

Ian Snell's No-Hitter Among Greatest Starts in Team History Pg. 14

# Curtain Call

THE OFFICIAL INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS MAGAZINE

## THE RETURN TO BASEBALL

HOW THE INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS HELD  
THEIR GROUND THROUGH COVID-19  
Pg. 22

**PLUS**  
TWO MVP  
SEASONS  
AND A FAN  
FAVORITE MAKE  
MATT HAGUE  
Pg. 45



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# Curtain Call

THE OFFICIAL INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS MAGAZINE

APRIL/MAY 2021 | ISSUE 1

## STAFF

### Editorial

Kim Stoebeck, Cheyne Reiter,  
Chad Bohm, Kylie Kinder,  
Shayla Smith, Jessica Davis,  
Anna Kayser, Matt Lipke,  
Ben Kayser, Emily Reese

### Design

Jessica Davis, Matt Lipke,  
Patrick Westrick

### Contributors

Cheyne Reiter, Anna Kayser

### Corporate Sales

(317) 532-6935

Christina Toler  
Kylie Kinder

### Photography

Casey McGaw, Alex Leachman,  
Adam Pintar, Austin Friedline,  
Bill Gentry, Pittsburgh Pirates

### Indianapolis Indians

at Victory Field

501 West Maryland St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46225  
(317) 269-3542

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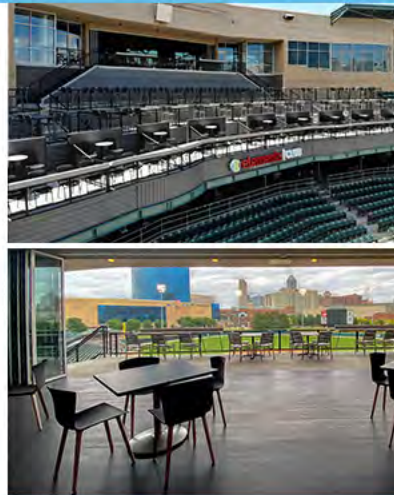
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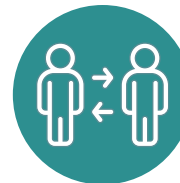
### STAFF POLICIES

- All Victory Field staff and vendors on-site for events will be required to have their temperature checked and submit to a health screen upon arrival. Staff who interacts with registrants and guests will wear personal protective equipment appropriate to their job duties and tasks.



### SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Walkways and concourses will have signage to direct guests to ensure proper social distancing, including one-way pedestrian traffic. Stanchions and spacing markers will be used for guests queued in lines.





# All-Time 25 ROSTER



#25 - Ryan Doumit  
(Catcher)



#24 - Bob Scanlan  
(Relief Pitcher)



#23 - Ian Snell  
(Starting Pitcher)



#22 - Matt Hague  
(First Baseman)



#21 - Zach Duke  
(Starting Pitcher)



#20 - Rajai Davis  
(Outfielder)



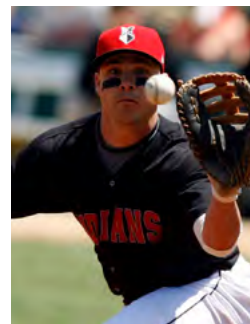
#19 - Danny Graves  
(Relief Pitcher)



#18 - Jameson Taillon  
(Starting Pitcher)



#17 - Steve Pearce  
(First Baseman)



## STEVE PEARCE | 1B

**BATS:** Right    **THROWS:** Right  
**HEIGHT:** 5'11"    **WEIGHT:** 200 lbs  
**BORN:** 4/13/1983 in Lakeland, FL

	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	BA
MLB TOTALS	766	2555	2256	290	572	131	8	91	303	13	7	240	509	.254
IND TOTALS	256	1069	940	132	264	69	5	37	152	25	13	96	169	.281

## CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Just two years after being selected by Pittsburgh in the eighth round of the 2005 First-Year Player Draft, future World Series MVP and budding slugger Steve Pearce skyrocketed through the minors. In 134 games between High-A Lynchburg, Double-A Altoona and Indianapolis, he slashed an impressive .333/.394/.622 to be named the 2007 MiLB.com Minor League Offensive Player of the Year while earning himself a September call-up to Pittsburgh.



The next season he found himself in Indianapolis again despite a solid 23 games in the majors the fall prior and continued to hone his strength at the plate. He hit .251 with a team-high tying 26 doubles (matched with Andrew McCutchen), 12 home runs and 60 RBI that summer in the Circle City to be honored with the Team Slugger Award.

He jumped between the majors and minors throughout his five years with the Indians, never solidifying himself as an everyday player with the Pirates. After entering free agency following the 2011 season and stints with Baltimore, Houston, New York (AL), Tampa Bay and Toronto, Pearce landed with Boston in June 2018 for a historic run to the championship.

After playing in just 50 regular-season games for the Red Sox (76 total games between Toronto and Boston), Pearce hit .333 with three home runs, eight RBI and a 1.667 OPS to help lead Boston to a World Series victory in five games over the Dodgers.

Pearce returned to Boston for the 2019 season and hung up his cleats in April 2020.





# Single-Season

## BATTING AVERAGE, .331

### ROBERTO PETAGINE (1998)

First baseman Roberto Petagine raked for the Indians in 1998, the year Indianapolis rejoined the International League after the American Association disbanded. Petagine paced the team in batting average (.331, 120-for-363), home runs (24), RBI (109), total bases (224) and walks (T-1st, 70), with his batting average being the highest by an Indians player since Junior Noboa hit .340 in 1989. Petagine's .436 on-base percentage and .617 slugging percentage from the 1998 campaign still hold as Victory Field era single-season records, too.



## HOME RUNS, 30

### D.T. CROMER (1999)

Corner outfielder/first baseman D.T. Cromer launched a Victory Field era record 30 home runs in 1999 along with team highs in hits (166), RBI (107), total bases (301) and runs scored (83) that season. Cromer's best month came in May when he hit .385 with seven home runs and 20 RBI while notching a 16-game hitting streak. The left-handed hitter joined Cliff Cook (1961) and Champ Summers (1978) as the only Indians to hit at least .300 with 30-plus home runs and 100-plus RBI in a single season.



