

Indians Laughing Their Way Through Training Camp

BY TOM WITHERS
AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — The Indians are pitching, hitting, bunting and doing everything else they need to work on for the upcoming season at spring training.

And laughing every step of the way.

No team seems be enjoying itself as much as Cleveland, once only the butt of jokes. Whether it's bombarding manager Terry Francona with water balloons, mocking pitcher Trevor Bauer for giving up three consecutive home runs or parking rookie infielder Jose Ramirez's car on the infield dirt, the Indians are leading the majors in hijinks.

It's a training camp for camp. The fun under the sun in Good-

year, Arizona, peaked last week when Ramirez took the practice field only to find his BMW parked where he usually stands at short-stop. After noticing the car sitting too far from the curb, infielder Mike Aviles orchestrated the prank, which involved getting Ramirez's keys and driving it onto a practice field.

The Indians wanted to teach a lesson to Ramirez, who seems to follow his own rules when it comes to parking etiquette. They just placed it between the first- and third-base lines.

"Hey, he parks anywhere so you might as well park it in a comfortable spot," Aviles said. "When you park it anywhere what's the difference between the field and the parking lot?"

Earlier this month, Francona had some fun at the expense of Bauer, who gave up home runs to three straight Chicago Cubs prospects during an exhibition start. The following day, Francona had a police officer come to the team's morning meeting with three baseballs to deliver to Bauer.

"I just wanted to return these three baseballs that disrupted traffic on Estrella Parkway at 2:20 p.m., 2:21 p.m. and 2:22 p.m. on Tuesday," the officer told Bauer as players in the clubhouse howled with laughter.

Bauer, too, took it in stride, posting a photo of the souvenirs on Twitter.

"I think Trevor loved it," said Francona, who understands the importance of keeping his players relaxed and loose. "I hope we don't

do that every five days, but it was good."

The Indians aren't afraid to poke fun at themselves.

On Monday, the team released a funny video in which several current players, Francona, general manager Chris Antonetti and a singing Carlos Santana, read some negative comments directed at them on Twitter. The "Mean Tweets" bit has been used by late-night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel, and the Indians seemed to relish the chance to respond.

Also making an appearance on the video was longtime Brewers broadcaster Bob Uecker, who played Harry Doyle, the whiskey-swilling play-by-play announcer who coined the phrase "Juust a bit outside" to describe a wild pitch in

the "Major League" movies, about a fictionally hapless Indians.

"C'mon, Cleveland," Uecker said. "Give them a chance."

Last week, Sports Illustrated picked the Indians, who haven't won the World Series since 1948, to take it all this season. The forecast was greeted with the usual skepticism by Clevelanders, who were quick to point out that SI also tabbed the Indians in 1987 and the team lost 101 games.

On the magazine's cover, Cy Young winner Corey Kluber is smiling and outfielder Michael Brantley is cracking up at something funny.

A jinx?
The Indians are too busy laughing to care.

Golf: YHS Opens With Third At BV

BRANDON — The Yankton Gazelles opened the 2015 girls' golf season with a second place finish in a triangular at the Brandon Municipal Golf Course on Monday.

Brookings won the event with a 357, led by Beth Hildebrandt's 74 and Brooke Pearson's 81. Yankton's Ashley Van Meeteren (88) finished third, with Yankton's Linze Cowman (93) and Brandon Valley's Kaila Kuehn tying for fourth at 93.

Yankton finished at 375 on the day, with Darian Tramp's 94 and Morgan Strahl's 100 rounding out the varsity scores. Payton Pierce shot 101, Stephanie Schwartz shot 106, Reagan Kolberg shot 126 and Kasey Erickson carded a 129.

Yankton travels to Mitchell on Thursday for a triangular with the Kernels and Sioux Falls Washington.

TEAM SCORES: Brookings 357, Yankton 375, Brandon Valley 413

INDIVIDUAL: Beth Hildebrandt, Brookings, 74; Brooke Pearson, Brookings, 81; Ashley VanMeeteren, Yankton, 88; Linze Cowman, Yankton, 93; Kaila Kuehn, BV, 93; Darian Tramp, Yankton, 94; Liz Duncan, BV, 96; Madison Amment, Brookings, 98; Morgan Strahl, Yankton, 100; Payton Pierce, Yankton, 101; Heidi Bien, Brookings, 104; Erica Bien, Brookings, 104; Nicole Steen, Brookings, 106; Stephanie Schwartz, Yankton, 106; Julia Andresen, BV, 110; Hannah Deville, BV, 114; Jamie Johnson, BV, 116; Lauren Blue, BV, 119; Ashlea Wolfe, BV, 121; Reagan Kolberg, Yankton, 126; Kasey Erickson, Yankton, 129; Hailey Miller, BV, 133; Caylan Aichele, BV, 139

Bryant Sent To Minors By Cubs

MESA, Ariz. (AP) — Third baseman Kris Bryant was reassigned by the Chicago Cubs to their minor league camp on Monday despite an outstanding spring training at the plate, triggering a threat of litigation from the players' association.

Bryant hit .425 in the exhibition season with nine homers and 15 RBIs in 40 at-bats. If the 23-year-old spends 12 or more days in the minor leagues, Chicago would delay him from becoming eligible for free agency by one year, until after the 2021 season, according to baseball's collective bargaining agreement.

"Today is a bad day for baseball," the Major League Baseball Players Association said in a statement. "I think we all know that even if Kris Bryant were a combination of the greatest players to play our game, and perhaps he will be before it's all said and done, the Cubs still would have made the decision they made today. This decision, and other similar decisions made by clubs will be addressed in litigation, bargaining or both."

Major League Baseball defended the Cubs' decision.

