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Tampa Bay rekindles good 2008 memories for Dodgers' Scott Kazmir, J.P. Howell, Carl Crawford

By Joey Kaufman

Hope awashed the Tampa Bay Rays as they gathered for spring training in 2008.

A reporter broached Scott Kazmir with a question about expectations and the 24-year-old ace sounded off.

“What’s possible?” Kazmir began. “Play in October, that’s possible.”

It prompted sneers, though not undeservedly. Since the expansion franchise was formed in 1998, Tampa Bay had yet to make the playoffs, win more than 70 games in a season or finish higher than fourth place in the American League East.

“Typically when Rays have talked about playing in October, it’s golf,” read a story in the St. Petersburg Times.

Kazmir’s prediction ended up looking Namath-like. Not only did the Rays appear in the postseason after winning 97 games and snagging the division title, they advanced to the World Series. It remains the only berth in club history.

Kazmir, now 32, has played in 132 games with five other teams since he was traded away the following season, but he returns to Tropicana Field with the Dodgers and a couple other ex-Rays, Carl Crawford and J.P. Howell, for a two-game, midweek series. The left-hander will be on the mound Tuesday for his third start as a visitor in his former ballpark.

The Rays were the team Kazmir debuted with and saw some of his best years, landing in All-Star Games in 2006 and 2008 and jump-starting the franchise.

His youthful optimism from eight years ago helped change the course for Tampa Bay, which made the postseason in three subsequent seasons and has seen far more consistency over its second decade.

“It was one of those things where we knew we were going to be tough to beat,” said Howell, a left-handed reliever. “That was the whole crucial part to the beginning.”

Howell arrived by trade after his rookie season in Kansas City. Like many others, he was brought in by the team’s executive vice president, Andrew Friedman, who now runs the Dodgers’ front office.

The bold comments from Kazmir helped take pressure off the other young players.
“It was gutsy for him to go out and say it like that,” Howell said. “I want to ask him today if he really believed it when he was saying it or if he was just trying to set the tone. I really do think he believed it.”

Kazmir said he did.

“We had a couple young guys, had a couple key veterans and thought we had a shot,” he said.

Both of the pitchers pointed to the previous September as an indication that they might be turning the corner. They finished below .500 that month at 11-16, but they said they saw progress during that final month of 2007 with a young roster under the guidance of second-year manager Joe Maddon.

So when the question was posed from a beat writer about the Rays’ 2008 plans, Kazmir said he was answering honestly.

“It wasn't me just preaching to the world that we were going to make the World Series or make the playoffs,” Kazmir said. “He asked me, and I was confident.”

All laughs aside.

“It's like when you’re telling the truth and nobody believes you, it’s frustrating” Howell said. “We really believed we were good. Everyone was saying we weren’t. So we had to show them, and we did.”

Against the Philadelphia Phillies in the World Series, they had home-field advantage and split the first two games, but ended up losing in five games.

Still, they were playing baseball in October, Kazmir said Tropicana Field during that run was the loudest stadium he had pitched in. Howell called it “the first cool thing to happen in St. Pete in a long time.”

“That’s when the fun started,” said Crawford, the Dodgers’ left fielder who was with Tampa Bay from 2002-10 and was one its longest-tenured players.

Those years, though, weigh most heavily on Crawford.

Since he signed with the Boston Red Sox before the 2011 season and was later dealt to the Dodgers, he has spent 354 days on the disabled list because of an assortment of injuries, including two stints with a hamstring injury, a torn oblique muscle, a sprained ankle, wrist soreness, a knee injury and back soreness.

Roaming Tropicana Field’s artificial turf did not help.

“You play that many years on turf, you’re going to pay for it at some point,” Crawford said. “I’m paying for it now. You don't think about it when you’re playing on it, because you have to play on it. You can’t stress yourself thinking on turf. At the end of the day, it definitely takes a toll on your body.”

He rarely missed time with the Rays. In eight full seasons with the Rays, he averaged 147 games.
“There’s no give, really,” Crawford said. “Even though they try to make it padded, it’s still concrete at the bottom. It’s a little rough on you.”

But as with Kazmir, those were some of his best years.

“We were just young and didn’t know what were doing, really,” Crawford said. “We just knew we had a lot of talent on the team. We felt like we could beat anybody.”

**Dodgers pitcher Josh Ravin tests positive for PEDs, suspended 80 games**

By Bill Plunkett

Just days after former Dodger Dee Gordon was suspended for PED use, injured Dodgers reliever Josh Ravin has been suspended 80 games for violating Major League Baseball’s policy regarding performance-enhancing substances.

The right-hander was suspended Monday for 80 games after a spring training drug test revealed a banned peptide in his system. Ravin suffered a fractured left forearm in a car accident during spring training and has not pitched since.

Ravin was not expected back until June but the suspension will begin immediately.

Ravin also suffered "a severe case of intestinal flu and strep throat" this spring. In a statement released through the MLB players' union, Ravin blamed a supplement he took to regain weight after the illness for the positive test.

"I was put on antibiotics and lost a total of 20 pounds in less than seven days," Ravin said in his statement. "To try and speed up my recovery, I took some supplements that I thought would help. Unfortunately, I was not as careful as I should have been and one of the supplements contained a banned substance.

"I later learned that the substance showed up in a regular drug test done of me during 2016 spring training. This has been a very painful lesson for me. I have always tried to avoid doing anything in violation of the system and I take full responsibility for the consequences of my actions and my bad judgment. So I have decided to accept the suspension and continue my ultimate goal to be able to pitch again in the major leagues."

Ravin, 28, spent 10 seasons in the minor leagues, mostly in the Cincinnati Reds organization, before making his major-league debut last season. The hard-throwing reliever made nine appearances for the Dodgers, going 2-1 with a 6.75 ERA. He was a long shot to make the Dodgers' bullpen this spring before his injury.

Ravin is the sixth major-leaguer suspended for a positive PED test this season, the third in a little over a week (along with Gordon and Chris Colabello of the Toronto Blue Jays).
"We are disappointed to hear that Josh has violated Major League Baseball's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program," the Dodgers said in a written statement. "The Dodgers fully support MLB's policy toward eliminating performance-enhancing substances from the sport and, as per the Joint Drug Program, we will have no further comment on this suspension."

**On deck: Dodgers at Rays, Tuesday, 4 p.m.**

By Joey Kaufman

Where: Tropicana Field

TV: SNLA, 4:10 p.m.

Did you know? The Dodgers have faced the Rays nine times in franchise history. They are 3-3 in St. Petersburg and 3-0 in Los Angeles.

**THE PITCHERS**

**DODGERS LHP SCOTT KAZMIR (1-2, 5.76)**

Vs. Rays: 1-5, 5.13

At Tropicana Field: 27-18, 3.64

Hates to face: Evan Longoria, 4 for 13 (.308)

Loves to face: Desmond Jennings, 1 for 6 (.167)

**RAYS LHP MATT MOORE (1-2, 3.66)**

Vs. Dodgers: First appearance

At Tropicana Field: 17-12, 3.80

Hates to face: Carl Crawford, 1 for 1 (1.000)

Loves to face: Howie Kendrick, 2 for 9 (.222), 5 Ks

**UPCOMING MATCHUP**

Wednesday: Dodgers LHP Alex Wood (1-2, 4.82) vs. Rays LHP Drew Smyly (1-3, 2.60), 4:10 p.m., SNLA
For Scott Kazmir and other National League pitchers, hitting can be a painful experience

By Andy McCullough

Clayton Kershaw lugged a bucket of balls in one hand and two bats in the other as he led a procession of starting pitchers into the on-deck circle at Dodger Stadium last Friday. Trailing behind were Kenta Maeda and Scott Kazmir. A pitching machine resided near the mound.

"Get this bunting machine out of here," Kershaw said. "Let's hit."

The group waited for Ross Stripling to finish an interview in the dugout — "Strip, stretch with the relievers," Kershaw called to him. "You don't get to hit" — then continued its regular routine before home games. The pitchers convene to practice hitting on a daily basis, with only that day's starter exempt.

When Stripling arrived, the quartet took turns laying down bunts. Then Kershaw received his wish, the pitchers got to swing away and the group thinned to three. Kazmir stood behind the cage, protecting the left arm he damaged practicing a skill he had not utilized in a decade.

After 11 seasons pitching in the American League, Kazmir did not transition smoothly to the National League last month. He posted a 5.76 earned-run average in April, worst among the Dodgers starters. He also dealt with soreness in his left wrist and thumb caused by hitting during spring training.

To protect his arm, Kazmir has been restricted from swinging a bat for the next two weeks. So he limited himself to bunting during drills. In the on-deck circle during his last outing, he warmed up with his right hand. He tried to bunt even when the bases were empty.

Kazmir will get a reprieve when he starts Tuesday. The Dodgers (13-13) play the Tampa Bay Rays at Tropicana Field under American League rules, meaning a designated hitter will be used. But five months of hitting still awaits Kazmir, a 32-year-old who signed a three-year, $48-million contract last winter.

"Knowing now how my body's going to react to stuff like that," he said, "maybe I should have done a little more in the off-season to prepare myself for spring training. Because we just got right into it, and everyone else was fine with it, and I was struggling a little bit, day to day. With everything, not even just the wrist, but everything, obliques, everything gets tired."

Brett Anderson can empathize. As a kid, he explained, "I was one of the best hitters in the country when I was 12." But he couldn't handle off-speed pitches and found his calling on the mound. He never hit in the minor leagues and only swung a bat sporadically during five seasons with the Oakland Athletics.

Then the A's traded him to the Colorado Rockies in 2014. In his third game, Anderson fought off a 93-mph sinker from San Francisco Giants starter Matt Cain and "hit it off the end of the bat," he said. The reverberation fractured his left index finger. He was sidelined for three months, part of a chronic history of injuries that includes back surgery this spring.

Anderson did not suffer a similar catastrophe with the Dodgers last season. But he did feel discomfort in his right wrist "from the torque of hitting," he said. He finished the season with four hits in 47 at-bats.
"There was like a two-week stretch where I was like, 'This isn't so bad. I feel mildly comfortable up here,'" he said. "And then that dissipated, and it was like, 'This is back to sucking. I don't like this anymore.'"

As group, the Dodgers pitchers rank seventh in the National League in on-base plus slugging percentage. During a miserable stretch of offense last week, the pitchers actually provided some of the team's better at-bats. Kershaw drove in the only run in Sunday's victory. Stripling walked and scored a run Saturday. Alex Wood cracked a hit and worked a walk Friday.

