

Chang notches 2nd straight multihit game in AFL

Indians (Glendale)

Third baseman Yu Chang, Cleveland's No. 6 prospect, turned in an impressive 3-for-4 performance, with a double, RBI and run scored. Right fielder Connor Marabell was 1-for-5 with a single and an RBI. And left-hander Rob Kaminsky was the final pitcher out of the bullpen for Glendale, tossing a scoreless eighth inning, allowing a hit and fanning two.

Bauer enjoys stint as MLB Network analyst

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- Trevor Bauer thought through his hectic schedule and weighed whether he needed to keep some suits on hand. There was a bullpen session for a biomechanics reading in Phoenix, a couple of season-ending assessments in Los Angeles and then some time at home in Houston.

Bauer decided that his suits could be shipped to Seattle, where he spends the bulk of his time training over the offseason, and the Indians pitcher embarked on his itinerary. Then, while on a flight to Dallas on Sunday evening, he received an e-mail from his agency. MLB Network wanted Bauer to join the MLB Tonight cast as a guest analyst for postseason coverage. There was just one request.

The only thing they ask is that you bring two suits.

"I was like, 'Well, shoot,'" Bauer said with a laugh on Friday.

After a frantic trip to a Dallas store, Bauer made his way to New York with a pair of awkward-fitting suits and offered his insights on air. The right-hander helped out with the postgame show after Boston's 8-6 win over the Astros in Game 4 of the American League Championship Series, and then returned for pregame coverage before Thursday's Game 5 pennant-clinching victory for the Red Sox.

Wednesday's game was a drama-filled tilt between Houston and Boston that lasted deep into the night, meaning Bauer did not appear on screen until 1:15 a.m. ET. Seated between analysts Al Leiter and Bill Ripken, Bauer was introduced by host Greg Amsinger.

"How do you follow that?" Bauer asked with a smile.

There are many facets to Bauer's personality, but the one on display for a national audience was a polished professional who had plenty of experienced and technical insight to offer. Whether standing in front of his locker or typing on his Twitter account, Bauer is never shy about speaking his mind or offering strong opinions. On MLB Network, the pitcher looked and sounded right at home while providing analysis.

Behind the scenes, Bauer helped come up with ways to create a video that illustrated how Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw's pitches work together. In Wednesday night's postgame show, Bauer helped with the breakdown of Jose Altuve's near home run, which was ruled an out due to fan interference on a Mookie Betts' catch attempt. During a segment on Thursday's show, Bauer sat down with host Brian Kenny and held a discussion on pitch design.

"That was fun," Bauer said. "[I enjoyed] any of the segments where it was just kind of going back and forth and talking about baseball. The Mookie Betts-Altuve home run segment that we got to do -- kind of there on the wall, where we got to do some demonstration and whatnot -- was really fun. Obviously, the pitch design stuff, that's my realm. So, that was a good one as well."

Bauer -- known for his scientific approach to pitching -- said getting to see all the work that goes into that kind of show was interesting for him.

"The behind the scenes, that's always the stuff I'm most interested in," Bauer said. "Like, sitting in the video room and watching, like, 'OK, this tape is going to be played and here's how we decide what tapes we're going to make. Here's how the tapes are made. And then here's how the commentary goes over them.' Like, being restricted to that minute-long segment or whatever and having to hit a certain couple key points, it's interesting how that plays together."

"And then just all the on-screen graphics. I've been doing that stuff for years just internally. But, to see how they do it and their process and workflows and all that stuff was very interesting. I enjoyed that part of it. And then all the work that goes into seeing four guys [talking] on stage. There's two to three times that many people in the actual room, in the studio, moving the jibs around, the lights, the cameras, the steady cams, all that different stuff. Everyone's mic'd up, talking to each other. It's pretty interesting."

Could broadcasting be in Bauer's future when his playing days are over?

"There's many players they could've had on," Bauer said. "So, I'm appreciative that they thought I have some value to add in that way. Can I see myself doing it down the road? Yeah, I could see myself doing it here or there. I don't think I'd ever be on the show nightly. I think there are other things in life that I'm looking forward to doing."

Jordan Bastian has co

Q&A: Trevor Bauer on his MLBN stint, designing a changeup, going global and why cameras were not why the Tribe lost

Trevor Bauer has been racking up the air miles over the past week. Finally, following a flight home from New York, the Indians pitcher was able to take a deep breath on Friday afternoon.

"I'm back home in Texas and I actually get a few days to relax," Bauer said.

Relax? That word isn't usually part of Bauer's vocabulary.

"I mean, it won't be relaxing," he clarified with a laugh. "But, I don't have to be in a new state tomorrow, so that's what I consider relaxing."

Let's take a run through Bauer's itinerary since the season ended...

Oct. 8: Indians eliminated from playoffs

Oct. 9: Packing in Cleveland

Oct. 10: Flew to Phoenix

Oct. 11: Mound session, biomechanics reading, flew to L.A.

Oct. 12: Business meetings, assessment with physical therapist

Oct. 13: MRIs done in morning, pitch design session with dad in evening

Oct. 14: Dexa body scan, form offseason nutrition plan, flew to Dallas

Oct. 15: Meeting with agency, flew to Houston

Oct. 16: Strength assessment, flew to New York

Oct. 17: Meeting at MLB offices, did ALCS postgame show

Oct. 18: ALCS pregame show

Oct. 19: Flew to back to Houston

"And now, probably Tuesday night," Bauer said, "I'll fly back to L.A. to meet with my dietitian and see my parents for a couple more days and then I'll be off to Seattle."

In the meantime, Bauer spent an hour of his time holding a wide-ranging discussion on his recent stint on MLB Network, his plans for this offseason, his thoughts on why the Tribe crumbled in the American League Division Series and what needs to change in 2019, among other topics.

MLB.com: You have your sort of offseason triangle of Texas, California and Seattle. Texas is home now?

TB: "That's my residence, but I own a house now up in Seattle as well. But, I left my home address as Texas. My parents are in California. I generally spend about a week or a week and a half in California after the season, about a week and a half or two weeks around Christmas and about a week before Spring Training. So, I end up spending about a month every offseason in California, a couple weeks in Texas and the majority of it up in Seattle."

MLB.com: How did the MLB Network opportunity come up for you?

TB: "So, they reached out to my agency about having some players on during the postseason, to see if there was any players at Wasserman that had any interest. At the same time, I was sharing my new five-year plan with Wasserman and so they thought, 'Oh, this is a perfect opportunity. We'll get you on MLB Network. People will get to see you in a different way.' It was just good timing."

MLB.com: If you were nervous, you didn't look it. You sounded polished and prepared. How much did you enjoy that opportunity?

TB: "Yeah, it was a fun experience. Everyone was very accommodating and very kind to me. It was a very easy process on my end, because of those guys made it easy and walked me through everything. Once the show was actually going live, I felt very well-prepared and very comfortable with what was going on."

MLB.com: You're someone who really enjoys seeing the process behind things. Was that the case again here, getting to see how a show like that is put together behind the scenes?

TB: "Yeah, the behind the scenes, that's always the stuff I'm most interested in. Like, sitting in the video room and watching, like, 'OK, this tape is going to be played and here's how we decide what tapes we're going to make. Here's how the tapes are made. And then here's how the commentary goes over them.' Like, being restricted to that minute-long segment or whatever and having to hit a certain couple key points, it's interesting how that plays together. And then just all the on-screen graphics. I've been doing that stuff for years just internally. But, to see how they do it and their process and workflows and all that stuff was very interesting. I enjoyed that part of it. And then all the work that goes into seeing four guys B.S.'ing on stage. There's two to three times that many people in the actual room, in the studio, moving the jibs around, the lights, the cameras, the steady cams, all that different stuff. Everyone's mic'd up, talking to each other. It's pretty interesting."

MLB.com: Being interviewed is one thing. It's much different to be on camera, live, being conversational and knowing how to balance when to speak and staying within time restraints.

TB: "Yeah, definitely. One of the most impressive things to me was seeing [Greg] Amsinger... They'd be in his ear counting down like, '10, 9, 8...' until break. And he would have to choose his words and what he was going to say and the cadence of everything to end right on break, basically. But, I never sensed that there was a break in cadence. It just sounded like he just came to the end of his sentence at the perfect time, every single time, which was super impressive. That's stuff you don't see at home. It's like, 'Oh, well, they broke whenever he stopped talking.' No, there's a break and he has to stop talking at a specific point. That was super interesting. And then, there was a lot going on. During the segment, there's people talking to you like, 'Hey, in 10 seconds, we're going to show this tape on this and that.' It was pretty interesting."

