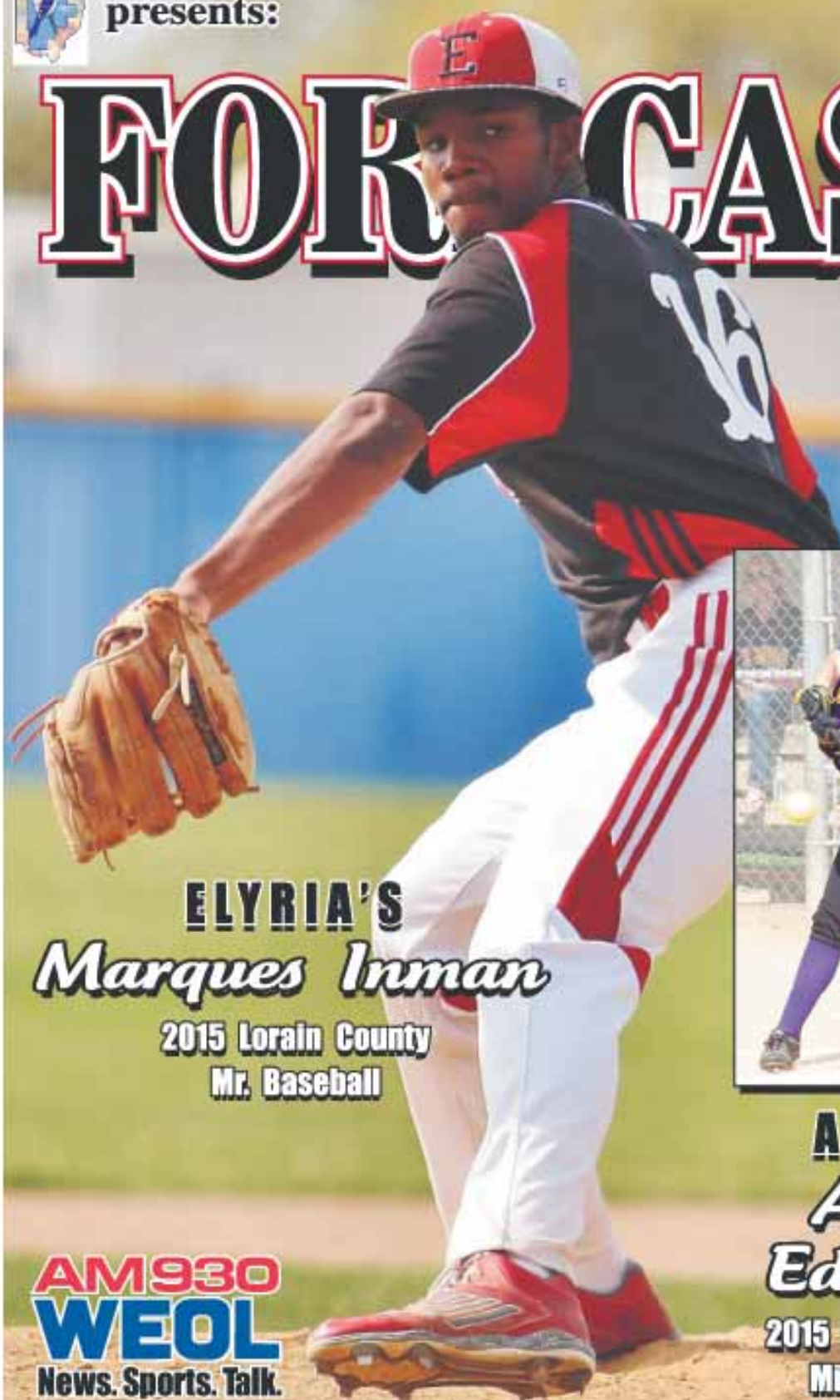




presents:

Volume 17 Issue 3
Spring 2016

FORCAST



ELYRIA'S
Marques Inman

2015 Lorain County
Mr. Baseball

AM 930
WEOL
News. Sports. Talk.



AVON'S
Anna Edwards

2015 Lorain County
Miss Softball

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FORECAST

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WEOL FORECAST MAGAZINE SPRING 2016 PREVIEW

A Publication of AM 930 WEOL
Volume 17 Issue 3

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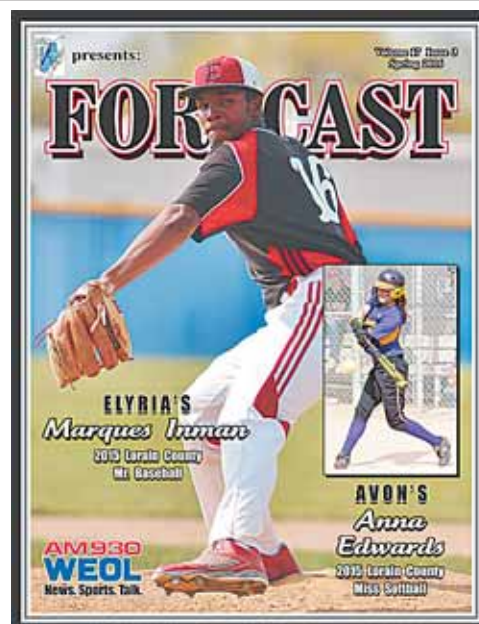
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About the Cover:

Marques Inman: Marques Inman of Elyria had an outstanding senior season in 2015 earning the honor of Lorain County Mr. Baseball. During his final season, the Pioneers first baseman was a headache for pitchers hitting an impressive .400 with 10 doubles, 3 triples and a home run. Along with being named First-Team All-Ohio, Inman was also highly regarded throughout the county. Perfect Game, a national amateur baseball publication, had high praise for the Elyria native and named him high honorable mention on their All-American Squad. While Inman's future will very likely see him playing professional baseball, the former Pioneer will be suiting up for the West Virginia Mountaineers in 2016.

