

By MICHAEL WEINREB

ere, in the home clubhouse at Jacobs Field, amid the din of baseball's best team readying itself to beat the daylights out of another opponent, Indians shortstop Omar Vizquel sits quietly in front of his locker. Nearby, on one of the televisions, drones a major league game in progress.

Across the room, right fielder/RBI machine Manny Ramirez is trying to play table tennis—with both hands, his tattooed chest heaving with laughter to the *ticktock, ticktock* of the game as he awkwardly wields paddles righthanded and lefthanded. His head bobs and his eyes sparkle, betraying a boyish innocence not often found in big-league clubhouses anymore.

Vizquel, after stealing a glance at Ramirez, gives a joyless hiccup of a laugh, then points to the TV and says, "Sometimes, I think that's the only place where Manny knows what he's doing."

The most dangerous batter in the most dangerous lineup in baseball turned 27 on May 30. In his sixth full major league season, he has blossomed into one of the best pure hitters in the game. He is on a pace to drive in 203 runs, and while some of that might be attributed to the hitters around him, there is no dispute: Manny Ramirez is a star.

How good can he be? Former Indians scouting director Mickey White, one of the decision-makers who chose to draft Ramirez with the 13th pick in 1991, says: "That is why they play 162 games."

This much is abundantly clear: Ramirez hits with power (15 home runs through Saturday). He hits line drives. He hits consistently (.342). He hits to the opposite field. He hits when he's behind in the count. He hits fastballs and breaking balls and knuckleballs. He hits Ping-Pong balls with both hands, for crying out loud.

But when he's tattooing baseballs all over the American League, he does it with a buttery swing, a swing that makes your knees—and opposing pitchers' knees—buckle.

A computerized scouting report on Ramirez shows his "red zones," where he hits the ball with the most power: Against righthanded pitchers, he likes the ball middle of the plate and in; against lefthanders, his power is middle and away. Show that to baseball people, and they say, "Yes, he dives over the plate against lefties."

Indians hitting coach Charlie Manuel doesn't let people tinker with The Swing. He doesn't even like to touch it himself. He has never seen a batter so free of tension, so decidedly nonchalant at the plate.

There have been swings like this before. Manuel compares it to a righthanded version of Tony Oliva. White, now working for the Pirates, saw shades of Roberto Clemente. Vizquel sees a mirror image of another lefty, Ken Griffey Jr.

It is no coincidence that Clemente is in the Hall of Fame. Oliva would be there if not for injuries. Griffey is headed there.

"One of the most beautiful swings I've ever seen," says teammate Sandy Alomar, eloquently simple in his analysis of Ramirez.

Yet analysis of Manny Ramirez is never simple. True enough, Manny Ramirez is a star.

But he is an enigma, too.

He dyed his hair a Crayola shade of burnt orange-yellow this spring. He left his paycheck in one of his boots in a visiting clubhouse. He told a clubhouse attendant to wash his car. Said there was money in the glove compartment. And there was. About 10 grand. In cash.

He has worn other people's socks. He has worn other people's pants. He has used other people's bats.

Ah, yes, the bats.

Those accusations by unidentified Yankees earlier this month that Ramirez is using a corked bat appear to be more gamesmanship than reality.

The Indians were annoyed at the charges but also amused at the Yankees' reasoning. New York players noted that Ramirez changed bats after hitting the home run that aroused their suspicion because the bat made an odd sound upon contact. Truth be told, however, Ramirez is so cavalier about his bat selection that he picks up the first piece of lumber he encounters.

"A different bat in almost every at-bat," equipment manager Ted Walsh says. "There's no rhyme or reason to it. He'll just go to the bat rack and grab anyone's bat and go to the plate."

And the one that didn't "sound" right on the questioned home run? "He was using Sandy Alomar's bat," Walsh says.

