

Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings February 9, 2018

THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY

1920-The rule committee ushers in the era of the lively ball, which allows the use of a fresh ball and bans pitchers from using any foreign substances. The Reds were hit hard by this change with their two top pitchers, Hod Eller and Slim Sallee, being “trick” ball pitchers

MLB.COM

Reds add Manship, Tapia as non-roster invitees

By Mark Sheldon MLB.com @m_sheldon

Feb. 8th, 2018

CINCINNATI -- The Reds added two more pitchers on Thursday when right-handers Jeff Manship and Domingo Tapia were signed to Minor League contracts with invites to big league camp.

Cincinnati will have 62 players in camp when Spring Training opens next week.

Manship, 33, pitched for the Twins, Rockies, Phillies and Indians from 2009-16 and spent last season playing in Korea. His best big league seasons came in Cleveland's bullpen from 2015-16, when he had a 2.07 ERA over a combined 85 games.

But Manship was non-tendered by the Indians after the 2016 season, when he had a 3.12 ERA but saw his walk rate jump from 2.3 to 4.6 per nine innings and his WHIP doubled from .076 to 1.43.

In 2017 for the NC Dinos in the Korea Baseball Organization, Manship was a starting pitcher and posted a 12-4 record and 3.67 ERA in 21 starts.

Tapia, 26, has yet to pitch in the Majors and has spent the bulk of his career with the Mets. He pitched in the Reds' organization at Double-A Pensacola and Triple-A Louisville last season, posting a combined 4.08 ERA in 38 games with 10 starts.

CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

Marty Brenneman named Quaker State 400 honorary pace car driver at Kentucky Speedway

Dave Clark and Jason Hoffman, Cincinnati Enquirer

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The Monster Energy Cup drivers competing at the Quaker State 400, July 14, at Kentucky Speedway will be led to the green flag by Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame announcer Marty Brenneman.

Brenneman, who has broadcasted Reds baseball for 45 years, will drive the Toyota Camry pace car, which leads the field to the start of the race.

"I said yes, with a little bit of trepidation," Brenneman said at Kentucky Speedway's media luncheon Thursday at the Montgomery Inn Boathouse. "Unlike me, I'm convinced my wife, Amanda, was either a NASCAR driver or she drove an 18-wheeler over the road in a previous life. She drives us everywhere we go – I don't drive unless I'm by myself."

This will be Brenneman's first involvement in track activities as the Reds will be on a road trip in St. Louis that weekend.

"We were finally able to make it work out with his schedule," said Mark Semindinger, general manager of Kentucky Speedway.

Brenneman joined NASCAR driver Brendan Gaughan at the event, which also featured sponsorship announcements and several video montages dedicated to Gaughan and the track's pedigree for its winners become series champions.

Last year, Martin Truex Jr. won the Quaker State 400 and went on to win his first ever Cup Series title.

Past champions that won at Kentucky Speedway include Kyle Busch and Brad Keselowski, among others.

New way to get free tickets

It's usually not good when you get pulled over, but at least there will be a perk for motorists in Kentucky this year.

The Kentucky Office of Highway Safety will again sponsor the Camping World Truck Series Buckle Up In Your Truck 225 on July 12, and, this year, will be offering a promotion where drivers pulled over while wearing their seatbelts will receive a voucher for two tickets to the truck race.

"The Speedway provides us ticket vouchers for the race," said Troy Dye, law enforcement liaison for the KOHS, "We'll provide those vouchers to local law and enforcement. If they stop a vehicle for a moving violation of some sort and the driver and passenger are wearing a seatbelt, then the officer can give that voucher to the operator or passenger. ... It shows the community the officers have a sense of humor and the track has a sense of humor – we're willing to take extraordinary means to get that message out."

Pickup trucks are twice as likely to flip over during a crash, Dye said, and seatbelt use among truck drivers is about 10 percent less than that of car drivers.

"We have worked together with KYTC for many years to create unique platforms which encourage highway safety. This is especially important around the busy summer travel season," Kentucky Speedway General Manager Mark Simendinger said. "We are proud that KYTC reports a nine percent decrease in highway fatalities for 2017. The sponsorship resulting in saved lives is the most rewarding thing we do."