MLB.com: Was there one aspect of the experience that you enjoyed the most? You certainly looked right at home talking about pitch design with Brian Kenny.

TB: “Yeah, that was fun. Any of the segments where it was just kind of going back and forth and talking about baseball. The Mookie Betts-Altuve home run segment that we got to do—kind of there on the wall, where we got to do some demonstration and whatnot—was really fun. Obviously, the pitch design stuff, that’s my realm. So, that was a good one as well.”

MLB.com: You’ve discussed in the past that one goal is to make some of these things—pitch design, tunneling, spin rates, as examples—a normal part of what fans consume and understand. Was it nice to be able to reach a wider audience while talking about those types of things?

TB: “I said it in a segment in regards to tunneling, that tunneling has kind of become part of the baseball lexicon. Not that everyone understands exactly what it means, but the term and the concept is out there and pretty well understood among people in the industry now. Whereas, two or three years ago, that was not the case. So, seeing these things kind of come to light, I mean, this is one of my passions about playing baseball, is changing the industry and moving it forward. Embracing technology, embracing player development. And a lot of these concepts are very key to the player development on the pitching side. So, it’s been cool to see that evolution. And how that’s been really accelerating over the past couple years. And I think getting on MLB Network and discussing it and trying to lay it out in a way that’s not too technical, but has enough of the technicality that the casual fan can be like, ‘Oh, yeah, that makes a lot of sense. If everything starts off middle and then goes different ways, then that’s got to be hard to hit.’ Instead of talking about how many inches it moves and why and the speed differentials and all that different stuff that really brings the concept to life, but getting in front of a national audience—for my brand, personally—but then also just for the state of the industry and the understanding of casual fans, so they can understand broadcasts and what’s going on a little bit better. Hopefully, that brings some more enjoyment to the game and more interest.”

MLB.com: Whether it’s tunneling or launch angle or whatever it is, these things have always existed. It’s just there are terms for them now.

TB: “And we can measure them.”

MLB.com: Right. You had one exchange with Brian Kenny where he said pitchers of past generations had to rely on their inner computer, where you have actual computers. But, you said the inner computer is still just as important during games. It’s just that you have more resources for all the time you spend off the mound...

TB: “Yeah. I was listening to a podcast with Elon Musk the other day and he said, ‘We’re already basically superhuman. We’re already like these cyborgs, because we have our cell phone with us. And our cell phone is a supercomputer. We can Google anything at any point.’ It really rang true with me, because we have so much information at our fingertips at all points. I can go down to the video room and not only access what I did against this guy last at-bat, but I can access what I did against him three years ago and what he did against a pitcher similar to me two months ago, in the span of two minutes in-between innings so I can be more prepared that when I get on the mound I can execute this way or that way. I can see him drifting in the box. I can see his approach. All this different stuff. We’ve got iPads in the dugout where you can look up heatmaps. You can load whatever you want for information. It’s combining the inner computer with the actual computer. Relative to 30 years ago, we’re cyborgs in that way.”

MLB.com: Not even 30 years. Even a decade ago, some players were still keeping written notes on pitchers or hitters. Now, there’s no need for such a thing...

TB: “Yeah, the book is just stored in the cloud somewhere and you can pull it up on your phone, you can pull it off your computer or an iPad. It’s everywhere.”

MLB.com: Does it surprise you that MLB Network wanted to have you on the show? And, now that you’ve had a taste of it, is this something you could see yourself doing down the road?

TB: “It doesn’t surprise me, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t take it as a compliment. I recognize that there’s many players they could’ve had on, so I’m appreciative that they thought I have some value to add in that way. Can I see myself doing it down the road? Yeah, I could see myself doing it here or there. I don’t think I’d ever be on the show nightly. I think there are other things in life that I’m looking forward to doing. I want to do some traveling and then I want to run my development college program. I have business interests that I’m sure I’ll be tied up with off the field. So, I guess I’d want to be involved with it here or there as a guest analyst maybe during postseasons or something like that, but I’m not sure I’d want to do it in a full-time role.”

MLB.com: What is the college development program you’ve thought about? Is this something where you thought certain things were lacking when you were at that level, or is it just that there are more resources available now to tailor towards collegiate athletes?

TB: “I don’t think it was necessarily lacking when I was there, because the information wasn’t really out there yet. Technology wasn’t being used in the same way. Statcast and Trackman didn’t exist. Rapsodo didn’t exist. High-speed cameras didn’t exist. It was cost prohibitive. You had to go get a Phantom camera and rent it. You could rent it for \$10,000 a day or you could try to buy one for \$200,000 or something, which obviously isn’t possible. And then it only shot at 1,000 frames a second. And it’s crazy that you say ‘only 1,000 frames a second’ now, but I’ve been using the Edgertronic camera—1,500 or 2,000 frames a second—for five or six years now. I definitely wouldn’t say there was anything lacking when I was in college. I just don’t think the industry had really moved and the technology had really evolved in a way that allowed for there to be more resources. The goal, though, would be to coach like a mid-level D-I school and go after third-tier recruits. The first-tier high school recruits are going to sign in the Draft. The second-tier are going to fill out the Vanderbilts, the UCLAs, the Oregon States, those types of programs. We’d be looking at kids that have a tool. Maybe they have really good command. Maybe they spin a breaking ball really well, but they don’t throw very hard. Maybe they throw hard, but they have nothing else. Maybe they have really good bat speed, but bad hand-eye coordination—whatever the case is. We’d look for guys with one good tool, bring them in, red-shirt them their first year. So, they would have a full year and a half on campus to develop skills. So, let’s just take an example of a guy that spins a breaking ball well, has good feel for a breaking ball, but doesn’t throw very hard. So, he’s 85 with a good breaking ball. Bring him in, a year and a half or pure velocity development.

You'd have him competing against the other three or four pitchers that you brought in in that class that are all red-shirting. Once a week, they have mound velocity sessions where they're actually competing against your active team, competing against each other. So, you create these hyper-competitive athletes and then you give them the tools and the resources to help develop the other skills that they need. So, ideally, this guy you bring in—85 with a good breaking ball—after a year and a half, when he's ready to start his red-shirt freshman year, when the season starts, he's 88–90 with a good breaking ball and a brass set of balls. And then, by the time he's a Draft-eligible sophomore, he's 91–93 with a power breaking ball, a developing third pitch and he knows how to get guys out and best utilize his stuff. That's kind of the track that I would want to run and just run a complete development program and trust that the development of the athletes, of the assets, would produce wins on the field, as well as Draft prospects.”

MLB.com: This is just conceptual for later on in your career?

TB: “Right now, it's all conceptual. It's something I would want to do down the line. I would be open to doing a consulting gig like this. My dad and I have talked about it for a long time—ever since I was in college, really, and fresh out of college. In 2011, once I signed. There was some stuff that clearly worked at the college level that I was doing that I didn't see anybody else doing. But, I think right now Driveline is doing a lot of the consulting at the college level and they do a very good job of it. So, I don't have any interest in trying to compete with them on that front. But, yeah, down the road, I think I would enjoy running a college like that.”

MLB.com: You mentioned having a five-year plan. Can you give some details on that?

TB: “So, my five-year plan starting in 2014 was to be on the Body Issue by 2019. I think I'm in a good spot for that...”

MLB.com: Oh man.

TB: (laughs) “If that actually happens... I'm pretty sure it's going to, but I'm trying not to get my hopes up too high in case it doesn't. But, if that actually happens, I'm going to plaster that picture everywhere. But, my new five-year plan is to be, basically, be the face of MLB international, to be the most internationally recognizable and well-known baseball player brand. Hopefully, domestic as well, but definitely international. I want to start growing my reach. Obviously, over in Japan, Yu Darvish is this huge superstar, right? But, Yu Darvish in America isn't as big of a superstar as he is in Japan. Over here, Francisco Lindor is huge in America and in Puerto Rico, but he doesn't have really the reach in Japan or over in Asia or in those areas. So, I just want to be well-known and respected in Asia and in Latin America and in Europe and Australia—all over the world—as a baseball player and a brand. There are zero baseball players on ESPN's top 100 most famous or most followed athletes. Meanwhile, there's two cricket players and a badminton player. That's ridiculous. Baseball is one of the biggest sports in the biggest country on Earth and we don't have any baseball players. You can go down the line. Who's the most famous basketball player?”

