

DOING MORE WITH LESS

Small market teams, big-time managers

Rays all-in on Cash

Murphy's law: Play hard

By Bill Burt
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Kevin Cash has the old-school, former catcher, rugged player look. And for good reason ... because it's real. The Tampa Bay Rays manager's trek to the Fall Classic, his second trip, is longer — 12 years — and his connection to new-wave baseball is unmatched. The Rays, like the Brewers, are not a surprise "small market" team. Over the last eight seasons, the Rays have made the post-season six times. Cash, like the Brewers' Pat Murphy a two-time (AL) Manager of the Year Award winner, was a scrappy, journeyman catcher over his eight seasons, having played for all five teams in the American League East as well as a short stint with the Astros.

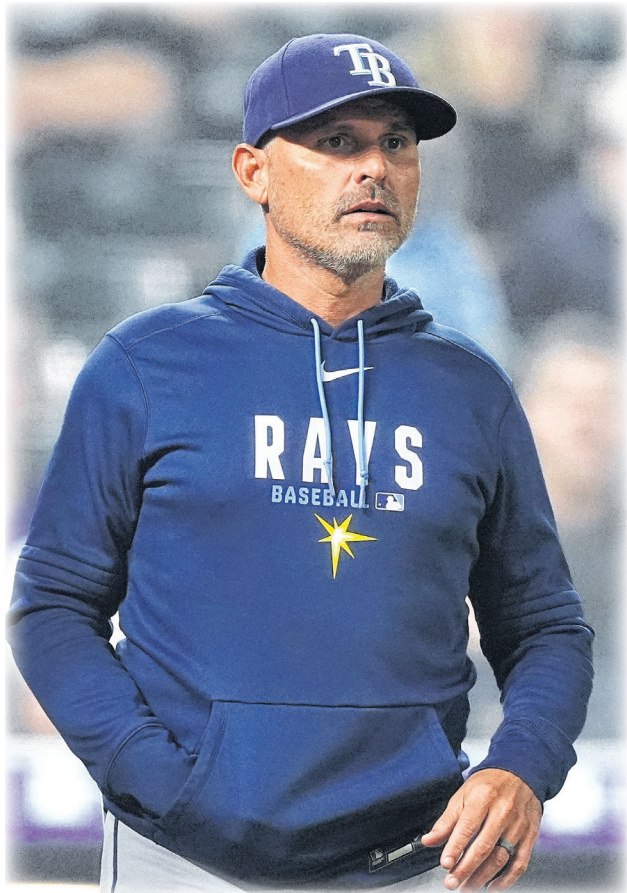
His mantra is simple. He embraces all of the information received, closely collaborating with the front office and analytics department while heavily utilizing strategies like the "opener," dynamic bullpen usage, and matchup "optimization."

In a time when more than 10 franchises are spending upwards of \$200 million and \$300 million, the Rays rank 28th overall at around \$96 million, more than \$200 million less than the N.Y. Yankees.

How do they do it? Well, two old-school stats — ranking tied for first in MLB in batting average (.258) and seventh overall in ERA (3.70) — have helped the Rays be, in reality, the best team in the American League for most of the 2026 regular season.

The Rays have something in 2026 they haven't always had under Cash's watch: superstars.

Four were all-stars in 2026.



AP PHOTOS
Rays manager Kevin Cash on the players' self-less attitude: "They don't care who gets it done. They just want to get it done."

Third baseman Junior Caminero will probably finish second in the MVP standings behind the Astros' Jordan Alvarez, and they have two elite starters in Drew Rasmussen (16-5, 2.67 ERA) and Nick Martinez (15-6, 3.10), plus a top closer in Bryan Baker (41 saves, 1.44 ERA).

The straw that stirs the drink is Caminero, who played in all 162 games, leading the team with 42 homers and 101 RBI while hitting .276 with an OPS of .885.

His two-run homer in the seventh inning of the clincher on Monday night was, by the far, the most exciting moment of this season.

But their "thing," particularly in the playoffs, has

been sharing the successes.

"It's a byproduct of having a really good clubhouse and also selfless teammates," said Cash a few days ago. "They don't care who gets it done. They just want to get it done. The biggest cheerleaders are the guys in the dugout. Good teams don't rely on one or two people. We rely on all nine in lineup; all of the guys in the dugout; and certainly our entire pitching staff."

And don't forget the manager, who has not only weathered the small-market storm, but created a team that is worthy of a \$300 million payroll.

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After 44 years of waiting, the Milwaukee Brewers are returning to the World Series.

We love underdog stories and this one is being embraced baseball fans as much the red-hot pitch clock and new ABS system.

You'll be hearing a lot about "Harvey's Wall-Bangers," the 1982 Milwaukee Brewers lovable moniker and the comparisons about the little engine that could in the franchise's only World Series berth.

The 1982 Brewers led MLB in homers, runs scored and RBI and won America's hearts. But they eventually lost to St. Louis Cardinals in seven games.

These lovable Brewers have done it the old-fashioned way: pitching and good old-fashioned grit.

While the four-decades' plus since their last trip to the World Series will get many mentions, this trek really started more than a decade earlier under then-manager Craig Counsell with five playoff berths in nine years, including a 92-70 Central Division title in 1993.

Counsell and several key players left, with prevailing wisdom predicting "same old Brewers" returning to form.

Instead, new manager Pat Murphy, Counsell's longtime bench coach, methodically elevated the Milwaukee's "mid-major" approach — 19th out of 30 teams in payroll at \$184 million — into consistency from April through September.

