



GAMEDAY

AUGUST 2025

LETTER FROM THE TEAM

Hillcats Fans,

Thank you for your continued support of the Lynchburg Hillcats.

When we purchased the team in October of last year, we knew there was work to be done to get the fan experience up to our standards. Fortunately for us all, we inherited a dedicated staff that shares our goal of making our team the best family-friendly entertainment available to the 434.

During this season, you'll begin to notice small improvements and changes to the fan experience. These will include more affordable food and concessions offerings to our community, new artwork around the stadium, and a reimagined game area for fans of all ages. At the completion of the 2025 season, we will embark on a major stadium renovation made possible by the dedicated efforts and support of the Lynchburg City Council.

Along first-base, we plan to add a second floor covered bar and lounge stretching down the concourse, a new picnic area along the right field foul line, and a new carousel and carnival area beyond that. Along the third-base concourse, we plan to add a new two-tier bar and over-21 lounge area. Finally, we will replace all of our bleachers with food and drink rail seating and add new cabanas in the main seating bowl. As you can see, the scope of our project is expansive and we hope you become as excited as we are to see it completed before the start of the 2026 season.

Our family has had roots in Lynchburg for three generations and we are very fortunate to help write the next chapter of baseball in Lynchburg.

Warmly,

Dylan, Holly, Abby, Olivia, and Ivy Narang



CLARIK





HILLCATS CLINCH PLAYOFF SPOT

The Lynchburg Hillcats celebrated the first-half crown with a heart-racing 2-1 victory over the Carolina Mudcats on Sunday afternoon.

Coming into the series, the Hillcats needed to sweep the series to clinch on their home field. Facing the division leaders since the start of the season, Lynchburg rattled off six in a row at home to take the title. In addition, they extended their season-high win streak to nine games.

For Lynchburg, it will be their first postseason appearance since 2022.

Lynchburg would do early damage in the first inning. Despite losing their leadoff runner on a failed double steal, the Hillcats would still score two on a Luis Merejo two-run single up-the-middle.

From there, it became a pitcher's duel. Lynchburg and Carolina each had opportunities with runner's in scoring position, but each time, they came up empty.

It was not until the seventh inning when Carolina would scratch across their first run. After a triple from Reece Walling off the center field wall, he would scamper home on a wild pitch, cutting the deficit to one.

Carolina would have another chance in the eighth with a runner in scoring position, but Luis Flores would strike out the final two batters of the inning to leave the runner stranded.

Then in the ninth, after two quick outs, an error allowed Carolina another runner in scoring position. With Jesus Made at the plate, he would ground sharply to third. Alberto Mendez gathered and rifled a dart to Robert Lopez at first to clinch the first half title.

The party commenced and the champagne flew as Lynchburg secured their first postseason trip since 2022, which will begin on Tuesday, September 9. Ticket information for the Divisional Round will be provided at a later date.

Lynchburg travels down to Augusta and Charleston over the next two weeks before returning to face Salem July 1-6 at Bank of the James Stadium. Tickets to see the first half champs are on sale at Lynchburg-hillcats.com.



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FIVE DRAFTEES TO WATCH

One of the most intriguing sections of the Minor League Baseball season are the weeks following the MLB Draft.

With the new shrunken roster sizes, the decisions made by the parent club become more impactful, as it often means tons of roster moves. As the Cleveland Guardians evaluate their 2025 draft class, the Lynchburg Hillcats anxiously await which players will be assigned to the Hill City for the postseason run.

All draftees must be assigned to a team within the organization by August 5. However, entering the month, it is often fun to speculate which players may put on the green and blue for the remainder of the season.

The following are five possible draftees who could find their way to Lynchburg for the home stretch. In addition, a scouting report and explanation of why they may fit into the 2025 postseason plan for the Hillcats is included.

The order is based on when and where they were drafted in the MLB Draft, not a ranking of the likelihood of them arriving in the 434. So, let's have some fun! Shall we?

AARON WALTON - OF - UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA - RD. CB-B (66)

Scouting grades: Hit: 45 | Power: 50 | Run: 55 | Arm: 50 | Field: 50 | Overall: 40

A product of the Tennessee high school scene, Walton spent his first two seasons of college ball playing for Samford University in Alabama. He entered the transfer portal and headed west to Arizona for more exposure. The move has paid off and Walton has been able to display his physicality and tools against better competition to move him up Draft boards, though his performance lagged a bit in conference play.