MLB.com: LeBron.

TB: “Right. Who's the most famous golfer?”

MLB.com: Tiger.

TB: Right. Most famous football player?

MLB.com: Tom Brady.

TB: Brady, right? And who's the most famous baseball player?

MLB.com: Right now? Aaron Judge, maybe? It should be Mike Trout.

TB: “Right? Why is there a question mark there? It should be Trout, but is it? It could be Francisco Lindor. I don't know. That's a problem, right? That's the problem and one of the things I'm trying to address with my production company and one thing I'm trying to address personally. I'd like to be the face of baseball and starting to grow that reach internationally is going to be big. The world is a big place. If you can tap into these markets as a brand, I think there's a lot of benefit that can come from that both from MLB's side and from my side, personally.”

MLB.com: So, what's your plan for extending your reach around the globe?

TB: “That was actually part of my meeting with MLB while I was in New York. I have a lot of ideas for what I want to do here domestically and then a lot of ideas. Really, the fun ones are the international ones. Making trips to these countries in the offseason. Doing clinics. Doing shows. Doing appearances. Doing stuff like that. I think there's a lot of crossover there with creating a show. One of the ideas I had was to basically go to Japan completely unannounced with an interpreter and my camera crew and show up to different baseball institutions around the country, whether it's a Little League practice, 10 year olds practicing on a field. Show up, ‘Hey, can I practice with you guys? Can you teach me how to play?’ Show up to where they make the gloves maybe and tell them to teach me about gloves. Hopefully, the idea is they'd have no idea who I am and then the reveal would happen over the course of the show. Turn it into like an eight-part series of half-hour episodes of me in Japan or China or Puerto Rico or the Dominican or whatever. I'd bring a bunch of equipment and give it out to the kids, hopefully have my logo on it to help establish my brand over there. And then run those shows here domestically, so it gets exposure domestically, but then also generates interest in international markets. That's good for MLB's brand. That's one of the ideas that I had. As part of that, it would be doing clinics, game shows, learning about the cultures, learning about languages and all kinds of different stuff. That would be enriching for me as a person, too. So, I think there's a lot of crossover and would benefit a lot of people. By 2024, I want to be the first baseball player on the most followed list that ESPN puts out.”

MLB.com: I thought for sure you'd be wearing a tie with your "Bauer Outage" logo all over it while on set...

TB: (laughs) "Don't think I didn't have that idea. Let me tell you what happened. I was leaving Cleveland and I thought to myself, 'OK, is there any chance that I need my suit?' I'm thinking, I'm going to go to California and do athletic assessments. I'm going to Houston and will maybe lift and hang out at home. There's no chance. There's nothing I would do in these next two weeks that would need a suit. So, I sent it in my truck to Seattle. So then, I'm on a plane to Dallas Sunday night and I get the e-mail from my agency saying, 'Hey, MLB Network says it'd be great to have you on. They're going to pay for your flights out there. What do you say?' Yeah, sure. Then, it was like, 'The only thing they ask if that you bring two suits.' I was like, 'Well, shoot.' So, here I am, I'm flying to Dallas. It's a night flight. Everything's closed. I get in, I have a meeting at three o'clock on Monday and then a flight immediately after that to Houston. When I'm in Houston, I have an assessment and I've got to get on another flight, so I'm going to have zero time in Houston. So, I woke up and Men's Warehouse was the only place I could find that was close enough to where I was staying and could do same-day tailoring. So, I went in to Men's Warehouse. They opened at 11, so I had three hours to go in there and pick out a couple suits. I couldn't get any tailoring done with the shirts. Couldn't do anything to the jackets, so I just had to pick suits based on what kind of fit off the rack. And then they were able to tailor the pants, which was nice. So, at least my pants were somewhat the right length, and then I had to buy shirts and buy ties and the whole deal. That's the reason I didn't have my logo on my tie. Trust me. I would've loved it. I wanted it. I'm going to get that made as soon as possible. It was just a massive rush."

MLB.com: And then your suits were getting criticized on social media...

TB: "Yeah. The shirt, I didn't have time to try it on. They took my measurements and grabbed them off the shelf. I just figured they got the right size. My shirt was massive. It was like a balloon on me. I put it on and it was like, 'This is terrible.' I could do nothing. I don't know. Whatever." (laughs)

MLB.com: Will you try to convince any teammates to join you at Driveline this offseason? Mike Clevinger or Shane Bieber come to mind...

TB: "Clev's at a point where I don't see Clev benefitting from coming up to Driveline and training. His stuff is good enough. His idea of what he's doing, his process, his mix, his mechanics, he's done a tremendous amount of work over the past two years on all that stuff. And he's been able to accomplish a lot in-season, which is extremely hard to do. So, his biggest thing next year is going to be understanding how to minimize the big innings. That kind of burned him early in the year and I think he did a lot better at that during the second half of the season, so I think he'll carry that over. And then, just maintaining physical ability, making sure he maintains his velocity, maintains his mechanics, maintains his health. Those things are, comparatively, very easy to do. Changing mechanics and adding a pitch or whatever are very difficult things compared to just maintaining what you have. So, I think Clev's in a very good spot. I would expect him to be, for sure, a top 10 pitcher in the league next year like he was this year, and most likely, probably, top five. So, him, specifically, I'm not worried about. He's going to be just fine. Guys like Shane, I think Shane has tremendous potential. And I think there's ways to expedite him getting to that threshold—that potential. And I've talked to him about some of those things. He made a couple adjustments at the end of the year. He didn't really have time to see how they played out over the course of a month or two months or three months, but I think those are going to be beneficial for him. And then, if he can increase the depth on his changeup, I think he'd have a really powerful repertoire. And then, it would be about how he uses it and understanding what hitters are doing and stuff that you can't really pick up in the offseason. That's one of the reasons I've talked to him about meeting up with him and helping him with that and working through it together. We're both kind of trying to develop that same pitch. I'm working on my changeup this offseason, so I thought it'd be a good pairing to kind of do that together. So, while I was in California, I invited him down for the pitch design session. We weren't able to connect on that day, but at some point, once he starts throwing again and starts ramping up and stuff like that, I'll make sure I connect with him and try to help him out with that. And then Neil, I was going to meet up with Neil up at Driveline, but he was there the weekend that I was in California doing all my assessments and all that stuff and everything got sped up. So, I'm going to go out to Nashville in the next couple weeks and see him and his training facility. A couple of the guys that I used to train with up at Driveline now kind of run that training facility, so it'd be good to connect with them. But, I'm working with Neil on his overhand breaking ball, his 12–6 curveball, which obviously is my specialty. So, I feel like I have value that I can add to him there. I talked to Jon Edwards a little bit. We exchanged information. I'm not sure exactly what his timeline is—I haven't connected with him yet. But, I know he has a facility that he runs in his hometown, so he's got plenty of resources there. So, when we connect, we'll kind of get together and throw some ideas back and forth and see what he's looking to work on and stuff. Those are the main ones."

MLB.com: The pitch design session with your dad... You said that took 12 hours last year? What about this time?

TB: "Yeah, it was a 12-hour process last year. This time, it was four, but we had to go find special lighting to satisfy a software that I'm trying to have developed to help out that algorithm. So, it took a little while to find the right lighting. But, the actual session was like four hours."

MLB.com: You said your goal this offseason is to focus on the changeup again and I believe you mentioned at the end of the year that you also want to fine-tune your fastballs?

TB: "Yep. I think that I would benefit from about two more inches of separation—lateral movement—between my two-seam and my four-seam. I think my four-seam ran like four and a half inches on average, five inches, something like that, this year. I'd like to shrink that down, get it under four, three and a half, three or four, something like that. And then, add another inch of lateral movement on the two-seam, which is for sure possible, it's just this year I didn't have the ball aligned perfectly to generate that laminar flow. It was still good, but a slight tweak here or there, five degrees on the axis, would make a big difference. So, that stuff is a lot easier to accomplish, because it's fine-tuning. You're not trying to develop something new. The changeup is going to be the most difficult thing, because I've never been able to truly side-spin a ball. So, I'm having to teach myself how to do that and fiddle with the grips enough that allows me to do it out of something that's comfortable. Just that whole process will take a lot of figuring out."

MLB.com: You worked on the changeup last offseason, too. So, is this a continuation of that process or a new style of pitch?

