

Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings February 7, 2019

THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY

1936-Reds players and officials sail from New York to San Juan, Puerto Rico for spring training. They will open spring training on February 10th

MLB.COM

All you need to know for Reds Spring Training
By Mark Sheldon MLB.com @m_sheldon
Feb. 6th, 2019

CINCINNATI -- Reds Spring Training in Goodyear, Ariz., will feature a new manager in David Bell, a new coaching staff and several new players. Here is what you need to know about 2019 camp.

Pitchers and catchers report date
Tuesday, Feb. 12

First pitchers and catchers workout
Wednesday, Feb. 13

Full-squad report date
Sunday, Feb. 17

First full-squad workout
Monday, Feb. 18

New faces to know
Right-handers Sonny Gray and Tanner Roark, left-hander Alex Wood and outfielders Yasiel Puig and Matt Kemp

Top prospects to know
Infielder/outfielder Nick Senzel, outfielders Taylor Trammell and TJ Friedl, catcher Tyler Stephenson, shortstop Alfredo Rodriguez and right-handers Tony Santillan and Vladimir Gutierrez

Where is the facility?
All Reds spring home games are played at Goodyear Ballpark off Estrella Parkway.

Can fans attend workouts?
Yes, but all workouts and batting practices are held each morning at the Reds player development complex, less than a mile away at 3125 S. Wood Boulevard. Times vary, but 10 a.m. MST is the general start time of activities. The club will still take batting practice there ahead of road games.

First Cactus League game
Saturday, Feb. 23, vs. the Indians at 3:05 p.m. ET

First TV game
Sunday, Feb. 24, at the Angels at 3:10 p.m. ET (Fox Sports Ohio)

Two other notable games

The Reds play the two-time defending National League champion Dodgers at 4:05 p.m. ET on Thursday, March 14, in Glendale and again at 9:05 p.m. ET on Friday, March 15, in Goodyear.

Last game in Arizona

Sunday, March 24, vs. the Rockies at 3:05 p.m. ET

Any additional exhibitions before the regular season?

The Reds visit the Braves at SunTrust Park in Atlanta on Monday, March 25, at 7:20 p.m. ET and Tuesday, March 26, at 1:10 p.m. ET.

Opening Day

Thursday, March 28, at 4:10 p.m. ET vs. the Pirates at Great American Ball Park

Mark Sheldon has covered the Reds for MLB.com since 2006, and previously covered the Twins from 2001-05. Follow him on Twitter @m_sheldon and Facebook and listen to his podcast.

Scooter Gennett's goal for 2019 is to break down barriers around mental health

By Eric Chesterton @CF_Larue

February 6, 2019 at 2:21pm

The last two years have been good to Scooter Gennett. In 2017, the second baseman made history by hitting four home runs in a single game, earning him a scooter to call his own. Last year, he made his first All-Star team and hit a clutch 2-run homer in the 9th inning to send the game to extra innings.

With those on-field accomplishments in tow, Gennett is setting his sights on some off-field goals in 2019. That starts with getting out in the community and helping kids have conversations about their mental health:

As discussions around mental health become less stigmatized in sports and athletes increasingly rely on sports psychologists to help them perform at the highest level, it's nice to see them bring that perspective into the community. Hopefully, Gennett's 2019 project helps the kids he works with and inspires more openness about mental health.

Eric Chesterton is writer for Cut4. He particularly enjoys bunts against the shift, stolen bases and celebrating his birthday with mascots at the ballpark.

CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

You can play as a Cincinnati Reds legend in 'MLB The Show 19'

Jacob Fisher, Cincinnati Enquirer

Published 1:36 p.m. ET Feb. 6, 2019 | Updated 1:37 p.m. ET Feb. 6, 2019

Some familiar faces are coming to the latest installment of Sony's popular video game franchise.

Former Reds pitcher Rob Dibble and outfielder Yasiel Puig will be playable characters in "MLB The Show 19," the fourteenth installment of Sony Interactive's popular baseball simulator.

The game simulates a baseball game where players can choose to control either an individual player or an entire team.

Dibble, a two-time All-Star who played from 1988-1995, is one of just 41 MLB pitchers to throw an immaculate inning — the same feat Drew Storen accomplished against the Orioles in April 2017.

Puig, a right fielder, made his major league debut in June 2013 when he signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers. He played with the Dodgers until December 2018, when he was traded to the Cincinnati Reds.

"MLB The Show 2019" will be released March 26, 2019, on Playstation 4.

BLEACHER REPORT

Yasiel Puig Has Finally Found the Perfect Place to Let 'Wild Horse' Run Free

Zachary D. Rymer

February 7, 2019

Yasiel Puig is a Cincinnati Red now—and loving it.

