

## **Bauer's out-of-the-box mentality on life, baseball**

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

KENT, Wash. -- A white bucket sat on the back of the mound constructed inside Driveline Baseball's research facility, filled with baseballs of different weights and sizes. Indians pitcher Trevor Bauer stood within a metal grid fixed with high-speed cameras, detailing the list of drills he does daily during his offseason workouts at the complex outside Seattle.

Really, not much has changed over the years for Bauer.

In his youth, Bauer would hook a bucket of baseballs to the handlebars of his bike and ride over to a park near his California home. Baseball practice was over. The workout with his pitching instructor was complete. Still, Bauer would find a fence -- when his dad was away in New Mexico for work, Bauer rarely had a throwing partner -- and repeatedly fire balls into the chain links. It was the beginning of what has essentially been a life-long science experiment.

"I didn't have any friends in high school. I didn't have any friends in grade school," Bauer said last Friday. "So, my parents, they raised me, one, to not be blindly allegiant to authority. They raised me to think for myself and also to just believe that I was working for something down the road that my peers weren't going to have, and that I'd be better off in life for it. Take the long-term approach."

That mindset, which Bauer said was instilled in him around the age of six, is what has powered his path to having a home in Cleveland's deep and talented rotation. Given his father Warren's background in engineering, Bauer was raised to question, test, evaluate and then question some more. Bauer views his body as a system and science as the key to unlocking that system's ability to turn an unathletic kid into a Major League pitcher.

That process is what led to Bauer being introduced to Kyle Boddy, who runs Driveline and has watched the facility and its approach to training gain momentum over the past several years. When Bauer first walked into the Driveline back in 2013, there was room for a mound, a squat rack, a handful of weights and a desk littered with tech equipment. Now, Boddy's complex has three buildings and is a constant hive of activity.

While Bauer gave a tour of the research space, there were workers placing sensors on another pitcher, prepping him for a digital scan that would break down his biomechanics. Other athletes tossed weighted balls into vertical boards, while another worked off a mound. Each pitch thrown churned out a slew of data -- velocity, spin rate, vertical and horizontal movement, for example -- which immediately flashed on a nearby tablet.

The forefront of baseball science is located within row of warehouses fit with bland aluminum siding. Tucked away in an industrial section... Bauer's love of science really took hold during his freshman year at Hart High School, where he took a Newtonian physics class taught by Martin Kirby. That class sparked Bauer's intrigue in the various elements involved in making a baseball spin and move through the air. That continues to be Bauer's focus in the winter at Driveline, where he will stick pushpins in a ball in order to study how to manipulate its path to the catcher's glove.

"I feel like it's home away from home," Bauer said with a smile. "I feel like I'm able to be who I am, because this is all the stuff I do anyway. It's just nice to have like-minded people around, so that the ideas that I have or have considered, there's other ideas to bounce off that. So, the conversation and the research and stuff moves a lot quicker when there's more like-minded people around attacking the same problem from different angles."

That, really, is all Bauer has ever wanted, but his unique personality -- one that often includes unfiltered commentary -- has gotten him into trouble in the past. As a rookie, Bauer did not go along with everything the D-backs asked of him and he was deemed uncoachable and soon traded to the Indians. Even with Cleveland, Bauer and former pitching coach Mickey Callaway did not see eye to eye.

Bauer said he knows he has "ruined relationships" along the way, but the pitcher emphasized that his only wish is to hear the "why" when given instruction on approach or training. Throughout his life, the methods Bauer has adopted have been based on research and experimentation not only by himself, but from coaches and analysts that he has surrounded himself with since youth.

Put it this way: Bauer does not care what you think, but he is interested in hearing what you know.

Carl Willis, the Indians' new pitching coach, said he appreciates that mentality.

"I know he has different ideas. They aren't things that he just pulled out of the clouds. He does research," Willis said. "Some of those things, I'm learning. I told him: 'I want to learn. I want to talk to you about them, because I want to be able to understand.' But, at the same time, I said, 'I'm going to have ideas, things that I think could help you. Take them for what they're worth. I'm not pulling things out of the clouds, either.'"

The other thing that Bauer wants to make clear is that his every waking moment is dedicated to becoming the best pitcher possible, which he hopes is eventually the best pitcher in baseball.

Bauer does not binge TV shows. He has no interest in card games with teammates in the clubhouse. The idea of marriage makes him laugh. He has hobbies -- like building his own website or designing and constructing his own fleet of drones -- but those are aimed at keeping his mind sharp. He doesn't drink or smoke. To Bauer, everything else feels like wasted time that he could be spending honing his craft.

In December 2012, Bauer met Boddy at a conference in Texas and was blown away by the instructor's presentation on G sensors and gyroscopes. Part of Boddy's talk involved a discussion on high-speed cameras to break down pitching mechanics, which was something Bauer had already been using in his workouts. Bauer was having an issue with his cameras -- frames were being skipped -- and consulted Boddy to see if he could help.

Boddy suggested trying a different type of memory card and the problem was solved. From there, they began a partnership that started with Bauer overhauling his delivery early in his tenure with the Tribe. The next phase was focusing on command and velocity training with some unique methods. This past winter, Bauer concentrated on pitch development, using frame-by-frame analysis of Corey Kluber's slurve in order to develop a new slider.

Why, following what was a career year, was Bauer so intent on adding a new pitch?

"I didn't win the Cy Young, so the season was a failure in my eyes," Bauer said. "That's the standard I hold myself to, is being the best pitcher in the league and the best pitcher in baseball. So, if I'm not that, then there's a reason I'm not that and I've got to go figure it out."

When Bauer was a kid, he and his dad would drill holes in baseballs and stuff fishing weights inside, creating weighted balls for his workouts. Weighted-ball use is now commonplace around baseball. During the spring, the Indians have stations set up around the fields for pitchers who incorporate that into their daily drills. There are more pitchers trying out the long, black shoulder tube that Bauer uses. Eyebrows no longer rise at the sight of a pitcher doing extreme long-toss.

What once was a spectacle is now acceptable.

"I've taken all the arrows in the back along the way, so it's been kind of a painful ride," Bauer said. "I still take some arrows on new stuff I'm trying to do. The command program that I developed three or four years ago, in three or four more years it's going to be mainstream and you'll see everybody doing it. But, I've been ridiculed for doing it."

That has never been an issue at Driveline, where Bauer is surrounded by people with similar views on baseball and how to push it forward through science.

"When I'm 50, I'm going to look back and say, 'I wish this stuff existed when I played,' Bauer said. "But, what I don't want to do is find out what did exist when I played and I didn't apply it and I didn't use it. So, that's one of my motivations for trying to use all this stuff and be the one driving the research forward. At least I can know, hey, I exhausted every resource I had available to me."

#### **Other top prospect performances from Thursday's Opening Day action:**

- A pair of Indians pitchers combined for 17 strikeouts over 12 innings as No. 8 prospect Shane Bieber fanned nine in six scoreless innings and No. 28 Elijah Morgan struck out eight over six innings as well. Bieber, pitching for Double-A Akron, gave up two hits and didn't allow a run, while Morgan gave up just one unearned run on four hits for Class A Lake County.

#### **Trevor Bauer cares. He just doesn't care what you think.**

by Jordan Bastian

The forefront of baseball science is located within a row of warehouses fit with bland aluminum siding. Tucked away in an industrial section of Kent, Wash., is Driveline Baseball, where data drives development.

It is also where Trevor Bauer practically lives in the winter, when baseball hibernates, but the pitcher does not. During Friday's team off-day in Seattle, Bauer took SportsTime Ohio and MLB.com on a tour of Driveline's facility, which includes a training building and research complex.

While Bauer discussed a wide range of topics, a group of pitchers in training eventually gave way to a crop of batters. The pitchers went through weighted-ball drills and mound workouts analyzed by the Trackman Bauer donated. The hitters swung weighted bats and had cage work broken down with HitTrax, which turns cage swings into video game-like simulations.

It's a science lab for athletes, and it's a place where Bauer is truly free to be himself.

Over the course of an hour-long interview, Bauer discussed Driveline, the development of his new slider and the reasons why his personality has rubbed plenty of people the wrong way. He also provided more insight on his charity work—the latest initiative being his “69 Days of Giving”—which is detailed on the website Bauer built himself.

Bauer discussed why he thinks baseball is still behind the times, and where he thinks the game can go given the technology and science that is rapidly gaining momentum behind the scenes.

Here is the full transcript of Bauer's conversation with STO and MLB.com.

Q: What are you drawn to Driveline?

TB: “I feel like it's home away from home, for sure. Mostly, it's kind of like a proud moment for me. I feel like I'm able to be who I am, because this is all the stuff I do anyway. It's just nice to have like-minded people around, so that the ideas that I have or have considered, there's other

ideas to bounce off that. So, the conversation and the research and stuff moves a lot quicker when there's more like-minded people around attacking the same problem from different angles."

Q: This obviously isn't an atmosphere like a clubhouse, but it's clearly an environment you feel really comfortable in. And we can already see some of the camaraderie with you have with the people here...

TB: "There's a lot of things. One is, one of the best things about sports is the camaraderie of people around working for the same thing. During the season and in the clubhouse, everyone's working to win a World Series, so that's a slightly different goal than everyone trying to get better on an individual skill. So, it's just two different orientations. But, in the offseason, when everyone's working to get better at a specific skill, that's when all the cool, nerdy stuff comes out that I really enjoy. So, I'm trying to add a slider, so I'm studying high-speed film day in, day out. But, in order to know if it's good, I've got to throw to hitters to see how they react to it, get their feedback. And so, if I'm going to be competing and throwing to hitters, and it's a new pitch, we'll talk crap to each other.

"The whole week long, as it leads up to the start, you're in the same building training together. So, you know they're trying to get better and everyone's got each other's back, but you can talk shit to each other. Oh, I'm going to punch you out. I nicknamed all the hitters—like 6'3" Dan, Max Doo Doo and a bunch of different ones. Eric No Sack. Just a bunch of different little things. We'd go back and forth with each other. I think that's one of the coolest things about the atmosphere here. But, it's also, you're around everyone working above and beyond what is expected out of their team or wherever their level of baseball is, to get better at actual skill development. And that's where a lot of the fun comes, is the nitty-gritty skill development part."

Q: Everyone thinks of a jock in a certain way, but there are other kids like you, kids into the "nerdy stuff," as you put it. Do you hope some of those kids can look at your background and find some inspiration? Maybe they don't look like the typical athlete, but they like physics and numbers and want to pursue athletics?

TB: "Yeah. That's actually one of the reasons I do a lot of the stuff that I do online. It's the reason I got Twitter in the first place. It's the reason I have my own website. There's a bunch of baseball videos on it talking about those different subjects and trying to give kids a resource. When I was growing up, I couldn't reach out to Barry Zito or Tim Lincecum and say, 'Hey, how do you throw your curveball?' Or, 'Hey, how do you,' whatever. There was hardly even any video online at that point. Or, Youtube was still in 144p and I couldn't see anything. So, I try to give kids a resource that maybe they don't have money to go to a local instructor. Maybe their local instructor isn't good or whatever.

"But, they can reach out and I can try to give them some sort of help, especially the kids that ask insightful questions that are actually interested in trying to improve. Like, 'Hey, can you explain laminar flow to me?' That's a question they'll ask, because clearly there's been some research done or they're trying to figure out how to make a two-seamer move. Or, 'Hey, when you throw your curveball, my coach will tell me to supinate or to twist my wrist. But, how do you throw it? It kind of hurts my arm.' Stuff like that, so that I can provide a resource for those kids to further themselves. And then, have them be empowered to be themselves and be nerdy and be into physics and still be an athlete, because that's not something that goes together very often."

Q: When did your love of baseball mold with your love of physics?

