

Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings August 9, 2018

THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY

2002-Aaron Boone hits two home runs in the first inning against the Padres, tying a club record, then hits a third home run in the fourth inning, making it three straight plate appearances with a home run

MLB.COM

Control issues plague Stephenson in '18 debut
By Mark Sheldon MLB.com @m_sheldon
Aug. 8th, 2018

NEW YORK -- Back from Triple-A Louisville to pitch for the Reds on Wednesday afternoon after showing all he could show the organization in the Minors, Robert Stephenson was given a tough task to oppose Mets ace Jacob deGrom. But facing deGrom the hitter in the fourth inning with the bases loaded should have been much easier by comparison.

Stephenson walked deGrom on four straight pitches -- not a fastball among them -- to force home the game's second run. The Mets went on to hand the Reds an 8-0 defeat in the rubber game at Citi Field.

"Every single inning, I was out there working harder than I needed to. It was definitely a tough start for me," Stephenson said.

In four innings of work, totaling 76 pitches, Stephenson gave up three earned runs and three hits with five walks (two intentional), four strikeouts and a wild pitch. The right-hander, who had a 2.87 ERA in 20 starts for Louisville this season and a 1.23 ERA over his past seven Triple-A starts, did not set himself up for success. The leadoff batter reached safely in each of his final three innings, twice on walks.

Stephenson also threw a first-pitch strike to only 10 of his 20 batters.

"The bottom line is I just didn't throw enough strikes today," he said. "Moving forward, I just have to better about that."

The pivotal fourth inning had the Mets already ahead, 1-0, when Stephenson walked leadoff batter Jose Bautista. Brandon Nimmo followed with a double to left field that put runners on second and third base. After the first out, the Reds opted to intentionally walk Devin Mesoraco to face deGrom, who is considered a decent hitter for a pitcher but nonetheless entered the day with a .128 average.

Stephenson opened the plate appearance with a slider that was outside. The second pitch was a curveball up and in for ball two. For ball three, another curveball was high. A slider that went outside was ball four and forced in the run to make it 2-0.

"For me, my slider is my easiest pitch to throw for strikes," Stephenson said. "I wanted to throw whatever I could for a strike. That at-bat, I wasn't able to throw any for a strike."

deGrom sounded disappointed that he didn't get a chance to put the ball in play.

"I guess he had a better feel for that slider, I don't know," deGrom said. "I was trying to hit the ball. I couldn't do it."

After deGrom reached, Amed Rosario added a sacrifice to increase New York's lead to three runs.

According to Statcast™, Stephenson threw more sliders (30) than fastballs (19) during the start.

"I thought he did some really good things, but a little too dependent on his other stuff, his secondary stuff -- his slider and split-fingered pitch, a lot of those," Reds interim manager Jim Riggleman said. "We've got some work to do between this start and his next one where he can get more confident in locating his fastball."

Walks were a frequent issue during Stephenson's previous big league stints in 2016 and '17. Although he had more success and increased confidence in Triple-A, he still was prone to walking batters, with 57 over 113 innings for a 4.5 BB/9 ratio. Even during his strong Triple-A stretch, he issued 17 walks over 44 innings. He told reporters on Tuesday that walks are part of his game, likely believing he can work out of any situation.

Although Stephenson wasn't as haunted by walks in the Minors, it's usually not a path to succeeding in the big leagues.

"The only person I've ever been around that I saw successfully do that is Hideo Nomo," Riggles said. "He'd walk two guys to get to the one he'd want to get out. He could throw 150 pitches."

Walks haunted every Reds pitcher, and their 11 tied the team's season high. After dropping two of three in the series to the Mets, the Reds completed a disappointing 2-7 road trip through Detroit, Washington and New York. The rotation was the difference in both wins and all seven losses while posting a 5.84 ERA.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

One missed chance: deGrom, who entered with a 1.85 ERA despite being winless in his past seven starts, pitched six strong innings with four hits, one walk and 10 strikeouts. In the first inning, Phillip Ervin and Scooter Gennett hit back-to-back singles to put runners on the corners with one out. But Gennett was caught stealing and Eugenio Suarez struck out to extinguish the chance. No other Reds player reached third base the rest of the day.

