

THE OFFICIAL INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS MAGAZINE

# Curtain Call

## a sea of EMPTY SEATS

Baseball returns without one  
of its greatest assets  
Pg. 24

**PLUS**

JACOB  
STALLINGS  
STEPS INTO  
HIS FUTURE  
Pg. 39





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# Curtain Call

THE OFFICIAL INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS MAGAZINE

AUGUST 2020 | ISSUE 5

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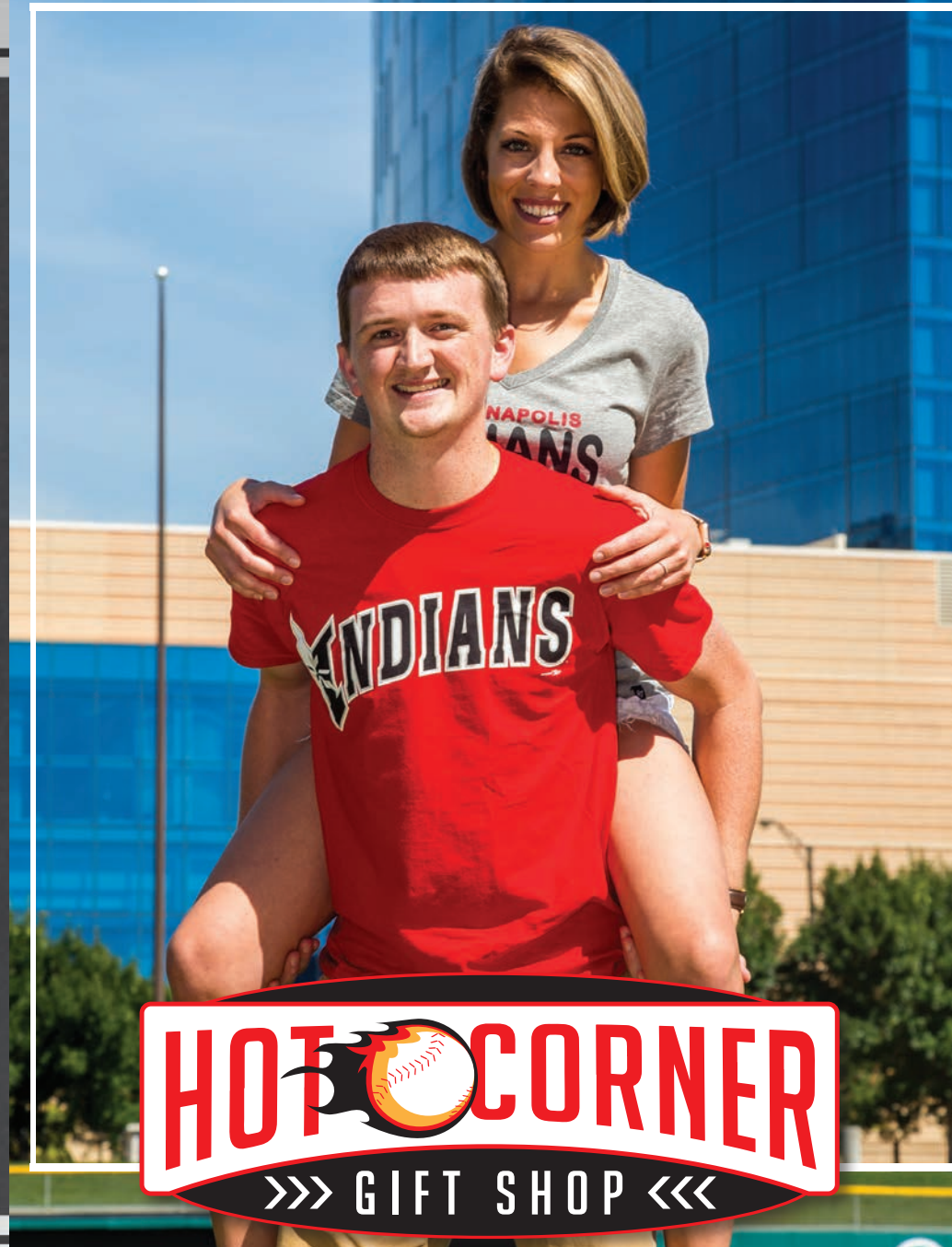
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## RAJAI DAVIS | CF

**BATS:** Right    **THROWS:** Right  
**HEIGHT:** 5'10"    **WEIGHT:** 195 lbs  
**BORN:** 10/19/1980 in Norwich, CT

	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	BA
MLB TOTALS	1448	4607	4244	637	1111	226	43	62	387	62	108	267	844	.262
IND TOTALS	153	656	596	84	176	29	5	6	51	72	22	48	84	.295

## CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

A home run in the first inning vs. Charlotte extended the longest hitting streak in the Victory Field era to 21 games on June 3, 2007. Center fielder Rajai Davis, the Pittsburgh Pirates 38th-round draft pick in 2001, blasted his fourth long ball of the season to put the Tribe ahead by one run early in the game against the Knights. The Indians went on to win 5-1, as Davis went 1-for-3 with one RBI.

Davis recorded eight stolen bases and 13 RBI while batting .364 (32-for-88) during that 21-game stretch to put himself in the Indians history books. On June 4, instead of facing Charlotte again for the chance to extend the streak to 22 games, the Connecticut native was making his way to Washington D.C. to join the Pirates for his first and only call-up of the season.



Before his 14-year major league career took him to eight different organizations, Davis established himself a base stealer in the Pittsburgh farm system. His 72 stolen bags outnumbered his 51 RBI during his two seasons in Indianapolis, and his record of 45 stolen bases in the 2006 season has yet to be broken.

One of his most successful campaigns came in 2016 with the Cleveland Indians, when they punched a ticket to their first World Series since 1997. Although Davis led the American League with 43 stolen bases, his career-defining moment came at the plate in Game 7 of the Fall Classic.

