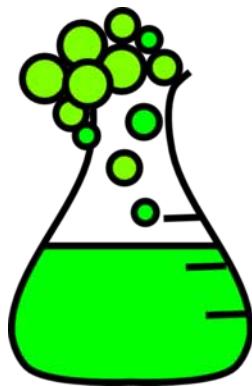


The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

The Formula



2015 Edition

Walter H. Hunt

Robert Jordan

Mark H. Bloom

All 24 Teams Analyzed
Using the T.Q. System

The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

by

Walter H. Hunt

Robert Jordan

Mark H. Bloom

with contributions from TBL's managers

and extra help from:

Eric Sheffler

Paul Harrington

Jim Dietz

Copyright © 2015 Walter H. Hunt, except "*The Faith of Job*"
and "*Ernie Banks*", which are copyright © 2015, Jim Dietz.

This book was produced using a Macintosh with Adobe
InDesign and Adobe Photoshop CS4.

I can be reached by mail at

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

or by e-mail at

hotc@walterhunt.com.

the TBL baseball annual

Welcome to the 2015 *TBL Baseball Annual*. This is the twentieth year of the *Annual* in the book format. We're happy to welcome the Vegas Line back to the book, along with an article from our returning manager Eric Sheffler. It's hard to believe that the editorial team has been at this for this long, but it's hard to argue with documentary evidence. This year Robert Jordan re-joins our merry band with his usual skill and humor.

We've approached the ideas of team-building from all sorts of angles, but this year we're taking a look at the "secret formula" that teams have used over the years to grab the brass ring. Our regular features are back as well, giving our insights into past, present and future.

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

Walter, Mark
May, 2015

The T.Q. System

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

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

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

table of contents

FRONT MATTER

The Winning Formula	Bob Jordan	6
SNTs		9
Future Drafts		10
TQ Summary		11
Manager Roll Call		12
2015 Computer Pre-Play	Clay Beard	13
Hall of Fame: Enshrinee 2015		14
Hall of Fame: For Your Consideration		15
Statesmen Return to The: Will Winning Follow?	Eric Sheffler	16
The Vegas Line	Paul Harrington	18

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

	Clemente Division Warrenton Blue Hill	Giant Expectations 22 30	Whitman Columbus	26 34	20
	Mays Division Gotham City Rye	Fifteen Guys 40 48	Grand Cayman Greater Ohio	44 52	38
	Ruth Division Broddingnag Detroit	Not According To Plan 58 66	Detroit New Westminster	62 70	56
	2014 World Series Report				74

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

	Aaron Division Statesmen Maracaibo	Welcome Back 78 86	Northboro Kansas	82 90	76
	Mantle Division Munich Zion	Pay Per View 96 104	Melrose Hudson	100 108	94
	Williams Division Knoxville Midwest	Outlaw Overkill 114 122	Taylorville Las Vegas	118 126	112

FINAL WORDS

Breakthrough		130
Future		131
Editorial		132
The Vegas Line	Paul Harrington	133
The Faith of Job	Jim Dietz	134
In Memoriam		135

the winning formula

by Bob Jordan



Welcome to the 2015 *TBL Baseball Annual*! The Red Sox starting rotation is a mess, the snow from our month long February snow storm is almost, but not quite, melted away, and the *Annual* staff is once again braving the ire of our wives and employers to pound out this - the finest APBA retrospective in the galaxy. We are so good that major universities are studying these pages to uncover the formula for our secret sauce. Spring is here, and we are looking forward to a spectacular 2015 season – TBL's 34th year!

In this volume, we look back at the 2014 TBL Champion Brobdingnag Barbarians. The merciless Joseph Auletta fielded a real road grader in 2014 – a spectacular 122-win regular season that was almost derailed by Darrell Skogen's Midwest team that simply refused to lose in the 2014 World Series.

Also included here are our usual mind-expanding predictions, pinpoint analysis, and pithy commentary that *Annual* fans have come to expect. And several of our excellent brotherhood have contributed their wisdom and foresight to these pages as well.

Thanks, and more thanks

Keeping an informal league running for over three decades requires the efforts of many, so let's kick this party off by acknowledging that many have contributed to our success. Congratulations to Paul Harrington on surviving his first year as TBL commissioner. Paul smoothly took the reins in 2014, and guided this ship past all the sand bars and rocky shoals normally encountered in a long season. His decisiveness and good humor served us well, and his insistence on working for nothing is much appreciated by the league bean counters.

The TBL Brass has new blood this year. Steve Powell, who has been a steady influence on

the league proceedings for decades, has stepped in as our new Commissioner of Vice. He will be awarded a truly minimal minimum wage, a 0% 401K match and self-funded health care plan for his efforts.

Congratulations as well are due to the technowizard that is Steve Stein, who runs our league draft, builds our incredible statistics archive, fixes our rosters, and still finds time to correct my numerous mental errors as co-owner of the Northboro Phoenix. He receives help and assistance from Hall of Famer Clay Beard, who runs our waiver draft and provides other services.

Lastly but never leastly, thanks go once again to the unstoppable Walter Hunt, without whose efforts we would have nothing but back issues of the *Annual* to keep us up at night. This year, Walter took it to yet another level and got an honest-to-Pete-I-get-paid-for-this job! The Worshipful One is now the librarian of the Massachusetts Grand Lodge. So my handy excuse for not getting my articles done ("...but I have to work...") isn't gonna fly anymore.

Not All Those Who Wander are Lost

Some departures are harder than others. This year, the *Annual* bids adieu to a great friend and a great APBA manager – Ray Murphy. Ray joined TBL in 1992, won the 2006 TBL Championship, and was our League Commissioner for five years. The reason this league has lasted for 34 years is that we have always had intelligent, humorous, deeply knowledgeable and fair minded gentlemen like Mr. Murphy in our midst. It has been a privilege to be part of an organization that includes you, Raymond, and I know I speak for the whole league when I wish you good health, good fortune, and every blessing for your young and growing family. You will be missed.

Ray doubles down on his departure by taking his partner Jon Brinkmann with him. Jon has been in and out of the league for a couple of decades, and was the longtime owner of the Mahopac Stogies. He will be missed as well.

Stepping into all four of those big shoes is another old friend. Eric Sheffler is now the happy inheritor of the Portland Possum franchise. He has renamed the team The Statesmen. We welcome Eric back after a short twenty year absence – he was last with us during the 1995 season.

The Formula

Baseball has changed a lot in the post-steroid era. We have entered a new, brutal period marked by bigger, better and disposable pitching, with opportunistic offense taking the place of sheer, brute home run power. The formula in Real Ball is to collect several arms that throw in the high 90s for the bullpen, and surround this group with enough starting pitching to keep them fresh through the playoffs, and enough offense to win games but not break the bank on salary. The new normal is last year's Kansas City Royals and the San Francisco Giants teams of the last six years. One critical element to winning an MLB World Series is to catch a pitcher that is on an all-world streak (Madison Bumgarner last year, Koji Uehara in 2013) and ride them to the title.

The question we investigated here is this: is there a specific formula for winning a TBL title? We have set our crack statistics team to work crunching the numbers over the last decade. We examined the TBL champions and the teams they defeated in the World Series in each of the last ten seasons.

TBL championship teams fall roughly into three categories. *Knuckle Draggers* roll out a big offense, suitable for bashing in the brains of unarmed opponents, and push enough pitching to the mound to keep the opponents under control. Clay Beard made it to the World Series in 2010 with a 927-run offense, and a team that

finished an unspectacular 7th in the league in ERA. Gotham City rolled to the World Series in 2007 with the #1 offense in the league (938 runs scored) and solid pitching (3.83 team ERA, good for 4th in the league). They lost a death match to Munich in seven games that year.

Some teams that win are *Anacondas*. These teams suffocate their opponents with lock-down pitching. Offense? Your mileage may vary. The gold standard for this type of club is Midwest's 2009 TBL championship team. Darrel finished 3rd in team ERA (3.34), second in WHIP (1.12), first in fewest walks allowed, 3rd in fewest hits allowed. Meanwhile, the offense showed up long enough to finish 12th in runs scored (782), 8th in homers (177) and a yawn-inducing 17th in doubles. Craig Musselman's 2010 league championship team allowed only 576 runs in the regular season. They were 13th in the league in runs scored, and 14th in hits. Pat Martin's Knoxville Outlaws, the team Joe Auletta beat in the 2008 World Series was an anaconda – 14th in runs scored, 1st in team ERA (3.41).

Then, there are the *Monsters*. Monsters are characterized by both overwhelming pitching and bone crushing power. And they win. A lot. Examples of recent Monsters are Melrose in 2011 (123 wins), Munich in 2007 (113 wins), and Brobdingnag in 2014 (122 wins). All three of these clubs won the TBL World Series. Another characteristic of monsters is that they have a very limited half-life. In 2008, Mr. Montague won 64 games. Mark Freedman won 110 in 2012 and tacked on another TBL title, but in 2013 he won 73 games. Guys go all-in when they build these kinds of clubs. The following year's draft is typically burned to support this year's freak show, and the dominance, while spectacular, is not meant to last.

This analysis unlocked a few interesting tidbits:

Doubles are not a key to a championship. When Walter and I hatched the idea for this article, one of our theories was that winning teams may

not always hit the most homers, but they finish very high in the league in doubles. Not true, as it turns out. On average, TBL champions finish 9th in the league in doubles. The teams they beat finish 10th. If you really want to win, build a team that applies pressure through flurries of hits, and features the long ball. TBL Champs over the last ten years have finished fifth in hits and fifth in home runs.

Richard Meyer, in his analysis of the teams after each draft, has always emphasized that cards with more hits are desirable. An 11/3 card is preferable to a 10/4 card or a 9/5 card, if all other factors are equal. This analysis shows him to be spot on – as if we needed any statistical evidence of that.

Pitching rules. The strongest statistical indicator I could find as a predictor of a TBL championship is hits allowed. On average, the TBL Champion ranks second (aggregate rank 2.2) in hits allowed, followed by ERA (2.7) and WHIP (2.8). Surprisingly, walks allowed is not as strong an indicator – TBL champions, on average, rank 8th in the league in walks allowed.

Win a lot, and win your division. On average TBL champions win way over 100 games. In the last 10 years, the average number of wins by the victorious teams in our league is 108.9. And every one of the World Series winners has been a division winner. Only one wild card team in TBL history has ever won a TBL World Series – the 1995 Elders of Zion. Richard finished a game back of Maracaibo in the old Mays division. Rich then dispatched Walter Hunt, Joe Auletta and Dave Suter in consecutive series to win the title. In fact, since 2000, only two wild card teams have even played in a TBL World Series – the 2012 Gotham City Batmen and the 2010 Hudson Generals.

Real Life

All of this is in stark contrast to what we find when we look at Major League baseball. Activity at the trade deadline is critically important to the

fortunes of a major league baseball team, as is strength of the division. For example, the 2006 St. Louis Cardinals won 83 games, but finished first in an awful division. They went on to win the World Series that year. That Cardinals team was 14th in baseball in runs scored, 19th in hits and 16th in team ERA. But they caught a tail wind once the playoffs started and won it all. In 2012, the San Francisco Giants won the World Series despite being dead last in homers in the majors. They hit only 103 dingers all season long. But their pitching was dominant in every category except walks (they were 27th that season in walks allowed) – and that's all it took.

The 2008 Philadelphia Phillies were 9th in runs scored, 23rd in hits, and 12th in WHIP, but they pounded home runs all season long on their way to their first World Series in 28 years. This was an example of catching a pitcher in an ungodly hot streak – Brad Lidge was 41 for 41 in save opportunities that season.

Fessing Up

The Annual's track record. Since we're analyzing the structure of championship ball clubs, I checked the *Annual's* TQ evaluations against the actual track record of the teams evaluated over the last ten years. The results speak well of Mr. Meyer's ability to make snap judgements at a glance. Here are the last ten World Series results, with accompanying TQ Ratings for the participants:

- 2005 – Maracaibo (TQ 35.5, 4th) over Brobdignag (TQ 39.5, 1st)
- 2006 – Portland (TQ 36.5, 1st) over Greater Ohio (TQ 27, 10th)
- 2007 – Munich (TQ 36, 5th) over Gotham City (TQ 37.5, 3rd)
- 2008 - Brobdignag (TQ 36, 3rd) over Knoxville (TQ 40.5, 1st)
- 2009 – Midwest (TQ 33.5, 3rd) over Gotham City (TQ 30.5 6th)
- 2010 – Rye (TQ 39, 1st) over Hudson (TQ 30, 6th)

-
- 2011 – Melrose (TQ 38.5, 2nd) over Dallas (TQ 34.5, 3rd)
2012 – Melrose (TQ 32, 2nd) over Gotham City (TQ 26.5, 11th)
2013 – Elders of Zion (TQ 35, 2nd) over Whitman (TQ 31, 5th)
2014 – Brodingnag (TQ 42.5, 1st) over Midwest (TQ 29, 7th)

The immediate future

Since we're so dang good at this, let's tee it up again and see how we do for 2015:

In the *Aaron Division*, Eric Sheffler's Statesmen will romp to their first division title under new ownership. Northboro and Maracaibo will conduct a staring contest for a National Conference wild card slot.

In the *Mantle Division*, Munich and Melrose are two of the most loaded teams in the league. The *Annual* gives a slight edge to Paul Montague's minions, but Mr. Freedman will be a force to be reckoned with in the playoffs.

In the *Williams*, Pat Martin might be sitting on the best team of his career. He should easily win the division and take another shot at a World Series title.

In the International Conference, the *Clemente Division* champion will be the newly restructured Warrenton Giants. Jack Chapman is making this rebuilding thing look easy in this, his third year.

In the *Mays Division*, Anton Greenwald's Gotham City Batmen will win by a nose over Mark Bloom's Grand Cayman Havens. (Did anyone else notice that Evan Gattis hit 35 homers in 364 at bats for Boomer last year?)

Finally, Brobbingnag will win the 2015 Duel With Feathers in the greatly diminished *Ruth Division*. All four teams took a step backwards, but Joe still looks good enough to win this.

We at the *Annual* are glad to be back. Whether you are rolling out a road grader or just trying to get your games played on time this year, we wish each of you a joyous 2015 season.

SNTs

Shiny New Things for 2015:

Blue Hill: Yordano Ventura, SP
Brobbingnag: Mookie Betts, OF-2B
Columbus: Masahiro Tanaka, SP
Detroit: Phil Klein, RP
Gotham City: Dellin Betances, RP
Grand Cayman: Gregory Polanco, OF
Greater Ohio: Ender Inciarte, OF
Hoboken: Nick Castellanos, 3B
Hudson: Marcus Stroman, SP
Kansas: George Springer, OF
Knoxville: Zach Britton, RP
Las Vegas: Xander Bogaerts, SS

Maracaibo: Drew Hutchison, SP
Melrose: J. D. Martinez, OF
Midwest: Rougned Odor, 2B
Munich: Jacob DeGrom, SP
New Westminster: Jorge Soler, OF
Northboro: Jose Abreu, 1B
Rye: Roenis Elias, SP
Statesmen: Billy Hamilton, OF
Taylorville: Josh Harrison, IF-OF
Warrenton: Buster Posey, C
Whitman: Jose Ramirez, SS
Zion: Trevor Bauer, SP

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.

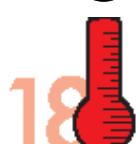
The graphical displays below show how much each team has in the tank. The middle mark on the thermometer (9) represents a full draft (picks #1-#3) in 2016; above the middle line is excess, while below means something's missing.



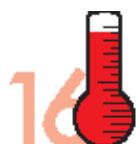
haves



BROBDINGNAG. *Quelle surprise.* In addition to their own draft, they hold the Detroit #1, the Blue Hill #2, and two extra #3s.



HOBOKEN. Their #1, Knoxville's #1, and the Midwest #1, #2 and #3.



NEW WESTMINSTER. Their own draft, plus the Grand Cayman and Knoxville #2. (And a lot of choices in the 4th and 5th round, too.)



HUDSON. Their own draft, plus the Munich #1.



WHITMAN, TAYLORVILLE. Whitman has its draft plus the Munich #2; Taylorville has its #1 and Melrose's #1, #2 and #3.



COLUMBUS. His picks and Kansas #3.

balanced



LAS VEGAS, GREATER OHIO. Their own drafts, likely higher up.



NORTHBORO, RYE, GOTHAM CITY, STATESMEN, MARACAIBO, ZION.

Their own drafts.

MUNICH. Their #2 and #3, Warrenton #1.

have nots



KANSAS. Their #1 and #2.



BLUE HILL. Their #1 and #3.



GRAND CAYMAN. Their #1 and #3.



DETROIT, MIDWEST, MELROSE. Their #2 and #3.



WARRENTON, KNOXVILLE. These clubs pick in the 6th round and after.

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									Crop	
Munich (Mantle)	14.0	7.0	14.5	3.5	39.0					
Knoxville (Williams)	16.0	6.5	11.0	4.5	38.0					
Melrose (Mantle)	13.0	5.5	15.0	3.0	36.5					
Statesmen (Aaron)	12.0	5.5	14.5	2.5	34.5					
Gotham City (Mays)	11.0	5.0	13.5	3.5	33.0					
Grand Cayman (Mays)	10.5	6.0	11.5	4.0	32.0					
The Solid Performers										
Taylorville (Williams)	8.0	5.0	12.0	2.5	27.5					
Northboro (Aaron)	11.5	4.0	9.0	2.5	27.0					
Maracaibo (Aaron)	8.5	5.0	10.5	2.5	26.5					
Midwest (Williams)	9.0	5.5	10.0	2.0	26.5					
Zion (Mantle)	6.5	4.0	12.0	2.0	24.5					
Warrenton (Clemente)	8.0	3.5	9.5	3.5	24.5					
Brobbdingnag (Ruth)	9.0	4.0	9.0	2.0	24.0					
Rye (Mays)	8.0	4.0	9.5	2.0	23.5					
The Transitional Teams										
Hudson (Mantle)	7.0	4.5	6.5	2.5	20.5					
Detroit (Ruth)	7.0	4.0	7.0	2.0	20.0					
Whitman (Clemente)	5.5	4.0	8.0	2.0	19.5					
Kansas (Aaron)	7.0	4.0	6.5	1.5	19.0					
Blue Hill (Clemente)	5.5	4.0	6.5	3.0	19.0					
The Rebuilders										
Hoboken (Ruth)	6.0	3.5	5.5	2.0	17.0					
Greater Ohio (Mays)	6.5	4.5	4.0	1.5	16.5					
Las Vegas (Williams)	4.0	4.5	5.0	2.5	16.0					
New Westminster (Ruth)	4.0	4.0	4.5	2.0	14.5					
Columbus (Clemente)	3.0	3.0	6.0	2.0	14.0					

National 335.5 (28.0 average)
International 257.5 (21.5 average)

Division Totals

Mantle (NC)	120.5	Mays (IC)	105.0
Williams (NC)	108.0	Clemente (IC)	77.0
Aaron (NC)	107.0	Ruth (IC)	75.5

manager roll call

Munich Marauders	Mantle Division	<i>Paul Montague</i>	32nd year
Hudson Generals	Mantle Division	<i>Clay Beard</i>	31st year
Elders of Zion	Mantle Division	<i>Richard Meyer</i>	31st year
Gotham City Batmen	Mays Division	Anton Greenwald	30th year
Knoxville Outlaws	Williams Division	Pat Martin	29th year
Maracaibo Rumrunners	Aaron Division	Walter Hunt	29th year
Brobdignag Barbarians	Ruth Division	Joe Auletta	27th year
Dallas Eagles	Ruth Division	Steve Powell	26th year
Grand Cayman Havens	Mays Division	Mark Bloom	25th year
Melrose Avengers	Mantle Division	Mark Freedman	22nd year
Blue Hill Mudslides	Clemente Division	Mark Ludwig	20th year
Greater Ohio Chia Pets	Mays Division	Devlin Toth	20th year
Whitman River Rats	Clemente Division	Brian Hanley	20th year
Las Vegas Gamblers	Williams Division	Paul Harrington	19th year
Taylorville Red Raiders	Williams Division	Bruce Taylor	18th year
Northboro Phoenix	Aaron Division	Robert Jordan	16th year
Taylorville Red Raiders	Williams Division	Glenn Taylor	14th year
Midwest Mongrels	Williams Division	Darrell Skogen	14th year
Northboro Phoenix	Aaron Division	Steve Stein	13th year
The Statesmen	Aaron Division	Eric Sheffler*	12th year
Rye Herons	Mays Division	Craig Musselman	11th year
New West Whiskeyjacks	Ruth Division	Jim Jeatt	11th year
Columbus Jets	Clemente Division	Vic Vaughn	9th year
Kansas Coyotes	Aaron Division	Bill Schwartz	8th year
Fair Oaks Giants	Clemente Division	Jack Chapman	7th year
Detroit Stars	Ruth Division	Dave Jaskot	4th year

* Welcome back to Mr. Sheffler, who is in his first year with the current version of the Statesmen.

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



2015 computer pre-play

by Clay Beard

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

Check out the Clemente. It sure looks like fun to me – even Columbus could sneak in there if the bones roll right. Even in a somewhat down year for the Barbarians they look like a cinch; a strong

team in a down division. In the Mays, Gotham City made the playoffs all ten times but is not dominant. Rare for TBL, there doesn't appear to be a dominant team in the conference. Other than Brobdingnag, there should be some great races for the other spots.



In the National Conference we *do* have dominance. Munich and Knoxville can print playoff tickets now and Melrose has risen to be a strong challenger to the Marauders, whose mission will be to avoid the Wild Card. The surprise here is that the Portly Men of State are not the monster we've grown accustomed to. It looks



like the injuries take their toll. But this is still a solid favorite. So we have three locks and a decent race in the Aaron. The real action in the IC will be for that final wild-card spot.

International Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Clemente	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lot	Div‡	WC§
WARRENTON	83	79	--	97	73	4	1
BLUE HILL	82	80	1	93	74	3.3	1.3
WHITMAN	80	82	3	87	68	2.3	0.3
COLUMBUS	69	93	14	82	60	0.3	0.3

Mays	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lot	Div‡	WC§
GOTHAM CITY	95	67	--	104	89	6	4
GRAND CAYMAN	94	68	1	104	87	3.5	6.5
RYE	84	78	11	92	73	0.5	5.5
GREATER OHIO	67	95	28	79	59	0	0

Ruth	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lot	Div‡	WC§
BROBDINGNAG	88	74	--	97	80	10	0
DETROIT	75	87	13	86	62	0	0
NEW WESTMINSTER	63	99	25	71	53	0	0
HOBOKEN	60	102	28	73	50	0	0

fractions reflect ties.

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

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

National Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Aaron	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lot	Div‡	WC§
STATESMEN	88	74	--	101	82	7	1
NORTHBORO	85	77	3	97	77	3	1
MARACAIBO	76	86	12	83	68	0	1
KANSAS	74	88	14	79	64	0	0

Mantle	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lot	Div‡	WC§
MUNICH	106	56	--	116	98	8	2
MELROSE	99	63	7	106	91	2	8
ZION	79	83	27	89	66	0	1
HUDSON	65	97	41	79	52	0	0

Williams	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lot	Div‡	WC§
KNOXVILLE	105	57	--	118	90	9	1
MIDWEST	88	74	17	101	75	1	4
TAYLORVILLE	76	86	29	84	66	0	1
LAS VEGAS	64	98	41	73	56	0	0

hall of fame enshrinee 2014



Pedro Martinez, SP 1994-2010
Mahopac, Portland

A dominant pitcher in his prime, he led the league in strikeouts 11 times in 12 years, with his injury year of 2002 only lacking. He led the league in CG 10 times and wins 7 times, striking out 3,372 batters in 3,168 innings, and finished with a 3.00 lifetime ERA. His best year was 1998, when he recorded 24 complete games and 9 shutouts en route to a 22-7, 1.74 campaign with 349 strikeouts. *He was a shoo-in for enshrinement, with a very talented field coming up just short.*

HALF OF HALL

for your consideration



Left to Right: Mike Piazza, Wade Boggs, Mike Mussina, Jason Giambi

Mike Piazza, C

1994-2008
Minnesota/Knoxville, Maracaibo,
Oklahoma City/Lewiston-Auburn,
Rochester/Columbus

Like many other players in TBL, Mike Piazza's services were in demand; he played for several different teams, adding punch to contending lineups. He hit more than 30 home runs eight times, ending with a career total of 409, tops among catchers. His best season was 1998, when he led the league with 200 hits and a .354 average to go with 34 homers.
He fell just short of election in 2012-2014.

Mike Mussina, SP

1993-2009
Minnesota, Knoxville, Melrose, Rochester,
Columbus, Richmond

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

Wade Boggs, 3B

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

A contact-hitting machine, Boggs was a lifetime .307 hitter, sixth in TBL history as of this writing. He recorded 2,517 hits and 1,123 walks in 16 seasons (with only 835 strikeouts), leading to a lifetime .390 OBP. From 1986 to 1990 he had five straight 200-hit seasons for Amherst, the North Carolinan franchises, and the Jessup club. *Boggs fell just short in 2014 as well.*

Jason Giambi, 1B-DH

1996-2012
East Anglia, Brobdingnag, Munich, Whitman.

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

Players with carryover votes: Piazza 7; Boggs 7; V. Guerrero 6; M. Ramirez 4; I. Rodriguez, C. Finley 3; Sheffield, J. Gonzalez, Schilling 2; W. Clark, Belle, Henke, Mattingly, Sosa, Burks, Eckersley, Foulke, Gooden, Myers, Saberhagen, D. Wells, Molitor 1.

Statesmen Return to The: Will Winning Follow?

by Eric Sheffler



Baseball beat writer Zeppelin Hendrix of the The Congressional Ledger Record was granted an all-access pass to The Statesmen ownership, front office, coaches, and players during Spring Training. What follows is a potable potpourri transcript of Hendrix's 12 hours of contact with the inner workings of The Statesmen.

After working my way through the over-zealous security at The Statesmen spring training facility, I finally was buzzed into owner Eric Sheffler's office at 4:00 am. He had already been at work for an hour but greeted me with the excitement of an under aged teenager going to buy beer for the first time – anxious and nervous with the off-balance anticipation of new found joy. Nothing seemed forced or fake, just awkward and somewhat unsettling at times. After getting through the formal pleasantries, I was able to sit down and get some answers to my questions.

You have experienced quite a life away from the TBL after relinquishing ownership of the original Statesmen franchise in 1994. Fans of the club were told that you were just tired of the rigors of owning a baseball club. What we found out a mere 8 months later is that you were tried, convicted, and sentenced to 10 years of hard time in Leavenworth for indiscretions with player payrolls, gambling, and illegally selling your Hydrochlorothiazide prescription to young wrestlers looking to make weight. What can you share with readers about this experience?

Zeppelin, I would be glad to be an open book to you but with the early release I was granted, I am unable to share any of the details with you. I can only speak to the here and now and say how happy I am that the leadership and owners in the TBL have granted me the ability to own a team again. I am incredibly fortunate and look-

ing forward to a great season for the club. I am also looking forward to employing thousands of citizens from The and surrounding communities. This is an opportunity to give back to those who have stood behind me and are willing to forgive my past.

Your ownership past included a trip to the TBL World Series. The team continued its winning ways after they departed The and have been extremely successful throughout the years since your departure. Would you attribute that to the foundation you built and developed for the original club?

Not in the slightest. It had nothing to do with me. In fact, they prospered far more without me than they did with me at the helm. I accept no credit for the success of any Statesmen-based team after I left the TBL.

You have hired some of the men who helped your original team succeed on the field. Why did you believe this to be of import?

Men like Fisk, Dauer, Wathan, Johnson, and Atherton (to name a few), are just that – men of character who have walked-the-walk and will talk-the-talk. Their history and values speak volumes to the young men who make up our current team. I can't fully express how excited I am to have them as part of The Statesmen once again.

It was then the Sheffler's red phone rang, actually buzzed, and he had to hurriedly excuse himself. He pointed the way to Carlton Fisk's office and then he was escorted out through the back door of the facility.

As I walked into Fisk's office, there was no pretense of past greatness. A very plain office with personnel rosters and evaluations stacked a few inches high along with a computer filled

with Beane-like formulas and calculations. He greeted me as someone who seemed too busy would do – a cursory smile along with a ‘what can I do for you to quickly remove you from my presence’ type vocal presentation. I took the hint and got to the point.

You made some quick trades early in your tenure as GM of The Statesmen. How would you rate your moves on an A to F scale?

Well, as you no doubt know, I cannot really judge and rate the moves because we won’t really know until the season starts and the team has a few games under their belts. I can say that I believe every trade made has helped the team whether it’s immediate help now as in the acquisitions of Cruz and Putnam or help for the future with the trade of pitcher Bud Norris to Grand Cayman for what I believe are two young pitching studs in the making, Eovaldi and Montero. I can only hope that when all is said and done, the rating will be an A as the season develops.

The Portland Possum created a rich tradition of solid teams with great potential and an eye for talent. What is your hope for The Statesmen in 2015?

Mr. Hendrix, I would be lying if I didn’t say that we have some holes to fill and some concerns with our overall team balance and health. We have a solid rotation with Wainwright leading the way. Our bullpen is talented but not extremely deep. We must take care to get our starters deep enough in the game without burning out the pen. Our offense is full of power but I also question how much true contact we will make.

I am worried about the lineup having too many players that strike out too much. The defense is adequate – weak at second base along with the need to rest Wieters, Tulowitski, Wright and Mesoraco more than desired to keep them fresh. All are concerns as we enter the season. If, by the in-season trading period, we are in the pen-

nant race we will probably buy what we need to fill our weaknesses to be more competitive in the post season. If we are not in the chase, we will sell with vigor to give our team a better chance in the following seasons.

Fisk then politely, sort of, asked me to leave. For the next 10 hours I spoke with the coaches and players while studying the information scouts have accumulated over the past couple of years in regard to The Statesmen roster.

Field Manager Rich Dauer took a moment to answer the question on many Statesmen fan’s minds – *will the club win it all this year?*

I know that my mentor, Earl Weaver, would tell you that only the players determine the outcome of the games. I stand by that and will say that my coaches and I will do everything we can to keep a winning attitude in place for the season.

As day turned into night and the team enjoyed a relaxing day away from in-game activities, this reporter wonders if The Statesmen will rise triumphantly to the winning expectations of their fan base or if they will fade into the horizon just as the sun does now over the Karkovice Spring Training Stadium by the time July rolls around. Time will tell but I for one am expecting a solid beginning to a renewed franchise in the richly storied Transcontinental Baseball League.



the vegas line

Mr. Harrington's short takes on our TBL teams return to our publication this year. These also appear in the team articles for your convenience.

 **BLUE HILL MUDSLIDES.** Since last making the playoffs in 2008, Blue Hill has been in extended rebuild mode, never winning 70 games in six years, but this is the first year that there is real hope for, at least, a .500 finish.

 **BROBDINGNAG BARBARIANS.** Joe Auletta (AKA the Prince of Darkness) didn't make much of an effort to defend his WS crown in 2015. Vlad and the gang will just go with what's left over from 2014, which is still fairly potent.

 **COLUMBUS JETS.** With only 45 starts of Grade 12's, and the other 117 at Grade 8 or worse, not to mention a weak bullpen with no real closer or setup men, competing in the Clemente will be a challenge for Mr. Vaughn.

 **DETROIT STARS.** After two winning seasons and two trips to the playoffs, the Stars of Motor City have fallen back to Earth. Weak pitching and a much diminished offense spell another trip to Under .500 Land.

 **GOTHAM CITY BATMEN.** Gotham has the best bullpen in the league this year, with 190 innings of Grade 21*+ relief, a sturdy rotation and six positional players with 140+ games and great cards. Should win the Mays and possibly the World Series.

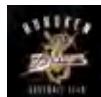
 **GRAND CAYMAN HAVENS.** Whitey's gone, but the bullpen structure is still criminal. Wade Davis is a great closer, but he's supported by a vast sea of middle relievers. A solid offense will probably score a wild card spot.

by Paul Harrington



GREATER OHIO CHIA PETS.

The Shadow Pet has his work cut out for him this year as half of Greater Ohio's bullpen has gone into the shadows, along with half of many of their regulars' seasons. Lots of mixing and matching this year for the Pets.



HOBOKEN ZEPHYRS. Steve Powell relocated his storied franchise from Texas to the NYC borough of Hoboken, perhaps hoping a new venue will result in a return to winning ways. Nope. New setting, same crappy results.



HUDSON GENERALS. Not one double digit grade in the rotation, a bullpen short on innings and a bunch of part time players is the very definition of 'average'. Will probably hold up the Mantle this year.



KANSAS KOYOTES. 115 great starts and an adequate bullpen won't be the issue in Kansas this season. It will be the anemic offense, especially the black hole at first base.



KNOXVILLE OUTLAWS. Their only real flaw is the need for a couple of setup men for Zach Britton. Six regulars are Fielding One with fabulous cards. Over 120 double digit grade starts. Will seriously challenge Melrose for the NC crown.



LAS VEGAS GAMBLERS. A third straight down year is in store for your beloved Commissioner, mostly due to injuries and poor drafting. There is a glimmer of hope for 2016, but that just might be an oncoming train.



MARACAIBO RUMRUNNERS. Being highly competitive while still adding young talent like Bethancourt and

Singleton is a neat trick, but then again, Walter is one smart cookie.



MELROSE AVENGERS. A solid rotation, backed by a deep and versatile bullpen. A stellar offense with a very deep bench and good defense, along with a savvy manager. Melrose looks primed for another WS appearance, its third in five years.



MIDWEST MONGRELS. The Guru's guys took mighty Brob to a game seven in the 2014 WS, only to fall just short. They are a diminished group this year, but still have enough to challenge for a WC spot.



MUNICH MARAUDERS. Easily the best rotation in TBL this year. It is so deep that Grade 18 Mike Fiers pitches mostly out of the 'pen. Enough offense to give Melrose a good run, but probably the top wild card.



NEW WEST WHISKEYJACKS. Jim Jeatt probably fields the worst team in TBL for 2015. Apart from Johnny Cueto, no pitching. And no real offense coupled with inadequate defense means another season in the cellar for New West.



NORTHBORO PHOENIX. Adding Jose Abreu to an already good offense should guarantee that Bob and Steve won't finish last in the league again, but having only 136 innings of double digit relief (only 28 of closer grade), will make it a difficult task.



RYE HERONS. Craig is no longer anticipating the cliff's approach, he's over the edge and admiring the scenery beyond it. Several valuable veterans are here that could help a contender, but will Craig pull the trigger on any deals?



THE STATESMEN. Old friend/new friend Eric Sheffler takes over the former Possum. They're stacked with

pitching, with almost 200 innings of Grade 20*+ relief and a superb offense. Great welcome home present!



TAYLORVILLE RED RAIDERS. The Taylor boys, after two consecutive down years, finally have something to work with here. There is enough of both pitching and offense to make a good run at a wild card slot.



WARRENTON GIANTS. The offense will be mostly small ball, with speed and H&R and not much power, but a decent rotation backed by a stacked 'pen should be enough to snatch the Clemente crown from Whitman.



WHITMAN RIVER RATS. Brian Hanley's team has had a great run. In the playoffs six straight years, won the Clemente five of the last six years and three straight 100+ win seasons. But with weakened pitching and not much offense after Goldschmidt and the OF, this ride stops this season.



ELDERS OF ZION. An aging, veteran club, trying for one last grab at glory before the inevitable cliff. A mediocre rotation, tons of positional players who had down years, only the bullpen is above average.



Giant Expectations

There is no question, at least among anyone who has met him, that you always know when *Jack Chapman* is in the room. In the direction of his baseball club, he is no less effusive and no less demonstrative – he knows what he wants and who he wants to draft, to trade for.

He got his club, now the *Warrenton Giants*, to the NC semi-finals two years ago and was swept by Zion. This year he's come back after a difficult season; and now he has Buster Posey in the middle of his lineup and a lot of other Giants besides. Is it enough to go all the way?



What can stop him? *Brian Hanley's Whitman River Rats* . . . Maybe. They're some distance from the usual roster, but they do have the

Best Pitcher in Baseball, Clayton Kershaw, and they do have a top-flight manager. In a division without a powerhouse, a team like Whitman – if they stay close – could make a move late in the year and edge into the playoffs. After that, who knows?



2014 Clemente Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Whitman*	107	55	.660	—
Columbus	82	80	.506	25
Blue Hill	56	106	.346	51
Fair Oaks	47	115	.290	60

* Lost to Brobdingnag in IC Championship.

Mark Ludwig's Blue Hill Mudslides have been rebuilding for six years; each season the team has added more talent – Bryce Harper, Christian Yelich, Gordon Beckham, Chase Headley, Yonder Alonso, Jarred Cosart, Josh Collmenter and others – and though the record doesn't really reflect it, the club *is* getting better. This year should be a step forward – but not quite a step into contention.



Vic Vaughn's Columbus Jets have also followed a rebuilding path, while venturing occasionally toward contention. Entropy is a nasty business, though: just when things are starting to come together, others take a step back. On balance this club has more deficiencies than assets, though the names on the roster are good ones: Fister, Kipnis, Bruce – and now Kiermaier and Tanaka.



1. Warrenton	24.0
2. Whitman	19.5
3. Blue Hill	19.0
4. Columbus	14.5

Clemente Division

Buster Posey,
Warrenton

2014 fair oaks GIANTS in review



Chapman is a member of the Cult of Boom and Bust.

2014 in Review

Final Record: 47-115 (4th, Clemente)

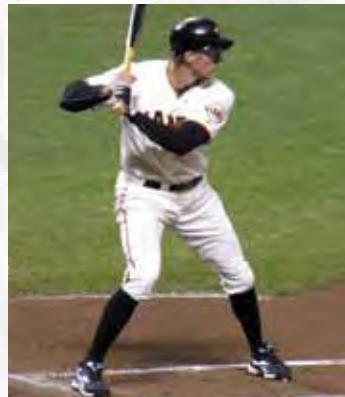
Last year we wrote, after Trader Jack won a pennant and was paved by the Elders of Zion in the playoffs: "Mr. Chapman didn't rest on his laurels – he sent them packing." He got what he wanted: a massive crash and a bulked-up 2015 draft (some of which already belonged to others).

Now they're back and ready to contend again – a clear indication that Chapman is a member of the Cult of Boom and Bust. The question is whether he can do what we call "The Bounce" – first to worst to first again, and if he'll have to go back to being worst as a result.

What went right?

It goes without saying that teams that go 47-115 don't have too many high points. This was a plodding team, but it did hit a lot of home runs (193). The most productive member of the lineup was Hunter Pence, who hit 33 of them, along with 33 doubles. He drove in 91 and scored 97, ad walked 82 times, leading the team in most of those categories. Angel Pagan's half season was decent (.289); Matt Dominguez hit 24 homers with 88 RBI and a .267 average. (He was rewarded by being sent packing.) Yoenis Cespedes hit 35 homers and drove in 75. (He's left the building as well.)

On the mound, Wade Miley went 12-12, 3.98, as the ace of a struggling team. He completed 12 games and threw 5 shutouts. J. J. Putz managed 9 saves in just under 15 innings; these were the bright spots on an otherwise quite dismal staff.



Pence: Productive

What went wrong?

Just about everything else. The club hit .231 with a .290 OBP. Hunter Pence struck out 134 times and hit .240; Cespedes, 151 and .226. The team scored 658 runs and surrendered 949.

Beyond Miley, the starting pitching struggled. Mark Buehrle pitched 10 complete games, but went 8-16, 4.64. Kyle Kendrick had 15 CG, but went 8-20, 4.86. Promising rookie Zack Wheeler went 2-9. Alfredo Figaro recorded a 4-17, 6.76 mark.

They took an expected beating from just about every opponent they faced. Mr. Chapman must have been relieved to put away this set of cards when the curtain fell on the 2014 TBL season.

3 Things

1. *Those Giants.* "Trader Jack" is always up for acquiring members of his favorite team. When the favorite team has won three World Series in recent years, it's not such a bad idea. (As opposed to, say, gathering Twins.) Their first 2015 pick: Joe Panik.
2. *Know what you want.* Mr. Chapman has demonstrated a good eye for talent. He has his own preferences, but he gets what he wants when he makes a deal – even if he has to overpay.
3. *Prepare for winning or losing.* Winning is way more fun, of course: but in order to win, Jack knows what the consequences might be, and he's ready.

warrenton GIANTS

Jack Chapman (7th year)

What you see is what you get.



It is fair to say that you always know when Jack Chapman is in the room. He cultivates the character; he projects a personality and a style, and lives up to it. As with Darrell Skogen, who was the self-styled Guru from his arrival in the league, The Chapman called himself Trader Jack – and then lived up to it. Last year the club turned over half of its roster; this year, coming off a painful 47 win campaign, two-thirds of the roster was sent packing. There were seemingly two motivations: get better – and get Giants. He got both. There's no question that Warrenton is miles ahead of Fair Oaks. And there is no question that Jean Machi, Casey McGehee, Sergio Romo, Yusmeiro Petit, and of course Buster Posey have been added to the roster in part because they play for the Giants. But it's not like he's acquiring players from the '72 Texas Rangers – the Giants have won some MLB World Series recently.

So the question isn't whether Warrenton can stay in the Clemente race: this isn't a good division. It's whether they can go further – and what the club will look like this time next year. Without

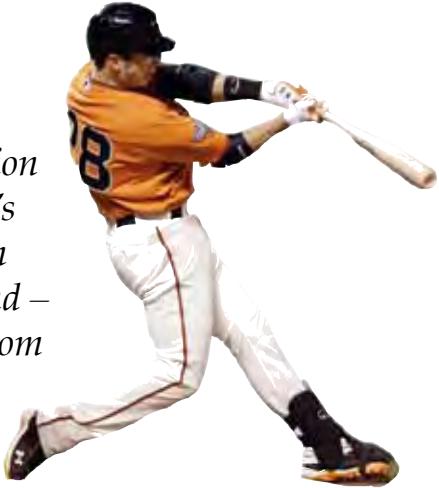
Turnover Rate: 71%

Arrived: Pedro Alvarez, Erick Aybar, Grant Balfour, Carl Crawford, Dana Eveland, Nate Freiman, Ken Giles, Nick Hagadone, Blaine Hardy, Roberto H. Hernandez, Brandon Hicks, Omar Infante, Jon Jay, James Jones, Jean Machi, Casey McGehee, Collin McHugh, Joe Panik, Jake Peavy, Brayan Peña, Yusmeiro Petit, Buster Posey, Sergio Romo, Jose Veras, Chris B. Young.

Departed: Tony Abreu, Luis Ayala, Jackie Bradley, Shawn Camp, Yoenis Cespedes, Matt Dominguez, Jake Elmore, Alfredo Figaro, Anthony Gose, Kevin Gregg, Kyle Kendrick, Marc Krauss, Brandon Morrow, Mike Morse, Nick Noonan, Carlos Peña, Derrick Robinson, Justin Ruggiano, Carlos Ruiz, Fernando Salas, Gaby Sanchez, Moises Sierra, Luis Valbuena

SNT: Buster Posey

The biggest acquisition of the off-season. He's a top-notch hitter, an excellent receiver, and – most importantly, from Jack Chapman's point of view – he's a Giant.



any picks before the sixth round, what you see is what you get.

Pitching: It had to be fixed.

9.5

Last year's pitching staff was hard to look at. They surrendered 252 homers and struck out just over 1000 batters, en route to a 47-115, 5.47 result. That had to be fixed.

ROTATION. The effort began in the first round with the acquisition of rookie hurler Collin McHugh (Grade 15 C+15 HR+14, 25 starts). Zach Wheeler (Grade 11 C-34 HR+21, 32 starts) had a good sophomore season.

These two will be supported by two Grade 9s: Jake Peavy and Roberto Hernandez (C-32 HR-14) who will go to the mound 61 times between them. The rest of the starts will go to lefties Mark Buehrle (Grade 7 C+23 HR+23) and Wade Miley (Grade 6 C-22 HR-14).

This is not quite championship caliber, but it'll make the club competitive.

Warrenton Giants



Machi: Key to pen

the only lefties. Overall this is a good staff, and the relievers help the starters. The personnel will need to be managed due to short bullpen usage.

Offense:
They'll score some runs.

8.0

It begins, of course, with Posey (1-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, no platoon shift). Having that card every



BULLPEN. The Fair Oaks club recorded 17 saves last year, and there was a lot of work to do to fix it. The top of the pen is all new: hard-throwing rookie Ken Giles (Grade 25* C+15 HR+52, KX) is the closer for 45 innings, with Giant Yusmeiro Petit (Grade 19* C+35) providing 49 more. But the key to the bullpen may be middleman Jean Machi (Grade 16* C+15), who has 66 innings to set up the other two. If he can do his job in games where Warrenton leads, the top end will be very effective.

