



New York Yankees Clips
Sunday, May 31, 2015

GETTING THE CALL

By GEORGE A. KING III

Flores makes major league debut

OAKLAND, Calif. — Having spent seven seasons in the minor leagues Ramon Flores never has been a highly regarded prospect.

But Saturday, Flores became something a lot of those prospects never turn into: a big leaguer.

Flores, a 23-year-old left-handed hitting outfielder, arrived from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre to the Yankees' O.co Coliseum clubhouse Saturday and was playing left field and batting seventh against Athletics right-hander Jesse Hahn.

YANKEES NOTES

"I am proud to be here with the Yankees," said Flores, who went 0-for-4 in the Yankees' 5-3 win. "The last 24 hours have been a lot of emotion for me. I feel like I am still dreaming. Maybe [Sunday] I will wake up. It took seven years in the minor leagues to get here."

With Slade Heathcott (strained right quadriceps) joining Jacoby Ellsbury (sprained right knee) on the disabled list, the left-handed hitting Flores, the fifth Yankee to make his major league debut this season for the club, got the call.

In 42 games at Triple-A, the Venezuela native hit .294 (47-for-160) with four homers, 15 RBIs and 15 stolen bases.

"He is used to being an every-day player, get his feet wet and see if he can be productive," said manager Joe Girardi, who shifted Brett Gardner from left to center, something he will do whenever Flores is in the lineup until Ellsbury returns. "His ceiling is high offensively and defensively. Just give us good at-bats, and I think he has the ability to do that."

Heathcott will leave the club and have his leg examined by team physician Dr. Chris Ahmad.

Gardner, a former center fielder who was moved to left last year when Jacoby Ellsbury signed, started in center field for the first time Saturday night after making 41 starts and appearing in 44 games in left this season. He went 0-for-5



HIGH FIVE: Masahiro Tanaka has a pregame greeting for Chris Capuano (26), the man whose rotation spot he will take when he returns for the Yankees to start against the Mariners on Wednesday. Getty Images

with two strikeouts.

"I think he will be fine, I don't think it will be a problem," Girardi said of Gardner in center, where he appeared in 308 games.

➤ Inserting Flores in the lineup wasn't the only change Girardi made. **Jose Pirela** filled in for the ice-cold **Stephen Drew** at second base. He went 1-for-3 and scored the Yankees' second run before Drew took over in the bottom of the seventh inning, with the Bombers up, 4-3.

"Have we made a position change? No, not necessarily," Girardi said.

Drew, hitless in 19 at-bats coming in, fouled out in his only at-bat and carries a .157 average and a .225 on-base average.

"Anyone can earn playing time, that's

the way it's always been," Girardi.

In limited playing time, Pirela is hitting .212 (7-for-33) in 13 games.

➤ Barring another injury between Saturday and Wednesday, **Masahiro Tanaka** will start against the Mariners in Seattle Wednesday.

That means **Chris Capuano**, who started Friday night in a 6-2 loss at Oakland, won't make his next scheduled start and will watch Tanaka take the ball that night.

So, where does that leave the veteran lefty who was re-signed to a one-year deal for \$5 million, suffered a quadriceps injury in the first spring training game and didn't come off the DL until May 17 and is 0-3 with an alarming 6.39 ERA in three starts?

"There is no need to make a deci-

sion right now," said Girardi, who will do that Wednesday.

Tanaka played long toss in the outfield before Saturday's game.

Girardi isn't saying and Capuano stated the situation isn't playing mind games with him.

"I never worry too much about that," Capuano said after throwing a season-high 5 1/3 innings against the A's in Friday night's 6-2 loss in which he allowed four runs [three] earned and six hits. "That stuff usually works itself out."

➤ Right-handed reliever **Chris Martin** threw a scoreless inning at Triple-A on Saturday night. Martin has been on the disabled list since May 9 with tendinitis in the right elbow.

ON DECK

VS. A'S

SUNDAY — 4:05 P.M.

RHP Adam Warren

(3-3, 3.91) vs.

RHP Jesse Chavez

(1-5, 2.44)

Game on YES, WFAN

(660 AM, 101.9 FM)

INSIDE THE MATCHUPS

YANKEES: After back-to-back losses, Warren was victorious in his last start, when he allowed one earned run over 6 1/3 innings in a 5-1 triumph over the Royals last Tuesday.

ATHLETICS: Chavez has been victimized by poor run support, as the A's have been shut out in three of his seven starts. He blanked the Tigers through eight innings last Tuesday in his previous outing, but as his luck would have it, he wound up on the wrong end of a 1-0 loss.

STAT SO?

YANKEES: Brian McCann is one of two Yankees to homer in four straight games as a catcher, joining Mike Stanley (1993).

ATHLETICS: Oakland leads the major leagues with 52 errors after Saturday's loss.

Joe draws up Yankee lineup without Drew

OAKLAND — Stephen Drew was not in the Yankee lineup Saturday night, replaced at second base by rookie Jose Pirela. Is this a sign of things to come?

Not according to Joe Girardi. The manager said it was nothing more than a routine day off for the struggling Drew, who entered the game against Oakland with a slash line of .158/.226/.303 with five home runs and 15 RBI in 45 games.

"I'll go day by day," Girardi said. "Anyone can earn playing time. That's the bottom line in this game, and that's the way it's always been. Have we made a position switch? No, not necessarily."

Drew's batting average ranked last among the 169 major-league hitters with enough at-bats to qualify for a batting title, technically making him the worst hitter in baseball this season. His .529 OPS had him 168th, ahead of only light-hitting Indians shortstop Jose Ramirez.

"I'd like to be doing better up there at the plate; I've got to also just trust my talent and know it's a



matter of time," Drew said.

Drew came off the bench Saturday and went 0-for-1, making him hitless in his last 20 at-bats, part of a 2-for-36 slide since May 20. Pirela, who went 1-for-3 Saturday, entered the game only 6-for-30 (.200) with one extra-base hit since being called up in early May, but his sporadic appearances could be part of the problem.

"It's difficult for young players," Girardi said. "That's why a lot of times you see utility guys as older players that have experience because they're just more familiar with it."

Saturday's move might not be an official passing of the torch, but should Pirela begin to produce, it could result in a reduced role for the 32-year-old. As a veteran with experience at multiple positions, Drew could ultimately prove to be the perfect utility infielder.

"I can't worry about that," Drew said of his job status. "I'm just worried about what I can control, and preparation and everything that I'm doing go into it."

RAMON GETS RIGHT TO IT

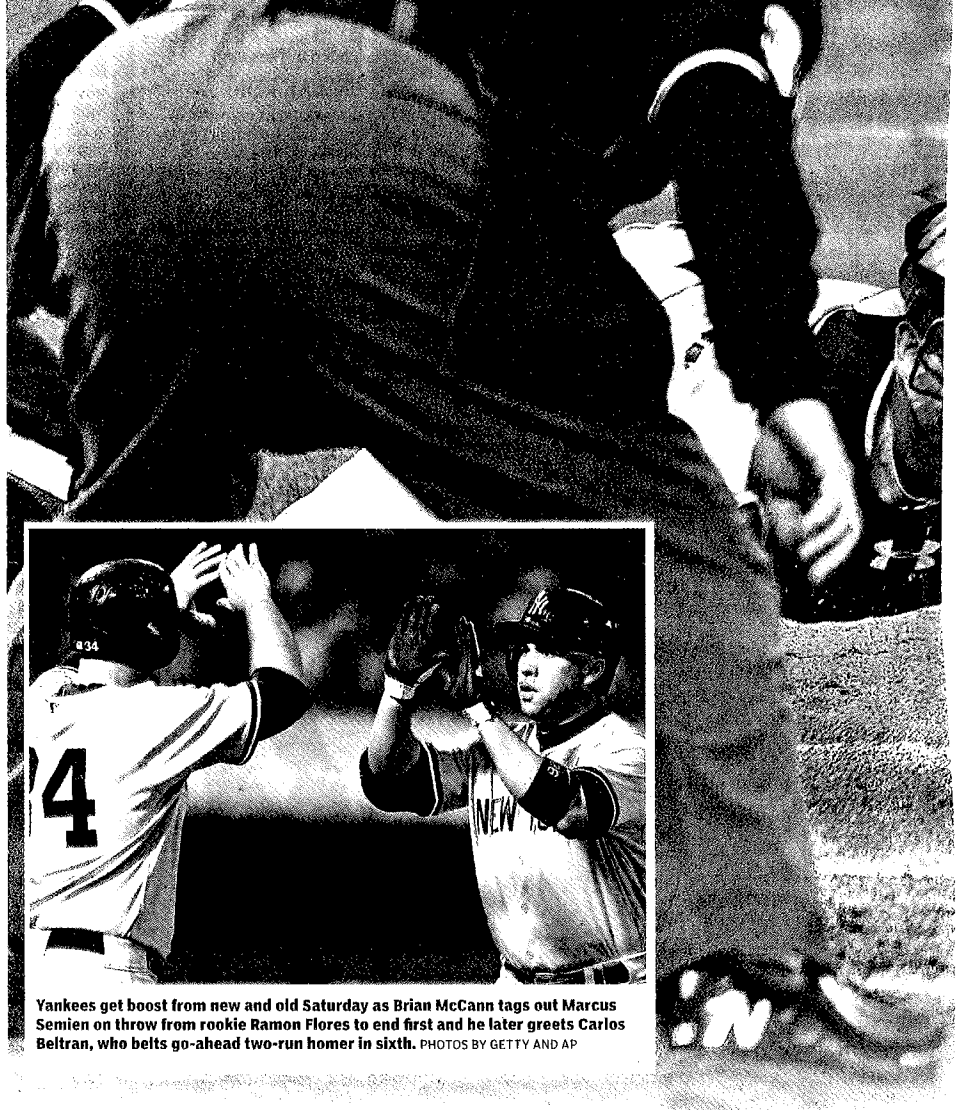
Ramon Flores joined the Yankees on Saturday as Slade Heathcott was placed on the 15-day disabled list with a strained right quad. Flores, who put up a slash line of .294/.389/.425 with four homers and 15 RBI in 42 games at Triple-A this season, was in the lineup batting seventh and playing left field.

He went 0-for-4 but sparked in the field, throwing out Marcus Semien on the plate on a one-hopper to Brian McCann in the first inning and making a diving catch in foul territory in the second.

"The last 24 hours have had a lot of emotions for me," said Flores, who slept in Philadelphia Friday night, then took an early Saturday flight to the Bay Area, connecting in Minneapolis. "I feel I'm still dreaming. Maybe tomorrow I'll wake up and say, 'Oh, I'm here in the major leagues!' It's been seven years in the minors, working very hard to get here."

Flores, 23, has been in the Yankees system since 2009. His arrival meant a return to center field for Brett Gardner, who had played all 41 of his games this season in left field.

BOMBERS



Yankees get boost from new and old Saturday as Brian McCann tags out Marcus Semien on throw from rookie Ramon Flores to end first and he later greets Carlos Beltran, who belts go-ahead two-run homer in sixth. PHOTOS BY GETTY AND AP

BY MARK FEINSAND
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

OAKLAND — Carlos Beltran turned his season around in May, so why not provide one more big moment before we get ready to turn the calendars to June?

Beltran's two-run homer in the sixth propelled the Yankees to a 5-3 win over the A's, snapping their two-game losing streak against the American League's worst team and giving the Bombers a chance for a split of the four-game series at the Coliseum.

The veteran also added an RBI single

in the eighth inning to give the bullpen a two-run cushion.

While some players can't wait for May to end — we're looking at you, Chris Young (.132) and Stephen Drew (.143) — it's been a great month for Beltran. The 38-year-old is hitting .308 with four homers and 14 RBI in 24 games, putting his brutal April (.162, no home runs) behind him as he has hit safely in 21 of those contests.

Brian McCann's average has dipped, but the catcher found his power stroke

this month, driving in a team-high 21 runs after his first-inning RBI Saturday night.

If there was a negative to Saturday's victory, it was Nathan Eovaldi. The hard-throwing righthander failed to make it out of the fifth, allowing three runs on a season-high 11 hits over 4.2 innings, the second time in three starts he hasn't gotten through five frames.

The bullpen picked him up in spectacular fashion as Chasen Shreve (2-1), Justin Wilson, Dellin Betances and

YANKEES	5
A'S	3

BELT OAKLAND

Carlos' HR, 3 RBI back bullpen's 'A' game



EXTRA INNINGS

STAT OF THE DAY

5 Ramon Flores became the fifth Yankee this season to make his major-league debut.

TEST YOUR YANKEES IQ

Brian McCann homered in four straight games between Tuesday and Friday. Who was the last Yankees catcher to go deep in five straight games?

NEXT GAME

A's Sunday, 4:05 p.m.
RHP Adam Warren (3-3, 3.91 ERA) vs. RHP Jesse Chavez (1-5, 2.44 ERA); TV: YES

A: Bill Dickey (1937)

Andrew Miller (15th save) combined for 4.1 scoreless innings, allowing only one Oakland batter to reach base while striking out eight.

The win snapped the Yankees' four-game losing streak at the Coliseum, giving them only their second win here in their last 13 games.

Adam Warren will try to earn the split on Sunday, starting the series finale against fellow righthander Jesse Chavez.

McCann's two-out RBI single in the first inning got the Yankees out to a lead against righthander Jesse Hahn. McCann now has an eight-game hitting streak, batting .385 (10-for-26) with four home runs

and 12 RBI during that stretch.

Eovaldi gave up three hits in the bottom of the first, but a solid throw by rookie Ramon Flores — in the first inning of his major-league career — on Josh Reddick's single nailed Marcus Semien at the plate to end the inning, keeping the A's off the board. Oakland came out swinging again in the third, loading the bases as the top three hitters in the lineup each singled to start the frame. Billy Butler lifted a sacrifice fly to tie the game, then Reddick delivered an RBI single, putting the A's ahead by a run.

Semien added to the lead with an RBI single in the fourth, the 10th hit allowed to

that point by Eovaldi.

Hahn settled in after the first, retiring 10 of 11 batters while facing the minimum thanks to a Jose Pirela double play. Pirela reached on a two-out infield hit in the fifth before Brett Lawrie dropped a Brett Gardner line drive, putting two men on for the Yankees.

Chase Headley came through with a single up the middle, scoring Pirela to trim the lead to 3-2.

Eovaldi allowed his 11th hit with two out in the fifth, which proved to be all Girardi could take. The manager lifted his starter after 96 laborious pitches, turning the one-run game over to Shreve.

Beltran put the Yankees in the lead with his two-run blast in the sixth, his fourth homer of the season.

Shreve did his part to hold the momentum, striking out the side in the sixth after Beltran gave the Yankees a lead. The lefty fanned all four batters he faced, helping fill the middle innings that have become a recent problem for Girardi.

Wilson recorded the first two outs in the seventh before Betances came in and struck out Butler. Beltran tacked on an insurance run in the eighth, then Betances fanned two during a scoreless eighth before Miller closed out the win.

YANKS ANSWER

SEE YA! Carlos Beltran blasts a two-run homer in the sixth inning of the Yankees' 5-3 win over the Athletics on Saturday night in Oakland, Calif., and gets congratulated afterward by Brian McCann (inset).

USA TODAY Sports; Getty Images (inset)



Carlos' 2-run HR, bullpen ignite Bombers

By GEORGE A. KING III

YANKEES	5	Boxscore Page 64
ATHLETICS	3	

OAKLAND, Calif. — The East Bay dump of a stadium called O.co Coliseum has been a torture chamber for the Yankees in recent years since they won once in a dozen tries entering Saturday night's action against the Athletics.

Most of the times the teams have faced off, the A's were a good club, but in the first two tilts of a four-game series the Yankees lost to the worst team in the AL and looked very bad doing it.

While they didn't dominate the A's, the Yankees managed to overcome Nathan Eovaldi's shaky outing to post a 5-3 victory that was witnessed by 25,223.

"I know they are a last place team this year but they haven't been. You could argue that the first four months last year they were the best team in baseball," manager Joe Girardi said of the A's.

The Yankees finish the series Sunday before opening a three-game series with the Mariners in Seattle on Monday night.

Carlos Beltran's two-run homer in the sixth erased a one-run deficit and his RBI single in the eighth provided the insur-

ance, but equally as important was the bullpen work of lefties Chasen Shreve and Justin Wilson. They pitched before Dellin Betances surfaced with two outs and the bases empty in the seventh.

Shreve, who replaced Eovaldi in the fifth, fanned all four batters he faced. Wilson retired the first two hitters in the seventh and turned it over to Betances.

The Yankees' second win in 13 games at O.co and fifth in 17 games anywhere, allowed them to stay one game ahead of the second-place Rays in the AL East.

Beltran's homer to center came with one out, Brian McCann on first and the Yankees trailing, 3-2. It was Beltran's fourth of the season and put the Yankees in position to ask Betances and Andrew Miller to protect a late-game lead that went to 5-3 in the eighth on Beltran's RBI single.

Chase Headley also went 3-for-5.

Shreve replaced starter Eovaldi with two outs and one on in the fifth and fanned pinch-hitter Mark Canha. The

left-handed Shreve followed that by striking out all three batters he faced in the sixth. Wilson retired the two hitters he faced and Betances whiffed three of the five he faced. He got Canha swinging at a 99-mph fastball.

Eovaldi did well to allow just three runs, because in 4²/₃ innings the right-hander gave up 11 hits.

"I battled tonight," Eovaldi said. "They were all singles but I still have to do a better job."

The Yankees hoped Eovaldi would be able to build off his last outing when he gave up a run and eight hits to the Royals in seven innings. But the hard-throwing right-hander struggled to get out of the fourth inning, when the A's had nine singles and a 2-1 lead.

That advantage went to 3-1 when Marcus Semien's ground single through the right side with two outs scored Eric Sogard, who opened the inning with a single to center.

Singles by Billy Burns, Semien and Stephen Vogt started the third inning and dropped Eovaldi into deep trouble while leading, 1-0.

Billy Butler's fly to center plated Burns and Josh Reddick's single to center scored Semien and put the A's up, 2-1.

Ramon Flores' first contributions to the Yankees were made by his left arm and the glove on the right hand in his initial big league game.

With the Yankees leading, 1-0, in the first inning, the A's had runners on first and second and two outs when the left-handed hitting Josh Reddick sliced a single to left. Flores charged the ball and his one-hop throw to the plate beat Semien for the final out.

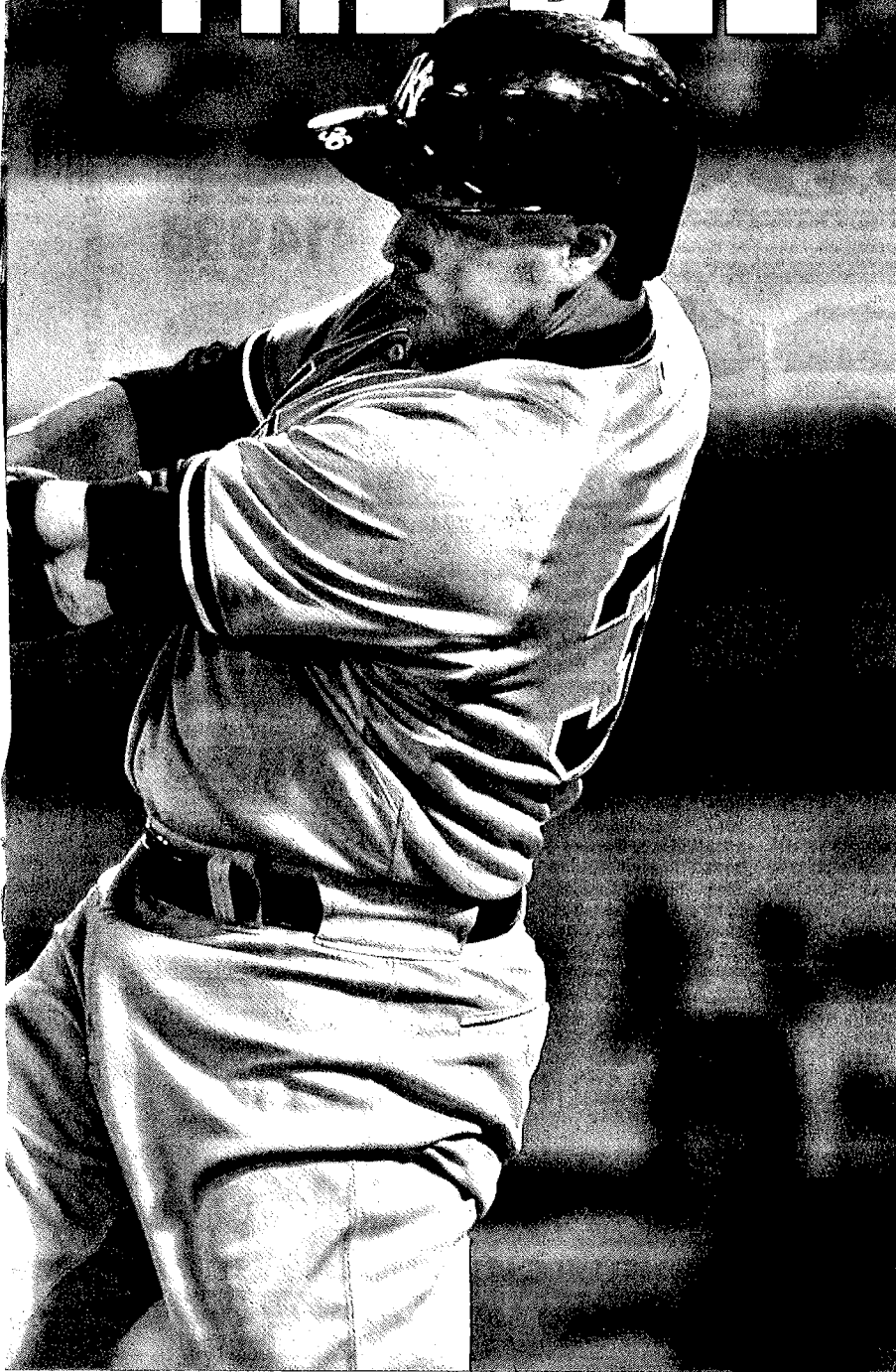
The next inning Flores, who went 0-for-4, made a sprawling catch of Eric Sogard's foul ball down the left field line for the second out of the frame.

Headley's one-out single in the first was followed by Alex Rodriguez serving a 0-2 breaking ball from Jesse Hahn into center field. After Mark Teixeira whiffed on a 2-2 breaking ball out of the strike zone, McCann stayed hot with an RBI single.

The single extended McCann's consecutive game hitting streak to eight.

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THE BELT



Vet starting to live up to his past

OAKLAND, Calif. — Carlos Beltran sat at his locker in the visiting clubhouse at O.co Coliseum methodically wiping a rag over the barrel of his bats.

He was cleaning off the marks made by previous batted balls.

"It's something I just like to do," Beltran explained before the Yankees' 5-3 win over the Athletics on Saturday night. "I like to have a clean bat to see where I hit the baseball."

You could say Beltran was wiping away the disappointments of this season. And you can be sure the fastball he crushed to center in the sixth inning off A's starer Jesse Hahn left a mark on the sweetest spot of the bat.

It was the best ball Beltran has hit all season, and it carried over the center-field fence for a two-run home run that turned a 3-2 deficit into a 4-3 lead.

Beltran added an RBI single in the eighth as the Yankees came away with a much-needed road win. The Yankees had dropped the first two games here against the lowly A's, making them losers in nine of their last 10 road games.

This was a game the Yankees really had no right to win because starter Nathan Eovaldi gave up 11 hits over 4 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings, but he was fortunate the A's made a bevy of base-running mistakes and played all-around terrible baseball.

The home run by Beltran was just his fourth of the season and marked the sixth straight game in which the Yankees have homered as they continue to live and die with the long ball.

That's because the Yankees are hitting .245 as a team.

The Yankees live by the home run and are tied with the NL West leading Dodgers for second place with 63 home runs. The AL West-leading Astros top all of baseball with 68 home runs.

This was a most interesting night for the Yankees in many ways as manager Joe Girardi finally got around to sitting slumping second baseman Stephen Drew, replacing him with young Jose Pirela.

"Have we made a position switch, no, not necessarily," Girardi said.

Drew is hitting .157. It's time to



Kevin Kernan

take a seat and serve the Yankees as a backup infielder. Drew entered the game late as a defensive replacement for Pirela.

On Friday Girardi said of Drew, "It just doesn't seem that he gets the rewards that he should when he hits the ball hard and that's frustrating."

Drew needs to make adjustments and focus on hitting the ball the other way to get back into some sort of a groove or the Yankees would be better off without him in the lineup.

Anyone can hit .157. Over the last two years, Drew is hitting .154. That's a lot of tough luck.

Drew said he is not worried about losing his job.

"I trust my talent that in the long run it is going to come out," Drew said.

"You go through these things as a player. Every player has done it. It makes you stronger. It's just one of those years.

"Numbers sometimes don't tell you how you are really hitting. This year has been frustrating at times. For the most part I've had productive at-bats, just no luck."

Girardi did say this was a rest day for Drew, but also said Pirela can earn more playing time.

Clearly, Drew could wind up losing his job if Pirela produces.

But that becomes less important issue for the Yankees if Beltran becomes a run producer again.

Beltran has shown signs of life this month, batting over .300 with 13 RBIs and all four of his home runs. He has hit safely in 17 of his last 18 games as he has raised his average to .245.

Beltran was removed for defense in the eighth with Chris Young coming in to play right.

Girardi is going to have to squeeze everything he can out of Beltran while trying to keep him healthy. Wipe away the bad results and win.

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FUTURE CORE?

Yankees' minor-league system finally is beginning to pay some dividends

BY BRIAN HEYMAN
Special to Newsday

It was just past 10 a.m. and the clubhouse still was mostly empty, but one player had his suitcase stretched open on the floor in front of his locker next to the doors. Slade Heathcott added a few items to take on a trip with the team that owns the biggest brand name in the game.

Here he was at Yankee Stadium on Wednesday, a 24-year-old centerfielder starting his eighth day in the majors, standing in a room that once housed the Yankees' homegrown Core Four of Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera, Andy Pettitte and Jorge Posada.

"It's been surreal at times," Heathcott said. "I dreamed of being in the big leagues, being here. After I signed and started learning about the background and the history a little bit more, guys like Jeter and Mo and Pettitte, Jorge, guys like that who have come through this locker room and the Yankees' system, it makes you respect being here a lot more."

That system came under fire in recent years for a lack of homegrown help to summon to the Bronx. But Heathcott, a 2009 first-round pick, arrived from Triple-A on May 20 and provided a .353 boost in place of the injured Jacoby Ellsbury before going on the DL himself yesterday with a quadriceps strain. Jacob Lindgren, a 22-year-old lefty reliever, arrived last Sunday, less than a year after being drafted in the second round. And there's more to come this year or next.

They will have to prove themselves, but the Yankees finally appear to have some legitimate prospects.

"I think the system has been deep, but I think it's been at the lower levels," Joe Girardi said. "Well, these lower-level kids are now getting to the upper levels. And that's why I think

you'll start to see contributions from them."

So the wait is on for kids such as 21-year-old righthanded starter Luis Severino at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and 23-year-old rightfielder Aaron Judge at Double-A Trenton. They are the Yankees' top two prospects and two of the top 55 in the game, according to Baseball America.

Severino, who signed in 2012 as an international free agent, went 2-2 with a 3.32 ERA and 48 strikeouts in 38 innings in eight starts for Trenton before his promotion this past week.

"He has a pretty live arm," said Lindgren, his Trenton teammate last season.

Judge, an athletic 6-7, 275-pounder who was a 2013 first-round selection, entered the weekend at .295 with seven homers and 27 RBIs.

"Very, very high ceiling," Chase Headley said, having seen him in spring training. "I thought he was a really good hitter, not just a power hitter."

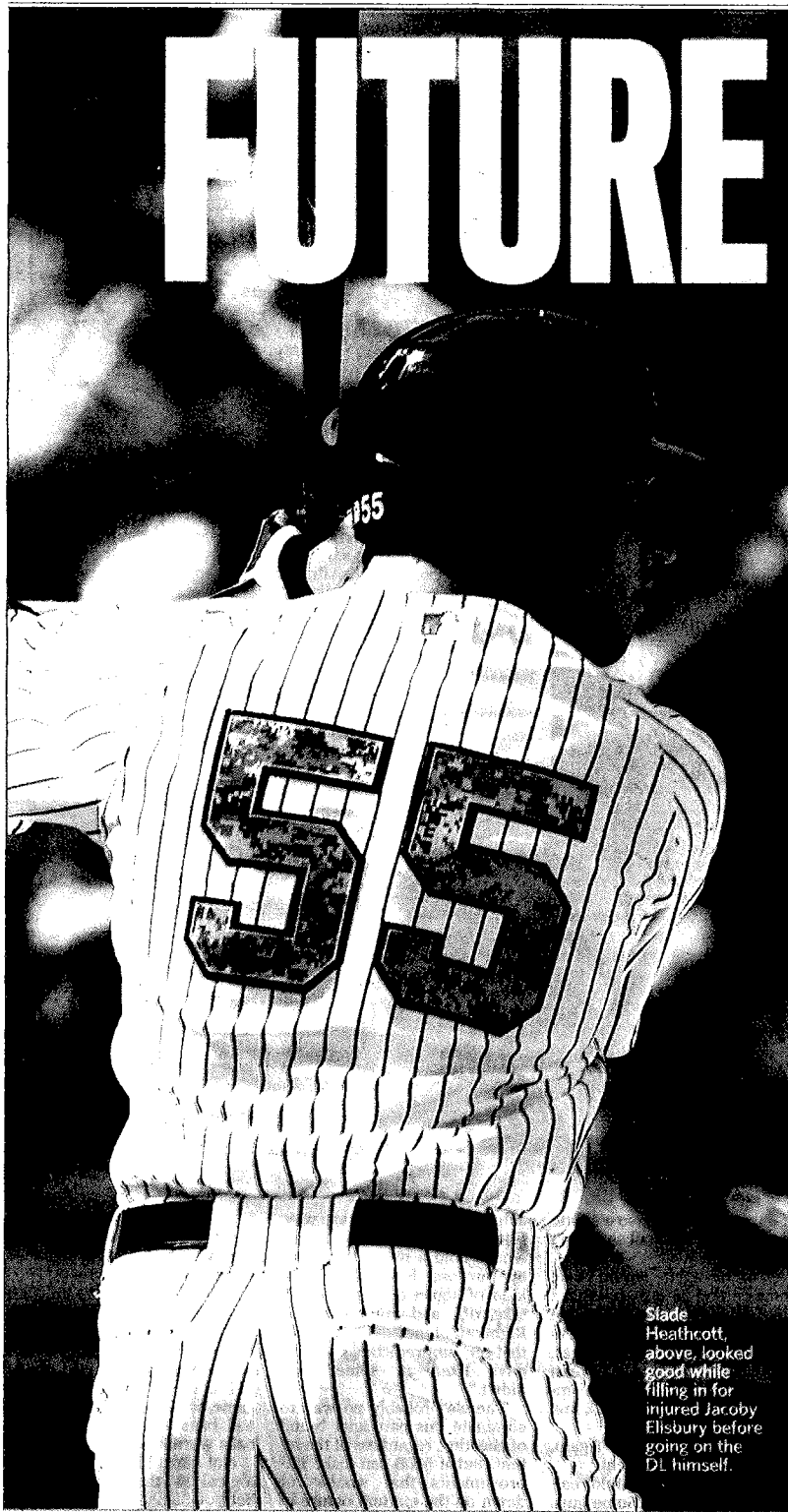
Rob Refsnyder, taken in the fifth round in 2012, is another on the watch list. The outfielder-turned-second baseman stood at .286 through Friday's play. He had 11 errors, but seven occurred in his first 19 games.

"He's steadily improving every day," Heathcott said.

Third baseman Eric Jagielo, another 2013 first-rounder who was at .292 with nine homers and 32 RBIs, and first baseman Greg Bird, out lately with a shoulder injury, are two names Girardi mentioned who are at Trenton. Heathcott also mentioned top catching prospect Gary Sanchez and outfielder Jake Cave at Double-A and outfielder Mason Williams at Triple-A, among others.

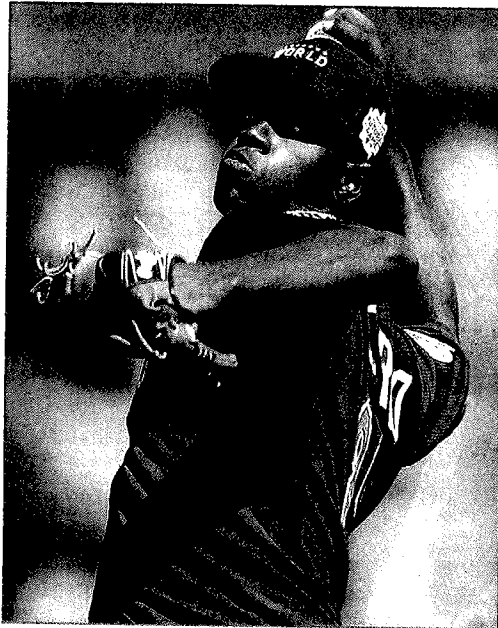
"There's a ton of talent down there," Heathcott said.

Heathcott took the long way to the Bronx, slowed by shoulder and knee injuries. The Yankees non-tendered him after



Slade Heathcott, above, looked good while filling in for injured Jacoby Ellsbury before going on the DL himself.

NEWSDAY SUNDAY, MAY 31, 2015
KATHLEEN MALONE/VAN DYKE



GETTY IMAGES/HANNAH FOLEN

Luis Severino could help the Yankees in the near future.

NEW WAVE

How some of the Yankees' brightest prospects are faring.

SLADE HEATHCOTT, CF

At Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (AAA)
.285 BA, .335 OBP,
.358 SLG

With Yankees

.353 BA, .353 OBP, .588 SLG

AARON JUDGE, RF

At Trenton (AA)
.298 BA, 7 HRs, .358 OBP,
.497 SLG

JACOB LINDGREN, LHP

At Scranton/WB
22 IP, 29 K, 1.23 ERA

With Yankees

3 IP, 2 ER, 3 K

ROB REFSNYDER, 2B/RF

At Scranton/WB
.286 BA, .362 OBP,
.393 SLG

LUIS SEVERINO, RHP

At Trenton
38 IP, 48 K, 2.39 ERA
Games through Friday

last season before bringing him back on a minor-league deal. In the past, he had to adjust his attitude and put an alcohol issue behind him. Heathcott said he no longer

attends AA meetings.

"I've made a lot of mistakes in my past," said Heathcott, who was replaced on the roster by outfielder Ramon Flores yesterday. "I have attended AA meetings on the request of the Yankees' behalf. You know, we're all young. Whether we're 20 or whether we're 40, we make mistakes and we learn from them.

"There were some mistakes that I've learned from in my past to realize that there's a lot more in life than the party. It's just something I had to mature from."

Lindgren took his sharp slider to the bullpen as a Mississippi State junior, then became the first Yankee to debut within one year of being drafted since Deion Sanders in 1989. Lindgren opened with two scoreless innings against Kansas City on Monday before yielding two runs in one inning in Oakland Friday night. He admits his command still needs some polish but would love to shine it in the majors.

"You appreciate this more because all your hard work paid off," Lindgren said. "But it's not over. They say, 'Once you make it up, it's hard to stay up.' So that's why I want to continue to prove myself and prove what I can do."



New York Yankees grab much-needed win over Oakland Athletics

Carlos Beltran clubs go-ahead two-run shot to give Bombers a victory out west

05/31/2015 - By The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) -- Carlos Beltran hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the sixth, Brian McCann and Chase Headley drove in runs and the New York Yankees ended a four-game losing streak in Oakland, beating the Athletics 5-3 Saturday night.

McCann drove in a run in his eighth straight to help the Yankees win their fourth in six games. Headley had three hits and Alex Rodriguez hit safely in his ninth straight, and in his last 14 starts.

Josh Reddick had three hits and drove in a run for the A's, who had a two-game win streak snapped. The A's have still won five of their last eight following a four-game losing streak. Billy Butler and Marcus Semien drove in runs.

Jesse Hahn (2-5), who threw his first complete-game and shutout in his last start, gave up four runs - three earned - on seven hits over six innings. He walked one and struck out four.

Chasen Shreve (2-1) struck out all four batters he faced to earn the win. Andrew Miller pitched the ninth for his 15th consecutive save.

