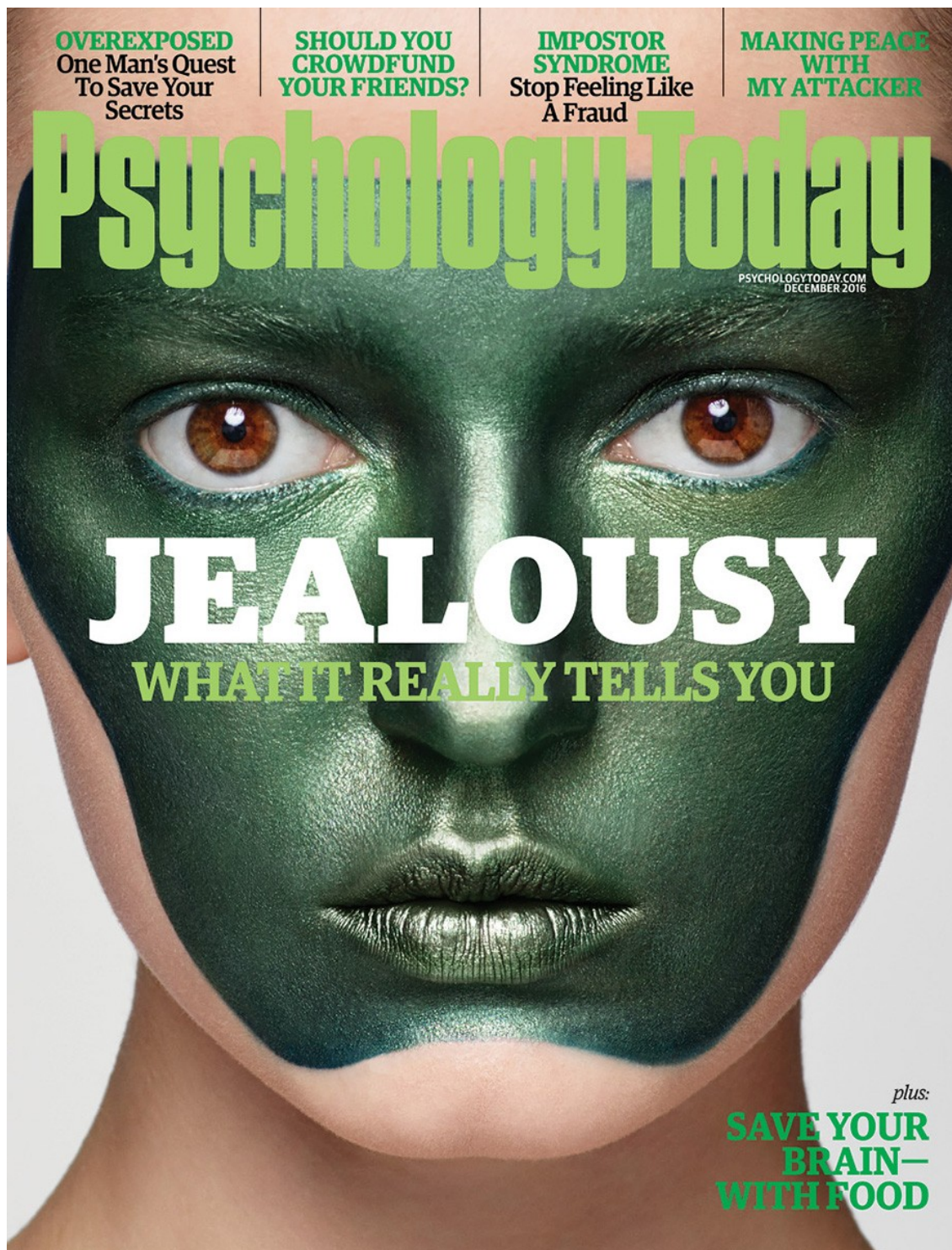


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COVER MODEL MUSCLE
ALEXANDER SKARSGÅRD

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 BRAUN WITH BRAINS? HERE'S HOW THE ICE-COOL SWEDE BECAME KING OF THE JUNGLE, HIS OWN WAY

WORDS BY COLIN CRUMMY - PHOTOGRAPHY BY DYLAN COULTER



44 MEN'S HEALTH

MENSHEALTH.CO.UK



FLEX APPEAL: SKARSGÅRD
PAIRS BIG-BUDGET MUSCLE
WITH INDIE-HERO CHARISMA

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70 ESPN 12.07.2015

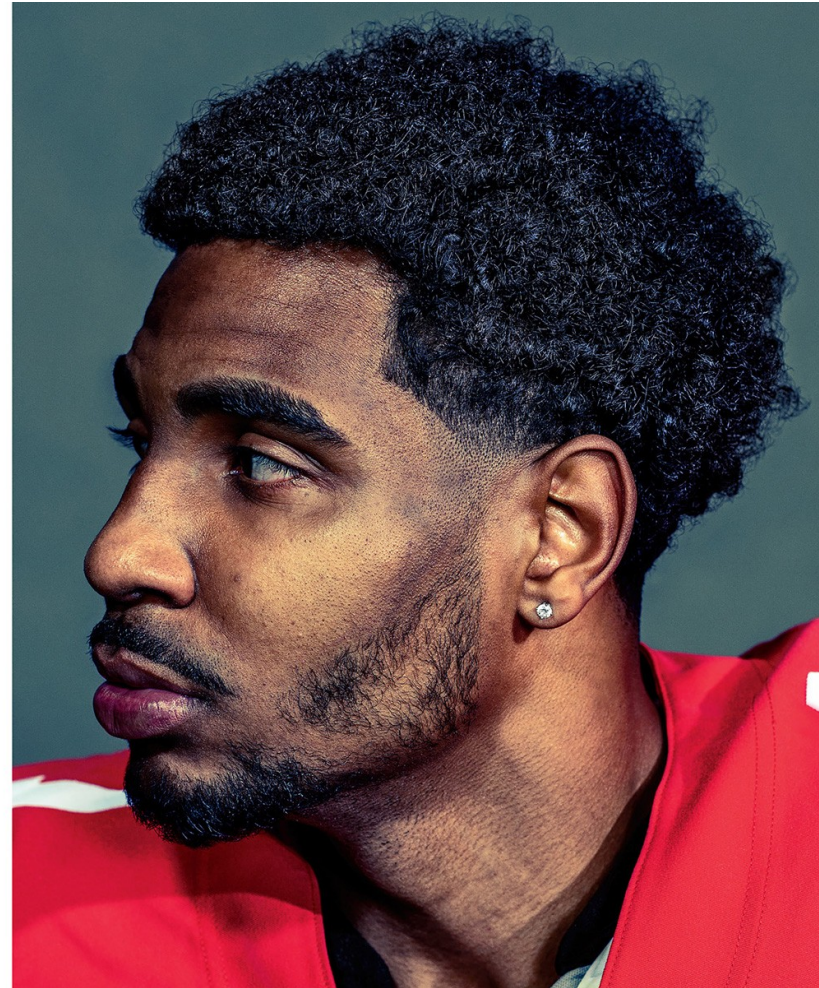


WIDE RECEIVERS

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 FORREST | PHOTOGRAPHS BY DYLAN COULTER



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WIDE RECEIVERS



OHIO STATE'S IDENTITY crisis descends the locker room tunnel at High Point Solutions Stadium in Piscataway, New Jersey. Dressed in OSU sweats, Braxton Miller's eyes into the crisis late-October evening. The Buckeyes have just taken down Big Ten bottom-feeder Rutgers 49-7. Miller carries a duffel bag over his twice-injured right shoulder, the one that used to carry the weight of expectations in Columbus. Now it can support hardly more than a change of clothes. He stands in the postgame quiet, doing what any NFL hopeful would do. He's analyzing his numbers.

Miller had only three opportunities, two catches for 55 yards and one rush for 16. Yet he makes sure to remain upbeat. "I love it," he says. "Coach Meyer knows I love it too."

No, Miller doesn't love that he has been repositioned from quarterback to wide receiver, reduced from BMOOC to bit 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 44.8 points per game last season, tops in the Big Ten and No. 5 in the country. The Buckeyes appeared to

have little room for Miller: more to the point, they looked as if they didn't need him. Then the offseason 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 fits and starts. In September, Ohio State scored only 20 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 early 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, throwing 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 fall camp 100 percent, prepared to push Jameis Winston and Marcus Mariota for the 2014 Heisman Trophy. But on Aug. 18, while cautiously testing his shoulder in preseason 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 reinjured the labrum. "I have never felt pain like that in my life, and I never want to go through it again."

A QB no more, Miller earned the 2015 highlight reel with a spin move. But the nuances of his new position haven't come easily.



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THE INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE 12.09.2015



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

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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A SHOW OF HANDS

No body part is more integral to an athlete's success than a receiver's hands. Texans breakout star DeAndre Hopkins and Tom Brady's temporarily sidelined top target, Julian Edelman, help us get a grip on their mitts.

