTATION. Overall, the Columbus pitching is pretty good, but this is not a championship caliber starting rotation.

Aaron Nola (Grade 12 C-16, HR+14, 34 starts) and Jacob Waguespack (Grade 10 C-13, 13 starts, 22 fatigue) handle the first 47 starts. They are the only starters in the stack with double digit grades.

The next 95 starts are guys that steal 9s without help. Matt Boyd (Grade 9 C+23 HR-23, 32 starts), Yankees veteran Masahiro Tanaka (Grade 8 C+31, 31 starts) and SNT Merrill Kelly (Grade 8 C+15, 32 starts) get the Jets out to start 142 before they hand the ball to the accurate but hittable Mike Leake (Grade 6, C+45 HR-24, 32 starts).

They will pitch all 162 games. They will not make headlines.



columbus JETS

BULLPEN. This part of the pitching staff is more playoff ready. The top end is very good but a little thin on usage. Kevin Ginkel (Grade 23* C-22 HR+33, 24 IP) is the closer for as long as he lasts. Jimmy Cordero (Grade 17* HR+24, 37 IP) will close when Ginkel is taking the month off. Between the two of them, there are 61 innings to close out wins.

The setup innings are solid and deep. Dan Hudson (Grade 16* HR+24, 73 IP), J. B. Wendelken (Grade 16* C+26, HR+43, 34 IP) and Brandon Kintzler (Grade 14* C+34 HR+31, 57 IP) are a

very nice team of setup men. Taylor Rogers (Grade 14* C+44 HR+22, 69 IP) and John Brebbia (Grade 13* HR+34, 73 IP) also contribute here. The 272 additional innings gives the club 367 innings of relievers that steal 8s without help. This allows for aggressive use from about the fifth inning or so. This will help the fatigued starters and allow the Jets to compete in extra innings.

The long relievers and mops are Ryan Brasier (Grade 10*, 56 IP), Wade Leblanc (Grade 8* C-25 HR-26, 121 IP) and some November batting practice from Matt Wisler (Grade 5*) and Shaun Anderson (Grade 3).

They're deep and that's good – the rotation can pitch the early innings on a short leash, and the back end of the bullpen can close out the victories. This is a good unit.

Offense: 14.0
x

Okay ... let's talk about Howie Kendrick (1-5-5-6, 12 hits, 3 walks, 121 games). Kendrick has always been a decent hitter. Career numbers:



Hudson: Solid

.294 / .334 / .768. 125 homers in a long career. He was a spectacular minor league hitter – .969 OPS for his minor league career. But last year he did this: 125 games, .344 / .395 / .572. The .966 OPS was almost 200 points above his career average. He was 34 years old in 2019. This has to be one of the flukiest years any hitter has had since Brady Anderson's 50 home run season in 1996.

Having a killer 12-hit card in the lineup is terrific. But hey – why not have two just to make things really interesting? Ketel Marte (1-0-0-0-0, 12 hits, 3 walks, 32 SSN for 13 SBA) combines power, speed, plate discipline and youth – he won't be 27 until October. The fireworks continue with Eugenio Suarez (1-1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks + 42) and the *indefatigable* Jorge Soler (1-1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 162 games).

Then there are a few guys that hit the ball less often but for spectacular effect. Rhys Hoskins (1-0-0-0-0, 7 hits, 6 walks, L+7) will be featured on Weird Card Wednesday, but he'll be a tough out against lefties. Lourdes Gurriel (1-1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks) will certainly have his explosive moments as well.

That's six serious hitting cards. The rest of the lineup is down a notch but still respectable. Joey Votto (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks) is on the back nine of a Hall of Fame career, but is still a good hitter and gets the right-handed half of the platoon at first base. Domingo Santana (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) is the everyday right fielder. Tucker



Soler, Marte, Suarez: Three of six

Barnhart (1-6-0, 7 hits, 4 walks, L-13) plays against right-handed pitching on the boards. Tyler Flowers (1-4-6, 8 hits, 4 walks + 42, R+2) is the better player and steps in on the computer and against lefties that scare Barnhart. The reliable Elvis Andrus (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, D31 for 39 attempts) is the everyday shortstop.

Many pitching staffs will be unable to contain this lineup. Even high grade pitching will take its lumps with all the walks and power. This will be huge fun for Jets fans.

Defense: 4.0
Jack up the leather.

Defense is not the strongest part of the plan in Columbus, but they can jack up the leather ratings when the situation calls for it. For example, the starting outfield is Lourdes Gurriel (OF2, 33 arm), Ketel Marte (OF2, 31 arm, 2B8, SS8), and Domingo Santana (OF1, 33 arm). But the bench features Aaron Hicks (OF3, 38 arm and Kevin Kiermaier (OF3, 37 arm). Howie Kendrick (1B3, 2B7, 3B3) starts at second base but Jason Kipnis and Marte are both 2B8s.

Eugenio Suarez (3B4) and Joey Votto (1B5) man the infield corners capably. Tucker Barnhart (C9, Th-1) is rock solid behind the plate, and gets spelled by the very capable Tyler Flowers (C8, Th-2), though neither one hinders the running game.

The one nit with all this is that Elvis Andrus (SS8), who has been terrific for years and does not have an SS9 defensive replacement. With the resources on this team, management should go get a star fielder. It would help the team's chances in the playoffs. All in all, this is an above average defensive team with good leather guys on the bench. Careful late game management will be required.



Holy Stan Musial.

Bench: 2.5
Situational depth.

There is good situational depth on the bench. Aaron Hicks (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks, 17 speed, R+1) and Kevin Kiermaier (1-3-6, 8 hits, 2 walks, 16 speed, D31 for 24 attempts) play terrific defense and run well. Having Jason Kipnis (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 16 speed) as a bench option is just decadent. This guy would start at second for almost every team in TBL, but with Ketel here, Kipnis gets less action than a chess team captain at an abbey. Jay Bruce (1-1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks) does little but hit homers, but that will be enough to give him a role on this club. Ryan O'Hearn (1-0-0, 7 hits, 4 walks) looks like waiver fodder.

Hoskins and Votto split first base, and the one that doesn't start will pinch hit. Plenty of options, and versatility to spare.

1st The TQ ratings say that they will win this comfortably, and with this hitting attack they should be very solid. Munich is behind them in the division, and the Marauders have this Hall of Fame manager pulling the levers, but there's enough here to hold them off.

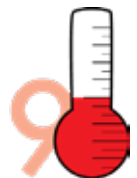
Some elements of the team are getting on in years, so this team's time is now. But what a now it is. The offense attracted Joe Auletta's notice eight months ago, but for most of us this team is an eye-opener.

In the meanwhile, someone needs to find a way to beat the Jets in the playoffs.

TQ: 30.5



columbus JETS



2019 munich MARAUDERS in review



The team dropped several close games just when it most needed wins.

by Paul Montague

2019 in review

Final Record: 100-62 (2nd, Mantle)

In what is seemingly becoming an annual pattern, the Marauders played very well early in the season before fading in the late months. They led the Mantle Division until September, fell three games back of Hudson in October, and were unable to catch back up. The season ended with an epic Skype-played series against Hudson that Munich needed to win, but wasn't quite able to, ultimately finishing two games back. The Marauders won the wild card series against Kansas, four games to one, before falling to Hudson in the division series.

What went right?

Winning 102 games. The offense produced 764 runs, with a creditable .260/.332/.409 team slashline. Meanwhile the pitching staff gave up only 565 runs, and recorded a 3.18 team ERA – over a full run lower than the year before.

Jake deGrom continued his stellar career, winning 21 games with 305 K in 257.2 IP, and a 2.06 ERA. deGrom also broke the team record for shutouts by a pitcher, with seven. Two other starters, Zach Greinke and Kyle Hendricks, won 17 games apiece, with 3.01 and 2.78 ERAs respectively.

Anthony Rizzo led the team with 27 HR and 96 RBI, while Altuve put up a .316/.369/.457 slashline. More surprisingly, Andrelton Simmons was right up there with the top two, including a team-leading 41 doubles, and finishing second or third in many other offensive statistics. Simmons also contributed his normal scintillating glove work, committing only three errors in 160 games.

What went wrong?

The “wrong” is hard to pinpoint. Partly because in a 100-win season, by definition not a lot did go wrong. It is true that Arodys Vizcaino, with the highest relief grade in the bullpen, struggled all season. He did lead the team in saves, with 10, but also hung up a dreadful 5.46 ERA with four losses and numerous blown saves. Catcher Willson Contreras never caught a rhythm at the plate, finishing with a .202 batting average and .273 OBP.



DeGrom: Stellar

But those are nitpicks. The main thing that went “wrong” was simply timing – as the team came down the stretch, it dropped several close games just when it most needed wins.

3 Things

- 1. Better records through trading.* Although Munich was not especially active, the front office did swing two big deals. It traded away the top of the draft for both 2020 and 2021, plus starter Andrew Heaney, for lefty Hyun-Jin Ryu and Francisco Liriano, and acquired Justin Turner from rival Hudson. Catching depth was added in veteran Alex Avila, who can help on both offense and defense.
- 2. Never too much....Bullpen!* It's not possible. Like 2019, there is no “TBL closer” grade among them, 470+ IP are Grades 12* through 15*. All but two of these relievers also stop home runs nicely.
- 3. Speaking of stopping things...* As mentioned, only two relievers don't stop homers – and only one of the starters doesn't. The starters have good control. Expect few hits, few walks, few hom– or at least less than the league average across the board.

munich MARAUDERS

Paul Montague (37th year); Hall of Famer

This team can surprise even the Annual.



Mr. Montague has lorded over the Marauders for 36 years. That's longer than this publication has existed. It's longer than the Beatles were together. It's longer than the Tampa Bay Rays or Miami Marlins have been in existence. For that, let's tip our collective hat to him.

Now, about the 2020 Marauders. Coming off a 100-win season, the Marauders are right back in the thick of another pennant race. They have a strong team, with one thing missing: a closer. Managed by Mr. Montague, who has more TBL experience than anyone, this team can surprise even the *Annual*, but its weakness is not insubstantial. The tale of the team won't be written until the final out.

Pitching: 9.0 **A non-conformist approach.**

The Marauders have a strong rotation, just seven starts short of amazing. There's an ace, of course, but the rest of the rotation is also strong, both in grades and peripherals. It is a strength of the team, and will keep the team in the running all year long.

The bullpen is another matter. It's deep, though fairly wild; but as mentioned, there is no closer, at least not in the traditional TBL sense. But as Munich's instructions state: there's more than 500 relief innings. It's going to take a lot of moving these pitchers in and out to get the most out of them ... and to compensate for no closer. It's a nonconformist approach that may possibly work.



DeGrom: Ace

SNT: Hyun-Jin Ryu.

SNTs don't always come from the draft. In this case, a dominant starting pitcher came through a trade to make the Marauders even more formidable.



Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Alex Avila, Franklin Barreto, Yonathan Daza, Francisco Liriano, Josh Rojas, Kyle Ryan, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Eric Sogard, Christin Stewart, Justin Turner.

Departed: Jose Bautista, Trevor Cahill, Khris Davis, Andrew Heaney, Jon Jay, Seung-Hwan Oh, Wily Peralta, Arodys Vizcaino, Patrick Wisdom, Brad Ziegler.

ROTATION. The ace this year, like last year, is Jacob DeGrom (Grade 16 C+26 HR+26). Not only is he a valuable part of this rotation, but he's been consistent, which is a rare commodity in a starter. He's followed by Zack Greinke (Grade 13 C+43 HR+24), Yu Darvish (Grade 13 HR-22), and SNT Ryu (Grade 13 C+44 HR+26). That's 125 starts of Grade 13 or better.

Kyle Hendricks (Grade 10 C+35 HR+24) takes 30 starts, leaving only seven for the well-traveled Jesse Chavez (Grade 5 C+21). These last seven starts will likely play out like a bullpen game, with Chavez playing the part of the opener. Review all the significantly positive peripherals in this rotation. It's definitely a team strength.