Anna Edwards: In the circle or at the plate, Avon's Anna Edwards was a force to be reckoned with in 2015. Many would claim it was the pitching that led the Avon hurler to the Miss Lorain County Softball award, and with a record of 8-3 and a 1.41 ERA it would be hard to argue against. However, as good as Edwards was in the circle she was just as dangerous to opposing teams when she stepped into the batter's box. In her career with the Eagles, Edwards held a batting average of .438 and drove in 100 runs. After leading Avon to their first conference title in 39 years, Edwards went onto to become just the second Lorain County player to win both the Miss Softball award and the Lorain County Senior Player of the Year Award.



Welcome Letter, Spring 2016

Yes, we've had a relatively mild winter. Even so, there's nothing like spring and summer, sitting back and enjoying a baseball (or softball) game whether it's on the local sandlots or professional diamonds. As my co-host of the WEOL Morning Show, Bruce VanDyke has said, baseball is the soundtrack of summer.

Welcome to the 2016 spring edition of FORECAST. Inside, you'll find team schedules, our broadcast schedules and previews of your favorite teams.

WEOL AM 930 is proud to bring you Cleveland Indians baseball, select games of the Lake Erie Crushers and a busy schedule of high school baseball and softball games from Lorain County.

Thanks to all of our terrific sponsors who make these games possible along with the managers, coaches and players from the majors to the minors and high school ballfields.

Play ball!

Craig R. Adams

Operations Manager/News Director
WEOL AM 930

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Diamond Duel Schedule
On AM930 and WEOL.com

Baseball	Softball
Thur, April 14: Amherst @ Avon 7:00pm	Sat, April 30: Prebis Tournament 11:00am Avon vs Kenton Ridge Keystone vs Bishop Hartley Keystone vs Glen Oak
Sat, April 16: Elyria @ Lorain 11:00am	
Mon, April 18: Avon @ Avon Lake 7:00pm	
Thurs, April 21: Clearview @ Keystone 7:00pm	Sat, May 7: Elyria vs Ely. Catholic 11:00am
Sat, April 23: Columbia @ Ely. Catholic 11:00am	
Mon, May 2: Avon @ Amherst 7:00pm	

**AM930
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2016 Lorain County High School softball preview

By Todd Shapiro

The 2015 softball season ended like so many others in recent memory, with a Lorain County team playing in the state tournament at Akron's Firestone Stadium and on AM - 930 WEOL. With the amount of talent returning to the local sandlots this spring it's likely the 2016 season will play out the same in the same manner.

Keystone made its 14th appearance in the state tournament last season, losing to Hebron Lakewood, 4-0, in the Division II state semifinals. With nine of its 10 starters returning from last year's team the Wildcats are a favorite to make it back to Akron and contend for its fourth state championship. How good is



KRISTIN BAUER / CHRONICLE
Keystone Coach Jim Piazza.

Keystone? They enter the season ranked No. 14 in the country in the MaxPreps Top 100 national softball rankings.

The Wildcats have six Divi-

sion I recruits on their roster, led by seniors Summer Constable and Sammie Stefan, who batted .535 and .517 respectively last year. Keystone also returns junior pitcher Lauren Shaw, a University of Iowa recruit, who went 20-6 last year. Senior Destiny Weber is the fourth Big Ten recruit on the Wildcats roster. Weber, a senior catcher, hit .458 last season.

Stefan was also Lorain County's home run leader last year with six in the regular season.

Keystone also has a pair of Division I recruits — Madi Cendrosky and Paige Hartley — who will be staying closer to home and playing their college softball at Cleveland State University.

In coach Jim Piazza's 14 years at Keystone he has sent 18 players on to play NCAA Division I softball.

Elyria Catholic was one game away from Akron last year, losing the Division III regional final against Warren Champion. The Panthers, who will be competing in the new Great Lakes Conference this spring, also returns almost its entire starting lineup from 2015, led by junior Sam Filiaggi and senior Leigha Donaghue

who both hit over .400 last season.

Elyria had its string of 10 consecutive district championships broken last year by Westlake with its pitching ace Katie Lew, a Cornell recruit; but the Pioneers will be loaded once again in 2016, as they look to return to the state tournament for the 12th time. The Pioneers, who are now members of the Greater Cleveland Conference, will have senior Elizabeth Ellis, a 20-game winner each of the last two seasons, in the pitcher's circle. The Elyria offense will be led by Ellis, senior Carly Bachna and sophomore April Howser. Pioneers coach Ken Fenik joined an elite group of coaches with 500 career wins last season.