INTERVIEWS BY MORTY AIN AND STACEY PRESSMAN



Hopkins' hand shown to scale. 1 inch = 1 inch

DEANDRE HOPKINS	CATCHES THIS SEASON 71*	YPC 13.1	CATCH RATE THIS SEASON 58%
<p>➤ I think I have the best hands in the NFL. Not because I'm full of myself, but I think if you look at drops over the past three years, I'd say I'm at the top of that list. [Hopkins is right—he grabbed 87 percent of catchable passes in his first two years, best in the league.]</p>	<p>➤ I remember my more spectacular catches exactly—like last year against the Giants. It was with my left hand, and really couldn't get a grip on the ball, so I caught it with only three fingers. On the sidelines, my teammates were like, "Did I really just see that?"</p>	<p>➤ My first hand injury was in eighth grade. My thumb got jammed when a defender hit it with his helmet. I didn't realize it was broken until the next play—it looked like a little nub, it was so far back in my skin. I had to get two pins in it.</p>	<p>➤ These calluses aren't going away—I've been a wide receiver since I was 15 years old. And every quarterback I've had throw a pretty hard ball. Ryan Mallett [a Texans QB last season] probably had the hardest ball I've caught in my years of playing football.</p>
<p>➤ My pinkie tends to pop out of place a lot while I'm playing—I just pop it back in. I notice it when I move my hand and it feels stiff. I mean, it's been happening my whole life. It's never broken—just pops out of place real easy. *As seen through Week 10.</p>			

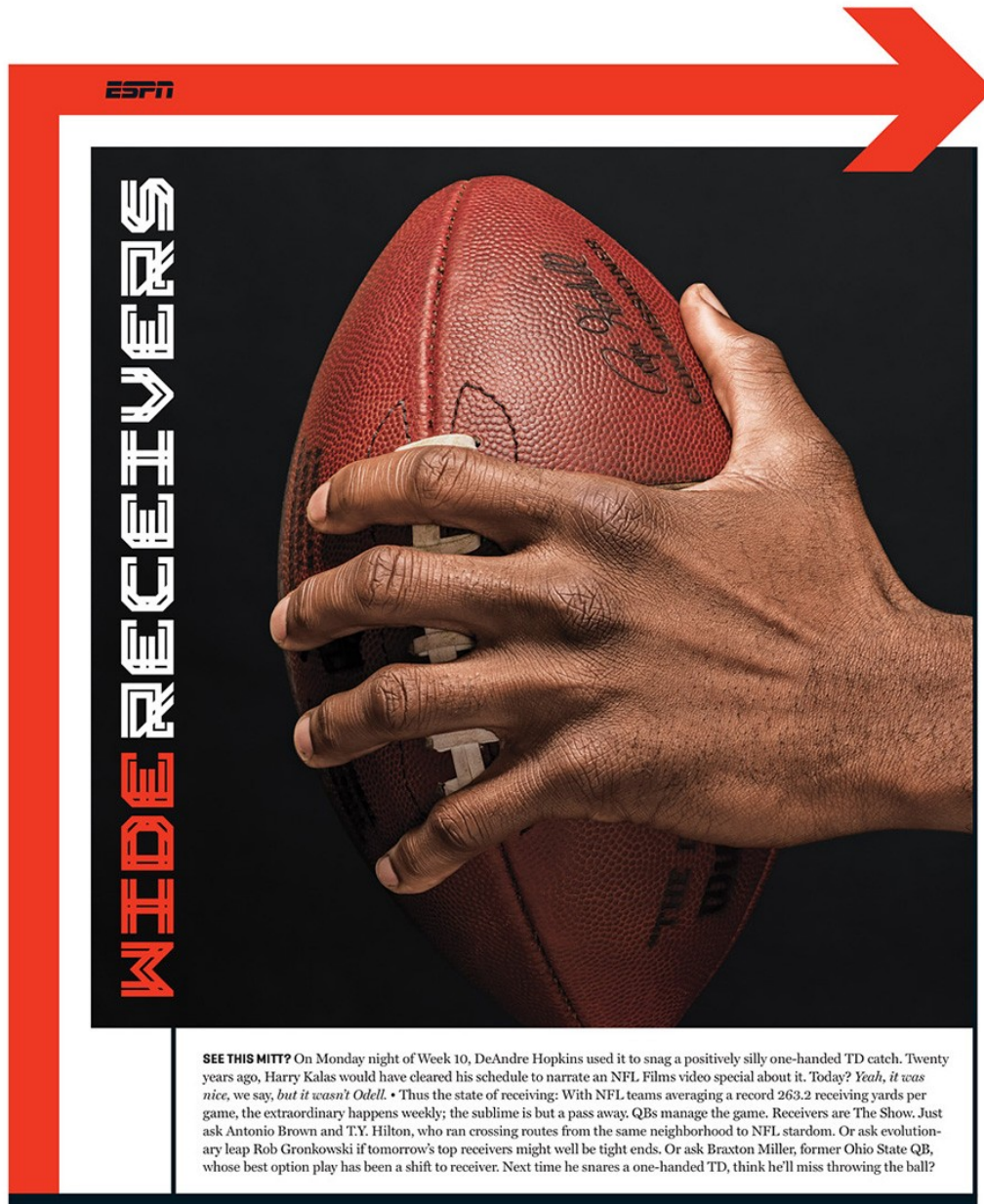
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DYLAN COULTER
STYLING: JULIE WISNIEWSKI

12.07.2015 ESPN 85

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ESPN

RECEIVING

SEE THIS MITT? On Monday night of Week 10, DeAndre Hopkins used it to snag a positively silly one-handed TD catch. Twenty years ago, Harry Kalas would have cleared his schedule to narrate an NFL Films video special about it. Today? *Yeah, it was nice, we say, but it wasn't Odell.* • Thus the state of receiving: With NFL teams averaging a record 263.2 receiving yards per game, the extraordinary happens weekly; the sublime is but a pass away. QBs manage the game. Receivers are The Show. Just ask Antonio Brown and T.Y. Hilton, who ran crossing routes from the same neighborhood to NFL stardom. Or ask evolutionary leap Rob Gronkowski if tomorrow's top receivers might well be tight ends. Or ask Braxton Miller, former Ohio State QB, whose best option play has been a shift to receiver. Next time he snares a one-handed TD, think he'll miss throwing the ball?

PHOTOGRAPH BY DYLAN COULTER
LOGO BY MICHAEL BRANDON MYERS

12.07.2015 ESPN 49

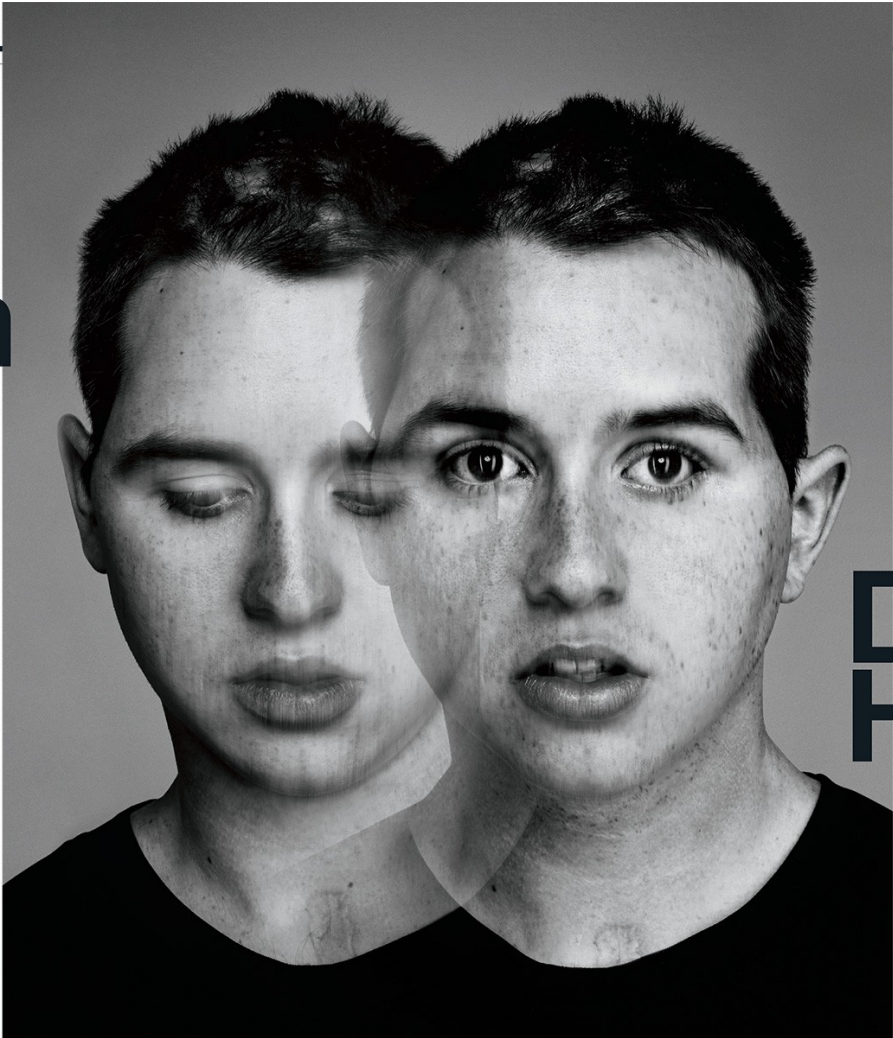
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Part 2 Features

The Storm in



Dylan's Head

One patient's long and perilous crawl back to consciousness.