TB: "My dad is an engineer, so my whole entire life I was raised with that kind of engineering mindset present. And then, freshman year of high school, I took a physics class—Newtonian physics with Martin Kirby. He's a British guy. Great accent. He made class super fun. It was one of my favorite classes ever. Examples like, 'If a baby falls off a cliff, how high does the baby bounce when it hits the ground?' Just little funny things like that, instead of like, 'Oh, a ball falls off a cliff.' It was a really fun class and I started thinking about, when I learned about torque, it was like, 'Well, how do I throw harder?' I need to create more torque in the delivery, so what do I torque against each other? Where's the separation come, power and stuff like that. Then, how do I make a ball move when it flies through the air? What are the effects of that and whatnot. So, it was really that time, when I started trying to study.

"The first thing was momentum, learning how momentum compounds over the course of an event happening. So, if I can move myself up and down a lot quicker, then I have more available energy. So then, if I sequence it up and transfer it while there's more available energy in the system to transfer the ball and whatnot, maybe that's a route that I can go to throw harder. I knew I needed to throw harder to get to the next level. But, yeah, it was really ninth grade and that class when I started on this journey on the physics side. The work ethic stuff and putting in the hours is something that started when I was six. My dad got me pitching lessons for the first time. My dad worked in New Mexico, but we moved to California. So, he would fly out Sunday night and he would get back super early Friday morning—like two o'clock in the morning, Friday morning. So, he always told me, 'I'll get pitching lessons for you, but I'm not going to pay for the same lesson over and over. So, you have to go out and do the work in-between so that you can get better and you can advance in the pitching lessons.'

"So, I would ride my bike up to the local park with a bucket of balls on my handlebars for 10–12 years or whatever it was, when I was growing up, during the week, because I didn't have anyone to go throw with. So, I threw long toss into a fence. I took my rope and my med balls up to the park and would work out for three or four hours a night after team practice and after homework was done. So, that started a little bit earlier than ninth grade. But, that's kind of both ends of the question."

Q: Tim Lincecum was a guy you liked watching from afar when you were younger. What was it like then to see him training here at Driveline over the offseason?

TB: "It was interesting. I'd never met him before. I met him last year. He was here in September when we came. They brought a bunch of guys in. I met him real quick, like, 'Hey, how's it going? I'm Trevor. I know you're busy doing other stuff.' He was busy getting his work done, so we

didn't talk a whole lot. But, my first real interaction with him ... this is a guy I've looked up to for a long time and my first conversation with him is like completely normal big league conversation. We're talking about [things you joke about in a clubhouse]. That's not at all how I thought my first conversation with Lincecum was going to go. It was just, 'Oh, he's a baseball player.' Especially him. He had such a—and still does, really—such a cult following. He was so much larger in life, the way he came up. And San Francisco was one of the perfect markets for that. He just had such a following and such a persona about him that it can be intimidating in some ways. But, he's great. We shot the [expletive] all offseason and had fun working out. He kind of challenged me and was trying to get him out of his comfort zone a little bit."

Q: What is your comfort zone? Do you even know yet?

TB: "I enjoy being uncomfortable, honestly. I think I've studied so much that that's where skill development and improvement comes from, is being just on the edge of your ability and just slightly past it. That's what I really enjoy. So like, I'll go into facing hitters' live at-bats knowing I lifted upper body yesterday, so my velo's going to be down. And I'm only throwing fastball, which is one of my worst pitches. And a slider, which is brand-new. And we have an offseason-long bet that we had on who was going to win, me or the hitters. You get a little bit of that nervousness and you're like, 'Oh, shoot, if I am bad today, if I give up a homer today, that really sets me back for the whole offseason.' But, that's fun, because you try to talk crap and whatever. I like when the stakes are raised.

"So, that's I guess my comfort zone, is feeling like I can be myself and just talk crap to people in a productive way, a helpful way. I think everybody here knows I've got their back and I don't mean all the stuff I say. I'm just trying to raise the adrenaline level and stuff like that. Even in Spring Training, the first couple outings are always fun, because I limit myself to only two pitches or three pitches and a lot of times they're my worst pitches. So, I'm trying to go out there and compete against big league guys and get guys out with my worst stuff. So, it's like pushing me to improve. In the weight room, if I'm next to someone who's slightly better than me, they'll start talking crap to me and pissing me off, so I want to go be better. That's what's enjoyable for me."

Q: Why, following a career year, were you so intent on adding a slider to the mix?

TB: "I didn't win the Cy Young, so the season was a failure in my eyes. That's the standard I hold myself to, is being the best pitcher in the league and the best pitcher in baseball. So, if I'm not that, then there's a reason I'm not that and I've got to go figure it out, because next season I need to be that or it's another failure. I only play baseball for a certain amount of time, so I only have so many seasons I can fail and still get to my goals. That's how I view things. So, the process was similar to what it was every offseason. I look at what do I do well, what did I do well this year, what did I do poorly, what can I improve on, where did the season really turn, why wasn't it as good as it could've been, and let me go fix that.

"So, I needed a pitch with zero vertical movement and preferably a lateral breaking pitch. So, it was the slider. But, I worked on a changeup, too. And the changeup has zero vertical movement and that would've worked as well, but the slider kind of got figured out a little bit earlier. That's the engineering mindset. You have to develop a process and test it and then you iterate. And then where am I, where do I want to go, process. OK, how did it work? Where am I now, where do I want to go. It's a constant iteration."

Q: Do you believe that the slider can help your curveball?

TB: "It definitely will. Maybe not as much in the feel category, but from the hitter's perspective, now they have to defend against two-plus breaking balls. So, from a tunneling perspective, the visual from the hitter, just to not being able to eliminate a pitch. Like, in order for me to tunnel my fastball and my curveball, I've got to bounce my curveball and throw the fastball at the belt. So, it's hard to get calls on the fastball or it's hard to get swings on the curveball. So, if I throw fastballs for strikes and curveballs for strikes, it's good, because I have two pitches that I'm throwing for strikes, but there's immediate identification on it. So now, when a hitter sees a little pop they're not sure if it's a slider that stays in the zone or a curveball that goes below the zone. They also aren't sure if they see a fastball up or a slider down, those are both strike pitches that are both tough to hit because of the speed differential. Also, I can go through the first time through the order throwing fastball and slider and be super effective, and I can go through the second time throwing fastball and curveball being super effective. And, if there's two ways I can get hitters out—not even counting a comeback two-seamer or backdoor cutter or the other pitches I throw—then it's just confusing. And that's the point."

Q: Why do you say that you hate your fastball?

TB: "It does [suck]. It was the 17th-worst fastball in all the big leagues last year. It's effective when I don't throw it as much. If I can throw fastballs like 35 percent of the time, where hitters have to respect 95, but they don't get a fastball all the time, then it's effective, because they get caught in the middle speeds. They're having to defend a slider and a curveball in the 80s and a changeup and a cutter in the upper 80s. And then, every now and then, they get 95. That's when it's effective, but if I just sit there and throw fastballs, or if a hitter sees two or three fastballs for a strike in an at-bat, I lost that at-bat. The result might be in my favor. He might hit an out somewhere or whatever, but that's a loss just from a game theory standpoint. If I have to throw a hitter two or three fastballs in an at-bat, that's not successful for me over the course of a season. It's like one of the best pitches in baseball when it gets taken and one of the worst when it gets hit. So, if I can freeze people with it, then it's great. So, I want people to not swing when they see a fastball. The only way to do that is to throw a high percentage of offspeed stuff. They start looking for that and they get surprised when they see a fastball."

Q: How much do you appreciate being part of a pitching staff that does throw offspeed pitches at one of the highest rates in baseball?

TB: "I think it's great. I'm glad that they allow me to do it. I'm glad they finally came to the conclusion that I came to in 2012 or '13. My whole time in the Minor Leagues, they stressed fastball command and throwing more fastballs. You've got to throw 65–70 percent fastballs. And that's just not how I'm effective. That's never something I've done. I didn't do it in college. I threw about 45 percent fastballs in college. I didn't do it in high school. It's just not something I've ever done or I can be effective with. I think when you look at the numbers, and the numbers say league wide that, if you have a good breaking ball, you should throw that more often. Ultimately, it comes down to you should throw your best pitch most often.

"The problem is hitters are optimized to hit fastballs, so it's very rare that a fastball is someone's best pitch. So, if the fastball is not your best pitch, why are you throwing it 75 percent of time or 60 percent of the time or whatever? Why are you featuring it the most? A lot of guys, their fastball is one of their worst pitches, because it's got average characteristics and hitters are looking for it. But, they're sitting there throwing it and hitting barrels 60 percent of the time. How is that a recipe for success? So, even if you look at Carrasco. Carrasco had a worse fastball than I did last year—he was like ninth worst. But, he can still have a really good season, because he throws a high percentage of splits, slider, curveballs and stuff like that.

"Ultimately, it just comes back down to finding what works for you. If Danny Salazar's best pitch is his fastball—which, it probably isn't, his changeup is probably his best pitch—but he should feature those two most often, which he does and he has great success when he's healthy. But, my best pitch is not my fastball. I have multiple pitches. My curveball and my slider are going to play a lot better than my fastball this year, so I'm going to leverage those."

Q: The D-backs didn't really buy into your approach after drafting you in the first round. So, when you were traded, what played into your confidence to keep going about things the way you do behind the scenes?

TB: "There's multiple layers there. I was depressed and wanted to quit baseball after 2012 and got traded, so it was a breath of fresh air, especially going to a club that I knew wanted to draft me. I had multiple conversations with them and it was friendly. So, I was excited and ready to go again when I got traded, which is huge, because like I said, I didn't want to play any more. I was depressed about it. It's like you look up to something for so long as a goal and then you get there and it's different than what you thought and then it's like your belief system, or whatever, just crumbles and it's hard to deal with. The self-belief stuff started when I was a kid. I didn't have any friends in high school. I didn't have any friends in grade school or things like that. So, my parents, they raised me, one, to not be blindly allegiant to authority. They raised me to think for myself and also to just believe that I was working for something down the road that my peers weren't going to have, and that I'd be better off in life for it. Take the long-term approach.

"So, the combination of those two things, knowing my process and my process is the correct process—not what I do per se. It's evaluate where you are, create a process to get better. Evaluate where you are and then go that way. That's the only way you can improve. So, if I have that mindset that I don't have everything figured out, that I'm trying to improve every day, and when I ask questions, if I don't get acceptable answers back, then I have no reason to doubt what I'm doing and to change it, regardless of who's telling it to me. Now, that's created a lot of problems. It ruined relationships with the Diamondbacks and it has ruined relationships with the Indians. There's a lot of strained relationships because of that process, but I think as people get to know me more, they realize that my unwillingness to listen is not arrogance. It's not that I have everything figured out. It's that I just require a good answer and research or a reason.

"I think that's one of the things that annoys me about the media a lot of times. The questions are so lazy. There's no effort put into it. There's no thought. There's no anything like that a lot of the time. So, I just don't have any interest in dealing in that world. I like stuff on an intellectual basis. I like stuff that has thought and effort and a reasoning behind it. So, if you can come to me and say, 'Hey, we don't think you should throw weighted balls and here's why. We did all the studies. Here's what the numbers say. Here's injury cases,' or whatever. Then, we can have a discussion about it. But, when you come to me and say, 'Hey, we don't want you to throw those, because you're going to hurt your arm.' OK, based on what? If it's, 'Well, I never did it, so you don't need to do it and that's not what we do here.' Well, that's what I do and I have reasons behind it and you don't have any reasons why I shouldn't, so we can't have a discussion about this. It's not negotiable if that's where you're coming from."

Q: What is it like to see the things you were criticized for early on—extreme long-toss, weighted balls, your shoulder tube drills—be adopted by more and more players around the game?

TB: "I've taken all the arrows in the back along the way, so it's been kind of a painful ride. I still take some arrows on new stuff I'm trying to do. The command program that I developed three or four years ago, in three or four more years it's going to be mainstream and you'll see everybody doing it. But, I've been ridiculed for doing it by people in my own organization over the past couple of years and whatnot. So, it's a proud moment when I see people doing it. It's one of the things that got me into baseball. I want to help provide research and resources to people coming up, so that they can be better at baseball, so they can have a more productive career and whatnot. But, I also want to move the game forward.

