

# BRASSWORLD JOURNAL

Volume 1, Issue 3

December 2006



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## **BRASSWORLD CROWN'S A CHAMPION!**

The Montreal McGaffigan's, directed by Jonah Keri, are BRASSWORLD'S fourth league champion.

The Game Five clincher (boxscore below) was a nail-biter as it was not decided until the ninth inning when pinch hitter Brian Giles plated pinch runner Dave Roberts with the go-ahead run. Vlad Guerrero followed with a sac fly to provide Derrick

Turnbow and his teammates the cushion they would need to exit as champs in the ninth. With a whiff of the bat from Coco Crisp, the McGaffigans laid claim to the BRASSWORLD hardware.

Game 1 was a fascinating win for Montreal as well as they won 4-0 on the strength of four solo homers- three from the thunderous bat of Eric Chavez alone!

The Stampede recorded their lone 'W' of the series in Game 3 with a 3-1 victory. Jon Garland was strong on the mound for seven innings, while Juan Encarnacion's two-run, second inning blast provided the necessary offense.

Ageless Roger Clemens was the Series MVP, winning both of his starts behind a 1.17 ERA. On behalf of the membership, I extend hearty compliments to Jonah on his victorious season. I'd like to think that winning BRASSWORLD is a well-earned SOM honor. Chris, as well, deserves a solid pat for his accomplishment, as he kept the Stampede on track for well-deserved title shot.

### **PAST CHAMPIONS**

**2003: Syracuse SkyChiefs (John Feola)  
2004: Portland Grays (Stefan Feurherdt)  
2005: Northwoods Moose (Corey Weisser)**

### BRASSWORLD WORLD SERIES, GAME 5

| Montreal        | AB  | R   | H   | BI | San Bernardino     | AB | R                 | H | BI |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|----|--------------------|----|-------------------|---|----|
| Castillo, 2b    | 3   | 0   | 1   | 0  | Abreu, rf          | 3  | 1                 | 0 | 0  |
| Bell, 3b        | 4   | 1   | 1   | 0  | Ellis, 2b          | 4  | 1                 | 1 | 0  |
| Chavez, 3b      | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | A. Rodriguez, ss   | 4  | 0                 | 1 | 1  |
| Varitek, c      | 2   | 1   | 0   | 0  | D. Lee, 1b         | 4  | 0                 | 1 | 1  |
| Thomas, 1b      | 4   | 0   | 1   | 0  | A. Ramirez, 3b     | 4  | 0                 | 1 | 0  |
| Roberts, pr-lf  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0  | Crisp, cf          | 3  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| Peralta, ss     | 4   | 1   | 2   | 2  | Wilkerson, ph      | 0  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| E. Brown, lf    | 3   | 0   | 0   | 0  | J. Encarnacion, lf | 3  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| B. Giles, ph    | 1   | 0   | 1   | 1  | R. Hernandez, c    | 3  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| Turnbow, p      | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | Schneider, c       | 0  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| V. Guerrero, rf | 3   | 0   | 1   | 1  | Willis, p          | 2  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| Hunter, cf      | 4   | 0   | 0   | 0  | Matthews Jr., ph   | 0  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| P. Martinez, p  | 2   | 0   | 0   | 0  | Gathright, pr      | 0  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| Lugo, ph        | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | Seo, p             | 0  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| Carrasco, p     | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | M. Rivera, p       | 0  | 0                 | 0 | 0  |
| Dunn, ph-1b     | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  |                    |    |                   |   |    |
| <hr/>           |     |     |     |    |                    |    |                   |   |    |
| 32              |     |     |     |    | 4 7 4              |    |                   |   |    |
| <hr/>           |     |     |     |    | 30 2 4 2           |    |                   |   |    |
|                 |     |     |     |    |                    |    |                   |   |    |
| Montreal        | 000 | 200 | 002 | 4  | 7                  | 1  |                   |   |    |
| San Bern.       | 100 | 001 | 000 | 2  | 4                  | 0  |                   |   |    |
|                 |     |     |     |    |                    |    |                   |   |    |
| Montreal        | IP  | H   | R   | ER | BB                 | SO | Att: 49,037       |   |    |
| P. Martinez     | 7   | 4   | 2   | 1  | 1                  | 8  | 2B: D. Lee        |   |    |
| Carrasco, W     | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 1                  | 2  | SB: Gathright     |   |    |
| Turnbow, S      | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 1                  | 1  | HR: None          |   |    |
|                 |     |     |     |    |                    |    | SF: Guerrero      |   |    |
|                 |     |     |     |    |                    |    | GIDP: Ramirez     |   |    |
|                 |     |     |     |    |                    |    | E: Brown          |   |    |
| San Bern.       | IP  | H   | R   | ER | BB                 | SO | LOB: MON-5, SBS-4 |   |    |
| Willis          | 8   | 4   | 2   | 2  | 3                  | 7  | DP: MON-1, SBS-0  |   |    |
| Seo, L          | 0   | 2   | 2   | 2  | 0                  | 0  |                   |   |    |
| Rivera          | 1   | 1   | 0   | 0  | 0                  | 1  |                   |   |    |

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## The Naked Walk

[Note: This article was printed by the Minneapolis Star Tribune in August. Just some of the goofiness that goes on in a Major League clubhouse.]

# Redmond's help comes in many forms

The silly and uninhibited veteran catcher has become a mentor and motivator.

**Jim Souhan**, Star Tribune

In the beginning, there was the Naked Walk, and it was good.

Twins catcher Mike Redmond would stand near his locker before a game and announce that he needed coffee. He would strip, then troll for caffeine and attention.

Soon, the Naked Walk was not enough. "You've got to keep it fresh," he said.

So when his teammates became accustomed to the Naked Walk, he would step onto the card table holding their cribbage game and strut above them on his way to the kitchen. "I got a little nervous," bullpen coach Rick Stelmazek said, "when he walked over the table and nobody bothered to look. They don't bat an eye at him anymore."