TB: "It's a continuation of it. Last year, I made some progress on it and got to a point where I could do it reliably at like 80–90 percent effort, but as soon as I would ramp up to 100 percent, it would change. And, at that point, before I really figured out how to do it at high-intent, that was when the slider really started coming along, so I just sunk my teeth into the slider. And then the changeup kind of got put on the backburner, but a lot of that research and that time that I spent on it last offseason will come in handy this offseason. So, I'm starting from a place that's further along, the changeup now, than what I did last offseason. So, my pitch design session, I had multiple pitches that I was actually able to achieve the axis and the results I'm looking for fairly reliably. By that I mean over the course of three or four consecutive pitches, I was able to achieve the same result. Not at a high-intent, but I think that I'll be able to do that at high-intent, especially because I know that that's going to be an issue this year, so I'll be able to attack it from basically the start of November. That's when I'll be throwing off a mound again, so I'll have an extra two or three months with that realization in mind, that I can solve that last 10 percent of effort and really lock it down."

MLB.com: This may sound like a basic question, but can you explain what you mean by a true side spin?

TB: "So, imagine just a truly polar axis, that the axis run north pole to south pole, and the ball is just spinning around three-to-nine on a clock face."

MLB.com: Is the goal to mimic the two-seam movement, but at a lower velo?

TB: "So, my changeup actually did mimic my two-seam movement this year. But, the problem is it didn't have enough depth. So, if you have a truly polar axis with dead side spin, there's no component of lift there. So, you'll get zero lift and then you'll get maximum horizontal movement, which sounds like the exact same thing I was going for last year with my slider—just opposite. So, I'm trying to mirror my slider. My changeup will be thrown harder, but I'm trying to mirror the movement profile of the slider. So, I have the slider that starts middle and runs off glove side. I want to be able to start another pitch middle and have it run off arm side, so I can throw righties can't start sitting on it, just leaning out over and swinging at my slider. Because, they'll see two offspeed pitches that start at the exact same place and end up just off the plate on completely opposite sides."

MLB.com: That sounds like a nightmare for hitters...

TB: "Yeah. With enough depth on the changeup to get below a lefty's barrel. This year, I would get a lot of foul balls on lefties. They'd barely nick it and it'd go right into the plate and bounce foul. Next year, if I have four or five inches of depth on that, those are all swing and misses. It really helps drive pitch count down and strikeouts go up and you can end at-bats quicker. So, yeah, if I can just mimic my slider profile, if I can mirror that with the changeup at 86, that would be a massively successful offseason."

MLB.com: Back in 2016, your two-seamer was your primary fastball. You've used that pitch less and less over the past two years, while leaning more on the four-seamer as your main fastball. What's driven that change?

TB: (laughs) "Well, in 2014 and '15, two-seam sinkers were actually good league-wide. And then the league just decided they had enough of sinker-slider guys and they were going to optimize to hit balls at the bottom of the zone in the air. And then, all of a sudden, it took like two years, and the two-seam just became bad league-wide. The pitch itself is the same, but the league has adjusted to hit that movement."

MLB.com: So, this was a direct result of the air-ball revolution?

TB: "Mm hm. Baseball's cyclical. So, for a while it was the cutter. For a while, it was the sinker. Then, it was the splitter. All this different stuff, right? But, at some point, hitters get tired of getting out with this pitch, and enough people in the league are doing it, that they optimize to hit it. Then, you'll see the next cycle come in. I was just right at the end of the sinker cycle. And so, I developed this pitch, because it was good in the league and I needed it in my arsenal. And then the league started hitting it. So, now, I use it in a very specific way and it plays really well off my slider. Like, if righties don't swing at my slider, because it's just off the plate. I just throw a backdoor two-seam, and they take it, because it has that opposite movement. The two-seam runs nine inches. The slider runs nine inches the opposite way. I can start the two-seam off the plate, it looks like a ball, looks like it's going to run further away, and then it runs back. I can start the slider on the plate, it looks like it's going to be over the middle and then it runs off. I call it kind of criss-crossing. So, I can play that game on the outside, on the glove side of the plate. But, if I start using two-seams too much, then I start hitting a lot of barrels, and that's not what I want to do. So, I use it up and in to lefties as a freeze pitch to keep them off the cutter and the slider running in on them, and I use it backdoor to righties as a freeze pitch. And, occasionally, I'll throw one just in to a righty to get a ground ball or something, but that might be once a game, maybe once every two or three games, because the four-seam is just a much better play in the league right now."

MLB.com: It will be interesting to see what the next cycle is after more pitchers make this kind of adjustment...

TB: "The next big wave you're going to see, and you're starting to see it, is the four-seam and overhand curveball combination. The high-spin four-seam at the top and the high-spin curveball below the zone. So, you get above and below the barrel. But, I think that these waves are going to come a little bit quicker now that we have all the technology and all the ways of measuring pitch metrics and all that different stuff. The league adjusted to hit two-seams like a year after we got Trackman. I don't think that that's necessarily a coincidence. I think there's a lot of smart people that are like, 'Oh, two-seams are used a ton and hitters suck at hitting them, so let's teach our hitters to hit two-seams and they'll be better.' And it happened very quickly. It's definitely still going to happen. I just think the frequency at which the league adjusts will be a lot shorter."

MLB.com: How much has that played into how you've gone about building your pitch arsenal? If the league adjusts, you have enough pitches to try to counteract it. If you're a pitcher that doesn't have the pitch that is now the most-effective pitch, you'd be stuck.

TB: "Yep. Why do you think I've built my repertoire this way? Yeah, guys like Otero—and I'm not picking on Otero at all..."

MLB.com: No, but he's an example of a sinker-based pitcher whose home run rate spiked last season, while everything else—all the other numbers—stayed relatively the same compared to his career rates...

TB: "Because the hitters have optimized to be able to do that. So, he's going to have to come up with... perhaps it's throwing sinkers at the top of zone. He's going to have to find a way to get around the league optimizing to be able to hit the sinker at the bottom of the zone for power."

MLB.com: I'm not sure what you want to say on this topic, but it's known now that an Astros employee was ejected from the camera well next to your dugout during Game 3 of the ALDS. MLB issued a statement that this staffer—also removed from a similar location in Boston in the ALCS—was making sure the other teams were not stealing signs and the league declared the matter closed. There have been reports of other teams—not only the Astros—using other tactics to either steal signs or guard against it. Do you have any thoughts on what can be done to help address this issue?

TB: "Yeah, that's a tough one, because if that's the thing that got seen, that's probably just the tip of the iceberg. So, who knows? There's all the rumors out there. It's fairly well-known what's going on in that organization among people that are in the clubhouses and in the front offices and stuff like that. People leave organizations and they tell their buddy this and the buddy knows someone else who whispers that. And information spreads. It's just really tough to solve, because who knows where the information is being gathered and who's seeing it and how on all kinds of different stuff. If people want to cheat, there's always going to be a way to cheat. We've seen it with drug testing. There's always a new drug and then testing catches up to the latest science and people keep getting busted. You see it on the organizational side, too. Like, 'Oh, well, we could do this. No one's watching, so might as well. No one will know.' And then it extends and one thing turns into another thing. A hitter says, 'Oh, if he can pick up the signs on what the pitcher is doing, let me know. I hit better when I know what's coming.' OK, well, instead of just having the guy at second try to pick signs while he's on base, why don't we have someone in the clubhouse looking at signs and trying to decipher them? We have a camera. Well, if we're going to do that, let's do this, too, and let's do that, and then it gets out of hand. But no one knows it's going on until there's enough rumblings about it that something gets done. So, there's no real easy answer. I think the best answer is, when you find the first instance of it that's concrete, you just punish the [expletive] out of them to send a message to everyone else that there's a consequence, and maybe they'll think twice about doing things and they'll run things on the up and up. Once you catch a hotbed of it, I think you have to make the penalty severe enough that it sends a message to the rest of the people that maybe deters them from doing it."

MLB.com: After the loss to Houston, Clevinger said you guys had your "backs against the wall analytically" in the series. What was your take on that?

