

FORECAST

Volume 21 Issue 3 Spring 2020

presented by:



Elyria Catholic's Leighton Banjoff

2019 Lorain County
Mr. Baseball



Keystone's Sydney Campbell

2019 Lorain County
Miss Softball



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FORECAST

2020 Spring Preview

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About the Cover:

Elyria Catholic's **Leighton Banjoff** compiled a .483 career batting average and amassed 158 hits, 127 runs scored, 90 RBIs, 45 doubles, 13 triples, 10 home runs and 84 stolen bases during his high school career at Elyria Catholic. He was named the Great Lakes Conference Player of the Year twice in his career. Banjoff earned first-team Great Lakes Conference honors during all four years with the Panthers. He was named 2019 District Player of the Year and 2019 Lorain County Mr. Baseball in addition to garnering first-team all-district honors three times and first-team all-state accolades two times. He was a multi-sport athlete, he earned three letters in football and two letters in basketball. Banjoff was a member of National Honor Society, he graduated with a perfect 4.0 grade-point average and is attending Nebraska.

Keystone's **Sydney Campbell** threw a county-record, four perfect games en route to a state-record 63 consecutive victories in 2019. She went 25-1 with a 0.33 ERA, 267 strikeouts and 18 shutouts in 167 innings pitched. In her four year career at Keystone, she went 70-4 with a 0.50 ERA and 50 shutouts. She led the program to its fourth Division II state championship during her junior season, and to a state semifinals appearance in 2019. Besides the All-Ohio and Lorain County Miss Softball honors, she was named to the All-Lorain County first team, All-Patriot Athletic Conference first team, she was named the county's Pitcher of the Year, and earned Max-Preps All-American first team honors. Campbell is attending Oakland University in Michigan.

WEOL FORECAST MAGAZINE SPRING 2020 PREVIEW

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Welcome to FORECAST, the spring edition from AM 930 and the all-new 100.3 FM!

Remember when the Cleveland Indians would open their regular season in late March or early April? Sure you do, but due to the spread of the coronavirus, that's not the case this year.

In fact, the virus has impacted everyday living, and that includes the publication of this magazine. We are posting the latest, greatest information and schedules based on what we know (knew), but we realize, and hope you'll understand, that these are very strange and fluid times.

As we often say on The WEOL Morning Show, when in doubt, call ahead!

In the meantime, we send out a major 'thank you' to the advertisers who support FORECAST and our outstanding broadcasts, and of course, our local athletic directors, managers and coaches!

Hopefully, we'll hear the words, 'play ball' in the not-so-distant future!

Craig R. Adams

Operations Manager/News Director
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WHEELER

2020 Lorain County High School Softball Preview



JOE COLON

Amherst's Cassidy Kettleman.

By Todd Shapiro

Editors Note: Events and dates in article may change due to current circumstances

The days are getting longer, and hopefully warmer, and occasionally there's even a glimpse of the sun peering out from behind the gray clouds.

In Lorain County that means one thing, it's time for softball.

The 2019 season ended in the usual fashion with a pair of local teams, Elyria and Keystone, playing in the state tournament at Akron's Firestone Stadium and the AM930/100.3FM WEOL microphones bringing all of the action to listeners in Lorain County and around the world on WEOL.com.

Elyria's 4-2 loss to eventual Division I state champion Louisville and Keystone's 4-3 loss in a rain-delayed state semifinal against Hebron Lakewood brought to an end what was an amazing decade for softball in Lorain County.

Between 2011-19 a total of 15 Lorain County teams have advanced to the state tournament with three, Elyria in 2017 and Keystone in 2012 and 2018, winning state championships. Over that time four different Lorain County schools earned their way to Akron with Columbia and Amherst making their first state tournament appearances in 2013 and 2016 respectively.

What will the 2020's bring? The area's top teams hope to get the new decade off to a roaring start,

Elyria will have a familiar look heading into the new season. The Pioneers return all but one starter, outfielder Damia Parks from the 2019 team that finished with a 24-6 record. Pioneers senior Maycee Godbolt tied the Lorain County single-season home run record last spring with 13, to go along with a .548 batting average. In the off-season the first-team All-Ohio catcher signed her National Letter of Intent to continue her career on the collegiate level at Bowling Green State University. Before heading off to college Godbolt will team up with a pitching staff led by 16-game winner Izzy St. Peter and an offense that returns six starters that hit over .400 last spring — Godbolt, Adrian Petrisko, Mallory Phares, Jaylah Howard, Madison Olszewski and St. Peter — to try to get Elyria back to the state tournament for the 14th time in school history.

Keystone has a trio of Bowling Green commits of its own in outfielder Marlie McNulty and infielders Emma Miller and Allissa Boragina. McNulty, a second team Division II all-Ohio selection, batted .443 with seven home runs and 28 RBIs last season. Junior Madi Herington, an Oakland University verbal commit, hit .528 with 12 doubles

and 24 RBIs last year. She is one of six starters returning from a Wildcats team that went 29-1 a year ago.

Keystone's biggest question mark coming into 2020 is pitching as it will have to find a replacement for Sydney Campbell who went 54-1 in the circle for the Wildcats over the last two seasons.

The Wildcats are 10 wins away from 1,000 in the program's history and veteran Keystone coach Jim Piazza needs 19 wins to join Elyria's Ken Fenik in the elite fraternity of coaches who have won 500 games.

New **Vermilion** coach Tony Larizza will have the unenviable task of trying to replace one of those coaches in 500-win club as he takes over the Sailors program after the retirement of Bill Matthews, who retired at the end of a 33-year career, the final three years at Vermilion, after winning 526 games.

The Sailors return five starters from last year's 12-9 team that advanced the Division II district finals for the first time in school history, led by all-Sandusky Bay Conference shortstop Gracie Frey and senior outfielder Rylee Phillips

Another team hoping to build upon its 2019 postseason success is **Wellington**. The Dukes knocked off No. 2 seed and No. 1 seed Independence on back-to-back days to win their first district title in 11 years.

Wellington returns most of its lineup, including all-Ohio catcher Teddi Hardoby, who hit .420 with nine home runs last season. Junior Payton Regal will look to have a breakout year in the pitchers' circle for the Dukes while also building upon her .407 batting average from a year ago. Wellington's lineup will also include a pair of all-district

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Wellington's Teddi Hardoby.

