The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

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2022 Edition

Walter H. Hunt

Robert Jordan

Mark H. Bloom

Darrell Skogen

**All 24 Teams Analyzed
Using the T.Q. System**

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A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

by

Walter H. Hunt
Robert Jordan
Mark H. Bloom
Darrell Skogen

with contributions from TBL's managers

and extra help from Rich Meyer

the TBL baseball annual

Welcome to the 2022 *TBL Baseball Annual*. This is the twenty-eighth year of the *Annual* in the book format, and TBL's forty-first year – the thirty-ninth that we have on record. Our editorial team from 2021 is back and excited to bring you lots of new content. After a couple of strange years, we are – miraculously – looking forward to something like a normal year of MLB.

Our focus this year is on starting pitching – how it's changed during the last decade. By looking back ten years we can see how things have changed in the game, and how it affects our league. Each team writeup includes the team's "Big 3" ten years ago; there are plenty of familiar names there!

Our memorial section includes my tribute to one of the greatest players in the history of the game, Hank Aaron, who left us sixteen months ago. *Ave atque vale.*

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

Enjoy the *Annual* and enjoy the season.

Walter, Robert, Mark, Darrell
May, 2022

The T.Q. System

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

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

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

table of contents

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 2023; above the middle line is excess, while below means something's missing.
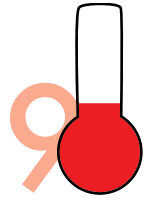
base

haves

MIDWEST. Four #1s (their own, Knoxville, Warrenton, Calusa); #2, #3.

MUNICH. Their own #1, three #2s, #3.
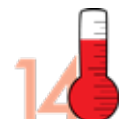
BROBDINGNAG, **HOBOKEN**. A #1 and two #2s.
NORTHBORO. Two #1s including their own.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN. No #1, three #2s and two #3s.

NEW WESTMINSTER. Two #1s including their own, no #2, their #3.

balanced

ZION, **RYE**, **GOTHAM CITY**, **MARACAIBO**.
Their own drafts, with higher #1s.

HUDSON, **GRAND CAYMAN**, **BLUE HILL**, **KANSAS**, **COLUMBUS**.
Their own drafts.

have nots

MELROSE, **WHITMAN**. Missing their #3.
RIVERWOOLF, **LAS VEGAS**. Missing their #2, but a higher #1.
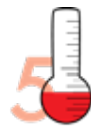
KNOXVILLE. Their #2 and #3.

all in

STRONG CITY. First pick is their #9.

WARRENTON. They have two #6s.

CALUSA. First pick is their #5.

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

TEAM (DIVISION)	OFFENSE	DEFENSE	PITCHING	BENCH	TOTAL
Brobdingnag (Ruth)	12.5	6.0	16.0	3.5	38.0
Melrose (Aaron)	12.0	3.5	14.0	3.0	32.5
Strong City (Clemente)	12.5	6.0	12.0	2.0	32.5
Warrenton (Williams)	11.5	6.0	11.5	3.0	32.0

The Solid Performers

TEAM (DIVISION)	OFFENSE	DEFENSE	PITCHING	BENCH	TOTAL
Knoxville (Ruth)	8.0	4.5	13.0	3.5	29.0
Rocky Mountain (Mantle)	7.5	6.0	11.5	2.0	27.0
Whitman (Clemente)	10.0	7.0	12.0	2.5	26.5
Hudson (Mantle)	9.0	5.0	12.0	3.0	24.5

The Transitional Teams

TEAM (DIVISION)	OFFENSE	DEFENSE	PITCHING	BENCH	TOTAL
Hoboken (Ruth)	6.5	4.0	11.0	2.0	23.5
Grand Cayman (Williams)	8.5	3.5	9.0	2.5	23.5
Columbus (Mantle)	8.0	4.0	6.5	3.0	21.5
Kansas (Aaron)	7.0	4.5	8.0	2.0	21.5
Blue Hill (Clemente)	9.5	4.0	5.5	2.0	21.0
Calusa (Aaron)	7.0	4.0	7.5	2.5	21.0
New Westminster (Mays)	6.5	4.0	7.5	2.5	20.5
Zion (Williams)	7.0	3.5	7.0	2.5	20.0

The Rebuilders

TEAM (DIVISION)	OFFENSE	DEFENSE	PITCHING	BENCH	TOTAL
Rye (Mays)	5.5	5.0	7.0	2.0	19.5
Gotham City (Mays)	6.0	3.0	8.0	2.0	19.0
Northboro (Williams)	6.0	4.5	5.5	1.5	19.0
Maracaibo (Mays)	6.0	5.0	6.5	1.5	19.0
Riverwoolf (Clemente)	7.5	4.0	5.0	2.0	17.5
Las Vegas (Aaron)	7.0	3.5	5.0	2.0	17.5
Midwest (Ruth)	4.0	4.5	4.0	1.5	14.0
Munich (Mantle)	5.0	4.0	3.0	2.0	14.0

International	286.0 (23.6 average)
National	274.5 (23.2 average)

Division Totals

Ruth (IC)	104.5	Aaron (NC)	92.5
Clemente (IC)	103.5	Mantle (NC)	91.5
Williams (NC)	94.5	Mays (IC)	78.0

manager roll call

Munich Marauders	Mantle Division	*Paul Montague*	39th year
Hudson Generals	Mantle Division	*Clay Beard*	38th year
Elders of Zion	Williams Division	*Richard Meyer*	38th year
Gotham City Batmen	Mays Division	*Anton Greenwald*	37th year
Knoxville Outlaws	Ruth Division	Pat Martin	36th year
Maracaibo Rumrunners	Mays Division	*Walter Hunt*	36th year
Brobdingnag Barbarians	Ruth Division	*Joe Auletta*	34th year
Hoboken Zephyrs	Ruth Division	Steve Powell	33rd year
Grand Cayman Havens	Williams Division	Mark Bloom	32nd year
Melrose Avengers	Aaron Division	Mark Freedman	29th year
Blue Hill Mudslides	Clemente Division	Mark Ludwig	27th year
Whitman River Rats	Clemente Division	Brian Hanley	27th year
Las Vegas Gamblers	Aaron Division	Paul Harrington	26th year
Northboro Phoenix	Williams Division	Robert Jordan	23rd year
Midwest Mongrels	Ruth Division	Darrell Skogen	21st year
Northboro Phoenix	Williams Division	Steve Stein	20th year
Strong City Statesmen	Clemente Division	Eric Sheffler	19th year
Rye Herons	Mays Division	Craig Musselman	18th year
New West Whiskeyjacks	Mays Division	Jim Jeatt	18th year
Columbus Jets	Mantle Division	Vic Vaughn	16th year
Kansas Koyotes	Aaron Division	Bill Schwartz	15th year
Warrenton Giants	Williams Division	Jack Chapman	14th year
Rocky Mountain Dragons	Mantle Division	Dave Jaskot	11th year
Calusa Indians	Aaron Division	Gordon Rodell	8th year
Riverwoolf Sharks	Clemente Division	Daniel Dumont	6th year

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

Hall of Fame managers in *Bold Italic*.

2022 computer pre-play   by Clay Beard

Another year, another manager. With COVID out of the picture, so is Buck Miller. Thank you for your sevice, Buck. Kingfish Boudreau is back in the driver's seat for all 24 teams.

Here's the setup again. I checked *Fatigue Only* under Fatigue and Injury Rules. I also checked all four of the options at the bottom; *Automatic AIM Subs*, *Automatic AIM Sub Platoon*, *Enforce BFP*, and that *No PR > 930* thing, which provides some innocuous usage. All players were active for the whole season. These settings basically allow the season to be played with usage similar to that of the MLB season with some innocuous help. Then I just pushed the button and played the season 10 times.

The won/loss records below indicate the average of the 10 seasons. As always take this with a grain of salt. Even the good computer managers do some strange things.

There are four, maybe five, dominant teams this year, but only one true doormat. Congratulations? Mission accomplished?

In the International, there's another battle royale this year. But this time Strong City replaces Blue Hill as Whitman's nemesis. Both will make the playoffs, but will battle all year for the precious bye. The Barbarians walk away with the Ruth, but Knoxville is a safe bet for the second wild-card, with a remarkably consistent shot-group.

That leaves only one spot open in the IC and that's the Mays winner. Rye looks to have the inside track over the WhiskeyJacks, but defending IC champ, Maracaibo, even has a shot despite averaging just 70 wins. I just noticed that with all the whiskey, rum and rye, Gotham City is the only sober team in this division … not that it helps.

In the National, There's a good division race in the Mantle, with Hudson feeling the heat from the Dragons. Rocky Mountain was the opposite of Knoxville, with a startling 34 game gap between their best and worst seasons. Warrenton walks away with the Williams and with the exception of one outlier season, Melrose does the same in the Aaron. The fun part in the NC, is that if you're anywhere around .500 you're in the wild-card hunt. I gave Calusa the second spot over Grand Cayman, on the basis of two more wins over the 10 seasons.

International Conference
TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Clemente	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
WHITMAN	105	57	--	116	95	5	5
STRONG CITY	102	60	3	110	94	5	5
RIVERWOOLF	66	96	39	72	58	0	0
BLUE HILL	65	97	40	71	59	0	0

Mays	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
RYE	83	79	--	92	75	6	0.5
NEW WESTMINSTER	80	82	3	85	73	2.5	0
MARACAIBO	70	92	13	84	60	1.5	0
GOTHAM CITY	65	97	18	73	56	0	0

Ruth	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
BROBDINGNAG	110	52	--	121	104	10	0
KNOXVILLE	91	71	19	97	84	0	9.5
HOBOKEN	78	84	32	84	60	1.5	0
MIDWEST	50	112	60	58	41	0	0

National Conference
TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Aaron	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
MELROSE	97	65	--	106	91	9	1
CALUSA	82	80	15	93	71	1	4
KANSAS	77	85	20	84	71	0	0
LAS VEGAS	70	92	27	86	59	0	1

Mantle	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
HUDSON	89	73	--	98	83	6	3.5
ROCKY MOUNTAIN	86	76	3	106	72	4	2
COLUMBUS	80	82	9	87	73	0	2.5
MUNICH	70	92	19	83	63	0	0

Williams	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
WARRENTON	105	57	--	114	96	9	1
GRAND CAYMAN	82	80	23	90	77	0	3
ZION	76	86	29	82	65	0	3
NORTHBORO	65	97	40	75	56	0	0

fractions reflect ties. Also see the note above on the Columbus division result.

* Highest number of wins recorded   ‡ Division Championships (in 10 seasons)
† Lowest number of wins recorded   § Wild Card appearances (in 10 seasons)

hall of fame enshrinees 2021

Adrian Beltre, 3B   *2000-2019*
Zion

For twenty years, Adrian Beltre was one of the best third basemen in baseball. A serious power threat – he hit 460 homers, drove in 1,844, and had 2,968 hits (among lifetime leaders). He won two batting titles, but his best season was 2005, when he slugged .663 and recorded a .319-60-162 line.

Ichiro Suzuki, OF   *2002-2018*
Pensacola/Oregon, Maracaibo

A consummate hitter, Ichiro made his greatest mark with the Rumrunners. He only won one batting title in his rookie year, but was a consistent high average hitter. He had 200 or more hits eight times, including seven straight years, recording 2,922 hits for a lifetime .301 average. He stole 379 bases. He was also a superior fielder with a rifle arm.

for your consideration

Left to Right: Joe Nathan, Andy Pettitte, Joe Mauer, Paul Molitor

Joe Nathan, RP   *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 sixth year of eligibility. He appeared on 14 ballots in 2021.

Andy Pettitte, SP   *1990-2010*
Amherst/Melrose, Richmond, Northboro, 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 tenth year of eligibility. He appeared on 13 ballots in 2021.

Joe Mauer, C   *2005-2019*
Brobdingnag, Strong City

One of the star performers at catcher, Mauer was a hitting machine, recording 2,135 hits and 425 doubles in his career, with a lifetime average of .305. His best season was 2010, when he recorded a .362-18-78 record, winning the batting title and ranking among league leaders in OBP and SLG. He also hit .397 in 2007, and was over .300 in nine seasons.

This is his third year of eligibility. He appeared on 11 ballots in 2021.

Paul Molitor, 1B-DH   *2000-2014*
Zion

A consummate hitter, Molitor was a .303 lifetime hitter, with six seasons above .300. His best season was 1988, when he hit .377 with 41 doubles and 28 homers; in 1992 he hit .353, with 66 XBH and a league-leading 236 hits. He was a great contact hitter, striking out only 720 times in 6,399 at bats. His popularity has spiked in the last few years.

This is his fourteenth year of eligibility. He appeared on 8 ballots in 2021.

Players with carryover votes: Joe Nathan 5, Andy Pettitte 5, Joe Mauer 5, Paul Molitor 3, Dennis Eckersley 2, Don Mattingly 2, Trevor Hoffman 2, Roy Halladay 2, Tim Hudson 2, Jamie Moyer 2, Sammy Sosa 2, Juan Gonzalez 2, Jake Peavy 2, twenty-nine players with 1.

*Mildly off theme, but not at all off topic – During this afternoon's Red Sox-Orioles radio broadcast, the announcers were reminiscing about a legendary 1960's matchup between Juan Marichal and Warren Spahn. The game went 16 innings, and both pitchers threw complete games. The announcers reported that Marichal threw over 220 pitches, and Spahn just over 200. Neither needed an extra day before their next start. (**Baseball Almanac** confirms the account and adds some details. The July 2, 1963 game ended 1-0 on a Willie Mays HR. The total game time was incredibly only 4 hours 10 minutes, or about 20 minutes longer than a typical Yanks-Sox regular season game in April. And one last ironic sidenote – the box score tells us Spahn intentionally walked Mays twice in this game. Shoulda made it three times . . .)*

Excuse me – I've got to go to the door and tell some kids to "Get off my lawn".

Science tells us the modern athlete is better. Nutrition, weight training, and a 12 month schedule of AAU games and showcases give pitchers bigger muscles, lightning quick fastballs, ungodly spin rates (though who knows quite where that comes from), and . . . the stamina of a quarter horse at Ruidoso Downs, New Mexico who's spent after 2 furlongs. But massive long term contracts make for scared GMs, who in turn transmit their fears down the wire to their managers.

In the meantime, sabermetricians calculate that today's starters have reduced performance in their third time around the batting order, and instead of using all that nutrition and science and game video to provide those pitchers with the skills to solve the problem – teams run for cover, and bring on a parade of completely interchangeable hard throwing wild middle relievers. What the modern starting pitcher

clearly is *not* better at is finishing what he started. And as a result, our GM decisions about roster construction and in game management are forced to change. I actually was about to end the last sentence with "on the fly" . . . but that wouldn't be accurate, because in fact this trend has been coming for a long, *loooong*, time.

Some Historical Perspective

To illustrate the "mega-trend", the following table (compiled by Bob Jordan of the *Annual*

	2022 Total SP	SP w/ 30+	SP w/ 20+	2012 Total SP	SP w/ 30+	SP w/ 20-29
Blue Hill	10	1	4	9	2	2
Riverwoolf*	10	1	3	7	1	4
Strong City†	8	2	3	5	5	0
Whitman	9	1	5	6	5	0
Gotham City	8	3	1	7	2	3
Maracaibo	8	3	2	8	4	1
New West	9	0	5	7	1	4
Rye	11	2	3	6	3	2
Brobdingnag	9	3	0	6	3	2
Hoboken¶	9	0	3	6	2	3
Knoxville	6	2	4	8	2	4
Midwest	8	2	3	7	2	3
Calusa§	10	2	3	6	2	4
Kansas	9	1	5	7	4	0
Las Vegas	6	3	3	6	5	0
Melrose	10	2	3	6	3	3
Columbus	7	2	2	7	3	1
Hudson	7	2	3	7	3	2
Munich	8	1	3	6	5	0
Rocky Mountain#	7	2	4	8	3	3
Grand Cayman	11	0	5	10	0	3
Northboro	9	0	4	7	2	3
Warrenton&	10	2	3	6	4	1
Zion	8	1	4	7	3	3
Total	**207**	**38**	**78**	**165**	**69**	**51**
Average	**8.6**	**1.6**	**3.3**	**6.9**	**2.9**	**2.1**

* *Richmond.*
† *Portland.*
¶ *Dallas: same GM, different town.*
§ *Greater Ohio.*
\# *Detroit: same GM, different town.*
& *Wakefield.*

staff) illustrates how starting pitching has changed over the past 10 years, by comparing TBL rosters in 2012 and 2022. It displays the total number of starting pitchers on each team's roster in each year. It also summarizes how many pitchers are shouldering a significant portion of their team's 162-game load by throwing more than 30 or 20 starts per year. *(Ed. Note: The 2012 "Big 3" for each team appears in the team analysis.)*

In 2012, one TBL club (Portland) required only five pitchers, as each of their starters recorded more than 30 starts. Nine more teams required only six SPs, and nine others only seven – so only five teams in the league had to use more than seven roster spots on starting pitching.

Oh, what a difference a decade makes. In 2022, there are now just two teams getting thru the season with six starters, and only three others are making due with seven. That's a drop from 79% to 21% in just a decade. Meanwhile, a total of seven teams now require 10 or more roster spots to fulfill their legal requirement of 162 starts. The number of rostered SPs has risen from 165 (6.9 per team) to 207 (8.6 per team), an increase of nearly two roster spots per club.

The table also shows that a big reason for this problem is the death (or at least a severe thinning of the herd) of the 30+ game starter. In 2012 there were 69 of these creatures, nearly three per team. In 2022, there were 38, barely more than 1.5 per team, with four teams owning none of these "unicorns". Basically, all of the lost 30+ game SPs have become 20+ game SPs, as the total in the two categories combined (120 in 2012, 116 in 2022) is basically the same.

However, while the increasing rarity of the workhorse starter has contributed to this problem, the rise of the "opener" has added a complication. As near as I could gather from a stroll through the 2021 pitching stats, it appears that somewhere in the vicinity of 225-230 games were started by an opener. That's roughly 7 games per pitching staff that basically fall out of the available pool of starts – because even if you use that same pitcher in that capacity, his job is only to go an inning or two, so it doesn't really solve the problem.

Where We Are Today – Senseimetrics

The table on the following page rates the values of the 2022 post-waiver pitching staffs of the TBL teams. To simplify my job, starts are assigned to actual starters or split-grade Ps unless a team doesn't have enough starts to reach 162 without using an opener. Bullpen ratings are based upon each team's top 450 relief innings (up from 400 last year), and the last column shows which teams have a significant excess of relief innings beyond 450 (more on this below. Please note – I did my best on this last column but the inning numbers may not be accurate. They will, however, at least indicate what teams have really deep pens.

General observations:
- TBL GMs as a whole don't want our starting pitchers to have bad control. 20 out of 24 staffs have an overall positive control rating, though there are obviously limits, as the high end value (3 teams) was +21.
- Starting staffs are basically homer neutral, with 12 teams positive and 10 teams negative overall. Again, no startling swings -- +21 is the high, and -16 the low.
- The average league-wide starter fatigue is 23.2. This means that the league average pitcher is fatiguing in the 6th – but that those below the average are vulnerable sooner. If your team has an above average fatigue rating, you're starting some low grade guys. Virtually all of the teams at the top of this category are among the bottom 10 average starter grades.
- Unsurprisingly, the grade variability between bullpens is significantly wider than the gap in starting staffs. Much of this, of course, is

"trying/not trying" to win. But even teams on the heavy rebuild are still looking to stock the rotation with an eye to the future.

- It's a given – relievers tend to be wild, and the good ones really limit HRs. Consequently, every team's bullpen leans *toward* poor control but positive HRs. It's just a difference of degree. Overall, only 4 team bullpens have positive control (vs. 18 negative), and only 2 bullpens have negative HRs (vs. 22 positive). The top nine pens (mostly contenders) have HR ratings of +25 or more, the most extreme variations of all.

Based on that 23.2 average fatigue, which is likely just going to keep getting worse, it's important to note – even 450 relief innings isn't going to be enough to get through a season anymore. If every starter is going 6 innings max, the low end of the innings requirement is probably 500, and those who are at 550, 600, or even more aren't wrong.

If they're on your roster, though, you need to make sure that your instructions are designed to take advantage of them. If you have a couple of weak starters, some of your long/middle men should have defined roles as caddies. If your standard instructions for the last 20 years have said, "I expect the starters to go at least five", *stop saying that.* Some of them (especially the guys with the 19-22 batter fatigues or worse) aren't making it that far. Similarly, make it clear that with the number of relievers you have, you welcome multiple bullpen switches *within* a single rally to keep the +5s coming.

	STARTING PITCHING			RELIEF PITCHING				Extra
TEAM	Avg. Gr.	CTL	HR	Fatigue	Avg. Gr.	CTL	HR	RP
Blue Hill	8.2	+12	-11	23.8	10.5	-26	+12	
Riverwoolf	8.6	+ 0	-16	23.3	8.4	-14	-13	
Strong City	8.1	+21	+12	24.2	10.5	-15	+25	207
Whitman	12.4	+12	+13	22.1	15.2	+13	+16	178
Gotham City	8.9	+16	+15	22.4	14.2	-14	+22	90
Maracaibo	7.9	+13	+ 0	24.0	12.0	-14	+22	
New West	9.6	+11	-12	22.4	13.1	+12	+15	
Rye	9.6	+11	+12	22.9	11.5	-11	+13	
Brobdingnag	13.1	+14	+16	23.3	18.1	-13	+35	122
Hoboken	10.2	+14	-14	22.6	13.5	-24	+12	
Knoxville	10.9	-12	-13	22.6	16.5	+16	+26	109
Midwest	6.7	-15	;-15	23.7	8.2	-13	+12	
Calusa	10.6	+15	+14	23.2	10.1	-11	+25	
Kansas	9.4	+15	-13	22.9	16.4	+16	+26	72
Las Vegas	9.0	+15	-15	23.8	8.6	-11	+21	
Melrose	11.0	+15	+21	23.1	16.9	+ 0	+31	
Columbus	6.5	+21	-13	24.3	10.5	+ 0	+13	
Hudson	10.4	+15	+12	22.7	14.5	-21	+14	
Munich	8.0	+21	-11	23.8	5.9	-16	-14	
Rocky Mountain	10.2	+14	+12	23.5	14.9	-21	+33	80
Grand Cayman	10.2	+16	+21	23.2	14.5	-26	+14	62
Northboro	7.2	-15	+15	23.4	11.1	-33	+12	
Warrenton	11.4	+21	+ 0	22.2	16.2	-16	+35	150
Zion	7.5	+12	+14	23.7	14.5	-22	+31	40
Average	**9.4**	**+13**	**+11**	**23.2**	**12.7**	**-14**	**+21**	

There's no way around the fact that your 36 man roster will have more pitchers than before – they'll consume 18 to 20 roster spots on most teams. However, I would argue it is not wise for us to copy the real world GMs who are carrying 13 or 14 Ps on the active roster and leaving their benches then. TBL rules only require reliever rest for very long stints (very rare) or pitching 3 days in a row, whereas real life managers are shying away from even using pitchers in back to back games. To me, it is hard to imagine that six or seven relievers can't sufficiently fulfill any team's needs during a given month, with the number needed increasing for teams employing one or more caddies.

That's all for this year. Hope y'all find this enjoyable to chew on. Oh, and PLEASE GET OFF THE LAWN!!!

pitching leaders: 2021

Innings Pitched

1.	WOODRUFF,Brandon	BRO	271.0
2.	LAMET,Dinelson	MAR	248.7
3.	BIEBER,Shane	HOB	246.7
4.	BAUER,Trevor	HOB	243.7
5.	DeGROM, Jacob	MUN	238.0
6.	DARVISH, Yu	MUN	234.0
7.	COLE,Gerrit	KNX	233.3
8.	HENDRICKS, Kyle	MUN	231.7
9.	RYU,Hyun-Jin	RYE	230.7
10.	SINGER,Brady	RYE	228.0

Complete Games

1.	BAUER,Trevor	HOB	16
2.	LAMET,Dinelson	MAR	15
3.	WOODRUFF,Brandon	BRO	13
4.	COLE,Gerrit	KNX	10
5.	BUMGARNER, Madison	WAR	10
6.	DeGROM, Jacob	MUN	9
7.	CARRASCO,Carlos	STM	8
8.	DAVIES,Zach	MID	8
9.	BIEBER,Shane	HOB	8
10.	Five tied with		7

Complete Games By Team

1.	WAR (83-79)	35
2.	HOB (89-73)	32
3.	MUN (62-100)	30
4.	BRO (70-92)	30
5.	LVG (108-54)	27

pitching leaders: 2012

Innings Pitched

1.	KERSHAW, Clayton	WHT	275.3
2.	VERLANDER, Justin	GC	267.7
3.	WEAVER, Jered	RYE	261.7
4.	HAREN, Dan	DAL	261.0
5.	HALLADAY,Roy	NBO	253.3
6.	SABATHIA, C. C.	DET	250.7
7.	WILSON, C. J.	DAL	249.0
8.	KENNEDY,Ian	POR	240.3
9.	LEE, Cliff	GOH	240.0
10.	PRICE, David	WHT	237.7

Complete Games

1.	HAREN, Dan	DAL	15
2.	WEAVER, Jered	RYE	13
3.	HALLADAY, Roy	NBO	12
4.	VERLANDER, Justin	GC	10
5.	KERSHAW, Clayton	WHT	10
6.	KENNEDY, Ian	POR	9
7.	SHIELDS, James	RYE	9
8.	Five tied with		8

Complete Games By Team

1.	RYE (98-64)	36
2.	WHT (116-46)	31
3.	DAL (93-69)	31
4.	GC (96-66)	31
5.	COL (81-81)	30

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 2022.

Blue Hill Mudslides:	James Kaprelian, P	*Columbus Jets:*	Jesus Sanchez, OF
Brobdingnag Barbarians:	Ranger Suarez, P	*Gotham City Batmen:*	Keibert Ruiz, C
Calusa Indians:	Jose Berrios, P	*Grand Cayman Havens:*	Alek Manoah, P

Hoboken Zephyrs:	Jose Suarez, P	*Knoxville Blue Thunder:*	Alex Kiriloff, OF
Hudson Generals:	Chris Flexen, P	*Las Vegas Gamblers:*	Cole Irvin, P
Kansas Koyotes:	Michael Kopech, P	*Maracaibo Rumrunners:*	Daniel Marsh, OF

Melrose Avengers:	Jonathan India, 2B	*New West. Whiskeyjacks:*	Luis H. Garcia, P
Midwest Mongrels:	Shane McClanahan, P	*Northboro Phoenix:*	Kyle Isbel, OF
Munich Marauders:	Jared Kelenic, OF	*Riverwoolf Sharks:*	Wander Franco, IF

Rocky Mountain Dragons:	Brandon Belt, 1B	*Warrenton Giants:*	Trea Turner, IF
Rye Herons:	Jake Meyers, OF	*Whitman River Rats:*	Liam Hendriks, P
Strong City Statesmen:	Nick Castellanos, OF	*Elders of Zion:*	Alejandro Kirk, C

commissioner's report

by Ray Murphy

Funny thing about this league: for all of its community, stability, and durability, its ability to survive and thrive onto the doorstep of a fifth decade now, there is one glaring single point of failure that poses periodic threats to the survival of this little enterprise.

I'm speaking, of course, of Major League Baseball.

This past winter/spring's shenanigans related to the Collective Bargaining Agreement (I liked to refer to it as a foodfight, just to highlight the futility and juvenile behavior involved, not to mention the egregious misuse of resources) was a reminder that TBL is the equivalent of a piece of plankton caught in the wake of a shark cruising the ocean floor: we depend on the shark's survival for our own. While that's usually a good bet, our particular shark has a habit of making stupid, avoidable, unforced errors that periodically threaten its survival.

Of course, since we've <*gestures around*> seen a few things over the past five decades, there are very few new problems in these parts, just repeats of old ones. Indeed, we learned in 1994 how to pro-rate MLB stats to our full season rates: it's not often that this bit of trivia is needed in everyday life, but to this day I can tell you that 114/162 is .703 or 70.3% of a full season. We played back that routine just last year, of course, allowing us to hit the "Yes" button when prompted "Cancel Pandemic? Y/N" in the TBL universe. I'm sure all of you can quickly shout out that 60/162 Is .3703 or 37%, right?

Truth is, these kinds of adjustments aren't quite as easy as I'm making them sound. There are always wrinkles and gotchas, special cases and unintended consequences. And there's also a loss of goodwill and trust: not among our membership, but between us and the game

that we base our game on. Sure, the pandemic wasn't MLB's fault. Maybe they didn't cover themselves in glory in their attempt to reboot the 2020 season over that summer, but they did eventually get it done.

But this spring was entirely different. The very idea that they could even entertain, even flirt with, disrupting the 162 game season for the second time in three years, was just so utterly appalling to me. No lie, it absolutely ruined my winter. It was all just so deeply offensive to me, and almost entirely because of the impact on the rest of the ecosystem around the shark. Our league. My other leagues. My website. Ballpark workers. The restaurants around the ballparks. Spring training communities. Absolutely nobody involved cared about any of those things.

But, of course, the two sides worked it out, just in time to save our summer of 162 games. A couple of months later, I don't think about it much. But I haven't totally forgotten how I felt for those 99 days. I have an old friend who totally swore off baseball after 1994. For about 27 years, I thought he was crazy. I still mostly think that, but I empathize a little more now. And next time around, I'll probably empathize even more than I do today.

The good news, though, is that we're guaranteed 162 games/year for the next five years. (Shhh, let's not discuss the possibility of COVID-26 here). And that's a pretty good thing: no new fractional conversions for us to memorize for at least five years. Let's resolve to enjoy the good times, and may they continue to roll.

Good luck to all this year!

– Commish

Everybody Plays

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Whitman*	113	49	.698	—
Blue Hill†	100	62	.617	13
Strong City	73	89	.451	40
Riverwoolf	46	116	.284	67

Lost to Midwest in the Conference playoff.
† Lost to Hoboken in the Wild Card.

We were mostly right about the level of competition in the Clemente in 2021, but for a swoon by the Statesmen. Whitman had a great season and Blue Hill won 100 games for the first time.

This year Blue Hill's down a notch, but *Whitman* is still competitive; still, we think that *Eric Sheffler*'s **Strong City Statesmen** have the stuff to win a tight race. There's above average pitching at the top of the rotation and the bullpen, and there is some serious offense that should bludgeon lesser pitching staffs.

Still, Whitman has been there before and the *River Rats* will be there again. It's the usual formula: strong pitching and a deep, powerful lineup will carry them far, perhaps far into the playoffs (even if *Brian Hanley* don't win the hotly-contested pennant as he has so many times before.)

Mark Ludwig's **Blue Hill Mudslides** had a pretty good year last year, but didn't get past the Wild Card round. They're going to have a tougher go of it in 2022, especially with the pennant race taking place over their heads. The pitching is suspect, and despite a few outstanding cards, there may be some trouble scoring enough runs. Still, they shouldn't be completely discounted, and will win some games.

Daniel Dumont's **Riverwoolf Sharks** are going to lose a fair number of games this year, but fewer than last year and fewer than the year before. Wander Franco joins a core of younger, dynamic players that are part of the group of Guys We Like. We are really remarkably unsnarky about their long term success.

Clemente Division

Vlad Guerrero Jr.,
Strong City

1. **Strong City**   **32.5**
2. **Whitman**   **31.5**
3. **Blue Hill**   **21.0**
4. **Riverwoolf**   **18.5**

2021 strong city STATESMEN in review

This club is built to last.

2021 in Review
Final Record: 73-89 (3rd, Clemente)

Final Jeopardy answer: Eric Sheffler, Bob Jordan, Steve Stein, Brian Hanley, Jack Chapman, Darrell Skogen, Ray Murphy, Anton Greenwald.
Answer in the form of a question: Who are the current TBL members who have won 1 – and only 1 – TBL championship?

Eric Sheffler won his title in 2018 when he fielded an absolute road grader – a 112 win team that led the league in runs and ERA. By September of that year, he was already selling off pieces on his way to a 49-win 2019 season. The Statesmen have been rebuilding ever since.

What went right?

In 2021, the hitters were holding the wrong end of the bats but the pitching was playoff ready. Carlos Carrasco and Zack Wheeler won 15 games apiece and had 15 complete games between them. Michael Pineda (2.34 ERA) and Taijuan Walker (3.11 ERA) were also excellent performers out of the starting rotation. The bullpen boasted Cam Bedrosian and his 0.85 ERA.

Wheeler: Playoff ready

What went wrong?

Strong City just flat-out didn't hit. They scored only 634 runs – 20th in TBL. Vlad Guerrero Jr. flashed potential with 27 homers and 69 XBH, but his .303 OBP was a symptom of the illness suffered by the entire club. We should note that part time catcher Kevin Plawecki hit .340 last year – a phenomenon that will never, ever happen again.

3 Things

1. The Hitter Bus Arrived. The kiddos who struggled mightily last year have matured into a nice hitting attack. Vlad is just a beast and Bo Bichette and friends are back with full season cards that will make the Statesmen strong contenders in 2022.

2. Wheelin' and Dealin'. There are a number of managers in TBL that are famous for trading anything that is not firmly bolted to the floor – Trader Jack, The Prince of Darkness, and the Riverwoolf Gambler are three that come immediately to mind. But Mr. Sheffler takes a back seat to no one when it comes to moving bodies all over the league.

Exhibit A: How about practically his entire pitching staff? Strong City has 21 pitchers on its 2022 roster. Five of them were drafted or picked up on waivers. The other 16 were acquired by trade. The highest draft pick spent on any pitcher on the current roster is the 2019 #3 used on Jordan Hicks, who is uncarded.

3. They're here to stay. Of the 36 players on the Statesmen roster, 13 are over 31 years of age. More importantly, the core of the team – Vlad, Bichette, Griffin Canning, Emmanuel Clase, Tanner Houck – are in their mid 20s. This club is built to last.

strong city STATESMEN

Eric Sheffler (19th year)

This is the time.

The 2021 campaign turned out to be much more about rebuilding than about contending, as the Clemente had two top-notch contenders. Fortunately, there was value in acquiring players like Randy Arozerena and Tanner Houck – even though they could have been interpreted as contender moves, they also have value for an actual contender.

There is no doubt, of course, that this year's edition of the Statesmen is exactly that. The top end of the starting pitching is solid, the bullpen has some great talent – and these boys can hit and hit for power. There's even some speed. The buildup has come at the cost of some youth. A few of the key players are *very* young, like Guerrero, Bichette and Clase; but the team is preponderantly *mature*. There is no draft in 2023 (and we mean *none*: Mr. Sheffler can fetch snacks until the 9th round). The time to contend is now.

Pitching: 12.0
Above average.

In the world of 2022 baseball, the key to pitching is hard throwing and relief in depth. The top starters and relievers on the Statesmen fit the hard-throwing description, and there are many relievers. This is an above-average staff.

**SNT:
Nick Castellanos.**

The big power card in the middle of the order arrived via trade with Hoboken. He will make a huge impact on opposing pitching.
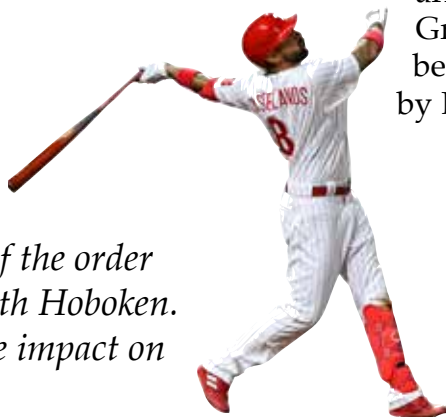
Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Tejay Antone, Chris Bassitt, Brad Boxberger, Griffin Canning, Nick Castellanos, Austin Hedges, Keynan Middleton, Adam Ottavino, Spencer Patton, Phillips Valdez, Austin Wynns.

Departed: Jo Adell, Scott Alexander, Cam Bedrosian, Mike Fiers, Leury Garcia, Tim Lopes, Andrew Miller, Daniel Norris, Isaac Paredes, Sergio Romo, Justin Upton.

ROTATION. There's a new ace at the top: Zack Wheeler (Grade 13 C+31 HR+33, 32 starts, fatigue 27). He's a front line starter straight out of the past. The second man, Chris Bassitt (Grade 13 C+24 HR+25) is almost as good but has a slightly lower fatigue;

Wheeler: New ace

Tanner Houck, a hard thrower, has a nice grade and peripherals (Grade 12 C+15 HR+43) but only a 19 fatigue, so he's a 4-5 inning man. This trio goes out 72 times. Michael Pineda (Grade 8 C+35, 21 fatigue) adds 21 more good starts.

Then things get interesting. As the instructions note, the rest of the starts are made by "other arms who have the starts we need to be legal." Griffin Canning (Grade 6 C-26 HR-32) is the best of the rest, but there will be a lot of starts by Erick Fedde (Grade 3) and Carlos Carrasco

Big 3, 2012 (Portland Possum):
98 starts

Matt Cain (Grade 13)
Gio Gonzalez (Grade 14)
Ian Kennedy (Grade 13)

strong city STATESMEN

(Grade 2 HR-33). These pitchers are to function as "openers" and will retreat to the showers as soon as they have any sort of trouble. This is very 2022: instead of having more guys who at least have the staying power of the top end of the rotation, they're saying the quiet part out loud. The expectations for the bottom end are intentionally low.

BULLPEN. But there's a solution. The relievers are numerous, and headed by a talented top end. The big closer is Emmanuel Clase, and boy howdy is he big (Grade 20* C+33 HR+54, 70 innings). His key setup guy is Luke Jackson (Grade 19* C-31 HR+24, 64 innings). That's the 8th and 9th inning if everything goes right. There are 60 innings of spot relievers to go with them: lefty Drew Pomeranz (Grade 18* HR+32) and righty Tejay Antone (Grade 23* C-25 HR+24). Don't blink or you'll miss them.

Clase: Boy howdy

Middle relief belongs to a trio of veteran relief pitchers: Brad Boxberger (Grade 15*) and Grade 14* Will Smith and Lou Trivino. Only the latter has any peripherals (C-32 HR+41). There are just over 200 innings between them. Then there are the affectionately-named "Caddy Crew" – six additional relievers with grades between 8* and 11* who have 300 more innings total. They'll be rescuing the low end of the rotation and filling in bulk innings. The pitching coach will have carpal tunnel syndrome by September.

Offense: 12.5
Mighty fine.

There are some mighty fine cards in the Strong City lineup. Bo Bichette, in his sophomore year, is the whole package (1-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, 26 SBA with 35 SSN). He'll play every day, yielding only when defense is called for. He will score a lot of runs, driven in by the very scary Vlad Guerrero (1-1-5-6, 11 hits, 4 walks) and Nick Castellanos (1-1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks). Yuli Gurriel (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22) is another dangerous card, and Adam Frazier (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 15 SBA with 26 SSN) is equally capable.

Things get interesting after that. Nolan Arenado had an off year at the plate (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+5 R-3) – that's an "off year" for him. Randy Arozarena isn't quite the monster he was, though he's still useful (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, 30 SBA with 26 SSN). David Peralta (6-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) gets every day at bats. Catcher is a mixed bag: Yasmani Grandal is a borderline Bearded Lady (1-1-6, 8 hits, 8 walks, 6 13s, L+4 R-3) for half the season, while Austin Hedges (1-6, 7 hits, 2 walks) is there to catch.

This offense will rake – and on days when double numbers predominate, they will score bunches and bunches of runs.

Defense: 6.0
A good fielding team.

