

Tribe using different 1B alignment for Tomlin

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

GOODYEAR, Ariz. -- It would have required a keen eye to notice, but the Indians unveiled a subtle strategy earlier this week during Josh Tomlin's start against the Dodgers.

In the second inning of Thursday's 4-1 win over Los Angeles, while Matt Kemp was on first and Chase Utley was batting, Indians first baseman Edwin Encarnacion played behind the runner rather than holding him close. Tribe manager Terry Francona believes that alignment could create some incremental advantages for his team during Tomlin's starts this season.

"It's not so much an experiment," Francona explained. "To me, it's more common sense."

The strategy is based on the fact that Tomlin, who is extremely quick to the plate when pitching out of the stretch, is one of the Majors' best at controlling the running game. Over the course of Tomlin's eight seasons in the Major Leagues, there have only been 10 successful steals in 20 chances against the right-hander. Last year, Tomlin allowed just one stolen base in two attempts. Tomlin is only half of the equation, though.

The Indians also boast two of the better throwing catchers in the game in Yan Gomes and Roberto Perez. Last season, Cleveland allowed the fewest steals (50) in the Majors and boasted the highest caught-stealing rate (42.5 percent). According to Statcast™, Gomes and Perez each averaged a 1.95 pop time on throws to second on steal attempts in 2017, putting them into a tie for fifth fastest among MLB catchers.

"It's not just about me," Tomlin said. "It's about 'Berto and Yan being as good as they are back there at throwing guys out." This approach would not be used against the better basestealing threats -- Billy Hamilton of the Reds, for example -- but rather runners who fall into the second-tier of basethiefs, along with runners who are not stolen base threats. With the first baseman playing back, some runners might be tempted to steal, and that could play into the Tribe's hand.

"If they go, it's kind of like a free out," Perez said. "And we'd love to take it."

The other aspect is putting the defense in a position to potentially take a hit away from the hole between the first and second baseman. That could help for generating double plays or cut down on the opportunities that opposing teams have for the runner on first to hustle to third base on a single to right field.

"I think it's great," Indians first baseman Yonder Alonso said. "You take away the hole and, on the defensive side, you have a chance to cover more ground as a first baseman. We get to steal more hits -- absolutely. And, if they want to go to second base, then have a try. Tomlin's really, really fast and we have really good catchers. We're not really worried about it. It's a strategy that I think is good."

When the Indians implemented the approach against the Dodgers, Francona noted that Kemp appeared to be considering stealing second on three consecutive pitches, but the runner stayed put.

"He wanted to go, but he couldn't," Francona said. "J.T.'s so quick that -- there will be an occasional stolen base -- but over the long haul, I bet it will save some outs and runs and hits."

Tomlin said he is completely on board with the approach.

"If it helps change even two or three games a year," Tomlin said, "that could be big over the course of a long season."

Indians feel no need to label starting catcher

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

PEORIA, Ariz. -- Both Roberto Perez and Yan Gomes want to be the starting catcher for the Indians. Manager Terry Francona has tried to convey that there is no need to apply such a label, especially when neither catcher fits the description of a backup.

The way Francona views the situation, this is a 1A and 1B scenario for Cleveland's catchers, but it is not immediately clear who will wind up handling the bulk of the innings. Gomes (856 innings) caught more than Perez (580 2/3) overall last year, but Perez was behind the plate more from September through the American League Division Series (178 to 135).

"I know they both want to be [the No. 1 catcher], and I don't blame them," Francona said. "I think they both have the ability to be frontline catchers. For us, we're a better team having both of them and so that means that, I think I've said it a lot of times, we wouldn't treat it like a normal catcher, backup catcher [alignment]. We're going to balance the workload, because they both are deserving. I think it's best for our team."

Perez, who started for the Indians in Saturday's 8-8 tie with the Padres, said there is no ill will between the two competitive catchers.

"Me and Yan, we have a great relationship," Perez said. "I know I want to catch every day. I know he wants to catch every day. But, I think at the end of the day, we're more about the team and how can we help the team win. And that's it. Of course, anybody in here wants to play every day, but we have two great catchers and we both need to play."

Injury updates

- Following a couple days off due to illness, right-hander Danny Salazar (right shoulder inflammation) resumed throwing on Saturday, building up to around 100-120 feet in long toss, per Francona. Salazar is getting closer to being cleared for a mound session.

- Left fielder Michael Brantley (right ankle surgery in October) should be ready to start running the bases as part of his rehab program in "the next couple days," according to Francona. Brantley has been doing outfield work and agility drills, along with unrestricted hitting.

Camp battles

- Yandy Diaz won an Opening Day roster spot a year ago due to an impressive spring showing (1.252 OPS) and because Cleveland had a spot open at third base. This year, with Jose Ramirez back at third and a healthy Jason Kipnis at second, Diaz does not have a clear path to the big league roster.

In the seventh inning on Saturday, Diaz lifted a pitch from San Diego's Phil Maton deep to right field for a grand slam. The third baseman then added an RBI single to right field in the eighth. Diaz has shown a knack for hard-hit balls to the opposite field, and Francona believes his pull-side power will develop over time.

