

BRASSWORLD JOURNAL

Volume 5, Issue 1

April 2010



Inside this issue...

2010 BRASSWORLD PREVIEW

Teams to Beat

Players to Watch

Things to Know

BRASSWORLD Honor Roll

Logo-maina with Jim!

Eight is 'Not' Enough

Eight years of BRASSWORLD now.

Some might reflect back and consider the passage of time that has occurred. Corey and I created a league we knew was well founded, but like any new venture we had no true idea if it would catch on and carry a spirit of its own.

It did and it has.

It has pleased me to see the league serve as an inspiration for yet another BRASS-league. I field questions and inquiries from other commissioners as well, asking how we do things and such. I (and I hope, WE) have made friends with others from disparate areas of the country. And surely we all remember Paolo in Roma...

So while eight was enough for Dick Van Patten, it most certainly will not be enough for BRASSWORLD. Our league is strong, our future brighter. An eighth champion will be crowned this year, but it will not be our last and it might not even be our best, but it will be a team that carves its place in our lore.

What follows are the annual assessments of the BRASSWORLD landscape. Read who may be on a youthful rise and who may be stumbling with the passage of time, as we all will.

Read on to learn more...

Cobb Division

Alaska Hot Stoves 2009: 113-49			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	McCann	SP	Lester
1B	Fielder	SP	Cook
2B	K. Matsui	SP	Moehler
3B	An. LaRoche	SP	Bailey
SS	Barmes	SP	Buchholz
OF	McClouth	CL	Bell
OF	Cuddyer	SU	Park
OF	Thames	SU	Breslow

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 992 (1)
Runs Allowed: 676 (2)
Road Wins: 51 (T-1)
Team OPS: 864 (1)
Team HR: 246 (2)
Total Bases: 2820 (2)
Stolen Bases: 71 (5)
Fielding X-Pct: 705 (7)

LAST YEAR The Hot Stoves racked up the best regular-season record in BRASSWORLD, then rode that stellar squad all the way to the championship.

TRANSACTION REPORT Alaska followed a path similar to the one taken by Montreal after repeat titles and a near-miss in three seasons, selling high after winning it all. A lack of cash flow left Alaska with little choice but to lay low this off-season, while also unloading a key cog in Jonathan Papelbon.

DOWN ON THE FARM As with most winning teams, high draft picks weren't available, which means the Hot Stoves might have to go through a lean year or two to restock the minor league system. On the plus side, Logan Morrison could create a good-problem-to-have logjam with Prince Fielder, young stars like Jon Lester and Brian McCann should keep the team competitive, and Clay Buchholz and Michael Bowden add to the deep stable of young Red Sox hurlers.

PITCHING Lester's the clear ace in a shallow rotation that also includes Aaron Cook and then a big drop-off to the likes of Brian Moehler, Mark Hendrickson and not-ready-for-prime-time starters Buchholz and Homer Bailey. Heath Bell anchors a bullpen that can still hold its own with Chan Ho Park and Craig Breslow in the mix, despite the loss of Papelbon.

HITTING Not bad for a team that's broke. You won't find too many batting orders with a better core than Fielder, McCann and Cuddyer. The problem is that it gets thin in a hurry from there, as big pullbacks by former stalwarts like Brian Giles, Mark DeRosa and Mike Aviles have hurt a once overloaded offense.

PROGNOSTICATION If Alaska really wants to take a run at the post-season, it wouldn't be impossible, assuming a few well-placed trades. There's also the option of blowing things up and restocking the farm system with a slew of young talent, via the trade market. More likely, owner Chris Blake will take the middle ground, hanging onto key cogs with multiple years of service time left, reloading incrementally for the next year or two, and falling short of the playoffs, not to mention .500.

Mequon Keglers 2009: 102-60			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Doumit	SP	Weaver
1B	Pena	SP	Wells
2B	Uggla	SP	Cueto
3B	Rolen	SP	Chamberlain
SS	M. Izturis	SP	Bush
OF	Braun	CL	Lidge
OF	Hunter	SU	McClung
OF	Ramirez	SU	Putz

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 922 (2)
 Runs Allowed: 754 (8)
 Road Wins: 48 (3)
 Team OPS: 848 (2)
 Team HR: 261 (1)
 Total Bases: 2867 (1)
 Stolen Bases: 35 (10)
 Fielding X-Pct: 696 (8)

LAST YEAR Another elite team from the Cobb may well have won the title if not for an LCS meeting with nemesis Alaska. Mequon went down in six games, falling just short of an AL pennant.

TRANSACTION REPORT An oddly quiet off-season for a team that had plenty of money to spend on the free agent market or in trade. Like the rival Hot Stoves, the Keglers may have figured they were too far from being legitimate title contenders to warrant an off-season buying binge, opting instead to bide their time with a decent collection of keepers.

DOWN ON THE FARM Again, lots of wins mean a tougher starting point in trying to stock the farm system. Brett Lawrie could provide infield help by 2011. There are some intriguing Y1s and Y2s on this club, though, especially on the pitching side. Randy Wells, Johnny Cueto and Joba Chamberlain lead the way.

PITCHING Wells and Jered Weaver form a solid pair of right-handers, though the Keglers would surely rather have those two as number-three and -four starters, rather than as a top two. Cueto, Chamberlain and David Bush round out a rotation with upside but not a lot of present-day value. On the relief side, when Brad Lidge is your closer...that means Brad Lidge is your closer.

HITTING Freaking loaded. Ryan Braun, Torii Hunter, Manny Ramirez, Dan Uggla, Carlos Pena, Scott Rolen form a potent lineup core that will be especially deadly against left-handed pitching. That's what makes it doubly frustrating that the Keglers didn't do more to augment their rotation and shore up their bullpen.

PROGNOSTICATION It's hard to figure what Mequon was thinking this off-season, leaving nearly \$20 million in the bank while heading into the 2010 season with a bunch of holes in the pitching staff. A playoff run should be doable. Where it's a deep run will depend on how aggressive the Keglers are with in-season upgrades.

Silver Sluggers 2009: 98-64			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	R. Hernandez	SP	Lincecum
1B	Howard	SP	W. Rodriguez
2B	Ellis	SP	Zambrano
3B	Teahen	SP	Davies
SS	E. Cabrera	SP	Richmond
OF	Reimold	CL	Guerrier
OF	Hamilton	SU	Jepsen
OF	Beltran	SU	Boyer

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 856 (4)
 Runs Allowed: 652 (1)
 Road Wins: 38 (5)
 Team OPS: 790 (4)
 Team HR: 207 (4)
 Total Bases: 2469 (4)
 Stolen Bases: 107 (4)
 Fielding X-Pct: 754 (2)

LAST YEAR Stop us if you've heard this before: Top-notch team falls short in the Cobb Division standings, fares well early in the playoffs, then runs into the buzzsaw from Alaska.

TRANSACTION REPORT Silver's biggest off-season deals saw the Sluggers send away slugging outfielders Jayson Werth and Bobby Abreu for Melky Cabrera, Emmanuel Burriss, outfield prospect Josh Reddick, and three young pitchers. After that, here was another team that stuck its finger into the wind, studied the landscape, and kept its free agent powder dry, with an eye toward competing in 2011 and beyond.

DOWN ON THE FARM Not the strongest collection of MINs, that's for sure. On the other hand, phenom catcher Bryce Harper could produce more value than many other teams' best five prospects. Some nimble drafting and prior moves also netted some Y1s with upside. Nolan Reimold, Drew Stubbs and Everth Cabrera look like the best of the bunch.

PITCHING Few teams can trot out a top three to rival Tim Lincecum, Wandy Rodriguez and Carlos Zambrano. If starting pitching were the only criterion for winning in BRASSWORLD, the Sluggers would be one of this year's favorites. Unfortunately the bullpen is shaky and the hitting...

HITTING ...has holes of its own. Ryan Howard is a lovely centerpiece, Reimold provides instant offense, Beltran has a strong card with limited at-bats, and you have to admire any team with three Cabreras on the roster. But this is far from a championship-level lineup. It's not even close to a typical Lenny Luchtefeld lineup, given the owner's history of Strat success.

