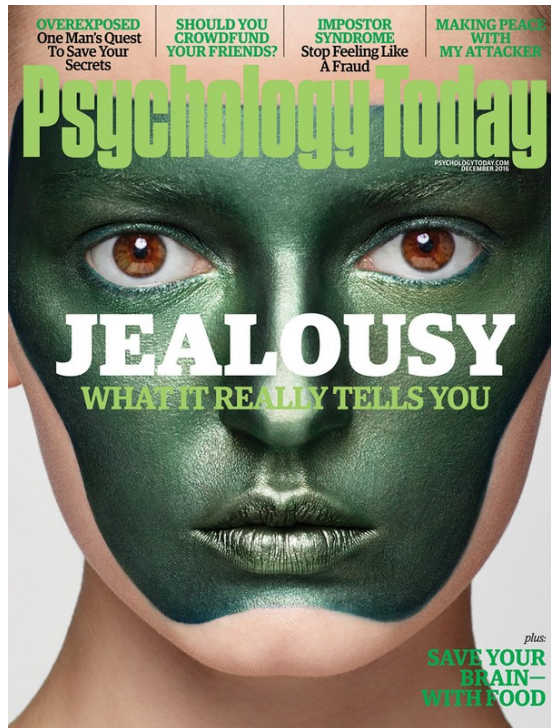


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COVER MODEL MUSCLE
ALEXANDER SKARSGÅRD

MeTarzan You Train

WITH HIS SCANDI-BOHEMIAN BACKGROUND, HIPSTER GIRLFRIEND AND ARTHOUSE RESUME, ALEXANDER SKARSGÅRD IS NOT YOUR ARCHETYPAL BLOCKBUSTER LEAD. BUT THEN, WHO EVER SAID IT'S AGAINST THE RULES TO COMBINE BRAIN WITH BRAINS? HERE'S HOW THE ICE-COOL SWEDISH BECAME KING OF THE JUNGLE, HIS OWN WAY

WORDS BY COLIN CRUMPTON - PHOTOGRAPHY BY DYLAN COULTER

44 MEN'S HEALTH

MEN'SHEALTH.CO.UK



FLEX APPEAL: SKARSGÅRD
PUMPS HIS MUSCLE TWICE
WITH NO-HOLD-BAR CHAIRMAN



ROUTE ADJUSTMENT

Braxton Miller had a rude awakening in the spring. He could no longer play QB at Ohio State. Now at a position he hadn't played since his first high school game, can he keep his national title hopes and NFL dreams alive?

BY BRETT FORRESTER | PHOTOGRAPHS BY DYLAN COULTER

70 ESPN 12.07.2015



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OHIO STATE'S IDENTITY crisis demands the locker room turned at High Point Solutions Stadium in Pleasanton, New Jersey. Dressed in OSU sweat, Braxton Miller steps into the spotlight October 10. The Buckeyes have not taken a Big Ten bottom-tier Big Ten game since 2011. Miller carries a solid 100-pound weight on his left shoulder, the one that could carry the weight of experience in Columbus. Since it can support more than any NFL hopeful would do, he's making his numbers.

Miller and his teammates are quick, doing what any NFL hopeful would do. He's making his numbers. No, Miller doesn't know that he has been repositioned from quarterback to wide receiver, reduced from BMOC to hit player. But after missing all of Ohio State's 2014 national championship season, being back on the field is reward enough. It was Miller, a two-time Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year under center, who set this bizarre Ohio State story in motion. His shoulder injury in August 2014 allowed two backups—first J.T. Barrett, then Cardale Jones—to lead OSU to that startling title. And it is Miller whose on-the-job transition this fall has provided a tidy metaphor for the team's efforts to find itself all over again.

Ohio State averaged 44.4 points per game last season, tops in the Big Ten and No. 2 in the country. The Buckeyes appeared to



A QB no more, Miller opened the 2015 season as a WR. But the nuances of his new position haven't come easily.

have little room for Miller; more to the point, they looked as if they didn't need him. Then the offense arrived, and with it the sort of juicy speculation that can tear a team apart, especially one with three elite QBs. Who would start? Who would transfer? How could Urban Meyer keep everyone happy?

Such high-class problems are at the root of this season's fit and starts. In September, Ohio State scored only 10 points and gave up 13 against a MAC school, Northern Illinois. The Buckeyes' seven-point win at Indiana to begin October had the trappings of a loss. The next Saturday, they were still tied only in the second half against Maryland, which has performed this year as though it belongs in the MAC.

Over the second half of the season, Ohio State has hit its stride, while whatever gains Miller has earned have been met with a step back. A week after Rutgers, he beat a Minnesota corner on a deep post, smoothly making the catch before getting thrown to the ground, his head slamming the turf. He would exit that game and get only two touches the next week, losing 4 yards, at Illinois.