"We never really threatened too much," Riggles said. "That's a pretty good chance right there. We'll take that. Then it's two out. The odds were working against us at that point."

POSITION-PLAYER-PITCHES ALERT

After the Mets scored three runs in the eighth inning against Keury Mella to make it an eight-run game, Riggles summoned Ervin from left field to take the mound with two outs. Ervin, who hasn't pitched professionally previously, threw three curveballs to Mesoraco and retired him on a groundout to third base. Ervin is the third Reds position player to pitch this season -- after Cliff Pennington and Alex Blandino. Not counting two-way Angels star Shohei Ohtani, Ervin is the 41st position player to pitch in the Major Leagues this season.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

With one out and a runner on second base in the third inning, Reds center fielder Billy Hamilton potentially saved a run. On Wilmer Flores' drive to right-center field, Hamilton made a long run to his left and made a sliding catch before the warning track and popped up with a quick throw as Rosario tagged up and went to third base. According to Statcast™, it was a 4-star catch. The catch probability was 34 percent, as Hamilton had to go 97 feet in 5.0 seconds with a sprint speed of 29.7 feet per second.

UP NEXT

Following an off-day on Thursday, the Reds will open a homestand at 7:10 p.m. ET Friday vs. the D-backs at Great American Ball Park, and they hope to have Joey Votto back in the lineup after he missed two starts with a right knee contusion. Anthony DeSclafani will pitch against Arizona's Clay Buchholz. After being unable to complete at least five innings for three straight starts, DeSclafani turned in a seven-inning gem vs. the Nationals on Saturday for a 7-1 win. He allowed one earned run and six hits.

Reds hope to have Votto back on Friday
By Mark Sheldon MLB.com @m_sheldon
Aug. 8th, 2018

NEW YORK -- When the Reds return home and open a series against the D-backs on Friday, they will be hoping that Joey Votto's knee has improved enough to start. The first baseman, who doesn't miss consecutive games from the lineup often, was unable to start again Wednesday vs. the Mets because of a right knee contusion.

On Saturday vs. the Nationals, Votto was hit on the leg by Ryan Madson's 96-mph fastball. He was able to play through the next two games but was clearly limping during Monday's 6-4 loss to New York as he notched two hits and a walk. Interim manager Jim Riggles decided after that game Votto would not play on Tuesday. Now that break has extended to a second day.

"He felt somewhat, a little better yesterday," Riggles said. "Today with an off-day tomorrow, I'm thinking [will help]. He likes to play. He's not happy about having to take any days off. I'm sure he's going to be pushing it to be in there Friday."

Votto has been undergoing treatment and was on the field Wednesday morning doing exercise drills with strength-and-conditioning director Sean Marohn.

The last time Votto did not play two straight games for the Reds was June 21-22, 2016, vs. the Rangers because of a stomach ailment. He did not start a third game after that, vs. the Padres, but appeared as a pinch-hitter. He started all 162 games of the 2017 season.

Brandon Dixon started in Votto's place on both Tuesday and Wednesday. In 112 games this season, Votto is batting .289/.426/.427 with nine home runs and 53 RBIs. He leads the National League in on-base percentage.

Rehab assignment for Stephens

Right-handed reliever Jackson Stephens began a rehab assignment for Triple-A Louisville on Tuesday. Stephens, who has a torn meniscus in his right knee, pitched one scoreless inning with one hit while throwing 18 pitches. He was placed on the disabled list July 24.

CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

Walks ruin the day for Cincinnati Reds starter Stephenson, road trip ends with seventh loss in nine games

John Fay, Cincinnati Enquirer

Published 3:25 p.m. ET Aug. 8, 2018 | Updated 4:31 p.m. ET Aug. 8, 2018

NEW YORK – Before his return to the majors, Robert Stephenson said he has accepted that walks were part of his game.

"I think the biggest thing for me is it's part of my game," he said. "I realize I walk people and obviously want to cut that. But I'm not going to change anything just to avoid walking people. I don't want to give good pitches up, just so I don't walk anybody."

Stephenson walked five Wednesday on his way to a 8-0 loss to the New York Mets on a steamy day before a crowd of 24,287 at Citi Field. Two of the walks were intentional, but walks unquestionably ruined his outing.

