



New York Yankees Clips
Thursday, May 19, 2016

Nate's great in Yank 'W'

BY MARK FEINSAND
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

PHOENIX — Hal Steinbrenner spoke and the Yankees listened.

Nathan Eovaldi wasn't among the players mentioned by name by the team's managing general partner Wednesday, but the right-hander did his part to pick up the rest of the team, leading the Yankees to a 4-2 win to salvage the final game of a three-game set at Chase Field.

Eovaldi combined with Dellin Betances, Andrew Miller and Aroldis Chapman for a two-hitter to help the Yankees avoid a three-game losing streak.

Eovaldi had alternated good and bad starts over his past four outings, though he was 3-0 with a 3.96 ERA in those outings. After putting 10 runners on base and allowing three runs in only five innings last week against the Royals, Eovaldi's pattern suggested he was due for a good one.

He gave the Yankees exactly what they needed, holding the Di-

amondbacks to one run on one hit and no walks over six innings.

The Yankees wasted no time in getting to Shelby Miller, who came into the game with a 1-4 record and 6.94 ERA in eight starts. He walked Jacoby Ellsbury to start the game, then served up a 1-2 changeup that Brett Gardner belted to right field for a 2-0 lead.

Eovaldi gave back a run in the bottom of the first, though it took a funky play to get the Diamondbacks going as Jean Segura led off with a ground-er that ricocheted off second-base for a double. Two ground balls brought Segura home to cut the lead to 2-1, but they also started an impressive streak for the Yankees starter.

Eovaldi would retire 18 in a row following the leadoff double, breezing through the lineup with ease. He induced 10 ground-ball outs and fanned five during that stretch, allowing only three balls to leave the infield.

"He had really good command

EXTRA INNINGS

STAT OF THE DAY

.343 Didi Gregorius is hitting .343 against lefthanded pitchers this season, more than 100 points higher than his .227 career average against them.

twice in a game this season. Who are they?

NEXT GAME



Tonight, 10:05, Ivan Nova (2-1, 3.70) vs. Kendall Graveman (1-5, 5.84), TV: YES.

TEST YOUR YANKEE IQ

Only two players age 39 or older have homered

David Ortiz.
A: Carlos Beltran &

Nathan Eovaldi delivers six stellar innings of one-run ball against Diamondbacks to hand it over to bullpen. GETTY

tonight; he attacked," Joe Girardi said. "Eighteen outs in a row, kid did a heck of a job. We needed a win tonight."

The Yankees had plenty of opportunities to add to their lead against Miller, who gave up 10 hits and walked two during his 5.2 innings, but they went only 1-for-6 with runners in scoring position against him, the lone hit coming from Ellsbury in the sixth to push the lead to two runs.

Holding the two-run lead after six, Girardi didn't hesitate to call on his three-headed bullpen mon-

ster despite Eovaldi's low pitch count and 18 outstreak.

"Nate did his job, the next three guys were there to do their job," Girardi said.

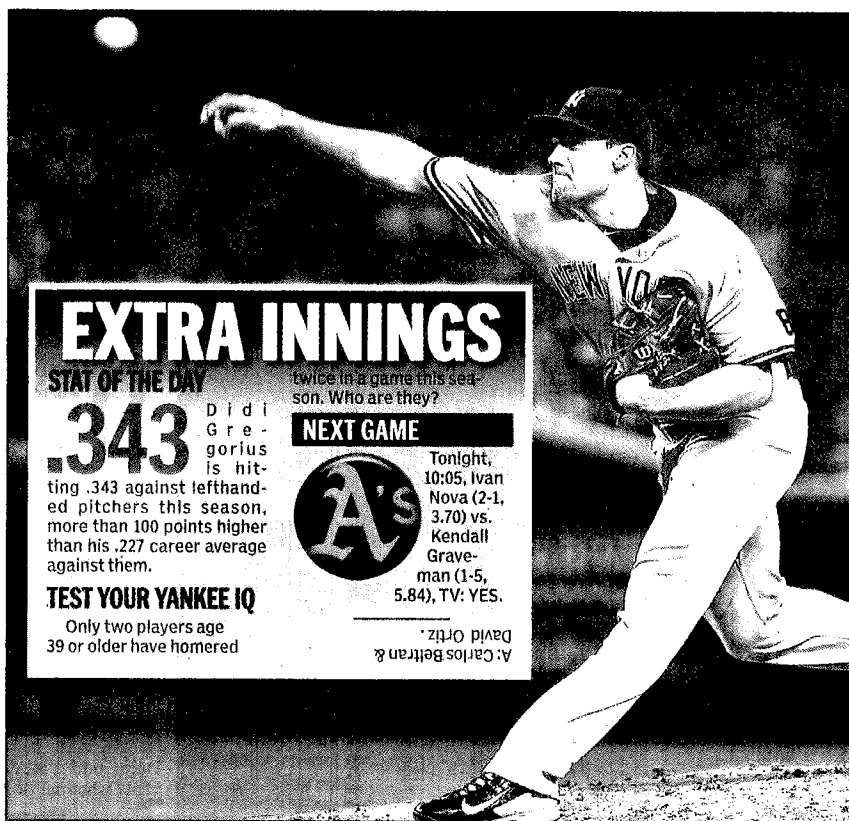
Betances made things interesting in the seventh, walking the first two hitters to put the tying runs on base. He came back to strike out Jake Lamb and get an innocent fly ball from Wellington Castillo before ending the threat with a strikeout of Brandon Drury.

Miller got ahead of Chris Owings, 0-2, to start the eighth, but

Owings ripped a slider over the left-field wall, drawing the Diamondbacks within a run.

The towering lefty didn't let the home run faze him, striking out the next three batters to hold the one-run lead. That became a two-run lead when Evan Marshall unleashed a wild pitch with the bases loaded, bumping the Yankees' lead back to two runs for Chapman.

Chapman slammed the door with a perfect ninth, lighting up the radar gun with a half-dozen triple-digit pitches, topping out at 102 mph.





CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

By GEORGE A. KING III

**YANKEES
D'BACKS**

**4
2** **Boxscore
Page 48**

PHOENIX — Joe Girardi's actions spoke far louder than his words and sent a message to future opponents that all those bullets lodged in the Yankees' late-game bullpen will be used when the time is right.

"If I got them set up and they are rested, I am going to go to them," Girardi said of Dellin Betances, Andrew Miller and Aroldis Chapman.

With Nathan Eovaldi throwing a gem and the Yankees leading the Diamondbacks by two runs in the seventh Wednesday night, Girardi replaced his hottest starter with Betances. He worked in and out of trouble and then watched Miller give up a homer to Chris Owings in the eighth. Working with his signature triple-digit gas, Chapman recorded the final three outs and posted the save in a 4-2 Yankees victory that ended a two-game slide and was witnessed by 32,191 at Chase Field.

Eovaldi gave up a leadoff double to Jean Segura in the first inning and retired the next 18 hitters. He was at 85 pitches and thought he would start the seventh.

"I could have," Girardi said of sending Eovaldi out for the seventh. "But I am going to take my chances 99 percent of the time with Betances, Miller and Chapman."

With Masahiro Tanaka's recent struggles and Michael Pineda's putrid season, Eovaldi has evolved into the Yankees' top starter. The victory, his third straight, raised his record to 4-2.

"I thought I was going to go out there, but I wasn't disappointed with those three guys coming in," said Eovaldi, who gave up a run and a hit, didn't issue a walk and fanned five.

Brett Gardner's homer, after Jacob Ellsberry started the game

against Shelby Miller with a walk, staked Eovaldi to a 2-0 lead. Segura, whose double was a ground ball up the middle that hit second base and trickled into center field, scored from third on Paul Goldschmidt's grounder to Chase Headley.

The next 18 Diamondbacks never touched first base.

Ellsberry, who went 3-for-3 with two walks, singled in Headley to make it 3-1 in the sixth.

Betances injected drama into the game by walking the first two Diamondbacks to start the seventh.

"I tried to make them sweat back home," joked Betances, who calmed the fears by retiring the next three hitters; two by strikeouts. "A lot of people stayed up late. I wanted to make them nervous."

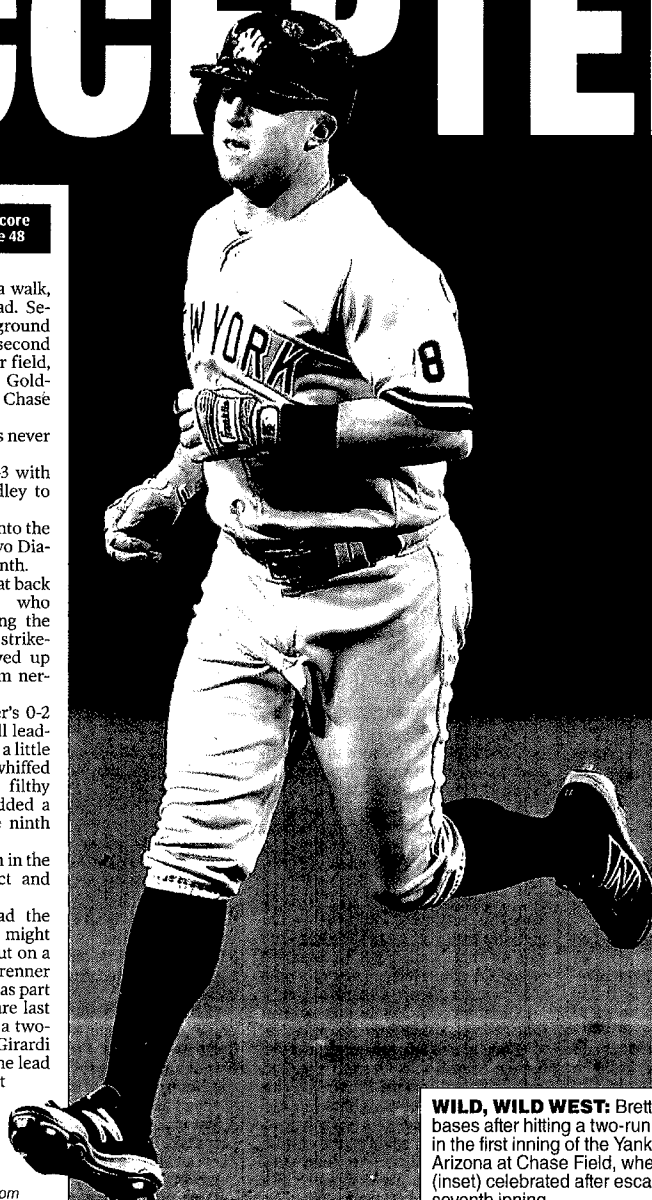
When Owings took Miller's 0-2 slider over the left-field wall leading off the eighth, things got a little tighter. However, Miller whiffed the final three batters on filthy sliders, and the Yankees added a run on a wild pitch in the ninth that was scored by Ellsberry.

Chapman reached 102 mph in the ninth when he was perfect and posted his fourth save.

According to Girardi, had the lead been a bit bigger, he might have stayed with Eovaldi. But on a day when owner Hal Steinbrenner singled out players by name as part of the reason the Yankees are last in the AL East and holding a two-run lead in a hitters' park, Girardi wasn't going to risk losing the lead without using all of the best late-game pen in baseball.

"We had Betances, Miller and Chapman rested, and that's what they are there for," Girardi said.

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WILD, WILD WEST: Brett Gardner rounds the bases after hitting a two-run homer off Shelby Miller in the first inning of the Yankees' 4-2 victory over Arizona at Chase Field, where Dellin Betances (inset) celebrated after escaping a jam in the seventh inning.

Getty Images; AP

**Called out by
owner, Yanks
answer with
a victory**

**NY Post
5.19.16**



The Record

Nathan Eovaldi powers Yanks past Diamondbacks, 4-2

BY PETE CALDRRA

THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016, 2:15 AM

PHOENIX – At another critical hour in the Yankees' early season, starter Nathan Eovaldi retired the last 18 Diamondbacks he faced on Wednesday night.

And then two of the Yanks' vaunted trio of lock-down relievers turned the finish into a nail-biter.

Dellin Betances wriggled out of a seventh-inning jam and Andrew Miller yielded a solo homer in the eighth, but Aroldis Chapman finally nailed down a 4-2 Yankees win before 32,191 fans at Chase Field.

In escaping this three-game interleague series with one victory, the Yankees (17-22) were aided by a first-inning, two-run homer by Brett Gardner and a three-hit night by Jacoby Ellsbury against struggling Arizona right-hander Shelby Miller (1-5).

"Just gives us some momentum going into Oakland," said Ellsbury, who was on base all five times, and scored on a ninth-inning wild pitch.

After surrendering a run in the first inning, Eovaldi (4-2) was sensational through six innings. He allowed just one hit, Jean Segura's quirky leadoff double.

From there, Eovaldi was perfect at the perfect time, in the wake of owner Hal Steinbrenner's sharp comments earlier Wednesday about his disappointing ball club.

"I thought I was going back out (for the seventh inning), said Eovaldi, who walked none, struck out five and used just 85 pitches. "I was a little disappointed." But with the bullpen arms at the back end, "You can't be too frustrated about that."

Betances promptly walked the first two batters he faced in the seventh and fell behind 2-0 to Jake Lamb before finding his curveball and striking him out – one of the right-hander's two Ks in the inning.

"Just trying to make people sweat a little bit back home," Betances said with a smile, referencing those who were still up late watching on the East Coast.

Andrew Miller surrendered a leadoff homer to Chris Owings in the eighth, cutting the lead to 3-2, but quickly retired the next three hitters – setting up a fourth save for Chapman, who lit up the radar gun with a few 102 mph fastballs.

Eovaldi's sharp slider and splitter led to his economy of pitches, an outing Gardner termed "the best I've seen (from) him."

Had the Yanks' lead been larger than 3-1, or if Eovaldi had a no-hitter going, Girardi said he probably would've stayed with the right-hander. But, "we had Betances, Miller and Chapman rested and that's what they're there for," Girardi said.

Before the game, the manager absorbed the blame for the club's last-place standing following Steinbrenner's comments in New York.

"The coaches are doing a good job," Steinbrenner told reporters Wednesday. "Sooner or later it comes down to (the players) to push through whatever it is they're going through and to persevere."

Girardi hadn't spoken to Steinbrenner directly on Wednesday, but said "we've talked, we've met as a staff" previously this season. "Hal's pretty even-keeled. We talk about areas we've been struggling, how to approach it and fix them."

Coming off Monday's 12-2 defeat by the D-backs and Tuesday's 5-3 loss, in which the Yankees displayed some shoddy defense, Girardi took the target off his team.

"I'm always going to be supportive of the players," Girardi said. "It's no fun to struggle in this game, but I believe those players will get it going."

They got it going right off the bat Wednesday night, as Ellsbury drew a leadoff walk and Gardner lashed a 1-and-2 pitch deep over the right field fence for his fifth homer of the year.

The Yanks mounted plenty of other threats against Miller, but they wouldn't score again until the sixth. That's when Headley singled, moved to second on an Eovaldi sacrifice and scored on Ellsbury's sharp single to left for a 3-1 lead.

And that hit kept Ellsbury's batting average at 1.000 against Miller – a perfect 6-for-6 in his career.

Still, the seeds of another frustrating Yankees' night were present in the bottom of the first inning, when Segura led off with a grounder up the middle that struck the second base bag and darted over the reach of shortstop Didi Gregorius.

It was probably going to be a base hit anyway, but turned into "one of the weirder doubles you're going to see," Girardi said.

As the ball bounced into shallow center field, the speedy Segura hustled into second base for a double. He moved up on a groundout and scored on Paul Goldschmidt's grounder to third with the infield back.

But Headley, who fielded the ball, committed to throw to first base without noticing that Segura had stopped between home and third, attempting to get into a rundown.

If it's later in the game, "(Headley) probably goes home (with the throw)," Girardi said.

Eovaldi took control from there, with an outing that was "definitely encouraging," he said. "We've been struggling the past few games, and I was trying to do extra well out there to get us back on track."

The New York Times

Yankees Set Aside Criticism From the Boss, Beating the Diamondbacks

By BILLY WITZ
MAY 19, 2016

PHOENIX — By the time Hal Steinbrenner's rather tepid criticism of several of his Yankees — statements of fact, really — had carried across the country from New York, landing on ears in the visitors' clubhouse, it was as if the blustery ghost of Steinbrenner's past had delivered a pound-the-fist-on-his-desk message.

Chase Headley, Mark Teixeira and Michael Pineda — who were mentioned by Steinbrenner as underperforming — took turns being grilled by reporters. (Luis Severino, the other player named by Steinbrenner, is injured and away from the team, so he was spared.)

The line of questioning went like this: How does it feel to be singled out by the owner? Is it extra motivation? Does it add more pressure?

Manager Joe Girardi, though he and General Manager Brian Cashman were exonerated by Steinbrenner, nevertheless bravely located a sword to fall on.

"I always take full responsibility for what happens," Girardi said.

The Yankees put the brakes on any manufactured tumult on Wednesday — as well as on a two-game losing streak — with a 4-2 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Brett Gardner got the Yankees off to a good start with a two-run homer in the first, Nathan Eovaldi was near perfect for six innings, and the bullpen — despite a few jittery moments — secured the victory.

Eovaldi allowed only one baserunner — Jean Segura, who led off the bottom of the first with a ground ball up the middle that kicked off second base, depriving both shortstop Didi Gregorius and second baseman Starlin Castro the opportunity to throw him out.

Eovaldi retired the next 18 batters, striking out five and allowing only three balls to be hit out of the infield. He might have turned a shutout over to the bullpen, but third baseman Chase Headley chose to throw to first even as Segura froze halfway home on a one-out grounder.

The decision to remove Eovaldi after he had thrown only 85 pitches immediately looked shaky when Dellin Betances walked two batters to open the seventh. But Betances struck out Jake Lamb, who had homered the previous two nights, on a devastating 3-2 slider, got Wellington Castillo to fly out, and struck out Brandon Drury.

“I was just trying to make the people sweat a little bit back home,” Betances said of the walks.

Andrew Miller then came on in the eighth and hung an 0-2 slider that Chris Owings hit over the left-field wall and removed the margin for error that Jacoby Ellsbury had provided in the sixth when his two-out single — he had three hits and a walk — scored Headley. Miller quickly recovered to strike out the side.

“I thought I was going back out,” Eovaldi said. “I was a little disappointed, but with those three guys coming in, you can’t be too frustrated about that.”

Girardi said, “We had Betances, Miller and Chapman rested and that’s what they’re there for,” adding that he would have kept Eovaldi in if he had been throwing a no-hitter.

“Nate did his job, and it’s the responsibility of the next three guys to do their job,” Girardi said.

Ellsbury, who had three hits and two walks, scored on a wild pitch in the ninth.

Aroldis Chapman retired the Diamondbacks in order for his fourth save, sparing the Yankees any further drama.

The stir that Steinbrenner’s comments created outweighed their content. The players Steinbrenner had mentioned when he spoke to reporters at an owners meeting in Manhattan were not singled out in harsh terms — certainly not as harsh as many fans would use to assess their performance.

Pineda and Severino are a combined 1-13, and both have E.R.A.s are over 6.50. Teixeira has not hit a home run in his last 107 at-bats. Though Headley has awakened at the plate of late — he is hitting .316 since May 7 — he did not have an extra-base hit until May 12.

Though Steinbrenner's comments were not quoted to the players, they shrugged.

"I've been around long enough to know you're going to get singled out when you're not producing, especially the type of career I've had," Teixeira said. "I've always been someone who's been able to carry teams during tough streaks, and we've been in a tough stretch the whole season, and I'm the type of player that can carry a team — I just haven't done it yet."

Headley and Pineda said they were just as disappointed in their play thus far as Steinbrenner — or anyone else — might be.

"It's his team," Headley said. "It doesn't really mean anything, to be honest. I don't need a reminder. By saying that, make sure it's not me saying I wish he wouldn't have said anything. I know that I haven't played the way that I'm capable."

Pineda, speaking through a translator, said, "It doesn't bother me that he's saying that, but at the same time I expect a lot from myself, and I know I can be better."

Teixeira's slump is most discomfiting.

He hit 31 home runs last year, even after missing all but a few at-bats of the final seven weeks after fouling a ball off his shin. Teixeira has been swinging the bat reasonably well right-handed — batting .288 — but he has been dreadful hitting left-handed, which is where most of his power comes from.

He is hitting .148 left-handed and has struck out 32 times in 96 plate appearances, including three Tuesday night and three more Wednesday. (He did strike one ball well, but Drury caught his first-inning drive while crashing into the right-field fence.)

Another sign of his timing being off, Teixeira said, is that he is hitting too many weak ground balls and is not driving the ball. It is something that he has worked on with the hitting coaches, Alan Cockrell and Marcus Thames, but thus far the work has not translated to games.

"That's the thing that's a little frustrating," Teixeira said. "In the cage and in batting practice, everything is fine. But you know, you face some tough pitchers, you expand the zone a little bit — I'm not taking my walks like I was earlier. I need to swing at better pitches, and hopefully the home runs will come, I'll draw my walks when I need to, and then hopefully get on a roll."

That roll did not begin for Teixeira on Wednesday, but the Yankees can at least hope it did for them.



Nathan Eovaldi retires 18 in a row as Yankees handle Diamondbacks

By Erik Boland

Updated May 19, 2016 1:47 AM

PHOENIX — Eighteen straight retired, 85 pitches.

That was Nathan Eovaldi through six innings Wednesday night, the righthander still firing fastballs occasionally touching 98 mph, his splitter and slider as good as they've been all season, and a 3-1 lead.

But with his full complement of seed-throwing relievers available at the back end of the bullpen, Joe Girardi went to them.

It nearly blew up in his face but, after jittery moments from both Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller, the Yankees escaped with a 3-2 victory in front of 32,191 at Chase Field to avoid what would have been an embarrassing sweep.

"I'm going to take my chances probably 99 percent of the time with Betances, Miller and Chapman," said Girardi, whose team improved to 17-22 and starts a four-game series in Oakland Thursday night. "Just because they're so good."

The 26-year-old Eovaldi, inconsistent much of the season – like every rotation member – allowed a leadoff double and nothing else over six brilliant innings, retiring 18 straight thereafter.

"I thought I was going back out," Eovaldi said. "I was a little disappointed, but you've got those three guys coming in so you can't be too frustrated about that."

Only a fielding blunder by Chase Headley in the first allowed a run to come across as Eovaldi allowed one run and one hit over six innings, striking out five.

"He's capable of really being something special, a lot better than he's shown at times," said Brett Gardner, whose two-run homer in the first gave Eovaldi a 2-0 lead. "I thought tonight was as good as I've seen him."

Eovaldi, now 4-2 with a 4.44 ERA, gave way to Betances, who nearly had the torch-and-pitchfork crowd looking for Girardi when he walked the first two batters, Phil Gosselin and Paul Goldschmidt, he faced.

But Betances struck out Jake Lamb, after falling behind 2-and-0, and quickly retired the side.

"I was just trying to make the people sweat a little bit back home," Betances joked.

Andrew Miller allowed a leadoff homer to Chris Owings in the eighth to make it 3-2, but struck out three straight.

After Evan Marshall threw a wild pitch with the bases loaded with two outs in the ninth to make it 4-2, Aroldis Chapman struck out one in a perfect ninth to notch his fourth save in four tries.

Arizona righthander Shelby Miller, who came in 1-4 with a 6.94 ERA and having walked more batters (23) than he's struck out (22), allowed three runs and 10 hits over 5 2/3 innings.

Jacoby Ellsbury, who went 3-for-3 with two walks, led off the game with a walk and came in on Gardner's fifth homer of the season.

Eovaldi had some bad luck and poor fielding go against him in the bottom half as the Diamondbacks (19-24) cut it to 2-1.

Jean Segura, 4-for-9 the first two games of the series, led off with a slow bouncer up the middle that bounced off the second base bag and into center for an interesting-looking double. Gosselin's groundout to second moved Segura to third and Paul Goldschmidt, 3-for-7 with a homer and three runs the first two games, followed with a grounder to third. Segura hesitated going down the line and almost seemed surprised when Headley didn't give him more than a cursory glance back. Segura continued home and scored as Headley – mentioned earlier in the day along with Mark Teixeira, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino by managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner as the major causes of the club's rough start – nipped Goldschmidt at first.

The Yankees, who stranded six over the first five innings, finally added on in the sixth on Ellsbury's two-out RBI single that brought in Headley to make it 3-1.

"It was a nice night go kind of get the offense going," Ellsbury said. "Tonight was obviously an important win for us to give us a little momentum going to Oakland."

AP

Eovaldi retires 18 straight, Yankees beat Arizona 4-2

By BOB BAUM

May. 19, 2016 2:07 AM EDT

PHOENIX (AP) — Nathan Eovaldi doesn't consider himself an ace just yet. He sure pitched like one Wednesday night, though.

Eovaldi retired the 18 batters he faced after allowing a freak leadoff base hit and the New York Yankees salvaged the final game of a three-game series in Arizona by beating the Diamondbacks 4-2.

"I don't look at myself as an ace but I do want to try and do well when we're struggling and try to get us back on track," he said. "I do feel like if you have a good start from the starter, everybody else kind of builds off that."

Jean Segura's ground ball to start the first inning bounced off the bag at second and dribbled into the outfield for a double.

Yankees manager Joe Girardi thought it would have been a base hit even if it hadn't hit the bag "but it was one of the weirder doubles you're going to see."

After that, only two balls even reached the outfield off the Yankees right-hander, who hit 100 mph on the Chase Field radar gun while improving to 4-0 in his last five starts.

Eovaldi (4-2) gave up one run and struck out five with no walks.

"He attacked," Girardi said. "He did a heck of a job. We needed a win tonight after losing the first two the way we did and he pitched a great game."

Brett Gardner hit a two-run homer and Jacoby Ellsbury went 3 for 3 with an RBI single for New York. Aroldis Chapman threw a perfect ninth for his fourth save since being reinstated on May 9.

Shelby Miller (1-5) scattered 10 hits over 5 2/3 innings, allowing three runs.

Eovaldi threw just 85 pitches and admitted he was "a little bit disappointed" not to come out for the seventh.

But Girardi instead turned the ball over to the well-rested big three at the back end of the bullpen — Dellin Betances, Andrew Miller and Chapman.

"I'm going to take my chances probably 99 percent of the time with Betances, Miller and Chapman," Girardi said, "just because they're so good."

The only other Arizona hit for the night was Chris Owings' home run off Andrew Miller in the eighth.

Ellsbury opened the game with a walk and Gardner hit Shelby Miller's 1-2 pitch into the right field seats for his fifth home run of the season.

After his unorthodox double in the first, Segura took third on a ground out and scored when Paul Goldschmidt bounced out to third. Third baseman Chase Headley may have had a chance to throw the runner out at home, especially when Segura screeched to a stop about two-thirds of the way there, but chose to get the sure out instead.

New York added a run in the sixth.

With a runner at second and two outs, Arizona manager Chip Hale went to the mound but chose not to make a pitching change.

Ellsbury followed with an RBI single, making him 6 for 6 lifetime against Miller.

"I went to talk to him and make sure it was his last hitter," Hale explained. "I was going to bring in Chaf (Andrew Chafin) for Gardner. Ellsbury's numbers versus left-handers are really good. Granted, he hits Shelby pretty well, but we had a plan how to pitch him, but he (Miller) just got the ball up a little."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Yankees: Alex Rodriguez (strained right hamstring) is eligible to come off the DL on Thursday but Girardi says it will be a few days more before that happens. SS Didi Gregorius was hit in the ankle by a line drive off the bat of Headley in the second inning but stayed in the game.

Diamondbacks: RHP Josh Collmenter (right shoulder inflammation) allowed a run on four hits in 4 1/3 innings in a rehab start for Triple-A Reno on Tuesday night. Manager Chip Hale said Collmenter will make one more rehab appearance before joining the big league club.

UP NEXT

Yankees: RHP Ivan Nova (2-1, 3.70 ERA) makes his third start of the season Thursday night when the Yankees open a four-game series in Oakland. He is 1-0 with a 1.74 ERA in his two starts after making his first five appearances of the season out of the bullpen.

Diamondbacks: Arizona has only its second day off in the last 38 days on Thursday. LHP Patrick Corbin (19-3, 4.14) makes the start Friday night in the opener of a three-game series at St. Louis.

Eovaldi, Yanks' power 'pen subdue D-backs

By Barry M. Bloom and Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | 1:57 AM ET May 19, 2016

PHOENIX -- Yankees right-hander **Nathan Eovaldi** pitched six innings of one-run, one-hit ball and then turned the game over to the relief trio now dubbed "Run BMC," as the Yankees salvaged the finale of a three-game series, 4-2, over the D-backs on Wednesday night at Chase Field.

Eovaldi was followed by **Dellin Betances**, **Andrew Miller** and **Aroldis Chapman**, who recorded his fourth save since returning from a 30-game suspension. This is the third time the three hurlers have combined to close a game. Eovaldi won his fourth consecutive decision after opening the season with two losses.

"I never look at myself as an ace, but I do want to do well when we're struggling and try and get us back on track," said Eovaldi, who threw just 85 pitches. "I do feel like if you have a good start from a starter, everybody else can build off of that."

The D-backs -- held to two hits -- scored their only run off Eovaldi on a first-inning leadoff double by **Jean Segura** and **Paul Goldschmidt**'s RBI grounder to third. **Chris Owings** homered off Miller to open the eighth.

"You're not going to win many games getting two hits," D-backs manager Chip Hale said. "We had some battle at-bats, but Eovaldi really had good stuff tonight. He used his split and his breaking ball. Then when you get to those last three, it's tough."

Shelby Miller started for the D-backs and left with two out in the sixth inning. He was tagged with his fifth loss in six decisions in his first season in Arizona after the offseason trade with the Braves.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Nathan's famous: Eovaldi had his good stuff working as he was in command of the Arizona lineup. After Segura led off with a grounder that hit the second-base bag for a quirky double, Eovaldi retired the next 18 straight before yielding to Betances in the seventh, throwing 85 pitches. There's something he likes about pitching at Chase Field; Eovaldi has limited the D-backs to two runs or fewer in each of his five starts here.

"I thought he had really good command tonight," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "I thought his slider was good. I thought his split was good. He attacked, and he got 18 outs in a row, I believe. He did a heck of job. We needed a win tonight after losing the first two the way we did. He pitched a great game."

Miller time: Despite allowing eight hits and walking two in the first five innings, the D-backs right-hander managed to survive with a 2-1 deficit, the runs coming on Brett Gardner's two-run, first-inning homer. The Yankees added a run with a pair of singles in the sixth, as Jacoby Ellsbury drove home Chase Headley. Ellsbury was on base all five times he batted, while Gardner had two hits.

Power of the 'pen: Having lost the first two games of the series, the Yankees took no chances in salvaging the finale. Betances gave his club a scare by walking the first two men in the seventh but emerged unscathed, thanks to two strikeouts and a flyout. Miller recovered from Owings' homer to start the eighth by striking out the next three batters, and Chapman slammed the door in the ninth for his fourth save.

"I think they laid off a few breaking balls that were pretty good. I had to trust my stuff," Betances said. "I got myself in a jam, but I was just trying to make the people sweat a little bit back home."

QUOTABLE

"That's what we need to do at the top of the lineup. You can't expect guys to get on base three, four or five times a night, but as long as he and I can get a little more consistent and get on base for these guys in the middle of the lineup, it will make things a lot easier, not just on our offense but on our pitching." -- *Gardner, on combining with Ellsbury*

WHAT'S NEXT

Yankees: Right-hander Ivan Nova (2-1, 3.70 ERA) will make his third start of the season on Thursday as the Yankees open a four-game series with the Athletics in Oakland at 10:05 p.m. ET. The A's will counter with right-hander Kendall Graveman.

D-backs: After a day off on Thursday, they open a three-game series against the Cardinals at Busch Stadium on Friday at 5:15 p.m. MST. The D-backs have rearranged their pitching rotation for the series, as Hale decided to give Rubby De La Rosa a start off. Patrick Corbin is in his regular slot on Friday.

Playing bad or bad team? Yankees right ship in 4-2 win | Rapid reaction

By [Randy Miller](#) | [NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on May 19, 2016 at 12:54 AM, updated May 19, 2016 at 7:32 AM

PHOENIX — [Yankees](#) first baseman [Mark Teixeira](#) was talking before Wednesday night's game about being called out earlier in the day by owner [Hal Steinbrenner](#) when the subject changed.

After agreeing that he needs to pick up his hitting big time, Teixeira was asked if he's starting to wonder if his last-place club is as good as it thought going into the season.

His answer was a good one.

"At a certain point, you go from a good team that's playing bad to a bad team. I don't think we're there yet," Teixeira said. "I still feel we're a good team, but we obviously have to win more games."

Sort of on cue, the Yankees went out and played one of their best games of the season in forging a 4-2 win over the Arizona Diamondbacks to salvage the final game of an interleague road series at Chase Field.

It's easy to look good when you get great pitching and a little hitting, and the Yankees had both for the first time in a while.

The star of the night was right-hander Nathan Eovaldi, who allowed a weakly hit leadoff double in the first and then set down 18 in a row in a one-run, six-inning masterpiece that the Yankees badly needed.

From there, the Yankees' Big 3 bullpen blew away Arizona in striking out five over the final three frames, although Andrew Miller served up a leadoff homer in the eighth to Chris Owings to make it a 3-2 game.

Dellin Betances pitched his way out of a seventh-inning jam after walking the first two batters, then Miller protected a one-run lead after allowing the eighth-inning homer.

After the Yankees scored a run in the ninth on a wild pitch to make it 4-2, Aroldis Chapman worked a 1-2-3 ninth for his fourth save.

This was way more than a first quality start by a Yankees pitcher in 11 games with Eovaldi mowing down Arizona hitters with high-90s fastballs as well as splitters and sliders.

Before starting his outing, Eovaldi was handed a quick 2-0 lead on a first-inning homer by Brett Gardner.

Eovaldi gave up a double to the first hitter he faced, but Jean Segura hit a slow roller up the middle that hit the second base bag and shot over shortstop Didi Gregorius' head into shallow center.

A burner, Segura raced to second for a double, took third on a groundball to second and scored when Yankees third baseman Chase Headley made a costly mental error.

Segura broke for the plate when Paul Goldschmidt hit a hard grounder to third, then stopped to get himself into a rundown when seeing Headley could easily throw him out at home. Headley looked at Segura, but threw to first for some reason and Segura ended up heading home to make a 2-1 game.

The Yankees made it 3-1 in the sixth when Jacoby Ellsbury, who was 3-for-3, knocked in Headley with a two-out RBI single.

Eovaldi (4-2), who was pulled after the sixth with his pitch count at just 85, struck out five, didn't walk a batter and induced 10 groundball outs in lowering his ERA from 4.85 to 4.44.

NOTABLE

- Mark Teixeira's homer drought is up to 108 at-bats after an 0-for-5, three-strikeout-game, but it almost ended in the first inning when he hit a liner to deep right that was caught by Brandon Drury, who crashed face-first into a meshed fence and banged a knee off a metal pipe.
- Eovaldi was 0-for-2 with two strikeouts and a sacrifice bunt in three plate appearances. Yankees pitchers were 0-for-5 with five whiffs and one sacrifice in their first interleague road series of the season.
- The four Yankees pitchers combined on a two-hitter.
- The comedy of the night: A Kiss Cam on the scoreboard showed a couple holding Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton masks over their faces, then kissing.

LOOKING AHEAD

- Thursday: Yankees at Oakland Athletics, 10:05 p.m., EST, YES; RHP Ivan Nova (2-1, 3.70) vs. RHP Kendall Graveman (1-5, 5.84).
- Friday: Yankees at Oakland Athletics, 9:35 p.m., EST, YES; LHP CC Sabathia (2-2, 3.81) vs. RHP Sonny Gray (3-4, 5.84).
- Saturday: Yankees at Oakland Athletics, 4:05 p.m., EST, YES; Masahiro Tanaka (1-0, 3.51) vs. LHP Sean Manaea (1-1, 7.91).
- Sunday: Yankees at Oakland Athletics, 4:05 p.m., EST, YES (RHP Michael Pineda (1-5, 6.60) vs. RHP Jesse Hahn (1-1, 3.30)

N4 Daily News
5.19.16

Hal's criticism no surprise to boring Bombers

PHOENIX — Hal Steinbrenner's critical words didn't come as a surprise to any of the owner's targets. In fact, the players involved couldn't fault the owner for his frustration over the team's sluggish start.

After all, they're right there with him. "I don't blame him," said Mark Teixeira, one of the four players singled out by Steinbrenner Wednesday. "I've been terrible the last month. I've just got to get it going, especially left-handed."

Teixeira entered Wednesday hitting .192/.263/.250 with no home runs and one RBI in 14 games this month. He's hitting only .152 from the left side this season, and although all three of his homers have been hit lefty, he took the field Wednesday with

a 103-at-bat homerless streak.

"I've been around long enough to know that you're going to get singled out when you're not producing, especially the type of career that I've had," Teixeira said. "I've always been someone that's been able to carry teams during tough streaks. We've been in a tough stretch the whole season. I'm the kind of player that can carry a team for a while. I just haven't done it yet."

Other players called out by Steinbrenner were Michael Pineda, Luis Severino and Chase Headley, though the owner did mention Headley's recent turnaround at

the plate following his abysmal start.

"Obviously my numbers aren't where they normally are," Headley said. "It's his team. He wants to win. We want to win."

And I know that I'm not at this point performing the way I hoped to."

Steinbrenner absolved Girardi and his coaching staff from any of this season's problems, but the manager

continued to hold himself accountable for the 16-22 start.

"I always take full responsibility for what happens here - good or bad," Girardi said. "It's my job to get the best out of the players and right now, we're not perform-

ing to the level I think we're capable of.

"Everybody is frustrated. If I was the owner, I'd be frustrated, too."

BABY STEPS

Alex Rodriguez tested his strained right hamstring with more running in the outfield Wednesday, though he won't begin running the bases until Thursday at the earliest.

A-Rod has yet to run at full speed during his rehab, which will be one of the final hurdles for him to clear. Girardi called a Saturday return "the best-case scenario" for the 40-year-old DH.

"He just doesn't feel ready," Girardi said. "We need him to pick up the speed a little bit where he can run where he needs to run. It's just a day-by-day process and we'll see how good he feels."



