

The TBL Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

The Master Plan



2012 Edition

Walter H. Hunt

Robert Jordan

Mark H. Bloom

**All 24 Teams Analyzed
Using the T.Q. System**

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by

Walter H. Hunt

Robert Jordan

Mark H. Bloom

with contributions from all of TBL's managers

and extra help from:

Clay Beard

Mark Freedman

Paul Harrington

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the TBL baseball annual

Welcome to the 2012 *TBL Baseball Annual*. This is the seventeenth year of the *Annual* in the book format, and each year we try to do something new and innovative. We've added Mark Bloom to the staff for this edition – he's written some of our team articles and has also contributed a feature.

We've got the usual collection of analysis tools and metrics as well as a look at each team's Master Plan – at least as we see it. We've also got some outstanding insights into building a championship team from the last two champions, Rye and Melrose.

As always, it's probably as much fun to write as it is to read. Have a great season.

Walter, Editor
Robert
Mark
May, 2012

The T.Q. System

Shamelessly stolen from the Mazerowski 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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state of the league

by Bob Jordan



Welcome to the 2012 *TBL Baseball Annual*! We are happy to be back to bring you another installment of the clairvoyant predictions, visionary analysis and agile wit for which we have become internationally (US *and* Canada, baby!) renowned. In this issue, we will gaze at every card, slice and dice every trade and waiver pick, and boldly set forth the path to success for each and every team in our fine league.

Confronting the future

In 2012 we will be looking for a team to beat the Portland Possum. Ray Murphy and new co-owner Jon Brinkmann field a club that just leaps off the page as the mammals to beat this year. Will they live up to the hype and take home their second TBL title? Or will they go the way of the 2002 Rochester Express, who won everything except the game that mattered?

Before we set our sights on the far horizon, we first need to acknowledge a few people who were instrumental in making 2011 another spectacular year for the Transcontinental Baseball League. First off, we should acknowledge the spectacular full-season performance of Mark Freedman's 2011 TBL champion Melrose Avengers. Mr. Freedman showed no quarter to anyone that crossed his path last year, steamrolling to a 123-39 record in the regular season, and crushing three playoff opponents on their way to the title. Mark fell one game short of the Rochester Express record of 124 win in the regular season, but he made up for it with his playoff run. Adding in the 12-3 record Melrose posted in the playoffs, the 135-42 record (a ridiculous .762 winning percentage) ranks as one of the most dominant season-long performances in TBL history.

Congratulations are also in order for Steve Powell's Dallas Eagles, who won 110 games and beat a grimly determined Whitman outfit before

dispatching the defending champion Rye Herons in five games to win the right to face Melrose in the 2012 TBL World Series. This was the best season of Steve's career – and he has been with us since 1988.

Commissioner Darrell Skoggin is once again deserving of our respect and gratitude, as he carried out his difficult duties with class and humor. Tips of the hat are also due our ever-vigilant roster czar Clay Beard, the incredible Stephen Stein who works constantly to keep our schedule tracker and statistics archive up to date and laser-accurate. Thanks also to Ray Murphy for surviving his first year with the twins, and maintaining the TBL web site.

Finally, we once again are lucky to have the indestructible Walter Hunt at the help of this extraordinary effort. Writing novels side-by-side with his work on our *Annual* was simply not enough of a challenge for Walter this year, so he published a game – **Rails of New England**, which is on sale on fine gaming stores and web sites all over the net.

Comings and goings

Two gentlemen join our brotherhood this year. Dean Rogers, who hung in there with us for five years despite a myriad of difficult life events, finally walked off into the sunset, leaving his Houston Lone Stars in the hands of Dave Jaskot. Dave moved the team to Motown – the Detroit Stars will get their groove on with Brobdingnag, Dallas, and New West in the Ruth Division this year.

The other new owner is a familiar face, and it is fantastic to be able to welcome back Jon Brinkmann to TBL! John owned the Mahopac Stogies between 1995 and 2008, and he will help

Ray Murphy pound the rest of TBL into submission as co-owner of the Portland Possum.

The road ahead of us; The journey behind

Our league has been in existence since 1982, when Tim Holmes leveraged a monster Mickey Klutts card to the very first TBL championship. Statistics for that season are lost to history, but the league grew in size and strength for years until it morphed at last into one of the most successful fantasy baseball leagues in the country. In this article, we examine the road ahead, and cite some of the difficult decisions we may have to face as TBL prepares to enter its fourth decade of competition.

The Game

Last year, we were all startled by the Game Company's sudden move from Lancaster, Pa. to Alpharetta, Ga. This may be a simple transition, and APBA may continue in its present course for years. There is plenty of support for the game out there – the APBA page on Facebook buzzes along with news of tournaments, drafts, conferences and other activities. There is no lack of interest in APBA.

But the Game Company has seen its share of financial problems and this physical move was part of the retirement plan of one of the company's founders. Consideration of the future of TBL beyond the lifetime of the APBA Game Company itself would seem to be in order. There has been significant discussion of this within the league. We have a few options, all of which have their ups and downs.

- *Change games* – Many in the league have played other games, such as Strat O Matic. We can prepare for a substantial turnover in league ownership if this happens – some owners will simply resign from the league, no matter which game we select.
- *Roll our own* – Steve Stein publishes a stripped-down version of the card set

every year with his very popular APBA card generator. Steve is clear that he has no intention of competing with the Game Company, or violating any copyright laws, so leveraging Steve's work may not be possible. Also, generating our own cards will be costly – our dues are miniscule compared to most similar organizations. If we build and print our own card sets, dues will go up significantly.

- *Go silicon* – This is another possibility that Steve has brought up in discussion at various times. Baseball for Windows has its problems, not the least of which is that the game is ancient and is not easy to install on later versions of Windows. Steve suggests putting the Master Game as we play it into a database and building an application from that. This will involve a lot of data entry – every board, including the RP boards, the throwing charts and the Adams tables has to be entered so that Steve or another programmer can leverage it. We probably have a few years before we hit a crisis with the Game, but if we're going to do this, now might be a good time to start. This project, once completed, would also free us from any vulnerability surrounding the financial viability of the Game Company. This is an exciting idea.

The players

We are blessed with some of the best game players in the country in our midst, and the quality of the people in this league is certainly one of the reasons that we have lasted so long. It is a bit sobering to consider, however, that this league was founded by 20-somethings, and is now populated by 50 and 60-somethings. As a group, we are still ahead on points, as the saying goes, but we need to consider the age of the league in any discussion of its long-term survival.

Trying to recruit younger players to play a baseball-based board game seems like a dif-

difficult task, but board games have suddenly become hip. The recent recession has forced folks looking for inexpensive entertainment to rediscover the joys of well-designed games. And as I, game designer Walter Hunt, and Richard Meyer (2011 US Champion – *Empire Builder*) can tell you, playing board games is pretty habit forming once you have a good group of folks to play with.

Another headwind we certainly encounter with adding younger owners is the sheer amount of time it takes to be a responsible, contributing owner in TBL. Many of us have hit the wall – even owners as revered in our brotherhood as Joe Auletta and Ray Murphy have found the demands TBL ownership to be extremely daunting when the more challenging periods of our lives land on us.

Ray and I found one solution to alleviate the stress – take on a partner. (Once more...welcome back, Jon Brinkmann!) The amount of work involved with being part of a team is quite manageable when you only have one or two series to play a month. I've said many times in these pages that without Steve's help, I would be off mowing my shaggy lawn right now instead of pounding away at this keyboard. As new owners enter the league, we should encourage them to seek out a partner that they have confidence in, and bring them on board as co-owners. This would deepen the owner pool and help bring new blood into the league at the same time.

Making the future irrelevant

The winter is over, the Red Sox have gotten ceremonially slaughtered by the Yankees in their home opening series, and TBL is ready to rock and roll in 2012! Our carefully polished crystal ball yields the following information on the 2012 pennant races:

- Whitman and Las Vegas are set up for a brawl in the Clemente Division. This race

should go right into November, and the TQs are calling out Brian Hanley's River Rats as the winner. Paul Harrington, even now, is writing his sharp rebuttal to that idea.

- In the Aaron, the race should be tight straight through May Day, when the Portland Possum, piloted by the law firm of Brinkmann and Murphy, starts printing playoff tickets. The Possum have everything in vast steaming quantities this year, and they are a serious threat to win it all.
- Steve Powell's Dallas Eagles, fresh from their appearance in the 2011 TBL World Series, look to take the Ruth Division once again this year.
- The Williams division has three clubs within the margin of error – Glenn Taylor's nicely balanced Wakefield Wizards are the pick from here, but Bruce Taylor, who won his first Williams division title since 2006 last year, will be looking to steal his brother's lunch money in 2012. Darrell Skoggen may send them both to detention with his resurgent Dawgs from Midwest.
- The Melrose Avengers have lost some viscosity after scorching the earth last season, but they will be potent enough to win the Mantle Division for the second year in a row.
- The Mays division sees an aging Rye Herons team battling a potent Gotham City club for the division crown. Anton's club has Justin Verlander and Felix Hernandez, so they will be a handful for Rye and others this season.

We at the *Annual* are happy to be back for another year. Whether you're tricked out with a bullpen full of 20*s or trying to finish off your opponents with noodle armed Red Sox rejects, we wish you all good luck and good health as TBL heads into its 31st season.

the master plan

by Walter Hunt

From the time each team manager took control of a club in TBL, he has had a notion of what he wanted the team to be. This stems from two important sources: *what we like* and *what will make the club more competitive*.

Some people like power hitting. In the APBA Basic game especially, power wins: Basic Game pitchers steal singles only, so those nice '4's, '5's and '6's (and especially those '1's) are good against everyone from Cy Young to Justin Verlander. But even in the Master Game (and the more *involved* version that we have adopted here in TBL) successful teams like to populate the middle of their lineups with 4- and 5-power number players, with as many '1's as possible. The top three home run clubs in TBL last year? Portland, Melbourne, Dallas (107, 123, 110 victories). Of course, there are exceptions: Munich hit 200 homers and turned in a 71-91 record; Las Vegas won 100 games in 2011 and hit only 109, tied for fewest in the league.

Others like pitching. Five good starters; a stocked bullpen; good control and home run prevention are the way to success. It was an *Annual* tradition to mock, or at least chide, teams that favored pitching as the royal road to success – until the Midwest Monarchs built a pitching staff and added a lineup to go with it and won the TBL World Series. So that clearly works. Once, at least.

It's clear, however, that success doesn't just happen by accident, and sustained competitiveness is hard to achieve – the history of the league is littered with one-year wonders, booms and busts, teams built on cardboard who run up the draft credit card and then pay for it with a few years of purgatory. Anyone can do *that*: anyone willing to manage an APBA team in TBL knows what numbers need to be on which cards to win 100 games. There is always a team in rebuild mode willing to let go of a hitter with a good card who has his best years behind him, or a pitcher with an outlier performance (what we wittily call “the Landrum Effect” on these pages). We usually think of early draft picks as building blocks for a young, dynamic team, but they get expended for cardboard that

will help *this* club get to the playoffs *this* year. We accept that; we expect it. It's a better strategy when everything else is in place, and the team needs one more piece. Too much of that stuff, of course, and it's back to the starting point.

To build a perennial contender or even to reach contender status needs a plan. This year, the *Annual* looks into that process with each of our 24 teams in a feature we've grandly dubbed *The Master Plan*. For teams that are in the playoff mix, this section of the team writeup tells you how they got there and what they're doing to stay there; for teams in a rebuild or recovery mode, we convey our sense of their approach, what's on the team now and where they are in the process.

Teams sometimes seek to be bad in order to obtain draft position (this year we call this “the Bryce Harper Sweepstakes”; there are a few clubs in that lottery), but nobody wants to be the punching bag all the time. Even Brobdingnag, where the Prince knows more about how to build a doormat than any other TBL manager, has long-term contention as an objective. World Series dreams are, or should be, everyone's goal. Some teams have gotten there several times; others have reached it but once. Last year's championship was between one team from each category. In order to be in the first one, even for a season, requires some sort of plan.