A big, strong right-handed hitter, Walton has a bit of a linebacker-type build that's a little Mike Trout-ish at 6-foot-3 and 219 pounds. When Walton arrived in Tucson in the fall, his hit tool was a bit behind the others and he's still power over pure bat, showing some swing-and-miss. But he made some adjustments heading into the spring and has struck out less with the Wildcats than he did with Samford while drawing more walks. He's incorporated a leg kick to help him get to the inside fastball and has gotten more power to his pull side.

Walton runs well and showed this fall he can play a solid center field, moving Brendan Summerhill to right, with a decent arm to boot. It's an intriguing profile with strength and athleticism, and a team that thinks it can tease a little more consistency at the plate from Walton will take him on Day 2 of the Draft, perhaps seeing a Harrison Bader-type career in the future. (MLB Pipeline)

Rationale: The Cleveland Guardians went heavy on the bats in this year's draft. Furthermore, they invested in the outfield, finding players that challenge the typical Guardians persona. In reality, of this list, Walton may be more of a dream than reality for the Hillcats. However, the Hillcats have lost several outfielders this season, including Tommy Hawke and Nick Mitchell, and have struggled to fill that role. With the log jam of outfielders in Lake County, it's a fair assumption that if an outfielder continues their season at the Minor League level, Walton may see himself in Lynchburg. However, due to his draft position and high-level collegiate experience, he's also a candidate to begin his season at Lake County.

ANTHONY MARTINEZ - 1B - UC IRVINE - RD. 8 (252)

Scouting grades: Hit: 55 | Power: 45 | Run: 35 | Arm: 40 | Field: 40 | Overall: 40

A product of De La Salle High School in Northern California (which most recently produced Giants lefty Kyle Harrison), Martinez traveled southward to stay in-state and attend UC Irvine for college ball. He made a very strong first impression, hitting .394 with 11 homers and an OPS north of 1.000 in 2023 to land on several freshman All-American lists. He was solid, but not as explosive as a sophomore and earned a spot on USA Baseball's Collegiate National Team in 2024. And while his early numbers were more modest to start out 2025 as he battled through a hamstring issue, scouts were still impressed with his work at the plate.





Most evaluators have conviction that Martinez will hit at the next level. He makes contact at an elite rate and rarely strikes out while using a quick, short swing from the left side of the plate. He has very fast hands and excellent strike zone awareness. Right now, it's very much a hit-over-power profile and he's content to go the other way and not concern himself with loft. There is plenty of strength and raw power in there and a pro team could work with him to add leverage to get to it more consistently.

Martinez is going to have to hit to make it to the big leagues, and he's going to have to add some thump if he wants to profile at first base, the only position he possibly could play defensively. He's not a good defender and was DHing even more this season because of the hamstring, but there is some risk it will be his long-term home as a big leaguer. (MLB Pipeline)

Rationale: The Hillcats are in desperate need of a first baseman. Currently, Robert Lopez, a recently converted catcher, finds himself covering the bag alongside Luis Merejo. The Guardians also drafted Vanderbilt first baseman Riley Nelson. He seems better suited for a placement at Lake County, leaving Martinez to start his professional career in Lynchburg. A first baseman arriving in the Hill City is not unheard of after the draft. In 2023, CJ Kayfus began his professional trek in Lynchburg. The knock on Kayfus tended to be his lack of power, which he has somewhat quieted. For Martinez, his biggest knock is his fielding. No better place to practice than in Lynchburg.

RYAN DESANTO - LHP - PENN STATE - RD. 12 (372)

Scouting grades: Fastball: 45 | Slider: 50 | Changeup: 50 | Control: 50 | Overall: 40

In 2025, Penn State's baseball program was the beneficiary of a pair of players coming from St. Joseph's. Ryan Weingartner was the Nittany Lions' shortstop and DeSanto was a mainstay in the rotation after two years of starting for the Hawks and a strong turn in the Cape Cod League, when he was named Harwich's Pitcher of the Year. The big left-hander wasn't quite as effective with Penn State, but he did take over as the Friday night guy in March.

From a pure stuff standpoint, the 6-foot-4 DeSanto isn't anything to write home about. It's a below-average fastball from a velocity standpoint, averaging only around 88 mph in 2025 and topping out at 93 mph. But the data on the pitch is off the charts, with huge spin rates that lead to a ton of carry to make it very effective above the hands, a reason why it produced a 24-percent miss rate and opponents only hit .182 against the pitch. His

upper-70s slider also features good spin, and he kills it with a changeup thrown a tick or two harder than the breaking ball.

In addition to the metrics, DeSanto's funky delivery adds a ton of deception, allowing all of his stuff to play up. There's not a ton of margin for error here based on the velocity profile -- perhaps a team will think a few more ticks out of that big frame are possible -- and he'll have to find better command, especially of his breaking stuff, for him to be a back-end starter at the highest level.

