

# **Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings February 5, 2019**

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## **THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY**

1930-The Reds trade Dolf Luque to Brooklyn for Doug McWeeny, and purchase Leo Durocher from the Yankees. McWeeny lasts only one season with the Reds, going 0-2 with a 7.36 ERA in 25.2 innings pitched. Durocher will spend four seasons with the Reds, collecting a .227 batting average with 97 RBI

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## **CINCINNATI ENQUIRER**

**Cincinnati Reds manager David Bell plans to make some changes at Spring Training**  
**Bobby Nightengale, Cincinnati Enquirer**  
**Published 5:19 p.m. ET Feb. 4, 2019**

Under first-year manager David Bell, it's clear the Reds want to embrace analytics and they want to introduce some changes to the way they conduct Spring Training once pitchers and catchers report to Goodyear, Arizona, next week.

One of the clearest changes will be their daily schedule. Bell wants players to show up a little later to the ballpark, putting an extra emphasis on their sleep schedules.

"It's not too much later, but if you can shift it just 30 minutes or an hour, guys get an extra hour of sleep," Bell said. "We all know how important sleep is. It's not going to cut down on any work. It'll actually help us be very focused on doing the same amount of work, if not more, in a shorter period of time."

Bell said he embraced all the information and analytics available to players and staff members when he was the San Francisco Giants' farm director last year. That means trying to use spin rates and launch angles to their advantage, plus learning how players could benefit from more information about their sleep and nutrition.

The Reds hired data-driven coaches like Caleb Cotham (assistant pitching coach) and Donnie Eckert (assistant hitting coach) with a goal of communicating analytical information directly to players.

"A lot of really good things are happening," Bell said last month. "Some things that we can see like the trades and that, but also just the little things behind the scenes that we're working on every single day. Our coaching staff, we're talking every day. It's the offseason. We know we have a lot to accomplish. There's definitely a commitment to doing everything we can."

Bell, who will lead an 11-man coaching staff, wanted to build a staff with different perspectives. He said the goal is to see the "whole picture" for players.

"The information and the analytics is one very important piece," Bell said. "The last few years, I knew getting into an opportunity like this – or even last year in player development – that has to be a piece of it. To have the resources to be able to bring in somebody like that or multiple people, we'd be missing out if we didn't do it."

Bell said he started to incorporate analytics into his daily routine when he joined the St. Louis Cardinals as an assistant hitting coach in 2014 and it continued when he was Mike Matheny's bench coach from 2015-17. Through a later start to the day in Spring Training, Bell hopes to create an advantage for his players.

Once the season begins, it's possible there could be more changes to the way they prepare for games.

“I think we are the only sport that plays a game every single night and practices every day before that game,” Bell said. “And we do it like two hours before the game. There’s a place for that, but there’s also maybe a place to find ways to improve that and make sure guys are not only rested and healthy, but practicing in a way that they’re getting better, as well.”

**HIGHLY RANKED:** Several publications that cover minor league baseball released their preseason Top 100 prospects rankings within the last two weeks.

Four Reds prospects, infielder/outfielder Nick Senzel, outfielder Taylor Trammell, right-handed pitcher Hunter Greene and infielder Jonathan India were ranked in the Top 100 by Baseball America, MLB.com, Baseball Prospectus and ESPN. Right-handed pitcher Tony Santillan made the Baseball America and ESPN lists.

ESPN rated the Reds as the sixth-best farm system in baseball, which is the same spot it held last year.

Baseball America – Senzel (10th overall), Trammell (33), India (51), Greene (57), Santillan (69).

MLB.com – Senzel (6), Trammell (17), Greene (22), India (51).

Baseball Prospectus – Senzel (9), Trammell (11), India (35), Greene (75).

ESPN – Senzel (6), Trammell (12), Greene (16), India (76), Santillan (83).

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## **THE ATHLETIC**

**Egger: How the winter of Yasiel Puig has invigorated Cincinnati**  
**By Mo Egger**  
**Feb 4, 2019**

The most fun I’ve had being a sports fan was in 2005 when the Bengals went 11-5, winning the AFC North while finally achieving relevancy and completely taking over the city.

That ’05 Bengals team was a blast, for so many different reasons. There was a sense that the good times were only just getting started with a young quarterback on the cusp of greatness. They played an incredibly entertaining brand of offense that had versatility and explosiveness, and after the Bengals had been so bad for so long, there was the cathartic joy that comes with being a fan whose patience had been tested for so many years finally being rewarded.

And they had Chad Johnson.

However you feel about some of the controversies that dogged the latter years of No. 85’s tenure, it is undeniable that no athlete has owned this city the way Chad Johnson had a grip on Cincinnati in the middle of the last decade. He was unlike anything we’d seen before, and there’s been no one quite like him ever since. He was ridiculously productive of course, and he never failed to remind all of us just exactly how good he was, making playful, attention-grabbing boasts during the week, then spending his Sundays backing up his words.