No matter how good the top end is, a long season requires a pen to be deep. There are a lot of bodies here: Brandon Maurer (Grade 15* C+21 HR+15), Nick Hagadone (Grade 14* C+31 HR-22), George Kontos (Grade 14* HR+45) and Blaine Hardy (Grade 14* C-43 HR+53) are the first wave; the four of them add up to only 131 innings. They are sup-

ported by Scott Atchison (Grade 12* C+36 HR+32, 72 innings), the slightly scary Sergio Romo (Grade 12* C+32 HR-32), Jose Veras (Grade 12* C-62) and Grant Balfour (Grade 9* C-62 HR+41), who add 160 or so more. 20 innings of waiver pickup Dana Eveland (Grade 12* C+32 HR+22),

Hardy and Hagadone are

day – though it lacks the big power of a real cleanup hitter.



Pence: Second most scary

The second most scary card belongs to Hunter Pence (1-4-6, 10 hits, 3 walks). Three of the other four every day players have 11 hits at least, and all are newcomers: Erick Aybar (3 0s, D25, L-5); Casey McGehee (2 0s, L-6); and Jon Jay (2 0s, F26, L+5 R-3). The fourth guy playing day in and day out is also new to the club – Pedro Alvarez (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 8 13s, L-11 R+1).

The three shared positions have decent cards, but again they are not exceptional. One out-field position will be shared by Carl Crawford (3 0s, 11 hits, C31 with a fair number of steal attempts) and Angel Pagan (3 0s, 11 hits, D28 with some SBAs of his own.) Second base belongs to Omar Infante (2 0s, 10 hits, F29, L-4) and rookie Joe Panik (2 0s, 11 hits with 7s through 55). Gaby Sanchez (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+2 R-5) has the best power on the roster; Brayan Peña (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-10 R+1) gets the rest of the reps at first.

There isn't enough power to intimidate, and there isn't enough speed for a motion offense. But they'll score some runs, especially against poor pitching staffs (of which there are many in TBL this year).

Defense:
Universally average.

3.5

The plus positions on defense are catcher (Posey and Jeff Mathis are both C8s; Posey has a Th-0, Mathis a Th+1) and first base (Sanchez and Peña are both 1B4s. Peña, in fact, has a C8 with a Th+5 that probably won't see much use.

The rest of the gloves are universally average. Panik and Infante are 2B7s; Aybar is an SS8; utilityman Merwin Gonzalez has those ratings as well. McGehee and Matt Dominguez are 3B4s. All of the outfielders are OF2s, and other than Hunter Pence (35 arm) there isn't much throwing skill out there.

There are no holes in the defense, but very few bright spots. With no Fielding One infielder on the bench to enter the game in the late innings, it's more of "what you see is what you get."

Bench: **3.0** Many options.

Another sign of a good club is having players to vary the lineup and work in the late innings. Nate Freiman (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, L+1 R-6) is a short usage power threat; rookie James Jones (10 hits, 28 SBA) adds a dangerous pinch runner with decent defense (OF2, 34 arm). Waiver pickup Chris Young (OF3) has a little power.

The best player on the bench is one that could likely start on another team: Marwin Gonzalez (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L+1 R-2). He is adequate at SS and 2B, though not better than Aybar and Panik. By mid-season, however, Trader Jack may be tired of Omar Infante.

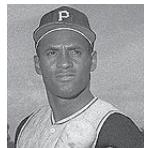
1st

They are good enough to win the Clemente, though it's never wise to count out perennial Clemente contender Whitman in a long season.

The difference is that the River Rats can do something about their club if they're close, while the Giants will have to go with what they have. This is a chance for Trader Jack to show if he's Manager Jack as well.



warrenton:
THE FORMULA



warrenton GIANTS

FLINT STONES

From 1996 to 1999, the Flint Stones were strong contenders in the Mantle and the Williams Division, losing twice in the National Conference semi-finals. The best year was 1998, when the club won 100 games and the Williams pennant, led by Larry Walker (.331-52-137) and Tino Martinez (.282-43-122). Walker stole 32 of 35 bases, and Brian Hunter led the team with 51 thefts. Denny Neagle was outstanding (21-5, 3.13) and closer John Wetteland was unhittable (36 saves, 1.25 ERA).

Flint's contending run was clearly driven by power and strong starting pitching. Walker was dominant in the middle of the lineup even after the contending run, but in 2000 and 2001 the starting pitching fell apart and the franchise moved to other management.



The offense will be mostly small ball, with speed and H&R and not much power, but a decent rotation backed by a stacked 'pen should be enough to snatch the Clemente crown from Whitman.

THIS YEAR

Warrenton in 2015 has embraced strong starting pitching, with no start worse than a Grade 6 and a strong ace at the top. But it's clear that the club will have to manufacture runs rather than merely club them, as Flint did in their heyday; but this is a different time than that, when pitching is stronger and there's far less power to go around.

TQ: 24.0



2014 whitman RIVER RATS in review

There was always the hope that a historic upset would happen in the playoffs.

by Brian Hanley



2014 in Review

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

Another year in the Clemente Division led to a 107 win season and a deep playoff run. After fighting off longtime rival Greater Ohio in 6 games we fell to eventual champion Broddingnag in the Conference Championship Series 6 games. The statistics say that Whitman had the second most productive offense in TBL behind Brob and the second best pitching staff again behind Brob. A major pre-season trade with division rival Fair Oaks filled in some major gaps in the offense and propelled the Rats from also-ran to serious contender. The team batting average of .289 led all of TBL thanks mostly to some of the pieces acquired in that trade.

What went right?

This team had the benefit of sending out the best pitcher in baseball, Clayton Kershaw, 33 times and wow did he produce. How does 260 IP, 28-2 record with a microscopic 1.83 ERA and 287 K's sound? The rest of the staff performed well but not without some careful management as the best bullpen arms had very short usage. The offense was led by stud Paul Goldschmidt who slashed 313/387/595 with 41 HR and 148 RBI. 11 players batted .290 or better scoring a formidable 840 runs. The win total was likely pumped up a bit by catching our 3 division rivals at a good time as we ran over the local competition.

What went wrong?

We knew full well that any and all efforts to put a team together that would best Brob when

the weather turned cold would be pretty much futile but that didn't stop us from trying just the same. There was always the hope that a historic upset would happen in the playoffs as it did in 2013 but alas the cream rose to the top and then some. Not much went wrong on the field for this team during the regular season though. There were a few underperformers as there always are but nothing of real note. This was just about the perfect season for Whitman until we got to the Conference Championship Series.

3 Things



Goldschmidt: Stud

1. *Building around starting pitching has given us a solid base and going into 2015 we have a staff that is 4 deep. The addition of Jesse Hahn and a few other flyers will likely result in a very strong deep rotation going into next season with some higher draft choices than we have had in a long time.*

2. *Billy Butler could be a big key to how much work the offense will need next year. There are some exciting pieces in place with Goldschmidt, Wong, Ramirez and Ellsbury to go along with older players who can still produce. This team is still built mostly around pitching but the focus will need to change.*

3. *The bullpen is adequate at best. For this team to have any real success we will need to manage very carefully. We will lose some games that past Rats teams would have won due to that fact.*

The division race will be fun because all four teams will have some say in who moves on to the playoffs. We will need some things to break our way this year to be in the thick of the hunt.

whitman RIVER RATS

Brian Hanley (20th year)

As dextrous a blunt knife juggler as he might be, there is only so much that he – or anyone – can do.



Having your playoff hopes terminated by the Brobdingnag club brings no reproach. This is the best face that the Whitman club can put on the IC championship series from last winter; their opponent, after all, won 15 more games, hit 60 more homers, scored 102 more runs, had a quarter of a run lead in ERA . . . it was a buzzsaw, and the talented Mr. Hanley is neither the first nor will he be the last to have to deal with the talented Mr. Auletta.

What comes after is going to be less capable than the 107 win club of 2014. Paul Goldschmidt is back; Clayton Kershaw is better than ever; but age and injury have made the supporting crew thinner and weaker. Is there a pennant run in this team – or, to put it another way, can Whitman keep close enough to make moves to strengthen the team down the stretch?

And should it? Only Brian Hanley can answer that. In the meanwhile they'll have to play the games.

Pitching: It'll be a long season.

8.0

ROTATION. There's really little left to say about Clayton Kershaw. Last year's version (28-2, 1.83, 287 Ks, 13 CG, 8 ShO) was dominant: this year's (Grade 17 C+33 HR+35, 27 starts) should be outstanding as well.

In the past there have been better supporters for the ace. This year is somewhat deficient. Rookie Jesse Hahn (Grade 14 C-42 HR+33) has 12 good starts, and Matt Garza and David Price (Grade 10 righty and lefty, 61 starts between them) provide 61 more. Kyle Lohse (Grade 9 C+22 HR-14) goes to the hill 31 times.

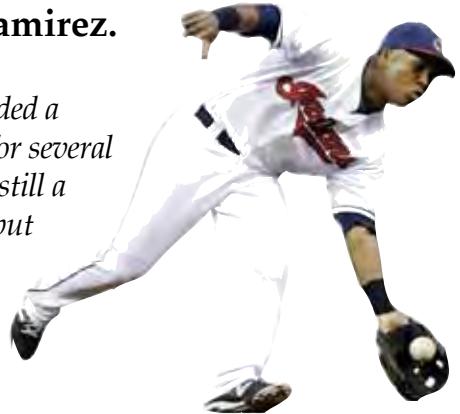


Kershaw: No more to say

Things get a little dicey for the last position. Allen Webster (Grade 6 C-46 HR+36) is the best of the lot; the next best,

SNT: Jose Ramirez.

Whitman has needed a young shortstop for several years. Ramirez is still a work in progress but has plenty of upside – just what the doctor ordered.



Anthony Ranaudo, is a deeply flawed Grade 8 (C-33 HR-54). They start 18 times between them, The rest of the starts belong to two Grade 1s: Andre Rienzo and Carlos Villanueva. Some days, these guys will have to just stay out there and get pounded.

BULLPEN. Unlike past years, this relief staff is thin and flawed. Whitman pioneered the idea of the relief valet, who would be specifically assigned to support a weak starter; no such role exists this year.

The top grades belong to lefty Tony Sipp (Grade 19* C-13) and righty Tyler Clippard (Grade 17* C-25 HR+21). They have 120 innings between them and



Brian Hanley's team has had a great run. In the playoffs six straight years, won the Clemente five of the last six years and three straight 100+ win seasons. But with weakened pitching and not much offense after Goldschmidt and the OF, this ride stops this season.

Turnover Rate: 34%

Arrived: Billy Butler, Maikel Cleto, Jesse Hahn, Brock Holt, J. J. Hoover, Lyle Overbay, Chris Perez, Jose Ramirez, Anthony Ranaudo, Eric Sogard, Allen Webster, Kirby Yates.

Departed: Jesse Crain, Chris Culberson, Dane De la Rosa, Mark Ellis, Jim Henderson, Raul Ibañez, Blake Parker, Troy Patton, Andy Pettitte, Juan Pierre, Matt Reynolds, Sergio Santos.



will protect leads late in games, being used slightly differently on the boards and the computer.

A contender would then have a few strong arms in the Grade 13*-16* range to support the closers. The best evidence that the club is scuffling is that notable absence. The best middle reliever is Carlos Villanueva (Grade 12* C+32 HR+21, 58 innings); he's useful in close games. The rest of the crew is, well, motley: Kirby Yates (Grade 10* C+14); Chris Perez (Grade 11* C-62 HR-16); and southpaw Jake Diekman (Grade 9* C-35 HR+33) add about 150 more innings, with rookie Maikel Cleto (Grade 10* C-62) and scary man J. J. Hoover (Grade 8* C-43 HR-43) bulk up the bottom of the pen.

It's hard to completely discount any staff that has Kershaw at the top and three quarters of a good rotation; but the long season and the suspect bullpen will have a tough time on the days that the ace isn't starting.

Offense: 5.5
Lots of tough at-bats.

The card of Paul Goldschmidt practically jumps out of the envelope when laying out the cards. It's outstanding (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks, L+9 R-4, E29), especially in a low power year. The problem is that it can only play 109 games. Lyle Overbay (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-10) will fill in when he's unavailable.



Goldschmidt: Pitch around

(2 0s, 12 hits, D33 for 57 SBA). It has wheels, but not a great deal of muscle.

Then things go down hill. There is no other card on the roster with a first-column 1. The rest of the regulars and semi-regulars uniformly have 10 hits: DH Billy Butler (3 0s, L+6 R-4); Jacoby Ellsbury (3 0s, 3 walks, D34 for 44 SBA, L+3 R-3); Chris Johnson

(3 0s, L+15 R-5); Nick Markakis (3 0s, 3 walks, L-3); Kolten Wong (3 0s, D32 for 24 SBA); and part timers Shane Victorino (3 0s), Jose Ramirez (2 0s,

E35 for 11 SBA); A. J. Pierzynski (2 0s, L-9 R+1); and Wil Nieves (3 0s, L-3). As noted, there is some good speed to go with Revere, with excellent SSNs – and there are several players with a 7 on 44. But there are a lot of extreme splits and just not enough hits, which will lead to a lot of empty innings.

This is a motion offense without particularly good gears. Even when considering the addition of utility players Brock Holt and Willie Bloomquist, both of whom have 11 hits, the Whitman lineup is going to have a tough time scoring runs. Opposing pitchers will pitch around Goldschmidt when he's in the lineup, and bless their luck when he isn't.

Defense: 4.0
Won't be shortening long innings.

The strength of the team on the field is led from first base, where Goldschmidt and Overbay are both 1B4s. There is also strength in the outfield, where Nick Markakis is still top notch (OF3, 37 arm) and Jacoby Ellsbury (OF3, 33 arm). Ben Revere used to be an OF3, but has been unfortunately downgraded to an OF2; now there's nothing to hide his 25-rated lucky fin. Colin Cowgill, Shane Victorino (who only has 30 games) and Willie Bloomquist (who only has 47) are all OF2s with decent-to-good arms.

Catching is average to mediocre. The eternal Wil Nieves has 36 good games as a C8, Th+1; Josh Thole is also a C8, but has a Revere-like Th-4. The bulk of the duties fall to A. J. Pierzynski, who is a C7 with a Th-3. The middle infield features straight Fielding Two: Wong and Bloomquist are 2B7s, though waiver pickup Sogard is a 2B8 (but can't hit); Ramirez and the utilityman are all SS8s. Third base belongs to a passel of 3B3s, with 3B4s available to replace them. Overall the defense isn't an enormous liability, but it's not going to shorten long innings created by the relief staff.



Revere: Wheels

Bench: Juggling unsharp knives.

2.0

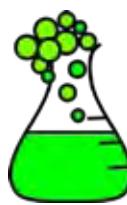
This used to be more of a team strength, but with limited draft, there wasn't much to be done. The absence of playing time for some regulars – a third of a season from Goldschmidt, Wong, Pierzynski, and even more missing for Victorino and a few others – means that Whitman is going to have to do a lot of juggling during the course of the season. Regrettably, it won't be a flashy Karamazov Brother performance, but rather a case of juggling a case of largely unsharp knives.

The best players on the bench are the platoon partners, but there are a few other high spots. The best utility card belongs to surprise performer Brock Holt (11 hits, 2 walks, F33 for 14 SBA), who got way too much playing time last year for the Red Sox. He can't really field any position, but even if he could, he can't play *everywhere*.

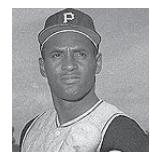
The rest of the bench is mere bulk. As mentioned before, Josh Thole isn't able to throw, and to go with it he should be kept from bat (6, 9 hits, 3 walks); Collin Cowgill (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) has a decent card except for an unpleasant platoon split (L-3 R+6); and the remaining bodies are utility infielders (Kelly Johnson, Culberson, Ryan) who are a waste of at-bats (Ryan doesn't even have the one thing that made him useful: he left his SS9 on a commuter bus or something.)

2nd

As in the Ruth, finishing second in the Clemente says more about the deficiency in competition than the quality of the competitor. Warrenton is a long way from bullet proof, and Whitman has two really outstanding players – Kershaw and Goldschmidt – each of whom is better than anything Trader Jack can throw out there. But where the Giants have power-shy players with 11 hits, the Rats have power-shy players with 10 hits; and the Giant bullpen (25*-19*-16*) is lots better than the suspect Rat one (19*-17*-12*). Kershaw overmatches McHugh, of course; but the Warrenton rotation, particularly on the bottom end, is better than the Whitman one. This year, if you don't win the pennant, you're not going to the playoffs.



whitman: THE FORMULA



Holt: Can't play everywhere

WHITMAN RIVER RATS

This club has never been elsewhere, and has had remarkable success over the course of their two decade long history. During the last six years they have been among the most successful franchises in TBL, winning more than 100 games four times. The high point was in 2012, when they won 116, and 2013, when they made it to the World Series for the first time after a 105-57 campaign.

Whitman's best teams have had excellent pitching, especially in the rotation. Along with Kershaw, the draft has brought the club David Price, Matt Garza and (in earlier years) such pitchers as Adam Eaton and Curt Schilling (who was part of the original expansion club). The team's offense was never overpowering, but you can win a lot of games if you outscore your opponents by 200-300 runs.

THIS YEAR

As noted, only the weakness of the division makes this club even remotely a contender. As efficient and as skilled as Mr. Hanley is as a field manager, and as dexterous a blunt knife juggler as he might be, there is only so much that he – or anyone – can do. The team will depend less on Kershaw and Goldschmidt: they will do what they do – and more on guys like Brock Holt and Carlos Villanueva. If everything breaks right it's 85-88 wins. If not, the Whitman River Rats will finally get to enjoy the rookie draft.

TQ: 19.5



2014 blue hill MUDSLIDES in review

BH

Given pre-season expectations, it performed largely as expected.

by Mark Ludwig

2014 in Review

Final Record: 56-106 (3rd, Clemente)

The Mudslides finished 51 games back with a record of 56-106 in 2014, making the season very unmemorable. It's hard to say that too much went right given the record, though there were a few high points; still, given pre-season expectations, it performed largely as expected.

What went right?

Despite a bit of a sophomore slump Bryce Harper led the team with 18 home runs. Chase Headley was the best overall player hitting .244 with 29 doubles and 15 homers. Stephen Drew's offense continued to decline but he still managed to lead the team with a .428 slugging percentage.

For the pitchers A.J. Griffin managed to win 10 games with this team with a respectable 4.21 ERA. Jarred Cosart spent his rookie year as the team's closer and managed 22 saves with a 1.59 ERA.

What went wrong?

Essentially, everything else. The team hit .245 and had a team ERA of 5.21. Besides Harper and Headley there wasn't much to worry about in the Mudslides' offense. The team had little power or speed to speak of. Besides Griffin the pitchers couldn't do much and even Chad Gaudin, a Grade 16* reliever, managed an ERA of 5.54! The rest of the pitching staff had too many low grade starts and the bullpen was unable to support them.



Headley: Best overall

After another losing season, management made the decision to move forward. The opportunity to add Ventura to the rotation and Boxberger to the bullpen are key to future success, but clearly more had to be done.

3 Things

1. *The offense needed an overhaul.* Accordingly, Blue Hill traded for Rajai Davis, Eduardo Escobar, Adam LaRoche and Jayson Werth. Adding them in the lineup with Christian Yelich and Kurt Suzuki should give this team a lot more offense than in the past few seasons.

2. *Defense, defense, defense.* The gloves are really good, and the outfield is probably the best the Mudslides have ever had with the ability to play 3 OF-3's – and this is with Bryce Harper not even part of the mix. LaRoche at 1B and Headley at 3B are both fielding 5's and Suzuki is a C-8 and is backed up by a C-9 in Drew Butera.

3. *No such thing as too much pitching.* The starting rotation is much better than in past years and should do a better job of winning games (except when Edwin Jackson has to pitch.) The bullpen has also been upgraded and the backend should be able to close out most games.

The best part of this move forward is that it is more than patching and filling – with a good core, Blue Hill should be able to look forward to a good future.

blue hill MUDSLIDES

Mark Ludwig (20th year)

It's all right if we're wrong.



"Coming together" is a phrase that Mark Ludwig uses in his instructions, talking about the starting rotation. But it applies to the whole team.

Unlike most years, there really isn't a lot of daylight between Blue Hill and its long time friendly rival Whitman: neither is a powerhouse, but either could take advantage of a poor stretch by Warrenton. Blue Hill's lineup and pitching staff has some assets – a few acquired by trade, most arrived by the draft – and has youth on its side. The real question is whether management has convinced itself that the team is a contender.

At the *Annual* we've convinced ourselves otherwise. Turning over forty percent of your roster after a 56-win season is rarely a bad thing. Adding Yordano Ventura as your top starter and Brad Boxberger as your top grade reliever are good things. Trading for Jason Werth, Rajai Davis, and Eduardo Escobar make the team a lot better than what was there before.

But contending . . . it's probably a reach. *Probably.* This is sometimes a sore point with this publication: we get down on a club that performs better than expected, and we get to look stupid a year later. It's all right if we're wrong, and we'd like to see Blue Hill do well. We just think it's out of reach in 2015.

Pitching:
Very functional.

6.5



Collmenter: Old man

ROTATION. There is no need to expend too much space in praise of rookie Yordano Ventura (Grade 12 C-24 HR+22), who anchors a nice young staff for the Blue Hill Mudslides. He joins lefty Alex Wood (Grade 12 C+14) and righties Josh Collmenter (Grade 10 C+24), Jarred Cosart (Grade 9 C-33 HR+36) and Dillon Gee



SNT: Yordano Ventura.

He burst on the scene on the biggest stage there is: the MLB World Series. Another great building block for a team on the way up.

Turnover Rate: 42%

Arrived: Mike Bolsinger, Brad Boxberger, Drew Butera, Buddy Carlyle, Joba Chamberlain, Rajai Davis, Eduardo Escobar, Erian Herrera, Edwin Jackson, Adam LaRoche, Roman Mendez, Oliver Perez, Carlos Sanchez, Yordano Ventura, Jayson Werth.

Departed: Heath Bell, Jose Cisnero, Brian Duensing, Nate Freiman, Chad Gaudin, Phil Hughes, Elliot Johnson, Chia-Jen Lo, Lucas Luetge, Lou Marson, Juan Nicasio, Ross Ohlendorf, J. B. Shuck, Barry Zito

(Grade 9 C-13 HR-22). There are 134 pretty solid starts there, and a quick examination of the birth dates show that Josh Collmenter is the old man of the crew (he just turned 29). The remaining 28 starts are unpleasant: Edwin Jackson and Mike Bolsinger will share the learning opportunities as Grade 1s. Years ago, a fine Zion contender managed to win a good number of games sending a Grade 1 to the mound 28 times, so that may not be a problem.

BULLPEN. When we evaluate bullpens, at least now that we think we're pretty smart, our ratings depend in part on whether the relievers can actually rescue the starters. This bullpen can do it, though there are probably not enough innings to always contribute.

The closing duties belong to two newcomers: Roman Mendez (Grade 21* C-52 HR+31) and Earl Carlyle



(Grade 18* C+33 HR+23). They have 64 innings between them, which is not as good as having 60 innings each. However there are 64 more solid innings of Brad Boxberger (Grade 22* C-16 HR-24); his peripherals make him the setup man.

As noted in the Whitman article, this is the place where contenders have setup pitchers with decent grades. Blue Hill features a solid lefty in Oliver Perez (Grade 13* C-24 HR+14), but most of the middle relief belongs to lesser lights: John Axford (Grade 12* C-62), Seth Maness (Grade 10* C+45) and Joba Chamberlain (Grade 10* C-26 HR+36). There are more than 250 innings among this quartet, and they will see lots of action. T. J. McFarland is a useful second lefty (Grade 7* C+32 HR+46), though he'll be far better on the computer than on the boards, where lefty shifts will eat him alive.

This is a very functional pitching staff, but it lacks the depth that would be needed to win much more than half its games.

Offense: Much improved.

5.5

A key offseason acquisition for Blue Hill was veteran outfielder Jayson Werth (3 0s, 10 hits, 5 walks+22, some speed). Now that Randy Johnson has retired, he's in line to be the new Photogenic Man. He is in the middle of a pretty good lineup. He shares the outfield with a younger, faster version of the same set of talents in Christian Yelich (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, E29 for 28 SBA) and a spiffy new leadoff hitter, Rajai Davis (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L+9 R-6, C30 for 47 SBA). The fourth outfielder, Gregor Blanco (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, D29 for 21 SBA) basically pushes the *fifth* outfielder Bryce Harper to the bench, even though he owns one of the few first



Werth: Photogenic, and limber too

column 1s on the roster.

There aren't a lot of home run hitters, but there are a few guys with a fourth power number. Case in point is the cleanup hitter listed in the standard instructions

– shortstop Eduardo Escobar (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks). Yonder Alonso also has four 0s, but only 9 hits and 2 walks; he won't get much playing time due to the acquisition of Adam LaRoche (1-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks, with an unsightly L-11 R+2 platoon split).

Of the remaining positions, third base is mediocre – Chase Headley (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, no platoon shift); catcher is above average – Kurt Suzuki (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+42); and second base is a good news (40% of the time) with Elian Herrera (0-6, 11 hits, L-6 R+1) and bad news (60% of the time) with Gordon Beckham (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+7 R-4). If Bryce Harper was an infielder, he'd get lots more playing time.

This offense is much improved, and is particularly effective in the outfield; but in a down-power year, it is likely to have trouble scoring runs against better pitching staffs. But many of the key players – Yelich, Harper, Alonso, and others – are young, and better days are ahead.

Defense: Some high spots.

4.0

The outfield is a particularly strong part of the Blue Hill defense. Jayson Werth is outstanding (OF3, 36 arm) and Christian Yelich can go after it as well (OF3, 33 arm). Rajai Davis is an OF2 with a 31 arm, and Blanco is an OF3 with a 31 arm. Bryce Harper's arm is 36; he's an OF2.

The club is also strong at the corners. Adam LaRoche is a 1B5 and Chase Headley is a 3B5;



Since last making the playoffs in 2008, Blue Hill has been in extended rebuild mode, never winning 70 games in six years, but this is the 1st year that there is real hope for, at least, a .500 finish.



Escobar: Cleanup hitter

Yonder Alonso is a 1B4. The middle infield is Fielding Two (Escobar is an SS8; Beckham, a 2B7) or worse (Herrera is a 2B6). There is no 2B8 on the roster. Behind the plate Kurt Suzuki is a C8, but has a Th-3. Drew Butera, who will hopefully bat only rarely, can rescue him as a C9 with a Th+2. Hank Conger, also a stranger to the bat, is a C7 with a Th-1.

This defense will help with baserunner advancement but won't shorten too many innings, especially when the ball is hit up the middle. Still, there are some high spots.

Bench: Some nice toys.

With the logjam in the outfield, there are a few nice toys available on the bench. Blanco and Bryce Harper (1-6, 10 hits, 3 walks), as well as

Daniel Nava (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L-15 R+2, but a switch hitter with no shift on the computer), all of whom can be useful. Tyler Moore (1-5, 9 hits, 3 walks) could get some reps as a pinch hitter, and Carlos Sanchez – the best guy in baseball with the actual first name of Yolmer – can be used for his batting split (6-6, 10 hits, L+9 R-8). As for Conger and Stephen Drew . . . they can drive the bus and enjoy their meal money.

3rd

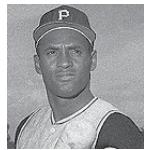
Or maybe second. Ventura sure isn't Kershaw, but Blue Hill has a deeper bullpen than Whitman, and more hitters (though none of them are Goldschmidt). If they were contenders, the guy to get wasn't necessarily Jayson Werth – it was another middle infielder to put the bat on the ball and catch it when it was hit. Jhonny Peralta would look really good in the middle of this lineup.

But maybe it's not time for that yet. Blue Hill has had a lot of bad seasons: really too many, all things considered. Any team willing to trade a contender piece for a part of the team that was deficient – another starter, extra relief innings, a better second baseman – would have wanted someone like Bryce



Yelich: Goes after it

Harper in return. For the opportunity to go 87-75 and get paved by Grand Cayman or Gotham City isn't worth surrendering a top young player.



At least this year will be lots more fun.



blue hill: THE FORMULA

BLUE HILL MUDSLIDES

The best performance by this club, which has always resided in Blue Hill, was between 2002 and 2008. Three times the team crossed the 90-win barrier, and four times got into the postseason.

These clubs hit a lot of home runs, exceeding 200 a few times. They also put the ball in play, going five years – 2004 to 2008 – with fewer than 1000 strikeouts as a team. They usually had one top notch starting pitcher – Tim Hudson was a long time star – and a shutdown closer.

THIS YEAR

Just being able to roll out good young starters and some late inning relievers will be a pleasure that has been absent for several years; since the 87-75 season in 2008, the club has won 58, 41, 69, 48, 65 and 56 games, in part due to the leaky pitching.

This offense – even with its problems – is likely to score more than 600 runs, the high water mark since Blue Hill's period of contention. That being said, there's no Sexson, no Gonzalez, no Sorrento, no Jose Cruz Jr. to hit 35 or more homers. They may have a tough time getting to 150 as a team, which means one of two things: either they'll get over .500 in a different way, or they'll fall short and be in the upper half of the draft again. But they're going to do lots better than 56-106, and we here at the *Annual* will be glad to see it.

TQ: 19.0



2014 columbus JETS in review

We'll . . . only go as far as our mediocre starting pitching takes us.



by Vic Vaughn

2014 in Review

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

The 2014 edition of the Jets crawled their way over the .500 mark, finishing the season with 82 victories which was good enough for a distant second in the Clemente and 10 games out of the playoff picture. The final result was a team effort, with both the offense and pitching finishing in the middle of the pack statistically.

What went right?

The offense was fairly pedestrian scoring 743 runs led by Jay Bruce who hit 53 doubles (good for second in the league) along with 30 HR. Jason Castro also had a very good year with 22 HR while slugging .526. Jason Kipnis and Josh Hamilton also cleared the 20 home run level.

Doug Fister was the ace of the staff, collecting 18 wins and posting a 3.07 ERA. David Robertson again anchored the bullpen, saving 27 games and only allowing three earned runs all season for a 0.61 ERA. Randy Choate, Casey Fien and Charlie Furbush were also very solid.

What went wrong?

The starting pitching just wasn't good enough. Other than Fister, the only starting pitcher who had a winning record was Mike Leake who staggered to a 10-9 record. The other starters combined for a 30-44 record with a 4.30 ERA.

The pitching staff didn't get much help from the defense who committed 106 errors leading to

82 unearned runs. Elvis Andrus committed 30 errors to lead the team.

Offensively, the departed Jesus Guzman only managed a .214 batting average and .303 slugging percentage in 126 games. The club struck out 1,351 times, seventh in the league.

3 Things



Fister: Ace of the staff

1. *Masahiro Tanaka.* Concerns about Mr. Tanaka's partially torn UCL caused him to wait in the TBL green room until the Jets chose him with the 11th pick in the 2015 draft.

A large part of the Jets' future rests on health of Tanaka's right elbow. If he turns out to be the pitcher from the first half of 2014, Columbus has a serious ace for years to come.

2. *2015 Will Be A Long Year.* Several members of the Jets had career-worst years at the plate in 2014 real life baseball, which is reflected in the less-than-stellar TQ rating you see here. It would be easy to give up on them, but there's still lots of talent there.

We'll struggle to score runs and will only go as far as our mediocre starting pitching takes us. When the dust settles, we should be comfortably in the upper half of the 2016 draft.

3. *Fishkill.* It was a pleasure to finally meet everyone and finally put faces to names. There's nothing like being in the room on the best day of the year and I'm looking forward to attending future drafts.

columbus JETS

Vic Vaughn (9th year)

Pray for rain.



We like the idea of progress. Teams evolve in cycles: they get better as they move toward contention, and have off years when they rebuild. But, in general, it is expected that rebuilding happens after the contention period is over.

We also like, and praise, acumen in acquiring key players that form a cornerstone for the rebuilding franchise. When a team adds good players, it is assumed that the club is moving toward long-term cohesion. We have offered encomiums to Vic Vaughn on his addition of such players as Jay Bruce, Jason Kipnis, Doug Fister, and others in his efforts in this area. But when those cards are laid out on the table . . . *yeesh.*

What has happened here? The club finished at .500 last year; they had an average staff and an above-average offense. There are key players missing from the 2014 roster – Ben Zobrist, Darren O'Day – but they've added Tanaka, Kevin Kiermaier, and others. Yet the overall ratings place Columbus at the bottom of the TQ ratings. Is this a blip in the rebuilding adventure, or does it indicate something deeper? Whatever the answer: this is going to be a very long season in Columbus.

**Pitching:
Not enough.**

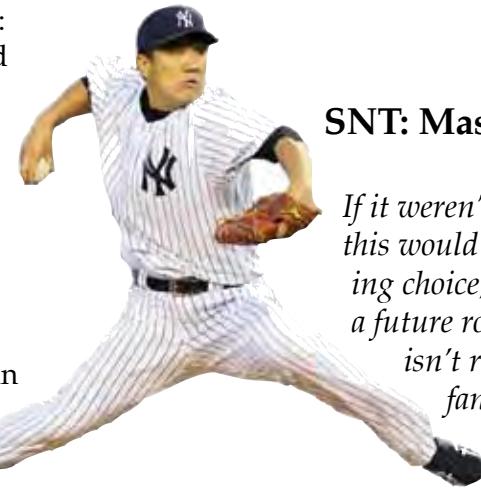
6.0

ROTATION. The problems begin with the pitching staff, though not the top of the rotation. The ace of the staff is Doug Fister, who has certainly arrived

Turnover Rate: 40%

Arrived: Ronald Belisario, Chris Coghlan, Javy Guerra, Kevin Kiermaier, Erik Kratz, Efren Navarro, Danny Salazar, Moises Sierra, Yangervis Solarte, Masahiro Tanaka.

Departed: John Buck, Manuel Corpas, Caleb Gindl, Jesus Guzman, Paul Konerko, Justin Maxwell, Darren O'Day, Ramon Trancoso, Neil Wagner, Ben Zobrist



SNT: Masahiro Tanaka.

If it weren't for that ligament, this would be an outstanding choice, the cornerstone of a future rotation. If surgery isn't required he'll put up fantastic numbers.

(Grade 12 C+36 HR-14). Tanaka (Grade 12 C+34 HR-13) is essentially the same; together they have 45 good starts. On the days they start, Columbus will want to keep them in place as long as possible.

Rick Porcello (Grade 7 C+32) and Mike Leake (Grade 7 C+23) capably fill two rotation spots for the full year. Certainly against weaker teams, these two guys will keep Columbus in the game.



The remaining fifty-odd starts are in the hands of two Grade 6s (Bronson Arroyo and Danny Salazar) and a Grade 5 (Brandon McCarthy). While none of them are particularly deficient – indeed, they have decent peripherals – they'll get hit, and there isn't a lot of bullpen to rescue them.

BULLPEN. Which brings us to this problem. In order for a middling rotation to contend, there have to be pitchers to rescue them in the middle innings. In its favor, this crew is largely better than the pitchers they replace; but there are no good grades to protect a lead.

The closer is David Robertson (Grade 15* C-21 HR-13), who has 64 innings to protect the leads that Columbus



columbus JETS

takes this year. Even if the base grade were better, the peripherals make him a little scary. But he's the best of the bunch, and the only reliever with a grade of 13* or more. His caddies are Burke Badenhop (Grade 11* C+25 HR+61) and Javy Guerra (Grade 12* C-14 HR+26), with 116 more innings between them.

The rest of the pen – lefties Randy Choate (Grade 10* HR+32) and Charlie Furbush (Grade 9* C+34) and righties J. C. Gutierrez (Grade 8* C+23) and Casey Fien (Grade 7* C+35) provide two hundred more innings; the *Annual* predicts that they'll get used, as will the Grade 1*s that provide bulk.

For a team strength, there's not a great deal of 'there' on the pitching staff.

Offense: 3.0 **We still like the names, but . . .**

Evidently 2014 was the year that major league players on the Columbus Jets roster got the same memo to underperform. We still like the names but, as Mr. Vaughn suggests, the overarching strategy for the club may be to pray for rain.

Rookie Kevin Kiermaier is a welcome addition to this club and has a very capable card (4 0s, 10 hits) but an unsightly platoon shift (L-14 R+2). He'll fare better on the computer. There's only one card slightly better than his: another new acquisition, Chris Coghlan (4 0s, 10 hits, L-5, E25). They'll share the outfield with a half season of competent performance from Josh Hamilton, who is far from his peak (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+5 R-3) and most of a season of the former heavyweight Jay Bruce (1-0-0, 8



Kiermaier: Welcome addition



With only 45 starts of Grade 12s, and the other 117 at Grade 8 or worse, not to mention a weak bullpen with no real closer or setup men, competing in the Clemente will be a challenge for Mr. Vaughn.

hits, 3 walks) who owns one of the three first-column 1s on the roster.

The infield is less settled. Jason Kipnis (0-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, E34 for 25 SBA, L-9 R+2) will give up some playing time to rookie Yangervis Solarte, the best TBL player ever to be named Yangervis, for what that's worth (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks). Elvis Andrus will be the everyday shortstop (6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks) and Daniel Descalso the most-days third baseman (6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks); both have positive shifts against lefties, which would matter more if they could actually hit. First base will be shared between Adam Rosales (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42), Efren Navarro (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) and a first-class bearded lady, the best power card on the club, Sean Rodriguez (1-4-5-5, 8 hits, 1 walk+42, L+1 R-4). Catcher belongs to Jason Castro (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+42) and Erik Kratz, who owns the third and last first-column 1 (1-5-6, 9 hits).

Without considering the cards, and without looking too closely at the 2014 performance, a team with Bruce, Kipnis, Kiermaier, Hamilton, and Bruce – as well as some of the other supporting players – would seem to be one we'd like. But with the cards spread on the table, we'd be praying for rain too. This is the least productive offense in the league.

Defense: 3.0 **Fielding not an asset.**

The best defense on the club is in the outfield, and the best of them is Jay Bruce, who is top notch (OF3, 37 arm). Josh Hamilton retains his elite arm as well (36) but has dropped to an OF2, while rookie Kiermaier checks in with an OF3 and a 32. Only Chris Coghlan (OF2, 28) is deficient, and he's penciled in to be the DH most days. Moises Sierra (OF2) has a 37 arm but won't see much time in the lineup.

The infield is Fielding Two all around except for Rosales (1B4.) Navarro and Rodriguez are both 1B3s, Kipnis and Solarte 2B7s, and Andrus is an SS8 (everyone else is an SS7.) Descalso is a 3B4 (and a 2B8, but will have little opportunity to play there.)



Bruce: Top notch

Behind the plate Juan Castro is a C8 with a Th-1, while Erik Kratz is a C7 with a Th-0. They have 173 games between them, so there isn't going to be any defensive substitution. Defense, therefore, isn't really an asset: there are no truly bad spots, but this is a team that could benefit from having defensive innings be shorter and it's just not going to happen.

Bench: Necessity makes it thin.

2.0

Much of the managerial choice on the Columbus roster is governed by necessity: not enough games, at bats or innings. There is extra usage in the outfield; Moises Sierra (3 0s, 9 hits, with a very good throwing arm) can be used when the lefty shifts are countered; Solarte and Descalso can play multiple positions, as can Rodriguez – but each is assigned to start at one or another of them, limiting flexibility.



Kipnis: Weapon off the bench

The only real weapon off the bench is Jason Kipnis, whose high SSN lets him come in as a pinch-runner to steal bases in close games. He is still the long-term solution at second base, but at least he has something to do for the club this year.

4th

And by a lot. Having a season and a half of starts by Tanaka and Fister is sweet, but only for five or six innings – and even if they perform at or above expectations, the deficient offense will have a very tough time putting up run support to get them into the win column.

What to do? Looking back at the Columbus club over the past few years as the club has hovered around .500, it's clear that the clock has simply run down – or run out – on key players. Corey Hart, John Buck, Carlos Lee, Kevin Slowey, Wandy Rodriguez . . . and in order to try and keep the team functioning, key players like Darren O'Day, Ben Zobrist and Brett Gardner have been dealt away. It still comes down to severely disappointing seasons

for cornerstone players like Bruce and Kipnis – if those guys and a few others had performed up to expectations, this would look more like a rebuild on its way out than one stalled waiting for things to happen.



columbus: THE FORMULA

ROCHESTER EXPRESS, 1993-2005

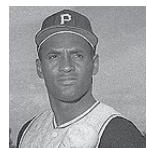
It need scarcely be recounted how dominant the predecessor club was for a dozen years, scoring 900+ runs every year, hitting 200-300 homers, with top notch pitching. How did they do it?

Whenever there was a gap, management traded – aggressively – to fill it, often taking advantage of a single year stellar performance, but usually relying on a number of outstanding individual talents such as Bonds, McGwire, Johnson, Cone, Galarraga, Puckett, Giacaparra, Bichette, Mussina, Thome, Smoltz and Edmonds. There was even a first-to-worst-to-first in 1996-97-98, a strong example of How It Is Done. This is one of the dominant franchises in TBL history, and it's hard to argue with results.

THIS YEAR

This club is not looking for success; this year's draft and next year's are focused on trying to get the ship upright and sailing in a positive direction. Drafting and trading for useful players such as Solarte, Sierra and Coghlan along with the headline names of Tanaka and Kiermaier are constructive steps. So is holding on to good players with disappointing seasons, though Mr. Vaughn has little control over *that*. He also can't do much about Tanaka's arm – that will either work out or will end in surgery. Is it a risk worth taking? Why not? It could have been Marcus Stroman – and that's already ended in a visit to Dr. Andrews. Maybe just pray for rain.

TQ: 14.0



columbus JETS

Fifteen Guys

A few years ago this publication ran an article by the esteemed *Anton Greenwald* regarding the art of team building. His thesis was, in short, that in order to be a contender you have to have fifteen solid players around which you can build your team: seven or eight on offense, seven or eight pitchers. If you can count that number of solid performers you have a playoff team – and if you don't, you don't.



This year the *Gotham City Batmen* have their fifteen guys and then some. Getting to pencil in King Felix and getting to bring in rookie Dellin Betances at the end is strong encouragement that they can go all the way. Gotham City has been here before and they know how it's done.

But it's not going to be easy. *Mark Bloom's Grand Cayman Havens* have emerged from some years of struggle to be another solid contender for the Mays crown. There's a very good and much younger club that will give Dr. Anton a run for his money.

This race is likely to last all summer, and the winner has a good chance to go all the way to the TBL World Series.



2014 Mays Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Greater Ohio*	93	69	.574	—
Gotham City†	92	70	.568	1
Rye	85	77	.525	8
Grand Cayman	72	90	.444	21

* Lost to Whitman in conference semi-final.

† Lost to Detroit in Wild Card playoff.

We had become accustomed to talking about the power of the aging contender, *Craig Musselman's Rye Herons* – but it looks as if the clock has finally started to strike for them. There are still some very good names on the roster, but there are some holes too – and thin drafts during the last few years have made it impossible to patch those holes. Rye will not go down easily, but there isn't enough for them to fight the top two teams in the division.