Down 6-4 with two outs and a runner on second base in the bottom of the 8th inning, Davis stepped into the right-handed batter's box against Chicago Cubs closer Aroldis Chapman. The seventh pitch of the at-bat, a 98-MPH fastball down and inside, brought mayhem to Cleveland. A two-run home run to left field tied the game, one that the Cubs would later go on to win in 10 innings. Davis went 5-for-22 in the series.

He played the next three seasons with four organizations, returning to both Oakland and Cleveland. After electing free agency from the New York Mets in the 2019-20 offseason, Davis signed with Acereros del Norte in the Mexican League. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Davis never suited up for the Acereros.





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**EDUARDO PEREZ** | 1B, RF

**BATS:** Right

**THROWS:** Right

**HEIGHT:** 6'4"

**WEIGHT:** 215 lbs

**BORN:** 9/11/1969 in Cincinnati, OH

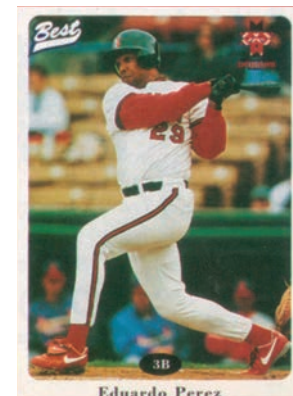
	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	BA
MLB TOTALS	754	2039	1800	238	445	88	3	79	294	19	13	194	393	.247
IND TOTALS	122	509	451	84	132	29	5	21	84	11	0	51	69	.293

### CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Before he solidified himself as a big leaguer, Eduardo Perez made his way through Indianapolis.

After making his major league debut on July 27, 1993, the son of Hall of Famer Tony Perez toggled between California and Triple-A Vancouver until being traded to Cincinnati on April 9, 1996, with the season already underway.

It didn't take long for Perez to make his mark on the Circle City. He joined the ballclub for that night's game at Buffalo and went 2-for-3 with a home run and two RBI. In his first month with the Tribe, he recorded hits in all but one game: April 13 vs. Louisville.



On April 14, Perez began a legendary stretch that still holds a place among Indians all-time leaders, trailing only Francis Sigafos' 38-game hitting streak of 1933 and Ed Stevens' 33-gamer in 1951.

During his 21-game hitting streak that outlasted Todd Haney's 1991 streak by one game, he notched six multi-hit contests. One of those multi-hit games was a standout game at Iowa, where he went 4-for-5 with a double, home run and two RBI.

After the streak ended on May 10 with an 0-for-3 performance vs. Nashville, Perez remained in Triple-A until June 4 when he joined the Reds in Cincinnati for one game against the Giants. He returned to the big-league club for a 10-day stint in July before ending the season with a .293 average and a team-leading 132 hits, 21 home runs, 84 RBI, 234 total bases and 84 runs scored with Indianapolis.

Perez never returned to the Circle City after 1996. He spent the 1997-98 seasons with Cincinnati before signing with St. Louis as a free agent. The 17th overall selection of the 1991 First-Year Player Draft also had stints with the Hanshin Tigers in Japan, Tampa Bay and Cleveland before retiring as a Seattle Mariner following the 2006 season.





## COLLEGE SUMMER LEAGUE COMES TO VICTORY FIELD



by CHEYNE REITER

When the door officially closed on the 2020 Minor League Baseball season – Tuesday, June 30, to be exact – the Indianapolis Indians organization was weeks into preparations of hosting outside events at Victory Field. Before the season was canceled, The Vic had already held two travel baseball Pastime Tournaments each of the last two weekends in June, and the club was quick to arrange a third Pastime Tournament in mid-July. Baseball was being played at the corner of West & Maryland, albeit with 250 family members or less in attendance every game due to COVID-19 restrictions.

As the calendar flipped to July and Indiana's Back on Track plan reached stage 4.5 in Marion County, slightly larger events with 1,000-person capacities were on the docket. After the Fourth of July weekend, an American Red Cross Indiana blood drive and one of Indy's most popular downtown traditions – American Dairy Association Indiana's 31st annual Ice Cream Social – found their way to Victory Field. When the last few remaining ice cream novelties were distributed on Friday, July 10, that meant one thing for the Tribe front office – baseball was on deck for the rest of July.

Grand Park, a 400-plus acre sports campus located roughly 30 miles north of Victory Field in Westfield, Ind., hosts over 2.5 million visitors each year. One of the many extravagant buildings on site is Pro X, a sport-specific training facility that welcomes high school and college athletes from near and far. When the pandemic hit in mid-March and college seasons were cut short, over 100 local players who had returned to Central Indiana expressed interest in training to where Luke Dietz, Director of Operations at Grand Park, jumped on an opportunity.

"[Pro X] typically hasn't had enough players training to necessarily form a league," Dietz said. "But as more and more players reached out, we thought 'Hey, we've got fields open on Mondays and Tuesdays, let's go ahead and try to run our own league.'"

The uncertainty of a season start date did not deter interest. The 22-team Northwoods League delayed the start of its season into the first week of July, and the Cape Cod League, known to host some of the best college talent in the country every summer, wasn't an option after it canceled its season on April 24. Grand Park promised there would be games, *eventually*, with doubleheaders played every Monday and Tuesday. As a bonus, players could pay off their league fees by working Wednesday thru Sunday tournaments at Grand Park. Those factors, along with Prep Baseball Report Indiana's connections to college athletes, helped swell the interest to 270 players, who were divided into 12 teams of which they named themselves: The A-Team, Screwballs, Local Legends and Snapping Turtles, to name a few.

The College Summer League at Grand Park was born.

Players from Indiana University, Purdue University, Butler University, Ball State University, and countless other in- and out-of-state programs littered the rosters. There were also players representing the SEC, ACC and Big 12, among other major conferences. The league originally aimed at being a commuter league, but the drive to play didn't prevented some players from tackling much longer commutes.