SOFTBALL

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sophomores in Kennedy Benko and Brooke Noss.

The new year will also bring a new conference affiliation for Wellington, Keystone and the rest of the Lorain County schools that were formerly members of the Patriot Athletic Conference, as 2020 will be the first year of play in the new Lorain County League. Of course, Keystone will be a heavy favorite to win the first LCL title but there is an abundance of talent throughout the league.

Columbia, which won the final PAC Stripes Division title last year, returns five players led by senior shortstop Riley West and juniors Alyssa Wilkins and Avery Lavender.

Oberlin returns seven players led by all-Lorain County and all-PAC pitcher Victoria Jackson and senior right fielder Bailey Wallace.

Firelands is coming off a 19-5 season, its best year since it won the district title in 2013. Coach Judy Dostall returns a quartet of seniors — pitcher Ashley Strauss and infielders Emily Stewart, Lexy Coggins and Aliana Becker.

Clearview is counting on a



BRUCE BISHOP

Elyria's Maycee Godbolt, with her parents, signing her letter of Intent to play at Bowling Green in 2021

pair of all-district performers in pitcher Elizabeth Allen and infielder Madison Pennington. The Clippers are also looking forward to bringing in a strong freshman class.

The future is looking bright at **Brookside** as coach Ken Col-

lins has a young, talented team led by sophomore pitcher Leah Musall, who struck out 164 batters in her freshman year. With no seniors on the roster the Cardinals could be building a team that challenges for LCL titles in the coming years.

The path to the Southwestern Conference championship looks like it will run through **Amherst** once again. The Comets return nine letterwinners, led by Akron commit McKenzie Cornwell and all-district centerfielder Cassidy Kettleman who batted .573 and broke the school record for hits and runs scored as a freshman, from a team that went 22-4 and won their fourth consecutive SWC title in 2019.

Avon finished second in the SWC last season behind SWC co-coach of the year Ken Matuszak, an award he shared with Amherst's Lacey Reichert. The Eagles hit over .350 as a team last season and has 12 returning letterwinners returning in 2020.

Midview, is just a year removed from sharing the SWC title in 2018, and will be strong again this season with all-SWC pitcher Marcella McMahon in the circle and a strong infield led by senior Katie Weaver, Malory Dunlap, Emma Barnes and Maddie Huge.

North Ridgeville had one of its best seasons in recent memory in 2019, going 17-6, and the momentum should continue heading into the new year. The



KRISTIN BAUER

Brookside's Leah Musall.

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DAVID RICHARD

Keystone's Marlie McNulty.

SOFTBALL

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Rangers return a trio of .400 hitters in Rachel Mease, Daylan Baker and Katie Barnhart. Mease and Baker also had over 30 stolen bases last year. Barnhart, a sophomore, looks to be on her way to becoming an elite pitcher after going 14-6 with 156 strikeouts last year.

Avon Lake returns an experienced team led by sophomore Mallory McClellan, who earned

all-SWC honors as a freshman, and senior shortstop Paige Schwark.

Elyria Catholic has high hopes for 2020 after ending the 2019 season with 17-9 record and a second-place finish in the Great Lakes Conference. The Panthers return three all-district players, Kaylie Griffin, Annika Bredel and Stephanie Griffin. One thing that could hurt coach Megan Bashak's team early in the year is seven of her 11 returning letterwin-

ners missed weeks of valuable practice time during Elyria Catholic's deep postseason run on the basketball court.

Open Door, one of the only two Division IV teams in Lorain County, along with Oberlin, is hoping for big things from seniors Emily Ford and Kayla Fox. Patriots coach Obed Melendez is also excited about his strong freshman class.

Lorain had an uncharacteristically tough year in 2019 but with all-Lake Erie League outfielders Tatiana Marrero and Yazmyn Faria and shortstop Talia Harris returning, the Titans could be back on top of the LEL this spring.

The best chances to see all the local talent in action is at tournaments and no tournament is bigger, or has a more star-studded field than the Prebis Memorial Classic. This year's Prebis will hopefully be played at LaGrange Community Park and North Ridgeville's Victory

Park. The 2020 Prebis field is expected to include Elyria, Midview, Amherst, Avon, Columbia, Elyria Catholic, North Ridgeville and Brookside in addition to the Keystone, the host team.

Elyria also hopes to host its annual Softball Classic at Vic Janowicz Park. The Pioneers will be joined in the event by Brookside, Columbia and Midview.

Vermilion will also plan to host the Second Annual Melanie Stainbrook Invitational. The event will get underway with Vermilion facing Wellington on Friday night.

The postseason will look a little bit different as the Division III district tournament moves to Lakewood High School this spring. Avon Lake will still host the Division I district.

If 2020 plays out like recent years it will end with at least one Lorain County team playing in Akron in the State Tournament.



BRUCE BISHOP

Vermilion's Gracie Frey.

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2020 Lorain County High School Baseball Preview



KRISTIN BAUER

Amherst Catcher Eric Ritter tags out Midview's Matt Kardos at Home.

By Tim Gebhardt

Editors Note: Events and dates in article may change due to current circumstances

The smell of freshly cut grass, the ping sound of the aluminum alloy bat against the ball and the turning of the clocks to daylight savings time can mean only one thing: It's high school baseball season.

Last year saw three local schools – Amherst in Division I and Elyria Catholic and Vermilion in Division II- win a district championships. For the Sailors, it was their first time in the Sweet 16 in 28 years. The Comets lost a heartbreaking 1-0 regional semi-final to eventual state champion St. Ignatius. Vermilion got past EC, 2-0, in the regional semi-final but met up with a buzz-saw attack against Van Wert, losing 13-2. Keystone, who lost the district final to the Panthers, 6-5, has moved back to D-III after

playing at D-II last year.

Elyria Catholic was led by All-Ohio outfielder Leighton Banjoff, who's now at Nebraska, and by 2nd team All-Ohio pitcher Jack Laird, now throwing at Seton Hall. Veteran Panther coach Bruce Lisicky will return 2nd team All-Ohio Brenden Holley at first base this year. Ridge Clark was All-Ohio for Vermilion with infielder Mason Montgomery earning honorable mention status. Clark is at Heidelberg this year while Montgomery is at Bowling Green.