Which brings us to Sunday, the morning of the Twins' latest Big Game, against the White Sox. Redmond saw his name in the lineup, told starting catcher Joe Mauer, "Take the day off and cheer for me, I got it handled," and decided to accessorize his Tools of Ignorance.

Thus, he donned the Magic Girdle, an old, yellowed undergarment that looks as if it once might have supported Kent Hrbek's love handles. "They found it in an old trunk somewhere," Redmond said. "It's pretty cool, and it holds in my obliques."

An hour after modeling the girdle -- and how often do you see that phrase in a baseball story? -- Redmond contributed in the other way to which the Twins have become accustomed, hitting a two-run single in the third inning of their 7-3 victory.

"When I first saw the Naked Walk, it was pretty ... pretty ... well, bad," said Torii Hunter. "It's a tough scene, and he knows it. But he does get guys laughing."

Said locker neighbor Nick Punto: "I actually have to sit and talk to him when he's naked. But he continually gets big knocks for us, and he has some of the best ball-talk I've ever heard." "The Naked Walk has gotten pretty normal now," Michael Cuddyer said. "And that's probably sad. When I told him he should come out of his shell, I didn't think he'd take it literally."

Baseball is the most fascinating and literary of games because of the characters who inhabit every clubhouse, and Redmond might be the funniest Twin since Kirby Puckett was luring born-again Brian Harper and biker Dan Gladden into religious debates.

"Today was a big game," Redmond said. "I felt like I needed to try something different, and I think we responded to it, and I'm sure I was the reason."

He laughed, but there is truth there. Redmond is hitting .333 and, on a team without an obvious leader, he's become a mentor for young players and an ice-breaker before big games.

It is not a coincidence that the Twins, with all of their impending contract decisions, have signed one player to an extension -- Redmond.

He lives in and hails from Washington state. Now he and his family are looking to buy a house in the Twin Cities.

"It took a while to get comfortable here, because I had never played anywhere but Florida," he said. "I didn't know how the guys would take to my personality. It's worked out better than I ever anticipated. This is a great group of guys. I'm the oldest guy on the team, but these guys make me have just as much fun as they do.

"I can't imagine going anywhere else at this point. I love the way we play, I love the organization, the way we get after it, and we're scrappy. We've got our own little thing going."

Redmond has created an entire vocabulary for the team White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen calls "The Little Piranhas."

He tells them to "smell those RBIs," which has led to players tapping their noses when they get a big hit. Sunday, he started bobbing his head and yelling, "Shoot it, now!" so often that Stelmazek thought he was having an attack.

At the heart of the silliness is a passion for the game that you can't fake over a six-month season. "I love baseball," Redmond said. "Today, I was just pumped that I got to play. I still get nervous, just like in Little League."

Nervous? You should see his teammates when he gets coffee. "I think I'm losing it more and more every year," Redmond said of his sanity. "But, hey, we're having a lot of fun."

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## **BRASSWORLD'S own Heinie**

On page 53 of the October 9<sup>th</sup> issue of "ESPN THE MAGAZINE," Steve Hirdt of Elias wrote the following in his statistical breakdown of Jose Reyes' historic 2006 season:

*"Any time you've done something for the first time since someone named Heinie played, you know it's been a while."*

What in Heinie's Manush was Mr. Hirdt referring to, you might be asking? Well, it seems Reyes is the first player since Paul Waner, Earle Combs and, yes, Heinie Manush, to record three straight seasons with 17 or more three-baggers. Hirdt went on to point out that no one in the history of baseball has had a season like Reyes' in regard to the number of runs, hits, homers and steals that they put up. Impressive. But back to Heinie and triples...

Check out these stats from BW's own Heinie:

Doubles: 19

**TRIPLES: 20**

Home runs: 21

The player in question? Ichiro. The Black Sox RF almost netted more triples than he did *both doubles and taters*. That's gotta be close to Heinie-era production.

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## **“THE ONION,” tidbit #1**

### ***Frank Thomas Credits Recent Power Surge To Steroids***

September 28, 2006 | [Onion Sports](#)

OAKLAND, CA— After two seasons marked by nagging injuries and sub-par home-run totals, Frank Thomas credited his career rejuvenation and rediscovered power stroke "strictly to my weekly cycle of injecting myself with anabolic steroids." "People ask me all the time what's my secret, how have I stayed in such good shape and been so consistent this season, and I tell them the same thing every time: It's the steroids," said Thomas, who has 19 homers and a league-high 62 RBI since the All-Star break. "I give the steroids all the credit. It's not even just the muscle and the power, but the confidence I have when I step up to the plate knowing I have a total competitive advantage. I just wish I knew about this miracle drug earlier in my career." MLB officials later announced that, should Thomas test positive for steroid use in a random drug test before season's end, his punishment would be significantly reduced for being open and honest about it beforehand.

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## **Alaska Hot Stoves – a Rookie Team’s Look Back at their First Season Part 1 of 2**

By Chris Blake

I took over the reins of the Baltimore Baysox in November of 2005, inheriting a team in collapse. I packed the vans and moved cross-country from the pollution and continual tunnel construction of Baltimore, up to the brisk, clean Artic air of Alaska. There was plenty of grumbling among the players, but I made it known that wholesale changes were on the way.

The first step was to analyze the roster. What realistic chances did the team have for the upcoming season? That was pretty easy. I had 3 star players (Andruw Jones, Rafael Furcal, and Shawn Green), 2 good pitchers (Chris Young, Dustin Hermanson), and some good prospects. No third baseman. No second baseman or Left Fielder. No catcher. And short about 900 innings. Oh, and only \$7M for free agency.

So competing in 2006 was out of the question. Next question: could we even field a team?