"We had guys who drove four hours to play on a Monday," Dietz said. "Out-of-state guys came to Westfield on a Monday morning, played a doubleheader, stayed in a hotel room, played a doubleheader again on Tuesday and drove home that night."





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- LUKE DIETZ, DIRECTOR OF  
OPERATIONS, GRAND PARK



Once the regular season began, Dietz's connection to the Indians made for easy conversations in hopes of bringing select College Summer League games to Victory Field. He interned for the Tribe during the 2018 season and knew the organization would be hungry for baseball after losing its respective season.

"We wanted to give the players a college league atmosphere, but on Mondays and Tuesdays at Grand Park with 12 teams playing at the same time — even with free admission — you don't have many spectators," Dietz said. "So, we thought, 'Let's try to play at the greatest baseball facility in Indiana.'"

Neither side balked at the idea and in due time, it was announced that the league's All-Star Game, regular-season finale, and league championship were coming to The Vic on July 16, 23 and 30, respectively. Tickets started as low as \$8, the brand-new Elements Financial Club was open for business, and baseball was back at Victory Field. All three games sold out.

For Jack Lang, a shortstop on the Snapping Turtles who will repeat as a junior at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) after losing his 2020 season to the pandemic, the College Summer League was a blessing. He expected to play in Kokomo, Ind., and then the Prospect League in Terre Haute, Ind., before finally settling with the newborn College Summer League at Grand Park in his backyard. And playing at Victory Field fulfills a childhood dream. He starred at Hamilton Southeastern and played with or against many former high school teammates also playing in the College Summer League. At HSE, the goal was to always end the season at Victory Field.

"My junior year [Hamilton Southeastern] probably had one of the best teams on paper, six or seven Division I guys," Lang remembered. "We came up short for whatever reason, but I was excited to step onto a professional baseball field for the first time."

And the talent in the league, many with professional baseball aspirations and legitimate draft stock, Lang included among them, ran deep. The league split into an upper and lower division for the regular season, but the postseason bracket included every team.

"There's never a matchup where I was like, 'I know this team is going to win because this guy is pitching,'" Dietz said. "It's competitive. These guys are really good, and it's fun to watch every week knowing they could make it to the big leagues someday." ♥



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**Jake Elmore (13)**  
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## BEYOND *the* BALLPARK

with  
**JT Brubaker**

After battling an elbow injury for most of 2019, former Tribe right-hander JT Brubaker has big goals for the 60-game major league season. We caught up with him to talk more about those goals, and his lifestyle outside of baseball.

### Q: What is your favorite movie?

A: Probably "Space Jam." I just grew up watching "Looney Tunes" and stuff, and to mix that with one of the best basketball players ever, I think it was just a great idea for a movie. I don't know if the sequel will be able to top the first one, with Michael Jordan and Bill Murray. That's going to be tough.

### Q: What is your go-to pregame song?

A: That's a tough one. Any kind of rock. I don't have a specific song, but a specific genre like rock and metal. Kind of like AC/DC, Ozzy Osbourne, that type of group.

### Q: What are you binge-watching right now?

A: Before season three came out I was binge-watching Yellowstone to catch up for when the season three premiere came out.

### Q: What is your favorite ballpark or city to play baseball in?

A: It was always fun to play in Louisville and Columbus. Louisville just because of the history of the Bourbon Trail, and then Columbus and Indy are probably two of my favorite stadiums. Columbus is just close to home.

### Q: What's your favorite holiday?

A: Probably Thanksgiving. Just hanging out with a bunch of family and getting to eat a lot of food. It's an excuse to overeat.

### Q: If you could attend either the Super Bowl or a Game 7 of either the World Series, NBA Finals or Stanley Cup Finals, what would you choose?

A: Well, just from experience I would love to go back and watch another Stanley Cup Final game. I was fortunate enough to watch one game in person of the Stanley Cup a couple years back with Pittsburgh and Nashville, and that was an experience. It's awesome just because the fans are so close, you really can't have a bad seat in a hockey arena and it's just loud and electric.

### Q: What was it like for you to have somewhat of a summer?

A: It was actually kind of nice to just have your summer days to do whatever you want. It was a little bit different of a feeling of waking up and not having to go to the field or sleeping in and wasting half of your day before you go to the field.

### Q: What are your goals for the 2020 season?

A: Last year I had the injury bug, so my number one goal is staying healthy this entire year and do what I need to do out on the field. Number two, be in the big leagues for the year and get that experience. And then three, make a playoff push.

### Q: Who is your best friend in baseball outside of any Pirates players?

A: There's a guy from my hometown, his name is Seth Gray, he was just drafted by the Minnesota Twins last year. He's a guy I've worked out with in the offseason and I'm pretty close with him.





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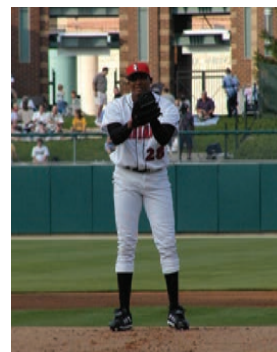
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## THIS MONTH IN INDIANS HISTORY

2003  
AUGUST 3



Left-handed pitcher **Luis Martinez** was lights out in an 8.0-inning outing en route to a 1-0 win vs. Durham. The southpaw struck out 10 batters for his third quality start with the Tribe as he improved to 3-0 on the season. Martinez also extended his scoreless inning streak to 20.1 innings in the Indians defeat of the South Division leaders. Martinez was a gem for the Indians the last couple months of the season, as he finished with a 0.99 ERA (5er/45.2ip) in seven starts.

1988  
AUGUST 6



**Randy Johnson** had 15 Triple-A starts under his belt when he took the mound for the Tribe at Nashville during a playoff push. Johnson and Pat Pacillo tossed the last no-hitter in the Bush Stadium era when they threw a combined 8.0 hitless innings. Johnson was tagged for the loss as he gave up the game's only earned run in the first inning, despite not giving up a hit. The future Hall of Famer tossed 7.0 innings as he issued two walks and struck out eight hitters.