Division I

Two-time defending district champion **Amherst** (20-11) lost to St. Ignatius, 1-0, at Tri-C to end its tournament run in the Sweet 16. The Comets won the district by beating the top two seeds – Olmsted Falls, 1-0, in the semi-final and St. Edward, 4-3- in the finals at Strongsville. It was the second year in a row that Amherst had

beaten the Eagles to win the district. Coach Matt Rositano, now in his eighth season, is closing in on 150 coaching victories. His record is 149-57 to start the year.

The Comets, defending SWC champions, are loaded again this year, returning seven of their eight position players and four of their top six pitching prospects. Senior catcher Eric Ritter returns to handle the pitching staff. Ritter had two homers and drove in 15 a year ago. Senior right-hand pitchers Jason Monos (2-0, 1.50 ERA), Justin Hritsko (3-3, 3 saves, 2.35 ERA) and Brayden Willbond (1-2, 2 saves, 3.13 ERA) along with southpaw Luke Feakins (3-2, 1.85 ERA) head an impressive pitching staff. Monos will also patrol centerfield (.267, 11 RBIs) when he's not on the mound. Juniors Caleb McGee (1b, .371 17 RBIs), Blake Kendall (LF, .314), Josh Qualls (SS, .287 18 RBIs) and Dylan Bailey (2b) also return. Rositano also

expects juniors Graham Solak (3b), Ty Weatherspoon (P), Jake Armbruster (P), Jake Mantin (OF) and Aiden Steele (OF/P) to contribute. Rositano feels his team can compete for the conference and district again this season but feels Berea-Midpark, Avon, Avon Lake and Olmsted Falls will be very good.

Elyria (16-14) lost to St. Edward, 1-0, in last year's district semi-final. The Pioneers will be playing in the very tough Greater Cleveland Conference this year. It'll be the next-to-last year in the GCC before they depart to join the SWC for the 2021-22 school year. The Pioneers finished 6-8 in league play a year ago.

Ed Piazza (158-109 in eight years) always has his teams ready and playing competitively. Elyria, even though losing 12 seniors to graduation last year, has plenty

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BASEBALL

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of potential with four-year senior letterman Michael Knapp (CF, .345, 18 RBIs, 18 SB) leading the way. Evan Engle (.360, 16 RBIs, 16 SB) returns to patrol shortstop. Both will be available to pitch as well and both are heading to college next year – Knapp at the University of Charleston and Engle at Tiffin. Senior Hunter Olsen (4-3, 2.35 ERA) heads the pitching with Max Payton (Urbana University) behind the plate for his third year. Others Piazza expects to have big years are senior infielders Gage Barbee (.370) and Collin Vargo (.400) along with senior outfielder Austin O'Quinn and junior outfielder Stephen Larkins (.310). Mentor, Solon, Medina and Brunswick should be the cream of the GCC while Piazza likes Amherst and Keystone locally.

There's a new voice at **Avon Lake** (12-14) as Andrew Means takes over the program from Kevin Marlow. Marlow was the Shoremen boss for eight years, compiling a 115-89 mark. Means will rely on a strong pitching staff and good defense this year. Senior lefty Ryan Shinko (4-1, 1.44 ERA) is rated as one of the top pitchers in the area this year. Shinko fanned 57 hitters a year ago. Other pitchers worth noting are senior righty Dakota Dudgeon (2.62 ERA with 32 Ks) and Matt Kovacs along with junior southpaw Kevin McKinley (34 Ks last year). McKinley (1b) batted .333 a year ago. Seniors Aidan Shoop (2b, .361), Kai Kuwalu (C, .275) and juniors Aidan Grabowski (SS, .261) and Gage Dueller (CF, .288) are returning lettermen as well. Means is a former player at Avon Lake and hopes to get off to a



Elyria Catholic's Brendan Holley.

good start as the skipper of the Shoremen.

Matt Ponting, starting his ninth season, put together a decent season a year ago at **North Ridgeville** (14-12). The Rangers will be led by Tri-C commit Nate Kisel (.307, 21 RBIs). Kisel can play the outfield and infield as well as pitch. Seniors Zach Cabell (IF, OF, 3.15 ERA), Ryan Stefancin (2b) and junior catcher Jake Flesher are other returning lettermen. Cabell's fast ball has been clocked in the high 80s. Versatile Trent Miller (IF, OF, .361) is back after missing significant time to injury a year ago. Other seniors Ponting will depend on are Tyler Rowe, Tyler Wensing, Bryce Howell, Tyler

Lime, Ty Quintana, Austin Timko, Austin Roy and Aiden Matta. Ponting lost 13 seniors to graduation a year ago but feels with the opening of the new all-turf field by the football stadium, his team is excited to get started.

At **Avon** (15-13), Craig Kirschner (29-26) is about to begin his third season with the Eagles with a hopeful eye on his solid starting pitching led by right-hander Ryan Starr, committed to Miami of Ohio. Seniors Grant Mitchell (SS, .304) and Brandon Doehne (1b, .297) along with junior Michael Matlak (OF, .296).

Midview (7-15) first year coach Ryan Morgan can't wait to get

started with the Middies. He has nine returning lettermen including seniors Connor Bansek (SS, .345), Jacob Landers (P, 2.27 ERA) and juniors Bryce Sanders (C, 1b, .354, 18 RBIs) and Ethan Honis (Inf, .302). Morgan will field a smart ball club with the team GPA averaging 3.23. Morgan hopes to create some depth in his pitching rotation.

Brad Ternes (245-176) begins his 18th year as a head coach. He's been the only baseball coach at the consolidated Lorain High School.

Lorain (12-10), the defending Lake Erie League champions,

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STEVE MANHEIM

Avon Pitcher Ryan Starr.

BASEBALL

From 7

returns its top three pitchers in seniors Amaurion Mitchel (4-2, 35 Ks), Tyrus Brewer (4-3, 1.18 ERA, 39 Ks) and George Pena (2.50 ERA, 20 Ks). Mitchell will also play in the outfield and at first base with his .300 average and 12 RBIs from last year. Lorain will have some speed to burn with senior centerfielder Anthony Miller, who batted .348 with 15 stolen bases and junior shortstop Dominique Thompson, who batted .283 with 18 steals. Sophomore catcher/pitcher/infielder Nate Antus and senior infielder Zack Hargreaves are expected to have good seasons. The Titans will be headed south for a spring trip to the Keaton Hall Memorial Baseball Tournament in Bardstown, Kentucky over spring break.

