

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



Alistair Brearley, Reds



Chicago travelled to Texas to face the #1 seeded Rangers in the opening game of the ALCS and it proved to be a real pitching duel between Cordero and Guerrero. There were only 11 hits in the game 6 off Guerrero who gave up 2 runs, enough for the Rangers to draw first blood. Game 2 was equally as tight with only 10 hits in the game. Texas starter Garcia pitched 7 scoreless innings and the bullpen saw out the job for a shutout by not letting anybody on base. Davis foe the White Sox was unlucky in defeat going 8 innings for 1 run, but the bats let Chicago down again. Back to Chicago for game 3 and the White Sox lead after 7 innings but the Rangers bullpen again held them scoreless for the remainder of the game but the same couldn't be said for their Chicago counterparts who surrendered the lead and the game giving the Rangers 1 game more to make the World Series. Game 4 was almost a carbon copy of game 3 with the White Sox leading late and the Rangers rallying against the bullpen for a come from behind win and passage into the World Series. Hard luck on Chicago as they probably didn't deserve to be swept but all power to Mike and his Rangers who have made it to the big one again.

Over in the NL the Mets travelled to their divisional winners Atlanta with a view to putting the record straight following a disappointing regular season by the Mets. New York were quickly out of the blocks with a couple of runs in the 1st but that was matched by the Braves in the bottom of the frame. That was the scoring until the 7th when the Braves exploded for 10 runs and game 1 was safely in the hands of the Braves. Game 2 looked to be heading the same way as the Braves jumped on Mets starter Glavine early and led by 5 runs after 5 innings. New York gradually built up a head of steam and tied the game in the 9th. Into the 11th and a 2 out double by Karim Garcia was converted into the go ahead run by a Redman single and the Mets hung on to knot the series. Game 3 saw the Mets start quickly knocking Braves starter Shearer out after 3 innings and pounding the Braves pen. A late rally by Atlanta wasn't enough and the Mets went a head in the series in front of their home fans. Game 4 was New York all over, score early and hang on for the win. Bochtler pitched well against former Met 1st round pick Grant Roberts and 2 homers from Wiggington was the difference between the sides. Game 5 saw the Braves start well but the more consistent Mets lumber was again the deciding factor in the win. Rookie Lindstrom pitched well for the Mets and Reyes and Danny Garcia with 3 RBI's each sent the Mets through for a repeat of last year World Series against the Rangers. If it's anything like last years series it will be a great match up.

Milwaukee will play Colorado in the Continental Series following their 4-1 & 4-2 victories over Toronto and Cincinnati respectively and in the National Series Minnesota will face Houston following wins over Oakland and Washington.

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Preview by Mike Sim

Before I start the preview here is an article on Ranger C Matt Pearce who will be playing in his 6th World Series (surely a record).

Matt Pearce - A quick word on Pearce who'll be appearing in his 6th World Series, starting in each at C for Texas. Pearce has been solid without setting the stage alight - his World Series career reads .266av (32-120), 4hr.17rbi. He is the only survivor from the first Texas World Series appearance back in season 6 and in fact most of the current line-up were not around for the 4 Ranger losses. Only the current trio of starting pitchers Cordero, Garcia and Benoit played much in those series - their appearances were in the bullpen, with very mixed results (as you might expect on a team that lost).

Pearce has had much of the offensive load taken off him by the superb play of Carl Everett, Glen Davis and Dave Berg, but season 14 may start with all 3 of those in retirement and the burden very much on Pearce. For the next (up to) 7 games though he'll enjoy just being one of the guys.

Rangers v Mets Preview (Texas viewpoint!)

C

TR - Matt Pearce (.283, 25hr, 96rbi, 25sb)

NM - Vance Wilson (.264, 7hr, 58rbi, 0sb)

Pearce is appearing in an incredible 6th World Series as a starter and his presence behind the plate really helps to settle the Ranger starters. His bat has some pop too, slightly more than that of Wilson who is in his first season as the Mets starting C, replacing Mike Piazza. Wilson has a rep as a solid catcher and a good clutch hitter.

Edge: Rangers

1b

TR - Mark Teixeira (.297, 14hr, 69rbi, 14sb)

NM Jason Phillips (.308, 23hr, 103rbi, 14sb)

Two switch hitting first basemen, but it is Phillips who is the better all-round player. Teixeira has had a great year but his defence has been shaky at times. Errors from this position could be a critical factor.

