

Keeping Score

First-timer Infante is no futility man

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The National League All-Stars are assembled in a hotel ballroom, and let's find the one who's not supposed to be here.

There he is, in the blue shirt. Omar Infante, sitting at a table nearly alone, while news media flock around more famous faces. He is the Atlanta Braves utility man added to the team by NL manager Charlie Manuel, and to hear talk shows and read Internet postings, it's the most ill-gotten gain since Bernie Madoff's Ponzi scheme.

Infante is a rather shy Venezuelan of few words, not many of those English. But let's go see what he has to say for himself. For example, how does it feel to be named to your first All-Star Game, and then have people make you Exhibit A of boneheaded selections?

"It hurt his feelings a little," a translator says, after asking Infante. "But his family tells him he deserves to be here, and that is important to him."



Commentary
By Mike Lopresti

Family? Here for the game?

"Nine," the translator says. "Father, three brothers, mother-in-law. They are outside right now and really happy."

Then Infante, with his first smile, reaches for what English he can find. "Everybody is coming. This is very nice."

It's going to be hard to make a villain of this guy.

Matter of fact, why bother?

Some quibble that a man with 193 at-bats who isn't even a full-time starter has no more business playing in baseball's All-Star Game than a soccer goalie. Not a baseball argument, but there is another side, and someone should make it, since the quiet Brave born the day after Christmas in 1981 won't.

We could bring up his .332 batting average. Or his baseball-leading .356 average with runners in scoring position since 2007. Or how he has started at five positions this season, and gone 13-for-24 in the past five games while critics howled over his inclusion.

Or how this game is supposedly a showcase for excellence, and he's nothing but excellent at what he's asked to do.

As for being an unpopular selection, anyone remember Terry Steinbach? He was the Oakland Athletics catcher voted in as a starter in 1988, to considerable public uproar, because he was batting .217.

Did we mention Steinbach homered and drove in both American League runs in a 2-1 win and was game MVP?

So let's go around the Braves' All-Star horn Monday, checking how Infante's teammates feel. First Martin Prado, Venezuela countryman, godfather to Infante's daughter and himself a first-time All-Star.

"If you see that guy playing every day, you would for sure put him in this room. For him, it was shocking. He was so happy and surprised. I'm more happy for him than for me."

"He doesn't know English, and he didn't know what was going on (with the controversy). I told him not to get frustrated. Everybody on this team and around the league knows."

Then to Tim Hudson.

"A lot of people might scratch their heads that he's not even a starter in this team. But he's singlehandedly won us a lot of games this year."

When (general manager) Frank Wren called me to tell me I made the All-Star team, he asked me to guess who else had made it. I named three or four guys and he finally says Omar. I'm going to be honest, that made my day."

Then Brian McCann.

"Someone who says he doesn't belong doesn't know how hard it is to come to the field and not know where you're hitting in the lineup, not know whether you're going to play third, center, right, second, short."

"He's going to cherish this forever."

Besides, the NL could need an Omar-of-all-trades during the evening. Having not won this game since 1996 — 10 active NL ballparks in '96 don't even exist now — it might as well try something outside the box.

The translator passes along some final Infante words.

"He thinks he is a good player, but as a utility player, he never thought he would make the team. He knows his numbers are not as good as those who start. As a kid, he watched this game all the time and dreamed."

"He says this is a dream come true."

You tell Omar Infante he shouldn't be here. I won't.

Mike Lopresti writes for Gannett



By Christian Petersen, Getty Images

Role player: Omar Infante, top, is an NL All-Star despite not being a regular starter for the Braves.

Page3.0

Your connection to sports coverage online and on TV

Eye-opener May-Treanor releases sands of her times

Part of a continuing series of *Game On!*-suggested summer reads:

Misty May-Treanor was almost like a silent partner in one of women's beach volleyball's greatest duos.

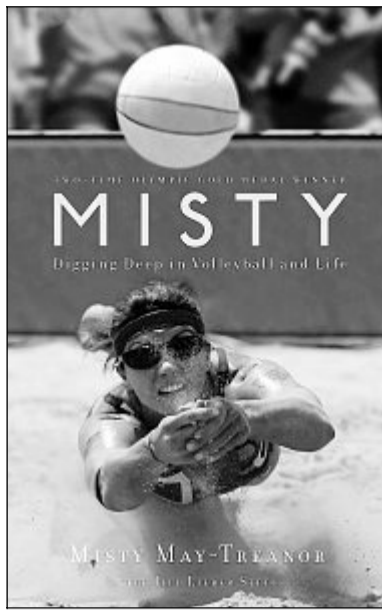
Partner Kerri Walsh was the tall one, the outspoken one, the gregarious one, the one with the nickname "Six Feet of Sunshine."

May-Treanor was the quiet one, the intense, brooding volleyball genius who analyzed and dissected the match in her head and then carried out her plan brilliantly in the sand.