Division II

Jeff Keck begins his 18th season as Vermilion's manager and his 34th season overall. Keck has won 455 games, lost 294 in his overall career and is 340-179 with

the Sailors. **Vermilion** (22-9) put together one of its best seasons ever, winning the district for the first time in 28 years and advancing to within one game of the final four. Keck built that team on the strength of side-armed Ridge Clark and four-year starting shortstop Mason Montgomery. The Sailors, who will compete in the Sandusky Bay Lake Division this year, were champions of the league last year. Vermilion will be young this year. Keck will rely on senior James Matheson (Of, 1b, P), junior Jacob Krausher (P, 1b), junior Ethan Young (Of), junior Carter Klausung (C/P) and sophomore Jack Wells (2b) and hopes his 19-1 JV team is ready to fill the holes left by a strong senior class last year.

Elyria Catholic (17-13) has been knocking on the door to a state tournament berth for many years under nine-year coach Bruce Lisicky (153-72). Last year, the Panthers lost a 2-0 heartbreaker to Vermilion in the Regional semi-finals. The Panthers will have to rebuild without Leighton Banjoff and Jack Laird,

two four-year lettermen, but they do have hard-hitting Brendan Holley back at first base. Holley, a Tiffin commit, batted .374 with four homers, two triples and six doubles last year and batted in 22 runners. Other returnees include senior Mason Doll (RF, .286), senior catcher/pitcher Nick Wells, junior Aiden Timko (CF, .281, 12 SBs), junior pitcher/shortstop Chris Phillips and sophomore Alex Carandang (LF, .386, 9 SBs). Lisicky will have to rebuild his lineup with only three returning starters and a completely overhauled pitching staff.

Dan Ransom at **Firelands** (21-7) was hoping for a return to the regional tournament a year ago but the 4th seeded Falcons were tripped up in 11 innings by Parma Padua in the first round of the tournament. Ransom (176-112 in 11 years as a head coach) returns 11 lettermen off that team, all hungry and ready to bounce back. Two players who have moved on to college are All-Ohio Alex Brill (Ohio Dominican) and 2nd team Austin Urban (Mount Union), two of Lorain County's leading hitters

a year ago but Keck has a good nucleus returning and should be favored to win the Lorain County League. Seniors Grant Price, Jacob Mullins, Austin Schuler, Carter Smith, Vincent Morales, Vincent Yobi and Ethan Cordy Price should provide the Falcons with veteran leadership. Junior pitchers Aaron Urban and south-paw Zach Brill head Ransom's pitching staff. Other juniors are Evan Zidar, Mikey Kelley, Garrett Varndell and Caden Bomback. Sophomores are Kyle Ransom, Aiden Newman, Jayden Morrison, Alex Krebs and Abe Mastelone. Firelands will challenge bigger schools like Benedictine, St. Edward, Lexington, Shelby and Vermilion on their schedule this year to give the Falcons a taste of good competition. Ransom believes Keystone and Wellington will provide the biggest challenge in the LC8.

Dennis Pihlblad has hung up the clipboard and scorecard after 10 seasons at **Clearview** (9-14) and given way to Eric Lahetta, who coached at Oberlin College for 13 seasons (1998-2010). Lahetta is getting to know his Clippers and feels optimistic entering his first season as a high school coach. He'll build around seven lettermen led by senior catcher Kian Ortiz (.427, 25 RBIs), senior outfielder Kuly Petrov, junior 1b Josiah Moon (.420, 16 RBIs), outfielder Kyle Mettler (.340), junior infielder Julian Mendez (.346), junior infielder Nate Klamer (.314), and junior infielder Tyler Green (.281, 11 RBIs). Lahetta is working on building a pitching staff and feels Moon, Mettler and Mendez are capable.

Brookside (10-13) also starts fresh with Joe Ferrera, who takes over for Bill McCleave. Ferrera is banking on senior Devin Blotzer (.397) and junior Mason Besserer (.362, 19 RBIs) to lead the team. Sophomore catcher Carter Vilevac (.317) is back as well.

Division III

Keystone (24-5) returns to D-III this season after competing in D-II last year. The Wildcats, under eighth year veteran Bert Fitzgerald (139-57), nearly knocked off EC in the district final a year ago. The Wildcats squandered a 4-0 lead and lost, 6-5. Keystone hasn't won the district since 2014 but did tie the school record for wins

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BASEBALL

From 8

in a season. The Wildcats will be without its best pitcher – Mike Mileski – and the Mealwitz twins – Matt and Kevin. All were four-year starters. Senior Nick Compton (2nd Team All-Ohio) heads the group of six returning starters as an outfielder and left-hand pitcher. He batted over .500 last year and he'll be joined by Kyle Yusko (P/1b), Joseph Gaughn (P/Of), Nathan Archer (Of/P), Nathen Prunty (C) and Sean Saterlee (P/SS). Fitzgerald expects to be in the thick of the LC8 race and compete for the D-III district crown.

Wellington (14-12) expects to compete for the LC8 championship as well. The Dukes certainly have a good cast of returning players including senior short-stop/pitcher Ben Higgins (.506), senior 3b/Of/P Nick Laposky (.345), senior outfielder Mason McClellan (.443) and senior 1b/P Ben Bliss (.400). They'll also have juniors Jacob Evans (Inf/P),

Cameron Brinker (Corner Inf), and Jacob Shaver (P/Corner Inf). Coach Dan Davison will also hope to get good years from juniors Wyatt Sasack and Caleb Teague along with sophomores Drew Unangst, Jacob Weegmann and Ty Moore.

Division IV

Dan Durante begins his second year as the head coach at **Columbia** (15-10). Carson Heidecker (.391) returns for his senior season at first base, one of six returning lettermen for the Raiders. The others are senior pitcher/3b Charlie Simon, senior pitcher/Of Mike Verbus, junior center-fielder Trevor Hottell (.348), junior catcher Jeff Grzywna and sophomore infielder Owen Menge (.379 as a frosh).

