The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

The Franchise

2011 Edition

Walter H. Hunt

Robert Jordan

Mark H. Bloom

All 24 Teams Analyzed Using the T.Q. System

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A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

2011 Edition

by

Walter H. Hunt
Robert Jordan
Mark H. Bloom
with contributions from all of TBL's managers

and extra help from:
Joe Auletta
Jim Dietz
Mark Freedman
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the TBL baseball annual

Welcome to the 2011 ***TBL Baseball Annual***. This is the sixteenth year of the ***Annual*** in the book format, and we welcome the talents of Mark "Boomer" Bloom to our staff.

This year's book has the features you're accustomed to reading, and this year each team write-eup includes a player we've designated as The Franchise. Some are current players, while others are from the team's past . . . sometimes when the team was in a different place. We imagine that this will lead to some interesting discussions.

We also feature entertaining articles by Joe Auletta and Mark Freedman, comments from the Commissioner, and a dedicatory poem on Bob Feller from the talented Jim Dietz. We also bring back Grantland Rice to memorialize the late, great Harmon Killebrew.

As always, it's probably as much fun to write as it is to read.

Have a great season.

Walter H. Hunt, Editor
Robert Jordan
Mark Bloom
May, 2011

The T.Q. System

Shamelessly stolen from the Mazeroski annual, the T.Q. System assigns points to each area of the team's expected performance and totals the result. The maximum score under the T.Q. System is **50**, divided as follows:

Pitching:	20 points
Offense:	15 points
Defense:	10 points
Bench:	5 points

The T.Q. System does not take age or prospect value into account, only present capability. It does, however, consider usage (available games, at bats and innings).

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future drafts

In many cases, what's on the field isn't the whole story. Some of our teams have quite a bit to say in future drafts, and any evaluation should properly take that into account.

The graphical displays below show how much each team has in the tank. The middle mark on the thermometer represents a full draft (picks #1-#3) in 2012; above the middle line is excess, while below means something's missing.

base

joe auletta: the legend

BROBDINGNAG. Ridiculous. The left-hand thermometer is the six #1 picks. The right-hand thermometer is the six #2s and single #3.

haves

NEW WESTMINSTER. Their own draft, which should be high up, along with an extra #1 and #2 from better teams.

HUDSON. Their own draft, an extra #1 and #2, both from contenders, but no #3.

MUNICH. Melrose's #1, their own and Brobdingnag's #2, and their own #3.

balanced

COLUMBUS, **WHITMAN**, **GREATER OHIO**, **GOTHAM CITY**, **KNOXVILLE, MIDWEST**. Their own drafts, likely higher up.

KANSAS, **MARACAIBO**, **ZION**. Their own drafts.

have nots

It goes without saying that most of the missing picks belong to Brobdingnag.

RYE, **DALLAS**. Brobdingnag owns Rye's #2. New Westminster owns Dallas' #2.

RICHMOND. Three #3s. Brobdingnag owns their #1 and #2.

WAKEFIELD. Melrose owns their #3.

BLUE HILL. Brobdingnag owns their very fine #1.

MELROSE, **PORTLAND**, **HOUSTON**. Portland has just a #1; Houston and Melrose have only two #3s.

GRAND CAYMAN. Just a #2. Surprisingly, Boomer's picks do not belong to Brobdingnag.

LAS VEGAS, **HOUSTON**. Just a #3 each. Brobdingnag and Hudson each own a #1 and a #2, one from each team.

These indicators also appear at the bottom of each team article, for your convenience.

t.q. summary

TEAM (DIVISION)	OFFENSE	DEFENSE	PITCHING	BENCH	TOTAL
The Cream of the Crop					
Portland (Aaron)	13.5	5.5	18.0	3.0	**40.0**
Melrose (Mantle)	12.0	6.0	18.0	2.5	**38.5**
Dallas (Ruth)	9.5	7.5	13.5	4.0	**34.5**
Northboro (Aaron)	8.0	8.0	13.0	2.5	**31.5**
Rye (Mays)	7.5	6.0	14.0	2.5	**30.0**
The Solid Performers					
Houston (Ruth)	7.5	6.0	13.0	2.0	**28.5**
Grand Cayman (Mays)	8.0	4.0	13.5	2.5	**28.0**
Las Vegas (Mays)	7.0	5.0	13.0	3.0	**28.0**
Richmond (Williams)	8.5	5.5	11.5	2.0	**27.5**
Kansas (Aaron)	5.5	6.0	12.5	2.5	**26.5**
The Transitional Teams					
Munich (Mantle)	8.5	5.5	7.5	2.5	**24.0**
Zion (Mantle)	6.5	6.0	8.5	2.5	**23.5**
Maracaibo (Aaron)	7.0	5.5	8.5	2.5	**23.5**
Whitman (Clemente)	6.0	6.5	8.5	2.0	**23.0**
Wakefield (Williams)	6.0	7.0	7.5	2.5	**23.0**
The Rebuilders					
Midwest (Williams)	6.0	5.0	6.0	2.0	**19.0**
Gotham City (Mays)	6.5	3.5	6.5	2.5	**18.5**
Hudson (Mantle)	5.0	6.0	5.0	2.5	**18.5**
Columbus (Clemente)	5.0	4.0	7.5	2.0	**18.5**
Blue Hill (Clemente)	4.5	4.0	8.0	1.5	**18.0**
Greater Ohio (Clemente)	5.0	4.0	7.0	1.5	**17.5**
Knoxville (Williams)	4.5	4.0	6.0	2.0	**17.0**
Brobdingnag (Ruth)	5.5	4.0	5.5	1.5	**16.5**
New Westminster (Ruth)	4.5	3.0	4.5	1.5	**13.5**

Conference Totals

National	311.5 (26.0 average)
International	274.5 (22.9 average)

Division Totals

Aaron (NC)	121.5	Ruth (IC)	93.0
Mantle (NC)	104.5	Clemente (IC)	87.5
Mays (IC)	94.0	Williams (NC)	85.5

We have several team evaluation metrics that go beyond what we see in the team envelopes. On a previous page we showed the contents of each team's 2012 draft; on the next two pages, we show other ways in which we can measure how our teams are doing.

The Rebuilding Clock

We again present the rebuilding clock for your edification. As previously noted, there are fewer teams willing to hit the wall at high speed – we have learned from Joe and others to hedge our bets; so there isn't anyone at the bottom of the clock cycle. Still, we have a wide range of clock settings this year.

Teams In Serious Rebuild Mode

12:00 The team has hit the wall and is a hideous train wreck. The Munich and East Anglia collapses, the self-created Brob team two decades ago. **This Year:** *NONE.*

01:00 The first steps back from the abyss. Usually the team has had one draft and has some more coming in future. The post-Rusty Cobb Carolina Spirits, the New Westminster 38-win club. **This Year:** *NONE.*

02:00 A team that has taken the plunge toward a major rebuild. Usually that means no pitching, but a few key players on the roster. **This Year:** *Brobdingnag, New Westminster.*

03:00 Teams at 3 have either built down but not completely out, or have had some of their future start to show ability. **This Year:** *Blue Hill, Knoxville, Hudson.*

Teams Turning The Corner

04:00 These teams have either unbuilt only modestly, or are on the road to recovery. There are usually flaws keeping them from contention. **This Year:** *Gotham City, Whitman, Columbus, Greater Ohio, Midwest, Maracaibo, Zion.*

05:00 A contender in a weak division, a .500 club in a strong one. This team will often be coming off a strong draft and may make the mistake of trying to contend too soon. **This Year:** *Munich, Wakefield.*

06:00 An above .500 club, likely one that has just made a trade to strengthen its hand but not spent in a major way to get to the playoffs. **This Year:** *NONE.*

Teams In Their Prime

07:00 A good contender with young players. It hasn't made a complete commitment to drafting cardboard and getting veterans to fill holes – but has the ability to do it. **This Year:** *Kansas.*

08:00 A contender in its prime with a mix of youth and veteran players. A team that's made a commitment to win *now.* **This Year:** *Houston, Rye, Grand Cayman, Portland, Melrose.*

09:00 A team completely around the corner. Some of the present, and possibly some of the future, has been traded away to keep it solid. **This Year:** *Dallas, Northboro, Richmond.*

Teams Headed For The Cliff

10:00 Teams that reach 10 can see what will happen when their luck has run out, but have decided to move forward rather than back. This is where you go if you don't go to 2 or 3. **This Year:** *Las Vegas.*

11:00 This is the last stop before the cliff. Note that teams at this stage can often be quite good, but when the old guys run out of mojo, they become quite bad. **This Year:** *NONE.*

Remember that this is about the state of a team, not necessarily its ability or projected performance.

SNTs

We once again present the Shiny New Things found under TBL managers' holiday foliage. Here are our choices – briefly considered – for each team's new toy:

Blue Hill:	***Danny Valencia, 3B***
Brobdingnag:	***Stephen Strasburg, SP***
Columbus:	***Daniel Hudson, SP***
Dallas:	***C.J. Wilson, SP***
Gotham City:	***Mike Stanton, OF***
Grand Cayman:	***Matt Holliday, OF***
Greater Ohio:	***Drew Storen, RP***
Houston:	***Roy Oswalt, SP***
Hudson:	***Ike Davis, 1B***
Kansas:	***Curtis Granderson, OF***
Knoxville:	***Pedro Alvarez, 3B***
Las Vegas:	***Austin Jackson, OF***
Maracaibo:	***Starlin Castro, SS***
Melrose:	***Jimmy Rollins, SS***
Midwest:	***Carlos Santana, C***
Munich:	***Jason Heyward, OF and Buster Posey, C***
New Westminster:	***J.P. Arencibia, C***
Northboro:	***Jayson Werth, OF***
Portland:	***Joaquin Benoit, RP***
Richmond:	***J.A. Happ, SP***
Rye:	***Jake Westbrook, SP***
Wakefield:	***Derrek Lee, 1B***
Whitman:	***David Aardsma, RP***
Zion:	***Kenley Jansen, RP***

The Vegas Line

The staff of the ***Annual*** never claimed to have exclusive right to baseball analysis in TBL, and a few years ago we gladly made room for Paul Harrington's **Vegas Line**, which first made its appearance on our mailing list.

When we became kinder and gentler some editions ago – due to an incident most of us would rather forget – some of our most visceral analysis went with it. But our friend Mr. Harrington, untarred by the same brush, delivered some of what we had left behind. It is a pleasure to continue to add his commentary to ours under the logo you see above.

In each team article, there's a quip from Paul Harrington. His position does not always agree with the extended description – but it provides some additional insight that we hope you enjoy.

Numbers, Numbers, Numbers

Don't we like them, too. Over the course of sixteen years, part of the preparation process for the ***Annual*** has involved poking through stacks of paper with previous seasons' stats, draft lists, and records from our history.

We continue to owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Steve Stein for his efforts in compiling, preserving, organizing and presenting the history of our league in his online stats site. Once again, so much of our statistical work – from Hall of Fame balloting to finding our "Franchise" players to reporting on the season just past – is made much, much easier because of his work. The staff of the ***Annual*** is very grateful that we have him in our league. Thanks, Steve.

hall of fame 2011

The ***TBL Annual*** is pleased to present the 2011 inductees to the TBL Hall of Fame. The voters have spoken, and four great players of the past have been enshrined.

Jeff Bagwell

Jeff Bagwell, 1B *1992-2005*
Dallas, Louisville/Capitol Hill/Pensacola, Mahopac.

Bagwell was a prodigious power hitter who was in the lineup every day; he played all 162 in four seasons, and in all but one of his 16 years he was in 140 or more. He hit 413 homers in his 14 years in TBL, driving in 1,455 and walking 1,335 times. He recorded a .281 lifetime batting average, with OBP of .389 and a .507 SLG.

Roberto Alomar, 2B *1989-2005*
Amherst, Melrose/Northboro

Arguably one of the best players in baseball during his stellar career, Alomar was a great all-around player; he could hit, hit for power, field and run. He drove in 1207 in his career, hitting .292 in 16 full seasons, four times crossing the .300 barrier (leading the league in 1994 with a .368 average). He stole 412 bases and, in his career, made only 117 errors.

Roberto Alomar

Fred McGriff

Fred McGriff, 1B *1998-2004*
Amherst, Melrose, Zion

A dominant power hitter, McGriff made his greatest impact as a part of the dominant Elders of Zion from 1996 until his retirement. His 488 career home runs and 1569 RBI place him among the all-time leaders; he crossed the 100-RBI plateau eight times, and hit 30 homers in eight seasons, hitting 50 to lead Greg Hamburg's 1989 Amherst Avengers.

Kevin Appier, SP *1991-2004*
East Anglia, Minnesota, Munich, and Maracaibo.

Shortened by injury, Appier's career included a number of remarkable seasons. Other than his final year in Maracaibo (8-3), he had double-digit wins in every TBL season, winning 21 with the 1998 Munich Marauders. In his 2,773 TBL innings, he struck out 2,067 batters. He had a 3.59 lifetime ERA and was consistently among league leaders throughout his career.

Kevin Appier

tbl hall of fame managers' wing

Walter Hunt

Owner of the Maracaibo RumRunners, two time TBL League Champion, and Editor-in-Chief of the TBL ***Annual***.

Walter joined TBL in 1988, and promptly won the league title, beating fellow Hall of Famer Paul Montague in the World Series. In 1990, Walter drafted the first preseason analysis of TBL - a short set of essays on the teams in the Aaron Division - that would eventually grow into one of the League's most notable features. In 2006, Walter published an editoral in the ***Annual*** calling for the establishment of the TBL Hall of Fame. Sure enough, with guidance from Mr. Hunt and the work of Clay Beard and Stephen Stein, three years later we were inducting our first class of players and managers into that hallowed institution.

Every step of the way for over twenty-five years, Walter has added ideas, humor, a willingness to do difficult tasks, and a competitive edge to the Transcontinental Baseball League. Congratulations to him on his induction, and thanks from lucky brotherhood who have shared his passion for this league and its game.

the franchise

by Walter Hunt

> "Baseball connects American males with each other. Not only through bleacher friendships and neighbor loyalties, but most importantly through *generations*. You learn your first lesson of the rainbow arc all living things make, but that baseball exaggerates.
>
> For when you are in the sixth grade, the 'rook' has fuzz on his face, and throws to the wrong base. Before you leave junior high, he is a seasoned regular, the body filled out: his jowl ripples with tobacco. When you graduate from high school, he is a grizzled veteran . . . even if you are not certain what *grizzled* means. In a few years, the green shoot becomes the withered stalk, and you learn the hill all beans travel by."
>
> ***Baseball and the Meaning of Life***, *by Donald Hall*.

The first words spoken in ***When It Was A Game***, the tremendous video presentation, appear above. This 1999 film is composed of 8- and 16-millimeter film, mostly taken by players and fans in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. It should be in the library of every baseball fan.

I chose to introduce this year's ***TBL Annual*** with this quote because it points up a particular sensibility that all long-time baseball fans (and, notably, long-time APBA players) feel as the years go by – that we are watching the transformation of which Donald Hall speaks happening before our eyes as the seasons turn. Players whom we once prized as rookies mature into regulars, and then gradually, inevitably, follow the path that leads to retirement.

Every year we open the package from APBA and sort the clean, new cards into envelopes and retire the previous worn and smudged ones to the closet, usually never to return again. Yet to open an old envelope and pull the cards back out again is to bring those players, those cards, those performances back to life. . . and in some cases bring that *player* back to life.

This year we memorialize the great Bob Feller, and Harmon Killebrew. In the former case, my only acquaintance with the legendary pitcher is through APBA cards bearing his name . . . while I remember Killebrew hitting a home run in Fenway Park when I was young. But to draw Feller or Killebrew out of an APBA envelope is to restore them to life and health, to pitch and hit and run again, eternally young and their talents forever on display.

We remember the stars and forget the marginal players – in part because the marginal guys come back again and again in new uniforms under new names. Every year there are new cards with nine hits and three walks, three zeroes and no first-column 1: a few steal attempts, one or two useful positions, or maybe fifty or sixty decent innings. In two years that player or pitcher is gone, replaced with someone else equally forgettable: yet for a season that young man is crucial to filling games or helping a team win a pennant. It's a shame, really, since that's where pennants are won or lost: on the twenty-third or twenty-fourth position on the roster. And like the stars, they are there years and decades later and still young and vital, when the envelopes are opened and the cards return to the light.

We are creatures of habit and tradition, we baseball fans and APBA players. I remarked a few years ago, when Darrell Skogen, our Commissioner, selected David Wright in the draft, that it was Ken Boyer he was thinking about: a power-speed man from before my time, with whom I had only made acquaintance through an APBA card. Yet it was an on-the-money comparison that Darrell acknowledged. Fast third basemen

who can field their position and hit for power and whose cards look like cards we've seen before are a part of the psyche that the board game imposes on us (and that for many of us, the Windows computer game sadly lacks: there is a missing somatic component for which the ease of record keeping does not compensate).

It is a game superimposed upon the game, and it is an experience thing – we know what 1-5-5 *means*, we know that 11-10 is better than 10-10, that from time to time a 22 takes away a walk or a hit that, damn it, *should* have been there. There are detractors of our game that point at those peculiarities of APBA, the idiosyncratic way in which the cards are created: but I believe that we like it that way, it is the character that defines the game as we know it. We spend a *lot* of time in this publication describing those cards, and the best managers in TBL recognize the need to make them fit together to build a winning team. We like it that way, taking the two 10s and the lefty shifts and the extra 22s as the cost of doing business.

The cards come and go, and the players pass from our teams and sometimes from our minds. Steve Stein has created an amazing resource that we now draw upon to write our ***Annual*** every year. We can now see how many times Barry Bonds walked, but we can also count Jeff Reboulet's bunts and Jon Zuber's one home run (it was a crucial one off Ugueth Urbina). One of the great things about TBL in the present day is our history – which, with the aid of this tool, we can remember. Perhaps some day we'll be able to view the cards that go with those performances.

Which brings us to the theme of this year's book. We have endeavored to select one player from each of our twenty-four franchises that at one time epitomized it. We call this player ***The Franchise***. Some are obvious, while others might be a surprise. We seek to evoke not merely a reverence for times past, but a recollection of those great players and the great seasons they contributed to the pageant of the Transcontinental Baseball League. Some will be memorable for managers in our league, others will have been great before some of our merry band arrived.

But for those whose career is past, it should be remembered that their cards are still in envelopes, and that like a brief snapshot or loop of film on some forgotten reel, they are still young, the possibility of greatness still there whenever we take up the dice and roll them.

The Franchise

These players are highlighted on the team pages.

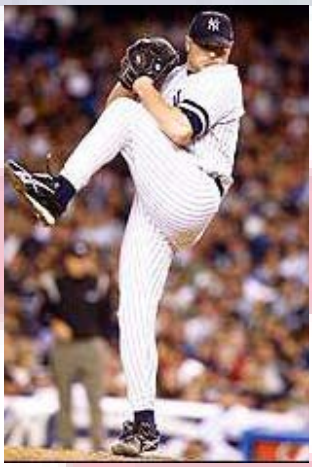
Blue Hill:	***Tim Hudson, SP***
Brobdingnag:	***Alex Rodriguez, 3B***
Columbus:	***Barry Bonds, OF***
Dallas:	***Mark Teixeira, 1B***
Gotham City:	***Tony Gwynn, OF***
Grand Cayman:	***Bobby Bonilla, OF***
Greater Ohio:	***Miguel Cabrera, 1B***
Houston:	***C.C. Sabathia, SP***
Hudson:	***Todd Helton, 1B***
Kansas:	***Pedro Martinez, SP***
Knoxville:	***Michael Cuddyer, OF***
Las Vegas:	***Vladimir Guerrero, OF***
Maracaibo:	***Rafael Palmeiro, 1B***
Melrose:	***Wally Joyner, 1B***
Midwest:	***Kirby Puckett, OF***
Munich:	***Orel Hershiser, SP***
New Westminster:	***Prince Fielder, 1B***
Northboro:	***Scott Rolen, 3B***
Portland:	***Manny Ramirez, OF***
Richmond:	***Albert Pujols, 1B***
Rye:	***Alan Trammell, SS***
Wakefield:	***Larry Walker, OF***
Whitman:	***Andruw Jones, OF***
Zion:	***Greg Maddux, SP***

Good luck to everyone in TBL in 2011. Play ball!

international conference hall of fame eligibles

Roger Clemens, SP *1985-2008*
Farmville/Puget Sound, Knoxville, Brobdingnag, Gotham City, Munich and others

One of the most dominant pitchers in TBL history, he pitched for numerous contenders over his long career. He won 20 games 5 times and finished with 359 wins; he struck out 4,671 batters in 5,261 innings. In 1998 in Richmond he had a season for the ages (24-8, 1.69, 23 CG, 345 Ks), followed by a 27-5, 2.33 season for Brobdingnag in 1999.


Roger Clemens

Frank Thomas

Frank Thomas, 1B *1991-2008*
Brobdingnag, Rochester, Melrose, Munich and others

A lifetime .288 hitter, he was a dominant OBP machine for much of his first decade with the great Brobdingnag teams of the 1990s. He walked more than 100 times for seven consecutive seasons, and hit over .300 each year. He finished his career with 1,515 walks, 2,299 hits, 456 homers and almost 1,000 extra-base hits in about 9,500 plate appearances.

Wade Boggs, 3B *1991-2004*
Amherst, Raleigh/Winston-Salem, Jessup/Boston, Cape Cod, Diamond Point, Whitman.

A contact-hitting machine, Boggs was a lifetime .307 hitter, sixth in TBL history as of this writing. He recorded 2,517 hits and 1,123 walks in 16 seasons (with only 835 strikeouts), leading to a lifetime .390 OBP. From 1986 to 1990 he had five straight 200-hit seasons for Amherst, the North Carolina franchises, and the Jessup club.

Wade Boggs

Will Clark

Will Clark, 1B *1987-2001*
Gotham City, Antioch/Greater Ohio, Melrose, Rochester

A slick-fielding first baseman, Clark was a steady hitter who topped .300 four times. He hit 309 home runs and drove in 1,331 runs, recording 2,242 hits and 949 walks in his 15-year career. He regularly drove in 100 runs and was a doubles machine.

HALL OF FAME

The Prodigal Franchise

2010 Clemente Division
Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Whitman*	102	60	.630	—
Greater Ohio	89	73	.549	13
Columbus	83	79	.512	19
Blue Hill	41	121	.253	61

** Lost to Rye in IC Championship Series.*

In 2002, the **Las Vegas Gamblers** won 82 games and lost 80, but found themselves in last place in the Clemente Division. Commissioner of Vice *Paul Harrington* took the Vegas travelling road show to the Mays Division.

Eight years later, Paul had won two division titles in his new digs, but it was time to go home. So, in 2011, The Las Vegas Gamblers are back like 35 prodigal sons, and they enter 2011 as the favorite for the Clemente Division title. They've done what needs to be done to contend in the division and to go deep into the playoffs. It should be a fun season.

The opportunistic Mr. Harrington shows up immediately after *Brian Hanley*'s **Whitman River Rats** peaked – the ***Annual*** does not see them winning another 102 games in 2011 as they did last year.

However, this Rats club has two Grade 15 lefty starters - Clayton Kershaw and David Price – at the top of their rotation, and the best hitter in the division – Paul Konerko. With Brian's skill at making the best of whatever he has, this should be a decent race.

There are two rebuilders. The **Columbus Jets** have been hoarding young pitching for a few years and that trend continued in this year's draft with the additions of Dan Hudson and Mike Leake.

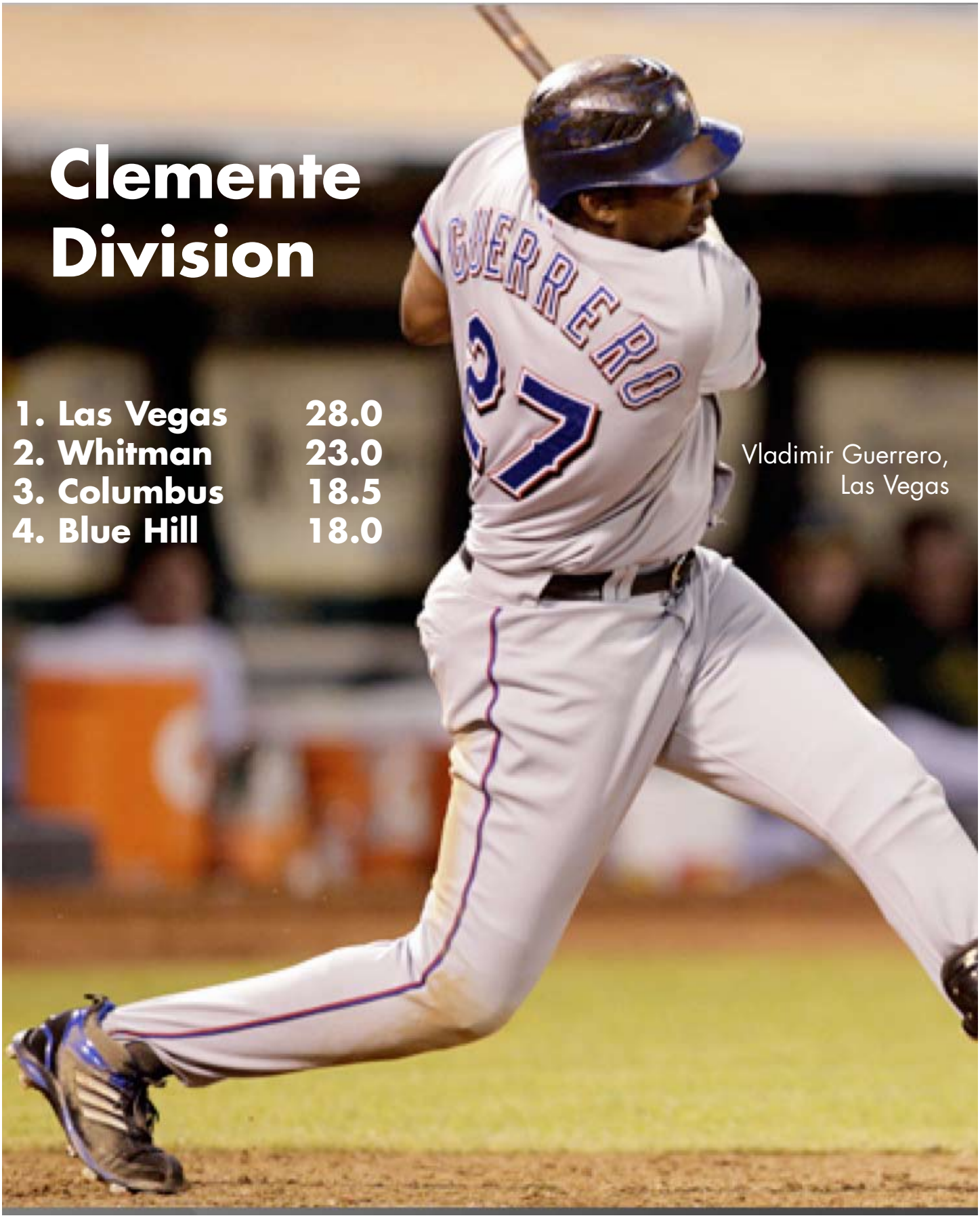
The young pitching and a lineup full of power hitters will make for some pleasant afternoons for *Vic Vaughn*, but this is a Potemkin Village outfit – the good players are terrific, but there's no depth. More marinating is required for Columbus to contend.

Mark Ludwig's **Blue Hill Mudslides** can take solace in two things in 2011 – the offseason brought a mother lode of fine young players in trade and draft, and 2011 *is not 2010*. Last year's 121-loss club finished 61 games out of first place, though it wasn't even in the Top Five of Futility.

They are even optimistic enough to have acquired a closer for the bullpen – Grade 19* lefty Brian Fuentes will get the call when it's close and late.

Clemente Division

1. Las Vegas	28.0
2. Whitman	23.0
3. Columbus	18.5
4. Blue Hill	18.0



Vladimir Guerrero, Las Vegas

2010 las vegas GAMBLERS in review

Having a bad year and missing the playoffs is nothing new for Vegas.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 66-96 (4th, Mays)

It was pretty evident that the 2010 season was going to be a long one for the TBL franchise situated in Las Vegas. After having reached the Conference Championship for the third time in their 14 year team history only to be swatted away like a rabid cur by former divisional rival Gotham City, missing out on their first trip to the TBL World Series left lingering heartburn in the hearts of Gamblers fans everywhere. And the team was a shadow of its 2009 89-73 edition. Due to injuries to Shaun Marcum and Ben Sheets, the Gamblers were forced to use gumbies such as Manny Parra and David Huff for more than a third of their starts. Several down years from major offensive contributors didn't help much either.

Cabrera: offensive leader

Having a bad year and missing the playoffs is nothing new for Vegas, but usually they can console themselves with a high draft position and another Shiny New Thing from the draft. Due to the capricious nature of the baseball gods the Gamblers had to settle for the 8th pick in the 2011 draft, despite ending the season with the 5th worst record! After going 26-33 for the first three months of 2010 and compiling a 20-42 record down the stretch from September thru November for some inexplicable reason Las Vegas went 20-21 in July and August to sink down to the 8th draft spot. It was the difference between getting power hitter Mike Stanton and defensive speedster Austin Jackson in a year we *had* to get an outfielder. Las Vegas' general manager now regrets accidently killing that gypsy witch with his car and burying her body out in the desert. Bad move there!

What went right?

Not a whole lot. On the offensive side Asdrubal Cabrera led the team in batting average (among qualifiers) at .262. He also smacked 44 doubles to lead the team there. James Loney led the team with 23 HR. Newcomer Chone Figgins paced the team in SB with 41 (in 58 attempts). Japanese import Hiroki Kuroda won half of his starts (10 wins in 20 starts) and Gavin Floyd led the team with 11 wins. Another player from the Land of the Rising Sun, Takashi Saito, saved nearly half of the Gamblers' wins (28 saves/66 wins), despite not having a closer's grade.

What went wrong?

Where to start! Those 59 starts from Huff (Grade 3) and Parra (Grade 1) were just as bad as you'd expect. Their combined results: 12-35, 558 hits, 297 runs (276 earned), 53 HR and an ERA of 6.51! The offense didn't exactly help them win either. A team batting average of .233 with only 125 HR and over 1000 K, combined with a team OPS of .665, won't garner too many victories. Team captain VLAD Guerrero had his worst season since his rookie campaign in 1998 posting a .248 average, a .372 slugging percentage and only 11 dingers in 98 games. How sad that Father Time is finally catching up to our Latino leader.

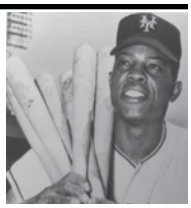
3 Things

1. *Bad Trades.* Moving starters like Bronson Arroyo and Dallas Braden in questionable deals forced the drafting of Colby Lewis and another trade to get R.A. Dickey to replace those missing starts.
2. *Bankrupting the Future*. The Gamblers' first and second round draft picks for 2012 now reside with Brob and Hudson respectively while we are getting older and older. Thankfully many key members of the Gamblers have really decrepit looking portraits hanging in their attics.
3. *Overvaluing our 2011 performance.* Las Vegas switched back to the Clemente for the 2011 season thinking that it would be easy pickings. Whitman would be but a speed bump on our way to the division crown. As of this writing we are 2-7 in mid April! Could the Las Vegas *Sun* have erred in calling us the "Best Gamblers Team Ever"? (Cue the cringes from Red Sox Nation).

las vegas GAMBLERS

Paul Harrington (15th year)

He can win when he has the horses.



"When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Last year, the Las Vegas Gamblers efficiently executed the "bust" portion of their Boom and Bust philosophy, losing 96 games and finishing 39 games behind TBL Champion Rye in the Mays Division.

In the 2010/2011 offseason, Paul Harrington did some homework, saw Rye, Gotham City and up-and coming Grand Cayman ahead of him in the Mays Division, pulled up stakes and returned like the Prodigal Franchise to their old stomping grounds in the Clemente Division. They were last there in 2002, and they enter 2011 as the favorite to win it.

Pitching: 13.0
Built to contend.

ROTATION. has worked the draft and the trade wires hard to piece together this rotation. This year brought in Colby Lewis (Grade 12, 32 starts) with a 2011 #2 and R. A. Dickey (Grade 12 C+25 HR+23, 26 starts) through a trade with Hudson. These two guys lead the staff – there is no Grade 15 slump assassin in Vegas this season.

There follow 91 starts around Grade 10. Hiroki Kuroda (Grade 10 C+34 HR+22, 31 starts), Shaun Marcum (Grade 11 C+31, 31 starts) and Jeff Niemann (Grade 10 HR-21, 29 starts) will get the job done through start 149. The remaining 13 go to Gavin Floyd (Grade 7 C+15 HR+25, 31 starts), who will be treated like a lefthanded 7 – *i.e.,* not well.

Whitman has the two big dogs at the top of their rotation, but they shallow out long before Vegas. It will be interesting to compare the performances of these two teams' starting staffs after this season is over.

SNT:
Austin Jackson.
The outfielder that Las Vegas needed and wanted. He has all the tools – though he needs to make better contact.

BULLPEN. This unit right here represents the primary reason that Las Vegas is favored to win the Clemente this year. The good news starts with Joel Peralta (Grade 20* C+46, 49 IP), who was acquired with a #2 in the 2011 draft. Peralta is the closer for the first part of the season, and while the +46 would better serve as a homer rating than a control rating in the closer's role, Paul will trot out Joel whenever a save situation evolves between April and July. The co-closer is Santiago Casilla (Grade 18* C-31 HR+45, 55 IP).

Arrived: Drew Butera, Santiago Casilla, R.A. Dickey, Matt Downs, Austin Jackson, Jon Jay, Colby Lewis, Magglio Ordoñez, Corey Patterson, Joel Peralta, Jason Repko, Will Rhymes

Departed: Jonathan Albaladejo, Robert Andino, Wladimir Balentien, Jake Fox, Nick Green, Eddie Guardado, David Huff, Mike MacDougal, Brandon McCarthy, Jayson Nix, Trent Oeltjen, Luis Perdomo, Jack Taschner

Turnover Rate: *34%*

He does not even warm up in the bullpen until August. According to the instructions, these two will never be on the active roster at the same time, so Paul will be using his closers very aggressively all year.

The late game setup crew has three bodies and a total of 183 innings of work. The best of the group is probably K-Rod – Frankie Rodriguez (Grade 16* HR+35, 57 IP) has the peripherals to be the eighth inning guys most of the year. Sergio Romo (Grade 16* C+32, 62 IP), Takashi Saito (Grade 15* C+15 HR+23, 54 IP), and Manny Parra (Grade 14* C-41 HR-16, 14 starts, 38 IP) will form a tag team designed to get leads into the hands of Joel Peralta.

Ron Mahay (Grade 11* C+24 HR-21, 34 IP) will spot up against lefthanders. Robinson Tejeda (Grade 12* C-26 HR+23, 61 IP) has marginal control, but he will be quite adequate as a long man. He is ticketed to relief valet duty on days that Gavin Floyd starts, or the first pitcher off the bench if another starter struggles.

There's enough here to help the starters all season long. This unit is a difference-maker in the Clemente Division this year.

R.A. Dickey, Colby Lewis: New Aces

The Franchise

Vladimir Guerrero

He's headed for the TBL Hall of Fame – over 13 seasons he has hit 427 home runs, driven in over 1300 runs, with a batting average near .300. He's topped 40 homers four times and 120 RBI seven times. His best season was 2003 (.329-46-144).

Offense: 7.0

May be frustrated by good pitching.

Whenever you talk about the Gambler attack, there is only one place to start: Vlad Guerrero (1-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L+4). The big guy got off to a ridiculous start in Texas in 2010, but a late-season swoon whittled the card down. He still bats fifth against righties and third against lefties.

The big scary cardboard in the Las Vegas lineup this year belongs to Alfonso Soriano (1-0-0-0-0, 9 hits. 3 walks). He may not get on base much, but the five power numbers means he bats fourth all season long. Another excellent card belongs to catcher Geovany Soto (1-5-6, 9 hits, 6 walks, L+8 R-6, 105 games). Soto is limited to 105 games and has a nasty righty shift, so he bats towards the end of the lineup.

The leadoff man is Chone Figgins (2 0s, 9 hits. 4 walks, 2 11s, 29 SSN for 57 attempts). He's a legacy third baseman. The other table setters are first round pick Austin Jackson (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 31 SSN for 33 attempts), and veteran utility man Jamey Carroll (2 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, 29 SSN for 16 attempts). Carroll will play SS all season for the Gamblers to leverage his excellent glove work, but he'll contribute as a hitter as well.

Vegas Line

A good team heads back to the Clemente Division, good enough to win the division and make a run in the playoffs. But like the businessman on his firsttime in Vegas we've emptied our bank accounts, took out that third mortgage on the home and drained the college fund and put everything on "00 – Green". It could happen!

las vegas GAMBLERS

Filling in the middle of the lineup are two half-season cards: Jon Jay (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks) and the always sublime Magglio Ordoñez (1-6-6, 11 hits, 4 walks). James Loney (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) is more durable – he played 161 games last year for LA, and he'll play first all season for Vegas. At second base, Paul has a platoon - Skip Schumaker (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22) against righties, and Wil Rhymes (4-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, 3 7s, 54 games) against lefties.

Soriano: Big scary

This is not a spectacular lineup. The Soriano card will make its share of noise, but with twelve on-base numbers, it can be pitched to. The best cards in the stack are half-season efforts and will have to be managed carefully. It's not a train wreck, but Vegas may have some frustrating nights against good pitching.

Defense: 5.0
As long as it's on the ground . . .

The Gamblers are pretty decent defensively this year, as long as their opponents hit the ball on the ground; but fly balls will be a circus in Vegas this year.

Jamey Carroll (SS9), James Loney (1B5), rookie Austin Jackson (CF3, 34 arm) and Geovany Soto (C8, Th+2), are the defensive stalwarts. Carroll (2B8) is also the team's best option at second. Sadly, he's needed at short and the actual second sackers (Schumaker and Rhymes) are both 7s. Figgins (3B3) needs a chest protector at third.

It's a good thing Jackson is fast, because he'll need to help out the cavalcade of statues that Vegas is planting in the corners of its outfield. Jon Jay, Magglio Ordonez, Vlad, and Fonzie Soriano are all OF1s.

Overall, they're a lot like the team itself. When they're good they're really good. When they're bad…

Bench: 3.0
There for a reason.

The bench is there for a reason. Corey Patterson (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 25 attempts) is a nice asset. His speed makes him a nice late-inning option. Jason Repko (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, R+3) won't scare anyone, but he's an OF3. The most interesting player on the pine is Asdrubal Cabrera (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22), who was a regular last season but didn't hit much, lost his stellar defensive rating and finds himself backing up Jamey Carroll.

Dewayne Wise (3 0s, 10 hits), Xavier Nady (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42) and the backup catching tandem of Drew Butera (0-6, 8 hits, C9 Th+5) and Brayan Pena (6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, R+2) round out the roster. Not a threat in the bunch, but some defensive options.

1st There's too much pitching to pick anyone else for the division, and Mr. Harrington has proven over and over again that he can win when he's got the horses. Whitman may make a race of it, but Las Vegas looks poised to make the playoffs by Labor Day.

2010 finish: 66-96 (4th, Mays)
Last 5 years: 411-399, .507

PITCHING: 13.0 OFF: 7.0 DEF: 5.0 BNC: 3.0

TQ: **28.0**

2010 whitman RIVER RATS in review

This was a team that came to play every day.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 102-60 (1st, Clemente)

The Whitman River Rats did everything they could do to reach the World Series in 2010. Truly, the effort started years ago when the club drafted the likes of David Price, Clayton Kershaw and Matt Garza; but adding Raul Ibañez in a pre-season trade clinched the deal. The regular-season lineup clubbed 194 home runs and stole 195 bases, while the pitching staff came up big. Led by Garza and closer George Sherrill, they were the best in the Clemente and came up one series short of the Fall Classic. Unfortunately, the Rye Herons, eventual TBL champions, were not to be denied. But it should definitely count as a successful season.

Garza: Dominant

What went right?

The Rats featured two monster power hitters in their lineup in 2010: Raul Ibañez, who was all that (.272-58-141), and third baseman Mark Reynolds (.261-54-133, 26 steals). They spent all summer driving in speedsters Juan Pierre (.317, 35 steals, 195 hits, 89 runs scored) and Jacoby Ellsbury (.273, 73 steals in 79 attempts, 191 hits, 116 runs scored).

On the mound, Matt Garza (18-10, 2.88, 229 Ks in 237 innings, 9 complete games) was dominant, and his tag-team partner Clayton Kershaw chipped in 13 wins and 231 Ks in 204 innings. But the bullpen was even more impressive. George Sherrill (41 saves, 1.43 ERA, 67 Ks in 69 innings with only 29 hits) was a lights-out closer, while the bullpen had 50 overall wins – almost half of the total. It suggests a whole lot of come-from-behind wins.

This was a team that came to play every day, and was dangerous early, late, and every part of the game in between.

What went wrong?

The team had huge home run power, but that came along with lots and lots of strikeouts – 1,155 as a team, led by Reynolds' impressive total of 217. Six regulars struck out 100 or more times, including Paul Konerko's 107; he hit 27 homers but recorded only a .236 average. Nick Markakis was also something of a disappointment, hitting only .253 with 10 homers and 123 strikeouts.

The club recorded only a .326 OBP for the season, with only 450 walks. Reynolds led the club with 75, but only two others were in the 50s. They also recorded a very small number of doubles for a team with this much power, suggesting that a lot of those homers were solo shots. The pitching staff issued 100 more walks than the lineup recorded, led by Kershaw's 114.

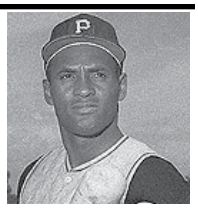
3 Things

1. The Ibañez trade. It was key to the team's success; the huge card contributed 58 homers, and helped power the club to the post season. Mr. Hanley has never hesitated to make the big trade, and as we know, it's much more fun to win than to lose.

2. Pitching is important. Kershaw, Garza, Price, and now Sheets and Aardsma and a few others added in the draft and through off-season trades, will keep Whitman in the mix for years to come. With only one moderate rebuild, Mr. Hanley's eye for pitching has kept the team a contender since its third season in TBL. Hanley knows how to pick them and how to use them once they're on the roster.

3. Fix what can be fixed, and live with the rest. Because the post-season has produced some surprises, Whitman has done its best to hang around. Don't expect that situation to change. Because winning is *more fun.*

whitman RIVER RATS



Brian Hanley (16th year)

The instructions are looking at something in the neighborhood of a .500 season. That seems about right.

The savvy Mr. Hanley loaded up and made every shot count last year, driving his Rats to a 105-57 record and a first place finish in the Clemente Division. The made a nice showing in the TBL playoffs, clubbing the New West Whiskeyjacks in five games before they ran into the Rye buzzsaw in the International Conference semi-finals.

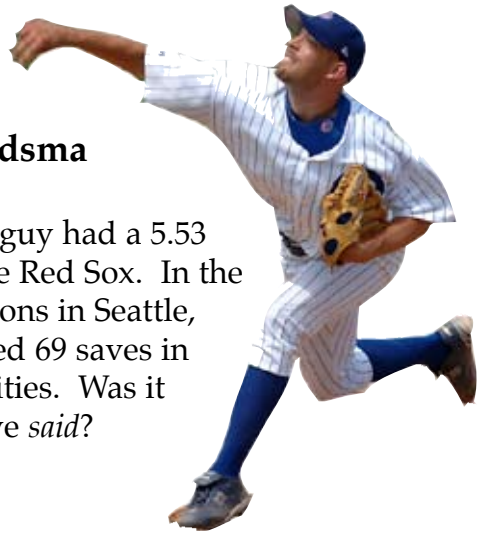
This season, Whitman will be taking a step back from the giddy heights of the last one. This team does have weapons, though, and no one is better at squeezing value out of players than Brian Hanley.

Pitching: 8.5
Non-trivial.

ROTATION. Who is the best starting pitcher in baseball? The quick answer in the NL is Tim Lincecum, who has been absolutely overpowering for two years, and led the San Francisco Giants to the 2010 World Series title. Brian Hanley might offer another name - Clayton Kershaw (15 C-15 HR+31, 32 starts). In the last two years, Kershaw has pitched 375 innings, allowed 279 hits, struck out 397 guys and registered ERAs of 2.79 and 2.91. This guy is just 23 years old. He may already be the game's best lefthanded starter.

Or perhaps that title should go to David Price (Grade 15, C-21 HR+26, 31 starts). Last year, Price went 19-6, 2.72 while pitching in the high-octane American League East. This year, Mr. Hanley will be using him every five days, come rain or shine. The top 2 starters on this club will allow Whitman to compete with any club in TBL. If they make the playoffs, facing the Rats will be – as Joe Auletta would put it– "non-trivial."

SNT:
David Aardsma



In 2008, this guy had a 5.53 ERA with the Red Sox. In the last two seasons in Seattle, he's converted 69 saves in 78 opportunities. Was it something we *said*?

There are 60 more solid starts behind the big lefties. Barry Enright (10 C+14 HR-41, 17 starts) and Matt Garza (10 C+14 HR-15, 32 starts) have established themselves as good young starting pitchers. It'll be interesting to see how Enright's terrifying homer rating affects his performance. Garza has been a Red Sox killer for several years. Bosox Nation is shedding no tears as he takes his act to the National League for 2011.

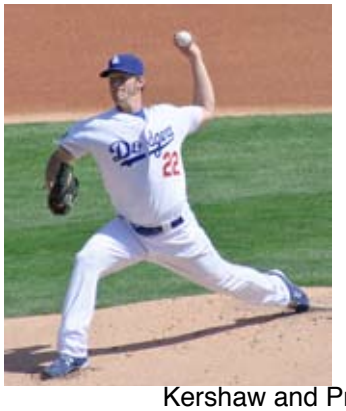
Whitman's top 4 starters have 112 starts. The back third of the rotation consists of 50 opportunities to go to the bullpen early. Aaron Laffey (Grade 9, C-36 HR+56, 5 starts, 56 IP) and Ben Sheets (Grade 8 HR-21, 20 starts) are respectable for 25 of those 50. The rest are PG-13 affairs starring Aaron Cook (4 C-14 HR+21, 23 starts) and concept starter Brian

Arrived: Joaquin Arias, David Aardsma, Blaine Boyer, Jason Bulger, Barry Enright, Frank Herrmann, Sergio Santos, Ben Sheets, Josh Thole, Omar Vizquel

Departed: Jesse Carlson, Matt Daley, Jeff Fiorentino, Ryan Garko, Alberto Gonzalez, Adam Kennedy, Justin Miller, Fernando Tatis, Brett Tomko, Sean White.

Turnover Rate: *28%*

whitman RIVER RATS



Kershaw and Price: the top 2.

Tallet (7 C-31 HR-46, 5 starts). This is one of the strengths of the team because of the top two, who are young and gifted. Brian will work the bullpen hard to assure good performances from the rest of the staff.

