

Three MLB Players Who Train at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex amongst League Leaders in Stolen Bases

Atlanta Braves outfielder Ender Inciarte, Cincinnati Reds outfielder Billy Hamilton and Seattle Mariners infielder Dee Gordon are amongst the top base stealers in Major League Baseball through the halfway point of the 2018 season.

What do these three speedsters have in common? The trio spend all or portions of their respective offseasons training and preparing for the rigors of baseball's 162-game season in the Tom Shaw Performance training camp at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World Resort.

Through the All-Star Break, Inciarte is third in all of baseball with 23 stolen bases. Pittsburgh Pirates centerfielder Starling Marte leads the big leagues with 25, followed by Michael A. Taylor, centerfielder for the Washington Nationals, who has 24. Gordon and Hamilton – who finished No. 1 and No. 2, respectively, in stolen bases in 2017 – are tied in 4th place with 22, alongside Washington shortstop Trea Turner.

At this time last season, Inciarte – who was a member of the 2017 National League All-Star team – had 11 stolen bases and finished the season with 22. The speedy Braves centerfielder has not only doubled his first-half output in 2018, but has surpassed his total for all of last year.

"I think the work we did over the spring and Ender's success through the first half of the season speaks volumes as to how athletes who train at Disney get better in our program," said Bert Whigham, an athletic trainer in the Shaw program. "Ender was already fast, so we focused on improving his get off – his explosive power on the start of his sprints."

Inciarte spent the 2017 offseason at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex working with Whigham and the training staff to improve various aspects of his game.

"We primarily worked with Ender in our sand pit and also used resistance bungees, focusing on the first three steps of his take off, which is critical for guys who are good at stealing bases," Whigham said.

Based on his first-half stolen base numbers this season, the work Inciarte put in at Disney is paying off.

"I spent a lot of time at Disney working with the training staff on a combination of key aspects that power my game," Inciarte said this past spring. "You can work hard in the weight room, you can work hard on your core. You can stretch a lot, and for a guy like me, I rely a lot on my speed. I know what I've been doing here is working."

At ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, professional athletes across different sports actually work out together, a unique aspect of the training program at Disney. This spring, Inciarte trained alongside former Penn State running back Saquon Barkley (2nd overall pick in the 2018 NFL draft, NY Giants), among others, which Whigham says helps further develop the athletes' speed.

"Training day in and day out with Barkley and other NFL prospects definitely helped motivate Ender to work harder and focus more on speed, since that's the primary focus of the NFL combine," Whigham said.

In 375 plate appearances, Inciarte, Atlanta's lead-off hitter, is currently batting .244. He has 91 hits, 34 runs batted in and has scored 52 runs for the Braves.

"I think the results of his training here with the NFL guys and all the other work we did with him speaks for itself," Whigham said.