Rationale: DeSanto seems like nearly a lock to finish the season at a Minor League affiliate. He did not find himself pitching deep into the season, making his last start for Penn State on May 21. His season numbers were solid at Penn State, he finished 8-2 with a 3.96 ERA with an average of a strikeout per inning. In addition, DeSanto is a former collegiate teammate of current-Hillcat Ryan Cesarini at Saint Joseph's. For a guy transitioning to the professional level, it may be helpful to have a familiar face around.



AARON SAVARY - RHP - IOWA - RD. 13 (402)

Scouting Report: University of Iowa junior Aaron Savary was selected by the Cleveland Guardians on Monday in the 13th Round of the 2025 Major League Baseball Draft. Savary was the 402nd pick overall.

Savary is the 36nd player drafted under head coach Rick Heller.

The Dubuque, Iowa, native had a 7-2 record with a 4.37 ERA in 15 starts in 2025. He struck out 82 in 80 1/3 innings of work.

Savary had a career 12-3 record over 45 appearances. He struck out 147 batters over 141 1/3 innings.

The Hawkeyes closed the 2025 season with a 33-22-1 overall record. Iowa finished third in the Big Ten regular season standings and made their 10th straight Big Ten Tournament appearance. (University of Iowa)

Rationale: Similar to DeSanto, Savary did not have to worry about pitching deep into the postseason. In addition, because the Big 10 is limited earlier in the season due to frigid weather, it can often be difficult to get them as many outdoor reps. Instead of sending Savary to Arizona, they may want to see what he has to offer in facing professional talent. His strikeout rate nearly doubled from his previous season at Iowa, which is something that meshes well with the current Hillcats pitching staff. In addition, he has a similar frame to the Hillcats current Pitching Coach, Shane McCarthy. The Guardians may want them to work together before the end of the season.

CANNON PEEBLES - C - TENNESSEE - RD. 17 (522)

Scouting Report: Tennessee junior catcher Cannon Peebles was selected selected by the Cleveland Guardians in the 17th round with the No. 522 of the 2025 Major League Baseball Draft. The slugger was a draft-eligible junior who spent two seasons on Rocky Top and the 2025 campaign as the everyday catcher.

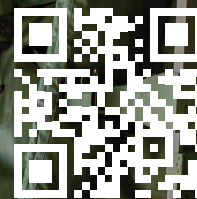
The junior hit for a .253 average across 178 at-bats in 2025, launching 11 home runs with 41 runs batted in and 31 runs scored. Peebles tied for second on the team with seven home runs and 22 RBI in Southeastern Conference play. He missed one game of the Fayetteville Super Regional against Arkansas due to being ejected in the Knoxville Regional Final against Wake Forest.

Peebles' first year with the Vols was as a sophomore in 2024 where he hit .216 with two homers and 24 RBI in 54 games with 34 starts. He saw the bulk of his cation towards the end of the season as a designated hitter for the Vols.

The catcher signed with NC State out of high school and led the Wolfpack with a .352 average, .697 slugging percentage and .456 on-base percentage as the club's designated hitter.

Peebles did not appear as a top-500 MLB Draft prospect per Baseball America or the top-250 from MLB Pipeline ahead of draft weekend. (Eric Cain; On3)

Rationale: The Guardians attacked the draft looking to get a pair of catchers. They walked away with several, and Peebles was the last taken of the bunch. After a strong start to his collegiate career at NC State, he never found his footing in the SEC with Tennessee. His numbers were underwhelming, which led him to miss Baseball America's Top-500 Draft Prospects list. However, he showed enough that Cleveland took a shot at seeing if they can find the Wolfpack form of Peebles. He's a strong candidate for Lynchburg as he grew up not far from the Hill City, spending his early years in Ashland, Virginia. A return towards family and friends may be what's needed to spark the catching prospect. Plus, the catching name combination of Logun "The Gun" Clark and Cannon Peebles could have runners in the Carolina League spooked.



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GUARDIANS TOP 30 PROFILE: #12 JUNEIKER CACERES

Though Caceres' \$300,000 bonus was just the eighth-highest in the Guardians' 2024 international class, he might be the best player in the crop. He exceeded expectations in his first taste of pro ball, slashing .340/.425/.504 and leading the Rookie-level Dominican Summer League's 16-year-olds in on-base percentage and strikeout rate (11 percent). He may be the youngest player in the Rookie-level Arizona Complex League when he makes his U.S. debut this year.

Caceres takes aggressive uphill swings from the left side of the plate yet has a knack for putting the barrel on the ball. Though he didn't homer in his debut, he did drill 17 extra-base hits in 40 games while producing high-end exit velocities for his age. He uses the entire field well and has no trouble driving the ball in the air, so he could hit for a solid average with 20-homer power once he adds strength and is fully developed.

