

Cincinnati Reds Press Clippings January 21, 2019

THIS DAY IN REDS HISTORY

1974-The Reds hire 31-year-old Marty Brennaman to do radio play-by-play, replacing Al Michaels

THE ATHLETIC

Rosenthal: The Reds' plan for Sonny Gray; big ideas from Scott Boras; what the Dodgers are thinking; more notes

By Ken Rosenthal

Jan 20, 2019

To understand why the Reds are willing to give right-hander Sonny Gray a contract extension before he ever wears their uniform, consider what happened last month when the team attempted to sign free-agent left-hander J.A. Happ. The Reds met Happ's request for a three-year deal and offered him the largest guarantee, according to major-league sources. But Happ agreed to a two-year, \$34 million contract with the Yankees, plus a vesting option at \$17 million if he makes 27 starts or pitches 165 innings in 2020.

The average annual value of the Yankees' deal was higher, sources said. At 36, Happ might simply have wanted a more certain contender. But let's not ignore the Reds' other obvious obstacle: Great American Ballpark.

Great American is not entirely deserving of its reputation for being extremely hitter-friendly — over the past five seasons, it averaged a ranking of 11th in park factor, a metric that measures the rate of stats at home against the rate of stats on the road. Yet, even a groundball specialist such as free-agent lefty Dallas Keuchel almost certainly would prefer to play in a better pitching environment, unless he lacked better options.

Enter Gray, who for whatever reason crumbled when pitching at Yankee Stadium last season, producing a 6.98 ERA at home and a 3.17 ERA on the road. If he could not adapt to the Yankees' home park, the Reds probably should be concerned that their own park might spook him. But Cincinnati, as a condition of a trade agreement it has reached with the Yankees, is trying to negotiate an extension with Gray, sources say.

Rival executives and player representatives were surprised the Reds would want to take such a step, considering Gray's regression last season. Two newly acquired Reds, left-hander Alex Wood and righty Tanner Roark, also are entering their free-agent years. The Reds could wait, assess how each performs this season and then decide which of the pitchers, if any, they want to extend.

Gray, though, might come at an immediate discount.

He is close with Reds pitching coach Derek Johnson, who was his pitching coach at Vanderbilt. And rather than test the open market, knowing players no longer are assured of windfalls in free agency, he might prefer the security of, say, a two- or three-year extension on top of his \$7.5 million salary for 2019.

The guess here is that such an extension would cost the Reds somewhere in the \$8 million to \$10 million range annually, a reasonable rate for a starting pitcher entering his age-29 season, provided he returns to form. Johnson, who is believed to have signed a deal for at least three years and possibly four, would offer Gray perhaps his best chance to rebound.

The 72-hour deadline for the Reds to complete an extension with Gray expires late Monday, sources said. If the trade is completed, the Reds reportedly will part with minor-league infielder Shed Long and their competitive-balance pick, which most likely will be No. 37 overall. If Gray rejects the extension, the Yankees either restructure

their agreement with the Reds or pursue a deal with another club. They previously have discussed Gray with the Giants, Braves and Athletics, among others.

A Gray trade and extension would give the Reds certainty for their rotation beyond this season, and the additional control would help justify their decision to part with Long, their No. 7 prospect according to MLB Pipeline.com, as well as the pick and anyone else in the deal. Yet, as The Athletic's Jim Bowden points out, the decision to acquire a series of one-year assets — outfielders Yasiel Puig and Matt Kemp as well as Wood and Roark — has already raised questions about the Reds' offseason strategy.

Even with Gray, the Reds would be a longshot for the postseason, and quite possibly a fourth-place club behind the Brewers, Cardinals and Cubs. Clearly — and admirably, considering the number of teams not competing to the fullest — the Reds want to give their fans a more entertaining product after four consecutive sub-70-win seasons. But they've already traded three prospects to whom they paid more than \$3 million combined in draft bonuses: infielder Jeter Downs and right-hander Josiah Gray (to the Dodgers in the Wood-Puig extravaganza) and righty Tanner Rainey (to the Nats). It's fair to ask: Is the team ready for all this?