Yankees starter Nathan Eovaldi lasted 4 2-3 innings, allowing three runs on 11 hits. He did not walk a batter and struck out two.

Beltran added an RBI single in the eighth.

TRAINER'S ROOM:

Yankees: RHP Chris Martin (right elbow) threw a scoreless inning with the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders Saturday, his first rehab appearance. He threw

14 pitches, nine for strikes. . OF Slade Heathcott (right quad strain) was placed on the disabled list 10 days after making his major league debut.

Athletics: LHP Eric O'Flaherty (strained left shoulder) allowed an unearned run on one hit in one inning with the Single-A Stockton Ports in his first rehab appearance. . LHP Sean Doolittle (left shoulder sprain) returned to the disabled list three days after making his season debut.

UP NEXT:

Yankees: RHP Adam Warren (3-3, 3.91) will start against the Athletics in the series finale Sunday. He's thrown three consecutive quality starts. In two previous appearances, both relief, in Oakland, Warren has not allowed a run in eight innings.

Athletics: RHP Jesse Chavez (1-5, 2.44) hopes his luck begins to change when he starts Sunday against the Yankees. He has the lowest run support (1.20) in the majors since his first start on April 23 and has received no run support in four of his first seven starts. He's 3-0 in four games against the Yankees.

Yanks rally past A's on Beltran's clutch HR

By Bryan Hoch and Jane Lee / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 31, 2015

OAKLAND -- [Carlos Beltran](#) hit a go-ahead two-run homer in the sixth inning and added an RBI single in the eighth, guiding the Yankees to a 5-3 victory over the A's at the Coliseum on Saturday night and putting New York in position to split the four-game series in Sunday's matinee.

Beltran's one-out shot to straightaway center field off A's starter [Jesse Hahn](#) was his fourth of the year, and just the third home run allowed by Hahn in 59 2/3 innings.

"It's great. At the end of the day, it's about wins," Beltran said. "It feels good every time we're capable of helping the team to win a ballgame. Today was a good day for me, at the same time it was a good day for the ballclub. We needed this one. Tomorrow we have a chance to leave this place with an even series."

Hahn allowed four runs in six innings, though one was unearned, as the A's defensive lapses in the fifth proved costly.

"I thought I was on a roll there," Hahn said. "That one pitch kind of **ruined the night** for me. Tried to go sinker, down and away there, and it flattened out on me. I got under it, hung it, and it was a good pitch for him to drive."

The A's tallied 12 hits, all singles -- 11 of them coming in four-plus innings against righty [Nathan Eovaldi](#), including two each from [Marcus Semien](#) and [Josh Reddick](#), who both drove in runs. But they stranded eight in the loss, as [Andrew Miller](#) worked a perfect ninth for his 15th save in as many chances.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Beltran's big swing: The veteran outfielder continued his hot May by slugging his fourth homer of the year, a line-drive two-run shot with [Brian McCann](#) aboard. Beltran has hit safely in 17 of his last 18 games and has 377 homers, tying [Mark Teixeira](#) for fourth-most all time by a switch-hitter. The go-ahead homer took Eovaldi off the hook for the decision after his 4 2/3-inning, 11-hit outing. [More >](#)

"It's just hitting, is what it is," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "It takes guys sometimes a while to get going, to feel good about their swings, and to mechanically be sound. And that's where he is."

Singles night: The A's had 14 baserunners, but just three runs to show for it. They outhit the Yankees, 12-10, but all 12 hits were singles. The A's had seven singles, but no runs by the time [Billy Butler](#) stepped to the plate with the bases loaded and no outs in the third, after Semien was thrown out at the plate trying to score on Reddick's first-inning single. Butler could only manage

a sacrifice fly, though. Reddick followed with an RBI base hit, and that's all they would get in the inning.

"One extra base hit maybe breaks it open a little bit more," said A's manager Bob Melvin. "We were getting good at-bats, we were getting our share of hits, but just not to the point where we're knocking runs in early."

Flores shows flair: Making his Major League debut in left field, Ramon Flores wasted little time introducing himself to his teammates. Flores came up firing on Reddick's first-inning single, throwing home to nab Semien for an assist. Flores then contributed a sharp play in the second, tumbling near the bullpen mound to snare an Eric Sogard pop fly.

"It was exciting, those two plays that I made," Flores said. "I'm proud to play for the Yankees. Thank you to the Yankees for this opportunity. I'm going to try to play hard every day, every time when the manager puts me in the lineup, just play hard."

Glove story: The A's allowed their Major League-leading 31st unearned run in the fifth, when Jose Pirela reached on a two-out single that second baseman Sogard couldn't handle. Brett Gardner's ensuing line drive went off the glove of third baseman Brett Lawrie, and Chase Headley capitalized on the error by notching an RBI single. It was the A's 52nd error in as many games this season.

"It happens," Girardi said. "The guys are really good at what they do, but sometimes you don't make the plays, and those extra outs -- we've talked about it all year long -- can lead to runs."

WHAT'S NEXT

Yankees: Adam Warren (3-3, 3.91 ERA) draws the start on Sunday as the Yankees wrap up their four-game series at the Coliseum. The right-hander has recorded three straight quality starts, beating the Royals his last time out. First pitch is scheduled for 4:05 p.m. ET.

Athletics: Jesse Chavez (1-5, 2.44) takes the mound for the A's on Sunday at the Coliseum at 1:05 p.m. PT. The right-hander allowed just one unearned run in eight innings in the A's 1-0 loss to the Tigers on Tuesday, but was the losing pitcher.



Rapid Reaction: Yankees 5, Athletics 3

By Wallace Matthews - Sunday, May 31, 2015

OAKLAND -- The New York Yankees will not get swept in Oakland. That might not have seemed like much of an accomplishment three days ago, when they were riding the wave of a three-game sweep of the Kansas City Royals and the Athletics were lugging around the worst record in the American League.

But things changed over the course of two games here, both losses, and when the Yankees fell behind again, 3-1, after four innings with a struggling Nathan Eovaldi on the mound, another humiliating sweep looked like a better possibility for their weekend in the Bay Area.

But a rejuvenated Carlos Beltran came to their rescue with two big hits and three RBIs, the bullpen righted itself after a rough stretch, and the A's inability to get a long ball, or a timely hit -- they had a dozen singles tonight -- resulted in a tidy 5-3 win at O.co Coliseum.

Now, the Yankees can think about leaving here with a split before moving on to Seattle after Sunday afternoon's finale.

Belting: Finishing off a strong May, Carlos Beltran drove an 0-1 fastball from A's starter Jesse Hahn over the centerfield fence with a runner aboard in the sixth to give the Yankees a 4-3 lead. It was Beltran's fourth homer of the season, all of which came in May when he has batted .308 and driven in 14 runs. Beltran added an insurance run with an RBI single in the eighth to make it 5-3. By comparison, Beltran hit just .162 with 7 RBIs in April.

Stingy pen: Yankee relievers combined to throw 4 1/3 innings of scoreless, one-hit ball. Standouts were Chasen Shreve (four batters, four strikeouts and the win), Dellin Betances (1 1/3 IP, 1 H, 3 Ks) and Andrew Miller, who picked up his 15th save.

Cameo appearance: For the second time in his last three starts, Nathan Eovaldi was unable to complete five innings, allowing 11 hits and three runs -- and throwing 96 pitches -- before manager Joe Girardi replaced him with Chasen Shreve with two out in the fifth. It was only due to the inefficiency of the A's

offense that Eovaldi escaped without a bucketful of earned runs, and probably a loss, in this one.

Hit parade: The A's collected eight hits off Eovaldi before he recorded eight outs, but somehow managed not to score on the first seven of them. Finally, Billy Butler drove in Oakland's first run with a bases-loaded sacrifice fly, and Josh Reddick knocked in the second with a single -- hit No. 8 -- to give the A's a 2-1 third inning lead.

Deja Vu All Over Again: Brian McCann knocked in the first run of the game with a single to right in the first inning, driving in Chase Headley (single). It was the eighth straight game in which McCann had at least one hit and one RBI, tying the Yankees record for such a feat by a catcher. The other backstop to do it? A fellow named Lawrence Peter Berra in 1956.

Young gun: In the first inning of his first major league game, Ramon Flores, who flew all day from Scranton to get here, picked up his first big-league assist, gunning down Marcus Semien at the plate on Reddick's single to left. In truth, Semien probably should have been held; Flores charged the ball well and had a relatively short throw home. And it was accurate enough that McCann was able to apply a sweep tag to end the inning without the A's scoring despite getting three hits off Eovaldi. Flores also made a fine sliding catch of Eric Sogard's foul pop in the second.

Chalk player: Chase Headley laid down a bizarrely perfect bunt in the seventh, the ball literally riding the third-base line as if it were a rail, zigging into and out of foul territory along the way, before coming to a stop on the chalk for a base hit as A's catcher Stephen Vogt looked on in disbelief.

Tomorrow: This four-game series wraps up with Adam Warren (3-3, 3.91) facing RHP Jesse Chavez (1-5, 2.44), first pitch at 4:05 p.m. ET (YES).

Yankees halt skid, beat Oakland Athletics 5-3 | Rapid Reaction

Brendan Kutny | on May 31, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. — Here's what you need to know about the **Yankees'** 5-3 win over the A's at O.co Coliseum Saturday night.

WHAT IT MEANS: No losing streak. The Yankees (26-24) stopped their two-game skid against baseball's worst team from turning into a longer slide, and they maintained a one-game lead over Tampa Bay, which beat Baltimore Saturday.

TURNING POINT: Carlos Beltran's sixth-inning two-run blast gave the Yankees a 4-3 lead. It was Beltran's fourth of May after his terrible, homerless April. He drove in three runs Saturday.

EH-OVALDI: It's becoming of the theme of Nathan Eovaldi's season — lots of hits, few innings. The Yankees' starting pitcher had trouble locating and threw 96 pitches over just 4 2/3 innings while giving up 11 knocks. The Yankees were down, 3-2, when lefty reliever Chasen Shreve replaced Eovaldi in the fifth. Of course, it could have been much worse for Eovaldi, who let the A's load the bases in the third but surrendered only a run. But they could have been a lot better, too, considering how much is made of Eovaldi's supposedly high ceiling. Maybe it's no coincidence he's on his third team at age 25.

THE WHIFF: Relievers Shreve, Dellin Betances, Justin Wilson and Andrew Miller combined for eight strikeouts in 4 1/3 innings. Shreve struck out all four hitters he faced and collected the win. Miller's save was his 15th.

RAZOR RAMON: Yankees rookie Ramon Flores had a heck of a major-league debut. The left fielder gunned out Marcus Semien at home on the first fly ball hit to him to end the first inning. His second-inning diving catch on Eric Sogard's foul fly was just as spectacular. He finished 0-4.

INCREDI-BALL: You'll probably never see another bunt like Chase Headley's seventh-inning attempt, which rolled slowly down the third base line and went foul at least three times before resting just before third base in fair territory.

NEXT: Yankees righty Adam Warren (3-3, 3.91 ERA) will face A's righty Jesse Chavez (1-5, 2.44 ERA) at 4:05 p.m. Sunday.



In a game of singles, Beltran's home run makes the difference

Posted By [Chad Jennings](#) On May 31, 2015

There were 22 hits in this game. Only one went for extra bases, and that one made the most difference. Carlos Beltran's two-run home run in the sixth inning was the big blow in a 5-3 Yankees win in Oakland. It was Beltran's fourth homer of the year, all of which have come in the month of May when Beltran's finally become the productive hitter the Yankees envisioned when they signed him last offseason. Two-out singles by Brian McCann and Chase Headley brought in the Yankees' first two runs, but a bunch of singles had put the A's in front before Beltran went deep. Beltran later singled in an insurance run in the eighth. Yankees starter Nathan Eovaldi lasted just 4.2 innings. He walked no one and gave up no extra base hits, but Oakland had 11 singles against him. Three in the first inning led to no runs only because Ramon Flores threw out a runner at the plate. Four in the third inning plated a run, and two in the fourth inning brought in another. It was the second time in his past three starts that Eovaldi failed to get out of the fifth. The bullpen picked up the slack this time, starting with Chasen Shreve, who struck out each of the four batters he faced. Justin Wilson, Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller finished off the game with three scoreless innings.



Postgame notes: “He’s at full strength now, and you’re seeing Carlos”

Posted By [Chad Jennings](#) On May 31, 2015

Carlos Beltran said he was never really worried. Not after his brutal second half last season. Not after he hit .162/.216/.265 in April. Not when he turned 38 years old late last month. At some point, Beltran believed, he would be a good hitter again.

“I’m not worried, man,” he said. “I’m healthy. I feel good. It’s just part of baseball. Sometimes you start the season hitting .340. All of a sudden you get to a month where you hit less than .200. Everything is magnified when you just start the season slow. At the end of the day, I do believe that it’s not about how you start, it’s about how you finish. I believe that, and I have (thought) like that all my career. I’m just happy I feel good right now.”

Two more hits tonight, including a go-ahead home run, pushed Beltran’s batting average to .308 for the month of May. He’s had seven doubles, four home runs and 14 RBI in 24 games this month. He’s hit safely in 16 of his past 17 games, and he’s finally giving the Yankees legitimate production.

“His track record tells you he’s going to come out of it, is what it does,” manager Joe Girardi said. “But there was frustration. It’s just human nature to be frustrated in those situations, but he kept working at it, kept working at it, and he had to battle some health things when he was sick. I think he’s at full strength now, and you’re seeing Carlos.”

Alex Rodriguez and Mark Teixeira have remained the Yankees’ most consistent middle-order hitters, but Beltran and Brian McCann have added some depth this month. Neither one has a high on-base percentage, but they’re hitting for power in the fifth and sixth spots in the order. Tonight, those two combined for four of the five Yankees RBIs. McCann drove in the first run with an RBI single — but went on to end his four-game homer streak — then Beltran delivered the night’s only extra-base hit with a go-ahead home run in the sixth.

“I haven’t changed anything, actually,” Beltran said. “I just have been more aggressive. Sometimes I (can) be too passive up there at the plate. I’ve just got to go out there with the mentality to hit. Sometimes I just go being too patient. That puts me in the hole.”

A passive, unproductive Beltran was putting the Yankees in a hole earlier this season. Right field is typically an offense-first position, and Beltran’s weak bat in April was certainly not making up for his underwhelming defense. Now he’s giving the Yankees what they need. His best years are

surely behind him, but if Beltran can stay productive, he could add some much needed length to a lineup that has often felt far too shallow.

“Baseball is based on being able to have positive results,” Beltran said. “And right now I’m getting those. Every time you get those, you get more confident and you feel better about yourself. You have a better chance to put a good at-bat up there. At the end of the day, you’ve got to take things month by month. You can’t really judge your season based on one month. You have to come to the ballpark every day with the mentality of just working in the cage, working on the things you’ve done in the past that have given you success.”

- Really nice debut for Ramon Flores. He went hitless, but Flores threw a runner out at the plate in the first inning, then he made a diving catch in foul territory in the second inning. “It was a good feeling,” Flores said. “Because everybody was cheering me in the dugout, so I (was) feeling like, ‘Oh, I did this.’ I was trying to do my job and trying to stay in the game, concentrating.”

- Nathan Eovaldi on his new left fielder: “The first two innings, he saved me with a good play at the plate and then catching that ball in foul territory. It helped out a lot.”

- Kind of a funny moment in the clubhouse: Flores speaks pretty strong English, but he’s young, and Didi Gregorius — who has a locker next to Flores — worried Flores might not be comfortable, so he leaned in and offered to work as translator for what turned out to be the last question. It was about the way Flores felt about his teammates reaction to the throw home. Gregorius did his best: “He said, um, when he made that throw to the plate and all the guys were on the stairs waiting for him to come back in, that made him really comfortable and confident right there. So that was nice. He felt great right away.” Thanks, Didi.

- Beltran on his interaction with Flores today: “I was so excited. I tell him, ‘Go out, have fun, man. This is a great opportunity for you, for your family, so enjoy. Enjoy the moment.’ He was able to make good plays for us and basically was able to save a run with that throw that he made from left field to home plate, and another ball that he was able to catch in the bullpen. He did a good job today for us.”

- Quietly also having a good day today: Chase Headley with three hits and an RBI.

- Eight straight games with an RBI for McCann. He’s the first Yankees catcher to do that since Yogi Berra in 1956.

- Also having a great day today: The Yankees bullpen with 4.1 innings of scoreless baseball. Chasen Shreve, Justin Wilson, Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller combined to strike out eight, walk none and allow one hit.

- Shreve struck out each of the four batters he faced. “He’s done a really good job with whatever we’ve asked him to do,” Girardi said. “His role has increased as the season has kind of went along a little bit, and he gave us a big inning and a third tonight.”

- Bad start for Eovaldi, but one that could have been much worse considering he allowed 11 hits without getting through the fifth inning. He once again had real trouble putting hitters away, a recurring theme for him since his days in Miami. “It’s one of the most frustrating things, I feel like,” Eovaldi said. “(Try to) throw the ball down in the dirt, then it’s middle or just up. I just have to do a better job of executing those pitches. ... My fastball felt good, I just wasn’t locating very well. When I would get ahead of guys, I wasn’t finishing off the batters. A lot of my off-speed pitches were up and middle. They were putting the ball in play and it felt like they were finding every hole.”

- Girardi actually didn’t seem too down on Eovaldi, who’s lasted fewer than five innings in two of his past three starts. “I just don’t think he had his great command tonight,” Girardi said. “But as I said, I thought he did a pretty good job of minimizing it. They had 11 hits in 4.2 innings and you look at the first three hits that setup that inning where they scored: you get a ball that goes just past Head, you get a ball that kind of squeaks through the infield, Vogt hits one off the end of the bat with some funny spin. And then they hit a couple of balls hard, but that’s part of the game. Sometimes you get those outs and sometimes you don’t.”

- Kind of an under-the-radar nice game for Mark Teixeira. He had just one hit, but he had one of those standout games at first base. Really nice defensive night for him. “Oh, I mean, he’s outstanding,” Girardi said. “He’s a Gold Glove guy is what he is, and he had a big night for us. Really helped our infielders out.”

- To me, it feels like Alex Rodriguez hasn’t hit much lately, but he actually has a nine-game hitting streak and is hitting .406 in that span.

- Final word goes to Beltran: “At the end of the day, it’s about wins. It feels good every time we’re capable of helping the team to win a ballgame. Today was a good day for me, at the same time it was a good day for the ballclub. We needed this one. Tomorrow we have a chance to leave this place with an even series.”



Game 50: Yankees at Athletics

Posted By Chad Jennings On May 30, 2015

YANKEES (25-24)

Brett Gardner CF
Chase Headley 3B
Alex Rodriguez DH
Mark Teixeira 1B
Brian McCann C
Carlos Beltran RF
Ramon Flores LF
Didi Gregorius SS
Jose Pirela 2B

RHP Nathan Eovaldi (4-1, 4.27)
Eovaldi vs. Athletics ^[3]

ATHLETICS (19-32)

Billy Burns CF
Marcus Semien SS
Stephen Vogt C
Billy Butler DH
Josh Reddick RF
Brett Lawrie 3B
Max Muncy 1B
Eric Sogard 2B
Sam Fuld LF

RHP Jesse Hahn (2-4, 3.69)
Hahn vs. Yankees ^[4]

TIME/TV: 10:05 p.m., YES Network and MLB Network

WEATHER: It was a really nice day out here. Little chilly, but that's always the case. Clear skies.

UMPIRES: HP Dana DeMuth, 1B Paul Nauert, 2B Ed Hickox, 3B Mike Estabrook

FIRST TIMERS: Ramon Flores joins Slade Heathcott, Jacob Lindgren, Branden Pinder and Matt Tracy as Yankees who have made their major league debut this season.

GOING DEEP: Brian McCann has homered in four straight games, and the Yankees have hit 10 home runs in their past five games. The Yankees 62 home runs this season leave them tied with the Dodgers for the second-most in baseball behind Houston.

ON THIS DATE: It was on May 30, 1956 that Mickey Mantle hit a home run that very left Yankee Stadium. The ball hit the upper-deck frieze in right field.

UPDATE, 10:17 p.m.: Brian McCann stays hot. Not a home run this time, but a two-out RBI single to give the Yankees an early lead in the first inning.

UPDATE, 10:22 p.m.: First time the A's put the ball in play, it's a single to left field. Ramon Flores gets some action right away, and does a nice job getting to the ball and holding Burns to a single.

UPDATE, 10:34 p.m.: Well that was cool. Flores just ended the first inning by throwing a runner out at the plate. Every Yankee on the field made sure to high five him on the way into the dugout, Alex Rodriguez came out of the dugout for a high five, and the rest of the Yankees were crowded around for a bunch more high fives as he came off the field.

UPDATE, 11:08 p.m.: All singles, but the A's already have seven hits off Eovaldi. He's gotten just six outs.

UPDATE, 11:11 p.m.: Sac fly and we're tied at 1.

UPDATE, 11:42 p.m.: It's now 10 A's hits through four innings. All are singles and that's enough for a 3-1 lead.

UPDATE, 11:50 p.m.: Two-out single by Headley makes it 3-2 in the fifth. Yankees have six hits, also all singles.

UPDATE, 11:59 p.m.: Giving up a bunch of singles is really no good for the pitch count. Eovaldi is finished after 4.2 innings. He allowed 11 hits, every one of them a single.

UPDATE, 12:22 a.m.: Is every place in the world having horrible internet problems tonight, or is it just Oakland? Either way, it's a 4-3 Yankees lead after a two-run Beltran homer in the sixth.

UPDATE, 12:29 p.m.: Shreve struck out each of the four batters he faced, yet the Yankees are going to a different lefty — Justin Wilson — to start the seventh inning. I assume he'll face Semien and Vogt before Betances comes in for Butler (Betances is warming). Stephen Drew in to play defense at second.

Troubling stat shows Yankees' Nathan Eovaldi hasn't fixed problem

Brendan Kutty | on May 31, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. — When the **Yankees** acquired starting pitcher **Nathan Eovaldi in the offseason**, their goal was to take the righty who allowed the most hits in the National League in 2014 and help him realize his strikeout-artist potential.

The Yankees knew it was going to take a while to transform the 25-year-old. And apparently they're not too close yet, considering Eovaldi's back to leading the league in hits allowed.

Though manager Joe Girardi praised Eovaldi for working out of jams and minimizing damage in the Yankees 5-3 win over the A's at O.co Coliseum Sunday, it was Eovaldi who, once again, put himself in the pickles to begin with.

He lasted just 4 2/3 innings, the second time in three starts he failed to get out of the fifth inning. And Eovaldi might have been out much sooner had rookie left fielder Ramon Flores, playing his first career game, didn't make a pair of spectacular plays early — one a throw to home, gunning a runner, the other a diving foul-territory catch.

Also, Eovaldi gave up three runs and struck out just three, and the 11 hits he surrendered gave him a season total of 76 — the most in baseball. Last season, he led the NL with 223 hits allowed.

Eovaldi's strikeout total, by the way? He's at No. 74 with 42 through 10 starts.

Eovaldi said he was upset with the way he couldn't finish hitters.

"It's one of the most frustrating things, I feel like," Eovaldi said, (to try to) throw the ball down in the dirt, then it's middle or just up. I just have to do a better job of executing those pitches.

"My fastball felt good, I just wasn't locating very well. When I was would get ahead of guys, I wasn't finishing off the batters. A lot of my offspeed pitches were

up and middle. They were putting the ball in play and it felt like they were finding every hole."

Of course, that's been Eovaldi's issue since breaking into the league in 2011 with the Dodgers, who sent him to Miami in 2012. The Yankees got Eovaldi, essentially, for utility man Martin Prado.

And it's what Eovaldi has worked on with pitching coach Larry Rothschild. Because no matter how good of a fastball you throw — and Eovaldi's averages about 95 mph, among the fastest in the game among starters — major-league hitters can handle it if they know it's coming.

Girardi acknowledged things haven't come easy at all for Eovaldi this season, but added that he believes he's on the right track.

"As I've said all along, we really like this kid and he's a work in progress," the manager said. "But we believe he's making steps in the right direction and sometimes you're going to have nights like this."

Flores shines defensively in debut

Yankees outfield prospect throws out runner at plate, makes diving catch

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | @BryanHoch | May 31, 2015

OAKLAND -- The Yankees took note of Ramon Flores' potential this spring, impressed by a fluid left-handed stroke that seemed to send the ball a long way with ease. Those good impressions helped promote the rookie to a big league clubhouse for the first time Saturday.

Flores was recalled from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre to replace Slade Heathcott, who was placed on the 15-day disabled list with a Grade 2 strain of his right quadriceps. Flores immediately appeared in the Yanks' lineup Saturday against the A's, batting seventh and playing left field in the **5-3 victory**.

More highly regarded for his bat than his glove, Flores made an immediate defensive impact in his first two innings as a big leaguer. He fired home to throw out Marcus Semien at the plate to end the first, then made a tumbling catch near the bullpen mound in foul territory to retire Eric Sogard in the second.

"It was exciting, those two plays that I made," said Flores, ranked as the **Yankees' No. 25 prospect** by MLB.com. "I'm proud to play for the Yankees. Thank you to the Yankees for this opportunity. I'm going to try to play hard every day, every time when the manager puts me in the lineup, just play hard."

"I'm feel I'm still dreaming," Flores said before the game. "Maybe tomorrow I'll wake up and say, 'Oh, I'm here in the Major Leagues!' It's been seven years in the Minors, working very hard to get here."

The 23-year-old Flores, a product of Venezuela, had been on a recent tear with the RailRiders, going 15-for-44 (.341) in his last 11 games Overall, Flores was batting .294 (47-for-160) with four homers and 15 RBIs in 42 games.

"I think his ceiling is pretty high, offensively and defensively," manager Joe Girardi said. "You can move him around a little bit defensively, but I'll probably focus on left mostly. Just to give us good at-bats, I think that's the important thing, and I really believe he has the ability to do that."

With Flores slotted in left, Girardi shifted Brett Gardner to center, where he is expected to play while Jacoby Ellsbury mends a sprained right knee. Chris Young could also see reps in center.

"I feel comfortable in center. I feel more comfortable there than I do in left field," Gardner said. "I've obviously played left field every day and I'm becoming more comfortable over there, but I feel perfectly normal going back to center field."

Flores said that he was in the middle of batting practice with the RailRiders when he was informed of his callup. After spending the night in a Philadelphia hotel, Flores flew direct to the West Coast on Saturday morning, getting to the Coliseum around 11:30 a.m. PT.

With 23 walks against 28 strikeouts at Triple-A this year, Flores said that his plate discipline could help him to succeed against big league pitching.

"What I like to do at home plate is look for a very good pitch to try to connect," Flores said. "I think that's what helped distinguish me in the Minor Leagues, because I have a lot of patience and I try to wait for the right pitch. I just try to enjoy the game."

Yankees' Ramon Flores has unforgettable MLB debut

Brendan Kutty | on May 31, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. — The **Yankees** called up rookie left fielder Ramon Flores Saturday mostly because of his bat and he went 0-for-4 in his debut.

But that's not even close to why he'll remember it forever.

Flores' pair of incredible plays may have saved the Yankees in their 5-3 win over the A's at O.co Coliseum.

The 23-year-old gunned out Marcus Semien at home on the first fly ball hit to him to end the first inning.

And his second-inning diving catch on Eric Sogard's foul fly was just as spectacular.

Flores said he wasn't nervous for the game. He learned he was going to get called up from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Friday and spent the night in Philadelphia. He was on a plane to California at 6 a.m. Saturday, with a layover in Minneapolis. But Flores was too excited to be tired, he said

"Just trying to enjoy the game and help the team," he said.

After throwing out Semien, Flores said, it was cool to see his new teammates rooting for him.

"It was a good feeling," Flores said. "Because everybody was cheering me in the dugout, so I was feeling like, 'Oh, I did this.' I was trying to do my job and trying to stay in the game."

Flores caught the eye of Carlos Beltran, in particular.

"I was so excited. I told him, 'Go out, have fun, man. This is a great opportunity for you, for your family, so enjoy. Enjoy the moment,'" Beltran said. "He was able to make good plays for us and basically was able to save a run with that throw that he made from left field to home plate, and another ball that he was able to catch in the bullpen. He did a good job today for us."

Flores, a lefty swinger, looks like he'll split time in the outfield with righty hitting Chris Young until either Slade Heathcott (quad strain) or Jacoby Ellsbury (knee sprain).



Chase Headley lays down a bunt that just ... will ... not ... roll ... foul

By Chris Landers – May 31, 2015

Just think, all those years of playing catch in the backyard, taking swings in the batting cage, whispering your darkest secrets in the presence of a bucket of baseballs, and you never knew -- *they were watching you*. Sure, baseballs may seem innocent, feeding you that same old "Hey, we aren't so bad, we're just inanimate objects!" line. But on Saturday night in Oakland, Chase Headley laid a bunt down the third-base line, and the nation watched in horror as the A's discovered the true cruelty of baseballs everywhere:

By our count, the ball rolled foul three separate times, only to immediately reverse course like it was auditioning for Angels in the Outfield.

Remain calm, everyone: The baseballs may have risen against us, but as long as we have Giancarlo Stanton, we'll be OK.

Watch and laugh at Yankees' Chase Headley's insane bunt

Brendan Kutty | on May 31, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. — It was like the baseball had a mind of its own.

Chase Headley's bunt in the **Yankees'** 5-3 win over the A's at to O.co Colisem Saturday night was a thing of beauty — and total weirdness.

Headley laid down a bunt with two outs in the top of the seventh inning. If that wasn't odd enough, the ball decided to ride the third-base line almost all the way to the bag. It appeared to go fair and then foul again about four times before it finally rested in fair territory and Headley was credited with a hit.

Headley was eventually stranded on first base when Alex Rodriguez struck out.

Watch below, and then shake your head:

Either Chase Headley is a warlock, or the baseballs have finally become sentient: <http://t.co/Qn08Dzfl4f> pic.twitter.com/ZkuxSg2jHi

— Cut4 (@Cut4) **May 31, 2015**



WATCH: This Chase Headley bunt shall be called 'Devil Magic Ridiculuso'

By Dayn Perry | Baseball Writer - May 31, 2015

The Yankees triumphed over the Athletics on Saturday night in Oakland, and in the seventh inning of that contest New York third baseman/heedless conjurer Chase Headley indulged in the dark arts. Witness the power of the occult ...

Look at Chase Headley over at first base -- acting all cool and nonchalant and pretending that he didn't just awaken ancient spirits that should never have been unleashed from their vaults. Thanks a lot, Chase Headley.

Of that bunt, and just before the spirits descend upon them, the people say: "Devil Magic Ridiculuso."

BASEBALL

YANKEES NOTEBOOK

Pirela gives Drew a rest

BY ERIK BOLAND
erik.boland@newsday.com

OAKLAND, Calif. — Starting Jose Pirela at second base last night instead of Stephen Drew was not, Joe Girardi said, a "position switch."

Drew has been solid in the field this season but has shown few indications that his bat will come around. He entered the game with a .158/.226/.303 slash line, five homers and 15 RBIs and was in a 0-for-19 slump.

But Girardi said it was more a matter of giving Drew, who played in 45 of the first 49 games, a rest. "I have to give these guys some days off," he said. "I checked with him and Head [Chase Headley] and decided to give Drew a day off."

Could Pirela, who starred in spring training before suffering a concussion and had a .200/.200/.233 slash line in 12 games, earn more playing time?

"Anyone can earn playing time," Girardi said. "That's the bottom line in this game and

that's the way it's always been."

■ Flores up

Slade Heathcott was placed on the DL yesterday with a right quadriceps strain and Ramon Flores was called up from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. Though Flores, 23, flew overnight and arrived in the Bay Area at about 11:30 a.m., he found himself in the lineup last night, starting in left field and batting seventh.

"I wanted to get him in there, get his feet wet and see if he can be productive for us," Girardi said. "He's another young player I think whose ceiling is pretty high offensively and defensively. . . . The young man can hit."

Flores, signed by the Yankees as a non-drafted free agent in 2008, said his head still was swimming. "I feel like I'm still dreaming," he said. "It's been seven years in the minors to get here."

Flores was bypassed in favor of Heathcott on May 20 when centerfielder Jacoby Ellsbury

was put on the DL with a right knee sprain, but that was mostly because his best position is leftfield and Heathcott's is centerfield.

"I knew my moment was going to come," Flores said.

Heathcott is scheduled to fly to New York today and will be evaluated by team physician Christopher Ahmad.

■ Gardner back in center

With Flores in left, Brett Gardner made his first start of the season in centerfield, his natural position.

"I think he'll be fine," Girardi said. "Obviously, the angles are a little bit different, but I don't think it will be a problem for him."

■ Didi getting going?

Didi Gregorius doubled Friday night and entered last night 7-for-his-last-30. "I think he's hitting the ball harder, he's impacting the ball better," Girardi said. "That would be big for us."



Pregame notes: “Have we made a position switch? No, not necessarily.”

Posted By [Chad Jennings](#) On May 30, 2015

The Yankees’ lineup was posted to the clubhouse door, and Stephen Drew’s name wasn’t in it, so Drew sat at a locker room table and watched old video with assistant hitting coach Alan Cockrell. It was footage from better days, from long before Drew was a .158 hitter with the lowest batting average — by a lot — of all 169 qualifying hitters in Major League Baseball.

“As much as I can sit here and pout, I’m working on things to get myself better,” Drew said. “That’s all I can control, and the preparation and hard work I’ve put in. I’m going to trust that in the long run it’s going to be there. ... With the years that I’ve had in the past, it’s been tough. Just trying to get into a routine where I get that feel that I’ve had in the past before all the injuries and things like that that I’ve had in the past. I’ve had some spurts of it, but I haven’t had that extended spurt (like) the seven years that I had in Arizona and stuff like that. It was just there. Looking back at video back then and making some minor adjustments here and there and see what happens.”

Despite brutal numbers that Drew’s put up for a year now, Yankees manager Joe Girardi has stuck with him as the team’s everyday second baseman. Girardi’s said repeatedly that Drew’s at-bats have been better than his results, and Drew’s defense is believed to be better than the in-house alternatives.

Tonight, though, it’s rookie Jose Pirela starting at second base despite the fact the Yankees were facing a right-handed pitcher.

“Have we made a position switch?” Girardi said. “No, not necessarily.”

Hard to deny the potential for change, though. Pirela has hit even worse than Drew this season, but Pirela’s also hardly played, and Girardi’s admitted that lack of playing time could be the reason for Pirela’s poor numbers. Last year in Triple-A, during a brief September call-up, and again in spring training, Pirela looked like an

offensive weapon. Maybe not a middle-of-the-order slugger, but certainly better than what Drew has provided.

If Pirela begins to hit, could he win more playing time?

“Anyone can earn playing time,” Girardi said. “That’s the bottom line in this game, and that’s the way it’s always been.”

Small sample size does not work as an excuse for Drew. He hit just .162 last season, but that was an unusual season because he signed late. This year, though, he’s already had 152 at-bats. Take the two seasons combined and Drew’s had 423 at-bats with a cumulative .161 batting average. That average has come with a similarly low on-base percentage and only occasional power. He’s now had two hits in his past 35 at-bats. He’s hitless in his past 19 at-bats.

At 32 years old, Drew isn’t especially old, but he’s been a far cry from the .273 hitter with power that he used to be during his late-20s in Arizona.

“It’s not searching for answers,” he said. “I think everybody in this game has an idea. It’s just consistently having that same feel every day, like I said. I’ve had days where it’s been good and days when I’m searching for that feel again. Definitely when I get going, it’s going to help this team out. ... You go back to earlier in April when I was hitting balls good and just at home against Kansas City, I could easily have had four or five hits. I had one hit that day, and it’s, this game sometimes, it’s a humbling game. I know that. It’s not getting too high or too low, it’s just going out and playing every day. This year has definitely been frustrating at times. Besides these last couple of games I’ve had some some productive at-bats, just no luck, so eventually it’s going to turn around for me.”

- Welcome to the big leagues Ramon Flores. He flew in from Philadelphia this morning, got into Oakland around 11:30 this morning, and tonight he’s making his debut in left field. “The young man can hit,” Girardi said. “He has a nice looking swing. There’s no panic in his swing. He’s very smooth. You’re not going to see a lot of violent actions, and when he squares up a ball, he hits it hard, and it doesn’t even look like he’s swinging hard but it jumps.”