There a number of high points in the field for the Statesmen. Though he's not a 3B6, among the rarest of ratings, Nolan Arenado (3B5) is still the best at the hot corner; his picture on the opposite page is an evergreen – we show it most every year. He's joined in Fielding One by Adam Frazier (2B9) and Yulieski Gurriel (1B5), as well as Randy Arozarena (OF3, 31 arm) and David Peralta (OF3, 32 arm), and Grandal (C8, Th-2) and Austin Hedges (C9, Th+1) behind the plate.

Bichette: Whole package

Bo Bichette (SS8) is a Fielding Two out-

lier in the infield, though Kevin Newman (SS9) is available for late inning defense. Vlad Guerrero (1B3, 3B3) fields like a DH, which means that Nick Castellanos (OF1, 31 arm) has to play the field most days. There's an OF2 (Mauricio Dubon) to carry his glove, but his bat will keep him in as much as possible.

Arenado: This picture is evergreen

This is a good fielding team. There's even a big catching arm (Austin Wynns, C7 Th+6, when he can make the roster). They will catch most balls, most days.

Bench: 2.0
Not as much needed.

The upside to having a starting lineup with full-season regulars is that there isn't a huge need for a bench. Most of the starting players don't have a need to be replaced – and Strong City management won't want to replace them. Catcher is a platoon, as Grandal can only play 93 games; Austin Wynns (C7 Th+6, 1-6, 7 hits; his error number is on 25, which is just weird) is a spare wheel. There's also Kevin Plawecki (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, C8 Th-4), but he's equally an extra.

In addition to Kevin Newman (SS9 2B7, 9 hits, 33 SSN) there is a small amount of usage for Raul Mondesi (3B4 SS8, 1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, 10 13s, 16 SBA with a 35 SSN), a very useful bench player. Mauricio

Mondesi: Useful but limited

Dubon (OF2 SS8 2B7 3B3), 32 arm, 1-6-0, 9 hits, 26 SSN) is here to carry Castellanos' glove and to occasionally pinch-run.

It won't be an easy road: Whitman has been here many, many times before and Blue Hill and even Riverwoolf have some game.
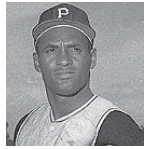
The strategy to victory depends on the use of the bullpen and the potent middle of the offense. Mr. Sheffler has bet the entire farm on the success of this strategy, as there's no way to improve it (and it's unclear, short of acquiring a full time boss catcher, or one more strong starter, what could be done). Guerrero and his friends have to rake; Wheeler and his friends have to go 5-6 at least; and the defense has to catch balls (and Castellanos has to avoid them). This is the time.

Ages of players on the Strong City roster, as of 07/01/2022:

39: Romo
38: Y. Gurriel
36: Ottavino
35: Carrasco
34: Boxberger, Patton, D. Peralta
33: Bassitt, Grandal, Pineda, Pomeranz
32: Lugo, W. Smith, Wheeler
31: Arenado, Plawecki, Wynns, Zimmer
30: N. Castellanos, Frazier, L. Jackson, Trivino
29: Fedde, Hedges
28: Antone, Middleton, Newman
27: Arozarena, Dubon
26: Canning, Houck, Mondesi
25: J. Hicks
24: Bichette, Clase
23: Guerrero

TQ: **32.5**
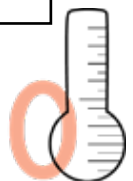
2021 whitman RIVER RATS in review

When you go 113-49, lots of things have to go right.

2021 in Review
Final Record: 113-49 (1st, Clemente)

Brian Hanley's Whitman River Rats have been the most successful franchise in TBL in the last decade. Since drafting Clayton Edward Kershaw in the 2009 draft, they have won 100 games or more in 8 seasons, and at least 96 wins in 10 of the last twelve years – an absolutely amazing accomplishment. That run included four World Series appearances and the 2019 TBL title.

In 2021, Whitman set a team record when they won 113 in the regular season to steamroll the Clemente by 13 games. But their season ended with a thud when they got swept by Midwest in the divisional round – the second year in a row they suffered a first round sweep.

What went right?

When you go 113-49, lots of things have to go right. The starting rotation of Kershaw, Wainright, Snell and Lynn won 68 games between them. Codi Heuer, a Grade 23* closer, had 52 saves, a 1.28 ERA and allowed 2 homers in 63 innings.

On the hitting side, Jose Ramirez was pretty good - .308/.398/.642 with 48 homers, 168 RBI and 141 runs scored. Ramirez had help from everyone – Whitman scored 916 runs, second in TBL to Warrenton.

Ramirez: Pretty good

What went wrong?

The only thing that went wrong was the playoff faceplant against plucky Midwest. The Dawgs went on to take powerful Maracaibo to seven games in the International Conference championship.

3 Things

1. No mortgaging the future. Brian Hanley is very careful – and very accurate – with his draft picks. Typically, he ends up keeping his own early picks and using other means to patch holes in his contenders. There are 11 players on this year's team that were taken either in the first or second rounds of the TBL draft with their Whitman's own picks. In 2023, Whitman once again has their own first and second round picks.

2. Time is undefeated. There are 21 players on this club listed in the instructions as 30 years old or older. They include stalwarts like Kershaw (34) and catcher Yadier Molina (39).

3. New Pretender to the throne. Whitman has seen many teams move forward in efforts to win the Clemente Division from them over the last decade. Last year, Blue Hill had a terrific 100 win season but finished a distant second. This year, the Statesmen are the next team up to challenge the River Rats. This race will be close.

whitman RIVER RATS

Brian Hanley (27th year)

The formula is the same.

We sometimes wonder here at the *Annual* if Mr. Hanley grows as tired of reading the same thing every year. We are professionally obliged not to tire of writing it.

Whitman, since it reached contention at the dawn of its existence, could always pitch and most of the time could catch the ball. Success for the team generally depended on whether they could hit as well. This year, like some years, they certainly can, and will be competing for the Clemente and prizes beyond.

The formula is, needless to say, the same.

Pitching: 12.0
Very solid, top to bottom.

The Rats are always strong on the mound. We say this every year, of course, though the names change (gradually: look at the inset above, and there's Clayton Kershaw.) The rotation, like most in TBL, takes eight pitchers to fill (plus one Griffin Jax start in November); there are more than 600 useful innings in the bullpen, spread among ten pitchers. They'll carry the team most days, though it'll be a busy time for the Whitman field manager.

SNT:
Liam Hendriks.

A nice addition to the bullpen depth. The HR rating isn't the best, but he'll bridge the gap to the closer.

Big 3, 2012:
98 starts

Clayton Kershaw (Grade 16)
David Price (Grade 12)
Matt Garza (Grade 10)

Turnover Rate: **19%**

Arrived: Riley Adams, Alcides Escobar, Liam Hendriks, Darwinzon Hernandez, Griffin Jax, Max Schrock, Drew Steckenrider.

Departed: Shogo Akiyama, Mike Foltynewicz, Brad Miller, Adam Ottavino, Sam Selman, Ross Stripling, Dan Winkler.

ROTATION. The best grade available is Drew Rasmussen (Grade 21 HR+36); he has 10 starts but only a 15 fatigue. The ace, again, is instead Lance Lynn (Grade 15 C+21 HR+16). His #2 is the ageless Adam Wainwright (Grade 12

Lynn: Again the ace

C+26 HR+21), with further help from Nate Snell (Grade 12 C-52), Jose Urquidy (Grade 12 C+34 HR-16) and Kershaw (Grade 11 C+36). There are 129 starts among these five. Lynn has a 23 fatigue, Wainwright 25; the other three are 21 or 22, so they are all unlikely to go deep.

The remaining starts belong to Chad Kuhl (Grade 9 C-46, 23 fatigue) and Joey Lucchesi (Grade 8, 17 fatigue). This rotation has no real bad starts.

BULLPEN. To support the solid, but limited, rotation, Whitman sports a deep bullpen. It's headed by a new closer: Kendall Graveman (Grade 21* HR+43, 56 innings). Almost as important are the guys who are charged with getting Whitman from starter to closer, led by two Grade 17*s: Drew Steckenrider (C+25 HR+34, 68 innings) and Liam Hendriks (C+52 HR-21, 71 innings). The key lefty is rookie Darwinzon Hernandez, clearly the very best Darwinzon in baseball (Grade 15* C-62 HR+16, 40 innings.)

Behind those worthies are a fleet of other relievers, who surprisingly don't have Whitman-traditional bad control – other than Jake Diekman (Grade 14* C-52). Luis Cessa (Grade 14* C+16 HR+33), Tyler Clippard (Grade 12* C-15 HR+15), Yusmiero Petit (Grade 10* C+43), Rasmussen (Grade 9* HR+36), and Codi Heuer (Grade 8* C+15 HR+22). Emilio Pagan, once a top closer, is a scary bulk reliever (Grade 8* C+21 HR-46). There are almost 400 innings among the group, and they will likely get used.

This is a good staff, very solid from top to bottom. They're a fair match for the rival Statesmen, and we think they're very close.

Offense: 10.0
These guys can hit.

The River Rats put out a very solid lineup, with three cards in the heart of it: veterans Paul Goldschmidt (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, 12 SBA with a 35 SSN, L+7 R-3) and Jose Ramirez (1-1-4-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, 31 SBA with a 33 SSN) and second-year man Ryan Mountcastle (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22). They'll generate a lot of offense every day.

Graveman: The closer

There's more power in the starting lineup. Avisail Garcia turned in a pretty nice card (1-1-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L+5 R-3), and Kolten Wong has the best power of his career (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 17 SBA with a 27 SSN). Hunter Renfroe can send the ball for a ride when he makes contact (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 7 13s). Tyler Naquin (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-11) is available when the shift doesn't bother him. There's also Tim Anderson (1-6-6, 12 hits, 25 SBA with a 28 SSN).

Only the remaining infielders – Nicky Lopez (2 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 23 SBA with a 35 SSN) and Miguel Rojas (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 16 SBA with a 31 SSN) – and the catcher, Yadier Molina (3 0s, 9 hits, L+8 R-3) don't drive the ball very hard.

These guys can hit, and they'll help the team stay in – and get back into – a lot of games.

Defense: 7.0
The best in TBL.

This is truly the best defensive team in TBL. There are Fielding One players behind the plate, Yadier Molina (C9 Th+4) and in the infield (Goldschmidt is a 1B5, Mountcastle a 1B4; Wong a 2B9, Lopez an SS9 and 2B8; Rojas an SS9; Ramirez a 3B5). Anderson is an SS8, but won't see much time in the field.

Goldschmidt, Ramirez, Mountcastle: Heart of the order

Molina: Again

The outfield is a little more chancy. Mountcastle will be out there most days (OF1, 30 arm). But Garcia is an OF3 with a 36 arm, and Renfroe is an OF2 with a 37 arm.

Aristides Aquino is an OF2 with a 38 arm, and Naquin an OF2 with a 36.

They will generally catch the ball, and the outstanding outfield arms will make a lot of difference in keeping innings from getting out of hand.

Bench: 2.5
Help as needed.

The team has a very good starting lineup, but there is enough usage that those not starting can be used in key situations later in the game. But there are other people on the roster to help as needed, or to fill needed games.

Let's start with Chris Owings, who has a really neat card (*6* 0s, 11 hits, 4 walks, L+8 R-8), for 50 plate appearances. Where did this come from? He's the main go-to pinch hitter. Against right-ies there's also rookie Max Schrock (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-9). Also from out of nowhere, Alcides Escobar turned up a decent half season (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42). Aristides Aquino is good in the field as noted above, but is a true Bearded Lady (1-5-5, 7 hits, 5 walks, L+1 R-4). The two backup catchers, Cam Gallagher (0-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) and Riley Adams (3 0s, 7 hits, 5 walks+2 42s) are both C7s. Enough said.

Owings: Where?

2nd

Maybe. Or maybe they win the pennant. It's not like it's a foreign idea: they've won the division 12 times, including the last four, and put up 113 wins last season. They won the World Series just three years ago, though they were swept out of the playoffs in the last two.

This is not a young team. Some of the key players are in their prime: Jose Ramirez, Nate Snell, Tim Anderson, Kolten Wong. But others, such as Yadier Molina, Adam Wainwright and Clayton Kershaw, are past that period. Whitman has some draft (unlike Strong City, which blew the whole bankroll this year), but a lot depends on how things hold together in 2022. The clock is ticking on the current roster.
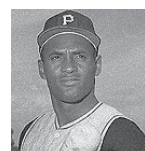
Ages of players on the Whitman roster, as of 07/01/2022:

40: Wainwright
39: Y. Molina
37: Clippard, Petit
35: Diekman, A. Escobar, Lynn
34: Goldschmidt, Kershaw
33: Hendriks, M. Rojas
31: A. Garcia, Graveman, Naquin, Pagan, Steckenrider, Wong
30: Cessa, Owings, Renfroe
29: T. Anderson, Gallagher, Kuhl, Lucchesi, J. Ramirez, Snell
28: Aquino
27: Jax, N. Lopez, Schrock, Urquidy
26: R. Adams, Rasmussen
25: D. Hernandez, Heuer, Mountcastle

Whitman RIVER RATS

TQ: **31.5**

2021 blue hill MUDSLIDES in review

There are a ton of walks in the everyday lineup.

by Mark Ludwig

BLUE HILL

2021 in Review
Final Record: 100-62 (2nd, Clemente)

Blue Hill won 100 games for the first time in franchise history but still had to settle for second place in the Clemente Division. The Mudslides were hoping to get another shot at division winner Whitman in the playoffs but instead were knocked out in the first round by Hoboken in a fierce 7 game series.

What went right?

The streak for breaking the team record in home runs was extended to four years in a row as the 2021 club swatted 288 in total with eight batters with 20 or more, and scored a franchise record 855 runs. Individually Luke Voit set the team record with 54 HR, Trevor Story hit 35 HR, scored 112 runs, drove in 109 and had 31 SB. Rafael Devers contributed 42 doubles and 36 HR. Bryce Harper broke his own walk record with 123 and set a new franchise record of 126 runs scored, and also contributed 30 HR and 25 SB.

Voit: Set record

The pitching was led by Marco Gonzales who went 18-6 with a 3.03 ERA while striking out 174. Lance McCullers went 16-6 while striking out 159. This staff actually set the franchise record with a team ERA of 3.27 and was the first Blue Hill team to give up fewer than 600 runs.

What went wrong?

The offense still struck out too much with 6 different hitters striking out over 100 times. The defense made 127 errors which contributed to 64 unearned runs. The bullpen lost 28 games. Hopes were high after winning 100 games but in the first round of the playoffs we ran into a Hoboken team that proved once again that good pitching beats good hitting and we were sent home.

3 Things

1. Pitching. Blue Hill's pitching is not going to be good enough to be as competitive as we've been the last few seasons. While McCullers gives us an ace at the top of the rotation there will be too many starts of single digit grades. A deep quality bullpen might be able to make up for that but we do not have that either so there will be no cavalry around to save them!

2. Fielding. Catching the ball this year is going to be a challenge too which will only contribute to the pitching staffs struggles. The corner infielders will be an adventure all year with no help on the bench, Yelich is the only fielding one outfielder, and while all the catchers can field they can't throw anybody out.

3. Drafting. The last few drafts Blue Hill has used to patch up pitching needs in order to be competitive, which has left a gap in acquiring newer future talent. Picks like Kim and Mayers helped us win 100 games in 2021 but won't be that much help in 2022. We need to get some higher end draft picks to replace some of the aging veterans.

blue hill MUDSLIDES

Mark Ludwig (27th year)

This team will scuffle.

It was a good year in Blue Hill: their first 100 win season, following three solid seasons of contention. As is so often the case, there were strong playoff opponents, both in the Clemente and in the conference, and one of them took the Mudslides down.

That wouldn't be as much of a blow: 22 teams don't get to the World Series every year, and 23 teams don't get to call themselves TBL champs the year after. But this year's team is going to have a rough time – particularly due to a down year for the pitching staff. We look through the stack of cards and see Bryce Harper and Trevor Story and Rafael Devers and feel that there should be cause for long-term optimism: but the team is aging, and there's going to be a need for a rebuild before there is another fruitful period. In the meanwhile, this team will scuffle.

Pitching: 5.5
Will give up runs.

As observed in the Year in Review, some of the decisions made during the last few years will have consequences this year. The rotation is weakened and the bullpen isn't deep enough to help it. They're going to give up some runs.

ROTATION. The top arm in the starting staff is Lance McCullers
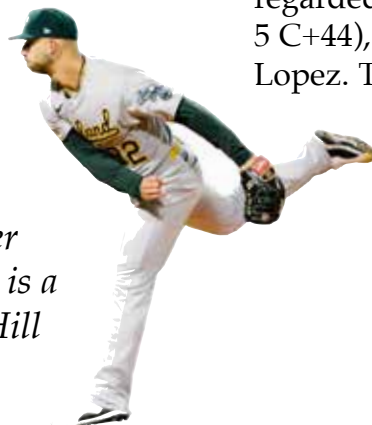
SNT: James Kaprelian.

The hard throwing right hander was their #1 pick in 2022, and is a welcome addition to the Blue Hill pitching staff.

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Bobby Bradley, Daz Cameron, Paul Fry, Kelvin Gutierrez, Yadiel Hernandez, James Kaprelian, Dean Kremer, Gavin Sheets, Austin Voth, Eli White, Bryse Wilson.

Departed: Jonathan Arauz, Anthony Bass, Brad Brach, Harold Castro, Jordan Lyles, Evan Marshall, Adam Morgan, Blake Parker, Kevin Pillar, Josh Tomlin, Spencer Turnbull.

(Grade 15 C-36 HR+34); his 28 starts will be the most pleasant ones for Blue Hill this year. The largest number of starts belong to veteran lefty J. A. Happ (Grade 2 HR-24), who will have a caddy to rescue him. But there is some better news: a trio of starters will provide competent innings – lefties Marco Gonzalez (Grade 11 C+21 HR-32) and Kwang Hyun Kim (Grade 10 HR+16, 19 fatigue) and righty rookie James Kaprelian (Grade 11 HR-14) add 67 starts, getting the team three-fifths of the way through the season without considering Happ.

McCullers: Top arm

The rest of the starts belong to perennially high regarded (and low graded) Zach Eflin (Grade 5 C+44), and Grade 2s Bryse Wilson and Jorge Lopez. They too with have valets to help.

Big 3, 2012:
84 starts

Tim Hudson (Grade 11)
Josh Collmenter (Grade 11)
Dillon Gee (Grade 9)

BULLPEN. When we evaluate bullpens we look to see if the relievers help the starters. In the case of the Mudslides they do – but that's more a commentary on the weakness of the rotation than the strength of the bullpen. The relief is led by flame throwing lefty Aroldis Chapman, who has what the instructions describe as "heart attack" peripherals (Grade 17* C-62 HR-13). Some days he'll be good enough. His main setup men are lefty Blake Taylor (Grade 13* C-34) and righty Robert Stephenson (Grade 12* C-15 HR+22). That's 145 innings of relief among them.

The next tier – which will help most of the starters – is about the same number of innings split between rookie righty Mike Mayers (Grade 10*) and Dillon Tate (Grade 9* HR+24). They'll help in the middle.

The rest of the pen will serve as caddies and pitch when the need arises. Paul Fry (Grade 7* C-62 HR+43) and Justin Wilson (Grade 6* C-21 HR-21) throw from the left side, Austin Voth (Grade 6* C-21 HR-21) from the right. Jose Urena (Grade 2), Dean Kremer (Grade 1) and any of the available innocuous starters pick up the rest of the slack. This staff will give up runs.

Offense: 9.5
High points will carry it.

Lineups are best judged by the impact cards in them. Blue Hill has two particularly dangerous ones: Bryce Harper, a steady contributor, turned in a fine card (1-1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 5 walks, 16 SBA with a 31 SSN, L-10 R+3); and Rafael Devers had a breakout season (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 3

Chapman: Heart attack

Harper: Steady

Devers: Breakout

walks, L-6 R+2). The third best card belongs to Trevor Story (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, 26 SBA with a 30 SSN) – an "off year" that can still hit the ball.

There's a third of a year of another power card: rookie Gavin Sheets will play when the shift doesn't hurt (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-14 R+2). Bobby Bradley also has some power but isn't a consistent bat (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, 11 13s). Manny Pina also has some power but an otherwise deficient card (1-1-6, 7 hits, 4 walks+42).

The next tier in the offense consists of names that have had better cards, but don't this year. Christian Yelich can get on base some but his power is down (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks, 12 SBA with a 29 SSN, L-7); Alex Dickerson (1-4-5, 9 hits, 3 walks); Luke Voit (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, 8 13s); and Jeff McNeil (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42). Austin Nola has a decent card (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L+5 R-6) but only 56 games; and Yadiel Hernandez (1-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+4 R-3) has to play a lot.

Overall, the high points in the lineup will carry it, but there may be a few too many empty at-bats.

Defense: 4.0
Not enough high points.

Blue Hill turns out some strong defenders. At shortstop Trevor Story (SS9) can certainly pick it, and will likely be rated well at second base now that it's his primary position for the Red Sox. Christian Yelich (OF3, 31 arm) is good in center field, and Bryce Harper has a cannon (OF2, 36 arm) in right. The catchers are all C8s (Nola, Suzuki and Pina), but only Pina has a good arm (Th+2).

Story: Can pick it

Things revert to Fielding Two at best after that. Jeff McNeil is a 2B7; Luke Voit, when he plays, is a 1B3, and Bobby Bradley is a 1B2. Alex Dickerson is an OF2 with a 30 arm; the rest of the outfield crew is OF1 except for Daz Cameron who is an OF2. At third, Devers turned in an iron glove (3B3).

There are not enough high points to offset the defensive deficiencies.

Bench: 2.0
What's left, again.

Missing games make the bench somewhat thin, limiting the substitution options for the club. Daz Cameron, who lacks a bat, can substitute in the outfield (OF2, 30 arm); Kelvin Gutierrez (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+3) is, we suppose, a counter against lefties. Jace Peterson (6-0, 9 hits, 5 walks, 11 SBA with a 35 SSN) is somewhat useful. Eli White (2 0s, 6 hits) isn't.

3rd TBL perennial contenders – as Blue Hill has been for the last few seasons – rely on consistency. This team is built around some excellent talent that has that kind of perennial quality: Bryce Harper and Trevor Story are outstanding talents, or as we call them around here, *Guys We Like*.

Yelich: What happened?

One of those Guys is – was – Christian Yelich. Let's set 2020 aside as an anomaly; but we're still required to ask what happened to him. A few years ago he was a five tool player who turned in great TBL cards and now he's Mickey Rivers with an outfield arm.

This can happen to any star, and any team. You make your best guess at the draft, Murphy book in one hand and laptop in the other. At the *Annual* we continue to think highly of Mr. Ludwig's acumen – but they'll need some breaks to get back to contention.
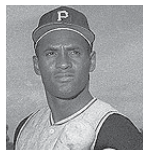
Ages of players on the Blue Hill roster, as of 07/01/2022:

39: J. Happ
38: K. Suzuki
35: Pina
34: A. Chapman, Y. Hernandez, J. Wilson
33: K. Kim
32: A. Dickerson, A. Nola, Ja. Peterson
31: Voit
30: M. Gonzales, M. Mayers, McNeil, Urena, Voth, Yelich
29: Fry, B. Harper, J. Lopez, R. Stephenson, Story
28: Eflin, Kaprielian, McCullers, Tate, E. White
27: K. Gutierrez, Y. Ramirez
26: B. Bradley, Kremer, Sheets, B. Taylor
25: Cameron, Devers
24: B. Wilson

TQ: **22.0**
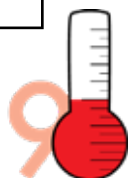
2021 riverwoolf SHARKS in review

It's hard to find sunshine in a team that lost 127 games.

by Daniel Dumont

2021 in Review
Final Record: 46-116 (4th, Clemente)

When a team is in the middle of a deep rebuild the Won-Loss record doesn't tell much of the story. The Sharks won 46 games last year, an improvement over the 35-127 disaster of 2020, but still the worst record in TBL.

But there are signs of life. Adding Wander Franco with the first pick in the 2022 draft improves the young core of the team, and there is some amount of optimism and hope up in Riverwoolf. They won't have as bad a record this year than in the past. But there's still clearly work to do.

What went right?

Austin Riley was the team's power leader, delivering 56 XBH, including 28 HR, driving in 76. Willi Castro had a great rookie season (.328-18-51 in 101 games). In limited playing time Jake Lamb hit 15 homers and had 29 XBH.

Riley: HR and RBI

On the mound Framber Valdez won 10 games and turned in a fine 3.12 ERA, with 186 strikeouts in 193 innings. Jesse Hahn was a stellar closer, saving 15 games and winning 6 with a 1.80 ERA. Tanner Rainey had a 2.54 ERA with 59 strikeouts in just under 57 innings.

What went wrong?

Truly, too many things. Cedric Mullins hit only .225 with minimal power. Evan White hit 14 HR but was otherwise dismal (153 strikeouts in 379 at-bats, .218 average) and is hurt in 2022. Jon

Lester, the "staff ace", went 8-22, 6.12, surrendering 39 homers. Casey Mize went 5-18, 6.18, giving up 32 big flies. The team scored only 497 runs, hitting .211, and surrendered 923 with a 5.40 ERA. It looked a lot like a 46-116 team on the stat sheet.

3 Things

1. The beginning of a young pitching staff. Teams regularly build lineups before pitching staffs, but the club has added some good arms that should help going forward. Casey Mize has a solid full season ahead; Framber Valdez is very good; anticipating the very theme of this year's magazine, the team went out and acquired starts to help fill out the rotation.

2. An actual heart of the order. A great 2021 for Austin Riley and Cedric Mullins gives the team the beginnings of a solid lineup. Adding veterans Jonathan Schoop and Max Kepler extends it even further, and Wander Franco has a great future ahead. We have hopes for other players currently on the roster.

3. Future drafts. In the past Riverwoolf has made moves to fill out the roster, and that has led to the acquisition of players on the down side of their career. That's probably off the table going forward, as future drafts will give the team better and younger players to surround the emerging stars.

riverwoolf SHARKS

Daniel Dumont (6th year)

They will surprise from time to time.

People go about team building in a lot of ways. It's always a difficult task to look at a team over a period of years – and we certainly do a lot of that here at the *Annual* – and try to see the overall strategy. Things change, of course. Various circumstances: injury, aging, worldwide pandemics . . . they all alter the course. Anyone (other than Auletta, of course) who tells you where he expects to be four years out is just trying to win bar bets.

Riverwoolf tried for contention in its second year, and went 94-68, making it to the semi-final round before losing to Blue Hill; but other than that bright spot, it's been all rebuilding and getting pounded while injury, aging, and worldwide pandemics got in the way of the path to success.

This year, though, there is cause for hope. Some of those cornerstone players have started to really blossom, both on the mound and in the lineup. Sharks management will have to stay the course for a little longer, but the signs are promising.

Pitching: 5.0
Curb your enthusiasm.

For the first time in several years, there's some good news on the Riverwoolf pitching staff. After all, they still have the best Framber and they now have the best Mize in baseball; and though it takes ten pitchers to complete the rotation, the

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Big 3, 2012 (Richmond Rebels):
77 starts

Jeff Niemann (Grade 9)
Jason Vargas (Grade 8)
Jake Arrieta (Grade 8)

SNT: Wander Franco.

The #1 pick – and Riverwoolf's only pick in the 2022 draft. He's already a star, and has only better years ahead.

Turnover Rate: **61%**

Arrived: Anthony Bass, Paul Blackburn, Harold Castro, Steve Cishek, Mike Foltynewicz, Wander Franco, Ben Gamel, Brett Gardner, Amir Garrett, Cesar Hernandez, Max Kepler, Tyler Kinley, Andrew Knapp, Jordan Lyles, Blake Parker, Martin Perez, Kevin Pillar, Jonathan Schoop, Touki Toussaint, Justin Upton, Stephen Vogt.

Departed: Anthony Alford, Dan Altavilla, Christian Arroyo, David Bote, Brad Boxberger, Drew Butera, Daz Cameron, J.P. Crawford, Jarrod Dyson, Santiago Espinal, Alex Gordon, Jesse Hahn, Adeiny Hechavarria, Tommy La Stella, Chris Mazza, Adrian Morejon, Ivan Nova, Tanner Rainey, Rio Ruiz, Austin Voth, Ryan Yarbrough.

Valdez: Still best Framber

Mize: Best Mize

starts aren't that bad. The bullpen is more chancy, but there are a few arms out there as well. Still, it's important to curb your enthusiasm.

ROTATION. Roughly a third of the starts belong to Framber Valdez (Grade 14 C-25 HR+31, 26 fatigue) and Casey Mize (Grade 11 C+21 HR-15). Another 16 starts belong to Aaron Sanchez

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(Grade 12 C-22 HR+44), Reynaldo Lopez (Grade 14 C+25 HR-24) and Touki Toussaint (Grade 10 C-23 HR-34). One of the three, at least, should emerge in 2022 with a more complete season.

The remaining half of the starts belong to an interesting collection. Jordan Lyles (Grade 5 C+14 HR-31) and Jon Lester, in his final season (Grade 4 HR-21) both have full seasons, though Lester doesn't have to use them all; Martin Perez (Grade 4 C+21) has 22 starts, Jeff Hoffman (Grade 7 C-55) makes 11, and Mike Foltynewicz (Grade 6 C+23 HR-44 makes ten scary appearances.

BULLPEN. The rotation would not be as problematic if there was a strong pen to rescue it. But there just isn't. Blake Parker (Grade 11* HR+21) has 44 innings as the "closer"; he has support from Steve Cishek (Grade 12* C-45 HR+55), Jeff Hoffman (12*) and Anthony Bass (Grade 10* C+16 HR-23) are the 155 innings that follow. Tyler Kinley (Grade 9* HR-21) adds 70 more innings.

Then it's turtles all the way down. The starters that aren't starting can provide bulk innings, as well as Amir Garrett (Grade 5*) and Paul Blackburn (Grade 1). The better starters, despite their lower fatigue ratings, will be stapled to the mound as much as possible.

Offense: 7.5
This will be more fun.

Well, it'll be a little more fun. Austin Riley is likely to be the leader of the offense for some years to come: he certainly hits the ball (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+42, L-6). He plays every day, as does new second baseman Jonathan Schoop (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2

Riley: Hits the ball

walks+22, L+7 R-5. There's also the very dynamic Cedric Mullins (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-5 R+1, 38 SBA with a 30 SSN; he has all the tools. On the days that Wander Franco is in the lineup (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+9 R-7) the middle of the order will

Mullins: All the tools

be as potent as it has been in quite some time. Franco's platoon partner Harold Castro (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-11) is nowhere near as exciting, but can hit a little.

The outfield and DH spots are largely mediocre and are getting a little old – upcoming drafts will have to address this, Brett Gardner (3 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks) and Ben Gamel (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks) can get on base; Justin Upton (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks, 9 13s) is a swing or miss proposition at this point in his career. The same is true of Kevin Pillar (1-5-6, 9 hits, 7 13s). Max Kepler (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks) shows some promise but has some work to do. Good dice will generate some runs, but some innings some days will generate nothing but stolen hits. Matt Beaty (1-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+42) extends the lineup with some useful at bats but little power, while Cesar Hernandez (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, just extends the lineup. Behind the plate only Luis Torrens (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) offers much offense.

Defense: 4.0
High points.

There are some high points in the defense. Riverwoolf flashes a 2B8 with Hernandez and Schoop, and Riley is a steady 3B5; Mullins, Gardner and Pillar are OF3s (though Gardner no longer has much of an arm); Kepler, Gamel and Upton are OF2s. All of the shortstops are SS8s, and all of the first basemen are 1B3s.

The catchers don't add much to the defense: Torrens (C7 Th-4) and Vogt (C7 Th-2) will set the fast opponents running, with only Michael Perez (C8 Th-0) as a viable defensive replacement.

Riley: Catches the ball

Thus, while Riley catches the ball and the outfielders run it down, the Riverwoolf defense will only help in places. Still, it's an improvement.

Bench: 2.0
Best is already on the field.

The best players, as usual, are already on the field; the bench is what's left. With some players having full season usage, there's some extra flexibility to use guys who aren't starting today. Schoop can shift to first base to make room for Hernandez, and there are plenty of outfield games.

The remaining players don't help very much. Jake Lamb (1-0-0, 7 hits, 5 walks, L-7) is still here; Evan White is a 1B5 but offers nothing on offense – hopefully he'll recover from injury in 2022. Steven Vogt (1-6, 7 hits, 4 walks, L+6 R-3) isn't helped much by the platoon shift; and Michael Perez (1-0-0, 6 hits, 3 walks) is here for defense. Andrew Knapp (C7 Th-4) came in the waiver draft for some reason. Willi Castro, who was highly regarded and was to be a part of the team rebuild, had a disappointing season (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+42, 13 SBA with a 27 SSN) but may be useful in a pinch-running role. Riverwoolf would benefit from a nice comeback season.

Willi Castro: Comeback?

In short, this bench is simply here for flexibility, and doesn't do a lot to make the team more competitive.

4th A pretty much foregone conclusion. Still, there's just enough starting pitching, and just enough offense, to make the team dangerous on any given day, and they will surprise from time to time.
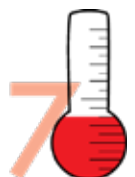
The rebuild is progressing at least. Building the team around players like Franco, Riley, Valdez, Mize and Mullins is obviously the way to go, but there are too many players past their prime still on the roster. A little luck and a major restructuring, though, might make them a contender sooner than expected.
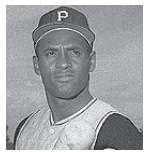
Ages of players on the Riverwoolf roster, as of 07/01/2022:

38: Gardner, Lester
37: Parker, Vogt
36: Cishek
34: Bass, Upton
33: Pillar
32: Ce. Hernandez
31: Kinley, Lamb, Lyles, Ma. Perez
30: Foltynewicz, Gamel, Garrett, Knapp, A. Sanchez, Schoop, Velasquez
29: Beaty, Hoffman, Kepler, Mi. Perez
28: Blackburn, H. Castro, R. Lopez, F. Valdez
27: Mullins
26: Torrens, Toussaint, E. White
25: W. Castro, Mize, Riley
21: Franco

TQ: **18.5**

Someone Must Win

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Maracaibo*	114	48	.704	—
Rye	84	78	.519	30
New Westminster	65	97	.401	49
Gotham City	50	112	.309	64

* Lost to Northboro in the World Series.

This division is likely to be a scrum this year, as there isn't a single team that looks or plays like a contender. This is in sharp contrast to last year, when Maracaibo dominated the race.

Instead, there are four teams that all think of themselves as rebuilders, and whose TQ ratings are very close. But one of them must win. It's the opinion of the *Annual* that there's not much more post season – but anything can happen as we have seen.

Jim Jeatt's **New Westminster Whiskeyjacks** are ahead by a little bit. There are some very good cards on this roster, and the boys from up north have rebuilt the pitching staff. More than half of last year's roster is gone, and the new crew is a little better than the **Rye Herons**. *Craig Musselman* also has some good cards and some pitching, but they're not at the level of what we would consider a TBL contender. Still, they'll be in the race all year. In fact, we wouldn't be surprised if they win.

What a difference a year makes. The bill has come due for *Walter Hunt*'s **Maracaibo Rumrunners**. They rode all the way to the World Series last year, but injuries and age have caught up with them. They'll not win 114 this year, on anything like them. The pitching staff is badly reduced, and the lineup lacks power. But Rumrunner teams often overperform, and they may do so this year even though they should be gunning for the 2023 draft.

It's another step in rebuilding for *Anton Greenwald*. He has more work to do this year, but the **Gotham City Batmen** are better than the 2021 edition. They won't lose 112 this year, but there's no reasonable expectation of a .500 season.

Adding a franchise figure in the new catcher, along with several other young players, means that there's better news ahead. It just isn't likely to be this year. Still, their TQ isn't too far behind.

Mays Division

Fernando Tatis, Jr.,
New Westminster

1. New Westminster		20.5
2. Rye		19.5
3. Maracaibo		19.0
3. Gotham City		19.0

2021 new westminster WHISKEYJACKS in review

The future is a few years away.

by Jim Jeatt

2021 in Review
Final Record: 65-97 (3rd, Mays)

New West's first period of success was marked by drafting Hanley Ramirez a shortstop. Hoping to recapture that magic a new shortstop was drafted in 2020. Entering his third season Tatis announced his presence with 54 HR, 127 RBI and 9 steals. In his first two seasons his totals are 67 HR and 160 RBI. New West management has quickly realized that to move forward as a club offense needs to be improved. Building around Tatis is the now the priority.

What went right?

A typical New Westminster Season. 65 wins figures into the historical average for the franchise. The club scored 714 runs: only the third time in 11 seasons they have crested 700 runs.

What went wrong?

Pitching struggled mightily giving up 870 runs, one of the worst performances in the recent past.

Looking over the pitching and hitting the Whiskeyjacks had a few interesting and note-worthy performances that sum up the season. Pitching was unusually bad for New West . Three pitchers finished with 182 IP, Bassitt, Freeland and Mills. Unfortunately they combined for a 27-37 record. The list of pitchers with an ERA north of six was four. Those four combined for a record of 7-17.

Hitting was a struggle, as there was virtually no depth. Batters hitting at or below .225 with

Tatis: Announced presence

at least 50 games were Brinson, Cooper, Chavis, Goodwin, Goodrum, McMahon and Gregory Polanco which is 7 of the 19 hitters who made an appearance last year.

3 Things

1. Maximizing the draft. In a season with little pitching in the draft Bassitt and Ray were deemed luxuries on a team that couldn't hit or pitch particularly well. The problem was there was not a lot of obvious available talent in the draft. Some picks were pushed to 2023 but it was a pick now 2022 draft. Sixteen draft picks made the 2022 roster (9 pitchers and 7 hitters).

2. Progress beyond Tatis. Chisholm has progressed to being a 20/20 threat, Cooper and Verdugo look to provide hits and OBP. Goodrum and Polanco who will struggle to hit could combine for 28 steals. A deal for Moncada provides a solid third basemen. The drafting of Sosa gives the Whiskeyjacks a solid defensive middle infielder who consistently gets on base. Herrera makes a comeback in the Queen City outfield. The team may have a shot at 700 runs but they will need to be consistent.

3. The future is a few years away. .500 may be distant. The team seems snake bit with injuries to Tatis, German, Moncada, Means, and many players not on a major league roster. This may be the only chance for a bit of fun. Two first round picks in 2023 may be the most important asset the club has. It would appear, based on recent developments, that the future is not now or in the next few years.

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

Jim Jeatt (18th year)

If this were a presidential election, we would be staying up until 5 a.m. to wait for the networks to make their final call.

Someone has to win the Mays Division. TQ says it's the Whiskeyjacks; Clay's replay suggests it will be the Rye Herons, although the Maracaibo Rumrunners have a chance as well. Is this the year Mr. Jeatt tastes the playoffs as a division champ for the first time since 2010?

The top three teams will all be fighting to stay around the .500 mark all season. It's going to come down to who wins enough games in November to outlast the rest of the pack. At the *Annual* we love a good battle, and this one appears to be a three-way photo finish.

Pitching: 7.5
Strong pen helps average rotation.

This is still an evolving starting staff. Garcia is a good starting point, but the only name we like. The rest is patchwork but serviceable for this season. The Whiskeyjacks gave up 253 homeruns last season and are hoping the revisions in the rotation will settle that number down a bit. With three first round picks and few good options, Mr. Jeatt understandably went for young bats.