Now, thanks to *Misty: Digging Deep in Volleyball and Life*, an autobiography co-written with former USA TODAY and *Sports Illustrated* writer Jill Lieber Steeg, fans can have a greater understanding of May-Treanor.

May-Treanor had revealed her private side in bits and pieces in articles about her and Walsh leading up to their gold medal triumphs in Athens in 2004 and Beijing in 2008.

But in *Misty*, she details the difficulty



Scribner Book Company

Diving into detail: Misty May-Treanor discusses her life.

of growing up the only child of alcoholic parents and the joy of both gaining sobriety.

May-Treanor offers insights into several areas of her life, including:

► The battle her mother fought against cancer before dying in 2002.

► The friction between her and Walsh in 2006 that threatened to break up their dominant partnership.

In a lighter story, she whimsically tells of when she and other Olympics-bound athletes met President George W. Bush at the White House before the 2008 Games. She introduced herself, then "bent over in front of him, put my hands on my knees, and stuck out my butt, ever so slightly."

"Doesn't this look familiar?" I joked. 'Oh, I know who you are,' he said, chuckling. 'You're the one with the tucks.' — David Leon Moore

Click here for more summer reads gameon.usatoday.com

Fantasy Midseason advice on Floyd, Glaus, Ramirez



By Jonathan Daniel, Getty Images

Injury issues: Cubs third baseman Aramis Ramirez has hit four home runs this month and has raised his batting average from .179 to .207. But health concerns make Ramirez a 50-50 bet for the second half.

USA TODAY fantasy baseball guru Steve Gardner offered his advice for midseason tweaks during his weekly online chat:

Q: I need some pitching advice. I have Jonathan Sanchez, who has struggled recently, and have the chance to pick up Gavin Floyd. Is this a move to be made?

A: I really like Floyd, and the White Sox are playing really well right now. So short term it's an excellent move. Floyd started out so poorly, and a lot of it was just bad luck on balls in play. That's starting to normalize a bit now, and he's won his last three starts.

I think Floyd will be more consistent than Sanchez over the second half, so, yes, make the move.

Q: Your thoughts on Troy Glaus in any roto format. Is he just coming back to earth with his stats, or do you think his slide will continue and (should I) look to trade him?

A: First of all, I have to admit I gave up on Glaus too early this season. I had him in several leagues, and I ended up looking elsewhere when he struggled early. The break may come at a good time for him. He has been dealing with a sore knee, and then he collided with Jeff Francoeur a couple of days ago and banged up his wrist.

I don't think you'd get proper value for him if you traded him now, so hold on to him a bit longer. Once Jason Heyward comes back, he'll give Glaus a few more RBI opportunities.

Q: Hey, Steve, Aramis Ramirez

has been playing better recently; do you think he has turned the corner? What do you expect from him in the second half?

A: Ramirez has certainly looked better lately after dealing with various injuries so far this season. I have to think a thumb injury would affect the way you swing the bat, but if he's found a way to deal with the pain or alter his swing, then he has to be considered as a sleeper candidate for a big second half. I'd still be worried about reinjury — or maybe another injury altogether — since he's had trouble staying healthy during his Cubs tenure. As for turning the corner, I'd still put his chances at 50-50.

Click here for more fantasy advice fantasywindup.usatoday.com

Active watch Beautiful bikes with practical attributes

The *Tour de France* is fun to watch, but those bikes have little application in the real world. Here are four new bikes with more practical attributes:

► The Trek Valencia+ (Trek-bikes.com) is a souped-up commuter bike with an "electric assist" power system. The BionX electric motor gives your own pedal stroke a boost at four different assist levels. The motor won't turn the pedals for you, but will make each turn easier and faster. With

a max speed of 20 mph, the Valencia+ (MSRP \$2,520) is perfect for towing a kid trailer or a long commute.

► The OHM Sport XS 750 (MSRP \$3,800, OHMcycles.com) is a sturdy off-road bike that also has BionX electric-assist capabilities. The Sport XS 750 rules on dirt roads and paths and is also a useful campground bike.

► The Trek District (MSRP \$1,100, Trekbikes.com) is a stylish single-speed city bike with a clean differ-

ence: instead of a greasy metal chain, it is powered by a carbon fiber composite belt.

► The Yuba Mundo V3.0 Cargo Bike (MSRP \$1,199, Yubaride.com) is an eye-catching and very large bike that can carry big loads with ease. The 21-speed Mundo is easy to pedal and maintain. — Sal Ruibal

Click here for video of the bikes cycling.usatoday.com

TV ratings World Cup final provides quite a kick

Sunday's Netherlands-Spain World Cup final drew 24.3 million total U.S. viewers — making it the most-watched soccer game ever on U.S. TV — including 15.5 million viewers on ABC. It also drew 8.8 million on Spanish-language Univision, becoming the third most-watched program on Spanish-language U.S. TV, trailing only the 9.4 million viewers for the Mexico-Argentina Cup game on June 27 and the 9 million viewers for an *Essence of Love* show in 2007. — Michael Hiestand

Event	Day, time (p.m., ET)	Rating (households)	Outlet
World Cup final: Spain-Netherlands	Sunday, 2:30	9.9 (7.6 million)	ABC

The comparison: Up 15% from the 2006 Cup final.

