

Tigers Stripes

The Newsletter of the
D
Mayo Smith Society

Vol. 31, No. 9

Tigers Fans Who Always Care

November 2015

IMPROVING THE TEAM – By David Raglin

If you like excitement, you'll love the 2015-2016 offseason for the Tigers. As we discussed in last month's *Tigers Stripes*, owner Mike Ilitch plans on contending next year and the team that finished the season this year needs quite a few holes filled to make that a reality. This month, we will look at some potential additions for the 2016 Tigers.

The first question is: free agents or trades. There will surely be some of both, but the Tigers are hamstrung by the combination of little depth and few minor league prospects. The Tigers acquired three pitchers in August who are close to being major league contributors (Daniel Norris, Matt Byrd, and Michael Fullmer), so they won't be moved. The Tigers could deal left-handed pitcher Jairo Labourt, acquired in the David Price deal, or shortstop JaCoby Jones, acquired from the Pirates for Joakim Soria, because they are farther from the majors, have some potential, and -- at least in Jones' case -- is at a position where the Tigers have depth.

That brings up probably the most intriguing trade possibility for the Tigers: dealing Jose Iglesias. Why would the Tigers trade one of their few good young players? First, as already stated, the Tigers have depth at short with Dixon Machado and Jones. Machado probably could be a credible major league shortstop in 2016. Second, Iglesias is injury-prone and a team like the Tigers with injury concerns always present for stars such as Miguel Cabrera and Victor Martinez are taking an especially high risk by having another injury-prone player in the projected lineup. Iglesias' injuries may cut back on his trade value to the point the Tigers would not get a solid pitcher for him, but if not, it is a move the team should consider.

However, given the above issues and ownership's willingness to spend in the past to win, the most likely avenue for additions is the free-agent market. Fortunately, this is a pretty good free agent class, especially for starting pitchers. This month, we will focus on two of the three big needs: a corner outfielder and two starting pitchers. (We will look at the bullpen possibilities next month.)

HELP WANTED: CORNER OUTFIELDER (PREFERABLY LEFTHANDED) - By David Raglin

While trading Yoenis Cespedes made sense given that he would be a free agent and the Tigers got young hotshot pitcher Michael Fullmer for him, Cespedes' absence opened up a huge hole in left field. In one way, Cespedes was not an ideal fit for the Tigers in that he hits right-handed. With right-handed Brian McCann replacing lefty Alex Avila behind the plate, the Tigers have only two left-handed regulars, switch-hitting Victor Martinez and weak-hitting center fielder Anthony Gose. Below are some free agent options.

Potential Detroit Tiger Outfielders in the 2015-2016 Free Agent Class, With 2015 Statistics

Outfielder	Bats	Age	Tm	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	RC	RC/G	WAR
Jason Heyward	L	25	StL	154	547	79	160	13	60	56	90	.293	.359	.439	89	5.9	6.5
Yoenis Cespedes	R	29	Det/NYM	159	633	101	184	35	105	33	141	.291	.328	.542	108	6.1	6.3
Justin Upton	R	27	SD	150	542	85	136	26	81	68	159	.251	.336	.454	86	5.4	4.4
Alex Gordon	L	31	KC	104	354	40	96	13	48	49	92	.271	.377	.432	62	6.2	2.8
Colby Rasmus	L	28	Hou	137	432	67	103	25	61	47	154	.238	.314	.475	68	5.2	2.6
Dexter Fowler	S	29	ChC	156	596	102	149	17	46	84	154	.250	.346	.411	92	5.3	2.2
Ben Zobrist	S	34	Oak/KC	126	467	76	129	13	56	62	56	.276	.359	.450	77	5.8	1.2
Denard Span	L	31	Was	61	246	38	74	5	22	25	26	.301	.365	.431	41	6.1	0.8

The ages are as of June 1, 2016 (basically their 2016 season age), and the team is their 2015 team. The players are ranked by the Baseball Reference Wins Above Replacement (WAR). The WARs are far from perfect but they provide a reasonable ranking of the player's 2015 seasons.