"With experience," Francona said, "he's going to start getting the ball out front more. And, as he does, you're going to start to see more balls get in the air."

- Veterans Rajai Davis and Melvin Upton Jr. remain the top candidates to earn a complementary outfield role with the Tribe, and there is a chance that both could make the Opening Day roster. In Saturday's game, Davis went 0-for-3 and started in left field. Upton started in center, finished 2-for-3 with a double and was thrown out as part of a pick-off, caught-stealing play in the third.

Who's the new guy?

When Francisco Lindor arrived to Peoria Stadium on Saturday afternoon, the shortstop discovered that he did not bring his signature No. 12 jersey with him. Instead, Lindor put on a jersey without his name on the back and took the field as No. 69 against the Padres.

"I'm taking it back to my Minor League days," Lindor said with a laugh. "I just forgot my jersey. I should've worn a bigger helmet as a punishment, but there were no Minor League helmets out here, so I threw on mine."

Lindor tried to contain his smile as he stepped into the batter's box to lead off the game but let a laugh out after rounding first following a single to left field. An Indians clubhouse worker brought Lindor's No. 12 jersey to the ballpark, but the shortstop did not make the switch until after flying out in his second at-bat in the third.

"The jersey was in the game after I got my first hit," Lindor said. "But I wasn't going to change. I like No. 69. It's my new number."

Worth noting

- Francona has mentioned a handful of times this spring that catching prospect Francisco Mejia might get some exposure to the outfield in the Minors this season. With Gomes and Perez entrenched as Cleveland's catchers, the organization wants to consider other ways to possibly expedite Mejia's path to the Majors.

"That's something that we need to -- down the road -- talk about," Francona said. "We don't really know. We saw with [Carlos] Santana, the first couple times we put him in the outfield, we'd all hold our breath. And then, after a while, he was fine. I think everybody's probably a little bit different, but he's a baseball player. It wouldn't shock me if he went out there and he was OK. But that needs to be down the road a little bit."

- Right-handed reliever Zach McAllister worked two frames against the Padres on Saturday, marking his third multi-inning outing of the spring. Relievers Carlos Torres and Nick Goody have also worked multiple innings in outings this spring, and Dan Otero will do the same at some point as well.

"I think it serves a lot of purposes," Francona said. "I think it's really good for their arm strength and their pitch development in Spring Training."

Up next

The Indians will send split squads to play the Brewers and Royals on Sunday afternoon. Right-hander Carlos Carrasco is slated to start against Milwaukee in a 4:05 p.m. ET tilt at Goodyear Ballpark, with relievers Andrew Miller and Cody Allen also penciled in to pitch. In Surprise, Ariz., lefty Ryan Merritt will start for the Tribe against Kansas City in the other 4:05 p.m. Cactus League tilt. Both games can be watched live on MLB.TV.

Cleveland Indians, Padres play to 8-8 tie; Yandy Diaz hits grand slam, drives in 5 runs

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

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The Indians don't want Yandy Diaz to change his swing and so far he hasn't.

Diaz, who likes to hit to right field, hit a grand slam and a single in the late going Saturday as the Indians and Padres played to a 8-8 spring-training tie at Peoria Stadium in Peoria, Ariz.

The Indians entered the seventh trailing, 4-2, but loaded the bases as Melvin Upton Jr., doubled, Drew Maggi was hit by a pitch and Erik Gonzalez chopped an infield single down the third-base line.

Brandon Barnes flied out to right and Richie Shaffer struck out to bring Diaz to the plate. Diaz, pinch-hitting for Edwin Encarnacion, hit an 0-1 pitch from Phil Maton down the right-field line for his first homer of the spring and a 6-4 lead. It was the Tribe's third slam of the exhibition season.

San Diego reclaimed the lead, 7-6, on a three-run homer by Travis Jankowski off Adam Wilk in the seventh.

The Indians came back to take an 8-7 lead in the eighth. Abraham Almonte, who singled and took third when center fielder Edward Oliveras dropped Maggi's liner for an error, scored on a ground out by Gonzalez. Diaz, following a walk by Richie Shaffer, singled sharply to right for the lead.

Cameron Hill, who pitched at Class AA Akron and Class AAA Columbus last year, had two out in the ninth, but Jankowski hit his second homer of the game to tie the score. The Indians and Padres did not play a 10th inning. The homer was the first run Hill has allowed this spring.

The Padres took an early 3-0 lead on three homers off starter Mike Clevinger. Jose Pirela and Hunter Renfroe homered in the second. Carlos Asuaje made it 3-0 with a blast in the third.

The score stayed that way until Jose Ramirez made it 3-2 with a two-run homer in the sixth. It was Ramirez's first homer of the spring.

Clevinger allowed three runs on five hits in three innings. He struck out three.

Zach McAllister continued his strong spring with two scoreless innings. McAllister has allowed one run in 8 2/3 innings. He's struck out nine and walked five.

Terry Francona preaches 'winning baseball' and Cleveland Indians have been listening

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - This is a statistic you've probably heard before. The Indians, over the last five years, have won more games than any team in the American League.

