

# Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings February 13, 2018

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## THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY

1970-The National League office begins their move from Cincinnati to San Francisco

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### MLB.COM

**Reds' rotation trio raring to go at Spring Training**  
**DeSclafani, Bailey, Finnegan hoping for strong return from injuries**  
**By Mark Sheldon MLB.com @m\_sheldon**  
**Feb. 12th, 2018**

GOODYEAR, Ariz. -- As Spring Training opens on Tuesday with the reporting of Reds pitchers and catchers, the healthy returns of Anthony DeSclafani, Homer Bailey and Brandon Finnegan will be paramount. As the team's young pitchers continue to establish themselves and progress, the three experienced starters are expected to provide innings and stability.

In each of the past two Spring Trainings, DeSclafani endured an injury. In 2016, after a left oblique strain, he was limited to 20 starts. Last spring, a sprained elbow ligament wiped out his entire season.

A veteran with two 200-inning seasons and two no-hitters, Bailey was rehabbing from Tommy John surgery on his right elbow two springs ago. Just before camp opened in 2017, he had bone chips removed from the same elbow. Bailey made 24 combined starts from '16-17 and had a 6.47 ERA.

Finnegan has had healthy springs and pitched 172 innings in 2016. But injuries to the teres major muscle near his left shoulder and surgery on his right shoulder limited him to four starts last season.

Not coincidentally, the Reds used 16 starting pitchers in 2017 -- the most in the National League. The rotation was last in the Majors in innings pitched and posted an NL-worst 5.55 ERA.

DeSclafani, Bailey and Finnegan were all viewed as healthy after the season and had what the club considered "normal" offseasons. DeSclafani pitched in instructional league games and came away pleased with his performances. Bailey had a 3.58 ERA over his final seven starts and finished with seven innings in his last start of 2017. Finnegan was healed from his shoulder surgery and also had rehabbed his left arm. He doesn't turn 25 until April 14.

All three pitchers are expected to begin camp this week without limitations. If they can remain healthy, the Reds have reason to feel better about their rotation, especially since no free-agent upgrades or trades were made.

DeSclafani, 27, pitched 184 2/3 innings over 31 starts in his first full year with the Reds in 2015. When he resumed starting in '16, 14 of his 20 starts were quality outings, and he began his season 6-0.

Bailey, 31, was durable from 2012-13, when he pitched 208 innings with an NL-leading 33 starts and then 209 innings in 32 starts. But he's had three elbow surgeries since '14. Finnegan became a workhorse and ranked second to Dan Straily in innings pitched.

If all goes as expected, DeSclafani, Bailey and Finnegan would be viewed as locks in the rotation along with young ace-in-the-making Luis Castillo. The fifth spot is up for grabs among a cadre of youthful pitchers in Sal Romano, Tyler Mahle, Amir Garrett, Robert Stephenson and others.

Workouts at the Reds' player-development complex begin on Wednesday, and the first chance to see the pitchers in game action comes on Feb. 23 at the Cactus League opener against the Indians.

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## CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

**Cincinnati Reds off to a healthy start in 2018 spring training – sort of**

**John Fay, [jfay@enquirer.com](mailto:jfay@enquirer.com)**

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GOODYEAR, Ariz. — Spring training hasn't even started yet, but the Reds are off to a better start than in 2017.

Not sure if that's grammatically possible. But let us explain: Last year just before spring training opened, the club announced that Homer Bailey had undergone another surgery on his right elbow.

"Don't remind me of that," president of baseball operations Dick Williams said. "That's when my phone started ringing."

Bailey's setback was the first of many dominoes to fall. The fortunes of the team took a hit with each injury. Bailey, Anthony DeSclafani, the projected No. 1, 2 and 3 starters, all missed huge chunks of the season.

As a result, the Reds pitching numbers were the worst in the National League. As a result of the bad pitching, the Reds lost 94 games and finished last in the NL Central.

For this year to be appreciably different, the Reds are going to have to be healthier. Right now, they are. Pitchers and catchers report to Goodyear Tuesday morning and get physicals. The first workout is Wednesday.

Bailey, DeSclafani, Brandon Finnegan and other 31 pitchers in camp are all expected to be healthy and ready to pitch.

Again, a good start.

"You've got to be optimistic going into the season," Williams said. "We had more than our fair share of injuries last year. These guys have been taking care of themselves, been working hard.

"I want it for them – to have the opportunity to pitch, show people what they can do. They're as frustrated as we've been."