But more than anything, and perhaps equally as important as the way he carved up opposing secondaries, Chad gave a long-dormant franchise that had been a national afterthought a loud, colorful personality. He injected into a tired, jaded fan base much-needed doses of energy and enthusiasm that had been sapped during a run of 14 non-winning seasons. He was both the face and the voice of a team that for years had been so unlikable while lacking anyone worth really getting interested about, or invested in. Simply put, he made the Bengals cool, transforming being a fan from something that no one wanted to admit to into something that finally made folks feel good.

After more than a decade of watching stars openly pine for the day they could leave, while being resigned to the fact that no one with choices would want to come here, we finally had a star who actually wanted to be here. He professed his love for the city in interviews, doing his best to change our collective mindset, jogging us out of a lengthy malaise that took a fan base that never dared to dream big and made it start thinking, hey, why not us?

Specific memories of the 2005 Bengals may be fading with time and the disappointing way their season ended remains a sore spot for most. And Chad's act did eventually devolve from endearing to annoying, and even destructive, but his impact that season goes well beyond his numbers. He made people care about the Bengals again.

The Reds' current offseason strategy has been simple: Try to win, but not go overboard in doing so. The results have been admirable, even if this team isn't a likely playoff contender, at least as of now. They've rid themselves of Homer Bailey's toxicity and parted with prospects that aren't among the organization's best while getting three pitchers that each represent upgrades from the revolving door of unproven arms that have populated the team's rotation for years, and bolstering an already formidable offense. The unofficial mantra goes something like this: The Reds might not be very good, but they're at least finally interesting.

The ancillary effect of what the Reds have done, though, might reflect the club's primary winter goal. Fans have started to stir, baseball is being discussed, and for the first time in very, very long time, there's genuine energy and enthusiasm. Celebs are tweeting outlandish predictions, talk radio callers are actively debating potential trades, and for the first time in a long while, we're doing more than just trying to convince ourselves that another 90-plus losses aren't in the offing. We're starting to feel good about the Reds again.

Yasiel Puig has been brought to Cincinnati to take advantage of whatever it is that makes Great American Ballpark such a haven for hitters, and if his bat doesn't produce, whatever else he does or says really won't matter. But months before he suits up for the Reds in a game that matters, he's already had an impact, energizing fans with his personality, and maybe more than anything, actually showing some enthusiasm for wanting to play here.

You couldn't blame Puig if he dragged his feet toward Cincinnati, coming from the bright lights of L.A. and a franchise that he'd played in two World Series with to laid-back Cincinnati and a team that last finished somewhere other than last place in 2014. He's instead not only embraced his new team but seems very willing to take on the tall task of not only bringing some personality to the team but giving fans reasons for excitement.

It's almost hard to explain to those who haven't been paying attention, and admittedly, social media isn't always the proper gauge for taking the public's temperature, but there's a buzz for this team. And Puig specifically is what's been absent around here for a long, long time. It's little stuff, but it's meaningful. Instantly changing his Twitter avatar moments after the trade was announced. Making the rounds during a visit to Cincinnati last week, including a stopover at the Reds' Urban Youth Academy. Posing in his jersey. Shooting videos, and being wrong about the cold, in his new team's colors. Talking playoffs. Making us believe. At the very least, making us care.

This stuff may matter less than things like how he hits and the way he fits in as a teammate, and you as a fan might only be concerned with the tangible ways he impacts his new team, but I believe there is value in making fans feel good, especially when most haven't felt anything other than either misery or apathy in a while. There's undeniably something refreshing about listening to a star say big things about a team that's spent recent years doing very little.

The winter of Yasiel Puig has been invigorating, and a refreshing departure from anything we've had to endure over the past few years. For a franchise that's forced its fans to say way too many goodbyes in recent years, there's something that's almost intoxicating about saying hello to someone like Puig.

I don't know many tickets Puig will sell. I'm not ready to buy into the idea that with a series of interesting offseason moves, a 95-loss team in 2018 has been transformed into an 88-win unit in 2019. I'm not even ready to think about the Reds signing Puig beyond this coming season. I am, however, 100 percent in on Puigmania and the fun and excitement it's brought to a cold Cincinnati winter and a franchise that's recently given us very little to feel good about.

What Puig is doing can have a lasting impact, not as much on how much his team wins, but in how much we care about it. If the club does win enough to make the summer more than just interesting, he can go a long way toward framing how we remember it. There is value in personality, and for someone who views sports almost solely as something to have fun with, I put an immense amount of stock in those who can entertain, engage and excite. There's something to be said about someone that can make people care.