Turnover Rate: **53%**

Arrived: Zack Collins, John Gant, Luis H. Garcia, Odubel Herrera, Jordan Holloway, Juan Lagares, Lucas Luetge, Chas McCormick, Yermin Mercedes, Yoan Moncada, Eli Morgan, Joel Payamps, Edgar Santana, Ervin Santana, Edmundo Sosa, Hunter Strickland, Zach Thompson, Taylor Trammell, Andrew Vaughn.

Departed: Chris Bassitt, Lewis Brinson, Michael Chavis, Stefan Crichton, Dexter Fowler, Joey Gerber, Brian Goodwin, Junior Guerra, David Hale, Monte Harrison, Ryan Helsley, Scott Kingery, Tim Locastro, Ryan McMahon, Adam Plutko, Robbie Ray, Tyler Rogers, Pedro Severino, Alex Young.

Means: Usual glory

The bullpen looks to be much improved, as there are guys who can throw strikes more often this year as well as keep the ball out of the stands. This staff will keep the Whiskeyjacks in games much better than it did last season.

ROTATION. Garcia is the ace this season (Grade 12 HR+14, 28 starts). John Means is back in all his usual glory (Grade 12 C+35 HR-33, 26 starts). The two-headed monster of John Gant (Grade 11 C-62 HR+31, 23 starts) and Zach Thompson (Grade 12 HR+33, 14 starts) serves as a pretty good third starter. After those 91 starts, things start to go downhill a bit. Domingo German gets 18 starts (Grade 9 HR-21), followed by Kyle Free-

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Big 3, 2012:
84 starts

Johnny Cueto (Grade 15)
Paul Maholm (Grade 8)
Ryan Dempster (Grade 6)

SNT: Luis H. Garcia.

The first starting pitcher selected in the 2022 draft, Garcia will head up a rotation that will keep the ball in the park much more often this season.

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

land's 23 starts (Grade 6) and Eli Morgan's 18 starts (Grade 6 HR-34). Taylor Hearn eats up 11 of the remaining 12 starts (Grade 5), leaving Alec Mills, very thankfully (Grade 3), out of the rotation after coughing up 36 homers last season. Reliever Jordan Holloway will start four times (Grade 14* C-62 HR+33).

BULLPEN: The bullpen appears to be better on paper than last season, although it is still a bit short in total innings, requiring the better starts to stay in past their first fatigue point. Jonathan Loaisiga (Grade 15* HR+51, 70.7 IP) and Hector Neris (Grade 14* C-21, 74.3 IP) will share late and closing duties. Taylor Hearn (Grade 13* C-21) and Hunter Strickland (Grade 15*) are a good lefty-righty tandem for the seventh and eighth innings with approximately 50 innings each in their arms.

Hearn, Joel Payamps (Grade 11* C+24), and Edgar Santana (Grade 11* C+23) take the middle innings. The secret weapon is lefty Lucas Luetge (Grade 12* C+34 HR+33), who can be used at any time, according to instructions, with his 70.3 innings. The Whiskeyjacks will need their best starters to go deep to make these effective relief innings stretch throughout the season as they make their division run.

Offense: 6.5
Guys we like...just not enough of them.

Head and shoulders above all is Fernando Tatis (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, 33 SSN for 29 attempts) for 130 games. Alex Verdugo is developing nicely (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-12 R+4). Three solid

hitters have been added through the draft in Andrew Vaughn (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks +22, L+9 R-6, 127 games), Chas McCormick (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks +22, 108 games), and Edmundo Sosa (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+ 2 42s, L-5, 113 games).

Tatis: Head and shoulders

Jazz Chisholm (1-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks+22, 29 SSN for 31 attempts, R-0) and Garrett Cooper (1-5-6. 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L+4) are paired up in the instructions as an interesting designated hitter team. Christian Vazquez is an offensive catcher for 138 games (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6 R+1). The rest of the offense is likely to come from Yoan Moncada (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, L-6, 144 games), Odubel Herrera (6-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 124 games), and part-time newcomer Yermin Mercedes (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+7 R-4).

Three part-time outfielders will contribute occasionally to the cause. The best of these is Juan Lagares (0-6-6, 9 hits, 1 walk). Long time TBL player Greg Polanco provides some speed although his best days are gone (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, L-9 R+2). The enigmatic Willie Calhoun continues to develop at a slow pace (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks). Niko Goodrum will provide some power and speed (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, 29 SSN for 19 attempts). Alec Bohm, however, has taken a big step backward (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks), evoking the memory in New Westminster of the incredible vanishing Scott Kingery.

The offense will be inconsistent. When the lesser lights get on base, the sluggers on the team will be ready to drive them in. The question is how often there will be men on base in front of the boppers? And will those days of offense match up with good starting pitching efforts?

Defense: 4.0
Solid at most spots.

Vazquez (C8) will anchor the infield, although his arm is not the greatest this season. Vaughn and Cooper (both 1B3) are the chinks in the armor, but Sosa

Vazquez: Anchors

(2B8), Tatis (SS8), and Moncada (3B4) will get the job done handily. Verdugo (OF3, 35 arm) stars in centerfield, and corner outfielders Herrera (OF2) and McCormick (OF2) will catch the ball despite having weak arms. Sosa can back up at SS, and

Verdugo: Stars

Tatis could play in the outfield late (36) if Mr. Jeatt wants to slow down opposing runners. Lagares is also a good man for that job (OF3, 36), while Goodrum late in the game on defense (SS8) is a better option than Chisholm (2B7).

Bench: 2.5
Non names who may rise.

Goodrum and Polanco are the best bets offensively for late moves with their combination of speed and power. Calhoun will hit well against both lefties and righties, while Mercedes will neutralize LOOGIES. Lagares will fix one of the two corners late on defense when needed. The rest of the guys are in platoons and might be limited by game availability over the length of the season.

1st   Before printing playoff tickets, the New Westminster fans will have to realize that the other three teams have TQs of 19.5, 19.0, and 19.0. Clay Beard's replays have Rye winning the division six times, New Westminster taking the top twice, and Maracaibo once, with those two teams tied on top in the final replay.

If this were a presidential election, we would be staying up until 5 a.m. to wait for the networks to make their final call. Steve Kornacki would be at the big board all night telling us we have to wait for all precincts to report before making the call. It should be fun to watch this race.

Ages of players on the New Westminster roster, as of 07/01/2022:

39: Er. Santana
35: Luetge
33: Neris, Strickland
32: Lagares
31: Cooper, C. Vazquez
30: Goodrum, Herrera, Mills, G. Polanco, Ed. Santana
29: Freeland, Gant, German, Means, Mercedes
28: Payamps, Z. Thompson, J. Webb
27: W. Calhoun, Z. Collins, Hearn, Loaisiga, McCormick, Moncada
26: Holloway, E. Morgan, E. Sosa, Verdugo
25: Bohm, L. H. Garcia
24: Chisholm, Trammell, Vaughn
23: Tatis

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

TQ: **20.5**

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2021 rye HERONS in review

One of two poor choices.

by Craig Musselman

2021 in Review
Final Record: 84-78 (2nd, Mays)

In 2021, the Rye Herons missed the playoffs by five games. In September, Rye management uncharacteristically "threw in the towel", trading its best hitter, who had been arrested on domestic violence charges, and its "closer in name only" (a Grade 18* C-62) for sufficient mediocre draft picks to create a bullpen for 2022. It didn't even seem like a good idea at the time, but it was one of two poor choices.

What went right?

Jose Abreu had a great year. He slashed .292/.321/.854 with 38 home runs and 136 RBI. Ty France, an *eighth round* Rye pick in 2020, hit .349 in his first full year in Rye. One of the TBL denizens once described Rye fourth round pick Whit Merrifield as a "clown at the beach". France looks like another one. Nothing but sh*t luck.

Abreu: A great year

Marcell Ozuna slashed .293/.364/.955 with 33 homers in 120 games before being ignominiously shipped out of town for being a bonehead. One thing that went right was having a winning record despite giving up 40 more runs than the team scored. There was some scrambling for wins.

What went wrong?

Primarily, the management threw in the towel in September. If you have a shot at the playoffs, why not take the shot? Lightning might strike. Why throw in the towel when the next year is looking just as mediocre with respect to potential playoff success? Good questions, adequately voiced by most Rye fans.

Once again, the team didn't run enough. Management backed off a little in encouraging road managers to use the base stealing capabilities, and the home field manager wasn't aggressive.

3 Things

1. The core. This team has a solid core that has been together a number of years, yet injuries and down years keep recurring. The core is now getting up there in years, without any season in which management has gone for it by sacrificing the future. Lost years by Chris Sale and Jameson Taillon, the core of the pitching staff, has left management no choice but to wait and see. The offensive core of Realmuto, Abreu, France, Merrifield, and Bregman is worth hanging onto. But it's not clear at this point if the full core of this team is going to come together at the same time. What was once a grand plan is still in wait and see mode.

2. The drafts. The last two drafts have been bizarre. It would be very nice to be drafting players with whatever sampling of a rookie year they've had, if only we could see a year or so at Double A and a year or so at Triple A. That's still a bit of a crapshoot because of the grand leap from Triple A to MLB. But these last several drafts have been akin to a spinning, blind crapshoot.

3. The league. The Master Game and the TBL modifications continue to be great fun, and the TBL, with all of its resources and camaraderie, continues to be absolutely the best in all of APBA-dom.

rye HERONS

Craig Musselman (18th year)

It is never a good thing to bet against Mr. Musselman's ability to manage this kind of team.

Year in and year out Mr. Musselman puts together a competitive team that challenges for a playoff spot from the Mays Division. This year is no exception, as he has a solid team core that will battle from start to finish once again. While TQ picks the Herons to be second, they fall short of the top notch by only a single point; in the Preplay, Rye took the division in six of the ten plays. The draft filled in the Heron bullpen and brought some power and speed to the offense— will it be enough? Time will tell.

Pitching: 7.0
Some good, then a lot of shaky.

This is a staff that no one will fear this season. There is a great name — Chris Sale — but no one fears a Grade 9 starter who pitches in 9 games. The base is there for a good young core, but it's not quite ready for prime time yet. Mr. Musselman patched the bullpen as well as he could in the draft, but there are only about 250 IP above grade 12. The team's chances will rest on starters going deep into games and then the best relievers mixing and matching their way to wins. So we see why the Mays is such a tossup this season!

SNT: Jake Meyers.
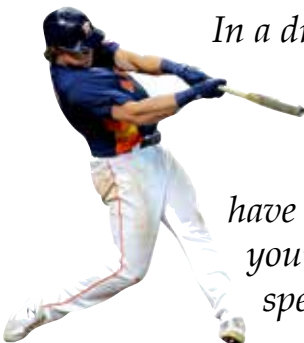
In a draft that was a little weak, this was a good pick in the second round for the Herons, who did not have a first round pick. This young outfielder combines speed, power, and defense.

ROTATION. As noted, former ace Sale is limited to 9 games (Grade 9 C+24). But Joe Musgrove and Adrian Houser make a pretty good 1-2 punch at the top of the rotation. Musgrove (Grade 13 C+21 HR+13) is the better of the two and starts 31 games. Houser is a good bet for now and the future, but he is still a bit wild (Grade 13 C-33 HR+32, 26 starts). Jameson Taillon should come back strong this season (Grade 10 C+15 HR-15, 29 starts).

Musgrove: One of two

After that, things fall apart. Last year's rookie phenom Brady Singer took a huge step backward (Grade 4 C-14, 27 starts). Hyun-Jin Ryu also dropped several notches (Grade 7 C+33 HR-11. 31 starts). That leaves Taylor Widener

Turnover Rate: 28%

Arrived: Phil Bickford, J.T. Chargois, Daniel Coulombe, Eric Haase, Travis Jankowski, Alex Lange, Jake Meyers, Zach Pop, Hirokazu Sawamura, Trevor Stephan.

Departed: Paul Fry, Gio Gonzalez, Cam Hill, Matt Joyce, Josh Osich, Jt Riddle, Daniel R. Robertson, Mallex Smith, Trevor Williams, Brandon Workman

Big 3, 2012:
88 starts

Jered Weaver (Grade 16)
James Shields (Grade 15)
Guillermo Moscoso (Grade 13)

((Grade 10 HR-24) and Jaime Barria (Grade 3) to split the remaining starts with young Mr. Singer.

BULLPEN. In TBL, when you don't have a great closer, you say in your instructions "We don't care who gets saves." Mr. Musselman had to say that this year, though he did pick up JT Chargois in the draft to be his primary closer (Grade 16* HR+25, 54 IP). Set up men Phil Bickford (Grade 15* C+24, 51 IP) and TJ McFarland (Grade 13* C+26 HR+26, only 39 IP) will also get their share in a closer by committee approach. Connor Brogdon (Grade 12* C+21 HR+21, 57 IP) and Hirokazu Sawamura (Grade 14* C-42, 53 IP) are the middle inning guys, while Dan Coulombe (Grade 8* C+35) and Zach Pop (Grade 8* HR+44, 55 IP) will mop when they are op—oops—up. Both McFarland and Coulombe will serve as loogies from time to time. It's not a bad bullpen, but it lacks a stud and will be used often in those games when the weaker starters are getting knocked around a bit. Mr. Musselman will have to use more of Nick Wittgren (Grade 6* HR-33) and Trevor Stephan (Grade 10* C-34 HR-35) than he will want to.

Offense: 5.5
Too many spare parts this season.

The closest Rye comes to scary is Ty France (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks +22 +42, 152 games). Jose Abreu (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22+42) and Whit Merrifield (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 35 SSN for 44 attempts, 162 games) took big steps downward this season. These three give Mr. Musselman everyday players at 3B, 1B, and OF-2B, but they do not have the thump to keep up with other teams.

France: Closest to scary

The next tier of hitters includes offensive catcher JT Realmuto in a down year (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, SSN 31 for 16 attempts), David Fletcher (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 18 attempts, L+7 R-5), and Austin Slater (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, 34 SSN for 17 attempts). Tony Kemp rounds out this group (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks+2 22s, 131 games) in what is likely a career card. Again, not scary, although useful.

Realmuto: Offensive

The rest is a mess of guys with power or speed but limited in games. What happened to Alex Bregman (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 91 games)? The two backup catchers are all or nothing power guys—Eric Haase (1-1-6, 8 hits) and Dustin Garneau (1-1-1-0-0-0, 8 hits, but for only 68 PA). And hey, what the heck happened to Paul DeJong (1-0-0, 7 hits, 3 walks+42, 113 games)? The rest of the guys are interesting, but severely limited: Meyers (49 games), Taylor Jones (102 PA), Delino DeShields (58 PA), Travis Jankowski (75 games), Ed Olivares (111 PA). They make Guillermo Heredia into a virtual all-star (5-6-6, 120 games). There is going to be some interesting mixing and matching on offense with the Herons this season.

Defense: 5.0
Mostly good leather.

While the offense suffers, the defense is usually going to be solid, except at 3B where France (3B3) finds himself with Abreu (1B4) blocking him on the other side of the infield. Realmuto (C8 Th-1) is solid but can be spelled late by Garneau (C6 Th+6). Merrifield is a 2B9, but will often see time as an OF2.

No problem as Fletcher (2B9 SS8) and DeJong (SS9) still pick it with the best of

them all. Bregman (3B4) can help when he is not at DH. Kemp is an OF2 most often but also has a 2B8 rating. Slater is an OF3, Heredia an OF2, but all the outfielders have arms in the low 30s.

Bench: 2.0
Some possible moves.

While Mr. Musselman will be able to pinch hit and pinch run and replace guys on defense with others who can still catch the ball, there is a large amount of platoon play here with so many players limited by games or plate appearances. It's going to be a struggle and Rye will have to keep most moves to a minimum in key situations.

2nd Hey, the gurus at the *Annual* usually know what they are doing. Who is your writer to quibble with the process? But looking at this team is mind boggling. So many guys, so much ability to move things around on a day to day basis—and Mr. Musselman is just the manager to make the most of this utility.

The replays from Clay Beard show that a computer can make this team win. The question is, will Craig Musselman be able to will his boys past the poorer pitching starts, the inconsistent hitting, and the need to interchangeably more parts around?

As we know at the *Annual,* it is never a good thing to bet against Mr. Musselman's ability to manage this kind of team. But this is going to take some seriously inspired managing this season. As we said while writing about New Westminster, it is going to be great fun to watch how this turns out.

DeJong: Can still pick it

Ages of players on the Rye roster, as of 07/01/2022:

35: Abreu, Ryu
34: Garneau, Sawamura
33: McFarland, Merrifield, Sale
32: Coulombe
31: Chargois, Heredia, Jankowski, T. Kemp, Realmuto, Wittgren
30: Taillon
29: DeShields, Estevez, Haase, Houser, Musgrove, Slater
28: Bregman, P. DeJong, Fletcher, Ta. Jones
27: Brogdon, France, Widener
26: Bickford, Lange, Meyers, Olivares, Stephan
25: Barria, Pop, Singer

TQ: **19.5**

2021 maracaibo RUMRUNNERS in review

The dice will turn.

by Walter Hunt

2021 in Review
Final Record: 114-48 (1st, Mays)

Down three games to one in the conference championship series, Mr. Skogen told me: "you know how it is: the dice will turn." They had turned in the Hoboken series that had preceded the tilt with Midwest: and they turned again, as Maracaibo escaped with a 4-3 heart-stopping victory sending us to the World Series against Northboro. Then the dice turned again. A team that hit .280 with 206 homers in the regular season went silent in the Series, even getting no-hit in the final game.

It was a good season, though. Yankee Cap Mentality™ would call it a failure since the other team came out on top, but there are 22 teams that would disagree. Counting the Rumrunners, that would be 23.

What went right?

This was a fun team to manage. Four players hit 20 or more homers, led by Eloy Jimenez (.271-42-134, 41 doubles); Salvador Perez could only play 100 games but he hit .349 with 32 doubles and 20 homers; Raimel Tapia hit .336 and stole 26 of 30 bases. Starling Marte stole 15 of 16, and hit .280-17-90.

On the mound, Dinelson Lamet was the most dominant starter in Rumrunner history (24-5, 1.70, 15 CG, 9 shutouts, 293 strikeouts in 249 innings). Greg Holland saved 46 games with a 1.13 ERA; the bullpen was credited with 39 of the 114 team wins.

The team led the league in average, was third in runs scored, third in ERA, and first in saves. They won the most games in TBL, and the most

in Rumrunner history (they'd also won 114 in 1998 and 113 in 1997). By all measures, a very successful year right up to the end.

What went wrong?

No more time need be spent on the World Series disappointment. Gratuitous complaints about how the pitching staff walked more people than it should have, or that Dylan Cease went 14-5 but had a 5.70 ERA and surrendered 36 homers, or that Mitch Moreland hit .224 – those are minor. The team did very well, and got past some extremely tough opponents in a run to the World Series. They didn't walk enough times, and the speedy guys didn't run as much as they should have. But overall the team played to its potential.

Lamet: Dominant

3 Things

1. Time to change course. With a very light 2022 draft, it would have been uncharacteristically risky to try and "go for it" in the upcoming year. Maracaibo doesn't really do the Bounce, but 2022 is clearly a rebuild season.

2. Accept disappointment. Sixto Sanchez, Nick Madrigal, Seranthony Dominguez, Eloy Jimenez, Dinelson Lamet . . . injuries made it even more unlikely that the team could contend this year. Patience is definitely required here.

3. Contending in a down year? Maybe. The Mays has no dominant team. This duct-taped squad could sneak to a pennant. Not expected, but stranger things have happened.

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

Walter Hunt (36th year); Hall of Famer

A long run in the playoffs is highly unlikely this season.

Mr. Hunt never takes the big bounce. But occasionally he has to reload, and this looks like one of those years. After making it to the World Series, the Rumrunners are taking a step back. They will contend for their division but a long run in the playoffs is highly unlikely this season.

But you don't become a Hall of Fame manager by rolling over and not playing hard. The Rumrunners are in the capable hands of Mr. Hunt, and at the *Annual* we think that means they will be contending for their division championship right down to the final game in November.

Pitching: 6.5
It's not pretty.

Two solid starters and a long but low-rated bullpen is not enough to contend anywhere but in the Mays this season. There are some nice parts still here this year, but the young arms have taken a step back or are in the shop temporarily for long term repair (yes, Sixto Sanchez and Seranthony Dominguez, we are talking about you). It is going to be tough dealing with the wildness of this group of pitchers as the Rumrunners work their way through the season. A little wildness, however, is still better than long-ballitis, and there are only a few of those guys hanging

Turnover Rate: 28%

Arrived: Christian Arroyo, John Curtiss, Chase De Jong, Wilmer Flores, Jed Lowrie, Matt Manning, Brandon Marsh, Chris Stratton, Josh Taylor, Bruce Zimmermann

Departed: Jake Arrieta, Jalen Beeks, Ben Gamel, Shane Greene, Cole Hamels, Keone Kela, Jose Marmolejos, Jake McGee, Jonathan Schoop, Matt Wieters

around looking for their chances to pitch this summer.

ROTATION. There are two fantastic starters on the squad in Sandy Alcantara (Grade 12 C+25 HR+22) and Dylan Cease (Grade 12 C-23 HR+16). The sad news is they only share 65 starts. Sanchez would be a nice fit here, but he is still recuperating. The next 40 starts are a deep drop off in quality to German Marquez (Grade 8 C+12 HR+15) and the often injured Dinelson Lamet (Grade 7 C-32 HR+14, 9 starts). And then it gets downright ugly as the Rumrunners hope for better futures out of young arms. Not ready for prime time this season are Bruce Zimmermann (Grade 4 HR-31), Matt Manning (Grade 3 C-12 HR+22) and Chase DeJong (Grade 3 C-12 HR+42). It's going to be a long season with massive growing pains as those three develop their games.

Alcantara: Fantastic

BULLPEN. Thankfully there is plenty of bullpen, with 450 innings of Grade 7 or better, although it tops out at Grade 16. If the starters can keep the Rumrunners in the game, there is hope for Mr. Hunt to do his traditional magic. This is a mix and match bullpen that will prosper under a deft hand for juggling grades and peripherals to optimize win probability. Joe Kelly (Grade 16* C+13 HR+35) and Diego Castillo (Grade 16* C+22 HR-15) provide 100 innings of late relief in save situations. Mark Melancon will also help late as always (Grade 14* HR+41) for another 65 innings. Chris Stratton (Grade 11* C-16 HR+16) and Josh Taylor (Grade 11* C-23 HR+52) provide a nice right-left punch in the middle of the game, as do John Curtiss (Grade 10*

SNT: Brandon Marsh.

This talented young outfielder has a solid future in front of him with the mixture of power and speed Mr. Hunt looks for consistently.
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Big 3, 2012:
91 starts
Cole Hamels (Grade 14)
Aaron Harang (Grade 9)
Jeremy Guthrie (Grade 8)

C+22) and Ryan Borucki (Grade 12* C-41 HR-33) earlier. Taylor and Borucki are used as loogies as well, according to the instructions. Greg Holland (Grade 9* C-25 HR-13) and Rafael Dolis (Grade 7* C-62 HR+44) have fallen on hard times after better years in the past, but they can serve as a bridge to offset poor starts by the young rookies.

Offense: 6.0
Sal and a bunch of guys.

The offense took a big hit over the winter. There is an abundance of part time players to be juggled as the year wears on. There are three categories of hitters among the Rumrunners this year: the old stand by reliables, the old stars who have fallen on bad times, and the young up and comers who still have a ways to climb. As with any Maracaibo team in the past, it has power and speed in varying combinations, allowing Mr. Hunt to hit and run, take extra bases, and wait for three run blasts. The mixture is just not quite as potent this season.

Salvador Perez and Starling Marte are the old pros who are still are the top of their games. Perez (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 1 walk+42) plays 161 games and anchors the offense. Marte is limited to 120 games but still slashes the ball and runs the bases with abandon (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 35 SSN for 52 attempts). They are aided by Isiah Kiner-Falefa (2 0s, 10 hits, 1 walk+22, 31 SSN for 25 attempts), Raimel Tapia (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 30 SSN for 26 attempts), and game-limited Nick Madrigal (3 0s, 11 hits, 2walks+22, L+9 R-5, 54 games). It's a ping pong attack, but a very good one indeed.

Perez, Marte: Old pros

The supporting parts are down this year, though, as some of the older players lost their edge. Keith Moreland (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-8, 81 games) had a steep drop off the cliff, as did Maikel Franco (1-6-6, 8 hits, 2 walks), Orlando Arcia and Dylan Moore (1-0-0, 7 hits. 4 walks+22). Wilmer Flores (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks), Jed Lowrie (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Christian Arroyo (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L+5 R-6) provide infield depth, and Lorenzo Cain (1-0-6, 9 hits, 33 SSN for 15 attempts) does the same in the outfield. Jose Trevino is a good back up catcher, although he will not be needed there (3 0s, 9 hits, L-7). Mr. Hunt has some work to do replacing these guys in the near future, but for now he will struggle to get the best out of them as he tries to contend for the Mays Division title.

Finally, there are the young guys who are still developing. Eloy Jimenez took a big step backward due to injuries (1-0-0, 9 hits, L-9, 55 games). Luis Rengifo (1-0, 8 hits, 2 walks+22) and Brandon Marsh (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-6) have time to prove themselves but will contribute little this year. Jimenez has shown greatness in past years and can be counted on for the future; Marsh has some growing to do. Both will provide little this season, but they combine to portend great things for the future. This year will be frustrating, however, and the Rumrunners will find themselves asking "What If" on a regular basis.

Jimenez: What if

Defense: 5.0
Still above average but some holes.

Perez continues to sparkle behind the plate (C9 +6). Moreland is serviceable at first (1B4) but only for half a season. Madrigal, Moore, Lowrie, and Arroyo are all 2B7, with Kiner-Falefa (SS9) the best of the middle fielders. Franco and Flores are both 3B3. Perez and Kiner-Falefa save this infield from itself most days.

The outfield is stellar, however, with Marte, Cain, and Tapia all OF3. Marsh is an OF2, and Eloy just should never be allowed to put a glove on except when he is hitting.

Maracaibo will stay in games because its players can catch the ball and prevent unearned runs from putting games out of reach. But there will be days when infield grounders go clanking to the ground on both the left and right

Perez: Sparkles

sides of play, and when that happens, there does not appear to be good enough offense to fight back.

There is a good amount of usage on the roster. Managers

Bench: 1.5
Lots of players,
but not so many worth using.

who are used to making decisions tend to make them anyway, so expect the team to make moves even though the starters are usually better than the bench options. Madrigal looks to be the one option when a hit is needed or a lefty is on the hill.

Moore is a super-sub who can play anywhere but whose bat doesn't even qualify as "suspect." He does patch a whole at 3B when he plays on defense. Luis Rengifo hits better, but his glove is suspect this season. Most days it will be best to just let the game ride on the starters' shoulders.

This is not a typical Rumrunner bench in any sense of the word.

At first glance, this is a mess of players who all look alike on offense and defense. They don't hit for a lot of power, but there is pretty good speed.

3rd The defense in the infield will be a major challenge at first, second, and third base. The starters will struggle most days and the bullpen is challenged.

This is no surprise for Rumrunner management, but Ichiro Suzuki, Cole Hamels, and John Lackey aren't walking through that door – despite the deep run last year this is a team in transition, in the process of ushering in a new generation of Rumrunners – Diego Castillo, Isiah Kiner-Falefa, Sandy Alcantara, Dylan Cease, Eloy Jimenez, Nick Madrigal, Matt Manning, Brandon Marsh. They could be good again in a hurry, or they might go through some growing pains.

And yet, behind all of this is the prowess of Mr. Hunt. Somehow, we are betting the whole will be greater than the sum of the parts. It should be a dog fight for the Mays Division championship.

Ages of players on the Maracaibo roster, as of 07/01/2022:

38: Lowrie
37: Melancon
36: L. Cain, G. Holland, Moreland
34: Dolis, Kelly
33: S. Marte
32: S. Perez
31: Stratton
30: Flores
29: Curtiss, M. Franco, Lamet, D. Moore, J. Taylor, Trevino
28: Borucki, Di. Castillo, C. DeJong, R. Tapia
27: O. Arcia, Arroyo, Kiner-Falefa, Marquez, B. Zimmerman
26: Alcantara, Cease
25: E. Jimenez, Madrigal, Rengifo
24: Manning, Marsh

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

Hamels, Lackey, Suzuki: Not coming through the door

TQ: **19.0**

2021 gotham city BATMEN in review

Gotham City is looking forward.

by Anton Greenwald

2021 in Review
Final Record: 50-112 (4th, Mays)

Most of these review articles will dwell on the TBL team performance. I can't. Gotham City, hit by many injuries, collapsed. I am looking forward to the MLB performance of my players and what I can expect in the future. 2021 was a rebuilding year for GC.

What went right?

In 2020 we looked to rebuild our infield. That effort looks like it was successful. Choi at first (maybe Dalbec backup), Arraez at second, Adames at short (maybe Barrero backup) and Urshela at third. Infield utility Wade was traded in MLB and is doing well.

There weren't a lot of highlights for the team last year, though they did hit 201 homers and walked 676 times, leading TBL. Gio Urshela was the offensive standout with 24 homers and 27 doubles; three players had more than 40 doubles (Ji-Man Choi, Willy Adames and Mark Canha). Anthony Santander led the team with 26 homers, and three other players topped 20.

On the pitching side, Alex Reyes saved 13 games; the bullpen won 18, a bit over a third of the team's total wins. Matt Andriese won 7.

What went wrong?

For all its power, Gotham City hit .221 with 1,547 strikeouts (which remarkably was only third-highest in TBL). No regular hit more than .251, and four frequent players hit below the Mendoza. The team scored 688 runs and gave up 919.

The pitching staff was even more difficult. They surrendered 248 homers, and had a 5.25 ERA; the three principal starters (Duffy, Dobnak and Montgomery) went 19-43, and the remaining two (Wacha and Junis) went 4-29. The bullpen worked hard, but could only do so much.

3 Things

1. Reducing age. In 2021 we wanted to reduce team average age. Our first round pick, Lewis, for CF looked good until the injury bug hit. A possible replacement is a bust (Fraley) and Pham (CF for GC this year) is faltering. The rest of our outfield, Canha and Santander looks good in 2022 thus far. For dh we have Vogelbach (improving) and Stanton (getting older).

Urshela: Standout

2. Filling the need. In 2022 draft we filled the team's greatest need for a prime catcher and hope he will turn out to be a team leader. Meanwhile, our hope for this position two years ago, Tom Murphy of Seattle, is having a good start in 2022.

3. The pitching staff. Our best pitcher (Duffy) was injured last year and is still on the IL. However, three of the remaining starters are (in 2022 MLB) doing very well, and two spot starters may come through. The bullpen from 2021 fell apart and had to be replaced in this year's draft. Following the new relief staff is fun – seven are doing very well early in the 2022 MLB season.

In summary, Gotham City is looking forward to breaking .500 in 2023, maybe even grabbing a wild card slot, and competing at a high level in 2024.

gotham city BATMEN

Anton Greenwald (37th year, Hall of Famer)

Mr. Greenwald is surely rebuilding the team he wants on the field.

Building back can take a long time when the drafts are a little sparse. This year was not kind to Mr. Greenwald, who won 50 games last year and qualified for the fourth overall pick. Keibert Ruiz was a sweet addition to the Batmen. After that, however, pickings were slim and the Batmen had to content themselves with relief pitchers over and over.

But the pitching looks better than last season and the pre-season replays have the Batmen in last place but with 65 wins this year. Incremental progress comes from patience, and this Hall of Fame manager is known for drafting and following as his team progresses. It will be another tough year in Gotham City, but better days look to be forthcoming.

Pitching: 8.0
Pitcha, pitcha, pitcha indeed.

We live in a strange reality. The bats seem to have regressed a bit for the Batmen but the pitching arms represent a noticeable upgrade over last year. Mr. Greenwald will be in games more than he was last season, but may not be able to get the big hits he will need in key situations. The Batmen may not be the best fourth place team in TBL, but they will surely be in contention for that title as they begin to trend upward.

> Big 3, 2012:
> 93 starts
>
> Justin Verlander (Grade 17)
> Felix Hernandez (Grade 11)
> Philip Humber (Grade 10)

SNT: Keibert Ruiz.

Franchise catcher; pencil him in the lineup for the next decade.

Turnover Rate: 32%

Arrived: Sergio Alcantara, David Bednar, Nabil Crismatt, Jake Fraley, Tyler Gilbert, Ryan Helsley, Clay Holmes, Dillon Maples, Wily Peralta, Jose Ruiz, Keibert Ruiz.

Departed: Matt Andriese, Dellin Betances, Matt Carpenter, Randy Dobnak, Tom Eshelman, Sam Howard, Jakob Junis, Anthony Kay, Martin Maldonado, Chaz Roe, Ryan Zimmerman.

ROTATION. Five double digit starters for 81 starts with a Grade 8 for 32 more is a solid beginning. The two highest grades combine for only 18 starts unfortunately. Tyler Gilbert (Grade 15 HR+21, 6 starts) provides hope for the future. The injured Danny Duffy (Grade 14 HR+24, 12 starts) has to find a way to get into more games in the upcoming seasons. For now, these two give a half season of pretty good starts.

Two more short season starters are in the next tier for Gotham City. Wily Peralta (Grade 12 C-22 HR+14, 18 starts) and Tyler Alexander (Grade 11 C+23 HR-12, 17 starts) match up to provide one more quality full season guy. Jordan Montgomery comes off the injured list to return to his level of competency (Grade 10 C+12 HR+15) for 30 starts. Throw in Nate Eovaldi

Eovaldi: Baseline

gotham city BATMEN

(Grade 8 C+35 HR+33) for 32 starts and you have a nice baseline.

Eduardo Rodriguez gives hope for the future but little help this season (Grade 5, 31 starts), but he is better than Michael Wacha (Grade 5 HR-22, 23 starts). Five of those starters are lefties, which really messes with teams that are imbalanced with high shift lefty hitters.

BULLPEN. The draft found Gotham City patching, patching, patching his pen. Dillon Maples (Grade 22* C-62 HR+42) and David Bednar (Grade 17* C+15 HR+26) share 92 innings of late inning relief.

Bednar: Patch

The middle to late inning bridge finds five relievers contributing 300+ innings of more than respectable ability. Young starter Gilbert is available for 40 IP, followed by very wild Alex Reyes (Grade 16* C-62), somewhat flammable Ian Kennedy (Grade 14* C+23 HR-35), peripherally neutral Jose Ruiz (Grade 14*), and long ball stopping Clay Holmes (Grade 13* HR+35). Lefties Richard Bleier (Grade 10* C+56 HR+34) and Rex Brothers (Grade 10* C-62 HR+33) stabilize the middle innings, while Neil Crismatt (Grade 7* C+23) and split grade Alexander (Grade 6*) will keep the Batmen in games early. This is an effective pen that will keep the Batmen close and give their hitters the chance to win close games.

is youngster Bobby Dalbec (1-1-4-6, 9 hits, 2 walks). Luis Arraez will get on base to score ahead of those boppers (2 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks). The rest is a patchwork quilt of guys who had down years and others who have yet to make their way as hitters.

The three-way platoon of Tom Murphy (1-6-6, 7 hits, 4 walks, L+5 R-8), Robinson Chirinos (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+2 42s) and Ruiz (1-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42) works well behind the plate when the Batmen are hitting. Ji-Man Choi hits well enough to take some time away from Dalbec at first base (1-5-6, 8 hits, 5 walks+22, L-11 R+2), while Daniel Vogelbach remains an inconsistent question mark (1-6, 7 hits, 4 walks, L-15). Willy Adames made great strides (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks) at shortstop, and Gio Urshela will have good days at third base when he is available (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks). Tyler Wade also improved as a hitter, although his speed is still his best calling card (2 0s, 7 hits, 29 SSN for 23 attempts).

Sergio Alcantara needs to hit better to not be confused with Sandy (2 0s, 6 hits, L-10). n the outfield, Tommie Pham had a down year (3 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks), as did Mark Canha (3 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks+22+42). Anthony Santander is improving nicely (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks). Kyle Lewis took two steps back (1-6) in an injury-riddled season, Jake Fraley has a long way to go (1-6, 7 hits, L-9). These are not the Batmen of old. They *look* like the Batmen — lots of power and walks — but it is an engine not yet clicking on all the cylinders.

Offense: 6.0
A work in progress.

Mr. Greenwald loves his hitters. Unfortunately, he doesn't have enough of the quality bats he loves so well. Giancarlo Stanton is scary (1-1-6, 10 hits, 4 walks), as

Dalbec: Scary

Defense: 4.5
Below average.

This edition of the Batmen is going to be shaky in the field. None of the catchers throw well, and Chirinos is the only C8 for 45 games. Dalbec (1B3) will yield time to Choi (1B4), but the hitting will suffer when he does. Arraez is still a man without a glove at 2B7. Urshela

Lewis: Strong in the field

and Alcantara platoon with 3B4 ratings, but the latter cannot hit enough to stay in the lineup. Adames drops to a SS8 this season.

Lewis is strong in the field as the only OF3, likely spelling Stanton when he takes his clunky glove to RF. The rest of the guys are OF2s, and Pham is the best arm of the group.

Bench: 2.0
Not many moves to be made.

Mr. Greenwald notes in his instructions that his game limitations preclude too much usage of the bench. He is depending on the bullpen to keep him in games as the starting offense does its best to cope with game conditions.

There are some pinch-runners – Fraley and Wade – and having three catchers is a luxury. But there isn't very much that the team can do to counter opposing moves.

4th This is not a great team for the Batmen, and their TQ score and pre-season replay reinforce the idea that it is still evolving. The key for this year, however, is that it *is* evolving. Slowly but surely Mr. Greenwald is rebuilding the team he wants on the field.

His hitters need more success in the future, and he needs to shore up the defense. But the work on the pitching staff is starting to take hold this season, and next year's draft is going to give him and other TBL general managers a better field of hitters to choose from for the future.

It seems clear that the Batmen are not contending this season – though the TQ of the team isn't much different from those of the other reluctant contenders in the Mays.

It is not a stretch to say they could well be a force in the near future.

gotham city BATMEN

Ages of players on the Gotham City roster, as of 07/01/2022:

38: R. Chirinos
37: Kennedy
35: Bleier
34: Brothers, Pham
33: Canha, Duffy, W. Peralta
32: Eovaldi, G. Stanton
31: Choi, Murphy, Wacha
30: Maples, Urshela
29: Holmes, E. Rodriguez, J. Montgomery, Vogelbach
28: Gilbert
27: Akin, T. Alexander, Bednar, Crismatt, Dalbec, Fraley, A. Reyes, J. Ruiz, Santander, T. Wade
26: Adames, K. Lewis
25: Arraez, S. Alcantara
24: Barrero
23: K. Ruiz

TQ: **19.0**

Doesn't Take A Weatherman

There are tough divisions to predict; and then there's the 2022 Ruth Division. As Bob Dylan would say, it doesn't take a weatherman to see which way the wind blows.
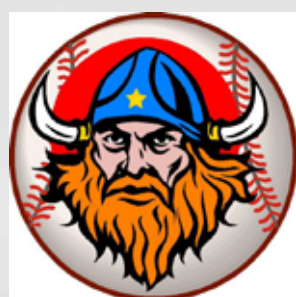
We know which way the wind is blowing this year: it's a strong wind pushing the *Brobdingnag Barbarians* to the front of the TBL scrum. They won the whole thing two years ago, dropped back to 70 wins last year, and now are loaded up with the best TQ in the league. They've got it all: pitching, a solid lineup, and, hey, extra stuff in the 2023 draft.

