

The Newsletter of the

Mayo Smith Society

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HE'S KING OF THE TIGERS – by Mark Pattison

The Mayo Smith Society has crowned a new King Tiger. His name? Max Scherzer. Despite the many peak performances delivered by Tigers players in winning their third straight American League Central title, the voting was, in essence, a two-way race between Scherzer, the AL Cy Young Award winner, and third baseman Miguel Cabrera, the two-time AL Most Valuable Player and the three-time batting champion.

On the field, Scherzer, was the majors' only 20-game winner (he won 21), and started the season with 19 straight victories. He was first with a WHIP (walks plus hits per inning pitched) of 0.97, a batter's on-page percentage of .254, an OPS (on-base plus slugging percentage) of .539, and an .875 winning percentage (21-3). Scherzer was second in the AL with 240 strikeouts, 10.08 strikeouts per nine innings, 6.38 hits per nine innings, and a .198 opponents' batting average. He was also fourth with a strikeout-to-walk ratio of 4.29, fifth with a 2.90 ERA, tied for fifth with 214.1 innings pitched (but 51st with 152 hits allowed and 73 runs allowed), seventh in inducing 234 air outs, eighth with 3,388 pitches thrown, tied for 12th with 32 starts, tied for 13th with two pickoffs, 13th with 2.35 walks per nine innings, 15th with 15.81 pitches thrown per inning, and 16th with 836 batters faced.

Contrary to the custom of King Tiger voting in recent years, most of Scherzer's supporters did not specify a reason or reasons for voting for him But those who did spoke volumes: "We nominate Max Scherzer as King Tiger. His exploits of winning the Cy Young Award are well documented. But what impressed us about Max was his friendly, charismatic and unassuming attitude during the season. He was always available and very charitable. He was a credit to the City of Detroit and the Detroit Tigers."--Norm and Evelyn Young; "This was a hard decision and I thought the longer I waited the easier it would get. I decided that if Max hadn't won 21 games, we might not have gotten into the playoffs. Miggy is obviously a close second for me."—Deana Carr

Cabrera was indeed a close second. Here's what his voters said about him. "The best hitter in baseball — Miguel Cabrera — has my vote for King Tiger in 2013. His next step is World Series MVP in 2014."--Nick Edson; "My vote is for Miguel Cabrera taking into consideration his injuries. It puzzles me why he was allowed to play in [the] postseason, but I do not make the big bucks to make those decisions nor have the expertise."--Janice Klein; "The starting pitchers were awesome, but I have to vote for Miggy. He played through injuries and pain much of the season, and had so many memorable hits and RBIs, from the home runs in consecutive at bats off [Mariano] Rivera to the two-run blast off Sonny Gray that helped send the Tigs to the ALCS."--Brad Battson; "First place: Miguel Cabrera. MVP, batting champion. Simply the best player in baseball today."—Michael Mervis

Society Administrator Todd Miller said this about Scherzer: "Max Scherzer is most deserving of the King Tiger Award. His Cy Young Award-winning season and commitment to helping children through Scherzer's Superstars and Big Brothers-Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit set the standards for excellence on and off the field."

The Society plans to give the award to Scherzer on the field before a home game during the March 15-22 Spring Training Trip in Lakeland. Another reason to make your way to sunny Florida!

THE FIELDER TRADE – By David Raglin

It's been a wild month on Woodward Avenue! The Tigers have certainly not rested on their laurels of three Final Four appearances in a row. Last month's issue focused on Prince Fielder and his mysterious drop in 2013. The last thing we expected was to see Prince dealt, but on the evening of November 20, the Twitter world suddenly blew up with the news of the huge deal: Prince Fielder to Texas straight up for second baseman Ian Kinsler.