(True story: Alomar grew tired of Ramirez borrowing his bats and sometimes breaking them. He banned Ramirez from his bat stash. However, because Alomar is injured and was back in Cleveland rehabbing, he wasn't around to guard his bats in New York. So Ramirez is back in Alomar's bats, using them to pound opposing pitchers.)

"He goes purely by feel," says Manuel of Ramirez, who has been known to take six bats from six teammates to the pregame batting cage, trying them all. "Manny makes it very simple. If the bat feels good, he uses it. If the pitch looks good, he swings at it."

See ball, hit ball. Pick up bat, swing bat.

No one knows why Manny Ramirez does what Manny Ramirez does—except Manny Ramirez. He is not high on sharing his feelings with strangers. He has not spoken with the local media this season, although no one seems to know why. So here's how best to gauge how bothered he was the day after the Yankees' accusations: Before he went out to stretch and take batting practice—pausing to chat with friends in the stands from his old neighborhood, nearby Washington Heights—he sat in the visitors' clubhouse at the Stadium with headphones on, listening to music and watching video of Roger Clemens.



DILIP VISHWANATH/TSN

Getting his Hacks

In his pursuit of Hack Wilson's RBI record, Manny Ramirez gets support from a man whose opinion counts: the Rangers' Juan Gonzalez.

Gonzalez, who last year made a strong run at Wilson's hallowed mark of 190 RBIs set in 1930, says he believes Ramirez can do it.

"He has more of a chance than me last year," Gonzalez says. "Manny has the first three hitters in front of him (Kenny Lofton, Omar Vizquel and Roberto Alomar), fast guys who get a lot of stolen bases. You have pressure every day because everybody talks about the record. It's not easy. But I think he has a good chance."

Ramirez had 60 RBIs through the Indians' first 48 games—the exact pace of Gonzalez last year, when he had 101 at the All-Star break and a career-high 157 for the season. Ramirez had 70 through last Saturday, putting him on a pace to knock in 203. —Larry Stone

Driving home a point

Even if Manny Ramirez doesn't break Hack Wilson's single-season RBI record of 190, he has a shot at another noteworthy accomplishment: No player has knocked in more than 159 runs in a season in the past 50 years. In fact, of the 21 players who have 159 RBIs or more in a season since 1901, only two—Ted Williams and Vern Stephens—did it after 1938. And yet baseball's current offensive onslaught shows that of the top 10 RBI seasons in the past 50 years, half have occurred in the three seasons leading up to 1999, and three happened in 1998:

Player	RBIs	Year
Ted Williams	159	1949
Vern Stephens	159	1949
Sammy Sosa	158	1998
Juan Gonzalez	157	1998
Tommy Davis	153	1962
Albert Belle	152	1998
Andres Galarraga	150	1996
George Foster	149	1977
Johnny Bench	148	1970
Albert Belle	148	1996

Sources: 1999 Major League Fact Book and baseballstats.com

The people who know him best tell you this: Manny Ramirez is misunderstood. They say he is shy. They tell you he speaks English more readily than he might let on, that his heart is as pure as they come.

They tell you he was hurried to the major leagues less than two years

after he was drafted, that he hadn't even graduated from high school, that he came from a neighborhood where he was sheltered in Dominican culture, where his father drove a cab and his mother was a seamstress.

They tell you he's maturing, becoming more responsible. They tell you no one on this team, the best team in baseball, works harder. They tell you his fundamentals are improving, that he could be a Gold Glove outfielder if not for his sullied reputation, and that his baserunning is no worse than many big-league players'.

But still, there are these moments. And they are so vivid, they cloud the vision of Ramirez's immense ability. Says his high school coach, Steve Mandl: "Manny just happens to pick the worst times to do the worst things."

New York, 1998. Game 6 of the A.L. Championship Series. The Yankees' Derek Jeter hits a line drive, and Ramirez leaps and climbs the wall of Yankee Stadium, ready to save a home run in his hometown. The ball lands six feet below—at the bottom of the wall.

Ramirez says he never saw the ball. He walks back to the dugout, shrugs, grins and says, "That ball almost hit me in my back."