## RBI, 109

### ROBERTO PETAGINE (1998)

Unsurprisingly, Petagine was named Team MVP and International League MVP in 1998, making him the 12th player in franchise history to garner league MVP honors. Petagine drove in 24 runs in April, 25 in May, 11 in June, 34 in July and 15 in August. He recorded 29 multi-RBI games, in eight of which he drove in at least four runs. He notched a season-high six RBI on Aug. 8 against Durham in an 11-10 loss at Victory Field. Petagine's 109 RBI were the most by an Indians player in a season since Champ Summers recorded 124 in 1978.



# BATTING LEADERS

## RUNS SCORED, 102

### DAMIAN JACKSON (1998)

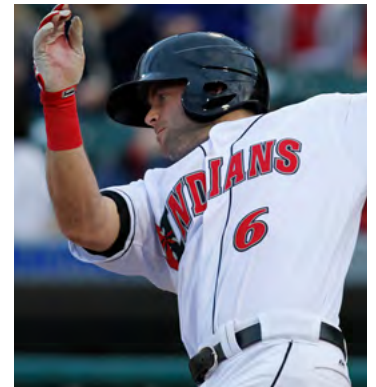
After appearing in 19 games for the Indians in 1997, Jackson became the everyday shortstop for Indianapolis the following year and took full advantage of the opportunity. His name was often placed in the leadoff or No. 2 spot of Indy's lineup, and he was the true definition of a table setter. Over 130 games for the Indians in 1998, Jackson led the team in hits (135), doubles (36), triples (10), stolen bases (25) and runs scored (102), the last standing alone as a Victory Field era record.



## DOUBLES, 37 (5X)

### D.T. CROMER AND JASON HARDTKE (1999), JOSE FERNANDEZ (2000) AND MATT HAGUE (2011, 2013)

Four Indians players have recorded exactly 37 doubles in a season since Victory Field opened in July 1996. Two-time Team MVP Matt Hague was the most recent to tally 37 two-baggers, accomplishing the feat during both of his MVP seasons in 2011 and 2013. Hague's best individual months for hitting doubles came in 2011 when he clubbed 11 in June followed by 12 in July. In 1999, D.T. Cromer and Jason Hardtke were the first Indians to reach 37 doubles in a season since 1969 when Bernie Carbo tallied an American Association-leading 37 doubles.



## STOLEN BASES, 45

### RAJAI DAVIS (2006)

A speedster throughout his entire career, Rajai Davis swiped a Victory Field era record 45 bases in 100 games for the Indians in 2006. In doing so, the outfielder became the 11th player in franchise history to reach at least 45 stolen bases in a single season. He was caught stealing 13 times that year for Indy but managed to successfully steal 12 bases apiece in both June and August. Davis' 45 thefts were the most in a season by an Indians player since Tom Lawless stole 46 in 1983.







# Take a DEEP Breath

**IAN SNELL DELIVERED THE  
FIRST 9.0-INNING NO-NO FOR  
INDIANAPOLIS SINCE 1974**

by **CHEYNE REITER**

One of the most dominant starts in the illustrious history of the Indianapolis Indians ended with a routine fly ball to left field. May 15, 2005 – nine innings, nine strikeouts, no hits, no runs... and one walk. With 7,390 fans in attendance for a 54-degree, Sunday afternoon ballgame at Victory Field, Ian Snell turned up the heat with a tantalizing, near-perfect performance against the Norfolk Tides.

Snell's 9.0-inning no-no was just the fourth thrown by a single Indians pitcher since World War II and only the second in that time frame to take place in the Circle City. The others? Edward Wright at Kansas City in 1945, Gary Peters against Minneapolis at old Victory Field in 1959 and Tom Carroll at Omaha in 1974. Snell was a 3-2 pitch away from becoming the first Indianapolis pitcher to ever secure a perfect game.

Backed by a second-inning, three-run homer by former Indians outfielder and current hitting coach Jon Nunnally, Snell sailed through a strong Tides lineup.

"He hardly ever walked people," longtime Voice of the Indians Howard Kellman said. "I remember [Snell] telling me once in an interview, 'I take walks personally.'"

Snell retired the first 13 batters he faced – four on strikeouts – until that decisive full-count offering to Tides right fielder Ron Calloway with one down in the top half of the fifth inning. It missed the zone, and Calloway didn't chase.

"His best pitch was his fastball, but he opted for a breaking ball in that particular moment," Kellman remembered. "I spoke with [Indians pitching coach] Darold Knowles after the game and he said, 'I didn't call that pitch!'"

Snell escaped the one-out free pass without further harm. Calloway reached third on a stolen base and coinciding throwing error by Indians catcher Paul Chiaffredo, but Snell's fastball-curveball combination wiped away Benji Gil and Chris Basak on strikes. Sixteen up, 15 down.

Selected by Pittsburgh in the 26th round of the 2000 First-Year Player Draft out of Caesar Rodney (Camden, Del.) High School, Snell flirted with perfection from the first time he toed the rubber as an 18-year-old with rookie-level Bradenton up until that May 2005 outing at The Vic, and beyond.

The right-hander started his minor league career with a perfect 13-0 record. He went 1-0 in four relief appearances in 2000, 10-0 in 13 games (12 starts) between Bradenton and Short-Season A Williamsport in 2001, and 2-0 in his first two decisions with Single-A Hickory in 2002. He finished the '02 campaign with an 11-6 record and maintained his prowess the following season between High-A Lynchburg and Double-A Altoona, compiling a 14-3 record and 3.00 ERA in 26 starts, which earned him honors as Pittsburgh's Minor League Pitcher of the Year. Snell remained in Double-A in 2004 and his consistency never wavered; he set a new Curve single-season record and finished second in the Eastern League with 142 strikeouts while going 11-7 with a 3.16 ERA in 26 starts. Ranked as Pittsburgh's No. 6 prospect by *Baseball America* ahead of the '04 season, Snell's success allowed him to skip Triple-A momentarily for three outings (one start) with the Buccos that year.