A trade of Long would further deplete a farm system that many considered one of the game's 10 best before the start of the offseason. According to sources, the Indians wanted at least one of the Reds' top two prospects — infielder Nick Senzel and outfielder Taylor Trammell — for right-hander Corey Kluber. The Padres are among the other teams that covet Senzel. But rather than trade from the top of their farm system, the Reds have parted with players who are less than sure things. Downs and Gray are years away from the majors. Rainey has command issues. Long plays only second base, and trails both Senzel and last year's first-round pick, Jonathan India, on the organizational depth chart.

If the Reds fail to contend in the first half, they can recoup some the young talent they lost by trading veterans at the non-waiver deadline. If they compete all season, they could consider extending qualifying offers for at least Wood and Puig, protecting their right to draft-pick compensation.

Their entire offseason has been unusual. An extension for Gray would be one more unexpected step.

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Bowden: The Angels and Reds are making one-year moves. Is it the right approach?

By Jim Bowden

Jan 20, 2019

The Los Angeles Angels and Cincinnati Reds have each made a flurry off-season moves — and contrary to industry trends, they're focusing on how to be more competitive in 2019, with little regard to 2020 and beyond.

The Angels have been busy signing free agents to one-year deals, while the Reds have been trading prospects for one-year-rental major-leaguers. Both clubs seem to be putting themselves on track to have .500 seasons, give or take. That means another year without a postseason appearance — and with a worse draft position.

The Angels' strategy has been clear: Stay away from long-term commitments and focus on short-term patchwork solutions. This is mainly because they still have \$87 million due to Albert Pujols through 2021, and \$90 million due to Justin Upton through 2022. On top of that, Mike Trout will be a free agent after the 2020 season, and they want to make sure they have enough money put aside to try to lock him up to another long-term deal.

The Angels have kept their 40-man payroll in the \$176 million-\$188 million range for three consecutive years and project to do the same again this year, making sure they stay under the luxury tax threshold. The club's history of big contracts gone bad has been a strong influence in their decisions; besides the disastrous Pujols deal, they've had plenty of others in recent memory, including Josh Hamilton, C.J. Wilson and Jered Weaver. That's certainly left them cautious, and perhaps gun-shy. However, they also want to wait for their much-improved farm system to start

producing results. That's finally on track, and it could start sending legitimate prospects to the majors as early as this summer.

The Angels' difficulty is that they need to start winning soon if they want to persuade Trout to sign an extension. With the farm system not bearing fruit just yet, they've turned to stopgap moves to fill several of their holes, hoping they can win now.

The Reds' strategy, on the other hand, is very different — and less complicated. They are just plain tired of losing. Cincinnati has not won 70 games in five years and has not seen the playoffs since 2013. The Reds have had to sit through four consecutive years of losing at least 94 games. Since taking control of the team in 2006, the Castellini family has never gotten to the National League Championship Series, let alone the World Series. (In fact, the last time the Reds were in the NLCS, I was the general manager and Davey Johnson was the manager.) They've since gone through six GMs and nine managers. The bottom line is that both ownership and the front office are hungry for wins and are not willing to wait the six-plus years it takes to rebuild properly through the draft, the way the Astros (2009-2014), Cubs (2009-2014) and Nationals (2004-2011) did. The Reds have instead decided to cut the normal industry blueprint for success short by a year or two, mostly out of frustration and driven by the fact they are losing their fanbase. Last season saw the team's lowest attendance since 1984, with only 1,629,356 fans showing up to the ballpark.

The Angels have been playing checkbook baseball this offseason, spending \$34.35 million just on one-year contracts for 2019. They've signed two starting pitchers in Matt Harvey and Trevor Cahill. Harvey finished 2019 with a 4.94 ERA and 0.7 WAR after 28 starts for the Mets and Reds combined. Cahill finished with a 1.3 WAR and 3.76 ERA after 20 starts. That's not exactly a lot of bang for \$20 million in guaranteed money. Anaheim needed a catcher and got a solid veteran in Jonathan Lucroy, who will help their starting rotation defensively but is also in dramatic offensive decline, as shown by his four home runs and .291 on-base percentage to go with his -0.7 WAR from last season with the Athletics.