BULLPEN. Whitman always seems to pick up its closers on draft day, but this year the club pulled a trade to get David Aardsma (17* C-32, 49 IP) from Rye. Aardsma's slightly icky control rating sets the tone for the entire pen. Only one member of the Whitman relief corps has positive control – mop up man Frank Herrmann (7* C+32 HR-15, 44 IP). Other than that, the Whitman mascot had better wear catcher's gear.

The primary setup dudes are wild whiplash specialist Tony Sipp (Grade 14* C-62 HR-33, 63 IP) and Tyler Clippard (Grade 15* C-31 HR+14, 91 IP). Clippard almost has enough innings to require two roster slots. The top 3 have 198 innings of Grade 14 or better, but the peripherals make this late relief corps substandard.

After those three, Whitman will peel three Grade 11*s off the pile. Tim Byrdak (C-51, 38 IP), Sergio Santos (C-31 HR+46, 51 IP) and George Sherrill (C-45, 36 IP) only have 120 innings of work among them. The rest of the staff is manned by fill-ins like Blaine Boyer (8* C-44 HR+36, 57 IP), Jason Bulger (8* C-62, 24 IP) and Carlos Villanueva (9* C-22 HR-15, 52 IP).

This is the bullpen of a team concentrating its energy in other places. Indeed, aside from the trade for Aardsma, Whitman burned only one significant draft pick on relief – Sergio Santos got here with a #3 pick in the 2011 draft. These guys will not be a lot of help to the starters.

Offense: 6.0

Less power, more depth.

Last year, Whitman had two hitters who combined for 112 home runs – Raul Ibañez and Mark Reynolds. This year's lineup has only one monster hitter, but perhaps a little more depth than last year's outfit that scored 793 runs.

The carnival attraction is Paul Konerko (1-1-6-6, 11 hits, 4 walks+22), and there are very few cards in the set better than this one. He plays first base and bats fourth all season long. Konerko is playing this year as a 35 year old, and seems to be getting better as he ages. He has plenty of help this year. Kelly Johnson (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks) plays second base and bats either third or fifth in most lineups. Johnson barely played last year (2 at bats), so his return is most welcome. Outfield stalwart Nick Markakis (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, 30 SSN for 9 attempts) did not hit for much power last season (12 homers) but everything else was just fine, thanks. He bats third in many lineups.

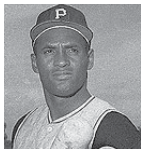
The leadoff man most of the year is centerfielder Juan Pierre (2 0s, 10 hits 2 walks+42, 3 31s, 30

The Franchise

Andruw Jones

He's been a lifetime Rat, a dominant power hitter now in the twilight of his career. 378 homers and 1,096 RBI in his 11 full seasons, he has been a great defensive player for much of his career.

The 2011 Clemente winner won't roll over just because Las Vegas took Greater Ohio's place in the division. As always Brian Hanley will scrape and dig for every ounce of talent to make it back to the playoffs. His pair of Aces (Price and Kershaw) is a good hand to bet on.



whitman RIVER RATS

SSN for 86 attempts). Pierre is a key cog in the Rats offense, which emphasizes the hit-and-run more than perhaps any team in the league except Zion. And who better to hit and run than the ancient but wonderful Omar Vizquel (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 3 31s)? Raul Ibañez (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) checks in with his usual solid card, although this is a severe step down from the eyeball-scorching cardboard of a year ago. Occasionally, Andruw Jones (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks, 31 SSN for 11 attempts) will get an opportunity to relive his glory days with Whitman. Mark Reynolds (1-5-5, 7 hits, 5 walks) will also see some starts despite the fact that his batting average evaporated last season. The shortstop hits ninth. The regular, listed one is Brendan Ryan (2 0s, 8 hits 2 walks). He is a slightly more inept hitter than backup Cesar Izturis (9 hits 2 walks). The catching will make a contribution to the offense when Josh Thole (2 0s, 10 hits 4 walks, R+2) plays. The other catchers, Ronny Paulino (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+9) and Kelly Shoppach (3 0s, 7 hits, 4 walks+42, L+7) are marginal at best.

This is a decent offense overall. Most lineups will go seven deep before the blank cardboard appears, and that Konerko card will lay the wood to many this season.

Defense: 6.5
A team strength.

Whitman is an excellent defensive team this year. There aren't a lot of clubs with *two* full-season SS9s, but here are the good-field-no-hit tandem of Brendan Ryan and Cesar Izturis. They are joined in the middle of the diamond by the outstanding Kelly Johnson (2B8). Omar Vizquel (3B5) can still fling the leather out there, although he's moved his act to the hot corner. Paul Konerko (1B4) is pretty decent at first.

The catchers run the gamut from wretched (Kelly Shoppach is a C7, Th-4) to sublime (Henry Blanco is a C8, Th+6). In the outfield, Nick Markakis (OF3, 37 arm) is fantastic. The rest of the outfielders are decent OF2s. Andruw Jones (34 arm) can still throw.

The defense is a team strength, and they will need to make every fielding roll count in support of the weaker parts of the pitching staff.

Bench: 2.0
No hurry to rush them in.

The bench is also a strength insofar as there is not a big dropoff between the starters and some of the backups. The Ryan / Izturis tandem at short is one example of this. There is no hitting toy, however, so there isn't a lot of reason to rush the scrubs in there, either. Henry Blanco is a nice defensive replacement, and Joaquin Arias backs up in six positions. Everyone plays because Brian pinch hits a lot. This is a decent group.

2nd

Brian is resourceful enough to give Las Vegas a run for their money this year, but the TQs say that the Clemente is Paul Harrington's division to lose. The weaknesses in the bullpen are significant, and the starting pitching is shallow after Matt Garza. The instructions are looking at something in the neighborhood of a .500 season. That seems about right.

2010 finish: 102-60 (1st, Clemente)
Last 5 years: 406-404, .501

PITCHING: 8.5 OFF: 6.0 DEF: 6.5 BNC: 2.0

TQ: **23.0**

2010 columbus JETS in review

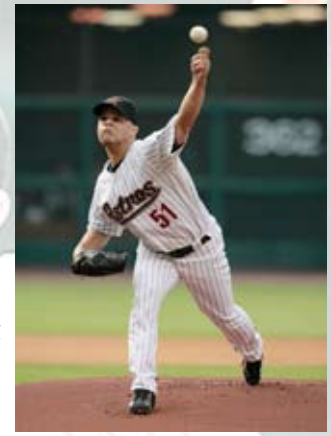
That's when expectations met reality.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 83-79 (3rd, Clemente)

Last year's 83-79 record represented a baby step forward for the Jets. We were hoping for more improvement, but the final record ended up fairly close to Clay's computer pre-play, so we probably ended up where we should have.

What went right?

Once we'd played ourselves out of playoff contention and the pressure was off, the team started to perform as we'd hoped it would earlier in the season, playing decent ball over the last two months of the season.


Rodriguez: Tough luck

Russell Branyan slugged .632 with 41 dingers to lead the offense. Significant contributions also came from Carlos "El Caballo Grande" Lee (.276 BA, 33 HR) and Ben Zobrist (102 runs scored and 28 HRs).

Bronson Arroyo led the staff with 16 wins, while Wandy Rodriguez had some tough luck mustering a 14-12 record with his sterling 2.76 ERA. Darren O'Day, who compiled 31 saves and a 1.01 ERA, led the relief corps.

What went wrong?

Expectations were high among the Jets' faithful. The ***Annual*** had predicted a second place finish in the Clemente and contention for a wild card berth. The first two months of the season produced some mediocre results, but with the division rivals coming to town in June, a successful home stand would jump start the season and get the Jets back into the playoff mix. Unfortunately, that's when expectations met reality. We went 3-7, including a sweep by Whitman, and dug ourselves a hole that we weren't able to climb out of.

Major disappointments offensively included Jay Bruce, who hit a paltry .191, and Corey Hart who wasn't much better at .222 with only 5 home runs. If 2011 is going to be a better year, we'll need much better performances from these gentlemen. Future TBL Hall of Famer Randy Johnson collected his 300th TBL victory but posted a 5.27 ERA.

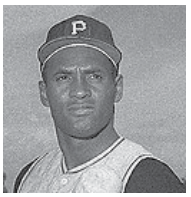
3 Things

1. High risk, high reward. As Giuseppe once pointed out, our draft strategy seems to focus on high risk, high reward players. In many cases, we are still waiting on the reward part. We're hoping that our first round choice this year, Dan Hudson, will move to the reward column faster than his predecessors.

2. Win in the Clemente. We need to perform better against our division rivals. For some reason we haven't played that well against the other teams within the division. Any improvement has to start with improving our inter-divisional record.

3. New Look. With the departure of the Chia Pets and the addition of the Las Vegas Gamblers, the Clemente Division will have a different look in 2011. We welcome Mr. Harrington and wish Devlin good luck in his transition to the Mays Division.

columbus JETS



Vic Vaughn (5th year)

Typically, we start the hitting analysis by discussing the team's circus performers . . . Columbus has none of those this year, so we can skip that part.

Last year, Vic Vaughn's Columbus Jets found themselves exactly where you don't want to be in TBL – 83 wins, short of the playoffs but beyond the reach of help that accrues to the blind and the lame through the TBL draft. Judging by the roster, Vic knows he had to get younger, and this club has some very nice players with recent birth dates. If some of the lottery picks work out, this team can remain a contender for years to come.

Pitching: 7.5
Built for the long run.

ROTATION. Vic is using the Midwest Mongrels' approach to building his team – pitching first. There was a time when the illuminati at the ***Annual*** warned against this methodology, but that was before TBL Commissioner Darrell Skogen made monkeys of us all by winning the 2009 TBL World Series.

Columbus added two nice pieces to a rotation that already had some strength to it. The big addition is Daniel Hudson (Grade 17 C+14 HR+14, 14 starts), who definitely qualifies as a Guy We Like. In 2008, Dan Hudson was pitching for Old Dominion. In 2009, he blew through the White Sox minor league system, then got traded to the Diamondbacks. His stuff is reminiscent of a fine pitcher with a similar name – Tim Hudson. His half season of excellent starts is just the beginning for this 24 year old.

Hudson is not the youngest starting pitcher on the staff. Brett Anderson (Grade 11 C+35 HR+36, 19 starts) is only 23, and like Dan Hudson he's proven that he can pitch in the bigs. The two children have a full season of starts between them. Two veterans add competence and bulk to the Jets rotation this year. Bronson Arroyo (Grade 11 C+22 HR-21, 33 starts) and Wandy Rodriguez (Grade 10 HR+21, 32 starts) are proven commodities in the prime of their careers. They will help Columbus compete through half the season. Then, things get a little ugly…

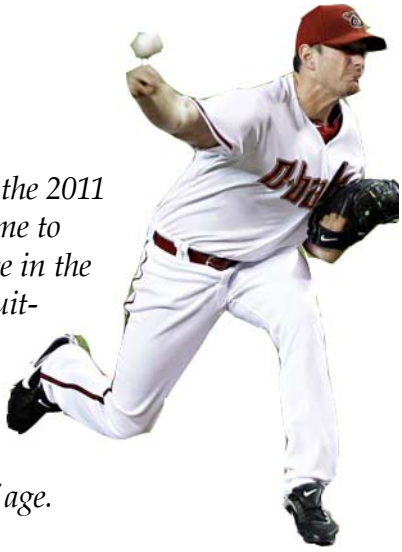
Kevin Slowey (Grade 6 C+35 HR-15, 28 starts), rookie Mike Leake (Grade 6 HR-16, 22 starts) and slop-tossing Baltimore righty Brad Bergesen (Grade 5 C+21 HR-21, 26 starts) are slated to *toe the rubbah* for 64 appearances. This is not a formula that will strike fear into the hearts of Whitman and Vegas. The rotation is built for the long run, though, so perspective is called for here.

Arrived: Scott Atchison, John Bowker, Jason Castro, Daniel Hudson, Dusty Hughes, Dan Johnson, Mike Leake, Kameron Loe.

Departed: Greg Burke, Roman Colon, Clay Condrey, Nomar Garciaparra, Jeff Gray, Sean Green, Randy Johnson, Fu-Te Ni, Jeremy Sowers.

Turnover Rate: 23%

SNT:
Daniel Hudson



Columbus' first pick in the 2011 TBL draft barely had time to finish his morning coffee in the minor leagues, and acquitted himself beautifully in his first season in Arizona last year. He's a half-season Grade 17 at 24 years of age.

BULLPEN. Last season, Jets closer Darren O'Day (Grade 18* C+35 HR+21, 62 IP) put up numbers that one would ordinarily expect to see only in Babe Ruth leagues – 4-1, 31 saves, 1.00 ERA, 17 hits in 51 IP. That is absolutely ridiculous, and even with the shiny grade and outstanding peripherals Mr. O'Day is packing this year, one can't imagine he's going to do *that* again. Still, O'Day will be an excellent closer for Vic this year.

O'Day: Ridiculous

Getting the ball into the hands of the fabulous Mr. O is going to be the big challenge this year for Columbus, because when you go to the shelf labeled "late inning setup staff" you encounter only dust bunnies and memories. Three poseurs will don false mustaches and rubber noses and try to impersonate setup men they've seen on TV. Francisco Cordero (Grade 11* C-43 HR+31, 72 IP), Kameron Loe (Grade 11* C+23, 58 IP) and David Robertson (Grade 11* C-32 HR+24, 61 IP) at least have the required bulk to handle their assignments, but an 11* is not a 15* in this crazy world, so trouble is afoot.

Randy Choate (Grade 9* C+16 HR+31, 44 IP) and Dusty Hughes (Grade 9* C-24 HR+41, 56 IP) are nice situational lefties, and there's 100 innings between them, so both will see duty in the regular relief rotation when the Jets are trying to protect a lead. The back end of the bullpen has two almost identical righties - Scott Atchison (Grade 8* C+15 HR-22, 60 IP) and Andy Sonnanstine (Grade 8* C+15 HR-14, 81 IP).

The depth is there – they have almost 500 innings. The issue comes when they're leading by 2 in the seventh and they want to lock the game down against a good hitting team. Vic will be working overtime and leveraging the +5 relief bonus to make this all work.

Barry Bonds

The greatest slugger in TBL history. His .361-81-166 is a season for the ages, and his 826 lifetime homers will put him in the TBL Hall of Fame. No one defines this franchise like Bonds. For eighteen years he was the most feared hitter in the league; he had more than 2,200 walks, 2,300 RBI and 3,200 hits.

The Franchise

Offense: 5.0

Power, but not enough baserunners.

Typically, we start the hitting analysis by discussing the team's circus performers – those 11 hit, 4 walk, five power number guys who put fannies in the seats. Columbus has none of those this year, so we can skip that part.

Next up, we talk about the solid performers – guys that have 13 or 14 on base numbers, some power, some speed…Columbus has four of those. Brett Gardner (2 0s, 9 hits 5 walks, 32 SSN for 56 attempts) has become a very nice speed outfielder for Vic. He leads off or bats second all season long. Corey Hart (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 16 speed number) is the number 3 hitter, and is most welcome back after struggling with injuries last year. Ben Zobrist (3 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks, 34 SSN for 27 attempts) is the primary leadoff guy, Jay Bruce (1-4-5, 10 hits

Vic Vaughn has put his own stamp on this team. Pitchers like Brett Anderson and Daniel Hudson and hitters like Jay Bruce and Brett Gardner may carry him to playoff greatness, just like his predecessor.

3 walks) continues his fine career with another good card.

Hart: Plus power

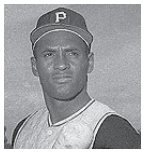
Next up we get to talk about the guys with ordinary cards, but plus power. Columbus has piles of these guys, like Russell Branyan (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, R+2, 109 games), shortstop Juan Uribe (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks), and the surprising John Buck (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 1 walk+22), who is suddenly one of the American League's best hitting backstops. First baseman Ross Gload (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks) also fits in this group. Sean Rodriguez (3 0s, 9 hits 2 walks+42, 31 SSN for 16 attempts, L+5) lacks the power of the others, but has excellent speed. He plays second against lefties.

Buck: Surprising

This is Northboro's offense from last year. The lack of monster bats and a paucity of base runners for the power hitters to drive in will limit the Jets to 700 to 750 runs, depending on dice. They're decent here – but not strong enough to make up for the holes in the pitching staff.

Defense: 4.0
No contributions to the highlight reel.

Columbus is slightly above average defensively, with a few high points and no glaring holes. The top leather workers include rightfielder Jay Bruce (OF3, 37 arm), centerfielder Brett Gardner (OF3) and a bevy of 2B8s – Sean Rodriguez, Ben Zobrist, and utility guy Jerry Hairston, Jr. are all thus rated.



columbus JETS

Everyone else gets the job done without contributing to the nightly highlight reel. Jerry Hairston, Jr. and Juan Uribe are SS8s. Ross Gload (1B4) is the regular first sacker. Corey Hart (OF2, 32 arm) is decent out there. John Buck (C7, Th+0) is mediocre. Juan Uribe (3B4) is pretty good at the hot corner, but Ben Zobrist (3B3) will struggle when he's in there They're better than Vegas, but a little short of Whitman here.

Bench: 2.0
Versatile, but few options.

Vic barely addresses the possibility of pinch-hitting in his instructions. "Let everyone play through their shifts." Sure enough – there's almost nothing to see here. There no speed for pinch running in close games. Jason Castro (C8, TH+3) is a good defensive option. The best hitter on the bench are former standaout Aaron Rowand (1-0-0, 9 hits) and former caballo Carlos Lee (1-5-6, 9 hits). The cupboard is pretty bare.

3rd

Las Vegas is clearly better on the pitching side, and Whitman has two 15s in their rotation plus a scary Paul Konerko card to build their lineup around. Vic Vaughn's outfit is young and will clearly improve over the next couple of seasons. This is his team now, with most of the legacies behind him.

2010 finish: 83-79 (3rd, Clemente)
Last 5 years: 368-442, .454

PITCHING: 7.5 OFF: 5.0 DEF: 4.0 BNC: 2.0

TQ: **18.5**

2010 blue hill MUDSLIDES in review

Pretty much nothing went right in 2010.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 41-121 (4th, Clemente)

Blue Hill had a long season in 2010, leading to a difficult 41-win record.

What went right?

Pretty much nothing went right in 2010 as Blue Hill didn't even end up with the first pick after having the worst record in the league. The 41 wins was a franchise low, worse even than the expansion year. The only positives I can see are rookie Gordon Beckham, who hit 25 doubles and 17 HRs which will hopefully trend upward in the next few years.

Rollins: Valedictory

Limited to only 77 games, Aramis Ramirez did make the most out of it hitting .336 and slugging .535. Jimmy Rollins hit only .231, but did steal 25 of 26 bases and had 38 doubles in his valedictory performance for Blue Hill. Hideki Matsui led the team with 27 HRs.

What went wrong?

The team batted .215 and had a team ERA of 5.65, neither which was going to lead to many wins. No hitter with qualifying at bats hit close to .300 and the lowest starter's ERA was 4.64.

The team offense was drawn down by such performances as Ken Griffey (.189-11-28); Willy Taveras (.193-4-19 in 440-odd plate appearances); Austin Kearns (.157); and Jeremy Reed (.194-0-17 in 400-plus plate appearances). The team hit only 124 homers and struck out over 1100 times.

The pitching staff had too many low grade starters and the bullpen was not much better and could not support them. Brian Bannister (6-16, 4.64) was the best starter; Carl Pavano went 7-17, 5.22; Sidney Ponson 4-12, 6.78; Vin Mazzaro 3-15, 7.44; and Daisuke Matsuzaka 1-19, 8.40.

3 Things

1. Transition in progress. This year's team has a mixture of young and old players as the team continues its transition to move forward. Stephen Drew is the new SS, while the rest of the infield (Barton, Beckham, Headley, Sanchez and Valencia) are all in their 20's so I believe the future is bright. Julio Borbon continues to improve and looks like the CF and leadoff hitter of the future.

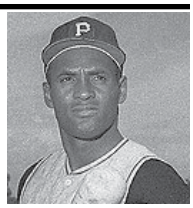
2. Can't fix everything. The outfield is still too old and adding Jim Edmonds certainly didn't help. Its defense is suspect and the arms are all weak. Out of my 3 catchers only one (Ellis) can sort of hit and only one (Marson) has a plus Th rating. The end of the rotation is weak and the bullpen is a bit too lefthanded.

3. But some things are fixed. The pitching staff is far better. Lineups are consistent with only a platoon at second base and catcher and only half season's worth of Edmonds and Valencia. There are options on the bench this year, and we will score more runs – the lineup is more balanced than a year ago. The bottom won't be very scary but there are pinch hitters available when needed.

blue hill MUDSLIDES

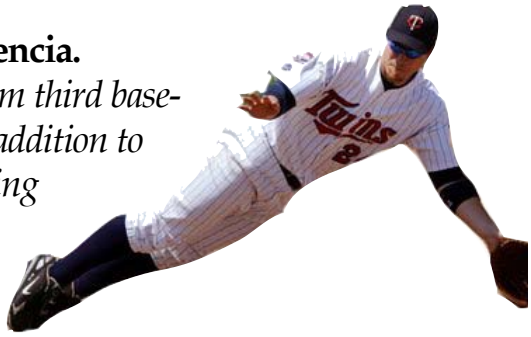
Mark Ludwig (16th year)

Blue Hill has names we like in a young lineup.



Mark Ludwig suffered in silence through a horrific 2010 season, as his Blue Hill Mudslides crashed and burned to the tune of a 41 - 121 record, 61 games behind Whitman in the Clemente Division. The kicker – as if they weren't kicked enough last year – is that they did not even get the first pick in the draft. That selection went to Munich, whose 48 wins looks decadent by comparison.

SNT: Danny Valencia.
The All-Rookie Team third baseman will be a nice addition to a lineup that's getting younger.



Taunted but undaunted, Mr. Ludwig took solace in the fact that several veterans returned to form during the 2010 season, most notably Tim Hudson and Carl Pavano. Encouraged by anything resembling traction after a season of slippage, Mark pulled the trigger twice in the offseason, sending away the #2 pick in the 2011 TBL draft to Brobdingnag for a basket of goodies, and bringing in outstanding lefty Brian Fuentes to bolt down the back of the bullpen.

Suddenly, Blue Hill has names we like in a young lineup, and a starting rotation that will allow them to compete most evenings. There are holes, but this team is a long way from the 2010 Mudslides that got trounced so badly all last year.

Pitching: 8.0
Recovering from last year.

ROTATION. Tim Hudson (Grade 14 C+13 HR+14, 34 starts) has spent his entire career in Blue Hill, and has checked in with grades from 1 to the mid-teens. He personifies the resurrection anthem being played in Blue Hill this season. In 2010, Hudson was 1-4, with a 7.79 ERA. This year, the 35-year-old Hudson is the staff ace.

Hudson is not out there by himself, either. Blue Hill has three more starters who will keep them in games early. Phil Hughes (Grade 10 HR-21, 29 starts) will be solid as the #2 starter. Carl Pavano (Grade 8 C+36, 32 starts) will pitch with accuracy all year. Daisuke Matsuzaka (Grade 10 C-42 HR+23, 26 starts) will pitch *without* accuracy, but is still a double-digit starter on a team that lost triple digit games a year ago. Mark Ludwig will take the card.

Those four men will devour 121 starts this season. The last quarter of the year will be a little more challenging. Vin Mazzaro (Grade 9 C-23 HR-21, 18 starts) will walk people and throw gopher balls for a few months. Promising youngster Wade Leblanc (Grade 7 C+12 HR-25, 26 starts) will take his lumps and wait for better cards.

Arrived: John Axford, Ronald Belisario, Matt Belisle, Jason Bourgeois, Eric Chavez, Stephen Drew, Jim Edmonds, A.J. Ellis, Randy Flores, Brian Fuentes, Phil Hughes, Aaron Miles, Gaby Sanchez, Danny Valencia.

Departed: Brian Bannister, Paul Byrd, Edgar Gonzalez, Ken Griffey, Jr., Rob Johnson, Seth McClung, Stephen Pearce, Sidney Ponson, Jeremy Reed, Jimmy Rollins, Justin Speier, Drew Sutton, Willy Taveras, Joe Thurston, Dontrelle Willis.

Turnover Rate: 40%

The Franchise

Tim Hudson
He's been in Blue Hill for his entire career, during which he's won 129 games, recording a league-leading 21-8 2.64 campaign in 2004 and a 22-win season in 2008.

For a team one year out from a flaming train wreck, this is a nice rotation.

BULLPEN. The team needed some late relief, and found it on the trade market and at the draft table. Brian Fuentes (Grade 19* C-26. 48 innings) may not be Portland or Rye's idea of a closer, but he'll be adequate most nights for this club. He'll be set up by another high-grade lefty, Darren Oliver (Grade 14* C+33 HR+31, 61 IP). Both these guys are over 35 years old, so Mark fetched John Axford (Grade 16*, C-33 HR+56, 58 innings) – a mere child at age 28 - in the middle of the second round of the 2011 draft. Another competent performer came in the Bonus round – Matt Belisle (Grade 11* C+44 HR+21, 92 IP). The nice peripherals and monster inning total will make Belisle a valuable addition this year. The last of the useful relief comes from '09 waiver acquisition Mitchell Boggs (Grade 11* C-16 HR+24, 67 IP).

Fuentes: Adequate

The top five relievers have 326 innings between them. They will allow Blue Hill to try and win the game when they have the lead. The rest of the pen is a mess. Brendan Donnelly (Grade 8*, C-62 HR-32, 30 innings) will be an adventure for half a season. Randy Flores (Grade 11, C-33 HR-33, 31 IP) will scare the fans for the other half. The rest are too unsightly for a family publication.

The bullpen is far too thin to allow Blue Hill to contend for a wild card, and far too old to be considered a stable piece of a rebuilder. But at least there are a few options here.

Offense: 4.5
More work to do.

Mr. Ludwig did most of his work on this side of the team in the 2010 offseason. The draft brought power hitting first baseman Gaby Sanchez (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks), a 27-year old who will bat fifth every day. Management hopes that this guy will be a cornerstone of the next Mudslide pennant winner. At shortstop and batting second in most lineups is Stephen Drew (4 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks). Drew came over in the big trade with Joe Auletta. He's been described as a disappointment in some corners, but those corners aren't trying to win a pennant with J. J. Hardy at shortstop.

Leading off and playing first base with élan is Daric Barton (3 0s, 9 hits, 6 walks). Barton will turn 26 in August and is on his way to becoming Mark Grace. Promising third baseman Danny Valencia (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks) only plays 85 games, but will bat third during his active months. The cleanup hitter is a geezer who still has all his teeth – Jim Edmonds (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks). Edmonds is not a guy who should be here – he retired this offseason, and his card would be valuable to a contender. Look for him to be packing his bags in September.

Hideki Matsui (1-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks) will be playing the outfield all season, despite defensive defi-

Our friend Mark Ludwig has had it rough in TBL recently. Aging superstars like Griffey and Matsui haven't brought playoff wins along with their other baggage. Mark has decided to start over and with young talent like Gaby Sanchez, Stephen Drew and Gordon Beckham he should have better luck this time.

ciencies. He hit 27 home runs last year. Chase Headley (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) has not been the butt-kicking monster that everyone expected so far, but he turns 27 this May, so he's a part of the youth movement. The primary second baseman is Mike Fontenot (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks). He plays 103 games out there. The rest are manned by 25 year old Gordon (Bend it like) Beckham (3 0s, 9 hits 3 walks).

Beckham: Bend it

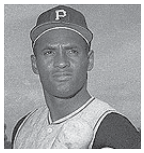
At catcher, Mudslide fans are hoping that the future belongs to 25 year old Lou Marson (7 hits), but this is not the future. Thirty-somethings Will Nieves (8 hits) and A.J. Ellis (0-6, 10 hits 4 walks+22) will see time behind the dish this year as well.

Overall, they're a vast improvement over last season, but when your best hitter is a 41 year old retiree, one can state without equivocation that there is more work to do here.

Defense: 4.0
This is going to be ugly.

The gloves will not be much help this year. Behind the plate, everyone is a C7. Marson (Th+3) has a decent arm. The second basemen are 2B7s and Drew is an SS8. Aaron Miles (2B8) is the lone bright spot in the middle infield. This is pretty much Fielding 2 all the way.

The one exceptional defender is Daric Barton (1B5). Valencia is a 3B4, which will be adequate most days. The big problem is the outfield. Jim Edmonds (OF2, 30 arm) is no longer the human highlight reel he was in his youth. One corner outfield slot is owned by Matsui (OF1) and the other is occupied by Chase Headley (OF1) who is not even rated in the outfield. This is going to be ugly.



blue hill MUDSLIDES

Bench: 1.5
Interesting. Not lots of help.

The bench has some interesting guys on it. Austin Kearns (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+42) is a regular on the computer and against lefties on the boards. Julio Borbon (2 0s, 10 hits) can pinch run, play some defense and is 25 years old. We like this guy here at the ***Annual***. Aaron Miles (6, 11 hits) is a nice utility man. Aramis Ramirez (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks) had the worst season of his career last year, but still has big power. Jason Bourgeois (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks) exists in the physical plane.

There's not much to help the starting lineup. Mark is hoping these guys come back with better cards in a year.

4th

They're better, and some of the improvement is legitimate: consider Drew, Hughes, Barton, Headley, Axford.

This is going to take a while, but the building materials are being collected. Patience is required to dig out of the deep hole of 2010.

2010 finish: 41-121 (4th, Clemente)
Last 5 years: 358-452, .442

PITCHING: 8.0 OFF: 4.5 DEF: 4.0 BNC: 1.5

TQ: **18.0**

A Little Bit More Competition

2010 Mays Division
Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Rye*	105	57	.648	—
Gotham City	72	90	.444	33
Grand Cayman	69	93	.426	36
Las Vegas	66	96	.407	39

** Won the 2010 World Series against Portland.*

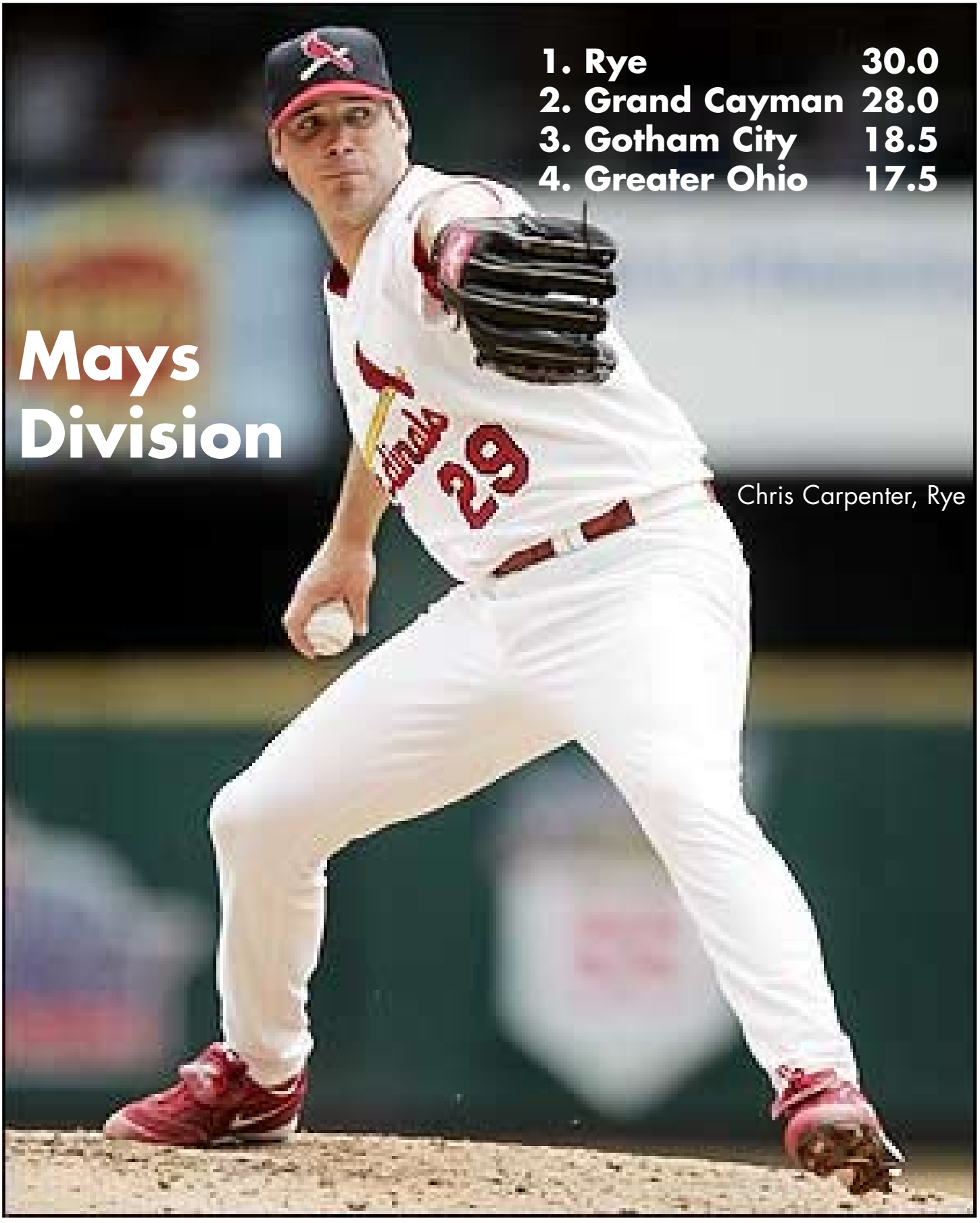
This year the Mays Division will have a pennant race, which is a Mays tradition going back to the days when Maracaibo and Zion locked horns here. There certainly wasn't much of a race last year, as *Craig Musselman*'s **Rye Herons** romped to 105 victories and a 4-0 sweep in the World Series. By his own admission, it was a fun year – and it sure looked like it. This year should be more challenging, but there is quite a bit of fun left to enjoy with the current generation.

The primary source of competition this year will be the **Grand Cayman Havens**. They last got close in 2008 when *Mark Bloom*'s club was still in Maine. It was Barry Bonds' swan song; it was all about Curtis Granderson's year of 27 triples (and 104 extra-base hits); and it ended at the conference championship series against eventual champion Brobdingnag.

Now they're back, they're younger, and there's a lot of talent on the roster. The last contention run was followed by two years of 90 or more losses; we think that this version of the club is likely to have a lot more staying power.

Meanwhile in **Gotham City**, *Anton Greenwald*'s boys add up to less than the sum of their parts, but still have *lots* of good parts – Felix Hernandez, Justin Verlander, Ryan Howard, Nick Swisher, and rookie power hitter Mike Stanton. It's going to be a long year, but the **Batmen** have a good future to look forward to.

As will be observed elsewhere, the **Greater Ohio Chia Pets** have moved to the Mays Division after thirteen years in the Clemente. They were last in the Mays in 1997, when TBL had only four divisions. They have not come here to contend, at least this year, as the club will be recovering from down seasons, injuries and some missing pieces. They're not the worst team in TBL, but *Devlin Toth*'s club will be tussling with the Gotham boys at the bottom of the division. Still, there are some talented players on this team, and they will have a few of the earlier picks in the 2012 draft that actually don't belong to Joe Auletta.


1. Rye 30.0
2. Grand Cayman 28.0
3. Gotham City 18.5
4. Greater Ohio 17.5
Mays Division
Chris Carpenter, Rye

2010 rye HERONS in review

Man, was that fun.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 105-57 (1st, Mays)

The Rye Herons were the 2010 TBL Champions. How sweet it is, as Ralph Cramden used to say. Man, that was fun.

What went right?

Everything that mattered went right. In the playoffs the Herons were 12-1, the finest playoff run in TBL history. Scorched earth. This team was built more for the playoffs, and had a formidable lineup, particularly in a short series where rest requirements didn't come into play. The combination of that formidable lineup, with moderate power, on-base potential, and speed up and down the lineup, and with solid starting pitching, an adequate bullpen with a shutdown closer, and fine defense, resulted in wins in close games and blow-outs alike, relying on multiple strengths in both circumstances. This team was a playoff juggernaut.

Greinke: Staff ace.

During the regular season, the team had the best record in the league and home field advantage in the playoffs, with a 105 win season. They scored 842 runs. The offense came from everywhere. No player had 100 RBI. Nine players hit between 15 and 30 home runs. Matt Kemp was arguably the leader of the offense with 111 runs scored, 94 RBI, 29 homers and 36 stolen bases, all despite a .257 average. Chase Utley had his best year yet as a Heron, hitting .281, with a .397 OBP, and scoring 114 times.

The pitching staff was led by Zack Greinke's 20-8 record and 2.21 ERA, and Chris Carpenter's 16-6 record and 2.63 ERA. Scott Feldman was lucky, going 16-4. Jered Weaver was a solid 17-11. Shutdown closer Mike Adams had 31 saves and a stellar 1.07 ERA.

What went wrong?

A few things did go wrong. Nelson Cruz hit .228 and Manny Ramirez hit .216. Both redeemed themselves in the playoffs, but neither could hit a lick during the season. Zack Greinke's pitching was superb, but his eight losses represented a lot of hard luck. The only player on the roster who consistently exceeded expectations was Scott Feldman. The regular season was successful and fun, but the team was generally flat compared to its lofty expectations. There's not a lot that went wrong, but this wasn't as well oiled a machine as it looked.

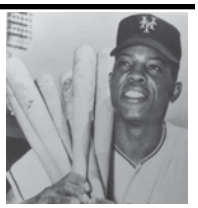
3 Things

1. Three years. This was a three year process of forming a roster where every piece fit together. Rye had been building a pitching staff for a number of years, and sacrificed the 2011 draft to trade for needed veterans. The result was a roster which had no weakness to speak of. That may not happen again for a long time. All assets were used to go for it.

2. Competitive but not dominant in 2011. It's a decent team, and the few 2011 draft picks remaining were used in the right spots to make the club competitive. The goals for 2011 are to strive to win the division, compete for best record in the conference, both of which could go either way, and see what the playoffs bring. September trading, frankly, could involve acquisitions or movement of veterans.

3. No rebuild soon. There is a core of young starting pitching in Greinke, Weaver and maybe Stauffer, and a young offense led by Matt Kemp, Nelson Cruz, and Chase Utley, that should keep this team moderately successful for a few years. We'll see.

rye HERONS



Craig Musselman (7th year)

Where are you headed next, Mr. Musselman? Disneyland?

The smile on Mr. Musselman's face and the blush of his cheeks said more about how he felt about winning the 2010 World Series than anything he could actually say. His team was clearly the class of the league. His postseason record of 12-1 showed how dominant they were.

Still, he had to play the games. This was a victory he earned; it was a victory to be savored. Where are you headed next, Mr. Musselman? *Disneyland?*

The real answer is *back for seconds.* While the 2011 Herons might not be as strong, while the competition might be tougher, and while the saying goes that it's *more* difficult to win the second time, the Rye Herons are still poised to do it. The odds are against them – a TBL team hasn't repeated since Brobdingnag in 1997–98 – but it's not out of the question. And that in itself is quite an accomplishment.

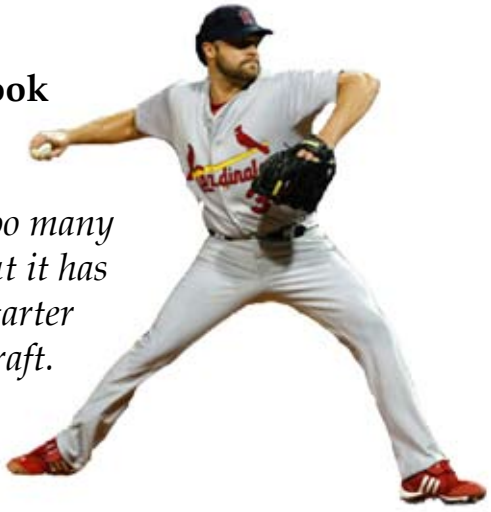
The Herons are once again favored to win the Mays Division. They have solid pitching, a loaded bullpen, and some fearsome hitters.

Arrived: Brad Davis, Adam Kennedy, Jesse Litsch, Javier Lopez, Humberto Quintero, Carlos Silva, Jake Westbrook.

Departed: Josh Anderson, Miguel Batista, Jason Bulger, Brian Buscher, Raul Chavez, Jason LaRue, Edwin Maysonet, Jarrod Washburn.

Turnover Rate: ***20%***

SNT:
Jake Westbrook



The Rye roster doesn't have too many new names; but it has a full season starter added in the draft. Not bad.

They have Manny Ramirez in his swan song. And they have an owner who has taken his first trip to the World Series and come away with a convincing sweep. Congratulations, Mr. Musselman.

Pitching: 14.0
No negatives.

ROTATION. The most amazing thing about this rotation is not the grades, although they aren't bad. It's the peripherals. There isn't a single negative peripheral in the rotation. Not one.

Weaver: He's the ace

The ace of the staff is certainly Jered Weaver (Grade 14 C+23). He satisfies all the criteria, including 34 starts. He's followed by veteran Chris Carpenter (Grade 11 C+22), back for his

rye HERONS

second tour as a Heron. A pair of Grade 8s – Zack Greinke (C+23 HR+23) and SNT Jake Westbrook – bring the total to 135 starts. Tim Stauffer (Grade 17 C+23 HR+44) tosses in seven (four against division rival Grand Cayman), and the rest are absorbed by Carlos Silva (Grade 6 C+33) and the bullpen. One drawback is that they're all right-handed.

BULLPEN. Mike Adams (Grade 19* HR+51) returns as the closer. Last year, he saved 32 games. He's more than ably set up by lefty Joe Thatcher (Grade 21* C+41 HR+51) – who may also save a few games – and righty Stauffer (Grade 16*).

The next tier of relief includes Brian Sanches (Grade 19* C-36), Javier Lopez (Grade 14* HR+45), and Elmer Dessens (Grade 14* C+26), although Sanches' role is earlier in the game per the instructions. At the "bottom" of the bullpen are Brian Sweeney (Grade 12* C+43) and Shawn Camp (Grade 11* C+34). These two could be set-up guys on a lesser team.

The total number of relief innings for the Herons exceeds 420. That's not a lot by TBL standards, and it remains to be seen if it will be enough for the 2011 campaign. The relievers complement the starters, but if they're used too often early in the year, Craig Musselman may have to go get another arm for the stretch drive. And you know what? He still has resources to do it.

Offense: 7.5
Power galore.

The biggest stick in the sack belongs to Nelson Cruz (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks). It's a terrific card with almost no shift penalty. The only weakness is his limit of 108 games. Manny (10 hits, 5 walks+42) goes out with a good though not overpowering card. Omar Infante (2 0s, 12 hits, 2 walks) chips in with a lot of hits on a card that leads off against right handed pitching.

Cruz: Biggest stick

Besides Cruz, there's other decent on this team. Torii Hunter (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Matt Kemp (1-4-5, 9 hits, 3 walks) play alongside Cruz. Miguel Olivo (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 walks), Lance Berkman (1-6-6, 9 hits, 5 walks), Casey Blake (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks), Chase Utley (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+42), and even Billy Hall (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) power the infield. While Utley, Berkman, and Kemp had off-years, this offense still has plenty of pop.

Last year was the year Rye was supposed to win in all and guess what...they did! Craig Musselman is still polishing the trophy and making the rounds on the rubber chicken circuit. There is still enough talent here to try for back to back titlesLet's watch and see.

The Franchise

Alan Trammell.
The talented shortstop was the keystone of the East Anglia club for his entire career, recording a .280 lifetime average. His best year was 1988, when his .377-35-177 line led the Pirates to 101 wins.

rye HERONS

The supporting crew isn't bad either. Marco Scutaro and Jeff Keppinger (both have 10 hits and 3 walks) form a weird platoon, although Keppinger could spell Utley, who has to miss 47 games. Back-up catch Humberto Quintero (2 0s, 9 hits, 1 walk) is a hit number away from being demoted to Triple-A.

Olivo: Defensive weapon

Defense: 6.0
O-mar! Solid without Infante.

Olivo (C8 with a +5 arm) is a defensive weapon. Even Quintero (C8 with a +2 arm) calls a good game. Hunter and Cruz (OF3) can run down anything, and Hunter and Infante can throw. Utley and Keppinger (2B8) are solid, and Berkman (1B4), as always, is above average. The shortstops, Scutero and Keppinger (both SS8), can make the easy plays look easy. Blake (3B4) isn't bad, but Infante (3B3) is penciled into the hot corner vs. RHPs.

How the defense does will be impacted by another factor: the limits to playing time. Cruz, as mentioned, has two-thirds of a season. Utley has only slightly more. Berkman has to miss 40 games. It sounds like a puzzle for Mr. Musselman. Most of the time, though, this defense will be effective.

Bench: 2.5
Some contributors.

This is a versatile bench, although it lacks a great pinch-hitting toy. Wes Helms (8 hits, 3 walks) platoons nicely with Berkman, even if he can't hit as well. He's also a 3B4, so he can carry Infante's glove at third base.

Adam Kennedy (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) can pinch-run for slow runners with an SSN of 34. Carlos Guillen (6-6-0, 10 hits, 3 walks), Hall, and Keppinger can all contribute, depending on usage and availability.

1st

After last year's run to the championship, this is all gravy. As we've often heard repeated: It's better to win than lose. As Mr. Musselman now knows, it's better to win a lot than just a little.

The division title is his to lose. Making the playoffs seems a given. The real question is: Can the Herons get back to the World Series? They're the champs, and that makes them the team to beat.

2010 finish: 105-57 (1st, Mays)
Last 5 years: 444-366, .548

PITCHING: 14.0 OFF: 7.5 DEF: 6.0 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **30.0**

2010 grand cayman HAVENS in review

The only good to come of this team was the seventh pick in the rookie draft.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 69-93 (3rd, Mays)

In retrospect, the Grand Cayman Havens seem lucky to have only lost 93 games. To call this a team in transition is an affront to transitions happening in other places. The only good to come of this team was the seventh pick in the rookie draft: a reward for months of decrepitude.

What went right?

Brad Hawpe (who did *not* lead the team in errors this year) hit 47 doubles with 86 walks, both tops on the team and top 10 in the conference. Team captain Mike Sweeney rebounded to hit .331/.502/.379 in about half a season. New arrival Jason Bay slugged 29 homers and led the team with 109 RBIs. Ryan Theriot hit over .300 with a team-leading 7 triples and an astounding 10 home runs. Three different players stole over 20 bases.

Ryan Theriot: Astounding

What went wrong?

Jason Bay struck out 173 times, good for second all-time in franchise history. And he wasn't alone. Brad Hawpe (163) and Curtis Granderson (158) finished 5th and 6th on the list. While the offense didn't entirely suck (.252 average, 172 homeruns, 766 runs scored), the pitching was atrocious, finishing 22nd in the league with a 5.61 ERA. The staff surrendered 993 runs with a league-leading 683 walks. How bad is that? The next-worst team (Richmond) gave up 619 walks. Jonathan Sanchez led the league in walks allowed (115).

3 Things

1. *Contending*. Given a pitching staff foundation of Clay Buchholz and Jonathan Sanchez (both Grade 16s), Tommy Hanson (a solid Grade 11), Evan Meek (Grade 19*), and Kyle McClellan (Grade 16*), the team decided to contend. That meant adding to the pitching and somehow improving an offense that featured way too many 9-hit, 3-walk cards.