And then there are *Devlin Toth's Greater Ohio Chia Pets*. They too had been part of the mix for quite a while, winning the Mays last year by a single game over Gotham City. This year's version is a pale shadow of the previous one, and it'll be a long summer for Pets fans. This happens to teams, even younger ones, from time to time, even in

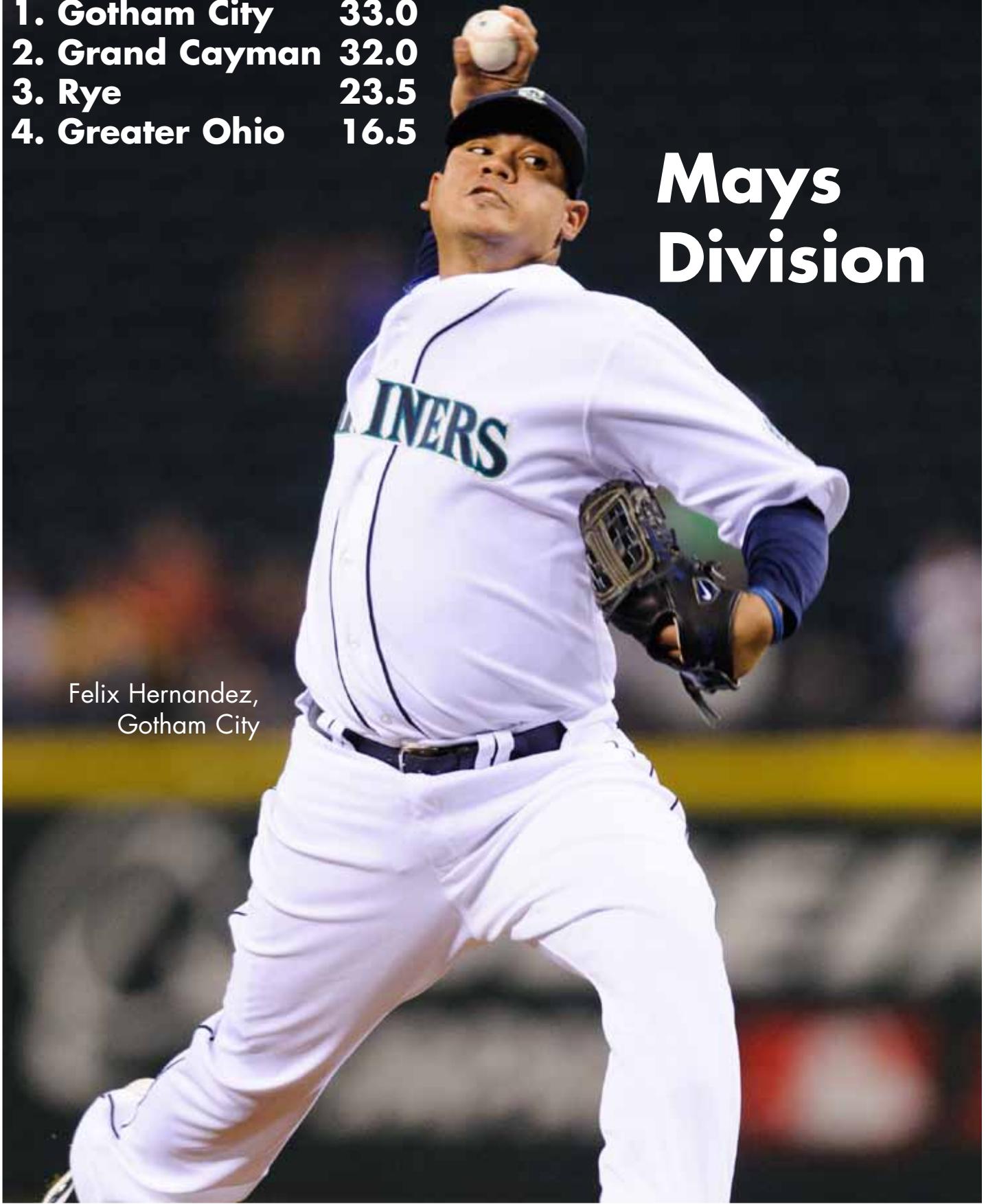
the real major leagues: injuries, degradation, and players not reaching their potential will combine for a team like this. Better days may be ahead.



- | | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Gotham City | 33.0 |
| 2. Grand Cayman | 32.0 |
| 3. Rye | 23.5 |
| 4. Greater Ohio | 16.5 |

Mays Division

Felix Hernandez,
Gotham City



2014 gotham city BATMEN in review



Since the goal was to make the playoffs, the season was arguably a success.

by Anton Greenwald

2014 in Review Final Record: 92-70 (2nd, Mays)

Gotham City's season was short of expectations in 2014. The team made the playoffs but was bounced in the first round – we expected to make it one round more – but making the post season was the goal. Whitman and Broddingnag in our conference were too good for us to expect to reach the classic.

We did this despite having limited playing time due to injuries or limited use for key players (Stanton, Howard, Wacha, ...) For the future, we wound up with a full team – all positions covered from the getgo and we could choose any player we liked in the 2015 draft.

What went right?

Since the goal was to make the playoffs, the season was arguably a success. Matt Carpenter proved to be the player we hoped, as he hit just under .300 with 187 hits including 45 doubles and 103 runs scored. Giancarlo Stanton slugged 23 homers and 25 doubles in 112 games.

On the mound, Felix Hernandez went a stellar 18-7, while Justin Verlander went 17-14 with 8 complete games. Rookie Caleb Thielbar saved 29 with a microscopic 0.55 ERA.

What went wrong?

We got bounced fast in the playoffs. The starters past the Big Two were suspect; the team hit only .251, and Stanton's 23 homers shared the team

lead, even among players who didn't miss any time. In the meanwhile, MLB in 2014 was a little more capricious than usual: key players such as Michael Saunders were not carded while under-performers were carded.

The number of big bats available in the draft was predicted to give at least one to Gotham City – but it did not work out that way and all significant bats were gone by the time I got to pick. That meant that some pitching had to be available that was not expected – so we built up the bullpen to terrifying status. There is more than one way to win in TBL, and no "sign" could be displayed for saying the name Dellin Betances.

3 Things



Felix Hernandez: Stellar

1. *We have a chance to win.* We may even be able to get to the Fall Classic this year. Winning will require some luck: the opposition in the other conference is clearly better (on paper) than in my own conference.

2. *Some key talent is getting old, which may require a complete rebuild.* Part of the skill set for a general manager is knowing when it's time to throw in the towel; that simply might be necessary. Not this year: but maybe next.

3. *Or not.* There are some young people on the team that bring hope for the near future if a few veterans hold up. If that's the case, Gotham City might be able to make the transition from one era to the next and still have those "fifteen guys" necessary to contend in TBL.

gotham city BATMEN

Anton Greenwald (30th year)

With expert management they can easily be headed for the World Series.



We were characteristically hesitant in this space last year to either praise or dismiss the Gotham City club's chances to go all the way. We didn't even pick them to win the pennant, but to finish second a few games behind Greater Ohio (we were on target) or – if there was a late surge by Rye – to even fall to third (there wasn't). But we didn't think they were better than the fourth or possibly fifth best team in the conference. (We were right.)

A year later, we think more highly of the club that Dr. Greenwald has put together. They score higher on the TQ scale; the Greater Ohio threat is over, and the Rye club is sliding toward rebuild as age and inability to patch holes exposes their problems. There is a new challenger in Grand Cayman: but overall we think that Gotham City is better.

Pitching: Rotation: functional. Bullpen: terrifying.

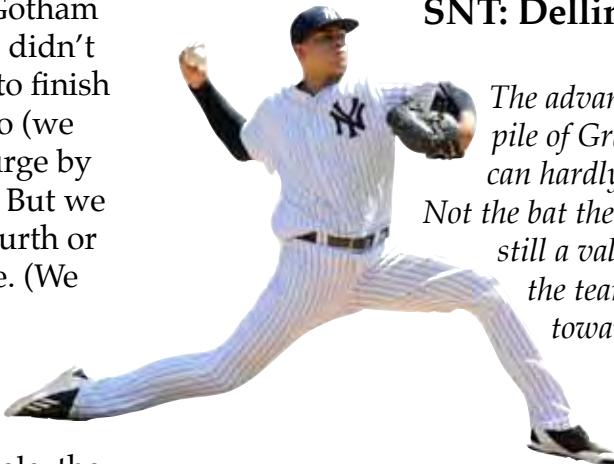
13.5

The Year in Review article to the left characterizes the bullpen as built up to "terrifying status". That's a very accurate statement - and a good thing, since the off year from Justin Verlander means that Felix Hernandez is out there alone without a second ace. Still, there's nothing like having four closer grades in the bullpen to res-

Turnover Rate: **26%**

Arrived: Dellin Betances, Robinson Chirinos, Hiroki Kuroda, Kirk Nieuwenhuis, Ben Paulsen, Gregorio Petit, Neil Ramirez, Blake Treinen, Mark Trumbo.

Departed: Matt Albers, Erick Aybar, Clint Barnes, Jeanmar Gomez, J. J. Hoover, Ubaldo Jimenez, Derek Norris, Nick Swisher, Will Venable.



SNT: Dellin Betances.

The advantages of a huge pile of Grade 26 innings can hardly be exaggerated. Not the bat the team wanted but still a valuable addition to the team as it charges toward the post season.*

cue the starters. They'll be getting a lot of work during the season, and may be enough to get the Batmen into and through the playoffs.

ROTATION. One part of the two-headed ace of former years is pushed to the background, but there's still one of the best pitchers in baseball leading the Gotham City rotation: Felix Hernandez (Grade 16 C+25 HR+23) has 34 excellent starts at the top of the rotation.



Hernandez: Out there alone.

The rest of the starters are less imposing. Michael Wacha lost some playing time to injury but is still solid (Grade 11 HR+32, 19 starts); there are two capable middle men (Jorge de la Rosa, Grade 10 C-23 HR-14, the only lefty in the rotation, and Hiroki "Big in Japan" Kuroda, Grade 9 C+33, 32 starts each). The rest of the starts will be taken up by rookie



gotham city BATMEN

Blake Treinen (Grade 8 C+21 HR+54, 7 starts) and veterans Tim Hudson (Grade 7 C+34 HR-15, full season) and Verlander (Grade 5 HR+15, just 7 starts in July and November).

Overall it's a very functional rotation, plenty good enough to keep the club in most games.

BULLPEN. Now we can move wholly into the realm of the superlative. Rookie Dellin Betances (Grade 26* KX HR+36, 90 innings) will dominate many late innings this year, and he has lots of help: Fernando Abad is a Grade 22* C+22 HR+21 (Fernando Abad? Really?) for 57 lefty innings; J.P. Howell (Grade 19* C-62 HR+42) has 49 more; and from the right side, there's rookie Neil Ramirez (Grade 21* C-34 HR+36).



Abad: Really?

ski (12* lefty C-21 HR+54). There are 150-plus innings past *that*, should occasion ever require them.

It's an outstanding bullpen, as good as we've seen in TBL for a few years, and it will give very effective service.



Gotham has the best bullpen in the league this year, with 190 innings of Grade 21+ relief, a sturdy rotation and six positional players with 140+ games and great cards. Should win the Mays and possibly the World Series.

Offense: Giancarlo and Friends.

11.0



Call him Giancarlo

There are plenty of bats to go with the pitching staff. The biggest one belongs to The Man Named Giancarlo (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, 2 10s, L+5 R-3, F35

for 15 attempts.) He will strike out a fair number of times (8 13s) but will occupy the middle of most lineups.

He has some Friends. Jonathan Lucroy (4 0s, 11 hits, 4 walks) put together an outstanding season and will be there every day; Ian Kinsler (3 0s, 11 hits, E30 for 19 SBA) is very solid; and his double-play partner Alcides Escobar can hit (11 hits) and run (D32 for 37 SBA). Matt Carpenter (3 0s, 10 hits, 5 walks+22) gets on base regularly.

The rest of the offense is mix and match. Jarrod Dyson (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, B32 for 43 attempts) is a speed threat, while Juan Francisco (1-5-5-6, 8 hits, L-17 R+2) provides some occasional power. Rookie Kirk Nieuwenhuis (5 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-8) can be used situationally, as can Matt Joyce (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-15) and Jeff Baker (3 0s, 10 hits, L+5 R-9).

Power is a definite asset in the Gotham City attack, which sets them apart in a year where the thunderous offenses of previous years seem far away. The chant of "walk . . . walk . . . HOMAH!" should once again be heard among the team's fans.

Defense: Some studs.

5.0

The old cliché of "strong up the middle" applies here. Jonathan Lucroy (C9 Th-0) will be the every day catcher; Ian Kinsler (2B9) anchors the

middle infield; and Giancarlo Stanton (OF2 with a fine 36 arm) is the center fielder. Surrounding these three luminaries are adequate defenders. Alcides Escobar is an SS8; Matt Carpenter is a 3B4; most of the first basemen are 1B3s (Trumbo, Baker, Howard, Paulsen).

In the outfield, Jarred Dyson earned an OF3 and is the only OF3 (but with a 28 arm); Kirk Nieuwenhuis and Matt Joyce are OF2s, and there may be some OF1s out there.

But overall this is a very competent defense with some studs, and ways to rescue the deficient gloves in later innings.

Bench: 3.5 **Lots of pieces parts.**

A hallmark of a good bench is to have options. In addition to the players named above, Gotham can count on some useful pieces parts: power threer Ben Paulsen (1-1-6-6, 12 hits, but only 63 at bats); Grant Green (0-6, 11 hits, L+6 R-7); Gregorio Petit (4 0s, 11 hits, 0 walks+42, L+11 R-9, 97 AB); and backup catcher Robinson Chirinos (1-5-6, 9 hits). Ryan Howard has regrettably become a Depressing Thing (1-6, 8 hits, 4 walks), though he can now demonstrate equal futility against lefties and righties.

1st

We aren't convinced that they win in a walk: the Grand Cayman crew down the road is very solid. But there's no threat from Rye or Greater Ohio this year, and the competition in the other two divisions of the International Conference is simply not as stiff. Warrenton is dynamic but doesn't have pitching or offense to match Gotham's best, and Brobdingnag has worked hard to shamble toward mediocrity while maintaining some talent. In a short series the starting pitching would be deficient, if it weren't for the incredibly deep bullpen. This year, they may go all the way.



gotham city:
THE FORMULA



GOTHAM CITY BATMEN, 2001-2004

At the height of the years of big offense, Gotham City had one of the biggest. In 2001 the team burst from the .500 level to win 105 games and defeat Melrose in the World Series. The offense was built around power, walks and strong starting pitching, especially Jeff Kent (62 doubles, 38 homers, .312), Troy Glaus (47 homers) and Jermaine Dye (30 homers) at bat, with 17 wins by Roger Clemens and Robert Person. They won 98 and 103 with much the same crew in 2002 and 2003 (in the latter year Hideo Nomo went 20-6 and Tim Wakefield 17-3 with 15 complete games). 2004 was the end of the run, when they won the Mays with a 94-68 record and were dumped in the conference finals for the third straight year. They moved right into rebuild, sending away what remained of the pitching staff and restructuring around youth.

THIS YEAR

The starting pitching other than The King isn't like the best of the earlier period, but the bullpen is dominant and the team has lots of power. In many ways this is a classic Gotham City club that will get on base and have big innings. This is one of the best teams in the league, and the TQs show it – and with expert management they can easily be headed for the World Series.

TQ: **33.0**



2014 grand cayman HAVENS in review



10 hits are better than 9, just like we said.

by Mark Bloom

2014 in Review

Final Record: 72-90 (4th, Mays)

Once again, the team improved only marginally over the previous year, meaning it was another long season on the island. In many ways, it was a dysfunctional team. It didn't hit well, yet it hit for power. The lack of speed translated into 130 rally-killing double plays. And the pitching? Let's just say there were few highlights.

What went right?

Matt Holliday led the offense with a .288 average, his best as a Haven. The offense pounded the ball, smacking 194 homers (fourth in the league), led by rookie Evan Gattis (35). The team scored 724 runs while walking 562 times (second in the league). Rookie Julio Teheran put up a solid rookie season (14-9, 3.68), while Clay Buchholz saved 35 games and won four more with a sparkling 2.44 ERA.

What went wrong?

The offense, despite its explosion of power, hit a piddling .244, the lowest mark in franchise history. The team led the league in errors (138) for the second straight season, although the fielding actually improved from 2013's 160 errors.

The Havens no longer had the worst pitching staff in the league, though they did surrender 200 homeruns and ended with a 4.82 ERA.



Gattis: Pounded the ball

3 Things

1. *10 Hits Are Better Than 9.* The *Annual* said it last year about the Havens, and it proved true. Two players with nine hits (David DeJesus and Neil Walker) hit under .220 last year. In 2015, Walker, Edwin Encarnacion, Evan Gattis, and Kyle Seager all improved from nine hits to 10.

Drew Stubbs improved from nine to 11 hits. It will help.

2. *Going for it.* While #1 pick Gregory Polanco will add much-needed youth to an aging outfield, he's not yet ready for prime time. To compensate, the Havens traded for Michael Cuddyer and Martin Prado and drafted Dan Robertson to contribute this year.

Trades also brought in closer Wade Davis, lefty relievers Antonio Bastardo and Josh Outman, and starter Bud Norris. Yeah, we're going for it.

3. *Channeling the Shift Doctor.* When APBA gives your players large shifts, you can grin and bear it, or you can compensate. No fewer than six Havens have a double-digit Master Game batting shift. Seven more have a shift of seven or eight. As a result, the team has been constructed around a series of necessary platoons — at catcher, first base, second base, and center field.

There are two players who will likely play through their shifts, though: Matt Holliday and Kyle Seager.

grand cayman HAVENS

Mark Bloom (25th year)

Will they go all the way this year to overcome Dr. Anton's team?



A year ago, when Grand Cayman was the anchor team in the Mays Division, we said that sentimentality was a luxury, but a sense of humor was vital. We also noted that the team had a wealth of young players – the team's age (a stat featured in last year's *Annual*) was #2 in TBL. Take the fortitude of the manager, the talent on the team, and a very solid offseason of draft and trade, and what you now have is a contender.

Up the road is Gotham City, which has moved from one contending year to another. Here in Grand Cayman, the direction has changed from rebuild to contend – but still, given the pain of the last few years, Mr. Bloom must surely be hesitant to go "all in" to get to the top of TBL. There is enough young talent in Grand Cayman that this club can be good for years to come. Will they go all the way this year to overcome Dr. Anton's team? It should be a fun summer while we wait for the answer.

Pitching: Lots of good arms.

11.5

There are a lot of good arms on the Grand Cayman staff this year, plenty enough to keep the club in the game. There are no bad starts

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Antonio Bastardo, Carlos Contreras, Michael Cuddyer, Wade Davis, Jumbo Diaz, Dominic Leone, Daisuke Matsuzaka, Bud Norris, Josh Outman, Gregory Polanco, Martin Prado, Dan Robertson, Vance Worley.

Departed: Clay Buchholz, Billy Butler, Joba Chamberlain, Nate Eovaldi, Logan Forsythe, Freddy Garcia, David Hernandez, Josh Lueke, Donald Lutz, Chris Perez, Stephen Pryor, Evan Reed, Esmil Rogers, Chris Stewart, Eric Stults, Jonathan Villar.

SNT: Gregory Polanco.

There's plenty of upside in the Havens' first round pick, and lots yet to see. He should be in the lineup for some time to come.



Teheran: Young ace

and there are a lot of able innings in the bullpen to rescue them.

ROTATION. The starters are led by last year's first round pick, Julio Teheran (Grade 12 C+23). He has help: lefty Drew Smyly (Grade 12 C+13 HR-15) and, acquired from the Statesmen in the offseason, Bud Norris (Grade 11 HR-15). These three make 86 starts – just over half the season.

The next tier of starters consist of converted reliever Jesse Chavez (Grade 10), the best and the oldest of the crew, who goes to the hill 21 times. Vance Worley, returned to baseball after a year away, is a good Grade 9 (C+31, 17 starts); and two second-year lefties, Tyler Skaggs (Grade 8 C+14 HR+16) and Tony Cingrani (Grade 8 C-61 HR+35) pitch the rest. Daisuke Matsuzaka (Grade 11 C-62 HR+23) makes a handful of starts as well before he takes off back to Japan. (He will also serve in the bullpen for part of the year.)



grand cayman HAVENS

BULLPEN. Now we come to a real strength of the team. The relievers are led by a trade acquisition, the sublime Wade Davis (Grade 27* C-21 HR+62), who didn't give up a homer all season. He's the Man for Grand Cayman this year, and is a match for Gotham City's Grade 26*.

Here is a place where the Havens may have to step up their game during the trading period: improving the setup crew for Davis. The leading man is rookie Dominic Leone (Grade 16* C-21 HR+31, 66 innings). Mr. Bloom has also added two guys by trade and one in the draft: lefty Josh Outman (Grade 15* C-55 HR+22) and righties Antonio Bastardo (Grade 14* C-53 HR+26) and Dice-K (Grade 15* C-62 HR+23).

The biggest concern is the wildness; these guys may prolong innings rather than terminate them. Though assigned to a lesser role, rookie Justin DeFratus (Grade 13* C+35 HR+16) might be a better choice in some situations. There are about 200 innings, or about 250 with DeFratus.

Beyond that there is an additional group, yet another 200 innings: two rookies – Brad Brach (Grade 14* C-33) and Jumbo Diaz (Grade 12*) – and two veterans, Tommy Hunter (Grade 11* C+35 HR+24) and Justin Grimm (Grade 10* C-24 HR+32). Hunter is the most important man in this crew due to his good peripherals. Brad Peacock is available for 131 innings of mop-up relief at the tail end.

This is a good bullpen, but a step behind that of Gotham City – which might make a big difference in the pennant race.



Wade Davis: The Man



Whitey's gone, but the bullpen structure is still criminal. Wade Davis is a great closer, but he's supported by a vast sea of middle relievers. A solid offense will probably score a wild card spot.

Offense: 10.5 Strong and weak points.

Once again, the card of Edwin Encarnacion jumps out of the pile and demands our attention (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks). It's the sort of card that announces that the team is a serious contender. This year, he has help. Drew Stubbs turns in



Encarnacion: Again

a pretty nice card as well (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, L+5 R-4, D33 for 23 SBA – though there are 9 13s as well.) Evan Gattis has two-thirds of a solid season (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L+7 R-3). On the other side of the platoon differential is Matt Adams (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, L-14 R+2). That's a powerful middle of the order.

There are some good supporting players as well. Martin Prado (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L+10 R-4) will get into a lot of lineups, as will Matt Holliday (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L+8 R-4). The rest of the infield is decent: 2B Neil Walker (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L-4) and Kyle Seager (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-7 R+2) are good everyday players, and Brandon Crawford (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) is much improved.

There are a number of other players who will get regular playing time, particularly in the outfield. David DeJesus (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L-8) will be helpful when the shift differentials work against other players. David Lough (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) would normally be a good speed alternative, but he's a B24. Rookie Dan Robertson (6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-11) will see time as well. So will Alex Avila (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-6 R+1).

This is a lineup with strong and weak points. The power is obvious: three very strong hitters and a number of lesser ones (along with a few on the bench.) There are a fair number of walks and some good on-base cards.

On the other hand, the regulars have some fairly serious platoon shifts, particularly against right handed pitching. This doesn't show up as much in the computer game, but it has hurt other teams in the past on the boards.

Defense: 6.0 **Solid in most places.**

The club has a very solid infield, though some platoons will weaken it. The best defense is all Fielding One: Matt Adams (1B4), Neil Walker (2B8), key man Brandon Crawford (SS9) and Kyle Seager (3B5). In some lineups Edwin Encarnacion (1B3) and Martin Prado (2B7, 3B4, OF2) will be on defense.

In the outfield, Drew Stubbs (OF3, 34 arm) and David Lough (OF3, 33 arm) are excellent, while Dan Robertson and David DeJesus (OF2) are decent. Part-timer Michael Cuddyer (OF2, 37 arm) is a plus defender. Matt Holliday (OF1, 28 arm) will be a problem when he's using a glove. Behind the plate, Evan Gattis (C6, Th-1) is there for his bat and Alex Avila (C8, Th+1) to field.

Bench: 4.0 **Significant flexibility.**

In addition to the many players listed above, who provide significant flexibility, Grand Cayman can count on Michael Cuddyer (1-0-0-0-0, 12 hits, 3 walks, L+13 R-7) for key moments. Gregory Polanco (9 hits, 3 walks, L-10 R+3, D29 for 22 SBA) is the key pinch runner.

2nd

We think they don't quite catch the Men of Anton this year, but it's great to see the club

jump into contention. Over the course of the season, and probably in the post season, we'll get a chance to see just how good they've become.



**grand cayman:
THE FORMULA**



LEWISTON-AUBURN DRAFTDODGERS, 2008

Years ago the *Annual* excoriated our late friend Col. Don Mahley for always being in the middle with his club. In 2008 Mr. Bloom, who had taken over from Don and his successor T. J. Williams, brought the club to new heights with a 109-53 campaign, winning the Mays but running into the Barbarian buzz-saw (which won the World Series right afterward). But this was a great club: Curtis Granderson was all-world (.317-36-147, 41 doubles, 27 triples, 22 steals); Barry Bonds hit 32 homers and walked 112 times; Placido Polanco led the league at .365. Aaron Harang went 19-9, Roberto "Fausto Carmona" Hernandez 16-8, and Scott Kazmir 18-11 with a great bullpen.

THIS YEAR

They're much less fragile than the 2008 club, with very good young talent. But they're a ways from that 109 wins. They'll do more with guile, but power will play a part.

TQ: 32.0



2014 rye HERONS in review



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

by Craig Musselman

2014 in Review Final Record: 85-77 (3rd, Mays)

There is a fair amount of luck involved in the outcome of a TBL season for any team. Dice can be hot. Dice can be cold. In the long run, those things even out. But even over the grind of a 162 game season, luck can and does dictate the outcome to some extent. All season long, through September, Greater Ohio, Gotham City and Rye were in a knock down drag out fight for a division title and a playoff berth. Frankly, all three expected a playoff berth. Then came October. Rye went 3-19 in October. Down the tubes. The dice went dead. Missed the playoffs. Another year older and deeper in debt. If the team had even split in October, it would have made the playoffs. 12-10 in October would have meant a division title. But no . . .

What went right?

Except for the one bad month, the team played as expected, which is to say slightly better than mediocre. The ageless Torii Hunter had a good year, hitting .305 with 83 RBI and 86 runs scored. Chase Utley hit .320. Big Game James Shields went 16-11, 3.87. Joe Nathan had 43 saves and a 1.06 ERA in his likely swan song for the Herons. Javy Lopez was 7-2 as a LOOGY out of the pen. Zack Greinke hit .380 in those games when he was used as a batter. In total, the team probably outperformed its mediocrity. Its 677 runs scored ranked 15th of 24 teams, and its 4.24 team ERA ranked 16th. With those two statistics in mind, perhaps the luck wasn't all bad, October notwithstanding, and perhaps an 85-77 record was better than you might have expected.



Hunter: Ageless

What went wrong?

October. Father Time. And other things. Two solid starting pitchers, Zack Greinke and Jeff Samardzija, had ERAs of 5.00 and 5.41, respectively. Neither of them were losing pitchers. Jared Weaver went 9-9 despite a 2.52 ERA; a hard luck season. Nelson Cruz hit 30 home

runs, but managed only 64 RBI. Too many solo blasts. Kendrys Morales, of whom more was expected, hit .222. And the team's age related calcification led to only 30 stolen bases on the season. Checking the league stats, surprisingly, five other teams were even worse, though younger.

3 Things

1. *Over the Cliff.* It is TBL tradition to describe teams as approaching the cliff. This team is over the cliff and parasailing on less than gossamer wings. Rye's championship season in 2010 is a long way in the rear view mirror. Due to a fine core of starting pitchers still not well past their prime, the Herons, surprisingly, are still a bubble playoff team, and thus have not yet been dismantled.

2. *Look to the Draft.* For the first time in many years, Rye has *all* of its draft picks for 2016. A planned rebuild is visible on the horizon, maybe...

3. *Competitiveness.* Despite the obvious approach of old age, the related cast of base cloggers and a limited bullpen, the team remains competitive, and fun to play, as long as another October, 2014 doesn't rear its ugly head.

rye HERONS

Craig Musselman (11th year)

The two top contenders in this division underestimate this club at their own peril.



There is an old joke regarding a man who falls off a thirty-story building. As he passes the 20th floor, when asked, he says, "OK so far." As he passes the 10th floor, he says the same. Because, see, it's not the fall that will hurt: it's the landing.

The fall is still happening, and the landing is still ahead. A year ago Rye was – by a fair margin – the oldest team in TBL. Nothing much has been altered on that front, though Roenis Elias is at least not quite 27 and Kennys Vargas is just 25, and there's a full draft for 2016.

But in the meanwhile there is still some talent here: the core players in the lineup can still mash the ball; the entire season is covered by just five strong starters; and there are some relief innings. The bench is thin and there's about the amount of speed you'd expect from a team this old. But as the team falls toward a rebuild, all we can say is: "OK so far."

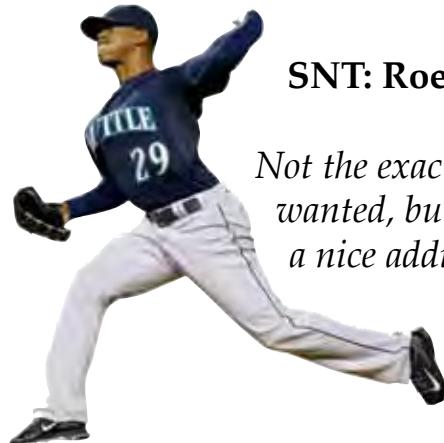
We think they can't win the Mays or make it into the post-season. But the two top contenders in this division underestimate this club at their own peril.

Pitching: Five horses: go nine.

9.5

It is an article of faith in TBL that you can't go a very long way without relievers to rescue your starters. Over the last few seasons there have been teams that have demonstrated otherwise, but here at the *Annual* we're going to stick to the story.

Here in Rye, the five strong horses that will start this season will want to go nine as often as possible, because there aren't a lot of innings to rescue them.



SNT: Roenis Elias.

Not the exact guy he wanted, but Elias is a nice addition to an aging Rye rotation.

ROTATION. Zack Greinke (Grade 11 C+33) and Jeff Samardzija (Grade 12 C+31) are the leaders of a solid, strong rotation for Rye. They each make 33 starts for the club. Jered Weaver (Grade 11 HR-16) and "Big Game James" Shields (Grade 10 C+26) make 34 each. Rookie Roenis Elias, who wasn't Mr. Musselman's top choice to add to his rotation, but he's young, capable (Grade 10 C-23) and

the only lefty in the crew. As if it was planned that way, these five add up to exactly 162 starts.



Greinke: Same pic, different year

Turnover Rate: 28%

Arrived: Joe Beimel, Roenis Elias, Chris Heisey, Jared Hughes, Travis Ishakawa, Munenori Kawasaki, Kyle Kendrick, Justin Ruggiano, Carlos Ruiz, Kennys Vargas.

Departed: Lance Berkman, Preston Claiborne, Stephen Fife, Donovan Hand, Omar Infante, Jeff Keppinger, Jake Peavy, Alfonso Soriano, Yorvit Torrealba, Jake Westbrook.



rye HERONS



Neshek: New closer

more innings for the team. Even Joe Nathan (Grade 6* C-41) may see some time.

This is a decent pitching staff, hardly weak but without a lock down closer or a Grade 13 starter. The question is whether they can keep the opposing offenses at bay while the offense does its damage.



Craig is no longer anticipating the cliff's approach, he's over the edge and admiring the scenery beyond it. Several valuable veterans are here that could help a contender, but will Craig pull the trigger on any deals?

BULLPEN. Weep for poor Joe Nathan, who has been so good for so long. His closer role now belongs to veteran submariner Pat Neshek (Grade 17* C+44 HR+24, 67 innings). He's the best of the bullpen.

There are about 160 innings to help him out. Jared Hughes (Grade 15* C+22 HR+24) is the key man, with a few extra innings from Mike Adams (Grade 13* C-26 HR+33, 18 innings). From the left side, Rye has added veteran Joe Beimel (Grade 14* C+22) and retain the services of Javier Lopez (Grade 12* C-16 HR+34). These are the pitchers that are better than the starters.

There are some additional innings in the pen, who will be useful when

the rotation fatigues or is reduced. The ageless LaTroy Hawkins (Grade 9* C+25 HR+32), Man in Black Will Smith (Grade 9* C-26), Tim Stauffer (Grade 8* C+26) and lefty Jerry Blevins (Grade 7* HR+33) add 240

Offense: The old guys can still hit.

8.0

A hallmark of the Rye club is a powerful attack. The lineup isn't quite as potent as in past years, but it's still got some teeth.

Nelson Cruz has stepped up. He has a very dangerous card (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+5 R-3) and, even more importantly, plays every single day. His regular tag-team partner, Matt Kemp (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) is solid as well. Juan Uribe lacks some of his previous power (3 0s) but does have 12 hits, with a cool 7 at dice number 15.



Cruz: Steps up

Acquired just before the beginning of last season, shortstop Jhonny Peralta (1-0-0-0, 10 hits) has another surprisingly nice card, as does Aramis Ramirez (3 0s, 11 hits, L+10 R-4). Torii Hunter (1-5-6, 11 hits) soldiers onward. That makes six very dangerous cards covering roughly five full positions in the lineup.

The best of the rest is Justin Ruggiano (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks), who will play about half the time. Chase Utley, once a top notch regular, has some fire left but isn't what he was (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, F35 for 11 SBA – what passes for a speed threat in the lineup). Carlos Ruiz has been brought in to be the primary catcher, and is an occasional threat (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L+4 R-3) for about two-thirds of the season. Travis Ishakawa (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-7) and rookie Kennys Vargas (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-8 R+4) will get reps at first base and DH.

This is not the Rye lineup that won the World Series a few years ago . . . wait, it mostly is, but they're a couple of years later. They'll have some great days, and some troubled ones.

Defense: 4.0 **Only good news in some places.**

The defense will benefit from the surprisingly nice SS9 granted to Jhonny Peralta this year. He, Juan Uribe (3B5), catchers Carlos Ruiz (C8 Th-1) and Jose Molina (C9 Th-0) and part-time first baseman Travis Ishakawa (1B4) are the only Fielding One performers for Rye this year.

A lot of the defense is average or worse. Chase Utley is Fielding Two when in his usual position (2B7) but may get into the lineup as a first baseman (1B2). Vargas is also a 1B2. Since Uribe misses a third of the season, Aramis Ramirez will have to struggle along (3B3). Munenori Kawasaki (2B7, 3B4) might be helpful as well. In the outfield, Ruggiano, Kemp and Hunter are all OF2s, with plus arms for Kemp and Hunter. Cruz is an OF1 and will have to play in the field some days.

Bench: 2.0 **Not much good news.**

There isn't much good news in the bench. Tim Federowicz (C7 Th+5, 5-6, 5 hits) can catch but not hit. The same is true of Jose Molina (C9 Th-0, 7 hits); Anthony Recker (C7 Th+3, 1-5-6, 8 hits) can hit, but poorly. Kawasaki (6, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Eduardo Nunez (3 0s, 10 hits) are spare infielders. Kendrys Morales (3 0s, 9 hits), once a stellar hitter, is just, well, here.

3rd

There's simply not enough for Rye to catch either Gotham City or Greater Ohio. What they can do is make trouble for both of them and wait to see if any contender wants to make a deal in September. In the meanwhile – "OK so far."



rye:
THE FORMULA

rye HERONS

EAST ANGLIA PIRATES, 1987-1994

A nod to one of the great teams of TBL's past, and one of the great gentlemen of our league: East Anglia and Don Nipps. From 1987 until 1994, with one brief interruption, the Pirates were a top notch team, with three 100-win seasons. They lost the Series in 1987 and never got there again, but they had versatile offenses and strong pitching staffs in a very competitive 20-team environment. Don got the nickname "Shift Doctor" for his use of specialized bench players. His 1994 team won 98 games and the Mantle pennant, then collapsed in a fiery 34-128 wreck the following season.

RYE HERONS, 2010-2012

Current management took several years to get the former Dunn Loring club to contender status, but for three years they were a feared competitor, winning the World Series in 2010 with a 105-57 record. Rye teams have featured strong starting pitching and series veteran power.

THIS YEAR

The strong starting pitching and serious veteran power is still here, but the team faces the need to rebuild after postponing the inevitable. Still, there is no 1995 East Anglia on the horizon ... yet.

TQ: 23.5



2014 greater ohio CHIA PETS in review

It was not an altogether satisfying conclusion.



2014 in Review

Final Record: 93-69 (1st, Mays)

A year ago, the *Annual* suggested that the club was aging and that there would be a cliff “sometime in the future.” It is unclear whether Mr. Toth realized how close it was when his club slid to the pennant we predicted for them. Probably: when TBL clubs wrap up their seasons, the finger of history has already written the next one in MLB. Still, the team had its chance in 2014, and made it into the post-season, only to fall to Whitman in six games. (The River Rats are having their own epiphany this year, so perhaps there is some justice.)

What went right?

Clearly, winning the pennant – even by the narrow margin of one game – counts as a plus. The team had one truly obvious leader: the sublime Miguel Cabrera (.347-41-121), who was scary the whole season. His tag-team partner Freddie Freeman (.346-20-101) was very good as well, and Evan Longoria hit 34 homers, drove in 120 and scored 100 runs. Jarrod Saltalamacchia hit 22 dingers while managers all around the league struggled to spell his name.

On the mound, the bullpen was dominant, led by rookie closer David Carpenter (36 saves, 1.05 ERA). Four other relievers recorded minuscule ERAs. Bartolo Colon was excellent (15-8, 2.85), and Cliff Lee led the starters with 16 wins.

What went wrong?

The team was slow, almost Rye Herons / Detroit Stars slow. They stole 12 bases all year and hit into 116 double plays.



Cabrera: Obvious

Seven regulars struck out more than 100 times, led by Evan Longoria with 152 and Saltalamacchia with 138. The starters were good, but weren’t terribly dominant.

And, again, the fact that the club didn’t make it even to the conference championship – in view of what was in front of them for 2015, and in view of the graying of the team – it was not an altogether satisfying conclusion.

3 Things

1. *No time for half measures.* The club has clearly found itself on the edge, if not over, the cliff. Greater Ohio did not waste much time trying to patch the problems on the team, and is not under any illusions about how this will turn out.

2. *Hold on to the core.* At the moment, at least, the Pets still have Cabrera, Freeman, Longoria, Archer, Cashner, Storen and a few others on the roster. If they wanted to commit to a serious rebuild, at least some of those men would be wearing other uniforms. A lot might depend on what happens in MLB in 2015 . . . is this a blip, or a trend?

3. *Prepare for the long haul.* If it’s going to be a long-term rebuild, it will be important to evaluate the problems on the team and address them. Starting pitching is deficient at the moment; the team is plodding and doesn’t get on base; catcher is a problem. There’s some serious scouting ahead for the Shadow Pet.

greater ohio CHIA PETS

Devlin Toth (20th year)

Sometimes it just happens.



Miguel Cabrera. Freddie Freeman. Evan Longoria. Chris Archer. Andrew Cashner. Drew Storen. We see those names, and the first reaction is: *Hey, I like those guys. I'd build a team around those guys.* Of course you would.

In fact, someone did. The team built around those guys had names like Jose Tabata, Carl Crawford, Andre Ethier, Jarrod Saltalamacchia, Cliff Lee ... Luke Scott, Michael Young, Chad Qualls, Bartolo Colon ... Zack Cosart, Jordy Mercer, Andy Dirks, Scott Feldman, Carlos Marmol, Jose Veras ...

The point of the argument is somewhat lost in the details, but this is the sort of quandary that long-term contenders try to avoid: build a good core of players, and surround them with decent contributors who don't disappoint, crumble or evaporate after a season or two. Some of Greater Ohio's contributors have disappointed; some have crumbled; and some are simply gone, with nothing to show. This is where the team is after a 93-69 campaign: suffering through a rebuild that might be short and might be long. Sometimes it just happens.

Pitching: This will be a long season.

4.0



Archer: Out alone

Watching a pitching staff hit the wall is never pleasant, but it seems a shame here in Greater Ohio given the bright prospect just a year ago. David Carpenter came in as the new closer, and has come back as an 8*; Andrew Cashner lost half a season to injury; Carlos Marmol lost all viscosity, after having

SNT: Ender Inciarte

The speedy young outfielder is a welcome addition to the severely depleted Greater Ohio outfield.



Turnover Rate: 28%

Arrived: Arismendy Alcantara, Christian Bergman, David Hale, Ender Inciarte, Juan Nicasio, Chris Owings, Yohan Pino, Eugenio Suarez, Ian Thomas, Daniel Webb.

Departed: Carl Crawford, Carlos Marmol, Will Harris, Nolan Reimold, Austin Romine, David Purcey, Luke Scott, Donnie Veal, Jose Veras, Michael Young.

once been dominant; and Cliff Lee . . . *yeesh*, and he may be done. The result is that of the solid arms that made up the 2014 group, Chris Archer is pretty much out alone this year. The rest will have a lot of learning opportunities.

ROTATION. The aforementioned Mr. Archer is the ace of what remains of the starting rotation (Grade 11 C-24 HR+32). He carries a heavy load, but will have 32 decent starts. The next best grade belongs to veteran Scott Feldman, the pride of Kailua on the Big Island (Grade 8 C+16 HR+14).

Things go severely downhill after that. John Danks (Grade 6 C-23 HR-15) and former ace Bartolo Colon (Grade 5 C+42) manage 63 starts between them, making 124 among the top four in the rotation. The remaining 40 or so will be split among Zach McAllister (Grade 3 HR+21), the late Cliff Lee (Grade 3 C+41), and Christian Bergman (Grade 1) or possibly waiver acquisition Yohan Pino (Grade 3 C+23 HR-16).



greater ohio CHIA PETS

BULLPEN. At least there's some good news here. The closer role belongs to the very fine Drew Storen (Grade 19* C+36 HR+43). Coming into the season, the Pets had very few friends for Mr. Storen, so they've chosen to assign starter Andrew Cashner (Grade 12 C+24 HR+32, 123 innings) as the principal middle man with help from wild Daniel Webb (Grade 11* C-62 HR+14) and homer-preventing Brandon League (Grade 10* C-21 HR+62).

But wait, there's more. Wesley Wright (Grade 9* C-21 HR+42), former closer David Carpenter (Grade 8* C+15 HR+15) and Chad Qualls (Grade 7* C+55) will provide 160 more innings, which they will likely use in entirety. There are some even worse grades, but they probably will not be used.

It's going to be a long season out on the hill in Greater Ohio.

Offense: 6.5 Not too many good regulars.

There are only so many superlatives that we can write about Miguel Cabrera (1-5-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks). He's not quite as formidable as in the past, but there are certainly many contenders who would settle for this card in their lineup. Freddie Freeman (4 0s, 10 hits, 5 walks, L-6 R+1), whom the *Annual* has finally decided to picture, is another nice card in the Greater Ohio lineup.



Freeman: Finally a picture



Storen: Good news.

The good news isn't quite over after that, but there aren't too many good regular cards. Evan Longoria plays every day, but isn't as good as in the past (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L+4 R-3). Jose Tabata can get on base (11 hits) but his card has some problems (2 0s, no 1, 7 24s but fortunately 2 31s) and he misses half a season. Andre Ethier is also down a ways from his best (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks). Rookie Ender Inciarte has some speed (E33, 22 SBA) but has a mediocre 2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks card.

The middle infield has no superstars. Jordy Mercer, who is an SS9 but will

play largely at second base, is only average (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks); rookie Chris Owings has a pretty strange card (3-5-6, 2 10s, 10 hits, 2 walks, E34 for 9 SBA) and rookie Eugenio Suarez (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) is pretty much just young. Zack Cozart is more of a glove than a bat (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks). Behind the plate, Tyler Flowers has a little power (1-0-0) but only 9 hits and 2 walks+42, and Jarrod Saltalamacchia has, well, not much at all (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks).

It's not the most punchless offense we've seen, especially with Cabrera and Freeman in it; but there appear to be a lot of empty at-bats.

Defense: 4.5 Two SS9s, at least.

With the team in rebuild mode, it's surprising to find two SS9s on the roster. Jordy Mercer was promoted to Fielding One, and for Greater Ohio this year he'll be serving as a 2B7. Meanwhile Zack Cozart will get to occupy the position, though Chris Owings (SS7) and Eugenio Suarez (SS8) may get playing time because they can



The Shadow Pet has his work cut out for him this year as half of Greater Ohio's bullpen has gone into the shadows, along with half of many of their regular's seasons. Lots of mixing and matching this year for the Pets.

actually hit. On either side of the middle infield the news is good: Freddie Freeman is a Fielding One glove (1B4); Evan Longoria is capable (3B4).



Cozart: One of the SS9s

Behind the plate, the defenders are only average. Saltalamacchia has finally attained C7 but has an inferior arm (Th-2); Tyler Flowers is a little better (C7 Th+1). In the outfield, Inciarte is a fine fielder (OF3, 33 arm) while Ethier, Tabata and Alexi Amarista are all OF2s.

Bench: **1.5**
Just not much there.

In order to cover games, most of the regulars will have to move around, leaving very little extra to be used. Alexi Amarista (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, E35 for 14 SBA) can play ineffectively in a number of place; rookie Arismendy Alcantara (3 0s, 8 hits) has only the distinction of being the best major leaguer named Arismendy. Cesar Hernandez (0, 9 hits, 2 walks) is just a Guy. There's just not much there.

4th When the cards were laid out at the annual meeting this year, the audience was a bit surprised to see how much the Mays Division champions had fallen. It was a bit of a revelation, even for the cognoscenti who pay attention to other people's teams in the off season.

It must be assumed that Mr. Toth and the Shadow Pets brain trust knew what was coming and knew well what they had. Greater Ohio's instructions say: "The 2015 Chia Pets . . . this year will be taking a step back. Actually they fell off a cliff and possibly all the way to the bottom of the league." We think not quite – but they're certainly at the bottom of the Mays.