Atlanta, 1995. Game 2 of the World Series. Ramirez, having strayed too far off first base, is picked off by Braves catcher Javy Lopez, destroying an Indians rally. Ramirez walks back to the dugout, shrugs, grins and says, "I thought I was Rickey Henderson for a minute."

Yet there is a blessed innocence to him. He is everyone's little brother.

"Anyone who knows him, knows he's a good kid," says Mel Zitter, his old summer-league coach in New York. "He's not malicious at all."

His teammates try. He talks to Vizquel, to Alomar, to the other Hispanic players. He idolizes them, and they tell him this team needs him now, more than ever. They're counting on him.

"I try to hang around with him, but I can't be baby-sitting him all the time," Vizquel says. "I talk to him a lot. I think he's finally hearing."

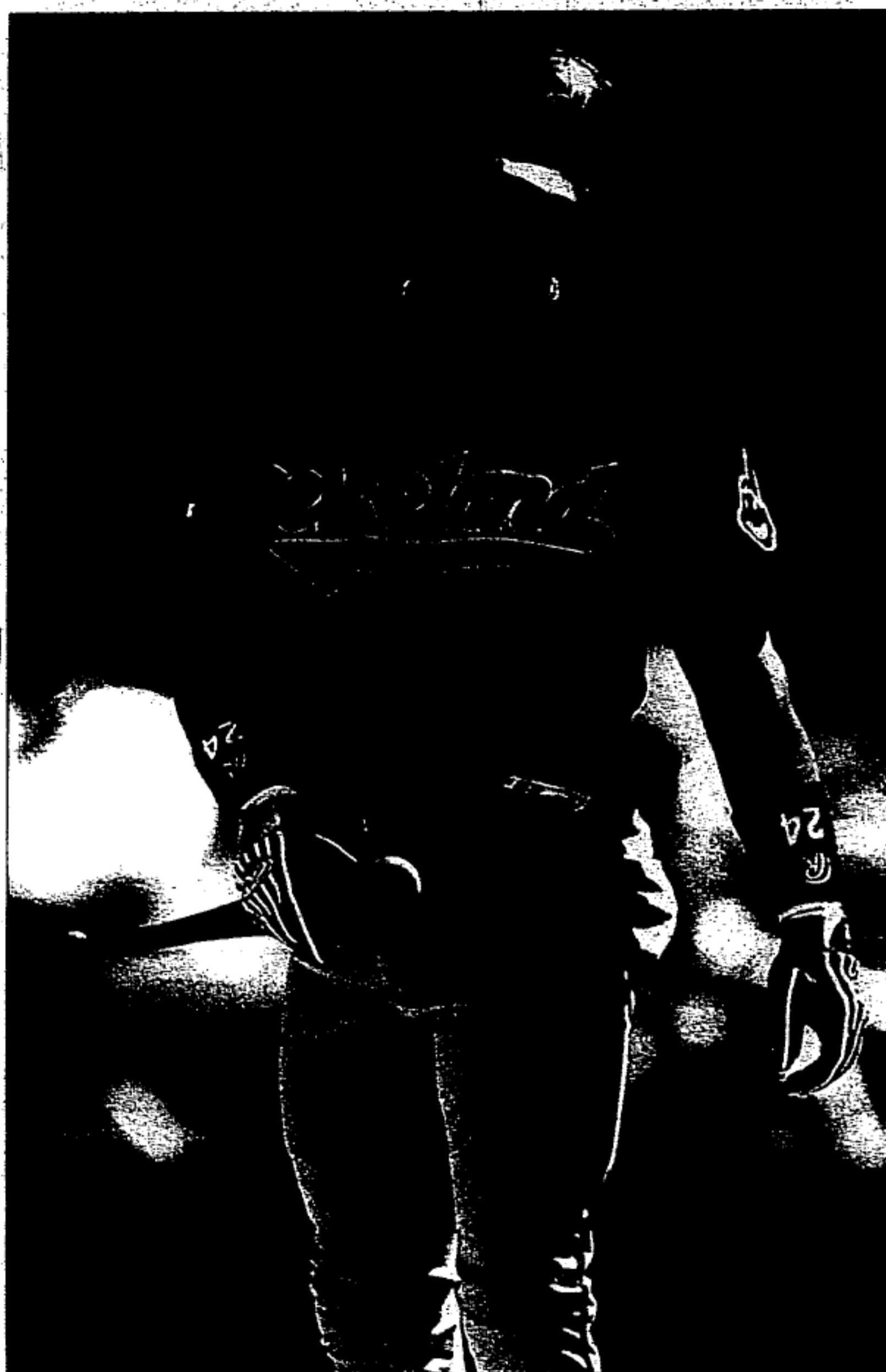
Usually, his errors in judgment are harmless. Often, especially off the field, they are comical. The dropped fly balls and pickoffs are compensated healthily by his bat, by hit after hit after hit, by the extra practice and workouts. Even manager Mike Hargrove finds room to joke about the hair.