You might think Cespedes, who played well for the Tigers before starring for the Mets, would be #1 in WAR. He is nosed out by Cardinals outfielder Jason Heyward. You look at Heyward's offensive numbers and they are solid but not star level. A lot of his value is in his defense. Baseball Reference System's Defensive Runs Saved (DRS), a stat we've used here before, suggests that he saved 22 runs in the field in 2015 compared to an average right fielder, with only three other players (including former Tiger Curtis Granderson) save even half that many. Using the ballpark figure (pun intended) of 10 runs being a win, Heyward's glove won the Cardinals about two games compared to the average right fielder. If you prefer more traditional stats, Heyward regularly is one of the best in the number of plays per inning among right fielders. Heyward is also young, so even with a long-term contract, he would still be close to his prime when it ends. The Cardinals are expected to try to re-sign him but they have quite a bit of depth and don't tend to bid big for free agents.

Cespedes and Justin Upton are both right-handed and will get superstar money that they probably don't deserve. We loved Cespedes as a Tiger but he had a career year and is the classic buy-high guy.

Alex Gordon is the best of the rest, and signing him would weaken division rival Kansas City. His numbers were hurt by a freak injury that cost him a couple of months, but he is back to his regular solid play. Colby Rasmus would be a cheaper option than most of the others, as would Dexter Fowler, but neither are as good as the players above them, either. They would be adequate players to fill the Tigers' needs.

Ben Zobrist is the kind of free agent that fans of many teams talk about getting at this time of year. He is generally underrated, plays multiple positions in both the infield and outfield, and is a switch-hitter. On the other hand, he is 34, the oldest guy on this list, his defense is going down (he had a negative WAR in the field in 2015), and the Tigers don't need his versatility as much as some other teams since they have a set infield. He'd be great to have but he is a better fit for other teams that rightly will be willing to pay him more than the Tigers.

The last guy, Denard Span, is probably a better option if the Tigers decide that Anthony Gose is not a regular center fielder. Gose's bat is weak and did not get better as the season went on, so he probably is more of a backup guy. Span plays decent center field, with good range, hits left-handed and could go at the top of the lineup with Ian Kinsler. His contract demands will be relatively modest and a short-term deal is likely. Unfortunately, that is because he has battled back issues and missed a huge chunk of the 2015 season. If he's healthy, on a one- or two-year deal he could be a steal, but with Cabrera, Victor Martinez and Iglesias in the lineup, the Tigers do not need another injury risk.

Al Avila has said that a left-handed hitting corner outfielder is a priority, and it would not be surprising to see one of the guys on this list be a Tiger in 2016.

HELP WANTED: STARTING PITCHING - By David Raglin

Al Avila also noted the Tigers need a couple of starting pitchers. They need one to be a 2-3 guy and one can be a 4-5 guy if that is what is available. We talked about the possibility of a trade for one earlier in this newsletter, but that would still mean the Tigers will have to dip into the free-agent market. With Justin Verlander, an oft-injured Anibal Sanchez and several young pitchers, there are openings in the Tigers' rotation.

Below is a list of free agents who are potentials for the 2016 Tigers. The big names like David Price, Zach Grienke, Johnny Cueto and Jordan Zimmerman are not here. They would demand multi-year deals for \$20 million or more, and if Mike Ilitch wants one of them, the Tigers will get one of them. Assuming that will not happen, here are the more realistic possibilities:

Potential Detroit Tigers Starting Pitchers in the 2015-2016 Free Agent Class, With 2015 Statistics

Name	Thr	Age	Team	G	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	W	L	ERA
John Lackey	R	37	StL	33	218.0	211	71	67	53	175	13	10	2.77
Jeff Samardzija	R	31	ChW	32	214.0	228	122	118	49	163	11	13	4.96

