



# Curtain Call

CAL BURLERSON

## BUILT FOR THE BALLPARK

The life and legacy of a longtime  
Indians front office member

*by* MIKE LOPRESTI





# Curtain Call

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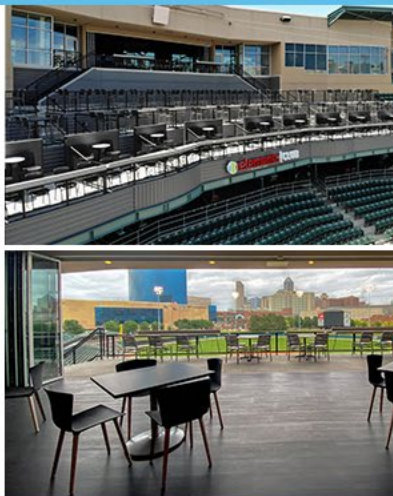
# Premium Seating AT VICTORY FIELD

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**SEATING AND AMENITIES:**  
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DINNER AND DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED  
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SINGLE-GAME TICKET PACKAGES AVAILABLE**

# Daily DEALS



## KIDS EAT FREE SUNDAYS

All children 14 and under  
receive a free hot dog, bag of  
chips and bottle of water with  
price of admission.



## WEDNESDAY DAY GAMES

Schedule that "off-site"  
meeting or business lunch  
during these afternoon  
ballgames.



## FRIDAY FIREWORKS

Start your weekend  
with a bang and enjoy  
a postgame fireworks  
show.



## TUESDAY DOLLAR MENU

Bring your appetite when hot  
dogs, peanuts, potato chips,  
Cracker Jack and popcorn are  
all available for just \$1 each.



## THIRSTY THURSDAYS™

Quench your thirst with \$2 Pepsi  
fountain drinks, \$3 domestic  
drafts and \$5 premium and  
craft drafts.



## SUPER SATURDAYS

Knock Saturdays out  
of the park with super  
hero nights.

# UPCOMING SCHEDULE & PROMOTIONS

APRIL							MAY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	IOW CHC		CLT CWS 6:35	CLT CWS 1:35	CLT CWS 11:05	CLT CWS 7:05	CLT CWS 6:35
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
STP MIN 1:35		STP MIN	STP MIN	STP MIN	STP MIN	STP MIN	CLT CWS		CLT CWS 6:35	CLT CWS 1:35	CLT CWS 11:05	CLT CWS 7:05	CLT CWS 6:35
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
STP MIN		CLT CWS 6:35	CLT CWS 1:35	CLT CWS 12:05	CLT CWS 7:05	CLT CWS 6:35	CLT CWS		STP MIN	STP MIN	STP MIN	STP MIN	STP MIN
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
CLT CWS 1:35		IOW CHC	IOW CHC	IOW CHC	IOW CHC	IOW CHC	STP MIN 1:35		OMA KC				
HOME							AWAY						

## APRIL / MAY HIGHLIGHTS

**PROSPECTS WEEKEND | APRIL 22-23, MAY 20-21** PRESENTED BY HOOSIER LOTTERY  
The Indians will wear jerseys designed in the spirit of their MLB affiliate, the Pittsburgh Pirates. Be one of the first 1,000 fans through the Victory Field gates and receive a mystery baseball card set. Each card set includes five cards, with one card being holographic. The entire mystery card set consists of 25 players.

**SUNDAY CHARACTERS WITH PIRATE PARROT | APRIL 24** PRESENTED BY MHS  
Rowdie's mascot pal Pirate Parrot, the official mascot of the Pittsburgh Pirates, will be in attendance to entertain fans throughout the game.

**INDY 500 NIGHT | FRI., MAY 6** PRESENTED BY INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY  
Start your engines and race down to Victory Field for Indy 500 Night! Meet IndyCar's fastest drivers and catch racing-themed in-game entertainment. Plus, stick around after the final lap for postgame fireworks.

**STAR WARS™ NIGHT | SAT., MAY 7**  
Victory Field turns into a galaxy far, far away with Star Wars character appearances, music, in-game entertainment and more.

**MOTHER'S DAY CATCH ON THE FIELD | SUN., MAY 8** PRESENTED BY INDIANA WIC  
Celebrate Mom with a day at the ballpark! Purchase a Mother's Day ticket package that includes four (4) Penn & Beech baseball-themed candles, two (2) Reserved tickets and a postgame catch with mom on the field.



# FROM LAS VEGAS TO AUSTRALIA:

How Bligh Madris' Individualized Approach Shapes His Game

By Anna Kayser

***Madris' mindset in the cage has translated to success on the field.***

Bligh Madris' journey to the highest ranks of minor league baseball – and beyond, perhaps, coming off a campaign of late-season success in Triple-A and his first career non-roster invite to major league spring training – began with a conversation.

The Las Vegas-area product spent his entire childhood running to and from sporting events. In the fall, he played football. Football transitioned into basketball, and the school year would wind to a close each spring as he laced up his spikes and took to the diamond.

Early on, baseball took him everywhere. His talent and opportunities grew as he did, and it wasn't long before travel ball took him from his home state of Nevada to different corners of the country.

With a plethora of experience already behind him, Madris' talent was easily recognizable as he entered his teens. During his early years at Foothill High School, head baseball coach, Matt Iglitz, sat him down to talk about his future.