In 2005, he returned to the minors for more seasoning, this time at the highest rung of the Pirates' minor league ladder. It was also Indianapolis' first year as Pittsburgh's Triple-A affiliate since a four-year partnership from 1948-51. No matter the level or location, Snell got off to another fast start, going 5-0 through his first seven appearances in an Indians uniform. Start No. 8 with Indy turned out to be quite special.

"When the game got into the sixth, maybe the seventh inning, that's when I started to get the same feeling I had during [Tom] Carroll's no-hitter in '74," Kellman recalled. "Anytime a pitcher gets that deep into a game with zeroes still intact, you realize that you're seeing something special."



**ANYTIME A PITCHER GETS  
THAT DEEP INTO A GAME WITH  
ZEROES STILL INTACT, YOU  
REALIZE THAT YOU'RE SEEING  
SOMETHING SPECIAL.**

**HOWARD KELLMAN,  
VOICE OF THE INDIANS**





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**IT'S REALLY AN HONOR TO HAVE  
THOSE GUYS ON MY TEAM. THEY ARE  
ALWAYS THERE TO BACK ME UP.**

**IAN SNELL, FORMER INDIANS PITCHER**

It had been almost 31 years to the day – May 24, 1974 to be exact – when Kellman called Carroll's 9.0-inning no-hitter for the Indians in Omaha, Neb. That was Kellman's first year behind the mic for Indians games.

"I've been fortunate to broadcast many exciting moments in our franchise's history. Clinching division titles and winning league championships... all great memories," Kellman said. "But there is something about a chance at perfection for a pitcher... a chance at a no-hitter, where I feel like every waning pitch matters. I get nervous in those moments."

Meanwhile, Snell's emotions were under control. Two line drives found Nunnally's glove in left to bookend the seventh, and five outs later, Nunnally grabbed out No. 27 – a fly ball off the bat of Gerald Williams – to seal the bid.

Like any no-hitter, Kellman was caught by surprise. What didn't surprise him, however, was that it was Snell who completed the feat.

"Throwing a no-hitter is such a difficult task for any pitcher," Kellman said. "But in terms of guys that I would anticipate having the chance to throw [a no-hitter], Snell would have been at the forefront of the pitchers I'd consider. [I always thought], 'Yeah, he's certainly got the stuff to make it happen.'"

In a postgame interview with ESPN Radio, Snell knew his no-hitter would not have been possible without great defense.

"[Left fielder Jon] Nunnally, [center fielder Chris] Duffy and [right fielder Graham] Koonce all made awesome catches in the outfield. It's really an honor to have those guys on my team. They are always there to back me up," Snell said.

Snell also leaned into the support from everyone in the dugout.

"I tried to mix my pitches and locations today," he said. "Our coaching staff helped calm me down late in the game. Everyone just told me to take a deep breath, and fortunately, that advice worked."

Did it ever. It was advice that helped etch Snell's name in the Indianapolis record books forever. ♥





# VISITORS AT THE VIC



## Toledo Mud Hens

Detroit Tigers Triple-A affiliate since 1987, Midwest Division  
May 11-16

**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. Since 1988, the Indians own a record of 245-203 (.547) against Toledo, including a 135-92 (.595) mark in the Circle City.

**Players to Watch:** After an abbreviated 2020 major league season that saw many of Detroit's top prospects reach the game's highest level, the question remains if the Tigers want those farmhands to receive some upper-level minors seasoning. As many as nine or 10 of Detroit's top 30 prospects (*Baseball America*) could open the season with Toledo, including the likes of RHP Casey Mize (No. 3), RHP Matt Manning (No. 4), 3B Isaac Paredes (No. 6) and LHP Joey Wentz (No. 12). RHP Drew Hutchison pitched for Indy in 2016 and '17 and could anchor the back end of Toledo's rotation.

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



## Columbus Clippers

Cleveland Indians Triple-A affiliate since 2009, Midwest Division  
June 1-6

**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 from 1998-2019 when the Indians were in the IL as well. 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. Since 1988, Indianapolis is 212-234 (.475) against the Clippers, including a 109-107 (.505) record at home.

**Players to Watch:** No. 1 overall prospect is RHP Triston McKenzie, who is expected to cement his spot in the big-league rotation. The 23-year-old missed the entire 2019 campaign and then with the cancellation of the 2020 minor league season, made the jump to the majors without ever throwing a pitch in Triple-A. Cleveland's system is stacked with position players, led by 3B Nolan Jones (No. 2), SS Tyler Freeman (No. 3) and SS Gabriel Arias (No. 6), all expected to suit up for the Clippers in 2021. C Ryan Lavanway, an IL midseason All-Star for Indy in 2018, should get most of the reps behind the plate.

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



# VISITORS AT THE VIC



## Memphis Redbirds

St. Louis Cardinals Triple-A affiliate since 1998, Southeast Division  
June 15-20

**Get to Know 'Em:** The Memphis Redbirds were announced as an expansion team of the Pacific Coast League in 1998 and have been the top affiliate of the St. Louis Cardinals ever since. In 2000, Memphis won the PCL championship and earned the right to play the Indianapolis Indians – the International League champions – in the Triple-A World Series held in Las Vegas, Nev. It was the first and only time in history where Indianapolis and Memphis have faced each other. The Redbirds had LF Albert Pujols in their lineup for all four games, but the Indians prevailed to win the Triple-A World Series, three games to one.

**Players to Watch:** OF Dylan Carlson ranks as St. Louis' No. 1 prospect by *Baseball America*, but the slugger is expected to nail down an outfield vacancy in the majors. That leaves 3B Nolan Gorman (No. 3), RHP Johan Oviedo (No. 10), RHP Angel Rondon (No. 15) and RHP Seth Elledge (No. 22) as top candidates to play for the Redbirds in 2021. No longer a prospect but a name Indians fans will recognize is switch-hitting utilityman Max Moroff, who was signed to a minor league deal by St. Louis this offseason. He appeared in 258 games for Indy from 2016-18 and hit 29 home runs while driving in 120 runs.