In late November, these questions remain: Has Ohio State, ranked No. 3 by the College Football Playoff committee entering Week 12, progressed enough to repeat as national champ? And has Miller shown the specialized skills at receiver to have a career beyond January?

MILLER'S TROUBLES BEGAN innocently enough, at the Orange Bowl against Clemson on Jan. 3, 2014. Tackled on the fifth play of the game, he landed on his right elbow. Pain shot through his shoulder, but he shrugged it off, showing for 234 yards in a 40-35 loss. The next month, Miller had surgery to repair a torn labrum, the ring of cartilage where the shoulder socket attaches to the shoulder ligaments.

Miller sat out spring practice, expecting to return to full camp 100 percent, prepared to push James Winston and Marvin Marinis for the 2014 Heisman Trophy. But on Aug. 16, while cautiously testing his shoulder in pressurized drills, he tossed a simple, short pass to a cutting receiver, no more than a flick of the wrist. "It popped out," Miller says of his shoulder. He had re injured the labrum. "I have never felt pain like that in my life, and I never want to go through it again."

THE INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE 12.09.2015



Frock 'n' roll
The woman who dressed Carrie Bradshaw and now Caitlyn Jenner talks to Rebecca Gintshires

A British general's battle to rebuild Sierra Leone
I'm ready for my close up: Grace Dent on Instagram

Plus: Mark Hix, Anna Pavord, and John Walsh



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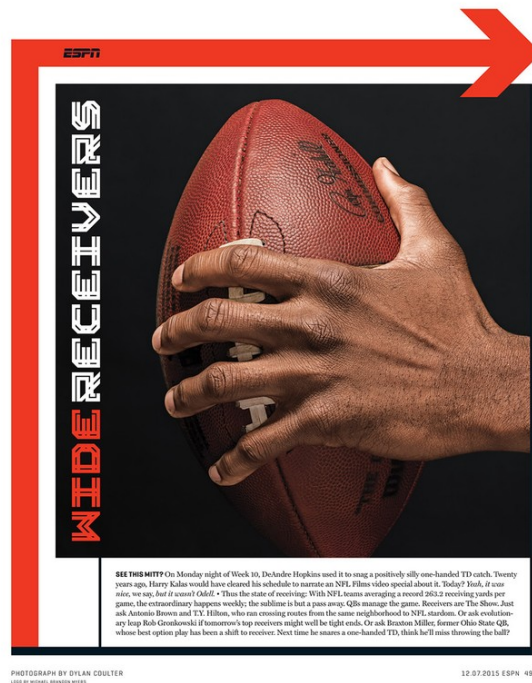
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STYLING: JULIE WATKINS