Caceres possesses just fringy to average speed yet will steal and take extra bases when given the opportunity. He has good outfield instincts as well, though he projects to lose a step as his 5-foot-10 frame gets thicker. He divided his time among all three outfield spots in 2024 but fits best on the corners and has average arm strength.

Courtesy: MLB Pipeline





A NEW ERA OF MEMORIES

The Lynchburg Hillcats are thrilled to announce several new changes coming to the ballpark for the 2025 season.

With single game tickets on-sale today, fans can explore all the new additions to the organization, from our ownership down to our gameday operations.

New to the club this year is Dylan K. Narang, who has taken over ownership of the team. Narang is no stranger to professional baseball, having served as a minority owner of the Albuquerque Isotopes before selling his stake at the start of 2024.

A Virginia native, after graduating from UVA's School of Commerce in 2002, Narang enlisted in the U.S. Army. After his active service he pursued an MBA from Georgetown University and earned a commission in the U.S. Army Reserve. In 2011, he completed an MFA from Chapman University, coinciding with the creation of his own media production company, Foggy Bottom Pictures.

Narang, who currently resides in Washington, D.C., purchased the club from the Elmore Sports Group, who concluded a nine-year run as owners of the Hillcats.

The sale of the organization ushers in a new era of baseball in the Hill City, with a renewed focus towards creating a family friendly atmosphere. New for 2025, the organization is proud to announce a large-scale reduction in concessions prices to make Lynchburg baseball affordable with an eye on families.

Furthermore, summer nights at the ballpark just became a lot cooler, with the installation of a new soft serve ice cream machine. Fans can enjoy cups each night throughout the season.

Finally, the Hillcats are installing a new in-house dining option serving Mexican cuisine.

Beyond the concessions stand, the Hillcats are building the best promotional calendar in team history. This season, the schedule includes nearly 20 giveaways and a dozen fireworks shows. Giveaways include jersey and t-shirt giveaways, campfire mugs, and multiple hat giveaways.



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VOTE FOR PLAYER OF THE YEAR

The Lynchburg Hillcats are excited to bring back one of the traditions from our past this season.

Lynchburg and Arthur's Jewelry are teaming up to bring back the Hillcats Player of the Year! Fan's in attendance at Bank of the James Stadium will have the opportunity to place their vote for which Hillcats's player they believe deserves the award.

As part of the award, both the player and one of the fans that voted for them will receive a free watch, courtesy of Arthur's Jewelry. The award and the watch will be handed out at Fan Appreciation Night on August 31st.

Arthur's Jewelry is a family owned and operated jewelry store located in Bedford, Virginia. Located at 111 N Bridge St., Arthur's Jewelry is the community's home for engagement rings, fine jewelry, and diamonds.

Fans can cast their vote for Player of the Year by visiting the promotions booth located on the concourse during any of the Hillcats home games in 2025.

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HILLCAT ALUMNI

SPOTLIGHT:

PARKER MESSICK

Parker Chase Messick, a left-handed pitcher drafted in the second round (54th overall) of the 2022 MLB Draft out of Florida State, began his professional career in the Guardians system with the ACL Guardians and was assigned to the Single-A Lynchburg Hillcats in April 2023. In 13 starts for Lynchburg, he posted a record of 3-2 with a 3.02 ERA, tallied 61 strikeouts, and maintained a 1.09 WHIP. His control and poise earned him a Carolina League Pitcher of the Week honor in May 2023.

On June 27, 2023, Messick was promoted to the High-A Lake County Captains. quickly made an impact. In his first 13 appearances (11 starts) with Lake County, he produced 75 strikeouts in about 64 innings, an ERA of 4.43, and a strikeouts-per-nine rate over 10.38. Over that span, he ranked among the Midwest League leaders in innings and strikeouts. Notably, in May 2024 he registered ten strikeouts over six shutout innings against West Michigan, earning Lake County's "Captain of the Week" and showcasing his elite swing-and-miss ability.

Messick earned a mid-season promotion in June 2024 to the Akron RubberDucks (Double-A) where his development accelerated. He delivered several standout outings, including an August 2024 quality start that featured eight strikeouts for Akron. In total, he earned Eastern League postseason All-Star honors for 2024 after combining for a sub-2.10 ERA over 65 2/3 innings at Double-A and a cumulative ERA of just 2.83 over the full 2024 campaign split between High-A and Double-A, striking out 165 batters in 133.2 innings.