Is this an example of the *Annual's* incredible insight and acumen? At least somewhat. But we do not seek to mock with this feature (*chide*, perhaps, but that is our kinder and gentler nature). In some cases we may be completely wrong, and in others we may have no idea. What is Joe Auletta or Paul Montague trying to do? Probably we're on the button. What is the Master Plan for Dave Jaskot, our newest manager? *We can only speculate*. Like the Rebuilding Clock, like the Draft Thermometer, like the TQ rating itself, it is only an attempt at insight, to see through the glass darkly. It is how we view the road ahead, into 2012 and beyond. Hope you enjoy our prognostications on these pages.

future drafts

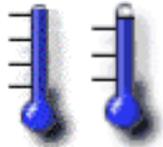
In many cases, what's on the field isn't the whole story. Some of our teams have quite a bit to say in future drafts, and any evaluation should properly take that into account.



base

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 2013; above the middle line is excess, while below means something's missing.

joe auletta: the legend



BROBDINGNAG. The legend continues. Still ridiculous. Five #1s, three #2s, two #3s. Not shown: three #4s.

haves



MUNICH. Their own draft in the upper half, with Hudson's #1.



GREATER OHIO. Their own draft and the Las Vegas #2.



NEW WESTMINSTER, KNOXVILLE, NORTHBORO. Their own upper-half draft for the first two with an extra #3; their own draft for Northboro, with an extra #3.

balanced



ZION, BLUE HILL, COLUMBUS, DETROIT, GRAND CAYMAN. Their own drafts, likely higher up.



KANSAS, RICHMOND, MARACAIBO, WHITMAN. Their own drafts.

have nots

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



MIDWEST. An extra #3, their own #2, but no #1 in 2013.



GOTHAM CITY, PORTLAND. A lower #1 and #2; no #3.



DALLAS. Brobdingnag owns their #2.



MELROSE, HUDSON. Brobdingnag owns Melrose's #1; Munich owns Hudson's #1.



WAKEFIELD. Brobdingnag owns their #2; Knoxville owns their #3.



LAS VEGAS. Just a #3, though they do own the rest of their own draft. For now.



RYE. It belongs to Brobdingnag, though they also do own the rest of their own draft. For now.

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 (Aron)	12.0	7.5	15.5	3.0	38.0
Rye (Mays)	11.5	5.0	13.0	2.5	32.0
Melrose (Mantle)	11.0	7.0	11.0	3.0	32.0
Whitman (Clemente)	8.5	7.0	13.0	3.0	31.5
Dallas (Ruth)	9.5	5.0	12.5	3.5	30.5

The Solid Performers



Las Vegas (Clemente)	7.0	5.0	14.0	3.0	29.0
Wakefield (Williams)	7.5	5.5	13.0	3.0	29.0
Northboro (Aron)	11.0	8.5	7.0	2.5	29.0
Hudson (Mantle)	10.0	5.5	9.5	3.0	28.0
Richmond (Williams)	9.0	7.0	7.5	3.5	27.0
Gotham City (Mays)	7.5	6.0	10.5	2.5	26.5
Midwest (Williams)	6.0	4.5	13.0	2.5	26.0

The Transitional Teams



Kansas (Aron)	7.5	6.0	8.5	2.0	24.0
Maracaibo (Aron)	6.5	6.0	8.0	2.5	23.0
Zion (Mantle)	7.0	4.5	7.5	2.5	21.5
Greater Ohio (Mays)	6.5	4.5	7.0	2.0	20.0
Columbus (Clemente)	6.0	4.0	7.0	2.0	19.0
Brobdingnag (Ruth)	4.5	4.0	9.0	1.5	19.0
Grand Cayman (Mays)	8.0	4.0	5.0	2.0	19.0

The Rebuilders



New Westminster (Ruth)	5.5	4.0	5.5	1.5	16.5
Knoxville (Williams)	4.5	4.0	6.0	2.0	16.5
Munich (Mantle)	4.0	4.0	5.5	2.0	15.5
Blue Hill (Clemente)	4.0	3.0	6.5	2.0	15.5
Detroit (Ruth)	4.5	3.5	5.5	1.5	1.0

Conference Totals

International	273.5 (22.8 average)
National	310.5 (25.9 average)

Division Totals

Aron (NC)	114.0	Mantle (NC)	97.0
Ruth (IC)	81.0	Clemente (IC)	95.0
Mays (IC)	97.5	Williams (NC)	99.5

features

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 2013 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:** *Blue Hill, Knoxville*.



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:** *Brobdingnag, Detroit, Munich*.

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:** *Columbus, Grand Cayman, Greater Ohio, Maracaibo, New Westminster, 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:** *Kansas*.



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:** *Midwest, Richmond*.

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:** *Hudson*.



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:** *Dallas, Portland*.



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:** *Gotham City, Las Vegas, Melrose, Wakefield, Whitman*.



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: *Rye.*



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.



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. It's been a feature in this publication for a few years.

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. You will also find this commentary below.

Numbers, Numbers, Numbers

Don't we like them, too. Over the course of 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.

Now we rely on the wonderful statistics history provided by Steve Stein. As previously noted, it has made our job here much easier, and has given us insights and perspectives we might not have otherwise had.

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:	<i>Yonder Alonso, 1B</i>
Brobdingnag:	<i>Dustin Ackley, 2B</i>
Columbus:	<i>Jason Kipnis, 2B</i>
Dallas:	<i>Dee Gordon, SS</i>
Detroit:	<i>Chad Billingsley, SP</i>
Gotham City:	<i>Vance Worley, SP</i>
Grand Cayman:	<i>Nathan Eovaldi, SP</i>
Greater Ohio:	<i>Freddie Freeman, 1B</i>
Hudson:	<i>Jose Bautista, 3B</i>
Kansas:	<i>Mike Moustakas, 3B</i>
Knoxville:	<i>Delmon Young, OF</i>
Las Vegas:	<i>Eric O'Flaherty, RP</i>
Maracaibo:	<i>Salvador Perez, C</i>
Melrose:	<i>Ryan Vogelsong, SP</i>
Midwest:	<i>Eric Hosmer, 1B</i>
Munich:	<i>Brett Lawrie, 3B</i>
New Westminster:	<i>Mark Melancon, RP</i>
Northboro:	<i>Jeff Francoeur, OF</i>
Portland:	<i>Mike Napoli, C</i>
Richmond:	<i>Aroldis Chapman, RP</i>
Rye:	<i>Aramis Ramirez, 3B</i>
Wakefield:	<i>Mike Trumbo, 1B</i>
Whitman:	<i>Paul Goldschmidt, 1B</i>
Zion:	<i>Jesus Montero, C</i>



For your entertainment and enjoyment: the Vegas Line for each team in TBL. Paul's insights often differ from ours, but they're always of interest.

BLUE HILL. The 2011 edition of the Mudslides lost 93 games and, due to many injuries, the 2012 edition will probably be worse. Blue Hill will be the frontrunner in the Bryce Harper Sweepstakes.

BROBDINGNAG. This team, just like its owner Vlad, has risen from the dead and is on the verge of being respectable again. They won't catch Dallas for the Ruth crown, but an over .500 finish is quite likely.

COLUMBUS. Long gone are the days of the Rochester Express and Vic Vaughn has put his stamp on this franchise. But there are still too many non-performers around taking up space on the roster. Too many for the Jets to succeed in 2012.

DALLAS. The Eagles made their first World Series appearance in 2011 and I'm sure they'd love to make it back again in 2012. That's totally possible as their path to the Ruth title, and the playoffs, is all but unobstructed.

DETROIT. Gone are the Lonestars and our friend Dean Rogers. In comes our new friend Dave Jaskot and a franchise transfer to the Motor City. He inherits a moribund team that has talent, but is several years from a playoff team. Good luck Dave!

GOTHAM CITY. Despite having Verlander and "King" Felix at the top of the rotation, the Batmen will have a tough time overtaking the Herons for the Mays Division crown. Maybe in 2013.

GRAND CAYMAN. With GM Whitey Bulger now safely behind bars can Grand Cayman, a team which ran on violence and intimidation for years, be able to win on their on field merits alone. Time will tell.

GREATER OHIO. From 2004 thru 2006, the Chia Pets averaged almost 95 wins culminating in a World Series appearance in 2006. Since then they've averaged under 68 wins. It won't be much better in 2012.

HUDSON. Clay Beard and his Generals avoided 100 losses in 2011 by only one game. This year's edition is much improved on both offense and pitching wise. A wild card berth could be the result.

KANSAS. Bill Schwartz, our Midwset manager, and his Koyotes were the odd team out in 2011 when the rest of the Aaron division made the playoffs. Kansas will not be even that close in 2012 despite some young talent on the roster.

KNOXVILLE. Everything that you need to know about the 2012 Outlaws can be gleaned from Pat Martin's standard instructions. Their pitchers are "young", their offense is stuck in a "black hole" and, with luck, they'll be having fun in 2014. Woo, boy!

LAS VEGAS. The Gamblers won an even 100 games in 2011 and with added power from the likes of Mayberry, Presley and Downs and a monster bullpen they may even better that mark in 2012.

MARACAIBO. Everyone's favorite Master Mason, Walter Hunt, returns to a Rumrunners team that won 90 games and made the playoffs last year. The 2012 edition isn't as good and will struggle to make it back there again, but Walter is game for a challenge.

MELROSE. Before last season began the *Annual* picked the Avengers to win their division and get to the World Series. But ya

gotta play the games, right? They did and they won 123 games and the World Series. Melrose is a shadow of 2011 but will still win the Mantle easily.

MIDWEST. The Guru sure has fallen on hard times since his WS victory in 2009, averaging a 57-105 record the last 2 seasons. But that won't be the case this season. A decent offense and great pitching will right the ship.

MUNICH. Even Monty's instructions say Munich will be lucky to win 70 games in 2012 and that would be optimistic. Seriously tight player usages (lots of 2B5's) along with mediocre pitching means they will challenge Blue Hill for the No.1 pick in 2013 draft.

NEW WEST. In 2010, our Canadian buddy Jim Jeatt won over 100 games. Last year they almost halved their win total (56). The best they can hope for in 2012 is beating out Detroit for third place in the Ruth Division.

NORTHBORO. TBL's "Dandy Duo", Steve Stein and Bob Jordan, steered their shared club to the final WC spot in 2011. They return a team with good offense, average starting pitching and a 'pen in search of a closer. Another spot in the playoffs could happen in 2012.

PORTLAND. They played second fiddle to Melrose last year, even denied another World Series appearance by the Avengers. But not in 2012. Five studs make *all* of their 162 starts. A loaded bullpen and a lineup full of superstars make Portland this season's Melrose. Probably with similar success.

RICHMOND. It took a 163rd game for Bruce Taylor's Rebels to beat back his brother's team and take the Williams Division crown in 2011. They were then promptly crushed by Melrose. In 2012 they will battle with Midwest for the division title.

RYE. The elite of the Mays Division, since Las Vegas left for the Clemente, they should rule there again in 2012. Whether they can make it back to the World Series is another story.

WAKEFIELD. As mentioned with Richmond, Wakefield lost the Williams title in game 163 and then missed a Wild Card berth to Northboro by 1 game! But in 2012 the Wizards, led by a good offense and great starting pitching could give both Richmond and Midwest a run for their money.

WHITMAN. All of Whitman's 2012 starters have decent grades and positive peripherals. They have good power and better defense. They will battle Vegas all season long for the Clemente Division title.

ZION. If anyone could make this team competitive it's the Sensei, but even that worthy will be hard pressed to win with this crew. Only 7 of 20 positional players have more than 100 games and those with the most usage have crappy cards. Only Munich keeps them from the division basement.

This commentary also appears in each team article, for your convenience.