12.07.2015 ESPN 85



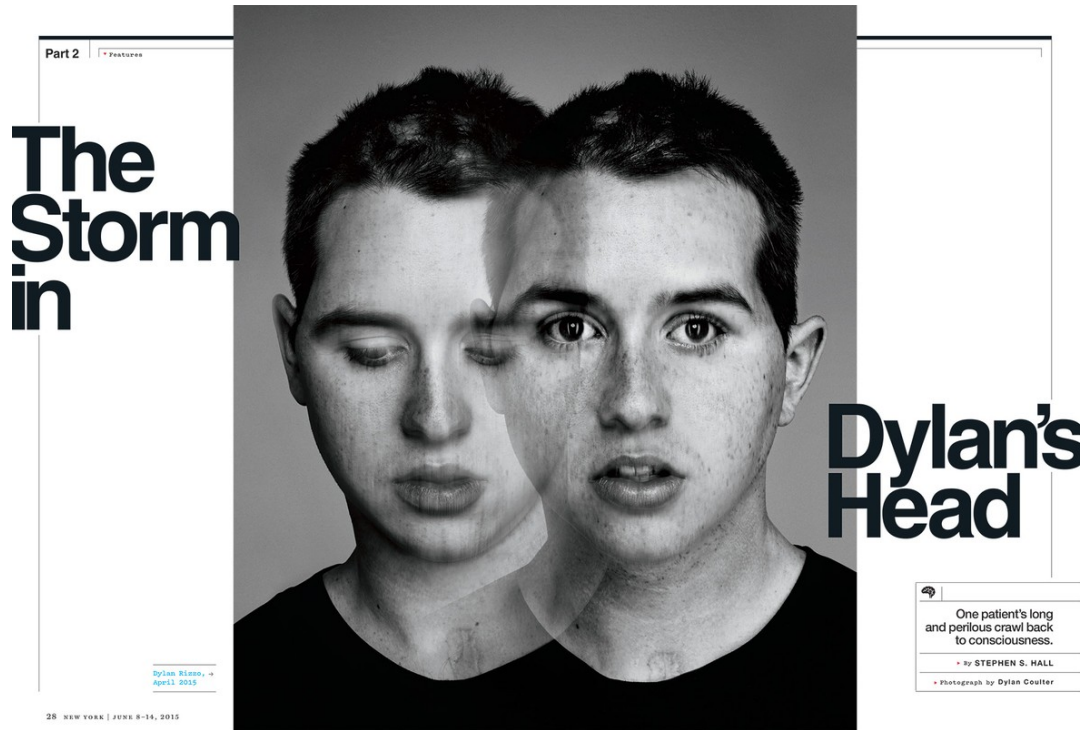
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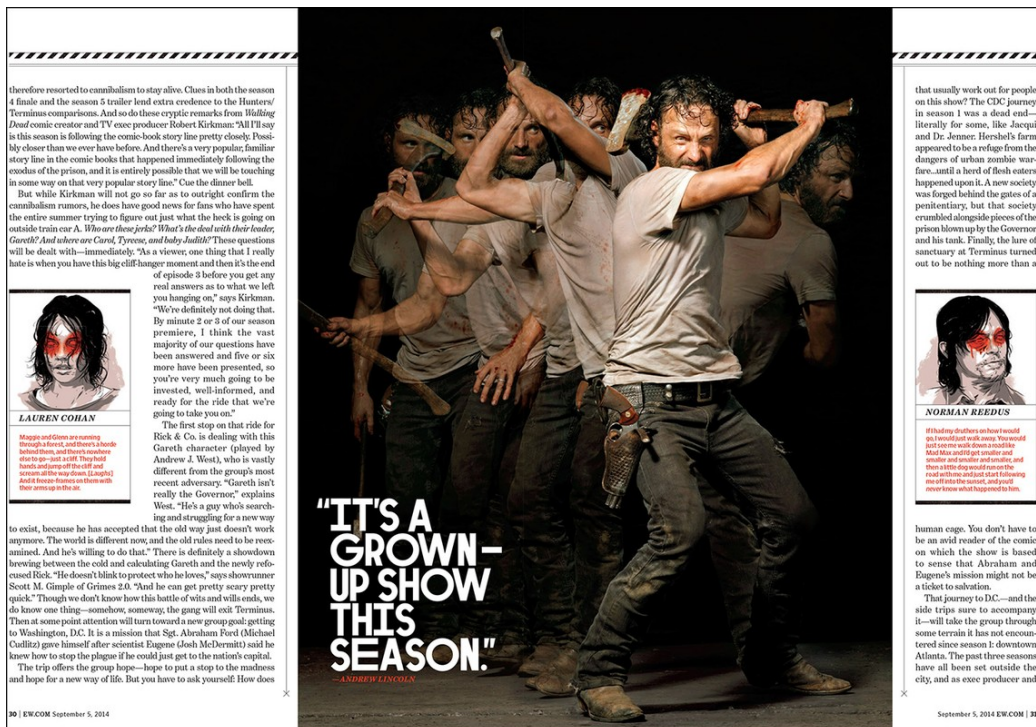
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therefore resorted to cannibalism to stay alive. Chances in both the season 4 finale and the season 5 trailer lend extra credence to the *Hunters/Terminus* comparisons. And so do these cryptic remarks from *Walking Dead* comic creator and TV exec producer Robert Kirkman: "All I'll say is this season is following the comic-book story line pretty closely. Possibly closer than we ever have before. And there's a very popular, familiar story line in the comic books that happened immediately following the escape of the prison, and it is entirely possible that we will be touching in some way on that very popular story line." Cue the dinner bell.

But while Kirkman will not go so far as to outright confirm the cannibalism rumors, he does have good news for fans who have spent the entire summer trying to figure out just what the heck is going on outside train car A. *Who are these jerks? What's the deal with their leader, Gareth? And where are Carol, Tyreese, and baby Judith?* These questions will be dealt with—immediately. "As a viewer, one thing that I really hate is when you have this big cliff-hanger moment and then it's the end of episode 3 before you get any real answers as to what we left you hanging on," says Kirkman. "We're definitely not doing that. By minute 2 or 3 of our season premiere, I think the vast majority of our questions have been answered and five or six more have been presented, so you're very much going to be invested, well-informed, and ready for the ride that we're going to take you on."