The best competition in the division is from the *Knoxville Blue Thunder.* The 2021 team wound up tied with the Barbarians; they didn't leap as far ahead as their rival, but *Pat Martin* has done a great job shoring up their club. The pitching is pretty solid, and there are some good bats.

Can they get to the post season? We certainly think so – just not likely through the Ruth Division pennant. They're plenty good enough to grab a wild card spot (since at least one International Conference division will contribute only one team to the postseason); but the team will have to step on the gas all season to make sure that happens.
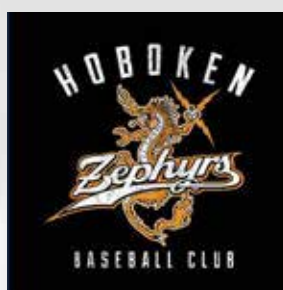
We haven't figured out how a team could lose 18 games started by Grade 23s, especially given the bullpen they had behind them. But it happened: one of the most dominant staffs ever was outfoxed by an offense that couldn't deliver. They didn't get past Maracaibo in the playoffs either. This year's club is better at the plate, but doesn't have anywhere near the pitching (though it's still pretty good). The numbers say they're way behind Knoxville, but far ahead of the last place team.

Which is, of course, the *Midwest Mongrels*. *Darrell Skogen* has taken the club apart in a big way, offering some of its key components to the Warrenton club in a draft day fire sale. What's left is less than inspiring – well, it's actually less than less than inspiring. The *Annual* staff (other than the Guru himself) thinks he got a lot, but didn't get enough for what he gave up. This version will be a big player in the 2023 draft, but they may be on the mat for more than one season as they look for the next group of key players.

Ruth Division

1. **Brobdingnag**   **38.0**
2. **Knoxville**   **29.0**
3. **Hoboken**   **23.5**
2. *Midwest*   **14.0**

Juan Soto,
Brobdingnag

2021 brobdingnag BARBARIANS in review

It was a strange year in Brobdingnag.

by Joe Auletta

2021 in Review
Final Record: 70-92 (T-3rd, Ruth)

It was a strange year in Brobdingnag, with the team showing some life in a year when they weren't a contender. This isn't really part of the Barbarian model: go big – very big – or go home. In 2021 there were too many talented players that weren't going anwhere; accordingly, this was a Jekyll & Hyde team, and the good parts made a fine example of overachieving.

What went right?

Brandon Woodruff reached the 20 win circle (20-7, 2.67 ERA and 13 complete games), and Walker Buehler (13) and Tyler Glasnow (10) also reached double digit wins. In the bullpen, Giovanni Gallegos recorded 22 saves on a 70 win team with a 2.66 ERA, though he did lose 8 games in relief. Craig Kimbrel and Casey Sadler also pitched well in setup roles.

Offensively the young outfield duo of Soto and Acuna made a strong statement that the Barbarian offense revolved around them (they combined for 73 homers, 205 runs, and 179 RBI and a combined OPS of 1.048). Manny Machado (.310-43-136, 58 doubles) and Mookie Betts (.276-32-76) also contributed to the heart of a potent offense.

What went wrong?

The Mr. Hyde parts of the roster were even scarier and more monstrous than Robert Louis Stevenson originally described him. The bottom half of the lineup had only one batter hit over .222 (part-timer rookie Luis Garcia), and

Woodruff: Won 20

combined for an underwhelming .542 OPS. Hitters who had been expected to provide punch deep into the lineup essentially disappeared for the year (Carlos Santana .156/.287/.272; Yoan Moncada .164/.232/.287). As a result the Barbarian run differential dropped from +434 in 2020 to -114 in 2021.

On the mound, past the three good starters, the pitching staff was troubled. Derek Holland went 4-16, 7.11, and Julio Teheran went 4-15, 8.86. Patrick Sandoval's record was 2-8, 6.46, but he only pitched for half a season. Past Gallegos, the bullpen was remarkably ineffective, with ERAs all over 4.00 and ranging into far higher numbers.

3 Things

1. Youth movement. Can some of the younger players step up and be productive enough to replace the veterans who have left since 2020? Young starters Patrick Sandoval and Luis Patino have a total of 15 games started — will they stand up to a being primary pieces of a starting staff in a pennant race?

2. Nelson Cruz. Can the 2022 version be a close enough imitation of the 2020 one? With Moncada gone, Santana having one foot in the retirement village, and Acuna out for the first half of the season, Cruz needs to have a "good enough" season to extend the lineup behind Soto and Machado.

3. Bullpen. The normal Barbarian recipe for contending is a dominant offence, excellent starting pitching, and a "good enough" set of relievers. This year the offense is good, not dominant. The starters are good, not excellent. But the relief staff is the best & deepest Barbarian bullpen ever. Can the Barbarians win with a different script?

brobdingnag BARBARIANS

Joe Auletta (34th year; Hall of Famer)

Mr. Auletta knows he has a team built to win a championship.

There appear to be two ways to approach a sudden decline in the fortune of a Ruth Division team in TBL. One way is the tear it up, big bounce approach. The other is the patient approach Mr. Auletta showed last year, when his starting staff and half of his offense were decimated by injuries. We said in the *Annual* last spring that many of the names were the same, and that is true again this year. But what a difference a year makes. This edition of the Barbarians is back to its Evil Empire status and will be a solid contender to make it to the World Series. This is a team that was built to contend for a long period of time, and this year things will be back on track for Mr. Auletta.

Pitching: 16.0
Best pitching in the league.

Let's see. You want to stay in every game and need good starting for that? No problem here with 154 starts of Grade 10 or above. Stud closer? How about two studs, Grades 30 and 22, for 105 innings. Oh, and don't forget that composite starter/reliever who gets 40 innings of Grade 26. Solid relievers to serve as a bridge to get to the closers? No problem — 437 innings of Grade 12-16. Only two wild relievers, and no relievers with a negative HR rating. Yeah, that is seriously good stuff. Good luck to anyone hoping to find any weaknesses in this staff this season. The best way to rally against this staff may well be to get a walk and then have back to back rare plays that lead to infielders and outfielders booting the ball around the field. The pitching is for real.

ROTATION. Suarez (Grade 18/26* C+15 HR+51, 12 starts, 40 relief innings) was the ninth overall draft

SNT: Ranger Suarez.

Suarez came out of the blue and put up what is likely a career year.

Turnover Rate: 33%

Arrived: Jake Brentz, Adam Cimber, Nelson R. Cruz, Dylan Floro, Rich Hill, Martin Maldonado, Tyler Rogers, Frank Schwindel, Justus Sheffield, Ranger Suarez, Ryan Yarbrough, Ryan Zimmerman.

Departed: Willians Astudillo, Tyler Bashlor, Javy A. Guerra, Will Harris, Cesar Hernandez, Phil Maton, Keynan Middleton, Yoan Moncada, Jojo Romero, Carlos Santana, Julio Teheran, Touki Toussaint.

Big 3, 2012:
92 starts

Michael Pineda (Grade 13)
Jhoulys Chacin (Grade 12)
Justin Masterson (Grade 10)

Buehler: Ace elsewhere

pick in the first round and solidified an already strong pitching staff as both a starter and reliever. Tyler Glasnow is limited to 14 starts in an injury-riddled season, but he is superb when healthy (Grade 18 C+11 HR+14). Walker Buehler (Grade 15 C+24 HR+24) would be an ace on many other teams, as would Brandon Woodruff (Grade 15 C+24 HR+22). Stephen Strasburg is injured again (what else is new?), but he is a shaky Grade 13 C-55 HR-23 (for five starts). Patrick Sandoval is another partial season starter, with 14 starts (Grade 13 C-25 HR+13). Rich Hill (Grade 11) and

brobdingnag BARBARIANS

Luis Patino (Grade 10) round out the rotation as a solid left-right punch for a combined 46 starts. This staff should go fairly deep into games—but the instructions remind us that there is a long, deep bullpen and starters will not last long if they get into even a hint of trouble. Oh, while we're talking here, remember that Justin Verlander is on the roster recovering from surgery this season.

BULLPEN. The Prince tells us that he want to use four relievers as closers, using them to get the final out in pre-ninth innings to snuff rallies, and then to be replaced by a one-inning ninth-inning save guy. Pick your poison as you do this. Casey Sadler stands out (Grade 30* C+16 HR+55, 40 IP). Suarez is a 26 with 40 more innings. Craig Kimbrel is solid (Grade 22* C-21 HR+22, 60 IP) and lefty Jake Brentz (Grade 16* C-61 HR+23, 72 IP) pairs with him to make a dynamic duo easily able to be a roogie-loogie combo before the ninth.

Sadler: Stands out

Getting to these guys is no problem for the Barbarians. Again it is pick your poison when the starter falters. Ryne Stanek (Grade 16* C-45 HR+16, 72 innings) is the weakest of the group because of the control issue. Giovanny Gallegos is strong enough to offset that alone (Grade 15* C+25 HR+32, 73 innings), but there are also Adam Cimber (Grade 13* C+36 HR+54, 73 innings), Dylan Floro (Grade 13* C+11 HR+54, 68 innings), and Tyler Rogers (Grade 12* C+41 HR+41, 81 innings). When there are better options in the pen, and at the first sign of fatigue, the starters are expected to leave.

Offense: 12.5
He's a tad humble.

Carson Kelly (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, L+10 R-8) and Omar Narvaez (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-1 R+2) platoon at catcher as young Joey Bart continues to learn his craft. Ryan Zimmerman (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) and Nelson Cruz (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22) share first base. Cruz, returning from a year in exile in Midwest, also platoons at DH with Brandon Nimmo (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks +22), who also platoons in right field with the injured Ronald Acuna (1-1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+42, 29 SSN for 23 SBA). Brendan Rogers mans second base (1-1-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22).Veterans Manny Machado (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 31 SSN for 15 SBA) and Carlos Correa (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks) hold down the left side of the infield once again. Juan Soto had a down power year in left field (1-0-0, 10 hits, 7 walks) but he gets on base. Mookie Betts plays most of the season in center in a less impressive year, but still – (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, 22 SSN for 16 SBA) and will be spelled more than adequately by speedster Miles Straw (2 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, 32 SSN for 36 SBA). At the *Annual*, we believe Mr. Auletta might be a tad humble about this offense. It will score plenty of runs, and given the stellar pitching the team will hammer many of its opponents into submission early and often.

Cruz: Back from exile

Defense: 6.0
Serious leather.

The only weakness in the field is at catcher, where Kelly (C7) and Narvaez (C8) both have weak arms. No problem, though, as Martin Maldonado (C9 Th+6) is there for the late innings.

In the infield Zimmerman (1B4) is the good news, Cruz is the bad (1B2). Rodgers (2B8), Correa (SS9) and Machado (3B5) are the back-

bone of a tremendous infield defense. Rodgers' glove is a particularly pleasant surprise – he could be a top glove for years to come.

Soto and Nimmo are OF2s, but Betts, Straw and Acuna are all OF3s. Betts still has a shotgun arm (35) and Acuna (33) is no slouch either.

Bench: 3.5
Platoons and some weapons.

The various platoons listed above allow Mr. Auletta to take advantage of shifts from inning to inning as games proceed. Let's not forget Maldonado for late defense, however.

The biggest toy on the bench is the hitting machine that is Frank Schwindel. The instructions

Schwindel: Machine

ask opponents to use him carefully (1-1-6-6-6, 12 hits, 2 walks, 64 G, 259 PA – a lot more than the average hitting toy). Also, Luis V. Garcia continues to develop as he provides depth at second and short (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks).

Clay's pre-play had the Barbarians winning the Ruth Division in all 10 replays, averaging 104 wins. This comes as no surprise for us, given the TQs of the opponents.

The Prince of Darkness is brooding in the lair with Vlad, worried about stiff challenges in the playoffs from Whitman, Knoxville and Strong City (but maybe he shouldn't be: this team is the whole package – pitching, power, on-base, bench). If management sees deficiencies, there is extra in the 2023 draft that could be used to fix them.

Rodgers: Outstanding

At the *Annual*, we can see past the evil eye.

We think behind all the subterfuge, Mr. Auletta knows he has a team built to win a championship. Not making it to the Series would be a serious stumble for a team this talented. Not to downplay the chances of the other teams in the International League, but this is a seriously well-built machine.

brobdingnag BARBARIANS

Ages of players on the Brobdingnag roster, as of 07/01/2022:

42: N. Cruz, R. Hill
40: Verlander
37: R. Zimmerman
35: Maldonado
34: Kimbrel
33: Strasburg
31: Cimber, Floro, T. Rogers, Sadler
30: Gallegos, Narvaez, Schwindel, Stanek, Yarbrough
29: Betts, Machado, Nimmo, Woodruff
28: Glasnow
27: Brentz, Buehler, Correa, C. Kelly, Osuna, Straw
26: Sheffield, R. Suarez
25: Bart, Rodgers, Sandoval
24: Acuna
23: J. Soto
22: L. H. Garcia, Patino

TQ: **38.0**
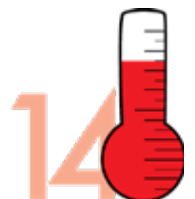
2021 knoxville BLUE THUNDER in review

Moments of loneliness and reflection.

2021 in Review
Final Record: 70-92 (T-3rd, Ruth)

The quiet gentleman from Minnesota has been with us for an amazing 35 years – he joined the league in 1987 as manager of the Ramstein Rams. In 3 ½ decades, Mr. Martin has done everything except win a TBL World Series. He's played in one – the 2008 World Series against Brobdingnag. He has won five division titles and made seven playoff appearances, but the top prize has eluded him.

The 2021 edition of the Knoxville Blue Thunder won 72 games and finished tied with Brobdingnag for third in the loaded Ruth Division.

What went right?

Gerrit Cole was a horse for Knoxville last year – 17 wins, 3 shutouts, 143 hits allowed in 233 innings. He's the definition of a #1 starter. Nick Anderson had a nice season as the closer – 25 saves and a 2.25 ERA.

Cole: Horse

On the hitting side, two guys had eye-popping power stats. Byron Buxton hit 32 homers in 100 games. Miguel Sano had 71 XBH including 35 homers in 561 plate appearances.

What went wrong?

The offense was a disaster for the Blue Thunder last year. The 201 home runs was in the middle of the pack, but the trots around the bases were moments of loneliness and reflection for Knoxville batters. The Blue Thunder finished 21st in the league in hits, dead last in walks, and 23rd in hit batters. The team on base percentage was .270.

3 Things

1. Any time now, Buck. Pat acquired Byron Buxton from Brobdingnag in a 2017 trade. Buxton has as much pure talent as any player in baseball, but he can't stay on the field. He's played 90, 124, 5, 87, and 100 games in the five years he's been with Knoxville. This year, his 1.005 OPS is spread over 64 games. Someday, this guy is going to win an MVP award and Pat's patience will be rewarded.

2. Take a walk. Knoxville has struggled for a number of years to get guys on base. In 2015, this team scored 936 run in a Division winning season. They had an OBP of .347 that year thanks to a blizzard of 1,666 hits. Since then, the highest OBP this team has posted in a full season is .326. It's tough to win this way. With that in mind, Pat drafted Colorado outfielder Connor Joe, who just happened to have the highest On Base Percentage of any draftee available this season. And he added the excellent Alex Kirilloff whose career minor league on base percentage is .367. This will help.

3. This year will be different. Knoxville's pitching showed up big time this year and they are heavy favorites to snag the second wild card slot in the International Conference. If everything works to plan, Pat gets an eighth opportunity to throw a scare into some folks this year.

knoxville BLUE THUNDER

Pat Martin (36th year)

Maybe he realized he couldn't catch Brobdingnag.

Mr. Martin's team is an enigma. It's loaded with talent, but doesn't always perform up to expectations. It's in a tough division that it's never won. One of the other three teams always seemed to be a step faster or a pitch better. This season, the team has a decent rotation and a deep bullpen. It has good power up and down the lineup.

While Knoxville has to face the powerhouse in Brobdingnag 14 times during the regular season, it's still positioned to make a run for the playoffs as a Wild Card, where as the saying goes, anything can happen. How far this team goes in the playoffs may depend on its bullpen use, as that's an obvious team strength.

But Mr. Martin always seems to hedge his bets. With a high draft pick in 2022, he could have taken a player who would've helped more than SNT Kirilloff, who didn't have a particularly good year, whatever his prospect status. Instead, Kirilloff was the pick. Maybe adding another Twin is more important to Mr. Martin than winning, or maybe he realized he couldn't catch Brobdingnag.

Pitching: 13.0
A solid staff.

While the rotation isn't overpowering, it bottoms out at a Grade 9, which is certainly respectable. The Blue Thunder has an ace in front of its rotation and four closer-worthy relievers, although several act as setup men. That's got to help over the course of the season. The most difficult part may be mixing and matching them on the 26-man roster.

The starting staff needs only six pitchers to fill out the season, meaning that all of them have 23 to 30 starts. That's unusual in today's game, but Mr. Martin isn't complaining. The stability in the rotation has allowed him the extra roster spots to stockpile relievers.

And overall, the bullpen is deep, with mostly positive peripherals when it matters. The pen

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Nick Ahmed, Connor Joe, Alex Kirilloff, Andrew Kittredge, Sandy Leon, Tim Mayza, Juan Minaya, Steven Okert, Victor Reyes, Eddie Rosario, Nick Solak.

Departed: Shaun Anderson, Jacob Barnes, Jake Cave, Patrick Corbin, Wilmer Flores, Grayson Greiner, Robert Gsellman, Jose Peraza, Nik Turley, Phillips Valdez, Tony Wolters.

Big 3, 2012:
79 starts

Luke Hochevar (Grade 8)
Brett Cecil (Grade 8)
Zach Britton (Grade 7)
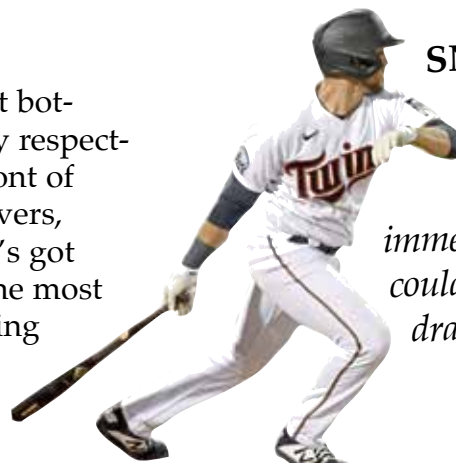
SNT: Alex Kiriloff.

At #8, Mr. Martin had his pick of prospects or immediate help, but he just couldn't resist the enticing draw of another Twin.

knoxville BLUE THUNDER

features an enviable mix of righties and lefties with 649 relief innings between them. Given the solid rotation, that depth provides plenty of coverage to pull the lesser starters and rescue games when needed.

ROTATION. Once again, the ace of the staff is Gerrit Cole (Grade 13 C+25), although he's slightly diminished this season. He's joined at the top end of the rotation by last year's SNT Tristan McKenzie (Grade 13 C-44 HR-21), whose peripherals may hurt him at times. That's 54 starts. The rest of the starts are covered by Kyle Gibson (Grade 11 HR+25), Nick Pivetta (Grade 10 C-22 HR-12), Tarik Skubal (Grade 9 C+14 HR-36), and Jake Odorizzi (Grade 9 C+13 HR-12). Skubal is the only lefty and the only one with an egregious peripheral. It's a solid staff.

BULLPEN. The two-armed closer is lefty Andrew Chafin (Grade 19* C+21 HR+41) and righty Ryan Tepera (Grade 19* C+14 HR+35). They're joined by set-up men righty Juan Minaya (Grade 18* C-46 HR+24) and lefty Steven Okert (Grade 18* C-16 HR-13). That's 206 innings of closer goodness.

Andrew Kittredge (Grade 17* C+42 HR+23) and Ryan Pressly (Grade 15* C+33 HR+41) provide additional set-up help with good positive peripherals. This bullpen is stacked! These two add 129 more innings to the upper end of the pen.

Cole: Staff ace, again

Middle relief is handled ably by Tim Mayza (Grade 13* C+25 HR+24), Caleb Thielbar (Grade 12* C+15 HR+14), and Trevor May (Grade 11* HR-15). Even the mop-up crew is good: Kyle Finnegan (Grade 10* C-31) and Brett Martin (Grade 8* C+41 HR+33). This team has the grades and peripherals to shut down opposing offenses.

Offense: 8.0
Outstanding power.

This team may go yard with regularity. Let's start with the amazing Byron Buxton (1-1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+42, 34 SSN for 10 SBAs, no shift). That's six power numbers for those of you scoring at home. And his second column has only three singles. While Miguel Sano (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-3) also has double 1s, it's an obviously inferior card, although unlike Buxton, Sano plays every day.

Then come a trio of power-packing players: Jorge Polanco (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 25 SSN for 17 SBA, no shift), Mitch Garver (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, L-8 R+4), and Ozzie Albies (1-4-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 24 SBA, L+5 R-4). Eduardo Escobar (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+2 R-3) fits nicely with this group.

Buxton: Amazing

Chafin, Tepera: Two-armed

Even usually light-hitting Victor Reyes (4 0s, 10 hits, L+6 R-5) has joined the four-power-number party. Connor Joe (1-5-6, 10 hits, 5 walks, L+2 R-2) brings power and patience, while Eddie Rosario (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 30 SSN for 14 SBAs, L-5)

adds power and speed. It's a nice combination. That leaves Alex Kirilloff (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+2 R-3) and Manny Margot (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 24 SSN for 21 SBAs, R-3). This team has outstanding power and some speed. The addition of extra walks to the lineup also helps. The only concern is the limitations, as Buxton, Joe, Garver, and Reyes have less than half a season to play.

Defense: 4.5
Changes in the later innings.

For the starting nine, at least, defense takes a back seat to offensive production. While Margot and Buxton are OF3s, Buxton's time is limited, and the rest are all OF2s. Albies is using his 2B9 at short, with Polanco (2B8) playing the keystone. Sano (1B3) and Garver (C7, but with a Th-4) are average at best. Escobar (3B3) is an accident waiting to happen. Of course, all that changes in the later innings, when Matt Chapman (3B5), Nick Ahmed (SS9), Harrison Bader (OF3) and Sandy Leon (C8, but with a Th-1) can come off the bench. Ahmed moves Albies to second, another upgrade.

Albies: at shortstop

Bench: 3.5
Can flash the leather.

Chapman (1-0-0, 7 hits, 5 walks, L+2 R-3), Ahmed (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, 30 SSN for 9 SBA, L+6 R-5), and Leon (2 0s, 7 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4 R-3) can flash the leather. Bader (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 27 SSN for 13 SBAs, L-3) is apparently waiting for Buxton's expiration date. Ryan Jeffers (1-5-5, 7 hits, 3 walks+22, L+2 R-3) will get his turn. Colin Moran (1-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-10 R+2) can pinch-hit. Nick Solak (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, 23 SSN for 12 SBAs) waiting in the wings.

2nd There's almost no chance that Mr. Martin's team, as good as it is, can catch Brobdingnag for the Ruth Division crown.

That said, they're head and shoulders above Hoboken and in the stratosphere compared to the Midwest club. A Wild Card playoff berth seems assured, and from there, it will be up to the team's power and the bullpen to drive home a championship. Stranger things have happened.

knoxville BLUE THUNDER

Ages of players on the Knoxville roster, as of 07/01/2022:

35: Thielbar
34: Gibson, Tepera
33: E. Escobar, Leon, Pressly
32: Ahmed, Chafin, Kittredge, May, Odorizzi
31: N. Anderson, Cole, Garver, Minaya
30: Finnegan, Okert, Mayza, Rosario
29: M. Chapman, Joe, Moran, Pivetta, J. Polanco, Sano
28: Buxton, Hader
27: Margot, B. Martin, V. Reyes, Solak
25: Albies, Jeffers, Skubal
24: Margot
23: McKenzie

TQ: **29.0**

5

2021 hoboken ZEPHYRS in review
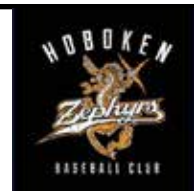
*The **Annual** was wrong.*

by Steve Powell

2021 in Review
Final Record: 89-73 (2nd, Ruth)

OK. We're big enough to admit it. The *Annual* was wrong.

Last year, the *Annual* did its evaluations, added its numbers and gave Dr. Steve Powell's Hoboken Zephyrs the highest rating in the book, one point ahead of eventual league champion Northboro.

Sitting quietly back in the TQ lists was Midwest – 28 points. But once the dice started rolling, they proved to be a better team than Hoboken in every department – hitting, pitching, even defense. Hoboken finished 9 games behind Midwest in the Ruth.

What went right?

The pitching was excellent, as one would expect from a team with a pair of Grade 23 starters at the top of its rotation. Trever Bauer and Shane Bieber combined for 32 wins, 24 complete games and 7 shutouts. Kenta Maeda won another 16 and had four shutouts. At the back of the bullpen, Grade 27* Devin Williams had 26 saves and a tidy 1.06 ERA.

On the hitting side Will Myers was the star, clubbing 48 homers with 90 XBH.

What went wrong?

Hoboken's offense, outside of Meyers' heroics, was pretty mundane. They scored 719 runs - 16th in TBL. They had a team on base percent-

Myers: Clubbed

age of .303 – right in the middle of the pack. In the playoffs, they beat a really tough Blue Hill club but succumbed to Maracaibo in six games in the conference semi-finals.

3 Things

1. Lead with pitching. Trevor Bauer's suspension for two years after a domestic violence incident is a major blow to this franchise. So Steve did what he usually does on Draft Day and stole Bailey Ober right out of Northboro's grasp. Pitching will continue to be a team strength here.

2. Load up for 2023. Steve Powell read the tea leaves before the 2022 TBL draft – the ones that said that picks after the third round were not worth the effort to draft – and moved resources into the 2023 draft instead. Hoboken has their 1, 2 2s, and 2 3s. Watch for this club to step forward next season.

3. Patience Required. Hoboken has two players who need to live up to their reputations and talent – Jo Adell and Aaron Judge. Either one of them could be a game changer for Hoboken if they can stay on the field and perform. Last year, Judge hit a sad .188 for Hoboken while terrorizing American League pitching all summer – OPS of .916 in Real Ball. That's a piece of the offensive puzzle Dr. Powell really needed. Adell – still only 23 – came up with fanfare and trumpets but has not performed well in the majors. Is this the year?

hoboken ZEPHYRS

Steve Powell (33nd year)

It still remains to be seen if this is the first year of a two year fall back.

Oh, how quickly the favored have fallen. After competing for the Ruth Division pennant in 2021 and ending with 98 and 89 wins respectively, the Mongrels and the Zephyrs face a huge drop in wins this season. Mr. Powell was the *Annual*'s choice to win the division last season with a team featuring tremendous pitching. Remnants of that staff are still in play, but injuries have limited their usage in the short term. The offense is aging, however, and the decline last season that resulted in a surprising second place finish should continue more rapidly in 2022. This was

Turnover Rate: 42%

Arrived: Jo Adell, Paolo Espino, Leury Garcia, Marwin Gonzalez, Derek Hill, Nick Maton, Tomas Nido, Bailey Ober, Caleb Smith, Drew Smith, Ross Stripling, Jose Suarez, Mason Thompson, Ronald Torreyes, Luke Williams.

Departed: Yancy Almonte, Albert Almora, Nick Castellanos, Yonny Chirinos, David Dahl, Freddy Galvis, Brusdar Graterol, Matt Harvey, Liam Hendriks, Travis Lakins, Andres Munoz, Stephen Piscotty, Daniel Ponce De Leon, Josh Reddick, Austin Romine

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Big 3, 2012 (Dallas Eagles):
92 starts

C. J. Wilson (Grade 14)
Dan Haren (Grade 11)
Erik Bedard (Grade 12)

SNT: Jose Suarez.

Hoboken was happy to get Suarez in the second round to fill out a rotation and provide a sound bullpen option.

not the season to find future gems in the draft, however, so the Zephyrs are in a holding pattern as they begin the process of getting younger.

Pitching: 11.0
The strength of the team again.

This is a good news-bad news situation for the Zephyrs. The pitching is the strength of the team again; unfortunately, it is not the quality of last year's staff as injuries and bizarre incidents in real life have wreaked havoc in Hoboken. Last season's big four had Grades 23, 23, 18, 18 for 108 starts. This year's big three are 17, 17, 12 for 57 starts. The fourth starter is a 7 for 21 more starts. Ouch. Seven quality relievers this season total 312 innings; last season there were two studs graded 22 or higher for 147 innings as well as over 500 innings of double digit relief. This staff is helpful, but it is aging, too, and feeling the effects of the many innings their arms have carried so well for so long.

ROTATION. Carlos Rodon (Grade 17 C+21 HR+24) is the staff ace, but he is only available for 24 starts. Next up is would be stud Trevor Bauer (Grade 17 C-0 HR-24) whose off-field actions limited him to 17 starts and has thrown his entire TBL existence into jeopardy for the foreseeable future. Last year's ace Shane Bieber

Rodon: New staff ace

(Grade 12 C+11 HR+21) also faced injury and is available for only 16 starts. Kenta Maeda (Grade 7 C+15 HR-12) also got the injury bug in a 21 start season. Suarez (Grade 9 C-11 HR+21) starts 14 times and gets 27 bullpen innings.The rest of the starters are average at best but get the Zephyrs to their start requirements: Paolo Espino (Grade 7 C+32 HR-22), Bailey Ober (Grade 8 C+32 HR-34) and Ross Stripling (Grade 8 C+16 HR-35) will all struggle to keep the ball in the park. Suarez and Ober have good upside, and Mr. Powell will be looking to add more pitching in the draft next season.

BULLPEN. With no top quality closer like last year, there is still a very good two-headed end of game alternative in the pairing of Devin Williams (Grade 18* C-62 HR+25) and Suarez (Grade 18*) for 81 total innings.

Williams: End alternative

Trevor Richards (Grade 17* C-11 HR-26), Caleb Smith (Grade 17* C-46 HR-21) and Drew Smith (Grade 17* C+14 HR-23) provide 160 innings of middle to late inning relief that is a bit scary in both command and gopheritis. Aaron Bummer (Grade 14* C-36 HR+45) will help, but Evan Phillips (Grade 12* C+16 HR+35) would be more help if he had more than 13 innings on tap for the season.

If they keep runners off the bases and balls in the yard, this is a group that can protect leads for Mr. Powell.

Offense: Oh boy.   6.5

We could talk about rust, but it appears the correct term here is calcification, as in these guys are getting old. Are the weaknesses here fixable, or should an all-out youth movement begin post-haste? The process has begun, as Josh Reddick and Stephen Piscotty were shipped to Midwest during the off-season. It's still a growing group of oldies whose best seasons might have passed already.

James McCann (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) is showing signs of decline at age 32. Backup Tomas Nido (2 0s) is on the roster for his glove and arm. Josh Bell appears to be returning to norm (1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks) but is 30. Donovan Solano (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42) platoons with Leury Garcia (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) at 2B at ages 35 and 31 respectively. Francisco Lindor (age 29) plays like he is 32 (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks).

Another platoon at 3B features 30 year old journeyman Ronald Torreyes (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) and 34 year old fellow traveler Phil Gosselin (0-6, 10 hits, 2 walks). The outfield is a mish mash of guys. The youngest, good bets for the future, are Josh Naylor (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) but limited to 69 games and rookie Derek Hill (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22 in 49 games). Wil Myers stays healthy for a full season at age 32 (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks), and 30 year old Aaron Judge is still awesome in his robes (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks). Starlin Castro is half a season of power-

Myers: Healthy

Judge: Awesome

less good OBP DH (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks). There is some serious rebuilding coming here, and very, very soon.

Defense: 4.0
Average with a few weak spots.

McCann (C7, Th-0) is declining, but Nido (C8 Th+6) is a great end of game player. Bell (1B3) and Solano/Garcia (2B7) are a problem on the right side of the infield. On the left, Lindor can still pick it (SS9) and Torreyes/ Gosselin (3B4) are there because Castro can't play solid defense any more. Judge and Hill (OF3) flash

Lindor: Picks it

the leather and have outstanding arms, while Naylor and Myers are OF2.

Bench: 2.0
Two youngsters, three veterans.

Nick Maton (3 0s, 9 hits) and Lucas Williams (2 0s, 9 hits) bring the upside of speed and super-sub quality to the bench at ages 25 and 26. It would be best not to say too much about Marwin Gonzalez (33), Jake Marisnick (31), and Jason Heyward (33). Gonzalez still plays everywhere, just less well and with no hitting ability any more; the fly chasers are still OF3 with speed but suspect bats.

3rd The Zephyrs chose not to totally clean out this season in a weak draft season. The question Mr. Powell will have to face is whether or not he is willing to take the big bounce in the future. If he does, there are some great names here who could speed up the process next winter. Bell, Garcia, Judge, Lindor, Solano, Bieber, Maeda, Rodon, Bummer, and Williams could all help accelerate the process of rebuilding if

the good doctor decides to take that plunge and send them where they could help contenders.

That is decidedly not how Mr. Powell goes about his business. What will happen is the kind of gradual buildup through the draft which will create a monster again about three seasons from now. When quality youngsters join the squad, and when they do, watch out for Hoboken.

With a stronger TBL draft in order in 2023, perhaps the astute Mr. Powell can make the switch on the fly in two years. It will be fun to watch, but it still remains to be seen if this is the first year of a two year fall back to the 60 win level for the Zephyrs.

hoboken ZEPHYRS

Ages of players on the Hoboken roster, as of 07/01/2022:

35: Espino
34: Maeda, Solano
33: Gosselin, M. Gonzalez
32: S. Castro, Heyward, J. McCann, Stripling
31: Bauer, L. Garcia, Marisnick, Myers
30: Judge, C. Smith
29: Bell, A. Bradley, Richards, Rodon, A. D. Smith, Torreyes
28: Brosseau, Bummer, Lindor, Nido
27: Bieber, Phillips, D. Williams
26: D. Hill, Ober,
25: Maton, Naylor, L. Williams
24: J. Suarez, M. Thompson
23: Adell

TQ: **23.5**

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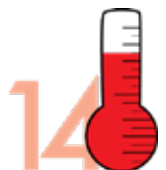
2021 midwest MONGRELS in review

Was this really the time to tear apart?

by Darrell Skogen

2021 in Review
Final Record: 98-64 (1st, Ruth)

The Dawgs successfully won ten more games than in 2020 and won the Ruth Division. They beat a tough Whitman team to make it to the conference finals before losing in seven games to World Series runner-up Maracaibo. In all respects, it was a good season for the team. But looking to the future, things were ugly, so the Guru and V-Mart decided it was time to start over from step one. Everyone was traded away, and while there are plenty of draft picks, 2022 will be painful.

What went right?

The team hit only .238, but five players cranked out 20 or more homers on the way to a team total of 234. Nelson Cruz (34) and Trea Turner (30) led the way, followed by Cody Bellinger (27), Eddie Rosario (25), and Edwin Rios (22 in 306 AB). Turner led all offensive players at .279/.332/.495, with 41 doubles, 6 triples, 36 SB, and 115 runs. Only Bellinger remains from this offense.

Davies: Led rotation

Team ERA dropped from 4.29 in 2020 to 3.09. The five main starters all won double digit games, led by Zach Davies at 16-11 and Jose Berrios at 15-7. Edwin Diaz headlined the relief staff with 32 saves, 6 wins, and a 1.47 ERA. Oliver Perez (0.71), Tyler Webb (1.87), Pedro Baez (1.98) and Chad Green (2.73) kept the Dawgs in games all season long. Davies is the only one returning in 2022.

What went wrong?

Bellinger hit only .227 and drove in only 64 runs in an off season. Josh Harrison (.211) and Rougnie Odor (.227) were a black hole at second base. Victor Reyes (.231) and Travis Shaw (.207) couldn't buy a hit in the clutch all season. And while Dustin May won 11, he lost 12, gave up 35 homers, and ended with a team worst 5.03 ERA.

3 Things

1. Was this really the time to tear apart? In truth, V-Mart was tired of playing with these guys. Even Turner, Berrios, and Burnes were not enough to hold his interest. He tore the team apart bit by bit as the winter wore on, and when the draft began, there was no there there. It's going to be bleak as the Dawgs battle for the number one draft pick in what they hope will be a great draft year.

2. No offense. There are lots of players who were once good, but they don't expect to be good in 2022. This team could set Midwest records in futility on offense, and they already did that with a 49 and 53 win back to back snafu before leaping to 93 wins a very long time ago. We are dusting off the record books to see those seasons return; fittingly, Frank Menechino from those days of old has been named the new manager of the team.

3. Pitcha, pitcha, pitcha? It's Shane McClanahan and not much else this season. Tony Gonsolin and Dustin May will start some in April, but their arms appear ready to fall off. Let's not talk about the bullpen.

midwest MONGRELS

Darrell Skogen (21st year)

Gone are key players.

The Mongrels made it to the seventh game of the International Conference Championship Series in 2021, one win away from the TBL World Series. Afterward, Mr. Skogen, aka The Guru, apparently decided the pieces no longer fit together the way he liked. Certainly, several players showed some age or ineptitude, which factored into his decision.

He may have started out wanting to trade away the age and keep the ineptitude in the first phase of his rebuild. But once the trading started, it took on a mind of its own. Trading away ancient Nelson Cruz made sense, but Eddie Rosario? Max Kepler? Corbin Burnes? Jose Berrios? The frenzy even extended to franchise cornerstone Trea Turner.

These were key players who'd helped him finish with winning records every year since 2018. Gone. In their places are cast-offs and prospects. Then Mr. Skogen stayed true to form by drafting a starting pitcher as his 2022 SNT. While some talent remains and future draft picks exist, this particular team will suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous defeats, again and again.

SNT: Shane McClanahan.

Mr. Skogen selected him with the tenth pick to begin his next rebuild. He might have been the most talented pitching prospect in the recent draft.

Pitching: 4.0
A plethora of bad grades.

Last year in the *Annual*, we labeled the Mongrel pitching staff as "talented, young, and deep." This year's version, not so much. Sure, last year's SNT is still here, and there are still seven pitchers who were born in 1995 or later. But not all of them will contribute to wins this season. In fact, many of them may not even be on the team in two years.

Such is the nature of a rebuilding team. Every rebuilder needs placeholders, and Mr. Skogen favors potential over anything else. Potential, however, can't win ballgames. In addition to a

Turnover Rate: 67%

Arrived: Shogo Akiyama, Jorge Alfaro, Willians Astudillo, Madison Bumgarner, Alex Claudio, Patrick Corbin, J.P. Crawford, Enyel De Los Santos, Wilmer Difo, Jeurys Familia, Sam Hentges, Trevor Larnach, Shane McClanahan, Daniel Norris, Stephen Piscotty, A.J. Puk, Josh Reddick, Victor Robles, Brent Rooker, Bryan Shaw, Joe Smith, Pavin Smith, Garrett Whitlock.

Departed: Pedro Baez, Jose Berrios, Corbin Burnes, Nelson R. Cruz, Edwin Diaz, Chad Green, Josh Harrison, Tommy Hunter, Max Kepler, Andrew Kittredge, Sandy Leon, Nick Margevicius, Oliver Perez, Cody Ponce, Victor Reyes, Edwin Rios, Richard Rodriguez, Eddie Rosario, Aaron Slegers, Kevan Smith, Trea Turner, Andrew Velazquez, Tyler Webb.

Big 3, 2012:
95 starts

Jeremy Hellickson (Grade 15)
Ervin Santana (Grade 12)
Jordan Zimmerman (Grade 10)

midwest MONGRELS

plethora of bad grades, this team features many poor peripherals as well, outside of their closer. There will be fun times had in Midwest; just not by the Mongrels.

