

***2017 JEFFERSON LEAGUE BASEBALL
WINTER REPORT: THE SMELL OF FEAR***



2017 JLB AWARDS

Most Valuable Player	1st	2nd	3rd	Tot.
<i>Altuve, J. (MAN)</i>	4	0	1	21
Stanton, G. (CEN)	1	3	2	16
Blackmon, C. (RES)	1	2	0	11
Kluber, C. (MAN)	1	1	0	8
Trout, M. (MAN)	1	0	1	6
Wood, A. (ALX)	1	0	0	5
Ramirez, J. (GFG)	0	1	1	4
Martinez, J. (MAN*)	0	1	1	4
Gordon, D. (ALX)	0	1	0	3
Ozuna, M. (SPR)	0	0	2	2
Gonzalez, M. (ALX)	0	0	1	1
Total	9	9	9	81

*Martinez also played for HER in 2017

The Randy	1st	2nd	3rd	Tot.
<i>Kluber, C. (MAN)</i>	6	0	0	30
Sale, C. (ALX)	0	3	3	12
Kimbrel, C. (ALX)	1	1	0	8
Strasburg, S. (ALX*)	1	0	2	7
Scherzer, M. (CLI)	0	2	1	7
Verlander, J. (MAN)	0	2	0	6
Wood, A. (ALX)	1	0	0	5
Severino, L. (FCF)	0	1	0	3
Ray, R. (CEN)	0	0	2	2
Kershaw, C. (CLI)	0	0	1	1
Total	9	9	9	81

*Strasburg also pitched for RES & ARL in 2017

Rookie of the Year	1st	2nd	3rd	Tot.
<i>Sanchez, G. (CEN)</i>	4	1	0	23
<i>Bellinger, C. (ALX)</i>	3	2	2	23
Severino, L. (FCF)	2	3	3	22
Turner, T. (CLI)	0	3	0	9
Pham, T. (RES)	0	0	2	2
Hand, B. (HER)	0	0	1	1
Seager, C. (HER)	0	0	1	1
Total	9	9	9	81

Durgala	1st	2nd	3rd	Tot.
<i>Manatees (MAN)</i>	6	2	1	37
Alleycats (ALX)	3	4	1	28
66ers (CEN)	0	2	4	10
Spacemen (SPR)	0	0	2	2
Total	9	8	8	77

2017 JLB SEASON RECAP

This year was a struggle, boys. Not for us, but for all of you, who have to endure another gloating report written by two idiots whose every move is still questioned by 30-40% of the league despite a four-year run in the money of 4th-2nd-1st-1st. And you can now look back fondly at this unsuccessful season (for each of you), realizing you were part of league history, as the 2017 Manatees became the first JLB team to take home the title without winning a single category! Think about that, a team that had just 59 points to its name in the middle of June stormed back to add 40 more standings point in the season's final 3+ months, without the benefit of a single category win. WOW, what team balance, what organizational style, what panache!

You may be familiar with the single worst day in club history, and we're not sure whether you should bless or curse Sept. 18, 2015 - a day that continues to live in infamy at Manatees HQ. You see, that day, we benched normal starting shortstop Starlin Castro, who went on to bash two HR and throw up six RBI (back when he was SS eligible, way to pay attention, Spacemen). Had he been in our lineup, we would have finished the season with 797 runs scored - passing the Starfish in that category by ONE to forge a tie at 99 points apiece - and 746 RBI, passing the Clams also BY ONE and pulling us into sole possession of first place & a championship, setting in motion the first three-peat of JLB's modern era.

Historical league scholars may disagree on the impact of a hypothetical Manatees' 2015 title and how it would have shaped the 2016 and '17 seasons, but let there be no doubt, after coming tantalizingly close to already accomplishing it, the Manatees now aim to do something that no one but the Roundabouts have been able to do: win three consecutive JLB titles. This report will not only take a look back at a memorable 2017 JLB season, but also feature our predictions for the coming season, which are usually flawless.

2017 FINAL TEAM CAPSULES

This is the part where we shit all over your teams (again). The “*What We Expected*” text is very simply our prediction from last year’s Winter Report, which we also had to write, because we were also the 2016 JLB Champions, the first of our current back-to-back titles!

-1- MANASSAS MANATEES, 99 (45 Hitting, 54 Pitching – 5th place at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: Following our historic 2016 title, we are looking to run it back again in 2017. Most of the gang returns to Manassas, with the notable exception of Mr. Altuve, who we will be wining and dining around Manassas’ finest establishments (basically a Bowl America and run down mini-golf course, but still!) in the coming weeks. We’ll also need to figure out shortstop, or maybe not, since we just beat all of you with Starlin Castro, Zack Cozart and Jurickson Profar this season. We’ll also be looking for a catcher and another outfielder to round out the offense.

What Happened: Well, we warned you last year, we were looking to run it back again in 2017. As boldly stated and planned, we executed flawlessly. Everyone had the chance to take this title away from us in the off-season, and only the Roundabouts made a serious run, taking us up to - and beyond - our bidding limits for Jose Altuve. With literally the last offer we had at our disposal, we brought back the hometown hero on a monster five-year deal (you all remember the press release!) and he was worth every penny of the deal in year one alone.