GM Whitey Bulger shored up the rotation (Livan Hernandez, Chris Narveson and Nelson Figueroa) and added to the bullpen (Manny Acosta, Zack Braddock, Wilton Lopez, and Doug Slaten), but the big deals were for Matt Holliday and Billy Butler. Neil Walker and Chris Johnson joined the team via the draft.

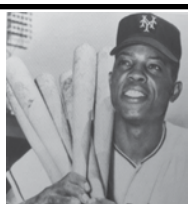
2. *But he couldn't fix everything*. While this team should contend for a playoff spot, the catching spot is a definite weakness. Alex Avila (C6, although with a Th+1) is the primary starter, backed by Bobby Wilson (who can hit a little) and Gerald Laird (who can't). This team will have to find ways to win despite the black hole behind the plate.

3. *Charging ahead.* As the team came together, two things became apparent: 1) acquiring players who may only help this year wasn't an issue and 2) next year's draft would be decimated. Will the gamble pay off? Will Whitey live to see another draft? It's all a roll of the dice.

grand cayman HAVENS

Mark Bloom (21st year)

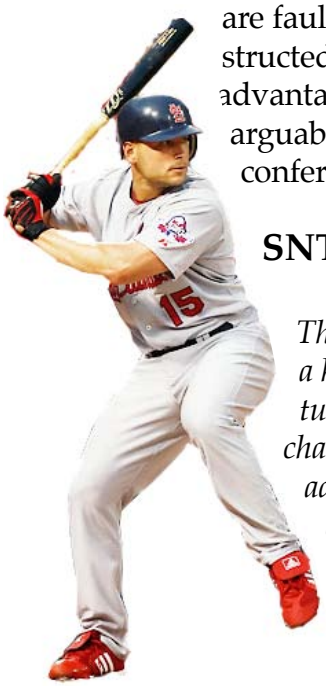
When it's time to contend, then for the love of God, ***contend****.*



This is year nine. There has been one significant highlight in Mark Bloom's management of this club: the 109-win edition of the club in 2008, which hit .282 as a team, had three 30-home run hitters, and was beaten by the champion club from Brobdingnag in the IC championship series. Two preceding steps (86 and 83 wins) led to that climax, and the last two years (68 and 69 wins) have exposed what 2008 ultimately cost.

But read what Uncle Boomer has written in his Year in Review. What was there suggested a run at contention; not everything could be fixed; and it was necessary to gamble with present value in order to charge ahead. This speaks to a theme that we here at the ***Annual*** have harped on to distraction: *when it's time to contend, then for the love of God,* ***contend****.* The window may close very quickly. Don't miss it – because it's fun to win, and sometimes it's the only chance for several years.

Evidently, Grand Cayman got the message. There are faults with the club as constructed, but there are significant advantages as well. The team is arguably one of the best in the conference.



SNT: Matt Holliday

The Havens have undergone a huge facelift since last year, turning over half their roster, changing their approach, even adopting a new logo. Adding a talent like Matt Holliday, convinces the Annual that they're moving in the right direction.

Arrived: Manny Acosta, Zach Braddock, Reid Brignac, Billy Butler, Nelson Figueroa, Livan Hernandez, Matt Holliday, Chris Johnson, Gerald Laird, Wilton Lopez, Donny Lucy, Chris Narveson, Scott Podsednik, Chad Qualls, Doug Slaten, Neil Walker, Bobby Wilson

Departed: Jeremy Accardo, Hank Blalock, Curtis Granderson, Jose Guillen, Aaron Harang, Brad Hawpe, Shawn Kelley, Bengie Molina, Franklin Morales, Jose Morales, Garrett Mock, Jason Motte, Eric Patterson, Ramon Peña, Renyel Pinto, Eric Young, Jr.

Turnover Rate: ***49%***

Pitching: 13.5
Talent and motivation.

Sanchez: Stuff

ROTATION. There is really nothing like having two Grade 16 starters on the roster going into the off-season as a motivator to contend. The top two guys have 61 starts between them: Jonathan Sanchez (Grade 16 C-45) and Clay Buchholz (Grade 16 C-23 HR+36). Buchholz really came into his own in 2010 for the Red Sox, and Sanchez is a lefty who has tremendous stuff, who blossomed for the champion Giants. To go with these two guys is the youngest starter in the rotation: Tommy Hanson (Grade 11 C+21 HR+25), who is not quite 25. He starts 34 times.

The remaining two-fifths of the season is fairly competent as well. The draft and trades brought Livan Hernandez (Grade 9 C+16 HR+23), Chris Narveson (Grade 6 HR-14) and swing man Nelson Figueroa (Grade 11). The best news is that

long time *soi-disant* staff ace Scott Kazmir doesn't have to start at all. This can only help the team.

BULLPEN. The relief staff is led by the surprising Evan Meek (Grade 19* C-14 HR+31), who emerged from the 2010 Pirates disaster to put up some really solid numbers. He has 80 innings and along with his sidekick Kyle McClellan (Grade 16* C+16 HR-14) there are 155 really solid innings at the top of the pen.

The Havens have a flotilla of middle men that will be available during the course of the season. Manny Acosta (Grade 16* C-42), Doug Slaten (Grade 13* C-31 HR+41), Joel Zumaya (Grade 14* C+14 HR+53) and hard-throwing rookie Zach Braddock (Grade 14* C-56 HR+52), as well as swing man Nelson Figueroa (Grade 13*) add about 180 decent innings. Uncle Boomer also snagged rookie Wilton Lopez (Grade 10* C+55 HR+31), whose excellent peripherals make him the right choice for middle innings where men are on base. Joba Chamberlain (Grade 8* C+16 HR+22) is a quite acceptable mopup man who will serve as caddy for Chris Narveson or any other starter who suffers an early loss of viscosity.

This is a very capable pen and combined with the rotation will keep Grand Cayman in the game.

The Franchise

Bobby Bonilla.
For a decade, Bobby Bo was the key man for the Council Squares. He piled up 322 homers in his career, with an outstanding .305-46-139 season in 1996.

Vegas Line

A rotation with the likes of Clay Buchholz, Tommy Hanson and Jonathan Sanchez and hitters like Billy Butler, Neil Walker and Drew Stubbs make this team a favorite to take the Mays in 2011. Now if only our friend Mark Bloom can keep Whitey Bulger and Boomer Wells from killing each other in paradise!

Offense: 8.0
Success depends on matchups.

Here at the ***Annual***, we always start looking at a team's offense by picking out the impact cards. (If there aren't any, that is what we would usually call a *statement*.) The Havens do not disappoint; the lineup has some folks that will deliver the goods in support of its fine pitching staff.

Butler: Key addition

Start with SNT Matt Holliday (1-5-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, E25) and the other key off-season addition, Billy Butler (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L-7). Holliday will be there every day, and Butler will only sit out against big lefty grades on the boards. For half a season, rookie Chris Johnson (1-0-0-0, 12 hits, L-5) is another big bat in the middle of the lineup.

The second tier of hitters is also a pleasant surprise. Johnson's tag-team partner is hit-or-miss power hitter Edwin Encarnacion (1-1-6-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L+5); together they are the DH for the season. Placido Polanco (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 3 31s) and rookie Neil Walker (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks) have nice cards with very small platoon shifts.

The rest of the offense is mix-and-match. Jason Bay (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 2 10s) is missing half a season and a lot of power; Drew Stubbs (1-4-5, 9 hits, 3 walks, D32 for 32 SBA) has the kind of card that might not perform well in TBL; and Reid Brignac (10 hits, 2 walks+22), Emilio Bonifacio (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+7 R-4, D35), Scott Podsednik (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, C27 for 44

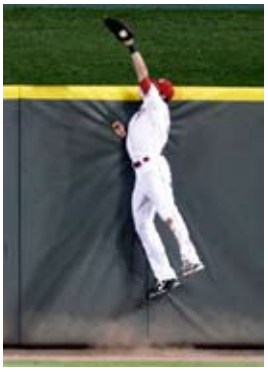
SBA), and Ryan Theriot (0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 3 31s, D27 for 29 SBA) are the sorts of contributors that have to generate three hits to score a run – which is like being gnawed to death by ducks. Still, other than the offensive black hole at catcher (three guys, eight hits each), there are capable cards at each position.

Away from the top tier and, sometimes, the second tier, the success of the team will depend on how they match up. Fortunately, the Grand Cayman instructions are helpful and thorough.

Defense: 4.0
Not so much.

There are only two outstanding defenders on the roster: Placido Polanco (3B5, 2B8), who will get most of his starts at third base; and Gerald Laird (C9 Th+2), who has a half-season of catcher. With three backstops on the roster, Laird will be called upon to come in for defense.

After that, it's turtles all the way down. The infield, other than Polanco's 2B8 when available, is all generic Fielding Two – Brignac and Theriot are both 2B7/SS8s; Neil Walker is a 2B7; Butler and Kyle Blanks are both 1B3s; Emilio Bonifacio is a 3B4. Johnson and Encarnacion are both only 3B3s, but shouldn't have to use fielders' gloves.


Stubbs: Top arm

The outfield is all OF2s. Podsednik's arm is a 28, but everyone else has an adequate or better arm, with Drew Stubbs (34) the best of the group. Behind the plate, other than Laird, Bobby Wilson (C7 Th-2) and Alex Avila (C6 Th-2) take up space.

grand cayman HAVENS

For a contending team, this is not as much defense as one might want. This happens when the offense has a lot of mix and match; perhaps the club will look for a defensive specialist down the stretch, at the sacrifice of one of the specialty bats.

Bench: 2.5
Useful, though no gloves.

Defensive specialists aside, the variety of bats available gives Uncle Boomer some choices. In addition, veteran Mike Sweeney (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 hits+22, R+2) and extremely limited hitting toy Donny Lucy (1-6-6-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+42) as well as the bearded lady Kyle Blanks (3 0s, 5 hits, 5 walks+42, L+6) have their uses. The many platoon players, however, make the bench versatile.

2nd

The ***Annual*** is not going out on a limb in predicting a second-place finish for this club. They compete with Rye, but probably fall short on offense and a little short on the mound. Compared to the rebuilders down the road in Gotham City and Greater Ohio, there's enough space in between for two or three monster trucks to drive abreast. This is a two-team race for certain.

The Havens will go as far as their pitching takes them. That being said, the outlook is brighter than it's been for several years.

2010 finish: 68-94 (4th, Mays)
Last 5 years: 412-408, .509

PITCHING:13.5 OFF: 8.0 DEF: 4.0 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **28.0**

2010 gotham city BATMEN in review

Giles, Dye and Glaus: bye-bye.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 72-90 (2nd, Mays)

It's fair to say that this year wasn't the one we expected. The month of April wasn't bad – but then it all went downhill. The Batmen should have finished in the middle of the league, but instead they came in 19th.

What went right?

What went right last year? Nothing! The starters could not buy a win. They would get a lead and the bullpen could not hold it. The offense had power but couldn't get on base.

Howard: That man again

The best overall performer – the team MVP – was Ryan Howard again. He struck out 175 times but put up impressive numbers (.314-37-128, with 34 doubles and 6 triples). Nick Swisher also hit for good power (28 homers, 28 doubles, 103 RBI) and though his average was low (.245) he did walk 108 times to lead the team. Miguel Tejada hit .306 and Clint Barmes had 47 doubles and 29 homers.

On the pitching side, Felix Hernandez managed 13 wins and a 3.62 ERA with 11 complete games and 209 Ks in 248 innings. Justin Verlander won 13 games and struck out 299 in 255 innings. Jonathan Papelbon notched 25 saves and recorded 4 wins.

What went wrong?

The team struck out 1,244 times with only 516 walks (just 400 or so for everyone not named Swisher). Five players struck out more than 100 times. The bullpen past Papelbon and J.P. Howell (7 wins) was just awful, unable to keep the team in the game. The starters had to go deep into starts and put up lots of innings, but had the scars to prove it. In the field, the team had 112 errors, with Tejada recording 26 miscues.

Worse for Gotham City, performance of my players in the real major leagues went south. After reaching the World Series two years ago, all of the stars retired simultaneously. I did not get a chance to trade very much for draft picks at all. Giles, Dye, and Glaus: bye-bye. Miguel Tejada will follow; he is playing but not well enough to be trade bait. He who I thought could be my catcher of the future won't be (Dioner Navarro). He who I once thought could be my shortstop (or second baseman) of the future, won't (Clint Barmes). And as a further consideration, they both started this year on the DL (as did about 6 other players/pitchers on my team).

3 Things

1. *Fast start.* I am positively thrilled to be writing this summary right now. Even more insults – this year I have to start out winning 5 - 0 against Brobingnag and 3-1 against Greater Ohio so as to kill my draft choice next year. No one can say that I don't play to win every game.

2. *Recovery*. Please, may the G_ds of the disabled list have pity on my team and heal the wounded so that I can play next year.

3. *Hope for the future.* Let's hope that Mike Stanton, Jonathan Lucroy, and Dayan Viciedo break out and bring contention back to the Batmen.

gotham city BATMEN

Anton Greenwald (27th year)

It is far to say that in his 27th season, our friend Anton understands what he's got and what he doesn't.

Teams with long TBL histories tend to take on particular characteristics. This is similar to the urban legend that people and their dogs tend to look similar – that after a while, teams and their managers reflect each other.

Most of the time, therefore, the players that go with a team's motif tend to define the team. Brobdingnag has power hitters. Midwest has power pitchers. Houston . . . well, Houston must have pyramid power or something. And as for Gotham City? Dr. Anton has most often adopted the mantra (frequently parodied by this august publication) of *walk, walk, walk, homaaah!* The players drafted and acquired are often players that do just that. Ryan Howard is that sort of guy; so are Troy Glaus and Jermaine Dye and Nick Swisher and a number of others. It has come as quite a surprise for the Batmen that Dye and Glaus, among others, have simply evaporated. As mentioned on the opposite page, others are headed for the same outcome.

So the question is: where does Gotham City go when their cornerstone position players are pulled out from under them? Embrace speed? Go over to pitching? Study the works of Sun Tzu?

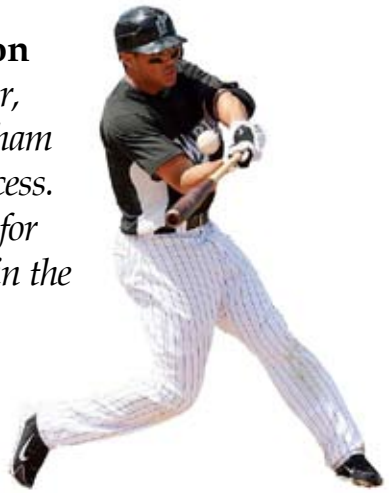
If the first-round selection of the club this year is any indication, Dr. Anton is staying the course.

Arrived: Zach Duke, Jarrod Dyson, Jeanmar Gomez, Jonathan Lucroy, Scott Maine, Michael Stanton, Ruben Tejada, Dayan Viciedo.

Departed: Jermaine Dye, Brendan Harris, Gabe Kapler, Garry Matthews, Cla Meredith, Scott Podsednik, Tim Redding, Taylor Teagarden.

Turnover Rate: *23%*

SNT: Mike Stanton
An elite power hitter, he's a key part of Gotham City's rebuilding process. There's lots of upside for this very young star in the making.



Mike Stanton will fit right in. The question is whether he – and others – will lead them back to contention and success.

Pitching: 6.5
Go nine, or the bullpen has to pitch.

ROTATION. The Gotham City pitching staff is not at all overpowering, but it does start with an outstanding name: Felix Hernandez (Grade 16 C+15 HR+26), an elite lefty whose picture will appear on these pages for years to come. His tag team partner, Justin Verlander, is also excellent (Grade 12 HR+33); between them they make 67 starts. Jorge de la Rosa misses a third of a season but provides 20 competent starts (Grade 11 C-32 HR-14). As a lefty, he will have rough times on the boards.

King Felix: Same pic.

Unfortunately, that's where the good news ends – not just in the rotation either. Half a season of starts are shared by four pitchers, the best of whom is a man whose name should disqualify him as an Anton player – lefty Marc Rz-

epczynski (Grade 6 C-32). He only goes to the hill 12 times. The rest belong to a group of Grade 3s: Tim Wakefield (C+25 HR-14), Craig Stammen (C+16) and rookie Jeanmar Gomez (C+13).

The two top starters will have to go nine innings as often as possible, while de la Rosa will rarely last that long . . . but might have to go past the point where a deep bullpen might rescue him. As for the lower end of the rotation . . . get out the rivet-gun and the mops.

BULLPEN. Then it gets worse. From an elite grade to mediocrity to a suspect Grade 12*, Jonathan Papelbon has remained the Gotham City closer. Along with journeyman D.J. Carrasco (Grade 12* C-24 HR+31) and 13 famous minutes of Scott Maine (Grade 13* C+12 HR-22), this is the top end of the Gotham City bullpen. Maybe everyone in the rotation will want to go nine innings. Oh, we almost forgot: there are 25 innings of Tim Wakefield as a Grade 11*. That will make all the difference.

The guys that follow aren't much more help. Lance Cormier (Grade 9* C-43), who went 2-11 in the pen last year; former closer Bobby Jenks (Grade 7* HR+36); and Matt Albers (Grade 7* C-21 HR+24) are all around to soak up innings, as are innocuous Jesse Chavez (Grade 3*) and waiver acquisition Zach Duke (Grade 1, 159 bulk frames that – disturbingly – they really need.)

This is going to be a very long season for the Gotham City staff, King Felix or no King Felix.

Offense: 6.5

Same great taste, fewer calories.

We like Ryan Howard, and so does Anton. He should: this card is a good one (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, and most importantly only a L-3 shift on the boards.) Even better is Nick Swisher, who has graduated from having a peculiar OBP card to a career-best one (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22). For two thirds of a season there's another fine card cut in the Gotham City mold: Mike Stanton (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, though there are also 8 13s and a L-9 platoon shift – but an SA-0 on computer.)

The Franchise

Tony Gwynn.

For a dozen years, this TBL Hall of Famer was a Gotham City stalwart. He hit .336 with 3,292 hits in his TBL career, winning four batting titles. In 1988 he turned in a .403 season with 269 hits for a pitching starved club that hit .301 overall.

That's the best news. The rest of the lineup is mix and match. Miguel Tejada will be there every day at one or another position (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+5 R-4) but isn't what he used to be; Jeff Baker has a nice card (0-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) but a psychotic batting split (L+8 R-21).

Then there are a parade of 9-hit cards that will find it tough going against good pitchers: Clint Barmes (3 0s), Alcides Escobar (2 0s, E28), Will Venable (1-0-0, C31 for 36 SBA), and the catching tandem of Rod Barajas (1-5-5, L-9) and rookie Jonathan Lucroy (2 0s, L+2 R-3). And *then* there are a few 8-hit cards: Troy Glaus, who is a self-caricature (1-0-0, 5 walks+22), Matt Joyce (1-4-5-6, 5 walks+22 but a L-17 R+2 split), and rookie Ruben Tejada (6-6, 3 walks+42, L+6 R-4).

Swisher: Career year.

This lineup has the same great taste as many previous Gotham City ones, but there are far fewer calories. They'll struggle.

Defense: 3.5
Better if you don't look too close.

Gotham City has one, count 'em, *one* Fielding One performer with regular playing time: Clint Barmes, who has recorded a 2B8 this year as well as ratings at third and short. He'll cover some ground. He'll have to, as his compadres in the infield are mediocre or worse. The shortstops are all SS8s: Miguel and Ruben Tejada, Alcides Escobar, and Barmes. The third basemen are all 3B3s. At first, Ryan Howard, Nick Swisher and Jeff Baker are all 1B3s.

Barmes: Covers ground

The outfield is at least average. Swisher, Joyce, Venable, Stanton, Escobar, and the assorted bench outfielders are all OF2s. Jeff Baker is an OF1 and he will see some time out there, but his batting shift makes that less of an issue.

Catching is a mess as well. Rod Barajas (C7 Th-4) and Jonathan Lucroy (C6 Th+1) will provide minimal contribution to the defense, while the defensive replacement Dioner Navarro (C8 Th+3) has an ugly enough card that he will see very little playing time.

Overall, this is a defensive alignment that you shouldn't examine too soon after a meal.

Anton Greenwald has had so many good teams and low draft positions in recent years that he never noticed the cliff he was hurtling off of. Like they say it's not the fall that gets you...it's the sudden stop at the bottom. At least slugger Mike Stanton is a nice player to build the next dynasty around.

Bench: 2.0
Options limited.

Some restrictions on usage limit the options for the Gotham City manager. In addition to the spare infielder or outfielder, the team has a few part-timers that will help a bit. Rookie Dayan Viciedo, who might be the third baseman of the future, has a nice pinch-hitting card (1-5-6-6, 12 hits, L+4 R-6); Jarrod Dyson has a little speed and power (3-4-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, A34 for 10 SBA, L-10 R+3); and Dioner Navarro, lacking a bat (7 hits) is a good defender. Former top prospect Michael Saunders (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks) gets to drive the bus.

The bench has some nice cards, but it's not going to make a huge difference in the team's performance.

gotham city BATMEN

3rd

This could as easily be a last place finish, as the Greater Ohio club could lose less or go on a streak. Neither club should stand a chance in the pennant race against contenders Grand Cayman or Rye, nor should they be in the mix for a wild-card spot in the International Conference.

It is far to say that in his 27th season, our friend Anton understands what he's got and what he doesn't. The instructions say: *We have half of a rotation and half of an offense, no bullpen, mediocre defense and the rest is ugly. . .* but they also say, *the half-a-team we have is really good.* They're already looking at 2012, and rightly so.

2010 finish: 72-90 (2nd, Mays)
Last 5 years: 425-385, .525

PITCHING: 6.5 OFF: 6.5 DEF: 3.5 BNC: 2.0

TQ: **18.5**

2010 greater ohio CHIA PETS in review

*The **Annual** thought they had a good chance of winning 85 and finishing ahead of Columbus; that prediction turned out to be true.*

2010 in Review
Final Record: 89-73 (2nd, Clemente)

Greater Ohio's swan song in the Clemente Division was a successful one. The team won 89 games and slipped past the powerful Dallas Eagles before they ran into the Buzzsaw That Was Rye, falling in four straight games.

The ***Annual*** thought they had a good chance of winning 85 and finishing ahead of Columbus; that prediction turned out to be true. Now they will take their talented roster and their left-leaning pitching staff back to the Mays Division, with the hope that it will be an easier route to the post-season.

What went right?

The offense was led by two first-class bashers: Miguel Cabrera (.289-32-121, 83 walks, 39 doubles) and Evan Longoria (.284-36-101, 43 doubles). Nolan Reimold was stellar as a part time player (21 homers, .303 in 106 games). Kosuke Fukudome had 40 doubles, and Andre Ethier (27 homers, 99 RBI, 36 doubles, 24 HBP, 83 walks) was a power and on-base threat.

Marmol: Shut the door

The pitching staff was also very effective. Carlos Marmol (4 wins, 35 saves, 1.00 ERA, 50 K in 45 innings) shut the door whenever he pitched; the top three starters had so-so won-lost records but got lots of people out. Barry Zito had 12 wins, a 3.20 ERA and 151 Ks; Cliff Lee went 16-11, 3.60; and John Danks won 15 games.

Overall, the pitching was a team strength, carrying them through the season and into the playoffs.

What went wrong?

The team got on base with regularity, walking 618 times, but also struck out more than 1,100 times. They hit 179 homers and scored 741 runs, but still won only 89 games. This was in part because, when players weren't walking or hitting homers, they were making unproductive outs. Fukudome hit only .259 with 112 strikeouts; Ethier, .246 with 121 strikeouts; and Elijah Dukes (.221, 102 Ks in 394 at-bats) and Jarrod Saltalamacchia (.205, 104 Ks in 292 at-bats) were completely useless.

On the mound, the staff surrendered 190 homers, seventh-most in TBL, and walked 540 opponents. Barry Zito walked 87 and John Danks 81; Danks' 34 dingers led the staff. Rick Vanden Hurk made 11 starts, pitched 65 innings, and surrendered 24 homers. Yikes!

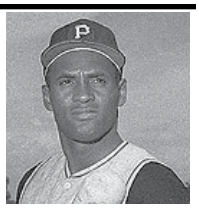
3 Things

1. Holding on to the pitching. Early on in Devlin Toth's time in TBL, he was known for selecting pitchers; most of them are still here. He's resisted offers for Marmol, Lee, Wood and others. Pitching makes also-rans into contenders.

2. Moving to the Mays. This year it's going to be tough with a fine Rye club and a surging one in Grand Cayman, but they may have an easier time of it in years to come.

3. Patience, patience. He'll need it with this club, but our friend Devlin has it.

greater ohio CHIA PETS



Devlin Toth (16th year)

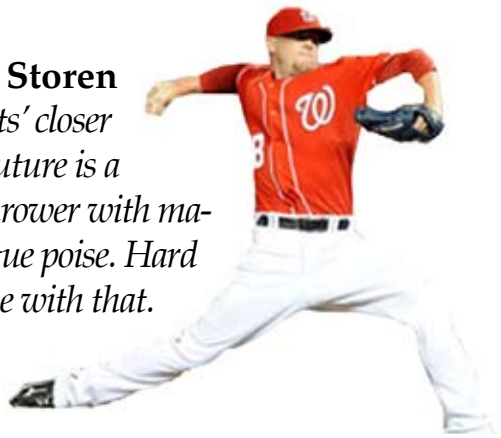
The 2011 Chia Pets won't win more than they lose, but with a few more good drafts, this team could become very good very quickly.

Greater Ohio changes divisions this year, leaving behind the Clemente where they've enjoyed sporadic success, including the 2006 division and conference championship. Despite the playoff appearances, however, the team finished last more often than first. Will the change help or hurt Devlin Toth's chances? To start, he joins a division with the defending TBL Champion Rye Herons, who are favored to win the division again. The Gotham City Batmen took the 2009 World Series to six games and still have many players involved in that championship run. Finally, the Grand Cayman Havens have been up and down, but won the most games in TBL in 2008 and are beefed up once again. This is not a weak division.

Maybe that's what Mr. Toth and his "Shadow Pets" wanted. After all, the current Chia Pets team is in rebuilding mode after an attempt to return to the World Series in 2010. They did make it to the conference semifinals, so no one will call it a failed season.

While the team has some definite strengths, including Franchise Player Miguel Cabrera, there are holes in the lineup bigger than Cabrera's police record. Playing in a stronger division might mean more losses, which could translate into higher draft choices in the coming years. Perhaps it's all part of a greater strategy.

SNT:
Drew Storen
The Pets' closer of the future is a hard thrower with major league poise. Hard to argue with that.



In any case, what's certain is that the 2011 Chia Pets won't win more than they lose. But don't be fooled. This team has Cabrera, Evan Longoria, and Andre Ethier. This team has Cliff Lee, John Danks, and Carlos Marmol. The oldest of those superstars, Lee, is 32 and in his prime. With a few more good drafts, this team could become very good very quickly.

Pitching: 7.0
Cliff Lee and the explosions.

ROTATION. Mr. Toth has always liked left-handed starters and he's had some success with them. There's something subversively radical in bucking conventional TBL wisdom to such an extreme. In an era when most teams carry limited-use "lefty-killers," you can make a case that so many lefties can overwhelm even the best of teams, leaving otherwise good players susceptible to their negative shifts. This year is no different, as 104 games are started by a lefty – basically every game Freddy Garcia (Grade 6 C+23 HR-21) and Jason Hammel (Grade 4 C+23) don't start.

Arrived: Brennan Boesch, Andrew Cashner, Jake Fox, Freddy Garcia, Ryan Langerhans, Daniel McCutchen, Jonathan Niese, Garrett Olson, Scott Sizemore, Drew Storen, Jose Tabata, Craig Tatum.

Departed: Frank Catalanotto, Elijah Dukes, Josh Geer, Angel Guzman, Andy Marte, Brandon Moss, Bobby Seay, Greg Smith, Eric Stults, Rick Vanden Hurk, Sean West

Turnover Rate: 34%

greater ohio CHIA PETS

And therein lies the dilemma. With Danks (Grade 11 HR+21) assigned to the bullpen for the year, Cliff Lee (Grade 11 C+53 HR+23) becomes the only starter on this team better than Grade 8. While Lee is a real ace, the rest of the rotation is an explosion waiting to happen. Joining Lee, Garcia, and Hammel are lefties Jonathon Niese (Grade 7), John Lannan (Grade 3), and Nate Robertson (Grade 2 C-21). How many games they lose will be determined by how many games they start.

Lee: Real Ace

BULLPEN. Unlike other rebuilding teams Greater Ohio has a real closer, some good but wild set-up men, and a few promising young arms, including SNT Drew Storen (Grade 11* HR+35). Unfortunately for the 2011 club, there really aren't enough innings to make up for the dreadful rotation. Carlos Marmol (Grade 22* C-62 HR+61) will make some games exciting, but his grade and number of innings make him a bona fide closer. He's set up by two equally wild righties: Kerry Wood (Grade 16* C-61 HR+22) and Jose Veras (Grade 16* C-62). There are 94 innings between them, which means only one may be active at a time.

Erstwhile starter Danks becomes a virtually unlimited middle-inning guy, but he'll be hard-pressed to use all of his 213 innings, even with this rotation. He's joined by Storen and Andrew Cashner (Grade 8* C-34 HR-21) to pitch in games the Pets could still win. The rest of the bullpen, like the bottom end of the rotation, are explosion-inducing: Juan Gutierrez (Grade 7* HR-45), Garrett Olson (Grade 6* HR-21), and John Grabow (Grade 1* HR-26). Ka-POW!

If Cliff Lee could start 108 games instead of just 28, the team might be decent. If the top end of the bullpen had 374 innings instead of just 174, they might fare better. Stuffing Danks' 32 starts and 213 innings into the bullpen, while needed there, will likely reduce both the team's chance of success and their TQ rating. Here's looking for better days ahead.

Offense: 5.0
Both excellent and atrocious.

There are highlights. Let's start with Miguel Cabrera, a.k.a. "The Franchise." Once again, he's fearsome (1-1-0-0-0, 11 hits with a 7 on 55, 4 walks). He's a full-time force, the card no one will want to face with the game on the line. Evan Longoria (1-4-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks) and Andre Ethier (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks) join Cabrera as top-tier players. Extending the lineup are rookie Jose Tabata (11 hits, 2 walks), Kosuke Fukudome (1-6-6, 9 hits, 5 walks), and Brennan Boesch (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks). These guys could play for almost any team.

Longoria: Top tier

The good news ends there. Reggie Willits (6-0, 9 hits, 4 walks) and, we suspect, waiver wire pickup Ryan Langerhans (0-0, 7 hits, 6 walks) will play some in the outfield. The middle infield is a muddle of Jack Wilson (6-6, 10 hits), Maicer Izturis (9 hits, 3 walks), Chris Getz (6, 9 hits, 3 walks), innocuous Bobby Crosby (6-6, 8

The Franchise

Miguel Cabrera.
The 210 homers (in six and a half seasons) are impressive. He's done nothing but hit in TBL, racking up almost as many RBIs (799) as strikeouts (801). And he's not done yet.

hits, 3 walks), and Luis Valbuena (2 0s, 7 hits, 3 walks), last year's SNT. Then there's the black hole behind the plate. Craig Tatum (6, 10 hits, 3 walks), Jason Varitek (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks), and Jake Fox (1-4-6, 8 hits, 1 walk+42) may have modest power, but very little else.

As excellent as the top half of the lineup can be, the bottom half can be as atrocious. In games where the "big bats" do what they're capable of and the "little bats" contribute, they may score enough to compensate for the pitching staff. There are some complementary batting shifts which will also help, but limits and ineptitude will prevent the Chia Pets from surprising too many opponents.

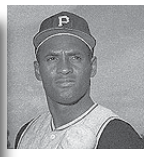
Defense: 4.0
The good, the average and the ugly.

Jack Wilson is an SS9 in the 61 games he can play. Getz, Izturis, and Valbuena are all 2B8s. Longoria (3B5) is superlative, and the outfield can field two OF3s in Langerhans and Tabata. That's a fine start to any defense. Izturis (SS8), Cabrera (1B3), Ethier (OF2), Willits (OF2), and Fukudome (OF2 with a good arm) all contribute with average ratings.

But Crosby (SS7) will play more often than Mr. Toth might want, and the three-headed catching tandem—Varitek (C7 with a Th-3), Tatum (C7 with a Th-4), and Fox (C6 but with a Th+1) – are no help at all.

Tabata: Nice pickup

A change of scenery can be nice, but it won't help Devlin Toth's troops make the playoffs in 2011. They weren't going to win the Clemente and they certainly won't be taking the Mays crown. They seem to have just enough talent to finish in the middle of the pack, every TBL manager's fear. With another good draft they could be dangerous.



greater ohio CHIA PETS

Bench: 2.0
It won't help.

Most of the team is limited by games or plate appearances, making in-game flexibility a luxury unavailable for most of the season.

In addition, we count 159 catching games, which means some of the bench has to be devoted to saving plate appearances for the catchers … which, considering the quality of those bats, might be a good thing. The good news? On this team, a bench is unlikely to help much anyway.

4th

This team is not without talent. But Cliff Lee simply cannot start 162 games, and Miguel Cabrera cannot bat 5000 times in a season. For every Cliff Lee start, there will be almost three starts by someone who isn't as good as Freddy Garcia. For every Cabrera at bat, there will be at least three at bats by someone like Jose Valbuena.

This will be a long season in Greater Ohio. Welcome to the Mays Division!

2010 finish: 89-73 (3rd, Clemente)
Last 5 years: 391-419, .483

PITCHING: 7.5 OFF: 5.0 DEF: 4.0 BNC: 1.5

TQ: **17.5**

Build Up, Build Down

2008 Ruth Division
Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
New Westminster*	102	60	.630	—
Dallas†	96	66	.593	6
Houston	82	80	.506	20
Brobdingnag	73	89	.451	29

** Lost to Whitman in IC playoff.*
† Lost to Greater Ohio in IC wild card.

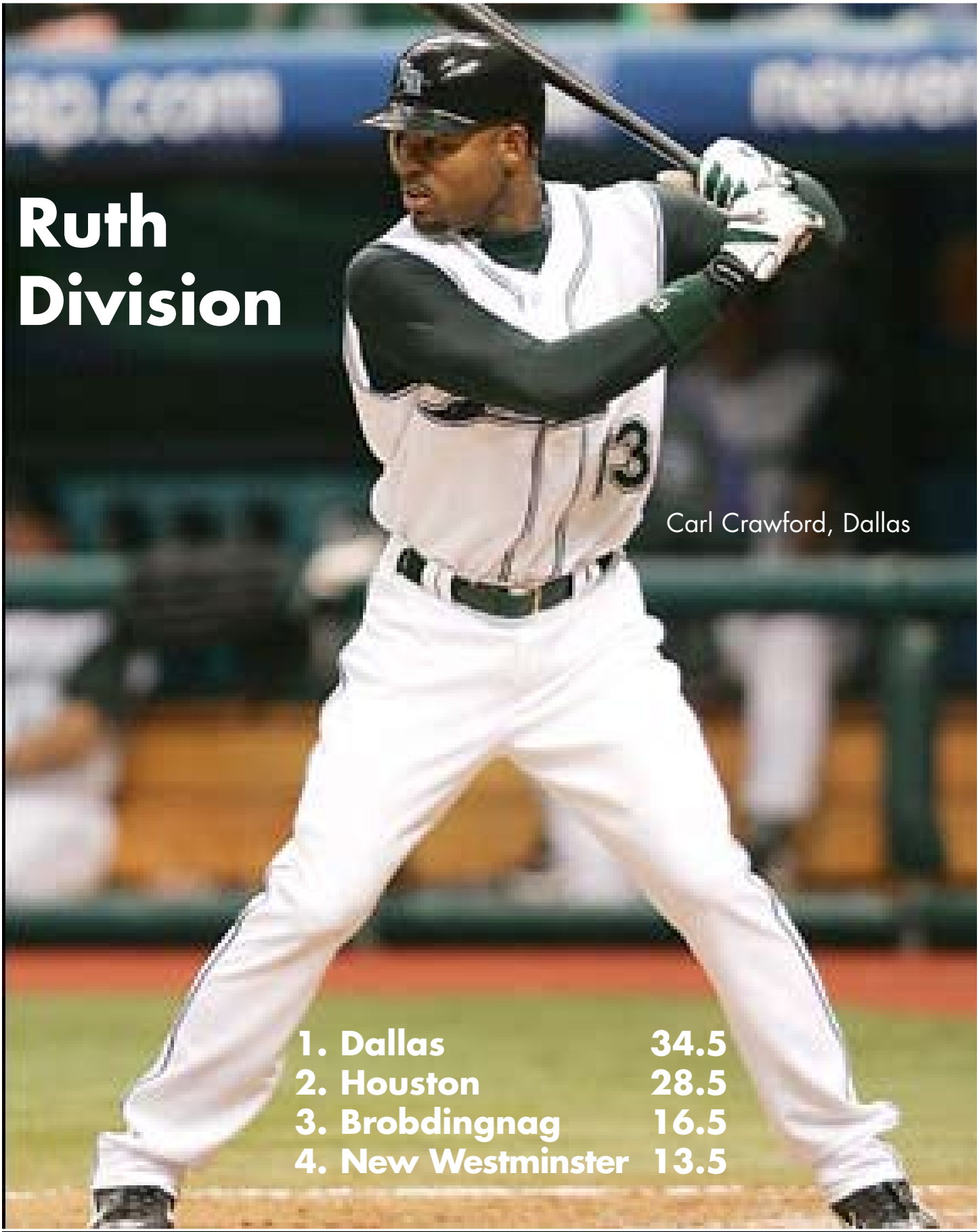
When Brobdingnag is rebuilding, it gives an opportunity for others to make a grab for the Ruth Division championship. They might not think in those terms: certainly *Steve Powell* didn't feel the need to wait for the Prince of Darkness to step back in order to try to go all the way with his **Dallas Eagles** – he's spent several years building up the healthy pool of talent that makes his team so good. The question is whether the large collection of Guys We Like can get to the World Series this year. The Magic 8-Ball says yes, but we still need to play the games.

So. Speaking of building up. The **Houston Lonestars** have done everything they can to become a contender, and acquired as many players they like as their resources allow. For several years the Zen Master, *Dean Rogers*, has used his mystical methods to transform the also-ran club he inherited into the contender it claims to have become. The question is whether Professor Dean presides over a real championship-worthy club, or merely a *soi-disant* also-ran. And if that's too many hyphens for you, then the mad ninja deception of the ***Annual*** staff is working.

Without question, the *guignol* puppet show of the **Brobdingnag Barbarians** was a build down of, well, giant proportions. Passing up present value to build up piles of future value is one of *Joe Auletta*'s hallmarks: you would think that we would be used to it by now. This year it has led to six 2012 first rounders, six 2012 second rounders, and a pretty bad 2011 roster. It should lead to a high position in the 2012 draft – except we think it's only the second-worst team in the division. . .

Which is the defending Ruth champions, the **New Westminster Whiskeyjacks**. Things have gone well for the club the last two years, but it all went off the rails this offseason for *Jim Jeatt*. The club returns with insufficient pitching, inadequate ability to get on base, and no power at all. We think they're the worst team in the league, whatever the Prince of Darkness might think. The question is whether they will play down to expectations.

Ruth Division



Carl Crawford, Dallas

1.	Dallas	34.5
2.	Houston	28.5
3.	Brobdingnag	16.5
4.	New Westminster	13.5

2010 dallas EAGLES in review

Much more enjoyment in winning 96 than in losing 96. Ask an Oriole fan.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 96-66 (2nd, Ruth)

In your best Samuel L Jackson: *"This is the year!"* How else to describe the feeling in April of 2010? This team had post season written all over it, & that was before the draft. Post draft comments from the ***Annual*** and others placed the Eagles among the league's most powerful. What followed the draft was by all standards good year, not a great one. From management's standpoint it was a frustrating, and yes, an enjoyable one. Much more enjoyment in winning 96 than in losing 96. Ask an Oriole fan. After the final dice roll ending a game 6 loss in the wild card series to a very slick Greater Ohio team, we packed our bags, headed home, and tried to figure out just what the hell went on out there.

Johnson: One for the books

What went right?

Hard to find fault with the overall balance of this team. There were two very competent table setters in Denard Span (.305, 105 runs) and Jason Bartlett (.310/.381/.473) supplying Ryan Zimmerman (.289, .510 SLG) and Mark Teixeira (.266/.367/.527, 130 RBI) ample opportunities to create runs, while the defense (a mere 64 non-pitcher errors) minimized them.

On the mound, the starting staff featured one for the TBL record books. Josh Johnson didn't lose a start until mid-August en route to a 22-2 record with 6 shutouts. Dan Haren provided quality with quantity in his usual fashion: 18 wins, 10 complete games with an ERA just under 3. Rookie Andrew Bailey justified his first round selection by saving 42.

What went wrong?

The Eagle lefties were hit. Grade 16 Eric Bedard won only 2 of 15 starts. Clayton Richard was more effective with nearly half the grade: 7-12 record and an ERA in the mid-5s. This team struggled to maintain any kind of consistent offense, especially in the power department. After Zimmerman and Teixeira the power numbers fell dramatically. Dallas averaged less than 5 runs per game, slugged a mere .420, and hit only 2 more HR than its opponents. It wasn't the hits: it was getting multiple runs.

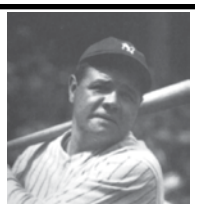
3 Things

1. 2 out of 3 ain't bad, but... Pitching, defense and three-run homers. Essentially stay the course. Josh Johnson returns with 28 very tough starts, Tommy Hunter and Clay Richard remain unchanged from a year ago. With Dan Haren's dip in performance, C.J. Wilson was brought in to close the gap. What's that? Wilson's left-handed? Shouldn't be too much of a problem. The bullpen keeps things close. The 3-run homers? That will have to wait another year.

2. Still can't get on base. Management felt C.J. Wilson was more important than Denard Span (.382 OBP in 2010). The acquisition of Mike Morse and return of Pat Burrell provide some help.

3. Take a mulligan? Some groups are more understanding than others. *Tee it up, we won't count that first one. You weren't ready, we could see that.* That's how Dallas approached last year's playoffs. It was a bad representation from a team that should have done more. The upside to that is we should get another shot, take another swing, keeping in mind last year's dribbler off the tee. We believe this shot will be more to our liking.

dallas EAGLES



Steve Powell (22nd year)

The pages of this publication have been at times impolite to the diffident and courteous Dr. Powell.

The veteran manager of the Dallas Eagles makes the case in the page opposite that last year was good, but not good enough: that while the team fell short despite its perceived capability, 96 wins is much more enjoyable than 96 losses. *Ask any Orioles fan*, as he says.

The pages of this publication have been at times impolite to the diffident and courteous Dr. Powell. In 1997 we compared his team to the big hit, no pitch Red Sox teams of the '90s. In 1999 we sent the radio message instructing him to *go get a pitching staff*. In 2001 we talked about the 'expectation game.' Overall, we have revelled in how smart we are and how much he needs our advice . . . as if anyone reads the ***Annual*** for advice, as opposed to entertainment.

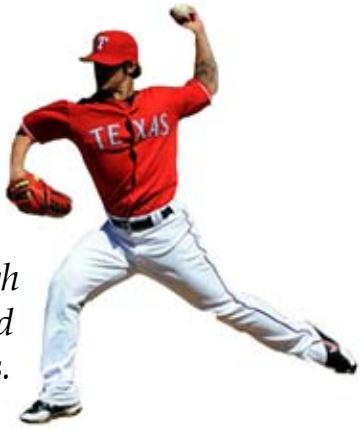
But let's be serious: does he need it? Yes, the club has not made it to the World Series since its time in Tasmania when the world was young, but it's had good years and has accumulated a huge pile of players We Really Like. He's managed just fine without our advice, thank you. Now, this year, he has one of the best teams in TBL, and arguably the best team in its conference.

This club is very fine. They will perform very well, and the Guys We Like will carry him far. He'll do it without our advice. But we hope to provide a little entertainment.

Pitching: 13.5
Solid enough to go far.

The Dallas pitching staff is excellent. Given the competition in the division – which, this year, is primarily the Houston Lonestars – it should be strong enough to carry the team in a straight line to the post-season.

SNT:
C.J. Wilson



A top shelf addition to the rotation, the Eagles hope he'll pitch them into the World Series.

Arrived: Casey Coleman, Tyler Colvin, Chris Denorfia, Willie Harris, Brett Hayes, Mitch Moreland, Mike Morse, Xavier Paul.

Departed: David Bush, Chad Gaudin, Doug Mathis, Micah Owings, Rusty Ryal, Denard Span, Claudio Vargas, Delwyn Young, Gregg Zaun

Turnover Rate: *23%*

ROTATION. Josh Johnson (Grade 14 C+22 HR+44) is back in a big way. He and newcomer C.J. Wilson (Grade 14 C-42 HR+42) have 61 excellent starts between them, to lead the starting staff.

The new #3 is lefty Clayton Richard (Grade 9 C-14 HR+22) with a full season of starts this year and supplants Dan Haren, who had a bit of a down season (Grade 8 C+32 HR-15). Tommy Hunter, the youngest of the regular starters (he won't turn 25 until July), has 22 starts as a Grade 10 (C+22 HR-24 and a short fatigue rating). Rookie Casey Coleman (Grade 9 C-24 HR+36) takes a few turns as well.

Richard: The new #3

dallas EAGLES

This is a very good rotation, and a very young one: Haren and Wilson are the old men at age 30. They should be able to keep Dallas in most games.

BULLPEN. Over the course of the last few seasons, Dallas has done an excellent job bulking up the relief staff. The kahuna grande is second-year man Andrew Bailey (Grade 21* C+21 HR+32), who was outstanding once again. His backup is also very solid: Heath Bell (Grade 17* C-16 HR+61), who surrendered only one homer in MLB last year. Grant Balfour, acquired in a trade before last season, had a nice comeback (Grade 16* C+15 HR+35). These three stalwarts have 174 innings between them, and will nail down most of the late innings.

Bailey: Kahuna grande

Boone Logan (Grade 14* C-33 HR+25) and Joel Hanrahan (Grade 12* C-16 HR+16) will be the lefty and righty to get to the top relievers, while Kevin Jepsen (Grade 10* C-25 HR+51), Jose Mijares (Grade 10* C+24 HR-12) and Pedro Feliciano (Grade 9* C-16 HR+61) have a variety of skills. There are 260 additional innings among this crew.

There are no bad innings in the bullpen, though Dr. Steve may have to be patient with his starters to have enough innings for the entire season.

Offense: 9.5
Six deep at least.

There is a nice core of excellent cards in the middle of the Dallas lineup. Carl Crawford is a good place to start; his free agent year was sweet (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-8 R+2, 32 SSN with 57 SBA). He has some old friends behind him: Ryan Sweeney (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks), Ryan Zimmerman (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks) and Mark Teixeira, who had a tough first half in MLB but had a good comeback (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks+42). So did Pat Burrell (1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks). There are also some newcomers: Tyler Colvin (1-4-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks, 33 SSN), and part-timers Mike Morse (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+4) and Chris Denorfia (1-4-6, 10 hits, 3 walks). That covers six lineup spots: the outfield, the infield corners, and DH.