Now in his fourth season in the National League, Wood has grown comfortable with the routine of batting. But he never hit during three seasons at the University of Georgia and took only 17 at-bats in the minors before the Atlanta Braves promoted him to the majors in 2013.

His first time up, Wood faced the heat of New York Mets starter Matt Harvey. He required 39 at-bats to notch his first hit. In the interim, he struck out 26 times.

"It's hard, man," Wood said. "If you don't do it [regularly], it's impossible."

Stripling presents an even more unusual case. As a senior at Carroll High in Southlake, Texas, he suffered a broken leg playing basketball. When he debuted for the varsity baseball team that spring, he never played the field. Like Wood, he did not swing a bat during four seasons at Texas A&M. His minor league resume consisted of six hits in 22 at-bats.

"It's been something that I just don't try too hard at," Stripling said. "Like, I go and get the work done. But I'm not going to hit jacks. I've never hit before."

Kazmir lamented his own overzealousness during the spring. He tried to hit home runs during batting practice, hoping to show his skills after the long layoff. His body did not appreciate it.

So Kazmir intended to downscale his aggression at the plate. But even as he grappled with the injury, he remained firm on one issue facing the sport: He would not support the implementation of the designated hitter in the National League.

"No. No. No, I won't," Kazmir said. "I like to hit too much. Even though I'm probably not the best at, based on the evidence."

**Dodgers minor league pitcher Josh Ravin is suspended for PED use**

By Andy McCullough

Dodgers minor league pitcher Josh Ravin on Monday was suspended 80 games for violating baseball's performance-enhancing drug policy.

Ravin tested positive for Growth Hormone Releasing Peptide 2.
Ravin, 28, broke his left forearm in a car accident in February and has been on the disabled list all season. He was not expected to be able to pitch until June.

“We are disappointed to hear that Josh has violated Major League Baseball's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program,” the team said in a statement. “The Dodgers fully support MLB’s policy toward eliminating performance enhancing substances from the sport and, as per the Joint Drug Program, we will have no further comment on this suspension.”

In a statement, Ravin said his positive test was caused by supplements he took after dealing with illnesses during spring training.

“During 2016 spring training, I came down with a severe case of intestinal flu and strep throat. I was put on antibiotics and lost a total of 20 pounds in less than seven days,” Ravin said in a statement. “To try and speed up my recovery, I took some supplements that I thought would help. Unfortunately, I was not as careful as I should have been and one of the supplements contained a banned substance.

“I later learned that the substance showed up in a regular drug test done of me during 2016 spring training. This has been a very painful lesson for me. I have always tried to avoid doing anything in violation of the system and I take full responsibility for the consequences of my actions and my bad judgment. So, I have decided to accept the suspension and continue my ultimate goal to be able to pitch again in the major leagues.”

Ravin posted a 6.75 earned-run average in nine outings for the Dodgers in 2015. Because he is on the big league disabled list, he qualified as the sixth major leaguer to receive a suspension for violating the league’s drug policy this season.

DODGERS.COM

Dodgers set for test with tough May slate

By Ken Gurnick

ST. PETERSBURG -- The Dodgers should learn in May whether they play in an evenly matched division or a weak one. The National League West didn't have a team finish April with a winning record. The Dodgers went 12-13, playing all but two series against division foes.

After Clayton Kershaw opened the new month on Sunday by overwhelming the Padres, the Dodgers play 29 of the next 32 games against teams out of their division, starting Tuesday night with a pair of Interleague games against Tampa Bay. It will be the first time president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman faces his old club.

The Dodgers then leave the country, playing two games in Toronto. Apparently, the scheduling computer spit out opponents this month in alphabetical order instead of proximity.
That computer also gave the Dodgers off-days on Monday and Thursday, then only one more over the ensuing five weeks. The Dodgers will use this week's down time to juggle the rotation, giving Kenta Maeda two extra days of rest so he will start Friday against the right-handed-heavy lineup of the Blue Jays.

Even in victory on Sunday, the club's offensive malaise dragged on. The Dodgers had only three hits, the biggest one by Kershaw, who cashed in A.J. Ellis' double for the lone run of the game. Kershaw drove in two of the 12 runs the club scored on the seven-game homestand. The dozen runs equaled the number of runs the Dodgers scored in their last game on the previous trip.

"Maybe a day off, get on the East Coast, get on the road, we might come alive," manager Dave Roberts said Sunday.

The Dodgers led the league in home runs last year, but through Sunday, they were next to last. Outfielders Andre Ethier and Scott Van Slyke are injured, and third baseman Justin Turner's power has vanished after microfracture knee surgery.

"I don't see anything wrong physically," Roberts said of Turner. "I do see that there are some balls where the at-bat should be ended, balls in the hitting zone that he's missing. Also, there are some close pitches that he's taking. He's just not seeing the ball as well as he'd like to."

Yasiel Puig and Howie Kendrick have been slumping badly for weeks, and Adrian Gonzalez joined them on the homestand. Joc Pederson, tied with Gonzalez for the team lead with three homers, had four last April and 16 more by the All-Star break.

More troublesome, the team is 14th in runners left on base.

"We just have to continue to stay the course," Roberts said. "The hitting coaches are working tirelessly; they take it home with them at night, as do the players. It's one of those things where you can't just put guys in different places in the order and say that's a magic solution. They still have to hit.

"It doesn't matter where you hit in the order, you still have to hit. Right now, I think there's consistency with where they're at and they're comfortable showing when they're supposed to play. Now it's just a matter of going out there and getting hits. The work's there, the confidence is there, I know on my part."

**Dodgers reliever Ravin suspended 80 games**

By Chad Thornburg

Dodgers pitcher Josh Ravin has been suspended without pay for 80 games for violating MLB's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program, the Office of the Commissioner announced Monday evening.

Ravin tested positive for a performance-enhancing substance -- Growth Hormone Releasing Peptide 2. "We are disappointed to hear that Josh has violated Major League Baseball's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program," the Dodgers said in a statement. "The Dodgers fully support MLB's policy toward
eliminating performance enhancing substances from the sport and, as per the Joint Drug Program, we will have no further comment on this suspension."

Ravin, 28, has spent the season on the disabled list after breaking his left arm in a car accident this spring. He made his big league debut with the Dodgers last year, going 2-1 with a 6.75 ERA through nine relief appearances.

Honorary Bat Girl has special connection to Dodgers

By Chad Thornburg

The Dodgers will welcome a special guest -- Melissa Stockhoff of Houston -- to Chavez Ravine later this month as part of the Honorary Bat Girl program.

Stockhoff was announced Monday as one of the winners of the 2016 contest, which recognizes baseball fans who have been affected by breast cancer and who demonstrate a commitment to supporting the fight against the disease.

Stockhoff will be honored on the field and throw out the ceremonial first pitch prior to the Dodgers' game against the Cardinals on May 13. The 34-year-old mother of three was diagnosed with breast cancer in September 2015. She finished her final infusion of chemotherapy in March and continues her fight against the disease.

The Dodgers have special meaning to Stockhoff because she and her husband, Andrew, attended a Dodgers game on their honeymoon. The couple will celebrate their nine-year wedding anniversary in June.

The Honorary Bat Girl program was introduced in 2009 in support of the "Going to Bat Against Breast Cancer" initiative, which aims to increase awareness about the breast cancer cause, while fundraising for breast cancer research. Each of this year's winners' stories can be found at HonoraryBatGirl.com.

DODGER INSIDER

Guns N' Roses adds second Dodger Stadium show August 19

By Jon Weisman

Guns N’ Roses has added a second show at Dodger Stadium for its “Not in This Lifetime” tour, produced by Live Nation.

Tickets for the added August 19 show will be available on a 48-hour pre-sale for Citi cardmembers beginning Tuesday at 10 a.m., followed by a Dodger pre-sale Thursday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tickets for the general public go on sale beginning Friday.
The Dodgers will be in the middle of a seven-game road trip to Philadelphia and Cincinnati, returning home to play the Giants from August 23-25, followed by the Cubs from August 26-28.

Kershaw’s striking dominance

By Josh Gurnick

In case you somehow missed it ... Clayton Kershaw is really good.

Since his 2008 big-league debut, he leads Major League Baseball in ERA (2.42), strikeouts (1,800), opponents’ batting average (.206), shutouts (13) and WHIP (1.02), and ranks in the top 10 in wins (117, tied for fourth), complete games (22, tied for third), strikeout-to-walk ratio (3.84, 10th) and strikeouts per nine innings (10.42, fourth).

Kershaw’s 1,800th career strikeout came in the ninth inning of the Dodgers’ 1-0 victory Sunday over the Padres, arriving in his 250th career game. Only Randy Johnson (1,877) has more strikeouts through his first 250 games.

Although it is not considered a major milestone, the ranking provides some additional perspective on his dominance through only nine years in the big leagues. Kershaw remains on track this year to become the youngest National League pitcher ever with 2,000 career strikeouts.

It is obviously too early to vote him into the Hall of Fame, but his name surely ranks among a lot of its members.

Josh Ravin suspended 80 games

By Jon Weisman

Dodgers reliever Josh Ravin, who has been on the 60-day disabled list this year as a result of breaking his left forearm in a car accident during Spring Training, has received an 80-game suspension without pay for a violation of Major League Baseball’s Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program, the Office of the Commissioner of Baseball has announced.

Ravin, 28, tested positive for “Growth Hormone Releasing Peptide 2 (GHRP-2), a performance-enhancing substance,” MLB said.

The suspension of Ravin is effective immediately.

“We are disappointed to hear that Josh has violated Major League Baseball’s Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program,” the Dodgers said in a statement. “The Dodgers fully support MLB’s policy toward eliminating performance enhancing substances from the sport and, as per the Joint Drug Program, we will have no further comment on this suspension.”
Ravin pitched 9 1/3 innings for the Dodgers last year, allowing 18 baserunners while striking out 12. For Triple-A Oklahoma City, the Chatsworth High grad allowed 40 baserunners in 28 innings with 38 strikeouts.

He issued a statement via the Major League Baseball Players Association.

“During 2016 Spring Training, I came down with a severe case of intestinal flu and strep throat,” Ravin said. “I was put on antibiotics and lost a total of 20 pounds in less than seven days. To try and speed up my recovery, I took some supplements that I thought would help. Unfortunately, I was not as careful as I should have been, and one of the supplements contained a banned substance.

