Pirates' push for more offense better work

BY JASON MACKEY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

PITTSBURGH — Sitting in a coffee shop with Paul Skenes while discussing his addiction to winning, the thought is hard to ignore.

The same for a conversation with Don Kelly at the Clemente Museum about managing his hometown team, or the rare time Bryan Reynolds' voice rose above a monotone drawl during a phone conversation we had while he was driving to hit.

There's a lot riding on what the Pirates have done this offseason to improve their offense — and it better work.

We're talking about at least a 20% increase in runs, which in 2025 would've moved the Pirates from last to 19th in Major League Baseball. For some context, the Pirates were 20th in runs back in 2013, when they also had the sport's seventh-best ERA.

Matching those numbers, perhaps relative to the additional offense that exists in today's game, should be attainable for an organization that made a few key moves this offseason — trading for Brandon Lowe, Jake Mangum and Jhostynxon Garcia, plus signing Ryan O'Hearn and a few more moves to come in spring training.

But those moves also have to be the right ones, not failures.

"It's gonna be exciting," Kelly said. "The additions have been really good. There's a great energy and vibe around the team right now. Looking forward to getting down to spring training and pulling it all together."

It's what has been on everyone's mind this offseason, not to mention their fingers tapping into texts or tweets, as well as conversations inside and outside the organization.

If only the Pirates can pair a respectable offense to go with that pitching staff ...

It's what Skenes and I discussed during my weekend trip to see him — whom they've added, what that signals and how the reigning National League Cy Young Award winner can't wait to prove perceptions of the Pirates wrong.

If the Pirates can do that, if they can hit, perhaps that opens the door to extension talks with Skenes or Konnor Griffin, once-in-a-generation talents who want — OK, need — to win.

It's the same thing recently with Eugenio Suarez, the power-hitting third baseman who spurned them to sign with the NL Central-rival Cincinnati Reds. They never had much of a chance, in part because the Pirates have not yet delivered assurance for free agents that they'll win.

That needs to change.

And doing it starts not with pitching, fielding or better fundamentals — though they're all important. The offense has to offer something.

"We're super excited to lean on each other," Spencer Horwitz said. "If somebody's having an off day, we know there's someone else there to pick them up."

To quantify the chase for offense, there's an interesting starting point with FanGraphs' runs above replacement (RAR) metric, which tells us Lowe and O'Hearn last season added 46 RAR in 2025.

That's a solid start. We're also less than halfway home.

Bryan Reynolds and Oneil Cruz, meanwhile, were worth 26.1 RAR in 2025. That number has to be much, much larger.

For context, Reynolds generated 63.2 runs above a replacement player in 2021, while Cruz topped out at 34.8 in 2024 — which tells me that a 20% increase in runs might actually be reasonable.

Even if Cruz matches his 2024 total and Reynolds gives the Pirates his career average over six full seasons (34.3 RAR), we've taken our team total to 89 of the desired increase of 117 runs.

"I think it's going to be a lot better this year," Cruz said at PiratesFest, with major league coach Stephen Morales translating. "The pieces that we added to the team, I think it's going to help add that motivation that we need. Those guys are going to bring it."

But it can't just be the new guys or bounce-back seasons from fringe stars. The Pirates need improvement on the margins, too.

Jared Triolo should have a regular role and needs to recapture the form he found late last season, after he returned from Triple-A. We know he can field. But can he hit like the guy who had a .276 average and .775 OPS over his final 52 games? The Pirates should certainly hope so.

The Pirates also need a positive development story behind the plate. Give Henry Davis credit for his defensive improvement, and he figures to catch a bunch this season. But more important — he needs to hit.

The talent is there. Work ethic, Davis is off the charts. But it hasn't come together.

The No. 1 overall pick in 2021 actually had a negative effect (minus-1.0 RAR) on the offense in 2025, which obviously has to change.

If Triolo and Davis can combine for more than 13.6 RAR, that could and should push the Pirates' offense into an acceptable range, one good enough to pair with elite pitching to spur winning.

If that doesn't happen?

You know the consequences. They know the consequences. General manager Ben Cherington is fully aware results are required at this point.

There've also been bad trades and free-agent signings. More would not not reverse the narrative in a way the Pirates need.