**greater ohio:
THE FORMULA**



GREATER OHIO CHIA PETS, 2004-2006

This franchise experienced many difficult seasons before Mr. Toth pulled the team into the upper echelons of TBL in 2004. They were coming off a 53-109 season – but their early draft position brought them Miguel Cabrera.

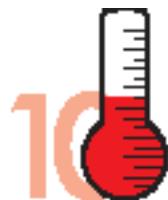
For many years the team had been adding to the pitching staff, and it performed very well starting in 2004. After two winning years with nothing to show for it, it all came together in 2006. Cabrera turned in an outstanding .326-44-146 line; Juan Pierre stole 37 bases and hit 15 triples; Dmitri Young hit .305. Barry Zito went 18-11, 3.48, and Cliff Lee won 17 games. The club won 100 games and made an appearance in the World Series, though they had little luck against a dominant Portland Possum team.

THIS YEAR

There is no winning formula for the Greater Ohio club this year, as there is very little that they can do to find a way to victory. The best effect they can have on opponents in this season is when Cabrera and Freeman come to bat.

Greater Ohio has shown skill in the past in its selection of young pitching. Some of it hasn't worked out well, but it isn't just about this year. The way forward may be to return to that strategy – building a new staff for the future.

TQ: 16.5



Not According To Plan

We heard it at the draft, and it came as no surprise. In Barbarian land – where they have a nice shiny new championship trophy – they like to be really good or really bad, not in the gray area in between. Thus the off-season moves; thus the building up of the draft war chest.



The problem is that *Joe Auletta's Brobbingnag Barbarians* are in the Ruth Division. The chief contender for post season honors, *Dave Jaskot's Detroit Stars*, are the best of the rest but have significant problems on the roster.

Brobbingnag wins the Ruth Division, places in the middle of the draft, and faces the same problem next year (with which the rest of us are significantly more familiar) – continue with the current set of players, or bail out and start again?

Detroit, by comparison, has no choice but to sit tight. Next year's draft is short, this year's team is suspect. Their challenge is to go .500, which will be easier in the Ruth, but makes success more of a mirage.

2014 Ruth Division Final Standings

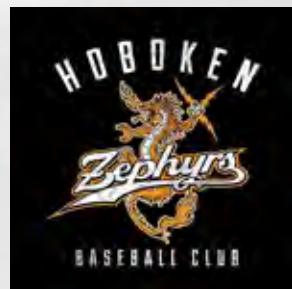
Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Brobbingnag*	122	40	.753	—
Detroit †	91	71	.562	31
New Westminster	59	103	.364	63
Dallas	48	114	.296	74

* 2014 TBL Champions.

† Lost to Brobbingnag in conference semi-final.

And speaking of rebuilding: *Steve Powell's Hoboken Zephyrs*, formerly the *Dallas Eagles*, have a new name, a new logo, and many of the same problems. The core of the club is much different from the players that were a big part of their success just a few years ago. At the *Annual* we call that embracing the cliff.

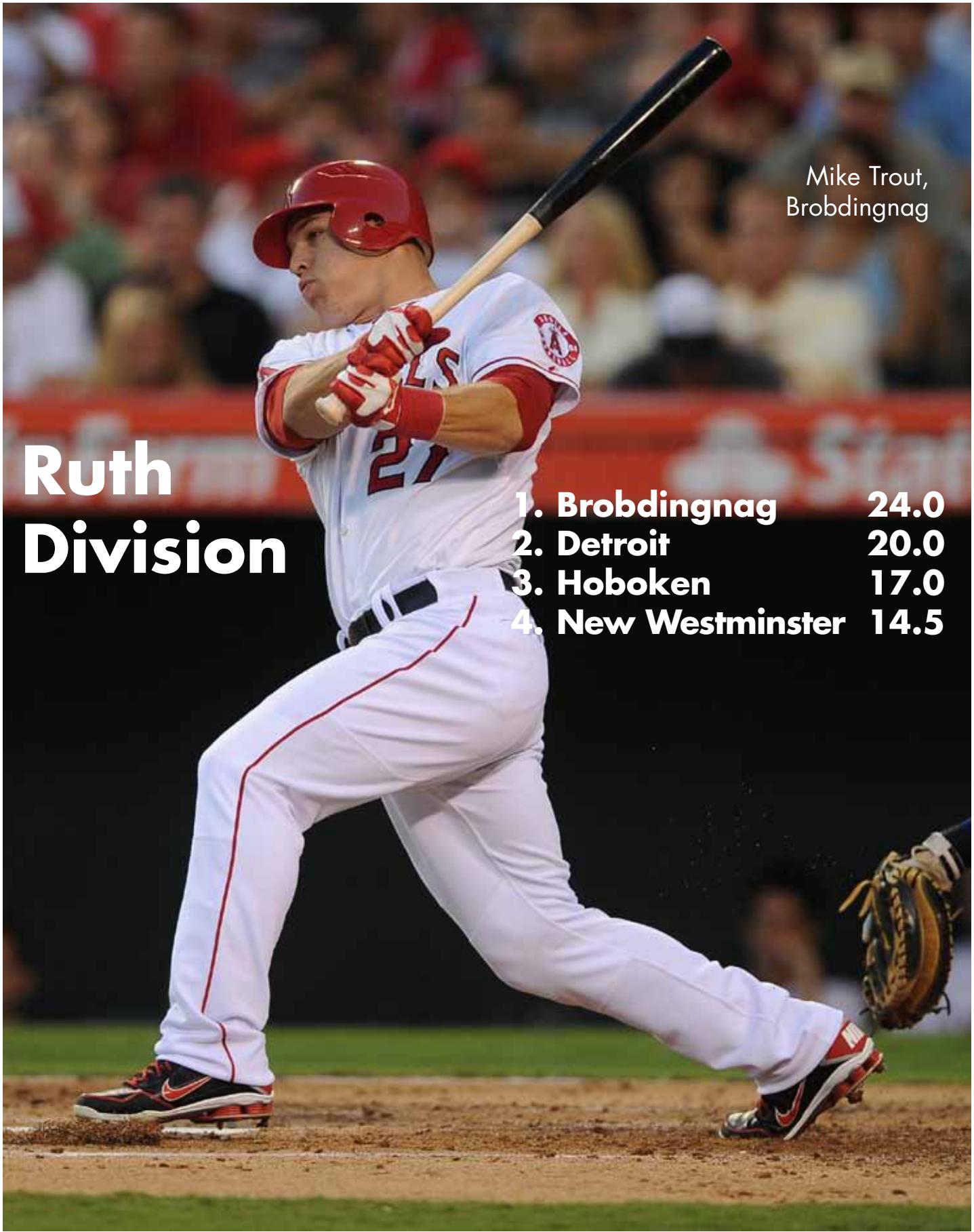
The trick is to have a plan – not to muddle along. We're fairly convinced that there are better days ahead for the Hoboken club.



We feel the same way about the *New Westminster Whiskeyjacks*, who are going to have another long year out in Western Canada. *Jim Jeatt* has been here before, but at least the team has gotten much younger and has a very solid 2016 draft – not just in the first few rounds but throughout. There are only a handful of key players on the



current roster, including ace *Johnny Cueto* and rookie *Jorge Soler*; it will be necessary to continue to avoid the temptation to trade them.



Mike Trout,
Brobdingnag

Ruth Division

- | | |
|--------------------|------|
| 1. Brobdingnag | 24.0 |
| 2. Detroit | 20.0 |
| 3. Hoboken | 17.0 |
| 4. New Westminster | 14.5 |

2014 brobdingnag BARBARIANS in review



What went wrong? . . . The only correct response is "not much."

by Joe Auletta

2014 in Review Final Record: 122-40 (1st, Ruth)

Motivated by their unexpected early exit from the 2013 playoffs and by Vlad's motivational words the Barbarians were in first place at the end of April, went 31-9 through May, and were never tested in the Ruth the rest of the way. In the playoffs they defeated Detroit (4-3), Whitman (4-2) and were taken to an extra inning 7th game by Midwest.

What went right?

We found a pair of unexpectedly scary clean-up hitters. Chris Davis had a year for the record books. After being picked early in the first round Davis had languished, never living up to the lofty expectations to be a middle of the order hitter. He had a decent 2013, and then blew away all reasonable expectations with 57 home runs, 176 RBI and 103 runs scored in 2014. Since Everth Cabrera faced a half-season drug suspension, the Barbarians obtained Hanley Ramirez to platoon at short. For 79 games Hanley channeled vintage Manny, hitting .351/.425/.699 with 24 HR and 77 RBI.

We used the full age spectrum, finding the fountain of youth for Papi (.297/.30/.112) and Jason Werth (.319/.409/.593) while turning a precious 20 year old rookie starter into a Cy Young candidate, Jose Fernandez went 23-3 with a 1.76 ERA and 220 Ks.

On the way to a championship, Brobdingnag rode the best bullpen in franchise history. Eleven relievers pitched 450 innings with a 2.09 combined ERA, 62 saves and 36 wins.



Davis: Blew away

What went wrong?

When you set a franchise record with 122 wins and you top the season off with a 5th World Championship, the only correct response is "not much".

Still, two shortstops (Ramirez and Cabrera) were limited to half seasons and the third, Dee Gordon, was limited to one game. Expected starter Pineda and reliever O'Flaherty spent the season on the DL.

3 Things

1. *Repeat?* Can the starting pitching repeat their amazing health from 2014. Five pitchers made 150 starts. Already in spring training there are disquieting signs that several starters may be showing the stress of pitching so many games in 2014, though Michael Pineda may finally toe the rubber after missing two seasons.

2. *Offensive question marks.* Without the stabilizing bats of Ortiz and Werth can the rest up to expectations and produce at a high level? Will Manny Machado build upon a tremendous rookie season? Will heralded rookie Mookie Betts develop quickly? Can Chris Davis repeat anything close to his 2014 numbers?

3. *Weak competition.* In a suddenly very weak Ruth Division, can the Barbarians take advantage of the in-division schedule to win enough games to get a seed that may take them on a deep playoff run in 2015? The three opening series of 2015 had the Barbarians go 7-4 in division, so maybe.

brobdingnag BARBARIANS

Joe Auletta (27th year)

This year is unusual – neither fish nor fowl.



A fine time was had in Brobdingnag last year as they pieced together one of the most successful seasons in league history. But while Joe was happily beheading opponents like a Game of Thrones episode, the foundation was disintegrating in front of our eyes. Jose Fernandez had Tommy John surgery, Chris Davis suffered an absolutely horrific yearlong slump, Hanley Ramirez saw his OPS drop by over 200 points.

What's left of the 2014 monster is a vastly diminished outfit that we are picking to win the Ruth Division, this time by default. The other three teams in the Ruth all have TQs below 20, and are just not ready to contend as yet. Joe Auletta will have some fun with this club in 2015, with no elevated expectations to pollute his joy of competition. Meanwhile, he will check the chalk boards at Brobdingnag Memorial Hospital in the hopes that his team does not appear for a second straight year.

Pitching: Innovative approach.

9.0

ROTATION. Pitching is still strong here, but injuries have scuttled the top-end of the rotation. Michael Pineda and Jose Fernandez would give any team a championship look, but they only have about 2/3 of a season of starts between the two of them. So, rather than use them in the starting rotation, Joe moved them to the bullpen for this year.

The heavy lifting is left to Stephen Strasburg (Grade 10 C+31 HR-14, 34 starts) and the excellent Baltimore lefty Chris Tillman (Grade 11, 34 starts). Homer Bailey (Grade 9 HR-13, 23 starts), and Jaime Garcia (Grade 8 C+34 HR-24, 7 starts) are competent for another 30 starts. This gives the Barbarians a respectable 98 starts above Grade 8, but enough bullpen to go



Strasburg: Heavy lifting

SNT: **Mookie Betts**

The Red Sox rookie was terrific in his debut – a bright spot in a very down year in Boston. He brings a little of everything – speed, defense and moderate power.



rescue any starter who even starts to perspire heavily after the 4th inning.

The other 64 ain't pretty. Brandon Workman (Grade 6 C-33 HR-15, 15 starts) will scare women and children in all his appearances. Jhoulys Chacin (Grade 5 C-41 HR-16, 11 starts) and the innocuous Justin Masterson (Grade 3, C-53 HR+14, 32 starts) eat up the rest.

The rotation is not quite what The Prince of Darkness envisioned when he collected these guys, but the future of this rotation is very, very bright. The big talents – Pineda, Fernandez, Strasburg and Tillman – are all 27 or less. This rotation is the best in the division.

BULLPEN. Joe boasts a killer backend bullpen combination of fire-baller Craig Kimbrel (Grade 26* C-45 HR+45, 61 IP) and rookie Aaron Sanchez (Grade 30* C-12 HR+45, 33 IP). Ninety-four innings above

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: J. P. Arencibia, Mookie Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr., Wei-Yin Chen, Jaime Garcia, Rymer Liriano, Mike Olt, Stolmy Pimentel, Aaron Sanchez, Andrew Susac, Josh Willingham.

Departed: Grant Balfour, Antonio Bastardo, Neal Cotts, Tony Cruz, Donnie Murphy, David Ortiz, Tanner Roark, Sergio Romo, Marco Scutaro, Jayson Werth, Chris B. Young.



Grade 26* means it's a seven inning game when you play these guys.

Getting to the closers is much easier because of the moves of Michael Pineda (Grade 16 C+46 HT+24, 13 starts, 76 innings) and Jose Fernandez (Grade 16 C+16 HR+14, 8 starts, 51 innings) to the pen. Joe has a few innings of Eric O'Flaherty (Grade 16* C+25 HR-25, 20 IP), and a full season of the very solid Aaron Loup (Grade 15* C-26 HR+32, 68 IP). These four add up to a total of 310 innings of Grade 13* and above.

Some middle relief is needed to smooth the transition to the late innings, and Wei-Yin Chen (Grade 8 C+32 HR-15, 185 IP), can pitch every day and twice on Sundays. Casey Janssen (Grade 7* C+36 HR-16, 45 IP) will attempt to make himself useful in spots where his +5 eligibility helps. Mopping up is the purview of the best Stolmy in baseball - Stolmy Pimentel (Grade 4* C-34 HR-24, 32 IP). There is plenty of bullpen, and they will be needed. This is an innovative approach to pitching management. It will be interesting to see how well this works.

Offense: 9.0 Thin and not as scary.

Injuries and slumps have razed the village, but there are still several rock-solid cards in the lineup this year. However, things thin out quickly in the latter part of the lineup.

Mike Trout (1-4-5-5, 10 hits, 4 walks, 18 Spd, 34 SSN for 18 attempts) is the star of the show, and will be for a long time to come. Trout won't be 24 until August, but is already established as the most dynamic player in the game. Joe Mauer (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, 3 31s) is the primary catcher for one more year – he's moving to first in Minnesota. Hanley Ramirez (4 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, 29 SSN for 19 attempts) is also changing positions,

but he's the regular shortstop for this season. Josh Willingham (1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks + 42) will be the regular DH. Dee Gordon (0-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, 20 Spd, 30 SSN for 83 attempts) will not be staying at first this season – he might be the premiere stolen base threat in the league.



Gordon: Premiere threat

Several other cards will be helpful, but have limited usage. Manny Machado (1-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, 16 SPD) will bring good news to third base after the All-Star break. He has only 82 games, so Mike Olt (1-5-5, 6 hits) will ugly things up in the first half. Mookie Betts (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, 2 31s), the #8 pick in the 2015 TBL draft, has 52 very nice games on his debut card.

Things get a little dicey after that.

Alex Rios (3 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk, 18 spd, L+8) has a usable card, but will really excel only against lefties. Chris Davis (1-5-5, 7 hits, 4 walks + 42) suffered a brutal season-long slump. Dioner Navarro (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 2 31s) is the everyday DH. This lineup will not be embarrassing, but it is thin and really only has Trout's card to scare people.

Joe is watching the Baltimore box scores to see if Chris Davis can re-emerge as an all-world power threat.

Defense: 4.0 Some quality; some anxiety.

There are a few high-quality defenders in the regular lineups. Joe Mauer (C8 Th+4) will be outstanding behind the plate. Mike Trout (OF3, 33 arm) will catch everything that floats by out there. Chris Davis (1B4) is an asset at first. Manny Machado (3B5) did not repeat as a 3B6, but is outstanding nevertheless.

The corner outfielders – Rios and Dustin Ackley – are both average defenders (OF2). Rios has a big



Mauer: One more year

The big problem is the middle infield. Hanley Ramirez (SS7) is backed up by Evereth Cabrera (SS8). Dee Gordon (2B7) will catch it if it stops. This part of the team will cause anxiety all season for the team's pitchers.

Bench: 2.0 A few power options . . .

There are a few power options off the bench, such as Andrew Susac (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 2 31s) and J.P. Arencibia (1-5-6, 7 hits, 2 walks+42). Jackie Bradley can run and defend (35 SSN for 8 attempts, OF3) but is not a hitter. The good players are on the field at the start of the game. Still, it's not as stripped down as a "rebuilding" Brobdingnag bench – there are actually a few spare games over the course of the season.

1st

No one is stepping up to challenge this team in the Ruth this season, so they will win it even with the holes in the starting rotation, hitting attack and defense.

Brobdingnag will find its way to the playoffs, hoping to catch someone off guard with the excellent bullpen. Mr. Auletta knows that this entry into the playoffs is likely to end in a quick exit: that, essentially, this playoff run is far less meaningful than – for example – last year's run to the Series. Anything can happen in the playoffs, of course: but it doesn't happen very often. Still, this team is very young, and they will be better next year.



Joe Auletta (AKA the Prince of Darkness) didn't make much of an effort to defend his WS crown in 2015. Vlad and the gang will just go with what's left over from 2014, which is still fairly potent.

arm (36), so he plays right all year. Josh Willingham (OF1) sees some time in left, and that will not work well.



bробдинаг: THE FORMULA



BROBDINGNAG BARBARIANS, 2014

The dominant Brobdingnag teams of the past have graced our pages on many occasions, giving the *Annual* staff lots of choices for 'formula' teams.

What makes a great Barbarian team? Power, power, power – up and down the lineup – with a solid bench and a deep staff. In the earliest years of contention, the pitching would be assembled on the spot; but either by design or by accident, Mr. Auletta has drafted more and more young pitchers in recent years, who stay with the club between periods of contention, rather than being acquired when the rest of the team comes together.

For our example, we look no further than Brobdingnag's 2014 TBL Champions. The scored in groups (942 runs), pounded homers (235) and pitched exquisitely (Jose Fernandez was 23-3, Greg Kimbrel had 43 saves and a 1.82 ERA.) Nothing but a true monster will do here.

THIS YEAR

The club is waiting for Chris Davis, Jose Fernandez and Michael Pineda to return to form, while it holds on to Guys Joe Likes. This year is unusual - neither fish nor fowl.

If those three return at full strength, and very young players like Betts and Machado develop as expected, Joe goes right back to the 110 win plateau.

TQ: 24.0



2014 detroit STARS in review

What went wrong can be summarized in two words:
"Brobbingnag Barbarians!"

by Dave Jaskot



2014 in Review

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

There was a lot to like about the Detroit Stars' season last year, as most of what we expected came to fruition. The Stars finished with a strong 91-71 record, good for 2nd place in the Ruth Division and a wildcard playoff spot.

What went right?

Hisashi Iwakuma headlined the pitching staff with 16 wins and a 2.76 era over 244 innings followed by R.A. Dickey with 15 wins and Hiroki Kuroda with 14. Carlos Torres had 16 of the team's 31 saves and a low 0.83 era. The pitching staff overall finished with a 3.48 era for the year.

The offense produced 797 runs, which was 175 more runs than the Stars pitching staff allowed. Stars hitters smacked 214 HR, led by Colby Rasmus with 31 and Brandon Moss with 30. The team finished with a .260/.318/.439 line. Team average leaders were Rasmus at .302, Mike Carp at .298 and Robinson Cano at .291. Rasmus also led the team in slugging at .598 followed by Carp at .527 and Ryan Raburn at .508.

What went wrong?

What went wrong can be summarized in two words "Brobbingnag Barbarians!" Joe's team got in the way on the Stars' planned march to a pennant and eliminated Detroit in a close 7 game playoff series 4-3 with all games decided by one run. As we all know the Barbarians did go on to win the World Series over the Dawgs.

Detroit committed too many errors, 126, which led to 56 unearned runs. The team also hit into 123 double plays. It was very much an Earl Weaver / '80s Red Sox offense – the team only attempted 8 steals all year and recorded only 16 sacrifice bunts. The Stars also struck out 1,372 times while drawing 462 bases on balls.

3 Things

The Stars are retooling this year, preparing for 2016. Since the year after the club moved to Detroit it has been in the mix, recording 94 and 91 win seasons, but the level of expectation is far lower this year.



Iwakuma: Headliner

Keys for the future include:

1. *The reworked outfield.* A completely new group has taken its place in Detroit this year – Yoenis Cespedes, Wil Myers, Michael Bourn and Anthony Gose join Colby Rasmus.

2. *The reworked infield.* Ryan Zimmerman, Prince Fielder and Will Middlebrooks are the all-new crew to surround top star Robinson Cano. Again, there is hope for a return to form by these players.

3. *Eyes on the prize.* It's hard to tell where any of the clubs in the Ruth Division are headed over the next couple of years. Brobbingnag has lots of talent, but they're always willing to take it all apart and start over. As for Hoboken and New West, this year's team has very little to do with what will be on the field in a year. The Stars want to see comebacks so the team can once again contend in 2016.

detroit STARS

Dave Jaskot (4th year)

This is a planned convalescence.



There is something to be said for just taking your shot. Last year, Dave Jaskot looked over the Ruth Division, as we all did, and saw that Brobdnag had built themselves a toothy beast. But Detroit had some assets – a good power lineup, some solid starting pitchers, and enough bullpen to finish people off. So, they hammered their way into the playoffs, and came within a single game of upending that same scary Brob Monster in the International Conference Semi-finals.

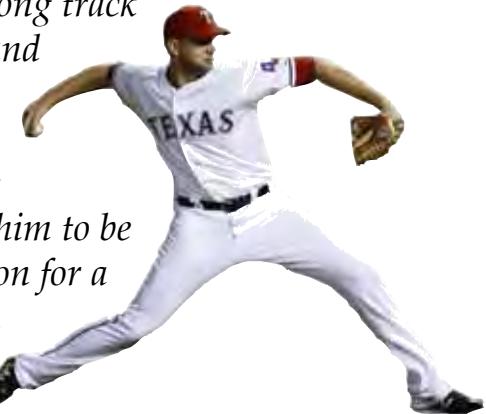
It was a terrific effort by an older club who knew the cliff was coming. (Detroit stole 4 bases last year – *as a team.*) This year, Dave did what every TBL manager must do eventually – retrench and start gathering assets for the future.

Pitching: Not giving games away.

SNT: Phil Klein.

The new normal is to have a plane load of rocket arms in the bullpen when you try to contend. Klein is huge, misses bats and has a long track record of intimidation and success in the minors.

He starts his rookie year here in Detroit as the closer. Look for him to be part of that discussion for a while.



need 25
starts from
Stults to get through the season.

The age of the staff is a concern here. Dickey is 40, Iwakuma is 34, and even Miguel Gonzalez is 31, though he seems a good bet to be here a while. Dickey is a good September trade candidate.

7.0

ROTATION. For a team in a rebuilding year, there is some quality on board in the starting rotation. R.A. Dickey (Grade 11 C-15 HR -14, 34 starts) and Miguel Gonzalez (Grade 11 HR-25, 26 starts) are the two best grades in the stack, though Hisashi Iwakuma (Grade 9 C+44 HR-14, 28 starts) may prove as effective as either of them with his excellent control number. These three will be competent for 92 starts.

That ends the list of starters who steal 9s without help. Lefty T. J. House (Grade 7 C+25, 18 starts) is ok for half a season, but Hector Noesi (Grade 6 C-12 HR-26, 27 starts) and Eric Stults (Grade 4 C+22 HR-24, 32 starts) will be rudely treated by opposing offenses most nights. Dave will

BULLPEN. This bullpen is cleverly constructed to endure a long season with a mediocre starting staff. It starts with monstrous Phillies rookie Phil Klein (Grade 19* C+12 HR-32 19 IP). The 6' 7"

Turnover Rate: 42%

Arrived: Michael Bourn, Blaine Boyer, Yoenis Cespedes, Anthony DeSclafani, Robbie Erlin, Anthony Gose, Chris Hatcher, T. J. House, Phil Klein, Will Middlebrooks, Wil Myers, Hector Noesi, Fernando Salas, Eric Stults, Chris Taylor, Ryan Zimmerman.

Departed: Brian Bogusevic, Jared Burton, Mike Carp, Eric Chavez, Ryan Doumit, Rafael Furcal, Hiroki Kuroda, Francisco Liriano, Jean Machi, Darren Oliver, Yusmeiro Petit, Ryan Raburn, Clayton Richard, Cody Ross, Miguel Tejada.



detroit STARS

260-pound fireballer allowed 132 hits in 201 minor league innings, and will be part of the closer mix here in Detroit for years. Dave limits him to 2 outs per outing, so he's good for 25+ saves (assuming that pesky HR-33 doesn't come into play).

The setup crew includes James Russell (Grade 13* HR+33, 57 IP) Rafael Soriano (Grade 12* C-13 HR+24, 62 IP), Fernando Salas (Grade 11* C+33, 58 IP) and Blaine Boyer (Grade 10* C+25 HR+34, 40 IP). That's 218 innings to bridge the gap to Mr. Klein. Carlos Torres (Grade 12* C-23 HR-14, 92 IP) is also here in a special role – he's the middle relief / mop. Chris Hatcher (Grade 8*C+26 HR+22, 56 IP) rounds out this group nicely – they have a total of 384 innings of relief, all over Grade 8*.

It's not overwhelming, but they won't be giving games away.

Offense: **Will have its moments.**

7.0

Detroit has one all-world card: Robinson Cano (3 0s, 12 hits, 3 walks, 2 31s, R+1, 30 SSN for 13 attempts) is probably the best second baseman in captivity right now. This guy will bat either second or third in the lineup all year. The card is a beauty – 3 7s, including 44 and 55.

There is some power in the lineup. Yoenis Cespedes (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 4 8s) who barely has room in his shirt for all his muscles, will always hit for power. Brandon Moss (1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+42) will hit a few and miss a few.



Cano: Best in captivity

Colby Rasmus (1-5-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, 16 Spd) will miss more than Moss, but is another source of big power. Wilin Rosario (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 2 7s) adds power from the catcher slot, which is rare these days. Ryan Zimmerman (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 61 games) will help for three months.

Other guys who contribute regularly are speedster Michael Bourn (3-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 2 31s, 18 spd), and the underrated shortstop Cliff Pennington (3-5, 9 hits, 4 walks, 33 SSN for 7 attempts, L+3).

There are also some uninspiring at bats. Danny Espinosa (3 0s, 9 hits, 1 walks + 42, L+10) plays against lefties on the boards. Danny Valencia (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) is a below average hitter at third. Prince Fielder (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, R+1, 42 games) was injured almost all season. Wil Myers (2 0s, 8 hits 3 walks) was a major disappointment, but is a regular at DH. Will Middlebrooks (2 0s, 7 hits, 2 walks+42) plays way more often than Detroit would like. Ryan Sweeney (5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 2 31s) is the everyday centerfielder. This offense will have its moments, but Cano is the only card in the stack with 11 hits or more, and Cespedes and Rasmus are the only regulars with 4 power numbers. There is also very little speed to help manufacture runs. This offense is a little below Brobdingnag's.

Defense: **No clunkers.**

4.0

There are four exceptional defenders in the regular lineups. Cano is a 2B8. Ryan Sweeney (CF3, 33 arm) is rock solid in center. Michael Bourn (OF3, 32 arm) goes after it in left and right. Anthony Gose (OF3, 35 arm) is very good as well. A.J. Ellis (C9, Th-1) plays against lefties on the boards and righties on the computer, which is fine, but Wilin Rosario (C7, Th-3) leaves something to be desired – and Detroit will want to have his bat in the lineup, especially when Ellis' batting card is considered.

In the infield, Will Middlebrooks (3B4) is a very good glove at third. Other fielders are solid average. Cliff Pennington and Danny Espinoza are both SS8s. Brandon Moss (1B3) and Prince Fielder (1B3) are adequate at first. Corey Rasmus (OF2) and Yoenis Cespedes (OF2, 36 arm) are the corner outfielders.



Bourn: Goes after it

Not a clunker in the bunch, other than behind the plate. This is a pretty solid defense.

Bench: 2.0 **Stuff that is underpowered.**

A lot of the bench is bats that are too underpowered to play regularly. Chris Taylor (6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, 16 spd, 28 SSN for 7 attempts) is a guy we like, but he's only around for 47 games this year. Most of the usage for the regular lineup will be drawn from here, due to missing games from key players. The bench is not a team strength – and that's probably being kind.

2nd

There's enough here to keep things from getting embarrassing, but they are well short of Brobbingnag in the division, and they may struggle to get to 80 wins. What militates in their favor in this regard is the number of times the team will face Hoboken and New Westminster. Still, it's not a particularly strong endorsement to note that they must beat up bad teams to get to mediocrity. Still, this is a planned convalescence – and the youngsters like Taylor and Klein will help going forward.



After two winning seasons and two trips to the playoff, the Stars of Motor City have fallen back to Earth. Weak pitching and a much diminished offense spell another trip to Under .500 Land.



**detroit:
THE FORMULA**



DETROIT STARS, 2013-2014

We note the last two seasons, but it is fair to say that they haven't found one yet. This franchise has never won 100 games and never won a division title. Dave Jaskot himself was the manager for the most successful season in Franchise history – that was 2013. That club leaned heavily on its starters – CC Sabathia, Hiroki Kuroda, and R. A. Dickey pitched 672 innings between them, leading Detroit to the playoffs.

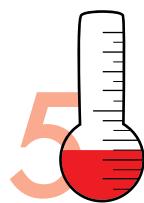
Based on evidence, Mr. Jaskot appears to have less respect or desire for a strong bullpen than most TBL cognoscenti, meaning that in order to do well the team must have a strong rotation (with good fatigue numbers). On last year's 91 win team, three starters went 230 or more innings, following the 2013 pattern, and there were 30 complete games.

THIS YEAR

This is a rebuilding year, and the club is forced to wait for players to return to good health (such as Prince Fielder) and for the kids to step up.

He has won with pitching so far, so he's closer to Darrel Skogen than Mark Freedman or Joe Autetta. It will be interesting to see how the savvy Midwesterner handles this rebuild.

TQ: 20.0



detroit STARS

2014 dallas EAGLES in review

The overall pitching staff was only marginally better than the offense, but that's not saying much.



by Steve Powell

2014 in Review

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

We're changing our name, not our stripes. After 20 seasons of being someone else, Jim Chastain's Dallas Eagles, we decided to form our own identity, the Hoboken Zephyrs. After losing 114 games, the most since we dropped 118 in 2003, it seemed like the perfect time start fresh in a new location.

What went right?

Step 2, we hit our bottom. It's all a part of the plan slogging through seasons like 2014. We may top the century mark for losses again, but we will be a tougher and more interesting team. Statistically, Dallas/Hoboken resembled a 48 win team with no offensive players worth mentioning. No hitter was deemed *too good* for a team anticipating a high draft pick, with a possible exception in Carl Crawford. Carl was hitting .288 through August, then was promptly traded to Greater Ohio. On the mound 37 year old AJ Burnett showed he still has good stuff with 230 strikeouts and 4 shutouts. He also tied Bryan Morris for team high in wins with 7.

What went wrong?

If the pitching was bad, and it truly was, then we were just plain embarrassing in run production. Shut out 23 times. 10-32 in the Ruth. Team OPS just over .600. Virtually no hitter, whether starter or platoon types, managed over .260. 6 hitters struck out more than 100 times, with the stylin' Oswaldo Arcia whiffing 137

times in only 97 games. Hitting coach Dave Nicholson was informed at season's end that he would not be retained for 2015.

The overall pitching staff was only marginally better than the offense, but that's not saying much. Starting rotation consisted of a handful of kids (Rob Erlin, Jacob Turner, and Jonathan Pettibone) who combined for 8 wins in their

50 starts, a staff ace (Burnett at 7-13 4.26) and a collection of warm bodies (Ryan Dempster, Jason Hammel, David Phelps, and the formerly dominant Dan Haren). Of that group, Dempster proved the most valuable not for his right arm, but for his fabulous standup comedy.

3 Things



Burnett: Still good stuff

1. *Patience.* Stay the course. The quickest and easiest phase of a rebuild is the demolition. In committing to a plan of action, building through the draft in this case, we don't expect to be a serious contender until the fourth year of the rebuild.

2. *Strong up the middle.* Catcher, Short, second, and center are key being a consistent winner, and not just from an offensive standpoint. There's a piece or two lacking here.

3. *MUST have a staff ace.* The one guy who can stop losing streaks and prevent those series sweeps. No doubt three good starters are necessary for the playoffs, but it all starts with that Number 1.

hoboken ZEPHYRS

Steve Powell (26th year)

This is a textbook rebuild effort by Mr. Powell.



TBL's new Commissioner of Vice, Steve Powell, and the Dallas Eagles bottomed out last year, winning only 48 games all season. That 'effort' garnered him the third pick in the 2015 TBL draft, and a few hours later Dr. Powell gathered most of a whole new infield - Baez, Lamb, Castellanos. There will be no repeat of 2014 here – a point implicitly made by moving the whole operation north to Hoboken. The way the *Annual* sees it, they won't even finish last.

Pitching: There is some.

5.5

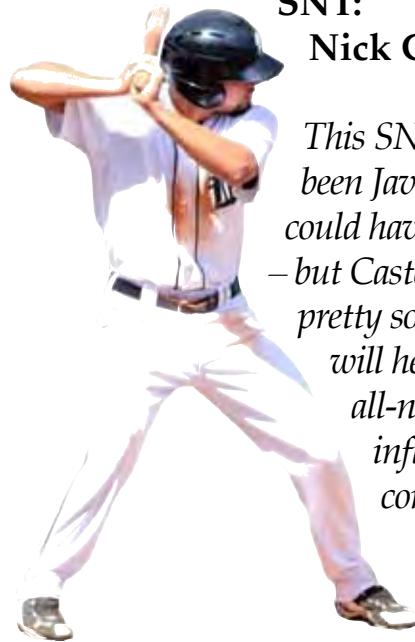
There is some – a welcome departure from last year's club, which finished 20th in Team ERA.

ROTATION. Veteran Chris Young (Grade 12 C-22 HR-26, 29 starts) leads the rotation. At 35 years young, this is not exactly the guy you want leading your rotation when you're trying to rebuild, but he was lying there in the third round of the draft and Steve decided to grab him.

Two other full season starters stand behind Young: A. J. Burnett (Grade 7 C-41, 34 starts) and Dan Haren (Grade 7, C+35 HR-24, 32 starts). Then come some kids - Vidal Nuno (Grade 7 C+12 HR-25, 28 starts), David Buchanan (Grade 7 C+16, 20 starts), David Phelps (Grade 7, C-25 HR-12), and Kyle (I'll order the) Lobstein (Grade 9 HR+22, 6 starts).

They manage to get through the season without running anyone out there below Grade 7. Considering what happened to this club last year, this is very promising.

BULLPEN. The closer has two heads. Michael Kohn (Grade 21* C-62 HR+43, 24 IP) and Shae



SNT: Nick Castellanos

This SNT could have been Javier Baez, who could have more upside – but Castellanos had a pretty solid year and will help anchor the all-new Hoboken infield for years to come.

Turnover Rate: 42%

Arrived: Javier Baez, David Buchanan, Alberto Callaspo, Nick Castellanos, Christian Colon, Jeremy Jeffress, Jake Lamb, Kyle Lobstein, Brandon Morrow, Adrian Nieto, Vidal Nuno, Shane Robinson, Shae Simmons, Craig Stammen, Chris Young

Departed: Mike Aviles, Andrew Bailey, Yuniesky Betancourt, Matt Davidson, Ryan Dempster, Derek Dietrich, Scott Downs, Robbier Erlin, Jason Hammel, George Kottaras, Boone Logan, Lyle Overbay, Jonathan Pettibone, Hector Rondon, Rob Wooten

Simmons (Grade 16* C-54 HR+36, 21 IP) form a ninth inning tag team, with each guy handling closing duties for four months.

There is a nice setup crew as well. Jeremy Jeffress (Grade 8* C+16 HR+46, 32 IP), Bryan Morris (Grade 15*, 64 IP) and Cesar Ramos (Grade 14* C-26, 52 IP) will bridge the gap between the starters and the closers. But the



guy who really makes this pen work is Adam Warren (Grade 13* HR+35, 79 IP). These four plus the closers give Hoboken 272 innings of Grade 13+ relief.

There are some bulk innings elsewhere. Craig Stammen (Grade 5* C+34 HR+24, 86 IP) is a mop, a valet and an under-butler all rolled into one. This unit is a team strength.

Offense: 6.0 Ordinary, with a bright future.

This is the part of the team that really needed work – they scored only 501 runs last season. Steve drafted a pile of hitters, but none of them had four power numbers. The star of the show is shortstop Starlin Castro (0-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks). He bats at or near the top of the lineup every day. He's 25, and he'll be here for a long time.



Reddick: Worth mentioning

2 walks, 108 Games) is the regular catcher, and he will have his moments. Josh Reddick (1-3-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) also should be mentioned here – a little power, 13 on-base numbers. He's a regular against righties.

There are some generic cards that see a lot of action. Nick Castellanos (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks)



Warren: Makes it work

is the regular third baseman. Alberto Callaspo (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) is playing first and second this year. Aaron Hicks (2 0s, 8 hits, 6 walks, L+8) is a useful piece against lefties. Martin Maldonado (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks + 42, 52 games) is game limited. Otherwise, he'd play more. Mark Teixeira (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks) shows up in May and plays first base, as he has for this team for a decade.

It's a pretty ordinary bunch, light on scary cards but pointed firmly at a brighter future.

Defense: 3.5 Won't shorten many innings.

Cutting directly to the heart of matter, Starling Castro is an SS8, Alberto Callaspo is a 2B7 and Travis D'Arnaud is a C7 with a bad arm (TH-3). It pretty much doesn't matter what the rest of the defense looks like when three the critical pieces are dead average or less.

Mark Teixeira (1B4) is still a good fielder. Nick Castellanos (3B3) is no Brooks Robinson. There are two bright spots in the outfield – Josh Reddick (OF3, with a 37 arm) is sublime. Aaron Hicks (OF3, 36 arm) is also excellent when he cracks the lineup. The other outfielders – Denofia, Marisnick, and Ozuna are OF2s.

They are not terrible, but this defense won't shorten many innings.

Bench: 2.0 A few tasty options.

There are a few tasty bench options. The only 4 power number card in the stack - Christian Colon (3-6-6-6, 12 hits, 2 walks, 21 games) is a nice hitting toy. Hicks (17 speed) is a nice pinch-running option. This team will not be scared by your power lefty, either – they have Jake Marisnick (L+6), Travis Snyder (L+9) and Aaron

Hicks (L+8) to punish lefties. Not a bad bench for a team in rebuilding mode.

A key new member of the club who won't see much actual playing time is Javier Baez, selected early in the 2015 draft. It's hard to decide what to make of him. Indeed, Steve added a lot of nice pieces in last year's draft, but this is the guy he'll be watching all season. Will he strike out in every at bat? Will he hit 60 home runs? It is absolutely impossible to know whether this guy is the next Ryne Sandberg or the next Dave Kingman or something else altogether. A fascinating player with huge upside.



Baez: Fascinating

3rd

There's just too much here for Hoboken to finish behind New Westminster for the second year in a row.

The biggest factor is qualitative – it feels like Dr. Steve is sick of losing after last year's debacle. In the Ruth in 2015, a little attitude goes a long way.



Steve Powell relocated his storied franchise from Texas to the NYC borough of Hoboken, perhaps hoping a new venue will result in a return to winning ways. Nope. New setting, same crappy results.



hoboken: THE FORMULA



DALLAS EAGLES, 2011

Steve built himself an absolute monster club in 2011 and rampaged all the way to the TBL World Series before getting flattened by the Melrose Avengers' 123-win juggernaut.

Steve's club could crush you any way they wanted. They scored 943 runs that season, and hit 212 home runs. They had a team ERA of 3.26, and their closer – Andrew Bailey – gave up 12 hits in 44 innings of work. They did not have a 20 game winner, but they had three 19-game winners, including Josh Johnson (19-3, 1.95 ERA).

THIS YEAR

The pins are set for this team to make leaps forward as the kids mature. Aside from Baez, they have the promising Jake Lamb, Nick Castellanos, Starlin Castro, Marcel Ozuna – and entire lineup full of kids who could fill out a championship roster very quickly.

Only three position players on the entire team are over 30. When this team emerges, they will all move forward together. This is a textbook rebuild effort by Mr. Powell.

TQ: 17.0



hoboken ZEPHYRS

2014 new westminster WHISKEYJACKS in review

The team did score over 500 runs . . .

by Jim Jeatt



2014 in Review Final Record: 59-103 (3rd, Ruth)

New Westminster fans suffered yet another 100 loss season in 2014. The high water mark of 2010 with 102 wins and a division title, is but a distant, sad memory. New West, at 59-103, has been fooling no one losing 100 games or more in 3 of the last 4 seasons.

2014 had a few highlights for the Whiskeyjacks. The 59 wins actually outperformed the Pythagoras total of 52. A modest late season win streak moved them to the 5th spot in the draft after having been fourth almost all season.

What went right?

The New West bunch seemed to get way too much out of Placido Polanco as he lead the team in average at .268 and OBP with .349. Modest numbers for sure but good numbers from a player off the scrap heap. New West had managed to create a roster full of players who were at the margins of usefulness.

J. P. Arencibia hit 20 homers but earned just 50 RBI while hitting a round .180. Eric Young stole 25 bases but hit only .237. Chris Parmelee was the only hitter who slugged above .400 at .414. Desmond Jennings was very confusing hitting 18 homers, stealing 11 bases but batting .202 and slugging .359 in 139 games. The team did score over 500 runs which some pundits scoffed at when the season began.



Polanco: Off scrap heap

What went wrong?

The pitching staff was particularly disappointing. Sabathia and Maholm two left handers struggled mightly with Sabathia at 7-16 6.71 ERA and Maholm 4-9 5.97. That 11-25 was just less than a quarter of the total losses. Wade Davis and Scott Kazmir each contributed 15 losses, so with those 4 starters they had over half of the losses. Dane DeRosa missed the final two months, after being traded, but somehow found a way to save 18 games. Jeff Locke had a great first season in the league going 12-12 with a 3.42 ERA reaching 187 IP.

3 Things

Actually, one thing. Realizing that the organization had pretty bottomed out with the current roster New Westminster cleared the decks at the end of 2014 season.

With no young players and little prospects of adding new talent internally, the team stacked up on draft picks. New West selected 19 players in the 2014 draft and stacked up another 10 picks in the first four rounds of the 2016 draft.

Committing to a long term draft build has left little doubt that there are a few more seasons of 100 losses in their future. The draft class of 2015 may yield a few players of value but the team is still looking to have a complete roster of bona fide major leaguers.

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

Jim Jeatt (11th year)

The formula is yet to be written.



You know you're facing rebuilding challenges when you win 59 games, and finish in third place in your division by 11 games. Nothing has come easy for Jim Jeatt since his WhiskeyJacks won back-to-back Ruth Division titles in 2009 and 2010. He has lost 100 games three of the last four years, and this year does not look much different.

But it is. Because with his first pick in the 2015 TBL draft, Jim snagged Jorge Soler. Soler is the type of hitter you can build a franchise around, and will be at the core of Jim's lineup for the next fifteen years. This year, Jim gets a nice card and a cup of Java. Next year, the gravy train begins, and New West will start on the long road back to contention.

But there's 162 games left this season ...

Pitching:

It's a mess.

4.5

ROTATION. The rotation has one all-world stud - Johnny Cueto (Grade 17 C+13, 34 starts). The Cincinnati Kid was spectacular last season for the Reds. This guy and Clayton Kershaw have the best full season grades in the league this year. Cueto gets some help from the promising Kyle Hendricks (Grade 12 C+33 HR+34, 13 starts) and Pirates lefthander Jeff Locke (Grade 8, HR-16, 21 starts). These three will give New Westminster a chance to win for 68 games.

Then, things get very ugly very quickly. Nick Martinez (Grade 6 C-25 HR-15, 24 starts) will struggle through his starts, but he'll look like Walter Johnson compared to Marco Estrada (Grade 6 /14* HR-42, 18 starts, 43 IP).



