

T-BONES SPRING TRAINING PREVIEW



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By Dan Vaughan

KANSAS CITY – Kan. – What do you do for an encore after winning the American Association Championship? For the T-Bones faithful, that question will start to have an answer this week. The team started to arrive in bits and pieces last week, and the first full workout was over the weekend. The club has been working out together, making the most of what limited time the American Association preseason affords.

Tuesday it all begins with the first spring game against the Lee's Summit Monarchs. Then the Gary South Shore RailCats come to town. By the weeks end we should have a pretty good idea of what battles are going on for which roster spots and what part of the starting rotation will look like come this season's opening game.

Manager Joe Calfapietra has told us over the course of the winter to expect a wide-open camp. Nobody has an upper hand, and it will all be decided over the next 10 days or so.

"I have got to get these guys in and see them in different spots. We have some flexibility with guys who can play several positions, so we are fortunate with that," said Joe Calfapietra. "The best guys will be the ones who go out on the field. When you bring 28 guys into camp, you still will break with only 23."

What Calfapietra has done, with help of course from Vice-President and General Manager Chris Browne and the backing of the Ehlert family ownership, has been nothing short of impressive. The days of coming to Kansas City as a visitor and getting some shopping done, visiting our fine city, and feasting on the culinary delights we offer—and, oh, by the way taking a series from the T-Bones on the way to the playoffs— are over.

Throughout the last two seasons, the T-Bones have set an all-time franchise record for wins in a season, going 62-37, and the (at the time) second-best record in franchise history in 2017 at 57-43. The simple numbers speak loud and clear of the renaissance that is T-Bones Baseball. Let this tidbit sink in: in 16 seasons of the franchise's KCK history, the club has finished .500 or better five times. Joe Calfapietra has skippered two of those clubs— something no other manager has done. The team has finished above .500 in back-to-back seasons, which is also uncharted waters for the franchise. The road to three in a row will not be easy, but one thing we have seen from Calfapietra and Browne is that they will exhaust every possible option and look under every stone to find that missing piece.

So, with that background, let's preview the upcoming spring and the key story lines heading into the first weeks.

Rotation

Tommy Collier returns as the T-Bones staff ace. The T-Bones do not win it all last year without him. The righty set the tone last season and was the true leader of the staff. Collier would go 12-3 with a 3.11 ERA, and he should be the top spot in the rotation. After writing his name on the roster with a Sharpie, the rest is wide open. New player/coach **Randall Delgado** should lead a wide-open race for one of the spots in the five-man rotation. Delgado, who last season was in the Big Leagues, brings more Major League innings to KCK than any previous T-Bone arm. His eight years and 542.2 innings should provide a **Scott Carroll**-like effect on the club over all. Outside of Delgado, right-hander **Dustin Hurlbutt** has the most starting experience on the roster with 34 starting nods over the last two seasons with the Oakland A's farm system. One interesting note on right-hander **Dylan Baker** is that he has worked out of the pen the last two seasons but made 64 starts in his first four seasons in the minor leagues.

Pen

The T-Bones have an envious position. In fact, I wish my fantasy team was as deep as this bunch is! How it all breaks down this spring will be fun to watch. **Cody Winiarski** has retired, leaving the back-end job of closing games wide open. The T-Bones will have two key returning pieces in lefty **Joe Filomeno** and righty **Marcus Crescentini**—both of whom made big play off contributions. It would figure both would have a chance for some late game high leverage situations. We are also bringing back the hard throwing lefty **Carlos Diaz**, who was unhittable before his contract was purchased last summer. Many forget that Diaz held down the closer role while Winiarski was on the shelf, and he notched nine saves during that time. That three-man combo goes into spring with depth and with a track record of success almost unmatched in the league. Add former Royal **Eric Stout** and the durability of RHP **Jackson Lowery** to the mix, and the possibilities are intriguing!

Local connections

Right-hander **Robbie Gordon** hails from St. Louis. Infielder **Shawn O'Malley** lives in Overland Park. RHP **Dustin Hurlbutt** is from Coffeyville, Kansas, and IF **Casey Gillaspie** is a former Wichita State star.

