

Former Cincinnati Reds Star Barry Larkin Lends Professional Expertise to Baseball Players in Tom Shaw Performance Training at Disney

Barry Larkin spent all 19 of his big-league seasons as a member of the Cincinnati Reds. He played shortstop for the club from 1986 to 2004 and was one of the pivotal players on the 1990 Reds' [World Series](#) championship team. Larkin was elected to the [National Baseball Hall of Fame](#) in [January 2012](#) and was inducted on July 22, 2012. The 12-time Major League Baseball All-Star finished his career hitting .295, recorded 2,340 hits, belted 198 home runs, drove in 960 runs and stole 379 bases.

After retiring following the 2004 season, Larkin worked in a front office position for the [Washington Nationals](#) for several years until he joined [ESPN](#) as a baseball analyst in 2011.

Larkin, a three-time Gold Glove award-winning shortstop, had his No. 11 jersey retired by the Reds in 2012.

Disney Sports recently caught up with Larkin out at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World Resort where he works with legendary performance coach Tom Shaw in his speed and performance training camp. Larkin helps hone the skills of current big-league players and others who are aspiring to one day make their professional debut "in the show".

Larkin, a no-nonsense competitor during his playing days who powered the Reds for the majority of his MLB career, offered his take on the state of today's game, former teammate Aaron Boone's chances of success as the new manager of the New York Yankees, the success of the World Champion Houston Astros and talked about how he has not yet ruled out managing in the big leagues.

DS: Give us a sense of what you've been up to since your Hall of Fame career ended and tell us what you are doing these days out at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World?

BL: "Well, I live here in Orlando, and I've been here for about 25 years now. Since I retired from playing, I've been working in player development side of the game for the Cincinnati Reds. I've been coming down here during the offseason to Disney's sports complex to work with Tom Shaw and his guys for the past three years. I've been working with Dee Gordon (Miami Marlins) for the past eight years, Francisco Lindor (Cleveland Indians) and others. Dee had been working out down here with Tom Shaw and he asked me to bring the baseball program down here. We have 15 to 20 players that come down here during the offseason."

DS: Can you take us behind the curtain and give us a glimpse of what those workouts look like?

BL: "We arrive at 9 a.m., and our guys will get their cardio work in by either running on the treadmill or getting some elliptical work in. Then, we will get into an upper-body workout two days per week and then a lower body workout two days per week. After that, we will either run on the track, do agility drills or we will do some kind of boxing workout. We've got some heavy bags and some boxing mitts and we incorporate some type of cross training into the routine to

get the guys into a much more aggressive mindset. After that, we'll go to the track to do some running and conditioning work for about an hour. After that, we will head out to the batting cages where we will hit in the cages, do ground ball work, and then we will cap the day by getting our hitting in. It's a full day."

DS: The MLB season concludes with the crowning of the World Series champion in October. When do most professional baseball players ramp up their training for the next season?

BL: "It really depends on a lot of factors - age, experience, injuries. Veteran players who kind of understand what they need to do to get ready for the next season tend to take more time off whereas some of the younger players take less time off before getting back into their off-season training mode. But one of the beautiful things about being down here at Disney is that we have access to all the facilities as well as the medical staff. We have access to all the trainers that we need whether it relates to ice baths, massages, plyometric exercises, whatever we need, we have access to it. We've got a good program down here at Disney, and it's attractive to a lot of the guys and to a lot of different MLB organizations who want to send their guys down here to work out."

DS: As a guy who is now working in player development, you have an up close and personal view of the game. Give us your assessment of today's game?

BL: "The game certainly has changed. It looks like the guys are having a lot more fun. That's one thing that I really do like about the game. I think there is still a respect for the history of the game, but certainly guys seem to be expressing themselves a little bit more. I know for a while there, guys felt like they could not express themselves in that baseball got somewhat boring. But I think that if you saw the World Series between the Astros and the Dodgers, it was a really exciting series because you could see guys out there playing with passion and really enjoying themselves, and I like that.

I certainly felt when I was playing, it was a little bit different in that you couldn't be as expressive. But the game has changed, the world has changed. Social media is bigger part of everything that we do, so it's just a much more social environment compared to what the traditional clubhouse use to be.