We also said we needed to figure out shortstop, and like 2016, we really didn’t, but it had zero discernable impact! Somehow a three-year agreement at a sort of low AAV for Troy Tulowitzki was reached and it didn’t tank us completely when he was (very not) shockingly terrible. Rookie Paul DeJong (whose signing has been called THE MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON) hit a lot of Paul DeBombs, Andrelton Simmons hit and stole bases for a few months, and there was much rejoicing in Manatee land at the salvaging of some productivity from the position.

As for catcher and outfield, we addressed those with either quality (OF) or quantity (CA), employing close to double-digit catchers all season, who would go on to hit a combined .276 / 76 / 18 / 66 / 0 in 150 games. You know what, that’s not terrible for the shit money we put into the position!

We made several under-the-radar but shrewd off-season trades, perhaps most notably bringing the underrated Ender Inciarte back into the fold. Originally signed during the 2015 season, Inciarte was shipped to Arlington on June 15 of that season with an expiring Alex Rios (4.4MM), Danny Santana (a1) & a 2020 MLD 5th round pick in exchange for Scott Kazmir (2.9MM exp) and \$600,000. The Manatees saw the error of their ways and knew it was time to bring back the four-category contributor, shipping what would obviously become 2018 MLD pick 2.12 to Arlington to do so. Inciarte went on to be an incredibly productive 3rd OF / UT option, bringing category balance, especially after the in-season deal to acquire second-half team MVP J.D. Martinez.

Martinez was another MUCH derided but brilliant signing by Manassas before the 2015 season (3 years x 4.5 million, again, only Hausman was in on the bidding with us, learn something you dummies) that was traded away (DETAILS OF THIS TRANSACTION REDACTED), only to be re-acquired in time for a 2017 title. In just one-third of the season (53 games), Martinez sparked the Manatees with a robust and outrageous line of .315 / 40 / 24 / 53 / 2! His [four-homer night](#) on Sept. 4 was the clearest and most obvious sign that something magical was in the air and destined for Manassas. **Also, we think Mick literally got Rachel pregnant that night!** (EDITOR’S NOTE: Except the ACTUAL most obvious sign something magical was in the air was on August 8 when Yan Gomes, in our lineup for some reason, [hit a walk-off, three-run homer to give Corey Kluber a win](#)).

As an aside, this year’s top 3 rated outfielders were ALL previously in the Manatees organization: Charlie Blackmon (1), Giancarlo Stanton (2) & Aaron Judge (3), with the latter two swapped for each other before the 2016 season! Despite the fact that we traded each away, Manassas ended the season with three of the top 17 outfielders (and four of the top 24) WITHOUT them, in Mike Trout’s injury shortened campaign. Guys, that is NUTS! We are so good at finding outfielders that the horrific & finally expiring Ryan Braun contract (update: he’s got two rings and zero drug suspensions with Manassas!) did absolutely no net damage to our positional production, except for all of the day games Mick jammed him into the lineup against the Reds or Pirates when Braun seemingly went like 2-for-37 with no counting stats. (EDITOR’S NOTE: Yeah, but those two infield hits were SO fun!)

We would be remiss if we didn’t point out what a joke our pitching was down the stretch. Running Kluber, Verlander, Greinke, Arrieta and Carrasco out there was just a delight. Alex Colome, Wade Davis and a mish mosh of relievers also pitched in to keep us competitive in saves and alive for the title chase, even when things were looking bleak in the season’s first half. Let that be a lesson, Spacemen - you can win a title without winning a category, but you can’t win a title by punting a category. Actually, you are doing fine, don’t listen to us, just keep finishing 2nd or 3rd for the next six years instead.

Here's a sampling of some chapters we considered putting together for the Winter Report for everyone else's benefit. Sort of as a guide, a ***HOW TO WIN JLB FOR IDIOTS***, if you will:

Pitching for Dummies: We Gave Real Innings to Biagini, Cahill, Enny Romero & the Barnes Brothers And Those Fuckers All Get a Championship Share Anyway

JDM .V.P.? Finding Sunny Days By Shipping Out Sonny Gray

How a Championship Front Office Works: Inside the Winning Bid for Anthony Swarzak by Mere Seconds

What's Next: Thankfully for all of you, we are far too lazy to write 10,000 words on the Anthony Swarzak signing. As for what's next? The first non-Hausman three-peat in JLB history, that's what's next. The core of our offense is back (minus J.D. Martinez), and we'll make some small moves to fill the holes we have there. We lose a ton of starting pitching, but the Klubot returns, and we should have some money to bring back at least one or two of our good starters. We'll once again make a few shrewd in-season moves, like signing Blake Treinen or trading Chris Owings the week before he gets hurt (sorry Dan!) for Justin Smoak, Wellington Castillo and a bunch of cash. Most importantly, we'll keep officially pitching the MLB Players' Union to approve the filming of the Trout-Altuve buddy cop script Jay and I have been working on for 4 years.

Predicted 2018 finish: **We are happily paying Pat Riley royalties in 10 months.**

-2- ALEXANDRIA ALLEYCATS/ALBINOS, 96.5 (40 Hitting, 56.5 Pitching – 1st at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: They still have Sale, deGrom and Wainwright at the top of the rotation. Marcus Stroman and Vince Velasquez are big question marks but certainly have big upside. I'd also guess they have a Mets pitcher none of us have ever heard of either in their minor league system or on their MLD radar who will turn into an excellent JLB performer. On offense, a full season of Dee Gordon, Addison Russell continuing to improve and the most HIP-HOP outfielder of all-time (Jones, Cain and Fowler) are all fun, but they don't seem like enough pieces to contend. Jake Lamb being the guy from the first half of 2016 and not the second half, plus an Adrian Gonzalez bounce back would be two steps in the right direction.