PROGNOSTICATION Make it three-for-three on 2009 Cobb Division powerhouses that aren't title contenders in 2010 but aren't rushing to cash in everything not bolted to the floor either. This is another team in limbo that could try to sneak into the bottom rung of the playoffs. On the other hand, the lineup is merely decent, and the bullpen and back of the rotation are weak. This is an intriguing playoff sleepers based on the top three starters alone. The question is if Silver will get there.

Greenville Black Sox 2009: 72-90			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Laird	SP	Penny
1B	Lee	SP	Lowe
2B	Pedroia	SP	Harang
3B	Young	SP	Happ
SS	Ryan	SP	Snell
OF	Damon	CL	Qualls
OF	Winn	SU	Moylan
OF	Milledge	SU	Gregerson

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 610 (11)
 Runs Allowed: 695 (6)
 Road Wins: 34 (T-8)
 Team OPS: 702 (10)
 Team HR: 104 (12)
 Total Bases: 2121 (10)
 Stolen Bases: 131 (2)
 Fielding X-Pct: 765 (1)

LAST YEAR About as distant a fourth place as you'll ever see, the Black Sox knew not to try to force the issue last season against the murderer's row at the top of last year's Cobb.

TRANSACTION REPORT Finally, a team that spent some off-season dough! Greenville's big catch was a five-year, \$25 million deal for Michael Young that looks swell for the 2010 lineup but might start to sting in two or three years. Still, the Black Sox spent money elsewhere to back up the Young deal, nabbing Brad Penny, Derek Lowe, Brendan Ryan and Randy Winn, and extending Johnny Damon's contract for an extra year. Lots of mid-tier shopping here.

DOWN ON THE FARM An eclectic mix, with Freddie Freeman and Todd Frazier leading a decent collection of offensive prospects. We like Mark Rzepczynski as a Y1, though there's not a ton of premium young talent elsewhere.

PITCHING Penny, Lowe and Rzepczynski offer support to a rotation that also includes veteran Aaron Harang, Ian Snell and J.A. Happ. Pretty much the definition of decent, but not great. The bullpen, on the other hand, is very strong, led by Chad Qualls, Peter Moylan, Jason Frasor and strike-throwing newcomer Luke Gregerson.

HITTING The offense is in much better shape. Young's beastly card will look good alongside Dustin Pedroia, Derrek Lee and Martin Prado. The offense gets thinner in the outfield after Damon, though.

PROGNOSTICATION The Black Sox clearly moved from the lower class to the middle class of BRASSWORLD with its off-season moves. In a severely depleted Cobb Division, that could count for a lot, even a playoff spot. How Greenville might fare against more elite competition later on remains an open question, though.

South Range Mariners 2009: 61-101			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Mathis	SP	Blanton
1B	Helton	SP	Looper
2B	Lopez	SP	Johnson
3B	Kouzmanoff	SP	Moyer
SS	Crosby	SP	Richard
OF	Bourn	CL	Street
OF	A. Jones	SU	Robertson
OF	Hawpe	SU	Hanrahan

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 619 (10)
 Runs Allowed: 829 (10)
 Road Wins: 27 (T-10)
 Team OPS: 665 (12)
 Team HR: 123 (11)
 Total Bases: 2001 (12)
 Stolen Bases: 175 (1)
 Fielding X-Pct: 725 (5)

LAST YEAR It was an ugly season for South Range, as the Mariners tried to dig out from some unfortunate contracts decisions and begin the rebuilding process.

TRANSACTION REPORT That rebuild could take a while, give the lack of premium talent on the roster and the lack of funds in the account. South Range opted mostly for playing time acquisitions, nabbing fill-ins like Randy Johnson, Braden Looper and sentimental favorite Ken Griffey Jr. for low prices.

DOWN ON THE FARM Christian Friedrich and Josh Vitters form a potent one-two punch for the future rotation and lineup, respectively. Adam Jones and Alcides Escobar the best of a diverse group of Y-contract players that owner Mike Swanson hopes to ride to contender status in the coming seasons.

PITCHING The rotation won't be pretty, with Joe Blanton leading the way and Johnson, Looper and Jamie Moyer offering scant support. Oddly, the bullpen has some very good pieces, led by lights-out closer Huston Street. The Mariners would do well to dangle those bullpen assets in trade – there won't be many games to save this season.

HITTING Jones, Escobar, Michael Bourn and Michael Saunders are attractive building blocks. Todd Helton and Brad Hawpe offer solid lefty bats, though like their fellow Rockie Street, they should be shopped for future help if South Range wants to goose its rebuilding efforts.

PROGNOSTICATION Expect another year of South Range fans enjoying the concessions more than the play on the field. Sixty-five or fewer wins seem likely, and the Mariners have nothing to lose by selling veterans pieces for more prospects at this point.

Waikiki Rabbits 2009: 57-105			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Ruiz	SP	Danks
1B	Loney	SP	Feldman
2B	Kinsler	SP	Gorzelanny
3B	Reynolds	SP	Millwood
SS	Wilson	SP	Bannister
OF	Young	CL	Gregg
OF	Schumaker	SU	Green
OF	Rowand	SU	Feliz

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 644 (9)
 Runs Allowed: 933 (11)
 Road Wins: 27 (T-10)
 Team OPS: 705 (9)
 Team HR: 154 (6)
 Total Bases: 2237 (9)
 Stolen Bases: 49 (8)
 Fielding X-Pct: 603 (12)

LAST YEAR Seeking to dig out from the mess left by previous ownership, Waikiki continued to stockpile assets as it eyes a return to contention in the next couple years.

TRANSACTION REPORT The Rabbits were active this off-season. The biggest trade saw Nelson Cruz dealt for Carlos Ruiz and Skip Schumaker, an extremely puzzling trade for a team that would normally seek to hoard premium keepers like Cruz. Trades with Dublin (driftwood and cash for James Loney and Jack Wilson) and Aspen (Paul Konerko for Jhonny Peralta) made a lot more sense. Waikiki's free agent spending was limited to minor pieces like Kevin Gregg and Ivan Rodriguez.

DOWN ON THE FARM Scott Sizemore will be an instant starter at second base next season, Casey Kelly is a top pitching prospect in an organization that knows how to groom pitching and Dustin Ackley is a pure hitter who'll spend seven or eight years near the top of the Waikiki order. Finishing near the bottom of the standings has its advantages.

PITCHING Watch out. The Rabbits rotation isn't quite ready for prime time, but it could be downright terrifying in a year or two. John Danks is a solid left-handed anchor, Chris Tillman is a gas-throwing righty who the Orioles love, Scott Feldman is a vastly underrated righty on the Rangers' improving pitch-to-contact staff, and Neftali Feliz is a force of nature who could one day annihilate Planet Earth with his triple-digit fastball and wipeout breaking stuff. Combined with Kelly, the seeds are there for a very intriguing staff in the foreseeable future.

HITTING Loney, Ian Kinsler, Wilson, Peralta and Mark Reynolds form a very good infield, and Buster Posey is a potential front-line player waiting in the wings at catcher. That infield depth, and a lack of corresponding quality in the outfield, only makes the Cruz trade that much stranger. Delmon Young and Fernando Martinez could still hold upside as post-hype outfield sleepers, at least.

PROGNOSTICATION Few teams boast a better foundation of young talent than Waikiki, and owner Matt Wright deserves high marks for staying the course and building a team could be a terror from say, 2012 to 2016. No playoff this year and probably not next, but if he can avoid more head-scratching trades like the Cruz deal, the Rabbits will be a perennial contender in BRASSWORLD.

The Ruth Round Up

Gotham City Gargoyles 2009: 108-54			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Napoli	SP	Haren
1B	Swisher	SP	Garza
2B	Coghlan	SP	Lackey
3B	C. Jones	SP	Tallett
SS	Renteria	SP	B. Anderson
OF	Willingham	CL	Rivera
OF	Cameron	SU	O'Day
OF	Murphy	SU	Franklin

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 906 (3)
Runs Allowed: 676 (2)
Road Wins: 51 (T-1)
Team OPS: 825 (3)
Team HR: 220 (3)
Total Bases: 2601 (3)
Stolen Bases: 43 (9)
Fielding X-Pct: 672 (10)

LAST YEAR This is becoming a pattern for the Gotham bunch: destroy the regular season and then stumble in the playoffs. No BW team has won more games and yet no hardware for Bill.