Where are the other players from?

RHP Dylan Baker is from Juneau, Alaska, which is not usually known as a baseball hot bed, but fans will surely want to hear more about his home state. The rest of the states breakdown like this:

Florida – 6
Texas – 4
Arizona – 3
Kansas – 2
Washington – 2
Illinois – 2
Arkansas -1
West Virginia – 1
Missouri – 1
New Jersey – 1
Massachusetts – 1
Oregon - 1
Puerto Rico – 1
Wisconsin -1

Time is of the essence

The T-Bones, as per American Association rules, can carry 28 players on the spring roster. The final tally, however, will be only 23. As the line from the classic song “East Bound and Down” from the movie *Smokey and the Bandit* goes, “*We got a long way to go and a short time to get there....*”

The T-Bones will have had a total of 11 days to get the 23-man roster set by Wednesday, the 15th of May.

That makes every pitch and every at-bat meaningful to the players. It may not count in the standings, but the next 11 days will tell which players have a job to begin the season. So, these games do matter for all the clubs in the league.

Correa

Catcher **Christian Correa** is back in a familiar spot. The Florida native will be taking part in his third T-Bones spring training.

MLB Alums

While the philosophy if the organization is to get players back to affiliated ball to one day get a chance at the Big Leagues, the T-Bones will feature six former Big Leaguers.

RHP Randall Delgado – Arizona, Atlanta

RHP Eric Stout – Kansas City

IF Shawn O’Malley – Los Angeles (AL), Seattle

IF Darnell Sweeney - Philadelphia

OF Ryan Brett – Tampa Bay

OF Daniel Robertson –Texas, Los Angeles (AL), Seattle, Cleveland

Position switch

RHP **Marc Magliaro** is an interesting story. Magliaro arrives in KCK with a five-year resume of pro baseball experience, all with the Colorado Rockies organization. Magliaro, a career reliever, has 149 appearances in the minor leagues with a 4.81 ERA in 200.1 innings. Magliaro's route to pitching in the Rockies organization was not a traditional route for a pitcher. He was a non-drafted free agent signee out of Rowan University (New Jersey) in 2013, but he did not pitch until his senior season of college. Magliaro would make a name for himself in college as a shortstop. He was a four-year starter at short with a .328 career batting average in 164 games. He registered 212 hits in 647 at bats with 115 runs scored and 85 RBIs. He stole 39 bases in 50 attempts and produced a .393 on-base percentage while serving as team captain his final year. During his senior season, Magliaro began to close games for Rowan and would notch five saves in eight games over 8.1 innings with four strike outs and no earned runs in 2012. After graduating in 2012, he spent the winter competing in several tryouts as a pitcher where the Rockies took notice and signed him as a free agent pitcher.

Welcome Back

There will be nine T-Bones in the spring who spent time with the club last season at some point.

Watch this guy

Carlos Franco does not have the Big-League time that some of the other big names have on the T-Bones spring roster, but what he has done at AA and AAA in the Braves system is impressive. Franco joins the T-Bones after blasting 36 home runs combined over the last two seasons in the Atlanta Braves organization. The left-handed batting corner infielder spent the 2018 season with the AAA Gwinnett Stripers of the International League for Atlanta. In 119 games, he hit .249 (109-for-437) with 16 home runs and 76 RBIs—both totals led the club—all while playing 102 games at first base. Franco finished fourth in the International League in RBIs while his home run total was good to tie him for eighth place in the circuit. Franco split time between AAA and AA in 2017. He would combine to hit .252 (116-for-461) with 18 doubles, 21 home runs, 53 runs and 77 RBIs in 134 games at both Gwinnett and Mississippi. His 21 long balls tied him with Ronald Acuna for tops in the Braves system in 2017, and Franco would be named to the Braves Organizational All-Star Team by MiLB.com. In 93 games at AAA, his 77 runs knocked in also placed him second in the farm system to Acuna, who had 82. Read his [complete bio online](#).