Peter Gammons, the Hall of Fame baseball writer, pointed that out recently along with this appetizer. In the last five years, the Indians have won 22 more games than the Boston Red Sox, while paying \$414 million less in payroll. It says a lot about the baseball operations department that owner Paul Dolan has allowed Chris Antonetti and Mike Chernoff to put together.

It says just as much about the guy in the manager's office - Terry Francona.

On Friday, Francona was talking to reporters in Goodyear, Ariz., about players understanding "winning baseball."

The path to the big leagues, unless you're Mike Trout, is rarely easy. When a player finally gets there, he's thinking mostly about "how do I stay here long enough to take care of myself and my family?" Winning, understandably, may take a back seat during the early stages of a player's career.

Francona understands that. He also understands "some players never get it. That's just the way it is."

Since Francona became manager of the Indians in 2013, more players have gotten his message than missed it.

"Everyone wants to win, but the hope is that you get to a point in your career where you're showing up and saying our job is to win today," said Francona. "When players understand that it makes their job easier as opposed to harder. Because when you're hanging your hat just on getting hits, man, it's a tough league.

"So if you can hang your hat on saying 'I've got to do something to help our team win.' If you can back up a base, make a throw, there are more things to hang your hat to show you're helping your ballclub."

Here are a few examples:

Justin Masterson was the Indians' ace in 2013. On Sept. 2, with the Indians chasing a wild card spot, he strained an oblique muscle in a start against Baltimore. He should have been out for the year, but just over three weeks later he made three appearances out of the bullpen to help the Indians win a wild card spot for their first postseason appearance since 2007.

On July 19, 2016, the Indians were on the verge of winning a then-franchise record 14 straight games except for one thing - they were out of pitchers. They were tied with Toronto, 1-1, after 14 innings. Trevor Bauer, the next day's scheduled starter, came on in the 15th inning and pitched five scoreless in a 2-1 win thanks to Carlos Santana's homer in the 19th.

The Indians won the AL Central in 2016, but lost starters Danny Salazar and Carlos Carrasco to injuries in September. In the ALCS, Bauer went down with a sliced little finger on his pitching hand caused by one of his drones.

Down to two starters, Corey Kluber and Josh Tomlin, Francona unleashed a bullpen led by Andrew Miller and Cody Allen and the Indians reached Game 7 of the World Series before losing to the Cubs. Miller went 2-0 with one save. He pitched the second most innings on the team (19.1) and struck out 30 batters. The opposition hit .179 against him.

Allen pitched the fourth most innings of any Tribe pitcher (13.2). He converted six straight saves, struck out 24 and didn't allow a run in 10 postseason appearances. The opposition hit .163 against him.

Jose Ramirez, in 2016, played left field, third base, second and short. He never complained, he just kept playing and putting up big numbers.

Last year he went to the All-Star Game as the A.L.'s starting third baseman, but still played 65 games at second for injured Jason Kipnis.

This spring he said, "I don't care where I play. I'll catch if they want me to. I just want to do my best and help the team."

Last year when Kipnis came off the disabled list in September, Ramirez had taken his job at second base, but the Indians needed someone to replace injured Bradley Zimmer in center. Kipnis made the move despite not having played the outfield since 2009. In August of last season, the Indians acquired Jay Bruce from the Mets to play right field. Lonnie Chisenhall, struggling with a calf injury, made way for Bruce by saying he'd play any position to help the team.

The Indians are favored to win their third straight AL Central title, but little is certain in baseball. But to accomplish what they have in the last five years has taken front-office smarts and on-the-field talent. But that's not all.

"You need guys who are outwardly focused and put the team first," said Chisenhall, the Tribe's No.1 pick in 2008. "That's what makes the team go. ... It takes a lot to build what we have here and they've done a great job putting it together."

Outfield competition continues: Cleveland Indians' spring training lineup vs. San Diego

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The competition for jobs in the outfield takes another turn Saturday when the Indians play the Padres at Peoria Stadium in their 18th game of the spring.

Rajai Davis is in left field, Tyler Naquin in right and Melvin Upton Jr. is in center. Depending on the health of Michael Brantley and Brandon Guyer come opening day, there could be one or two outfield jobs open on the 25-man roster.

Davis and Upton are in camp on minor-league deals. Naquin, a former No.1 pick, has one option left.

Manager Terry Francona says spring-training stats aren't the deciding factor in who wins a job and who doesn't. But they give an indication of how a player is performing and if his skills are still intact.

Davis, coming off a three-hit game against the Dodgers on Thursday night, is hitting .300 (6-for-20) in 10 games. Naquin is hitting .238 (5-for-21) with one homer and two RBI in nine games. Upton is hitting .182 (4-for-22) with one homer and two RBI in 11 games.

There are other outfielders in the mix including Brandon Barnes, Rob Refsnyder, Greg Allen and Abraham Almonte.

Barnes is hitting .050 (1-for-20) with 12 strikeouts and two RBI. Allen is hitting .391 (9-for-23) with five RBI. Refsnyder is hitting .240 (6-for-25) with two homers and six RBI. Almonte, who has appeared shaky in the field this spring, is hitting .158 (3-for-19) with one homer and three RBI.

Allen, Refsnyder and Almonte are on the 40-man. Barnes is in camp on a minor-league deal. Allen, who made the Tribe's postseason roster last year, has three options left. Almonte has one option left, but Refsnyder and Barnes are out of options.