More from a Kentucky Speedway press release:

"I am thrilled and excited to have the opportunity to drive the pace car. I can't express my appreciation to Mark Simendinger and the entire Kentucky Speedway staff," said Brenneman. "I'll be honest, I accepted with a little bit of trepidation. I've never been around the track or driven on it before. I'm sure I will have a whole bunch of butterflies but I'll be fine and fully prepared by the time the pace car hits the track."

Brenneman has been broadcasting Cincinnati Reds baseball games for 45 years. He joined the Reds radio team in 1974 and for 31 seasons (1974-2004) shared the 700 WLW Radio booth with Reds Hall of Fame pitcher Joe Nuxhall. Brenneman has been named Ohio Sportscaster of the Year 16 times, most recently in 2009.

He received the Ford C. Frick Award on July 23, 2000, in ceremonies at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. The award is presented each year by the Hall of Fame to a broadcaster "for major contributions to the game of baseball." Brenneman, Red Barber (WSAI, 1934-38) and Russ Hodges (WFBE, 1932) are the only Reds announcers ever to receive the Hall of Fame's prestigious broadcasting award.

WCPO.COM

The Broo View: Here are 9 things that should give Cincinnati Reds fans hope in 2018

Ken Broo

2:25 PM, Feb 8, 2018

3:43 PM, Feb 8, 2018

Winter sucks. Everybody's got the flu. Major League Soccer has apparently lost our phone number and the last major sports championship this city has seen was 28 years ago. How about some blue skies, seashells and balloons today?

Fantastic!

By the time you read this, it will be less than six days until Reds pitches and catchers report for spring training. You can't find anyone not named Castellini who thinks the Reds have a shot to win the National League Central Division this year.

In fact, my good friend Gabe Lacques at USA Today just picked the Reds to finish 68-94 for the THIRD season in a row.

Am I predicting the Reds will win their division this year? I'm not that delusional, even with an open bottle of Castello di Amaa, L'Apparita in front of me (merlot connoisseurs all over the world nod, knowingly).

But as the Reds head to Goodyear, Arizona, let me now offer nine good reasons why we should be optimistic about the hometown team this season.

1. Joey Votto

Last I checked, Joey Votto is still on the roster. And though he may be wasting the best years of his baseball life on non-competitive teams, he remains the best-hitting player in team history. Period, end of story.

However, let's continue the story.

Votto hit .320 last season, with a staggering on-base percentage of .454. Almost as amazing, Votto played in all 162 games. The only other player to do that last season was the Phillies' Freddy Galvis.

By the way, Votto did it in 2013, too. Votto and Hunter Pence are the only players to play in all 162 in multiple seasons since 2008.

Dan Szymborski, he of ZIPS projections fame, has Votto making 624 plate appearances in 2018, down from 694 this past season. But Szymborski has Votto hitting .303, with a .434 on base percentage and a wRC+ (weighted runs created) projected at 147. In other words, Votto continues to be a once-in-a-lifetime player.

2. Better starting pitching

Anthony DeSclafani is allegedly healthy again. The operative word is allegedly.

Before the Reds caravan departed on its annual journey through the Midwest, Bryan Price told me he expected DeSclafani to be ready for full workouts at the beginning of camp. The one-time ace in waiting didn't throw a single pitch this past season. But DeSclafani did throw a bit in the Fall Instructional League and reported no problems.

DeSclafani won nine games in 31 starts in 2015. His 2016 season was delayed with a muscle problem in his torso. When he did make it onto the field, he won nine times in 20 starts. Is he a top-of-the-rotation guy on a contending team? Nope. But on the Reds, you could reasonably see him as a healthy starter.

Which leads to the whole starting rotation question. On paper it looks like a collection of pitchers who are just eligible to vote or have had their arms re-attached.

Luis Castillo looks like a star in the making. He was just 3-7 last season. But his 3-1 strikeout to walk ratio coupled with his mound presence has a lot of baseball smart guys talking. Szymborski has Castillo making 28 starts this season, up from 15 last year, throwing over 156 innings and his ZIPS comparison is Don Drysdale. Not bad company.

Though he throws far too many pitches to get through not enough innings, Brandon Finnegan will be back. Homer Bailey ended 2017 healthy for the first time in forever. Bailey is what he's been, basically a .500 pitcher. And anything you get from a pitcher who's had Tommy John surgery is a bonus.

The Reds have a lot of contenders for the rest of the rotation. It won't be a team strength. But the starting rotation may not be the liability it's been in years past. It will need help. And that brings us to...