Both Andruw and Green were in the last year of their contracts, so they had to go. No sense paying for stars when you were having trouble just filling positions. After offering Andruw around the league for a month I had surprisingly little interest. He was a 1 in CF and hit 50 home runs, but hardly anyone made an offer. My brother came to the rescue, trading me underachieving Austin Kearns and super catching prospect Dioner Navarro for him. Now I had a RF/CF and at least part of a catcher.

Hoboken came through again as I traded my brother Dustin Hermanson for SP Jon Lieber, JT Snow, a pick, and most of Snow's contract. I just got a 1B and a good SP.

In free agency, I grossly underbid on all the reliable starting position players and blue chip pitchers. A new lesson learned. I was able to land a closer (Miguel Batista) and a 3B (Aaron Bleeping Boone), and, more importantly, lots of cheap, bad, pitching (Al Leiter, and bad 2B Marlon Anderson. I wasn't able to get a starting 2B, but at least I got part-timers Anderson and Desi Relaford, who together could conceivably make it through the season sharing 2B if they batted 8<sup>th</sup> and bunted a lot.

By Christmas, after shopping Green for a month and a half, I made a trade with Maryland where I sent him and newly acquired Jon Lieber (who was really too good for my team) and cash, for Aaron Cook (OK innings), Andy Sisco (good prospect, left reliever, and innings), Larry Bigbie (CF at bats), and some good picks. More importantly, I freed up about \$4M in cash.

I was able to put together a whole team, just covering the pitching innings I needed, short at 2B and C, a mish mash in the outfield, but at least we could play. And I got some cash freed up.

Next Stop: the draft. I took Jon Lester with my first pick – highly thought of pitcher, had a chance at the starting rotation, and a min. Next I overspent on Travis Denker, who I liked but was probably safe to let slip 'til later.

The pressure of draft day was new to me. I'm a slow typist (one finger) so just keeping up on who was taken was an adventure. And despite a lot of research, I wasn't prepared to rattle off my picks. Another lesson learned.

Next I took another prospect, Marcus Sanders, who I liked as an all-around athlete. I really wanted Matt Kemp, but Virginia nabbed him the pick before. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> round I took Ryan Shealy, who I was surprised was still around, and in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Humberto Cota (filler, but important Catching at bats), Ray Liotta – supposedly Chicago's #1 pitching prospect – and Casey Janssen, who had great numbers at AA, but wasn't highly regarded.

Unbeknownst to me, I took my last pick – Shaun Marcum – another AA New Hampshire pitcher – in the 4<sup>th</sup>. I later learned yet another important lesson: You can only have 10 mins on your roster max – EVEN IF YOU HAVE SPACE ON YOUR 40-MAN ROSTER. As a result, my subsequent picks were later cut.

There were a few more minor trades made, but basically I had my team to go do battle.

So how did the team look? Awful. My offense looked terrible. No power at all and I'd have been surprised if I hit .230 as a team. My defense was bad as well – a 4 high e at 2<sup>nd</sup> and high e's at 3<sup>rd</sup> and the OF. For pitching, I had a decent bullpen, a good closer, and just enough innings. The problem was my starters were easily the league's worst: Al Leiter, Aaron Cook, Chris Young, Joe Mays and Seth McClung.

Honestly, I was predicting my team to lose 110 games.

Next Issue: The 2006 Season Recap

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**“THE ONION,” tidbit #2**

### ***Trevor Hoffman: 'I Want To Be A Hall Of Famer Right Now'***

September 28, 2006 | [Onion Sports](#)

SAN DIEGO— Moments after recording his 479th career save Sunday, placing him ahead of Lee Smith as baseball's all-time saves leader, Padres closer Trevor Hoffman demanded that Major League Baseball immediately induct him into the Hall of Fame. "I've worked my ass off for 14 years to get to this point, and now you're telling me I have to retire and then wait five more years before I get the chance to be recognized for my accomplishments?" Hoffman said. "Bullshit, gimme my plaque." After the game, Hoffman wished his teammates good luck in the playoffs, and informed bystanders that he was "heading out to Cooperstown tonight if anyone wants to hear my speech."

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### **An Interlude from the LD**

What a fantastic return to the helm of BW! You guys do a very good job of staying on top of your league responsibilities. From what I can tell there is a good interaction amongst the membership—both trade-wise and in online play. Free agency interest was both spirited and knowledgeable. The league is quite stable and with a long future ahead to enjoy. We have a very nice, resource-laden league website and our roster wrangler keeps the membership informed at a level unequalled by any league I'm familiar with.

My thanks to all for making 2006 a great BRASSWORLD campaign!

## AL AWARDS

| <b>MVP</b>      | <b>PTS</b> | <b>WALTER JOHNSON</b> | <b>PTS</b> | <b>ROOKIE</b>   | <b>PTS</b> |
|-----------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| ALEX RODRIGUEZ  | 111        | CARLOS ZAMBRANO       | 111        | GUSTAVO CHACIN  | 115        |
| David Ortiz     | 81         | Chris Carpenter       | 74         | Chris Shelton   | 57         |
| Derrek Lee      | 36         | Jason Johnson         | 33         | Felix Hernandez | 35         |
| Jason Giambi    | 31         | Mariano Rivera        | 28         | Jeremy Reed     | 32         |
| Miguel Tejada   | 19         | Aaron Harang          | 19         | Nick Swisher    | 28         |
| Juan Pierre     | 16         | Brett Myers           | 18         | Jesse Crain     | 21         |
| Geoff Jenkins   | 8          | Gustavo Chacin        | 9          | Kameron Loe     | 19         |
| Ichiro          | 6          | Dontrelle Willis      | 8          | Garrett Atkins  | 4          |
| Alfonso Soriano | 3          | Tim Wakefield         | 5          | J.J. Hardy      | 1          |
| David DeJesus   | 1          | Joe Nathan            | 3          |                 |            |
|                 |            | Mark Buehrle          | 1          |                 |            |
|                 |            | Freddie Garcia        | 1          |                 |            |

