

# Scout's methods same after 25 years

Erik Unger  
Staff Reporter

After 25 years as a major league baseball scout, Charles Leftin's idea of a great baseball player hasn't changed.

Leftin, a scout with the Cincinnati Reds, said his team still runs prospective players through the standard tests, running, throwing, fielding and hitting, but he said those players that interest him must have more.

He said during tryouts, the Reds first have the athletes run a 60-yard sprint, with a barometer time under seven seconds. The players' arms are then tested by having them throw from 260 feet to second and third base.

"You can tell by how it lands if they grip it properly, if the ball hits and skips off the turf," Leftin said.

He said the athletes are graded here as well, with a barometer of 50 points for a good arm.

But there are intangible aspects of the players game that Leftin said he finds equally important.

"I watch them in the dugout to see if they are paying attention to what is going on or if they are talking about what they are going to do that night," he said.

Leftin said a quick glance at the player's uniform can also indicate to him if the player wants to play or not. He said physical appearance is important.

"Eliminate guys with long hair or a beard," he said. "They have to look like an athlete to be in our organization."

The Reds have a club policy of no facial hair on any players, Leftin said. He said he likes the rule.

"You must have discipline to be a good club," he said.

He said a strong arm and good speed are the most important aspect of a ballplayer, but he said he will take a chance on a ballplayer who might not test well in all categories.

"I will just draft a pure athlete," Leftin said. "I would rather have just a good all-around athlete that we can use anywhere."

Leftin knows good athletes. He followed Reds' All-Star shortstop Barry Larkin through high school and summer league baseball.

"He's proven to be one of the better ballplayers in the major leagues," he said.

He also followed the career of infielder Paul Benzinger since high school as well as scouting outfielder Paul O'Neil and pitcher Tom Browning.

Leftin said scouting is most fulfilling when his prospects succeed.

"The best part is when I see a kid come all the way up through the minor leagues and make the majors," he said.

He has seen many through his 25 years of scouting, 17 years with

the Cincinnati Reds and his first eight with the Houston Astros. He is in charge of the Cincinnati and northern Kentucky areas for the Reds.

Leftin said the highlight of his 25 years in baseball is not all the great friends he has made, although he receives over 100 Christmas cards from players a year, or sitting in the box seats with Bill White, president of the National League, or having Pete Rose, the ex-manager of the Reds ask him for advice. He said his highlight was earning a World Series ring after

last season.

He said even though he was on staff when the Reds won back-to-back championships in 1975-76, he was only a recommending scout and didn't receive a ring. That made last season sweeter for him, he said.

"The World Series makes the job fun," he said. "It was the greatest thing; the ring was a big plus."

However, once the excitement of last year died down, Leftin returned to high school and college diamonds all over the area to look for the next Reds' superstar.



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## Dream

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cap and a Royal's jersey.

High school student Jeremy Johnson, the youngest manager in the league, begins the draft. He chooses Jose Canseco, a personal favorite and a groan comes up from the other managers.

Already by the second round of the draft, manager Larry Haines has lost his first two draft choices to other managers.

"You're watching the winning team come alive over here," Jeff Augustyn boasts during the early rounds.

As the draft progresses and preferred players are chosen by other teams, each manager takes longer to analyze the stats and announce their choices.

Someone suggests that Bo Jackson hasn't been chosen yet and the three managers whispering around the card table, Tim Sell, Larry Schuett and Cunningham are jokingly accused of conspiring against the other managers.

Allen Freye of Beatrice picks Bobby Bonilla of the Pirates, perhaps influenced by Bonilla's interview now playing on the big screen television.

The draft continues around the room and Jim Cunningham bends over and confers with his son John, who will act as assistant manager this year, before choosing their players.


In the last hour and a half, the managers have completed nine rounds of their draft. Only 21 more rounds until each manager has his own fantasy team.

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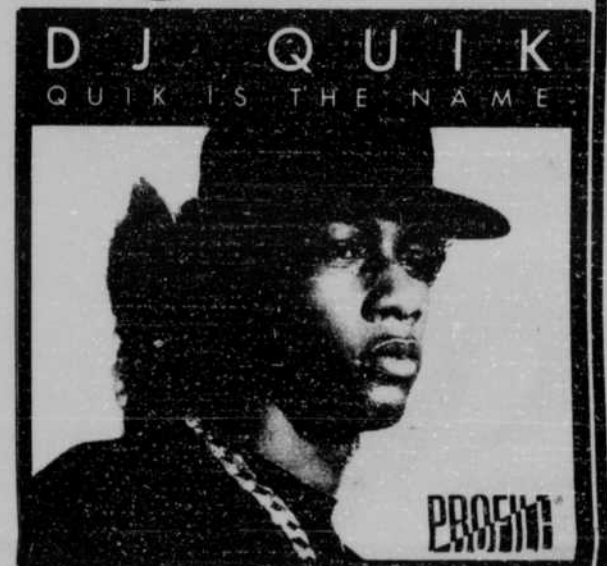
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