The Angels also landed former Indians closer Cody Allen (who lost his ninth-inning job in Cleveland last year to Brad Hand), signing him to a one-year, \$8.5 million deal. Allen lost velocity as well as command and control last year. Anaheim's only other free-agent signing was first baseman/designated hitter Justin Bour, who was brought in to give them protection for Pujols' decline and for Shohei Ohtani, who is coming back from Tommy John surgery. The Angels hope that collection of \$34 million veteran journeymen will help them contend in the AL West. However, I have to ask: Wouldn't it have been a better play to sign free-agent third baseman Manny Machado for the same annual price, if not less, and then have a core going forward of Trout, Ohtani, Upton and Machado? Wouldn't that have done more to help persuade Trout to sign? And, even if he doesn't sign, at least they'd still have Machado, Upton and Ohtani to build around long term.

The Reds have spent their offseason in a different manner. Instead of signing free agents to one-year contracts, they've been wheeling and dealing, trading for veteran players who are almost all free agents at season's end. The Reds' biggest trade landed outfielders Matt Kemp and Yasiel Puig from the Dodgers, along with starting pitcher Alex Wood and utility player Kyle Farmer. All but Farmer are in their walk year. Wood was a key for the Reds after he went 9-7 with a 3.68 ERA and 1.0 WAR for the Dodgers last year. The deal also allowed them to dump one of the teams' biggest contract busts of all time, right-handed pitcher Homer Bailey, who was immediately released by the Dodgers at the time of the trade. However, the Reds also sacrificed two legitimate prospects — infielder Jeter Downs and right-handed pitcher Josiah Gray.

The Reds also traded hard thrower Tanner Rainey to the Washington Nationals for starting pitcher Tanner Roark. Rainey has a good arm, but that's about it. Roark was 9-15 last year with a 4.34 ERA and finished with a 3.4 WAR, making him a definite upgrade to Cincinnati's rotation. The Nationals wanted to dump Roark's salary because they didn't want to go to arbitration with him, preferring to spend their money on free-agent pitcher Aníbal Sánchez, who was coming off a better season. Wood and Roark give the Reds two solid middle-of-the-rotation starters and should make them more competitive.

Still not done, the Reds are finalizing a trade for Yankees right-hander Sonny Gray, who in theory could improve their starting rotation, though he is coming off a difficult season. Like Roark and Wood, Gray will also be a free

agent at the end of the season — unless the Reds sign him to an extension, which remains a possibility. The price was yet another prospect and, this time, a draft pick.

Puig will be an upgrade in right field for the Reds offensively and defensively, and he should be able to reach a career high in home runs playing at Great American Ball Park. But he, too, is a free agent at the end of the 2019 season. Matt Kemp will compete for the left-field job but will have stiff competition from Scott Schebler, Jesse Winker and Nick Senzel. However, after non-tendering Billy Hamilton, the Reds don't have an above-average defensive center fielder on the roster.

The Angels went 80-82 last year, and although they've added Harvey and Cahill, they've also lost Garrett Richards, Blake Parker and José Álvarez and will miss their best starter, Ohtani, as he rehabilitates. Yes, the Angels should be better, but realistically the improvement will be by only a handful of games.

The Reds went 67-95 last year, and their shrewd hiring of manager David Bell, plus solid trades, should allow them to be much more competitive. It would still be a stretch to predict that they'll win more games than they lose. Some analysts will give them credit for at least trying to win; others will wonder why they didn't let the industry-standard blueprint of losing for six or seven years play out for another season or two.

Even after all these moves, neither team is good enough to win its division or even land a wild-card berth. So you have to wonder: What's the point?

I was a GM in the major leagues for approximately 16 years, and the seasons when I put teams together in similar fashions almost always ended without playoff appearances, having to pick much later in the draft and delaying by years our return to legitimate contention.

At the same time, having lived through it, I understand those teams wanting to win as many games as they possibly can. I hope I'm wrong and both will be surprises and make the playoffs. Even if I am right and they are only .500 teams, or worse, they may be able to trade most of these impending free agents at the deadline and get prospects in return who can help them continue building.