Reds manager Jim Riggleman gave a wry smile when the Stephenson quote was mentioned.

"He's a very strong kid," Riggleman said. "Physically, he feels like he could throw a lot of pitches, walk people and still get people out, battle through it. The only person I've ever been around that I saw successfully do that is Hideo Nomo. He'd walk two guys to get to the one he want to get out. He could throw 150 pitches.

"(Stephenson) probably doesn't mean that literally. He just means 'I can pitch out of trouble.' "

Riggleman was more concerned with the number of off-speed pitches Stephenson threw.

"We've got to get him better with his fastball," Riggleman said. "He's got a good arm. He's got to get more confident that he can locate his fastball, so he's not throwing as many off-speed pitches."

The Reds ended the nine-game, three-city road trip 2-7. The end was ugly: Reds pitchers walked a total of 11, and outfielder Phillip Ervin made the final out of the game.

The Reds are off Thursday and then open a nine-game, 10-day homestand against Arizona.

"I love being at home, that's for sure," Riggleman said. "But you're going to play the same amount home and away. You've got to win ballgames on the road and we did not have a good road trip. Going home doesn't solve your problems. You've got to play well when you get home."

Stephenson, the 25-year-old right-hander, went four innings and allowed three runs on three hits. He struck out four.

Stephenson worked a 1-2-3 first. He walked Michael Comforito to start to start the second. Two outs later, Austin Jackson doubled to get Comforito in.

Stephenson worked an easy third.

But he walked Jose Bautista to start the fourth. Brandon Nimmo followed with a double. After Stephenson struck out Austin Jackson, the Reds intentionally walked Devin Mesoraco.

The lowlight of Stephenson's outing followed: He walked pitcher Jacob deGrom on four straight pitches – all breaking balls, none close to the zone. That made it 2-0.

"For me, my slider is my easiest pitch to throw for strikes," Stephenson said. "I wanted to throw whatever I could for a strike. That at-bat I wasn't able to throw any for a strike"

Amed Rosario followed with a sacrifice fly to make it 3-0.

That was it for Stephenson.

deGrom came in with a 1.85 ERA, so things didn't look good for the Reds. They looked a whole lot worse when Michael Lorenzen gave up two runs in the sixth. deGrom ended up going six shutout innings. He allowed four hits, walked one and struck out 10.

Stephenson, the Reds' first-round pick in the 2011 draft, was 11-6 with a 2.87 ERA overall at Triple-A Louisville. He threw 113 innings, allowed 74 hits, 57 walks and struck out 133.

That walk rate – 4.54 per nine innings -- would be the fourth worst in Major League Baseball.

"The bottom line is I didn't throw enough strikes today," Stephenson said. "Going forward, I have to be better about that."

Cincinnati Reds manager Jim Riggleman will get his message to players loudly when needed

John Fay, Cincinnati Enquirer

Published 12:52 p.m. ET Aug. 8, 2018

NEW YORK — Reds manager Jim Riggleman is the easy-going type. He rarely shows much emotion on the field.

It's hard to imagine him yelling at a player or even raising his voice to a player on the field. That is true.

Behind closed doors? That's a different subject. He'll air it out.

"I've had of those with our team," he said. "I've had a couple where they got loud because I was dissatisfied with the play."

One was after the Detroit series where the team played poorly on defense. Riggleman has been able to keep such meetings under wraps since taking over the Reds.

A writer who covered Riggleman in Washington mentioned that Riggleman was a known yeller then.

"He would know that because he caught wind of some of the meetings I had with the team," Riggleman said. "When I was with Washington, I took over, and we were 26-61. We lost the first five games, so we're 26-66. We played 90 games, and we're 40 under .500.

"And we were playing some really bad baseball, so I had to make it clear to the players: This isn't acceptable. We're going to find out who the keepers are. That turned into some hollering.

"It was all behind closed doors, but it would get out."

The Reds were 3-15 when Riggleman took this year. But it was more a lack of offense and poor pitching that put them there. Riggleman leaves that to the hitting and pitching coaches.

Riggleman concerns himself with winning the game and making sure the team is playing the game the right way.

When they don't, he'll let them know it -- loud and clear.