The first stop on that ride for Rick & Co. is dealing with this Gareth character (played by Andrew J. West), who is vastly different from the group's most recent adversary. "Gareth isn't really the Governor," explains West. "He's a guy who's searching and struggling for a new way to exist, because he has accepted that the old way just doesn't work anymore. The world is different now, and the old rules need to be reexamined. And he's willing to do that." There is definitely a showdown brewing between the cold and calculating Gareth and the newly reformed Rick. "He doesn't blink to protect who he loves," says showrunner Scott M. Gimple of *Crimes 2.0*. "And he can get pretty scary pretty quick." Though we don't know how this battle of wits and will ends, we do know one thing—somehow, somehow, the gang will exit Terminus. Then at some point attention will turn toward a new group goal: getting to Washington, D.C. It is a mission that Sgt. Abraham Ford (Michael Cudlitz) gave himself after scientist Eugene (Josh McDermitt) said he knew how to stop the plague if he could just get to the nation's capital. The trip offers the group hope—hope to put a stop to the madness and hope for a new way of life. But you have to ask yourself: How does

that usually work out for people on this show? The CDC journey in season 1 was a dead end—literally for some, like Jacqui and Dr. Jenner. Hershel's farm appeared to be a refuge from the dangers of urban zombie warfare...until a herd of *Behemothes* happened upon it. A new society was forged behind the gates of a penitentiary, but that society crumbled alongside pieces of the prison blown up by the Governor and his tank. Finally, the lure of sanctuary at Terminus turned out to be nothing more than a

human cage. You don't have to be an avid reader of the comic on which the show is based to sense that Abraham and Eugene's mission might not be a ticket to salvation. That journey to D.C.—and the side trips sure to accompany it—will take the group through some terrain it has not encountered since season 1: downtown Atlanta. The past three seasons have all been set outside the city, and as exec producer and

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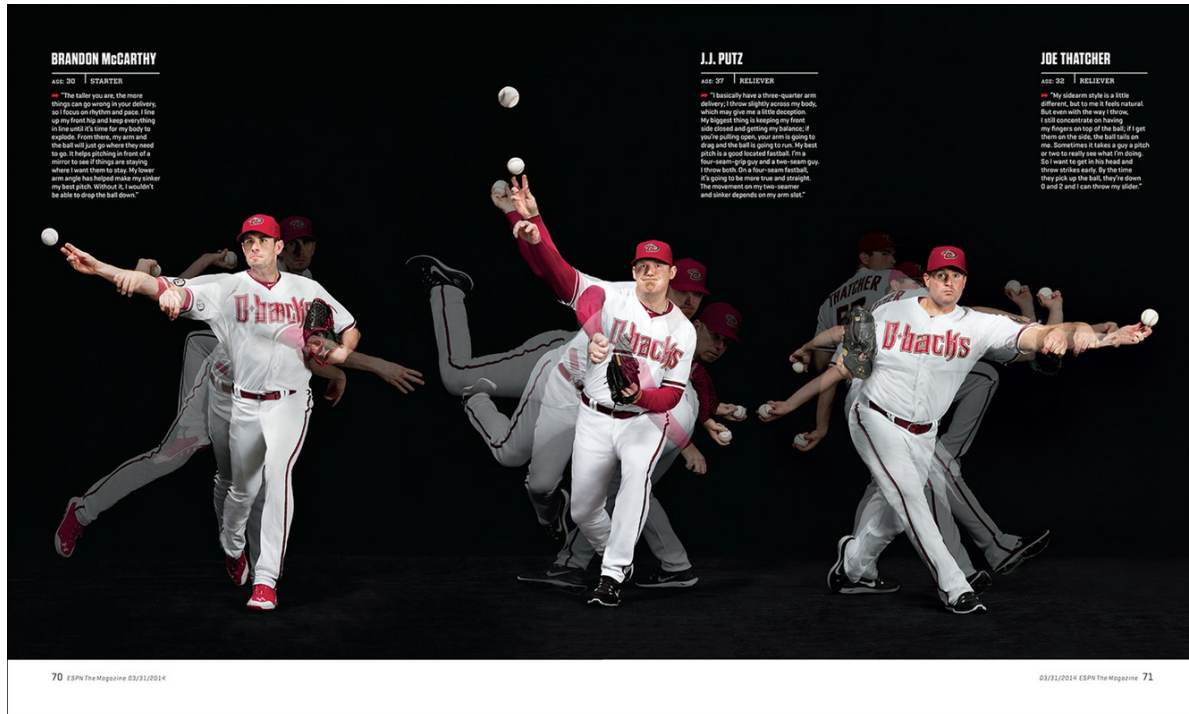
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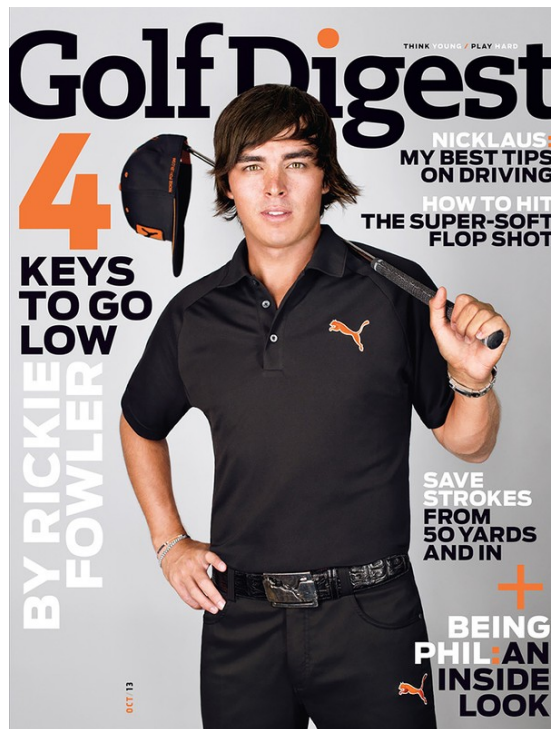
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BIG DATA'S BIGGEST FIGURE

