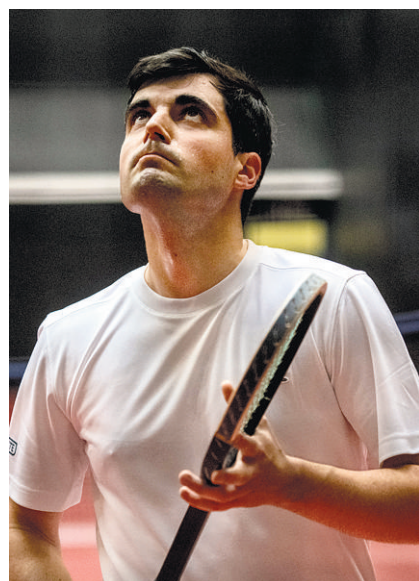




The Palace of Fontainebleau, above. Court tennis is played in the building at left. Below left, the final of the Raquette d'Or, the main amateur competition in France, at the Jeu de Paume Club in Paris. The match was won by Matthieu Sarlangue, below right, shown in a different competition waiting for a ball to come down from the roof of a gallery.



BASEBALL

Hot Dodgers and Yankees Are Eager for What's Next

By SCOTT MILLER

LOS ANGELES — The juggernaut franchises faced off in the World Series 11 times between 1941 and 1981. But since then, they had been limited to 16 interleague games against each other heading into this weekend. And the last time they met, the Yankees and the Dodgers didn't even look the part.

"I'm glad we get to wear our normal uniforms this time instead of the weird black and whites we wore the last time this happened," Gerrit Cole, the ace starting pitcher of the Yankees, said Friday afternoon when discussing the three-game series in August 2019 in which the players wore alternative jerseys for the short-lived Players' Weekend.

While the iconic New York road grays and Los Angeles home whites have everyone looking sharp, the teams are still working hard to play more like themselves.

On the surface, though, everything has seemed fine.

The Yankees ripped through the past month, winning 19 of 29 games before Friday and constructing the best record in Major League Baseball since May 2. The Dodgers, after beating the Yankees, 8-4, in Friday night's series opener, were tied with Arizona for the best record in the National League (35-23).

Those are the results teams expect when they spend like the Yankees (\$277 million) and the Dodgers (\$226 million). Yet the first two months of this season saw the clubs test the depth provided by those huge payrolls. When that depth wasn't quite enough either, both began to improvise.

The managers, Aaron Boone and Dave Roberts, have found themselves in the margins, playing mix-and-match, with the Yankees leading the majors in days lost to the injured list, with 747, and the Dodgers ranking third, with 636.

This weekend, though, could be something of a turning point for the Yankees, who are trailing Tampa Bay and Baltimore in a wildly competitive American League East. On Friday, the Yankees activated designated hitter Giancarlo Stanton and third baseman Josh Donaldson from the injured list. Perhaps now they can be less dependent on Aaron Judge, the team's captain, who was announced as the A.L.'s player of the month for May on Friday after he batted .342 with 12 homers, 25 R.B.I. and 23 runs scored in the month while leading the majors in slugging percentage.

The returning sluggers took part in the series-opening loss, and both produced. Donaldson smashed a Clayton Kershaw slider over the left-center field fence in his first plate appearance since April 5, then blasted a second home run in the ninth inning. Stanton also homered off Kershaw, a 417-foot shot in the fourth on a lazy slider.

That was all too little and too late since Luis Severino, the Yankees' oft-injured right-handed starter, taking the mound for only the third time this season, was torched for six runs in the first inning by the Dodgers.

Still, both the beauty and the challenge of a season come with the what's next, and getting back two previous winners of the Most Valuable Player Award (Donaldson in 2015; Stanton in 2017) would boost any team's spirits.

"The guy has been a wrecking machine his whole life," Boone said of Donaldson, now 37 and limited some by a series of leg injuries. "He still has his power, his twitch, his bat speed. I know it's in there. When he's right, he's a great player."

