

Tigers Stripes

The Newsletter of the



Mayo Smith Society

Vol. 30, No. 11

Tigers Fans Who Always Care

January, 2015

KING TIGER 2014: HAIL TO THE VICTOR! – By Mark Pattison

The votes are in, and King Tiger for 2014 is designated hitter Victor Martinez. V-Mart won in a walk. And a home run. And an RBI. Just not in a strikeout — especially a called strikeout! Martinez had a 157-game string of games with no called strikeouts in 2013-14.

J.D. Martinez, a spring pickup for Detroit, ran even with his fellow Martinez in the early balloting conducted by the Mayo Smith Society, but Victor pulled away as the voting period got into the home stretch, and news of his re-signing with the Tigers made it a stampede. J.D. finished second in the balloting, and Max Scherzer finished third. Ian Kinsler and ex-Tiger (and re-signed Twin) Torii Hunter also received support from the electorate.

Martinez, who finished second in American League MVP voting, has already been named Tiger of the Year by the Detroit chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America. These kinds of honors are no surprise. Martinez had his best season ever at age 35. He was one of only two players in the majors this year with a .300-30-100 season. He topped the AL with a .409 on-base percentage and a .974 OPS (on-base plus slugging). He finished second with a .335 batting average and a .565 slugging percentage. He was tied with Kinsler for fourth with 188 hits (Miguel Cabrera was third with 191); seventh with 103 RBIs (Miggy was second with 109) eighth with 32 home runs, 10th with 70 walks compared to only 42 strikeouts, good for 181st in the league; he had fewer K's than both Eugenio Suarez and Andrew Romine, who split time for Detroit as shortstop! He tied for 13th with 87 runs scored, third best on the Tigers as he was driving in Cabrera and Kinsler an awful lot. He was tied with Hunter for 20th in the AL with 33 doubles.

Off the field? There's no kick from voters here, either. Martinez was a steady, positive presence in the clubhouse all season. Remember when early in the season Martinez apologized to manager Brad Ausmus for dogging it on a groundout and promised to never do it again — and Ausmus said he hadn't even noticed? (We're not saying V-Mart is a slow runner, but...). Society members were enamored, too, with Martinez' midseason desire to stay in Detroit after his contract expired this past season.

We'll honor Martinez with the King Tiger plaque during the Society's March 21-28 spring training trip with Lakeland. With five home games on the schedule, it should be rather easy to find a game to suitably honor him. Speaking of honors, here's what you had to say when you cast your votes for ...

Victor Martinez: "A great season for Victor. His prowess could be seen in his determination at the plate, and the concentration of his face and his eyes. A smart hitter who appeared to be at times, in the opposing pitcher's mind, simply knowing what the pitcher was going to throw and to what side of the plate. I hope I have not seen the last of Victor in the Old English D." — Dean A. Ross; "No one was more valuable or more regal in his performance, at least on the field." -- Carl Shinkle; "He was the main reason — both on and off the field — that the Tigers were able to win the Central Division championship again. He was consistent as a performer on the field and as a person off the field. He was a leader in the lineup and in the locker room. He typified what Mr. Tiger is all about." -- Nick Edson; "Had to think about this for a bit but my vote goes to Victor for the season he had. With Miggy playing hurt most, if not all of the year, Victor was the man. Hitting against the shift, he put up numbers that put him in the AL MVP discussion. He led by example at the plate and on the field when he had the opportunity. We all know he could hit but his numbers this year were the best of his career which is amazing since he is supposed to be fading at this point." -- Bob Huisman; "Even though the season seems like a giant disappointment, V-Mart was definitely not a disappointment. His long at-bats were always exciting especially when runners were on base and the game was on the line." – Ed Jackson; "Any hard-working, well-prepared professional hitter like him that goes to the GM on the side midseason and says 'please bring me back' and that he's overruling his agent even in a season when he ends up second in line for MVP of

the league is, well, certainly special and sort of ‘gets it’ and this special game.” – Society co-founder Bill Mackay; “I have been putting this off because I wanted to see if I could find more ‘off the field’ information for the player I wanted to vote for. Even though I didn't find much, I still can't find a better candidate for King Tiger than Victor. Where would we have been last year without him?” -- Deana Carr

Max Scherzer: “He was a class act all season and really hope we can keep him in a Tiger uniform.” -- Wayne Barry; “I’m in an election frame of mind. I think it has to go to Max Scherzer. There is only the thinnest difference between his 2013 Cy Young season and his effort this past year. Given that our bullpen wasn’t the strongest, to go 18-5 this year was on par with the 21-3 record of 2013.” — Eric Shellhouse

Ian Kinsler: “We have chosen Ian Kinsler for King Tiger. He came to a new team, fit in nicely, and solidified second base. He played hard every day at a high level, is a smart, intelligent player who knows the game. Along with his charitable work we feel he is deserving of this honor.” -- Norm and Evelyn Young

Torii Hunter: “I am a new member and I am glad I have the opportunity to vote. Torii Hunter has been ‘my Tiger’ all year and I think he deserves the title. His infectious grin in the dugout and on the field makes the players and the fans feel happy. He always appears upbeat and I think that helps everyone on the team. In addition, his charitable work makes him a good man as well as a good Tiger. I think he has been a great influence on the young players and the Tiger management darned well better not trade him. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to brag about ‘my Tiger.’” -- Diane Cerqueira.