“I later learned that the substance showed up in a regular drug test done of me during 2016 Spring Training. This has been a very painful lesson for me. I have always tried to avoid doing anything in violation of the system, and I take full responsibility for the consequences of my actions and my bad judgment. So, I have decided to accept the suspension and continue my ultimate goal to be able to pitch again in the Major Leagues.”

Dodgers recall their most memorable home runs

By Jon Weisman

The most memorable home run of a big-leaguer’s life might not even be in his big-league life. Sometimes, the big blow is an obvious one, but other times, it’s one you might never have known about if you never asked.

So, we asked.

See what we mean in the stories that follow from these members of the Dodger family …

Trayce Thompson

I remember my first one ever. I don’t even remember running around the bases or anything like that. It was when I was 9 years old. I was playing on a team with my brother (Klay). My oldest brother (Mychel), he always knew I had power — he always believed. He was the best support system, still, to this day, for me and Klay. He’s the best, your typical older brother. But Klay never believed, because Klay’s always so competitive, he never believed that I had power. So I hit a home run, and I don’t even remember going around the bases, but Klay was on the team, and I got in the dugout and remember just being like, “See?”

My first (MLB homer), kind of the same thing. I don’t even remember running around the bases. … Now thinking about it, it’s the same exact feeling that I had, but I didn’t think about it at the time.

* * *

Dave Roberts
Hey, you know what? My most memorable home run was in Double-A (1998), against John Smoltz. So he was on a rehab assignment. I was at Jacksonville. And this is the first time I ever faced a Major League pitcher. And I hit a home run off him in the first inning. And I got him to sign the baseball. I was probably 26. I got the home-run ball. Southern League baseball. He wasn’t too happy about it, but he said, “I’ll sign it for the kid.”

But as far as in the big leagues, I think my first homer (August 30, 1999), Ramon Ortiz, Jacobs Field, right-center field, fastball maybe. And you know – you always remember your first.

* * *

Howie Kendrick

I hit a walkoff home run (May 30, 2010) when I was with the Angels. It was actually the day after Kendrys Morales broke his ankle on home plate. He hit a walkoff the day before, and the next night I hit a walkoff right behind it. So that’s probably one of my most memorable moments. I didn’t (watch my step crossing home plate) actually, because that was kind of a freak accident. It was kind of pretty sad to see it happen that way, but there’s nothing anybody could have done any differently.

* * *

Adrian Gonzalez

Hard one to answer. I think most of the times I hit a memorable home run, we lost the game, so it becomes not memorable. ... A couple of playoff home runs that come to mind. Playing in Game 163 when we played the Rockies (October 1, 2007), in the famous no-tag, I hit a grand slam. All those, when I remember them, we lost the game. So it makes it not as good.

* * *

Kiké Hernandez

The only time I hit a walkoff homer was in A ball, when my family just got there on the same day I happened to hit a walkoff homer. But my first career homer (July 2, 2014 for Houston) was insane. My family was there (for) my first big-league start. I hit a home run, and after the game, my phone was blowing up, but more than about my homer, it was just people telling me I had to watch the replay, because the TV channel happened to do a split-screen live of my family in the stands, in my at-bat. It was pretty cool just to watch my mom and dad and my agent and their reactions, because I had two strikes, and they were kind of just focused on the at-bat.

The look on their face was like “he’s got two strikes —don’t strike out,” and all of a sudden I hit the homer. To be able to see my parents just stand up and start jumping like little kids, that was pretty cool.

* * *

Scott Van Slyke
I remember the first home run I ever hit — that was pretty memorable. I was 5. I don’t remember the situation, but it went over the center-field wall. I think the fences were about 150 feet or something. I was (surprised), that’s why I remember it. Excited.

* * *

Corey Seager

Probably the first career one (September 12, 2015). I don’t even really remember it — it’s kind of just a blur. I remember until about halfway to first base, seeing it go over, and then from there it’s just kind of dark.

* * *

Carl Crawford

My first home run that I remember was probably my first walkoff in the big leagues (for Tampa Bay on March 31, 2003) against the Red Sox. You just feel good to win a game with a homer — that’s what you always want to do. I mean, I feel like everybody dreams of that. They want to win a game with a home run. They tell us not to do that when you go up to the plate, but you know, if it happens, you’re really happy about it.

* * *

Yasmani Grandal

Probably my first game I started, in Colorado (June 30, 2012), first big-league hit, from the right-hand side, then the second big-league hit (was also a homer) from the left-hand side. Fastball up and in, and a changeup down and away.

* * *

Ross Stripling

It’s only funny because it just came up. So, I wasn’t great at baseball when I was young, and when I played, I had a buddy, one of my best friends in other sports like soccer and football, and we were on the same team in baseball. And it was like the Little League playoffs, maybe first or second year of kid-pitch, maybe (age) 10. It feels like it’s midnight, but it’s probably like 7:30, because we’re so young. And it’s like second and third, and the reason I know this is because (my buddy) was just in Denver, and he’s one of my good friends so we met up — that’s where he lives and works now — and he brought it up. He was like, “You remember that?” And I was like, “Yeah, I didn’t, but I do now.”

He was telling me, second and third, first base was open, so their coach said to basically walk me, so he’s throwing balls like head-high. And he throws a ball head-high, and I tomahawk it, over the fence, to basically win the game. So I guess that might be one of the only home runs I ever hit. Didn’t hit any in high school, didn’t hit in college, so that would probably be it.
It felt like a big deal at the time, but now it’s fun to talk about. I remember watching it go — one of those that you hit and didn’t really know if it was a bomb — and I watch and it goes over, and I think my dad was coaching first base, so I gave him a big high five.

* * *

Joc Pederson

I’d say my first home run in the big leagues (April 12, 2015), because it’s something you dream about, and it’s pretty cool. It was in Arizona, 3-2 count, fastball.

* * *

Chase Utley

For me, probably my first home run in the big leagues (for Philadelphia, April 24, 2003). It was my first hit in the big leagues. It was a grand slam. It was off Aaron Cook. It was fairly surreal, obviously. It happened pretty quickly, but I was just pretty excited about it.

* * *

Charlie Culberson (previously published)

Sometimes, the game, it gets a little bit different-feeling. You’re in the big leagues, and just trying to stay or what not, but a couple years ago, I was able to pinch-hit for the Rockies, bottom of the ninth, down by a run. I had a pinch-hit walkoff homer. That kind of made me realize, I love the game — I really love the game — but things like that make you feel like a little kid again. So honestly, I’ve enjoyed the ups and downs, but that was probably the highlight of my career. Yeah, it made me feel like a kid running around the bases.

* * *

Manny Mota

Against James Rodney Richard (October 2, 1977), pinch-hit home run at Dodger Stadium. I just closed my eyes, made contact and the ball went out. We were losing. The situation was, Tommy Lasorda was looking for someone to pinch-hit against him, and no one wants to. ... I say, “Tommy, I’ll hit. The only thing he can do is strike me out.” Then I said, “I’m gonna take first pitch.” I see if he’s going to try me with a fastball inside. That will give me a message: How’s he gonna pitch me? I say the next pitch is going to be middle inside, (and) I’m going to try to get the fat part of the bat in front. If I miss that one, I’m dead, because after that he’s going to go to slider. Luckily, I make contact, and the ball went into the bullpen.

OK, I’m coming back to the dugout, and everybody’s down on the floor. And then later I find out, Davey Lopes told the guys, if I hit a base hit today off J.R., he’ll buy dinner for everybody.

(Note: This was the same inning that the legend, however true, of Glenn Burke inventing the high five was born. Mota’s homer — the 31st and last of his career — cut the Astros’ lead to 3-1. Two outs later,
Dusty Baker hit his 30th home run of the season, giving the Dodgers MLB’s first quartet of 30-homer hitters. Burke, the on-deck hitter, congratulated Baker — and then stepped up and homered off Richard himself. That was the only home run Burke hit as a Dodger.

* * *

A.J. Ellis

In the long run, it didn’t work out for us, but just the feeling of hitting in the playoffs, running around the bases. It was a splitter from (Edward) Mujica. Game 5 of the 2013 NLCS (October 16, 2013) to help keep us alive. We ended up winning the game and taking the trip back to St. Louis, but in the moment, to be part of that and stave off elimination, keep us playing, just the energy and the jolt of the crowd. ... No, it’s definitely more fulfilling (than the dream), because when you do it in the dream setting, you’re only feeling the internal excitement. You actually get to feel the external excitement of what you’ve done for the fanbase, of what you’ve done in the stadium, the way the stadium comes alive, the energy — you can’t imagine that until it actually happens.

I’m fortunate to hit two playoff home runs in my career, and both have just been ridiculous feelings, running around the bases with floods of emotion. I’d like to hit one that helps lead to a Series win one of these days.

TRUEBLUELA.COM

Isaac Anderson and bullpen combine for a 4-0 Loons win

By Craig Minami

Though all four affiliates had solid starting pitching, only two teams, Rancho Cucamonga and Great Lakes won on Monday.

Player of the day

Great Lakes starting pitcher, 2015 40th-round pick Isaac Anderson, combined with three other pitchers on a 4-0 shutout. Anderson in five starts has pitched 25 innings this season, striking out 25 while walking seven.

Triple-A Oklahoma City

The Dodgers had tied the game at two in the bottom of the eighth and their bullpen had tossed zeros for four innings to send the game to extra innings. However, in the tenth, Jharel Cotton gave up a solo home run to the first batter he faced that led to the 3-2 win for the Zephyrs.

Sam LeCure started for the Dodgers and he pitched five innings. LeCure gave up two runs (one earned), three hits, four walks ands struck out four. Joe Thatcher, Matt West and Jacob Rhame combined to pitch four innings and give up three hits and struck out seven.
Cotton has now given up a home run in each of his last three appearances. Cotton started in his four appearances this season but has now relieved twice in the last four days.

The Dodgers had eight hits and received 10 walks but could only push across two runs, one of those was on a home run by Corey Brown. The Dodgers were 1-for-8 with runners in scoring position and left 15 runners on base.

Double-A Tulsa

The Drillers were looking for the win as they took a one-run lead to the the ninth. The Naturals (Royals) then scored seven runs to overwhelm the Drillers and they took a 9-3 win.

Chris Anderson started for the Drillers and pitched six innings. Anderson struck out six, walked three, allowed two runs (one earned). Grant Dayton and Jordan Schafer each pitched a scoreless inning, Dayton struck out two and Schafer struck out one.