By STEPHEN S. HALL

Photograph by Dylan Coulter

Dylan Rizzo, → April 2015

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NEW YORK
Health
JUNE 8-14, 2015

"Remarkably and unexpectedly, the brain scan suggested that some of Dylan's wiring had begun to mend."
(p. 28)

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And would the patient lose his mind?

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WOODSMAN · HUNTER
FIELD & STREAM
ANGLER · NATURALIST

HOW TO RAISE A WILD CHILD

SUMMER'S HERE AND SCHOOL IS OUT, WHICH MAKES NOW THE PERFECT TIME TO GET OUTSIDE WITH A YOUNG SPORTSMAN. HERE ARE 16 FUN TIPS AND PROJECTS TO TEACH KIDS AND KICK-START THEIR LOVE OF HUNTING, FISHING, AND THE OUTDOORS

BY T. EDWARD NICKENS, WITH PHIL BOURJAILLY, KIRK DEETER, DAVE HURTEAU, AND KEITH McCAFFERTY

Photographs by Dylan Coulter ✦ Icons by Mikey Burton

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SOPHIE DIETZ

Age: 9

"I love to fish and hike and spend time outside with my mom and dad. My dad has deer stands, and we'll just sit there for a while, watching for animals. He's taught me a lot about nature."

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RYLEY McCARDELL

Age: 8

"My biggest fish is a 37½-inch striped bass. I couldn't believe I caught it! My older brother caught a big one that day, too, but his was 37 inches. He got teased for his little brother beating him."

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PAUL OBRECHT

Age: 14

"My dad and I bond on hunts, because hunting is something we both love. We joke with each other, too. If he misses a duck, then I hit it, I'll say, 'What kind of shot was that?' He dishes it right back to me."

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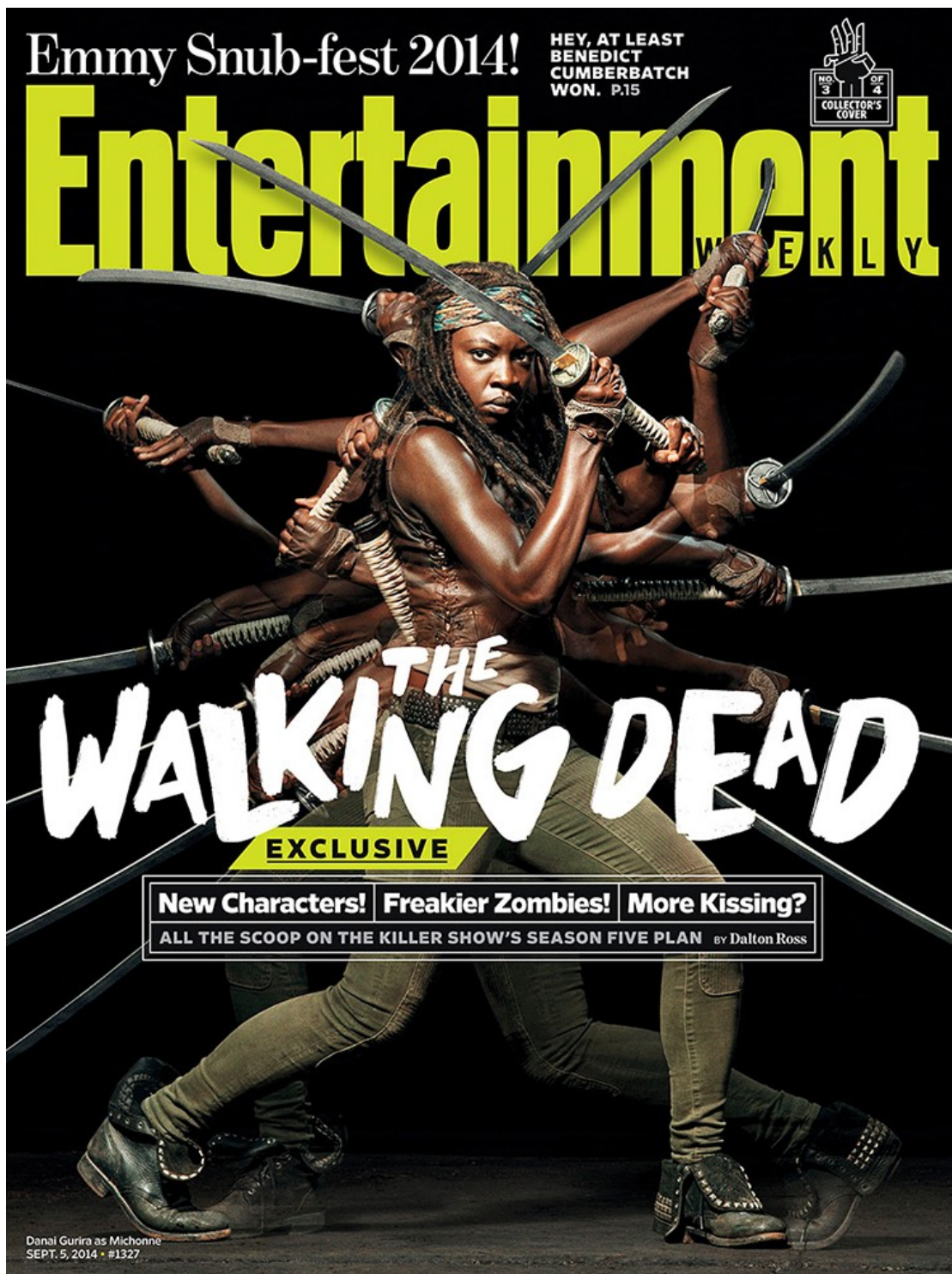
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Collector's Covers: To buy your favorite or a bundle of all four, go to ew.com/thewalkingdeadcovers



ON THE COVERS

Norman Reedus, Andrew Lincoln, Danai Gurira, Steven Yeun, and Lauren Cohan photographed exclusively for EW by Dylan Coulter on July 13, 2014, in Atlanta. Icon by Luke Shuman.

JUMP SHOT

Photographer Dylan Coulter has shot his share of world-class athletes. But he was still impressed by the physical prowess of *The Walking Dead* stars Lauren Cohan, Andrew Lincoln, Steven Yeun, Norman Reedus, and Danai Gurira (not

pictured) at EW's cover shoot. "They're all in amazing condition," says Coulter, who asked the actors to demonstrate their zombie-killing style for the striking multiple-exposure cover shots. "They have a real sense of where their body is."

They also got a boost from their handpicked soundtracks: Metallica for Lincoln, Motorhead for Reedus, the Black Keys for Cohan and Yeun. "[The music] added an energizing element to their performance," says Coulter. —C. Molly Smith

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therefore resorted to cannibalism to stay alive. Clues 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 exodus 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, Tyrese, 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."



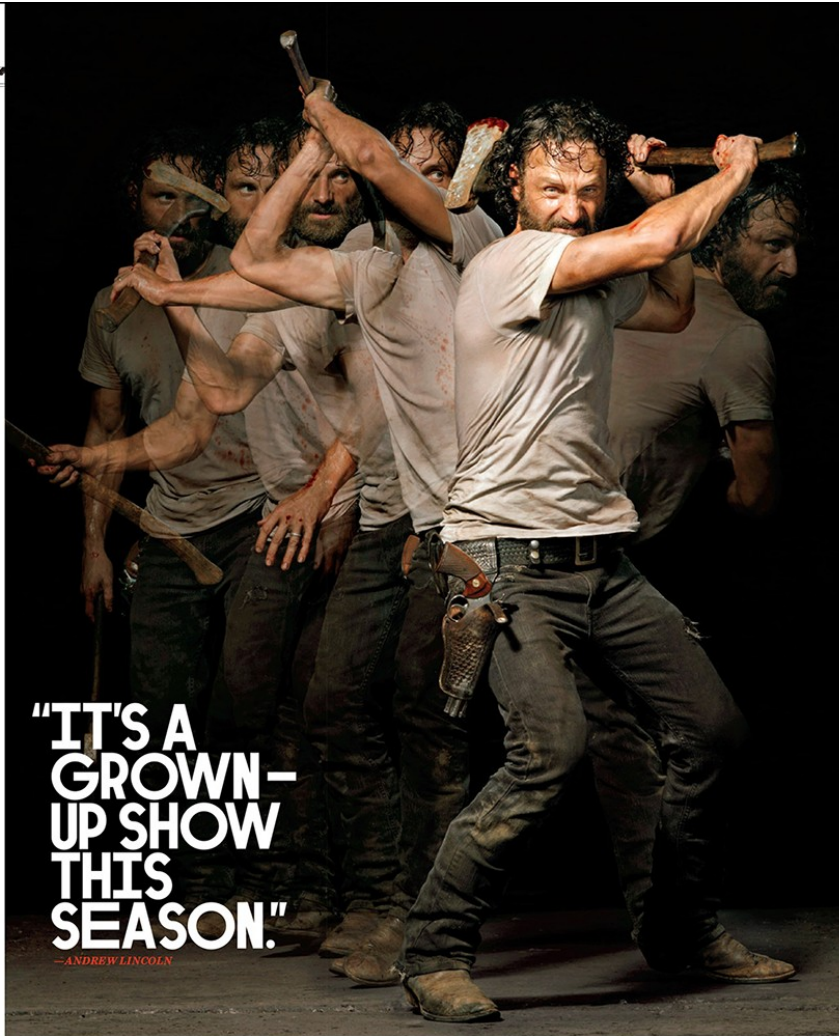
LAUREN COHAN

Maggie and Glenn are running through a forest, and there's a horde else to go—just a cliff. They hold hands and jump off the cliff and scream all the way down. [Laughs] And it freeze-frames on them with their arms up in the air.

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 refocused Rick. "He doesn't blink to protect who he loves," says showrunner Scott M. Gimple of *Grimes 2.0*. "And he can get pretty scary pretty quick." Though we don't know how this battle of wits and wills 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



"IT'S A GROWN-UP SHOW THIS SEASON."

—ANDREW LINCOLN

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 flesh eaters 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



NORMAN REEDUS

If I had my druthers on how I would go, I would just walk away. You would just see me walk down a road like Mad Max and I'd get smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller, and then a little dog would run on the road with me and just start following me off into the sunset, and you'd never know what happened to him.

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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**"MICHONNE'S
A PERSON
WHO DOESN'T
GO FOR THINGS
EASILY."**

—DANAI GURIRA

face. It looks like she might be in a hospital of some sort, but then again, maybe not. This is the one lingering mystery from last season that Kirkman concedes may take a bit of time to unravel. "I wouldn't expect it too terribly soon," he says as to when we might get answers. "There's been a lot going on with her while she was missing and we're definitely going to see a lot of that, so all things will be revealed Beth-wise. It's going to have some far-reaching ramifications for all the characters."

And that could include new characters as well. Jumping from the comic book to the screen this season is Father Gabriel Stokes—a priest who, in the source material, offers his church as shelter for the group while also attempting to atone for past sins. He'll be played by Seth Gilliam, the third alum from *The Wire* to join the series, after Coleman and Gilliard. For Gilliam, appearing on one of the most watched programs in the world has definitely been an adjustment. "This is the first time I've actually been on a show where it's popular while it's airing," he laughs. "I was not prepared for that, and I'm not sure that I ever will be, actually." Showrunner Gimple teases that Father Gabriel will be far from the



MICHAEL CUDLITZ

*As with everyone, I know it's coming. At some point everyone dies on *The Walking Dead*. I would hope that his death would be befitting of his life, and Abraham did everything hard. As they say in *Spinal Tap*, it goes to 11.*

only fresh face: "We are going to see a bunch of new characters, people of significance to the show, even during the first half of the season."

We'll also be treated to a slew of new zombies—ones that are gnarlier than ever. This season, Nicotero's goal was to "show the passage of time by seeing how rotted and decomposed these walkers get," he says. "You can see that some of the zombies are missing noses and parts of their faces." (Sounds delightful!) One such situation we can look forward to is "a room filled with water that has had walkers in it for a year, and what that would do to the zombies in terms of their skin flopping off." This is the type of discussion that turns Nicotero giddy—somewhat disturbingly so. "I use the rotisserie-chicken description," he says of the waterlogged walkers, "with the meat sliding off the bones." (Second memo, this one to self: Never, ever eat rotisserie chicken again.)

Between dealing with Terminus, whoever is holding Beth, and the walking rotisserie chickens, the harsh reality is that not everyone is likely to make it out of season 5 alive. But the question of who will be among this season's dearly departed is not one Yeun cares to consider. "Ultimately, what I think it ends up doing is making fans choose people," he says of audience speculation. "And they go, 'Oh, I like that

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1-2 WORLD CUP ISSUE

that afternoon, Donovan and the other players who were cut were on their way out of town.

FOR ALL THE UPROAR that followed Donovan's cut — and whether you agree or disagree with how Klinsmann handled it — this much is clear: The confidence Klinsmann had in making his decision is exactly what U.S. Soccer was looking for when it hired him as coach.

As far back as 1998, after Klinsmann scored a memorable goal for Germany against the United States in a World Cup game, Sunil Gulati, now the president of the U.S. Soccer Federation, tried to convince Klinsmann's agent that Klinsmann should consider playing in M.L.S. When Gulati heard that Klinsmann was not interested in the travel demands of an American professional sports league, Gulati raised the possibility of Klinsmann's signing with the Galaxy and playing only home games.

"I was like half-joking," Gulati, who is also a senior lecturer in economics at Columbia, told me. "But I felt, even then, he was someone we wanted to be working with."

In 2006, shortly after Klinsmann coached Germany to a stirring third-place finish in the World Cup, Gulati approached him about coaching the U.S. men's national team. Klinsmann said no. In 2010, in South Africa, after the U.S. lost to Ghana in the Round of 16, Gulati again tried to hire him and again could not reach a suitable deal.

By 2011, however, things were different. Klinsmann had been through a tumultuous stretch as coach at Bayern Munich, the dominant club team in Germany; he was fired after just nine months, having apparently clashed with the team's management. This round of negotiations with Gulati went more smoothly, and Klinsmann signed on to take over.

To Gulati, Klinsmann was what U.S. Soccer needed: a coach European enough to command the players' respect, but American enough to embrace new advances in training and technology. He also saw Klinsmann as someone who would be able to relate to an ever-growing fan base that was looking for something — anything — fresh.

"Look, part of what we're trying to do is excite people," Gulati said. "And Jurgen's charm is a piece of that. He's a crossover. For us, at this point, it's about selling the game in a way that, frankly, we haven't had anyone, ever, do before."

U.S. Soccer essentially turned over its house keys to Klinsmann. His base salary (said to be about \$2.5 million per year) was more than any previous coach was paid. His support staff was larger than what any previous coach was given. His ambitions — to bring in an outside sports-training company, to push yoga and other unusual treatment techniques, (Continued on Page 56)

Total market value of players in 2014 World Cup → \$9,680,000,000

Players who have won the Golden Boot (highest scorer) and the Golden Ball (most outstanding player) at the same World Cup: **Garrincha** (Brazil, 1962), **María Kempes** (Argentina, 1978), **Paolo Rossi** (Italy, 1982) and **Salvatore Schillaci** (Italy, 1990).

BRAZIL'S ALL-TIME TOP WORLD CUP SCORERS:



THE STARS

The world's best footballers have stepover moves and penalty kicks that can cause spikes in national birthrates. Here is how some of the tournament's best players pull it off. **TEXT BY RYAN O'HANLON**

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY DYLAN COULTER



Cristiano Ronaldo Country: Portugal. Position: Forward. Age: 29. In soccer's early days, before field dimensions were drawn, team sizes were fixed, and players were allowed to play in any position. Ronaldo, who can pass his head down and dribble through a wall of defenders, is the ultimate throwback, but as a 360-degree turn is universally known as a Maradona, this inside-to-out stepover has come to be called simply the Ronaldo.

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DYLAN COULTER

After a last-minute goal by Cristiano Ronaldo, Real Madrid scored a dramatic 3-2 victory over FC Barcelona in the final of the European Champions League. The success of both clubs and their legendary players, according to Jonathan Wilson in "Inventing the Pyramid," a history of soccer tactics, has made it seem that 2-foot-7 was the ideal height for a passing midfielder. To keep the ball on the ground as he is doing here, it helps to have a low center of gravity. © Stewart & Frost. These moves and more, in high-speed videos, are at nytimes.com/magazine.

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THE AMERICA ISSUE
★★★ ★ CONTENTS

DESTINATIONS SPECIAL
14 DRIVE, WE SAID
Outside's guide to the open highway steers you toward the ten best road trips in America, with stops for spare ribs on Lake Superior, fresh peaches in Utah, and Spanish mackerel on the Gulf Coast. We supply the tips on gas-station food, staying fit, CB etiquette, and proper caffeination (a must). You pack the car. **PLUS:** Skier and firefighter Kalen Thorien has the nomadic life-style dialed.

46 CAPTAIN UNDERDOG
Team USA doesn't have the easiest World Cup path ahead. But striker Clint Dempsey is the perfect player to shoulder America's dark-horse fantasies. **BY MATT SKENAZY**

48 GRIND HOUSE
Spartan Race founder Joe De Sena is happy to personally train and board anyone who shows up at his Vermont farm. So long as they submit completely to his insane custom regimen. **BY PETER VIGNERON**
PLUS: Five other iconoclasts who are turning fitness on its head.

62 THIS IS HOW WE ROLL
As a young man, TED CONOVER wrote a book about hopping freight trains from Colorado to California. So when his 18-year-old son thumbed through it and suggested they team up for a repeat adventure, how could he say no? **(CONTINUED)**

2 OUTSIDE MAGAZINE

Cover and this page, photographs by DYLAN COULTER

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I've always played my best golf in the summer. I won the 2011 PGA Championship in August, and my other two tour wins were in August and late May. Could be from growing up in Vermont. After shaking off the rust in spring and getting my body used to playing again, I always felt the pressure of about a 10-week window to shoot some low rounds and prove to myself I was getting better. Now that I play the tour and live in Jupiter, Fla., my life is perpetual summer. Still, there's a part of me that expects to hit that mid-season form my buddies and I used to talk about.

► **When it's deep into the season** and you're not playing well, it's frustrating. This is when it's time to revisit some basics. To me, the basics are driving and chipping. If you can do those two things well, you'll be hard to beat. It's rare to mess up a short iron from a fairway that badly. And if you can chip the ball to a foot, your putter doesn't matter.

► **The beauty is,** while you're working on chipping you're also working on driving. This is because the bottoms of both swings—the area around impact—are identical. From the moment the clubhead is two feet from the ball until two feet after impact, the technique of a good chip is the same as a ripped tee-shot. The clubface isn't flipping or doing anything funny. It's staying square to the path of the swing and striking the ball as solidly as a bat hits a baseball. A good feel is the back of the left hand staying pointed at the target through the strike. Except for flops and a few other specialty shots, that's how every swing with every club should feel at the bottom. It's why I start my practice sessions with simple bump-and-runs. I'll take an 8-iron and make a swing that's as short as a putting stroke and just watch how the ball rockets off the clubface for a yard or so. My teacher, Chuck Cook, calls it a "square pinch" because the face stays square and pinches the ball off the turf. If I'm

struggling, Chuck will say, "Hey, Keegan, give me a square pinch." This means stop whatever I'm doing and hit a chip to remember what solid contact feels like. ► **After you master** the square pinch, try some longer chips. Work your way up to a 40-yard pitch, or what Chuck calls a "high sweep." Go through the bag until you're hitting driver. Same as with the short chip, the way to get maximum speed on a drive is to present the dead middle of the clubface to the ball. When you achieve that, you realize that a full swing is one simple motion that feels like a chip, only with some wrist hinge and body turn. I'm a feel player, but paying strict, technical attention

to chipping has given the right amount of structure to my swing. ► **The other half** of the scoring equation is, of course, mental. I owe my ticket off the mini-tours to Jim McLean, who taught me to approach golf like my other favorite summertime activities. I love throwing the football and shooting baskets. Rickie Fowler, Brendan Steele and some other guys and I will get full-on softball and volleyball games going. When I throw a softball, there's no time to think about the motion of my arm. I just look at the first baseman's glove and react. So when you're starting at flags from the fairway this summer, just pretend you're playing catch in the back yard. Or maybe even at the beach. —WITH MAX ADLER

HERE'S ONE TIP THAT CAN HELP YOUR WHOLE GAME: WORK ON YOUR CHIPPING STROKE.



PREVIOUS PAGES

TOMMY HILFINGER shirt, \$89; shorts, \$69; belt, \$49; sunglasses, \$145.
AUDEMARS PIGUET watch, \$45,000.

THIS PAGE

TOMMY HILFINGER T-shirt, \$89; shorts, \$69.
AUDEMARS PIGUET watch, \$45,000.
AIR JORDAN sneakers, \$170.
Hair and grooming: **KAREN CLEARY**

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ESPN 03.31.14



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We built a fancy algorithm that measures clubhouse chemistry. The result? The Rays should ready themselves for lots of Champagne showers come October.

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After enduring 197 losses in his first two seasons with the Cubs, Theo Epstein swears his down-to-the-studs rebuild is on schedule. Hey, reversing another curse isn't for the timid. *By Tim Keown*

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Lefties and righties, submariners and sidearmers, high leg kicks and over-the-top deliveries: No two Diamondbacks pitchers throw alike. Which is exactly the point. *By Marty Ain*

76 A LONG JOURNEY TO SPRING

Before the Royals called him up, coach Mike Jirschle spent 35 years in the minors and worked part-time jobs in the offseason. What kept him in the game? The memory of his three brothers. *By Chris Jones*

cover photograph by PETER YANG
THIS PAGE: DYLAN COULTER; LOGO BY JON CONTINO

03/31/2014 ESPN The Magazine 5

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BRANDON MCCARTHY

AGE: 30 | STARTER

» "The taller you are, the more things can go wrong in your delivery, so I focus on rhythm and pace. I line up my front hip and keep everything in line until it's time for my body to explode. From there, my arm and the ball will just go where they need to go. It helps pitching in front of a mirror to see if things are staying where I want them to stay. My lower arm angle has helped make my sinker my best pitch. Without it, I wouldn't be able to drop the ball down."

J.J. PUTZ

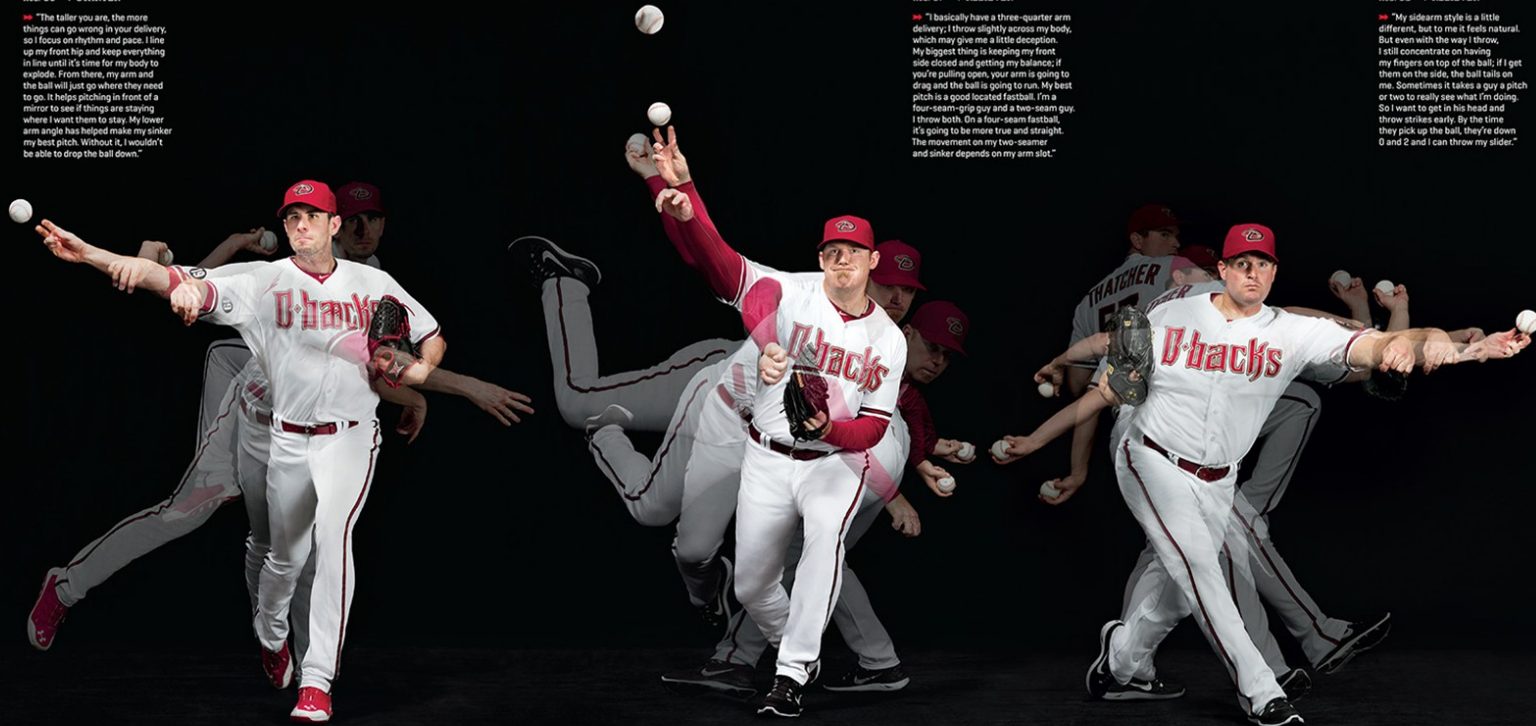
AGE: 37 | RELIEVER

» "I basically have a three-quarter arm delivery. I throw slightly across my body, which may give me a little deception. My biggest thing is keeping my front side closed and getting my balance; if you're pulling open, your arm is going to drag and the ball is going to run. My best pitch is a good located fastball. I'm a four-seam-grip guy and a two-seam guy. I throw both. On a four-seam fastball, it's going to be more true and straight. The movement on my two-seamer and sinker depends on my arm slot."