2018  
AUGUST 7



The eighth inning vs. Lehigh Valley was historic in two ways for the Tribe, as **Kevin Newman** (pictured) and **Jacob Stallings** each recorded a hit to complete their respective cycles. As the third hitter due up in the bottom of the eighth, Newman capitalized on his final at-bat of the game with a two-run home run to left field. After Jason Martin struck out swinging for the second out, Pablo Reyes worked a walk to extend the inning for Stallings. An improbable triple to center field – just the sixth of his then-seven-year career – completed the catcher's cycle and extended the Tribe lead to 12-5 over the IronPigs. Newman and Stallings went a combined 9-for-10 and drove in six runs.



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**1941**  
**AUGUST 10**



Right-handed pitcher **Ray Starr** became the second Tribe pitcher in the Bush Stadium era to win 20 games with the Tribe's 10-5 win over St. Paul in the first game of a doubleheader. Unlike other times in his career where he pitched in both games of a doubleheader, Starr only pitched in Game 1 as the Tribe split the twin bill. He went the distance and allowed five runs on seven hits and five walks with four strikeouts. The following season, Starr was selected as an All-Star for the Cincinnati Reds and finished the year with a 2.67 ERA (82er/276.2ip).

**1958**  
**AUGUST 14**



In the Tribe's 11th consecutive victory, right fielder **Johnny Callison** and catcher **John Romano** were dubbed the "Home Run Twins" after they each hit a home run in their combined 6-for-6 day at the plate with three runs scored and four RBI. The Tribe beat Louisville 7-2 thanks to a complete game by Jimmie 'Hot Rod' McDonald, who allowed just two earned runs on 11 hits and one walk with two strikeouts.

**1988**  
**AUGUST 17**



Pinch hitter **Razor Shines** ripped a two-out single to drive in Johnny Paredes and finish off an 8-7 comeback win for the Tribe. The Indians were in control when a three-run third inning broke the game's 2-2 tie, but Iowa responded with five runs in the sixth to go ahead, 7-5. The Indians countered in the seventh with two runs of their own to tie the game, once again. The win extended the Tribe's Eastern Division lead to 9.5 games.



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2019  
AUGUST 18



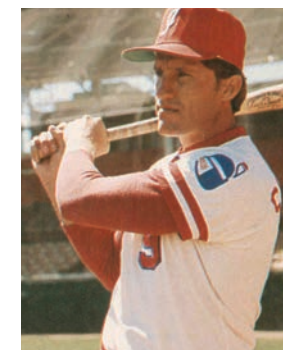
Facing a five-run deficit in the bottom of the ninth vs. Lehigh Valley, free bases were key to a comeback win for the Tribe. The inning opened when Christian Kelley struck out looking, but was followed by four consecutive walks to keep the bases loaded for **Ke'Bryan Hayes**, who was 0-for-4 on the day. A wild pitch scored Hunter Owen to bring the Indians within three runs, and then came a 2-2 slider down and in. Hayes crushed a fly ball into the left field lawn to even the game at 7-7. Kelley then went on to hit a walk-off single in the 10th as the Tribe won, 8-7, in one of the biggest comeback victories in Indians history.

2011  
AUGUST 29



In just his second game with the Tribe, right-handed pitcher **Nelson Figueroa** struck out 10 hitters at Toledo on his way to a complete game. He limited the Mud Hens to one run in the third inning and stranded eight runners on the bases in his 9.0 innings of work. The Indians cushioned their 2-1 lead with a five-run eighth inning followed by a two-run ninth. Much of the Tribe's offense in the 9-1 win came off the bat of Pedro Alvarez, whose only hit of the game was a grand slam.

1978  
AUGUST 31



**Champ Summers**, the eventual Minor League Player of the Year, blasted two home runs vs. Springfield to keep the Tribe's playoff hopes alive with a 5-2 win as they awaited their postseason destiny. Their chances of winning the Eastern Division title relied on the outcome of the second game of a doubleheader between Evansville and Iowa. The Indians and Triplets were tied for first place heading into the day, but Evansville's 3-2 loss to Iowa in the Game 2 of the doubleheader provided the Tribe clarity. Indianapolis went on to the American Association playoffs as the Eastern Division champions.





# a sea of EMPTY SEATS

**While pitchers were working to stay healthy, baseball returned without one of its greatest assets**

by ANNA KAYSER

**T**here's a distinct hum in the background as the pitcher leans in, taking in the signs. Step back, pause, maybe eye the runner at first. He winds into his delivery like he's done a million times before, and hurls in a curveball that paints the lower corner of the zone. The hum remains, opening up into chaos only when the barrier between the focus in a pitcher's head and the surrounding atmosphere breaks.

For each of Trevor Williams' 83 career starts in four big-league years, the hum was there. It was there for Clay Holmes, too, inviting him in when he stepped on the mound in relief.

But that was before the world was enveloped in a pandemic, and now the piped-in crowd noise erupting from the speakers doesn't hum quite the same as a stadium full of heartbeats.

"It doesn't sound like a stadium 30 to 40 thousand people full, but it sounds like a loud restaurant," Williams said. "Like, maybe there's 500 people in a room making crowd noise."

Since March 12 when the entire sports world fell apart with the positive COVID-19 test of Utah Jazz player Rudy Gobert, the 2020 Major League Baseball season has looked a lot different. Spring training games were immediately put on hold, and in the next few days the hope that it would only be a two-week delay diminished. Players were sent home, and questions of if there would even be a season outweighed the questions of when.



Now, with a 60-game schedule in place and underway, the changes to this season are glaring. Matchups are based solely on regional travel, COVID-19 protocols are in place, constant testing has been implemented for players and staff, the National League features a designated hitter, extra innings begin with a runner on second base and, most notably, the stands are empty.

Sure, some teams have placed cardboard cutouts of individual fans in the seats. Fox Sports is even playing with adding virtual fans into the stands during broadcasts. Each stadium will be playing crowd noise over the speakers to avoid certain words picked up by microphones. But the absence is eerie.