ON DECK

AT A'S



THURSDAY — 10:05

RHP Ivan Nova
(2-1, 3.70) vs.
RHP Kendall Graveman
(1-5, 5.84)

FRIDAY — 9:35

LHP CC Sabathia
(2-2, 3.81) vs.
LHP Sonny Gray
(3-4, 5.84)

SATURDAY — 4:05

RHP Masahiro Tanaka
(1-0, 3.51) vs.
LHP Sean Manaea
(1-1, 7.91)

SUNDAY — 4:05

RHP Michael Pineda
(1-5, 6.60) vs.
RHP Jesse Hahn
(1-1, 3.38)

YES, WFAN
(660 AM, 101.9 FM)

INSIDE THE MATCHUPS

YANKEES: After pitching out of the bullpen to start the year, Nova has allowed one run in each of his first two starts of the season. He earned the win Saturday against the White Sox, giving up four hits with two strikeouts across 5 2/3 innings.

A'S: Graveman has been pummeled in his past four starts, posting a 9.31 ERA after giving up just four runs total in his first three starts of the season. The 25-year-old pitched well against the Yankees on April 20, giving up one run on three hits with eight strikeouts over 6 1/3 innings in a 5-2 Oakland win.

STAT SO?

YANKEES: Batters struck out 10 times in each of the first two games against Arizona after reaching double-digit strikeouts just twice in their first 36 games.

A'S: Left fielder Khristian Davis has nine home runs in his last 14 games — including four in his last two games — and leads the majors with 10 home runs in May.

No guarantee A-Rod returns this weekend

By GEORGE A. KING III

YANKEES NOTES

PHOENIX — Don't look for Alex Rodriguez to jump off the disabled list before Saturday in Oakland against the Athletics, and that isn't a lock.

Rodriguez ran lightly on the grass beyond the infield dirt and took batting practice prior to the Yankees' 4-2 victory over the Diamondbacks on Wednesday night at Chase Field. While manager Joe Girardi said the designated hitter improved from Tuesday, Rodriguez still has to show better movement before he returns to the lineup. Rodriguez is eligible to come off the DL on Thursday.

"Maybe get on the bases [Thursday] and see where he is at," Girardi said. "We need him to pick up the speed a little bit where he needs to run."

Girardi said Rodriguez returning Saturday is the "best-case scenario."

Rodriguez has been out since leaving a game on May 3 in Baltimore with a strained right hamstring.

"He said he didn't really feel any-

thing today," Girardi said. "The fact that he didn't feel it running is progress."

Girardi said Rodriguez has to demonstrate more than simply not reinjuring the hamstring.

"He has to be able to go from second to home. If he hits a ground ball I don't expect him to go full out," Girardi said.

The Yankees employed the DH in the previous 12 games before Monday's interleague series opener against Arizona and went 8-4 without Rodriguez available.

During Rodriguez's absence, the Yankees' designated hitters batted .250 (11-for-44) with four homers and eight RBIs. With runners in scoring position, they went 3-for-16 (.188) with a homer and seven RBIs.

Carlos Beltran was the DH in eight of those games.

Rodriguez is hitting .194 (14-for-72) with five homers and 12 RBIs.

► **CC Sabathia** is on track to come off the DL and start Friday against the A's in Oakland. Sabathia has been out since May 5 with a strained left groin problem.

► **Didi Gregorius** played with his right foot taped for the second straight game and went 1-for-4. He took a foul ball off the foot Monday night.

► The Yankees have used 19 pitchers in 39 games after employing a team-record 33 last season. **Johnny Barbato, Luis Cessa, Chad Green** and **Conor Mullee** have made their major league debuts this season.

► According to FanGraphs, the Yankees had swung and missed on 8 percent of pitches this year, which was the lowest in the majors entering Wednesday. However, they whiffed exactly 10 times in each of the three games against the Diamondbacks. In the first 36 games of the season, the Yankees struck out 10 times twice.

A-Rod targeting Saturday

BY ERIK BOLAND

erik.boland@newsday.com

Newsday
5.19.16

PHOENIX — Alex Rodriguez's recovery has hit a snag, though the Yankees maintain it's not a significant one.

Expectations this week were that the 40-year-old DH, out with a right hamstring strain, would return from the 15-day DL tonight in Oakland.

But after Tuesday night's loss Joe Girardi said that wouldn't happen and he said before last night's game his expectation now is a return Saturday. "I would say that's the best-case scenario," Girardi said.

Rodriguez has run on the field the last couple of days, including the base paths for the first time yesterday, but has not pushed himself.

"We need him to pick up the speed a little bit," Girardi said. "You have to be able to run. The fact he didn't feel it today running was progress, it's not full-speed though. He just doesn't feel ready [to run full speed]."

Girardi joked that he understands Rodriguez, who turns 41 July 27, isn't the fleetest of foot.

"But he has to be able to run the bases," Girardi said. "He has to be able to be able to go from second to home and those sort of things. If he hits a ground ball that's [an easy] out, I don't expect him to go full-out. But he has to be able to score."

■ Can't put 'em away

Yankees pitchers have struggled to put teams away this season with two outs in an inning and individual hitters with two strikes. Michael Pineda on Tuesday was the most recent to fail, allowing a two-out, two-strike RBI single to Nick Ahmed in the second inning and an RBI single on a 1-and-2 pitch in a two-run third.

"Is it a mechanical thing? Is it a psychological thing that leads to a mechanical thing?" Girardi said. "If I was that smart I would change it."

The Record

Yankees notes: Alex Rodriguez still not ready to return

BY PETE CALDERA

THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016, 1:21 AM

PHOENIX — Alex Rodriguez's earliest return date is likely on Saturday at Oakland. "I would think that's the best-case scenario," said manager Joe Girardi, after his slugging designated hitter tested his strained right hamstring again Wednesday.

According to the manager, A-Rod experienced no discomfort while running; four times Wednesday, Rodriguez ran lightly around the perimeter of the bases, from first to third, increasing his speed slightly each time.

"It's not full speed, but it's progress. He just doesn't feel ready [to run at a faster pace]," said Girardi, who watched A-Rod go through his pregame paces along with head athletic trainer Steve Donohue and strength coach Matt Krause.

Today is A-Rod's first eligible day to come off the 15-day disabled list after sustaining the hamstring strain May 3 at Baltimore.

Rodriguez plans to increase his running today, which should include making cuts around the bases.

TEIX'S DROUGHT: Mark Teixeira entered Wednesday's game without a home run since April 13, a span of 103 at-bats. "I'm just not driving the ball left-handed," said the switch-hitter. Teixeira was batting .158 (12-for-76) as a lefty hitter this season, partially a product of having faced more left-handed pitching.

"I've been terrible the last month. I just have to get it going, especially left-handed," Teixeira said.

"I'm not taking my walks as I was earlier [in the year] and I need to swing at better pitches. Hopefully, the home runs will come and I'll take my walks when I need to and hopefully get on a roll."

BY THE BAY: Ivan Nova opens a four-game series tonight at Oakland, where the Yankees have lost 12 of their last 14 games and four straight series. Overall, the Yanks have dropped 15 of their last 20 games against the Athletics, including a three-game sweep at the Stadium last month.



Game 39: Yankees at Diamondbacks

Chad Jennings, cjennings@lohud.com 10:24 p.m. EDT May 18, 2016

YANKEES (16-22)

1. Jacoby Ellsbury CF
2. Brett Gardner LF
3. Carlos Beltran RF
4. Brian McCann C
5. Mark Teixeira 1B
6. Starlin Castro 2B
7. Didi Gregorius SS
8. Chase Headley 3B
9. Nathan Eovaldi SP
- RHP Nathan Eovaldi (3-2, 4.85)
Eovaldi vs. Diamondbacks

DIAMONDBACKS (19-23)

1. Jean Segura 2B
2. Phil Gosselin LF
3. Paul Goldschmidt 1B
4. Jake Lamb 3B
5. Welington Castillo C
6. Chris Drury RF
7. Chris Owings CF
8. Nick Ahmed SS
9. Shelby Miller SP
- RHP Shelby Miller (1-4, 6.94)
Miller vs. Yankees

FIRST PITCH: 9:40 p.m. ET

TV/RADIO: YES Network and WFAN

WEATHER: Pretty hot, but not absurdly hot.

UMPIRES: HP Jim Reynolds, 1B Nic Lentz, 2B CB Bucknor, 3B Fieldin Culbreth

STEINBRENNER SPEAKS: At today's Owners' Meetings, Hal Steinbrenner said he blames the Yankees' slow start on the players' poor performance. He said he stands by both Joe Girardi and Brian Cashman.

REGULAR LINEUP: Trying to avoid a sweep, the Yankees are going with all of their lineup regulars, which means no Rob Refsnyder or Aaron Hicks.

SCRANTON SHUTTLE: The Yankees didn't make a move today, but they've made 22 changes to the Major League roster in the past two weeks alone.

KEY DECISIONS: Alex Rodriguez and CC Sabathia are nearly ready to play, which means the Yankees are facing a series of key decisions that could impact things going forward.

UPDATE, 9:49 p.m.: Two batters into the game, Brett Gardner has a two-run homer. Remember when Arizona traded the farm for Shelby Miller?

UPDATE, 9:54 p.m.: Teixeira hit a ball really hard, but Drury made a really nice catch to take away extra bases. Yankees finish the top of the first up 2-0.

UPDATE, 10:11 p.m.: Weird play. Headley hit a sharp bouncing ball that hit off Gregorius's ankle (he was going first to second on the play). Gregorius limped off the field, but based on his reaction in the dugout, he seems alright.

UPDATE, 10:24 p.m.: Eovaldi's first strikeout of the night finishes off the bottom of the second. D'Backs have one run so far.



Pregame notes: Steinbrenner blames players, not coaches

THE LOHUD YANKEES BLOG

Chad Jennings, cjennings@lohud.com 8:13 p.m. EDT May 18, 2016

At today's Owners' Meetings, Yankees managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner said he stood by his coaching staff and general manager and instead placed the blame on his players for the Yankees miserable start to the season.

From Ron Blum of The Associated Press:

Mark Teixeira, Chase Headley, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino were singled out for criticism, and Steinbrenner also praised Headley, Starlin Castro and Aaron Hicks along with Girardi, Cashman and pitching coach Larry Rothschild.

"The coaches are doing a good job," Steinbrenner said. "These are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world, and sooner or later it comes down to them, on the inside, to push through whatever it is they're going through and to persevere."

Far less tempestuous than father George Steinbrenner, who goaded the team from his purchase in 1973 until nearly the time of his death in 2010, Hal discussed the Yankees analytically — but with hope.

"Needless to say, the first five weeks were disappointing, frustrating, particularly looking at the offense," he said. "Clearly not living up to their potential."

Teixeira, a three-time All-Star first baseman, started the day with a .211 average and 11 RBIs. Headley didn't have an extra-base hit until May 12. After going 5-3 with a 2.89 ERA as a rookie, Severino is 0-6 with a 7.46 ERA and is on the disabled list with a triceps injury. Pineda is 1-5 with a 6.60 ERA — 102nd among 104 qualifying pitchers in the major leagues.

As a general rule, that's usually my first focus as well when placing blame for any team falling short of expectation. Perhaps I minimize the impact coaches have at the Major League level, but I tend to think players get to this point mostly knowing what they're doing. There's only so much a coach can do at this point. The Yankees hitting into the shift is a product of the type of hitters they have, not the fact Alan Cockrell hasn't taught Brian McCann to suddenly become an opposite-field slasher. Pineda being completely erratic is a product of his own inability to consistently execute pitches, not Larry Rothschild's misunderstanding of Pineda's mechanics. There's only so much Joe Girardi can do with a lineup that simply didn't hit, top to bottom, for a full month.

Obviously there's some blame to fall on the manager and coaches, but I usually have a hard time blaming a coach or a manager for a player being unproductive (unless it's something to do with the clubhouse culture or something like that).

As for the guy who put these players together, clearly there's significant blame to rest on Brian Cashman's shoulders -- he's said so himself -- but I also look back at this offseason and think he made mostly smart and prudent moves. If he wasn't given the budget to sign an ace, and if he wasn't given the green light to

cut bait with some ugly contracts, then I think he did a nice job supplementing with what he had. Steinbrenner said, "I think the team we have this year is better than the team we had last year," and I think that's probably correct.

That said, I don't think the Jacoby Ellsbury contract was smart, and I think the organization is responsible for having no one ready to play third base, which led to the Headley deal, but I also think it was reasonable to think Ellsbury and Headley would be better than they've been this season. Those are bad contracts, but they shouldn't be this bad.

Certainly Cashman and to a lesser extent Girardi carry responsibility for these results; I just tend to first look to players who are under-performing and leave the bulk of the responsibility with them.

A few of Steinbrenner's specific player comments, as relayed by The Associated Press:

- "When you look at a guy like Mark Teixeira, clearly he's not playing to his potential with the bat."
- "Chase Headley, same thing. Now you're starting to see him hit, see him more relaxed. He's making harder contact. That has to continue."
- "Pineda is concerning — all these strikeouts and yet he's given up these runs. Clearly he's giving up runs early. Clearly there's been issues with his slider. Again, Larry can only do so much. Whatever technically is wrong with the delivery, Larry's going to work on, but the rest is up to Pineda to figure out. He's a professional and that's what we expect from him and that's what his teammates expect from him."
- "We all know Severino has good stuff. I'm not worried about his stuff. We saw that the last two months of last year. We'll see about the injury and how much that played into his performance the last few outings. I also think there was a confidence issue at some point. He is a rookie. This is his first downturn, if you will. ... Every player is going to have to learn how to push through that downturn the first time and get through it. And he will."
- Before tonight's game, **Alex Rodriguez** ran around the edge of the infield. Bryan Hoch has a little bit of video of Rodriguez jogging. Best I can tell, he stayed on the grass and didn't run at anything approaching 100 percent. It's not unusual for a player to do that when he's coming back from a hamstring injury, but it does seem odd for a player who was -- not so long ago -- expected to be activated tomorrow. Clearly Rodriguez is not at all game ready.
- As for when A-Rod might actually come off the disabled list, Girardi said today that Saturday is the best-case scenario. That does not seem to be a date plucked out of thin air. Saturday happens to be the next time the Yankees are scheduled to face a left-handed starter. They'll see Sean Manaea in Oakland that day.
- Told of Steinbrenner's comments, Girardi said he thinks the blame should fall on his own shoulders. That's obviously the right thing to say, but I don't think Girardi honestly believes that. Just saying what he knows he's supposed to say. Can't blame him for that. Girardi can't publicly blame the players or he'd lose the clubhouse, and he can't blame his bosses or he'd lose his job.
- I'll be curious to see how the Yankees use **Rob Refsnyder** this weekend. I'm not at all surprised to see him not in the lineup these final two games in Arizona, but **Starlin Castro** has played a ton this year. Maybe he'll get a day off against one of those right-handed pitchers either Thursday or Friday.



All Yankees regulars in lineup for Diamondbacks finale

THE LOHUD YANKEES BLOG

Chad Jennings, cjennings@lohud.com 8:12 p.m. EDT May 18, 2016

There are no real surprises in the Yankees' lineup tonight. After losing two games in a row, Joe Girardi is going with his everyday position players -- which means no Aaron Hicks and no Rob Refsnyder.

For Hicks, this is only the second time in the past 14 games that he hasn't been in the starting lineup. He's been essentially an everyday player ever since Alex Rodriguez's injury, but now that Jacoby Ellsbury is healthy -- and for this game without a designated hitter -- the Yankees are going with their three regular outfielders. Hicks started last night in place of Carlos Beltran.

As for Refsnyder, I'm sure there's frustration that he's not in the lineup for a second day in a row, but there was little about his call-up that suggested he would become a piece of the starting lineup. All along he seemed to primarily serve as a utility guy who filled out the bench for these final two games in a National League park. The interesting decision will come when Rodriguez is activated from the DL and the Yankees have to decide between Refsnyder and Ronald Torreyes to send down and open a roster spot.

Refsnyder's been red-hot lately, and he looks like a better offensive option than Torreyes at this point, but Torreyes is also a better defender. And is it worth keeping Refsnyder in New York for such a limited role when he could be playing everyday down in Triple-A to continue learning third base and getting used to right field?

That's a decision for another day. For now, here's the Yankees lineup:

1. Jacoby Ellsbury CF
2. Brett Gardner LF
3. Carlos Beltran RF
4. Brian McCann C
5. Mark Teixeira 1B
6. Starlin Castro 2B
7. Didi Gregorius SS
8. Chase Headley 3B
9. Nathan Eovaldi SP

Yankees, Arizona Diamondbacks lineup for Wednesday

By Randy Miller | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on May 18, 2016 at 6:00 PM, updated May 18, 2016 at 6:01 PM

PHOENIX — The Yankees need a win Wednesday night at Chase Field to avoid being swept in a three-game series by the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Two right-handers will be the starting pitchers, Nathan Eovaldi (3-3, 4.85) for the Yankees and Shelby Miller (1-4, 6.94) for the Diamondbacks.

Arizona won 12-2 on Monday night and 5-3 on Tuesday night.

Here is the Yankees' lineup:

1. Jacoby Ellsbury, CF
2. Brett Gardner, LF
3. Carlos Beltran, RF
4. Brian McCann, C
5. Mark Teixeira, 1B
6. Starlin Castro, 2B
7. Didi Gregorius, SS
8. Chase Headley, 3B
9. Nathan Eovaldi, RHP

NY Daily News
5.19.16

Triple-A visit may be right move for Mike

MICHAEL Pineda has officially become Michael Píñata.

This isn't an overreaction to a lousy start. At some point, a bad stretch becomes a season, and with one-quarter of the schedule in the books, the cause for concern about Pineda has become glaring.

There's a school of thought that big-league pitchers need to work out their problems at the big-league level, but the Yankees must consider sending Pineda to Triple-A to get him straightened out. It just isn't happening here, and the Yankees are paying the price.

The obvious hitch in that plan would be his replacement, as the Yankees aren't exactly brimming with polished starters at Triple-A. But honestly, the way Pineda has been pitching, would Luis Cessa or Chad Green give them any less of a chance to win?

After a dreadful second half that saw Pineda go 4-9 with a 5.80 ERA in 10 starts (he missed a month with a right forearm strain), Pineda has actually gotten worse this season, opening 1-5 with a 6.60 ERA.

That's a 4-10 record and 6.15 ERA since

last July 18. Yuck.

"It would be easy to sit here and say things are going to turn and it's going to change, but it's too long," pitching coach Larry Rothschild said. "We're almost a quarter of the way through his starts so we need that to straighten out, especially from the stretch position. He's got a chance to be a really good pitcher here and I still think he will be. He's going through a major bump in the road right now and we just need to get it straightened out."

It's become quite popular among fans to blame Rothschild for Pineda's inability to improve, but all a pitching coach can do is identify the problem, which he seems to have done, particularly with the slider.

He's not the one that has to make the pitches. Only Pineda can do that.

Evidently, Hal Steinbrenner agrees. The owner absolved Rothschild of any blame for Pineda's struggles, putting the onus on the nitcher to get himself turned around.

"Larry can only do so much," Steinbrenner said Wednesday after the owners meetings. "Whatever technically is wrong with the delivery, Larry's going to work on, but the rest is up to Pineda to figure out. He's a professional and that's what we expect from him and that's what his teammates expect from him."



From a numbers standpoint, nothing about Pineda's season has made sense.

When Pineda throws a first-pitch strike, opponents are hitting .313 with an .898 OPS. Getting ahead 0-2 hasn't helped him, either, as batters are hitting .302 with a .799 OPS. By comparison, the entire AL hits .225 with a .618 OPS after an 0-1 count and .176 with a .476 OPS following an 0-2 count.

"Two strikes, usually the averages go down; his go up," Joe Girardi said. "It's the opposite of what it's supposed to be. It's pretty perplexing."

Equally perplexing are Pineda's strikeout

and walk numbers. His 10.3 strikeouts per nine innings are more than two higher than the league average of 7.9, while his 3.57 strikeout/walk ratio is more than a strikeout higher than the league's 2.64 average.

Despite all of that, opponents are slashing .315/.371/.576 against Pineda, compared to .253/.320/.414 against the entire AL.

"The more he's ahead in the count, the worse off the numbers turn," Rothschild said. "It's kind of hard to figure out with the strikeouts and walks and everything."

"When you get into 0-1, 1-2, 0-2 counts, the swings and misses go down; usually those are pitches that are chased and the swings and misses go way up. It's really, really unusual. It's not just one count, it's progressive as you go into favorable counts."

The Yankees acquired Pineda in 2012 with the hopes that he would mature into a top-of-the-rotation starter. If he can't get things turned around, he'll be lucky to be their No. 5.

DAILY NEWS

The 1996 Yankees had more grit, guts and glory than the '86 Mets: That's Debatable

Anthony Mccarron NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 11:49 AM

Has any team ever piled up storylines quite the way the 1996 Yankees did? Grab your hankies and your Charlie Hayes jerseys as we look back at the club that birthed a dynasty, made Joe Torre an icon and saw two more all-timers, Derek Jeter and Mariano Rivera, begin to soar to greatness.

This club and this season had everything, from drama and heartache to redemption and timeless tales and over all that loomed a fiery George Steinbrenner. Great baseball, too.

That's why it's a better — dare we say cooler? — anniversary squad than today's "That's Debatable" opponent, the '86 Mets. Back 20 years ago, some non-Yankee fans — OK, haters — even viewed this scrappy bunch of passionate grinders as a likeable team, certainly more so than many of those that came before and after it.

Imagine that.

What's not to like? Torre had been in baseball for 32 years and 4,272 games before he finally reached his first Fall Classic with the 96ers. Torre's brother Rocco died during the season. His brother Frank got a heart transplant. Torre managed through it all, shedding tears on the field after the Yanks sealed the championship.

You want guts? How about Tino Martinez doing the impossible job of replacing a pinstriped god named Don Mattingly? David Cone came back from an aneurysm in his arm.

You want theater? How about the Yankees rallying from a 2-0 deficit to Atlanta in the World Series? Heck, most everyone ceded the title to the Braves after they walloped the Yankees in the opening pair at the Stadium.

What happened next generated a well-loved snapshot from life in the Boss Age. Torre kidded a fuming Steinbrenner that Atlanta was "his town" and the Yanks would go there and win all three and then win Game 6 in the Bronx. Then it happened that way. It was more tension release than prophecy, but now it's a nifty part of Yankee lore and certainly demonstrated Torre had the chops to handle the capricious Steinbrenner.

There were personalities, including the bubbling cauldron of intensity known as Paul O'Neill, who obsessively practiced his swing while standing in right field and still gets a hero's welcome at the Stadium. Bernie Williams was a delightful, if spacey, baseball virtuoso.

These Yanks even made use of the best of the '86 Mets, 10 Years After version when they got something out of both Dwight Gooden and Darryl Strawberry, Steinbrenner reclamation projects made good again in pinstripes. Gooden even threw a no-hitter.

The postseason gave us lasting memories, too, including an "angel in the outfield" named Jeffrey Maier. Hey, every championship team needs a hand, right, Davey Johnson (cough, cough Bill Buckner)? There was Jim Leyritz's home run off Mark Wohlers to help fuel a huge Game 4 comeback, Andy Pettitte over John Smoltz in Game 5 and Joe Girardi's unlikely triple in the clincher.

It had its iconic photo op, too — Hayes squeezing the final out, an image that sticks just like Jesse Orosco on his knees, throwing his glove in the air in 1986.

This was the 23rd title in Yankee history and the first since 1978, ending a long title drought — for the Yanks, anyway — that featured some ugly days.

Then some of the same stars from '96 won again in 1998, 1999 and 2000 and nearly did in 2001, all while winning an extra layer of playoffs the '86 Mets never had to face.

It was a Yankee team for the ages and it should still have enough juice to win "That's Debatable."



Drellich: Red Sox-Yankees rivalry stunted by parity

Evan Drellich

Thursday, May 19, 2016

NEW YORK — Parity, the carousel of competitiveness Major League Baseball has championed so much in recent years — look at the Royals, everybody! — was, at its core, a death sentence for the Red Sox-Yankees rivalry as we knew it.

Many fans across the country wanted balance, even if you didn't. A more even field was a necessity for baseball's survival.

Either way, even the Yankees themselves are thinking more holistically about the competition these days because they have to.

The Rays can actually afford gas now. Everybody can.

The Yanks began yesterday in the AL East cellar. The Sox were in a virtual tie for first place with the Orioles. But the struggling Yankees don't seem to take their rivals' success as insult to injury.

They would have, once upon a time.

"If we don't win, I feel bad, period," Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner said yesterday at MLB headquarters in Manhattan, site of the owners meetings. "We're playing every team in our division the same amount of games, right? I don't like any of 'em. I respect 'em, it doesn't mean I have to like 'em."

"I understand the rivalry and all that, but I also respect the rivalry. I think it's a healthy thing, the Boston-New York rivalry. Most people would agree, and it's an exciting thing, not just for our division but for baseball. But every team in our division is a problem as far as I'm concerned."

That's by design.

Derek Jeter is retired, David Ortiz is about to be, and nothing matches the shine of ending an 86-year title drought.

So yes, the luster inevitably was going to fade away.

But you can't come close to repainting the rivalry in this climate, in which a dollar doesn't go as far as it used to.

"There's certainly more parity in the game than ever before," Steinbrenner said. "If you look at the teams who've been in the playoffs the last couple years, I think most people, you know, including a lot of the owners would agree with that — that's good for baseball. That's good for baseball."

But is there a downside too?

Every team can become a threat, but the best precursor for competitiveness might be losing instead of spending for the small markets.

And when those teams are losing, they might be benefiting as money teams like the Yankees and Red Sox pay into revenue sharing.

"It's a great question, but the reality is parity is here to stay," Steinbrenner said, repeating that phrase yesterday as though he once had to hear it again and again to accept as much himself.

The current collective bargaining agreement went into effect in 2012 and made adding talent by outspending everyone increasingly difficult, in free agency and otherwise. That's why the Sox went wild in the relatively deregulated international market on the likes of Rusney Castillo and Yoan Moncada.

So how are teams supposed to build now?

With an even greater focus on amateur, cost-controlled players. And to get the best, it's just easier for a team to lose for a time.

Poor records beget high draft picks and more money to spend on amateurs domestically and abroad.

But the Yankees can't just punt.

"Parity's here," Steinbrenner said. "And we're just going to have to figure it out how to do the best to rebuild. And at the same time, because we are the Yankees, we know we always have to have the veterans, we always have to have the marquee players."

"We've got a little ways to go, but again, look at the teams who were in the playoffs last year, and it looks a lot different than 10, 15, 20 years ago in many cases."

This CBA expires in the fall, and a new deal is being discussed at these owners meetings, which wrap today.

Red Sox owner John Henry was out of the country yesterday watching his soccer team, Liverpool, which lost to Sevilla in the Europa League final. Team president Sam Kennedy is at the meetings in his place.

The Sox and Yanks surely think alike on this issue, though.

“Revenue sharing is always one of our biggest expenses. It’s always one of the biggest things discussed in a new collective bargaining agreement,” Steinbrenner said. “I think (commissioner Rob Manfred is) doing a great job. I think this is a natural time . . . to see how revenue sharing is impacting not just the payees but the payers. And I think that’s going to be done. I think there’s a lot of healthy discussions that have happened.”

Explaining the Bombers’ woes, Steinbrenner put the onus on his players while backing up manager Joe Girardi. He suggested his team was just going through a standard dip, not something greater.

The Sox and Yankees will, eventually, be simultaneously competitive again. A full rekindling, if you will, not just a fling on a Sunday night telecast.

But the question is whether baseball’s structure will let that competitiveness play out for long before the carousel starts up again.

Steinbrenner didn’t rule out another dynasty in today’s game. (Hey, maybe he has some of his father’s aplomb after all.)

“We’re always going to have the veterans, we’re always going to have the marquee players and the mentors,” Steinbrenner said. “If you can build a good group of young players . . . I think it’s entirely possible.

“Is it more difficult? Sure, it may be more difficult than it was.”

Baseball wanted it to be more difficult. A sustained rivalry was parity’s collateral damage.



Eovaldi's latest gem lets Yankees avoid sweep in Arizona

THE LOHUD YANKEES BLOG

Chad Jennings, cjennings@lohud.com 12:53 a.m. EDT May 19, 2016

Hard to be much better than Nathan Eovaldi was tonight, but in a game the Yankees desperately wanted to win to avoid a sweep, Joe Girardi went to his bullpen anyway.

Eovaldi had retired 18 in a row when the bullpen door swung open and Dellin Betances started the parade of hard-throwing Yankees relievers, who did their job to close out a 4-2 Yankees win against the Diamondbacks. The Yankees will now head to Oakland where they start a long four-game series tomorrow.

Usually, going to Betances in a closer game is a near no-brainer. At the very least, it's usually a decision that doesn't generate much second guessing.

In this case, though, there was plenty to second guess.

Eovaldi had thrown just 85 pitches and had not allowed a single base runners since a strange, leadoff hit in the first inning. It was a groundball double, and a couple of productive outs meant the Diamondbacks got a run out of it. But that's all they would get against Eovaldi who sent the side down in order every other inning until the bullpen took over. He struck out five, and he's now delivered a real gem in three of his past five starts. He's won four of his past five.

When Girardi pulled him with such a low pitch count on a such a dominant night, it raised eyebrows to say the least, but the move ultimately worked. Betances got into trouble with a couple of walks in the seventh, but he stranded the runners. Andrew Miller allowed a home

run in the eighth, but he struck out the other three batters he faced. Aroldis Chapman got his fourth save in the week and half since his suspension ended.

So why pull Eovaldi? Four reasons I can think of (though I don't necessarily agree with any of them).

1. None of the big three relievers had pitched the past two days, and what's safer than handing a two-run lead to those guys?
2. Eovaldi has allowed a 1.032 OPS against hitters seeing him for the third time in a game, and the seventh inning was going to be the third time through the order.
3. Along those lines, remember Eovaldi had a no-hitter through six not so long ago, then he let three of the next five hitters reach base.
4. Being swept would have been such a punch to the gut, the Yankees owed it to themselves to use their biggest weapons possible to avoid it.

Ultimately, Girardi's decision worked, and if the big three relievers aren't needed the next few days, it will have been a decision that worked out in every way. I don't like forcing Betances into a game that he didn't necessarily have to enter -- Eovaldi had just been so good, this seemed like a golden opportunity to use just two of the three late-inning guys -- but ultimately the decision ended with a win. In the moment it worked.

As for the Yankees' offense, Jacoby Ellsbury reached base five times. He walked to start the game, then promptly scored on Brett Gardner's fifth home run of the year. In the sixth inning, Ellsbury had an RBI single to push the lead to 3-1. In the ninth, Ellsbury walked and eventually scored on a wild pitch. Gardner and Chase Headley each had two hits in the game.



Joe Girardi manages, desperately, to pull out a Yankees win

BY WALLACE MATTHEWS

May 19, 2016 2:03 AM ET

PHOENIX -- Nathan Eovaldi had given up a freak hit to the first batter he faced Wednesday night, and then retired his next 18. He went into the New York Yankees' dugout after six innings having thrown just 85 pitches and holding a 3-1 lead.

So, naturally, he never came out of that dugout again.

In what was either evidence of Joe Girardi's desperation to win at least one game from the lowly Arizona Diamondbacks or his belief that he was bulletproof following a vote of confidence earlier in the day from his boss, Hal Steinbrenner, the Yankees manager took the ultimate gamble, removing one pitcher (Eovaldi) who was in total command and replacing him with another (Dellin Betances) who came into the game with no command at all.

When Betances walked the first two batters he faced in the seventh inning, it looked as though Girardi's gamble would blow up in his face like a trick cigar. But Betances recovered to retire the next three hitters and, for the moment, Girardi's strategy proved sound, if not entirely logical.

Then it was on to the middle head of the Yankees three-headed relief monster, Andrew Miller, who promptly hung an 0-2 slider to the first hitter he faced, Chris Owings, who launched it into the left-field seats to cut the lead to 3-2. Miller recovered to strike out the next three hitters but, still, things were getting a little antsy.

Next came Aroldis Chapman's turn, made somewhat easier by a ninth-inning insurance run on a bases-loaded wild pitch that extended the Yankees lead to 4-2. Fortunately for Girardi and the Yankees, Chapman did what Chapman usually does, dialing up a half-dozen 100-plus-mph fastballs to retire the side in order and preserve the 4-2 victory.

Whew! The Yankees avoided the sweep and Steinbrenner had no immediate cause to retract his absolution.

Girardi's reason for removing Eovaldi will remain a mystery until after the postgame media session, but you can guess at his motivations. If not a must win, then at least a must-not-lose game against a team that had already humiliated the Yankees the previous two nights. And Eovaldi, a notoriously erratic performer who can pitch like Tom Seaver one night and Tom Thumb the next, was about to face the dangerous heart of the Diamondbacks order for the third time in the game.

Still, it's hard to understand why a manager would pull a pitcher who seemed to be as in control of his craft as Eovaldi was on this night.

In the end, it worked out for Girardi and the Yankees, but not without some unexpected, and perhaps unnecessary, drama.

Girardi quick to call on 'Run BMC' to wrap win

Yanks manager doesn't hesitate to lean on 'pen despite Eovaldi's sharp outing

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | 2:49 AM ET May 19, 2016

PHOENIX -- If there was ever a test to see if Joe Girardi could resist turning a game over to his power bullpen, this was it. Nathan Eovaldi cruised through six innings and retired 18 straight D-backs on Wednesday, needing just 85 pitches to get there.

As such, Eovaldi believed that he was going back out for the seventh, but Girardi was taking no chances after his Yankees were outplayed in the first two games of the series. Dellin Betances, Andrew Miller and Aroldis Chapman teamed for the final nine outs, locking down a 4-2 victory at Chase Field.

"If the score's a little bit different, maybe I do it a little bit differently," Girardi said. "But we had Betances, Miller and Chapman rested. That's what they're there for. Nate did his job and it was the responsibility of the next three guys to do their jobs."

Eovaldi permitted just one hit, watching Jean Segura's leadoff grounder kick off the second-base bag for a quirky double. From there, he was dominant, striking out five while walking none. His excellent command provided the brand of starting performance the Yanks have sorely lacked of late.

"In the bullpen, I felt really good, but I feel like that stuff changes when a batter gets in the box," Eovaldi said. "The first inning, I was able to locate the fastball both in and away and had a real good feel for my slider early on."

Getting into a good rhythm with catcher Brian McCann, Eovaldi shrugged off Paul Goldschmidt's run-scoring groundout -- on a ball that third baseman Chase Headley appeared to have time to throw home on -- and pounded the zone with efficiency in his best start of the year.

"I'm just trying to work ahead in the count and keep attacking," Eovaldi said. "It was good having Mac back there; we had a good connection from all the starts last year. It was nice having him back there and I felt we were on the same page the whole game."

Given that, Eovaldi admitted to being surprised to see Betances warming for the seventh.

"I thought I was going back out," Eovaldi said. "I was a little disappointed, but you've got those three guys coming in. You can't be too frustrated about that."

With "Run BMC" dispatched, Betances made things interesting in the seventh, issuing walks to the first two batters he faced before settling down to escape via two strikeouts and a flyout.

Betances joked that he was just trying to keep the game interesting for viewers staying up late back on the East Coast, and said that he wasn't shocked to see Eovaldi get the hook after the sixth.

"Oh, no; I'm coming in that situation," Betances said. "Obviously it's Joe's call, but in my mind I'm coming in if we're winning by one, tie game, two, three. I'm coming in the seventh inning; that's my mindset. He did a tremendous job and I'm sure he would have done a good job. I think Evo doesn't mind sharing the seventh with me."

Chris Owings opened the eighth with a homer off Miller, just the D-backs' second hit, but Miller recovered to strike out the next three hitters. Chapman touched 102 mph several times in a 1-2-3 ninth inning, striking out one. Girardi left with no regrets with how he deployed the trio.

"I'm going to take my chances probably 99 percent of the time with Betances, Miller and Chapman, just because they're so good," Girardi said.

BASEBALL

In Era of Parity, Owner Preaches Patience for Yankees

The war is over. It was decided years ago, and the outcome is permanent: Every team in baseball has a chance to win. At least, this is what the owner of the

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Yankees believes, and he would know. "The reality is: Parity is here to stay," that owner, Hal Steinbrenner, said Wednesday during a break at the quarterly owners' meetings at Major League Baseball's headquarters in Manhattan. "We're there. We've got a little ways to go, but look at the teams that were in the playoffs last year. It looks a lot different than 10, 15, 20 years ago in many cases."

"Parity's here, and we're just going to have to figure out how to do the best to rebuild, and at the same time — because we are the Yankees — we know we always have to have the veterans; we always have to have the marquee players. It's always a balance for us."

The Kansas City Royals are the reigning champions and the two-time defending American League pennant winners. The Toronto Blue Jays snapped a 22-year playoff drought last season. The Pittsburgh Pirates have hosted the National League wild-card game three years in a row. Since 2001, every team has reached the postseason.

Steinbrenner insisted that parity was "good for baseball." He inherited the team from his

father, but not the environment that once helped the Yankees dominate the sport.

The Yankees still outspend almost everyone, but their rivals, often aided by revenue sharing, can easily maintain competitive payrolls. The highest average annual salary belongs to a member of the Arizona Diamondbacks, pitcher Zack Greinke, at \$34.4 million. He beat the Yankees on Tuesday.

The loss plunged the Yankees' record to 16-22 and dropped their winning percentage to .421, putting them ahead of only Cincinnati, Houston, Minnesota and Atlanta. The Yankees earned a wild-card berth last fall but have not played in a postseason series since 2012.

The team is still searching for a championship formula that fits the modern era. Yet as the league and the union negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement, Steinbrenner is not clamoring — in public, anyway — for the right to keep more of his money. The closest he came to complaining about the system on Wednesday was to mildly rebuke unnamed teams for not spending to win.

"I think anytime you have a system like this, there's always going to be a handful of people that don't use the funds for what they're intended to be used for," he said.

The changes in the system alone do not fully explain the



KATHY WILLENS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The owner Hal Steinbrenner of the Yankees before Wednesday's meeting of Major League Baseball's executive committee.

shift in the Yankees' landscape. The truth is that their most recent dynasty — four titles in five seasons in a 13-year playoff run through 2007 — was largely a result of remarkable scouting and luck. In 1995, when that streak began, they promoted four extraordinary players — Derek Jeter, Andy Pettitte, Jorge Posada and Mariano Rivera — and they kept them all for almost the entirety of their careers.

Theoretically, the Yankees could still do something similar; of those players and the other homegrown star of the era, Bernie Williams, only Jeter was a high draft choice. But the chances of having five superstars

grow up together, and surrounding them with precisely the right mix of veterans, are remote.

"We're always going to have the veterans; we're always going to have the marquee players and the mentors," Steinbrenner said. "If you've got a good, solid group — it would be tough to replicate those four, Jeter and all — but look, if Bird pans out and Judge pans out, Severino and Kaprielian, and you start getting Mateo a year or two from now, if you can build a good group of young players that play different positions, obviously, I think it's entirely possible. Is it more difficult? Sure, it may be more difficult than it was."