MUNICH MARAUDERS

BULLPEN. Here's where things get interesting. Without a closer grade at the back end of the bullpen, everyone has to contribute. The best grade in the pen belongs to lefty Amir Garrett (Grade 15* C-62 HR+21), but his control may limit his closing options. John Gant (Grade 14* C-53 HR+43) is a little better and a righty. That's 122 innings of top-end relief, which probably isn't enough.

Setting up are lefties Francisco Liriano (Grade 13* C-43 HR+23) and Kyle Ryan (Grade 10* C-33 HR+34), along with righties Buck Farmer (Grade 12* HR+23), Sam Dyson (Grade 12* C+31 HR+26), and Craig Stammen (Grade 10* C+41). The mop, when available, is Chavez (Grade 8* C+21). They add 392 innings, which is a lot of middle relief, most of which doesn't help the top starters. But how well the bullpen performs may determine the success of this team.

Offense: 9.0
More power than the 100-win team.

This is a powerful offense. Second-year player Austin Meadows (1-1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 25 SSN for 21 attempts, L-5) has blossomed quickly into a five-power-number force. Jose Altuve (1-1-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, 3 3Is, 22 SSN for 13 attempts, L+5 R-3) has bounced back big time. They are guys you don't want to face with the game on the line.



Meadows: Blossomed

But wait, there's more. Kyle Schwarber (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L-6) and Willson Contreras (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+5 R-3) are two

more bashers. Justin Turner (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42) joins Anthony Rizzo (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+2 42s, L-7) as legitimate middle-of-the-order bats.

Table setters include leadoff hitter Adam Eaton (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, 32 SSN 20 attempts), Jason Heyward (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, 28 SSN for 13 attempts, L-11), and former power hitter Miguel Cabrera (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+9 R-4). The leaves the ageless Ben Zobrist (2 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks), Andrelton Simmons (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 14 attempts, L+6 R-4), and Josh Rojas (6-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L+4 R-4).

This team has much more power than last year's team that won 100 games. There are lots of hits and walks to go around, and there's even some speed to burn, assuming the right guys get on base. This is the kind of offense that may make the bullpen problem moot. At the *Annual*, we expect this team to score runs in bunches.

Defense: 6.0
A strong defense.

With Simmons (SS9) and Altuve (2B8) up the middle, this is a strong, stable infield. Rizzo (1B5) is a Hoover at first, while Turner (3B4) is only average, as is Zobrist (2B7) when he plays.



Simmons: We like this picture

Contreras (C7 Th-0) is the definition of average behind the plate. The outfield is manned everyday by Heyward and Eaton, both OF3s. Meadows and Rojas are just average. This is a strong defense, with no weaknesses. What's more, there is some help on the bench.

Bench: 2.5 Relievers would help more.

There are two backup catchers. Martin Maldonado (1-6-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22) is a C9, but with a Th-1. Bearded lady Alex Avila (1-5-6, 7 hits, 6 walks, L-5) is a C8 Th+5. Eric Sogard (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) plays all over, but is a 2B8 at his best. Victor Caratini (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22) is a useful bat off the bench, and Chad Pinder (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, R-3) also plays everywhere with some power. Christin Stewart (4 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-4) is working on becoming more than a one-dimensional player. Franklin Barreto, Yonathan Daza, and Carlos Gomez are realizing they could help this team if they were relievers.

2nd

Make no mistake about it: this is a good ballclub. Perhaps the bullpen is a weakness, but they will hammer the ball while the rotation keeps the team in the game most of the time. And the defense is a plus, too.

This analysis is done on paper, of course, and when playing the games, anything can happen. But Mr. Montague has been at this a long time, and he's picked up a thing or two along the way. If anyone can get the most out of this unconventional team, it's him.

The best Munich teams have had good power. The best Munich teams have also had good pitching. Power on both sides of the ball is the way the game is changing, but it's where the Marauders have always been when they're good. In many ways, this team is another example of how Major League Baseball is catching up to TBL. And that may be the best compliment the *Annual* can give to Mr. Montague.

We do feel obliged to note that the Munich team is, well, *mature*. The principal players, with the



Pinder: Plays everywhere



exception of Austin Meadows and Willson Contreras, are 30 or older. 2020 is probably not the last hurrah for this club, but the cliff isn't far away.

munich MARAUDERS

Ages of players on the Munich roster, as of 07/01/2020:

39:	Zobrist
37:	M. Cabrera
36:	Chavez, Greinke, Liriano, Stammen
35:	Turner
34:	C. Gomez, Sogard
33:	Avila, Darvish, Maldonado, Ryu
32:	DeGrom, Dyson
31:	Eaton
30:	Altuve, Hendricks, Heyward, Rizzo, Simmons
29:	B. Farmer
28:	Contreras, Pinder, Ryan
27:	Gant, Garrett, Schwarber
26:	Caratini, Daza, Rojas, C. Stewart
25:	Meadows
24:	Barreto

TQ: 26.5



2019 detroit DRAGONS in review

An exciting 2020 is ahead.



by Dave Jaskot

2019 in review

Final Record: 52-110 (4th, Mantle)

Detroit finished its first season as the Dragons much the same as the Detroit Stars finished its farewell 2018 season, last place in the Mantle Division. Their won-loss record was actually nine games worse than the previous season. As a team in the middle of a rebuild, a poor record was expected, however the multitude of errors led to a far worse season than what could have been. Even with a 52-110 record, Detroit was only the sixth worst team in the TBL this year. Management has opened wondered if the Commissioner has looked into this phenomenon!

What went right?

Very little went very well in 2019 but in a heavy rebuilding year, being able to field a team felt like an accomplishment. Mike Minor led all starters with a 7-15 record and a 4.27 ERA. Before being traded, Robbie Erlin won 7 and led the staff with 10 saves before being traded. The offense produced only 645 runs, lower than the previous year, despite hitting 216 HR, led by slugger Joey Gallo with 38 (though he struck out 222 times over 603 plate appearances and hit .166.) Nine others were in double digits. The Team MVP was Daniel Descalso with a .249 average, 61 RBI, 132 hits and 66 runs scored. Part time OF and DH Billy McKinney led the team with a .268 average over 154 PA.

What went wrong?

Although 2019 was a poor season for the Dragons, it was foreseen though not with this magnitude. Statistically Detroit's poor defense led to an increase over 2018 by 42

miscues resulting in a total of 169 errors and 146 unearned runs this past season. The team offence also hit into 99 double plays. The Dragons also struck out 1,513 times compared to 539 walks. The Detroit starters combined for a 31-88 won-loss record for the year.

The team batting average was a very poor .216 and their OB% came in at a low .291. Both numbers were worse than the previous year's lows.



Gallo: Hit some homers

3 Things

1. *2020 should be a far better year for Detroit.* There's a Dragon Nest full of newly drafted players hoping to make an impact beyond 2020. A better than .500 season is expected. The draft concentrated on youth and best available including future potential.

2. *An exciting 2020 is ahead.* Victor Robles, Cavan Biggio, Tommy Edman and Reese McGuire will join up with Hunter Dozier, Franmil Reyes, Gleyber Torres, Gary Sanchez and Joey Gallo to make for an exciting 2020 as well as future seasons.

3. *Starting pitchers will be the key.* Several pitchers had impressive comeback seasons. Tanner Roark, Anthony DeSclafani, Tyler Skaggs and Mike Minor will be joined by Jordan Yamamoto and Zac Gallen and injury comeback starter Dinelson Lamet for 2020. Relievers Greene and Robles had nice comeback seasons to bolster the relief staff which will be led by Julio Urias who has also returned from injury.

detroit DRAGONS

Dave Jaskot (9th year)

The team is finally on track to win more than it loses



Dave Jaskot has had an up-and-down career in TBL. Coming off two straight 100-loss seasons, he's got the team back on track. Between several judicious trades, several high-round draft picks, and several rebound seasons from players already on the roster, the Detroit Dragons are expected to compete for a playoff spot for the first time since 2017.

A lineup with power and speed, plus a competent pitching staff enhanced with starts-as-relievers, the Dragons should be in the thick of the Mantle Division race. It won't be easy, as the division has other worthy candidates. But the team is finally on track to win more than it loses, and no matter what the outcome of this season, that's the biggest takeaway.

Pitching: **Better, but still a problem.** **9.0**

This is largely a homegrown staff, which is impressive. The team added one reliever via trade and selected four pitchers in this year's draft, one of whom will make it into the rotation for 2020. While it's not an exceptionally deep staff, what's there is decent enough. In other words, the pitching organically came together this year for Detroit. Sometimes, that happens,



SNT: Cavan Biggio.

Mr. Jaskot is serving two needs by selecting young Biggio: collecting talented players and helping his team compete this season.



Minor: Coveted

and it's a beautiful thing.

The rotation and bullpen contain a balance of righties and lefties, and there aren't many large negative peripherals. While all the grades are competent, there's only one, the closer's, that's exceptional.

This team can beat up on the weaker teams in the league, but may have trouble against the ones it has to beat. Still, this pitching staff has come a long way in just a year.

ROTATION. The best of the lot, even if he isn't the ace, is rookie Jordan Yamamoto (Grade 14 C-36). The true team ace may be lefty Mike Minor (Grade 12), but he doesn't really have the grade or peripherals to match up against other team's aces. Dinelson Lamet (Grade 12 C-24) has the same grade, if not the starts or control. That's just 61 starts of Grade 12 and above.

Veteran Anthony DeSclafani (Grade 11 C+22) and the late Tyler Skaggs (Grade 10 HR+24) help the middle of the rotation. Eric Lauer (Grade 7) and Tanner Roark (Grade 7) give the bullpen some workdays. There are no real problems with

Turnover Rate: 34%

Arrived: Cavan Biggio, Tommy Edman, Zac Gallen, Brett Gardner, Adam Kolarek, Reese McGuire, David Phelps, Victor Robles, Addison Russell, Josh Van Meter, Brad Wieck, Jordan Yamamoto.

Departed: Dan Altavilla, Daniel Descalso, Ryan Dull, David Hess, Nick Kingham, Jorge Lopez, Mike Mayers, Bryan Mitchell, Thomas Pannone, Scott Schebler, Devon Travis, Jordan Zimmermann.



detroit DRAGONS

the starters, except that the grades aren't quite as good as those of other contenders. So the Dragons' rotation is better, but still a problem.

BULLPEN. The new closer is youngster Julio Urias (Grade 19* HR+32). He gets the job done, even as a lefty, for 49 innings before reverting to a still-useful Grade 13* for another 30. He's set up by Shane Greene (Grade 17* C+22), starter Zac Gallen (Grade 16 C-34 HR+26), and Hansel Robles (Grade 15* C+31 HR+34). They add 214 significant innings.

Adam Kolarek (Grade 13* C+31) is the first lefty out of the pen. David Phelps (Grade 13* C-36) adds 34 innings. Waiver pick-up lefty Brad Wieck (Grade 9* HR-33) and Joe Biagini (Grade 8* HR-24) are available for long and middle relief work.

In total, there are 483 relief innings. Given the rotation, it may be a little thin.

Offense: 10.0
Power, but hits a little scarce.

There is no lack of power in Detroit. Four players have double 1s, starting with Gleyber Torres (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks) and followed by the extreme bearded lady Joey Gallo (1-1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 6 walks+22, L+7 R-5), Franmil Reyes (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+3 R-3), and Gary Sanchez (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-5).

The real issue with the Dragons' offense is a lack of hits, as part-timer Tommy Edman (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 35 SSN for 16 attempts, L+3 R-3), Reese McGuire (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-8) for a couple months, and full-timer Hunter Dozier



Torres: Start here

(1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks) have as many as 10 hits.

There's good speed in rookie Victor Robles (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42+22, 29 SSN for 37 attempts), Wil Myers (1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, L+4 R-3, 27 SSN for 23 attempts), SNT Biggio (1-5-6, 8 hits, 6 walks, L-3, 35 SSN for 14 attempts), and Brett Gardner (1-4-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-9 R+2, 32 SSN for 12 attempts).