**League Championships (4):** 2000, 2009, 2017, 2018 (Pacific Coast League)



## Iowa Cubs

Chicago Cubs Triple-A affiliate since 1981, Midwest Division  
June 29-July 4

**Get to Know 'Em:** The Iowa Oaks were founded in 1969 and kept that name through the 1981 season. Then in 1982, Iowa adopted the Cubs nickname after becoming the Triple-A affiliate of the Chicago Cubs the year prior. Indianapolis and Iowa were both members of the American Association from 1969-97, but Indy joined the International League and Iowa went to the Pacific Coast League when the American Association disbanded ahead of the 1998 campaign. Since 1988, Indianapolis is 91-65 (.583) against Iowa, including a 50-27 (.649) record in Indy.

**Players to Watch:** The Cubs farm system is led by LHP Brailyn Marquez (No. 1), OF Brennan Davis (No. 2) and C Miguel Amaya (No. 3), with each expected to start the season at or above Double-A. By midseason, when Iowa comes to Indianapolis for the first time since 1997, all three could be wearing an I-Cubs uniform. Marquez made his MLB debut last summer and has touched 102 mph on the radar gun. One major league veteran, RHP Pedro Strop, could see himself on Iowa's 2021 roster as well.

**League Championships (1):** 1993 (American Association)





# Ballpark MEMORIES



Henry Izaguirre

Father's Day in 2019, my son and I came from Chicago to see a game! We had contacted your Assistant GM, Matt Guay, a few weeks before our trip. He welcomed us like season ticket holders and gave us a tour of Victory Field. He even listened intently to some of my customer feedback and marketing ideas! He also took a very nice picture that we could cherish for years. Miguel and I are very big and knowledgeable Minor League Baseball fans and your staff treated us very well! The experience at Victory Field will be cherished as part of a great father/son road trip for years to come!

Our visit to The Vic on April 9, 2015 was special because Giada (5 years old) received the Knot Hole Kids Club autographed ball and Paden (4 years old) hugged Rowdie for the first time (he was usually scared of mascots). Visiting the press box and introducing the kids to Howard and Robin Kellman was the icing on the cake!



Crystal Ailes

This is our Beech Grove Sandlot Crew at Victory Field watching "The Sandlot." Next best thing to an actual game!



Joseph Gervase



Corby Thompson

I gave my tickets to a friend and he was able to grab the wonder in his son's face as he was handed a baseball. Priceless!

A favorite memory was kicking off our first 100 Men in 50 Days volunteer recruitment campaign with the Indians at Victory Field in March 2016! Big Brothers and Little Brothers, along with BBBS and Indians leadership team, gathered at Victory Field to meet with the press and take an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour. They all received a surprise when Rowdie joined them in the batting cages! The special afternoon ended on the field playing baseball. That year, the Indians helped us recruit 119 men toward our goal of 100, and the campaign has been going strong ever since. Thank you, Victory Field and the Indianapolis Indians!



Whitney Smith



Deb Weinmann

For several years now, I have purchased a 10-ticket pack, and my father and I have attended five Indians home games, plus opening night. This picture was from opening night in 2017. As you can see, we were amongst the very few fans who braved the extreme cold to cheer on the Indians! Dad is 87 years old now, and our time spent together sharing our love for Indians baseball is creating some of my most treasured memories.





# THE RETURN TO BASEBALL

Without a Minor League Baseball season in 2020, the Indianapolis Indians' resiliency helped turn a stay-at-home summer into something memorable

**BY: ANNA KAYSER**

The best way to describe the routines and commitments that come with planning and executing the minor league baseball season in downtown Indianapolis is with a wheel. One of those that you really need to put strength behind to manually get it going, it takes the contribution of every member in the organization to keep it spinning for approximately 70 home games that run from April into September.

For the Indianapolis Indians – and all those in Minor League Baseball, for that matter – the wheel stopped turning on the afternoon of March 12, 2020, and it took the combined resiliency of the entire front office to get it moving again in preparation for 2021.

“As we crank that wheel and get it going for the start of the Indians season in '21, it might start a little more slowly and have a few more creeks... but every department plays a big part in that wheel,” Indians President and General Manager Randy Lewandowski said. “I think everybody is anxious, excited to get back to doing what we do.”

It's a story that's been told over and over, and if you're a sports fan you probably know it by heart. The night of Wednesday, March 11, Rudy Gobert of the Utah Jazz tested positive for COVID-19 and set off a chain reaction that led to the NBA being suspended minutes later and the rest of the sports world shutting down the following day.

The Pittsburgh Pirates and all of Grapefruit League operations in Florida continued that Thursday – a players' account of which you can read [here](#) – but one-by-one as the lights flicked off on different sporting events, both current and upcoming, the inevitable inched closer.

Lewandowski, who was in attendance for the Pirates 1:05 p.m. ET first pitch start in Bradenton, Fla. that afternoon, describes a “buzz” that went through the crowd about five minutes before game time. Major League Baseball had suspended spring training operations, effective at 4 p.m. ET.

Two hours after that initial news blast, Lewandowski received an email from the Minor League Baseball office mirroring what MLB had said: the MiLB season was now pushed back two weeks.

“It was just kind of an eerie feeling from that point forward, and still didn't quite know what it meant,” Lewandowski said. “That's when the wheel started to turn in terms of, yeah, this is going to hit home and have a major effect on what we do.”



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WAS UP, BUT YOU WEREN'T QUITE SURE  
EXACTLY WHAT IT MEANT FOR EVERYBODY."  
- MATT GUAY, AGM TICKETS & OPERATIONS**

At that point in the calendar year, the organization had already been moving at a steady pace. The 2020 schedule was released even before the curtains closed on the 2019 season, and for most the end of one season only meant the start of another.

As three of the top four working members of the organization traveled to what they thought would be a typical work week in the Pirates spring training home of Bradenton, Assistant General Manager of Tickets and Operations Matt Guay was on point back home at Victory Field. The front office, at least through the early hours on Thursday when things didn't seem as imminent, continued as normal.

Normal, however, is a relative term even in the rising of a pandemic age. When the clock hit 3:30 that afternoon, the contents of the Victory Field Hot Corner Gift Shop were all pushed to the side, and those working in the office stood in a circle as the reality of the situation slowly but surely sunk in.

"It was surreal," Guay said. "You knew something was up, but you weren't quite sure exactly what it meant for everybody. I don't think anyone thought at that

point that there was a season cancellation coming... from that standpoint, we didn't really grasp the severity of what we were getting ourselves into."