"I was still loving playing different sports like basketball and football, but... my high school coach was like 'Bligh, you have a legitimate chance and opportunity to use baseball as a tool to get into a really nice school and earn some scholarship money.'

"I was like, 'No, you're kidding. That's crazy, why would any college want me right now?'" Madris recalls. "I just couldn't believe that was a legitimate possibility."

So, he hung up the football pads. He played one year of basketball in high school before also stepping off the hardwood for good, opting instead to focus on baseball during the winter months.

The decision to step away from two

major sports from his childhood presented an opportunity, one that began to shape the way he now works in the batting cages of LECOM Park in Bradenton, Fla., and Victory Field in Indianapolis. In the fall of his sophomore year, with Iglitz as head coach and a few of his baseball teammates alongside him, Madris took to the tennis court.

"I think tennis really helped me with an individual mindset," he said. "When you're out there, it's just you and you need to figure out a way to get yourself back into it mentally if you need to. It's just you vs. one other person, and it's just you two out there on the court."

"That helped my mental strength and the mental side of [baseball], and it made me a better competitor. Going into the batter's box, I kind of take that same mentality. It's me vs. the pitcher, and I try to take all other variables out of it. I don't care about the other eight defenders behind him, I just get to focus on the pitcher. It's me vs. him."

After making the transition to a more baseball-friendly schedule, Madris' career began to progress at a quicker pace. During his three varsity seasons, he was a two-time All-State and three-time

All-Sunrise Region selection, named a two-time Offensive Player of the Year and the Sunrise Region MVP. His accolades and skill across different positions on the diamond earned him calls and emails from colleges looking to recruit him to their program.

"That's when I finally realized, wow, baseball is going to open up a lot of doors in my life and create a lot of different opportunities," Madris said.

As a product of his environment and the opportunities to travel the country playing baseball in his formative years, Madris knew



that college would take him away from his home of Henderson, Nev.

His landing spot was Division II baseball at Colorado Mesa University, just over a 500-mile drive away from his hometown through the heart of Utah.

“I wanted to get out of Las Vegas as a whole, and I think that was a big factor for me,” Madris said. “I wanted to experience something new and see what other towns and cities were like. I love traveling and I love going all over the place, so I used baseball and an athletic scholarship to find a way to go somewhere new and see new places. Baseball was that avenue for me.”

His success from high school translated well to the college diamond. In 2015, his first year with Colorado Mesa, he hit .381 with 20 doubles, four home runs, 52 RBI and 23 walks to be named the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference Freshman of the Year.

He led the Mavericks to their second consecutive RMAC Championship during that freshman campaign with two hitless innings on the mound to close out the title game. He was also named the tournament MVP after hitting .421 (8-for-19) with five RBI in five games.

In 2017, he was named a finalist for the Tino Martinez Player of the Year Award while ranking eighth in the nation among Division II players with a .757 slugging percentage and 10th with 67 RBI.

As his growth and performance in high school presented him an opportunity to widen his horizons in college, his standout career as a Maverick formed a path toward professional baseball. With it came the chance to take his game outside the continental United States.

After being selected by Pittsburgh in the ninth round of the 2017 First-Year Player Draft, his college baseball experiences helped move him through the farm system with ease. Through his first three years in the minors, he owned a .255 career batting average (268-for-1052) and showed flashes of power into outfield gaps and over the wall with 84 extra-base hits.

He was an everyday staple of the lineup

in each of his stops, from Short-Season A West Virginia in 2017 to Double-A Altoona in '19. The path was clear to Triple-A in 2020 and into a potential 40-man roster spot soon after.

That was, until the COVID-19 pandemic derailed the 2020 minor league baseball season. Along with a significant number of minor league ballplayers across all 30 major league systems, Madris was out of a baseball job for the first time in a long time.

As the summer dwindled down and winter ball jobs across the world became available, the outfielder turned to Facebook Messenger to look for work. He reached out to owners of teams in the Australian Baseball League, which has a season running from mid-December into early February.

“I didn’t hear much for about two weeks, and I get an offer on Facebook to come play for the Brisbane Bandits in Queensland,” Madris said. “I jumped on the opportunity right away because finding a job in winter ball at that point was so hard, and because so many guys wanted to play, it was so competitive. I had to jump on the first opportunity I could get.”

The individualized mindset Madris adapted to during his days on the tennis court transferred to this sink-or-swim situation. To continue his ascension in affiliated baseball, he had to put in a lot of solo work in Australia.

With the help of a notebook where he chronicled his hitting journey, from hours in the cage during quarantine working through mechanics to transferring them to game-action in Australia, his feel for high production in the box just clicked.

“I had to learn how my body works on my own,” Madris said. “I had a hitting coach and all that stuff, but never really got into the mechanics of things. It was just me, myself and I trying to go through all these different movements and feels on my own and seeing what works.”

The biggest thing he had to work through on his own was how to transfer his hitting cues from the batting cage to game speed. Through that process of speeding up



his movements and feelings in the cage to game tempo, he knew to run with what was working and adjust what wasn’t.

That meticulous work paid off in 2021 during his first Triple-A season with the Indians. After returning from Brisbane where he hit .288 (17-for-59) with six extra-base hits and three multi-RBI performances in his final 17 games, Madris brought what he learned back to Pirate City, Fla. at Pittsburgh’s minor league camp.