Steinbrenner was referring to pitchers Luis Severino and James Kaprielian, first baseman Greg Bird, outfielder Aaron Judge and shortstop Jorge Mateo, and so much must happen before they are major league stars. The first three are injured, including Severino, who is 0-6 for the Yankees. Judge, 24, was hitting .261 with seven homers at Class AAA through Tuesday.

Mateo, 20, was hitting .331 with 13 stolen bases at high Class A.

All teams have prospects, of course, and there is no indication that the Yankees' farm system sets them apart. Before the season, both Baseball America and MiLB.com — the official website of the minors — ranked the Yankees 17th of 30 teams in organizational talent. Steinbrenner said he was encouraged because the system was improving.

As for the slow start in the majors, Steinbrenner mentioned specific players — Michael Pineda, Mark Teixeira, Chase Headley — but not in harsh terms. He did not criticize Manager Joe Girardi or his staff.

"The coaches and manager, I think they're doing all they can," Steinbrenner said. "I think they're doing a good job. I've got no complaints there."

Steinbrenner praised General Manager Brian Cashman's trades for Starlin Castro and Aaron Hicks, which provided at least some youth.

"I don't think there's a flaw in

the way the team's put together," Steinbrenner said. "I think the team we have this year is better than the team we had last year."

Steinbrenner said he was pleased by the last homestand, in which the Yankees went 7-3. If they keep playing like that, he said, things will be fine. He said he had not considered dumping veterans for young players at the trading deadline.

"Right now that's the least of my concerns," he said, "because I think the hitting's turned the corner."

He said the family had no intention of selling the team.

"We're here to stay," he said, adding later: "As I've always said, if my name wasn't Steinbrenner, I wouldn't be here. I don't look at this as something I deserve. I've been given this. It's a gift. I respect it, and I enjoy it."

Steinbrenner said he even found some solace in the hard times. "It's never enjoyable to struggle, but it does make one stronger and wiser, I believe," he said. "You're not going to learn all the life lessons by winning all the time, that's for sure."

Steinbrenner projects admirable calm; the threatening directives of an old generation are not his style. But if the season continues this way, the most fascinating question around the Yankees will be what lessons, exactly, Steinbrenner will have learned. He will, at least, be much stronger and wiser.

Singled out, but

Players blamed
by the owner say
they can improve

BY ERIK BOLAND
erik.boland@newsday.com

PHOENIX — No offense taken.

That basically sums up the reaction of three of the four players managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner mentioned by name regarding the Yankees' lousy start to the season. Steinbrenner named them yesterday while speaking with reporters at the quarterly owners' meetings in New York.

"I don't blame him," said the switch-hitting Mark Teixeira, who brought a .211/.318/.313 slash line into last night's game against Arizona. "I've been terrible the last month. I just have to get it going, especially left-handed."

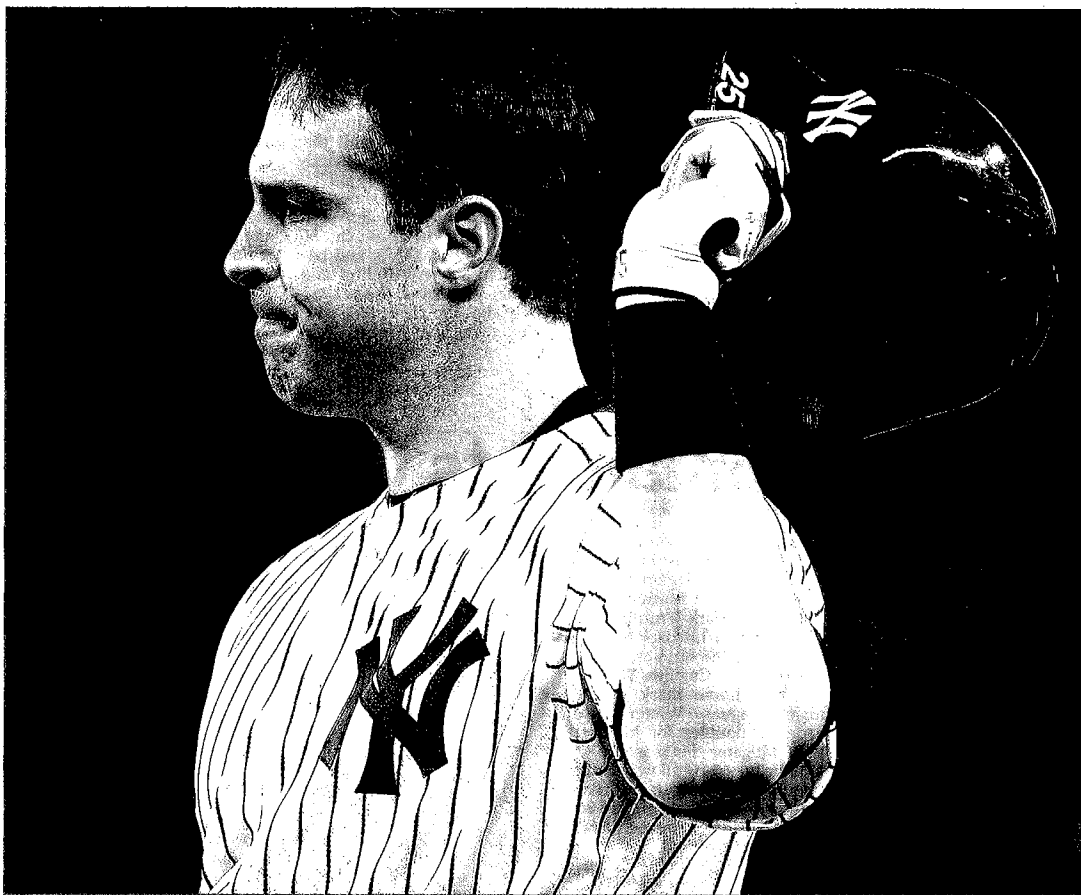
Switch-hitting third baseman Chase Headley, toting a .196/.287/.262 slash line entering last night's game, was also singled out, as were struggling pitchers Michael Pineda and Luis Severino, who was placed on the DL last week with a right triceps strain.

"Obviously the numbers aren't where they normally are," said Headley, who has been better of late, which Steinbrenner did point out, reaching safely in his last eight games entering yesterday. "It's his team. He wants to win, we want to win, and I know at this point I'm not performing the way that I hope to."

Headley continued: "It doesn't really mean anything to me, to be honest. I don't need a reminder, and I don't mean that in a negative way toward him, I know I'm not playing the way I'm capable of. I know I have to pick up. If I'm playing better maybe we win a couple of more games, and some other guys I'm sure feel the same way."

Pineda, who had a stellar spring and was looked at by some as a potential front-end-of-the-rotation cog, fell to 1-5 with a 6.60 ERA Tuesday after he allowed five runs and nine hits.

"It doesn't bother me for him



Mark Teixeira was one of the Yankees mentioned by Hal Steinbrenner regarding players who have contributed to the team's poor start.

LATE RESULT

Read about last night's
Yankees-D-backs game
at newsday.com/yankees

Tonight

Yankees
at Oakland
TV: YES, 10:05 p.m.
Radio: WFAN (660, 101.9)



to say that," Pineda said of Steinbrenner's comments, which included the owner using the word "concerning" to describe his performance so far. "I expect a lot of myself because I can be better."

Pineda said Steinbrenner's comments didn't add any additional stress.

"Being a baseball player, there's pressure; being a Yankee, there's pressure," he said.

Headley and Teixeira agreed.

"I don't rely on anybody to tell me whether I'm playing good or not," Headley said. "I'm pretty aware of that myself. I'm just going to try and be better. That's it. I feel like I'm on the right track and

that's where my focus is."

Teixeira, hitting .152 with a .264 on-base percentage left-handed compared to .306/.404 righthanded and without a homer since April 13, said the owner's remarks won't help or hinder him.

"I don't need any extra motivation," Teixeira said. "I just have to go out there and perform. It doesn't really matter what anyone says."

Joe Girardi, whose job is not in jeopardy, according to Steinbrenner, said the buck still stops with him as manager.

"I always take full responsibility for what happens, good or

bad," Girardi said. "It's my job to get the best out of the players and right now we're not performing to the level I think we're capable."

Entering last night, they were the last-place team in the AL East.

It's still early but . . .

"At a certain point you go from a good team that's playing bad to being a bad team," Teixeira said. "I don't think we're there yet, I still think we're a good team. But we obviously have to win more games, and we're just not getting the job done, and I need to be a big part of that."

Newsday
5.19.16

not upset

HAL POINTS FINGER AT PLAYERS

BY ANTHONY RIEBER
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Hal Steinbrenner was kicked to the curb yesterday. But he's not going to do the same thing to Brian Cashman or Joe Girardi.

The Yankees owner, after being told by a lobby security guard that he had to take an interview session at Major League Baseball's Park Avenue headquarters out to the sidewalk, expressed confidence in his general manager and manager despite the Yankees' poor start to the season.

Steinbrenner laid the blame for the Yankees' 16-22 record going into last night squarely at the feet of their underperforming players.

"The coaches and manager, I think they are doing all they can," Steinbrenner said after being banished to the land of the smokers outside the building along with a half-dozen reporters and one photographer. "I think they are doing a good job. I've got no complaints there. I think Cash made some good trades. I think [Starlin] Castro's worked out great. I think [Aaron] Hicks has worked out great. Now that's he's playing every day, he's starting to hit."

Of the players, Steinbrenner patted his chest at heart level and said: "Sooner or later, it comes down to the guys to pull through."

Steinbrenner's harshest comments, though, were directed at righthander Michael Pineda, who fell to 1-5 with a 6.60 ERA with another subpar performance on Tuesday in the Yankees' 5-3 loss to the Diamondbacks.

"Pineda's concerning," Steinbrenner said. "All these strikeouts, and yet he's giving up all these runs. Clearly, he's giving up runs early. Clearly, there's some issues with his slider. Again, [pitching coach] Larry [Rothschild] can only do so much with whatever is techni-



AP/KATHY WILSON

Hal Steinbrenner doesn't fault manager or GM for Yanks' poor start.

cally wrong with the delivery. Larry's going to work on it, but the rest is up to Pineda to figure out. I mean, he's a professional and that's what we expect from him and that's what his teammates expect from him."

Steinbrenner also mentioned the offensive struggles of Mark Teixeira and Chase Headley and the ineffectiveness and elbow injury of pitcher Luis Severino.

"When you look at a guy like Mark Teixeira, clearly he's not playing to his potential with the bat," he said. "Chase Headley, same thing. Now you're starting to see him hit, see him more relaxed. He's making harder contact. That has to continue."

Of Severino, he said: "We all know Severino has good stuff. I'm not worried about his stuff. We saw that the last two months of last year. We'll see about the injury and how much that played into his performance the last few outings. I also think there was a confidence issue at some point. He is a rookie. This is his first downturn, if you will. . . . Every player is going to have to learn how to push through that downturn the first time and get through it. And he will."

Asked to assess the state of the

team, Steinbrenner said: "Needless to say, the first five weeks were disappointing. Frustrating. Particularly looking at the offense, not living up to their potential. Last homestand was promising, I thought."

The Yankees went 7-3 on the homestand that ended Sunday, but then lost two in a row against the Diamondbacks in the desert.

"What we can't start having now is for our starting pitchers to give up five, six, seven runs," Steinbrenner said. "We've got to start firing on all cylinders."

Steinbrenner reiterated for the umpteenth thousandth time that the team is not for sale. The Yankees are a family business, and off the field business is still good.

"Tickets are actually up from last year, which is a good sign," he said. "Season tickets are slightly up, which is the first time in four or five years that that's been the case. I don't know if it's making the playoffs [last year] one game or not. I don't know if it's some of the young players — Hicks, Castro, [Aroldis] Chapman, some of the guys we've brought on. I don't know, but the fans have been excited."

Hal blames players, not organization for record

THE ONLY people who sit on a pinstriped hot seat, Hal Steinbrenner asserted Wednesday, are the Yankees players themselves.

In his first public comments since the 2016 season began, the Yankees' managing general partner politely expressed his unhappiness with his club's 17-22 stumble out of the gate. Yet Steinbrenner made it clear he didn't put the onus on general manager Brian Cashman, manager Joe Girardi or his coaches. The Yankees' boss is counting on his prime assets to realize their peak value.

"I think the coaches are doing a good job," Steinbrenner said at Major League Baseball's Manhattan headquarters, as he arrived for the quarterly owners meetings. "These are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world. And sooner or later, it comes down to them on the inside, to push through whatever it is they're going through, and to persevere."

Steinbrenner mentioned veteran first baseman Mark Teixeira, identified as one player who "[is] not playing to his potential with the bat" and, asked about struggling right-handers Luis Severino and Michael Pineda, called upon the pitchers to fix themselves.

"We all know Severino has good stuff. I'm not worried about his stuff," Steinbrenner said of the right-hander recently placed on the disabled list. "We saw that the last two months of last year. We'll see about the [right elbow] injury, how much that played into his performance the last few outings. I also think there was a confidence issue at some point. He is a rookie. This is his first downturn. ... Larry [Rothschild] can only do so

YANKS ON NOTICE: Hal Steinbrenner, speaking at MLB's offices in Manhattan on Wednesday, says Mark Teixeira is among the Yankees "not playing to his potential." AP



much with that. The rest is up to Severino, and every player is going to have to learn how to push through that downturn the first time and get through it. And he will.

"Pineda's concerning. He's got all these strikeouts, and yet he's given up these runs. Clearly, he's been giving up runs early. Clearly, there have been issues with his slider. Again, Larry can only do so much. Whatever technically is wrong with the delivery, Larry is working on it, but the rest is up to Pineda to figure it out. He's a professional, and that's what we expect from him. That's what his teammates expect from him."

Girardi and his coaches, Steinbrenner said, "[are] doing a good job. I've got no complaints there. I think Cash made some good trades. I think [Starlin] Castro has worked out great. I think [Aaron] Hicks has worked out great. He's playing every day."

"Look, you go through these periods every year. Every team does. For us, unfortunately, it happened at the very

beginning and maybe longer than it normally does as well. But when it happens at the beginning, when you're under .500 right out of the gate, you're in a hole."

The team's recent 7-3 homestand gave Steinbrenner confidence the offense was on the upswing.

"What we can't have happen now is for our starting pitchers to give up five, six, seven runs per game," he said. "We've got to start firing on all cylinders, or we're never going to get out of this hole, because we are in a hole right now."

If they don't climb out of the hole, the Yankees could find themselves in the rare situation of being trade-deadline sellers.

"Any possibility that comes along, we're going to look at," Steinbrenner said. "But I'm not even thinking about that right now."

Steinbrenner added he expected pitching prospect James Kaprielian, shelved with a right elbow injury, to start throwing again in the next couple of weeks and be back in a game in four-to-six weeks.

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No panic in Hal

But Yanks must improve

BY CHRISTIAN RED
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

THE NEW Boss certainly ain't like the old Boss.

Despite his \$200-plus million payroll Yankees resting firmly in the basement of the AL East, Hal Steinbrenner is not sounding any alarms, no manager or coaching positions are in jeopardy and there is no back page headline to rival the many his famous dad, George, used to boom when all was not well in the pinstriped land.

"Needless to say, the first five weeks were disappointing, frustrating," Steinbrenner said Wednesday outside MLB's Park Avenue offices before he attended the owners meetings. "Particularly looking at the offense, it's certainly not living up to their potential. We've got to start firing on all cylinders or we're never going to get out of this hole. We are in a hole right now."

A 16-22 record out of the gates a decade ago might have produced firings galore in the George Steinbrenner era, but Hal said the general manager, Brian Cashman, and Joe Girardi and his coaching staff are not on the hot seat. It's the players, Steinbrenner said, who need to step it up and get the pinstriped ship turned around.

"I think the coaches are doing a good job. I got no complaints there. These are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world. Sooner or

later, it comes down to them, on the inside, to push through, whatever it is they're going through and to persevere," said Steinbrenner. "I think Cash made some good trades. I think (Starlin) Castro has worked out great. I think (Aaron) Hicks has worked out great."

"Look, you go through these periods every year. For us, unfortunately it happened at the very beginning and maybe longer than it normally does," Steinbrenner continued. "But when it happens at the very beginning, you go below .500 right out of the gate, you're in a hole. I can tell you, the players are calm, they're focused. The coaches are doing everything they need to do as far as any problems with the deliveries of a pitcher, or the swinging of a hitter. But sooner or later it comes down to the guys to pull through."

Steinbrenner did take a small page out of his dad's ownership playbook, tweaking certain players' performances — in this case, first baseman Mark Teixeira and starting pitcher Michael Pineda.

"I think when you look at a guy like Mark Teixeira, clearly he's not playing to his potential with the bat," said Steinbrenner. "Pineda is concerning — all these strikeouts and yet he's given up these runs. Clearly he's giving up runs early. Clearly there (have) been issues with his slider. Again, (pitching coach) Larry (Rothschild) can only do so much. Whatever technically is wrong with the delivery,

Larry's gonna work on, but the rest is up to Pineda to figure out. He's a professional and that's what we expect from him and that's what his teammates expect from him."

But Steinbrenner was pleased with other aspects of the franchise, saying ticket sales were up, and that he felt the fans got to see a good product on the field during the Yankees' recent home stand.

"Tickets are actually up from last year, which is a good sign. Season tickets are slightly up, which is the first time in four or five years. The fans have been excited. But we've got to give them something to watch," said Steinbrenner. "We dug ourselves into a hole. But it's mid-May, not mid-August. Stranger things have happened. Nobody's given up. That clubhouse has not given up, I can tell you that much."



Unlike demanding father, Yanks owner Hal Steinbrenner says GM and coaches are not on hot seat, but emphasizes players must dig team out of early hole. COREY SIPKIN/NEWS

The Journal-News
5.19.16

Hal backs Girardi, GM, blames players

RONALD BLUM
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - Hal Steinbrenner had just started his quarterly State of the Yankees session when he asked to switch places with reporters and stood near the side of the lobby at Major League Baseball's headquarters.

"This feels better," the New York owner said with his back to the wall. "Very fitting."

A minute later, a security guard asked Steinbrenner and the media to step outside.

That's what happens when your team is last in the AL East at 16-22.

Steinbrenner backed manager Joe Girardi, his coaching staff and general manager Brian Cashman on Wednesday and blamed players for the team's poor start, which bottomed at 9-17. Mark Teixeira, Chase Headley, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino were singled out for criticism, and Steinbrenner also praised Headley, Starlin Castro and Aaron Hicks along with Girardi, Cashman and pitching coach Larry Rothschild.

"The coaches are doing a good job," Steinbrenner said. "These are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world, and sooner or later it comes down to them, on the inside, to push through whatever it is they're going through and to persevere."

Far less tempestuous than father George Steinbrenner, who goaded the team from his purchase in 1973 until nearly the time of his death in 2010, Hal discussed the Yankees analytically — but with hope.

"Needless to say, the first five weeks were disappointing, frustrating, particularly looking at the offense," he said. "Clearly not living up to their potential."

Teixeira, a three-time All-Star first baseman, started the day with a .211 average and 11 RBI. Headley didn't have an extra-base hit until May 12. After going 5-3 with a 2.89 ERA as a rookie, Severino is 0-6 with a 7.46 ERA and is on the disabled list with a triceps injury. Pineda is 1-5 with a 6.60 ERA — 102nd among 104 qualifying pitchers in the major leagues.

Some of Steinbrenner's comments:

» "When you look at a guy like Mark Teixeira, clearly he's not playing to his potential with the bat."

» "Chase Headley, same thing. Now you're starting to see him hit, see him more relaxed. He's making harder contact. That has to continue."

» "Pineda is concerning — all these strikeouts and yet he's given up these runs. Clearly he's giving up runs early. Clearly there's been issues with his slider."



Hal Steinbrenner should blame himself, too, for Yankees' lowly state

BY WALLACE MATTHEWS

May 18, 2016 9:42 PM ET

PHOENIX -- In his State of the Yankees address Wednesday, Hal Steinbrenner singled out all of the right suspects, absolved all of the innocent parties and threw at least a partial bone to frustrated Yankees fans who have been desperate for any shred of evidence that he is indeed a blood relation to George M. Steinbrenner III.

The only thing the New York Yankees owner didn't do was point a finger in the direction it belongs: at himself.

Steinbrenner was right to name Mark Teixeira, Chase Headley, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino as the chief culprits in the Yankees' horrible start. The team is six games under .500 and in the cellar of the American League East, 7½ games behind the division-leading Baltimore Orioles entering Wednesday night's meeting with the Arizona Diamondbacks.

And Steinbrenner was equally justified in exonerating his manager, Joe Girardi, who can neither hit, pitch, run nor field for the men on his highly paid roster, and his general manager, Brian Cashman, who like all GMs acts strictly in accordance with the wishes of his boss.

Where he went wrong, however, is in not shouldering the blame himself. The reason is not because he did not spend enough money -- the Yankees' 2016 payroll is \$225 million, up \$8 million from last season and second only to the Los Angeles Dodgers' \$249 million -- or because he did not pursue the handful of desirable free agents on the market this past winter. (Can you imagine the fans' reaction if the Yankees had given David Price seven years and \$217 million?)

The reason is that for all his positive qualities as an owner, Hal Steinbrenner has not been truly honest with Yankees fans. Whether he, Cashman or Girardi would dare admit it, Steinbrenner is not all in it to win it this season, nor was he last season.

Yes, he is trying to put a competitive team on the field, because he has seats to fill, debt service on the Stadium to pay off and cable TV ratings to bolster.

But we all know that for the past two seasons, the Yankees have been in a holding pattern, waiting for some of their onerous contracts to expire, such as those of Teixeira and Carlos Beltran after this season, and those of Alex Rodriguez and CC Sabathia following 2017. We know that Steinbrenner would love to get under the luxury-tax threshold, which will be renegotiated in the next collective bargaining agreement. And we can reasonably assume he is looking forward to the day he can take all the money that will be freed up from those expiring deals and invest it in Bryce Harper, the closest thing the Yankees will ever see to a free agent in his prime when he hits the market after the 2018 season.

So in addition to naming Teixeira, Headley, Pineda and Severino on Wednesday at baseball's quarterly owners meetings in New York, it would have been a good idea -- and a gesture of good faith with the fans -- for Hal Steinbrenner to drop a dime on himself.

Just come out and say what is clear as day to any discerning fan: That the New York Yankees, proud owners of 27 world championships and the self-bestowed soubriquet of "The World's Greatest Sports Franchise," are probably not built to win this year. Or next year, for that matter. In fact, they are in a rebuilding stage, or as close as they can ever come to rebuilding while still keeping a hold on one of the most demanding fan bases in all of professional sports.

And the truth is, mistakes were made in the construction of this roster and the allocation of the considerable sums of money at the Yankees' disposal.

It was a lousy idea to give Rodriguez 10 more years when he opted out of his first deal in 2007. It was a huge risk, and one Cashman has been publicly leery of for years, to give a seven-year contract to a starting pitcher, any starting pitcher, like the one they gave to Masahiro Tanaka two years ago. It was sheer insanity, and probably some guilt-ridden compensation, to give Jacoby Ellsbury seven years and \$153 million after the Yankees (read: Hal Steinbrenner) chose to let Robinson Cano leave as a free agent. Beltran's deal never seemed like a good idea considering he would be 39 in its final season.

And you can debate the merits all you want of Teixeira's eight-year, \$180 million deal and Sabathia's renegotiated, five-year, \$122 million deal with a vesting option for another \$25 million for 2017, since both were part of the last Yankees team to win a world championship.

But the truth about those deals -- and really, just about any free-agent deal -- is that while they might provide value in the early years, they are all bound to become albatrosses and huge wastes of money as the players age out of their productive years while continuing to be paid as superstars.

Hal Steinbrenner signed off on all those deals and, presumably, put the kibosh on others. So if there is anyone who should assume the responsibility for the flaws on his roster and the dead money on his books, it is him.

You can make the fair argument that the Yankees' player-development department has failed to develop enough young starting pitchers -- Severino is only the latest disappointment on a list that includes Manny Banuelos, Andrew Brackman and even Dellin Betances, who once projected as a starter -- and really, no everyday players at all other than Brett Gardner, now that Cano is gone. But to be truly fair, you also must recognize that Hal Steinbrenner eventually recognized the weakness of his player-development department a year ago and made some changes about which it is still too early to judge.

But there is little to no question that in many cases, the wrong players were signed, for too long and for too much money, and over the past two seasons, that bill has come due with a vengeance.

You can point the finger of blame at those players for underperforming, or you can point it at the man who thought they were worth investing in.

That man was Hal Steinbrenner, and while he was pointing fingers today, the right thing to do would have been to point one at himself, too.



Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner blames players for slow start

ESPN.com news services

MAY 19, 2016 4:20 AM ET

NEW YORK -- Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner has backed manager Joe Girardi and his coaching staff and has blamed players for the team's slow start.

With New York last in the AL East at 16-22 before its 4-2 win over Arizona on Wednesday, Steinbrenner singled out Mark Teixeira, Chase Headley, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino for criticism.

"The first five weeks were disappointing, frustrating, particularly looking at the offense," said Steinbrenner, speaking Wednesday outside Major League Baseball's offices. "Clearly not living up to their potential.

"When you look at a guy like Mark Teixeira, clearly, he's not playing to his potential with the bat."

Steinbrenner said Pineda's decline is "concerning."

"All these strikeouts, and yet he's given up these runs," Steinbrenner said.

"Whatever technically is wrong with the delivery, Larry [Rothschild, pitching coach] is going to work on, but the rest is up to Pineda to figure out. He's a professional, and that's what we expect from him, and that's what his teammates expect from him."

As for Severino, Steinbrenner said the pitcher has "a confidence issue" and has "to learn how to push through that downturn."

Not all players felt Steinbrenner's wrath. He praised Starlin Castro and Aaron Hicks, along with Girardi, Rothschild and general manager Brian Cashman.

"The coaches are doing a good job," Steinbrenner said. "These are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world, and sooner or later it comes down to them, on the inside, to push through whatever it is they're going through and to persevere."

Far less tempestuous than his father, George, who goaded the team from his purchase in 1973 until nearly the time of his death in 2010, Hal Steinbrenner discussed the Yankees analytically, but with hope.

"Needless to say, the first five weeks were disappointing, frustrating, particularly looking at the offense," he said. "Clearly not living up to their potential."

Teixeira, a three-time All-Star first baseman, finished Wednesday night with a .203 average and 11 RBIs after going 0-for-5 with three strikeouts against the Diamondbacks. Headley didn't have an extra-base hit until May 12. After going 5-3 with a 2.89 ERA as a rookie, Severino is 0-6 with a 7.46 ERA and is on the disabled list with a triceps injury. Pineda is 1-5 with a 6.60 ERA, 102nd among 104 qualifying pitchers in the major leagues.

"I don't think it's a flaw in the way the team is put together," Steinbrenner said. "I think the team we have this year is better than the team we had last year."

The slumping Teixeira responded to Steinbrenner's assertion, readily acknowledging that he needs to play better.

"I don't blame him," Teixeira said. "I've been terrible the last month. I've been around long enough to know that you're going to get singled out when you're not producing, especially the type of career that I've had. I've always been someone that's been able to carry teams during tough streaks. We've been in a tough stretch the whole season. I'm the kind of player that can carry a team for a while. I just haven't done it yet."

Pineda echoed this sentiment, telling reporters that he's not bothered by the critical assessment from the New York owner.

"I know I can be better, and that's why I'm telling you guys that I need to keep working hard to improve," Pineda said. "I can be better. I know it."

Speaking in Phoenix before the Yankees played Arizona, Girardi also understood Steinbrenner's sentiment.

"If I was the owner, I'd be frustrated, too," the manager said.

Now 46, with his hair starting to gray near the temples, Steinbrenner put off questions about what he would do if the Yankees are far from contention as the Aug. 1 deadline approaches for trades without waivers. After missing the playoffs in consecutive years for the first time in two decades, New York returned to the postseason in October, only to lose to the Houston Astros in the AL wild-card game.

For their first 22 home games this season, the Yankees averaged 38,587 fans, which appears on track to surpass last season's average of 39,992, given the larger crowds that usually show up when school is out.

"Season tickets are slightly up, which is the first time in four or five years that that's been the case," Steinbrenner said. "I don't know if it's making the playoffs one game or not. I don't know if it's some of the young players, Hicks, Castro, [Aroldis] Chapman, some of the guys we brought on. I don't know. But the fans have been excited."

He talked about the need for the Yankees to always have veteran stars, even as they add younger players. He looked ahead to prospects such as first baseman Greg Bird and pitcher James Kaprielian, who are both hurt, and shortstop Jorge Mateo. Steinbrenner said another run of consecutive World Series titles might be more difficult with the parity caused by revenue sharing and the luxury tax, but he thinks it still is possible.

"Sooner or later it comes down to ... ," he said, stopping to tap his hand over his heart three times.

In a text message to ESPN.com on Wednesday, Cashman said: "We just need to play better baseball, and baseball like we are capable of playing."

New York won six World Series titles while George Steinbrenner was in charge. Hal Steinbrenner, whose only title since taking over came in 2009, said he knows the standard set by his father.

"If my name wasn't Steinbrenner, I wouldn't be here," he said. "I don't look at this as something I deserve. I've been given this. It's a gift. I respect it, and I enjoy it."

Information from ESPN's Wallace Matthews and The Associated Press was used in this report.

Yankees Owner Hal Steinbrenner Calls Out Players for Slow Start

Mark Teixeira, Chase Headley, Luis Severino and Michael Pineda singled out by owner. GM Cashman, manager Girardi given vote of confidence

By JARED DIAMOND

May 18, 2016 8:29 p.m. ET

PHOENIX— Hal Steinbrenner is not his father, but he proved Wednesday that he isn't afraid to channel his inner Boss when the situation calls for it.

Speaking with reporters at baseball's quarterly owners meetings in New York, the Yankees' owner gave manager Joe Girardi and general manager Brian Cashman a vote of confidence, blaming the players for the team's slow start and admonishing them for failing to perform up to expectations.

In fact, Steinbrenner took the George-like step of criticizing four struggling Yankees by name, singling out first baseman Mark Teixeira, third baseman Chase Headley and starting pitchers Michael Pineda and Luis Severino.

"I don't blame him," Teixeira said after hearing about Steinbrenner's remarks. "I've been terrible the last month."

Even as the Yankees' floundering offense has improved somewhat in recent weeks, Teixeira has remained mired in a miserable slump. He entered Wednesday's series finale here against the Arizona Diamondbacks batting .192 in May and .211 overall. After bashing 31 home runs last season, he hadn't hit one since April 13—a drought of more than 100 at-bats.

"At some point you go from being a good team that's playing bad to a bad team," Teixeira said. "I need to be a big part of turning it around."

Meanwhile, Steinbrenner acknowledged that Headley has started to play better of late, but he still went into Wednesday hitting .196. He didn't have a single extra-base hit until last Thursday.

Before Wednesday's game, Headley seemed to take Steinbrenner's words in stride, saying it comes with the territory when you play for the Yankees and don't deliver.

"I don't need a reminder," Headley said. "I don't mean that in a negative way toward him. I know I'm not playing well."

As for the two pitchers, Severino is currently on the disabled list with a right triceps strain, after posting a 7.46 ERA in his first seven outings. Pineda hasn't been much better, putting up a 6.60 ERA so far, including a five-inning, five-run outing Tuesday.

"It doesn't bother me that he's saying that, but at the same time, I expect a lot from myself," Pineda said. "I know I can be better."

Yankees' Mark Teixeira, Chase Headley, Michael Pineda on being called out by owner

By Randy Miller | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on May 18, 2016 at 8:50 PM

PHOENIX — Yankees third baseman Chase Headley was at his locker changing into his uniform Wednesday afternoon when noticing a bunch of reporters nearby looking his way.

Headley finished dressing, then stood up to see what everyone wanted.

That's when Headley, a .196 hitter with two homers and nine RBIs in 34 games through Tuesday, found out that he was among four players singled out by Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner as underachieving for a club that is last in the AL East in mid-May after being a wild card playoff team in 2015.

A few minutes later, pitcher Michael Pineda, 1-5 with a 6.60 ERA in eight starts and a day removed from his latest bad outing, got word from the media that he'd been called out, as well.

Before Yankees reporters got to Mark Teixeira, who was batting .211 with three homers and 11 RBIs in 36 games heading into Wednesday and freely admits he's stunk, the three-time All-Star first baseman was told by a team official what Steinbrenner had told reporters earlier in the day during a break in the owner meetings.

As for pitcher Luis Severino, the fourth player named by Steinbrenner, he's on the disabled list with an 0-6 record and 7.46 ERA in seven starts and wasn't able for comment.

Here's how three of the four called out Yankees reacted to Steinbrenner's criticism:

MARK TEIXEIRA

On being called out by Steinbrenner:

"I don't blame him. I've been terrible the last month. I've just got to get it going, especially left-handed. Left-handed, I've been pretty bad."

On if being called out by ownership stings:

"I've been around long enough to know that you're going to be singled out when you're not producing, especially the type of career I've had. I've always been someone that's been able to carry teams during streaks. We've been in a tough stretch the whole season and I'm the kind of player that can carry a team for awhile. I just haven't done it yet."

On if Steinbrenner's comments can add emotionally help him or hurt him in any way:

"I don't need any extra motivation. I just gotta go out there and perform. It doesn't matter what anyone really says. That's just the way sports is. You gotta go out there and perform. It's the ultimate, 'what have you done for me lately' sport. I'm a streaky hitter. There's no doubt about that and I just need to get on a hot streak now."

On if Steinbrenner's criticism could have an impact because, unlike his late father, he rarely publicly calls out players by name:

"I don't think so. Like I said, I don't need any more motivation. I was an All-Star last year. I need to get back to that because I feel good. I'm healthy and I need to just go out there and perform."

CHASE HEADLEY

On being one of four players singled out by Steinbrenner as underachieving:

"Obviously, the numbers aren't where they normally are. It's his team. He wants to win. We want to win, and at this point I'm not performing the way that I've hoped to. It doesn't really mean anything to me to be honest. I don't need a reminder, and I don't mean that in a negative way towards him. Let me make sure everyone understands I'm not saying I wish he wouldn't have said anything like that. I know that I haven't played the way that I'm capable of. I know that I've got to pick it up. If I'm playing better, then we win a couple more games."

On if it's a different feeling being called out by ownership rather than media and/or fans:

"Not really. Listen, whether (Steinbrenner) says it or doesn't say it, I'm sure he felt it. So I don't rely on him anybody to tell me whether I'm playing good or not. I'm pretty aware of that myself. I'm just going to try to be better. I feel like I'm on the right track. I've been playing better the last week and a week or so, and that's where my focus is."

MICHAEL PINEDA

Reaction to Steinbrenner's comments:

"It doesn't bother me that he's saying that, but at the same time I expect a lot from myself and I know I can be better. That's why I'm telling you guys that I need to keep working hard to improve because I can be better. I know it."

On if being called out by the owner adds more pressure:

"There's pressure when you're a baseball player and part of the Yankees, but at the same time I've got to keep working hard and do my job."

The Record

Steinbrenner blames players, not Girardi, for Yanks' slow start

BY PETE CALDERA

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18, 2016, 9:52 PM

PHOENIX — Word of Hal Steinbrenner's cutting, public critique of his last-place Yankees — in which he leaned specifically on a handful of players — had traveled to the desert on Wednesday afternoon, where it met a universal response.

"Yeah, I don't blame him," Mark Teixeira said.

"It's his team, he wants to win," Chase Headley said. "[And] we want to win."

"If I was the owner, I'd be frustrated too," said manager Joe Girardi.

Speaking with reporters at the quarterly owners' meetings in New York, Steinbrenner absolved Girardi, his coaching staff and general manager Brian Cashman of blame for the club's 16-22 start.

Instead, the Yankees' managing general partner and youngest son of the bombastic late owner George Steinbrenner called out Teixeira, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino and Headley — whom he also praised for his recent uptick — as illustrative of an ugly start.

"Needless to say, the first five weeks were disappointing, frustrating, particularly looking at the offense," Steinbrenner told reporters. "Clearly [they're] not living up to their potential."

Girardi hadn't personally read Steinbrenner's quotes and withheld specific comment, having not spoken directly to Steinbrenner by Wednesday afternoon.

However, "I always take full responsibility for what happens here, good or bad," Girardi said in backing his underachieving roster. "It's my job to get the best out of the players and right now we're not performing to the level I think we're capable of."

But the players in question saw the reality of Steinbrenner's sentiment.

"I've been around long enough to know you're going to get singled out if you're not producing," said Teixeira, batting just .211 with three homers and 11 RBI in

his first 36 games. "I've always been someone who's been able to carry teams during tough streaks and we've been in a tough stretch the whole season."

"I was an All-Star last year," Teixeira said. "I need to get back to that because I feel good, I'm healthy. I just need to go out and perform."

Steinbrenner included with Teixeira as "not playing to his potential with the bat," to which Headley replied: "[It] doesn't really mean anything to me to be honest, I don't need a reminder [and] I don't mean that in a negative way towards him."

"I know I'm not playing the way I'm capable of," said Headley (.196, 2 HR, 9 RBI), who had gone more than a month before his first extra-base hit. "If I'm playing better, then maybe we win a couple more games and some other guys, I'm sure, feel the same way."

Steinbrenner called Pineda's 1-5 record and 6.60 ERA "concerning." Pitching coach Larry Rothschild feels it's more baffling, given the right-hander's failures while ahead in the count.

But Rothschild was committed to making a quick fix of Pineda's troubles, especially out of the stretch, while Pineda absorbed Steinbrenner's criticism evenly.

"It doesn't bother me that he's saying that," Pineda said evenly through an interpreter. "At the same time, I expect a lot from myself. I know I can be better."

Severino felt Steinbrenner's sting, too, for an 0-6 start and 7.46 ERA, though he's currently on the disabled list (triceps strain) and might be forced to work his way back from the minors.

Just as Headley stated, Teixeira said: "I don't need any extra motivation ... it doesn't matter what anyone really says. That's just the way sports is; you have to go out there and perform."

Left unsaid by Steinbrenner was the potentially pitfalls of an aging roster, one that wasn't bolstered by any free agent signings this past winter.

"At a certain point you go from being a good team that's playing bad, to a bad team. I don't think we're there yet," Teixeira said. "I still think we're a good team."

Steinbrenner: It's up to players to lift Yankees

By Paul Hagen / MLB.com | May 18th, 2016

NEW YORK -- The Yankees didn't expect to be in last place at this point in the season. They certainly don't like it, even though it's still very early in the season.

But don't look for any fireworks from managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner, none of the change-for-change-sake that was so much a part of the franchise's culture under his late father, George.