What Happened: The Alleycats finally cracked the money. Sure, they wrote the midseason report and looked poised to win their first title in franchise history, so coming up just a few points short is a bit of a bummer. But getting into the money after years of 5th place has to feel good for Joe and Ricky. Plus, it's not like they didn't see this coming. Even while we were toiling away in 5th place with points in the low-70's, Joe still knew we would probably win the league. Here's what he wrote in the midseason report:

“[I] checked the standings and looked a bit closer at the Manassas roster and said to Ricky “Holyshit, these motherfuckers might just win the league!”

Good prognosticating, Joe! In fact, predicting our eventual title has to be THE MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON! The problem is, you then wrote this:

“If these guys think they have a chance, it's a problem. They have to be stopped. We remember that time Manassas won the 2016 JLB title, it was fun for a little while, but we can't let it happen again!”

Well Joe, you let it happen. I mean, Ricky did too, kind of. But since he doesn't even know who is on YOUR team, it's tough to assume he could have done much to stop US. That said, even with your guys' never-ending campaign to refuse to call us by our name, I have to say I'm proud of you. You traded for Freeman, Votto, Cruz and Strasburg in an effort to win the league. You took your shot, and I respect the hell out of you guys for that. When you have a chance to win the league, you take it. You don't jerk off to Lewis Brinson's Triple-A stats, you trade him for Votto.

What's Next: Alexandria will find themselves with several holes to fill heading into 2018, but they have the makings of a strong and financially prudent core on offense (Dee Gordon, Bellinger, Hoskins, Lamb) along with a prime age chubby slugger at 3B in Moustakas and the HTD on both Votto and Freeman, should they want to address 1B in free agency and keep Bellinger and Hoskins in the OF. Marvelous Marwin Gonzalez, a candidate for the MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON, probably won't be back as a step 6, and the Brett Lawrie contract enters its final days, just four years after any semblance of him having an impactful big league career did.

Chris Sale hits the free agent market, but deGrom and Marcus Stroman (he's no longer a midget that doesn't strike anyone out, as per a previous report!) are the foundation of a solid staff, with a possible Alex Wood return as a step 6. The bullpen boasts monsters in Kimbrel, Jansen and at least 15 saves out of Doolittle before he gets hurt next season.

Joe and Rick have produced top-5 finishes in five of the last six seasons, and there's little reason to doubt they can't do it again in 2018.

Predicted 2018 finish: **5th place**.

-3- SPRINGFIELD SPACEMEN, 95.5 (52 Hitting, 43.5 Pitching – 4th at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: Goddamnit, these jabronis are probably the favorite to win it all, with minimal large scale needs, tons of money in the bank and some big time prospects to use in the right trade. Good thing they have an entire offseason* to fuck it up again (and they will)! (*EDITOR'S NOTE: Add in "the entire regular season too" and this is spot on!)

What Happened: Where to begin? How about with this anonymous quote from a rival Owner/General Manager: "Another year of acting like patsies cost them another shot at first. They're definitely good enough to place every year but they'll never win with that attitude." Man, ~~Carlton~~, we couldn't have said it better ourselves. Let's not jump to the end of the story, though, and take a full look at what happened on another aborted mission among the stars.

The Spacemen got out of the gates STRONG in 2017, making everyone wonder if this would finally be the year they used their war chest to bully the other contenders out of the picture and claim their first title. On January 3, they traded prospects Brendan Rodgers and Bradley Zimmer to the rebuilding Starfish in exchange for Bryce Harper (2 x 1.7) and Daniel Murphy (2 x 1.3), a spectacular return for Springfield that still left them with many more good prospects in the system to be able to acquire more help (Ron Howard voice: they didn't). They then used some of their financial might to sign Jon Lester to a three-year deal (\$11.97 mil per), mere MONTHS after his arm ran out of gas due to a workload that took him deep into October of 2016. There was hope for the rest of the league yet...

Once they scared themselves with the Lester signing and found themselves in the deep end of the pool, it was typical Spacemen with their next few moves, first signing Starlin Castro to a two-year deal because they thought he was still a shortstop, then fixing that mistake by giving \$1 million to Alcides Escobar, who would hit a robust .333 for them on the season (4-for-12, 1 RBI).

Once the season got underway, they saw they might only get 11 points in SV, so they took \$14 million in cash to trade for Kenley Jansen (2 x 8.0) in early May and went on to win SV by 14, finishing 28 SV ahead of the 10-point team in the category. An excellent use of funds, according to most everyone else in the league.

No one makes ALL good or ALL bad moves, so we have to give some credit for a great in-season signing (some would say the MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON): Whit Merrifield for \$600K! Merrifield hit .288 with a line of 48 / 12 / 49 / 19 in 82 games at 2B and the OF, quite a steal (get it?). If only they found 16 more SB from the beginning of the season and won the league...

I guess this is the part where better men would note that the Springfield team leader in games played was Justin Upton, who hit .272 / 88 / 31 / 92 / 12 in just 128 contests, while injuries limited the impact of Harper, Correa, Turner, Murphy, Abreu and Sano. Welp, maybe some better men can win the league and write this fucking thing next year and waste hours playing games of "what if" in regards to injuries, but all champions care about is what actually happened and what happened was, you tanked it again. Regardless of your issues on offense, you didn't win because your bad pitching predictably remained bad. Lastly, your [Team Log](#) is longer than the Bill of Rights, get it together (or actually, don't)!