Potential Detroit Tigers Starting Pitchers in the 2015-2016 Free Agent Class, With 2015 Statistics

Name	Thr	Age	Team	G	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	W	L	ERA
Bartolo Colon	R	43	NYM	31	192.7	216	94	90	24	133	14	13	4.20
Mike Leake	R	28	SF	30	192.0	174	80	79	49	119	11	10	3.70
Wei-Yin Chen	L	31	Bal	31	191.3	192	78	71	41	153	11	8	3.34
Yovani Gallardo	R	30	Tex	33	184.3	193	76	70	68	121	13	11	3.42
Scott Kazmir	L	32	Hou	31	183.0	162	77	63	59	155	7	11	3.10
Brett Anderson	L	28	LAD	31	180.3	194	82	74	46	116	10	9	3.69
Marco Estrada	R	33	Tor	28	170.3	130	66	62	50	120	12	8	3.28
Ian Kennedy	R	31	SD	30	168.3	166	95	80	52	174	9	15	4.28
Jaime Garcia	L	30	StL	20	129.7	106	37	35	30	97	10	6	2.43
Hisashi Iwakuma	L	35	Sea	20	129.7	117	53	51	21	111	9	5	3.54
Chris Young	R	37	KC	18	99.0	78	37	35	33	66	8	6	3.18
Doug Fister	L	32	Was	15	86.0	104	48	44	18	48	4	7	4.60

The Tigers are lucky that this is the winter they are looking for starting pitchers. As you can see, the list of good-but-not-great guys is pretty long. The pitchers are listed in order of innings pitched. I'm not as confident about WAR for pitchers as I am for position players, and one of the Tigers' key requirements is durability, given Verlander and Sanchez's injury problems.

John Lackey is an older starter but is solid year after year. Given his age, he will not command a long commitment, but on the other hand, he is reported to be happy in St. Louis and it would not be a surprise to see him remain there.

Jeff Samardzija is an interesting case. He was supposed to be one of the guys in the top class, but he had a very disappointing 2015 season. He might be available on a shorter-term deal so that he can rebuild his value, but don't be surprised if a team takes the big plunge.

Bartolo Colon is even more interesting. He is so old he was traded in one of those veteran-for-prospect deals by the Expos when they thought they would be contracted, and the three prospects he was dealt for were Cliff Lee, Grady Sizemore, and Brandon Phillips, who are now either retired (Lee) or veterans. However, he eats innings and holds his own.

Wei-Yin Chen has to be linked to the Tigers since he is a Scott Boras client, but that also means he will probably sign later in the winter, and the Tigers (at least under Dave Dombrowski) like to make their moves early. Arguably the best player on the list is Hisashi Iwakuma, who missed significant time but pitched very well the second half of the season.

A bunch of these guys had decent 2015 seasons but are risky due to past injuries that in some cases cover multiple seasons, like Brett Anderson, Jaime Garcia and Chris Young. However, all were pitching fine at the end of the season and could be available for a reasonable price.

We cannot leave this without looking at the last name on the list, Doug Fister. If I had to bet on one name on that list becoming a Tiger in 2016, it is Fister. He liked Detroit, the Tigers liked him, and after a disappointing season in Washington for both the team and him (including some very questionable handling of Fister and other pitchers), Fister is probably looking for a deal in a place where he knows he can do well. He might want a sort term deal to set up a big deal if he has a good season.

I would be very surprised if the Tigers do not add at least one of these players, and maybe two. The Tigers need them and none of these pitchers should be overly expensive, allowing them to get two of them or save money for the outfield or the bullpen. Ah the bullpen. We will look at that in December.

KING TIGER VOTING CONTINUES -- AND ENDS – By Mark Pattison

The voting for King Tiger for 2015 continues this month and ends on Saturday, November 28, during Thanksgiving weekend. Remember, though, that we're voting not for turkeys but for Tigers. We're looking for

the Tiger who, in the opinion of Society members, best represented the club with his performance on the field and his character and activities off the field. King Tiger is not necessarily the team MVP, it is something different. You could even vote for a bench player if you feel that player embodies the spirit of what it means to be a Detroit Tiger.