Robles: Speedy

That leaves Neil Walker (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks), Addison Russell (1-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+22), and backup catcher Brian McCann (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-9) to fill out the lineups. Power, speed, and walks are in abundance, but hits are hard to come by, hampering the success of Detroit's offense.

Defense: 3.5
Not a priority.

Gardner and Robles provide full-time OF3s, and Robles provides the team's only above-average arm. Russell (2B9, SS8) is a defensive highlight when he plays. Almost everyone else is average, meaning errors may appear in bunches.

Behind the plate, Sanchez (C6, Th-0) is a weakness, but he has the best throwing arm back there, as McGuire and McCann (both C7s) have negative arms. Torres (2B7, SS8), Cavan Biggio (2B7), Tommy Edman (2B7, 3B4); and Ryon Healy, Wil Myers, and Hunter Dozier are all 1B3s.

In the outfield, rookie Victor Robles (OF3, 34 arm) and Michael Taylor (OF3, 34 arm) and Brett Gardner (OF3, 31 arm) are excellent, and Gallo (OF2, 31 arm), Raimel Tapia (OF2, 32 arm) Dozier (OF2, 30 arm), and Myers

(OF2, 33 arm) are satisfactory, but McKinney and Reyes are both OF1s.

Let's just say defense is not a priority for Detroit.

Bench: 3.0 **A useful bench ... for someone.**

There are a few extra games among the starters, but not the better ones. Raimel Tapia (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 29 SSN for 12 attempts, L-3) offers some pinch-hitting and pinch-running options. Michael Taylor (5-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+3 R-4) can play as an OF3. Benjamin Gamel (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L+9 R-4) can do damage vs. left-handed pitching. Ryan Healy (1-0-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-5) and Billy McKinney (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-7) have power.

Then there is Josh Vanmeter (1-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, 29 SSN for 12 attempts, L-10), who has a little bit of everything. This is a useful bench ... for someone. While these players may be better next year, will Mr. Jaskot put them to use this year?

3rd Hudson aside, the Mantle Division is strong this year. There are enough cracks in Detroit's team foundation to relegate it to a third-place finish. But the team still may finish with a winning record; it could make a mark on the wall as high as 90 wins, depending on the dice or electrons.

Detroit has abundant power. It has a solid, if unspectacular pitching staff. It has some high-lights on defense, though as we noted it really isn't a priority (nor should it be expected.) But it probably doesn't have enough to catch Munich or Columbus. It's just nice to see this team heading in the right direction again – and based on the talent that has been accumulated, it'll be going that direction for some time to come.

The Detroit Dragons have embraced the power-first mantra. Nearly every player on the roster has power, sometimes to the exclusion of everything else. To be fair, this team is also blessed with quite a bit of usable speed. But is it possible to learn a lesson too well? If so, Mr. Jaskot has taken the new philosophy of launch angels and exit velocities to an extreme. Power can win games, but pitching, defense, and most importantly, timely hitting can potentially win more. Perhaps future Detroit teams will add these elements to the power that's already here. In abundance.



detroit DRAGONS

Ages of players on the Detroit roster, as of 07/01/2020:

36: Gardner, B. McCann
34: N. Walker
33: Phelps, Roark
32: Minor
31: Greene, Kolarek
30: Biagini, DeSclafani
29: Myers, H. Robles, M. Taylor
28: H. Dozier, Gamel, Healy, Skaggs, Wieck
27: Lamet, G. Sanchez
26: Gallo, A. Russell, Tapia
25: Biggio, Edman, Lauer, McGuire, McKinney, VanMeter
24: Gallen, F. Reyes, Yamamoto
23: V. Robles, Torres, Urias

TQ: 25.5



2019 hudson GENERALS in review



There was no magic in the World Series.

by Clay Beard

2019 in review

Final Record: 102-60 (1st, Mantle)

2019 was one of the most successful seasons in team history with 102 wins to edge out Munich by two games. We set a team record for the best home record at 57-24 and tied the longest winning streak at 13. And, of course, the team went to the World Series.

What went right?

Almost everything. Sean Doolittle (1.40) and Josh Hader (9-5, 2.43) combined for 42 saves. A 3.49 team ERA was good for 5th in the league. The Generals were led on the hill by Rich Hill (who performs better the lower his grade is) at 13-6, 2.91. Mike Clevinger led in wins at 14-10. Rookie Brad Keller contributed a 12-4, 3.32 season. Gausman went 13-11 despite a 4.64 ERA.

The offense was a classic group effort. The team RBI leader was Didi Gregorius with only 77, but there were four players over 70 and six over 60. The Generals were second in the league in doubles and slugged a respectable .432. Max Muncy and C. J. Cron led in HR with 33 and 32 (though they hit only .221 and .220. Justin "Steve the Pirate" Turner slashed .301 / .386 / .507 in 105 games. Rookie Brian Anderson hit a respectable .279 with a .366 OBP. Then there's this head-scratcher from the Buffalo. Wilson Ramos hit .208 in the first half and .379 in the second with nary a leg hit.

What went wrong?

Not much. While the offense was strong top to bottom, the Generals were unable to

manufacture runs. We had the fewest stolen bases in team history with 39, and stole at a record low percentage.

Brad Keller had an excellent rookie season, but wasn't up to a Game 7 World Series start. The first four Whitman batters scored and he was gone in the second inning.

3 3 Things



Turner: Pirate

1. *Late inning dominance.* The Generals had an unusual amount of close games and were successful: 32-19 in one-run games and 11-2 in extra innings. It helps to have a pair of 25*s in the pen. And Dirty Al had the Midas touch for the second year in a row: Hudson pinch hitters slashed .321 / .391 / .449.

2. *Walk-off magic.* Hudson clinched the division with two days left on a walk-off pinch-hit HR from Justin Turner. Hudson defeated Munich in the Division Series with a walk-off 10th inning single up the middle from Johan Camargo. An 11th inning, walk-off, bases loaded single from Jed Lowrie defeated Melrose in the Conference Series. But there was no magic in the World Series.

3. *One-step back.* Injuries killed any possibility of a 2021 return to the playoffs. The front office looked to find older players that would provide a decent return, but wouldn't be selling low. There were few. Fan favorite Justin Turner was shipped off to Munich and Rich Hill moved on to Vegas. We wish them well.

HUDSON GENERALS

Clay Beard (36th year); Hall of Famer

his season, the rent comes due and the celebration hangover kicks in.



Last year, the *Annual* stated that Mr. Beard's Hudson Generals may exceed expectations. The publication picked them as the Mantle Division champions, but the team rallied for a third trip to the World Series in franchise history. And looking at the stats, the team didn't do anything spectacular ... except win games. That's a tip of the cap to management.

This season, the rent comes due and the celebration hangover kicks in. The Generals still have many of the pieces that got them to the Series, but the competition has improved, and the team used its draft picks and several targeted trades to get younger and restock. The Generals aren't expected to challenge for a playoff spot in 2020.

Pitching: 5.5
No lead will be safe.

Hudson has an ace with a young sidekick, but the good news doesn't extend much beyond them. So, while the rotation starts strong, it bottoms out fairly quickly and fairly deeply. Likewise, the bullpen has a big closer and not much else. Most days, this staff won't be up to the task of, well, winning.

With a few exceptions, the bullpen may give up homers in bunches, which as you may surmise, is not the best way to keep your team in the game or protect a lead. Even the closer's affected by this malady, enough that the grade may not be enough. As a result, no lead will be safe until the final out, and the pressure will be on the offense to keep coming back. Some settling of contents may occur.

ROTATION. The first bit of news is great: The Generals have a bona fide ace in Mike Clevinger

SNT: Bryan Reynolds.

Reynolds may be far from a complete package, but boy, can he hit. A .314 batting average and a .503 slugging percentage improves a weak outfield.



Turnover Rate: 34%

Arrived: Hanser Alberto, Kolby Allard, Austin Allen, Luis Guillorme, Billy Hamilton, Andrew Heaney, Jeremy Jeffress, Zack Littell, Jose Quintana, Bryan Reynolds, Justus Sheffield, Devin Smeltzer, Abraham Toro.

Departed: Cody Allen, Brad Brach, Xavier Cedeno, Austin Dean, Lucas Duda, Grayson Greiner, Rich Hill, Jed Lowrie, Antonio Senzatela, Robert Stock, Justin Turner, Taijuan Walker.

(Grade 16 HR+35). His little sidekick is youngster Brad Keller (Grade 11 C-23 HR+34). Lefties Devin Smeltzer (Grade 10 C+24), a rookie, and trade acquisition Andrew Heaney (Grade 8 HR-23) may have their good days. That's 73 decent starts.



Clevinger: Ace redux

Things turn south from there for the last 89 starts. Pablo Lopez (Grade 6 C+31) is the best of the rest. He's joined by veteran Jose Quintana (Grade 5 C+23 HR+23), rookie Kolby Allard (Grade 5 HR+44), prospect Justus Sheffield (Grade 4 C-34 HR+21), and holdover Kevin



Gausman (Grade 3 C+21). This part of the rotation will likely be pummeled repeatedly, and even a deep, talented bullpen likely couldn't make up for it.



Hader: Problematic

BULLPEN. Unfortunately, the team doesn't have a deep, talented bullpen. Instead, it has a problematic closer in Josh Hader (Grade 21* C+22 HR-32). Despite his grade, he'll make every save a non-guaranteed adventure. He's set up by four righties: Carlos Martinez (Grade 13* HR+52), Zack Littell (Grade 13* C+26 HR+23), and Freddy Peralta (Grade 13* C-23). That's 210 innings, which won't be enough.

Middle relief will be manned by Mychal Givens (Grade 13* C-23 HR-24) and Raisel Iglesias (Grade 10* C+22 HR-21), with a healthy dose

of lefty Sean Doolittle (Grade 8* C+32) thrown in for good measure. That's 190 more innings. Bryan Shaw (Grade 7*) and waiver pickup Jeremy Jeffress (Grade 6* HR+31) add 124 more bulk innings. There's just not enough innings here to make up for the bottom end of the rotation.

Offense: 7.5
Some pop, but many 1-2-3 innings.

Let's start with SNT Reynolds (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-8). J.D. Davis (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 3 walks) has a similar card, which is a good thing. Along with rookie Hanser Alberto (3 0s, 11 hits, a walk+22, L+8 R-8), they'll hit all year long. Then there's the power of Max Muncy (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks+22), who'll be aiming for the fences the whole year.

The next level of power bat includes Brian Anderson (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L-6), C.J.

Cron (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, L+9 R-5), Did Gregorius (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks), Randal Grichuk (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+1 R-3), and Wellington Castillo (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks+22). That's a lot of four-power-number cards, even if they do all start to look alike after a while.

A.J. Pollock (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L+3 R-3) and Johan Camargo (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) add some pop and a different look. Meanwhile, Wilson Ramos (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22 L+7 R-4) will beat up on lefties. Billy Hamilton (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, 30 SSN for 28 attempts) won't hit much at all, but becomes the team's only stolen base threat.

There are several other players who can run, but not often. Muncy is the only player with more than three 14s, and many have two or fewer, so on-base skills are at a premium. When the power numbers come up, the Generals can have some big innings. Otherwise, they may see many 1-2-3 innings. Guess which scenario they'll see more of.

Defense: 3.5
Ho-hum average.

There are quite a few mix-and-match pieces in the field, so the defense on any given day may vary. Hamilton and Pollock are OF3s with above-average arms. Everyone else is average.



Muncy: Aiming

In the infield, only Cron (1B4) is above average. No one else stands out: Muncy and Alberto are 2B7s, Gregorius and Camargo are SS8s; Alberto and Brian Anderson are 3B4s (and Davis is a 3B3). Even the catchers are average, although both Castillo (Th-2) and Ramos (Th-4)

won't be throwing out many base stealers. This defense is ho-hum average, which won't help the pitching staff or the win column.

Bench: 2.5
There is some help here.