JOE THATCHER

AGE: 32 | RELIEVER

» "My sidearm style is a little different, but to me it feels natural. But even with the way I throw, I still concentrate on having my fingers on top of the ball, if I get them on the side, the ball tails on me. Sometimes it takes a guy a pitch or two to really see what I'm doing. So I want to get in his head and throw strikes early. By the time they pick up the ball, they're down 0 and 2 and I can throw my slider."



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TO SEE THESE PITCHERS
BREAK DOWN THEIR
DELIVERIES EVEN FURTHER,
GO TO ES.PITCHANATOMY
STARTING MARCH 25

BRONSON ARROYO

AGE 37 | STARTER

“I take a small step back and emulate a young Dwight Gooden, who had this big leg kick. I use my foot almost like a pendulum to sling my leg up, so by the time my leg gets up by my face, it’s totally released. There’s no tension at all, and it’s just falling down toward the plate. The entire time, I’m as relaxed as possible, it’s like being a sniper. You’re quiet, breathing and then pull the trigger. My curveball is definitely the pitch that has kept me in this game. Without it, I’d be a very, very mediocre pitcher. The affirmation for me was punching out guys like Derek Jeter, who didn’t swing at anything but was swinging at my breaking ball.”

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RANDALL DELGADO

AGE 24 | STARTER/RELIEVER

"I just try to keep the ball at the same angle for the three pitches I have, which makes it a challenge for me—but also makes it harder for the hitter to figure out what pitch he's seeing. With my fastball, I have the velocity I want, but it's more important for me to have command. I try to keep the ball down and stay calm on the mound. Sometimes you get excited, but I take a breath, think about it and slow the game down."

PATRICK CORBIN

AGE 24 | STARTER

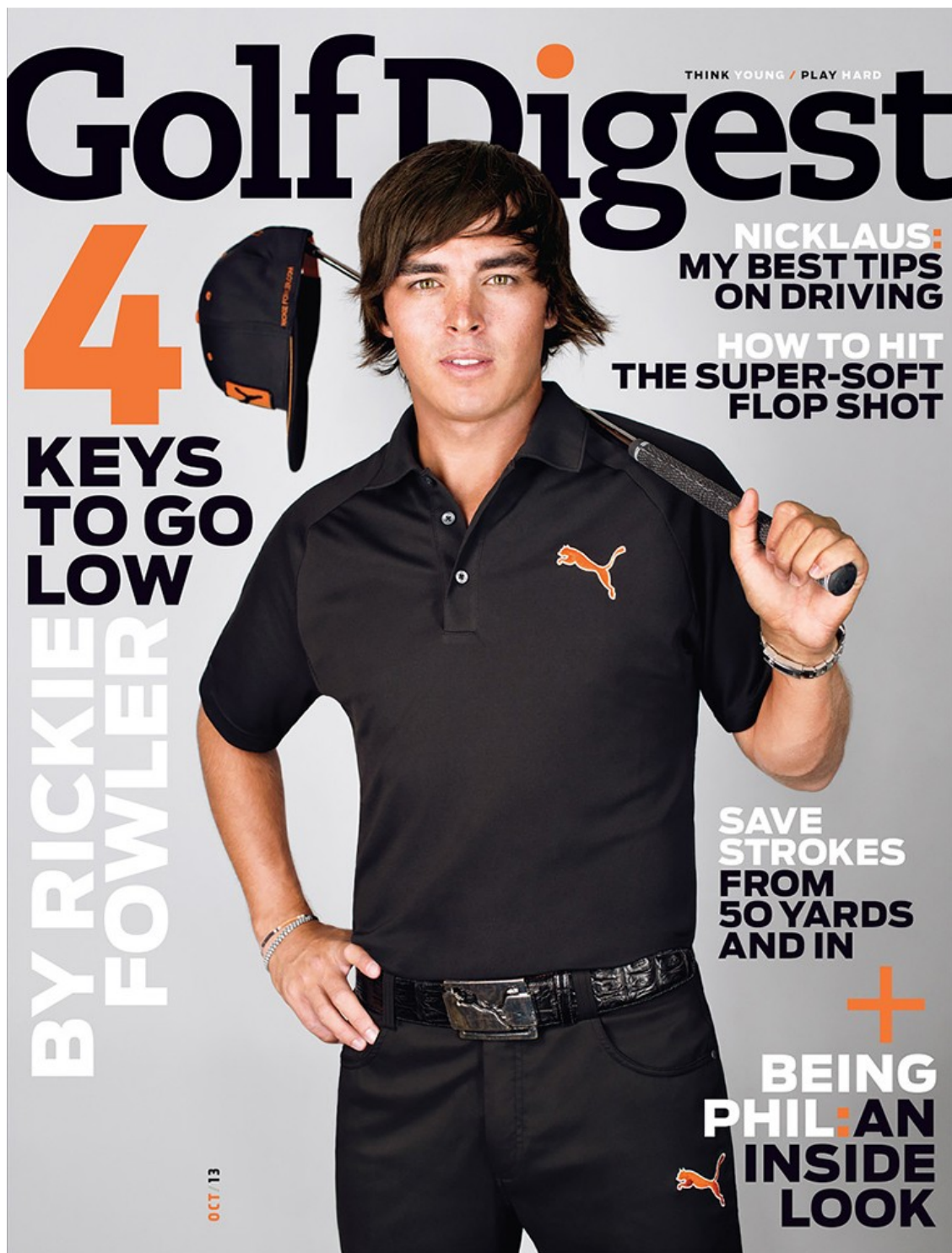
"I throw from a low three-quarter angle, and when I turn, my shoulder turns with me, so my back is almost facing the hitter. That helps hide the ball. Whether it adds velocity, deception or movement, it's worked. My slider is kind of like my two-seam fastball, but I turn the ball over a bit on the one seam and push off on my middle finger and turn my wrist a bit more. It's hard for the hitter to pick up a lot of the time, and that's why I get all those swings and misses."



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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 Coultter

Nate Silver was down on Anthony Weiner's chances long before the selfie-snapping former congressman's campaign had to contend with the publication of a second wave of X-rated messages and prurient self-portraits.

"I think his favourites 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. Huma Abedin, Weiner's wife and an aide to Hillary Clinton, would have won in a landslide, he adds. The unfortunately named candidate has been a gift to the city's tabloids but a metropolitan mayoral race 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 nerd in glasses, brown suit trousers and pale blue shirt, but the age of "big data" has made numeracy 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 foibles make most of us poor predictors of anything from cand



FT.COM/MAGAZINE AUGUST 3/4 2013

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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, 42, 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 admired 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 customer survey. How was her stay? "Not great.") The *Live* story almost ended there. Before she talked about her health issues onstage, Notaro was working on a *C. difficile* 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 6,700 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 anymore. 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 *In a World...* will be in limited release Aug. 9, followed by *Walk of Shame*, with Elizabeth Banks, and Ryan Phillippe's directorial debut, *Shrewport*. 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 is 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 dreamed up by a bookworm. He is a knuckleball pitcher, already the most ungainly of athletic specialists, relying on physics to make jocks look foolish. He wears his brown hair shaggy in the back, and has a beard that would please a thru-hiker. 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 curbing sex trafficking in India. He wrote about that for the *Daily News*: "It made me want to grab every downtrodden 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 love 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 cosmopolitanism can be its own form of vinity, especially in a sport with a culture as lethargic as baseball's. "Hurry up and wait," baseball people sometimes joke, about the preponderance of downtime that overwhelms 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 losing 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 glory 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 handful"—and unloved by his less worldly teammates.

The precipitating event for this zinger was a holiday party that the team had organized, at Citi Field, to benefit victims of Hurricane Sandy. Whether or not Dickey was admired by his peers, he was, after three seasons on the roster, undeniably popular among Mets fans, a lone bright spot in the grim years that followed the near-bankrupting of the franchise owing to the owner's investments with Bernie Madoff. Dickey was asked to fly up from his home, in Nashville, to attend the party, playing the part of an elf. (Inevitably, a knuckleballer, even one who stands six feet 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 KNUCKLE UNDER DICKEY'S LAUGHABLE THREATS TO LEAVE"—gave the impression that the column's author was serving 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 this," 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 as he drove around town, fielding calls from his agent ("Hey, did we put the shoe contract to bed?") 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 Pyrrhic 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 55

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PLUS TEAM-BY-TEAM RANKINGS
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THINKING INSIDE THE BY BUSTER OLNEY BOX

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 inside the game's ups and downs, The Mag asked Gian Szymanski for a new metric that shows fans a player's potential for erratic production. Joey Votto's index heading into 2013? A reliable, near-league-average 1.03 (where 0 is completely predictable and 2 is anything but). That's remarkable given Votto's comeback from an injury-plagued 2012.