TB: "It would be unfair and disingenuous for me to not talk about how good the Astros actually are with their analytics department. Their analytics department is ridiculously good. They've solved... like, Trackman data. They know exactly what's going to be good against the league. They know exactly how to shape individual pitchers' Trackman data, so that when they come up, their arsenal is optimized. They've figured all this stuff out and are far and away ahead of other teams. They've figured out on the hitting side, they can tell, because of how they shape their pitchers, they've naturally thought, 'Well, how do hitters hit this?' And they train their hitters in different ways than anybody else I've heard of, except for guys that have been training outside of professional baseball in private hitting instructions. Like, J.D. Martinez, when he was with Detroit, a lot of the Detroit hitters were working with a guy named Robert Van Scoyoc, who does a lot of different stuff, and Craig Wallenbrock. So, that information is out there in the private circles, but the Astros are very good—probably the most evolved team—at teaching this in professional baseball."

MLB.com: Still, everyone expected that to be a much closer series...

TB: "If you look at the talent on the field. If you go position by position, the talent on the field is similar, it's equal. You can say the Astros have a little edge here and the Indians have a little edge there. It's just hard to decide. There's no clear talent gap. You saw it against the Red Sox. That was a tight series, but the Red Sox talent and our talent is not that dissimilar."

MLB.com: We can talk about analytics, or the person caught in the camera well, but Houston just flat-out beat you guys. Do you view those things as the reason you guys lost?

TB: "No, not at all. They wiped the floor with us on the field. I mean, we got six hits the first two games. It's hard to win when you score six runs in three games. We're not going to win that series regardless. We're not throwing three straight shutouts against that team—regardless of what information they have. They're too good for that. We didn't hit. We didn't play great in any facet of the game. Carlos and Clev shoved as starters and then we couldn't hold whatever slim leads that we had in the bullpen. A lot of that was on me. So, we just got out-played. They had more heart than we did, I think, and were better prepared and were more aggressive. They reminded me of our team in 2016. It was like every time we took the field, we were going to kick someone's ass. There was a different level of intensity and fire in that team than there was in our team. Whatever information, whatever they were doing, that's not the reason we lost. It just made it more of an uphill battle for us. Look, I don't think anyone would disagree with the fact that they out-played us, the fact that they had more fire, that they had more energy and more heart. It's a sad reality. That's not saying anything about our team and our teammates. It's just the level that those guys were on. It's something that we need to be better about next year, and something that I'm going to put a big emphasis on being better about—bringing the intensity each game. I do think our division hurt us a little bit, given that we weren't pressed all year. We never went through the fire to figure out when we face adversity, what's our response as a team? How much fire do we have and where are we really at? But, that's not an excuse. That's just to say we need to be better as players and as a leadership group on the team—the guys that have been there a long time—at holding people accountable to that level of intensity, that level of play, that level of energy throughout the whole season. So, that's something that we're going to get better at."

MLB.com: Your guys could lose a considerable amount of players in free agency this winter. What're your thoughts on how the team might look next year? No matter what happens in the offseason, you'll probably again be the favorites in the division, but you obviously don't want a repeat of this year...

TB: "I think that we have a ton of talent coming back. It would be interesting to see if we put a slightly worse—and by 'worse,' I mean, on paper worse. Like, you might not have Brantley and Brantley is a multiple-time All-Star. So, basically, anyone who replaces Brantley in left field is going to be 'worse' on paper, right? So, I don't want it to get misconstrued that the players are worse. Unproven, perhaps, is a better word. You're probably going to lose Miller and Allen and pretty anyone you put in that role is going to be worse on paper or less proven, especially given our financial constraints. So, it will be interesting to see if, on paper, if we have a worse team next year that gets pushed a little bit more by the division, if we might be more prepared to go further in October. I think it was Kip that said it, he said that the 2016 team was our worst team, but it went the furthest. And I wonder if sometimes it's almost better to be a little closer in competition level in the division you're in. You'd rather be a hot team with a lot of character and a lot of heart and a lot of fight than someone who just ran away with it and was just waiting. So, I think next year we have a tremendous core coming back. Obviously, winning and losing starts on the mound and I think that, obviously, returning the starting rotation [helps]. Hopefully we get Danny Salazar and Cody Anderson back from injury, hopefully Nick Goody as well. I think we have some pieces in the bullpen that can—with a couple tweaks here and there—can be very, very valuable. So, I think we have a really good core there and then obviously our entire infield is coming back. The catching core. So, I think there's a lot of room for excitement there. I think there's a lot of talent in the room, regardless of whether any moves are made in the offseason or not. Hopefully, Naquin and Zimmer can come back and be healthy. Greg Allen played well. We're hoping Leonys Martin makes a full recovery and is healthy and can be on the field. We obviously know he wants to be out there, too. So, I think there's a lot of pieces. You look around and you can say, 'Naquin was a first-rounder. Zimmer was a first-rounder.' There's talent there and who knows what it's really going to produce on a full-time basis? So, yeah, even with the way this year went, and the amount of talent and character that we're going to be losing, I think there's a lot of room for excitement and hope for next season."

Cleveland Indians reportedly talking to GM Mike Chernoff about contract extension

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - The Indians are reportedly talking to GM Mike Chernoff about a contract extension. ESPN's Buster Olney was first to report the possibility.

Chernoff just finished his third year as GM and his 15th season with the Indians. He reportedly recently turned down a chance to interview for the Mets' vacant GM job. Chernoff, who declined comment, and Chris Antonetti, president of baseball operations, are the top baseball executives with the Indians. They'll be faced with a challenging offseason.

The Indians have 11 players who will become free agents after the World Series. Cody Allen, Andrew Miller, Oliver Perez, Michael Brantley, Josh Donaldson, Melky Cabrera and Rajai Davis are among them.

Carlos Carrasco, who won 17 games during the regular season, and outfielder Brandon Guyer have 2019 club options that require decisions five days after the last game of the World Series.

The Indians also have eight players eligible for arbitration: Francisco Lindor, Trevor Bauer, Cody Anderson, Nick Goody, Neil Ramirez, Danny Salazar, Leonys Martin and Brandon Barnes.

Cleveland Indians: Talkin' lineup changes with Yandy Diaz, Jason Kipnis -- Terry Pluto

By Terry Pluto, The Plain Dealer terrypluto2003@yahoo.com

ABOUT MICHAEL BRANTLEY & YANDY DIAZ

For a variety of reasons, the Indians are going to have a different looking team next season:

1. Michael Brantley is a free agent. The Indians have to decide if they want to extend him a qualifying offer of \$18 million. If they do that, they'll receive a draft pick as compensation if Brantley signs with another team.
2. The Indians also have to be prepared for Brantley to possibly accept the \$18 million -- a \$6 million raise from his \$12 million salary in 2018.
3. The 32-year-old Brantley batted .309 (.832 OPS) with 17 HR and 76 RBI. I've heard whispers of Brantley being in line for a 3-year deal in the \$45 million range from some team. Given Brantley's injury history (major ankle and shoulder surgeries), he should pursue a long-term deal. It's doubtful it will come from the Tribe.
4. My best guess is the replacement for Brantley in left field will be...Jason Kipnis. Fans say, "Trade him." The Indians will probably try to do just that. But Kipnis is due \$14.7 million in 2019. He has a \$2.5 million buyout in 2020.
5. In the last two years, Kipnis has batted .231 (.705 OPS), averaging 15 HR and 55 RBI. He was hurt in part of 2017. Healthy in 2018, he still batted .230, but showed some power with 18 HR and 75 RBI. He can probably do a decent job defensively in left field.
6. Kipnis to left field opens up third base for Yandy Diaz. Finally, the Indians seem prepared to give him a chance to be a regular. Kipnis to left, Diaz to third is not being discussed publicly by the Tribe. But I do know it's under serious consideration.
7. Since the 2017 All-Star break, Diaz is batting .312 (62-for-201) with 1 HR, 15 RBI and a .797 OPS. He is respectable at third base. The 27-year-old Diaz is a career .319 hitter (.848 OPS) in Class AAA. Just play him.
8. Assuming my theory is correct, that means Jose Ramirez plays second base. Francisco Lindor stays at shortstop. Yonder Alonso is at first base.

9. Some fans want the Tribe to re-sign Josh Donaldson. His calf injuries are scary. The Indians saw Lonnie Chisenhall deal with that for the last two years. It makes more sense (and saves a lot of money) to put Diaz at third and leave him alone.

10. He became the forgotten man because of his life-threatening bacterial infection in early August, but Leonys Martin could be a factor in center field. As of now, he is considered healthy. The 30-year-old wants to keep playing. He is an excellent center fielder. He is mostly a platoon player, batting .279 vs. righties as opposed to .176 vs. lefties.