Avon broke a 39-year drought last year by winning the final West Shore Conference championship. This year the Eagles will join Midview and North Ridgeville in shifting over to the Southwestern Conference, joining Amherst and Avon Lake.

Avon will have to replace 2015 Miss Softball award winner Anna Edwards but the Eagles only had two seniors on last year's roster and return a pair of .400 hitters in Alex Kozich and Tina Clark.



See SOFTBALL, 5

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SOFTBALL

From 4

The **Amherst Comets** will have a potent offense led by University of Connecticut recruit Ashlee Dahman, who led the team with a .441 average last season. Amherst also returns its top-two home run hitters juniors Sarah Miller and Madison Cruzado.

Midview will have one of the deepest teams in SWC, if not the entire area, with nine returning letter winners, led by pitchers Lauren Landers who went 12-6 last season and Sara Lowman, who was 7-2 with a team-leading 1.12 ERA. Scoring runs should not be a problem for the Middies with four hitters who batted over .400 returning to the lineup this spring. Senior center fielder Morgan Hamker's .545 batting average last year was the best in Lorain County. Landers (.440), Gabby Shackelford (.424) and Hally Ivan (.403) were Midview's other .400 hitters.

North Ridgeville will be a young team this spring but coming off of a winning season in its final year in the WSC the Rangers bring a wealth of talent into the Southwestern Conference. Junior Addison



KRISTIN BAUER / CHRONICLE
Anna Edwards

Mease proved herself as one of the area's elite hitters last year batting .529. If the Rangers can get consistent pitching they find themselves competing in the upper tier of the SWC.

The **Avon Lake Shoreegals** were a young team that experienced some growing pains in 2015 but they had one of the area's top home run hitter in junior Sarah Scott and a freshman pitcher Lexi Anderson who was among the top-10 in strikeouts.

The Patriot Athletic Conference Stars Division has been Keystone's private playground since the league was founded in 2005 but the Wildcats are far from the only talented program in the Stars Division.

Wellington has the rare one-two combination of four-year letter winners at pitcher and catcher in Olivia Bradstock, an 11-game winner last season, who will be throwing to Morgan Tandarich, who also hit three home runs last season.

Firelands also brings back a veteran catcher in Alex Willis, who was Lorain County's regular season stolen base leader last year. While over at **Brookside** a star was born last season as Summer Metcalf burst upon the scene with three home runs and 22 RBIs.

Black River returns its leading hitter Madison Combs, who hit .428 last year and a pair of veteran pitchers in Bailey Scheck and Hannah Barco, whose 123 strikeouts were third highest in the county in the regular season.

Over in the Stripes Division Columbia has won the last three conference titles.

The **Columbia Raiders** will

rely on the hitting of Brooke White, who batted .382 last season and the pitching of Allison Bouscher, who went 9-1 as a freshman with 65 strikeouts in 59 innings.

Oberlin expects its strength to be in the pitchers circle where senior Arianna Ambrosio and freshman Bryanna Rivas will share time. The Phoenix also return a pair of senior outfielders -Jayna Mitchell and Rhiannon McKee — and junior power hitting infielder Makenzie Tallman.

Clearview struggled last season but expects to be much improved in 2016. Clippers coach Denny Myers hopes that an influx of new talent combined with a veteran senior class will give his team a chance to make a run at its first league title since 2012.

Vermilion is a team without a conference this season. Last year the Sailors were part of the now defunct West Shore Conference and next year they turn their gaze to the west and join the Sandusky Bay Conference but for now first-year coach Lisa Hoffman is left to play an independent schedule.



KRISTIN BAUER / CHRONICLE
Black River's Madison Combs

The good news for Vermilion is that they return both of their pitchers — Savannah Hitlan and Becca Oates — from last season and infielder Carley Skettle, who was second on the team with a .337 batting average.

Veteran coach Pam Jackson will have her **Lorain Titans** in contention to compete for the Lake Erie League title.

Open Door Christian School, is Lorain County's only other independent team. The Patriots will have their third coach in as many season in 2016 as Bill Dunston will be leading a team hoping to make a run in the Division IV tournament.

The best place to see all of the top local talent will once again be the Prebis Memorial Classic. This year's Classic will be played on April 29-30 at LaGrange Community Park and Wellington Recreation Park. In addition to hosts Keystone and Wellington, Lorain County teams in the Prebis will include Elyria, Avon, Amherst, Midview and Columbia. Overall 59 games are scheduled over the two day event and AM - 930 WEOL will be on hand to broadcast from the event on April 30.

Very few counties, especially those in a northern climate, can match the bounty of talent that is on display annually in Lorain County. So free up an afternoon this spring to check out your favorite team and watch some of the best softball on display anywhere in the United States.