"Baseball operates in the frickin' dark ages. The stuff that's done in training room, the stuff that's done in the clubhouse, the way people go about throwing their bullpen and the way BP is taken. All this stuff is so behind the times, behind the research that we have available to us now. Why doesn't every organization have high-speed cameras? It's asinine. That finally caught on, but I was doing high-speed video work in 2011, when 240 frames wasn't on the iPhones yet. You had to buy a dedicated camera to do it. I bought five of them to do it. Stuff like that that you have to have in order to get the right answers. This is a multi-billion dollar industry and it operates on principles and procedures that were developed 40–50 years ago with no research or science behind it. It's ridiculous.

“So, it’s a proud moment seeing that some of that stuff is being accepted, because I do think I’m very well aware of how much I’ve driven that forward. It’s not all me. There’s a lot of people doing a lot of really good things and Driveline is one of the places that’s really helped drive it forward. It’s not just me and not just Driveline. But, the sense of pride that I feel for it has to be a similar sense of pride that all the other people driving this forward feel. It’s nice when something you’re passionate about and you work hard to push forward and you take a lot of crap for, eventually becomes accepted. You don’t necessarily get the credit for it, but you know deep down that I’ve been a big part of this.”

Q: When people see you working out with your shoulder tube, can you explain what you’re doing?

TB: “That’s all rhythmic stability for the shoulder. So, it’s activation of the smaller rotator cuff muscles, even stuff in the elbows to your grip strength. You’re activating pronation, supination, flexion, extension. So, it’s basically a warm-up. That’s the first thing is warming up the shoulder, so that when I go throw, everything’s firing and active. The other part of it is teaching co-contraction, which is necessary to throw hard and to stay healthy. And there’s not a whole lot of stuff out there that works on it. There’s a lot more stuff now. I’ve seen a ball where you can kind of move it around and stuff, which is applying the same principle. I started doing that back when I was 14. It’s multi-layered. Warm-up, activation and then just health and teaching firing patterns and stuff like that.”

Q: How much does your comfort level improve when people start to get used to your personality?

TB: “It’s been that way my entire career. When I went to high school, the freshman team hated me. They used to throw balls at me during BP and try to hit me in the back of the head while I was trying to take ground balls at shortstop to get better at fielding. The JV coach actively ridiculed me and made fun of me for carrying around the “penis pole”—my shoulder tube. The varsity coach hated me and actively tried to kick me off the team for going to the park at night and doing work outside of his practice, for missing summer games to go train, instead of playing meaningless summer games. So, for the first two years, everybody hated me and it was miserable.

“And then, by about two and a half, three years in, everyone realized—all the players and stuff realized—you know what? He’s not that bad. He’s just someone we have to get accustomed to. He has no ill intentions. He’s not out doing stuff that’s going to harm the team outside of the field. I’m not out drinking or partying. I’m not out getting arrested. I’m not out doing whatever. All I care about is getting better at baseball. That’s fine. He’s not actively trying to make my life worst, so we can accept him. Then, I went to college. I graduated high school early, went to college the first year the team hated me. I was different. No one liked me. Sophomore year, I was really good. One of the best pitchers in the nation and still the team didn’t really accept me. The upperclassmen didn’t really like me, but that team kind of came together and we went to the College World Series and it was kind of OK.

“By my junior year, again, two and a half, three years in, everyone was like, ‘Oh, this guy’s actually not bad. We can accept him. There’s nothing wrong with him.’ I go to pro ball and I bounce around from organization to organization. I’m in Triple-A. I’m in Double-A. I’m in the big leagues. Whatever. But, if you actually just look at the time that I’ve been consecutively in the big leagues, halfway through 2014, that’s half a year, then 2015 and 2016—two and a half years. By 2017, all of a sudden, it’s like, ‘Oh, Bauer’s made this huge change. He’s such a much better teammate. Look at the progress he’s made.’ And, yeah, I have made progress. I’ve done a lot of work trying to find ways to interact with people and whatnot, but a lot of it is just it takes people a while to get used to me.

“There’s not very many people like me who just say what they think. It wouldn’t seem like a big problem, but it is. If I tell you what I think, then you take offense to it a lot of times, because it’s not exactly how you think or it’s not exactly what you want to hear or whatever. I’m not blindly allegiant to authority or to experience. I question stuff and I say things. I try to say the truth and be accurate with stuff. So, if I say, ‘I didn’t throw any changeups tonight, I threw mostly cutters.’ And then someone else says something else, now I’m in trouble for not toeing the company line. I’m just not going to say something that I don’t feel is accurate. So, it takes a while to get used to me, until you realize that I don’t care what you do.

“I don’t care. Go live your life. I’m not going to judge you for it. As long as you come to the field and you’re professional and you treat me as a professional and you go out there and do your job for team, I’m fine with it. That’s my definitely of a great teammate, not necessarily someone who sits there for four hours and plays cards every day or whatever. I don’t value that, because that’s time I want to be spending improving myself in some way, whether it’s baseball, whether it’s my off-field ideas and ventures, whether it’s just hobbies I enjoy that then keep me in a good mindset to do baseball. Ultimately, it all comes down to, for me, I want to be the best at baseball. So, everything that I do is suited towards being the best at baseball.

“If something’s not going to help me or it’s going to hold me back from being the best at baseball, I just cut it out of my life. That goes for relationships. It goes for TV shows. I don’t watch TV. I don’t waste my time with that. It goes for all sorts of different stuff. But, there’s not many people like that, so it takes a while to get used to me.”

Q: What’s the biggest misconception about Trevor Bauer?

TB: “I think a lot of people feel like I’m a bad person or I’m arrogant or I’m callous or something in that vein, because they see how I am online and they see how I am in news media and they see how I am in all the reports that come out of the clubhouse about how uncoachable I am or how difficult I am or whatever. So, I’d say that’s the biggest misconception. I’m not arrogant. I’m not callous. People that know me, whatever, I get along with them great. I’m very caring. I try to help my friends out. I go above and beyond. I try to enrich peoples’ lives. I do it in my own way—‘69 Days of Giving’ is one of those things. I’m trying to involve as many people as possible and raise as much awareness for charity as possible. But, people are going to see the numbers and they’ll be like, ‘Oh, this kid’s immature. This kid thinks he’s smarter than everybody.’

But, ultimately, it's like the best way to get as much involvement as possible is to make something provocative, something sexual, something kind of underhanded, because if I just give to charity, no one would care and no one would notice.

"People give to charity all the time and no one talks about it. But, as soon as you attach a sexual number to it or a marijuana number to it or some sort of reason why you're doing it, now everybody cares and it's a national story and it's going to be a much bigger campaign because of it. But, if you believe I'm uncoachable and arrogant and smarter than everybody else and callous and whatever, you interpret that much different. If you believe all that stuff, you interpret the fact that I do weighted balls or whatever as much different. So, if people would just understand what I've been saying, that I only care about being better at baseball and that, if you get to know me and just treat me like a normal human being, I'm much different than what's portrayed in the media."

Q: To speak with this much confidence in the things you believe in, whether it's fair or not, you needed to have a certain level of success for people to become more open-minded and listen to you. How good does it feel to have started to reach that point?

TB: "A couple things on that. One, anybody who plays in professional baseball has had a ton of success. So, it's what you hold it relative to. Everybody online, 'Oh, he's never had an ERA below 4.00. He's never,' whatever, all this stuff. 'He's not successful.' But, when I say I'm in the top 0.01 percent of people that play the game of my profession, it's true. It just depends on what you hold it relative to. So, when I speak like this, or before when I would say something, it was coming from the success that I've had in baseball, because that's how I view it. I'm playing professional baseball. I'm one of the best baseball players in the world. I'm at the top of my profession. But, other people don't view it that way, so I come off as pompous or arrogant or aloof or whatever."

"But, now that I've won 17 games or whatever—a [stat] that doesn't even matter. If you look at my numbers, my ERA was very similar. I just happened to have good run support and got on a roll. But, I did the same thing in the first half of 2016. But, because I happened to win 17 games and because we were on the 22-game win streak and because it finished the season [strong] instead of opening the season [strong], now people view things differently. And I realize that, but it's just not something I'm willing to change—how I talk—because I haven't posted a 3.00 ERA in the big leagues. Like, that shouldn't determine how I speak or handle myself or whatever. But, it's just how I come off. It is what it is."

Q: But, now there's more receptiveness to many of the things you've believed in...

TB: "Yeah, of course. Now, the reception is [better]. Just look at the narrative around me this spring, right? It's so much different. One, it's he developed a slider and did all this work in the offseason. Giving to charity. Much better in the clubhouse. Bauer knows what he's talking about. The Infield Chatter piece came out about all my offseason work and giving back to kids. That got a lot of play. That's all stuff that I've been doing for the past however many years. But now, because people look at it like, 'Oh, he won 17 games. He's figured it out, because he finished the season strong and he shoved in the postseason in one outing,' or whatever. Now that people see that, now they start looking at all these things like, 'Now I want to do that, because that leads to that.' And, it's just the same process. I haven't changed anything. It's not like now all of a sudden I'm working at my craft. The only thing that I've changed is my intent on controlling the narrative that surrounds me, so you can't sit there and bash me non-stop in the media without me fighting back."

Q: With the charity work, you said you felt like you had to do something provocative to get attention. Does that bother you?

TB: "It doesn't bother me at all. It's just the new age. It's society right now. Provocative sells. Sex sells. Drama sells and trolling sells. That's what's newsy. So, you have to play the game that's out there if you want to further your cause. I've talked to multiple people since I've launched, just in the last few days. They said, 'I tried to do the same exact thing, but it never caught on. No one really cared.' Well, that's part of the reason for it. You have to understand how you're marketing and the landscape. So, no, it doesn't bother me. And I don't care. I'm going to take backlash for it—I get that—but everybody who's between the ages of 10 and probably 30 is going to love it, and those are the ones who are on social media anyway, which is how I'm marketing the campaign. Those are the people I want to grab and have them retweet it or whatever, because that spreads the most awareness."

"And charity, this is another thing, I like giving back and trying to help people. That's why I'm on Twitter—to help kids. That's why I come in and donate the Trackman that's on the wall that was \$30,000. That's why I donated VFR machines to Driveline for studying. They were \$11,000. I bought a Keiser machine that's \$6,500. I bought all this different stuff that I've put in. And I've got a facility in California and I pay all the opening costs for Jim Wagner's Throwzone. It's stocked with high-speed cameras and whatever, so there's another facility that can help kids. The Infield Chatter piece touched a little on this. I like helping people."

"Like, my friends in my personal life. If someone is trying to move up in their life, like, I've let people come stay with me for a year rent-free so they can have the time to study and try to move forward in their life. I'll pay for someone to further their education or make their living situation better so they can try to further their career. But, none of that stuff gets talked about, because it's all in my personal life. I keep it private and I don't need any recognition for it. I don't care. Those people are important to me and I try to improve their life a little."

"Again, this isn't any different. It's just now I'm putting it out in public and I'm trying to control the narrative, so it's more positive. And it's just something I'm passionate about. I've been very fortunate. A lot of people work very hard and don't have the opportunities that I've had and I realize that. So, if I can help out with people who are less fortunate than me genetically or health-wise or just job-position wise or circumstances, it doesn't matter, then that's something that I can do and I'm in a position that I can do it and I enjoy doing it."

Q: Have you ever thought about, if you win a Cy Young...

TB: "When

. "Q: ...how will you push yourself after reaching that level?"

TB: "My goal is three Cy Youngs. One is not enough. And three is more realistic. Ultimately, I wanted to win the most Cy Youngs ever—That was before pro ball—which is eight. So, I've got a long way to go on that. But, yeah, when I win my first Cy Young, it doesn't even matter, I don't even have to win the Cy Young. All I have to do is post an ERA south of 3.50 and be in contention for it and the entire landscape of baseball is going to change. There's going to be nothing left you can say about me. Like, 'Oh, this doesn't work. Look, he's never had an ERA under 4.00.' OK, well, I just posted a 3.40. Well, 'He's not the best pitcher in the league.' Well, I'm a top-five pitcher in the league in strikeout rate and this and that. OK, well, 'He walks too many people.' No, the walk rate's fallen for the last [few] years. 'Well, no,' whatever. There's going to be nothing left. At some point, all the barriers are going to be broken and everyone's going to have to accept the fact that, yeah, maybe he does know what he's talking about. Maybe he's on to something. Then, at that point, then everything, all this stuff that I've been researching for the past 15–20 years or whatever, is going to be flushed into baseball and it's going to be the new fad. Hopefully, that's this year."