“Sometimes baseball is opposite for me,” Madris said. “When I’m in the cage, I know I need to work on hard, backspin line drives, right back up the middle, opposite side or right side. Then in the game, when I think that same mentality, that’s when the doubles and the homers come from me. I figured that out halfway through Australia, and that’s what did it for me.

“When I came back for spring training in 2021 and was able to put all those cue points and feels together with a [Pirates] hitting coach in Jon Nunnally, I was really able to take off.”

Madris began the 2021 season back with Altoona, where he spent the 2019 season. After a slow start through the first two weeks of the season – he hit just .192 (5-for-26) with no extra-base hits in 10 games – he was promoted to Indianapolis where he picked up his work with Nunnally.

It didn’t take long after the promotion for Madris to turn his season around. He recorded six two-hit performances in 10 May games to begin his Triple-A career and continued to be a productive bat in the Indians lineup. He ended the season on a

26-game on-base streak from Aug. 27-Oct. 3, during which he hit .320 (32-for-100) with 10 doubles, two home runs, 16 RBI, a .480 slugging percentage and .855 OPS to be named Indy’s Rookie of the Year. He also tied teammate Chris Sharpe for the team lead with 25 doubles, 17 of which came in the second half of the season.

That 2021 campaign solidified Madris as an outfielder or designated hitter – with the addition of the universal DH in the new collective bargaining agreement – in Pittsburgh’s current wave of young talent coming up through the minor leagues.

When Major League Baseball Spring Training officially began on March 13, Madris was on the list. With his skills presented in the highest rung of Pittsburgh’s minor league ladder and potential moving forward, he earned his first non-roster invite to Bradenton entering the 2022 season.

“It’s really cool watching [my friends] play on TV in Pittsburgh, but now I really, really want to play beside them in Pittsburgh,” Madris said. “That’s definitely a goal of mine, is to be able to go out there and play this game I love with a bunch of my friends. And then the ultimate goal is to help the team win in Pittsburgh any way I can. Not only do I just want to get to [the big leagues], but I want to be part of the change in Pittsburgh.

“I want to show everyone that I can play in the big leagues, that I can make it,” Madris said. “That you don’t always need to be a top prospect or you don’t need to go to a big school – you can go to a Division II [program] and make it to the big leagues.”

# VISITORS AT THE VIC



## Omaha Storm Chasers

Kansas City Royals Triple-A affiliate since 1969, West Division  
April 5-10

**Get to Know 'Em:** The Omaha Royals were founded in 1969 and were named after their parent affiliate through the 1998 season. Indianapolis and Omaha played each other in the American Association after both joining the league in 1969. The two teams met in the American Association Championship Series four times, with the Indians winning in 1982, '88 and '89. Omaha joined the Pacific Coast League in 1998 and officially changed their name to the Storm Chasers in 2011. In 2013 and '14, Omaha won the Triple-A National Championship. Omaha finished the 2021 season with a 73-56 record and was just one-half game back of Toledo for the Triple-A East Midwest Division title. Since 1988, the Indians own a record of 92-81 (.532) against Omaha, including a 58-26 (.690) mark in Indy.

**Players to Watch:** The Storm Chasers enter the 2022 season led by catcher M.J. Melendez (No. 3 Royals prospect according to *Baseball America*) and first baseman Nick Pratto (No. 4). Melendez hit 41 home runs and tallied 103 RBI last season in 123 games between Double-A Northwest Arkansas and Omaha. Pratto nearly matched those numbers with 36 homers and 98 RBI in 124 games between the same levels. The Omaha rotation could feature left-hander Austin Cox, the Royals' No. 22 prospect. The southpaw spent most of last season with Northwest Arkansas and went 4-1 with a 3.00 ERA (21er/63.0ip) and 56 strikeouts.

**League Championships (7):** 1969, 1970, 1978, 1990 (American Association); 2011, 2013, 2014 (Pacific Coast League)



## Columbus Clippers

Cleveland Guardians Triple-A affiliate since 2009, West Division  
April 19-24

**Get to Know 'Em:** The Columbus Clippers were founded in 1977 and as an International League squad, didn't play Indianapolis until the Triple-A Alliance from 1988-91 and again since 1998 when the Indians moved into the IL. Indy has a rich history against Columbus-based baseball teams other than the Clippers, however, as it played the Columbus Senators from 1902-30, Columbus Red Birds from 1931-54 and Columbus Jets in 1963. The Clippers ended the 2021 campaign in fifth place of the Triple-A East Midwest Division with a 59-68 record for their first sub-.500 season since 2013. Since 1988, Indianapolis is 218-239 (.477) against the Clippers, including a 113-109 (.509) record at home.

**Players to Watch:** The 2022 Clippers could feature some veteran players such as outfielder Daniel Johnson, catcher Sandy Leon and left-hander Alex Young along with top-end organizational prospects like middle infielder Tyler Freeman (No. 1), shortstop Brayan Rocchio (No. 3), outfielder George Valera (No. 4) and third baseman Nolan Jones (No. 6). Outfielder Will Benson hit 14 home runs with Double-A Akron and added three more homers late in the season with Columbus, too. Two southpaws, Logan T. Allen (No. 9) and Juan Hillman, could be mainstays in their starting rotation. Allen went 9-0 with a 2.26 ERA (28er/111.1ip) and 143 strikeouts in his professional debut season while Hillman amassed a 10-4 record, 3.77 ERA (45er/107.1ip) and 85 strikeouts in Double-A last season.