Ask anyone who remembers 2005.

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## STADIA MAGAZINE

**By David Smith**  
**Freelance Journalist**  
**Feb. 5, 2019**

It's winter in Cincinnati and the Reds' groundskeeper Steve Lord describes how his life "turns around 90 degrees" in the off season. Rather than the hectic 14-hour shifts when the team is in town, Lord reverts to six-hour days and gets his "work-life balance back in synch" during the Ohio winter. Most groundskeepers in major league baseball (MLB) follow a similar routine, he says, though it partly depends where they are based in the US, which has vast climatic differences.

Outside there is heavy rain, ice on the ground, and Cincinnati's roads are "a mess". There's not too much to do on the surface, but a lot of the preparation for the start of the next season in Spring has already been done. Lord and his team work intensely on the turf for 30 to 60 days as soon as the season ends in October. Once the season begins again in April, the temperatures rise until the heart of summer, Lord has to manage the wear and tear from 90-degree temperatures as well as week-long runs of home games.

Fortunately, advances in technology and the production of durable turf are helping Lord, and his fellow groundskeepers, to meet the challenges. "We're seeing technological advances all the time that allow us to build consistency into our dirt and grass surfaces, both of which are vital in baseball," he says. "We've seen a big influence from golf. When the USGA specs for greens came in 40 years ago they were adapted for baseball and there was a big change in the quality of fields."

Baseball is unique in that the game centers around the dirt surfaces of the mound and home plates. The groundskeepers' role is to care for these dirt surfaces, and the rest of the diamond, just as much as the grass surfaces in the outfields. Lord says that 30 years ago, baseball sides mixed their own dirt from local clay, or sands. But now they tend to import in-field dirt mixes, mound clays and conditioners, from specialist companies. These blends make it easier to manage moisture.

One of the most successful turf companies, he says, is Pennsylvania's DuraEdge, which supplies full infields to 18 MLB teams. Improvements in golf turf were again a crucial part of the story. DuraEdge had started out developing sand and soil mixes for golf greens in 1999, then realised they could use the same processes for baseball infields.

The company was fortunate when it struck the turfing equivalent of gold, near its home base in the town of Slippery Rock. What they discovered was a hard, and powerfully absorbent, clay that could outperform almost anything else available. Traditional blends of locally sourced soil, or red clays in southern states, were slippery when wet. For years, teams had been more concerned with the look of the surfaces, but commercial pressures forced a rethink. They began to turn to science to prevent injuries, bad bounces and costly delays, and DuraEdge's dirt provided a solution. It remained playable after heavy rainfall thanks to the dry rock around – the ironically named - Slippery Rock.

Perhaps it's not surprising golf has been behind so many innovations in turf production when there are tens of thousands of courses compared with few professional sports fields. The golf industry has also been driving developments in technology, such as the portable moisture management tools, the Pogo and the TDR, which make a big difference to how Steve Lord manages diseases. "I use a pogo metre to better plan my waterings and understand how the moisture is, or isn't, moving through the ryegrass. It helps minimise a lot of disease pressures, especially in the hot and humid months of July and August. Teams used to over-water, thinking 'well at least it won't be dry', but we now monitor the moisture better and it helps us save water and fertilizer."

Baseball groundskeepers mainly work on the dirt surfaces of the pitcher's mound and home plate for the six or seven days a team is in town. The intention is always to provide a home-team advantage. "I ask the four infielders how they would like the areas? So, if I'm watering the infield surface by hand with a hose, but the third baseman likes it really wet to slow the ball down, I'll give him extra moisture," Lord says. "But the short-stop next to him might want it dry." Lord used to be deputy groundskeeper for the Texas Rangers, where a young pitching staff were more

skilled at dealing with ground balls than ones struck in the air. So, Lord and his team grew the in-field grass taller to slow the ball down. "It gave the infielders a better chance of getting to it and making a play," he says.

When setting up the mound, Lord concentrates on the wishes of his five starting pitchers, who are used in rotation. "How do they like the mound? A bit wetter, or drier? Softer, or harder? Do they want more of the pure moisture management materials like calcite clay? Do they need to feel a solid footing, or less of a good footing?"

When the team takes to the road, attention switches to the outfield grass. Lord's team will do sod replacement, aeration, mowing and watering. Cincinnati is something of an anomaly in US sport as it uses a hybrid grass with a plastic, or carpeted base. The ryegrass-plastic hybrid is grown on a sod farm 30km from the stadium and trucked to the stadium on palletized squares. It comes in 1in or 2in depths of 3ft<sup>2</sup> squares. Lord says it has advantages over pure natural turf. "There's lots of weight and it's stable underfoot so we can replace it on a game day and play on it that afternoon without grass or turf blowing from underfoot," he says.