11. Martin made \$1.75 million. He is eligible for arbitration. I hope the Indians can work a reasonable 1-year deal. If healthy, he can platoon with Greg Allen in center field. Allen is a switch hitter. He batted .257 (.554 OPS) with 2 HR and 20 RBI last season. After the All-Star break, the rookie batted .310 (.784 OPS).

12. What about Bradley Zimmer? He was the opening day center fielder in 2018. He had major shoulder surgery on July 22. He was projected to be out 8 to 12 months. He is making progress, but shoulder injuries are tricky and scary. Remember what Brantley endured in 2016 and 2017. Hard to put him in the picture right now.

13. Outfield free agents: Brantley, Chisenhall, Rajai Davis and Melky Cabrera. Brandon Guyer has a \$3 million club option. I doubt the Indians will keep Guyer, after he batted .206 (.671 OPS) with 7 HR and 27 RBI.

14. Who plays right field? At the moment, the best bet is Tyler Naquin. He has recovered well from his hip surgery on July 26. He batted .264 (.651 OPS) with 3 HR and 23 RBI in 174 at bats. Naquin had hip problems earlier in his career. The surgery should fix that. He was playing games against young prospects in Goodyear as the playoffs ended. His prognosis is good.

15. An outfield prospect is Oscar Mercado, acquired from St. Louis at the end of July. He batted .278 (.738 OPS) with 8 HR, 47 RBI and 37 stolen bases in Class AAA last season. He's 23 and could be a factor later in the 2019 season.

16. I doubt the Indians will open the season with a starting outfield of Kipnis (LF), Martin/Allen (CF) and Naquin (RF). They will add some players. The outfield screams for help via a trade. The Indians are not going to spend much money on free agents, it's futile to discuss that possibility.

17. But I do expect Kipnis to be in the outfield, Ramirez at second and Diaz at third.

ABOUT TERRY FRANCONA

I received this email from a guy named Terry...no, not me!

"Terry, Do you think Terry Francona should stay? He lost the last 3 (playoff) games in last 3 years. Great pitching, bad managing. Tribe needs young aggressive manager like (Alex) Cora.

"I'd hire Omar Vizquel! Would not be boring and be a good in-game manager. Francona over the hill...out of shape...no energy!!"

Where to begin?

1. Maybe Omar Vizquel will be a good manager. Or maybe not. He was a great shortstop and received my Hall of Fame vote. He is one of my all-time favorite Indians. After he retired, he was a first base coach from 2013-17 for the Tigers.

2. Last season, he managed at Class A Winston-Salem and was the Carolina League Manager of the Year as his team had an 85-54 record. His roster was loaded with top prospects, but he did the job well.

3. He is on the road to becoming a big league manager. He did interview for the Angels job, but reportedly was told he is no longer a candidate.

4. I've received a few emails from frustrated fans wanting to replace Francona. Fire the guy who has had six consecutive winning seasons...four playoff berths...one World Series...IN CLEVELAND?

5. In Francona's six seasons, the Indians have a .542 winning percentage...best in the American League over that span.

6. The previous four seasons (2009-12) before Francona arrived, the Tribe's average record was 70-92. As Tribe President Chris Antonetti said at the postseason press conference, the team has to take the long view - and not just react to playing poorly against Houston.

7. Francona has delivered winning, contending baseball with a team that has not been higher than 16th out of 30 teams in payroll -- and that was this year. Most years, the Tribe was in the bottom 30 percent in payroll.

8. One of the reasons the Indians are contenders in a small market is their stability in the front office and with the manager. It's a competitive advantage, assuming the key people continue working well together.

9. Some fans have wondered about Francona's stance of no changes to the coaching staff. That has some fans angry. Ike emailed: "My friend, summa cum laude from CWRU, watched almost all the games and he agrees with me that the hitting coach job should go to someone else."

10. The Indians changed bullpen and pitching coaches last season. The pitching coach move was forced on them when Mickey Callaway was hired to manage the Mets. Carl Willis is a solid pitching coach, but I thought Callaway was fabulous -- and missed.

11. Callaway is still the Mets manager. The team is coming off a dismal season and is looking to hire a new general manager. After that happens, then Callaway's future will be discussed.

12. Scott Atchison replaced Jason Bere as bullpen coach. I don't know how much (if any) of the bullpen's struggles had to do with the change of coaches.

13. Some fans want to change hitting coaches. Batting .144 in the 3-game sweep by Houston has fans angry. In the regular season, the Indians ranked No. 3 in runs scored. They were ahead of Houston. They only trailed Boston and New York.

14. In 2017, the Indians were No. 6 in runs scored. In 2016, they were No. 2. So they have ranked high in the last three seasons. Francona said changing hitting coaches would be "reactionary."

15. My guess is most coaching staffs should probably make a change nearly every year, partly because good people become available when they are fired elsewhere. But the core people with the Indians deserve to stay in place.

Purdue coach Jeff Brohm would give up football to have played in a Cleveland Indians World Series

By Doug Lesmerises, cleveland.comdlesmerises@cleveland.com

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Taken by the Cleveland Indians in the fourth round of the 1990 Major League Baseball Draft, Purdue football coach Jeff Brohm was a talented athlete who loved football, tolerated baseball and followed his heart into a career centered on his passion.

Now, he's not so sure about that choice.

Brohm kind of wishes he'd chased the chance at joining the Indians' run of dominance in the mid-90s, which was percolating in the minors as Brohm wasn't giving baseball a full shot in 1990 and 1991.

Brohm played two brief seasons in the minor leagues, with Rookie League Burlington in 1990 and Single A Watertown in 1991. Among his teammates - Manny Ramirez and Jim Thome.

"Manny Ramirez was a guy, I remember I've never seen bat speed like his in my life," Brohm told cleveland.com at Big Ten media days this summer. "When the ball came off the bat when he hit it, I've never seen anything like that before. His bat speed was incredible. All the other stuff he was average at, but as far as hitting the baseball, it was not like anything I've ever seen."

At Burlington his first season, when Brohm hit .213 with two home runs and 10 stolen bases in 136 at-bats, he remembers a struggling teammate in his second year in the Indians system who caught fire.

That was Thome, a 13th-round pick in 1989, who hit .373 with 12 home runs in 118 at-bats with Burlington.

"Midway through, he took off," Brohm said. "He finally got it."

Brohm never did.

He was playing quarterback at the University of Louisville at the same time he was playing for the Indians, which the team knew was the plan when they picked him. Brohm didn't play baseball in 1992 because of an injury suffered at extended spring training, and he never played in the Indians system again.

"I'm basically playing both sports, giving both a shot," Brohm told The Plain Dealer in 1992 before leading Louisville against the Buckeyes in that season's opener. "If one starts to outshine the other, I'll go with that."

It was football. But there's an alternate universe when Brohm, a multi-tool infielder, joined Ramirez and Thome on those 1995 and 1997 World Series teams.

"If I had to do it over again, I would have gone that route," Brohm said.

Brohm was expressing those regrets during his brief NFL career. He played eight games as the San Francisco 49ers backup quarterback in 1996 and 1997. But it's interesting to hear a football coach express these thoughts now, as information about the toll that football can take on a body continues to come in.

"To be quite honest with you, if I knew then when I knew now, things would be different," Brohm said. "I would have probably tried baseball."

"Growing up I loved football, I loved playing quarterback, the ball was in your hands. Baseball I happened to be good at, but boy, it was not an exciting sport. It was kind of boring. It didn't really rev me up. But I was decent at it and I liked being a competitor."

He didn't really understand the baseball draft. He didn't understand what a baseball career might have offered. And he was always only playing baseball on the side.

"My knowledge was not very good of how this thing works and how it operates," Brohm said, "and, 'You know what, if they're saying this about you, you need to play baseball. You can play this game till you're 40, you can never get truly injured, you can make a lot of money.' I didn't really factor all that in."

"I loved football and that was the sport I liked. If I knew all that, I may have tried it with a genuine effort full-time and maybe had better results."

Don't read this as Brohm, the second-year coach who has rallied the Purdue Boilermakers from the doldrums of a 9-39 stretch between 2013-16, not liking his gig. He's really good at it, with Purdue a dangerous 3-3 going into Saturday's game against Ohio State after posting a 7-6 record in his debut a year ago.

The 47-year-old will be a hot name on the coaching market after this season, and you can bet on him to land a really big job in the next several years, unless Purdue breaks the bank to keep him.

If he had tried baseball, he might be retired right now with millions of dollars in the bank, and a head full of Indians playoff memories.