Oberlin (2-15) is learning to compete under Mike Perry, who took over the program last year after the Phoenix didn't win a game in 2018 but Perry is bringing the program back to respectability. Senior Sam Thompson batted .360 last year as a pitcher/first baseman and seniors

Thomas Elchert (LF/P, .320), Matthias Fritz (Of) also return. Juniors Andrew Streater (C/Of) and Jean Gonzalez (Of/P) along with sophomore Dominic Clawson (C/2b) are also back from last year. Perry has worked hard to get kids out for baseball – many for the first time ever.

Matt Loescher returns for his 20th season at **Open Door** (8-14). Loescher is one win away from reaching his 160th career win. The Patriots return nine starters and have 11 lettermen returning this season. Seniors Alex Lloyd (1b/.449/22 RBIs), Josh Zaborowski (SS/.406/12 SBs), Ryan Emilio (2b/Of/.261/16 SBs) and Cam Holan (2b/.318) give Loescher veteran leadership on the field. Juniors Bailey Loescher, left-hand hitting catcher (.424/24 RBIs/14 SBs), James Green (P/4-3, 42 Ks), Josiah Munger (Utility/.328), Mitch Abram (Of/P/.321) and sophomore Teddy Murphy (P/3b) also return as lettermen. Freshmen Josh Moore and Anthony Olivencia are also competing

for starting roles.

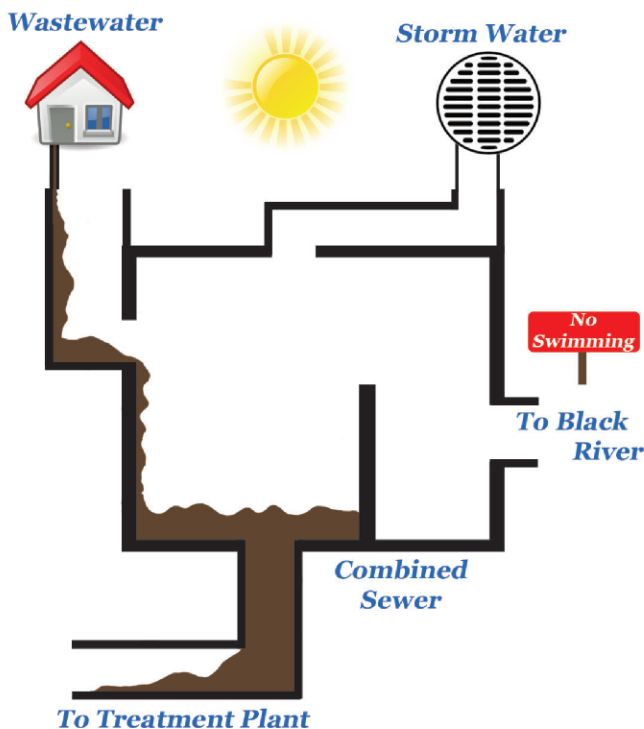
Lake Ridge (13-8) has had a number of good years in a row and Mitch Zofka takes over the program with expectations to continue that success. The Royals return senior middle infielder and pitcher Matt South this year as well as junior Kate Kastellic (3b) and sophomore infielder Connor Spencer. Zofka knows his team must stay healthy to compete in the Lake Effect Conference and post-season tournaments. He's busy trying to get to know the players as Lake Ridge prepares for the season.

Outlook

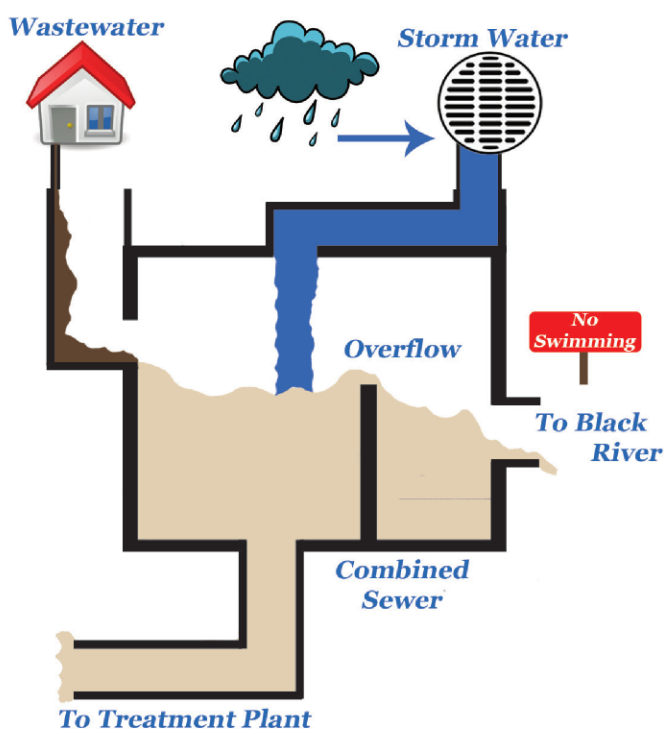
Baseball is alive and well in Lorain County and 2020 should bring an exciting and rewarding brand to the fans again this year. Amherst appears to be the early season favorite in D-I with Elyria Catholic and Firelands going after the D-II district crown. Keystone is always a tough out, especially since the Wildcats are back in D-III this year. Columbia has the best chance in D-IV.

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Fair Weather



Rainy Weather



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Dan the Man

By Andy Barch

Editors Note: Events and dates in article may change due to current circumstances

For the first time in four years, the Lake Erie Crushers will have a new manager. Former Crusher skipper Cam Roth took a job with the Detroit Tigers back in December and he's now managing in their minor league system. That opened the door for a familiar face in the Frontier League to become Lake Erie's new bench boss.

Enter Dan Rohn, the new manager of the Crushers. Many Frontier League fans may remember Rohn most recently as the skipper of the Traverse City Beach Bums, a role he served for five seasons (2014-18). He left the Beach Bums after the 2018 season, when they announced that they were ceasing operations in the Frontier League, to join a college wood bat league (Northwoods).

His managerial tenure in

Traverse City was highlighted in 2015 when the Beach Bums captured the Frontier League Championship. They swept the River City Rascals in a best of five series to capture their first Frontier League title.

While his managerial tenure in the Frontier League may stand out to some, to others, he's remembered as a terrific manager and coach at several minor league levels, coaching and managing affiliates for the Minnesota Twins (1991-96), Seattle Mariners (1998-2005), San Francisco Giants (2007-09) and Toronto Blue Jays (2010). In his managerial career, his teams have captured three league championships, and he's worked with some of the biggest names in baseball. His managerial career, which spans over three decades, has allowed him to work with some of the biggest names in baseball, having worked with the likes of Felix Hernandez, Raul Ibanez, Buster Posey, Tim Lincecum,



Dan Rohn.



