

2 OUT BOTTOM OF THE 12th

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MLB6

SEASON 12 PREVIEW

Hall of Fame

Season 12 will be under way when you read this so here are my thoughts on the upcoming hostilities throughout MLB6.

Kevin Reed, Dodgers



In the AL East, on paper at least, the Blue Jays look a class above everyone else. They headed the AL pitching stats last year and looking at their array of classy hurlers they will not be far away from that honour again this time round. Their batting was solid but not spectacular last term but they look likely to step up on those efforts with the batters they have this year. The battle for second place should centre round the Yankees and Red Sox but with the Yankees looking to be rebuilding I feel the Red Sox may be the challengers. Tampa weren't competitive last year and looking at their roster and their pre-season results that appears to be the case again. **TO, BR, NY, TB.**

Ian Clark, Blue Jays



Kevin Gibson, Mets



Mike Sim, Rangers



Alan Molloy, Giants



Simon Greener, Yankees



Nigel Beck, Pirates



The Central is fascinating, with only 10 games covering all four teams last year. All four teams pitched reasonably well last year, but their batting was terrible. They all look evenly matched again on the pitching side but the Tigers appear to have the greater strength in depth of batting. This could prove to be the decisive factor in such a closely fought division. Minnesota does have some cash to splash so if they spend wisely and upgrade their batting they could well upset the Tigers. Both the White Sox and Brewers are a little short of cash and may find it hard to keep pace, of the two the White Sox look to have the greater scope for improvement. **DT, MT, CW, MB.**

World Champions Seattle look solid but the Rangers to me look like they could have that little extra needed to win the division. They have four top class pitchers plus a variety of options from the bullpen. They have five reliable batters but may have to add some wood to take the division. Seattle have a much greater strength in depth to their batting than Texas so it could be a close one. Anaheim look like they have the potential to challenge but whether they can match the big two is another question after finishing well adrift at the bottom of the division last year. Oakland look to have an ordinary batting lineup and an ordinary pitching set up so they may struggle. **TR, SM, AA, OA.**

New York have been the dogs in this division for 10 years but this could be the year that changes. Atlanta look to have the squad to dethrone them as the Mets are ageing and in need of some new young blood. The Braves have a lot of strength in depth on the pitching side and even more depth to their batting lineup which is always the key in the National League. New York will be competitive again, I guarantee it, but they may not have enough to take the division. Montreal have a solid enough pitching set up but they have no stars to carry them through difficult games. Their batting was terrible last year and definitely need adding to if they are to challenge. Philadel-

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phia look like they are in decline and a lot of changes are needed if they are to get into contention. Their pitching looks like it may be good enough but they need to replace some highly paid potential less veterans to make any sort of showing. **AB, NM, ME, PH.**

The Central is the division where I feel all the excitement will be this year in the NL. I think Houston will add a hell of a lot of spice into the division and judging by their pre-season form they will be a tough outfit to beat. Their pitching is solid with a couple of potential superstars and their batting looks like it has real strength in depth, enough strength perhaps to take the division. Pittsburgh will be strong as usual. Their pitching could use a little bolstering with the addition of a couple of starters but their batting again looks strong anchored by Cordero and Lansing. Steinbach will be a big miss as he was a key part of their offense but with his age and wage demands he obviously had to go. Cincinnati played well for a large part of last season but they came up a little short after a few indifferent weeks. They look pretty solid on both sides of the ball and with the usual run of luck any team needs they should be there or there about come the end of the season. Chicago look a little brittle on the batting side of things, but in their favour they do have some useful looking youngsters laden with potential. Their pitching doesn't look spectacular but by no means do they look out of their depth. The strength of the other 3 teams though may play a significant part of the Cubs finishing at the bottom of their division this year. **HA, PI, CI, CU.**

I can't see the status quo shifting too much in the West this year, after all the Dodgers and Giants have been dominant for some considerable time now. LA are the class act in the division as their dominance of the division proves, but this year their pitching looks at it's weakest level I can remember. The batting is on a different planet though and will more than make up for any shortcomings on the other side of the ball. San Francisco look like an ageing side but they do have ability on both sides of the ball, ability that will push the Dodgers all the way. They will upgrade on both sides of the ball as the season progresses but they might not have enough class this year. Colorado to me are an interesting proposition. They picked up well in the second half of last year and look to have a cracking young roster especially on the pitching side where a lot of teams are very thin. The Colorado pitching could be overpowering for seasons if they fulfil their potential. Their batting is not as strong as their pitching yet, but again they are potential laden and should step up, if not this year then definitely next. San Diego have some good pitching and some decent looking batting but they lack direction, drive and a coach to fit

Mariners Mail – Troy Dilworth

It was a fantastic comeback by you and when you took the lead in Game 7 in around innings 6 or 7 I have to admit I was very much fearing the worst!?! Due to having HFA for the World Series, I gambled with my starting rotation, thus allowing me to have my 2 most in form pitchers for my 4 home games. However, this did mean that I had a 6* pitcher (Shearer) starting in Game 5. He got humped unsurprisingly. Game 3 was a bonus for me as Brooks would have been one of my go to guys but his current form was so bad I nearly didn't use him, thank god that I did as without winning Game 3 I would have lost overall. Yet, it could have been a walk in the park. If I had won in extra innings in Game 4, then I would have avoided my all so near heart attack but then we wouldn't have witnessed such a great series. But, then I would say that, as I was luckily enough to win in the end. I am still pleased that I used the 5 man rotation as it meant that I had Mlicki, my best playoff pitcher, pitching in that vital game 7. I also dropped my 1st baseman for the series and used my backup catcher at 1st base. That also worked a treat as he had a decent batting average and if I'm correct, he didn't error once neither. Shame the same can't be said for my normal 1st base during the playoffs who batted under .100 and errored in just about every game (Ex Fld too!) !?!