But if it works, if the Pirates can make good on their offseason push to improve the offense, it could turn into an incredibly fun summer.

"If we want to accomplish something, there's nothing standing in our way other than ourselves," Skenes said. "We have to go put in the work and do the right things starting [next week].

"Really, it started a long time ago. It started the moment our season ended. But if we want to accomplish something, we have to take it."

Johnson, Malinin star for U.S. at Milan Cortina Olympics

MILAN (AP) — The crash. The gasps. The helicopter.

Lindsey Vonn's frightening fall in the women's downhill at the Milan Cortina Olympics couldn't help but overshadow U.S. teammate Breezy Johnson's feat — winning her country's first gold medal at these Games.

Johnson's victory Sunday in Cortina wasn't the Olympic comeback story everyone expected, as the focus was on Vonn going for gold despite a torn ACL. Even as Johnson sat in the leader's box on the verge of securing her first Olympic gold medal, her emotions swung from anticipation to anguish when Vonn went down.

"It was one of the most heartbreaking moments of my life," Johnson said.

Still, the 30-year-old Johnson became only the second American woman to win the Olympic downhill — Vonn won it in 2010 — and it came after her own injury concerns as well as a 14-month ban for violating "whereabouts" rules when it comes to testing for doping.

Sometimes, she said, "you just have to keep going because that's the only option."

Ilia Malinin the 'Quad God' delivers for US

No delays this time.

The U.S. defended its team figure skating gold medal by edging Japan on Sunday.

Ilia Malinin beat rival Shun Sato in a head-to-head showdown to break a deadlock in the final session of the competition. The U.S. ended up with 69 points while Japan finished with 68.

Malinin, nicknamed the "Quad God," landed five quadruple jumps and scored 200.03 points for his free skate. Sato followed him with three quads in his program, but he could only manage 194.86 points, leaving the Japanese with a second straight silver medal in the team event.

Four years ago, the Americans — and Japanese — were denied a medal ceremony in Beijing because of a lengthy investigation into Russian doping, which kept them from receiving their medals until the 2024 Summer Games in Paris.

Italy celebrates big haul of medals

Must be the home cooking.

Host nation Italy won six medals Sunday — five bronze and one silver — the most Italy has ever won in a single day at the Winter Olympics.

The Italy team delivered the silver medal in the mixed relay biathlon race.

Downhill skier Sofia Goggia won Italy's first bronze medal of the day, followed by Lucia Dalmasso's third place in snowboarding's parallel giant slalom. Riccardo Lorello claimed bronze in the men's speedskating 5,000 meters.

Dominik Fischnaller took bronze in men's singles luge before Italy rallied for third place in the figure skating team event.

That followed Italy's Day 1 total of three medals, led by speedskater Francesca Lollobrigida's gold in the 3,000 meters.

Big favorite Ledecka stunned in snowboarding

No surprise that a Czech racer won snowboarding's parallel giant slalom Sunday in Livigno. The shocker was that it wasn't Ester Ledecka.

Ledecka, who was trying to become the first snowboarder to win gold medals at three straight Olympics, lost her quarterfinal race by 0.06 seconds to Austria's Sabine Payer.

The gold medal went to Ledecka's teammate, 22-year-old Zuzana Maderova. It was her first victory in a major event. Payer took the silver medal. Italy's Lucia Dalmasso won bronze.

Ledecka hadn't lost a PGS World Cup race in almost two years.

Early hours in Italy for Super Bowl

There's plenty of interest here in the Super Bowl, even if the game kicks off Monday at 12:30 a.m. in Italy. A couple of sports pubs in Milan said on Sunday that they're fully booked and will turn away walk-ups. The New England Patriots face the Seattle Seahawks in Santa Clara, California.

A few days before competing in Sunday's women's downhill, American skier Jacqueline Wiles noted that she's a "big, big fan" of the Seahawks. A native of Portland, Oregon, Wiles finished tied for fourth on Sunday, just missing out on a bronze medal.