2011 computer pre-play

by Clay Beard

After a year's hiatus the pre-play is back. This is the same low labor project come to expect from me. For the settings I used Duke Robinson Jr. to manage all the teams. I checked *Fatigue only* under *Fatigue and Injury Rules*. I also checked all three of the options at the bottom: *Automatic AIM Subs*, *Enforce BFP*, and that *No PR > 930* thing, which provides some innocuous usage. All players were active for the whole season. These settings basically allow the season to be played with usage similar to that of the MLB season, with some innocuous help. Then I just pushed the button and played the season 10 times. The won/loss records indicate the average of the 10 seasons.

The rounding off was a little weird this year; a large majority of the averages were under the .5 mark. So I actually played it an eleventh time just to decide which .4 to round up. Rye gets the extra win to give us a 1944-1944 league record.

It's an interesting mix of locks and real races this year. Dallas actually has the securest playoff spot even though they're probably the weakest division winner, thanks to being safely tucked in the Ruth division. Whitman is a heavy favorite in the Clemente with Las Vegas probably securing



a wild -card and having a puncher's chance at the division. The real action in the IC is in the Mays with three strong contenders.

It's a similar story in the NC. Portland is the class of the conference and was also the most consistent team in the pre-play, with only an eleven game range.

Melrose and Hudson are in a virtual dead heat for the Mantle. The two teams end the season against each other and it's also the most likely place for game 163 to show up. The loser however will most likely be a wild-card. The scramble is in the Williams where, like the Mays, three teams have a real shot. All three, plus the Mantle teams will have one eye peeled on a very strong Northboro squad that will be in the wild-card mix.

Obviously this isn't nearly as scientific as Steve's work (thanks Duke). But I like this because it shows you the possibilities if things break your way or not. Plain old dumb luck is always huge factor.



International Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Clemente	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
WHITMAN	100	62	--	110	85	9	0
LAS VEGAS	91	71	9	99	82	1	8
COLUMBUS	66	96	34	75	60	0	0
BLUE HILL	60	102	40	69	49	0	0

Mays	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
RYE	95	67	--	101	86	5.5	4.5
GOTHAM CITY	93	69	2	106	82	3.5	4
GREATER OHIO	86	76	9	93	78	1	3.5
GRAND CAYMAN	75	87	20	82	66	0	0

Ruth	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
DALLAS	89	73	--	102	82	10	0
NEW WESTMINSTER	69	93	20	78	63	0	0
DETROIT	69	93	20	78	62	0	0
BROBDINGNAG	63	99	26	76	52	0	0

National Conference TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Aaron	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
PORTLAND	104	58	--	110	99	10	0
NORTHBORO	91	71	13	104	84	0	6
KANSAS	77	85	27	84	68	0	0
MARACAIBO	77	85	27	84	69	0	0

Mantle	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
MELROSE	97	65	--	108	87	4.5	4.5
HUDSON	96	66	1	108	88	5.5	4.5
ZION	70	92	27	82	63	0	0
MUNICH	58	104	39	68	50	0	0

Williams	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
MIDWEST	92	70	--	108	82	6	2
WAKEFIELD	86	76	6	93	76	3	2
RICHMOND	83	79	9	95	75	1	1
KNOXVILLE	57	105	35	65	52	0	0

fractions reflect ties.

* Highest number of wins recorded

‡ Division Championships (in 10 seasons)

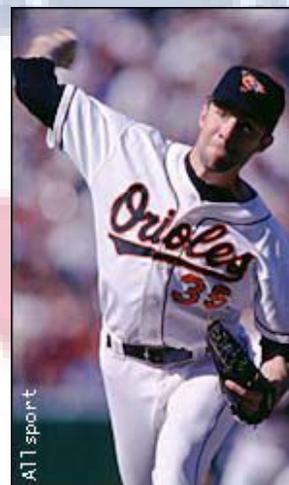
† Lowest number of wins recorded

§ Wild Card appearances (in 10 seasons)

international conference hall of fame eligibles

Mike Mussina, SP 1993-2009
Minnesota/Knoxville, Rochester/Columbus

One of the steadiest rotation pitchers in TBL for fifteen years, Moose had his best years laboring for the Minnesota Blue Thunder. He won 16 games as a rookie in 1993, and was among the league's leaders from then on. After a year in Melrose he became a member of the Rochester Express and their successor in Columbus. In his TBL career he won 251 games (fourth all-time) and struck out 3,045 (third all time) in 3,635 innings.



Mike Mussina



Barry Bonds

Barry Bonds, OF 1987-2008
Rochester

TBL has never seen eye-popping numbers and APBA cards like those produced by Bonds. He hit 826 homers in his 22 seasons, driving in 2,342 runs and scoring 2,465. His 2,204 walks, 721 doubles, and .406 OBP, as well as his RBI and HR totals, are all #1 on the leader boards. He led the league in homers five times, with an astounding 81 in 2002.



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 Carolinian franchises, and the Jessup club.



Wade Boggs



Roger Clemens

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 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.

HALL OF FAME

Once Again Into the Breach

When the Las Vegas Gamblers returned to the Clemente Division, they renewed an old rivalry. Last year both they and the Whitman River Rats had fine seasons and both made the playoffs.

Well, here we go again.



Brian Hanley's Whitman River Rats are back, tanned and rested and armed. The pitching staff is young and very talented; there are some great cards on offense; and, as usual, they can catch the ball too. The TQs say that they have a few games' margin over their nearest rivals, but it should be a great pennant race.

The competition will come from the **Las Vegas Gamblers**. **Paul Harrington** enjoyed his second 100-win season, and his first in more than a decade, riding a great pitching staff to a Clemente Division pennant. It's been a few years since Vegas has had a sustained period of contention, but this edition should be good for a while. It may come down to head-to-head matchups.



2011 Clemente Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Las Vegas*	100	62	.617	—
Whitman†	96	66	.593	4
Columbus	78	84	.481	22
Blue Hill	69	93	.426	31

* Lost to Rye in IC semi-final.

† Won WC; lost to Dallas in IC semi-final.

They don't play the game on paper, baseball wags say when a team looks good on paper but doesn't play well on the field. Well, of course, we play the game on paper – and even then, good numbers don't always turn into good APBA cards, and the TQ doesn't take "talent" or "potential" into account. (We have other metrics for that.) Such is the lot of **Vic Vaughn's Columbus Jets**, a team with more and more talented core players that will probably struggle in TBL this year. But there will be better years to come.

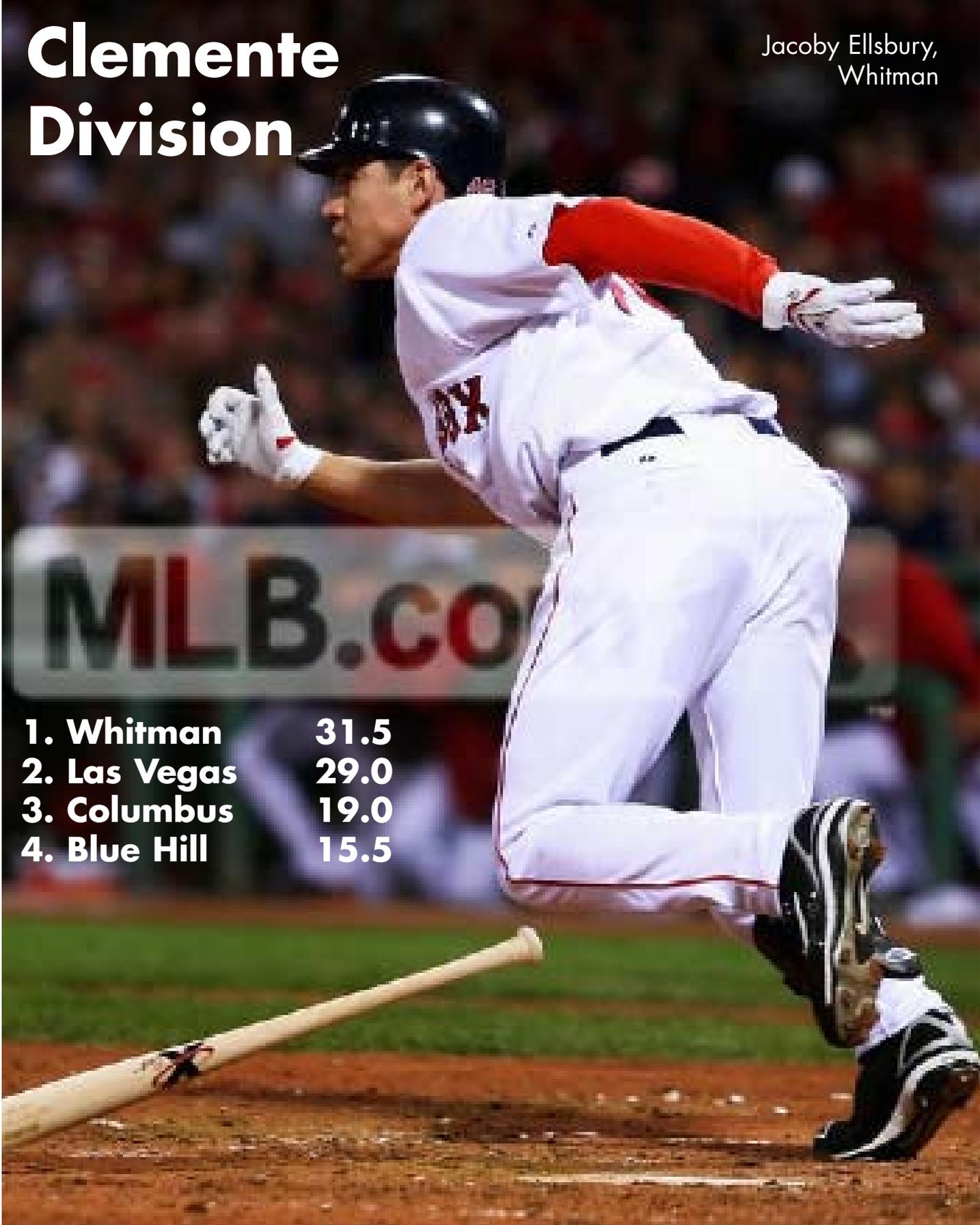


We hope to cast some light on the recent hard times of the Blue Hill club, and the master plan of Mark Ludwig to get them back to contention. It's been three long years in the wilderness: but the last few drafts have been fruitful. Like the team up in Columbus, however, young talent isn't enough to make this anything other than a long, long season.



Clemente Division

Jacoby Ellsbury,
Whitman



1. Whitman	31.5
2. Las Vegas	29.0
3. Columbus	19.0
4. Blue Hill	15.5

2011 whitman RIVER RATS in review



The pitching . . . was the path to success.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 96-66 (2nd, Clemente)

Another year in the Clemente Division led to a somewhat surprising 96 win season and a wild card berth. After fighting off Grand Cayman in 7 games we fell to eventual Series runner-up Dallas in 7 games. Our pair of aces carried the staff and strongly influenced the team ERA of 3.53. The offense was improved in spots hitting a combined .262 with a team .336 OBP. We managed to hit 152 homers despite only having three batters who hit more than 20. 98 stolen bases helped us score an average of 4.9 runs per game. Despite a first round playoff exit that took 7 games to conclude, the season was a success.

What went right?

There were some offensive bright spots. Paul Konerko had a huge year with a line of .296/.366/.564, with 40 HR and a whopping 142 RBI while scoring 98 and pounding out 44 doubles. Kelly Johnson scored a team high 113 runs with 25 HR and 116 RBI. Part timer Andruw Jones clubbed 29 dingers in just 107 games but hit only .233. Juan Pierre stole 46 bags and scored 105 runs while Nick Markakis posted a solid year batting .290 with 104 runs scored.