The remaining positions are competent, but not as exciting. The middle infield combination of Brandon Phillips (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 2 10s) and Jason Bartlett (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) will get some hits and make some outs. Neither runs particularly well. At catcher, Ryan Doumit (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L-10 R+3) has taken a step back as well.

This lineup will score bunches of runs, though it will have to be managed carefully to make best use of the batting shifts. As may be said of any offense, it will do well if the dice fall as they should.

Defense: 7.5
Only one weakness.

Dallas in the field has strengths at many locations and only one real weakness – behind the plate. There are several Fielding One defenders: at the infield corners

The Franchise

Mark Teixeira.
He's partway to a Hall of Fame career, all spent with Dallas. In seven years he's hit .276 with 500 walks, 218 homers and 286 doubles (62 in 2009), while playing outstanding defense.

Everyone's favorite pharmacist, Dr. Steve Powell, pulled out a wild card berth last year, but that ever elusive trip to the WS was not to be. This year's version of the Eagles has a lineup blessed with speed and power, a good defense and solid pitching. A division crown and a deep playoff run will fill Dr.Powell's prescription just fine.

dallas EAGLES

Teixeira (1B5) and Zimmerman (3B5) are top-notch, and Brandon Phillips (2B9) continues to be rock solid. (We even used the same picture – and caption – as last year.) Jason Bartlett (SS8) is only Fielding Two, but he has a nice backup in John McDonald (SS9, as well as 2B8 if needed).

Phillips: Rock-solid

In the outfield, Crawford and Sweeney are OF3s. Chris Denorfia and Tyler Colvin are both rated OF2 with a 31 arm. Matt Diaz and Willie Harris are both OF2s as well.

The only real problem is at catcher. Ryan Doumit will be the regular backstop as a C7 with a Th-4: he's there to make sure that the pitches with which batters don't make contact aren't turned into wild pitches. He won't do much more; his rookie substitute Brett Hayes (C6 Th+1) isn't much better.

The club can't improve too much, except behind the plate; this is a position management may look to fix during September.

Bench: 4.0
Lots of things to do.

Sweeney, Morse and Denorfia have some usage limitations, but the other starters have lots of games. In addition, there are three good players with limited use that will help. John McDonald can field, and has a surprisingly good bat (1-4-5-6, 10 hits). Mitch Moreland has a good on-base card (1-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks); and long time Dallas Eagle Matt Diaz (1-4-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+42). These are the sort of guys that end up on a contender's bench, but they'd be a huge help as part-time starters on many rosters.

Other than these three, backup catcher Brett Hayes (4 0s, 8 hits) is best kept away from a bat, and Xavier Paul (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks), waiver pickup Willie Harris (1-0-0, 6 hits, 5 walks) and George Kottaras (1-5-6, 7 hits, 5 walks) are the baseball equivalent of foam peanuts.

Houston is good, especially on the mound, but it pales by comparison to this edition of the Dallas Eagles. Even given the assertion that the Dallas club isn't quite as good as last year's 96-game winner, they should drive everyone in the Ruth Division before them and should wrap up the pennant before the summer is over.

Does Dr. Steve need the ***Annual***'s advice? Not likely. But in case he's listening, we're impressed with what he's done so far. Denard Span would have looked good in this lineup, but C.J. Wilson looks good in the rotation. A part-time SS9 with four power numbers looks good. Having good power and excellent speed, and gloves at key positions are all to be praised.

2010 finish: 96-66 (2nd, Ruth)
Last 5 years: 445-365, .549

PITCHING: 13.5 OFF: 9.5 DEF: 7.5 BNC: 4.0

TQ: **34.5**

2010 houston LONESTARS in review

If only the Lonestars could have batted against their own *pitching . . .*

2010 in Review
Final Record: 82-80 (3rd, Ruth)

The Lonestars showed marked improvement in 2010, posting the first winning record (82-80) of the Rogers regime. For a brief time they were even in sight of a postseason appearance.

What went right?

On offense, second baseman Martin Prado posted a team high .318 average in his first "full" season as a starter, while Hunter Pence posted a respectable second full season (.288, 18 HR, 186 hits, 99 RBI). Cody Ross led the team with 30 HR and 101 RBI, and Rafael Furcal scored 90 times from the leadoff position.

Sabathia: Big Man Ace

On the mound, C.C. Sabathia turned in a solid year (20-9, 2.96, 248 K). As the team's perennial ace, he posted 3 shutouts and 10 complete games. Out of the bullpen, none were better than Nick Masset (13-3, 1.43) who pitched 94 2/3 innings in 69 relief appearances. Also noteworthy were rookie starter Brian Duensing (4-3, 2.88 in 9 starts) and Alfredo Aceves (2.72, 67 strikeouts in 83 innings) out of the pen. Jose Valverde was solid as the closer posting 33 saves and a 3.02 ERA.

What went wrong?

Too many things went wrong, and always at the most inopportune time. The Lonestars faded from the postseason picture with a disappointing November. Much of the blame can be laid on the a lineup that struck out 1,059 times. Very disappointing seasons by Josh Willingham (.208, 19 HR, 157 strikeouts), Jason Kendall (.194) and the newly acquired Mike Jacobs (.197, 11 HR, 100 strikeouts) left too many runs on base.

Pitching shares the blame as well. Top pick and SNT Rick Porcello posted a disappointing record (5-14 4.34) as did first year Lonestar Matt Palmer (5-5 4.33). Veteran John Lannan fared even worse (10-14 5.30). If only the Lonestars could have batted against their *own* pitching one of these categories might have been different.

3 Things

1. *The Big Fix.* The team approached the offseason no longer content for middle of the pack. Big trades were made to address the ongoing concerns at starting pitching, first base and power hitting.

2. *Cutting loose dead weight.* Continuing to have no sentimentality for players, the Houston Lonestars dealt 2010 #1 pick Rick Porcello as part of the Big Fix. Many other non-contributors changed addresses as well.

3. *Making a run.* The Lonestars feel that 2011 is the year for them to finally reach the post season. They have assembled an eager bunch of veterans to try to make that a reality. While still light in the lineup, their hope is that starting pitching will carry them beyond November. The fans will have to admit that management has made a considerable effort to make that happen.

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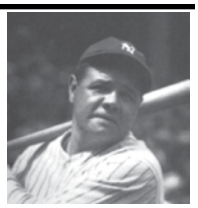
houston LONESTARS



Dean Rogers (6th year)

Look for Houston to clear 90 wins and challenge for the Ruth Division title.

Last year, Zen Master Dean Rogers piloted his Lonestars to the middle of the TBL pack last year on the strength of some fine pitching and the bat of Cody Ross. It was Dean's first winning season as a TBL manager. This season will be his second, and he's angling for a spot in the post season this time. The regular season hill to climb is winning the Ruth over Steve Powell's Dallas Eagles.

Pitching: 13.0
Contending rotation, good bullpen.

ROTATION. The best part of the team is right here, with an excellent collection of top-shelf talent that should help get Houston deep into games … *very* deep. The Zen-structions call for several of the starters to stay in until the second reduction.

There are two monster starters. Roy Oswalt (Grade 15, C+21 HR+12, 32 starts) has always been a favorite here at the ***Annual***, but the Roy Toy really brought the hammer last year in Philly, and he will stand tall on the Lonestar mound for a full season of starts. The number two starter is C. C. Sabathia (Grade 12 C+14 HR+21, 34 starts, 29 fatigue). He looks like a whale in pinstripes, but it's the results Dean is loving, not the style. These two studs have 66 starts between them, and Houston can expect to win a pile of those games.

Arrived: Josh Bell, Trevor Bell, Adam Dunn, Scott Moore, Roy Oswalt, Lyle Overbay, James Russell, Scot Shields, Barry Zito.

Departed: Eric Byrnes, Darrin Erstad, Tommy Everidge, Mike Jacobs, Russ Ortiz, Rick Porcello, Luis Rodriguez

Turnover Rate: *20%*

The next guy off the pile is Mr. Everything Brian Duensing (Grade 11/17*, C+24 HR+21, 13 starts, 45 RIP). The Dunce pitches almost every month, because he starts and relieves. The next wave consists of two lefty grade 10s - Francisco Liriano (Grade 10 C+13 HR+42, 31 starts) and Barry Zito (Grade 10 C-22, 33 starts). These guys add up to 144 starts of Grade 10 or better. The remaining 18 starts go to Randy Wells (Grade 7, C+14 HR+13). This is one of the league's best rotations, and they should allow Houston to compete with even the best teams in TBL.

SNT:
Roy Oswalt.
The newest member of the Houston rotation won 100 games with Hudson, his former club. They expect great things from him as a big part of the Big Fix.

BULLPEN. Last time we visited Enron's home town, they were packing 230+ innings of Grade 16*+ relief. This year, the bullpen is thinner, but still has the structure of a playoff pen. Jose Valverde (Grade 18*, C-53 HR+23, 63 IP) is the closer once again. The wretched control number will have Dean swigging the hard stuff in the ninth from time to time, but Valverde will wrack up some saves this year.

Then we have the TBL instructions take on an audible. The next best grade is

houston LONE STARS

the aforementioned Brian Duensing (Grade 17*) but the eighth inning setup role gets split between wild men J. C. Romero (Grade 13*, C-62 HR+23, 36 IP) and Trever Miller (Grade 12*, C-36 HR+34, 36 IP). That leaves Nick Masset (Grade 13*, C-24 HR+14, 76 IP) and the Dunce as options earlier in close games – as early as the fifth inning according to Mr. Rogers' instructions.

Valverde: Closer

The net plus in this approach is that Dean will be going to the mattresses in any game that is close in the fifth inning. Since his starting rotation is very strong, and should get him to the fifth with a chance to win, this is the Zen Master's way of fighting for every close game.

This upside-down approach to the bullpen setup has never been tried, so it will certainly be interesting to see how it all shakes out. Jamey Wright (Grade 10*, C-25 HR+41, 58 IP) will get the call in the fifth, sixth and seventh when Houston is trailing. There are about 275 quality innings here to be used in close games. The balance of the bullpen is used when Houston is trailing, and features bulk grades whose purpose is to make sure all nine innings are played even when the score is ugly.

Offense: 7.5

Good power and other options.

Dunn: Eyeball-scorching

The eyeball-scorching cardboard on this team belongs to powerhouse Adam Dunn (1-1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, R+2). Dunn will spend most of the season batting cleanup, watching leadoff man Rafael Furcal (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, 32 SSN for 32 attempts) dance around driving opposing pitchers nuts.

Two other middle-of-the-order hitters will have an impact for the Lonestars this year. Josh Willingham (1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks, 35 SSN for 8 attempts) has been a solid contributor despite never hitting over .234 in his four years playing for Houston. Lyle Overbay (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks) played last year with Portland with modest results. Dean bats him seventh all year, but the power will help this lineup.

Home town favorite Hunter Pence (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks) has some power on a modest card. He's a career .301 hitter for Houston. Cody Ross (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+5, 31 SSN for 11 attempts) had 30 homers and 55 doubles, and was a standout for this club last year. He bats fifth and sixth in the posted lineups. Second baseman Martin Prado (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 2 31s) bats either first or second all year, and is an emerging star.

That's seven pretty good hitters. For half a season, Ryan Hanigan (3 0s, 10 hits, 5 walks, L+5) will help as the offensive catcher. Hanigan has played only part time for the Lonestars in the last two seasons, but he's a career .320 hitter in TBL, so this is a guy to keep an eye on. For the other 92 games, Jason Kendall (0-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 3 31s, L+6) will play hit and run. The one soft spot is at third base, where Pedro Feliz (2 0s, 8 hits, 1 walk, 13 on 51) and Geoff Blum

The Lonestars have been slowly accumulating good players and there is good talent here ... just not enough to make the playoffs in 2011. If everything were to break just right, and if Dallas was to stumble out of the gate, maybe Houston could succeed, but it's most likely still a year or two away.

(3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) split the duties. Cliff Pennington (3 0s, 9 hits 3 walks, 33 SSN for 34 attempts) plays short against lefties, and is there primarily for his glove work.

There are a few holes here, but there is enough power for Dean to keep chipping away. They could use a companion bat for Dunn. Perhaps if Houston is in a position to make a vigorous playoff run, they could talk to Blue Hill about Jim Edmonds in the September trading period.

Defense: 6.0
Average, but with bright spots.

Houston has done a decent job stockpiling good defensive talent over the last few years. Martin Prado (2B8) and Cliff Pennington (SS9) can catch the ball as well as anyone. Hunter Pence (OF3, 34 arm) is a very solid everyday centerfielder. Ryan Hanigan (C8, Th+1) will be a heavy contributor behind the plate for half the season. Lyle Overbay (1B5) will continue his career-long ballet at first.

The remainder of the lineup is average. Raffy Furcal (SS8) will hold his own out there. Pedro Feliz (3B4) is pretty good at third, but Geoff Blum (3B3) will struggle. Both corner outfielders, Willingham and Ross, are OF2s with below-average arms. Jason Kendall (C7, Th+0) is a subpar defensive presence behind the dish. They'll catch the ball on most days. This defense will help stretch the pitching.

houston LONE STARS

Bench: 2.0
A few assets.

There are two assets on the bench. Johnny Damon (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, no shift, 35 SSN for 11 attempts) could start for a lot of TBL teams, but his defense keeps him on the pine here. Tony Gwynn, Jr. (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN for 21 attempts, OF3) is one of the better fourth outfielders in the league this year.

The other bench guys - Scott Moore (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks), Josh Bell (2 0s, 8 hits, 1 walk), and Don Kelly (1-5, 9 hits) – are barely worth mentioning, so after this, we will not …

The Franchise

C.C. Sabathia.
No one has been as significant for this franchise than the Big Guy. His won-loss record is not remarkable, but he has been a dominant pitcher for some very poor teams.

2nd

The Houston offense is a notch down from Dallas' forces, and their bullpen is not quite as good, but Dean Rogers' instructions seem to indicate that he's done getting beat up and is ready to dish out some punishment himself this year. Look for Houston to clear 90 wins and challenge for the Ruth Division title. With the two big time starters and deep bullpen, they might go lots further.

2010 finish: 82-80 (4th, Ruth)
Last 5 years: 351-459, .443

PITCHING: 13.0 OFF: 7.5 DEF: 6.0 BNC: 2.0

TQ: **28.5**

2010 brobdingnag BARBARIANS in review

For a season where the team wasn't contending, it was a long way from a dumpster dive.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 73-89 (4th, Ruth)

This wasn't exactly where Joe Auletta wanted to end up this year, which forced some recalculations going into the off-season . . . otherwise, it wouldn't have been possible to play the 2011 (and 2012) drafts like a virtuoso. But, of course, he likes to do that, so maybe it doesn't matter.

They finished fourth (as the ***Annual*** predicted). They won about the number of games that the TQ indicated. They scored 851 freakin' runs, hit 245 homers, and hit .262 as a team; and the pitching wasn't all that bad (4.65, surrendering just six more runs than they scored). For a season where the team wasn't contending, it was a long way from a dumpster dive.

Joe Mauer: Sublime

What went right?

Joe Mauer was absolutely sublime. He led the league in hitting (.362) and on-base percentage (.428), hitting 18 homers and striking out only 6 more times than he walked (67-61). He was surrounded by a powerful lineup: six hitters recorded 20 or more homers, led by Adam Lind (.284-26-121, 53 doubles), Alex Rodriguez (27 homers), Jose Lopez (28) and Adam Dunn (35 homers, 113 walks, 96 RBI).

On the mound, James Shields (14-12, 3.80, 177 Ks, 9 CG) was a big-game money pitcher, with help from part-timer Jake Peavy (8-3, 3.03, 108 Ks in 113 innings over 16 starts). Phil Hughes recorded 24 saves in part-time closer duty. The ***Annual*** assumed that they'd win their share of 10-8 games, and the final stats suggest that it's probably true.

What went wrong?

Pragmatically, it's likely that the Prince of Darkness didn't want the club to be this *good*. They finished fourth in the Ruth Division, sure: not unexpected, given the alignment of contenders and would-be contenders in the 2010 season. But the model season for a Brobdingnag rebuilder – say, the one that will be playing for the draft pick this year – is more like 58-104.

That aside, this offense was a feast-or-famine one. They had some "veteran" skills – they hit well over 200 homers and walked over 600 times (leading the league in both categories), but also struck out 1,233 times, ranking them fourth in TBL. The big power hitters – Lind (147 Ks), Werth (124 Ks to go with his 111 walks), and Dunn (189 Ks) must have cut off rallies with regularity. With very modest team speed (68 steals, but only part-timer Everth Cabrera, at 19, with a significant number) the team pounded bad pitching and was stymied by good pitching.

On the mound, the starters other than Shields was pretty brutal (Scott Richmond was the "best" at 10-9, 5.37). The bullpen front men were good, but the middle inning guys were not.

3 Things

1. Wait for it. No contender before its time: just as 2010 was not a down-enough year, 2011 is not good enough to be a contender. Brobdingnag made an effort to make sure they're in dire straits to set up for the 2012 draft.

2. Mediocre talent can always relocate. Barbarian management has never been sentimental about players that aren't superstars – and sometimes not even then. In the offseason good cards have moved to other teams.

3. The amazing thermometer. The 2012 draft is going to be the greatest performance ever for the Prince. 12 picks in the first 48: never seen that before. Maybe never again.

brobdingnag BARBARIANS

Joe Auletta (23rd year)

It's all about the show – the art, the artifice, and showing us how it's done. Again.

In Paris, France, several years ago, my wife, daughter and I found ourselves one afternoon in a public garden where we had an opportunity to see that most French of public entertainments, the *Guignol*. Guignol is, essentially, Punch and Judy in French; the characters are puppets who, in the guise of a simple children's entertainment, get to engage in a little distracting political commentary. In former days, I assume that this gave the puppet-master's compatriots a good chance to lift the wallets of the thus distracted audience members.

How does this apply to the Brobdingnag Barbarians? It is not to suggest that Mr. Auletta has been picking the pockets of fellow managers, this year or any recent one: that's not his style. The analogy is more germane to the Guignol itself. You see, on the surface, the puppet show is just that: a couple of stock characters sharing a private joke with the audience in between bouts of beating the hell out of each other. For the kids, all they see is the smacks on the head. The adults, though, see deeper meaning in the clowning around.

Every time Brobdingnag unbuilds and gives its TBL opponents a chance to make with the stick there's the risk that while it's happening, deeper things are going on. This year is a textbook example: the Brobdingnag thermometer, measuring the amount of draft available to the team next year, is so full that it spills onto the next thermometer. They have six first rounders and six second rounders. While opponents have been lining up like puppets in the Guignol, something else is going on. The team has already hung up an 0-20 April at this writing, and they plan to lose and lose big.

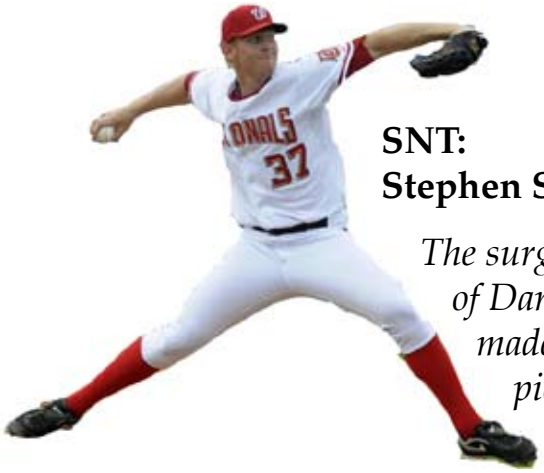
Arrived: Antonio Bastardo, Jhoulys Chacin, Scott Cousins, Ryan Kalish, Craig Kimbrel, Eric Patterson, Ramiro Peña, Rick Porcello, Oscar Salazar, Angel Sanchez, Stephen Strasburg, Brett Wallace, Dontrelle Willis, Delwyn Young

Departed: Marlon Byrd, Coco Crisp, Stephen Drew, Adam Dunn, Tom Gorzelanny, Phil Hughes, Pat Misch, Charlie Morton, Peter Moylan, Josh Outman, Scott Richmond, Randy Ruiz, Jeff Samardzjia, Jim Thome, Jayson Werth

Turnover Rate: *42%*

For Joe Auletta, it's *been there done that.* He knows how to win when the team is dominant; he knows how to lose when it's not. Each status, like scenes in a puppet show, leads to the next. It is impossible to know what the team will look like a year from now: only that it will be much better. We also know very well that for the legendary Prince of Darkness, insofar as baseball is concerned, he absolutely *lives* for this.

It's all about the show – the art, the artifice, and showing us how it's done. *Again.*



SNT:
Stephen Strasburg

The surgery didn't scare the Prince of Darkness. The draft maneuvers made him the Barbarians' top pick in 2011. If he comes back strong, Joe wins big.

brobdingnag BARBARIANS

Pitching: 5.5
Young and not deep.

The pitching staff has been built around two types of pitchers: young and talented guys, and low calorie fillers and additives. The former are part of the team yet to come, while the latter help fill up innings for the current season.

The best Jhoulys in MLB.

ROTATION. As the instructions say, the staff gets lots better later in the season. The rotation is appropriately backloaded, and there are about 60 very capable starts. The best grades belong to the Best Jhoulys in the majors: Jhoulys Chacin (Grade 13 C-26 HR+24) and the comeback kid, Stephen Strasburg (Grade 13 C+22 HR+23). They have 33 starts between them. They are followed by lefty Derek Holland (Grade 10 C-24 HR+13) and veteran Jake Peavy (Grade 9 C+14 HR-13).

Of course, to get to them, there'll be the rest of the rotation: Brad Penny (Grade 7 C+42 HR+24), Chris Tillman (Grade 7 C-61 HR-24) – 20 starts between them; full seasons of Justin Masterson (Grade 6 C-15 HR+25) and Rick Porcello (Grade 4 C+31). Former stalwart James Shields, who had a terrible off year (Grade 3 C+25 HR-23) will take up the rest of the starts.

BULLPEN. The flame-throwing Craig Kimbrel is the closer of the future; the present only has 20 great innings (Grade 20* C-62 HR+62) and will have little impact on the team. The bulk of the good bullpen consists of Brandon League (Grade 12* C+16 HR+15), Ryan Perry (Grade 12* C-13 HR+14) and the mildly toxic Scott Linebrink (Grade 8* C+15 HR-32). Even with a few frames by Daniel Schlereth (Grade 11*), rookie Antonio Bastardo (Grade 8* C-35 HR+41) and a few more for Bobby Parnell (Grade 7* C+35 HR+52), there are fewer than 300 innings overall. Waiver pick Dontrelle Willis (Grade 3) will get lots of work, and the starters will have to stay in the game a lot. This will be a long season in Brobdingnag.

Offense: 5.5
A few stars and a puppet show.

It starts well. Joe Mauer (4 0s, 12 hits, 3 walks, 3 31s, L-9 R+4) is as they say *Nothing To Complain About*. Alex Rodriguez is not at his best, but has a pretty nice card (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks); but he doesn't run like he used to. Adam Lind is not at his peak; he hits for power (1-0-0-0, 9 hits) but has a hideous platoon shift (L-19 R+4). Chris Young has a good card as well (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN for 35 SBA), and Travis Snider has some power (1-5-6-6).

The Franchise

Alex Rodriguez.
The team's first great star was Griffey, but since 1997 A-Rod has been dominant. 4 50-HR seasons and 3 more with 40, for a total of 551; 2400+ hits and 200+ steals; and he's still going.

After these 4 1/2 players the puppet show begins. The middle infield consists of place holders: Jose Lopez, a legacy second baseman, has a bat outage (3 0s, 9 hits); shortstop consists of unworthy successors to Stephen Drew, Ramiro Peña (0, 9 hits, 34 SSN for 8 SBA) and Everth Cabrera (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, 25 SSN for 16 SBA). Delwyn Young (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) may see time as well, as could Eric Patterson (1-4-4, 8 hits,

3 walks, 35 SSN for 12 SBA) as he is rated at second base.

We all know that Vlad the Impaler is a perfectionist. Anything short of a WS contender can be assigned to oblivion (quite literally). Vlad won't enjoy these stats along with his evening Bloody Mary!

The outfield games that remain after Young and half a season of Snider are similarly puppet-like. Oscar Salazar (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks) will get way too many at-bats, as will Patterson and Justin Maxwell (3 0s, 7 hits, 6 walks, 32 SSN). Brett Wallace (5-6, 8 hits, 1 walk+2 42s) will DH for a third of the season.

It's not the worst offense in the league, or even in the division. But it's not what a Brobdingnag offense really looks like.

Defense: 4.0
Suspect gloves.

The defense is largely suspect as well. Joe Mauer leads in this department as well (C9, Th-1), and Chris Young (OF3, 32 arm) is solid. At shortstop, the various suspects (Peña, Cabrera and rookie Angel Sanchez) are all SS8s; Snider, Patterson, and Maxwell are all OF2s; and Alex Rodriguez is a 3B4.

Adam Lind at first base is a 1B2, though there are two 1B3s (Wallace and Salazar) and a bench 1B4 (Chris Davis, who won't be on the roster most of the year). Jose Lopez is out of position as a 2B6, though there are various 2B7s to replace him, including Delwyn Young. Salazar is an OF1 and will be out there dropping the ball with great regularity.

Mauer: No complaints.

This group will extend innings that the pitching staff cannot afford to have extended. Ah well.

Bench: 1.5
Not enough flexibility.

Oh, come now. This is not a feature of a Brobdingnag rebuild. The best of the remaining bats will not appear until late in the season, though they're actually not bad and there are some young guys among them. Angel Sanchez (2 0s, 11 hits) is the late season infielder; Scott Cousins (2-4-6, 10 hits) and Ryan Kalish (4 0s, 9 hits, 35 SSN for 11 SBA) will be outfield alternatives.

Chris Davis (1B4, 3 0s, 7 hits, 4 walks) and Chris Iannetta (C7, Th-2, 1-0-0, 7 hits) will not make anyone want to replace the starters. The Prince hopes that they will approach the players he thought he had drafted.

3rd

But not by a whole lot. They really are better than the team up in Canada, since the latter club has not a single player with a fourth power number, and has even worse pitching. This club is decidedly bad, but not historically bad; they could manage their way to 110 losses or come back for 65 wins. It does not matter in the long run.

Kimbrel: Closer to be

2010 finish: 73-89 (4th, Ruth)
Last 5 years: 400-410, .494

PITCHING: 5.5 OFF: 5.5 DEF: 4.0 BNC: 1.5

TQ: **16.5**

2010 new westminster WHISKEYJACKS in review

There are never a lot of things wrong when a team wins 102 games.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 102-60 (1st, Ruth)

Several combinations of things contributed to the team's success in 2010. New West won a franchise record 102 games. These wins led to a second straight Ruth title.

What went right?

As a team New West was third in batting and third in ERA. The big three were the big three as Ramirez had the best average in the International Conference with Holiday in second. Four batters scored more than 100 runs with Callaspo scoring 123. New West had three batters with over 100 RBI and Cantu came in at 99.

Joel Piniero: Great year.

The pitching was good with a strong bullpen. The starters were a collective 82-44. Piniero had a great year, going 21-5 with a 3.71 ERA. Correira won 17 and Ohlendorff and Kawakami each won 14. In the bullpen, Joe Nathan, a late season addition went 2-1 with 10 saves in 16 appearances. Broxton chipped in with 28 saves and an ERA of 1.97.

With offense and pitching in abundance New West was the leading club at the end of August and took the 24th pick in the draft.

What went wrong?

There are never a lot of things wrong when a team wins 102 games. In some ways this was a team that played above its head. The team feasted on the second division but had a poor record against all of the playoff teams.

Finishing first for the draft complicated an already thin roster. Second base was a position that was poorly manned between Matsui and Roberts. Neither hit well – Matsui .238 and Roberts .232 – or played particularly strong defense. Catching was another noticeable letdown with Martin and Moehler both below a .255 average. The lack of a big bat addition in the home stretch seemed to deflate the team heading to the playoffs. Nathan was a good pickup but he was not able to stop a 4-1 series loss to Whitman.

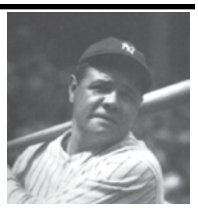
3 Things

1. Dealing Matt Holliday. Grand Cayman traded beads in the form of Bengie Molina and Eric Young but some gold with Arencibia and a first rounder in 2012. This was our admission of a need to deepen the roster with some good prospects and that some players were not developing as had been hoped.

2. Taking the catching prospect. We moved up in the draft to take a catcher – J.P. Arencibia. This helped the earlier moving of Russell Martin and the ability to draft Miranda another prospect.

3. First to worse. It was necessary for us to accept a first to worse future. New West has some solid pieces and we are trying a partial rebuild which may or may not work.

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS



Jim Jeatt (7th year)

The team is older, but it's not really old. *The team was built the right way . . . and we like the guys on this team.*

Was it an illusion? No. Of course not. The club was a doormat in 2006, to no one's surprise, and then had a stellar draft and began coming together. They won 71, then 73, then 86 (and won the Ruth Division, losing to Gotham City in the playoffs), then 102 (and won the division again, losing to Whitman).

Look at the roster. Prince Fielder, Hanley Ramirez, Dexter Fowler, Johnny Cueto, Jonathan Broxton: they're all still here. So is newcomer J.P. Arencibia, who will not matter this year. So are some other folks who are, or recently were, prospects: Sean Marshall, Kila Ka'aihue, David Freese, Eric Young, Jeremy Hermida. What's not to like?

Well, for one thing, the cards are not to like. As is customary, we laid them out on the table to look at the power hitters, and the good on-base cards, and the good fielders, and the good starters and top bullpen guys, and . . . um . . . *wait, did someone drain Prince Fielder's power? Did the bullpen, a team strength during the last few years, decide to join an ashram? How many first-column 3s do you really need on one roster?*

We've seen teams that were jerry-built and bound to fall apart. We've seen teams disassemble their rosters to rebuild. We've seen teams get old. *(Boy, have we seen teams get old.)* We have also had rosters where we didn't like the guys – at all levels of performance. But none of those apply here. The team is older, but it's not really *old*. The team was built the right way, around youth and talent. Some of the talent was sent away, but not all of it: and we like the guys on this team.

We think Jim Jeatt does too, but he's not going to like how they perform during this long season.

Arrived: J.P. Arencibia, Jose Arredondo, Gregor Blanco, Kyle Davies, David Freese, Cristian Guzman, Jeremy Hermida, Ryota Igarashi, Joe Inglett, Kila Ka'aihue, Brent Lillibridge, Juan Miranda, Bengie Molina, Esmil Rogers, Alfredo Simon, Jeff Stevens, Kanekoa Texeira, Eric Young, Jr.

Departed: David Aardsma, Rocco Baldelli, Jorge Cantu, Kevin Gregg, Matt Herges, Matt Holliday, Jim Johnson, Fred Lewis, Brandon Lyon, John Maine, Russell Martin, Kaz Matsui, Zach Miner, Chad Moeller, Joe Nathan, Augie Ojeda, Arthur Rhodes, Ryan Roberts

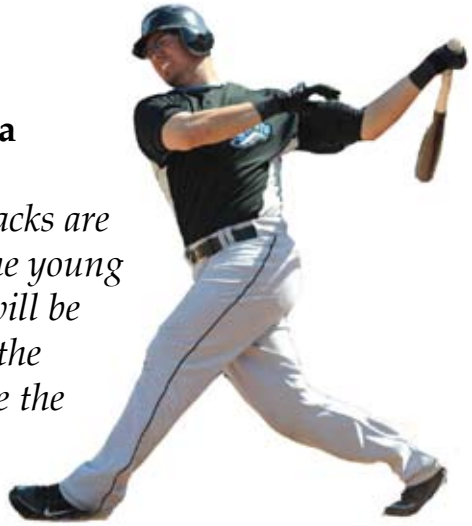
Turnover Rate: ***51%***

Pitching: 4.5
Don't look in the bullpen.

ROTATION. The New West starters are not quite contender quality, but they are mostly capable. The ace of the staff is a highly-touted young righty – Johnny Cueto (Grade 10 C+16). Along with veterans Jeremy Guthrie (Grade 10 C+24) and Joel Piniero (Grade 8 C+34 HR+13) and the surprisingly capable Ross Ohlendorf (Grade 9 C-16) the

SNT:
J.P. Arencibia

The Whiskeyjacks are betting that the young power hitter will be the catcher of the future. We like the pick here.



Cueto: Talented ace

decent starts go 107 deep.

After that, the remaining starts belong to long time Whiskeyjack Kevin Correia (Grade 5 C-22 HR-16) and recent acquisition Kyle Davies (Grade 5 C-25), whose primary distinction in TBL is surrendering 74 homers in 165 innings a few years ago.

BULLPEN. Jonathan Broxton has what you like for a closer: he throws very hard and isn't too wild. What he doesn't have this year is a good grade. He's a Grade 8* (C-15 HR+32). Lefty Sean Marshall serves as the late inning setup man (Grade 14* C+16 HR+43). They would be helpful additions in a solid bullpen. However, they are, essentially, the bulk of the talent out there.

The next cards off the stack are Manny Corpas (Grade 6* C+21) and Kenshin Kawakami (Grade 4 C+24). Alfredo Simon (Grade 6* C-22 HR-33) is also available for 49 scary innings. The rest of the arms are suitable for mopup duty, in which capacity they are likely to frequently serve.

The Franchise

Prince Fielder

This club is only 14 years old, but no one has impacted it like its premier power hitter. 145 homers in 4 years and change, and lots more to come.

Vegas Line

Our Canadian manager, Jim Jeatt, won a hard fought battle with Dallas for the 2010 Ruth Division crown, but missed out on the WS. That division crown will need to keep him warm for there won't be a repeat performance in 2011. A weak rotation, a weaker bullpen and major questions in the lineup will prevent another playoff spot this year.

Offense: 4.5
Quite a letdown.

We begin with Hanley Ramirez. It's a good card, though far from his best (1-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 29 SSN for 42 SBA). He and Prince Fielder (1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+42, but a L-11 R+3 platoon differential) will provide a great part of the offense. They'll be driving home speedy Dexter Fowler (2-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, 25 SSN for 20 SBA) and the competent Alberto Callaspo (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks).

Hanley: Top card in the lineup.

The balance of the offense is mediocre at best. Rookie David Freese has half a good season (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L+5 R-4); Cristian Guzman has, well, 10 hits (and 2 0s and only 2 walks); Ryan Ludwick has some power (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) as does Joe Inglett (3-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-9). Gregor Blanco has 10 hits and 6-3 power, plus a little speed (28 SSN for 15 SBA).

After the "mediocre at best" crowd come the largely empty at-bats: Eric Young (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 29 SSN for 23 SBA); Jeremy Hermida (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks); Kila Ka'aihue (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks) and the catching tandem of Bengie Molina (2 0s, 9 hits, L+10 R-5) and Josh Bard (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-7).

Analyzing these cards supported the contention that the offense had suffered quite a letdown from the one that scored 879 runs, but it wasn't until then that the crack staff at the ***Annual*** realized that there was no card in the envelope with a fourth power number. Not one. Not even some

bizarre relief pitcher with four 1s. In these days where double-column cards lead to all kinds of weak second columns, this offense couldn't find one. They'll have a tough time scoring 600 runs, let alone almost 900.

Defense: 3.0
Consistently deficient.

Let it not be said that New West values defense over offense. They do not. There are two Fielding One players available: Bengie Molina (C8 with a floppy Th-2) and Brett Carroll (an OF3 with extremely limited usage.)

Most of the regular players are Fielding Two or worse. Prince Fielder is a 1B3. (He's the only 1B3 on the roster; all others are 1B2s.) Josh Bard is a C7 with a Th+0; Cristian Guzman and Hanley Ramirez are rated 2B7 and SS8 respectively (though Joe Inglett and Eric Young are both 2B6s); Alberto Callaspo is a 3B4 but David Freese is a 3B3.

In the outfield it will be almost all OF2s – Ryan Ludwick, Dexter Fowler, and Gregor Blanco – with occasional "help" from Jeremy Hermida (OF1). Fowler has the best arm at 33. He'll go get the ball. Actually, it's good that he (and the others) are at least competent at that sort of thing, since they will be doing a great deal of it this season.

Fowler: Goes and gets it.

Usually having defense will help the pitching staff; but in this case, nothing can really help the pitching staff. Consequently, the consistently deficient defense will have little effect on the team's performance.

Bench: 1.5
Not as such.

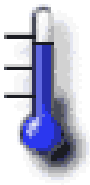
Kila Ka'aihue, Gregor Blanco, and Alberto Callaspo are spare parts from the starting lineups, and will be joined by defense-only replacement Brett Carroll (OF3, 34 arm, 3 0s, 7 hits, 2 walks+3 42s), short-usage rookie Juan Miranda (1-4-5, 8 hits, 4 walks) and waiver castoff Brent Lillibridge (3-5-6, 9 hits, L+10 R-9).

J.P. Arencibia has no usage to speak of: he's an interest-bearing account, as we like to say here at the ***Annual***. He will likely start his few games as the other two catchers have barely enough to cover the season.

This is not the worst bench we've ever seen, but it's certainly a thin collection. They won't help the team win the games they're actually involved in.

4th As if that should surprise you. This TQ usually converts to about 40 wins, but the vagaries of dice rolling, or computer randomization, or the stubborn recalcitrance of managers and teams to do what we predict they will do can make it more certain. We are certain, however, that it'll be a long season.

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS



2010 finish: 100-62 (1st, Ruth)
Last 5 years: 370-440, .457

PITCHING: 4.5 OFF: 4.5 DEF: 3.0 BNC: 1.5

TQ: **13.5**

road to the world series

by Bob Jordan

The 2010 TBL playoffs featured spectacular drama, huge hits by key players, and a collision of two legendary TBL Managers in the National Conference championship. In counterpoint, the excitement was dampened a bit by the crushing performance of the Rye Herons, who took no prisoners on their way to the International Conference championship.

Dallas vs. Greater Ohio

Dallas took the first two games of the series, tagging workhorse reliever Kerry Wood with both losses. The Chia Pets got off the mat and battered Danny Haren in game 3, then got a late 3-run shot from Andre Ethier to even the series. In the pivotal fifth game, Dallas closer Andrew Bailey entered the ninth inning with a three run lead, but Greater Ohio tied it up on clutch hits by Frank Catalanotto and Jack Wilson. In extra innings, Evan Longoria ended it with a homer off Claudio Vargas. The Pets closed the deal behind a superior pitching performance from John Danks.

Kansas vs. Hudson

Game 1 saw aces Tim Lincecum and Randy Wolf get bludgeoned early, but the contest was not decided until Hudson's Ryan Raburn and Todd Helton put together hits in the tenth inning to win it. Kansas evened the series in Game 2, but Hudson caught a break in Game 3 when an injury to Max Scherzer forced Kansas to bring in Jon Garland, with awful results. Hudson rolled 10-0, then hung on in Game 4 to hand the ball back to Lincecum up 3-1 in the series. Kansas stretched out Lincecum and got loose in the Hudson bullpen to force a Game 6, but Kurt Suzuki hit a walkoff 9th-inning homer to end the season for Kansas and send Clay Beard and the Hudson Generals into a showdown with the fearsome Portland Possum.

Whitman vs. New Westminster

Both offenses took the day off for the opener, with Whitman winning 1-0 behind Clayton Kershaw. Then Whitman came from 4 runs down in the 5th inning of game 2 to take a 7-6 lead into the 9th. Matt Holliday flew out with the bases loaded against Whitman closer George Sherrill.

Whitman's pitching dominated in Game 3, but New West's bats broke out in Game 4 with an 8-7 win on a late clutch double by Ryan Ludwick. Whitman brought back Kershaw for Game 5 and snuffed the New West bats once again to win the series in 5.

Knoxville vs. Zion

Pat Martin and Richard Meyer squared off in a matchup of high-octane offenses. Zion got a 2-run homer from Shin Soo Choo to take Game 1. In game 2, it was Garrett Jones who hit the 2-run job early, and Zion won an almost identical 5-1 victory. Back in Knoxville, the Outlaws behind with

clutch hits by Edgar Renteria and Mark Teahen to take Game 3, with former Elder Kiko Calero closing it out for Knoxville. In Game 4, Zion jumped out in front again, and kept chipping away and got a fine performance from young starter Koji (lieutenant) Uehara. In game 5, the good news for Knoxville was a tightly-fought 3-2 win in 14 innings. The bad news was the heavy impact on their bullpen. In game 6, Zion got three 2-run blasts from Aaron Hill, Garrett Jones and Bobby Abreu to close out the series 4 games to 2.

Rye vs. Greater Ohio

Devlin Toth came into the series with Rye with momentum, having come from two games down against an excellent Dallas club to win his wild card series. Rye rewarded this burst of optimism by mirthlessly crushing the Pets 10-0 in Game 1, and 6-1 in Game 3. This was sandwiched around a 5-3 win in Game 2 where the Pets almost crawled back into it before Craig slapped Mike Adams, his Grade 30* closer, on the table. In Game 4, Rye sent the Pets home for the holidays by pounding out 3 homers, including two three run jacks by Manny Ramirez.

Hudson vs. Portland

The Red Sox *had to* beat the New York Yankees to win their first World Series in 86 years, and Clay *had to* face Ray Murphy in an East Hartford Connecticut Econolodge showdown to get a chance to win his first TBL World Series.

Two previous Generals visits to the same location had yielded only heartbreak, but in a series full of unexpected twists and turns, Clay would find the formula this time.

The Game 1 pitcher's duel between Tim Lincecum and Adam Wainright ended 8-6, with Nate Schierholtz providing several clutch hits. In Game 2, Hudson sent out Grade 8 Roy Oswalt against a Grade 14 Matt Cain, and somehow survived to take a 2-0 lead when Scott Eyre induced Troy Tulowitzki to hit into a game-ending double play with the bases loaded in the ninth.

In Game 3, Tulowitzki traded in his goat horns for a laurel wreath as he hit a ninth-inning homer to tie up the game. Portland pulled it out later in the inning when Pablo Sandoval air mailed a throw over Todd Helton's head allowing 2 runs to score. Game 4 saw *another* incredible comeback. This time, Portland handed Trevor Hoffman a 6-4 lead in the 11th, and Hudson handed Hoffman the loss after Kurt Suzuki homered to tie it and Derek Jeter singled home Luis Castillo to win it.

Game 5 was a rematch between Lincecum and Wainright, and this time a pitcher's duel actually did materialize, with Portland hanging on 3-2. The Game 6 matchup was Oswalt against Cain, but it was Roy Oswalt that looked like the Grade 14 this night, as he snuffed all Portland's hopes to tie the series and force a Game 7. Clay had survived his contest against his *bête noire*. Now all he had to do was beat Richard Meyer to get to the World Series.

Continued on next page with the Conference Championships.

Whitman vs. Rye

Both teams rolled through the first round, losing one game between them. The first game pitted Whitman ace Clayton Kershaw against 20 game winner Zack Greinke. The game was close: both starters were injured early and several lead changes occurred. Finally, Juan Pierre single in two runs to give Whitman a 5-4 lead in the seventh, and the Whitman bullpen made it stand up. It was Rye's first loss of the 2010 postseason. Whitman used nine pitchers in the game, while Rye used eight.

Game 2 featured Whitman ace Matt Garza against 17 game winner Jered Weaver. Down 3-0 early and staring a 2-0 deficit in the face, the Herons tied it in the third on a Lance Berkman homer, then grabbed the lead 5-3 on a Nelson Cruz homer and a Chase Utley single in the sixth. Whitman tied it 5-5 on an Ellsbury double. Rye got a long ball from Torii Hunter to take the lead, but Whitman tied it again on a Paul Konerko single. Finally, Manny Ramirez untied the game for good with a ninth-inning grand slam off Tim Byrdak. The series was tied at 1. Craig's understated evaluation of the first two razor-close contests – "These game are a bit stressful."

In game 3, Whitman took a quick 2-1 lead, but Rye's relentless offense kept chipping away at rookie David Price. In the 5th, Rye took the lead for good on a series of singles and a Marco Scutaro homer. 8-3 Rye. In Game 4, Rye clubbed Whitman starter Aaron Cook like a baby seal and won an easy one, 10-5 to take a 3-1 lead in the series.

In Game 5, Whitman sent Clayton Kershaw out to face Zack Greinke once again, but it was the Rye pitching that carried the day as they took a 5-3 lead into the ninth against a scrappy Whitman outfit. Grade 30* Mike Adams reduced a homer to a 7 against Nick Markakis, then reduced a 1 to a 6 against Raul Ibanez. Finally, Juan Pierre grounded out with the tying run on second to end it. Rye was going to the World Series.

Hudson vs. Zion

Two Hall of Fame managers – one in, the other going in unless we all get taken up in the Rapture today – squared off in a classic series for the 2010 National Conference championship and a berth in the 2010 TBL World Series.

Game 1 matched Tim Lincecum (Grade 16) against Scott Baker (Grade 10). The edge to Hudson never materialized – both starters had shutouts, with Baker throwing a perfect game through 6. The game went to extra frames, with Zion's Shin-Soo Choo finally ending it with a home run off Brian Fuentes.

Game 2 matched Edwin Jackson against Jason Marquis. No pitcher's duel this time: Zion pounded the stripes off the Generals 14-1. In Game 3, played on the silicon fields of Hudson stadium, Hudson looked like a team on a championship run as they pummeled Chris Volstad for an early 7-1 lead, then survived a late charge by Zion to win 11-6. Derek Jeter had five hits. Game 4 was a classic. In the fifth, Rajai Davis broke a 5-5 tie with a single to plate Ryan Rayburn. Hudson led 6-5 and there the scoring ended, but the action just kept coming…pitching changes, great fielding plays, broken hit and runs that led to key outs, and a busted sacrifice that snuffed out a promising inning … Hudson evened the series, 2-2.

The combatants sent out Lincecum and Baker in Game 5, and Lincecum did most of the work himself, tossing a 4-hit shutout at TBL's highest scoring team in the biggest game of the Hudson season. This one ended 7-0, Generals. Game 6 saw better pitching from Zion, Jason Marquis and five relievers held the Generals hot hitters to five singles and a double, and one third-inning run. Edwin Jackson was terrific for Hudson, holding the Zion to four hits, but Zion forced a game 7, 3-1.

Everything was on the line as Roy Oswalt and Anibel Sanchez squared off in game 7. Pitching would not be the story here. The teams used 18 pitchers between them. The game whipsawed back and forth. A clutch single by Todd Helton tied it after 8, and after a scoreless ninth, this epic would be decided in extra innings.

Only one extra inning, as it turned out, but it was dinner, a circus and a cabaret. Hudson slashed and burned through the Zion bullpen for 4 runs in the top of the tenth, all of them coming with two outs. The big blow was a pinch hit triple by playoff hero Nate Schierholtz that set up Hudson with a 4-run lead entering the bottom of the tenth. Hudson had only two problems left to solve – first, their bullpen was sucking wind, and second, the guy rolling the dice was Richard Meyer. Escobar singled off Guillermo Mota to start Zion off. Mota got two outs but walked Abreu and gave up a single to Felipe Lopez and another huge clutch double by Morgan (4 for 4 on the day). Zion was within 1, and had speed in scoring position when Clay reached to the bottom of his pile and pulled out Edwin Jackson, who induced a game-ending flyout from backup catcher Robinson Diaz. For the first time since 1990, Clay Beard and the Hudson Generals were headed to the TBL World Series.