Cueto: All world

SNT: Jorge Soler

His minor league OPS of .931, and his 75 XBH in 636 minor league at bats tell you that he's going to be something special. But you have to see him to really understand what this guy could be – he's 23, huge, athletic and has a gorgeous swing. This will not be his last five power number card.



Turnover Rate: 48%

Arrived: Tucker Barnhart, Clay Buchholz, Michael Choice, Phil Coke, Ross Detweiler, Jeanmar Gomez, Kyle Hendricks, Caleb Joseph, Evan Marshall, Nick Martinez, Tommy Medica, Robbie Ray, Luis Sardinas, Jonathan Schoop, Jorge Soler, Christian Vazquez, Jonathan Villar.

Departed: David Aardsma, J. P. Arencibia, Alexi Casilla, Wade Davis, Scott Kazmir, Ryan Ludwick, Tyler Lyons, Nate McLouth, Joe Ortiz, Josh Outman, Oliver Perez, Placido Polanco, Martin Prado, Omar Quintanilla, Tom Wilhelmsen, Josh Willingham.

There are gale force winds blowing out when Estrada toes the rubber.

And it gets worse. Clay Buchholz (Grade 3, 32 starts) is here, fresh off the worst season of his career. Paul Maholm (Grade 3 /3* C-21 HR-13, 22 starts, 27 IP) will serve 'em up for all his starts. And just to show that Jim is serious about his entry into the Kris Bryant sweepstakes, he's trotting out



new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

Robbie Ross (Grade 1, Sept and Oct) and Robbie Ray (Grade 1, Oct only) late in the year.

It's a mess.

BULLPEN. Mr. Estrada's 43 relief innings (14* HR-42) is the best grade available, but that homer rating makes him close to unusable as a closer, so the job falls to Anthony Varvaro (Grade 13* C+22, 54 IP). The 96 innings of grade 13* and above relief is better than many teams in this position. Evan Marshall (Grade 10* HR+31, 49 IP) and Ryan Webb (Grade 7* C+25 HR+43, 49 IP) are half-decent setup men whose peripherals make them better than their grades would indicate. The opposite is true for concept reliever Aaron Crow (Grade 11* C-33 HR-32, 59 IP).

Jim is so convinced that the beatings are on their way that he calls out three of his relievers as mops - Phil Coke (Grade 5* HR+16, 58 IP), Ross Detwiler (Grade 6* C+14 HR+16, 63 IP) and Jeanmar Gomez (Grade 7* C+15, 62 IP). This bullpen is good enough to rescue the underpowered starters, but closing out games late will be a big challenge.

Offense:

4.0

Wait 12 months.

Let's stop right here and admire the view: Jorge Soler (1-5-5-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks). Jorge had only 95 at bats last season, but he broke camp with the big club and is a regular on *Baseball Tonight*. As someone once said to me of Jeff Francoeur – what's not to love?

For this year, Jim goes into battle with only two really tasty cards. Dexter Fowler (3 0s, 10 hits, 5

walks, 28 SSN for 15 attempts) is a wonderful lead-off man who will be making a nuisance of himself all year. Jim also has Conor Gillespie (0-6-6, 11 hits 2 walks, L-10, R+1) at DH, who is a guy who would look great at third base with almost any other team in the league. But New Westminster also has Lonnie Chisenhall (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 2 31s), who is the superior fielder, so Dizzy Gillespie is a lumber-only player this year.

Derek Jeter (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 3 31s, L+5, 32 SSN for 12 attempts) finishes up his career playing every day and sporting 3 31s – same as it ever was for the Hall of Famer. He bats second all season. The promising Desmond Jennings (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 28 SSN for 21 attempts) bats in the middle of the lineup all year.



Jeter: Same as ever

The new second baseman is the powerful but erratic Jonathan Schoop (1-0-0, 8 hits). Caleb Joseph (1-6, 8 hits, 2 walks) is the regular catcher. Eric Young, Jr. (3-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 19 spd) bats last in the lineup and has speed to spare. Tommy Medica (1-4-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) is the first baseman and cleanup hitter against lefties. Strangely, Chris Parmalee (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+7, R-5) is the first baseman against righties.

What's missing is an all-world power bat. All Jim has to do is wait 12 months for that.

Defense:

4.0

Nothing special here.

The Whiskeyjacks are one of the strongest teams in TBL in catching defense. Check out the leather



Jim Jeatt probably fields the worst team in TBL for 2015. Apart from Johnny Cueto, no pitching. And no real offense coupled with inadequate defense means another season in the cellar for New West.

here: Caleb Joseph (C8 Th+5), Christian Vazquez (C8 Th+5), Tucker Barhart (C7 Th+6). Only Carlos Corporan (C7, Th-1) is below average. But Whiskeyjack fans need not be concerned that their shot at a high draft pick will be compromised by sublime pitch framing. Mr. Jeter (SS7) will keep those opposing base runners moving all year. Jon Schoop (2B8) is a bright spot at second though.

The corner infielders are all adequate but unspectacular. Chisenhall is a 3B3. Parmelee and Medica are both 1B3s. In the outfield, Desmond Jennings (OF3 32 arm) is terrific, Dexter Fowler (OF2 30 arm) is ok, Eric Young, Jr. (OF-2 29 arm), well, he can run it in to the infield ...

Nothing special here. Jeter's presence will not help the pitching, and may cost the Jacks a few games.

Bench: 2.0
Move along.

No big freakish bat off the bench here – all the good lumber plays every day, and there's precious little of that. Soler would be a great pinch hitter, but Jim has him in the minors all season. Carlos Corporan (1-6, 9 hits 3 walks, R+2) has a first column 1 and a decent shift against righties. Luis Sardinas (6-6, 10 hits, 1 walk) is your choice with a runner on third base. But really – there's not much and Jim doesn't call for any pinch-hitting in his instructions. Move along ...

4th Fourth in the Ruth. New West has a shot at the #1 pick in the draft this year. This will come as no surprise to New Westminster management; this year's draft, and offseason moves, were in no way intended to make the 2015 edition of the team better or more competitive.

Instead, Mr. Jeatt has done what he needed to do – take as many "lottery tickets" as possible, and get ready for a good 2016 draft. What the team looks like in a year will be much, much different.



**new westminster:
THE FORMULA**



NEW WESTMINSTER: 2010

In 2010, New West had a terrific year, winning 102 games. They did it in knuckle-dragging fashion – their offense was led by Prince Fielder (36 homers) and Matt Holliday (.330 / .407.527). They scored 879 runs. Were third in the league in doubles and first in triples with 51.

It was by far the best performance for this team in its entire history – a tale largely of woe. They have lost 100 or more games 10 times, more than half of the years they have existed. The 2010 team was a triumph – but a short lived one.

THIS YEAR

They are waiting for Soler and hoping for the best from a number of other players.

They are also building in some team speed – Desmond Jennings and Eric Young can really fly, as can perennial star Dexter Fowler. This offense could be quite dynamic when the pieces coalesce. Still, it's hard to evaluate where the team is going – the formula is yet to be written, the roster is yet to be established. We can be as snarky as we want about what's on the field, but next year will look a whole lot different.

TQ: 14.5



2014 TBL world series



by Walter Hunt
(based on accounts
by Joe Auletta
and Darrell Skogen)

Midwest vs. Brobbdingnag

The top teams don't always make the World Series, but in 2014 they did. Midwest (110-50) topped the National Conference (tied with Zion), and Brobbdingnag (122-40) was the best in the International. First- and third-best offensive teams in the league, and while both pitching staffs were strong the expectation was for big scoring brawls.

Darrell Skogen and the Mongrels won in 2009 and defeated Portland 4 to 3, and Maracaibo 4-2 to get back to the championship. Joe Auletta won in 1997, 1998, 2003, and 2008 and survived a seven games with Detroit and then six against Whitman to advance.

Game 1 at Brobbdingnag Zimmermann vs. Fernandez

For six innings Fernandez held the Mongrels to five hits, mostly singles, but an error and wild pitch each led to a Midwest score and a 2-0 lead. Meanwhile Jordan Zimmerman completely stymied the home team, allowing only two singles and no runner past second.



In the seventh Zimmerman started to fatigue, putting two runners on base. Jason Grilli came out of Midwest's reliable pen and retired Trout but then Joe Mauer laid down a suicide squeeze for a run. That shook the visitors as it was followed by an error on a routine grounder, walk, double, and single as the Barbarians scored six times.

Brobbdingnag 7, Midwest 2
WP: Roark LP: Grilli

Game 2 at Brobbdingnag Bumgarner vs. Bailey

Sometimes excellent is topped by awesome. Such was game two. Bailey, a surprise starter, silenced all the doubters. He pitched six innings before leaving for the Barbarian bullpen. Five relievers continued to shut out the Mongrels through nine on four hits.

But Bumgarner did them one better – actually two better – smothering the Barbarians on two harmless singles. Scoreless through regulation, it was MadBum against the bullpen into the tenth. Two more zeroes went up, with nary a sniff of home plate by either team. In the top of the eleventh, Darwin Barney sent a Derek Holland curveball into the seats for a 1-0 lead. Bumgarner (12 Ks) handed the ball to Greg Holland who set down the Barbarians 1-2-3 in the bottom half to even the series.



MadBum

Midwest 1, Brobbdingnag 0
WP: Bumgarner LP: D. Holland S: G. Holland

Game 3 at Midwest Strasburg vs. Chen

The series shifted to Midwest, but the bats did not warm up. Strasburg threw smoke and K'd six in the first three innings but in the 4th Jones singled, moved to second on a hit and run, and scored on Victor Martinez' double. Chen didn't look as overpowering but he was more effective -- the Mongrels made the one run stand up through five.

With one out in the 6th Hanley Ramirez singled and after Davis K'd, Big Papi walked. Chen left for Grilli who again didn't get the job done. Jason Werth doubled in two and Brobbdingnag took a 2-1 lead. The relievers dominated the rest of the way leading to a 2-1 series lead.



Werth

Brobbdingnag 2, Midwest 1
WP: Roark LP: Chen S: Kimbrel

Game 4 at Midwest Chacin vs. Zimmerman

Game 4 was a chilly night game at Elm Creek Stadium. Zimmerman fanned five in the first five innings, while Chacin was in and out of trouble

over the first six, but only allowed a solo home run from Victor Martinez, giving the Mongrels a 1-0 lead going into the seventh.

Chris Davis tied the game with a solo homerun in the eighth, but Eric Hosmer replied with a shot of his own. After striking out Joe Mauer for the third time, Zimmerman left the game for closer Greg Holland, who retired Davis to seal the win for Midwest and tie the series at two wins apiece.

Game 5 at Midwest **Fernandez vs. Bumgarner**

Game five is one for the ages, pitting the two aces against each other. Both bring their "A" game: MadBum fanned eight in the first nine innings, and is able to wiggle out of a few jams, the toughest in the sixth inning when Everth Cabrera led off with a single, stole second, and went to third on a ground ball; after a free pass to Jason Werth, Chris Davis continued his futility, bouncing weakly to Hosmer at first for the third out. Fernandez, meanwhile, was great, fanning nine in 8 2/3 innings, leaving for Neal Cotts, who retired Adam Jones with a runner on second.

In the 10th, Carlos Gomez walked off Casey Janssen, stole second and then third against reliever Craig Kimbrel. After Zimmerman was hit with a pitch, the Dawgs turned to one of their favorite plays: Darwin Barney laid down the perfect suicide squeeze to win the game 1-0.

Midwest 1, Brobdignag 0
WP: Bumgarner LP: Janssen

Game 6 at Brobdignag **Santana vs. Masterson**

Pitching had largely dominated the series so far, despite the two offensive machines that faced each other.

Game 6 started the same way. It took until the home half of the fifth inning to break through: Marco Scutaro singled, and Everth Cabrera ran for him, stole second, and scored on an RBI double by Mike Trout. Shortly he stole third and scored on another Mauer squeeze.



Trout



G. Holland

The sixth, seventh, and eighth innings were dominated by bullpen pitching performances. A Michael Cuddyer double and a Jayson Werth double were the only hits for each side. End of eight, 2-0 Barbarians. In the ninth, two long fly balls and a strikeout by Adam Jones were all that Antonio Bastardo allowed saving a series-tying victory.

Brobdignag 2, Midwest 0

WP: Parnell LP: Santana S: Bastardo

Game 7 at Brobdignag **Zimmermann vs. Strasburg**

Jordan Zimmermann was the surprise Game 7 starter on short rest, and he was unequal to the task from the start. The Midwest bullpen was active in the first inning, with first Brett Cecil and then Alfredo Simon trying to stop the Brobdignag attack. By the time the dust had cleared the Barbarians held a 3-0 lead.

But while three runs had been insurmountable for much of the series, it wasn't enough today. Midwest scored two runs in the fourth off Stephen Strasburg and Antonio Bastardo in relief. They fell another run behind in the seventh inning on a home run by Manny Machado; Brobdignag had already pulled its bats in favor of its gloves. But Carlos Gomez drove in Endy Chavez in the eighth, bringing them again within one run.

With only three outs to go, Neal Cotts was on the mound to finish off Midwest; but when he walked Jimmy Rollins with two outs, Brobdignag went to Kimbrel: but with Rollins on second after a steal, he overthrew first on a ground ball, letting the tying run score.



Young

After a few scoreless frames, Brobdignag almost had ironic revenge when Ryan Zimmerman threw away a Werth grounder in the bottom of the 12th; but Cabrera was thrown out on a hit and run. Bruce Chen almost escaped, forcing the game to the next inning – but he hung a breaking ball to defensive replacement Chris Young, who hit a walk off homer to give Brobdignag its fifth World Series title.

Brobdignag 5, Midwest 4
WP: Kimbrel LP: Chen

Welcome Back

The return of *Eric Sheffler* (who offers a humorous commentary elsewhere in this publication) is cause for celebration, though it is coupled with the departure of Ray Murphy and Jon Brinkmann from among our ranks. But life is change; even as we celebrate the continuity of TBL, it must be noted that this is not the same league that it was when Mr. Sheffler was last with us. Still, there is much that remains constant. Pitchers still pitch, batters still hit, and the draft brings new life to teams . . . assuming the picks haven't been all traded to Joe Auletta. (So that hasn't changed either since Eric was last with us.)



And speaking of things that don't change, the former Portland club, now *The Statesmen* (Mk. II), is locked and loaded and ready for the long season ahead. They've got a solid pitching staff and a very talented lineup that makes them the top pick to take the Aaron Division crown. There are more dominant teams here in the NC, but they can stay on the field with anyone and should make some noise in the playoffs.

So, too, should the tag-team duo of *Robert Jordan* and *Steve Stein*, down the road in *Northboro*. The *Phoenix* have once again risen from the ashes of rebuild and have both a pitching staff and a lineup that will make their time as a doormat a distant memory. Having the first draft pick is sweet when you can go and contend with it.



2014 Aaron Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Maracaibo*	103	59	.636	—
Portland†	97	65	.599	6
Kansas	77	85	.475	26
Northboro	47	115	.290	56

* Lost to Midwest in NC championship.

† Lost to Midwest in conference semi-final.

Meanwhile, the *Maracaibo Rumrunners* have done some retooling of their own after a very surprising 103-win campaign that took them to TBL's final four. *Walter Hunt*'s crew have some

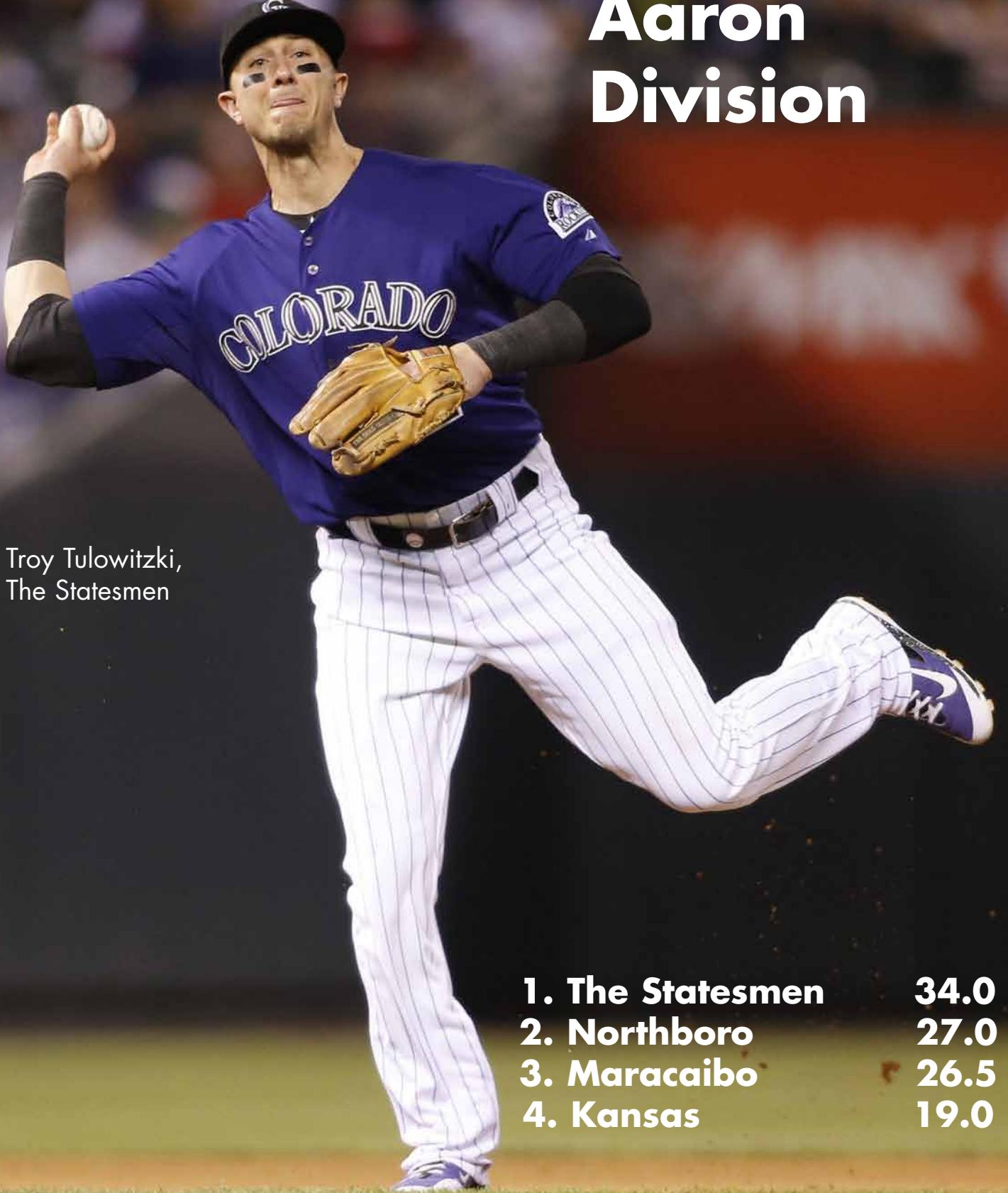


talent – even some young talent, which is impressive for a team that has spent most of its career among the contenders, and has never lost 100 games. They probably don't have enough to get it done this year, but he – and this publication – and other pundits have heard that line before.

That leaves the *Kansas Coyotes*, *Bill Schwartz'* club. Injuries have interrupted their coalescence into a perennial contender, usually striking the arm of a promising pitcher. The club has had some excellent drafts, and is gradually getting younger and more talented. There has to be a point at which it all comes together, but in TBL it often comes down to the willingness of a manager to go "all in" and trade out the future for a shot at a ring. It won't be this year, but this might have to be the Rubicon Mr. Schwartz will have to cross to get to the Series.



Aaron Division



- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1. The Statesmen | 34.0 |
| 2. Northboro | 27.0 |
| 3. Maracaibo | 26.5 |
| 4. Kansas | 19.0 |

2014 portland POSSUM in review



It was a final exit that left something to be desired.

2014 in Review

Final Record: 97-65 (2nd, Aaron)

In 2014, the header text read: "Stop us if you've heard this before." We could just leave that there to describe the 2014 campaign for the Portland Possum, their last in TBL. The team excelled on both sides: it had one of the best pitching staffs in the league, and was second in home runs, first in walks and doubles, scoring 818 runs. But they also struck out 1,521 times (most in TBL), and finished six games behind surging Maracaibo, falling to the same team that beat the Rumrunners on its way to the World Series.

Statistically, it was a fine season – but in terms of results, it was a final exit that left something to be desired.

What went right?

There were some impressive seasons for Possum hitters. Daniel Murphy hit .304 to lead the team, stealing 12 of 12 bases (out of 31 that Portland swiped all year). Carlos Gonzalez was the best all around, hitting 27 homers with a .291 average. Joey Votto hit 19 HR, 36 doubles and walked 113 times; Troy Tulowitzki hit 30 in 126 games along with 36 doubles, and David Wright hit 25 in 112 games.

On the mound, all five of the starters recorded double digit wins, led by ace Adam Wainwright (17-9, 3.64, 211 Ks). Rookie Luis Avilan saved 41 games with a 1.38 ERA; Joaquin Benoit's was even lower (1.28), and the deep bullpen recorded 25 of the 97 Possum wins, led by Tanner Scheppers (who won 8). Overall the staff put up an impressive 3.31 ERA, allowing only 133 HR all season.



CarGo: All around

What went wrong?

Obviously, not getting far in the playoffs was the biggest failure. But it's clear that the club didn't perform as well as the cards – or computer data files – would have indicated. One clear problem was strikeouts. Eight players struck out more than 100 times, led by Votto (198), Mike Napoli (190) and Justin Upton (181). They walked a lot, but for 1445 hits and 613 walks, it seems as if the number of actual scored runs should have been

higher. In terms of batting average, OBP and slugging, the club was more or less in the middle of the pack. We've blamed the computer game for years for the lack of good outcomes; we'll see if new management can do better on the boards.

3 Things

1. *Continuity.* Inheriting a club like Portland means that the new guy

is already a contender; still, there is always the tendency to remake the club in one's own image. Mr. Sheffler has been here before, so there's less pressure to do that; no major piece was moved.

2. *The need for speed.* Adding talent like Billy Hamilton addresses one of the key deficiencies of the club – no motion offense. This will be more and more an issue as the roster ages, and this is a forward-looking move.

3. *Patience.* Injuries are a fact of life. Tulowitzki, Wright, Wieters . . . the solution, if you're not taking a crowbar to the club, is to wait and see.

the STATESMEN

Eric Sheffler (12th year / 1st year at this location)

Can Mr. Sheffler guide to the team to a World Series, something not even Mr. Murphy has done since 2006?



2014 saw the end of an era as Ray Murphy and Jon Brinkmann, with a combined 40 years of TBL experience, bowed to real life pressure and left the league. Their final Portland Possum team was a powerhouse. They took eventual Conference Champion Midwest to seven games in the semi-final round before succumbing. The league will miss their knowledge, class and humility.

For 2015, the team has a new owner in Mr. Sheffler, who last graced the league in 1995, and a new location in The. Some things haven't changed, though: this team is once again loaded for a long and vicious assault on the league. The Statesmen can't miss the playoffs; the question is can Mr. Sheffler guide to the team to a World Series, something not even Mr. Murphy has done since 2006?

Pitching: Should dominate.

14.0

A strong rotation is backed up by a loaded bullpen. By the *Annual* ratings, it's not the best pitching staff in the league (Munich was rated a shade better), but over the course of the season, this staff should dominate, especially against the weaker offenses out there.

ROTATION. The Statesmen have two nearly identical aces: Adam Wainwright (Grade 14 C+24 HR+36) and Carlos Carrasco (Grade 14 C+23 HR+34). They combine for 54 starts. The righty-lefty combo that follows — Lance Lynn (Grade 12 C-21 HR+26) and Gio Gonzalez (Grade 11 C-24 HR+25) — add 60 more solid starts.

The final 48 starts are bit more dubious. Yovanni Gallardo (Grade 8) makes 31, Matt Cain (Grade 9 HR-24) makes 15, and rookie Rafael Montero

SNT: **Billy Hamilton**

What do you add to a team that seems to have everything? A new wrinkle. Rookie OF Billy Hamilton adds speed in spades.



gets two in November. On another team, those 48 starts might be a problem, but on this team, it's merely a nuisance, because the team will simply call on its ...

BULLPEN. While some teams struggle to find a closer, it's because the Statesmen have five closer grades in the bullpen. The real closer is Joaquin Benoit (Grade 25* HR+26). He's set up ably by Joseph "The Book of Mormon" Smith (Grade 20* C+33 HR+32).



That means that Huston Street (Grade 20* C+25 HR+22), lefty

Benoit: Real closer

Turnover Rate: **31%**

Arrived: Tony Cruz, Nathan Eovaldi, Billy Hamilton, Tommy Layne, Rafael Montero, David Peralta, Zach Putnam, Chase Whitley.

Departed: Chris Bassitt, Danny Farquhar, Ernesto Frieri, Jonny Gomes, Don Kelly, Chris Nelson, Bud Norris, Yohan Pino, Alex Rodriguez, Tanner Scheppers, Jonny Venters.



the STATESMEN

Tom Layne (Grade 19* C-32 HR+62), and Zach Putnam (Grade 18* C-26 HR+44) are *middle relievers!* Ryan Cook (Grade 16* C-43 HR+31) and lefty Jeremy Affeldt (Grade 13* C+21 HR+55) round out the functional pen, a total of 367.3 innings. More would be better, since they'll work hard in those lower 48 starts, but this bullpen is a weapon.

Offense: 12.0 Some of everything.

Let's start with what has to be the best card in the set: Troy Tulowitzki (1-1-6-6, 12 hits 5 walks+22, L+11 R-5). Unfortunately, he's limited to 91 games. Devin Mesoraco (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L+3) and Justin Upton (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+4 R-3) seem just *pretty good* in comparison. In a season where there is less power across the board, this is a great advantage.

This team can do some of everything. Rookie David Peralta (3-5-5, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-13 R+2) and Matt Wieters (1-5-6, 12 hits, 2 walks) will hit when they play. Khris Davis (1-5-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) adds power to the lineup, if not much else. SNT Billy Hamilton (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, B28 for 79 attempts) adds speed, if not much else.

There are three solid on-base guys: Joey Votto (3 0s, 9 hits, 6 walks+22, L+4 R-3), Mike Napoli (1-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks, L+6 R-4), and Ricky Weeks (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, R-3). And there are three solid line-drive hitters: Dan Murphy (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-4, E28 for 18 attempts), Adeiny Hechavarria (2 0s, 11 hits, a walk), and



Khris Davis: Adds power.

David Wright (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+10 R-4). And then there's Darin Ruf (4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42+22, L+8 R-13), who only plays against left-handers.

There are several big batting shifts against right-handed pitchers, including Tulo's R-5, but when the dice are rolling, it may not matter. This team will score runs in bunches to support a darn good pitching staff.

Defense: 5.5 Tulo Tulo Tulo.

Tulowitzki (SS9) is an exceptional two-way player when he's available. When he is not on the roster, Adelny Hechevarria (SS8) is only average. David Wright (3B4) is also a Fielding Two defender, but at the other corner, Mike Napoli and Josey Votto (1B4) are Fielding One. The big hole, again – it seems a perennial problem – is at second base, where Murphy and Weeks are both 2B6s, although Ryan Goins (2B8) can help when he's up.

Rookie Hamilton and the Uptons (Justin and Melvin, Jr.) are OF3s with superior arms. The other outfielders are average, although Ruf (OF1) is a first baseman out there.

Behind the plate, Wieters (C9, but Th-4) and Mesoraco (C8 Th-0) are solid backstops, but won't stop a running game.

Bench: 2.5 They could help.

Several key players are limited: Tulo, Wieters, Votto, and Ruf. The instructions call for Melvin, Jr., the Man Formerly Known as B. J. (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, D29 for 27 attempts) and Carlos Gonzalez 1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-5) to stay in the minors until November. They could help. Tony Cruz (C8 Th-0), when active, adds catcher games when a bat isn't needed, and Goins (3-6, 8 hits, a walk, L-6), as mentioned, can play late-

inning defense as a 2B8.

There's no obvious pinch-hitting toy, though there are extra games among the starters and only catchers and Tulowitzki are excluded from use. This is not a top-flight bench (particularly when compared to last year), but it can do some things.

Stop us if you've heard *this* before.

1st

Predicting a pennant for Portland has always been easy. Murphy, and then Murphy and Brinkmann, were smart and detail-oriented; they loved building top notch bullpens, drafted great starters, and had found a way to bulk up a versatile lineup, leading to four straight Aaron Division pennants since the crater period of 2007-2009.

We don't expect this to change in 2015. This team is not as dominant as Melrose, Munich or Knoxville, but it's still dominant; there is no club in the Aaron Division to match it. Unlike last year, Maracaibo should not be able to catch them; The Statesmen should run away with the division title. This is a playoff-bound team.

But it's not a team without weaknesses. How Mr. Sheffler adjusts the lineup and uses the bullpen will determine how deep the team goes in the post-season, but he has a lot to work with on both counts. There's even a draft to help out, if the Statesmen want to improve anything down the stretch. (Second base comes to mind, in fact.) Welcome back to TBL, Mr. Sheffler!



Old friend/new friend Eric Sheffler takes over the former Possums. They're stacked with pitching, with almost 200 innings of Grade 20+ relief and a superb offense. Great welcome home present!



Melvin Upton, Jr: No more "BJ".



the statesmen: THE FORMULA



PORTLAND POSSUM, 2006

This franchise played in Portland for 21 years, and while it was very successful, they only won one World Series (in 2006). In 2004, the team won 102 games and finished third! Still that year, they made it to Game 7 of the Conference Championship series. The team finished play in Portland with five straight seasons with 97+ wins.

The championship team slugged 205 homers, led by Manny Ramirez' 39. Reggie Sanders also hit over 30. Kenny Lofton led a meager running attack with 21 steals. They walked over 500 times, too, while hitting a respectable .265. Roger Clemens led the pitching staff with 19 wins and a 2.88 ERA, but besides a two-headed closer in Fernando Cabrera and Matt Cain, the rest of the staff was solid, but unexceptional.

THIS YEAR

The Statesmen are picking up where the Possum left off. An 100-win season would not be a surprise. Their current staff matches up well to the World Series-winning staff, and a 200-homer campaign is within reach. There is one thing the Statesmen have that the Possum didn't: Billy Hamilton. He may not win games by himself, but he's an offensive weapon comparable to Lofton (although, to be fair, Lofton hit .348 with a .406 OBP, numbers Hamilton won't approach.)

TQ: 34.0



2014 northboro PHOENIX in review

Last year I said “we would be bad.” Boy, was I right.

by Steve Stein



2014 in Review

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

Last year I said “we would be bad”. Boy, was I right. In 2013 we gave up 893 runs. Last year, almost 100 more – 991. We lost 115 games – good for 16th on the TBL all-time futility list.

Roy Halladay pitched his last innings for the Phoenix, 2-8 9.04 ERA, but ends his career with 175 wins in 14 years with the franchise. His number will be retired in a ceremony some time this summer.

What went right?

Corey Dickerson had 10 triples in limited playing time. Chris Ianetta put together a very nice .244/.357/.419 slash line. Brandon Belt had 41 doubles. We won a game on Leury Garcia pinch running, stealing second, stealing third and scoring on a walk-off sac fly. That's about it!

What went wrong?

When you're 47-115, the answer is certainly “Everything!” The most painful event happened before we played the first game. Our #1 pick Jurickson Profar was injured in real life. He won't return to TBL play until 2017.

During the season, it was the pitching that hurt us the most. We gave up 991 runs. Our starters were 6-10, 7-13, 3-17, 5-16, 8-19, 7-11, the last two with ERAs over 6. If we took a lead into the late innings, we were not safe – our closer lost 8



Belt: 41 doubles

games, and recorded only 17 saves. That hardly provided confidence for the starters.

The offense was thin as well – team average .229, team OBP under .300, scoring only 604 runs.

It made us among the most futile teams in the league (though, surprisingly, not the most futile, but that's not something to be especially proud of.)

3 Things

1. *Career years and kind drafts.* A lot of guys did very well last year – Kluber, Richards, Dickerson, Cabrera, Smith, Calhoun, even a career year from McKenry. The draft was very kind to us. We won't be as bad as we thought we were going to be.

2. *The target is still 2017.* Until then, we will endure fill-ins in the infield, something of a cobbled-together bullpen, weakness at the end of the rotation. Patience wins this race.

3. *Youth is the key.* We're still very young, and waiting for some prospects to show their true faces (Zunino, Carter). We're enduring injuries in the pitching staff and in the middle infield. We will tough it out.

northboro PHOENIX

Bob Jordan (16th year) / Steve Stein (13th year)

Northboro has a chance to make the playoffs. The question is: will they grab that ring?



The boys of Northboro suffered last year. Many times. In fact, they lost an astounding 115 times to win the race to the bottom (played by seven teams last year). Actually, they tied for futility with the Fair Oaks (now Warrenton) Giants, but they won the coin toss to officially finish last and collect the prize (Jose Abreu).

Maybe now they have some hope for a brighter future. Maybe now they can think about competing, even in a tough division and an even tougher conference. For the first time since 2012, a team from Northboro has a chance to make the playoffs. The question is: will they grab that ring?

Pitching: Two solid aces. Plus.

3.0

What a difference a year makes. A lot of the names are the same, but someone must have slipped something into the water supply ... from the superhero haven of Melrose. Almost all of these guys, with a few notable exceptions, have bulked up and been transformed overnight. We hope they can avoid the drug-testing czar, at least until the season's over.

ROTATION. This team has two solid aces: Garrett Richard (Grade 15 HR+51) and Corey Kluber (Grade



Kluber: Solid, surprising ace

13 C+25 HR+31 – go on, tell us you saw *that* coming). Plus the team's starting pitching strength doesn't end there. Cory Rasmus (Grade 20) adds six starts, Drew Pomeranz (Grade 17 C-32) throws in two, and Dylan Axelrod (Grade 14 C+33 HR-62, now gone) adds four April starts. That totals 72 starts of Grade 13 or better. That's freaking impressive.

SNT: Jose Abreu



Adding Abreu to the lineup is like adding a tank to Sherman's march to Atlanta. They'll still get there, only faster.

The next 64 starts are taken by able Ian Kennedy (Grade 9) and rookie Jake "Eggs" Odorizzi (Grade 9 C-21). Lefty Chris Capuano (Grade 7) takes the hill 12 times, and Erasmo Ramirez (Grade 4 C-33 HR-26) gets 14 learning experiences. Still, given the top end, this is an impressive rotation, even in a playoff series.

BULLPEN. The team is going with a two-headed closer: righty Alex Wilson (Grade 18* C+31) and lefty Drew Pomeranz (Grade 17* for 16.7 innings before he loses the asterisk and the +5 bonus). Only one will be active at a time. That's about 83 innings, depending on how many Pomeranz uses in his two starts.

Setting them up are Aaron Barrett (Grade 14* C-44 HR+53), Rasmus (Grade 14*), and Tommy Kahnle (Grade 12* C-42). Their 146+ innings certainly help.

Things drop off rapidly after that; Josh Fields (Grade 7* HR+45), Addison Reed (Grade 7* C+24 HR-36), Capuano (Grade 5*), Matthew Stites (Grade 4* C-42

Turnover Rate: 43%

Arrived: Jose Abreu, Aaron Barrett, Derek Dietrich, Josh Fields, Ernesto Frieri, Tommy Kahnle, Tommy LaStella, Jake Odorizzi, Drew Pomeranz, Matt Stites, Steve Tolleson.

Departed: Dylan Axelrod, Scott Elbert, Jeff Francoeur, Roy Halladay, Jeremy Hefner, Maicer Izturis, Ryan Mattheus, Alex Sanabia, Johan Santana, Burch Smith.



northboro PHOENIX



Carter: Hits his share

can play this position (where are you, Mr. Profar?). Instead, they will roll out Tommy La Stella (6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L+7 R-3), Steve Tolleson (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+7 R-17), Kevin Frandsen (2 0s, 10 hits, a walk+42, R-3), and waiver wire pickup Derek Dietrich (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+2 42s, L-11).

The entire lineup has little speed. Dickerson leads the team in attempts, but he's a C21. Leury Garcia (0, 7 hits, a walk, B35 for 12 attempts) is the designated pinch-runner due to his missing bat. Plus, there are

HR-33), and waiver acquisition Ernesto Frieri (Grade 1* HR-56) may see more work than is desirable. The total number of innings is sufficient, given the rotation, but the distribution of grades isn't.

Offense: 11.5 Some firepower.

This team has some power, starting with "El Canon:" Jose Abreu (1-1-6-6, 12 hits, 2 walks+42, L+5 R-3). Compared to him, Chris Carter (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks L+3 R-3) looks like pale imitation, but both will hit their share of homers. Then there's the outfielders, all with four power numbers: Corey Dickerson (1-4-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L-10), Melky Cabrera (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-3), Kole Calhoun (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-4), and Seth Smith (4 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks). That's some firepower.

Mike McKenry (1-5-6, 11 hits, 4 walks+22) and Brandon Belt (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks) also contribute to the onslaught. J.J. Hardy (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-4), Chris Iannetta (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks+42, L+3 R-4), and Cody Asche (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) will all get their chances, too.

That leaves second base to a trio of underachievers — this team could really use a top-notch prospect who

issues with shifts. All the catchers and most of the second basemen, for example, can't hit righties. Half of the outfield has trouble against lefties.

Defense: Evens out to average.

4.5

J. J. Hardy (SS9) gets to almost everything at short, which is a big boost. He's steady enough that we were even able to reuse a picture from last year.



Hardy: We used this picture last year.

Iannetta (C9, but Th-1) fields with grace, but won't stop a running game. Abreu and Belt (1B4s) are above average. That's all the good news.

All the second basemen are 2B7s or worse. McKenry is average, with an awful arm (C7 Th-3), and Asche (3B3) is a hole at the hot corner. Granted, Garcia (3B4) could play if he doesn't have to bat, and Mike Zunino (C8 Th+1) can come in for late-inning defense.

The entire outfield (Dickerson, Smith, Cabrera and Calhoun) is Fielding Two (OF2s) with unremarkable arms (30-32). Chris Carter is an OF1, but doesn't need to get out there.

It all kind of evens out to average.

Bench: Little you'd want to use.

2.5

A team on the rise has the advantage of being able to swap players in and out of the lineup, and that's the strength of the bench — some of the regulars are available on the days they don't start.



Adding Jose Abreu to an already good offense should guarantee that Bob and Steve won't finish last in the league again, but having only 136 innings of double digit relief (only 28 of closer grade), will make it a difficult task.

Beyond that, there's little extra usage of stuff you'd want to use, besides Garcia's extraordinary legs as a pinch-runner. Still, don't look for natural platoons; there aren't any. Given the roster limit (only 25?), some guys just won't be available when Northboro needs them.



Profar: Used this picture last year too

2nd

With its power, Northboro will win a good share of its games when the good starters pitch. They could even win better than half of the games started by the Grade 9s. The last 26 starts will be dicey.

The bullpen's not as strong as it needs to be, so they'll have to hope the sluggers connect often enough to keep them in the game until the end. It will be an interesting, and fun, year. That should be a welcome change of pace in Northboro, after some down seasons.

There's no question that when a team comes together, especially after a deep rebuild, that some of the credit goes to scouting, careful trading, and solid management of resources. But sometimes it's just a matter of luck. Some of it is good: Corey Kluber suddenly went from a good arm to a Cy Young winner. Chris Carter went to a new team and was able to belt almost 40 home runs. Some of it is bad: we are able to feature the same picture of Jurickson Profar as we used last year (yay us), because there are no pictures of Jurickson Profar from 2014. There won't be any from 2015, either. Does that mean it was a bad pick? Wise men that we are in TBL – including, but not limited to, the *Annual* staff – say that it was a good pick . . . but it's going to take a while for it to pan out. He could barely qualify as a driver when he was picked – now he barely qualifies to drink. His time will come. In the meanwhile, there'll be a good team when he rejoins it.



northboro: THE FORMULA



AMHERST AVENGERS, 1989-1991

The first Melrose Avengers (not to be confused with the current Melrose franchise, also run by Mark Freedman) went first to worst to first from 1999 to 2001. But Greg Hamburg's Amherst Avengers went to the World Series twice in three years in 1989 to 1991, winning 299 games and one championship.

Those teams were dominated by pitchers like Greg Maddux (19-12 in 1990) and Joe Magrane (44 wins in 3 years). Zane Smith won 20 in 1991, and Rob Dibble saved 72 games in two years. The offense was powered by Fred McGriff, but they stole an incredible 430 bases in that span, led by Roberto Alomar and Luis Polonia ("lose a step and he'll be out of baseball.")

In those days, this franchise was stocked with top flight everyday players. Maddux was an outlier: when the Sensei went to Mr. Hamburg to trade for a starting pitcher during that time, he was unable to pry Joe Magrane loose and "settled" for Greg Maddux, who was dominant for a decade plus.

THIS YEAR

The 2015 Northboro team can't match that Amherst team. Few could. Northboro has McGriff-like power, and they might even match up well against a Maddox or Magrane, at least on a good day. But they have nowhere near the speed of those Amherst teams, and they don't anyone like Rob Dibble, which is something we can't believe we just wrote.

TQ: 27.0



2014 maracaibo RUMRUNNERS in review



A good way to send off a future Hall of Famer.

by Walter Hunt

2014 in Review

Final Record: 103-59 (1st, Aaron)

This is not how it usually goes, and it's not how Maracaibo management diagrammed it. During the offseason there were moves - add Melancon to the bullpen, since Mariano wasn't going to be the Man there anymore; draft Byrd and a starter . . . and then there was the last-minute trade that brought Casilla, Jay and Peña to fill in some obvious holes. But there were better teams in the conference and a better team in the division. This was going to be fun, but it wasn't going to be productive.

Then the club had a fast start and held together, even without a Grade 18* to close or a Grade 13 to start. There was no SS9 either. They struck out (a lot). They walked a lot of opposing batters and didn't do much walking themselves. They didn't hit a lot of home runs, but did hit a fair number of doubles, especially Ian Desmond, who set the TBL record with 73. None of the starters were that impressive, but the bullpen was a Maracaibo one.

In the playoffs, where things usually don't go well, they took four of five from ancient rival Zion. The dream season ended before they had a chance to get a return match against Brobdingnag. It might have been a good series. But at least it was a good season – a pennant and some success, a good way to send off a future Hall of Famer.

What went right?

The bullpen was magnificent. Old Man Rivera didn't manage a save but went 4-0, 0.74, 55 Ks in 41 innings; Melancon went 6-1, 1.26, 35 saves; Frasor, Wilson, Tazawa, Cishek and Casilla went

25-13, all with sub-3.00 ERAs. John Lackey led all starters with a 12-6, 3.48 mark.

Ian Desmond's 73 doubles, 19 HR and .318 BA made him an offensive machine. Marlon Byrd (17 HR, 44 doubles, .284) was a nice contribution, and Mitch Moreland was the team leader with 21 HR.

What went wrong?



Desmond: Records

The best motion offense will have trouble overcoming 1,369 strikeouts, 5th in TBL. There was lots of team speed, but the steal was underused: Desmond and Suzuki had 16 each to lead the club. Slugging .412 with a .315 OBP should not have translated to 799 runs and 103 wins, but somehow it did. Maybe it was the 76 HBP - four players had 10 or more.

3 Things

1. *Trust in opportunity.* The deal that brought a valuable outfielder (Jay), a key part of a deep pen (Casilla) and a catcher-first baseman (Peña) was not what was sought, but it was all needed.

2. *Put the cards out; let them play.* A team with 7 players over 100 strikeouts and no one over 50 walks should not generate enough offense to win, no matter how many doubles you hit – but it did. Sometimes you have to go with what you have, and sometimes it works out.

3. *Patience.* Straily, Rutledge and Moreland have not had MVP career arcs. On the other hand, Marte, Perez and Desmond have done pretty well. One season doesn't decide the entire future. That's what being in the league 30 years will teach.

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

Walter Hunt (29th year); Hall of Famer

This is not going to be the first Rumrunner team to lose 100 games.



The 2014 Rumrunners surprised the *Annual*, and the league, by capturing the Aaron Division crown with 103 victories. The team then dispensed with its nemesis, the Elders of Zion, in five games. They got to within two wins of the World Series, which is a heck of lot closer than pre-season prognosticators figured.

In 2015, the team has had to retool a bit — not a lot, which would be un-Rumrunner-like — and may or may not make the playoffs. There are several new faces, while some old faces, notably long-time closer Mariano Rivera, have departed. One thing is certain: this is not going to be the first Rumrunner team to lose 100 games.

Pitching: Like Australia.