Dale Thayer had allowed a run in only two of his prior six appearances. Thayer gave up six runs (four earned) in ⅓ inning. Seth Prankoff finished up the game.

Jacob Scavuzzo had two hits, Drew Maggi was 2-for-4 with his first home run of the season.

Class-A Rancho Cucamonga

The Quakes took a 4-0 lead over the Blaze (Mariners) and then held on as they saw the Blaze post single runs in the sixth, seventh and eighth innings. Scott Griggs pitched a scoreless ninth and the Quakes won 4-3.

Josh Sborz started and pitched seven innings for the third time this season. Sborz gave up two runs, three hits, walked two and struck out six.

Matt Beaty was 3-for-3, Erick Mejia was 2-for-4 with a double. The Quakes received nine walks and their first run was a result of a bases-loaded walk.

Class-A Great Lakes

The Loons shutout the River Bandits (Astros) 4-0 to win the first game of their series. Isaac Anderson pitched five innings and allowed four hits, two walks and struck out five. 2015 3rd round pick Philip Pfeifer pitched his second two-inning appearance in the last four days. Pfeifer didn't allow a hit and struck out three.

Matt Jones was 2-for-4 with three RBI.

Transactions

Triple-A: Right-handed pitcher Logan Bawcom assigned to Oklahoma City from Tulsa; left-handed pitcher Sean Burnett released from contract. Double-A: Activated outfielder Adam Law from the 7-day disabled list.
Monday Scores

New Orleans 3, Oklahoma City 2

NW Arkansas 9, Tulsa 3

Rancho Cucamonga 4, Bakersfield 3

Great Lakes 4, Quad Cities 0

Tuesday Schedule

4:05 p.m. - Quad Cities (Jose Hernandez) at Great Lakes (Dennis Santana)

5:05 p.m. - New Orleans (Dylan Axelrod) at Oklahoma City (Jose De Leon)

5:10 p.m. - Tulsa (Trevor Oaks) at Arkansas (Angels) (Blayne Weller)

7:05 p.m. - Bakersfield (Andrew Moore) at Rancho Cucamonga (Andrew Sopko)

**Rays, like Dodgers, having trouble scoring runs**

By Eric Stephen

As the lumbering Dodgers offensive train moves into American League territory for five interleague games this week, they can take solace that they are not alone in offensive woes. The Rays have been among the worst offensive teams in baseball in 2016, and host the Dodgers for two games beginning Tuesday night.

Tampa Bay had higher hopes that its offense would better complement their young pitching staff in 2016, so much so that at the end of spring training the Tampa Bay Times wondered if the club was sacrificing some of its patented defense for offense.

"You have to have balance. You have to have balance. We learned for the last eight years that just being pitching heavy is probably not the way to do it," starting pitcher Chris Archer told Marc Topkin in March. "You've got to have defense. You've got to have pitching — the teams that win get high-level pitching, starting and relief. But you've got to have offense, too."

The key additions to the Rays were outfielder Corey Dickerson, shortstop Brad Miller, first basemen and outfielders Steve Pearce and Logan Morrison, and catcher Hank Conger.

But so far the Rays are dead last in the majors in scoring, at just 3.21 runs per game, hitting just .229/.283/.356 as a team.
Tampa Bay has been held to three or fewer runs in 18 of their 24 games, the most in baseball, and are tied with the Yankees at six games with four or more runs scored, the fewest in baseball.

The Dodgers haven't been much better, with 16 of their 26 games at three runs or less, and just 10 games scoring four or more runs. The Dodgers are 16th in MLB at 4.08 runs per game, though when adjusting for park and league have been slightly worse on a peripheral basis, with a 90 wRC+ from their non-pitchers, compared to a 91 wRC+ by the Rays.

The Rays, like the Dodgers, should be better on offense and likely will be. But it’s just a question of degree. Tampa Bay thought they turned a corner in an 8-1 win at Yankee Stadium on April 24, capping a 31-run, six-game road trip.

"We got off to a slow start," outfielder Steven Souza told Topkin. "We faced some tough pitchers early on, some real good ones. This last week and a half or so, guys are starting to find their groove, and more guys are going to fall in behind that and find their groove. That's what you're seeing."

But after that eight-run outburst, the Rays scored just 12 runs in six games last week, while the Dodgers were busy scoring 12 runs in seven games.

I'd suggest betting the under for these two games, but baseball is just weird enough to give us a pair of offensive shootouts (instead of shutouts) at Tropicana Field.

Swing away

One thing noticeable with the Rays in 2016 is that they swing at the first pitch more often than anybody, both in volume and frequency. Entering Monday, Tampa Bay swung at the first pitch 315 times in 861 plate appearances, 36.6 percent of the time. Major league hitters on the whole this year have swung at the first pitch 28.0 percent of the time.

The Dodgers are slightly above average this season, swinging at 30.1 percent of first pitches in 2016.

BEST RAYS HITTERS, 2016

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Pos</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>BA/OBP/SLG</th>
<th>wOBA</th>
<th>wRC+</th>
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<td>Logan Forsythe</td>
<td>2B</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>.337/.418/.593</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brandon Guyer</td>
<td>OF</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.297/.422/.405</td>
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<td>152</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steven Souza</td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>.260/.313/.494</td>
<td>.348</td>
<td>130</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kevin Kiermaier (L)</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>.239/.329/.448</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>125</td>
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</table>

Source: Baseball-Reference & FanGraphs

But the Rays' aggression hasn't stopped with the first pitch. Their non-pitchers have swung at 70.3 percent of pitches in the strike zone, the most in baseball, and their 77.6-percent contact rate on those swings is the lowest in baseball.

They swing early, swing often, and miss often, too. The resulting 26-percent strikeout rate by their non-pitchers trails only the Astros.
Lefties galore

This was a week made for Scott Van Slyke, with the designated hitter available for five games and a pair of left-handed pitchers starting for Tampa Bay. But unfortunately Van Slyke is still sidelined on the disabled list with back soreness, and doesn’t really have a timetable for a return any time soon.

The Dodgers will also throw two left-handed pitchers against the Rays, which should tell us a few things.

Tampa Bay has faced seven left-handed starting pitchers this season, and Pearce started at first base in all seven games, which means Morrison and his 6-for-64 (.094) start will likely be on the bench versus Los Angeles. Brandon Guyer has started all seven games, spread around the three outfield positions, and Tim Beckham has started six of the seven games, including five games at shortstop and once at second base.

Curt Casali has started 15 of 24 games behind the plate for the Rays, including all seven games against lefties, which means the Dodgers likely won’t get to face Hank Conger, who just saw his streak of 48 straight stolen bases against him snapped by throwing out a runner on Sunday.

Conger this season has allowed 11 steals in 12 attempts in just 80 innings, while the running game is virtually nonexistent with Casali as the backstop, with four steals in four attempts in 132⅔ innings.

On the Dodgers’ side, to date Joc Pederson has been in a platoon, sitting against all six lefty starters, and with only seven of his 77 plate appearances this season coming against southpaws. But manager Dave Roberts was adamant that Pederson wasn’t in a platoon, suggesting that he could start in one of these games in St. Petersburg.

Less pulp at home

The Rays are averaging only 2.63 runs per game at home this season, yet are somehow still 8-8 at Tropicana Field. That is thanks in large part to a starting rotation that has 10 quality starts in 16 home games, with only one pitcher - Wednesday night starter Drew Smyly - allowing more than three runs in a start.

Tampa Bay starting pitchers at home in 2016 have a 2.45 ERA, with 113 strikeouts and 24 walks in 99⅓ innings.

Dodgers RHP Josh Ravin suspended 80 games for positive PED test

By Eric Stephen

LOS ANGELES -- Dodgers pitcher Josh Ravin is having a terrible 2016 season in many respects. On Monday, a mistake he made extended that nightmare a little longer. Ravin was suspended 80 games by Major League Baseball for testing positive for a performance-enhancing substance.

Ravin is currently on the 60-day disabled list after suffering a broken left forearm in a car accident during spring training. His suspension starts immediately.
The drug in question for Ravin was Growth Hormone Releasing Peptide 2 (GHRP-2), something he says he took during spring training to help recover from dropping a lot of weight with the flu.

"During 2016 spring training, I came down with a severe case of intestinal flu and strep throat. I was put on antibiotics and lost a total of 20 pounds in less than seven days. To try and speed up my recovery, I took some supplements that I thought would help," Ravin said in a statement released by the MLB Players Association. "Unfortunately, I was not as careful as I should have been and one of the supplements contained a banned substance.

"I later learned that the substance showed up in a regular drug test done of me during 2016 spring training. This has been a very painful lesson for me. I have always tried to avoid doing anything in violation of the system and I take full responsibility for the consequences of my actions and my bad judgment. So, I have decided to accept the suspension and continue my ultimate goal to be able to pitch again in the major leagues."

Ravin could have easily been optioned to the minors at the end of spring training, but that he is on the 60-day disabled list was more a procedural move that allowed the Dodgers an extra spot on the 40-man roster. The benefit to Ravin during that period was collecting a major league salary, a pro-rated share of $515,000, rather than a minor league salary, as well as collecting major league service time.

During the suspension Ravin will continue to earn service time, because the MLBPA is powerful, but he will not be paid, potentially losing approximately $225,137.

"We are disappointed to hear that Josh has violated Major League Baseball's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program," the Dodgers said in a statement. "The Dodgers fully support MLB's policy toward eliminating performance enhancing substances from the sport and, as per the Joint Drug Program, we will have no further comment on this suspension."

Ravin, a graduate of nearby Chatsworth High School, made his major league debut in 2015 with the Dodgers, his hometown team, after nearly a full decade in the minors. He put up a 6.75 ERA in nine major league games, with 12 strikeouts and four walks in 9⅓ innings.

The earliest date Ravin can be reinstated is Wednesday, Aug. 3.

**Dodgers vs. Rays schedule & probable starting pitchers**

By Eric Stephen

The Dodgers play their first American League opponent of the year on Tuesday, traveling to Tampa for a quick two-game set with the Rays. This is just the fourth time in 20 seasons of interleague play that these two teams have matched up, and the first time in Florida since 2007.

Here is a quick look at the schedule and pitching matchups for the series, which is chock full of starters who have to use special scissors.
Tuesday, 4:10 p.m. PT (SportsNet LA)

The last time the Dodgers and Rays played in Tampa Bay was June 22-24, 2007, and Scott Kazmir — the American League leader that year with 239 strikeouts — started the middle game for the Rays. This time, Kazmir starts for the Dodgers, looking to build off his quality start at home last Wednesday night.