While the team is away, the groundskeepers also create the aesthetically pleasing stripe effects. Rules in the English Premier League now prevent imaginative striping, such as the patterns introduced by Leicester City. But in the MLB, the Boston Red Sox are renowned for their intricate patterns, and the St Louis Cardinals are known for including a big arch that references an iconic city landmark. "At Cincinnati, it's purely aesthetic, but we take care to rotate the patterns as otherwise they get trampled down and the ball doesn't roll true," Lord says.

During the baseball season, the likeliest areas to get worn down are the end-field positions of short stop and second field which get a lot of foot traffic. Some sections might be repaired with hybrid turf, but the whole field is likely to be replaced only every five or six years. For teams in California, such as San Diego, where moderate temperatures allow off-season events almost constantly, the entire field is likely to be replaced every year.

Lord says his neighbors at the Cincinnati Bengals, in the National Football League (NFL), are using even more futuristic technology. The Bengals use a robot to paint the lines, which can be a tedious job for groundskeepers in American Football, he says. The robot is controlled from an app and a simple click of a button can launch a route plan.

The turf-growing industry has benefited from advances in technology just as much as the groundskeepers. Paul Carlson, MD of SideKick, a specialist turf company, says innovations in removal and installation mean the turf is ready to be played on immediately. "There's much more precise equipment for removing turf and we've developed thick-cut turf and thicker-based turf grown on plastic," he says. "Installation machines such as the SideKick turf compressor, lead to stronger turf and instant playability."

The greater consistency of modern turf, however, has to be offset against the higher number of non-sporting events, Carlson says. "Workloads have increased and groundskeepers are no longer afforded the luxury of allowing fields to recover naturally. They have to remedy damage immediately. In fairness, most do a fantastic job of renovating quickly and keeping fields open."

The amateur sports groundskeeper faces similar technical issues, but doesn't have to cope with so many extra events, says STMA (Sports Turf Managers Association) president elect Jody Gill, who is the grounds coordinator for the Blue Valley School District in Kansas. Although there are no professional fields on his patch, Gill is responsible for 38 schools and 105 athletic fields on 200 acres. Crowds can reach 7,000, or more, for high-school games. "We don't have the pressures of events, but there's a trickle-down effect from pro sports. Everyone sees the professional fields on TV and expects the same standards," he says.

Blue Valley is an affluent district that can afford top-line technology. "With more than 100 fields, we've purchased larger pieces of equipment. One of the best is the Triplex roller mower, which is on rollers not wheels. We pull it with a tractor and it rolls as we cut. We can cover large acreage in short times. We also use it for the striping patterns, maintaining a dark-light pattern as we mow," Gill says.

Modern equipment also helps Gill's groundskeepers to aerate their natural grass. Using deep tine, or needle tine, aeration, they deploy machines that blow air into the ground. Another important technological advance, Gill says, is the computerized management systems that help with irrigation. They have advanced sensors which allow the

groundskeepers to target water where it's most needed and reduce waste. "Methods and technologies are constantly evolving and we learn by sharing information, or watching what the pros are doing," says Gill.

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## **TRANSACTIONS**

**02/04/19**

Milwaukee Brewers invited non-roster RHP Zack Brown to spring training.  
Milwaukee Brewers invited non-roster RHP Bubba Derby to spring training.  
Milwaukee Brewers invited non-roster RHP Jon Olczak to spring training.  
Milwaukee Brewers invited non-roster RHP Miguel Sanchez to spring training.  
Milwaukee Brewers invited non-roster C Payton Henry to spring training.  
Milwaukee Brewers invited non-roster 3B Lucas Erceg to spring training.  
Milwaukee Brewers invited non-roster 2B Nate Orf to spring training.  
Milwaukee Brewers invited non-roster 2B Keston Hiura to spring training.  
Milwaukee Brewers invited non-roster CF Corey Ray to spring training.  
Cleveland Indians designated RHP A.J. Cole for assignment.  
Miami Marlins traded RHP Nick Wittgren to Cleveland Indians for RHP Jordan Milbrath.  
Miami Marlins claimed RHP Austin Brice off waivers from Baltimore Orioles.  
Miami Marlins designated RF Isaac Galloway for assignment.  
Minnesota Twins signed free agent 2B Jordany Valdespin to a minor league contract.  
Minnesota Twins signed free agent RHP Kevin Comer to a minor league contract.  
Minnesota Twins signed free agent 1B Wilin Rosario to a minor league contract.  
Minnesota Twins signed free agent LHP Pat Dean to a minor league contract.  
Minnesota Twins signed free agent RHP Adam Atkins to a minor league contract.  
Pittsburgh Pirates signed free agent LHP Francisco Liriano to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.