Edge: Mets

2b

TR - Dave Berg (.361, 33hr, 96rbi, 28sb)

NM - Jose Reyes (.347, 29hr, 108rbi, 33sb)

There is nothing to choose between 2 of the premier players in the league. Berg has indicated that he is leaning towards retirement after this season but is more than capable of winning a World Series MVP. The same can be said for Reyes - that he is capable of winning a MVP in this series. Neither player was dominant in last season's World Series and both should be fired up this time around.

Edge: Even

3b

TR - Drew Mansfield (.267, 17hr, 62rbi, 0sb)

NM -Ty Wiggington (.357, 33hr, 154rbi, 47sb)

Mansfield started the season in the NL East with the Braves but joined the Rangers mid-season and has proven an excellent acquisition, filling the troublesome 3b spot and giving some quality at bats. Wiggington is one of the premier players in MLB6, almost certainly leaning towards retirement, he'll be desperate to go out with a bang. He had a monster series last year with 5HRs and 11RBIs in a losing effort. He'll be the man the Rangers must be wary of.

Edge: Mets

SS

TR - Michael Young (.270, 18hr, 70rbi, 10sb)

NM - Casey Blake (.256, 8hr, 47rbi, 0sb)

Young had a big series last year with 8rbi from the 9 spot in the line-up. He's had a solid year and is a tough out. Blake has a bit more pop than you'd expect and may contribute down the order for the Mets.

Edge: Rangers

LF

TR - David Delluci (.287, 19hr, 93rbi, 22sb)

NM - Karim Garcia (.317, 4hr, 41rbi, 8sb)

Delluci was on the bench last season but has broken into the starting line-up after a good season. Garcia played pretty well all year, and hit for a high average, much as he did this time last year.

Edge: Even

CF

TR - Carl Everett (.387, 50hr, 163rbi, 31sb)

NM - Mike Cameron (.319, 16hr, 75rbi, 34sb)

Cameron has been the Mets leadoff guy for a while but really struggled this time last year. Everett only joined the Rangers in week 2 but his season has been nothing short of remarkable, leading the league in a number of categories and flirting with .400 for a while. He is another who'll likely retire after the series so he'll want to go out on a high.

Edge: Rangers

RF

TR - Drew Meyer (.268, 0hr, 39rbi, 13sb)

NM - Jeremy Burnitz (.288, 12hr, 79rbi, 21sb)

Meyer played in 101 games and is likely to be a fixture in the future for the Rangers. He lacks power but gets on base and is a durable player. Burnitz has impressed since joining the Mets, offering speed and some power. His contribution may be vital.

Edge: Mets

DH

TR - Glen Davis (.356, 28hr, 124rbi, 41sb)

NM - Carlos Beltran (.304, 6hr, 76rbi)

Davis would be the starting C on many teams but he is content to DH and influence games with his bat. He's a great talent and can change a game in a single swing. Beltran shares platoon duties with Redman and this pair are usually pretty solid.

Edge: Rangers

SP

TR - Francisco Cordero (19-6, 3.15era), Rosman Garcia (17-4, 3.56era), Carlos Almanazar (16-6, 4.00era), Joaquin Benoit (16-8, 4.41era)

NM - Tom Glavine (13-7, 3.80), Matthew Lindstrom (9-10, 4.53), Steve Trachsel (13-5, 4.28), Doug Bochtler (6-12, 4.87)

The Rangers starting 4 all notched 15 wins and the top 2, Cordero and Garcia are amongst the best in MLB6 on their day. Cordero didn't fare well in the World Series last year as the Mets appeared to have his number. Garcia was better, but in the end it came down to Almanazar in G7. Carlos has been in and out of form the past few weeks and is a slight worry for the Rangers. The Mets opted not to use Scott Strickland in the NLCS, preferring rookie of the year candidate Matthew Lindstrom who pitched pretty well in the clinching G5. Bochtler, Glavine and Trachsel are very solid veterans. Mike Stanton might get a start.

Edge: Texas should hold the advantage here if Cordero and Garcia pitch to their capabilities.