Trevor Bauer's gig as an analyst for MLB Network has him praising Astros, Red Sox. Wait... what?

By Joe Noga, cleveland.comjnova@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- If you're like me, you stayed awake into the wee hours of Thursday morning to watch the conclusion of Game 4 of the American League Championship Series between the Boston Red Sox and Houston Astros.

You did so not out of some morbid sense of longing for a Cleveland Indians season that was cut all too short by an early playoff exit; rather, for the potentially glorious circus that was on tap as Tribe pitcher Trevor Bauer made his debut as a postgame analyst on MLB Network.

And if you're like me, you were terribly disappointed with the results.

To his credit, Bauer more than exceeded expectations in his on-air role. He was poised, insightful engaging and affable. Sharply dressed in a suit, Bauer seemed comfortable and confident in his own skin -- a far cry from the irascible gremlin that prowled the Indians clubhouse after his injury in August.

He spoke knowledgeably about the game, calling it one of the most exciting playoff games he's seen since World Series Game 5 last year in Houston. He praised the efforts of both Astros and Red Sox players, even mentioning individuals such as Alex Bregman and Mookie Betts without the slightest hint of sarcasm.

But the antics that we've come to expect, and in some cases demand, of Bauer were nowhere to be found. Instead he presented himself in the way some of us who get to see him behind the scenes have caught glimpses in the last two years: as one of the best pitchers in the American League with a vast stockpile of the intricate knowledge behind pitching mechanics and techniques.

The insolent, churlish, petty frat boy personality was nowhere to be found.

And to the credit of those at MLB Network, Bauer was pretty much kept on task as an analyst. In-studio hosts did not lead him down any paths that could have taken the postgame show off the rails.

There was no talk of drones.

He was not allowed to strap a GoPro camera on top of his head. (Though it's a near certainty that he wanted to.)

No mention of drastically increased spin rates or sticky substances.

He was never once allowed to refer to himself as "Tyler."

There was no trolling with hashtags, and the numbers "69" and "420" were avoided at all costs.

Does this mean Bauer has completely turned the corner? Has he moved past picking Twitter fights with opponents and fans in favor of a more polished persona that could be looked upon more favorably by Cy Young Award voters in years to come?

Or is the impish Bauer a smokescreen that we've all fallen victim to for the past six seasons? Maybe in-studio Trevor is the real thing, and he's been hiding from us all along.

Who knows? Only one thing is for certain: Bauer will again appear on MLB Network for the Thursday pregame show and have another chance to show us which Trevor is the real deal. And I, for one, can't wait to tune in and find out.

MLB can rest easy because Houston Astros' spy network has its back: Tribe Take

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- I don't know about you, but I feel much better now that Houston GM Jeff Luhnow and his spy network are in charge of making sure teams aren't cheating when it comes to trying to pilfer other team's signs and strategies during games.

I would have thought that was the job of Commissioner Rob Manfred and MLB's investigative unit, but I guess Luhnow and the Astros are doing such good work that there's no need for Manfred to get involved.

As you may have heard, the Astros had a team employee, equipped with a cellphone camera, take pictures/video inside the Indians' dugout during Game 3 of the ALDS and the Red Sox's dugout during Game 1 of the ALCS. He was repeatedly chased away by security, but the guy had plenty of pluck and kept coming back for more.

The Indians and Red Sox complained to Manfred. An investigation was held and Wednesday night before Game 4 of the ALCS, the Astros were cleared of any wrongdoing. In a remarkable statement, Luhnow told reporters at Minute Maid Park that the Astros weren't really cheating. He said they were policing other teams' ballparks to see if they were cheating. Luhnow added that they uncovered evidence of unsavory doings.

"We were playing defense, we were not playing offense," Luhnow told the media before Game 4.

I'm still trying to get my head around that statement. So if I'm pool hustler and I walk into a pool room, I'm not really going in there to hustle a game of pool, I'm going there to see if anyone else is hustling a game. Either way, at least from all the movies I've watched, doesn't that guy end up in a back room with two broken thumbs?

The Astros didn't even get a slap on the wrist. MLB said the matter was closed. Who knows, maybe they gave Luhnow his Junior G-man badge and told him to keep up the good work.

A couple of things to ponder. If the Astros were only playing "defense" to make sure they weren't being taken advantage of by their opponents, what were they going to do with the information they gathered? Were they going to sing like canaries and give it to MLB? Were they going to hold it over the other team's head? Or simply compare the captured spyware with their spyware?

There are 30 teams in the big leagues. They don't always get along. But in saying the Astros were policing suspicious activities by an untold number of their business partners, I'm guessing Luhnow may have cost himself some votes for GM of the Year even if the Astros defend their World Series title.

Right now, they trail the Red Sox, 3-1.

Nick Cafardo / After two terrific postseason starts, Nathan Eovaldi should hit it big in free agency

Nick Cafardo – Reporter

Nathan Eovaldi is 28 years old, a free agent and pitching great in the highest profile time of his career. Think he might make a few dollars in free agency this offseason?

Eovaldi is one of a few bona fide free agent pitchers in an unspectacular market. The ones who stand out will benefit by the likely competition for their services. Eovaldi is a low-key, humble guy who would never talk about his future while the team is in the middle of postseason bliss and with him being a huge part of it.

But his two postseason starts likely have propped up his value much higher than what it would have been if he had never made them. What the starts have shown, according to one baseball executive is, "He's shown, first of all, that he's healthy. He's shown he can pitch on a big stage. He's shown that he's grown as a pitcher where he not only relies on that 97-100-miles-per-hour fastball, but now he has a cutter that's proven so effective for him and allowed him to pitch deep into games. And, he's had two Tommy John surgeries, survived them and is flourishing.

"The other thing is his age. Any time you can get a guy under 30 in free agency is a huge attribute."

Most executives think a comparable is Alex Cobb, who also came back from Tommy John and landed a four-year, \$57 million deal with Baltimore last offseason. Eovaldi's pedigree exceeds Cobb's at this point, so his contract should be more lucrative. The Red Sox should be interested in re-signing him, particularly with Chris Sale's current physical condition.

Conversely, the guy whose stock has dropped is Drew Pomeranz, who had a terrible season (2-6, 6.08 ERA) and didn't make the Red Sox playoff roster. Pomeranz was in line to make a small fortune after winning 17 games in 2017. If that had continued, the sky's the limit in salary and interest. Pomeranz may still be a Red Sox target since they know him better than anyone and could foresee a rebound season.

Besides Eovaldi, here are the major starters who could warrant attention in free agency:

1. Patrick Corbin, LHP, Diamondbacks — Considered the most sought-after pitcher on the market this winter. Corbin will have his pick, but it likely won't be in Arizona, which is looking to strip payroll and start rebuilding. Corbin is expected to draw a lot of interest from the Yankees, Dodgers, Giants, and Braves. The deal likely could be at least five years in the \$20 million-\$25 million range.
2. J.A. Happ, LHP, Yankees — Happ is 36, but he won 17 games and while he had a few clunkers, including against the Red Sox, he's still a desirable pitcher who can work at the front of the rotation. He likely will garner interest from the Yankees, but he may garner other interest if he's willing to sign a three-year deal, which might be his max given his age. The Astros could be among the bidders.
3. Dallas Keuchel, LHP, Astros — The 2015 American League Cy Young winner still can be a useful middle-to-back-end starter. He obviously doesn't fit the power pitcher profile teams are enamored with, but he's a savvy veteran who knows how to get it done. Keuchel is still only 30 years old.
4. Charlie Morton, RHP, Astros — Morton is 34 and hit a wall the second half of the season in Houston. At one point this year, teammate Justin Verlander said, "He was one of the best three pitchers in the league." But that dissipated a bit. He did have a resurgence later in the season, but he didn't pitch well against the Red Sox in the ALCS. Morton is from Connecticut and if he doesn't re-sign in Houston, you could see interest from the Red Sox or Yankees. The Red Sox do need to be a bit more righthanded in their rotation and if Eovaldi departs, Morton could be a short-term fix.
5. Gio Gonzalez, LHP, Brewers — Gonzalez was replaced on the playoff roster because of a sprained ankle. He didn't have the usual quality season, beset by injuries after the Nationals traded him to Milwaukee. At 33, however, he's still capable of quality starts in the middle-to-back-end of a rotation.
6. Matt Harvey, RHP, Reds — Harvey once would have drawn considerable interest in the open market, but he was never the same after his thoracic outlet surgery. Now he's a serviceable starter, a back-of-the-rotation guy who at 29 could regain his elite status, but it's likely he is what he is.
7. Lance Lynn, RHP, Yankees — Lynn simply didn't pitch as well as he did in 2017 with the Cardinals, whether it was his rough start in Minnesota, and then with the Yankees, where he fulfilled a role at the back of their rotation with a 3-2 record and a 4.14 ERA. The Yankees could bring him back at their terms, but doubt they're sweating whether they lose him.
8. CC Sabathia, LHP, Yankees — More knee surgery recently for the respected lefthander, a leader in the Yankees' clubhouse. We believe the Yankees will move on only because, after their quick postseason departure, they need more of a sure thing 1 through 5 in their rotation rather than a 38-year-old lefty who has been breaking down. The Yankees likely need to promote the young pitchers they have touted over the past couple of years.
9. Hyun Jin-Ryu, LHP, Dodgers — The South Korean lefty will finally reached free agency after five injury-filled seasons. He posted a 2.12 earned-run average in his first six starts this season, but then suffered a torn groin muscle May 2 in Arizona and didn't return until Aug. 15. He'd pitched well in his first two postseason starts, but allowed five runs in three innings in a Game 6 loss to the Brewers. He went 7-3 with a 1.97 ERA in 15 starts in 2018. He's 31.
10. Wade Miley, LHP, Brewers — Pitched well over 16 starts for the Brewers (5-2, 2.57 ERA) and has pitched well in the playoffs. Brewers may seek to re-sign him, or he'll end up with a National League team.