TRANSACTION REPORT A quiet off-season from the Gargoyles. The lone trade brought in infield depth in the form of Chris Getz. BRASSWORLD's greatest relief ace, Mo Rivera, did come over in Free Agency.

DOWN ON THE FARM Pedro Alvarez is closing in on a BW job. Lars Anderson is only a short step behind him. Young arms Jake Turner and Mike Montgomery are a bit further away but figure to continue the Gargoyle's steady stream of premium arms.

PITCHING Brandon Webb (Johnson Runner-up, 19-4, 3.06) will miss the 2010 season after off-season shoulder surgery. On the plus side, the Gargoyles historically have been BW's most well-pitched team and so Danny Haren (16-10, 3.96) and John Lackey will bump up in importance. Youngster Brett Anderson will be forced to graduate early, but worse problems could have befallen Gotham than the young ace-in-making starting his career now.

HITTING Chipper Jones is now the twice-crowned AL MVP after winning the award in successive seasons. In 2009 the ageless 3B hit .381 while socking 33 homers. Because of money concerns, only minor fill-ins were signed to supplement the offense. Still, Nick Swisher's 834 OPS bat returns while Mike Cameron should be better than his 2009 model (.232 BA, .314 OBP).

PROGNOSTICATION This is not a team to overlook, given the amazing win totals Bill has amassed. Would it not be ironic then if 2010 was the year he broke through despite what some insiders might call his most 'challenged' club in recent memory?

Hoboken Bums 2009: 80-82			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Olivo	SP	Cain
1B	Ortiz	SP	Guthrie
2B	Sanchez	SP	Arroyo
3B	Gordon	SP	D. Davis
SS	Jeter	SP	Parra
OF	DeJesus	CL	Soria
OF	Soriano	SU	Jenks
OF	Fukudome	SU	Morrow

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 689 (8)
 Runs Allowed: 694 (5)
 Road Wins: 37(6)
 Team OPS: 736 (8)
 Team HR: 137 (9)
 Total Bases: 2292 (7)
 Stolen Bases: 31 (11)
 Fielding X-Pct: 727 (4)

LAST YEAR A middling Bum squad qualified in the sixth spot and then was promptly swept away by Mequon.

TRANSACTION REPORT Shrewd signings saw the Bums secure veteran talent on the cheap as both David Ortiz and Alfonso Soriano will now wear Bums garb for two and a half million combined. Bronson Arroyo and Doug Davis cost a bit more, but starters who go to the post every five days rightfully cost some coin in BW.

DOWN ON THE FARM Tyler Matzek is the lone name that jumps out at the interested purveyor of the Hoboken farm- and he was brought in during the recent draft. Carlos Triunfel seems to have been a perpetual prospect.

PITCHING Matt Cain has earned “BW Ace” status now as he finished third in the Johnson balloting after going 19-8 with a 3.04 ERA. Three strong veterans line up behind Cain while Manny Parra looks to build on a reasonable rookie campaign (12-13, 136 whiffs). Joakim Soria still anchors the pen, but spring training issues with Brandon Morrow (74 K’s in 55 IP) and Rafael Perez (71 IP, 2.42) has Bum faithful wondering about the squad’s depth and what had been its strength.

HITTING Derek Jeter’s All Star (770 OPS) bat and glove returns as the focus of the offense. Big Papi comes over to give the Gums a legitimate force that is has lacked since Adam Dunn left. Too many first-base at bats went to Ross Gload in '09 and that is not a contender grade player at a power position in BW. Alex Gordon broke out with 21 homers and a .301 BA. He does that again and the Bums offense looks better.

PROGNOSTICATION The Bums continue to look like a second-tier BRASSWORLD club- good enough to be annoying, but not enough so as to slay a giant in the post-season. With seven million in cash on hand, Pete could make a move or two to step up mid-season if a window of opportunity appears.

Dublin GaelForce 2009: 75-87			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	B. Molina	SP	Suppan
1B	Berkman	SP	Redding
2B	Polanco	SP	Wellemeyer
3B	Blake	SP	Carmona
SS	Andrus	SP	Cahill
OF	Pence	CL	Valverde
OF	C. Ross	SU	Downs
OF	Choo	SU	Weathers

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 775 (5)
 Runs Allowed: 750 (7)
 Road Wins: 35 (7)
 Team OPS: 749 (6)
 Team HR: 152 (7)
 Total Bases: 2347 (6)
 Stolen Bases: 57 (7)
 Fielding X-Pct: 718 (6)

LAST YEAR

Dublin fell off, losing 87 games with average performances abounding on the club. No hitter found 100 ribbies and only Lance Berkman could belt more than 20 homers (28). On the mound only two starters reached double digits.

TRANSACTION REPORT

Bengie Molina was re-upped for 3 million over the next two seasons. Innings were brought in on the relative cheap while young 1B James Loney was sent away in a curious deal.

DOWN ON THE FARM

Force faithful are biding their time, waiting for Jason Heyward and Carlos Santana to claim their rightful spots on the big club. Martin Perez shines brightly not only on the farm but in all of BW.

PITCHING

Rookie Edsin Volquez led the staff in wins (13) while racking up 203 innings. Predictably, the stress on such a young arm came to light in spring training. For now the fireballing righty will rest his prize arm, but little is known of what he may contribute to the forthcoming campaign. Young Trevor Cahill has looked impressive in spring training, but he would be a rookie if he makes the club. And with Bronson Arroyo (4.33, 208 IP) signed away by the rival Bums, Jeff Suppan (6-13, 5.33 for PIG) might be called upon to pitch Opening Day. Oh my...

HITTING

The talk of camp has been the play of Elvis Andrus. Is a twenty-year old shortstop ready to crack an everyday lineup in BW? Word from the Dublin front office is that is indeed the case. If he produces with the glove his bat may be allowed to nurture. Lance Berkman remains the Force's stalwart and he has solid, if unspectacular help. Shin Shoo Choo's 854 OPS in a half a season of play portends of a breakthrough 2010 season.

PROGNOSTICATION

The Dublin pitching staff has too many question marks to consider them for playoff consideration. Yet, this is a bright-hued club if only for the impressive youth that is steadily rising through the ranks.

Plum Island Greenheads 2008: 41-121			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Sandoval	SP	Wakefield
1B	LaRoche	SP	Scherzer
2B	Eckstein	SP	Karstens
3B	Cantu	SP	Rookie Arm
SS	Tulowitzki	SP	Rookie Arm
OF	Pie	CL	Zumaya
OF	Church	SU	Dotel
OF	Guerrero	SU	Mota

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 569 (12)
 Runs Allowed: 964 (12)
 Road Wins: 21 (12)
 Team OPS: 676 (11)
 Team HR: 140 (8)
 Total Bases: 2082 (11)
 Stolen Bases: 66 (6)
 Fielding X-Pct: 621 (11)

LAST YEAR Oh how the mighty have fallen. One of BW's more consistent clubs decided to implode the team and angle sharply toward the future. The result was 121 losses- the most ever in the AL.

TRANSACTION REPORT Much sorting through the pitching remnants was done by Henry during free agency. The likes of Octavio Dotel, David Eckstein, Joel Zumaya and Charlie Morton were brought in on management-friendly contracts. The Zumaya deal in particular could prove an acquisition of shrewd foresight.

DOWN ON THE FARM Three-fourths of the future 'Heads infield bides their time. Starlin Castro (SS), David Cooper (1b) and Josh Bell (3b) are well thought of in BW circles. Arms Craig Kimbrel and Aaron Miller are close to following recent-graduate Tommy Hanson to the bigs.

PITCHING Carlos Zambrano is now gone, long the face of the Greenhead franchise. For the immediate future the team appears to need Tim Wakefield to lean on his decades of experience to educate his staff-mates. A spirited spring has been eyed amongst talented Wade Davis, Tommy Hanson, Phil Hughes, Max Scherzer and Jason Berken. All figure to see mound action in '10. Dustin McGowan, unfortunately, will lose another season to injury after enjoying a promising return (4.73, 110 IP) in '09.

HITTING Last off-season, the 'Heads brought in Jorge Cantu and Adam LaRoche on the cheap. They then went on to lead the offense with 47 combined home runs. Not too shabby. Much the same will be expected from the duo in 2010. Expect Troy Tulowitzki to bounce back from an injury that limited his field time (357 AB) and sapped much of his power (only 6). How much longer can Vlad Guerrero (840 OPS, 24 HR) bring it?