Before news from Major League Baseball had even broke, Guay gathered the directors of various departments together to cancel the upcoming Victory Field events out of an abundance of caution. In the following hours, that cohesive group of front office employees became vital to the communication efforts from Indianapolis to Florida.

"Once you decided how you were going to move on one thing, then something else came up," Guay said. "And it probably forced us to make decisions rather quickly because those guys were [in Florida]. We knew, 'Alright, we need to make a call now. That's what we're going to do, let's do it.' On some level, I think for me there was some sense of peace there and trying to deal with that stuff."

The difficulties that arose from remote communication that day, as news continued to pile on each hour Thursday and into Friday, was nothing compared to what would be coming around the corner.



By that following Monday, Victory Field was shut down and the front office – save those who were working diligently to clean and sanitize every inch of the ballpark – began working from home.

For most, the process of taking work home wasn't the difficult thing to adjust to. Besides now commuting between rooms instead of along highways, the lack of face-to-face interaction and in-person meetings meant that digital communication efforts were of the utmost importance.

"Whether it was [Microsoft] Teams, how quickly we needed to set up meetings, how reoccurring we needed to have meetings to talk through everything, across the board I think the communication really has been something that we've improved upon because we had to," Director of Marketing and Promotions Kim Stoebeck said.

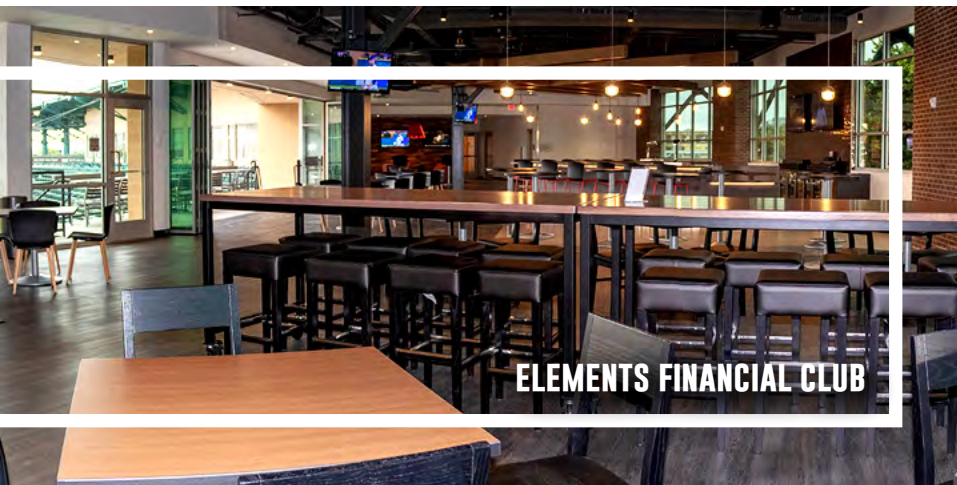
Meetings, now digital, turned into brainstorming sessions for how to move forward with little to no idea on if or when things would go back to normal. As the days and weeks began to bleed together while stay-at-home orders were in place, the season delay turned from a two-week hiatus to a hanging question mark.

Within the Indians front office, two plans were lined out: one with professional baseball, and one without. The latter would give the organization a chance to put together events that it had been considering for years, while also working diligently to fill the calendar with as many events as possible and complying with COVID-19 guidelines.

"Whatever happened in the first 48 to 72 hours escaped me pretty quick because we just had to move forward as quick as we could," Director of Tickets for Premium Services and Events Kerry Vick said. "We're a baseball business and we had to convert to an event center, relatively speaking, overnight."

Before COVID-19 was even on the global radar, the Indians had been planning to expand their reach beyond the scope of baseball. Following the 2019 season, Victory Field underwent renovations to add the Elements Financial Club, a premium tickets and events space that would transform the ballpark into more of a year-round facility.

With the addition of the club came the onboarding of a Stadium Events Manager



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in March to plan and facilitate those events outside of baseball. Very quickly, the scope of that job changed.

“We were already kind of gearing up for a new world of events here, this just accelerated everything,” Vick said. “We realized, each month at a time, that baseball wasn’t coming back right away, and we needed to figure out what the next steps were.

“We probably explored dozens of event ideas, and when you’re in the brainstorming stages you do probably have to eliminate 90 percent of them, but you’ve got to have a lot of darts to throw at the wall just to see where you find that sweet spot.”

It took every member of the front office to budge the wheel in those first months without professional baseball. Indianapolis Indians Charities kicked off the new calendar with a monthlong COVID-19 relief campaign in May and small-scale private and community events followed.



After months of planning and predicting the inevitable, Minor League Baseball officially announced the cancellation of its 2020 season on June 30 with plans to go forward with an MLB season and alternate training sites already in place. For the Indians, the planning paid off.

“It’s interesting in times of challenge and difficulty, how the people you work and associate with come together,” Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer Bruce Schumacher said. “In some ways it would have been easy for people to be down, but everyone showed up and pitched in to keep Victory Field active.”

With the organization already immersed in the world of digital marketing, it launched the Victory Field social media brand in late June to work in tandem with the existing Indianapolis Indians brand. Those Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels would soon become a hub for everything the Indians organization had planned for the upcoming months, without the Indians team being on the field.

**“WE ALWAYS WONDER WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE AS A GROUNDSKEEPER AND NOT HAVE ANY GAMES, AND IT’S HONESTLY TERRIBLE BECAUSE WHAT’S MOST ENJOYABLE IS SEEING THE GAME AND EVERYBODY ENJOYING THE BALLPARK.”**

**– JOEY STEVENSON, DIRECTOR OF FIELD OPERATIONS**



“I felt like we were constantly busy, which helped,” Stoebeck said. “Just constantly trying to think of new ideas, new ways to bring in revenue, new ways to market.”

On July 16, just over two weeks after the possibility of a minor league season returning to the Circle City was erased, the Victory Field gates were opened for its first public baseball game since August 31, 2019.

Grand Park College Summer League games at Victory Field kicked off what would have been the second half of the Indians baseball season, and the public events portion of the calendar only ramped up from there.