But there has to be a reason for these lapses, why the bulbs dim inside Ramirez's head.

"When he was in school, there was always some kind of problem. Nobody wanted to address it," Mandl says. "Then, I was watching an Indians game once with a kid who had Attention Deficit Disorder. And the kid said, 'Coach, Manny's just like me.' And it struck me. That could be it."

The Indians won't talk much about it. Assistant general manager Mark Shapiro says any psychological evaluations of Ramirez have found nothing out of the ordinary.

Yet, in the wake of Corkgate, when there was room to wonder if the Yankees were just trying to play mind games with Ramirez, here is how Vizquel, speaking to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*,



JOHN DUINN FOR TSN

BIG BAT: Ramirez may have his shortcomings, but there's no denying he is one of the best power hitters in baseball.

laughed off the notion that they would be able to rattle Ramirez. "If you can get inside Manny's head, come and see me. The psychologist on our team is trying to figure Manny out, and he is driving him crazy."

Dr. Charles Maher says Ramirez's problem is shyness, not ADD. Whatever the team shrink is doing, it appears to be working; the blatant errors are coming less frequently. Ramirez gave his team Most Valuable Player trophy from last season to Maher, for helping him to focus, to concentrate.

"You guys," says Alomar, speaking to one reporter but chastising the media as a whole, "think he's stupid. He's not."

You wonder, then, what motivated the Yankees to make an issue of Ramirez's bat. And, honestly, whoever did it (word is the Indians think it was Orlando Hernandez, who gave up the off-balance, one-handed home run), New York manager Joe Torre and G.M. Brian Cashman wish he hadn't. Had the Yankees won the series and been in a position they were in last season, it probably wouldn't have been an issue.

But the balance of power has shifted in the A.L., thanks in great part to Ramirez. The Indians

have the best record in baseball and scored 23 runs in the recent three-game series at New York. The teams meet twice more in the regular season, but clearly the first go-round made an impression on a team that won 114 regular-season games in 1998.

"That's the best batting order we've seen from them in the last five years," Yankees pitcher David Cone says. "And we're talking about some impressive teams. These guys are very, very dangerous."

There are no prominent photos of Ramirez above his locker at the Jake. There are pictures of Jim Thome, a clipping about Sandy and Roberto Alomar from a magazine. There are pictures of the Indians' coaching staff, of Clemente.

He reveres his teammates, especially the Alomars; he respects and listens to Vizquel. He has heroes such as Dodgers outfielder Raul Mondesi. He apparently doesn't understand that he probably is just as good as, if not better than, nearly every player in either league, although he turned down a seven-year offer for a reported \$56 million last winter. His contract expires after next season, and there's talk of the Indians trading him before he leaves as a free agent. There's talk of him returning to New York and playing for the Yankees.