PROGNOSTICATION The Head's suffered through an historically miserable BW campaign in 2009. However, the road back will be quicker due to the solid infusion of strong-armed fireballers that have been assembled to formulate the core of the not-so-future staff. But that youth will once again be racked in '10, but the odds of PIG being bludgeoned for 121 losses again seems remote with this burgeoning talent.

Williamsburg Burgesses 2008: 78-84			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Y. Molina	SP	Oswalt
1B	Pujols	SP	Pelfrey
2B	Utley	SP	Niemann
3B	Zimmerman	SP	Ohlendorf
SS	Uribe	SP	Braden
OF	Dunn	CL	Fuentes
OF	Rasmus	SU	Rauch
OF	Victorino	SU	Coke

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 761 (6)
 Runs Allowed: 791 (9)
 Road Wins: 34 (T-8)
 Team OPS: 795 (5)
 Team HR: 195 (5)
 Total Bases: 2451 (5)
 Stolen Bases: 25 (12)
 Fielding X-Pct: 676 (9)

LAST YEAR Burgess faithful wiled away another hazy Potomac summer as their BW club played steady, but overall uninspired ball. However, they could not be faulted for their eyes being focused on the near future.

TRANSACTION REPORT Williamsburg went out in free agency and used its cash to build a middle-of-the-order unrivaled in BW. No free agent in BW history has been as desired as Albert Pujols was. Pujols brought his **FIVE MVP** awards to Williamsburg in exchange for \$45 million. But WIL did not stop there, augmenting Pujols with Adam Dunn (890 OPS for ASP), Shane Victorino (GG defense, 30 SB in VIR) and Roy Oswalt (19-6 for NOR).

DOWN ON THE FARM The pitching cupboard appears bare but hitters remain. Hank Conger could be an option if management ever feels the need to move Albert Pujols and his contract. Dee Gordon is the type of shortstop the big club lacks, but unfortunately is still a few years away from helping out.

PITCHING The Burgesses had a fair offense last year, only to see it betrayed by a middling effort from the moundsmen. So in was brought ace Roy Oswalt, a pitcher who has known nothing but success in Northwoods. Brian Fuentes (2.04, 24 SV) was brought in to close and his presence allows the bullpen to align more naturally as Jon Rauch (3.89), last year's closer, might prove more useful in his previous role of eighth-inning ace.

HITTING The Burgesses already had Chase Utley (917 OPS) and Ryan Zimmerman aboard. To them they've added on the aforementioned Pujols and Dunn and Victorino. This will become a powerful offense- even more so if youngster Colby Rasmus is prepared to claim centerfield.

PROGNOSTICATION The Burgesses bear the weight of expectations that are brought on by expansive financial outlays. The offense now has two MVP candidates in Pujols and Utley while the staff has an ace once more in Oswalt, a void felt since Johan Santana left two seasons ago. If the Burgesses are not playing for the AL pennant come October it will be a surprise.

New York Metz 2008: 87-75			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Posada	SP	Nolasco
1B	Morneau	SP	E. Jackson
2B	A. Cabrera	SP	Wolf
3B	Longoria	SP	Blackburn
SS	Aybar	SP	Kershaw
OF	Abreu	CL	Papelbon
OF	Ellsbury	SU	B. Wilson
OF	Drew	SU	R. Soriano

2009 AL Rankings

Runs Scored: 759 (7)
 Runs Allowed: 685 (4)
 Road Wins: 39 (4)
 Team OPS: 739 (7)
 Team HR: 127 (10)
 Total Bases: 2277 (8)
 Stolen Bases: 129 (3)
 Fielding X-Pct: 740 (3)

LAST YEAR The Metz found themselves in the playoffs after steady team-building. The reward was a experience-building loss to the Sluggers.

TRANSACTION REPORT The Metz were a whirl of postseason activity. A flurry of picks were exchanged and an uber-prospect was brought in (Jesus Montero). But the immediate impact will be found in the acquisitions of Bobby Abreu (806 OPS, 33 SB in SIL), the swindle of Jon Papelbon (1.64 ERA, 29 SV for ALA) and the landing of JD Drew (910 OPS) and now-healthy relief ace Rafael Soriano (1.27, 24 SV in '08) from the Moose. Jorge Posada was inked in free agency to assist Chris Iannetta behind the dish.

DOWN ON THE FARM Mike Stanton lingers in the minors like a storm collecting itself on the prairie. Dom Brown might be just as good and is a sweet swinging lefty to boot. Jesus Montero and Brett Wallace flat out rake for their positions while no pitcher not already in BW carries as much hype as Stephen Strasbourg. It all adds up to arguably the finest assemblage of young talent in all of BW.

PITCHING The starters are solid, if lacking an ace, an especially important role once the playoffs come around. Ricky Nolasco (14-10, 3.64) and Nick Blackburn (15-11, 2.89) are moving in that direction but have yet to achieve the moniker. Young Clayton Kershaw possesses the raw stuff to be an ace but that is much to expect of such an untested arm. Where the Metz will win games with their pitching is with its superior bullpen. Jon Papelbon has been one of the best closers in the AL since he arrived in BW while Rafael Soriano has lights-out stuff, while arms like Brian Wilson and Danys Baez are sent into early-game roles. Erudite C.J. Wilson brings his intriguing lefty arm to the Metz pen as well.

HITTING Last year the Metz hit 127 homers- fewest on the playoff clubs. ROY runner-up Evan Longoria (24 bombs) and Justin Morneau (23) shouldered the run production load. They will once more as the incoming Metz set-up better as table-setters rather than producers. No matter- Longoria and Morneau are up to the task, it would appear.

PROGNOSTICATION The Metz are very, very close to being **THE** AL team. That time may arrive in 2010 if the offense overachieves and the starting pitching can hand over enough leads to the dominant pen. No matter how the vagaries of the 2010 season

shake out, the Metz should be a playoff club and should be enjoying more than one round of excitement.

The Aaron Assemblage

Annadale Anteaters 2008: 39-123			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Pierzynski	SP	Santana
1B	Overbay	SP	Myers
2B	Loretta/Kennedy	SP	Garland
3B	Feliz	SP	Floyd
SS	Furcal	SP	Owings
OF	Lind	CL	Heilman
OF	Rowand	SU	Grabow
OF	Span/Spilborghs	SU	Burnett

Seven Things to Know

1. The Anteaters improved by 9 wins over last year.
2. Annadale went 21-22 in one run games.
3. The Anteater offense hit into two triple plays in 2009.
4. Aaron Rowand was 3rd in the NL in HBP, with 15.
5. Three fielders (Feliz, Teahen and Loretta) were in the top 10 in NL errors.
6. Garland and Santana each had 20 losses.
7. Robert Smith is very patient.

LAST YEAR Annadale had another tough year, with a 48-114 finish in 2009. While it was an improvement on 2008's 39-123 record, the progress was not as great as Annadale fans would like. It was a tough year across the board as the offense posted a league-low 556 runs, the pitching staff's 4.59 ERA was third worst in the NL and the 118 errors committed was one off the total of NL leaders Georgia and Montreal. The lone bright spot was Gavin Floyd, who had just a 6-13 record but a respectable 3.57 ERA.

TRANSACTION REPORT Owner Robert Smith used free agency to provide some filler on the team, with low dollar contracts to Matt Herges, Mark Kotsay and Jason LaRue. Gavin Floyd and Anibal Sanchez were locked into long-term contracts, buying out their arbitration years. The big splash in the draft was selecting closer Andrew Bailey with the 3rd overall pick. Jason Motte, David Price and Gerardo Parra will be coming up from the farm to play key roles on the Anteaters this year.

DOWN ON THE FARM Madison Bumgarner will continue to refine his stuff with the farm team this year. Jason Castro and Kyle Drabek are top prospects that will help this team in the very near future.

HITTING The offense was anemic in 2009 and doesn't look much better for 2010. Adam Kennedy will provide some OBP at the top of the order but Adam Lind is the only bat in the lineup that will give pitchers some pause.

PITCHING The Anteaters have a great starting staff, with Johan Santana and Gavin Floyd at the top. Jon Garland and Jason Hammel will do well eating up innings and David Price is a future ace. Andrew Bailey will be a shut down closer.