**League Championships (11):** 1979, 1980, 1981, 1987, 1991, 1992, 1996, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2019 (International League)

# VISITORS AT THE VIC



## Louisville Bats

Cincinnati Reds Triple-A affiliate since 2000, West Division  
May 3-8

**Get to Know 'Em:** Triple-A baseball in Louisville began in 1982 when the Louisville Redbirds, then-affiliate of the St. Louis Cardinals, joined the American Association. During the American Association era, Indianapolis and Louisville faced off in the postseason four times (1984, 1987, 1994 and 1995), with the winner of each of those series going on to win the league championship. In the IL era, Louisville has been affiliated with the Milwaukee Brewers (1998-99) and Cincinnati Reds. It also rebranded as the Louisville RiverBats in 1999 and shortened the nickname to Bats in 2002. In 2021 the Bats finished sixth out of seven teams in the Triple-A East Midwest Division with a 55-73 record for their ninth consecutive losing season. Since 1998, when both Indianapolis and Louisville joined the International League after the American Association disbanded, the Indians own a 228-221 (.508) record against their longtime rival.

**Players to Watch:** Louisville's pitching rotation could be highlighted by a trio of Cincinnati's top prospects – right-hander Hunter Greene (No. 2), left-hander Nick Lodolo (No. 3) and righty Graham Ashcraft (No. 11). According to *Baseball America*, Greene is the No. 35 overall prospect and Lodolo is No. 36. The flamethrower Greene split last season between Double- and Triple-A and went 10-8 with a 3.30 ERA (39er/106.1ip) and 139 strikeouts. Injuries shortened Lodolo's 2021 campaign, but he was excellent in his work with Double-A Chattanooga, posting a 1.84 ERA (9er/44.0ip) with 68 strikeouts and only nine walks over 10 starts. Ashcraft split time between High-A Daytona and Double-A and managed to go 11-4 with a 3.00 ERA (37er/111.0ip) in 22 starts. Offensively, outfielder Lorenzo Cedrola is coming off a tremendous 2021 Double-A season in which he hit .320 (130-for-406) with 32 extra-base hits. His 130 base hits were the most in Double-A.

**League Championships (4):** 1984, 1985, 1995 (American Association); 2001 (International League)



## Toledo Mud Hens

Detroit Tigers Triple-A affiliate since 1987, West Division  
May 17-22

**Get to Know 'Em:** Professional baseball in Toledo and Indianapolis has been intertwined for decades, with both organizations competing against each other in the American Association and International League for many years. From 1988-91 as part of the Triple-A Alliance, where American Association teams would play IL teams in regular-season crossover series, the Mud Hens and Indians renewed their rivalry. The two squads began playing each other annually once again when Indy joined the IL in 1998. Last season the Mud Hens went 74-56 to win the Triple-A East Midwest Division for their first division crown since 2018. Since 1988, the Indians own a record of 254-212 (.545) against Toledo, including a 142-97 (.594) mark in the Circle City.

**Players to Watch:** The Mud Hens could be highlighted by the one-two punch of top ranked organizational prospects, outfielder Riley Greene (No. 1) and corner infielder Spencer Torkelson (No. 2). In its top 100 rankings, *Baseball America* has Greene at No. 4 overall and Torkelson at No. 5, too. The pair was promoted to Triple-A on Aug. 16 last season, both appearing in 40 games with the Mud Hens. Together they lifted the Mud Hens' offense by providing 19 combined home runs. Toledo could feature two additional top 30 prospects with shortstop Ryan Kreidler (No. 7) and left-hander Joey Wentz (No. 9). Right-hander Logan Shore could again anchor this season's rotation after earning seven wins with a 3.95 ERA (32er/73.0ip) for Toledo last summer.

**League Championships (4):** 1927 (American Association); 1967, 2005, 2006 (International League)

## QUICK HITTERS WITH CANAAN SMITH-NJIGBA

Smith-Njigba spoke on his favorite baseball memory, food and more

*After appearing in seven Triple-A games in 2021, up-and-coming Pirates prospect Canaan Smith-Njigba will look to make an impact this season with Indianapolis. We sat down with the 22-year-old outfielder to talk about his life in baseball, both on and off the field.*

**Q:** Who is your favorite baseball player of all time?

**CSN:** Growing up my favorite player would be David Ortiz, and now my favorite current players are Mookie Betts and Bryce Harper.

**Q:** What is your favorite baseball memory?

**CSN:** Hitting for the cycle on Mother's Day, which was also my dad's birthday. It was special doing something for them, and it was my first cycle in pro ball.

**Q:** What is it like advancing through the Pirates farm system and playing alongside lots of talented prospects?

**CSN:** It's incredible seeing guys around my age who are playing in the big leagues and performing well. It motivates me to get to where they are at, and that is where I want to go. It's nice having guys around with the same goals and



who I've played with since rookie ball.

**Q:** For the fans who aren't familiar with you yet, how would you describe your game in one sentence?

**CSN:** I try to be entertaining for the fans.

**Q:** Would you rather hit a walk-off home run in the bottom of the ninth or throw out the game-tying runner at home from the outfield to win the game?

**CSN:** I would definitely rather hit a walk-off home run, I think it would be electric.

**Q:** What is your favorite ballpark food?

**CSN:** I liked the Curve Burgers in Altoona, they lived up to the name. My choices would be Curve Burgers and popcorn.

**Q:** Which teammate has the best sense of humor?

**CSN:** Rodolfo Castro. He's special, always energized and is a spark plug.

**Q:** Who is the best dressed?

**CSN:** I'll give you the top 5. No. 1 Oneil Cruz, No. 2 myself, No. 3 Roansy Contreras, No. 4 Jack Suwinski and No. 5 Matt Fraizer.