DeSclafani was a walking, talking, throwing picture of frustration last year. He went from being the projected Opening Day starter to an endless ride on the disabled list with a sore elbow. He didn't have surgery, but he never got healthy enough to pitch in the big leagues.

"It was a long year last year," DeSclafani said. "I'm excited to be back in this environment with the guys, and hopefully have a good healthy camp."

The Reds sent him to the Instructional League in October to make sure the elbow was sound after all the rehab time. He made five starts. In the last one, he went seven innings and threw 90-plus pitches.

"That was great a great note to end on," he said. "Warming up and cooling down six times was great. I felt good."

After some rest, DeSclafani was able to have a normal offseason. He expects to be cleared to have a normal spring training.

"Yeah, everything is good," he said. "I feel ready to go."

The Reds don't need to be completely injury-free. That doesn't happen in modern baseball. The Reds were about average as far as total numbers of starters on the DL. But it really hurts when No. 1, 2 and 3 are among the injured.

"We'll deal with injuries," Williams said. "That's part of the game. We're not thinking: 'Hey, this is the year we're not going to get anyone hurt.'"

Dealing with all those injuries last year made the Reds better equipped to deal with injuries this year.

With Bailey, DeSclafani and Finnegan limited to 22 starts total, young pitchers got opportunities they might not have otherwise. In all, 10 rookies made starts for the Reds, including six who made their big league debut.

The results were spotty at times.

But the encouraging thing is the club had four rookie starters pitching well as the season wound down. Right-hander Luis Castillo pitched well enough (3.12 ERA over 15 starts) to lock up a spot in this year's rotation.

Right-handers Sal Romano, Robert Stephenson and Tyler Mahle made strong late impressions as well. They top the list of those competing for the fifth spot.

"You're not dealing with as many unknowns," Williams said. "We've seen the guys. We know the guys. They've pitched in the big leagues.

"There's still some uncertainty. I wouldn't say uncertainty, but you still have the risk associated with young pitchers coming up in the big leagues, but those first-time jitters are gone."

If Bailey, DeSclafani and Finnegan are healthy, the Reds will be able to take their time with the young pitchers.

### **Cincinnati Reds: Here's your primer for 2018 spring training**

**John Fay, [jfay@enquirer.com](mailto:jfay@enquirer.com)**

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Notable spring face

3B Nick Senzel: The No. 2 overall pick in 2016, was invited to big league spring training for the first time. Senzel had a terrific first full season as a professional. He hit a combined .321/.391/.514 at High A and Double-A with 14 home runs, 65 RBI and 14 steals. He's played exclusively third base so far. But the Reds plan to move him around in order to speed his arrival in the big leagues.

Senzel is currently blocked at third base by Eugenio Suarez.

"There are a couple of different opportunities at different positions," Senzel said. "I'm excited to get out there, be with some of the big league guys, and kind of pick their brains and play some games and being in the lineup. It should be fun."

Senzel, 22, is rated the No. 7 overall by Baseball America, but the Reds say they won't rush him.

"We think he should sit back and use this as an opportunity to soak up and enjoy learning from the Major League players," president of baseball operations Dick Williams said. "That's how we've talked to him about approaching it.

Burning question

Can the rotation make it through spring training healthy? The Reds are counting heavily on Homer Bailey, Anthony DeSclafani and Brandon Finnegan. They combined for all of 22 starts last year. That forced the Reds to populate the rotation with young pitchers, many of whom weren't ready.

Reds manager Bryan Price has Bailey, DeSclafani, Finnegan and Luis Castillo penciled for the top four spots in the rotation. Castillo was the best of young pitchers in 2017. He put up a 3.12 ERA over 20 starts after making the jump from Double-A. The other youngsters – Robert Stephenson, Sal Romano, Tyler Mahle, Cody Reed, et al – will compete for the open spot. Depending on the health of aforementioned three, there could be more slots open.

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## **THE ATHLETIC**

### **Three Up, Three Down: Big questions as Reds' pitchers and catchers report**

**By C. Trent Rosecrans 36 minutes ago**

"Pitchers and catchers report" is much more exciting as a concept than in reality.

Those four words conjure images of spring, of shorts and short sleeves, cacti and palm trees, bats and balls, summertime and sunshine.

Reality is a line to be weighed, forms to fill out and saying hi to the boss. Report date is just that, reporting for duty — but not necessarily performing any duties.

That's what Tuesday will be for the Cincinnati Reds. Pitchers and catchers will report. Wednesday they will actually work out. In the end, it's a baseball practice. It's not too exciting, but the symbolism is.