ROTATION. The two best grades in the rotation belong to Dustin May (Grade 16 C+22 HR-23) and last year's SNT Tony Gonsolin (Grade 15 C-62). They provide exactly 18 starts. Then it drops to this year's SNT Shane McClanahan (Grade 10 C+15 HR+21), David Price (Grade 10 C+14 HR+22), and – once again – Madison Bumgarner (Grade 8 C+24 HR-16). That's about half the season.

The other half of the season has been left to the cast of Rent: Wil Crowe (Grade 4 C-33 HR-31), Zach

Bumgarner: Back again

Davies (Grade 3 C-35 HR-14), Patrick Corbin (Grade 2 HR-32), and Sam Hentges (Grade 1 C-26). Even if they finish .500 in its good starts, which is far from a given, this team could still lose 100 games easily just from a starting pitching perspective. The 14 season ticket fans aren't going to be happy.

BULLPEN. The closer this year is rookie Garrett Whitlock (Grade 15* C+32 HR+32). While he doesn't have a typical closer's grade, his peripherals will help him close out those few games when the Mongrels actually manage to gain and hold a lead. Bryan Shaw (Grade 12* C-42 HR+14) acts as the setup man. At least there are 150 innings between the two.

Jeurys Familia (Grade 9* C-22 HR-15) and Brooks Raley (Grade 9* HR+15) bridge the gap when the game is still

Whitlock: This year's closer

close. When it's not, it falls to Daniel Norris (Grade 5* C-44), Alex Claudio (Grade 4* C-22 HR-16), Joe Smith (C+43 HR+15), Enyel de los Santos (Grade 1* HR-31), and A.J. Puk (Grade 1* C-16 HR+41). Good luck with that.

Offense: 4.0
Not much power; less speed.

The good news is that four hitters in the starting lineups have as many as 10 hits: Eric Hosmer (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-4), J.P. Crawford (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-3), Pavin Smith (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-6 R+1), and Wilmer Difo (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-9 R+2). The bad news is that there is exactly one player with four power numbers. Ladies and gentlemen, your Mongrels clean-up hitter: Elias Diaz (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 4 24s, but 2 31s, no shift).

Two other power-hitting players in the lineups have a first-column 1: Willians Astudillo (1-0-0, 9 hits, 1 walk+42, 6 24s, but 2 31s, R-2) and Roughned Odor (1-0-0, 7 hits, 3 walks+42, L+3 R-3). OK, so there's not much power, but there's less speed. The only hitter with any useable base-stealing speed is Jorge Alfaro (3 0s, 9 hits, a walk+22, 34 SSN for 9 SBAs, L+4 R-3).

The rest of the hitters, and we use the term with caution, make the above players look like All Stars. Josh Fuentes (3 0s, 9 hits, a walk, L+3 R-3) at least has 9 hits. Trevor Larnach (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, L-8 R+2) at least draws some walks. Stephen Piscotty (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+3 R-6) at least can hit lefties.

That leaves Erik Gonzalez (2 0s, 9 hits, L+8 R-5), Shogo Akiyama (6-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+2 R-3), and Victor Robles (3 0s, 7 hits, 3 walks+42+22, L-4). The Mongrels may often need three hits to score a run, and

the chances of two in the same inning against good pitching is miniscule. And given the team's usage limitations, don't look for bench help.

Defense: 4.5
Making the easy plays.

The Mongrels have some standout defenders, including outfielders Akiyama and Robles (both OF3s), Crawford (SS9), and Diaz (C8 with a +6 arm). Hosmer (1B4) is above average at first, and Alfaro is only a C7, but he has a Th+6 as well, so no one will be stealing bases against this team; of course, they may not have to. Gonzalez (3B4), Odor and Difo (both 2B7s), and Piscotty (OF2) at least make the easy plays look easy. But Smith and Astudillo (both OF1s) will play as much as they can.

Bench: 2.0
Very limited.

The team is limited by usage, making the bench a decorative item. Several players can help, if they can crack the 26-man roster. Josh Reddick (5-6-6, 10 hits, L -11 R+4) is also an OF2.

Both Travis Shaw (1-5-6, 7 hits, 4 walks+22, L-5) and Brent Rooker (1-5-6, 7 hits, 3 walks+42+22, R-2) have isolated power, while erstwhile star Cody Bellinger (1-6, 6 hits, 3 walks, L-7 R+1), but an OF3, has fallen off the table (or the wagon, which may explain this card).
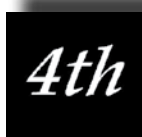
4th This team is the odds-on favorite to earn the first pick in next year's draft, although Munich will give chase, if such terminology is even truly appropriate.

This is a dramatic turnaround for a team that was one win away from the World Series just last year. Yet, true to form, it appears as if Mr.

Skogen will rebuild starting with the pitching staff, even in an era when starting pitchers can no longer be counted on to pitch in 30 games.

Crawford, Diaz: Standout

midwest MONGRELS

Ages of players on the Midwest roster, as of 07/01/2022:

38: J. Smith
36: Price
35: Reddick
34: Akiyama, Raley, B. Shaw
32: Bumgarner, Claudio, Corbin, Familia, Hosmer, T. Shaw
31: E. Diaz, Piscotty
30: Astudillo, Difo, E. Gonzalez
29: Alfaro, Davies, Fuentes, D. Norris
28: Gonsolin, Odor
27: Bellinger, Crowe, J. Crawford, Puk, Rooker
26: De Los Santos, P. Smith, Whitlock
25: Hentges, Larnach, McClanahan, V. Robles
24: D. May

TQ: **14.0**

22

2021 TBL world series

Northboro vs. Maracaibo

by Bob Jordan

Didn't see that coming.

Walter Hunt's Maracaibo Rumrunners and the Northboro Phoenix – co-piloted by the tag team of Steve Stein and Bob Jordan – locked horns in the 38th Transcontinental Baseball League World Series.

The paths taken by these two teams were stark in their contrast. The Rumrunners won more games than any team in the league in 2021 – 114 wins - finishing 30 games ahead of second place Rye in the Mays.

Northboro, on the other hand, had the appearance of an awkward teenager who wears shorts to the prom. Their 93 wins were fourth best in the National Conference. They won their division by 10 games over Warrenton, but really didn't put the division away until October. But the Phoenix were on a roll coming into this series – with commanding wins in their two playoff series over Gordon Rodell's Calusa Indians and Clay Beard's Hudson Generals.

Game 1 at Maracaibo
Hudson vs. Alcantara

Northboro caught a break before the first dice roll, as the 7 game series Maracaibo played against Midwest in the International Conference Championship pushed Grade 21 Dinelson Lamet to a Game 3 start. Alcatara was a tidy 9-3 in 20 regular season starts, but he was facing a Grade 19 Hudson, who was 12-4 this year.

Both starters earned their paychecks through the first 4 innings. Northboro broke through in the fifth with solo shots from Kole Calhoun and Jesus Aguilar. Mitch Moreland cut the lead in half with a solo blast in the 6th. That would prove to be the last word from the Maracaibo offense as ten of the

Hudson

next 11 hitters went quietly. Northboro tacked on 2 runs in the 8th and 1 in the ninth.

Northboro 5, Maracaibo 1
W: Hudson   L: Alcantara

Game 2 at Maracaibo
Anderson vs. Cease

Northboro sent their ace to the mound in Game 2. The Grade 20 Anderson had an extraordinary rookie year for the Phoenix, going 9-1 with an ERA of 1.43.

The Northboro offense did their part by jumping on Cease for three second inning runs. Then came the fifth, where the normally steady Anderson did his best Reggie Cleveland impression – two hit batters, a walk, and a double to the #9 hitter Orlando Arcia. After a sacrifice fly from Salvator Perez, the score was 3-2, and Anderson was on the cusp of fatiguing early. But Anderson got his feet back under him, setting the next 8 Rumrunners down in order. He finally fatigued when Perez nailed him for a double with one out in the 8th.

On came Grade 23* James Karinchak. Somehow, he allowed a single to Eloy Jimenez, but Perez was held at third. Then Karinchak did Karinchak – walking the next hitter. Bases loaded, one out, and the nervous systems on the two Northboro managers were on full tilt. They handed the ball to Matt Foster who struck out Marte and Schoop to preserve the lead. That may have been the most important two outs in the series. In the ninth, Arcia walked and stole second but Foster got Tapia and Gamel to end it.

Northboro 3, Maracaibo 2
W: Anderson   L: Cease

Game 3 at Northboro
Lamet vs. Senzatela

Maracaibo, down 2 games in the series, handed the ball to their ace Lamet, who posted a respectable 24-5 record during the regular season with a 1.70 ERA. Northboro responded with a whimper, sending Senzatela and his modest Grade 10 to the mound. The surprising result was a back and forth affair. Sensatella pitched four gritty innings while a strange collection of Northboro hitters spent the afternoon torturing Lamet.

The scoring started in the second inning with a walk to Dansby Swanson and a 2-run homer from Derek Dietrich. Maracaibo struck back immediately with a run in the third and two in the fourth, giving them their first lead in the series. But the bottom of the fourth started with a Swanson double, and he was driven home by another double, this one off the bat of Jesus Aguilar. With two outs and the score tied, Northboro's bizarro-catcher and leadoff man Anthony Bemboom stepped to the plate and channeled the ghost of John Zuber, hitting one of the most unlikely home runs imaginable. The score was now 5-3, and the Northboro bullpen took it from there, snuffing the relentless Rumrunners on 4 hits the rest of the way.

Northboro was up 3-0 in the series.

Northboro 5, Maracaibo 3
W: Castano   L: Lamet

Game 4 at Munich
Marquez vs. Cody

Northboro, no doubt grateful to see a human Grade 9 on the mound, jumped on Marquez immediately for a run in the first, with Aledmys Diaz driving in Brandon Belt with a 2 out single. That would end the Northboro scoring this night, as Walter Hunt brought in almost his entire bullpen to keep the game close.

Unfortunately for Maracaibo, the Diaz single ended the scoring for both teams. In fact, Cody threw a sloppy, nerve-fraying no hitter to complete up the sweep – 2 errors, five walks. The key moment came in the eighth, when Cody walked three straight hitters to load the bases. The Northboro Brain trust had a disagreement as to the correct pitcher to face Nick Madrigal with one out. In the end, they stayed with Cody and moved the infield in – and Madrigal hit into a fielder's choice with the runner cut down at home. Kiner-Falefa popped to third to end the threat.

Northboro 1, Maracaibo 0
W: Cody   L: Marquez

Some notes:

The last team to win a TBL World Championship while winning fewer than 100 regular season games was Walter Hunt's 1988 Maracaibo Rumrunners (97 wins).

Only one TBL World Series winner – the 1984 Shangri-La Nowheremen (74 wins) won fewer regular season games than Northboro (93 wins) – and their season was only 106 games long.

Maracaibo played 19 series in 2021 where they either swept the opposing team or were swept themselves. They won 16 of those 19 series.

Northboro played Calusa (110 wins), Hudson (99 wins) and Maracaibo (114 wins) in their championship run. They went 12-2 in the post-season.

And a personal note from Steve – This is my 60th year playing APBA, and I've played various other games over that time, and this is the first time I've ever won a game tournament. Very exciting! But I would not be doing this thing I love if it wasn't for Walter Hunt, who reconnected me with APBA and introduced me to APBA league play 33 years ago. Thank you Walter, for enriching my life.

No Contest

Not that we couldn't, or didn't, see this coming: the **Melrose Avengers** are back, and with a vengeance. Recovering from one of those 'everything went wrong' seasons, *Mark Freedman* has made All the Trades and added the one piece he needed to complete the master plan. The TQs tell the story: the master plan is pretty much a foregone conclusion. There are some very capable teams in the National Conference, though none quite measure up to Melrose. It's not certain that they can get past Warrenton or the tough teams in the Mantle … but they'll be a tough opponent no matter what.

Kansas is the second-best team in the division, and it has its strengths. Not to be repetitive, but we continue to respect *Bill Schwartz*'s ability to work with what he has. The **Koyotes** bring some pitching and some power to the table, but not enough in either case. Will they make it interesting in the Aaron? Sometimes, but the chances of catching Melrose are slim. Can they make it to the postseason? We at the *Annual* don't think they have quite enough.

Ah, the **Calusa Indians**. That's exactly what we said last year, and they went out and won the pennant and 110 games. We were dubious about their chances, so yay us. This year we predict more mediocrity, so based on our stellar track record *Gordon Rodell*'s boys will be in the World Series. Stay tuned.

It's back to the drawing board for *Paul Harrington*'s **Las Vegas Gamblers**, who had (by comparison) just about exactly the year we thought they would have – 108 wins and a shot at the big prize. That didn't happen due to a very good Hudson team that eventually lost to the ultimate winner, Northboro; so the Vegas boys have gone back to rebuilding. Never fear: they'll be back and will be better in the future.

Aaron Division

Marcus Semien,
Melrose

1. Melrose	**32.5**	
2. Kansas	**21.5**	
3. Calusa	**21.0**	
4. Las Vegas	**17.5**	

2021 melrose AVENGERS in review

World Series or bust. It's on

by Mark Freedman

2021 in Review
Final Record: 47-115 (4th, Aaron)

COVID is behind us, hopefully.

The 2021 team collapsed because of the shortened Major League season and all the restrictions brought on by the pandemic. It was a bane suffered by many in TBL. In 2022 many of the Avengers responded to a full MLB season. Hopefully all of this is behind us.

What went right?

What went right is more about the coming season than the disaster that was 2021. Most players rebounded from their off-seasons.

The 2021 offense was truly hit or miss: the club hit 226 homers, led by Ian Happ (43) and Matt Olson (43). Michael Brantley had only 21, but contributed 50 doubles and hit .275. Michael Conforto was the offensive leader (.281-27-71).

There wasn't much good news on the mound, but Tanner Scott did record 21 saves and a 1.54 ERA with 45 Ks in 47 innings.

The 2022 draft, weak by any measure, brought some valuable talent to challenge for the conference crown. Although we gave up Alejandro Kirk, we strengthened the team for this year. I think we made the best of a bad draft class.

Brantley: Contributor

What went wrong?

There isn't much that can be said good about the season that was 2021. We were outscored 685 to 882. 47 wins was well below expectations. The team hit .220 as a whole, I think hit might be too strong a word. Our 2nd round pick would end up being released and we had no 1st. It's a season best forgotten.

3 Things

1. Rebound. New Lineup, New Pitching, some old friends and we have a contender again. The recovery from last season is quite remarkable.

2. Is the cliff coming? Sure it is, and we embrace it. Will it be next season? Season after? Who knows? Health, retirements and eroding skills will bring it closer or push it out. Morton is 38, Donaldson 36, JD Martinez and Michael Brantley 35, and new closer Aaron Loup 34. 15 of 36 players are 31 or older. World Series or bust. It's on.

3. We still have picks next year. Not for lack of trying but there was no value in trading them for this year. There still is some youth in Jonathan India, Happ, Olson, Hernandez and some guy named Ohtani.

melrose AVENGERS

Mark Freedman (29th year)

The front office is already printing tickets to the World Series.

Mr. Freedman is not down and out for long. Last season was a low point with 47 wins. But the team featured a group of stars who had down seasons. If we take a longer view and go back to 2018, the Avengers bottomed at 63 wins, propelling them on to 116 wins in 2019 and 97 in 2020. Mr. Freedman chose to play the hand he was dealt last summer and wait for better days with proven players.

Those better days are back already, as his players returned to their normal level of play. TQ says he is the odds-on favorite in the Aaron, and the pre-play says it could be around 97 wins, with him winning the division nine times in the ten replays. Suffice it to say that we at the *Annual* do not have any worries that we are going too far out on the limb to predict this team will contend for the TBL championship.

Pitching: 14.0
Best in the National.

What a difference a year can make. Last year the Avengers had 20 starts above Grade 11, 72 starts of Grade 6-9, and 70 starts of Grade 4 or lower, including 46 of Grade 1. 432 innings of Grade 10 or higher relief, often wild, were not enough to offset that rotation. It's a whole new game this season, however, as the Avengers feature 100 starts of Grade 11 or better, and the

rest are Grade 7-9. Two pitchers have control issues, but none yield large numbers of homers. In the pen, there are 303 innings of Grade 15 or

Ohtani: On the mound

higher with no major wildness or gopher ball problems, backed up by 195 more innings of Grade 11-13. Yes, TBL managers, that is serious pitching. Pity the teams that oppose Melrose as they try to outslug Mr. Freedman's Avengers.

Turnover Rate: 39%

Arrived: Taylor Clarke, Ernie Clement, Josh Donaldson, Santiago Espinal, Jonathan India, Dominic Leone, Aaron Loup, Andres Machado, Reese McGuire, Zach McKinstry, Rafael Ortega, Richard Rodriguez, Pedro Severino, Josh Staumont

Departed: Jorge Alfaro, Chase Anderson, Asdrubal Cabrera, Steve Cishek, Zack Collins, Kyle Crick, Brandon Drury, Vimael Machin, Reyes Moronta, Chris Paddack, James Paxton, Anderson Tejeda, Rowdy Tellez, Tyler Zuber.

SNT:
Jonathan India.

Number two pick overall in the draft, India plugs the only hole Melrose had in its lineup.

Big 3, 2012:
88 starts

Jon Lester (Grade 13)
Ryan Vogelsong (Grade 12)
Alexi Ogando (Grade 11)

ROTATION. Shohei Ohtani heads the talented starting crew (Grade 14 C+12 HR+16, 23 starts). He is assisted very ably for 77 more starts by Charlie Morton (Grade 13 C+14 HR+26), Carlos Hernandez (Grade 13 C-41 HR+33) and Marcus Stroman (Grade 11 C+24 HR+33). 64 more starts come from Wade Miley (Grade 9 C+15 HR+22), Austin Gomber (Grade 9 C+12 HR-21), and Johan Oviedo (Grade 9 C-51 HR +15).

BULLPEN. On those days when the starters falter, the pen is well-equipped to pick them up. What is better than one solid closer? How about two, one lefty and one righty. Aaron Loup is the lefty (Grade 23* C+15 HR+61) and Dominic Leone is the righty (Grade 20* C-22 HR+52) and the two total 102 innings. There are 198 innings of options for late work to get to the closers: Blake Treinen (Grade 19* HR+34), Josh Staumont (Grade 17* C-24 HR+25) and Cole Sulser (Grade 15* C-14 HR+33). The early men provide another 195 innings more than adequately: Matt Barnes (Grade 13* HR-12), Rich Rodriguez (Grade 13* C+43 HR-0), Andres Machado (Grade 12* C-15 HR+21) and Wandy Peralta (Grade 11* C-16 HR+16). Starter Hernandez contributes 27 more innings as a Grade 12*. That's a darn fine bullpen too.

Offense: 12.0
Best in the National.

Usually a team is stronger on offense than the mound or vice versa. Not Melrose. As good as the hurlers are, the hitters can match them as well. That's fitting on a team where the best starting pitcher just happens to be the DH. Ohtani is awesome at the plate (1-1-0-0,

9 hits, 5 walks). Pedro Severino (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, R-5) and Reese McGuire (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-10) are a solid platoon at catcher. The first baseman is Matt Olson (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22) who hits and fields like a perennial All-Star.

Drafting India (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22+42) allowed Mr. Freedman to keep Marcus Semien (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) at SS. Josh Donaldson had a seriouscomeback season (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks+22) at 3B. When he needs to be spelled, there is Santiago Espinal (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks) waiting for playing time. An infield that hits for power and fields almost perfectly. Yep, that's a keeper. Surely the outfield must be weak? No, TBL friends. Exhibit A — Mickey Brantley in LF (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22). Exhibit B — the platoon of Ian Happ (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks+22) and Rafael Ortega (1-4-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) mans CF more than ably. Exhibit C — J.D. Martinez in RF (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks). Holy Moly, Rocky — that's a *lineup*, top to bottom.

Ohtani: At the plate

Defense: 3.5
A bit of a weakness.

Martinez (OF1) will leave the games often when the Avengers lead, yielding to Happ or Cole Tucker (OF2), but there is no replacement for India (2B-7). Curt Casali (C8) is better than both Severino and McGuire, but that Th-4 will keep him on the bench in late innings. Olson (1B5) and Semien (SS8) can handle the leather, and while Donaldson and Espinal are both 3B4s, Anthony Rendon (3B5) is sitting on the

bench begging to play more in a down year. In all truth, however, defense is not going to matter on a team that pitches and hits as well as this team will.

Olson: Top glove

Bench: 3.0
Could rate even higher.

Besides the obvious platoons available from the bench, the Avengers have Ernie Clement (2 0s, 2B6, 3B3, OF1, SS6) in reserve as well as Rendon (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 58 games). Zach McKinstry (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks) has some pop off the bench, as does Michael Conforto in a down year (1-0-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, OF2.) There are moves that will improve the team when bad splits need to be overcome as Severino/McGuire pair for 191 games, Donaldson/Espinal share 227 games, and Happ/Ortega 251 games. We think this bench could potentially rate higher than 3.0, but it's certainly a fair number..

1st On paper and in the pre-play this is clearly the prohibitive favorite in the National League this season. We usually only bet on the Gamblers here at the *Annual*; but if we *were* betting folks, we would put our money on the Avengers and the Barbarians in the Series. This is a seriously good team, and it is managed by a more than capable player in Mr. Freedman. If TQ is to be believed, the Avengers should perform well in the postseason.

We think that Mr. Freedman's front office is already printing tickets to the World Series and hoping to go all the way from the second worst record in TBL last season to champion this season — from almost worst to first. Anything can happen in a seven game series, so the *Annual*

cautions Mr. Freedman to play his boys hard; but printing those tickets is an expense that makes a lot of sense before supply chain issues make them too expensive to print late in the season.

Ages of players on the Melrose roster, as of 07/01/2022:

38: Morton
36: Donaldson
35: Brantley, Miley
34: Loup, J. D. Martinez, Treinen
33: Casali
32: M. Barnes, A. Rendon, R. Rodriguez, Sulser
31: Ortega, Semien, Stroman
30: Leone, W. Peralta
29: T. Clarke, Conforto, A. Machado
28: Gomber, Olson, P. Severino, Staumont
27: Espinal, I. Happ, McGuire, McKinstry, Ohtani, T. Scott
26: Clement, K. Wright
25: C. Hernandez, India, C. Tucker
24: Oviedo

Oh, they're assembled

TQ: **32.5**

2021 kansas KOYOTES in review

Always a bridesmaid.

by Bill Schwartz

2021 in Review
Final Record: 91-71 (3rd, Aaron)

Predicted by the computer pre-play to win 77 games and have only a 20% chance of making the playoffs via the wildcard route, 2021's 91 wins and wildcard berth could be considered another year of overachieving. For the sixth time in seven years, the Koyotes surpassed the computer's expectations. Fortunately, the *Annual*'s "What if everything falls into place?" was closer to what happened.

But unfortunately for Kansas, those 91 wins were only good for third place in the Aaron as Calusa and Las Vegas excelled all year and ended up with 110 and 108 wins respectively, relegating the Koyotes to a wildcard spot for the fourth time in six years.

2022's version should be another typical Koyote team - considering a .500 season a probability (at best), but hoping for an overachievement for the fifth year in a row.

Keuchel: Paced

What went right?

This year's Big Three, Dallas Keuchel, Cristian Javier and Sonny Gray conspicuously missed perennial ace, Max Scherzer, whose 11-14, 4.55 was his first sub-.500 year since 2013. The three posted a 46-26, 3.56 record, paced by Keuchel's 21-7, 2.84, 6 CG, 4 ShO. The 21 wins were the third most in team history. Brad Hand led a stellar pen with 42 saves (second most in Koyote history) and 1.41 ERA. No less than five relievers registered an ERA under 2.18. Workhorse Jonathan Hernandez appeared in 76 games, a franchise record, and had a respectable 3.17 ERA.

A somewhat below average offense was led by George Springer's 33 HR, 80 RBI, 101 R. Mike Moustakas chipped in with 26 HR, a team-leading 82 RBI, and a .500 SA. Jared Walsh also hit 26 HR, one of

10 double digit HR producers. But the most amazing stat was Pat Valaika's 27 HR (he of 5 HR in real life).

What went wrong?

Always a bridesmaid, never a bride is the mantra again: always a wildcard team in the playoffs under current management, and never a division title. And only once having advanced past the wildcard series, it was no different this time around. After holding off a strong Columbus club down the stretch to gain the second wildcard spot, Kansas faced 108-win Las Vegas and went down in 6 games.

3 Things

1. Results of the draft: In a notoriously weak draft and drafting in the #16 spot, the Koyotes were pleasantly surprised to see Michael Kopech still on the board. We look forward to Kopech teaming with Scherzer, Severino and Gray to form a strong starting staff in the future. The next two picks were intended to shore up the outfield. Both Adolis Garcia and Seth Brown will contribute to the offense in 2022 and hopefully in the future. After taking Kyle Funkhouser, the reliever with the most RIP, a platoon combo of 3B, Yu Chang and Jose Rojas were taken. The remainder of the picks, of necessity, were relief pitchers. See below …

2. Bullpen Dilemma. Like last year, the Koyotes entered the draft with severe relief problems (221 carryover RIP). But unlike last year, very few quality relievers were still there in the later rounds. Consequently, Kansas is left with no reliever above a Grade 15. Any possible late lead is in jeopardy.

3. Luis Severino. Possibly the best news is that Luis Severino appears to be recovered from TJ surgery and is poised to come back in 2023! And he is a Yankee!

kansas KOYOTES

Bill Schwartz (15th year)

They may win more than they lose, even if they don't make the playoffs.

Mr. Schwartz is committed to winning, which is a strength year after year as he builds his team. Picking SNT Kopech is a prime example: he's a player who helps this year's team, but has long-term potential to help much more in future years. Even when his team doesn't have the depth to contend for the division crown, let alone a World Series appearance, Mr. Schwartz still manages to put together a competitive team.

Kansas hasn't suffered a losing season since 2017, and even that year, they went 80-82, barely under .500. The most recent losing season before that was in 2014, when they still won a respectable 77 games. In all, the fact that they've only endured six losing seasons in 14 years, most of them coming in their first few years in the league, is remarkable. This year, Mr. Schwartz's team may once again win more than they lose, even if they don't make the playoffs.

> Big 3, 2012:
> 97 starts
>
> Ted Lilly (Grade 9)
> Randy Wolf (Grade 9)
> James McDonald (Grade 8)
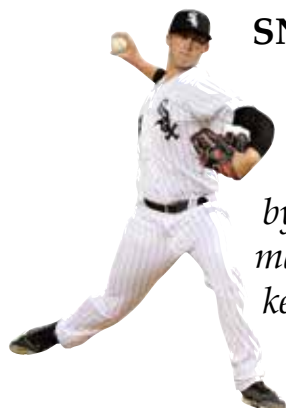
SNT: Michael Kopech.

He starts out in the bullpen, but he showed his promise by striking out 103 in just 69 major league innings. He's a keeper.

Pitching: 10.0
Capable, if not overpowering.

The Koyotes have a deep starting staff, at least in terms of numbers. They have to use nine starting pitchers to fill out the schedule, and only one of them starts as many as 30 times. The bottom end of the rotation is lefty-heavy and grade-challenged. It will be an up-and-down year for a team used to relying on a solid starting staff. Mr. Schwartz will have his hands full managing this staff.

The bullpen also has strength in numbers (of arms.) There's no real closer, but there will always be lots of alternatives. A more costly development, though, is that there are only seven peripheral numbers on the entire staff greater than +21. Meanwhile, there are eight peripheral numbers on the staff worse than -21.

Scherzer: Bulldog

ROTATION. This write-up starts, again, with the bonafide bulldog ace Max Scherzer (Grade 16 C+32), who takes the hill 30 times. He's backed by Aaron

Turnover Rate: 33%

Arrived: Seth Brown, Yu Chang, Kyle Funkhouser, Adolis Garcia, Michael Kopech, Kyle McGowin, Jose Peraza, Jose Rojas, Miguel Sanchez, Tayler Saucedo, D. J. Stewart.

Departed: Luis Avilan, Jonathan Hernandez, Kyle Keller, Andrew Knapp, Mark Mathias, Ryan McBroom, Nick Nelson, Nick Ramirez, Justin Smoak, Mike Tauchman, Pat Valaika, Ildemaro Vargas.

kansas KOYOTES

Civale (Grade 11 C+23 HR-25) and Sonny Gray (Grade 10). Nine starts belong to Cristian Javier (Grade 20 C-52 HR-14), four to SNT Michael Kopech (Grade 13), and two to Erik Swanson (Grade 13 C+23). That brings the total number of quality starts to 92.

The starters above are all righthanders. The southpaws fill out the rest of the rotation, but they'll need to be rescued. Brett Anderson (Grade 6 C+21 HR+16), Todd Smyly (Grade 6 C+16 HR-32), and Dallas Keuchel (Grade 3) may not even keep big lefty shifts out of the games they start. These are the games that have to be managed carefully. Fortunately, the team has a deep bullpen.

BULLPEN. With no real closer grade, the Koyotes will mix-and-match in the ninth inning. Wild lefty Chasen Shreve (Grade 15* C-45 HR+13) joins righties Javier (Grade 15*), Kyle Funkhouser (Grade 13* C-55 HR+32), and Kopech as would-be closers. Swanson and Kyle McGowin (Grade 13* C-26 HR-16) add some depth. All told, they have 288 capable, if not overpowering, innings.

The middle relief crew includes lefty Brad Hand (Grade 11*), Yimi Garcia (Grade 10* C+26), XC-carded Darren O'Day (Grade 10* C-13 HR-22), waiver wire pickup and lefty Tayler Saucedo (Grade 9* C-16 HR+52), and Miguel Sanchez (Grade 8* C-25). They add 185 innings, not nearly enough considering the bottom of the rotation.

Offense: 7.0
This team has some power.

Let's start with the big-time power of the right field platoon: the amazing George Springer (1-1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22) and Seth Brown (1-1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, L-9). Each has a handful of good SBAs as

Springer: Amazing

well. Jared Walsh (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-15 R+6) chips in with a middle-of-the-lineup card against RHPs, while Jose Rojas (1-6-6-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+4 R-3) contributes versus LHPs.

Kike Hernandez (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, R-3) and Adolis Garcia (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-3, 29 SSN for 21 SBA) play all the time. Yu Chang (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) and Tyrone Taylor (1-4-5, 9 hits, but 2 10s, 3 walks+42, R-3, 33 SSN for 7 SBAs) platoon due to playing time limitations.

The table setters have speed and include Jean Segura (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L+3 R-3, 29 SSN for 12 SBA) and lefty-killer Jose Rondon (1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+12 R-14). Chris Taylor (1-5-6, 9 hits, but 2 10s, 4 walks+22, L+4 R-4, 35 SSN for 14 SBAs is the everyday shortstop.

That leaves the decent catching platoon of Yan Gomes (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, but with 4 24s, L+7 R-5) and the rejuvenated Francisco Mejia (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42). Part-time DH Moose Moustakas (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-13) plays against RHPs. This team has some power, but there are only three hitters with as many as 10 hits. With hits and walks in somewhat short supply, this team may struggle to score runs.

Defense: 4.0
Strengths and weaknesses.

The Koyotes feature two OF3s in Russ Springer and Kike Hernandez (who is also a 2B8), but Springer plays just half the season. Jared Walsh (1B4), Jean Segura (2B8), and Yan Gomes (C8, Th+2) are all above average defenders. Francisco Mejia (C7, Th-1), Chris Taylor at short (SS8, as well as OF2, 2B7, 3B3), and Jose Rojas at third (3B4, as well as OF2, 2B7, 1B2) define the term 'mediocrity.'

The rest of the outfielders are OF2s: Tyrone Taylor, Seth Brown, and Adolis Garcia.

That leaves Chang (3B3) and Rondon (1B2, as well as OF2, 3B3, 2B7) as the glaring weaknesses.

Gomes: Above average

Bench: 3.0
It is what it is.

Playing time is apparently an issue, as the instructions call for no pinch-hitting or pinch-running. The two players on the bench, if they ever find their way onto the active roster, are Jose Peraza (1-5-6, 8 hits, 2 walks+42, L-4, and a quartet of mediocre positions) and D.J. Stewart (1-0-0, 7 hits, 5 walks+22, L-7, and a poor outfield glove). Not very useful. This is obviously not a contender's bench. It's not really a rebuilder's bench, either. It is what it is.

2nd While Mr. Schwartz's teams have overachieved in past years, there is absolutely no chance this team can catch up with the juggernaut that is the Melrose Avengers.

The *Annual* has been wrong about this team in the past, but we think we've got it sorted in 2022. There's a slight chance for a Wild Card finish. It's more likely that the Koyotes will hover around the .500 mark. That they may finish second in the Aaron Division is more a reflection of the other two teams in the division than a reward for its current talent. With bad luck, in fact, this team could fall into third place behind the Calusa Indians.

Ages of players on the Kansas roster, as of 07/01/2022:

39: O'Day
37: Scherzer
34: B. Anderson, Gomes, Keuchel
33: Moustakas, Smyly
32: Hand, S. Gray, J. Segura, Springer
31: Y. Garcia, Montero, Puig, Shreve, C. Taylor
30: K. Hernandez, McGowin
29: S. Brown, A. Garcia, J. Rojas, Saucedo
28: Funkhouser, Peraza, J. Rondon, M. Sanchez, L. Severino, D. J. Stewart, Swanson, T. Taylor, Walsh
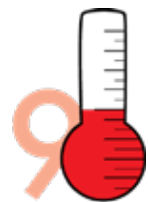27: Civale
26: Chang, Kopech, Mejia

kansas KOYOTES

Hernandez: Goes and gets it

TQ: **21.5**

2021 calusa INDIANS in review

Yes, Virginia, we have a plan.

by Gordon Rodell

2021 in Review
Final Record: 110-52 (1st, Aaron)

Sunshine, Lollipops and Rainbows
Everything that's wonderful is what I feel
— Lesley Gore

Whoa, no one saw this coming! No gloom and doom in Paradise in 2021. It was all Sunshine, Lollipops, and Rainbows. Repeat after me, never underestimate the power of monster cards again!

Needless to say, we exceeded the low standards set for the season. We won road games, in fact we led the league in road wins with 54. And we played all the games on the schedule. Mission accomplished. On to 2022. This year's goal, win more than we lose. Wildcard? Maybe yes, maybe no.

Freeman: Usual monster

What went right?

Freddy was his usual MVP self. Monster card/monster year; 70 doubles, 5 triples, 40 home runs, add in 114 walks versus only 97 strikeouts. and a .337/.445/.660 slash line. But this year Freddy had help. Jose Iglesias; 49 doubles, .307/.335/.441. Luis Robert justified his draft position: 28 home runs, 285/.343/.497. Jesse Winker 26 home runs, .252/.388/.522. Also, can't overlook late season trade acquisition Marcell Ozuna, .333/.389/.563.

The pitching staff didn't have the outstanding individual efforts, but as a group, they had the slug it out get the job done mentality. After their trade, Taijuan Walker and Mike Soroka made a combined 16 starts and went 9-1. Eight relievers combined to notch 47 saves. Reduced errors from 105 in 2020 to 88 in 2021 and a +211-run differential leads to Everything wonderful is what I feel!

What went wrong?

The playoffs. Their only consolation was Calusa beat Northboro twice in their playoff series. Since the Indians were the only team to beat the eventual champions in the playoffs, an argument could be made they were the second-best team in the 2021 TBL. You know, first place losers!

3 Things

1. It's déjà vu all over again. Or, "going all in doesn't work." See results from 2017 and 2021. Both times the team traded away next year's draft picks for pieces to Win it All! Neither time did the team advance to the Championship series thanks to Whitman and Northboro. The Minions have decreed, "We will never, ever do this again." Well, maybe never.

2. Yes, Virginia, we have a plan. In 2021, the team stumbled onto its strategy to compete in future TBL seasons. That strategy is stumble along a few seasons; *then* catch lightning in a bottle; then go back to stumbling along; *then* catch lightning in a bottle *again!* Hey, we didn't say it was a great strategy, but it is better than nothing. Right?

3. Uncle Albert. In 2021, Pujols became collateral damage in the team's run to the playoffs. The trade for Ozuna squeezed his playing time. But this is a new year and Albert needs 17 home runs and 100 total bases to pass A-Rod. Doable. Also, he needs 22 hits to pass Ichiro and 8 doubles to pass Helton. All In For Uncle Albert!!

calusa INDIANS

Gordon Rodell (8th year)

Can Mr. Rodell's team repeat the miracle of 2021? Hmmm, maybe not this year.
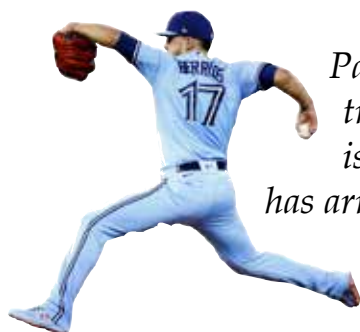
Perhaps "Heart" should be a category that the *Annual* measures. Calusa defied the *Annual*'s prediction of a third-place finish last year in a big way, winning a conference-best 110 games and capturing the Aaron Division crown. Was it just lucky dice? Was it the team's "serious leather?" Was it the arrival of Luis Robert, last year's Shiny New Thing?

Perhaps it was a miracle. How do you account for a rotation in which no one had a losing record, not even Grade 1 Rick Porcello? If not for the eventual league champion Northboro's charmed season, this team may have advanced to the World Series for only the second time in franchise history. Instead, the team has to step back and regroup. But they're not *bad*. Can Mr. Rodell's team repeat the miracle of 2021 and shred the *Annual*'s prediction for 2022? Hmmm, maybe not this year.

Pitching: 7.5
Good and bad news.

There's good news and bad news on this year's team. The good news is a solid rotation filled with Guys We Like. The oldest member won't turn 30 until August. Mr. Rodell has always had a weakness for good starters, and this edition of the Indians reflects that.

The real bad news comes from the bullpen. There's a missing closer grade, and in fact, the top end of the bullpen is rather light. Even if the starters perform

Flaherty: Former ace

well, this team may not be able to make the leads hold up. It's going to take some luck, or really big leads, to make up for this weakness.

ROTATION. The rotation this year starts with a half season of former ace Jack Flaherty (Grade 14 HR-14, 15 starts). Next comes two-way talent Cal Quantrill (Grade 13, HR+22). He starts 22 times and spends time in the bullpen too Then come SNT Berrios (Grade 12 C+25 HR+16) and Frankie Montas (Grade 12 C+15 HR+22). Taijuan Walker

Turnover Rate: 45%

Arrived: Miguel Andujar, Jose Berrios, Sam Coonrod, Camilo Doval, Matt Duffy, Joe Mantiply, Chris Paddack, Domingo Tapia, Rowdy Tellez, Rowan Wick.

Departed: Tejay Antone, Daniel Bard, Alex Claudio, Austin Hedges, Jacoby Jones, Trevor Rosenthal, Matt Shoemaker, Mike Soroka, Josh Staumont.

SNT: Jose Berrios.

Part of the Midwest trade-off-palooza, Berrios is a 27-year-old ace who has arrived to revitalize a rotation that's suddenly respectable again.

Big 3, 2012 (Greater Ohio Chia Pets): 90 starts

Cliff Lee (Grade 14)
Freddie Garcia (Grade 9)
John Lannan (Grade 8)

(Grade 10 HR-16) gives the team 130 double-digit starts.

calusa INDIANS

For the last 32 starts, Mr. Rodell is going with a tag-team strategy. A combination of Brent Suter (Grade 10 C+21), Sam Coonrod (Grade 8 C+13 HR+16), David Peterson (Grade 6 C-25 HR-15), Chris Paddack (Grade 4 C+34), and Josh Fleming (Grade 1 C+24 HR+23) make abbreviated starts, followed by a pitcher who usually throws from the opposite side. It's an interesting approach to these low-grade starts, but it's a gamble whether it will actually work. Still, we at the *Annual* applaud new ideas.