2010 TBL World Series

by Bob Jordan

So after 11 months of competition, the Rye Herons sat down to face the Hudson generals in the TBL World Series. Craig Musselman was rested and relaxed after clubbing Whitman 4 games to 1, while Clay Beard was seen taking oxygen and guzzling 5-hour energy drinks after a grueling 7-game throw-down with Zion.

Game 1 at Rye
Lincecum vs. Greinke

Hudson jumped on top in game 1 on homers by Ryan Raburn and Pablo Sandoval. Lincecum carried a no hitter into the seventh, when Rye finally broke through with a Manny Ramirez RBI double. Rye loaded the bases, then Torii Hunter tied the game with walk. Rye scored a go-ahead run on a Tim Lincecum error. Meanwhile, Zack Greinke was cruising along, retiring the last five Hudson batters in order to seal it the complete game win.

Greinke

Rye 3, Hudson 2
WP: Greinke LP: Lincecum

Game 2 at Rye
Jackson vs. Weaver

Jackson was pitching fatigued as a Grade 7 as an aftermath of the Game 7 Hudson victory over Zion. Hudson scored three in the first, but Rye ground down Jackson for four runs to take a 4-3 lead after 3. Hudson kept battling, taking a 6-4 lead in the fifth. The explosive Rye offense went off again in the seventh, as they loaded the bases, scored one on a sacrifice fly, then took the lead on a two-run single by Raul Chavez.

Berkman

Hudson took the lead again in the eighth, stringing together Luis Castillo sacrifice fly and a Jeter single to plate the go-ahead. Into the ninth they went with Hudson nursing a 1-run lead. Hudson closer Scott Eyre came on. After a one-out walk to Kemp, and a steal of second, Hunter fanned. Eyre needed only one out to win, but he walked three straight – Olivo, Scutaro and Utley.

Lance Berkman then hit a walk-off grand slam home run. This was what Ray Murphy calls 'a dagger' for the Generals. Rye led the series 2-0.

Rye 12, Hudson 8
WP: Hawkins LP: Eyre

Game 3 at Hudson
Oswalt vs. Carpenter

Game 3 was a continuation of the theme. Hudson led this one 2-0, in the first and 3-2 in the fourth, but Rye just kept coming. A 2-run homer by Utley gave the Herons a 4-3 lead, and Carpenter snuffed the Hudson offense from there, giving way to Grade 30* closer Mike Adams to end it with two strikeouts. Rye was up 3 games to none.

Carpenter

Rye 4, Hudson 3
WP: Carpenter LP: Oswalt

Game 4 at Hudson
Millwood vs. Feldman

Game 4 was anti-climactic after such a hard-fought series. Rye got solo homers from Berkman, Cruz and Miguel Olivo to take a 4-0 lead into the sixth behind Scott Feldman. Then, the Herons iced it with five in the sixth. The Herons won this one 11-0 to put the final exclamation point on a tremendous season.

Feldman

Rye 11, Hudson 0
WP: Feldman LP: Millwood

Series MVP: ***Lance Berkman.***

He hit two home runs in the Rye Herons' sweep, including the walkoff grand slam in Game 2. He also turned a key double play in Game 3, setting up the Rye win.

national conference hall of fame eligibles

Craig Biggio

Craig Biggio, C-2B-OF *1990-2007*
Brobdingnag, Maracaibo, Blue Hill and other clubs.

Biggio was an on-base specialist, with nearly 1000 walks in his 19-year TBL career, and remains the all-time leader in HBP with 264 (and the record holder with 51 for the 1998 Rumrunners). He was an everyday player, averaging 151 games a year in his 17 full seasons; he stole 333 bases and drove in 1224 runs with 276 homers and 611 doubles.

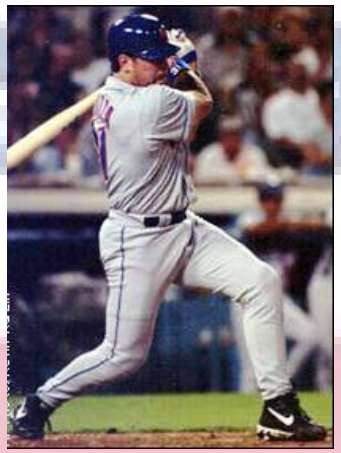
Barry Bonds, OF *1987-2008*
Rochester, Columbus, Lewiston-Auburn

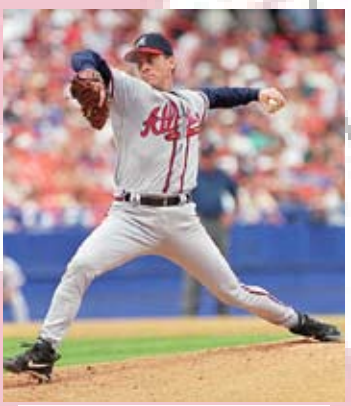
The big kahuna, Bonds holds the all-time single season and career home run records (81 in 2002 and 826 overall). He had a tremendous on-base percentage, including records of .538 and .517 in 2002 and 2003. He had 3,213 hits, 2,204 walks, 2,342 RBI, scored 2,465 runs, and stole 393 bases (in 498 attempts). Some of the records he set may never be broken.

Barry Bonds

Mike Piazza, C *1994-2008*
Minnesota/Knoxville, Maracaibo, Oklahoma City, Lewiston-Auburn, Rochester/Columbus.

A power-hitting catcher, he was an RBI machine, driving in 100 or more runs eight times and finishing his career with 1,336. He hit 409 homers, topping 30 eight times. His best season was 1998 with Knoxville (.354-34-102, with 41 doubles and 200 hits). He finished his career with 2,098 hits.


Mike Piazza


Tom Glavine

Tom Glavine, SP *1988-2008*
Farmville/Pugest Sound, Zion

Pitching often in the shadow of Greg Maddux, Glavine was a stalwart regular for the dominant Zion teams during their long run of success. He won 18 or more games eight times and 20 games three times, pitching 200 or more innings for eighteen straight seasons. He won 312 games in his long career, starting 678 games and completing 132 of them. He struck out 2,946 batters in 4,614 innings.

HALL OF FAME

Take It Up A Notch

2010 Aaron Division
Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Portland*	98	64	.605	—
Kansas†	91	71	.562	7
Northboro	90	72	.556	8
Maracaibo	51	111	.315	48

** Lost to Hudson in NC playoff.*
† Lost to Hudson in NC Wild Card playoff.

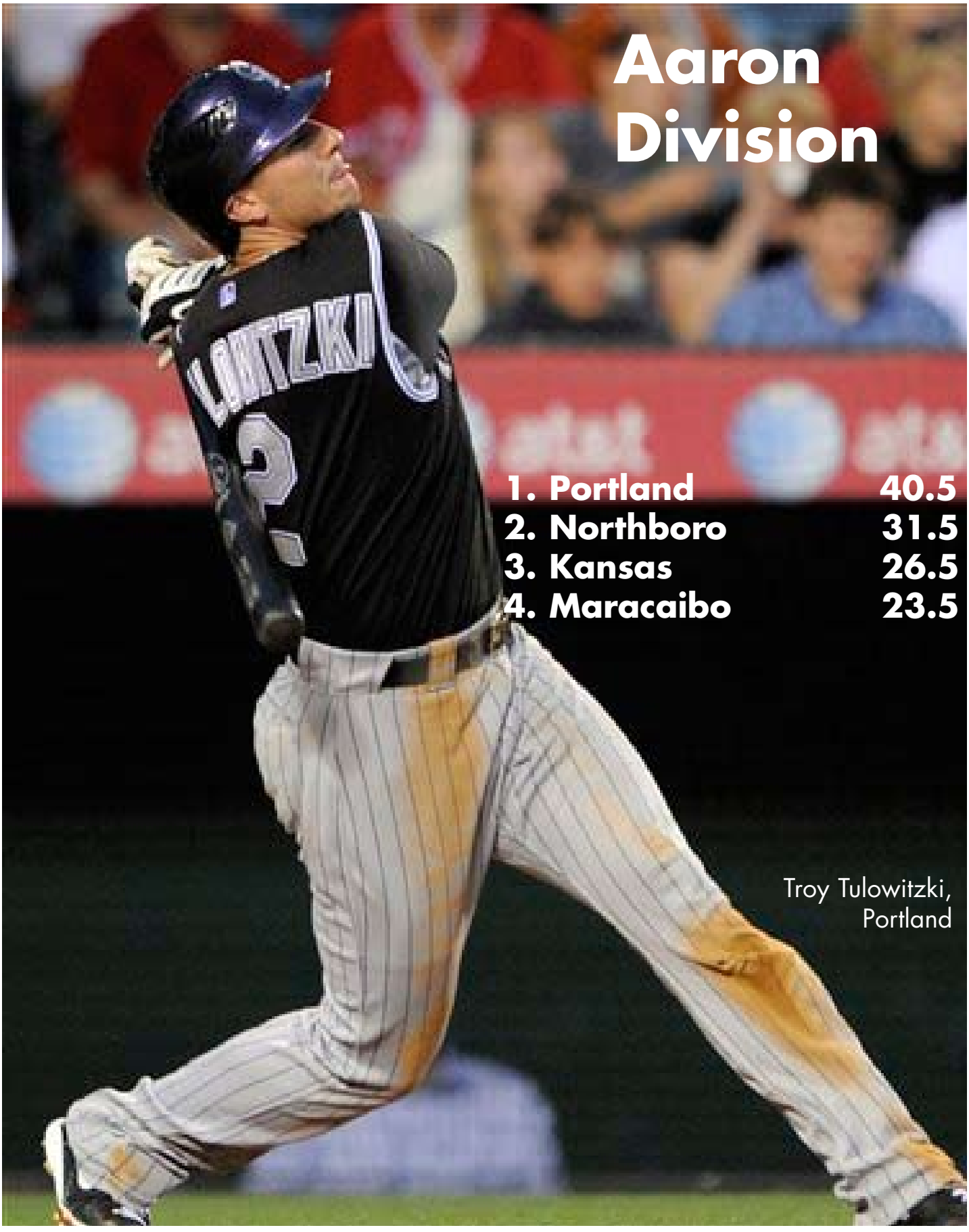
There are only two ways to respond to "not quite." The way chosen has everything to do with what you've got left after you didn't quite grab the brass ring. *Ray Murphy* has chosen option one for his **Portland Possum**: to take it up a notch. This year's club is even better than last year's, with more pitching, a superior lineup, and more Guys We Like. There should be more than 100 regular season wins for the team in 2011, as the club beats up on the various rebuilders and almost-rebuilders who are looking for cover this season. They'll meet up with a tough opponent in Melrose in the post-season – assuming they fare better in earlier rounds.

That is, unless the boys down the road don't get in the way. This year the **Northboro Phoenix** have taken a step forward, adding a fine relief staff to their excellent starting rotation, and bringing in a productive middle-of-the-order hitter, Jayson Werth, who will do for the team what no one seemed to do last year – drive in runs for *Steve Stein* and *Bob Jordan*. The Dynamic Duo have gotten close before; but, like the Portland club across the way, they've stepped it up as well with the intention of going all the way. There is always the danger that a club on the hairy edge will focus too heavily on the consequences . . . and not do what it takes to win *now*. Entropy is your enemy, and the boys know that.

The rumors of the **Kansas Koyotes** coming apart are once again premature. Our Yankee fan friend *Bill Schwartz* has added some talent to his team and is clearly not interested in rebuilding now or in the near future. Curtis Granderson plays for his favorite MLB team and is off to a fast start; the pitching is better; and they've slipped past pre-season playoff picks before. Once the team gets into the playoffs, anything can happen. And unlike half the league, Kansas still has its 2012 draft to help if they're close in September.

The **Maracaibo Rumrunners** are in the middle of a multi-year rebuild, which is somewhat foreign territory for new Hall of Famer *Walter Hunt*. The team was hapless enough to lose 100 games last year, something the team has never done in its long history – and somehow it avoided that fate. The question is whether they will have to get really bad in order to get really good again. This mantra – fall deep into the loss column in order to build a contender – seems to be common wisdom, but Maracaibo has never signed on to it (and has a pretty solid history of success to show for it). It's going to depend on how their draft works out.

Aaron Division



1.	Portland	40.5
2.	Northboro	31.5
3.	Kansas	26.5
4.	Maracaibo	23.5

Troy Tulowitzki, Portland

2010 portland POSSUM in review

Despite the regular-season success, the playoff run ended quickly.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 98-64 (1st, Mays)

Portland reached a milestone in its rebuilding effort, returning to the playoffs after a three-year absence (following the 2006 TBL championship season). The drafts and trades of the last few years paid off, making the Possum the team to beat in the Aaron.

What went right?

The Possum won 98 games and the Aaron Division title for the third time in franchise history. Matt Cain and Adam Wainwright served as twin aces in the rotation, going a combined 33-20 with a sub-3.50 ERA. Rent-a-closer Trevor Hoffman logged a vintage farewell-season, saving 33 games with a 1.04 ERA. The offense was headlined by its depth, as 10 batters reached double-digit HR and nine had 48 or more RBI. Joey Votto was the team leader, hitting 23 homers and recording an impressive slash line of .327/.394/.539.

Joey Votto: Team leader

While there were no power hitters with 40 homers and no one recorded 100 RBI, the number of productive players on the stat sheet showed the versatility of the Portland roster.

What went wrong?

Despite the regular-season success, the playoff run ended quickly, as Hudson bounced the Possum in six games in the divisional playoffs. Highlighted in that series was the occasional absence of an offense that should have been more productive, as the team's 789 runs scored ranked only 11th in the league.

Part of the problem was the large number of team strikeouts – 1,364, which led TBL. Eight players struck out more than 100 times, including part-timer Jonny Gomes (111 in 341 at-bats).

Also, there was little team speed: Justin Upton stole 15 bases, but no one else had more than 8. This was a line-drive hitting team that likely had a lot of unproductive innings.

3 Things

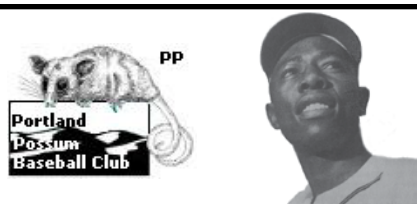
The Possum are back and looking to avenge that early playoff exit this year, featuring:

1. *A retooled bullpen* that is every bit the equal of last year's excellent crew (which went 25-13 with 37 saves and a 2.47 ERA in 416 IP).

2. *Just five starters* toeing the rubber for the Possum this year, covering all 162 starts in the process.

3. *Cardboard rentals* Jim Thome and Wilson Betemit, added to the young/prime core of the team, signal that another playoff flameout will not be tolerated in 2011.

portland POSSUM



Ray Murphy (20th year)

The compensation for disappointment . . . is that sometimes things do *all fall into place.*

After three years in the wilderness following their 2006 World Series sweep, Portland returned to the championship run last year. The real baseball analyst is as knowledgeable as anyone we know, and Ray Murphy has shown often that he has what it takes to make the deals and draft the players to get to the playoffs.

The compensation for disappointment – which is what must have been felt when they fell to Hudson in six games last year – is that sometimes things *do* all fall into place. 2006, for example, was all about falling into place. For Portland, there are fewer obstacles, there are lots of weapons, and there's the same skill and determination. There is, still, Broadcast Blast: while a time-saver, it seems to the ***Annual*** staff that the APBA computer game has not been kind to Mr. Murphy.

We think that Portland has the best team in the division, and should certainly be favored to go to the Conference Championship at least. What comes then is up to the dice – or the randomizer.

Pitching: 18.0
Strong all the way through.

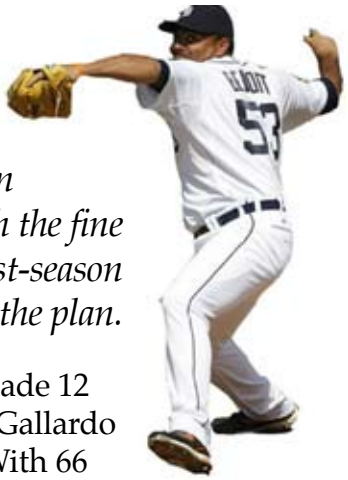
ROTATION. We didn't even have to move the picture of Adam Wainwright (Grade 15 C+23 HR+26) at the bottom of this page (though we regrettably won't display it here next year); he's the staff ace all season. Ace #2, once again, is Matt Cain (Grade 13 C+21).

Wainwright: Ace #1 again.

It continues with what Mr. Murphy calls "the merely good": Giovany Gonzalez, who had a breakthrough year in MLB (Grade 14 C-36 HR+25); Ian Kennedy (Grade 12 C-13 HR-16); and Yovani Gallardo (Grade 10 C-15 HR+32. With 66 starts for the two aces and 96 for the remaining three, 162 starts are covered for the year. Thanks for coming. Bud Norris, a 26-year-old Grade 8 with 27 starts, is here to fetch hot dogs and beer for the top five.

SNT:
Joaquin Benoit

He's shiny, and new to Portland. The veteran reliever will help pitch the fine Portland club to the post-season – at least, that's the plan.



BULLPEN. The top dude in the bullpen is the SNT, newly-drafted Joaquin Benoit (Grade 27* C+33 HR-12). He'll be most scary protecting a one-run lead, but he'll stop a lot of hits. What's more, he has lots and lots of help.

Fear the Beard: Brian Wilson (Grade 17* C+15 HR+44) and rookie Jonny Venters (Grade 18* C-36

Arrived: Joaquin Benoit, Wilson Betemit, Scott Downs, Aaron Harang, Brandon Lyon, Jim Thome, Jonny Venters, Brian Wilson

Departed: Octavio Dotel, Freddy Garcia, J.A. Happ, Trevor Hoffman, Kevin Kouzmanoff, Pedro Martinez, Brandon Morrow, Dustin Nippert, Lyle Overbay

Turnover Rate: *23%*

portland POSSUM

HR+62) have the task of keeping the opponents from getting close. That's 217 top-notch innings.

There's more. Brandon Lyon is a middleman with good peripherals (Grade 12* C+23 HR+53); Scott Downs does the same from the left side (Grade 15* C+33 HR+36) with a little help from Mike Gonzalez (Grade 13* C-26 HR+44, 24 innings). Mike Wuertz (Grade 11* C-25 HR-22), the aforementioned Norris, and a pair of Grade 6*s (Jeremy Affeldt and Todd Coffey) bring up the back end and will only come on if the starter and a couple of relievers are punched out.

If we were quibbling – and we're not – the 300 middle innings, only half of which are the trustable ones, might not be enough. But given the rotation and the closer, they probably will be. It's as good a staff as there is in TBL this year.

Offense: 13.5
Highly unstoppable.

Let's just step back and admire one of the best cards in the set, which belongs to Carlos Gonzalez (1-0-0-0-0, 12 hits, 2 walks, 30 SSN for 34 SBA). Yeesh. Against righties, at least, he has a power-hitting tag team partner who has come over to help the Possum pennant chase: the ageless Jim Thome (1-1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 6 walks, with a

And then there was Portland. Last year's club malfunctioned, so Ray Murphy went out and improved on perfection. Five studs make all 162 starts. Hundreds of closer grade relief innings and an all-star at most positions should bring back the WS trophy to Portland.

L-14 R+4 platoon differential.) The PR-5 won't hurt as much on the computer, of course.

Now to the merely very good. Troy Tulowitzki is back (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 32 SSN for 13 SBA); and Joey Votto is huge (1-1-6-6, 11 hits, 5 walks+22, L-8 R+2). Some Guys Named Upton will make contributions (Justin has 1-6-6 power, 9 hits, 4 walks, 27 SSN for 26 SBA; B.J., 1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 32 SSN for 51 SBA), as will veteran draftee Wilson Betemit (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks), and on-base machine Rickie Weeks (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42+22, 28 SSN for 15 SBA).

CarGo: Go go go.

The rest of the lineup has part-timers who would be welcome on most rosters. Ian Stewart turned in a nice card (1-4-5, 9 hits, 3 walks, 28 SSN); J. D. Drew is useful (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-9 R+2); and Jonny Gomes is here to hit lefties (1-4-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L+4 R-4). The only position that is somewhat lacking is behind the plate. Matt Wieters' second year was not as good as expected (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Mike Napoli has what we usually call "isolated power" (1-0-0-0, but only 8 hits and 3 walks+42).

The Franchise

Manny Ramirez.
His career winds to a close with Rye, but had his best years with Portland. He's hit 518 homers, topping 30 10 times and 50 twice, driven in 1,545, scored 1,305, and has 2,222 hits.

The presence of the two five-power-number hitters, the dangerous Tulowitzki and Votto cards, and the various parts with a substantial number of games, at-bats and steal attempts and various batting shifts and hit numbers, makes this an incredibly dangerous offense. We think they'll score a ton of runs and will be hard to stop – particularly on the computer, where the shifts will not be as onerous.

Defense: 5.5
High points, but not everywhere.

There are some terrific defenders on the roster. The outfield in particular has a good OF3 (Carlos Gonzalez, 33 arm) and two OF2s with 37 arms (the Upton brothers). Drew is an OF2 as well with an average arm (32). At shortstop Troy Tulowitzki (SS9) is as good as they come, while Joey Votto (1B4) shows that it's all good on defense as well as at the plate.

But all is not perfect. Second base will be patrolled by Rickie Weeks (2B7), with Adam Rosales (2B8, 3B4) and Craig Counsell (2B8, 3B4) available to replace him. Similarly, Ian Stewart is adequate as a 3B4, but sometimes Wilson Betemit (3B3) will be playing there. Rosales and Counsell can jump in there as well.

Votto: It's all good.

Behind the plate, it's a pair of C7s; Wieters can throw a little (Th+1), while Napoli (Th-1) is even weaker. The C8 defensive replacement, batless Jeff Mathis, can't throw at all (Th-3). Like some other contenders, they could use a real late-game catcher.

This is a capable defensive team. They don't have to put gloveless wonders such as Thome or Gomes in the field, and they do have an SS9 all the time and 2B8s and 3B4s when the game is on the line. The outfield is strong. They shouldn't give up too many four-out innings.

Bench: 3.0
Mix and match.

Seasons hang on overall performance, and pennants are won by solid pitching and consistent offense. But individual games are often won by key use of bench players. Portland's every day lineups are very strong, but some have weaknesses – batting shifts, 13s, 24s, or lack of speed. Having a good bench is a key to a team's success.

In addition to the lineup options, Portland has a few extra players to help them out. The late inning defenders can hit some: Craig Counsell (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, but 3 31s) and Adam Rosales (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+2) are decent. Also, Juan Rivera (1-0-0, 9 hits) may get a chance for the occasional pinch hit.

Ray Murphy knows how to use his personnel, and he'll get the most out of his roster.

1st There is no reason to expect fewer than 100 wins for this club. It's put together with great skill, and has lots of Guys We Like. It has a solid rotation, a very capable bullpen, on-base percentage and power, speed, flexibility against various grades and types of pitching, good (though not great) defense.

Can they fall short? Of course they can. Can they win the World Series? Of course they can. We play, not replay, each season, each series, each game. The joy is in the building, and for Portland, in the execution. This should be fun.

2010 finish: 98-64 (1st, Aaron)
Last 5 years: 386-424, .476

PITCHING: 18.0 OFF: 13.5 DEF: 5.5 BNC: 3.0

TQ: **40.0**

portland POSSUM

2010 northboro PHOENIX in review

You don't need a team of NASA engineers to figure out [that] this team really struggled on offense last year.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 90-72 (3rd, Aaron)

TBL's dynamic duo of Bob Jordan and Steve Stein entered the 2010 season with a head of steam after spending piles of draft picks bringing Grade 14* Javier Lopez and Grade 12 Johan Santana onto the roster. It was a good season – their 90 wins would have comfortably have secured them a playoff spot in the International Conference – but an unexpectedly strong performance from Bill Schwartz' Kansas Koyotes left the Phoenix pressing their beaks against the glass at playoff time.

Johan Santana: Spectacular

What went right?

Pitching was key for Northboro, as their 3.34 team ERA ranked third in TBL in 2010. Johan Santana had a spectacular season, going 17-3 with a 2.02 ERA and 6 shutouts. Roy Halladay went 18-9 with 11 complete games and 5 shutouts. Javier Vazquez won 14 games with 10 complete games and 6 shutouts. Twenty-one of Northboro's 90 wins were shutouts.

The hitting star for the club was Scott Rolen (.323/.376/.474), who hammered the ball all season long. David Ortiz (32 homers) did some damage in the center of the lineup. The team also was efficient in avoiding the double play – they grounded into only 79 all year. And when the analysts start digging for stats like that, you don't need a team of NASA engineers to figure out…

What went wrong?

This team really struggled on offense last year. David Ortiz (70 runs scored) was the only member of the Phoenix that scored 70 runs or more for the season. The team hit .250 with an anemic .319 on base percentage. Carlos Pena hit .201 in 135 games to set the pace for offensive futility for the club. Ian Kinsler hit .206 and grounded into 16 double plays.

The other part of the club that fell short of expectations was the bullpen, and the Northboro fans are all staring at you, Ronald Belisario. The Phoenix burned a second round draft pick on the large Dodger righthander, hoping that his healthy Grade 18* and big homer number would bolt down the back of the bullpen. Belisario's numbers are mundane enough – he went 3-4, 3.88 with 20 saves. But virtually all of his appearances were save situations. This means that he converted 20 saves in 40 chances. This was probably the biggest factor in Northboro's falling so far short of their projected win total – they should have won 99 games based on 742 runs scored vs. 595 runs against. But they didn't hit and they couldn't finish when they had a lead.

3 Things

1. *Age.* In 2011, Big Papi will turn 36, Scott Rolen will turn 36, Roy Halladay will turn 34, and Johan Santana will turn 32. It's getting late in Northboro.

2. *No draft in 2011.* The Phoenix have traded away all their significant draft picks to make a run in 2011. Most of them can be found in Brobdingnag. If injuries strike this aging club, there will be nothing to slow the ride off the cliff.

3. *Competition.* Portland is still in Northboro's division.

northboro PHOENIX

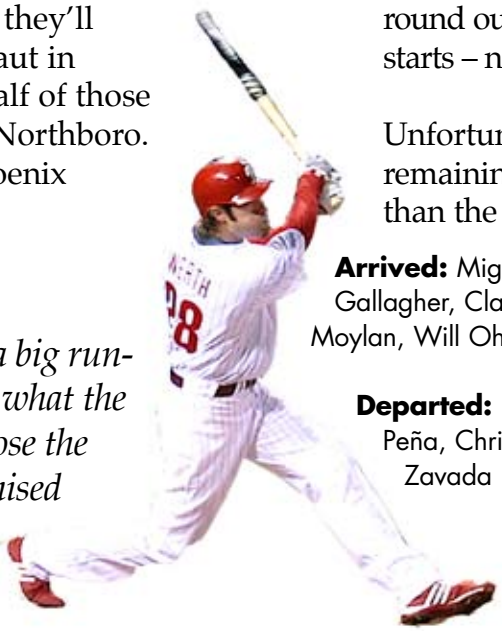
Bob Jordan (12th year) / Steve Stein (9th year)

We don't believe two disappointments in a row are in the cards. Let's hope Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein get the memo.

Once again, we're forced to write about the Phoenix rising up from the ashes of an unsuccessful season. Last year's disappointing finish – one win away from the playoffs – should push this year's club. It pushed the team's owners into many strategy sessions. In the end, while many of the same faces are returning, they'll be joined by this year's SNT Jayson Werth, a stud who will solidify the lineup.

Werth was needed because so much of the past few years focused on helping the pitching staff. Dallas Braden, Johan Santana, and Javier Vazquez were pried from their former teams, at premium prices, to help the Phoenix over the hump. It didn't work. Northboro didn't make the playoffs last year, but it wasn't the pitching staff's fault. The team compiled a sparkling 3.34 team ERA with 1216 strikeouts in 1466 innings. You can't ask more than that from any staff.

So the focus returned to improving the lineup, and Werth's presence makes the whole team better. Sure, they'll have to face the juggernaut in Portland 14 times, but half of those games will be in sunny Northboro. If this is the year the Phoenix takes the next step, they'll have to suck it up and play good baseball from Opening Day to the end. This roster isn't getting any younger.



SNT:
Jayson Werth.
Last year's club lacked a big run-producer: Werth is just what the dynamic duo need to close the deal and get to the promised land – the TBL post season.

Pitching: 13.0
No "learning opportunities."

ROTATION. Even with the focus on hitting this year, the rotation is still a team strength. "Doc" Halladay (Grade 13 C+45) is simply a machine, performing at a high standard year after year. This year, he'll continue his excellence as the staff ace. Johan Santana (Grade 12 HR+21), a former ace, is still solid in the #2 slot. Carlos Zambrano (Grade 12 C-53 HR+36) rebounded to post typical Zambrano numbers. Lefties Dallas Braden (Grade 11 C+25) and Andy Pettitte (Grade 11, in his final year) round out the upper tier of the rotation. That's 133 starts – no weaknesses here.

Halladay: Machine

Unfortunately, that's all the good news. The remaining 29 starts look more like the 1962 Mets than the 1987 Astros. Javier Vazquez (Grade 7

Arrived: Miguel Cairo, Shelley Duncan, Ernesto Frieri, Sean Gallagher, Clay Hensley, Rodrigo Lopez, Dustin Moseley, Peter Moylan, Will Ohman, Jayson Werth

Departed: Ronald Belisario, Brandon Medders, Ramiro Peña, Chris Snyder, Brian Stokes, David Weathers, Clay Zavada

Turnover Rate: *28%*

C-21 HR-34), who contributed a 14-10 record with a 2.99 ERA and 233 strikeouts last year, starts only 4 times. Rodrigo Lopez (Grade 4 C+21 HR-32) starts 16 times. A scary Dustin Moseley (Grade 8 C-26 HR-34) kicks in the remaining 9 starts. Luckily, Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein have these starters on a very short leash. These would usually be deemed "learning opportunities," but this trio averages 33 years old, hardly the age to be learning new tricks, unless that trick is a knuckleball.

BULLPEN. This is a deep bullpen that loves to strike out opposing batters. At the top is Rafael Soriano (Grade 23* C+31 HR+26), who was stellar last year, although not as the closer. He's exceptional every year he's healthy, and this year, he's as healthy as Cal Ripken ever was.

Soriano: Exceptional

He's set up by three strong righties: Ernesto Frieri (Grade 25* C-44 HR+26), Clay Hensley (Grade 17* HR+43), and Peter Moylan (Grade 15* C-51). The top end of the bullpen has about 233 innings, plenty to support this starting rotation.

The rest of the pen is an assortment of middle-innings relievers. Will Ohman (Grade 12* C-31), Joe Beimel (Grade 10*), and Jerry Blevins (Grade 8*) are the lefties, and Huston Street (Grade 11* C+41) and Rafael Betancourt (Grade 11* C+51 HR-24) are the righties. They combine for an additional 245 innings, with generally good peripherals. This should be enough, even with the 29 exciting starts at the back end of the rotation.

This staff will win games and protect a host of others. Except for those final 29 starts, it will keep the team close. Will those final 29 starts matter? In the tough Aaron Division, *every* game is important.

Offense: 8.0

Jayson Werth and his friends.

Once again, the Northboro team has put together a fearsome offense. SNT Jayson Werth (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks) is great step toward changing the fortunes of the team. He bats high in the lineup every day with virtually no batting shift. He's joined by David Ortiz (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks), who will struggle against lefties but devastate righties. Featured Franchise Player Scott Rolen (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) has had a stellar career, putting out cards similar to this one. The three-headed catching monster – Ramon Castro (1-1-5, 10 hits, 3 walks), Ramon Hernandez (11 hits, 3 walks), and David Ross (4-5-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks) – can bash with the Joe Mauers of the world.

The offense doesn't stop there. Angel Pagan (11 hits, 2 walks) has proven to be a steal, literally, as he contributes 46 steal attempts at an excellent SSN. Seth Smith (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks) platoons with Darnell McDonald (6-0-0, 10 hits, 3 hits), the poster child for the waiver draft. Jeff Francoeur (this year with *two* walks) soaks up some at bats, too. Carlos Peña (1-5-5, 7 hits, 5 walks) has taken a step backward, but Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein have compensated with hits (Miguel Cairo: 10 hits, 3 walks) or power (Shelley Duncan: 1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks).

That leaves the middle infield, but you won't find any obvious weaknesses here either.

The Franchise

Scott Rolen.
He's been a performer nearly every year of his career. He peaked in 2005 with a 40-homer season, driving in 123. He's already slugged 285 HRs, and he's still going strong.

The comedy duo of Steve Stein and Bob Jordan has given all in TBL many laughs over the years, but has produced some serious contenders also, and the 2011 edition of the Phoenix is no different. They are a solid performer with playoff aspirations.

northboro PHOENIX

Ian Kinsler (10 hits, 4 walks) is fine, although he lost some power and steals. Shortstop J.J. Hardy (10 hits, 3 walks) had a great bounce-back season. Backing them up are Freddy Sanchez (11 hits, 2 walks) and Cairo. There's a lot to like about this offense, and if handled well, they should score a lot of runs, which is just what the pitching staff needs.

Defense: 8.0
Upper echelon.

Only Wakefield's and Whitman's compare, and only Dallas' is considered even marginally better. Up the middle, Ross and Hernandez are both C8 with positive arms. Castro's a C7 with a zero arm. Hardy (SS9) and the Kinsler/Sanchez duo (both 2B8) are above average. Rolen (3B5) and Pena (1B5) are exemplary on the corners, although Cairo and Hernandez are average 1B3s. Duncan is only a 1B2 when he plays.

Kinsler: Talented.

Werth and forgotten man Melky Cabrera are OF3s. Everyone else is average. Werth and Francoeur have rocket arms. The defense will not cost them many games.

Bench: 2.5
No toys.

There are a few spare parts on this year's team. The extra catcher, first baseman, and outfielder can all hit. Freddy Sanchez is versatile (as a 3B4 and SS7); he doubles as the team's primary pinch-runner. There's no big PH toy or PR speedster, but the starting nine might not need much help. We get the feeling that that's by design.

The key aspect is the versatility of the lineup, which (other than catcher) has full time players sharing positions. Some of the guys who get only part time usage on the Northboro roster would start regularly elsewhere in TBL. Having useful spare parts such as Sanchez, Cabrera, McDonald or Cairo is a hallmark of a contending team – additional evidence that the Stein and Jordan traveling road show is serious about going all the way.

Hardy: Comeback.

2nd

Once again, the T.Q. ratings pick them as a solid playoff contender. Kansas will push them from behind while Portland threatens to pull away from the pack. Will Northboro stay firmly stuck in the middle? We here at the ***Annual*** don't believe two disappointments in a row are in the cards. Let's hope Mr. Jordan and Mr. Stein get the memo and at least buy some new dice.

2010 finish: 90-72 (3rd, Aaron)
Last 5 years: 435-375, .537

PITCHING: 13.0 OFF: 8.0 DEF: 8.0 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **31.5**

2010 Kansas KOYOTES in review

Can't complain too much when a playoff series ends your season.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 91-71 (2nd, Aaron)

With 50 starts at grade 7 and below, the pundits picked Kansas for third in the Aaron with only an outside chance of making the playoffs (and who could argue)? But somehow the planets aligned and the Koyotes, with a little luck on their side and a great road record (50-31 – which meant that they were only 41-40 at home), squeaked into the playoffs by a game over Northboro.

What went right?

Two Grade 13 starters, Randy Wolf and Ted Lilly, headed the starting staff and were solid all year. Lilly posted sparkling stats (16-3, 3.20) in his 27 starts and led the stretch drive, going 8-0 after September 4th. Wolf was the workhorse with 34 starts and 240 innings and chipped in with 16 wins (16-8, 3.11). Needing help for that stretch drive, the Koyotes pulled off a couple of trades in September, picking up Josh Outman, Jeff Weaver and Dan Wheeler. Outman's 4-1, 3.48 in October and November was instrumental in the Koyotes squeaking into the playoffs. First round draft choice Neftali Feliz (Grade 29*) and returning ace Joakim Soria (Grade 17*) presented a two-headed stopper, combining for 47 saves.

Michael Young: .300

The Koyotes acquired two sleepers late in the 2010 draft – Andres Torres in the 5th and Laynce Nix in the 6th round. Nix' 18 HR in 116 games and Torres' .295 BA and 13 triples in 75 games were keys in the Koyote playoff run. And both figure to be valuable regulars in 2011. Michael Young was the lone .300 hitter at .305, but no less than 9 hitters had 12 HR's or more. Young just missed the 100 club in both runs and RBI with 95 and 97 respectively. Billy Butler led the team with 29 HR and was the only hitter with 100+ RBI with 118. Dustin Pedroia ended up with 57 doubles.

Probably the most noteworthy hit of the year happened in a late November game vs. Northboro. Gary Sheffield's 8th inning 2-run come from behind HR was the game-winner and ultimately was the difference between making the playoffs and staying home. What made it even more notable was the fact that it was his 17th of the year and the 500th of his TBL career.

Noteworthy pitching performance: Needing one win in the season-ending series at Portland to clinch the last wildcard spot, Max Scherzer (Grade 9) provided it with a sterling 8 inning effort, whiffing 14 and allowing only 1 run. Rick Ankiel's HR gave the Koyotes a 2-1 lead and Feliz nailed it down, stranding the tying run on 3rd.

What went wrong?

Not too much – can't complain too much when a playoff series ends your season. After surviving the nail biting stretch run, Kansas found themselves up against their old nemesis, Hudson, who had eliminated them from the 2008 playoffs in the first round in six games. Alas, it was "déjà vu all over again" as the Generals prevailed in six. Three one-run games made for a very exciting playoff, but when the dust had settled, it was Hudson advancing again.

3 Things

1. A subpar draft. This was primarily because of pre-draft trades that sent choices away in order to fill holes at C and SS. Those trades have added more defense in Alex Gonzalez, Chris Snyder and Curtis Granderson and significantly upgraded team speed, especially when Coco Crisp joined them in a post-draft trade. Casey is excited to be able to more effectively run his speed/defense/platooning system.

2. Good starters. With all starts covered with Grade 9 or above, hopes are high. However, the absence of stud starters (no starters above Grade 12) could limit any hopes for a glossy record.

3. A deep bullpen. As a group, the returning bullpen members turned in excellent actual 2010 numbers, so only one draft choice was required to fill out the relievers – that being Hisanori Takahashi, the first lefty in two years to grace the Koyote pen. No lights-out stoppers in the mix, but fairly deep with nice grades – 18, 17, 17, 16, 15, 12, 11, 9.

kansas KOYOTES

Bill Schwartz (4th year)

They'll require a flexible hand to manage them to 90 wins.

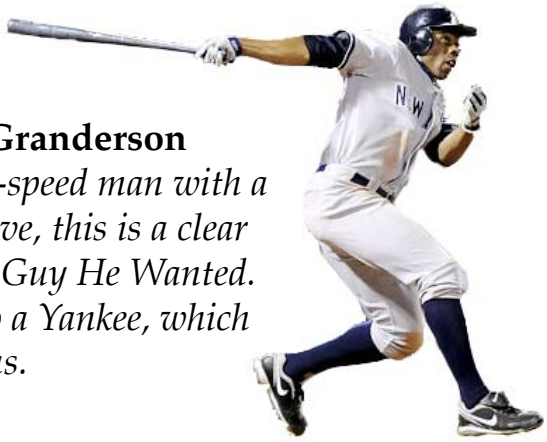
Bill Schwartz's team scampered to a well-deserved playoff berth in a tough division last year. Though his team was bounced out in the first round by the eventual conference champ Hudson, they didn't embarrass themselves. This is team geared to win run by a general manger who is a shrewd judge of talent.

Mr. Schwartz is an avowed Yankee fan, but he's too smart to try to "collect the whole set" as fans of other teams have tried in the past in TBL. At the end of last year, he owned no active Yankees and only 5 ex-Yanks. Of those, only Jose Contreras and Nick Johnson made the roster. Maybe that's why he traded for his 2011 Shiny New Thing: current Yankee Curtis Granderson. Whatever the reason, he landed a guy with 30-homer, 20-steal potential.

The team looks strong again, although significant players (Dustin Pedroia, Coco Crisp, Miguel Montero, and Nick Johnson – *again*) missed time. Mr. Schwartz has done an admirable job filling holes, but they'll have an uphill battle to make the playoffs again this year, with a loaded Portland club and a very good Northboro team in the same division. But … he's done it before.

Pitching: 12.5
Solid from top to bottom.

ROTATION. There are only two numbers you need to know this year: 12 and 9. The team has three Grade 12s (a breakout Max Scherzer, a Petco-inspired Jon Garland, and a shaky Ted Lilly) and three Grade 9s (an improving Brian Matusz, a workhorse in Randy Wolf, and James McDonald, who only makes two starts). While there are no obvious aces, there are no obvious holes, either.



SNT:
Curtis Granderson
A power-speed man with a great glove, this is a clear case of a Guy He Wanted. He's also a Yankee, which is a bonus.

This rotation should keep his team in the game most days. Lilly's HR-31 rating is the only scary peripheral, but his C+31 may translate with some luck into many solo homers, minimizing the damage. He surrendered 32 for the Dodgers in MLB and may top that in TBL. If only he pitched in a different park – like Yellowstone.

While this staff's numbers can't compete with Portland, it does match up well with Northboro. Hope springs eternal. Whether this rotation can get them deep into the post-season is another matter. Playoff-bound teams have stronger top starters. The success of his season will likely rest on his use of a very deep and talented bullpen.

BULLPEN. Led again by 23-year-old Naftali Feliz (Grade 18* C+21 HR+24) and Joakim "The

Arrived: Tony Abreu, Domonic Brown, Brooks Conrad, Coco Crisp, Cole Gillespie, Alex Gonzalez, Brad Hawpe, Jason Motte, Chris Snyder, Hisanori Takahashi

Departed: Brad Ausmus, Reid Brignac, Billy Butler, Cristian Guzman, Bob Howry, Chris Jakabauskas, Omir Santos, Garry Sheffield, Chris Smith, Chien-Ming Wang, Jeff Weaver, Dan Wheeler.

Turnover Rate: 34%

kansas KOYOTES

Scherzer: Breakout

Mexicutioner" Soria (Grade 17* C+25 HR+33), this collection of mostly right-handers is designed to help the starters. Add in the lefty/righty/righty combo of Hisanori Takahashi (Grade 17*), Jason Motte (Grade 16*), and Ramon Ramirez (Grade 15*), the bullpen doesn't lack for high grades. The set-up crew does lack strong positive peripherals, however. The rest of the bullpen will help rescue the Grade 9 starters. Chris Ray (Grade 12* C-31), Jose Contreras (Grade 11* C+22), and rotation cast-off James McDonald (Grade 9 HR+34) will take up the slack, either early in the game or when the game's out of reach.

This is a solid pen, with 314 top-end (Grade 18* to 15*) innings. These are the guys who will be on the mound to protect the lead in the later innings, and how they do will determine the course of the Koyotes' season. Without a lights-out closer and only one lefty, Mr. Schwartz may have to juggle roles to get the most out of them.

Offense: 5.5
Platoons galore.

This year's crew has had to deal with injuries to star players. As a result, many of the best cards are relegated to part-time status. Dustin Pedroia has a superlative card for a second baseman (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks) but only 75 games. He'll platoon with Mark Ellis (10 hits, 3 walks+42). Miguel Montero (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) nearly reprised his breakout year, but lasted only 85 games. He has to platoon with Chris Snyder (1-5-5, 7 hits, 4 walks), who, despite the power and walks, represents a significant drop-off. Brad Hawpe (4 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks) takes over for the traded Billy Butler, but has to share time with the ageless Melvin Mora (10 hits, 3 walks).

Torres: Amazing

Outfielder Andres Torres (1-4-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) turned in an amazing first half, but struggled after an injury. Shiny new thing Curtis Granderson (1-4-5, 9 hits, 4 walks) struggled in his first year as a Yankee, but rode a late surge to a decent card. Both have large lefty shifts and may platoon with Mike Cameron (9 hits, 3 walks+42) or Coco Crisp (10 hits, 3 walks). Laynce Nix returns with another solid card (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks), but mustered only 97 games. He'll share time with Jack Cust (1-0-0, 9 hits, 6 walks) and Rick Ankiel (8 hits, 4 walks).

Of the regulars, Michael Young leads the way with 1-6-6 power, 11 hits and 2 walks. He plays almost every day somewhere. Alex Gonzalez (1-5-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) came over from Richmond to take over shortstop duties. Finally, utility man Brooks Conrad (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) will also get his share of starts. While some positions (catcher comes to mind) will be hampered by limits, others will be able to compensate with in-game moves. There is enough power and there is decent on-base, but there may not be enough hits. Luck, and pitching matchups, may play a factor throughout the season.

Defense: 6.0
Highlights and lowlights.

Kansas will be strong up the middle with Snyder (C8, but a Th-2), Gonzalez (SS9), Ellis (2B9), and the trio of Granderson, Crisp, and

In just a few short years one of TBL's newest GMs, Bill Schwartz, has turned around a moribund Mahopac franchise into a potential powerhouse. A rotation topped by three 12s, a deep bullpen and solid performers abound. They should run deep into the 2011 playoffs.

Torres (all OF3s). That's not a bad place to start. If that's where all the batted balls go, Kansas could lead the league in fewest errors.

Gonzalez: Strong

Baseball doesn't work that way, though, and the corners will provide some entertainment for the corn-fed Koyote fans. Hawpe is an OF1/1B2 when he plays, although Mora is average as a 1B3. Both Young and Conrad, however, are 3B3s. Tony Abreu (3B4) is slated as the defensive replacement, but Mr. Schwartz had better hope he doesn't ever have to bat.

When Montero plays, he's average (C7, Th+1). Nix, Cameron, and Ankiel are OF2s, but of all the outfielders, only Ankiel has a power arm (38). Then there's Jack Cust, who apparently will play some as an OF1 with a 28 arm.

Bench: 2.5
Many spare parts.

Due to the platoons, there will be some flexibility for in-game moves, but it isn't an unlimited supply, as many of those spare parts have to start their share of games.

There are a couple of interesting bats on the bench, although they are severely limited by plate appearances: Josh Fields (1-1, 11 hits, 1 walk) and good old Nick Johnson (6-0, 5 hits, but 8 walks+42). Abreu, as mentioned above, is around just to be the third base glove.

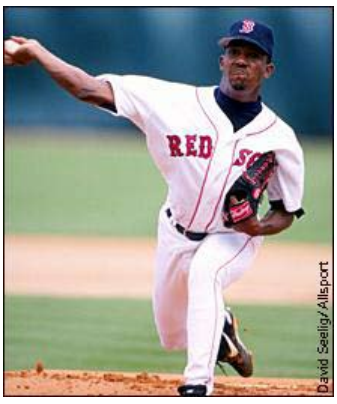
kansas KOYOTES

3rd

This is a team with many solid parts and few real weaknesses, but they'll require a flexible hand to manage them to 90 wins, especially in the always-competitive Aaron Division.