A surprise awaits on the bench, as veteran Andrew McCutchen (1-5-6, 8 hits, 6 walks) has become a bearded lady, but can still play on this team. He's even a better fielder (OF2 with a 33 arm) than some of the regulars. Luis Guillorme (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-6) is a utility on-base specialist, and Abraham Toro (3-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-10 R+7) can pinch hit for power. Austin Allen is waiting for better days. All in all, there is some help here.

4th From the World Series to last place. It's a common refrain in TBL. The starting rotation dooms the team.

The reliever can't help enough, and the station-to-station offense, surprising for a Hudson Generals team, won't be able to keep up with the other teams in the division. At least Mr. Beard can bask in the knowledge that his previous team went to the seventh game of the World Series. That memory will likely sustain him for this season.

The Hudson Generals have always been a run-and-gun team, coming at opponents from every which way and finding ways to win that others missed. This is the franchise, after all, that



We always put this here.

holds the league single-season stolen base record ... by 63 steals!



That element of speed is no longer a vital part of the game. And it appears, if this iteration of the team is any indication, that the Generals have changed their stripes (their ribbons?) to keep up. Time will tell if this is a blip on the radar or a new trend for Mr. Beard.

Also, as always, we provide this review with the usual caveat that Hudson often defies our predictions. Still, we thought they'd go far last year and they did. Maybe next year we'll remove the 8-ball.

Ages of players on the Hudson roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 33: W. Castillo, Doolittle, McCutchen
- 32: Jeffress, Pollock, Ramos, Shaw
- 31: Quintana
- 30: Cron, Givens, Grigorius, R. Iglesias
- 29: Clevinger, Gausman, Hamilton, Heaney, Muncy
- 28: Grichuk, C. Martinez
- 27: Alberto, B. Anderson, J. Davis
- 26: A. Allen, Camargo, Hader
- 25: Guillorme, B. Reynolds
- 24: Keller, Littell, P. Lopez, F. Peralta, Sheffield, Smeltzer
- 23: Toro
- 22: Allard

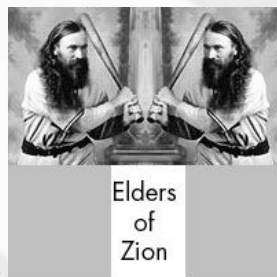
TQ: 19.0



Do Not Adjust Your Television

In 1998, an eternity ago in baseball years, a phenomenon the *Annual* has dubbed *The Great Divide* pervaded the league. There were the haves and the severely have nots. For some teams their post-season fate was settled around Mother’s Day. But in the Clemente, it was one of those “someone has to win” years. The eventual winner was the Gate City Bombers, who went 68-94 to win the pennant (and then take the eventual champ, Brobdingnag, 7 games before bowing out.)

This year’s Williams may be reminiscent of that campaign. The parade of rebuilders who are fighting for the pennant is led by the Sensei himself, *Richard Meyer*, and his *Elders of Zion*. In any other year or in another division, the Elders would be working hard at rebuilding (which they’re still doing); instead, some win total in the mid-80s should be enough to get them to the pennant, and an early exit.



The best of the rest – maybe – is the *Grand Cayman Havens*, coming off a 51-111 season. This is even more of a fix-it project than Zion: it might be the second-best team in the Williams Division, but it’s headed for a



2019 Williams Division
Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Warrenton*	94	68	.580	—
Northboro	78	84	.481	16
Zion	72	90	.444	22
Grand Cayman	51	111	.272	43

* Lost to Melrose in conference playoffs.

year of “learning opportunities.” They’ve added quite a lot of good, young talent to the club, but like any good stew, it’ll take a while to mature.

It’s also true for the *Northboro Phoenix*, where *Steve Stein* and *Robert Jordan* try to forge their way to the land of respectability. This has been a bit of a struggle for the boys, as pieces of the vehicle keep falling off as they tack other new pieces on. We thought they’d be better last year, and we hope they’ll be better next.



Well, this is predictable. The *Warrenton Giants* went 44-118 in 2018, and 94-68 last year; and now they’ve returned to be at the bottom of the division. *Jack Chapman* was able to gather some new talent in the draft, but there have to be more assets to surround Mike Trout before they contend again.



Williams Division

Charlie Blackmon,
Zion

- | | |
|-----------------|------|
| 1. Zion | 22.0 |
| 2. Grand Cayman | 18.5 |
| 3. Northboro | 18.0 |
| 4. Warrenton | 15.0 |

2019 ELDERS of zion in review

Satisfaction with management is running short.



by Rich Meyer

2019 in review

Final Record: 72-90 (3rd, Williams)

What went right?

Two players paced the offense consistently throughout the year. CF Charlie Blackmon hit .315 with 27 HR, 69 EBH, 111 RBI, and a total average of .906. 2B Scooter Gennett hit .320 with 204 hits, 26 HR, and 101 runs scored. Beyond them, however, the contributors were more off-and-on – Andrew Benintendi (.283-15-70), Mitch Haniger (.262-19-58), and Shin Soo Choo (.272-10-60) helping out the most. On the pitching side, Trevor Bauer pitched like a 16 (15-5, 3.06, 7 CG) but had some games lost for him late. Mike Mikolas went only 11-14, but pitched 212 IP in his 32 starts to give the Zion pen some needed rest.



Blackmon: Paced the team

And of course, since no roster member decided to fly a plane into a building like Cory Lidle, nobody actually died in 2019.

What went wrong?

The notion that Grade 4s Alex Cobb and Jon Gray should make 57 starts between them appears, in retrospect, not a good idea. Cobb (6-13, 6.40 ERA, 27 HR in 146 IP) was sadly the more successful of the duo, as Gray (4-16, 7.84 ERA, 26 HR in 134 IP) hopefully set a mark for futility that will not be duplicated soon.

Brandon Morrow (18 saves in 25 IP, 1.44) and Kenley Jansen (1.34, 10 saves) anchored the bullpen, but Dylan Floro (63 IP, 2.29), Mike Lorenzen (75 IP, 2.88), and Adam Kolarek (67 IP,

2.82) contributed to a surprisingly strong overall relief performance.

Adrian Beltre's swan song with the Elders was a disappointment on the field – (.243-11-30 in 117 games) but fans did come to pay their respects to one of the team's all time leaders. Temporary SS replacements Ehire Adrianza and Yairo Munoz combined to make 36 errors in 2019, and Trey Mancini (13 E at first) and Blackmon's 8 OF errors also made for a porous defense.

3 Things

1. *The starting pitching is looking up.* Nobody is expected to scale the heights of Bauer's 2019 campaign, the rotation should be more solid in the year to come.
2. *Injuries continue to plague the offense.* – In 2019, Corey Seager's absence and Beltre's reduction to part time status ravaged the left side of the Elder infield; their replacements were pale substitutes. This year, Gennett and Haniger both battled serious injuries and produced cards that are a shadow of their normal selves. Even looking ahead to 2021, 1B Trey Mancini will not be playing due to a battle with testicular cancer.
3. *Satisfaction with management is running short.* The last 3-4 drafts have not lived up to the team's golden years of operation, leaving fans angry and calling for changes at the top. Only the Elders' control of a worldwide conspiracy (including black ops agents, ninja assassins, and the international media) keep reclusive GM Hagbard Celine nominally in charge of baseball operations. (However, be assured that there is absolutely NO truth to the rumor that Zion laboratories are the actual source of the COVID-19 pandemic.)

ELDERS of zion

Rich Meyer (36th year); Hall of Famer

At the Annual we say, never underestimate the Sensei.



By now we should be tired of making the usual observation that the Sensei, Richard Meyer, can make more from less than almost anyone in TBL. His knowledge and insights are a matter of public record, and his skill as both a field manager and a general manager is such that he should be looked at as an example of How To Do It.

There is an obvious response, of course, and Mr. Meyer will not hesitate to provide it. Since the two year run in 2013-2014 (World Series victory over Whitman; 110-win season and a loss in the semi-finals to Maracaibo) the team has put up records of 64-98, 62-100, 91-71, 87-75 and 72-90. That doesn't look like unparalleled success; and it doesn't look like 2020 will herald a return to greatness. This is unlikely to be the seventh TBL Championship season.

So the talent says: *wait and see*, and here at the *Annual* we say, *never underestimate the Sensei*. The circumstances say, *someone needs to win the Williams Division*. When you get to the playoffs, who knows? Gate City went to the conference championship after 64 wins. Why not Zion?

Pitching: 8.0
Should be able to stay in the game.



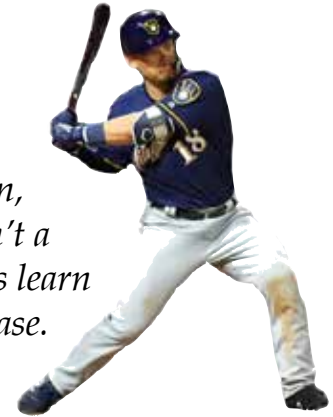
Bauer: Still #1

There is nothing on this pitching staff that jumps up and impresses. Still, that being said, there are no bad starts and there are a good number of bullpen arms. There are far worse staffs in the league.

ROTATION. Trevor Bauer is still the #1 starter here,

SNT:
Keston Hiura.

He raked in his first major league half season, and it looks like it wasn't a fluke. All he has to do is learn to play a solid second base.



Turnover Rate: 29%

Arrived: Michel Baez, Luke Bard, Jose Cisnero, Kyle Farmer, Keston Hiura, Oscar Mercado, Colin Poche, Josh Taylor, Rowan Wick, Asher Wojciechowski.

Departed: Adrian Beltre, Jorge de la Rosa, Nick Hundley, Brian Johnson, Adam Kolarek, Dominic Leone, Brandon Morrow, John Ryan Murphy, Jimmy Nelson, Ronald Torreyes.

and he gives a very capable full season (Grade 11 C-15). He is followed by three full-season and one almost-full-season starters: Jon Gray (Grade 10 HR+16); Dylan Bundy (Grade 8 HR-13); Steven Matz (Grade 8 lefty, C+21 HR-13); and Miles Mikolas (Grade 7 C+36). That's 151 very competent, if not eye-popping, starts. Asher Wojciechowski returns from orthographic obscurity to make the remaining ones (Grade 9 HR-21). From the HR ratings, it looks like the stadium under Lake Ingolstadt pulled its fences in a little bit.

BULLPEN. As with other teams, the closer role is a bit up in the air in Zion. Rookie Rowan Wick (Grade 18* C-35 HR+62) is very good, but for only 33 innings; the rest of the year the task of finishing games will fall to one of the middle men – Grade 14* and 15*s.



ELDERS of zion

That being said, it may be possible to use the group of better relievers in waves to get through the end game. There are two lefties and two righties; the southpaws are rookies – Colin Poche (Grade 15* C-13 HR-15) and Josh Taylor (Grade 14* HR+25); the righties are rookie Michel Baez (Grade 14* C-22 HR+26) and Michael Lorenzen (Grade 14* HR+23). They have 220 good innings among them.

That plays a bit of a burden on the middle relievers. On a contender, these would be guys like Poche and Lorenzen; instead, the bulk middle innings will belong to former closer Kenley Jansen (Grade 12* C+23); waiver pickup Jose Cisnero (Grade

10* C-26 HR+16); Luke Bard (Grade 10* C+23); Dylan Floro (Grade 8* C+34 HR+33); and lefty Tony Watson (Grade 8* C+33). Wojciechowski will chip in some innings in midseason. There are about 250 innings.

The instructions keep starters in the game into the fifth inning, unless forced out. With some of the high-octane offenses in TBL, that may lose some games that might have otherwise be contested. The absence of the closer grade for part of the season will cause some games that could be won to be given away at the end.

But in between those extremes, the Zion staff should be able to stay in the game in many cases. Management knows how to use them.

Offense: **8.5** Some power, and some Guys.

In the changed game of 2020, there is little quite as satisfying as a power number on result 44. Zion can claim three players – two full time, and one half-time – who can boast that attribute. As usual, Charlie Blackmon (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22) is the offensive leader; he'll

sit 20 games, but will otherwise be in the middle of every lineup. He's joined by the returning star, Corey Seager (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-7 R+2); he misses about a quarter of the season as well, but Zion is very glad to have him back. Zion's SNT, Keston Hiura (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, 29 SSN for 12 SBA, L-12 R+2) has roughly a half-season, and will play entire games despite the split.