The pitching, on the other hand, was the path to success. The bullpen had an off year posting a collective ERA of 3.61 which is higher than the starters' 3.50. Kershaw went 17-10, 2.33 with 231 Ks and an impressive 1.05 WHIP while his counterpart David Price went 17-7, 2.91 with 219 Ks and an identical 1.05 WHIP. Matt Garza turned in a solid effort going 12-7 with a stingy 3.18 ERA.

What went wrong?

Overall the offense was not what you would call potent; beyond the five top players it got a bit ugly at times. Everyday players like Mark Reynolds (149 games, .179, 15 HR), Brendan Ryan (104 games, .206, 18 RBI) and Raul Ibañez (149 games, .254, 11 HR .313 OBP) made for some quiet stretches in the Whitman lineup (but we knew these guys were going to struggle going into the year.) The subtraction of Jacoby Ellsbury left a large hole. The bullpen was not good; closer David Aardsma had 34 saves but 5 losses and an ERA of 3.89. After setup guys Sipp and Clippard there was no one we could count on.

3 Things

1. *Building around starting pitching.* This has given us a solid base to work from, and is the biggest factor in our recent success and in the coming season. Going into 2012 we have a deep staff; all five starters have solid grades and positive peripherals.
2. *The acquisition of Jason Giambi.* His and Paul Goldschmidt's performance in 2012 will likely determine our success. While not a typical Whitman strategy, it was necessary because the 2012 lineup is similar to last year, though the bench may be the best in TBL.
3. *The improved bullpen.* The 2011 edition was not particularly good, but with a Grade 25* closer and a Grade 23* setup man we look pretty solid after the seventh inning. If our pitching holds up and we can get enough out of our bench this year I like our chances in a very close race with Las Vegas.

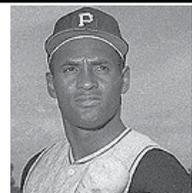


Konerko: Huge year.

whitman RIVER RATS

Brian Hanley (17th year)

Be prepared to work when the Rats come to town.



The *Annual* has it down to a science. Take Brian Hanley's team, lay out the cards, apply the usual objective criteria born of years of experience, and miss the projection by 15 games. Last year, we performed our usual face plant on the dismount, calling out a .500 season for Brian's uneven squad, which had a clearly identifiable demarcation line between its strengths (top-end start pitching) and its weaknesses (a marginal bullpen with control issues). The River Rats won 96 and threw a scare into Las Vegas before locking in a second place finish in the Clemente. In the playoffs, Whitman survived a seven game donnybrook with Cayman, but just missed taking out eventual conference champion Dallas.

It was a terrific season, but as it turned out, the summer of 2011 was just an appetizer for the big entrée served up this year.

Pitching: 13.0
Outstanding rotation, solid pen.



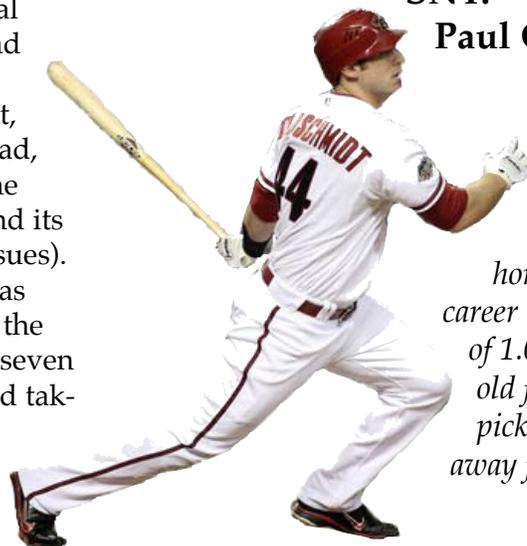
Kershaw: Better every year

ROTATION. Whitman's championship look starts with a gorgeous starting staff that goes 159 starts deep. It starts with the dominant Dodger lefthander Clayton Kershaw (Grade 16 HR+22 HR+25, 33 starts), who just seems to get better every year. Kershaw turns 24 this

year, and has been at the top of Whitman's rotation for three seasons. With his age and ability, there is no more valuable starting pitcher in TBL right now.

Kershaw is followed in the rotation with another stellar lefty, David Price (Grade 12 C+16 HR+12, 34 starts). Price is down a step from his grade 15 of a year ago, but this card will take a run at the 17 win mark he posted last season.

SNT:
Paul Goldschmidt



He has a sexy card and a minor league career that includes two 30 homer seasons and a career minor league OPS of 1.060. The 25 year old first round draft pick will be hammering away for years.

Turnover Rate: 26%

Arrived: Robert Andino, Mark Buehrle, Bobby Cassevah, Brian Dinkelman, Jason Giambi, Paul Goldschmidt, Ben Revere, Drew Sutton, Brayan Villarreal

Departed: David Aardsma, Joaquin Arias, Blaine Boyer, Barry Enright, Frank Herrmann, Raul Ibanez, Ben Sheets, Brian Tallet, Omar Vizquel.

The middle of the rotation sees two solid right-handed starters with solid peripherals: Kyle Lohse (Grade 10 C+24 HR+15, 30 starts) and Matt Garza (Grade 10 HR+25, 31 starts). Lohse is coming off a career year with the Cardinals as a 32 year old. Brian has had Kyle buried on his roster for a few years, and his patience finally paid off. Garza defied the stats mavens last year, moving from a nice pitcher's park in Tampa to the wind-blown horrors of Wrigley Field, but posting a career-best ERA (3.32) anyway. Veteran Mark Buehrle (Grade 8 C+31 HR+12, 31 starts) will perform credibly in his appearances before three episodes of the Aaron Cook (Grade 1) Comedy Hour.



Whitman RIVER RATS

The only possible nit with this group is that they are very left-handed, which means that the best teams in the league will have their lineups filled with big lefty shifts. Teams like Greater Ohio and Northboro have tried this before, with limited success, but neither of them was working with Clayton Kershaw.

BULLPEN. It is a truth widely noted that most problems in a bullpen can be solved with the addition of a Grade 23* with 88 relief innings. Tyler Clippard (HR-22, 88 IP) is a one man setup staff, and if his insistence on throwing left-handed and his unorthodox peripherals give one pause, please note that he does not have closer responsibilities on this excellent club. That job falls to short-inning stud Carlos Villanueva (Grade 3/25* C+15, 34 RIP), whose job, according to the instructions, is to get the last two outs in a save situation. The two guys at the top have 122 innings of door-slamming goodness.

There follows a troika of setup men of varying levels of competence. The best of the group is Bobby Cassevah (Grade 17* C-44 HR+53, 39 IP), a 27 year old Angels righty. His large homer number makes him very valuable, but his wacky control number means he leaves with the bases are loaded. The real workhorse here is Sergio Santos (Grade 16* C-26, 63 IP). Concept reliever Tony Sipp (Grade 16* C-16 HR-26, 62 IP) contributes a nice grade and some overly entertaining peripherals to the late staff. They are followed by ancient lefty Tim Byrdak (Grade 10* C-25 HR+22, 37 IP), former closer George Sherrill (Grade 12* HR+15, 36 IP), and Minnesota righty Matt Guerrier (Grade 9* HR+32, 66 IP), whose role is to cleanup for pummeled starters. These three add about 140 more innings.

With the strong starting staff, this should be just enough for the regular season. The pitching will



All of Whitman's 2012 starters have decent grades and positive peripherals. They have good power and better defense.

They will battle Vegas all season long for the Clemente Division title.

work hard and will be one of the reasons for Whitman's success this coming season.

**Offense: 8.5
Perhaps a notch below.**

Whitman is looking to improve on the 796 runs it scored last year with a thunder and lightning lineup that has power in the middle and speed all over the roster. The entire hitting attack is centered on two monster cards – CF Jacoby Ellsbury (1-4-5-6, 11 hits 3 walks+22, 2 11s) and the ageless Paul Konerko (1-5-5, 11 hits, 4 walks). Last year, Ellsbury almost won the AL MVP award before the BBWAA remembered he played for Boston. (All the arguments about not giving the MVP award to starting pitchers, which were so persuasive when Pedro Martinez was the American League's best player, were tossed in the ash can to give the MVP to Justin Verlander.)

There are four other power cards – all part-time card-board – to reinforce the middle of the lineup. The most compelling is 2012 first round draft pick Paul Goldschmidt (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, R+1, 48 games), who might have been the best hitter in the draft. Forty-one year old Jason Giambi (1-1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, 64 games) adds his grizzled presence for three months. Mark Reynolds (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks) and Andruw Jones (1-1-6, 9 hits, 5 walks, R-8, L+2, 77 games) will be swinging like oscillating fans all year.



Reynolds: Oscillating fans

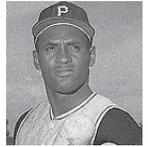
Then there's the motion offense, designed to get on base and move runners into scoring position for the big guys. The *getting on base part* is going to be the challenge. The best card in this set is Nick Markakis (3 0s, 10 hits 3 walks, 15 speed number, 31 SSN for 15 attempts), who leads off in many lineups. Robert Andino (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+2) plays second in most lineups and will prove annoying against lefthanders on the board. Then, things get a little dicey. Juan Pierre (2 0s, 10 hits 2 walks, L+5, and 24 SSN for 44 attempts, 3 31s) is showing signs of age and really should not be running a lot with that modest SSN. The three 31s will be used, though, as

Mr. Hanley will be leaning hard on the hit and run this year. Kelly Johnson (1-4-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, 17 speed number, 28 SSN for 28 SBA) platoons at second base, and is way off his highs. Outfielder Ben Revere (0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 18 speed number, 30 SSN for 43 SBAs) and everyday shortstop Brendan Ryan (2 0s, 9 hits 3 walks+42, 31 SSN for 16 SBA) will burn up the base paths when the make it that far.



Ellsbury: MVP candidate

Everyone plays on this club and guys have very specific roles that are called for at all points of the game. Drew Sutton (6-6-6-6, 11 hits 2 walks+42, 54 at bats) should always bat with a man on third. Henry Blanco (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, R-4, 37 games) has a terrific hitting card to go with his defense. Old friend Andruw Jones – a lifetime Rat – has 1-1-0-0 power and a nice shift (L+2). He'll be useful. Kelly Johnson has a 17 speed number and enough stolen bases to help in close and late situations. Plenty of options here. Be prepared to work when the River Rats are in town.



Whitman RIVER RATS

If Whitman can get folks on base and use the hit and run to move them into scoring position, this offense will be fine. The issue is going to be scoring runs against good pitching when the little guys get snuffed. With the power, this is probably about as good an offense as last year, which makes it a notch below what you normally see from a championship team.

Defense: 7.0
A solid defensive team.

Defensively, Whitman is very solid in the middle of the Diamond with Ryan (SS9) and Andino (2B8) taking regular shifts. The outfield is full of quality leather as well – Markakis, Revere and Ellsbury are all OF3s. Markakis (37 arm) can really throw, but Revere (25 arm) and Juan Pierre (OF2, 28 arm) would be better off running the ball in. The catching slot sees a lot of Ronny Paulino (C7, Th-3) and Josh Thole (C7, Th-3), but Henry Blanco (C8, Th+3) is around for when things get serious.

At the corner infield slots, Whitman has Konerko (1B4) at first, but Reynolds (3B3) needs a catcher's mask at the hot corner.

Overall, this is a solid defensive club. Having an everyday SS9 will help the pitching a lot.

Bench: 3.0
Nifty options.

There are lots of nifty bench options, and anyone that thinks games against Whitman are going to be quick affairs should carefully read the instructions.

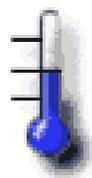
1st We think they'll win. It's not going to be easy: the club down the road in Las Vegas has a lot going for it and has extended its efforts to make the team good enough to win. It's clear that Whitman has done the same, both in the draft and by trade. Both managers are very capable and both teams should have a chance to compete in the post season.



MASTER PLAN: WHITMAN

Mr. Hanley is a believer in pitching: Kershaw, Price, and Garza were all top selections in TBL drafts, and the acquisition of Buehrle reinforce that notion. The addition of Jones (long ago), Ellsbury, Markakis, Konerko, and now Goldschmidt shows that he has a good eye for position players as well.