## NL AWARDS

| <b>MVP</b>        | <b>PTS</b> | <b>CHRISTY MATHEWSON</b> | <b>PTS</b> | <b>ROOKIE</b>   | <b>PTS</b> |
|-------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| ALBERT PUJOLS     | 107        | ROGER CLEMENS            | 93         | HUSTON STREET   | 73         |
| Miguel Cabrera    | 70         | Andy Pettitte            | 77         | Jeff Francoeur  | 64         |
| Travis Hafner     | 29         | Pedro Martinez           | 48         | Joe Blanton     | 38         |
| Jason Bay         | 27         | Jake Peavy               | 25         | Tadahito Iguchi | 35         |
| Richie Sexson     | 19         | Billy Wagner             | 22         | Freddy Sanchez  | 34         |
| Paul Konerko      | 10         | Ben Sheets               | 14         | Robinson Cano   | 18         |
| Vladimir Guerrero | 9          | John Smoltz              | 3          | Zach Duke       | 13         |
| Roger Clemens     | 7          | Derek Lowe               | 3          | Willy Taveras   | 11         |
| Pedro Martinez    | 5          | Brad Lidge               | 1          |                 |            |
| Mark Teixeira     | 2          |                          |            |                 |            |
| Pat Burrell       | 1          |                          |            |                 |            |

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## **Free Agent Roundup – American League** By Jonah Keri

The 2006 free-agent period couldn't quite match the amount of top-caliber talent— or monster salaries— seen in the '05 Hot Stove League. No player topped the \$10 million-a-year mark, a level blown away by San Bernardino's five-year, \$58 million deal for slugger Derrek Lee.

But while the market may have lacked some of last year's glitz, it could play an equally big role in shaping the 2007 playoff race. In Part 1 of a two-part series, we'll look at the American League's free-agent results and how they may impact the '07 season. (We'll cover the National League next time):



**Team:** Alaska Hot Stoves

**Manager:** Chris Blake

**Key Signings:** SP Jason Schmidt, four years, \$25 million; SP Matt Morris, four years, \$20 million; OF Raul Ibanez, four years, \$12 million

Chris Blake joined BrassWorld last off-season, inheriting a team in flux. Alaska struggled to a 69-93 record in 2006, then went into the free-agent period with as many question marks as any team in the league.

Those questions have been answered. Blake was arguably the most aggressive manager in the AL, using an ample cash reserve to upgrade at multiple positions. Schmidt, Morris and fellow free-agent signee Woody Williams (two years, \$5 million) will join Chris Young in a much-improved rotation. The Hot Stoves may own the deepest outfield in BrassWorld after the signings of Ibanez, Dave Roberts (two years, \$6 million) and Marcus Thames (four years, \$6 million). Those three free agents could form a solid outfield in their own right; instead, they join slugging corner outfielders Carlos Lee and Austin Kearns to form a formidable core.

Meanwhile, Rich Aurilia (two years, \$7 million) and Mark DeRosa (three years, \$5.5 million) upgrade an infield that already includes the likes of Prince Fielder, Rafael Furcal and Brian McCann. Using a go-for-broke approach, Alaska installed itself as the early favorite in the Cobb Division.

**Team:** Exeter Alewives

**Manager:** Mike Forsyth

**Key Signings:** Jose Vidro, three years, \$5.1 million; Trot Nixon, three years, \$5.4 million, Ron Belliard, two years \$3.5 million; Scott Proctor, two years, \$4.2 million

After a last-place, 51-111 showing in the Ruth division last season, Exeter's Mike Forsyth took a broad approach to free agency, netting 13 signings. Rather than break the bank on high-profile players, Forsyth landed a batch of middle-class talent that should give the team a boost in '07.

Anyone need a second baseman? Exeter's signings of both Vidro and Belliard, along with the presence of top prospect Howie Kendrick, give the Alewives more depth at the deuce than any other team. Rick Bauer (two years, \$1.6 million), Elmer Dessens (two years, \$1.5 million), Tyler Yates (three years, \$1.9 million) and Proctor should give the bullpen a lift. Jose Valverde (four years, \$5.4 million) could be a golden ticket if he returns to the form he flashed in 2005.

With a rotation headed by Bronson Arroyo, Curt Schilling, Cliff Lee, along with Jim Thome on a bargain deal at \$1.75 million a year for three more years, this team could be a year away from making a big leap— especially if some of the moderate-priced free-agent gambles of '06 pan out.

**Team:** Greenville Black Sox

**Manager:** Bob Askin

**Key Signings:** None

The competitive nature of BrassWorld makes repeat division titles a tall task. After a late-season rally propelled Greenville to the 2006 Cobb Division crown, manager Bob Askin chose to sit out

most of the free-agent period, picking up just a few low-profile relievers. Elite veterans Miguel Tejada and Ichiro Suzuki could combine with young talent such as Russ Martin and Adam LaRoche to make the Sox a threat in '08 and beyond. Greenville's got an ace in the hole toward that end: Lights-out closer Joe Nathan, in the final year of a four-year contract and one of the most attractive trade chits likely to be available come July.

**Team:** Gotham City Gargoyles

**Manager:** Wayne Foulke

**Key Signings:** None

Few teams can call Miguel Cairo (one year, \$555,000) their marquee free agent and still be considered a legitimate title contender. But Gotham City sports the best starting rotation one through five of any team in BrassWorld, with John Lackey, Dan Haren, Brandon Webb, Brett Myers and Jeremy Sowers in the fold. A loaded Ruth Division relegated the Gargoyles to a fourth-place finish in '06, despite a 99-win season. Look for Gotham to improve that showing in '07.