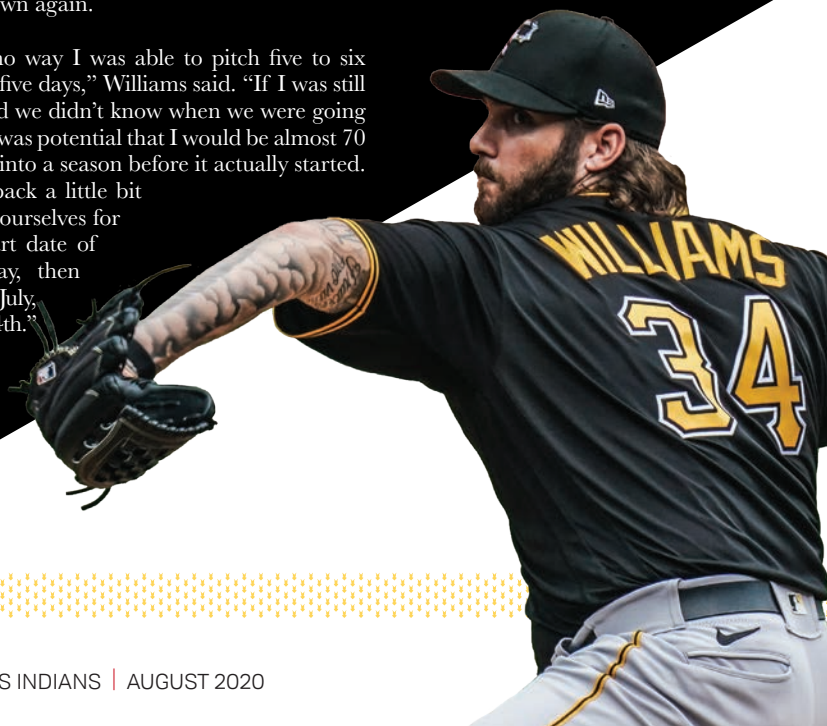
The last time Williams pitched in front of fans was March 9, just three days before spring training operations were suspended due to the novel coronavirus. He tossed three, two-hit innings – his first scoreless outing of the year – and was set to bounce back from an injury-riddled 2019.

In 2018, Williams went 14-10 with a 3.11 ERA, the lowest of his career and among Pirates starters that season. He ended the campaign with a flourish, going 8-3 with a 1.29 ERA over his final 13 outings. He started the 2019 season where he left off, collecting a 3.33 ERA in his first nine starts.

Then, on May 16, Williams left his start early with a right-side strain, and the pitcher that returned to Pittsburgh on June 19 after a month on the injured list and a rehab start in Indy wasn't the same. He finished the season with a 6.58 ERA in his last 17 games, five of which he gave up six-or-more earned runs.

For pitchers across the country, that's exactly what they were trying to avoid in the three months and 19 days between spring training's shutdown on March 12 and summer camp's report date on July 1. With just two weeks to go until what was set to be Opening Day, Williams was ramping up toward the end goal. So, when things ended, things had to ramp back down again.

"There was no way I was able to pitch five to six innings every five days," Williams said. "If I was still doing that and we didn't know when we were going to start, there was potential that I would be almost 70 or 80 innings into a season before it actually started. We toned it back a little bit but prepared ourselves for our initial start date of Memorial Day, then the Fourth of July, and now the 24th."



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**“I DREW FROM THE FANS. THERE'S NOTHING GREATER THAN WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU CAN'T DO SOMETHING AND YOU'VE GOT 50,000 PEOPLE SCREAMING. ALL OF A SUDDEN YOUR MIND IS MADE UP: 'I CAN DO THIS.'”**  
**- RANDY JOHNSON, FORMER INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS PITCHER**

For Pirates reliever Clay Holmes, it was the opposite. Instead of working to pace himself and avoid injury, he was working to rebound from a broken foot suffered on Feb. 29, less than two weeks shy of when camp was shut down.

After making his big-league debut in 2018, Holmes spent the majority of 2019 with the Pirates. He tossed 50.0 innings in 35 appearances, and while his ERA sat at 5.58 when all was said and done, it was a step in the right direction for the then-26-year-old right-hander. Fast forward to late-February 2020, and Holmes showed his growth in a pair of short relief appearances. He surrendered just one baserunner on a hit batter in his first two innings of work and was feeling confident going into March.

At CenturyLink Sports Complex in Fort Myers, Fla., with the Pirates holding a one-run lead against the Minnesota Twins, Holmes entered the game for the sixth inning. Facing his first batter of the day, a comebacker off the bat of Nelson Cruz struck Holmes and broke his fibula, sidelining him for the rest of spring and presumably the beginning of the regular season.

Then, 12 days later, Holmes' mindset on his injury changed.

“I think there for a little bit, [spring training being shut down] kind of took my mind off my leg and I was trying to figure things out like everybody else was,” Holmes said. “But I guess the most important thing and the silver lining in all that for me was it gave me a lot of extra time. It was one of those things where I didn't feel like I had to rush back.”

“There were already some things I was trying to work on with my delivery, with my feet and especially my back foot, so it gave me the opportunity to start from the ground up.”

Holmes remained in Florida with the training staff to help rehab his injury and continue working to hone his craft. He tossed from his knees when he was unable to put pressure on his leg and progressed up to facing live batters in May.

“I was very fortunate,” Holmes said. “Having [coaches and trainers] around definitely helped keep the rehab process moving along, so I didn't have to face any stalls or get behind on schedule.”

He made his official return to game action on July 22 as the Pirates took on Cleveland in an exhibition game and tossed one scoreless inning in relief. He picked up right where he left off in the spring, although the atmosphere looked a whole lot different.

To really understand the effect of crowd noise, there may be no better example in baseball than one centered around another former Indianapolis Indians hurler. One whose nickname, ‘Big Unit,’ holds all the introduction in the world.