One thing is clear: Whitman is not a team that has committed to long rebuilds. The team is a long term contender: since reaching .500 in 1997, they dipped a little bit in 2007-2008 but have otherwise been in the pennant chase. They've never reached the Series, though. Does the master plan of continuous contention mean that they never will? Time will tell.



TQ: 31.5

2011 Las Vegas GAMBLERS in review



If you're going to trade your team's future for cardboard, it should at least be the durable kind.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 100-62 (1st, Mays)

If you were to do the math, you'd see that the Las Vegas Gamblers are one of the oldest teams in TBL. I think the average age for the boys from Sin City is something like 31-32. Years of trading top round draft picks for ground chuck cardboard has left Las Vegas with quite a lot of veteran baggage mixed in with some young talent. The moon and the stars aligned again in 2011 and all the signs and portents showed a winning team should be expected that year. 31 yr old Colby Lewis was drafted and 36 yr old knuckler R.A. Dickey was traded for (along with a little more of our future) to shore up the rotation. We girded our loins and prepared for the season to commence.

What went right?

We won 100 games, the Clemente crown and made the playoffs! That's got to count for something. The offense was paced by Alfonso Soriano, who led the team in HR (22) and doubles (44). Chone Figgins, in his final year in a Gamblers uniform, solidified the leadoff spot, scoring 110 runs, drawing 82 walks (a team high) with 39 steals. Rookie newcomer Austin Jackson was as good as expected, leading the team in average (.301) and hits (192) with 22 steals. In fact, Las Vegas led all of TBL with 114 SB.

Overall the offense was good enough to win a lot of games behind some really good pitching. Colby Lewis led the starters at 19-11, 3.77. Shaun Marcum won 16 wins; Hiroki Kuroda 14. The starters as a whole were good for a 77-54 record with 29 CG, 12 ShO and a 3.88 ERA; but it was truly the great bullpen performance that ruled the day. Co-closers Santiago Casilla and



Marcum: 16 wins

Joel Peralta combined for 3 wins and 55 saves and a 1.43 ERA in 94.1 IP spanning 86 appearances! The relief corps was impressive – 23-8, 57 saves and an ERA of 2.81 in 385 innings.

What went wrong?

We were summarily dismissed from the playoffs by a superior offensive squad from Rye. In the Gamblers' 15 seasons, they have only reached the conference championship twice (2000, 2009) and never the World Series. Some things never change. The offense (.270 / .330 / .393) hit only 109 dingers, the lowest total in TBL last year. We had over 1100 Ks, paced by Jackson's 196 and Soriano's 166. Team Captain Vlad Guerrero showed signs of wear, with only 19 HR and with pedestrian percentages of .280 / .329 / .437.

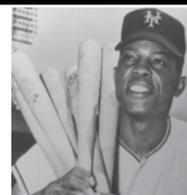
3 Things

1. *The end of Vlad Guerrero.* 2012 looks to be the end of the baseball road for "the VLAD" and there will be a happy little ceremony sometime in 2013. The future Hall of Famer still has a role to play and 2012 gives him one more shot at that championship that has eluded him for so long.
2. *Aging with grace.* – Vegas is an old team, but at least the oldsters are getting playing time and making starts. If you're going to trade your team's future for cardboard, it should at least be the durable kind. The kind you can sleep under in tough times!
3. *Boom and Bust.* It's early in the MLB season and it doesn't look good for the 2013 Gamblers. We may be at the beginning of another bust. Management has always lived "for the moment" and won't stop now. If we have to take our lumps for a couple of years then we will. It's certainly nothing new in Sin City.

Las Vegas GAMBLERS

Paul Harrington (16th year)

This is going to be a photo finish – just like last year.



Las Vegas cashed in its chips right on schedule last season, racking up 100 regular season wins for the second time in team history. With strong pitching and a season-long commitment to small-ball offense, Paul squeezed every last win out of this team last year, and won the Clemente Division despite hitting only 109 home runs all year.

This season, the power is slightly improved, and Paul is taking aim at another division title. This time, his big weapon is a lock-down bullpen that he's planning to use aggressively. Can he overachieve enough to catch the River Rats?

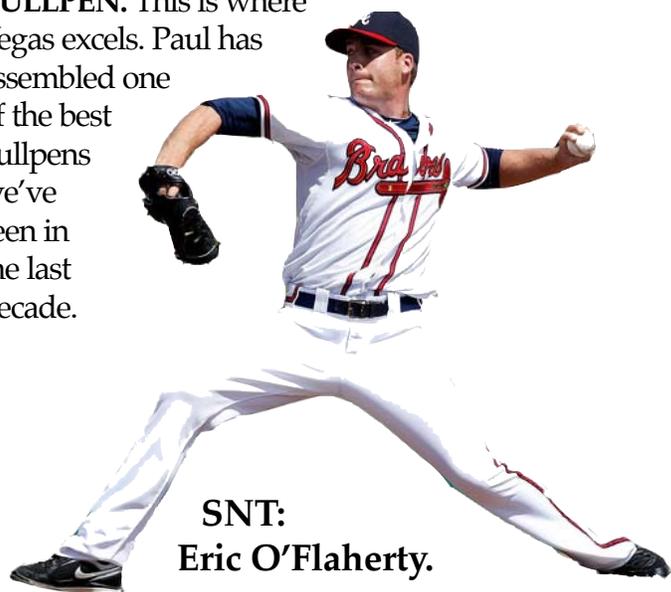
Pitching: 14.0
Solid rotation, strong at the end.

No team in TBL is going to live or die on the performance of its starting pitching like the Gamblers this season. Simply put, if this team can get to the late innings with a lead, it will usually win the game; if it falls behind early, it may struggle to catch up.

ROTATION. Las Vegas has a deep starting staff with no monster on top but no weaknesses either. Everyone is between grades 9 and 11. Shawn Marcum (Grade 11 C+14 HR-12, 33 starts) is the best full-season grade in the stack. He is followed by R. A. Dickey (Grade 10 C+21 HR+15, 32 starts) and Hiroki Kuroda (Grade 10 C+25 HR-14, 32 starts). Lefthander Colby Lewis (Grade 9 C+15 HR-26, 32 starts) won 19 games last year for Las Vegas. Gavin Floyd (Grade 9 C+24 HR-11, 30 starts) pushes the Gamblers to 159 starts with no regrets. Rookie Brad Hand (Grade 11 C-62 HR-26, 12 starts) will mop up the last three starts, all of them in November.

The starting pitching will allow Las Vegas to compete through the first five innings most days. Teams that find themselves behind Vegas can then prepare themselves for the beatdown.

BULLPEN. This is where Vegas excels. Paul has assembled one of the best bullpens we've seen in the last decade.



SNT:
Eric O'Flaherty.

Part of the huge bullpen that the Head Gambler has assembled for this season. He's the top notch lefty to back up the two huge righties.

Arrived: Ezequiel Carrera, Jason Grilli, Brad Hand, Josh Harrison, Eric O'Flaherty, Darren Oliver, Juan Miranda, Mike Nickeas, Placido Polanco, Alex Presley, Ivan Rodriguez.

Departed: Chone Figgins, Ron Mahay, Xavier Nady, Jeff Niemann, Magglio Ordoñez, Manny Parra, Corey Patterson, Jason Repko, Will Rhymes, Robinson Tejeda, DeWayne Wise.

Turnover Rate: 31%

It starts with a monster closer in San Francisco righty Sergio Romo (Grade 21* C+51 HR+41, 48 IP). The huge peripherals make him the ninth



Las Vegas GAMBLERS

innings go-to guy. He has plenty of help. Santiago Casilla (Grade 21* C-52 HR+55, 51 IP) and Eric O'Flaherty (Grade 20* C+33 HR+52, 73 IP) constitute a monster setup crew, and give Paul 172 innings of Grade 20*+ relief.

There are other assorted goodies as well. Joel Peralta (Grade 17* C+22, 67 IP) and Takashi Saito (Grade 16* C+14 HR+21, 26 IP) would be closers in Northboro, but here they will get to snuff rallies in the fifth and sixth innings. Jason Grilli (Grade 16* HR+32, 32 IP) also contributes here for a few months. Darren Oliver (Grade 13* C+32 HR+34, 51 IP) is around to scare off any hitters who are allergic to lefties. Francisco Rodriguez (Grade 12* HR+34, 71 IP) adds depth and bulk at various points of the season when innings are required.



Vlad Guerrero: New age

The middle infield is very solid offensively, with 2B Jamey Carroll (2 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, 35 SSN for 10 attempts) leading off every day, and Asdrubal Cabrera (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 30 SSN for 22 attempts) playing short. The regular center fielder is Austin Jackson (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 17 speed number, 31 SSN for 27 attempts), who bats eighth all year. Jon Jay (3 0s, 11 hits 2 walks + 15 + 22, 15 speed number) plays left field and bats second all year, leveraging those HBP numbers. The only really black hole in the lineup is the regular catcher Drew

Butera (2 0s, 7 hits, 2 walks). This is a truly awful card, but the man is not there for his bat.

Vlad Guerrero (3 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk, 3 7s), who has been the face of the franchise for years, is relegated to batting sixth against righthanders this year. Alfonso Soriano (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) has plenty of power, but is missing everything else. He shows up against lefties. It's a new age in Las Vegas.

The team has 348 innings of Grade 13*+ relief to work with. Rodriguez pushes the total to about 420 innings, which should be enough, given the solid starting staff.

Offense: 7.0
Harrington alchemy required.

Overall, Whitman has a far better lineup, but last year Paul won 100 games with a lineup that wasn't even this good. Some Harrington alchemy will be required. The head-to-head matchups with Whitman could be epic.

Defense: 5.0
Solid, with some options.

Here is the challenge: score enough runs with this lineup to sneak past Whitman for the Clemente Division title. Paul has two new shiny things to play with. Matt Downs (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits 3 walks+42, L+5) and John Mayberry, Jr. (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 104 games, L+3) are both very promising young players just entering their prime. Both have about two-thirds of a season, so Paul will be mixing in other players at first and third base, such as James Loney (3 0s, 11 hits 2 walks) and Placido Polanco (2 0s, 10 hits 3 walks, 3 31s, L+6).

Las Vegas is a solid defensive team. Drew Butera (C9, Th+1) earns all his money with his glove. Jamey Carroll (2B8) is an excellent second sacker, and Austin Jackson (OF3, 34 arm) is terrific in center field. When James Loney (1B5) plays, Paul will not be worrying about the action around first base.



The Gamblers won an even 100 games in 2011 and with added power from the likes of Mayberry, Presley and Downs and a monster bullpen they may even better that mark in 2012.



Cabrera: Day and night

Asdrubal Cabrera (SS8) is a good but not great shortstop, and there is no SS9 on the bench to help, so Cabrera will be out there day and night. Mayberry (OF2, 35 arm) and Jay (OF2, 31 arm) are competent corner outfielders.

The team can amp up the gloves by sliding Sam Fuld (OF3, 34 arm) out there. Third base is a potential weak spot. On most days, Matt Downs (3B3) is the starter, but Placido Polanco (3B5) is out there against lefties and in late and close situations.

Bench: 3.0
Here to bring home wins.

There are a number of excellent bench options. Alex Presley (4 0s, 11 hits 2 walks, R+3) has a beautiful card, but only 52 games to show it off. He'll be showing up in right-handed lineups all year, and be a nice pinch hitter against righties when he's not in the lineup. Sam Fuld (17 speed number, 28 SSN for 28 attempts) is a very nice running option for late inning situations, in addition to his excellent defense.