Nate Silver has made number-crunching glamorous, predicting everything from elections to sports results. He talks to Andrew Edgecliffe-Johnson about his new career move and why he's not in the business to make friends. Portrait by Dylan Coulter

Nate Silver was down on Anthony Weiner's chances long before the coffee-sipping former congressman's campaign to become New York's mayor had to contend with the publication of a second wave of X-rated messages and private self-portraits. "I think his favorables were low enough that he had a cap on his support from the get-go," says the 35-year-old data blogger as he perches, straight-backed, on the edge of a black leather couch in his Manhattan loft. Home alone, Weiner's wife and an aide to Hillary Clinton, would have been in a landslide, he adds. The underestimator named candidate has been a gift to the city's tabloids but a metropolitan moment none feels a little small for Silver: the man who predicted how 49 of America's 50 states would vote in 2008 and then swept the board in 2012.

The one-time economics student and KPMG consultant looks every inch the nerdy need in glasses, brown suit trousers and pale blue shirt, but the age of "the data" has made monetary hip. Statisticians have become stars, from the authors of *Freakonomics* to Billy Beane, who applied data to baseball at the Oakland A's and ended up being portrayed by Brad Pitt in *Moneyball*.

Nearly a year after publishing *The Signal and the Noise*, his bestseller on how human fallacies make most of us poor predictors of anything from cash

PHOTOGRAPH BY DYLAN COULTER FOR TIME



The Culture

Comedy

Funny Side Up. Tig Notaro turned a health crisis into an iconic comedy set. Now what?

By Lily Rothman

LAST AUGUST, COMEDIAN LOUIS CK witnessed something special. "In 27 years doing this, I've seen a handful of truly great, masterful stand-up sets," he marveled to his millions of Twitter followers. "One was Tig Notaro last night at Largo." Prior to that night, Notaro, 41, had achieved success within stand-up circles with a popular podcast, a busy touring schedule and some TV writing gigs, but such praise from one of mainstream comedy's most adored talents set her apart. In the days that followed, other comedians who were at that August show took to the Web to tell what they had seen. Notaro was approached about crafting a book from her material. By the time she visited New York City in June, almost a year after the set that sparked the frenzy, her schedule was so full that she almost snubbed Louis CK when he called her to hang out. "I told him, 'Because of you, I'm so busy that I don't have time for you anymore,'" Notaro recalls, with a hint of awe in her voice.

That sense of disbelief is typical for Notaro these days. The recording of that night at Largo, in Los Angeles, became an album called *Live* ("as in, 'to keep not dying,'" in her words), which has sold more than 100,000 digital downloads. It was dubbed the best comedy album of 2012 by numerous outlets and reached No. 1 on *Billboard's* comedy chart. On July 16, *Live* will be available for the first time as a physical CD and LP, packaged with a second set taped in December. But while Notaro's celebrity is largely due to a single show, she's now navigating fame without that material.

Which is surely a good thing. During the half-hour set that became *Live*, Notaro recounted months of true-life horrors. After a bout of pneumonia, she was nearly killed by a C. difficile bacterial infection. ("I had this bacteria eating my digestive tract. So I lost 20 pounds.... How do I look?") Her mother died suddenly. She and her girlfriend broke up. She learned that she had cancer in both breasts and, the day before she went onstage, received

word that it might have spread. Her set—delivered in a more intimate style than her fans were likely expecting—was moving. It was also funny. (The hospital sent her mother, who had died, a custom survey. How was her stay? "Not great.") The levity almost ended there.

Before she talked about her health issues onstage, Notaro was working on a C. diff story for *This American Life*—she'd had a popular bit on the radio show months earlier, and host Ira Glass asked her back—but it wasn't done. In fact, she doubted if comedy was the way to address such topics. Glass recalls, it was Louis CK who convinced her to think again, encouraging her to release the Largo show. "I feel so lucky that Louis said, 'You should put this record out,' because I wouldn't have had that insight," she says. "I just thought that wasn't the best set I could do."