11.0

The top end of the pitching staff is very good. The bottom end isn't that bad. The problem is that the middle 80 percent, kind of like the continent of Australia, is just, well, *there*. Not good, not bad, liable to pitch respectably or terribly any given day. In fact, how the team does will be traced directly to this middle bulk of pitchers.



Hamels: Established

ROTATION. The Rumrunners have an established ace in Cole Hamels (Grade 13 HR+23). A lefty with decent command, he could win every time out.

He may have to. He's followed by a trio of Grade 8s: veteran Aaron Harang (HR+22), SNT Drew Hutchison, and newly arrived Ubaldo Jimenez (C-62). Combined with Hamels' 30 starts, these three bring the total to 117.

John Lackey (Grade 7 C+22) is next, and he's not all that bad, and he probably only needs to get into the fifth inning. The final 14 starts are taken by Joe Kelly

SNT: Drew Hutchison

A young starting pitcher who has overcome past injury to reclaim his dominance, Hutchison gives Maracaibo exactly what it needs.



Turnover Rate: 23%

Arrived: Clint Barmes, Christian Bethancourt, Danny Farquhar, Drew Hutchison, Ubaldo Jimenez, Junior Lake, Mike Morse, Jon Singleton.

Departed: Erik Bedard, Felix Doubront, Pedro Florimon, Jon Jay, Brayan Peña, Scott Rice, Mariano Rivera, Mark Trumbo.

(Grade 9 C-41), who actually could have had 17. Maybe Mr. Hunt feels indebted to Lackey, who posted a decent 3.48 ERA last season. At least Colby Lewis (Grade 1 C+21 HR-22) can spend the year learning something new.

BULLPEN. Last year's closer Mark Melancon (Grade 16* C+36 HR+46) and set-up reliever Santiago Casilla (Grade 21* HR+32) have changed places. Together, they offer more than 129 high-quality innings. To get to the late-inning tandem, Maracaibo uses three Grade 14* righties: Danny Farquhar (HR+23), Yoervis Medina (C-42 HR+35), and ageless Jason Frasor (C-21 HR+26). They bring the total to almost 305 innings. That's impressive.

The bottom end of the pen isn't bad. Righties Junichi Tazawa (Grade 12*) and Steve Cishek (Grade 11* HR+36) add more than 128 innings, while Justin Wilson (Grade 10* C-41 HR+24) is the lone lefty in the



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS



Being highly competitive while still adding young talent like Bethancourt and Singleton is a neat trick, but then again, Walter is one smart cookie.

bullpen with 60 more innings. All told, there is nearly 500 innings. The bullpen definitely compensates for a less-than-stellar rotation, and they'll be fun to manage.

Offense: 8.5 No monster.

The Rumrunners, reconfigured for 2015, can boast several decent cards, but no monster. Starling Marte (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+42, C28 for 41 attempts) can do everything, while Lorenzo Cain (3 0s, 11 hits, R-3, D33 for 33 attempts) and Ichiro Suzuki (2 0s, 11 hits, L+6 R-3, E32 for 18 attempts) can hit and can run.

The real power on the team belongs to Mike Morse (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22), Ian Desmond (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, D32 for 29 attempts), and Marlon Byrd (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22). Two things you should have noticed already: this team can (and will) run, and there are not many bad batting shifts, which will help the team create runs.

Salvador Perez (3 0s, 10 hits, a walk, L-4), Brandon Phillips (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-4), and Josh Rutledge (3-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4 R-3) all have a 7 on 44. That leaves David Freese (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+8 R-4), Emilio Bonifacio (6-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+13 R-6, C30 with 34 attempts), Christian Bethancourt (6, 10 hits, a walk+22, L+9 R-6), and Mitch Moreland (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-10 R+1) as the final regular or platoon players.

The team has some power, lots and lots of speed, and some good hitting. But it does not have anyone who walks more than normal and quite a few who walk less than normal. With no big slugger (who are you, Mr. Quentin?), it's an unusual collection



Marte: Does everything

of talent. Not good, not bad, liable to hit respectably or terribly any given day.

Defense: 5.0 Four standouts.

Three standouts start in the outfield, as Lorenzo Cain, Starling Marte, and Ichiro Suzuki are all OF3s with plus arms. Byrd, when he has to play out there, is average. Behind the plate, Perez (C9 Th+2) is another standout, while backup Bethancourt (C7 Th-0) is average. Phillips (2B8) can still pick it at the keystone, but Bonifacio (2B7) is, you guessed it, average, as is Desmond (SS8). Morse and Moreland (1B3s) are also average, but at the hot corner, Freese and Rutledge (3B3s) are both competing for the Tin Glove Award.



Perez: Repeat picture

The standouts – particularly the outfield and behind the plate – are an asset on the team, though the club would likely trade a glove or two for a few more power numbers.

Bench: 2.0 Covering all the positions.

There's enough usage for the platoons to help, and Clint Barmes (6-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) can help while covering all the infield positions. It's a useful card, and Mr. Hunt knows how to use his bench.

There are extra games for the outfield and third base, though the team lacks a key pinch hitter for crucial situations and there may be many innings with too many strikeouts and not enough hits.

Poor Freddy "SS9" Galvis, Cameron Maybin, and waiver wire pickup Junior Lake will spend their time in the minors. Still, a little roster flexibility can help.

3rd

When is the last time the Annual picked Maracaibo to finish third? They are within the margin of error for second place (0.5 points), and they may even challenge for a Wild Card berth, given their bullpen strength and speed game.

They should not challenge The Statesmen for the division crown, but you know what? We said that last year and look what they did. Mr. Hunt will get the most out of this crew.

Maracaibo Rumrunners: Transition

One of the hallmarks of the Rumrunner club is the ability to transform without completely rebuilding – it's one of the only two franchises in TBL to never lose 100 games in a season (the club record is 93, achieved three years ago). Consider how much the club has changed between 2009 and the present day:

2009

C: Jorge Posada
Chris Coste
1B: Casey Kotchman
2B: Orlando Hudson
3B: Chipper Jones
SS: Orlando Cabrera
OF: Ichiro Suzuki
Carlos Quentin
Reed Johnson
DH: Carlos Delgado

SP: Cole Hamels
John Lackey
Joe Blanton
Todd Wellemeyer
Cha-Seung Baek
Closer: Mariano Rivera
Relievers: Chad Durbin
Jose Arredondo
Joe Smith
Jensen Lewis

Present

Salvador Perez
Christian Bethancourt
Mike Morse
Brandon Phillips
David Freese
Ian Desmond
Lorenzo Cain
Starling Marte
Ichiro Suzuki
Marlon Byrd

Cole Hamels
Aaron Harang
Drew Hutchison
John Lackey
Ubaldo Jimenez
Santiago Casilla
Mark Melancon
Steve Cishek
Yoervis Medina
Danny Farquhar

During this stretch the team won 70, 90, 69, 93 and 103 games, while getting younger and without completely sacrificing any of its rookie drafts.



maracaibo: THE FORMULA



MARACAIBO RUMRUNNERS, 1986-1988

This franchise has always been in Maracaibo, although Rich Meyer ran it for its first three years. Its heyday came in 1986 to 1988, right in the midst of that transition, when it won three World Series in a row.

Mr. Meyer won the first two, and Mr. Hunt won the last. Those teams did a little of everything, although all of them hit for a relatively high average.

While their pitching seemed just good enough, George Bell, George Brett, and Tim Raines starred year after year.

The team topped 430 walks every year, with the '86 team reaching 490. They slugged 150+ homers every year, with the '88 team reaching 210. The '87 team stole 166 bases, led by Raines and Bob Dernier, who had 26 plate appearances and 31 steals.

THIS YEAR

A big difference between those teams and this year's model is the dearth of walks. The 2015 edition has speed in spades, but they won't walk nearly as much. And while this team has an ace and a strong bullpen, the rest of the supporting players aren't up to championship caliber. They'll need luck and a few more years to get there.

TQ: 26.5



2014 kansas KOYOTES in review



The old Brooklyn Dodgers have nothing on us.

by Bill Schwartz

2014 in Review

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

In 2014, the Koyotes didn't accomplish their goal of a .500 season, falling short at 77-85, but did improve greatly on 2013's 58-104. After getting off to a dismal 25-40 start, they actually played 7 games over .500 baseball the rest of the way, but still finished 26 games behind division champion Portland and 12 games out of a playoff berth.

What went right?

Hopefully Matt Harvey gave a preview of things to come once he comes back from his Tommy John surgery, as he posted a superlative 15-5, 2.44 record with 5 shutouts. Fellow grade 15 Max Scherzer added a respectable 14-11, 3.43 to the mix with 276 Ks, second in the TBL only to Clayton Kershaw. Paced by their three grade 15 starters, the Koyotes were able to post 17 ShO's, second in the TBL to Whitman's 22. Oddly, grade 5 Kevin Correia registered 4 of them among his 5 wins.

Domonic Brown led the team in HR (29), RBI (90) and SA (.470), none of which are overly impressive, but such is the state of recent Koyote teams. Steady Dustin Pedroia turned in a workmanlike year, pacing the team in BA (.269), OBA (.356), hits (171), runs (96), doubles (41) and walks (82).

What went wrong?

As expected, the 57 mediocre starts proved to be an albatross to the 68 grade 15 starts. Cor-



Harvey: Superlative

reia (Grade 5), despite a controversial 12 inning no-hitter for the ages vs. Midwest, went 5-13, 4.60 and Dallas Keuchel (Grade 3) struggled to a record of 2-11, 5.83.

Also as expected, too many mediocre at bats stifled the offense. Mike Moustakas (.200), Mark Reynolds (.198), Andres Torres (.191) and Curtis Granderson (.189) all finished below the Mendoza Line, combining for 403 games of .196 mediocrity.

3 Things

1. *Power outage.* Has there ever been a TBL team with only one player on the roster with over 3 power numbers? Lonely Yasiel Puig is it for the Koyotes in 2015 with a paltry 3.33 PN.

2. *Building up the lineup.* The Koyotes were elated again this year to see their #1 target, George Springer, drop to them at pick #10. Look for him to team with Puig, last year's #1, and add much needed power to the lineup in years to come.

3. *"Wait till next year" department (the old Brooklyn Dodgers have nothing on us):* The Koyotes are practically salivating so see what might be in 2016 with a rotation of Harvey, Gray, Scherzer, Keuchel and Shoemaker. And, in real life, it appears that all of the Koyote Tommy John victims (Harvey, Soria, Feliz, Motte) are recovered and ready to get a card in 2015. Hopefully, a base is being set for the future.

kansas KOYOTES

Bill Schwartz (8th year)

In 2015, it's more or less the same.



The *Annual* pegged the Koyotes for third place last year, and that's exactly where they landed. Matt Harvey and Max Scherzer combined for 29 victories, but no one else had more than five. You could say the club generally underperformed, but it was never going to challenge Maracaibo or Portland.

In 2015, it's more or less the same. But while Northboro has improved, Kansas has treaded water (due in part to Harvey's absence). Mr. Schwartz hasn't rushed things, content to add quality pieces to a team with lots of needs. It may be a long season facing tough opponents, but the Koyotes are slowly improving.

Pitching: Not deep enough.

7.5

Losing Matt Harvey for the year certainly hurts, but it appears that he'll be back in a Coyote uniform in 2016. That may give the team a solid five-man rotation and a reason to build up its bullpen. In the meantime, though, this staff simply is not deep enough.

ROTATION. Ace Sonny Gray (Grade 13 HR+24) certainly turned out well after being picked 17th overall in the 2014 TBL rookie draft. But the real surprise turned out to be 2013 sixth-round pick Dallas Keuchel (Grade 11 C+21 HR+33), who put it all together last season. They're joined by veteran Max Scherzer (Grade 12) and rookie Matt Shoemaker (Grade 11 C+32). That adds up to 115 excellent starts.



Gray: Turned out well



SNT: George Springer

Joining last year's SNT Yasiel Puig in a revamped outfield, Springer owns a power-speed potential that tantalizes.

Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Scott Carroll, Tyler Colvin, Zach Duke, Liam Hendriks, Enrique Hernandez, Kevin Quackenbush, Matt Shoemaker, Justin Smoak, George Springer.

Departed: Travis Blackley, Kevin Correia, Jim Johnson, Jason Marquis, Vin Mazzaro, Andres Torres, Matt Tuiasosopo, Josh Vitters, Vernon Wells.

Unfortunately for the Koyotes, they need another 47. That leaves 19 starts for Scott Carroll (Grade 4), 20 innocuous starts for Anthony Swarzak (Grade 3 HR+33), and eight innocuous starts for Liam Hendriks (Grade 2 C+25). Ugh-lee. These are 47 games the team will be lucky to win.

BULLPEN. The team has a closer, but the 9th inning isn't exactly safe. Neftali Feliz (Grade 21* C-26 HR-32) has only 31.7 innings to use those scary peripherals. Righty Kevin Quackenbush (Grade 14* HR+43) and lefty Zach Duke (Grade 13* HR+34) compose the set-up tag team, adding just 113 more innings. Will these three pitchers even have enough innings to protect late leads? Maybe, maybe not.

The middle relievers are a mix-and-match bunch. Joakim Soria (Grade 10* C+51 HR+41) leads Todd Redmond (Grade 10* HR+25) and Steve Delabar (Grade 10* C-62) as the right-handed portion. Brian



115 great starts and an adequate bullpen won't be the issue in Kansas this season. It will be the anemic offense, especially the black hole at first base.

kansas KOYOTES

Matusz (Grade 9* C+21) and David Huff (Grade 9* C-21) make up the left-handed portion. All together, they add almost 256 vital innings, especially for the lower end of the rotation. Innocuous Jason Motte (Grade 4* C-21 HR-62) helps batters pad their stats when the game's out of reach.

Offense: 7.0 Doesn't deserve much ink.

SNT George Springer (1-1-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+42) immediately becomes one of the best power cards on the team, and he's still developing. He joins Yasiel Puig (4 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, L-6, D24 for 18 attempts), Yan Gomes (1-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4 R-3), and Dustin Pedroia (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) as legitimate hitting threats.

Curtis Granderson (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22), Mike "Moose" Moustakas (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-5), and Mark Reynolds (1-0-0, 7 hits, 4 walks, L-5) have isolated power, meaning they'll get lucky occasionally. When they're not lucky, these guys will create a lot of outs.



Puig: Legitimate hitting threat

The rest of the lineup is rather unimpressive. Coco Crisp (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-5, E31 SSN for 24 attempts) and Jean Segura (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-6, D27 for 29 attempts) can at least run when they get on base. Miguel Montero (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L-8), Domonic Brown (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-6), Ramiro Pena (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks), and Justin Smoak (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+22) don't deserve much more ink than this.

Despite having some power and some speed, this lineup will struggle to sustain any rallies, so the starting pitchers will have to work that much harder to keep the team in games. It may be a long season ahead for the Koyotes. Maybe that's by design.

Defense: 4.0 A lot of average.

The pitchers get some help, if not with the team's bats, then with their gloves. Gomes (C7 Th+2) and Montero (C7 Th-0) are only average, but at least they don't hurt the team. Pedroia (2B9) and Pena (3B5), who plays against lefties, are both superb.

Moustakas (3B4) and Segura (SS8) are average, but both Reynolds and Smoak (1B4) are better. That means that the team can put up Fielding One some days – but occasionally at the cost of having the best bats in the lineup.



Pedroia: Superb

In the outfield, only Crisp (OF3) can get to everything, while only Puig (38) has a cannon.

Everyone else out there is average. No weaknesses, a few strengths, and a lot of average.

Bench: 1.5
A few “lost souls.”

There's no call for any use of the bench. No pinch-hitting. No pinch-running. No defensive replacements. This might change as the season goes on, but it will depend on usage. Enrique Hernandez (3-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) at least gets a mention in the instructions. Chris Colabello (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-4) and waiver wire acquisition Tyler Colvin (4 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) do not. Perhaps Colvin will get to use his 57 games at some point in the season. These “lost souls” on the bench might help the team if used properly.

4th

Yes, this is a bad team, and the rest of the Aaron Division will beat up on them pretty regularly. The good starting pitching, which looked like a strength, will wilt if they have to go seven full innings every time out.

The bullpen won't be much help, and the hitting won't score many runs. While Mr. Schwartz has put some key pieces in place, the team needs several hitters (Moustakas, Segura, Smoak, and Brown, for example) to blossom all at once. It could happen, but the Magic Eight Ball at the *Annual* says, “Very doubtful.”



This is really how we predict things.



kansas:
THE FORMULA



MAHOPAC STOGIES 1998-2001

From 1998–2001, the Stogies won 90+ games every year, but it was several years later, in 2004, that the team made its first World Series appearance. The fact that it got beat by the Rochester Express juggernaut is beside the point. That team went 107–55 by doing a lot of things right.

They slugged 209 homers, with three players topping 30: Chipper Jones, Jorge Posada, and Jeff Bagwell. They walked over 700 times, with Bagwell and Brad Wilkerson leading the team with over 90 each. Edgar Renteria stole 37 bases, and the team scored over 900 runs. On the mound, six different pitchers had double-digit wins, including Pedro Martinez' 16. David Riske saved 39, and the team recorded a low 3.14 ERA.

THIS YEAR

The 2015 Kansas Coyotes will not likely have a 30-homer season or a 16-game winner. While they have the makings of an exceptional starting staff once Harvey rejoins the team, the offense has a way to go to match the Stogies' all-around performance. Puig, Springer, Pedroia Gomes, and Segura provide a core, but it's still a small core.

TQ: 19.0



Pay Per View

As stated many times before, the Mantle Division is the home of four veteran managers: Paul Montague, Mark Freedman, Rich Meyer and Clay Beard. These guys have been through many TBL seasons and have sat at the World Series table many times. This year, like so frequently in the past, the Mantle will be a terrific race between these competitors. It's the sort of thing that would qualify for a full treatment on Pay Per View.



Paul Montague's Munich Marauders have come together after some years of struggle. Our beloved founder and ex-Commissioner is the Supreme Commander of

the Department of Boom and Bust; this team has everything, and should make life difficult for all comers this year.

Still, he's not going to have an easy walk to the pennant, as long as *Mark Freedman* has something to say about it. The *Melrose Avengers* have a potent lineup and a strong pitching staff, placing them in TBL's elite this year. Some of the future has been traded off – as usual – to bulk up the roster, but as always the Avengers rely on long term investments for their contenders. There'll be a crash someday, but this will be a fun ride this season.



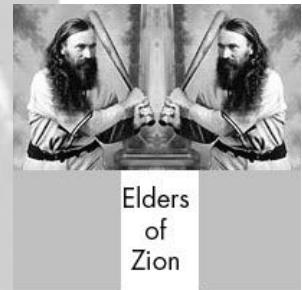
2014 Mantle Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Zion*	110	52	.679	—
Hudson†	89	73	.549	21
Munich	84	78	.519	26
Melrose	69	93	.426	41

* Lost to Maracaibo in NC semi-final.

† Lost to Portland in Wild Card playoff.

A team unaccustomed to taking a back seat to anyone will have to do just that this year. *Rich Meyer's Elders of Zion* won 110 games last year and fell – surprisingly – to the Maracaibo club they had frustrated many times in the past. That doesn't qualify as success down below Lake Ingolstadt.



But there are some issues that need to be addressed on the club this year. In the meanwhile, there's no sense in trying to bail out the ocean with a spoon – i.e., trying to compete with the two titans up above them in the standings.

To be honest, *Clay Beard's Hudson Generals* aren't really that bad a team. They have some hitters in the lineup and a decent bullpen, but the rotation is problematic and there is some serious work to be done in the near future. Mr. Beard has a considerable amount of experience doing rebuilds, but sooner or later they will return to the winner's circle. The fans demand it.

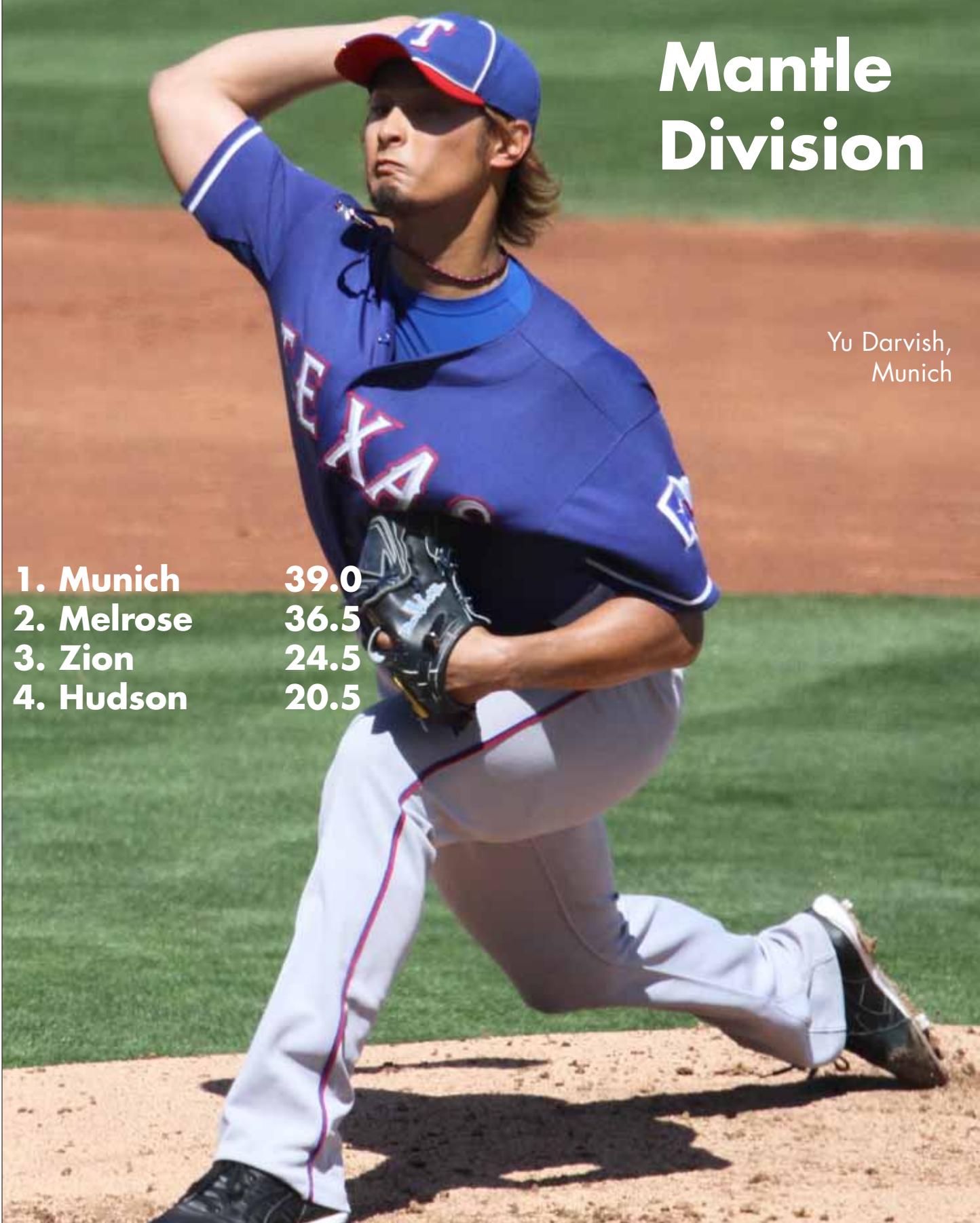


Mantle Division

Yu Darvish,
Munich

1. Munich
2. Melrose
3. Zion
4. Hudson

39.0
36.5
24.5
20.5



2014 munich MARAUDERS in review



Unlike previous off-seasons, GM Willie Mays didn't just sit on youngsters.

by Paul Montague

2014 in Review

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

With very similar offense and pitching between the 2013 and 2014 Marauders, forecasts were dim following the disappointing 100-loss season in '13. But, relaxed expectations (or just random variation) produced vastly different results – Munich's first winning season in several years.

What went right?

Pitching. After several years of ERAs north of 4.40, 2014 saw the Marauder staff improve by almost a full run to a 3.59 mark. Three starters won 11 games each, and ace Chris Sale went 16-8. Yu Darvish struck out 262 in 219 2/3 IP, with eight 10+K starts. The bullpen was solid to exceptional. The pitching staff was clearly the difference-maker in the club finishing over .500.

What went wrong?

Wilting under pressure. When the Marauders came into September leading the wild-card race, team management opened the purse-strings to trade for a couple of veterans to help down the stretch – Adam Dunn and J.J. Putz. Unfortunately, the rest of the roster was young and not used to the heat of a pennant race. Munich fell back to a 7-12 September and 9-13 October, while Hudson roared past to reach the playoffs.

3 Things

1. *Goodbye to Buster.* To everyone's surprise, especially Buster Posey, the All-Star catcher



Posey: Goodbye

who had been a Marauder his entire TBL career was traded during the off-season. In the first of several December deals, Posey was shipped off to Warrenton in exchange for three premium prospects. But, unlike previous off-seasons, GM Willie Mays didn't just sit on youngsters...

2. *The Zen of Youthness in practice.* Management felt good about the youth – but some early trade feelers suggested that the Marauders could suddenly become good without sacrificing the

future. Prospects brought thumpers Carlos Gomez and Carlos Santana, just in their primes, Jose Bautista (a 'young 33'), and super-utilty man Ben Zobrist, giving Munich a potent offense entering 2015. Kevin Gausman, Carlos Martinez, Danny Salazar and Wil Myers brought some currently-valuable pitchers (Jake deGrom, Mike Fiers, Brett Cecil, Darren O'Day, Jake Petricka, and Francisco Liriano) only one of whom,

Liriano, is on the wrong side of age 30. A young roster perhaps a year away from solid contention became one almost as young that should be capable of a deep playoff run in 2015, without significantly reducing Munich's future potential.

3. *Tough competition!* For whatever reason, the National Conference holds the vast majority of the talent in TBL in 2015. Munich's off-season acquisitions need to hit the ground running if the Marauders are to overcome Melrose in-division, let alone Knoxville and The from the rest of the conference. Several other NC teams are potential spoilers. Manager Orel Hershiser has his work cut out for him, but the German pundits are hopeful as spring approaches.

munich MARAUDERS

Paul Montague (32nd year); Hall of Famer

The pitching will be good, but it's the offense that will carry this team.



It's been a long road back for Munich. The last shudder of the team that won the TBL World Series in 2007 was a Wild Card berth in 2009, but that team couldn't make it past the first round. Since then, the Marauders have suffered horribly, including 100+ losses in three separate seasons.

But now they're back. The TQ ratings like them. The pre-season buzz respects them. The draft and trades have solidified the team's existing talent enough to make the intervening five ugly years a distant memory. Mr. Montague, one of the league's founders and its most elder owner, has the horses to take his team deep into the playoffs. All that's left is to prove us right.

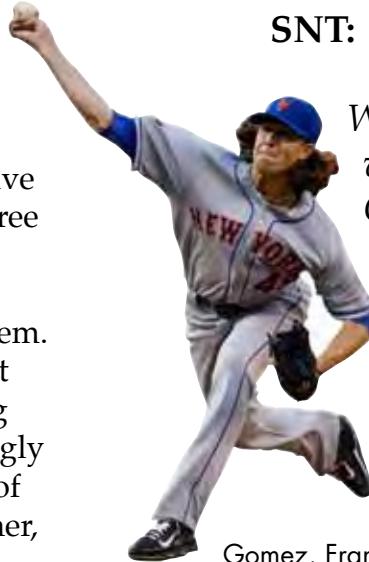
Pitching: 14.5 Deep, stacked and loaded.

According to the TQ ratings, this is the best pitching staff in the league. It's deep, stacked, and loaded. It mixes in lefties and righties. It has the grades and the peripherals to dominate over a long season and into the playoffs. It has names we like, and it features a few career years. This is the staff we least want to face in a must-win scenario.

ROTATION. The ace of the staff is lefty Chris Sale (Grade 16 C+23 HR+21). The lefty-righty tag team of Francisco Liriano (Grade 13 C-53) and SNT Jacob DeGrom (Grade 13 HR+34) follow. That's 77 big starts, even if they do lean more to the left than Hillary Clinton.



Sale: Ace of the staff



SNT: Jacob DeGrom

What do you give to a team with everything? Another Grade 13 starter. DeGrom helps this year and has potential for more.

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Jose Bautista, Brett Cecil, Neal Cotts, Jacob DeGrom, Michael Fiers, Carlos Gomez, Francisco Liriano, Darren O'Day, Jake Petricka, Carlos Santana, Ben Zobrist.

Departed: Craig Breslow, Alberto Callaspo, Kevin Gausman, Leonys Martin, Carlos Martinez, Wil Myers, Ricky Nolasco, Buster Posey, J. J. Putz, Danny Salazar, Justin Smoak.

Two righty Grade 12s — Edinson Volquez and erstwhile ace Yu Darvish — mitigate the lefty issue. But Jonathon Niese (Grade 8 C+21) throws the rotation back to the left. Michael Fiers (Grade 18) adds two token starts, but spends most of his time in the bullpen. A playoff rotation might look like this: 16-13-13-18-16-13-13. Whoa.

BULLPEN. Like all the best teams this year, Munich has multiple closers. Lefty Andrew Miller (Grade 22* HR+35) has the best grade, but he's, you know, a lefty. Righty Darren O'Day (Grade 21* C+22) steps in when needed.

And then there's Fiers (Grade 18, with no asterisk after seven innings), who can close as well. There are about 180 innings of closer stupendousness.



Easily the best rotation in TBL this year. So deep that Grade 18 Mike Fiers pitches mostly out of the 'pen. Enough offense to give Melrose a good run, but probably the top wild card.

The set up crew starts with wild Jordan Walden (Grade 16* C-62 HR+42). A lesser tag team follows in lefty Brett Cecil (Grade 14* C-36 HR+45) and righty Trevor Rosenthal Grade 13* C-62 HR+51). These three add 173.7 innings.

Mop-up duty goes to Jake Petricka (Grade 12* C-34 HR+43), Brad Ziegler (Grade 10* HR+21), and young Jenrry Mejia (Grade 10*), although they really only help Niese. This group is a little wild, but there are enough innings here.

This is a terrific pitching staff, and will be in the hands of a virtuoso.

Offense: 14.0
Patience and power. And speed.

Mr. Montague loves his teams to draw walks, and not surprisingly, this is his kind of team. Only two of his possible starters have fewer than three walks. One, Jose Altuve (3 0s, 13 hits, 2 walks+22, L+7 R-4, C33 for 72 attempts!), can be quickly excused, while the other, Stephen Vogt (1-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-6), also has a pretty good card despite the lack of 14s.

The players with walks also have power. Carlos Santana (1-5-6, 8 hits, 6 walks) is a prime example, but there's also Jose Bautista (1-5-5, 10 hits, 5 walks+22, L+5), Adam Dunn (1-5-6,



Altuve: Excused

5 walks+22, L-10), Anthony Rizzo (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+42), and Carlos Gomez (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, D29 for 51 attempts). Patience and power.

Ben Zobrist (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, L+5), Jason Heywood (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, L-14, E32 for 27 attempts), and Ruben Tejada (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks+42) will get on base often enough to make things happen. That leaves speedsters Adam Eaton (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, D25 for 27 attempts) and Norichika Aoki (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+6 R-4, E26 for 28 attempts) as mere mortals in the base on balls department.

It's amazing to consider, but 10 TBL teams have surpassed 700 walks in a season. This team could join those elite ranks. Mr. Montague has a few batting shifts to work around, but he plays his home games on the computer. Plus, walks sometimes negate those shifts. And speed! The elite speed on this team adds a dimension for run-producing which this team should do in abundance.

Defense: 7.0
Playoff ready.

The defense is playoff-ready. The catchers, Stephen Vogt (C7 Th+4) and Carlos Santana (C6 Th+2), will make some errors, but also hamper an opponent's running game. Jose Altuve (2B7) is only average at second and worse (3B3) at third. Santana is also a 3B3, but Brett Lawrie (3B5) is available off the bench.

The rest of the infield — Anthony Rizzo (1B4), Ben Zobrist (2B8), and Ruben Tejada and Andrelton Simmons (SS9) — are all Fielding One. There are three OF3s in Eaton, Gomez, and Heywood, and the two OF2s (Aoki and Bautista) have good arms.

With a wild bullpen, there's a distinct advantage in not introducing other means by which opponents can extend innings.

Bench: 2.0 Using everyone to win a game.

Almost all the players have lots of usage, with Tejada and Vogt notable exceptions. That means plenty of moves can be made. In addition, Brett Lawrie (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, L-6), Logan Morrison (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4 R-3), and Andrelton Simmons (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, SS9) may also be used.

While he doesn't have a big pinch-hitting bat, Mr. Montague will use everyone to win a game.



Simmons: Not an SS10, but good pic

1st

It's the highest-rated team in the league this year.

They have offense and defense, pitching, patience, and power. And speed. And flexibility. However, it's not the kind of team to throw out there and roll the dice (their home games are on the computer anyway), so it will take some work to get the most out of the players and the bullpen. There's no question that a manager like Paul Montague – the last of TBL's founders, one of the first members of its managers' Hall of Fame – is more than equal to the task. He knows how to make a team like this perform.

And that's where the fun — and the risks — lie.



Yeah, he knows these.



munich:
THE FORMULA



MUNICH MARAUDERS: 1996-1998

This franchise has always been in Munich as the Marauders, and it has always been in the league. Since the beginning. And it's always been run by Mr. Montague, who has won two TBL World Series. The first was sweet revenge against Maracaibo (after losing two seven-game World Series to the Rumrunners earlier). The second was in 2007, but we're going to focus on a three-year span (1996–98), in which the team lost a World Series and two consecutive Conference Championship series.

Those teams were led by Edgar Martinez (.301, 62 doubles, 46 homers, and 117 walks in 1996) and Jim Thome (.314, 37 homers, and 130 walks in 1997). Those teams had three 20-game winners (Kevin Appier, John Smoltz, and an odd Ismael Valdez — 20 wins despite a 4.29 ERA). Randy Myers saved 51 games in 1998. But it was the offense, with power and walks, that carried the team.

THIS YEAR

And now they're back. The names have changed, but the strategy is the same: lots of walks and good power. This year's edition adds more speed than the "standard" Marauders typically favor, but it's an addition that simply makes them more dangerous. The pitching will be good, but it's the offense that will carry the team.

TQ: 39.0



2014 melrose AVENGERS in review



If the team stays healthy we should be able to challenge for the conference in consecutive years.

by Mark Freedman

2014 in Review

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

For the 2014 Avengers it was all about survival. Before the season had even begun our second best pitcher, Kris Medlen, our best outfielder, Ryan Braun, was caught using, and first round pick, Jose Iglesias, were done for the year. Keeping the team together and hoping for a return to form and health bore some fruit and our early 1st rounder, Anthony Rendon, looks like a stud.

What went right?

69 wins is not an auspicious number but the team did avoid 100 losses.

The team era was 3.83, primarily driving by the starting staff. Ogando went 10-3, 2.34, Ross went only 8-9 but had a 2.81 ERA. Jon Lester went 13-10 but was average with a 3.81 ERA. Only limited starts by Ogando and Ross prevented the numbers from looking even better.

On the offensive side only Adrian Gonzalez performed turning in another solid 25 HR 106 RBI campaign.

What went wrong?

For the second straight year the team failed to make .500. Tony Stark and Pepper Potts were arrested on federal charges of player tampering. Injuries plagued the team. The season ended with seven uncarded players including Medlen, Iglesias and Franklin. The bullpen was dreadful with a 12-28 record. It was expected with a



Gonzalez: Only performer

Grade 12* closer to be that bad. With a better pen the team could have finished with another 6-8 wins.

The offense struggled to put up 696 runs as only Gonzalez broke the 20 homer mark. Ryan Braun was injured most of the year and everybody else under performed to a .242 batting average.

Only Broxton, Edgin and Jepsen returned for the 2015 season. The others, I can't even call them relievers, were uncarded or failed to break a Grade 6*. Garcia's arm fell off after 7 starts and Paxton pulled a muscle, then hurt his shoulder on his way to 13 starts.

3 Things

1. *World Series or bust.* 2015 looks like a rebound. A strong staff is led by Lester and Ross and 200 innings of closer grade relief. Alex Gordon hits 8th: *that's* a deep offense. The team traded away a lot of 2014 and 2015 draft to fill some holes and shore up the pen. There are four strong teams in the conference and the winner should be the favorite to win the World Series.

2. *Graying.* The team is starting to get older. Even with some youngsters the window is closing. Lester will be 31. Can Braun bounce back and how long can Gonzalez continue to hit? Gordon has settled into a decent but unspectacular player at age 31.

3. *Two year plan.* Rendon looks like a stud but can't do it alone. Can Frazier stabilize a .270 with 25+ homers? Can Paxton and Ross get 31 starts? Can Wily Peralta take the next step? Nobody had a career year and the team is still competitive. There is room for improvement. If the team stays healthy we should be able to challenge for the conference in consecutive years.

Melrose AVENGERS

Mark Freedman (22nd year)

As good as this team is, it's not a lock for the postseason in the competitive National Conference.



This franchise has exhibited a series of extremes over the years. Seven times, they've won 100 or more games. Eight times, they've lost 100 or more games. This could be the year they even out that record. The past two years have been disappointing to the fans in Melrose, but that may all be forgotten come November.

Mr. Freedman has gathered an enviable collection of talent. It starts with a strong rotation and deep bullpen, but it doesn't stop until it shows off its power, speed, and defense. As good as this team is, it is not yet a lock for the postseason. Not in the competitive Mantle Division and the tough National Conference.

Pitching: Super-powered.

15.0

The TQ ratings rank this as the Best Pitching Staff in the League, a shade better than Munich's. That's because it doesn't have a single ace.

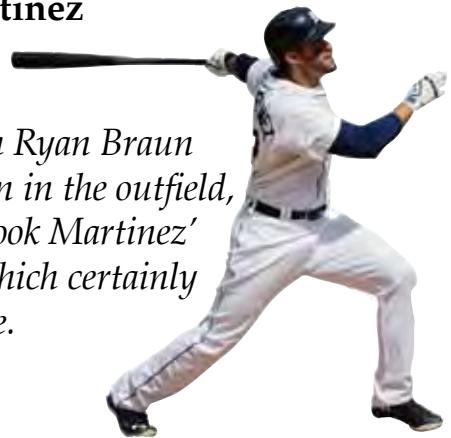
Instead, it has three aces. It also doesn't have a single closer. Instead, it has potentially five closers. Besides a propensity for bad control, this is powerful, if not outright super-powered, staff.

ROTATION. Maybe 13 is Mr. Freedman's lucky number. It might be, this year, as the team boast three Grade 13 starters in lefty Jon Lester (C+23 HR+22), righty Tyson Ross (C-24 HR+24), and lefty James Paxton (C-26 HR+43). They account for almost half of the season (76 starts). All playoff opponents, assuming the earth doesn't flood before then, will only see are Grade 13 starters.

Lefty Scott Kazmir (Grade 10), righty Wily Peralta (Grade 9), and righty Ryan

SNT: J. D. Martinez

To go along with Ryan Braun and Alex Gordon in the outfield, Mr. Freedman took Martinez' monster card, which certainly helps this offense.



Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Trevor Cahill, Logan Forsythe, Sam Freeman, Tuffy Gosewisch, Scott Kazmir, J. D. Martinez, David Ortiz, Alexei Ramirez, A. J. Ramos, Chris Stewart, Tom Wilhelmsen.

Departed: Rob Brantly, Tim Collins, Ross Detweiler, Jaime Garcia, Nate Jones, Jason Kubel, Junior Lake, Ed Lucas, Manny Parra, Dan Uggla, Jamey Wright.

Vogelsong (Grade 8) fill out the rotation, with one short November start by Tom Wilhelmsen (Grade 21 C-34 and a 10 fatigue). While the peripherals of this group aren't as strong as the top tier, this is a solid rotation, top to bottom.



Lester: Lucky 13

BULLPEN. Any of five relievers can close, but the preferred closer is A. J. Ramos (Grade 21* C-62 HR+56).

Because of Ramos' bionic poor control, Tom Wilhelmsen and Pedro Strop (Grade 18*

Melrose AVENGERS



Ortiz: Papi returns

C-31 HR+45) can pitch in at any time, especially, say the instructions, in a bases-loaded situation. Josh Edgin (Grade 20* C+21) is the short-inning, situational lefty and surprisingly the only reliever besides the long man with positive control. Combined, they offer 227.3 super-powered innings.

Middle relief falls to Jonathan Broxton (Grade 17* C-21 HR+22) — who could close for other teams — Kevin Jepsen (Grade 16* HR+26), and lefty Sam Freeman (Grade 13* C-53 HR+35). There's another 161.7 very competent innings. That leaves Ryan Pressly (Grade 9* C+25) and maybe Alexi Ogando (Grade 1* C-55 HR+45) as the long men. This bullpen makes the rotation even better, if you can believe it.

Offense: **13.0**
Almost all All-Stars.

Let's start with the return of David "Big Papi" Ortiz (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks), who comes over from Broddingnag, where he hit .297 and 30 homers for the league champs. He joins SNT J.D. Martinez (1-5-5-6, 12 hits, 2 walks), Anthony Rendon (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, E33 for 20

attempts), Adrian Gonzalez (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-12 R+3), Ryan Braun (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, E27 for 16 attempts), Todd Frazier (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, D28 for 28 attempts), and Alex Gordon (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, F31 for 15 attempts). That's almost an All-Star team.

Alexei Ramirez (3 0s, 11 hits, a walk+22, E32 for 25 attempts), who joins the team from Taylorville, still swings hard and runs fast.



A solid rotation, backed by a deep and versatile bullpen. A stellar offense with a very deep bench and good defense, along with a savvy manager. Melrose looks primed for another WS appearance, its third in five years.

Catching will be a platoon of on-base machines Russell Martin (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, L-4) and Chris Stewart (6, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L+14 R-8). Every player in the lineup has at least one excellent skill, sometimes more than one.

There are not very many larger batting shifts to worry about, and there is power galore. Five of nine starters have a "7" on "44." These guys will crush bad pitching and will hold up their end against anyone. If there is any weakness at all, it's that only Martinez, Rendon, and Ramirez have more than 10 hits. There's nothing inherently wrong with a 10-hit card, but road to the World Series leads through Knoxville, which has 10 players with 11 hits or more.

Defense: **5.5**
No masks needed.

Russell Martin (C9 Th+3) somehow became a catcher everyone wants. His backups, Stewart (C8, but Th-2) and Tuffy Gosewisch (C7, but Th+5), are also better than most. A-Gone (1B5) is awesome, and Rendon (2B8) is solid on the right side of the infield, while Frazier (3B4) and Ramirez (SS8) are just average on the left.

Outfielders Gordon and Braun are both OF3s, although Gordon has the only above average



Gonzalez: Awesome

arm. Martinez (OF1) has to play the field, but he's backed up by Alejandro De Aza and David Murphy (both OF2s). Besides Martinez, no masks are needed to hide their identities.

Bench: Plug and play.

3.0

David Murphy (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-7) and De Aza (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-14 R+2, C25 for 27 attempts) help off the bench.

Peter Bourjos (3-5, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) and Gosewisch (3 0s, 9 hits, a walk) can play defense, and Logan Forsythe (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+22 R-5) can play almost anywhere. Mr. Freedman will plug and play as needed when he needs to rest one of the starting nine.

2nd

Second place? It surprised us too, but the TQ never lies, does it? But don't get us wrong. With good dice and Mr. Freedman rolling them, this team could sweep to the top.

With bad dice and bad breaks, it could somehow miss the playoffs in a tough division and conference. When all is said and done, there'll be more to say and do about this team.

To be honest, we'd be shocked – *shocked!* – if the club doesn't get close to 100 wins. The problem with an imbalance in talent, and in schedule, is that occasionally a very talented team misses out. This has been less of a problem since TBL moved to 10 playoff teams and six divisions some years ago (it used to be six playoff teams and four divisions: so 100 wins was no guarantee that there was a sniff of the post season). But it's clear that there will be some very stiff competition. If Melrose was in the Clemente or the Ruth it would be a different story . . . but, you know, *tradition*.



melrose:
THE FORMULA



melrose AVENGERS

MELROSE AVENGERS: 2011-2012

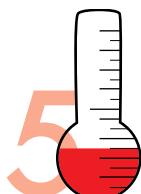
This franchise had never won a World Series before Mr. Freedman guided his team to back-to-back titles in 2011 and 2012. In 2011, he nearly tied the league record for wins with 123. That team hit .300 (as a team), slugged 216 homers (led by Dan Uggla's 49), and scored more than 1000 runs. Ubaldo Jimenez won 23 games (with a 2.39 ERA), Jon Lester won 20 (2.81), Chad Billingsley won 18 (3.75), and Jaime Garcia won 17 (2.20!).