The reaction from Tiger fans was overwhelmingly positive. Many of us had come to see Fielder's contract as an albatross around the team that had now been lifted. It was a genius move by General Manager Dave Dombrowski, in large part because it looks like a good trade for Texas too. Dombrowski is great at putting himself in the shoes of the other team's general manager and figuring out what that team needs that we can provide that also helps us fill a hole. A great example of that is the Jose Iglesias trade last summer. The Tigers needed a shortstop with the upcoming Peralta suspension, and he knew the Red Sox had a surplus at the position.

Here, he saw that Texas, long known for its great power, was now lacking a big power hitter, and it needed to open up a spot in the middle infield for super prospect Jurickson Profar. He knew that Fielder's left-handed power fit Rangers Ballpark to a T. He knew that Kinsler had a big contract that would mitigate the cost of taking on Fielder's deal.

So, to analyze the deal, let's start with a look at our new second baseman.

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Year	Tm	G	AB	R	Н	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB	CS	BA	OBP	SLG	RC	RC/G	DRS	WAR
2006	TEX	120	423	65	121	27	1	14	55	40	64	11	4	.286	.347	.454	66	5.4	-3	1.9
2007	TEX	130	483	96	127	22	2	20	61	62	83	23	2	.263	.355	.441	80	5.6	4	4.1
2008	TEX	121	518	102	165	41	4	18	71	45	67	26	2	.319	.375	.517	105	7.4	9	4.6
2009	TEX	144	566	101	143	32	4	31	86	59	77	31	5	.253	.327	.488	95	5.7	22	6.0
2010	TEX	103	391	73	112	20	1	9	45	56	57	15	5	.286	.382	.412	65	5.8	7	4.2
2011	TEX	155	620	121	158	34	4	32	77	89	71	30	4	.255	.355	.477	110	6.0	18	7.0
2012	TEX	157	655	105	168	42	5	19	72	60	90	21	9	.256	.326	.423	91	4.7	1	2.1
2013	TEX	136	545	85	151	31	2	13	72	51	59	15	11	.277	.344	.413	80	5.1	11	4.9
Total -8	3 yrs	1066	4201	748	1145	249	23	156	539	462	568	172	42	.273	.349	.454	692	5.7	50	34.7

Ian Kinsler, New Second Baseman, Bats Right, Born June 22, 1982 (31/32 Years Old in 2014)

RC: Runs Created, RC/G: Runs Created Per Game (27 Outs), DRS, Defensive Runs Saved (at second base) from Baseball Info Systems, the number of runs saved by the player in the field compared to an average player, WAR: Wins Above Replacement, an estimate of the number of wins the player was better or worse than a replacement-level player available for minimal cost.

Kinsler has been one of the top second baseman in the league for quite a few years. He has consistently been a good player (except for 2012) and occasionally a great one. His best year, according to WAR, was 2011, when Kinsler hit 32 home runs, walked more than he struck out, and saved 18 runs in the field compared to an average second baseman. His WAR in 2013 was 4.9, meaning that the Rangers won about five more games with him compared to a guy that is available off the street to play second base.

His WAR of 4.9 put Kinsler 33rd in the majors, around players such as Yasiel Puig of the Dodgers, Carlos Gonzalez of the Rockies, Colby Rasmus of the Blue Jays, and Jayson Werth of the Nationals. Kinsler had the seventh-best WAR among second basemen in the majors, behind Robinson Cano of the Yankees (7.6), Matt Carpenter of the Cardinals (6.6), Dustin Pedroia of the Red Sox (6.5), Jason Kipnis of the Indians (5.9), and Ben Zobrist of the Rays (5.1). The Tigers' 2013 second baseman, Omar Infante, had a 2.4 WAR. So, Kinsler was a good solid player, not a great one, but he is a notable improvement for the Tigers at the position.