First cut is the deepest

The Indians made their first roster cut of the season Thursday. Shortstops Willie Castro and Yu Chang were optioned to Class AA Akron, while first baseman Nellie Rodriguez, left-hander Robert Zarate and right-hander Cole Sulser were re-assigned to minor league camp.

There are 59 players in camp.

Swing before you launch

Manager Terry Francona isn't crazy about the term 'launch angle.' More than that, he doesn't want third base prospect Yandy Diaz to get caught up in changing his swing to try and hit more home runs. He thinks Diaz's swing will evolve naturally with more at-bats.

How good do you think the Cleveland Indians' Jason Kipnis is feeling right now? Hey, Hoynsie

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Do you have a question that you'd like to have answered in Hey, Hoynsie? Submit it here or Tweet him at @hoynsie.

Hey, Hoynsie: Spring training is a tough time to judge where a player is at from a performance standpoint. Do you think Jason Kipnis is looking to have a career year or just feasting on spring-training pitching? - Mark Lasher, Bangor, Pa.

Hey, Mark: I think Kipnis would love to have a career year, but most of all I think he's glad to be healthy after being on the disabled list three times last year. He's certainly swinging the bat like it.

Through Friday's spring-training games, Kipnis was hitting .500 (11-for-22) with six homers and 12 RBI. As manager Terry Francona likes to say, he's in a good place and I don't think the pitching has much to do with it.

Hey, Hoynsie: Now that Chief Wahoo has been retired, why not use a likeness of Francisco Lindor as the Tribe's logo? He has a nice smile, and everyone likes him. Maybe change the name of the team to The Lindors to honor his enthusiasm for the game. - George, Daphne, Ala.

Hey, George: Do I pick up a hint of mischief/sarcasm in your question? No matter, been there, done that. From 1903-14, the Indians were called the Cleveland Naps in honor of their player manager Napoleon Lajoie.

How about this for a counter proposal, the Cleveland Sliders? Slider has a nice smile and who doesn't like the Big Fuschia? He's also been around a lot longer than Lindor, who can be a free agent after four years and has shown little interest in signing an extension.

Hey, Hoynsie: How likely is it that Jose Ramirez will play second base vs. third base this year? Is the decision completely dependent on Michael Brantley's health or are there other factors in play? - John Cuddy, Vienna, Va.

Hey, John: If Brantley can't start the season, I don't think that necessarily means Kipnis will replace him in left field, thus prompting Ramirez to play second. The Indians are halfway through the spring-training schedule and Kipnis hasn't played any games in the outfield.

So even if Brantley opens on the disabled list, I think Kipnis will stay at second and Ramirez at third. The Indians have more than enough outfielders to fill in for Brantley until he's ready to play.

Hey, Hoynsie: Who is the fourth-best position player on the Indians? Like it or not at the moment it is Jason Kipnis. So why is everyone trying to get rid of him because you are not going to get equal value if you trade him now. - Jerry Birk, Chardon.

Hey, Jerry: I try to avoid counting as much as possible because it hurts my head. When healthy, however, Kipnis is an All-Star caliber player.

Hey, Hoynsie: The Indians could lose Ryan Merritt, Erik Gonzalez and Giovanny Urshela at the end of spring training because they're out of options. To avoid losing players because of a lack of roster spots, do you think the Indians could trade Josh Tomlin, Urshela and Yan Gomes for a good outfielder before the start of the regular season? - Joel Brown, Mason.

Hey, Joel: The Indians, if motivated to do so, could make a deal like that. I think they've been exploring trade possibilities since the end of the ALDS.

But why would a team trade for Urshela when all they have to do is wait for the Indians to make a decision at the end of spring training? If they don't put him on the 25-man roster, that team could claim him on waivers without losing a player.

The Indians would also be hurting their starting pitching depth by trading Tomlin when they could keep Merritt and him by putting one of them in the bullpen to start the season. Of course, if they made a trade, they might get a starting pitcher back as part of the deal.

Hey, Hoynsie: Blake Swihart is out of options with the Red Sox and doesn't have a real roster spot with them. Is he a trade option for the Indians? - Sam Martin, Valdosta, Ga.

Hey, Sam: Swihart is a catcher who the Red Sox are trying to turn into a utility player. The Indians are happy with Gomes and Roberto Perez and one of their top prospects, Francisco Mejia, is a catcher as well.

They also have utility guys all over the place in Gonzalez, Urshela and Rob Refsnyder. I don't see them making a trade like that.

Hey, Hoynsie: How does arbitration work? - Ben, Columbus.

Hey, Ben: Arbitration is a process used to determine a MLB player's salary who is not signed to a multiyear deal, does not have enough service time (six full seasons) to be a free agent, but has at least three years of service time. Super two players - players in the upper 22 percent of players with more than two, but fewer than three years of service time - are also eligible.

If a club and player are unable to reach a contract agreement through normal negotiations, they will exchange salary proposals and argue their case in front of an arbitration panel. The panel must pick the player or team's salary figure and its decision is binding.

Twenty-two players went to arbitration this winter with the players going 12-10 against teams. Trevor Bauer beat the Indians in arbitration.