The Reds acquired Puig in a seven-player trade with the Los Angeles Dodgers on Dec. 21. The deal was effectively a salary dump for the Dodgers, one that moved Puig from a large-market World Series contender to a small-market club that leads Major League Baseball in losses since 2015.

But if Puig has any hard feelings, he did a dandy of a job hiding them in his first public appearance as a Red last Wednesday:

In speaking to reporters, including Mark Sheldon of MLB.com, Puig expressed optimism that he and the 2019 Reds can turn the tide and emulate the Big Red Machine teams of the 1970s. The Cuba native also insisted that he's bothered by neither the temperature nor the size of his new surroundings.

"I've been playing in a small city, a small country, almost all my life," he told reporters.

Perhaps it's best not to read too much into Puig's sunny disposition. Or the Reds' exhibition of it, for that matter. Public relations blitzes are a thing, after all. And in the dead of winter—an especially cold one in Cincinnati, to be sure—this fits the bill.

Alternatively, we could posit that Puig is the right guy in the right place at exactly the right time.

The "Wild Horse" is what legendary Dodgers announcer Vin Scully started calling Puig during his star-making rookie season in 2013. And, boy, did it fit.

Puig's opening statement was a debut week for the ages in which he showed that he was indeed a force of nature. He had power, speed and arm strength as good as anyone's, not to mention the personality and playing style of an anthropomorphized lightning bolt. There were bat flips and other celebratory displays aplenty.

"It's pretty amazing," Dodgers catcher A.J. Ellis said at the time. "It's pretty special to be a part of. It just doesn't seem like he's slowing down. He's definitely changed the culture in this clubhouse."

Puig ultimately finished second in the National League Rookie of the Year voting on the strength of a .925 OPS and 4.7 wins above replacement, according to Baseball Reference. The following year, he made the NL All-Star team and finished with an .863 OPS and 5.1 WAR.

At a certain point, however, it became difficult to focus on Puig's numbers. The same lightning-bolt nature that powered his rise to stardom also ignited controversy after controversy (h/t MLB.com's Will Leitch for compiling them) between 2013 and 2016.

Some of those—most notably his spat with notoriously red-rear-ended San Francisco Giants ace Madison Bumgarner in May 2014—weren't entirely Puig's fault. They were more like instances of MLB simply not being ready for a player unmoored from the bland culture long since established by the "unwritten rules."

It's not as easy to shift blame for the times when Puig ran afoul of his own teammates, or of former manager Don Mattingly. And following an injury-marred 2015, his offense was declining so drastically in 2016 that the Dodgers ran out of excuses to be patient with him. In August, they finally sent him down to the minors for a period meant to "improve him as a player and person."

Evidently, it worked.

Starting with his return to the Dodgers in September 2016, Puig bounced back with an .832 OPS, 55 home runs and 30 stolen bases over his next 300 games. He was last seen playing a major role in the 2018 postseason with huge homers in Game 7 of the National League Championship Series and Game 4 of the World Series.

And though he largely maintained his Wild Horse persona, Puig mostly stayed out of trouble. There was the time he sent a two-fingered message to heckling fans. And he had yet another run-in with the Giants. But nothing egregious, and he generally fit more comfortably under Dave Roberts' wing than he ever did under Mattingly's.

"He was kind of at a fork in the road in terms of which way to go," Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman said in a post-trade conference call with reporters. "To his credit, he put in a lot of hard work and focused on being a better teammate and performing more consistently, and he's been a big part of the success we've had in 2017 and 2018."

Meanwhile, there's been a decidedly Puig-friendly shift in MLB's culture. The league has steadily been distancing itself away from a preference for blank-faced automatons and more toward players with life in their limbs and emotions on their sleeves.

The culmination was MLB's "Let the Kids Play" promo for the 2018 postseason. Puig was prominently featured flipping his bat and wagging his tongue, all against the backdrop of Ken Griffey Jr., baseball's OG cool dude, urging baseball fans to lighten up a little.

About the only thing Puig has been missing in the last couple of seasons is a spotlight of his own. Despite the equilibrium he found following his demotion, he spent much of 2017 and 2018 as one star among many on Dodgers teams with loftier ambitions than merely being relevant.

Which brings us, finally, back to Cincinnati.

Along with fellow former Dodgers Matt Kemp and Alex Wood and other newcomers Sonny Gray and Tanner Roark, Puig is merely one piece of the Reds' impressive offseason haul. Likewise, he's sharing a roster with incumbent stars such as Joey Votto, Eugenio Suarez and Scooter Gennett. Which is to say, Puig is only one reason to believe that the Reds can rise from the muck and contend in the NL Central this season.

There's nonetheless a sense that the Reds care just as much about being relevant as they do about being good. To this end, of course Puig is emerging as the point man in their hype machine for 2019. He may be one of many stars, but none of their other guys has as much potential star power as he does.