**Q:** What is your main goal for the 2022 season?

**CSN:** I just want to enjoy the process and have fun. I want to continue to enjoy the grind and find a way to get better each day.



## THIS DAY IN INDIANS HISTORY

Baseball history runs deep in Indianapolis. Now in the 120th season of Indianapolis Indians baseball, the club has had its fair share of iconic moments and baseball stars come through the Circle City. We highlighted some of the top moments in team history for the months of April and May.

### APRIL 5, 2007



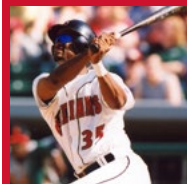
Center fielder Nyjer Morgan collected four hits in five at-bats atop the Indians lineup to push Indy past Columbus on Opening Day at Victory Field, 6-1. Left-hander Sean Burnett hurled 5.0 shutout frames (6h, 1bb, 3k) to earn the win.

### APRIL 8, 2007



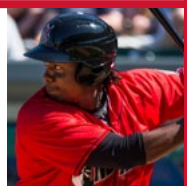
In just the third game of the season, Indians third baseman Jerry Goff went 3-for-5 with two home runs and a franchise-record tying eight RBI in a 9-6 win at Iowa. Goff's eight RBI tied Mike Stenhouse's single-game RBI record of eight, which he set on May 10, 1984 vs. Evansville. Goff's historic performance was interrupted in the fifth inning when Indy center fielder James Steels drifted back toward the fence for a catch, but his spikes got stuck in the base of the wall. The game was delayed as Iowa's grounds crew had to help him escape.

### APRIL 14, 1990



Behind a 20-hit attack, Indianapolis ran away with a 14-5 win at Durham. Indy scored four of its runs off Bulls starting pitcher Travis Harper before hanging 10 runs in just four innings against Durham relievers. Seven Indians had two or more hits, and right fielder Izzy Alcantara smashed his sixth home run in just 11 games. The victory improved Indy's record to 9-2.

### APRIL 22, 2016



After leading the Indians to Game 5 of the Governors' Cup finals in 2015, Josh Bell put up massive numbers for Indy in 2016, including hitting for the cycle in a 13-1 rout on April 22 at Louisville. He finished 4-for-5 with five RBI and two runs scored and became the fourth player to hit for the cycle in the Victory Field era.

### APRIL 25, 1954



In the second game of a twin bill at Columbus, left-hander Herb Score fanned 11 batters in a 7.0-inning, complete-game effort to give the Indians an 8-1 win and doubleheader sweep. The victory was the first of an American Association-leading 22 wins for the southpaw. He also led the league in ERA (2.62) and strikeouts (330), the latter holding as the American Association single-season record to this day. Indians center fielder Rocky Colavito homered in both contests, and Indy finished with eight long balls combined between the games.

### APRIL 26, 2010

In a 15-inning, 4-hour and 57-minute marathon at Louisville Slugger Field, the Indians outlasted the Bats, 7-6. The game was knotted at 2-2 entering the eighth inning, but both teams traded a pair of runs in the frame and the game went to extras tied at four. Each team scored single runs in the 13th and 14th innings before center fielder Jose Tabata hit a solo home run in the 15th that proved to be the difference. Catcher Erik Kratz earned the save after closing out the game with a hitless frame.

### MAY 6, 2004

With a 19-3 win over Charlotte, the Indians set a new Victory Field era record with the most runs scored in a game at home. Indy put up five runs in the second, four in the third, five in the fifth and four in the seventh behind 20 team hits, four of which came off the bat of second baseman Matt Erickson.

### MAY 10, 1984



Mike Stenhouse recorded the fourth three-homer game in franchise history vs. Evansville at Bush Stadium. In a 17-4 victory for the Indians, Stenhouse went 3-for-5 with a team-leading eight RBI. Ron Johnson hit a home run of his own, going 4-for-4 with two RBI and five runs scored. Right-hander Greg Bargar went the distance and struck out 11 batters to earn the win. Stenhouse spent 27 games with Indianapolis in 1984, hitting .333 (31-for-93) with eight home runs and 27 RBI.

### MAY 12, 2007



With a double vs. Ottawa in a 5-2 win at Victory Field, Rajai Davis began a Victory Field era record 21-game hitting streak that lasted through June 3. The streak tied Eduardo Perez's streak from 1996 for third all-time in Indians history, trailing Frank Sigafoos (38 games, 1933) and Ed Stevens (33 games, 1951). Davis was recalled by Pittsburgh before he could extend his hitting streak and spent the remainder of the season at the major league level.

## MAY 15, 2005



In a 4-0 win over Norfolk at Victory Field, right-hander Ian Snell went 9.0 hitless innings for Indy's first no-hitter since 1997 and 12th in franchise history. Snell walked one batter and struck out nine as Indianapolis' offense put up three runs in the second inning and another in the fifth. It was his only shutout of the season and his sixth career complete game. The lone no-hitter of his career earned him his second International League Pitcher of the Week Award. Snell went 4-0 in six May starts that year with a 2.04 ERA (9er/39.2ip).