Seager: He's back

The next tier of hitters is led by Trey Mancini (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22), who takes over the main duties at first base and shows nice power. Shin-Soo Choo (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, 2 10s, 35 SSN for 15 SBA, L-9 R+2) has a nice on-base card when the shift doesn't cut the wrong way.



Mancini: Nice power

Andrew Benentendi (4 0s, 9 hits, 30 SSN for 13 SBA) is decent, but not what was anticipated, while Mitch Haniger (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, 9 13s) has power but doesn't look a lot like

a Zion-type hitter. By comparison, rookie Oscar Mercado (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 30 SSN for 19 SBA) does, with an interesting power-speed combination that will likely get better as he develops. Josh Phegley (1-6-6, 9 hits, L+5 R-4) is mildly useful behind the plate.

After that it's basically Guys. The remaining infield games will be filled by Ehire Adrianza (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42); Yairo Munoz (5-6, 10 hits, 28 SSN for 11 SBA); Kyle Farmer (1-0-0, 9 hits, L+6 R-5); and Jeimer Candelario, about which the less said the better. Roberto Perez (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, 8 13s) will play some catcher games, and will occasionally hit.

The lineup is about half-formed, and hindered by usage restrictions, but the best players will be able to play together on some occasions and should score some runs.

Defense: 3.5
A few highlights.

The defensive standout on the Zion roster is Roberto Perez (C9 Th+5), which is about as good as it gets in TBL. It's also about as good as it gets in the field. Josh Phegley (C8 Th+1) is the other half of the catching team, and he's pretty good. So is Trey Mancini (1B4). In the outfield, Mitch Haniger and Andrew Benintendi are both OF3s.



Perez: Standout

After these highlights, the news is generally of Fielding Two or less. None of the infielders are outstanding: the shortstops are all SS8s, the third basemen all 3B4s, and the second basemen 2B7s – except Keston Hiura, who is only a 2B6. The remaining outfielders are OF2s – Mercado, Blackmon, Greg Allen and Steven Duggar. Choo should not have to play out there all year with his OF1, even though his arm is better than anyone else's.

Bench: 2.0
A few remnants.

Usage restrictions will make the bench a bit thin for the tastes of the Sensei. There are a few other bodies on the roster who do a scant few things: former star Scooter Gennett (2B7, 3 0s, 9 hits) will occupy space for a few games; Greg Allen (OF2, 3 0s, 8 hits, 31 SSN for 10 SBA) can run a little; and Steven Duggar (OF2, 3 0s, 9 hits) will take up some games in the outfield. All three of them have lefty shifts and righty plusses on the boards, and might be useful for pinch-hitting in just the right situation.

1st We're reasonably confident in this, as there's a competent team here; but that being said, and despite our encomiums about management, we don't believe that the team will go much further. The Sensei doesn't think so either.



ELDERS of zion

The draft and the off-season was about gathering younger players for the next iteration. There is a somewhat younger core, and there's lots of potential talent to build around. This is clearly a team in transition.

Ages of players on the Zion roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 37: Choo
- 35: Watson
- 34: Blackmon
- 32: Jansen, Phegley
- 31: Cisnero, Mikolas, R. Perez, Wojciechowski
- 30: Adrianza, Gennett, Herrera
- 29: Bard, Bauer, Farmer, Floro, Haniger, Matz
- 28: J. Gray, Lorenzen, Mancini
- 27: Allen, Bundy, J. Taylor, Wick
- 26: Candelario, Duggar, Poche, C. Seager
- 25: Benintendi, Mercado, Munoz
- 24: Baez
- 23: Hiura

TQ: 22.0



2019 grand cayman HAVENS in review



Nowhere to go but up.

by Mark Bloom

2019 in review

Final Record: 51-111 (4th, Williams)

Yes, it was ugly, but ugly by design. A team torn apart for the first pick in the draft, it was on target until an inexplicable winning streak in October. The team ended up with the fourth-worst record in the league, still good enough in a deep draft. This is rock bottom; nowhere to go but up.

What went right?

The team actually won with some power bats, led by Gregory Polanco's team-leading .498 slugging, 32 doubles, 26 HR, and 93 RBI (on a team that lost 111 games!). Nine players hit 10 or more HRs, which is possibly the new normal.

On the mound, Kyle Barraclough managed 18 saves, and new acquisition Tyler Anderson won a team-leading 12 games. A. J. Minter turned in a solid 59 innings, striking out 64. Nick Pivetta struck out 223 in 202 innings.

What went wrong?

Let's start with a team .216 batting average and 5.39 ERA. The run differential was 619-965. The Havens scored only 543 earned runs all year.

Chris Archer continued to impress nobody with a 7.95 ERA, which doesn't begin to describe how awful he was. 235 hits and 64 walks in 154 innings gets closer.

While the hitters managed 480 walks, they also struck out more than 1,500 times, with six hit-

ters over 100 (led by Brian Dozier's 156). And Amed Rosario set a TBL record with 46 errors.

3 Things

1. *Riding out the Storm.* Boomer Wells knew this season was going to be bad. Many of the players on the roster were placeholders to soak up games and innings. But they did what was expected of them, and now, most of those placeholders are gone. In their stead are a few sure things and many, many young lottery tickets. While the team didn't suck enough to nab the first pick in the draft, they were bad enough to restock the roster, which was the point, after all.



Polanco: Power bat

2. *Youth, Youth, and More Youth.* A strategy to tear down and rebuild doesn't work unless you use the draft to restock with young players who may develop into the superstars of tomorrow. That's

exactly what the Havens management did. Whenever there was a choice between an older player, however useful, and a young prospect, Boomer Wells and Company selected the prospect, every single time.

3. *Hoping for the Best.* A roster full of young prospects guarantees exactly nothing. Not all of them will work out, and there are always unforeseen career-altering injuries, but the Grand Cayman Havens are now loaded with potential both at the plate and on the mound, and that's something no one would have said about last year's team. Next year's draft may finish off the rebuild.

grand cayman HAVENS

Mark Bloom (30th year)

In another year, the newbies will be in charge. Then there'll be something to see.



This will come as no surprise: The Grand Cayman Havens aren't very good. Second place in the Williams, this year, doesn't exactly put a team in the top echelon in TBL – while this team is unlikely to suffer 100 losses, it's still a work in progress.

What it *is*, though, is very young. Spreading out the cards and looking at years of birth, there are 18 of 35 – more than half – with dates from 1994 and after; Bill James' metrics used to say that a player would have his first peak season at age 27, which is ahead of these worthies. Youth does not always mean very talented, and because the game has changed so much, the peak years might start at 24 these days. But when the oldest player on the roster is 33, it's easy to see that the best is yet to come.

It's a good start. As was observed in the Year in Review at left, there were placeholders for the planned crash; and most of those guys have moved along. In another year, the newbies will be in charge. Then there'll be something to see.

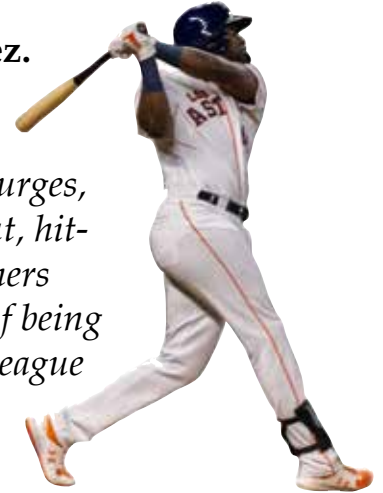
Pitching: 4.5
Better than last year, at least.

The 2019 pitching staff lived down to expectations, cruising to a 5.37 ERA and giving up close to 1,000 runs. This staff will be better, but still has deficiencies – lots of “learning opportunity” starts, no closer, and a pastiche of short usage pitchers who will take turns in the rotation. It's an organized mess.

ROTATION. The leading full season starter is rookie Max Fried (Grade 8 C+22 HR+16), who might be poised for a breakout season. He's left handed, which is always a problem in a world of

SNT: Yordan Alvarez.

In a year of offensive surges, Alvarez was a standout, hitting tape-measure homers and showing no sign of being intimidated by major league pitching. Expect a sophomore surge, not a slump.



Turnover Rate: 60%

Arrived: Yordan Alvarez, Ty Buttrey, Griffin Canning, Miguel Castro, Max Fried, Robbie Grossman, Josh James, Mitch Keller, Reynaldo Lopez, Gavin Lux, Nick Senzel, Nick Solak, Myles Straw, Luis Urias, Alex Wood.

Departed: Tyler Austin, Alex Avila, Danny Barnes, Kyle Barraclough, Alex Blandino, Keon Broxton, Tim Collins, Noel Cuevas, Marco Gonzales, Cameron Maybin, Logan Morrison, Hector Neris, Dan Otero, Yefry Ramirez, Jimmy Yacabonis.



Fried: Breakout

big lefty shifts, but he is a nice addition to the staff. So are his fellow rookies Griffin Canning (Grade 10), Reynaldo Lopez (Grade 6 HR-14), and Mitch Keller (Grade 1 C+15 HR+23); along with returning veteran Chris Archer (Grade 8 C-31 HR-24), and counting Keller's innocuous status, this group covers 127 of the needed times to toe the rubber. That leaves the remaining 35 starts in the hands of five other pitchers.



grand cayman HAVENS

Daniel Mengden (Grade 9 C-32 HR+24) is the best grade among the part-timers; he goes 9 times. Nick Pivetta (Grade 5 C-15 HR-24) covers 13 more; Alex Wood, an innocuous Grade 3 with a terrifying HR-55, gets 10 tries; and relievers Hunter Wood and Josh James get a few tries as well.

The quality runs out fairly quickly, and the starters – who are nailed to the mound through the fifth inning unless required to be removed – will get pounded.

BULLPEN. The song remains largely the same here. Many of the lower-tier starters are ticketed to help out with bulk innings in the bullpen, because there simply aren't enough available among the designated relievers.

The closer throws Very Hard and All Over The Place: Josh James (Grade 14*K C-62) has 61 innings, less his one presumably very short start. His



James: Throws hard

supporting cast is not very numerous: Miguel Castro (Grade 12* C-51 HR+16), Hunter Wood (Grade 11* C+25), and Ty Buttrey (Grade 10* C+13 HR-25) are the bulk of it, comprising 190 innings, supplemented by the remaining time provided by the starters as relievers.

Past that, it's the likes of Joe Ross (Grade 4 C-36 HR+26) and Alex Minter (Grade 1* C-56 HR+33). There is really no help.

This pitching staff is arguably better than last year's, but that certainly doesn't make it good. It'll be a long season of learning opportunities down in the Cayman Islands.

Offense: Mix and match.

7.5

The place to begin is, of course, the half season of the SNT, Yordan Alvarez (1-1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks+22). This is a huge, scary card, that is scheduled to play against righties. There are only 369 plate appearances, but careful use can get between 90 and 100 games of it. The card is so good it merits its own paragraph.

There are actually very few full time players on the Grand Cayman roster. Amed Rosario will be in the lineup every day (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 26 SSN for 29 SBA, L+5 R-3); so will Brian Dozier (1-5-6, 8 hits, 5 walks, L+4 R-3). It's otherwise mix and match. Brandon Lowe (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 9 13s, L-9) is good in spots for half a season; so are Clint Frazier (1-5-5-7, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6), Dominic Smith (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks), Jordan Luplow (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 5 walks, L+9 R-16), Tyler Naquin (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22), and Nick Senzel (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-4). Kyle Seager will play two thirds of the season at third base and has some power (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22).



Seager: Some power

Beyond that bewildering combination, Robbie Grossman (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks) will play part time in the outfield, Luis Urias (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks+42) will get reps in the infield, and Danny Jansen and Chance Sisco, both with 7 hits, will generate bountiful outs behind the plate.