Fellow left-hander Matt Moore starts the opener for the Rays, having lasted at least six innings in each of his last four starts. He has 35 strikeouts against seven walks in his 32 innings this season. Lefties (in a small sample size of just 22 plate appearances) have fared better against Moore in 2016, hitting .318/.348/.455 compared to .194/.255/.306 (in 106 plate appearances) for right-handers.

Wednesday, 4:10 p.m. (SportsNet LA)

The Dodgers shuffled their starting rotation so Alex Wood wouldn't have to face the lefty-murdering trio of Jose Bautista, Edwin Encarnacion and Josh Donaldson in Toronto on Friday, though it is interesting to note that in the early going in 2016 the Rays have hit left-handed pitchers better (.251/.315/.419) than the Jays (.219/.283/.416).

Drew Smyly, yet another lefty, has four straight quality starts and is averaging just a tick under seven innings per start this season. He has 41 strikeouts against only six walks to go with his 2.60 ERA this season, and since joining the Rays from Detroit in the David Price trade in 2014 has a 2.54 ERA in 24 starts with a strikeout rate of 28.1 percent.

The Dodgers are 4-3 against left-handed starting pitchers in 2016, while the Rays are 5-2.

**Dodgers Week 4 review: Old friends on parade at Dodger Stadium**

By Eric Stephen

The beauty of baseball is that even in an otherwise miserable week we still got a memorable performance, with Clayton Kershaw providing the palate cleanser after a distasteful week.

First came manager Don Mattingly's return to Dodger Stadium, one that saw his Marlins win four times in four days, the first time the Marlins have ever swept the Dodgers in four games whether in Los Angeles or Miami.

Chief culprit for Miami was local product Giancarlo Stanton, who continued to torment the hometown team that did not draft him out of Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks in 2007. The slugger extraordinaire homered in three of the four games, including a three-run monster shot against Kershaw to turn Tuesday's game around, and went 5-for-14 (.357) with seven RBI in the sweep.

Former Dodger Dee Gordon drove home the tying run in the seventh inning on Thursday, then scored an insurance run later in the inning, but he had a worse week at Dodger Stadium than the Dodgers. With dubious timing, he dropped the appeal of his testing positive for a pair of performance-enhancing drugs, triggering arguably the most shocking suspension in the history of baseball's joint drug agreement, sidelining the slight speedster for 80 games.
Matt Kemp continued the old friend parade on Friday, hitting a go-ahead three-run home run for the Padres in the eighth inning Friday after Chris Hatcher, in his own words, "hung the piss out of a splitter."

The pitching was mostly fine for the Dodgers, save for the two key home runs mentioned above, but the overwhelming anchor on the week was an offense that all but disappeared. The Dodgers hit .167/.266/.260 for the week, scoring just 12 runs in seven games.

In the one game they won, they scored all of one run, which was all Kershaw needed in his 14-strikeout shutout win on Sunday to snap a six-game losing streak.

Since I started compiling these weekly reviews in April 2009 — would you believe this is the 189th such report, without missing a single one? — last week was the third-lowest-scoring at 1.71 runs per game. The only two worse offensive weeks came May 18-24, 2015 (seven runs in six games, 1.17 runs per game) and June 25 to July 1, 2012 (10 runs in seven games, 1.43 per).

It was such a bad week that Kenley Jansen only saw one game, and even then it was just because he needed work. Naturally, Jansen allowed his first run of the season.

It was that kind of a week.

Dodger Batter of the Week: As tempting as it was to leave this award vacant for the week, there was one clear winner. Clayton Kershaw was 3-for-5 with a double on the week, driving in a run in both of his starts. Kershaw tied for the team lead during the week with two RBI, one of just five players on the team to drive in a single run over the last seven games.

The offense was so bad that Kershaw was one of only five Dodgers with more than two hits last week. Adrian Gonzalez was 0-for-20, Howie Kendrick was 1-for-16, Kiké Hernandez was 1-for-15 and Yasiel Puig was 2-for-24.

Dodger Pitcher of the Week: Kershaw nearly took home dual honors thanks to 24 strikeouts and no walks in his two starts, but the Stanton home run mentioned above was part of a five-run inning that made this award competition wide open. Alex Wood claimed the prize with a very solid seven innings on Friday night, allowing only one run to the Padres while striking out a season-high nine.

Honorable mention goes to Louis Coleman, who returned to throw five scoreless innings with five strikeouts, and to Joe Blanton, who retired 10 of 11 batters, with four strikeouts and no hits allowed for the week.

Game of the Week

Sunday: Dodgers 1, Padres 0

Week 4 Record: 1-6
12 runs scored (1.71 per game)
26 runs allowed (3.71 per game)
.195 pythagorean winning percentage
2016 season Record: 13-13
106 runs scored (4.08 per game)
97 runs allowed (3.73 per game)
.541 pythagorean winning percentage (14-12)

Miscellany

Worst homestands: The Dodgers needed Kershaw's masterpiece on Sunday to avoid the first extended winless homestand in the history of Dodger Stadium, which opened in 1962. The worst Dodgers' homestand in Dodger Stadium history was Aug. 28 to Sept. 6, 1987, when they lost eight of nine games to the Expos, Phillies and Mets.

WORST DODGERS HOMESTANDS AT DODGER STADIUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Opponents</th>
<th>Record</th>
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<td>8/28-9/6/1987</td>
<td>Mon, Phi, NYM</td>
<td>1-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/14-4/20/1964</td>
<td>StL, Cin, Mil</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/6-7/11/1971</td>
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<td>6/25-7/1/1979</td>
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<td>9/24-9/30/1982</td>
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<td>9/21-9/27/1992</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/25-5/1/2016</td>
<td>Mia, SD</td>
<td>1-6</td>
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Minimum 4 games

The Dodgers technically had seven winless homestands in the last 55 seasons, but none longer than three games.

The Dodgers' 1-6 homestand last week tied five other miserable residencies, with the last coming Sept. 21-27, 1992, against the Braves, Reds and Astros, which back then — unlike now — were all in the National League West.

The six-game home losing streak by the Dodgers from Monday through Saturday has been topped only three times since 1962 — a nine-game losing streak from Aug. 13 to Sept. 6, 1987, and eight-game losing streak from Sept. 23, 1992 to Apr. 15, 1993, and a seven-game streak from Aug. 7-13, 1993.

The 10-K run, don't walk: With 14 strikeouts and no walks on Sunday, Kershaw now has a ridiculous 54 strikeouts and three walks on the season, including 24 strikeouts since his last walk and no walks in three home starts in 2016. It was also the 15th game in his career with double-digit strikeouts with zero walks. Dating back to 1913, Kershaw has more than double such games than any other Dodgers pitcher.

Dazzy Vance, Don Drysdale and Sandy Koufax had seven games each with 10-plus strikeouts and no walks.

Innings eater: Kershaw recorded his 22nd career complete game and 13th shutout in Sunday's 1-0 win over San Diego. It was also the sixth straight start of at least seven innings by Kershaw, the longest streak by a Dodgers pitcher to open a season since Orel Hershiser had nine straight to begin 1989.
Kershaw, who led the majors with 232⅔ innings in 2015, leads the majors this season with 46 innings, an average so far of 7⅔ per start.

A fun game to play with Kershaw's career numbers is to see how far back you can go with a certain category and still achieve something. For instance, in his last 151 regular season starts, dating back to June 14, 2011, Kershaw has an ERA under 2.00, sort of (1.9956).

You can go back a whopping 196 career starts, dating back to his second start of the 2010 season, and Kershaw averages at least seven innings per outing in that span, 7.01 to be exact.

### DODGERS PITCHERS WITH 1-0 SHUTOUT & RBI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitcher</th>
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<th>Opponent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claude Osteen</td>
<td>7/6/1966</td>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don Drysdale</td>
<td>8/11/1968</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alan Foster</td>
<td>9/22/1970</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don Sutton</td>
<td>4/14/1974</td>
<td>Houston</td>
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<td>Fernando Valenzuela</td>
<td>4/22/1981</td>
<td>at Houston</td>
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<td>Bob Welch*</td>
<td>6/17/1983</td>
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<td>Fernando Valenzuela</td>
<td>5/23/1984</td>
<td>at Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clayton Kershaw</td>
<td>5/1/2016</td>
<td>San Diego</td>
</tr>
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*homered

Helping yourself: Kershaw drove in A.J. Ellis with a single in the third inning on Sunday, providing the only run in a 1-0 victory in which he also pitched a shutout. It was just the eighth such time an LA Dodgers pitcher threw a shutout and collected the only RBI in a 1-0 win, and the first since Fernando Valenzuela against Philadelphia on May 23, 1984.

Valenzuela is the only Dodgers pitcher to appear on the list twice, having also beaten the Astros on Apr. 22, 1981 with an 11-strikeout shutout and an RBI single to score Pedro Guerrero at The Astrodome in Valenzuela's fourth major league start.

Bob Welch is the only pitcher on the list to have homered for the one run, taking Mario Soto deep on June 17, 1983.

### Transactions

Monday: Relief pitcher Louis Coleman was reinstated from the bereavement list after missing four games, and left-hander Luis Avilan was optioned to Triple-A Oklahoma City.

Tuesday: Left fielder Carl Crawford was activated from the disabled list, and pitcher Zach Lee was sent back to Triple-A after spending three days as unused long relief insurance.

### Game Results

Monday: Marlins 3, Dodgers 2  
Tuesday: Marlins 6, Dodgers 3  
Wednesday: Marlins 2, Dodgers 0
Thursday: Marlins 5, Dodgers 3
Friday: Padres 5, Dodgers 1
Saturday: Padres 5, Dodgers 2
Sunday: Dodgers 1, Padres 0

Upcoming Week

The Dodgers run the Rich Butler gauntlet, hitting the road for some hot interleague play action. It starts with the first-part of a home-and-home series with the Rays (the return engagement in Los Angeles is July 26-27), a two-game set that gives the Dodgers off days on both Monday and Thursday. Beginning Friday, the Dodgers have 20 games in 20 days — the maximum consecutive game days allowed without consent per the collective bargaining agreement — beginning with a three-game set against the Blue Jays in Toronto.

ESPN LA

Dodgers RHP Josh Ravin suspended 80 games after positive PED test

By ESPN.com

Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Josh Ravin has been suspended 80 games after testing positive for a performance-enhancing substance.

Although on the 40-man roster, Ravin has not pitched for the Dodgers this season, as he broke his non-pitching arm in a car accident.

