

Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings January 30, 2019

THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY

1919-The Reds hire Pat Moran as manager, replacing Christy Mathewson, when no word is received from him while his is in France with the U.S. Army. Moran would manage the Reds until 1923, collecting a 425-329 record

1978-Former Reds executive, Larry MacPhail, is elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

1997-The Reds sign Deion Sanders to a free agent contract, for the second time

ESPN.COM

Busy Reds in on Realmuto, but would he make them a contender?

Jan. 29, 2019

Buster Olney

ESPN Senior Writer

The last time the Cincinnati Reds won a postseason series, Joey Votto was 12 years old, Bret Boone was the team's second baseman and the organization had only recently drafted his kid brother, a third baseman out of the University of Southern California named Aaron Boone.

Since the Reds swept the Dodgers in a Division Series in 1995, they have built more statues than they have playoff wins. In recent years, a Dodger said he was sick of Kirk Gibson -- not because of anything Gibson had done, but because the team had felt the need to roll out the highlight of Gibson's epic '88 World Series home run, in lieu of subsequent championship success. Similarly, most of the biggest stars in the Reds organization continue to be Johnny Bench, Joe Morgan, Pete Rose and Tony Perez, as well as announcer Marty Brennaman, who recently announced he will retire after the upcoming season.

You can understand why the Reds' leadership is pushing -- maybe desperately, maybe recklessly -- to get back into contention in 2019. Reportedly, Cincinnati is among the teams engaged with the Miami Marlins for J.T. Realmuto, who is regarded as baseball's best catcher these days. The Reds already are vying with the Mets for the title of the winter's most active team, having acquired outfielders Yasiel Puig and Matt Kemp, and starting pitchers Sonny Gray, Alex Wood and Tanner Roark. They hired a new manager, David Bell, and his Opening Day lineup will be deep, and perhaps look something like this:

LF Jesse Winker
SS Jose Peraza
1B Votto
3B Eugenio Suarez
2B Scooter Gennett
RF Puig
CF Scott Schebler/Kemp
C Tucker Barnhart

Schebler could play center against right-handed pitchers, with Puig sliding over to center field against lefties. It could be that the Reds' reported dalliance with the Marlins over Realmuto is overstated, a way for Miami to get some leverage in discussions with the Padres or Dodgers, and if no deal goes down, Cincinnati would be fine behind the plate, with Gold Glover Tucker Barnhart. If the Reds land Realmuto, they would add a solid masher who posted an .870 OPS in games away from the Marlins' cavernous home park. Thirteen of his 21 homers were on the road, and the Reds could project him to do even more damage playing half of his games in their cozy home park.

The Reds' rotation is stronger, in front of what was a good bullpen last season:

Anthony DeSclafani, RH

Luis Castillo, RH

Alex Wood, LH

Sonny Gray, RH

Tanner Roark, RH

Tyler Mahle, RH

But it seems very possible that the Reds will expend all of these resources for naught, because the context for their push is different than, say, for the White Sox or the Padres. Cincinnati inhabits the same division as the Brewers, who led the NL in wins last year and are poised to defend that title; the Cubs, who've reached the postseason each of the past four years; the Cardinals, who played much better in the second half last year and then went out and added slugger Paul Goldschmidt and lefty Andrew Miller; and the Pirates, who may not make the playoffs but should be competitive because of their young pitching.

The Reds have had five straight losing seasons, including four straight years posting fewer than 70 wins. They cut their payroll and have picked near the top of the draft year after year. It might seem to be the right time for them to try to climb back over .500 and fight for a day when a Bench, Morgan and Perez can share in a first-pitch ceremony in October.

But the recent urgency is mostly constructed on short-term acquisitions. If they trade for Realmuto, with the Marlins holding to their refusal to allow interested teams to negotiate an extension, then he might walk away as a free agent after 2020. Roark will be a free agent next winter, and so will Wood, Puig and Kemp.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. A lot of the core guys are young -- Suarez is 27, Peraza is 24, and they have a bunch of 20-something pitchers. Gray, 29, just signed a three-year extension. The Reds should have the financial flexibility to replace Puig, Kemp and others next winter, in what should be a team-friendly free-agent market (again).