VOTTO, TUCKER OUT: The hit-by-pitch victims – Joey Votto and Preston Tucker – were out of the lineup for Wednesday's game – as expected. Riggleman hopes to have them back after Thursday's off day.

On Votto (right knee): "He felt somewhat better (Tuesday)," Riggleman said. "He likes to play. He's not happy about taking any days off and he's going to push it to be back in there Friday."

Votto has not missed two games in a row since he missed two on June 21 and 22 in Texas.

On Tucker (right foot): "I'll go into (Thursday) and check with the trainer," Riggleman said. "They'll do some tests. He's confident he'll be available Friday. But it's questionable. He's still limping around."

REYES OUT: Right-hander Jesus Reyes was optioned back to Triple-A Louisville to open a spot on the roster for Wednesday's starter Robert Stephenson.

Reyes, 25, made one appearance with the Reds. He threw two scoreless innings Friday in Washington.

DAYTON DAILY NEWS

Billy Hamilton reaches Cincinnati Reds milestone

By Marcus Hartman

August 8, 2018

Billy Hamilton tied a Cincinnati Reds icon Wednesday afternoon in New York.

The speedy centerfielder tied Eric Davis for fifth in franchise history with his 270th career steal.

Hamilton will take over sole possession of fifth place with his next steal, but it's a long way to No. 4.

That spot belongs to Bob Bescher, a Wittenberg graduate who stole 320 bags for the Reds from 1908-1913. He was a four-time National League steals champion.

Joe Morgan is the Reds' all-time leader with 406 steals followed by Barry Larkin (379) and Davey Concepcion (321).

Hamilton has 27 steals on the season after swiping more than 50 bags in each of the previous four.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DeGrom gets run support, lowers ERA to 1.77; Mets blank Reds

By LARRY FLEISHER

Yesterday

NEW YORK (AP) — Jacob deGrom has had precious little margin for error even while having the best ERA in the majors. Finally, on Wednesday, he got the run support he needed.

DeGrom struck out 10 over six innings, received rare significant run support and earned his first win in nearly two months as the New York Mets blanked the Cincinnati Reds 8-0.

“Almost every game he's pitched in, one pitch can cost him the game,” Mets manager Mickey Callaway said. “So I feel like all of those are stressful innings.”

“Jacob is so relaxed, he might not feel the stress of those, but I would have to think every time a runner gets in scoring position or every time a home run hitter gets up that he steps on the gas a tad more to make sure he doesn't even give up one run.”

Brandon Nimmo tied a team record with three doubles and drove in three runs as the Mets won for the 22nd time in their last 66 games.

DeGrom (6-7) ended a seven-start winless streak, allowing four hits in a 100-pitch outing and lowering his ERA from 1.85 to 1.77. He won for the first time since June 18 at Colorado, where the Mets scored 12 runs.

It was his sixth double-digit strikeout game of the season and 27th of his career. His first nine strikeouts were on change-ups and fastballs, and deGrom used his curveball to fan Scooter Gennett to end the sixth.

“When I go out there, I don't want anybody to score,” deGrom said. “I don't like giving up runs whether it's 8-0 or 0-0, and that's how I approach this year, go out there and keep guys from getting around the bases.”

DeGrom allowed one earned or fewer for the 13th time this season, tying him with Justin Verlander, Blake Snell and Chris Sale for the major league lead. He held an opponent under three runs for the 20th straight time.

“He's definitely one of the best in the game,” Gennett said. “His numbers show it.”

He was 0-5 with a 2.47 ERA during the winless skid, with the Mets giving deGrom a combined eight runs in those games.

They scored plenty on Wednesday for deGrom, who helped himself with an RBI walk in the fourth. It was the second straight outing he drove in a run.

Austin Jackson drove in two runs with a double in the second and a single in the fifth as the Mets built a 5-0 lead. Nimmo hit an RBI double in the fifth and scored on a sacrifice fly by Amed Rosario in the fourth.

Nimmo also added a two-run double in the eighth and Jackson capped the scoring with a single.

Rosario's sacrifice fly came after deGrom drove in his third run of the season and 15th of his career. With runners at second and third, the Reds intentionally walked Devin Mesoraco, but starter Robert Stephenson (0-1) threw four straight pitches out of the strike zone.