STEVE MANHEIM

Cam Roth (Right) with Crushers owner Tom Kramig.

and Alex Rodriguez, just to name a few.

Rohn had Cleveland ties long before he was hired to run the baseball operations for the "Grapest Show on Turf." The Alpena, Michigan, native was originally drafted by the Chicago Cubs as a second baseman in the fourth round of the 1977 draft, and he remained with the Cubs until he was traded at the start of the 1985 season. Rohn made his big league debut with the Cubs in September of 1983, and less than two years later, he was traded to the Cleveland Indians for Jay Baller on April 1, 1985.

When asked about some of his most memorable moments with the Tribe, Rohn refers to his second season with the club. "Opening Day in 1986 we had about 60,000 fans in attendance," said Rohn. "There were 2,200 for the second game of the season." The drop in attendance, coincided with the drop in temperature as well, as Rohn stated that it was 38 degrees and snowing. "The highlight for us that day, was timing the

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fans in attendance as they were chasing down foul balls all game long.”

When it came to discussing the major differences between handling players at the Triple-A level and at the Frontier League level, Rohn was very honest about how much he thoroughly enjoys managing in the Frontier League. “We get to put our own team together and we aren’t ever told who we have to play,” said Rohn. “You don’t have all the higher ups constantly hovering around you all the time telling you who you have to play every night.”

As far as his managerial style, as Rohn puts it “I manage by the scoreboard.” Rohn says his managerial style is aggressive, but also under control. We’ve all been told about going by the book or playing the percentages for baseball managers, but Rohn mentioned that he doesn’t follow the book very often. Win or lose, it should make for some very exciting baseball this summer!

On the field, things will certainly look a lot different for the Crushers. Because of the Frontier League rules, players typically don’t stay with teams very long. Some changes are bitter-sweet as well, with a few Crushers signing with affiliated teams in the off season. Right-hander Kent Hasler signed with the Arizona Diamondbacks, Dondrei Hubbard signed with the San Diego Padres, while lefty Jared Koenig signed with the Oakland A’s in December. Lake Erie will look a bit different than it did a year ago, in a league that has undergone a series of changes too.

Back in the fall, it was announced that the Frontier League was joining forces with and, for lack of a better term, absorbing the remaining five Can-Am League teams, making the Frontier League a 14-team league once again. While the River City Rascals were the latest to leave the nest of the Frontier League, it was an easy tradeoff for the Frontier League, as the New York Boulders, the Quebec Capitales, Trois-Rivieres Aigles, Sussex County Miners,



Pitcher Kent Hasler.

and the New Jersey Jackals all enter the 14-team field, which gives the league a much larger geographic footprint. It will give Frontier League fans a lot of variety when it comes to opponents, but it will also make traveling a bit of a challenge for sure.

Travel in the Frontier League was always a little challenging for the Crushers, but for the first year under the new alignment, they will not have to travel to Canada to play Quebec or Trois-Rivieres, which would require an all day bus trip as well. Instead, Quebec City will travel to Avon, to take on the Crushers on opening day, which is scheduled for Friday, May 15.

While there’s no telling what

the Crushers will look like on the field in 2020 just yet, there’s certainly hope that they can capitalize off of a 2019 season, which on the field, was one of their best in recent history. The Crushers ended their longest post season drought in franchise history last year, after capturing the Frontier League’s Eastern Division Title. Lake Erie clinched the division crown after a 7-3 victory over Southern Illinois on August 29, marking their first division title since 2013. In addition to it being their first division title in six years, it also marked the Crushers’ first appearance in the post season since 2014, ending a five year playoff drought in the process.

The fun was short-lived, as the Crushers saw their 2019 run come to an end rather quickly in the post season. Lake Erie fell to the Florence Freedom, 4-2 in game one, 6-2 in game two, and they were blanked, 1-0 in Avon on September 6. The sweep brought an end to a year that was a special one to be certain.

In addition to hosting the Grapest Show on Turf in Avon this summer, the Lake Erie Crushers will host the Cleveland Comets softball team on Memorial Day weekend. The Crushers will also play host to the always entertaining Mid-American Conference Baseball tournament, which runs Tuesday, May 19 through Sunday, May 24.



LAKE ERIE CRUSHERS 2020 GAME SCHEDULE

MAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	FLO 11:05am	FLO 11:05am	FLO	9
10	11	12	13	14	QC 7:05	QC 6:05
17	18	SC	SC	SC	RKL	RKL
24	25	WC 6:35	WC 6:35	WC 6:35	WSH	WSH
31						

JUNE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	JOL 7:05	JOL 7:05	JOL 7:05	FLO	FLO
7	8	TR 7:05	TR 7:05	TR 7:05	RKL 7:05	RKL 6:05
14	15	WC	WC	WC	SCH 7:05	SCH 6:05
21	22	JOL	JOL	JOL	SIL	SIL
28	29	FLO 7:05				

JULY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			FLO 7:05	FLO 7:05	EVN 7:05	EVN 7:05
5	6	GAT	GAT	GAT	EVN	EVN
12	13	ALL	STAR	BREAK	SCH 7:05	SCH 6:05
19	20	NJ	NJ	NJ	EVN 7:05	EVN 6:05
26	27	NJ 7:05	NJ 7:05	NJ 11:05am	WC	

AUGUST

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4	5	6	WC 7:05	WC 6:05
9	10	WSH 7:05	WSH 7:05	WSH 7:05	SCH	SCH
16	17	FLO 6:35	FLO 6:35	FLO 6:35	JOL 7:05	JOL 6:05
23	24	SCH	SCH	SCH	SIL 7:05	SIL 6:05
30	31					

SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
		EVN	EVN	EVN	JOL	JOL
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

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Away
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Exhibition Home/School Day
Exhibition Away

NJ	New Jersey Jackals	EVN	Evansville Otters
QC	Quebec Capitales	FLO	Florence Y'alls
RKL	Rockland Boulders	GAT	Gateway Grizzlies
SC	Sussex County Miners	JOL	Joliet Slammers
TR	Trois-Rivieres Eagles	SCH	Schaumburg Boomers
WSH	Washington Wild Things	SIL	Southern Illinois Miners
LE	Lake Erie Crushers	WC	Windy City ThunderBolts

The 2020 Cleveland Indians



KRISTIN BAUER

Shane Bieber hoists 2019 All Star Game MVP award.