As a team, there are plenty of questions for the Reds, but this edition of “Three Up, Three Down” will focus on just those four words and two positions — pitchers and catchers.

## Three Up

### 1. Competition for the rotation

As it stands, there's one open spot in the rotation. That seems odd considering the team's leader in innings from a year ago is in Korea (Tim Adleman), the man with the most starts is in free-agent limbo (Scott Feldman), its highest-paid starter (Homer Bailey) has made 26 starts and \$47 million over the last three seasons and the announced Opening Day starter for each of the last two seasons (Anthony DeSclafani) has made exactly zero Opening Day starts.

Still, Reds' general manager Dick Williams said he's had good reports on the health of DeSclafani, Bailey and Brandon Finnegan, who made all of four starts in 2017 and 39 as a big-leaguer. Those three are locked into the rotation.

But this is the up section, so let's focus on the other parts — namely Luis Castillo.

Acquired for Dan Straily last January, the 25-year-old right-hander was a legitimate ray of light for the Reds' pitching future. Castillo was 3-7 with a 3.12 ERA in 15 starts as a rookie after being moved up from Double-A. He struck out nearly 10 batters per nine innings and struck out three times as many batters as he walked. Over his final eight starts of the season, he was 2-3 with a 2.37 ERA. In his final start, he went eight innings and struck out 10 Brewers, allowing one run on four hits and no walks.

That's four spots and then another one in the rotation up for grabs from a host of players, all with their ups and downs in the big leagues so far.

- RHP Robert Stephenson: The team's top prospect from 2014 to 2016, the right-hander started the 2017 season in the bullpen before being sent back to Triple-A to start. He went 5-4 with a 3.41 ERA in 11 starts and 5-3 with a 2.74 ERA in his final eight starts of the season.
- RHP Sal Romano: Romano emerged last spring, but struggled in his initial foray into the big leagues. Once Romano started using his changeup, he finished the season by going 3-3 with a 3.17 ERA over his final eight starts.
- RHP Tyler Mahle: The youngest of the young guns shooting for a rotation spot, Mahle is also the most polished. Mahle made four starts in August and September, going 1-2 with a 2.70 ERA. He struggled with his command some once he was called up, but his minor-league track record suggests that was an anomaly. He's a dark-horse candidate to claim the fifth spot.
- LHP Amir Garrett: Garrett was the team's best starter when he was first sent down to the minors in May in a bit of service time manipulation, and then he wasn't the same confident pitcher upon his return. Garrett dealt with some injuries both in the minors and after his return, going 0-5 with a 9.82 ERA in eight appearances (six starts) from June on.
- LHP Cody Reed: Reed was the central piece in the team's trade of Johnny Cueto to the Royals at the trade deadline in 2015. His talent and stuff have been apparent to the naked eye, but not yet in his big-league results. Reed still has fewer than 200 innings in Triple-A and just more than 500 in professional baseball combined. Reed's stuff is still as good as anyone's and if he can get out of his own way, he could still be a building block.
- RHP Michael Lorenzen: A reliever the last two years, he'll get a chance to start in spring. A spot in the rotation seems like a long shot, but he's started before. If he doesn't make the rotation, he'll be slotted back into the eighth-inning role where he's had some success setting up closer Raisel Iglesias.

### 2. Bolstered bullpen

The Reds signed two free agents to big-league contracts, adding right-handers David Hernandez and Jared Hughes to two-year deals to help solidify the bullpen.

The team also added veterans Vance Worley, Kevin Quackenbush and Jeff Manship on minor-league deals.

With five spots pretty much claimed (Iglesias, Lorenzen, Wandy Peralta, Hernandez and Hughes), that leaves two to three spots for competition among a group that includes youngsters Ariel Hernandez, Kevin Shackelford and Austin Brice, all of whom showed potential in 2017, as well as prospects Zack Weiss and Jimmy Herget.

### 3. Tucker's team

Tucker Barnhart has been asked to hold down the fort while Devin Mesoraco has dealt with injuries to his hips and shoulders, but he's done much more than that. He planted his flag in the fort.

Winner of a Gold Glove in 2017, Barnhart not only solidified his reputation as one of the best defenders and game callers in baseball, but he also put together a solid season at the plate with a .270/.347/.403 slash line.

For the first time in his career, the 27-year-old Barnhart enters the season as the team's Opening Day catcher without an asterisk attached.

Three Down

1. Can everyone stay healthy?

The top three in the Reds' rotation made a combined 22 starts last season, 18 of those coming from Bailey.