MORE ON THE UNPREDICTABILITY INDEX FOR TEAMS AND PLAYERS ON PAGE 55



1.03

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IN

the middle of a game last summer, Joey 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 Frazier 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. "Joe, 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 way most of us comprehend the universe: He's reliable and

omnipresent, 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 prowess 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 iPad 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 summer 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 I go up there. If I drive in 50 runs, I don't care. I know a lot of old-school people wouldn't believe I'd say something like that."

He paused 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 that way and shooting it through the gap or out of the ballpark. As hitters grow and get older, those are the battles that are so gratifying."

There are many ways to define how great 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 set, there's this: Using the advanced metric Adjusted OPS-plus, 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

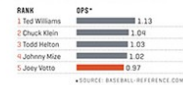


“ I CARE MORE HOW CONSISTENTLY TOUGH AND COMPETITIVE I CAN BE FOR THE OPPOSING PITCHER, AND THAT'S MY GOAL EVERY SINGLE TIME I GO UP THERE. ”

LEADERS IN WIN PROBABILITY ADDED
Over the past five years, Votto has led MLB in Win Probability Added (WPA), which measures how much the play of each MLBer contributed to his team's wins. Last season, even with a knee injury, Votto paced the majors in WPA at 6.0.



HIGHEST ON-BASE PLUS SLUGGING PERCENTAGE
Votto is in esteemed company when examining the OPS of left-handed hitters in their first six seasons (minimum 3,000 plate appearances).



BATTING AVERAGE WITH RUNNERS IN SCORING POSITION
Since 2008 Votto has led the majors in BA with RISP (minimum 500 at-bats). Votto ranks ahead of a Triple Crown winner (Miguel Cabrera) and two other MVPs (Joe Mauer and Albert Pujols).

.349

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 at 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 mouth 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 anything in particular. This is the Votto Stare. His teammates don't know whether he's musing about something he read or the workout ahead. But they are certain that he's thinking—a lot—because Votto doesn't really do light and breezy.

"He's a pretty quiet guy, pretty to himself," 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 2012 season, the Reds negotiated a 12-year, \$251.5 million deal with Votto's agent, Danny Lozano—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 Walt Jocketty says.

Jocketty knew because of moments like this: When Cuban defector 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 don't bet against the guy who still Skypes with his Spanish tutor.

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Average length, in yards, of her drives in 2012; second on the LPGA Tour.

LEXI THOMPSON

AGE 17 BIRTHPLACE CORAL SPRINGS, FLA.
NEXT CREW THE SECOND-YOUNGEST
WINNER IN LPGA TOUR HISTORY,
CAPTURING THE 2011 NAVISTAR LPGA
CLASSIC AT AGE 16.

THE MOMENT Every time Lexi Thompson stepped up to a shot on the first hole at the 2010 U.S. Women's Open, something would go wrong. A wayward drive. A misread putt. Thompson played the hole five over par for the week—three bogeys and a double. But a funny thing happened: Every day Thompson would turn it around. By the time she got to Oakmont's 260-yard 17th, a drivable par 4, on Sunday, a top-10 finish was within reach. Screw playing it safe, Lexi decided; she pulled a 3-wood. In that swing, her coach, Jim McLean, saw everything that makes Thompson golf's next big star: the chops to attempt the shot and the raw ability to pull it off. Thompson birdied the hole and finished in a tie for 10th. She was 15 years old.

THE BUZZ After successfully lobbying the LPGA to waive its age minimum of 18, Thompson played her first event as an official tour pro the weekend of her 17th birthday. Last year alone, she compiled four top-10s on the tour.

THE QUOTE "When she walks on the range, she has a presence," her coach says. "You could see it when she was 14. She gets your attention." —SCOTT T. MILLER



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1 "I watch the ball fiercely to see its height and speed off my opponent's racket so I can decide how I want to hit it."

2 "I grip very close to the butt of the racket. This allows me to get a lot of wrist action to create more spin and whip."

3 "I set my arms, shoulders and lower body in a loaded position. That unit turn helps disguise the direction of my shot."

4 "With my open stance, I can go down the line or crosscourt effectively, and it's very tough for an opponent to read me."

5 "I use the bend in my knees to transfer my weight, and I explode through the shot with my legs."

TECHNIQUE

THANKS TO HER FEARSOME FOREHAND, **SLOANE STEPHENS IS THE ONLY AMERICAN TEEN—MALE OR FEMALE—RANKED IN THE WORLD'S TOP 100.**

If you've moved up 300 spots in two years and the world's top player knows your game, you have to be doing something right. For Sloane Stephens, 19, that something is her forehand. Her powerful stroke, hit out of an open stance, played a big role in her upset of 23rd-seeded Shahar Peer in the 2011 U.S. Open. Ranked No. 79, up from No. 381 in 2010, Stephens has even impressed world No. 1 Victoria Azarenka with her style. "Sloane hits an amazing ball off the ground," says the 2012 Australian Open champ. It's more amazing when you break it down. —LINDSAY BERRA

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PLAYBOOK VISUALS

TO SEE HIS SHOT IN ACTION, GO TO ESPN.COM AND SEARCH: SPORT SCIENCE PAUL RABIL



TECHNIQUE

**BRINGING THE HEAT:
HOW BOSTON CANNONS
MIDFIELDER PAUL RABIL
PROPELS A LACROSSE
BALL AT RECORD SPEED.**

At the 2008 Major League Lacrosse All-Star Game, Paul Rabil was the only player who met a veteran's challenge to throw the ball out of the stadium at Mile High. "A lightbulb went off," says Rabil. "From then on, I anchored my whole body to generate power." He has put that power to good use. The 27-year-old former Johns Hopkins All-American has won two MLL MVP awards, and at the 2010 MLL All-Star Game skills contest, he set a world record for fastest shot (111 mph). We had him take us through the motions—slowly. —NDAH DAVIS

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TECHNIQUE

HIGH ROLLER: HOW BMX STAR NIGEL SYLVESTER LAUNCHES—AND LANDS—HIS GO-TO SPIN MOVE.

As a youngster in Jamaica, N.Y., Nigel Sylvester would watch VHS demos of Dave Mirra and Edwin DeLaRosa landing downside tailwhips and then head to the park to try them out. Many falls and tweaks later, Sylvester, 25 and a seven-year pro, has come full circle and is the guy kids flock to YouTube to copy. Here's what they need to know. —ELENA BERGERON

- 1/"I start with a bunny hop and get as much air as I can. So as I climb the ramp, I compress into my seat and then pop back up to get the height I need."
- 2/"I try to keep the top of my body as straight and solid as possible and my arms straight and locked. That keeps all of my momentum going upward."
- 3/"I ride left foot forward, so I use my right foot to kick the back of the bike around. That way, I can get the whole back end moving more quickly."
- 4/"As I kick, I rotate my arms to propel the bike around, but I keep them square so I can land straight away without jamming the front wheel."
- 5/"I have maybe a one-second window to get back on the pedals. So I start eyeing them once the bike is parallel to my body."

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ESPN POWER RANKINGS



IF YOU'VE GROWN up hoops crazed, surrounded by cornfields and bluegrass, have we got a top 25 for you. Bloomington is abuzz with a legitimate shot at Indiana's first national title in a quarter-century; Louisville's adopted son, Peyton Siva, has more than just back-to-back Final Fours in mind; and as for Kentucky's perpetually youthful Cats, the fine, sensible folks of Lexington ask only for another banner. Yes, according to our map, the road to Atlanta will run right down I-65. Of course, it wouldn't be college basketball without a season of detours. So to help guide you, we consulted the experts: Our resident bracketologist,

Joe Lunardi, picked each team's March-worthy matchups and bravely predicted NCAA tourney seeds four months early; former Virginia Tech coach and current ESPN analyst Seth Greenberg used X's and O's to show that no one is unbeatable; and Dan Hammer, an economist by day and RealGM.com contributor by night, crunched each team's next-level numbers to project offensive ratings for the players who should see the most minutes. Even after all that, just like the landscape in Indiana and Kentucky, this is one wide-open field.

CAPSULES BY IAN GORDON

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INDIANA
Projected Big Ten finish: **1st**

THE CANDY-STRIPED PANTS. The Assembly Hall sellouts, the No. 1 preseason ranking—maybe these are your father's Hoosiers. Led by POF front-runner Cody Zeller, IU returns all five starters from one of the nation's most potent offenses, which put up a Big Ten-best 77.3 ppg. Tom Cream will surround his seven-foot sophomore with 6'8" inside-outside threat **Christian Watford** (12.6 ppg, 5.8 rpg), sharpshooter **Jordan Hulls** (48.3 3FG%) and high-energy guard **Victor Oladipo**. Depth is of no concern with a trio of ESPN 100 Freshmen: PG Yogi Ferrell, SF Jeremy Hollowell and PF Hamner Mosquera-Peres, all Indiana natives. But the D needs work. Last season, IU allowed 77 or more points in six of its nine losses, including the 102-50 Sweet 16 shootout against eventual champ Kentucky. Without a stiffer defense, these Hoosiers will never repeat the wins of the fathers.

JOE LUNARDI'S GAMES WITH BRACKET IMPACT

Nov. 27 vs. North Carolina
First time the programs have met since UNC won at Bloomington in '04.