The Franchise

Pedro Martinez.
Let the numbers do the talking. 208-133 record with 6 saves and an even 3.00 ERA. 3372 Ks in 3168 innings. He was dominant in 9 of his 16 years and was pretty good in 4 others. Can you say "Hall of Fame?" I thought you could.



Portland is a juggernaut, and Northboro is out to avenge a disappointing 2010. But, as we've mentioned, *he's done it before*. This version of the Kansas Koyotes will be a real test for Mr. Schwartz.

This sort of team is always a challenge when considered long term. Winning each year – at least, having a winning season – seems to be the goal, while such clubs rarely reach the 110-win juggernaut level. On the other hand, it sometimes leads to patch and fill compromises. We'll see how it turns out.

2010 finish: 91-71 (2nd, Aaron)
Last 5 years: 414-396, .511

PITCHING: 12.5 OFF: 5.5 DEF: 6.0 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **26.5**

2010 maracaibo RUMRUNNERS in review

The team had broken down and gotten old.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 70-92 (4th, Aaron)

The process of rebuilding is not unique for the Maracaibo franchise. This has happened before: the team even had a draft where it had four picks in the first round (two of those draftees, John Lackey and Orlando Hudson, are still on the team). What would be a new – and unpleasant – experience was avoided during 2010: a season with 100 losses. There was no chance (repeat: *no chance*) of a winning season; too many good teams in TBL, particularly in the Aaron Division, to make it possible. The only thing to shoot for was to avoid that 100-loss mark. Somehow the team not only did so, but won 70 games – making the season look like less of a disaster than it was likely to be.

And let's face it: the team had broken down and gotten old. Management knew it; opponents knew it; and, of course, the ***Annual*** knew it. They were right. Now it remains to be seen whether the team is heading the right direction.

Ichiro Suzuki: Bright spot

What went right?

Ichiro Suzuki was a bright spot in the lineup, even though he had to miss a few games. He turned in a .309 average with 203 hits; he also stole 19 of 21 bases (though he also struck out over 100 times again). His best supporters in the lineup were veteran catcher Jorge Posada (.282-20-69, 31 doubles) and slugger Luke Scott (.260-25-89, 39 doubles). Casey Kotchman and rookie Cameron Maybin both hit .288.

Despite insufficient support by a light-hitting offense, the pitching staff had some bright spots. John Lackey turned in an 11-11 record with 10 complete games and 5 shutouts; Mariano Rivera struck out 84 in 63 innings with 32 saves, and rookie Daniel Bard (1.89 ERA, 54 strikeouts in 48 innings) was lights out setting him up.

What went wrong?

Considering the run differential (722 runs scored, 889 runs surrendered) the Rumrunners should consider themselves fortunate to have won 70 games. The club struck out 1139 times and hit only 131 home runs. Chipper Jones (.209-11-70), Orlando Cabrera (an empty .256), and Orlando Hudson (an equally empty .265) were disappointments, as were part-timers Felix Pie (.206) and Carolos Quentin (.202).

The starting rotation past Lackey (4.01) featured ERAs of 4.81 (Cole Hamels, 10-17); 6.03 (Braden Looper, 12-15); 7.02 (David Hernandez, 4-11); and 8.31 (Todd Wellemeyer, 4-18). The pitching staff gave up 195 homers, which was hardly unexpected given the ugly peripherals. The bullpen was worked hard and hung up wet, and past the first few guys was fairly porous.

3 Things

1. Why are they still here? Ichiro, Posada, Rivera are all still on the club. Guys named Orlando and a guy named Chipper would have packed their bags on most rebuilding clubs, but they've stayed on this roster. The offers weren't great, but didn't they have to move?

2. Starlin vs. Mike. No need to speculate on how Jason Heyward or Buster Posey would have looked like in Rumrunner colors. As it turned out, Carlos Santana, the catcher solution, was out of reach too. But should the club have grabbed Mike Stanton with the #4 pick? Starlin Castro just turned 21 and plays a skill position. We think we did the right thing.

3. Is this a 2011 contender? Hard to say. Catcher, third base, first base, and some of the pitching staff is still old; the team has gotten lots younger, but is there more rebuilding ahead or can the hybrid club come back for one more dance? At least Maracaibo hasn't given its entire draft to Joe Auletta . . .

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

Walter Hunt (25th year); Hall of Famer

Mr. Hunt has never used other people's measuring sticks.

It has been some time since we've seen TBL Hall of Famer Walter Hunt negotiating the eddies and currents of a full-on rebuild. There have been pockets of recovery in his long history of success, but no multi-year re-jiggering of the machinery that we've seen in places like Munich, Portland, or even Brobdingnag.

Last year, Walter set the heat to simmer and stood back while the League had its way with the Rumrunners. They finished 70–92, 28 games out of first place in the Aaron. They negotiated intensely with everyone in the league about the #4 pick in the 2011 TBL draft. When the dust settled, they stayed where they were and drafted Chicago Cubs shortstop Starlin Castro – something of a controversial pick.

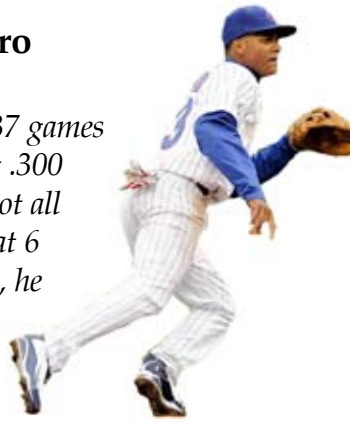
But Mr. Hunt has never used other people's measuring sticks or consulted other managers' How-To manuals in his time in TBL. This rebuild will be different.

Pitching: 8.5
Rotation wanting; contender bullpen.

ROTATION. Maracaibo will be rebuilding its starting rotation around a guy who has been here for several years: Cole Hamels (Grade 13 C+16 HR-15, 33 starts). After struggling through 2010 with a 10-17 record, Walter is happy to see the fireballing lefty return to form. He and rookie Travis Wood (Grade 12 C+23 HR+14, 17 starts) constitute the tip of the spear for Maracaibo this year – they will allow the Rumrunners to compete with any team in the league for about a third of the season.

Behind those stalwarts come Chris Capuano (Grade 9 C+13 HR-16) and David Hernandez (Grade 8 C-42). Adding these guys in, Maracaibo has 67 starts in which their pitcher will steal hits without help.

SNT: Starlin Castro



Starlin Castro played 137 games as a 20-year-old, and hit .300 with 31 doubles. He's got all the offensive chops and at 6 feet tall and 190 pounds, he projects as an extra base hit machine for the next two decades. Barring injury, Walter will not be drafting another shortstop before his 60th birthday.

Then come the 'gang of sevens'. John Lackey (Grade 7 HR+23, 33 starts) leads the way with a full season of indifferent starts. He has better peripherals than Luke French (Grade 7 C+13 HR-21, 13 starts) and Mitch Talbot (Grade 7 C-25 HR+24, 26 starts). Todd Wellemeyer (Grade 7 C-62 HR-35) had peripherals rated PG-13, but has already left town. The last few learning opportunities are claimed by the law firm of Ryan Rowland-Smith (Grade 1) and his new friend Andrew Miller (Grade 1 C-62 HR-23).

For about 1/3 of the season, they compete. That won't be good enough in the Aaron this year.

Arrived: Lorenzo Cain, Chris Capuano, Starlin Castro, Felix Doubront, Fred Lewis, Andrew Miller, Dan Runzler, Mitch Talbot, Matt Treanor, Wilson Valdez, Travis Wood

Departed: Jose Arredondo, Brian Bass, Endy Chavez, Chad Cordero, Jack Hannahan, Joe Inglett, Braden Looper, Humberto Quintero, Ron Villone, Todd Wellemeyer, Kip Wells

Turnover Rate: ***28%***

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

BULLPEN. When the Rumrunners have the lead, they will morph into a club that does a very nice imitation of a contender. The closer – this year and forever – is Mariano Rivera (Grade 20* C+42 HR+46). Trade offers came in from all over the league for this guy, but nothing appealed to The Hunt, so here he stays. He is set up by one of the best young relievers in captivity – Red Sox smoke thrower Daniel Bard (Grade 22* C-23 HR+21, 74 IP).

Rivera: Now and forever

There is some setup to get to the late-inning relief, but it's a wild bunch. Joe Smith (Grade 15* C-62 HR+13, 40 IP) and Jensen Lewis (Grade 15* C-51 HR+53, 36 IP), both draftees in 2009, will man the seventh inning. Dan Runzler (Grade 13* C-53 HR+52, 32 IP) shows up later in the season as a lefty specialist with a nice homer number. David Hernandez chips in 37 innings as a Grade 14*. This brings the total bullpen to about 280 innings of Grade 13* and above. Then, there's more of that Grade 7 thing - Felix Dubront (Grade 7 C-16 HR-11, 26 IP) from the left side and Aaron Heilman (Grade 7* C+14 C-14, 72 IP) from the right.

Offense: No major holes. 7.0

There are three hitters here who would ordinarily have left the building if a mere mortal were rebuilding the club. Ichiro Suzuki (2 0s, 12 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 57 attempts, 3 31s) is now 37 years old, but is still doing his thing. Last year, he had 203 more hits for Maracaibo, and now has 7 seasons of 200 or more hits and 1930 hits in his TBL career. Then there are Jorge Posada (1-5-6, 9 hits, 5 walks) and Chipper Jones (3 0s, 9 hits 5 walks). They are still effective players, and are 40 and 39, respectively. They are there to coach the youngsters – and there are plenty of children hanging around the Rumrunner clubhouse this year.

Let's start with a kid so young that his hat falls down over his eyes and his sleeves are too long – new Maracaibo shortstop Starlin Castro (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, L+6). Starlin was born in the year *1990*, gentlemen. Other youngsters with promise are guys like 25-year-old Ian Desmond (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 30 SSN for 22 attempts, L+4), 25-year-old Lorenzo Cain (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks), and 26-year-old Felix Pie (3-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 17 speed number).

The iron of the lineup is a little more mature. Luke Scott (1-5-5-6, 10 hits 4 walks) has certainly exceeded expectations in his year in Baltimore, and he has the best card in the lineup for the Rumrunners this year. Carlos Quentin (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) has recovered from his stumble of a few years ago and is back to bashing the ball regularly. He's off to a great start in 2011, too.

Other regular have modest cards. Orlando Hudson (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 30 SSN for 13 attempts) is the everyday second baseman. Fred Lewis (4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, 29 SSN for 23 attempts) is the leadoff man in many lineups. Orlando Cabrera (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 28 SSN for 15 attempts) is the regular

The Franchise

Rafael Palmeiro.
Rafael Palmeiro is one of only 4 members of TBL's 3000 hit club, and 493 of those left the ballpark. He had a stretch from 1999 through 2002 when he hit at least 41 homers and drove in at least 123 runs a year. He is a charter member of the TBL Hall of Fame.

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

The Rumrunner are an aging team. There is talent still, along with the age. But, like a demented plastic surgeon, Walter Hunt moved in with the Botox and the collagen, injecting some needed youth. As he holds up the mirror to the team will there be maniacal laughter or admiring glances?

third baseman until Chipper Jones arrives. Twenty-four year old speedster Cameron Maybin (2 0s, 8 hits 3 walks, 17 speed number) patrols centerfield until Felix Pie arrives.

Scott: Iron of the lineup

They'll hit and run and be as annoying as ever. They lack the one or two pieces of eyeball-scorching cardboard they need to operate with the league's elite offenses, but there are no major holes here.

Defense: 5.5
Depends on their mood.

The defense for Maracaibo depends on their mood. They can be below average, or they can ramp it up to protect a late lead. One example of this is starting shortstop Starlin Castro (SS8) who is backed up all year by super utility dude Wilson Valdez (2B8, SS9, 3B4). Another example is catcher, where starter Jorge Posada (C6, Th-4) gets his three at bats then gives way to Matt Treanor (C7, Th+0) or Jose Molina (C8, Th+5). And so it goes. Luke Scott (1B3) is backed up by Casey Kotchman (1B5). Cameron Maybin (OF2) is backed up by Reed Johnson (OF3). Two of the regulars are among the best defenders at their respective positions – Orlando Hudson (2B9) and Ichiro Suzuki (OF3, 38 arm).

They're not worse than average anywhere except catcher – and that's only for five or six innings. Overall. They're a tick above average.

Bench: 2.5
Defense but no toys.

The defensive replacements are all over the place, but there are no offensive upgrades or hitting toys to be found here. Wilson Valdez (3 0s, 10 hits 2 walks, 2 31s), Reed Johnson (3 0s, 10 hits, L+5), and Jose Molina (1-6, 9 hits 2 walks + 42, R+3, 57 games) all have their roles and situations, but they are on the bench because they're not as good as the guy in front of them.

4th Beyond the first 50 starts, the Rumrunners will struggle. The late inning relief is terrific and the lineup certainly has its bright spots, but the Aaron has, arguably, the first and third best teams in TBL in Portland and Northboro, and Kansas is solid as a rock. The Rumrunners will use 2011 to retool.

Hudson: Among the best

2010 finish: 70-92 (4th, Aaron)
Last 5 years: 420-390, .519

PITCHING: 8.5 OFF: 7.0 DEF: 5.5 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **23.5**

One Juggernaut: Three Guys

2010 Mantle Division
Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Zion*	100	62	.617	—
Hudson†	96	66	.593	6
Melrose	70	92	.432	30
Munich	48	114	.296	52

** Lost to Hudson in NC Championship.*
† Lost to Rye in the 2010 World Series.

The Mantle Division, as observed in the past, has four very competitive and very experienced managers. Last year's top clubs were Zion and Hudson, who met in a classic seven game match for a chance to go to the World Series.

Hudson will not be on the march for a pennant this year. In fact, it's not clear that any team other than *Mark Freedman*'s **Melrose Avengers** will be looking for post-season glory. The Avengers are absolutely loaded for the regular season and all that comes after – a powerful lineup, a solid defense, and the best pitching staff in TBL. They may not need to wait for the traditional Memorial Day date to start printing the playoff tickets.

The **Munich Marauders** made the biggest draft day splash in TBL history by drafting the most coveted player, Jason Hayward, and then the second-most coveted player, Buster Posey. They join long-time Marauder Jose Bautista, who has the most powerful card in the set. *Paul Montague* has an interesting conundrum: play well enough to contend or hang back and wait for next year. They might be good enough for the post-season . . . but is there any point in ascending from the ranks of Guys to the post-season?

The same is true for the **Elders of Zion**. A few dice rolls away from a trip to the World Series, *Rich Meyer*'s club has new challenges. Can they sneak into the playoffs this year? This isn't the club that won 100 games last year, but there aren't as many obstacles as there were. It's never wise to count out the Sensei; nobody has a better lemons-to-lemonade production record.

Elders of Zion

Clay Beard has been here before. His team has been up and down; there have been some bright spots and some serious rebuilding years. After reaching the World Series last year, the **Hudson Generals** face another challenge as they put together the next version of the team. Looking at the roster there is cause for hope – but this season will be a long one. None of this will come as a surprise.

Mantle Division

Adrian Gonzalez, Melrose

1. Melrose	38.5
2. Munich	24.0
3. Zion	23.5
4. Hudson	18.5

2010 melrose AVENGERS in review

The offense scored 593 runs, a drop of 260 runs from the previous campaign. Throw in a .230 BA, .308 OBP and team .372 slugging percentage and 70 wins doesn't look so bad.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 70-92 (3rd, Mantle)

The team avoided 100 losses, at least, but the 70 wins was far below expectations.

What went right?

Not much. The good news was the pitching held up. Jon Lester went 17-8 with a 2.57 ERA, Jair Jurrjens 16-11 3.15, Ubaldo Jimenez posted a 11-14 record with a 3.56 ERA. Overall, the staff posted a 3.94 ERA with 13 shutouts and 17 complete games.

Lester: Staff leader

On offense only Adrian Gonzalez truly performed, slugging 29 homers on his way to 73 RBI. Ryan Braun led the team with 85 RBI, helped by his 25 homers, and Kevin Youkilis had 77 RBI and 19 homers in 126 games. Alex Rios provided the only speed with 23 steals in 24 attempts.

What went wrong?

Offense. Gonzalez hit .252, Braun .233 and Dan Uggla a horrific .176 with 11 homers in 154 games. Nobody performed well. David Murphy's .357 OBP was the third highest on the team. The next highest was .321. Nine Melrose players had OBP below .300, with Garrett Anderson posting a near-futile .306.

The offense scored 593 runs, a drop of 260 runs from the previous campaign. Throw in a .230 BA, .308 OBP and team .372 slugging percentage and 70 wins doesn't look so bad.

The bullpen was no help posting a 12-27 record with only 23 saves. It seemed like every close game blew up late as the bullpen could not hold a lead.

3 Things

1. *Pitching*. It all starts with pitching and despite the injury to Jurrjens the starting staff is well provided for. Jimenez, Lester and newcomer Jaime Garcia provide 93 starts of 13 and above while Billingsley, Medlen and Tomlin fill out 57 of the remaining 69 starts with 10, 9, and 8 grades. The pen is led by Hong-Chih Kuo (Grade 28*), retiree Billy Wagner (Grade 25*) and new guy Alexei Ogando (Grade 21*). 170 innings of Grade 21 or better should prevent the late inning meltdowns of last year.

2. *Offensive punch*. Aubrey Huff extends the lineup wih his 10 hit, 4 walks+22, 1-0-0-0 card. Add in career years by Uggla and Delmon Young to stalwarts Youkilis, Adrian Gonzalez and Ryan Braun and we have six strong in the middle. Peripheral players like Rios, David Murphy, and David David Eckstein fill out the lineup instead of being featured in the heart of the order.

3. *Jimmie Rollins, Russell Martin and Health.* Rollins (age 32) and Martin (27), both former All-Stars are key futures for Melrose in 2012. Age plays a factor with Huff (34) and Youkilis (31) who has not played in 150 games since 2008. Health always plays a factor with contendors but a rebound by Rollins and Martin with new-found health for Youk would propel the Avengers into the next year.

melrose AVENGERS

Mark Freedman (18th year)

Captain America has nothing on these guys, except maybe a better uniform.

Mark Freedman's Avenger squad is back. After a season spent restocking the utility belt and sharpening the Wolverine blades, the Avengers enter 2011 as the clear favorite in the Mantle Division. Two years ago, this team won a TBL-best 112 games, only to lose in dramatic fashion to the eventual TBL champ Midwest Mongrels. Last year, they dropped to 70 wins, mostly due to an anemic offense. That won't happen this year, trust us.

When Mr. Freedman decides to compete, he goes all out. Captain America has nothing on these guys, except maybe a better uniform. There is a lot of power for bashing evil-doers (otherwise known as "their opponents"). There are a lot of arms stronger than Thor's. And heading it all up is a man who's won it all before and knows what it takes to get back there.

None of the players have any superpowers, because that would just be cruel. But unusual punishment is in store for anyone who faces this powerhouse. Are they the best team in TBL? The T.Q. says no, Portland deserves that honor. But this team *will* make the playoffs. From there, who can say? We aren't counting them out.

Pitching: 11.0
Faster than a speeding bullet.

ROTATION. This isn't the best staff in TBL. Portland's is equally devastating. Both teams feature a top-end of the rotation that looks like this: 15-14-13. For what's worth, two of Melrose's dynamic trio are left-handed, but Ubaldo Jimenez (Grade 15 HR+41), Jon Lester (Grade 14 HR+31), and first-round pick Jaime Garcia (Grade 13 HR+35) form an impenetrable wall that other teams will have a tough time cracking. These three full-season starters make 93 trips to the hill.

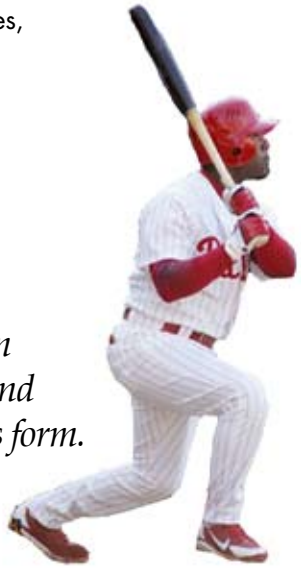
It would be one thing if the rest of the rotation was composed of mere mortals, but the next name is super in his own right. Chad Billingsley, still just 26, is the best of the rest as a solid Grade 10 (HR+43). He adds another 31 starts. The rest will be absorbed by a trio of part-timers: Kris Medlen (Grade 9 C+33), rookie Josh Tomlin (Grade 8 C+26), and Jair Jurrjens (Grade 7), who apparently didn't get the memo that this was the year to shine. Jurrjens only has to make 11 starts. The entire back-end of the rotation shouldn't have to pitch very deep into games because of the …

Arrived: Peter Bourjos, Jesse Crain, Aaron Cunningham, Joey Devine, Jaime Garcia, Aubrey Huff, Russell Martin, Adam Moore, Alexi Ogando, Arthur Rhodes, Dustin Richardson, Jimmy Rollins, Carlos Rosa, Josh Tomlin, Billy Wagner.

Departed: Garret Anderson, Brian Bruney, Ronny Cedeño, Kyle Davies, Mike DeFelice, Kyle Farnsworth, Gerald Laird, Kevin Medlen, Andrew Miller, Matt LaPorta, Anthony Reyes, Dennys Reyes, Mitch Stetter.

Turnover Rate: 43%

SNT:
Jimmy Rollins
Melrose pried him loose from Blue Hill in the off season, and hope for a return to previous form. He could be the shortstop for years to come.



melrose AVENGERS

Garcia, Jimenez, Lester: Very similar to last year's gallery.

BULLPEN. Like the rotation, this bullpen shares a trait with Portland's. Both teams have a closer with a grade over 25*. While the Possum drafted Joaquin Benoit (Grade 27* C+33), Melrose has *three* relievers with a Grade over 20*, and any of them can close games: Hong-Chih Kuo (Grade 28* HR+56), veteran Billy Wagner (Grade 25* HR+22), and rookie Alexi Ogando (Grade 21* HR+41). True, two of them are lefties, but when pitching grades get that high, it doesn't matter which arm they use to strike batters out.

Having 204 Grade 20* relief innings means they can bring one into a game in the 6th inning if they choose. But they might not have to. The set-up crew starts with righty/lefty Grade 17*s named Brad Lidge and Arthur Rhodes. While their peripherals don't compare to the closers, only Lidge's control (C-36) is an obvious weakness. These two add another 100 innings to the pen.

But they're not done yet. Jesse Crain (Grade 15* HR+25) and Ryan Madson (Grade 14* C+33 HR+22) add another 121 solid set-up innings. Lonely Jason Frasor (Grade 10* HR+34) went from the 2010 closer to the 2011 mop-up man. This, my friends, is a serious pitching staff that should scare most teams into the straight and narrow.

Offense: 12.0
Like a balding superhero.

Don't get us wrong; this is a powerful lineup. The standard lineup vs. RHPs has seven players with first-column 1s. The standard lineup vs. LHPs has eight. Six full-time players have a 7 on 44. This team can flat-out hit. Let's start this showcase with superstar Ryan Braun (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks), who plays every day. Kevin Youkilis (1-4-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+42) has a nasty shift (L+13/R-6) and makes only 102 starts, but when he's in, he's fearsome. Any one of the next three – Adrian Gonzalez, Aubrey Huff, and Dan Uggla (all equally impressive: 1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks) – could bat cleanup for most other teams. All three also play everyday.

Not bad? Wait, there's more. Add in Delmon Young (1-6-6-6, 11 hits, with a 7 on 55), Alexis Rios (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks), and even Aaron Cunningham (0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42) for a limited time. The very good mortals include Yuniesky Betancourt (1-6-6, 10 hits), David Murphy (10 hits, 3 walks), and David Eckstein (6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42).

But like a balding superhero, there are bare patches in this offense. The batting shifts aren't complementary, at least on the boards. And what will they do for the 60 games that Youkilis is out? The only options are Eckstein, Jimmy Rollins (9 hits, 4 walks), or Alex Gordon (8 hits, 4 walks), none of whom remotely resemble

The Franchise

Wally Joyner.
In 1988, Joyner hit .315 with 35 homers and 109 RBIs. While he never hit more than 20 homers in a season again, he topped .300 4 more times, ending with a .285/.353/.432 slash line in 15 TBL seasons.

Vegas Line

93 starts of +GR13, coupled with 170 innings of +GR*21 relief make for a true monster team. They are the biggest obstacle to Portland dominance, or should that be the other way around? It's also nice to have a SS9 and 2B9 mooching around on the bench looking for playing time!

Youkilis. The catching is also a weak spot, as both Ivan Rodriguez (10 hits, 1 walk) and Russ Martin (9 hits, 4 walks) are less than daunting. Another weakness is a lack of speed. Flash, these guys aren't. Only Rios is a consistent threat.

Defense: 6.0
Generally solid, but not super.

Braun: Superstar

The Avengers can manage Fielding 1, but only when the defensive subs are in. Early in the game, defense will be adequate, but not great. A-Go (1B5) slings slick leather, and Pudge is solid as a C8 with a Th+2. Everywhere else is average at best. Youkilis is a 3B4 and Martin a C7 (but with a +3 arm) when they play. Up the middle, Uggla (2B7) and Betancourt (SS8) aren't any better, although help is available in Eckstein (2B9) and Rollins (SS9). However, while Rollins may start a number of games, Eckstein isn't going to force Uggla out of any lineup.

The outfield features mostly average fielders with better-than-average arms, but Young (OF1) is an adventure waiting to happen, and he plays RF *every day*. The team has Cunningham (OF2) or Peter Bourjos (OF3) to carry his glove, but again, only in the late innings. This defense may help protect leads, but little else.

Bench: 2.5
Body building.

There are a lot of bodies here. There are a few pinch-hitting options, but most of The Cards will be playing. Missing is a big pinch hitting toy, although Cunningham isn't a bad lefty-killer to have on hand. There are some running options in Bourjos, Eckstein, Rios, and Rollins. There are defensive replacements, too, as mentioned above.

This is a solid bench for a contender and will definitely help win some games.

1st

This is a team built to win now. This edition of the Avengers is by far the best team in the Mantle Division, so a playoff appearance is virtually assured.

They should even go deep into the playoffs, and maybe a Portland-Melrose National Conference Championship series is in the cards. We hope so. It would be awesome to see the top-rated teams in TBL (according to the TQ) face off against each other.

2010 finish: 70-92 (3rd, Mantle)
Last 5 years: 349-461, .431

PITCHING: 18.0 OFF: 12.0 DEF: 6.0 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **38.5**

2010 munich MARAUDERS in review

An interesting domino effect.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 48-114 (4th, Mantle)

Munich was definitely in re-trenching mode in 2010 and it showed on the field. GM Willie Mays spent the off-season bankrolling young players and draft picks, with almost no attention being paid to the 2010 roster. After a 109-53 year in 2009, the record fell to 48-114. No single month in 2010 was above .500, with the worst being a 3-16 June.

What went right?

Precious little. Sophomore closer Brad Ziegler recorded a nice 2.26 ERA and 20 saves, despite being only a Grade 10*. The rest of the bullpen also contributed, led by Craig Breslow (3 saves, 2.26), Scott Downs (3.02), and Joe Nelson (1 save, 2.41). Erick Aybar led the batters with a .308 batting average and 151 hits, while Brian McCann continued his slugging ways at catcher – 41 doubles, 28 homers, and a .516 slugging percentage. Jason Giambi socked 27 homers, but had only 59 RBI to show for it, because the team didn't get enough men on base ahead of him (team .240/.311/.382 slash line).

McCann: Slugger

What went wrong?

Pitching and hitting. Derek Lowe, a 20-game winner in seasons past, recorded 24 losses to go with an awful 7.05 ERA. Joe Saunders was only 4-21, 5.20. Among the starters, only Rich Harden recorded an above-.500 record (10-9, 4.69). On offense, nobody got on base, and only a couple of guys slugged well. No fewer than eight regulars or platoon starters had on-base percentages below .300, and the result was only 627 runs scored as a team. Meanwhile, the pitching staff almost doubled its runs allowed, from 539 in 2009 to 1003 in 2010.

3 Things

1. Early draft picks. A 48-win season was bad enough to garner the #1 pick, as well as three extra picks in the first round, plus extra bonus, 3rd and 4th rounders. 5-tool outfielder Jason Heyward with the first pick (despite having dealt away catcher McCann, creating an apparent "must-draft" of a catcher). This turned out to have an interesting domino effect: Brobdingnag had apparently expected to take Heyward. When he went, Munich was able to put together a deal to get the pick and take Buster Posey to fill the catcher hole, without dealing away the entire farm to do it. Heyward and Posey make a nice pair of youngsters to rebuild around.

2. The "anti-bounce". During the 2000's, Munich had established an 'every other year' "bounce". The pattern should be broken this season, though the addition of a dozen rookies mostly with some current utility, combined with some hold-over veterans, leaves Munich "not good enough to win it all, not bad enough to get an early draft pick".

3. Age (or rather, youth). Lots of rookies = lower team age; QED. Although only three of the rookies were batters, the average age of the batters on the 2011 roster is down to 29.0, pitchers down to 26.7. Expect this trend to continue into 2012, as the Marauders have a couple extra choices in the next draft as well.

munich MARAUDERS

Paul Montague (28th year); Hall of Famer

This Munich squad is a huge improvement over its 2010 edition. Adding two SNTs in Heyward and Posey can do that for a team.

One thing is certain: This will be a much more fun team to manage than the 2010 Munich squad. They actually have some options. They actually have some pitching. They actually have some guys we'd all like to have on *our* rosters. What a difference a year makes.

When you suck enough the year before to "earn" the first pick in the TBL rookie draft, you're bound to get one player who will help you in years to come. This year, with some shrewd draft-picking and opportunistic trading, Mr. Montague ended up with the first *two* picks in the draft and *two* players who will help him in the years to come: his dual SNTs, outfielder Jason Heyward and catcher Buster Posey. Nice work. (The ***Annual*** has never had to designate two SNTs before, but this is an unusual case.)

Is his work done? No. Will this team make the playoffs? Unlikely. But once again, Mr. Montague has pieces of the puzzle in place. It might not be long before he's back in the first division.

In the meantime, he may actually get to enjoy baseball games at the Münchenstraßestade again.

Arrived: Wade Davis, Jason Donald, Jeff Francis, Jason Heyward, Matt LaPorta, Jennry Mejia, Brandon Morrow, Ivan Nova, Buster Posey, Tyson Ross, Chris Sale, Justin Smoak, Jordan Walden, Robbie Weinhardt

Departed: Chad Bradford, Milton Bradley, Scott Downs, Livan Hernandez, Aubrey Huff, Scott Hairston, Brent Leach, Mark Loretta, Joe Nelson, Garrett Olson, Donnie Veal, Omar Vizquel, Randy Winn

Turnover Rate: ***40%***

SNT:
Jason Heyward, Buster Posey

Two for the price of ... two. 'Nuff said.

Pitching: 7.5
95 beer and pretzel nights.

ROTATION. Last year, Rich Harden carried the team. This year, he's been relegated to the bullpen for mop-up work. That's because a lot of new faces are in town. Well, OK, it's also because he turned in a season (Grade 7 C-62 HR-26) that deserves such treatment. The two most significant additions are first-round draft pick Wade Davis (Grade 10) and trade acquisition Brandon Morrow (Grade 10 C-35 HR+26). They join oft-injured Edinson Volquez (Grade 10 C-61) at the top end of the rotation. This trio makes 67 trips to the hill.

The 95 other starts won't nearly be as pretty. Derek Lowe *bounced back* to post a Grade 7 (C+21). That's an improvement over last year. He contributes 33 starts, followed by fellow holdovers Joe Saunders (Grade 6) and Ricky Nolasco (Grade 6 C+32). Draft pick Ivan Nova (Grade 7) chips in seven starts, and former ace Harden starts a single game in November. While

Many one of these starters could pitch a gem on any given night, the chances are that they'll need to be rescued early and often. These 95 games may be good for concession sales: encouraging fans to consume large quantities of Münchner Bier and oversized pretzels.

BULLPEN. After two seasons, Brad Ziegler (Grade 12* HR+31) finally relinquishes the closer role. That honor goes to former closer J.J. Putz (Grade 15* C+23 HR+24). Welcome back! The team actually has two higher-grade relievers in limited Chris Sale (22* C-41) and nearly unlimited Craig Breslow (Grade 16*). Sale and Breslow will set up Putz. Joining the set-up crew are a couple more arms with limited innings: righty Jordan Walden (Grade 15* C-36 HR+33) and lefty David Purcey (Grade 14* C-31). All these arms contribute just over 200 innings.

The next tier will help the back end of the rotation. Ziegler, Henry Rodriguez (Grade 10* C-36 HR+31), Casey Janssen (Grade 8*), and Tyson Ross (Grade 7* C-51) will all be able to rescue the bad starters, but this group only adds another 189 innings. Harden will help here, but his appearance in a game may not inspire confidence in his teammates. Given the rotation, this bullpen will be stretched to the point that innocuous Jenrry Mejia and Robbie Weinhardt will find their way into games ("take a right from the trainer's room"). This is more good news for the concessionaires.

Breslow: Nearly unlimited.

All things considered, the trade for Morrow was one the best things to happen to this staff. Even and still, this one of TBL's weaker staffs. But it isn't *the worst*, and it has some pieces: a real closer (if not by grade then by reputation), many young arms (some of whom will blossom), and Rich Harden. What will his role be next year?

Offense: 8.5

Three stars on a field of black.

"Ladies and gentlemen, your starting second baseman … Ty Wigginton?" The good news on offense is that Munich has quite a few full-season players. The bad news is that some of them are shadows of their former selves (Jason Giambi comes to mind) or playing out of position (like, say, Wigginton). Yes, Virginia, there is a reason Munich garnered the first pick in this year's rookie draft. And to make matters worse, last season's team leader in doubles, homers, and RBI (Brian McCann) was dealt away.

Let's start with the highlights, and Munich has a few. #1 overall pick Jason Heyward (1-4-6, 9 hits, 5 walks) is a coveted addition. #2 overall pick Buster Posey (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks) may make fans forget McCann. Jose Bautista (1-1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks) had a breakout season. These three players are the best reasons to be a Marauder fan. Too bad they each only get to bat four times a game.

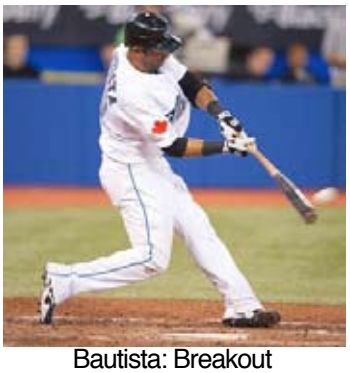
A few other bats supply potential. Marcus Thames (1-5-5, 10 hits, 3 walks) had a nice half-season. The aforementioned Wigginton (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) has some power, as

The Franchise

Orel Hershiser.

In 1987, he started an unbelievable 40 games. From 1988 to 1990, he won 69 of 90 decisions, completing 43 games with 11 shutouts. His career winning percentage is .592. Bulldog? Thy name is Hershiser.

does newcomer Justin Smoak (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks). Ryan Spilborghs (10 hits, 3 walks), part-timer Jason Donald (10 hits, 2 walks), and A.J. Pierzynski (10 hits) provide some offense. The rest – Jason Giambi (8 hits, 5 walks+42), Brandon Inge (9 hits, 3 walks), Matt LaPorta (8 hits, 4 walks), and Erick Aybar (9 hits, 2 walks) – add little to the offense.



Bautista: Breakout

Defense: 5.5
Some good news, finally.

When everything else is going against them, at least this team can boast a decent defense … in most positions. Heyward (OF3) is a standout in CF. The other outfielders are all OF2s, assuming Thames or waiver pick-up Milton Bradley never don a glove. Posey (C8 Th+3) turned in an excellent rookie campaign, while Pierzynski (C7, Th-1) doesn't suck. Inge (3B5) is Hoover at the hot corner, while across the diamond, both Smoak and LaPorta are both average (1B3).

Aybar (SS8) lost his SS9 rating, which makes his offense even more painful. Donald (2B8) should shine when he gets to play. Unfortunately, Wigginton (2B6) is slated to get most of the PT there, and that, dear readers, will be an adventure worth seeing.

Monty is in the midst of another rebuilding, and starting with a foundation of Jason Heyward and Buster Posey is certainly the way to go. It's like winning the lottery twice with the same ticket! The pitching, loaded with talent, is still a year or two away.

Bench: 2.5
Useful? Maybe. Helpful? No.

Chris Dickerson is useful as a pinch-runner. The spare first baseman and Bradley can pinch-hit. Donald comes in for defense whenever Munich leads.

It's interesting the Pierzynski isn't targeted in a bench role, since that's where he'll be spending most of his time with the drafting of Posey. A deep bench? Not exactly. All in all, this bench won't win many games for the Marauders.

2nd

But not by much. Yes, it's hard to believe this team could finish in second place and possibly even challenge for a Wild Card.

But the TQ system doesn't lie – it just exaggerates occasionally. This Munich squad is a *huge* improvement over its 2010 edition. Adding two SNTs in Heyward and Posey can do that for a team. Still, a lot of things would have to go right for this team to succeed.

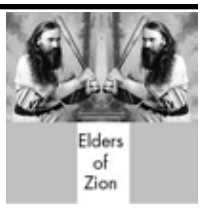
2B Ty Wigginton: Look out!

2010 finish: 109-53 (2nd, Mantle)
Last 5 years: 463-347, .572

PITCHING: 7.5 OFF: 8.5 DEF: 5.5 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **24.0**

2010 ELDERS of zion in review



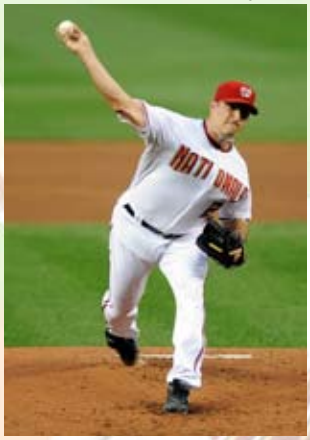
It's hard to find too much to complain about.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 100-62 (1st, Mantle)

In the end, a 100-win season and a pennant in the tough Mantle Division came down to a couple of die rolls. To be fair, *all* of TBL's results come down to die rolls – but as much as these things even out over time, it has always seemed that die rolls have bounced in favor of the Sensei.

Not this time. Hudson slipped past the powerful Zion club to win Game 7 of the conference championship, earning the privilege of being paved by the Rye Herons.

Some folks, indoctrinated by what the ***Annual*** calls the "Yankee Cap Mentality," would label the 2010 campaign a failure the boys from Zion. But there are 20 teams that didn't get to play in a conference championship at all. They might well have had a different opinion. We're guessing that Mr. Meyer would agree with them.


Jason Marquis: Top starter

What went right?

Winning 100 games and a pennant makes this a successful season. The club had an excellent offensive attack, with eight regulars hitting .261 or higher. Brian Roberts (.302-20-103, 47 doubles, 22 for 24 stealing) had the best overall numbers; Yunel Escobar chipped in a .304 average; Shin-Soo Choo hit .286-21-126 with 46 doubles and was plunked 20 times. Aaron Hill hit only .261 but chipped in 30 homers and 30 doubles. The team hit .282 overall, second in TBL; they were third in OBP with a .346 mark, and tied for fourth with a .440 slugging percentage. Their 106 steals ranked them fifth in the league.

On the mound, Jason Marquis (19-5, 5 complete games) was the surprising top starter. Scott Baker chipped in a 16-9 record and 177 strikeouts in 238 innings. Blake Hawksworth saved 20 games in 29 innings, with help from the ageless Chan Ho Park (10 saves, 5 relief wins). Frank Francisco (2.01 ERA) and Jon Rauch (2.05 ERA) led a talented and versatile bullpen.

What went wrong?

Ultimately, it was those two die rolls. There were no major structural defects in the team, though the staff did give up 155 homers. The bottom end of the starting rotation (Chris Volstead, 11-8, 4.60 and Mike Pelfrey, 14-11, 5.74) had winning records due to offensive support rather than mound skill. Shin-Soo Choo struck out 166 times. It's hard to find too much to complain about.

3 Things

1. Good bye to the old. The Greg Maddux era is over, and will never come again. Tom Glavine has hung up his spikes. The team is looking forward, hoping that pitchers like Scott Baker, Mat Latos and Mike Pelfrey can be the new generation of rotation stalwarts.

2. Keep to the pattern. Experience in other leagues and years of practice make the Sensei as knowledgeable as anyone about scouting and drafting. Without the wild swings of Munich or Las Vegas, or the puppet mastery of Brobdingnag, Zion has had only *one* losing season in TBL – an astounding record. The last World Series was in 2003, but they've been in the post-season in five of the seven seasons since. In short, *He knows what's he's doing: watch out.*

3. Back or forward? This question doesn't get asked. The Zion club may not be built for the World Series every year, but in the ones it's not, the team does not really build down – it transforms, with Mr. Meyer planning what the next few years will look like.

ELDERS of zion

Rich Meyer (27th year)

The season starts with Mr. Meyer on the fence. Everyone's watching, some are waiting, and a few are holding their breath.

There are six teams in the National Conference better than the Elders this year, according to the T.Q., although he's tied with Maracaibo for that "honor." Seeing as only five clubs usually make the playoffs, will Mr. Meyer sit tight and "wait 'til next year?" Or will he wait to see if he can hang close enough for a surprise mid-season trade to push his team into the post-season yet again? After last year's near miss (potentially, a stolen homer away from the World Series), this will be an interesting season to watch Mr. Meyer in action.

Looking at just the numbers, this isn't as strong a club as the one that lost to Hudson in the Conference Championship series. Still, it can do some things very well, it has a lot of roster flexibility, and it has the Lord of the Dice at the helm. All this with former superstar Grady Sizemore and Elder-statesman Brian Roberts on the shelf for most of the year.

Mr. Meyer has focused mostly on youth and pitching in recent drafts. Those players are starting to come of age. He's put together consistent playoff teams while picking in the second half of the draft. What would he do with a high draft pick? On the other hand, the Elders play in one of the weaker divisions in TBL. A second-place finish is within reach, and therefore a playoff spot is possible. The season starts with Mr. Meyer on the fence. Which way will he jump? Everyone's watching, some are waiting, and a few are holding their breath.

Pitching: 8.5
An ace and a closer.

ROTATION. Mr. Meyer never let something like low pitcher grades stop him from advancing through the playoffs, although he certainly recognizes the value of a good staff. This year, his pitching includes a true ace: Mat Latos (Grade 14 C+21). After Latos, though, the rotation becomes more pedestrian. Anibal Sanchez (Grade 9 HR+36) might finally be blossoming into the pitcher many predicted. And don't knock his grade; last season, Jason Marquis, as a similar grade, won 19 games for the Elders. Mike Pelfrey (Grade 8 HR+34) follows Sanchez to provide 96 "quality" starts.

Then the fun begins. Scott Baker (Grade 6 C+23) and Chris Volstad (Grade 6) add another 59 starts. The final seven starts are assigned to rookie John Ely (Grade 5). Marquis and former first-round pick Jeremy Bonderman will spend the year cooling their heels (and learning a new pitch?) in the minors.

BULLPEN. Chris Perez (Grade 22* C-26 HR+32) has finally become the real live closer Mr. Meyer expected, and he's a good one. Unfortunately, he's operating in a near vacuum, as the rest of the bullpen is so thin that it just barely qualifies as being TBL-legal. That's not something you want to see with a rotation like the Elders'. Perez has 63 innings. The set-up combo (only one will be active per month) is SNT Kenley

SNT:
Kenley Jansen

You can learn to pitch with control, but you can't learn to throw 100 mph. Zion hasn't had a fireballer like this for quite a while.

ELDERS of zion

Jansen (Grade 27* C-62 HR+62) and Koji Uehara (Grade 13* C+45). They add exactly 71 innings. That makes 134 innings of 13*+ relief. Did they forget something?

Perez: Real live closer.

The rest of the pen includes Octavio Dotel (Grade 12* C-31 HR-21), Leo Nuñez (Grade 10* HR+22), Frank Francisco (Grade 10*), Jon Rauch (Grade 9* C+24 HR+41), and mop-up man Blake Hawksworth (Grade 5* HR-24). All these arms total only 373 innings. That means the starters will sometimes have to "take one for the team" (according the team's instructions). This is not the mark of a winner.

66 low-grade starts would normally dictate a rebuilding year, but the Sensei is not your normal GM. A thin bullpen is often another sign of throwing in the towel, but the ***Annual*** staff refuses to believe it. The Zion manager always finds a way to win. *Always*.

Offense: 6.5
Adrian Beltre, then little ball.

Beltre: Welcome back

Welcome back, Adrian Beltre (1-0-0-0-0, 12 hits, 2 walks)! He could have one of his best seasons in 2011, and were talking about a player who once smashed 60 homers in a TBL season. He's *that* good this year. He is, however, only one of two hitters on the roster to have more than three power numbers. Not your average Zion offense.

The Elders of Zion personify the burning desire for a power-speed-walk combination. Think Grady Sizemore in his prime and Brian Roberts in a good year. This season, Shin-Soo Choo (1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+42) moves into the spotlight as the Zion poster child. He adds 29 SB attempts with a good success rate. Bobby Abreu (1-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks) contributes his usual speed, too. Garret Jones (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) comes close, but no one else does.

Travis Hafner (1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+42) adds power and walks. Nick Hundley 4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks), Allen Craig (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks), and Aaron Hill (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks) can flash some power. John Jaso (9 hits, 5 walks), Yunel Escobar (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks), and when he's up, Brian Roberts (10 hits, 4 walks), have the walks, while Nyjer Morgan (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42), Roger Bernadina (9 hits, 3 walks), and Franklin Gutierrez (9 hits, 3 walks) have the speed. Jonathan Herrera (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Danny Worth (10 hits, 2 walks) can make contact. If the Elders make the post-season again, it will be due primarily to Mr. Beltre and Mr. Meyer.

Defense: 6.0
Chinks in the armor.

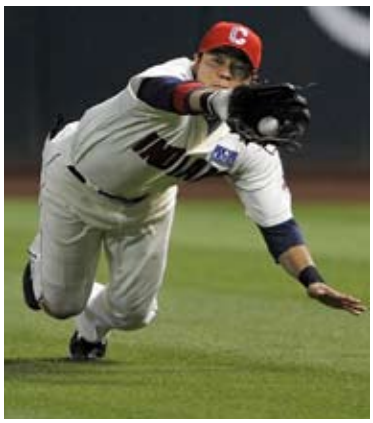
Choo is an OF3 with a rocket arm. Gutierrez is also an OF3, but the two may not play in the same outfield very often. Abreu drops to a OF1, but he'll still patrol LF, which should be cause for some adventures out there. Escobar returns another SS9, but Beltre has become an average 3B4. All the second basemen (all three of them) are 2B8s. Jones is a 1B3 as the everyday first

TBL's reigning sensei Rich Meyer, by his own words, doesn't much like this edition of the Elders. The rotation, after the top three performers, is weak. The same can be said about the bullpen. The lineup has holes as well. But if properly motivated, Rich can make this rabble overachieve enough for 2nd place in the Mantle.

baseman. The catchers are both C7s, although Jaso has a Th-2, while Hundley's is Th-0.

