

# NEXT MAN UP

witnessed firsthand the quality of at-bats,” Tauchman says of Urshela’s hard contact. “He was an incredible player then. I’ve seen him be an offensive force, just a doubles machine before, and (now) he’s been driving the ball out of the ballpark — and that’s not even touching on his defense, which is incredible, too.

“He’s been a huge part of our team.”

Quietly, Urshela explains how he’s keeping his hands inside the ball, watching how pitchers adjust to him and adjusting back. It’s a revelation that began last year, part of “a big change,” Urshela says of coming to the Yankees and working with RailRiders hitting coach Phil Plantier. “I learned a lot.”

Just a few months ago, the idea of Urshela batting in the middle of the Yankees’ order seemed preposterous. Now, it’s common — and it’s working.

“It’s a tribute to him, his talent, his ability to grow in his game,” Boone says. “He’s kept learning, kept working, and now he’s been as consistent a player (as we’ve had), and that’s what has been so exciting.

“He’s been a special player for us. An impact player.”

The conga line of injured players continued deep into the summer, with Hicks (flexor strain) going down again and Edwin Encarnación fracturing a wrist and Voit (sports hernia) missing at least a month. Stanton had played just nine games all season.

“It’s been a crazy year,” Boone says of all the physical ailments. “And yet, that’s been a real rallying cry for us. And I think it’s not just brought a level of physical toughness to the room, but it’s forced guys to be mentally tough, as well. It’s part of the hunger that exists with those guys. They have the mindset of nothing’s going to get in our way, nothing’s going to stop us. And they all kind of pull for each other and know that the next guy is expected to do the job.”

To date, the 2019 season has been “a credit to so many people across the board who have stepped up and impacted us winning games,” Boone says, leaving the manager to believe that when the next guy’s number is called, he’ll be ready. **NY**



Urshela [L, with Gleyber Torres] was just a .225 big-league hitter before the Yankees purchased him from Toronto in 2018. Through 107 games in 2019, he was hitting .340 with an OPS north of .950. With a revamped swing, the third baseman is one of several previously overlooked players embodying New York’s “Next Man Up” mantra.