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2016 Lorain County High School baseball preview



By: Tim Grattan

Twitter: @Tim_Grattan77

The competitive Southwestern Conference features one of the area's top teams in **Amherst**, which is coming off an 18-11 season, second place finish in the league and district runner-ups to St. Edward last season. Coach Matt Rositano will have an extremely talented and deep pitching staff. Leading the Comets pitching staff will be two first team All-Lorain County pitchers Evan Shawver (5-2 last season, 1.23 ERA) and Casey McConihe (2-2 last season, 4.97 ERA). Notre Dame College commit Nick DeJesus will also be in the Comets rotation. McConihe (.347 batting average, 13 RBIs, six doubles) will also look to lead the Comets on offense, including senior Joe Masters and junior Mark Harris.

Avon Lake is coming off a 10-16 season, where they lost to North Olmsted in the Division I sectional semifinal last

year. Coach Kevin Marlow lost Jeremiah Campo (Walsh University) and Garrett Kordish (Notre Dame College) to graduation, but the Shoremen will have a veteran pitching staff coming back. Mitch Sorensen, James O'Connor and Holden Ohm are all back for their senior year and will look to lead the Shoremen in the new SWC this season.

There are new kids on the block in the SWC, including the final West Shore Conference champions **Avon**. Frank DeSmit led the Eagles to a 23-6

record and ninth in the final Coaches Poll in Division I.

North Ridgeville looks to improve on a 6-21 record in their first season in the SWC. Coach Matt Ponting will look to lean on his seniors James Qualls and Seth Anderson to produce on offense this season. Senior left-hander Nick Salvatore will look to be the ace of the staff for the Rangers followed by junior right-hander Chris Machovina and Anderson.

Midview will be entering a new era with new manager Todd Ratica. Ratica will be taking over for Scott Jalowiec, who will be looking to compete in the new SWC. Ratica will be looking to lean on senior right-hander Brett Kopronica (3-3 record, 1.52 ERA) and senior Dylan Brister (2-4 record, 2.51 ERA) to lead the Middies pitching staff. Gavin Taulbee will lead the Middies on offense as he batted .400 last season.

After coming off a second record 22 wins, Don Ransom returns for this second season with **Firelands**. Ransom led the Falcons to a share of the Patriot Athletic Conference Stars Division title last season and a sectional championship. Coastal Carolina commit, first team All-PAC and lefty Trevor Damron (5-1 record, 1.23 ERA, five saves, 73 strikeouts) will be

the ace of the Falcons this season. Junior Nathan Kovach (.309 batting average) had two triples and drove in 15 runs for the Falcons last year.

Keystone is coming off an 18-8 season and shared the PAC Stars Division title. Coach Bert Fitzgerald is back for his fourth season with the Wildcats and is bringing back an experienced roster with talented players. The Wildcats did lose the PAC and Lorain County (Division II) Player of the Year in Aaron Brodnik (8-0 record), but juniors Drew Compton and Turner Campbell will look to fill Brodnik's shoes on the mound. PJ Prunty (.355 batting average) and Clay Todd (.324 batting average) will

See **BASEBALL**, 8



Aaron Brodnik

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BASEBALL

From 7

look to lead the Wildcats on offense.

Wellington finished with an under .500 record (13-17) last season, but got hot in the post-season and fell to Akron Manchester in the Division III Copley District finals last season. First team All-PAC and All-Lorain County member Tristian Arno is back to help lead Roger Sasack's Dukes. Arno (.327 batting average) led the Dukes with 11 doubles and drove in 29 RBIs. Sam Echtenkampfer (.385 batting average) will be back as catcher for the Dukes after missing half the season last year due to an injury.

Brad Bombback is back for his fifth season at **Brookside**, as the Cardinals finished third in the PAC Stars last season. After leading the PAC in homeruns and his team in wins on the mound, Dudley Taw returns for his senior season. Senior Brad Hughes and junior Tim Ackerman will look to be productive for the Cardinals this season.

Columbia is coming off the 2015 with an under .500 record (11-13), but won the Patriot Athletic Conference Stripes Division for the fourth year in a row. Bluffton commit and senior Sam Krizek will look to lead the Raiders on offense. He had a team-high 31 hits and drove in 17 runs in 2015. First team All-PAC and All-County Cody Reichard will be the ace of coach Justin Ramsey's pitching staff. Reichard was 5-2 last year with a 1.62 ERA and

struck out 34 batters.

One of the best players in Lorain County is back wearing the **Clearview Clipper** uniform for his senior season and his name is Antonio Bennett. The Toledo commit Bennett (.506 batting average) was a first team All-PAC and All-Lorain County member as he had 10 doubles, 20 RBIs and stole 35 bases for the Clippers (10-7). Bennett has 67 stolen bases in his career and has been caught only twice. Mason Sedivy (4-3 record, 1.33 ERA) will look to continue his first team All-PAC conference dominance on the mound for the Dennis Pihlbald's Clippers team in 2016.

Oberlin finished in last place in the PAC Stripes with a 3-13 conference record. Coach Lynn Gray looks to have an improved Phoenix team with CJ Ramsey and Sam Wilson returning for their senior season.

Elyria Catholic will be playing in the new Great Lakes Conference this season after the West Shore Conference was disbanded. Nebraska commit and junior Andrew Abrahamowicz and senior Sean Darmafall (Division III All-Ohio outfield) will look to lead Bruce Lisicky club who won 23 games last season.