## MAY 20, 1998

The first home run cycle ever recorded in a single inning by a professional baseball team occurred in the top of the fifth, when the Indians put up 10 runs at Pawtucket. Pete Rose Jr. hit a solo home run, Jason Williams tacked on a three-run homer, Glenn Murray cleared the bases with a grand slam and Guillermo Garcia finished it off with a two-run shot. Garcia finished the day with two home runs after hitting a solo shot in the ninth inning to give the Indians an 11-4 win.



## MAY 29, 1970

The Indians won a 23-inning game at Oklahoma City that began on Thursday, May 28 and finished on Friday. The score was tied 5-5 through nine innings, and both teams went scoreless for the next 10 innings before trading runs in the 20th. The Indians broke ahead in the 23rd inning with a four-run frame, and Oklahoma City rallied with one run in the bottom half to finish the game, 10-7. The game time was 6 hours and 37 minutes and remains the longest game by both innings and time in franchise history. Indy outhit OKC 22-16, led by a four-hit performance from 30-year-old right fielder George Kernek. Ross "Crazy Eyes" Grimsley threw the final 6.0 innings for Indy to earn the win.





# Built for the Ballpark

*Remembering the life and legacy of longtime Indians front office member, Cal Burleson*

By Mike Lopresti



**T**o understand what Cal Burleson and his 45 years meant to the Indianapolis Indians, maybe we should start with the sound of shattering glass at old Bush Stadium.

In a rush of emotion, the man broke a window. Turned it into shards. Not that it was in a fit of anger. No, no, this was because the Indians scored a run. Let Indians chief executive officer Bruce Schumacher tell the story.

“In the old press box at Bush Stadium, there were three or four feet of picture-type windows, and at the very top there were windows you could actually open to let fresh air in. We won a game in the bottom of the ninth and Cal was so excited he pounded on one of those upper windows and broke it. He was just so pumped.”

Marc Bombard, the team’s manager at the time: “I’d tell him, ‘C’mon, I don’t want you to have a heart attack.’”

Yep, that was Cal.

“Anybody or anything he became attached to,” Schumacher said, “he was all-in.”

After receiving an extremely rare diagnosis of small cell bladder cancer in December 2020, Burleson died last November at 71 years old, most of them spent loving baseball in general,



Burleson (right) and Max Schumacher embrace after the 1988 American Association Championship.

and this franchise in particular. How long was he a part of your Indianapolis Indians? Long enough to be ticket manager... and publicity director... and business manager... and assistant general manager... and general manager... well, you get the idea. Part of the granite-solid nature of this franchise is how so many key figures have come to the ballpark to stay, becoming as part of the landscape as the scoreboard and lights. That takes passion, and you never talk to anybody who knew Burleson very long before that word pops up. Probably right down to the guy who had to clean up the broken glass.

So, time for some Cal Burleson stories, from those who worked by his side. Where to start? How about how he ended up here in the first place, at the winter meetings in 1974 when team president Max Schumacher was approached by an eager young man.

Bruce Schumacher: "Cal was working for the Jacksonville baseball team at the time and wanted to leave there. He got Dad in the hallway and Dad told him we didn't have any

openings. To hear Dad tell it, every time he came out of a meeting after that, Cal would be in the hallway waiting for him. Cal finally said, 'What if I come as a salesman, almost entirely on commission, could you make room for me that way?' Eventually he made Dad an offer he couldn't refuse, and he came and started in '75 working in the ticket office, and then from there became ticket manager and publicity director and business manager and assistant general manager and on up the line. But it would not have happened if Cal



Left: Burleson after winning the 1994 American Association Championship; Right: Then-Indians Manager Marc Bombard with Burleson during the 1994 season.



had not been relentless."

A lifelong relationship between a man and a franchise was created that day. And those who came after would see Burleson's

passion for the Indians and the game in so many ways.

Bombard, manager for the Indians from 1993-95, including the 1994 American Association championship season: "You talk about intense; it was like life and death every game. I tried to get him to loosen up. 'Hey Cal, it's not worth getting an ulcer over these games.' He was beside himself when we won that championship. He was like a mad man. That was the year when [MLB] had the strike, so we were the only game in town. Nobody else was playing. It made it all even that much better."

Randy Mobley, longtime president of the International League: "I believe this and always will. There may be others who love the game itself as much as him, but there is nobody – nobody – who loves it more. He loved the game itself, the idiosyncrasies of the game, the strategy of the game. That oozed from him. We had our differences but his personality being what it was, he was going to be considerate and polite and courteous, even to his opponents. He always treated me with the utmost respect and the

position I was in with the utmost respect. I can't say we ever had any nose-to-nose kind of things, we had discussions on disagreements."

Another Indians manager understood that, too. Burleson and Dean Treanor – who led the Indians from 2011-16 – became close friends.

Treanor: "The thing that struck me more than anything, when we were home,

he would always come down to my office after games and we would sit there for, if it was an hour, it was probably two. I know he loved that, and I loved that. We talked about the game, I let him second guess me a little bit. We would be the last ones there. I think even

the [clubhouse attendant] would beat us out of there. We were just talking baseball and talking life."

To win, the Indians needed the right players. That was a Burleson obsession.

Former Pirates farm director Larry Broadway: "With Cal, one thing I could count on him like clockwork is whenever we were in winter meetings, he would want to talk about the roster for Indy and he always wanted to ask me, 'Who is that veteran left-handed corner bat that hits really well, or who was the veteran closer that we were going to get?' He never wanted to have a bunch of prospects in the bullpen because he wanted a veteran who he could count on to be a closer."