PROGNOSTICATION Annadale's pitching is top-notch, but the lack of impact bats will lead to scoring struggles and this team will top out at 70 wins.

Exeter Alewives 2009: 62-100			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Miguel Montero	SP	U. Jimenez
1B	Luke Scott	SP	S. Baker
2B	Mike Fontenot	SP	C. Billingsley
3B	You pick!	SP	Z. Duke
SS	Alexei Ramirez	SP	J. Sanchez
OF	Ryan Ludwick	CL	???
OF	Carlos Gomez	SU	G. Burke
OF	Corey Hart	SU	M. Stetter

Seven Things to Know

1. This team will be the Exeter Alewives in 2010.
2. "New" owner Mike Forsythe had a record of 208-359 from his first stint in BRASSWORD.
3. Albert Pujols led the NL in batting average (.368), OBP (.447) and SLG (.704).
4. Albert Pujols was 2nd in the NL in HR (44) and RBL (124).
5. A.J. Burnett walked 10 batters in one of his starts.
6. Georgia tied for the NL lead in errors with Montreal (119).
7. Georgia played the longest game in the NL against Virginia (19 innings)

LAST YEAR It was a rough season for Georgia, as they went from a 105-57 record in 2008 to a 62-100 record in 2009. Further adding to the turmoil was an ownership change in mid-season, with Sean Britt leaving the league and Mike Forsythe taking over. The offense struggled with a .304 on-base percentage, meaning there weren't all that many folks on base when Albert Pujols came up to bat (the #1 and #2 spots in the batting order had aggregate .306 and .292 OBP). Billingsley, Baker and Burnett had good years, but the rest of the pitching staff struggled.

TRANSACTION REPORT Georgia watched Albert Pujols depart to Williamsburg in free agency and now the rebuilding will begin in earnest. They made a nice trade, picking up Alexei Ramirez from San Jose in exchange for John Baker. Chad Billingsley was signed to a long term deal, buying out his arbitration years. Spring injuries have also derailed their top two pitchers from last year, as neither Smoltz nor Escobar will be available to help in 2009.

DOWN ON THE FARM Georgia is excited about the long-term potential of slugging outfielders, Austin Jackson and Mike Trout. Jeremy Hellickson is one of the top pitching prospects in the game. Angel Villalona reportedly ran afoul of the law and his legal troubles could derail his status as a top prospect.

HITTING Apart from Miguel Montero, the offense is going to struggle this year. Mike Forsythe will have to do a lot of platooning and situational match-ups to try to extract something approaching league average in run production. 1B and 3B will be a huge mix-and-match involving Garrett Atkins, Edwin Encarnacion, Melvin Mora and Luke Scott.

PITCHING The rotation has a great top three in Ubaldo Jimenez, Scott Baker and Chad Billingsley. Zack Duke is a pretty darn good #4 and Jonathan Sanchez shows flashes of brilliance as the 5th starter. However the bullpen is full of young guys and retreads, with Mitch Stetter being the only reliever with a closer rating.

PROGNOSTICATION The inconsistent offense and lack of a bullpen will make it a feast-or-famine year for the Alewives, with more famine than feast. Expect a finish near the bottom of the division.

Taggart Titans 2009: 91-71			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	D. Navarro	SP	CC Sabathia
1B	N. Johnson	SP	Z. Greinke
2B	B. Roberts	SP	Y. Gallardo
3B	H. Blalock	SP	B. Zito
SS	J.J. Hardy	SP	"Orthus"
LF	J. Werth	CL	R. Troncoso
CF	C. Young	SU	M. Gonzalez
RF	J. Cust	SU	F. Francisco

Seven Things to Know

1. The team's name comes from a prominent family in the novel *Atlas Shrugged*.
2. Barry Zito recorded 30 outs in a single start, most in the NL.
3. Armando Galarraga pitched a 1-hitter against Aspen.
4. Aubrey Huff led the NL in doubles (59).
5. Jack Cust led the NL in strikeouts (193).
6. CC Sabathia hit three homers.
7. Taggart led the NL with 55 sacrifice flies.

LAST YEAR The Titans improved from their 74-88 record in 2008 to go 91-71 and make the playoffs, losing to Palo Alto in the wild card round. Aubrey Huff had an outstanding season, with a slash line of .331/.384/.567. Hong-Chih Kuo was an outstanding relief ace, yielding just 52 hits and striking out 100 in 80 relief innings.

TRANSACTION REPORT Mark Lentz has decided to keep the playoff run going, making a big trade in October to pick up Jayson Werth and giving up Josh Reddick in the process. In November Taggart gave up Fernando Perez to San Jose in exchange for Gary Sheffield, further solidifying the outfield. Figuring Aubrey Huff will turn back into a pumpkin, Taggart sent him off to New York and picked up Hank Blalock in exchange to man the hot corner.

DOWN ON THE FARM Some of Taggart's talent, including Josh Reddick and Brett Wallace were traded away in the offseason to acquire pieces to win now, reducing the talent level on the farm. However, Taggart still has some promising bats in Yonder Alonso, Tony Sanchez and Jemile Weeks,

HITTING After not contributing much following his free agent signing last year, Nick Johnson figures to start earning his money at first base this year. Brian Roberts and Nick Johnson will do a good job setting the table for sluggers Jayson Werth and Jack Cust to knock in. The back end of the lineup will be boom or bust, with lots of low contact but high power hitters.

PITCHING CC Sabathia, Zack Greinke and Yovanni Gallardo are going to be a fearsome threesome at the front of the Titans rotation. Barry Zito isn't exactly an ace, but he is rounding back into form and is certainly going to be fine as the fourth starter. The Titans don't have an established 5th starter, so it will be an "Orthus" consisting of rookie Jordan Zimmermann and Ryan Rowland-Smith (Hyphen!). Kuo is battling some injuries, but the bullpen is full of good parts that will pick up the slack.

PROGNOSTICATION Taggart has some holes in their lineup but the pitching will more than pick up the slack. A division title might be a little out of reach, but Taggart should definitely make the playoffs again.

Virginia Patriots 2009: 106-56			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	G. Soto	SP	C. Lee
1B	K. Youkilis	SP	R. Dempster
2B	L. Castillo	SP	A. Pettitte
3B	F. Tatis	SP	C. Pavano
SS	R. Theriot	SP	J. Saunders
LF	M. Byrd	CL	T. Hoffman
CF	Davis/Pagan	SU	D. Reyes
RF	N. Markakis	SU	S. White

Seven Things to Know

1. Virginia won the longest game in the NL last year, beating Georgia 4-3 in 19 innings.
2. Marlon Byrd hit 4 home runs in a game against Montreal (5 AB).
3. Virginia had to go 22-5 in September in order to hold of LPD for the division title.
4. Rajai Davis led the NL in steals (61).
5. Mike led the league in H&R attempted, SH attempted and IBB.
6. Virginia led the NL with a 3.23 ERA.
7. Derek Lowe (2.52) and Cliff Lee (2.84) were 1-2 in the NL ERA race.

LAST YEAR Virginia made the leap from a 87-75 record in 2008 to a 106-56 record and division title in 2009. Virginia won the NL pennant only to fall to the Alaska Hot Stoves in 7 games in the World Series. Virginia's key to success was a good offense and stellar pitching. Milton Bradley (.300/.382/.542) and Kevin Youkilis (.282/.367/.575) led the offense. Derek Lowe (19-5, 2.52 ERA) and Cliff Lee (18-8, 2.84 ERA) led an impressive pitching staff.

TRANSACTION REPORT Virginia was a big player in free agency, signing Ryan Dempster and Andy Pettitte for the rotation, Trevor Hoffman and Sean White for the bullpen and Luis Castillo to man second base. Their only failing in free agency was not resigning Joe Nathan, but I heard concern that after maybe one more season of being ridden hard in the bullpen he might blow out his arm, leading Mike Bardos to pass on a big contract. Nick Markakis was signed to a long term deal, buying out his arbitration years.

DOWN ON THE FARM Virginia's young players don't wow the prospect mavens, but there could be a diamond in the rough Peter Bourjos is probably the best of the bunch.