Ed Piazza is back as coach for **Elyria**, who is also entering a new league in the Greater Cleveland Conference. The Pioneers went 12-15 last season in the old Northeast Ohio Conference and will look to

replace last year's Mr. Baseball Marques Inman (West Virginia) and Zach Minney (Lorain County Community College).

Lorain High will be looking to take the Lake Erie League title after falling to Euclid (who left for the Greater Cleveland Conference) for the third straight season and improve on a 16-8 record last season. Coach Brad Ternes will be returning some big hitters in the lineup. Senior Brandon Bartlome (.464 batting average) stole a team-high 22 bases and had 32 hits. Ternes will also be leaning on senior Anthony Saegert and senior Sergio Soto to lead the pitching staff this season. Alejandro Ortiz is ranked third in his class with a 3.77 unweighted GRA and a 4.34 weighted.

Vermilion will be an independent for the 2016 season and will be joining the brand new Sandusky Bay Conference in 2017. Jeff Keck is back for his 15th season with the Sailors and went 20-9 overall and 8-6

in their final season of the WSC. Keck will have an experienced team with nine returning letterman from the 2015 season. Lake Erie College commit Caleb Waller (.302 batting average, 3.32 ERA) looks to lead the Sailors at the plate and on the mound as the teams closer.

Matt Loescher returns for his 15th years as manager at **Open Door** looking to improve on a 2015 that saw the Patriots go 15-7 on the year. Tyler Haas (.531 batting average) will not playing his senior season due to an off-season injury. First team All-Lorain County member Dustin Hackney (.430 batting average) will lead the Patriots on the field as he drove in 18 runs and stole 20 bases.

Lake Ridge's Jason Dimaccia is entering his fourth season at the manger for the Royals. Junior Collin Harris will lead the Royals' offense. Senior right-hand pitcher Niko Ortiz will be expected to lead the







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"Where we still do business with a handshake!"

New ownership and new leadership give Crushers new hope



Submitted photos

By: Andy "Bull" Barch

The last few years, we've taken this space to clue you in on who will be returning to the Crushers, and what to expect from some of the new players that will be invited to camp in early May. This year, we're taking a different approach, as I sit down and conduct a Q and A session with the new owner of the Lake Erie Crushers, Tom Kramig.

Last year was a down year for the Crushers on the field, as they finished the season with a record of 38-57, the worst in their seven years of existence.

However, as you'll read down below in my Q and A with Tom, there are plenty of reasons to believe that the product will be much better on the field in 2016. Tom's arrival, along with a new front office, will offer a sense of renewed enthusiasm, as the Crushers look to turn things around both on and off the field under new ownership.

AB: Andy Barch TK: Tom Kramig

AB: You arrived a little less than six months ago to take over as the President of the Lake Erie Crushers. During that stretch, how have the

Crushers changed?

TK: The first task we faced was rebuilding the front office staff. There has been tremendous turnover in the front office over the past few years and stabilizing and re-building that team was absolutely job number one. We have more than doubled this group since the first of the year, and tried to bring in folks with professional sports experience. We are really excited about the new team we have assembled and feel like they will be extremely helpful in building the fan-friendly environment we are hoping to create.

AB: For those that are not familiar with the entire process of purchasing a team, take us through a timeline of the events that occurred leading up to you acquiring the Crushers.

TK: The process started late in 2014. We looked at several different opportunities in several different leagues including the Atlantic League, the Florida State league and even some other Frontier League franchises. Avon, Ohio was by far the most attractive of these,



Tom Kramig

and with my wife Jacqueline and I both being from Ohio, coming back to the Buckeye State was a huge factor. We started talks with the former owner in June and visited the ballpark and area several times last summer. The opportunity here was obvious from the start and negotiations started in the late summer and fall. We signed a purchase agreement and corresponding management agreement in early October and took over day to day operations the 2nd week of October. The intention from the start has been to purchase the team, but the process was slowed, waiting for the State of Ohio to transfer the liquor license. Once that process was finalized in late January, we were able to close the deal and take full ownership.



See CRUSHERS, 11

Spring 2016 Forecast Magazine 9

LAKE ERIE CRUSHERS

2016 SCHEDULE

MAY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				FLO 7:05pm	FLO 7:05pm	
				RC 7:05	RC 7:05pm	RC 7:05pm
		SCH 7:05pm	SCH 11:05am	SCH 7:05pm	WASH 7:05pm	WASH 7:05pm
WASH 5:05		WC 8:05pm	WC 11:35am	WC 11:35am	TC 7:05pm	TC 7:05pm
TC 5:05		GAT 7:05pm				

JUNE

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			GAT 7:05pm	GAT 7:05pm	SIL 8:05pm	SIL 7:05pm
SIL 6:05pm		JOL 8:05pm	JOL 8:05pm	JOL 8:05pm	WASH 7:05	WASH 7:05
WASH 2:05pm		WC 7:05PM	WC 7:05PM	WC 7:05	TC 7:05pm	TC 7:05pm
TC 2:05pm		SCH 7:30pm	SCH 12:00pm	SCH 7:30	JOL 8:05pm	JOL 7:05pm
JOL 2:05pm		FLO 7:05pm	FLO 7:05pm	FLO 7:05pm		