- Flores said he used the Slade Heathcott call-up — when it easily could have been Flores instead — as extra motivation in Triple-A. “I knew somehow that this moment was going to come very soon,” Flores said. “I don’t want my teammates

to be injured, but I just wanted to get here and I had a feeling this moment was going to come.”

- Flores can play center and right, and he’s played a little bit of first base in his career, but Girardi said he plans to keep Flores in left. Brett Gardner said he doesn’t expect any problems moving back to center field for the first time this season. “I feel more comfortable there than I do in left field,” Gardner said. “I’ve obviously played left field every day and I’m becoming more comfortable over there, but I feel perfectly normal going back to center field. It doesn’t feel weird or like I’m playing out of position. I feel good.”

- Back when he was playing in Triple-A, Gardner told me that he always thought center field was a much easier position than the outfielder corners. As long as a player has the range for center, it’s a position that provides a better view of the pitch and an easier read of the ball off the bat. Gardner said the same thing today, and added that it’s easier to not have to worry about low walls in foul territory. There’s room to run, and Gardner runs well.

- Reliever Chris Martin pitched one scoreless, hitless inning for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre tonight. Girardi said he’s not sure how many rehab appearances Martin will need, but he didn’t rule out the idea of having him back fairly soon. “All depends on how he’s doing,” Girardi said.

- Slade Heathcott is flying to New York tomorrow to see Dr. Chris Ahmad. Otherwise, nothing new on the other injured Yankees (Ellsbury, Ryan, Petit, etc.).

- Girardi on tonight’s starter Nathan Eovaldi: “I think he’s taken some steps forward. I think he’s made improvements. I think his offspeed has gotten better. He’s gotten deep in some games for us, and I think as the year goes on, that will continue to get better as well. I’ve said often that I think the key is his two breaking balls, being able to throw them over for strikes when he’s behind in the count. That’s the thing that needs to become consistent for him. He’s got a big fastball, but at this level, a lot of guys can hit a big fastball. But when you can change the speeds, then it plays up.”



Game 50: Yankees (25-24) @ Athletics (19-32)

By Wallace Matthews - Saturday, May 30, 2015

OAKLAND -- It will be a new-look New York Yankees team that takes the field tonight at O.co Coliseum looking to avert a series loss to the last-place Athletics. Rookies Jose Pirela and Ramon Flores are in the lineup, Pirela replacing the slumping Stephen Drew and Flores pressed into service due to the injuries to Jacoby Ellsbury and Slade Heathcott.

Nathan Eovaldi (4-1, 4.27) gets the start, trying to reverse the trend of this seven-game road trip in which the Yankees have dropped the first two games. Here's the lineup:

Brett Gardner CF
Chase Headley 3B
Alex Rodriguez DH
Mark Teixeira 1B
Brian McCann C
Carlos Beltran RF
Flores LF
Didi Gregorius SS
Pirela 2B

Eovaldi RHP

Flores, who was hitting .294 with four homers and 15 RBI for Triple A-Scranton, was pulled out of BP Friday night, caught a flight out of Philadelphia at 8 a.m. Saturday morning, changed planes in Minneapolis and arrived in San Francisco around 11:30 a.m. "The last 24 hours have had a lot of emotions for me," he said. "I feel I'm still dreaming. Maybe tomorrow I'll wake up and say, 'Oh, I'm here in the major leagues!' It's been seven years in the minors, working very hard to get here." ... Pirela has started eight games since being recalled on May 6, most recently on May 24. He is hitting .200, with six hits -- five of them singles -- in 30 at-bats. ... Joe Girardi said Heathcott, who was diagnosed with a Grade 2 quad strain after an MRI on Friday, would not accompany the team to Seattle after Sunday's game, but would return to New York to be examined by team doctor Christopher Ahmad. ... Girardi said he was unlikely to make a decision about his starting rotation -- the Yankees need to clear roster space, and trim their rotation by one starter, to make room for the reinstatement of Masahiro Tanaka -- before Wednesday, when Tanaka is scheduled to start the final game against the Mariners. ... The Yankees have lost 15 of their last 21 games against the Athletics, and 11 of their last 12 at O.co Coliseum.

Yankees lineup vs. Oakland Athletics: Slumping Stephen Drew sits

Brendan Kutny | on May 30, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Here's the Yankees' lineup against the A's at the O.co Coliseum Saturday.

Right Nathan Eovaldi will be on the mound for the Yankees.

1. Brett Gardner CF
2. Chase Headley 3B
3. Alex Rodriguez DH
4. Mark Teixeira 1B
5. Brian McCann C
6. Carlos Beltran RF
7. Ramon Flores LF
8. Didi Gregorius SS
9. Jose Pirela 2B

5.31.15

The Journal News lohud.com



FILE/GETTY IMAGES

Stephen Drew of the Yankees, who is hitting .158, sat in favor of Jose Pirela for Saturday's game in Oakland.

Drew sets sights on redemption

CHAD JENNINGS
CJENNINGS@LOHUD.COM

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Yankees' lineup was posted to the clubhouse door, and Stephen Drew's name wasn't in it, so the struggling middle infielder sat at a table on Saturday afternoon and watched old video with assistant hitting coach Alan Cockrell.

It was footage from better days, from long before Drew was a .158 hitter, the lowest average of all 169 qualifying hitters in major league baseball.

"As much as I can sit here and pout, I'm working on things to get myself better," Drew said. "That's all I can control, and the preparation and hard work I've put in. I'm going to trust that in the long run it's going to be there."

Thing is, Drew didn't hit much better last season, but Yankees manager Joe Girardi has stuck with him as the team's everyday second baseman. Drew's at-bats have been better than his results, Girardi's said, and his defense is believed to be better than the in-house alternatives.

On Saturday, though, it was rookie Jose Pirela starting at second base despite the fact the Yankees were facing a right-handed pitcher (Pirela hits right-handed; Drew's a lefty).

"Have we made a position switch?" Girardi said. "No, not necessarily."

It's still hard to deny the potential for change. Pirela has hit even worse than Drew this season, but Pirela's also hardly played, and Girardi's admitted that lack of playing time could be the reason for Pirela's poor numbers.

Last year in Triple-A, during a brief September call-up, and again in spring training, Pirela looked like an offensive weapon. Maybe not a middle-of-the-order slugger, but certainly better than what Drew has provided.

If Pirela begins to hit, could he win more playing time?

"Anyone can earn playing time," Girardi said. "That's the bottom line in this game, and that's the way it's always been."

Small sample size does not work as an excuse for Drew. He hit just .162 last season, and he's already had 152 at-bats this season. Take the two seasons combined and he's had 423 at-bats with a cumulative .161 batting average. That average has come with a similarly low on-base percentage and only occasional power.

At 32 years old, Drew isn't a young player, but he's hardly ancient. He's a far cry, though, from the .273 hitter with power that he used to be during his late-20s in Arizona.

"This game sometimes, it's a humbling game," Drew said. "I know that. It's not getting too high or too low. It's just going out and playing every day. This year has definitely been frustrating at times. Besides these last couple of games, I've had some productive at-bats, just no luck, so eventually it's going to turn around for me."

Yankee clippings: Called up from Triple-A to replace injured Slade Heathcott, prospect Ramon Flores made his major league debut as the Yankees' starting left fielder. He could play there regularly against right-handed starters. ... Reliever Chris Martin began a rehab assignment with Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. ... Brett Gardner started in center field for the first time this season.

Twitter: @LohudYankees

Yankees' struggling Stephen Drew: Go ahead and boo me

Brendan Kutty | on May 30, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Drew said he's still been valuable to the Yankees this season despite his utter lack of production at the plate. Drew said his defense at second base and his work with young shortstop Didi Gregorius has been "huge."

"Whenever I can help this team with my knowledge from over the years, at short and at second, it's definitely huge to have me out there," Drew told reporters before Saturday's game against the A's at O.co Coliseum.

Of course, that Drew has been terrible at the plate this season wasn't lost on the 32-year-old. It also has been a point of concern for his manager, Joe Girardi, who's had to defend him at almost every turn.

Girardi sat Drew in favor of rookie Jose Pirela on Saturday, even though the righty-hitting Pirela was set to face a righty in Jesse Hahn. Drew, a lefty hitter, would typically have been given the start.

Drew has just two hits in his last 35 at-bats and is hitless in his last 19. He's hitting .158 with five homers and 15 RBI in 152 at-bats.

Drew didn't make any excuses for his performance, though he added that he believes he's hitting better than his numbers indicate.

"The numbers sometimes don't tell you how you're really hitting," he said. "You go back to earlier in April, when I was hitting balls good, and at home against Kansas City, I could have easily had four or five hits. Sometimes it's a humbling game and it's not getting too high or too low."

He added that his confidence hasn't been shaken, despite what he's hearing from fans.

"It's OK, though," Drew said. "It's not the end of the year for me. People can boo. The 25 guys are what matters and winning games are what matter."

Slumping Drew sits in favor of Pirela

Girardi: Yanks 2B will get chances to turn year around

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 30th, 2015

OAKLAND -- The Yankees have shown patience with [Stephen Drew](#), searching for deeper numbers to show that his stat line doesn't agree with his ability. As he was sent to the bench Saturday, he continues to be puzzled by the trouble in hitting his weight.

Drew yielded second base to [Jose Pirela](#) on Saturday against the A's, offered a day to clear his head in the midst of an 0-for-19 and 1-for-26 skid that has dropped the 32-year-old's season average to .158.

"I'd like to be doing better up there at the plate," Drew said. "I've got to also just trust my talent and know it's a matter of time. I've had some good at-bats, and the past three days have been frustrating."

Yankees manager Joe Girardi defended Drew after his hitless performance in Friday's 6-2 loss to the Athletics, saying, "It just doesn't seem that he gets the rewards that he should when he hits the ball hard."

One day later, Girardi said that Drew will continue to get opportunities to turn his season around, unwilling to announce any decisions about future playing time at second base. He did allow that there is a possibility that Pirela could earn more reps.

"Anyone can earn playing time," Girardi said. "That's the bottom line in this game, and that's the way it's always been. Have we made a position swing? No, not necessarily."

The Yanks gave Drew a one-year, \$5 million contract this past offseason, gambling that his sub-Mendoza line performance of 2014 was a fluke tied to his missing Spring Training while sitting out in a contract dispute with the Red Sox.

Drew enjoyed a more normal spring this year, remaining injury-free while fine-tuning his work at second base and helping to tutor shortstop [Didi Gregorius](#), but the offensive results have not appeared.

Not surprisingly, Drew's batting average and on-base percentage (.226) are the worst among all qualified big league second basemen; only the Braves' [Jace Peterson](#) (.300) and the Phillies' [Chase Utley](#) (.295) have lower slugging percentages than Drew (.303).

"It's not the end of the year for me," Drew said. "People can boo or whatever, the 25 guys that are here are what matters, and winning games is what matters for me."



Time for Yankees to cut their losses with Stephen Drew

By Wallace Matthews - Saturday, May 30, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Stephen Drew is not the reason the New York Yankees are once again flirting with mediocrity, their 6-2 loss to the lowly Oakland Athletics dropping them back to a game over .500, even if they remain a game ahead of the rest of the pack in the just as mediocre American League East.

And he is not the reason they have now lost 12 of their past 16 games, and can only hope to leave here on Sunday with no better than a split of this four-game series.

But he is one of the reasons why the Yankees seem destined to hover around the .500 mark all season long, and why even if they prevail in their weak division, they are unlikely to go far once they venture into baseball's more dangerous neighborhoods.

Most importantly, he is one of the few players the Yankees have the luxury of changing out, and really, how much worse could anyone else do at the plate than Drew, with his .158 batting average and .529 OPS, has already done.

It was kind of a cruel joke on Yankees fans to see Drew stepping to the plate in the ninth inning of Friday night's loss, with two outs, two runners on and Mark Teixeira in the on-deck circle swinging a bat everyone in the park had to know he would never get to use in the game. Predictably enough, Drew popped out to the infield to end the game and set himself up as an easy enough foil for frustrated fans who seem to think that with another second baseman, the Yankees would be a lot better than they are.

There is some truth to that, only the second baseman they need out there now plays for the Seattle Mariners, and will until the year 2024.

Taking Stephen Drew's feeble bat out of the Yankees' lineup will not in itself make this team a legitimate World Series contender, nor will removing his fine glove from their infield do anything to shore up their leaky defense.

Clearly, something has to be done, if only to do something, and probably the only thing the Yankees can do right now is sit Drew down for a while and replace him with -- gulp! -- Jose Pirela.

Let's get real here. Pirela is no Drew with the glove, and the euphoria of his impressive spring has certainly faded away with his .200 batting average in limited duty since he was added to the roster on May 6, having missed nearly two months with a concussion suffered when he ran into the center-field wall back in March.

Even though he has had only 30 at-bats with the Yankees -- and just six hits, all but one of them singles -- some in the Yankees organization have seen enough to believe that what they saw in the spring was just another Florida mirage. His OPS, at .433, is even worse than Drew's.

Still, there isn't really much wiggle room for manager Joe Girardi and GM Brian Cashman on this roster, not with Jacoby Ellsbury on the DL with a knee injury, his replacement (Slade Heathcott) about to go on the DL with a severe quad strain, the backup shortstop (Brendan Ryan) still in Florida working back from a variety of spring injuries, and no other outfielders or infielders in the farm system anywhere close to big league ready aside from Ramon Flores, who will be called up from Triple-A to replace Heathcott. But Flores is strictly a corner outfielder, a part-time player who might spell Carlos Beltran here or there or Chris Young when a right-hander is pitching. Certainly, no difference-maker.

Neither, of course, are Drew or Pirela, but there really is nothing else to be done. Didi Gregorius is erratic at shortstop, but he's hitting 60 points higher than Drew, and his double off Oakland ace Sonny Gray in the sixth inning on Friday led to the Yankees' second, and last, run of the game. Besides, the only player on the roster capable of replacing him is -- you guessed it -- Stephen Drew. So he's safe for now.

So is Chase Headley, who despite his 11 errors -- No. 11 sparked the third-inning rally that doomed starter Chris Capuano on Friday -- and .246/6/22 slash line is the Yankees' only viable choice at third. Alex Rodriguez, who has aged out of the position, is solid as the DH and Teixeira owns his position at first and in the cleanup spot. The outfield is set, through attrition and performance -- Brett Gardner is hitting .289 with an .809 OPS -- and Brian McCann, with four homers in his past four games, finally appears to be paying off behind the plate.

So replacing Drew is really the only way to go, even if it doesn't accomplish all

that much.

Even Girardi, one of Drew's staunchest defenders, was hard-pressed to explain his second baseman's long-running slump, which is now well into its second consecutive season. In the past, he has used esoteric measurements like exit velocity to justify his continuance in the Yankees' lineup. Now, he has been reduced to just cursing what he considers to be Drew's terrible luck.

"It's different from night to night," Girardi said. "We've seen him barrel balls up, but he doesn't get hits. Then he might be out in front of one a little bit. Tonight's a hard night to judge anyone when you're facing Sonny Gray. But it just doesn't seem that he gets the rewards that he should when he hits the ball hard. And that's frustrating."

That last remark is sure to draw snickers, or worse, from Yankees fans who might be tempted to believe that Drew's \$5 million salary is reward enough. Because two years removed from his membership on the Boston Red Sox's last world championship team -- and his subsequent spurning of a \$14 million qualifying offer in search of free-agent riches that never came his way -- Drew is quantifiably one of the worst hitters in baseball. Over his past 423 at-bats, stretching back to the beginning of 2014, Drew is batting a cumulative .151 with 12 home runs, 41 RBIs and an OPS barely above .500. It is becoming silly to continue to maintain that he will come around. What he is now is what he is likely to be.

At that point, there's really nothing else to do but sit him down and try someone else in his place.

It may not make a difference over the long haul, but for the here and now, at least it will look as if the Yankees are doing something about a player who has done virtually nothing.



What's the deal with Stephen Drew?

Posted By [Chad Jennings](#) On May 30, 2015

When Stephen Drew came to the plate in the ninth inning last night, Joe Girardi didn't have many good options.

The best option was clearly Mark Teixeira, but using him in that spot could have been a waste. Even if Teixeira had gone deep in that spot, the Yankees still would have been down a run with struggling Chris Young coming to the plate. John Ryan Murphy could have pinch hit, but he's the backup catcher and hasn't hit much this season. Jose Pirela was also on the bench, but his numbers are actually worse than Drew's.

So there wasn't an ideal option in the bunch, but if you want to make the case that anything would've been better than Drew, I'm not sure I could argue.

At this point, Drew's struggles speak for themselves and they are impossible to ignore.

So the question is, why is Girardi sticking with Drew as an everyday player? We might all disagree with Girardi's logic from time to time, but he rarely makes a decision without some sort of logic behind it, and I'm sure there's logic behind this one.

But I can only come up with only a few possibilities:

1. He really believes Drew is going to start hitting

One thing Girardi has said time and time again about Drew's offensive struggles is that Drew has hit better than the numbers suggest. Despite the evidence, Girardi might honestly believe with each at bat that Drew is the best option. "It just doesn't seem that he gets the rewards that he should when he hits the ball hard," Girardi said. "And that's frustrating."

2. He values Drew's defense above all else

Second base is not traditionally a source of great offensive production. Obviously there are exceptions to that rule – Robinson Cano, of course – but it may be that

Girardi believes he can live with a non-factor at the plate as long as Drew's delivering solid production in the field. FanGraphs has Drew as a positive defensive player, and Baseball Reference lists him with a positive defensive WAR. Is that enough to make up for the bat? Most would probably say, no. Girardi might say, yes.

3. He simply doesn't believe in Pirela

There was a time when Jose Pirela had basically fallen completely off the prospect map, but he hit his way back on it, and eventually hit his way to the big leagues. He kept hitting during that brief September call-up last season, and he kept hitting during spring training. But he hasn't hit this year. Maybe that's because of a lack of playing time – something Girardi said he's definitely considered – but his numbers are brutal, and his defensive reputation has never been good. Maybe Girardi simply doesn't believe Pirela is worth trying as a big league regular.

4. The Yankees don't believe Refsnyder is ready

One of the top second base prospects in baseball is sitting in Triple-A, but the Yankees haven't called him into action. He had another two-hit game last night, his batting average is up to .286 – after a not-so-good month of April – and he could be an offensive upgrade at the position, but it could be the Yankees don't believe he's ready. Refsnyder's still relatively new to second base, and he's made 11 errors already this season (the same number that's caused a lot of negative attention on Chase Headley). Could be that the Yankees would rather see him develop some more in a minor league environment rather than ask him to save the day in the big leagues.

5. There's a money issue

Despite last year's horrible production, I actually kind of liked the Drew signing this offseason. I liked it, though, because one year, \$5 million wasn't the kind of contract that a team holds onto at all costs. I liked it because it was a buy low situation with the possibility that Drew could rebound. I liked it because it provided infield depth that the Yankees definitely lacked. And I liked it because the Yankees could easily walk away if it didn't work out. Well, so far it hasn't worked out, but the Yankees aren't walking away. Is that because they don't think 45 games is enough of a sample size to give up on a guy they gave such a contract in the first place?



Joe Girardi benches Stephen Drew, but for how long?

By Wallace Matthews - Saturday, May 30, 2015

OAKLAND -- Joe Girardi says it's not a changing of the guard, just a routine day off, and yet you have to wonder if his decision to sit Stephen Drew tonight in favor of rookie Jose Pirela isn't an indication of things to come for the New York Yankees and their struggling second baseman.

"Have we made a position swing? No, not necessarily," Girardi said, without being asked if he had. "I mean, I have to give these guys some days off, in a sense. I checked with him and [Chase Headley], and I decided to give Drew a day off here. I'll go day by day."

But a few seconds later, the manager acknowledged that Pirela was in a position to earn himself some more playing time, and perhaps even the everyday second base job, with an impressive showing in tonight's game against the Oakland Athletics at O.co Coliseum.

"Anyone can earn playing time," Girardi said. "That's the bottom line in this game, and that's the way it's always been."

Drew, who is hitting just .158 this season after batting just .150 in 46 games last season, has become the favorite whipping boy of Yankees fans who seem to find him the culprit every time the Yankees lose. It was Drew's misfortune to come to the plate with two outs in the ninth inning of Friday night's 6-2 loss with two runners on and team home run leader Mark Teixeira on deck waiting to pinch-hit. And in accordance with the narrative of his season so far, Drew popped out to the infield to end the game.

But that was not the reason Drew is on the bench tonight. Before Friday's game, a team source told Marly Rivera of ESPNDeportes.com that a switch was in the works and that Pirela, a right-handed hitter, was likely to play in place of the lefty swinging Drew on Saturday, even though the A's were starting Jesse Hahn, a right-hander.

Pirela, who was a spring training sensation, has not hit well since being added to the roster May 6 after missing the first five weeks of the season due to a concussion suffered in an exhibition game against the Mets in March. He has batted just .200 (6-for-30) in limited duty, and has not started a game since May 24.

"Sometimes it's difficult for young players, especially when they don't get a lot of playing time," Girardi said.

Drew, for his part, chose to see tonight's night off the way the manager presented it, as a brief respite rather than a permanent situation. Despite struggling with the Yankees last season, Drew was re-signed to a one-year, \$5 million deal in January.

"Obviously, I'd like to be doing better up there at the plate," Drew said. "The numbers sometimes don't tell how you're really hitting. Through the course of the year, looking back on my at-bats, I've had good at-bats and some productive at-bats. I've got to just trust my talent and know it's a matter of time. Hopefully sooner or later, things start to click a little more and I start getting some better outcomes."

Drew is also aware of the fan wrath that has been directed at him, justified or not.

"People can boo or whatever, but it's OK," he said. "It's not the end of the year for me. The 25 guys that are here are what matters, and winning games is what matters for me. Defensive-wise I've helped out, and helping [Didi Gregorius] out over there. The more I can help this team win it's going to be huge for us."

And in spite of which way things seem to be trending for him, Drew said he is not concerned about the possibility of losing his job.

"I can't worry about that," he said. "I'm just worried about what I can control, like my preparation. As much as I can sit here and pout, I'm working on things to get myself better. I trust my talent and in the long run it's going to come out."

Beltran wrapping up strong month with a bang

Yankees outfielder, who had a rough April, delivers go-ahead two-run HR

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 31, 2015

OAKLAND -- The Yankees never believed that they saw the real Carlos Beltran when he tried to play through a painful right elbow injury last season, and they certainly hoped that he still had more to offer than they saw in April.

This month's version of Beltran, however, agrees with the Yanks just fine. Beltran homered and drove in three runs as the **Yankees defeated the Athletics, 5-3**, on Saturday at the Coliseum, as the 38-year-old veteran charges to the end of the week in strong fashion.

"I'm not worried, man. I'm healthy. I feel good," Beltran said. "It's just part of baseball. Sometimes you start the season hitting .340. All of a sudden you get to a month where you hit less than .200. Everything is magnified when you just start the season slow."

That was the case in April, as Beltran posted just 11 hits in 68 at-bats (.162), an alarming sign considering the two years and \$30 million remaining on his contract. The Yanks thought that a lingering illness might have had something to do with it, and so there was great relief to see him shake that off in May.

Beltran's 2-for-4 performance Saturday, including a go-ahead two-run homer in the sixth off A's right-hander Jesse Hahn, marked the 17th time in the last 18 games that he has hit safely. Beltran is batting .308 (28-for-91) with nine runs, seven doubles, four homers and 14 RBIs in 24 contests this month.

"His track record tells you he's going to come out of it, but there was frustration," manager Joe Girardi said. "It's just human nature to be frustrated in those situations, but he kept working at it and he had to battle some health things when he was sick. I think he's at full strength now, and you're seeing Carlos."

Beltran said that he has made some small adjustments since April, but they were more of the mental variety than the mechanical.

"I just have been more aggressive," Beltran said. "Sometimes I [can] be too passive up there at the plate. I've just got to go out there with the mentality to hit. Sometimes I just go being too patient. That puts me in the hole."

Whatever the reason, Beltran is pleased to be seeing better results.

"At the end of the day, you've got to take things month by month," Beltran said. "You can't really judge your season based on one month. You have to come to the ballpark every day with the mentality of just working in the cage, working on the things you've done in the past that have given you success."

Yankees' Alex Rodriguez doesn't give a (bleep) & that's good, report says

Brendan Kuty | on May 30, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. — Alex Rodriguez doesn't give a (bleep).

That's at least according to a major-league advance scout who's watched the Yankees' slugger recently, according to a report from the **New York Daily News'** **Andy Martino**.

From the report:

Like most other evaluators, this scout has seen A-Rod appear tense over the years, squeezing the bat in pressure situations. This year has brought noticeable change.

"He has the easiest swing I've ever seen from him," the advance scout said. "He just looks like he doesn't give a sh-t. And that's a good thing."

In other words, a famously self-conscious man is finally allowing himself to let it rip, and enjoy the game.

The scout went on to theorize that the year off, forced by a PED suspension, had left A-Rod more appreciative of the game, and able to enjoy it more than ever. That jibes with A-Rod's own account.

Of course, Rodriguez does seem to care. The embattled 39-year-old hasn't just been among the bats carrying the offense, but he's also hung around and answered for its performance — good or bad.

Rodriguez is hitting .277 with 11 home runs and 27 RBI in 159 at-bats this season.



A-Rod set to pass Barry Bonds on all-time RBI list, but who did it better?

- Cory Collins - May 30, 2015

On Thursday night, Alex Rodriguez climbed further up baseball's ladder of all-time RBI leaders. The Yankees' slugger, often accused of egomania, did it with a sacrifice — a sacrifice fly, that is — in the fifth-inning against the Athletics and pitcher Kendall Graveman, Bay Area underdogs of the O.co Coliseum.

But it was a better-known Bay Area baseball player who made headlines upon A-Rod's milestone: Barry Bonds.

With his 1,996th RBI, Rodriguez tied Bonds for second on the official RBI list. The same Bonds rooting for Rodriguez to surpass fellow Giants superstar and godfather Willie Mays on the career home run leaderboard. The same Bonds who, yes, like Rodriguez, has an unofficial asterisk next to his stats because of suspicions of performance-enhancing drug use.

Commonalities aside, we know that all RBIs aren't created equal. It's a situational stat, a source of debate, an incomplete assessment. So even as Rodriguez and Bonds seem buddy-buddy and sit tied near the top of the RBI leaderboard, it doesn't mean they got there the same way. So who did it faster? Who did it better? Like most things, you can use statistics to tell either story.

All statistics are courtesy of the indispensable, splendid Baseball-Reference.

The Case for Alex Rodriguez

It took Rodriguez 372 fewer games than Bonds to reach No. 1,996, so he certainly gets points for efficiency. His 11,531 plate appearances to hit the mark outpaces Bonds' 12,606 trips to the dish.

But more impressively, Rodriguez seemingly has the edge in clutch hitting.

In situations Baseball-Reference defines as "high leverage," Rodriguez ever-so-slightly knocked runs in at a greater pace. While Bonds garnered 683 RBIs in 1,847 at-bats in such situations (36.98 percent), Rodriguez got the RBI 37.8 percent of the time when it supposedly mattered most.

Rodriguez has also made his home runs count when he hits them. This shouldn't be a surprise — the guy is the all-time leader in grand slams. In fact, 46.8 percent of Rodriguez's home runs (311) to date have plated more than one run. For Bonds, the multi-run home run tally is similar (312), but the percentage much lower (40.9).

Perhaps most interesting, though, is the postseason comparison. Rodriguez's critics like to cite his history of lackluster playoff runs. Which, you know, conveniently ignores the first nine years of his career — and 2009 — but who's counting? In the context of this comparison, Rodriguez fares better than Bonds in postseason play. In 326 career playoff plate appearances so far in his career, Rodriguez has driven in 75 runs, good for an average of one RBI per 4.35 at-bats. Bonds' 48 career postseason RBIs came at a pace — wait for it — of an RBI every 4.33 at-bats.

It's difficult to picture what two-hundredths of an at-bat looks like (perhaps a Nomar Garciaparra cup adjustment), but for the sake of this conversation, let's pretend it matters greatly.

The Case for Barry Bonds

One reason Rodriguez does not run away with this RBI faceoff: Bonds walked a lot.

Because of Bonds' incredible eye, and pitchers' incredible fear of throwing him anything near the strike zone, Bonds actually had fewer RBI opportunities than it would seem. While he came to the plate about 1,000 times more than Rodriguez has, Bonds actually had fewer official at-bats: 9,847 to A-Rod's 9,977. Taking that into account, Bonds got an RBI, on average, every 4.9 at-bats. Rodriguez, slacking, sits at an RBI per five at-bats.

Bonds also did better in definitions of clutch hitting beyond "high leverage" situations. His batting line with runners in scoring position (.310/.527/.594), for example, beats A-Rod across the board (.294/.398/.528).

And in complicated, hard-to-calculate statistics that attempt to better measure a player's impact on the game and the score, Bonds doesn't just best Rodriguez. He bests ... everyone ... ever. Bonds is MLB's all-time leader in career Win Probability Added (127.6 to A-Rod's 58.3), a stat that accumulates based on how much a player's plate appearance adds to his team's chance of winning. Bonds also sits atop the leaderboard for runs created (2,892 to A-Rod's 2,195), a stat created by Bill James to estimate the number of runs a player contributes to his team. Not bad.

The Tiebreaker

All of this said, this argument splits hairs between two elite hitters (steroid whispers, ahem, screams, aside). An example of how close this RBI race is: Rodriguez brought home 18 percent of baserunners between his MLB debut and Friday. Barry Bonds, for his career, knocked in 17 percent of baserunners. It's close.

But Bonds wins. Here's why: style points. The final RBIs of Bonds' career didn't come on a lazy fly. His 1,995th and 1,996th RBIs came, instead, on a two-run home run in Coors Field. A blast that ended up being the difference in a 5-3 win for the Giants over the Rockies.

Your move, A-Rod.

Rodriguez has a chance to pass Bonds on Saturday night in Oakland, 16 miles across the bay from AT&T Park in San Francisco where Bonds used to blast. Together again, two players with supposedly tainted statistics, for now in lockstep.

BASEBALL

Inheriting Jeter's Position, but So Far, Not His Defensive Instincts

By BILLY WITZ

OAKLAND, Calif. — The signature play in Derek Jeter's long Yankees career occurred here. During the 2001 playoffs, the Yankees, clinging to their postseason life against the A's, were rescued when Jeter raced across the diamond to cut off a throw home and flipped it backhanded to catcher Jorge Posada, who tagged out Jeremy Giambi just before he touched home plate for what would have been a crucial run.

The moment encapsulated Jeter's approach to the game: athletic, creative, timely and, most of all, heads up.

Growing up in Curaçao, Didi Gregorius watched the play many times. "In that situation, you don't plan," he said. "That's anticipation."

When the Yankees acquired Gregorius from the Arizona Diamondbacks last winter to play shortstop, nobody expected him to truly replace Jeter. What the Yankees were hoping for was a solid fielder with a strong arm and much better range than Jeter displayed in his later years, and a bottom-of-the-order hitter who might evolve into a modestly productive one. Gregorius is only 25, and the hopes seemed reasonable.

But what has been striking during Gregorius's first two months with the Yankees is his lack of instinct and awareness. If those qualities defined Jeter, their absence is defining Gregorius.

His troubles began on opening day, when he was thrown out trying to steal third with two out in the eighth inning of a 6-1 loss to Toronto. He has been caught taking unnecessarily large turns around first base, has held onto a relay throw when he appeared to have a play at the plate, and had a ball roll under his glove recently against Texas when he tried to make a great play instead of a simple one, paving the way for a seven-run inning.

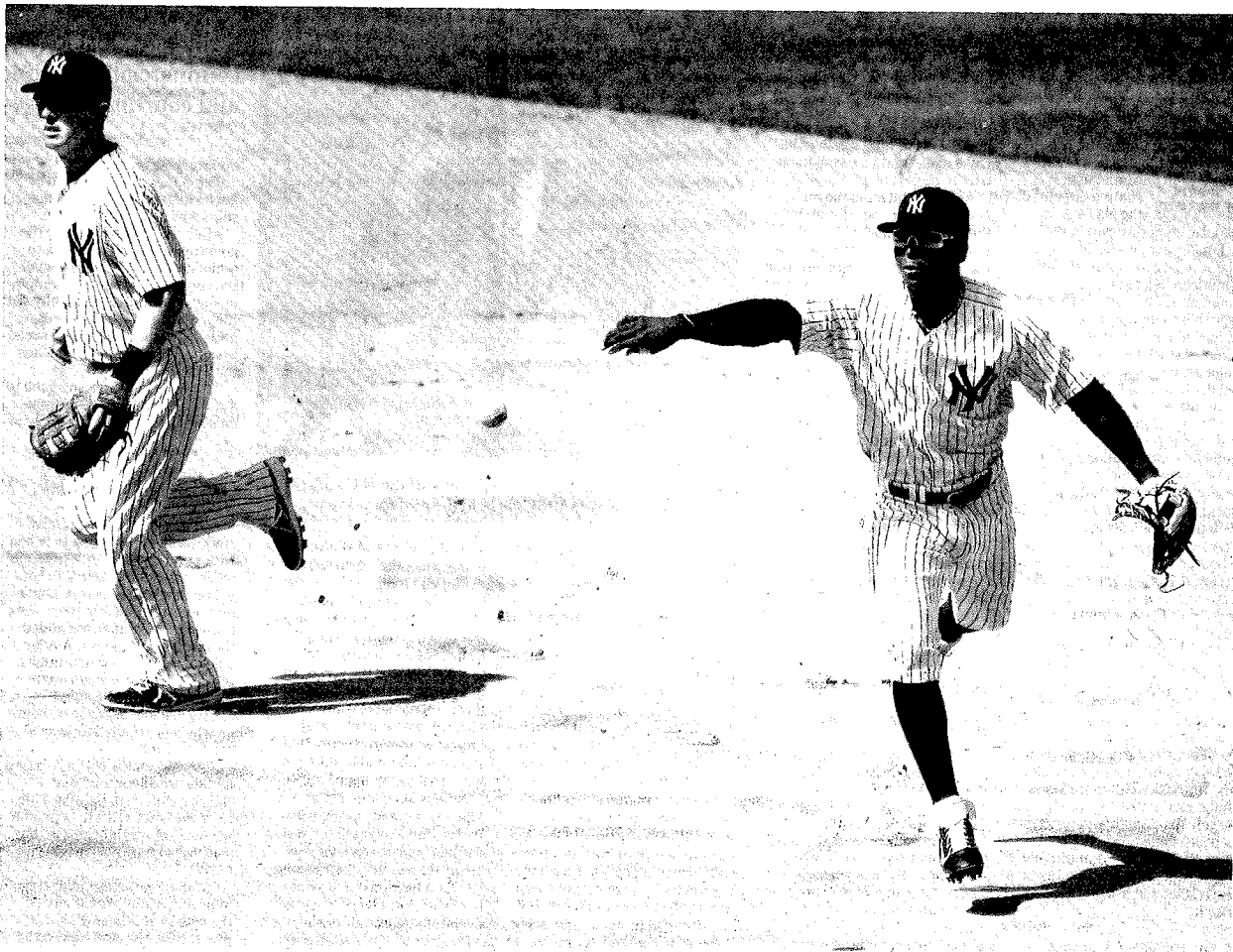
Last week against Kansas City, he might have made a Jeter-like play when, with the Yankees in a defensive shift, he drifted far to his left to snag a slow bouncer, but his backhanded flip sailed past first baseman Mark Teixeira.

On Friday night, Gregorius lacked composure when he ranged onto the outfield grass to grab Josh Phegley's grounder but bobbed the ball, seemingly unaware that he had plenty of time with a slow, limping runner. Though he was not charged with a statistical error, there seemed to be one of judgment.

Manager Joe Girardi's common refrain is that Gregorius is trying to do too much.

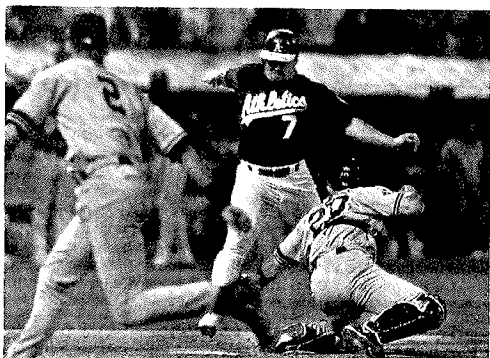
But Gregorius's early-season foibles raise an interesting question: Is instinctiveness a trait that can be learned, or is it inherent?

