

Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings February 6, 2018

THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY

1934-The Reds purchase 43-year-old Dazzy Vance from the Cardinals for \$7,500. The future Hall of Famer will only make two starts for the Reds, pitching 18.0 innings over six games, with a 7.50 ERA

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**Reds looking to sort out rotation as camp nears
A year after its starters struggled, Cincy has some decisions to make
By Mark Sheldon MLB.com @m_sheldon
Feb. 5th, 2018**

CINCINNATI -- Despite the overall results from last season's 68-94 record, the Reds remain bullish on their young starting pitchers -- so much so that general manager Dick Williams neither signed, nor traded for, a veteran pitcher to join the rotation on a big league contract. Cincinnati's starting-pitcher eggs have essentially been put in one basket.

There will be a lot to choose from out of that basket, however. Luis Castillo, Sal Romano, Robert Stephenson, Tyler Mahle, Amir Garrett, Cody Reed, Michael Lorenzen and Jackson Stephens are among those being asked to step up. Progress is expected as the Reds want to move beyond rebuilding and fully into competing.

"We can look to the second half of last year and say Castillo, Romano, Stephenson and Mahle were very, very good," Reds manager Bryan Price said. "And that's exciting when you add that to a fully healthy Homer Bailey, [Anthony] DeSclafani and [Brandon] Finnegan. We are putting a lot of stock in the health and the improvement of our young pitching."

Castillo, who skipped Triple-A, had a 3.12 ERA in his 15 big league starts. Romano initially struggled but had a 3.17 ERA over his final eight starts. Mahle had a 2.70 ERA in his four big league starts and Stephenson had a 2.62 ERA over his final nine games (eight starts).

The Reds needed 16 different starters in 2017, and the rotation's 5.55 ERA was last in the National League. Injuries loomed large as Bailey was lost to elbow surgery before camp opened, and DeSclafani went down with an elbow injury in early March and missed the season. Others like Rookie Davis and Finnegan were injured by April.

When the Reds gather at their complex in Goodyear, Ariz., all but one of their pitchers will be ready to go. Only Davis, who had hip surgery in October, will be behind in preparation for the regular season.

Price has previously handicapped DeSclafani, Bailey, Finnegan and Castillo as the top four starters, with the fifth spot wide open among the others. The manager noted that wasn't set in stone as someone from the front four could backpedal their way out of the top five.

The bullpen was upgraded with two free-agent veterans in Jared Hughes and David Hernandez. The lineup -- which had five with at least 25 homers in 2017 -- is returning mostly intact, with only Zack Cozart departing in free agency.

But if Cincinnati is to make the improvement it wants, it all comes down to starting pitching.

Not only will Williams and Price be looking to break camp with a competitive five-man rotation, they will want to assemble another crew of starters for Triple-A Louisville that would be capable of stepping up.

"We want to make sure we have depth in our starting rotation, and we've got a lot of good, young guys with options that we still believe in as starters," Williams said. "We want to give them opportunities to start so this helps keep more of those guys starting and not just converting them to the bullpen to fill spots. But, I would also leave the door open that out of all that group, there is a possibility, like last year, that you could see someone appear in the Major League bullpen just to get exposure and to help the team."

Transactions

02/05/18

Arizona Diamondbacks sent Rey Fuentes outright to Reno Aces.

Texas Rangers signed free agent 2B Darwin Barney to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.