Messick opened the 2025 season with Triple-A Columbus Clippers on April 1, 2025. . In his second Triple-A start on April 11, he went five scoreless innings with eight strikeouts and no walks, capping a dominant performance in which the Clippers staff fanned 16 batters collectively. . Over 17 starts with Columbus in 2025, he posted a 4-4 record, 3.47 ERA, 99 strikeouts in 80.1 innings, a 1.27 WHIP, and a .215 batting average against. Per Baseball America, he also posted a 29.1 % strikeout rate and a 3.99 xFIP in Triple-A.

Since his time with the Lynchburg Hillcats, Parker Messick has steadily risen through High-A and Double-A to Triple-A, demonstrating elite strikeout ability, control, and pitch mix development. His physical transformation, improved velocity, and confidence in four-seam, sinker, slider, curve, and especially plus change-up have allowed him to dominate each level. As of mid-2025, he remains on the cusp of a major league breakthrough and represents a highly promising future piece of Cleveland's starting rotation.



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4/8 OPENING NIGHT

4/11 VINTAGE T-SHIRT GIVEAWAY

4/13 VINTAGE PENNANT GIVEAWAY

4/25 K9 & WINE NIGHT

4/26 YOUTH LEAGUE NIGHT + FIREWORKS

4/27 YOUTH HAT GIVEAWAY

5/2 MENTAL HEALTH NIGHT

5/3 CINCO DE MAYO CELEBRATION + FIREWORKS

5/4 HILLCATS' PILLOWCASE GIVEAWAY

5/16 MARGARITAVILLE NIGHT + HAWAIIAN SHIRT GIVEAWAY

5/17 AUTISM AWARENESS + JERSEY AUCTION

5/18 MATCHBOX CAR GIVEAWAY

5/30 PICKLEBALL NIGHT + PICKLEBALL PADDLE GIVEAWAY

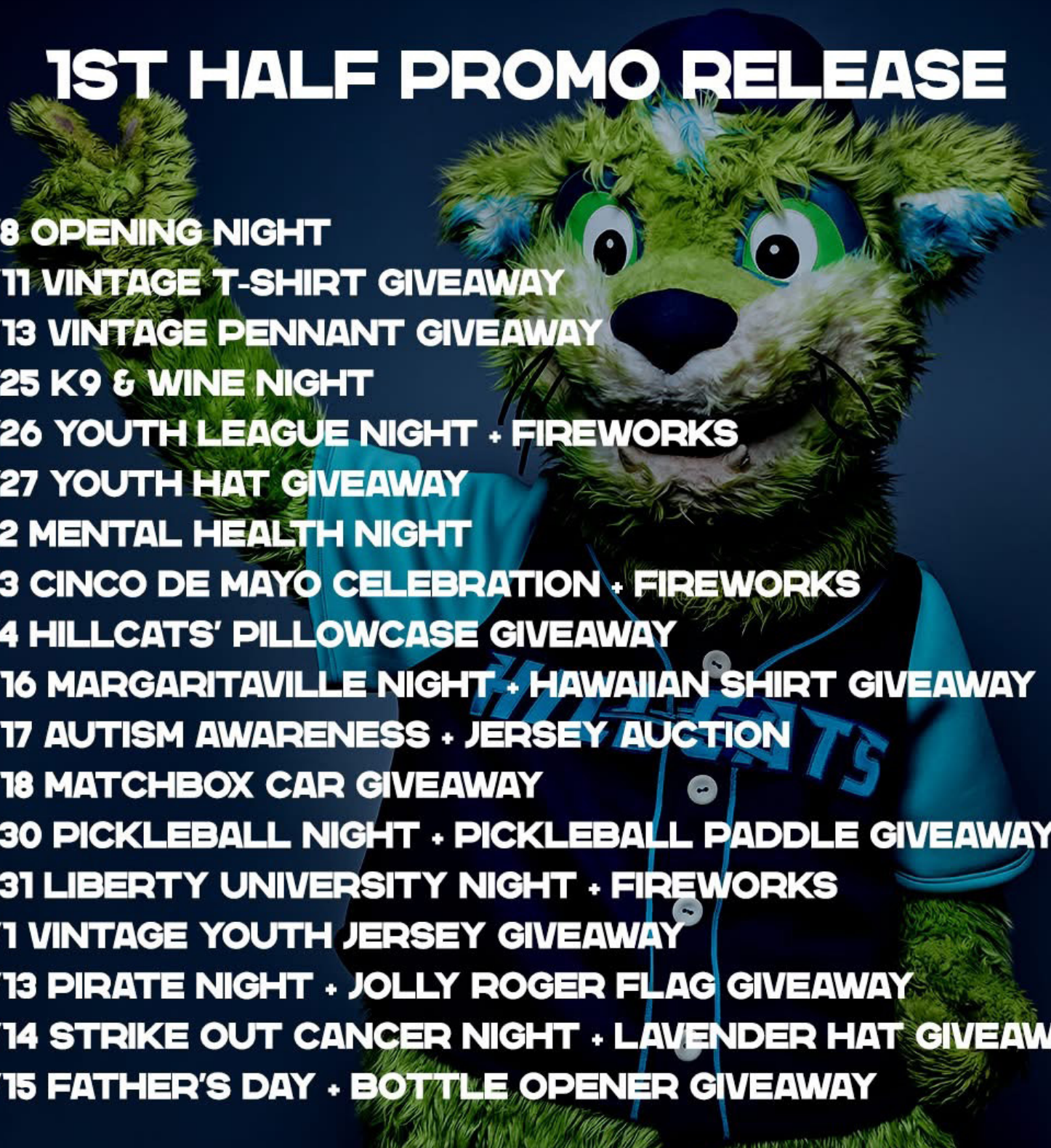
5/31 LIBERTY UNIVERSITY NIGHT + FIREWORKS