“Those college games where we had 1,000 fans in here, it felt weird, but it was just nice to see people at the ballpark,” Director of Field Operations Joey Stevenson said. “We always wonder what it would be like as a groundskeeper and not have any games, and it’s honestly terrible because what’s most enjoyable is seeing the game and everybody enjoying the ballpark.”

Over the course of the summer, Victory Field would play host to baseball games, an auto show, multiple movie nights and a watch party for the hometown Pacers’ efforts in the NBA Playoffs.

One of the biggest and most creative events turned the field into a golf course for The Links at Victory Field. Hosted over two weekends in August and October, the Indianapolis Indians staff, from top to bottom, put in over 1,500 hours at the ballpark that led to the event’s success – not including the hours of preparation and execution, from selling tickets to branding and marketing the event.

“[The Links] was the most fun and interesting and challenging,” Vick said. “It was really neat to see the whole staff get together, team up and attack it, from the planning to having Randy [Lewandowski] manning a [tee] box for a six-hour shift.”

The type of collaboration seen throughout the summer in every aspect of what the organization went through, whether





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**- RANDY LEWANDOWSKI, PRESIDENT & GM**

it was internally being transparent when information became available on COVID-19 and the status of the minor league season to the strength in numbers to pull off both public and private events, gives the Indians an edge entering the 2021 season.

Things still aren't back to a 2019 level of normal, with the latest jam in the wheel coming with the four-week delay to the 2021 Triple-A baseball season. However, having that experience from March 2020 on has changed the mindset of the front office for the better.

"A few years ago, we talked about how our organization can turn into silos, where you're in your lane and doing your thing, but you're not really collaborating as much and aren't thinking about how the decisions that you make for your position affects [the organization as a whole]," Stoeckel said. "I think going through this pandemic, those silos have had to come down because we have had to work as a team to survive."

Now, every member of the organization is focused and working on moving the wheel toward May 11, Opening Day in Victory Field's 25th anniversary season.

When that date does arrive – despite all the nervousness and anxiety that comes with putting on events and an entire 60-game slate – so will relief.

"There'll be a joy or a happiness that envelops everybody on staff," Lewandowski said. "And we'll welcome what we would have considered to be the everyday challenges or headaches of the weather, pulling tarp or any other glitch we might have in the normal course of operations."

"I think more than anything we now know that nothing is guaranteed. Now we'll have an appreciation for what we do and what we provide. I think we've always had it; it'll just feel a little more special." ♥



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INDIANAPOLIS



LET'S PLAY BALL!

*Indianapolis Indians Charities' involvement with Indy RBI has taken the inner-city nonprofit to new heights for 2021*

By: Cheyne Reiter

Back in the early 1980s, Mike Lennox was experiencing instability in his line of work. Out of college, Lennox worked in the radio business bouncing from station to station, but it did not provide a stable life at home. In his twenties at the time and newly engaged, Lennox transitioned into public relations and marketing work, landing his first job off the airwaves with the Indiana Department of Commerce in its Tourism Development Division. He was a supportive team member for its Wander Indiana campaign that promoted tourism opportunities for the entire state, but the gig still left him unfulfilled.

In the late 80s, Lennox joined the Family Service Association of Indianapolis as its director of development, and it was there where he found his calling. He attended an intense 7-day fundraising course through The Fund Raising School, which is now part of the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, and was mesmerized.





“This is it,” Lennox, the current Executive Director at Indy RBI, remembered thinking at the time. “I quickly learned that I wanted to help raise money for the less fortunate, but the right opportunity just wasn’t there for me yet.”

Insert Milt Thompson, an active member on the Indianapolis Indians Board of Directors. Lennox gives Thompson, who attended the same church as him and became a close friend, a ton of credit for getting him to where he is today.

“Milt knew I wasn’t happy with the work I had been doing, so he told me one day, ‘I’ve got a job for you if you want it.’” Lennox said.

The offer was to help run an inner-city baseball program called the Indiana Amateur Baseball Association, a nonprofit Thompson had originally founded in 1982. Lennox received the offer in March 1996. He accepted, but soon after he experienced one of the biggest hurdles he would have to overcome.

“I went to Lilly Endowment and asked for a \$100,000 grant to help get IABA off its feet again. It felt like we were shooting for the moon and this was a make-or-break situation,” Lennox recalled. “Once we received that contribution, we hit the ground running.”

Still in his first year, Lennox was part of IABA’s request to join Major League Baseball’s Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) initiative. It didn’t take long for that approval, and the positive impact on inner-city youth and families – providing every kid the chance to play baseball or softball each summer – has since been noticeable.

“Every kid is given the chance to play, but it’s not just the kids who benefit from our Indy RBI program... truthfully, the parents and mentors to these student-athletes learn a lot about themselves every summer,” Lennox said. “[The parents] grow as individuals and realize that our leagues are not focused on the winning and losing, but rather on the idea of creating major league citizens. We practice good sportsmanship, teamwork, and try to foster positive off-the-field behavior.”

In a normal year, Indy RBI has nearly 2,000 participants in youth baseball and softball for various age groups. Teams play mostly at Forest Manor Park, Rhodius Park, Christian Park and Garfield Park, with many Indianapolis Public School (IPS) and charter school fields used for the older age divisions. However, 35% of those approximate 2,000 ballplayers are unable to cover the \$25 registration fee, which equates to nearly \$15,000 in registration costs covered by Indy RBI alone each summer. That is where partners like Indianapolis Indians Charities, or individuals in the community, have and still can step up to the plate.

Now in his 25th year with Indy RBI, Lennox understands that the organization’s successes aren’t possible without great partners like Indianapolis Indians Charities.

“We were at a disadvantage for years because we do not have a major league team [in Indianapolis],” he said. “The RBI programs in Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, any city with a major league team, they are funded six figures by those clubs. Fortunately for us,

four or five years ago, the Indianapolis Indians increased their support to us to help cover registration fees, uniform costs, field projects and umpire dues.”

And the relationship has only strengthened from there.