In an environment where there's plenty of power in lineups around the league, this young, flexible offense will generate more than last year's anemic one, but it's unlikely to overcome good pitching. Still, Cayman management has lots of choices at least.

**Defense:
Adequate.**

4.0

There aren't many Fielding One performers on the roster, but the team should be Fielding Two at least every day. Danny Jansen (C9, Th+2) is top notch behind the plate (though Chance Cisco is a C7 Th-4 and clearly not), and both Brian Dozier and Brandon Lowe are 2B8s, though Lowe will mostly be playing first base (1B3) along with Dominic Smith (1B3). Amed Rosario is an SS8, and Kyle Seager is a 3B4. Luis Urias (2B7 SS7 3B3) is a definite downgrade.

All of the outfielders are OF2s with average or slightly better arms. Yordan Alvarez will only need to take his glove along when the team plays without the DH, which certainly could happen in the Williams.

This defense isn't going to extend innings, but it won't really shorten them either.

**Bench:
Some good news.**

2.5

There's actually some good news here. There are some useful players who may get regular starts or who may be available from the bench. Five guys who won't get a lot of regular playing time include: Tyler O'Neill (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks); Nick Solak (1-4-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, L+6 R-7); Gregory Polanco (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-5); Myles Straw (2 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks, 34 SSN with 9 SBA); and Gavin Lux (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-9 R+2). All of these guys will be useful either during months where semi-regulars must sit, or on the bench when Grand Cayman is close enough to use them (probably at home).



Lux: Future prize

Of these, Lux is the future prize. He has only a handful of games this year, but could step into the full time lineup as soon as next. And at age 22 he is scarcely old enough to buy beer.

2nd

Or possibly third, if the Northboro club performs better. There's very little chance that either team can catch the Zion juggernaut, such as it is.



This team is in some ways a continuation of last year's effort, transforming the roster from the previous edition to the one yet to come.

A quick glance at the list below shows just how young the team has become, and how many key players are as young as we've noted. This is the forerunner of a very exciting, very dynamic young team that should enjoy success. . . just not yet.

Ages of players on the Grand Cayman roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 33: B. Dozier
- 32: K. Seager
- 31: Archer
- 30: Grossman
- 29: Naquin, A. Wood
- 28: G. Polanco
- 27: Buttrey, James, Mengden, Pivetta, J. Ross,
- 26: Fried, R. Lopez, Luplow, Minter, H. Wood
- 25: M. Castro, Frasier, Jansen, B. Lowe, O'Neill, Rosario, Senzel, Sisco, D. Smith, Solak, Straw
- 24: Canning, Keller
- 23: Alvarez, Urias
- 22: Lux

TQ: 18.5

Grand Cayman HAVENS



2019 northboro PHOENIX in review



by Steve Stein

Things are not moving in the right direction.

2019 in review

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

Last year, we wrote: "we expect to be in a holding pattern this year." And that's about what happened. If the baseball gods were kind to us, we might eke into the playoffs. That didn't happen. We had a great July, and stood 6 games over .500 at the halfway point, but that still put us five games behind Warrenton in the division and four games back of Kansas and Hudson for a wild card. Then we fell apart, finishing 6 games *under* .500. Ah, well.

What happened in the 2019 MLB season didn't help us much – 80% of our starting pitching spent most of the year on the disabled list. Third base remains the wasteland it's been since Scott Rolen retired. The catcher position is threadbare as well, as stalwart Chris Iannetta looks to be moving toward retirement. We drafted to fill holes. Things are not moving in the right direction.

What went right?

Half of the offense was surprisingly good. Jesus Aguilar was the standout star of the offense – 41 HR, 111 runs scored, .286/.366/.569. Aledmys Diaz, Derek Dietrich, Jurickson Profar (50 doubles!) and Teoscar Hernandez all put up better than .800 OPS in nearly full seasons. Just looking at Ramon Laureano's card makes me happy. In 47 games he hit .298/.377/.530. I look forward to playing full seasons of this guy. Corey Kluber was very good as always, going 18-10. Jose Alvarado had 33 saves, while Joe Smith (1.76 ERA, 52 K in 46 IP) and Chris Devenski (2.34 ERA) were outstanding in relief as well.

What went wrong?

Half of the offense stunk. Brett Gardner hit .202. Marwin Gonzalez, Chris Iannetta, Mike Zunino and Dansby Swanson were all below .200. Once we got past the middle of the order, it was a black hole where baserunners went to die. The pitching was weak. 60% of our starts were by Jake Odorizzi (5.31 ERA), Tyson Ross (6.14), Nick Tropeano (6.72), and Mike Montgomery (7.82). 'Nuf said.

3 Things

1. *Healthy pitching. Again.* This was #3 on last year's list, and oh the humanity! All our starters except Odorizzi were injured. We have patchwork starters (3 innocuous) and 700+ innings of bullpen. It's going to be a delicate balancing act this year, and we'll have to rebuild our starting staff, beginning with Dakota Hudson.



Aguilar: Standout star

2. *The start of the Will D. Smith era behind the plate.* The catching this year will be split almost evenly between Smith, Zunino and Iannetta (probably his last year). If Smith develops as we hope, it'll solve the catcher position for some time.

3. *The infield is still muddled.* Swanson has emerged as the SS of the future. 2B and especially 3B are still unsolved, as Profar took a step back last year. Yandy Diaz might be the 3B solution, but that is far from certain.

northboro PHOENIX



Bob Jordan (21st year) / Steve Stein (18th year)

There's no crying in baseball.

Years ago, when the *Annual* was less nuanced, we took our late friend Don Mahley and his Council Squares to task, suggesting that going neither backward nor forward was going nowhere at all.

There are plenty of ways to build and plenty of routes to contend: there is no one formula (and if there was, presumably we would all use it). But it's clear that staying near .500 and drafting in the middle requires a little too much reliance on what Steve Stein calls "the baseball gods." They tend to be fickle.

But there's no crying in baseball. The 2020 draft has brought some excellent new pieces, and we think Northboro is going in the right direction. But this may still take some time.

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Yandy Diaz, Michael Feliz, Caleb Ferguson, David Hess, Dakota Hudson, Jorge Lopez, Will D. Smith, Cody Stashak, Jordan Zimmermann.

Departed: Brett Gardner, Koda Glover, Javy Guerra, Nick Martini, Gabriel Moya, Addison Reed, Tyson Ross, Joe Smith, Nick Tropeano.



SNT: Will Smith.

Northboro has been waiting for this problem to be solved, and the 25 year old has talent both behind the plate and at bat. He should be a part of the Northboro scene for some time to come.

Pitching: 5.0 Jekyll and Hyde. Mostly Hyde.

The pitching staff is a mess, though it's got some good names. Northboro made an offseason deal to fill in the missing bodies with, well, bodies; the bottom end of the rotation, and the bulk innings of the bullpen, are formed from this formless mass. As a result, there is a strong distinction between the Jekyll and Hyde parts of the staff, and unfortunately it's much more Hyde.

ROTATION. It starts well. There's a definite ace: Jake Odorizzi (Grade 13 HR+31), and a definite sidekick, rookie #1 pick Dakota Hudson (Grade 12 C-33 HR+16). Tyler Chatwood makes 5 starts as a wild Grade 13, giving the Northboro rotation 67 good starts.



Odorizzi: Ace

After Spahn and Sain, things go downhill in a hurry. There are 13 "opener" starts, and then 82 others from Mike Montgomery (Grade 5 HR-16), Jorge Lopez (Grade 3 HR-23), Jordan Zimmerman (Grade 1 C+34) and David Hess (Grade 2 HR-56; that should be painful). In these games, the bullpen will be called upon often. The instructions call for it early in the game – and it may be even earlier than indicated.

BULLPEN. The relief corps is deep, that's true. There are many choices, though there is no closer grade. Instead, that duty will fall to Tommy Kahnle (Grade 15"K). His assistants include a vast array of Guys: Michael Feliz (Grade 14* C-36 HR-23); Chatwood (Grade 13*

C-44 HR+25); Noe Ramirez (Grade 12* C+16 HR+15); lefty Jace Fry (Grade 12* C+23); Caleb Ferguson (Grade 11* C-54); and Ian Kennedy (Grade 10* C+24 HR+32). That's almost 350 innings plus the balance of Chatwood's innings (77 in total). Some of these will be used as openers, making the total somewhat less.

Then there is a quartet of bulk relievers. Former closers Jose Alvarado (Grade 9* lefty C-62 HR+45) and Chris Devenski (Grade 8* C+15 HR-15) and rookies Adam Cimber (Grade 9* C+15 HR+26) and Cody Stashak (Grade 7* C+62 HR+22) provide 180 additional innings.

For a rebuilding team this is a useful but unimpressive bullpen.

Offense: 7.0
Hit or miss.



Pederson: 2 1/2 true outcomes

We have carried over the picture and caption from last year, though Joc Pederson is better than last year (1-1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L-15) and strikes out far less – so it's really only 2 1/2 outcomes now.

He's joined by a very nice 3/4 season of Ramon Laureano (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 33 SSN for 15 SBA) and 54 games of SNT Will D. Smith (1-1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+42). Rookie Yandy Diaz (10-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L+5 R-4) has a good half season, as does his "cousin" Aledmys Diaz (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L-4).

There are some interesting cards that play regularly. Kole Calhoun has power (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22); Marwin Gonzalez has versatility

(1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22); Dansby Swanson (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, 26 SSN for 14 SBA), Chris Iannetta (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22) and Brandon Belt (3 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks) are useful.

Then there is the bearded lady poster child: Derek Dietrich (1-1-0-0, 6 hits, 3 walks+3 42s, L-11). It's hard to say anything about this card, as there are so few to compare it to.



Dietrich: Bearded lady

This team's offense is largely hit or miss. It gets on base a lot – walks, and a remarkable number of 42s – and has a great deal of power, which is quite common these days. But there are no cards with 11 hits and quite a few with 8 or 9, which suggests that if power numbers aren't rolled, the team will struggle against better pitching.

Fortunately, they play in the Williams Division, and that might make it an easier ride. The names are good, but some of the cards are simply deficient, at least for now.

Defense: 3.5
Has been better.

No accounting of the Northboro team on the field should begin anywhere other than right field, where Ramon Laureano (OF3, 37 arm) is a fixture, and will be for some time to come. The cannon is accurately represented in APBA; it may be the best outfield arm in baseball. His outfield companions are decent. Kole Calhoun is an OF3 (31 arm) and Joc Pederson is an OF2 (32 arm). Marwin Gonzalez (OF2, 34 arm; also 3B4 1B4 2B7) can play there as well.

In the infield, Brandon Belt (1B5) is excellent, as is Aledmys Diaz (2B8, also 1B4), but a lot of the time it'll be Dietrich, Gonzalez or Jurickson Profar (all 2B7s); Dansby Swanson mislaid his

SS9 and is only an 8 this year; and Yandy Diaz (3B3), when he plays, will be a drag on the team defense total.

Behind the plate, Will Smith (C7 Th-1) is the least proficient, while Iannetta (C8 Th-4) is a “catch, don’t throw” receiver. Mike Zunino (C8 Th+4) would be a good defensive replacement, but may have to start enough games that he can’t be a defensive replacement.

This area used to be a team strength, but was better in the past. This year, like the offense, it has strengths and weaknesses.

Bench: 2.5
Some more useful parts.

After having to wait for him to arrive, Jurickson Profar (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, 34 SSN for 10 SBA, L+6 R-3) has at least proved his worth – except that he has no regular position, and his card is a tick down from last year. But at least there’s plenty of him. The same is true of Jesus Aguilar (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22), whose breakout broke back in. Teoscar Hernandez (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, 10 13s) is another spare part that can be useful, but isn’t a lot better than what gets to start. Mike Zunino (1-0-0, 6 hits) is here for his glove, and Nick Martini (2 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks, L-14 R+5) is here to drive the bus.