RP

TR - Aaron Myette (11-5, 2.89, 11sv), Nick Masset (4-4, 3.78, 4sv), Aaron Fultz (6-5, 3.85, 8sv)

NM - Mike Williams (4-3, 4.35), John Franco (14-7, 4.66), David Weathers (7-9, 5.42)

Aaron Myette enjoyed an excellent season and Nick Masset has 4 saves so far this post-season. With relief pitchers, stats and w-l records can be misleading. What you are after is a guy who will keep you ahead, or keep you in a game. The Mets bullpen doesn't have the numbers of the Rangers but is veteran and will match the Rangers.

Edge: Even

Overall: Hitting edge - Texas 5, New York 4. Pitching edge - Texas 1.5, New York 0.5

So Texas has a slight edge going in which is what you'd expect of a team which won 18 games more but let's not forget the Mets have already eliminated the Pirates (103 wins) and the Braves (96 wins), so they'll not be intimidated one bit. The teams know a bit about each other from last season's World Series, which went the Rangers way 4-3, though the Mets lead 1-0, 2-1 and 3-2 - in other words it was close all the way through. I believe the series will be closer than the records suggest, though whether it'll go to 7 games remains to be seen. Both teams are worthy champions of their respective leagues and all that's left is to wish Kevin good luck.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

After a heart breaking end to the season for Brewers' fans the Sentinel sat down with Skipper Paul Denyer to ask his views on season 13 and his hopes and fears from season 14 in MLB6.

MJN: "so what are your views to the end of the season?"

PD: "disappointing to say the least, but I felt our only chance of making the playoffs in the last few weeks as the gap between us and the White Sox was just too much to make up as Chicago were playing some great baseball and only 9-0/8-1 weeks were going to overcome that gap. To lose out on run difference was hard to take because then you start looking at games where we lost by one run where we could have won and made the playoffs.

MJN: "who do you think will win the World Series?"

PD: "I think it is a series too far for the Mets to be honest, and I hope my good friend from Texas can improve his World Series record from 1-4 even though my series loss in the last series of the season against the Rangers cost us a playoff place :-). Saying that Skipper Gibson did a hell of a job with the Mets this season and that was an excellent win over the Braves last week in the NLCS."

MJN: "hopes and fears for next season?"

PD: "I feel we are becoming a very good team with the pitching which has been developed over the last few tough seasons and the batting came on leaps and bounds with Belliard, Hammonds and Lansing having good seasons. My fears – well I feel as we become a decent team that can compete till week 18 several other teams are in that group as well – Texas, Chicago, Tampa, Toronto and Yankees are all good teams with exceptional coaches. It will be a hell of a fight for the AL wildcard next season, even more exciting than season 13."

MJN: "pleased with the draft?"

PD: "yes, we needed more bats after concentrating on the pitching side for a couple of seasons. We needed outfielders after releasing Christensen at the end of last season, both picks are way off playing week in week out for the team but could end up platooning or pinch hitting as we go along. We may be in the market for a veteran outfielder through a trade or free agency."

Chicago Tribune

While I felt going in that the Rangers were clearly the better team, I was expecting to give them a good run for their money. Certainly I wasn't expecting to get swept, and given how close every game was I think we were a little hard done by. Losing both games in Texas by a single run, we needed a big performance at home to mount a comeback. It looked like we were getting it as Matt Walsh, hero of the divisional round, pitched seven scoreless innings, taking his running total to 25 in this year's playoffs, before blowing up for four runs in the eighth. Neagle came on in relief and let slip another three and, in one inning, we went from 5-0 up to 5-7 down. We never really recovered from that, and although we scored three runs in the bottom of the ninth in game four - that made the score look closer than the game actually was.

Overall, disappointed with the result but satisfied with the season. The young players we've been trying to bring along for the last two seasons have all accumulated solid form. Our young starting rotation had an excellent season (five of them in the top 17 in the AL starters by ERA) and, I hope, can only get better. The main focus for improvement for next season will be the bullpen. I tried to make some changes here with some free agent moves towards the end of the season but they didn't really work out - expect some more free agent moves near the start of next season in this area.

So far in the draft I'm satisfied with my picks, wasn't in a position to pick up any players likely to have an immediate impact so I went for a couple of long term development picks. They'll spend a couple of seasons in the minors before making any sort of contribution. In the third round there's not many players left I like the look of - if I don't get one of those few then expect the player not to survive spring training.

Deadline for Contributions: Saturday 25th February 2006