What's Next: We've all seen this movie before: They put together the best roster in the league on paper, but still not as good as it could be because they are too afraid to "lose a trade" or "overpay a free agent." They'll have a few injuries or a few guys underperform, and stare lustily at their minor league system, waiting for Vlad, Jr. and Brent Honeywell to save them. Their team will be good enough to finish 2nd or 3rd, because they have lots of great players, but they won't win because the fear of Bo Bichette being a good player for someone else 4 years down the road is apparently more important to them than actually winning the league.

Predicted 2018 finish: **3rd place**.

-4- CENTREVILLE 66ERS, 88.5 (48 Hitting, 40.5 Pitching – 2nd at All-Star Break / 11th in 2016!)

What We Expected: Masahiro Tanaka and Jose Quintana are fine pitchers, but it sounds far too much like the 2014 Manatees staff, and unless they have a really good Ouija board, they can't bank on a Jose Fernandez return to save them. At least they have Drew Smyly locked up until President Trump's second term. On offense, they feature Freddie Freeman, JD Martinez, AJ Pollock coming back from a brutal injury, Jonathan Villar trying to follow up his monster season and a solid duo at 2B with Kipnis and Schoop. I also think it is terrific that they've started a Korean foreign exchange program, but they might want to actually find some of them that can actually hit.

What Happened: I have to say, I think I respect TPL and Paulie Wags more than any other owners in the league. (Besides us, of course. We are back-to-back champs!) As one anonymous GM said to us, "These guys give absolutely NO fucks what anyone else thinks!" Agreed! They'll sign Carter Capps and Neftali Feliz to long-term contracts, call up Jose De Leon and 6 x 1.7 him even though he isn't even pitching in the big leagues, and pitch Jerry Blevins even though HE ISN'T EVEN ON THEIR ROSTER (several GM's that encourage cheating thought that "The Blevins Third" was THE MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON.) The only thing that causes more gchats between Jay and I that start "What the fuck?!" than the Sixers unpredictability is Bob Nightengale's Twitter account. But then again, they go out and sign Stanton the year he finally explodes, they trade for Springer as he turns into a superstar, and they put together a really fun, cheap, young pitching staff (Nola/McCullers/Ray). After the implosion in 2015 following the GM change and the bottoming out last year, it was really impressive for the Sixers to find their way back into the money this year. [We still miss you, Jose.](#)

What's Next: This is a fascinating organization, as it looks like they have one obvious non-tender this offseason (Jedd Gyorko at step 5), which would leave them with an astounding 37 players under contract for \$77.9 million, with plenty of flexibility to add an ace, a closer, and maybe a 1B if they want more than Thames/Shaw manning the position.

The rest of the offense is interesting, featuring Sanchez and Lucroy adding a ton of value behind the plate, the newly acquired Odor looking to rebound in his first year as a 6er at 2B, a smorgasbord of SS, steady Seager at 3rd and a top notch OF headlined by Stanton and Springer. The pitching corps is young and interesting, especially if McCullers, Nola and Smyly can stay healthy. The closer contracts of last off-season were a rare misstep by TPL and Paulie Wags, but with Rivero, Iglesias & Edwin Diaz in the fold, they will be in the mix for big points in the category, regardless of how some of those long term deals otherwise limit their roster flexibility.

Overall, this is a very solid team with enough money to go out and get a difference maker this winter.

Predicted 2018 finish: **2nd place.**

-5- CLIFTON CLAMS, 79 (32 Hitting, 47 Pitching – 3rd at All-Star Break / 10th in 2016!)

What We Expected: You can certainly envision a world where Clifton has a good pitching staff. We already talked about Kershaw and Scherzer, but if any of Steven Matz, James Paxton, Trevor Bauer or Dylan Bundy can pitch a full season, there is something there. However, the Clams have absolutely zero to talk about in the bullpen, and the offense is basically Trea Turner, hoping Gregory Polanco and Max Kepler are actually legit, and then finding 4 or 5 good hitters on the free agent or trade market. Our guess is Lasken will make a push to compete this year, but it seems far fetched to think he can make enough moves to get into the money. (EDITOR'S NOTE: We are fucking good at predictions!)

What Happened: I'll be honest, I was going to do some in-depth exploration in Clifton's transaction thread, but some hooligans vandalized it to a distasteful and borderline unrecognizable degree. We remember Lasken making a move that we felt, at the time, could be considered the MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON, but damned if we can find it.

HOWEVER, it can be said that the Clams had the right idea of building around elite stars, with Kershaw, Scherzer and Goldschmidt forming one of the league's most dominant triumvirates. Unfortunately, injuries to Kershaw, Trea Turner and others came into play (to the surprise of some in Clifton ownership) and Clifton was never a serious challenger for a title, despite being in the top three for the lion's share of the season. It was a noble effort to try to contend, but in the end the Clams couldn't get over the hump and finished just out of the money. Other league owners felt the same, "I really admire Lasken for going all in and sacrificing the future. He left it all out on the table for a fifth place finish. Got burned with injuries but went for it and came up short."