We're not big on mentioning guys with opt outs or easily converted options. For instance, do we really think David Price or Clayton Kershaw will opt out of contracts that pay them more than \$30 million per season? Now if these two were traded for each other, we'd listen to that.

Nor do we think the Red Sox would forgo Chris Sale's \$15 million option, or the Cubs deciding not to pick up Cole Hamels's \$20 million option after the brilliant job he did for them. Or the Giants not picking up a \$12.5 million option on Madison Bumgarner. Or the Indians foregoing a \$9.75 million option on Carlos Carrasco. Not going to happen.

Apropos of nothing

1. Some of the people interviewed, and not interviewed, for manager and GM jobs have always been a head-scratcher to me. Teams have finally smartened up in interviewing Rocco Baldelli, but now I wonder why Ruben Amaro Jr. is not being considered for GM or managing jobs. First of all, Amaro Jr. is relatively young – 53. Secondly, he's bilingual. Thirdly, he's smart – Stanford-educated. He's already been a GM, made mistakes and also made some of the best deals, unloading high-priced players, of any GM in recent times. How many guys can actually be up for both a GM and a managing job? Executive and field experience. The Mets' first base coach was also exposed to one of the best analytical departments when he was a coach with the Red Sox. He's the first one to say his one regret when he ran the Phillies was he didn't embrace analytics sooner. Over the years he's done a good job dealing with the media, which has become one of the top attributes a manager or GM needs. Ask the Red Sox who hired both Dave Dombrowski and Alex Cora.

2. Stunning Major League Baseball didn't enforce major penalties on the Astros for their spy work, which goes beyond videotaping the Red Sox dugout at the start of the playoffs. Don't know if MLB wanted to silence the story quickly as to not have the attention focused on something so negative during the postseason. But league sources tell me there's a long pattern of indiscretions even after MLB came down on the Red Sox after they used an electronic device to relay signals last year. The Astros are a great organization and they push the envelope on information-gathering and trying to gain an edge on the competition with their methods. Dombrowski hinted he doesn't think the investigation is over, so we'll see if there are more penalties. Let's face it, these maneuvers will only be a deterrent if there are penalties.

3. Former Dodgers owner Frank McCourt, who now owns the Marseille (France) soccer club and still owns property around Dodger Stadium, recalls Cora's gritty 18-pitch at-bat on May 12, 2004, which ended in a home run. "One of the best big league at-bats I've ever seen," said McCourt, who owned the Dodgers at the time. McCourt, a Boston native, has been rooting for a Red Sox-Dodgers World Series. "It would be great to see those two teams go at it. I obviously have ties to both, growing up a Red Sox fan and owning the Dodgers. It would be fun."

4. The Marlins have jettisoned lots of good people since Derek Jeter took over, but they recently hired some good scouts, including Adrian Lorenzo from the Red Sox, who will be a special assistant to baseball operations and scouting, and Nathan Adcock as an area scout. Meanwhile, one of the talented people let go, former Marlins assistant farm director Brett West, was hired by the Arizona Diamondbacks as a pro scout.

5. The Sports Museum's "Tradition" event will take place Nov. 28 at TD Garden. Jim Lonborg is the baseball honoree, presented by Jim Kaat. For ticket information, go to www.sportsmuseum.org/events/the-tradition.

Updates on nine

1. Darwinson Hernandez, LHP, Red Sox – Scouts watching him in the Arizona Fall League believe he's not far from the big leagues. Currently a reliever, one National League scout said, "He has a good four-pitch mix with a 96-97- miles per hour fastball. He's got that reliever mentality. He's very tough, aggressive. I know the Red Sox are toying with keeping him in the pen and that's not a bad choice, but I wouldn't give up on him as a starter."

2. Ned Colletti, former Dodgers GM – Colletti's name continues to be the strongest mentioned in the Baltimore mix. Colletti, who is a television broadcaster for the Dodgers, has had consistent contact with Orioles owners, according to one major league source. Colletti certainly knows how to run an organization, working for many years under McCourt's ownership.

3. Dave Littlefield, vice president, Tigers – The former Pirates general manager is gaining steam as a candidate with the Mets. He would appeal to the Fred Wilpon faction of the ownership, given Littlefield's traditional approach to running a baseball team. Fred's son, Jeff Wilpon, is still of the mind to hire someone with a greater analytic background. A hybrid, such as Dan Duquette, is possible.

4. Jason McLeod, assistant general manager, Cubs – McLeod, the longtime scouting guru for the Padres, Red Sox and Cubs, appears likely to accept a GM job after a few years of wanting to remain in Chicago with the Theo Epstein regime. McLeod is considered a strong candidate in San Francisco, which also has reached out to former Red Sox scouting director Amiel Sawdaye, currently the assistant GM under Mike Hazen in Arizona.

5. Dan Jennings, special assistant to Nationals – The former Marlins GM and manager has drawn inquiries from two teams gauging his interest. "Having been on both sides as a GM and manager it's given me a greater appreciation of what managers, coaches and on-field personnel go through on a daily basis. Not sure you ever understand it fully until you do it," Jennings said.

6. Alex Bregman, 3B, Astros – Bregman is an outstanding young player defensively and offensively, but he probably has a little growing up to do. Posting those videos of Nathan Eovaldi allowing three straight homers to the Astros in June while he was pitching for the Rays backfired on him. Bregman was 0-for-his-last-10 in the ALCS, which prompted David Price to yell at him "Post that!" after he struck out vs. Eovaldi in the eighth inning of Game 5. Bregman had it coming, and while bulletin-board material isn't as effective in baseball as it is in football, it gave the Sox that little edge that may have helped along the way.

7. Dustin Pedroia, 2B, Red Sox – Pedroia's role on this team reminds me so much of what Ellis Burks did for the 2004 Red Sox. At one point in the postseason, Johnny Damon was struggling and Burks, who was not on the active playoff roster, got on Damon's case a bit and informed him he needed to work harder on his swing because the Red Sox needed him to be his best. Damon took the advice and turned his batting slump around. Pedroia provides constant reinforcement to his teammates. It's a shame he wasn't able to be a more active participant.

8. Manny Machado, SS, Dodgers – Did he cost himself money by admitting that hustling isn't part of his game, and also stepping on Jesus Aguilar's foot while running down the first base line in Game 4? The GM we asked said, "It would be a factor for me. Not sure I'd want that type of attitude on my team but I don't need a shortstop or third baseman. If I did I might feel differently because there's no denying his talent. But I don't think I'd make that type of investment on someone who says hustling isn't part of his game."

9. Marwin Gonzalez, utility, Astros — In Boston, we marvel at jack-of-all-trades Brock Holt, but Gonzalez, who will be a free agent, is a switch-hitting multi-positional player who filled in so ably for the hobbled Jose Altuve. Gonzalez, who can hit for power, could wind up being a permanent positional player for someone such as the Giants, who are hunting for offense.