In a statement, Ravin claimed his positive test was caused by supplements he took after dealing with illnesses during spring training.

"During 2016 spring training, I came down with a severe case of intestinal flu and strep throat. I was put on antibiotics and lost a total of 20 pounds in less than seven days," Ravin said Monday in a statement. "To try and speed up my recovery, I took some supplements that I thought would help. Unfortunately, I was not as careful as I should have been and one of the supplements contained a banned substance.

"I later learned that the substance showed up in a regular drug test done of me during 2016 spring training. This has been a very painful lesson for me. I have always tried to avoid doing anything in violation of the system and I take full responsibility for the consequences of my actions and my bad judgment. So, I have decided to accept the suspension and continue my ultimate goal to be able to pitch again in the major leagues."

In 2015, Ravin was 2-1 over 9 1/3 innings for the Dodgers. He posted a 6.75 ERA with 12 strikeouts and four walks.

The Southern California native appeared in nine games last season and made his major league debut at age 27. He was a fifth-round draft pick by the Cincinnati Reds in 2006, and he pitched in the minor leagues for 10 seasons. With the suspension he will lose $225,137 of his $515,000 salary.
Ravin becomes the latest player suspended by the league after a positive test.

Reigning National League batting champion Dee Gordon of the Miami Marlins and Toronto Blue Jays outfielder Chris Colabello have each been suspended 80 games this season. New York Mets reliever Jenrry Mejia was banned for life the past offseason, after a third positive test.

**MLB Rumor Central: Burnett opts out with Dodgers, will sign minors deal with Braves**

By ESPN.com

Left-handed reliever Sean Burnett intends to opt out of a minor league contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers and ink a new minors deal with the Atlanta Braves, reports Ben Nicholson-Smith of Sportsnet.

Burnett signed a two-year, $8 million contract with the Angels as a free agent ahead of the 2013 season. But left elbow impingement in 2013 led to season-ending elbow surgery, and a torn ulnar collateral ligament required Tommy John surgery in 2014.

The 33-year-old veteran reliever is making his return to the game after a year off to recover from Tommy John surgery, and has been with three organizations in the past few weeks. Burnett took part in the Nationals camp on a minor league deal, but was not signed into the club in Spring Training, leading to his move to the Dodgers. He has pitched 7 2/3 innings at the Triple-A level in the past month.

Burnett will report to Triple-A Gwinnett tomorrow, according to Nicholson-Smith.

**What to make of Yasiel Puig’s first month under Dave Roberts**

By Doug Padilla

LOS ANGELES -- Four weeks does not make a career, or a season, or a thoroughly convincing argument that your me-first, why-are-you-looking-at-me-that-way days are completely behind you.

But for Yasiel Puig, the first three weeks of the 2016 season provided a sign that he is aware of past transgressions, that he heard the grumblings from Los Angeles Dodgers teammates last year -- whoever said them -- and that he is capable of putting team ahead of self, trade the attention-getting play for the one that benefits the club and fan base.

Perhaps an even better sign, a month into the 2016 season, is that Puig has found balance. He hasn’t completely disavowed a go-for-broke style, as his rainbow throw from near the warning track to third base to nail Trevor Story in Colorado can attest.

It was hard not to connect Puig’s 9-for-18 start to the season to the comfort level he had in his new environment. That hot pace has slowed of late, as Puig has not had a multihit game since April 14, but his effort is not really in question.
Even in the midst of a tough stretch -- a 2-for-24 homestand dropped Puig's batting average all the way down to .239 -- new manager Dave Roberts saw enough in Puig to move him up to the leadoff spot in the lineup in hopes of sparking the Dodgers' struggling offense.

And while Puig seems to be thinking more about team these days, he hasn’t completely lost his identity.

"Yeah, it’s been great this year and really starting back in the offseason," Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman said. "We saw a lot of really encouraging signs that carried over into spring training and then obviously what we’re seeing here to date. The energy, defensively, on the basepaths, in the batter’s box has helped us in countless ways already this year."

The Dodgers will take a determined Puig, of course. Players want to win, first and foremost, and the blueprint for that success will require just about everybody to reach their potential this year, including a certain right fielder who has giant upside. Puig is so intent on cleaning things up this year, he is focused on details both on and off the field.

"I made a commitment to myself and to the team that I would never be late in 2016," Puig said in Spanish to ESPN. "This is a new year. I arrive early every single day, I work my hardest every single day, and I give my very best on the field every single day.

"I want people to only say positive things about Yasiel Puig. I am doing what needs to be done at this level."

It’s too late for former Dodgers manager Don Mattingly to reap the rewards of such a positive new attitude. The fascinating intrigue here was that as Puig professed his intentions to keep things positive, Mattingly was in the opposite clubhouse in Los Angeles last week, helping his new team, the Marlins, to a four-game sweep.

"That’s another one that gets overblown a lot," Mattingly said early in the week about his relationship with Puig.

Yet Mattingly followed that immediately with, "There were different meetings [with Puig] and different stuff, and I know different things have been written."

The Mattingly-Puig dynamic is of note because the manager was left to deal with whatever issue arose. Mattingly never did detail those issues, but he seemed to acknowledge they existed.

"I’ll tell you from my standpoint, it wasn’t about him being a better player, him growing, him being a better teammate -- all those things," Mattingly said. "Those were all part of those meetings and conversations. It was nothing personal in anything with that relationship at all for me. It was just about helping him grow, and that’s what I tried to do."

And Puig seems to have grown at least some. At the very least, he is saying all the right things. As the season plays out, it will become clear whether those words are genuine.
It doesn’t seem to be lip service. Puig’s changes are noticeable. He has been funny and self-deprecating on social media; he has shown hustle on the field, including his sprints to first base after walks. His defense under new outfield coach George Lombard has shown improvement.

He still isn’t hitting the cutoff man every time, but his risks have been sensible, more often than not.

"Defensively he’s engaged with George, and he’s really trying to make plays defensively," Roberts said. "You see him diving out there, making great throws.

"When you talk about being a good teammate, it’s things that don’t show up in the box score, things that your teammates judge you on and kind of watch. When you’re running the bases well, with intent, and you’re playing defense, that is a barometer, and I think he is doing a great job."

Much has been made of the clean slate Roberts gave to Puig and how Puig has accepted it. If Puig has issues with authority, he is not taking things out on Roberts and his staff.

The Dodgers obviously made Puig a priority this offseason. Call it high maintenance if you will, but for now, anyway, the club’s efforts have paid off.

"I think a lot of conversation [went on]," Friedman conceded. "And I think it’s a combination of a lot of conversations, coupled with our new staff forging new relationships. And also [it’s] just continued maturation.

"I think we’re seeing someone who is eager and willing to do what it takes to have team success, individual success, and I think that part is critical. I don’t think you can achieve it without the player being all in on the process."

How much of the Puig drama led to Mattingly mutually agreeing to leave might never be known. What is known is that with Roberts at the helm, players have noticed a difference, and not just in Puig. It is also noticeable in the tone of the clubhouse.

"Dave Roberts and the staff set the tone, even going back into the offseason," catcher A.J. Ellis said. "He reached out to everybody, and you knew right away how sincere and genuine he was, and basically he was coming in with a new voice and a chance for everybody to start fresh.

"I think Yasiel embraced that, and you have seen the relationship between those two guys really grow."

Yes, production is what will endear him to his teammates more than anything. But Puig is trying with other avenues too, like learning and using more English in the clubhouse, on the bench and in the field.

"Always be on time," Puig said in English. "Work hard every day."

And learn even more English?

"Yes, I speak English," he said, though in Spanish this time. "And that also helps me relate more to my teammates."
Could all this change really have come about because the Dodgers put a new manager in place? Does Roberts’ offer of a clean slate to Puig get much of the credit?

"It might have something to do it, but it goes to the player that he has to understand and buy in," Roberts said. "But I think with anyone who has any type of past, if you’re given a new lease on life, or whatever, and it’s genuine, which my offer was genuine and he took it."

The Dodgers know that if Puig fully understands the importance of team and community, he can reach his full potential. After all, despite his being around for a while, and what already seems to be an eventful career, this is still a 25-year-old kid.

"I think there is an appreciation of how difficult this game is; this game is the ultimate here in the major leagues," Friedman said. "With young players there is an adjustment period, and you can't possibly get to every aspect of that in the minor leagues.

"There are certain aspects of that that you have to experience at the major league level, which we've seen him learn from things in the past and start to really sync up all facets of his game."

LA DAILY NEWS

Dodgers reliever Josh Ravin suspended 80 games for PEDs

By JP Hoornstra

Dodgers pitcher Josh Ravin received an 80-game suspension without pay Monday after testing positive for Growth Hormone Releasing Peptide 2 (GHRP-2).

Ravin fractured his left arm in an automobile accident in spring training and had not been with the team since camp broke. He is on the 60-day disabled list.

“We are disappointed to hear that Josh has violated Major League Baseball’s Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program,” the Dodgers said in a statement. “The Dodgers fully support MLB’s policy toward eliminating performance enhancing substances from the sport and, as per the Joint Drug Program, we will have no further comment on this suspension.”

Ravin, 28, made his major league debut with the Dodgers last year after parts of 10 seasons in the minor leagues. The West Hills native and Chatsworth High grad appeared in nine games and posted a 6.75 earned-run average.

Ravin subsequently released a statement through the MLB Players’ Association:

“During 2016 spring training, I came down with a severe case of intestinal flu and strep throat. I was put on antibiotics and lost a total of 20 pounds in less than seven days. To try and speed up my recovery, I took some supplements that I thought would help. Unfortunately, I was not as careful as I should have been and one of the supplements contained a banned substance.
“I later learned that the substance showed up in a regular drug test done of me during 2016 spring training. This has been a very painful lesson for me. I have always tried to avoid doing anything in violation of the system and I take full responsibility for the consequences of my actions and my bad judgment. So, I have decided to accept the suspension and continue my ultimate goal to be able to pitch again in the major leagues.”

Ravin can serve his suspension while on the disabled list. He can train with the team and participate in extended spring training games, but will not be paid.

The Dodgers can also assign Ravin to a Minor League affiliate for a period of time prescribed under Section 7.H.2 of the Joint Drug Program.

**NBC LA**

**Dodgers Double-A Tulsa: Top 5 Drillers Prospects for 2016**

By Michael Duarte

The Los Angeles Dodgers had an off day on Monday as they traveled to Tampa Bay for a two-game interleague series with the Rays.