Still: Is this really the right play for two teams that, quite frankly, aren't postseason-ready?

Jim Bowden, a staff writer for The Athletic MLB, is the former general manager of the Cincinnati Reds and Washington Nationals. He is also a regular co-host on the MLB Network channel on Sirius XM Radio, and the year-round analyst on the Fantasy Alarm show on Sirius XM. He previously wrote for ESPN.com. Follow Jim on Twitter @JimBowdenGM.

JOURNAL REVIEW (CRAWFORDSVILLE, INDIANA)

Reds Caravan makes stop in Crawfordsville

Jared McMurry | jmcmurry@jrpress.com

JAN. 20, 2019

The Crawfordsville radio stations welcomed the 2019 Cincinnati Reds Caravan to Crawfordsville on Friday. Select invitees and die-hard Reds fans were greeted by some premier members of the Reds organization for a luncheon, meet and greet, and autograph opportunity.

Broadcasters Jeff Brantley, Jim Day, third basemen Eugenio Suarez, pitcher Tanner Roark, minor-league catcher Tyler Stephenson, President of Baseball Operations Dick Williams, and mascot Rosie Red made the stop Friday morning at Franciscan Health.

WCVL General Manager Dave Peach interviewed many of the participants, with optimism remaining high throughout for the upcoming season, as the Reds are less than a month away from breaking camp in Arizona.

Cincinnati finished 67-95 in 2018, and have missed the playoffs five-straight years, last making the postseason as a wild card team in 2013.

Williams took over the team amidst the rebuild in 2015, and has fans as optimistic as they've been in quite some time.

In the offseason, the Reds engaged with the Los Angeles Dodgers in a blockbuster trade that sent pitcher Homer Bailey to Los Angeles, and sluggers Yasiel Puig, Matt Kemp, and pitcher Alex Wood to Cincinnati.

The Reds also traded for Roark, who has been a staple in the Washington Nationals successful pitching rotation over the last few years.

Williams also hired David Bell this winter as the new manager of the team. Bell had been a coach with the Chicago Cubs, and St. Louis Cardinals in recent seasons.

Last season, Suarez had a breakout season, with a .315 batting average, hitting 34 home runs, and driving in 104 RBI, as well as his first All-Star nod. Williams, Day, and Brantley were all in agreement Friday that Suarez will be a key leader in the Red's Clubhouse this season with so many new faces on the team.

Couple Suarez with slugger Joey Votto, and newly-acquired Puig and Kemp and a reconfigured pitching staff, and the Reds are poised to make some noise in arguably the best division in baseball with Chicago, St. Louis, the Milwaukee Brewers, and Pittsburgh Pirates.

The Reds open the season at home against the Pirates on March 28, with fans energized for the 150th season of baseball in Cincinnati, and long-time broadcaster Marty Brennaman's last year in the booth.

All games can be listened to live, locally on 92.1 FM and 1550 AM.

THE MARIETTA TIMES (MARIETTA, OHIO)

Reds Caravan stops in Parkersburg

Jan 21, 2019

MIKE MORRISON

VIENNA — The Cincinnati Reds are baseball's oldest franchise.

As a matter of fact the Red Stockings are set to celebrate their 150th season when the 2019 campaign gets underway a little more than two months from now.

The product the Reds put on the field figures to be anything but old as the Reds hope to break a string of five years of losing baseball with new talent on the field and in the dugout.

Several members of the Cincinnati organization were on hand Saturday at the Grand Central Mall for the Reds Annual Caravan stop and expectations are rising for a team that has failed to win 70 games in any of the past four seasons.

New Reds manager David Bell made the trip to Vienna and he feels that brighter days are ahead for the storied franchise.

“We are trying to get all parts of our organization to work together to develop players in every way we possibly can,” said Bell, a Cincinnati native who attended Cincinnati Moeller High School. “In order to do that all of these different parts have to communicate. We have so many smart people and so much information and we just need to work that into one piece.”

Bell brings quite a pedigree to the Reds manager position as he is the son of former All-Star third baseman and major league manager Buddy Bell as well as the grandson of former Red Gus Bell.