"I wanted to throw just whatever I could throw for a strike, and that at-bat, I wasn't able to throw any for a strike," Stephenson said.

Stephenson made his season debut for the Reds after going 6-0 in his last seven starts for Triple-A Louisville. The former first-round pick allowed three runs on three hits in four innings.

The Reds wound up moving left fielder Phillip Ervin to the mound to finish the eighth.

Seth Lugo, Jerry Blevins, and Robert Gsellman each pitched a scoreless inning for the Mets.

METS MILESTONES

Nimmo's three doubles marked the 29th time in team history it happened and the first since Yoenis Cespedes on Aug. 3, 2015, at Miami. ... 3B Jose Bautista scored his 1,000th run in the fourth inning, becoming the 10th active player to reach the milestone.

GOOD HITTING PITCHER

When the Reds wanted to bat for Stephenson, they didn't turn to their bench. Instead, they went to their pitching staff, sending out Michael Lorenzen. Lorenzen hit a 324-foot fly ball to left right field, lowering his average from .267 to .250. It was the fourth time he pinch hit and stayed in the game.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Reds: 1B Joey Votto (right knee) missed his second straight game and sat out for the third time in four games. Votto was hit by a pitch by Washington RHP Ryan Madson and missed his 10th game since the start of the 2015 season. Manager Jim Riggleman said Votto is feeling better and that the slugger will play Friday. . OF Preston Tucker (toe) did not play for the second straight game. He was hit on the right foot by RHP Noah Syndergaard's slider on Monday. Riggleman said Tucker's foot is still sore and he will consult with trainers and undergo tests during Thursday's off day.

Mets: C Devin Mesoraco was hit in the groin while attempting to catch a deGrom pitch in the first inning but stayed in the game.

UP NEXT

Reds: After a day off, RHP Anthony DeSclafani (6-5, 4.98 ERA) will start the opener of a three-game series against Arizona on Friday.

Mets: RHP Zack Wheeler (6-6, 3.89 ERA) starts the opener of a three-game series at Miami on Friday. Wheeler is 4-0 with a 2.17 ERA in his last seven starts.

TRANSACTIONS

08/09/18

Toronto Blue Jays sent RHP Aaron Sanchez on a rehab assignment to GCL Blue Jays.

08/08/18

Cleveland Indians sent RHP Josh Tomlin on a rehab assignment to Akron RubberDucks.

Cleveland Indians reassigned RHP Evan Marshall to the minor leagues.

Oakland Athletics signed free agent 1B Viosegy Rosa to a minor league contract.

Boston Red Sox activated 3B Rafael Devers from the 10-day disabled list.

Boston Red Sox optioned 2B Tony Renda to Pawtucket Red Sox.

Washington Nationals placed RHP Kelvin Herrera on the 10-day disabled list. Right rotator cuff impingement.

Washington Nationals recalled RHP Koda Glover from Syracuse Chiefs.

Atlanta Braves sent RHP Jason Hursh outright to Mississippi Braves.

Detroit Tigers recalled C Grayson Greiner from Toledo Mud Hens.

Detroit Tigers recalled RHP Artie Lewicki from Toledo Mud Hens.

Cleveland Indians optioned RHP Evan Marshall to Columbus Clippers.

Detroit Tigers placed 1B John Hicks on the 10-day disabled list retroactive to August 7, 2018. Right groin strain.

Pittsburgh Pirates optioned 1B Jose Osuna to Indianapolis Indians.

Pittsburgh Pirates activated 1B Josh Bell from the 10-day disabled list.

Atlanta Braves optioned LHP Kolby Allard to Gwinnett Stripers.

Washington Nationals optioned RHP Jefry Rodriguez to Syracuse Chiefs.

Cincinnati Reds recalled RHP Robert Stephenson from Louisville Bats.

Cincinnati Reds optioned RHP Jesus Reyes to Louisville Bats.

Atlanta Braves placed RHP Shane Carle on the 10-day disabled list. Right shoulder inflammation

Atlanta Braves placed LHP Max Fried on the 10-day disabled list. Left groin strain.

Detroit Tigers optioned LHP Daniel Stumpf to Toledo Mud Hens.