If only a homer will do, Paul has Alfonso Soriano (1-5-5-6, 9 hits) sitting around playing mumbly peg all year. Geovanny Soto (1-6-6, 8 hits 3 walks, L+9) may be an option against lefties when Paul gets tired of watching Butera strike out. (Butera has only 93 games, so someone has to catch ...) Waiver acquisition Ivan Rodriguez (8 hits, 2 walks) still has a very useful arm (Th+6). With Vlad (11 hits, 3 7s, no shift) starting only against right-handers, he'll be available to pinch hit in many games. Skip Schumaker (6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks) is a pretty nice middle-infield option for a bench guy.

There's value here for the aggressing road manager. Paul's instructions leave the door wide open to use the entire lineup to bring home wins for Las Vegas this year.



2nd By a nose. The TQs like Whitman's starters and solid offense a little more than Las Vegas' big bullpen and motion offense, but this is going to be a photo finish – just like last year.

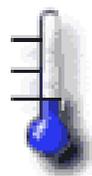


**MASTER PLAN:
LAS VEGAS**

We fall into ruts here at the *Annual*. Mr. Harrington spent some time in them with us during his years on staff, and his **Vegas Line** persists as a regular feature.

One of our ruts is that we watched the regular quick build and quick collapse of the Las Vegas franchise. Yet they're back this year for a *second* year of contention. (They actually have three in a row in the middle of the last decade: but our memories are short.) The current roster is not too young, but seems less fragile and ephemeral than some of the cometary examples previously reviewed in this publication.

What does this mean? It might suggest a change of attitude in Vegas – a commitment to build for a longer term. The Vladimir Guerrero era is likely over, but the newer edition of the Gamblers is built around pitching, especially bullpen. Maracaibo has been winning for years like that. Maybe Vegas will too.



TQ: 29.0

Las Vegas GAMBLERS

2011 columbus JETS in review



No one was going to confuse this lineup with the '27 Yankees (or the 2011 Avengers).

2011 in Review

Final Record: 78-84 (3rd, Clemente)

The 2011 Columbus Jets season had two distinct parts. The month of May (2-19) and everything else (76-65). The pitching staff was responsible for whatever successes were obtained, because the offense never did get untracked.

What went right?

The pitching was pretty decent, posting a 3.98 ERA. Bronson Arroyo (14 wins, 3.63) and Wandy Rodriguez (14 wins, 3.72) led the starters. Darren O'Day put up his second consecutive strong year with an ERA of 0.78 while accumulating 37 saves.

Offensively, the highlights were Brett Gardner's 46 stolen bases (tying for the conference lead) and Ben Zobrist's 97 runs scored. Outside of the May debacle, we were 11 games over .500 at 76-65 which hopefully gives us something to build on in 2012.

What went wrong?

The Jets got off to a decent start and ended April with a 14-6 record, fueling expectations among the faithful. The May schedule was daunting featuring Dallas, Grand Cayman, Melrose, Wakefield and Zion. Against that competition, the Jets managed to win two games out of twenty-one. Just like that, April's promising start was gone and any hope for a meaningful season went along with it.

Overall, the offense was very pedestrian, ending the season with a .231 batting average, a

.387 slugging average and managing to plate just over 4 runs per game. Nobody was going to confuse this lineup with the '27 Yankees (or the 2011 Avengers), but the cards looked better than they performed.

You had to roll the dice day after day to appreciate how bad this offense really was. It was a true team effort with no one batting over .265 and no one sniffing 30 home runs or 100 RBI. We hope our first round draft pick, Jason Kipnis, will bolster the offense going forward.



O'Day: Second straight

3 Things

1. *Rick Porcello*. It seems like he's been in with the Tigers for 10 years, but he's still only 23. We mortgaged a significant part of our 2013 draft to acquire him from the Prince of Darkness and whether we improve or decline over the next few years will depend largely on him.

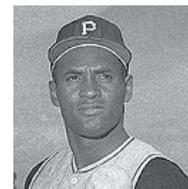
2. *Lack of bench strength*. The 2012 offensive deck of cards consists of nine guys who are going to play almost every day because the bench is beyond terrible. For this team to move forward in the future and contend for a playoff spot, we'll need better secondary cards that provide more flexibility.

3. *Improving against our Clemente rivals*. Last season saw us only win 16 out of 42 games against the teams in our division. Another step in achieving playoff status will be reversing that trend.

columbus JETS

Vic Vaughn (6th year)

The results are like eating plain yogurt – there just seems to be something missing somehow.



We have half a decade of data collected, the best minds in fantasy baseball have been brought to bear, our team of crack data analysts have been brought in to slice and dice the numbers, but the head-scratching enigma that is the Columbus Jets continues to mystify us all.

Vic inherited an ancient team back in 2005, and it took a while for him to turn over the roster. The price has been paid, and the names on the roster seem to indicate that things are headed in the right direction. But the results are like eating plain yogurt – there just seems to be something missing somehow.

In the last five years, the Jets have won 86, 54, 72, 83, and 78 games. This is the path tread by the Council Squares under the guidance of old friend Don Mahley and others. From 1988 through 2007 – 20 straight seasons – Council never won over 91 games. They were locked in suspended animation – a permanent rebuilding mode that had them oscillate gently between 70 and 90 wins without either dropping in the mud or soaring above clouds. The names say that Vic is collecting the forces and looking for traction, but this is not a playoff team in 2012, at least according to the TQs.

Another year of waiting is on tap.

Pitching: **7.0**
They give some ground.

ROTATION. Like much of the team, the starting staff is young and talented, but the contender grades have yet to show up. The top grade in the rotation belongs to Houston lefthander Wandy Rodriguez (Grade 10 C-12 HR-16, 30 starts). Last year, Rodriguez brought this same grade to a similar team and went 14-10, 3.72. He has a few more seasons in him like this one. Next up comes the portion of the rotation that should anchor Columbus' next playoff run. Check out the ages in this roll call. This year's second round draft

SNT:
Jason Kipnis.

The talented Kipnis scorched the AL for 17 XBH and 7 homers in 136 at bats. He has some power, some speed and some plate discipline; but can he push Ben Zobrist off second base?



Arrived: Scott Cousins, Daniel Descalso, Charlie Furbush, Jason Kipnis, Brandon McCarthy, Rick Porcello, Jason Pridie, Aneury Rodriguez, Chance Ruffin.

Departed: Scott Atchison, John Bowker, Russell Branyan, Dana Eveland, Dusty Hughes, Dan Johnson, Andy LaRoche, Aaron Rowand, Brandon Wood

Turnover Rate: 26%

pick Brandon McCarthy (Grade 9 C+41 HR+32, 25 starts, 29 years old) is the greybeard of the group, but has the peripherals we all look for. He should over-perform his grade. Daniel Hudson (Grade 9 C+24 HR+22, 33 starts, 25 years old) delivered a full season of quality starts after getting drafted #1 in 2011. Mike Leake (Grade 9 C+25 HR-22, 26 starts, 25 years old) put together a very solid season in one of the best hitters' parks in baseball. Brett Anderson (Grade 8 C+14 HR+15, 13 starts, 24 years old) was having a nice year on Oakland when he was cut down by Tommy John surgery. He is expected back by the All Star break this year. Rick Porcello (Grade 4 C+23 HR+14, 31 starts, 23 years old) is ridiculously tal-



Wandy: The ace



ented, but never seemed to get it together last year. He'll try again pitching for a Detroit team that should give him plenty of opportunities to pitch with a lead.

Overall, Columbus has 127 starts of grade 9 and 10 to work with. Porcello and Andy Sonnanstine (Grade 4 HR-61, 4 starts) take the last 35 starts, which should be full of adventure, and not in a good way. This is a decent staff, but they are not going to cause terror for opponents. The back end of the rotation assures Columbus of choking on Whitman and Vegas dust all summer.

BULLPEN. In a division overflowing with fantastic closer grades, none is better than David Robinson (Grade 26* C-44 HR+61, 66 IP). Last year in New York, Robertson struck out a ridiculous 100 batters in

70 innings, and allowed one home run. He turns 27 this year. Randy Choate (Grade 24* C-15 HR-15) adds 24 more. The 94 innings of grade 24+ relief is impressive everywhere in the league, but not in the division that includes Las Vegas. But Columbus can finish games when ahead.

The setup crew is not deep. Francisco Cordero (Grade 17* C-14 HR+13, 69 IP) has been around forever and has delivered good solid grades like this everywhere he's pitched. Charlie Furbush (Grade 15* HR-31, 26 RIP) is not embarrassing, but the wind tends to blow straight out when he's on the mound. These two add 95 innings of decent setup relief to get leads into the hands of the closers. The trouble arrives further down the roster. Kameron Loe (Grade 10* C+31 HR+33, 72 IP) is a fine contributor in middle relief, but he is the only body back there that won't scare school children. Chance Ruffin (Grade 10* C-52 HR-42, 17 IP) may get a chance to do whatever it is he's doing out there, but parental guidance is definitely advised. Aneurly Rodriguez (Grade 8* C-13 HR-23, 45 IP) is the last of Columbus' relief staff that can steal a hit without help. The rest (including Darren O'Day - Grade 6* C+14 HR-62, who woke up, looked in the mirror and realized that he was not Bruce Sutter) are no more than mops. The bullpen will give ground to Whitman and Las Vegas.

Offense: 6.0 Some great names, at least.

Like the pitching staff, there are some great names in the lineup, but the cardboard is not meeting expectations as yet. The marquee name is probably Cincinnati OF Jay Bruce (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks), but the best card in the lineup is 2B Ben Zobrist (1-4-6-6, 10 hits 3 walks, 29 SSN for 25 attempts). Zobrist has been a solid contributor here for a few years, but his 8-hit card last season struggled to a .216 average for Vic. This year should be a little closer to the 28 homer, 102 runs scored that Zobrist posted for the Jets in 2010. Zobrist hits cleanup all year.



Bruce: Marquee

There are a couple of other really nice cards, but no eyeball-scorching cardboard in sight. Corey Hart (1-0-0-0, 10 hits 3 walks) is the #3 hitter, and should be a steady source of power. Brett Gardner (0-6, 9 hits 4 walks, 19 speed number, 30 SSN for 62 SBA) is a really nice leadoff hitter. Carlos Lee (1-6-6, 10 hits 3 walks, L+10 R-5) bats fifth against lefties and sixth against righties. The shifts will hurt against righties - Lee has 4 8s. Jerry Hairston (3 0s, 10 hits 3 walks, 16 speed number) hits second all year. His job is to stand there while Gardner steals second. The club does not emphasize the hit and run.

The rest of the lineup is blank cardboard. John Buck (1-6, 8 hits 3 walks) hits seventh in most lineups. Danny Descalso (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, R+1) is the regular third baseman, and he hits ninth. His second column has 1 homer - on 66. The shortstop hitting way down in the order is Sean Rodriguez (3 0s, 8 hits 3 walks + 42, 15 speed number). The lower third of this lineup is a real wasteland.



Long gone are the days of the Rochester Express and Vic Vaughn has put his stamp on this franchise. But there are still too many non-performers taking up space on the roster. Too many for the Jets to succeed in 2012.

Defense: 4.0
Bad enough to be annoying.

There are three top-shelf defensive players on the field. Brett Gardner (OF3, 31 arm), secondbaseman Ben Zobrist (2B8) and the outstanding Jay Bruce (OF3, 37 arm). These guys will make all the plays. Danny Descalso (3B4) is very solid at the hot corner.

There are two average performers: Corey Hart (OF2, 32 arm), and Sean Rodriguez (SS8) will catch the ball. The problem spots are at catcher and first base. Behind the plate, John Buck (C7, Th-4) will be an agent of chaos all season. At first base El Caballo (1B2) will demonstrate that his nickname was earned with the stick, not the glove.



El Caballo: Not for his glove

This is bad enough to be annoying, and for a team with thin pitching, this defense will not help.

Bench: 2.0
Anemic, by its own admission.

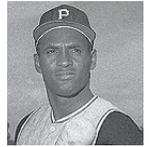
There is a bench guy, and he's worth keeping an eye on. Jason Kipnis (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 15 speed number) has his share of doubters among the baseball illuminati, but he's a 25 year old infielder with speed who showed a lot of pop in his cuppa coffee last year. Vic will carefully read those Indian box scores.