To hold up his end of the bargain, Puig will eventually have to keep backing up his eccentricity with production. It can only help that the trade to Cincinnati reunited him with hitting coach/kissing buddy Turner Ward, who had a huge hand in facilitating Puig's revival in Los Angeles.

"We are like a family. I talk to him a lot," Puig said of Ward, according to Sheldon. "He's helped me a lot to be a better person, a better baseball player."

Puig should also be boosted by his new home ballpark. He slammed 51 homers across 2017 and 2018 despite having to contend with Dodger Stadium's deep dimensions and marine layer. By contrast, Great American Ball Park is a tiny stadium with fly-ball-boosting powers.

Health permitting, the first 30-homer season of Puig's career should be within reach in 2019. Throw in everything else he can do—namely: run the bases and play Gold Glove-caliber defense—and he should at least re-emerge as an All-Star. He might even make a run at the NL MVP.

If there's a downside to Puig's outlook in Cincinnati, it's that he may only stick around for one year. He's due for free agency after 2019. If his walk year is as explosive as it should be, his market value could grow beyond Cincinnati's comfort zone.

All the same, the times should be good while they last. The Reds are getting the best possible version of Puig, and the conditions in Cincinnati are just right for everyone to notice.

ESPN.COM

The universal DH is coming! Here's who it impacts most

If -- and when -- the National League adopts the designated hitter, these dominoes will fall

Feb. 7, 2019

Buster Olney

ESPN Senior Writer

The general managers had already talked about legislating home plate collisions out of baseball before Scott Cousins ran over Buster Posey, but that particular moment in 2011 seemed to fully define the risks at hand -- the possibility of a great young franchise star having his career ruined by an outlier play.

The rules were changed, and similarly, Chase Utley's postseason slide into Ruben Tejada in 2015 accelerated eventual discussions to protect middle infielders.

The same sort of crystallization seemed to happen last summer in regards to the universal designated hitter, with the highly respected Masahiro Tanaka. Club executives have been frustrated when pitchers were lost to injuries while swinging a bat, or bunting, or running the bases, and last summer, Tanaka -- someone who trains and prepares diligently -- strained both hamstrings while running the bases in an interleague game. For some club officials, this fully illuminated the ridiculousness of asking pitchers to do stuff outside of the realm of their day to day training.

Maybe somebody like Madison Bumgarner or Mike Lorenzen is suited to do that kind of work, but many pitchers are not.

The adoption of the universal DH has seemed inevitable for months, and while there is haggling to be done between Major League Baseball and the union over the when and how, it's going to happen eventually, changing the context for NL teams dramatically. The anticipated changes have already affected decisions, in fact.

Some of the dominoes related to this:

5. The end of Joey Votto's contract will look a whole lot better for the Reds. Votto is a freakishly great hitter who has thrived in Cincinnati, and has a full no-trade clause in his contract that runs for at least five more years. He's in excellent condition. But he's 35 years old and eventually, there will come a time when he and the Reds would be better off if he took some or most of his at-bats as a DH -- and now it seems likely that can happen in his final seasons, when Votto will be passing milestones. He's got 1,729 hits, 1,104 walks, 269 homers, and counting.

TRANSACTIONS

02/06/19

Colorado Rockies invited non-roster LHP Ben Bowden to spring training.

Colorado Rockies invited non-roster LHP Evan Grills to spring training.

Colorado Rockies invited non-roster RHP Rico Garcia to spring training.

Pittsburgh Pirates signed free agent 2B Nick Franklin to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Colorado Rockies signed free agent RHP Peter Lambert to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Colorado Rockies signed free agent RHP Matt Pierpont to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Colorado Rockies signed free agent C Brett Nicholas to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training.

Colorado Rockies invited non-roster C Dom Nunez to spring training.

Colorado Rockies invited non-roster C Brian Serven to spring training.

Colorado Rockies invited non-roster 2B Bret Boswell to spring training.

Colorado Rockies invited non-roster 1B Brian Mundell to spring training.

Colorado Rockies invited non-roster 1B Tyler Nevin to spring training.

Colorado Rockies invited non-roster SS Brendan Rodgers to spring training.
Colorado Rockies invited non-roster 3B Colton Welker to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster IF Craig Brooks to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster LHP Ian Clarkin to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster RHP Dakota Mekkes to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster RHP Duncan Robinson to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster C P.J. Higgins to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster C Ian Rice to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster 2B Trent Giambrone to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster SS Zack Short to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster RF Johnny Field to spring training.
Chicago Cubs invited non-roster CF Jacob Hannemann to spring training.
Minnesota Twins signed free agent LHP Tim Collins to a minor league contract.
Minnesota Twins sent RHP Chase De Jong outright to Rochester Red Wings.
Minnesota Twins signed free agent LHP Justin Nicolino to a minor league contract.