Q: What's the next frontier for your research? You've mentioned virtual reality in the past.

TB: "That's huge. If the technology catches up and it's realistic enough, and at some point it will, for sure. It's close. Understanding what hitters actually see to talk about sequencing and whatnot. I think the more tangible one is pitch design, like the stuff I did this offseason, and command training. If you can take, whatever, So and So Big Leaguer with elite stuff, struggles to throw strikes, and you can teach him how to throw strikes consistently without losing stuff, that's massively beneficial. If you can take XY Big Leaguer who has one plus pitch and you can teach him a second plus pitch, that's tremendously valuable. And it's not hard. It's not hard. It just requires time. It requires the knowledge of what to do and then it requires time and effort being put in by the athlete. But, if one person doesn't do it, someone else will and that person who doesn't will be flushed out and the person who does will be a success story and everyone will be talking about he added this pitch or he did that or whatever. That's the frontier that we're on right now. Pitch design is being integrated right now. It's slowly catching on. Command training would be the next one."

Q: What is involved in command training?

TB: "So, command is all feel. So, proprioception of the ball coming off your hand and being able to reliably repeat your delivery and consistently locate a ball at a certain spot. So, in order to do that, you have to develop the feel and you have to develop consistency. The best way to develop feel and consistency is to make everything foreign and inconsistent in training. It forces your body to adapt. So, if you imagine command—so, like a fastball down and away—think of it as an algorithm.  $X \text{ this plus } Y \text{ that plus } Z \text{ this equals fastball located down and away}$ . If only one set of numbers satisfies that equation, then you're in trouble. Because, the mound's different, the weather is different, your body is tired in the third inning versus the first, your heartrate is up, or whatever. You're in trouble. You're not going to be able to reliably do it.

"But, if you can get 100 numbers to satisfy the equation, or 100 sets or numbers, or 1,000 sets of numbers, or 10,000 sets of numbers to satisfy that equation, then you can throw upsidedown on a mound backwards with your left hand at 90 mph with a glove. That's obviously an exaggeration, but that's the process. So, you force yourself to live just past your ability level and you live in that zone, where you can still accomplish the task sometimes and it's tangible, but you're pushing yourself. So, it's a different slope of the mound. It's a different weighted ball. It's a different size ball. It's a different location. It's a different pitch every time.

"It's just constantly changing three things, that's the system, the implement and the activity. So, partial fatigue of a leg and throw a pitch. Change the size of the ball—the implement—the size of the ball, the weight of the ball or whatever. The activity is throwing down a slope or doing a pick-off move, it's doing from a catcher pose and trying to hit a spot. All this stuff. The more you're able to train that, the more you're able to train every single throw you have, there's an external focus on a spot, the more you're able to train that, the more sets of numbers you add to your algorithm and the better off you are. That's why, if you look at my walk rates, they've fallen every single year. Since command was identified as one of the things I needed to work on, so walk rates plummet. And then my stuff gets better.

"How is that possible? Well, 'You can't throw it hard and command it.' So, I don't throw as hard, and command it. But, how does my stuff get better and my command gets better? I completely changed my delivery four or five years ago. I move drastically different now than I moved ever in my life before. How do I do that? How is that possible? That's how it's possible. Tons of hours of work on the right formula with the right information with the right process."

Q: During command training, how much do you introduce distraction into the workouts?

TB: "Yeah. So, there's all sorts of things. Environment is huge. If someone's sitting there constantly trying to talk crap to me or playing obnoxious music. Or, if I lose today's battle, I get shot from 30 feet with a paint ball barechested in 20 degree weather at night. All these different things force adaptation. Turn all the lights out and have one red dot and that's all. And you don't know if you hit it or not. That just trains the process, like now I'm uncomfortable. I can't move the same. I don't have the sensory stuff around me to feel comfortable on the mound, but my process is I have to hit that red dot with whatever pitch. So, that trains the mental process of, OK, identify a spot and hit it. But, I have no idea if I did or not—there's no feedback loop. You take the feedback loop out.

"You disrupt the system as much as possible and in any way. Throw a pitch and then shoot a basketball. Now, you have to access a completely different movement pattern, so when you come back to throw the next pitch, you're coming off a different movement pattern, so it's not as easily

accessible. So, your body stays engaged and your mind stays engaged. You don't just throw four reps in a row and your mind checks out, because you're on autopilot and you get nothing out of the remainder of the 40, 50 or 100 throws you make that day."

Q: When you step on the mound, what is in your mind?

TB: "[Expletive] you.' There can't be anything. It has to be pure competition mindset. It's got to be like, 'OK, I'm going to beat you. You're not getting a hit. I'm going to punch you out and make you look stupid and to do that, I'm going to throw this pitch at 100.' And, if it's not 100 and it's not there, the next pitch, it's like, 'I'm going to throw this pitch that's going to have two and a half feet of lateral break at 85 mph and I'm going to throw it right there.' And then I go do it. And it's not that, but I'm in a 1-1 count or whatever... Every pitch is ultra competitive and there can be no conscious thought, because conscious thought is the enemy of performance mindset. It's all about performance at that point. All the work's done once you get on the mound."

Q: How important of a role does your catcher play? Like, with Roberto Perez, you guys got on a roll together to a point where there was a time we never saw you shake him off.

TB: "Yeah, because he challenged me to not shake and it pushed me past my comfort zone. I said, 'Fine, I'll go dominate without the ability to shake.' That's the same thing like when I tell Avisail Garcia to get back in the box. This year, I'm going to tell someone exactly what pitch is coming for an entire at-bat—for the fun of it. And, because it raises the stakes and it's uncomfortable. That's how you get better. But, a lot of times, when I step on the mound I'm like, 'I'm throwing this pitch.' And then if it doesn't get put down, I'm shaking until I get to it. So, that was all that was. Sometimes Yan will shake at me. Make me fake shake at times to distract or disguise or whatever the case may be. I guess that's the mindset."

Q: Can you see why people would perceive your approach—the "I'm going to throw this pitch no matter what" mindset—might frustrate a coach or a leader for the team?

TB: "Yeah, sure. I get it. Completely. I think it's justified, especially for a kid coming up. The coaches have experience to say, 'Oh, he knows what he's doing,' or, 'I trust him,' or whatever. I think a lot of people in baseball value experience over numbers. If I had my ideal situation, the pitches would be called by a random number generator. So, №1-20 would equal curveball. There'd be a certain breakdown and the catcher would look down and the number generator would say 69 and he'd put down curveball and I'd throw that. And, every now and then, we'd audible if we recognized something in the hitter. That's how I would do it, but that's not how it's ever been done and that flies in the face of every experience. Like, oh, well, the catcher can see this and the catcher is in control about knowing the hitters. He's done all the research. Just follow him. But, if I throw a pitch that I'm not convicted in that I don't want to throw, then how am I going to be competitive with that pitch in my mindset, if I sit there and say, 'Oh, shoot. I wanted to throw curveball, but he called fastball. So, now let me just locate this fastball, I guess.' I can't be competitive with that pitch, so that takes me out of my competition mindset and my performance mindset and that's a net negative a lot of times."

Q: So often, you have rattled off a hitter's OPS against a certain pitch in a certain zone, so that's clearly a scouting report approach. But, how do you balance that with sticking with your best pitch even if the report would dictate otherwise?

TB: "A lot of it's preparation and knowing this guys' OPS on this pitch is this or whatever. So, I know my primary attack against this guy is fastball-curveball, and then I know when I do throw a fastball and I do throw a curveball, I have to throw it to these zones and then that maximizes my leverage. So, when I'm on the mound and I'm in a big situation and I go, 'OK, I'm going to throw it to a spot, because the numbers say this and these are my best pitches.' I mesh those before the game, so that I know what to do in those leverage situations. A lot of times, too, like I said earlier, you'd audible. Like, OK, it says to throw heaters up and in, but he just hit that fastball at 95. It was up and in and 700 feet foul and I got lucky. I can't. I've got to throw something else, because he's on that. So, you have to read the hitter."

"So, it's meshing the numbers and the experience. The best process has experience and numbers really well meshed together. You can't have the best process without either of those. You can't just do it on this or do it just on that. It has to be meshed together and that's the difficult part, because what do you look at? Do you look at slugging? Do you look at OPS? And when you read his swing, what are you trying to optimize? Are you trying to optimize to not give up hits? Are you trying to optimize to not give up damage? What're you trying to do? Maybe my fastball down and away is a great pitch, but if I can't locate it there consistently, then that becomes a net negative pitch, because I miss too much off. It's either a ball or it's getting hit, even though that might be the best pitch on paper. If I can't locate it there, then it's not."

Q: Do you like some of the newer expected metrics for evaluating hitters? Things that take exit velocity and launch angle into account? Something like expected wOBA comes to mind. Because there can still be a lot of noise in slugging and OPS.

TB: "Yeah. Say, there's a shift and someone bunts a ball just past third base and it's a double, because no one can get there. Now, his slugging jumps. I do like the expected ones. I think they're not as fine maybe as they could be. I think if you can get, ultimately, and this is going to happen in the next five years maybe. Probably not even that long. It's probably going to happen. It might already exist—some teams may already have it. I don't know. The ultimate scenario is, OK, this guy, this is his pitch characteristic relative to everyone else in the league. So, for this specific hitter, we know exactly how he performs in general against this pitch characteristic. Now, where does he perform worst against that pitch characteristic? Come up with a heat map. Now, you take your pitcher and you say here's all of his pitch characteristics. We know how the hitter performs in general against all the pitch characteristics that this pitcher has. What are the best options, in general?"

“So you say, OK, we’re going to leverage curveball and four-seam fastball. OK, now, where are we going to throw those to this hitter? And how good is the pitcher at actually executing that pitch? So, this number is going to take into account the pitcher’s miss tendency. Like I said, if the fastball down and away is the best pitch, but I reliably miss over the middle when I try to throw a fastball down and away. Say I miss 50 percent of the time, then that has to be factored in, and I don’t think it is right now. So, there should be some sort of expected [number] based on my pitch characteristic based on each hitter. You have to [mesh them]. So, my pitch characteristics to a specific hitter relative to that hitter facing those specific pitch characteristics. What does he do against those? And then how accurately can I locate them to these certain spots, and then create an expected value for each pitch.

“So, when the catcher puts down fastball away, I know my expected run value on that is X. And we just call a game based on a random number generator that calculates all of that. It has all that fed in there. So, I know, when he puts down fastball in, this is the best pitch to throw in this count, whereas right now it’s like, ‘Oh, I saw this week, he hit a couple fastballs in, so we’re going to go down and away. That’s very hard to do, because you have to have a way to calculate miss percentage. How do you calculate miss percentage? How much did I miss by? There’s no way to tell exactly where the pitcher intended to throw the ball, right? So, that’s something you might have to know and to designate in bullpen sessions.

“[On a basic level], you look at the catcher’s glove. But, sometimes it’s like, I want to throw this down and away, but the catcher is thinking up and away or whatever. So, he flashes the glove up higher and then he sets it up down lower. Which one was it? So, that might be something that, in order to get your miss tendency, that you have to sit there and do in Spring Training and you have to designate in the bullpen session, every single pitch, ‘I’m trying to throw this pitch. OK, catcher, move the glove a little bit left. Right there. That’s where I want to throw it.’ And then we’re going to video it and we’re going to calculate this. But, even that’s flawed, because in a game situation, your adrenaline is a lot higher. So, it’s a tough problem to solve, but that’s ultimately the best way to do it.

“That’s the best way to sequence. That’s the best way to call a game and whatnot. So, hopefully in the next, well, if it’s not done in the next year, I’m hiring my own person to do it. I’ll incorporate it before that.”