DeSclafani never pitched because of an elbow injury and Finnegan made just four starts before a forearm injury put him on the disabled list and an injury to his non-throwing shoulder ended his 2017.

None of the three were healthy at the same time in 2017. Much of the team's internal optimism for the 2018 season hinges on crossed fingers that the trio can give them significant innings.

2. What's Mesoraco's role?

Since signing his four-year, \$28-million extension following his All-Star season in 2014, Devin Mesoraco has started a total of 55 games behind the plate, 37 of them this past season.

Since 2015, he's had surgery to repair the labrum in both hips and in his left shoulder. His 2017 ended with a broken left foot.

Mesoraco is expected to be healthy heading into camp, but what's his role with the emergence of Barnhart as the team's regular catcher?

3. Can young starters take the next step?

As noted above, there are several young starters that the Reds are optimistic about. But how many can they count on?

The team centered its rebuild around young arms and so far, the one with the most success was a late add in a trade before spring training started last season.

Bailey and Johnny Cueto are Cincinnati's top homegrown starters in a long time — and Bailey's been good for just a 6.0 WAR in his career. Cueto has won a World Series, but for Kansas City before signing a long-term deal with the Giants.

Attracting free-agent pitchers to Great American Ball Park will always be an issue, so the team must develop its own — and to be successful it will have to develop them better than they have in the past decade.

**Will Joey Votto be the next Red in Cooperstown?**

**C. Trent Rosecrans 20 hours ago**

While I was in Cooperstown, N.Y., for Ken Griffey Jr.'s Hall of Fame induction, I was asked by someone who would be the next Reds player to go into the Hall of Fame.

My response — on July 24, 2016 — was that the next Reds Hall of Famer had yet to play for the Reds.

Since that day, Joey Votto has hit .343/.458/.596 in 224 games and added two top-10 MVP voting finishes, including a second-place finish in 2017.

Now, my answer seems to be wrong. Votto could very well be the next Reds player to be enshrined in Cooperstown.

So, how close is he? There are statistical models to look at what could happen, but that kind of analysis often misses a crucial part of the Hall of Fame equation — that it's decided by voters.

The Athletic reached out to a number of people — including Hall of Fame expert Jay Jaffe (creator of the invaluable Jaffe War System for Hall of Fame evaluation), current Hall of Fame voters and future Hall of Fame voters — about how they see Votto's case moving forward. (Special thanks to Hall of Fame Tracker guru Ryan Thibodaux for the assist on identifying Hall of Fame voters.)

The expert: Jay Jaffe, author

Jaffe wrote the excellent Cooperstown Casebook, but may be better known for creating JAWS, or the Jaffe WAR Score system, for Baseball Prospectus in 2004. JAWS combines a player's overall WAR and top seven WAR seasons for an overall JAWS score and then compares that player to others at his position. A member of the Baseball Writers Association of America, Jaffe is scheduled to be eligible to vote in 2021.

“From an advanced stat standpoint, the 2017 season was a big one for him with regards to JAWS because his 7.5 Baseball-Reference.com WAR (bWAR) was the second-highest of his career, and pushed him well past the peak standard for HoF 1B. He came into the year with 47.3 career WAR, 42.1 peak WAR and 44.7 JAWS, and is now at 54.8/45.6/50.2 JAWS, where the standards are 66.4/42.7/54.6.

“The short answer for as to what Votto needs to get into the Hall is longevity, and his contract through 2023 would seem to guarantee that, barring major injury. I don't think he'd get a ton of support if he retired today, or even after one more big season, but fortunately, that's not on the table.

“Even if all he does now is add a few 3 WAR seasons and some lesser ones, he'll surpass the JAWS standard within a few years, and any season above 4.8 further pads his peak score.

“Of course, not every voter looks at things that way. From a historical standpoint, the first big thing he has to do is get to 2,000 hits (he's at 1,586) because no candidate whose whole career took place in the post-1960 expansion era has been elected with fewer than that. Voters may not be conscious of that bias, but whether it's Dick Allen, Bobby Grich, Tony Oliva, Jim Edmonds or Andruw Jones, that line seems to matter a whole lot.

“Because he walks so much, Votto isn't likely to make a run at 3,000 hits; even if he averages 180 hits/year over the next six, he's only at about 2,600. He's not so homer-focused that he'll get to 500, either. He'll look great when it comes to rate stats, but it does seem likely those numbers will decline.