They repeated in 2012, celebrating Ryan Braun's coming-out party (.339, 42 homers, 130 RBIs). While the team only hit .278, they still topped 200 homers. The pitching staff had five starters who won 13 or more games: Lester (19-5), Ryan Vogelsong (17-7), Garcia (16-14), Alexi Ogando (15-7), and Jair Jurrjens (13-4). Awe-inspiring. Super-human. All of the above.

THIS YEAR

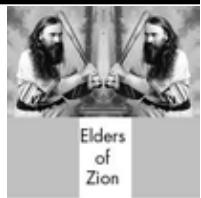
Some of the same faces are still with the team: Lester and Braun, for example. This version of the Avengers may not be capable of hitting a collective .300, but a 200-homer season should be within reach. Five starters with double-digit victories? It could happen. Even if this team doesn't climb to the same lofty heights as its predecessors, it is in position to challenge them.

TQ: 36.5



2014 ELDERS of zion in review

The 2014 Elders were something very much like the Meyer clubs of yesteryear ... well, not quite.



2014 in Review

Final Record: 110-52 (1st, Mantle)

We were happy to see Mr. Meyer, our newest Hall of Fame manager, have a team he could get excited about. The 2014 Elders were something very much like the Meyer clubs of yesteryear – well, not quite: there's no Greg Maddux, there's no Albert Belle, there's no . . .

They were good in 2014. They were really much better than good: they won 110 and the Mantle by more than 20 games. Going into the offseason, they had a big time starting ace, a first class closer, a big time performer in their lineup, and the Sensei rolling the dice. Oh, and the Rumrunners as the opponent (again).

It didn't work out. Maracaibo didn't roll over – though they did get taken by the eventual NC champion. And the cards for this very good Zion club got put back in the box.

What went right?

Adrian Beltre was, again, a big-time performer (.319-27-135). Charlie Blackmon (.345, 10 HR in 81 games) and Scooter Gennett (.364 in 68 games) were excellent in a limited role. The team hit .269 overall, fourth in the league, with a .332 OBP, good for third.

Anibal Sanchez was beyond outstanding (22-5, 2.22, 262 Ks in 219 IP). Koji Uehara was, well, Koji (1.51 ERA, 48 saves, 38 hits and 81 Ks in 66 IP). The other four starters went 58-24, with ERAs between 2.72 and 3.67.



Beltre:Big time

What went wrong?

It goes without saying that losing in the playoffs was the biggest disappointment. But a close look at the team's statistical performance shows some flaws – and makes their 110 win season even more remarkable (perhaps due to the Sensei dice rolling effect). The team struck out 1,506 times (though no player more than 123). They hit only 133 homers, and only stole 35 bases. They did outscore their opponents 762-535; so while they didn't hit like a classic Zion team, they made other teams hit like the boys

3 Things

from New Westminster.

1. *Stop them at first base.* One of the great lessons of the Sensei is to have a strong bullpen. 2014 was a classic year for that; this year there's no Grade 29* for a change (imagine that!) but there'll be plenty of good innings available to get the team into the late game. Just like always.

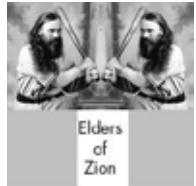
2. *Take the long view.* Every year, win or lose, winds up with getting ready for the next year. Winning the World Series or recovering (on rare occasions) from a rebuild, it ends with a beginning. There is no need to dwell on the past – there's always a future beckoning.

3. *Knowledge is power.* There is no one – even the Prince of Darkness – who comes as prepared to the draft. Some of it is years in leagues like MAX: some is three decades' experience in TBL; and some is just . . . he's the Sensei. Watch out.

ELDERS of zion

Rich Meyer (31st year); Hall of Famer

Anything can happen. Again.



The *Annual* noted last year: "This [2014] team might be even stronger than the team that just won the TBL World Series." They proved it by recapturing the Mantle Division title, winning nine more games than the championship team. But anything can happen in the playoffs, and Maracaibo, whom Zion used to beat regularly in postseasons past, whipped them in the semi-finals.

The 2015 Elders are still strong. They still have Mr. Meyer rolling the dice and pulling the strings. They still have an ace atop their rotation and multiple closers. They still have the 3000-year-old All World at third base. Anything can happen. Again.

Pitching: **12.0** Un-Zion-like, but younger.

While the top-heavy bullpen returns with the same names (although with slight variations in grade), the rotation welcomes several new recruits from the TBL rookie draft. How this season plays out — and how the future of the franchise fares — may rest on these young arms. If they develop as hoped, they may unleash another round of dominance over the league.

ROTATION. Zion's ace is Alex Cobb (Grade 13 HR+25). He takes the hill 27 times. He's followed by a pair of righty Grade 10s: Anibel Sanchez (C+22 HR+46) and Mat Latos (C+21). They add 37 starts. The good news ends with lefty Hyun-Jin Ryu (Grade 8 C+32 HR+33) and SNT Trevor Bauer (Grade 8 C-23). That makes 116 starts altogether.

The bottom 46 starts are cobbled together with rookie Tyler Matzek (Grade 7



Cobb: Staff ace.



SNT: Trevor Bauer

Mr. Meyer hopes Bauer, only the third starting pitcher SNT for Zion since 2007 (with Anibel Sanchez and Jarrod Parker), fulfills his enormous potential.

Turnover Rate: **20%**

Arrived: Trevor Bauer, Eric Campbell, Brandon Guyer, Tyler Matzek, Chris Nelson, Roberto Perez, Grady Sizemore.

Departed: Scott Baker, Mark DeRosa, Franklin Gutierrez, Jesus Montero, Mike Pelfrey, Josh Satin, Logan Schafer.

C-23 HR+21), one-time prospect Rubby de la Rosa (Grade 5), and erstwhile reliever Dustin McGowen (Grade 3 C-26 HR-25). Those final nine starts are likely to be especially brutal. Very un-Zion-like, but definitely younger.

BULLPEN. While there are no "gods and monsters" in the Zion bullpen this year, Mr. Meyer can still call on two closers: righty Kelvin Herrera (Grade 19* C-31 HR+62) and lefty Jake McGee (Grade 18* C+22 HR+51). They have more than 141 innings to toss, and you can bet they'll be used effectively.

The deep set-up/middle relief crew includes Chris Withrow (Grade 20* C-62 HR+36, but only for 21.3 innings), lefty Tony Watson (Grade 16* C+25 HR+24), lefty Dan Jennings (Grade 14* C-25 HR+23), scary Koji Uehara (Grade 14* C+42 HR-31), Kenley Jansen (Grade 13*), and McGowan (Grade 14*). These arms



add almost 312 more innings, and that doesn't even count Randall Delgado (Grade 7* C-35 HR+21).

Offense: 6.5 Missing enough power.

The face of the Elders, Mr. All World himself, is Adrian Beltre (1-6-6, 12 hits, 3 walks, L+4 R-3). He leads the team by example, but wait – here's a weird, obscure fact: The only player with four power numbers is Scooter Gennett (4 0s, 11 hits, a walk, L-21). When your power hitter's named "Scooter," there's trouble afoot. Still, he can hit, even if he rarely sees a pitch he can't swing at.

The other sources of power are Garrett Jones (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-9) and Charlie Blackmon (1-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L-6, D29 for 37 attempts).



Beltre: Face of the Elders.

10 hits, 3 walks+22) and rookies Eric Campbell (5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Brandon Guyer (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42) add a little depth.

That leaves former franchise player Grady Sizemore (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-9), Aaron Hill (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22), and Nick Hundley (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) to soak up some at-bats. The team's definitely missing enough power. They'll scramble to score, even with Mr. Meyer's magic dice. The TQ rating really says it all.

Defense: 4.0 No real weaknesses.

All World Beltre (3B5) is once again a vacuum cleaner at the hot corner. Gentry and Fuld (OF3s) distin-



Aaron Hill: Top fielder

guish themselves in the field, and Fuld has a superior arm. Hill (2B8) and Hundley (C8, but Th-3) are above average, and that's all the good news. Hundley only has half a season; the other catching games belong to John Jaso (C7 Th-4) – Zion won't be throwing out too many opposing runners, though rookie Roberto Perez does have a Th+2 with limited usage.

Other than Hill, the middle infield is dead average. Scooter Gennett and various utilitymen are all 2B7s; Yunel Escobar has backed off to be an SS8, and the same utilitymen are SS8s.

The other outfielders are all average, although Choo has an outstanding arm. Allen Craig is only an OF1 (and a 1B3), but his hitting card is sufficiently unpleasant that his glove probably makes very little difference.

At least there are no weaknesses.

Bench: 2.0 Not the same.

Zion has some roster flexibility, due to natural platoons. But displacing a platoon shift is not the same as taking advantage of a reliever.

In addition, for better or worse, there are Roberto Perez (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6 R+4, but for only 95 plate appearances), innocuous Jonathan Herrera (3, 9 hits, 2 walks+42), and Allen Craig (6-0, 8 hits, 3



An aging, veteran club, trying for one last grab at glory before the inevitable cliff. A mediocre rotation, tons of positional players who had down years, only the bullpen is above average.

walks+22, L+4 R-3). While Mr. Meyers will try to maximize what he has, he can't squeeze orange juice from a tomato (to coin a phrase.)

3rd

This is quite a fall from the past two years. The *Annual* is betting against an Elders Three-peat for the Mantle Division crown.

Mr. Meyer and his magic dice can do wonders, and maybe the team will finish higher than predicted. But they'll have to fight tooth and nail for a playoff spot, let alone the division title. It's just not in the cards in our opinion.

We have observed that the Sensei is as skilled as anyone in making something from less than something; but there is only so much that can be done. Looking back at the statistical history of the Elders of Zion – which has been part of our theme this year – there are names that evoke those great teams of the past. Larkin, Williams, Maddux, Glavine, Mattingly, Tartabull, Belle . . . from 1990 through 2003, the club won 100 or more games 12 times in 14 years – including 10 Mays Division and one Mantle Division pennants, five World championships (and one World Series loss). There are some good names on this roster – but not like there were during that run. Where are they now?



Belle: Those were the days



zion: THE FORMULA



ELDERS of zion

ELDERS OF ZION: 1991-1996

Always under Mr. Meyer's care, the Elders have won six TBL championships, an impressive feat. They're one of only four teams in TBL history to win back-to-back World Series (along with Joe Auletta's Brobbingnag Barbarians, Mark Freedman's Melrose Avengers, and Mr. Meyer's previous club, the Maracaibo Rumrunners). In one stretch, the Elders won four championships in a six-year period (1991–96).

Those teams were led by Greg Maddux and Barry Larkin, both TBL Hall of Famers. In that stretch, Maddux won 135 games, including the 31–3 1995 campaign. Larkin, meanwhile, hit .300 or more in four of those six seasons. Albert Belle joined the team in 1992 (the year Mr. Meyer traded away future TBL HoFer Larry Walker) and proceeded to hit 181 homers over the next five seasons.

THIS YEAR

It's unfair to compare any team to the 1991–6 Zion teams, but the idea is to compare strategies for success, not player-by-player comparisons. There may never be another Greg Maddux, and Belle's power production was prodigious. The 2015 Elders have neither of those commodities, although Beltre makes a good case for being the Larkin of this team. To return to those glory days, though, Zion will need more power and walks, as well as a stronger rotation. They at least have some of those pieces.

TQ: **24.5**



2014 hudson GENERALS in review



Has any team ever thwarted our analysis more often than Hudson?

by Clay Beard

2014 in Review

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

How did this happen? Was this a playoff team? The Generals went 7-16 in July and August, recording a 2-10 stretch at home. The team was ultimately outscored by 14 runs; one of its best pitchers, Trevor Cahill, ultimately went 5-15 with a 7.11 ERA.

Just looking at the statistical summary, it's hard to figure how the team could have gone 89-73. Did they do really well in close games? Not really: they were 6-5 in extra innings, 23-23 in one-run games. Did they beat up conference rivals in the race for the Wild Card? Not so much. Hudson was 5-9 against Munich and 3-6 against Knoxville.

What went right?

Against all odds, and against the prediction of the *Annual*, getting to the playoffs was truly the best outcome of the season.

The team recovered after the doldrums, going 45-29. They were led by Carlos Beltran, who put together an MVP-caliber year, hitting .316 / .367 / .564, with 30 home runs and 41 doubles. Pablo Sandoval, the Kung Fu Panda, turned in a solid season, hitting .297 with 18 home runs. Jose Bautista had 27 home runs, Nate Schierholtz hit 23, and Wilson Ramos hit 17 in just 273 at-bats. Rajai Davis stole 45 in 50 attempts.

On the mound, Tim Lincecum recorded 16 wins and 176 strikeouts in 192 innings. The bullpen was deep and strong, led by Kevin Siegrist, who put up 26 saves in just under 40 innings.

Sean Doolittle had a great year, with 5 wins and 3 saves, striking out 65 in 69 innings. Luke Gregerson won 9 and saved 8, posting a 2.18 ERA. Eight different pitchers recorded saves.

What went wrong?

The best card in the lineup didn't perform very well: Jose Bautista hit .224. A. J. Pollock hit .210 with a .266 OBP, Lucas Duda .210, Scott Van Slyke .183. There were many, many empty at bats at the tail end of the lineup.

In the field, Jed Lowrie "anchored" the middle of the defense with 33 errors.

The bullpen was very strong, but the rotation was less so. Mike Minor had a 4.48 ERA, Tim Lincecum 4.55 – and Cahill was the aforementioned disaster.

And ultimately, of course, the joy of a playoff spot was erased by a six-game loss to the Portland Possum.



Beltran: MVP caliber

3 Things

1. *Patience.* Anyone who was watched Mr. Beard at the TBL Draft knows that he does his homework – he is in focus from Round 1 to Round 9. He is devoted to building the best team.

2. *Beat the odds.* Has any team ever thwarted our analysis more often than Hudson? Well, no, actually.

3. *Hidden gems.* Hudson has always found players who are valuable while not being big names. A. J. Pollock and Cody Allen come to mind.

hudson GENERALS

Clay Beard (31st year); Hall of Famer

There are players on this team who've barely begun shaving.



Last year, the *Annual* predicted a third-place finish for the Generals, but added, "We wouldn't bet against him." Mr. Beard pulled off an upset, outpacing Knoxville and Munich to snatch the last playoff berth. It was, after all, an even-numbered year. That they succumbed to the monster from Portland in the first round was almost beside the point.

This being an odd-numbered year, we expect the Generals to step back to retool. While there may be some learning experiences in 2015, the good news is that Mr. Beard has used this past draft to get younger. Much younger. There are players on this team who've barely begun shaving.

Pitching: Full of potential.

6.5

This isn't a horrible staff. It's temporarily a bit short in the rotation, relying on two innocuous starters. The bullpen has a closer. What makes the staff exciting, though, is that of the 17 pitchers, only five are 30 or older, including just one starter. Mr. Beard has built a young staff full of potential. If they all blossom together, it could get scary.

ROTATION. The grades aren't great, but the top end of the rotation is young. The oldest just turned 25. All are Grade 9 righties, and injuries aside, all have big-time potential: Henderson Alvarez (C+34 HR+21), rookie Marcus Stroman (C+24 HR+34), Kevin Gausman (HR+31), and Gerrit Cole contribute 92 starts. That's the good news.

Elder statesman Tim Lincecum (Grade 6 C-33) has fallen a bit, but Mr. Beard hopes he still has



Allen, Doolittle: Two closers

SNT: Marcus Stroman

Stroman gives Hudson a winning hand — four of a kind: four right-handed Grade 9 starters, all 25 years old and under.



Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Chris Bassitt, Kyle Crockett, C. J. Cron, Kevin Gausman, Johnny Gomes, Randal Grichuk, Dilson Herrera, Boone Logan, Leonys Martin, Carlos Martinez, Marcus Stroman, Will Venable, Zach Walters.

Departed: Andrew Albers, Jose Bautista, Trevor Cahill, Louis Coleman, Rajai Davis, Chris Heisey, Todd Helton, Edwin Jackson, Taylor Jordan, Vinnie Pestano, Jake Petricka, Trevor Plouffe, Nate Schierholtz

some Cy Young potential in his arm. He adds 26 wild starts. Chris Bassitt (Grade 5 C-25 HR+62) chips in 5 more, and then the excitement begins. An innocuous pair of Grade 3 starters make the final 39 starts. Lefty Mike Minor (HR-23) will work his way through injury, and righty Carlos Martinez (HR+41) will be learning on the job.

BULLPEN. We said this team has a closer. Actually, it has two. Righty Cody Allen (Grade 18*) and lefty Sean Doolittle (Grade 17* C+43) bring 132.3 innings of decent closer-worthiness. The sheer number of innings and the fact that there are two of them help matters. They are



hudson GENERALS

ably set up by righty Luke Gregerson (Grade 15* C+32) and lefty Kyle Crockett (Grade 15* C+25 HR+24). These two add 102.3 more innings, although Crockett is active only half the season.

Things get dicey after that. There are two Grade 8* middle relievers, Brandon Kintzler (C+22 HR-24) and Carlos Martinez, but Martinez makes 17 starts, so Kintzler has more ground to cover than Lucas Duda playing centerfield. They add 115.3 innings. The backup option is Edward Mujica (Grade 5* C+26) and his 67 innocuous innings. Stuck to the bottom of the pen like mold are lefty Grade 1*s Kevin Siegrist (C-54 HR-25) and waiver wire rescue Boone Logan (C-24 HR-46).

Offense: 7.0
They'll struggle.



Pollock: Does it all

but as a C20) adds some risky attempts. That's it for real speed.

The other power comes from Scott Van Slyke (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, L+4 R-7), Lucas Duda (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L-15), rookie C.J. Cron (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, a walk), the ever-youthful Carlos Beltran (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-7), and the weird and wacky Zach Walters (1-1-5, 7 hits, 2 walks, L+8 R-6). Wilson "The Buffalo" Ramos (1-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+5



Not one double digit grade in the rotation, a bullpen short on innings and a bunch of part time players is the very definition of 'average'. Will probably hold up the Mantle this year.

R-3) and Wellington Castillo (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, L+6 R-4) add some pop.

Pablo Sandoval (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L-10 R+3) bats cleanup against all but board lefties. That leaves Jed Lowrie (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-5), Didi Gregorius (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-11), Randal Grichuk (6-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks), and Ike "Valley Fever" Davis (3 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks, L-17) to round out the various lineups.

Both catchers have trouble versus righties, while both shortstops have trouble versus lefties. There are some nice individual cards, but it's difficult to see how the lineup will perform. Only three hitters have above-average walks, and one of those only has eight hits. They'll struggle against the much better pitching in the division.

Defense: 4.5
Good, average, ugly.

Three OF3s (Pollock, Martin, and Grichuk) lead the defense, although Beltran (OF1) is tabbed to take his turn out there.

The infield is all-average with one exception: C. J. Cron and Lucas Duda are both 1B3s; Pablo Sandoval is a 3B4; both shortstops are SS8s. D. J. LeMahieu (2B9), by comparison, stands out as a defensive star.

The platoon of Wellington Castillo (C8 Th+2) and Wilson Ramos (C7, but with Th+4) is a highlight. Besides Beltran, the other weakness is Zach



LeMahieu: Defensive standout

Walters (3B3) trying to play third. It's the good, the average, and the ugly.

Bench: Move along.

2.5

Options are limited, and the team will often be dysfunctional on the boards due to the platoon shifts, especially on the road. To his long-standing credit, Hall of Famer Mr. Beard has always stated in his instructions that he uses everyone on the roster – “25 guys” – so the team will make every effort to put the right player in the right position at the right time.

Still, the bench is limited. In addition to the platoon players, the bench offers these 8-hit cards: Dilson Herrera (1-3, 4 walks) and waiver wire pickups Jonny Gomes (2 0s, 4 walks+42 L+4 R-10) and Will Venable (2 0s, 3 walks+22, L-6, D25 for 17 attempts). Move along; really not much to see here.

4th

This is obviously a work-in-progress. Come back in a year, maybe two, and then we'll talk.

In the meantime, this team will likely go as far as those Grade 9 starters will take them. When they pitch well, there are bullpen arms to carry them. If not, it may be a long season, especially against the rest of the division.

That being said, the *Annual* has a long tradition of betting against the Man From Hudson; long time readers of this publication will recall that in our less kind, less gentle era we derided one of the Hudson pitching staffs as a “bowling team”, and then they went out and overperformed. Still, it’s difficult for us to say anything other than, *Not this year, Mr. Beard*. The departure of Rajai Davis and Jose Bautista, and the focus on acquisition of young talent, suggests that he already knows this all too well.



**hudson:
THE FORMULA**



HUDSON GENERALS: 2010

Clay Beard has run this franchise in Hudson ever since the beginning, back in 1985. He’s put together several outstanding teams over the past 30 years, but only his Wild Card winner in 2010 made it to the TBL World Series. That team won 96 games, led by an outstanding Tim Lincecum (17-9, 2.98, 271 strikeouts in 241 innings) and Derek Jeter (.337, 19 homers, 133 runs, 110 RBIs, 66 walks, and 33 steals).

The team hit .286 and scored 927 runs. They stole 125 bases, led by Rajai Davis’ 35. But Ryan Raburn led the team with just 24 homers.

The staff pitched to an unremarkable 3.80 ERA. After Lincecum, no other pitcher won more than Trevor Cahill’s 13 (with a 4.40 ERA). The saves leader was Scott Eyre (17), who turned in a 4.50 ERA in 28 innings. In other words, they were well managed and a little lucky.

THIS YEAR

Lincecum is still on the team, but as a shadow of his former self. Mr. Beard is still calling the plays, but even he claims this lineup doesn’t fit together well. The current team will not hit .286 or steal even 100 bases. Some pieces are in place for a balanced attack and a solid staff, but it’s not here now.

TQ: 20.5



Outlaw Overkill

There is usually an entertaining race out in the Williams, though this year – like last year – the race will largely be about whether anyone from the division makes it to the Wild Card round of the playoffs. There are two solid teams that should have a chance, but neither of those clubs should get anywhere near the top of the Williams.



That position belongs, or should belong, to the *Knoxville Outlaws*. Pat Martin knows what to do when the team is ready to contend: build up the bullpen, bulk up the lineup, and keep doing

it until he runs out of assets. The result is a monster roster that should go a long way even in the “strong” conference. As usual, the success of the franchise rests on two things: how will the team be managed, and how fragile is what he’s collected?

The brothers Glenn and Bruce Taylor have a brighter prospect than a year ago, when the club skidded to a very un-Taylor-like 58 win campaign. Guys are back and new guys have been added to the roster. There was an argument for a little more youth in



2014 Williams Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Midwest *	110	52	.679	—
Knoxville	86	76	.531	24
Las Vegas	60	102	.370	50
Taylorville	58	104	.358	52

* Lost to Brobdingnag in World Series.

the draft, but all drafts consist of calculated risks; if the top pick turns out to be a blue chipper instead of cardboard, they’ll look pretty smart. In the meanwhile, there might be a post-season date – which is far more Taylor-like.



It took some luck and plenty of skill to build the fine team that took Darrell Skogen to the World Series (and to Game 7 at that), but his *Midwest Mongrels* have lost a step this year and may have to settle for a wrestling match with the Taylor boys for a playoff spot. Still, as a lifetime Twins fan, the Guru is used to the underdog spot. Expect a strong effort.

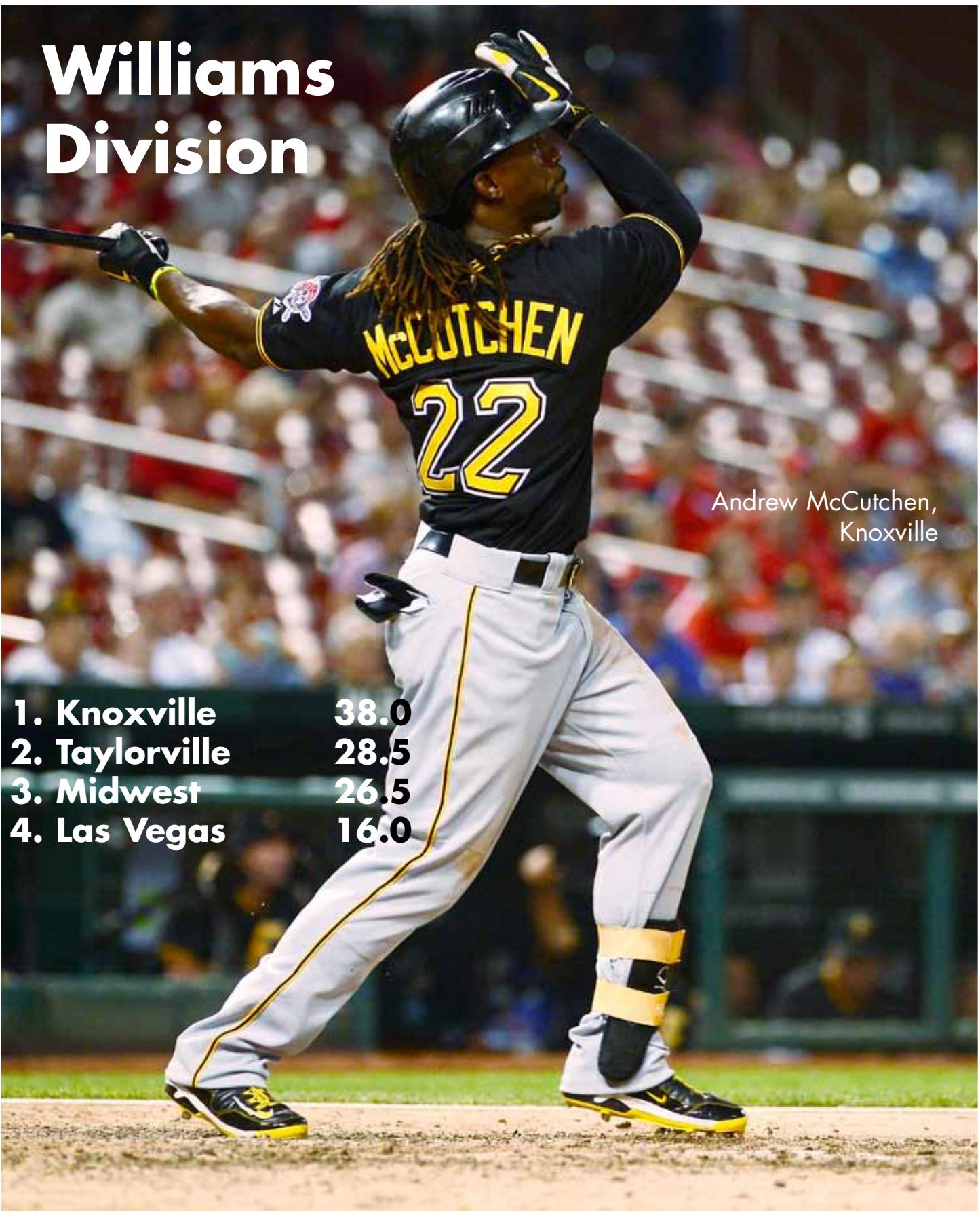
The *Las Vegas Gamblers* are looking at another building year, but there are some more pieces to the puzzle on the roster this year. There are plenty of deficiencies, so expectations are understandably low (both for management and your resident pundits), but Paul Harrington is going in the right direction.



Williams Division

Andrew McCutchen,
Knoxville

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1. Knoxville | 38.0 |
| 2. Taylorville | 28.5 |
| 3. Midwest | 26.5 |
| 4. Las Vegas | 16.0 |



2014 knoxville OUTLAWS in review



This coming year, just good enough is just not good enough.

2014 in Review

Final Record: 86-76 (2nd, Williams)

Knoxville last recorded a winning record in 2010, falling in a seven-game series to Zion. Since then the club had recorded 64, 58 and 69 wins, slowly gathering resources to return to respectability.

That arrived in 2014. There was pitching and power and an opportunity for a pennant. The *Annual* even predicted that they'd win it.

But they still needed to play the games.

What went right?

Rookie Shelby Miller was outstanding as the ace of the Knoxville staff, going 17-8, 3.29 with 232 strikeouts in 219 innings. Luke Hochevar did a very good job as closer (5 wins, 23 saves, 2.00 ERA), and Alex Torres (5 wins, 19 saves, 1.37 ERA, 71 Ks in 59 IP) was even better. Overall, the team only surrendered 631 runs – 70 fewer than they scored – and recorded a 3.48 ERA.

Adam Lind was the biggest hammer on offense, with a .301 / .377 / .531 slash line and 29 homers. Pedro Alvarez hit 38 homers and drove in 103. Yadier Molina, in addition to his excellent defense, hit 15 homers and led the team with a .319 average.

What went wrong?

The team had good top end pitching, but the starters were largely mediocre. Matt Moore, the expected ace, only managed a 10-12 record with



Lind: Hammer

a 4.46 ERA, walking 87 in 178 innings. Other than Miller, neither Patrick Corbin, Wei-Yin Chen, Moore nor C. J. Wilson pitched particularly well.

The offense was indifferent. Justin Morneau hit 20 homers, but managed only a .246 average and struck out 121 times. Brian Dozier struck out 138 times with decent (but not great) power. Pedro Alvarez' 38 homers came with a .220 average and 185 strikeouts. The team hit only 166 homers and 265 doubles – just not enough

to get them through to the next level. When Hudson surged in October and November, Knoxville was left behind, falling short of a playoff spot by three games.

3 Things

1. *Make sure of it.* The disappointment of coming up short after three years of rebuild may have driven Outlaw management to the efforts put into the 2015 club. This coming year, just good enough is just not good enough – he's going to make sure.

2. *There is no substitute for good young pitching.* As part of the drive to the top of the standings, the club has selected, developed and traded for some excellent young arms. Some have taken a while to arrive (and some are still waiting in the wings). But the key to long-term success rests on youth.

3. *Persistence.* The club has gone all in for 2015, but after the number of seasons they've been the anchormen in the *Annual*, Pat Martin's crew is ready for some continued success. The way to contention is through the Williams Division, and this year will be a good start.

knoxville OUTLAWS

Pat Martin (29th year)

Their pitching may prevent them from finishing with the best record in the Conference, but they will finish with the best record in their division.



In 2014, Pat Martin had his eyes on the post-season. He brought together all the pieces, including good-luck charm Nick Punto. Unfortunately, the Hudson Generals outplayed his Outlaws, edging them out of the last Wild Card by three games. Luck was a factor, as the Outlaws should have won 89 (according to the run differential) while the Generals should have won only 79.

Despite the lack of luck last year, Punto remains on the Outlaw roster. How it plays out in 2015 may be worth watching, as the boys from Knoxville enter the season as the odds-on favorite to capture the division championship. Once again, Mr. Martin has gone "all in," trading away his 2016 draft through round 5. It's a familiar tactic, one that's even justifiable given the team's strengths, but it means there will be no September trades to help.

Pitching: Curious curiosities.

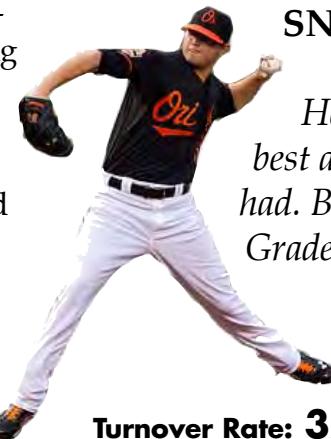
11.0

Here's a curiosity. This pitching staff has obvious talent, but they've been playing phone tag with each other. Last year, Patrick Corbin and Matt Moore were the stalwarts in the rotation while Danny Duffy was limited. This year, it's reversed. Last year, Luke Hochevar saved 23 games while Zach Britton was mostly absent. This year, it's reversed. If all the pitchers contribute in the same year, watch out!



Danny Duffy: Phone tag

ROTATION. It starts out curiously, as the team uses only 23 of the 25 available starts for lefty



SNT: Zach Britton

Here's a switch. The Outlaws' best acquisition is one they already had. Britton went from a forgotten Grade 2 starter to the team's closer.

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Jason Hammel, Trevor May, Kris Negron, Derek Norris, Tanner Roark, Hector Rondon, Michael Tonkin, Luis Valbuena, Tsuyoshi Wada.

Departed: Pedro Alvarez, Anthony Bass, Wei-Yin Chen, Kyle Drabek, Josh Fields, Brett Oberholtzer, Sandy Rosario, Hector Sanchez, Craig Stammen.

Danny Duffy (Grade 16, C-22). Not the usual treatment you'd expect for an ace. Despite a 23 fatigue, he'll be expected to pitch deep into the games he does start. The next tier includes a trio of right-handed Grade 11s, as newly acquired Tanner Roark (C+26) and Jason Hammel (C-22 HR+25) join last year's SNT Shelby Miller (C-31). They add 91 solid starts.

Draftee Tsuyoshi "Dr. K" Wada (Grade 10) and veteran C.J. Wilson (Grade 8 C-44) add 31 more left-handed starts (out of a possible 44). That leaves young Jordan Lyles (Grade 7 C-21) to pitch 17 (of his possible 22) starts. We're not sure why the rotation was broken up this way, but at least Trevor May (Grade 1 C-36 HR-22) doesn't make an appearance.

BULLPEN. Surprise closer Zach Britton (Grade 22* HR+32) put it all together for 76.3 innings at age 27. But he's a lefty, which may matter over



knoxville OUTLAWS

the course of the season, given the plethora of lefty-killing bats scattered around the league. On the plus side, he has 14 hits on his card, including 1-1-6-6 power.

The meat of the bullpen, if you can call it that, consists of righties Bryan Shaw (Grade 14* C+21) and Hector Rondon (Grade 13* HR+45), joined by lefties Michael Dunn (Grade 12* C-24 HR+24) and Alex Torres (Grade 12* C-62 HR+45). This quartet contributes just over 250 innings.

While these guys help the rotation, the grades and depth are short for a contender. The bottom of the pen adds 51.7 innings of capable Shawn Kelley (Grade 9*) and a lot of Michael Tonkin (Grade 3*), if needed.

Offense: Irrepressible.

16.0



Morneau: Resurgent

Oh my. This team will *hit*, and they'll hit for both average and power. They can even run. They should score many, many runs.

The Outlaws have *five* players with 12 hits. Michael Brantley (1-0-0-0, 3 walks+22, E35 for 24 SBA), resurgent Justin Morneau (1-0-0-0, 3 walks+22, L-10 R+2), Adam Lind (4 0s, 3

walks, but a big L-23 R+3 shift), super-sub Justin Turner (4 0s, 3 walks+22), and Delmon Young (3 0s, 1 walk+22) will all get on base and drive in runs.

Add five more players with 11 hits, two with big power: Andrew McCutchen (1-4-5-6, 4 walks+22, E33 for 21 SBA), breakout Steve



Their only real flaw is the need for a couple of setup men for Zach Britton. Six regulars are Fielding One with fabulous cards. Over 120 double digit grade starts. Will seriously challenge Melrose for the NC crown.

Pearce (1-5-5-6, 4 walks+22, L+6 R-4), Denard Span (3 0s, 3 walks, L-5, E31 for 38 SBA), Jose Reyes (3 0s, 2 walks, E35 for 32 SBA), and the irrepressible Yadier Molina (3 0s, 2 walks+22).

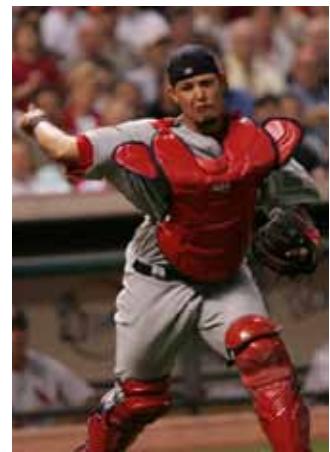
That leaves second base to Brian Dozier (1-6-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, E29 for 28 SBAs) and third base to an effective platoon of Luis Valbuena (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-9) and rookie Kris Negron (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+8 R-6).

There are no offensive weaknesses on this team.

Defense: Built to win.

6.5

The Outlaws are built to win now, and the all-around defense will help. Molina (C9 Th+6) continues to be as good as it gets. The everyday outfield of Brantley, McCutchen, and Span are all OF3s, although only McCutchen (33) has a plus arm, a quibble.



Molina: As good as it gets

The platoon at first — Morneau (1B5) and Pearce (1B4) — are excellent. Dozier (2B8) is solid at second, although he lost a point from last year. Reyes (SS8) is only average, as is the hot corner platoon of Valbuena and Negron (both 3B4s). There's no defensive help on the bench.

Only Munich has a better-rated defensive team.

Bench: It helps.

Note to self: it helps your bench when you have 10 players with 11 or more hits. Young, Turner (when he's not DHing), and the platoon mates are available off the bench, as are Brandon Barnes (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks), backup catcher Derek Norris (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, L+3 R-4), and defensive whiz Nick Punto (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks). David Ross



Turner: 12 hit card from the bench

(1-5-6, 7 hits, 3 walks, L+7 R-6), the only real defensive replacement, just gets to dream of seasons past.

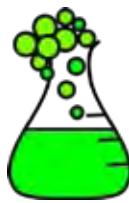
1st

Their pitching staff, which is not as jaw-dropping as their hitting attack, may prevent the Outlaws from finishing with the best record in the Conference, but they will without a doubt finish with the best record in their division.

This comes at a price, of course: there's nothing in the draft for 2016 (and we mean *nothing*: Pat can drink Pepsi until the sixth round.) It's not a cliff-embracing team, since many of the parts were added during one of the low periods in Knoxville history; but problems can't be fixed. Not that it affects this year's result.

The instructions, though, especially concerning the pitching staff, are weak and incomplete. If this team is to make the most of its strengths, Mr. Martin will have to be more attentive, especially on the road with the board game. This is not a new point; we used to assign a rating to instructions (back in the day before they were actually reviewed by the commissioner's office – a policy of which the *Annual* staff heartily approves), and Knoxville's were never great.

2.0



knoxville:
THE FORMULA



MINNESOTA BLUE THUNDER, 1994-96

The 107-win team from 2008 might have been a subject for this article, but we thought we'd engage the Wayback Machine to review the very strong clubs from 1994 to 1996. In 1990 the club won 111 games, largely on the back of its tremendous pitching – two 20-game winners in Langston and Drabek and more than 600 talented innings in the bullpen – and then was swept in the Conference finals by Hudson. Accordingly, the team was forcibly disassembled. It took four years to come back, and returned with a great offense (Mike Piazza, Kenny Lofton, Sammy Sosa, Gregg Jefferies, Reggie Sanders) and very Twins-like pitching, with a sturdy rotation and excellent bullpen. In 1996 they won 101 and finished 11 games behind Rochester, who bested them in a fierce 7-game series. Back to the drawing board – with two exceptions (2003, 2008) for the next two decades.

THIS YEAR

The current club looks very much like the 1994-1996 one, though the front of the rotation doesn't look very much like Mike Mussina and Kevin Appier (or even Danny Jackson). In 1994 they hit 222 homers and scored 846 runs, stole 129 bases and struck out only 895 times. Those are good targets (and that club won only 91).

TQ: 38.0



knoxville OUTLAWS

2014 taylorville RED RAIDERS in review

The team had less power than a fully-loaded VW Microbus.



2014 in Review

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

We asked in last year's volume if this was a rebuilder or a borderline contender. We thought they weren't too bad. Taylorville performed a real Hudson on us: rather than being a decent competitor in the Williams Division, the team collapsed, scoring only 520 runs while giving up 746, hitting only 119 homers and struggling to a .241/.295/.365 slash line.

They won 58 games, probably 20 less than we expected. It was a year that the Taylor brothers are no doubt happy to put behind them. What happened? Hard to say, except the pitching was inferior and the hitting was missing in action.

We thought we might be looking at a team in transition. This was more like a bus accident.

What went right?

Alexei Ramirez hit .308 with 50 doubles.

No, really, that might be the only real good news. Howie Kendrick hit .284, with 13 HR; Brett Gardner had 10 triples. Jose Lobaton hit 11 homers in 159 at-bats and hit a nice .270 – who knew he had it in him?

Tyler Thornburg turned in a nice 1.27 ERA, and Travis Wood was the best performer among the starters, recording 10 wins, pitching 7 complete games and 2 shutouts. Overall the bullpen was fairly effective, with 14 of Taylorville's 58 wins. They certainly got a lot of work.



Wood: Best performer

What went wrong?

The team had less power than a fully-loaded VW Microbus (and I've driven one. They have the Beetle engine). They hit 119 homers as a team, with Brian McCann leading the club at 15. There wasn't any compensatory speed: they stole 39 bases all year and hit into 111 double plays.

On the mound, the club disappointed. Wood's 10 wins went with 16 losses and 36 home runs allowed in 229 innings. Their top notch closer Aroldis Chapman struggled to a 4-8 record and 4.45 ERA. He managed 20 saves, but the 8 losses illustrate his ineffectiveness. The bottom of the rotation was sad: Jeremy Guthrie went 5-17, 4.97, Jason Vargas 8-12, 5.06, and J. A. Happ 4-10, 5.76.

3 Things

1. *Josh Harrison.* We like the card as much as the next guy (4 0s, 12 hits, speed, three good positions), but we had Taylorville pegged for Xander Bogaerts. This is a contender move; there are players in Pittsburgh (Kang, Walker, other OFs) waiting to take Harrison's playing time. This had better work out.

2. *Albert Pujols.* It would be good to see him return to his old form. (Presumably the Angels think so too.)

3. *Jake Arrieta.* That was a pleasant surprise. Is he as good as he was in 2014? We think so, but it's hard to say for sure.

taylorville RED RAIDERS

Bruce Taylor (18th year) / Glenn Taylor (14th year)

The postseason is a reward worth pursuing, but the World Series remains an elusive prize.



2015 marks the third season for the Brothers Taylor. The team bottomed out with 104 losses last year, but that will seem like a distant memory this year. The pitching staff has come up big, and the Taylors have cobbled together a decent enough offense to contend.

That seems to be enough, as the team (as the Richmond Rebels under Bruce) has made the playoffs nine times in the past 17 years, but has never progressed past the semi-finals. We'll agree that making the postseason is a reward worth pursuing, but the World Series remains an elusive prize.

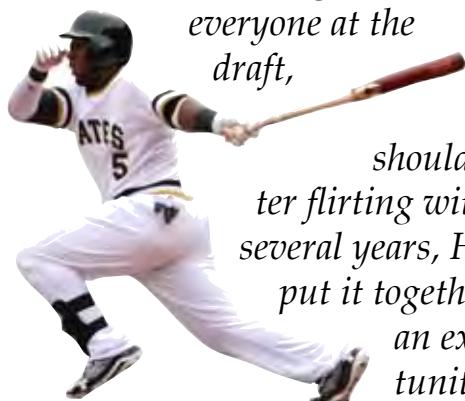
Turnover Rate: 34%

Arrived: Jeff Beliveau, Matt Den Dekker, Odrisamer Despaigne, Jeurys Familia, Wilmer Flores, Josh Harrison, Cesar Jimenez, Ed Lucas, Juan Carlos Oviedo, Ramon Santiago, Shawn Tolleson.

Departed: Jeff Bianchi, Michael Bourn, Jake Dunning, Gerald Laird, Will Middlebrooks, Jeff Niemann, Logan Ondrussek, Tyler Pastornicky, Alexei Ramirez, A. J. Ramos, Shane Robinson.

SNT: Josh Harrison

Selecting Harrison surprised everyone at the draft, but it shouldn't have. After flirting with his skills for several years, Harrison finally put it together when given an extended opportunity.



Pitching: A true ace and a real closer.

12.5

This is the best staff in the division, which gives the team hope for staying close to the Knoxville juggernaut during the division race. The Red Raiders have a true ace and a real closer. The rotation is fairly strong and the bullpen, while not loaded with closer grades a la The Statesmen, is still deep.

ROTATION. The ace of the team is Jake Arrieta (Grade 15 HR+45), who takes the hill 25 times. He's followed by 20 starts of the slightly scary Josh Beckett (Grade 13 HR-25),

if a Grade 13 can be considered scary. Odrisamer Despaigne (Grade 11 HR+26) and Charlie Morton (Grade 9 C-22 HR+32) add 40 more right-handed starts.



Arrieta: Ace

Wild Hector Santiago (Grade 10 C-32), J.A. Happ (Grade 8 HR-21), and Jason Vargas (Grade 7 C+26) provide the remaining starts, and they're all left-handed. That means that Jeremy Guthrie (Grade 6 C+21) and Travis Wood (Grade 4 C-34) get to ply their trade for AAA Montgomery Greys or in the bullpen. The top end of this rotation strengthens the whole thing; now they just have to pitch like their grades.