Normally, this defense won't beat itself, but we are seeing chinks in the armor for the first time in a while.

Bench: 2.5
Options. Not good ones.



Choo: Top glove

A Zion bench always has options. There is just no other way for Mr. Meyer to play. This team has a number of spare parts for pinch-hitting and -running, but there are some batting shift issues that will translate to unfavorable matchups, something those of us who have played the Elders will find strange to witness. John Jaso, Garrett Jones, Chin-soo Choo, Nyjer Morgan and Bobby Abreu give it up against lefties; Danny Worth and Nick Hundley have problems with righties.

Like all Zion teams with these sorts of combinations and role-players, the skill of the Sensei should make the team better in home hands than on the road; but that is more a compliment to Rich Meyer's ability than to neglect by others. There are few, if any, managers in TBL (or, indeed, anywhere else) who get more out of their team than the Zion manager. The proof is in the lifetime record.

Because the team is basically carrying four hitters and two pitchers with little current value, it throws off the entire team dynamic.

ELDERS of zion

3rd

Looking back on this review, it seems to be clear that Mr. Meyer is taking a conscious step back.

The bullpen's thin, the offense isn't, well, *Zion-like*, and the bench doesn't help as much as you'd think it should. It would be easy to write them off for the year.

That would be a mistake. The Elders rarely phone in a full season. The Elders of Zion always find a way to win, and while his team may not be championship caliber, they have some weapons, and they will use them all.

Based on the results of the last several TBL seasons, even when there are five clear contenders, the sixth or seventh (or, in some cases, eighth) best team sometimes sneaks into the playoffs. And if Zion makes it . . . watch out.

The Franchise

Greg Maddux.
22 seasons. 403 wins, 3.30 career ERA. 15–11 in his final season. In 1995, he struck out over 300 batters while winning 31 games and registering a 1.26 ERA. Holy cow!

Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

2010 finish: 100-62 (1st, Mantle)
Last 5 years: 465-345, .574

PITCHING: 8.5 OFF: 6.5 DEF: 6.0 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **23.5**

2010 hudson GENERALS in review

Finally, they got hot in the end.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 96-66 (2nd, Mantle)

It's difficult to judge whether the World Series was an anticlimax after the near-run thing, the victory over Zion in the conference championship. Getting to the Series has been a rare thing for the Generals, and any season that ends there has to be considered a success – even though they were swept by the champions.

It was not a clear run to the end. The team came out of the gate white-hot, winning 27 of 33, then basically played .500 ball for five months. Finally, they got hot in the end and were able to run through the playoffs.

Lincecum: Dominant

What went right?

The 2010 edition of the Generals set team records for batting average (.286), hits (1,670) and doubles (375), led by Derek Jeter (.337-19-110) and Todd Helton (.332-18-114, 49 doubles), who finished second and fourth in the league in hitting respectively. Jeter also stole 33 bases in 34 attempts, second on the team to Rajai Davis (35 steals in 41 attempts; he hit .292 overall). Luis Castillo chipped in a .315 average.

The pitching was also impressive. Tim Lincecum was dominant (17-9, 9 CG, 4 shutouts, 271 K in 242 innings). All five starters had double digit wins. In the bullpen, rookie Luke Gregerson had an impressive campaign (5 wins, 10 saves, 65 K in 73 innings). The team recorded a 3.80 ERA for the season, striking out 1,119 opponents (about 100 more than the Generals' batters recorded.)

What went wrong?

The club had a consistent, steady offense, which is effective in the regular season but sometimes has trouble in the post-season. The Generals hit only 154 homers, with only two players in excess of 20 (Casey McGehee with 23 and Ryan Raburn with 24). Pablo "Kung Fu Panda" Sandoval underperformed at .259, though he did drive in 101 runs.

The four starters not named Lincecum were fairly pedestrian. Each surrendered 20 or more homers, and the starters walked many opposing batters (Lincecum, 96; Jackson, 92; Cahill, 77; Milwood, 74). In the pen, as Mr. Beard observed to the ***Annual*** staff, Scott Eyre (5-5, 17 saves, 4.50 ERA, 20 walks in 28 innings) "sucks no matter what grade you put on him."

3 Things

1. Don't give away underperformers. Sandoval, Beltran, and others have remained on the roster, as Hudson hopes for better days.

2. Sending away Oswalt. For several years, teams have sought to acquire Roy Oswalt, one of the bedrock members of the Hudson rotation. The Houston Lonestars were finally in the right place at the right time with the right price.

3. Preparing for the future. Ike Davis and Logan Morrison are on the roster, with more drafts to come. Hudson has the third-biggest 2012 thermometer.

hudson GENERALS

Clay Beard (27th year); Hall of Famer

This is clearly the end of a cycle for the Generals.

The Hudson Generals lived up to their names in 2010. They scorched the earth like General Sherman on their way to the TBL World Series, before being ambushed like General Custer by a Rye Herons team that was not to be denied. In the process, Clay Beard beat Ray Murphy's Portland Possum in a year when they were loaded, and he beat Richard Meyer *head to head on the boards* to earn his second World Series berth.

Pitching: 5.0
Young enough to improve.

ROTATION. Once again, the ace of the Hudson starting rotation is one of the baseball's best right-handed starters, and one of the best full-season grades in the set. The surprise is that we're not talking about Tim Lincecum. This year, the ace is 23 year old Trevor Cahill (Grade 15 HR+12, 30 starts). He pitches to contact more than the purists would like, but Cahill has excellent control and keeps the ball in the park. Tim Lincecum (Grade 11 HR+16, 33 starts) had a bad month of August last year, but he righted the ship enough to drive the Giants all the way to the 2010 World Series championship. Not a bad #2 starter for the Generals.

There are 63 good starts there. Then, the floor just falls out from underneath this club. The next name off the pile is the durable but unexciting Edwin Jackson (Grade 7, 32 starts). At least he's right-handed, which means he should be serviceable. After that, you get to sample a noxious stew consisting of Luis Atilano (Grade 4 C+14 HR-14, 16 starts), David Huff (Grade 1, 15 starts), Mike Minor (Grade 1, 8 starts) and the already-waived Kevin Millwood (Grade 4, C+12 HR-22). This group won't help. They are young enough to improve in years to come, however, and that is probably the material point of all this.

Arrived: Ike Davis, Lucas Duda, Chris Heisey, John Hester, David Huff, Mike Minor, Logan Morrison, Jordan Norberto, Eduardo Nuñez, Ryan Webb

Departed: Travis Buck, Ryan Church, Carlos Delgado, Scott Eyre, Brian Fuentes, Tyler Greene, Gabe Gross, Koyie Hill, Roy Oswalt, Ken Takahashi.

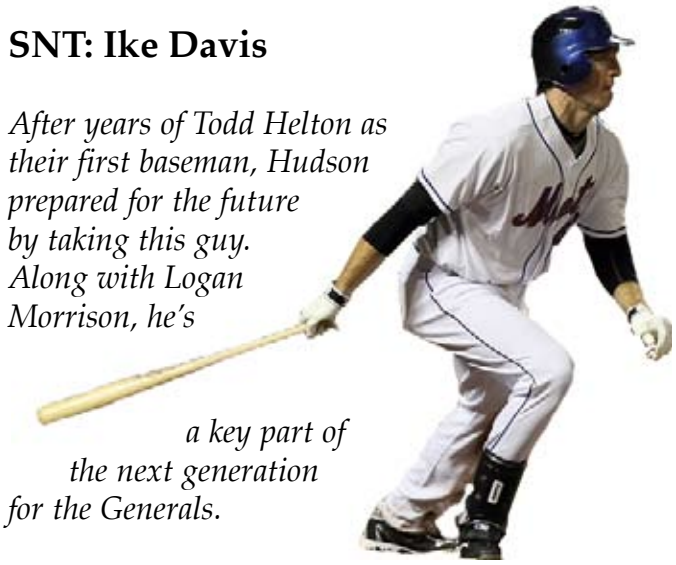
Turnover Rate: *28%*

BULLPEN. Luke Gregerson (Grade 18* C+25, 78 IP) is a guy we like. With a beautiful grade and a big innings total, this kid has turned into a fine back-of-the-bullpen presence. In Hudson this year, he'll be a closer-plus – Clay wants him in there with the score tied late in games.

The roll call of setup men is pretty short. There are none, really. The best of the rest is Ryan Webb (Grade 9*, C+24 HR+56, 59 IP), who at least has solid peripherals. Hudson calls out Edward Mujica (Grade 11* C+52 HR-44, 69 IP) as a setup man, but encourages us to avoid him in close games because of the silly homer number. This is like telling people not to use lighter fluid to douse their barbecue.

SNT: Ike Davis

After years of Todd Helton as their first baseman, Hudson prepared for the future by taking this guy. Along with Logan Morrison, he's a key part of the next generation for the Generals.



hudson GENERALS

There are plenty of bulk innings. Phil Coke (Grade 8* HR+52, 64 IP) will defeat the homer when he's in there. Guillermo Mota (Grade 9* HR+24, 54 IP), who has been here since the 2000 draft, turns in another decent year in relief. Rafael Perez (Grade 8*, HR+42, 61 IP) is another guy who can steal 9s without help. Fernando Rodney (Grade 9*, C-42 HR+36, 68 IP) is yet another option.

Gregerson: A guy we like

If the fans get bored with those guys, Clay can bring in Shawn Kelley (Grade 9* C-22 HR-33, 25 IP) and hand out valium tablets to the patrons. At the end of the bullpen, the brilliantly monikered Jordan Norberto (Grade 6* C-62 HR-16, 20 IP) toils when the game is out of hand. He will use all of his innings.

Offense: 5.0
A crack in reality.

Last year's Generals had a deep hitting attack, with power all over the lineup. This year's Generals seem to have fallen into a crack in reality between the Todd Helton (2 0s, 9 hits 5 walks) era and the Pablo Sandoval (3 0s, 10 hits 2 walks, 4 8s, R+1) era. Both guys showed up this year with underwhelming cardboard, and therein lies the issue with this offence.

The best card in the stack is up and coming Red Sox shortstop Jed Lowrie (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks), who is unfortunately limited to a third of a season. Among the regulars, Casey McGehee (1-0-0-0, 10 hits 3 walks, L+5) will leave his share of dents, especially against southpaws. Ike Davis (1-6-6, 9 hits 4 walks) is angling to become Todd Helton's replacement at first. Derek Jeter (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 3 31s, 30 SSN for 23 attempts) has an average card with plus speed, and plays shortstop every day. Utility guy Ryan Raburn (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 7 on 44, 113 games) plays five positions and is widely expected to break out with regular playing time in Detroit this year.

Rajai Davis (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 61 attempts) is not a great hitter, but is a terror on the basepaths. Kurt Suzuki (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, 4 24s) is the regular catcher. Those double play numbers may hurt from time to time. Ramon Santiago (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) is the regular second baseman.

Several part-time players will have important roles. Carlos Beltran (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, L+7, 64 games) should be terrific against lefties on the boards, and plays in some lineups on the computer. Logan Morrison (4 0s, 10 hits, 5 walks, 62 games) is a terrific young hitter (24 years old) and contributes in certain lineups.

Raburn: Breakout

There is a little power here, some speed, and enough depth to aggravate the unsuspecting opponent who is expecting to find some soft spots. Without an anchor or two in the middle of the lineup, they may struggle against high grade pitchers.

Defense: 6.0
It will help the pitching.

As you would expect from a club coming off a World Series appearance, Hudson is solid defensively in the middle of the field. Derek Jeter (SS9) and Ramon Santiago (2B8) will make all the plays in the middle of the diamond. Kurt

Sayings heard amongst the Hudson fan base: "Lincecum and Cahill, then head to the landfill," because the rest of the rotation is compost. About the bullpen? "Luke Gregerson and the eight dwarves." This team is a long way from the one that bounced the Portland juggernaut from the playoffs.

Suzuki (C8, TH-2) is not an intimidating arm, but he's mechanically sound. Rajai Davis (CF3) can use his speed in the outfield as well as he can on the base paths.

Both first basemen – Helton and Ike Davis – are solid 1B4s. The corner outfielder will be some combination of Carlos Beltran (OF2, 34 arm), Ryan Raburn (OF2) and the excellent glove man Nate Schierholtz (OF3, 34 arm). The only problem position is third base, where both Sandoval and McGehee are 3B3s. Otherwise this is a solid defensive team. This will help the pitching.

Bench: 2.5

25 Guys, as usual.

There are choices from the part-time players, and Hudson management will make use of them. In particular, Chris Heisey (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+42) and Nate Schierholtz (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) are decent players who will struggle to find regular playing time otherwise. Eduardo Nuñez (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 3 11s, 35 SSN for 5 attempts) is fast, and can steal a base.

The backup catchers, however, are awful - John Hester (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, 95 at bats) is the primary guy there. If only a power hit will do, the Generals can take a shot with rookie Lucas Duda (1-5-6-6, 7 hits 2 walks, 84 at bats).

hudson GENERALS

4th

Melrose will wrap this division up by Mother's Day, and Zion will find a way to overachieve. Only Munich, still working on gathering the assets, might keep Hudson from visiting the cellar this year, but this is clearly the end of a cycle for the Generals.

The trades of Roy Oswalt and Brian Fuentes, and the continued decline of regular players such as Carlos Beltran and Todd Helton, coupled with some off years (or abrupt career endings), have caused Hall of Famer Clay Beard to restructure his roster. It will take some work to bring it back to contention. That said, Clay has a lot of pieces, and could bounce back strong in a year if Tim Lincecum and Trevor Cahill continue to perform, the current regulars thrive, and Kung Fu Panda re-emerges from his hibernation.

The Franchise

Todd Helton. Derek Jeter certainly has an argument, but this is the guy that got all the hawt chicks in Hudson over the last thirteen years. The ladies dig the long ball, and Todd has clubbed 339 of those in his long career, to go with 2128 hits and 1347 RBI. His career .404 on-base average is just spectacular.

2010 finish: 96-66 (2nd, Mantle)
Last 5 years: 439-371, .542

PITCHING: 5.0 OFF: 5.0 DEF: 6.0 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **18.5**

Always In Flux

2010 Williams Division
Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Knoxville*	93	69	.574	—
Wakefield	85	77	.525	8
Richmond	69	93	.426	24
Midwest	54	108	.333	39

** Lost to Zion in NC playoffs.*

The only thing consistent in the Williams Division is change. In 2009, Midwest finished first (as TBL Champs), with Richmond, Knoxville and Wakefield following. Last season, Knoxville edged out Wakefield, while Richmond and Midwest were rebuilding.

In 2011, we're picking the **Richmond Rebels** to be the third division champ in three years. The Rebels have been a perennial contender over the past decade, and in fact entered the playoffs as a wild card in 2009. After a year off to restock the pitching staff, *Bruce Taylor*'s team has enough talent to return to the top. How deep they go in the playoffs, however, is another matter.

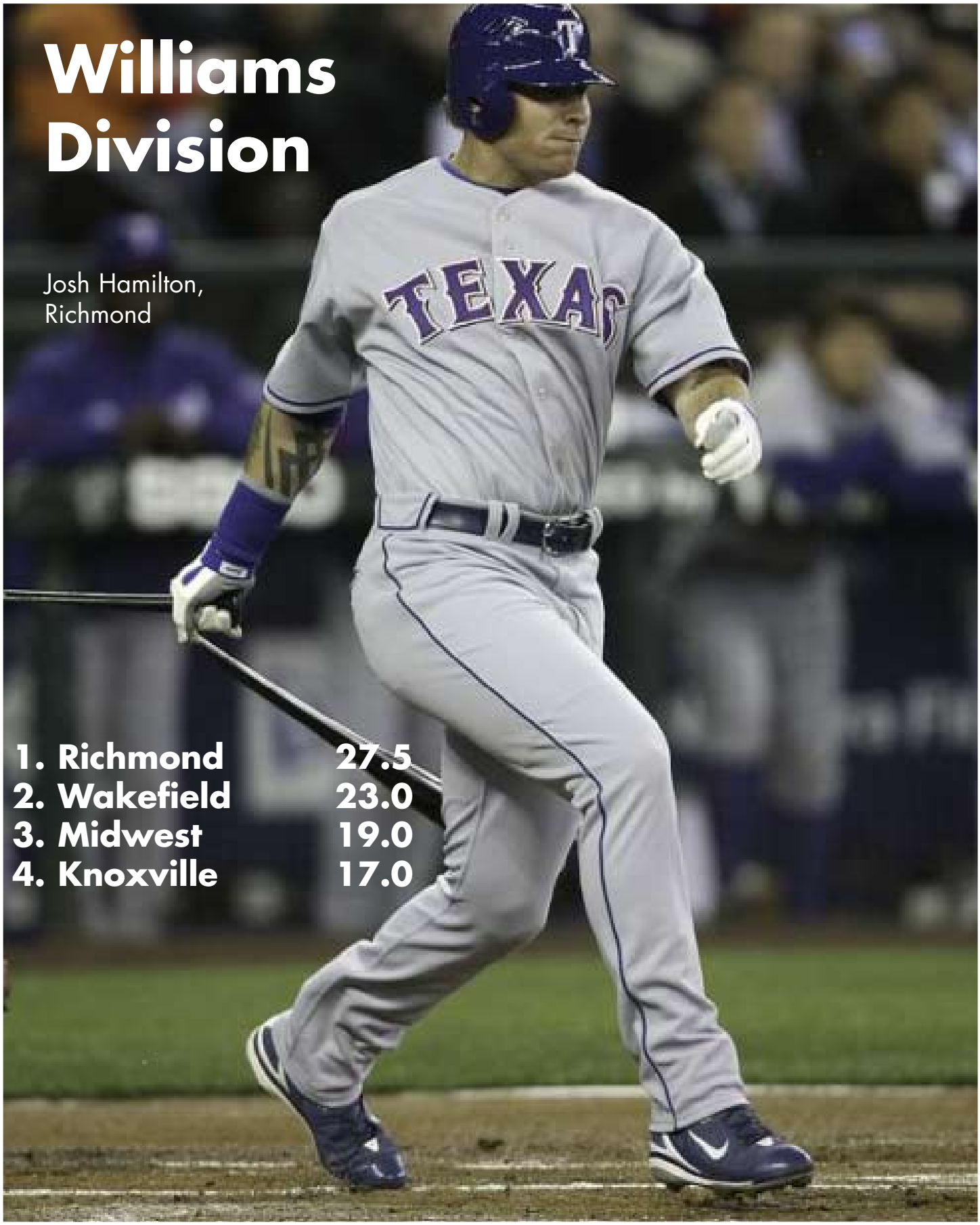
Thanks in part to an unsuccessful run at the playoffs last year, *Glenn Taylor* has to make do with the team he's been dealt. Luckily, he's got some offense to help with the transition.

The Wizards are a young team, and one on the rise. While they may not have enough pitching to get them into the playoffs this year, they are definitely a team to watch.

It's been two years since *Darrell Skogen* pulled all the strings to bring a TBL Championship for the **Midwest Mongrels**. He tore down the team last year, and they lost 108 games – all part of the Guru's plan to draft early enough to score a key player or two. Now they're slowly making their way back, as the Guru accumulates young talent, including an impressive draft class this year. The Mongrels are moving back toward contention … but it won't happen this year.

The **Knoxville Outlaws** won the Williams Division last year, only to lose in the semi-finals to the Elders of Zion. *Pat Martin* called in all his favors for that run, and as a result, Knoxville will take a step back – a *big* step back – this year. Although many of the hitters have returned, the pitching staff is in shambles. Pat knows you can't win in TBL without good arms. This could be a bounce, with some luck, or it could be the start of a long road back to the

Williams Division



Josh Hamilton,
Richmond

1. Richmond	27.5
2. Wakefield	23.0
3. Midwest	19.0
4. Knoxville	17.0

2010 richmond REBELS in review

Sliding to 93 losses wasn't much of a surprise.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 69-93 (3rd, Williams)

Rebuilding was the plan for the year. The starting pitching was expected to struggle, with the offense carrying the team as well as it might. The bullpen had some strength at the top but not much backing it up. Sliding to 93 losses wasn't much of a surprise.

What went right?

The offense was fairly competent, recording a .264 team average. Of course, we had Albert Pujols. He started off the season rather mundanely, but kept progressing throughout the schedule and ended up with a fine .312 BA, with 43 doubles, 3 triples and 52 HR all while recording 128 RBI and 124 walks.

Albert Pujols: That man again.

Mike Lowell had an outstanding season, hitting .290 and second on the team with 24 HR and slick with the glove – only 7 errors in 121 games. Shane Victorino also batted .290 and led the team in base thefts with 24, and he had 42 doubles, a team leading 11 triples and 9 HR.

The back of the bullpen was a plus as well. The setup and closer tandem of Matt Thornton (0.96 ERA) and Brian Wilson (1.32) were outstanding. Together they combined for 140 Ks and only 33 BB in 134 IP.

What went wrong?

No starter won 10 games and the main corps all lost between 12 and 14 games with ERA between Burnett's 4.24 and Galarraga's 7.37. Middle of the rotation pitchers Carmona and Olsen combined for 10-26 record and an ERA of 7.13. The only starter with a winning record was Gil Meche at 9-8. None of this was a surprise, but it still was a dark point to the season.

To back up the poor starters, the middle relievers were spanked hard all season. The +5 advantage was seldom used as batters continually hit the first pitch they saw, and generally hit it hard. This group of pitchers were expected to fare better and their general season-long collapse was unexpected.

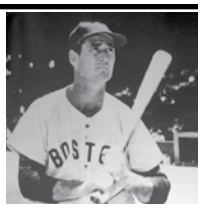
3 Things

1. Trade revisions. During the midseason trading period the team had built up to two #1s, three #2s. The top #1 and a #2 went for Brian McCann, while Brian Wilson left for J.A. Happ, while a deal with Brobdingnag brought Tom Gorzelanny. Michael Bourn was also acquired to add some speed behind Shane Victorino.

2. Drafting for the future. The draft also brought some new faces in Danny Espinoza, Jake Arrieta and Wilson Ramos, as well as pitchers to help rebuild the bullpen.

3. Not going too fast. I still consider us a re-builder. We are not at a par with the elite teams in our Conference yet. But, I feel as though we are moving solidly in the right direction.

richmond REBELS



Bruce Taylor (14th year)

Even with Pujols and Hamilton, this team will not blow away the competition.

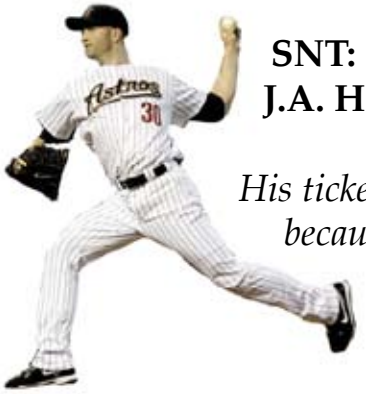
Bruce Taylor's squad lost more games in 2010 than any Richmond team since 2001. That was a whole different *era*. Mark Grace played first. Mike Lowell and Bobby Higginson were the offensive studs. Andy Pettitte was the staff ace. Donnie Wall and C.J. Nitkowski combined to save 21 games. How could a team with Albert Pujols and Josh Hamilton lose 93 games?

Well, Hamilton was injured for half the season, but the offense was OK, posting a .264 batting average and smacking 163 homeruns. The real issue was the pitching with its combined 5.22 ERA. You might say it was a controlled demolition, as even the good things on the staff, like Joe Nathan and A.J. Burnett, were sold off during a mid-season auction.

The 2010 campaign might just be a blip on the radar. The team is back, although not as strong as it might have been. Even before the rookie draft, this team was favored to retake the Williams Division. But with Melrose and Portland in the conference, Mr. Taylor decided not to load up on 1-year talent and instead continue to build while winning. Will it work? Despite all the good Richmond teams in the recent past, they have not made a World Series appearance, so it makes sense to try something new.

ROTATION. This would have been an excellent rotation in 2009, but this year every good team has better starting pitching than Richmond. Their "ace" and SNT, J.A. Happ (Grade 14 C-55), is limited to 16 starts (only one in the playoffs). That leaves the bulk of the starts in the hands of a solid but far from dominating trio: Brett Myers (Grade 11), Jason Vargas (Grade 10 C+21), and Fausto Carmona (Grade 10 HR+23), bringing the total up to 113.

The bottom of the rotation isn't bad. Tom



SNT:
J.A. Happ

His ticket out of Portland was because Mr. Murphy had too much starting pitching. He's a nice addition to a rotation that was getting a little bit old.

Arrived: Jake Arrieta, Michael Bourn, Bill Bray, Francisco Cervelli, Blake DeWitt, Danny Espinosa, Tom Gorzelanny, Tyler Greene, J.A. Happ, Kevin Kouzmanoff, Brian McCann, Eric O'Flaherty, Sean O'Sullivan, Logan Ondrusek, Wilson Ramos, Francisco Rodriguez.

Departed: Danys Baez, Willie Bloomquist, Emmanuel Burriss, Manny Delcarmen, Josh Fields, Carlos Fisher, Jody Gerut, Alex Gonzalez, Kevin Gregg, Rich Hill, Jason Jaramillo, Mike Lowell, Gil Meche, Lastings Milledge, Joe Nathan, A.J. Pierzynski, Chris Sampson, Brian Wilson

Turnover Rate: *51%*

Gorzelanny (Grade 9 C-36 HR+23) came over from Brobdingnag. Armando Galarraga (Grade 8) returns, and rookie Jake Arrieta (Grade 7 C-32 HR+22) only has to make four starts. This is a solid group over the course of a season, but it will be less than frightening during a seven-game playoff series. This year, it may be enough just to return there.

BULLPEN. Like the rotation, this bullpen is solid, but far from intimidating. The closer is Matt Thornton (Grade 17* C+21 HR+36), whose grade is slightly less than desired but whose peripherals are closer-worthy. He's also left-handed, which is bound to be a factor, as every good

team has a lefty-killer on the bench.

The two set-up relievers are Eric O'Flaherty (Grade 15* C-21 HR+41 – but another lefty) and Dan Wheeler (Grade 15* HR-22). The next tier will help the rotation in close games: Sergio Mitre (Grade 14*), Kevin Gregg (Grade 13* C-45 HR+32), and Bill Bray (Grade 13* HR-22). All together, there are just over 280 innings here, not really enough to protect the starting rotation all season long.

Thornton: Closer-worthy

The arms at the back end of the bullpen—Logan Ondrusek (Grade 12*), Francisco Rodriguez (Grade 10* C-43), and Burke Badenhop (Grade 9* C+24 HR+23)—are adequate and add bulk, bringing to relief inning total to 454. The question remains whether there will be enough at the top.

The conversation starts, as it always does, with Josh Hamilton (1-0-0-0-0, 12 hits, 3 walks) and Albert Pujols (1-1-6-6, 11 hits, 4 walks). These two bash brothers provide full-season fireworks. But no other regular has four power numbers. Alexei Ramirez (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks), Kevin Kouzmanoff (1-6-6, 10 hits), Brian McCann (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks), and Shane Victorino (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) all provide power and stability, but none of them will hit with the regularity and *persuasiveness* of Hamilton-Pujols.

Michael Bourn (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) is a base-stealing machine … when he's on base. Howie Kendrick (10 hits, 2 walks) stepped backward. The DH platoon of Manny Parra (10 hits, 2 walks) and Blake DeWitt (9 hits, 3 walks) is underwhelming (and they bat 8th all year).

Hamilton: Persuasive

This is an offense with peaks and valleys. The middle of the order will be awesome, but the bottom will be weak. It all depends on how often Bourn gets on and how often the three-power-number cards explode. Even with Pujols and Hamilton, this offense will not blow away the competition.

Offense: 8.5
Peaks and valleys.

Defense: 5.5
No real weaknesses.

This is the kind of defense the Richmond pitching staff desperately needs, because any time an inning is extended, bad things could happen.

Let's start with the outfield, where all three starters (Bourn, Hamilton, and Victorino) are OF3s. Ramirez (SS9) and Pujols (1B5) are infield standouts. Kouzmanoff (3B4), Kendrick (2B7), and McCann (C7) are average, which means there are no weak spots.

Waiver wire pick-up Alberto Gonzalez owns a 2B8 rating, which might be the only reason he was acquired, since none of the other 13 utility infielders can make that

The Franchise

Albert Pujols.
In nine seasons, Pujols has hit .310 with 379 homers, 377 doubles, 1140 RBIs, and more walks (789) than strikeouts (647). Already, his RBI total is behind only active players A-Rod, Manny, Thome, Chipper, Vlad, Pudge, Helton, and Edmonds.

claim. Backup catcher Francisco Cervelli (C6 with a Th-4), who will have to get some time, is awful when he plays.

Bench: 2.0
One hitting toy, then go fish.

Alexei Ramirez: Infield standout

the Williams, but strengthening this part of the team may be necessary for them to stand toe-to-toe with the powerhouse teams in the National Conference.

richmond REBELS

At the ***Annual***, we love pinch-hitting toys. It's a sign that a team is really going for it. Richmond has a hitting toy this year in Wilson Ramos (4 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk with a wild +14/-10 shift on the boards), but Mr. Taylor took him for his future, not his present (he won't turn 24 until later this summer). Same for Danny Espinosa (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks); he just turned 24 and may be a second baseman of the future, depending on what happens with Kendrick.

The rest of the bench has utility infield options, none of whom help much except to cover games. Gonzalez plays everywhere and a lot but doesn't hit (9 hits); Andres Blanco (6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22+19 on dice number 13; how weird is that?) may be useful against better grade pitchers; DeWitt and Tyler Greene (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42+22) are occupying space and driving the team bus when they're on the roster. Richmond should not need them to win

There's no denying that the Rebels are the class of the Williams in 2011. A good rotation, served by a decent bullpen will keep them in most games. It's their fabulous lineup that will take them to the playoffs, led by King Albert and his wrecking crew. They win the division by double digits!

1st

This Richmond team may be the weakest division winner in the league, but barring a huge collapse, this team should make the playoffs. They probably won't advance beyond the first round, though. The playoff-caliber competition within the conference is very tough. Beating Portland and its powerful lineup and deep pitching staff, and Melrose's juggernaut, may be too much for Richmond to overcome; even the other contenders such as Northboro match up well with them.

But this is a step in the right direction for this team. With a few bounce-back years from key players and growth years from their rookie crop, they could once again be dominant.

Victorino: Stability

2010 finish: 69-93 (3rd, Williams)
Last 5 years: 414-396, .511

PITCHING: 11.5 OFF: 8.5 DEF: 5.5 BNC: 2.0

TQ: **27.5**

2010 wakefield WIZARDS in review

Wakefield won 85, sixth-best in a field of five playoff teams.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 85-77 (2nd, Williams)

The *Annual* liked what it saw going into 2010. We didn't think they'd win the pennant in the Williams – and they didn't: the Knoxville club won 93, Wakefield won 85, sixth-best in a field of five playoff teams.

But after two years finishing below .500, it was a step forward. What remains to be seen is whether 2011 will be a step forward – as 2010 clearly was – or a step backward to 2008 or 2009.

What went right?

The offensive leader was, once again, Robinson Cano. He had a terrific season (.316-23-105, 50 doubles) and led the team with 211 hits. Kendry Morales came into his own with a great campaign (.290-33-109). Derrek Lee, who came over late in the season, hit 9 homers with a .313 average (he hit 33 overall). This year he's the team's SNT, and he will be filling in the gap created by the unfortunate injury to Morales.

Robinson Cano: Again

Josh Beckett was the top starter for the club all year (18-7, 3.21, 193 Ks in 238 innings, 6 CG, 4 shutouts). A.J. Burnett, who also arrived late in the season, won 4 games down the stretch. The bullpen was a stalwart crew; closer Sean Burnett gave up only 34 hits in 60 innings, striking out 52 and recording 32 saves, while Burke Badenhop (6 wins, 2.42 ERA) and Erik O'Flaherty (4 wins, 2.59 ERA) helped the team secure victories. The team recorded a 3.97 ERA for the season.

What went wrong?

Other than Beckett, the starting staff was full of holes. Vicente Padilla (6-11, 4.27) wasn't terrible, but gave up 22 homers in 25 starts. Zach Duke (5-14, 4.61, 271 base runners in 174 innings) and Rick Romero (11-10, 4.97, 281 base runners in 177 innings) caused lots of calls to the bullpen.

As much as the top contributors had good seasons, there were full season players that were very disappointing. Elvis Andrus hit 10 triples and stole 20 bases, but hit only .240 and struck out 113 times. He was the only speed threat on the team (the club stole only 36 bases for the season). Jhonny Peralta (.250) and Vernon Wells (.244) had moments of power but made lots of outs.

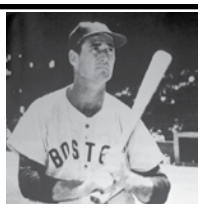
3 Things

1. Making the push. Down the stretch in 2010, the club made trades to get close, but fell short. How much will that cost long term? It remains to be seen.

2. Entropy. The injury to Morales and down seasons by Burnett and Beckett serves as a reminder that it's difficult to keep things together for any length of time. Can they solidify enough to have another good run?

3. Pitching, pitching, pitching. The lineup should be solid in 2011 – but it takes pitching to contend. Is there enough?

wakefield WIZARDS



Glenn Taylor (10th year)

If this team is going to be anything more than a distant second-place finisher, they'll need all the help they can get.

They did what you're supposed to do: get off to a good start, see an opening, make a few trades, and turn an also-ran into a playoff contender. The problem is that it didn't work. Derrek Lee, this year's SNT, hit well enough. A.J. Burnett went 4-1 down the stretch. Chad Durbin and Danys Baez pitched great out of the pen. But the team won only 85 games and finished out of the playoff picture.

Those trades cost the team their first-, second-, and third-round picks in the rookie draft, seriously hampering the team's pennant run in 2011. That's too bad, too, since the team has several highlight-worthy players. In TBL, unlike on TV shows, a plan doesn't always come together.

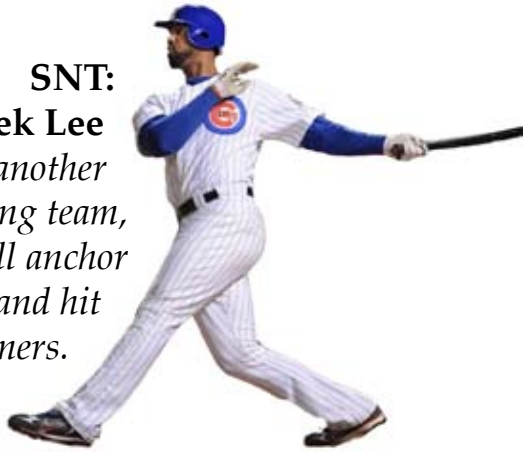
But this "rebuilding" year will be one with promise because the 2011 Wizards have talent. Robinson Cano came of age at 27. Carlos Ruiz blossomed with the bat. Colby Rasmus showed he was for real. Ricky Romero proved to be an ace in waiting. This team isn't that many players away from being a contender.

Pitching: 7.5
Not what you want to see.

ROTATION. Ricky Romero (Grade 11 C-21 HR+26) leads a thin starting staff. As a #2 starter, this lefty would shine. As the #1 guy, up against better talent, he may struggle in his sophomore year. Vicente Padilla (Grade 11 C+26 HR-23) and the ageless Jamie Moyer (Grade 8 C+34 HR-33) together add 35 starts: one more spot in the rotation. And then it gets a little ugly.

Rookie Doug Fister (Grade 6 C+35 HR+25) gets 28 trips to the mound. Righty J.D. Martin (Grade 6 C+32 HR-32) and lefty Matt Harrison (Grade 6 C-33) add another 15. That brings the total to 110. The final 52 starts belong to A.J. Burnett (Grade 5 C-22) and Josh Beckett (Grade 2 HR-21), mere shadows of their former selves. This is not a team strength.

SNT: Derrek Lee
He joins another contending team, and will anchor first base and hit some homers.



Arrived: Willie Bloomquist, Marlon Byrd, Manny Delcarmen, Doug Fister, Michael Kohn, Derrek Lee, Marcos Mateo, Fernando Nieve, Fernando Salas, Jordan Smith

Departed: Michael Aubrey, Willy Aybar, Francisco Cervelli, Zach Duke, Willie Harris, Danny Herrera, Jason Jennings, Brian Moehler, Eric O'Flaherty, B.J. Ryan, Cory Sullivan, Chad Tracy

Turnover Rate: *34%*

Romero: Staff Leader

BULLPEN. The co-closers are right-handed rookie Michael Kohn (Grade 17* C-62 HR+62) and last year's closer left-handed Sean Burnett (Grade 15* C+22 HR+41). Although lower in grade than traditional closers, they do provide 84 innings. The set-up duo of Fernando Salas (Grade 12* C-31) and Chad Durbin (Grade 11*)

do not exactly inspire confidence. Plus, they add less than 100 more innings.

The bulk of the bullpen is strewn with arms with negative peripherals. Manny Delcarmen (Grade 11* C-62 HR-21), Matt Harrison (Grade 9*), Esmerling Vasquez (Grade 9* C-62), Jordan Smith (Grade 8* C+24 HR-26), Marcos Mateo (Grade 7* HR-62), and Fernando Nieve (Grade 7* C-42 HR-46) aren't what you normally want to see with a game within three runs. We haven't even mentioned Jeff Fulchino or Danys Baez, both Grade 4* with negative peripherals.

With a good pitching staff, this team could threaten Richmond. Instead, they're stuck with *these* guys. This season could feature many, many high-scoring affairs. Romero can win some games, and there is lots of depth in the bullpen for in-game moves, but it will come down to the bats. If they can score enough runs, they can win.

Offense: 6.0
A little punch and Elvis, not Judy.

Kendry Morales (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42) was enjoying an all-star year when he broke his leg in a freak accident during a home-plate celebration for his game-winning hit.

It led Mr. Taylor to acquire Derrek Lee during last season's mid-season trading period. SNT Lee (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) had an off-year, but adequately takes over at first base. The real star on this team is second baseman Robinson Cano (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks), who took his game up a notch and made himself a two-way star. He led the club offensively last year and will likely do so this year as well.

Rasmus: Developed

Colby Rasmus (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks) developed to join Vernon Wells (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) in the middle of the Wakefield lineup. This pair will get solid support from Carlos Ruiz (10 hits, 4 walks), Marlon Byrd (10 hits, 2 walks+42), Chris Coghlan (10 hits, 3 walks), and Elvis Andrus (0, 10 hits, 3 walks). Jhonny Peralta (9 hits, 3 walks) adds little, but plays everyday at third base.

This team has a little punch in the middle of the lineup and speed in the form of Andrus at the top. Good lineups, as we have observed here at the ***Annual***, pose threats in any inning – the ones with serious weak spots can be pitched around. The question if there's enough punch, given the relative absence of judy.

There are some useful batting shifts and some troublesome ones, but the lineup should produce runs, especially against weaker pitching (as offered throughout the Williams Division).

The Franchise

Larry Walker.
A .297 hitter, this Hall of Famer finished with 432 homers, 171 steals, and 1479 RBIs. He hit 68 doubles, 15 triples, and 52 homers, although not in the same season.

Glenn Taylor's Wizards have really gotten their defense "on" for 2011, regularly fielding a C8, a 1B5, a 2B9, two SS9's and an OF3. Glenn can't compete with his brother Bruce's team, nor even for a WC, considering what's in the Aaron Division, but they may lead the league in fewest errors.

It still remains to be seen whether it can compensate for the pitching staff.

Defense: 7.0
Help for the pitching staff.

The Wizards' strong defense is anchored up the middle. Andrus (SS9) and Cano (2B9) are both enviable players. But the team strength doesn't end there. Lee (1B5), Wells (OF3), and Ruiz (C8) are all Fielding One players. Paul Janish (SS9, 3B4, 2B7) doesn't even get a chance to play very often.

Andrus: Anchor

Peralta (3B4), the other outfielders (OF2s all), and the backup catchers (both C7s, although Johnson has a Th+2) are all middle-of-the-road defenders.

That means that there are no weak spots in the field. This is a solid defense, which will help the poor pitching staff. And if this team is going to be anything more than a distant second-place finisher, they'll need all the help they can get. Most of the regulars can play the full season.

Bench: 2.5
Kendry and his cronies.

Morales is a nice toy to have on the bench. He has lots of usage as a part-time player (made possible by the arrival of Derrek Lee), and his interesting batting shift (L-13/R+6) will come in handy. Brian Schneider's (8 hits, 4 walks) shift complements Ruiz'; however, he should not be

Milledge: Has his uses

starting against all RHPs because of it. Janish (9 hits, 3 walks), Willie Bloomquist (10 hits, 2 walks), and Lastings Milledge (10 hits, 2 walks, with a L+9 shift on the boards) all have their uses. It's not a deep bench, but it can help.

wakefield WIZARDS

2nd

The T.Q. puts them squarely in second place, but luck could shine two years in a row, and Wakefield could find itself in a fight for the division crown or for a wild-card spot.

What would Mr. Taylor do then? Would he pull the trigger and try to win again even with last season's taste of disappointment fresh in his mouth? At the ***Annual***, we like to think that the right thing to do always wins out.

2010 finish: 85-77 (2nd, Wakefield)
Last 5 years: 367-443, .453

PITCHING: 7.5 OFF: 6.0 DEF: 7.0 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **23.0**

2010 midwest MONGRELS in review

The season left the Guru saying, "Wait until two years from now."

2010 in Review
Final Record: 54-108 (4th, Williams)

Defending a championship is nearly impossible in TBL. Teams are up, they are down, they have injuries, and their players get healthy. The Dawgs' pitching arms fell off, literally, and down years offensively also caused by injury dropped the boys to a 54 win season. The season left the Guru saying "Wait until two years from now."

What went right?

Darn little went right. Dan Wheeler chalked up 21 saves and a 1.93 ERA, earning him a ticket out to Kansas to play in a pennant race in the final two months. Adam LaRoche hit .278 with 22 homers, and Victor Martinez came back from injury to hit .271 with 50 extra base hits. Derrek Lee cracked 24 home runs before leaving for Wakefield's pennant run.

LaRoche: 22 HR

What went wrong?

Injuries decimated the Dawgs' starting rotation. Brandon Webb lost the season entirely, and Ervin Santana suffered with a sore arm all year. Building for the future, the Dawgs traded away Johan Santana, and believing a bad season would result, the Dawgs drafted youth and eschewed rebuilding a bullpen where most of the arms had fallen off during the title chase.

Ryan Dempster held up his end of the rotation, winning 13, but his 4.57 ERA was abysmal. Ervin Santana dropped to 7-11, 4.82, and Paul Maholm lost 20 with a 5.35 ERA. Youngsters Homer Bailey, Jason Berken, and Jordan Zimmermann combined to go 10-36. The bullpen was lackluster, and the team ERA of 5.41 and the yielding of 971 totals runs spelled doom for the Dawgs.

Injuries decimated the offense as well. Mike Aviles had a huge dropoff, available for only 37 games and hitting .143, while outfielders Nate McLouth, Adam Jones, and Carlos Gomez all saw limited time, hitting .253, .252, and .194 respectively. David Wright had a horrible year (.245, 12, 54). Mark Kotsay and Mitch Maier both hit under .200. The Dawgs scored 625 runs and batted only .239.

3 Things

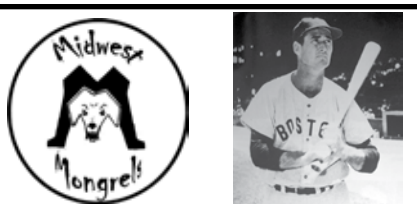
1. Better starters. The draft brought young starters Madison Bumgarner, Jeremy Hellickson, Alex Sanabia, and David Pauley, to join Bailey, Cecil, Dempster and Santana.

2. Better offense. The Dawgs are hoping for a better offensive season. Comebacks from injured players, and addition of newly-acquired players in the draft and by trade. Little ball should be augmented by at least as much power as the Dawgs exhibited last year.

3. Bullpen improvement. The bullpen must exceed preseason expectations. There are more relievers out there, but they're all hoping for lots of quality starts by the young gun starters.

It will be a growing season in Midwest this year. Another good draft, the possible return of injured pitchers, and the continued development of the offense bring hopeful signs for 2012.

midwest MONGRELS



Darrell Skogen (10th year)

Another year could see the return of the Guru.

Commissioner Darrell Skogen enjoyed his reign as TBL champion in 2009, and his year with the crown was well-earned. Mr. Skogen built his club using his own approach, and won on his own terms, and we in TBL could feel good that one of the nicest guys on earth actually finished first – good Karma all around.

Then came 2010. Clearly, the Gods of Karma had had about enough of all that feelin' good *kumbaya* silliness, because Midwest showed up with lame cards and pretty much stunk up table tops from Massachusetts to Manitoba all season long. With good, knowledgeable managers, however, such seasons are a means to an end. This year, Midwest is back to being respectable, and they've added some terrific young talent through the draft.

Pitching: 6.0
Starting to return.

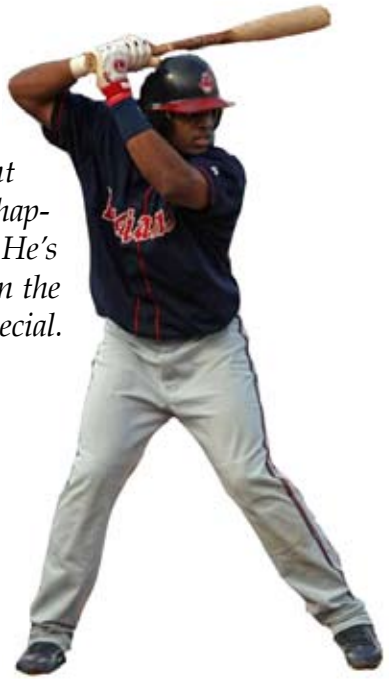
ROTATION. This area won the 2009 TBL championship for Darrell, and it is starting to coalesce after the addition of some fantastic young arms. The best grade in the rotation belongs to one of those guys - Jeremy Hellickson (Grade 12 C+35 HR-16, 4 starts) who will burn all four of his starts in May. The ace of the staff, however, is Ryan Dempster (Grade 11 C-21, 34 starts) who won 19 games for this club two years ago and led the staff with 13 wins last year.

Behind Dempster is a Guy We Like: stylish 22 year old lefty Madison Bumgarner (Grade 9 C+31 HR+11, 18 starts). Bumgarner exploded onto the scene in San Francisco last year, helped the Giants win a World Series in Reality Baseball, and looks like a crafty lefty out of the John Tudor school. At this age, he should be here for a decade or two. Another guy who will be carded in bars frequently this year is Alex Sanabia (Grade 8, C+33 HR+21, 12 starts), who quietly put together a few good months in Florida. Darrell snapped him up with a Bonus pick in the 2011 TBL draft.

There are still a couple of veterans around to do the heavy lifting. Ervin Santana (Grade 9, 33 starts) seems like he's been around forever, but he's only 28. Brett Cecil (Grade 8 C+13, 28 starts) won 15 games with the Blue Jays last year, and

SNT:
Carlos Santana

My favorite guitarist is reborn as an unusually patient young hitter who happens to be a catcher. He's been a great hitter in the minors and will be special.