Joining Bell at the Caravan stop were a pair of outfielders in Jesse Winker and Phillip Ervin, former Reds catcher and minor league manager Corky Miller, Reds television broadcaster Thom Brennaman, minor league outfielder Stuart Fairchild as well as Chief Operating Officer Phil Castellini and assistant general manager Sam Grossman. Brennaman was the master of ceremonies for the mornings activities and the veteran broadcaster of both baseball and football feels a few moves the Reds have made as well as a few more that he anticipates them making should give Reds fans reason for optimism this spring.

“The caravan is always awesome because you get to go out and get around people and you see how excited they are about the Reds and the upcoming season,” said Brennaman, the son of Hall-of-Fame broadcaster Marty Brennaman, who earlier this week announced that he will retire at the end of the 2019 season. “There is a lot to be optimistic about. The last couple of years they were hopeful but not optimistic. This year it’s hopeful and optimistic by some of the moves they have made.”

Among those moves so far have been the acquisition of starting pitcher Tanner Roark from the Washington Nationals as well as outfielders Yasiel Puig and Matt Kemp, starting pitcher Alex Wood and utility player Kyle Farmer in a blockbuster deal that sent disappointing pitcher Homer Bailey and his huge contract to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Like many other Reds fans, Brennaman has heard all the rumors about the front office looking to add even more starting pitching with names such as Cory Kluber, Sonny Gray and Dallas Keuchel being mentioned as potential targets.

“I really believe they probably have another major move or two left between now and spring training,” said Brennaman. “If they were to go out and acquire a Cory Kluber or a Sonny Gray or somebody like that, all of the sudden they go from being a hopeful or optimistic team to being a bonafide contender.”

Winker and Ervin were both first round picks of the Reds and both saw their first extensive time in the big leagues last year with promising results.

Ervin batted .252 last season with seven homeruns and 31 runs batted in while Winker was a solid candidate for National League Rookie of the Year before suffering a season ending shoulder injury in June.

Winker had secured the everyday job in leftfield and was batting .299 with seven homers and 43 RBI’s at the time of his injury.

With Kemp and Puig joining a crowded outfield mix that also includes Scott Schebler and top prospect Nick Senzel, Winker is once again healthy and ready to continue his development into becoming one of the best young hitters in the National League.

“My rehab is done and I’ve already started hitting so I will be ready to go for spring training,” said Winker, who will turn 25 years old in April. “You never want your season to be cut short especially with an injury so I just really look forward to picking up where I left off and helping this team win some games.”

The Reds contingent answered questions from many of the couple hundred Reds fans in attendance before participating in an autograph session.

ZANESVILLE TIMES RECORDER (ZANESVILLE, OHIO)

Competition will be high for Reds young pitchers

Reed, Romano hope to show they deserve roster spots amidst a flurry of changes to pitching staff

Sam Blackburn, Zanesville Times Recorder

Jan. 20, 2019

ZANESVILLE - Cody Reed has to change numbers this year, but that's the least of his concerns.

The Reds' left-hander wore No. 25 for the Reds until the day David Bell was announced as the team's new manager. The likes of Todd Benzinger and Dmitri Young wore it previously, but it's an institution with the Bell family. David's grandfather, Gus, and his father, Gus, also wore it as Reds.

Reed will now wear No. 23, made famous by the likes of former Reds sluggers Adam Duvall, Lee May and Greg Vaughn. Bell, a third generation Red, will continue the family tradition.

"Plus he's the guy calling the shots," Reed joked of his new manager. "He's the one making the decision if I'm going to be on the team or not, so he can have whatever he wants.

Reed and fellow starting pitcher Sal Romano, in town with the annual Reds Caravan stop recently at WHIZ Media Group, are among the litany of familiar arms that Bell must decide to fill key roles on the pitching staff. Reed and Romano are still largely unproven, but versatility will be on their side. Both have mostly been starters, but their flexibility could give them an edge for a roster spot over other competition.

Their situations were even further muddled when New York Yankees starter Sonny Gray was reportedly acquired for two minor leaguers and a draft pick on Saturday, although the trade had yet to be official as of Sunday afternoon. According to the New York Post, the Reds want Gray to agree to an extension before completing the deal.