Nobody is on the hot seat, the son stressed Wednesday during the first day of the quarterly Owners Meetings held at Major League Baseball's Park Avenue headquarters. Not general manager Brian Cashman. Not manager Joe Girardi. Not any members of the coaching staff.

"Needless to say, the first five weeks were disappointing," Steinbrenner said. "Frustrating, particularly looking at the offense. We've got to start firing on all cylinders. That's the only way we're going to get out of this hole. Because we're in a hole right now."

It will be up to the players, he said. Steinbrenner mentioned Mark Teixeira, Chase Headley, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino among the players most responsible for the Yankees' 16-22 start.

"Certainly not living up to their potential. It's up to them," he said.

"Sooner or later, it comes down to the guys. Again, these are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world. Sooner or later it comes down to them."

Steinbrenner was encouraged by his team's most recent homestand, when the Yankees went 7-3 against the Red Sox, Royals and White Sox and said he wasn't even thinking about the possibility of selling off assets at the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline.

"Any possibility that comes along we're going to look at," he said. "But it's mid-May. We can talk again in July but, right now, that's the least of my concerns. Nobody has given up. That clubhouse has not given up, I can tell you that."

Steinbrenner said that he believes the additions of **Aaron Hicks** and **Starlin Castro** have made the Yankees an even better offensive team than the 2015 club that finished second in runs scored, and that the organization continues to improve overall.

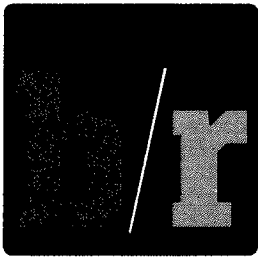
"I'm excited. I think our fans are excited. But the excitement wanes if the production isn't there. So we'll see," he said.

Steinbrenner also addressed issues such as revenue sharing and instant replay. The latter is particularly timely because baseball is in the process of negotiating a new Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Major League Baseball Players Association.

"Clearly, that's going to be one of the biggest topics, so we'll see where we end up with that," he said. "But everybody is discussing things in a really rational manner, which is how it should be done."

And he gave a thumbs up to replay.

"I like it," he said. "Obviously, it can go too far. But, within reason, it's a good thing. I've been pleased with the process, how it worked. As long as we don't have three-and-a-half, four-hour games, it's a healthy thing."



bleacher report

Hal Steinbrenner Comments on Yankees' Struggles, Coaching Staff, More

By Scott Polacek, Featured Columnist
May 19, 2016

The New York Yankees moved to 17-22 on Wednesday with a victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks, but owner Hal Steinbrenner is not happy his team is in last place in the American League East.

He specifically singled out the players while deflecting blame from manager Joe Girardi and the rest of the coaching staff, per ESPN.com:

The first five weeks were disappointing, frustrating, particularly looking at the offense. ... The coaches are doing a good job. These are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world, and sooner or later it comes down to them, on the inside, to push through whatever it is they're going through and to persevere.

Steinbrenner mentioned the offense's poor performance, which is not surprising considering their statistical rankings across the league entering play Wednesday:

Stat	League Ranking
------	----------------

Total Runs	26th
------------	------

Home Runs	20th
-----------	------

Batting Average	25th
-----------------	------

OPS	27th
-----	------

Source: ESPN.com

The Yankees simply don't resemble the usual powerful lineup fans are accustomed to seeing don the pinstripes. New York won six World Series titles when

Steinbrenner's father, George, was running things, but the elder Steinbrenner was never afraid to challenge coaches or players with his fiery attitude.

His son took a cue on Wednesday and singled out some underperformers, including first baseman Mark Teixeira, per ESPN.com: "When you look at a guy like [Teixeira], clearly, he's not playing to his potential with the bat."

Teixeira is a three-time All-Star, five-time Gold Glove winner and three-time Silver Slugger recipient who has 12 different seasons with more than 20 home runs and nine different campaigns with at least 30 long balls on his sterling resume. However, the 36-year-old was sporting a .211 batting average with three home runs and 11 RBI entering play Wednesday.

Teixeira didn't shy away from the criticism, per ESPN.com: "I don't blame him. I've been terrible the last month. I've been around long enough to know that you're going to get singled out when you're not producing, especially the type of career that I've had."

Steinbrenner was focused on the poor offensive numbers, but he also looked toward starting pitcher Michael Pineda. Steinbrenner said, "All these strikeouts, and yet he's given up these runs. Whatever technically is wrong with the delivery, Larry [Rothschild, pitching coach] is going to work on, but the rest is up to Pineda to figure out. He's a professional, and that's what we expect from him, and that's what his teammates expect from him."

Pineda does have 50 strikeouts in 43.2 innings, but he also boasts a 1-5 record with an ugly 6.60 ERA and 1.65 WHIP. He was solid but unspectacular last season with a 4.37 ERA and 1.23 WHIP, but his 2016 performance is a far cry from 2014 when he finished with a sparkling 1.89 ERA, 0.83 WHIP and 59 strikeouts in 76.1 innings and 13 starts.

He looked like a Yankees superstar-in-the-making at the time, but he has been anything but this season.

It is fair to wonder if the Yankees are too old to realistically compete for an American League East crown this year, especially after such a poor start. They were counting on a number of aging veterans entering the season who were all 32 years old or older:

Aging Players on Yankees Roster

Player	Age
--------	-----

Jacoby Ellsbury	32
Brett Gardner	32
Chase Headley	32
Brian McCann	32
CC Sabathia	35
Mark Teixeira	36
Carlos Beltran	39
Alex Rodriguez	40

Steinbrenner wasn't ready to concede that point when reflecting on the poor start, "I don't think it's a flaw in the way the team is put together. I think the team we have this year is better than the team we had last year," he said, per ESPN.com.

The Yankees did add pieces such as closer Aroldis Chapman and second baseman Starlin Castro to a team that finished 87-75 and reached the American League Wild Card Game in 2015, where it lost to the Houston Astros. However, New York missed the playoffs the two years prior and may be better served moving on from this core and starting a rebuilding process.

Still, the Yankees are one of the pillar franchises in all of professional sports and made the playoffs 17 times and won six World Series titles from 1995-2012. Rebuilding isn't in their blood, and Steinbrenner sounded like someone who still believes they can make a run this season.

For his part, Girardi was quick to accept the blame for the start, per Wallace Matthews of ESPN.com: "I always take full responsibility for what happens here—good or bad. It's my job to get the best out of the players, and right now, we're not performing to the level I think we're capable of."

The silver lining for the Yankees is the fact it is still early in a long season, and they are within striking distance of the first-place Baltimore Orioles at 7.5 games back. They were also only four games back in the wild-card race after Wednesday's victory and have plenty of time to turn things around.

If they don't, they will probably hear about it from Steinbrenner.



Hal Steinbrenner faults players for Yankees' poor start, not Joe Girardi

By Brandon Schlager

Updated at 4:41 a.m. ET

Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner isn't much like his father, but he's taking a page from George's playbook in an attempt to spark his last-place franchise.

Making his first public comments since the 2016 season began, Steinbrenner offered a critical assessment of the Yankees' 16-22 start but spared manager Joe Girardi and his staff, placing the blame squarely on struggling players like Mark Teixeira, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino.

"The first five weeks were disappointing, frustrating, particularly looking at the offense," Steinbrenner told reporters Wednesday outside Major League Baseball's offices, via ESPN.com. "Clearly not living up to their potential . . . When you look at a guy like Mark Teixeira, clearly, he's not playing to his potential with the bat."

Entering Wednesday, the Yankees were among MLB's worst in runs scored (26th), on-base percentage (25th) and team batting average (26th).

Teixeira, Chase Headley and Alex Rodriguez all are batting .211 or lower and have just 10 home runs between them.

When it comes to the rotation, the Yankees were counting on progression from the trio of Pineda (6.60 ERA in eight starts), Severino (7.46 in seven) and Nathan Eovaldi (4.85 in seven) and they've gotten the opposite.

Steinbrenner said Severino has "a confidence issue" and has "to learn how to push through that downturn," but it's Pineda who's most concerning.

"He's got all these strikeouts (50 in 43 2/3 innings), and yet he's given up these runs (33 total, 32 earned)," he said. "Clearly, he's been giving up runs early. Clearly, there have been issues with his slider. Again, (pitching coach) Larry (Rothschild) can only do so much. Whatever technically is wrong with the delivery, Larry is working on it, but the rest is up to Pineda to figure it out. He's a professional, and that's what we expect from him. That's what his teammates expect from him."

Not everyone drew Steinbrenner's ire. He credited the success of offseason additions Starlin Castro and Aaron Hicks to general manager Brian Cashman, a reason why Steinbrenner doesn't "think it's a flaw in the way the team is put together."

"I think the team we have this year is better than the team we had last year," he added, pointing to a recent 7-3 homestand as reason for optimism. He put off talk about the Yankees' plan for the July 31 trade deadline should struggles persist.

"I think the coaches are doing a good job," he said. "These are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world. And sooner or later, it comes down to them on the inside, to push through whatever it is they're going through, and to persevere."

Yankees should consider selling, despite Hal Steinbrenner's reluctance

By Brendan Kutty | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on May 19, 2016 at 8:00 AM, updated May 19, 2016 at 8:22 AM

NEW YORK — Hal Steinbrenner was — understandably — reluctant to face a possible and scary reality.

The Yankees owner wasn't willing to talk about whether his club would be willing to do something in stark contrast to its mission statement — and its history:

Become salesmen if buying no longer made sense.

"It's mid-May," Steinbrenner said. "I'm going to see you guys. I'm going to be around. I'll be around the stadium. We'll talk again in July. Right now, that's the least of my concerns."

Steinbrenner was talking outside Major League Baseball's headquarters during Day 1 of the Owners Meetings on Wednesday in Manhattan.

With their record at 17-22 — their worst start in a long time — the Yankees have been in last place in the American League East since April 23.

"Look, every trade deadline, you know me," Steinbrenner said. "Any possibility that comes along, we're going to look at. But I'm not even going to think of that right now. But that's what I do every trade deadline. We looked at a lot of possibilities last year, but we just ended up not doing anything."

Again, Steinbrenner's preference to kick the can down the road was understandable. He doesn't want to make it sound like the Yankees are considering waving the white flag this early, and of the first time in a long time. It's way, way too early for that.

But we'll say it for him: Steinbrenner and general manager Brian Cashman need to explore selling off assets if contention is no longer a reality come the Aug. 1 trade deadline.

A few thoughts on the matter:

1.) What is "out of contention?:" Is that five games out of the Wild Card come the deadline? Six? Four? The addition of the second Wild Card spot makes that even blurrier. And it depends on how the rest of the division is performing in relation to the Yankees. This question alone is going to make it tough for the Yankees to reverse their natural course and auction off parts instead of adding them.

2.) Plenty of tradable assets: Here's a list of guys to become free agents next season and could help winning clubs: closer Aroldis Chapman, right fielder Carlos Beltran and first baseman Mark Teixeira. Then there are the players who have circulated in trade rumors for a while: left fielder Brett Gardner and set-up man Andrew Miller. Want more? How about starting pitchers Michael Pineda and Nathan Eovaldi, who each are set to become free agents of the first time in 2018.

3.) A little space to clear: The team would likely prefer 24-year-old right fielder Aaron Judge, who's raked at Triple-A the year, to take over full-time in the Bronx next season.

4.) Don't fake it to ... not make it: Half-measures won't help the Yankees in the long term. The team's only trade deadline acquisition last year was Dustin Ackley. Predictably, it wasn't enough to put them over the top. Of course, the Yankees had their reasons for not making a bigger deal. They didn't believe the returns met the demands, and that's fine. But if the Yankees aren't near the top of the division at the deadline, the way they were last year, it won't be worth it for the longterm health of the club to do enough just to keep it somewhat competitive.

Yankees' Hal Steinbrenner won't use dad's playbook yet

By Brendan Kutty | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on May 18, 2016 at 6:06 PM

NEW YORK — Heads aren't going to roll in the Bronx any time soon.

Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner said nobody's in danger of losing their jobs yet, despite the team's sad 16-22 start that has it in last place in the American League East. The stumble comes a season after the club — with virtually the same roster — reached the Wild Card game, building expectations.

Steinbrenner's comments came during the first day at the quarterly Major League Baseball owners meetings outside of the league's headquarters in Manhattan.

"No, I think the coaches are doing a good job," he said. "These are professional athletes, they're the best baseball players in the world. Sooner or later it comes down to them, on the inside, to push through whatever they're going through and to persevere."

A growing number of fans on social media have been calling for wholesale changes to the Yankees as they've underperformed and watched the rest of the division pass them by.

In the offseason, the team didn't renew the one-year contract of primary hitting coach Jeff Pentland, despite his offense finishing second in the league in runs scored. Assistant hitting coach Alan Cockrell was given Pentland's job going into this season, and Triple-A hitting coach Marcus Thames took over the No. 2 hitting job.

The Yankees' offense struggled mightily early this season but has shown signs of life in the last couple of weeks. It's currently 26th in runs scored and batting average.

Pitching coach Larry Rothschild, respected as one of the best at his job in the game, has been with the team since 2011. He hasn't been able to fix the struggles of a pair of promising pitchers Luis Severino and Michael Pineda, righties who have been among baseball's worst starters. The front end of the team's bullpen has also been unreliable, while it's back-end trio of Dellin Betances, Andrew Miller and Aroldis Chapman has been lights out.

Manager Joe Girardi and general manager Brian Cashman each are on deals that will take them through 2017.

The team hasn't changed managers in the middle of a season since 1990, when it replaced Bucky Dent with Stump Merrill. At the time, the Yankees were 18-33.

Steinbrenner praised a pair of trades Cashman made in the offseason. The team acquired outfielder Aaron Hicks from the Twins for a backup catcher and second baseman Starlin Castro from the Cubs for a reliever and a little-used utility infielder.

"I think (Cashman) made some good trades," the owner said. "I think Castro worked out great. I think Hicks has worked out great now that he's starting to play everyday, he's starting to hit. Look, again, this is, you go through these periods every year. Every team does. For us, unfortunately, it happened at the very beginning."



Hal Steinbrenner gives a vote of confidence for Joe Girardi

By Bill Baer

May 18, 2016, 10:40 PM EDT

The Yankees entered play Wednesday with a 16-22 record, sitting the cellar of the AL East. Their slow month and a half to begin the season has many culprits, and team owner Hal Steinbrenner does not believe that manager Joe Girardi or his coaching staff are among them.

Per ESPN, Steinbrenner said, "The coaches are doing a good job."

Steinbrenner did single out **Mark Teixeira**, **Chase Headley**, **Michael Pineda**, and **Luis Severino**. Headley didn't register his first extra-base hit of the season until recently while Teixeira entered play Wednesday with a 6.30 OPS. Meanwhile, both Pineda and Severino have ERA's above 6.00 in 15 combined starts.

Despite entering the season with a \$226 million payroll, the Yankees haven't been signing free agents as wildly as they have in the past. Most of the active payroll is taken up by contracts signed years ago, including **CC Sabathia**'s \$25 million, Teixeira's \$23 million, and **Alex Rodriguez**'s \$21 million. It's tough to say if spending more money would have actually changed the Yankees' fate.

NY Post
5.19.16

Criticism of no concern to Bombers

By GEORGE A. KING III

PHOENIX — With Hal Steinbrenner singling out Mark Teixeira, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino as reasons for the Yankees in last place in the AL East, three of the four said they weren't offended the managing general partner put the onus on them.

Only Severino, who is on the disabled list with a strained right triceps, didn't comment, because he isn't with the club.

Speaking at the owners

meetings in New York, Steinbrenner said it is on the players, and general manager Brian Cashman, manager Joe Girardi and his coaches aren't to blame for the 17-22 start that is threatening to bury the Yankees before Memorial Day.

"I don't need extra motivation," said the struggling Teixeira, who went 0-for-5 Wednesday and hasn't homered in 108 at-bats. "I have to perform. It doesn't matter what anyone else says. I have been able to carry a team for stretches. I

haven't done it yet."

Counted on to make the move from back of the rotation to the front this season, Pineda has been a major disappointment.

"It doesn't bother me," Pineda said of Steinbrenner's words. "At the same time I expect a lot of myself. I know I can be better."

Pineda (1-5) has a 6.60 ERA in eight starts and would be a candidate to be dropped from the struggling rotation if the Yankees had a replacement option, which they don't.

Having not read Steinbrenner's quotes before meeting the media, Girardi didn't comment on them. However, he did use the opportunity to remind people that as the manager it falls on him.

"I always take full responsibility for what happens, good or bad," Girardi said. "It's my job to get the best out of the players. We are not performing at the level I think we are capable of. I take responsibility."

More Yanks / P. 55

★
★
20

Yanks not surprised by Steinbrenner's remarks

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 18th, 2016

PHOENIX -- Yankees managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner is voicing his disappointment and frustration with his team's performance, and as those comments carried from the streets of Manhattan into the visiting clubhouse at Chase Field, they did not come as a surprise to those in uniform.

Speaking to reporters in New York, Steinbrenner backed manager Joe Girardi and his coaching staff, but mentioned [Mark Teixeira](#), [Chase Headley](#), [Michael Pineda](#) and [Luis Severino](#) among the players most responsible for the Yankees' 16-22 start.

"I don't blame him. I've been terrible the last month," Teixeira said. "I've just got to get it going, especially left-handed. Right-handed, my swing feels a lot better. We've been facing a lot of lefties. I feel like I've got that pretty locked in right now, but left-handed I've been pretty bad."

Steinbrenner spoke outside Major League Baseball's offices in Manhattan, saying that Teixeira, batting .211 with just three home runs entering play on Wednesday, is "not playing to his potential with the bat."

He said that the touted right-hander Severino -- 0-6 with a 7.46 ERA and currently on the disabled list with a right triceps strain -- is dealing with "a confidence issue" and that Pineda must huddle with pitching coach Larry Rothschild to fix his problems.

"All these strikeouts, and yet he's given up these runs," Steinbrenner said. "Whatever technically is wrong with the delivery, Larry is going to work on, but the rest is up to Pineda to figure out. He's a professional, and that's what we expect from him, and that's what his teammates expect from him."

Pineda's record fell to 1-5 with a 6.60 ERA after taking the loss in Tuesday's **5-3 defeat** at Arizona.

"It doesn't bother me that he's saying that," Pineda said. "At the same time, I expect a lot from myself. I know I can be better and that's why I'm telling you guys that I need to keep working hard to improve. I can be better. I know it."

Headley's season was off to a miserable start, but he has started to turn it around at the plate, though he still entered play on Wednesday batting .196.

"Obviously my numbers aren't where they normally are," Headley said. "It's his team. He wants to win. We want to win. And I know that I'm not, at this point, performing the way I hoped to, so it doesn't really mean anything to be honest. I don't need a reminder and I don't mean that in a negative way towards him. I know I'm not playing the way I'm capable of."

There have been bright spots; Steinbrenner praised [Starlin Castro](#) and [Aaron Hicks](#), along with Girardi, Rothschild and general manager Brian Cashman, saying that he does not see a flaw with how the roster was put together.

"The coaches are doing a good job," Steinbrenner said. "These are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world, and sooner or later it comes down to them, on the inside, to push through whatever it is they're going through and to persevere."



Joe Girardi still believes Yankees can make playoffs

BY SI WIRE

MAY 18, 2016

Manager Joe Girardi still believes the New York Yankees can make the playoffs, he **told** reporters on Wednesday.

"I do. I wouldn't come to work if I didn't," Girardi said.

The Yankees are at the bottom of the American League East with their 16–22 record. Only the Astros and Twins have a worse winning percentage heading into Wednesday night.

Hal Steinbrenner, the Yankees' managing general partner, spoke out about his team for the first time since the beginning of the season.

"I think the coaches are doing a good job," Steinbrenner **said** at the quarterly owners meetings. "These are professional athletes. They're the best baseball players in the world. And sooner or later, it comes down to them on the inside, to push through whatever it is they're going through, and to persevere."

New York was eliminated in the American League Wild Card game against the Houston Astros in 2015. The Yankees have made the playoffs seven times in the last 10 seasons.

The Yankees have not finished with a record below .500 since 1992.

The Yankees look to avoid getting swept by the Arizona Diamondbacks at Chase Field on Wednesday night.



Joe Girardi: 'I take responsibility' for Yankees' failures

BY WALLACE MATTHEWS

May 19, 2016 7:25 AM ET

PHOENIX -- Joe Girardi said he hadn't seen the comments of Hal Steinbrenner absolving him, his coaches and GM Brian Cashman of culpability in the New York Yankees' poor start.

But Girardi wasn't about to accept the absolution of his boss without at least an attempt at shouldering some of the blame.

"Because I didn't see them and talk to Hal, I don't really have any comment," Girardi said Wednesday before his last-place team took the field trying to avert a sweep at the hands of the also-struggling Arizona Diamondbacks. "I always take full responsibility for what happens here -- good or bad. It's my job to get the best out of the players and right now, we're not performing to the level I think we're capable of."

Even though he said he had not read Steinbrenner's comments placing blame on the underperforming Mark Teixeira, Chase Headley, Michael Pineda and Luis Severino, Girardi said he was not surprised by what Steinbrenner had to say.

"Everybody is frustrated," Girardi said. "If I was the owner, I'd be frustrated, too."

Without providing specifics, Girardi indicated Steinbrenner has communicated his frustration with the Yankees' poor start personally to his manager.

"We've talked," Girardi said. "We've met. We've met as a staff. Hal is pretty even keel. We talked about areas that we were struggling, how to try to approach it and fix them. We've been doing that."

Steinbrenner made his comments outside Major League Baseball's Park Avenue offices in New York during a recess in the quarterly owner's meetings. Asked what a manager could specifically do to improve the performance of an underperforming and aging roster, Girardi could only provide generalities.

"There's a lot of different things you can do," he said. "A lot of it is trying to build confidence in them, trying to find little things to maybe where they're mechanically off, studying tape. Sometimes it's tough love. There are a lot of different things you try as a manager to get players going. I was a guy that experienced all those different things when I was a player. You just keep trying."

But he was quite specific when asked if he still believed the Yankees -- who entered Wednesday's play at 16-22 and in last place in the American League East, 7 1/2 games behind the Baltimore Orioles -- were a playoff-caliber team.

"I do," he said. "Obviously we have not played up to that level and we need to change things around. But I do. I wouldn't come to work if I didn't."



Michael Pineda even stymies his pitching coach

BY WALLACE MATTHEWS

MAY 18, 2016

PHOENIX -- It has become a running joke among the Yankees beat writers: Whenever there is a question about pitching, it is practically a guarantee that manager Joe Girardi will delegate the response to his pitching coach, Larry Rothschild.

In fact, so much does Girardi depend on Rothschild that "I'll have to ask Larry" is a refrain and a punch line to just about any question on any subject involving the New York Yankees.

So it made perfect sense that after Michael Pineda turned in yet another horrendous performance in the Yankees' 5-3 loss to the Arizona Diamondbacks on Tuesday night -- five innings pitched, nine hits, five earned runs -- there was only one thing to do.

Ask Larry.

The broad question, of course, was how can one pitcher be so good, recording nine strikeouts, and so bad in the same outing? The more in-depth queries involved Pineda's inability to lock down innings, his repeated failure to put hitters away, and the precipitous decline in his performance since his transcendent 16-strikeout performance against the Baltimore Orioles a little more than year ago.

And Larry, whose natural reticence causes him to rarely speak to the media, was refreshingly candid on every subject. But candid does not necessarily mean enlightening, and it became clear that even the highly respected Rothschild had no easy answers to what has ailed Pineda for the bulk of his past 28 starts.

"I've never had a pitcher who, when the counts get in his favor, the swing-and-miss rate goes down," Rothschild said. "It's kind of hard to figure out."

The two most glaring examples were a second-inning at-bat by Nick Ahmed and a third-inning at-bat by Paul Goldschmidt. Both fell behind -- 0-2 and 1-2, respectively -- and both were the beneficiaries of hanging sliders that, even viewed from the press box, were clearly going to be spanked.

"When he gets two strikes on a hitter, it's like he stops thinking that what he's done so far to get to that point is going to be good enough," Rothschild said. "Instead of trusting his stuff, he's getting out in front of it, overthrowing it, and the ball just ends up spinning."

Rothschild said both sliders to Ahmed and Goldschmidt were intended to be thrown in the dirt.

"I think he's trying to do that, but the adjustments just aren't being made," Rothschild said.

Rothschild also pointed to a decline in the quality of Pineda's stuff when he works out of the stretch.

"We need to fix that as quick as we can," he said.

Rothschild said he was aware of Pineda's dropoff since his 16-strikeout game last May 10, but Rothschild said, "I think that game was the outlier, not the ones that followed it."

He did, however, admit that the regression in Pineda since that day was indeed remarkable.

"I've seen it, but I have no rational explanation for it," Rothschild said.

Still, Rothschild maintains that fixing Pineda would not be as difficult as it appears.

"We've done it in the past, so I think it won't be all that problematic," he said, "But we just need to get it done, for his own benefit and especially for the team."

But the man Girardi and his pitching staff rely on so heavily is not immune to the impatience of a fan.

"It would be easy to sit here and say things are going to turn and it's going to change, but it's just been too long," Rothschild said. "We're almost a quarter of the way through his starts, so we need this to straighten out. We need to end this right now."

Now all he has to do is figure out how.

How Yankees pitching coach Larry Rothschild plans to fix Michael Pineda

By Randy Miller | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on May 18, 2016 at 8:00 AM, updated May 18, 2016 at 12:01 PM

PHOENIX — The Yankees finally seem to have run out of patience waiting for right-hander Michael Pineda to pitch well for more than brief spurts.

His spot in the rotation seems safe for the time being, but there could be some tough love coming in what may be a last-ditch effort to straighten out a pitcher who, in past seasons, sometimes looked like a top-of-the-rotation guy.

Four of Pineda's eight starts this season have been really bad ones, including Tuesday night's clunker ... five runs over five mystifyingly inconsistent innings in a 5-3 Yankees loss to the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Afterward, Pineda had a deer-in-the-headlights look while talking to reporters, with his record at 1-5 and ERA at 6.60. He'd struck out nine and walked just one in his five innings, but Arizona had nine hits against him and eight were smoked, including a backbreaking, two-run homer in the fifth by Jake Lamb that made it a 5-1 game.

Manager Joe Girardi seemed to be more down than usual after this loss, too, in his postgame interview.

Later, pitching coach Larry Rothschild made an appearance in the clubhouse to put his spin on Pineda's season, and he did it with agitation sometimes spilling into his tone.

"It would be easy to sit here and say it'll turn and things will change, but it's too long," Rothschild said. "We're almost a quarter of the way through his starts, so we need that straightened out."

"He's got a chance to be a really good pitcher and I still think he will be. He's going through a major bump in the road right now. We just need to get it straightened out."

Now what?

"At the end of the day, I think one of the problems is the stretch position," Rothschild said. "The quality of pitches there are not the same and we need to fix that as quick as we can."

Rothschild thinks he can help get Pineda straightened out quickly.

"We've done it in the past," he said. "I think it won't be all that problematic. We just need to get it done for his own benefit and especially for the team."

The struggling Dominican got into more first-inning trouble against Arizona, but this time made a big pitch with a runner on third and two down to put up a zero. Then after Starlin Castro homered in the Yankees' second to give him a 1-0 lead, Pineda set down the first two Arizona hitters in the bottom of the inning.

And then it was more of same 2016 Pineda we've seen seeing time and again for more than six weeks.

A mistake pitch led to a two-out triple, another mistake pitch on an 0-2 slider turned into an RBI single and the game was tied.

"That at-bat tells the story of a lot of stuff that's happening this year," Rothschild said. "He throws a number of good pitches, a number of good sliders. He locates fastballs. And then all of a sudden, out of nowhere it's pitches left in the zone that become very hittable."

"The peripheral numbers don't tell the truth about what's going on with him. The whole picture needs to be straightened out."

NY seeks answers to Pineda's perplexing slump

'He's going through a major bump in the road right now,' Rothschild says

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 18th, 2016

PHOENIX -- The emphatic gyrations that used to punctuate **Michael Pineda**'s outings have been replaced by body language of a different kind, like the exasperated glance he shot at the Chase Field roof after watching **Jake Lamb**'s homer travel toward the right-field swimming pool on Tuesday.

Pineda has never been concerned with masking his feelings, whether the performance is positive or negative, and this season has already seen too much of the latter. The right-hander was hammered for five runs and nine hits in a **5-3 loss** to the D-backs on Tuesday, raising his ERA to 6.60.

"Would you be [angry]? Of course you would. He's [angry]," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "He knows he's better than this. He's always been animated. When things are going well, he shakes a lot. He's animated; that's who he is."

Rather than monitoring his quivers, the Yankees are more concerned with how to fix a sour run that has seen Pineda go 0-5 with a 6.05 ERA in seven starts since his season debut on April 6. Though Girardi said they haven't entertained removing Pineda from the rotation, Pineda acknowledged that the thought crosses his mind.

"Of course I'm thinking. This is my job," Pineda said. "I want to be better all the time. About the rotation or whatever, I don't have control for the situation. So the only thing I have control of is, be better when I get on the mound and try to do the best."

The major issue seems to be that the quality of Pineda's pitches drop greatly when he works out of the stretch, compared to the windup. Rothschild said that he believes Pineda has a tendency to overthrow when he is ahead in the count, pointing to **Nick Ahmed**'s two-out, two-strike RBI single on a hanging second-inning slider as a prime example.

"I think one of the problems is the stretch position, that the quality of pitches are not the same," Rothschild said. "We need to fix that as quick as we can. Tonight, two-out RBI on a two-strike breaking ball, he makes a pitch there and he's out of that inning. It's just runs that pile up. We need to end this right now and get this straightened out."

The crushing blow was Lamb's two-run homer in the fifth, but the D-backs enjoyed consistent contact against Pineda in the second and third innings, producing three runs. Given his nine-strikeout performance, that had the Yanks wondering why his swing-and-miss stuff seems to come and go.

"It just goes to show you when he makes a mistake, they're not missing it," Girardi said. "There were sliders that almost backed up, and they're not missing them. When he makes good pitches, he gets people out and he strikes people out."

Pineda tallied seven or more strikeouts for the fourth time in six starts, but his seven-game winless streak is the second-longest of his career.

"It's hard for me," Pineda said. "But I'm just keeping my head up, keep working hard and be better."

Rothschild said that he does not believe the peripheral numbers tell the complete truth about Pineda, though he said that the rise in hitter productivity late in the count has been bizarre.

"We're almost a quarter of the way through his starts, so we need that to straighten out, especially from the stretch position," Rothschild said. "He's got a chance to be a really good pitcher here and I still think he will be. He's going through a major bump in the road right now and we just need to get it straightened out."

Mired in HR drought, Tex refining lefty swing

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | 2:07 AM ET May 19, 2016

PHOENIX -- As he tries to snap the longest home run drought of his career, **Mark Teixeira** said that he is working on his left-handed stroke, hoping that will allow him to get back to hitting the ball with authority.

Teixeira went 0-for-5 with three strikeouts in the Yankees' **4-2 victory** over the D-backs on Wednesday at Chase Field. He has now gone a career-high 108 at-bats without a home run, last clearing an outfield fence on April 13 at Toronto.

"I'm just not driving the ball left-handed. I'm off just enough," Teixeira said. "All it takes is to be off a little bit. Too many ground balls. That's something I'm just trying to work on."

The Yankees saw a healthy diet of left-handed pitching early in the season, which helped Teixeira get his right-handed swing going; he's slashing .306/.404/.388 from that side. He is hitting just .148 (12-for-81) as a lefty this year, which historically has been his more productive side.

"That's surprising. To me, that tells me he's due, and he's due to hit a bunch," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "His track record says he's probably going to hit a bunch, and if they come in bunches, it will be really nice for us."

Teixeira said that everything feels fine in the batting cage and when taking batting practice, which has made it frustrating that the results have not followed into game action. In the ninth inning Wednesday, the D-backs intentionally walked **Brian McCann** to load the bases for Teixeira. A wild pitch brought home New York's fourth run before Teixeira struck out.

"You face some tough pitchers and you expand the zone a little bit," said Teixeira, who drove a ball to the warning track in his first at-bat but was robbed on a nice catch by D-backs right fielder **Brandon Drury**. "I'm not taking my walks like I was earlier. I need to swing at better pitches. Hopefully the home runs will come and I'll draw my walks when I need to. Then hopefully get on a roll."

Because of his power drought, Teixeira said that he was not surprised that managing general partner **Hal Steinbrenner mentioned him** as one of the players responsible for the Yankees' sluggish opening to the season.

"I've been around long enough to know that you're going to get singled out when you're not producing, especially the type of career that I've had," Teixeira said. "I've always been someone that's been able to carry teams during tough streaks. We've been in a tough stretch the whole season. I'm the kind of player that can carry a team for a while. I just haven't done it yet."

Yankees' Alex Rodriguez tests hamstring with some jogging

By [Randy Miller](#) | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on May 18, 2016 at 7:47 PM

PHOENIX — Rehabbing Yankees DH Alex Rodriguez looked healthy and felt good doing some pre-game jogging Wednesday at Chase Field.

Having no discomfort in his right hamstring was encouraging.

A-Rod, however, still didn't feel up to running hard, and thus the new plan to keep him on the disabled list beyond Thursday is still in place.

"He just doesn't feel ready," manager Joe Girardi said before the [Yankees-Arizona Diamondbacks series finale](#). "He has to be able to run the bases. He has to be able to go from second to home, those sort of things. If he hits a groundball and he's out, I don't expect him to go full out, but he has to be able to score."

Until Tuesday, the Yankees were hoping A-Rod would be back in their lineup for their series opening in Oakland on Thursday, the day he's eligible to be activated. Now a best-case return appears to be Saturday, Girardi said.

A-Rod headed from the Yankees clubhouse to shallow right field around 3 p.m. Arizona time Wednesday with trainers and Girardi.

First, A-Rod did some high-stepping jogging from right field to center field, then later jogged from behind first base along the edge of the infield to the third-base foul line three or or four times.

How did he feel?

"Better," Girardi said. "The fact that he didn't feel it today running is progress. It's not full speed though, but it's progress from where he was five or six days ago when he starting jogging."

A-Rod strained his hamstring during the Yankees' 4-1 loss in Baltimore on May 3 and was [put on the disabled list](#) the next day. The Yanks won eight of their first 12 games with A-Rod on the DL before losing two games this week in Arizona.

Next for A-Rod is more jogging Thursday in Oakland, and if he feels up to it, "maybe get on the bases a little bit and we'll see where he's at," Girardi said. "We need him to pick up the speed a little bit so he could run where he needs to run. It's just a day-by-day process. We'll see how good he feels."

A-Rod jogs, but return on hold until Saturday

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 18th, 2016

PHOENIX -- The Yankees are pushing Alex Rodriguez's earliest activation date back another day, with manager Joe Girardi now saying the best case would have him appearing in Saturday's lineup against the Athletics in Oakland.

Rodriguez, on the 15-day disabled list with a strained right hamstring, is eligible to be activated on Thursday but is not moving well enough in the team's estimation. He did not report any further discomfort on Wednesday, but still has yet to run the bases.

"We need him to pick up the speed a little bit where he can run where he needs to run," Girardi said. "It's just a day-by-day process and we'll see how good he feels."

Girardi, head athletic trainer Steve Donohue, strength and conditioning coach Matt Krause and bench coach Rob Thomson all watched Rodriguez work out on the outfield grass Wednesday afternoon, as Rodriguez jogged from right field to center field, then ran several half-moons across the lip of the infield.

"[He looked] better," Girardi said. "He'll do that again tomorrow, maybe get on the bases a little bit and we'll see where he's at."

Rodriguez sustained the strain, which the club termed a "Grade one-plus," running to first base in a May 3 game at Baltimore. The 40-year-old designated hitter is batting .194 with five homers and 12 RBIs in 20 games this season, and though speed is no longer a major part of his game, Girardi said that the Yankees still need him to move in an acceptable fashion.

"He has to be able to run the bases. He has to be able to go from second to home, that sort of thing," Girardi said. "If he hits a ground ball that he's out, I don't expect him to go full-out. But he has to be able to score."

Are the Yankees Better Without Alex Rodriguez?

Slugger's injury has opened door for Beltran and others to blossom in new roles

By **JARED DIAMOND**

Updated May 18, 2016 8:55 p.m. ET

PHOENIX—Their performance in Arizona this week notwithstanding, the Yankees have actually played pretty well of late. They went 7-3 on their recent homestand, showing for the first time this season that they might have a chance in a competitive American League East.

What's strange about the Yankees' sudden resurgence is that it has coincided almost exactly with the absence of Alex Rodriguez, who landed on the disabled list with a strained hamstring on May 4. Somehow, the Yankees have begun to perform better without the player who is supposed to be their best hitter.

Now, after taking batting practice and jogging in the outfield Wednesday here at Chase Field, Rodriguez is nearing his return. After initially hoping that he would be back Thursday, the Yankees now expect to activate Rodriguez sometime during their weekend series in Oakland.

That leaves them facing an uncomfortable question: Is it possible that he will mess up a good thing?

Let's be clear: Nobody is suggesting that the Yankees are a better team without Rodriguez. Though he is batting just .194 this season, he homered in three of his last 17 at-bats before getting hurt, and his presence alone changes the entire complexion of the Yankees' lineup.

But from Rodriguez's absence, the Yankees have learned a few crucial lessons about the composition of their roster, and they all lead to the same conclusion: Perhaps his role isn't as obvious as it once seemed.

"I plan on him being our everyday DH. That's the plan going in," manager Joe Girardi said Tuesday. "Everything in life and in the game of baseball and sports can change. It's not always exactly how you draw it up, but that's my plan."

With Rodriguez out, the Yankees moved Carlos Beltran from right field to designated hitter, and slid Aaron Hicks into an everyday outfield spot. The adjustments had a significant impact on both offense and defense that will be hard to re-create with Rodriguez around.

At age 39 and with more than 2,300 major-league games logged, Beltran is a liability in the outfield, essentially unable to corral anything not in his immediate vicinity. Since joining the Yankees in 2014, his minus-26 defensive runs saved rank last among all right fielders.

Beltran, a three-time Gold Glove winner, says he prefers playing the outfield. But sparing his surgically repaired right knee from the rigors of standing out there every night appears to have helped his bat. He entered Wednesday's series finale against the Arizona Diamondbacks with an

on-base-plus-slugging percentage of .677 when playing right field, versus 1.025 as a DH. In the Yankees' last homestand, he DH'd in six of the 10 games and had seven extra-base hits, including four home runs.

At this point in his career, however, the 40-year-old Rodriguez is a full-time designated hitter. The Yankees have made it clear that they won't use him in the field under any circumstance this year. So when Rodriguez starts, Beltran has to play in the outfield.