In 1995, the Seattle Mariners had been around for 18 pennant-less years. After ending the season with a record that nearly tied the New York Yankees, Seattle ended up facing the Pinstripes in the American League Division Series.

In front of a near-capacity crowd at the Kingdome in Seattle, the Mariners tied up the game at four apiece on a Ken Griffey Jr. home run and a bases-loaded walk in the eighth inning. A quick double and a walk in the top of the ninth inning gave the Yankees the go-ahead run in scoring position with three outs still in their pockets.

Enter Randy Johnson. He replaced Norm Charlton on the mound and finished the inning unscathed on a strikeout and two pop-ups. The future Hall of Famer went on to pitch three innings in relief and gave up one run on one hit in the top of the 11th. And, well, the bottom half of that inning is infamous.

In a 2019 MLB Network documentary titled “The 1995 Mariners, Saving Baseball in Seattle,” Johnson recalled the do-or-die moment.

“I drew from the fans,” he said in the documentary. “There's nothing greater than when you feel like you can't do something, and you've got 50,000 people screaming. All of the sudden your mind is made up: ‘I can do this.’”

The sound all depends on the acoustics of the stadium, and some are louder than others. Fenway Park is widely regarded as one of, if not the loudest. Williams says Dodger Stadium is at the top of his list. In 2011, the crowd noise in Globe Life Park – which has now been traded in by the Rangers for Globe Life Field – caused bullpen confusion for the Cardinals in Game 5 of the World Series.

“Sitting in the dugout or the bullpen and hearing the roar of the crowd, it's fun,” Holmes said. “That's what makes the game so special, especially for us players.”





The ramp back up toward Major League Baseball's Opening Day of July 23 – the Pirates opened up on July 24 in St. Louis, and Williams made his first start of the season on the 25th – went seamless, from the 28-year-old starter's perspective.

It's no secret that players had to get creative to get their work in. Williams was fortunate to live in an area with teammates around him to work out with, and Holmes' situation in Florida helped him greatly in the long run. From the pitching staff to those filling the eight positions around them, the team as a whole picked up right where it left off on March 12.

"I think all the guys really spent the time at home to get better," Williams said. "They had 10 weeks at home to hone their craft, if it was something specific on the hitting side or fielding side or pitching side, I think everyone did what they could to come to the park ready to go."

Intrasquad matchups and exhibition games with a team's closest opponent – Pittsburgh played Cleveland, the Cubs traveled to the south side of Chicago, the Dodgers faced their Anaheim counterparts, etc. – gave players a chance to get full games in against a different club for the first time since March.

"It was good to finally play a team with a different colored jersey," Williams said. "The competitiveness just turns on a little more when you're facing a different team."

“[THE ARTIFICIAL CROWD NOISE] CAN'T EXACTLY REPLACE THE EMOTION AND NOISE FROM THE FANS.”

– CLAY HOLMES, FORMER INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS PITCHER

Those games also gave players a chance to hear crowd noise through the speakers in a different stadium than their own, something that will vary from ballpark to ballpark.

Major League Baseball made artificial crowd noise mandatory for all games and even supplied audio for teams to use from MLB The Show. The key to creating somewhat of a normal atmosphere comes multiple decks up in the control room, where operators must time crowd reactions to the on-field action.

"There's like 50 different reactions that you can have," Williams said. "So, if there's a good operator that knows what they're doing it's great, but if not then you can tell it's fake."

There are different instances where the crowds will definitely be missed, too; corner infielders tumbling into the stands for a pop-up, home runs into the outfield bleachers, moments where the intensity builds to a release from the crowd on that final strike or walk-off hit.

"[The artificial crowd noise] can't exactly replace the emotion and noise from the fans," Holmes said.

Now, with the season underway, the goal is to keep it going through the recently outlined 16-team extended playoff format.

There are no fans in the stands, at least for now, but what matters to the players is keeping themselves, and their teammates, safe.

"I would say that was one of the biggest question marks and challenges for players to come back, is that we all wanted to come back and play but the 'how it's going to work,'" Holmes said. "I think that specifically our staff and MLB has done a great job of putting protocols in place and being prepared."

"Ultimately, I think it comes down to, especially as teammates, kind of taking care of each other and making sure that we're being as safe as possible and not putting the clubhouse at risk. I think everybody has that responsible mindset that we're in this together." ▼







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Blood Drive and Ice Cream Social Huge Hits in July

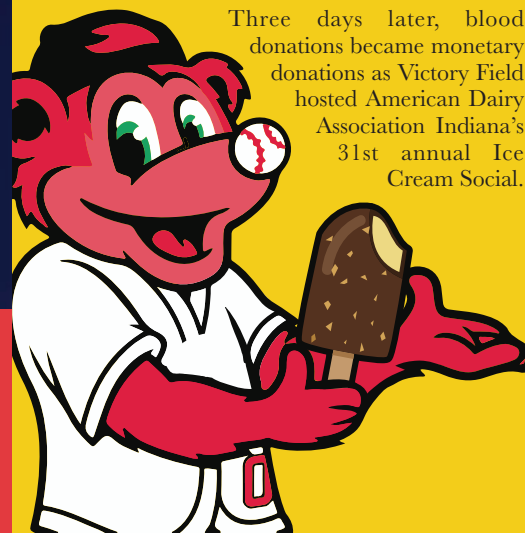
by **CHEYNE REITER**

When the 2020 Minor League Baseball season was canceled on June 30, Indianapolis Indians Charities' preparation for two early-July community events gave Tribe fans an alternative to Indians games at Victory Field.

In partnership with American Red Cross Indiana, IIC helped Victory Field host a blood drive on Tuesday, July 7.

Blood drive time slots filled quickly with many of the donors being Indianapolis Indians front office members. In total, 62 blood donors churned out 57 units of blood, equating to a potential 171 lives saved.