All Society members are eligible to vote. The rules are simple: You can vote for only one Tiger; no split votes. You can vote only once. And you've got to get your vote in by the deadline, with via email at pattison_mark@hotmail.com, or via postal mail to Mark Pattison, 1221 Floral St. NW, Washington, DC 20012. When you vote, you can, if you wish to, include the reason behind your vote. We'll include some of them in the December issue of *Tigers Stripes*. Because the vote is ongoing, we're not conducting any exit polls. And when it comes to who may be ahead or behind, our lips are sealed. So vote!

THE WORLD SERIES' MICHIGAN TOUCH – by Todd Miller

With the 111th World Series under way, it's interesting to note the dearth of managers and abundance of players from The Great Lake State who have participated in the Fall Classic. (Birth city is in parentheses.) Among skippers, only three are Michigan natives, a figure that pales in comparison to those from other large northern states, including Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania, but one of the 2015 World Series managers is a native of the Great Lake State.

The managers are:

Joe Altobelli (Detroit) – Succeeded Hall-of-Famer Earl Weaver and led '83 Orioles to the Birds' most recent World Series Championship;

Clint Hurdle (Big Rapids) -- Current Pirates' skipper piloted '07 Rockies and got swept by Red Sox.

Terry Collins (Midland) – Led this year's Mets team to the "big dance." Played at Eastern Michigan for legendary coach Ron Oestrike 1968-71. Drafted by Pirates but never cracked The Show. Managed in Bucs' minor league system and coached under Jim Leyland in Pittsburgh 1992-93 Wears number 10 in honor of Leyland, whom he considers a mentor.

The list of players is long and impressive.

Paul Assenmacher (Detroit) – Relief pitcher for Indians in '95 and '97.

Steve Avery (Trenton) – Starting pitcher for the Braves in '91, '92, '95 and '96; won Game 4 of the '95 Series to help Braves to their first (and only, to date) world championship in Atlanta, finishing his career with the 119-loss Tigers of 2003..

Bob Buhl (Saginaw) – Helped Milwaukee Braves to NL pennants in '57 and '58, and pitched in '57 Series.

Jim Burton (Royal Oak) – University of Michigan standout was losing pitcher in Game 7 of '75 Series.

Bernie Carbo (Detroit) – His pinch-hit 3-run homer in Game 6 of '75 Series paved way for Carlton Fisk's game-winning shot to force Game 7. Also played for Reds in '70 and '72 Series.

Eddie Cicotte (Detroit) – Pitcher who helped White Sox defeat Giants in '17 Series and was implicated in Black Sox Scandal two years later.

Todd Cruz (Detroit) – Strong defensive third baseman was a starter on Orioles' '83 championship team. His father was a groundskeeper at Tiger Stadium.

Hazen "Kiki" Cuyler (Harrisville) – Hall of Fame outfielder who helped Pirates to World Series championship in '25, vs. Walter Johnson-led Washington Senators. Also played on Cubs' NL pennant winners in '29 and '32.

Bill Freehan (Detroit) – Backstop was integral part of '68 World Series Champion Tigers.

Charlie Gehringer (Fowlerville) – Hall of Fame second baseman who help Tigers capture '34 pennant and '35 World Series championship.

Kirk Gibson (Pontiac) – Hit key home runs to power Tigers to '84 championship, and his walk-off blast off future Hall of Famer Dennis Eckersley to win Game 1 for '88 Dodgers powered Blue Crew to its most recent Fall Classic triumph.

Pat Hentgen (Fraser) – Right-handed starter helped Blue Jays capture '93 championship and won the Cy Young Award in '96.

Tigers Stripes – November 2015 – Page 5

Art Houtteman (Detroit) – Ex-Tigers righthander pitched for Indians in '54 Fall Classic.