When a player is struggling at the plate, he can go in the batting



JULIE JACOBSON/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Didi Gregorius, above, sent a backhanded flip toward first base on Wednesday against the Royals. The throw was off target, unlike Derek Jeter's memorable flip in the 2001 playoffs, left.



ERIC RISBERG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

cage and tinker with his swing. If he is struggling in the field, he can take more ground balls. But how does a player improve his awareness?

"You have to play," Girardi said. "You can't simulate game speed and game conditions. As much as you try, you just can't do

it. They'll work on a time clock sometimes with runners, and having to go to first base, but it's not really the same. That's the hard part. The only way to get better is to play."

Gregorius, who entered Saturday batting .210, appears to be a diligent worker. He is regularly at

the ballpark early to work on his fielding or hitting. He often has conversations with teammates that have the feel of advice sessions.

"You can't touch it, but you can see it," Alex Rodriguez, now mostly a designated hitter, said of instincts. "They come with time. Didi's asking questions and he's working hard. And you can remember, he's also very young. It takes time."

In the home team's dugout here this weekend is another struggling young shortstop. Oakland's Marcus Semien, 24, has committed 18 errors this season, the most in the major leagues and one more than the Miami Marlins have made as a team. Playing here, Semien can develop in relative anonymity, along with the Athletics' other young players. Gregorius has a less forgiving environment at Yankee Stadium, where his de-

A work in progress on the left side of the Yankees' infield.

veloping baseball sensibilities stand out on a veteran club.

Girardi dismissed the suggestion that Gregorius could benefit from going to the minors.

"I think he's proven he can do it in the minor leagues," Girardi said. "I think you have to prove you can do it up here."

The Yankees' problems on the left side of the infield are not confined to Gregorius.

Chase Headley, a former Gold Glove third baseman, committed his 11th error Friday night when he misread a potential double-play grounder that bounced between his legs. The A's turned the mistake into a four-run inning in a 6-2 win over the Yankees.

With Headley and Gregorius beginning their first full season in New York, the Yankees expected to be much improved defensively on the left side of the infield. Instead, it has been an area of disappointment.

"I know what type of player I am defensively," said Headley, who is two errors from equaling his career high. "My entire career I've been a good player. It's obviously been tough for me so far this year, but I'm going to keep working at it, grinding at it, and it'll get better. It has to."

Headley's track record suggests it will. Gregorius's track record is still being laid down.

"It's a process," Gregorius said of his decision-making. "You have to go step by step."

The question, unanswered for now, is whether those steps will lead him, as they always seemed to do for his predecessor, to the right place at the right time.

Chase can't catch break in the field

BY ERIK BOLAND
erik.boland@newsday.com

OAKLAND, Calif. — Like every major-leaguer, Chase Headley has gone through slumps in his career. But nothing like this.

The difference, the third baseman said, is that the slumps usually occur in the batter's box.

"Sometimes things go that way; you're going to go great, you're going to go bad," he said. "[But] usually it's more offensively than defensively. But that's where it is right now."

Headley, a solid fielder the majority of his career, made his major league-leading 11th error in Friday night's 6-2 loss to the A's.

Ben Zobrist hit a ground smash in the third inning that Headley thought was a double-play ball. But it flattened out — rather than coming up, as Headley anticipated — darting through his legs and contributing to a four-run inning.

"I'm expecting the ball to come up so I have my glove turned up," said Headley, a Gold Glove winner in 2012 with the Padres. "It's unfortunate because it's a big part of the game and it cost us a bunch of runs. It's a play I feel I have to make regardless of whether it takes a hop or not."

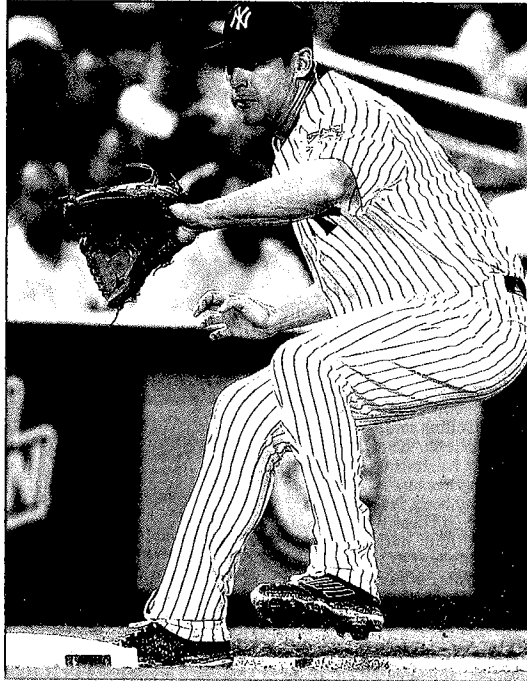
Headley sighed. "Another play that I probably should have made," he said.

As the number of those plays have increased this season, Headley, who committed nine errors in 135 games last season, has become more and more perplexed.

"I know what type of player I am defensively," he said. "My entire career, I've been a good player. It's obviously been tough for me so far this year. But I'm going to keep working at it, grinding at it, and it'll get better. It has to."

The constant errors have Joe Girardi at a loss as well. "It's hard to say [why]," said Girardi, whose club entered last night with 36 errors, third most in the American League. "We saw him play great defense for us last year, and he's struggled some."

Headley hasn't been a star at the plate to this point, entering last night with a .246/.302/.400 slash line, six homers and 22 RBIs. The numbers are not hor-



KATHLEEN MALONE/VAN DYKE

Chase Headley, who had throwing issues, isn't catching ball now.

LATE RESULT
Read about last night's Yankees-A's game at newsday.com/yankees

Today
Yankees at Oakland
TV: YES, 4:05 p.m.
Radio: WFAN (660, 101.9)

rific, but they're also not the kind that make up for the constant mistakes in the field.

After Friday night's game, Girardi — who at times provides cover for a fielder by talking about the need for a pitcher to "pick up" a position player who commits an error — didn't try to downplay the impact of Headley's miscue. "I don't know if he lost it or what happened," he said. "But obviously it opened up an opportunity for them . . . The extra out hurt us."

The nightmare start in the field came out of nowhere. "Coming out of spring training, I felt great," he said. "I don't know if I

made an error in spring training [he did not]. I probably wish I would have. It's just baseball. That's not an excuse. I have to correct the situation."

Early this season, the majority of his miscues came on throws, something he thinks he cleaned up to a degree in recent weeks. But that's when fielding the ball became more of an issue.

"It's uncharacteristic. I really don't have any explanation for any of it," he said. "It's never happened to me before and I know I'll get through it. It's frustrating that it's causing us to lose games, but it's not for a lack of effort or lack of attention to detail, I can tell you that."

newsday.com NEWSDAY, SUNDAY, MAY 31, 2015

Chase Headley failing Yankees in 1 area he's supposed to ace

Brendan Kutny | on May 30, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. — Think Chase Headley's woeful fielding has perplexed the Yankees? Try talking to the man himself.

The frustration in Headley's voice was clear after his team-leading 11th error contributed to the Yankees' 6-2 loss to the league's worst club, the Oakland A's, at O.co Coliseum Friday night.

"It's uncharacteristic," he said. "I don't really have any other explanation other than, it's never happened to me before and I know I'll get through it. It's frustrating. It's not for a lack of effort or attention to detail."

With two men on, Headley let a hot grounder zip through his legs in the third inning. What could have been a double play ended up extending the inning, in which Oakland put up four runs to grab a 4-0 lead.

Manager Joe Girardi said the miscue was significant.

"It possibly changes the way you use the bullpen, it changes a lot of different things," Girardi said. "The extra out hurt us."

And even Girardi, the eternal optimist, was at a loss for Headley's defensive problems.

"It's hard to say," the manager said. "We saw him play great defense for us last year and he's struggled some."

Headley signed a four-year, \$52-million extension with the Yankees in the offseason, in large part due to his reputation as a great third baseman. But he's well en route to shattering his personal errors mark. The most he's ever committed in a season was 13, and that happened in 2011.

The biggest questions the Yankees had in the offseason had to do with Headley's balky lower back and his bat. But he's only missed a game due to the back this season and he's only underperformed a bit at the plate, hitting .251 with six homers and 22 RBI.

Headley didn't make a single error in 115 spring training innings.

"I probably wish I would have," he said. "It's one of those things. But it's just baseball. That's not an excuse. You've got to correct the problems, but sometimes things don't go that way."

The Record

Klapisch: Yankees' CC Sabathia in decline

May 31, 2015 - By **BOB KLAPISCH**

RECORD BASEBALL COLUMNIST |

If there was anything to be gleaned from Jorge Posada's recent memoirs, it was just how cold and calculating Joe Girardi could be when the situation warranted. The manager has a reputation of loyalty to his veterans, but, as evidenced by the way he showed Posada the door, Girardi isn't always blinded by nostalgia.

Yet, he maintains an unbreakable bond with CC Sabathia, which cost the Yankees on Thursday night in a 5-4 loss to the A's. Girardi allowed the big left-hander to go out for the seventh inning, despite surrendering a two-run homer to Brett Lawrie in the sixth, tying the score at 3.

Sabathia never made it out of the seventh, as the last-place A's went ahead for good. The former-ace's ERA climbed to 5.67, which is no surprise to anyone who's watched him decline over the last three seasons. Sabathia doesn't throw particularly hard and his command on the corners is inconsistent. Yet, Girardi keeps waiting for Sabathia to either reincarnate as the 2009 version of himself or as a latter-day Andy Pettitte, able to throw a killer out-pitch in the middle of a rally.

So far, neither has happened, and it's hard to believe it will. Sooner or later, the Yankee hierarchy, and Girardi in particular, will have to accept Sabathia's decline phase for what it is. In fact, as much as the Yankees hoped in spring training CC wouldn't get hurt in 2015, the real problem is that he's stayed healthy.

Like most new millennium managers, Girardi's strategy is data-driven. He's well prepared in the late innings when games are on the line. Yet, Girardi seems oblivious to one glaring flaw in Sabathia's profile: The left-hander can't get through an opposing lineup a third time.

His ERA after the fifth inning is 7.62; from the sixth inning on, it inflates to 10.12. Sabathia has managed to keep his walks down, and, oddly, his strikeout ratio (7.6 per nine innings) is almost identical to what it was in 2009. But Sabathia is giving up a slew of base hits — more than 11 per nine innings — which suggests he simply doesn't have the arsenal to get out of trouble anymore.

One talent evaluator said the other day, "It's just too late in [Sabathia's] career to turn into Pettitte or [Mike] Mussina. Those guys had deliveries that were consistent with finesse pitching. CC doesn't."

Sabathia still has that massive windup, an explosion of arms and legs coming at hitters in a fury, a reminder of the days when his fastball lived in the mid-to-high 90s. But now, with his four-seamer under 90-mph, that windup only serves to get in the way. There's too many moving parts

for precision, especially from a former Cy Young winner who was taught to crush hitters with blow-away heat.

So what's to be done, if Sabathia can't be counted in late innings? One solution is for Girardi to start looking to the bullpen after the second time through the order; turn Sabathia into a five-inning pitcher. It would be a blow to the big man's ego, but a veteran's pride didn't stop Girardi from dropping Posada to the No. 9 spot in the order when it made sense.

The other option is to turn Sabathia into a long man, specifically to neutralize lefties. You can forget about that ever happening, though, since the Yankees are paying Sabathia \$48 million through 2016. And unless he ends next season on the disabled list with a left shoulder injury, or doesn't spend more than 45 days on the DL with a left shoulder injury or doesn't make more than six relief appearances because of a left shoulder injury — then his contract rolls over for another \$25 million in 2017.

Who knows, though, it's possible Sabathia will benefit from Masahiro Tanaka's return to the rotation on Wednesday. And Ivan Nova, recovering from Tommy John surgery, could make his 2015 debut in June, as well. The Yankees' rotation might be sufficiently bolstered to keep them afloat in the East, but more importantly, push Sabathia to the No. 5 where he's pitched himself to.

It's a steep drop for a player everyone likes and respects. To his credit, Sabathia has never run from his failure; he faces questions every time he suffers a loss. Surely, though, Sabathia's confidence is down, as it becomes obvious he can't win in the middle of the strike zone. The question, of course, is whether Girardi knows it and if he does, what he intends to do about it.

NEWS ITEM: Jonathon Niese struggles again.

It's becoming harder and harder for the Mets to make a case for keeping Niese in the rotation and not promoting Class AAA phenom Steven Matz. Saturday's 9-5 loss to the pathetic Marlins was an indictment of Niese's diminished velocity, and his chronic problem with putting hitters away.

For the first time in his career, Niese has allowed four or more earned runs in his last four starts.

Against Miami, the left-hander's velocity ticked up a bit, averaging 90.8 mph, but more telling was his inability to get a single swing and miss on any of the 19 curveballs and change-ups he threw. Niese isn't fooling anyone lately.



Opportunity for Ramon Flores (as long Girardi actually plays him)

Posted By [Chad Jennings](#) On May 30, 2015

On March 24, Ramon Flores hit a walk-off home run to win a spring training game. This is what Joe Girardi had to say about it:

“He’s a guy that’s definitely on our radar. If something was to happen to one of our outfielders, I think he’d be a pretty strong candidate.”

Well, Flores was still a candidate yesterday, and he’ll be a big leaguer tonight. He was hitting .294/.389/.425 in Triple-A, the Yankees needed a new outfielder, and Flores got the call. Now we’ll find out whether he can go from being on the radar to being in the lineup.

Flores is replacing Slade Heathcott on the roster. Will he replace him as a lineup regular?

“It will be kind of like what I did with Slade,” Girardi said. “We’ll see how the kid does. It could be a platoon situation. There’s a lot of different things we could do. We’ll see how the kid does.”

We’ve seen that good young hitters don’t always thrive when they don’t get much playing time. A part-time role isn’t for everyone, and even veteran hitters often find it difficult to be productive without regular at-bats. Right now, the lowest OPS on the Yankees’ roster doesn’t belong to Didi Gregorius or Stephen Drew.

By a large margin, it’s Jose Pirela who’s hitting just .200/.200/.233 for a team-worst.433 OPS. Based on his Triple-A numbers last season, Pirela should be an obvious possibility to offensively upgrade in the middle of the infield, but in his limited big league opportunity this season, he hasn’t forced Girardi’s hand.

“We’ve talked about it, and he seemed to struggle too,” Girardi said. “We’ve talked about it. ... It’s difficult when you’re a young player and you’re used to playing every day, to make that adjustment. It’s hard.”

John Ryan Murphy has also not hit much this season (.222/.286/.361), and the only Yankees with a lower OPS than Garrett Jones are the light-hitting middle infielders. Is that a sign of a weak bench, or simply a bench that hasn’t done much because it hasn’t had many opportunities?

Now, into that mix comes Flores, a 23-year-old who could slide right into Heathcott’s platoon situation with a legitimate chance to sink or swim. If this were a month ago, Chris Young would probably get something close to everyday playing time in center field, but Young’s been pretty bad lately, and he’s been especially bad against right-handed pitchers. Jones could play some left field, but his defense is spotty at best, and he hasn’t hit much.

Platoon playing time for Flores make sense, and it’s the only way to find out if he can truly help this lineup get something going at the bottom of the order.



Heathcott officially placed on disabled list

Posted By [Chad Jennings](#) On May 30, 2015

The Yankees have officially placed Slade Heathcott on the disabled list and called up Ramon Flores from Triple-A.

Additionally, Chris Martin has joined the Triple-A roster on a rehab assignment.

Outfielder Taylor Dugas has been transferred from Double-A to Triple-A to replace Flores, and top pitching prospect Luis Severino has officially joined the Triple-A roster and will start for Scranton/Wilkes-Barre tomorrow.

Top prospect Severino set for Triple-A debut

Girardi, Yanks to keep close eye on righty, who starts Sunday for Scranton/Wilkes-Barre

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 30th, 2015

OAKLAND -- Luis Severino, regarded as the Yankees' top prospect, is scheduled to make his Triple-A debut on Sunday for the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders against the Norfolk Tides at 1:05 p.m. ET in Moosic, Pa.

Severino, 21, has been rated as the **Yankees' No. 1 prospect** by MLB.com. The right-hander was 2-2 with a 3.32 ERA in eight starts for Double-A Trenton to begin the 2015 season.

"Obviously, it's a step closer," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "The way it usually happens is if somebody goes down or somebody struggles, you talk about the guys in Triple-A before you talk about the guys in Double-A. He's that much closer now, and so we'll pay attention to what he's doing."

While in Double-A, Severino struck out 48 while walking just 10 in 38 innings, permitting a .227 opponent batting average. He was in big league camp this spring, impressing coaches with a live fastball and a solid changeup.

Yankees' Joe Girardi talks top prospects Aaron Judge, Luis Severino

Brendan Kutty | on May 30, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. — As Yankees fans have watched their team struggle to find consistency amid injuries and up-and-down production at key spots, some have undoubtedly closed their eyes and dreamed of the future.

The way manager Joe Girardi talked Friday made it seem like that future might be closer than ever.

Girardi was asked about top pitching prospect Luis Severino and top hitting prospect Aaron Judge before Friday's 6-2 loss to the A's at O.co Coliseum.

The manager said the team didn't consider promoting the hulking, live-drive hitting Judge from Double-A Trenton to the bigs after the news that rookie Slade Heathcott will miss approximately a month with a Grade II quadriceps strain.

Judge's impressive minor-league career has continued in 2015. The 23-year-old is hitting .298 with seven homers and 29 RBI. He's slugging .497.

"Well, it'd be a pretty steep jump," Girardi said. "But there's players that go from Double-A to the big leagues. But usually they've been in Double-A a whole year. And he's basically always been a right fielder."

The team instead will call up Triple-A left fielder Ramon Flores to replace Heathcott.

Severino has been similarly good. **His performance at Double-A earned him a promotion to Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre recently.**

Girardi said the move means the 21-year-old righty is "that much closer" to his major-league debut.

"Obviously it's a step closer and the way it usually happens is, somebody goes down physically or somebody's struggling, you talk about the guys in Triple-A before you talk about the guys in Double-A," Girardi said. "He's that much closer now, in a sense. So we'll pay attention to what he's doing."

A's go for series win, while Yanks eye split

By Trevor Hass / MLB.com | May 31, 2015

The A's and Yankees close out their series Sunday afternoon at the Coliseum, with Jesse Chavez and Oakland seeking a series win and Adam Warren and New York trying to secure a split of the four-game set.

Chavez holds a 1-5 record and a 2.44 ERA and has a run support average of 1.20 in his starting assignments -- lowest in the Majors dating back to the righty's first start April 23.

Warren is 3-3 and has a 3.91 ERA through nine starts. The right-hander is 0-1 against the Athletics in five bullpen appearances, in which he allowed a combined 12 hits and three runs.

Three things to know about this game:

- Chavez has not allowed an earned run in the first two innings and has a 1.08 ERA from the sixth inning on. He has yielded 13 of his 17 runs in the third through fifth innings.
- Yankees outfielders entered Saturday's game batting .284 (166-for-585) this season, their highest combined mark since 2000 (.289).
- Yankees slugger Alex Rodriguez enters the game riding a nine-game hitting streak.

5 Yankees things to know today: Adam Warren, Dellin Betances

Brendan Kutty | on May 31, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. — Here are five **Yankees** things you need to know Sunday:

1. BROADCAST INFO: The American League East-leading Yankees (26-24) will take on the Oakland A's (19-33), the team with the worst record in the league, at 4:05 p.m. at O.co Coliseum. Watch it on YES Network. Hear it on WFAN 660 AM/101.9 FM. Follow @brendankutynj for updates.

2. STARTING PITCHERS: Yankees righty Adam Warren (3-3, 3.91 ERA) will face A's righty Jesse Chavez (1-5, 2.44 ERA). Warren has pitched so well in his last three starts (1-2, 2.75 ERA) that he essentially has saved his spot in the rotation. It appears Masahiro Tanaka's return will bounce Chris Capuano instead of Warren, who could have moved back into the bullpen where he was effective in 2015.

3. THE CAVALRY: Righty Chris Martin (elbow tendinitis) pitched well in his first rehab assignment Saturday. Martin got three groundouts and consistently threw in the mid-90-mph range. Yankees manager Joe Girardi said he didn't know whether Martin would need more than one outing before coming off the 15-day disabled list.

4. ZEROES: Righty reliever and setup man Dellin Betances hasn't allowed an earned run in any of his 27 1/3 innings this season.

5. DECISIONS, DECISIONS: With a righty facing the Yankees, will manager Joe Girardi give Stephen Drew the day off yet again, the way he did Saturday? Or will Jose Pirela go back to the bench? Drew is hitless in his last 20 at-bats and has just two hits in his last 36 at-bats.

NY Post 5.31.15

Prado refuses to look in rear-view mirror

By DAN MARTIN

Not much has gone right for the Marlins this season, and even Martin Prado has been a mild disappointment since coming over in an offseason trade with the Yankees.

Still, Prado's production as Miami's starting third baseman is

practically Ruthian compared to what Stephen Drew has done this season in The Bronx.

But Prado, playing this weekend at Citi Field against the Mets, doesn't wonder what might have been if he had stayed with the Yankees.

"I don't think about it," Prado said Saturday. "It doesn't bother me not being there, because I have no con-

trol over that. Movement, trades, those things aren't up to me."

No, they're up to people like Yankees general manager Brian Cashman, who opted to re-sign Chase Headley to play third and move Prado as part of a package with David Phelps to get Nathan Eovaldi and Garrett Jones.

That left Drew to re-sign with

the Yankees in hopes his disastrous 2014 season was the result of his missing spring training while waiting for a contract.

Instead, Drew has shown no signs of straightening himself out at the plate. Prado, who went 3-for-5, is hitting .280 with three homers and 21 RBIs and entered Saturday with a .663 OPS. Drew has provided some

pop in the lineup, but nothing else, with a .529 OPS, somehow worse than it was a year ago.

"I can stand here and tell you what kind of start I would have had if I stayed there," Prado said. "I don't think that way. There's always an 'if.' Things worked out the way they did and I don't worry about anything else."

** RR



Babe Ruth played his last game 80 years ago today — in a different world

- [Cory Collins](#) - May 30, 2015

On May 30, 1935, Babe Ruth decided he'd had enough.

The Yankees had released baseball's first true superstar on Feb. 5, leaving him to struggle through his final days with the Boston Braves — a franchise in such dire straits that, by season's end, the National League had to take over the bankrupt team. After hitting three home runs in a heroic performance on May 25, Ruth had gone hitless for five straight games. He was hitting .181 on the season.

According to [PhiladelphiaAthletics.org](#), Ruth tried to exit this midseason game against the Phillies without ceremony. The slugger who claimed to have once called his shot grounded out in the first inning. In the field, a ball dropped in front of him, got past him. Then after the third out, he left through the center field fence. The Philadelphia crowd gave him one last standing ovation.

Saturday marks the 80th anniversary of The Babe's swan song — a song that, if not for the final cheer, would have ended on a sour note. A former moneymaker who couldn't draw the crowds necessary to save the Braves from bankruptcy. The unbeatable batter, suddenly, an easy out.

But it's worth remembering just how incredible Ruth's career was compared with his peers. It's worth remembering how much in the baseball world, and the world at large, has changed since Ruth left the game. Because the incredible thing is that he hasn't really left at all; his legend and his numbers still loom. At the time, though, Ruth did not represent a milestone to make. He represented an unreachable peak.

The baseball world in 1935

After Ruth's final season, his statistics looked like outliers against the list of MLB's all-time leaders. He completed his career with 714 home runs. The closest viceroy for the home run crown? His teammate, Lou Gehrig ... with 378. Ruth's career slugging percentage: .690, a full 50 points above Jimmie Foxx in second place. And true to his free-swinging style, Ruth also had 1,330 strikeouts — 531 more than the next-in-line Jimmie Dykes, 574 more than everyone's favorite baseball thumper, Rabbit Maranville.

Though, to be fair, Adam Dunn retired with 1,040 more strikeouts in 502 fewer games. There are home run kings who strike out, then there are strike out kings who hit home runs.

The great gap between Ruth and his peers upon retirement also — at least in part — reflected a much different game and level of competition. Only 16 teams played in the league at the time, and, notably, without black players. That whitewashing, and that the live-ball era was only 15 years old, contributed to the novelty of Ruth's power.

But you have to do something right to get a candy bar named after you.

The world beyond baseball in 1935

While Ruth remains one of the most recognizable names in American sports, it's easy to forget just how many eras have passed since his retirement. So here's some context.

On that same day, Kelly Petillo won the Indianapolis 500 with a time of 4:42:22. The fastest race on record today? Tony Kanaan's 2:40:03 in 2013.

Ruth's final time afield occurred just five months after Amelia Earhart had become the first person to fly solo from Hawaii to California. Today, the Honolulu International Airport handles about 20 million passengers a year.

Also 5 months old in late May 1935: tighty whities. Men's briefs were still a new thing. Think about that. Then think about Ruth wearing them. You're welcome.

1935 was the year of the Dust Bowl, the year of Fred Astaire's "Cheek to Cheek," the year that "Mutiny on the Bounty" starring Clark Gable won the Academy Award for Best Picture. It was the year, perhaps to Ruth's relief, that Alcoholics Anonymous would be founded.

1935, so long ago that it predates John Goodman's birth by 17 years — the John Goodman who played, arguably, the most laughable representation of Ruth in cinematic history. Who failed to do what we all seemingly fail to do: to put such an outrageous outlier career in proper perspective.

NY Post 5.31.15

A-Rod's 'legendary' lease

OF all the apartments in NYC, **Alex Rodriguez** rented the one **Reggie Jackson** used to call home.

When the Yankee slugger recently stepped into the elevator of his Fifth Avenue tower, he was greeted by **Stevie Phillips**, who once managed the career of Judy Garland. She told him: "In the late '70s a friend of mine lived in your apartment — Reggie Jackson."

A-Rod's eyes popped, writes **Richard Turley** on orbmagazine.com, at the news Alex' four walls once housed

the Yankee legend.

Phillips, whose memoir "Judy & Liza & Robert & Freddie & David & Sue & Me" is out Tuesday, told A-Rod, "Reggie would

sometimes come by my apartment . . . for my housekeeper to trim his neck."

Rodriguez previously lived at 15 Central Park West, where he was noted for his leggy guests — including **Cameron Diaz**.

You'll never guess who used to live in Alex Rodriguez's apartment

Kevin Manahan | on May 30, 2015

Alex Rodriguez's Fifth Avenue apartment, which overlooks Central Park, has the luxury features you'd expect in a multi-millionaire ballplayer's home, plus one more you probably wouldn't expect: 1,228 career home runs and counting.

Turns out, another Yankees slugger used to call the pad home: Reggie Jackson.

When Rodriguez recently stepped into the elevator of the Manhattan tower, he ran into Stevie Phillips, the former manager of Judy Garland and daughter Liza Minnelli.

Here's what happened, **according to orbmagazine.com**:

"Welcome to the building," she said.

"Thanks," he said. "I'm Alex. Have you lived here long?"

"Forty-two years," she said. "In fact, in the late '70s a friend of mine lived in your apartment — Reggie Jackson."

A-Rod's eyes popped, writes Richard Turley on orbmagazine.com, at the news his four walls once housed the Yankee legend known as "Mr. October" for his World Series feats. "Really?" he asked.

"That's right," said Phillips, whose memoir "Judy & Liza & Robert & Freddie & David & Sue & Me . . ." hits bookstores Tuesday. "Reggie would sometimes come by my apartment before going out in the evening for my housekeeper to trim his neck."

"Wow," said Rodriguez, who was so "flummoxed" by the news that when he reached the lobby, he almost climbed into a black car waiting for the socialite Gillian Miniter.

Yankees special advisor Reggie Jackson, left, talks to the Yankees designated hitter Alex Rodriguez (13) during batting practice before a spring baseball game in Tampa, Fla., Thursday, March 12, 2015. (AP Photo | Kathy Willens)

Turns out, Jackson and Rodriguez have been friends from the first time Jackson saw a teenaged A-Rod at a West Coast all-star game. Here's what **Jackson told NJ.com about the relationship** during spring training, when Rodriguez hadn't quite won over Yankees fans after his year-long suspension:

"I'm a Yankee," Jackson said, "So regardless of what he's going through, I'm going to be there to support him. I'm glad to see him doing well. It makes everybody feel good, everybody. From the ownership to the fans. If somebody's rooting against him, I haven't seen it. I guess I saw a guy (Wednesday) that was (taunting him from the crowd).

"Finally, he hit the home run, and I got up and I tipped my cap to the guy. That kind of stuff is unnecessary. But he's going to get that and he's going to get the boos and the comments and stuff like that. He's doing well. "

After tie, NYCFC still winless since March

BY WAYNE COFFEY
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

THE WINLESS streak stands at 77 days now, their lone victory coming in the second game they ever played, back when their landlords, the New York Yankees, were still in spring training.

It is never an easy thing, playing your inaugural season in a professional league. But it is an especially exasperating experience for NYCFC, which was supported by a boisterous crowd of 26,211 Saturday night at the Stadium, had two spectacular chances to win near the close of business, but came away with a 1-1 tie against the Houston Dynamo.

NYCFC (1-7-5) remains in the basement of the MLS Eastern Conference.

"That's the way our season is

going right now. We can't get a bounce, can't get a break," said Jeb Brovsky, a 26-year-old defender, who has a Rollie Fingers-style handlebar mustache and had both of the late scoring opportunities.

In the 89th minute, Brovsky got a beautiful cross from midfielder Kwadwo Poku, who had come on for Mehdi Ballouchy some 15 minutes earlier. Brovsky timed his header perfectly, directed it hard, and seemingly perfectly toward the near post.

"I thought it was going in and we were going to get three points," Brovsky said. Except Dynamo keeper Tyler Deric made the save of the night, sprawling to his left and snaring the ball a microsecond before it went into the net.

Minutes later, in stoppage time, Brovsky made an overlapping run and got another brilliant ball, this one from midfielder Mix Diskerud. Brovsky, in alone on Deric, one-timed it but knocked it across the goalmouth.

The crowd groaned, and Jason Kreis, the NYCFC coach, wondered when his team would stop its habit of falling behind early, doing things the hard way.

"I still believe we're going to get there. It's just taking a whole longer than I'd like," Kreis said.

There were encouraging signs to be sure. David Villa, captain and big-name Spanish import, was named star of the game and was a threat throughout, scoring his third goal of the season in stoppage time of the first half on a penalty kick. Certainly, Villa got help from a generous whistle, referee Sorin Stoica calling Dynamo defender Raul Rodriguez for a highly questionable hand

ball when he went up to contest a header with Adam Nemeč, and the ball caromed randomly off his upper arm. Nonetheless, Stoica's whistle blew, Dynamo coach Owen Coyle went ballistic, and Villa calmly buried his PK into the lower right corner.

The gift squared the score at 1-1, a half hour after Will Bruin, a stout, 6-2, 195-pound forward out of Indiana, had given the Dynamo its lead in the 16th minute. Midfielder Alexander Lopez curled a corner kick to David Horst, a 6-4 defender, who headed it toward Bruin, who blistered a half-volley past a helpless, and angry, Josh Saunders, the NYCFC keeper.

The Dynamo raised its game as the second half opened, and threatened often, before NYCFC made its big push at the end.

Nemeč had a chance on his own ball from Diskerud, in the 75th minute, but his arching shot

kissed the crossbar and went over. Four minutes later, Nemeč attempted to slide the ball to a wide-open Villa on the left side, but the pass was intercepted, leaving an exasperated Villa all alone, with no ball to play with.

The lowest-scoring team in MLS, NYCFC nearly scored just two minutes in, when Villa curled a ball toward the far post in the second minute, missing by inches. It would be the first of many close calls for a team that hasn't won in 11 games since March 15. Kreis wants more, and wants a victory, now.

"There's a continuing theme that I see," the coach said. "The players need to be a little more brave and a little more bold and (have) a little more self belief about what they are and who they are. We may not be the best team in the league for sure. But we're capable of playing better."

NYCFC	1
DYNAMO	1

NY Post 5.31.15

NYCFC's winless streak goes to 11

By ZACH BRAZILLER

Say this for New York City FC: They're getting excruciatingly closer to finding the win column.

The MLS expansion team's winless streak reached 11 games Saturday night after they settled for a 1-1 draw with the Houston Dynamo in front of 26,211 at Yankee Stadium. But it very nearly ended in a match mostly controlled by NYCFC.

They had numerous

chances to forge ahead in the final minutes, one tantalizingly close chance after another. However, at the final whistle, it was merely a tease, another contest that failed to result in victory, as NYCFC settled for a point.

"It's incredibly frustrating," NYCFC coach Jason Kreis said of his team's drought, which has included four draws and five one-goal defeats since the club's first vic-

NYCFC
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tory 77 days ago.

Kreis called out his players after the disappointing result.

"There are a lot of guys who are just a little afraid," he said, while also promising lineup changes.

"There's a continuing theme I see," Kreis said. "The players need to be a little more bold and a little more brave and [have]

a little bit more self belief. We may not be the best team in the league for sure, but we're certainly capable of playing better than we did for long stretches of the first half."

"It's normal," captain David Villa said. "You can see it on the pitch when you're losing. Team confidence suffers."

Rather than discuss the myriad of opportunities on which NYCFC (1-7-5, 8 points) failed to capitalize in the waning min-

utes, Kreis focused on an early goal allowed in the 16th minute, a Will Bruin tally off a corner kick by Houston (4-5-5, 17 points).

Villa equalized in the 45th minute on a penalty kick, but the early goal was the difference.

"It's one of the hardest things in soccer, to be involved with a team that continues to do that," Kreis said. "It can be very mentally frustrating, and I think you saw that."

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New York City FC's Chris Wingert tries to make a move on Houston Dynamo midfielder Boniek Garcia.

Villa earns draw via penalty shot

BY SAL CACCIATORE
salvatore.cacciatore@newsday.com

Things have hardly gone as planned for New York City FC in its inaugural season, but the club earned a much needed point last night.

David Villa's 45th-minute penalty kick tied the score for NYC FC in its 1-1 draw with the Houston Dynamo in front of 26,211 fans at Yankee Stadium.

The goal was Villa's third of the season for New York City (1-7-5), which earned its eighth point. The club came into the match with both the league's worst record and lowest goal differential (minus-7).

The hope for NYC FC is that a healthy Villa can kick-start a struggling offense, which came into the game averaging a league-low 0.75 goals per game. The former Barcelona striker was the team's best player. He had seven total shots, four of them on target.

Houston opened the scoring in the 16th minute when David Horst headed a corner to the feet of Will Bruin, who fired a shot that gave Houston (4-5-5) the lead.

NYC FC, which did not look threatening outside of a second-minute Villa shot in the box that went wide of the far post, got its chance to equalize at the end of the first half. Houston's Paul Rodriguez handled the ball inside his own penalty area, earning a penalty kick to NYC FC, which Villa converted.

Houston created the first chance of the second half in the

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56th minute when Bruin headed a cross from the right flank directly at goalie Josh Saunders. The Dynamo had another chance to double its lead in the 66th minute when Raul Rodriguez's shot from outside the area was slowed by a deflection, creating a manageable save for Saunders.

At the other end, NYC FC had a number of attempts to take the lead. In the 75th minute, Villa got past his defender inside in the box, but shot straight at Houston goalkeeper Tyler Deric. Deric made two more saves, on Andrew Jacobson's 77th-minute shot and Villa's 84th-minute effort.

Deric was again called upon in the 88th minute, diving across the goal line to deny Jeb Brovsky's header from 8 yards out.

In stoppage time, an unmarked Brovsky received a cross inside the 6-yard box, but his effort went just wide of the far post.

Houston had the advantage in total shots 15-13 with NYC FC putting seven on target, with four for the Dynamo.

NYC FC's struggles in finishing continued, as NYC FC came into the game ranked seventh in the 20-team league in total shots per game (13.0).

NY Times 5.31.15

CITY F.C. TIES HOUSTON David Villa scored on a first-half penalty kick, and New York City F.C. tied the visiting Houston Dynamo, 1-1. Houston scored first, in the 16th minute, when David Horst headed a corner kick into the middle of the box and Will Bruin one-touched it home. Villa evened the score in first-half stoppage time after Raul Rodriguez was penalized for a hand ball. N.Y.C.F.C. (1-7-5) had its winless streak extended to 11 games.