"All I can tell you about New York," says Eric Goldschmidt, the latest in what has been a parade of agents since Ramirez signed his first professional contract, "is that Manny spends a lot of time there in the offseason."

It is a question of what Ramirez wants. Sometimes, that's hard to see, and virtually impossible to comprehend, from the outside. Sometimes, you wonder if he knows what he wants, if he is giving careful enough consideration to his situation, his future. Being blissfully unaware can be a charming quality. It also can be a source of immense frustration, on the field and off.

Ramirez talks to Mandl, his old high school coach, every couple of weeks. At George Washington High School in Washington Heights, one of the best baseball programs in New York, the money is just not there. They wear old uniforms because Ramirez promised to buy new ones and never did. They can't take batting practice because they can't afford to lose the baseballs.

They are raising money to build a new batting cage. All it would take from Ramirez is one check, but Mandl can't impose on Ramirez, can't bear to ask him for cash like that.

"Still, he remembers what it was like," Mandl says, "hitting with ragballs."

But this is where Manny Ramirez's vision is clouded. It is something he cannot comprehend. That he's not the boy anymore, that he's the one they idolize in Washington Heights. That he has eclipsed his heroes.

That he's the heart of the most dangerous lineup in baseball. **TSN**

Michael Weinreb writes for the Akron (Ohio) Beacon Journal. Some information for this story came from other news organizations.

The survey says ...

OK, we know what Juan Gonzalez thinks (see accompanying story), but we had to get a second opinion from another knowledgeable source on whether Manny Ramirez can break Hack Wilson's single-season RBI record. So we asked online users at sportingnews.com how many RBIs they thought Ramirez would finish with in 1999.

The results:

150-169 RBIs: 34%

130-149: 30%

110-129: 12%

190 or more: 10%

170-189: 10%

Not even 110: 4%

To see who ends up being right, follow the Indians and Ramirez daily at sportingnews.com/baseball.

Absent

anything else on the field?

mindded

By Steve Herrick

It's Saturday morning at Chain of Lakes Park, the Cleveland Indians' spring training home in Winter Haven, Fla. The opener is less than four weeks away, and Manny Ramirez looks like he's in midseason form. During batting practice, he's hitting long home runs and spraying line drives all over the field. Ramirez's hitting exhibition doesn't come as a surprise to anyone who has watched him play the past three seasons. After all, Ramirez, 25, has hit .315, while averaging 30 homers and 102 RBIs.

Unfortunately for the Indians, Ramirez can't seem to master other facets of the game. At times, he looks lost in the outfield even though he has 39 assists in the past four seasons. Take a game against the Rangers last August. Ramirez lost a fly ball in sun. Granted, it doesn't seem like a big deal—every outfielder has this problem every once in a while. However, Ramirez's difficulty could have been avoided had he not left his sunglasses in his back pocket.

And don't get us started on his baserunning. Let's put it this way: Jimmy Piersall looks better running the bases—backward.

Who can forget Ramirez's blunder against the Tigers last season? In the eighth inning, with the Indians trailing 13-2, he singled in a run. While Jim Thome was in the batter's box, Ramirez took off for second and slid headfirst into the bag safely. Thome swung and missed, and the ball rolled a few feet from home plate. Ramirez, thinking the ball had been fouled off, got up and headed back to first. This screw-up didn't go unnoticed by the Tigers, who tagged him for the second out of the inning.

"I've never seen anything like that in all my years in baseball," Indians manager Mike Hargrove says.

Helping Ramirez iron out his problems in the outfield and on the basepaths are top priorities for the Indians. But first they have to find out why he keeps making mistakes. Hargrove has a theory.

"At times, he's still unsure about himself on the bases," he says. "He runs into mistakes because he's afraid he's going to hurt the ballclub. When Manny becomes tentative on the bases, that's when he gets into trouble. He becomes passive."

During the offseason, the Indians hired basestealer extraordinaire Al Bumbry as their first base and outfield coach. One of his duties will be to fix the holes in Ramirez's game.