In addition to the MVP-level season posted by Goldschmidt, the only other Clam to suit up for at least 100 games was Didi Gregorius (!), who batted .273 / 49 / 18 / 65 / 3, not bad at short. Ultimately, a lack of high-average hitters and sluggers were the Clams undoing, besides the injuries, which everyone forgot to previously mention. A 47-point pitching staff kept Clifton in contention, even during Kershaw's absence and thanks to yeoman's work from James Paxton and Trevor Bauer, among others.

What's Next: You have to figure Lasken will use his available money to try to add some offense to the Goldschmidt/Turner core. J.D. Martinez and Josh Donaldson would both make sense for the Clams in free agency. His pitching should be top notch again, especially if Berrios and Bundy can put together productive full seasons and Paxton stays healthy. Also, hopefully the announcement of a book signing tour at some point!

Predicted 2018 finish: **8th place**

-6- RESTON ROUNDABOUTS, 56 (38 Hitting, 18 Pitching – 11th at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: The Roundabouts will make a few mid-tier FA signings, look like a good bet to finish between 4th and 7th, and place top 3 after some phenomenal in-season tinkering. It's just what Dan does. He has big holes at 1B, OF and on the pitching staff. But again, this is the guy last year who found Adam Duvall and whoever it is pitching in Danny Duffy's jersey. Bet against Reston being in the money again at your own risk. (**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Much closer to 11th than 5th, but technically correct that he finished between 4th and 7th!)

What Happened: Last offseason, Dan outbid us in the Starling Marte sweepstakes, eventually landing the star outfielder in a trade from Sterling. We were crushed. Then he got suspended for 80 games. And that was the beginning of the end for Dan. He smartly realized early on that his team would not be able to compete this season and shipped off some expiring assets. He also, as usual, came up with the MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON, signing Tommy Pham for 600K before he turned into a really poor man's Mike Trout. Also as usual, Dan was one of the most enjoyable guys in the league to chat with throughout the season. Thanks for bringing up Chris Owings to us when we weren't trying to trade him!

What's Next: If Haus doesn't NT anyone, he'll enter the offseason with 32 players under contract for just over \$43 million. What. The. Fuck. That is terrifying. The good news for everyone else is the only sure things on the roster are Charlie Blackmon (\$4.9 million, the highest paid player on the team at this point), Manny Machado and James McCann, which make two damn good building blocks, but still leaves many holes to be filled.

We know Haus will be aggressive and creative via trades and free agency, with plenty of cash to add core pieces and the willingness to move pieces from the system. We still think it might be a year too early, but no one will act more swiftly in either direction when the competitive landscape starts to come into focus, despite what an anonymous former championship organization said in regards to the 'Bouts 2017 season, "He should have gone for the rebuild and wasted valuable resources and prospects in the process. If he's smart he'll sell off Machado and Blackmon and go all in for 2019 and beyond. He's not and thinks he has a chance next year so will waste more valuable resources for another bad finish in 2018."

Predicted 2018 Finish: **6th place**

-7- FALLS CHURCH FOXES, 54.5 (20 Hitting, 34.5 Pitching – 10th at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: Carlton is desperate to make the Foxes a winner again, and this is the off-season he is going to go all out to do it. He has a loaded farm system, tons of cash, and already a deep offense that includes studs like Votto, CarGo, Bogaerts and Bregman, plus a couple of young catchers in Schwarber and Sanchez. On the pitching side, he has Yu Darvish, and then a bunch of young guys who may or may not be good. You can expect him to be in on any starting pitcher on the free agent or trade market as he looks to get Falls Church back into the money. If he isn't in the Top 4 this year, you'll be able to hear Carlton's angry screams from the top of a Swiss mountain like he's in a Ricola commercial. (**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We apparently overrated Carlton's desire to win in 2017. Good lord, man!)

What Happened: Carlton has been huffily promising a dynasty overstuffed with countless successes, hasn't done anything of significance since his proclamations began, yet continues to double down on promises of imminent boom times that just aren't happening.

A partial list of the Foxes transaction highlights related to the 2017 JLB season:

- Non-tendered Felipe Rivero 12/30/16; Rivero was the No. 44 rated player in JLB in 2017 after signing for 2 x 1.0
- Traded Gary Sanchez for Alex Reyes on 1/9; it was announced that Reyes needed TJ on 2/15
- Signed Albert Pujols on 1/16 & Jason Heyward on 1/17; it was announced the next day that it was 2017, not 2012
- Signed Derek Norris on 1/19; Norris accused of beating his wife on 6/7 & officially suspended on 9/1
- Acquired Matt Harvey on 5/31 for \$1.3 million; Harvey then went 1-4 with a 9.41 ERA, 6.4 K/9 & 2.06 WHIP
- Cut Blake Treinen as the corresponding on 5/31; Treinen then posted 13 SV, 2.70 ERA, 9.11 K/9 & 1.14 WHIP

****We thought that the Treinen cut was the MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON, since we signed him and all of those excellent stats helped us win the title****

Holy SHIT when did you get so bad at this? Your average finish over the last four seasons has been 9th! Every year that passes puts 2009 & 2010 further in the rearview mirror. I'd delve into more specifics from this season, but your 7th place finish was much closer to 11th than it was 5th by standings points, so why waste the time? Until you start to turn this thing into a competitive operation, I think we are going to have to take your over the top boasts a little less seriously, if that's possible.