Short of relegating Rodriguez to the bench more often than they do, there's nothing the Yankees can do about that. "Alex is our DH," Girardi said. "But on the days I give Alex off, I might choose to DH Carlos and put Hicksey in right."

Girardi might want to consider doing that with a bit more frequency moving forward, especially if Rodriguez's hitting doesn't improve. In Rodriguez's stead, Hicks has proven to be a worthwhile asset.

The Yankees acquired Hicks in November to be their fourth outfielder and start primarily against left-handed pitching. For the first month of the season or so, it didn't work: Playing sparingly, Hicks started by going 2-for-30 (.067) with no extra-base hits.

The moment Rodriguez opened up a position, Hicks woke up.

Until Wednesday, when the Yankees didn't have the luxury of the DH in a National League ballpark, Hicks had played in all 13 games since May 5, starting 12 of them. During that span, he went 13-for-41 (.317), with two doubles, two homers and six RBIs, benefiting from the consistent action. Equally important, Hicks plays high-level defense and boasts an elite throwing arm.

Of course, Hicks may not sustain that level of production. A former first-round pick of the Minnesota Twins, he has struggled in his career thus far. But the Yankees see the potential. As a result, Girardi said he will continue trying to find a place for Hicks, especially because on Tuesday, the Yankees begin a stretch of 20 games in 20 days.

"The original goal was to get him in four, five days week, and we'll try to do that," Girardi said. "He's got going offensively a little bit, so that helps."

None of this is necessarily a criticism of Rodriguez. Rather, it highlights an undeniable truth about how these Yankees are built. Having a full-time DH like Rodriguez hinders the team's flexibility—an issue, considering the age and injury histories of their other players.

Ultimately, the Yankees will withstand all that if Rodriguez hits as well as he did last season, when he bashed 33 homers. That's why the Yankees don't believe that he's the problem. To the contrary: They think bringing him back will only help the cause.



Yankees fast approaching five key decisions

THE LOHUD YANKEES BLOG

Chad Jennings, cjennings@lohud.com 12:17 p.m. EDT May 18, 2016

Forty eight hours ago, the Yankees actually seemed to have found some traction. They'd won seven of 10 at home and capped the home stand with two of three against the first-place White Sox. Their bullpen had had a new weapon for the ninth inning, their offense was getting fresh production from guys who'd struggled earlier in the year, and their rotation had found a ready injury replacement in Ivan Nova.

Hard to notice much traction today, though.

Perhaps Monday's loss can be dismissed as the product of young, inexperienced pitching. But last night's loss was an ugly mix of bad pitching, sloppy defense and ineffective hitting. Joe Girardi was clearly not pleased during the game and again during his postgame press conference.

Now the Yankees are five games away from finally having a day off, and in trying to get something going again, they have some big decisions looming.

- **Can anything be done to make Michael Pineda more reliable? If not, then what?**

This first question has been asked for a few years, but at this point, the second is coming more into focus. Pineda looks healthy and strong, he's mostly throwing strikes, and even his worst games include some really good pitches and impressive moments. But he's so erratic from pitch to pitch that the Yankees can't count on him from start to start. For now, there's little option but to stick with him. The Yankees saw their best Triple-A starter on Monday and the results weren't pretty. CC Sabathia coming off the disabled list on Friday will fill Luis Severino's open rotation spot, but what happens when Severino comes off the DL? Which one should be left out of the rotation, Severino, Pineda or Nova? Sure, Nova's technically the sixth starter, but the Yankees haven't had five starters better than him so far this season.

- **How should the lineup adjust with Alex Rodriguez?**

After last night's game, Girardi acknowledged it's no longer expected that A-Rod will come off the disabled list on Thursday. He hasn't run yet, and so Rodriguez will miss a little more time. When he comes back, though, where should Rodriguez fit in the lineup? Does he go right back into the No. 3 spot? Should his role vary depending on whether there's a righty or a lefty on the mound? When he got hurt, Rodriguez was still a bit of an enigma. He'd started hitting home runs again, and the Yankees were desperate for some sort of boost, so they'd started leaning on his bat again, but that might not be the best approach now that the lineup has been at least occasionally

scoring runs. Good power, but A-Rod's still hitting below .200 this season. He's a valuable right-handed bat, but does that make him a middle-of-the-order guy every night?

- **Where does Aaron Hicks get his at-bats going forward?**

This is probably related to the A-Rod question, but are the Yankees really going to go back to using Hicks strictly against left-handed starters? Surely not. He's a clear defensive upgrade in right field, and Hicks has a higher OPS against righties than Jacoby Ellsbury, Mark Teixeira, Didi Gregorius and A-Rod. He's starting to hit like an everyday player, but the Yankees might not have everyday at-bats available after Rodriguez is available again. It would be difficult to get Hicks in the lineup everyday, but there might be a way to rotate days off so that Hicks plays a little more often than he did in the first month of the season.

- **Is there a long-term role for Rob Refsnyder?**

Until yesterday, the Yankees had kept Refsnyder in Triple-A, but last night they finally called him up. Question is, was this a short-term move just to give the Yankees a full bench for the final two games in Arizona -- perhaps a move the Yankees intended to make on Sunday but had to delay because the pitching staff was so thin -- or was this a long-term move that could end with Ronald Torreyes being the infielder optioned to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre once A-Rod comes off the disabled list? Surely it's worth at least consideration that Refsnyder might be a more valuable role player than Torreyes at this point. Granted, it would force Castro into being the backup shortstop, but Gregorius isn't sitting very often anyway, and Refsnyder's been red-hot. He's probably a better offensive option than Torreyes, but is he a better utility option given how little that role is actually used this season?

- **Who's the best bullpen option for those middle innings?**

Could be that this question was definitively answered last night when Chasen Shreve pitched two scoreless innings and Kirby Yates delivered yet another scoreless frame. Yates has been good lately, and right now he seems to be the go-to reliever beyond the Big Three. If Shreve can join him by doing more of what he did last night, that could solve what's become a real problem for the Yankees: figuring out who in the bullpen they can trust beyond Dellin Betances, Andrew Miller and Aroldis Chapman. Looks like Luis Cessa might get another turn as the long man, and the Yankees now have to decide between him, James Pazos and Nick Goody in choosing who to send down when Sabathia is activated on Friday.



Yankees' Opening Day roster decisions have proved solid

By Christopher Carelli

May 18 | 11:22AM

The New York Yankees had few question marks, beyond health, coming into the season. The club's decision-making revolved around the last spots and some roles within the roster -- who would be the fifth starter, the utility infielder, the backup catcher and which relievers would round out the bullpen? Did they make the right decisions as we approach the quarter pole of the season?

Fifth Starter

Questions around **CC Sabathia's** physical and mental health were at the forefront of the spring and the uncertainty gave **Ivan Nova** a puncher's chance of breaking camp in the rotation. Despite performing slightly better than Sabathia in spring training, Nova was relegated to the bullpen. There was little chance that the Yankees were going to ask Sabathia to work out of the bullpen.

Sabathia, like much of the staff, got off to a slow start, but then began to turn things around in his last couple of starts before hitting the disabled list with a groin strain. Sabathia's marks are not exactly excellent, but they are much better than what he has offered the last two seasons - 3.81 ERA, 1.55 WHIP, 21 K and 13 BB in 28 1/3 IP.

Nova had some difficulties as the long reliever, but pitched well in his two starts - two earned runs in 10 1/3 combined innings pitched. Nova's overall ERA stands at 3.70 and his WHIP is a respectable 1.19.

While Sabathia is due back Friday, his return has zero impact on Nova. **Luis Severino's** trip to the DL gives Nova plenty of time to cement himself in the rotation. Severino's struggles along with the Yankees' desire to protect their young hurler should mean Nova sticks in the rotation for the near future.

The decision with Sabathia and Nova was appropriate in my view. Sabathia was not going to benefit the Yankees out of the bullpen, whereas Nova could. Further, Nova's age allowed for some movement from bullpen to rotation and he showed little trouble doing it.

Utility Infielder

The fans wanted **Rob Refsnyder** and they ended up with little known and well-traveled **Ronald Torreyes**.

The Yankees simply wanted their utility infielder to be able to play shortstop, and that is one position you will never see Refsnyder. The Yankees have given Refsnyder time at third base and the outfield at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, one season after working primarily at second base. The club is doing its best to make Refsnyder as versatile as possible.

In the meantime, Torreyes won some fans over quickly, making some spot starts early on in the season and performing quite well. His efforts along with **Chase Headley's** offensive struggles, got Torreyes more starts, and immediately it was evident why Torreyes will have trouble securing a full-time role here or anywhere else.

The Yankees called Refsnyder up Tuesday to give the club an extra right-handed bat while **Alex Rodriguez** completes his stay on the disabled list. The Yankees will have to decide if Refsnyder goes back to triple-A when Rodriguez returns Thursday, or if the Torreyes era is over.

Refsnyder provides a much better bat with moderate defense, and if the Yankees need to give shortstop **Didi Gregorius** a day off, **Starlin Castro** would get the call. Of course, if Gregorius gets hurt, the club would need to decide if Refsnyder could handle daily reps at second base and if they even want to shift Castro to short for extended time.

The decision at the beginning of the season was the right call in my opinion. However, now that Castro seems quite at ease at second base, I believe he can spell Gregorius on occasion without causing harm to his development at the keystone. Therefore, it seems to me the Yankees could use Refsnyder's bat more than Torreyes' glove. The unknown variable will be Refsnyder's ability to play sparingly and remain productive. The Yankees will never know if Refsnyder can handle a bench spot for an extended period if they do not try it.

Backup Catcher

Gary Sanchez, the Yankees No. 3 prospect according to MLB Pipeline.com, was the odds-on favorite to win the role of backing up starting catcher **Brian McCann**.

Unfortunately, a 1-for-21 spring told the Yankees brass that he could use some more seasoning before getting a lengthy major league run.

It helped that Sanchez's toughest competitor, **Austin Romine**, was having a fine spring and was out of options. Romine put together a .289/.308/.474 slash line during spring training and has not let up in the regular season - .278/.316/.389. If Romine, considered a defense-first backstop, can continue to play to these numbers, it will be hard for Sanchez to take over.

In fact, Sanchez is trying to make things difficult for the Yankees. Sanchez has been hitting well at Scranton producing a .819 OPS and word is he has continued to improve behind the plate. Sanchez received a one-day cameo appearance with the Yankees last

week, but seeing him for an extensive stretch might have to wait until there is an injury to McCann or Romine.

So long as Romine remains steady, I am fine with that. I would much rather see Sanchez play daily and continue to grow. Sanchez's time will come.

Bullpen

With **Aroldis Chapman** set to serve a 30-game suspension for violating the league's domestic violence policy, the Yankees were in need of three relievers to round out the bullpen. Some of the candidates had some time with the Yankees last season and others joined the team in the offseason.

The Yankees ended up selecting **Johnny Barbato** who excelled at Triple-A Scranton last season, **Luis Cessa** (acquired from Tigers) and **Kirby Yates** (minor league free agent signing). Only Yates has stuck with the club the entire season as the Yankees unsurprisingly have employed a shuttle of fresh relievers throughout the season.

Barbato got off to a rousing start and then began to falter earning him a demotion. Cessa departed New York more for the need to stretch a pitcher out than anything he did poorly, and he returned Tuesday along with Refsnyder.

Yates has pitched to a 1.76 ERA with 19 strikeouts in 15 1/3 innings. Thus far, he has been a revelation and has quietly been receiving more impact innings of late.

The Yankees will continue to use the up and down bullpen methodology and it is understandable because they fail to get lengthy outings from their starters, thus forcing an abundance of innings on the relievers. However, it is not ideal to be using two or even three relievers in this fashion in my opinion.

The relievers need some consistency and the whereabouts of where they are pitching does play into the mental aspect of the game. The Yankees have already had Cessa and **James Pazos** up twice, and used 13 relievers in all this season. That number will surely climb, but if it did so one at a time, based on performance, I believe the Yankees would benefit from it in the long term. Of course, it is up to the pitchers to give the Yankees a reason to keep them with the big league club, just as Yates has done.

Altogether, the Yankees' Opening Day roster decisions were solid ones. A majority of the players discussed here who made the club, or earned a particular role, have performed adequately. What is more encouraging is the players who just missed out have played well enough to earn call-ups and might force the Yankees' hand to stick long-term in the future.



Held to 2 hits, D-backs missteps magnified in loss to Yankees

Shelby Miller gave up a two-run home run two batters into the game and manager Chip Hale left in right-hander in the game one batter too long in the sixth.

By Chris GabelFOX Sports Arizona

UPDATED: May 19, 2016 at 2:37a ET

PHOENIX -- On a night the Diamondbacks went 23 batters between their two hits yet still were within a run in the ninth inning, the missteps that led to Wednesday's 4-2 loss to the Yankees were easy to pinpoint.

Shelby Miller gave up a two-run home run two batters into the game.

After Miller righted the ship and pitched into the sixth, manager Chip Hale left in right-hander in the game one batter too long.

Already tasked with scoring once against flame-throwing closer Aroldis Chapman, reliever Evan Marshall make the job twice as hard when he unloaded a run-scoring wild pitch in the top of the ninth.

It was the second slip up that Hale was questioned most about after his team failed to complete the three-game sweep. With Nathan Eovaldi showing no signs of weakness and the Yankees three-headed monster in the bullpen looming, Hale went to the mound with two outs and a runner on second in the sixth. Lefty Andrew Chafin was ready in the bullpen. But after a brief discussion, Hale went back to the dugout and Miller readied to face Ellsbury.

Already 5 for 5 in his career against Miller, Ellsbury singled sharply on the second pitch of the at-bat to bring around Chase Headley for a 3-1 advantage. Hale then had seen enough and brought in Chafin.

"He's one of our horses; he's our No. 2 guy. For me, he'd earned it; it was his game at that point," Hale said. "We had a clear plan on how to get him out, (Miller) just didn't execute. But I'd do it again."

Chafin wasn't going to face Ellsbury, who is hitting .295 against lefties this season. The plan was for Miller attacked Ellsbury with sinkers down and away. If he fell behind, the D-backs would issue a walk and Chafin would face Gardner, who was hitting .197 against lefties.

Miller said he thought he was done when Hale emerged from the dugout. But he got ahead before Ellsbury slapped a single between shortstop Nick Ahmed and third baseman Jake Lamb.

"I threw him a fastball away, the ball was away and he hit a ball through the six hole," Miller said plainly.

While Hale said he would make the same decisions again, it doesn't mean he won't second-guess himself.

"Of course I do," he said. "Those are the reasons managers don't sleep. ... All the decisions that go into a game when you lose, those are the reasons you don't sleep. I feel good about it. But when it doesn't work, that's why I'm losing my hair and going gray."

Eovaldi may also have something to do with that. The Yankees right-hander set down 18 straight D-backs after Jean Segura's leadoff double in the first that ricocheted off second base.

"I think we all had a good approach going into the game. We knew what we were looking for, he just made good pitches," Drury said. "He was throwing 98 mph and sliders and splitfingers in hitter's counts. He did a good job mixing it up. That's the way the game goes sometimes.

"We were one hit away from tying it up or getting the lead, but we didn't get that."

The D-backs immediately fared better when Eovaldi was lifted after six innings and just 85 pitches. Dellin Betances walked Phil Gosselin and Paul Goldschmidt to start the seventh but wrapped strikeouts of Jake Lamb and Brandon Drury around a weak fly out from Welington Castillo.

Chris Owings homered off Andrew Miller to lead off the eighth and pull the D-backs within 3-2, but Marshall gave the run back and Chapman, throwing as hard as 102 mph, closed the door in the ninth.

"Once you get to those last three it's tough. But we had our shot against Betances," Hale said. "If you give up three runs, you're giving us a chance to win in this ballpark. We were just beat by a really good pitcher and relievers. They did a nice job."



Yankees-Athletics Preview

The only blemish during Oakland's hot streak was a tough day at the plate the last time Kendall Graveman took the mound for the Athletics.

Stats LLC

May 19, 2016 at 2:52a ET

The only blemish during Oakland's hot streak was a tough day at the plate the last time Kendall Graveman took the mound for the Athletics.

Their offense has picked up since, leaving the onus on Graveman to recapture the form that helped him shut down the New York Yankees last month.

Oakland looks to keep rolling by winning a fifth straight game in the opener of a four-game set with the visiting Yankees on Thursday night.

The A's (19-22) suddenly have caught fire, winning five of six while scoring at least six runs four times in that stretch. They're coming off a three-game sweep of Texas after Khris Davis launched a walkoff grand slam for his third homer of the game in Tuesday's 8-5 win before connecting for a solo shot in an 8-1 victory Wednesday.

Danny Valencia, who had his own three-homer game in Sunday's win at Tampa Bay, went 3 for 4 with a pair of RBIs and is batting .455 with six homers in nine games since coming off the disabled list.

"We've been fortunate enough to hit the ball hard when we get a pitch to hit," Valencia said. "It's been a lot of fun. The middle of the order is supposed to do some damage and right now we're doing it."

Oakland lost nine of 10 prior to its hot stretch, with starting pitchers posting a 9.00 ERA in that span. Starters have a 3.68 ERA over the last six.

"A lot of things are going right," manager Bob Melvin said. "The rotation is suddenly getting us deep into games and we've been able to sustain the momentum."

The A's lineup took a day off Saturday, though, finishing with only two hits in a 6-0 loss to Tampa. Graveman (1-5, 5.84 ERA) wasn't exactly great on the mound, either, giving up four runs in 5 2/3 innings.

Graveman had a 2.04 ERA through his first three starts but has posted a 9.31 mark while losing the four since. He's allowed eight homers in that stretch, including one Saturday when he had his second-longest outing during his skid.

"I thought he was better than his last several times out, for sure," Melvin said.

The right-hander's last good start came against the Yankees on April 20, when he gave up one run and three hits while striking out a career-high eight in 6 1/3 innings of a 5-2 win.

New York (17-22), which was swept in that three-game series, hopes for a better result this time around against Graveman and the A's after beating Arizona 4-2 on Wednesday to salvage the finale of a three-game series. Brett Gardner hit a two-run homer in the first inning for the Yankees, who had dropped nine of 10 on the road.

Ivan Nova has been good during his return to the rotation, and he'll get the ball again in this one.

Nova (2-1, 3.70) has given up two runs - both on solo homers - and 10 hits in 10 1/3 innings over two starts and beat the Chicago White Sox 2-1 on Saturday, leaving the bullpen trio of Dellin Betances, Andrew Miller and Aroldis Chapman to finish the job.

"They're strikeout machines," Nova said. "It's special to have those guys behind us."

The right-hander threw a perfect inning of relief against the A's on April 20, his first appearance against them since posting a 4.50 ERA in three starts in 2012. Billy Butler is 5 for 10 off Nova, and Josh Reddick is 4 for 11 in their matchups.

Alex Rodriguez is eligible to come off the disabled list Thursday, but his strained right hamstring will keep him on the DL a little while longer.

Graveman, A's host Nova, Yanks at Coliseum

By Mark Chiarelli / MLB.com | May 18th, 2016

The A's and Yankees meet for the second time this season, embarking on a four-game weekend series beginning Thursday night at the Coliseum.

Oakland swept New York in three games in the Bronx the first time the teams met in mid-April.

Thursday's game, which is scheduled to begin at 10:05 p.m. ET, features a pair of right-handers, as Kendall Graveman of the A's will take on Ivan Nova.

Graveman (1-5) picked up his lone win of the season against the Yankees on April 20, allowing one run in 6 1/3 innings in Oakland's 5-2 win. He's struggled since, giving up at least four runs in each of his subsequent four starts. The A's haven't scored more than three runs in six of Graveman's seven starts.

Nova, who began the season in the bullpen, rejoined the starting rotation two weeks ago when New York sent CC Sabathia to the DL. He has pitched well, allowing just two earned runs over his past 10 1/3 innings as a starter. Sabathia is expected to rejoin the rotation Friday night after missing time with a left groin strain.

Three things to know about this game

- Graveman has faced the Yankees twice in his career, posting a 1-0 record and a 3.00 ERA in 12 innings.
- Nova threw a scoreless inning of relief against Oakland last month. He's 1-0 with a 4.24 ERA in his career against the A's, spanning 17 innings. He owns a 3.29 ERA at the Coliseum.
- Both Billy Butler and Josh Reddick have found success against Nova in their career. Butler sports a .500 average against the righty, while Reddick has a .364 (4-for-11) lifetime average that includes a homer and two doubles.



Scranton shuttle up and running, who might be on board?

THE LOHUD YANKEES BLOG

Chad Jennings, cjennings@lohud.com 4:49 p.m. EDT May 18, 2016

This offseason, when the Yankees talked about a Scranton shuttle, they discussed a revolving door of pitchers and position players who could fill specific roles as specific needs and situations presented themselves.

It was clear, in the winter, the Yankees saw this shuttle as a machine of opportunity, not desperation. But in the past two weeks, the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre shuttle has absolutely been rooted in the desperation to deal with injury, a short-handed roster and a depleted bullpen. In two weeks, the Yankees have made 22 moves on the Major League active roster. If you count all of the moves to the 60-day disabled list and one minor trade, the total transactions jump to 27.

Here are the Major League roster moves of the past two weeks:

1. **May 4:** Alex Rodriguez to the disabled list
2. **May 4:** James Pazos recalled
3. **May 5:** James Pazos optioned
4. **May 5:** Ben Gamel recalled (*reaction to mild Brett Gardner injury*)
5. **May 6:** CC Sabathia to the disabled list
6. **May 6:** Phil Coke contract purchased
7. **May 9:** Johnny Barbato optioned
8. **May 9:** Aroldis Chapman activated from suspension
9. **May 12:** Ben Gamel optioned
10. **May 12:** Tyler Olson recalled
11. **May 13:** Tyler Olson optioned
12. **May 13:** Gary Sanchez recalled
13. **May 14:** Luis Severino to the disabled list
14. **May 14:** Chad Green contract purchased
15. **May 14:** Gary Sanchez optioned
16. **May 14:** Conor Mullee contract purchased
17. **May 17:** Phil Coke designated for assignment
18. **May 17:** Luis Cessa recalled
19. **May 17:** Chad Green optioned
20. **May 17:** James Pazos recalled
21. **May 17:** Conor Mullee optioned
22. **May 17:** Rob Refsnyder recalled

That's nine different minor leaguers brought up to the big leagues in a span of 14 days. Aside from the Sanchez call-up to DH against a lefty, and the Refsnyder call-up to add some depth and

flexibility in a National League park, none of these call-ups was strictly built around the idea of taking advantage of a particular situation. The rest were direct reactions to either injury or workload.

That's not really a surprise -- most baseball moves, it seems, are made out of in-the-moment need -- but it speaks to the difficulty in predicting moves going forward. It's easy to look at the Triple-A roster and see guys who could help, but moves really tend to happen based on Major League need and not minor league production. So...

- Are the Yankees going to call up Aaron Judge at some point? Could happen, but it's going to depend on more than simply his home run total. The Yankees are going to need a place to play him, and right now the emergence of Aaron Hicks has given them more than three everyday outfield options. And Judge is still an at-bat priority. If the Yankees want a right-handed outfielder in a bench role, Cesar Puello's putting up good numbers (but with reverse splits), and Refsnyder is a more versatile bench option.

- Are the Yankees going to add Tyler Webb to the bullpen mix? Certainly seems possible given his sub-1.00 WHIP, good strikeout totals and ability to handle both lefties and righties in Triple-A, but right now the team has three left-handers already in the late-inning mix and right now they seem to prefer the familiar arm of James Pazos and the long-relief ability of Luis Cessa.

- Does it make sense to use Sanchez again (and for more than one game this time)? Sure, there's logic there, but those at-bats are harder to give out once Alex Rodriguez is off the disabled list as a full-time, right-handed designated hitter. As long as Austin Romine is playing well and A-Rod is active, there's just not a lot of opportunity to use Sanchez.

- How long before Dietrich Enns becomes a spot-start candidate? The 25-year-old lefty literally didn't allow an earned run in Double-A through the month of April, and his first Triple-A start lasted six scoreless innings. Maybe he can jump into the rotation mix, but the minor league numbers were also heavily in Chad Green's favor, and that start didn't work out too well. For now, Ivan Nova is clearly the preferred fill-in, and Luis Severino should be back within two weeks.

- What about Ben Gamel again? Or Jake Cave at some point? Or Mason Williams once he's off the disabled list? Again, it's opportunity, not performance. Gamel was called up because there was an open roster spot and Gardner was day-to-day, then he stuck around because Ellsbury got hurt, and even then Gamel had a hard time getting at-bats because Hicks is a switch hitter and Dustin Ackley is a lefty. Even if Gardner or Ellsbury lands on the DL, it seems a call-up might be more of a fourth outfielder than a new starter.

- Is there any chance Jorge Mateo is in the regular infield by the end of the year? In September, maybe. He needs Rule 5 protection this offseason, so the Yankees might as well get his feet wet with a September call-up. But those terrific numbers Mateo is putting up this year are all the way down in High-A, so it's hard to make the leap toward an assumption that he's ready for the Majors. A non-Triple-A guy more viable on the big league radar? How about reliever Jonathan Holder? Or eventually Ronald Herrera if he keeps this pace? Or maybe even Tyler Wade if Didi Gregorius gets hurt and the Yankees want a left-handed middle infielder?

When Yankees top pitching prospect James Kaprielian should return

By Brendan Kuty | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on May 19, 2016 at 6:00 AM, updated May 19, 2016 at 7:36 AM

NEW YORK — The Yankees' prized young arm will be back from injury in a matter of weeks.

That's according to owner Hal Steinbrenner, who spoke to reporters outside Major League Baseball's headquarters Wednesday during the first day of the quarterly Owners Meetings in Manhattan.

James Kaprielian, the team's 2015 top pick, has been on the disabled list since April 25 recovering from right elbow soreness. He hasn't thrown since then, but is scheduled to start again in less than two weeks and could be back on a mound in between four or six weeks, Steinbrenner said.

"I'm excited about Kaprielian," the Yankees owner said.

The 22-year-old was the No. 16 overall pick last year. He impressed in spring training, when Yankees brass said they couldn't rule out him making his major league debut sometime this season.

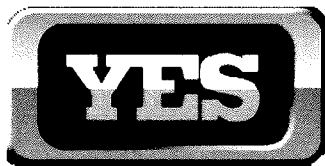
Their hesitance to shut the door on Kaprielian heading to the Bronx sooner than later seemed smart for a while. Through his first three starts, the UCLA product went 1-0 with a 1.50 ERA for High-A Tampa, striking out 22 batters in 18 innings. He skipped Low-A Charleston after a brief stint in short-season Staten Island last year.

But days after tying his career high with nine strikeouts in a game, Kaprielian found himself on ice.

"Thank you everyone for all of the messages and support," Kaprielian wrote in an Instagram caption shortly after his injury was announced. "Looking forward to getting back out there and staying there!"

Girardi expressed optimism for Kapielian, too.

"He should be fine," Girardi said. "So what you do is maybe you take a little bit longer than you might if he was in the big leagues and you needed to get him back in your rotation."



Yankees release minor-league OF Jared Mitchell

By Lou DiPietro

05/18/2016 10:59 AM ET

The New York Yankees have released outfielder Jared Mitchell from his minor-league contract.

The move was announced Wednesday morning by the Double-A Trenton Thunder, who removed Mitchell from their roster after outfielder Mark Payton was activated off the Class-A Advanced Tampa Yankees disabled list and transferred to Trenton.

Mitchell, 27, was the No. 23 overall pick in 2009 by the White Sox, and signed with the Yankees as a minor-league free agent in February after seven seasons in the Sox and Angels organizations. He began 2015 in Extended Spring Training, but joined Trenton in mid-April and hit .250 with one home run, seven RBI, and five steals in 20 games; his final at-bat was that homer, a walk-off solo shot in the 11th inning of Trenton's 3-2 win over Richmond on Tuesday, and he completed his time by reaching base safely in each of his final 15 games with the Thunder.

Payton, 24, was the Yankees' seventh-round pick in 2014, and he hit .309 with three homers and 15 RBI in 24 games for the T-Yanks before going on the DL.

Yankees could make Gary Sheffield's nephew 1st-round pick

By [Brendan Kutty](#) | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on May 18, 2016 at 9:00 AM, updated May 18, 2016 at 9:38 AM

In a few years, there might be a many more [Gary Sheffield](#) sightings around Yankee Stadium.

That's because his nephew, Jordan, would make a "strong fit" for the [Yankees](#), who have the No. 18 overall pick in the Major League Baseball Draft on June 9. That's according to [Hudson Belinsky](#) at [Baseball America](#).

The 20-year-old Sheffield is a 6-foot, 185-pound redshirt sophomore at Vanderbilt. The right-handed starting pitcher's brother, Justus, was the Indians' first-round selection in 2014.

The Yankees have a recent history of drafting college arms who weren't expected to need much minor-league seasoning. In 2015, they drafted [UCLA righty starting pitcher James Kaprielian](#) in the first round. In 2014, they didn't have a first-round pick, but nabbed [University of Mississippi lefty reliever Jacob Lindgren](#) in the second round.

Here's [MLB.com's](#) [scouting report](#) on Justus Sheffield:

Of all the pitching prospects in the 2016 Draft, Sheffield may have the best chance to develop three plus offerings. His fastball can sit at 94-96 mph and reach 98, and he has maintained his velocity in the late innings of his starts. Both Sheffield's hard three-quarters breaking ball (which is more likely to become a slider than a curveball) and his circle changeup can be out pitches at times.

All that said, Sheffield does come with concerns. His combination of explosive stuff and small stature draws Tom Gordon and Marcus Stroman comparisons, but his size and his medical history lead to concerns about his durability as a starter. So does the effort in Sheffield's delivery, as he often overthrows and has yet to prove he can find the strike zone on a consistent basis.

Gary Sheffield spent more than two seasons with the Yankees. He joined the club in 2004 and was traded to the Tigers in 2006. The outfielder averaged 25 homers and 90 RBI and hit .291 over the span.

Sheffield spent his final season with the [Mets](#) in 2009 and finished with 509 career homers and a .292 batting average. His 1,676 RBI put him No. 27 on the all-time list.

Sheffield didn't come close in the Hall of Fame vote in either 2015 or 2016.

ESPN predicts Yankees' 1st pick in MLB draft

By [Brendan Kutty](#) | [NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on May 18, 2016 at 1:05 PM, updated May 18, 2016 at 1:27 PM

ESPN's [Keith Law](#) took a stab on Wednesday at predicting who the [Yankees](#) might pick with the No. 18 overall selection in the [2016 Major League Baseball Draft](#).

Law said he believed the team could select Taylor Trammell, an outfielder from Mount Paran Christian High School in Kennesaw, Ga.

But he added that the team has been connected to Kevin Gowdy, a right-hander out of prep school Santa Barbara, Calif.

The Yankees don't have an overwhelming number of high-end prospects on the mound or in the field, so it's likely they'll simply grab the player they feel has the most talent with their first overall pick.

Here's MLB.com's scouting report on Trammell:

Because he has divided his time between two sports, Trammell is still learning how to recognize pitches, handled offspeed offerings and tap into his raw power. He does show some feel for hitting and his well above-average speed will help him reach base. With his bat speed and strength, he could develop average or better pop. Trammell is still figuring things out defensively, but he has the tools to be an asset in center field. He's working on improving the strength of his arm, which should be fine for center.

And here's MLB.com's scouting report on Gowdy:

With his combination of pitchability and projectability, Gowdy appeared to be the top pitching option in California this season. Some lackluster performances — along with some others breaking out — have made that more of a race, though he's more well regarded. The Santa Barbara native has a chance to have three at least above average pitches in his arsenal. When he's firing on all cylinders, Gowdy's fastball will sit in the 90-93 mph range and with his frame it's easy to dream about increased velocity. His breaking ball can be an out pitch with good bite, one that should develop into a true slider in time. Gowdy has a better feel for a change up than most high school pitchers and he has shown advanced command for his age. He typically has a free and easy delivery that he repeats well. If Gowdy's stock falters, his signability and his commitment to UCLA could come into play. But there's still a good chance a team early on will roll the dice on his upside and current feel for pitching.



Minor League Baseball Red Sox, Yankees Minor League Clubs Revive Rivalry With Twitter Jabs

by Sam Galanis

on Wed, May 18, 2016 at 2:14PM

Minor league affiliates for the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees kicked the organizations' rivalry up a notch Tuesday. The Single-A Charleston RiverDogs (Yankees) faced off against the Greenville Drive (Red Sox), and they apparently were in no mood for music while they were down 4-2 to the Red Sox's club in the middle of the eighth inning. The RiverDogs took to Twitter to complain about Greenville's traditional eighth-inning jam.

(Tweet) @ChasRiverDogs: "Dogs sent down in order in Top 8th. We have to suffer through Sweet Caroline for the 8 millionth time. OH THATS NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE"

The Drive weren't going to go down without a fight, and they took the argument from zero to 100 real quick.

(Tweet) @GreenvilleDrive: "We both follow our @MLB affiliate traditions. Ours is #SweetCaroline, theirs is being arrogant jacka**..."

Ding, ding, ding. We have a winner. Greenville really got the last laugh, too, as the club held back the RiverDogs in the ninth for a 4-2 win.



Wednesdays with Brownie: Derek Jeter's impact on Cards' Aledmys Diaz

By Tim Brown

MAY 18, 2016

As Aledmys Diaz remembers it, he first saw Derek Jeter "live," which is not to say in person but on television in real time, in the fall of 2009. He was 19 years old. He'd grown up liking Albert Pujols as a hitter, but loving Jeter, who was a shortstop just like him.

He'd seen a few highlights of Jeter on a clunky DVD player. He'd read about Jeter when it was possible, which wasn't often. Otherwise, it was just the stories about the great New York Yankee, and maybe it was the stories he loved as much as he did the ballplayer himself.

Diaz was playing his third season for Villa Clara of the Cuban National Series. His father, Rigoberto, had been a shortstop in college and then became an agronomy teacher. His mother, Quenia, worked in a clothing factory. Aledmys would be a ballplayer, and a young ballplayer needs heroes. Aledmys chose Jeter. In Cuba, where access to the outside world was spotty, that would require some ingenuity, some imagination and some luck.

The Villa Clara team was housed at Hotel Santa Clara Libre, not far from where Diaz was born and raised. On this particular night, the television in the lobby was tuned to the World Series. Diaz and his teammates stopped to watch. And there was Jeter, playing baseball, walking that slow walk, leading his Yankees, on his way to batting .407 in a series the Yankees would win in six games.

Going on seven years later, Diaz is the starting shortstop for the St. Louis Cardinals, he is batting .375 after his first 36 big-league games, and what brings his brightest smile one afternoon is the memory of that ballgame on that night in that hotel lobby.

"That," he said, "was amazing."

In the hours before a game at Dodger Stadium last week, a game he would have two more hits including his sixth home run, Diaz sat in the visitors' clubhouse with first-base coach Bill Mueller. They leafed through a scouting report, Mueller talking and pantomiming Ross Stripling's move to first, Diaz nodding. The conversation was light and in casual English, which Diaz mastered through his devotion to the television show, "Ellen." Diaz defected from Cuba four years ago. He signed with the Cardinals two years ago. He played two minor-league seasons, finishing last summer with 14 games in Triple-A Memphis, where he surely was headed again in 2016. Except Jhonny Peraltaneeded thumb surgery, and the Cardinals needed a shortstop, and while Diaz would have to come a ways defensively, he had always — always — hit.

He has, through a quarter of the season, been a below-average defensive shortstop. He's also batted .375, leads the National League in slugging and is second — to Bryce Harper — in OPS. Diaz has hit eighth or ninth in 24 of his 29 starts, directly in front of the pitcher in 21 of those games. Still, he has seen fewer than four pitches per plate appearance, and has walked but seven times, and struck out only 12 times, and hardly misses a hittable pitch.

A long scar cups the outside of his right eye like a stray parenthesis, the remains of a bicycle accident when he was 5. His eyes are wide and welcoming. He smiles easy. He has fallen in behind Yadier Molina and Matt Holliday, whose rigorous daily routines have inspired him to cultivate — and stick to — his own. The manager, Mike Matheny, praises Diaz for “putting tough at-bats together.” Also, for being, “bright,” “intelligent” and “gracious.”

“He is,” Matheny says, “aggressively trying to take advantage of this opportunity.”

So that is the name — “ah-led-miss” — and the game that stands with Harper and Daniel Murphy and Yoenis Cespedes and Nolan Arenado and Ryan Braun and Anthony Rizzo on all those early leaderboards. That is the young man who happened upon moving, electronic images of Derek Jeter in a hotel lobby once and confirmed his own imagination, who crept away from his team and his country after a game in the Netherlands, who familiarized himself with the language watching an afternoon talk show, whose wife, Dayara, is seven months pregnant with their first child, a boy they'll name Nathan after a character on the television show “One Tree Hill.”

Aledmys smiled at that. There's a lot a man can learn from television.

“I just liked that name.”

A WEEK BEHIND:

A front office chooses the long road and its manager runs out of gas as a result, and maybe there's a difference between losing and losing a little too often or a little too ugly, but it doesn't look great nonetheless. As of Wednesday morning, the Atlanta Braves had played 38 games and won nine of them, though it must be said they'd already won four games in May after winning five in April. Probably that was a touch too subtle for a franchise that opted for temporary last place in exchange for sustained brilliance, so here we are. Fredi Gonzalez is out after five-plus years in Atlanta, and those shoes of Bobby Cox's just got a little bigger. Now Brian Snitker, the longtime Braves employee who's done time in the major and minor leagues, gets to shuffle around in those shoes for a few months.

Soon we'll learn Gonzalez wasn't reaching the players, or they'd tired of the message, or needed a new voice, or people weren't improving, except that for a team on the rebuild there certainly are a lot of veterans — A.J. Pierzynski, Freddie Freeman, Kelly Johnson, Erick Aybar, Jeff Francoeur, Nick Markakis — chewing up all the playing time.

It makes no difference, really. The Braves are that far from relevance. Good thing they chose the long road. It's the only way to get there from here.

Maybe it leads them to Chipper Jones or Bud Black or Torey Lovullo or Ron Wotus or Ron Gardenhire or Dave Martinez. Whomever, they're going to need another tank or two of gas.

A WEEK AHEAD:

The two methods for getting into this category are to offer hope or clarity.

Here's the hope:

The Kansas City Royals are in Chicago on Friday to play three games against the White Sox, who, so far, are significantly better than the defending World Series champions. It's mid-May and the Royals haven't hit at all and have pitched sporadically. That's no way to repeat.

If they stay on turn:

Friday: Dillon Gee vs. Jose Quintana

Saturday: Danny Duffy vs. Miguel Gonzalez

Sunday: Yordano Ventura vs. Carlos Rodon

Here's the clarity:

Starting Monday, the New York Mets go to Washington D.C. to sort out the Paul Ryan-Donald Trump kerfuffle and then to play three against the Nationals. By next Wednesday, the Mets and Nats will have played six times in nine days.

