

Tigers Stripes

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D
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Tigers Fans Who Always Care

November 2017

A SEPTEMBER NOT TO REMEMBER – By David Raglin

It was a tough month for Tiger fans. After Justin Verlander was traded to the Astros, the Tigers suffered through an awful last month of the season, going 6-24. Since, for better or for worse, this is the team that will be the starting place for 2018, let's take a look at what happened.

The Tigers scored 3.6 runs per game in September and allowed 6.6. The league average for runs scored was 4.6, so while the offense was not good, the biggest problem was the pitching. If they allowed runs at the September rate for a whole season, they would allow 1,064 runs. To put that in perspective, the 2017 Tigers allowed the most runs in Major League Baseball in the last nine years -- 894. The last team to allow even 900 runs was the 2008 Texas Rangers (967). The last two teams to allow 1,000 runs were the 1999 Colorado Rockies, with 1,028, and your 1996 Detroit Tigers, that allowed 1,064 runs and went 53-109. (If you were wondering, the infamous 2003 Tigers team that went 43-119 allowed "only" 928 runs.)

So while we all might want to avert our eyes, let's take a look at the pitchers for September. The Tigers used 21 pitchers; for the record, they are, in order of innings pitched: Matt Boyd, Anibal Sanchez, Buck Farmer, Chad Bell, Daniel Norris, Jordan Zimmermann, Blaine Hardy, Drew VerHagen, Myles Jaye, Daniel Stumpf, Artie Lewicki, Warwick Saupold, Shane Greene, Zac Reininger, Joe Jimenez, Victor Alcantara, Alex Wilson, Jairo Labourt, Jeff Ferrell and Andrew Romine. You'll be able to win a bar bet if you can name them all! Eight of them started a game: Boyd, Sanchez, Farmer, Bell, Zimmermann, Jaye, Norris and Lewicki. The only ones (other than Andrew Romine's one-third of an inning) with an ERA under 4.00 were Matt Boyd and Shane Greene. There seem to be very few pitchers on this list that can reasonably be expected to be decent pitchers for the 2018 Tigers.

The rotation for 2018 at this time includes Michael Fulmer (who hopefully will be recovered from his injury), Boyd, Zimmermann, maybe Norris, and who knows. Even with Fulmer back, this is a weak rotation. Maybe a new pitching coach can set Zimmermann and Norris on the right path, but the clock is ticking on both of them. While the Tigers will not be spending on big free agents, they need to get at least one innings-eater that might not be great but will be out there every four days. Possible names include players like Scott Feldman, Wade Miley (if his option is not picked up), Miguel Gonzalez, Francisco Liriano, Jhoulys Chacin, and our ol' buddy Doug Fister.

A DIAMOND IN A ROUGH MONTH – By David Raglin

While it is tough to rebuild, the fun part of a roster reset is to watch a young player come up and turn into a solid major leaguer. Maybe the most significant development this September was the emergence of Jeimer Candelario. Acquired from the Cubs in the deal for Justin Wilson and Alex Avila, Candelario had a couple cups of coffee with Chicago but September was his first time to get a chance to play regularly.

Jeimer took advantage of that opportunity. If it wasn't for Nick Castellanos' monster month, the Tigers' Player of the Month for September would have been Candelario, even with Matt Boyd coming so close to a no-hitter. You can see from his stats below how good Jeimer was.

Jeimer Candelario as a Tiger, 2017

Year	Team	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	RC	RC/G
2017	Detroit	27	94	16	31	7	0	2	13	12	18	.330	.406	.468	.874	18	7.4

Yes, it's only one month of stats, and it was better than what his history would suggest. He's had good strike zone judgment and it showed, with 12 walks as a Tiger. I recall one time (can't remember which game) where he took a 3-2 pitch that was just outside in a critical moment. He plays with a lot of energy and enthusiasm and he is just fun to watch; during September I would make sure to be watching every time he came up to the plate. The good thing about a rebuilding team is that a young player like him will get a chance to play regularly and grow. My only frustration regarding him is that I can't find a #46 Candelario T-shirt to buy. While I still have a special place in my heart for Miggy, and I miss JV, I think for 2018, when they ask "Who's Your Tiger?", it will be the Candy Man.

PLAN NINE FOR ROMINE -- By Deana Carr and Stew Thornley

(Ed. note: There were two highlights this September for the Tigers: Matt Boyd's near no-hitter and Andrew Romine playing all nine positions on the second-to-last day of the season, Sept. 30, in Minnesota. In the spirit of trying to bring you Tigers news you can't get elsewhere, we have reports from the game from two eyewitnesses, each of whom had a unique view. Deana Carr is a Mayo Smith mainstay who lives in Minnesota and sat by the Romine family during the game. Stew Thornley is an official scorer for MLB in Minnesota and was the official scorer of the game.)