Q: How did you first get introduced to Driveline and the work Kyle Boddy was doing here?

TB: “I met Kyle for the first time in December of 2012 at a coaches clinic that I was at at the Texas Baseball Ranch. I was having these problems with my high-speed cameras. They would skip frames at intervals. So, we’d manually turn them on and we’d try to get one pitch in a session. We’d film 10 pitches or whatever and hope that there was one pitch where all the cameras didn’t skip, so we had a smooth play feed. So, Kyle gave his presentation on G sensors and gyroscopes and all sorts of different stuff. I was like, ‘Wow, that’s super interesting. I like the direction that that guy’s going. It’s not something I’d been exposed to before. I’m going to go talk to him about it afterwards.’ And he had some high-speed film in his presentation, which I had never seen anywhere else.

“So, I was like, ‘What camera do you shoot with?’ or whatever. I was like, ‘Do you ever get this problem with the frame skipping.’ He said, ‘Oh yeah, you have to use a class 10 memory card instead of class 4. The write speed isn’t high enough, so it just drops frames, blah blah blah. I tried it. It worked and it was like, ‘Oh, that makes sense. That guy knows what he’s talking about.’ So then, I was trying to change my delivery all of 2013. I talked to him a couple times during the year about it and then came up here to Driveline—well, it was a much different facility. But, I came up to see him after the 2013 [season] to work on some mechanical stuff.

“And the stuff he told me was like, ‘Yeah, you know what? I can feel that. It makes so much more sense. I get it. And now I can go work on it.’ Every since then, it’s like I sense value in not only the research, but the environment and the resources. So, I keep coming back.”

Q: How has Driveline grown since you first came here?

TB: “So, when I first came, there were four people that were here with me. Kyle was in like the rafters or someone else’s facilities. If you see just this mound area, if you just take the cage and extend it just past the mound, that’s the area that he had. It was upstairs. He had a squat rack and a dead lift and like five weights. Then a desk with all sorts of tech around scattered everywhere. And that was it. Now, they have three facilities. Three different buildings here in this complex. They have the training, they have the research, they have the offices. So, over the course of four or five years, it’s just built up and it’s not slowing down. It’s exponential right now.”

Q: It has to be cool to see younger athletes embracing this kind of training...

TB: “Yeah, when I’m 50 and I’m going to look back and say, ‘I wish this stuff existed when I played.’ But, what I don’t want to do is find out what did exist when I played and I didn’t apply it and I didn’t use it. So, that’s one of my motivations for trying to use all this stuff and be the one driving the research forward. At least I can know, hey, I exhausted every resource I had available to me. I mean, at some point, someone’s going to come out with some easy way to train fastball spin rate and make your fastball elite and, [expletive], that would’ve completely changed my career. I’m doing all the research I can on it right now, but it just doesn’t exist.”

Q: Maybe it’ll be you?

TB: “Hopefully. Maybe I’ll finally get a frickin’ unit named after me.”

## **Columbus Clippers pitching rotation is set: Cleveland Indians Minors**

By Branson Wright, The Plain Dealer

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Chris Tremie returns as Columbus Clippers manager for the fifth straight year.

Tremie has led the Clippers to the postseason in three of his four years and a Governors' Cup in 2015. He has a combined record of 315-261 with Columbus, the top affiliate of the Cleveland Indians.

The Clippers will begin the 2018 season on Friday at Indianapolis. The three-game series ends Sunday and the Clippers move to Louisville for a three-game stand. Opening Day for the Clippers at Huntington Park is 6:35 p.m. Thursday against the Durham Bulls.

Tremie has settled on his pitching rotation. His starters, in order, include: Shawn Morimando (4.41 ERA), Adam Plutko (5.90 ERA), Stephen Fife (3.97 ERA), Adam Wilk (5.91) and Alexi Ogando (3.93 ERA).

"I made my decision on the rotation on how they came out of spring training," Tremie said. "It's how things lined up. They all had some strong innings in spring training ... We have several guys returning out of our bullpen and we have some free agent [pitchers] we need to look at."

Besides several new players, the Clippers will make several adjustments to the new season due to rule changes.

This year, Major League Baseball will use the minor leagues to test its attempt to speed up the game. That includes a 15-second pitch clock and a limit of six mound visits. Pitching changes do not count as a visit. There's also the placement of a runner on second base to start each half-inning in extra innings. Players will have a brief adjustment period for the pitch-clock violations. Umpires will only issue warnings through April 19.

"We've had conversations with our players about the rule changes," Tremie said. "The pitch count is not going to be too much of a factor. But we're not focused so much on the rule changes, we're focused on playing baseball and moving forward."

## **Indians' Corey Kluber, Zach McAllister know every day in the big leagues is not sunshine and roses**

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

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Pitching in the big leagues is a good deal. The pay is good. The travel first class and your spikes are always polished. Or brand new, depending on your preference.

But some days are better than others. And some are worse.

Corey Kluber and Zach McAllister went through one of those "worse" days on Wednesday when the Indians lost to the Angels, 3-2, in 13 innings at Angel Stadium.

Kluber started and pitched seven innings. For 95 of his 96 pitches, he looked like last year's Cy Young winner, which isn't all that surprising because that's exactly who he is. But on that one pitch, a 91 mph four-seam fastball, Japanese rookie Shohei Ohtani drove it on a line over the center field fence - Bradley Zimmer crashed into the fence in an attempt to catch it - to turn a 2-0 Indians' lead into a 2-2 tie.

Ohtani's homer came in the fifth inning. Kluber pitched two more innings before leaving with the score still tied, 2-2. Kluber pitched seven innings, struck out six, walked one and allowed three hits.

He left the game with a no decision in his second start of the season. He's 0-1 with a 2.40 ERA, but could easily be 2-0 except for a couple of things. He keeps giving up two-run homers at the wrong time and his teammates have scored three runs in the 15 innings he's pitched.

Terry Francona on Indians' struggling offense

Kluber pitched the season opener against Seattle on March 29. He allowed a two-run homer to Nelson Cruz in the first inning and lost 2-1 despite pitching a complete game. A pitcher who allows two runs per start should win a lot of games - Kluber's ERA last season was 2.25 and he won 18 games and his second Cy Young in four years. But if his offense only scores three in that same time, well, winning gets a lot more complicated.

A long time ago, Bob Feller, the Indians late, great Hall of Famer, said, "It's not how you pitch, it's when you pitch." Kluber won't dispute that.

"There are going to be times throughout the year when they're going to pick me up when I don't do my job," said Kluber. "That's part of it. If you start to get frustrated with that sort of thing, then you're worried about things that are out of your control.

"As a pitcher, regardless of whether the offense is scoring a lot of runs or not, your job is to go out there and execute pitches and try to give your team a chance to win. Just because it didn't work out the first two games, doesn't mean it's time to jump ship or get frustrated. . .So I don't buy into that."

A pitcher, to help his team win, has to throw strikes and control the opposing offense. Kluber, in two starts, has thrown 70 percent of his pitches (130-for-187) for strikes. The opposition is hitting .151 (9-for-51) against him.

Five innings after Kluber left Wednesday's game, McAllister started the 13th inning. He'd pitched in the first two games of the series, giving him appearances in four of the Tribe last five games.

Manager Terry Francona told McAllister before the game that the only way he'd use him was if the Indians found himself in an extended extra inning game. The 13-inning game was the Tribe's longest since it played 19 against the Blue Jays on July 1, 2016.

McAllister, one of several relievers trying to fill the vacancy created by the departure of free agent set-up man Bryan Shaw, started the inning with a strikeout of Rene Rivera. It was a good sign because McAllister gave up a two-run home to Rivera in Tuesday's 13-2 loss to the Angels. That brought Zack Cozart, the leadoff hitter, to the plate.

The count went to 3-2 and Cozart hit a 94 mph fastball over the left field fence to win it. After the game, Francona talked about his options out of the bullpen. Dan Otero and Matt Belisle were not available. The next pitcher after McAllister would have been Carlos Carrasco, who will start the home opener on Friday.

Closer Cody Allen went two innings. Nick Goody went 1 1/3. Tyler Olson came in the 12th and struck out pinch-hitter Jefry Marte and retired Ohtani on a grounder to first. Andrew Miller pitched an inning in relief of Kluber.

"The bullpen dug deep," said Francona. "Even with Zach, we told him the only he'd pitch was in a game just like that. It's his third day in a row and it's early in the season."

McAllister leads the bullpen with four appearances. In Saturday's 6-5 win over the Mariners, McAllister connected the dots between the starter (Carrasco) and the late-inning relievers (Miller and Allen). That's the role Shaw excelled in and right now the job has yet to be filled.

"I thought we (the bullpen) did a great job," said McAllister, who has thrown 60 percent of his pitches (28-for-47) for strikes. "Cody going out for two in that situation really saved us. From Miller to everybody but me, did a tremendous job."

McAllister went with his best pitch, a fastball, and Cozart hit it. But the fact that Francona went to him for a third straight game, meant something to him.

"Definitely. That's one thing I'm really looking forward to," he said. "Being a competitor, you want the ball. You want to be out there. Being able to stay healthy is No.1. That allows you to have the ball."

The next part of the equation, as McAllister knows, is to keep the other team from scoring. That allows a pitcher to keep getting the ball in those situations.

### **Homebody: Carlos Carrasco will start home opener and 4 other things we learned about Cleveland Indians**

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

CLEVELAND, Ohio - When the Indians opened the home season last year against the White Sox on April 11, it was 67 degrees. It's going to be at least 20 degrees colder for Friday's home opener against the Royals at Progressive Field at 4:10 p.m.

But one thing will be the same - Carlos Carrasco will start for the Indians.

"I can't wait to get back home and pitch in front of our fans," said Carrasco, on Wednesday at Angel Stadium before the Indians finished their six-game West Coast trip. "Last year was fun. It was very special to come back home and pitch in front of a full house. It's going to be cold, too."

Last year's first-pitch temperature was a virtual heat wave in Cleveland for this time of the baseball season. Carrasco responded to the heat with some of his own, holding the White Sox to one run on four hits in seven innings. He struck out seven and didn't allow walk, throwing 61 strikes, 24 of which the White Sox took looking.

Carrasco was not involved in the decision as the Indians won, 2-1, in 10 innings.

Carlos Carrasco struggles but wins

"To me it's really just another start," said Carrasco. "I think mostly the home opener is for the fans. You know there are going to be a lot of fans watching us."

Carrasco said earlier in his career he used to prepare for the cold by wearing extra clothing. But he found it restrictive when he pitched.

"It doesn't matter what you do (to stay warm)," said Carrasco. "It's baseball and you have to make adjustments."

Carrasco won his first game of the season, going 5 2/3 innings against the Mariners on Saturday at Safeco Field. He struck out four, but allowed seven hits and five runs. Seattle scored two runs each in the third and sixth innings, which was reminiscent of how Carrasco pitched late in spring training when inning tended to get away from him.

Pitching coach Carl Willis has talked to him about it.

"I felt like Carlos, through the entire spring, and I say this having already said it to him, would run into trouble with that one inning when he gets a couple of base runners," said Willis. "He needs to put his foot on their throat at that point and trust his best stuff as opposed to maybe trying to be a little too fine and execute and all of a sudden it snowballs.

"In the Seattle game, outside of a couple homers, it was an issue of getting out of an inning when he got a couple guys on base."

No.1: Michael Brantley countdown

Look for the Indians to activate Brantley from the disabled list in time for Friday's home opener. Last season Brantley won the home opener with a two-out double in the 10th against the White Sox.

Brantley opened this season on the disabled list following October surgery on his right ankle. He left the Indians spring-training site in Goodyear, Ariz., on Tuesday and arrived in Cleveland later that night.

Michael Brantley on his spring debut

Francona said Wednesday that the Indians brought Brantley to Cleveland with the idea of activating him for the home opener or in the near future.

No. 2: Second time around

Corey Kluber faced Angels' DH Shohei Ohtani in spring training and had his way with the Japanese rookie in two at-bats. On Wednesday, Kluber faced Ohtani twice, striking him out in the third inning and allowing a game-tying two-run homer to him in the fifth.