"In accordance with long established practice under the Basic Agreement, a club has an unfettered right to determine which players are part of its opening-day roster," MLB said in a statement. "This issue was discussed extensively in bargaining in 2011, and the principle was not changed. We do not believe that it is appropriate for the players' association to make the determination that Kris Bryant should be on the Cubs' 25-man roster while another player, who, unlike Bryant, is a member of its bargaining unit, should be cut or sent to the minor leagues."

Bryant, who is not on the 40-man roster, was slowed defensively in the middle of camp by right shoulder soreness.

"It's always difficult to send young players down because it is news they don't want to hear," Cubs President of Baseball Operations Theo Epstein said. "We entered camp with the presumptive move of sending him

Sliding In To 2015



P&D FILE PHOTO

Brad Ulmer slides in to a base safely during a Yankton High School baseball game last spring. Ulmer and the Bucks open the 2015 season at home Wednesday against Vermillion, at 5 p.m.

Bucks Aiming For State

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE
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After placing second with their legion team last year, and with a number of kids coming back from last season, Yankton baseball is setting its goals to find a way to make it to the state tournament.

"We've got some juniors back with a lot of experience," said head coach Trey Krier, whose team opens the 2015 season Wednesday at home against Vermillion at 5 p.m.

"We're just excited to get on the field."

Throwing began March 1, while regular practice started March 17 under the direction of Krier, now in his second year as the high school coach, third year as the legion coach and seventh year coaching in Yank-

"We've got a couple things to work on still, but it feels good to get back in the groove."

BRAD ULMER

ton overall.

"We're treating this time just like our spring training," Krier said. "We're starting from scratch, and we don't want to push progression too much right now."

But the team is making sure to take things slow and work at a decent pace not to get ahead of themselves.

"We haven't worked too much on offense or defense or running plays, we're just trying to get in the box and get some swings in and get the pitchers on the mound," Krier said. "We treat this time pretty much like a spring training, and we don't want

to get too far ahead of ourselves by trying to push things and push progression."

For seniors Brad Ulmer and Austin Johnson, being back for just two weeks has helped get back into the swing of things, with the ultimate goal of winning state.

"So far we're just focusing on the fundamentals," Johnson said. "So far we've been working ground balls and fly balls and getting the fundamentals down. But winning state is always the ultimate goal."

Putting last season behind them, Ulmer said it's time to start over, and

as a high school student keep pushing toward the state competition.

"We've got a couple things to work on still, but it feels good to get back in the groove, and we'll be alright come time to play" he said.

For now, with a hit or miss schedule due to spring weather, the team is simply focusing on getting back in the box and on the field.

"Spring in South Dakota is hit or miss in the spring," Krier said. "We're just trying to get on the field for now, and when we get the opportunity to do that we're just starting from scratch. The farther along we go we'll find a way to get ourselves into the state tournament and go from there."

You can follow Emily Niebrugge on Twitter at twitter.com/ENiebrugge. Discuss this story at yankton.net.

NCAA: UConn Women Reach Eighth Final Four

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Geno Auriemma and his UConn Huskies are back in a familiar place — the Final Four.

Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis scored 27 points to help UConn beat Dayton 91-70 on Monday night to advance to the national semifinals for an eighth straight season.

Now the Huskies stand two wins away from a third straight national championship. They accomplished that same feat from 2002-04.

Unlike the first three games of the

tournament when UConn won by an average of nearly 48 points, the Huskies got all they could handle from the seventh-seeded Flyers, who weren't intimidated by the top seed, for the game's first 20 minutes.

"When we're challenged, sometimes that's when we're at our best, and that's what we talked about in the locker room and I couldn't be prouder of them and happier for them ... especially tonight against a great, great team," Auriemma said. "Boy, I'm glad we don't

have to play them again."

Trailing at the half for the first time in two seasons, UConn scored the first nine points of the second half during a 15-3 run to take a 58-47 lead with 13:56 left.

A little more than a minute later, Mosqueda-Lewis hit her fifth 3-pointer of the game giving her 393 in her career to break the NCAA record for 3s. That made it 62-49.

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College Bound



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Hartington Cedar Catholic senior Alli Walter (front center) signed last week to play basketball at Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska. Pictured with her are parents Jamie (front left) and Heath Walter (front right), as well as Concordia head coach Drew Olsen (back left) and Cedar Catholic head coach Robb Koerting.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Yankton High School senior Kendall Lillie (front right) signed last week to play soccer at University of Saint Mary, an NAIA school in Leavenworth, Kansas. Lillie is joined by Yankton head coach Tyler Schuring (front left) and parents Doug and Deb Lillie.

Baseball: DV Rolls Past Vermillion 15-5

NORTH SIOUX CITY — Brady Dam was 2-3 with a grand slam as Dakota Valley opened its high school club baseball season with a 15-5 five-inning victory Monday over Vermillion.

Dakota Valley took control with a 7-run bottom of the third inning, and Vermillion scored twice in the top of the fifth but the game ended via the run rule.

Travis Weber and Cole Anderson doubled for Vermillion, while Jacob Odens took the loss. Dakota Valley's Travis Ohl got the win.

Vermillion returns to action Wednesday when the Tanagers play Yankton.

Freshman/Soph

Sioux Falls Roosevelt swept the Yankton freshman/sophomore baseball team by scores of 8-0 and 8-3 on Saturday at Bob Tereshinski Stadium at Riverside Field.

In the first game, Kellen Franzen, Jack Schoenfelder and Carter Peterson all singled for the Bucks.

In the second game, Jackson Somsen singled, while Isaiah Woods, Cole Brummer and Ben Jurrens all scored a run.

Yankton returns to action Thursday against Brookings.