Three names the league will know

In addition to Franco and the marquee names, here are three names that your broadcaster thinks will be known league wide this season.

RHP Corey Walter - Walter was drafted out of West Virginia University by Oakland and has been a part of two Texas League Championship Clubs with Midland in 2016 and 2017. Those A's clubs were loaded with prospects, and he fits that mold of guys that have flourished as a T-Bone.

RHP Jackson Lowery – He joined the club via a tryout down in Texas in 2017. His rookie status is valuable. He has shown some signs of life especially last season in spot

starts. From the booth, the gut feeling is that every year there is a guy who makes the leap. This is his year. Don't count him out of either a long role or even a spot in the rotation at some point.

OF Ryan Brett- He arrived so late last season that it might be hard to remember just how good he was in a small sample size. He played the final 27 games of the 2018 Championship season for the T-Bones, but he was a difference maker from the moment he set foot in the T-Bones clubhouse. In his first game in a KC jersey, he went 2-for-3 with a key RBI in a 4-2 win over Grand Prairie on August 6th. Brett would come up big for Kansas City, going 24-for-61 during the final 13 games of the season. That stretch was part of the run to the post season as the club clinched its first playoff spot since joining the American Association in 2011 and its first since 2009. Brett would score 14 runs over the 13-game span for KC. The playoffs did not slow Brett down. He would go 15-for-37 in two post-season series with a home run and five RBIs, scoring six runs. After going hitless in his first playoff game against Sioux City, he would then hit in the next eight games to close out the post season. That included getting a six-hit night in an 11-4 win over St. Paul on September 11th in game one of the championship series and going a combined 5-for-8 in back-to-back wins over Sioux City in game two and three of the division series. For the season, Brett hit .336, going 38 for 113, scoring 24 runs, driving in nine runs, and stealing seven bases in seven attempts for the T-Bones.

Breakout star

IF Mason Davis – He was already on his way to league-wide recognition last season. He delivered more clutch hits in the second half of the season for the T-Bones than anyone on the roster. His defense was as good as anyone in the circuit at third base. His ability to hurt opponents in many ways should only get stronger. He could be, by season's end, the batter you would least like to face on the card.

First round

IF Casey Gillaspie is a switch-hitting first baseman and was the 2014 first round pick of the Tampa Bay Rays in the June draft out of Wichita State University. Gillaspie spent last season at AAA Charlotte, playing in 71 games for the Knights the affiliate of the Chicago White Sox. He would hit .220 with three home runs and 22 RBIs. In 2017 Gillaspie combined to hit .223 (102-458) with 20 doubles, 15 homers, 62 RBI and 62 runs scored in 125 games between Class AAA Durham in the Tampa Bay organization and Class AAA Charlotte with the White Sox. Gillaspie had a big year in 2016. He would be named the Rays Minor League Player-of-the-Year after combining to hit .284/.388/.479 (134-472) with 34 doubles, 18 homers, 64 RBI, 78 runs scored and 80 walks in 132 games with Class AA Montgomery and Durham. He is the type of player that should flourish with the T-Bones and the American Association.

The Exhibition Schedule

Tuesday, May 7th: Lee's Summit vs. T-Bones (7:05 p.m.)

Wednesday, May 8th: Gary vs. T-Bones (7:05 p.m.) **

Thursday, May 9th: Gary vs. T-Bones (7:05 p.m.) **

Monday, May 13th: Winnipeg vs. T-Bones (7:05 p.m.) **

Monday, May 14th: Winnipeg vs. T-Bones (7:05 p.m.) **

All games are set for the first pitch at 7:05 p.m., and tickets can be purchased online or by calling [\(913\) 328-5618](tel:9133285618) or by visiting the Saint Luke's Box Office between the hours of 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. The two games with Gary and the pair with Winnipeg will air the on the T-Bones Broadcast Network online at [tbonesbaseball.com/ T-&Bones MixLR Channel](http://tbonesbaseball.com/T-&Bones MixLR Channel) .

** games to be broadcast on Mixlr.

2019 Spring Training roster