Indians president and general manager Randy Lewandowski: "He used to wear the Pirates out always wanting a veteran closer, a power-hitting, left-handed first baseman and a speedy center fielder to go cover the left-center field gap. It became a running joke between Broadway and me. I'd say, 'LB, we got that power-hitting, left-handed first baseman?' He'd look at me and laugh and say, 'No, but we're going to have that veteran closer.'"

Broadway: "I always had something in my pocket ready for him because I knew it was coming. So, I'd say, 'Hey, we're in negotiations with these free agents, I think we're going to get somebody you like in for spring training.' After the first year when I really wasn't prepared for what he was going to ask me, I would come in the years after that with the names of some hypothetical signs we were working on to keep that conversation flowing."

His colleagues with the Indians would soon learn Burleson's deep feelings about baseball – and his idiosyncrasies.

Longtime Voice of the Indians Howard Kellman: "The love of the game was there at all times, even the rough times. There was a time in the 2000s when he was here in the offseason on Sundays. He'd spend extremely long hours at the ballpark, longer than anybody I think."

Assistant general manager Matt Guay: "In 2015 when Josh Bell hit the walk-off in



Burleson (front row, center) cheers on the Indians among fellow fans during the 1982 American Association Championship.

game 4 of the championship series, I remember how happy Cal was. Looking back on it, he probably knew that might be his last best chance to win a championship. I also remember the times when the team wasn't playing well, he wouldn't be in a good mood. If you wanted to talk about something with him that needed to get done, it was a much tougher conversation with him when the team was losing."

And Heaven forbid if the weather forecast for that night's home game was ominous.

Guay: "If there was rain in the area you knew to stay away. I heard a story where he had decided not to cover a field in '97 or '98 and they ended up not playing that game. He vowed never to let that happen again. Early on there was a game or two when he hired a helicopter to come in and try to dry the field. If there was a reason to watch the radar, that was his sole focus. If you tried to talk to him about anything else, good luck. It's not going to happen."

Kellman: "You didn't want to interrupt him. I can still see him looking up at the radar, sitting in his office."

Lewandowski: "I'm in that chair now and we want to deliver for the fans, for our players, for everybody who works so hard to put on an event. He would agonize over it and if he's passed anything down to me, I agonize over that."

Once the game started, he was a man on many missions. Make sure the customers are happy. And win.

Lewandowski: "If it was a close game, you could find him in the old section 210 right behind home plate in the upper deck. That's where he liked to watch the close of every game. He just enjoyed that view with downtown Indianapolis unfolding in front of your eyes. In the eighth and ninth inning, if you were looking for Cal, you couldn't get him on his radio or on his cell phone because he was dialed in to the game."

Treanor: "I know during the game he was up there talking to fans and checking how things were going, but he knew everything that happened during that game. When we were in the run for a division title and we would lose a tough one, he would come down and just slump in the chair. I would just say, 'Hey Cal, we're going to be alright.'"

Schumacher: "Dad was a little bit like that, too, but not probably as much as Cal. I didn't get that passed on to me. I love to win, but I also know we have 150 of these things."

Mobley: "When he'd start clapping his hands you knew things were getting serious."

The Indians are determined to maintain strong connection with their fan base, and Burleson was part of that.

Schumacher: "He was kind of methodical about going to visit all the bigger groups, just to say 'Hey, I'm Cal Burleson with the Indians, really happy you're with us today.' He'd

talk a little baseball. He'd have a clipboard figuring his path."

Assistant general manager Joel Zawacki: "All the spring training trips over the years, we'd take partners down to Bradenton and Cal being the guy he is, he had his routine and was meticulous about where we were staying, where we'd have dinner, what day we were going deep sea fishing. He'd be competitive, fighting in those 20-pound Amberjacks when we went fishing. A little impatient. He'd want things to get moving. If it was a slow day, he'd get the captain to move on to another location. We'd bring clients and you'd have one or two get sick from the motion. I'm over there making sure they've got water, and Cal's still got his fishing rod off the deck."

Was there any downside to hanging with Cal? Well, those who rode with him never forgot the experience.

Zawacki: "He was a terrible driver. It was always nice to have him because he was the responsible one. You could have a couple of beers and we'd have a driver. But a couple of those trips from Tampa to Bradenton, you didn't want to be in the car with him. He was all over the road."

Lewandowski: "I learned early on when he would take me to a banquet or something in town, he was 10 and 2 on that wheel. One time we were going to Toledo to look at a ballpark for something. We took 69 to 24. When you get on 24 back then, it was a two-lane road, and you'd have to pass some people. I had him white knuckling the whole way. He called me an over-aggressive driver. I said, 'Cal this is just how you're supposed to drive.'"

But aside from the occasional fear of sitting in his passenger seat, those around Burleson came to cherish his enthusiasm, and his compassion.

Mobley: "This happened while Cal was sick. Over the last five or six years, Cal and I were on similar paths with our faith journey. A lady called me that I hadn't spoken to in 10 years that Cal knew, who was associated with one of the national organizations we worked with through baseball. She said she was in

some dire straits and wanted to know if I could help her out a little bit financially. I was really torn. I wanted to help her out, but this was 10-plus years out of the blue calling and asking, so I consulted Cal on what he would do. His response to me was very thoughtful, as everything with Cal was. He said if I decided to participate – and this is the part that blew me away – let him know because he would, too. This was between trips to the hospital, and he still had that giving heart."