The downside of the deal is that Kinsler will turn 32 midway through the 2014 season and has a contract that guarantees him \$65 million over the next four seasons (\$16.25 million a year), with an team option for 2018 that would make it a five-year, \$70 million deal (\$14 million a year). Kinsler will be 34/35 years old in his last guaranteed season. Since the end of World War II, only 12 second baseman 34 years old have created 80 runs in a season, only three of them outside the steroid era (Eddie Stanky, 1951; Red Schoendienst, 1957; and Davey Lopes, 1979). It is even rarer when you look at 35-year-olds; only four second baseman 35 years old in that period have created 80 runs, only two outside the steroid era (Frank White, 1986; and Lou Whitaker, 1992). A time may be at hand where we very well might be wanting to dump another underperforming contract.

Another downside that Kinsler tends to miss more than a few games. He missed 25 games last year with a right intercostal strain, and has played 150 or more games only twice in his career (the good news is that they were in 2011 and 2012, not just when he was young).

Also, Kinsler has hit much better in Rangers Ballpark than on the road in his career. At home, he has a .304/.387/.511 batting average/on-base percentage/slugging percentage, compared to .242/.312/.399 on the road. Rangers Ballpark is a great hitters' park and for 2011-13 there were 17 percent more runs scored in Rangers home games than in Rangers games away from Arlington, the highest difference in the American League. Comparatively, Comerica Park is a slightly above-average ballpark with 5 percent more runs in Tigers games in Detroit versus on the road. There is a real concern that Kinsler's stats will drop because of the change in ballparks (and Fielder's rise).

The last downside is that the Tigers traded a left-handed hitter for a right-handed hitter, making them pretty imbalanced toward righties. The only lefty-hitting regulars are Victor Martinez (switch), Andy Dirks, and Alex Avila. Dirks struggled quite a bit in 2013 but the Tigers are hoping that was in part due to a spring training injury that never fully healed. Avila, being the catcher, will miss more games than most regulars. Many of us thought they might get a lefty-hitting left fielder, but the signing of Rajai Davis and the declaration to platoon him and Andy Dirks means that they will not be signing such a player.

We do not want to sound negative about the deal; we love it. We just want to make it clear that a team does not get rid of a bad contract like Fielder's without paying somewhat of a price.

Beyond getting a better second baseman and the increased flexibility due to shedding Fielder's contract, the biggest gain is in the field. Not just because Fielder's bad defense is gone, but the trade allows Miguel Cabrera to move back to first base and prospect Nick Castellanos to play third base. The trade improves three defensive positions, four if you count Dirks and Davis in left field rather than Castellanos (who was a passable outfielder but not as good as Dirks and Davis).

Replacing Fielder with Kinsler will also really help team speed, a major problem last year. In 2013, Kinsler advanced an extra base on a hit (first to third on a single, second to home on a single, and first to home on a double) 41 times in 67 opportunities, a 61 percent rate. Fielder was 22-for-76, 29 percent.

It is sad that Prince Fielder did not work out in Detroit. I know I loved the connection with Tiger history, remembering Prince swatting fly balls into the overhand at Tiger Stadium as a 12-year-old. He is a good guy, and I will miss him. In his first season in Detroit, he was a valuable player who did what they signed him to do. However, 2013 was a big comedown, not just in the playoffs but in the regular season. He seems to be looking forward to a new start in Texas, which he deserves. With that short almost-overhang in right field there, patterned after Tiger Stadium, hopefully for his sake he will regain his youth and make it a good trade for both clubs.

THE FISTER DEAL - By David Raglin

The second big deal the Tigers made this winter did not receive such positive reviews. Actually, that is a huge understatement; as positive as the reaction was to the Fielder deal, the reaction to the Doug Fister deal was overwhelmingly negative from pretty much everybody.

Dave Dombrowski deserves the benefit of the doubt given the great deals that he has made that have made up for the poor farm system. That being said, even the best ones make mistakes. So, the focus of this article is to discuss why they made the deal and how it could fit in the overall plan of the Tigers.

I have an additional perspective writing this article. While I am a Tiger fan through and through, I live near Washington and am therefore a Nationals season ticket holder and I have seen quite a bit of Steve Lombardozzi and Ian Krol.