By Janey Murray

Editors Note: Events and dates in article may change due to current circumstances

Turnover within the Cleveland Indians roster has been constant over the last five years.

The 2020 Opening Day roster will bear minimal resemblance to that of the 2015 club. Yet throughout recent times of transition, Cleveland's on-field production has barely missed a beat.

The 2019 club faced frequent adversity in the form of numerous injuries to its star players. As a result, young prospects were forced to step up. Those fresh faces helped power the Indians to their fourth consecutive season with 93 or more wins and their seventh consecutive winning season under manager Terry

Francona.

Youth will be a defining factor for the 2020 club, as a young and energized roster aims to take the next step in what is sure to be a contentious American League Central division.

"We faced a lot of adversity last year. Got rid of a lot of guys, and a lot of guys went down to injury, unfortunately, but that also created opportunities for some guys to step up. Maybe if events didn't transpire like they did, then guys might not have gotten the opportunities that they did," right-hander Shane Bieber said. "We obviously have a ton of arms, and a ton of guys that can contribute to this team. It's just a matter of going out there and doing it."

Here's a look around the diamond at the faces that will form

Cleveland's 2020 roster.

Starting Pitching

Perhaps no area of the Indians roster is more characterized by youth than the starting rotation.

But in this case, youth does not indicate an absence of experience. This year's incumbent starters proved in 2019 that they're up to the task of maintaining Cleveland's legacy of starting pitching excellence.

Bieber made headlines in 2019 when he earned All-Star Game MVP honors. But the MVP award was just the cherry on top of a stellar sophomore season in the big leagues for the right-hander, who went 15-8 with a 3.28 ERA and amassed 259 strikeouts in 214.1 innings of work.

One of the defining storylines

of 2019 was Carlos Carrasco's battle with leukemia and subsequent return to action in September, capped off by his winning of the Roberto Clemente Award in October. Carrasco is dealing with a mild strain to his right hip flexor, but he continues to throw and is currently day-to-day as he aims to make a full return to the rotation in 2020.

Mike Clevinger will open the year on the Injured List due to a partial tear of his meniscus. Upon his return, he'll look build off an excellent 2019 campaign, in which he posted a 2.71 ERA with 169 strikeouts in an injury-shortened season.

With Clevinger beginning 2020 on the shelf, several young arms

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KRISTIN BAUER

Carlos Carrasco stands with teammates.

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remain in the mix for the remaining spots in the rotation.

Aaron Civale and Zach Ple-

sac made their Major League debuts with Cleveland in 2019 and looked every bit the part of big league starters. Civale made 10 starts and posted a sparkling 2.34 ERA, while Plesac started 21 games with a 3.81 ERA, recording

his first complete game shutout on Sept. 10.

Adam Plutko is another candidate for the rotation after he experienced his best and longest stint in the Majors last season. In 2019, the right-hander started 20 games and posted a 4.86 ERA with the Tribe.

Left-hander Logan Allen and right-hander Jefry Rodriguez could have the chance to start as well.

The Indians haven't slowed down in their pursuit to develop more young arms that are ready to produce at the Major League level. In the face of adversity, it's paying off.

"We feel like the organization has done an unbelievable job of regenerating," manager Terry Francona said. "The names might be a little different, but you look at Bieber, Carrasco, Clevinger, and you've got the younger kids that came up and more than held their own, and we don't expect it to stop there. They all compete."

Bullpen

The Indians 2020 bullpen offers a mix of top performers returning from 2019 and new up-and-comers ready to burst onto the scene.

In his first season as the Tribe's full-time closer in 2019, Brand Hand proved he was up to the challenge. The lefty accumulated 34 saves and a 3.30 ERA and

made his third consecutive All-Star appearance.

Nick Wittgren established himself as a mainstay in the bullpen in his first season with the Indians. The right-hander posted a 2.81 ERA as the Tribe's setup man after coming to Cleveland from the Marlins via trade last February.

Young right-handers Emmanuel Clase and James Karinchak have both shown sky-high potential thanks to their electric stuff. Karinchak made five appearances for the Indians in 2019, while Clase was acquired in a December trade from Texas, where he made 21 Major League appearances last season. Clase will begin the season on the Injured List due to a moderate strain of the teres major muscle in his upper back, but he is expected to return to game activity in 8-12 weeks.

"Two guys that we got in, Karinchak and Clase, are both big arms that throw hard," Hand said. "It's kind of a different look than we've had in the past. We didn't have anybody that really lit up the radar gun last year, so it'll be fun to have two guys down there than can fire it in there."

Oliver Pérez and Adam Cimber are likely to return to the group after a pair of successful 2019 campaigns, though both may be challenged by the new MLB rule requiring pitchers to face a minimum of three batters in an inning.

The list of likely candidates to round out the bullpen includes right-handers Hunter Wood, Phil Maton and James Hoyt and left-hander Scott Moss.

Catching

The 2019 season was a milestone for Roberto Pérez. In his first year as the Indians primary catcher, Pérez secured his first Gold Glove Award, appeared in a career-high 119 games and slugged 24 homers, easily eclipsing his previous career high of eight. He underwent ankle surgery in the offseason but is reportedly back to full health and ready to lead the pitching staff into another season.

Offseason transactions altered the makeup of the rest of the catching corps. Veteran Sandy León, who was acquired via trade from the Red Sox in December, will assume backup duties. Cam-

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eron Rupp signed a Minor League deal with the club in February and has big league time on his resume.

First Base

In his return to Cleveland, Carlos Santana reclaimed his spot as the Tribe's everyday first baseman. Santana had a career year last season, batting .281, slugging 34 homers and earning his first Silver Slugger Award and All-Star selection.

Jake Bauers can provide versatility as a possible backup at first base. Bauers began his career as a first baseman, though the bulk of his playing time in Cleveland has come in the outfield.

Second Base

With Jason Kipnis departing for free agency, the Indians had a hole to fill in the infield. Enter César Hernández.