Guay: "My favorite thing about him is he took the time to sit down with people and let them know you can have a career with the Indians if you work hard and want to be here. That's probably the main reason I'm still here. I think he took over as GM in 1998, the year the Colts drafted Peyton Manning. Two years later, Bankers Life was built and the Pacers went to the NBA Finals. To try to stay relevant in those first couple of years when everything was going on is a testament to him and then growing the staff from 16 people when I started to over 50 now is really due to him."

Lewandowski: "I was the young guy pushing him along with new ideas and wanting to do this and wanting to do that, and at the time he was the wise, grizzled vet trying to slow me down and put a seat belt on me every once in a while. We took so many trips together. We'd listen to NPR or the BBC, because that's what he wanted to listen to. They were Cal, a little bit out of left field."

Kellman: "Something that meant so much to him is when he met Al Kaline. It was about 2011 or '12 and he was in spring training. He calls me and says, 'You're not going to believe this, I'm in Lakeland right now and I'm with Al Kaline.' Al Kaline was his boyhood hero."

Schumacher: "He might as well have been a 10- or 11-year-old kid at that point."

Kellman: "I got him going one time. He said Kaline was such a clutch hitter, if there's a man on second with two out in the bottom of the ninth and you're down by a run, Al Kaline is going to get a base hit to tie up the game. I said you're right, but Mickey Mantle would hit a home run to win the game."

Burleson retired from the Indians and became involved with a new passion – community work for youth such as RightFit, which Schumacher said Cal basically birthed from nothing. “He had to take that from zero to 60 in his bulldog way.” That’s when the cancer struck. As he fought the fight, his baseball family gathered around.

Zawacki: “He was going through cancer treatments, and he reached out about going to Wrigley with me. We went in July of ’21 and caught a couple of games. I don’t think he had given in. I think he was at peace if that was going to happen. He was at peace with God. It didn’t have the feel that was going to be his last trip.”

Treanor: “He calls and says, ‘I think I have one trip left in me. What do you think about the last Dodgers-Giants series of the season in San Francisco?’” I told him I was all in, so I set it up. The day before he was supposed to leave, he called and said he was having a terrible day. We decided not to. The next day he was in the hospital.

I came back and drove him around, took him to get a haircut. He was a mess and I said, ‘Cal, I’m not going to drive you around looking like that.’ The next day, he said, ‘You know what, I’m really glad we went to get that haircut.’”

Mobley: “I came over to visit Cal after he’d come home from the hospital for the last time. It was about three weeks before he passed. I was going to watch an Ohio State football game with him. We not only watched that game but most of the next game, and then we got into a playoff baseball game. I asked him what I could bring over for us to have for lunch. He sends me a text, very detailed, even telling me the grocery store where I can go get [the food]. He stopped just short of telling me what aisle I needed to go down. Just like always, very pre-

cise and specific.”

Lewandowski: “I would say the last time we had a good conversation I was talking a walk in our neighborhood, and we were on the phone for maybe an hour. He just kept reiterating that it’s about people and relationships. He knew what was ahead of him the next month or two. I think if he could go back, he was so focused and so passionate about the game and whatever the result of that day was going to be, that sometime – especially early in his career – that passion blinded him. That might have put some people off. He brought up relationships that might have gone sideways, and he did try to make amends over the last year or so of his life. Those will be my lasting words from Cal,

that it’s about people and the journey and family and relationships. It was fitting that was our last conversation because that’s what he taught me most about running this business.”

Typical Cal. He lived to see the end of one final baseball season.

Bombard: “At my age, when you get calls from people you don’t expect, it’s not like you’re going to a party or something. You know what’s happening. Sure enough, Howard called and told me he had passed. You can look at his longevity. How many people have a job for 40-plus years? He had to be doing a lot of things right.

Schumacher: “The last time I saw him, I went to his house and just sat by his bed. I’m not sure how aware he was I was there. I just held his hand and told him how important he had been to me personally and professionally and that I wished him peace.”

Look closely this summer when the Indians have a rally going in the ninth inning. Or if dark clouds are starting to roll in from the west. Somewhere inside the walls of Victory Field, Cal Burleson will be there.



Burleson during a pregame ceremony at Victory Field celebrating RightFit in 2019.



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## INDIANS ANNOUNCE 50/50 RAFFLE AT VICTORY FIELD

Proceeds to benefit Indianapolis Indians Charities

For the first time at Victory Field, fans in attendance will have the opportunity to purchase 50/50 raffle tickets. The jackpot will be split with 50% of the proceeds benefiting Indianapolis Indians Charities (IIC) and 50% going to one lucky winner announced during each homestand finale. The 50/50 raffle officially begins Tuesday, April 19 against the Columbus Clippers, and the winner will be announced in the eighth inning of the homestand finale on Sunday, April 24. Every subsequent homestand will follow the same rules; the jackpot starts at \$0 for the first game of the homestand and swells until a winner is announced during

the last game of the homestand. Fans do not need to be present to win.

IIC is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit that was established by the Indianapolis Indians in September 2019. The nonprofit is dedicated to helping youth and families grow stronger together, learn more and live healthier lives by supporting organizations in four key areas: youth development, family success, education and neighborhood development. IIC's vision of enriching the lives of individuals in Indianapolis and its surrounding communities is made possible through generous contributions from partners and the general public.