6/1 VINTAGE YOUTH JERSEY GIVEAWAY

6/13 PIRATE NIGHT + JOLLY ROGER FLAG GIVEAWAY

6/14 STRIKE OUT CANCER NIGHT + LAVENDER HAT GIVEAWAY

6/15 FATHER'S DAY + BOTTLE OPENER GIVEAWAY



HILLCATS STATEMENT ON FORMER MANAGER TONY MANSOLINO

Former Lynchburg Hillcats manager Tony Mansolino has been named the interim manager of the Baltimore Orioles.

Mansolino is the last Hillcats skipper to lead the team to a Carolina League Championship, which he did during his lone season at the helm in 2017. That season, he led Lynchburg to a record of 87-52 while defeating the Frederick Keys to claim a share of the league crown. The Championship series against Down East was cancelled due to Hurricane Irma, and both teams were named co-champions.

In addition, Mansolino was named the Carolina League Manager of the Year for his performance.

“Although Tony was with the Hillcats for just a season, his impact was great,” Hillcats owner Dylan Narang said. “In his only year with the Hillcats, Lynchburg finished with the best record in the Carolina League - a feat the Hill City had not seen since 1992. Additionally, the Hillcats were Co-Champions of the league and that honor is no doubt due to Tony who was also named Carolina League Manager of the Year. We wish him great success as he takes another step forward as interim manager of the Baltimore Orioles.”

Following Lynchburg, Mansolino would continue to climb the ranks with the Cleveland Indians organization (now named the Cleveland Guardians), culminating in serving as their interim third-base coach during the 2020 season.

Following the season, he was hired by the Orioles, becoming their full-time third-base coach, where he remained until this season.

“I’m excited to see Tony take on this new opportunity with the Baltimore Orioles,” Ryan Henson, the Hillcats clubhouse assistant in 2017, said. “After spending a season in the clubhouse with him in 2017, I saw his work ethic and drive on full display. He was easy to work with and well deserving of his new role.”

Mansolino replaces Brandon Hyde, who was fired following a slow start to the season from the Orioles. He now has the chance to guide young stars such as Gunnar Henderson, Jackson Holliday, and Adley Rutschman in their professional journeys.

The Lynchburg Hillcats are proud that his journey to the majors began within the confines of Bank of the James Stadium.





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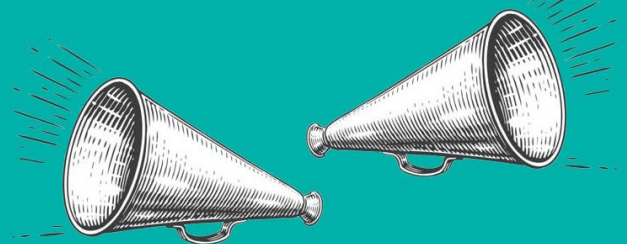


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COOPERSTOWN FEATURE: THEY'RE STILL THE WHIZ KIDS

75 years after winning the NL pennant, Philadelphia's 1950 heroes remain legends.

By BILL FRANCIS

Dubbed the "Whiz Kids" because of the youth of their key players, the upstart 1950 Philadelphia Phillies remain memorable 75 years later despite being swept by another iconic club of the era, the star-studded New York Yankees, in the Fall Classic.

Few teams captured the spirit of their era better than the team that nearly brought the city's National League franchise its first World Series title.

The Phils had trouble winning almost from their start as a National League member in 1883. Rarely finishing a campaign with a winning record, the team more often than not found themselves in the second division of an eight- or 10-team loop and posted 30 losing seasons in 31 years from 1918-48. But the tide was turning by the late 1940s, a positive change most often credited to new ownership, a front office shakeup, a midseason change at manager and an influx of young talent.