What's Next: Frankly, I'm surprised the emails harassing us about Trout haven't started yet. There are some pieces here that could lead to a competitive team. Darvish, Severino, plus a handful of young starters with potential lead the pitching staff, and you have to figure Carlton will be in on the free agent starting pitching market. Signing Votto or Freeman would definitely make sense as well. Bregman and Rendon are studs, and McCutchen looks like he is back. He has some intriguing young talent on offense as well like Buxton and Margot. His farm system is still loaded, so it remains to be seen if he will unload some of his talented youngsters to try and compete this year.

Predicted 2018 Finish: **7th place**

-8- FAIRFAX FIREMEN, 51 (29 Hitting, 22 Pitching – 6th at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: It's tough to really kill the Firemen too much, despite the collapse. Their pitching staff consisted of Matt Harvey, Dallas Keuchel and Chris Archer, all of whom were fantastic in 2015 and then either injured, terrible or both in 2016. The good news is all of these guys are still in the mix and could be poised for bounce back years. Combine that with staff ace Johnny Cueto and good-looking up and comers like Lance McCullers and Aaron Nola, and Keenan should have a respectable (at worst) starting staff. The offense still has Donaldson, Encarnacion, Cespedes and Billy Hamilton's base-stealing, but we have to assume Jean Segura will be traded to Arlington now that he is a Mariner. Ian Desmond losing his SS eligibility is tough, but him being bad again is a much bigger problem. Keenan had to be popping champagne when Desmond signed in Colorado.

What Happened: Kind of the same thing as 2016? For the first two months of the season, the Firemen looked unstoppable. Last year, the collapse happened in July/August. This year, things really fell apart in June and Keenan was already out of it before the All-Star break. One unnamed franchise that's a little too high on itself considering it moneys frequently but never wins made this observation, "Is there a safer bet in JLB than Keenan leading the league in April and May?"

What went wrong? His big offseason move was shipping Aaron Nola and Lance McCullers (plus a first round pick) to Centreville for Jonathan Villar and Freddie Freeman. He then flipped Freeman to Reston for Danny Duffy. Ending up with Villar and Duffy and losing two young, cost-controlled arms is not an ideal outcome. Josh Donaldson was hurt and ineffective and didn't turn it around until after the team was sunk. He probably should have moved some of his expiring assets (like Donaldson) at the deadline, but he either chose not to or never received multiple emails from multiple contenders, keeping himself from making a potential MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON. "We tried several times to get in touch with Keenan about potential trades around the deadline," one anonymous GM said. "But we never heard back. Juice business must be booming!" Indeed, it appears to be. They even have [their own fancy video!](#)

What's Next: There are definitely some pieces here, but the best opportunity for a near-term title might now be in the past. Seeing over 40% of the cap tied up in two catchers (Posey & Wieters), two starters with questionable injury histories (Cueto & Duffy) and relievers that aren't in line to close (Robertson, Watson, Alex Wilson I think?) makes the rest of the math pretty tough, although Archer and Keuchel could lead a dominant staff and Matt Olson and Gallo can provide a ton of HR and RBI for step 2 salaries, helping to balance it out. Too many down/injured years for expected cornerstones really hurt in 2017, and we see more of the same in 2018 (Villar, Cespedes, Desmond).

Predicted 2018 finish: **11th place.**

-9- GREAT FALLS GRENADES, 49.5 (30 Hitting, 19.5 Pitching – 7th at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: JD has lots of money, a very good farm system and a few guys you can absolutely build a championship team around in Bryant and Lindor, with Realmuto, Belt, Odor, Ramirez and Yelich all seemingly productive pieces for a winning team. He has Oh and Giles in the back end of the bullpen, but his best starting pitcher right now is Anthony DeSclafani. Does he try to make the worst-to-first leap and go all-in this off-season? Or does he add a few pieces, look to move up to the middle of the league, and then begin his title run in 2018? Either way he chooses will probably be the wrong one, according to JD.

What Happened: It was a bit hard to follow JD's logic in 2017, unless his entire goal for the year was "as few standings penalties as possible". Right after the New Year, he acquired the expiring Rick Porcello (not knowing the deal with the devil expired 12/31/16) and Anthony Rizzo, who expires in 2018, while giving up a couple of very interesting OF prospects in Nick Williams and Clint Frazier. This would be a worthwhile gamble for a competitive team just a piece or two away, but in JD's spot, it didn't make much sense.

Great Falls then quickly added David Price to the mix on a head scratching one-year deal for huge AAV (\$17MM), telling other owners that he could always trade Price if he fell out of it and Price was good like usual. Well, he got half of those conditions correct, as he fell out of it, but Price was injured and/or bad and I don't think anyone could add that kind of salary to their in-season roster without going over the tax. Odd strategy move number two. In fact, one anonymous GM told us that the Price signing was "the most inexplicable move of the entire off-season. It honestly made me question JD's sanity. I fear for his family."

Chris Davis, fresh off 157 games of a .792 OPS in 2016, was given a three-year deal at \$5MM per and would go on to become unplayable, not hitting for power (or average, of course!) in a year when he was out-homered by Scooter Gennett.

Continuing with the theme of going all-in on one-year deals for players in the AL East who aren't good anymore, JD then added the charred remains of Jose Bautista to the Grenades, for the low, low price of \$4.1 million. Serious question, did you stop following baseball after that summer you interned for the O's?

To supplement the bullpen, JD then added Andrew Miller and K-Rod on one-year deals for a total of \$16MM. They combined to pitch 37.2 innings and contribute 4 wins and 7 saves. K-Rod pitched to an 8.49 ERA and 2.06 WHIP, which was a little less than ideal.