As for the rest, if they were any good, they'd be in the lineup. Jason Pridie (8 hits, 4 walks, E34); Ross Gload (0-6-6, 10 hits 1 walk) can pinch hit with a runner on third, perhaps. Or perhaps not. The rest is silence – or, as the instructions say, 'anemic.' The *Annual* knows better than to argue with the manager.

3rd Blue Hill is the weakest team in TBL, and they will keep Columbus from visiting the basement this season. They need a few more draft classes and a few lucky breaks before they make a run. In particular, catcher and shortstop need better players – both slots are underpowered, and these are sink

hole slots where middle round draft picks go to die.

There are some nice names here, though, particularly on the pitching staff. Where there's life, there's hope.

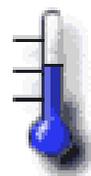


MASTER PLAN: COLUMBUS

We love to make memorable quips here, but ultimately we do want every team to get better and have their chance to contend and win. For the past six years we've been rooting for Vic Vaughn to win, as he places his own stamp on the team, gets younger, and builds up talent. Indeed, we have a rule (at least for regular articles) that we no longer talk about the predecessor team. This was Vic's team from the time he took over, and it's Vic's team now; no other club in TBL is so frequently compared to the edition that precedes it.

While that methodology has obvious advantages, it also imposes upon us the need to decide what the *current* management thinks it's doing, and in what way it's moving the team in a particular direction – without the rhetorical crutch of comparison.

And the answer is: we're not sure. Jay Bruce, Daniel Hudson, Jason Kipnis: no problem, we saw what you did there. Sean Rodriguez? Maybe even Ben Zobrist? Sure. But if this is about a youth movement then Francisco Cordero, Brett Gardner, Carlos Lee, and some other guys should be long gone and it should be a *youth movement*. Admittedly, players like Wood and LaRoche haven't worked out – but the desire to continue respectability might be making the rebuild take longer than it has. This is not a con-tender– *yet*. But whether it will be soon depends on choosing a direction and working toward it. We are not sure that's happened quite yet.



TQ: 19.0

columbus JETS

2011 blue hill MUDSLIDES in review



Another difficult year up in Blue Hill.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 69-93 (4th, Clemente)

Another difficult year up in Blue Hill left Mudslide fans with little to celebrate. The team finished in last place again with a 69-93 record, the third losing season in a row.

What went right?

Not too much went right for the club. Stephen Drew's first year in Blue Hill was also good as he hit .293 and slugged .511 with 47 doubles, 14 triples and 19 HR. Daric Barton drew 111 walks in the leadoff spot; and Gaby Sanchez had a good rookie year batting .257, showing some pop with 35 doubles and 15 homers. Danny Valencia turned in a solid rookie half-season at .276, and Hideki Matsui chipped in 30 doubles and 17 homers of his own.

On the mound, Tim Hudson had a good bounce back year after missing most of last year, posting a 14-15 record with an ERA of 4.35; Brian Fuentes notched 27 saves; Matt Belisle was an everyday asset with 7 relief wins in 91.7 innings and rookie John Axford showed promise as the future closer (6-4, 11 saves, 2.24 ERA, 55 Ks in 56 innings).

What went wrong?

The team batted .249 and had a team ERA of 4.15. Besides Drew there wasn't much to fear in the Mudslides lineup. There was not very much speed or power to speak of: the club hit only 109 homers and stole only 51 bases, with

Drew leading the team with 13. They struck out "only" 1,131 times, but simply didn't make enough contact.

Besides Hudson the pitching staff had too many low grade starters and the bullpen was not much better and could not support them. Dice-K Matsuzaka (5-14), Carl Pavano (8-15) and Phil Hughes (9-12) performed admirably but never had enough help from the lineup.



Drew: Offensive leader

3 Things

1. *It's time for the infield to come together.* I had high hopes for the young nucleus of Barton/Sanchez at 1B, Beckham at 2B, Drew at SS, and Headley/Valencia at 3B but if things don't come together soon it's going to be time to go in a new direction.

2. *The outfield needs to get younger and better.* First pick Yonder Alonso gives me some hope of moving in that direction. Newcomers Corey Patterson and Xavier Nady certainly don't help; they are merely placeholders as we look to get younger.

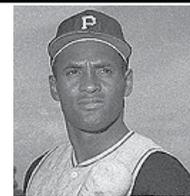
3. *The club needs to find a catcher.* Preferably one that can contribute more than one season! We are hopeful that with some seasoning Hank Conger will improve and be able to challenge A.J. Ellis for the job. Lou Marson will be fine for late inning replacement but it would be nice if I could get some offense from this position.

blue hill MUDSLIDES

Mark Ludwig (17th year)

It's hard to make a plan when all you're doing is reacting.

BH



Last year, Mark Ludwig pulled off a major deal with the Brobdingnag Barbarians for Phil Hughes, Stephen Drew and some other assorted knick-knacks. It was the right idea – both guys had youth, upside and a record of major league success. Drew filled a sinkhole at shortstop – always a desirable position to take care of early in the rebuilding process. Later in last year's draft, Blue Hill added slugger Gaby Sanchez – another nice piece the team could build around.

Unfortunately, both Hughes and Drew succumbed to slumps and injuries in the 2011 season. Then, everything else that could possibly go wrong with a TBL team followed in quick and lethal succession. This team, which has struggled to gain any kind of traction in the last few years, looks ready to repeat the 41-win ice bath that they endured in 2010.

Pitching: 6.5
Some good news. Some ooze.

ROTATION. The good news for Blue Hill is that ace Tim Hudson (Grade 11 C+22 HR+26, 33 starts) sailed through the season in good form in Atlanta. The bad



Hudson: Sailed through

news is that the ace of this staff is now 36 years old, and probably should not be here. Full season starters are easy to move, though, because they have significant usage in the playoffs, so perhaps a September trade is possible. Mark shuffled a very nice Jim Edmonds card off to the Portland Possum last September, so he knows the terrain here.

The next two names that peel off the pile are young, and exactly the types of players you

SNT: Yonder Alonso.

First of all, two snaps up for the name alone.

The young Cuban hit for high average with excellent plate discipline during his minor league career (.293 / .370 / .466).

He should be a good one for years.



want to see on a rebuild. Josh Collmenter (Grade 11 C+34, 24 starts) and Dillon Gee (Grade 9 C-32, 27 starts) were both taken in the 2012 TBL draft. The top 3 have 84 starts between them, so Blue Hill will at least have respectable representation on the mound for half their games.

Then comes the SUV-side pothole in the middle of the highway. Juan Nicasio (Grade 7 C+26, 13 starts) is not a world beater, but at least he's not left-handed. The same cannot be said of Wade LeBlanc (Grade 6 C-14 HR+15, 14 starts), although Wade is definitely a Guy We Like. Carl Pavano (Grade 5 C+34, 33 starts), will show up on schedule all year, walk very few and get his butt handed to him frequently. Twenty-four year

Arrived: Nate Adcock, Yonder Alonso, Josh Collmenter, Hank Conger, David Cooper, Chad Durbin, Dillon Gee, Elliot Johnson, Xavier Nady, Juan Nicasio, Corey Patterson

Departed: Ronald Belisario, Jason Bourgeois, Eric Chavez, Randy Flores, Austin Kearns, Vin Mazzaro, Wil Nieves, Hideki Okajima, Darren Oliver, Aramis Ramirez, Jeff Suppan

Turnover Rate: 31%

BH

blue hill MUDSLIDES

old Nathan Adcock (Grade 7* C-22 HR+23, 3 starts) will lob them up there for three starts. These four cover 63 starts. Phil Hughes (Grade 3, 14 starts) covers most of the rest of the season.

This is the strongest unit on the club, and that should give you an idea of the sticky ooze to come.

BULLPEN. There is a guy to close. John Axford (Grade 16* C-13 HR+34, 73 IP) arrived last year and did not get run over by the team bus or get abducted by aliens. His primary setup man, however, is ... *missing*. The next guy down the list is Brian Fuentes (Grade 11* C+21, 58 IP), who would be a middle reliever or a lefty specialist anywhere else. The right-handed setup guy is Mark Lowe (Grade 9* HR-14, 45 IP), who is also underpowered for his role. These two have 103 innings to get to Axford.

There are two Grade 8*s for use when the opponent is still within hailing distance after the starters leave. Matt Belisle (Grade 8* C+36 HR+25, 72 IP) and Mitchell Boggs (Grade 8* HR+26, 60 IP) help out, and they can steal hits without help. Nick Adcock (Grade 7* C-22 HR+23, 47 IP) will help in the pen when not starting. Whatever Mark can stomach of Chad Durbin (Grade 2*) are also available. This will probably be enough of a train wreck to give Mark the inside track on the Bryce Harper sweepstakes.



Axford: Guy to close

Offense: Will struggle.

4.0

The hitting is characterized by bad cards that are short on usage. Gabby Sanchez (1-6-6, 9 hits 4 walks+22, L+5) fits neither category; he should be helpful. He is a lonely guy this year, because he is the only full-time player on the team with any power at all. Chase Headley (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, 33 SSN for 15 SBA) plays only 113 games, but should get on base and cause some concern while he's out there.



Harper: Sweeps prize

Down the stack a bit, Hideki Matsui (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+2) will bring professional hitting credentials to his role in the lineup. Stephen Drew (4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) is missing half a season, but has an interesting card. Gordon Beckham (3 0s, 9 hits 2 walks+42) and Juan Rivera (3 0s, 9 hits 3 walks, L+4) have uninspiring cards, but hang around for the whole year. That's the way things go when you're rebuilding.

The wheels come off after that. Mike Fontenot (4 0s, 8 hits 3 walks, 85 games) plays the other half of the year at short. Corey Patterson (3 0s, 9 hits) leads off in most lineups, although all that speed will only help him quickly acquire his Gatorade after making another out.

The catching tandem is Hank Conger (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks) and Lou Marson (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, L+9). Conger is the only regular on the team other than Sanchez with a first column 1. Aaron Miles (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) and Xavier Nady (3 0s, 10 hits) complete the picture.

This is brutal. Almost the entire lineup has 11 or 12 on-base numbers with very little power. Blue Hill will struggle to score 600 runs with this group.



The 2011 edition of the Mudslides lost 93 games and, due to many injuries, the 2012 edition will probably be worse. Blue Hill will be the frontrunner in the Bryan Harper sweepstakes.

Defense: 3.0
Will extend innings.

The leather will not save the pitching this year in Blue Hill. The middle infield does have one strong spot – second base, where both Aaron Miles (2B8) and Gordon Beckham (2B8) will scoop them up regularly. Gabby Sanchez (1B4) and regular 3B Chase Headley (3B4) are solid performers at the corners.

The rest is a little ragged. Stephen Drew and Mike Fontenot are both SS8s, and the catching slot is loaded down with C7s – Conger, Marson, and A. J. Ellis all have that defensive rating. Marson (Th+3) has a good arm, but Conger (Th-3) does not.

The real nightmare is in the outfield. Corey Patterson (OF2, 30 arm) is the regular center-fielder, and is barely adequate out there. Xavier Nady (OF1) and Juan Rivera (OF1) play far too much. There is little help on the bench here, either. Julio Borbon (OF2, 30 arm). This group will extend a few innings.

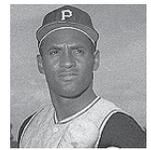
Bench: 2.0
Only occasional heroics.

There is one very nice bench hitter - Yonder Alonso (1-5-5, 11 hits, 4 walks, R+1, 88 AB). He is one of the better young hitters to come out of the 2012 draft this year, and he will be a super pinch hitter in close and late situations. A.J. Ellis (2 Os, 9 hits, 5 walks+42, 85 AB) can also help in spots, and has by far the best hitting card among the catchers. There are two guys who can pinch run – Julio Borbon and Elliot Johnson. They both sport 18 speed numbers. Overall, though, bench guys can only be used sparingly because of tight usage in a number of positions.