**Team:** Hoboken Bums

**Manager:** Pete Blake

**Key Signings:** 3B Scott Rolen, five years, \$27.6 million; C Jason Varitek, four years, \$10 million; 1B Nomar Garciaparra three years, \$9.3 million; OF Moises Alou, three years, \$7.6 million

The second half of the Blake family's apparent plan to take over the world, the Bums targeted offense in their spending binge. Rolen is the biggest boom-or-bust name in the bunch. An elite offensive and defensive force at a premium position when healthy, a back pain-ridden no-show when not, the Bums could hoist multiple championship trophies or head to a therapist's couch depending on how the Rolen deal shakes out. Varitek, Garciaparra and Alou come with cheaper price tags, but all three figure to boost the Hoboken offense and could end up as some of the biggest bargains of the off-season.

This team still has holes, lacking an ace starter and an adequate shortstop (Royce Clayton at two years, \$2 million won't help too many people other than Royce Clayton's agent). But a loaded bullpen (Joel Zumaya, Bobby Jenks, Cla Meredith) and a few well-placed trades could give Hoboken another crack at the playoffs, even if 100 wins is a long shot. Manager Pete Blake will need to be creative, though, with less than \$3 million in the bank at his disposal.

**Team:** Hogan's Heroes

**Manager:** Bob Loose

**Key Signings:** OF Geoff Jenkins, four years, \$8 million; Orlando Cabrera, four years, \$6 million; Sean Casey, three years, \$6 million

Another team that went the middle-class route, the Heroes loaded up on pitchers and outfielders in free agency, upgrading two of the team's weaknesses last season. It's a rebuilding process, as Manager Bob Loose enters his first full season at the helm of the former Santa Barbara franchise. Hogan's signed 15 free agents, though, a strategy which could pay off if two or three of the low-priced darts hit their target. Cabrera at \$1.5 million a year and Mike Sweeney at \$750,000 per season look like sweet deals.

With young stars Grady Sizemore and David Wright under Hogan's control for several more years, this team will remain just a few more pickups and a little luck away from being a team nobody wants to face in the Cobb Division.

**Team:** New York Mets

**Manager:** Chris Metz

**Key Signings:** None

No money, no free agents. The Mets inherited what may be the strongest collection of talent for the 2006 season when former San Bernardino owner Tom Fish bowed out of the league. But a slew of big salaries, including 2005 free-agent signings Derrek Lee, Chris Carpenter and Mariano Rivera, will likely force New York to rebuild.

Owner Chris Metz has spent the bulk of the off-season shopping those three massive contracts, along with \$7 million man Bobby Abreu, after unloading Alex Rodriguez's \$7 million contract for a first-round draft pick. It could prove to be a tough sell, given the smaller salaries coming out of this year's market. Still, reigning AL MVP Justin Morneau, Rickie Weeks, Dontrelle Willis and others offer plenty of hope for the (near) future.

**Team:** Plum Island Greenheads

**Manager:** Henry Vance

**Key Signings:** C Michael Barrett, four years, \$13 million; 2B Luis Castillo, three years, \$10.2 million

Currently locked in battle for the American League crown and a World Series trip, the Greenheads were assured of a great 2006 season well before free-agent bidding got underway. With multiple key contracts lapsing, Plum Island figured to start a slow rebuilding process in 2007, aiming to reload for another deep playoff run a few years down the year.

But the signings of Barrett and Castillo to lucrative contracts show that Manager Henry Vance wants no part of a long, painful losing period. Calculated pitching risks Casey Fossum (three years, \$3.4 million), Brandon Lyon (three years, \$3.1 million) and the aptly named David Riske (three years, \$3.4 million) are three live arms who could spearhead a quick turnaround. Recent trades for prospects such as Philip Hughes and Troy Tulowitzki could also bear fruit.

**Team:** Silver Sluggers

**Manager:** Lenny Luchtefeld

**Key Signings:** C Ramon Hernandez, four years, \$14 million; Adam Eaton, four years, \$4 million

A bull market for catchers saw multiple big deals go down, with Hernandez joining the likes of Michael Barrett, Jason Varitek and Jorge Posada among the rich and famous. Several years younger than Posada and Varitek and just five months older than Barrett, the 30-year-old Hernandez could retain his value over the life of the deal and be an anchor for the Sluggers.

Meanwhile, Eaton could prove to be the best pickup of the off-season at just \$1 million a year—MLB teams were throwing around numbers six to eight times higher at the recent GM meetings. Eaton is the kind of bargain hunting Silver will need to do to as it bides its time rebuilding. With

cornerstones Ryan Howard and Joe Crede under Manager Lenny Luchtefeld's control for at least the next four years and more than \$47 million in the bank, a spending spree next off-season could thrust Silver right into the playoff hunt in 2008.

**Team:** South Range Mariners

**Manager:** Michael Swanson

**Key Signings:** None

Why fight a thin market? After a 92-win season and a playoff berth, the Mariners opted to preserve their cash for the future, picking up just one free agent, rags-to-riches-to-whoa-where-did-that-pitch-go?! closer Derrick Turnbow (one year, \$1 million). South Range's future lies in its offense, with Jimmy Rollins and Jose Lopez expected to form a dynamic duo up the middle and Rockie twins Matt Holliday and Brad Hawpe doing likewise in the outfield.

Manager Mike Swanson could look to move the last three years of Carlos Delgado's \$6.6 million a year contract to a contender looking for a big bat. That and some successful mining for pitchers will hold the key to a South Range return to the post-season.

**Team:** Waukesha Keglers

**Manager:** Tony Cieszynski

**Key Signings:** RP Francisco Cordero, four years, \$8.1 million; Todd Jones, two years, \$4.5 million; Bob Wickman, two years, \$3.9 million; Mike Maroth, three years, \$4.2 million

Kent Tekulve, Rob Dibble and Alejandro Pena were unavailable— otherwise, they'd probably be Keglers by now too. Waukesha's cornering of the relief market could prove to be a shrewd strategy, though. With young talent at a premium, Manager Tony Cieszynski could try to move his multiple closers near the trading deadline for top prospects, as contenders seek to beef up for the pennant race. Garrett Atkins and Ian Kinsler are bonafide keepers, but Waukesha will need to draft well and make some well-placed moves to get back into contention. The #1 overall pick in the coming draft should help a lot.