“Still, it seems quite possible his OPS+ (currently 158) will wind up somewhere in the top 35 (above where Thome, Edgar, Schmidt, Stargell and McCovey are all tied at 147), which is pretty special.

The Old School voter: Mark Purdy, former San Jose Mercury News columnist

Purdy has been voting for the Hall of Fame for 28 years. Purdy, who last year stepped away from his column at the San Jose Mercury News, has noted that he only votes for the “best of the best,” and his ballots are always among those that draw the ire of Twitter. In 2018, he was one of just 12 writers not to vote for Braves third baseman Chipper Jones. His ballot included Vladimir Guerrero, Trevor Hoffman and Omar Vizquel.

“I'm not only old school, I'm just damn old, period.

“I wish I could give you a 'yes' or 'no' about Votto but honestly, I never consider the HoF question until, you know, a player is on the Hall of Fame ballot. Then I go through a process of deciding whether to check his box.

“But in brief, my real answer about the Votto question is, let's wait until he finishes his career and waits five years and is on the ballot, then let's see who else is on the ballot. I do notice how the player that Baseball-Reference.com most compares him to at age 33 is Jason Giambi ... who is another player that my friends who are A's fans frequently ask me about ... and I give them the same answer. Giambi, of course, has the added factor of being an admitted PED user.

“Plus, hey, you never know, maybe we find out a few years from now that Votto bet on baseball. (Just kidding.)”

The 'Small Hall' voter: Steven Marcus, Newsday

The Newsday baseball writer has averaged fewer than three names on his ballot over his eight years as a voter, and once (2012) he submitted a blank ballot. One thing that players on Marcus's ballot have in common is a plaque in Cooperstown. Aside from Roger Clemens and Barry Bonds, whom Marcus voted for in their first year of eligibility but not since, every player he's voted for has eventually gotten in. On the most recent ballot, Marcus voted for four players — Vladimir Guerrero, Trevor Hoffman, Chipper Jones and Jim Thome. All four got in. A fifth player he voted for in the past, Jack Morris, will also be inducted in July.

“I think he is definitely on a trajectory for the Hall, but probably could use three more solid years in the vicinity of 30 (home runs)/90 (RBI)/.300 (average) to make an unmistakable case.”

The 'Big Hall' voter: Jayson Stark, former ESPN baseball writer

Stark has used all 10 slots on his ballot before it was cool. Since 2009, Stark has voted for 10 players in all but two years, voting for nine in 2011 and eight in 2010.

“Unbeknownst to most of America, other than our favorite analytical minds, Votto is on a clear Hall of Fame track if he just keeps doing what he's doing. The question is how much longer he'd need to produce at this level.

“It isn't even that complicated. The only first basemen in the history of baseball who can match or beat his slash line in 6,000 plate appearances or more are Lou Gehrig and Jimmie Foxx.

“Even if you add in all other positions, you're only expanding the group by three — Babe Ruth, Ted Williams, Rogers Hornsby.

“His 158 OPS+ is such obvious Hall of Fame material that EVERYONE in that neighborhood, minus guys with clear PED connections, is in the Hall. Just six first basemen have an OPS+ that good or better, and everyone eligible, other than Mark McGwire, is in.

“I also tend to look at award votes, and we're looking at a guy with an MVP, three top-3 finishes, six top-7 finishes, votes in eight seasons, a Gold Glove, a second-place Rookie of the Year finish and five All-Star Games. So there aren't many boxes this guy doesn't check already.

“What he needs now is just volume. There's no precedent for a modern Hall of Fame first baseman with 257 homers and 1,500 hits. So what levels is he shooting for? I looked at the standards for the position.

“No Hall of Fame first baseman whose career began after World War II has fewer than 2,086 hits. Harmon Killebrew had that many, but he also hit 573 homers.

“And no Hall of Fame first baseman whose career began after World War II has fewer than 379 homers (Orlando Cepeda and Tony Perez). But they were borderline candidates, and I doubt they'd get elected today, considering the fate of Fred McGriff and Carlos Delgado. Remember, Delgado hit 440 home runs, had a .916 OPS and was one-and-done.

“I think Votto ranks well above that last group already. But those counting numbers matter to many of these voters. So I think he's going to have to approach or surpass 400 homers. And that could be a challenge.

“But we're also talking about a guy who doesn't figure to appear on the ballot for possibly another decade. And who knows how the voting philosophy of the writers will evolve between now and then. My guess is that they'll be increasingly swayed by the sorts of numbers Votto puts up and less seduced by traditional counting stats. But as I've often said, if I had to make a living predicting how Hall of Fame voters would vote, I'd have been in Chapter 11 years ago!”