COOPERTOWN



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Head for Home

Along with the Junior Circuit's Philadelphia Athletics, the two Philly teams shared the same ballpark, Shibe Park, since midseason 1938. While the A's under longtime manager and owner Connie Mack had periods of success over the decades, including most recently three straight World Series appearances and two titles between 1929 and '31, their NL counterparts had never won a world championship while only winning one pennant when the 1915 aggregation was led by future Hall of Famer Grover Cleveland Alexander's 31 victories.

Under the stewardship of Bob Carpenter, who acquired the Phillies in 1943, and the shrewd front office leadership of Herb Pennock, the onetime southpaw for the A's who made his name as a Yankees hurler in the 1920s and named general manager of the franchise in December 1943, the groundwork was laid and the future looked bright. By 1949, the team, at 81-73, had their first above .500 mark since 1932.

Led by skipper Eddie Sawyer, who replaced Ben Chapman in July 1948, the Phillies had a youth movement taking place on the diamond, supported by a few important veteran leaders, as the 1950 season got underway. Unfortunately, Pennock wouldn't live to see it, as the man who had acquired most of the team's talent passed away in 1948, the same year he would be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

After an inauspicious start, the 1950 Phillies won 11 of 13 in early May to place them above .500 – where they would remain for the rest of the season – but also gave them their first taste of first place among the eight NL teams. Overall, they would spend 113 days during the '50 campaign in the top spot, an unfamiliar spot for this franchise.

Despite this unprecedented success, baseball writers persisted in referring to them as the “Phutle Phils.” Their prior Modern Era history, which included finishing in last place 17 times, almost demanded it.

The colorful moniker, the “Whiz Kids,” was apt for this team, with most of their roster aged 25-or-younger, including third baseman Willie “Puddin’ Head” Jones (24), shortstop Granny Hamner (23), outfielders Del Ennis (25) and Richie Ashburn (23), and starting pitchers Robin Roberts (23), Bob Miller (24), Bubba Church (25) and Curt Simmons (21).

They had a combination of youth and experience, though, with veteran contributions coming from first baseman Eddie Waitkus (30), second baseman Mike Goliat (28), outfielder Dick Sisler (29), catcher Andy Seminick (29) and relief ace Jim Konstanty (33).

“They call this team the ‘Whiz Kids,’” said 35-year-old reserve outfielder Bill Nicholson. “But me ... Jim Konstanty – we’re the ‘Was Kids.’”

In particular, the youthful starting mound crew benefited greatly from both Konstanty, who would set a then-MLB record with 74 appearances while winning 16 games and saving 22 more, and Seminick, whose knowledge of opposing hitters helped the young staff and whose bat, which walloped 24 home runs, provided needed power.

After a wait of 35 years for something to cheer about, no one blamed the fans for being enthusiastic. For only the second time in their history, the Phillies went over the one million-mark in attendance, 1,217,035. Even sheet music of a marching song, “The Fightin’ Phils,” became a bestseller in the city.

The Phillies won the flag on the last day of the season in dramatic fashion. Two weeks after holding their largest lead, 7½ games on Sept. 20, they faced the Dodgers at Ebbets Field on Oct. 1 in the final game of the regular season with a one-game lead on Brooklyn. The Phillies had lost five in a row entering the game.

Hoping to avoid a playoff, the Phils were tied with the Dodgers, 1-1, going into the ninth inning. The game remained even when Brooklyn's Cal Abrams was thrown out at the plate by Ashburn after Duke Snider singled with two on and no outs. Roberts then escaped the jam without allowing a run.

The next inning, in the top of the 10th, Sisler clubbed a three-run homer to deep left field off Don Newcombe to give Philadelphia a 4-1 lead it would not relinquish. Sisler, who had three hits in the game prior to his heroics, was the son of Hall of Famer George Sisler, who was a Dodgers front office executive at the time and sitting behind the Dodgers' dugout when his son connected.

The 1950 Phillies won the pennant with a 91-63 record, a season after coming in third at 81-73, 16 games back of Brooklyn. It was the first time the Phillies had consecutive winning seasons since 1915-17.

"Build up a fellow's confidence and you build up his ability," is how Sawyer once explained his philosophy. "Knock him all the time, his confidence disappears and the battle is lost."

Though they would be swept in the World Series, the Phillies were game throughout – losing the first three by one run each and the finale by three.

BBWAA Career Excellence Award honoree Shirley Povich, in a column from the day the World Series began, joked about the perceived mismatch: "I like the Yankees to win it, but I don't possibly see how they can do it in less than four games."