HITTING The Patriots offense will improve on their decent showing last year. Rajai Davis and Luis Castillo will do a good job getting on base at the top of the order, with Kevin Youkilis and Nick Markakis knocking them in. Youkilis will switch between first and third base, depending on whether Jim Thome or Fernando Tatis is in the lineup.

PITCHING The starting rotation won't be as strong as last year, as Pettitte and won't be able to put up numbers similar to Derek Lowe's from last year. However, Mike was able to get some great arms for the bullpen in free agency and it will be mighty tough for teams to come back if Virginia has the lead after 6 innings.

PROGNOSTICATION The improvement in the offense should make up for the decline in pitching and Virginia will have another 90-100 win season and be challenging for a division title.

San Jose Tasmanian Devils 2009: 104-58			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Baker/Blanco	SP	F. Hernandez
1B	Jones/Pearce	SP	J. Johnson
2B	B. Zobrist	SP	J. Sowers
3B	Ramirez/Harris	SP	J. Karstens
SS	J. Bartlett	SP	S. West
LF	Jones/Venable	CL	J. Nathan
CF	T. Gwynn Jr.	SU	D. Aardsma
RF	A. Ethier	SU	J. Affeldt

Seven Things to Know

1. Aramis Ramirez had 8 RBI in a game against Georgia.
2. Went 11-1 vs. West Oakland.
3. Jason Giambi led the NL in HBP (26).
4. Billy Butler led the NL in pinch hit batting average (.595).
5. Diamond base runners stole 55 bases and were caught only 8 times, good for a NL leading .873 SB%.
6. Got Vaughn Nuestr addicted to Montreal-style bagels.
7. Identical 52-29 record at home and on the road.

LAST YEAR Daniel Valois took the team from a 52-110 record in 2008 to a 104-58 record in 2009, showing that 2008 was a fluke given that the team won 98 games in 2007. Carlos Quentin (.288/.403/.548) was the biggest bopper. Mike Mussina put up a 18-2 record and 3.24 ERA, but retired after the playoffs, which was puzzling for some. Speaking of playoffs, Lafontaine Park was upset in the Wild Card round by Aspen and shortly thereafter long time owner Daniel Valois decided to hang it up. David Silverberg has taken over the team, which will be known as the San Jose Tasmanian Devils.

TRANSACTION REPORT David Silverberg has wasted no time putting his stamp on this team and there has been a ton of turnover. I'm not even sure where to begin on trades so I'll just take a pass. The best free agent signing was Joe Nathan as long as his arm holds up.

DOWN ON THE FARM Tim Beckham, Jesus Montero and Justin Smoak have all departed as part of trades in the offseason, but there still is talent down on the farm. Impressive arms include Jake Arietta, Jenrry Mejia and Hector Rondon. While none of the position players have the upside of those that departed, Eric Hosmer still has potential and Ryan Westmoreland was looking like a star until his recent health issue.

HITTING While some of the position players don't look impressive in full, they have large platoon splits that manager David Silverberg will use to his full advantage. Expect to see many different lineups and quite a bit of pinch-hitting depending on the current pitching match-up.

PITCHING Felix Hernandez and Josh Johnson are anchors of the rotation, but expect many different starters to shuffle through the other three slots. The bullpen is absolutely lights out with arms like Aardsma, Affeldt, Mathis, Nathan and Sanches. Don't expect many comebacks if San Jose has the lead after 6 innings.

PROGNOSTICATION While the makeup of the team is quite different from the 2009 edition, the end result is very similar. There may not be quite enough on this team to compete for the division title, but the Tasmanian Devils should finish with 90-95 wins and make the playoffs.

Palm Harbor Sandcranes 2009: 68-94			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	O. Santos	SP	R. Halladay
1B	B. Butler	SP	J. Vazquez
2B	F. Lopez	SP	T. Lilly
3B	T. Wigginton	SP	M. Palmer
SS	C. Guzman	SP	J.D. Martin
LF	C. Crawford	CL	J. Broxton
CF	J. Pierre	SU	P. Feliciano
RF	Ordonez/Rivera	SU	F. Cordero

Seven Things to Know

1. Turned a triple play.
2. For the 2nd year in a row, Juan Pierre had the only 5 SB game in BW.
3. Went 24-23 vs. LH starters.
4. Went 16-38 in the final two months.
5. Roy Halladay led the NL in K/BB ratio (7.23).
6. Only NL team to not have a complete game by a starting pitcher.
7. Adrian Beltre led the league in batting average vs. lefties (.455).

LAST YEAR Firstly, It was a bit of a disappointment in Palm Harbor, as the 95-67 season of 2008 gave way to a 68-94 season in 2009. The bats were impotent and the lack of pitching depth caught up to the team, as evidence by the 16-38 collapse to end the year once the at-bats and innings started running out.

TRANSACTION REPORT Palm Harbor didn't sign anyone in free agency and has made only one trade in the off-season, picking up Billy Butler and Geoff Blum from San Jose for newly drafted Garrett Jones.

DOWN ON THE FARM Youth isn't a strong part of the Sand Cranes' development. Perhaps the only prospect worth mentioning is Ian Desmond, who will perhaps help the Sand Cranes in 2011.

HITTING There is not a lot of power in this lineup apart from Billy Butler and Juan Rivera. Carl Crawford, Felipe Lopez and Magglio Ordonez will be able to get on base, but there's not much else going for this lineup and they will struggle to score 700 runs.

PITCHING Halladay, Vazquez and Lilly will pitch their hearts out, but won't have a lot of run support to help them out. The final two rotation spots are a bit thin and that may be a major problem for this team heading late into the season. The bullpen is solid with Broxton, Cordero and Feliciano but there may not be a lot of leads to hold.

PROGNOSTICATION Unfortunately it looks like 2008 was a one-hit wonder and the Sand Cranes are back to their losing ways. It might be best to pull the plug and do a total rebuild, nabbing whatever prospects they can for Halladay, Vazquez, etc., painful as that may be.

The Mays Milieu

Aspen Rainmakers 2009: 89-73			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	J. Kendall	SP	A. Wainwright
1B	Konerko/Kotchman	SP	J. Shields
2B	O. Hudson	SP	S. Kazmir
3B	C. Figgins	SP	R. Romero
SS	M. Scutaro	SP	R. Harden
LF	M. Holliday	CL	M. Thornton
CF	V. Wells	SU	G. Balfour
RF	Dukes/McGehee	SU	D. Meyer

Seven Things to Know

1. Aspen led the NL with 161 SB.
2. Rene attempted 20 squeezes, more than double the next highest team in the NL.
3. Rene was successful on 13 squeezes, almost double the next highest team in the NL.
4. Adam Dunn led the NL in walks (113).
5. Matt Holliday (11), Adam Dunn (9) and Kelly Shoppach (7) were 1-2-3 in the NL in IBB.
6. Kelly Shoppach led the NL in opponent SB% (.610).
7. Adam Dunn hit 14 HR at home and 24 HR on the road.

LAST YEAR Aspen's big foray into free agency after the 2008 season paid off, with the team improving their record from 64-98 to 89-73. The Rainmakers made the playoffs and upset the 104 win Lafontaine Park Diamonds in 6 games but lost in 7 games to the Northwoods Moose in the NLDS. Adam Dunn (.235/.372/.518) once again paced the offense. A brilliant relief corps made up for mediocre starting pitching.

TRANSACTION REPORT A lack of cash due to last year's free agent signing bonanza meant that the Rainmakers did not have the cash to keep Adam Dunn from departing via free agency. The emergence of Marco Scutaro allowed the team to trade Jason Bartlett for James Shields, improving the pitching depth behind Adam Wainwright. Shields and Wainwright were signed to identical long-term deals, buying out their arbitration and ensuring they will be 1-2 in the Rainmaker rotation for the next 5 years.

DOWN ON THE FARM There's not a lot to write home about, but Chris Carter and Ross Detwiler will be able to help the team in 2011 or 2012.

HITTING The offense does not have a lot of firepower and will instead rely on stringing together hits and walks to manufacture runs. Rene will most likely lead the NL in bunting and stolen bases in an attempt to generate offense.

PITCHING The Rainmakers have a good 1-2 with Wainwright and Shields, followed by good pitchers with health problems. Rene will have to mix and match Rich Harden, Scott Kazmir and Hiroki Kuroda based on health. The bullpen is lights out once again, with Dan Meyer joining the fold full time to help Balfour, Carlson, Thornton and Wheeler.