**Team:** Williamsburg Burgesses

**Manager:** Jim Bodnar

**Key Signings:** SS Juan Uribe, four years, \$5.8 million; Scott Spiezio, three years, \$4.4 million; Kevin Correia, three years, \$4.5 million; Luis Vizcaino, three years, \$4.5 million

Shades of Waukesha, as the Burgesses picked up a pair of talented relievers who could help for the next few years or be used as prime trade bait. Uribe should provide power at the tough-to-fill shortstop spot for the next four years at a bargain \$1.45 million per year. Spiezio's strong numbers make him another intriguing keep-or-trade option for Manager Jim Bodnar.

Hamstrung by eight-figure contracts for Randy Johnson and Barry Bonds this season, Williamsburg could make some noise once those contracts come off the books. Whether that will happen as soon as 2008 is up in the air. A timeframe of 2009 and beyond may be more realistic, as star 2B Chase Utley could get ample help from pitching phenoms Anthony Reyes, Mike Pelfrey and Andrew Miller by then.

## **“THE ONION,” tidbit #3**

### **This Week In Sports History**

**Dec. 3, 1968:** To aid batters in production and increase their safety, MLB officials rule that the strike zone will now extend from the armpits to the knees, instead of from the forehead to the Adam's apple.

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### **Free Agent Roundup – National League**

**By Jonah Keri**

In Part 2 of this two-part series, we look at the National League's free-agent results and how they may impact the '07 season.

**Team:** Annadale Anteaters

**Manager:** Robert Smith

**Key Signings:** SS Edgar Renteria, four years, \$16 million; SP Nate Robertson, three years, \$15 million; SP Gil Meche, three years, \$14 million; C Bengie Molina, three years, \$13 million

With as many holes to fill as any team in BrassWorld, Robert Smith was one of the most aggressive shoppers on the market. Twin big-money deals for Robertson and Meche highlight the list. Robertson should provide steady, above-average pitching for the next three seasons, especially with a strong Tigers defense behind him. Meche is more of an upside play; given the massive dollars being bandied about for him during MLB's Hot Stove season, though, it's clear that people like his potential.

The Anteaters landed two veteran outfielders at identical prices (two years, \$5.25 million) in Shawn Green and Preston Wilson. They'll need another starting outfielder and several bench components and relief pitchers to round out the roster, with little cash at their disposal. Annadale will be a tough match-up every day, though, thanks to one of the league's deepest starting rotations (Scott Kazmir, Tom Glavine, Robertson, Jamie Moyer and Meche).

**Team:** Aspen Rainmakers

**Manager:** Rene Custeau

**Key Signings:** C Jason Kendall, four years, \$12.2 million; SP Kris Benson, four years, \$11.7 million; SP Joel Pineiro, five years, \$9.9 million

Another pair of free-agent starting pitcher signings in what was a thin market for talent. Benson's four-year contract and Pineiro's five-year deal give both pitchers a chance to bounce back after rough 2006 seasons, an upside play which could pay dividends down the road for the Rainmakers.

Upside is the name of the game for Aspen, which will likely spend next season in rebuilding mode. Ryan Dempster at three years, \$1.8 million, Edgar Gonzalez at three years, \$2.3 million and Cha Baek at three years, \$2.6 million give the Rainmakers hope for cheap pitching reinforcements down

the road. Kendall provides a steady OBP source for the next four seasons as the Rainmakers look to fight back in the highly competitive Mays division.

**Team:** Lafontaine Park Diamonds

**Manager:** Daniel Valois

**Key Signings:** OF Andruw Jones, five years, \$37.5 million; SP Mike Mussina, two years, \$16.2 million; 1B Jason Giambi, two years, \$10.4 million; OF Ken Griffey, Jr., two years, \$8.9 million

BrassWorld is on notice— the Diamonds look like the team to beat in the NL for 2007. Already owning an ace in Roy Halladay, a building block starter in Felix Hernandez and a slew of young, cheap talent, Daniel Valois took the next step, loading up for a pennant run next season. Better yet, Lafontaine Park pulled a rare feat, acquiring four elite free agents without signing any regrettable contracts. Mussina, Giambi and Griffey only need to produce decent 2007 seasons to earn out on their two-year contracts, as all three should have excellent cards for the coming Strat season. Jones is the lynchpin player, the rare free-agent find who's worth five-plus years at \$7 million+ per season.

The Diamonds also nabbed a bunch of low-risk, medium-reward players, signing Angel Berroa (already traded), Alex Escobar and Jesse Foppert for three years each at less than a million a year. Chad Bradford (two years, \$3.3 million) may be the best bang for the buck of any relief pitcher signed this off-season.

**Team:** Lake Zurich Stingrays

**Manager:** Kevin Kolb

**Key Signings:** C Jorge Posada, three years, \$17 million

New manager Kevin Kolb inherited the best available catcher on the market with the signing of Posada for nearly \$6 million a year. He also takes over one of BrassWorld's best offenses, with Albert Pujols, Manny Ramirez and company likely to be a force again in '07 after the franchise formerly known as Buckeye won the Aaron division in 2006. Just a few hours into his tenure as the team's new manager, Kolb announced his quest for a front-line starting pitcher. He may have to take a number, with top starting pitching in heavy demand and few aces available this season. Still, a loaded offense and deep bullpen should help the newly christened Stingrays make another playoff run next season.

**Team:** Mansfield Mounties

**Manager:** Rob Foulke

**Key Signings:** None

Lance Cormier and Matt Herges will soak up some cheap innings in the Mansfield bullpen. Still, this is a rebuilding year for the Mounties, after a hugely impressive 109-win season and Mays division title in 2006. Manager Rob Foulke could guide his Mounties back to prominence quickly, with Jake Peavy, Joe Mauer, Stephen Drew and several other young stars under team control for the next few seasons.