Robert: Standout

BULLPEN. Last year's team had at least a part-time closer grade. This team relies on Quantrill (Grade 16*), Camilo Doval (Grade 15* C+22 HR-14), and Pierce Johnson (Grade 13* C-24 HR+22). That's 112 innings, but Johnson spends time in the setup role too, along with Domingo Tapia (Grade 16* C-24 HR+54), Rowan Wick (Grade 12* C-62 HR+51), Peter Fairbanks (Grade 11* C-33 HR+51), and lone lefty Suter (Grade 10*). That's 283 innings that help keep the ball in the park.

The rest of the crew includes lefty Josh Fleming (Grade 10*), Sam Coonrod (Grade 8*), and Alex Colome (Grade 7* C+13 HR+16), who bring the total to 436 innings, which means the good starters need to pitch deep into the games, despite average fatigue. The mops, both lefties, at least steal homeruns: Joe Mantiply (Grade 6* HR+56) and Joely Rodriguez (Grade 4* HR+33). They add another 100 or so innings and may even be effective at times. Still, this is a pen in need of more depth.

Offense: 7.0
Less than impressive.

For the first time in recent memory, the team's offensive standouts don't start with their first baseman. Instead, this list begins with last season's SNT Luis Robert (1-5-6-6, 12 hits, 2 walks+42, 33 SSN for 7 SBAs, but L+10 R-5) for 68 games. Jesse Winker (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, L-17/ R+4) also turned in a superlative card for 110 games. A full season from either of these two would have helped.

Freeman: Perennial

Full-season contributions come from perennial stud Freddie Freeman (1-5-5, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, 28 SSN for 11 SBA, L-7) whose card seems a little off this year. Joey Wendle (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L-7) is another full-time performer, as is Trent Grisham (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, 28 SSN for 18 SBA).

The twin DHs Albert Pujols (1-1-0, 9 hits, a walk+42, L+8 R-11, 5 24s, but 2 31s) and Rowdy Tellez (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, no shift) offer isolated power. There's some additional spot power in Jason Castro (1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks+42, L-13 R+4) and Jonathan Villar (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 26 SSN for 21 SBAs, no shift). These two play all the time.

That leaves the table setters. Jose Iglesias (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 28 SSN for 7 SBAs, L+3 R-3), Garrett Hampson (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 28 SSN for 24 SBAs, L+5 R-4), and Austin Barnes (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-3) are overall less than impressive, but they'll play a lot. The team has some power and lots of team speed, but there are only three or four hitters you'd be scared to face, and then only if you have the wrong-side pitcher.

Defense: 4.0
No weaknesses.

Freddie Freeman (1B5) flashes his elite glove at first base. Joey Wendle (3B5) mans the hot corner most of the season. Grisham and Robert (OF3s) are highlight reels when they're out there. Iglesias (2B8) is above average at the keystone, and both catchers are C8s, although both have negative arms. Winker and Hampson are both average, as is Villar (SS8) at short. There are no weaknesses, but there's no extra help on the bench.

Bench: 2.5
Just some guys.

The best of the rest is Matt Duffy (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, 34 SSN for 9 SBA, L-3). He plays everywhere, but not well. Danny Mendick (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-3) can flash some leather (2B8, SS8, OF2, 3B4), but he's no better than the starters. Andrew Knizner (2 0s, 6 hits, 4 walks+42, L-12 R+3) will get playing time vs. RHPs. Marcell Ozuna (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks) is in limbo, and Hoy Park (3 0s, 7 hits, 4 walks+22, L+5 R-5) is still waiting to catch up to a fastball. They're just some guys.

3rd According to the very fallible TQ scores, this team is just a half point behind Kansas, so whoever finishes second may have better luck or better management. Neither team has any realistic hope of catching Melrose.

While Calusa has some definite strengths, they're outdone by the weaknesses on the mound and at the plate. They'll win their share of games, but it may not be enough to finish over 500. Of course, the *Annual* has been wrong before about Mr. Rodell's team.

Iconic – and still photogenic

calusa INDIANS

Ages of players on the Calusa roster, as of 07/01/2022:

42: Pujols
35: J. Castro
33: Colome
32: A. Barnes, Freeman, J. Iglesias, Suter, Wendle
31: M. Duffy, P. Johnson, Mantiply, Ozuna, Villar
30: J. Rodriguez, D. Tapia
29: Coonrod, Montas, Syndergaard, T. Walker, Wick
28: Berrios, Fairbanks, Mendick, Winker
27: Andujar, Hampson, Knizner, Quantrill, Tellez
26: Flaherty, Fleming, Paddack, D. Peterson
25: Grisham
24: Doval, Robert

TQ: **21.0**
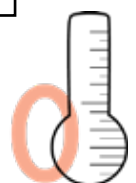
2021 las vegas GAMBLERS in review

Teams don't go 108-54 by accident.

by Paul Harrington

2021 in Review
Final Record: 108-54 (2nd, Aaron)

This was going to be The Year for the Gamblers. They'd invested in pitching and built up the lineup and, to be fair, they were very good: any season with 108 wins is, by definition, a good one. But the Calusa Indians were two games better; and the Hudson Generals were better than that. This happens in TBL (and in the real major leagues as well): a team gets to the playoffs at full steam and then gets stopped.

This year the team gets to pay for its investments. Calusa and Kansas are not as good, but Melrose has – once again – executed the Bounce with skill. There's nothing to do but hold on and get through the season. It's a long way from a train wreck though: there are still some good names and some good news. But it's a regrouping year for sure.

What went right?

The offense was pretty powerful. The team leader was veteran Robinson Cano (.319-28-104) – quite the swan song, as his future is unclear after being released by the Gamblers and the Mets. D. J. LeMahieu was outstanding (.346-13-76, 6 steals); Xander Bogaerts and Ryan Braun his 20 homers each; Adam Duvall hit 45 and Pete Alonso 31. Bogaerts also stole 17 bases in 19 tries, while Roman Quinn stole 26 of 27.

Lucas Giolito was a fine ace, going 17-9, 3.14, with 257 strikeouts in 224 innings. Zach Plesac went 15-2, 3.04. Shane Armstrong was 10-0 in relief, and Chris Martin was a lights out closer (45 saves, 1.42 ERA). The team ERA was 3.42, 6th overall, with 27 CG (second overall).

Cano: Quite the swan song

What went wrong?

Teams don't go 108-54 by accident, so things mostly went right. But 5 regulars or semi-regulars struck out more than 100 times, led by Pete Alonso's 163 (his 31 homers and 81 RBI came with a .208 average). Adam Duvall struck out 160 times as he swung for the fences, and he hit .224. Jon Berti and Josh Donaldson were disappointing.

3 Things

1. Do what comes naturally – or not. In years when the Gamblers fall short, they tend to take things apart down to the studs. This hasn't happened, at least not completely: Giolito, Mahle and Plesac are all still here, as are Alonso, LeMahieu, Bogaerts and the catchers. Some of this is expediency; have to fill the roster, and it's easier to fill it with people already here. But this is a bit of a departure.

2. Let's coast. The team is neither good nor bad. They will suffer from having to face teams like Melrose, Hudson, Rocky Mountain and Warrenton, but they might hold their own against the many teams who appear to be trying to rebuild in 2022. They could lose 100; they could go .500. It's a little hard to tell.

3. Focus on pitching. Adding Baragar, Gutierrez, and especially Irvin are all about reinforcing the part of the team that suffered from the transition from 2021 to 2022. They may have to go for some more in the next draft, but it's not a bad core.

las vegas GAMBLERS

Paul Harrington (26th year)

This is a year to regroup.

We have said this before, but we find it necessary at the *Annual* staff to say this *every* year: it's feast or famine with this franchise that is willing to roll the dice from season to season. The Gamblers were the favorites to win the Aaron Division last year, but in a close race Calusa showed lots of heart and played its way to the title. Still, it's hard to feel bad about winning 108 games and losing to a team that streaked to 110 wins. The Gamblers fell in the postseason to 99-win Hudson, while Calusa lost to eventual TBL champ Northboro. This season, as Melrose roars back to life after a year lost to injuries, Mr. Harrington's squad faces a regression in its pitching staff that likely will doom it to the bottom of the Aaron.
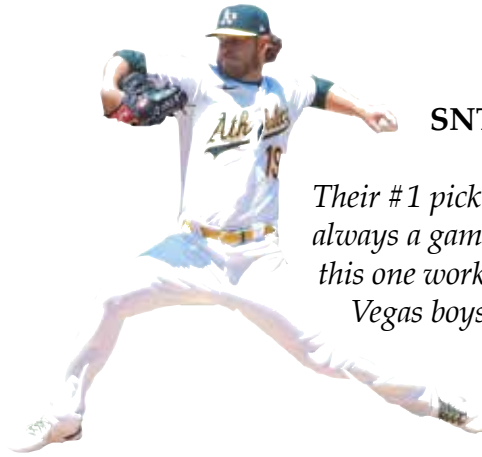
Pitching: 5.0
Average starters, weak bullpen.

The starting rotation is not truly bad, although it is a little wild and homerun prone. It has dropped off from last season's Grades of 17, 16, 16, 16, 15, 13, and 8. The real problem is the bullpen, which had good grades and dicey control last season. This year the quality innings have dropped from the 186 the Gamblers had at the top to 28 innings of a wild Grade 18. The middle of the pen, a strength last season, took a hit in both quality and innings. It's going to be a long season for the Gamblers.

ROTATION. Lucas Giolito (Grade 13 C+15 HR-13) and Tyler Mahle (Grade 11 C-0 HR+11) return as the 1-2 punch at the top of the rotation, combining for 64 starts. Zach Plesac (Grade

Giolito: #1

SNT: Cole Irvin.

Their #1 pick. Pitching is always a gamble, and let's hope this one works out for the Las Vegas boys.

Turnover Rate: 45%

Arrived: Albert Abreu, Caleb Baragar, Franchy Cordero, Yonathan Daza, Vladimir Gutierrez, Cole Irvin, Joe Jimenez, Travis Lakins, Phil Maton, Dj Peters, Brett Phillips, Andrew Stevenson, Ramon Urias, Justin Williams, Andy Young.

Departed: Shawn Armstrong, Steven Brault, Austin Brice, Zack Britton, Josh Donaldson, Oliver Drake, Ronald Guzman, Sam Haggerty, Jimmy Herget, Rich Hill, James Hoyt, Adam Kolarek, Aaron Loup, Jeff Mathis, Gabe Speier.

Big 3, 2012:
97 starts

Shawn Marcum (Grade 11)
R. A. Dickey (Grade 10)
Hiroki Kuroda (Grade 10)

C+26 HR-14) and Adbert Alzolay (Grade 8 C+23 HR-31) return as well, but Alzolay is badly prone to the gopher ball. Newcomers Cole Irvin (Grade 6 C+26 HR+14) and Vladimir Gutierrez (Grade 7 C-16 HR-21) fill out the staff. It's not horrible (and we *know* from horrible), but it is one that

las vegas GAMBLERS

depends on a strong bullpen to shore up its weaknesses. Unfortunately for the Gamblers, that is not going to happen this season. As Mr. Harrington points out in his instructions, starters will be stapled to the mound for five innings or until pounded because of the bullpen woes. The hoped for relief he was seeking in the waiver wire did not materialize, so this is what he has to go to battle with.

BULLPEN. So . . .we see Caleb Baragar as the primary closer for only 23 IP (Grade 18* C-31 HR+46, XC), followed by Albert Abreu (Grade 12* C-44 HR-33). Four middle relievers get the brunt of the work in close games, with only 217 total IP: Lucas Sims (Grade 11* C+13 HR+11), Tim Hill (Grade 11* C+15 HR-13), Joe Jimenez (Grade 9 C-62 HR+15), and Phil Maton (Grade 8* C-34 HR+32). Starters Elieser Hernandez (Grade 7 C+31 HR-44) and Humberto Castellanos (Grade 5 C+13 HR-13) work exclusively out of the pen in the early and middle innings, and Hernandez locks in as a caddy for Irvin. Last year's closer Chris Martin (Grade 5* C+46 HR+25) is also along for the cleanup ride. It will not be pretty on a day to day basis.

Baragar: We see

Offense: 7.0
A few good hitters with utility help.

The offense is the best part of this squad. It, too, took a downturn this season, but it is still pretty good on a day to day basis. The catching is solid for 112 games with Jacob Stallings manning the post (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-7), but too often Kyle Higashioka will play the entire

Bogaerts, Alonso: New year, same pictures

game (1-5-5, 7 hits, 3 walks, L+5). Taylor Ward provides some relief as a C5 with a better bat (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42). Pete Alonso is solid at first base (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42). D.J. LeMahieu is down a bit at second base both on offense and defense (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks), and late in games he slides to first with Jon Berti taking over second (0-6, 8 hits, 4 walks). Xander Bogaerts is still exemplary (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+42). In a comeback year, Kris Bryant mans third sack most often (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22). There is one good outfielder in Adam Duvall (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-7). Four others should rotate in and out based on splits: Andrew Stevenson (2 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks +42), Corey Dickerson (3 0s, 10 hits, L-4), Yonathan Daza (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) and Brett Phillips (1-4-5, 7 hits, 4 walks, L-14 R+4). Each can play between 100 and 120 games. There is a little power, a little speed, and a little on base strength there; again, it has declined from last year, but it gives the Gamblers the chance to stay in games when their pitching holds up.

Defense: 3.5
Some balls will clank.

There are some good defenders. Up the middle the Gamblers are strong with Stallings (C9) and Higashioka (C8) behind the plate, Bogey at SS (SS9), Berti (2B8) late in games replacing LeMahieu (2B7 1B4), and Duvall (OF3) in centerfield. The corner outfielders are all OF2s with arms in the low 30s. Alonso (1B3) will be replaced late, but Bryant (3B3) will stay in as

there are no better replacements on the bench. At crucial times, when the Gamblers will need good defense to get out of a jam, it is going to be very dependent on the roll of the dice as to whether the outcome is good or bad.

Duvall: Up the middle

Bench: 2.0
Some bench parts are available.

While there are plenty of platoons to be seen here, there remain some players on the bench who can plug in Andy Young has a nice hitting card (1-1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walk+2 42s, L+8 R-9) when the game is on the line. Ramon Urias provides supersub capabilities with a pretty good hitting card (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, SS7, 2B6, 3B3). Jackie Bradley should be prevented from coming to the plate, but that OF3 will get him playing time late in games. Justin Williams has no useful purpose, but that's OK given the rest of the bench.

4th Mr. Harrington is a tremendous manager who knows what to do with his players, even when he does not have the best of teams. But this Gambler squad will be a major challenge.

Clay's replay says the team should be around the 70 win mark, and that seems about right as we look at the cards. Still, it is going to take some hellacious managing in close games to make that happen. At the *Annual* staff, we are always willing to bet on Mr. Harrington's ability to get the best the card have to offer. This is a year to regroup, to replenish the team in the upcoming draft, one to take the mini-bounce back to relevance in 2023.

Las Vegas Gamblers

Roll the dice

las vegas GAMBLERS

Ages of players on the Las Vegas roster, as of 07/01/2022:

36: C. Martin
33: C. Dickerson, Duvall, LeMahieu
32: Berti, Bradley, Higashioka, T. Hill, Stallings
30: Bryant
29: Bogaerts, Maton, Quinn
28: Baragar, Daza, Irvin, Lakins, Phillips, Sims, Stevenson, Urias, T. Ward, A. Young
27: Alonso, Alzolay, Cordero, E. Hernandez, Jimenez, Mahle, Plesac
26: A. Abreu, Giolito, V. Gutierrez, Peters, J. Williams
24: H. Castellanos

TQ: **17.5**
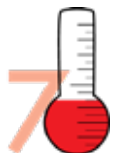
Down to the Wire

There is the possibility of a real barn burner of a pennant race in the Mantle this year. It's a two-team race, and it features last year's pennant winner and a team coming back from a 47-win season.

As usual, we go out on a limb to predict a first-place finish for *Clay Beard*'s **Hudson Generals**. Still, they have everything they need to get to the post-season. There's a solid pitching staff with the best closer in TBL and real aces at the top of the rotation; there are some serious hitters in the middle of the lineup – and on the Generals, 25 guys play as we know.

The challenger is the **Rocky Mountain Dragons**. *Dave Jaskot* is coming off a very bad campaign, and between the draft and some sharp trading, he's built a possible contender. Can they get past Hudson? We don't think so based on the numbers, but there's only so much the numbers can tell us. Last year the race wasn't really that close; we think it'll be lots closer this year.

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Hudson*	99	63	.611	—
Columbus	88	74	.543	11
Munich	62	100	.383	37
Rocky Mountain	47	115	.290	52

* Lost to Northboro in the Conference final.

The **Columbus Jets** are sporting a brand new logo this year. *Vic Vaughn* has some real talent on the roster, especially in the lineup, but in order to contend, they'll have to play a good way above the ratings the *Annual* has assigned. It's not impossible: that's why we play the games, after all – but it's a tough hill to climb for a team that isn't quite there.

Unlike last year, the **Munich Marauders** aren't coming off a contending season: they're coming off 100 losses, and are in for more of the same this year. Everyone and their cousin claims to be a rebuilder, but *Paul Montague*'s boys are the genuine article. 62-100 was nowhere near enough to snag the first pick in the 2022 draft. Lesson learned, we suspect. Though, needless to say, we in TBL (and at the *Annual*) probably have more to learn from the old master than vice versa.

Mantle Division

Kevin Gausman,
Hudson

1. Hudson	29.0
2. Rocky Mountain	27.0
3. Columbus	21.5
4. Munich	14.0

2021 hudson GENERALS in review

COVID friendly?

by Clay Beard

2021 in Review
Final Record: 99-63 (1st, Mantle)

Hudson's return to the board game after 27 seasons on the computer was a rousing success. The Generals got out of the gate 19-4, including a 14-1 stretch and coasted from there, holding off a late challenge from a game Columbus squad. They rode that early success to 99-63 to win the Mantle. So what's not to like? The Generals pulled off a major upset in the playoffs over the Las Vegas Gamblers before being swept in the conference finals by the eventual champion Phoenix.

What went right?

The offense was led by A.J. Pollock's .261-40-107. (He didn't have a chance to get injured in a 60 game MLB season.) First round pick Sean Murphy had a nice rookie season .258/.379/.510 with 22 dingers. Gregorius and Anderson both drove in 91, but with only .229 and .214 averages respectively. Lots of part time heroes with some COVID assisted shifts. Phillip Evans came off the bench slashing .348/.409/.470. Platoon player Hanser Alberto hit .342 and Luis Guillorme hit .311. And the strangest one. Only 3 months of work, but C.J. Cron batted 100 points over his real life average: .290/.414/.766.

But this team was carried by the pitching. This is what it looks like when a good rotation is backed up by a deep pen. We set a team record for fewest hits allowed at 1155 and had a 3.16 ERA, the lowest Hudson ERA since '91. Hudson also had the fewest HR allowed in the league. Brad Keller 12-5, 2.44, Justus Sheffield 13-6, 2.77, Gausman 14-3, 2.98, Clevinger 10-3, 3.24. Victor Gonzalez 0.99, 2-2, 14 saves, Rasiel Iglesias 7-2, 1.65, Jeremy Jeffress 2.71, 23 saves.

What went wrong?

Not much. On the downside, that pitching had absolutely no help from the defense, which committed a league high 158 errors, "led" by Sir Didi, who committed a team record 34 errors, surpassing Howard Johnson.

Pollock: Uninjured

3 Things

1. Where's Didi? Management was prepared to live with the bad offensive season, but then he showed up as a SS7. Surprise! But you know what else was a surprise? Freddy Galvis gets a 9. And he's conveniently on the same roster as Francisco Lindor. Plus, his change of address to Japan makes him not only available but relatively cheap. Welcome aboard Freddy?

2. Where's Clevinger? Where's Keller? Where's Sheffield? This made the selection of Chris Flexen's 32 starts the most obvious pick (though early) since Charles Johnson.

3. Where's the middle? It's a schizoid team. The Hudson offense is studly through the first six spots in the lineup, and then the opposing pitcher gets to take a breath. The pitching is similar. The top is excellent. Fastball Freddy Peralta, Gausman, Pablo Lopez and closing with Josh Hader. But then there's the three stooges. Former top performer Carlos Martinez is joined by Allard and Heaney for 51 starts of Grade 4 and 5. The key to the '22 Hudson season is how many wins can be squeezed out of the three stooges and the bottom third of the lineup.

hudson GENERALS

Clay Beard (38th year); Hall of Famer

Looking for two in a row.

Hudson had a terrific year in 2021, rolling the Mantle Division comfortably by 11 games over second place Columbus. They made it to the International Conference Championship against Northboro. Since Clay Beard doesn't sell off the future to contend, he's back with another contending team this year (largely the same as last year: only seven roster spots have changed.)

This time around, Hudson has a balanced club with power and good pitching… but the 2022 season is not without its challenges.

Pitching: 12.0
Two aces.

ROTATION. The starting rotation begins with Milwaukee Brewers youngster Freddy Peralta (Grade 19 C-21 HR+23, 27 starts). Peralta spent his first three years in the majors as a reliever, but last year the Brewers decided to try him as a starter, with magnificent results. Rocky Mountain – Hudson's main competition for the Mantle Division title – does not have anyone to match up with this guy. Peralta can be counted on for two playoff starts.

SNT: Chris Flexen.

A precious commodity in 2022: a full season starter.

Flexen will be under the microscope all year. He was a well targeted pick in the first round of this year's draft.
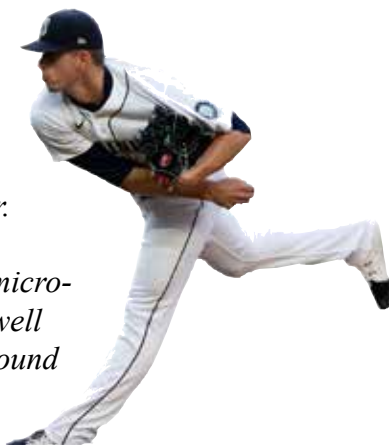
Behind the Ace is another ace. Kevin Gausman (Grade 14 C+23 HR+21, 33 starts) found a home in San Francisco last year, and rewarded the

Peralta: Magnificent

Giants with a full season of brilliant starts before cashing out and heading for Toronto. Pablo Lopez (Grade 12 C+24 HR+16, 20 starts) will excel as well. The top 3 in this group combine for 80 outstanding starts.

The most important pitcher on this staff may be righthander Chris Flexen (Grade 8, C+26 HR+22, 31 starts, 24 fatigue). Simply speaking, if Flexen finishes over .500, Hudson probably wins the Mantle. If Flexen struggles, Hudson is in trouble because the last 51 starts in this rotation are survival exercises starring Kolby Allard (Grade 5 C+25 HR-35, 17 starts, 26 fatigue), Andrew Heaney (Grade 5 C+14 HR-33, 23

Turnover Rate: 19%

Arrived: Jake Cousins, Chris Flexen, Freddy Galvis, Brad Miller, Nick Sandlin, Andrew Wantz, Tyler Wells.

Departed: Johan Camargo, Hunter Harvey, Carlos Martinez, Enoli Paredes, Wilson Ramos, Andre Scrubb, Justus Sheffield.

Big 3, 2012:
85 starts

Tim Lincecum (Grade 14)
Ivan Nova (Grade 10)
Brandon Beachy (Grade 10)

starts) and Carlos Martinez (Grade 4 C-21 HR+25, 16 starts). Not a pretty finish.

Clay knows this – his instructions call for relief help as early as the fourth inning for the bottom three.

BULLPEN. I suppose one must start with Josh Hader (Grade 30* C-33 HR+43, 59 IP). The asterisk seems a little redundant here. Hader is as good as it gets. Jake Cousins (Grade 21*, C-62 HR+23, 30 IP), Nick Sandlin (Grade 18* C-51 HR+43, 34 IP) and Rafael Iglesias (Grade 15* C+35 HR-16, 70 IP) comprise the setup crew, and there's just enough here – 193 innings of door-slamming, drive home safe relief.

The bridge crew consists of Michael Givens (Grade 13* C-34), Tyler Wells (Grade 13* C+31 HR-16) and Victor Gonzalez (Grade 11* C-36 HR+32). Andrew Wantz (Grade 9* HR-21) is also mentioned in this group in the instructions, but Hudson will be breathing pretty hard if they need Grade 9*s for key outs. There

Hader: One must

are 170 innings of decent relief here. This group is thin – and they will be under pressure because of those 51 ragged starts at the end of the rotation. There's a little bit more to help with that. This is a good pitching staff, and should keep them in most games, though there are questions.

Offense: 9.0
Top two-thirds stellar.

There are some question marks on the pitching staff, but there are exclamation points in this lineup. The anchor is DH C.J. Cron (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+42), who bats third in all lineups. Cron is just a tough out – he has a 42 on 61 and 41 on 62. He's followed by Dodgers slugger Max Muncy (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks+42).

Reynolds: Leadoff   Muncy: Slugger

The leadoff man is centerfielder Brian Reynolds (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks). Another Dodger, A.J. Pollock (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, 117 games) bats second. There's one other full season hitter with a plus card: second baseman Jake Cronenworth (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks). He bats sixth in most lineups.

There are some nice platoon players that spot up in different lineups. Darin Ruf (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks, L+3, 117 games) is very solid despite his R-4. J. D. Davis (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, 73 games) will produce for half a season. Luis Guillorme (0, 9 hits, 5 walks, 69 games) will finish the APBA season with far more at bats than the 132 he got for the Mets last year. The rest of the guys are just Guys. Many of them, like Freddy Galvis (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) and Sean Murphy (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42) are stellar defensive players who bat down the lineup. Andrew McCutchen (1-5-5, 8 hits, 5 walks, L+8) is strictly in the lineup against lefties. Brian Anderson (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L-16 R+3, 67 games) will be effective, but only against righties and only for three months or so.

The top two thirds of this lineup is stellar. Hudson is clearly better than Rocky Mountain on offense, and they should meet or exceed their run production of last year.

Defense: 5.0
Two defensive weaknesses.

In 2021, despite their success, Hudson was the worst defensive team in TBL committing a shocking 158 errors in the regular season. Things will be way waaay better this year.

They will catch the ball in the middle of the diamond. Freddie Galvis (SS9) will play all of his 102 games. The everyday second baseman is Jake Cronenworth (2B8). When these guys field their grounders, they will throw to 1B Max Muncy (1B5) with confidence.

The regular catcher is the excellent Sean Murphy (C9 Th-0). Two outfield slots are manned by A.J. Pollock (OF3, 33 arm) and Bryan Reynolds (OF3, 34 arm). The other outfield slot is occupied by either Andrew McCutcheon (OF1, 32 arm) or Darin Ruf (OF1, 32 arm). Randal Grichuk (OF2, 31 arm) is around for days when Clay can't stand it any longer.

Everyone on the roster plays third base, it seems. The best of the lot is Abraham Toro (3B4), Brian Anderson (3B4) and Hanser Alberto (3B4). But J. D. Davis (3B3) will spend a lot of time at the hot corner as well.

This is a decent defensive team and that should help the pitching.

## Bench: 3.0
A few tools.

There is a little power. Hector Alberto (4 0s, 10 hits, 1 walk, 103 games) has a decent card and plays three positions. Jonah Heim (1-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks) may hit a couple of homers if he ever plays. Didi Gregorius (1-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks+42) was a bright young talent at shortstop once. Abraham Toro (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42) will play some third, but not because of his bat.

Ages of players on the Hudson roster, as of 07/01/2022:

35: Doolittle, McCutchen, Ruf
34: Pollock
33: Quintana
32: Cron, Galvis, Givens, Gregorius, R. Iglesias, B. Miller
31: Gausman, Heaney, Muncy
30: Grichuk
29: Alberto, B. Anderson, J. Davis
28: Cronenworth, Flexen, Hader
27: Cousins, Guillorme, Heim, S. Murphy, Reynolds, Wells
26: V. Gonzalez, B. Keller, P. Lopez, F. Peralta, Wantz
25: Sandlin, Toro
24: Allard

hudson GENERALS

1st
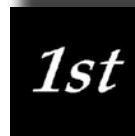
Rocky Mountain has deeper pitching overall, but no Grade 19 starter or Grade 30 reliever like the Generals – that makes lots of difference in the regular season and in the playoffs.

On offense, Hudson is clearly better and that should bring home the division for Clay Beard. We were actually right about this last year, so we're looking for two in a row.

Following tradition.

TQ: **29.0**

2021 in Review
Final Record: 47-115 (4th, Mantle)

Every once in a while, a team has a season where everything goes in the wrong direction. These campaigns of total capitulation are very painful, but necessary if you want to add the foundation talent that allows you to win in later years. Last year, four teams won 50 games or fewer in TBL – Gotham City, Rocky Mountain, Riverwoolf, and Melrose.

Fortunately, the Dragons were bad and young. The kids all got a year older. Dave had one of his best drafts despite the dearth of available talent. A couple of trades helped bring in players that will help this season. The story of the 2022 Rocky Mountain Dragons will be that of a team on the rise.

2021 was a year to eat broccoli and pay taxes…

What went right?

The pitching really wasn't all that bad. Zac Gallen had a remarkable year, with 31 decisions in 32 starts – he posted a record of 10-21. He had 4 complete games. Tyler Duffy had 25 saves in Rocky Mountain's 47 wins. Anthony Misiewicz pitched 48 innings with a nifty 1.29 ERA.
Overall, Rocky Mountain had a team ERA of 4.44, which was 15th in the league.

What went wrong?

In a season where the popcorn vendors and the ball girls had double 1s, Rocky Mountain hit a grand total of 157 home runs – only Riverwoolf

Misiewicz: Nifty

hit fewer. The Dragons scored 562 runs and hit .188 as a team.

On the pitching side, Mike Minor and Zac Gallen allowed 92 homers between them. As a team, the Dragons were out-homered last year 237-157.

They saved the worst for last. In October and November, Rocky Mountain went 8-34. They got swept in 6 of their last ten series.

3 Things

1. That won't happen twice. Dave Jaskot spent the offseason maneuvering and drafting a very nice set of players that will set Rocky Mountain on a course to a possible division title and a play-off spot. Their 2023 first round pick went to Northboro for slugging first baseman Brandon Belt. They traded with New West to acquire third baseman Ryan McMahon. Their draft included catcher Tyler Stephenson. This may be the most improved team in TBL.

2. Keeping their options open. Rocky Mountain has 3 #2 picks and 2 #3 picks in the 2023 TBL draft – and that looks to be a target-rich draft.

3. Timing is everything. Rocky Mountain is in the Mantle Division with Munich, Columbus and Hudson. Hudson is excellent again, and will be looking to build upon their 99 win season of a year ago. The other two teams, however, are living in the neighborhood that Mr. Jaskot just left. Those two struggling teams should help get Rocky Mountain pile up the wins and push them into the playoffs.

rocky mountain DRAGONS

Dave Jaskot (11th year)

This is a remarkable rebuilding job.

There have been a few teams that have recently moved from worst to first in a division in TBL. We have several masters of the Boom and Bust school of management in the league. We need not mention the names of Freedman, Montague, Harrington and Auletta – you know who you are. Last year, Clay Beard of Hudson and Gordon Rodell pulled off the floor to ceiling exercise.

It's rare, however, when a team goes from 47 wins to a division title. There's usually another step in there somewhere. Maybe a 70 win season where everyone finally stays healthy. But Dave Jaskot is not one to trifle with such intermediate steps. He won 47 last year. He's a Bona Fide threat to win the Mantle this year. Only Hudson can stop him. And this one looks to be close.

Turnover Rate: 36%

Arrived: Brandon Belt, Bryan De La Cruz, Deolis Guerra, Zack Littell, Collin McHugh, Ryan McMahon, Jose Quijada, Cal Raleigh, Dennis Santana, Jordan Sheffield, Tyler Stephenson, Taylor Walls, Kodi Whitley.

Departed: Cavan Biggio, Brett Gardner, Chi Chi Gonzalez, Tom Hatch, Reese McGuire, Ljay Newsome, Tanner Roark, Victor Robles, Pavin Smith, D.J. Stewart, Matt Strahm, Wander Suero, Jordan Yamamoto.

SNT: Brandon Belt.

A great hitter and top notch fielder. He really bolsters the lineup for three-fifths of the season.

Pitching: 11.5
They'll need to perform.

This is a big improvement both in the rotation and in the bullpen. There are some good starters and the relievers are led by a top notch closer. They'll need these guys to perform.

ROTATION. The Dragons' starting rotation does not have the towering ace that we like to see here at the *Annual*, but this rotation is solid.

It starts with two excellent lefties - Julio Urias (Grade 13 C+34 HR+21, 32 starts) and Eric Lauer (Grade 13, 20 starts). Both of these guys are well

Urias, Lauer: Two excellent lefties

under 30. Urias won 20 games for the Dodgers last year. The future is bright. They are followed by San Francisco righty Anthony DeSclafani (Grade 12 C+24 C+14, 31 starts). The top tier of this group has 83 starts between them.

Big 3, 2012 (Detroit Stars):
89 starts

C. C. Sabathia (Grade 11)
Chad Billingsley (Grade 8)
Francisco Liriano (Grade 9)

The Guy We All Want is hard throwing Arizona righty Zac Gallen (Grade 10 C-15 HR-14, 23 starts). This guy has staff ace written all over him. In his last year in the Pacific Coast League, he posted a 1.77 ERA.

Things get a little shaggy after the top 4. Kris Bubic (Grade 8 C-33 HR-15, 20 starts) has a workable grade, but the peripherals will be stress-inducing. Michael Minor (Grade 6 C+23 HR-14, 28 starts) and Jacob Woodford (Grade 6 HR+23, 8 starts) will struggle. The bottom 56 starts may not blow the fans away, but it is better than Hudson's rotation, and that may be all that matters.

BULLPEN. Bolstered by first round draft pick Collin McHugh (Grade 18* C+36 HR+45, 64 IP), it's playoff ready. Helping McHugh out with closing duties is Kodi Whitley (Grade 19* C+45 HR+51, 25 IP) and lefty Tyler Matzek (Grade 18* C-52 HR+45, 63 IP). The committee has 152 innings to clean up close and late situations.

The setup guys are spot starter Kris Bubic (Grade 16* C-33 HR-15), Tyler Duffey (Grade 15* C-34 HR+41), Zack Littell (Grade 15* C-15 HR+15), and Jordan Sheffield (Grade 16* C-36 HR+35).

There are 179 innings to act as a bridge to the closers. Altogether there are 331 innings of guys who steal 8s without help.

McHugh: Playoff ready

The long relievers are Jose Quijada (Grade 12* C-56 HR+34), Jacob Woodford (Grade 11* HR+23), Deolis Guerra (Grade 11* C+14 HR+14), Hansel Robles (Grade 11* C-43 HR+21)

and Dennis Santana (Grade 11* C-55 HR+35). That's another 246 innings of Grade 11 or better for a total of 577 innings.

This bullpen has good quality and good depth. There's enough here to offer support to the weaker starters.

Offense: 7.5
Much improved.

This part of the Dragons was not a strength last year. They finished 23rd in the league in runs scored (562), last in the league in hits (1002), and 23rd in the league in homers. They hit.188 as a team for the year. They did lead all of TBL in one category – strikeouts (1711).

Help was clearly needed, so they traded with Northboro for a truly great hitter – Brandon Belt (1-1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks+ 42, 97 games). Then, they drafted two outstanding young talents in outfielder Bryan De La Cruz (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, R-4, L+7) and catcher Tyler Stephenson (3 0s, 10 hits 4 walks, 132 games). Management made another trade with New West to bring over third baseman Ryan McMahon (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, R+1).

Stephenson: Outstanding

A few of these additions would have more impact if they played more games, but every decent card helps when you're shoring up a lineup as weak as last year's.

Franmil Reyes (1-1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 115 games) and the electrifying Javier Baez (1-1-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 30 SSN for 23 SBA) are back and have better cards this time. Then there's Three True Outcomes poster boy Joey Gallo (1-1-5, 7 hits, 6 walks).

There are lesser hitters that have power, like Sam Hilliard (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks) and

Nate Lowe (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 157 games). Michael Taylor (2 0s, 9 hits 2 walks, 26 SSN for 21 SBA) is the regular centerfielder. Tommy Edman (3 0s, 10 hits 2 walks, 18 Spd, 33 SSN for 35 SBA) adds some speed to the lineup.

This offense is much improved over last year. The TQs have it well behind Hudson, however.

Defense: 6.0
Among the best.

This team can field. The infield has Brandon Belt (1B5), Tommy Edman (2B9), Ryan McMahon (3B5), shortstop Javier Baez (SS9) and rookie Tyler Stevenson (C8, Th-3). Stephenson's arm aside, that is championship caliber. In the outfield, Joey Gallo (OF3, 35 arm) and Michael Taylor (OF3, 34 arm) are outstanding.

Baez: Big glove

Franmil Reyes (OF1) is in the lineup because of his bat.

According to the TQs, Whitman is the only team in TBL better than this defensively.

Bench: 2.0
Not deep.

Rocky Mountain is not a deep team. Most of the best cards are in the lineup.

Gary Sanchez (1-5-5, 7 hits, 4 walks, L+3) has some power, but can't field at all. Josh VanMeter (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, L+7) is usable against lefties, as is Gleyber Torres (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+3). That's about it. Hunter Dozier (1-4-6, 8 hits, 3 walks), Carter Kieboom (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42), Caleb Raleigh (5-6-6,

7 hits) and Taylor Walls (6-6, 7 hits) will struggle to find at bats.

2nd They are slightly behind Hudson because of their hitting and a weaker bench, but this is a remarkable rebuilding job by Dave Jaskot. The race should be a great one, and as we said at the outset, it's amazing to see it given the 2021 result for the team.

The question is whether the team is strong enough to stay with Hudson. They do have a little extra in the 2023 draft; and given the number of teams in TBL professing to rebuild, there may be things to obtain that can make a difference.

Ages of players on the Rocky Mountain roster, as of 07/01/2022:

35: McHugh
34: Belt, Minor
33: D. Guerra
32: DeSclefani
31: Duffey, Matzek, H. Robles, M. Taylor
30: Dozier
29: J. Baez, Sanchez
28: Gallo, Hilliard
27: Edman, Lauer, McMahon, Misiewicz, F. Reyes, Jo. Sheffield, VanMeter, Whitley
26: Gallen, Littell, N. Lowe, Quijada, D. Santana
25: De La Cruz, Raleigh, T. Stephenson, Torres, Urias, Walls, Woodford
24: Bubic, Kieboom

TQ: **27.0**

13

2021 columbus JETS in review

It looks like a long season in Columbus.

by Vic Vaughn

2021 in Review
Final Record: 88-74 (2nd, Mantle)

The Jets entered the 2021 campaign with hopes of capturing a wild card spot. Hudson was clearly the class of the Mantle Division, but we believed we could be competitive for a playoff spot. However, as the season developed, we just couldn't generate enough offense to push us past Las Vegas or Kansas. Despite having a -18 run differential, the final record was a respectable 88-74, and we fell three games short of making the playoffs marking our third straight year watching the post season from the sidelines.

What went right?