Three days later, blood donations became monetary donations as Victory Field hosted American Dairy Association Indiana's 31st annual Ice Cream Social.



On Friday, July 10, nice weather contributed to a large turnout for the Ice Cream Social – one of downtown Indy's greatest summer traditions typically held on Monument Circle. ADAI needed drive-thru capabilities to make the 31st version of the Ice Cream Social work during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Victory Field's multi-entrance/exit parking lot was the ideal space. The event also had a walk-up aspect to it, with attendees entering the Victory Field Center Field Gate to enjoy their pre-packaged ice cream novelties in PNC Plaza, as well as on the left and right field lawns.

All monetary donations made during the Ice Cream Social went to Second Helpings, a nonprofit dedicating its efforts to food hunger relief in Central Indiana. IIC contributed \$5,000 to the overall \$8,000 that was donated to Second Helpings. ♥



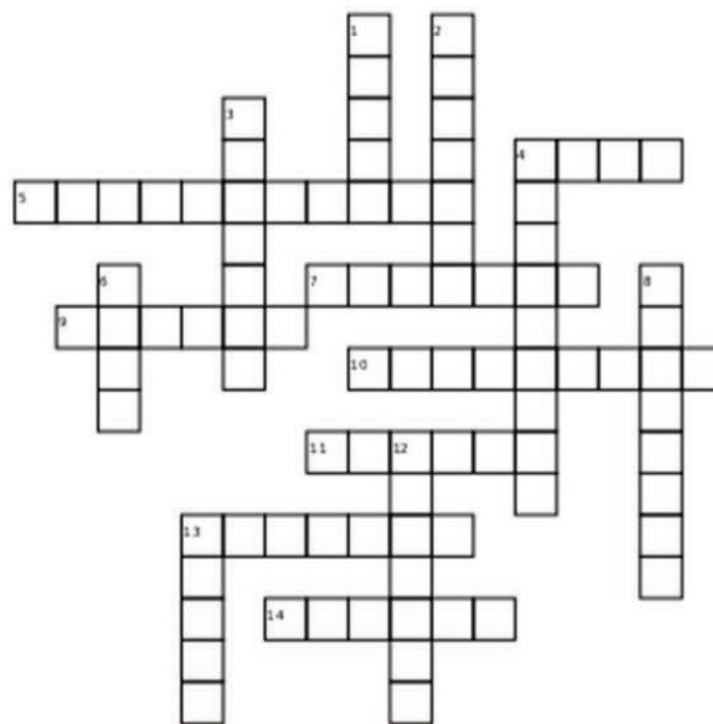
## ROWDIE MAD LIB

Fill in each space with the suggested word type to complete the story.

ONE NIGHT, \_\_\_\_\_ WAS HAVING  
 (PERSON)  
 TROUBLE TUCKING ROWDIE INTO BED.  
 TO HELP, HE/SHE TRIED READING HIM  
 \_\_\_\_\_. WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK,  
 (BOOK)  
 HE/SHE GAVE ROWDIE A WARM GLASS  
 OF \_\_\_\_\_. AFTER THAT FAILED  
 (BEVERAGE)  
 THEY HAD HIM DO \_\_\_\_\_ BUT ALAS,  
 (TYPE OF EXERCISE)  
 NO SUCCESS. FINALLY, HE/SHE TOOK  
 ROWDIE TO \_\_\_\_\_ WHERE  
 (PLACE)  
 HE FELL ASLEEP.

## CROSSWORD

Read the clues below and fill in with the correct answer.



Down:

1. Arni's Restaurant serves these
2. (word) tenders, great dipped in sauces
3. Breaded, twisted snack
4. Delicious german sausage
6. Tater (word)
8. Comes in a cone
12. Deep fried hot dog
13. Carbonated beverage company

Across:

4. Adult beverage
5. Buy me some peanuts and...
7. Salty, classic ballpark snack
9. Helps people get out of bed in the morning
10. Beef patty in between bread
11. Crunchy, cheesy food
13. Often enjoyed in a movie theater
14. There's a debate on if this is a sandwich



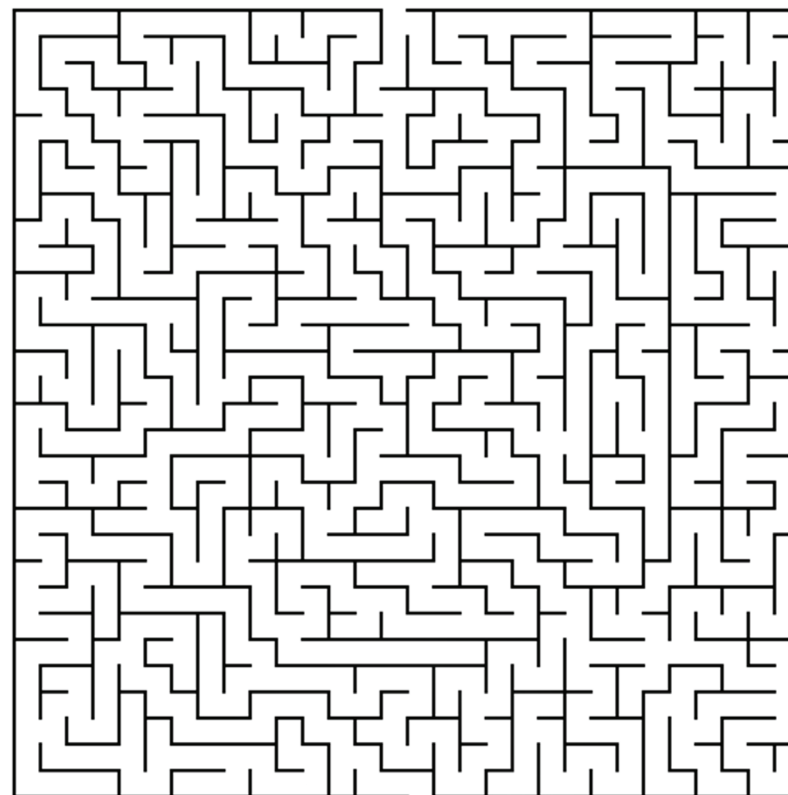
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# Stepping INTO THE FUTURE

## JACOB STALLINGS CAN'T KEEP THE FUTURE ON HOLD ANYMORE

by MEGAN GARCIA

Jacob Stallings was in his early 20s when he was the starting catcher for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Reaching the major leagues wasn't on his mind then; it wasn't the be-all and end-all. Coaches told him that he could possibly reach that level because of his defensive skills behind the plate, but it was a long shot in his eyes.