Without him, the Reds will have one rotation spot available after starters Alex Wood and Tanner Roark were welcomed in trades to join incumbents Luis Castillo and Anthony DeSclafani.

With many bullpen slots already accounted for, it means competition will be high for spots on the 25-man roster in spring training.

Reed and Romano, along with the likes of Tyler Mahle, Robert Stephenson, Amir Garrett and Jackson Stephens, to name a few, have all come through the Reds' system and been part of the rebuild.

Now they are simply trying to make the team.

"It's just a huge competition for all of us," Romano said. "You want them to succeed, and I'll never root against my friends, but this is a business and I want that spot. I'm doing to do everything it takes to get it."

After posting a 4.45 ERA in 16 starts as a rookie in 2017, Romano struggled to a 5.31 ERA in 145 innings last season. He moved to the bullpen on Aug. 21, where he had seven scoreless outings.

Reed, a 6-5, 220-pound lefty, rejoined the team in mid-August and worked out of the bullpen until joining the rotation on Aug. 30.

He showed promise, with five starts allowing three earned runs or fewer. He struck out 10 and allowed no earned runs against the Cubs on Sept. 15 at Wrigley Field, then came back with six shutout innings against the Marlins five days later.

It was momentum he said he took into the offseason. His 3.98 ERA was easily the best of his career, as were his walks per nine innings (3.1) and strikeouts per nine (8.8).

"People asked me what turned it around and I just tell them I stopped caring so much," Reed said. "So it's just me out there and I can only criticize myself. I can't worry about what other people say ... I'm just focused on what I can do and I showed them glimpses of that in September."

Romano said he has spent considerable time this offseason further developing his pitch arsenal. He has relied mostly on a hard slider to accompany a mid-90s fastball and change-up.

"I've really worked on having that slow curveball and still have that hard slider that, when it's on, is a really good pitch for me," Romano said. "Just to change the eye level of the hitter, to have that curveball I really think it's going to be a huge pitch for me."

Both are looking forward to working with new pitching coach Derek Johnson, who joined Bell's staff from Milwaukee. Romano said he has already been on contact with the staff via text message and video.

"Just some encouraging things," Romano said. "He's really been active in trying to make everyone be together, to learn the type of person and type of pitching coach he is. I'm really excited to pick his brain."

While the offseason moves the team made may have deep impact on their potential roster spots, they still appreciate trying to improve the team.

The fact it was more than lip service from the front office only enhanced that.

"There's a different buzz, and I think Cincinnati can feel it too," Romano said. "The front office is making some changes and really trying to figure some things out, trying to figure out what 25 guys can bring winning baseball back to Cincinnati."

HUNTINGTON HERALD-DISPATCH (HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA)

Say it ain't so, Marty

By GRANT TRAYLOR The Herald-Dispatch

Jan. 20, 2019

HUNTINGTON — Earlier last week, Cincinnati Reds announcer Marty Brennaman stunned Major League Baseball when he announced that 2019 would be his last season as the radio voice of the team.

The broadcaster's son, Thom Brennaman, who works TV games for the Reds on Fox Sports Ohio, was part of the Reds Caravan East Tour stop Saturday at the Huntington Mall.

Following his father's announcement, there was speculation that Thom Brennaman might step in to take over when the 2019 season ends, but he seemed to diffuse those rumors during a question-and-answer portion of the caravan visit.

"I think it's good for the organization and I know it's good for me and all the parties involved, staying on the television side for a while," he said. "You know, I had a buddy of mine that said, 'There's no way the Reds would go hire some triple-A announcer, would they?' I said, 'Well hold on a minute now. Marty Brennaman was a triple-A announcer in 1973. That was 47 years ago. That hire turned out to be okay.'

"Whatever direction the Reds go in, I'm sure they are going to get a very talented person and that job will be there - good Lord willing, they're healthy - a long, long time."

Marty Brennaman was on the South Tour of the Reds Caravan last week, but his impact on the Reds - and his announcement - was felt throughout all tiers of the caravan.

Phil Castellini, the president and chief operating officer of the Cincinnati Reds, said that while Brennaman is retiring from the broadcast booth, he will still be a fixture within the organization.