The spin on the spin: With a final national rating of 8.1, Sunday's game was the fourth highest-rated men's Cup game ever, trailing Italy-Brazil and U.S.-Brazil in 1994 as well as this year's U.S.-Ghana.

Event	Day, time (p.m., ET)	Rating (households)	Outlet
World Cup third-place game	Saturday, 2:30	4.1 (3.2 million)	ABC

The comparison: Uruguay-Germany game was up 78% from comparable coverage of Portugal-Germany in 2006.

The spin on the spin: ESPN/ABC Cup games overall end up averaging 2.1% of U.S. households per Cup game — up 31% over 2006.

Event	Day, time (p.m., ET)	Rating (households)	Outlet
Golf: U.S. Women's Open	Sunday, 3	1.1 (847,000)	NBC

The comparison: Down 21% from last year's comparable coverage.

The spin on the spin: Not a particularly close finish in the tournament, and it didn't help to have to go up against the World Cup title game.

Event	Day, time (p.m., ET)	Rating (households)	Outlet
WNBA: All-Star Game	Saturday, 3:30	0.4 (308,000)	ESPN

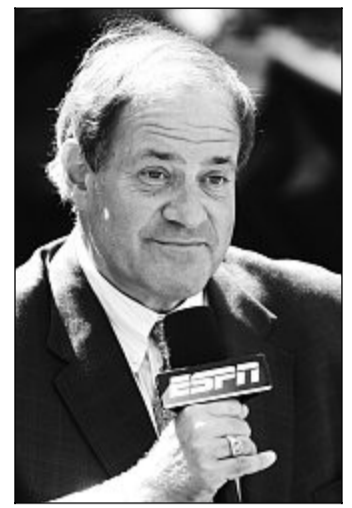
The comparison: Down 20% from last year's coverage on ABC.

The spin on the spin: The WNBA All-Stars, in exhibition against the USA national team, come dangerously close to a zero rating.

One rating point equals 1% of the USA's 77 million overnight TV homes in Nielsen Media Research's 56 selected major markets. Cable rating converted to broadcast equivalent. Sources: CBS, ESPN, NBC, Fox, ABC, Nielsen Media Research

Webline

All times Eastern



By Kirby Lee, US Presswire

He's going all the way: ESPN's Chris Berman is heading for the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

7 a.m. Driver diary: Courtney Force talks about her own harrowing moment on the track and the loss of a fellow NHRA competitor

Click here motorsports.usatoday.com

HOF honors Berman

Newsmakers from the wide world of Web and TV sports:

► **Chris Berman:** ESPN anchor Chris Berman is heading to the Pro Football Hall of Fame for the second consecutive year — this time as an honoree.

The Hall of Fame announced Monday that it will honor Berman with its Pete Rozelle Radio-Television Award at this year's enshrinement ceremonies in Canton, Ohio. The award recognizes "long-time exceptional contributions to radio and television in professional football."

Berman, who introduced Buffalo Bills owner Ralph Wilson before his induction last year, is heading into his 25th year as host of ESPN's *Sunday NFL Countdown*. He owns the record for the most consecutive years hosting a weekly NFL show.

"I embraced pro football a long time ago," Berman said. "I am honored and humbled beyond belief that pro football, in turn, has embraced me."

Berman hosted the football Hall of Fame ceremonies from 1998 to 2008.

— Sean Leahy

thehuddle.usatoday.com

input

Readers aren't thrilled with the new play-in format for the NCAA tournament:

“The tournament would be better if they only seeded the top 32 teams. Randomly draw the rest.” — SkiingFool

“More games just for the sake of more games. Last eight at-large would have been much better in my opinion. Winning a conference championship should mean a lot more than coming in sixth, seventh or eighth in your conference.” — greg.w.h.

“Terrible idea. Basically it is a way for the NCAA to trim two lower conference championship teams from the tourney, while adding two at-large teams from major conferences. The idea is supposed to be if you win your conference, you are in the tournament. Not you win your conference and then are in a play-in game to see if you get into the tournament.” — SlapShotSal

Quick question

Strong remarks

- Do you agree with Jesse Jackson or Cavs owner Dan Gilbert?
 - Who cares? Gilbert and Jackson are irrelevant. 29%
 - Gilbert. The Cavs owner was right on. 24%
 - Neither. Each sounds foolish. 23%
 - Jackson. Gilbert's comments were juvenile. 21%
 - Both. Points needed to be made. 3%

Votes: 12,907

Ticker: Monday's top hits

Read: Erin Andrews to join expanded *College GameDay* ... E-mailed: Bo Jackson reflects on past life 21 years after his All-Star blast