Plenty o’Profar



Laureano: Cannon arm

Still, there are enough different looks that the club has the ability to start different combinations, so the roster is flexible. We give credit for that. That’s something, at least.



northboro PHOENIX

3rd

We’re not confident of this; depending on Grand Cayman’s struggles, they could actually finish second. But the *Annual* doesn’t predict a .500 record. This is a matter of waiting to see how things turn out for a number of players on the roster, and whether some of them are part of the long term or not.

Ages of players on the Northboro roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 37: Iannetta
- 35: Kennedy
- 34: Zimmermann
- 32: Belt, Calhoun
- 31: M. Gonzalez, M. Montgomery
- 30: Aguilar, Chatwood, Dietrich, Kahnle, Martini, Odorizzi, N. Ramirez
- 29: Cimber, Devenski, A. Diaz, Zunino
- 28: Y. Diaz, Pederson
- 27: M. Feliz, Hernandez, J. Lopez, Profar
- 26: J. Fry, Hess, Stashak, Swanson
- 25: Alvarado, Hudson, Laureano, W. Smith
- 23: Ferguson

TQ: 18.0



2019 warrenton GIANTS in review



The tank was empty.

by Jack Chapman

2019 in review

Final Record: 94-68 (1st, Williams)

In 2019, the Giants played over their heads for the first three months, going 42-17. They followed that with a wake-up tour (24-37 the next three months). The last two months the bounced back to post a winning record and clinched the division.

Having traded away much of their future to acquire Mike Trout and the players necessary to make a playoff run, the tank was empty. Many of the players were aging and injured. More than half the roster was uncarded. So, the aging players were dealt away to acquire some future (which they did in drafting Kyle Tucker) and fill the holes necessary to play a season.

What went right?

The Giants won their Division.

The offense centered around Mike Trout (44 HR, 106 RBI, 105 walks, .310/.446/.625, 16 stolen bases). David Peralta hit 24 HR with a .303 average, and Buster Posey hit .317. Matt Adams slugged 36. The team hit 224, fourth overall in TBL. The team outscored its opponents 861-668.

J. A. Happ led the pitching staff with a 19-4, 2.34 record, the best in his career. Zack Wheeler went 13-10, 3.09, and Hyun-Jin Ryu went 10-3, 3.23 in half a season, and Jon Lester went 13-10, 3.54. For a rotation full of #3 starters, the starters did very well. The bullpen didn't get a lot of work, but Jeurys Familia (2.58 ERA) was effective.

What went wrong?

Too much of the success of the team was centered on too few players. There were many empty at-bats; the bottom end of the rotation and most of the bullpen didn't really perform very well. Tony Barnette, the closer, went 1-5, 6.49 with 17 saves.

The club exited the playoffs after winning only 1 game. After a surprisingly successful season, the team was furloughed quickly, leaving the club in dire need of revision.

3 Things

1. *The 2021 Draft.* After trading away most of the talent on the roster – other than Posey and Trout, but including almost all of the 2019 pitching staff – Warrenton has a lot coming in the 2020 Draft, and will be picking near the top.

2. *Playing the games.* We are here because we like the game, even with a team that has its problems. If it's not fun, don't do it.

3. *The draft in 2022.* It won't all be fixed in one year, and management is under no illusions about that. Some of the lottery tickets selected in 2020 may work out, but if they don't, there will be plenty more to take in the future.



Happ: Career best

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Jack Chapman (12th year)

That's the way it goes when you earn your nickname.

In TBL you earn your nickname.

Before he won the World Series, Darrell Skogen was only nominally "the Guru." It was a couple of years of bringing the idea of trading and drafting to a new level that made Joe Auletta "The Prince of Darkness." The Sensei got his nickname by a depth of knowledge and capacity for analysis that put Rich Meyer in a class of his own. As for Daniel Dumont . . . the quest for a nickname goes on.

But Trader Jack has more than confirmed the title that he bestowed on himself. He is an important exponent of the Bounce; in his first two years with this team he went 96-66 and 47-115; the next three, 107-55 (the championship year), followed by 86-76 and 73-89, the longest stretch of non-extreme performance in the Chapman Era. Then came a 44-118 doormat season, and last year's 94-68 pennant.

This year, two-thirds of those guys have hit the road, and the team's going to have a rough time again. Much of that is due to trades; Mr. Chapman goes big when he acquires the players he wants (Trout, Posey), and big when he takes it apart (pretty much the entire pitching staff). One thing's for sure: this pattern will continue. That's the way it goes when you earn your nickname.

SNT: Kyle Tucker.

He hasn't gotten the hype lavished on Yordan Alvarez, but Tucker is a power-speed prospect who could make a major impact in 2020 and beyond.



Turnover Rate: 66%

Arrived: Scott Barlow, Kyle Barraclough, Buddy Boshers, Seth Brown, Taylor Clarke, Sam Coonrod, Ryan Cordell, Edwin Encarnacion, Zack Godley, Dee Gordon, Yusei Kikuchi, Tyler Kinley, Juan Lagares, Peter Lambert, Tyler Mahle, Martin Perez, Harold Ramirez, Gregory Soto, Chris Stratton, Anthony Swarzak, Trent Thornton, Kyle Tucker, Mike Yastrzemski.

Departed: Tony Barnette, Ty Blach, Shane Carle, Louis Coleman, Matt Davidson, Carl Edwards, Avisail Garcia, Jarlin Garcia, Adrian Gonzalez, J. A. Happ, Gorkys Hernandez, Dan Jennings, Erik Kratz, Jon Lester, Francisco Liriano, Dixon Machado, Justin Miller, David Peralta, Hyun-Jin Ryu, Denard Span, Zack Wheeler, Mason Williams, Steven Wright.

Pitching: 3.0 Do not be surprised.

Where to begin? Nearly every member of the 2019 pitching staff has disappeared. Instead, the team has a new group of pitchers. They are largely younger. They are mostly not very good. Do not be surprised at this.

ROTATION. A key offseason acquisition leads the starting staff: 26-year-old Trent Thornton (Grade 8 C-15), who has a full season of



Thornton: Key acquisition

starts. So does Yusei Kukuchi (Grade 4 C+16 HR-23). Taylor Clarke (Grade 7 HR-44) makes 15 scary starts, and Martin Perez (Grade 6 C-15 HR+16) and Tyler Mahle (Grade 6 C+23 HR-22) make some marginally competent ones to get through another third of the season.

Then it's City of Innocuous Toys: Gregory Soto (Grade 3 C-44 HR+15), and Peter Lambert (Grade 1



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HR-16) will take up the rest of the slack. The majority of starts will involve early calls to the bullpen. It's not a pretty sight.

BULLPEN. The relief staff is better than the starters, but that doesn't make it good. The top grade belongs to Sam Coonrod (or, as they call him out west, Coon-Rod); he has a whole 28 innings as a Grade 16* (C-54 HR+23). The bulk of the relief usage will fall on the shoulders of Tyler Kinley (Grade 12* C-62 HR+31), Zack Godley (Grade 12* C-25), Buddy Boshers (Grade 11* C-36 HR+14), Scott Barlow (Grade 11* C-41 HR+35), and Anthony Swarzak (Grade 10* C-33 HR-31). That's 240 innings of "middle relief", some of which will be available each month.

Jeurys Familia (Grade 6* C-62 HR+24) and Kyle Barraclough (Grade 5* C-46 HR-34), as well as Chris Stratton (Grade 3) and Soto will eat up

the rest of the innings. Because Warrenton plays without a DH, there may be pinch hitting for the pitcher if the team is in the game, so there will certainly be innings to eat.

Offense: Highs and lows.

6.0

Obviously, we start with Mike Trout. Trout, Trout, Trout: there isn't much about him that hasn't been



Trout. Trout, Trout.

said: there's power (1-1-0-0-0), speed (32 SSN for 13 SBA), and on-base (9 hits, 6 walks+42) ... and it appears as if the Giants have just about finished paying for the privilege. Getting to roll the dice (or electrons) for the best player in baseball for 3/4 of the season is the reward.

As a result of this, the rest of the team has been forced to scramble. There's other power in the lineup though: the resurrected Pablo Sandoval (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+4 R-2), Edwin Encarnacion (1-1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L+2 R-3) and Matt Adams (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks+22, 10 13s, L-5) each have a third of a season. So does Mike Yastrzemski, who turned in a pretty solid rookie card (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+3 R-2). The lineup will be the most dangerous if they can all get into it at the same time, which might be difficult.

The rest of the Warrenton offense is more pedestrian. The speed component is restricted to Trout and part-time leadoff hitter Dee



Gordon: Very fast

Gordon (2 0s, 10 hits), who's a bit up in years for a rebuilding club but is undeniably very fast (31 SSN for 27 SBA). Rookie Harold Ramirez (3 0s, 10 hits) is neither a power nor a speed man, but fills games more capably than either Juan Lagares (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+22) or fellow rookie Ryan Cordell (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-4). In the infield, there isn't much punch either: time is catching up with Buster Posey (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-6), Evan Longoria (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+3 R-3), Joe Panik (0-6, 0 hits, 3 walks) and Brandon Crawford (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks). Erik Gonzalez (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+6 R-5) doesn't do much of anything. For the days when Posey needs to sit, Jeff Mathis (6 hits) does less than nothing.

As usual, it should be noted that management's attachment to All Things Giants means that there is a little too much dependence on a roster that had a bit of a downturn in 2019. Expect some outbursts, but overall the team is going to have some trouble, particularly against the better pitching staffs. Since the team plays without the DH, there also will only be eight hitters.

**Defense:
Not what it once was.**

The Warrenton defense used to be quite good, but a number of players have taken a step back (or left the premises entirely). At the hot corner Evan Longoria (3B5) can still go get it, and Mike Trout (OF3, 33 arm) is capable in the outfield as is Juan Lagares (OF3, 35 arm) when in the lineup. The catching position is ably manned by Buster Posey (C8, Th-0) and less ably by Jeff Mathis, who is a C9 but has a Th-4.

That leaves the remaining outfield positions and the rest of the infield. Ramirez, Cordell and Kyle Tucker are all OF2s with mediocre arms; Adam Engel is an OF3 for defense. Joe Panik (2B8) is fine, but Dee Gordon (2B7) has drifted down to Fielding Two, as has Brandon Crawford (SS8). Erik Gonzalez is no better (SS8). The Kung Fu Panda is a 3B3 and 1B3, and will be a legacy 2B6 from time to time. Both Adams and Encarnacion are 1B3s.

They're not terrible by any stretch, but they're mediocre up the middle and can't stop opponents' running game.

**Bench:
Will get used.**

So much of the offensive roster is usage-limited that Warrenton actually has something of an advantage; at home, and to a limited extent on the road, it can tailor lineups and usage based on the opponent. That counts in the Department of Flexibility.

There are a few extra pieces that will also get used. Rookie SNT Kyle Tucker is extremely limited in usage but has a terrific card (1-1-6-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 35 SSN for 5 SBA). Seth Brown (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-10 R+3) is a situational pinch hitter, and Adam Engel (3 Os, 9 hits,

3.5

L+7 R-6) can occasionally be helpful. Warrenton can make good use of its bench when the occasion requires.



Longoria: Can still go get it

That's old school management, young whippersnapper, and don't you forget it.

4th

The pitching will kill them over 162 games, and while they can hit the ball a long way, they don't get on enough. There'll be some number of big innings, but not enough to avoid the cellar.

One final point: Warrenton *should* be looking forward to the next two drafts. They'll need them: this team is aging, particularly in key positions, as shown below.

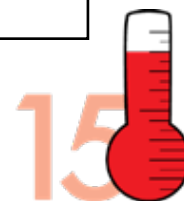
Ages of players on the Warrenton roster, as of 07/01/2020:

- 37: Encarnacion, Mathis
- 34: Longoria, Swarzak
- 33: Crawford, Posey, Sandoval
- 32: Boshers, Gordon
- 31: Adams, Lagares
- 30: Barraclough, Familia, Godley
- 29: Kinley, Stratton, Kikuchi, Yastrzemski
- 28: Cordell, Engel, E. Gonzalez, Panik, Perez, Trout
- 27: Barlow, S. Brown, Clarke, Coonrod
- 26: Thornton
- 25: Mahle, H. Ramirez, Soto
- 23: Lambert, Tucker

TQ: 15.0



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breakthrough

There are fringe players on TBL rosters right now who might be important players on rosters in 2019. Some of those names appear in the list below. Some won't make it, but last year's list included Domingo German, Ramon Laureano, Austin Meadows, Frankie Montas, Ryan McMahon, and Hunter Dozier, a pretty good list: and a good sized handful of other players in our honorable mentions.