Notaro's record label, Secretly Canadian, was also unsure how the emotional album would go over with listeners. "We loved the idea in concept," says co-owner Ben Swanson. "We were like, 'It could do as well as [Notaro's other album] *Good One*, maybe a little bit more, maybe a lot less.'" *Good One* sold about 6,200 copies.

By the time *Live* hits stores, it will have already sold 15 times as many copies as *Good One*. It's the rare comedy set that inspires ailing listeners—well, at least one, according to Notaro—to tell a comic that she gives them the strength to face death. And its impact goes beyond the stage: In addition to the book, she's working on a one-woman show. A documentary is being made about her remarkable year. She's even thinking of starting a foundation.

It's a rare set that inspires ailing listeners to tell a comic that she gives them the strength to face death

But while Notaro became famous as the comedian to whom terrible things happen, that's just not the case any more. After a double mastectomy, she is cancer-free. (And though she says there was a time she couldn't imagine being attractive to anybody ever again, she's now dating.) Fans need a new shorthand for her—The person who still doesn't have cancer," she suggests—and she's hoping her career doesn't change with it. "If people start to drop by the wayside, I'll realize, Oh, they wanted cancer," she says. Louis CK doesn't think that will happen. "The impact of her story is what got people interested," he says, "but I think the reason she's continuing to do well is because she's so good."

So far, the evidence bears him out. Notaro's first feature films are on the way: the comedy *Isa World*... will be in limited release Aug. 9, followed by *Walk of Shame*, with Elizabeth Banks, and Ryan Phillippe's directorial debut, *Silverport*. There's a TV project in progress too. And she's touring, working on new material.

Her new stuff can't be another *Live*—but it likely won't be another *Good One* either. There's a moment in *Live* when Notaro tells the sort of observational joke for which she had been known, about seeing a bee on the highway. The reaction, says Glass, indicates that she may not be able to go back to that old style. "It's a funny joke," he says, "but you feel like the whole audience is feeling, 'Wow, this isn't nothing compared to what we just saw.'"

Notaro isn't worried. Asked if she feels pressure to match *Live's* success, she says no. Sure, lightning doesn't strike twice—but needing a new energy source is freeing. Her mission to keep doing her thing, just as she has since she first arrived in Los Angeles 17 years ago. "I feel so lucky, I wish people could have my life sometimes. I know probably people from a distance would say, 'No, thank you. That sounds horrible.' But I do," she says. "I walk around going, 'I have a really great life.'"

Photograph by Dylan Coulter for TIME



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THE SPORTING SCENE

ODDBALL

Is R.A. Dickey too good to be true?

BY BEN MCGRATH

R.A. Dickey, the reigning National League Cy Young Award winner, sometimes seems like a sports hero drenched up by a bookworm. He is a knuckleball pitcher, already the most ungainly of athletic specialists, relying on physics to make jokes look foolish. He wears his brown hair chaggy in the back, and has a beard that would please a thug-lah. In 2011, inspired by Hemingway, he climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro—Kili, he calls it—and blogged about it for the *New York Times*. ("I take solace at least in the awareness of my own bravado.") Every celebrity has a charitable cause, but this past winter, Dickey actually travelled to the red-light district of Mumbai in support of his cothing on trafficking in India. He wrote about that for the *Daily News*. "It made me want to grab every downmodken person I could find and walk them through the door, into the light and possibility, beyond the vile and violent world they've grown so accustomed to." In spite of his millions, Dickey also professes to have public transportation, which he uses to visit museums in cities like Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., on the days he's not pitching. "I mean, I figure, why not, you know?" he told me, in a Tennessee drawl. "I love art." Dickey is impossible not to admire, yet one can't help but wonder about those who embrace him too readily, now that they've seen him self-deprecating with Jon Stewart on "The Daily Show." Are they even baseball fans, or do they just find it comforting to know that not all exceptional athletes are as boring as Derek Jeter or as vain as Alex Rodriguez?

Conspicuous compensation can be in its own form of vanity, especially in a sport with a culture as lethargic as baseball's. "Hurry up and wait," baseball people sometimes joke, about the proponderance of downtime that overabundates their daily professional lives. Instead of embracing multitasking, the game's unwritten code

seems to frown on it, and makes a virtue of enduring long afternoons between stretching and shagging fly balls with little more than sunflower seeds and headphones as distractions. In a living clubhouse, at least, extracurricular activity is cause for suspicion, and, shortly before the Mets traded Dickey, last December, a column appeared in the *Post* accusing him of being a play hound. Dickey was engaged in negotiations about his contract with the club. He was due to be paid five million dollars in 2013—good money, to be sure, but a pittance for a twenty-game winner—and his agent was seeking an extension, and a raise, to capitalize on his client's newfound status, at age thirty-eight, as one of the game's elite players. The column's author, Ken Davidoff, mocked Dickey's infatuation with his own "narrative," and accused him of being needy—"a handoff"—and unlabeled by his less worldly teammates.