Indianapolis Indians Charities recently made a three-year commitment of \$300,000 to cover team sponsorships, events and league programming. Also, in partnership with the Indianapolis Parks Department, Indians staff has committed itself to spending Indy Do Day renovating a city park diamond that will be used by Indy RBI and other inner-city schools. In years’ past, staff has volunteered renovating fields at Forest Manor Park, Rhodius Park and Manual High School. Further, internal work by Indians staff to rework Indy RBI’s website and social channels has not gone unnoticed by Lennox, either.

“Everything Indianapolis Indians Charities and the Indians staff has done over the last couple years has been nothing short of amazing,” he said.

With a season that begins in early May and wraps up with Indy RBI hosting a regional in mid-July, the 2021 season will come and go in the blink of an eye, meaning the time to act – and support – is now.

Indians fans and those wanting to contribute to Indy RBI are encouraged to visit [IndyRBI.org](https://IndyRBI.org) and click the ‘donate’ button. A \$25 donation will cover the registration fee for one player while a donation of \$300 will cover the costs associated with sponsoring an entire team. For those wanting to possibly coach an Indy RBI team or umpire baseball and softball games, email [info@IndyRBI.org](mailto:info@IndyRBI.org). Any volunteer work or monetary donation is of great value to Lennox and his team. After all, Indy RBI has served over 25,000 boys and girls ages 3-18 since 1996, and momentum is picking up as teams are filled and added for the 2021 season.

“We will never turn a child away who wants to play ball,” Lennox said. “We want them to learn fair team play, become major league citizens and enjoy [baseball or softball] their entire lives.”

On top of its support to Indy RBI, IIC also has existing partnerships with the Indy Flames and Indy Thunder.

The Flames participate in Alternative Baseball™, which provides a traditional baseball experience to those with autism and other disabilities, ages 15 and up. The program was founded in Dallas, Ga. by a young man on the autism spectrum. His goal was to develop physical and social skills in an environment where players will be accepted for who they are, encouraged to be the best version of themselves, and instilled with confidence to fulfill their dreams on and off the field. Please email [indianapolisflamesabo@gmail.com](mailto:indianapolisflamesabo@gmail.com) or visit [alternativebaseball.org](https://alternativebaseball.org) for more information.

The Thunder are part of the National Beep Baseball Association, an organization that was founded in 1976 and is committed to fostering competition and camaraderie through the game of beep baseball for the blind and visually impaired. Beep baseball is a challenging, demanding and enjoyable competitive sport that requires a combination of strength, skill and auditory senses to focus on the beeping ball and buzzing bases. For more information and to donate, visit [nbba.org](https://nbba.org). ♥



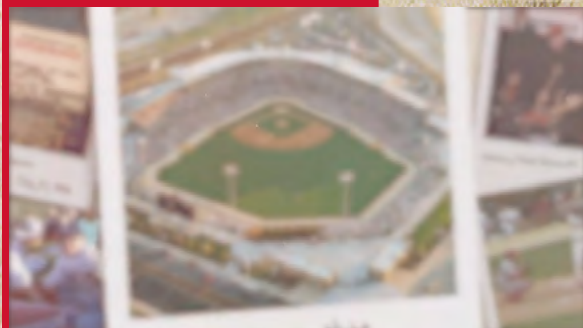




# Through THE YEARS

There have been many memorable moments at Victory Field over the last 25 years. Enjoy the timeline as we reflect on 25 of The Vic's greatest memories through the years.

**JULY 11, 1996**



## A New Beginning

The Indians hosted Oklahoma City in the first game ever played at Victory Field, with 14,667 fans in attendance.

**SEPTEMBER 1, 2001**



## Thrice is Nice

Micah Franklin became the first and only Indians player in the Victory Field era to smash three home runs in a single game, doing so against Toledo at The Vic.

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2000**

## Governors' Cup Clincher

The Indians topped Scranton/Wilkes-Barre 6-1 in Game 5 of the Governors' Cup finals to seal Indy's second championship in the International League and first since 1963.



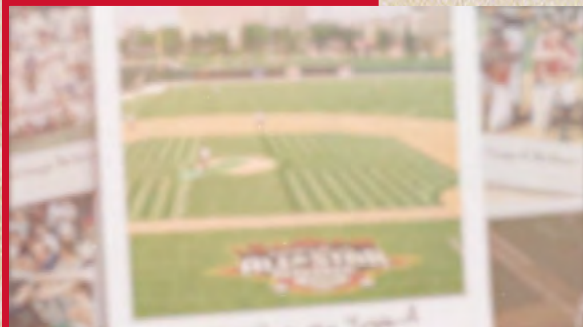
**JULY 10, 2003**



## Conti Cycles

Jason Conti recorded the first cycle by an Indians player at Victory Field. He finished 4-for-5 with three RBI and three runs scored against Norfolk.

**JULY 11, 2001**



## Hey Now, You're an All-Star

Five years to the day of hosting its first Indians game, Victory Field played host to the Triple-A All-Star Game. The Pacific Coast League All-Stars won 9-5 over the International League All-Stars, and the game featured many future big leaguers including Adam Dunn, Eric Byrnes, Juan Uribe & Joe Crede, among others.

## Snell Tosses a No-No

Ian Snell became the first Indians pitcher to throw a no-hitter at Victory Field with a dazzling performance against Norfolk. He issued just one walk and fanned nine batters in the 4-0 triumph.



**MAY 15, 2005**





# Through THE YEARS

## OCTOBER 2006



### Bye Bye Bleachers, Hello Patio

Renovations began beyond the right field foul pole at Victory Field with the ballpark's first premier seating space replacing a large set of bleacher seats. The Coors Light Patio (known today as the Corona Premier Patio) was unveiled in time for the 2007 season.

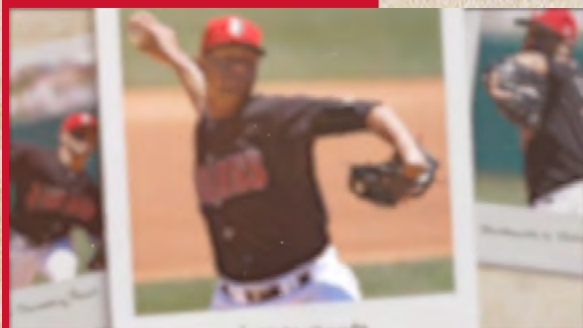
## AUGUST 24, 2007

### An MVP in the Making

Promoted to Triple-A in mid-August, Andrew McCutchen made his Victory Field debut with the Indians against Toledo. McCutchen went on to earn five consecutive National League All-Star bids (2011-15) and the 2013 NL MVP with Pittsburgh.