The Record

MLS: NYCFC winless streak reaches 11

May 31, 2015 - By ANDY VASQUEZ

NEW YORK — For most of the final 15 minutes of Saturday night's game, it seemed as if things were finally about to turn New York City Football Club's way.

The scoring opportunities stacked up. And had any one of the chances found the back of the net, NYC FC would have almost certainly tallied its first win in 76 days.

Instead, NYC FC had to settle for a 1-1 tie with Houston. NYC FC's winless streak stands at 11 games, and frustration is setting in.

That was apparent following the game, when coach Jason Kreis said the last win was so long ago he "can't remember" it. He challenged his players, calling their lack of courage a "continuing theme."

"The players need to be a little more brave and a little more bold and [have a] little more self belief in what they are and who they are," Kreis said. "Because we may not be the best team in the league for sure. But we are certainly capable of playing better than we did for long stretches of that first half.

"So we have to demand more from ourselves and just believe a little bit more," Kreis said "because at the moment, I think there are a lot of guys that I think are just a little bit afraid."

Star striker, and Spanish legend, David Villa didn't disagree with his coach's assessment.

"I think it's normal," Villa said through an interpreter. "You can see it on the pitch when we're losing, confidence suffers. ... We just have to continue working hard to lose that fear."

The problems came mostly early, as NYC FC didn't handle adversity well.

For the ninth time in 12 games this season, NYC FC surrendered the first goal of the match. This early setback came in the 16th minute off a corner kick.

The frustration of allowing yet another early goal seemed to shake NYC FC.

Just before halftime, NYC FC finally showed some signs of life. After a sustained attack, Dynamo defender Raul Rodriguez was called for a hand ball in the box. Replays showed it to be the correct call. Villa converted it into a goal, tucking his penalty kick low and just inside the right post.

NYC FC went into halftime with life. And the home team was the better team for the majority of the second half. NYC FC had the two best scoring chances, both by defender Jeb Brovsky.

In the 89th minute, Brovsky laid out for a header which seemed destined for the net. But Houston keeper Tyler Deric laid out to make a fantastic save, stopping it inches short of the goal line.

"He made a world-class save to keep his team in it," Brovsky said.

In stoppage time, Brovsky had a chance to finish another goal. But his redirection of a cross went wide of the left post. The 26,211 at Yankee Stadium groaned. They knew the winless streak would continue.

And after the game, Kreis admitted it hasn't been easy to keep his team positive in this inaugural season after nearly 2 1/2 months without a win.

"It's incredibly frustrating," Kreis said. "Coaches need wins to have belief amongst the team. The team looks at you and wonders if you know what you're talking about and they'll believe that you know what you're talking about when they win. When they don't, you have to sense that there's doubts.

"But I do feel like this is a team that's still together."



MLS Snapshot: New York City FC 1-1 Houston Dynamo

Duncan Day - May 30, 2015

One game in 100 words: As the match wound down, entering the final ten minutes and then into stoppage time, a sense that NYCFC would pull through for the game-winner was palpable. For the most of this contest, the flow of the game was deadlocked. The goalkeepers came up huge for both sides, principally Tyler Deric, who made several excellent saves to keep the score level as Mullins, Brovsky and the rest of the NYC pushed on; the atmosphere inside Yankee Stadium was electric. Jason Kreis' side remain at last place in the Eastern Conference, while the Houston Dynamo, with 17 points, improve to seventh place in the West.

Goals

NYC: David Villa 45' +1' (PK)

Houston: Will Bruin 16'

Three moments that mattered

16' — Bruin knocks it in — Midfielder Alexander Lopez set up the corner kick and curled it into the box, apparently aiming for David Horst, and his consequent header wasn't directed on frame, taking a hard downward angle right to Will Bruin's feet on the outskirts of the six-yard box. The Missouri native's first touch drove the ball into the back of the net for the first goal of the match. NYCFC goalie Josh Saunders was stunned as he laid on the ground.

45' +1' — Villa nets PK — Adam Nemeč scuffed what appeared to be a routine header in the box, and it ended up hitting the hand of Houston's Raul Rodriguez, forcing the penalty kick. This occurrence was severely unfortunate for the Dynamo at this point, and netminder Tyler Deric had to face David Villa, 1-on-1, on the PK. The Dynamo goalkeeper guessed the right side but didn't have the speed to meet the Spanish forward's shot, tucked into the lower-left corner.

89' — Deric with the magnificent stop — Substitute Kwadwo Poku made a strong run forward into the teeth of the Houston back line and was cornered on the end line when the Dynamo recovered. Still, he delivered a well-intended ball toward the center of the penalty area, and Jeb Brovsky dove to meet it with his head. Somehow, Deric managed to make the stop on the speeding strike, pushing the endeavor off the post to maintain the 1-1 result.

Lineups

New York City: David Villa, Adam Nemeč (Patrick Mullins 79'); Josh Saunders; Jeb Brovsky, Jason Hernandez, Shay Facey, Chris Wingert; Andrew Jacobson, Mix Diskerud, Mehdi Ballouchy (Kwadwo Poku 68'), Sebastian Velasquez (Khiry Shelton 58')

Houston: Giles Barnes, Will Bruin; Tyler Deric; Raul Rodriguez, David Horst, Jermaine Taylor, DaMarcus Beasley; Oscar Garcia (Rob Lovejoy 78'), Luis Garrido, Ricardo Clark, Alexander Lopez

LIKE A FISH OUT OF WATER

Learning on job, Marlins' Jennings tries managing

BY BRIAN HEYMAN
Special to Newsday

The cameras, recorders and notebooks and the people holding them were waiting in a semicircle several layers deep in the visiting dugout at Citi Field. And then a man cut through the crowd and sat in his hot seat, wearing a black No. 26 jersey instead of a black suit.

Dan Jennings was ready to meet the media before the 11th game in his new role — as Miami Marlins manager — after about a year and a half in his old role — as Miami Marlins general manager.

"I'm having a great time," Jennings said before a 4-3 win over the Mets on Friday night. "I'm keeping the TV off and the newspapers out of my hand, but yeah, I am. It's an honor to be able to put on a major-league uniform. I've had fun and I'm trying to learn every day."

Jennings arrived in New York with a 2-8 record after descending from the front office May 18 without any pro managerial or coaching experience. He replaced Mike Redmond after a 16-22 start. But owner Jeffrey Loria gave Jennings a vote of confidence during batting practice before the opener.

"The guy's got a PhD in baseball," Loria told Newsday. "Let him manage. He's been around for 30 years. I've got nothing but confidence in him."

Indeed, Miami has won two straight since that statement, including yesterday's 9-5 victory. The last time Jennings had run a team at field level was in the mid-1980s, his two seasons as the Davidson High coach in Mobile, Alabama.

Jennings was a well-liked, respected evaluator. His pro career dates to 1986 when he

started as a Reds scout. In fact, he's in the Professional Baseball Scouts Hall of Fame. But the 54-year-old Alabama native is the first big-league manager since 1977 without managerial experience or playing experience in the majors.

"I know it's got to be hard for him," Mets manager Terry Collins said. "I've known Dan Jennings for many years; tremendous guy. If that's what they felt was the best move, there are some smart guys over there."

Diamondbacks manager Chip Hale questioned the move, expressing frustration because Jennings didn't work his way up. And Hale took a shot at him over a bullpen situation. Orioles manager Buck Showalter also took a verbal swing for overusing relievers.

"I knew that was coming," Jennings said of the criticism. "People are going to say what they want to say. There's going to be critics. There's going to be cynical comments. But the bottom line is, we have to win. When you win, things change."

This was supposed to be a winning team that could contend for the postseason. Jennings seemed to make several strong acquisitions to join \$325-million slugger Giancarlo Stanton. But there have been rotation injuries and underachievement on the way to 20-30.

"We are a good team," Jennings said. "We've played poorly. And I think you're going to see that change. I think there's some accountability in that room that will surface."

There also could be some awkwardness in that room as far as building trust. There's always a chance Jennings will go back to being the GM after the season when the Marlins are supposed to re-evaluate.

"Being from the front office, he laid it out flat-out in the beginning that he was in here to be part of the team," said David Phelps, a righthander acquired from the Yankees. "I think he's done a good job. It is a tough spot coming in. He's going out

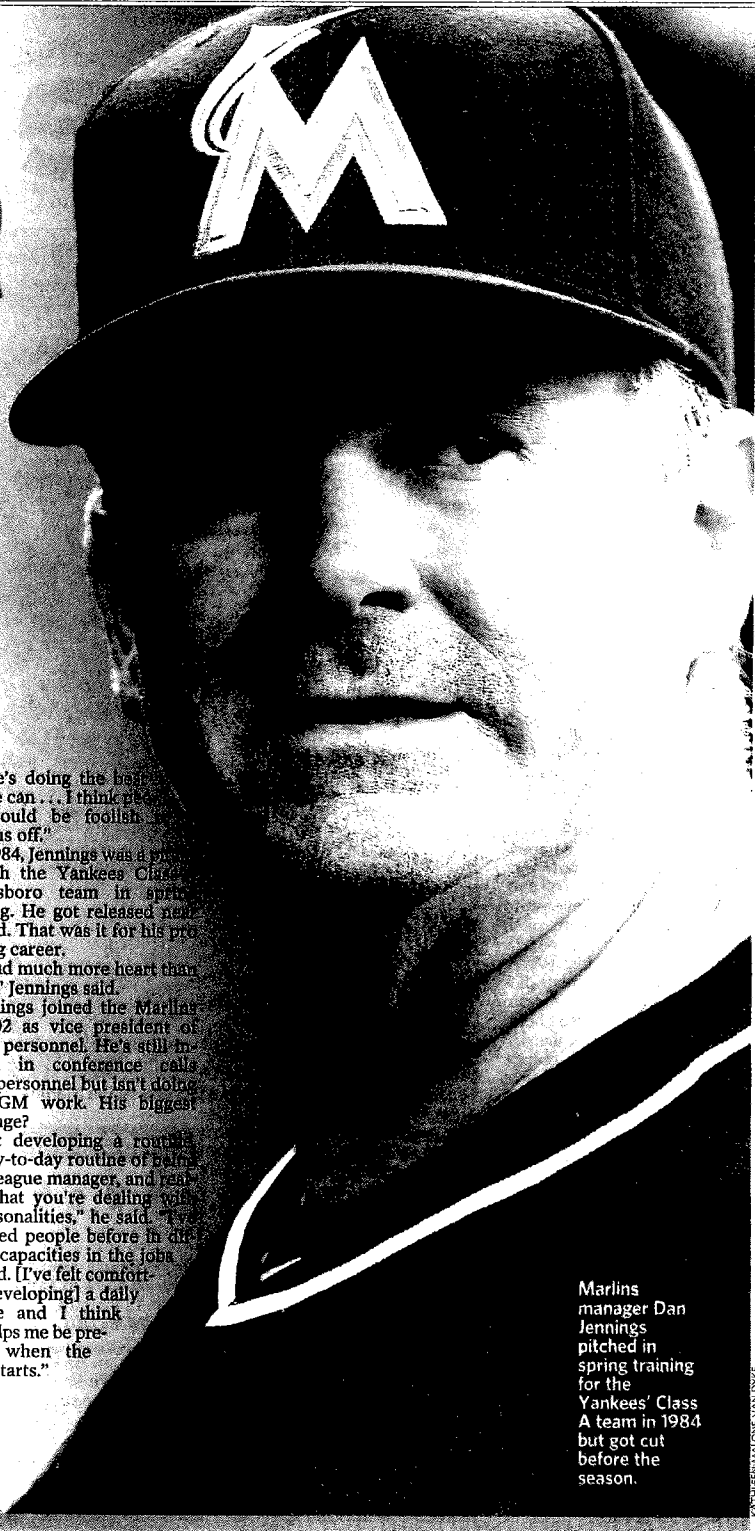
and he's doing the best that he can... I think people would be foolish to write us off."

In 1984, Jennings was a pitcher with the Yankees Class A Greensboro team in spring training. He got released near the end. That was it for his pro playing career.

"I had much more heart than talent," Jennings said.

Jennings joined the Marlins in 2002 as vice president of player personnel. He's still involved in conference calls about personnel but isn't doing daily GM work. His biggest challenge?

"Just developing a routine the day-to-day routine of being a big-league manager, and realizing that you're dealing with 25 personalities," he said. "I've managed people before in different capacities in the job I've had. [I've felt comfortable developing] a daily routine and I think that helps me be prepared when the game starts."



Marlins manager Dan Jennings pitched in spring training for the Yankees' Class A team in 1984 but got cut before the season.

KATHLEEN MALONE/VAN DYKE

In 2015, it remains illegal for a pitcher to apply a foreign substance, such as pine tar and/or sunscreen with a few pats from the rosin bag at the back of the mound, to the baseball.

The Orioles' Brian Matusz and the Brewers' Will Smith were the latest offenders to get ejected this past week for having shiny, sticky forearms. Each faces an eight-game suspension.

Like the Yankees' Michael Pineda, who was caught with pine tar on his neck and suspended last season, violating Rule 8.02b instantly labels them cheaters, or "dirty" pitchers. But let's face it, the baseballs are hardly "clean" to begin with.

Every baseball — all 10 or 12 dozen of them — is rubbed up with mud in the hours leading up to each game.

That's right. Mud. Soggy dirt, farmed out from the Delaware River basin. With the newly minted baseballs, fresh from the box, deemed too slick to be game-ready, this age-old process of smearing mud on the balls usually is carried out by the home team's clubhouse staffers.

Not much uniformity there. Thirty different groups of clubhouse staffers, 60 different sets of hands for each stadium. Maybe some use more mud, some less. And you thought DeflateGate was ridiculous. At least visiting NFL quarterbacks get to use their own footballs.

Visiting Major League Baseball pitchers are at the mercy of a mud bucket-toting clubhouse kid who can rub up the baseballs to the specifications of his own starting pitcher that day. And many do. While the umpires are relied upon to inspect the baseballs, it's not as if there's a pressure gauge or any standardized test.

So what difference does mud make? Other than roughing up the ball for grip, there are nuanced advantages. But David Cone, a savvy pitcher who could exploit any crumb for an edge during his career, brought up something we hadn't even thought of.

"I'd like them to use a little more mud, make them a little darker," said Cone, the former Yankee and Met who now is a YES analyst. "And then Keith Hernandez would complain. There's always that illusion of them being darker and harder to see."

Of course, the home team's hitters also objected to that



DAVID LENNON'S
EXTRA INNINGS

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Here's the dirt

Getting a good grip on the ball remains a murky problem

Delaware River mud is put on baseballs before each game, but the method is not uniform.

practice, as Cone mentioned. But they wouldn't know until they stepped into the box themselves — or once a pattern with their own pitcher was established.

In the wake of the DeflateGate mess, which sabotaged Super Bowl week and resulted in the NFL suspending one of its biggest stars, the Patriots' Tom Brady, MLB sent out a memo to all 30 teams before Opening Day about slight changes made to its own ball-monitoring process for this sea-

son.

These mostly involve the supervision of the baseballs, from the umpire's room to the field, which is watched by an MLB authenticator. But as far as the mud-application process is concerned, there's nothing official. And that partly explains why pitchers are always searching for another, more effective substance to give them a more consistent grip on the baseball. A small dab of pine tar or sunscreen or hair gel goes a long way. And that's not necessarily

a bad thing in extremely cold or wet conditions.

"Hitters know pitchers are all using something," Joe Girardi said. "We know that. C'mon. There's a lot of pitchers that do. And I think a hitter wants to know that a pitcher knows where the ball is going and that it's not slippery. That's the bottom line."

"I don't think hitters would care. And I think they'd probably prefer that they know there's one stuff, a substance they use, to help them with the

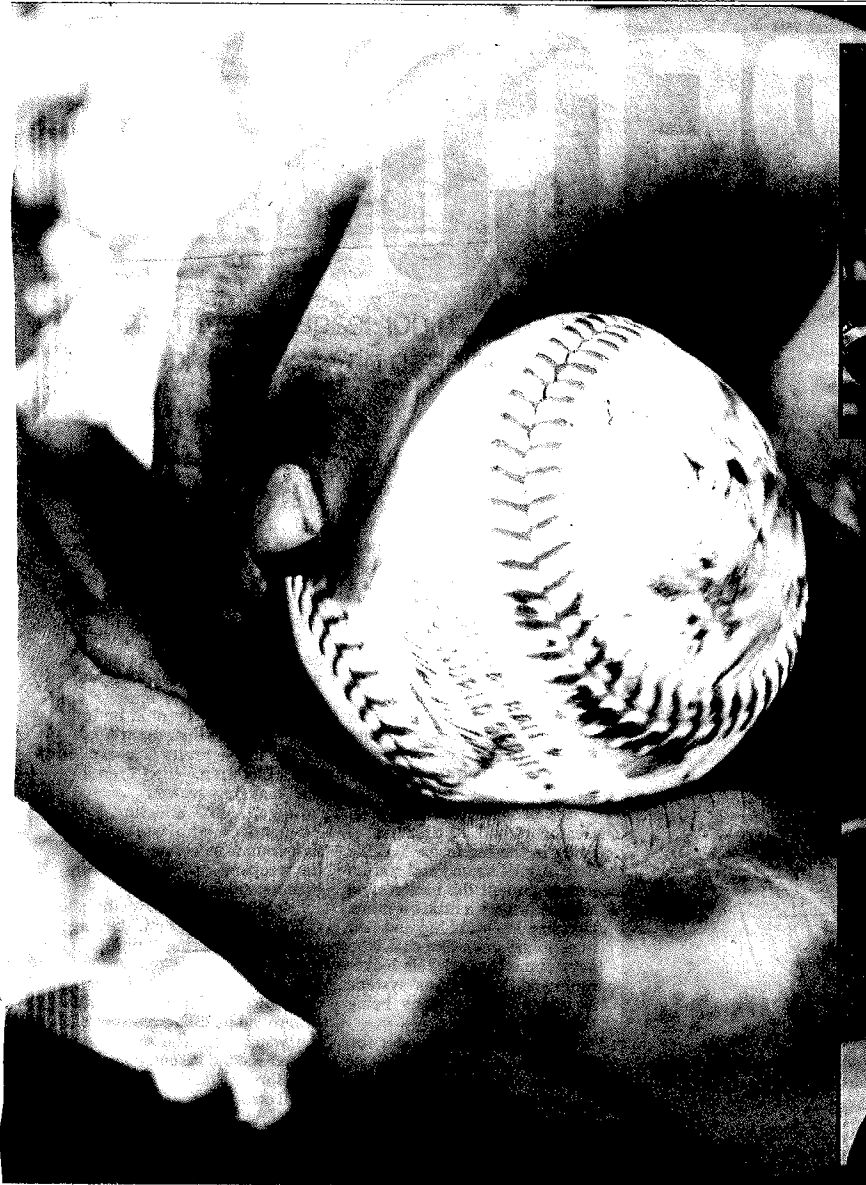
tackiness of the balls. And that's it."

Coming up with that substance, however, isn't so easy. And how would it be applied? Replacing the rosin bag with a spray can? Would the umpires spray it on? And how much is too much? Would it affect the flight of the ball? As with the mud, it would vary on personal preference.

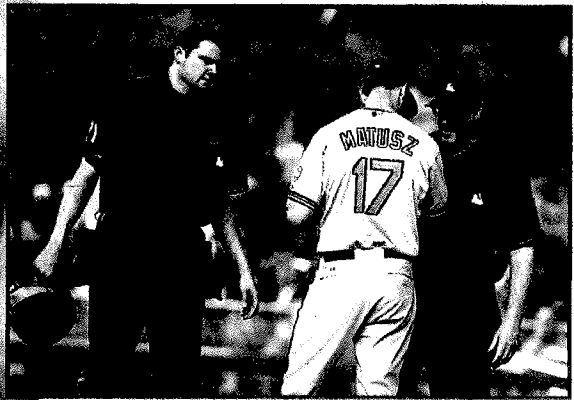
"There's a human element," Cone said. "I'm sure by the time you get into the fifth and sixth dozen, there wouldn't be"

NEWSDAY, SUNDAY, MAY 31, 2015

BASEBALL



AP / CHRIS O'MEARA



AP / JOE SKIPPER

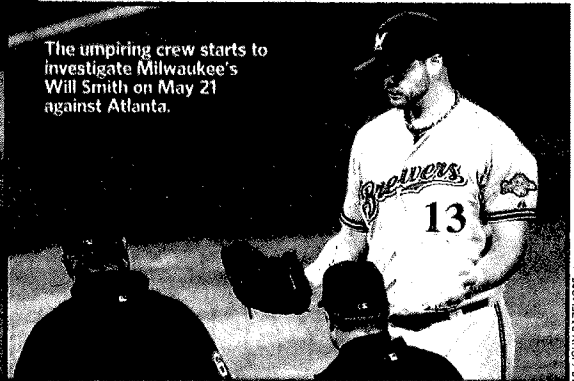
Orioles reliever Brian Matusz speaks with umpires just before being ejected for having a foreign substance on his forearm.

Rule 8:02.b

[Pitcher may not] have on his person, or in his possession, any foreign substance. For such infraction of this section (b) the penalty shall be immediate ejection from the game. In addition, the pitcher shall be suspended automatically.

Did you know?

The last legal spitball victory was recorded Sept. 10, 1934, by Pirates reliever Burleigh Grimes, a future Hall of Famer who had been grandfathered in, along with 16 other pitchers, after doctoring the baseball became illegal in 1920. Other legal spitballers included Hall of Famers Stan Coveleski and Red Faber, along with the Yankees' Jack Quinn and future Yankee Urban Shocker.



AP / JOHN BAZEMORE

The umpiring crew starts to investigate Milwaukee's Will Smith on May 21 against Atlanta.

as much mud. There wouldn't be as much consistency with the time spent on actually rubbing in the mud.

"A lot of times, it would just be mud smeared on the ball and it would still be slick. No two balls are rubbed up the same. There's no way to do it — the amount of mud you use, the time spent on rubbing the ball up."

Another option could make more sense: improving the feel of the baseball itself by copying what already is done by

Nippon Professional Baseball, the MLB's counterpart in Japan. The Mizuno-manufactured baseball has a texture and tackiness to the leather, which makes it better to grip straight from the box. No need for sticky additives — legal or otherwise.

"It's fantastic," Cone said. "I think it's something they definitely should look into."

Why not? The game has been subject to a recent flurry of changes, from anti-collision rules to instant replay to pace-

of-game alterations, so a subtle tweak to the baseball shouldn't be all that radical.

Of course, it would take some getting used to, but that's not impossible. It's the same thing for Japanese pitchers who must adapt to the larger, more slippery baseballs here in the States. And if you're improving the feel of the ball, few would object, right?

Not necessarily. Again, every pitcher is different.

"A new, slick ball would really sail," Cone said. "Some guys

actually liked it that way. Jimmy Key liked it because he would hold a no-seam fastball on purpose. He wanted it to kind of squirt out — it would take off, and run, and sail. Right out of the box. It was a little bit unpredictable. Some guys liked it, some guys didn't."

There's probably no way to eliminate this particular brand of cheating, regardless of the intent. But if MLB can make improvements that would cut down on the random nature of

penalizing some offenders and not others — depending on a manager's mood that night — it's worth looking into.

"You don't want to get in a situation where you're having players suspended for eight days," Girardi said. "I don't care what you do. I said to one of the umpires, when it's a cold game, why don't they heat the ball bags and try to keep the balls warm?"

Not a bad idea. Or at least as logical as the pregame mud bath.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AP/WIDEWORLD

BASEBALL

What a time we live in: In addition to runs, hits and errors, you can now add advanced metrics such as exit velocity, launch angle and route efficiency to your baseball score book.

Earlier this year, Major League Baseball Advanced Media (MLBAM) launched Statcast, a system using radar and cameras in all 30 big-league ballparks that puts a number on every movement on a baseball field other than how many bubbles Orioles centerfielder Adam Jones blows while he's chasing down a long fly ball.

Maybe that's coming next. Using the technology, Statcast has allowed MLB to attempt to answer a question that has been on fans' minds ever since Babe Ruth turned the home run into the sport's signature moment: Exactly how far would that ball have gone if it didn't hit a seat or pole or fan or something else in the stadium?

Home runs distances used to be mostly educated guesswork. Now, using Statcast, MLBAM can instantly tell us the projected home run distance, which is defined as "the distance of projected landing point at ground level on over-the-fence home runs."

Fun, right? All of the other stuff Statcast can do may take some time to go mainstream. Exit velocity ("velocity of the ball off the bat on batted balls") seems to be getting there, for example. But how far a home run travels is an easy-to-grasp concept that still inspires awe even in these cynical times.

Take Marlins slugger Giancarlo Stanton's home run on May 12 at Dodger Stadium — or more accurately out of Dodger Stadium. Stanton's epic blast off Mike Bolsinger was the fifth home run to go completely out of the venerable ballpark. The feat had been accomplished by Willie Stargell (twice), Mike Piazza and Mark McGwire. But you had to string a very long tape measure from home plate to the parking lot to find out how far those home runs went.

Statcast estimated Stanton's homer at 474.8 feet. The exit velocity was 114 miles per hour. The pitch was 85 mph.

Stanton hit two home runs against the Mets yesterday. Statcast measured the first at 422 feet and the second at 455.

The May 12 shot was not the longest this season or even Stanton's longest. Through Friday's games, it was No. 6.

No. 1 was a drive by Seattle's Nelson Cruz from April 29 that

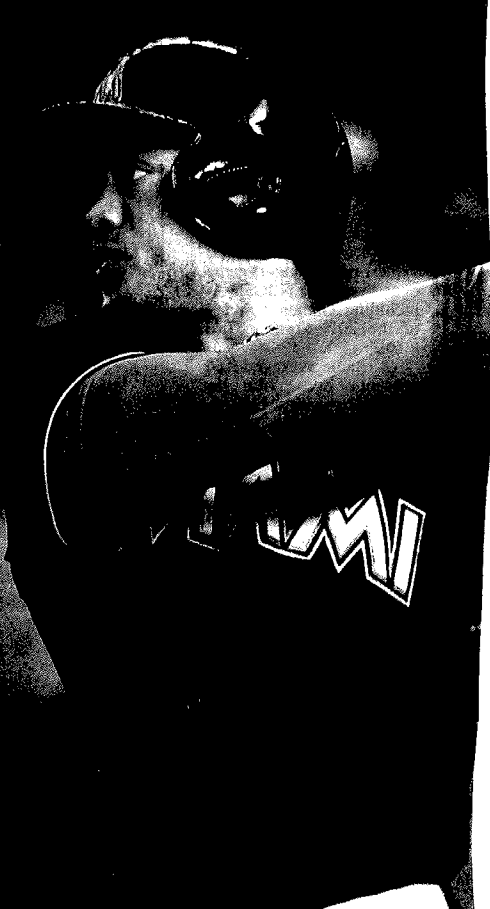


ANTHONY RIEBER
INSIDE THE NUMBERS

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THAT ONE IS OUT OF THE PARK!

And there's a new way to estimate how far that HR would have gone



went 482.7 feet. It landed in the leftfield club-level deck at Texas' Globe Life Stadium.

Cruz also has the 10th-longest home run, one that traveled a mere 469.2 feet on May 1. Stanton has three of the top 10 (third, sixth, eighth), which seems fitting for the player

with the richest contract in baseball history (\$325 million). Even in the Babe's day, home-run hitters made the big bucks.

Josh Donaldson of the Blue Jays owns the second-longest home run (481.2 feet on April 23).

The rest of the top 10 includes Cubs super rookie Kris Bryant,

aply-named Giants first baseman Brandon Belt, Ryan Braun of the Brewers and Alex Rodriguez of the Yankees, who drove a pitch from Tampa Bay's Nate Karns 470.5 feet on April 17 at Tropicana Field. That's the ninth-longest homer of the season. "There's no question that certain

metrics are very easy to understand," said Joe Inzerillo, MLBAM's executive vice president and chief technology officer. "Obviously, home-run distance. While we're doing it in a way that is slightly different from it's been done in the past because of the capabilities that we have, it's a very easy number to understand."

Statcast does other things, too, as we said earlier, and many of these features are highlighted during MLB Network broadcasts.

"People love exit velocity," Inzerillo said. "They seem to think that's a really important metric. The one that I like that's starting to get more and more play is route efficiency, which I think is by far the coolest thing that we're doing."

Route efficiency "divides the distance covered by the outfielder by a straight-line distance between the player's position at batted-ball contact and where the ball was fielded," according to the Statcast glossary on MLB.com.

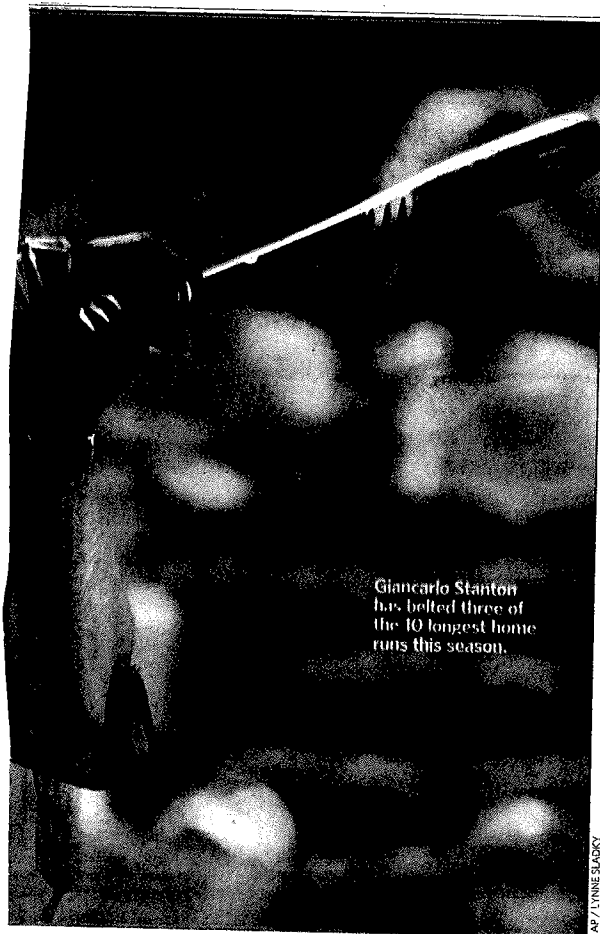
BIG BOPPERS

The top 10 home runs by distance this season through Friday:

Player	Team	Distance (feet)	Exit Velocity (mph)	Date	Pitcher
1. Nelson Cruz	Mariners	482.7	115.9	April 29	Wandy Rodriguez
2. Josh Donaldson	Blue Jays	481.2	112.5	April 23	Chris Tillman
3. Giancarlo Stanton	Marlins	478.4	115.2	May 16	Alex Wood
4. Kris Bryant	Cubs	477.4	107.3	May 26	Aaron Barrett
5. Brandon Belt	Giants	475.4	106.9	May 22	Kyle Kendrick
6. Giancarlo Stanton	Marlins	474.8	113.9	May 12	Mike Bolsinger
7. Ryan Braun	Brewers	474.0	112.9	May 25	Tim Lincecum
8. Giancarlo Stanton	Marlins	473.8	113.5	May 15	Cody Martini
9. Alex Rodriguez	Yankees	470.5	107.2	April 17	Nate Karns
10. Nelson Cruz	Mariners	469.2	107.7	May 1	Luke Gregerson

Source: MLBAM Statcast data

NEWSDAY, SUNDAY, MAY 31, 2015



Giancarlo Stanton has belted three of the 10 longest home runs this season.

AP/WIDEWORLD

So you might not be able to get any numbers (yet) on Jones' bubble-blowing, but when he scales the wall to take away a home run Statcast can tell you how far and fast he ran and whether he took the most efficient route.

Exit velocity has been around for a while and had been used by front offices for some time now. It is cited as one of the reasons the Mets believed in Lucas Duda over Ike Davis last year for their first-base job.

Duda's exit velocities showed he was hitting the ball harder than the traditional stats gave him credit for, which along with other metrics suggested he had untapped upside. Turns out the Mets were right about that one.

At the moment, the Yankees are trying to claim Stephen Drew's exit velocities show he should be doing better than the .158 he was at going into last night.

"It just doesn't seem that he gets the rewards that he should

when he hits the ball hard," manager Joe Girardi said on Friday after Drew popped up for the final out of a Yankees loss. "And that's frustrating."

Has Drew been unlucky or is he just bad? We know how most Yankees fans feel about this one.

"What I would say," Inzerillo said, "is that Statcast raises as many questions as it answers. There's certainly a thirst for more information, more data, more context. Is this number good? Is this number bad? Is that the best we've ever seen?"

By the way, launch angle refers to "the vertical angle at which the ball leaves the bat on a batted ball."

We're not sure that one's going to catch on. But who knows? As we all learned this week when A-Rod passed Lou Gehrig on the all-time RBIs list, runs batted in wasn't an official stat until 1920. There was probably some traditionalist somewhere who said making RBIs an official stat was going to ruin baseball. It didn't.

POSTSCRIPT

OPINIONS & IDEAS THE NEW YORK POST

SUNDAY, MAY 31, 2015

China's island
invasion P30

A new biography claims that Ty Cobb has been unfairly maligned by historians.

Fit to be Ty'd

How one of our greatest baseball players was framed as a racist

by KYLE SMITH

THE two things everyone knows

about Ty Cobb are that he was a phenomenal baseball player and that he was the worst racist ever to play the game.

But one of these things is mostly wrong.

Cobb, the first player voted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, the holder of more than 90 records upon his retirement and still the pacesetter with a .366 lifetime batting average, could be rude, but not nearly as nasty as you think. And far from being the most notorious racist in baseball history, he was an early and vocal supporter of integrating the big leagues.

In his new biography "Ty Cobb: A Terrible Beauty" (Simon & Schuster), Charles Leerhsen opens with a comedy routine that details some of the many myths about the Detroit Tigers superstar.

Was he a wife-beater? "He was an everything beater," offered comic Jim Norton. "A horrible racist. A Demerol addict ... in 1907 Cobb fought a black groundskeeper ... and ended up choking the man's wife when she intervened."

"On several occasions he brutally pistol-whipped African-American men whose only offense was to share a sidewalk with him," wrote a biographer of Hall of Famer Tris Speaker.

In Ken Burns' "Baseball," Cobb is called "an embarrassment to the game." Most notoriously, we all know that Cobb stabbed a black waiter in Cleveland and was a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

Except none of these allegations is true.

THE THINKER

Cobb, contrary to legend, was not a Southern redneck but an upper-middle-class boy, often derided for acting aristocratic in the locker room, where he would read literary novels and biographies of Thomas Jefferson and Napoleon. Both of his parents were genteel. His father, a state senator and "something of a public intellectual" in Leerhsen's words, once broke up a group of men plotting a lynching and was an outspoken advocate for the public education of black Americans.

When Cobb was 18, his mother shot and killed his father, mistaking him for an intruder after he returned unexpectedly from an out-of-town trip. At trial she was acquitted.

You might call Cobb the inventor of Moneyball — roughly, the idea that baseball is about smarts. "He didn't outhit the opposition and he didn't outrun them," said a teammate. "He out-thought them."

In a hilariously unprofessional era when ballplayers would chase umpires they didn't like off the field, Cobb took careful notes exploiting the weaknesses of other teams. Cobb noticed, for instance, that Walter Johnson was visibly upset whenever he hit a batter — so he stuck his skull out over the plate. Johnson, afraid of beaming Cobb, would walk him instead.

Cobb once scored the winning run by stealing third and home when the Yankees were busy arguing with an umpire. Cobb, noted baseball legend Casey Stengel, was the only player who could steal home on an infield pop-up: He'd make his break when the guy who caught the ball was lobbing the ball back to the pitcher.

Cobb enthusiastically supported the integration of major league baseball when he was asked about Jackie Robinson in 1952. He told *The Sporting News*, "The negro has the right to compete in sports and who's to say they have not?"

He called Roy Campanella a "great" player, said Willie Mays was "the only player I'd pay money to see" and after Campanella's crippling car accident, praised Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley for holding a candlelit tribute "for this fine man."

Even back in the 1920s, Cobb would befriend Negro League ballplayers such as Detroit Stars infielder Bobby Robinson, who

See COBB on Page 28

Continued →

Framing Cobb

COBB from Page 27

said "there wasn't a hint of prejudice in Cobb's attitude."