The precipitating event for this zinger was a holiday party that the team had organized, at Citi Field, to honor Dickey of Hurricane Sandy. Whether or not Dickey was admired by his peers, he was, after these seasons on the roster, undeniably popular among Mets fans, a lone bright spot in the grim years that followed the near-bankruptcy of the franchise owing to the owner's investments with Bernie Madoff. Dickey was asked to fly to his home, in Nashville, to attend the party, playing the part of an elf. (Inevitably, a knuckleballer, even one who stands six foot two and weighs two hundred and fifteen pounds, would be cast as an elf.) There, also inevitably, reporters asked him about the status of his contract talks, and he took the opportunity to plead his case: he was old, yes, but well within a knuckleballer's prime, and a bargain at a wage that was only slightly greater than the league average. "I feel like we're asking for even less than what is fair," Dickey said. "When people say, 'It's business, it's not personal,' that just means it's not personal for them."

To Davidoff, at the *Post*, this was Dickey showing his "true character," putting his own feelings above the mission of the team. The headline—"AMAZING! WONT KNICKLE UNDER PRESSURE! KICKABLE THREATS TO LEAVE"—gave the impression that the column's author was writing as a mouthpiece for management, which appeared to be more interested in rebuilding for the future. Sure enough, in a matter of days, the Mets had found Dickey a new home, in Toronto.

"My first thought in my heart was: You need to apologize, R.A., for the place that you did that," Dickey told me, the day after he'd passed his Blue Jays physical—"the day after all this crap," as he put it, referring to the fallout from the *Post* column, and what he perceived as a hurtful smear campaign by the Mets, to placate a frustrated fan base. "Because I did it at a holiday party that was there to celebrate kids who had been displaced from Hurricane Sandy."

Dickey was back in Nashville, where strangers stopped him occasionally to offer congratulations: the Blue Jays had agreed not only to take on his contract but to extend it by two years and twenty-five million dollars—considerably more money than he had made in his entire career thus far. Yet in the down season town, fielding calls from his agent ("Hey, did we get the contract to hold?") and ESPN. ("It feels good to be wanted—my narrative is such that that hasn't always been the case"). I got the sense that Dickey felt he'd earned a Pythian victory. He'd loved his time in New York, a city that had bigger ambitions than baseball. "Seemingly there was this culture where you could celebrate who you were authentically made to be," he told me, and referred to the connections and friends he'd been able to make in the publishing and film industries while writing a best-selling book, "Wherever I Wind Up: My Quest for Truth, Authenticity, and the Perfect Knuckleball," and participating in a documentary,



"It doesn't have as much time to flutter out of the zone," Dickey says of his knuckleball. Its speed makes it more controllable.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DYLAN COULTER

THE NEW YORKER, MAY 6, 2013

53

PLUS TEAM-BY-TEAM RANKINGS
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THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

BY **BUSTER OLNEY**

ALMOST ALL HITTERS REDUCE THE GAME TO ITS SIMPLEST PARTS.
ALMOST ALL HITTERS ARE NOT **JOEY VOTTO**.

UNPREDICTABILITY INDEX

No player is immune from a bad year. But as any fantasy player will tell you, it's invaluable to know who is likely to bounce back. To get the green light on a player, The Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA) has a special award: the Most Valuable Player Award. In 2013, the award went to Joey Votto, who hit .327 with 32 home runs and 105 RBI. That's remarkable given Votto's comeback from an injury suffered in 2012.

1.03

NOTE: ON THE UNPREDICTABILITY INDEX FOR TEAMS AND PLAYERS BY DAVE LO

I CARE MORE HOW CONSISTENTLY TOUGH AND COMPETITIVE I CAN BE FOR THE OPPOSING PITCHER. AND THAT'S MY GOAL EVERY SINGLE TIME I GO UP THERE.

LEADER IN WAR PROBABLY NOT

Over the past five years, Votto has led MLB in Wins Probability Added (WPA), which measures how much his play affects the odds of a team winning or losing. Last season, he topped the list with 2.65 WPA points per game, the highest in MLB.

RANK	WPA*
1. Jody Votto	23.39%
2. Adam LaRoche	21.74%
3. Ryan Braun	21.62%
4. Miguel Cabrera	21.13%
5. Ryan Howard	20.62%

*Minimum 1,000 plate appearances

HIGHER ON BENCH THAN SLUGGING PROWESS

Votto is an infrequent cleanup hitter, but he's a consistent cleanup hitter when he's in the lineup. He's hit 10 home runs in 100 at-bats, which is a career high.

