

2 OUT BOTTOM OF THE 12th

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MLB6

THEN THERE WERE TWO

Hall of Fame

Kevin Reed, Dodgers



Ian Clark, Blue Jays



Kevin Gibson, Mets



Mike Sim, Rangers



Alan Molloy, Giants



Simon Greener, Yankees



Nigel Beck, Pirates



Season 12 got down to the business end this week as the World Series lineup was settled. In the AL New York were slow into stride in Texas and were punished with a couple of straightforward defeats. They responded well back at home to take Game 3 but were on the back foot as the Rangers regained their 2 game lead with victory in Game 4. Game 5 was a cracker with the Yankees reducing the deficit with a win by the odd run in 13 but the superior quality of the Rangers saw them through for their 5th trip to "The Show" in the last 7 seasons.

They will take on the NL Champion Mets who eventually overcame a stern test by the Pirates in 7 games. New York took the opening game with a late rally but were no match for the Pirates in Game 2 as they were soundly beaten with some late game power by the Pirates. Game 3 was a cracker with the Mets building up an early lead only for the Pirates to rally and almost pull off a great come from behind victory. New York took Game 4 comfortably but were thwarted in game 5 by some fine Pittsburgh pitching. The Mets took control early in Game 6 but were stymied by a fantastic comeback by the Pirates to take the series to a decider. In the final game the Mets scored early but were pegged back by Pittsburgh only this time the superior power of New York turned up and the bats won the game for the Mets.

The World Series will be a great series no matter what the result as it's the first time since season 1 that the teams with the best two records have made the showpiece. I've already spoken to Mike as I write this on the Thursday before Christmas and I don't think there are any secrets either of us has to spring on each other so it's down to the teams now. On paper the Mets look stronger with the lumber but the Rangers hurl a mean ball of leather so bring it on.

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Yankee Report

The Subway Series bit the dust as Texas proved too powerful for the Yankees, beating us in 6 games and deservedly so. I am proud to have come this far given my plans at the start of the season, but credit must go to Mike for the team he has assembled. Losing the first two games was a nightmare start for us and we never managed to claw those games back, despite winning two of three in the Bronx. Lantigua had been pushed to the start of the rotation given his form against Seattle but he struggled badly in game 1 giving up 10 earned runs in 3 innings as Cordero guided Texas through, helped by consistent hitting from the whole of the line-up. Donne Wall pitched well in game 2 but Rosman Garcia pitched a beauty before handing over to the bullpen. Game 3 saw Colter Bean and Steve Karsay hand the Yanks their first victory but the big-hitting Rangers bounced back next game, Matt Pearce helping himself to 4 RBI's from 3 hits. A close 7-6 victory in game 5 kept the Yankees in it but the return to Texas was too much and

Rosman Garcia again pitched a belter to see Texas through. The thing that really impressed me about Mikes team was the consistent hitting throughout the line-up, they never let up and proved far too strong for my rotation. The pattern was set in the first two games, and as I've said, we couldn't come back. As for the World Series I'm keeping it in the AL, Texas to win in 6 again (Sorry Kevin).

World Series Preview —Mike Sim

I've done a comparison of the likely starting line-ups and how I think things will pan out.

C Piazza (40hr,152rbi,26sb,.368) v Pearce (19hr,118rbi,45sb,.302)

Pearce is the iron man of Texas baseball, playing the most games last season and a massive number again this time around. If Piazza is in his last season, he's going out on a high. He could be the key man to make this powerful Mets offence tick. Edge: Mets

1b Phillips (29,101,7,.322) v Soriano (21,97,26,.325)

Soriano has been the surprise of the Ranger season and may have been the difference between missing the playoffs last year and making it as no1 seed this year. Phillips looks and plays a lot like Soriano. Edge: Even

2b Reyes (41,127,50,.378) v Berg (36,141,50,.335)

Reyes is a genuine MVP candidate (with Piazza) and leads the team from the front. Berg is the Rangers best hitter and even then is a step (albeit a small one) behind Reyes. Edge: Mets

3b Wigginton (38,122,27,.301) v Vina (36,122,39,.317)

Almost identical stats for the veterans and they are almost identical to look at. I can't separate them. Edge: Even

SS Matsui (39,157,35,.335) v Young (4,31,11,.247)

Matsui is a fantastic player and is another MVP candidate. Young has forced his way back into the team down the stretch after spending most of the season in the minors. Edge: Mets

LF Beltran (8,49,16,.276) v Church (33,122,39,.337)

Beltran has been solid in LF but is over-shadowed by the reigning AL MVP Church who may retire after this series but is going to be key for the Rangers. Edge: Rangers