"Everybody talks about Manny," Bumbry says. "That's all I've heard since I came here. 'Manny doesn't do this, and Manny doesn't do that.'"

Although Bumbry is new to the team,

he's familiar with the Cleveland players. He was the Orioles' first base coach in 1995. Before that, he spent six years with the Red Sox in the same capacity. Bumbry hopes his tutelage will turn Ramirez into a complete player.

"In Manny's case, it's a matter of concentration," Bumbry says. "Manny's been a very good offensive player. To be that good of an offensive player, you have to concentrate. You have to concentrate on being a good baserunner, too. You just can't go out there and do it. You have to be aware of what you're supposed to do and react on the basepaths."

"(Ramirez) has to learn situations, learn all the things the club emphasizes," says a player development director. "Sometimes I think people underestimate his ability as a baserunner. It's not like he's playing with Milwaukee, (a team) that really emphasizes all the little things about baserunning and stealing. Cleveland is primarily a power-hitting club. Mike can wait for the big inning because he has that kind of lineup."

When asked about working on parts of his game that don't involve swinging a bat, Ramirez comes up with words that must be music to Hargrove's ears.

"I like to work on everything," he says. "I want to be an all-around player."

All this sounds good in theory. But theories during spring training don't always mean the Indians will get positive results during the regular season. For now, the Indians are hopeful.

"I talk to him in the locker room, and he talks to me," says teammate Sandy Alomar Jr., who is one of Ramirez's best friends. "I don't pull him aside. I make mistakes, too. We're all human. A couple of times I might mention to him to look out for this or to look out for that, but I don't criticize. Anything can happen to any player. I think you do a lot better when you don't criticize. They key is to relax him and not worry him and put a lot of pressure on him. That could make it worse."

Ramirez was taken with the 13th pick of the 1991 amateur draft out of George Washington High School in New York City. He was in Cleveland by September 1993—which might explain his shortcomings on the field.

"He's a young guy," Alomar says. "He learned how to play baseball in the big leagues. Not many guys make it to the big leagues when they're 22 or 23. Manny was already in the big leagues. He was learning how to play up here. That's a lot of pressure."

Yes, Ramirez can drive everyone crazy, but the Indians have shown unwa-

The wacky world of Manny Ramirez

Manny is a good guy, but he has done some unusual things. Since he entered the big leagues in 1993, Manny has put himself in predicaments that would make you wonder why he is still a member of the Indians.

1. In '93, Manny and best friend Julian Tavarez decided they wanted to buy a motorcycle. So they asked two writers who covered the team if they could borrow \$64,000. It was quickly explained to Manny and Tavarez that, No. 1, motorcycles don't cost \$64,000, and No. 2, people don't walk around with that kind of money, especially sportswriters.

2. Early in his career, Manny would lose count of balls and strikes. For example, he went to first base on ball three. Other times, Manny would stay in the batter's box on ball four. To make matters worse, the umpires and opposing players also would lose track of the count.

3. With the Indians trailing, 4-3, in Game 2 of the 1995 World Series, Braves catcher Javy Lopez nails Manny at first base. Manny looks even worse because Cleveland's players were warned before the Fall Classic that Lopez isn't afraid to throw the ball around the infield. Plus, first base coach Dave Nelson pulls Manny aside and repeats the same warning minutes before he is picked off. The Indians lose the game by a run.

4. Last season, Manny is pulled over by police following a game at Jacobs Field. The cops notice he is playing his car stereo too loud. Then, they discover Manny is driving without a license and has illegal plates. After writing out the tickets, the officers return to their car. Manny then pulls an illegal U-turn right in front of them and is cited again. He later pleads no contest and is fined \$225.

5. One week after having an emergency appendectomy, teammate Kevin Seitzer returns to the team and Manny gives him a bearhug. Seitzer screams in pain until Manny puts him down. Manny later apologizes and says, "I didn't know it was down there. It thought it was his heart."

