

# Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings February 12, 2018

---

## THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY

1888-The Reds begin a six-week exhibition tour through Texas, Louisiana and Alabama

---

### THE ATHLETIC

**Top Reds prospect Nick Senzel gets his first taste of the big leagues**  
By C. Trent Rosecrans 2 hours ago

For perhaps the first time in his life, Nick Senzel didn't feel comfortable in the batter's box.

It was last August, and he wasn't exactly sure what was going on, but he knew it wasn't good. He couldn't track the ball coming from the mound. It was blurry, and the light bothered him. That's disconcerting at any point, but more so when a baseball is coming at you 95 miles per hour.

"It was like when you get up early in the morning sometimes and your eyes try to get adjusted to light," Senzel noted recently. "It was like that for a couple of weeks."

The Reds' top prospect didn't play a game after pulling himself from an Aug. 24 contest in Pensacola, Fla. From the outside, there would be no reason to think anything was wrong. He'd singled in his lone at-bat that night. The day before, he'd gone 3-for-4, and two days before he'd hit a homer and walked twice in four plate appearances — in short, he was doing what he'd done all summer long.

He'd been dealing with dehydration, so maybe it was that. Then he was diagnosed with an inner-ear infection. No treatment seemed to help before he was finally diagnosed with vertigo. As his Blue Wahoos teammates charged through the Southern League playoffs to claim the franchise's first championship, the team's best player wasn't around. First, he sat out the rest of the season and then went home to deal with the disorder.

"I knew that I couldn't be in there," Senzel said. "I'd put myself in danger, really, because I couldn't really see that well."

His vertigo subsided and there is no reason to think it'll return, doctors told him. If it does, he now knows how to deal with it.

His immediate future, though, remains somewhat blurry.

This much is sure: Senzel will report to big-league camp for the first time on Feb. 16 along with the rest of the Reds position players.

Despite his dominant performance in Double-A last season and what appears to be an all-around game, Senzel isn't expected to compete for a job this spring. In fact, that's precisely why he's unlikely to start the spring in Cincinnati. By all accounts, he's big-league ready, but the Reds want to have Senzel as long as possible, so they'll play the service time game to ensure that.

"It's to expose him to major-league spring training, get him around the guys, give him the experience. He shouldn't feel any pressure to impress, to make a team," Reds general manager Dick Williams said recently. "We know a lot about him and what we've got in this player. I think he should sit back and use this as an opportunity to soak up and enjoy learning from the major-league players. That's how we've talked to him about approaching it."

If there's one thing that Senzel's shown in his short time in professional baseball, it's that he's going to attack whatever is in front of him. He hasn't played more than 62 games at any one level. After a two-week stint in rookie ball after being drafted No. 2 overall in 2016, he went to low-Class A Dayton, hitting .329/.415/.567 in 58 games to finish the season. In 62 games at high-Class A Daytona to start 2017, he hit .305/.371/.476 before being moved up to Double-A Pensacola. With the Blue Wahoos, he hit even better, putting up a .340/.413/.560 slash line in 57 games, including 10 home runs.

At one point, Blue Wahoos manager Pat Kelly said the only flaw he saw in Senzel's game was that he was only allowed to bat once every nine players.

Senzel will nearly certainly debut in the big leagues in 2018. But that would come sooner if the Reds didn't already have a young third baseman that is putting up good numbers.

Eugenio Suarez, who was a shortstop when the Reds got him (and former first-round pick Jonathon Crawford) in a December 2014 trade with the Tigers for Alfredo Simon, was good for a 3.7 WAR last season, his second full season at third base. In addition to his .260/.367/.461 slash line and 26 home runs, Suarez appeared to make a leap on defense in his sophomore season on the hot corner. He was one of the better defensive third basemen in the league and at 26 is under team control through the 2020 season.

Senzel has played exclusively at third base as a pro, but he played second base and shortstop in college in addition to third.

“He adapts well to things immediately,” his college coach, Dave Serrano, told The Athletic. “That's usually what good athletes are able to do. I think that's one of the things that Nick has been able to do throughout his career, he adapts to change.”

Serrano said that, as a junior, Senzel spent nearly three weeks at shortstop for his team because of injury, and Tennessee's defense may have been the best it had been all season because of it.

“I kind of kicked myself when it was all said and done because I think he could have played shortstop for us every day, but he just didn't come in labeled as that,” Serrano said. “He came in labeled as a second baseman and future third baseman. In a pinch for us, he played an outstanding shortstop.”

Serrano said he didn't see Senzel as a big-league shortstop, but wouldn't put it past him to do it. He also added that he thought Senzel could play in either corner outfield spot.

Williams said the Reds would let Senzel play at second and third in spring training, but doesn't expect a full-time move.

“We're not in a hurry to move him around the diamond,” Williams said. “But this is a great time to expose him to other opportunities and making sure he gets instruction around the infield.”

Senzel got a jump on his spring by getting to Arizona in January to work on playing second base. There, he's worked with Arizona Reds manager Jose Nieves, working on his footwork and reacquainting himself with the position he played in college.

There will be plenty of opportunities for Senzel to play second and third in spring training. But after that, the Reds still see him as a third baseman long-term.

“You don't know when the opportunities are going to arise, or where they're going to arise, and we want to continue to develop him,” Williams said. “We've got an elite player. You don't want to commit to a position change yet.”

---

## **Transactions**

02/09/18

Toronto Blue Jays signed free agent RHP John Axford to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Pittsburgh Pirates signed free agent LF Daniel Nava to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Philadelphia Phillies signed free agent LHP Josh Tols to a minor league contract.

New York Mets designated 3B Matt Reynolds for assignment.

---