Fast forward to now, at 30 years old, Stallings is the primary catcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates in an abbreviated 2020 season.

He cracked the major league club's Opening Day roster for a second consecutive year since being selected by the Pirates in the seventh round of the 2012 First-Year Player Draft. The Kansas-born backstop made his major league debut in 2016 but spent most of the last four seasons hopping between Indianapolis and Pittsburgh.

So, after eight seasons in the minor leagues, making the Opening Day roster was once again the goal. He did even better. On Friday, July 24, Stallings became the first homegrown catcher to make an Opening Day start for the Pirates since Ryan Doumit in 2011.

"[Those years in the minors] were definitely challenging, for sure, going up and down as many times as I did. As I think back, making my debut in 2016 was obviously exciting and unexpected for me," Stallings said. "I think it would have been a lot harder if Indy wasn't such a great place to play, but I loved Indy. I loved playing there, so to make the constant back and forth was a lot easier to handle."

As spring training 1.0 ramped up toward what would have been Opening Day on March 26, Stallings was hoping to at least break camp with the Pirates. He hit .350 in eight Grapefruit League games and started behind the plate in seven of those contests, giving him a good look at what his future could hold. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing Major League Baseball to postpone its upcoming season for the foreseeable future.





**"[THOSE YEARS IN THE MINORS] WERE DEFINITELY CHALLENGING, FOR SURE. GOING UP AND DOWN AS MANY TIMES AS I DID. AS I THINK BACK, MAKING MY DEBUT IN 2016 WAS OBVIOUSLY EXCITING AND UNEXPECTED FOR ME."**

**- JACOB STALLINGS,  
FORMER INDIANS CATCHER**

He retreated to his Nashville home with his wife and two daughters and awaited the green light to begin summer camp with his teammates. Stallings was able to do some catching drills from his home, but working on his physicality proved tougher than anything else.

Tennessee gyms were closed in compliance with the state's stay-at-home orders due to the alarming rates of coronavirus cases. The weight room in PNC Park was roughly 560 miles away from Nashville, while LECOM Park, the Pirates' spring training facility, was nearly 750 miles. So, he resorted to the one place that would allow him to get in his weightlifting reps: his parents' basement.

"My parents just had dumbbells up to 60 pounds, so I was just doing anything and everything that I could to make little workouts out of that. Lunges and just kind of being creative so it didn't get monotonous," Stallings said. "There were some days where it was tough to motivate myself in that basement but hopefully, I see some of the rewards this year."

The regular-season hiatus was less about adding muscle rather than maintaining the strength he had already built. The dumbbells in a basement were a far cry from a typical weightlifting program, and the sports blackout soon became a juggling act of staying in shape for whenever MLB decided to start the season and fighting off worries of what a year without baseball could mean for his career.

As negotiations went back and forth between MLB and the Players Association to start a season that was plagued by the pandemic, the possibility of expanded rosters meant that Stallings was most likely going to get his shot at reaching the big leagues on a full-time basis. But instead of being a backup catcher, the Pirates were planning to have Stallings as their primary backstop.

"Going into each of the last couple seasons of being the third guy or the second guy due to injury, this is exciting," Stallings said. "I just want to play well and win some games. Take advantage of the opportunity and be a good teammate and a good catcher to all of our guys."

This is first time that Stallings has been in conversations to be a starter for the Pirates in his career. He's suited up 95 times for Pittsburgh across four seasons, with only 83 of those appearances being behind the plate. In 2019 he appeared in 71 games – 61 behind the plate – and hit for a .262 batting average with six home runs and 13 RBI. He ended the season tied for third in the league with San Francisco Giants All-Star Buster Posey with 14 defensive runs saved among catchers. A scoreless inning of relief against the St. Louis Cardinals in the Pirates' 14-8 loss on July 24, 2019 even has his career ERA on the mound at 0.00.

2020 will be different, like it's already proven to be. The 60-game sprint to the finish line and the 16-team expanded playoffs leave any possibility up in the air as to how the year will play out for Stallings and the Pirates.

Making an Opening Day roster as a franchise's primary catcher wasn't part of Stallings' plans when he suited up with the likes of Kyle Seager and Matt Harvey at UNC Chapel Hill. He's approached his career by planning for the next day, which now involves watching videos of the major league hitters the Pirates will face and devise a plan of attack in and around the strike zone.

"I was fortunate in that I never really worried about the future. I was always where my feet were and just focused on getting better," Stallings said. "I don't think it's something I can appreciate as much while I'm in it right now because so much of the focus is on getting better. When I'm done playing, I'll be able to look back and hopefully be proud of my career."

In his second MLB Opening Day, batting in the eighth spot as the starting catcher, Stallings was the Pirates offensive and defensive force against the Cardinals. He prevented a run from scoring on an errant throw to third, threw out speedster Tommy Edman on a stolen-base attempt and his two-run single in the seventh inning vs. Jack Flaherty were the first runs of the game for Pittsburgh.

In what has been a weird 2020, Stallings has been given an opportunity by the big-league club. It appears he's ready to run with it. ♥







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2



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3



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1

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2

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3

**HOUSTON ROCKETS**



4

**HOUSTON TEXANS**



5

**PITTSBURGH PENGUINS**







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# BLAKE WEIMAN'S

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**2**



**LAKE POWELL, UT**

**3**



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**4**



**ASPEN, CO**

**5**



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