JULY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					EVN 7:05	EVN 7:05
EVN 7:05pm			WC TBD	WC 8:05pm	JOL 7:05pm	JOL 7:05pm
JOL 5:05	ALL STAR BREAK @FLORENCE				GAT 8:05pm	GAT 8:05pm
GAT 7:05		EVN 7:35pm	EVN 7:35pm	EVN 7:35pm	NOR 7:05pm	NOR 7:05pm
NOR 5:05		RC 7:35pm	RC 12:05pm	RC 7:35pm	NOR 7:35pm	NOR 7:35pm
NOR 5:35						

AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		SIL 7:05pm	SIL 11:05am	SIL 7:05	FLO 7:05pm	FLO 6:05
FLO 6:05		WASH 7:05pm	WASH 7:05pm	WASH 7:05pm	SCH 7:05pm	SCH 7:05pm
SCH 5:05		WC 7:05PM	WC 7:05PM	WC 7:05PM	TC 7:05pm	TC 7:05pm
TC 5:05		SCH 7:30pm	SCH 7:30	SCH 7:30pm	TC 7:05pm	TC 7:05pm
TC 5:05pm		JOL 7:05pm	JOL 7:05pm			

SEPTEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				JOL 7:05	WASH 7:05pm	WASH 7:05pm
WASH 5:05pm	Playoffs					

EAST

JOLIET SLAMMERS - JOL
SCHAUMBURG BOOMERS - SCH
TRAVERSE CITY BEACH BUMS - TC
WASHINGTON WILD THINGS - WASH
WINDY CITY THUNDERBOLTS - WC

WEST

EVANSVILLE OTTERS - EVN
FLORENCE FREEDOM - FLO
GATEWAY GRIZZLIES - GAT
NORMAL CORNBELTERS - NOR
RIVER CITY RASCALS - RC
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS MINERS - SIL

EXHIBITION HOME AWAY OFF



Games broadcast on WEOL

CRUSHERS

From 9

AB: What kind of plans do you have for the immediate future for the Crushers (over the next 6-12 months), and for the long term future of the Crushers?

TK: Minor league baseball is all about the fan experience, so improving that is our top priority now that the staff has been re-built. Customer service has suffered here over the past couple of years, so there is a big emphasis on making sure the fans have a great time when they come out to watch us play. We're looking at upgrading several areas including painting the ballpark, improving concessions, upgrading the Kid's Zone, adding an awning and bar to the picnic plaza as well as upgrading the luxury suites. I think fans will find a whole new attitude in the staff, and quite honestly the team also has to be better. There's no question Chris Mongiardo can win in this league if he is provided the right resources, which we think we are doing. We want to win on the field, with the fans, and in the community...next year and for years to come.

AB: Everyone has their favorite baseball story, what is yours?

TK: Growing up in Cincinnati in the 70's era of the Big Red Machine, I got to see a lot of great baseball moments, such as Henry Aaron hitting 714 on opening day in 1974. I was fortunate enough to attend several of the 1970, 1972, 1975 and 1976 World Series games. And though this may be painful to Indians fans, the 1970 All-Star game when Pete Rose ran over Ray Fosse. It was a great time and place to be a young baseball fan. People ask if it was always my dream to own a team...well actually my dream as a kid was to "play" in the major leagues but that ended when I got cut from my high school team.

Still, owning the Crushers is a pretty awesome experience and we couldn't be happier to be in northern Ohio.

AB: What are some of the things that immediately stood out to you when you arrived here in Avon?

TK: The growth in Avon jumped out at us immediately. There are lots of exciting things going on in this community with Cabela's, Meijer and Menard's all moving in. The other factor that really excited us was the passion of Cleveland area sports fans. The fans in this area really support their sports teams and we have already found great support for the Crushers. The community has been incredibly welcoming and supportive of our efforts to buy the team, and we have heard over and over how much they want the franchise to succeed. If you provide fans in northeast Ohio a strong product, we have no doubt they will support you.

AB: From a fan's perspective, how do you plan to improve the overall value of the product over the next two seasons?



TK: Well first and foremost we want to put a winning team on the field. That starts with giving "Mong" total control of the roster, line-up, and coaching staff, which we have done. We also want to improve every aspect of the fan experience, from our new website, to what they find at the ballpark. Better and more varied food options are big, and our new Food & Beverage Director has a lot of great ideas. The previously mentioned upgrades to the Kid's Zone, 3rd base picnic plaza and luxury suites are also

high priorities. Down the road we would like to add a video board but that may be a year or two away. We are definitely looking at this as a long-term investment.

The Crushers will begin the 2016 season at home against the River City Rascals on Thursday, May 12. The first pitch at All Pro Freight Stadium is scheduled for 7:05 PM. For more information on the 2016 season, please visit the Crushers' website, at www.lakeeriecrushers.com.

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Spring 2016 Forecast Magazine

Cleveland Indians 2016 season preview

By: Joel Hammond

The Cleveland Indians fell short of the club's own and fans' expectations in 2015. Then-General Manager Chris Antonetti told reporters the day after the season ended that the fact he was sitting there, speaking with media, means the organization was disappointed.