RANK	OPS*
1. Jody Votto	1.13
2. Ryan Howard	1.09
3. Adam LaRoche	1.08
4. Ryan Braun	1.07

*Minimum 1,000 plate appearances

ASTUTE AWARENESS OF HIS OWN STRENGTHS

Since 2009, Votto has led the majors in BA with OBP (minimum 500 at-bats). Votto ranks ahead of a Triple Crown winner (Miguel Cabrera) and other MVPs (Jody Wicks and Albert Pujols).

emphasized, but at the same time he's so remote and deep that they aren't entirely sure what makes him work. They are in awe of him, his powers and erudition as a hitter, and how much emotional and physical effort he puts into each pitch of each at-bat of each game.

The vast majority of major league hitters prefer to simplify the endless information streams available to them—the video of opposing pitchers, the scouting reports, the statistical data—and reduce all of it to the lowest common denominator: See the ball, hit the ball. Anything more and most players would crash due to mental overload. But much like another great student of hitting, Ted Williams, Votto has an insatiable appetite for intel about his swing and pitchers, and because of it he's arguably the best pure hitter of the 19th generation. He thinks about hitting uniquely and articulates each insight in a steady voice so deliberate it sounds as if it's coming from a GPS unit.

"It's all about reframing the challenge," he said last season when we talked hitting at Great American Ball Park's indoor batting cage. "I've stopped caring about runs and RBIs. I care more about how high a percentage of productive at-bats I can have, how consistently tough and competitive I can be for the opposing pitcher. That's my goal every single time you step here. If I drive in 30 runs, I don't care. I know a lot of old-school people wouldn't believe I'd say something like that."

He passed for a moment and continued: "If you can find a way to frame the fight to be patient as a challenge in and of itself, that can be more satisfying than catching a ball the right way and shooting it home or over or at the ballpark. As hitters grow and get older, those are the battles that are so gratifying."

There are many ways to define how good a hitter Votto is. The easy way is to say that he's a three-time All-Star and won the National League Most Valuable Player Award in 2010. For the SABR stat, there's this: Using the advanced metric Adjusted OPS+, which takes a player's OPS and adjusts for the ballpark and the league in which he plays, Votto rates as the offensive equal of Hank Aaron and Joe DiMaggio and is just

the middle of a game last summer, Jay Votto walked over to teammate Todd Frazier in the Reds' dugout and apologized. It had nothing to do with anything that had happened on the field. In fact, Votto was on the DL with a left knee injury, and Frazier, an infielder, wasn't in the lineup that day. Votto took advantage of the opportunity to simply tell Frazier he was sorry for not investing the time to get to know his teammate. "I take the blame for this," Votto said. "I don't know you that well, and I want to get to know you better."

The apology surprised Votto but not nearly as much as the fact that Votto had approached him at all. Votto doesn't talk much in the clubhouse and always seems preoccupied. So Frazier saw an opening and took it. "Now, since we're speaking the truth here," he said, "you're a little different. But I respect you 10 times more for coming up and talking with me."

Votto's teammates understand the 29-year-old first baseman in the mood of most of us: comprehend the universe. He's reliable and

a tick better than Frank Robinson. But maybe the best way to describe Votto is that he's baseball's most cerebral hitter, the Einstein of the batter's box.

WHEN I ARRIVED ○ Reds camp this spring, I mentioned to second baseman Brandon Phillips that I came to talk to Votto about hitting. Phillips laughed. "I hope you have a lot of time," he said.

Votto's teammates know his passion for every at-bat, but not much else. The outline of his month is often as flat as a pancake, and even if his eyes are open, those around him often can't tell whether he's looking at something in particular. This is the Votto Stare. His teammates don't know whether he's musing about anything he read or the workload ahead. But they are certain that he's thinking—*ah*—because Votto doesn't really do anything and breezy.

"It's a pretty quiet guy, pretty to his bones," rightfielder Jay Bruce says. "He doesn't let a lot of people in, but I would consider him a friend." Bruce adds that Votto can be funny once he gets to know you. And his social distance has never been a clubhouse hindrance. Before the 2011 season, the Reds celebrated a 12-year, \$25.5-million deal with Votto's agent, Danny Lewin—the longest contract in baseball history. "There was never any doubt about his personality and whether he would live up to his end," Cincinnati general manager Bill Jockley says.

Jockley knew because of moments like this: When Cuban defender Aroldis Chapman joined the Reds for his first full season in 2011, it seemed wrong to Votto that he was unable to communicate with a pitcher integral to the team's future. Votto had learned French as a kid and felt there were enough similarities between that language and Spanish that he could grasp it quickly. During the 2011 offseason, he worked with a Spanish tutor four or five times a week. By spring training last year, he spoke his third language well enough to challenge Chapman to a duel. He would speak Spanish better than Chapman could speak English. The pitcher accepted. Votto won't say who won, but not bet against the guy who still stays with his Spanish tutor.

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