The mid-career voter: Andrew Baggarly, The Athletic

A voter since 2008, Baggarly has submitted seven names on his ballot each of the last three years and voted for the full complement of 10 in 2014.

“I'm with you. Watching Votto maybe two or three years ago, I wouldn't have thought that I was watching a future Hall of Famer. He was signed to that massively long contract, he was hurt for most of his 30-year-old season in 2014 and it looked like that deal would become as leaden an albatross as any deal in the big leagues.

“Then in 2015, he led the league in walks but drove in just 80 runs. We all know that RBIs are context-dependent, but when you're making that kind of money in a smaller market, fair or not, you're supposed to be “the man” and thus you're judged on your run production. It was all too easy to ding him for that, and I heard a comment or two from coaches or other players to that end. The funny thing was, he still finished third in NL MVP voting that year. To me, that demonstrated that those 30 BBWAA voters (many if not most of them Hall of Fame voters, I suspect) recognized the massive worth all those walks generated.

“Now you look at the last two seasons, and it's been just stunning. Votto has elevated himself from an elite on-base presence to one of the all-time great on-base performers in baseball history. I mean, 134 walks and 83 strikeouts last year? Brian Giles met that criteria one year. Gary Sheffield did it once. Other than that, you're looking at Bonds and Frank Thomas and Ted Williams and Willie McCovey. Names like that. Another 2-3 seasons at this level and I think Votto will be looked at as a favorable comp with Thomas, who sailed in on the first ballot.”

The young voter: Marc Carig, The Athletic

Carig isn't technically young, but you don't have to be too young to be considered young in this group. A senior MLB writer at The Athletic, Carig voted for the Hall of Fame for the first time in 2018 and checked off 10 names on his ballot, including all four players who received the requisite 75 percent for election.

“Joey Votto’s path to the Hall of Fame is straightforward. At this point, he simply needs to stay on the field and keep accumulating. A few more solid seasons should do. So long as he stays relatively healthy, that shouldn’t be an issue since getting on-base is an ability that ages well. But his candidacy will be bolstered just as much off the field.

“We’re already seeing a transition when it comes to the composition of Hall of Fame voters. Under new rules adopted in recent years, writers who haven’t covered the sport in 10 years will no longer be eligible. Meanwhile, the voting body should see an infusion of first-time voters. In this case, those are writers who began covering baseball during the game’s analytics revolution. These new voters are more likely to take on a more flattering view of Votto’s contributions because they are less prone to being limited by homers and RBIs.

“This season offered a preview. This is the same group of writers who gave just as many first-place National League MVP votes to Votto as Giancarlo Stanton even though the ex-Marlins slugger hit 59 homers and knocked in 132 runs. That would have made him a runaway winner in past years, especially compared with Votto’s 36 homers and 100 RBIs. Instead, the MVP race was decided by two voting points. A decade from now, many of those same MVP voters will also be eligible to vote for the Hall of Fame. So, barring a sudden and swift downturn in performance, Votto is on course to wind up in Cooperstown.”

The future voter: Keith Law, ESPN

The author of *Smart Baseball: The Story Behind the Old Stats That Are Ruining the Game, the New Ones That Are Running It, and the Right Way to Think About Baseball*, Law is scheduled to earn his Hall of Fame vote next season.

“He’s already got a HoF peak — dude is 11th all-time in OBP — so it’s really about establishing enough career length for me. I don’t have a hard and fast rule for that but he only has nine full seasons (by PA or AB), and most Hall of Fame hitters in that range are either 1) Negro Leaguers 2) guys whose careers ended with major injuries or 3) bad Hall of Famers.

“Even 2-3 more Joey Votto kind of years before some sort of normal decline phase would make him a no-brainer for me. He’ll almost certainly clear 70 WAR, and I think that and the OBP and 300+ homers and the MVP will make a pretty solid case without requiring a lot of explanation.

“That said, there are plenty of voters who still don't grasp or wish to grasp this way of valuing players, who'll overlook the OBP and ask why he didn't have more RBI.”

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## **Transactions**

02/12/18

Texas Rangers signed free agent 3B Trevor Plouffe to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

New York Mets traded 3B Matt Reynolds to Washington Nationals for cash.

Toronto Blue Jays signed free agent LHP Craig Breslow to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Milwaukee Brewers signed free agent CF Quintin Berry to a minor league contract.

San Diego Padres placed LHP Jose Torres on the restricted list.

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