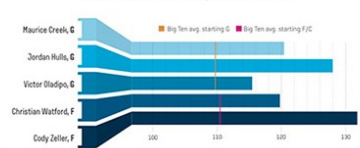
Feb. 19 @ Michigan St.
Statement game against the defending Big Ten champ. IU lost at East Lansing in '11-'12.

March 10 @ Michigan
A grand finale if both teams live up to top-five hype. IU hasn't won in Ann Arbor since '08.

Projected NCAA tournament seed: **1**

PROJECTED OFFENSIVE RATINGS

Top five minutes leaders



Team offensive efficiency: **124.9** | **93.8** Team defensive efficiency

SETH GREENBERG'S GAME PLAN

How to stop the Hoosiers offense: Arrive with Hulls on the catch, defend Watford early in the post and switch all ball screens when he is at the 4. Match Oladipo's energy and keep him off the floor with Zeller and pressure and blitz all of his low-post catches. Contain Ferrell in transition. Be aggressive against the team's half-court sets. IU had the fourth most efficient offense in DI. Force Indiana to make plays outside of its plays in the halfcourt.

TERMS YOU'LL NEED TO KNOW FOR THIS STORY*

* 2011-12 stats courtesy of KenPax.com and Synergy Sports Technology LLC

OFFENSIVE RATING
A measurement that factors a player's points, assists and offensive rebounds per 100 possessions.

TEAM OFFENSIVE/DEFENSIVE EFFICIENCY
Points scored/allowed per 100 possessions.

ASSIST PERCENTAGE
Teammate field goals on which a player assisted while on the floor.

BLOCK PERCENTAGE
Two-point field goal attempts a player (while on the floor) or team blocked.

STEAL PERCENTAGE
Opponent possessions that end with a steal. For a player, it accounts only for his time on the floor.

TURNOVER PERCENTAGE
A team's or opponent's possessions that end in a turnover.

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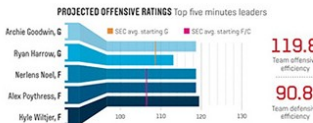
KENTUCKY
Projected SEC finish: **1st**

NOW THAT JOHN CALIPARI has shed the can't-win-the-big-one label, what's to stop Kentucky from losing six guys to the NBA as tough, but this latest version of Cal's Kids features the nation's top recruit in 6'10" Nerlens Noel, 6'7" SF Alex Poythress (No. 12, ESPN 100) and 6'5" SG Archie Goodwin (No. 15), all projected first-round picks. With 6'10" pick-and-pop specialist Kyle Wiltjer (17.2 points per 40 minutes) back for his sophomore season (surprise!) and NC State transfer Ryan Harrow stepping in at PG, the Cats' starting five can meet expectations. If you Kentucky fans are worried about a thin bench, relax. In last season's title run, Cal gave subs just 21.6% of minutes, which ranked 32nd in the nation.

JOE LUNARDI'S GAMES WITH BRACKET IMPACT

- Nov. 9 vs. Maryland (Brooklyn)**
We'll see if the young Cats look at home on a pro stage.
- Nov. 13 vs. Duke (Atlanta)**
There isn't a tougher two-game start in college basketball.
- Feb. 12 @ Florida**
A lot of Gators return for revenge after three losses to UK in '11-'12.

Projected NCAA tournament seed: **1**



SETH GREENBERG'S GAME PLAN
How to beat the Cats defense
Put Noel, Poythress and Wiltjer in ball-screen situations. You have to control the tempo of the game and make each possession count, not only on the scoreboard but on the clock. Wear down the Cats' athleticism and keep them from taking advantage of transition. You must think about playing Kentucky like this: Carve out 10 four-minute games. And if you keep it close late, all the pressure will be on a team still trying to establish its identity.

photograph by DYLAN COULTER

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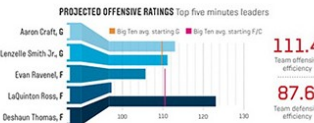
OHIO STATE
Projected Big Ten finish: **3rd**

FORGET ABOUT FILLING Jared Sullinger's shoes. How will Thad Matta replace that space-clearing All-America but of his? While Sully and his derrière collect checks from the Celtics, junior PG Aaron Craft and junior SF Deshaun Thomas will go to work on planning a return trip to the Final Four. Craft creates havoc on defense and led the Big Ten in steals percentage (4.7%), while a varied D helped the 6'7" Thomas post a 122.1 rating, tops among Buckeyes. But Craft must attack the basket and finish more frequently, and Thomas needs to improve on the defensive boards, where Sullinger will be most missed. OSU ranked second in the country by allowing opponents to grab just 25.1% of their missed shots.

JOE LUNARDI'S GAMES WITH BRACKET IMPACT

- Nov. 9 vs. Marquette (Charleston, S.C.)**
A top on the U.S. 'rankdown' would alter OSU's outlook.
- Dec. 22 vs. Kansas**
A win in this Final Four rematch could eventually be worth a top seed.
- March 5 @ Indiana**
The Hoosiers are much better than last season's four-point loss in Bloomington.

Projected NCAA tournament seed: **4**



SETH GREENBERG'S GAME PLAN
How to beat the OSU defense
You have to be stronger with the ball against the Buckeyes than against any other team. They're as physical a half-court D as there is in the country. So limit live-ball turnovers. Craft has great hands and anticipation and does a good job of pressuring the ball and getting deflections. If you're loose with the ball, he'll have it going the other way. Attack them in transition and in the first eight seconds of the shot clock, before they can set up their half-court defense.

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NORTH CAROLINA
Projected ACC finish: **3rd**

WITH **JOHN HENSON** and Tyler Zeller in the NBA—and few experienced options left down low—UNC won't again run 16.6% of its plays through the post (a Carolina high under Roy Williams). Instead, the Tar Heels will rely on a five-man backcourt rotation, including fresh PG Marcus Paige [No. 22, ESPN 100]. If soph **James Michael McAdoo** can up his production from 0.9 points per possession and Dexter Strickland and Leslie McDonald return healthy, this could be the nation's deepest collection of guards. It would take a repeat of last season's catastrophic injuries—McDonald, Strickland and Kendall Marshall all missed significant time—to keep this team out of the ACC title mix.

JOE LUNARDI'S GAMES WITH BRACKET IMPACT

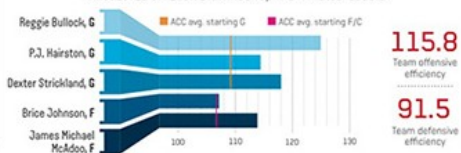
Nov. 27 @ Indiana Two of last season's most explosive offenses square off in Bloomington.

Dec. 29 vs. UNLV UNC can't let Mike Moser go off for 16 points and 18 boards like in last year's loss.

Feb. 23 vs. NC State It'll be tough for UNC to sweep the Wolfpack for the sixth straight regular season.

Projected NCAA tournament seed: **3**

PROJECTED OFFENSIVE RATINGS Top five minutes leaders



SETH GREENBERG'S GAME PLAN

How to stop UNC's offense Get back. Defensive transition is key because the Tar Heels run the floor as consistently and hard as any team in the country. They averaged 72.2 possessions per game last year, 10th most in D1. Paige has the potential to be special in Williams' fast-paced attack. So you must get the Heels into a half-court game. Limit sophomore P.J. Hairston's scoring opportunities and be physical with McAdoo off the ball. You have to bump all cutters in their motion.

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We Kid You Not
The models for our cover story are all avid sportsmen. Learn more about them on p. 50.

FEATURES

50. HOW TO RAISE A WILD CHILD

This summer, teach a kid how to enjoy the outdoors with these great skills and projects. They'll be fun for you, too. BY T. EDWARD NICKENS, WITH PHIL BOURJAILY, KIRK DEETER, DAVE HURTEAU, AND KEITH McCAFFERTY

65. LIGHTEN UP

Bass in your local waters getting pressured and finicky? Try these ultralight-line spinning techniques to draw strikes from hogs with the worst cases of lockjaw. BY DAVE WOLAK

70. READY. SET. SHOOT!

Step up to the line and try the country's fastest-growing shooting sport: 3-gun. Your summer off-season is about to get a whole lot louder, faster, and more fun. BY JEFF JOHNSTON

COVER AND THIS PAGE: HALLE VON KESSLER/ZENOBIA (STYLING); LAURIE BALDWIN/ZENOBIA (GROOMING); DUCK HUNTER: FILSON (HAT); BOWHUNTER: UNDER ARMOUR (JACKET, SHIRT, PANTS, BOOTS); ANGLER: ORVIS (HAT, NET); COLUMBIA (SHIRT); SIMMS (WADEES); REDINGTON (BOOTS); FISHPOND (VEST); WOODSMAN: CARHARTT (HAT, PANTS); GERBER (KNIFE); L.L. BEAN (BACKPACK); NATURALIST: L.L. BEAN (BACKPACK, BINOCULARS); BOGS (BOOTS)

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