If they stay on turn:

Monday: Bartolo Colon vs. Gio Gonzalez

Tuesday: Matt Harvey vs. Stephen Strasburg

Wednesday: Steven Matz vs. Tanner Roark

SAW IT COMING:

In spite of various pace-of-play measures and progress along those lines last season, average game times are up in 2016. Ask enough non-pitchers and there seems to be momentum toward a pitch clock, similar to the one used in the minor leagues. Twenty seconds is plenty enough time to throw a pitch, even too much.

DIDN'T SEE IT COMING:

In his 153rd plate appearance, Jason Heyward hit his first home run as a Cub on Tuesday night. A year ago, in his sole season as a Cardinal, he homered for the first time in his 43rd plate appearance.

Heyward remains mystified at Wrigley Field, where he's batted .189. In his career as a non-Cub, he was a .370 hitter at Wrigley.



DiMaggio, Yanks bombard Browns in blowout

By Doug Miller / MLB.com | May 18th, 2016

NEW YORK, May 18, 1941 -- The boisterous Sunday crowd in the Bronx reveled in a celebration of patriotism ... and an all-too-rare laughter of a victory for the Yankees.

It was I Am An American Day at Yankee Stadium, and the fans shared national pride and a 12 to 2 steamrolling of the last-place St. Louis Browns in the opener of a three-day homestand.

New York will take it and take it gladly. The big win, played with 30,109 persons present, got the Yanks back to level at 16-16 for the season after weeks of middle-of-the-standings mediocrity.

The Browns tied the game at two runs apiece in the top of the second inning on a Harlond Clift home run, but any semblance of drama ended there. The home nine struck for two runs in the bottom of that frame, with Red Rolfe and Joe DiMaggio contributing run-scoring doubles, and the onslaught had begun.

New York piled on with a four-run fourth that was started by DiMaggio reaching on interference by St. Louis catcher Frank Grube and effectively put the game away for safekeeping.

Every member of the starting nine for the Yankees recorded at least one hit, with DiMaggio leading the way in a 3-for-3 effort. Joe Gordon hit his seventh home run of the year and drove in five runs. This pelting party supported starter Lefty Gomez, who went nine innings to even his season record at 3 and 3.

The fans soaked up every bit of the shellacking, and at least for a day, there was reason for optimism. The Yankees stayed within 6 1/2 games of the first-place Cleveland Indians, and they have two more home games against the Browns on tap.

On May 15, 1941, Joe DiMaggio began his legendary 56-game hitting streak. In celebration of the 75th anniversary of that seemingly unbreakable record, we'll be doing a day-by-day account of the momentous feat.

NY Times
5.19.16

RED BULLS AND N.Y.C.F.C. GET READY The Red Bulls and New York City F.C. will enter their match Saturday at Yankee Stadium with runs of recent success.

The Red Bulls got a goal from Mike Grella early in the second half to beat visiting Chicago, 1-0. They have won three of their last five games after starting 1-6. Luis Robles

posted his second shutout of the season in his 118th consecutive start, a streak that ties an M.L.S. record.

N.Y.C.F.C. extended its club-record unbeaten streak to five games with a tie against host Toronto F.C., 1-1. Kwadwo Poku scored in the 16th minute, but N.Y.C.F.C.'s bid to extend its three-game winning streak ended with a second-half goal by Will Johnson.

NYCFC draws with Toronto

New York City FC moved to the top of MLS' Eastern Conference standings on Wednesday after extending their unbeaten run to five matches with a hard-fought 1-1 draw at Toronto FC.

NYCFC, fresh off a 2-1 victory over Portland on Sunday, took the lead through Ghanaian international Kwadwo Poku, the midfielder curling a finish past Clint Irwin on 16 minutes.

Toronto hit back just before the break when

NYCFC	1
TORONTO	1

Will Johnson tapped in from close range after good work from Josh Williams and Mo Babouli.

NYCFC coach Patrick Vieira fielded a starting lineup with Andrea Pirlo and David Villa both left out. Villa later entered as a second-half substitute and swiftly picked up a yellow card. Three other NYCFC players received cautions.

— AFP



NYCFC extend unbeaten streak with draw at Toronto

By Christian Araos
on 05/18/2016

New York City FC moved into first place in the Eastern Conference with a 1–1 draw against **Toronto FC** Wednesday night in BMO Field.

Kwadwo Poku opened the scoring for NYCFC in the 16th minute with a curled shot from the left side of the area into the far side netting. **Will Johnson** equalized three minutes before halftime, tapping **Josh Williams'** nodded layoff in from six yards.

The draw is enough for City to move atop the Eastern Conference with 17 points through 12 matches.

Poku was one of seven players to enter the lineup for head coach **Patrick Vieira**. **Diego Martinez** made his first MLS start at left back while **Ethan White** replaced **R.J. Allen** at right back. Poku replaced **Andrea Pirlo** and **Federico Bravo** returned from suspension to replace **Mikey Lopez** in midfield. **Mehdi Ballouchy** and **Patrick Mullins** replaced **Thomas McNamara** and **David Villa** up front. Villa and Allen would come off the bench for City.

Jack Harrison made the 18 for the first time this season but did not play. **Frank Lampard** was left off the team sheet.

NYCFC started the first half on the front foot pinning Toronto in their own end. Mullins nearly opened the scoring in the 12th minute after Ballouchy played him in behind but Mullins missed the bottom corner.

Diskerd nearly scored with a volley from outside the area but **Clint Irwin** tipped it over. City would only record two shots in the second half including Villa's speculative shot from 40 yards out.

Giovinco was kept off the scoresheet for the first time this season. His forward partner, **Mo Babouli**, struggled to beat **Jason Hernandez** and **Frédéric Brillant** in the air. That forced Giovinco to the channels where he was able to challenge the NYCFC defense and create chances.

Giovinco's best effort came in the 75th with a quick turn on Bravo and a shot that Josh Saunders blocked away. Jay Chapman was first to the rebound but Saunders pushed it aside. The double save part of a six-save performance from the City goalkeeper.

NYCFC now lead the **Montreal Impact** by a point in the Eastern Conference standings. They host the **New York Red Bulls** Saturday at 3 pm in Yankee Stadium.



Armchair Analyst: When Lampard plays, more questions for NYCFC

Matthew Doyle MLSsoccer.com

May 18, 2016 4:16 PM EDT

It seems, based upon the recent evidence, that Frank Lampard will make his season debut for NYCFC tonight against Toronto FC (7 pm ET; MLS LIVE in the US | TSN4 in Canada). This has potential to be a mixed blessing (pun not intended at all, I swear it).

NYCFC have come into their own over the last three weeks based upon a simple premise: In the midfield, there is one piano player -- usually Andrea Pirlo -- and two piano carriers. Those two carriers have generally been youngsters Federico Bravo and Mikey Lopez, with the former usually acting as a pure backline shield and the latter more often as a box-to-box player.

Putting the two of them into the lineup has relieved Pirlo of most of his defensive burdens, while at the same time necessitating a positional shift for the Italian legend. He's been a regista for the last dozen years, but since early April he's been pushed higher up the field as more of a classic, Argentine-style No. 10. He's the furthest forward of the three midfielders, which allows him to be more influential in the final third even if it's reduced his chances to hit the type of searching long-balls that were his staple with Juventus and Italy.

Tonight's game comes on three day's rest after a grueling 90 minutes of constant defense on a turf field on the other side of the continent. Given that, there is no way Pirlo goes from the start in this one.

Enter Lampard. His passing won't be quite so elegant and he won't be as clever with where and how he receives the ball in the build-up, but he'll be a better goal-threat than Pirlo has been and there's really no difference in their expected defensive contributions. The trade-off from one to the other at this point in their careers is within the margins and therefore acceptable.

Given Lampard's fitness and the short turnaround before Saturday's Heineken Rivalry Week match-up against the Red Bulls on Saturday (3 pm ET; FOX), it's a

safe bet that Pirlo will be back in the starting lineup and Lampard will be back on the bench. So the next 180 minutes don't present a "numbers crunch" problem for Patrick Vieira.

The problems crop up immediately following that, assuming both DPs stay healthy, because if they do... one of them has to sit. There's only room for one piano player in the midfield, as Mix Diskerud's performance this past weekend mostly showed:

The defensive shortcomings of the Pigeons' midfield against Portland were obvious as they conceded 24 shots, many from good locations. What probably surprised some folks was that, even with getting the more skillful Diskerud into the game, NYCFC's possession and ability to control the tempo was worse than usual.

"No, that wasn't our plan at all," Vieira said afterward about the way the field tilted toward Portland. "We wanted to control the game and have the possession of the game, but we played against a really good side tonight. You have to give them credit because they make it really difficult for us and that's the reason why I'm really proud of my team because they showed a lot of character to manage to leave Portland with three points."

He should be proud, but he should also understand this isn't a Diskerud-specific issue. Rather, it's a "spacing and role" issue. In the absence of Bravo, Diskerud -- a piano player, not a carrier -- struggled to fill Lopez's box-to-box role, while Lopez struggled to fill Bravo's role as a No. 6.

Which brings us back to the 800-pound gorilla in the room: What happens when Lampard and Pirlo are both healthy? One of them's going to be playing the piano, and the other's going to have to help carry it.

It shouldn't be an issue tonight, and I doubt it'll be one this weekend. After that, all bets are off.



NYCFC's Vieira praises Poku, Mullins in Toronto: "We managed it quite well"

James Grossi Contributor

May 19, 2016 12:13 AM EDT

TORONTO – New York City FC's winning streak came to an end at BMO Field on Wednesday night. But sometimes a draw is good enough, especially given adverse circumstances and near-wholesale changes to the starting 11.

"We didn't play our best game," admitted coach Patrick Vieira after the 1-1 draw against Toronto FC. "When you make so many changes, I knew it would be quite difficult against one of the best sides in the league. And [those] players don't play enough, it is always difficult. We managed it quite well, we didn't concede too much, and we didn't create much as well. I think the draw is a fair point for both teams."

NYCFC arrived in Toronto straight from a huge win in Portland on Sunday, and with one eye on this weekend's mouth-watering New York Derby against against the Red Bulls (Saturday, 3 pm ET; FOX).

With that congestion in mind, Vieira opted to give several first-choice starters a rest, running out a side that featured Patrick Mullins and Kwadwo Poku, to name but a few of his many changes.

"They did well," said Vieira of the pair. "I was expecting them to work hard and I knew that physically it would be difficult for them because they didn't have the rhythm of the game. But I was really pleased, especially with Patrick. it wasn't easy for a No. 9 to do what I asked. But he put his head up and he worked hard for the team and I was really pleased with his performance."

Mullins battled with the TFC back line throughout the match, collecting a booking for numerous indiscretions after just 19 minutes. Meanwhile, Poku scored a beautiful goal to open the scoring – his first of the year – collecting Mullins' flicked header off a Steven Mendoza cross before tucking a wonderful effort into the top corner beyond the reach of Reds goalkeeper Clint Irwin.

With the Toronto region home to a massive Italian diaspora, some of the fans at BMO Field may have been disappointed not to see Andrea Pirlo take to the pitch – though they were treated to a cameo from David Villa.

"It was just rotation," Vieira assured those back home. "With the traveling, I needed to."

Said Mullins, a veteran of MLS travel by now: "They're getting used to [the travel in MLS]. We handled it as well as you could have expected. You have a full roster for these specific types of trips and make sure you are ready to step in when your number is called."

DAILY NEWS

Garth Brooks slams millenials for playing it safe musically

BY CREELABELLE HOWARD NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Tuesday, May 17, 2016, 6:41 PM

Country legend Garth Brooks slammed young music fans Tuesday, saying they too often “play it safe.”

In an age when music is typically sold in single-song doses, Brooks criticized the iTunes mentality as he met the press in advance of his July 9 concert at Yankee Stadium. He said kids today don’t dive deep into an artist’s full work.

“Album cuts are going to make you look in the mirror and think, so I’m surprised that this generation isn’t more of an album generation than the one before,” said Brooks, who will be playing the Big Apple for the first time since his Central Park show 19 years ago.

And radio stations are the worst, the old king of country added, because the safest songs get played repeatedly while daring cuts are left aside. He expressed shock that modern-day listeners go along with that approach.

“I’m surprised the new generation wants to be safe,” he said.

It’s unclear whether anyone cares what the 54-year-old crooner has to say — but he still has his fans. In 2014, after a 13-year semi-retirement from recording, his album “Man Against Machine” topped Billboard’s country chart in its opening week, selling 130,000 units.

The self-professed “albums kid” also created an online music store — GhostTunes — that allows artists, if they wish, to sell only full discs instead of individual songs.

Brooks is not sure if he can convince youngsters to buy full records if that’s not their thing, but he’ll certainly try at the Stadium show.

It will be “epic,” he said, because people come with fully-charged batteries when they see a show in New York City.

The city “changes every second, but what doesn’t change is that what’s done in this town is epic,” Brooks said.

The world tour that this show is a part of has already sold over four million tickets since its start in September 2014, according to his public relations specialist. Ticket sales start on Ticketmaster.com at 10 a.m. on May 20.

TASTE OF COUNTRY

Garth Brooks to Launch Album Video Series, Inside Studio G

By Annie Reuter

May 17, 2016 6:00 PM

Garth Brooks was in New York on Tuesday (May 17) for a press conference live from Yankee Stadium to discuss his upcoming return to the Big Apple after nearly two decades. While en route to the event, he filmed a 10 minute segment with Facebook Live to answer fan questions about his tour, upcoming show in NYC and his next album.

During each live show, Brooks insists his main concern is his fans in the audience.

“You try and make each seat front row, that’s what you do,” he shares. “The more you can get to the people, hopefully the better show they have. The better show they have, the better show you have. If the people are happy, the artist and the band are happy.”

While Brooks and his crew currently film what they call Opening Night Live, which gives fans a glimpse into backstage before, during and after the show, he says he’ll be doing a similar video series after his tour date in New York City on July 9.

“That Monday (July 11) will become the birth of Inside Studio G,” the star explains. “We’re going to take you inside what happened the weekend before. We’re gonna document Opening Night Live in every city, do little highlights, and then the things that happen on stage, off stage that happen. It’s the most fun.”

“The thing I’m going to love most is getting ready to take you into the new album,” he adds.

“Take you into songwriting sessions, take you into recording sessions, see places. You’re going to see the room where ‘The Dance’ was cut. You’re going to see the room we packed 15 people in to sing ‘Friends in Low Places,’ and you’re going to see the new album be created and you’re going to be part of it.”

“Finally the people that make an artist an artist, get to come be with that artist and create. This is going to be good,” Brooks promises.

Come July, the singer’s focus will shift from the live show to “the most important thing — the music.”

“Come with us. You’re invited.”

Rolling Stone

Garth Brooks Announces New Video Series

"You're going to see the new album be created and you're going to be part of it," singer says of his 'Inside Studio G' clips

By Andrew Leahey

May 18, 2016

"Size matters," Garth Brooks proclaimed Tuesday morning while his car inched its way through rush-hour traffic in the Bronx. Up ahead lay Yankee Stadium, the sprawling ballpark that will host Brooks' next New York City performance — his first gig in the Big Apple since August 1997, when he drew more than 750,000 people to a show in Central Park. His July 9th Yankee Stadium gig adds to the tally of more than 240 shows on the superstar's mammoth World Tour with wife Trisha Yearwood.

Brooks discussed ticket sales and other logistics during a press conference later that day, but he dished out more updates during his early-morning car ride. Broadcasting from his own backseat via Facebook Live, the singer announced an upcoming video series called *Inside Studio G*, which will expand the behind-the-scenes coverage that his current series, *Opening Night Live*, already offers. [Watch below.] The last installment of *Opening Night Live* will apparently coincide with the July 9th New York show, followed days later by the kickoff episode of *Inside Studio G*.

Like its name suggests, *Studio G* will focus on the recording studio, where Brooks is slated to spend much of the summer and fall working on his follow-up to *Man Against Machine*. "You're going to see the new album be created and you're going to be part of it," he tells his fans in the Facebook video below, promising an insiders-only look at songwriting collaborations and recording sessions. Once notoriously absent from platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, Brooks now insists those outlets are an opportunity to break down the barriers separating the singer from his audience.

"That's what this should be used for," he says, drawing a circle around the camera lens to indicate the wide world of social media. "Finally, people that make an artist an artist get to come be with that artist and create. It's gonna be good."



Garth Brooks' Coming Back to New York to 'Do Something in a Big Way'

May 18, 2016

Country music star Garth Brooks is looking forward to his return to New York City when he plays at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx. It'll be his first appearance in New York since he played in Central Park in 1997.

FOX's Michelle Pollino has more:

Garth Brooks announced that he will be performing at New York's Yankee Stadium on July 9:

(Brooks) "I think if you're going to come back to New York, you want to try and do something, you know, in a big way, because that's all this town knows, is big ways, and this opportunity came up from Yankee Stadium, it came up from the Yankees organization."

His last show there was in Central Park on August 7, 1997, when he played for roughly 750,000 fans. He talked about the decision to take all that time off to raise his daughters with wife Trisha Yearwood saying this is a second chance:

(Brooks) "It'd be very sweet that people have showed up in these numbers and this attitude. I feel grateful for that and I'm just enjoying it."

Tickets for the July 9 show go on sale on Friday.



Passionate, Emotional Garth Brooks Readies NYC Return

08:01 AM Wednesday 5/18/16

Garth Brooks is full of tears – tears of joy – as he prepares to return to New York City after two decades and he discusses emotional topics such as family and music.

The country star, during a press conference Tuesday at Yankee Stadium where he'll perform on July 9, talked about connecting with his feverish fans, who he referred to as "his boss."

"Cause all they wanted to do, man, was take two seconds of your time to tell you what 'The Dance' meant to them, what it meant to their son that they lost or how your music might have got them through the Gulf War," the singer said, tearing up.

Brooks, 54, also grew emotional when he spoke about discovering music on the radio. Instead of releasing his music digitally on iTunes or Spotify, Brooks launched GhostTunes to house his music online.

"I always want radio to be Santa Claus, I always want them to bring it. ...I'll remember the rest of my life where I was when Michael Jackson died 'cause it came from that radio," he said. "Those are gifts from radio or times you remember in your life marked by radio, so I'm a big radio fan."

Brooks said after the press conference that it's easy to cry when he's talking about passionate subjects like his daughters, wife or music.

"People ask unfair questions about your kids and you're in that place where you're sending them off to college so you're touchy anyways," the father of three daughters told The Associated Press. "Or they talk about your musical heroes or what music means to you. Man, if you're going to talk about what music means to me it's gonna get really sappy really quick because that's my breath in and breath out."

Brooks, who returned to music with an album of originals in 2014 after a 13-year break, has been riding high on his world tour, which recently sold its 4 millionth ticket. The tour will come to Yankee Stadium in the Bronx in July, his first return to NYC since 1997 when he performed in Central Park.

"It wasn't my brainchild. The Yankees actually came to us," Brooks said in the interview. "I said, 'Well what a way to return to New York after Central Park.' So this makes sense. If you're going to do anything big, you do it in this city."

Brooks held a Yankees hat in his hand and swapped his black cap for it to take a few photos at the event.

Tickets for his NYC show, roughly \$80, go on sale Friday. His wife, country singer Trisha Yearwood, will also perform. Billy Joel joined Brooks at his NYC show in 19 years ago, and Brooks said other guests may join him this year.

"Billy was sweet enough to do Central Park. Central Park was Central Park, you want Yankee Stadium to be Yankee Stadium. So right now the drawing board is clear and clean," he said.

Newsday
5.19.16

MLB REPORT

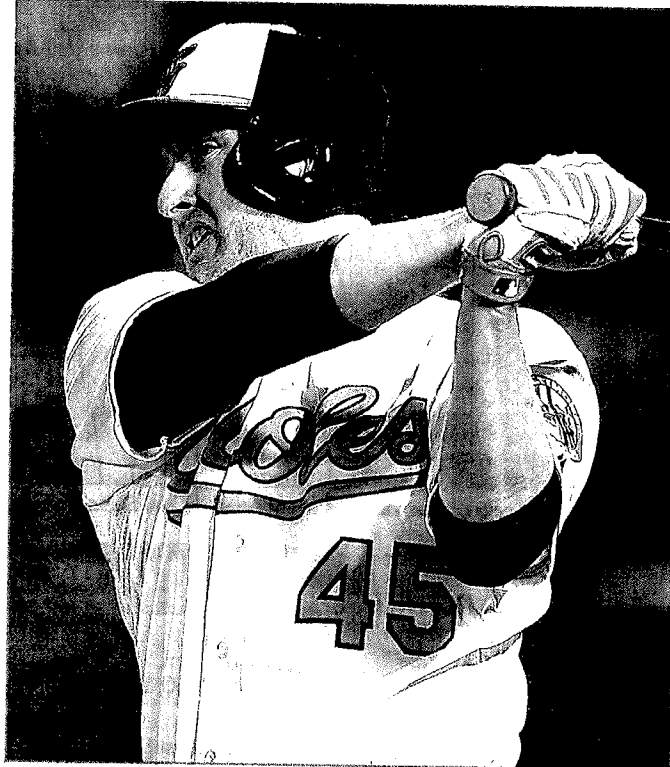
Tillman gets O's past M's

Chris Tillman won his fifth straight start with another solid performance against his former team and the Baltimore Orioles beat the Seattle Mariners, 5-2, last night. Mark Trumbo and Matt Wieters hit back-to-back homers for the Orioles, whose 17-7 record at Camden Yards is the best home mark in the major leagues. Wieters also had two doubles for his first three-hit game this season.

Tillman (6-1) allowed two runs and four hits with six strikeouts over 6 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings. Closer Zach Britton relieved Brad Brach and worked out of a bases-loaded jam in the eighth.

Athletics 8, Rangers 1: Khris Davis hit his fourth home run in two games, Danny Valencia drove in two and Oakland completed a three-game sweep of Texas. Valencia and Davis each recorded their first three-homer games within three games of each other, not surprisingly during the A's recent hot streak. Rich Hill (6-3) won for the first time at home, and his third straight, after giving up a run and three hits over his six innings. He walked one and struck out six.

Royals 3, Red Sox 2: Eric Hosmer homered for the second straight day, the Royals turned their first three hits off Boston's Steven Wright into runs, and host Kansas City held off the Red Sox to open a split-dou-



Mark Trumbo was 2-for-4 with a home run for the Orioles.

bleheader. Hosmer followed a single by Alcides Escobar with a homer in the first inning, and Lorenzo Cain added a sacrifice fly following a triple by Jarrod Dyson in the sixth for the Royals' only offense.

It proved to be enough for

Ian Kennedy and their bullpen.

Kennedy allowed two runs and six hits with a walk in 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings, striking out nine.

Tigers 6, Twins 3: Justin Verlander struck out 10 batters, including the 2,000th of his career for host Detroit. The Tigers

have won four straight, equaling a season high, after losing 11 of 12 games. Verlander (3-4) allowed six hits and three runs in 7 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings while matching his season high in strikeouts. He joined Mickey Lolich as the two pitchers in franchise history with 2,000 career strikeouts, and became the 76th in baseball history to reach the milestone.

Rays 6, Blue Jays 3: Kevin Kiermaier hit a two-run homer, Logan Morrison and Desmond Jennings each had solo shots as visiting Tampa beat slumping Toronto to complete a three-game sweep. Morrison had three hits and scored twice for the Rays, who outscored the Blue Jays 31-7 over the series.

Braves 3, Pirates 1: Julio Teheran allowed five hits in 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ crisp innings and Atlanta gave Brian Snitker his first victory as interim manager. Teheran struck out three without a walk to end six weeks of frustration. Tyler Flowers hit a home run to the bushes in centerfield and finished with three hits for the Braves, who won for only the third time in their last 13 games.

Phillies 4, Marlins 2: Tyler Goeddel hit his first career homer and Jeremy Hellickson pitched six sharp innings for host Philadelphia. Hellickson allowed two runs and five hits, striking out four. He retired 11 in a row at one point and pitched well after a shaky start. The Phillies won two of three for their seventh series win in the past eight, improving to 24-13 since an 0-4 start.

— AP

EXCLUSIVE

By JULIA MARSH, REUVEN FENTON and BRUCE GOLDING

Mets pitcher Bartolo Colon couldn't pass up this hot dish — falling hard for Alexandra Santos when she waited on him at a favorite eatery during a rough patch in his 21-year marriage. The Post has learned.

Santos, who's suing the starter nicknamed "Big Sexy" for allegedly failing to pay child support for their two grade-school-age kids, confided in her building super that she even shackled up with Colon before moving to her current home about three years ago.

"There came a period where his relationship was not good with his wife," Washington Heights super Dilson Espinal said Wednesday, hours after The Post revealed Colon's secret double life.

"It was not the kind of thing where he was like, 'Let me do this girl and move on.' His relationship with his wife was not good."

Even after reconciling with his wife, Rosanna — whom Colon met in their native Dominican Republic at age 13 — the Cy Young Award winner would regularly visit Santos and their kids at their \$2,500-a-month pad.

"He used to come and park here, come up for a little while and leave," Espinal said.

"Whatever she needed, he would bring or he would send his driver. Phone, iPad, clothes, food — whatever she wanted."

Espinal also said Colon would regularly take the kids — a son, 8, and a daughter, 7 — to Citi Field to watch the Mets play.

But Colon, who has a one-year, \$7.25 million contract with the Amazin's, hasn't been seen much around the building since Santos filed an "Anonymous v. Anonymous" suit against him in Manhattan Supreme Court a year ago.

Espinal said Santos initially tried to keep her kids' paternity a secret from her neighbors, "because then the whole building would go crazy" and hound Colon for autographs. But his kids don't hide who their daddy is, according to a 10-year-old boy who lives in the building and regularly plays with them.

The boy said Colon's children see him every month or two, and have visited the Clifton, NJ, home where the pitcher lives with his wife and their four sons.

The two kids describe the brick house with a two-car garage as a "mansion" compared to their fifth-floor apartment just south of the George Washington Bridge access road, the boy said.

"They love to go to his house," said the pal. "The kids are upset they're not together."

During a brief interview with The Post on Monday, Rosanna Colon admitted knowing about



HE'S OUTTA THERE: Bartolo Colon takes a seat in the Mets dug-out at Citi Field Wednesday night after being pulled from the game, in which he was the losing pitcher. His poor outing came on the same day The Post broke the story of his secret double life (far right) and his two kids with waitress Alexandra Santos (left), seen leaving her Washington Heights home earlier Wednesday.

HERE COMES How married Met Bartolo

her hubby's out-of-wedlock kids, but added in Spanish: "This is personal and not something I want to talk about."

Both children left for school at about 8 a.m. Wednesday, accompanied by an older stepbrother, around 20, who declined to comment. Santos refused to answer

the door to her apartment.

She emerged at around 5:30 p.m., accompanied by her and Colon's daughter and son, who was carrying a baseball and wearing a backpack that held two baseball bats. Also with them was Colon's nephew, who was wearing a Mets cap, a teenage girl and another

boy. Santos declined to comment before everyone hopped into an SUV and took off.

A member of the Mets organization who has regular contact with Colon was stunned to learn about his second family.

"You're shocking me with this one," the source said.

"I can't even picture it."

The source also could barely believe that Colon — who generally doesn't talk to reporters in the clubhouse — inadvertently outed himself in court records by briefly representing himself against Santos' suit.

"You can't make this stuff up,"



THE SQUEEZE

fell for baby-mama waitress

the Mets source added.

Colon — who started against the Washington Nationals at Citi Field on Wednesday night — refused to come to the door at his home, instead sending an unidentified man who insisted in Spanish that “he never missed” a child-support pay-

ment to Santos. Colon later drove off in a black Range Rover, wearing sunglasses.

At a pregame press conference, Mets manager Terry Collins was confident his veteran would survive the scandal.

“Obviously, that’s not really for me to discuss. His personal

issues are his personal issues, but Bartolo Colon can handle anything,” Collins said.

“I think he’ll be just fine.” In a statement, the Mets said: “This is a personal matter and we have no further comment.”

Colon’s agent declined to comment.

Colon, had a bad game Wednesday night. He walked five batters in a little more than four innings — the most he has walked since 2005 — and gave up three runs. The Amazon’s were hammered, 7-1.

Additional reporting by Joe Marino and Lorena Mongelli



Anthony J. Gaudi

Trademark bid to make ‘Sexy’ sell

Bartolo Colon’s child-support scandal involving his out-of-wedlock kids comes just as he is trying to capitalize on his “Big Sexy” nickname and recent, record-setting home run.

Colon — at 42 the oldest player in the major leagues — last month applied to trademark his sarcastic sobriquet, which plays off his hefty, 5-foot-11, 285-pound frame.

Colon’s April 19 filing with the US Patent and Trademark Office says he wants to slap the words “BIG SEXY” on various athletic apparel, “namely, shirts, pants, jackets, footwear, hats and caps [and] athletic uniforms.”

An earlier effort to trademark “BIG SEXY” by former pro wrestler Kevin Nash’s Spartacus Inc. was abandoned in 2002, records show.

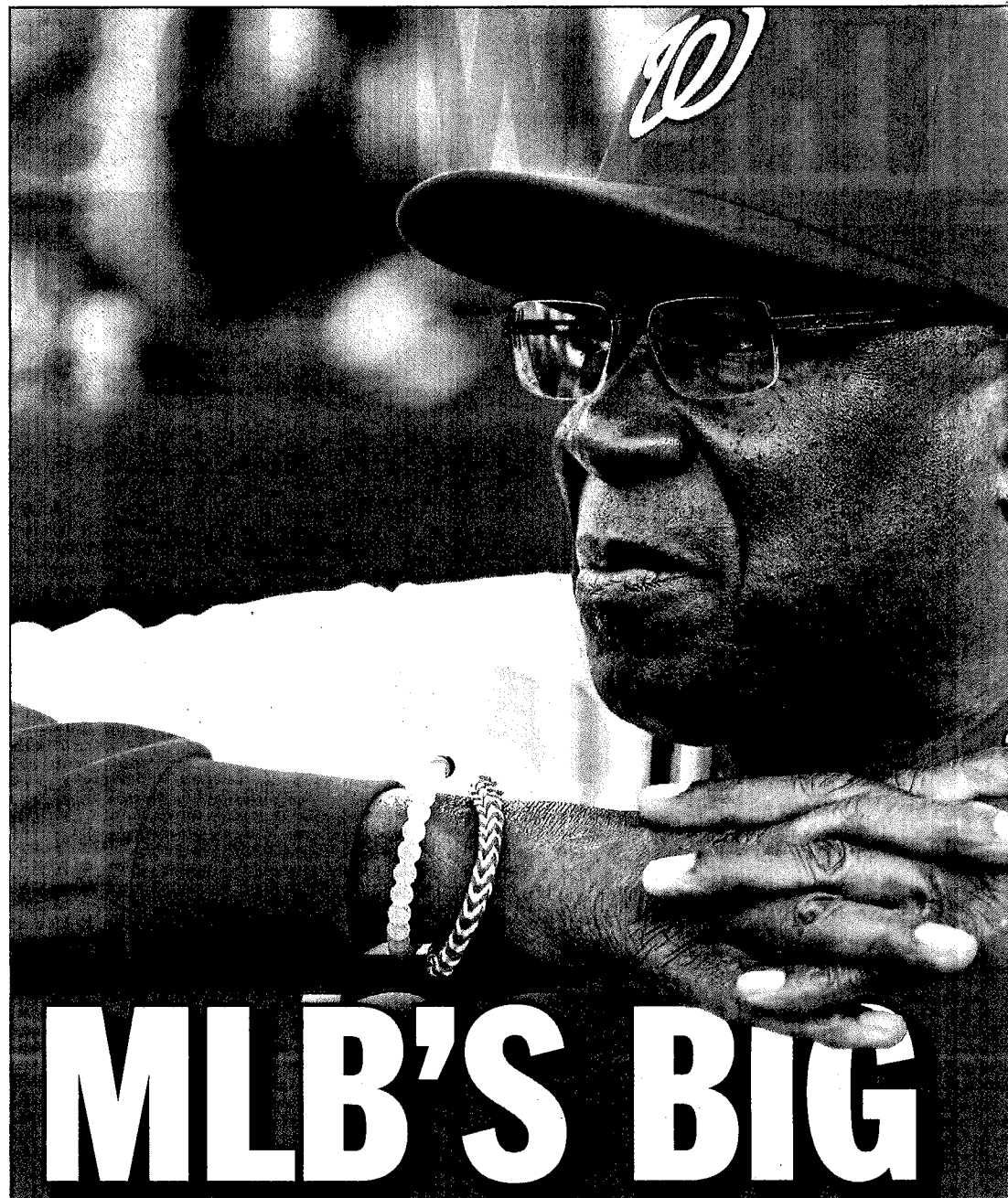
Colon is also selling T-shirts and hoodies commemorating his May 7 home run against the San Diego Padres, which made him the oldest player in MLB history to crush his first four-bagger.

The gear calls him “King Bart” and likens him to Babe Ruth with the words “The Great Bartbino.”

The shirts and hoodies sell for \$24.99 and \$39.99 respectively, plus shipping, through May 31.

Sales started Tuesday, and 95 items had been snapped up by Wednesday evening, according to represent.com, which is hawking the merchandise.

Bruce Golding



MLB'S BIG

BY DANIEL POPPER
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Sans Fredi, no Latin

JOSE Lobaton hopes to one day become a major league manager. But it's becoming increasingly difficult for the Nationals catcher to envision his dream ever turning into a reality.

After Braves manager Fredi Gonzalez was fired Tuesday because of his team's abysmal start, there are now no managers of Hispanic descent in the major leagues. Gonzalez was born in Holguin, Cuba and grew up in Miami. The absence of any Hispanic managers is a peculiar and jarring fact considering Latino players made up 28.5% of the league on Opening Day 2016, according to The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport. Yet that large percentage is now completely unrepresented at the managerial level.

It's a sorry situation that makes Lobaton — a Venezuela native — question his

goals. "I feel like I've got enough tools to be a manager. But at the same time, it's real hard to me," Lobaton said at Citi Field Wednesday before the Nationals faced the Mets. "Sometimes I feel like I can. Sometimes I feel like, 'Nah, just leave it there.'"

Lobaton said the idea of frequently addressing the media makes him think twice about pursuing a manager's job.

Major league managers generally talk to reporters twice every game day. And for someone who speaks English as a second language — like Lobaton — that task can seem very daunting. "I've got to learn English better and then I've got to talk to you guys all the time. I don't really like that," Lobaton said. "Sometimes the language is really important."

But the language barrier doesn't explain another concerning trend in MLB that relates to the Latino population: After Gonzalez's firing, there are only two minority managers in MLB — the Nationals' Dusty Baker and the Dodgers' Dave Roberts, two African-Americans who were hired before this season. "That ratio doesn't work," Baker said, alluding to the fact that nearly 30% of major leaguers are Hispanic. "I'm not doing the hiring. Or else I'd have hired me a long time ago."

Many Hispanics are part of MLB staffs as coaches. For instance, the Mets' bullpen coach, Ricky Bones, was born in Puerto Rico. It's an option that is more appealing to Lobaton, largely because coaches avoid the daily media grind. And many times, top

Nationals manager Dusty Baker, at Citi Field for big series with the Mets, is now one of just two minority skippers in the big

NY Daily News
5.19.16



managers

assistant coaches become primary candidates for open manager positions. Roberts was a bench coach for the Padres before joining the Dodgers. "I don't see a lot of (Latino managers), but I've seen a lot of coaches," Lobaton said. "So we're still there. Latin people are still there. We're just waiting for the chance. And I think it's going to happen one day."

MLB commissioner Rob Manfred said on ESPN Radio in October that "significant minority representation at entry-level jobs" and starting a "pipeline" of minority candidates is crucial to solving the problem. Former commissioner Bud Selig established the "Selig Rule" in 1999 — the MLB's version of the NFL's

Rooney Rule — which requires major league teams to consider a minority candidate "for all general manager, assistant general manager, field manager, director of player development and director of scouting positions."

But few teams have truly followed the directive. And Lobaton said "it can be good" for MLB to be more active in addressing the issue. "But at the same time," Lobaton said, "it's nothing about the league or that they don't want to see Latin managers. It just is how it is."

Mets shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera, who was also born in Venezuela, is more concerned with a person's qualifications.

"I don't think that matters to me," Cabrera said when asked if Hispanics deserve more representation. "The only thing that matters to me is having a good manager. And if you have a good manager — no matter if he's American or Latin — I don't really care."

leagues after Braves fired Fredi Gonzalez on Tuesday. AP

BASEBALL

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Trumbo again helping new team

Well-traveled slugger making mark with Orioles

Michelle R. Martinelli

@MMartinelli4
USA TODAY Sports

BALTIMORE Starting anew is nothing new for slugger Mark Trumbo, who has bounced around four teams in four years.

It's a curious odyssey: Trumbo seems well-liked wherever he goes, plays hard and possesses one of the rarest commodities in baseball — right-handed power.

Little wonder, then, that the Baltimore Orioles eagerly snapped him up, and they are reaping the benefits. Acquired from the Seattle Mariners for reserve catcher Steve Clevenger, Trumbo entered Wednesday's games with 11 home runs, tying him with teammate Manny Machado for third in the American League, and a team-leading 28 RBI, ninth most in the AL.

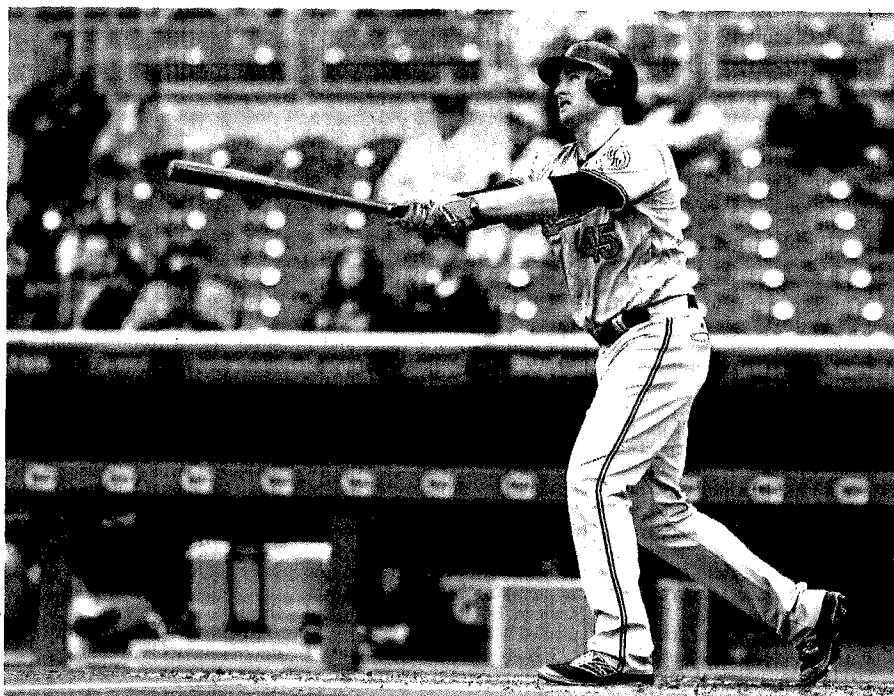
From the Los Angeles Angels to the Arizona Diamondbacks to the Mariners, Trumbo has grown accustomed to acclimating.