The star-studded Yankees included future Hall of Famers Casey Stengel, Yogi Berra, Joe DiMaggio, Whitey Ford, Johnny Mize and Phil Rizzuto. Cooperstown-bound Phillies numbered Ashburn and Roberts.

Phillies southpaw Curt Simmons was not available for the Fall Classic, his National Guard unit activated just before the Series. He had finished the regular season with 17 wins and a 3.40 earned run average. The 1950 World Series was also a matchup of league Most Valuable Players: Rizzuto batted .324 and scored 125 runs, while Konstanty compiled a 16-7 record with a 2.66 ERA.

"The way I set it up in my mind," Konstanty said, "every hitter I face is in a slump."

Konstanty, who had pitched in relief all season, started Game 1 for Philadelphia and lost, 1-0, to Vic Raschi, while Robin Roberts, a 20-game winner during the season, dropped a 2-1 game to Allie Reynolds when DiMaggio homered in the 10th inning. Game 3 was tied in the bottom of the ninth when Jerry Coleman won it with an RBI single off of reliever Russ Meyer. Hall of Famer Whitey Ford, only 21 at the time, started the clinching game and got the win.

For the Yankees it was their second straight title, their 13th in 17 chances, and another sweep added to the ones achieved in 1927, 1928, 1932, 1938 and 1939.

"Pitching was the story of this series," said Sawyer, who spent time in the upstate New York area near Cooperstown – having attended Ithaca College and received his Master's degree from Cornell University prior to managing in the minors with Binghamton and Utica. "Excepting for Raschi's job in the first game, I don't think their pitching was much better than ours, if any. But, as I said before, all our mistakes cost us."

The five pitchers used by the Yankees in the World Series had a combined 0.73 ERA. Of the 16 total runs scored by both teams, only five were tallied by Philadelphia.

The Game 1 start by Konstanty, the bespectacled righty who later in life opened a sporting goods store in Oneonta, N.Y., a 20-minute drive from the Baseball Hall of Fame, was his first in the majors since 1946. With Simmons unavailable, Sawyer bypassed Roberts, who would have been working on just two days' rest.

The rubber armed Konstanty, a control pitcher with a slider and palm ball, had pitched nine innings of relief against Pittsburgh on Aug. 25 and 10 relief innings in a 19-inning game against Cincinnati on Sept. 15.



“That slowball and the control and the confidence really does something to every batter in the league,” said Waitkus. “They sort of roll over and play dead. He pitches to them like they’re all off-balance – and I’m sure they are.”

Writing for the Philadelphia Daily News in 1986, Ashburn, who would go on to become a beloved broadcaster for the Phillies, tried to explain the hold the Whiz Kids had on the Philadelphia faithful.

“The Whiz Kids never should be confused with the Yankees of the late ‘20s, the Brooklyn Dodgers of the early ‘50s, the Milwaukee Braves of the late ‘50s or the Cincinnati Reds of the late ‘70s,” Ashburn wrote. “Those clubs were legitimate dynasties in baseball. The Whiz Kids were a young team that won a National League pennant one time and then proceeded to lose the World Series to the New York Yankees in four consecutive games.

“Despite this, the Whiz Kids have endured and seem to have endeared themselves in the hearts of Phillies baseball fans everywhere. Maybe it was the long dry spell of winning baseball in Philadelphia. The third place ‘49 Phillies, led by manager Eddie Sawyer, signaled a stretch of some pretty good baseball at Connie Mack Stadium.

Indeed, Sawyer called a meeting after the final game of that season and told the players, ‘We didn’t win this year, but we had the best team in the league the last half of the season.’

“He added: ‘Come back next spring ready to win.’”

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SOUTHPAW'S FUN ZONE

Baseball Terms:

Ball
Bat
Run
Helmet
Base
Pitcher
Catcher
Umpire
Outfielder
Shortstop
Infielder
Hit
Walk
Safe
Strikeout
Home run

Spanish Translations:

a. Almohadilla
b. Árbitro
c. Base por bolas
d. Bate
e. Carrera
f. Casco
g. Cuadrangular
h. Guardabosque
i. Jugador del cuadro
j. Lanzador
k. Pelota
l. Ponche
m. Quietto
n. Receptor
o. Sencillo
p. Torpedero

Match the baseball terms with their Spanish translations:

Ball _____
Bat _____
Run _____
Helmet _____
Base _____
Pitcher _____
Catcher _____
Umpire _____
Outfielder _____
Shortstop _____
Infielder _____
Hit _____
Walk _____
Safe _____
Strikeout _____
Home run _____

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