With the Big League club traveling, we thought we’d take a look at some of the best prospects within the organization that are currently playing in the Dodgers Double-A Tulsa affiliate. We believe the following players present the perfect blend of raw talent combined with long-term potential.

Without further ado, here are the top 5 Dodgers' prospects in Double-A:

1. 1B Cody Bellinger  (6th ranked prospect)

First baseman Cody Bellinger, 20, is the star of the team. The 20-year-old is the highest ranked Dodgers prospect (No. 6) in Tulsa.

Bellinger may be the reason alone for Tulsa’s power surge. Last year in Single-A Rancho Cucamonga, Bellinger hit 30 home runs and 103 RBI with a .264/.336/.538 slash line.

Bellinger is the son of Clay Bellinger, a longtime minor leaguer who broke into the big leagues with New York Yankees in 1999 at the age of 30 and was on their 2000 and 2001 World Series roster. Bellinger told the Tulsa World that his upbringing had a major impact on his makeup as a baseball player.

“It’s had a big impact on me,” Bellinger said, “offensively and defensively, being around the game my whole life, growing up and being in a major league clubhouse at a young age.”

Bellinger was on the disabled list for all of April with a strained hip, but returned this weekend to Tulsa where he went 2-for-8 with a run scored.
2. OF Alex Verdugo (7th ranked prospect)

Alex Verdugo, 19, is to the outfield as Bellinger is to the infield. Despite not even being 20-years-old yet, he is pretty advanced at the plate, demonstrating an understanding for the strike zone and recognizing pitches when he hit .311 in 124 games in Single-A.

Verdugo was also a fantastic high school pitcher in Tucson but as he told the Tulsa World on Monday, he preferred to be on the lineup everyday.

“I wanted to play every day,” Verdugo said. “I wanted to be in the lineup every day, contributing. I think I can be a game changer. If hitting doesn’t work out, although I think it will, I can always have a followup plan and go back on the mound. It's harder to be on the mound and go back to hitting.”

Verdugo is batting .263 with two home runs and 10 RBI in 22 games with Tulsa.

3. RHP Chris Anderson (17th ranked prospect)

Anderson returns to Tulsa after going 9-7 with a 4.05 ERA, 1.44 WHIP and 98 strikeouts in 126.2 innings pitched in 23 starts.

Anderson is known as being the first baseball player ever to be drafted in the first round out of Jacksonville University. With his powerful fastball, Anderson struck out 143 batters in his first pro season back in 2014 in Single-A Rancho Cucamonga.

Anderson has clocked his fastball as high as 98 mph but can cruise to a 92-95 mph fastball with zip and a heavy bite into the late innings. His only issues are his lack of a strong secondary pitch and struggles with command going into late innings.

Anderson is off to a rough start to the season, and is 2-1 with a 5.50 ERA through 18 innings. He has a lopsided 20 walks to go with just 12 strikeouts thus far.

4. RHP Chase De Jong (20th ranked prospect)

De Jong come in after posting a 3.43 ERA and 1.11 WHIP in 25 appearances (24 starts) in Single-A Lancaster and Rancho Cucamonga.

De Jong is more about poise and polish rather than power. De Jong has impressed scouts with his curveball and command and can also reach low 90s in fastball velocity. While it is not an issue now, De Jong is a fly ball pitcher and that is a problem in the NL West, if he were to ever make it that far up the ladder.

Similar to Anderson, De Jong is also off to a sloppy start in Tulsa as he has a record of 1-3 in five starts with a 4.68 ERA. He's struck out 23 batters and walked eight in 25 innings pitched.

5. RHP Trevor Oaks (21st ranked prospect)
Oaks started the season in Single-A Rancho Cucamonga where he went 1-1 with a 3.60 ERA to start the season. After an impressive 2015 stint that he saw him go a perfect 3-0 in five starts, it was only a matter of time before Oaks was called up to Double-A Tulsa.

Oaks was born in Riverside where he attended Woodcrest Christian High School. He underwent Tommy John surgery in 2012, and recovered nicely as he was named the PacWest and NCBWA West Region Pitcher of the Year in 2014.

He was selected by the Dodgers in the seventh round of the MLB draft that same year, and is known as a strikeout pitcher with a full arsenal of pitches to choose from. His best pitch, is his sinker and four-seam fastball, but Oaks also sports a cutter, slider, changeup and curve ball.

"My four seam and sinker usually come out at the same speed," he told TBPC.com. "I try to live around the 91 to 93 range. If I'm feeling fresh I might get it up to 95. I added the cutter this offseason and primarily use it against lefties."

Oaks made his Tulsa Drillers debut last Wednesday and earned his first Double-A victory as the Drillers beat Arkansas 2-1. Oaks allowed just one run on six hits with four strikeouts in six innings.

Los Angeles Dodgers Relief Pitcher Josh Ravin Suspended 80 Games for PEDs

By Michael Duarte

LOS ANGELES – It’s been a rough year for Los Angeles Dodgers relief pitcher Josh Ravin. After a family tragedy a year ago, Ravin broke his arm in a car accident during spring training. On Monday, Ravin received more bad news as he has been suspended by Major League Baseball for 80 games after he tested positive for a banned substance. Yahoo Sports was the first to report the news of the positive test and subsequent suspension.

Ravin becomes just the sixth player in 2016 to be suspended for a positive test for PED’s, following news earlier this week that Miami Marlins All-Star and former Dodger, Dee Gordon, tested positive for two banned substances in spring training. Ravin and Gordon join Toronto Blue Jays slugger Chris Colabello, Cleveland Indians center fielder Abraham Almonte, Philadelphia Phillies reliever Daniel Stumpf and New York Mets reliever Jenrry Mejia (who was banned for life) as the other players in baseball to test positive this year.

“We are disappointed to hear that Josh has violated Major League Baseball’s Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program,” the Dodgers said in a statement released on Monday. “The Dodgers fully support MLB’s policy toward eliminating performance enhancing substances from the sport and, as per the Joint Drug Program, we will have no further comment on this suspension.”

Ravin was currently on the Dodgers’ 40-man roster, but has been on the 60-day disabled list since the start of the season. He debuted with the Dodgers last year, and appeared in nine games, striking out 12 batters and posting an ERA of 6.75.
“During 2016 spring training, I came down with a severe case of intestinal flu and strep throat,” Ravin said Monday in his own statement. “I was put on antibiotics and lost a total of 20 pounds in less than seven days. To try and speed up my recovery, I took some supplements that I thought would help. Unfortunately, I was not as careful as I should have been and one of the supplements contained a banned substance.

“I later learned that the substance showed up in a regular drug test done of me during 2016 spring training. This has been a very painful lesson for me. I have always tried to avoid doing anything in violation of the system and I take full responsibility for the consequences of my actions and bad judgment. So, I have decided to accept the suspension and continue my ultimate goal to be able to pitch again in the major leagues.”

Ravin’s reason for the positive test is probable considering that his bout with the flu in spring training was widely reported, and that with the injury to his non-throwing arm, it was doubtful he would pitch for months. Regardless, he knowingly or unknowingly took a banned substance from the MLB Drug Policy list and will serve his suspension immediately.

The timing of the suspension comes on the heels of a bizarre Twitter exchange between Ravin and Dodger teammate Kiké Hernández last week. NBC LA was one of the first to report the exchange. Ravin was a fifth-round draft pick by the Cincinnati Reds in 2006.

YAHOO! SPORTS

Sources: Dodgers pitcher suspended 80 games for PEDs

By Jeff Passan

Los Angeles Dodgers relief pitcher Josh Ravin was suspended 80 games on Monday for using a banned substance, sources told Yahoo Sports, and is the sixth major leaguer to face discipline for performance-enhancing drugs this season. Ravin, who is on the Dodgers’ 40-man roster but has spent the year on the disabled list after breaking his non-throwing left arm in a car accident during spring training, tested positive for a banned peptide, according to sources.

His suspension comes on the heels of 80-game bans for National League batting champion Dee Gordon and Toronto Blue Jays slugger Chris Colabello. Cleveland center fielder Abraham Almonte and Philadelphia reliever Daniel Stumpf were hit with 80-game suspensions before that, and New York Mets reliever Jenrry Mejia received a lifetime ban in February for a third positive test.

Ravin, 28, debuted with the Dodgers last season after a decade in the minor leagues. In 9 1/3 innings, he posted a 6.75 ERA and struck out 12. The 6-foot-4, 240-pound Ravin touched 99 mph with his fastball last season and was considered a potential piece of the Dodgers’ bullpen, which has struggled with consistency this year. Ravin was expected to return from his injury sometime in May but now won’t be available until after the All-Star break.
I was soaked. I could hardly see. It was 2015, and I was a 23-year-old Dodgers rookie who was headed to the playoffs. You know the scene: The locker room was electric, corks popping, beer spraying. It was pure pandemonium.

Just before I could take in how surreal the moment actually was, I saw my brother Champ across the room. Goggles on. Pouring champagne on his head right along with the guys.

Of course, he’s not a player, but it was just natural to see Champ there. Our executive VP, Lon Rosen, went out of his way to find Champ and bring him into the locker room. Honestly, I don’t think Lon would have noticed if I was in there. Just saying.

That’s the way it’s always been with Champ. He brings this happiness out of people all the time. They see how much fun it is to have him around. And what’s more, he’s always done everything with me. He’s in the locker room before games, he’s hanging with all the players. So this time was nothing different. Nothing special. Nothing put on. Champ’s just always been there.

Every person who meets him immediately knows what it means to “Live Like a Champ.” It means you stay positive, even on the tough days. Because let’s be honest, in between the champagne celebrations and the Dodgers games, life isn’t always so easy.

To my teammates who’ve met Champ, and to the others who have heard his speeches, you know. You can just feel his sense of life.

And for those who have yet to find out, here’s a little slice of what it’s like to live like Champ. Of course, I couldn’t do it without the man himself — who always knows how to tell a good story.

Over to you, Champ.

Hi. My name is Champ Pederson. I have Down syndrome, but that does not define me. I am a big brother to Joc, who plays centerfield for the L.A. Dodgers. It’s not just for kicks, he’s a professional baseball player. He worked very hard to get where he is and now I have a Dodger little brother.

I am the oldest of four kids. I played baseball with my brothers growing up, but they were better than me. They both went on to have baseball careers. I used to compete in Special Olympics. I was really good. I am a competitor, I don’t like to lose. We are all competitive — me, Tyger, Joc, and our sister, Jacey. Jacey is the most athletic. She is going to UCLA for soccer.