But despite falling short, there are plenty of reasons for optimism: The team boasts one of the best – if not the best – rotations in baseball, at a time when starters are commanding massive contracts on the free agent market.

Jason Kipnis and Michael Brantley are perennial All-Star candidates. They are joined by an again-healthy Yan Gomes – who won the Silver Slugger Award in 2014 as the American League's best-hitting catcher – and Francisco Lindor, who took the league by storm last year in finishing as the runner-up in the AL Rookie of the Year balloting.

Add to that core supporting cast members such as Mike Napoli, Rajai Davis and Juan Uribe, and the Indians again figure to be in the postseason race. After finishing 92-70 in 2013 and playing in the AL Wild Card game, the Tribe has been in the Wild Card hunt



into the final weekend of each of the last two seasons before falling just short.

This offseason, respected advanced statistics site FanGraphs has projected the Indians with the best chance to win the American League Central and with the fifth-best chance among all MLB teams to win the World Series.

"We've shown that when we play good baseball, we can play with anyone. When we don't, we get beat," said manager Terry Francona, now in his fourth season at the helm. "It's our responsibility to go

out and see how often and how consistently we can play good baseball."

The Indians are in position to contend for postseason spots and more for years to come. Much of the core that's pushed the club to three consecutive seasons is in place for many more seasons: Rotation members Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco, Danny Salazar, Cody Anderson and Trevor Bauer are under club control through 2020, while Josh Tomlin signed a two-year contract extension



See INDIANS, 13 Rajai Davis



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INDIANS

From 12

this offseason.

On the position player side, Kipnis, Gomes and Lindor are under club control through at least 2019, with Brantley here through 2018.

The team's strength again will be pitching, as the Indians followed up a league-record 1,450 strikeouts in 2014 with 1,407 more last year. Four pitchers struck out 170 or more batters, only the third time that's happened in the modern era.

"I have the privilege of catching a staff that everyone talks about," Gomes said in Spring Training. "For me it's, let's not mess this up. It's a young group. We all came up together, they've developed tremendously. It's a lot of fun seeing the recognition everyone is getting. Everyone's a

year older, and I believe we have the best staff in the major leagues."

Though traditional statistics don't reflect it, Kluber followed up his 2014 Cy Young Award with an equally impressive 2015. He went 9-16, but suffered from poor run support in many of his starts. Advanced metrics looked favorably upon his season, as he finished with the eight-highest Wins Above Replacement among MLB pitchers. He even finished ninth in AL Cy Young voting, despite that 9-16 record.

Carrasco followed his strong end to 2014 with a breakout 2015 season, winning a team-high 14 games and striking out 216 – ninth most in the Majors. Carrasco on two occasions nearly no-hit his opponent: On July 1, he came within a strike of no-hitting the Rays, but Joey Butler broke it up with two out in the ninth. In September, Carrasco struck out a career-



Corey Kluber

high 15 batters and one-hit the Kansas City Royals.

Salazar – at age 25 – also broke out, winning 14 games to tie with Carrasco for the team lead. He also struck out 195 batters, 19th in the Majors, and was 12th in the bigs in strikeouts per nine innings.

Bauer, at age 24, won 11 games and struck out 170 batters in 176 innings, while Tomlin and Anderson solidified the back end of the rotation:

Anderson won the AL Pitcher

of the Month Award in September, going 5-0 with a 1.38 ERA, while Tomlin went 7-2 with a 3.05 ERA in 10 starts after returning from shoulder surgery.

In the bullpen, Cody Allen saved 34 games, struck out 99 in 69 innings and had the highest WAR among relievers in baseball (per FanGraphs).

"You saw what some pitchers were getting in free agency and the cost in trades," Fran-

See INDIANS, 14



FROM THE DUGOUT

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APRIL 4 VS BOSTON	JULY 5 VS DETROIT
APRIL 20 VS SEATTLE	AUG. 2 VS MINNESOTA
MAY 4 VS DETROIT	AUG. 17 CHI. WHITE SOX
MAY 17 VS CINCINNATI	AUG. 30 VS MINNESOTA
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INDIANS

From 13

cona said. "If we trade one, how do you get one back? It's too hard. We never felt that someone would give us what we asked – they would have had to bowl us over."

The Indians must generate more offense, though, especially with Brantley recovering from right shoulder surgery. While the timetable for his return still is uncertain, reports from Arizona have been positive, with Terry Francona pegging Brantley ahead of the original return estimate of late April or early May.

That will be key, as Brantley – despite various nagging injuries throughout the season – led the team with a .310 average, which was fourth in the American League. He also had 45 doubles – leading the AL – and became only the fourth player in Indians history to have consecutive seasons of 45 or more doubles. (He also had 45 in 2014.)



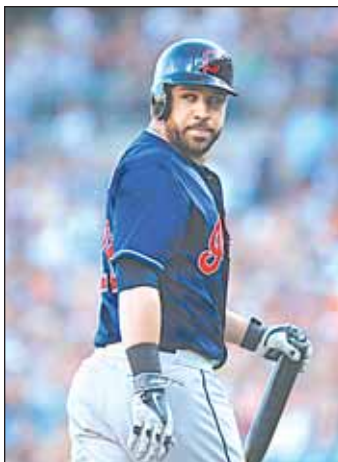
Michael Brantley

"I'm doing great – I'm making progress each and every day. I'm excited where I am," said Brantley, who spent a large chunk of time in Cleveland this offseason while he rehabbed, not his native Florida as he usually does.