Bob Castellini, CEO of the Reds, has a reputation for being an active boss -- for example, it was he who compelled the front office to keep center fielder Billy Hamilton, even as Hamilton's trade value slowly collapsed. But anyone who has worked for Castellini knows he badly wants to win, and he is presumably cheerleading this winter spree behind the scenes. The acquisition of players whose name value might be a little higher than their production value is something that owners typically like more than general managers.

But if the Reds played this more conservatively and decided to wait at least another year, this question would hang over them: If not now, then when? The Cubs aren't going away anytime soon, nor are the Brewers or the Cardinals. And Milwaukee has demonstrated what is possible in the Central, climbing from seasons of 68 and 73 wins in 2015 and 2016 to 86 and 96 the past two years.

If all goes well -- if Gray bounces back to pitch as he did with the Athletics, if Puig thrives in what should be a productive lineup, if the bullpen holds together, if Votto continues to be an elite hitter at 35 years old -- the Reds might surprise.

CINCINNATI PUBLIC RADIO WYXU

25 Reasons To Watch New 'BENCH' Film About Johnny Bench

By John Kiesewetter

Jan. 29, 2019

When you watch a biography of Reds Hall of Fame catcher Johnny Bench, you expect to see lots of World Series highlights available for years on DVD.

That's all part of BENCH, a terrific 90-minute MLB Network Presents film premiering 8 p.m. Wednesday Jan. 30 on the MLB Network. But the stars of the show are Bench, now 71, being a single father to sons Justin, 12, and Josh, 9, in their Florida home.

BENCH also will bring back a flood of memories for Big Red Machine fans with the sights and sounds from Riverfront Stadium, spring training, the Reds' dugout, and Bench's foray from behind the mask into the entertainment world with Johnny Carson, Bob Hope, Hee Haw, David Letterman and his own TV show.

Bench also provides a running commentary, which I wrote about last week. You'll also hear remarks by Pete Rose; Tony Perez; former Reds broadcaster Al Michaels; former players Steve Blass and Reggie Jackson; singer Toby Keith; retired Indiana basketball coach Bobby Knight; and announcer Brent Musburger.

Here are 25 reasons to watch BENCH:

1. To see Bench enjoying fatherhood at 71, as narrator Martin Sheen, a Dayton, Oh., native, describes the Hall of Fame catcher this way: "It's not where Johnny expected to be at this point in his life."
2. To see a photo of The Johnny Bench Show syndicated by WLWT-TV, with Michaels or Bill Myers as announcer. His first guests were Bob Hope and Willie Mays.
3. For the nostalgia of watching hundreds of fans walking over the pedestrian ramp over Fort Washington Way from Downtown to Riverfront Stadium.
4. To see rare color home movies of playing ball as a kid in tiny Binger, Okla., which folks at the Reds Hall of Fame and Museum had not seen before.
5. To relive the Fountain Square celebration after the 1975 World Series, with Commissioner Bowie Kuhn presenting the trophy to Reds President Bob Howsam.
6. To see Bench in his office reading scrapbooks sent to him by fans, which his son Bobby found in Bench's storage garage. "I look back and say: Did I really do this stuff? I guess I did!" His offices walls are filled with framed memorabilia, including a Cincinnati Enquirer cartoon by Pulitzer Prize-winner Jim Borgman.
7. To hear Bench's impression of legendary baseball announcer Harry Caray. Holy cow!
8. To watch Bench explain that he innovated the catching position by catching one-handed after he had broken the thumb on his right throwing hand too many times. He also lists his four goals every time he took the field: Call a good game, throw runners out, block home plate, and get some hits.
9. To hear Reds public address announcer Paul Sommerkamp introduce Bench on "Johnny Bench Night" at Riverfront Stadium on Sept. 17, 1983. And to see pregame on-field hosts Marty Brennaman and Al Michaels in tuxedos! (My only criticism of the excellent BENCH show on MLB Network: When Bench homers on "Johnny Bench Night," the film uses Channel 5's call by long-forgotten Ken Wilson instead of the iconic radio call by Joe Nuxhall: "The 0-1. Swung on and hit well to left field! GET OUTTA HERE BASEBALL! IT'S GONE!! Oh my God, can you believe it? Johnny Bench has tied it up! Amazing! ABSOLUTELY AMAZING!!")
10. For an explanation by Bench and Rose on what made the Big Red Machine run so smooth despite being "a team with alpha dogs," as Al Michaels says. "We had white leadership (Bench and Rose), we had black leadership (Joe Morgan), and we had Latino leadership (Tony Perez)," Bench says. Rose put it this way: "No team ever had a white Hall of Famer, a black Hall of Famer, a Latino Hall of Famer, and a Hall of Fame manager (Sparky Anderson).
11. To see Bench style the hair of his sons Justin and Josh in their Florida home. Cameras show him waking up the boys, cooking their breakfast and driving them to school. He told reporters last week that the best times are talking to them about school in the car. Bench also seemed disappointed that MLB Network didn't use footage of him doing laundry or going grocery shopping!