1 Gavin Lux, 2B, Grand Cayman.

One of the youngest players in TBL, Lux is ready to take a key role for the Dodgers and the Havens.



2 Austin Riley, 3B-OF, Riverwoolf.

The best new player on the Sharks' roster, he may wind up in the outfield or at an infield corner. In the meanwhile he'll be hitting bombs.



3 Bo Bichette, SS, Strong City.

The power hitting shortstop is the second most hyped player on the Toronto and the Strong City roster.



4 Justus Sheffield, SP, Hudson.

He's ready to step forward and deliver as a power lefty. Hudson has high hopes for his long term success.



5 Mitch Keller, SP, Grand Cayman.

Grand Cayman is betting that the rookie campaign showed enough of what he can do that he'll be a star performer.



6 Brendan Rodgers, 2B, Brobdingnag.

The rich get richer: Rodgers doesn't even need to play this year, but the Barbarians have great hopes for his future.



7 Dylan Cease, SP, Maracaibo.

His electric stuff could make him the next big thing on Chicago's south side. Maracaibo's pitching revival gives him a big part.



8 Emmanuel Clase, RP, Strong City

A big part of Texas' payment for Corey Kluber, Clase throws 100+. The PED thing is troubling, but he'll come back strong.



9 Kyle Tucker, OF, Warrenton.

The power bat will find its way into the Houston lineup. Warrenton is looking forward to seeing it too.



10 Luis Rengifo, 2B, Maracaibo.

The 22-year-old is the youngest player on the Maracaibo roster, bringing a quick bat and a sure glove. The Rumrunners can be patient.

Honorable mention: Shaun Anderson, SP, Columbus; Austin Adams, RP, Knoxville; Kolby Allard, SP, Hudson; Franklin Barreto, 2B, Munich; Jaime Barria, SP, Rye; Seth Brown, OF, Warrenton; Corbin Burnes, SP, Midwest; Zack Collins, C, Melrose; Yonathan Daza, OF, Munich; Ty France, 3B, Rye; Trent Grisham, OF, Calusa; Austin Hays, OF, Brobdingnag; Jonathan Holder, RP, Calusa; Josh James, RP, Grand Cayman; Nicky Lopez, 2B, Whitman; Elvis Luciano, RP, Hoboken; Nick Margevicius, SP, Midwest; Ryan McBroom, 1B, Kansas; Daniel Ponce de Leon, SP, Hoboken; Nick Solak, 3B, Grand Cayman; Cody Stashak, RP, Northboro; Myles Straw, IF, Grand Cayman; Andrew Suarez, RP, Riverwoolf; Jose Suarez, SP, New Westminster; Lane Thomas, OF, Calusa; Charlie Tilson, OF, Riverwoolf; Sam Tuivailala, RP, New Westminster; Luis Urias, IF, Grand Cayman.

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. Nine of our top ten last year were top 2020 choices, including four of the top five. Four of our honorable mentions made it to round 1 as well. You be the judge. Thanks to Ray Murphy for his help.



1 Luis Robert, OF, Chicago (A).

A true CF with five-tool talent, he's already signed a long-term contract. There's a lot of swing-and-miss, but that's not disqualifying these days.



2 Wander Franco, SS, Tampa Bay.

Baseball's consensus top prospect. He'll stick on the infield long term, maybe not at SS. But the bat will play absolutely anywhere: think 35-HR power.



3 Sean Murphy, C, Oakland.

25 is a touch old for a prospect, but he's a catcher that checks all the boxes: strong defensively, with an offensive profile that projects both OBP and power.



4 Casey Mize, RHP, Detroit.

Future rotation fixture is more command-and-polish than an electric-stuff guy, but there's more than enough of both to make him a long-term front-end type.



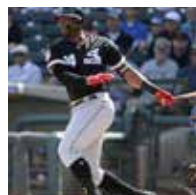
5 Michael Kopech, RHP, Chicago (A).

Teased absolutely electric stuff in 2018, before missing all of 2019 with Tommy John. But he's back and ready to jump to the top of the White Sox rotation.



6 Jo Adell, OF, Los Angeles (A).

Super-toolsy OF will arrive soon, bringing power and speed galore. He's only 20, so it might take some time, but a potential monster in the making.



7 Brendan McKay, LHP, Tampa Bay.

Two-way talent will make his primary TBL impact from the mound. Big lefty has the stuff to dominate big-league hitters, still learning how to use it.



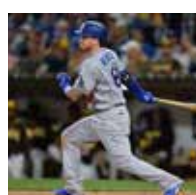
8 Carter Kieboom, IF, Washington.

Likely will be Anthony Rendon's replacement in Washington. Big shoes to fill, but solid across-the-board skills and versatility will make him a TBL asset.



9 Dylan Carlson, OF, St. Louis.

Power-and-patience profile in a precocious 21-year old switch-hitter, who can play all three OF positions. That's a TBL building block in the making.



10 Jesus Luzardo, LHP, Oakland.

Already an ace, his only limitation in 2020 was going to be workload. In a shortened season, the training wheels are likely off. Lots of double-digit grades ahead.

Honorable mention: Ian Anderson, RHP, Atlanta; Jazz Chisholm, SS, Arizona; Bobby Dalbec, 3B, Boston; Deivi Garcia, RHP, New York (A); Wander Franco, SS, Tampa Bay; Luis Garcia, IF, Washington; Logan Gilbert, RHP, Seattle; Ke'Bryan Hayes, 3B, Pittsburgh; Nolan Jones, 3B, Cleveland; Alex Kinloff, OF, Minnesota; Royce Lewis, SS, Minnesota; Matthew Liberatore, LHP, St. Louis; Nick Madrigal, 2B, Chicago (A); Matt Manning, RHP, Detroit; Dustin May, RHP, Los Angeles (N); Ryan Mountcastle, 1B, Baltimore; Nate Pearson, RHP, Toronto; A. J. Puk, LHP, Oakland; Julio Rodriguez, OF, Seattle; Adley Rutschman, C, Baltimore; Sixto Sanchez, RHP, Miami; Abraham Toro, IF, Houston; Evan White, 1B, Seattle.

editorial

by Walter Hunt

After fifty years of APBA (or more), I've watched the change in the game from an aesthetic and structural point of view. This walk down memory lane is a few strides short of Darrell Skogen's – he's got a little more time in service and a few more years of life than I do – but he'll find it familiar.

My first year was the 1969 season. There were no Master Game symbols, there were four expansion teams, and there were a few guys with more 9s than 8s. A few of my great heroes were still in uniform: Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, Carl Yastrzemski, Bob Gibson, Bill Mazeroski (primarily for the 1960 homer I am way too young to have seen live). The playoffs were simple: win your division and then beat the other division winner in the league. And yes, no DH.

XBs were paper, white with black numbers. They had their own lineup sheet. That's how it had been since 1964. And, of course, APBA only took checks, and you mailed it in and there was no one to answer the phone. Most of us came to it through ads in *The Sporting News* or *Street and Smith's*, and the arcane matter of reading the cards made us a select, geeky fraternity (though the term 'geeky' wasn't really invented yet.)

More importantly, the style was different then. Players who hit 30 homers and struck out 200 times didn't make it to the majors very often. The idea of a card with three 1s was absurd. Only Ruth had one (until Hank Aaron hit 40 in part of a season in 1973 – that card was an eye-opener!) Four power

numbers was a distinction. Five was a distant outlier. There were no singles in the second column either. You either had first column power or your 0s turned into extra-base hits. There wasn't even a 42 until Ron Hunt made it necessary, and in those days "42 - Hit By Pitcher" had to be printed at the bottom of the card, since it wasn't on the boards.

How times have changed. We expect four power numbers now, and a 7 on 22 (much less an 8 – horrors!) makes the card a relatively weak one, unless there are 12 hits or more. There are Three True Outcomes now, and no one bunts (except old replayers.) Few walks and many strikeouts are tolerated. (Look at the Mays card on the cover of this book: 5 14s, 3 13s, for a power hitter with two 1s.)

APBA tracks real life, of course; as teams expect their hitters to produce higher launch angles and exit speeds – that is, more power – the expectation is that every middle infield sub will have a 0 on 22 (even if the second column is a bit sketchy). As MLB goes, we go as well, and all we can do is draft what's there and put it on our rosters. The same is true of starters that go 5 innings, or sometimes 5 batters.

Is this a good trend? It's awfully hard to say. One thing is sure: you can pine for good old days, but you can't expect us to go back. Mays and Drysdale are in the Hall of Fame, but nothing like them is in the TBL draft. We will have to change as well.

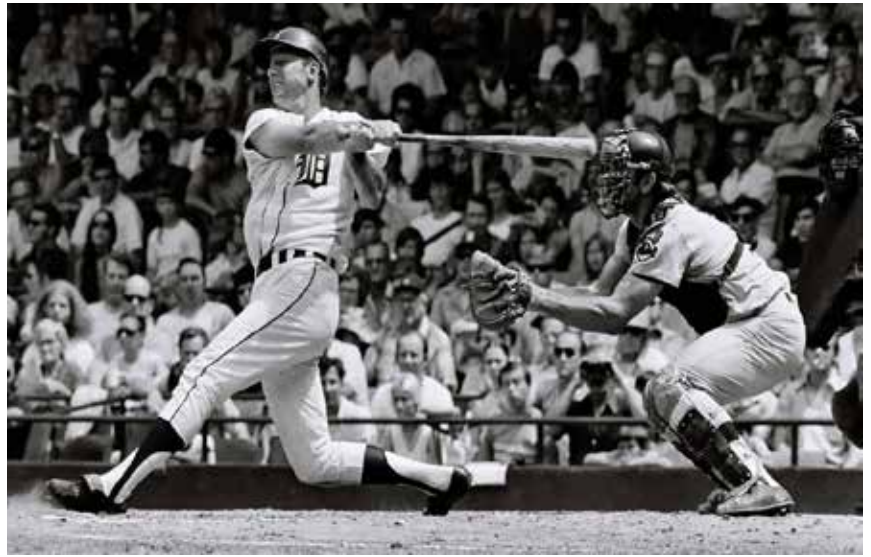
Have a great season.

number 6

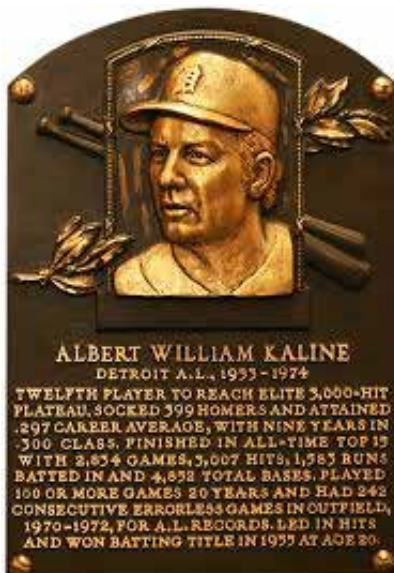
by Jim Dietz

So much pressure, the boy so young
A bonus baby, too
The kid could hit and with power
Shades of...yes, you know who

A batting title at twenty
No limit to his skill
Ten Gold Gloves, a great arm to match
Match Cobb? Of course he will



He did not though, modern dead-ball
Sapped his batting stats
Fans thinking wasted potential
Not tall mounds or dead bats



He still reached three thousand base hits
Clemente Award, too
He failed to reach immortal Cobb—
--at the park, this is true.

In life, now death, "Mister Tiger"
Role model for many
The legend lives within the game
So keep your eyes ahead.

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-ninth 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.