"I actually faced him a couple of times, for a couple of at-bats, in spring training so I had a feel for him," said Kluber, following Wednesday's 3-2 loss. "The first at-bat, I made good pitches and did what I wanted to and it worked out. The second at-bat, I made a mistake a little bit over the plate and he took advantage of it."

Ohtani homers in back-to-back games

Kluber didn't think Ohtani looked much different at the plate on Wednesday than he did during spring training. Ohtani struggled so much offensively in spring training that some felt he might have to open the season in the minors.

"It was only two at-bats," said Kluber. "The only noticeable thing was less of a leg kick, but it was two at-bats in the spring and two at-bats today, so it's hard to make big conclusions."

No. 3: That's a good sign

In Sunday's 5-4 loss to Seattle, lefty Tyler Olson allowed a two-run homer by Mitch Haniger in the seventh inning. The homer proved to be the difference in the game.

Last season Olson went all last year without allowing as run of any kind. When asked about the homer, Olson said he had to have a short memory and move on. So far, that's exactly what he's done.

He relieved Mike Clevinger on Monday night with one out in the sixth and retired three straight batters, including lefties Kole Calhoun and Luis Valbuena, in a 6-0 win. On Wednesday, he relieved Nick Goody with one out in the 12th and retired Andrelton Simmons on a fly ball to center and Ohtani on a grounder to first.

No. 4: Long may he run

Francisco Lindor wasn't the only Indians' player stealing bases on Wednesday. Rajai Davis singled in the second inning off Tyler Skaggs and stole second. It was the 396th steal of his career. Davis ranks third among active players in steals behind Jose Reyes with 512 and Ichiro Suzuki with 509.

Lindor stole two bases on Wednesday and turned them into runs thanks to RBI singles by Brandon Guyer and Jason Kipnis. Davis and Lindor are 2-for-2 in steal through four games.

### **Cleveland Indians Opening Day: Time to make memories -- Terry Pluto (video)**

By Terry Pluto, The Plain Dealer [terrypluto2003@yahoo.com](mailto:terrypluto2003@yahoo.com)

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- It was 20 years ago that my father died.

The exact date was February 11, 1998. It also was his 78th birthday.

I'm probably not the only one who thinks of someone special when the Cleveland Indians season opens -- especially someone who is no longer with us.

It could be a grandparent, an aunt, a friend. It's someone who either gave us the Indians or shared our love for the Tribe.

Opening day is a glorious day, even for the casual baseball fan.

Even if the team has already played six games on the road and has a 2-4 record. That's the situation with the Indians as they face the Kansas City Royals at 4:10 p.m. today.

It's still the home opener. It's still the first weekend of baseball at Progressive Field.

It's not only a time to look forward. But for some of us, it's OK to look for a bit in the rear view mirror of life.

For some of us, far more innings of life have already been played. Some of us may be in extra innings.

A few of us may feel like Rajia Davis, the 37-year-old outfielder who came to spring training with the Tribe on a minor league contract. After 13 years in the Majors, Davis had to prove his legs still had as much life as his wonderfully upbeat spirit.

Davis quieted the doubters, beat the odds -- and he's around for at least one more baseball season.

That's what opening day is for some of us -- a chance to say, "Hey, I'm still here. I wonder if this will really be the year the Indians win the World Series. They have a chance, don't they?"

#### MAKING MEMORIES

I once had someone tell me, "You're not going to write about the old Stadium, the West 3rd Street Bridge and your father."

Yes, I'm going to mention the old Cleveland Stadium, my father taking me by the hand down the West 3rd Street Bridge to a baseball game.

And I'm going to mention buying a scorecard for a quarter, and they gave you a small golf pencil for free. I'm going to mention how my father had his own special code for keeping score, and how he stuck the pencil behind his ear between hitters -- awaiting what happened next.

I'm going to mention frigid opening days. I'm going to mention staying home from school and my father leaving work early so we could go to the game.

I'm going to mention listening to Pete Franklin on the radio, doing the old pregame Clubhouse Confidential Show as we drove downtown.

I'm going to mention my first autograph came from Mudcat Grant. He asked my name before signing my scorecard.

I'm going to mention the first foul ball I caught came off the bat of Alex Johnson, who was with Angels.

I'm going to mention all that because I want fans to treasure their own memories.

This weekend, there could be a special adult taking a kid to the game -- stopping in front of the Bob Feller Statue for a picture.

There could be a family imitating Tom Hamilton's roaring home run call ... "A swing and a drive ... a way back ... GONE!"

#### BASEBALL ON RADIO

I love baseball because of my dad, who gave me the Indians at a young age.

His Tribe featured players from the 1930s and 1940s -- everyone from Joe Vosmik to Ray Mack to Hal Trosky to Bob Feller.

His memories began at old League Park. There may be some fans who still have those.

Right now, there are fans growing up with Trevor Bauer, Francisco Lindor, Jason Kipnis and Cody Allen. Maybe someone's first autograph is Josh Tomlin, a gentleman who signs a lot of autographs.

They'll see Progressive for the first time this spring, hearts beating a bit quicker.

Baseball is a radio sport.

Hamilton rules the airways. Jim Rosenhaus is his sidekick, his Ed McMahon to Hamilton doing Johnny Carson.

Remember, I'm old so I'm using some old guy references. I drive with the Tribe on the radio. I write stories with the Tribe on the radio. I remember Jimmy Dudley being my first favorite Tribe broadcaster.

Dudley also pitched hot dogs: "KAHNS! The wiener the world awaited!"

For a lot of us, we've been awaiting opening day ... in Cleveland. Play ball.

## **Cleveland Indians, Kansas City Royals series preview, pitching matchups**

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

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Here is the preview and pitching matchups for the home-opening series between the Indians and Royals that begins Friday.

Where: Progressive Field, Friday through Sunday.

TV/radio: SportsTime Ohio will carry the series and WKYC Channel 3 will carry Thursday's home opener. WTAM/1100 and WMMS/FM 100.7 will broadcast the series.

Pitching matchups: LHP Danny Duffy (0-1, 11.25) vs. RHP Carlos Carrasco (1-0, 7.94) on Friday at 4:10 p.m.; RHP Ian Kennedy (0-0, 1.50) Trevor Bauer (0-0, 3.60) Saturday at 4:10 p.m. and RHP Jason Hammel (0-1, 9.00) vs. RHP Mike Clevinger (1.00, 0.00) Sunday at 1:10 p.m.

Series: The Indians went 12-7 against the Royals last year.

Friday: Carrasco was credited with the win against Seattle in his first start of the season. He's 9-6 with a 3.58 ERA lifetime against the Royals. Alex Gordon is hitting just .152 (5-for-33) against Carrasco, but has three homers and four RBI.

Duffy is 2-6 with a 4.03 ERA against the Tribe. Brandon Guyer is hitting .625 (5-for-8) against him.

Saturday: Bauer allowed two runs on five hits against the Mariners in his first start. He's 2-3 with a 3.36 ERA in his career against the Royals. Alcides Escobar is hitting .320 (8-for-25) with one homer and three RBI against him.

Kennedy is 2-5 with a 5.90 ERA against the Indians. Rajai Davis is hitting .391 (9-for-23) against him.

Sunday: Clevinger won his first game of the season, throwing 5 1/3 scoreless innings against the Angels on Monday. He's 3-0 with a 2.42 ERA against the Royals. Whit Merrifield is hitting .273 (3-for-11) against him.

Hammel is 3-5 with a 5.10 ERA against the Indians. Edwin Encarnacion is hitting .281 (9-for-32) with five homers and seven RBI against Hammel.

Disabled list: Royals - RHP Jesse Hahn (right elbow), RHP Nate Karns (right elbow), C Salvador Perez (left knee), SS Adalberto Mondesi (right shoulder) and OF Bubba Starling (left oblique) are on the disabled list. Indians - OF Michael Brantley (right ankle), INF Giovanny Urshela (right hamstring), LHP Ryan Merritt (left shoulder), RHP Danny Salazar (right hamstring) and RHP Cody Anderson (right elbow) are on the disabled list.

Next: Detroit visits Progressive Field for a four-game series starting Monday.

## **Cleveland Indians fan's Opening Day streak extends to 64 games today**

By Marc Bona, cleveland.com mbona@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Edward Lachowski's streak of attending Opening Day in Cleveland was born out of bitter disappointment.

He was 13 when his beloved Cleveland Indians lost to the New York Giants in the 1954 World Series.

"What's the worst thing that ever happened to you in your life?" he said, the resentment still remaining. "I say 1954. I get wound up because of that. I was 13. The Indians were the best team in the world. They won 111 games that year. I was devastated.

"I collect baseball cards. I went and took all the New York Giants cards. I ripped them up and threw them out."

The next year, on April 12, Lachowski was at the season opener, optimistic and hopeful with the rest of the Indians faithful. The team would win 93 games and finish second. But for Lachowski, a special streak had begun.

From that day in 1955, with temperatures reaching into the low 70s, Lachowski saw a 5-1 win with Bob Lemon going the distance. And every April, he would be at the stadium for that first home game.

Friday, Lachowski, now 77 and living in Macedonia, will attend his 64th consecutive game. Opening Day became a companion, a day to look forward to, despite the unpredictable weather. He has never been sick on the opener and always had it off when he was working. He has seen the Indians win 29 and lose 34.

"I got to a point, when I started working (for a tax agency) after going to college, I would tell management 'I've got to have off Opening Day.' 'You can't do that,' they told me. 'I have to continue my streak.'

" 'OK, but don't tell anyone in the office," he was told.

The closest he came to not making a game might have been in 1994, the year Jacobs Field opened.

"My son and I went down," he said. "I didn't have tickets. That was the year I thought I wasn't going to get tickets. Someone was selling them. To this day he (his son) never told me how much it cost."

As a boy in the 1950s, he and a pal used to sell scorecards at Indians and Browns games. At 15 cents apiece, he said, they made \$1.50 if they sold 100.

He remembers players and games and moments, like 1975 when Frank Robinson hit a home run in his debut as manager. He recalls snow falling and fans having to come back the next day. One time, he remembers the cold grinding its way to him where he couldn't take it anymore.

"I don't know how many years ago it was, it one of the coldest Opening Day games," he said. "I had my sons and grandsons and granddaughters, it was so cold. I said to (daughter) Erin 'I can't handle it.'

So he went behind a home-plate concession area, waited one pitch, and then declared: 'We're outta here.' "

He has seen favorite players over the years, from Mike "Big Bear" Garcia helping anchor the Tribe's pitching staff in the 1950s, to Roger Clemens, his favorite overall player, to Ted Williams, the greatest hitter he ever saw. For his 60th he was taken on the field as wind whipped through the ballpark. The temperature had dropped, and he held a flag.

An attendant told him, "Whatever you do, don't let it go. It'll blow to Detroit.' Carlos Baerga was there, he kept thanking me."

He sits in different parts of the park year to year, though never too close, after seeing a fan take a foul ball "square in the forehead" off of Williams' bat.

The other constant is food: "I'm gonna have a hot dog, popcorn, peanuts, I'm gonna have one beer, and if they have pizza, I'm gonna have pizza. And I'm happy."

The streak might not be a way of life, but like many hobbies it's a collection. With neuropathy in his feet he uses a wheelchair to get around the park. If he becomes ill, he has a contingency plan in mind.

"What happens if I got real sick? I would probably ask to be taken to the ballpark and stay for an inning, then back to the car, just to keep it going," he said.

The streak will continue, as sure as hope lives in the hearts of fans, and daughter Erin will make sure of it. She sprang for club seats for Friday's game.

"They were 87 bucks apiece," he said. "I told her she was crazy. ... She said, 'Dad, we've been going to games a long time.' "

The one goal that remains for him is one shared by many fans.

"Someday," he said, "I would love to throw out a first pitch."