TSN Free Agents

Basketball

Basketball Free Agents who can be claimed after 2 PM on Monday, March 9th, and before 9 PM on Sunday, March 15th, and be on your team for games beginning Monday, March 16th.

PO ID	PLAYER / TEAM	SALARY
G 113	Kerry Kittles, New Jersey	...\$3,390,000
G 157	Rex Chapman, Phoenix\$1,770,000
F 308	Antoine Walker, Boston\$3,250,000
F 429	Tony Battie, Denver\$1,300,000
C 525	Isaac Austin, LA Clippers\$1,470,000

Hockey

Hockey Free Agents who can be claimed after 9 AM on Friday, March 13th, and before 9 PM on Thursday, March 19th, and be on your team for games beginning Friday, March 20th.

PO ID	PLAYER / TEAM	SALARY
G 39	Garth Snow, Philadelphia\$670,000
C 108	Keith Primeau, Carolina\$2,160,000
W 410	Tony Amonte, Chicago\$2,130,000
W 568	Vladimir Tsyplakov, LA Kings	...\$750,000
D 816	Kevin Hatcher, Pittsburgh\$1,170,000
D 842	Lyle Odelein, New Jersey\$890,000

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- 2 Keith DunhamAustin, TX
- 3 Terry / Tom DelikatBrandon, FL
- 4 Gary MyasStockton, CA
- 5 Steven WilsonSan Jose, CA
- 6 Marc HewittSt Joseph, MI
- 7 Kelly SchroederColumbus, NE
- 8 Tom DudmanVan Nuys, CA
- 9 Keith SchooseLong Beach, CA
- 10 Kelly SchroederColumbus, NE

\$10,000 HOCKEY CASH GRAND PRIZE LEADERS THRU 2/19

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- 2 Krajnz / SteinmanPort Huron, MI
- 3 Lacey / BradyBayside, NY
- 4 Longmore/BaileyColumbia, MO
- 5 Francis GagnonLachine, QUE
- 6 Doug FitzerCommerce, MI
- 7 Andrew MarhevkoHazel Park, MI
- 8 Kirk/SebastianVictoria, BC
- 9 Michael CascioNew Hyde Park, NY
- 10 Randolph RoggeGrand Rapids, MI

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BIG BOPPER: In the past three seasons, Ramirez has helped the Indians win two pennants.

vering support and are patient—some would say to a fault—with him. Why? He puts up great offensive numbers.

Ramirez became the everyday right fielder in 1994 and hit .269 with 17 homers and 60 RBIs in the strike-shortened season. He took off the next season and hasn't stopped since. In 1995, Ramirez batted .308 with 31 homers and 107 RBIs. He followed that by hitting .309 with 33 homers and 112 RBIs in 1996. Although his power numbers (26 homers, 88 RBIs) were down last year, he hit a career-high .328.

Those statistics are the reason the Indians are one of the best offensive teams in baseball. Ramirez can make up for a mistake with one swing. And they know his offensive game will get better.

"I think anybody who doesn't recognize him as a star is missing the boat," G.M. John Hart says. "There are a lot of guys who are better baserunners who I wouldn't trade Manny for."

There are signs Ramirez is learning from his mistakes. Two years ago he showed up at spring training about 25 pounds overweight. Club officials were fearful they were seeing the beginning of another Carlos Baerga, an outstanding hitter whose skills began to erode simply because his work ethic went kaput. So Ramirez quickly became the personal property of Fernando Montes, the Indians' strength and conditioning coach.

Montes assigned Ramirez to ride a bicycle around the team's training complex. But this wasn't an ordinary bike. This was a girls bike—a pink girls bike. Riding the bike accomplished two things. First, it helped Ramirez shed some weight. Second, Montes hoped the sheer embarrassment of riding such a contraption in front of teammates and fans would shame Ramirez into not reporting out of shape in the future.