I also think athletes are better, bigger and stronger. I also think the game is faster. You've got guys coming out of the bullpen throwing high 90s to 100 miles per hour. That was an anomaly when I was playing. Now, almost every guy that doesn't throw that hard, is an anomaly, so the game has certainly changed, and I think it's more exciting for the fans to watch and that's a good thing."

DS: The recent World Series went down to the wire and was one of the most exciting Fall Classics in recent history. Were you at all surprised at how the Astros played after the club had endured those three tough seasons where they lost 100+ games?

BL: "A couple of my buddies work inside the Astros organization, so I knew potentially how good they could be and wasn't all that surprised. They had a good base in second baseman in Jose Altuve. They drafted [Carlos] Correa and [Alex] Bregman and they made a few other moves and acquired [Justin] Verlander for the late season push, and the complexion of an already good team got even better. They had a good base and were growing towards something. I think baseball is a copy-cat league, so I think you are going to see other teams try to model what the Astros were able to do in order to make their club successful as well. They are going to go after guys who can put the ball in play, get guys who can have productive outs on the offensive end, and guys who

can make the routine play routinely on the defensive end.”

DS: You mentioned Jose Altuve, a five-time MLB All-Star who had a monster season last year on his way to becoming the 2017 American League Most Valuable Player. What do you like about his game?

BL: “I think his size is something he uses to his advantage. One of the things that I marvel at when I watch him hit is his balance and how he stays within himself. He’s a very powerful young man, but he is also a very compact young man and if he tried to go outside of his compactness, he would lose all of his strength. Therefore, that discipline of staying within yourself and using the tools that you have is what I drive home to guys when you watch guys like Altuve.

I talked to a few guys who actually had the opportunity to work with Altuve before he became a household name. He was a walk-on and was told that because of his size, he couldn’t play in the big leagues. But he could always swing the bat; he could always put the head of the bat on the ball and that is a talent in and of itself. He’s a strong individual - both strong physically and mentally, and a very disciplined hitter who is fun to watch.”

DS: With regards to the move that the New York Yankees just made [acquired 2017 National League MVP Giancarlo Stanton from the Miami Marlins via trade last week], which guy in the Yankees lineup will benefit the most with the addition of Stanton, who led all of baseball with 59 home runs and 132 runs batted in.

BL: “I think the guy in the Yankees lineup who is going to have an incredible year is catcher Gary Sanchez because teams are going to pitch to him. You’ve got to pick your poison - [Aaron] Judge, Stanton and Sanchez. I think people will defer to him and pitch to Sanchez. He had a fantastic year last season (Sanchez hit .278, had 33 home runs and drove in 90 runs), so I look for him to have an even better year in 2018.

The years I had really good years, I had really good people around me both in front of me and behind me. I had guys like Ken Griffey, Jr., behind me and Deion Sanders in front of me. So, when teams go and play the Yankees, they are going to have to decide who they are going to let beat them.”

DS: Give us a sense of how well Aaron Boone will do as the new Yankees manager being that he has no previous managerial experience and is coming out of the television broadcast booth?

BL: “Aaron knows the game very well. We are former teammates and as a youngster, I took him under my wing. Aaron was always very analytical as a player and he really is a student of the game. Being in the media, he also understands the analytics that go along with the game. He sees it and he had a birds-eye view of that part of the game for the past 10 years.

Personally, I think he will make the transition easily. He’s always been a baseball guy, and I think his relationship with the players will be strong which is very important, and I think he will be very fair because he is that type of guy. I also think his communication will be very consistent, and I think he learned that from being in the media, and he will rely on his experiences. Sometimes, a manager’s toughest job is to stay out of the way, and I think Aaron will have a good sense of when to interject himself and more importantly, when to let the guys go and let them play.”

DS: Is managing a big-league club in your future?

DL: “I have managed quite a few international tournaments, and I’ve managed the Brazilian national team. I have been a bench coach for Davey Johnson on the USA World Baseball Classic team in 2013, so I have some managerial experience. I’ve been asked about managing in that I

interviewed for the Detroit Tigers job in 2013 that went to Brad Ausmus and the next year, I interviewed for the Tampa job in before they hired Kevin Cash in 2014. I've had some different opportunities, but I am a Cincinnati Red and I would exhaust every resource and every opportunity with Cincinnati before I decided to manage another organization. I haven't been offered that opportunity, but if that opportunity comes about, I will look at it and make a decision."