Offensively, the team really never jelled ending the season with a .228/.314/.403 slash line. There were some individual highlights. Lourdes Gurriel was the offensive MVP with a .281 average, 177 hits (including 56 doubles), and 307 total bases. Eugenio Suarez hit 40 home runs for the second consecutive season. Joey Votto continued to defy Father Time with 31 homers and 81 RBI. Overall, the team went 62 for 70 in steal attempts led by Kevin Kiermaier who swiped 23 bases.

Suarez: 40 HR again

On the mound, Aaron Nola led the team with 15 wins and had 243 strikeouts. Josh Lindblom parlayed his Grade 7 into a 10-7 record with a 3.34 ERA. Masahiro Tanaka went 8-8 and finished his TBL career with a 78-71 record. Closer Matt Wisler made the most of his limited availability posting 32 saves and a 1.68 ERA in 48 innings. The bullpen came through when needed helping us go 29-13 in contests decided by one run and 12-6 in those games that went extra innings.

What went wrong?

With nine hitters with substantial playing time hitting under .220, generating consistent offense was a real issue. There were 52 games where we scored two runs or less and yet somehow ended up with a winning record.

We were surprisingly poor defensively, committing 117 errors resulting in 74 unearned runs. The left side of the infield contributed 56 of those miscues (Suarez with 27 and Andres Gimenez with 29).

3 Things

1. The youth movement continues. With many of our older players transitioning into reduced roles or even retirement, the rebuild continued with draft picks Jesus Sanchez and Tylor Megill who we hope will be major contributors going forward.

2. The pitching staff. The Jets 2022 rotation will feature almost 100 starts of Grade 7 or less. We won't be stealing many hits. The bullpen has some decent grades and should be able to keep us in close games. The question will be how many innings they'll have to pitch with this weak rotation.

3. The 2022 outlook is bleak. When the season began, I thought this was a 75-80 win team. A 6-14 start in April has lowered the expectations. It's apparent both the pitching staff and offense have regressed significantly from 2021. It looks like a long season in Columbus and we'll almost certainly be on the sidelines watching the playoffs again.

columbus JETS

Vic Vaughn (16th year)

Lower TQ than it may play on the field.

After a successful season that saw his team win 88 games and barely miss the playoffs, Vic Vaughn is looking to retrench and reload in 2022.

Vic's decade and a half in the league has been a model of consistency – Columbus has won between 70 and 88 games 11 times in 15 seasons. Columbus is the new Council Squares. The problem with bobbing along like this – and there are at least a half a dozen teams that operate this way – is that you rarely produce a teeth rattling juggernaut that can win you a title.

On the other hand, the kind of ice bath that gets you a #1 draft pick – like Wander Franco – is also out of reach. Some folks prefer a calm life without the roller coaster that Las Vegas or Munich experience every year. *Vive la difference*.

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Anthony Banda, J.P. Feyereisen, Ryne Harper, Heath Hembree, Mitch Keller, Corey Knebel, Jorge Mateo, Tylor Megill, Dom Nunez, Harold Ramirez, Jesus Sanchez.

Departed: Austin Allen, Caleb Baragar, Ryan Brasier, Grant Dayton, Ross Detwiler, Brandon Kintzler, Jason Kipnis, Josh Lindblom, Masahiro Tanaka, Nick Vincent, Andy Young.

SNT: Jesus Sanchez

A solid young hitter who has excelled at every level. He certainly has the talent to become a star.
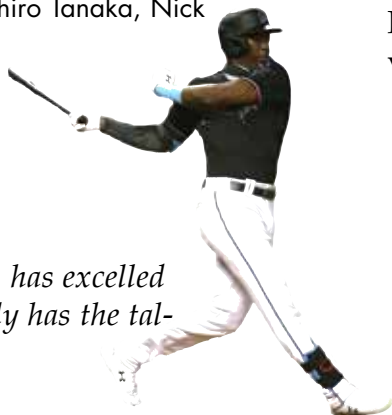
Pitching: Competent.   6.5

ROTATION. Collecting guys that pitch a lot in your starting rotation is a very important part of rebuilding. Columbus covers all 162 starts with just 7 pitchers. The question is – will any of these guys emerge as a #1 starter in the future?

Huascar Ynoa (Grade 10, C+22 HR-15, 17 starts) has the highest grade in the starting rotation, throws smoke and is only 23 years old - exactly the big upside talent Columbus needs. Ynoa needs to avoid punching the dugout wall when he gets frustrated – that happened last year, and he has struggled to return to form ever since.

Manaea: Young vet

Huascar is followed in the rotation by young veterans Matthew Boyd (Grade 9, C+16 HR+21, 15 starts) and Sean Manaea (Grade 8, C+26, 32 starts). The top 64 starts steal hits without help.

Then comes another 50 starts at Grade 7 from Aaron Nola (Grade 7, C+32, 32 starts, 25 fatigue) and Tylor Megill (Grade 7, C+15 HR-33, 18 starts). Nola had a very strange season with the Phillies where his ERA

Big 3, 2012:
88 starts

Wandy Rodriguez (Grade 10)
Brandon McCarthy (Grade 9)
Daniel Hudson (Grade 9)

columbus JETS

was almost a point and a half higher than his FIP. This seemed to be a combination of bad luck (BABIP was up), bad defense (Philadelphia can't field at all) and an issue stranding runners. At 28, a bounce back season seems likely.

Merrill Kelly (Grade 6, C+25, 27 starts) and J. T. Brubaker (Grade 5, C+16 HR-34, 24 starts) eat up the last 51 starts. There are better days ahead for this group of pitchers.

BULLPEN. It's competent, particularly for a rebuilding team. There are two closers – rookie J.P. Feyereisen (Grade 18*, C-62 HR+31, 56 IP) and grizzled veteran Corey Knebel (Grade 18*, HR+32, 26 IP). The 82 innings of Grade 18*+ relief will be plenty – and there's substantial help in the middle innings to set these guys up.

Jeffrey Springs (Grade 14*, C+14 HR-32, 45 IP) and the very talented Daniel Hudson (Grade 13*, C+15 HR-15, 52 IP) steal 8s without help for 97 innings.

Then comes a wave of middle men. Ryne Harper (Grade 12*, C-13 HR-21, 36 IP), Matt Wisler (Grade 11*, C+32, 49 IP), former starter Michael Fullmer (Grade 10*, C+23 HR+23, 57 IP), Taylor Rogers (Grade 10*, C+42 HR+24, 40 IP), Heath Hembree (Grade 9*, C-21 HR-32, 58 IP), Ross Detwiler (Grade 9*, HR-24, 52 IP) and JB Wendelken (Grade 8*, C-25 HR+31, 44 IP) bring bulk to the pen. There are 336 innings here.

Adding it all up, there are 525 innings in this relief staff – all of it above Grade 8. This will help the starters.

Offense: 8.0
Solid, then annoying.

Last year, Columbus scored 702 runs for the season - they were 16th in the league. In the first round of the 2022 draft, the team selected 25 year old Jesus Sanchez (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 64 games). This is the middle of the order stud that the Jets really need.

Votto: Comeback

There are three other scary cards. Rhys Hoskins (1-1-0-0-0, 9 hits 4 walks, 107 games) only needs to stay healthy to become one of the best hitters in the league.

Joey Votto (1-1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks, L-10 R+3) had a sweet comeback season for the Reds, and the team really reaps the benefits here. Ketel Marte (1-5-6-6, 11 hits 3 walks, 90 games, L+9, R-6) also will leave a dent, but mainly against lefties where he is a terror.

Dylan Carlson (1-4-6, 9 hits 3 walks+42) is the everyday leadoff man. Lourdes Gurriel (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks) bats either fourth or fifth all year. LaMonte Wade (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-17 R+1) will platoon against righties.

The bottom part of the lineup has some lesser cards. Elvis Andrus (0-6, 9 hits 2 walks, 33 SSN for 14 SBA) and Tucker Barnhart (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) are the regulars at shortstop and catcher. It's hard to believe that Andrus will be 34 this year. Gino Suarez (1-0-0-0, 7 hits, 4 walks, 145 games) and Jorge Mateo (3 0s, 9 hit,s 2 walks+42, 30 SSN for 13 SBA) play a lot, and will have their days.

Gurriel: 4th or 5th

The lineup is solid through the middle of the order, but there will be days when the weaker cards later in the lineup become annoying. This team is fast, so getting the most lout of their baserunners will be important. Meanwhile, Columbus is waiting for Jesus.

Defense: 4.0
Dead average.

Barnhart: Terrific

There are two exceptional defenders in the starting line-ups. Tucker Barnhart (C9, Th-1) is terrific behind the dish. Lourdes Gurriel (OF3, 35 arm) catches everything and has an excellent arm. Kevin Kiermaier (OF3, 37 arm) is a top shelf defender, but he is not a starter.

Most of the errors will come from Elvis Andrus (SS8), and Ketel Marte (OF2, 2B7, 31 arm). Jorge Mateo (2B7, OF2, 33 arm) will also see time at second. These guys are average players with the leather.

Gino Suarez (3B4) and Joey Votto (1B4) man the corners, and they'll be ok. In addition to Gurriel, Dylan Carlson (OF2, 30 arm) and Jesus Sanchez (OF2, 31 arm) are adequate but not inspiring.

This is a dead average defensive team.

Bench: 3.0
Some assets.

There are some assets on the bench. Jorge Soler (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks) has power and will be effective against lefties (L+2) in spots. Soler flashed his talent in 2019 when he hit 48 HR, and he's got the type of jaw-dropping power that will defy MLB's ball tampering. Kevin Kiermaier (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 2 10s, 16 Spd) is a nice speed and defense option off the bench. Andres Giminez (3 0s, 8 hits 2 walks +42, 35

SSN for 11 SBA) can steal bases. In fact, this whole team can run. If Vic wants to play aggressively with this bench, there is some help here.

3rd Hudson and Rocky Mountain are the real contenders in the Mantle, though each has its flaws. Our evaluation of Columbus gives it a lower TQ than it may play on the field; that's a feature (or flaw) of the process.

Some days the pitching staff will perform, and some days the team will score piles of runs. But we don't think they'll get further than third place. Still, they should be comfortably ahead of Munich this season.

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Ages of players on the Columbus roster, as of 07/01/2022:

38: Votto
35: D. Hudson
33: Andrus, R. Harper, Hembree, M. Kelly
32: A. Hicks, Kiermaier
31: Barnhart, Boyd, Rogers
30: Knebel, Manaea, Soler, Suarez
29: Feyereisen, Fulmer, L. Gurriel, Hoskins, A. Nola, Springer, Wendelken, Wisler
28: Banda, Brubaker, K. Marte, Wade
27: Mateo, D. Nunez, H. Ramirez
26: M. Keller, Ty. Megill
24: J. Sanchez, Ynoa
23: Carlson, Gimenez

TQ: **21.5**

2021 munich MARAUDERS in review

What about that *guy?*

by Paul Montague

2021 in Review
Final Record: 62-100 (3rd, Mantle)

Low expectations, low results. Simple. Munich went into 2021 thankful simply to have a roster – literally. Injuries and poor performance in MLB 2020, combined with having traded away the top of the 2021 draft, left management scrambling simply for bodies to fill playing time in TBL 2021. No fewer than four of those bodies had to be combed out of the waiver draft. It showed on the field, as Munich sank to the bottom of the Mantle Division.

What went right?

The Marauders did not lose more than 100 games. Yeah, yeah, we'll go with that, that's what went right. (Astute readers will notice the careful wording, though – the record was exactly 62-100….) That record was eight games better than the Pythagorean prediction based on runs scored versus runs allowed – if only that could happen when we're contending!

DeGrom: Underperformed

Kyle Schwarber and Anthony Rizzo hit 37 and 34 home runs, respectively. Jacob deGrom pitched a no-hitter (at Hoboken in August) and a one-hitter (at Kansas, also in August). That's pretty much the sum of the positives.

What went wrong?

Everything else? The offense was remarkably inoffensive, scoring a meager 563 runs (despite hitting nearly 200 homers). Meanwhile the pitching staff gave up 796 runs – that 233-run differential is the stuff of a 100-loss season. The one positive was the rotation, but it wasn't pretty: ace DeGrom lost more games than he won (11-16), underperforming remarkably often. His ERA slumped to 3.82. Rookie Logan Webb definitely struggled, winding up with a 5-18 record for his 6.85 ERA (on a team with a bad offense, how the heck do you manage five W's with an ERA of nearly 7?)

On offense, the situation was even worse. The *team* batting average barely topped the Mendoza Line at .203, while the team on-base percentage was a franchise-record low .288. No fewer than five batters who played in over 100 games hit below .200. 'Nuff said.

3 Things

1. Rookies! A total of 14 players on the 36-man roster come from the 2022 rookie draft – five hitters and nine pitchers. Number five pick Jared Kelenic likely won't do much worthy of note in his first TBL season, but management certainly expects good things from him after that. Fellow first-rounders Logan Gilbert and Josiah Gray step right into the middle of the rotation. Rookie hurlers Garrett Crochet and Ryan Weathers will share the closer/stopper role in their first season. (As this goes to editing, Crochet is feared to have to miss most or all of a season due to injury – the hits just keep on coming….)

2. The future is … not now. As 2021 began, recall the hope was that the injury and under-performance bugaboo would be behind Munich, but no such luck. Therefore, the forecast is 'cloudy with a high probability of premier draft position' for the 2022 season. Fans understand that the record could actually get worse than 2021's, before it gets better.

3. But what about that *guy?* Jacob deGrom sports the best Grade/peripherals combo in TBL history. In an ideal world, he'd be spearheading a charge for the playoffs. But… he worked only a half season in MLB 2021 due to injury. In theory, he was healthy coming into 2022, only to "walk off the mound holding his arm." The question for Munich management is whether to keep him or deal him at the mid-season trading period? That issue will be the dominant question for Munich as the TBL season unfolds. Stay tuned to see how it goes.

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Paul Montague (39th year); Hall of Famer

Stay tuned.

Paul Montague – the father of this excellent league – is in the middle of a painful deep dive rebuild. Last year, Munich lost exactly 100 games, and this year they enter the season tied for lowest TQ in TBL. This year's draft netted them some terrific names, but none of them have cards to match their talent, and there's no saving them this season.

It goes without saying that when a three time TBL World Series champion goes this route, it is scripted comedy. With every year that passes, Paul Montague always gives off the aura of a manager who has his hands on the levers – everything is under control. The question is

Turnover Rate: 44%

Arrived: Garrett Crochet, Lewin Diaz, Logan Gilbert, Chi Chi Gonzalez, Nick Gordon, Josiah Gray, Jarred Kelenic, Ha-Seong Kim, Owen Miller, Lars Nootbaar, Matt Peacock, Emmanuel Rivera, Manuel Rodriguez, Michael Rucker, Wander Suero, Ryan Weathers.

Departed: Alex Avila, Jose G. Castillo, Yu Darvish, Adam C. Eaton, John Gant, Rony Garcia, Zack Greinke, Jorge Mateo, Kyle Ryan, Eric Sogard, Craig Stammen, Christin Stewart, Robert Stock, Dee Strange-Gordon, Stephen Tarpley, Shun Yamaguchi.
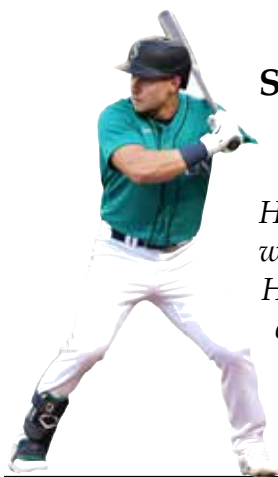
SNT:
Jarred Kelenic.

His Minor League career OPS was .903 and he can really run. He's a project, but this is a classic Montague draft pick.

not *if* Munich re-emerges as a powerhouse but *when*. Meanwhile, there's 162 games to play with this unit.

Pitching: 3.0
A masterpiece of ineptitude.

Jake DeGrom (6, 12 hits, 6 7s) can really swing the stick. Few pitchers in the league not named Ohtani can match Jake's level of production at the plate. He can pitch too - (Grade 29, C+43 HR+33, 22 fatigue, 15 starts).

After they're done slaughtering opponents with DeGrom, things moderate considerably. Logan Webb (Grade 11, C+24 HR+41, 26 starts) is a very

Webb: Promising

promising youngster with close to a full season of starts. He won't be 26 until November.

Then comes a wave of mediocrity. Luke Weaver (Grade 9, C+23 HR-21, 13 starts) is decent but only around for a while. Logan Gilbert (Grade 8, C+31, 24 starts) is very young and has a 128/28 K/BB ratio. Joshua Gray (Grade 8, C-24 HR-51, 13 starts, 26 fatigue) will contribute for his three months of starts.

> Big 3, 2012:
> 83 starts
>
> Brandon Morrow (Grade 9)
> Joe Saunders (Grade 9)
> Edinson Volquez (Grade 6)

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That's 91 starts where the starters will steal hits without help. And that's good – because there's precious little help coming. The last 71 starts feature the tasty meatballs of Kyle Hendricks (Grade 4, C+32 HR-16, 32 starts), Spencer Howard (Grade 1, C-44, 26 starts) and Chi Chi Rodriguez (Grade 1, C+23 HR-21, 13 starts).

This won't work even if Munich had a killer relief staff ... which they decidedly do not.

BULLPEN. In the event that Munich finds itself actually leading a game late, they have two toddlers to close things out. Garrett Crochet (Grade 15*, C-35 HR+53) and Ryan Weathers (Grade 15*, C+15 HR-33) are barely old enough to drive, but they are tasked with the eighth and ninth innings. There are 69 innings here, all left-handed.

Then – oh my goodness. Duane Underwood (Grade 6*, HR+14, 73 IP) and Nick Mears (Grade 6*, C-41 HR-16, 23 IP) are the closest thing Munich has to a setup crew. Matt Peacock (Grade 1/3*, C+24, 86 IP), Manuel Rodriguez (Grade 5, C-62 HR-14, 59 IP), Michael Rucker (Grade 1*, HR-16, 64 IP), and Wander Suero (Grade 2*, C+14 HR-41, 71 IP) roll out when the clown car doors open.

Kids - if you're looking for a high draft pick next year, watch Uncle Paul closely this year. This is a masterpiece of ineptitude.

Offense: 5.0
Solid for a deep rebuilder.

The Marauders' hitting attack still has remnants of their 2019 World Series run. Jose

Altuve (1-0-0-0, 10 hits 3 walks, 25 SSN for 8 SBA, 146 games) is still here, although he's a bit older and not the burner that he once was. He bats cleanup these days. Kyle Schwarber (1-1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks, 113 games) is the guy no one wants to pitch to in this lineup. He's missing 49 games, but he's an impact hitter. Anthony Rizzo (1-5-6, 9 hits 3 walks+42, R-4) is a little off his highs at age 33.

Altuve: Still here

The younger guys are more interesting. Josh Rojas (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 27 SSN for 15 SBA) is the leadoff man. 27-year-old Austin Meadows (1-0-0-0, 8 hits 4 walks) and Lars Nootbaar (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 58 games) bring some entertaining lumber in the middle of the order.

Willson Contreras (1-5-6, 8 hits 4 walks+42, L+4, 128 games) will do most of the work at catcher. Defensive specialists Andrelton Simmons (2 0s, 8 hits 3 walks, R-3) and Ha Seong Kim (3 0s, 8 hits 3 walks, 33 SSN for 8 SBA) will create outs at the bottom of the lineup.

This is a pretty solid lineup for a deep rebuilder, but there is a dearth of scary cards and not enough hits to create runs when they don't homer.

Defense: 4.0
A few things to like.

There are a few things to like when Munich takes the field. Jose Altuve (2B8) and Andrelton Simmons (SS9) are championship caliber defenders. Willson Contreras (C8 Th-1) and Anthony Rizzo (1B5) are also sublime with the leather. Ha-Seong Kim (3B4) is a shortstop by trade, but he'll capably man the hot corner in Munich.

Altuve: Still here too

Then there's the outfield, which should come with a laugh track. Josh Rojas (OF2, 31 arm) is not embarrassing, but Austin Meadows (CF1, 32 arm) and Lars NootBaar (OF1, 30 arm) will extend many innings.

It's ok – the outfield is a mess and will be quickly repaired by guys like 2022 first round draft pick Jarred Kelenic (OF2, 32 arm). But that's next year's story.

Bench: 2.0
Some late game options.

The instructions warn against defensive replacements, so fixing the outfield late in close games is not happening. However, then instructions are full of discussions of Pinch hitting. Lane Thomas (4 0s, 8 hits 5 walks, R-8 L+16) is a name that comes up quickly with a respectable card and killer lefty shift. Chad Pinder (4 0s, 9 hits 3 walks, L+6, 75 games) will also get the call when someone trots out a left-handed reliever against Munich this year. Lewin Diaz (1-1-0-0, 8 hits 2 walks) will scare the daylights out of someone when power is the only answer late. Ditto Yoshi Tsutsugo (1-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks). Nick Gordon (3 0s, 9 hits 2 walks, 35 SSN for 13 SBA) will be brought in as a nice pinch hitting option.

And then there's Nico Hoerner (6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, R+1, 44 games). Paul's instrux say not to use him, which means he's either part of the late season plan, or September trade bait.

This is a good bench that offers a lot of late game options and maneuverability.

4th The absence of 71 starts and the lack of a bullpen will doom this club for this year, but the table is set for a nice recovery.

The question is – will the kids develop quickly enough for Munich to take advantage of the good years coming from 30-somethings like Altuve and Rizzo? Or is there another sell off coming? Stay tuned.

Ages of players on the Columbus roster, as of 07/01/2022:

39: M. Cabrera
34: DeGrom
32: Altuve, Hendricks, Rizzo, Simmons
30: Contreras, C. Gonzalez, Pinder, Suero, Tsustugo
29: Schwarber
28: Caratini, Peacock, J. Rojas, Rucker, Weaver
27: Meadows, Underwood
26: Gordon, H. Kim, E. Rivera, Thomas
25: L. Diaz, Gilbert, Hoerner, S. Howard, O. Miller, M. Rodriguez, L. Webb
24: J. Gray, Nootbaar
23: Crochet
22: Kelenic, Weathers

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TQ: **14.0**

16

They Might Be Giants

They did it: and it was something to behold. The Jordan/Stein team got through some serious hurdles and swept the World Series last year. It's not going to be as pretty this year; we think the division is going to be won by the **Warrenton Giants.** Trader *Jack Chapman* has gone, if it's even possible, further than all in for another run at a championship. Even with only a quarter season of Mike Trout, they've got a fine pitching staff, a solid lineup, and a good bench. They have everything but a DH, but that's by design.
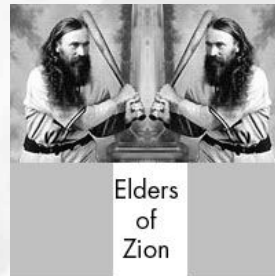
Mark Bloom's **Grand Cayman Havens** get to finish second to a different club this year. They have some talent on the roster, though not as much as Warrenton (but they had a draft in 2022 and will have one in 2023). They have a decent chance for a post-season appearance too: the National Conference doesn't have a wealth of contending teams other than the projected pennant winners. The Havens could be dangerous in a short series, and Uncle Boomer knows how to handle a team.
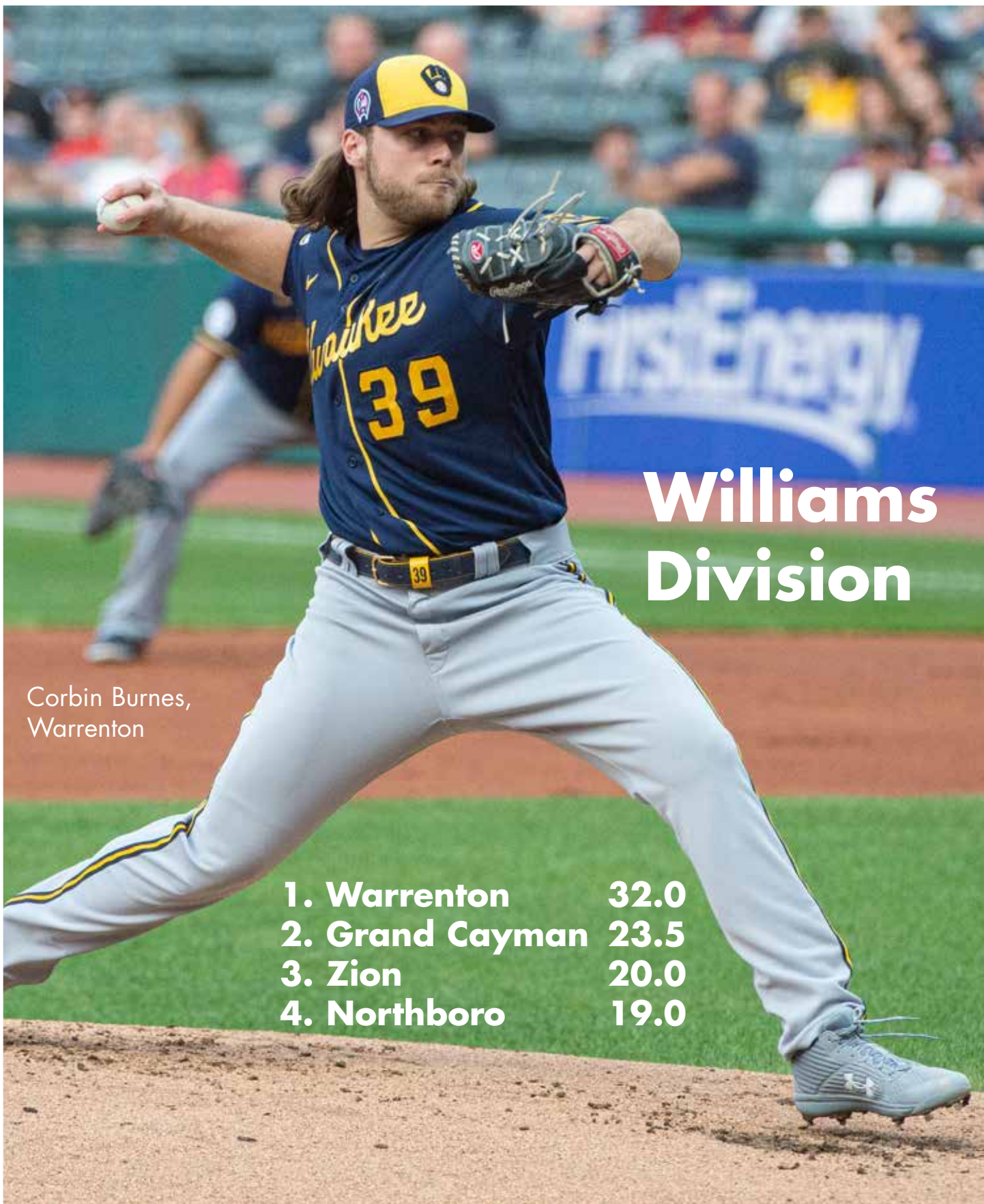
Needless to say, so does the Sensei. *Rich Meyer* has seen lots better versions of the **Elders of Zion,** but if there's anybody who can make more from less it is he. This is a team in transition as the older reliables are replaced by younger and more able players. They are some distance from the top team in the division, but there's an outside chance they could, like Grand Cayman, get into the playoffs.

The champs have a long season ahead. *Robert Jordan* and *Steve Stein* have a bit of a mess on their hands with the 2022 **Northboro Phoenix**. There's power, but the pitching is much less impressive than last year. The level of competition in the Williams Division isn't that stiff, though, and though we don't think they get to .500, they may turn in a better record than the gloomy predictions given in the instructions.

2021 Williams Division Final Standings				
Team	**W**	**L**	**Pct**	**GB**
Northboro*	93	69	.574	—
Warrenton	83	79	.512	10
Grand Cayman	77	85	.475	16
Zion	67	95	.414	26

2021 TBL Champions.

Corbin Burnes,
Warrenton

Williams Division

1.	Warrenton	32.0
2.	Grand Cayman	23.5
3.	Zion	20.0
4.	Northboro	19.0

2021 warrenton GIANTS in review

There are only 46 grade D starts required.

2021 in Review
Final Record: 83-79 (2nd, Williams)

A year away from 55 wins, the Giants worked their way to a near-.500 record in 2021. As usual – and, one must assume, for the forsee-able future – the team played without the DH; Captain Jack is old school. The team hit fairly well, especially for power, but the pitching was subpar (22nd in ERA, 24th in runs allowed, 3rd in walks allowed.) Looking at the stats alone, it's a wonder they won more than they lost; it probably should be credited to excellent use of the limited resources.

What went right?

These guys hit for power. Warrenton piled up 232 homers and nearly 600 extra-base hits. The leader was – who else? – Mike Trout (.362-56-165) – just three RBI short of winning the Triple Crown. He recorded a .464 OBP and slugged .773. Pretty solid. Mike Yastrzemski hit well too (.286-26-81), with 62 doubles (still almost a dozen short of the Ian Desmond record). Kyle Tucker hit 27 homers and 11 truples. Christian Walker and Brandon Crawford hit 27 homers each.

The principal starters were mediocre, but did record 35 complete games (even more amazing given the lack of DH). Jarlin Garcia was the best of the relievers (7-1, 16 saves, 34 Ks in 35 IP).

What went wrong?

It takes some effort to find some good news on the pitching staff. The four most frequently used starters – Bumgarner, Castellani, Kikuchi,

and Perez – had 23 CG, and went 44-40, but had ERAs from 5.20 to 6.27. They were all better than Zack Godley (0-12, 8.91, but 4 Triumphs of the Human Spirit complete games). Overall the staff gave up 266 homers.

The team had power, but no speed – they stole 23 bases in 42 attempts – and struck out 1,453 times (which was only seventh in TBL last year.)

3 Things

1. All in, always. The Giants rarely engage in half-measures when it comes to contending (or rebuilding). The 2021 year – affected by the weird scaled season – finished with a .500 record, but there was a lot in the draft. It's all been sent away as part of a blockbuster package. That, along with other trades, is evidence of Warrenton's commitment to winning it all.

Trout: Who else?

2. Pitching is key. Not only by trading for the likes of Corbin Burnes, Warrenton has retooled the pitching staff so that the dearth of talent on last year's crew isn't repeated now that the team is "going for it." There's a strong rotation and a very, very deep bullpen (including all available Barlows).

3. What you see . . . is what you get. The Giants get to jump into the draft about the middle of Round 6 in 2023. There is no real ability to grab any key part down the stretch, and there'll be no help if something is missing next year. But that's then. The focus is on *now*.

warrenton GIANTS

Jack Chapman (14th year)

We think you will enjoy the next couple of seasons as well.

Nobody is more willing to take the bounce than Mr. Chapman, who in the past four seasons won 44, 94, 55, and 83 regular season games. With a ton of draft picks in hand, he found more than a few trading partners, and when the Guru decided to tear down the Midwest franchise and virtually start over, Mr. Chapman traded most of those picks away as well as some from 2023 for the rights to Trea Turner, Corbin Burnes, Edwin Diaz, Chad Green and others who will fill out the Giant bench. In the season pre-play, the Giants won the Williams Division all 10 times, and they averaged 23 wins more than runner up Grand Cayman. Feast or famine, baby! The Giants are not competing with the Williams so much as they are with Melrose for the chance to square off for the World Series championship.

Pitching: 11.5
Plenty of talent.

Two aces and three other quality starters, paired with over 650 relief innings of Grade 11-29 means teams will have trouble scoring runs against the Giants this season. Here at the *Annual* we could quibble about some of the pitchers being a tad wild or a little too homerun prone, but let's just say no to quibbling. This team will eat up teams that don't have power or on-base percentages in their favor. An occasional walk or solo homer will not be a Giant worry during this season.

Big 3, 2012 (Wakefield Wizards):
93 starts

Josh Beckett (Grade 15)
Ricky Romero (Grade 15)
Doug Fister (Grade 12)

ROTATION. Need an ace or two? Trade for them, Mr. Chapman says. Robbie Ray (Grade 15 C+21 HR-22) comes in from New Westminster and Corbin Burnes (Grade 15 C+32 HR+46) from Midwest, a potent lefty-righty one-two punch for 60 starts.

Ray: Lefty ace

The last three starters are not quite as impressive but they cover 89 games

Turnover Rate: 50%

Arrived: Austin L. Adams, Joe Barlow, Lewis Brinson, Corbin Burnes, Charlie Culberson, Yu Darvish, Edwin Diaz, Steven Duggar, Lucas Gilbreath, Chad Green, Zack Greinke, Josh Harrison, Tommy La Stella, Jake Mcgee, Robbie Ray, Craig Stammen, Spencer Turnbull, Trea Turner, Patrick Wisdom.

Departed: Madison Bumgarner, Ryan Castellani, Taylor Clarke, John Curtiss, Edwin Encarnacion, Jeurys Familia, Greg Garcia, Zack Godley, Tyler Heineman, Tyler Kinley, Tzu-Wei Lin, Joe Panik, Martin Perez, Anibal Sanchez, Pablo Sandoval, Chris Stratton, Chadwick Tromp, Stephen Vogt.

SNT: Trea Turner.

A franchise SS/2B obtained in a trade with Midwest, Turner will bring a great blend of power, speed, and defense to the Giants for years to come.
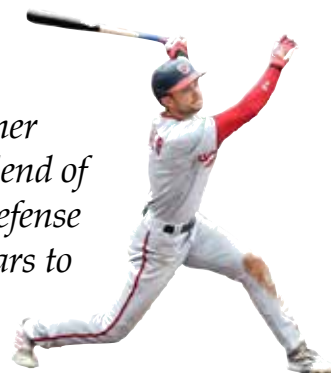
but will be helped by a bodacious bullpen. Yusei Kikuchi (Grade 10 C-21 HR-16), Yu Darvish (Grade 10 C+213 HR-21) and Zack Greinke (Grade 9 C+32 HR-22) will be more than serviceable. Spencer Turnbull (Grade 14 C+24 HR +51) rounds out most of the rest of the starts very ably.

BULLPEN. The relief corps is long and well-graded. Joe Barlow (Grade 29* C-34 HR+35) serves as primary closer, but is only available 29 innings. No problem: Austin Adams (Grade 18* C-62 HR+61) is there to pick up the slack. The Giants can mix and match Jarlin Garcia (Grade 16* C+26), Gregory Soto (Grade 16* C-62 HR+23), Scott Barlow (Grade 15* HR+44), and Chad Green (Grade 15* C+33 HR+23) in the seventh and eighth innings. But wait, there is still more for the middle innings: Jose Alvarez (Grade 14* C+21 HR+54), Edwin Diaz (Grade 14* HR+45), Lucas Gilbreath (Grade 14* C-52 HR+16), and Jake McGee (Grade 14* C+42 HR+32). Still not convinced you can win? How about Craig Stammen (Grade 11* C+43) for 80 innings? The pen is a little wild, but there is plenty of help to get out of jams when Mr. Chapman needs either walk or homerun prevention.

Offense: 11.5
No big boppers, but some good hitters.

Jack Chapman hates the DH with a passion. As a result, he always has a nice cadre of full and part time players who can shuffle around the field and be more than adequate at the plate and in the field as they do so. This season's roster is no exception.

Posey: Pretty fair

Looking at the team starters position by position, we begin with a pretty fair catcher in Buster Posey (1-6-6, 11 hits, 4 walks, L+5 R-3, 113 games). There is an able backup in Max Stassi (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, R-0, 87 G). Christian Walker is a good first sacker (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) and can be spelled by Patrick Wisdom (1-1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks), who also will platoon with Mike Yastrzemski in left field.

Turner starts at 2B (1-0-0-0, 12 hits, 33 SSN for 37 attempts). Evan Longoria (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Justin Turner (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L+9) split the duties at the hot corner. And then there is the career year of Brandon Crawford at SS (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-9); that lefty split can be offset by switching Trea Turner to SS. Yaz has power in left field (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, three walks+42, L-11), backed up by Wisdom with that L-1. Kyle Tucker is the centerfield stud (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks) while erstwhile stud Mike Trout (1-1-6-6, 11 hits, 6 walks, L-9) is limited by injury to 36 games. Right field is merely adequate with Steven Duggar (4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-5) and Lewis Brinson (1-6-6, 9 hits, two walks, L+4) platooning. This lineup will score many runs; the pitching staff will prevent many runs; no wonder the replay averaged 105 wins!

Crawford: Career year

Defense: 6.0
Bench smooths over rough edges.

There are a few holes on defense, but most of the starters know how to use their leather. Posey and Stassi are both C8, although neither has a great arm. Walker is good (1B4), but Wisdom's 1B2 will need help from Charlie Culberson (1B3) late in games. Trea Turner (SS8 2B7) is weak on the right side, but Tommy La Stella (2B8 3B4) is on the bench to repair that. Crawford (SS9) and Longoria (3B5)/J. Turner (3B4) gobble up groundballs on the left side of the infield.

Yaz, Tucker, Trout, and Duggar are all OF3 while Brinson contributes OF2. All the arms are in the 32-33 range.

Longoria: Gobbles

Everyone should have an XC like Adam Engel (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, OF3, 39 games, 140 PA). This team features great platoons *and* extra bench guys for emergency situations. It doesn't seem fair.

Bench: 3.0
There's a DH here!

The *Annual* is kidding, as we understand Josh Harrison (3 0s, 10 hits, one walk +42, L-1 R-1) will never do DH duty. He could see some time out in LF, however, when Wisdom is needed at first base and Yastrzemski needs to sit. He should be a primary PH for the pitchers when the game is on the line. Jack Mayfield (1-5-6, 8 hits, 2 walks+22) provides some pop off the bench and good infield defense (3B4 SS8 2B7).

1st The *Annual* staff is wondering at this point what the Guru was thinking when he made the first round draft trade that helped cement this juggernaut. We assume he must have been thinking that all these guys were in the other half of the league, so there would not be much harm coming back to the Dawgs.

At the staff headquarters, however, we prefer to think he was either drinking or totally depressed by a temporary downswing in his team's fortunes and that Mr. Chapman was the lucky recipient of the Guru's largesse.

Be that as it may, this is an absolutely wonderful team which will run away from its division and be in line to play for all the marbles this season. More importantly, the pieces to continue this mastery for several years are in place. Roll those dice and enjoy the season, Mr. Chapman! In fact, we think you will enjoy the next couple of seasons as well!

Ages of players on the Warrenton roster, as of 07/01/2022:

38: Greinke, Stammen
37: J. Turner
36: Longoria
35: B. Crawford, Darvish, McGee, Posey
34: Harrison
33: Alvarez, Culberson, La Stella
31: A. Adams, Green, Kikuchi, Mayfield, Stassi, C. Walker, Yastrzemski
30: Engel, Ray, Trout, Wisdom
29: S. Barlow, Ja. Garcia, Turnbull, T. Turner
28: Brinson, Ed. Diaz, Duggar, Thornton
27: Burnes, G. Soto
26: J. Barlow, Gilbreath

TQ: **32.0**
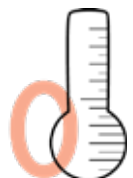
2021 grand cayman HAVENS in review

The Havens continue to solidify around their young talent.

by Mark Bloom

2021 in Review
Final Record: 77-85 (3rd, Williams)

After two straight years of triple-digit losses, the Grand Cayman Havens took a big step forward in 2021. The team didn't embarrass itself … most of the time. In fact, the team registered a 64-58 mark from June on, including 26-16 over the final two months. The Havens continue to solidify around their young talent and looks forward to a brighter future.

What went right?