Here are the reasons I think they made the deal and therefore why it could work out. First, the Tigers really, really, really (did I say "really"?) wanted to get Drew Smyly into the rotation. We have seen that in the press numerous times over the last year, going back to last offseason, and is probably the only reason they would consider trading such a good starter as Fister. They see Smyly as a starter who can replace Fister without much of a dropoff, and giving the Tigers a lefty in their rotation to boot. For what it is worth, here are Smyly's stats as a starter (all in 2012) compared to Fister in 2013 (taking out his one inning of relief).

Starter	Year	G	ÎP	Н	R	ER	HR	BB	SO	BABIP	W	L	ERA
Smyly	2012	18	95.0	89	45	40	12	26	88	.292	4	3	3.79
Fister	2013	32	207.7	227	91	85	14	44	157	.333	14	9	3.68

Drew Smyly and Doug Fister in Most Recent Season as a Starting Pitcher

BABIP: Batting Average on Balls in Play; in other words, batting average against excluding strikeouts.

To make them comparable, you can more or less double Smyly's stats to compare to Fister. The pitchers have similar ERAs. Smyly, though, gets more of outs with strikeouts, while Fister depends more on his defense. Notice that Fister in 2013 had a .333 batting average against him on balls in play, a testament to the Tigers' mediocre infield defense. The assumption is that Fister would pitch better if he had a better defense, which ironically he would have had if he had stayed with the Tigers. He certainly will have a good defensive infield in Washington to support him, so like Fielder, expect his statistics to look better in 2013 than they did in 2012.

I'm sure they see the deal as more like Fister and bullpen Smyly (about 80 innings) for starter Smyly (about 170 innings), Lombardozzi, Krol, and prospect Robbie Ray. Looking at it that way, they are swapping bullpen Smyly for Ian Krol. The 22 year-old lefty Krol is an intriguing player. He was drafted by the A's and traded to the Nationals last winter in the three-way deal that saw Michael Morse go to Seattle, John Jaso go to Oakland, and prospect J.J. Cole go back to the Nats (who had traded Cole to the A's in the Gio Gonzalez deal the year before). Krol was considered to be more of a long-term prospect for Washington, but after the Nats got off to such a bad start, in part because of their decision to go short on left-handers in the bullpen, Krol was called up in early June. He got off to a tremendous start in the majors, allowing only one hit total in his first eight appearances, and not giving up a run until his 10th game. But as the season went on, he was much less effective; in one stretch he gave up runs in four out of six appearances, two of them only comprising a third of an inning. He was sent back to AAA Syracuse and recalled in September but was not effective then either.

Krol is a young lefty who throws hard, with the kind of fastball that the Tigers under Dombrowski have focused on. However, the issue for him is his breaking ball. He was having a lot of trouble keeping his curveball down, in part because of out-of-whack mechanics. Krol will be a critical project for pitching coach Jeff Jones. If Krol gets his issues worked out, though, he could be a solid addition to the Tigers bullpen. Given his youth and lack of experience, we think he will work out the problems and be a decent reliever for the Tigers, although not as good as Smyly was last year.

We are more optimistic about what Steve Lombardozzi can do for the Tigers. Lombardozzi, whose dad (also named Steve) was the regular second baseman for the Twins 1986-88, is a switch-hitting utility player. Here are his pro stats:

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Year	Level/Team	Age	G	AB	R	Н	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	RC	RC/G
2008	Rookie	19	48	152	23	43	4	1	0	24	21	32	.283	.371	.322	.693	18	4.2
2009	Low A	20	128	496	90	147	26	7	3	58	62	80	.296	.375	.395	.771	73	5.4
2010	Hi A/AA	21	137	545	90	160	35	11	6	49	61	75	.294	.371	.431	.802	86	5.7
2011	AA/AAA	22	134	556	86	172	25	9	8	52	39	78	.309	.360	.430	.790	85	5.6
2011	Washington	22	13	31	3	6	1	0	0	1	1	4	.194	.219	.226	.445	2	2.2
2012	Washington	23	126	384	40	105	16	3	3	27	19	46	.273	.317	.354	.671	45	4.1
2013	Washington	24	118	290	25	75	15	1	2	22	8	34	.259	.278	.338	.616	26	3.0
Majors	s Total 3 Yrs		257	755	705	68	32	4	5	50	28	84	.264	.297	.342	.639	73	3.6
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Steve Lombardozzi, Bats Both, Born September 20, 1988 (25 years old)

Lombardozzi was a 19th-round pick and 2008 and not given much regard until he started putting up good numbers seasons in the minors. He made his major league debut in September 2011 and made the team for good in in 2012. He was a key reserve on the Nationals team that surprised the baseball world by posting the

best record in baseball that season. He played regularly for a month during the season while Ian Desmond was battling injuries, hitting .301 during that period.

He got off to a dreadful start in 2013, and was hitting only .234 at the All-Star break, as you can see from the first line in the table below. Given that he does not walk a lot, that meant his on-base percentage was a dreadful .246 with virtually no power. However, he was not the only National struggling at the plate. I have never seen a team of good hitters so cold for such a long time. Between the strong pitching staff and the lack of offense, it was like watching baseball forty years ago, with each run mattering a lot. It seemed like the team was not handling their expectations very well. Lombardozzi seemed to be caught up in that, heightened by the fact he was not playing much, making it harder to get any momentum going. The Nats got their act together in the second half, going from 13th in the league in runs per game in the first half to second in the second half, and as the table shows, Lombardozzi picked up his game in the second half along with his teammates.

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Split	G	AB	R	Н	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	RC	RC/G
2013 1st Half	73	184	15	43	9	1	0	14	4	24	.234	.246	.293	.540	13	2.3
2013 2nd Half	45	106	10	32	6	0	2	8	4	10	.302	.333	.415	.748	13	4.6
2013 Total	118	290	25	75	15	1	2	22	8	34	.259	.278	.338	.616	26	3.0

Steve Lombardozzi, First Half and Second Half, 2013

Does that mean I think we should ignore 184 at-bats in the first half and focus on the 106 in the second half? No; instead I suggest that in looking at his record in the minors the majors, it does seem like the first half of 2013 is the aberration. Lombardozzi is a limited player. He does not walk a lot and wouldn't hit 10 home runs in a season even if he played every day. He is slated to be the backup shortstop but he has rarely played there. That is a concern given that Iglesias looks like he might be injury prone.

What do the Tigers see in him, then? He came up as a second baseman but can hold his own at third base and left field. Given Kinsler's injury issues and the uncertainly of putting a 22-year-old rookie, no matter how good of a prospect he is, at third base, it is good to have a guy that you could play every day for a stretch. Lombardozzi is also a switch-hitter, which increases his versatility and is helpful on a team with a lack of left-handed hitting. I think he could end up as a league average hitter (around 4.5 runs created per game) with versatility both in the field and at the plate. That is the definition of a player who adds value. Whatever we think of the trade, I think we'll end up liking Lombardozzi.

The Tigers see Robbie Ray as the key to the deal, because they think he will be a solid starting pitcher for the Tigers, possibly as soon as late 2014 if he is needed because of injuries. He is a hard-throwing lefty who sits around 93 miles per hour. As a 21-year-old last year, he made it up to AA partway through the season and struck out 160 men in 142 innings. However, he also walked 62 batters, showing that he needs to improve his command. The consensus is that he is a decent prospect but that the Tigers value him much more than others. Supposedly, the Tigers did not offer Fister around the league much, focusing on the Nats because of Ray. We will have to wait and see if they were right.