Steve Howe (Pontiac) – Right-handed reliever pitched for Dodgers in '81 Series.

Derek Lowe (Dearborn) – Right-handed starter helped Red Sox win '04 Series, the franchise's first title in 86 years.

Mike Marshall (Adrian) – Dodgers reliever and Michigan State grad anchored bullpen on '74 NL Champion squad. Also won Cy Young Award that year and pitched in MLB record 106 games.

John McHale (Detroit) – First baseman appeared in '45 Series for Tigers. Went on to become GM of the Tigers, Milwaukee/Atlanta Braves and Expos. His son, John McHale Jr., is former Tigers club president and current MLB executive.

Rick Miller (Grand Rapids) – Saw limited action for Boston in the '75 World Series vs. Sparky's Big Red Machine.

Hal Newhouser (Detroit) – Hall of Fame southpaw went 2-1 in '45 Series for victorious Tigers. As a member of the Indians' staff, he faced two batters in the '54 Series vs. Giants.

Jim Northrup (Breckinridge) – Tigers outfielder hit HRs in '68 Series and hit a two-run triple in Game 7 to propel Detroit to victory.

Frank "Stubby" Overmire (Moline) – Went 0-1 for the Tigers in '45 Series and stayed with Detroit through '49 before finishing his career with the Browns and Yankees. Was a Tigers pitching coach in the 1960s.

Tom Paciorek (Detroit) – Saw limited action in '74 Series with Dodgers; also subbed in the Tigers' broadcast booth in the 1990s. Brother of ex-big leaguers Jim and John Paciorek.

Billy Pierce (Detroit) – Southpaw who began career with '45 Tigers saw action for '59 White Sox and '62 Giants, losers to the Dodgers and Yankees, respectively.

Dick Pole (Trout Creek) – Bosox reliever gave up a run in '75 Series without retiring a Reds hitter.

Phil "The Vulture" Regan (Otsego) – Relief pitcher began his career with Tigers in '60 and appeared in '66 Classic with Dodgers team which got swept by Orioles. Managed Orioles in '95.

Merv Rettenmund (Flint) – Reserve outfielder and pinch hitter appeared with Orioles in Series 1969-71, hitting home runs in '69 and '70. Also appeared with Reds in '75 Classic.

Ed Reulbach (Detroit) – Right-handed pitcher appeared for Cubs in Series of '06-'08 and '10, helping to best his hometown team in '07 and '08.

Chris Sabo (Detroit) – University of Michigan standout helped Reds achieve upset sweep of A's in '90 Classic by hitting .563.

Scott Sanderson (Dearborn) – Former Expo and Cub pitched 1.2 innings for Oakland in '90 Series. Finished his career with Yankees, Angels, Giants and White Sox.

Pat Sheridan (Ann Arbor) – Featured speaker at Society's 2010 Annual Gathering appeared in '85 Series with Royals and '89 Classic with Giants. Also played for Tigers in '87 ALCS.

Ted Simmons (Highland Park) – All-Star backstop appeared with Milwaukee, managed by ex-Tiger Harvey Kuenn in '82 Series after being traded from victorious Cardinals a couple years earlier.

John Smoltz (Detroit) – Hall-of-Fame right-hander appeared in 5 World Series for the Braves, most famously matching ex-Tiger Jack Morris pitch-for-pitch in Game 7 of the '91 Classic before Atlanta's bullpen yielded the game's lone run to the Twins. Morris pitched all 10 innings to pick up the win.

Mickey Stanley (Grand Rapids) – Appeared in all seven games for the Tigers in the '68 Series. Although he hit only .214, his stellar play at shortstop allowed manager Mayo Smith's famous gamble pay off. By benching the weak-hitting Ray Oyler in favor of Stanley, the Tigers were able to put clutch-hitting Jim Northrup in center field.