Stanton — also prone to muscle pulls and strains — will be limited to D.H. duties for his first couple of weeks back while the Yankees make sure to "build him up properly" and Boone works to "move the puzzle around."

With the team committed to the rookie Anthony Volpe at shortstop, and Gleyber Torres playing well at second base, Boone will have to get creative to find time on the field for Donaldson, while also keeping D.J. LeMahieu, the team's utility infielder, sharp.

Having some days where he has too many options for his lineup card is a challenge of sorts for Boone, but it is a welcome change from the last few months.

"Hopefully they are all doing their thing and banging and you know that each day you are sitting a good and dangerous player over there," Boone said. "We've been working hard to get ourselves whole and healthy"

With a starting rotation in tatters, the Dodgers can relate.

The right-handed starter

Dustin May (right elbow) is out for the foreseeable future, while the lefty Julio Urias (hamstring) is scheduled for a 30-pitch bullpen session Saturday afternoon as the Dodgers determine their next move with him. Then there is Noah Syndergaard, the veteran right-hander who signed a one-year deal this year as a bridge to the next wave of young pitchers. Instead, he seems one or two more bad starts away from losing his job.

After the Nationals treated Syndergaard like a batting practice pitcher on Wednesday, ballooning his E.R.A. to 6.54, Syndergaard was despondent. "I would give my hypothetical first born to be the old me again," he said. "I'll do anything possible to get back to that."

Though Roberts confirmed Friday that Syndergaard will make his next start in Cincinnati on Wednesday, nothing is promised after that. And while Kershaw held the Yankees to two runs over seven innings on Friday, a welcome change after his 5.55 E.R.A. in May, the Dodgers were expected to send out a pair of rookie starters, Michael Grove and Bobby Miller, for Saturday and Sunday's games against New York.

Miller, a first-round pick in 2020 who will start Sunday, has impressed so far, winning his first two starts since being called up.

"He's a special arm talent," said Andrew Friedman, the Dodgers' president of baseball operations. "Just a full repertoire of pitches



CAROLINE BREHMAN/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

Josh Donaldson rounding the bases after hitting his second home run Friday in his first game back after an injury.

that gives him a chance to match up against any hitter in the league. Obviously, it always comes down to execution. The stuff's there. The desire to be great is there. And this experience that he is gaining is invaluable."

The Dodgers' lineup has also featured far fewer options, though that was by design.

Justin Turner, a mainstay at third base, was allowed to walk as a free agent after the Dodgers won 111 games last year. The same was true of outfielder Cody Bellinger and shortstop Trea Turner, neither of whom was retained as the Dodgers worked to trim payroll in a year in which they were expected to step back and regroup.

Then, when Gavin Lux, Trea Turner's projected replacement at shortstop, blew out a knee in spring training, things really turned dicey. Coming into the year, few could have predicted that Mookie Betts, the team's Gold Glove right fielder, would have six starts at shortstop.

Somehow, though, a team with a middling rotation, a bad bullpen and a lineup that seems far less ferocious than it did in recent years has managed to bully its way past opponents.

The Yankees saw that firsthand on Friday. But they are happy to have that kind of challenge.

"We're excited to be here and I'm excited to pitch here," said Cole, who is scheduled to start Saturday night. "It's always fun coming here, but especially as a Yankee, it's the history going back to New York. It just makes it a little bit more special."

And even if neither team has looked quite right this season, both are preparing for October baseball, just like always. A June series against each other serves as a convenient test of their readiness.

"There are games, series, throughout the 162-game season that do get a little bigger feel," Boone said. "I think it's great. Whether it's when we go to London or you play in the Field of Dreams game, there's something really cool about that in the grind of 162 that, you know, obviously with the tradition of these two teams, interleague. I think a weekend in June, Dodgers-Yankees, has a good sound to it and probably does give you a little extra juice."