12. For a video clip of Bench singing "When You're Hot, You're Hot" on Hee Haw. He also talks about hanging out in Nashville with Willie Nelson, Charlie Pride and Glen Campbell, and dining at Frank Sinatra's Palm Springs home with Gregory Peck.
13. To catch glimpses of Reds equipment manager Bernie Stowe and hitting coach Ted Kluszewski briefly in archive video from the Reds clubhouse.
14. To hear Al Michaels and Rose describe the differences between Rose and Bench. And to hear Pete gush about Bench: "He was the best catcher ever. I've been saying that my whole life." Rose calls Bench "a Gold Glove behind the plate with the ability to hit 40 home runs."
15. To see that famous photo of Bench holding seven baseballs in his huge hand.
16. To hear Bobby Knight describe his friend Bench: "A lot of guys want to play. Johnny didn't want to play. He wanted to win." He also said Bench was "smart and tough," the best combination for an athlete.
17. To see Bench's TV commercial for Gillette Platinum Plus razor blades and Kylon spray paint. No runs, no drips, no errors.
18. To see a brief clip of Bench on David Letterman's old NBC Late Night show (but you don't see Letterman).
19. To hear Al Michaels' call Bench's ninth inning home run at Riverfront Stadium to tie the 1972 National League Championship Series against the Pirates on Oct. 11, 1972: "Johnny Bench, who hits most home runs to left, homers to right and the game is tied!" A few batters later, Michaels call the game-winning run when Pirates pitcher Bob Moose uncorked a wild pitch with pinch-runner George Foster on third: "In the dirt! It's a wild pitch! Here comes Foster! The Reds win the pennant!" Michaels says he was so excited his voice "hit like three octaves."
20. To see Bench on CBS' Mission: Impossible, in a Feb. 6, 1971, episode called "The Catafalque." Bench played "The Captain of the Guards." But you don't see Bench on the Partridge Family as a Kings Island Inn waiter from 1972.
21. To see photos of Bench on Bob Hope's USO Christmas Tour to entertain U.S. troops in Vietnam in December 1970, after his MVP season led the Reds to the World Series against the Baltimore Orioles.
21. To watch video from January 1989, when Bench gets the call to Cooperstown from Jack Lang, president of the Baseball Writers Association of America.
23. Seeing an a CBS Evening News with Dan Rather clip a few months later in 1989 about Pete Rose being investigated for gambling.
24. To hear a very proud Johnny Bench talking about his dad meeting Ted Williams, Pee Wee Reese and other Hall of Famers before his induction in Cooperstown.
25. To see the sheer joy on Bench's face as he watches TV with his sons. He messes with their hair, and they point out that he's bald. Sheen sums up the film by saying: "Arguably the greatest catcher who ever lived just goes by Dad."

TRANSACTIONS

01/29/19

- Toronto Blue Jays signed free agent SS Freddy Galvis.
- Toronto Blue Jays designated RHP Danny Barnes for assignment.
- Miami Marlins signed free agent 1B Neil Walker.
- Miami Marlins designated RHP Nick Wittgren for assignment.
- Texas Rangers signed free agent RHP Shawn Kelley.
- Texas Rangers designated RF John Andreoli for assignment.