It's not his preference, but he's managed to flourish despite the flux.

"All that stuff that people take for granted, it can really give you a lot of peace of mind," the 6-4, 225-pound right fielder said. "If you're feeling good off the field and kind of feel like you have a home settled in, you're probably going to play a lot better."

If that's what it takes for Trumbo to excel, his stats through nearly a quarter of the season suggest he's already feeling comfortable.

Hitting .299 this season — up from .262 in 2015 with Arizona and Seattle combined — he boasts a .576 slugging percentage, a 127-point increase from last season. He also has half as many home runs in six weeks as he accumulated all last season.



BRAD REMPEL, USA TODAY SPORTS

"If you're in a good frame of mind," Mark Trumbo says, "I think you're going to play better."

Batting second and fifth, respectively, Machado and Trumbo are a big reason the Orioles have the best record in the AL and have won nine of their last 13 games.

Trumbo says he's not doing anything differently with his new team, but his timing has improved, leading to more consistent and better contact.

Acquired by the Orioles in December with a one-year, \$9.15 million contract, Trumbo is doing exactly what general manager Dan Duquette wanted: improving the team's offensive production from the outfield. Trumbo also was a backup plan in case the Orioles didn't re-sign Chris Davis, Duquette said, and gives the team options with his ability to fill in at first base as

well as at designated hitter.

"This is a good ballpark for him," Duquette said of Camden Yards. "He adds some depth to our lineup, and he gives us a right-handed power threat in the middle of the lineup. He works hard, and he's ready to do his best every day."

Despite this season's surge in batting stats, Trumbo says he isn't chasing any number, whether it's his career-high 34 home runs from his final year with the Angels in 2013 or the nearly 50 he's on pace to hit this season.

Analyzing every at-bat too much leads to unnecessary pressure, he said, and as long as he and the team maintain their consistency, he's not going to change how he operates.

"If you're in a good frame of

mind, I think you're going to play better," Trumbo said. "As far as putting any numerical goals on things, it can just create that extra tension of chasing results when the process is really far more important."

Trading Trumbo for the second time — first in 2013 from the Angels to the Diamondbacks — Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto said he needed to create payroll flexibility in Seattle in the offseason and knew Trumbo's swing was built for Baltimore.

"When Mark gets hot, he can carry the middle of a lineup," Dipoto said. "No one has more majestic right-handed power in baseball. You've got Giancarlo Stanton and Mark Trumbo. It's a short list, but he's on it."

"No one has more majestic right-handed power in baseball. You've got Giancarlo Stanton and Mark Trumbo."

Mariners GM Jerry Dipoto, who traded Trumbo twice

"He also gives you the flexibility of trying him in different positions, particularly with an AL team."

Trumbo meshed with the Orioles from the first day of spring training, center fielder Adam Jones said, adding a noticeable thump to the lineup.

But while Trumbo is known for his hitting, Jones said he was impressed with Trumbo's dedication to improving his fielding.

Although Trumbo still is looking to read the ball off the bat better and charge a little more fluidly, Jones said the difference in fielding was clear from Day 1.

"I've seen him put aside his offensive mind-set — that is the reason why he's here anyway — and take it upon himself to understand how this team is," Jones said. "Because we're a defensive-minded team first, and especially the outfield with how it's changed and shifted, he's taken it upon himself to really understand both sides of the ball even more."

That should only increase Trumbo's marketability when he finally controls his own destiny; he's a free agent after this season. Trumbo said he had avoided the distraction of thinking about that, though Jones noted his strong start had increased his value in the clubhouse.

It's not the first time that's happened.

"As I told him when we traded him," Dipoto said, "You know I love you."

Contributing: Bob Nightengale



Notes: MLB's diversity issue back in spotlight, brawl fallout and more

Baseball is down to just two minority managers, final questions on the Jays-Rangers brawl and much more in Ken Rosenthal's latest notes.

By Ken Rosenthal

May 19, 2016 at 7:00a ET

After the Braves' dismissal of manager Fredi Gonzalez on Tuesday, I tweeted this:

(Tweet) @Ken_Rosenthal: "With firing of Gonzalez, no Latino managers in majors. #Nationals' Baker, #Dodgers' Roberts only minorities."

I offered no further commentary at the time; the facts alone are damning in a sport in which 28.5 percent of the players on Opening Day rosters were Latino, according to a study by the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport.

This is not to say Gonzalez deserved to keep his job; I reported late last season that he essentially had lost the clubhouse, and his in-game decisions this season often invited scrutiny, even though the Braves are rebuilding. Nor is it to suggest that teams should hire managers just because they are Latino, African-American or members of any other race. The goal, always, should be to hire the most qualified person.

The problem is that any number of minority candidates *are* qualified. But, as I wrote last October, baseball's current hiring practices make it difficult for minorities and others to land certain positions.

Baker and Roberts were not even the first choices among some with their respective clubs. Baker became the Nationals' manager only after the team failed to reach an agreement with Bud Black. Roberts, at minimum, had to overcome the perception that certain members of the Dodgers' front office favored Gabe Kapler.

Some ask, why is this an issue? One, it's a question of simple fairness and opportunity. Two, baseball acknowledges that it is an issue, and not because the sport is simply seeking to be politically correct. The diversity in the management ranks should reflect the diversity in the playing ranks, at least for a forward-thinking sport.

"There's a certain cyclical nature to this," commissioner Rob Manfred said last October.

"Field managers are high turnover jobs, and you're going to have peaks and valleys in terms

of representation. Having said that, we are focused on the need to promote diversity -- not just African-Americans but Latinos as well -- in the managerial ranks.

"We have had a year where our numbers are down, in terms of our diversity in some key positions, and I think it's incumbent upon us to come up with additional programs and ways to make sure our numbers look better over the long haul."

SUSPENSIONS: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Baseball, in announcing discipline for the Rangers-Blue Jays brawl, noted that Rangers right-hander Matt Bush received a fine for "intentionally" throwing at the Jays' Jose Bautista and causing warnings to be issued to both clubs.

Which led to the obvious question:

Why wasn't Bush suspended, particularly when Jays righty Jesse Chavez got three games for intentionally hitting Prince Fielder when both teams were under warnings?

The difference, according to a source with knowledge of the process, is that the umpires did not exercise their prerogative to automatically eject Bush -- and that there was little precedent for suspending a pitcher under such circumstances.

How is it possible that Jays manager John Gibbons and Rangers second baseman Rowned Odor received the same fine -- \$5,000?

Joe Garagiola Jr., baseball's senior VP of standards and on-field operations, assigned greater intent to Bush than the umpires, but by then it was too late. The Jays suffered under the warnings, unable to retaliate without their pitcher getting ejected. So once again, a team gained an advantageous position by effectively firing the first shot.

Another question that arose out of the discipline (and trust me, I know there are others): How is it possible that Jays manager John Gibbons and Rangers second baseman Rowned Odor received the same fine -- \$5,000?

Gibbons, who was suspended for three games, was cited for returning to the field after being ejected earlier in the game and inciting further fighting. Odor, who was suspended for eight games, actually initiated the brawl, pushing Bautista and then punching him in the jaw.

The source said that Gibbons, as someone in a position of leadership, is expected to show more restraint (players, by the way, are paid during their suspensions for on-field discipline, and it is believed that managers are, too).

STRASBURG'S DEAL: THE HIDDEN LOGIC

If you're wondering why agent Scott Boras "settled" for a seven-year, \$175 million extension for Nationals right-hander Stephen Strasburg, just follow the opt-outs.

Yes, Boras perhaps could have landed a \$200 million deal for Strasburg in a thin free-agent class, even though the pitcher underwent Tommy John surgery in 2010. But the opt-outs --

after either year three or four -- provide added value, creating the potential for an even bigger prize.

If Strasburg takes the first opt-out, he would become a free agent entering his age 31 season. By then, he presumably would have a more established track record, assuming he stays healthy. He has exceeded 200 innings only once, and thrown just 831 2/3 in his career.

Even better, Strasburg would hit the market soon after Clayton Kershaw, Jake Arrieta and Jose Fernandez are likely to establish new ceilings for starting pitchers in the coming free-agent years.

One or more of those pitchers could agree to extensions before then. But by the time all three are signed, it's reasonable to assume that the highest average salary for a starter will increase from Zack Greinke's current \$34.4 million to beyond \$40 million.

Would a team be willing to commit such a sum to Strasburg knowing that a second TJ could be in his future? Remains to be seen, but for Strasburg the gamble certainly was worth taking -- particularly when he already is guaranteed \$175 million.

NEW WRINKLE IN WERTH'S CONTRACT

In late March, I wrote that Jayson Werth's \$21 million salaries in 2016 and '17 restricted the Nationals' ability to sign a slugging outfielder last offseason (the team's bids for Yoenis Cespedes and Jason Heyward were heavily deferred).

I did not have all of the facts at the time.

Werth, according to a copy of his contract recently obtained by FOX Sports, amended his deal last Oct. 15 to defer \$10 million of his 2016 salary at 5 percent simple interest. The money, according to a source, will be paid in 2018.

Werth's original seven-year, \$126 million free-agent contract did not include deferrals, but the Nats created aggressive deferral structures in their recent deals for Strasburg and Max Scherzer. The idea, presumably, was to keep the club in a position of financial flexibility.

As for Werth's performance, it is below his previous career levels, but hardly embarrassing for a player who turns 37 on Friday. His .711 OPS is slightly below-average for a left fielder, and since last Aug. 15 -- two weeks after he returned from a left-wrist injury -- he has 15 home runs and 44 RBIs in 338 plate appearances.

HOW SOON FOR BRAVES' ALBIES, SWANSON?

The Braves' top two prospects, Ozzie Albies and Dansby Swanson, already are on the fast track -- Albies, 19, reached Triple A after just 22 games at Double A; Swanson, 22, reached Double A after just 21 games at High A.

Some rival executives, though, wonder whether the Braves will push both players too rapidly in an attempt to demonstrate that the team's rebuilding program is working.

The Braves rushed right-hander Aaron Blair, who returned to the minors after posting a 7.59 ERA in his first three starts. Albies and Swanson figure to reach the majors at some point this season; the question is how soon.

Albies, who signed at 16, entered Wednesday with 843 minor-league plate appearances. For comparison's sake, consider four current major-league shortstops who were drafted out of high school -- Francisco Lindor had 1,880 plate appearances in the minors, Corey Seager 1,704, Carlos Correa 1,262 and Addison Russell 1,087 (those numbers do not include winter and Arizona Fall League totals).

Some rival executives wonder whether the Braves will push Albies and Swanson too rapidly in an attempt to demonstrate that the team's rebuilding program is working.

Swanson, the No. 1 pick in last year's draft out of Vanderbilt, entered Wednesday with only 225 minor-league plate appearances. He did not make his professional debut until last Aug. 12 due to an injury.

Troy Tulowitzki, the No. 7 overall pick out of Long Beach State in 2005, reached the majors after 684 minor-league plate appearances. Stephen Drew, the 15th overall pick out of Florida State in 2004, made it after 777.

Players develop at their own rates. Perhaps the Braves will determine that both Albies and Swanson are exceptions who need to be in the majors sooner rather than later. Then again, what would be the rush? It's not as if either will make a difference in the 2016 club's fortunes.

Albies and Swanson both are playing shortstop at their respective levels; the expectation is that the Braves will move one of them to second base once they reach the majors.

TEAM PUERTO RICO'S BIG CHOICE

Team Puerto Rico will have two fantastic options at shortstop for the 2017 World Baseball Classic -- the Astros' Carlos Correa and Indians' Francisco Lindor. While Lindor rates as the better defender, Correa is perhaps likely to start most games at short.

In fact, Lindor's agility and skill actually might work against him. His athleticism would help him adjust more quickly to second base than Correa would. Lindor has made plays in shifts on the other side of the bag that remind some of a great Puerto Rican second baseman -- none other than Roberto Alomar.

Lindor and Correa both reached the majors last June and have appeared in almost the exact same number of games. Lindor finished last season ranked fourth among shortstops in defensive runs saved, Correa 15th. Lindor is eighth in that statistic thus far this season, Correa 33rd.

By the way, the term "defensive runs saved" is a misnomer. It does *not* refer to the number of runs a player actually saves on defense; it simply measures the number of runs a player saves above or below an average player.

AROUND THE HORN

* Astros hitting coach Dave Hudgens says of second baseman Jose Altuve, "What makes him great is that he's never satisfied."

Altuve, in fact, dramatically improved his selectivity after a conversation with Hudgens at the end of last season. Hudgens showed Altuve that he was chasing 37.7 percent of pitches outside the strike zone, explained that he would get better pitches to hit if he cut that down to the league average.

Well, Altuve has reduced his chase rate to below league average, dropping all the way down to 25.8 percent. He's seeing more pitches per plate appearance, his walk rate is up and pitchers have to attack him in the zone because he no longer is swinging at marginal strikes.

The result: His on-base and slugging percentages are at career-high levels, and not by a little. By a lot.

* The Phillies almost certainly will crash, but who would have imagined that with approximately one-fourth of the season complete their 24-17 record would be the third-best in the NL?

Their negative-28 run differential screams regression, as does their 14-3 record in one-run games; no other team has more than eight wins in one-run affairs. The pitching, though, is mostly real; the Phils rank sixth in the NL in both ERA and fielding-independent pitching, meaning they're about where they should be.

* And so it has come to this for the Blue Jays: The team is eagerly awaiting the return of second baseman Devon Travis, who has been out since last July 28 due to a shoulder condition that later required surgery.

Travis, who will join Triple-A Buffalo for a rehabilitation assignment, could be a spark for the Jays at the top of the order, enabling Michael Saunders to drop into more of an RBI position.

The Jays' offense, expected to be a force, has been a major disappointment; the team is tied with the Athletics for 21st in the majors in runs per game, ranking behind every division opponent but the Yankees.



Keith Law's 2016 MLB mock draft 1.0

BY KEITH LAW

MAY 18, 2016 10:52 PM ET

Considering we're only three weeks and one day away from the MLB draft, it's time I stop procrastinating and take a shot at projecting the first round. This is never easy -- I think it's the hardest thing I do in this job because I'm trying to get information teams have no incentive to disclose -- but this year, it's even more difficult because the teams at the top, including the Phillies at 1-1, have yet to decide whom they're taking.

I think with the way the top of the board is shaking out, with probably just two prep arms going in the top 10, several other top high school pitchers will end up in the teens -- or they'll be totally unsignable unless someone goes way over slot in the comp round. That could apply to Clifton Park, New York, right-hander Ian Anderson, who has barely pitched this spring because of terrible weather in the area and a bout of pneumonia, or Kansas lefty Joey Wentz, whose velocity has tailed off and whose medical reports teams are waiting to read.

Enjoy this for what it is: a first attempt. I'll have another one in two weeks, and I hope that will be more accurate. (You can see my **MLB draft Big Board here**.)

Note: Click on a player's name to go to his player card, which has a full scouting report written by Eric Longenhagen.

1. Philadelphia Phillies

A.J. Puk, LHP

Florida

Puk threw well Saturday with a ton of heat in the house, including three folks from the Phillies, at least two each from Atlanta and Colorado, and the scouting director for the Reds. The Phillies' mix is still pretty broad, which reflects the lack of consensus around the top talents in the class, with Puk, Kyle Lewis, Corey Ray, Mickey Moniak and Blake Rutherford forming their current decision set.

2. Cincinnati Reds

Kyle Lewis, OF

Mercer

The Reds have been rumored to be on college players most of the spring. Scouting director Chris Buckley has had three top-10 picks with Cincinnati, and he went college for each of those, though he went with a high schooler at No. 11 last year. This year, Lewis, Ray, Nick Senzel and Puk are the most likely options.

3. Atlanta Braves

Jason Groome, LHP

Barnegat (New Jersey) High School

Atlanta could take a strong college position player here, such as Ray, and then resume its usual, high-upside high school strategy in the sandwich round. That said, the Braves have loved Groome's upside since the fall, and I think they'd feel they were getting the draft's top talent.

4. Colorado Rockies

Riley Pint, RHP

St. Thomas Aquinas High School (Overland Park, Kansas)

The Rockies are on pitching. They'd take Puk if he got here, which seems unlikely but not impossible. If Puk is gone, I think their choice would come down to Pint or Groome, though they've also been very heavy on Moniak.

5. Milwaukee Brewers

Corey Ray, OF

Louisville

Brewers scouting director Ray Montgomery has always gone after the top player on the board wherever he has drafted (with Milwaukee and Arizona), and in this scenario, that's Ray. However, the Brewers also like Delvin Perez and Zack Collins, and they would be in the mix for Puk or Groome if either fell. Josh Lowe is also a dark horse here.

6. Oakland Athletics

Nick Senzel, 3B

Tennessee

Oakland is on college bats here, especially Senzel and Zack Collins, though it has scouted Moniak hard and would consider any of the top five guys who fell here, even Pint.

7. Miami Marlins

Mickey Moniak, OF

La Costa Canyon High School (Carlsbad, California)

I've heard the Marlins have expressed interest in Perez, Moniak, Braxton Garrett and Pint, as well as Senzel if he gets this far. That said, I don't think they'll take another college hitter in the first round, after Colin Moran didn't work out.

8. San Diego Padres

Braxton Garrett, LHP

Florence (Alabama) High School

Padres GM A.J. Preller said he wants "loud tools," but Garrett is not "loud." He is just a good, polished, high school pitcher who should move more quickly than some of his higher-ceiling peers. I've heard the Padres with Pint, Forrest Whitley and Perez. They're also widely rumored to have a deal in place at pick 24 with Stanford pitcher Cal Quantrill, who's still out after 2015 Tommy John surgery and might not pitch this spring (which is fueling rumors that he has a deal with a team, though it could be just about any team).

9. Detroit Tigers

Blake Rutherford, OF

Chaminade College Prep (West Hills, California)

It's Rutherford here for now, though I've heard Riley Pint will go here if he drops this far.

10. Chicago White Sox

Dakota Hudson, RHP

Mississippi State

I've heard the White Sox are on big college arms, especially Hudson and Georgia right-hander Robert Tyler. That said, I wonder if they'd roll the dice on Pint, given their willingness to take guys with great stuff but unusual aspects to their deliveries.

11. Seattle Mariners

Zack Collins, C

Miami

Collins almost certainly is not a catcher long-term, but he almost certainly is a major league bat at first base or even DH. Look for Seattle to lean toward a college bat at least with this pick, so if any of Ray, Lewis or Senzel slides here, one of them would be the pick. I've heard the Mariners are also very high on Justin Dunn.

12. Boston Red Sox

Nolan Jones, SS

Holy Ghost Prep (Bensalem, Pennsylvania)

Jones has been high on the Red Sox's radar for a while now. They don't seem to love the college pitching options and are very unlikely to take a high school arm.

13. Tampa Bay Rays

Delvin Perez, SS

International Baseball Academy (Puerto Rico)

Perez's stock has fallen due to questions about his work ethic and maturity, as well as some doubts about whether his ability to hit is enough to make his other plus-plus tools play. He's also just 17 years old and one of the highest-ceiling talents in the draft. The Rays, meanwhile, have never shied away from a player with questionable makeup, and compared to some past Rays players, such as Elijah Dukes and Josh Lueke, Perez is an angel. The Rays are looking for upside here and are also on Taylor Trammell.

14. Cleveland Indians

Cody Sedlock, RHP

Illinois

Perez stops here. I've also heard the Indians connected with a few college arms, including Sedlock and Justin Dunn, though I don't think that's all they're targeting.

15. Minnesota Twins

Matt Manning, RHP

Sheldon (Sacramento) High School

The Twins love power arms and have seen a lot of Manning -- part of that is due to his proximity to scouting director Deron Johnson's residence -- but I've heard them with Hudson if he slides here. Industry expectation is that Manning goes between pick No. 8 and here, if he's signable. The Twins seem to be on power arms first and a few high school athletes as well.

16. Los Angeles Angels

Alex Kirilloff, OF

Plum (Pittsburgh) High School

With the GM change in Anaheim (to Billy Eppler), the Angels are again open for business in the high school market, which should allow them to target some higher-ceiling players, such as Kirilloff or Trammell.

17. Houston Astros

Forrest Whitley, RHP

Alamo Heights (San Antonio) High School

I've heard the Astros more on high-upside high school players such as Whitley and Trammell, rather than the expected (or stereotyped?) college performers.

18. New York Yankees

Taylor Trammell, OF

Mount Paran Christian (Kennesaw, Georgia)

I've also heard the Yankees connected with Santa Barbara, California, prep right-hander Kevin Gowdy, who, if he doesn't go here, is a favorite of Phillies scouts and could be an overpay at 43.

19. New York Mets

Will Craig, 1B

Wake Forest

The Mets seem to be mostly focused on college bats, such as Craig, Collins if he gets here, Chris Okey and Matt Thaiss.

20. Los Angeles Dodgers

Justin Dunn, RHP

Boston College

The Dodgers are also on Sedlock, Trammell and prep shortstop Gavin Lux, the No. 2 true shortstop in this class.

21. Toronto Blue Jays

Bo Bichette, IF

Lakewood (St. Petersburg, Florida) High School

Dante Bichette's son was very good last summer and has continued to mash this spring, though he's clearly not a shortstop. He'll have to find a new position in pro ball.

22. Pittsburgh Pirates

Matt Thaiss, C

Virginia

Thaiss might not stay at catcher, but he rarely strikes out, which makes him an obvious fit for the Pirates' philosophy. They're also the highest team I've heard on Louisville reliever Zack Burdi, who might be able to pitch in the big leagues this season.

23. St. Louis Cardinals

Robert Tyler, RHP

Georgia

This is the first team about which I can honestly say I haven't heard anything of substance, and given that they have a new scouting director, I can't give you anything more than an educated guess.

Compensation picks

Because the first round is unusually short this year, here are a few stabs at the sandwich-round selections, the 11 picks awarded to teams that lost free agents who declined qualifying offers.

24. San Diego Padres: Cal Quantrill, RHP, Stanford

25. San Diego Padres: Zack Burdi, RHP, Louisville

26. Chicago White Sox: Gavin Lux, SS, Indian Trail Academy (Kenosha, Wisconsin)

27. Baltimore Orioles: Anthony Kay, LHP, Connecticut

28. Washington Nationals: Carter Kieboom, 3B, Walton High School (Marietta, Georgia)

29. Washington Nationals: Alec Hansen, RHP, Oklahoma

30. Texas Rangers: Josh Lowe, 3B/RHP, Pope High School (Marietta, Georgia)

31. New York Mets: Eric Lauer, LHP, Kent State

32. Los Angeles Dodgers: T.J. Zeuch, RHP, Pittsburgh

33. St. Louis Cardinals: Chris Okey, C, Clemson

34. St. Louis Cardinals: Jordan Sheffield, RHP, Vanderbilt



How MLB missed the mark in Blue Jays-Rangers punishments

BY BUSTER OLNEY

MAY 18, 2016 11:03 AM ET

Without having specific explanations for each of the suspensions doled out to the Blue Jays and Rangers following their Sunday brawl, these are some of the questions that linger about a few puzzling decisions:

1. Why was Matt Bush not suspended or exonerated entirely?

His fastball into the ribs of Jose Bautista kicked off the whole series of events, and while the umpires on the field did not interpret his actions as egregious in real time -- because they didn't throw him out of the game -- Major League Baseball apparently did. With the benefit of reviewing Bush's pitch with replay over two days of deliberations, MLB fined Bush.

But in this case, you can't have it both ways. Either Bush threw at Bautista with intent or he didn't.

If MLB determined that he didn't, then he shouldn't get any penalty for hitting Bautista any more than any of the hundreds of other pitchers who will inadvertently hit a batter with a pitch in 2016.

On the other hand, if MLB officials determined that Bush threw at Bautista on purpose -- if he had any level of culpability -- he should be subject to at least the same level of suspension that Jesse Chavez got.

To give Bush merely a fine is a cop-out, a search for a middle ground that really doesn't exist, perhaps out of respect for the umpires' handling of Bush's actions on the field. There's no reason why that should be a concern any more than any other replay review is: The umpires are at a disadvantage because they have to make their decisions immediately, without the benefit of time and second and third and fourth looks.

(And by the way: I haven't spoken to a single player or team official who believes Bush's fastball was an innocent mistake.)

2. Why was Elvis Andrus suspended for a game when Kevin Pillar and Josh Donaldson were not?

You can see 15 seconds into this replay of the brawl that after Rougned Odor and Bautista squared off, Andrus turned and threw a punch that missed, so it's not really a surprise that he was sanctioned. But if a primary question is about who escalated the brawl and who did not, then Pillar and Donaldson, like Andrus, were in supporting roles, both of them flying into the

mix, aiming for Odor; Pillar went in with arms flailing, and Donaldson took Odor to the ground.

The difference between what Andrus did and what Pillar and Donaldson did might come down to a literal definition of what a punch is, a really slippery slope; what if Pillar had made contact with his windmilling hands?

(In his comments Tuesday, Pillar left no doubt about his intent: "In the heat of the moment, you've got to do what you think is right. You've got to go out there and defend yourself and defend your teammates. And just given the circumstances, I felt like [Odor] was owed one, and I was going to go out there to get him.")

It might be better to stick with the question of who acted aggressively and who tried to defuse the situation.

3. How did Bautista get just one game?

He really did nothing out of bounds through his slide into second base, which was clearly aimed to send a message but not to injure, as Bautista said. He didn't sweep the leg -- to borrow a phrase from "The Karate Kid" -- as he went into Odor, and didn't go into a roll block. Bautista was angry that Bush hit him with a fastball and wanted the Rangers to know it.

But Bautista also had the opportunity, after his slide through second base, to pop up and run off the field to the visitors dugout on the third-base side. He didn't do this. Rather, he turned, glared at Odor and moved toward him, a choice that was a domino in setting off the brawl -- much like a hitter moving toward a pitcher after being drilled at the plate. If Bautista gets up and runs off the field, it would've been over.

Maybe Bautista got some forgiveness because he got drilled. Maybe it was because he chose to slide with intensity, and not intent to injure.

Or maybe this is a case of simple mercy, because Bautista will pay a price for this incident indefinitely: A replay of Odor punching the Jays slugger flush on the jaw will be shown on video boards for decades to come.

Odor will appeal his suspension.

A Rangers minor league affiliate created a drink named after his punch.

Bob Elliott thinks the Odor suspension of eight games was too lenient.

Bautista got a pass from David Price, as Steve Buckley writes. Red Sox coach Brian Butterfield knows Bautista and talked about what happened.

Bautista showed he can take a punch, writes Hal McCoy.

Blue Jays manager John Gibbons can't win for losing, writes Rosie DiManno.

Meanwhile: The Jays have been getting beat up on the field.

Notables

- It was more a matter of when Fredi Gonzalez was going to get fired and not a question of if he would be let go, and his dismissal took an awkward turn Monday night, as David O'Brien writes. The Braves' interim manager has been with the organization a long time.
- On Monday's podcast, Cardinals second baseman Kolten Wong on his journey to the big leagues, from the Big Island of Hawaii to the life-changing contract he signed in the spring; Todd Radom's uniform and logo quiz; and Brendan Kennedy of the Toronto Star and Jerry Crasnick on the brawl between the Rangers and Blue Jays.

Monday's Scoreboard podcast.

On Tuesday's podcast, Jayson Stark on Major League Baseball's concern over pace of play, on the Jays and Rangers and the response to Odor's punch in the baseball world, and the question of the best possible pitching matchup in 2016; Mark Simon on the Mets and Nationals and his new book; and Vanderbilt baseball coach Tim Corbin on what he sees in the early struggles of David Price and Sonny Gray, as well as the newly promoted Tony Kemp.

Tuesday's Scoreboard podcast.

- There is no timetable for the return of Indians outfielder Michael Brantley, after he was examined by a doctor. Not good.

From Jordan Bastian's story:

Brantley was placed on the 15-day disabled list on Saturday due to the shoulder inflammation.

"We need to look at the big picture and take care of him," Indians manager Terry Francona said on Saturday. "I think he understood, and I think this makes sense."

Brantley will technically be eligible to be activated from the DL on May 25, but his timetable for return is unknown at this point. After recently complaining of soreness in his shoulder, Brantley underwent an MRI exam on his arm on Friday, though nothing overly alarming was identified.

To be certain that the issue was not serious, Brantley opted to have a follow-up with Dr. Morgan, who performed surgery to repair a labral tear in the outfielder's shoulder in November. Brantley initially injured the shoulder during a diving catch attempt against the Twins on Sept. 25 last season in Minnesota.

- The time of game has jumped significantly so far this season, and the commissioner is not happy about it, writes Jayson Stark.

- Clayton Kershaw was thrown out trying to take an extra base on Mike Trout, but he also did what he does best, and shut down the Angels.

From the Elias Sports Bureau: Tuesday was the sixth consecutive start for Kershaw in which he struck out at least 10 batters while allowing no more than one walk, a modern major league record (since 1900). Kershaw is the fifth pitcher in the modern era to strike out 10-plus hitters in six or more consecutive games (Nolan Ryan, Pedro Martinez, Randy Johnson and Chris Sale). The record for most consecutive 10-strikeout games is eight, shared by Martinez and Sale.

From Elias: Kershaw has struck out 68 batters and issued only two walks over his past six starts. No other pitcher in the modern era had that many strikeouts with that few walks over a six-start span. The closest was Curt Schilling, who struck out 69 batters and walked only four over a six-start span in 2002.

Most K's At Time Of 5th BB

YEAR	PITCHER	K-BB
2016	Clayton Kershaw	88-4
2014	<u>Sean Doolittle</u>	78-5
2010	<u>Cliff Lee</u>	76-5
1990	Dennis Eckersley	73-4

*Single season since mound moved to 60'6" in 1893

**Source: Elias Sports Bureau

Kershaw has 88 strikeouts and four walks this season. From Elias: Kershaw is the first pitcher since 1893 (when the mound was moved to 60 feet, 6 inches) to have as many as 80 strikeouts at the time of his fifth walk of a season.

From ESPN Stats & Information: Kershaw's ridiculous numbers can be tied to two things that make him highlight effective:

A. The first is that he's getting more called strikes with his fastball. In past seasons, his called-strike rate with that pitch hovered near 40 percent. This season, it's 47 percent, which ranks second in the majors behind Aaron Nola of the Phillies (51 percent). In practical terms, Kershaw's improvement nets him an extra four called strikes per game above what he would typically get in past seasons.

B. The second is nothing new: His curveball and slider have been incredibly good. Opponents are hitting .099 in at-bats that end with either of those pitches. They hit .140 or better in each of the past three seasons. He has 60 strikeouts with his breaking balls this

season. The pitcher with the next most is Jose Fernandez with 45. Opponents miss on 44 percent of their swings against Kershaw breaking balls, the sixth-highest rate in the majors.

An aside: The Dodgers actually think that his slider was sort of flat in the first month of the season, and that his curveball hasn't been as sharp as it can be in recent weeks. That's how good he is.

Kershaw got some backing from a couple of young Dodgers.

- The Mets got the best of Max Scherzer. Noah Syndergaard continues to carry the Mets' rotation. He delivered in the clutch, writes Bob Klapisch.

- Francisco Cervelli got a three-year deal with the Pirates.

Over the past two seasons, Cervelli ranks second to Buster Posey in fWAR among catchers with at least 400 plate appearances.

By doing this deal, the Pirates have locked up a competitive advantage, writes Travis Sawchik.

- The next Atlanta manager will have it a lot easier, writes Joel Sherman.

- Oakland and Texas played a wild game that could signal the end of Shawn Tolleson's time as closer of the Rangers – at least temporarily.

Khris Davis had himself a night, capped off by a walkoff grand slam. Davis had an unusual way of celebrating the homer, as Susan Slusser writes.

Adrian Beltre dropped to one knee as he hit a homer.

- John Farrell acknowledged that Eduardo Rodriguez has been having troubles with his knee. Joe Kelly might get the ball in a start this weekend.

Farrell was ejected Tuesday.

- As Dan Patrick might say: You can't stop the Rockies, you can only hope to contain them.

- Madison Bumgarner sarled his way to a win over the Padres, writes Andrew Baggarly. The benches cleared after Bumgarner shot a glare at Wil Myers.

Dings and dents

1. Alex Rodriguez wasn't activated and wasn't happy about it. You do wonder if Rodriguez is lingering on the disabled list at least partly because he has limited value as the Yankees play this series in Arizona without benefit of the designated hitter rule. Rodriguez fits the Yankees' roster a whole lot better when they can use a DH.

2. David Wright wasn't thrilled with being held out of the lineup, but was circumspect. Over his past 10 games, Wright is 4-for-30 with 14 strikeouts and 10 walks.
3. Mike Minor will continue his rehab work in Triple-A.
4. Yovani Gallardo continues to make progress.
5. Mark Canha is having season-ending surgery.
6. Sergio Romo has made progress, as mentioned in this John Shea notebook.
7. The Angels added two more to their disabled list.
8. A couple of Padres suffered setbacks.
9. Joaquin Benoit was activated.

Moves, deals and decisions

1. The Cubs signed Joe Nathan.
2. The Astros promoted a couple of rookies.
3. Matt Klentak says he'll make trades if the Phillies stay in contention.
4. The start of the White Sox has put October baseball on the mind of GM Rick Hahn.
5. Jose Berrios was sent back to the minors, to develop more command.

Tuesday's games

1. Tommy Joseph hit his first homer, as Matt Gelb writes.
 2. Zack Greinke won again.
 3. Michael Pineda had another rough outing. The Yankees' coaches sound fed up with Pineda, writes George King.
 4. Paulo Orlando had a big day.
 5. The Pirates hung on to a lead against the Braves.
 6. The Cubs seem increasingly bored when they play second-division teams. And that'll be a challenge for them, after their strong start.
- Ben Zobrist broke up a no-hitter in the eighth inning, as Jesse Rogers writes.
7. Evan Gattis propelled the Astros, as Angel Verdejo Jr. writes.

8. Chase Anderson flirted with a no-hitter.
9. The Marlins racked up 17 strikeouts.
10. Nelson Cruz had a big game.

AL East

- There are some benefits to Alex Rodriguez getting some time off.
- The Yankees are constantly tailoring the fringe of their roster, writes Billy Witz.
- John Farrell was ejected.

AL Central

- Brad Ausmus' suspension took him off the hot seat for a day, writes Drew Sharp.
- Cameron Maybin has been huge for the Tigers, says Ian Kinsler.
- The Royals are resilient in defense of their title.
- Matt Albers had another bad day.

AL West

- Huston Street is glad to see the Angels land Tim Lincecum.

NL East

- From Elias: Vince Velasquez struck out 10 batters in only five innings pitched in the Phillies' win over the Marlins. Velasquez is the second Phillies pitcher since 1893 -- the year the mound was set at 60 feet, 6 inches -- to fan 10 or more batters in a game in which he pitched no more than five innings. Robert Person did it on April 28, 2000 against the Cardinals (10 SO, 5 IP).
- Daniel Murphy was excited to get his ring.
- Pregame preparation has been a key for the Marlins.

NL Central

- When Jhonny Peralta comes back, an infield shuffle could begin, writes Rick Hummel. From his story:

According to the rules, the rehab could last as long as 20 days.

"I would like to say we'll be patient with it and not rush it," Mozeliak said.

The big question, of course, is what will happen with Peralta and impressive rookie shortstop Aledmys Diaz on the club?

Peralta played at least 100 games at third base in the 2009 and 2010 seasons, with Detroit and Cleveland.

"I'm very comfortable with him doing other things," Mozeliak said but added Peralta would be playing shortstop on the rehab assignment.

But the GM added significantly, "We can't rule out moving Diaz, we can't rule out moving (Matt) Carpenter and we can't rule out moving Peralta. I know that's a vague answer but these are different pieces to the Rubik's Cube that we've got to solve. But the good news for us that we're very confident in what Peralta can do for us defensively, and I think he can do that at any position."

More likely, Diaz would be the one to move. But if he goes to third base, for instance, Carpenter could go to first — where the Cardinals already have a passel of candidates in Brandon Moss, Matt Adams and Matt Holliday.

- Jay Bruce has been facing a shift more than ever.

NL West

- Carlos Gonzalez has taken over the cleanup spot for the Rockies.

Lastly

- There is sad news about three-time All-Star Dick McAuliffe.
- Sandy Alderson had cancer-related surgery.
- Peter Magowan says the Athletics must handle their stadium issue on their own.

And today will be better than yesterday.



Inside the 2014 World Series Homeland Security Panty Raid

By Craig Calcaterra

May 18, 2016, 3:07 PM EDT

You may recall that just before the 2014 World Series **Department of Homeland Security agents raided a small clothing store in Kansas City** because it was committing the heinous crime of . . . selling panties with an unauthorized Royals logo on them. Like, an actual raid by law enforcement with confiscations and the whole deal.

At the time we noted how crazy it was that government agents were out there enforcing private copyrights like it was a criminal matter. We noted that, for most of our history, copyrights were enforced through the civil justice system, not by **a unit of government agents dedicated to fighting “intellectual property crime.”** A unit **that was created at the behest of entertainment companies**, not because there was any sort of public outcry or criminal scourge imperiling the general peace and welfare, but because the government is, apparently, supposed to proactively protect corporate profits, not just impose penalties for the violation of a law after the fact. Protect those profits, by the way, via use of the same governmental department which is tasked with leading the fight against terrorism.

That whole episode was quickly forgotten by most. But it wasn't forgotten by Aaron Gordon of Vice Sports. He sent out Freedom of Information Act requests about the incident. FOIA requests, it should be noted, that the government sat on forever because that's just how the government treats FOIA requests specifically and transparency of operations in general these days. **He finally got his documents, however, and he presents his findings today.**

Go read Gordon's story, where the documents are produced. Know, in the meantime, however, that a lot of taxpayer money and a lot of wrongheaded effort was expended to address what appears to be about \$40 in phony Kansas City Royals panties. Then ask yourself, why on Earth this wasn't a matter for the courts, following a copyright infringement suit, as opposed to a matter for armed law enforcement raiding businesses.