One of several blacks employed by Cobb, Alex Rivers, named his son after the ballplayer and said, "I love the man."

THE HITTER

Cobb did brawl often — a pastime so common in his era that Dr. Spock actually recommended little boys enjoy at least one fight a day and the head of the American Psychological Association encouraged fights. On the Bowery in the early 1900s, "black-eye repair shops" offered makeup treatments to men bruised in barroom battle.

For his first couple of seasons on the Tigers, Cobb was subjected to sustained hazing by his teammates, several of whom despised him. In 1907, on his way to the clubhouse, Cobb shoved a black groundskeeper who, under the influence of alcohol, got in Cobb's face and made a jokey greeting that the latter evidently found annoying.

There is no indication that race had anything to do with the encounter. A moment later, Cobb was attacked by a catcher on his own team, a much larger man who had a habit of beating up Cobb.

The catcher told sportswriters Cobb had previously assaulted the black groundskeeper and his wife, but this story is likely untrue. Cobb hotly denied the claim and no one asked the groundskeeper if it was true, nor were charges filed.

The catcher, his manager later admitted, was in the midst of a bad-mouthing campaign intended to get Cobb traded, so he was at best a questionable witness.

In 1908, among many other brawls Cobb participated in, he ignored an order from a black man laying asphalt in Detroit to stop walking, then

after the two argued, Cobb started a vicious fistfight and was overheard to use the N-word against the road paver.

Today that behavior would certainly brand you as a racist, but racial slurs were commonplace then, even published in the papers. And it's easy to picture the prickly Cobb getting in such a fight against a white guy on a paving crew.

Balance that ugly fight against Cobb's behavior toward a 16-year-old black team mascot, Ulysses Harrison. Ballboys were badly treated at the time, paid pennies and sometimes unceremoniously dumped on road trips if they were thought to be bringing bad luck.

The Detroit News referred to Harrison as "a pickaninny" and "the Ethiopian." But Cobb became the youth's "main defender and patron" and on [segregated] sleeping trains let the kid sleep below his berth, hiding him from view with luggage so no one would detect him. He also let the kid share his room at segregated hotels.

CHANGING THE STORY

The most famous story cited as evidence of Cobb's racism actually had nothing to do with race. In 1909, Cobb got into a fight in a Cleveland hotel that, according to legend, led to the stabbing death of a black man.

That isn't true. No one was killed. Cobb fought with the [white] security guard, whom he claimed he lightly raked across the back of the wrist with a pen knife, though the guard later said Cobb stabbed him in the shoulder and the hand. Cobb may have also struck a bellhop.

Race had nothing to do with this incident. Neither of the other men was ever described as black in the numerous newspaper reports at the time, though at the time reporters invariably and delightedly pointed out when someone was a "negro."

Leerhsen even dug up the census report that lists the watchman's race as white.

Charles Alexander's 1984 Cobb biography says both the watchman and the bellboy were black, but when asked by Leerhsen where he got that information, Alexander offered no specific source, offering vaguely that it was in news reports of the time. "It isn't," Leerhsen declares flatly.

Cobb eventually pleaded guilty to simple assault, paying a fine of \$100 and a settlement of \$115 to the watchman. Sometimes Alexander's account is distorted beyond all recognition into a story that Cobb stabbed a black waiter in Cleveland "for being uppity." That isn't even close to the truth.

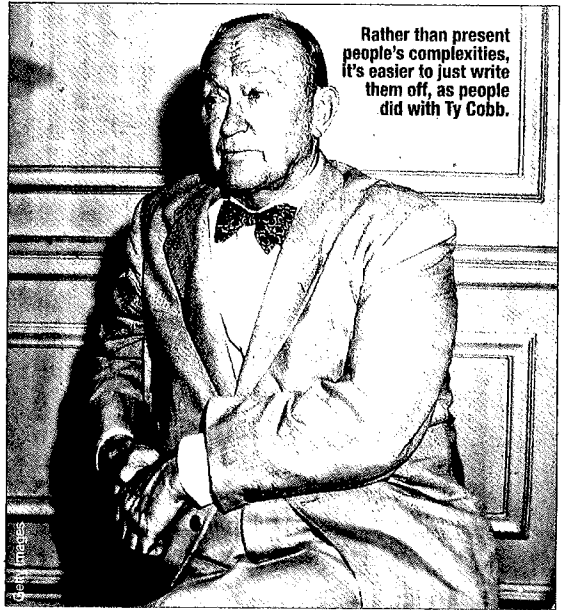
Later, Cobb got in a fight with a grocer over an alleged insult to his wife, but the grocer was white, too — and in his biography Alexander again got it wrong, mistakenly reporting the man was black.

WHO MADE THE MYTH

Today's Cobb hatred comes mainly from two sources: Alexander's mistakes and Al Stump, the ghostwriter of Cobb's autobiography, who produced a fictionalized account so full of lies that Cobb was preparing to sue to stop its publication when he died in 1961.

Stump was such a hack that he was banned from contributing to both TV Guide and The Saturday Evening Post. "One by one he alienated the kinds of magazines that had fact-checking departments," said a writer of that era who knew him. "That's because he produced fiction."

Fact-checking Stump's work, Leerhsen found it teeming with falsehoods. For instance, Stump claimed Cobb killed one of three men who tried to mug the superstar in a car in 1912, citing "an unidentified body" found in an alley shortly



Rather than present people's complexities, it's easier to just write them off, as people did with Ty Cobb.

after the encounter. That body simply didn't exist, as a report in the National Baseball Research Journal later discovered.

Stump was the source of the 1994 Tommy Lee Jones movie "Cobb," whose director, Ron Shelton, told Leerhsen, "It's well known that Cobb may have killed as many as three people." Asked where he got this information, Shelton said only, "It's well known." Shelton admitted to Leerhsen that he and Stump simply fabricated a scene in which the elderly Cobb tries to rape a girl in Las Vegas but fails because of impotence.

The real Cobb, in later years, funded a hospital and started a college-education fund for kids. In response to fan mail, he'd send letters as long as five pages.

One kid who wrote him, Koosma Tarasoff, Cobb mentored to the point of getting him a tryout with the Pittsburgh Pirates. "He was a good

human being," Tarasoff said in 2004. Another young ballplayer Cobb mentored, and whose first contract Cobb helped negotiate, had better luck. His name was Joe DiMaggio.

OUR PUNCHING BAG

Why the determination to brand Cobb as the worst racist ever? Stump apparently believed a more sensational book would lead to more sales. But a large part of the story, Leerhsen notes, is simply that the accurate perception of Cobb as a hothead simply got mixed up with the fact that he was born in Georgia in 1886. Bad temper, southerner: Must have been a racist.

That's both too broadly damning — not only were southerners not necessarily racist, Cobb's own father fought for better treatment of blacks — and it lets us off the hook too easily.

Detecting sin in someone else is a way of announcing to the world, and to yourself, your own virtue.

Extra Bases

By Tyler Kepner

Creative Spending Benefits the Astros

Dividing bonus money among draft picks lets the team stockpile talent.

Lance McCullers Jr. was new to the Fresno Grizzlies in mid-May, promoted to the Houston Astros' highest minor league affiliate after 29 overpowering innings in Class AA. His plan all along was to pitch for Houston this season, but he figured he would have to prove himself at a new level before getting there.

Then an Astros starter, Brett Oberholtzer, left a start with a blister on his index finger. Soon, the Grizzlies' manager, Tony DeFrancesco, was calling a clubhouse meeting and announcing that McCullers was going to the majors. The first person to hug him, McCullers said, was shortstop Carlos Correa.

"We're really close," McCullers said, "and he seemed really happy for me."

Without Correa, McCullers would probably be playing for the University of Florida instead of the Astros, for whom he is 1-0 with a 2.40 E.R.A. after three starts. Correa and McCullers were the Astros' first choices in the 2012 draft, the first under the current collective bargaining agreement and the first for their general manager, Jeff Luhnow. The selections were intertwined.

As teams prepare for this year's draft on June 8, the Astros' strategy stands out as an enticing — if risky — method of bundling talent. Since 2012, teams have been given different pools of bonus money depending on where they pick. Each slot comes with a recommended allowance, and teams are penalized for exceeding their overall pool.

But creative spending is allowed, and it helped sway McCullers from his Florida scholarship, and a fourth-round pick, Rio Ruiz, from his plans to attend Southern California.

"We didn't want to just take the best player and pay the recommended amount, unless it was necessary," Luhnow said. "If we could free up resources and take the best player, that was best for us. We believed Carlos Correa was the best player, and the rest of the top five probably didn't."

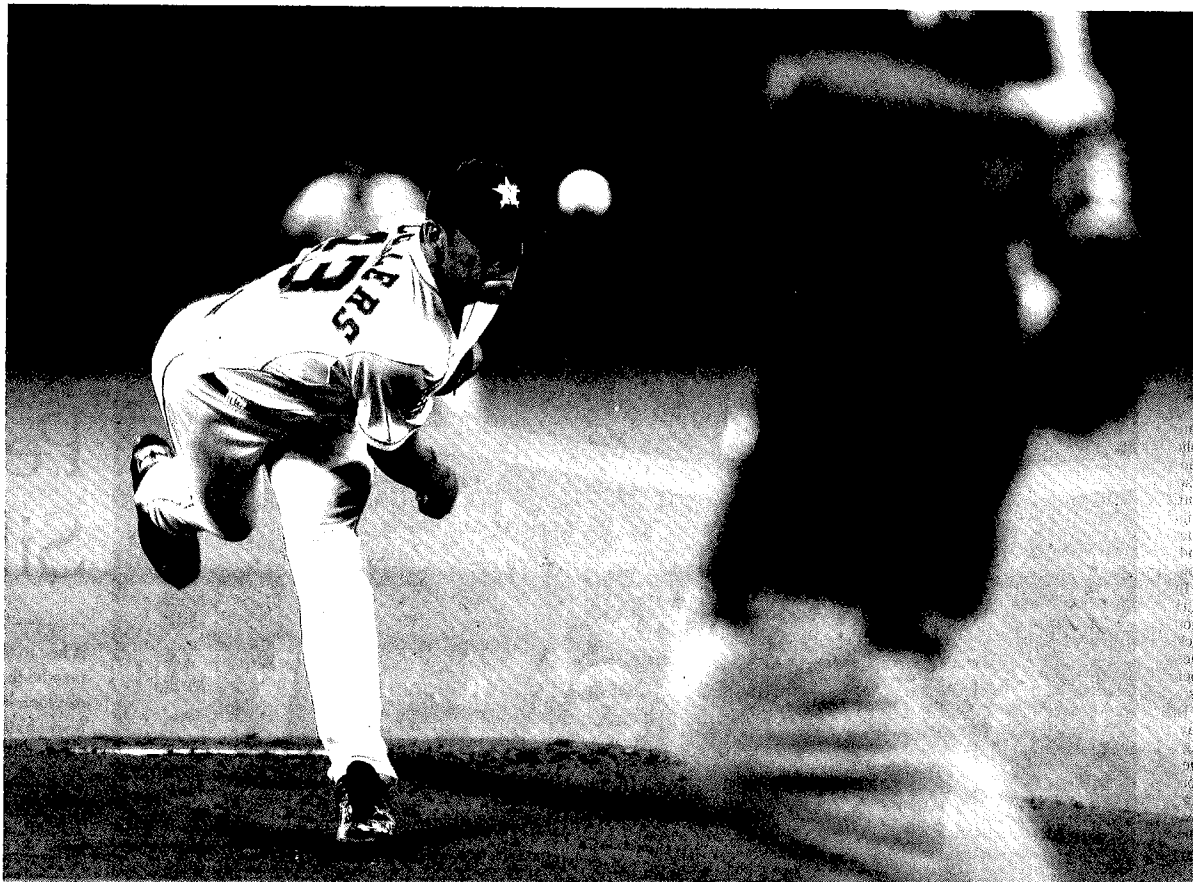
With an unexpected chance to be the first overall pick, Correa accepted a \$4.8 million bonus, well below his slotted value of \$7.2 million. The Astros used the savings to give McCullers a \$2.5 million bonus, well above his slotted value of \$1.26 million. They spent the additional savings on Ruiz, who was traded to Atlanta in a January deal for Evan Gattis, who is their designated hitter.

It was the kind of plan few teams had the bonus money to pull off. The Yankees, for example, picked 30th that June, with a slot value of \$1.6 million for the pick. They chose a high school left-hander, Ty Hensley, who is now recovering from Tommy John surgery.

McCullers, who went 41st, attended Jesuit High School in Tampa, Fla., and had season tickets to Yankees spring training games, once visiting the dugout at Steinbrenner Field in middle school. His father, Lance Sr., pitched seven years in the majors, including 1989 and part of 1990 with the Yankees.

Coming from a baseball family helped give McCullers, 21, the maturity and perspective to navigate his path to the majors. When the Astros told him to concentrate on developing his change-up last summer, he did, knowing that his statistics would suffer.

"When a guy throws 97 miles an hour, you really don't feel like making it easy on the hitter by throwing something 88,"



Lance McCullers Jr. during his major league debut against Oakland on May 18. The Astros lured him away from a scholarship at the University of Florida.

DAVID J. PHILLIP/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Luhnow said. "But to be successful in the big leagues, he was going to need it. He took his lumps and kept getting after it."

Pitching in high Class A in the California League last season, McCullers had a 5.47 earned run average, making 18 starts and allowing 18 homers. Yet when off-season workouts began, he told his trainer he planned to advance quickly.

"We're going to train to be a big leaguer," McCullers said he told the trainer, Nicole Gabriel. "There's no more 'I'm a young prospect, I have time.' It's go time for me."

He added, "I just trained the whole off-season as if I was going to make a statement in camp and push toward the big leagues."

When he got there, on May 18 against Oakland, McCullers allowed one run in four and two-thirds innings — and made a fashion statement by wearing a Batman logo on the back of his spikes. That violated the major league dress code, as it turned out, but he collected his first victory in his next start with six strong innings in Detroit.

Correa hit a home run out of the Grizzlies' stadium on Tuesday. His combined stat line at two levels this season, entering Saturday's games: a .333 average with 10 homers, 40 runs batted in and 18 steals.

"He's facing a lot of pitchers right now that have been in the big leagues, and that's a good experience for him," Luhnow said. "He's handling it well and learning from it. I don't know how long

he needs, but I do think he will play in Houston this summer."

As they monitor Correa, the Astros have another draft to plan. Last June, they tried to repeat their 2012 strategy by signing the first overall pick, the high school left-hander Brady Aiken, to a below-slot deal and spreading the savings to other choices. But when they failed to sign Aiken, who has since had Tommy John surgery, they lost the slot value for his pick — and the players they drafted whose deals depended on Aiken's.

As compensation for losing Aiken, the Astros got the No. 2 overall pick in this June's draft, to go with the No. 5 choice. They have a bonus pool of more than \$17 million — and many options for how to spend it — as they try to fortify a farm system that now feeds the first-place team in the American League West.

"We've paid our dues, and the fans have, with some losing seasons," Luhnow said. "But we're excited about where we are."

Feeling Lester's Pain

The Chicago Cubs' Jon Lester set a major league record last week by extending his hitless streak to 59 at-bats. It is the longest streak of futility at the start of any major league career, and does not even include his 0-for-5 showing in two World Series.

Lester broke a record set 20 years ago by Joey Hamilton of the San Diego Padres, who was 0 for 57. A few rungs down on the list is Don Carman, who started 0 for 48 and can relate to Les-

ter's woes. Lester had irregular hitting opportunities as an American League pitcher, as Carman did as a young reliever.

"I was always the top hitter on my Little League team," said Carman, who now works for the agent Scott Boras, helping clients with their mental skills. "I was the leadoff hitter in high school and hit .460. But I'll never forget my first at-bat in the big leagues. It was just overwhelming how good they were."

Opposing pitchers, Carman said, were unrelenting against him. They knew he was hopeless at the plate and did not want to end up on his highlight reel. Carman eventually sought help from a Philadelphia teammate, the future Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt, who told him that when he slumped, he tried to let the ball travel as deep as possible.

"It turns out that was pretty good advice," Carman said. "A couple of years ago, I asked Miggy Cabrera what his approach was, and he said, 'Just try to let the ball get as deep as you can.' So there you go."

Carman applied the wisdom, he said, and surprised San Diego's Storm Damage in 1987 by slapping a bouncer up the middle in a bunt situation. It was the first of 12 career hits for Carman — in 209 at-bats, good for a skimpy .057 career average.

Joe Maddon, the Cubs' upbeat manager, has said Lester has sound hitting mechanics and may surprise people by making his first hit a home run. If Carman is a guide, though, we should not

bet on it.

"My goal was to hit for the cycle — not for one day, but for a career," Carman said. "I got that single out of the way, but I never did get to the rest of them."

Royals' All-Star Push

The Kansas City Royals have not visited Great American Ballpark in Cincinnati since 2010, but they might take it over next month.

When the first All-Star balloting results were released last week, five Royals were leading at their positions: catcher Salvador Perez, outfielders Lorenzo Cain and Alex Gordon, shortstop Alcides Escobar and third baseman Mike Moustakas. All have played well this season, yet two others, first baseman Eric Hosmer and designated hitter Kendrys Morales, have probably been the team's best run producers.

If the balloting holds, the Royals will be the first team with five elected starters since the vaunted 1976 Cincinnati Reds, who sent Johnny Bench, Dave Concepcion, George Foster, Joe Morgan and Pete Rose. Like these Royals, those Reds were coming off a seven-game World Series the previous fall (the Reds won, the Royals lost).

Most of those Reds players, however, were well established by 1976. None of the Royals leading the new ballot have ever been elected starting All-Stars. Perez started last year's game as a replacement for Baltimore's Matt Wieters, who was injured.

NY Times 5.31.15

KEEPING SCORE

A Marlin Could Match Notable Names: Cobb, Sisler, Snuffy Stirnweiss

By BENJAMIN HOFFMAN

Howie Kendrick has delivered the type of production the Los Angeles Dodgers were hoping for when they traded for him in December. After going 1 for 4 on Friday night, Kendrick had a .291 batting average, which was in line with his .292 career average entering the season.

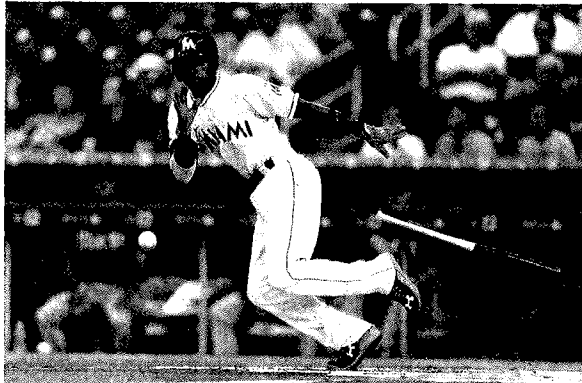
Dee Gordon, the player the Dodgers traded to Miami to make room for Kendrick, was leading the major leagues with a .374 batting average and 20 stolen bases through Friday. If he keeps things up, it will be just the 14th time a player has led his league in both categories and the seventh time a player has led the majors in both. Gordon has topped it off by playing the best defense of his career.

As if that were not enough to sufficiently rub salt into the Dodgers' wounds, Los Angeles is paying Gordon's entire salary while he stars for the Marlins.

The Dodgers could be forgiven if they did not see this coming. Gordon, a speedy second baseman, had a nice season last year, hitting .289 while leading the majors with 64 stolen bases, which earned him his first All-Star selection. In the two previous seasons, though, he had hit a combined .229.

Now Gordon, a son of the former major leaguer Tom Gordon, is having a breakthrough season, leading the majors with 74 hits through Friday.

Gordon would be in elite company if he managed to lead the majors in both batting average and stolen bases. The three members of the club are the Hall of Famers Honus Wagner, Ty Cobb and



ROB FOLBY/GETTY IMAGES

Miami's Dee Gordon, above, has a chance to lead his league in batting average and stolen bases, a feat that has happened only 13 times. One of the players who achieved it was the Yankees' Snuffy Stirnweiss, right, in 1945.

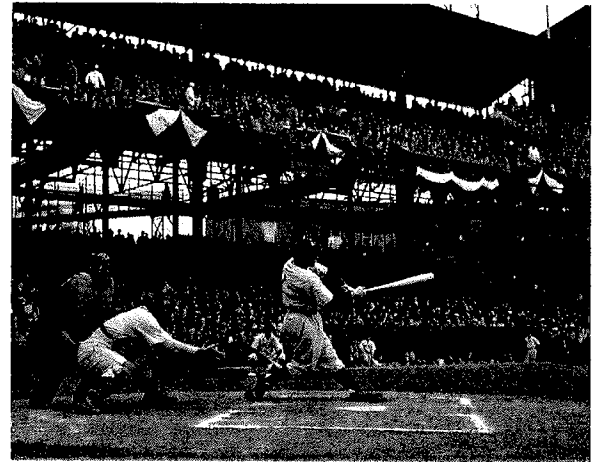
George Sisler. But leading just the National League would also be quite an accomplishment, as the last player to do so was Jackie Robinson for the 1949 Dodgers. In the American League, Jose Altuve captured both crowns last season for Houston, missing out on leading the majors in both by finishing eight stolen bases behind Gordon.

If Gordon and Altuve seem out of place among these luminaries, they have nothing on Snuffy Stirnweiss.

With Phil Rizzuto and Joe Gordon out for the 1944 season while serving in the

military, the Yankees handed their starting second-base job to Stirnweiss, who had joined the team the previous season after playing in the International League. He responded by leading the American League in plate appearances, runs, hits, triples and stolen bases. The next season he led the league in those categories again, and on the season's last day, he went 3 for 5 to capture the batting title with a .309 average. He was a top-five finisher in the Most Valuable Player Award voting in both seasons.

In 1946, many of baseball's biggest



DIAMOND IMAGES, VIA GETTY IMAGES

stars returned to the game after serving in World War II, and Stirnweiss's career collapsed. Luke Sewell, the manager of the St. Louis Browns at the time, could not explain Stirnweiss's struggles.

"From all I've seen, there is absolutely nothing the matter with him," Sewell said. "He is the same player who more than once raised hob with my pitchers in the past. But he just isn't clicking."

Stirnweiss played seven seasons after winning the batting title in 1945, but he never again hit higher than .261.

While Gordon should hardly be ex-

pected to have a Stirnweiss-like collapse, he will probably come back to earth at some point. A .435 batting average on balls in play is unsustainable no matter how much he can help his own cause with his legs.

But at a cost to Miami of \$0, Gordon's season could go down as one of the biggest bargains in major league history. And at some point, despite Kendrick's best efforts, Dodgers fans may begin to resent that the best second baseman on their team's payroll is wearing a Marlins jersey to work every day.



Brewers pitcher Will Smith to have suspension appeal hearing Monday

AP - MAY 30, 2015

MILWAUKEE — Brewers reliever Will Smith will have a hearing Monday for his appeal of an eight-game suspension after being found with a foreign substance on his arm while pitching.

Milwaukee manager Craig Counsell said Saturday that he wasn't sure how soon the team would find out the outcome of the appeal. The Brewers are scheduled to face the Cardinals in St. Louis on Monday night.

Smith was ejected from a 10-1 loss in Atlanta on May 21 after Braves manager Fredi Gonzalez asked umpires to check the left-handed reliever.

Smith has said he put the substance on his forearm before warming up in the bullpen, and that he forgot to wipe it off after being rushed into the game.

Baltimore reliever Brian Matusz was ejected last weekend for the same violation and also suspended eight games. He appealed, and his hearing will be Wednesday.

It's widely acknowledged pitchers use similar practices to grip the ball better even though it's against the rules. Smith has expressed regret for not wiping off the substance before coming into the game.

Counsell expects Smith to be suspended, though the pitcher has questioned the length of the punishment. The Brewers would be a man short in the bullpen since they wouldn't be able to replace Smith during a suspension.

Counsell said the uncertainty, though, won't affect the imminent return of catcher Jonathan Lucroy, who is expected back from a broken toe for the St. Louis series.

Milwaukee is also juggling its pitching staff following the left oblique injury to starter Wily Peralta.

"We're just going to be day-to-day until we know" about Smith, Counsell said.



Minute Maid Park floods during Astros-White Sox game

- Jason Foster - May 30, 2015

Astros fans hoping to escape Houston's ongoing deluge had no such luck Saturday.

A closed roof at Minute Maid Park was no match for heavy rain that made its way inside and flooded some areas.

After the game ended with a 3-0 Astros win against the White Sox, the park remained open to allow fans to wait out the storm before heading home.

Sunday's game will be played as scheduled and "the ballpark will be fine," the Astros say.



Bob Melvin gives Stephen Curry open invite to Athletics game

- Max Bultman - May 30, 2015

Soon after Stephen Curry was seen at a San Francisco Giants game, flashing his back and orange apparel for cameras, fans of the nearby Oakland Athletics were a little bummed.

So on Saturday, the A's, who play much closer to Oracle Arena than the Giants, made sure the NBA MVP is welcome any time.

“He’s got an open invite,” Oakland manager Bob Melvin said via CSN Bay Area. “I’ve talked to Steve Kerr before, so they know it’s an open invite to come out here and take BP, do whatever they want to do out here. I’d love to see him out here. ... Here in Oakland, we take significant pride in what they’re doing. They’re right here next door to us, so we feel like they’re an Oakland team even though they are a Bay Area club.”

Curry will be busy the next couple of weeks as the Warriors take on the Cavaliers in the NBA Finals, but should have all summer to curry favor back with A's fans.



Maddon prefers having pitchers hit

FOX Sports Staff - MAY 31, 2015

Joe Maddon has spent the bulk of his managerial career in the American League with the Designated Hitter, but after just a brief stint in the National League, he already prefers that style of baseball.

“There's so much more to think about,” Maddon told Cubs.com. “And if you want to really get fans engaged, I would like to believe the strategy of a National League game exceeds that of the American League game.

“So I'd prefer us all go no DH instead of all DH, if it came down to that.”

However, none of this really matters unless baseball decides to visit the rule and truly consider a change and Maddon doesn't think that'll happen.

“I don't really think it will happen,” Maddon said. “I'd be surprised if it did. Interestingly enough, I think by it being separate, it's almost more interesting.”



Cards GM John Mozeliak doesn't regret Jason Heyward trade

- ESPN News Services - May 30, 2015

Jason Heyward has gotten off to a slow start with the St. Louis Cardinals, but general manager John Mozeliak said he does not regret making the blockbuster trade for the star outfielder.

Mozeliak told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that the Cardinals' circumstances this past offseason, specifically the death of 22-year-old right fielder Oscar Taveras, factored into the four-player trade with the Atlanta Braves that sent Heyward to St. Louis.

"I think whenever you make those kind of deals, there are reasons behind it," Mozeliak told the Post-Dispatch. "And at the time, we felt that we had to do something. Not only looking at how we want this club to be put together, but we did not feel like there might be any other opportunities that would meet the type of criteria we're looking for."

The Cardinals acquired Heyward and reliever Jordan Walden from the Braves for starter Shelby Miller and pitching prospect Tyrell Jenkins.

Heyward, an All-Star and two-time Gold Glove winner during his five-year stint with Atlanta, entered play Saturday with a .241 batting average, five home runs and just 14 RBIs in 45 games with St. Louis.

Meanwhile, Miller has thrived with the Braves, going 5-2 with a 1.48 ERA -- the best in the majors -- over his first 10 starts. The 22-year-old Jenkins also gotten off to a promising start at Double-A Mississippi, posting a 3.00 ERA in 10 outings.

But Mozeliak believes that the 25-year-old Heyward, who is playing in the final year of his contract, has more than enough talent to justify parting with Miller and Jenkins.

"I still think there's more in the tank for [Heyward]," Mozeliak said. "He's a capable offensive player. I do think he's going to have to make some adjustments. When you look at the type of talent he is, and the type of athlete he is, expectations are high. Our game is pretty simple: you do or you don't. I do think he's the type of athlete that can do that. Historically he has."

The Man Who Made the MLB Logo

- By Darren Everson – May 30, 2015

Major League Baseball’s logo—the silhouette of a player poised to hit, set in red, white and blue—is one of the most iconic images in American sports. Yet for four decades, the man who created it received no official credit for his work.

Jerry Dior, who died May 10 at age 82 at his home in Edison, N.J., according to the New York Times, was the man responsible. In 1968, he was working as a graphic designer at Sandgren & Murtha, a New York-based marketing company, when MLB commissioned the agency to design a logo. The Wall Street Journal revealed his role in its creation in a 2008 story.

“It just came to me,” Dior said at the time. “I did the rough sketch and cleaned it up a bit, and that was that. I never thought anything about it until I turned on the television and saw it on the New York Mets’ uniforms” during the 1969 World Series.

Although the logo became famous, Dior didn’t. He left the company not long after creating the logo and received no royalties for it—and didn’t expect any. He did, however, petition baseball for recognition.

In 2009, MLB officially recognized Dior for his creation. “I’m glad that we have been able to acknowledge Mr. Dior’s contribution to our national pastime,” then-commissioner Bud Selig said at the time. “[He] created a symbol that has stood the test of time.”

For more: [The Man Behind the MLB Logo](#) (Oct. 2008)

Jerry Dior, designer of Major League Baseball logo, dies at 82

By Mike Axisa | Baseball Writer - May 30, 2015

Jerry Dior, the designer of Major League Baseball's iconic logo, has died at the age of 82. His wife Lita confirmed Dior died on May 10 following a battle with cancer, but his death was not made public until this week.

MLB expressed condolences to Dior's family and friends on Twitter:

Dior created MLB's red, white and blue logo back in 1968 while working for the New York based marketing firm Sandgren & Murtha. The logo was officially adopted by the league in 1969 to honor baseball's centennial.

Since it was a work-for-hire design, Dior received no royalties or public credit for the logo. It wasn't until 2009 that MLB officially recognized Dior as the logo's designer.

"Jerry Dior created a symbol that has stood the test of time," said then-commissioner Bud Selig in a statement that year. "Forty years after its introduction, the 'silhouetted batter' is instantly recognized worldwide as the official emblem of Major League Baseball."

Here's more on a logo design from [Margalit Fox of the *New York Times*](#):

At Sandgren & Murtha, Mr. Dior was glad to land the M.L.B. assignment. A lifelong baseball fan, he adored the Dodgers until they traduced him by quitting Brooklyn in 1957, after which he threw his support to the Yankees.

Per his instructions, he drew a generic baseball player. (In interviews years later, Mr. Dior stressed that the figure was not modeled on Harmon Killebrew as many people, including Killebrew himself, believed.) He executed the design in Magic Marker, originally making it blue and green before switching to a patriotic palette.

"It just came to me," [Mr. Dior told The Wall Street Journal](#) in 2008. "I did the rough sketch and cleaned it up a bit, and that was that. I never thought anything about it until I turned on the television and saw it on the New York Mets' uniforms," where it was emblazoned for the 1969 World Series.

Dior was born in 1932 and studied at the Art Students League of New York. He served stateside in the Army during the Korean War. He is survived by his wife, four children and four grandchildren.



Lennie Merullo, oldest former Cubs player, dies at 98

AP - MAY 31, 2015

CHICAGO — Lennie Merullo, the oldest former member of the Chicago Cubs and the last living person to play for them in the World Series, died Saturday. He was 98.

Cubs owner Tom Ricketts said in a statement that Merullo died earlier in the day. The team didn't include details of Merullo's death.

Merullo was a major league shortstop from 1941-47, all with the Cubs. He hit .240 with six home runs and 152 RBI.

Merullo played three games in the 1945 World Series and went 0 for 2. The Cubs lost in seven games to Detroit, and haven't made it back to the Series since then.

Last June, Merullo traveled from his home in Massachusetts and returned to Wrigley Field as part of the ballpark's 100th celebration.

Wearing a Cubs jersey, he used a walker to go from his wheelchair toward the mound and threw out the first ball before the Cubs played the Marlins, getting a big cheer from the fans.

During the seventh-inning stretch, he took part in Wrigley Field tradition and sang "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" over the stadium's sound system and drew another big ovation.

Merullo recalled that after the 1945 Series, the Cubs imagined they'd make it back soon enough.

"Yeah, sure," he said. "We never gave up hope."

Merullo later scouted for the Cubs. His grandson, Matt Merullo, played six years in the majors, mostly with the Chicago White Sox.

"While I have experienced many joys as owner of this great franchise, one of the most memorable was meeting Lennie last season," Ricketts said.

"When the Cubs last appeared in a World Series in 1945, Lennie was a 28-year-old shortstop. Nearly 70 years later, he brought the same youthful spirit and excitement," he said. "To his family, friends and loved ones, our organization will never forget him."



Angels sure could use Hamilton's production right now

May 30, 2015 - Buster Olney

Josh Hamilton clubbed two homers for the Rangers in his fifth game back in the big leagues, mostly on the Angels' dime. What must really gnaw on his old team -- his old team in Anaheim, that is -- is that it could really use a hitter like him right now for the middle of the lineup.

The Angels have a total of five homers from their cleanup hitters this season, and the collective OPS of the guys batting in the No. 4 spot in their lineup is .579, almost 100 points lower than the team ranked 29th in cleanup-spot OPS:

30. Angels' No. 4 spot: .579 OPS

29. Rockies: .673

28. Oakland: .679

27. Boston: .694

The problem was so bad that on May 18, Angels manager Mike Scioscia shifted Kole Calhoun out of the leadoff spot -- he has been one of baseball's best leadoff hitters -- into the No. 4 spot. Coincidence or not -- pitchers and catchers will tell you they consider who is in the on-deck circle all the time when pitching to the current batter -- No. 3 hitter Albert Pujols has been better since then:

Pujols before May 18: .231 average, 6 homers, 14 RBIs

Pujols since May 18: .341, 4 homers, 6 RBIs (including a home run Friday night)

So it's a step in the right direction. But Hamilton continues to look tremendous at the plate, as he has since he began working his way back from his winter troubles, and the Rangers' offense has become a wrecking ball, leading the AL in runs this month. The Angels are five games out of first place after their win Friday and the Astros' loss, and the Rangers are just 5 1/2 games out.

The Angels won Friday without Erick Aybar. Hector Santiago continues to be a really nice surprise.

Back to Hamilton's homer and the Rangers: Texas is 17-11 in May (second best in the AL). His walk in this game was more impressive than his two homers, Evan Grant writes. Prince Fielder and the Rangers are rolling, Rick Gosselin writes.

Sabathia's struggles

Yankees starter CC Sabathia acknowledged in spring training that he is never going to have the velocity he had when he was younger, and it also stands to reason that he'll never be as good as he once was. Perhaps it's time for the Yankees to adjust to that reality.

Time and again, Sabathia has gotten hit harder and harder as his pitch count has mounted, such as on Thursday night, when he allowed a game-tying homer in the sixth inning and a couple of baserunners to begin the seventh before being relieved. Both runners would come around to score, which proved pivotal.

The numbers generated against Sabathia as his starts have progressed provide a clear picture about how he becomes significantly more vulnerable when facing a lineup a third time:

First time through the order: .274 batting average, .703 OPS

Second time through the order: .316 average, .780 OPS

Third time through the order: .380 average, 1.027 OPS

Here's what it looks like by pitch count:

Pitches 1-25: .610 OPS

Pitches 26-50: .747 OPS

Pitches 51-75: .826 OPS

Pitches 76-100: 1.160 OPS

You wonder if it would be better for Yankees manager Joe Girardi to start looking for an exit ramp in Sabathia's starts as the opponents' lineup gets its third turn against him; if somebody gets on base, make the move. And maybe it would help Sabathia if he were told: *"Look, go as hard as you can two times through the batting order, and we'll evaluate it from there."*

Sabathia's numbers suggest that he is no longer the seven- or eight-inning horse he used to be, and it's time for Girardi to plan as such, especially given how overpowering and deep the Yankees' bullpen is.

The Yankees lost again to the last-place A's, as Mark Feinsand writes.

Billy Witz wrote this piece about Sabathia's connection with his hometown.

Notables

- A rival evaluator said this about Reds outfielder Billy Hamilton: "Unless he figures out a way to put the ball on the ground, he's not going to have much value to the Reds." Hamilton's rate of bunt hits has dropped from 32.7 percent in 2014 to 14.3 percent going into Friday's game, and he ranked 94th among 170 hitters in ground ball/fly ball rate (1.18). Naturally, when someone as fast as Hamilton hits the ball on the ground, he would have a better chance of reaching base than when he puts the ball in the air.