Wayne "Twig" Terwilliger (Clare) – First base coach for '87 Twins which defeated Tigers in ALCS, and for '91 World Series Champions.

Tom Tresh (Detroit) – Infielder appeared in three consecutive Classics ('62-'64) with Yankees. Finished career with Tigers in '69.

John VanderWal (Grand Rapids) – Appeared in the '98 Classic for the Padres team which got swept by the Yankees.

Jason Varitek (Rochester) – Was integral part of Bosox winners in '04 and '07.

Tigers Stripes – November 2015 – Page 6

Bill Virdon (Hazel Park) – Appeared for the winning Pirates in all seven games of the '60 Classic.

Bob Welch (Detroit) – Eastern Michigan right-hander saw action with Dodgers in '78 and '81 Series and with A's in '88 and '90 Classics. His 27 wins in '90 are the most by any pitchers since Denny McLain's 31 in '68.

Rick Wise (Jackson) – Right-handed starter notched a win for Boston in the '75 Classic.

Curt Young (Saginaw) – Central Michigan standout appeared in '88 and '90 World Series with A's.

Interestingly, the '75 Red Sox had a plethora of Michiganders on the roster: outfielder-pinch hitter Carbo, outfielder Miller, and pitchers Burton, Pole and Wise.

Michiganders who have appeared in the Fall Classic for the Tigers are Freehan, Gehringer, Gibson, McHale, Newhouser, Northrup and Stanley.

Dave Rozema (Grand Rapids), the featured speaker at the Society's Annual Gathering in 2011, was on the '84 Tigers' postseason roster but did not pitch against the Royals in the ALCS, nor against the Padres in the World Series.

As for the most compelling Michigan-born World Series performer, the honor goes to Rozema's brother-in-law, Gibson, whose two home runs in Game 5 of the '84 Classic put the Tigers' victory over San Diego on ice, and whose walk-off shot against Dennis Eckersley in Game 1 of the '88 Series – his only at-bat in that Fall Classic due to injury – set the tone for the Dodgers' upset of the A's in five games.

SHORT STRIPES

▶ The Mets never trailed in the NLCS against the Cubs. That was the sixth time in history that has happened in a seven game series. The Tigers did it in 2012, never trailing the Yankees in the ALCS. The other teams to do it were all in the World Series: Dodgers over Yankees in 1963, Orioles over Dodgers in 1966, Athletics over Giants in 1989 (the earthquake year), and Red Sox over Cardinals in 2004 (the end of the curse).

▶ Even though neither Nelson Cruz's Mariners nor our Tigers made the postseason this year, Cruz was still haunting Detroit in October. He carried out the flag to lead the Seattle Seahawks onto the field to face the Detroit Lions on October 5. It worked, too, as Seattle won 13-10. (We do not know if Cruz played a part in the refs' botched call in that game that hurt the Lions.)

▶ Last month, we talked about Miguel Cabrera and soccer great Pele are Twitter pen pals. This month, Miggy was in Barcelona and posed for a picture with current soccer great Lionel Messi of FC Barcelona.

▶ Ty Cobb's record for games played in the outfield has yet to be surpassed. He set the mark in 1923 and added to it for five more seasons. It's been 92 years, and 2,934 games.

▶ Two Tigers teams led the AL in home runs in years they won the World Series: 1968 and 1984. They're the only non-Yankees team to do it more than once.

▶ Let's recap Virgil Trucks' 1952 season, where he went 5-19 for Detroit: He tossed a pair of no-hitters, one at Yankee Stadium; in his next start after the first one, he took a no-hitter to the seventh inning. He later allowed the leadoff hitter a slow roller good for a single, and nobody else got a hit. In those four starts, Virgil Trucks logged 34 2/3 innings and gave up three hits. The rest of the year, he was 1-19 with a 4.77 ERA!

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

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

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

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

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

Name _____

Address _____

City, St/Pr _____

Zip/Postal Code _____ Phone _____

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.