Olney: Nobody may want an offseason do-over more than Scott Boras

There is no notation on the calendar, no government declaration, but many agents treated Friday as a holiday, a time for celebration. The text messages might as well have contained ascending balloons and exploding fireworks, and the voices on the celebratory phone calls were filled with unrestrained joy.

Because on Friday, it became apparent that Scott Boras -- baseball's most prominent agent, someone with a long history of late-winter negotiation victories -- lost to the market, in a rout.

Third baseman Mike Moustakas, one of Boras' many clients, rejected a \$17.4 million qualifying offer from the Royals in the fall, and after months of waiting for something bigger to materialize, he returned to Kansas City for little more than a third of that -- \$6.5 million in guaranteed

money. Outfielder Carlos Gonzalez, another player represented by Boras, took a one-year, \$8 million deal with Colorado, while telling friends in baseball that the year before he reached free agency, he had a three-year, \$45 million offer from the Rockies.

Boras differs in style from a lot of agents in his outspokenness and in his prominence, and he draws the most scrutiny from his peers because of past battles for clients. In the cutthroat world and wars of player representation, the other agents now eagerly await the final terms of two other unsigned Boras clients, starter Jake Arrieta and closer Greg Holland, because they anticipate that those players will also have to settle for far less than what was anticipated.

Assessing a free-agent market can be like forecasting the weather. Conditions are constantly changing, and for the Players Association, this offseason has been a disastrous storm of events. The growing number of tanking/non-participating teams is seemingly growing, taking tens of millions of dollars out of circulation, after the union failed to prioritize anti-tanking measures in the last CBA talks. Historic big spenders like the Yankees and Dodgers mostly waited out on the sidelines, incentivized by the union-negotiated system of penalties and rewards attached to the Competitive Balance Tax. This generation of baseball executives is better informed and more disciplined than their predecessors, and fewer owners are apt to step in and shove aside the advice of the front office.

But it's also apparent that in the annual Winter Free-Agent Game of Musical Chairs, the players who signed early did well, and a lot of those who waited have been left without suitable deals. In the past, Boras tarried and anticipated that the market for talented clients would eventually develop -- and this paid off in the past, for Carlos Beltran, for Prince Fielder, for others.

This year, that did not happen. The players who lingered on the free-agent market, like Moustakas and Gonzalez, have mostly been crushed after leaving money on the table. Boras client Eric Hosmer did well in a market in which few first basemen had apparent landing spots, when he got an eight-year, \$144 million deal. But the agents who back in December predicted a bloodbath for a lot of free agents turned out to be exactly right. In the end, relievers who signed deals quickly, from Luke Gregerson (\$11 million) to Tommy Hunter (\$18 million) to Pat Neshek (\$16.25 million), got more than Moustakas. Yonder Alonso got a two-year, \$16 million deal early in the winter, while Logan Morrison and Lucas Duda signed late and got \$6.5 million and \$3 million, respectively. Wellington Castillo (\$15 million), Chris Iannetta (\$8.5 million deal) and Alex Avila (\$8.25 million) all signed before February; Jonathan Lucroy agreed to terms this weekend and got \$6.5 million.

As the last players scramble to make deals in the most volatile free-agent market in memory, there are probably regrets all over the place -- for agents, players and even teams.

Lucroy: The Rockies reportedly offered the catcher \$21 million over three years; he got less than a third of that in his one-year deal with Oakland.

Jon Jay and Jarrod Dyson: Early in the offseason, the Mariners sought an outfielder to assume a lot of the at-bats left behind by Leonys Martin, and they presented three-year offers to both Jay and Dyson. When deals weren't completed, Seattle turned to the Marlins, who were working to dump the contract of Dee Gordon, and the Mariners will now convert Gordon into a center fielder. Dyson wound up taking a two-year deal with the Diamondbacks, Jay a one-year deal with the Royals. (Dyson also got far along in talks with the Orioles, but those negotiations fell apart.)

The Rays and outfielder Corey Dickerson: Tampa Bay tendered Dickerson a contract in December, and settled on a \$5.95 million salary before arbitration. But as the prices in the corner outfield market plummeted, the Rays saw better value elsewhere, and little more than a month after signing Dickerson, they dumped him in a deal for reliever Daniel Hudson, then pivoted and signed outfielder Carlos Gomez to a one-year, \$4 million deal.

Logan Morrison: The Indians had interest in Morrison early in the offseason, but when the initial ask was more than they were willing to pay, they quickly moved on to Alonso.

Greg Holland: There are reports that the Rockies gave a firm offer of three years, \$51 million to the closer; other sources say Colorado's conversations were more conceptual, and that the Rockies' preference was for Wade Davis over Holland. Either way, the Rockies pivoted to Davis, and now, late in the winter, it's unclear where Holland will land. Executives and agents privately speculate that the guaranteed money in any one-year deal will be something in the range of \$7-10 million, based on where the market stands.

Moustakas: There is a report that the Angels offered him \$45 million over three years, but Angels sources say that is not accurate; they made no offer. They have focused on defense in recent seasons and converted shortstop Zack Cozart was a priority for them at third, before he agreed to a three-year, \$38 million deal. Moustakas' best overture was the qualifying offer.