Deana Carr: This year, a lot of people would wonder what the point was of going to the last two Tigers games of the year in Minneapolis. Part of being in the Mayo Smith Society is never jumping off the bandwagon. It may not be fun at times, but I'll stick with them.

I had decided a couple of months before the end of the season to go to those games. It was a plus that it ended up being the weekend for Andrew Romine (#17) to play all nine positions. Since I was at the game in Detroit -- 17 years ago -- when Shane Halter (also #17) did it, I was very happy to be able to see it again. The forecast for Sunday wasn't very good so he ended up playing all nine on Saturday night. I was happy that I could wear my game-worn Andrew Romine Memorial Day jersey that I bought in 2016! I had tickets for the Lions-Vikings game right down the road on Sunday so I was glad that I wouldn't have to leave the football game early to get to the Romine game! I enjoyed watching the Lions beat the Vikings, too.

I ended up being fortunate enough to sit in the same section as Romine's family. His host family from the minor leagues was also in the row in front of me, AND Buck Farmer's aunt sat right next to me. Little did I know that during the fourth inning, Johnny Kane from Fox Sports Detroit would end up in the row behind me in the middle of the Romine family to do an interview! There was excitement everywhere as we watched Romine move from position to position, and listen to his mom, wife, and sisters talk about what a great guy Andrew is. I tried to keep up with the changes in my scorecard and take pictures of him at each position. Buck Farmer's aunt was so excited every time Andrew caught the ball or made a play -- which seemed like he did a lot during the game! She, of course, wanted Buck to get the win. Andrew's mom did make a comment to me that she liked my Romine jersey and if I wanted to turn around and have my back to the camera once or twice during the interview (so everyone could see the Romine name), she would be OK with that!

I'm not sure if the Minnesota fans knew what was happening right away. But after the third or fourth position switch, they got it. They did make an announcement and put it up on the scoreboard to congratulate Andrew when he moved to first base to complete "the rotation." You could see him grinning from ear to ear. And the Tigers won the game so it was a fun night for many reasons.

Stew Thornley: When I heard Brad Ausmus was going to play Andrew Romine at all nine positions in the Tigers' final game, at Minnesota on Sunday, October 1, I looked forward to seeing it and was also happy I was scheduled as the official scorer and not as the mlb.com Gameday datacaster. Entering position changes of multiple players would be easier with merely a pencil (and eraser) on paper than in a computer, as the datacaster does.

The forecast was for rain on Sunday, and I hoped that wouldn't interfere. Ausmus was concerned, too. At dinner before the Saturday game, I found out Romine would play all positions that night, just in case the Sunday game couldn't be played. I had already filled out my scoresheet, on which I include each player's basic stats and stolen bases, and I thought I'd better redo it, leaving plenty of room to the right of each player, especially Romine, to enter multiple positions.

The official scorer has to enter fielding and offensive statistics for each player, by position. It's usually not a problem if a player changes positions -- once. I use a yellow highlighter on a player's batting line to segment each plate appearance by the fielding position he has at the time, and I draw a line in his boxes for put outs and assists to keep those separate by position.

Romine started in left field and moved to center in the second inning, with Alex Presley and JaCoby Jones also shifting in the outfield. In the third he went to right as Jones returned to center. By this time, we could pick up the pattern and figured, as he did, that he and third-baseman Nick Castellanos would trade positions in the fourth. The substitutions involved only one other player at a time and weren't difficult to track.

We knew Romine would probably play more than one position in an inning sometime since the Tigers, on the road, were assured of only eight innings in the field. He knocked off shortstop and second base in the fifth and sixth and went behind the plate in the seventh, as Detroit led 3-1. Although he had two prior pitching appearances in the majors, including one at Target Field three years before, this was his first time catching.

The Twins cut the lead on a run-scoring one-out single by Zack Granite, who went to second as Romine let a pitch clunk off his glove for a passed ball. After Joe Mauer walked, Ausmus put Romine back at second.

Romine started the eighth on the mound and got Miguel Sano to ground out. With only a one-run lead for the Tigers, Ausmus brought in Daniel Stumpf and moved Romine to first. The fans applauded as it was announced he had become only the fifth player to play all nine positions in a game.

After the game I carefully separated his putouts and assists as well as all offensive numbers into separate lines onto the box score I compile and send to Elias Sports Bureau. It didn't take much longer than it normally does.

I don't have to track such stats as holds, but the postgame notes from the Twins pointed out he was the first position player to earn a hold and enter a game in a save situation since saves became a statistic in 1969.

One curmudgeonly Twins announcer the next day ranted about the feat. Yeah, it was gimmicky, and I can understand that folks might have different opinions, but I found the announcer's reasons for complaining to be reaching a bit much for something to complain about. I, too, can be turned off by gimmicks, but this one I liked, and I was happy to be a part of it.

(Ed. note: To see the actual scoresheet, go to <https://sabr.org/content/official-scoring-committee-october-2017-newsletter> and look about halfway down.)