Rasmus spends time with special baseball fan

By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com | [@brianmctaggart](#) | May 18th, 2016

CHICAGO -- Prior to going to U.S. Cellular Field for Wednesday's game against the White Sox, Astros outfielder **Colby Rasmus** spent some time at Shriners Hospital for Children with 8-year-old baseball fan Owen Mahan, who was burned on 98 percent of his body in a 2009 accident.

Rasmus, who was accompanied by his two kids, played Wiffle ball and spent time talking baseball with Mahan, who made his way to the game and met several players on the field while collecting autographs and pictures. Rasmus even gave him a jersey.

"I was contacted with some information about him, and they asked me if I wanted to go and I said I would like to go," Rasmus said. "We set it up to go over there and see him. It's one of those things to kind of help somebody that's been through a lot of stuff in his life.

"He was 2 years old at the time when he went through those things and he didn't know what was going on. To see how his spirit is ... He still feels pretty good and he's laughing and cutting up, and he was burned pretty badly."

Rasmus has been trying to do and attend more charitable functions. Earlier this year he launched the "Hitters for Heroes" campaign, through which he's donating \$1,000 for each home run he hits this season to Team Rubicon, a non-profit disaster response organization that repurposes the skills of military veterans to deploy emergency response teams.

"It's been something I've been wanting to do this year, get out and do some things in the community and go and see some kids and hoping to do some more things like that," he said.

"Today it just worked out that way to get to go see him, and I felt honored to be able to see him today and it felt pretty cool.

"I had my kids there with me, too, so to see my kids healthy and doing well and him struggling the way he is, that's tough. I just wanted to do that to be a good spot in his life, to continue to give him hope for feeling good and lift his spirits. We did that today. He had a good time."

Rasmus doesn't see himself as important, so he's not always comfortable playing the role of someone young kids look up to.

"Being in the position that I'm in, I'm very thankful to be able to just spend some time with him and it be good time for him," he said. "It's just as good for me to be able to spend time with him. I wish I could help him more, but those are things that are kind of tough to do. He's going through many surgeries, and he'll be going through surgeries up until the time he is 21 years old and maybe even longer than that. I'm thankful he looks at us in that way and we can show him some love."



Selig given Lifetime Achievement Award

Former Commissioner says game is in good hands

By Paul Hagen / MLB.com | 1:37 AM ET May 19, 2016

NEW YORK -- Introduced by legendary Hall of Famer Hank Aaron, his close friend, former Commissioner Bud Selig accepted the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Ninth Annual Sports Business Awards Dinner on Wednesday night at the Marriott Marquis.

The signature honor of the entire evening -- on a night in which MLB Advanced Media also was recognized (for Best in Digital Sports Media) -- seemed to belong to Selig, who received two standing ovations and was congratulated by numerous other winners.

His speech quoted historical figures ranging from George Bernard Shaw to Eleanor Roosevelt to Bart Giamatti and touched on many of the themes that were a hallmark of his groundbreaking tenure, which included revenue sharing, Interleague Play, expanded playoffs, instant replay, stadium construction, exploding revenue, labor peace and the internationalization of the game through the World Baseball Classic and other initiatives.

He and Aaron received standing ovations from the crowd of about 900, and both commented on their friendship, which has now lasted 58 years.

Selig, who holds the title of Commissioner Emeritus, recalled that when he got into baseball as owner of the Milwaukee Brewers, late Tigers owner John Fetzer advised him early on to always vote for the best interests of baseball above what might be best for his own club.

He told the story of being in the stands at County Stadium for the last game before the Braves moved to Atlanta and being asked by a woman in a wheelchair with tears in her eyes if he understood how important baseball was to people like her. That, he said, only made him more determined to secure another team for his hometown.

For a boy who had grown up dreaming of being the next Joe DiMaggio but quickly realized that wasn't going to happen, it was his entry into the game that he would ultimately lead for more than 20 impactful years.

In his speech, he credited his success to two guiding principles that were formed during his early years as an owner.

"One, baseball is a social institution with very important social responsibilities," he said. "Two, it is important that as many fans as possible at the beginning of the season have -- two key words -- hope and faith that his or her team can compete and possibly win the World Series."

Selig has won countless awards but, earlier in the evening, he talked about what made this one special. "This has meant a great deal to me," he said.

"When you're in a sport for 50 years, you develop a lot of relationships. And I've heard from a lot of people, gotten so many messages."

One of Selig's most obvious traits is that he has always been a huge fan of the game, and he still follows it closely. He expressed confidence that ongoing negotiations for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Major League Baseball Players Association can be concluded amicably.

"I'm a worrier, but let me just say that I have enormous faith in [Commissioner] Rob [Manfred] and [Chief Legal Officer] Dan Halem," he said. "They're real pros. So I'm confident. The sport is in great shape in every way."

Selig concluded his speech by remembering his last day as Commissioner a year-and-a-half ago, which he spent at the New York Baseball Writers Association of America dinner.

"I said, looking back, that what you see here is the result of a little boy's dreams that did come true," he said.

Ex-Met, Phillie Lenny Dykstra admits to HGH use: 'It was in my cereal'

By Joe Giglio | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on May 18, 2016 at 5:22 PM, updated May 18, 2016 at 5:29 PM

When Lenny Dykstra debuted with the Mets in the early 80s, he fit the profile of a speedy, on-base machine that would spark an offense. By the time Dykstra starred on the 1993 pennant-winning Phillies, he an extra-base hitting machine that looked much, much bigger.

If you didn't know better, you'd say Dykstra looked the part of many baseball players in the late-80s and early 90s: Noticeably bigger and stronger as the years went on.

Thanks to an appearance with Colin Cowherd on FOX Sports, we do now know better.

"It was in my cereal," Dykstra said. "C'mon HGH, we're talking about the good stuff—Deca-Durobolin and testosterone. I'm talking about, we're talking about the difference between making 30 million dollars and working and making \$60,000. What, do you want the guy next to you taking them and you're not going to take them?"

As you'd expect, Dykstra didn't hold back. He took performance-enhancing drugs and isn't bashful to talk about it now. While the interview didn't veer into when the usage started, the cereal claim makes it seem like it wasn't a one time or one-year endeavor for the former big league star.

The interview with Cowherd continues Dykstra's ascent back into the minds of baseball fans. Recently, Dykstra launched a Twitter account to interact with fans—and promote a new book coming out.

During Dykstra's 12-year career in New York and Philadelphia, the outfielder posted a .793 OPS, made three National League All-Star teams and had two top-10 finishes in the MVP vote.



Harris, Bregman among top prospect performers Wednesday

By William Boor / MLB.com | May 18th, 2016

It's been five starts and 25 innings since Jon Harris has given up an earned run. The Blue Jays' No. 4 prospect is in the middle of the best stretch of his young career and Wednesday's start against Fort Wayne was just the latest example.

The 22-year-old right-hander fired seven scoreless frames for Lansing, while giving up just four hits and a walk.

Harris fanned a career-high 11, nearly tripling his previous high of four.

"I was able to throw all four of my pitches for strikes today," Harris told MiLB.com. "And I got some big swings and misses at key times."

Harris was stuck with a no-decision, but is 2-0 with a 1.05 ERA this season.

The rest of the best performances from top prospects Wednesday:

- If there's a teammate on base, odds are Alex Bregman will drive him in. Bregman, the No. 19 overall prospect, has seven RBIs over his last three games, including two for Corpus Christi on Wednesday. The Astros' top prospect went **2-for-4 with a homer**.
- Anthony Alford may have found his swing. The Blue Jays' top prospect was mired in a deep slump, that dropped his average to .106, but the outfielder has hits in each of his last three game and recorded his first multi-hit game of the season on Wednesday. After going 2-for-4 with a double and three RBIs for Dunedin, Alford is hitting .153.
- Cubs' No. 18 prospect Mark Zagunis was 4-for-4 with a double for the Tennessee Smokies. Zagunis, drafted in the third round of 2014, now has four career four-hit games.
- Adalberto Mejia gave up more runs Wednesday than he had in his previous two starts combined. The Giants' No. 10 prospect gave up two runs in 7 1/3 innings for Richmond and has given up three earned runs in three starts this month.

- Chase De Jong threw seven scoreless innings in the first game of Tulsa's doubleheader. The Dodgers' No. 18 prospect struck out six and allowed just four baserunners, two walks and two hits. De Jong may have done the heavy lifting, but he had the help of Alex Verdugo and Cody Bellinger. The No. 6 and No. 5 prospects in the Dodgers' system hit back-to-back homers in the seventh inning.

- If teams are expecting to score a lot off Phillies' No. 13 prospect Zach Eflin, they better think again. The right-hander has held opponents to one earned run or less in five of seven starts this season and did so once again Wednesday for Lehigh Valley. Eflin carved his way through seven scoreless innings, surrendering just two hits and a walk.

"Today was all about staying with the game plan and attacking with the fastball as much as I could," Eflin told MiLB.com. "I think we did a good job of getting quality strikes. [Catcher] Andrew Knapp and I were on the same page in that regard. I don't think I shook him off once. We were just being aggressive, challenging hitters and it worked really well."

- Rays' No. 3 prospect Willy Adames hit two homers for his first career multi-homer game for Montgomery. Adames, the 77th-ranked prospect, had three RBIs.

- What better way to break out of a slump than with a grand slam? Well, that's exactly what Reds' No. 7 prospect Tyler Stephenson did. The Dayton catcher was hitting just .148 through his first 19 games, but broke out Wednesday, going 3-for-6 with a grand slam and a career-high five RBIs.

- When the Pensacola Blue Wahoos need innings, they can count on Amir Garrett. The Reds' No. 4 prospect turned in another quality start Wednesday, giving up one earned run over six innings. Garrett has thrown at least six innings in seven of his eight starts this season.

- JaCoby Jones is back and trying to make up for lost time. The Tigers' No. 8 prospect finished serving a 50 game suspension for a second positive test for a drug of abuse and is now 4-for-8 in two games for Erie. Jones went 2-for-4 on Wednesday with a double and his first RBI of the year. He drove in 80 runs a season ago.

- After striking out a season-high 10 in his last start, Yankees' No. 10 prospect Ian Clarkin fanned just three Wednesday, but the 21-year old Tampa starter was just as dominant. Clarkin, a left-hander, gave up one earned run in seven innings - the fifth time he's held an opponent to one earned run or less this season.



From Brad Ausmus to Joe Girardi, here are the next MLB managers who could be fired

Now that the Braves have started the cycle you just know another team is going to can their skipper

by **R.J. Anderson**

MAY 18, 2016

On Tuesday, the Braves fired manager Fredi Gonzalez. The decision raised many questions, including the one that Gonzalez's peers would rather avoid entertaining: which manager will be the next to go?

Before introducing our list of the five most likely candidates, let's roll out the legally obligated caveat: these exercises are more art than science -- or, in the most honest terms, these exercises are glorified guessing games. Without knowing how management and/or ownership feels about each manager, there's no way of knowing for certain who is (or isn't) on the hot seat.

To embrace that, we've included a wrinkle here that you might appreciate: we've asked a random number generator -- hereby "Randy" for short -- to assess each candidate's likelihood of dismissal. Remember: Randy knows nothing -- literally nothing -- so its input is for entertainment purposes only . . . at least until it proves correct. (Note: the candidates are listed in alphabetical order.)

Brad Ausmus, Detroit Tigers

Why he's on the list: There are many factors working against Ausmus. For one, the general manager who hired him is now employed elsewhere. For another, the Tigers brought in an experienced big-league skipper (Lloyd McClendon) to serve as their Triple-A manager -- thus giving them an internal Plan B, should circumstances demand a change during the season. There's also the matter of Ausmus being a questionable tactical skipper, the Tigers being in fourth place, and, oh, by the way, those pesky rumors from last fall that the Tigers were going to replace Ausmus with Ron Gardenhire. Ausmus has the reputation of being a good baseball man - - which manager doesn't? -- but it would be a surprise if he finishes out the season as Detroit's navigator.

Randy's odds of dismissal: 91 percent

Our guess: He's the top candidate in the American League to be fired next.

John Gibbons, Toronto Blue Jays

Why he's on the list: Gibbons, who has been fired by the Blue Jays before, always seems to walk the line between employed and unemployed. Working in his favor is last fall's postseason run. Working against Gibbons is the Jays' offseason front-office changes -- including the eyebrow-raising decision to bring in Eric Wedge, himself a former skipper who managed Cleveland under members of the Jays' remade front office. If the Jays are looking to pull the plug

on Gibbons' second run, then they might not need more reason than the club's current sub-.500 record and six-game deficit within the division.

Randy's odds of dismissal: 3 percent

Our guess: He's safe for the time being.

Joe Girardi, New York Yankees

Why he's on the list: Girardi is a good manager -- probably one of the best in baseball -- but his inclusion is straightforward. The Yankees are in last place despite a \$225 million payroll, and while the Steinbrenner brothers have been more patient than their father was, they're probably not pleased with the team's current state. Factor in Brian Cashman's recent vote of confidence, and it's fair to wonder if Girardi will make it to a 10th season as the Yankees skipper.

Randy's odds of dismissal: 5 percent

Our guess: He's safe for the time being.

Paul Molitor, Minnesota Twins

Why he's on the list: Molitor earned good will by overseeing a surprisingly competent 2015, and the Twins are Braves-like in their reluctance to change managers. Still, it's hard to ignore how poorly this season is going in Minnesota: there's the awful record, the reports that the Twins miss Torii Hunter's leadership, and the stalled development of their top prospects. Molitor isn't to blame for all of that -- he might not be to blame for most of it -- but you have to wonder if a change could be coming before the season ends.

Randy's odds of dismissal: 26 percent

Our guess: He's safe for the time being.

Bryan Price, Cincinnati Reds

Why he's on the list: Price's situation is that most similar to Fredi Gonzalez's, in that both entered the year knowing they'd lose far more often than they'd win. The difference is, whereas Gonzalez drew ire for his on-the-field decisions, Price has received attention for his repeated outbursts aimed at umpires and the press. It also doesn't help his standing that his supposed specialty is pitching, given how poorly the Reds have been in that category. (Though that isn't entirely Price's fault.) General manager Dick Williams didn't hire Price in the first place, but you can bet he'll be the one to fire him -- probably sometime before the All-Star Game.

Randy's odds of dismissal: 52 percent

Our guess: He's almost certainly the next skipper fired.



Can Melvin Upton bounce back from his own rock bottom?

Once a rising star for the Tampa Bay Rays, Melvin Upton Jr.'s career has gone in the wrong direction. Is the key to a change all in his head?

By Flinder Boyd

May 18, 2016 at 10:00a ET

When the 2013 season opened, Melvin Upton Jr. -- or B.J. as he was known then -- had just signed the richest free-agent contract in Braves history, just over \$15 million a year, and was featured on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* alongside his kid brother Justin, who had been traded from Arizona to Atlanta in the same offseason. In the photo, the brothers are sitting next to the (unrelated) supermodel Kate Upton, all wearing Braves uniforms. The caption read: Can the Uptons power Atlanta?

After the fifth game of the year, fans seemed to have their resounding answer: YES! In the bottom of the ninth inning, down a run to the Cubs, Melvin led off with a blast over the left-centerfield wall, and two batters later, Justin ended the game with his own home run. At home plate Melvin, elated, joined his teammates and surrounded Justin.

Their father was behind the dugout, his cheering drowned out by the home crowd, "It was crazy, everyone chanting 'UP-TON, UP-TON,'" Manny "Bossman" Upton says. "That was definitely the high point."

Now, if you would, hit the pause button on that moment, then loop those 3 minutes -- the delirious fans, the Braves announcer Chip Caray yelling, "Let's go home!", Melvin and Justin hugging -- over and over.

Melvin, the eldest, had seemed to reach his once nearly impossible expectations. Just before his 18th birthday, he was drafted second out of Greenbriar Christian Academy in Chesapeake, Virginia, and some predicted he'd be the next great five-tool player. "Scouts compare Upton to a young Derek Jeter, right down to his swagger," Jim Callis and Allen Simpson wrote in *Baseball America*.

Six years later, in 2008, he had one of the great postseasons of all time, tying for the fifth most runs scored of any player (16) and the fourth most playoff home runs ever (7) in a single campaign.

Now, before we stop the loop of the home-run celebration, and press play on Melvin's story, remember that he was only 28 years old then, in his prime, and despite batting just .246 the year before in Tampa Bay, he also hit 28 home runs and stole 31 bases while displaying

Gold-Glove caliber defense. Some warned of an impending demise -- his strikeouts were high, and fans questioned his hustle -- but for the moment, as he was cheering on his brother, he was on top of the world.

So now, instead of hitting play, tap the fast forward button. Zip past the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* calling him "one of baseball's worst hitters," skip past his manager Fredi Gonzalez threatening to send him to the minors in 2013, and definitely skip past the humiliating season-ending .184 average and postseason benching that same year. Wait for it ... and now hit play.

Melvin is sitting on a steel bench, in a Peoria, Az., complex outside of Phoenix in March. His lanky body, leaned back, his arms folded in front of him. He's wary of journalists, and peppers cliches in with every answer, barely speaking above a whisper. He can be engaging, but more than anything, he's in essence a sports psychologist's dream -- a study into understanding the psyche of an athlete. How can someone with so much early success unravel so completely? And then, after everything, come through to the other side.

"It's difficult to explain," he says.

Manny Upton was a football and baseball star at Norfolk State and taught Melvin from an early age how to hit and play quarterback. Melvin -- who was nicknamed "Bossman Jr." or B.J., after his father -- idolized Charlie Ward, and dreamed of also playing two sports at Florida State. In the backyard growing up, he and the more outgoing Justin, who was three years younger, would play Wiffle ball for hours. Melvin looked out for his kid brother but never took it easy on him. If he was batting against Justin, he'd stay at the improvised plate until Justin could get him out -- sometimes until it was dark. Then they'd move inside and play Nerf baseball while their parents tried to sleep.

In high school, Melvin was part of one of the greatest AAU baseball teams in Virginia history. He played middle infield alongside David Wright, currently of the Mets. Ryan Zimmerman of the Nationals was in the outfield, and Mark Reynolds of the Rockies played third. Before school, Wright would pick up Melvin and they'd head to the local batting cages and work on their swing.

"He was a ridiculous athlete," Wright said of Melvin. "Everything was so natural. For the rest of us, it looks like we're straining. For him it's effortless."

Before Melvin's junior year, their team played in a tournament in Las Vegas and dominated nationally recognized competition. "We didn't know it, but we were already playing against the best in the country in our own backyard," Wright said.

Melvin was drafted by the Rays, moved through the farm system fast, posting a .302/.394/.445 split at Low-A, and was ranked the second-best prospect in baseball behind Joe Mauer. In 2006 he yo-yoed between Triple-A and Tampa Bay, but at spring training the

following year, coaches didn't see the improvement they wanted. He admits now, his confidence in his hitting was lagging behind his other skills.

"Don Zimmer (the Devil Rays' senior advisor) sat me down (and said), 'This is yours, but you have to go get it,'" Upton said. "It was more about belief. I think sometimes you have to trick yourself into it. Transform yourself."

Under manager Joe Maddon's tutelage, Melvin indeed transformed into the player scouts had drooled over. "Joe allows players to express themselves and be who they are," pitcher James Shields -- a teammate of Upton's in Tampa and San Diego -- says. "He grew up with Joe." Together they took the Rays to their first and still only World Series in 2008, where Melvin put himself on the map by first dominating White Sox pitching in the ALDS, then the Red Sox in the ALCS, at one point knocking in a run in five straight games.

Maddon, who never played in the majors, learned the craft of managing from observation. He learned that a player's confidence is like a delicate thread. If it's pulled with too much tension, it snaps. Maddon never understood why, he told the *Chicago Reader* in 2015, "when things weren't going well (for a player), people would pile on or become punitive because guys are really trying and working hard."

Players, Maddon deduced, crave encouragement, and none of his players perhaps more than Melvin. After his 2008 postseason performance Melvin had become the face of the new generation of baseball superstars. But inexplicably, and almost immediately, he battled confidence issues, and struggled at the plate in 2009. His average dipped 32 points. His brother Justin meanwhile was steadily making a name for himself with the Arizona Diamondbacks. Without, perhaps, the raw athletic gifts of Melvin, his approach was more direct. "Justin is detail-oriented," their father Manny says. "He'll ask, 'What do you think about my hands?' (Melvin), though, feels like if I didn't get it this time, I'm going to get it next time. For him it's always about the challenge."

Baseball analysts, who track advanced statistics recognized obvious deficiencies in Melvin's game early in his career. His contact rate was obscenely low, and his batting average on balls in play (BABIP) was unusually high -- in other words, stat nerds surmised he was getting lucky. However, these various stats are really a way for people who don't play the game to attempt to understand and decipher what they see. Melvin thought he could instinctively *feel* what he was supposed to do, and eventually overcome any perceived problems. Maddon would tell his players, "The mind once stretched has difficulty going back to its original form." In essence, think in a tunnel, without losing your sense of self-expression. Because once you truly lose your confidence, it might never return.

By the time Upton was on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, Braves fans were hoping -- expecting -- that he'd do exactly what the picture with Kate Upton professed: his incredible skills would match her incredible beauty. He knew, of course, that while she could get by on looks alone, he could no longer skate by on his glittering potential. In the inflated market, Melvin was likely overpaid before the season started, but his .141 average by mid-May was

abysmal. In an organization like the Braves, with 14 consecutive postseason appearances in the '90s and early 2000s, they needed results immediately.

Hitting coach Greg Walker took Melvin into the cages and began to tinker with his swing. Hitting a pitched baseball is one of the most subtle yet complex of art forms in sports. The entire process happens in about half a second, and for someone like Melvin, with a high strikeout rate, each adjustment meant he'd have to fundamentally reconfigure his entire approach. In the book "Psychology of Baseball," Mike Stadler explains the fallout of these constant small changes, "Think of tying your shoes or buttoning a button and imagine you were asked to change one small part of that action. To comply, you would have to slow everything down." Melvin had gotten into bad habits his last couple years in Tampa Bay and was "loading," Walker said, or rocking backward then coming forward as the pitch was made.

"To swing the bat and get his heel on the ground, he has to slide. By then he's late, and a lot of times he doesn't ever get there," Walker said in 2013.

Others around the Braves chimed in with advice. Sportswriters dedicated columns to Melvin's swing, and every fan became a hitting expert. Melvin would listen, but it only seemed to confuse him more. "I was getting it from here and there," Melvin says. "And I was thinking instead of playing."

His strikeouts piled up and he was moved further down in the order -- the pressure mounted. By June, his manager, publicly debated sending him down to the minors, and his old high school friends David Wright and Ryan Zimmerman texted him, telling him to hang in there. "We all look out for each other," Wright says. "We're like a fraternity."

At home games Braves fans began to lose patience. How could a player making \$15 million forget how to hit a baseball? A portion of the crowd at Atlanta's Turner Field would boo each of his strikeouts.

"The worst is when they scream, 'You suck!' at him," Manny says. "His wife would bring his kids to the game. That's a hard thing to hear."

He was determined to figure out his struggles, but a player that had built his career on intuition could no longer *feel* the right thing to do. His failures now began to affect his younger brother. Justin, who started out leading the league in homers after a handful of games, saw his average dip below .250 in June.

"I think for him to sit there and watch everything I was dealing with, he had to deal with it, too," Melvin says. "I know if I don't come out of this, then (my family is) going to have to deal with it."

Perhaps he needed Maddon's understanding arm around him. Maddon was the only manager he'd ever had in the majors, and Melvin likely didn't realize his importance. In order to wall off negativity and remain positive, Melvin tried what sports psychologists label "mental conditioning" to convince himself he was in fact playing well.

Wrapped in a mental bubble of false positivity, Melvin sought to correct his hitting deficiencies with hours in the video room, then in the cages. He tried glasses, a heavier bat, then a lighter one, but his mind had supplanted his body. He was outthinking his overthinking. The care-free attitude of his youth was replaced with a hardened professional.

In 2006, Andy Roddick -- the former US Open tennis champ -- explained this loss of innocence that some athletes deal with when their confidence evaporates. Going through a difficult slump, and surrounded by reporters, Roddick was asked why if he's working harder the results weren't different.

"I used to hit for half an hour then go eat Cheetos the rest of the day," Roddick said of his early success. "Now I'm really trying to make it happen, being professional. And I miss my Cheetos."

Once the thread of confidence snaps for an athlete, the psychological scars form. Melvin could hear Maddon in his ear: *The mind once stretched has difficulty going back to its original form*. His average plateaued well below .200, and his manager had no choice but to bench him. The team then went on to win 14 straight games in late July and August. Upton returned to the lineup for the last six of those wins and actually had one of his best stretches of the season, going 10-for-25.

But by October, he was just a bit player in Atlanta's first-round loss to the Los Angeles Dodgers in the playoffs, tallying just three at-bats -- all strikeouts -- in the series. Hoping to turn his career around, he instead struck out a career-high 173 times the following year. He changed to his birth name, Melvin, after the season, though he denied it had anything to do with his mounting struggles.

With three years left on his inflated contract, only the San Diego Padres were willing to trade for him, in essence a contract dump so they could acquire the much sought-after closer Craig Kimbrel.

Every athlete's deepest fear is failing miserably in front of millions, then being discarded. It's the sports equivalent of being on stage, the curtains are drawn and you're in the buff. Immediately when Melvin was dealt to the Padres, he was placed on the disabled list. "I knew a lot of people were down on me," Melvin says. "I had hit rock bottom."

Melvin had no one to blame but himself. Padres teammates and coaches saw a timid player, albeit one whose broken ego now allowed him to fully embrace the process of change.

"The biggest thing he did is own the problem," Padres first-base coach Tarrik Brock says. "He's a guy that has to figure it out himself, once he gets it, then you can help him."

He took a step back from the pressures in Atlanta and hit a mild .259 in 2015. "Once I got past the failing part I was good," he says. "You can't hit rock bottom again." At 31, he had made more than \$56 million in his career, but fair to say from the second pick in the draft,

and the darling of the Rays in the late 2000s, his career has been fraught with disappointment.

At spring training with the Padres in Peoria, he stopped by a restaurant and across the room spotted Joe Maddon. Over the last couple of years they have exchanged a few cordial texts but little more. Maddon came over to his table and they talked for a few minutes. "He told me, 'I can hear it in your voice, you're in a different spot, that's what I want to see,'" Melvin says. "That was cool that he said that. I talked to him as much as I could, he's such a positive guy, you don't want to let him down."

Perhaps it was the meeting, or the inevitable increase in maturity, but Melvin started out solid, moving up to fourth in the Padres' lineup. On April 16, the Padres were playing at home against the Diamondbacks. In the bottom of the 14th inning with two outs, Melvin smashed a Rubby De La Rosa pitch over the center-field wall for the game-winning home run -- San Diego's first win of the season at Petco Park. After he dashed around the bases, his teammates encircled him at home plate, jumping up and down in unison.

Suddenly, he broke away and in a brief show of raw emotion, spun around in a circle punching through the air with his fist, yelling into the night sky. Nearly 14 years removed from draft night, and three years removed from his abysmal first year in Atlanta, maybe the psychological scars had healed.

If this was our movie, we'd hit pause again, run it on a loop and Melvin would have erased his demons. But again, confidence is a thread, and realization of its fragility is baseball's toughest lesson.

When we hit play, his average had dipped, to around .250 by mid-May, and his strikeouts were up. He had seemed to plateau as a solid player on an unspectacular team. But a recent stretch of eight hits in four games before running into Giants ace Madison Bumgarner on Tuesday has him hitting .273 as of this writing, second on the team. He leads the club in OPS. He'll never be the perennial All-Star player many once predicted, but he's accepted his place in baseball and has, perhaps, found a level of comfort in himself.

"I stopped trying to live up to other peoples' expectations," he says. "I'm just thankful for another opportunity."



Reiter 50 preview: Top 10 free agents for barren off-season market

BY **BEN REITER**

MAY 18, 2016

The dust has now settled from last week's concussive news of **Stephen Strasburg signing a seven-year extension with the Nationals**, just six months before the 27-year-old ace was due to become a free agent. That contract landed Strasburg \$175 million, an amount that would almost certainly have been even larger had he hit the open market (although he does have two valuable chances to opt out, after the third and fourth seasons of the deal). It has also unveiled a significantly altered free agency landscape.

Strasburg would have been the No. 1 player on the Reiter 50, SI.com's annual ranking of the game's top 50 free agents, which this fall will reach its ninth installment. His absence means that one year after an off-season for the ages, **an unusually thin market** will now be gaunter than any in recent memory, particularly as far as starting pitchers. Clubs looking for rotation-toppers will be out of luck, as their options will now include only the aged (42-year-old Bartolo Colon, 41-year-old R.A. Dickey, 36-year-old Rich Hill) and the disappointing (31-year-old Clay Buchholz, 29-year-old Andrew Cashner, 28-year-old Brett Anderson).

The pitching-needy will have to wait until next year, when defending NL Cy Young Jake Arrieta comes free, and especially until the year after that, which could include Marlins ace Jose Fernandez, Mets ace Matt Harvey, three-time NL Cy Young winner Clayton Kershaw, defending AL Cy Young Dallas Keuchel and 2012 AL Cy Young winner David Price (not to mention defending AL MVP Josh Donaldson, defending NL MVP Bryce Harper, Cubs rightfielder Jason Heyward, Orioles centerfielder Adam Jones and Gold Glove-winning third baseman Manny Machado and 2013 NL MVP Andrew McCutchen).

We're still a long way off from the Yankees giving a billion dollars to Fernandez and Harper, though. Here's an early look at this fall's top 10—now not only Strasburg-free, but also devoid of Pirates catcher Francisco Cervelli, **who signed a three-year extension** on Tuesday.

1. Yoenis Cespedes, OF, Mets

After a long-term suitor never materialized, Cespedes—No. 4 on last winter's Reiter 50—was forced to settle for a three-year, \$75 million deal to return to the Mets. It was not nearly as tragic a result as some suggested. He's still the game's 45th-highest-paid

player this year, with a base salary of \$17.5 million, and that doesn't include his \$10 million signing bonus, helping him to afford **his well-covered progression of cars in spring training**. The contract also afforded Cespedes protection: If he regressed or got injured, he had a nice \$47.5 million insurance policy, courtesy of New York. If he performed to his recent standard, then he could opt out of the deal and into a far weaker market this off-season.

The second scenario is now extremely likely. After a 2-for-16 start to the season, Cespedes has been on fire. He's second in baseball in homers (12), fifth in RBIs (32) and ninth in OPS (1.001) and playing perfectly passable defense in both centerfield and left. Now that Strasburg has exited, Cespedes is the clear No. 1 free agent on the market. At 31, he could receive a commitment of at least four times what the Mets will now likely never get the chance to pay him.

2. Josh Reddick, OF, Athletics

When I **profiled Reddick** two weeks ago and explained how he'd quietly reshaped himself into a well-rounded hitter after his 32-homer breakout in 2012, I suggested that he might surprisingly prove the fourth-best free agent this winter, after Strasburg, Cespedes and Jose Bautista. I underrated him. Now past the nagging injuries that compromised his past few seasons, Reddick is batting .314 with four homers, 17 RBIs and a .386 on-base percentage. He might not get much national coverage playing in Oakland, but general managers are certainly paying attention. The number that really gives Reddick the edge over Bautista: six. That's how many years younger the 29-year-old Reddick is than the Blue Jays' slugger.

3. Jose Bautista, OF, Blue Jays

It hadn't been a wonderful 2016 for Bautista even before **his cheek made the acquaintance of Rongned Odor's fist on Sunday**: He's batting just .227 with seven homers and 28 RBIs and is putting up his worst OPS+ (132) since 2009, the season before he belatedly hatched as a monster. Back in February, the six-time All-Star was reportedly seeking a five-year, \$150 million extension from Toronto. He publicly denied those numbers, but it wasn't the worst negotiating tactic for the savvy 35-year-old to reset sights that high, even if unintentionally. There's still plenty of season left for him to turn things around (and to ice that jaw), but it's a bad time for someone of his age to show some signs of decline.

4. Aroldis Chapman, RP, Yankees

Decline? The 28-year-old Cuban hasn't demonstrated anything of the sort after returning from his domestic violence suspension. His fastball is sitting at 99.8 mph, and he's thrown three straight perfect outings after allowing a run in his Yankees debut. The real question is whether he will finish the season in New York along with fellow dominant relievers Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller. At 16-22, the Yankees don't seem to be

going anywhere, and having a three-headed Cerberus chained up in the bullpen isn't valuable if there aren't many wins to close out. With Chapman's suspension now behind him, New York could expect to be offered a better package for him now than the four generally uninspiring pieces it gave up to acquire him less than five months ago.

5. Kenley Jansen, RP, Dodgers

Jansen has long been the only reliable option in the Dodgers' bullpen. This season, he's been phenomenal, allowing a single run and only one walk over 16 1/3 innings so far to go with 13 saves. His strikeout rate, which exceeded 13 per nine over his first six seasons, is at just 9.9, but that might just mean that he's more confident than ever in his command within the zone; his fastball, which averages nearly 93 mph, is actually up a tick from 2016. He'll be a fine consolation prize to Chapman, and might surpass him by autumn.

6. Dexter Fowler, OF, Cubs

I thought a 30-year-old-switch-hitting centerfielder with strong on-base skills would be a hotter commodity last off-season; Fowler was No. 12 on my list. But he ultimately spurned the Orioles' reported three-year, \$35 million deal to return to the Cubs for a salary of \$8 million with a \$9 million mutual option for 2017. Clearly, Fowler wanted the chance to improve his value while hitting atop what promised to be a powerful lineup, with the idea of taking another swing at free agency this year.

So far, so good for Fowler, who is batting .321 with three homers, 19 RBIs, six steals and the game's 14th-best OPS (.964). Scouts have long questioned his facility in the field—one evaluator told me his reputation is as a player who makes the spectacular play but botches the routine one—but he is errorless so far and on track for the first positive Ultimate Zone Rating of his career. The Cubs will likely want to pick up their half of the option, but Fowler should quickly decline his.

7. Edwin Encarnacion, DH, Blue Jays

As they did with Bautista, the Blue Jays have enjoyed Encarnacion on the cheap, paying him just \$9.25 million over the past four years. Over the first three of those, he batted .272, averaging 36 homers and 104 RBIs; that is a team-friendly deal. Unfortunately for Encarnacion, he's also mirrored Bautista in that his walk year hasn't gotten off to the best of starts, as he's hitting .241 with seven homers, 29 RBIs and an OPS of .749 that is down nearly 200 points from last year's. At 33, he'll spend the rest of the season trying to convince potential suitors of the same thing as his teammate: That he's still got it.

8. Mark Trumbo, OF, Orioles

It's so far been a dream walk year so far for the 30-year-old Trumbo, who has been stellar in his first season in Baltimore: He already has 11 homers and 28 RBIs to go with a .299 batting average that is 46 points above his career standard. Batting average on balls in

play can explain some of that—his is .340—but he does hit the ball very hard, as his average exit velocity of 94.9 mph is the majors' fifth fastest. And any prospective suitors should do what they can to keep him out of the field. But power plays, and power gets paid.

9. Ian Desmond, OF, Rangers

It is possible that no one has ever played the free-agency game worse than Desmond. Two years ago, the former Nationals shortstop turned down a seven-year, \$107 million extension, then followed that with by far the worst season of his career in 2015, batting .233 with a .674 OPS. That performance left him to settle for a one-year, \$8 million deal with the Rangers, but he wasn't helped by hitting free agency during a shortstop boom in which few clubs are looking to fill the position. The game is loaded with young stars—Xander Bogaerts, Carlos Correa, Francisco Lindor, Addison Russell, Corey Seager, Trevor Story—and 20 of *Baseball America's* current top-100 prospects play there.

Though Desmond likely can't sleep at night without thinking of the riches that might have been his, he has, to his credit, performed well for the Rangers while learning to play in new spots (leftfield and occasionally center). He's also rebounded at the plate, batting .268 with six homers, 25 RBIs, seven steals and an .803 OPS. Though the 30-year-old Desmond will likely never recoup that \$107 million, he should have better luck this winter as a credible outfielder who can also play short in a pinch.

10. Rich Hill, SP, A's

Hill pitched a grand total of 153 innings between 2008 and '14, recording a 5.41 ERA in the process. But he parlayed four strong starts with Boston late last year into a one-year, \$6 million deal with the A's. Now, at 36, the southpaw is 5–3 with a 2.68 ERA and nearly 11 strikeouts per nine. This year, that meager track record might be enough to make him the top starting pitcher available. Thanks to Strasburg, he's six months away from becoming Richer Hill.

The next ten (in alphabetical order): Andrew Cashner, SP, Padres; Bartolo Colon, SP, Mets; Carlos Gomez, OF, Astros; Mark Melancon, RP, Pirates; Colby Rasmus, OF, Astros; Michael Saunders, OF, Blue Jays; Mark Teixeira, 1B, Yankees; Justin Turner, 3B, Dodgers; Neil Walker, 2B, Mets; Matt Wieters, C, Orioles.

NY Times

TRANSACTIONS

5.19.16

M.L.B.

BOSTON RED SOX — Recalled RHP Noe Ramir  z from Pawtucket (IL) as 26th man for Wednesday's doubleheader.

CLEVELAND INDIANS — Optioned OF Tyler Naquin to Columbus (IL). Recalled RHP Mike Clevinger from Columbus.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Recalled RHP Alec Mills from Northwest Arkansas (TL) as 26th man for Wednesday's doubleheader. Sent 3B Mike Moustakas to Northwest Arkansas and LHP Mike Minor to Omaha (PCL) for rehab assignments. Selected the contract of INF-OF Whit Merrifield from Omaha. Optioned INF Christian Colon to Omaha. Designated OF Jose Martinez for assignment.

National League

NEW YORK METS — Optioned LHP Sean Gilmartin to Las Vegas (PCL). Recalled INF Matt Reynolds from Las Vegas.

CINCINNATI REDS — Optioned INF-OF Jose Peraza and RHP Layne Somsen to Louisville (IL). Recalled RHP Jumbo Diaz from Louisville. Selected the contract of RHP Keyvius Sampson from Louisville. Transferred RHP Homer Bailey to the 60-day DL.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Optioned INF Charlie Culberson to Oklahoma City (PCL). Reinstated RHP Mike Bolsinger from the 15-day DL.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Assigned LHP Michael Kirkman outright to Colorado Springs (PCL).

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Sent RHP Michael Mariot to Lehigh Valley (IL) for a rehab assignment.

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Sent 2B Alexi Amarista to San Antonio (TL) for a rehab assignment. Optioned RHP Tayron Guerrero to El Paso (PCL). Acquired OF Jabari Blash from Seattle Mariners for a player to be named or cash and assigned him to El Paso.