Top first base contracts

Eric Hosmer: 8 years, \$144 million

Carlos Santana: 4 years, \$60M

Yonder Alonso: 2 years, \$16M

Mitch Moreland: 2 years, \$13M

Logan Morrison: 1 year, \$6.5M

Matt Adams: 1 year, \$4M

The Padres: In the end, their deal for Hosmer is far and away the most money paid for a position player in a historically slow market, and \$86 million greater than the next-closest deal for a first baseman. The Phillies are the only other team that paid more than \$16 million for a first baseman. The Padres paid sticker price in a winter in which a lot of clubs got bargains.

Lance Lynn: He turned down a \$17.4 million qualifying offer from the Cardinals, and wound up with a one-year, \$12 million deal with the Twins.

The Giants: They assumed \$60.5 million of the remaining dollars owed to 32-year-old third baseman Evan Longoria, only to see the prices on free agents at the position plummet. Before Moustakas got his deal, Todd Frazier signed for two years and \$17 million. With the benefit of 20-20 hindsight, the cost for Longoria -- the dollars, the prospects surrendered -- seems exceedingly high.

In a classic case of supply and demand, big power numbers don't necessarily translate into big dollars because of the high volume of home run hitters. Thirteen relief pitchers got deals with guaranteed money of at least \$10 million this winter, while only 10 position players have guaranteed money of \$10 million or more. Moustakas, Morrison and Duda all compiled 30 or more homers, and received a total of \$16.5 million.

News from around the majors

Pitchers will often spin a breaking ball early in the count -- either on the first pitch, or 1-0 -- simply to throw a strike, while knowing with near-certainty that the hitter is likely to take the pitch. Under those circumstances, the quality bar is at its lowest for the curveball or slider; what's important is that the pitcher is able to drop it in for a strike, to either get ahead in the count or to get back into a more favorable position in the count. Longtime catcher David Ross, now a colleague with us at ESPN, refers to that pitch as a "dumper." The Braves' Sean Newcomb has an explosive fastball but needs to control the strike zone better in the eyes of evaluators, and the other day against the Jays, Newcomb repeatedly fought back in the ball-strike count with dumpers, another good sign in his development. For example: He threw a curveball to get back in the count against Kendrys Morales, and then followed it with a fastball away, for a swinging Strike 3.

Sources say there was a meeting between Major League Baseball and the union on March 2 to address some lingering issues, and again, there was a discussion of the slow free-agent market. But there aren't really quick-fix solutions available for now, or maybe even for next winter, because the adjustments required are complex, and would need to be carefully vetted with all 30 teams. For example: While anti-tanking measures undoubtedly need to be taken to get more teams spending money on free agents, the union and commissioner Rob Manfred cannot suddenly foist a shift in the draft rules on teams that have constructed a long-term strategy. And while Manfred has a lot of power, he does not have the authority to order the Marlins to spend more money.

There is quiet optimism in the Jays' camp mostly because Aaron Sanchez, the AL ERA leader in 2016, hasn't had any blister problems this spring after throwing only 36 innings last season, and because of the expected increase in offense from the infield. The Jays traded for Yangervis Solarte and Aledmys Diaz, and once again hope that Devon Travis is healthy. If they can get 1,000 at-bats out of that group, the Jays are almost certain to be better than last season in a couple of spots after ranking 27th in both second base (.658 OPS) and shortstop OPS (.656).

Everybody in baseball is bestowed a job title, and Dan Duquette is the general manager of the Baltimore Orioles, while Brady Anderson is the vice president of baseball operations. But the perception of many within the Orioles' organization is that Anderson holds more practical power right now, built on his long history with the organization. Duquette's contract runs out after this season.

An observation from another player about Phillies infield prospect Scott Kingery: "He's Dustin Pedroia, but with more talent."

Some players believe the union's focus on pace-of-play initiatives are a distraction from the larger financial issues, and the question of how the Players Association got into this position of such disadvantage.

Nick Cafardo / SUNDAY BASEBALL NOTES Gabe Kapler and his 'holistic approach to human development'

By Nick Cafardo

Phillies manager Gabe Kapler stands behind the hitting cage at Spectrum Field in Clearwater, Fla., looking more fit than many of his players. His face is strong and stoic and focused on one of his young hitters.

He's always been a fitness and nutritional savant, and he's trying to preach what he lives. He's disciplined in every way you can think of, and his mantra this season is "Be the strongest version of yourself."

He has come off as a motivational leader, like a modern version of Pittsburgh's Clint Hurdle, who manages with positive messages and motivational tactics.

Kapler spent 3½ of his 12 big league seasons as a reserve outfielder with the Red Sox (2003-06) and managed Boston's Single A team in Greenville, S.C., in 2007. He spent the past three years as the Dodgers' farm director. He wanted the Dodgers' managerial job when it came open after the 2015 season, but the position went to former Red Sox teammate Dave Roberts.

"I've asked players to be bold and then I went around and asked each player what it means to be bold when you're on the mound, when you're in the batter's box," said Kapler of his approach this spring. "The answers I got from them were you're bold in delivering a pitch with conviction, delivering a pitch with intent and with fearlessness and courage. Same thing in the batters' box."