WHO WILL BE KING TIGER THIS YEAR? – By Mark Pattison

The question in the headline is never easy to answer, but this year's race is wide open.

As a Tigers fan, you might have been aware that Detroit didn't do very well last season. While manager Brad Ausmus is gone as a result of the team's overall poor performance, there are individual players whose stories you can't help but admire. And as avid followers of the Tigers, you know which ones are making their mark in the community as well, since on-field and off-field performance are both important in making your vote.

Based on recent inquiries, we'll tell you that a previous winner can indeed win again. And yes, it is possible for a player no longer with the Tigers -- either now or over the offseason -- to be named King Tiger; it'll just make it harder to present the plaque and less fun without being able to do it at a spring training game. But you factor in only his Tigers achievement; none of this postseason for Houston, Arizona or Chicago.

Our other rules: Vote for one player, and one player only; no split votes, so you and your spouse have to come to an agreement. And vote just once. Since you're voting, feel free to say why you made the choice you did for King Tiger; we may excerpt part of when we announce the winner. The voting deadline is Friday, Dec. 15. You can vote via email at pattison_mark@hotmail.com -- please use "King Tiger" in the subject field -- or via postal mail to Mark Pattison, 1221 Floral St. NW, Washington, DC 20012. The mid-December deadline allows us to issue one more reminder to vote in the next issue of Stripes as well. The polls are open!

BOOKSHELF: "TRAMMELL: DETROIT'S ICONIC SHORTSTOP" -- Review by Mark Pattison

This may be the first time I've reviewed a biography whose subject was someone younger than me. I admit that's a bit odd. But the timing may never be better, as Alan Trammell is sure to come up for

consideration by the Veterans Committee for the Hall of Fame. Todd Masters' book ably makes the case for Trammell's inclusion -- and the sooner the better.

I delighted in reading that Trammell, while in middle school, was assigned to watch Game 7 of the 1968 World Series between the Tigers and the St. Louis Cardinals and report back on what developments might be happening in the game. (Having heard a tape of NBC's national radio broadcast featuring Ernie Harwell and Pee Wee Reese, with late-innings help from Jim Simpson, between reading the book and writing this review, I am reminded that not too much happened until the bottom of the sixth, when Mickey Lolich picked off both Lou Brock and Curt Flood in the same inning.) Also, the high-school-age Trammell sported a hairstyle akin to the character Vinnie Barbarino from "Welcome Back, Kotter."

But the real focus of the book, as it should be, is on Trammell's development from an insanely talented prep star in baseball and basketball to capable, quiet, talented Hall of Fame-caliber shortstop who spent 20 seasons wearing the Old English "D."

Masters, who previously authored a book on the 1972 Tigers team that won the AL East by a half-game in a strike-slivered season, treats Trammell's baseball life chronologically. Unlike too many baseball biographers, though, he doesn't give each season a separate chapter, but rather finds well-suited themes to the different segments of Tram's career: the minor-league days; his joint apprenticeship with double-play partner Lou Whitaker (who probably deserved more space here) under Ralph Houk; the Sparky Anderson years; the success of 1984 and the dejection of the follow-up seasons; Trammell's MVP-caliber season when Detroit won the AL East in 1987 (30 years later, the sting felt by fans from his second-place finish to Toronto's George Bell is made fresh); the close-but-no-cigar of the 1987 playoffs and 1988 season; and the Tigers' decline, concomitant with Trammell's, before Alan returns to the Motor City to manage the Tigers for three decidedly subpar seasons.

Trammell's legacy is given an astute treatment by Masters in a closing chapter. While Masters found plenty of quotes by Trammell and his teammates from original sources and newspaper accounts, Trammell's reputation was that of a quiet leader. Nor were the Tigers rah-rah about Tram's feats; some fans are still sore that the team never played up Trammell's Hall of Fame candidacy (or that of Whitaker, who was tossed off the ballot after one year for not gaining 5 percent of the writers' votes – a travesty as bad as the 1987 AL MVP vote). Tram was overshadowed by much-hyped "iron man" Cal Ripken Jr. in Baltimore, and back-flipper Ozzie Smith in St. Louis. In Trammell's playing twilight, he was eclipsed by more power-hitting shortstops like Derek "Past a Diving" Jeter and twice-caught steroid user Alex Rodriguez. But Trammell's history, his being a credit to the game, may very well count in a voting group of his peers.

Sadly, Trammell and Ripken do share one unwelcome distinction: Both have had their names misspelled throughout their adult lives; maybe they should be interviewed by CBS' Lesley Stahl. It's worse that I caught it a few times in "Trammell," when a couple of search-and-replaces of the text could have easily cured it. That issue doesn't seem to have swayed fans, as the bio is out of stock. The publisher, McFarland & Co., is taking backorders (\$25). Go to <http://www.mcfarlandbooks.com/book-2.php?id=978-1-4766-6660-0> to place your order.

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