3. Improved bullpen

The bullpen should be a lot better. The back end is particularly strong.

I think Raisel Iglesias is more than adequate as a closer. Michael Lorenzen could wind up in the rotation. But if not, he's back to set up. And Jared Hughes and David Hernandez are major upgrades.

No bullpen in all of baseball has thrown more innings than the Reds pen has thrown since the start of 2016 season. It will take more than those four, but I don't see Ross Ohlendorf, Jumbo Diaz or Caleb Cothman on the 40-man roster. So that's a good thing.

4. Going deep

Home runs have been devalued lately. EVERY team hits home runs now.

But the Reds have the bop to keep pace with the better teams. ZIPS projects Votto, Eugenio Suarez, Adam Duvall and Scott Schebler to all hit 24 or more home runs in 2018. Scooter Gennett is projected to hit 19.

Projections and reality often don't intersect, but in the era of the big ball, that's 154 dingers for just those five players.

5. Billy's potential

Billy Hamilton plays the best defensive center field in the game. I don't want to hear about Gold Gloves. Just watch him. It's called runs prevention. The more runs you prevent, the more of a chance you have to win.

The problem with Hamilton, of course, is his ability to get on base. He's not a top-of-the-order hitter and really never has been. But when he gets on base, he's not only a threat to steal a base, he can distract a pitcher to the point of helping the batter.

Hamilton got on base an embarrassing .299 last season. He also led the team with 133 strikeouts. Even free-swinging Suarez walked more than Hamilton.

The fact that the Reds were listening to trade offers for Hamilton this past off-season tells you they're running out of patience with him.

IF Hamilton can add 20 walks, at the expense of strikeouts. IF Hamilton can bump his OBP to .335, he could steal 70 bases this season. Those are huge ifs. But there's more to be encouraged about here than discouraged.

6. Barnhart on the rise

Tucker Barnhart is the Reds' everyday catcher.

He won his first ever Gold Glove in 2017. The last Reds catcher to win a Gold Glove was Johnny Bench. Not comparing the two. It wouldn't be fair to either. But Barnhart calls a good game.

Defense has never been a problem. Barnhart's offense has lagged behind his defense. But in 2017, he hit .270, a big number for a Major League catcher. Better than that, his OBP was .347.

Barnhart has emerged as one of the stars of the game at a position that is difficult for a MLB team to staff. This is a real strength for the 2018 Reds.

7. Time for Senzel

Nick Senzel will be in Cincinnati at some point this season. The 2016 first-round pick is on the fast track here.

Senzel, by almost all estimations, is a super star in waiting. The Reds will have to get creative to work him into the lineup. It might mean that Suarez may have to move to shortstop or Senzel may need to play a little there.

But in High A ball last season, Senzel hit .305, got on base almost 48 percent of the time he came to the plate. And after getting promoted to Double-A, his average rose to .340.

Senzel also hit 10 home runs in 235 Double-A plate appearances in 2017. He's the Reds third baseman of the future. The future and present should intersect sometime this summer.

8. Starting the clock

Which means the future may really be now.

The Reds have been reticent to "start the clock" on a lot of their minor league players.

Jesse Winker is a prime example. Was he Major League-ready in 2016 or 2017? We'll never know. The Reds didn't want to know because the sooner they brought any of their minor league talent to the Major League level, the clock would start. It would tick-tock first to arbitration and then to free agency.

And the decision was probably made early in those years that the team wouldn't be competitive, so why do it? Maybe that's not the best thing to do for your fan base, but from an economic point of view, it made sense.

It's always easy to spend someone else's money, but I think the time for saving dollars now for future spending should be over. I've never understood "playing the clock" with minor league pitchers. In the five years you have salary control over a pitcher he will invariably suffer a major arm injury. It might even require surgery.

Everyday players are different, in this equation. They stand a chance of getting hurt, but not to the extent a pitcher might.

The best thing the Reds owner and his front office staff can tell their long-suffering fan base is that the days of "playing the clock" are over. And let's be honest, you want to play the game, you have to do what ever it takes to win. Most of the time a team competes and wins a championship, it usually has a lot more than just talent. It's a lot of that and a lot of luck. Most of the time, you don't get to choose when you compete. It's chosen for you. It has as much to do with what you have as with what the other teams don't.

9. It's not 2017

Every season begins fresh and this may be the most encouraging of all the reasons why it's not a bad time to think big. Why not?