While this is backseat driving to be sure, it does seem like the Tigers could have gotten more for a pitcher as good as Fister. Yes, the pieces fit what the Tigers needed, but it was not enough. The baseball world was practically unanimous that it was an incredible deal for the Nats, so one might think that Dombrowski, the master of the three-team deal, could have gotten Washington to give up more to help us fill other needs, like a dependable relief pitcher for a bullpen full of big question marks.

MAYO BOOKSHELF: "THE GLORY YEARS OF THE DETROIT TIGERS" – Review by Mark Pattison

Are we living in a golden age of Detroit baseball? It's hard to tell when you're in the middle of it, but three postseason appearances in a row, two trips to the World Series in Jim Leyland's eight-year tenure as manager, and the respect of the baseball world as a force to be reckoned with would suggest so.

William M. Anderson, who's produced some striking coffee-table-style books on the Tigers in the past, would like you to think back – way, way, back – to nearly a century ago. His time frame is 1920-50, an era that

takes in virtually all of the Tigers greats of yore who are now in that great baseball game in the sky. The first year, 1920, takes in Hall of Fame manager Hughie Jennings' last year at the Tigers' helm, while 1950 is the year Detroit nearly pulled off winning the American League pennant only to fade at the very end; it presaged a decade of mediocrity in which only individuals' starts shone, like Al Kaline, Harvey Kuenn, Jim Bunning and Frank Lary (hmm, much like the post-Sparky decade of doom and gloom).

If you really want to get to the nut of Detroit's glory years, you've got to go to 1934-45, when the Tigers went to the World Series four times, winning twice and even going the distance in the two Fall Classics they lost. Those teams featured undeniable greats like Hank Greenberg, Charlie Gehringer, Goose Goslin, Mickey Cochrane, Hal Newhouser, Schoolboy Rowe, Tommy Bridges and Rudy York.

But if you just stuck to those dozen years, what would be the fun in that? Anderson, who has his own voluminous photo collection, uses the archives of the Detroit News to show what the greats and near-greats looked like, and then writes about them, too. Even I, who fancies himself a Tigers know-it-all, didn't know that shortstop prospect Bill Akers was known as the Beaumont Beauty — presumably from his time playing for Detroit's farm team in Beaumont, Texas. You'll get a great sense of pitcher Cletus "Boots" Poffenberger's individualistic streak, and how much fans loved Gerald "Gee" Walker despite all of his base-running gaffes.

But the photos sell this book. Mickey Cochrane giving catching pointers to Birdie Tebbetts. A 1940 workout conducted inside a gymnasium due to foul weather outside. The staged shots no one would dare take today for fear of being cheesy, like Jewish slugger Greenberg signing his name on a blackboard declaring "61 Homers in 1939. Merry Xmas."

In between and flanking these photos are the tales of Tigers to jog one's memory, like George Moriarty, the ex-Tiger who left umpiring to manage the club after Ty Cobb resigned; Bucky Harris, the Washington Senators' "boy wonder" skipper who couldn't replicate his success following Moriarty; the Tigers' listing of 4-F and 1-C players as World War II was drawing to a close; and plenty more in the book's 450-plus pages. There are also several newspaper stories reprinted verbatim that serve to illustrate some of the character (and characters) of that era's Tigers as well as the style of journalism practiced back then.

One quibble is that the photos seem to be several pages behind the text, but that's relatively minor. This is a fine book that deserves a spot at least on your Christmas wish list. And if your loved ones still don't understand your passion for the Tigers after all this time, then just get it for yourself on Dec. 26. We highly recommend this book.

"The Glory Years of the Detroit Tigers" is published by Wayne State University Press as part of its Painted Turtle imprint. It retails for \$39.95 and is available at http://wsupress.wayne.edu/books/detail/glory-years-detroit-tigers as well as reputable bookstores and other online booksellers.

SHORT STRIPE

If you live in the Washington-Baltimore metroplex (or close enough), email Mark Pattison for a onepage calendar of Society activities in the region for all of 2014. His email: Pattison_mark@hotmail.com.

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