Everything baseball every Monday-Friday during baseball season, and weekly in the offseason.

"What's it mean to be bold? It means explosive, athletic, in attack mode. What's it mean to be bold if you're a staff member? It means to relentlessly communicate and to say what you feel without fear. So if you enter a room or on the field and you feel you're going to be condemned or judged for every little thing, you get paralyzed, you don't act. Sometimes you don't even try. So that boldness untraps that. So if there's a theme on our team, it's that."

"More than anything else, and this is not just my concept, but I'm looking for a more holistic approach to player development. It's a more holistic approach to human development," he said. "So we're thinking about the player from every different angle — his health, his well-being, his mind-set, his confidence level, his mechanics, his approach at the plate, his approach on the mound, holistically addressing them so as not to miss any little detail."

By definition, a holistic approach is dealing with or treating the whole of something or someone and not just a part.

"We talk about the value of the margins," Kapler said. "The value of the margins are — if you have a catcher and his meat and potatoes is [to] block and throw and to call pitches, but the value of the margins might be the value of the relationships he's developing with his pitching staff. We stay focused on really seeking out the value of those margins to help these guys become the best they can be and the strongest version of themselves and to help the collective unit become the stronger and the healthiest version of itself."

Kapler took that approach when piecing together a coaching staff.

"What was most important in staff selection was diversity of thought. We didn't want everybody thinking similarly," he said. "We want our coaches coming at the game differently, and human development at a different angle, player development at a different angle, because everybody's perspective is so important in creating a spice mix that is really palatable, to use a food analogy, and really flavorful."

It's well known that the Phillies will have a significant revenue increase next season, with the potential to pick off a major free agent like Manny Machado or Bryce Harper. Perhaps even both. So this is a year when some of their younger, talented players must take a step forward. It's a year that will separate which players stay for a long time — left fielder/first baseman Rhys Hoskins, for example — and which ones won't stick around.

"The only way we can and should approach it is that we are prepared to win today," Kapler said. "Conceptually, if everyone on our roster takes a small step forward, and we don't need someone to take a huge leap and carry the team, we'll have a collection of individuals prepared to win."

Although Kapler only managed one year of A-ball — and then returned to play three more years in the majors — he said managing is "something I've been thinking about for a long time.

"What's most inspiring of the opportunity is helping human beings become the strongest version of themselves. My job is to establish a foundation of trust. My job is to establish a connection with the players that I have the best intentions for them at all times. That's all I think about and care about — for them to become the strongest version of themselves."

Kapler feels his experience as a farm director has prepared him for managing in the bigs.

"That's why I have so much respect for [Phillies director of player development] Joe Jordan, because anybody who oversees a farm system, an operation of about 250 people or so, you learn that you have to put everybody else's needs and everybody else's initiatives first. And I think that prepares you well for a major league staff and for helping a team with major league baseball players," he said.

"Every player and every staff member is an individual and should be treated as such. The personalities are unique and we should help celebrate them and celebrate their differences and diversity."

This isn't a Tony Robbins seminar. It's baseball according to Gabe Kapler. These are his methods. In the end, he will be measured like any other manager — by wins and losses, and by living up to the expectations of the fan base and team ownership.

CHANGES AT THE TOP?

Shakeup could be in Orioles' future

Keep an eye on the Orioles' situation. You not only have players who are reaching the end of their contracts, but manager Buck Showalter and general manager Dan Duquette are as well.

There's also a shift in ownership responsibilities, where John Angelos is said to have taken over for his father, Peter. He seems to respect the information he's getting from vice president of baseball operations Brady Anderson, whom he's known for 20 years. There's evidence that Anderson had a lot to do with the team's recent free agent signings, such as Andrew Cashner.

There's speculation that Anderson might move into the GM seat once Duquette's contract runs out after the season.

"I just don't see Brady wanting to be tied down to a desk," said one American League executive. "I'm not saying he couldn't do the job, but he would have to change his life quite a bit and I'm not sure he wants to do that."

Showalter has had a good relationship with the Angelos family, though a poor season could hurt his chances of an extension.

While we reported about the possible sale of the team a week ago, it doesn't appear the Angelos family will sell, though the Orioles could face a total rebuild with Manny Machado, Adam Jones, and Zach Britton all heading into free agency.

There haven't been signs that the Orioles will attempt to get Machado re-signed, but that shouldn't be ruled out. The Orioles thought they had lost Chris Davis when Scott Boras appealed to Peter Angelos to sign him to a long-term deal in 2016, when Duquette preferred to have signed an elite pitcher. The Orioles gave Davis seven years and \$161 million.

Duquette has always seemed hamstrung by the Orioles' unwillingness to spend the money needed to build a team that can contend with the Red Sox and Yankees in the AL East. A couple of years ago, Peter Angelos denied Duquette the chance to interview for the job of Blue Jays team president because he was still under contract.

Duquette is one of the best GMs in the game today. There may not be a lot of openings after this season, but Miami could be one place where Duquette could surface if he's not retained.