One idea from an evaluator: "He doesn't bunt enough. He should be trying to bunt three times a game."

- On Friday's podcast, Dee Gordon posed a really important question; Justin Havens and Karl Ravech discussed Corey Kluber; we discussed Eduardo Rodriguez's debut and more.

On Thursday's podcast, Keith Law talked about possible changes near the top of the draft and about the game's best pitcher, while Tim Kurkjian talks about the most incredible managerial move ever.

- When Wade Davis shut out the Cubs in the eighth inning Friday, his streak of hitters faced without allowing a home run reached 446.

- Stephen Strasburg had to leave Friday's game with discomfort in his neck, another tough outing in what has been a tough season for him. Before the start, John Fisher of ESPN Stats & Info sent out this series of incredible numbers generated by Strasburg this year:

1. In innings when the Nationals' defense makes an error, Strasburg allows opponents to hit .529 with an OPS of 1.365, and he strikes out only 10.3 percent of the batters he faces. (When the D doesn't make an error, he has allowed a .277 opponents' batting average and a .744 OPS, with a 23.7 K percentage.)

Stephen Strasburg, by score (2015)

Stat	Team ahead	Behind
ERA	2.57	12.09
Opp. OPS	.818	.945
K pct.	25.0	21.3
BB pct.	2.8	4.3
HR	0	5

2. When the team is trailing, he has struggled. His ERA is 12.09 when the Nationals are trailing in the game.

3. He also has been worse with runners on base. Strasburg has allowed opponents to hit .417 (1.022 OPS) when there are runners on base, with just a 12.6 K percentage. When there are no runners on, opponents have hit .248 (.721 OPS), and he has a 28.2 K percentage.

More on the Nationals: Jayson Werth is out indefinitely. Anthony Rendon began his injury rehabilitation assignment.

Tempers flared in the Reds' victory over the Nats, as John Fay writes. Joey Votto had some words for Bryce Harper.

- Derek Norris had one of the best moments of this season Friday night.
- Josh Donaldson has homers in four straight games for the first time in his career, and five homers in the four games.
- Sonny Gray was outstanding.
- Jose Abreu is out, but the White Sox won anyway.
- Jake Kaplan sizes up the market for Cole Hamels.

Moves, deals and decisions

1. Boston will give Eduardo Rodriguez another start. That's not a surprise given how great he was against the Rangers the other night. If the Red Sox had sent him back to the minors, there might have been a coup by the players.

2. The Astros' need to deal for a starting pitcher has been exacerbated due to an injury to Scott Feldman.

3. The Diamondbacks added Jarrod Saltalamacchia.

4. Cody Asche was promoted to the big leagues -- again.

5. One of the Phillies' best prospects was promoted to Double-A.

6. The Cubs will make a run at Ben Zobrist whenever Oakland gives up.

7. Tyler Wagner will get the ball for the Brewers this weekend.

Dings and dents

1. Matt Wieters is expected to rejoin the Orioles next Friday.

2. The timetable for Johnny Cueto's possible return was backed up again.

3. Masahiro Tanaka will be back in the Yankees' rotation next Wednesday.
 4. A Rockies prospect will miss the rest of the season after getting hurt in an outfield collision.
 5. There is no timetable for Victor Martinez's return.
 6. James Paxton has a finger problem.
 7. Matt Adams had surgery, and the Cardinals are committed to Mark Reynolds.
 8. Mets catcher Travis d'Arnaud had a setback.
 9. David Wright got an epidural.
 10. A couple of Rays returned from injury, as Matt Baker writes.
 11. Jake Peavy's rehab work hit a snag.
 12. A.J. Griffin is headed to Class A Stockton for his rehab work.
-

Friday's games

1. The Rockies' Chad Bettis flirted with a perfect game.
2. Taijuan Walker was brilliant.
3. The Royals thumped the Cubs. From Elias Sports Bureau: The Cubs struck out 15 times in Friday's loss, already their fourth game this season with 15-plus whiffs. That leads the majors, just as they did last year when they had a whopping 13 such games, a major league record. In the 11 seasons prior to that, they had just 17 15-plus-strikeout games.
4. The Cubs' defense faltered again.
5. The Giants seemingly never lose, and along the way, they matched a franchise-record streak of 39 consecutive scoreless innings pitched at home. The record had been held by the 1948 New York Giants, according to Elias. Another one from Elias: The Giants have secured their first 21-win month since August 1968 ... and moved into first place in the NL West with the victory. Steph Curry was on hand.
6. The Phillies were almost no-hit by the Rockies.
7. The Pirates' winning streak ended in an instant.
8. A strong start by Matt Harvey slipped away, writes Zach Schonbrun.
9. Mike Napoli and Red Sox manager John Farrell were ejected in the midst of Boston's loss.

10. The Tigers' offensive troubles continued, as Anthony Fenech writes.
 11. The Cardinals changed their lineup again -- and won, again.
 12. The O's got to walk it off. Darren O'Day put on an escape act.
 13. The Indians ran into the beast that is Taijuan Walker and had no answers, even though Trevor Bauer was really good, again.
 14. The Brewers have lost six straight.
 15. The Twins were taken down by an old friend.
 16. Dan Haren won again.
 17. Chad Qualls was unable to protect a lead.
 18. Nick Ahmed had a big hit.
 19. A.J. Ellis was ejected in the Dodgers' loss. Umpire Mike Winters was unhappy about how he framed pitches.
-

NL West

- From Elias: The Dodgers have not scored in their past four road games. That's the longest streak in franchise history.
 - Yasmani Grandal looks ready to go.
-

NL Central

- Joe Maddon is adjusting to the NL style of managing.
 - A.J. Burnett has provided some lessons.
 - The Pirates need to clean up their defense, says manager Clint Hurdle.
 - John Mozeliak has no regrets about the Jason Heyward trade.
-

NL East

- Giancarlo Stanton is not satisfied with his play.

AL Central

- Paul Molitor is loving life as a manager, writes Ken Fidlin.
- Corey Kluber is pitching like Corey Kluber again.
- There is uncertainty with Alfredo Simon.
- The Twins are building up Danny Santana one grounder at a time.

AL East

- The Blue Jays have an opportunity in the AL East.
- David Ortiz has had a slump like this before.

Lastly

- Vanderbilt opened its NCAA regional with a win.
- Ross Ohlendorf and Wade Miley had a cow-milking contest. Ohlendorf once did some offseason work in the Department of Agriculture.
- Chipper Jones mixed it up on Twitter.
- The Royals' ratings have spiked, writes Richard Sandomir.
- The designer of baseball's logo died.
- Leah Still, the daughter of Bengals defensive tackle Devon Still, has suffered a setback.

And today will be better than yesterday.



Eye on MLB, May 30: Can the Twins keep this up?

By Eye on Baseball *staff* - May 30, 2015

Coming into the 2015 season, the Twins were a fairly popular pick ... to not contend. Yes, heading into a campaign in which almost every team seemed to have at least semi-legitimate designs on contention, the Twins were, in many quarters, pegged as one of the few teams that relevance would surely elude. Well, we're roughly one-third in, and the Twins are just a half-game behind the Royals in the tough AL Central. Saturday's win over the Blue Jays pushed them to 10 games over .500, which ties a season high.

These surprising results raise two not-unrelated questions: How have the Twins done it, and how likely are they to keep it up? At a basic level, the Twins rank fifth in the AL in runs scored and seventh in fewest runs allowed. That's yielded a +20 run differential. That's good, but a +20 mark doesn't quite scale to a record of 10 games over .500.

As well, let's look at [the BaseRuns standings over at FanGraphs](#), which digs deeper and determines what a team's record should be based on batted-ball outcomes. According to BaseRuns, the Twins should be ... seven games below .500. Obviously, there's disconnect between the Twins in the standings and the Twins at the granular level.

In large part, that's owing to the success of the Minnesota hitters in RBI situations. With runners on base, the Twins in 2015 are batting .285/.350/.422 (third in the AL in terms of OPS). With runners in scoring position, they've been even better: .304/.378/.453 (also third in the AL in OPS). Now what about with the bases empty (excluding leadoff situations)? The Twins crater to .208/.246/.312, which is easily the worst such mark in the majors. Overall, they're batting .257/.310/.389. Circling back to [FanGraphs](#), the Twins are projected to rank next-to-last in the AL in runs scored per game over the rest of the season.

So, no, this run of success in RBI spots almost certainly isn't sustainable. It seems like almost every year we hear about a team that's learn to bear down/focus/improve the approach/conjure up devil-magic with runners on base. It never holds up. There's simply no evidence that ramped-up production with runners on, particularly at the team level, is any kind of repeatable skill. It's possible for such good fortune to last the better part of the season, which is why we can't say for sure that the Twins are in for sweeping *immediate* regression. But the 2015 Twins haven't cracked the RISP code or anything like that.

All those wins are in the bank, and that certainly improves the Twins' overall outlook for 2015. However, there's a lot of luck undergirding their success in the 2015. The thing about luck is that sometimes it runs out. -- *Dayn Perry*

Now here's Saturday's edition of Eye on MLB, your one-stop shop for everything that happens in the world of baseball. Game recaps, milestone updates, important highlights, news and notes ... you'll find all of that and more right here. Check back in through the day for updates, or come back Sunday morning for the finished product. Your call.

Today's MLB action (all times ET) (Full scoreboard)

Royals at Cubs, Postponed: Saturday night's Royals-Cubs game at Wrigley Field has been postponed "due to the forecast of inclement weather throughout the evening." The game will be made up on Monday, September 28 at 7pm ET.

Twins 3, Blue Jays 2 (Box score): Three extra-base hits led to Minnesota's three runs: Chris Herrmann homered in the third, Trevor Plouffe hit an RBI ground-rule double in the fourth, and Brian Dozier had the go-ahead RBI triple in the seventh. Kyle Gibson allowed two runs (one earned) in 5 2/3 innings and the Twins bullpen held the Jays to one hit in 3 1/3 innings. Kevin Pillar went deep for Toronto. The Twins have won 24 of their last 34 games.

Rays 3, Orioles 0 (Box score): The Rays built a picket fence in the first three innings, scoring one run in the first (Evan Longoria sac fly), one run in the second (Steven Souza homer) and one run in the third (Joey Butler homer). Erasmo Ramirez had his best start of the season, striking out seven in seven shutout innings. Eighteen of the final 20 Orioles to bat made outs. And if you like brisk games, then this one should have been to your liking ...

Rockies 5, Phillies 2 (Box score): Three solo home runs (Nolan Arenado, Mike McKenry, Ben Paulsen) and two RBI singles (Rafael Ynoa, Arenado) led the way offensively for the Rockies, who got six innings of one-run ball from Eddie Butler. Ryan Howard doubled in a run for the Phillies, who have lost six straight and eight of nine.

Astros 3, White Sox 0 (Box score): This game was 1-0 into the eighth inning, when Evan Gattis and Chris Carter gave the Astros some insurance with back-to-back solo homers. Dallas Keuchel, who has to be considered an early candidate for the AL Cy Young Award, struck out 11 in his second career complete game shutout. He is 7-1 with a 1.76 ERA. Stud.

Marlins 9, Mets 5 (Box score): Giancarlo Stanton homered twice, giving him 15 for the season. Overall, the Marlins abused starter Jon Niese for five runs on seven hits in just 4.0 innings of work. Also worth a shout-out? The Miami bullpen. Check out how they cleaned up starter Tom Koehler's mess ...

MIAMI MARLINS

PITCHERS	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	ERA
Tom Koehler	3.1	7	5	5	4	1	0	4.01
Vin Mazzaro	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Bryan Morris	0.1	0	0	0	2	0	0	4.07
Mike Dunn (W,1-3)	0.2	0	0	0	0	1	0	5.40
Carter Capps	1.0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1.08
Sam Dyson	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.20
A.J. Ramos (S,4)	1.1	1	0	0	0	2	0	1.07

Reds 8, Nationals 5 (Box score): Joey Votto homered for the second straight day, and the Reds, in coming back from down 5-2 in the sixth, completed their largest comeback of the season. Nats reliever Casey Janssen blew up, allowing four runs on four hits and a pair of walks in one inning. Bryce Harper, a day after being plunked in the back, was out of the lineup for Washington. Rookie Michael Taylor -- Jayson Werth's likely fill-in -- hit a long home run.

Diamondbacks 7, Brewers 3 (Box score): Paul Goldschmidt hit two long home runs, and D-backs starter Jeremy Hellickson even tallied a pair of hits (on the mound, he notched a quality start). As for Goldie, he's now hitting .345/.448/.661 on the year. Overall, Arizona has homered in eight straight games. The highlight for the Brewers? Maybe this Star Wars-inspired Jonathan Lucroy bobblehead, which was given to lucky attendees at Miller Park on Saturday ...

Rangers 8, Red Sox 0 (Box score): The story for Texas was starter Alex Gonzalez, who fared pretty well in his big-league debut ...

Sure the control wasn't there at times, but it's also worth noting that Gonzalez didn't allow a hit until the sixth. On the offensive side of things, Adam Rosales went 4-for-4 for the Rangers, who are now .500. The Sox, meanwhile, are now a season-worst six games under .500.

Dodgers 5, Cardinals 1 (Box score): First pitch was delayed by more than two hours because of rain in St. Louis. For a while, it looked like Michael Wacha would move to 8-0 on the season (he held the Dodgers hitless for 5 1/3 innings), but a Yasmani Grandal home run in the sixth proved to be the difference. For the Dodgers, Carlos Frias gave up one run -- unearned -- across 7.0 innings. He struck out three and walked two.

Angels 8, Tigers 6 (Box score): The Angels homered five times in the first two innings on Saturday night against Detroit. Here's just a taste ...

That's the first time in just over a year since a team hit five or more homers in a game against Detroit. Taking the brunt of the damage was Tigers starter Shane Greene, who gave up seven runs in just 1 2/3 innings. Pujols has now homered in three straight games. The Angels go for the four-game sweep on Sunday.

Braves 8, Giants 0 (Box score): Juan Uribe homered for the first time as a Brave, and Atlanta starter Williams Perez earned his first major-league win with 7.0 shutout innings. Jace Peterson had a three-hit game and wound up a home run shy of the cycle. Across the way, Tim Lincecum saw his home scoreless innings streak end at 23, as he allowed four runs on eight hits in 4 1/3 innings. Giants reliever Jean Machi saw his ERA rise to 5.68 after he gave up four runs in 2.0 innings of work.

Yankees 5, Athletics 3 (Box score): Carlos Beltran's go-ahead homer in the sixth was the killing blow as the Yankees won in Oakland for the first time in their last five games there. Chase Headley had a three-hit night, and the Yankee bullpen behind an ineffective Nathan Eovaldi worked 4 1/3 scoreless while striking out eight and walking none. Brian McCann drove in a run for the eighth straight game. On the Oakland side of things, Josh Reddick went 3-for-4.

Indians 4, Mariners 3 (Box score): Starter Roenis Elias struggled, and the Mariners as a team left 18 runners on base. On the upside, Robinson Cano hit his second homer of the season. For Cleveland, the big blow was a two-run homer by Jerry Sands. However, he's likely to be optioned back to the minors on Sunday, when Carlos Santana comes off the paternity list.

Pirates 5, Padres 2 (Box score): Charlie Morton looked strong again in his second start of the season, as he allowed two runs in 7.0 innings. Andrew McCutchen was 2-for-3 with a double and two walks. Meanwhile, no Padre managed more than one hit. Tyson Ross logged a quality start.

Milestone Watch

Longest active hit streak: Ian Desmond comes into Saturday having hit safely in his last 13 games. Several players are tied for the second longest hit streak at nine games.

History lesson of the day: On this date in 1982, Cal Ripken Jr. started a streak of 16+ seasons without a day off:

Citi Field history: Giancarlo Stanton's second homer of the day measured 466 feet, making the longest clout in the (rather brief) history of Citi Field, home of the Mets.

Daily Awards

Ugly swing of the day: This is from Friday night, but it's worth sharing Saturday. Fernando Rodney got Michael Bourn to corkscrew himself into the ground:

Quote of the day: Dan Uggla isn't playing a whole lot for the Nationals these days, but he is a valuable veteran leader in the clubhouse. As reliever Aaron Barrett told James Wagner of the *Washington Post*, Uggla does his leading with hugs:

“He's just a big bicep teddy bear,” reliever Aaron Barrett said. After a grin and laugh, Barrett continued: “The hugs are fantastic. I love it. It's very comforting.”

Service time manipulation of the day: The Dodgers have been using veteran Chris Heisey as an up-and-down outfielder this season, calling him up whenever an extra position player is needed. He was sent down again Saturday, just a few days shy of being able to refuse the assignment:

Dogs of the day: It's bring your dog to the park day in Philadelphia, so here are some lovable pooches:

Technical difficulties of the day: Not a good day for fans hoping to tune into Saturday's Brewers vs. D-Backs game:

Photo of the day, college edition: Watch your back, Oregon State ...

Slo-mo Mike Trout footage of the day: Gird yourselves for aesthetic baseball pleasure ...

Magic Johnson imitation of the day: Freddy Galvis with the slick no-look and the *almost* 6-4-3 ...

Momentary existential crisis of the day: Brett Lawrie, for one fleeting second, questioned the most basic human assumptions ...

Bunt of the day: Chase Headley, without debate ..



A.J. Ellis takes exception to umpire Mike Winters critiquing his pitch framing

By Mark Townsend – May 30

The Los Angeles Dodgers road struggles continued on Friday as they were shut out for the fourth consecutive game away from Dodger Stadium, losing 3-0 to the St. Louis Cardinals.

With that in mind, it would be only natural to expect some frustration and anger, and the Dodgers target turned out to be home plate umpire Mike Winters. Throughout the game, catcher A.J. Ellis, manager Don Mattingly and others in the Dodgers dugout grew increasingly annoyed by Winters' strike zone, and eventually that led to an explosive exchange that Ellis claims became personal.

It all broke loose in the seventh inning after reliever J.P. Howell walked Matt Carpenter. At that point, Mattingly had actually already been ejected by Winters for defending Andre Ethier, who was called out on a questionable strike. Ellis soon joined him and later revealed to the media that he not only became upset by an inconsistent strike, but also by Winters criticizing his pitch framing skills when he'd questioned the strike zone.

From the Orange County Register:

Winters could not have picked a hotter button to push with Ellis. He finds himself one of the lowest-ranking catchers in baseball in the new pitch-framing statistics – playing for an organization now run by a front office that places a lot of stock in that metric.

“Their job is to call balls and strikes,” Ellis said. “It’s not their job to be a catching coach behind the plate. It’s not their job to be critical of what I’m doing. It shouldn’t even matter if there’s a catcher there or not. The ball comes through a zone and they need to take a look at that.”

“People on blogs and websites can critique my framing but I’m not going to take it from an umpire because it’s not their job to do that. It’s their job to call balls and strikes based on what comes through a strike zone.”

It's an odd dynamic in that Ellis and Mattingly were obviously critical of Winters' job performance, but the umpires job is obviously to remain unbiased, unflinching and professional under all circumstances. If Winters went over that line a bit, it's understandable that Ellis would be upset, but sometimes the human element comes into play too, which Ellis also seemed to acknowledge.

“I had a rough game. Mike had a rough game,” Ellis said. “We were both out there doing our jobs, trying to work as hard as we can. But sometimes even when you’re trying to do your best you still don’t do a good job.”

In situations like this, the best place for everybody to look is in the mirror because the only thing you can control is how you react and move forward.

As for Winters, he would only say the argument was about "balls and strikes" while electing to keep the rest private. He was actually miced up for the MLB Network broadcast, so the league at least will know how the exchange went down.

Punishment for either side is unlikely, although a call or two might be made to ensure similar circumstances don't play out in the future.



SERBY'S SUNDAY Q&A WITH ... Noah Syndergaard

Amazin' rookie hurler Noah Syndergaard took a swing at some Q&A with Post columnist Steve Serby.

Q: What is it like right now being Noah Syndergaard?

A: Right now, I'd

Q: What would your baseball fantasy be?

A: To win the World Series, ultimately, hopefully a couple of them. ... Maybe a couple of Cy Young awards. Hopefully Hall of Fame would be in order.

Q: Tell me why success won't go to your head.

A: I like to think my entire life I've been a pretty humble guy. I was never really a big attention guy. So I just feel like I can go out there and just stay the same Noah that I've been my entire career, and not try to change.

Q: You just got a place in New York City. Are you recognized yet?

A: Yeah. [Thursday] I went apartment shopping, and just walking around I probably got noticed by six different people that stopped me. It was like, "Oh, you're Syndergaard, yeah." And apparently the guy I was with had mentioned that a lot of people were like staring at me as well.

Q: How do you feel about that?

A: I like it so far. I think it's pretty cool.

Q: What is so great about pitching in New York?

A: I would have to say the fans. I was exiting the field after Terry [Collins, Mets manager] took me out the other day, I had my eyes set on getting to the dugout, but I can see all around, my peripheral vision, the fans giving me a standing ovation. The cheering is so loud out there. I'd also say just living in the city, I just recently found myself an apartment, I love how you can go out and do basically whatever you want and have the most unbelievable food you've ever eaten at anywhere around the corner.

Q: There was a time when your name came up in trade rumors. I'm guessing you would want to stay in New York.

A: Oh yeah, 100 percent. I

mean. I love the city, I think it's the best city in the world. I try not to pay too much attention to trade talks 'cause that's really out of my control.

Q: Is there a different feeling when you walk around New York City?

A: Yeah, I mean, it's the City That Never Sleeps, so, disregarding the skyscrapers and the places to eat, the amount of people that are always constantly moving around, I don't know how much gets done here just 'cause there's so many people and so little space.

Q: Tell Mets fans who Noah Syndergaard is.

A: I would say Noah Syndergaard is a pretty normal guy, pretty goofy at times, I like hanging out with friends just [like] any 22-year-old likes to do ... love different TV shows — "Game of Thrones" and "Breaking Bad" and all that stuff.

Q: Can you give me an example of your goofiness?

A: I mean just like wearing onesies to work out in, and cutting the sleeves off.

Q: You think you're a typical 22-year-old?

A: I would think so.

Q: Except you can squat 500 pounds.

A: I get close to it, I think 455.

Q: Do you consider yourself a gentle giant?

A: Yes. I'm an extremely non-confrontational type of guy. But that personality changes once I step on the field.

Q: Do you think you're a bulldog on the mound like Matt Harvey is known for being?

A: I would say to a certain extent, yes, but watching him throw, that's the true definition of a bulldog and that's what I eventually want to get to. ... I can feel glimpses of it when I'm out there, compared to him.

Q: What is that feeling like?

A: You just kind of feel like you're on top of the world, especially when you're at Citi Field and you have all those Mets fans supporting you.

Q: Can you be an ace?

A: That's my goal. I feel like right now we have six aces. Everyone's got the ability to throw nine shutout innings.

Q: How do you feel about the six-man rotation?

A: I like it. It gives my arm another extra day of rest.

Q: What makes Harvey special?

A: Not even mentioning his stuff he has on the mound, like plus fastball, plus every pitch basically, but the mentality he has out there. He goes out there every five days — I'm sure if he could, he'd go out there every day, and pitch every day. He goes out there every five days and not only does he *think* he can beat you, he *knows* that he can beat the opposing team.

Q: Are you close to that point?

A: I think so, yeah.

Q: What makes Jacob deGrom special?

A: DeGrom's the same way. It's his night and day when you watch him in the dugout or hanging around and when he's on the mound. Even his facial expressions are completely different. He looks almost ... intimidating out there.

Q: Describe game day.

A: I get still pretty nervous to this day, I think I probably always will. So I don't eat a lot the day that I start. ... I just get anxious, really.

Q: What is your routine once you get to the ballpark?

A: I get pretty superstitious, even the smallest things, like when I put my pants on. We do a lot of foam rolling and whatnot, I'll stick to a certain foam roller that I'll use, so I get pretty superstitious there.

Q: How many home runs are you going to be hitting up here?

A: That's a tough one. My high school coach always told me that home runs were accidents, and that's how it kind of felt the other day, 'cause I didn't try at all to hit a home run, I just tried to put a good swing on it and it happened to go over the fence.

Q: What were you thinking circling the bases on your home run trot?

A: Did that really just happen?

Q: What would you want to say to Mets fans?

A: I love this city. I love pitching in this stadium, in front of the best fans in baseball, potentially in all sports, and I'm looking forward to a bright career here.

Andrew Theodorakis

THE difference between soccer's FIFA and the IOC — the International Olympic Committee — is just a couple of initials. For decades, both have operated off the same quid pro quo menus, with only upward price adjustments. It's breakfast at IHOP, the International House of PayolaCakes.

To be elected or named a delegate or executive — if your connection connects, something like the official ticket broker, parking concessionaire or seat cushion supplier — is to understand you have tacit permission to set sail for an offshore bank with an unloading dock.

Consider that some of the IOC's financial paper trail from the 1998 Winter Games in Japan was destroyed as it might have caused "some embarrassment," while FIFA has stonewalled money questions as a matter of "confidentiality." Kids, don't try that at home.

Until last week, when U.S. and Swiss prosecutors accused 14 FIFA big shots of being pass-the-envelope crooks, the IOC and FIFA long operated as mountain regencies, answerable to no external mortals.

Consider that the IOC's longtime president, unrepentant World War II fascist Juan Antonio Samaranch, who preferred to be called "Your Excellency," bestowed the "Olympic movement's" highest honor on Romania's murderous dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. Must've liked his style.

Samaranch only vaguely explained he was "very proud" to honor Ceausescu for, "What he did for the Olympic movement." Naturally.

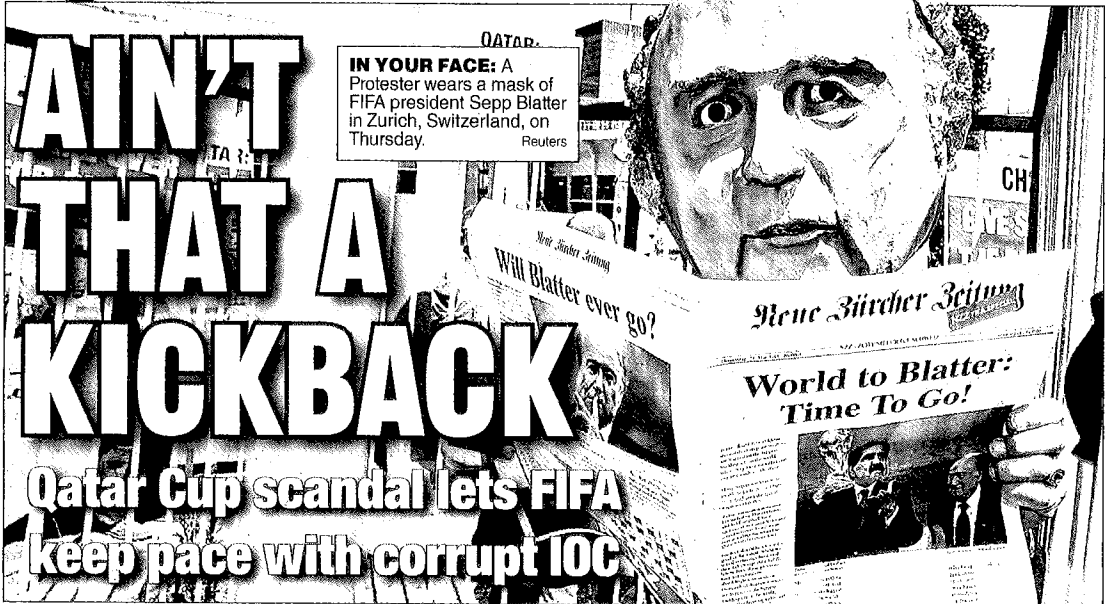
Regardless of last week's FIFA dragnet, Vladimir Putin remains a strong supporter of FIFA's ways and means. Natch. Russia "won" the 2018 World Cup.

But though FIFA finally may have



Phil Mushnick

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AIN'T THAT A KICKBACK

Qatar Cup scandal lets FIFA keep pace with corrupt IOC

IN YOUR FACE: A Protester wears a mask of FIFA president Sepp Blatter in Zurich, Switzerland, on Thursday. Reuters

travelled a toll bridge too far — now liable for past, pervasive and even pro forma charges of criminality — the best might yet to come.

In 2010, FIFA even shocked the previously conditioned distrustful when it granted the oil-soaked, money-to-burn Islamic kingdom of Qatar the 2022 World Cup.

Qatar? Why not plant an or-

ange grove in the Yukon?

Did it matter that it's dangerous to practice, let alone play soccer in 105 degrees? Or that Qatar had almost no stadia and support facilities? Did it matter that Qatar's oil and building industries perpetually are exposed and condemned for importing slave-wagers who are accordingly housed?

How about Qatar's 180-year ruling al-Thani family, reliable financiers of Islamic terrorism, a great enabler of Saddam Hussein? And what of Qatar's oppressive positions and practices of race, religion and gender, on permanent loan from the Ottoman Empire?

Nope, none of that mattered. So then, what did? How did

FIFA come to choose Qatar?

Maybe, if the indicted FIFA bosses stand trial — or cop a plea in exchange for their testimony — we will learn the answers to that question. Just don't be surprised if you're not surprised. As FIFA's 17-year, re-elected Swiss boss Sepp Blatter put it last week, "I'm sure more bad news will follow."

LOOK what they've done to my game, ma!

Isn't there a sports commissioner occasionally moved to say, "Nah, we shouldn't have any part of that," as opposed to "What's our take?"

On April 3, Marlins pitcher **Jarred Cosart** was publicly placed on MLB's watch-list when he was fined for placing illegal sports bets.

"Major League Baseball has completed its investigation into Cosart's possible connection to sports-related gambling," read a statement from commissioner **Rob Manfred's** office. "The investigation did not reveal any evidence to suggest that Cosart, who fully cooperated with the investigation, bet on baseball."

For Cosart's part, the MLB Players Association issued

one of those sincere-as-a-grunt statements as (unlikely) spoken by Cosart:

"I have never, nor would I ever bet on baseball. I'm sorry for any distractions this may have caused the Marlins, my teammates, coaches and our incredible fans. I'm glad to bring closure to this situation before Opening Day."

Yep, Opening Day, now Opening Night On ESPN, Presented By Scotts, was just two nights away, April 5. Good timing.

Timing? On April 2, the day before Cosart's spanking, MLB reached a long-term extension with a company that it already had partnered with and promoted, DraftKings, a fantasy

sports enterprise that's not all that pretend, given that it urges real fans to gamble real money on real players.

And since Opening Night, it seems every MLB telecast on TV has included at least one commercial for DraftKings, which carries MLB's logo and boasts MLB's official partnership, and/or FanDuel, which is able to list stars such as **Clayton Kershaw**, **Miguel Cabrera** and **Jose Altuve** as a fantasy team well worth betting real money on.

DraftKings also has a gambling deal with the NHL, FanDuel with the NBA.

One MLB fantasy league ad includes a fellow who claims to have won "over \$62,000" betting on MLB

players. Another is loaded with young wise-guy "attitude" requisites, including sexual innuendo and a chance to win a "shipload" of money. Get it?

Yep, why would MLB encourage fans to root for their team when they can buy individual MLB players and root for their money, every day and night?

And that "fan" who "won over \$62,000"? If true — if MLB and/or the primary owners can verify that claim — is that 62 grand clear, or did he "win" \$62,000 on twice or more that wagered?

Maybe it's a **Bernie Madoff/Fred Wilpon** thing. Maybe MLB's worried only about its take. Perhaps it's

not allowed — or inclined — to ask any questions. Besides, if fans have bets on a bunch of players every night, that drive sales of MLB's cable/satellite TV packages. "Game? What game? Gotta track my action."

Naturally, as a partnered representative of "the house," MLB's take becomes a matter of a cut of losing bets. And the losers' buy-in, by gambling business definition, must outnumber the winners', although some fantasy league payouts also rake 10 percent of the winnings. It's no different than if MLB were partners in a casino.

On April 2, MLB increased its financial and promotional interests in gambling by MLB fans on

MLB players as they play in MLB games. And as the ads urge, bet every day in every way, as much and as often as you want, baseball fans!

The next day, April 3, MLB completed its investigation of Cosart, fining him for illegal gambling on sports, but — whew! — not for gambling on baseball.

MLB couldn't say no? Couldn't pass on a profit source that encourages every fan to bet on baseball, every day, as much and as often as they want?

Gambling on baseball is one of those MLB no-greater-shame, zero-tolerance sins — unless MLB gets its cut. Here's hoping MLB has taught Cosart his lesson.

MLB anti-gambling stance is a fantasy

BOB RAISSMAN



MEDIA

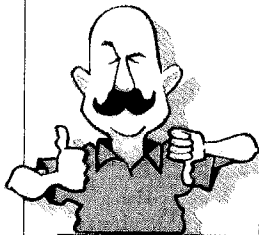
MIKE'S OFF!

Disgruntled Francesca looking for WFAN exit, not retirement

DUDE OF THE WEEK

RON DARLING

For serving as Terry Collins' translator — and making a point. Last week, while addressing boss scribes, the manager said he's got to go with the players he has and not walk around with some sort of wish list. Darling, on SNY, put it in much stronger terms. "A lot of times teams start to look around, looking for a savior to come in and 'save us, save us from this,'" Darling said. "Let me alert everyone that NO one is coming. There is no savior coming here." We're sure this came as news — and did not sit well — with Gasbags who spend far too much time speculating on who the Mets should go out and get. Not Darling. Never boring.



DWEEB OF THE WEEK

MIKE (GREENBERG) & MIKE (GOLIC)

It's not easy delivering multiple hours of sports talk radio each day, but when ESPN's morning mouths decide to suck up to their ESPN/ABC colleague Mark Jackson, it's time to throw a flag for either unnecessary tuchis kissing or illegal Pity Partying. When saluting the Western Conference champs, the guys touted these Warriors as Jackson's players and his team. Wrong. This is Steve Kerr's team. The starting five selected by Kerr this year, that skyrocketed to the top of the league and won 67 games, played together for 80 minutes all of last year. Sorry.

DOUBLE TALK

What FIFA president Sepp Blatter said: "It has to stop here and now."
What Sepp Blatter meant to say: "My new term of office may be interrupted by an indictment with my name on it."

As we said on our video show, **Mike (Sports Pope) Francesca** saying his retirement (he says he knows the actual date) is imminent is a lot of baloney. Nonetheless, it sure looks like the pontiff badly wants out of his WFAN contract (which expires in 2017) so he can move on to another gig.

That ain't exactly retiring. His Holiness won't be deserting the unwashed masses. Make no mistake. If Francesca does leave FAN there will be a market for his services. He has a large and loyal following. There are plenty of media platforms, which continue to expand, that would be a good fit for the pontiff.

Would anyone be surprised if Francesca has already approached CBS lawyers and asked out of his contract? And would anyone be surprised if their answer was no, we are not buying you out or letting you out?

Francesca still produces hefty ratings and revenue in afternoon drive. CBS is not about to let a performer with Francesca's revenue-generating and ratings power walk away from a contract. So, he talks retirement knowing full well his path to the next job is currently blocked.

And if he can't get released from his contract, Francesca is not going give up and leave millions of dollars on the table, even though his relationship with management, including one

of his once closest allies, FAN boss **Mark Chernoff**, is in the toilet. Francesca is not on speaking terms with any of the suits.

There are a variety of reasons why things have soured. The Pope has mentioned a few on the air. Stuff like, having his simulcast preempted by Fox and CBS' role in that. Or about him and management "going in different directions."

Reading between the lines, and talking with sources at WFAN, there's also the sense that Francesca does not get the kind of respect he once enjoyed, and still believes he deserves considering the contributions he's made for close to three decades at the station. Management does not perceive him as its top performer. Everyone wants to be loved, even a contentious Sports Pope. The suits don't cater to him the way they once did.

Some of this is due to the success of **Norman Esiason/Craig Cartoon's** morning show (it generates more revenue than Francesca's soiree) and the fact that they are easier to work with when it comes to marketing and promotional situations. It's not a reach to suggest Francesca doesn't like Esiason/Cartoon's brand of sports talk or their mocking of him. Clearly, FAN management has not

told them to stop. Ten years ago they would have.