THE DAILY SCOREBOARD

NFL Playoffs

Wild-card Playoffs
Saturday, Jan. 10
L.A. Rams 34, Carolina 31
Chicago 31, Green Bay 27
Sunday, Jan. 11
Buffalo 27, Jacksonville 24
San Francisco 23, Philadelphia 19
New England 16, L.A. Chargers 3
Monday, Jan. 12
Houston 30, Pittsburgh 6
Divisional Playoffs
Saturday, Jan. 17
Denver 33, Buffalo 30, OT
Seattle 41, San Francisco 6
Sunday, Jan. 18
New England 28, Houston 16
L.A. Rams 20, Chicago 17, OT
Conference Championships
Sunday, Jan. 25
AFC
New England 10, Denver 7
NFC
Seattle 31, L.A. Rams 27
Super Bowl LIX
Sunday, Feb. 8
At Santa Clara.
Seattle 29, New England 13

Super Bowl Summary

Seattle 29, New England 13

Seattle	3	6	3	17	—	29
New England	0	0	0	13	—	13

First Quarter
Sea—FG Myers 33, 11:58.
Second Quarter
Sea—FG Myers 39, 11:16.
Sea—FG Myers 41, :11.
Third Quarter
Sea—FG Myers 41, 9:12.
Fourth Quarter
Sea—Barner 16 pass from Darnold (Myers kick), 13:24.
NE—Hollins 35 pass from Maye (Borregales kick), 12:26.
Sea—FG Myers 26, 5:35.
Sea—Nwosu 45 interception return (Myers kick), 4:27.
NE—Stevenson 7 pass from Maye (pass failed), 2:21.

	Sea	NE
FIRST DOWNS	20	18
Rushing	9	2
Passing	11	14
Penalty	0	2
THIRD DOWN EFF	4-16	6-15
FOURTH DOWN EFF	0-0	0-0
TOTAL NET YARDS	335	331
Total Plays	71	67
Avg Gain	4.7	4.9
NET YARDS RUSHING	141	79
Rushes	32	18
Avg per rush	4.406	4.389
NET YARDS PASSING	194	252
Sacked-Yds lost	1-8	6-43
Gross-Yds passing	202	295
Completed-Att.	19-38	27-43
Had Intercepted	0	2
Yards-Pass Play	4.974	5.143
PUNTS-Avg.	7-47.857	8-44.5
Punt Returns	2-16	2-4
Kickoff Returns	1-20	5-141
Interceptions	2-80	0-0
PENALTIES-Yds	4-25	3-25
FUMBLES-Lost	0-0	1-1
TIME OF POSSESSION	33:11	26:49

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing–Seattle, Walker 27-135, Holani 2-6, Darnold 2-5, Shaheed 1-(minus 5). New England, Maye 5-37, Stevenson 7-23, Henderson 6-19.

Passing–Seattle, Darnold 19-38-0-202. New England, Maye 27-43-2-295.

Receiving–Seattle, Kupp 6-61, Barner 4-54, Smith-Njigba 4-27, Shaheed 2-27, Walker 2-26, Holani 1-7. New England, Douglas 5-45, Stevenson 5-40, Hollins 4-78, Diggs 3-37, Henry 3-31, Henderson 3-26, Hooper 2-10, Boutte 1-21, K.Williams 1-7.

Punt Returns–Seattle, Shaheed 2-16. New England, Jones 2-4.

Kickoff Returns–Seattle, Shaheed 1-20. New England, D.Johnson 4-103, Henderson 1-38.

Tackles-Assists-Sacks–Seattle, E.Jones 10-1-0, Jobe 6-1-0, Emmanwori 4-1-0, Witherspoon 4-0-1, Woolen 4-0-0, Bryant 3-1-0, D.Thomas 2-3-0, Love 2-1-0, D.Hall 2-0-2, Murphy 2-0-2, Lawrence 1-1-0, Mills 1-0-1, Mafe 1-0-0, Reed 0-2-0, Williams 0-1-0. New England, Woodson 7-3-0, Jones 7-0-0, Davis 5-1-0, A. Jennings 4-2-0, Hawkins 4-1-0, Gonzalez 4-0-0, Gibbens 3-1-0, Barmore 2-1-0, M.Williams 2-0-1, Spillane 1-3-0, Elliss 1-2-0, Chaisson 1-0-0, Landry 1-0-0, Durden 0-1-0, Pettus 0-1-0, Tavai 0-1-0, Tonga 0-1-0.