PROGNOSTICATION The success of this team will depend on the luck of the dice and Rene's ability to manage his butt off. Depending on how things break this team can be anywhere from 70-92 to 88-74.

Bloomington Greeks			
2009: 84-78			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	V. Martinez	SP	J. Beckett
1B	J. Votto	SP	A.J. Burnett
2B	R. Cano	SP	K. Correia
3B	D. Wright	SP	C. Volstad
SS	E. Bonifacio	SP	V. Padilla
LF	R. Ibanez	CL	B. Lyon
CF	M. Kemp	SU	J. Bulger
RF	N. Cruz	SU	N. Masset

Seven Things to Know

1. Bloomington had identical 42-39 records at home and on the road.
2. Bloomington was involved in 61 1-run games, most in the NL.
3. The Greeks allowed only 109 homers, the fewest in the NL.
4. The Greeks committed 13 balks, most in the NL.
5. Manny Delcarmen led the NL in appearances (75).
6. Bloomington turned 2 triple plays.
7. Bloomington went 16-2 vs. Montreal and 68-76 vs. the rest of the NL.

LAST YEAR Vaughn Nuestr's rookie campaign in 2009 was a forgettable one, finishing in the middle of the pack, but to be expected considering this was a roster in transition. David Wright (.292/.357/.534) was the leader of the offense and Josh Beckett (11-12, 3.37 ERA) led the pitching staff.

TRANSACTION REPORT A lot of the core for the 2010 team was acquired via trade last offseason or during the 2009 season, so the Greeks were relatively quiet this offseason. In an effort to further bolster the pitching staff, the big free agent signings were Kevin Correia, Brandon Lyon and Nick Masset. Carlos Ruiz and Skip Schumaker were traded away to bring in Nelson Cruz to be the big bopper in right field. Robinson Cano and Matt Kemp were signed to long term contracts, buying out their arbitration years.

DOWN ON THE FARM The farm has some great prospects in Lonnie Chisenhall, Tyler Flowers and Ben Revere. However, I was very confused when Vaughn drafted Mike Leak(e), the coach of the Bad News Bears in Breaking Training rather than Kelly Leak, the fireballing pitcher with a rebellious side.

HITTING Oh my, this is going to be a potent lineup. Victor Martinez will be free of injuries and will form a very potent middle of the order along with Joey Votto, Matt Kemp, Raul Ibanez and Nelson Cruz. David Wright will be right there producing as well, though in spring training it looks as if his power stroke has deserted him.

PITCHING The top three in the rotation are good, but there are some question marks for the final two slots, which will be mix-and-match among Francisco Liriano, Vicente Padilla, Andy Sonnanstine and Chris Volstad. The bullpen has a good foursome in Burke Badenhop, Jason Bulger, Brandon Lyon and Nick Masset, but things are a bit dodgy for the back end.

PROGNOSTICATION Bloomington will continue their rise and are definitely a playoff contender now. If they can get some good performances out of the supporting pitchers (or make a few trades to improve depth), they could challenge for the division.

Montreal McGaffigans 2009: 41-121			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Wieters/Snyder	SP	L. Hernandez
1B	LaPorta/Harris	SP	R. Porcello
2B	I. Stewart	SP	D. Holland
3B	Beckham/Beltre	SP	G. Meche
SS	Y. Escobar	SP	D. Hernandez
LF	C. Quentin	CL	D. Bard
CF	D. Span	SU	T. Pena
RF	M. DeRosa	SU	H. Okajima

Seven Things to Know

1. Jonah is the only manager with two BW titles.
2. Montreal only managed a winning record against Annadale (7-5).
3. Erik Bedard led the NL in batting average for a pitcher (.308).
4. The McGaffigans had half as many steal attempts (29) as any other team in the NL.
5. Montreal's pitching staff was worst in the NL in lots of categories.
6. Jonah's writing a book on the Tampa Bay Rays.
7. Jonah and his wife have welcomed twins Ellis and Thalia into their family.

LAST YEAR In 2008 Montreal led the league in wins with 113 and were on their way to a 3rd title, only to be knocked out in the NLCS by the Northwoods Moose. Jonah Keri took a hard look at his team and decided to do a total rebuild, trading off pretty much every big trade chit he had. The result was a very ugly 41-121 record in 2009, but there is lots of hope on the horizon.

TRANSACTION REPORT Montreal made some low-risk high-reward signings in free agency with Adrian Beltre, Gil Meche, Ben Sheets and Chris Snyder. Jonah traded away other usable pieces to pick up more prospects and rebound cases like Aaron Crow, Desmond Jennings, Dice-K, Carlos Quentin and Justin Smoak.

DOWN ON THE FARM All 8 of his mins are studs. The names speak for themselves: Casey Crosby, Aaron Crow, Desmond Jennings, Ethan Martin, Jarrod Parker, Justin Smoak, Julio Teheran and Arodys Vizcaino.

HITTING This team is still a year or two away, but there are some very promising bats in the lineup. Matt Wieters, Matt LaPorta, Gordon Beckham, Yunel Escobar and Denard Span will be the core of this lineup for years to come. The lineup will look even better in 2011 if the rumors of Gordan Beckham moving to 2B are true and if Adrian Beltre returns to form.

PITCHING Alas, the worst pitching staff in the NL for 2009 won't be much better this year. David Hernandez, Derek Holland and Rick Porcello are three rookies that will have to step in and eat innings in the rotation. There are lots of arms on the farm, but this pitching staff is still a few years away from respectability.

PROGNOSTICATION The McGaffigans will have another rough year in 2010 and finish at the bottom of the pack, but the amount of young talent they have collected is scary and this team will be a powerhouse again as soon as 2011 or 2012.

Northwoods Moose 2009: 105-57			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	R. Martin	SP	C. Hamels
1B	M. Cabrera	SP	J. Jurrjens
2B	B. Phillips	SP	P. Maholm
3B	Hairston/Fields	SP	E. Santana
SS	H. Ramirez	SP	B. Burgesen
LF	Gonzalez/Guillen	CL	F. Rodriguez
CF	R. Sweeney	SU	R. Belisario
RF	J. Upton	SU	J.P. Howell

Seven Things to Know

1. Northwoods led the NL in runs scored (919).
2. The Moose had the 2nd best team ERA in the NL (360).
3. Northwoods had the fewest team walks allowed in the NL.
4. Miguel Cabrera led the NL in HR (54) and RBI (152).
5. The Moose scored the most runs in a single game, torching Montreal for 18.
6. Cole Hamels led the NL in wins (21).
7. KRod led the NL in saves (39).

LAST YEAR The reigning NL Champion Moose bettered their 2008 record of 97-65 by going 105-57 in 2009 and once again making it to the NLCS. This year they fell in five games to a strong Virginia squad. Miguel Cabrera had a stellar year, hitting .311/.362/.635 and leading the league in both homers and RBI. Hanley Ramirez was no slouch either, hitting .315/.404/.550 and playing a respectable shortstop for the first time in his career. The pitching staff was phenomenal, with Roy Oswalt (19-6, 3.35 ERA), Ervin Santana (18-8, 3.53 ERA), Ben Sheets (15-6, 3.64 ERA) and Cole Hamels (21-8, 3.74 ERA) stopping their opponents cold.

TRANSACTION REPORT Northwoods decided not to mess with a good thing and for the most part stayed away from free agency, preferring to stay with their core already in place. One significant trade was made, sending J.D. Drew and Rafael Soriano to New York for Paul Maholm. The emergence of Justin Upton made Drew expendable and the shoulder injury to Ben Sheets necessitated the need for another rotation arm. Cole Hamels was signed to a long term contract, buying out his arbitration years.

DOWN ON THE FARM The Moose farm system features prospects that will be solid big leaguers, but there is not a lot of star potential. The two players with a chance to break out in the future are Shelby Miller and Mike Moustakas.

HITTING Once again this lineup will be anchored by young starts Miguel Cabrera and Hanley Ramirez, probably the best 1-2 position player duo in BRASSWORLD. Justin Upton is primed to break out this year and I think Ryan Sweeney will start to put it altogether as well. The only major hole in the lineup is at third base.