The fact Esiason/Cartoon's simulcast airs on CBSSN plays into this. On the corporate level CBS Sports, run by **Sean McManus**, views Esiason/Cartoon not only as earners but as team players. And it's no secret there's a long history of bad blood between McManus and Francesca. One CBS source called it a "poisonous relationship." The Pope once said he would never let his simulcast air on CBSSN. Yet there is a distinct possibility McManus wanted nothing to do with Francesca.

Let's just say **Doug Gottlieb's** afternoon drive CBSSN simulcast is never preempted. Perhaps Francesca has noticed this.

How will this all eventually play out? If he wants to, Francesca can push things — maybe even his way out — by escalating his attacks on CBS/FAN management of whom he recently said (on the air) are "doing a good job of running this place into the ground." Yes, there could come a time when the suits decide he ain't worth the aggravation.

A time when they decide to free the Sports Pope.

WHO'S NEXT?

If Francesca is able to split, who would assume the throne? Just our highly educated speculation, but **Joe Benigno/Evan Roberts**

would likely get the first call — if Benigno doesn't decide he wants to retire.

Or the FANroids could split up their morning team and move either Esiason or Cartoon to the afternoon. Considering the duo's success, this would be a gamble.

There's always the possibility of management forming a new team.

FAN has its own roster to choose from, including sharpshooting **Marc Malusis**. And CBS has plenty of mouths down on the CBS Sports Radio Farm, Gasbags like **Brandon Tierney**, **Gregg Giannotti** and **Tiki Barber**. Then there are Wild Cards like **Sal Licata**, **Chris Simms** and the iconic **Sid (Sidiot) Rosenberg**. What about **Chris Carlin**? Would he consider a return to radio? See, there is no shortage of hot air ready to blow into FAN should the Pope depart.

KAY-BOOM?

There are also rumblings of change coming

to ESPN-98.7's afternoon drive slot. And they are coming from the horse's mouth — so to speak.

Michael Kay has been dropping hints that he might not be back. His contract expires in September. Some of his discussions on the contract, (with) **Don LaGreca** sound like jive, kidding around stuff.

ESPN-98.7 boss **Tim McCarthy** said discussions with Kay and his representative are ongoing. "I think Michael is going to be back," McCarthy said. "If he doesn't come back it would be a personal choice because he just has too many jobs." Kay is also the TV voice of the Yankees on **AI Yankeeza**.

When guys talk so openly about their contract in a public forum, our antenna goes up. Kay has never been one to turn down a gig or leave a nickel on the table. So maybe he is weighing some other job options. Stay tuned.

JET LAG

Never understood all the attention paid to, and fascination with, broadcasters' travel schedules.

For example, NBC's **Doc Emrick**, **Eddie Olczyk** and **Pierre McGuire's** coast-to-coast flight (and the rest of their itinerary) after they called Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals at the Gulag Friday night, to get them to L.A. for Game 7 of the Western Conference finals Saturday night, was detailed on several platforms.

Like **Kenny Albert's** post-season travel sled.

The way this is presented it's like they all are traveling in covered wagons to the next city. Hey, these cats (and more power to them) are flying first class and not staying in tents once they arrive at their destination.

This is not exactly a hardship. They are living large.

I KNOW NOTHING

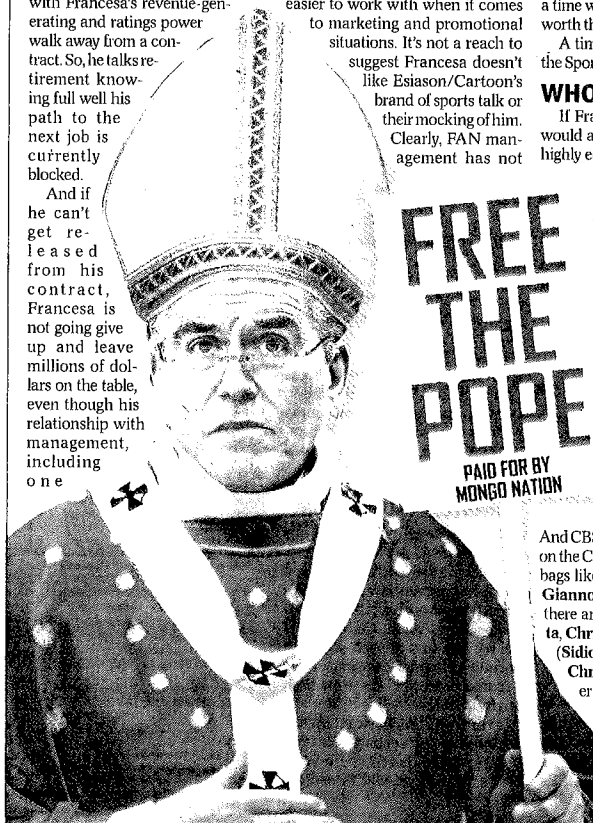
Someone at ESPN Radio should have spoken with **Michael Wilbon** before he went on **Scott Van Pelt's** Thursday show.

Apparently, SVP and his team thought Wilbon was prepared to offer an opinion on the divisive statement **Bulls** owner **Jerry Reinsdorf** released after firing **Tom Thibodeau**.

"What did you make of the syntax there, Mike," the host asked.

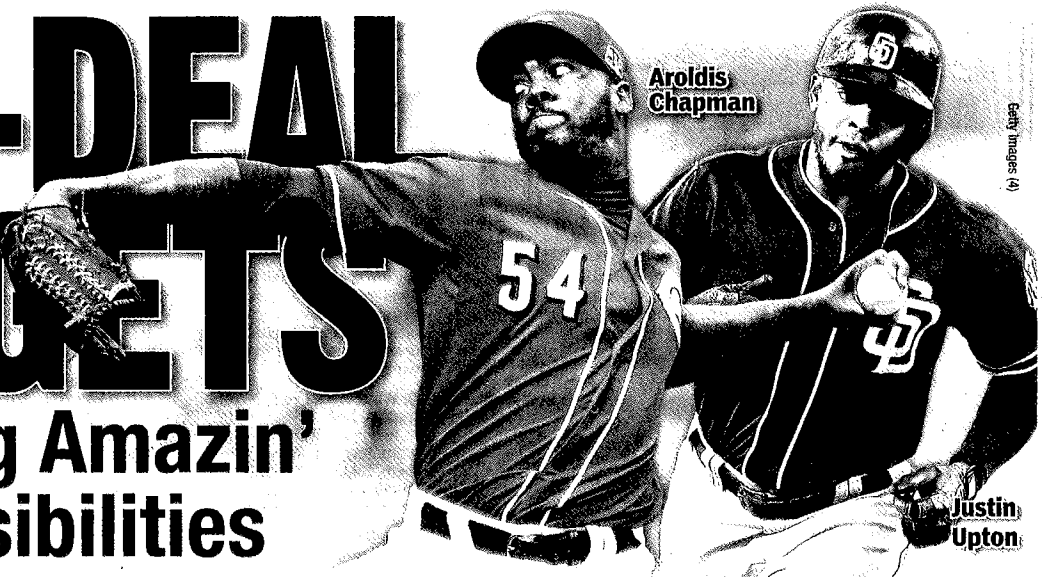
"Scott, I have not heard of any official anything because I'm stepping off a plane from San Francisco, which I've been on for four hours," Wilbon said. "I'm just landing in Chicago to the news so I don't know if there was a release, or a statement, or any of that."

Whoops. Oh, they finally read Wilbon the statement. Great idea.



EYE-DEAL TARGETS

Identifying Amazin' trade possibilities



Aroldis Chapman

Justin Upton

WE ARE in that period between Memorial Day and the draft, when clubs begin to intensify at least the chatter about doing something in the next two months, before the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline.

There are four teams in sell mode already, interestingly all in the NL — Atlanta, Philadelphia, Milwaukee and Colorado. When I asked executives over the past few days who they think will be the next to join the list, five teams came up most frequently, and four — Miami, Cincinnati, San Diego and Arizona — also were in the NL. Oakland was the AL team.

Think of that — eight NL clubs might soon be sellers, though executives cautioned that either for ownership reasons, vanity or delusion, the Marlins, Reds and Padres could wait as long as possible to see if they can rally this season before conceding and putting their players on the market.

But if eight NL clubs are at least contemplating being sellers, that means seven are vying for five playoff spots, which would include the Mets. And if you are not sellers, then you should be buyers.

Mets officials insist to me that ownership will add payroll to bolster a playoff run. Of course, there is skepticism until we see it. An executive from another NL team noted that in signing Michael Cuddyer, the Mets forfeited their first-round pick and saved the roughly \$2.7 million that mid-round slot would have cost. But, the executive asked, "Do they feel they already spent that money on [Jerry] Blevins," who was obtained at the end of spring and makes \$2.4 million in 2015?

Let's assume the Mets are going to be aggressive over the

Joel Sherman
HARDBALL

next two months to try to deliver their first playoff team since 2006. Where should they be concentrating? I offer these four names — Aroldis Chapman, Martin Prado, Ben Zobrist and Justin Upton:

CHAPMAN

The strong industry belief is the Mets will emphasize adding a hitter. And I suspect an analytics-based front office would not favor using significant assets (prospects and dollars) to obtain a closer. But here is my case:

1. The Royals accentuated last year what a powerhouse endgame could deliver. In Chapman and Jeurys Familia, the Mets would have a lefty-righty power duo akin to what the Yankees have with Andrew Miller and Dellin Betances.

2. At a time when the Mets are going to a six-man rotation to protect their starters, here is even a better way to not push the rotation — by assuring the last six-tine outs are elite.

3. Chapman is under control not just this year, but next year, too.

4. If they were to get to the playoffs, the Mets would be scary in a short series with power arms (Matt Harvey, Jacob deGrom, Noah Syndergaard and maybe Steve Matz starting, and Chapman, Familia and maybe Matz finishing).

The Braves traded Craig Kimbrel before the season and accepted less back because the Padres

also were willing to take on Melvin Upton Jr.'s bad contract. If the Mets were willing to take on Brandon Phillips (\$27 million owed in 2016-17), could they protect the best of their system, and because Daniel Murphy is a free agent after this season, just live with Phillips at second?

With good health/production from Jenry Mejia, Vic Black and Bobby Parnell when they return, the Mets probably could stay out of the bullpen market. If not, they may have to go for someone (Oakland's Tyler Clippard? San Diego's Joaquin Benoit?) even if they shun Chapman.

PRADO/ZOBRIST

At this point, we have to assume the Mets are not going to take on the financial and physical risk or give up the assets needed to obtain Colorado's Troy Tulowitzki. Maybe the Cubs and Mets eventually will find common ground in a pitcher-for-shortstop (Starlin Castro, Addison Russell, Javier Baez) deal. But I would not be surprised if Wilmer Flores remains the shortstop.

So where can the Mets improve their lineup? The problem is, they are kind of locked in with outfielders.

General manager Sandy Alderson's biggest free-agent signings are Curtis Granderson and Cuddyer, plus Juan Lagares received a long-term extension in spring. And the Mets cannot know yet if they need a

third baseman to replace David Wright because of his back problems.

That is why I believe Prado and Zobrist fit the Mets because of their ability to help at many positions.

Prado, for example, can play third base if Wright is not healthy or give more rest if Wright is healthy. He has a .503 slugging percentage against lefties since the start of the 2012 campaign, so if Granderson continues to struggle vs. southpaws Prado can play right field. Prado also can play some second if needed. He is experienced playing in both the NL East and New York.

Zobrist, just back from the disabled list, is the kind of player

Alderson likes because of an ability to have patient at-bats. He also can play pretty much anywhere on the diamond except catcher or center field.

If the Mets shoot lower, Toronto's Danny Valencia crushes lefties, as does Cleveland's Ryan Raburn — this is

particularly in case the Mets decide John Mayberry is this year's Chris Young and just never is going to hit southpaws.

Atlanta's Jonny Gomes and Colorado's Wilin Rosario could be options as well. It may be Boston's Shane Victorino never will be healthy enough to take on a risk, but his history of hitting lefties well and being a key champion in big northeast cities (Philadelphia, Boston) would make him enticing.

UPTON

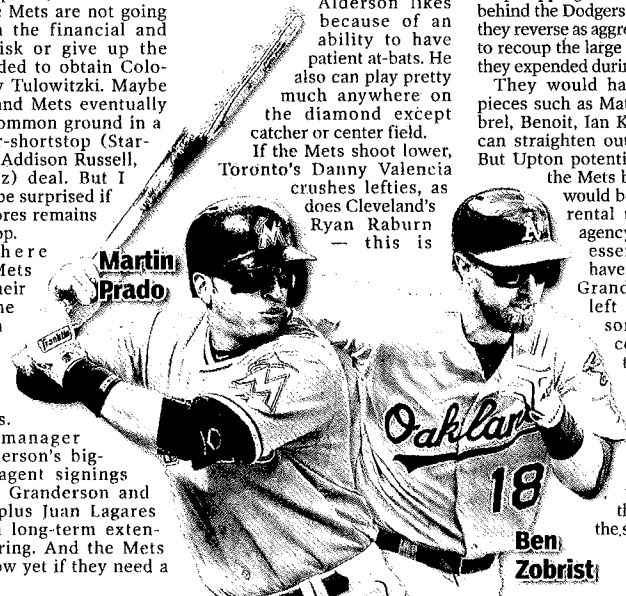
The Padres are fascinating because no club did more in the offseason to transform a roster than San Diego. But if the Padres keep slipping further and further behind the Dodgers and Giants, do they reverse as aggressively and try to recoup the large prospect trove they expended during the winter?

They would have intriguing pieces such as Matt Kemp, Kimbrel, Benoit, Ian Kennedy (if he can straighten out) and others.

But Upton potentially would fit

the Mets best because it would be a two-month rental until his free agency. So, the Mets essentially could have Cuddyer and Granderson share left or Granderson play some center against tough righties. And they would have Lucas Duda and Upton forming a powerhouse three-four in the lineup down the stretch.

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Martin Prado

Ben Zobrist



MIKE LUPICA

SHOOTING FROM THE LIP

The better team won

IT WASN'T just Henrik Lundqvist doubled over in the first moments after the Rangers' season was over, as if having just been gut-punched the way Rangers fans, and Madison Square Garden, had just been gut-punched in Game 7 by the Tampa Bay Lightning. It was all of them on the ice after the kind of game the Rangers had never before lost, a Game 7 at home, but just had. A team that had been living on borrowed time throughout this playoff season had finally run out of time.

Lundqvist hadn't been able to save them because they had been shut out at home in Game 7 the way they had been shut out in Game 5 last Sunday night, after they were supposed to have taken the whole thing back from the Lightning on the road in Game 4. Who knows, maybe the Rangers would still be playing if they could play all their post-season games on the road. Because in this hockey spring, the one when the New York Rangers were supposed to manage a second Stanley Cup in the last 75 years, they played 11 home games and managed to win just six of them.

They run out of season now, a series short of the Stanley Cup Final, for a reason as old as the New York Rangers: They once again weren't good enough to close the deal, whether they won the Presidents' Trophy or not. After everything we have seen in the playoffs in the NHL, all the hot goalies and hot teams and even No. 8 seeds who have won it all, we were supposed to believe that suddenly the regular season the Rangers had was supposed to mean everything, and the first Cup since '94 was their destiny. It wasn't, not with this offense.

This doesn't diminish their talent, their

character, their ability to get hit and keep coming, their memorable ability to come from behind, whether they are down 1-3 or not. It doesn't diminish the greatness of Lundqvist, who remains our Patrick Ewing, a champion without portfolio. But as brilliant as Lundqvist was for almost all of this run — absent what we saw from him in Games 2 and 3 — the Rangers struggled to score goals the way the Mets sometimes struggle to score runs.

Maybe that is why everybody suddenly looked at Mats Zuccarello, who never played against the Lightning because of a puck to the head in the Capitals series, like he was Wayne Gretzky. Make no mistake, the Rangers lost plenty when they lost Zuccarello. He is fast and good and at his best was New York's Tyler Johnson. He was just never supposed to be indispensable. Another reason why this wasn't about bad luck, or bad bounces, or even Ryan McDonagh's bad foot. It was about a team that wasn't quite good enough.

Again.

The Rangers managed to win four 2-1 games against the Penguins, No. 1 seed vs. No. 8 seed series in which the sides looked even way too often. They didn't score a goal over the last seven periods they played at home against the Lightning. They managed 11 shots in the first

two periods of the biggest game of their season. They played 19 playoff games and in 13 of them scored two goals or fewer. They were shut out three times. They were less than two minutes from going home in Game 5 against the Capitals before Chris Kreider saved them by sending that one to overtime, where the Rangers won again.

Oh, we know what they did when they were behind the Capitals three games to one and how they played Tuesday night in Tampa when they were up against it again. But tell me how many times, really, you thought you were watching the powerhouse, odds-on best team in hockey over the last six weeks.

"We were 20 minutes away," Lundqvist said when it was over.

The way it ended for Lundqvist and his teammates doesn't change the way they became the biggest game in town this spring, the city's best chance in a while to have a champion in something.

It doesn't change the way Lundqvist continues to accept the responsibilities of being this kind of star of his city, in victory and in defeat. His record in deciding games has already become a permanent part of his own playoff legend, even if he has now played as many games in the Stanley Cup Final as John Davidson did for the Rangers in 1979.

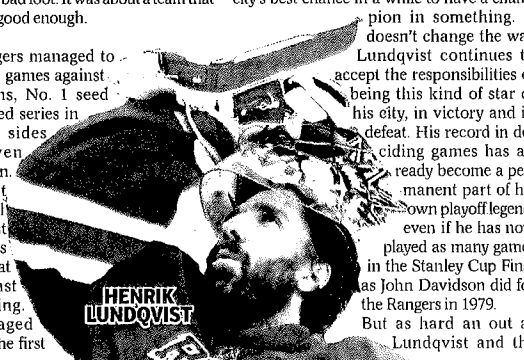
But as hard an out as Lundqvist and the

Rangers were last year and as hard an out as they were this year, you cannot look at the series just played and say they were better than Tampa Bay, or more talented. And by the way? If the Rangers can take a punch, what about the team that just beat them? The Lightning lost, 5-1, in Game 4, came to New York and shut out the Rangers. The Lightning gave up seven goals in Game 6 with a chance to close out the Rangers, benched its goalie, Ben Bishop, in the third period of that one, and came back and shut out the Rangers again in Game 7. The Lightning wasn't just faster than the Rangers, it was just as tough.

As dramatic and sometimes as thrilling as this playoff run was for the Rangers, out of April and into May, this is as bad an ending as any Rangers team has had in any season, going as far back as you want to go.

They went their last 145 minutes and 43 seconds at Madison Square Garden without scoring. They didn't score a goal on the Garden ice after Derek Stepan scored at 14:17 of the second period of Game 2, almost two weeks ago. So it isn't some crazy accident that they didn't make it back to June. If you want to keep blaming it all on Rick Nash, have at it.

This is some team, and some team to watch. Again: It was as cool to watch them and root for them this spring as it has ever been, and that includes 1994. They made hockey as big as it has ever been in New York. This run of theirs really feels as if it has gone on for years. But maybe they are the hockey version of the old Brooklyn Dodgers, at least before 1955, or the Knicks of Ewing and Pat Riley, always waiting till next year. Maybe this is who they are, and all they are. Maybe they're always going to be 20 minutes away.



A collapse sandwich, Thibs deserved better & Smith and lessons....

The truth of what happened to the Rangers, when you look at the end of the Eastern Conference finals, is that they just threw in a beatdown in Game 6 around a historic collapse at home.

Upon being re-elected as president of FIFA the other day, **Sepp Blatter** did everything except say, "I am not a crook."

FIFA, once and for all, has been exposed as the Tammany Hall of international sports.

There was a time, when the World Cup came to the United States, when one of the slogans was, "Two billion people can't be wrong."

Meaning the two billion around the world who love soccer. I pointed out at the time that of course that many people could be wrong about something, because I figured at least that many people had seen "Cats."

But you don't need two billion to be wrong, just anybody who ever trusted people like Blatter, and the confederacy of thieves who run his

sport.

It sounds like the ones selling votes so that Russia and Qatar could host World Cups were doing everything except handing out goody bags.

To go with the bags full of cash.

If you want a reality check, ratings-wise, go look at what **LeBron** against the Hawks last Sunday night did to Rangers-Lightning in that big old 18-to-49 demographic.

I'm starting to worry that this might be more than just a slump with **Stephen Drew**.

You better know, now that **Don Imus** is leaving the Fox Business Network — but not radio — that he changed the way morning TV looked and sounded the way he did radio once.

He opened his last show on Fox, incidentally, joking that usually when he leaves a job, he has to be escorted out of the building.

Bill Russell once said about **Joe Morgan**, "Isn't it interesting how good teams follow him around?"

Same thing with my friend Mr. Imus and ratings, and revenue.

Rafael Nadal may be breaking down in front of our eyes, but it would be a really good tennis thing if he manages to win another French Open.

In his mean-spirited statement after firing **Tom Thibodeau**, **Jerry Reinsdorf** talked about the "organizational culture" around the Chicago Bulls.

Yeah, when **Michael Jordan** had the ball.

Here's how that culture worked in Chicago after Michael left and before Thibodeau came to coach Reinsdorf's basketball team:

A 371-581 record, and a .390 winning percentage, and coaches like **Tim Floyd**.

Then in Thibodeau's five years, the winning percentage was .647.

Yeah, he was 23-28 in the playoffs. Twelve of those losses were to **LeBron**.

He just couldn't get past LeBron the way the old Knicks couldn't get

past Michael.

Who would you rather have coaching the Knicks, Thibodeau or **Derek Fisher**?

The Minnesota Twins are as big and surprising a story of the early season in baseball as the Houston Astros.

The Yankees lose 10 of 11, but then they sweep the Royals, and immediately it's as if the 10 of 11 never happened, and look out American League East.

So it goes.

There is no earthly reason why **Geno Smith** should be just handed the starting quarterback job with the Jets, and good for **Todd Bowles** for basically saying that.

And so you know? **Chan Gailey** stepping on himself and essentially awarding Smith the job is a reason why a lot of famous football coaches I know want their assistants seen and not heard.

It brings to mind something **Bette Midler** used to say in concerts, about how there was a reason why she

called the other singers in her act "backup girls."

Because, the Divine Miss M said, "I'm always telling them: Back up, girls."

Phil Jackson, Zen Tweeter, wrote something this week about **J.R. Smith** and **Iman Shumpert** needing a "comfort zone" to play their best.

Well, they sure must have had one here once under **Mike Woodson**, because when the Knicks won 54 games and the Atlantic Division, J.R. was Sixth Man of the Year and in the last game of that season, Shumpert was the best Knicks player on the court after **Carmelo Anthony**.

Apparently, after a year when Jackson's own team won 17 games, he wants to do some kind of curtain call because two guys he gave away are doing so well in Cleveland.

The guy's a giver, what can I say.

"Lupica" can be heard Monday through Friday at 1 p.m. and Sunday at 9 a.m. on ESPN 98.7.

BILL MADDEN

BASEBALL

AIN'T ALL WRIGHT

Dykstra: David has painful road ahead

AS THE METS wait anxiously for a determination on David Wright's spinal stenosis condition from renowned back specialist Dr. Robert Watkins in California, the odds of their 32-year-old captain finishing out all 5½ years left on his contract are slim. The odds of him ever being remotely close to the 25-30 homer/100-RBI player he was even slimmer.

At least that's the grim assessment of Lenny Dykstra, the ex-Met who, at 33, had his own career aborted by spinal stenosis. (For the record, Don Mattingly was 34 when a back injury ended his career prematurely in 1995.)

"It's a bitch, man," said Dykstra, speaking by phone from Los Angeles on Friday. "The day I first knew something was really wrong remains as vivid with me as the day I went to jail and they closed the doors behind me. I went down to get a ground ball in San Francisco in 1994 and — wham — it hit me like a bolt of lightning. It was like a sniper shot."

They say spinal stenosis — a narrowing of the spine — is a congenital condition, and Dykstra has no idea how he came to be struck down by it, even if the previous year, 1993, was when he showed up in Phillies spring training with some 15-25 pounds of added bulk (which he always attributed to "vitamins") and had one of his best seasons, leading the NL in runs and hits. All Dykstra knows is what Watkins told him when he went to him for an evaluation in '94.

"I remember being shocked when Dr. Watkins said: 'I hate to say this, Lenny, but it's not gonna get better. We can relieve the pain somewhat, but this is something that's gonna require surgery at some point and that could end your career.'"

"That's why I'd say the odds for David are tough. I tried to play through the pain. I just couldn't do it."

Dykstra finally succumbed to surgery in 1996 and held out hope that he could make a comeback. But as he explained: "What they did was remove the crown and bored out the spinal canal, but when they do that, you lose your range of motion. I felt like I was on skates. I couldn't play anymore. It's one thing for people with everyday jobs, but playing

baseball every day is on a completely different level. What the public doesn't understand is the schedule is grueling."

Dykstra, who did 6½ months in federal prison for bankruptcy fraud in 2013 and spends most of his time now following the minor-league careers of his sons, Cutter and Luke, says he lives with pain every day.

"I wish David the best," he said. "I know he's the leader in their clubhouse and he's gonna want to come back and be the player they need him to be. But it's going to be very tough for him. I'm still in pain every day and I don't have to take grounders at third and swing the bat five times a game, every day for six months."

MONEY FOR NOTHING

While the Mets will be happy just to have Wright back in the clubhouse and in the lineup, if he's reduced to a .260 singles hitter, there will have to be a meeting of the minds over the \$67 million they owe him from 2016-2020. At least if Wright is forced to retire, as Dykstra and Mattingly were, insurance will presumably cover a large percentage of it. Such is the risk in giving contracts of seven or more years to players 29 or older. There are five such contracts right now looming or already established as foolhardy financial disasters:

Robinson Cano: In the second year of his 10-year, \$240 million deal, he's been a primary reason for the Mariners' slow start, hitting .258 with two homers and a .304 OBP. Sources say he's miserable in Seattle. Had he not allowed Jay-Z to make a name for himself as an agent, Cano could've played his whole career in a ballpark made for his swing and been the Yankees' first Dominican captain.

Albert Pujols: In the fourth year of his 10-year, \$240 million deal with the Angels, he is hitting .250 with a .303 on-base percentage.

Jayson Werth: The Nationals, with a seven-year, \$126 million deal in 2011, paid him like a power-hitting cleanup hitter, which he wasn't. He was hitting .208 with 2 HR and 12 RBI when he was hit by a pitch last week, the third time he has gone

down for a lengthy DL stint with a broken wrist.

Elvis Andrus: In the third year of a 10-year, \$131 million deal with the Rangers, he was hitting .240 with a .296 OBP, 11 errors at shortstop and four caught stealings in 10 attempts. All-Star not.

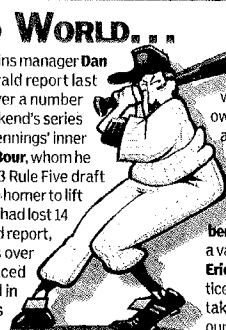
Carl Crawford: He has been nothing but hurt since the Red Sox signed him to that idiotic seven-year, \$142 million deal in 2011, and this season is no different. Was hitting .245 with 1 HR and 3 RBI when he went down with an oblique injury on April 28.

Going back, **Alfonso Soriano** was hurt a lot and had only three productive seasons during the eight-year, \$136 million contract he signed with the Cubs in 2007, and **Ken Griffey Jr.** had only three All-Star-caliber seasons and played less than 120 games in six of the nine years of the \$112.5 million deal he signed with the Red Sox in 2000.



It's A MADD MADD WORLD...

• It has surely been a rude early going for Marlins manager Dan Jennings whose team, according to a Miami Herald report last Thursday, was rife with dissension and anger over a number of issues when it arrived in New York for this weekend's series with the Mets. That's why you can only imagine Jennings' inner satisfaction Friday night when unheralded Justin Bour, whom he selected from the Cubs in the Triple-A phase 2013 Rule Five draft for \$12,500, took Matt Harvey deep for a three-run homer to lift the Marlins to a 4-3 victory. Coming in, the Marlins had lost 14 of their previous 17 games. According to the Herald report, there was resentment among the Marlin players over the firing of Mike Redmond and his being replaced by Jennings, who had never managed or coached in the majors or minors. That anger and unrest was



further exacerbated by the abrupt demotion of third base coach Brett Butler, criticism of the players for blowing off a meet-and-greet charity event with fans last week and the "no show" of that spacious, private jet promised by team owner Jeffrey Loria. Jennings, a good baseball man thrust into an untenable situation, doesn't deserve this and, I'm told, agreed to come down on the field after former Marlin players Jeff Conine and Mike Lowell were approached about managing but declined because of their friendship with Redmond.

• It's been a tough year all around for Phillies manager Ryne Sandberg, who reached his boiling point last weekend when the Nationals played a variety of soft pop songs, many of them sad, depressing numbers such as Eric Carmen's "All By Myself," when the Phillies were taking batting practice. "It was bush league," Sandberg fumed. "What was the point? But we'll take care of that. We'll give them the silent treatment when they come to our place."

Say It Ain't So...

"They don't understand the game. They don't understand the process. There's a plan in place and we're sticking by that plan. We can't do what's best for the fan. We have to do what's best for the organization."

— Phillies GM Ruben Amaro, in a radio interview, reacting to the Phillies fans' criticism over his failure to make a trade. He later apologized, saying he never intentionally meant to disparage the fans.

WELL, I guess everyone's happy now.

Rangers fans and Islanders fans were delighted by the results of the regular season just ended, mostly because their teams qualified for the playoffs, but significantly because the Devils didn't. Rangers fans and Devils fans were pleased as punch by the results of the first round of postseason, because the Islanders were skimmed out like the top layer of cream in an old-fashioned milk bottle, and because they wouldn't have to read any more purple prose about that miserable old Barn.

Devils fans and Islanders fans? Well, it wasn't too hard to predict how they would respond to what transpired at Madison Square Garden on Friday night. Put it this way: If you had offered a Devils fan or an Islanders fan the chance to cash a winning Powerball ticket in exchange for the Rangers beating the Lightning in Game 7, they probably would have taken the dough.

But they would've had to think about it first.

This is why, though hockey may be firmly fourth in the firmament of the Big Four sports in New York, there is something relentlessly awesome about the pull it has over the people who most care about the area hockey teams. The taunting that goes on is endless, and it is remarkably good-natured (while also being incredibly mean-spirited at the same time), and it is, in many ways, why Gotham hockey is so fascinating in so many ways.

Look, there are Mets fans who are able to sleep better at night, regardless of how the Mets do, as long as the Yankees lose (and though it's impossible to understand why, there are Yankees fans who feel the same way — probably muscle memory going back to the '40s and '50s and the Dodgers and the Giants).

Jets fans and Giants fans eye each other warily, but the fact is they only play each other once every four years, and the last time they played — Christmas Eve 2011, the game that propelled the Giants to the Super Bowl and turned the Rex Ryan Era 180 degrees in the wrong direction — was probably the only game you can say really, truly mattered in tangible ways to both teams. Plus ... there were plenty of Jets fans who actually rooted for the Giants in their Super Bowls. I don't know any Mets fans who rooted for the Yankees against the Phillies in '09, and



Mike Vaccaro

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OPEN MIKE

**Not all NYers
were sad to see
Rangers lose**

**MISERY
LOVES
COMPANY**

ALL OVER: Dejected Rangers fans leave the Garden after Friday's season-ending loss. Christopher Sadowski

even fewer Yankees fans who rooted for the Mets against the Red Sox in '86. Some things are sacred.

The Knicks and the Nets? Even back when we had major league basketball in New York City, it was extremely difficult to register anything at all on the mutual contempt scale. Maybe that will change someday. And maybe someday Topeka will become the communications capital of the world.

But hockey ... I mean, within an hour of the Rangers being eliminated, the Internet literally was stuffed with memes that ranged

from hysterical to downright mean (surely you saw them: the King, Henrik Lundqvist, with his face superimposed on Queen Elizabeth's head; the two NHL officials who always make carrying the Stanley Cup a sacred two-man job, only the Cup was replaced by a set of golf clubs; there were many, many, many others).

I suspect this is what it was like around here when there were three baseball teams, when the Yankees fans and the Dodgers fans and the Giants fans used to taunt each other, tease each other (probably

would have tazed each other if that had been a thing back then) and generally break each others' chops with precisely the fervor of Jackie Robinson or Billy Martin or Alvin Dark trying to break up a double play.

It's one of the reasons why the day after hockey season ends around here is so sad: All that passion, all that energy — all that hate — disappears for a while. It still percolates. It still festers. But it'll be October before it all comes out in fury again. But it'll be there. That's something that never goes away. Cool.

VAC'S WHACKS

If Sonny Corleone were a hockey player, he would have found a way to get on the ice even after his troubles at the toll booth.

► It would seem that **Lucas Duda** did well to bet on himself this year.

► **LeBron James** really is the modern embodiment of that wonderful old **Bum Phillips** chestnut: "He can take his'n and beat your'n and take your'n and beat his'n."

► I can't remember the last time I was so hopeful that a movie was as good as I want it to be as I am with "Entourage." Unfortunately, I think it may have been "The Godfather, Part III."



Ray Stubblebine

Steven Schafier: Being that the Mets are in the process of auditioning Triple-A third basemen in David Wright's absence, maybe they should give Noah Syndergaard a shot. We could sure use his bat.
Vac: You know who I bet would sign up for that? Matt Harvey. And Jacob deGrom.

WHACK BACK AT VAC

And Jon Niese. And ...

Jim Burns: Is it true that Hansel Robles is the only major league pitcher who has to leave a trail of bread crumbs on his way in

from the bullpen?

Vac: Another outing like the one Tuesday night and Terry Collins might build an iron cage in his garden.

@wa2k1999: The Rangers lost. They're the Knicks of the '90s. It's over.

@MikeVacc: It's distressing to realize how true that may well be.

Victor Copello: You have the first pick! Both in their prime, are you taking Jordan or LeBron for your basketball team?

Vac: I understand this is sacrilege to some. But straight up, LeBron as a physical specimen — with comparable basketball gifts — makes it a no-brainer to me.

EVERY SUNDAY MIKE VACCARO RESPONDS TO READERS' QUESTIONS AT VAC@NYPOST.COM AND @MIKEVACC ON TWITTER

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TRANSACTIONS

BASEBALL

American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Optioned RHP Tyler Wilson to Norfolk (IL). Assigned C. Ryan Lavanway outright to Norfolk. Agreed to terms with RHP Mikey O'Brien on a minor league contract.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Optioned RHP Chris Beck to Charlotte (IL).

HOUSTON ASTROS — Sent RHP Samuel Deduno to Fresno (PCL) for a rehab assignment.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Agreed to terms with RHPs Geovanny Acosta and Cesar Mendez on minor league contracts.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Placed OF Slade Heathcott on the 15-day, retroactive to Friday. Recalled OF Ramon Flores from Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL).

OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Placed LHP Sean Doolittle on the 15-day DL, retroactive to Thursday. Recalled RHP Angel Castro from Nashville (PCL).

SEATTLE MARINERS — Placed LHP Joe Beimel on the restricted list. Recalled LHP Lucas Luetge from Tacoma (PCL).

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Optioned LHP C.J. Riefenhauser to Durham (IL).

TEXAS RANGERS — Designated INF Tommy Field for assignment. Selected the contract of RHP Chi Chi Gonzalez from Round Rock (PCL).

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Assigned RHP Todd Redmond outright to Buffalo (IL). Sent 2B Devon Travis to Buffalo for a rehab assignment.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Sent OF Joey Terdoslavich to Carolina (Carolina) for a rehab assignment.

CHICAGO CUBS — Agreed to terms with RHPs Miguel Estevez, Julian Aybar and Luis Aquino on minor league contracts.

COLORADO ROCKIES — Placed 1B Justin Morneau on the 15-day DL. Sent 3B Charlie Culberson to Albuquerque (PCL) for a rehab assignment.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Optioned OF Chris Heisey to Oklahoma City (PCL). Reinstated C Yasmani Grandal from the 7-day DL.

MIAMI MARLINS — Sent C Jeff Mathis to Jacksonville (FL) for a rehab assignment.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Placed RHP Brandon Kintzler on the 15-day DL, retroactive to Thursday. Reinstated SS Jean Segura from the 15-day DL.

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Sent 1B Yonder Alonso to El Paso (PCL) for a rehab assignment.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Placed RHP Stephen Strasburg on the 15-day DL. Recalled RHP Taylor Hill from Syracuse (IL). Sent 3B Anthony Rendon to Harrisburg (EL) for a rehab assignment.