CF Cameron (20,70,36,.299) v Swann (22,66,49,.298)

Swann makes Wigginton look young and that's saying something. The 17 yr vet is in his last season but is as fast as ever. Cameron has played a good CF and his numbers match Swann. Edge: Even

RF Redman (10,50,0,.290) v Moranini (8,57,23,.313)

Redman has done ok for Kevin and may get the start though it's not certain. Morandini was a week 17 pickup who hasn't really got going so far in the playoffs, but may yet get another chance. Edge: Even

DH Blake (16,77,0,.307) v Davis (28,98,38,.314)

Texas is fortunate to have such a good C in Pearce that they can play a 10* catcher at DH. Davis was red hot before the All-Star break and quiet after. Blake is a decent prospect on a team built for the present. Edge: Rangers

Starting Pitching:

Trachsel (21-4,3.15) v Cordero (14-6,2.33)

Glavine (15-3, 3.69) v Garcia (15-6,3.02)

Bochtler (11-6, 4.23) v Almanazar (18-3,3.21)

Stanton (15-2, 3.20) v Rogers / Ramirez (14-2,4.11) / (8-6,5.37)

The Rangers 1-2-3 combination was as good as NY in the league. They are young, unlike their Mets counterparts and that should make for a fascinating contrast of styles. The Mets have a more effective 3-4 combination and the Rangers have struggled to get a regular 5 man rotation. In truth there isn't much between the teams. Edge: Even

Relief Pitching

Wheeler, Weathers, Strickland, Franco

Masset, Benoit, Fultz, Myette

This is where the Rangers pitching has the edge. Fultz was fantastic all year and with Myette, Masset and the increasingly effective Joquin Benoit for company the Rangers top 4 relievers are very strong. The Mets have less depth and will rely on their starters to eat the innings. Wheeler and Strickland look the business. Edge: Rangers

Last Meeting: Rangers edged the Mets 2-1 back in week 10 Inter-league play but all 3 games were close, the decider going to extra innings.

Overall - Edge... Even! Should be a classic and 7 games seems a distinct possibility unless the Mets offence blows red hot or the Rangers pitching is deadly. Here's hoping for a Ranger win!

Continental Series

The Mariners were very quickly out of the starting gate in their series with Boston. They held on for a hard fought victory in Game 1 and doubled their lead on the back of a Garcia shutout in Game 2. Game 3 in Boston saw the Mariners edge another close game leaving them 1 to progress. Boston found their feet in Game 4 pounding out 15 hits and amassing 8 walks in an easy win and when they took Game 5 by the odd run in 7 there were a few nervy look from the Seattle dugout. They needn't have worried though as they eased to a comfortable 6-3 victory to advance to the final.

In the NL the Giants faced the Braves and the boys from the Bay area announced themselves as a serious team for next year as they swept the Braves. Game 1 was anchored on the back of a good pitching performance by Williams as the Giants took the lead. Game 2 was a very even affair with the Giants holding on for the win and on travelling to Atlanta the Giants wrapped things up with a 6-3 and then an 8-4 victory sending themselves into the final as favourites to take the now coach-less reigning World Champions.

National Series

Minnesota drew first blood at home in their National Series match-up against Oakland but it was a short lived lead as the A's struck back and returned home even following a really tight game. The Oakland pitching then proceeded to shut down the Twins offence as they won 2 games on the bounce conceding only a run in each game but Minnesota showed bottle to fight back and take Game 5 by the odd run in 9 giving themselves a fighting chance on home turf. Game 6 was the turning point as the Twins took the game in 12 innings to knot the series and they walked all over the weary A's in the decider winning by 10 runs to 1 to progress to the final.

San Diego faced Washington in the NL side of the draw and they were soon behind as they were beaten soundly in the opening game. The bounced back with victory in a tight second game and took the lead in the series with a tough road win in Game 3. Washington knotted things again in Game 4 again by the odd run and the Padres took the final game in Washington 5-4 to return home with a slender lead. The victory was sealed in Game 6 with a shutout as the Padres late season form takes them into the final.

In Other News

Pre-season games got under way this week and one or two things caught my eye. Colorado took 8 games including a series win over the Dodgers (you still here Kevin), Tampa looked good then ordinary then good again and the same could be said for the Angels. A few teams could be put in the inconsistent category but that could be said for the regular season too. I don't read too much into pre-season as it is unlikely the best teams is out on the field but it can be the making of some players like a couple of young guys I have at the Mets. They have a good pre-season and they are in on opening day on the back of those performances and a few of my lot have had careers born that way.

Anyway, enough ramblings for now, I hope everyone has a great Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year. Best wishes from me and good luck for next season.

Deadline for Contributions: Saturday 14th January 2006