**Team:** Maryland Mounders

**Manager:** Bill Galanis

**Key Signings:** OF Coco Crisp, four years, \$11 million; 2B Adam Kennedy, two years, \$2.2 million

Another Mays division playoff team going the rebuilding route, the Mounders took the patient approach, signing only two players for more than \$1 million a year. Crisp is a bit of a risk at four years, \$11 million; Bill Galanis will be hoping for the Crisp of 2005, not the 2006 version. The Mounders could be a force in next year's free-agent market, with a slew of multi-millionaire veterans (including A.J. Burnett, Todd Helton, Mike Lowell, Reggie Sanders, Frank Catalanotto) in the last year of their contracts.

**Team:** Montreal McGaffigans

**Manager:** Jonah Keri

**Key Signings:** RP Pedro Feliciano, one year, \$1.3 million; SS Alex Gonzalez, three years, \$1.5 million; 3B Melvin Mora, three years, \$1.2 million

How do you follow a championship season? The McGaffigans opted for the conservative route, signing only one player to a contract worth more than \$1 million annually. Feliciano bolsters a loaded bullpen that also includes J.J. Putz, Rafael Soriano, Jason Frasor, B.J. Ryan, Joaquin Benoit and bargain free agent Rheal Cormier (one year, \$201,000). Gonzalez and Mora are everyday players signed for the price of far more speculative commodities; Mora's strong track record and job security makes his signing at \$400,000 per year among the biggest steals of the off-season.

But did the McGaffigans blow a chance to repeat in '07 with a low-spending off-season? A lot could depend on Montreal's recent trades. The acquisitions of Erik Bedard, Greg Maddux, Byung-Hyun Kim and Jake Westbrook revamped the starting rotation after the departures of Roger Clemens, Pedro Martinez and Doug Davis. The offense should be set with the return of Vladimir Guerrero, the dirt-cheap Frank Thomas and newly acquired near-MVP Derek Jeter. Repeating in BrassWorld is nearly impossible— but a second straight year in contention could be in the cards for the McGaffigans.

**Team:** Northwoods Moose

**Manager:** Corey Weisser

**Key Signings:** OF J.D. Drew, four years, \$24.9 million; C Paul Lo Duca, two years, \$7.4 million

The Moose only made five signings, but those include a pair of impact deals and three pick-ups of solid complementary players. Drew gives the Moose the best middle of the order in the NL, along with Jason Bay, Travis Hafner and Miguel Cabrera. Lo Duca provides upper-echelon offense at the always tough-to-fill catcher position. Two-year contracts for Trevor Miller, David Weathers and Darren Oliver fortified a bullpen that already includes Billy Wagner, Francisco Rodriguez and Akinori Otsuka.

The starting rotation rounds out a devastating Northwoods roster, with Kenny Rogers, Ervin Santana, Scott Olsen and Cole Hamels teaming with newly acquired Roy Oswalt. The Moose may have fewer weaknesses than any other team. They're the odds-on favorites in the Mays division for 2007.

**Team:** Port Richey Sandcranes

**Manager:** Fred Lambrecht

**Key Signings:** 3B Adrian Beltre, three years, \$16 million; OF Magglio Ordonez, two years, \$9 million; OF Endy Chavez, three years, \$7.5 million; 1B Shea Hillenbrand, two years, \$5.5 million

Sitting on a giant mint of cash, the Sandcranes grabbed four significant free agents. But with more than \$50 million left in the bank (more than any other team), one wonders if Port Richey could have done more. Manager Fred Lambrecht owns a newly-formed ace in Chien-Ming Wang, an elite outfielder in Vernon Wells, Carl Crawford and now Chavez and Ordonez, and a solid supporting cast. A couple more big-ticket signings could have positioned Port Richey for a possible title run.

Still, the 2006 BrassWorld free-agent market, like Major League Baseball's, was one of the weakest in recent memory. The Sandcranes could spend big next off-season and give themselves a long-awaited shot at the championship.

**Team:** Taggart Titans

**Manager:** Mark Lentz

**Key Signings:** SP John Patterson, five years, \$12.6 million; SP Pedro Martinez, one year, \$5.2 million; RP Bob Howry, two years, \$6.2 million; SP Ramon Ortiz, two years, \$5 million; 1B Craig Wilson, three years, \$6.3 million

In a conference that has several top 2006 teams likely to rebuild, the Titans took advantage, snatching up a bunch of mid-priced talent, especially on the pitching side of the ledger. Martinez was a win-now pick-up. Patterson may be the most intriguing gamble of the season, a top prospect turned oft-injured talent turned All Star-caliber pitcher who reverted to his injury-plagued ways in '06. Taggart found immediate help and compelling gambles, while leaving more than \$16 million in the bank. A fringe contending team that could be a player away from making the post-season, or a couple of trades away from netting the future talent needed for a run in 2008 and beyond.

**Team:** Virginia Patriots

**Manager:** Mike Bardos

**Key Signings:** SP Roger Clemens, two years, \$9.9 million; RP Hector Carrasco, two years, \$6.5 million; RP Dennys Reyes, two years, \$4.4 million

Intrigue, suspense, the fate of nations hanging in the balance? Not quite, but the two-year signing of Roger Clemens, who may not play at all in 2007, was as fascinating a gamble as any in league history. Even with only 19 starts to his credit in '06, Clemens should be one of the better pitchers in BrassWorld next season... but he may need to be a \$10 million talent to earn his pay, if he opts to retire instead of coming back next season. Carrasco and Reyes are safer bets, though also expensive ones for relief pitchers.

Virginia's another of the many middle-of-the-pack teams that could go either way in 2007. Neither a blockbuster trade to acquire a superstar nor a batch of well-placed veteran-for-prospect deals would be a surprise for the Patriots' always resourceful manager, Mike Bardos.