Great season for you Kev and unlucky in the end as you all so nearly pulled it out of the fire. Better luck next season! My pitchers have improved for next season and my batters have generally got worse so not quite sure what to expect for next season but at least I have won the World Series at least once in this league now ... so the pressure is off.

Texas Tribune –Mike Sim

Firstly, sorry if you tried to email me the newsletter. I've been out of the country for the past month and about a week before my return, my email account began bouncing mail which is annoying as I didn't know I had a quota until then. Normal service should be resumed now.

Secondly, commiseration's on the World Series - looked like your year once you got past the Dodgers and I was rooting for you but the Mariners played above themselves all season and so it proved in the WS. Troy is a fine skipper and a nice guy to boot. Shame one of you had to lose.

Thirdly... the new season and week 1 will be my first look at my team (David Trice stood in for me in pre-season). Initial impressions are favourable though some questions remain to be answered:-

1) Can we afford all the players we want to keep? Often you have 2 or 3 guys who are washed up who you want to let go. This team has 1 and it's going to be tough to pick 3 to depart. I'm going to have a tough choice and as a wage bill of 120 is not realistic, I'm going to have to lose about 10LP's worth of players which is going to sting.

2) Can the young pitchers step up? Last season our youngsters showed their inexperience and we faltered down the stretch. We're a year older but still only have 4 pitchers with over 4 year's experience so we'll be relying on those youngsters again.

3) Can we somehow manage to make up the gap that the Mariners opened last season? We need to be patient at the plate - too many strikeouts with men in scoring position cost us last season, particularly against the top teams like Seattle, New York and Toronto.

4) Should we try and trade one of our catchers? Matt Pearce is a workhorse behind the plate, while Glen Davis is perhaps the better hitter. Youngster Rod Barajas hit 4 HR's playing in pre-season and is demanding playing time. An OF or corner infielder for one of those players would be tempting.

5) (and most importantly!) Can we avoid our traditional sluggish start? We tend to be a .500 team in April and a fast start would do wonders for team belief. Here's hoping.

Good luck to everyone in MLB6 and congratulations to Nigel and Simon on the HOF election and Troy

Tampa Times – Rob Byrne

It's been a while and newsletter contributions seem a bit short so I thought it was time I gave a view from Tampa with the new season upon us. Well last time I wrote I felt we sucked, this time isn't any different. It's going to be a long rebuilding process and despite having the second lowest wages in the conference I still have a lot of overpaid rubbish on the team.

The off-season brought about the exit of star pitcher Francisco Cordova thanks to an admin error by me. It also bought some very strange changes to player skills. 3 batters had their fielding improve despite no training in this area and they were all decent fielders before this. My player with best form gained nothing while a player with negative form made strides. All very peculiar and not very helpful. In the short term I will be bidding for free agents every week as there is always someone who can improve the team. Pitching is a big problem. I'd love to ease my younger players in but they are much better than a lot of my veterans. I won't challenge for anything other than a high draft pick but I will put my best team out every week and maybe win a couple of more games than I did last year. My target is 50 games! If I win 63 it will be a major success.

High Hopes in Milwaukee

With the team reaching the National Series final (congratulations to Alan and Gordon BTW) the Brewers fans can be forgiven for hoping for a AL Central title at the end of this season, or even a winning record season for that matter.

I forecast a title race in the Central to be as close as ever with the Twins, Sox and Tigers and hopefully we can put away the memory of the poor finish to last season. Team wise nothing has changed, the main squad is intact with the draftees coming in and two players been released last week. Gone is Sterling Hitchcock and Mark Loretta with Dan Kolb and Scott Posedink coming into the squad with the other draftee Ben Sheets staying in the draft squad for the time been, with my wages low I think I can afford to do that. Offensively everyone can see who is the main man with the bat and the supporting cast didn't really help him last season so Burnitz, Hammonds and Lansing need to step up. One surprise in the starting line up for game 1 against the White Sox will be Ryan Christensen who has shown himself to be a decent lead off man so dropping Hammonds to third in the order. Hopefully players like Hall, Helms and Johnson even though young in terms in experience can step up and add productive bats to the bottom of the order.

Mets Hoping

I'm not going to say the Mets are in decline, but a few of the key players are getting to the stage where they need replaced. Piazza and Matsui are out of potential but still could play key roles for us this term. Wiggington has 1 more year after this one and Reyes and Cameron have two. To me that's the Mets offense gone and if I can I may try to soften the blow by shipping one of them this year as 4 of the 5 have exorbitant wage demands. Bochtler had better shape up if he wishes to stay with us as he is not producing the goods, and the rest of the pitching looks solid but nothing special. Strange and Wheeler may be given a few more innings this year but the bulk of the work from the pen should again come from Franco and Weathers. The rotation could have a lefty in regularly for the first time in a while whilst the onus again will fall on Trachsel and Glavine to anchor the rotation. We do have potential on both sides of the ball but this year could be a rebuilding one if things don't go to plan early.