Apropos of nothing

1. There are many teams still angry about all the work and resources they put in to prepare for a chance to visit with Shohei Ohtani when he wanted to go to the West Coast all along. The Yankees and Red Sox put together elaborate presentations and were ready to send all kinds of representatives — Boston had Pedro Martinez and David Ortiz lined up — to act on their behalf. The Yankees really felt they had a great shot of wooing Ohtani.
2. Buck Showalter and Mike Scioscia are coming to the ends of their contracts. Where will their respective teams go from here? With many teams turning to younger, less experienced managers, you wonder if one or both of Showalter and Scioscia won't be back with their teams in 2019.
3. It's sad and ridiculous that the Giants' Ron Wotus and the Blue Jays' DeMarlo Hale, two successful coaches, haven't landed a big league managerial job.
4. Aaron Judge created a bit of stir by saying he's "one and done" with the Home Run Derby. But his allegiance has to be to the Yankees and not to MLB as the "face of the game" that he's portrayed as. Judge obviously hurt his left shoulder or at least aggravated an injury while putting on an incredible display at last year's Derby. In his first 55 games after the break last year, Judge hit .185 with 84 strikeouts in 189 at-bats. He had his shoulder surgically repaired in the offseason.

5. Contract of the year: Cardinals shortstop Paul DeJong. Burton Rocks was the agent who negotiated a six-year, \$26 million deal — the largest contract given to a player with less than a year of service time — that could escalate to eight years and \$51.5 million if two options are exercised. Not bad for a fourth-round pick out of Illinois State, who hit .285 with 25 homers and 65 RBIs in 108 games after his call-up May 28.

Updates on nine

1. Manny Machado, SS, Orioles — Positive reports on Machado's move from third base to shortstop. "He makes all of the plays and his arm plays big there. He probably doesn't have great range, but above-average for sure," said an AL scout. "He'll be fine there. He's still a guy who will convert back to third base or even first base two or three years down the road."

2. Amed Rosario, SS, Mets — One of the most impressive players in Florida to this point, according to one scout who thinks the Mets have a future All-Star. Rosario missed a week with knee tightness, but scouts are in love with him.

3. Mike Moustakas, 3B, Royals — The Royals did their longtime third baseman a favor by signing him to a one-year, \$6.5 million deal plus a mutual option that could push the contract as high as \$22.5 million if he reaches playing time incentives. The Royals could use Moustakas as a trade chip at the deadline (he can't be traded without his permission before June 15). Because the Royals hung in with Eric Hosmer, Lorenzo Cain, and Moustakas last season, they weren't able to acquire prospects to help their rebuild.

4. Jake Arrieta, RHP, free agent — Teams seem hesitant to give Arrieta more than three years given his statistical decline and age (32). But the Twins and Brewers, in particular, need someone like Arrieta at the front of their younger rotations. Washington remains the wild card since there's a strong relationship between Scott Boras and Nationals ownership, and San Diego has made some noise, feeling there's not much available for front-line starters in 2019.

5. Aaron Judge, RF, Yankees — Should Judge bat leadoff? Interesting concept being bandied about by Aaron Boone. Our friend Bill Chuck did some research on home runs from the leadoff spot. The record for a leadoff batter is 39, by Alfonso Soriano in 2006 for the Nationals. Charlie Blackmon hit 37 last season for the Rockies. The Yankee record is 38 by Soriano in 2002.

6. Alex Cobb, RHP, free agent — It's understandable that Cobb would try to maximize his value in free agency. But the market he expected just isn't there. He remains a perfect fit for the Brewers and Twins, but the team that should make the expenditure is the Orioles. Cobb is tested in the AL East, and his funky delivery plays well in a league with some powerful righthanded bats.

7. Danny Duffy, LHP, Royals — The trade interest in Duffy has been "brisk," as one Royals official said, and that's likely to ramp up. The Royals, like the Rays with Chris Archer, want major prospects in return.

8. Blake Swihart, C/UTL, Red Sox — Scouts and executives have asked a lot of questions about what the Red Sox' intentions are for Swihart, 25, who is trying to be framed as a utilityman. "I know he's a great athlete and every team has to do what it has to do to protect a player out of options, but for me he'd be a catcher, period," said one NL official.

9. Dansby Swanson, SS, Braves — When Tony La Russa and Dave Stewart traded Swanson, the No. 1 overall pick in 2015, from Arizona to Atlanta in the Shelby Miller deal, they received a lot of criticism. But Swanson, who hit just .232 last year with a .636 OPS, is what many scouts thought he would be — an average big league shortstop (.232, 6/51) and not likely to become the outstanding superstar like some had thought.

Extra innings

From the Bill Chuck files: "They call it middle relief, not mediocre relief — in the sixth and seventh innings last season, the Indians had the lowest team ERA at 2.94, followed by the Cubs at 3.06, the Dodgers at 3.22, the Yankees at 3.44, and the Nationals at 3.53." Also, "Here's a good way to measure lineup strength — Last season, the Yankees' and Astros' Nos. 7 through 9 batters led the AL with a .329 OBP; Houston's group led with 263 runs scored, Boston's was next with 242." . . . Happy birthday, Brian Anderson (36), Rich Hill (38), Sang-Hoon Lee (47), Gar Finnold (50), and Dwayne Hosey (51).

Boston Globe LOADED: 03.11.2018