Dom Smith carried the team, slashing .326/.405/.621 with 55 doubles, 32 HR, and 114 RBI. Rookie Ke'Bryan Hayes was even better, hitting .355/.414/.641 in 65 games. Brandon Lowe took a powerful step forward, crushing 31 doubles, 8 triples, and 28 HRs. Robbie Grossman chipped in with 36 doubles and 20 stolen bases. AJ Minter went 5-1 with 33 saves, figuring in nearly half of the team's wins. Max Fried and Griffin Canning pitched to identical 13-9 records. Jake Newberry was third on the team with 9 wins.

Smith: Carried the team

What went wrong?

While the team scored almost 800 runs, its batting average was just .239. Four players finished under the Mendoza line, including Danny Jansen (.161). Only five hit more than .250. On the mound, the team "improved" to a 5.20 ERA. Tyler Anderson surrendered 305 baserunners in 166 innings, losing a team-high 14 games. Only five pitchers (no starters) managed ERAs under 4.00. Only two starters finished with ERAs under 5.00, including grade 21 Mitch Keller (4-4, 4.83). Jake Newberry was third on the team with 9 wins.

3 Things

1. Continuing the youth movement. Same as last year. The Havens' regulars may be a year older, but the team still averages under 27 years old. The draft brought in several 24-year-old pitchers, and a trade netted a couple 23-year-olds. The oldest player on the team, Kyle Seager, announced his retirement after this TBL season, leaving just four other Havens who are 30 or older. This is a very young team.

2. Pitcher, pitcher, pitcher. Jake Rogers (5th round) was the only position player drafted who made the team. Rookie Alek Manoah (1st round) was taken to solidify the rotation, while the bullpen was rebuilt for the current season … and with luck and health, beyond.

3. Tough personnel decisions. The team found itself with more assets than could fit into a 36-man roster. GM Boomer Wells had to make some tough cuts and trades. Nick Ahmed and Caleb Smith, still valuable contributors but over 30, were dealt away. Young pitchers who hadn't developed as hoped, including Griffin Canning, Deivi Garcia, and Mitch Keller, all former second-round picks, also left the island. And there still wasn't room for Chris Archer and former closer Josh James.

grand cayman HAVENS

Mark Bloom (32nd year)

The bounce is over and the good times are back. Whitey would be proud!

At the *Annual* we think we know our TBL managers pretty well. Mr. Bloom, the affable owner of the Havens, is certainly a patient developer. His team won 99 games in 2016 before it took *the bounce*. This is a cautionary tale for all who are willing to try the move (yes, Guru, that would be you). As the Boomer was rebuilding, the team dropped to 77 and then 51 wins before rebounding in the past two seasons to 55 and 77.

It takes a while for young players to develop into all stars; but that is now starting to happen in Grand Cayman. TQ and the season pre-play both suggest that the wait will be over soon. A seriously good young team has been assembled; the juggernaut that is Warrenton will pass it by this season, but the Havens are trending the right way after much patience and solid drafting.

Pitching: 9.0
Solid starters, live arms in the pen.

Building a pitching staff takes the longest time and the greatest patience. Mr. Bloom is starting to see some of his young picks develop both as starters and as firemen. This staff is closing in on Warrenton. It's not quite as deep in the pen, and it doesn't have the star power yet that the Giants do. But it is only a matter of time before these arms are the cream of the crop in the Williams Division.

ROTATION. Three quality young hurlers

SNT:
Alek Manoah.

Drafted in the first round, Manoah is a young stud around whom a pitching staff can be built to last for a long time.

Big 3, 2012:
67 starts

Tommy Hanson (Grade 12)
Jonathan Sanchez (Grade 11)
Josh Tomlin (Grade 8)

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Abraham Almonte, Anthony Bender, Marcos Diplan, Ralph Garza, Brusdar Graterol, Sam Howard, Alek Manoah, Andres Munoz, Jake Rogers, Tony Santillan, Josh Sborz.

Departed: Nick Ahmed, Chris Archer, Griffin Canning, Franchy Cordero, Deivi Garcia, Amir Garrett, Josh James, Mitch Keller, Chance Sisco, Caleb Smith, Nick Solak.

Fried, Rogers: One, two

grand cayman HAVENS

lead the rotation this season. Max Fried (Grade 12 C+24 HR+25) and Trevor Rogers (Grade 14 C+12 HR+46) are coming into their own. This lefty-righty one-two punch covers 53 starts. Rookie Alek Manoah (Grade 15 C-13 HR+22) steps in at age 24 with 20 more starts. Joe Ross, another 28-year old flame thrower, has finally recuperated from injury and will provide 19 solid starts this season (Grade 9 C+22 HR-14). Veteran Alex Wood steps in for 26 starts (Grade 9 C+22 HR+23). That's 118 pretty good starts this season. Youngster Dane Dunning is still a work in progress (Grade 6 HR+23), and Tyler Anderson, another veteran, might finally be coming into his own as well (Grade 6 C+32 HR-15). They take up 56 starts, although they will depend on the pen to bail them out some days.

BULLPEN. The team is lacking a great closer, but it has one in training who is starting to develop his command in Jordan Romano (Grade 19* C-24 HR+16. 63 IP). Four pretty good arms will cover the seventh and eighth innings: Miguel Castro (Grade 16* C-62 HR+24, 68 IP), Anthony Bender (Grade 15* C+16 HR+31, 60 IP), Tony Santillan (Grade 15* C-34 HR-14, 43 IP), and Ralph Garza (Grade 14* C-31 HR-15, 30 IP). Four more guys will handle the middle innings more than adequately, including A. J. Minter in a bit of an off year (Grade 11* HR+52, 52 IP). Jorge Alcala appears to have a bright future (Grade 12* C+31 HR-23, 59 IP). Projects in this category include Jharel Cotton (Grade 11* HR+42, 30 IP) and Josh Sborz (Grade 12* HR+21, 59 IP). That is over 450 pretty fair innings of relief. Mr. Bloom is still waiting for fireballing Brusdar Graterol to put things together (Grade 5* C-33 HR+42. 30 IP).

Offense: 8.5
Some pop on offense.

There's some pop on offense.

Let's start at DH, where 25-year-old Yordan Alvarez will star this season (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22). There are three young catchers ready to break out in

Alvarez: Star

Daulton Varsho (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks), Danny Jansen (1-5-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, L-10 R+3) and Jake Rogers (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+2 R-3). Brandon Lowe (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L-10 R+3) and Dominic Smith (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, L+5 R-4) comprise a powerful platoon at first base. Two 25 year-old platoon at second base — Gavin Lux (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+22) and Luis Urias (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42), both of whom continue to develop as both mature hitters and flexible defensive options. An aging Kyle Seager (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks) platoons with up and coming star 24-year-old Ke'Bryan Hayes (3 0s, 9 hits). Urias also platoons at SS with 26-year-old Amed Rosario (3 0s, 10 hits). That's a young infield with plenty of star power for the near future.

There is one more young stud in 26-year-old LF Tyler O'Neill (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 30 SSN for 19 attempts). The ever-consistent Robbie Grossman mans CF (1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks). Right field is the one black hole as four players combine to cover the games, and not always well: Clint Frazier (3 0s, 7 hits) in a down year, Jordan Luplow (1-1-0-0, 7 hits, 5 walks) also in a down year, and youngsters Anthony Alford (1-4-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-7) and Nick Senzel (2 0s, 9 hits). All in all, this is a pretty fair offense despite its youth.

Defense: 3.5
Young gloves still developing.

Bats are often ahead of gloves with young players. Jansen is the best of the catchers (C8), but both Rogers (Th+6) and Varsho (Th+0) have better arms at present. Smith and Lowe are both 1B3s, but Lux is a 2B8 when he plays there. Urias (2B7 SS7 3B4) has some honing of skills to do still. Seager is declining (3B4) but Hayes is already a fielding phenom (3B5). Rosario (SS8 OF2) has a good glove and just needs more regular playing time in the infield. O'Neill and Grossman (OF3) anchor an outfield that includes a bunch OF2 players in right. The infield will be better, but this season there will be some issues, particularly on the right side.

Hayes: Phenom

Ages of players on the Grand Cayman roster, as of 07/01/2022:

34: K. Seager
33: A. Almonte
32: T. Anderson, Grossman
31: A. Wood
30: Cotton
29: Romano, Ross, Sa. Howard
28: Fried, Garza, Luplow, Minter, Sborz
27: Bender, M. Castro, Dunning, Frazier, D. Jansen, B. Lowe, O'Neill, J. Rogers, Senzel, D. Smith
26: Alcala, A. Rosario
25: Alvarez, Diplan, Hayes, Santillan, Urias, Varsho
24: Lux, Manoah, T. Rogers
23: Graterol, Munoz

Bench: 2.5
Platoons and limitations.

There is a nice blend of full time and part time players, so as Mr. Bloom plays his games, he will have more options some times than others. As games mount, it looks like he will have greater ability to improvise in game situations as usage becomes clearer. We suspect that he will play the games with his starting lineup more often than not, with just a few defensive moves to upgrade when the Havens have a good chance at earning a win.

2nd The cup is half full this year. The pre-play makes us think there is no chance the Havens can win their division. However, the team did qualify as a wild card in three of the seasons, competing with division rival Zion who also did that feat three times. The numbers say 82 wins for Grand Cayman and 76 for the Elders.

As the runners-up to the behemoth in Warrenton, this will be a good race for TBL to follow this season. Boomer's boys might not have the ability to advance to a playoff this season; but they are not far away from being there, and when they get there, it will be for a string of seasons given the youth on this squad. The bounce is over and the good times are back. Whitey would be proud!

grand cayman HAVENS

TQ: **23.5**

Lux: Future prize

2021 ELDERS of zion in review

Neither dark, nor light.

2021 in Review
Final Record: 67-95 (4th, Williams)

2021 was disheartening, but not particularly surprising, for the boys from Lake Ingolstadt. The team didn't hit particularly well, the pitching wasn't that great, and they didn't run (and booted a lot of balls as well.)

It just wasn't much of a Meyer team. It was a team wearing the Zion uniforms but going through the motions of the season, winning some and losing more. Trevor Bauer was the big name in the offseason that moved on to Hoboken to add to its other dominant pitching; in return, Luis Castillo, Travis D'Arnaud and some bits and bobs joined the roster. It got them through the season. It turned out that Bauer was severely damaged goods (not the arm, but the rest of him, apparently). But it was a long term, not a short term, move. The Sensei plays the long game: always has. The addition of Alejandro Kirk and Akil Baddoo are evidence that this season was just transition; neither dark, nor light, but best shelved and forgotten.

What went right?

Corey Seager showed good form in his 125 games (.287-31-72, 35 doubles, 55 walks). Travis D'Arnaud was a great addition to the club (.325, 21 HR), and Charlie Blackmon was his usual solid self (.271-19-84). Renato Nunez, either a bit or a bob depending on how one reckons such things, hit 23 homers.

Dylan Bundy was very capable (13-7, 2.68), and Luis Castillo was competent (4.08 ERA). Genesis Cabrera took over closing duties and notched

Seager: Solid

28 saves, while Kenley Jansen (1.70 ERA, 55 Ks in 58.3 innings) was great in a setup role. As usual, many relievers contributed to keeping the Elders in the game most days.

What went wrong?

. . . But it cannot have been an interesting team to play. They hit .241 with a .389 SLG. Keston Hiura was horrible (21 HR, but a .179 average and 202 strikeouts). His 33 HBPs, though, qualify for sixth-best in TBL history. Jeimer Candelario struck out 158 times, Nunez 138. The team stole only 25 bases and hit only 168 homers. Cueto, Castillo, Luzardo and Cobb went 26-54 with ERAs in the 4s and 5s.

3 Things

1. Perseverance. One advantage of being in TBL for so long is that Mr. Meyer has seen teams like this. (Admittedly not that often, but more in the last decade than heretofore.) These things simply happen. There may be a contender coming but it hasn't gotten here yet.

2. Core competence. The title 'Sensei' is well earned. Drafts and trades are made for talent rather than necessarily for present value. When Mr. Meyer talks, people listen; when he makes a move, it's important to watch. The next generation of Zion players will – should – be very good.

3. Weak divisions create opportunities. The Williams Division, despite producing the TBL Champion for 2021, isn't terribly strong; as the Elders evolve, they may have a chance to contend more soon than in the Aaron or Mantle or Clemente.

ELDERS of zion

Rich Meyer (38th year); Hall of Famer

We like to tack on a few extra wins for those managers who play the game with gusto and guts.

What do we make of the Sensei's fortunes this year? In most divisions, most years, it is fairly easy to analyze the basic parameters. Sure, you might get something wrong, but you're gonna be close to reality. This is the Williams Division, however, and if we time travel a bit with Mr. Meyer we see a bizarre pattern: 91 wins in 2017 was only good enough for third in the division; 87 wins the next year won it. 72 wins ended in a third place spot in 2019, and 84 wins won it again in 2020. Last year was the down year with 67 wins and a fourth place finish.

The TQ says third place again this year, as does the pre-play. But it *is* the Sensei, and the results are usually better with the Elders than any other TBL manager could produce. So let's just hedge our bets and say that the boys could surprise the league with a stronger finish than we expect.

Pitching: 7.0
A stud closer and a bunch of guys.

At first glance this is not a very imposing pitching staff. Alex Cobb is the only double digit starter, and he is only around for 18 games. The next four guys are graded 8 or 9 and man the mound for 100 games. The rest is in the hands of two Grade 5s and the Grade 2 Lizard King. Ouch. The pen has King Kenley to close, but only one grade higher than 13 to get to him. Clearly wizardliness is called for; thankfully, the Sensei never runs from a challenge and often succeeds where mere mortals do not dare to attempt to achieve greatness. Time will tell, but it is never a good bet to doubt Mr. Meyer.

ROTATION. Cobb is the headliner, as noted above (Grade 10 C-11 HR+44). The Grade 9 is Luis Castillo in a down season (C-13 HR+25, but 33 starts). The next three are all reclamation projects who have come back to life after tragic turns in their careers: Jon Gray (Grade 8 C-12 HR 0), Steven Matz (Grade 8 C+21 HR+16) and Myles Mikolas (Grade 8 C+25 HR 0, but only 9 starts).

Johnny Cueto (Grade 5 C+25 HR+12) continues to twist and turn his way around TBL, and Dylan Bundy continues to baffle

Turnover Rate: 22%

Arrived: Akil Baddoo, Jhoulys Chacin, Luis A. Garcia, Andy Ibanez, John King, Alejandro Kirk, Tanner Rainey, Paul Sewald.

Departed: Shin-Soo Choo, A.J. Cole, Dylan Floro, Brock Holt, Yairo Munoz, Renato Nunez, Jordan Weems, Rowan Wick.

SNT: Alejandro Kirk.

How in the world did a 23 year old power hitting catcher make it to the second round in this winter's draft?

Castillo: Down year

Big 3, 2012:
84 starts

Matt Latos (Grade 11)
Scott Baker (Grade 11)
Anibal Sanchez (Grade 9)

Elders of Zion

ELDERS of zion

everyone but the hitters (Grade 5 C-12 HR+23). And what the heck happened to Jesus Luzardo (Grade 2 C-34 HR-25)? The Sensei's instructions call for us to staple these last three starters to the mound given the shortness of relief innings.

BULLPEN. And here we find the real problem for the pitching this season. There are 500 innings of relief, but most of it is average, meaning Mr. Meyer will be mixing and matching in close games all season. Keep in mind that he excels at that — but understand that the rest of us would find this a vexing challenge.

Jansen: Wild but solid

Jansen is a wild but solid closer (Grade 23* C-43 HR+42). Paul Sewald is the only bridge to Jansen (Grade 16* C+14 HR-14). They combine for 134 innings, however, so the final two innings should be fine. Next up come the pieces of cardboard aptly named "tools" by Mr. Meyer. Genesis Cabrera, Tony Watson, Jose Cisnero and Luis A. Garcia are all Grade 13, but the list includes two lefties and two righties, two control guys and two wild men, all of whom keep the ball in the yard.

Speaking of reclamation projects, Jhoulys Chacin is back (Grade 11* C-31 HR+13) for 64 innings of early usage. John King (Grade 10* C+25 HR+41) is also in the middle mix, and Michael Lorenzen is a pretty good mop (Grade 5* C-36 HR+36). It's not a great relief corps, but it is in deft hands and will do better than people think.

Offense: 6.0
Scoring runs may be hard.

The offense is a curious mixture of veterans who had down years and youngsters who have yet to prove themselves. No one scares an opposing team and there is multiple platooning.

Kirk is the best of the four catchers (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L+8 R-5) but he only gets 60 games. Travis D'Arnaud (1-6-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+6 R-4) gets another 60. Tres Barrera and Roberto Perez share the rest of the games; Barrera can hit but is very limited usage, and Perez still can't find his bat in the rack. All the catchers have horrible splits against righties, who unfortunately are more common than lefties in TBL.

Kyle Farmer gets 147 games (1-6-6, 9 hits) but he platoons with Trey Mancini at first base (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks), Andy Ibanez at second (3 0s, 10 hits), and Corey Seager at shortstop (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, but only 95 games). Ehire Adrianza returns to platoon at second and short (3 0s, 9 hits), and Jeimer Candelario is solid at the hot corner (0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks).

When will the real Keston Hiura return (3 0s, 6 hits, 12 13s)? Mitch Haniger (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) and Andrew Benintendi (1-6-6, 10 hits) are bright lights in the outfield, and rookie Akil Baddoo (3 0s, 9 hits, L-11) while Austin Hays (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, R-5) are a more than passable platoon in the third spot.

The ageless Charlie Blackmon continues as DH (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42). There is some punch in this lineup, but on-base percentage will rely on shifts and the dice.

Seager: 95 very good games

Defense: 3.5
Close to league average.

Perez (C9 Th+2) will spell the other catchers late in close games. The infield is average with Mancini (1B3), Ibanez (2B7), Seager/Adrianza/Farmer (SS8) and Candelario (3B4). Haniger, Benintendi and Sierra are OF3s and the rest are a collection of weak armed OF2s. Lots of flexibility, but not a lot of late inning help here.

Still, they'll keep the innings from being extended, and this is usually the last place that a rebuilder looks to fix.

Bench: 2.0
Platoons keep moves to minimum.

There is enough game usage, however, that platoon hitters can replace each other on a regular basis, so the Sensei will be able to maximize performances despite a not so great bench.

Perez: Late in close games

Leody Taveras, Oscar Mercado, and Magneuris Sierra continue to provide bench usage as they try to find themselves in TBL.

3rd

When push comes to shove, there is only one way a manager becomes a Hall of Famer in TBL — he has to know which buttons to push and when to push them to maximize winning.

We at the *Annual* don't call Mr. Meyer the Sensei lightly or disrespectfully. No one is better at taking insignificant little pieces and using them in just the right spot to win games. Is this a championship year? No, not at all. But it is also not a 65 win season, either. Pre-play says 76 wins; at the *Annual* we like to tack on a few extra wins for those managers who play the game with gusto and guts, something which our TQ does not measure.

Don't be surprised if this team ends up over .500 and you find yourself wondering what smoke and mirrors Mr. Meyer was able to conjure with this collection of Elders.

TQ: **20.0**

Ages of players on the Zion roster, as of 07/01/2022:

37: T. Watson
36: Blackmon, Cueto
35: L. A. Garcia
34: Chacin, Cobb, K. Jansen
33: Cisnero, D'Arnaud, Mikolas, R. Perez
32: Adrianza, Sewald
31: Farmer, Haniger, Matz
30: J. Gray, Lorenzen, Mancini
29: Bundy, L. M. Castillo, Ibanez, Rainey
28: Candelario, C. Seager
27: Benintendi, King, Mercado
26: Hays, Sierra
25: G. Cabrera, Hiura
24: Luzardo
23: Baddoo, Kirk, Taveras

2021 northboro PHOENIX in review

We were right.

by Steve Stein

2021 in Review
Final Record: 93-69 (1st, Williams)
2021 TBL Champions

Last year in this space, we expressed the thought that we would be very good in 2021. We were right! The strange year with scaled-up usage provided us with nearly a full season of some fearsome cards – Belt, Teoscar, Calhoun, Will Smith and many merely very good cards – Yandy, Dansby, Aguilar, Profar.

The pitching staff featured gaudy grades at the top of both the starting staff (Dakota Hudson, Ian Anderson, Kyle Cody) and the bullpen (Foster, Karinchak, Yardley and late acquisition Bryan Garcia). This proved to be a team that could explode into the lead and hold onto it (mostly). We even displayed competence in the field, recording the fewest errors of the past 8 years.

This was a team built to win *now*. And it did. The future will not be as bright as this "brief shining moment", but it feels good for now.

What went right?

The playoff run. Post-season scheduling allowed us to use our good pitchers even more, so that we were able to have Grade 18+ pitching a great majority of the time. The late-season trade for Bryan Garcia to add a HR-preventing closer turned out to be a key move.

But the main factor in our playoff success was our opponent's dice were generally horrible – tepid at best, cold most of the time, and occasionally frigid.

Hernandez: Good card

Winning is always fun. "It's, like, better than losing, y'hear what I'm sayin'?" (LaLoosh) But it was especially fun to be able to co-manage with Bob together over 3-way Zoom calls with our opponents. It's an experience we rarely have, and it was sublime.

What went wrong?

Not much. The regular season was a bit rough, managing some tight usage situations. We won only 93 games – the fewest ever for a league champion, and the first under 100 since Walter Hunt's first Rumrunners team in 1988.

3 Things

1. Usage. We used the best part of our 2022 draft to shore up our pitching, but things have gotten thin in the field. Most of the compensation for Brandon Belt won't arrive until 2023. That and other departures (Dietrich, Gyorko) and limited usage due to injuries or drug suspensions(!) means little roster slack. If our bats aren't healthy and productive in MLB this year, next year may be scarily bad.

2. Pitching. We picked up some promising pitching in the draft (Cortes, Vesia, Lynch, Steele). At the moment we have more healthy starters than we've had in years. A lot of the talented 2021 bullpen was disappointing in '22. Hopefully what was selected this year has some staying power, and stays healthy.

3. Youth. We've gotten much younger! We have a lot of young arms and a few lottery tickets in the field (McCarthy, Yonny Hernandez, and Cavan Biggio and Kyle Isbel acquired in trade). It'll take a couple of years to see what these guys amount to, but we'll give them time to develop.

It seems to the *Annual* staff that everyone was pulling for Bob and Steve to win the championship and join the list of TBL winners at long last. The duo would probably like to have had a legitimate chance to follow up with a strong season, but as Mick Jagger so eloquently puts it, "You can't always get what you want." Let's just say that sometimes bad things happen to good people. So back to the drawing board the boys go; after all, the Phoenix *always* rises — after its demise, of course. This is the year of the demise as TQ and pre-play agree on a fourth place finish in the Williams.

Pitching: 5.5
A fall from a very high ledge.

Few teams could pitch with the Phoenix from start to end of the game in 2021. The payback will come this season as the staff has fallen into partial disarray. There are some good starters, but just not enough of them. 250 innings of quality relief is never enough to offset those days when weak starters toe the hill, and a team carrying three XC relievers and one uncarded one cannot be expected to look with ease to the pen

Anderson: Injury pinch

when the fire is consuming the Phoenix. It's going to be one long season.

ROTATION. There are 74 starts of double digit arms on a staff decimated by the injury bug. Justin Dunn (Grade 15 C-62 HR+16, 11 starts) joins rookie Nestor Cortes (Grade 14 C-21 HR-13, 14 starts) to fill just short of one starting role. Ian Anderson feels the injury pinch (Grade 12 C-22 HR+12, 24 starts), and Justin Steele (Grade 10 C-25 HR-32, 9 starts) is a bad way to fill out that number two spot. Cory Kluber was also hurt (Grade 10 C-23 HR-25, 16 starts) and takes half of the third starter role. And then it

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: : Daniel Bard, Jacob Barnes, Cavan Biggio, Ryan Burr, Nestor Jr. Cortes, Yonny Hernandez, Kyle Isbel, Daniel Lynch, Jake Mccarthy, Justin Steele, Alex Vesia.

Departed: Brandon Belt, Anthony Bemboom, Brandon Bielak, Tyler Chatwood, Adam Cimber, Kyle Cody, Jace Fry, Bryan Garcia, Marwin Gonzalez, Geoff Hartlieb, Eric Yardley.

SNT: Kyle Isbel.

Joining the Phoenix by trade from Brobdingnag, he looks like a sure bet for outfield excellence in coming years.

Big 3, 2012:
84 starts

Roy Halladay (Grade 12)
Javier Vazquez (Grade 9)
Dustin Moseley (Grade 10)

gets ugly. Antonio Senzatela (Grade 4 C+34 HR+34), Garrett Richards (Grade 3 C-22 HR+13) and Daniel Lynch (Grade 2 C-25 HR+15) round out the rotation. This is a rugged way to start games compared to what Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein saw last season on a daily basis. Per instructions, starters go until pounded way too often

BULLPEN. Oh boy, the no bullpen-bullpen that will help when things are close but will sit when things are not. This is never a way to win games, and the Phoenix staff understands that well. Alex Vesia is a great closer (Grade 26* C-46 HR-15) although just a tad wild, and he has two equally wild counterparts to bridge to him in Ryan Burr (Grade 17* C-62 HR+33) and James Karinchak (Grade 16* HR-14). Noe Ramirez (Grade 16* C+11 HR+31) and Ryan Thompson (Grade 15* C+31 HR+26) are there when a strike-thrower is needed to end a middle innings. Jose Alvarado is the wild thing who keeps the ball in play (Grade 12* C-62 HR+31).

Karinchak: Still throws really hard

Then the boys depend on two innocuous relievers to pick up the slack in Matt Foster (Grade 3* HR-33) and Bryan Garcia (Grade 1* C-54 HR-34). Cody Stashak and Dakota Hudson are on the roster in the hopes they will resurrect their careers. About 60 innings of relief can be found from starters Richards, Cortes, and Steele.

Offense: 10.0
Interesting, powerful. No mocking.

Things start out well in the catching spot as Will Smith (1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks+22+42, L-7) and Mike Zunino (1-1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+42) provide power. Yandy Diaz gets the job done at first base (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks), while the platoon of Cavan Biggio (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks) and Aledmys Diaz (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42) is adequate at second. 3B is a mish mash of Jose Aguilar (1-5-6), Yonny Hernandez (6) and catcher Smith. Old reliable Dansby Swanson is solid at short (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22). Kole Calhoun (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Teoscar Hernandez (1-0-0-0, 11 hits) are everyday players in the outfield. The rest of the boys on the bench circulate in and

Hernandez: Everyday player

out of first base, the outfield, and DH spots in the order: Ramon Laureano (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 88 games), Jurickson Profar (0-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+22), Joc Pederson (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42). Isbel and Jake McCarthy will see limited duty as they acclimate to TBL this season. After having a pretty good offense last season, this is a pretty underwhelming crew in 2022. There are some really good names here, but they did not have really good years, and the Phoenix will pay the price for that this time around.

Defense: 4.5
Better than average.

Smith and Zunino share C8 with weak arms. Yandy Diaz (1B4) is a nice blend with his hitting ability for the season. Biggio (2B7) will suffer, but Aledmys Diaz (2B8 3B4 1B4 SS7) picks him up nicely. Aguilar/Smith (3B3) are dangerous to themselves at the hot corner, but Hernandez

(3B4) and others can pick it late in the games. Swanson (SS9) maintains his excellence at SS. Calhoun and Laureano are OF3s and the rest are OF2s. Profar has that 34 arm with his OF2.

Swanson: Old reliable

Bench: 3.5
Platoons everywhere.

The instructions say it all. "Pinch-hitting: Nope. Pinch Running: Nope (until further notice)." The season will have to play itself out, and as Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein get a feel for what the boys can and cannot do with the game limita-

Ages of players on the Northboro roster, as of 07/01/2022:

37: Bard
36: Kluber
34: K. Calhoun, Richards
32: Aguilar, J. Barnes, N. Ramirez
31: A. Diaz, Zunino
30: Y. Diaz, Pederson, R. Thompson
29: T. Hernandez, Profar
28: Burr, Stashak, D. Swanson
27: Alvarado, Biggio, Castano, Cortes, Foster, Hudson, Laureano, Senzatela, W. Smith
26: Bielak, Dunn, Karinchak, Steele, Vesia
25: Isbel, Lynch
24: I. Anderson, Y. Hernandez, McCarthy

tions they face. We can expect little other than the drudgery of playing the day's lineup with no changes other than trying to figure out whether it is a day to use the limited bullpen or not. We've all been there and done that at one time or another; it is a crying shame to see it happen due to injuries so quickly after their first championship season with a bunch of really good names on the roster.

4th TBL reflects MLB, which can be a cruel experience. You can be great one year and drop off the cliff the next with the same guys. That is never fun, and playing the next season when it happens is never easy.

We do have an interesting difference in TBL this season as this happens both to the Phoenix and the Midwest Mongrels. Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein chose to stay the course and hope for a quick turn around. The Guru, by comparison, tore it down and decided to start over. As the *Annual* noted several years ago, differing ideas are out there about what to do when this plague hits your team. Once again, we will get to see the decisions play out in real time. The Phoenix are ready to come back quickly. They just need to return to good health both on offense and the hill to start their next life. There will be plenty of pain this year, but it will likely be short lived. Meanwhile, Bob and Steve should bask in the glory of that great run last year and hope for the best! The championship could not have gone to two finer TBL gentlemen.

TQ: **19.0**
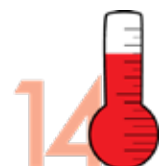
breakthrough

There are fringe players on TBL rosters right now who might be important players on rosters in 2022. Some of those names appear in the list below. Some won't make it, but last year's list included Shohei Ohtani, Trevor Rogers, Nate Lowe, Jazz Chisholm, Dylan Carlson, Casey Mize and Cedric Mullins: a pretty good list.

1 **Camilo Doval, P, Calusa.**

A hard thrower who has settled in as a closer in MLB; he's a nice piece for the Indians' future.

2 **Keibert Ruiz, C, Gotham City.**

Power hitting catchers are in vogue, but this young man might be very special. He fits the Gotham profile well.

3 **Paul Blackburn, P, Riverwoolf.**

He's started the season hot, and if this holds up he could be a piece of next year's rotation or a nice tradeable commodity before next year's draft.

4 **Alejandro Kirk, C, Zion.**

A very fine young hitter who could be in the Zion mix for years to come. He has a good eye and is good behind the plate as well.

5 **Jarred Kelenic, OF, Munich.**

A prime prospect who has a little more work to do – but at 22 there's time. Mr. Montague is glad to add him to the roster.

6 **Brandon Marsh, OF, Maracaibo.**

A power-speed outfielder who fits the Rumrunner model. He's getting lots of playing time with the Angels.

7 **Jo Adell, OF, Hoboken.**

He came out of the box and stumbled but is still one of the youngest players in the major leagues. The Statesmen sent him to the Zephyrs and may someday regret it.

8 **Daniel Bard, P, Northboro.**

He was once one of the top setup men in baseball, but lost it all years ago and even retired, but now he's back and throwing hard as ever.

9 **Kyle Isbel, OF, Northboro.**

He's got power and speed, and made his way to the champs by trade (and is now their SNT). He's got talent to spare.

10 **Daniel Lynch, P, Northboro.**

If you're on the Prince's radar, you've got talent: Lynch is part of a whole youth movement in Kansas City, and will either be a key player or trade bait.

Honorable mention: Riley Adams, C, Whitman; Joey Bart, C, Brobdingnag; J. T. Brubaker, P, Columbus; Daz Cameron, OF, Blue Hill; Zack Collins, C, New Westminster; Josh Fleming, P, Calusa; Luis V. Garcia, IF, Brobdingnag; Tyler Gilbert, P. Gotham City; Elieser Hernandez, P, Las Vegas; Alex Kiriloff, OF, Knoxville; Dean Kremer, P, Blue Hill; Trevor Larnach, OF, Midwest; Jorge Lopez, P, Blue Hill; Matt Manning, P, Maracaibo; Jake McCarthy, P, Las Vegas; Keynan Middleton, P, Strong City; Edward Olivares, OF, Rye; Johan Oviedo, P, Melrose; A. J. Puk, P, Midwest; Emmanuel Rivera, IF, Munich; Luis Rengifo, IF, Maracaibo; Gavin Sheets, OF, Blue Hill; Mason Thompson, P, Hoboken; Eli White, OF, Blue Hill; Bryse Wilson, P, Blue Hill; Bruce Zimmermann, P, Maracaibo.

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. Five of our top ten last year were top 2022 choices, and our #1 was the overall #1. Six of our honorable mentions made it to round 1 as well. You be the judge.

1 **Julio Rodriguez, OF, Seattle.**

He's the complete package: hits, hits for power, and runs. He's got a solid glove and a good centerfielder's arm.

2 **MacKenzie Gore, P, San Diego**

The big lefty has opened lots of eyes during the early part of the season, and looks like the top pitcher pick in the 2023 draft. He's really put it together.

3 **Bobby Witt Jr., IF, Kansas City.**

The kid is holding his own in the majors, and will attract lots of attention in next year's draft. We've been waiting.

4 **Seiya Suzuki, OF, Chicago (N).**

The latest Japanese All-Star to make the jump to MLB, he's in his prime and can rake. He's not exactly Ichiro, but he'll make a difference for the Cubs this year.

5 **Adley Rutschman, C, Baltimore.**

There's still plenty of room for him despite this year's catching surplus. We expected him last year but he'll be much sought after this year as well.

6 **Joe Ryan, P, Minnesota.**

He's a little old for the Top 100 list, but he's been excellent so far for the surging Twins. He'll look good in someone's rotation (we'd guess Midwest).

7 **Jeremy Pena, SS, Houston.**

Carlos Correa is a very tough act to follow, but the Astros are committed to the 24-year-old. He's got a steady bat and a sure glove.

8 **Spencer Torkelson, 1B, Detroit.**

The kid can hit, though he's off to a bit of a rough start. He will develop as the season continues, and Detroit knows that he can only improve.

9 **Hunter Greene, P, Cincinnati.**

The kid can top 100 with his fastball, but may take a little time to develop. He'll have to become more of a pitcher than a thrower, but we said that about The Unit too.

10 **Steven Kwan, OF, Cleveland.**

A true contact hitter, he's been an early season surprise for Cleveland. He is a throwback to the days where there was value in not always swinging for the fences.

Honorable mention: C. J. Abrams, IF, San Diego; Gabriel Arias, IF, Cleveland; Francisco Alvarez, OF, New York (N); Shane Baz, P, Tampa Bay; Matt Brash, P, Seattle; Vidal Brujan, IF, Tampa Bay; Edward Cabrera, P, Miami; Triston Casas, 1B, Boston; Diego A. Castillo, 3B, Pittsburgh; Oneil Cruz, IF, Pittsburgh; Reid Detmers, P, Los Angeles (A); Nolan Gorman, IF, St. Louis; Riley Greene, OF, Detroit; Nolan Jones, IF, Cleveland; George Kirby, P, Seattle; Royce Lewis, IF, Minnesota; Matthew Liberatore, P, St. Louis; Nick Lodolo, P, Cincinnati; Josh Lowe, OF, Tampa Bay; M. J. Melendez, Kansas City; Max Meyer, OF, Miami; Jose Miranda, IF, Minnesota; Gabriel Moreno, C, Toronto; Oliver Ortega, P, Los Angeles (A); Cristian Pache, OF, Atlanta; Nate Pearson, P, Toronto; Oswald Peraza, IF, New York (A); Geraldo Perdomo, IF, Arizona; Grayson Rodriguez, P, Baltimore; Bryson Stott, IF, Philadelphia; Spencer Strider, P, Atlanta; Alek Thomas, OF, Arizona; Anthony Volpe, IF, New York (A); Cole Winn, P, Texas, Connor Wong, C, Boston.

the hammer

<div style="text-align:right">by Walter Hunt</div>

It seems almost unnecessary to recite the accomplishments of Henry Louis Aaron, "Hammerin' Hank," one of the greatest players in the history of Major League Baseball. The all-time leader in RBI (2,297) and total bases (6.856), with nearly 3,800 lifetime hits and 755 home runs, his name appears and will likely forever appear among the leader boards of our favorite sport.

He was consistently great and was a perennial All-Star, playing almost all of his career with the Braves in Milwaukee and Atlanta. That career entirely predates our own league; none of us ever had the chance to write that name in a TBL lineup. He belongs to history, and for many of us he belongs to our youth, a great player in an age of great players, what we think of when we think of a Hall of Famer.

Hank Aaron was born in 1934 in Mobile, Alabama, and first played professionally for the Indianapolis Clowns in the Negro American League. He was originally an infielder. He signed with the Braves in 1952 and played in the minor leagues in Eau Claire, Jacksonville, and Atlanta, and made the major league club in 1954 when Bobby Thomson fractured his ankle in spring training, and hit .280 with 13 homers in 122 games. It was the beginning of an amazing career that spanned 23 years.

APBA was kind to Mr. Aaron. He earned that kindness with his outstanding performance on the field, of course, but the breaks in the carding process were often

in his favor. As a player with both power and speed, his cards had extra base hits as well as speed-based singles. Even after the base stealing prowess went away, he was reckoned as a fast baserunner, and he drew plenty of walks and struck out remarkably little for a power hitter. (We don't see that very much anymore.)

After two seasons back in Milwaukee with the Brewers, he retired at the age of 42. He was still a capable hitter, but a shadow of what he had been just a few years earlier. In 1982, in his first year of eligiblity, he was elected to the Hall of Fame, as worthy a selection as could be imagined.

In 1999, to mark the 25th anniversary of the breaking of Babe Ruth's home run record, Major League Baseball introduced the Hank Aaron Award. It is presented to the best overall offensive performer in each league. Winners of this award are better known to us: last year it was Vladimir Guerrero, Jr., and Bryce Harper.

After his retirement, Aaron became an executive with the Braves, in which role he was an ambassador

and spokesman for his club and for baseball. He always carried himself with dignity and grace; he was well-spoken, well-read, and a true gentleman – the last surviving Negro Leagues player at the time of his death in January 2021. He would have been included in our lengthy list of memorialized greats last year, but I felt he deserved his own treatment. I could not say much more than has already been said about Henry Aaron: he was a giant of my youthful fandom. I was a teenager when I watched him launch #715 off Al Downing and I knew that he was near the end of a tremendous career. It's hard to imagine that was nearly fifty years ago.

Below are some of his best APBA cards. *Ave atque vale*, Mr. Aaron: *I salute you, and goodbye.*

Rookie 1954

NL Batting Title 1959

Near Triple Crown 1963

500 HR 1968

NL MVP 1971

Triple 1s 1973

Game Called.
Across the field of play
  the dusk has come, the hour is late.
The fight is done and lost or won,
  the player files out through the gate.
The tumult dies, the cheer is hushed,
  the stands are bare, the park is still.
But through the night there shines the light,
  home beyond the silent hill.

Game Called.
Where in the golden light
the bugle rolled the reveille.
The shadows creep
  where night falls deep,
  and 'Taps' has called the end of play.
The game is done, the score is in,
  the final cheer and jeer have passed.
But in the night, beyond the fight,
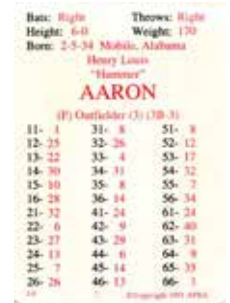 the player finds his rest at last.

Game Called.
Upon the field of life
  the darkness gathers far and wide,
  the dream is done, the score is spun
  that stands forever in the Guide.
Nor victory, nor yet defeat
  is chalked against the player's name.
But down the roll, the final scroll,
  shows only how he played the game.

Grantland Rice, 1956

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 forty-second 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.