#### **TRIBE NOTES Indians hope home cooking will help solve offensive woes**

**Chris Assenheimer** ByChris Assenheimer | The Chronicle-TelegramPublished on April 6, 2018 | Updated 7:22 a. m.

CLEVELAND — They've had an entire offseason, but the Indians still haven't figured out a way to score enough runs.

Shockingly eliminated by the Yankees in last year's ALDS due in large part to offensive inefficiency, Cleveland has displayed that same characteristic through its first six games, putting only 21 runs across the plate in a 2-4 start to the year.

Indians hitters produced on occasion during the six-game season-opening road trip — a grand slam from new first baseman Yonder Alonso and two home runs in the same game from cleanup hitter Edwin Encarnacion — but as a team, Cleveland batted only .161.

"As a club right now, we don't have anybody that's hot," manager Terry Francona told reporters following a 3-2, 13-inning loss Wednesday in Anaheim, Calif. "It certainly makes it hard on this (road) trip, but they're good hitters. Hopefully they all get hot at the same time. That would be terrific."

During the cold six-game span, the Indians wasted two quality outings from ace Corey Kluber, who has traditionally received little run support throughout his tenure in Cleveland.

Kluber, the reigning American League Cy Young award winner, allowed only two runs and struck out eight over eight innings of a 2-1 loss to open the season in Seattle on March 29, then allowed two more and struck out six over seven innings in Wednesday's extra-inning defeat.

A pair of stars in shortstop Francisco Lindor and third baseman Jose Ramirez struggled during the Indians' brief postseason run last year — a combined 4-for-38 over five games — and have started slowly this season.

Ramirez has one hit — a homer — in 23 at-bats over six games (going hitless in his first four), while Lindor, who bulked up this offseason after hitting a career-high 33 homers last year, is 5-for-26 without a homer or RBI over six games.

"It's just a matter of us continuing to work, continuing to take good at-bats the right way, continuing to do your pregame stuff the right way," Lindor told Indians.com after the loss to the Angels on Wednesday. "It will be there. The results will be there.

"Last year, we were 3-3 going home. This year, we're 2-4. And we won 102 (games in 2017). We definitely can improve. We can improve. We can play a lot better."

Brantley's back

The Indians are expected to activate left fielder Michael Brantley from the disabled list prior to the Home Opener today.

Brantley, an All-Star last year after an impressive first half, was limited to 90 games and was a non-factor in the postseason after sustaining an ankle injury that required surgery in October.

The oft-injured Brantley has been limited to 101 games over the past two years.

First-game festivities

The 2018 Olympic gold medalist snowboarder Red Girard, a Rocky River native, is scheduled to throw out the ceremonial first pitch prior to the Home Opener today, while The Ohio State University band will perform the national anthem.

There will be a pregame ceremony to celebrate the Indians' 2017 Central Division championship, with the Indians also recognizing their AL-record 22-game win streak, Kluber's second AL Cy Young award and the Silver Slugger awards for Lindor and Ramirez.

**Is it time to freak out about the Indians offense? Probably not. But let's do it**

By T.J. Zuppe 13m ago

"It's the darnedest thing. Guys get to their levels."

By now, most Indians scribes probably recognize Terry Francona's way of defusing questions about slow starts and slumps better than he does. He goes to that quote so often, it's nestled in comfortably on the bingo card of Tito-isms, sitting next to "what day is it?" and "come back with a vengeance."

If he says something about "not making out the lineup days in advance," you win a prize.

But it's not just Francona's delicate way of sidestepping a question.

More often than not, he's right.

At this point in the season, you can probably find metrics to back up your point, whatever it might be (which probably speaks to how silly it is to draw any definitive conclusions from six games).

That said, if we waited for a future point in the season where our observations became more realistic, we'd have more than a month of action to fill, all while staring at a blank screen and a blinking cursor.

Waiting is boring. We want our reactions to be instant. We want reasons to feel like this matters, even if its hard to justify the panic and anxiety one might feel in the first week of April. And no matter how many times the baseball gods laugh at what we think we know, we keep forming opinions based on the smallest of sample sizes, all without much regard to how those conclusions might change in the upcoming six-month grind ahead.

It's what we do.

So, with a scuffling offense on everyone's mind before the home opener Friday, let's dig in. Let's see if any of the anxiety fans feel is backed by the measurements at our finger tips. And maybe, through this exercise, we can work this out together.

To the small sample size mobile!

Let's start with the numbers on the surface. Spoiler alert: They're kinda disturbing. So much so, Sports Time Ohio should consider slapping a TV-MA rating on the broadcast. Viewer discretion is advised.

The Indians own baseball's lowest batting average (.161). Just one team has reached base at a lower clip (.262). They own the 10th-highest strikeout rate and fifth-lowest run-creation rate (wRC+), sitting 41 percent below average.

How in the hell are they averaging 3.5 runs per game? And how did they win two games on their recent trip to Seattle and Anaheim?

If not for Edwin Encarnacion, the typically slow starter, and Yonder Alonso, the launch angle convert, those numbers would look even more horrific.

Name	PA	BB%	K%	AVG	OBP	SLG	wRC+		
Edwin Encarnacion			25	8.00%	24.00%	.200	.333	.650	176
Yonder Alonso	25		12.00%	24.00%	.227	.320	.545	144	
Lonnie Chisenhall	21		14.30%	19.00%	.235	.381	.294	93	
Yan Gomes	17		17.60%	47.10%	.143	.294	.357	89	
Tyler Naquin	14		14.30%	35.70%	.167	.286	.417	79	
Jason Kipnis	26		11.50%	15.40%	.174	.269	.217	41	
Francisco Lindor	29		10.30%	24.10%	.192	.276	.192	37	
Brandon Guyer	10		0.00%	20.00%	.200	.200	.300	30	
Rajai Davis	8		12.50%	12.50%	.143	.250	.143	17	
Jose Ramirez	27		14.80%	3.70%	.043	.185	.174	4	
Bradley Zimmer	21		0.00%	52.40%	.143	.143	.143	-34	
Roberto Perez	8		12.50%	25.00%	.000	.125	.000	-64	
Erik Gonzalez	3		0.00%	33.30%	.000	.000	.000	-100	

The first thing that jumps out is a six percent jump in strikeout rate from last year. Bradley Zimmer has struck out in more than half of his plate appearances. Yan Gomes isn't that far behind. And while Tyler Naquin might have clubbed a two-run bomb against the Angels, he's also sitting around 35 percent in Ks.

It's tough to overcome that many strikeouts, no matter how talented the top of the lineup is. Yes, it's too early to claim that's the norm for the bottom-third — and Naquin might soon find himself back in Columbus — but the strikeouts are a legitimate gripe.

Beyond that, the Indians only have two guys sitting above league average in wRC+ (league average is 100). But is everyone really performing that poorly?

Luckily, we have better things at our disposal than batting average — things like exit velocity or quality of contact, which are believed to stabilize a lot quicker than some other more fluky metrics.

Are they hitting it hard? Is it directly at a fielder? We can use those tools to see if luck is playing a significant factor.

Utilizing Baseball Savant's Statcast search tool, we can search for the number of balls deemed to be "barreled" or "solid contact." Based on that search, the Indians are tied for seventh, above the league average. However, they're hitting just .400 on that type of contact. The league entered Thursday hitting .606 on similar contact.

If you reduced the search to just "barreled" balls — the best combination of launch angle and exit velocity — they're sitting 54 points below the league average on similar contact.

If we use expected weighted on-base average — a metric which measures quality and frequency of contact — we see that Tribe hitters own baseball's second-largest gap in their xwOBA and actual wOBA. That's notable, given that a much higher expected number than actual number can be an indication of some misfortune (sort of like how a pitcher's FIP can offer more insight into their ERA).

Now, that doesn't account for all of the issues — they're 20th on baseball's xwOBA leaderboard, which isn't great — but it does tell us their offense hasn't performed as poorly as the surface numbers indicate.

The story is the same for Lindor and Ramírez, who have each run into some bad luck.

Lindor

wOBA: .324

xwOBA: .223

MLB rank: 58th largest gap

Ramírez

wOBA: .317

xwOBA: .176

MLB rank: 22nd largest gap

Again, their quality of contact isn't what we're used to seeing, but it's not terrifying. Ramírez, in particular, has struck out just once, but his fly-ball rate is through the roof, and his launch angle is 14.4 degrees higher than last year. He might be one subtle shift in timing or balance away from regaining the stroke that has made him one of baseball's most productive sticks.

Still, we're talking about sample sizes so small that one or two hits greatly impacts those numbers, offering a staunch reminder that it's way too difficult — see, I didn't want to say early again — to make any definitive statements.

So, what does it all mean?

Well, much like a few of the metrics beneath the surface, they're are several things at play. It's not as simple as to just claim they've been unlucky. They have, but it doesn't account for everything. The strikeouts are disturbing. The bottom of the lineup needs to rectify that. The return of Michael Brantley should help in that regard. They also need to be a bit more selective. They're swinging at three percent more pitches outside the zone than last season.

While those are tangible things that need to change, we're still talking about a group that has been among baseball's best the past few years. Several of their most important players have track records of success, and it's highly unlikely that Lindor and Ramírez will continue to slump. On top of that, the team hasn't been consistently rewarded for their solid contact, which is both frustrating and encouraging.

Some of that will even out. And it will probably take longer than a week for that to become noticeable.

What often rings true about a 162-game grind is worth stressing now: deep clubs with the most talent typically rise to the top. And it doesn't always happen when you want it to. Sometimes, it doesn't manifest until a club rips off 22 consecutive wins.

(OK, maybe that's a stretch.)

And sure, occasionally, the worrywarts are proven correct. The concerns felt in the early season might remain long after the limitations of a small sample size pass. Either way, we won't truly know until we know. And if we're still at the point where a few breakout games could greatly impact the numbers, we probably don't.

The only thing worth betting on? Guys and their levels.

It's the darnedest thing.

### **Dramatic rally carries Captains to victory in home opener**

By David Glasier, The News-Herald

The Captains saved their best for last and pulled out a 3-2 victory over the Fort Wayne (Ind.) TinCaps on April 5 in a thoroughly chilled home opener.

Trailing, 2-0, going to the bottom of the ninth, the Captains cobbled together a rally that was equal parts unconventional and dramatic.

"It was nice to make something happen at the end," Captains manager Luke Carlin said, pointing out his feet still felt like blocks of ice 10 minutes after pinch runner Todd Isaacs raced home from third base with the winning run on an infield single by Jorma Rodriguez.

Through eight innings, the Captains had managed but one hit against Fort Wayne starter (and former St. Ignatius standout) Nick Margevicius and reliever Ben Scheckler.

The Captains were being goose-egged by Margevicius until Austen Wade lined a single to center field with two outs in the sixth. They had struck out 13 times and made four errors.

On top of all that, they had put starter Eli Morgan in a position to potentially be the loser despite the right-hander going six strong innings. Mixing fastballs with sliders and a world-class change-up, Morgan had surrendered one unearned run on four hits.

Reliever Tommy DeJuneas followed Morgan to the mound and blanked the Tin Caps over two innings. But when Fort Wayne scratched out a run off the second Captains reliever, James Karinchak, in the ninth, the Tin Caps were looking good.

Then came the fateful bottom of the ninth.

The frame started with Nolan Jones coaxing a walk off reliever Joe Galindo, who bounced back by retiring Oscar Gonzales on a fly out to left field.

After that, the tin roof caved in on the TinCaps.

Will Benson walked to move Jones to second base. Michael Rivera walked to load the bases. Ulysses Cantu walked to drive home Jones and cut the deficit to 2-1.

"The chemistry is good on this team," Cantu said, citing the fact many of these Captains played together last year at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley.. "We compete all the time, all the way to the final out."

Carlin, who managed Mahoning Valley last season, summoned Isaacs to pinch-run for Rivera at second base.

Galindo was pulled in favor of Jordan Guerrero by Fort Wayne manager Anthony Contreras. Guererro promptly uncorked a wild pitch, allowing Benson to race home from third base with the tying run.

"That was a prime example of this team now and the way we played last season. We fight to the finish.," Benson said.

After sending Jose Medina to first base on an intentional walk to reload the bases, Guerrero gave up the infield single by Rodriguez to second base.