BULLPEN. It all starts with closer Aroldis Chapman (Grade 27* C-61 HR+54), who is a little more wild than usual, but who will be effective for 54 innings. The set-up relievers



Taylorville Red Raiders

include mostly rookies. Jeurys Familia (Grade 16* C-23 HR+43) and Shawn Tolleson (Grade 15* HR-23) supply 149 right-handed innings, and Cesar Jimenez (Grade 16* C-46 HR+25), Jeff Beliveau (Grade 14* HR+42), and veteran Matt Thornton (Grade 14* C+34 HR+62) contribute 76 left-handed innings. That's 279 solid set-up innings.

Daniel Otero (Grade 12* C+46 HR+36) headlines the middle relievers, and with almost 87 innings, he'll see a lot of work rescuing starters. He's joined by Juan Carlos Oviedo (Grade 12* C-46) and Tyler Thornburg (Grade 9* C-62 HR+46) for 61 more innings, leaving the mop-up for Guthrie and Wood. Still, 427 innings might be a little light for a contender. The relief innings will have to be well managed.

Offense: 8.0

A tendency for free-swinging.

Let's start with SNT Josh Harrison (4 0s, 12 hits, 1 walk+22, D28 for 25 SBA). He's joined by the big bats of Nolan Arenado (1-5-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4 R-3) and the somewhat-recovered Albert Pujols (1-0-0-0,

10 hits, 2 walks+22 L-4). Brian McCann (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22 L+6 R-4) has some pop, too.

DH Howie Kendrick (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, E29 for 19 SBAs) can still hit singles and run some, and the other speed threat is Brett Gardner (3



Pujols: Somewhat recovered



Chapman: A little more wild

0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-4, E31 for 26 SBA).

Gerardo Parra (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6), Donovan Solano (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-4), and rookie Wilmer Flores (3 0s, 10 hits, a walk, L-13) are all unexceptional. They're still better than Jose Lobaton (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-6). The team has a tendency for free-swinging. Over the course of a season, the lack of walks will lead to shorter innings. Ramon Santiago (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+22 L+10 R-5) appears to be the only player who knows how to draw a walk. Maybe that's why he's here.

Defense: No weaknesses.

6.0

Nolan Arenado (3B5) and Donovan Solano (2B9) are human highlight reels. Brett Gardner and Gerardo Parra are both OF3s, although only Parra has a plus arm. Brian McCann (C8 Th+2) is solid behind the dish, and Albert Pujols (1B4) is above average.

Everyone else is average: Josh Harrison (2B8 and 3B4 but will be using his OF2), Wilmer Flores and Ramon Santiago are both SS8s, and the other half of the catching tandem, Jose Lobaton, is a C7 Th+2; Ryan Hanigan is a C9 Th-2, making him less useful even on defense.

There are no weaknesses, although the instructions call for Lobaton to catch the majority of games, and there's no mention of a backup outfielder (such as Den Dekker or Grossman).



The Taylor boys, after two consecutive down years, finally have something to work with here. There is enough of both pitching and offense to make a good run at a wild card slot.

Bench: Useful, but ignored in instructions.

3.0

Ed Lucas (2 0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+6 R-6) and Joaquin Arias (6-0, 10 hits, L+6 R-10) look a lot like the other players, but they might see their share of action at short. Matt den Dekker (6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-5) and Robbie Grossman (2 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks, L-6) offer something different, but they're ignored in the instructions.

Ryan Hanigan (C9 Th-2) offers some defense (and he too knows how to walk), but Jedd Gyorko offers nothing but future fulfillment of his promise (which is why he was drafted in the first place). There are plenty of catching games between McCann, Lobaton and Hanigan, so there is a move or two to be made there. Harrison is capable in a number of places, though due to Arenado and Solano he'll get a lot of reps in the outfield: but each of those players misses a third of a season, so he should be able to get some ground balls at times.

2nd

The emergency instructions state that the Taylorville Red Raiders are in rebuilding mode, and yet the *Annual* is picking them to finish second in the division, with a very solid chance of post-season play.

Is there a disconnection somewhere? If they're rebuilding, why did they select a 26-year-old with an awesome card as their first-round pick? Having two first rounders in 2016 doesn't supersede the solid pitching staff and the good bats and gloves that will run out there most days.

We at the *Annual* think they know they're better than they're letting on. We hope there are better instructions coming to monthly opponents because this team will need some TLC to maximize its strengths to win games.



taylorville:
THE FORMULA



KNOXVILLE KNOX SOX /
RICHMOND REBELS: 1994-1998

In 1994 Wade Mitchell's club, recently inherited from Steve Powell (during his first TBL tour of duty), jumped from good to top notch. This was the year that Coach Wade was at his one and only TBL draft and was able to pick a player that he'd *actually coached*: Greg McMichael, who went 10-1, 0.84 for a Knoxville club that won 111.

They were originally a pitching-and-OBP St. Louis type of offense, but by the late 1990s they showed tremendous power to go with their starting pitching. The 1997 club hit 229 home runs, led by Ellis Burks (.330-39-142, 58 doubles and 10 triples), Ken Caminiti (.302-43-117), and the great performance of Kevin Brown (27-4, 1.89, 13 CG). The following season, Bruce Taylor got 106 wins as a rookie as Roger Clemens jumped from 14-12 to 24-8, 1.69, 23 CG, 345 Ks in 293 innings, Brown went 23-6, 2.30, and David Cone went 'only' 18-8, 2.34. Yet with all of the talent, the team never got past the second playoff round. Bruce himself had a series of close calls over the next decade.

THIS YEAR

The power isn't as evident, but the pitching is back. Clearly the Taylor team knows what it likes. The question is whether it truly likes what it has – and is committed to contend.

TQ: **28.5**



taylorville RED RAIDERS

2014 midwest MONGRELS in review

It's a good thing the Dawgs went all the way to Game 7.



by Darrell Skogen

2014 in Review

Final Record: 110-52 (1st, Williams)

It's a good thing the Dawgs went all the way to Game 7, bottom of the 12th inning, before losing to the boys from Brobbingnag in the World Series; there will be no such pennant run this season, as management began the process of getting younger by trading away Carlos Gomez, Carlos Santana, and Adam LaRoche. Hopes are high that the youngsters, Danny Santana and Rougned Odor, will meld into the lineup over the next decade and finally plug the black holes that have been shortstop and second base at Midwest's Rice Creek Stadium.

What went right?

819 runs scored compared to 539 given up. There is the 110 win formula right there. On offense, 7 guys in double digits on homers, 4 with 20 or more, including Adam Jones at 29, Gomez at 26, Michael Cuddyer at 22, and Erik Hosmer at 21. Eight guys with 20 or more doubles, 4 with 40 or more led by Hosmer at 47, Santana at 45, Victor Martinez at 44, and Jones at 43. Hosmer scored 123 runs, and Jones drove in 116, joined in the century club by Martinez at an even 100. 330 doubles, 168 homers, 98 stolen bases. Wow—this is not your typical Mongrel offensive season.

Then on the pitching side, four double digit winners, led by Madison Bumgarner (20-9, 2.55, 234 K), Ervin Santana (16-8, 3.31, 186 K), Jordan Zimmermann (15-8, 3.06, 207 K), and *Bruce Chen!* (12-2, 1.82). Greg Holland led a deep bullpen with 47 saves and an 0.56 ERA. Don't forget 102 K in 64 innings.



Top performer again

What went wrong?

Not much when you win 110 games. Gomez could have hit more than .232, but it's hard to argue with 57 extra base hits, 27 stolen bases, 95 runs, and 90 RBIs. LaRoche whimpered in a season of only 4 homers in 141 at bats. Ryan Zimmerman struggled at .237, but again, 40 extra base hits and 72 RBIs from your number six hitter is not a curse. Jeremy Hellickson was a pedestrian starter at 7-6, 4.76 — but with three shutouts.

3 Things

1. *Pitching will determine* if the Dawgs can play at a .500 pace. Quality is down in the starting staff, and the bullpen is a mess. Management is standing strong, hoping for a return to form in 2016 with the present staff. It will be ugly this year, however.

2. *Running is key.* We will have to run more this year, as the power is in severe outage after the big trades. Jones will be picking up the load, and we hope to see lots of doubles, some triples, taking extra bases, and stealing at appropriate times. And yes, the bunt is back in full force this season.

3. *The new boys.* In real life, the Guru is hoping that this year's draftees all have great seasons in real life and that with a resurgent pitching staff we can be a force in the Williams once again.

This year, we expect to have our clocks cleaned regularly by the tougher teams and hope we can beat the rebuilders to get to a .500 season. We shall see! For the time being, we will take the fall back as the Knoxville Outlaws shake the

midwest MONGRELS

Darrell Skogen (14th year)

This team could bunt its way into a Wild Card.



Well, that was exciting. Mr. Skogen proved himself a resourceful manager yet again by defying the odds and getting to extra innings of the seventh game of the TBL World Series against eventual champion (and behemoth) Brobdingnag Barbarians. It's a Series that will be remembered as fondly as the 1991 Atlanta Braves-Minnesota Twins tilt, but in that one, the Twins won.

And Mr. Skogen *does* favor his Twins. The Mongrels have nine past or present Twinkies on the roster, including Santana. After the near upset in the World Series, the Mongrels will spend a year recuperating, both physically and emotionally. But that doesn't mean a 100-loss season. In fact, on paper, the Mongrels still have a chance to make the playoffs.

Pitching: 10.0 Holland will get fewer chances.

This is a surprisingly competent staff. No, we take it back: it's no surprise. Mr. Skogen has a decidedly pitching-first mentality when it comes to building teams, and while the 2015 pitching staff is thin, the key pieces remain. The Mongrels may only need one year "off."



Bumgarner: Leader

ROTATION. The leader of the staff (and real-life World Series MVP) is Madison "Mad Bum" Bumgarner (Grade 11 C+31). He won 20 games last year. He'll be hard-pressed to repeat that feat. Capable Jordan Zimmermann (Grade 11 C+36 HR+24) won 15 last year. Ditto. Alfredo



SNT: Roughned Odor.

A child who just turned 20, Odor was actually Mr. Skogen's second pick in the first round (after Danny Santana), but Odor is the prize of the draft.

Turnover Rate: 37%

Arrived: Mike Aviles, Brian Duensing, Mark Ellis, Phil Hughes, Don Kelly, Mike Morin, Ricky Nolasco, Roughned Odor, Josmil Pinto, Trevor Plouffe, Rene Rivera, Danny Santana, Oscar Taveras.

Departed: Henry Blanco, Brett Cecil, Michael Cuddyer, Eduardo Escobar, Kyle Farnsworth, Carlos Gomez, Adam LaRoche, Sean Marshall, Jayson Nix, Xavier Paul, Ryan Roberts, Carlos Santana, Ryan Zimmerman.

Simon (Grade 10) joins the rotation after spending last year in middle relief, an experiment no one saw coming. That's 97 solid starts.

Ervin Santana, a year before being caught with performance-enhancing drugs, should have taken more, as he drops to a Grade 8. Philip Hughes (Grade 7 C+53 HR+21) lost 20 games for Blue Hill last year, but his peripherals will keep him in games this year. Jerome Williams (Grade 8) gets two starts.

This is not an exceptional staff, but it should perform admirably over the course of the season.

BULLPEN. The Big Man, Greg Holland (Grade 23* C-22 HR+35), remains at the top end of the



midwest MONGRELS

bullpen. Getting to him, though, will be the challenge in 2015. His 62 innings are the only bullpen innings over Grade 13*. The set-up crew, for lack of a better word, a trio of right-handed Grade 12*s — Fernando Rodney (C-25 HR+42), rookie Mike Morin (C+23 HR+35), and Brandon Gomes (HR-25) — joined by lefty Brian Duensing (Grade 11*). This brings the total of relief innings to 276.

The next tier includes Jason "Grilled Cheese" Grilli (Grade 9* C-21 HR+23), Joel Peralta (Grade 8* C+23 HR-23), and lefty Glen Perkins (Grade 8* C+36). They add 179 more innings, but this crew only help the rotation if things go wrong. If things go horribly wrong, Jeremy Hellickson (Grade 5), Bruce Chen (Grade 1), and Ricky Nolasco (Grade 1 C+23 HR-21) are there to be knocked around. Unless Holland can deliver three-inning saves, he will likely get fewer chances this year.

Offense: 9.0 Highlights, but no fear at bottom.



Martinez: Ageless

It starts with player-manager Victor Martinez (1-0-0-0, 12 hits, 3 walks+22, L+4 R-3), who continues to operate at a higher level. Rookie sensation Danny Santana (4 0s, 12 hits, 2 walks+22, D32 for 24 SBA) and veteran Twin Trevor Plouffe (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) round out the four-power-number hitters. With



Holland: Fewer chances

the trade of Carlos Gomez, Adam Jones (1-5-6, 11 hits, a walk+42, L+9 R-5) becomes the best power-hitting fielder, although Rene Rivera (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L+4 R-4), Reed Johnson (5-6-6, 9 hits, 42, L+5 R-4), and Josmil Pinto (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks) have some pop.

The rest are mostly unimpressive.

Jimmy Rollins (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, D32 for 34 SBAs) and Jordan Schafer (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-11,A31 for 37 SBA) can run. In fact, in typical Mongrel fashion, almost every player can run a little. Eric Hosmer (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks), Endy Chavez (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-16), and SNT Rougned Odor (3 0s, 10 hits, 1 walk+22, L-5) have a 7 on 44, while Mike Aviles (3 0s, 10 hits, a walk), Don Kelly (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L-6), and ever-present Darwin Barney (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) will shorten games. There's not much fear here.

Defense: A mixed bag.

5.0

The Guru likes defense, and it shows in the way he filled out the roster during and after the draft. This is less of an issue when the team is (ostensibly) not a contender; defensive players and "good bunting cards" can serve where a pinch-hitting toy or some other sort of useful offensive contributor might appear.

Against right-handed pitchers, Jimmy Rollins (SS9), Eric Hosmer (1B5), Don Kelly (3B5), and three OF3s (Jordan Schafer, Adam Jones, and Endy Chavez, all with plus arms) start. Of course, so do Roughned Odor (2B6) and Josmil Pinto (C6 Th-4). Against lefties, the defense isn't



The Guru's guys took mighty Brob to a game seven in the 2014 WS, only to fall just short. They are a diminished group this year, but still have enough to challenge for a WC spot.

nearly as good, as Trevor Plouffe (3B4) and Mike Aviles (SS8) join Reed Johnson (OF2) and Danny Santana (OF1). But then Darwin Barney (2B8) and Rene Rivera (C7 Th+3) also take over. So it's always a mixed bag, although the best defense will be in the game when the Mongrels lead.

Bench: Flexibility is a mirage.

1.5

You'd think there'd be some flexibility given the platoons, but Victor Martinez and Adam Jones are the only players with over 150 games, so the flexibility is a mirage. Mark Ellis (2B9) can help with his glove, but not with his bat (6, 8 hits including 2 10s, 2 walks+42). Andrew Romine and the late great Oscar Taveras are probably wondering why they're still here.

In short, this is a bench that isn't really a bench: it's a set of players that are Not Starting That Day, or who come into the game under certain specified circumstances. In view of the changing needs of the offense depending on opposing pitcher, it will require some significant expertise to actually make sure the right guys are in at the right time. Odds are good that at some times during the season, one of those ugly cards is going to have to bunt . . . er, bat.

3rd

This is a definite step back from last year's International Conference championship. They were the second-oldest team in TBL last year and now there's more of a focus on youth, as one might expect. Still, with a little luck and solid pitching, this team could bunt its way into a Wild Card. It still runs well. It still has Victor Martinez. It still has Holland as a closer.

And it still has The Guru.



midwest: THE FORMULA



JESSUP COAL BARONS: 1990-1992

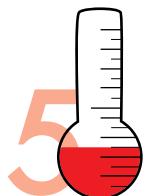
The successes of pitching-first and bunting-frequently are well known to the current roster of TBL managers; so while it is tempting to review the winning formula of the Guru era, we have decided to cast our gaze back many years to a previous edition of the team and celebrate its success.

From 1990 to 1992, Scranton's own Lou Umile piloted the Jessup Coal Barons to 119, 110 and 99 wins, taking the World Series in 1990 over Hudson. Wade Boggs set the record for doubles with 69, hitting .352 with 102 RBI; the team had three 20-game winners, led by Bret Saberhagen at 25-5, 2.67 with 16 CG. Ryne Sandberg hit 41 HR and drove in 150. Successive years did not quite reach those heights, but the team was very good, featuring big-name stars such as Eddie Murray, Jose Canseco, Willie McGee, Scott Garrelts and Mark Gubicza. Lou was not a deep researcher: he made sure to take a useful player with his (late) draft picks, and played what he had, favoring guys that regular fans have heard of.

THIS YEAR

Darrell Skogen isn't Lou Umile: he is a good student of the game and a genuine fan. He knows what he likes, and as a very experienced APBA manager, he knows what works. Star power doesn't matter. No matter what he says about rebuilding, his teams should never be underestimated.

TQ: 26.5



2014 las vegas GAMBLERS in review

There is no third thing.



by Paul Harrington

2014 in Review

Final Record: 60-102 (3rd, Williams)

There was a realization, going into the 2014 TBL campaign, that it was going to be another long, losing season. But there was optimism that we were getting closer to being relevant again. The 2014 draft had yielded promising young OF Avisail Garcia and Rangers' southpaw Martin Perez. Gamblers management was counting on both of these prospects to lead them back to the postseason someday. Early in the 2014 MLB season both of these players required shoulder surgery and their 2014 seasons were lost. Perez went uncared for 2015 and Garcia has a mere 46 games for the 2015 TBL season (and a vicious +11/-6 shift to boot). The upshot of all this was to set back the Gamblers rebuild at least one more season. We had hopes of being competitive in 2015, but that hope was dashed by these setbacks.

What went right?

Not a heck of a lot, but there were a few notable performers last year. James Loney had a stellar campaign, posting a slash line of .312/.346/.437 in 158 games. He also ripped 46 doubles. Josh Donaldson also did well in 2014, chipping in with 30 doubles of his own, as well as leading the team with 23 HR, also in 158 games. Staff Ace Jose Quintana won 12 games for a 60 win team. Sam Deduno won half of his starts, going 9-5 with a respectable ERA of 3.92, the only starter with a plus .500 record. Tommy Milone might have been the biggest surprise. A Grade 8 lefty, he went 9-10 in 26 starts, but posted a stellar 3.13 ERA, 3rd best in Gamblers history!



Loney: Stellar

What went wrong?

Plenty. We lost 100 games for the second year in a row. The team's slash line of .239/.289/.358 was pathetic. We smacked a mere 107 homers, dead last in TBL for the second consecutive year. And the festering pit of despair that was the Gamblers' catching tandem of Jordan Pacheco/Josh Phegley combined for 151 games, hit a mere 3 HR, walked 13 times and struck out 131. They also combined for 13 errors and 12 PB! Yikes! New Gamblers retread Roberto Hernandez went 3-14, 5.11 in 24 starts. Not to be outdone, rookie Tom Koehler went 2-14, with an even more putrid ERA of 6.44 in 23 starts. Overall there was plenty of mediocrity and blame to go around in 2014.

3 Things

1. *Enduring more losses.* It might come as a surprise, but between 1997 until 2012, our last winning season, Las

Vegas had a winning record in 10 of 16 years, and made the playoffs in 9 of them. We won 95 games in our 3rd season and 104 in our 4th. 2015 should turn out to be our 3rd consecutive losing campaign, also a first for the boys of Sin City.

2. *Staying healthy.* The devastating loss of our two top picks from 2014 was a bitter pill to swallow and really put a crimp in our rebuilding efforts. If this year's crop of new recruits can stay healthy, along with a return to vigor for the rest of the Gamblers' walking wounded, Las Vegas may soon return to their winning ways.

3. I can't think of a third thing here, so please send your submissions to the "Gamblers 3rd Thing" at pjh5000@hotmail.com. Thanks.

las vegas GAMBLERS

Paul Harrington (19th year)

The cards he's holding don't look like a winning hand.



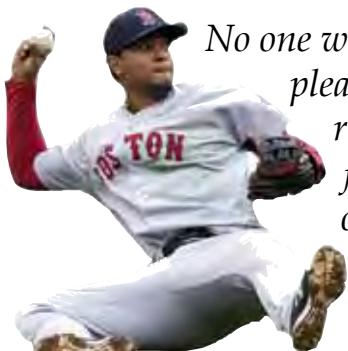
It was another long year in Las Vegas, as expected. The bad news is that despite losing 100 games, they got to pick seventh. All that losing only netted Mr. Harrington the seventh-best player in the draft. The good news is that he got a guy he liked, SNT Xander Bogaerts, who has grabbed the shortstop position from Asdrubal Cabrera and may never let go.

Looking ahead to 2015, the prospects are still dim. Whether the team hit rock bottom in 2014 or will in 2015 is still to be determined. What seems unavoidable, though, is another last-place finish in the Williams Division. But there are two positives to take away: unlike past years, Mr. Harrington has kept his #1 pick in the 2016 draft, and the 2015 draft added some youth and talent to the team.

Pitching: 6.0 No ace, but only two jokers.

Well, they're back for more. Gamblers are inherently brave souls. But when your closer is a wild Grade 16*, that affects the whole staff. It'll be a wild and crazy year on the mound for the 2015 Gamblers.

SNT: Xander Bogaerts



No one was more surprised (or pleased) than Paul Harrington when Bogaerts fell to pick #7. That's one less position to worry about.

ROTATION. There is no ace. But there are only two jokers. Veteran Gavin Floyd (Grade 10 C+21) last pitched in 2013, when he went 3-14. Somehow, he's back and has the best grade in the rotation, but only for eight (of his nine) starts. He's followed capably by lefty Jose Quintana (Grade 9 HR+35) and righties Tom Koehler (Grade 9 C-25) and rookie Shane Greene (Grade 8 C-22). They add a respectable 78 starts.



Jose Quintana: Capable

The bottom half of the rotation is at least split equally between righties and lefties. Waiver wire pickup Kyle Gibson (Grade 7 HR+26) and rookie Chase Anderson (Grade 7 HR-23) are the righties, while rookie Brad Hand and vet Tommy Milone (both Grade 6) are the lefties. The latter, being low-grade southpaws, are the jokers.

BULLPEN. The previously mentioned wild Grade 16* (C-62 HR+32) is rookie Vic Black. He offers fewer than 35 innings as the closer.

Turnover Rate: 34%

Arrived: Chase Anderson, Anthony Bass, Vic Black, Xander Bogaerts, Craig Breslow, Rusney Castillo, Francisco Cervelli, Sam Dyson, Shane Greene, Brad Hand, Tyler Holt, Esmil Rogers.

Departed: Michael Bowden, Paul Clemens, Mike V. Gonzalez, Lucas Harrell, Roberto H. Hernandez, Stephen Lombardozzi, Jordan Pacheco, Brian Roberts, Josh Roenicke, Chris Rusan, Eric Sogard, Joshua Zeid.



las vegas GAMBLERS

Backing him up is the outright dangerous Jose "K-Rod" Rodriguez (Grade 15* HR-51) and the less-dangerous Dale Thayer (Grade 14* C+25 HR-24). They add more than 133 dubious (but desperately needed) innings. They are all right-handed.

Middle relief is composed of the Grade 12* Sams: Dyson (HR+53) and Deduno (C-36). They offer 100 important innings. Darin Downs (Grade 8* C-55 HR+33) is the "situational lefty," which is like putting all the rent money on "red." Adam Ottavino (Grade 7* C+22) and the band of innocuous misfits from the waiver draft — Esmil Rogers (Grade 3* C-22 HR-31), Anthony Bass (Grade 1* C+24 HR-44), and Craig Breslow (Grade 1* C-43) — are the long men. No matter what else we can say about this bullpen, at least it is legal.

Offense: 4.0 Dead spots in the lineup.

There is one player with four power numbers: John Mayberry (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, L+6 R-9), and he doesn't offer much else. He's also relegated to playing first base vs. LH pitchers.

Only three other regulars have first-column power: Big Josh Donaldson (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L+7 R-4), arguably the best hitter on the team, Avisail Garcia (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+11 R-6), and Yasmani Grandal (1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks, L-9).

James Loney returns with a good singles-hitting card (2 0s, 11 hits including 4 7s, 2 walks L-7).



Donaldson: They call him "Big Josh".



A third straight down year is in store for your beloved Commissioner, mostly due to injuries and poor drafting. There is a glimmer of hope for 2016, but that just might be an oncoming train.

Juan Lagares (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22 L+6 R-3, E30 for 17 SBA) and Francisco "Gazoo" Cervelli (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks +42, L-5) can also hit.

That leaves six players with mediocre 9-hit cards. Asdrubal Cabrera (3 0s, 3 walks+22, F32 for 12 SBAs) and Austin Jackson (3 0s, 3 walks, L+3 R-3, E30 for 26 SBA) can both run. SNT Bogaerts (3 0s, 2 walks+22, L+3 R-3) is a work-in-progress, but Ryan Flaherty (3 0s, 2 walks+22, L-4), Alex Presley (2 0s, 2 walks), and Skip Schumaker (2 0s, 2 walks L-5) are dead spots in the lineup.

Defense: Not enough of it.

4.0

There are some bright spots: Josh Donaldson (3B5) and James Loney (1B5), when he plays against RHPs, are awesome at the corners.

Asdrubal Cabrera (2B9) is as good as it gets, and of course is the best player named Asdrubal in the major leagues. Juan Lagares (OF3, 38 arm), Austin Jackson (OF3, 34 arm), and even Avisail Garcia (OF2, 36 arm) are defensive strengths.



Loney: Bright spot

Francisco Cervelli (C8, but Th-1) will hold his own, unlike Yasmani Grandal (C7, but Th-4), who plays the most. Xander Bogaerts (SS8) is the everyday shortstop, Skip Schumaker (OF2) plays half the season in LF, and John Mayberry (1B2) plays vs. lefties. The strengths are great; there just aren't enough of them.

Bench: Depth is an issue.

2.0

It's not exactly deep, but the Las Vegas bench does feature a few pinch-hitters: Rusney Castillo (1-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+42, for 40 plate appearances) and Tyler Holt (6, 10 hits, a walk, R-5, for 76 PAs). Unfortunately, they don't see playing time until November. It's too bad, as they could help out for a month each.

It's hard to be surprised at the lack of depth, though. As with last year at least, the Gamblers are geared toward rebuild regardless of present capability. Mr. Harrington isn't trying to run a contender here, so it's not like there's any utility in optimizing.

As it is now, when your back-up infielder is pressed into DH duty, you know that depth is an issue.

4th

And this finish will be well deserved. All the other teams in the division have significantly more and may push for playoff berths.

Not the Gamblers. They are gambling once again that a poor season will result in a draft pick boondoggle.

TBL's commissioner has demonstrated his affection for boom and bust – which is fine: it's more fun to have contending years from time to time – it's probably fair to state that the Gamblers have overall had more fun than, say, Knoxville – which has been the last team in the *Annual* for many a year. If there is any comment, or criticism, that we can offer it is that the club has sometimes seemed to cut short a promising rebuild in order to take their shot, only to have to start again.

The cards he's presently holding don't look like a winning hand yet, but Mr. Harrington is slowly gathering youthful talent that could some day translate into a jackpot. Some day.



las vegas:
THE FORMULA



LAS VEGAS GAMBLERS: Various

The team has been gambling in Las Vegas since its inception in 1997. While the franchise has jumped among divisions, it has made a successful habit of making the playoffs. Three times (2000, 2007, and 2009), it's been to a Conference Championship series, and three times, it's been denied.

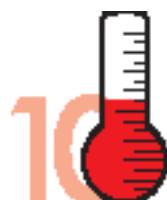
The Gamblers in the past have been powered (literally) by an awesome Vlad Guerrero and a deep bullpen. In the later years, Jason Bay added more power and walks, but Vlad was always consistent, and the bullpen always fearsome.

THIS YEAR

Who will be the next Vlad? – Josh Donaldson? Avisail Garcia? Rusney Castillo? Or a player not yet on the roster? Once the next Vlad emerges, the rest of the offense will come together. At that point, we bet, a deep, nasty bullpen will follow.

In the meantime, the 2015 Gamblers have neither a Vlad Guerrero nor a deep bullpen, and that leaves the team looking up at 63 wins. Las Vegas is no place to be if you're not winning.

TQ: 18.0



breakthrough

There are fringe players on TBL rosters right now who might be important players on rosters in 2015. Some of those names appear in the list below. Some won't make it, but last year's list included Sonny Gray, Michael Wacha, Mike Zunino, Dee Gordon and Lonnie Chisenhall in the top ten.



1 Mookie Betts, OF, Broddingnag.

Off to a decent start as the regular CF and leadoff hitter for the Red Sox, he's got power and speed and on-base. Another winning choice for Joe.



6 Carlos Martinez, P, Hudson

One of the fine arms Munich sent away to help build its contender, he has a power arm and good command.



2 Jorge Soler, OF, New Westminster.

A huge power threat, and a key part of a rebuilt New Westminster offense. He was much sought after in the draft, and with good reason.



7 Aaron Sanchez, P, Broddingnag.

This year he's a short innings closer but next year he'll be a starter. If he can harness his control he'll be dominant.



3 Javier Baez, IF, Hoboken.

If he can learn the strike zone, his power makes him a huge threat at the plate. He'll have to find a place to play in Chicago, but good bats always find a way.



8 Jake Lamb, 3B, Hoboken.

Another premium pick for Dr. Steve, he'll blossom in the desert air.



4 Gregory Polanco, OF, Grand Cayman.

A key part of a dynamic young outfield in Pittsburgh. He had a rough rookie season but it will come together this year.



9 Kennys Vargas, 1B, Rye.

He's been compared to a young David Ortiz. If he grows up to be Ortiz in his prime, he'll be devastating.



5 Christian Bethancourt, C, Maracaibo.

The catching job in Atlanta belongs to Bethancourt long term. He's there to catch and will find his groove as a hitter.



10 Rusney Castillo, OF, Las Vegas.

He may have to wait for the crowd at the top to disperse, but he's ticketed for a spot in the Red Sox outfield, where he'll excel at all aspects of the game.

Honorable mention: Arismendy Alcantara, Greater Ohio; Chris Bassitt, Hudson; Michael Bolsinger, Blue Hill; Michael Choice, New Westminster; Maikel Cleto, Whitman; Anthony DeSclafani, Detroit; Jake Diekman, Whitman; Nathan Eovaldi, Statesmen; Wilmer Flores, Taylorville; Tuffy Gosewisch, Melrose; Nick Hagadone, Warrenton; Jesse Hahn, Whitman; Liam Hendriks, Kansas; Cesar Hernandez, Greater Ohio; Jeremy Jeffress, Hoboken; Phil Klein, Detroit; Rymer Liriano, Broddingnag; Kyle Lobstein, Hoboken; Tyler Matzek, Zion; Trevor May, Knoxville; Rafael Montero, Statesmen; Jimmy Nelson, Zion; Adrian Nieto, Hoboken; Kirk Nieuwenhuis, Gotham City; Mike Olt, Broddingnag; David Peralta, Statesmen; Gregorio Petit, Gotham City; Stolmy Pimentel, Broddingnag; Josmil Pinto, Midwest; Anthony Ranaudo, Whitman; Carlos Sanchez, Blue Hill; Luis Sardinas, New Westminster; Marcus Semien, Grand Cayman; Jonathan Singleton, Maracaibo; Matthew Stites, Northboro; Andrew Susac, Broddingnag; Chris Taylor, Detroit; Blake Treinen, Gotham City; Christian Vazquez, New Westminster; Zach Walters, Hudson; Allen Webster, Whitman.

future

Every year we look forward to see who might be the big names in the next draft. Sometimes these predictions are prophetic, and sometimes they fall short. Last year, eight of our top ten were selected in the first round in 2015. You be the judge. Thanks – once again – to Ray Murphy for his help.



1 Kris Bryant, 3B, Chicago (N)

He dominated in the spring and has arrived in the majors. We'd be surprised if he didn't go #1 overall next year in TBL.



6 Archie Bradley, P, Arizona

A big time arm who was slowed by injury in 2014, he has something to prove in 2015. If he harnesses his control, watch out.



2 Taijuan Walker, SP, Seattle.

He hasn't quite lived up to expected stardom in the young season, but this is a dominant arm. We like dominant arms.



7 Maikel Franco, 3B, Philadelphia

The rebuilding Phillies have nothing to lose by giving him an extended look. They'll like what they see.



3 Joc Pederson, OF, Los Angeles (N)

He has star power on a big stage. The young outfielder will look good as part of a major rebuild, or in a powerful contender's lineup.



8 Francisco Lindor, SS, Cleveland

The speedy middle infielder is one of the youngest players in AAA. He should have a shot at the majors before 2015 is over, and will be there for good.



4 Blake Swihart, C, Boston

Injuries have rushed the young receiver to the majors, but he has all the tools and has a chance to make an impact.



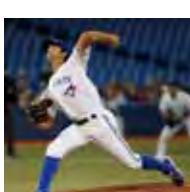
9 Carlos Rodon, P, Chicago (A)

Maybe the best lefty prospect since David Price, Rodon is another serious talent who needs to get his control under control for long term success.



5 Addison Russell, IF, Chicago (N)

At age 21, he's already capable of holding his own in the majors. Currently playing second, his long-term ticket is as a shortstop.



10 Daniel Norris, P, Toronto

Time to fear the beard once again. A breakout performer at age 22, he may be the top of the rotation starter the Jays have been looking for.

Honorable mention: R. J. Alvarez, P, Oakland; Elvis Araujo, P, Philadelphia; Dylan Bundy, P, Baltimore; Eddie Butler, P, Colorado; Byron Buxton, OF, Minnesota; Carlos Correa, SS, Houston; Delino DeShields, Jr., OF, Texas; Yimi Garcia, P, Los Angeles (N); Kendall Graveman, P, Oakland; Odubel Herrera, OF, Philadelphia; Chris Heston, P, San Francisco; Raisel Iglesias, P, Cincinnati; Jung-Ho Kang, IF, Pittsburgh; Nathan Karns, P, Tampa Bay; Keone Kela, P, Texas; James McCann, C, Detroit; Yoan Moncada, IF, Boston; Max Muncy, 1B, Oakland; Aaron Nola, P, Philadelphia; Paulo Orlando, OF, Kansas City; Roberto Osuna, P, Toronto; Henry Owens, P, Boston; Jace Peterson, 2B, Atlanta; Kevin Pillar, OF, Toronto; Kevin Plawecki, C, New York (N); Dalton Pompey, OF, Toronto; J. T. Realmuto, C, Miami; Eddie Rosario, OF, Minnesota; Carlos Sanchez, IF, Chicago (A); Miguel Sano, 3B, Minnesota; Corey Seager, IF, Los Angeles (N); Stephen Souza, Jr., OF, Tampa Bay; Cory Spangenberg, 2B, San Diego; Noah Syndergaard, P, New York (N); Michael Taylor, OF, Washington; Yasmany Tomas, OF, Arizona; Devon Travis, 2B, Toronto; Rafael Ynoa, 2B, Colorado.

editorial

by Walter Hunt

I usually write the introduction and the editor's remarks last, so I'm putting my thoughts together just as we're about to wrap up this year's book. I noted up above that this is the twentieth year in this format – laid out pages for divisions and teams. We've come a long way since the 1996 edition, both in content and in style. Some of the formatting, in view of lessons learned, is cringe-worthy (at least to my amateur discerning eye), but at least the content is good. More snarky than we are now, but insightful at least.

Another noteworthy feature of this year's book is the decision to look back at the history of each of our franchises to find successful teams and the "formula" used to build them. It's amazing to rediscover so many teams, and players, and colleagues that many of us knew in earlier years. Often, leagues like ours, or stats-based leagues which are even more common in the fan world, are ephemeral and lack history or context – every year is like beginning again. In TBL we have such longevity and continuity and (dare I say it) a common *culture* that there is some sense of history here. I think it's part of our appeal. The managers and teams are with us no more, but thanks to the *Annual* and to the Herculean efforts of Steve Stein on the TBL statistical encyclopedia, they are not forgotten. His work makes our work easier, and also makes possible features like the TBL Hall of Fame. I've known Steve for more than 25 years, and his participation is of tremendous benefit to TBL.

I am a writer by profession, which means that I am accustomed to taking my thoughts and making them into paragraphs. The two principal co-conspirators in the writing of this book – Mr. Jordan and Mr. Bloom – are also professionals, and their efforts in producing team writeups and other content for the book make it much better than it would be if I labored alone. In fact, I venture to say that without the help of those

two fine gentlemen this book would be simply *impossible* to produce. Thus, their contribution qualifies as indispensable, and I hope that in the past and as we work in future, I always take time to acknowledge their efforts. From March to May each year we all spend an inordinate amount of time putting the *Annual* together, with the final work falling to me for layout and editing – but they take time to produce top notch content that we should all appreciate. (See if you can tell who wrote what: I think we've moved much closer to uniform style.)

As we grow older and aspects of our lives interpose themselves between our responsibilities and our diversions, there have been times that many members of the league have considered parting ways from TBL. I should note that it has been many, many years since anyone left on any but the most cordial terms: as evidence of that, consider the recent return of Jack Chapman and Eric Sheffler, in each case absent from the merry band for two decades. We have said goodbye this year to Ray Murphy and Jonathan Brinkmann – but only because they could not meet the time requirements. They will certainly be missed, and perhaps they will find their way back to us.

What does the future hold for TBL? Well, a few years ago we considered contingency plans if APBA itself went under – it seems to be on an even keel now, and the cards arrive each spring as they have always done. But we grow older with each card set; it was a troubling thing when I realized that *every* player's birthday was after mine. What's more, the number of past seasons (represented by many stored card sets) grows and grows. We can say that our league will always be – but we know that takes effort. I'm glad that the current roster of managers takes such pride and makes such effort to keep it going. May it last many more years.

commissioner's report

by Paul Harrington

This is my second year as your beloved Commissioner and my second attempt at writing an inspirational bromide for the *Annual*, something to get you all ready to dive into the new season with enthusiasm and gusto. Every year our reliable editor Walter Hunt puts a lot of thought and effort into coming up with a theme to tie together every year's edition (I know, as I've seen him do it, up close).

I think it as variety to the mix if my statement veers away from his given theme, so I thought I might talk a little about some comings and goings. This past season marked the last year of the Portland Possum franchise and the participation of two of our long time managers, Ray Murphy and Jon Brinkmann. And this year marks the return of the proverbial Prodigal Son, veteran manager Eric Sheffler.

Both Ray and Jon were veteran members of TBL before I joined the league back in 1997 and both were (and are) respected and cherished managers and friends. Mr. Murphy guided the TBL for many seasons as Commissioner. His is a legacy that I could only wish for and strive to emulate. Jon is a worthy competitor in his own right. He returned to TBL after an all-too-long absence to help Ray, stressed for time, manage the Possum these last couple of years. But, unfortunately, both found that the commitments of family and work became too much to continue in TBL. I think I speak for all of TBL when I say that we wish they will find a way in the future to return to the fold, where they will be greeted with open arms.

In the meantime we have the return of a manager from the past: Eric Sheffler. Eric was the manager the first incarnation of The Statesmen (now Mark Freedman's Melrose Avengers) from their inception in 1985 through some point in the 1995 season, their second season as the

Overland Park Rangers. This was two years before your humble Commissioner joined the league at the helm of the expansion Gamblers, so I know really nothing about Mr. Sheffler, except that he was recommended very highly by the manager I spoke to regarding him.

He applied to join TBL for 2015, right after the Portland franchise had been awarded to another manager (and the less said about the brief Mike James era, or *error*, the better). That management group's funding fell through and Eric was kind enough to jump in at the last minute to resurrect the Possum as the new embodiment of the Statesmen. We, as a league, wish Eric a long and happy tenure this time around.

In closing I'd just like to say that the retirements of Ray and Jon and the return of Eric to the fold demonstrate precisely what happens every spring, when the world renews itself in the change of seasons. The passing of the long, cold winter and the return of the optimistic spring reminds us that the same things happen in our lives. Old friends leave our lives, hopefully not forever, and new (or old) friends return to the fold, hopefully for a long, long time.

Good luck to all and... PLAY BALL!!!

Paul J. Harrington
Las Vegas Gamblers
TBL Commissioner



the faith of job

by Jim Dietz

One of these years the Cubs will win
A pennant for all loyal fans;
A city has waited over sixty years for this.
Perhaps that time has become the present?

A pennant for all loyal fans
Something Ernie Banks never received
Perhaps that time has become the present
For Cub fans to have their glory.

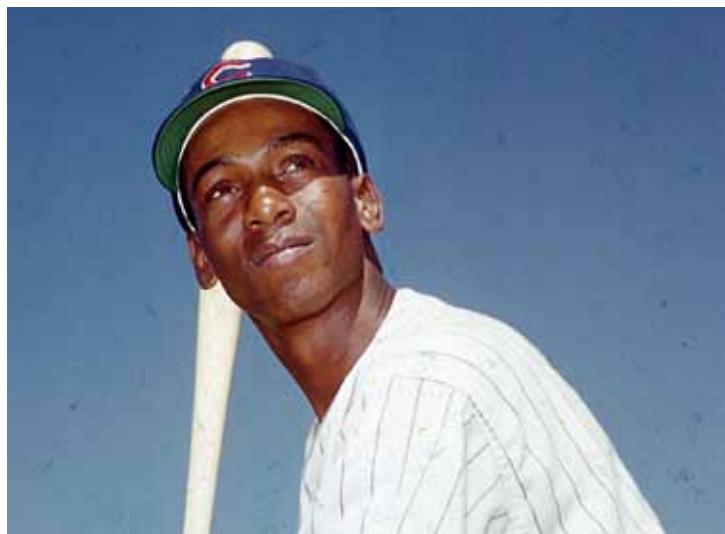
Something Ernie Banks never received--
the recognition for outstanding achievement.
For Cub fans to have their glory
In a park with daylight baseball.

The recognition for outstanding achievement,
Playing in the month of October
In a park with daylight baseball
Against an A.L. team.

Playing in the month of October
The Windy City would be so happy for a win
Against an A.L. team
And all sins of years gone by will be forgotten.

The Windy City would be so happy for a win,
(One of these years the Cubs will win)
And all sins of years gone by will be forgotten--
A city has waited over sixty years for this.

in memoriam



Ernie Banks

1931-2015

512 homers
1 team
Against 11 opponents
290 at the Friendly Confines.

12 grand slams
35 in the ninth
156 to put the Cubs in the lead
With 862 RBIs in all.

9/20 of '53 in the 8th at St. Louis for a first
8/24 eighteen years later, the last,
a two-out Shot off Jim McGlothlin to tie the game.

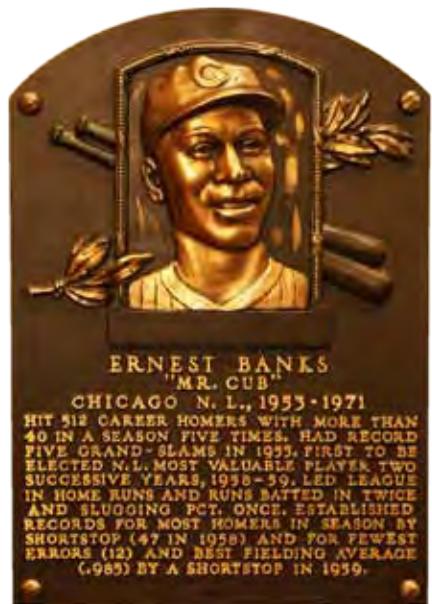
Eighteen years and none in the playoffs
The World Series
And still, he remains Mr. Cub
512 round-trippers, 11 All-Star appearances
And a pair of MVPs.

A good run, the seasons in the sun
The whipcord wrists, the toughness behind
The smile and the eyes.

And still, I'm sad, the dream
To see the Cubs in the Series,
World Champions,
Banks did not make it, though That
day is coming soon.

If they win, When they win,
Is there any doubt when the cheers faded
And the parades were over,
He would've raised fingers and said
"Let's play two."

- Jim Dietz



TBL

The Transcontinental Baseball League is a 24-team, continuous ownership APBA Baseball League that plays a 162 game season using the Master Board Game and the Computer Game. We play roughly twenty games a month from April through November. TBL uses an innovative, realistic pitching system and restricts players to real-life usage.

Our members are loyal, fun-loving and astute, and we have a high rate of retention. Now in our thirty-fourth season, our pennant races are always competitive and exciting.

TBL is always interested in adding backup managers to its roster. To get involved, send e-mail to our Commissioner, Paul Harrington, at

pjh5000@hotmail.com

or TBL's unofficial recruiter and analyst, Walter Hunt, at

hotc@walterhunt.com.

Copyright © 2015, Walter H. Hunt
(except as noted)