Joc
When we were younger Champ would play baseball with us, but then he had his own Challenger Division and Special Olympics teams. He would wrestle with Tyger and I, and he was always the strongest one. We knew not to mess with Champ — he would get you in a clinch and not let go. But I’d say Champ’s best sport is basketball. We would always shoot hoops and he has a good jump shot.

Champ
Down syndrome — it is not a disease. It doesn’t hold me back, but it is my disability and I know what my disability is. I just try even more. Some people say words about it. Words that are hateful. There is a word, called the r-word, and if anyone ever says that to us, it is really hateful. For some people that don’t know about Down syndrome, it’s about 21 chromosomes — we have an extra chromosome. That extra chromosome makes us special because we touch a lot of people’s hearts. It’s also how we talk to people too.

Joc
A lot of times people say, “I am sorry your brother has Down syndrome,” and I’m like, “Really? No, it’s a blessing, and I wouldn’t be the person I am without him.” There is nothing to be sorry about. I am extremely lucky.

Champ
I travel and fly by myself. I can handle it. I don’t mind. I just like doing what’s best for me. I work for Apple now as an Apple Store Specialist in Palo Alto, Calif. I take pride in Apple. That is what I wanted to do, so I am happy now and I am good at it. But I can’t give you any scoop though, I signed a contract.

Joc
Champ supports us in everything we do, so we make sure we’re always there whenever possible when he is doing something — whether he’s giving a speech, working as a Best Buddies ambassador, or competing at the Special Olympics. We rally together because ever since we were little, Champ’s been there cheering us on.

Champ
I started giving speeches with Tyger’s baseball team, the University of Pacific Tigers. I was their motivation coach, bat boy and team manager. They called me Coach C. I like giving speeches. I write speeches for Best Buddies. I’m doing good for myself in a professional setting and finding my way.

“QUITTING IS UNACCEPTABLE.”
Champ Pederson shares an excerpt from one of his many motivational speeches. (0:25)

Joc
What about the time you gave the speech to the Dodgers before Game 5 of the NLDS?

Champ
Yeah, when Adrian Gonzalez asked me to give a speech. I felt honored to talk to the Dodgers. It’s time for Dodger baseball. I said to the team that they had a shot during the chase for October, when the best teams are playing.

Joc
And somehow you dropped in Toby Keith’s name.
Champ
What? Toby Keith is my favorite country artist! I love his music. “Red Solo Cup” and “American Soldier” are my favorites.

Joc
I had no idea what you were going to say. You always add something that is not on the paper that just comes into your head. But when you do it your way it comes out special and authentic. It’s either your way or the highway, right Champ? It was definitely really cool to be a part of.

Champ
I’m glad I did it — got it off my chest. The vibe I get from the team is that they are all about playing together. They play every day. Not like me. I work for a living, making it on my own. But, enough about me. The vibe in their clubhouse is that they’re just a bunch of guys, there are no prima donna’s on the team.

Champ
This is Andre Ethier. He’s an outfielder for the L.A. Dodgers. He’s my guy on the DL, rehabbing and rolling around in the clubhouse on a scooter.

Champ
Chase Utley. The guy makes plays when it counts. You need a guy like him on your team. He gets along with his teammates, nice guy and humble.

Champ
Mr. Redhead, third baseman for the Dodgers, Justin Turner. DH sometimes. He’s the guy that can make plays. If he throws to first, you are out.

Joc
I think you make better connections with people than I do, Champ. It’s like you bring this joy out of people. There are superstar players who go out of their way just to see you. You know how many people come up to me and want to talk about you? Troy Tulowitzki: “How’s Champ doing? How’s my guy, Champ? Tell Champ I say, What’s up.”

Champ
The Legend of Troy!

Joc
I mean there’s a whole list: Albert Pujols, Mike Trout, Trayce Thompson and his brother, Klay.

Champ
I met Trout, he wears number 27 for the Angels. He gave me his bat. I have respect for him. We should hit golf balls. Albert has his foundation he started. I got involved with him. I have a lot of respect for him and his wife, Dede. They are amazing.

Joc
Honestly, I think you might have more players’ numbers than me.

Champ
It’s true, Yung Joc, Jr. LOL.

Joc
I know I definitely wouldn’t be where I am without my parents and the way they raised me. Champ has always kept our family close and brought us together. I don’t think we would be the family we are without him and I know that sounds cliché, but it’s true. It makes you understand how important family is and makes you do things together and have patience with your family.

Champ
My dad was playing professional baseball when I was born in 1987. So, I was with my mom most of the time when my dad was on the road. I was the first born, so that was pretty special for him to see. My dad gives Joc good advice. He’s helped him along the way. He’s a good dad for all of us kids. Three boys and a sister. He got a girl and I think he was happy.

Champ
I don’t want to be the guy who will tell him how his batting average is going up or going down. I don’t want to be the guy … “Hey Joc, what are you doing swinging at bad pitches?” I don’t want to be that guy. I am a scout, I am a GM, I am Billy Beane.

Joc
Billy Beane? Champ, the stuff you come up with is out of this world.

LA TIMES

Dodgers Dugout: Would whoever stole the Dodgers offense please return it

By Houston Mitchell

Hi, and welcome to another edition of Dodgers Dugout. My name is Houston Mitchell, and I just realized that I had as many hits as Adrian Gonzalez did last week, and I didn’t set one foot in Dodger Stadium.

The lost week

Remember when the Dodgers were on pace to win 102 games? Well, forget all that. Now they are on pace to win 81 games after a seven-game stretch in which they finished 1-6, with the one win coming when Clayton Kershaw pitched a three-hit shutout, struck out 14 and knocked in the only run with a single. The team offense is now being featured on the side of milk cartons throughout Los Angeles, so if you see it, please alert authorities.

Let’s take a look at some of the numbers from the last seven days:

--Adrian Gonzalez went 0 for 19.

-- Kershaw tied for the team lead in RBIs with two.
--The only regular to hit above .250 was Yasmani Grandal, who hit .333 with a homer and two RBIs.

--Chase Utley and Carl Crawford both went two for 14 (.143).

--Yasiel Puig went one for 20 with no walks.

--Howie Kendrick went one for 12 and ended April with exactly zero extra-base hits.

--As a team, the Dodgers hit .159 and “slugged” .236

--Pitching-wise, Chris Hatcher had an 11.57 ERA and lost his set-up job to Joe Blanton and Pedro Baez.

--Ross Stripling got shelved in his only start, giving up five runs in 4 2/3 innings.

In short, it was a tough week all around. However there are two ways to look at it. You can either convince yourself that this is a team with no shot at making the playoffs, or you can remind yourself that the team was still in first place in the weak NL West after Sunday’s loss, and can’t possibly be as bad as last week (or as good as the first week). And remind yourself that the last time the Dodgers lost six in a row was the same season in which they went 42-8 on their way to the division title.

Of course the big problem is I just don’t see this team winning a World Series with this bullpen. The only person you can rely on so far is Kenley Jansen. Maybe they can convince him to start coming in during the seventh inning and get some nine-out saves.

Then again, Andrew Friedman and Farhan Zaidi have had only 18 months to fix the bullpen, so we should stop complaining.

The magic number

Each week I will look at a uniform number a current Dodger is wearing and go through the history of that number with the Dodgers. When I was a kid and went to games, I was always curious as to who wore the number of my favorite players. Then again, I was a strange kid. For best Dodgers to wear the number, only the stats you compile while you are with the team and wearing that number count.

Next up is:

No. 3 (Carl Crawford)

Best Dodgers to wear No. 3: Joe Stripp (1932-37), Billy Cox (1948-54), Willie Davis (1961-73), Steve Sax (1982-88).


What Vin Scully means to me

I asked you to tell me your best Vin Scully memory, and I got a lot of responses. I will publish selected ones in each newsletter. And keep emailing them to me.

Rich Jones: To me Vin Scully is baseball. I have been listening to him for 44 of my 50 years. So many thoughts come to mind as it relates to Vin and his impact on me over the years. Here are a few:

--I could literally taste the lunch meat and hot dogs when Vin would narrate a Farmer John commercial.

--An endless amount of Sunday afternoons spent relaxing with Vin on the call. No better way to wrap up a weekend.

--Listening to him call the game from my transistor radio under the covers of my bed so my Mom would not hear...Found out years later she knew all along...but she said she couldn't blame me, she loves Vin as well.

--The Kirk Gibson home run call.

--The incredible feeling in knowing that my son has grown up listening to Vin Scully and truly grasps how amazing he is.

--The understanding that from listening to Vin, my son and I can share a love for baseball, Vin Scully and the Dodgers. The happiness this brings me is immeasurable.

--His ability to weave a story into the call of a game is unmatched, and an amazing gift. A gift only he has, and a gift all Dodger fans have enjoyed for 67 years. (I'm blessed to live out of market now so I am able to enjoy Vin via satellite. I feel for the local fans).

--The endless sadness I will feel when he has called his last game this season and the tears I will cry the day he leaves this Earth. A part of me will go with him, but fortunately a part of him will stay with me forever.

The TV situation

I wish there was a lot of good news to report, but there isn't. Last week, Rep. Janice Hahn (D-San Pedro) invited representatives for Time Warner Cable and DirecTV to meet in her office to discuss the continuing impasse that keeps over 60% of Southland households from being able to watch the Dodgers on TV.

Time Warner was willing to meet, but AT&T, the parent company of DirecTV, refused, saying any meeting should be "conducted on a business-to-business basis ... without unproductive public posturing."
It is believed AT&T is unhappy when the public learned in March that TWC had made short-term offers to try to get SportsNet LA on the air this season. AT&T felt Time Warner was trying to apply pressure to it by leaking the offers to the public.

However, Frontier Communications and Time Warner Cable accepted her request for a face-to-face meeting regarding carriage of SportsNet LA and will meet in her San Pedro office on Thursday. So, if you have Frontier Communications, cross your fingers.

If you would like to complain about the Dodgers’ TV situation, here’s who to contact:

For the Dodgers, click here or call (866) DODGERS ([866] 363-4377). (I hope you like form letters).

For Time Warner, click here.

For your local cable or satellite provider, consult your bill for the customer service number and for the website.

And finally

New Rams quarterback Jared Goff will take up Yasiel Puig on his offer to be his guest at a Dodger game, almost three years after Goff tweeted he hopes Puig gets a fastball in the ribs. Read all about it here.