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Reds 2018: Can the rotation make it through spring healthy?

Joe Kay | Associated Press

7:07 PM, Feb 8, 2018

CINCINNATI (AP) — Can Cincinnati's rotation make it through spring training intact for once?

The Reds' starting pitchers haven't done well in Arizona lately. Last year, Homer Bailey needed elbow surgery before camp even opened, and it just got worse as it went along. Anthony DeSclafani developed a sore pitching elbow and never threw an inning.

Left-hander Brandon Finnegan actually made it to the season, but wound up limited to four games because of a strained back and a dislocated shoulder. Together, the Reds' top three starters managed a total of 22 starts, the biggest factor in Cincinnati's third straight 90-loss season.

All three are back and healthy — for the moment — as the last-place team opens training camp hoping to finally make up some ground in the NL Central.

“Having a fully healthy Homer Bailey, Brandon Finnegan and Anthony DeSclafani, there's a lot of reason to believe we've finally got there,” manager Bryan Price said. “The young guys are going to continue to work hard and get confidence and consistency at this level. Having the stabilizing factor of some of our experienced pitchers will certainly benefit us.”

It's been a long, painful rebuild in Cincinnati, which won 90 games in 2013, fired manager Dusty Baker and embarked on a total makeover. Pitching has been the biggest problem. The staff gave up the most homers in the majors last season and was last in the NL in runs, walks and ERA at 5.17. With all the injuries, the Reds called up rookies before they were ready.

Things started to settle down in the second half of the season — Cincinnati went 15-14 in August for its only winning month — and some of the young pitchers showed moments of promise. But if the veteran starters can't stay healthy, it'll be another season of growing pains.

“We've asked our fans to be patient as we go through this transition,” Price said. “What we saw the second half of last season was the performance we wanted to see a couple years ago.”

Some things to watch as the Reds open camp in Goodyear, Arizona:

NEW LOOK: The bullpen gave up the most walks and runs in the NL last season and was the main focus in free agency. Cincinnati signed late-inning relievers Jared Hughes and David Hernandez. Closer Raisel Iglesias returns after converting 28 of 30 save chances.

ROOKIES TO WATCH: Right-hander Luis Castillo is slotted as the No. 4 starter after posting a 3.12 ERA in 15 games last season. A group of young starters is competing for the fifth spot. Instead of signing a veteran starter, general manager Dick Williams decided to give the youngsters another chance and hope for the best.

“We want to make sure we have depth in the starting rotation,” Williams said. “We've got a lot of good young guys with options that we still believe in as starters, and we want to give them the opportunity to start.”

They're set: The Reds have starters back at seven spots led by first baseman Joey Votto, who finished second in the NL Most Valuable Player voting. Scooter Gennett is back at second base after his best season, joining Lou Gehrig as the only players in major league history with a four-homer game and four grand slams in a season.

They're not: The Reds let shortstop Zack Cozart leave as a free agent following his All-Star season — .297, 24 homers, 63 RBIs. Jose Peraza (.259, 5 homers, 37 RBIs) moves over from second base. The Reds expect a drop-off at the spot offensively.

On deck: Every twitch and ache by a veteran starter will be the big news. Also, catcher Devin Mesoraco is making yet another comeback from injuries, this time from hip, shoulder and foot problems. In the past three seasons, he's played in only 95 games combined with six homers and 17 RBIs.

Transactions

02/08/18

Miami Marlins invited non-roster RHP Nick Neidert to spring training.

Philadelphia Phillies signed free agent 2B Ryan Flaherty to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster CF Isaac Galloway to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster 2B Isan Diaz to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster SS Peter Mooney to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster C Rodrigo Vigil to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster C Sharif Othman to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster C Chris Hoo to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster RHP Jordan Yamamoto to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster RHP Trevor Richards to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster CF Monte Harrison to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster RHP Ben Meyer to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster RHP Chris Mazza to spring training.

Miami Marlins invited non-roster RHP Zac Gallen to spring training.

Chicago White Sox signed free agent RHP Bruce Rondon to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Chicago White Sox signed free agent RHP Jeanmar Gomez to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Chicago White Sox signed free agent 2B Jake Elmore to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Chicago White Sox signed free agent LHP Xavier Cedeno to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Cleveland Indians signed free agent RHP Stephen Fife to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

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