CESPEDES IS FINALLY A TIGER – By David Raglin

When Yoenis Cespedes defected from Cuba in 2011 and put himself up for bidding in the winter of 2012, most people thought the Tigers would be contenders for the 26-year-old righthanded-hitting outfielder. However, soon before the bidding began, Victor Martinez hurt his knee and the Tigers signed Prince Fielder, taking them out of the Cespedes sweepstakes.

Cespedes signed with the Oakland Athletics to a unique four-year contract. After the contract expires, following the 2015 season, Cespedes becomes a free agent and hit team cannot offer arbitration or a qualifying offer. People were surprised that the A’s signed Cespedes, since they had gone 74-88 in 2011 and few people saw them contenders in the next few seasons. However, Cespedes had a great rookie season, finishing second in the American League Rookie of the Year race to Mike Trout, and the Athletics surprised the baseball world by not only sneaking into the wild card race, but dethroning the two-time defending American League champion Texas Rangers for the Western Division championship on the last day of the season before losing the Division Series to the Tigers.

As you can see from the stats below, the 2012 season has been Cespedes’ best at the plate, but he did win the Home Run Contest at the All-Star Game each of the last two seasons. On July 31, 2014, the same day the Tigers acquired David Price from the Rays, the A’s traded Cespedes and a competitive balance amateur draft pick to the Boston Red Sox for star starter Jon Lester, outfielder Jonny Gomes, and cash. Cespedes did not play well for the Sox, and after the season Boston acquired a new left fielder in free agent Hanley Ramirez.

It was clear that Cespedes would be on the move, since he wanted to play left field. The Red Sox needed a starting pitcher, after losing the free agent auction for Lester, and the Tigers needed an outfielder, so during the winter meetings, the long-rumored deal was announced. The Tigers also received a decent lefty reliever, Alex Wilson, and pitching prospect Gabe Speier.

(Wilson could be the hidden jewel in the deal. He had a 1.91 ERA in 18 games for Boston in 2014. Anthony Fenech of the Detroit Free Press reported that Wilson credited his good season to the fact he could throw his cutter, which he could not the year before due to a ligament tear in his thumb.)

Yoenis Cespedes Hitting Stats

Year	Age	Age	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	RC	RC/G
2012	Oakland	26	129	487	70	142	25	5	23	82	43	102	.292	.356	.505	89	6.6
2013	Oakland	27	135	529	74	127	21	4	26	80	37	137	.240	.294	.442	67	4.3
2014	Oak/Bos	28	152	600	89	156	36	6	22	100	35	128	.260	.301	.450	80	4.6

Tigers Stripes – January 2015 – Page 3

(Another aside; One thing that made this an unusual deal for the Tigers was that it was long-rumored. Note that most big Tiger moves seem to come out of the blue. Think about it: the Miguel Cabrera trade, the Doug Fister deal, the three-way with the Yankees and Diamondbacks in 2010, the David Price move, the Prince Fielder signing. The Tigers do a great job of playing their hands close to their vests. Before the Cespedes deal, Dave Dombrowski was saying he was fine with his outfield.)

Cespedes basically replaces Torii Hunter in the Detroit outfield, with J.D. Martinez moving from left to right. The Tigers let Hunter go after the 2014 season for nothing, even though Hunter publically stated he'd like to remain a Tiger. The initial intention was to get a left-handed hitter to replace Hunter, given the Tigers imbalance on the right side, but they ended up with Cespedes. Let's compare the two:

Before (Torii Hunter) and After (Yoenis Cespedes) for the Tigers

Name	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	RC	RC/G	oWAR	dWAR	WAR
Torii Hunter-2014	142	549	71	157	17	83	23	89	.286	.319	.446	73	4.7	2.2	-2.4	0.4
Yoenis Cespedes-2014	152	600	89	156	22	100	35	128	.260	.301	.450	80	4.6	2.7	0.7	4.1

Cespedes was a little better at the plate than Hunter, but he was much better in the field. Hunter was one of the worst defensive players in baseball in 2014. Cespedes' defensive value was largely in his throwing arm. He threw out 16 runners from left field in 2014, which led the league. (For an example of his arm, do a Google search on "Cespedes throwing arm", and watch the video on the first link that comes up.)

One more thing: Since the Tigers are overloaded on the right side, what is Cespedes' platoon differential? If you look at his 2014 season, you will see a big surprise—he hit .279 versus right-handed pitchers and only .199 versus left-handed pitchers. Wait—that's an opposite platoon differential.

Here's a sabermetric lesson. There are times that things don't balance out even over a whole season. Let's take a look at his platoon differential for 2012, 2013, and 2014:

Yoenis Cespedes Platoon Stats 2012-2014

vs LHP	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	RC	RC/G
2012	151	30	45	7	25	11	24	.298	.350	.503	27	6.6
2013	161	27	45	11	26	20	41	.280	.364	.516	29	6.4
2014	141	24	28	7	17	14	36	.199	.269	.397	15	3.4
Total	453	81	118	25	68	45	101	.260	.330	.475	71	5.4

vs RHP	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	RC	RC/G
2012	336	40	97	16	57	32	78	.289	.358	.506	62	6.6
2013	368	47	82	15	54	17	96	.223	.262	.410	38	3.4
2014	459	65	128	15	83	21	92	.279	.311	.466	65	5.0
Total	1163	152	307	46	194	70	266	.264	.310	.460	165	4.9

Notice that in 2012, he was about the same against lefties and righties. In 2013, he was much better against lefties, which is what is expected for a right-handed hitter. In 2014, he was the other way around. For his three-year career, he is pretty balanced versus left-handers and right-handers.

We will miss Rick Porcello. He has been a Tiger his whole career, and although at times it was a rocky road, he clearly has turned a corner. However, the Tigers could afford to trade a starter (given that they were working out a deal for Alfredo Simon) and outfield power is really hard to find these days. If Cespedes has a good year in Detroit, the Tigers' track record suggests he could re-sign with the team after the 2015 season.

CENTER FIELD PLATOON – By David Raglin

One good thing about the Cespedes deal is that it allows the Tigers to put a platoon of Anthony Gose and Rajai Davis in center field. How will they do? I come up with a projection using the following assumptions: (1) They will have about 660 plate appearance between them, (2) Gose, being the lefty, will get about 2/3rds of those plate appearances, (3) Gose will get about 90% of his plate appearances against righties and Davis will get about 80% of his plate appearances against lefties, (4) Gose will perform against lefties/righties as he has his whole three-year career (he did not have enough plate appearances in 2014 for me to feel confident about using his 2014 splits) and Davis will perform as he did in 2014. Given all of that, this is what I have:

Projected Production from the 2015 Tiger Center Fielders

Tiger CFs	AB	R	H	2B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	RC	RC/G
Gose	394	53	93	15	4	27	26	8	36	118	.236	.303	.340	41	3.4
Davis	208	32	69	18	5	24	14	5	10	35	.332	.369	.510	38	6.8
Total	602	85	162	33	9	51	40	13	46	153	.269	.325	.399	77	4.4

Davis looks so good because he had a large platoon differential in 2014. I decided not to go back to previous years because it was not that much different than in previous years—he has always hit lefties well. I suspect that Gose’s projection is a bit low and Davis’s is a bit high, so I’m guessing the total is about right.

Offensively, that is below the runs created per game for American League center fielders in 2014 of 5.1, but a bit above the overall league average of 4.2. Defensively, this should be a strong position for the Tigers; Gose is considered to have an excellent glove and Davis is a reasonable center fielder. With Jose Iglesias (a Cuban like Yoenis Cespedes) back a shortstop, between Alex Avila behind the plate, Ian Kinsler and Iglesias in the middle infield and the Gose-Davis combo in center field, the Tigers might be one of the stronger teams defensively up the middle.

SHORT STRIPE

Al Kaline turned 80 years old on December 19. As those of you who were at the Annual Gathering last year and heard Kaline speak, he certainly does not look or act like he is 80 years old. We all know Kaline has always represented the Tigers with class, and here is more evidence of that, from ESPN’s Buster Olney: “True story: I happened to be on the same flight to San Diego last week with Kaline, and when we got to baggage claim, I was talking with a club official and Al walked over and asked if we needed a ride to the hotel. Because Kaline was involved in the work of the veterans committee, he explained, a car had been sent for him and there was room for the two of us. An offer typical of one of the nicest people in the industry.” Happy birthday, Mr. Tiger!

For **Mayo Smith Society Memberships** send \$20

(US\$23 out of the US) to:

Mayo Smith Society, PO Box 119,
Northville, MI 48167

Name _____

Address _____

For **Detroit Tigers 1984: What a Start! What a Finish!** (\$20) or **Detroit Tigers Lists and More** (\$10), autographed by authors David Raglin and Mark Pattison, send **to:

Mark Pattison, 1221 Floral St. NW,
Washington, DC 20012

City, St/Pr _____

Zip/Postal Code _____ Phone _____

Our shirts are now sold through the Detroit Athletic Company. To purchase a shirt, call 313/961-3550.

E-mail _____

Tigers Stripes, the official newsletter of the Mayo Smith Society, is published nine times a year. **Publisher/Society Administrator:** Todd Miller (412/848-1082, toddprmtg@verizon.net). **Editor:** Mark Pattison (202/829-9289, pattison_mark@hotmail.com). **Writer/ Sabermetrician:** David Raglin (703/556-0332 or 703/835-1198, darags@ymail.com). **Membership Services Coordinator:** Pete Wright. The Mayo Smith Society was established in 1983 by Dale Petroskey, Dennis Petroskey, and Bill Mackay.