Isaacs scored, triggering a celebration around Rodriguez on the infield.

"We were laughing in the dugout and saying hitting is overrated," Carlin said. "What an interesting game."

A surprisingly large crowd of 5,641 turned out to watch the 16th home opener at Classic Park. Maybe one-third of those fans were still in the seats when the improbable rally ended with that celebration.

### **Season preview | Clippers ready to test new mix of prospects, veterans**

By Mark Znidar

For the better part of three seasons, Clippers fans didn't have to play a game of who's on first and what's on second with the likes of infielders Giovanni Urshela, Erik Gonzalez, Michael Martinez and Ronny Rodriguez and catcher Adam Moore being penciled in on the lineup card on a daily basis, and pitcher Ryan Merritt starting every five days.

The next generation of Cleveland Indians prospects and a slew of veterans with major league experience signed during the offseason will give the Clippers a vastly different profile going into the opener on Friday at the Indianapolis Indians.

"We have some really good prospects here and we have some experienced players, and it's going to be an exciting year," manager Chris Tremie said. "We just want to get going and see what we have here."

Tremie, who is the first to manage the team in six straight seasons, will have Cleveland's top-shelf prospects with center fielder Greg Allen, catcher Francisco Mejia and shortstop Yu Chang.

Allen was on the Indians roster during most of their 22-game winning streak at the end of last season.

"I've heard a lot of good things about Columbus, the fans and the facility, and I'm looking forward to it," Allen said. "I've heard this is a great league. I've heard about the veteran presence here and the professional way the guys go about their jobs."

There are familiar faces in outfielder Richie Shaffer, first baseman Nellie Rodriguez, third baseman Yandy Diaz and pitchers Adam Plutko, Shawn Morimando and Louis Head. Infielder Eric Stamets of Dublin Scioto, who was an All-Star last season, will start the season on the disabled list.

At least for now, the "Party at Napoli's" — with first baseman Mike Napoli — will be in Columbus. Napoli was a vital player on the Indians' American League pennant-winning team two years ago and has been assigned to the Clippers with a June 1 opt-out in his contract.

The red, white and blue bunting will be hung twice at Huntington Park, regardless of whether the Clippers reach the International League playoffs. The Triple-A All-Star Game is July 11 and the Triple-A National Championship Game on Sept. 18. The 10-year-old stadium has been freshened with a new grass field and \$1 million scoreboard in right-center field.

"I think the fans are really going to like the scoreboard because of the graphics and color," president and general manager Ken Schnacke said. "We needed a new one."

The 22-foot-high screen in right-center is being extended to the right side of the batter's eye in center. That project might not be ready for the home opener on April 12 against Durham.

"We're making the ballpark deeper at that part of the park because home runs were coming too easily," Schnacke said.

The burning question is whether the Clippers can make the playoffs after missing out last season following three straight West Division championships.

Shaffer, who reached career highs with 30 home runs and 89 RBI in making the IL All-Star team last season, said the Clippers have the feel of a contending team.

"It's always interesting when you put a team together," he said. "I'm excited about this one. There are a lot of new faces, but the guys already get along well. It's a good mindset with these guys, and that's huge. Compatibility is important."

### **Clippers season preview | Organization mourns two deaths in difficult offseason**

By Mark Znidar

It's rare when an organization sews a patch on the team's uniform to honor someone who didn't play a single game or wasn't in the front office for decades.

Matt Pruzinsky, however, meant that much to the Clippers.

As the home clubhouse attendant, Pruzinsky rarely even walked onto the field. But to players, such as outfielder Richie Shaffer, he was one of their own.

"Matty was one of the best cats I've ever met," Shaffer said. "No one ever had a negative thing to say about him — ever. He was a bright spot in the clubhouse and the most complete professional you'd ever want to meet."

It was a difficult winter for the franchise with Pruzinsky and Sandy Schnacke, the wife of 40 years of team president and general manager Ken Schnacke, dying.

Pruzinsky, 32, suffered a heart attack watching the Cleveland Browns play the Green Bay Packers on Dec. 10 at First Energy Stadium in Cleveland. Sandy Schnacke died on Jan. 21 after a long fight with cancer.

Clippers assistant general manager Mark Warren recalled how his daughters grew up at the ballpark with the Schnacke children, Stephanie, Kevin and Keith.

"My daughter Lynsey was born July 17 and Kevin was July 16," Warren said. "Sandy was the ultimate class person. There is no other word to describe her. Sandy was at almost every home game and went on all the big trips with Ken. The All-Star Game in Tacoma (Washington) last season was the first one she missed in a long time."

Sandy Schnacke grew up in Hilliard. She taught at the Ohio School for the Deaf for 30 years and was a substitute teacher for 10.

The Clippers will honor Pruzinsky with a circular, navy blue-and-red patch with the initials "RP" on their right shoulder. He did the grunt work of washing uniforms, cleaning and polishing spikes, preparing meals and greeting the team when it returned from road trips in the middle of the night or at sunrise.

Former Clippers pitcher Shawn Armstrong set up a GoFundMe page that took in more than \$100,000 for widow Shannon Pruzinsky and twin sons, Matthew and Brayden. The boys were born Feb. 26. The team has helped her set up a college fund.

First baseman Nellie Rodriguez was jolted hearing about Pruzinsky.

"That was a tough day — I took it hard," he said. "Matt was a great guy who just helped you. He was our 26th man. If we needed something, we got it."

#### **Indians return to frigid home after offensively icy 2-4 road trip by Beacon Journal/Ohio.com**

The bad news for the Indians: their ice-cold bats return home to Cleveland for the home opener on Friday as the beginning of a 10-game homestand, and the temperatures are expected to be frigid at best.

The good news: 156 games remain, and the Indians managed to go 2-4 on their season-opening road trip despite one of the least productive lineups to begin the year.

The Indians have been slow out of the gate this season. Their combined .161 batting average ranks last in the league. Their .559 OPS is 27th. Entering Thursday's games, their 21 total runs scored ranked 20th.

Jose Ramirez has embodied the slow start as well as anyone. Ramirez began the season 0-for-15 and on April 2 tweeted "I will get a hit" 13 times in succession, a playful addition after St. Louis Cardinals outfielder Dexter Fowler tweeted the same thing after his own slow start. The next day, Ramirez blasted a two-run home run, though it came in a 13-2 loss to the Los Angeles Angels and it remains his only hit.

He's not alone. Francisco Lindor, Jason Kipnis, Yan Gomes and several others all remain below the Mendoza Line (.200 batting average) through the club's first road trip of the season.

"We can definitely improve," Lindor told reporters in Anaheim. "It's just a matter of us continuing to work, continuing to take good at-bats the right way, continuing to do your pregame stuff the right way. It will be there. The results will be there. The guys aren't hitting, but our pitching staff is doing a great job. They are doing a great job."

#### **Winter is coming**

Those who are attending the home opener on Friday against the Kansas City Royals will have to bundle up, and they're the ones getting off easy. The high for Friday is expected to be 47 degrees with 25-mph winds, a much less-than-ideal scenario for a day at the ballpark. But it gets worse. The expected highs for Saturday and Sunday were 32 and 33 degrees, respectively. Think warm thoughts.

Carlos Carrasco (1-0, 7.94 ERA) will start against Royals left-hander Danny Duffy (0-1, 11.25 ERA) for the home opener.

The Indians are beginning a 10-game homestand against the Royals, Detroit Tigers and Toronto Blue Jays that runs through April 15. The temperature isn't expected to reach the 50s until April 13 and 14 against the Blue Jays, but the catch is that each day has a 60 percent chance of rain. Not much of a sunny homecoming.

## **Curve 6, RubberDucks 5: Bullpen wastes strong start by Shane Bieber by Beacon Journal staff report**

Curve 6, RubberDucks 5

After RubberDucks starter Shane Bieber dominated for six shutout innings, the bullpen allowed a six-run eighth inning and the Ducks lost their season opener at Altoona.

Bieber went six innings, giving up just two hits and striking out nine. He walked none and held a 3-0 advantage before being replaced by Dominic DeMasi and Argenis Angulo.

Each reliever gave up three runs on two hits.

The Ducks (0-1) took the lead with a three-run fifth inning.

Sam Haggerty singled to right field to score Sicnarf Loopstok. Dorssys Paulino then followed by reaching first on a fielding error by the first baseman that scored Haggerty and Tyler Kreiger.

Haggerty showed up again in the ninth with the Ducks trying to mount a comeback. The third baseman doubled on a liner to left field to score Loopstok and Mark Mathias, but the comeback ended when Krieger flied out to left.

The post Curve 6, RubberDucks 5: Bullpen wastes strong start by Shane Bieber appeared first on Ohio.com.

## **Bob Dyer: Tribe was No. 1 with uniform numbers by Bob Dyer**

The first player in the history of Major League Baseball to step into the batter's box wearing a uniform number?

A Cleveland Indian.

On June 26, 1916, at League Park, left-fielder Jack Graney strolled to the plate against the White Sox wearing a large No. 1 on his left sleeve.

He was wearing that number because he was the Indians' lead-off hitter, and in the beginning of the league, uniform numbers were based on your spot in the batting order.

This bit of obscure baseball history comes to us compliments of the knower of all things Indian, team Vice President Bob DiBiasio. He was an intern in the public relations department during the 1916 season.

We kid.

But "Bobby D," as he is universally known to those in and around the organization, has been with the Tribe since 1979, plenty long enough to fully appreciate just how important uniform numbers are to players.

When the Tribe takes on Kansas City on Friday in the 2018 home opener, about 75 percent of the players on both rosters will be wearing numbers they care deeply about, he estimates.

Some players care enough to bribe their teammates.

Although former outfielder Rick Manning has consistently refused to confirm the story, he breaks into a grin when he is asked whether he was bought off when veteran Bert Blyleven arrived in Cleveland in 1981 lusting after Manning's No. 28.

As the tale goes, Blyleven's wife owned so much jewelry with his number on it that he was desperate to keep the same digits he had worn during seven years with the Twins and two more with the Rangers.

Manning switched to No. 20.

Pulling rank is the norm.

"A veteran guy gets traded over, and it's his number and a younger guy will bow, and the veteran guy will do something for him, whether it's cash or buy him some clothes ... he'll do something to show appreciation," DiBiasio says.

Any cases where the younger guy didn't roll over?

"I never remember hearing it. I don't think that would happen. There's a pecking order in our game for sure."

Pitcher Chuck Finley had a jones for No. 31 after wearing it for 14 years with the Angels.

Problem was, that had been the number of Indians pitcher Steve Olin, who died during spring training in 1993 in a boating accident.

The number hadn't been used for seven years when Finley arrived.

Eventually he got the green light.

"He didn't know whether he should take it or not, but the conversation took place," says DiBiasio. "He was acknowledging Steve and recognizing the sensitivity of it, and we as an organization felt it was OK for him to put the uni on."

Unlike pro football, Major League Baseball has no rules about who wears what numbers.

The lower number usually are the most treasured, which is why you often see rookies in spring training wearing numbers in the 60s and 70s.

Some of them hold on to the numbers as they develop into stars, but many move down the number chain once they make a breakthrough — "unless you're really good like [Francisco] Lindor and you get a decent number right at the beginning," DiBiasio said, referring to the current shortstop's No. 12.

And if DiBiasio were suddenly called down from the front office onto the playing field at the tender age of 63?

"I'm No. 6 — Rocky Colavito's No. 6.

"Some people pick 21 [Rocky's number when he was traded back to the team after his prime], but I'm a Rocky Colavito No. 6 guy, and that's what I wore my whole life."

DiBiasio says uniform numbers were introduced when teams started selling programs and putting more information on scoreboards.

"It was part of the changing technology back in the '20s," he says with a laugh.

Another fun fact to know and tell: First team to wear numbers on the back of their uniforms, rather than on the sleeves?

Yep. The Indians again.

That happened on Opening Day of 1929. The Yankees were going to debut numbers on their backs that same day, but their game was rained out.

Oops. I apologize for typing the word "Yankees."