"This offseason has been a little different, because I love to hit in the offseason. But, it's a game of adjustments. I need to take my time, ease into my swing and get it ready to go. It's been different in Cleveland in the winter – I had to drive carefully in the snow."

The Indians lack a true bopper in the truest sense of the word, but the game has changed and those players have become more scarce – and the reliance on the home run has lessened. To wit: The World Series champion Kansas City Royals hit fewer home runs than the Indians did in 2015.

More importantly, the Indians also have a solid core of position players that the club has supplemented this offseason. In addition to Brantley,



Jason Kipnis

Kipnis is now a two-time All-Star after a career year in 2015. That included an historic May, a month when Kipnis hit a staggering .429 with 51 hits. For the season, he led all AL second basemen in average, on-base percentage, slugging percentage and OPS; he led AL leadoff hitters with a .385 OBP and ranked behind only Michael Brantley in doubles, with 43.

Meanwhile, Lindor not only was one of the best AL rookies last year, but one of the best players in the bigs in the season's second half. His .345 second-half average was second in the majors behind Joey Votto, while his 99 hits were third behind Jose Altuve and Xander Bogaerts – and were fourth-highest in Indians history. He was just the ninth AL rookie 21 or younger since 1994 with 100 hits, 10 homers and 110 steals in a season, joining the likes of Mike Trout, Bryce Harper and more.

"It has impressed me the way my teammates have been working," Lindor said in

Goodyear, of watching his teammates' habits. "I always thought I worked hard. Seeing the guys work as hard as they do, day in and day out, it showed me – if they're doing it, I'd better do it. They're doing it at a great level and they're successful – if I want to get to that level, I need to incorporate those things."

Add in Gomes – who won that 2014 Silver Slugger but was behind schedule after his first-weekend injury last year – and Napoli, Davis and Uribe, and the Tribe should be better against left-handed pitching, a weakness the last few years. In addition to their veteran leadership, Napoli, Davis and Uribe have been productive hitters against lefties.



Yan Gomes

"These are guys who are good pieces, good teammates," Brantley said.

That trio also will help the Indians defense, which actually ranked second in the league after Lindor and Giovanny Urshela were inserted on the left side of the infield. Napoli, Davis and Uribe each rank as plus defenders at their positions, with Uribe ranking first among MLB third basemen since 2011 in fielding percentage.

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2016 SEASON SCHEDULE

APRIL

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4 BOS	5	6 BOS	7 BOS	8 CWS	9 CWS
10 CWS	11	12 TB	13 TB	14 TB	15 NYM	16 NYM
17 NYM	18	19 SEA	20 SEA	21 SEA	22 DET	23 DET
24 DET	25 MIN	26 MIN	27 MIN	28	29 PHI	30 PHI

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 TOR	2 TOR
3 TOR	4 DET	5 DET	6 DET	7 NYY	8 NYY	9 NYY
10 NYY	ALL-STAR BREAK IN SAN DIEGO				15 MIN	16 MIN
17 MIN	18 KC	19 KC	20 KC	21	22 BAL	23 BAL
24 BAL	25	26 WAS	27 WAS	28	29 OAK	30 OAK

MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 PHI	2	3 DET	4 DET	5 DET	6 KC	7 KC
8 KC	9 HOU	10 HOU	11 HOU	12	13 MIN	14 MIN
15 MIN	16 CIN	17 CIN	18 CIN	19 CIN	20 BOS	21 BOS
22 BOS	23 CWS	24 CWS	25 CWS	26	27 BAL	28 BAL
29 BAL	30 TEX	31 TEX				

AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 MIN	2 MIN	3 MIN	4 MIN	5 NYY	6 NYY
7 NYY	8	9 WAS	10 WAS	11 LAA	12 LAA	13 LAA
14 LAA	15	16 CWS	17 CWS	18 CWS	19 TOR	20 TOR
21 TOR	22 OAK	23 OAK	24 OAK	25 TEX	26 TEX	27 TEX
28 TEX	29 MIN	30 MIN	31 MIN			

JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 TEX	2 KC	3 KC	4 KC
5 KC	6 SEA	7 SEA	8 SEA	9 SEA	10 LAA	11 LAA
12 LAA	13 KC	14 KC	15 KC	16	17 CWS	18 CWS
19 CWS	20 TB	21 TB	22 TB	23	24 DET	25 DET
26 DET	27 ATL	28 ATL	29 ATL	30 TOR		

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2 MIA	3 MIA
4 MIA	5 HOU	6 HOU	7 HOU	8 HOU	9 MIN	10 MIN
11 MIN	12 CWS	13 CWS	14 CWS	15 CWS	16 DET	17 DET
18 DET	19	20 KC	21 KC	22 KC	23 CWS	24 CWS
25 CWS	26	27 DET	28 DET	29 DET	30 KC	1 KC

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