"We plan on continuing with Marty being one of the faces of the franchise, so continuing with sponsorship, spokesperson-type relationships and one of the things we're most proud of having Marty's name on is our Reds Community Fund golf outing and so he definitely plans on continuing that as well, which we're really happy about," Castellini said. "Trust me, you're still going to see plenty of Marty Brennaman and hear from him and we're blessed that he's agreed to do that and continue that relationship."

Thom Brennaman said the first conversation that he heard of his father even mentioning retirement came a couple of years ago on a road trip in Milwaukee, but he had not heard anything more about it since that time until late in 2018.

After last season, Marty Brennaman and his wife Amanda, an Ashland native, took some time and got out of town for a while, but once they returned he sat down with Castellini and discussed the future.

"At the end of this year, I could tell that something was going on and he was flirting with that a lot more than he had been at other times," Thom Brennaman said. "Then, when he went out of town for a little while, he came back and sat down with Phil Castellini and talked about it and Phil was the one who talked him into not just going through the season and just quitting at the end of the last game -- to announce it ahead of time -- so Phil deserves a lot of credit for that."

While the discussions were taking place, Thom Brennaman said he tried to talk his father out of retiring.

"I didn't want him to retire and I get a little concerned about what he's going to go do, like a lot of people," Thom Brennaman said. "Your dad, your mom, anybody out there working and, all of the sudden, they retire. What are they going to go do? Everything sounds great for a little while. There was a concern there, but if he's excited, then I'm going to be excited."

With Marty Brennaman's announcement already public, the 2019 season is shaping up to be a celebration of the veteran broadcaster's career that has spanned five decades. Brennaman will be in his 46th season with the Cincinnati Reds in 2019. The year is also the 150th in the history of the organization.

LIMA NEWS (LIMA, OHIO)

Romano slims down to battle for spot in Reds rotation
Reds pitcher competing for starting spot
By Jose Nogueras - jnogueras@aimmediamidwest.com

From Big Sal to svelte Sal.

As Sal Romano made his way into the 2019 Reds caravan in Lima it was evident the tall right-hander had definitely shed some of the 270-pounds he was listed at last season.

A 6-foot-5, Romano still is an imposing figure but he has let lose some extra weight to prepare for the upcoming season.

Romano, like Reds fans, has seen the moves the Reds have made in the off season to bolster the inconsistent pitching staff that has plagued the Reds the last four years. Romano, who had his shot in the past two seasons to prove himself, bounced from being a starter to bullpen in 2018.

Romano opened the year as the starter and in 19 starts had an ERA of 5.53. He was moved to the bullpen when Homer Bailey returned but with that turning out to be a bust Romano returned to the starting rotation.

For the season, Romano finished 8-11 with a 5.31 ERA. He had 105 strikes out in a 145.2 innings of work. With new arms like Alex Wood and Tanner Roark added to the Reds and another trade in the works for a veteran arm, Romano understands the battle for a spot in the bullpen will be competitive and that is the reason for the weight loss.

"I am going into spring training trying to make the team, regardless of what I need to do," Romano said. "That is not up to me. I am in the best shape of my life, honestly, I have lost 20 pounds this off season."

Romano added that in addition to the slimming down he has worked on his mechanics and he is going to go into spring training with a positive attitude.

Romano sees an opportunity to show what he is capable of and thinks he can contribute and the 25-year-old has learned in his two years at the major league level.

"I've pitched against the best and some of the best hitters in the league," Romano said. "I know what to expect and there is a lot of things I can work on and I am starting to realize that."

Romano admits he has not gotten the job done to the best of his abilities and is looking to turn it around in a big transition year for him.

During the off season, Romano has met with newly hired manager David Bell and is impressed with his attitude and approach.

“David is a really good guy. Obviously a big baseball guy,” Romano said. “He is a ‘Bell.’ The guys that he brought in shows a lot about the type of guy he is and what he is trying to do.”

Romano said Bell told him he is going to get the opportunity to start but at this point he is more concerned at showing what he can do when his number is called.

TRANSACTIONS

01/20/19

Los Angeles Angels signed free agent RHP Cody Allen