**Team:** West Oakland Wolverines

**Manager:** Bill Ziem

**Key Signings:** SP Jarrod Washburn, three years, \$9.1 million



The Wolverines were the most cash-strapped team in the league this off-season, after huge contracts for Kerry Wood, John Smoltz, Richie Sexson and others left West Oakland hamstrung by payroll woes. Manager Bill Ziem dealt ace Roy Oswalt to Northwoods along with Wood's salary for Brad Penny, downgrading in talent, but also freeing up \$7 million in vital payroll room. The signing of Washburn at just over \$3 million a year should help the trade bear fruit. Vance Wilson (two years, \$1.25 million) steps in as an effective backup catcher, while Mike Hampton was the poor man's John Patterson signing, at three years, \$1.4 million.

Despite the tight payroll, West Oakland should contend again in '07, after a Cinderella run to the LCS in 2006. Smoltz heads a balanced pitching staff, while Carlos Beltran, Jose Reyes, Pat Burrell, Torii Hunter, Kenji Johjima, Sexson and others head an offense with few holes. If the Wolverines get back to the playoffs, Ziem will earn honors as the top tightrope walker in BrassWorld.

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## Virginia Free Agency Grades

I thought it might be interesting to review and grade Virginia's Free Agency selections over time. Now that BW has had several seasons of play, I was hoping to learn from some of my mistakes and to determine how well we chose our Free Agents.

Contracts in **blue** are considered good, those in **red** are too expensive, those in **green** are very high risk.

**2004**, Overall grade of C for year, minimal dollars spent with minimal return

| Name                  | Yrs | Amount    | Grade | Comment  |
|-----------------------|-----|-----------|-------|--|
| Gabe White            | 3   | 1,177,000 | D+    | One decent year of 3                               |
| Will Cunnane          | 2   | 511,000   | C+    | One good year of 2, Did not play in year 2         |
| Danny Patterson       | 1   | 333,000   | B+    | Card was of some use, low cost                     |
| David McCarty         | 1   | 235,000   | C-    | Card was of minimal use, low cost                  |
| <b>Solomon Torres</b> | 1   | 777,000   | A-    | Useful card with a lot of innings, reasonable cost |

**2005**, Overall grade of C+ for year, minimal dollars spent, some useful cards

| Name              | Yr | Amount    | Grade | Comment   |
|-------------------|----|-----------|-------|---|
| Kelly Stinnett    | 1  | 225,000   | B+    | Useful card as backup catcher for 1 year          |
| Mike Mathews      | 1  | 200,000   | C-    | Card was traded                                   |
| Augie Ojeda       | 2  | 501,000   | D-    | Minimal PA, did not play in year 2                |
| Brooks Kieschnick | 3  | 1,075,000 | D-    | One useful year, did not play in years 2 or 3     |
| <b>Al Reyes</b>   | 3  | 1,075,000 | A-    | 1 great year, 1 minimal year, 1 year did not play |
| Chris Woodward    | 3  | 1,075,000 | C+    | Traded 1 <sup>st</sup> year                       |
| Sun Woo-Kim       | 3  | 1,075,000 | C+    | Traded 1 <sup>st</sup> year                       |
| Rickey Ledee      | 3  | 1,211,000 | B+    | 1 useful season then traded                       |

**2006**, Overall grade C-, overspent in general, some useful cards; however, poor season did not justify amount spent, several poor contracts inked. Lowe and Sheffield contracts still in doubt.

| Name            | Yr | Amount  | Grade | Comment                     |
|-----------------|----|---------|-------|-----------------------------|
| Stinnett, Kelly | 2  | 855,000 | C-    | 1 useful year, 1 not useful |

|                   |   |            |    |  |
|-------------------|---|------------|----|--|
| Stanton, Mike     | 2 | 695,000    | B+ | Useful cards for 2 years, low cost                         |
| Lowe, Derek       | 4 | 16,900,000 | B+ | So far 2 good seasons, 2 unknowns                          |
| Gordon, Tom       | 3 | 10,750,000 | D+ | Overspent, card did not work well in first season , traded |
| Lofton, Kenny     | 2 | 7,270,000  | C- | Overspent, card was OK in 1 season, traded in year 2       |
| Womack, Tony      | 2 | 780,000    | C+ | Useful runner, traded in year 2                            |
| Palmeiro, Orlando | 2 | 982,000    | C- | Traded, card not needed                                    |
| Meadows, Brian    | 3 | 1,340,000  | F+ | Poor card, not needed                                      |
| Dubose, Eric      | 3 | 1,730,000  | F+ | Poor card, not needed, did not play                        |
| Sheffield, Gary   | 3 | 14,300,000 | D+ | 1 decent card, injured in year 2, unknown in year 3        |
| Saenz, Olmedo     | 3 | 1,390,000  | A- | Useful card in years 1 and 2, year 3 unknown               |

2007, Overall grade C-, Clemens is a high risk contract, and overspent on two relievers and utility IF, grade may change depending upon season and Roger Clemens decision.

| Name             | Yr | Amount    | Grade | Comment   |
|------------------|----|-----------|-------|---|
| Adkins, Jon      | 2  | 1,100,000 | B-    | Useful card, reasonable cost                                    |
| Carrasco, Hector | 2  | 6,500,000 | C+    | Overspent, 100 + innings needed, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year unknown   |
| Clemens, Roger   | 2  | 9,870,000 | ??    | High risk contract, only useful if playoffs reached, year 2 ??  |
| Gomez, Chris     | 2  | 2,430,000 | C-    | Overspent, useful card for 1 year, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year unknown |
| Morse, Mike      | 2  | 510,000   | D+    | Low cost, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year unknown, not needed              |
| Paul, Josh       | 2  | 675,000   | C-    | Not needed, traded  |
| Reyes, Dennys    | 2  | 4,400,000 | C-    | Overspent, good card in year 1, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year unknown    |

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