Interceptions–Seattle, Nwosu 1-45, Love 1-35. New England, None.

Missed Field Goals–None.

Basketball Boxscores

VARSITY BOYS
NORTH CLARION (72)
Baumcratz 9 1-1 22, Bish 1 1-1 3, Lutz 1 1-2 3, Zacheral 3 0-0 7, Irwin 7 0-0 16, Swanson 2 0-0 5, Pappas 1 0-0 3, E. Walter 6 0-0 13. Totals: 30 3-5 72.
A-C VALLEY (42)
Shirey 2 0-0 4, Snyder 1 0-0 2, Ithen 4 3-3 11, Armagost 5 0-2 12, Sacovsek 2 0-0 6, Gagliano 1 0-0 3, Rapp 1 0-2 2, Lutz 1 0-0 2. Totals: 17 3-7 42.
Score by Quarters

North Clarion	23	15	16	18	—	72
A-C Valley	8	6	11	17	—	42

3-point goals — NC (Baumcratz 3, Irwin 2, Zacheral, Swanson, Pappas, E. Walter), ACV (Armagost 2, Sacovsek 2, Gagliano).

8TH GRADE BOYS
REYNOLDS (34)
Holliday 1 0-0 2, Irvine 1 0-0 2, Kilgore 1 0-0 2, Kendall 3 1-2 7, Cook 5 2-4 13, Stull 1 0-4 2, Uhria 3 0-2 6. Totals: 15 3-12 34.
FRANKLIN (48)
Gonsalves 1 0-0 2, Goodman 1 1-2 3, Habbyshaw 2 0-0 6, Fleming 0 0-0 0, Boal 3 0-0 9, Rivera 2 0-0 4, Sherman 4 1-2 9, Riddle 4 0-0 8, Rosen 1 1-2 3, Beach 2 0-0 4. Totals: 20 3-6 48.
Score by Quarters

Reynolds	9	12	2	11	—	34
Franklin	12	17	13	6	—	48

3-point goals — Reynolds (Cook), Franklin (Boal 3, Habbyshaw 2).

7TH GRADE BOYS
REYNOLDS (18)
No names available.
FRANKLIN (36)
Cook 2 0-0 6, Carll 2 0-0 4, Milliron 2 0-0 4, Evans 2 1-2 5, Keith 2 0-0 5, Williams 2 0-0 4, Greksa 1 0-0 2, Thomas 2 0-0 4, McElhatten 1 0-2 2. Totals: 16 1-4 36.
Score by Quarters

Reynolds	4	7	4	3	—	18
Franklin	18	5	4	9	—	36

3-point goals — Franklin (Cook 2, Keith).
CRANBERRY (33)
Baker 5 1-4 11, Speerstra 8 4-6 20, Hepler 0 2-2 2, Slezak 0 0-0 0, Thompson 0 0-0 0. Totals: 13 7-12 33.
FRANKLIN (24)
Carll 1 0-0 3, Milliron 4 0-0 8, Evans 5 2-3 13, Cook 0 0-0 0, Keith 0 0-0 0. Totals: 10 2-3 24.
Score by Quarters

Cranberry	8	10	7	8	—	33
Franklin	12	6	4	2	—	24

3-point goals — Franklin (Carll, Evans).

Local Bowling

TUESDAY NITE MENS

Standings — Five G Farm 21-7, Lutz Concrete Construction 19-9, Dunkle's Heating & A/C 17-11, Ace Hardware 17-11, Almost Done 16-12, Mattern CPA, LLC 15-13, Digital Styles 13-15, Linmas Pharmacy 10-18, Sheakley's Custom Exhaust 6-22, Bare Bone Skull Cleaning 6-22.

High game — Matt Gilara 246, Devin Dunkle 236, Dean Weaver 236.

High series — Dunkle 663, Gilara 648, Weaver 641.

Announcement

WARM WATER FLY TYING CLASSES

The Keystone Fly Fishers will be offering a warm water fly tying class starting on Feb. 18 at 6:30 p.m. at the Emerging Technology Center, located at 191 Howard St. in Franklin. Each class will last for about two to two and a half hours each Wednesday night thru March 11.