Arrived: Madison Bumgarner, Darwin Barney, Kyle Farnsworth, Jeremy Hellickson, Jason Michaels, Carlos Monasterios, David Pauley, Nick Punto, Edgar Renteria, Dennys Reyes, Alex Sanabia, Carlos Santana, Matt Tolbert

Departed: Alberto Arias, Blaine Boyer, Michael Brantley, Billy Buckner, Juan Castro, Adam Everett, Shairon Martis, Landon Powell, Oscar Salazar, Scott Schoeneweis, Chris Smith, Russ Springer, Jeff Weaver

midwest MONGRELS

is only 25. Everyone in Cincinnati is waiting for Homer Bailey (Grade 7 C+12, 19 starts) to find himself. After surfing a wave of hype into the majors a few years ago, he's been something of a disappointment to date. Like most of the pitchers, though, he's just a kid at 25 years old. David Pauley (Grade 9 C+13 HR-16, 15 starts) rounds out the staff. Outside of Dempster, there isn't a single pitcher in the rotation over the age of 28. They will hold their own this season, but this unit is all pointed towards a bright future.

Bumgarner: Stylish

BULLPEN. Carlos Monasterios (Grade 15* C+16 HR-25, 35 IP) and Kyle Farnsworth (Grade 12* C+15 HR+33, 64 IP) share the closing duties for the Dawgs this year. That pretty much tells you everything you need to know. Recall, if you will, that this team was rocking a full season Grade 30* when it made its championship run.

The rest of the story reinforces the theme. Miguel Batista (Grade 12* C-22, 82 innings) has a whole lot of decent but unspectacular innings. Denys Reyes (Grade 12* C-44 HR+36, 38 IP) is the lefty specialist. Jeremy Berken (Grade 10* C+22 HR+23, 62 IP) is around for the sixth and seventh innings. Bruce Chen (Grade 10 C-16 HR-12, 23 starts) is slated for relief valet situations where the game is close but the starter is struggling. Paul Maholm (Grade 2 C+13 HR+24) is around for when the game is over in the fourth inning. Clearly, the expectations are pretty low here.

Offense: 6.0
Nothing scary.

As usual, the Midwest hitting attack starts with David Wright (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+8), who has been a star here since his arrival on the scene in 2005. He has an average card with above-average power, and he bats cleanup all season long. Protecting Wright in the lineup is the first baseman Adam LaRoche (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks), who bats right behind Wright all year.

Leading off most nights is second baseman Mike Aviles (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 2 7s, 29 SSN for 19 attempts), who surprised a lot of people by hitting .304 last year at the age of 29. Midwest is also stacked at the catcher position, with veteran Victor Martinez (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, L+13 R-8) terrorizing left-handed pitching and rookie Carlos Santana (1-0-0-0, 8 hits 6 walks, R+5, 46 games) torturing righties. Another youngster who is developing start qualities is center fielder Adam Jones (1-4-6, 11 hits, 1 walk+42, 4 8s). Jones bats third against right-handed pitching.

Martinez: Terrorizing lefties

There is some speed sprinkled around the lineup that may help a bit. Nate McLouth (3 0s, 6 hits, 4 walks+42, 18 speed) will zing between bases like a hunted hare on those rare occasions when he reaches base with his strange, *strange* card. Alexi Casilla (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) starts at second base against lefties. He can fly. Ditto Carlos Gomez (3 0s, 9 hits 2 walks, 33 SSN for 21 attempts, 8 13s), although his speed will be most often used racing back to the dugout after he whiffs. Edgar Renteria (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) starts at shortstop against lefties, while

The Guru, TBL's reigning Commissioner and a known connoisseur of fine pitching. But there just isn't much to savor this season. The offense will help out, but not often enough to prevent missing the playoffs. Knoxville will keep them out of the cellar.

Nick Punto (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 29 SSN for 8 attempts) gets the call against righties. Mark Kotsay (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Mitch Maier (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) are the scheduled starters at the corner outfield positions.

It's not a train wreck, but there's nothing in this lineup that will throw a scare into a team with a good pitching staff. Midwest desperately needs to have a big hitter emerge from this pile, or have David Wright return to form this year.

Defense: 5.0
No holes.

Midwest is a notch above average defensively. The center of diamond features a Fielding One player against lefties – Alexi Casilla (2B8). Victor Martinez (C8) makes all the plays but can't throw (Th-3). There are a few terrific fielding outfielders, like Mitch Maier (OF3, 32 arm) and Carlos Gomez (OF3, 37 arm).

After that, it's Fielding Two all the way. Mike Aviles (2B7) and Nick Punto (SS8) see regular action against right-handed starters. Adam Laroche (1B4) will make the plays at first. David Wright (3B3) will struggle at third, but Nate McLouth (OF2, 31 arm), Mark Kotsay (OF2, 35 arm) and Adam Jones (OF2, 33 arm) are all good outfielders who take regular turns. The defense is pretty good overall. There are no holes, and this will help the pitching most days.

Bench: 2.0
Some assets.

There are some assets on the bench. Jason Michaels (1-5-6-6, 9 hits 2 walks+42, R-5) is the starting DH against lefties, and the first pinch hitter off the pine because of the quartet of power numbers. Trevor Crowe (3 0s, 9 hits 2 walks, 29 SSN for 27 attempts) is another burner, and he can pinch run late or steal a base. Matt Tolbert (2-5-6, 8 hits 3 walks, R+1, 16 speed) and Darwin Barney (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) are interest-bearing accounts – Darrell is looking for them to develop into starting players in years to come.

This team is full of platoon players who will be available late in games when the pitching changes and a matchup needs to be exploited. Darrell has no lack of flexibility.

3rd

The pitching is pedestrian, especially in the bullpen, and the hitting lacks the high points that contending teams usually feature. The youngsters are terrific, though, and another year could see the return of the Guru.

The Franchise

Kirby Puckett.
He never played for Mr. Skogen, but was a big part of the franchise in the '80s and '90s. 2,160 hits in only 12 seasons, he hit .288 in his TBL career. His best year was 1989 (.325-22-109).

2010 finish: 54-108 (4th, Williams)
Last 5 years: 408-402, .504

PITCHING: 6.0 OFF: 6.0 DEF: 5.0 BNC: 2.0

TQ: **19.0**

2010 knoxville OUTLAWS in review

Yeah, there were probably too many Twins.

2010 in Review
Final Record: 93-69 (1st, Williams)

Have we been here before? It seems so. Two years ago, the club got all the way to the World Series for the first time, then dropped back to 65 wins in 2009. The 2003 club jumped to 96 wins in the middle of a ten-year run, the other nine of which featured more losses than wins. The 1990 club had 66 wins before and 60 wins after (and then 42 wins the year after that).

Why do Knoxville contending periods last only one year (at least since 1996)? The snarky answer from the ***Annual*** staff, of course, is *Too Many Twins*. Both Mr. Pat and Mr. Darrell are fans of the Minnesota club, no real surprise, but it sometimes leads to a fixation on players wearing that uniform. But there's clearly more than that working here. The team that won 93 games in 2010 was a roster writ in water, and entropy and poor luck did their work.

Kubel: Fabulous

And, yeah, there were probably too many Twins.

What went right?

The club was led by a fabulous season by Jason Kubel (.302-35-116, 36 doubles). Kubel had a great sidekick: Justin Morneau (.278-37-98, 38 doubles). Michael Cuddyer (34 homers, 80 EBH, 103 RBI) also delivered the goods on a regular basis. Yadier Molina, who is more commonly considered a defensive asset, hit .280 and drove in 56 runs. Overall the team hit .265 and slugged .430, scoring 822 runs.

Mark Buehrle (19-8, 2.68, 6 CG) had a great season as staff ace, helping put the lie to the conjecture that lefty starters can't thrive in TBL. Even more surprising, Joe Blanton, who was acquired just before the beginning of the season, went 14-8, 3.38, striking out 181 in 213 innings. Ian Snell was hit hard, but won 13 games at the back of the rotation. In the bullpen, Kiko Calero saved 42 games, striking out 61 in 53 innings; the setup relievers (Ryan Franklin, Tim Byrdak, Matt Guerrier and C.J. Wilson) won 23 games and finished under 3.00 in ERA.

What went wrong?

The team was a feast-or-famine proposition, with a little more feast than famine. They hit 173 homers, but stole only 61 bases (with no player recording more than 12.) Other than the three power hitters, there was no one on the roster with more than 13 homers, and Michael Cuddyer's power was offset by a .252 batting average and 131 strikeouts.

On the mound, Nick Blackburn (8-16, 4.46) and Doug David (9-14, 4.95) put a heavy strain on the bullpen. The pitching staff walked 518 and struck out only 1,031, and might not have been up to facing the metal of the other contenders. In the end, there wasn't enough to get them past and to the conference championship.

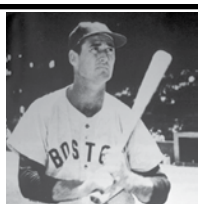
3 Things

1. Rebuild. Again. Pat Martin knows how to do this, from many experiences. Losing is no fun, but in order to get better, he knows that he has to get worse.

2. Building blocks. Players such as Molina, Reyes, McCutchen, Buehrle and Alvarez are what you have to build around, rather than players such as Doug Davis and Kiko Calero. Knoxville has to get more of the former and fewer of the latter to achieve long-term contention.

3. Entropy is your enemy. Knoxville's bouts of winning are based on the notion that you can't wait until everyone arrives – it may never happen. Makes sense.

knoxville OUTLAWS



Pat Martin (25th year)

There are better days ahead, but 2011 is going to be tough to watch.

Fresh off a 93-win, division championship season, this Knoxville team may hit rock bottom, but Mr. Martin, one of the league's longest-tenured owners, is no stranger to the boom-and-bust strategy. Here are his team's win totals over the past five years (going backward): 93, 65, 107, 80, and 62. That's nothing if not inconsistent.

But Mr. Martin is an astute general manager. There's always a plan at work. That plan got him (finally!) to the World Series back in 2008. The plan last year was to return. Unfortunately, games don't always go according to plan, and Knoxville was bumped out of the playoffs by the Elders of Zion. Even more unfortunately, the plan for 2011 is to suck. Big time.

This is the year that will create a foundation for future successes. The team still has all its top draft picks for 2012. It has collected some young talent. In meantime, though, the fans will have only two things to look forward to: 1) a half season of Justin Morneau awesomeness and 2) a half season of the David DeJesus hit machine.

SNT:
Pedro Alvarez

A power hitter who burst on the scene last summer, he's a great pickup for a Knoxville club that's rebuilding its roster after a one-year contention.

Pitching: 6.0
Inflating opponents' batting averages.

ROTATION. In a year when playoff teams routinely have two Grade 13+ starters, this Knoxville squad can't boast even one Grade 8 starter. As Mr. Martin himself said, "This is probably the second weakest group I have ever put together." Considering this is his 25th year in the league, that's really saying something.

Buehrle: Erstwhile ace

There's no way to soften the blow. The *best* arms belong to a trio of right-handed Grade 6s: Dave Bush (HR-23), Luke Hochevar (HR+22), and Felipe Paulino (C-34 HR+43). Erstwhile ace Mark Buehrle (Grade 5 C+26 HR+23) and über-rookie Kyle Kendrick (Grade 5 C+23 HR-22) follow. Joe Blanton (Grade 4 C+32 HR-23) and Nick Blackburn (Grade 2 C+24 HR-22) are around to inflate opponents' batting averages.

Arrived: Pedro Alvarez, Michael Brantley, David Bush, Jorge Cantu, Ronny Cedeño, Sam Demel, Michael Dunn, David Herndon, Kyle Kendrick, Franklin Morales, Joe Nathan, Jayson Nix, Ramon Peña, Denard Span, Brad Thomas

Departed: Garrett Atkins, Ron Belliard, Tim Byrdak, Kiko Calero, Jesse Crain, Doug Davis, Anderson Hernandez, Akinori Iwamura, Steven Jackson, Magglio Ordoñez, Nick Punto, Edgar Renteria, Ian Snell, Brad Thompson, Jess Todd, C.J. Wilson

Turnover Rate: 42%

knoxville OUTLAWS

BULLPEN. Knoxville at least has a closer of sorts. This year, Matt Guerrier (Grade 14*) takes the role. Along with lefty set-up man Michael Dunn (Grade 17* C-62 HR+41), who's not even mentioned in the emergency instructions, the team has 90 innings of relief that can steal 8s without help. This limitation won't help unless the rotation gets *really* lucky, which may happen a certain small percentage of the time.

Two right-handed set-up guys will help: Matt Capps (Grade 11* C+34 HR+21) and Ryan Franklin (Grade 11* C+42). They add another 138 innings, which is still not nearly enough. The rest of the pen are placeholders for better years or better arms: Brad Thomas (Grade 7* HR+36), Ramon Pena (Grade 6*), Franklin Morales (Grade 4* C-62 HR-23), David Herndon (Grade 3* C+24 HR+45), and Sam Demel (Grade 3* C+22).

Taken together, this group may add up to a solid starter and a closer, but separately, they will be in for a pounding this year. Each member of the rotation must go five innings, and if the game isn't close by then, they'll go a lot more. That strategy will translate into many, many losses. It will a painful season in Knoxville, but it's springtime, and they are planting the seeds for the next Outlaw title run.

Offense: 4.5
Down years abound.

There are three hitters of note, two of whom are limited to about half the season. Justin Morneau (1-0-0-0-0, 12 hits, 5 walks) is about as awesome as it gets. Jose DeJesus (11 hits, 3 walks) is a hit machine. Both are limited.

The Franchise

Michael Cuddyer. How sad: a career .228 hitter as Franchise Player. It speaks to the transitory nature of this team. Players have passed through, contributed great years, and moved on. Cuddyer has flashed some power and hit a league-leading 14 triples in 2010.

Andrew McCutchen (10 hits, 4 walks) turned in a solid sophomore card. He at least provides a full season.

Ben Francisco (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks), when he plays against LHPs, is a fine middle-of-the-order bat. The third-base tandem of SNT Pedro Alvarez and Eric Hinske (both: 1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks) provide some power, as does DH Jason Kubel (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks). Even infield sub Jayson Nix (1-5-6, 8 hits, 2 walks+42) can flash some power in those rare instances when he makes contact at all.

Denard Span (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Jose Reyes (10 hits, 2 walks) are speed threats whenever they reach base. Franchise Player Michael Cuddyer (10 hits, 3 walks) hit OK in a down year, while Yorvit Torrealba (6-0, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Jorge Cantu (10 hits, 2 walks) provide some support. Ronny Cedeño (10 hits) will create a lot of outs. Yadier Molina, Mark Teahen, and Michael Brantley (all have 9 hits and 3 walks) must get lucky to help.

Morneau: Awesome

This is, in general, not an exciting crew and certainly not enough to overcome the weak pitching staff. This is an offense composed of mostly down seasons. Even SNT Alvarez was taken more

for his future value than his current performance. There are better days ahead, but damn if 2011 isn't going to be tough to watch.

Defense: 4.0
Better hope they're lucky.

The defensive highlight this year is the catching tandem of Yadier Molina (C9, Th+6, same picture) and Yorvit Torrealba (C8, Th+3). Few teams can boast even one guy like this. Morneau is a 1B5 when he plays, and Jorge Cantu backs him up as a 1B4. The team also features two OF3s in Denard Span and the limited Jose DeJesus. The rest of the outfielders are average, although Daniel McCutchen and Michael Cuddyer both have outstanding arms.

Molina: Same picture

Reyes dropped to an SS8 this year, and Jayson Nix joins the team with a very useful 2B7, as Ronny Cedeño is slated to play as a 2B6 in the instructions. At the hot corner, no one on the roster is better than a 3B3. If only defensive subs got a +1 rating for the first inning, then Knoxville would be able to shuffle them in and out.

This defense has a few strengths and a few weaknesses. Only luck will determine which a batted ball finds. If lucky, the defense may help win a few games; if not, it may not matter.

Bench: 2.5
A few contributors.

To Mr. Martin's credit, there are a lot of spare bodies on this team: Eric Hinske and Jayson Nix in the infield and Ben Francisco and Denard Span in the outfield. While Knoxville can play some with the shifts, the cardboard is just not that exciting, which can temper a road manager's excitement. In our assessment, these guys won't contribute much, and the instructions seem to agree.

Still, adding Denard Span (another Twin) is a forward-looking move, and like McCutchen, they'll be full time players next year.

Span: Another Twin

4th Even in a weak division like the Williams, the TQ ratings pick Knoxville to finish last. It's not just one thing, either. The rotation is weak. The bullpen is thin. The hitting is no better than average, worse when Morneau and DeJesus don't play. There's no hope in Knoxville in 2011, only dreams of what's to come after.

The Outlaws won the Williams in 2010, but didn't go very far in the playoffs. Unfortunately they won't even do that well this year. Both the rotation and the bullpen are full of innocuous gumbies. The lineup has some young, up and coming, talent but not nearly enough to compensate.

2010 finish: 93-69 (1st, Williams)
Last 5 years: 407-403, .502

PITCHING: 6.0 OFF: 4.5 DEF: 4.0 BNC: 2.5

TQ: **17.0**

knoxville OUTLAWS

breakthrough

There are fringe players on TBL rosters right now who might be important players on rosters in 2011. Some of those names appear in the list below. Some of the names below won't make it, but last year's list included Wade LeBlanc, Derek Holland, Alcides Escobar, Reid Brignac, Brett Cecil, Jason Motte, Ian Desmond, Brian Matusz, and Mat Latos.

1 **J. P. Arencibia, C, New Westminster**

The biggest prize for New West in the draft – and their SNT. He's a power hitter. His catching is a work in progress, but Toronto has made space for him.

2 **Craig Kimbrel, RP, Brobdingnag**

At age 22 he's the Braves' closer. The Prince picked him in the draft, so he has a good chance of being a star in TBL . . . somewhere.

3 **Tyson Ross, SP, Munich**

A 24-year-old righty, he's already established himself in the majors with the Athletics. He'll be a solid member of the Munich rotation for years to come.

4 **Jeremy Hellickson, SP, Midwest**

A sure bet for a future ace, he's a canny pick by the Guru. There's lots of upside here.

5 **Jason Bourgeois, OF, Houston**

It's been a long road to the majors for Bourgeois, but he appears to be here to stay.

6 **Wilson Ramos, C, Richmond**

The big part of the Twins' payment for Matt Capps, Ramos has a clear path to regular playing time in Washington. He's got a powerful arm and a solid bat.

7 **Brett Wallace, 1B, Brobdingnag**

Houston is the fourth stop for Wallace, once a top prospect. He's got power and can hit to all fields, and looks like he's got a regular spot in the majors.

8 **Mike Minor, SP, Hudson**

A talented lefthander, Minor does not have an overpowering fastball, but knows how to pitch and will thrive in Atlanta – and in Hudson as well.

9 **Domonic Brown, OF, Kansas**

An injury has set him back, but the Phillies have confidence that he'll be a middle-of-the-order hitter in the near future. He's a five-tool player.

10 **Peter Bourjos, OF, Melrose**

The speedy Bourjos has a top notch glove, and has shown home run power. As he learns discipline at the plate he should develop into a star.

Honorable mention: Antonio Bastardo, RP, Brobdingnag; Trevor Bell, RP, Houston; Lorenzo Cain, OF, Maracaibo; Andrew Cashner, SP, Greater Ohio; Scott Cousins, OF, Brobdingnag; Allen Craig, 3b, Zion; Sam Demel, RP, Knoxville; Felix Doubront, RP, Maracaibo; Mike Dunn, RP, Knoxville; Jarrod Dyson, OF, Gotham City; Danny Espinosa, 2B, Richmond; Jeanmar Gomez, RP, Gotham City; Brett Hayes, C, Dallas; Chris Heisey, OF, Hudson; Kenley Jansen, RP, Zion; Ryan Kalish, OF, Brobdingnag; Michael Kohn, RP, Wakefield; Ivan Nova, SP, Munich; Henry Rodriguez, RP, Munich; James Russell, RP, Houston; Chris Sale, RP, Munich; Angel Sanchez, SS, Brobdingnag; Daniel Schlereth, RP, Brobdingnag; Scott Sizemore, 2B, Greater Ohio; Jordan Smith, RP, Wakefield; Kanekoa Texeira, RP, New Westminster; J.R. Towles, C, Hudson; Dayan Viciedo, 3B, Gotham City; Jordan Walden, RP, Munich; Bobby Wilson, C, Grand Cayman.

future

Every year we look forward to see who might be the big names in the next draft. Sometimes these predictions are prophetic, and sometimes they fall short. Last year, the ***Annual*** listed more than half of the first 48 picks in the 2010 draft (including 8 of the top 10) in this section, so you be the judge. Thanks to Ray Murphy and Rich Meyer for assistance in preparing this list.

1 **Michael Pineda, P, Seattle**

At age 22 he's already had the Tommy John surgery and now hits the high 90s regularly. He gives Seattle a devastating 1-2 punch.

2 **Eric Hosmer, 1B, Kansas City**

After a breakout 2010 at AA, Hosmer has been called up to the Royals and is making the most of it, driving balls to all fields and out of the park too.

3 **Zach Britton, P, Baltimore**

A lefty ace in the making. He's already the top starter on the Orioles, as he puts together an excellent rookie season.

4 **Jesus Montero, C, New York (A)**

The end of Jorge Posada's long reign as the Yankee catcher opens the door for the talented Montero to take his job. He'll get called up this summer.

5 **Desmond Jennings, OF, Tampa Bay**

A plus fielder in the outfield, with power and speed. He was on this list last year too, but this year he's really on the verge of stardom.

6 **Kyle Drabek, P, Toronto**

The complete package, Drabek has an excellent fastball and good control; he should have a major league job for some time to come.

7 **Freddie Freeman, 1B, Atlanta**

A solid line-drive hitter, he has the job with the Braves. He's not a huge power threat, but gets on base and makes good contact.

8 **Hank Conger, C, Los Angeles (A)**

A switch-hitting catcher with a plus arm, he can drive the ball to all fields. The Angels appear to want to give him lots of playing time.

9 **Dustin Ackley, 2B, Seattle**

A tremendous minor league hitter, he's been moved to second base, which should give him an easier path to the majors.

10 **Julio Teheran, P, Atlanta**

At 20 years old, he's already one of the Braves' top arms. He could be a future ace.

Honorable mention: Al Albequerque, P, Detroit; Yonder Alonso, 1B, Cincinnati; Manny Banuelos, P, New York (A); Brandon Beachy, P, Atlanta; Pedro Beato, P, New York (N); Brandon Belt, 1B, San Francisco; Dellin Betances, P, New York (A); Chris Carter, OF, Oakland; Aroldis Chapman, P, Cincinnati; Tyler Chatwood, P, Los Angeles (A); Tim Collins, P, Kansas City; Aaron Crow, P, Kansas City; Travis D'Arnaud, C, Toronto; Jeff Decker, OF, San Diego; Daniel Descalso, 3B, St. Louis; Matt Dominguez, 3B, Florida; Danny Duffy, P, Kansas City; Kyle Gibson, P, Minnesota; Bryce Harper, OF, Washington; Philip Humber, P, Chicago (A); Jose Iglesias, SS, Boston; Elliot Johnson, SS, Tampa Bay; Casey Kelly, P, San Diego; Jason Kipnis, 2B, Cleveland; Brett Lawrie, 3B, Toronto; Sam LeCure, P, Cincinnati; Jordan Lyles, P, Houston; Jake McGee, P, Tampa Bay; Trey McNutt, P, Chicago (N); Mark Melancon, P, Houston; Devin Mesorano, C, Cincinnati; Brad Meyers, P, Washington; Matt Moore, P, Kansas City; Brent Morel, 3B, Chicago (A); Mike Moustakas, 3B, Kansas City; Juan Nicasio, P, Colorado; Tsuyoshi Nishioka, 2B, Minnesota; Joe Paterson, P, Arizona; Vinnie Pestano, P, Cleveland; Trevor Plouffe, 3B, Minnesota; Ben Revere, OF, Minnesota; Anthony Rizzo, P, San Diego; Eric Surkamp, P, Washington; Mike Trout, OF, Los Angeles (A); Josh Vitters, 3B, Chicago (N); Alex White, OF, Cleveland; Vance Worley, P, Philadelphia.

the bounce

by Mark Freedman

The picture on the wall reminded him that it had been ten years since their failed attempt. Sad and disappointed ballplayers watching, stunned, as the Gotham City Batmen celebrated their Championship victory. Forlorn, disappointed and shaken looks greeted the black-masked crime fighters' joyous celebration.

It was in stark contrast with the other pictures that covered the dark mahogany paneling. Chad Curtis and Rey Ordoñez being hoisted by Scott Rolen and Garry Sheffield as Vlad and his Barbarians walked slump-shouldered back to the northern wastes, their quest for three straight titles thwarted. The Aaron Island victory with cheerful smiles from Frank Thomas, Richard Hidalgo, Garry Sheffield, Moises Alou, Will Clark, Ivan Rodriguez, Roberto Alomar and the rest taunted him with visions of his greatest team ever. After surviving the gauntlet of Mahopac, Portland and Rochester they were destined for greatness.

And then came the picture of the Game Seven loss to Gotham City. He had thought many a time he would put a meaty fist through the picture or tear it from the wall and throw it in the trash. Wasp, as always, balancing his physical nature, had said it was necessary to keep the picture. Even in defeat it was a testament to the team and franchise. They had attempted and nearly succeeded at the legendary feat Bob Jordan called ***The Bounce***.

Captain America pulled a bottle of Hennessey from his desk drawer. He poured enough of the golden brown liquid into the crystal tumbler to fill it half way. He hesitated for a second – the neck of the bottle hovering above the glass – before continuing to pour until it almost spilled out onto the leather-topped desk.

Wasp wouldn't approve, but he knew she would be tied up hours more doing the team budgets. By the time she came looking for him most of the bottle would be gone.

He took a sip and leaned back into his chair. It had all started in the winter of '98 . . .

Vlad and the Barbarians had just trounced and pillaged their way to a second straight world series thumping the competition. They had an incredible 8 wins to 1 loss in two straight series. Meanwhile, the Avengers suffered through three straight sub-.500 seasons.

But those three seasons set the foundation for future success. In 1999 the team came together. Offensively, the Avengers hit 188 homers and scored 941 runs, but the key was the pitching. Donnie Wall and Jim Corsi solidified the 8th and 9th, and a starting staff led by Mike Mussina put them in the Series.

He sighed and took another gulp, no matter what great things they said about him when they were winning and horrible things when they were losing, they would never admit there is a certain amount of luck involved. Luck was never more evident than in Games Six and Seven against Brobdingnag.

Down three games to two, the Barbarians were looking to close out the hapless superheroes when the most unlikely Avengers carried the final two games. Chad Curtis scored in Game 6 and Game

7 on doubles by Rey Ordoñez and Melrose hung on for their first, and so far only, championship.

Luck, he mused. *Luck could be good or bad.* Would you call it good or bad luck to be able to get the first pick the next year? Well that is what they did. *How do you build down and hang on to players like Roberto Alomar, Scott Rolen, Ivan Rodriguez, Trot Nixon and Garry Sheffield? You start by trading your best starter.* Mike Mussina went to Rochester for a below average Frank Thomas. Storm had stirred up a hurricane at that news. *"You don't trade a starter like the Moose for an over-the-hill Thomas,"* she wailed over the wind. Scarlet and Thor thought him unhinged.

Next to go was the pen. It was already a pack of cardboard that disappeared in 2000. Whatever was left went to other teams, and with a rotation led by Arrojo, Justin Thompson and his fragile arm, Jay Witasick and Kirk Rueter it was amazing they only gave up 947 runs. The team finished with 56 wins - not the worst the Avengers would ever do but that was good enough to get to get the first pick. *If you're going to be bad you should be really bad.*

He took another sip, feeling the intoxicating warmth flow through his veins and muscles. *Ah . . . The Bounce! A strategy played to perfection.* The core survived. I-Rod, Alou, Sheffield and Hidalgo were joined by Frank Thomas doing his best He-Man impersonation. Even the Hulk gave Frank and his five first column power numbers a wide berth that year.

But it was the draft strategy that propelled them to a 119 win season. Wasp told him it couldn't be done. She was a positive person, painfully so at times, but she thought it would take a miracle. But he, Captain America, had no fear or doubt.

With the number one pick the first part of the plan was easily accomplished. They chose a 21-year-old fireballing lefthander with 30 starts, a Grade 17, and a bright future, Rick Ankiel. Ten years later, it was a pick that didn't work out but at the time it was a good pick.

The first pick in the second round made the run possible – Frank Castillo. The aged veteran had 24 starts of a Grade 16. Later the Averngers would add two wild Grade 18s in the pen in the form of Rob Ramsay and Dan Plesac to complete the overhaul.

So close, he mused. *Perhaps it was too much to rebuild a pitching staff in one draft. Maybe that was why it almost worked. One more reliever or one more good starter and Melrose would have two championships.*

Maybe they would be able to try the bounce again? He would have to discuss it with Wasp. Clearly the key was the decimation of the pitching staff. If you can't stop the other team from scoring you will not win many games. It would be much harder to do with the modern Avengers. Lester, Jimenez, Billingsley and Garcia would not be going anywhere soon.

Well, he thought, *first we would have to win another World Series, and then we shall see.*

a christmas carol
or, Manny in Three Acts

by Joe Auletta

Prologue

The news of Manny Ramirez' retirement somehow hit me with more psychic force than I would have expected. I am sure this is partially because Manny was always a Barbarian kind of guy. Big, *big* bat. A .300/.400/.500 kind of guy. A guy whose bat was quite big enough to obscure the fact that he never met a glove that he didn't mock. But in Manny's case it goes well beyond that. He is not a person alone on an ephemeral island in my consciousness, he is a veritable Pied Piper of memories. Visualizing Manny perforce brings other hitchhiking shades along for the ride.

Act I: The Manny of Christmas Past

The first blunt object to figuratively strike me upside the cranium is the apparition of a young Manny, dreadlocks flying in the breeze, leading in the visage of an older, more portly man: Robert Hamelin. Be honest with yourself, can you ever think Manny and TBL without soon calling Bob Hamelin back from the grave? I cannot.

As long as TBL endures, every February we will remember that instead of 18 seasons of Manny – all 2300 games, 555 HR, 1831 RBI, and 7 different seasons with an OPS above 1.000 of him – someone preferred 6 seasons of Bob Hamelin: all 497 games, 67 HR, 209 RBI, and 1 season with an OPS over .900 of him. It may seem cruel to outsiders who, lost, stumble upon our incestuous cabal of old guys in baseball caps and Cubs shirts. They would see us ceremonially opening and reopening a decade old wound and raising cans of beer in glee at another team's unfortunate pick.

But in reality that is not why we keep recalling the Saga of Big Bob. Nor is it to use Hammerin' Hamelin as a bogey-man to frighten young impressionable pitchers. No, it is in actuality a ritual akin to tossing salt over the shoulder or spilling the first sip of wine on the dirt. We are trying to calm our own fears of what we will do in the next few hours as we turn highly valuable trinkets called draft picks into actual names of real major league players. We are psychically trying to prevent our pick from becoming the synonym of "Did you forget something?" As we steel ourselves, calm our fears, we whisper to our scared inner selves, *"Self, do not worry. If you pass over Albert Pujols to take Adam Dunn you will not be immortalized as the most ill advised TBL pick ever."* Indeed, for those of us who are afraid we will be the next person to select Joe Charbonneau, Mark Fydrich, or Wilson Alvarez far earlier than retrospection says we should have, the thought of Bob Hamelin will comfort us as we make our picks with a little more confidence. There is always that draft day safety net: to how far we can fall from the ranks of Draft Genius. Robert Hamelin is always there to break our fall.

After a pregnant pause to wipe the sweat from our brows Manny leads his guest back into the shadows until next February.

Act II: The Manny of Christmas Present

As any fan of Dickens knows – or in my case, anyone who was forced to endure reading Dickens to pass high school English against my wishes – the ghosts never appear only once. In this play it isn't really a shock who the Ghost of Manny Present brings along. It is another who shares the same eternal link to Mr Hamelin: the long time and still current Barbarian, Alex Rodriguez.

A-Rod too was part of TBL's Fab 5. Ramirez, Rodriguez, Cliff Floyd, Joey Hamilton, and Carlos Delgado. The five players in the "top tier" of prospects in that draft of 1995. The five who should all have gone in the first five picks. One by one Floyd, Delgado, and Hamilton followed Hamelin into retirement, passing from ball field to historical archives. All except A-Rod. My guy. The one who in my subjective reality should just be turning 30, and the anchor to the Barbarian lineup for another ten years. But this ghost of Alex – the one who stands beside Manny – has more age lines, more weight of years, and, *shockingly* the first hint of gray. He's a step slower, a little more *mature* and no longer the perennial MVP candidate. How could this have happened so soon? I'm not ready to find a replacement for the face of the franchise. *Think.* Recollect what Clay did to keep Ozzie playing until

he was 67. *I'm not supposed to feel this way, I'm not supposed to have emotional attachment to a player. I'm not Clay! I'm not Rich! I don't keep Rickey Henderson and Greg Maddux just because they used to be great! I traded Frank Thomas, didn't I?*

For me this is much scarier than Bob Hamelin, and much more personal. So long as Manny was still playing and helping Portland and Rye win World Series titles I was safe. A-Rod was younger than Manny and kept himself in better shape. So long as Manny could slug his way to five power numbers I didn't have to worry about Alex. Manny was part mine canary and part security blanket.

Just as this reality was sinking in my eyes widening a touch in desperation, Manny smirked. Holding up his slippers and his fishing pole (I didn't know Manny fished? He didn't learn *that* in the Bronx). Then, with the most malicious grin I've seen in a long, long time he handed a copy of **Field & Stream** to Rodriguez and ushered his spirit into the fog.

Act III: The Manny of Christmas Future

The waves of trepidation passed, but after that I wasn't sure if I could face the next Ghost. But when Manny returned he fooled me. This time he didn't bring another human specter with him. He brought an inanimate object far more sinister, and far more complex. From fear monger he had turned into buffoon, poking fun at himself. Or more aptly, poking ridicule. The Ghost of Manny Yet To Be was Manny with a newspaper in his hand, and the headline read *Manny Tests Positive Again*. As often happens with the supernatural, everything was not as it seemed.

Whether or not he was a Barbarian I was unhappy to see Manny fade away this way. For too many years we have had doubt tossed upon the certainty of baseball – *and we don't like it.* Life itself is far from certain, but one of the comforting facts of baseball has always been certainty. Carlton Fisk's fly ball in the 6thGame *did* land in the seats on the fair side of the pole, much as I wish it hadn't. Willie McCovey's screaming line drive wasn't in some gray area of *partially whizzed past Bobby Richardson* The pitcher gives up a hit or he doesn't, the pitch is a ball or a strike, the runner is out or safe. Heisenberg tells us that reality does have partials, but there are none of Schrödinger's cats in baseball.

At least until steroids.

In a few years when my grandson in the bleachers of the Dayton Dragons outfield says, *"That was an awesome home run, grandpa. Did you ever see someone hit a ball that far?"* what do I tell him? Do I mention the 500 foot blast I watched Mark McGwire hit, or was that ball only partially propelled by McGwire and partially by a bottle and a syringe? How many of Clemens' Ks should he really get credit for? When Ichiro fell short of .400, how many of the should-have-been hits evaporated because the pitchers were juiced? What is real and what is a baseball version of an urban legend that only fills my memory because of chemistry?

I always want to give *my* players the benefit of the doubt. I want to believe the reason Mark used steroids was not to get stronger – *any* rookie who had an eye and could hit a legitimate 49 HR as a rookie doesn't *need* to get stronger – he only needed to stay healthy enough to take the field. It was just to heal from years of being injured. Just like Andy Pettitte or the uncounted number of other players who used HGH after surgery – the Miracle-Gro® of athletes. After all, all HGH really does is let the player get back to where they had been. How many McGwire homeruns did fans miss because he was sidelined all those pre-steroid years? Putting him back "where he should be" was still a long, hard, laborious piece of work in the gym, wasn't it?

Of course it was. No one else did the reps, over and over, to build more muscle fibers and make them stronger. No one ran the uncountable number of wind sprints to make Marion Jones faster than any other woman on the planet. They still had to combine the mental toughness, fortitude, and physical execution pieces all into an athlete who persevered and eventually excelled.

But in the end it was a lie. It wasn't a flesh and blood the baseball player walking to the plate to hit 70 home runs in a season, it was a zombie – someone whose baseball career should have ended years before when the body broke under the stress of ten thousand bench presses and hundreds of thousands of swings. In some ways this *it just let me get healthy* kind of cheating – which sounds less wrong at first hearing – is even more insidious and more dangerous to the game than the Barry Bonds *I shouldn't have to play second fiddle to McGwire and Sosa* mindset. At least Bonds without steroids would have likely hit near .300, would have walked a lot of times, hit some home

runs, made some spectacular catches, and insulted both teammates and reporters. McGwire, minus the chemistry, would have become the Sandy Koufax of hitters, the spectacularly gifted supernova player with the tragic early end to his career because the body could not stay healthy enough.

That is why I found the New York press trying to absolve Andy Pettitte's use of HGH so troubling. They were scalding Clemens for a partial lie, but saw Pettitte's *complete* lie as somehow almost noble. I find the long years of winking at amphetamines equally disturbing. Again, it took a player who would have been too worn out to play the day game after a 12 inning night game and gave him five at bats he didn't deserve. That *weren't real.* They were a figment of a chemist's weird science. Even worse, it allowed him to gain reaction time and energy he *didn't* work for. At least the steroid user had to add his own workout to the injection in order to gain an edge.

The Manny of Christmas Future has a clear but scary message. *Baseball was meant to be the legacy of what superior athletes could accomplish with hard work, mental toughness, and physical dedication – overcoming both the opponent and the shrieking ravages of their own bodies.* No one has a "right" to extend his strength artificially, or his career. Chemistry has no place in that recipe. I love the game because more so than football or basketball a "normal" physical specimen really can use dedication and mental toughness to excel. Pete Rose was not a gifted physical specimen. Nor was Greg Maddux. There is almost no equivalent of those players in football or basketball, though I will spot you John Stockton as a freak of statistics.

I will restate it for emphasis: *Baseball was meant to be the legacy of what superior athletes could accomplish with hard work, mental toughness, and physical dedication – overcoming both the opponent and the shrieking ravages of their own bodies.* Chemistry has no place in that recipe, and chemistry-aided "records" have no place in baseball.

Epilogue

One great thing about baseball is it has no beginning – at least as far as any of us can recall – and no end. Every time a Ted Williams departs a Rod Carew appears. The demise of Koufax and Gibson are paired with the rise of Carlton. As saddened as I was by the ghosts of Manny I also have reason to be optimistic: Jake Peavy was pitching in the minors this week, and his first live outing was better than Tommy John's first outing after his surgery.

Yes, Peavy helped the Barbarians win a title but it goes beyond that. Coming from a family with three doctors I have always found the advances in surgery quite amazing. Having had eight knee surgeries myself, I also find it quite personal.

Lots of pain in the gym and even then only a long shot recovery, but no chance at all if not for advances in metallurgy. Now Peavy may be the second pitching marvel of science, a living cyborg pitching machine of sinew and staples to be celebrated. We have yet to see if the effect has the same one to three MPH boost to Peavy's fastball that Tommy John surgery often does. Reattaching the shoulder muscles does change the leverage a pitcher can get: maybe for the good, maybe for the bad. Time will tell. Speaking of TJS, I'm looking forward to what Stephen Strasburg might look like if he gains the couple ticks many pitchers do. The thought of a starter flinging 104 MPH heat with control will put some fans in the seats. Bet it ups the number of hitters signing up for Lasik, don't you?

It won't be long now before the two of them could be half the Barbarians' 2012 rotation if things break right and the staples hold. Whatever the final outcome of Peavy's ground-breaking surgery, at least he'll know it quicker than we would have back when I had my first surgery. It was ice packs and aspirin back then. Now they can control the swelling and stimulate new muscle growth with electric currents and ultrasonics. The combination sure made a difference in my recovery the last few times they cut me open.

I'm rereading at 2:30 AM, trying to beat the deadline. The last two weeks have been brutal at work: appraisals due, prep for this two week road trip, and a couple slave driving editors at the ***Annual***. It's good they had a huge pot of coffee in the lobby, and if that doesn't work the CVS at the corner has those 5 Hour Energy drinks on sale tonight.

commissioner's report by Darrell Skogen

Much went right last year in TBL. Great pennant races ended in a championship run that crowned another first time World Series champion, Craig Musselman's Rye Herons. Long time TBL manager and Hall of Famer Clay Beard played his way to the Series, the first time in two decades, after a number of close but not cigar seasons. Walter Hunt joined the list of Hall of Fame managers at the draft in New York in February.

The season was played in a timely fashion, and everyone contributed by staying in touch with each other better than we had the season before. Steve Stein continued to add computer touches that made the record-keeping for our league easier, and the schedule tracker was a great addition throughout the summer.

As we go forward this year, our goals are similar to those of last season. We need to keep communicating well with each other to keep the league moving along efficiently. I hope to contact Clay, Paul Montague, and Walter during the season to begin discussions about solidifying the process for the Hall of Fame selection process. It would be good to get discussions going through e-mail this summer regarding some of the proposals made this winter about the constitution. Things are functioning well, but there is always the possibility of tinkering at the edges to make things even better. I look forward to the comments you share about the things we discussed at the winter draft during the business meeting.

As always, we all await the yearbook; its arrival is much like that of the cards and the disks in December and January as we are all beginning to plan our teams for the following season. Clearing out several hours to read through all the things Walter and the boys have culled is one of the most satisfying signs that the new season is going once again.

In this new season, I would like to encourage everyone to make a great effort to read the road manager instructions carefully as you play your opponents. It became clear last year as several managers expressed concerns to me that this is an under-current that needs to be considered this season. We know each other so well and respect each other so much that it is difficult to ask the commissioner to step in to correct playing errors. We all write things like "I don't protest," but there are growing concerns that we are all becoming a bit cavalier in our treatment of instructions. It is frustrating when managers don't read rosters correctly, use ineligible players, and misapply instructions for use of relievers in particular. Several protests made it to my computer last season, and guys, I have to say that protests are not always a bad thing.

As during last year, I will try first to get the two managers involved in any protests to come up with a workable solution in negotiations with each other. It is this process that keeps home managers sharp and allows road managers to expect a consistently fair deal on the road. When agreement cannot be reached, I will decide issues based on the discussion of the two managers, the league rules, and if necessary, a common sense about the "best interest of the league." Confrontation is not always an evil, and in fact, is often a positive in its ability to give everyone a feeling that fair play is happening everywhere. If we all take the time to read instructions fairly, give the road managers the best play we can give them, and stay in contact in a positive manner with each other, we can carry on the excellent traditions that TBL has developed over the years.

Best wishes to all for a great season in 2011. Looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the draft next February in the Boston area.

in memoriam

Harmon Clayton Killebrew, 1936-2011

Game called
across the field of play;
The dusk has come, the hour is late
The fight is done, and lost or won
the player files out through the gate.
The tumult dies, the cheer is hushed;
the stands are bare, the park is still.
But through the night there shines the light
of home upon the silent hill.

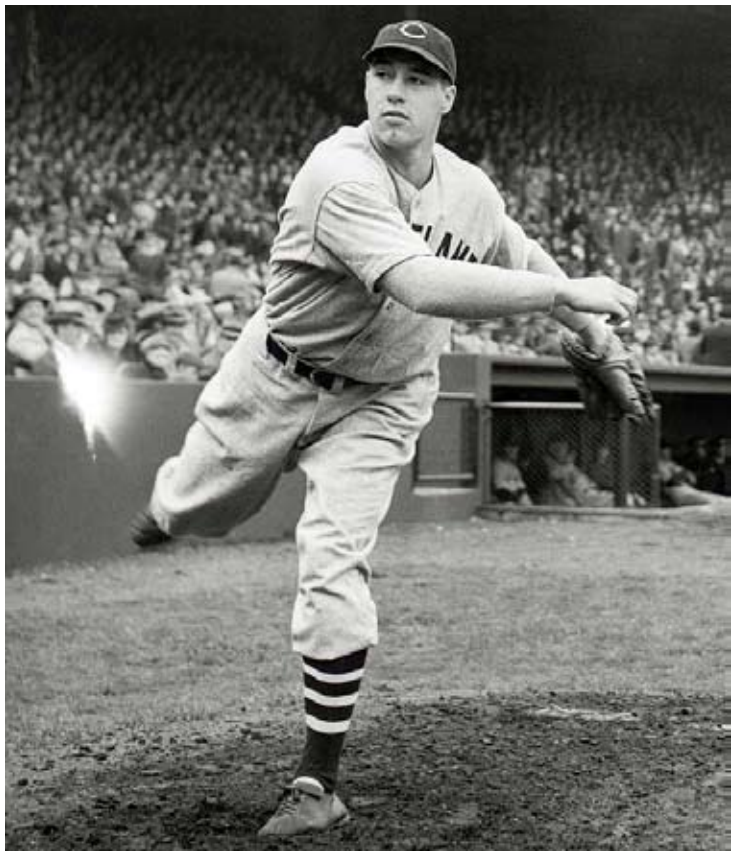
Game called
wherein the golden light
the bugle rolled the reveille.
The shadows creep where night falls deep
and "Taps" has called the end of play.
The game is done, the score is in;
the final cheer, and jeer, have passed –
but in the night, beyond the fight
the player finds his rest at last.

Game called
upon the field of life.
The darkness gathers far and wide;
the dream is done, the score is spun
that stands forever in the *Guide*.
Nor victory, nor yet defeat
is chalked against the player's name;
But down the roll, the final scroll
shows only how he played the game.

Grantland Rice

in memoriam

by Jim Dietz



It was a cold Monday
When the Heater from Van Meter
enlisted in the Navy, sacrificing four years
Of his baseball career for his nation,
escorting convoys to Murmansk
And troopships in the Pacific, too:
Five campaigns, eight battle stars.
The first major leaguer to enlist,
The only Hall of Fame petty officer.

"What kid wouldn't enjoy the life I led in Iowa?
Baseball and farming, the best of both worlds."

Rapid Robert was a quiet man
Signed for a dollar
and an autograph by another Iowa legend
who was sure he'd be a star.
He was. 266 wins, 2581 plus strikeouts,
And good enough for three nicknames.

Robert William Andrew Feller, 1918-2010

TBL

The Transcontinental Baseball League is a 24-team, continuous ownership APBA Baseball League that plays a 162 game season using the Master Board Game and the Computer Game. We play roughly twenty games a month from April through November. TBL uses an innovative, realistic pitching system and restricts players to real-life usage.

Our members are loyal, fun-loving and astute, and we have a high rate of retention. Now in our thirtieth season, our pennant races are always competitive and exciting.

TBL is always interested in adding backup managers to its roster. To get involved, send e-mail to our Commissioner, Darrell Skogen, at

darrell.s@comcast.net

or TBL's unofficial recruiter and analyst, Walter Hunt, at

hotc@walterhunt.com.

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