And now, best of all, October.

It's been a three-year run under Murphy's leadership, each year a little bit better. Last year Murphy's



Two keys to Brewers manager Pat Murphy's style: A little analytics, a lot of grit.

Brewers won 97 games and eventually were swept by the Dodgers. This time the Brewers made history, becoming the first team in MLB postseason history to sweep an opponent that had swept them the year before.

He won MLB Manager of the Year his first two years.

No manager has ever won it three years in a row.

Murphy's style is pretty simple. Play hard.

In an era of where athletes rule the roost, Murphy has benched players for not running hard, a rarity in sports, especially baseball.

Captain Christian Yelich noted that Murphy's "intense" accountability only succeeds because the franchise has built a culture with players who are mature and responsive to that approach.

Ranking second to last in homers — only three with 20 or more — and only one player with 100 RBI, the

Brewers, under Murphy, have spread the wealth.

The Brewers can pitch, led by the NL's top Cy Young contender Jacob Misorowski, who led baseball ERA, WHIP, and strikeouts. They were second overall in both ERA (3.54) and strikeouts.

They check a few "analytic boxes" too, for their opposite-field hitting while leading the league in disciplined walk rates and manufactured run-scoring with bunting and aggressive base-running part of their shtick.

After dethroning the two-time defending champs, with the highest payroll in the sports history, Murphy noted the discrepancy at the NLCS trophy presentation.

"They may have a bunch of Hall of Famers, but we got a bunch of gamers," Murphy said during the trophy presentation. "And the gamers won this week."

RAYS

KEYS TO VICTORY

Pitching, defense

The Rays have built their success around strong pitching and defense, led by one of baseball's best starting rotations and a deep, flexible bullpen.

Tampa Bay recorded a franchise-high 17 shutouts in 2013, giving the team 32 over two seasons—tied with the Dodgers for the most in the majors.

The Rays also held opponents to one run or fewer in 39 games, the highest total



Freddy Peralta leads a strong Rays pitching staff.

by an American League team since the 2005 Angels. Their defense was just as sharp, committing only 59 errors, second only to Baltimore's 54.

BILL BURT'S PICK

BREWERS IN 6

These are two very similar teams. And I'm not just talking about their tiny payrolls compared with the behemoths in L.A., New York, and Philadelphia.

Both teams are loaded with semi-unknowns compared with the big-city players and superstars they've buried over the past two weeks.

They win with pitching, defense, clutch hitting, and long, disciplined at-bats.

When you compare all 26 players, top to bottom, the edge goes to the Brewers.

Even more important is the Brewers' path during Pat Murphy's three-year tenure. They've built toward this moment more methodically. While the Rays might have three of the five best players in this World Series, the Brewers have been tested more—including last year.

They finally put the Dodgers' run to rest and have been dominant almost from late March, establishing themselves as the best team in the sport.

Pat Murphy is the best manager in the game. The guy in the other dugout, Kevin Cash, isn't far behind. But Murphy's grip on this club isn't just special. It's historic.

The Rays won't go away easily. I even expect some special moments from Junior Caminero, arguably the best everyday player in the sport. But the Brewers put pressure on opposing teams as if they had a \$300 million roster.

The Brewers aren't losing this. Period.

MILWAUKEE

Brewers

KEYS TO VICTORY

Hit it where they ain't

In an era defined by the long ball, Milwaukee produced an elite offense without relying on traditional power, instead winning by creating constant pressure and forcing pitchers to work for every out.

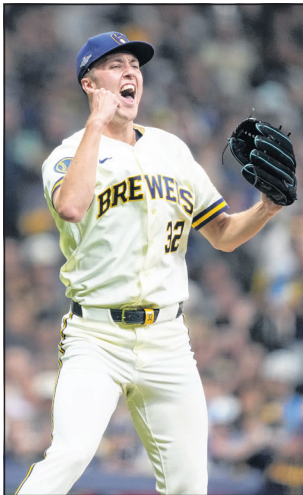
The Brewers led the majors in batting average, on-base percentage and walk rate, but also ranked fifth in both stolen bases and sacrifice hits. No team was better at putting hitters on base, and few were more determined



Lead-off batter Jackson Chourio is a catalyst for the Brewers offense.

to move those runners into scoring position.

Their offense isn't built around waiting for a three-run homer. It's built around patience, pressure and persistence—a rare formula in modern baseball.



Jacob Misorowski

TOP 10 PLAYERS IN 2026 WORLD SERIES

BY BILL BURT

1. Jacob Misorowski (SP)

Brewers

A dominant ace, Cy Young favorite with 100+ fastball
2. Junior Caminero (3B)

Rays

Best, most electric offensive player in this series
3. Yandy Diaz (DH)

Rays

Led AL in hits and always tough at bat

4. Jackson Chourio (OF)

Brewers

Leadoff hitter, dynamic young star is menace at top of lineup
5. Freddy Peralta (SP)

Rays

For five innings, a shutdown starter almost every outing
6. William Contreras (C)

Brewers

Maybe best catcher in game, on offense and defense
7. Drew Rasmussen (SP)

Rays

A leader, top-of-rotation arm

8. Brice Turang (2B)

Brewers

A star on defense, always causing trouble on bases
9. Jake Bauers (OF/DH)

Brewers

Had historic postseason run thus far; might be best player in series
10. Trevor Megill (RP)

Brewers

Mr. Automatic as shutdown closer anchoring baseball's best bullpen (1.33 postseason ERA)



Junior Caminero