Hernández became a free agent after a successful 2019 campaign in Philadelphia, where he batted .279 and appeared in all but one game for the Phillies. For the

Tribe in need of a new second baseman, Hernández was a clear fit. He signed with the club in December and is a sure bet to be the Tribe's everyday second baseman.

Shortstop

The 2019 season was nothing new for Francisco Lindor, who maintained his reputation of sustained excellence in his fifth Major League season. The shortstop made his fourth consecutive All-Star appearance while batting .284 with 32 homers and 74 RBI.

After dealing with an injury in Spring Training last season, Lindor won't be held back this year. He reported to camp at full health.

"It's nice to see everybody being healthy," Francona said. "That's one of the biggest goals of the first day of the camp, is watching guys being able to be themselves—whatever that is. And with Frankie, that means a lot, because he can do so many things so well."

Third Base

José Ramírez's 2019 season was a bit of a rollercoaster at times.

He got off to a slow start and later was sidelined for a month in late August after fracturing his right hamate bone. He made a splash in his return in the penultimate regular season series in Chicago, but his absence was undoubtedly felt in the Tribe's push for a play-off spot throughout September.

Now, he'll look to write a new script for 2020 and build off his consecutive top-three finishes in MVP voting in 2017 and 2018.

Outfield

It's possible the exact composition of the Tribe outfield won't be clear until Opening Day on March 26.

Oscar Mercado staked his claim for an outfield spot with an impressive 2019 rookie campaign. After debuting in May, he went on to bat .269 with 15 homers and provided dazzling defense in center field.

Meanwhile, two acquisitions are contenders to break into in the outfield rotation. Delino DeShields, acquired from the Texas Rangers in December, has spent time in left and center field. Domingo Santana signed with the Indians as camp opened in Feb-

ruary and has spent most of his six-year career in right field.

While Franmil Reyes has primarily been a designated hitter since coming to Cleveland, the slugger made an effort to lose weight in the offseason to improve his defensive ability. He could factor into the mix for outfield time as well.

Several other familiar faces remain in competition for just a few outfield spots, including Jordan Luplow, Jake Bauers, Greg Allen and Bradley Zimmer. And once Tyler Naquin returns from a torn ACL, likely in late May, he'll join the competition as well.

Which outfielders will make the 25-man roster is still largely up in the air, but it's clear there's no shortage of young outfield options prepared to battle it out through Spring Training.

"We will deal with adversity," Francona said. "Every team does. It could start tomorrow. That's the way the game is. It doesn't help, but you can't let it get in the way. And because of what happened last year, when the younger kids came up, with that comes some natural enthusiasm."

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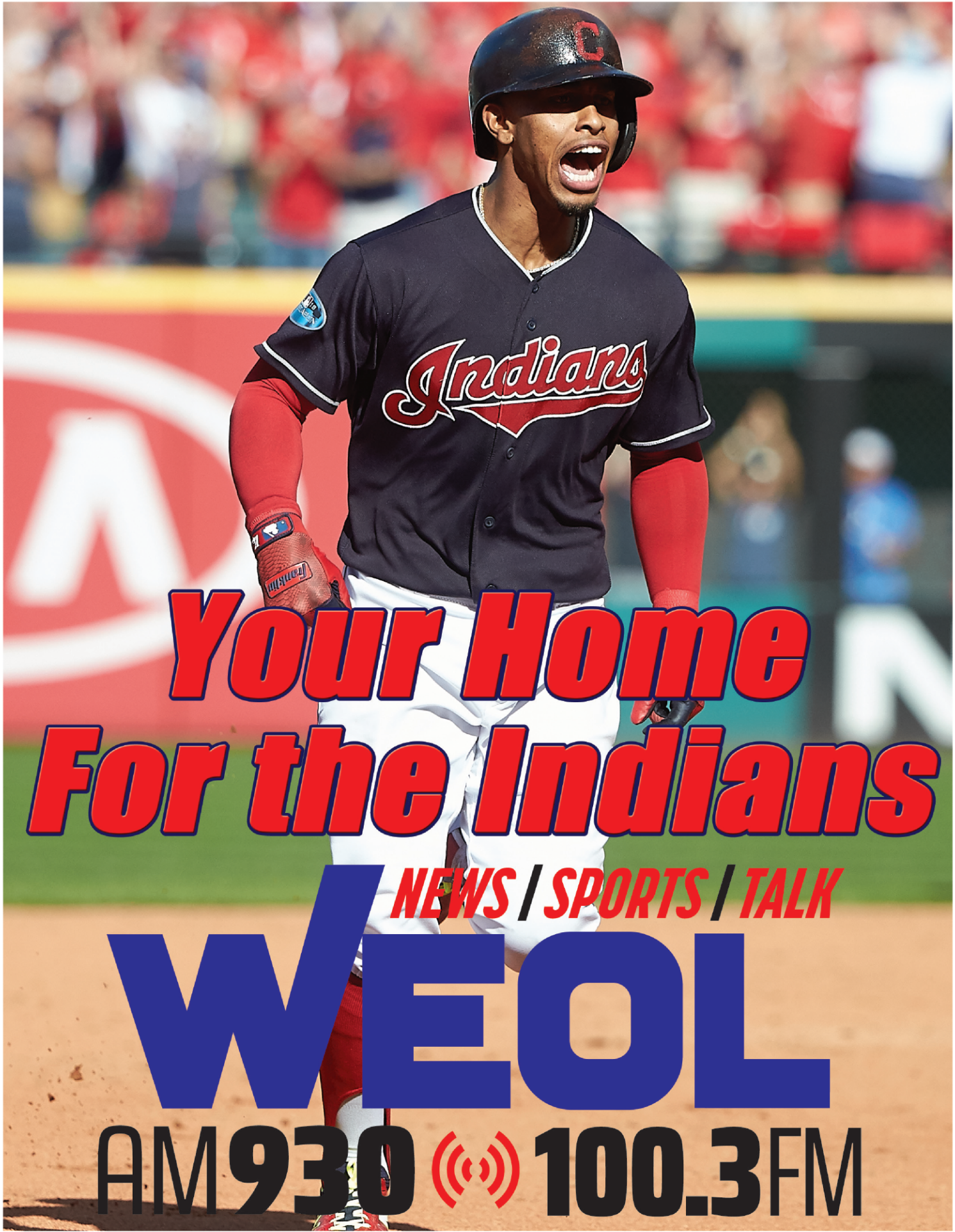
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