## JUNE 28, 2009



### Snell's 17 Strikeouts

Already the owner of Victory Field's only 9.0-inning no-hitter, Ian Snell put his name in the record books once again with 17 strikeouts over 7.0 innings against the Mud Hens at The Vic, a record that still stands today.



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# Circle City MVP



## TWO MVP SEASONS AND HIS ATTITUDE MADE MATT HAGUE A FAN FAVORITE IN INDIANAPOLIS

by ANNA KAYSER

Only four times in history has an up-and-coming player made their way through Indianapolis and been named a two-time MVP for the Indians. But for Matt Hague, the fourth and most recent to claim the feat, that's not what he remembers most about his four years in the Circle City.

"The first thing is Victory Field, how great the stadium is to play in," Hague said. "The fans, you go around the league, attendance-wise, and just overall ballpark atmosphere on weekends and in the summer, you felt like you were playing in the big leagues a little bit."

The right-handed slugger, Indy's everyday first baseman for the majority of his four seasons in the Circle City, made his Triple-A debut at Victory Field on April 7, 2011 – Opening Day of the Minor League Baseball season. He went 1-for-4, nothing too special, but through the course of that season his name slowly etched itself into the history books.

On the field, Hague excelled in Indianapolis. His first season culminated in a team-leading .309 batting average, 37 doubles, 244 total bases and 70 runs, plus an International League-best 165 hits. He was named an IL All-Star at both the midpoint and end of season and earned his first Indianapolis Team MVP award with the campaign.

As his batting statistics rose over that season, so did his fan-favorite status all the way from those in the seats to those in the front office.

This ad was not paid for by customer rates.



“You got to know everybody there, and everybody was extremely friendly,” Hague said. “You see everybody working on the field and the backdrop of Indianapolis there in the outfield is one of the most scenic backgrounds in the whole league. It makes you appreciate how much they value baseball in Indianapolis.”

That feeling led Hague to making Indianapolis his year-round home, and sticking around meant that he stood out in the community even more. When he moved his home base from Seattle to Indy, he brought his kids’ hitting clinics with him and would offer those in the offseason. For a guy that, according to a **2014 program feature**, paced Victory Field era records in games played (374), at-bats (1,437), hits (422), doubles (87), RBI (198), walks (144) and total bases (591) by the end of his third year with the Indians, saying that he stood out more off the diamond holds some weight.

It wasn’t just individual success, either. Through the four years Hague was a staple member of the Indians (2011-14), the team never finished lower than second in the division and was always in the postseason hunt.

Although Hague’s first Team MVP campaign didn’t send the Indians to the playoffs, it earned him a spot in Pittsburgh to open the 2012 campaign, making his MLB debut exactly one year after first stepping onto the Victory Field grass. His performance in Triple-A the year prior didn’t transfer to his 30 games in the majors that season, and after ending 2012 in the Governors’ Cup semifinals, he returned to Indianapolis in 2013.

2013 would mark the first time since 1988-89 that the Indians took home consecutive division titles (Indy won back-to-back league pennants in 1994-95 when the American Association was non-divisional), and the first time in the International League. Just like in 2011, Hague played a big part in that success.

“I think just playing competitive baseball late in the season, I think that’s an excitement that we almost got used to, just having that experience and getting used to pushing for the playoffs every year,” Hague said. “That’s a memory and experience I’ll never forget; a lot of players don’t ever get that.”

**“ YOU SEE EVERYBODY WORKING ON THE FIELD AND THE BACKDROP OF INDIANAPOLIS THERE IN THE OUTFIELD IS ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC BACKGROUNDS IN THE WHOLE LEAGUE. IT MAKES YOU APPRECIATE HOW MUCH THEY VALUE BASEBALL IN INDIANAPOLIS. ”**

**- MATT HAGUE, FORMER INDIANS FIRST BASEMAN**



He began the 2013 season hot, hitting .302 through the end of May and earning himself an IL Player of the Week honor after hitting three doubles on May 21 to tie a Victory Field era single-game record. Those doubles added up over the course of the season, and just like in 2011, Hague ended with 37 two-baggers on 153 hits, both league-leading marks, and paced the Indians with 69 RBI, 218 total bases, 67 runs scored and 71 walks.

Being in the playoff hunt for those first three years and the success he had in the Indians lineup is something Hague attests to those who were around them. Dean Treanor, who owns the third-most managerial wins in franchise history (471) and hitting coach Mike Pagliarulo (2013-14), were two key members of Hague’s development.

“I have always given a lot of credit to Pagliarulo,” Hague said. “He helped me in so many ways to help me figure out and evolve my swing, both mechanically and mentally. He was such a good offensive mind to be around and learn from in a time where, as a player, I felt I was stagnant in my development.”

In fact, when asked what his historic pair of Team MVP awards in Indianapolis meant to him, he credited everyone but himself.

“I value that honor greatly, but I believe it’s a reflection of a lot of things,” Hague said. “The Pirates continued to believe in me and gave me constant at-bats, and my family and faith provided me with a thriving environment that allowed me to mentally be in a good spot.”

Now, Hague has taken the experiences from his playing days back to the diamond. Thanks to a stint with Toronto after the Pirates designated him for assignment during the 2014 season, in March 2021 he was named the hitting coach for the Blue Jays Double-A affiliate, the New Hampshire Fisher Cats.

As the 2021 season gets underway on Hague’s first professional coaching season, it marks another milestone in downtown Indianapolis. In the early weeks after kicking off a yearlong, 25th anniversary celebration of Victory Field, the Indians announced that Matt Hague came in at No. 22 on their All-Time 25 Victory Field era roster. Ten years after Hague first played in a place he would soon call home, he was rightfully named one of the best to ever play at the corner of West and Maryland St. ♥





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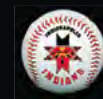
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