This is not a beginner class and will move right along at a somewhat accelerated rate. Therefore, all tyers considering this class should have some familiarity with general tying skills (whip finishing/half hitching, pinch wrap, use of dubbing, etc.) and have their own vise and tools.

The class will be limited to 12 individuals and anyone between the ages of 12-17 must be accompanied by an adult. All four classes will be provided at a cost of $50 total.

Pre-registration is required along with a non-refundable deposit of $20. Checks are to be made payable to: Keystone Fly Fishers. The deposit is required to confirm registration as the classes fill up very quickly. Once a deposit is received, confirmation about a participant's registration will be sent via email. For questions, contact the Keystone Fly Fishers by email at Keystoneflyfishers1@gmail.com or check them out on Facebook at Keystone Fly Fishers or call 814-673-5478.

This Date in Sports

1936 — Jay Berwanger, University of Chicago halfback and Heisman Trophy winner, is the first player ever selected in the NFL Draft. The Philadelphia Eagles make the pick and eventually trade his rights to the Chicago Bears.

1950 — Man o' War is selected the greatest horse of the half century by The Associated Press. Man o' War, as a 2- and 3-year-old, is a winner in 20 of 21 races and holds five track records.

The Franklin YMCA Starbursts gymnastics team competed at the Warren "Flipping Into Spring" Invitational last weekend. Taking first place for the Starbursts were (back, from left): Graci Sudac (Level 3 vault, bars, all-around), Paisley Gravatt (Level 3 vault) and Kinsley Sandieson (Level 3 beam); middle row, Kennedy Leach (Level 4 bars) and Natalie Rodriguez (Level 4 beam); front, Alexis Amsler (Level 2 vault, bars, beam, floor, all-around).

Elementary Boys Basketball

6th Grade Division
Game 1
Oil City (20) — Chance Russell 14, Austin Kellogg 2, Logan Dickenson 2, Luke Delvalle 2.
Franklin Black (8) — Carter Lyons 2, Jack Lyons 2, Silas Montgomery 2, Calvin Hanna 2.
Game 2
Franklin Red (20) — Jacen Bomia 2, Lucas Gealy 6, Simeon Mott 2, Liam Richter 6, Ezekiel William 2, Chase Hoffman 2.
Rocky Grove Orange (16) — Max Bloom 6, Warren Struthers 6, Cody Graham 4.
5th Grade Division
Game 1
Rocky Grove (3) — Jacob Potter 2, Levi Weller 1.
Victory (24) — Thatcher Stone 6, Finlee Kline 2, Owen Savage 4, Cayde Miller 4, Caleb DeVillars 2, Brantley Metcalf 6.
Game 2
Oil City (18) — Benson Basham 10, Cameron Hamilton 2, Zak'i Collins 5, Griffen Kasunic 1.
Central (16) — Blake Denny 4, Finlee Earp 4, Kayden Goodman 8.
4th Grade Division
Game 1
Central (9) — Landon Neely 7, Hunter Varner 2.
Victory (7) — Lexan Stants 4, Elijah Stewart 3.
Game 2
Central (8) — Landon Neely 4, Quinton Stover 2, Hunter Varner 2.
Sandycreek (10) — Krew Angiolieri 6, Brantley Hollidge 4.

YMCA Gymnastics

FRANKLIN YMCA STARBURSTS
From from Warren Invitational
The top 3 finishers in all events:
Level 3 Team- 3rd Place
Level 2
Lexi A- 1st vault, bars, beam, floor, All-Around
Maeve H- 3rd beam
Level 3
Bowie C- 3rd vault
Quinn R- 3rd vault, 3rd All-Around
Paisley G- 1st vault
Graci S- 1st vault, 1st bars, 1st All-Around
Caroline C- 3rd bars, 2nd beam
Kinsley S- 1st beam
Xcel Silver
Peggy Rose S- 3rd vault, 3rd bars
Aubrie B- 2nd vault
Level 4
Avery P- 3rd vault
Kennedy L- 1st bars
Natalie R- 1st beam, 2nd floor, 3rd All-Around
Level 5
Corrine S- 3rd vault,
Cheyenne B- 2nd vault
Level 7
Aliza F- 2nd floor
Level 8
Anna R- 3rd vault, 3rd bars, 2nd beam, 2nd All-Around