The ploy worked. Ramirez came to camp in good shape last season and the bike was bequeathed to the hefty Kevin Mitchell, who reported weighing around 260 pounds. The bike didn't last with him on it. In his first ride around camp, Mitchell bent the front rim while trying to pop a wheelie.

This season Ramirez reported early with the pitchers and catchers. He didn't talk much with the media, but he's not the Second Coming of Albert Belle. Ramirez shies away from the press be-

The Class of '94

Four years ago, Manny Ramirez was runner-up to Bob Hamelin in the Rookie of the Year balloting. However, they were not the only hitters to receive votes in this category. Rusty Greer and Chris Gomez finished third and fifth, respectively, in '94. So, how did their careers turn out since that time? According to the statistics provided by STATS, Inc., Ramirez is the winner, but Greer isn't too far behind.

HAMELIN (1995 to 1997)

	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	Avg.	BB	SO
	765	98	182	34	117	.238	128	186
	AB	H	HR	RBI	Avg.	BB	SO	
Bases empty	403	94	19	19	.233	62	108	
Runners on	362	88	15	98	.243	66	78	
0-0 count	123	37	7	25	.301	4	0	
Two strikes	395	66	13	40	.167	54	186	

RAMIREZ (1995 to 1997)

	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	Avg.	BB	SO
	1595	278	503	90	307	.315	239	331
	AB	H	HR	RBI	Avg.	BB	SO	
Bases empty	842	268	54	54	.318	115	185	
Runners on	753	235	36	253	.312	124	146	
0-0 count	148	50	12	39	.338	13	0	
Two strikes	799	181	25	102	.227	102	331	

GREER (1995 to 1997)

	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	Avg.	BB	SO
	1560	266	486	57	248	.312	200	239
	AB	H	HR	RBI	Avg.	BB	SO	
Bases empty	792	241	26	26	.304	91	129	
Runners on	768	245	31	222	.319	109	110	
0-0 count	176	50	7	34	.284	9	0	
Two strikes	667	152	15	70	.228	96	239	

GOMEZ (1995 to 1997)

	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	Avg.	BB	SO
	1409	164	345	20	149	.245	151	294
	AB	H	HR	RBI	Avg.	BB	SO	
Bases empty	798	184	17	17	.231	81	172	
Runners on	611	161	3	132	.264	70	122	
0-0 count	172	53	2	29	.308	2	0	
Two strikes	681	116	4	49	.170	77	294	

Manny by the numbers

- 0—Number of times on the disabled list.
- 1—Number of All-Star appearances.
- 2—Guaranteed years left on his contract.
- 4—Grand slams hit during his big-league career.
- 6—Most RBIs in a game.
- 7—Number of four-hit games in his career.
- 9—Home runs hit in the postseason, an Indians record.
- 18—His longest hitting streak.
- 19—Assists that led the majors in 1996.
- 22—Errors committed during his major league career.
- 25—Number of players—including Ramirez—who collected 30 home runs and 100-plus RBIs at the age of 23 or younger
- 81—Combined home runs for Ramirez and Albert Belle in 1995, a team record.
- 99—Career high in runs scored in a season.
- 269—Number of minor league games played.
- .277—Lifetime average against the Yankees.
- .347—Career average against lefthanders.

cause he's not astute with the English language even though he has spent most of his formative years in New York.

"Manny's quiet," Hargrove says. "Some people think he's not paying attention, but Manny soaks things in."

Unlike Belle, Ramirez is popular with his teammates. He often engages in horseplay with them before games. And even when Ramirez makes mistakes, Hargrove has a hard time staying mad at him.

"He's a good guy," Hargrove says. "He wants to win. He wants to do well."

The Indians know there are no Gold Gloves or baserunning awards in Ramirez's future, but that's not what they're asking for. They know they have one

of the game's best hitters, who should put up the numbers well into the next decade. As long as Ramirez shows the effort to improve every facet of his game, they'll be satisfied.

Steve Herrick covers the Indians for the Elyria Chronicle-Telegram and THE SPORTING NEWS.