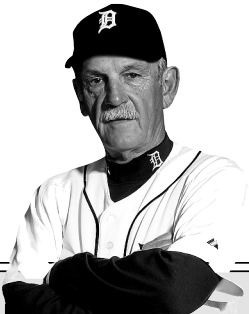




SUNDAY PITCH

BY STAFF WRITERS JOE CAPOZZI AND TOM D'ANGELO

Go to PalmBeachPost.com/marlinsblog for exclusive Marlins commentary.



THIS WEEK'S MARQUEE MATCHUPS

American League

Tigers at Red Sox, Tuesday-Thursday

Jim Leyland and his slumping Tigers face Boston in the Red Sox's first series at Fenway this season.

National League

Phillies at Mets, Tuesday-Thursday

Bet that potent New York lineup won't mind seeing this trio of Philly starters — Moyer, Kendrick and Eaton.

When Marlins players need help, Dr. Fish is on call

MIAMI GARDENS — There were 42,250 people at Milwaukee's Miller Park last June 2, but only one guy sitting in the stands mattered most for a handful of Marlins.



Joe Capozzi

Players call him "Fish," which might seem like the appropriate nickname for someone affiliated with a team called the Marlins. But the monicker is only verbal shorthand for Dr. Jeffrey Fishbein, the Marlins' team psychologist since 2002.

That day at Miller Park, the doctor was in. And his office had no couch.

Surrounded by Brewers fans with scorebooks and brews, Fishbein sat alone with his pen and notebook, jotting down ideas for a patient on the field — catcher Matt Treanor, who was struggling at the time with a batting average below .200.

The Marlins won the game 5-2, and afterward "Fish" pulled Treanor aside in the clubhouse and asked to meet with him.

"We chatted for about an hour and I left him with some information to read that I'd put together during the game," Fishbein said.

"Four to six weeks later, it was a great transformation."

Treanor went on to raise his batting average nearly 100 points on his way to finishing with a career-high .269 mark.

"Fish basically told me it's a confidence issue, not a skills issue," Treanor said.

Fishbein, 39, isn't comfortable taking credit for a player's improvement. He prefers to say he simply helps players channel their own skills through mental exercises.

In Treanor's case, Fishbein said, "We developed a pre-hit routine in the on-deck circle ... When you walk up to the plate with a different belief about what you can do, often it affects the outcome."

Fishbein won't reveal which players he has worked with; he agreed to talk about Treanor's case because the catcher publicly credited Fishbein for helping him improve last year. But during spring training, Fishbein could be seen chatting away with just about every player in camp — on practice fields, in the clubhouse, even in the parking lot.

"My office is right here in the park.



Fishbein

Has been the Marlins' team psychologist since 2002.

That's where they feel comfortable. You work with them on their terms whether it's over dinner, on the golf course or at the stadium in the locker room," said Fishbein, a scratch golfer who lives with his wife and two children north of Chicago.

"More often than not, they're very happy if I approach them. Some guys are more introverted and would rather not seek out help. There's still a little bit of a stigma attached to it but not much."

Several players don't worry about that stigma. They know they can benefit by spending time with Fishbein.

"The people who stay around are the ones who can handle the different types of emotions and the mental part of the game. That's what Fish helps with, giving yourself the best opportunity," left fielder Josh Willingham said. "The mind is a powerful thing. He talks about training it and preparing it the right way."

Of course, it helps when a psychologist can back up his theories with a World Series ring.

Back in February 2003, Fishbein gathered the players on their first day of spring training in a conference room at Roger Dean

Stadium for his annual pre-season meeting. Treanor, who was a minor leaguer that year working out in big-league camp, remembers players walking into the room to see a sign on the wall listing the mental exercise points in Fishbein's program.

At the very bottom of an 8½-by-14-inch laminated sheet outlining his program were the words "2003 World Champions."

"I got a few chuckles but I wanted to alter their belief system and not sell them on mediocrity," Fishbein said.

Eight month later, there were no chuckles.

On Oct. 15, 2003, after pitching four innings of relief in Game 7 of the NLCS, Josh Beckett saw Fishbein standing in the locker room at Wrigley Field, watching the final inning on television as attendants began wheeling in cases of champagne.

"Fish," Beckett said, "you said this would happen."

After the Marlins beat the Yankees in the World Series, players and staff signed the poster Fishbein had lectured on in Jupiter the previous February.

"I have it in a frame in my home office" he said, "and look at it every day."

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DUGOUT CHATTER

By Tom D'Angelo

Injuries take early toll

Just by staying healthy, the Phillies came out of Week 1 as the team to beat in the NL East. The Mets losing Pedro Martinez and Atlanta's Mike Hampton leaving before throwing a pitch are not good signs in a very competitive division.

Orioles set attendance low

Baltimore drew 10,505 to Camden Yards Wednesday, almost 3,000 fewer than its previous low. This proves that the charm of a new stadium eventually will wear off if cheap ownership continues to field an inferior product. Hope Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria is paying attention.

Zambrano kicking caffeine habit

Cubs pitcher Carlos Zambrano was removed in the seventh inning of his opening-day start because of cramping in his right hand, the third time in four openers he has had cramping issues. The club has asked its ace to stop drinking so much coffee and Red Bull and start downing more clear liquids.

Davis makes heroic start

Arizona's Doug Davis started Thursday, six days after being diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Davis pitched 3⅓ innings and took the loss in a 3-2 Reds win. He has one more schedule start before surgery Thursday to remove the thyroid. Doctors say he'll need four to six weeks to recover.

Ensborg's welcome to NYC

Yankees backup infielder Morgan Ensberg had a rough opening day in New York, and he didn't even play. Ensberg received a \$50 ticket for talking on his cellphone while driving home from Yankee Stadium.

Giants' future not very bright

The Giants fielded the fifth-oldest opening-day starting lineup in the majors in 50 years. Their starting nine averaged 34.218 years, which is actually a half-year younger than their 2005 lineup, that had Barry Bonds. The 2005 Yankees fielded the oldest opening day starters since 1958 with an average age of 34.862.

Pierre's streak ends, again

Joe Torre and Jack McKeon have more in common than managing teams to a World Series title. Both are responsible for ending long consecutive game streaks by Juan Pierre. Torre ended the most recent, at a major-league leading 434 games, when he left Pierre out of the Dodgers' lineup in the season opener. McKeon ended a string of 386 games in 2005 when he failed to put Pierre, then the Marlins center fielder, in the field after a pinch-running appearance.

Throwin' heat

The most memorable moment

of spring training was the Yankees playing at Virginia Tech and interacting with the players and friends and family of last year's shooting victims. A very classy gesture.

Opening day for America's pastime

needs to be in the Americas, not Asia. Sending the Red Sox on a three-country, 16,000-mile road trip before they play their home opener is inexcusable.

We can understand the Yankees, Tigers, Mets and Red Sox topping the list for highest payrolls. But the White Sox at No. 5? Jerry Reinsdorf better get more than 72 wins this season for his \$121 million investment.

CATCHING UP WITH ... BRET BARBERIE



Photo courtesy of Bret Barberie

Bret Barberie, who retired from the majors in 1996, now is a private instructor in California. 'At 11 years old, I made up my mind I was going to play baseball,' he said. 'This is fun, because I get to do it all over again.'

Living his dream

Bret Barberie says 'It didn't get any better' than playing baseball for the Marlins.

By CARLOS FRÍAS
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

He raised the brim of his helmet to stare into the stands, into a roiling sea of teal that flipped the turnstiles to 46,115 strong at Joe Robbie Stadium.

Bret Barberie watched from the on-deck circle as the masses responded with a collective groan when Scott Pose's leadoff hit — what everyone thought was the first hit in Florida Marlins franchise history — was ruled an error.

Barberie, the second baseman, came to the plate just trying to get something going against Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Orel Hersheiser. But the hairs that stood on the back of his neck told him this might be the most meaningful at-bat of his career.

"I never got to play in a World Series, but that opening day had that feel that something special was happening," he said.

At 2:22 p.m. on April 6, 1993, Barberie, 25 at the time, dug in and lined a single to center, the first official hit in Marlins history. It was the first of 14 that day, as Florida won 6-3.

Barberie, now 40, remembers those early days with the Marlins fondly, days when the team had the league's fifth-best attendance, setting attendance marks the franchise has not reached since that first season. He clearly remembers that inaugural opening day when the stadium ran out of hot dogs and programs, and his hit ended up in the Marlins' museum.

Retired from active duty since 1996 after six seasons in the majors, Barberie still remains close to the sport. He is a private instructor in Santa Clarita, Calif., and last season worked as a hitting and infield coach at Cypress Community College, which was the state runner-up in California last season.

Mostly, he devotes his days to young players from high school to junior college, who have major-league aspirations. He trains local and international players who come from the Major League Baseball academies in Australia at a facility near



OTTO GREULE/Allsport file photo

Bret Barberie was Florida's second baseman during the Marlins' inaugural season in 1993, recording the first hit in franchise history in their opening game.

his home.

"At 11 years old, I made up my mind I was going to play baseball," he said. "This is fun, because I get to do it all over again."

Those Marlins days were the time of his life, playing baseball, partying on South Beach and fishing. So good, in fact, that he's leaning toward leave sunny Southern California for these east coast beaches in retirement.

"It was like you were on vacation while you were playing, like you were living in a resort," he said. "It didn't get any better."

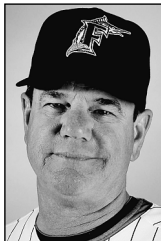
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60 SECONDS

Tom D'Angelo spoke with Marlins bench coach Carlos Tosca, who missed Saturday's game to watch his 18-year-old-son, Matthew, a concert violinist, perform at New York's Carnegie's Hall.

How proud a time is this for you?

I'm very, very proud. I think it's a beautiful thing when someone is passionate about something and is disciplined enough and has that confidence in themselves to go out and try to make a name for themselves.



Carlos Tosca

Is this his first time playing in Carnegie Hall?

He played in Carnegie Hall with his high school orchestra last year. This will be his first solo performance outside of the area in which we live, which is just outside of Tampa.

How does the son of a lifelong baseball manager/coach become a concert violinist?

My father-in-law was a concert violinist and my son has just always had a passion and an interest in doing it. He finally had an opportunity to take it up and it's just great.

Do you play any musical instruments?

No. I can't even sing in the shower.

I understand Matt's concert is raising money for a special foundation?

We lost a 2½ year old son to cancer in 1986, Carlos Jr. — C.J. Tosca. And we started a fund to help families with children with cancer and Matthew has decided to give all the proceeds from this concern to the C.J. Tosca fund.

SCOUTING REPORT

RYAN ZIMMERMAN, NATIONALS

The Marlins visit new Nationals Park for the first time for a three-game series starting Monday, and they'll hope Ryan Zimmerman won't give them the same treatment did at RFK Stadium. Against the Marlins he is batting .316 with three homers and 26 RBI in 42 games.

PROSPECT WATCH

CHRIS VOLSTAD, RHP, MARLINS

Volstad won his season debut Friday for Class AA Carolina, allowing two runs on six hits in six innings in a 6-2 win against Mobile. Volstad, a Palm Beach Gardens High grad who nearly made the team out of spring training, could make his major-league debut within the next two months if the Marlins' starters continue to falter.

STAT WATCH

352

Combined pitches thrown by the Marlins' top four starters in their first starts of the season. Done in a combined 18⅓ total innings, that works out to laborious 19.2 pitches per inning. If starters don't reduce their pitches soon, it will be another long season for the bullpen.