PITCHING Oswalt departed via free agency. Ben Sheets and Tim Hudson are hurt. However, Jair Jurrjens is ready to break out and acquisition of Paul Maholm gives Northwoods a strong top 3. The bullpen is solid with Belisario, Howell and KRod, but the back end lacks depth.

PROGNOSTICATION Northwoods has a strong team, but is a little weaker than the team that won the division last year. They'll challenge for the division title, but their lack of depth may cause them to come up just short and have to settle for a wild card.

Palo Alto Robber Barons 2009: 93-69			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	J. Mauer	SP	J. Verlander
1B	M. Teixeira	SP	J. Lannan
2B	Baker/Valbuena	SP	J. de la Rosa
3B	A. Rodriguez	SP	K. Kawakami
SS	Drew/Vizquel	SP	J. Peavy
LF	J. Bay	CL	C. Marmol
CF	Sizemore/Johnson	SU	K. Wood
RF	Ichiro	SU	E. O'Flaherty

Seven Things to Know

1. Palo Alto led the NL in team doubles.
2. The Robber Barons struggled against Palm Harbor, going 5-7.
3. Palo Alto issued the fewest IBB (3) of any team in the NL.
4. The Robber Barons had the 2nd fewest sacrifice bunt attempts in the NL.
5. Kaz Matsui led the NL in SB% (25-27, 92.6%).
6. John Lannan led the NL in balks (7).
7. Joe Mauer, Mark Teixeira and ARod all led their respective positions in X-Pct.

LAST YEAR The Robber Barons followed up their 97-65 2008 campaign with a 93-69 2009 and a loss in 7 games to Virginia in the NLDS. Alex Rodriguez (.280/.384/.552) and Mark Teixeira (.294/.391/.547) led the 2nd highest run scoring offense in the NL. Justin Verlander (13-9, 3.63 ERA) led a pitching staff that finished a middle of the pack 7th in runs allowed in the NL.

TRANSACTION REPORT With Jake Peavy hurt, Andy Pettitte a free agent and Odalis Perez retired, Palo Alto needed lots of starting pitching. The free agent signings of Jorge de la Rosa and Kenshin Kawakami addressed that need. Ichiro Suzuki was signed to be a dynamic pairing with Grady Sizemore at the top of the lineup. Justin Verlander was signed to a long term deal, buying out his arbitration years.

DOWN ON THE FARM The trade to acquire Grady Sizemore last offseason wiped out all of the top prospects from the Robber Baron farm system and it has been a slow effort in restocking. Derek Norris and Zach Stewart are the top two prospects. Jaff Decker and Wilmer Font could end up having nice careers as well.

HITTING Ichiro Suzuki and Grady Sizemore will be followed by perhaps the top middle of the order in BRASSWORLD: Mauer, ARod, Teixeira, Bay. The last two spots in the lineup (2B/SS) will be weak, but the top 6 should produce a lot of runs.

PITCHING After Justin Verlander the rotation looks solid, but the injury problems Jake Peavy is having affects the team's rotation depth. Jorge de la Rosa will really need to step it up. The bullpen has been completely retooled and newcomers LaTroy Hawkins, Mike MacDougal, Eric O'Flaherty and Kerry Wood give it more depth than it has had the previous two seasons.

PROGNOSTICATION Once again the offense will have to carry the Robber Barons, but given the bats in the 1-6 spots, that shouldn't be too much of a problem. This team should finish in the 90-100 win range and be challenging for the division title.

West Oakland Wolverines
2009: 81-81

Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Johjima/Coste	SP	M. Buehrle
1B	A. Gonzalez	SP	C. Carpenter
2B	A. Hill	SP	J. Pineiro
3B	C. Headley	SP	J. Marquis
SS	J. Rollins	SP	J. Washburn
LF	C. Lee	CL	G. Sherrill
CF	A. McCutchen	SU	T. Coffey
RF	J. Kubel	SU	R. Perry

Seven Things to Know

1. West Oakland did not like playing Lafontaine Park, going 1-11 against them.
2. Jose Reyes led the NL in triples (16).
3. Adrian Gonzalez led the NL in GIDP (28).
4. Jose Reyes also led the NL in errors (29).
5. The Wolverines went 7-9 in squeeze plays.
6. Bill Ziem has a career record of 565-569.
7. Carlos Lee hit 7 homers at home and 16 on the road.

LAST YEAR West Oakland improved on a 74-88 2008 to finish 81-81 in 2009. The offense was ranked 6th in the NL in runs scored, but the pitching was 9th ranked and still the Achilles heel of the Wolverines. Carlos Lee (.298/.350/.526) had the best year on offense for the team. Mark Buehrle went 13-5 with a 3.28 ERA in his first year with the Wolverines.

TRANSACTION REPORT Knowing that Jose Reyes would miss significant playing time due to injury this year, Bill Ziem used free agency to sign Jimmy Rollins to a 5-year deal. If Reyes recovers from his injuries there will be quite the battle at SS for years to come or a nice trade chit for Bill. West Oakland also shored up the rotation by trading top prospect Desmond Jennings to Montreal in exchange for Chris Carpenter. Adrian Gonzalez was signed to a long term contract, buying out his arbitration years.

DOWN ON THE FARM Andrew McCutchen and Ryan Perry will come up from the farm to help the big club this year and Desmond Jennings was traded away, but there still is quite a bit of talent down on the farm., including Jordan Danks and Chris Withrow.

HITTING Aaron Hill is poised to have a breakout year now that he's no longer suffering the after effects of last year's concussion. The middle of the lineup is solid with Adrian Gonzalez, Carlos Lee and Jason Kubel. If Chase Headley can put things together as well, this lineup will move into the upper echelon in the NL.

PITCHING The Wolverines rotation has gone from a liability to a strength. Chris Carpenter and Mark Buehrle form an excellent 1-2 punch. I have a feeling that the influence of these two starters will help Joel Pineiro, Jason Marquis and Jarrod Washburn to all have career years. The bullpen is solid with George Sherrill once again in the closer role. Newly signed Todd Coffey and first year pitcher Ryan Perry will be good set-up men.

PROGNOSTICATION The offense is improved and the pitching is much improved, so this team will move into the 85-95 win realm and be challenging for a playoff spot.

H O N O R R O L L

B R A S S W O R L D C H A M P I O N S

2003 SYRACUSE SKY CHIEFS
2004 PORTLAND GRAYS
2005 NORTHWOODS MOOSE
2006 MONTREAL MACGAFFIGANS
2007 MONTREAL MACGAFFIGANS
2008 SILVER SLUGGERS
2009 ALASKA HOT STOVES

B I L L G A L A N I S A W A R D

(FORMERLY THE BILLY BEANE AWARD)

2003 DANIEL VALOIS
2004 STEFAN FEUERHERDT
2005 COREY WEISSER
2006 ROB FOULKE AND TOM FISH
2007 MARK LENTZ
2008 JONAH KERI
2009 CHRIS BLAKE

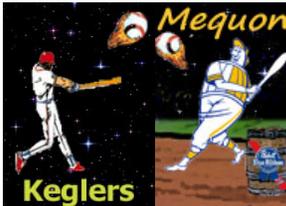
2010 BRASSWORLD Logos Unveiled

Showing respect for the rock sold franchises of BRASSWORLD, most logos this year show will remain unchanged rather than undergo wholesale renovation.

After 7 years of competition, it seemed time to recognize the past champions by the presence of a brass medallion on their logos. In this way, even if an old champion has fallen on hard times, the past glory of the franchise is still manifest for all to see. A medallion is earned for each championship. This medallion will be largest on the logo of the reigning champion; this year that team is Alaska:



Mequon Keglers' logo evolved with owner assistance from a generic batter which is transformed into a portly, slugging Kegler:



South Range's logo received significant makeover; gone is the curiously placed, inept lettering on top, which gives way to a more impressive textured style with a sea-blue color no less. The plain compass of 2009 is replaced by a more decorative version, now superimposed on a baseball.



BRASSWORLD has one team making its debut, the San Jose Tasmanian Devils. I found a nice cartoon version and dressed him up with custom cap ready for ball:



Though new for 2010, the Exeter Alewives have been reincarnated for BRASSWORLD as they in fact have already played in BRASSWORLD from 2005-2007, though in the Junior Circuit. The Alewife finds himself swimming on a baseball field covered in water:

