

Tigers Stripes

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D
Mayo Smith Society

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Tigers Fans Who Always Care

August 2013

V-MART AND LUCK – By David Raglin

One of the biggest disappointments of the season so far has been Victor Martinez. Until his recent hot streak, he was hitting in the .220s for much of the season with an on-base percentage below .300 and a slugging percentage a little over .300. Since late June, he has really picked it up, helping to make us optimistic about what Martinez might do in the second half. The Tigers could certainly use his big bat in the middle of the lineup between All-Stars Miguel Cabrera, Prince Fielder and Jhonny Peralta.

V-Mart: Before and After

Period During the Season	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	RC	RC/G
April 1 to June 28, 2013	77	289	28	65	13	0	6	40	26	35	.225	.283	.332	.615	25	2.8
June 29 to July 14, 2013	16	64	11	26	6	0	2	10	6	9	.417	.470	.567	1.036	15	10.3
2013 Total	93	353	39	91	19	0	8	50	32	44	.258	.314	.372	.687	40	3.9

Martinez has gotten hits in 15 of these 16 games, including a home run in the final game before the All-Star Break. He certainly cannot hit .417 with power for the rest of the season, but we hope he can get closer to the .303/.369/.457 projection from Baseball Info Systems. (We doubt he will match those marks, though; at his pace for at-bats this year, he'd have to hit .369 the rest of the way to hit .303.) It's nice to see that he is getting things together.

Or is he really “getting things together” just over the last couple of weeks? Mark Simon, the bog baseball stats guru at ESPN, recently noted that ESPN keeps track of “hard-hit balls”. According to Simon, “The judgment is subjective, but is based on careful video review and follow-up discussion to attempt to unify opinions.” Simon said that players hit about .720 on hard-hit balls. From the beginning of the season through June 28, Martinez was 38-for-68 (.559) on hard-hit balls, meaning that he was not getting the luck. If he had hit .720 on those 68 hard-hit balls, he'd have gotten about 49 hits, 11 less than he really did. From June 29 to July 12, the luck went the other way, with 15 hits in 17 hard hit balls (.882), three more than expected.

Let's redo Martinez' stats, then, giving him 11 more hits (with three of those hits arbitrarily made doubles and the rest singles) from April 1 to June 28, and three less hits (one less double) from June 29 to July 14. (We've also made small adjustments in the runs scored and runs batted in totals.)

V-Mart: Evening Out the Luck

Period During the Season	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	RC	RC/G
April 1 to June 28, 2013	77	289	30	76	16	0	6	43	26	35	.263	.324	.381	.704	32	3.8
June 29 to July 14, 2013	16	64	11	23	6	0	2	9	6	9	.359	.414	.547	.961	13	8.0
2013 Total	93	353	41	99	22	0	8	52	32	44	.280	.340	.411	.751	45	4.5

There is still a before-and-after difference, but it is not as extreme. His average from April 1 to June 28 would have been OK, although the power would have been much lower than expected. His overall numbers, although subpar, would have been at least within shouting distance from what had been projected.

It's a long season, and one thing that is great about baseball is that over a 162-game season, the luck often evens out, letting the best players and teams shine. Hopefully this is a preview of what Martinez will be doing for the Tigers in the second half.

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RUNS INTO WINS – By David Raglin

While we're talking about luck, let's look at Bill James' Pythagorean Theorem. The theory behind it is that runs scored and allowed translate into wins and losses. What he found is that in the long term, Winning Percentage = $(\text{Runs Scored}^2 / (\text{Runs Scored}^2 + \text{Runs Allowed}^2))$. Using that, we can project what each team's winning percentage, and therefore wins and losses, "should be," and then compare it to the team's actual wins and losses. The difference is generally attributed to luck.

	Actual							Projected Based on Pythagorean Theorem				
	W	L	Pct	GB	RS	RA	Diff	W	L	Pct	GB	+/-
AL East												
Boston	58	39	0.598	--	498	407	91	58	39	0.598	--	0
Tampa Bay	55	41	0.573	2.5	449	389	60	55	41	0.573	2.5	0
Baltimore	53	43	0.552	4.5	462	435	27	51	45	0.531	6.5	2
NY Yankees	51	44	0.537	6.0	373	375	-2	47	48	0.495	10.0	4
Toronto	45	49	0.479	11.5	428	440	-12	46	48	0.489	10.5	-1

	W	L	PCT	GB	RS	RA	Diff	W	L	Pct	GB	+/-
AL Central												
Detroit	52	42	0.553	--	477	388	89	57	37	0.606	--	-5
Cleveland	51	44	0.537	1.5	454	429	25	50	45	0.526	7.5	1
Kansas City	43	49	0.467	8.0	365	373	-8	45	47	0.489	11.0	-2
Minnesota	39	53	0.424	12.0	379	427	-48	41	51	0.446	15.0	-2
Chicago Sox	37	55	0.402	14.0	345	405	-60	39	53	0.424	17.0	-2

	W	L	PCT	GB	RS	RA	Diff	W	L	Pct	GB	+/-
AL West												
Oakland	56	39	0.589	--	429	367	62	55	40	0.579	--	1
Texas	54	41	0.568	2.0	411	388	23	50	45	0.526	5.0	4
LA Angels	44	49	0.473	11.0	430	434	-4	46	47	0.495	8.0	-2
Seattle	43	52	0.453	13.0	373	428	-55	41	54	0.432	14.0	2
Houston	33	61	0.351	22.5	351	494	-143	32	62	0.340	22.5	1

	W	L	PCT	GB	RS	RA	Diff	W	L	Pct	GB	+/-
NL East												
Atlanta	54	41	0.568	--	415	337	78	57	38	0.600	--	-3
Washington	48	47	0.505	6.0	357	371	-14	46	49	0.484	11.0	2
Philadelphia	48	48	0.500	6.5	371	416	-45	43	53	0.448	14.5	5
NY Mets	41	50	0.451	11.0	376	403	-27	42	49	0.462	13.0	-1
Miami	35	58	0.376	18.0	306	395	-89	35	58	0.376	21.0	0

	W	L	PCT	GB	RS	RA	Diff	W	L	Pct	GB	+/-
NL Central												
St. Louis	57	36	0.613	--	462	335	127	61	32	0.656	--	-4
Cincinnati	53	42	0.558	5.0	413	350	63	55	40	0.579	7.0	-2
Pittsburgh	56	37	0.602	1.0	357	311	46	53	40	0.570	8.0	3
Chicago Cubs	42	51	0.452	15.0	384	394	-10	45	48	0.484	16.0	-3
Milwaukee	38	56	0.404	19.5	369	434	-65	39	55	0.415	22.5	-1

	W	L	PCT	GB	RS	RA	Diff	W	L	Pct	GB	+/-
NL West												
Arizona	50	45	0.526	--	399	390	9	49	46	0.516	--	1
Colorado	46	50	0.479	4.5	426	425	1	48	48	0.500	1.5	-2
LA Dodgers	47	47	0.500	2.5	360	378	-18	45	49	0.479	3.5	2
San Francisco	43	51	0.457	6.5	378	418	-40	42	52	0.447	6.5	1
San Diego	42	54	0.438	8.5	379	440	-61	41	55	0.427	8.5	1

You can see the Tigers have a 52-42 record despite outscoring the opposition by 89 runs, the third highest differential in baseball. The formula says that the Tigers should have a 57-37 record, five games better

than what they really are. Why have the Tigers played below their projection? Part of it is what we talked about last month, the fact the Tigers are not hitting well late in games. They still have not scored a run in the 10th through 13th innings this year. They also are not winning low-scoring games, despite their good pitching. When the Tigers score 0-3 runs, they are 3-30 (.091), much worse than the league winning percentage of .219. We expect those things to even out over the second half.

It's interesting to look at the other divisions. In the National League Central, the Cardinals lead the Pirates by only one game, despite outscoring the opposition by 127 runs compared to 46 for Pittsburgh. Two teams who have been winning more than they should are the Yankees and the Phillies.

DOMBROWSKI, MONROE MAKE ANNUAL GATHERING MEMORABLE – by Todd Miller

The Society's 29th Annual Gathering took place June 22 at the Hockeytown Café. Nearly 100 members heard Dave Dombrowski, the Tigers' CEO, president and general manager, address a wide range of topics, and Craig Monroe, Fox Sports Detroit studio analyst and ex-Tigers outfielder, talk about the current team and his playing days.

"Detroit is a great baseball city," said Dave, a longtime Society member. "It has knowledgeable fans and it's rockin'; it's fun."

Dave then took us down memory lane by recalling that, in 1978 when he began his career in the front office of his hometown White Sox, Paul Richards, a former big league catcher, manager and innovator who then became an executive, taught him a lot about the game. (While managing the Orioles in the 1950s, Richards invented "Big Bertha," an oversized catcher's mitt for handling the pitches of knuckleballer and Hall of Famer Hoyt Wilhelm.) When Dave arrived in Detroit, in 2001, one of the first photos he saw in the Tigers' front office was of Paul Richards, Dizzy Trout and Hal Newhouser at Wrigley Field during the 1945 World Series. "When I saw that picture, I knew I belonged here," said Dave. He also mentioned that his Tigers connection extended to Montreal, where he worked as general manager under club president John McHale Sr., the Expos' first GM and a former Tigers player and executive. (John Sr.'s son, John Jr., served as Tigers' president 1995-2001.)

When it comes to the current team, Dave, assured us that "every day, we as an organization do everything we can to get better." He touched on Justin Verlander's recent struggles by saying, "We've talked about it and he's working on some things to get better." Relative to starting pitching, Dave said that "we have five starters who give us a chance to win every time. With Drew Smyly on the roster, we're six deep."

With regard to the pitching, Dave is confident that Joaquin Benoit can be the closer for the long haul and said that setup man Al Albuquerque "should be part of the equation" as well. He was also complimentary of Luke Putkonen and Evan Reed. As for the absence of dominant closers in today's game, Dave attributes the trend to "so many more hard throwers these days ... that you have a lot of guys who can get hitters out." He also observed that last year's most dominant closer was the Rays' Fernando Rodney, an ex-Tiger, and expects Bruce Rondon to contribute significantly to the Tigers' bullpen in 2014, if not this year.

On offense, he noted that "Austin Jackson changes the feel of the team" with his speed at the top of the order. He acknowledged that Prince Fielder "is in a lull" and has confidence that he'll finish the season hitting .280 with his expected output of home runs and RBI. Dave also praised Torii Hunter in making the adjustment from center field to right field and is impressed with Matt Tuiasosopo's ability to hit left-handed pitching. Dave attributed Victor Martinez's struggles to "pressing too much" and is optimistic about catcher Alex Avila can regain his form of 2011 (19 HR, 82 RBI, .295).

Focusing on the minor leagues, Dave commented that he doesn't panic when the Tigers affiliates in Toledo, Erie, West Michigan and Lakeland are struggling. "Winning is nice, but the number-one priority of our minor league system is to develop players. We like to see them win, because it's better to learn in a winning atmosphere, and it prepares them better for what we expect of them up here."

Although Dave's record on trades and free agent signings has been outstanding in putting together the past 12 Tigers teams, when asked about his one regret in the transactions department, he immediately recalled that trading pitcher Jair Jurrjens and outfielder Gorkys Hernandez to the Atlanta Braves for shortstop Edgar Renteria following the 2007 season was "a deal that didn't work out."

Regarding the creation of a Tigers Hall of Fame, Dave said, “The idea has been discussed, but nothing has been decided. There have been so many great players that deciding whom to induct would be a major project.” He also said that perhaps a Tigers Hall of Fame could be combined with Hispanic and African American Halls of Fame honoring athletes native to Michigan or who played significant portions of their careers in the state.

Craig Monroe enjoyed his best years in Detroit as a Tigers outfielder 2002-07 and was a major contributor on the 2006 American League champions. The extremely personable and insightful native of Texarkana, Texas, who played for five teams in a 10-year career, is in his second year as a studio analyst for Fox Sports Detroit. During the season, he rents an apartment in Southfield near the studios while his wife and three children stay back in Texas. Craig enjoys the work and said the toughest part of his job is “calling out his friends. When a guy makes an error on a play he should have made or doesn’t run out a ball, it’s my responsibility to tell the people watching what should have happened. It’s hard, but I’m getting used to it.”

Craig also misses the camaraderie of being on a team. “When you play with guys for six months, and you’re with them all the time, they become a family. After you stop playing, you don’t get that kind of relationship anywhere else.”

Nevertheless, Craig considers himself to be “extremely blessed” to be able to work in baseball. He has high regard for numerous players on the 2013 Tigers, including Torii Hunter, about whom he says “brings leadership qualities you need on a contender,” and is particularly fond of Andy Dirks. He called the Tigers’ left fielder “a dirt bag who goes after it. He gets [his uniform] dirty and goes after guys who don’t.”

He also had high praise for Jim Leyland for treating everyone as equals. Following a loss in early 2006 (Jim’s first season at the Tigers’ helm) resulting from an error, and catcher Pudge Rodriguez pointing the finger, the Tigers skipper called a team meeting and said, looking squarely at the Tigers/ catcher while addressing everyone, “Raise your hand if you’ve ever made a mistake.” After everyone’s hand went up, Jim said, “That’s what I thought. We win as a team and we lose as a team,” and went back to his office. According to Craig, “From that point on, he had total control of the clubhouse. When managers start treating players differently, they lose the team. I’ve seen it happen, but not with this manager.”

Craig also pointed out that the atmosphere in Detroit is “something special.” When it comes to loyal fans, Craig said, “The people here are great. You all stand behind your team. It’s not like that everywhere in baseball, so you should be proud of what you’re doing to support the team.”

Besides playing in a World Series, Craig said that his greatest thrill as a ballplayer was taking his mother in 2006 (who happens to be named Marilyn Monroe) to New York for her birthday so she could watch him play in Yankee Stadium. “I couldn’t believe that a guy from a small town in Texas was playing in a big-league ball game in the biggest city of all, and that my mom was going to be there in the stands.” (He hit a late homer to win the game for Detroit.)

The day was capped by a 10-3 shellacking of the Boston Red Sox, raising the Society’s Annual Gathering record to 21-10. (27 single games and two twi-night doubleheaders in ’84 and ’89) Max Scherzer pitched seven strong innings and raised his record to 11-0, while Victor Martinez paced the offense with a first-inning grand slam and five RBI on the night. Our winning streak stands at six games, the longest in the Society’s three decades of existence.

“A SERIES TO REMEMBER” PRODUCES MEMORABLE EVENING -- by Todd Miller

On June 19, a few days prior to the Society’s 29th Annual Gathering, ex-Tiger Dave Bergman hosted “A Series to Remember” fundraiser attended by nearly 200 people at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial (a.k.a. Russell Alger House and The Moorings) in Grosse Pointe Farms on the shores of Lake St. Clair to raise money for The Joe Niekro Foundation (TJNF). The dinner included remarks by members of the ’68 and ’84 Tigers, live and silent auctions of autographed jerseys, bats, balls, caps and other memorabilia related to the ’68 and ’84 World Series champion Tigers, and a computer simulation of a World Series between the ’68 and ’84 Tigers.

The ’68 team was represented by Gates Brown, Al Kaline, Mickey Lolich and Jon Warden, and the ’84 team had Bergman, Tom Brookens, Dan Petry and Dave Rozema on the dais. Jim Leyland and Tigers bench coach Gene Lamont autographed jerseys and memorabilia, and attended the dinner, but left before the Q&A

session to attend another function. Also attending from the Tigers family were Jim Schmakel, clubhouse manager, Jerry Lewis, director of Fantasy Camps, and Pio DiSalvo, a former trainer who helped the '84 champs stay healthy.

TJNF's mission is to educate the public about the causes and symptoms of brain aneurysms (bulges in blood vessels in the brain, causing strokes or other health problems) and to raise money for research. Niekro, the brother of Hall of Famer pitcher Phil Niekro and father of ex-major league first baseman Lance Niekro, pitched for the Tigers 1970-72 -- and became best friends with Bergman when they were teammates on the Houston Astros 1976-81. Joe died of a brain aneurysm in October 2006, at age 61. His daughter, Natalie Niekro, founded the organization in 2007. She resides in Scottsdale, Arizona, and attended the dinner.

The evening began with emcee Mario Impemba, the Tigers' television voice, welcoming everyone. Former owner Tom Monaghan, who developed a close relationship with Bergman while owning the club from 1983-92, offered video greetings.

Hall of Famer Al Kaline – arguably the most dapper 78-year-old on the planet – led off the Q&A session by telling the audience, “When 1968 came around, we knew it was going to be our year because we didn't get it done the year before even though we were the best team [in the American League].”

Dan Petry, a mainstay in the '84 Tigers' starting rotation, echoed similar sentiments about the team on which he played. “We came to spring training very confident that we were going to win. We battled the Orioles the year before and came up just a bit short. [six games] We were really good [in '84] and also got a lot of breaks that helped us go 35-5 and lead the rest of the way. I hope the same thing happens to the 2013 team that happened to us [in '84].”

Added Tom Brookens, a third baseman on the '84 team and the Tigers' current third-base coach, “There was a lot of pressure that went with the great start [35-5], but we came through when we had to and did really well against the Orioles and Toronto – the teams we had to beat.” While the '84 edition of the Tigers projected an image of being all business, pitcher Dave Rozema said that his primary responsibility was to “keep the team loose. No matter what anybody tells you, this [baseball] is a grind, and if you don't have a sense of humor it's hard to make it through the season. Sparky [Anderson] may not have appreciated me, but I know that most of the guys did.”

Turning back the clock, Warden, a left-handed reliever on the '68 team – his only year in the majors -- joked, “If I had been brought up in '67, we'd have won.” The comment drew a loud roar from the audience and was representative of other cracks that Jon, a self-admitted overgrown child, made throughout the evening.

When Mickey Lolich was asked what it was like to pitch Game 7 of the '68 Series on two days' rest, he replied, “I felt fine. God gave me a great arm, and I had no problems whatsoever.” As for the home run he hit in Game 2 in St. Louis, an 8-1 Tigers victory, he said, “I didn't even see it. I just hit the ball and ran. I asked the first base umpire if I was out and he told me I hit a home run. I couldn't believe it.”

Mickey's teammate, Gates Brown, gave Mayo Smith credit for “having the guts” to put Mickey Stanley at shortstop in place of the weak-hitting Ray Oyler and allowing Kaline, Willie Horton and Jim Northrup to patrol the outfield full time while contributing to the team's offense. Added Gates, “Mayo was always patient with me. It's tough coming off the bench sometimes to pinch-hit, and sometimes my stroke wasn't going real good, but he always had faith in me.”

At the conclusion of the Q&A session, Bergman thanked the Tigers alumni for participating in the program and remarked about how wonderful it is that the Ilitch family and Tigers management makes it “welcoming” for ex-players to share their experiences with current Tigers. “The team has done a great job of opening the locker room to former players. If they [current players] want to learn from us, they can.”

On a more solemn note, Bergman commented, “Everyone who knew Joe Niekro knows that that's why we're here tonight. He was a great guy, and my best friend, and I'm grateful that all of you showed up.” According to Bergman, “The dinner raised more money than anticipated. I think that's because I tried to make the auction items unique, and people responded.”

As for the computer-simulated World Series between the '68 and '84 Tigers, the '68 team won in seven games. The simulation program was created by Mark Madonna, a Detroit-area computer programmer and friend of Bergman's who's also active in Miracle League, a national charitable organization that provides children

with mental or physical challenges the opportunity to play baseball in organized leagues. The Tigers and other major league clubs, as well as the Major League Baseball Alumni, Players and Umpires Associations, are supporters of Miracle League. For more information about TJNF and brain aneurysm research, visit www.joeniecrofoundaton.com or call 602-318-1013.

CLUBHOUSE NOTEBOOK – by Todd Miller

Prior to the Tigers' June 21 game against the Boston Red Sox, a 10-6 loss and the Bengals' only defeat in the four-game series, I had the opportunity to speak with a number of Tigers players and coaches.

Right fielder Torii Hunter, on making the transition from center field to right field: "Center field is much easier. In center, the ball comes right to you, or it's hit square to the gaps. In right field, the ball takes all kinds of funny twists and dives because a lot of balls hit there come off the end of the bat. It's harder to 'square up,' but I'm getting used to it."

Second baseman Omar Infante on battling challenges in the field and at the plate: "I do everything I can to be a better player every day. I just have to be mentally strong because I know I'm doing my best."

Left fielder Andy Dirks, on becoming a more consistent hitter: "I constantly work on attacking the ball and placing it. Just concentrating on watching the ball and going with the pitch helps me a lot."

Relief pitcher Luke Putkonen, on why things are starting to click for him this year: "I've matured, so I focus more, and that helps me throw more strikes. I've also been working on a forkball and a changeup so I can have more pitches to throw consistently for strikes."

Backup catcher Brayan Pena, on filling in for the injured Alex Avila: "Alex is our number-one catcher, and I'm proud to take his place until he's off the DL. Victor Martinez has been extremely helpful to me in how to work the different hitters. He's been in the league for a long time and knows so much."

Reserve outfielder Matt Tuiasosopo, on why he's doing better with the Tigers than he was with the Mariners before coming to Detroit: "I'm getting more opportunities now, more at-bats. The more at-bats you get, the more comfortable you are, and the more hits you get."

Backup catcher Bryan Holaday, on the difference between life in the major and minor leagues: "Up here, the atmosphere is bigger; the crowds are bigger. Also, the field conditions are much better and the lights are brighter."

Pitcher Jose Alvarez, filling in for the injured Anibal Sanchez, on why the Marlins organization gave up on him: "I don't know what they thought, and I didn't ask when they released me, but I'm doing well with this team [the Tigers] and that's all that matters." (Alvarez started the previous night's game, getting a no-decision in a 4-3 Tigers victory resulting from a Jhonny Peralta walk-off home run in the bottom of the ninth)

Hitting coach Lloyd McClendon, on what it's like to work with Miguel Cabrera and Prince Fielder: "It's great. Both of those guys are hard workers and push themselves to the limit. They're also great guys to have in the clubhouse."

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