There were a lot of other moves (but none anyone would consider THE MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON), but frankly who cares. In his defense, JD was a monster in the MLD, popping Mitch Keller and Acuna, who will matter way more to his long-term competitive hopes than the crappy one-year contracts. He also traded some of his botched signings for picks, so he's plenty loaded up in future drafts.

What's Next: JD has lots of money, a very good farm system and a few guys you can absolutely build a championship team around in Bryant and Lindor, with Realmuto, Rizzo, Ramirez and Yelich - all seemingly productive pieces for a winning team. He has Bradley and Giles in the back end of the bullpen, but his best starting pitcher right now is Mike Clevinger. Does he try to make the mediocre-to-first leap and go all-in this off-season? Or does he add a few pieces, look to get into the money, and then begin his title run in 2019? Either way he chooses will probably be the wrong one, according to JD (our point is JD's team looks eerily similar to last year's version. Until he commits to making some big moves, we aren't buying it).

Predicted 2018 finish: **10th place**

-10- ARLINGTON ARSENAL, 48.5 (23 Hitting, 25.5 Pitching – 9th at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: There is no doubt BG will be gunning for the money again in 2017, but this time, Justin may even support all of his moves! While Kyle Hendricks may take a step back, their rotation still looks solid with Sanchez, Carrasco, and Odorizzi alongside Hendricks. They need a reliever or two to pair with Kenley Jansen and could maybe use one more bat... That \$13 million to Prince Fielder could really come in handy this off-season! Whoops!

What Happened: If all we told you was that the Arsenal acquired Jose Quintana and Ryan Zimmerman for nothing, that would be a pretty good start! Although, the Sixers did at least get back the Arsenal's well-wishes, which I noted at the time was not just a toss-in.

"Also, they didn't give [Quintana] away. They got the Arsenal's best wishes! The well-wishes of the Arsenal were a HUGE part of our championship last year. Frankly I think Paul and Tom did a nice job."

And I stand by that! You think Arlington's well-wishes didn't help Centreville into the money? Do you know how NUTS Greenhalgh went over every Stanton home run?!

Still, Zimmerman and Quintana, plus the newly signed Sal Perez, added to an Arsenal core that looked like it could potentially compete. They even went out and, in what at the time seemed like it may be THE MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON, added Stephen Strasburg in early May when Dan began punting. However, the wheels quickly came off, and by late June, they were in full sell mode, shipping Strasburg and Nelson Cruz to Alexandria and Carlos Carrasco to Manassas. How's this for a fun fact? Between the

two Strasburg trades (Acquired from RES on 5/2 and sent to ALX on 6/30), the Arsenal made ZERO transactions! Jesus! Was Brian in a coma for 8 weeks that I'm forgetting? It's insane to go that long without moves! I mean, just for reference, over that same time period Lasken must have made 50 transactions, look at all those emails!

But as always, my favorite part of the Arsenal's season was Justin's annual email. Sure, Justin always announces which draft picks have been signed and who is in their minor league system. But, as we all know, he is only good for ONE email each year that offers up anything more than "SIGN BAD PROSPECT." And this year, it came on April 19 and featured a heart-warming tale on the harrowing journey of prospect Slade Heathcott, and why it hurt so much for them to cut him.

"At this point, we all know the story behind Slade. So much potential, battled alcoholism as a teenager, and then performed brilliantly in his brief 2015 call-up for the Yanks. Then, of course, he infamously missed the bus to the spring training game in 2016 and couldn't really get past that - he would ultimately be released. It was a difficult decision for Brian and me, and looking back I don't regret the pick, but we can't ignore what Mancini is doing right now."

Thanks for making sure we all remember that this game is played by human beings, Justin. I think sometimes we forget that.

What's Next: We were counting down the days to the expiration of the Cabrera and Fielder contracts at the end of the 2018 season, since we think BG could throw a hell of a party with those savings, but then we changed our minds and shit our pants when we realized how that combined \$28 million will of course be redirected with laser-like sharpness at Mike Trout on January 1, 2019. 2018 isn't going to be a great year for the Arsenal, but they'll save almost \$10 million by non-tendering O'Day and Baez, giving them some more cash (about \$23 million total) to fill up about 16 roster spots. I just can't stop thinking about Trout and now I'm sad/scared, sorry I don't have more to add to this, guys.

Predicted 2018 finish: **9th place**

-11- HERNDON HEROES, 44 (20 Hitting, 24 Pitching – 8th at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: Danny has three of the best players in the league (Arenado, Seager and Betts) locked up for many years to come at basically no money. There are a few useful pieces sprinkled elsewhere, but can he find enough pitching to get himself back in contention? Between Salazar's injury issues, Fulmer's late-season regression and Pomeranz being forced to pitch in park that allows hitters to bring bats to the plate, there are lots of questions on this staff that has Tanner Roark as its ace. Woof.

What Happened: Danny started the season GOING FOR IT, striking a New Year's Eve afternoon deal with the Starfish to add Madison Bumgarner, Aroldis Chapman & Kelvin Herrera for Andrew Benintendi and something called AJ Reed. Carlton said it best in the Heroes' transactions thread immediately following the deal, "Nothing like giving up a prospect who was good a year ago and sucks big time now to land a couple of studs. Nice work."

Danny then supplemented the bullpen even more, basically stealing Felipe Rivero on a 2 x 1.0 deal on January 14. Things were looking up in Herndon, until one of the least notable moves of the winter set the Heroes down a path of tragedy.