Sports Scene

MONDAY, FEB. 9
BOYS BASKETBALL
Union at Ridgway (6 p.m.)
North Clarion at Karns City (6 p.m.)
Marion Center at Moniteau (6 p.m.)
Clarion at Elk County Catholic (6 p.m.)
Keystone at Brookville (6 p.m.)
GIRLS BASKETBALL
Franklin at Titusville (6 p.m.)
Meadville at Oil City (6 p.m.)
Commodore Perry at Rocky Grove (6 p.m.)
Curwensville at Clarion (6 p.m.)
North Clarion at Union/A-C Valley (6 p.m.)
Keystone at Redbank Valley (6 p.m.)
Cochranton at Saegertown (6 p.m.)
Grove City at Slippery Rock (6 p.m.)
SCHOLASTIC SWIMMING
Franklin at Oil City (6 p.m.)
Slippery Rock at Titusville (6 p.m.)

TUESDAY, FEB. 10
BOYS BASKETBALL
Franklin at Oil City (6 p.m.)
Rocky Grove at Jamestown (6 p.m.)
Moniteau at West Shamokin (6 p.m.)
Cambridge Springs at Cochranton (6 p.m.)
Mercer at Grove City (6 p.m.)
Corry at Titusville (6 p.m.)
GIRLS BASKETBALL
Cranberry at Hickory (6 p.m.)
Bradford at North Clarion (6 p.m.)
St. Marys at Keystone (varsity only, 6 p.m.)
Forest Area at Clarion (6 p.m.)
Moniteau at West Shamokin (6 p.m.)
SCHOLASTIC WRESTLING
Redbank Valley at Brookville (6 p.m.)

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11
BOYS BASKETBALL
Redbank Valley at Keystone (6 p.m.)
Cochranton at West Middlesex (6 p.m.)
GIRLS BASKETBALL
Rocky Grove at Sharpsville (6 p.m.)
Clarion at Eisenhower (6 p.m.)
BOCCE BALL
Oil City at Franklin (6 p.m.)

Sports on TV

Monday, Feb. 9
COLLEGE BASKETBALL (MEN'S)
6 p.m.
CBSSN — Navy at Bucknell
6:30 p.m.
FS1 — Xavier at St. John's
7 p.m.
ESPN — NC State at Louisville
8 p.m.
CBSSN — UNC-Wilmington at Coll. of Charleston
8:30 p.m.
FS1 — Oregon at Indiana
9 p.m.
ESPN — Arizona at Kansas
ESPNU — Alabama St. at Southern U.
10 p.m.
CBSSN — N. Iowa at Murray St.
COLLEGE BASKETBALL (WOMEN'S)
7:30 p.m.
SECN — Kentucky at Texas
9 p.m.
ESPN2 — Oklahoma at Vanderbilt
COLLEGE HOCKEY (MEN'S)
7:30 p.m.
NHLN — Beanpot Tournament: Boston U. vs. Boston College, Championship, Boston
GOLF
7 p.m.
ESPN2 — TGL: The Bay Golf Club vs. Los Angeles Golf Club
NBA BASKETBALL
7:30 p.m.
PEACOCK — Milwaukee at Orlando
10 p.m.
PEACOCK — Oklahoma City at L.A. Lakers
SOCCER (MEN'S)
5:50 p.m.
FS2 — CONCACAF U-17 Qualifier Group Stage: Barbados vs. Mexico, Group A, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
TENNIS
5 a.m.
TENNIS CHANNEL — Dallas-ATP, Rotterdam-ATP, Buenos Aires-ATP, & Doha-WTA Early Rounds
6 a.m.
TENNIS CHANNEL — Dallas-ATP, Rotterdam-ATP, Buenos Aires-ATP, & Doha-WTA Early Rounds
UNRIVALED BASKETBALL
7:30 p.m.
TNT — Vinyl vs. Phantom, Miami
TRUTV — Vinyl vs. Phantom, Miami
8:45 p.m.
TNT — Rose vs. Mist, Miami
TRUTV — Rose vs. Mist, Miami