On January 20, Herndon traded away Chris Owings to Manassas for a 2019 2nd round AM pick. What a mistake that would turn out to be as Owings became an early-season contributor for the Manatees before becoming the apple of the Roundabouts' eye and helping to fill multiple holes on the 'Tees roster by being dealt to Haus. Somehow, it would get even worse for the Heroes.

On January 21, Herndon announced the signing of Yordano Ventura to a one-year deal, adding an electric arm for the league minimum. On the morning of January 22, news broke that Ventura had passed away in a car accident in the Dominican. In tough circumstances like this, JLB bands together to do what's right and fair. After a league-wide vote, it was official: The Arsenal would again NOT receive salary relief for Prince Fielder.

The Ventura news would shake Herndon to its core and was something the clubhouse would never recover from throughout the 2017 season. When Centreville had this happen to them at the end of 2016, they had a full offseason to recover. Herndon was never afforded that chance, and it showed.

Despite these adverse circumstances, Danny would do the best he could to give his team a chance to compete. He signed monster contributors to cost-effective deals like My Two Brads (Hand - 2 x 1.0 & Brach - 1 x 540K) & Travis Shaw (1 x 600K) and traded a few picks for down ballot MVP candidate JD Martinez, while avoiding anything that could be considered a bad signing, except for John Lackey (1 x 5.8).

When it became obvious that 2017 would not be a year in the money, Danny did the smart thing and flipped Chapman and Herrera in separate deals, netting three 1st round and a 2nd round pick in future drafts. He also packaged Rivero and Shaw, two VERY low cost signings before the season, for two more 1st round picks.

In what some call the MOVE OF THE IN-SEASON, the Heroes flipped the disappointing/injured-to-date expiring JD Martinez to Manassas for step 4 Sonny Gray and two relievers of inconsequence. We consider this deal as evening the score from the pre-2016 swap of Judge for Stanton.

Danny went for it, had tragedy strike, gave it his best shot under tough circumstances, then smartly sold, sold, sold to load up on picks in an effort to make 2018 a big boom year. At least one other team feels that is his destiny, saying, "Seager, Betts and Arenado locked up for cheap... with a couple more pieces in FA, Danny could be really good next year. Like really, really good..."

What's Next: You could argue that nobody has a better core of young, cheap hitters than Herndon, who can run out Seager, Arenado, Betts and Judge for a combined \$7.4M (assuming he 6 x 1.7's Judge). The problem is, there is almost no depth beyond those guys and the pitching staff is full of question marks like Danny Salazar and Michael Fulmer. The Heroes have a ton of money available this off-season, so we fully expect them to add multiple, top-level performers and add them to the young core. We'll have to find someone else this year who will aid our path to the championship.

Predicted 2018 finish: **4th place!**

-12- STERLING STARFISH, 18 (13 Hitting, 5 Pitching – 12th at All-Star Break)

What We Expected: Mac has already made it clear that due to him probably living at sea for most of 2017 that he will look to take a year off from competing, and has put studs like Madison Bumgarner and Aroldis Chapman on the block, along with overrated hacks like Porcello. Most of his offensive core (Rizzo, Murphy, Harper, Marte, Springer) is also locked up for 2018 (or longer, in Springer's case), so it's reasonable to see Mac down in 2017 and bounce back quickly in 2018. We'll see if he can shake down the Spacemen into giving up too much for Bumgarner.

What Happened: Mac is a man of his word, and not only lived at sea for most of the year, but also punted more than just his 2017 team. Instead of a quick, one-year rebuild and trying to win in 2018, he smartly assumed we are going to war soon and decided to punt 2018 and beyond as well. He moved each of the pieces we listed above, and now has a very solid farm system.

Those moves had their consequences, though. Sterling put together one of the worst teams in JLB history, only having Brett Gardner and Jacoby Ellsbury to thank for not posting a perfect 10. As noted, Mac was on a ship most of the year, so he wasn't around much to participate in funny email banter or keep people from ruining Lasken's transactions thread. Apparently asking Mac to field an actual starting lineup, be the commissioner of the league AND defend our country is a little bit too much to ask.

What's Next: A long year again, but good times on the horizon in the not too distant future. Thank you for your service (and your entry fee)!

Predicted 2018 finish: **12th place**

IN CONCLUSION

Ho ho holy shit are we out of ideas for the Report after doing three of the last four. Next year you guys can expect to just see running gchat logs of Mick's trade targets if no one else wins the league. But before we go, we just want to make sure we are very clear about something: **DO NOT LET US WIN A THIRD STRAIGHT TITLE.** You thought the "Remember that time we won the 2016 JLB Title" schtick was a little annoying, right? Be prepared for more nonsense like that this year. And sure, it'll be annoying once again. You'll regret not trying harder last year to keep us from winning. You'll wonder how either of us have the time to come up with these exhausting ideas that don't benefit us in the slightest. But that will be NOTHING compared to the wrath of a third straight Mana-title. Would that trigger daily push notifications on your phone informing you of what Jose Altuve ate for breakfast? Would it mean stuffed manatees showing up at each of your doors wearing "DO IT THREE TIMES" t-shirts? No one can be sure how the world would change. But it's up to each of you to try and stop us. Because I'm not sure if even WE are ready to live in a world where "MANA-THREE-PEAT" is a thing that even remotely makes sense.