As noted, this club is firmly in the hunt for Bryce Harper. Blue Hill has problems all over, many of which will solve themselves with a new cycle of cards. There is plenty of

youth, so there are brighter days ahead. This will not be the year for cheer though.



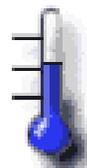
**MASTER PLAN:
BLUE HILL**

It is easier to criticize than to compliment, particularly in a publication that is intended to be insightful and incisive. Looking at the history of the Blue Hill club – now in its 17th season – it is clear that other than two periods in the middle of the last decade, this has been a trail of tears: five seasons with 100 or more losses, six last place finishes, and on and on. Without question there have been events and circumstances making this happen: injuries, retirements, trades . . . it’s hard to make a plan when all you’re doing is reacting.

No question: Mr. Ludwig knows how to judge talent; he’s drafted good players, made decent trades, managed his team as well as conditions permitted. Still – it seems to us here at Incisive Central that the club has been compensated poorly for its suffering, and it might be due to the lack of a true long-term plan in view of short term difficulties.

To return to success, the club will need to consider where it needs to be beyond 2013. We may be underinformed whether management has already embraced a long-term master plan: but having presented many similar articles which address the club’s problems, the *Annual* is a bit concerned that such a plan is still incomplete. As on the field, there’s work to be done.

blue hill MUDSLIDES



TQ: 15.5

Not Rocket Science

In 2011 there was less of a pennant race in the Mays than we had thought. This was not due to the performance of the pennant winner: the Rye club did just about everything expected, falling only one victory short of 100 and winning the division by 12 games; it was more the disappointing season in Grand Cayman. In the event, neither club got as far as the Fall Classic – though they might have fared just as poorly against the Melrose juggernaut.



It is not exactly rocket science, therefore, that the *Annual* has cannily chosen *Craig Musselman's Rye Herons* to win the Mays Division again in 2012. That would be three titles

in a row, though only the first one led to a World Series title. This year's team is not as dangerous as in the past: but it's certainly good enough to get close to 100 wins. Capably led, committed to victory, they will have their chance in the post-season.

Gotham City returns to the runner-up position after a sub-.500 season. The choice is almost forced on them: the best starter in baseball – Justin Verlander – is on the roster, and *Anton Greenwald's* club isn't getting any younger.



2011 Mays Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Rye*	99	63	.611	—
Grand Cayman†	87	75	.537	12
Gotham City	74	88	.457	25
Greater Ohio	48	114	.296	51

* Lost IC championship series to Dallas
† Lost WC playoff to Whitman

Strike while the iron is hot, we say – indeed, strike while you still have an iron to strike with.



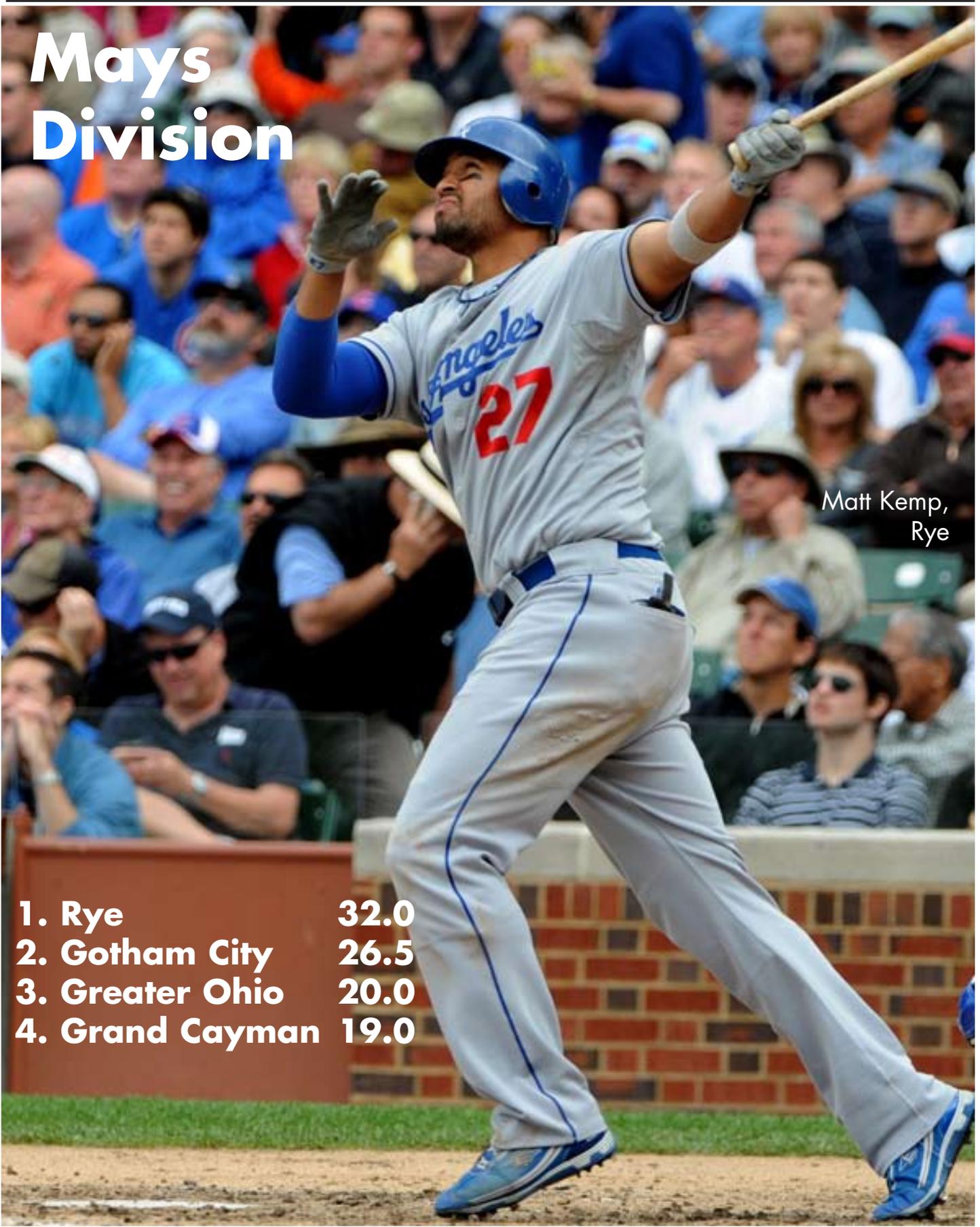
To call last year's experience dismal is to commit a category mistake. Devlin Toth's Greater Ohio Chia Pets scraped the bottom. This year will be a labor, but nowhere

near as arduous: there's some more talent on the roster, but not enough to make them a contender. There might be a top-ten pick in 2013, but it won't be the second overall.

A decent lineup will make things interesting for **Mark Bloom's Grand Cayman Havens**, but the pitching staff is of the "avert your eyes" variety. We believe that offense is what wins pennants in TBL, except in Midwest of course – but if the pitching isn't there, no offense is good enough to get to the post season. It will be a long year out there for Boomer – both manager and GM.



Mays Division



Matt Kemp,
Rye

- | | |
|-----------------|------|
| 1. Rye | 32.0 |
| 2. Gotham City | 26.5 |
| 3. Greater Ohio | 20.0 |
| 4. Grand Cayman | 19.0 |

2011 Rye HERONS in review



The team was good in all aspects of the game; but great in none.

2011 in Review

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

The 2010 TBL champion Rye Herons fielded a competitive team in 2011, a playoff shoo-in, and a team reasonably well configured for a playoff run. But there was one team in the conference, the Dallas Eagles, that was better and a team in the other conference, the Melrose Avengers which was dominant and a prohibitive favorite to win the series from the get-go.

Rye won 99 games and the Mays, beat Las Vegas Gamblers 4-1 in the opening playoff round. In the Conference Championship series against Dallas, Rye's dice went absolutely DEAD. Stone-cold dead. Dallas took the series, the outcome of which was never in doubt, 4-1.

This was a good team though, as it turns out, not a championship team. It scored 876 runs, fourth in the league, and gave up a total of 595, second behind only Melrose. The team ERA was a superb 3.35, which was fourth in the league behind only Melrose, Dallas and Portland. There is a recurring theme. A team that is fourth in the league in runs scored and second in the league in runs against would normally be expected to be competitive for the championship, but not here, not this year. Three teams were just better. It was a fine effort, but it was just not to be, and when the dice went DEAD, the season was over. You can't win them all.

As has been the case for a number of years, this was a team effort. No players scored 100 runs, and no one had 100 RBI. The offense came from throughout the lineup. Five starting pitchers won in double figures, and the entire bullpen, all of them, had ERA's of 3.00 or less. The regular player with the lowest batting average, Matt Kemp at .217, knocked in 98 runs. The team was good in all aspects of the game; but great in none.

What went right?

The team played well, just not quite up to expectations, and it was fun to manage because they were in most games. Chase Utley had his best year in Rye, hitting .301 with a .402 OBP, but was limited to 118 games due to injuries. Omar Infante had a fine year, hitting .317. Torii Hunter led the team with 25 HR, and Nelson Cruz had 37 doubles.



Adams: Outstanding.

The pitching was solid and consistent. Chris Carpenter was 19-10 and Zack Greinke had a stellar 17-5 record. TBL super-closer Mike Adams had another outstanding year with 38 saves and an ERA of 1.72.

What went wrong?

The team underperformed somewhat during the regular season, and lost home field advantage to Las Vegas in November. And then in the conference championships, the dice went dead. Mostly what went wrong was that other teams were better.

3 Things

1. *Playoff Aspirations in 2012.* The Herons made a number of trades in the offseason to remain competitive for 2012, including 3B Aramis Ramirez and James Shields as the #2 starter in a strong rotation, in hopes of winning the Mays again and to once again roll the dice, literally and figuratively, in the playoffs this coming year.
2. *Age.* This is the oldest team in TBL and all of the transactions over the past four years have made the team older and older. It is only a matter of time, and the approaching cliff is in sight.
3. *Storm Clouds.* The pitching is young and strong. And who knows what the ceiling is for Kemp. Next year, with no draft, the team may need to start sixth and seventh round draft picks. It won't be terrible, but it won't be good either. When you're rooting for Manny Ramirez' impending come-back, you know you're grasping at straws.

rye HERONS

Craig Musselman (8th year)

The offense features 27-year-old superstar Matt Kemp, surrounded almost entirely by guys in their mid-30s.



The Rye Herons have become an International Conference juggernaut. 2007 was the last year the team finished with fewer than 90 wins. In 2011, the defending TBL champs won 99 games and made it to the Conference finals before falling to a Dallas Eagles team that won 110. It was a good run.

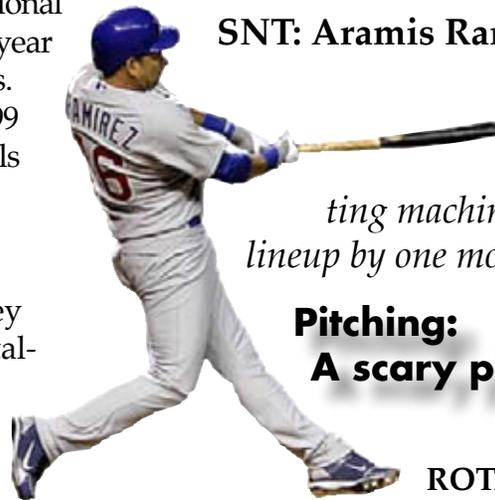
But wait! It's not exactly over, is it? They still have a potent offense, a deep and talented bullpen, and a vastly improved starting rotation. They are favored once again to take the Mays Division. It's entirely possible that they could return to the Conference Championship series for the third year in a row and maybe even make it to the World Series. What's not to like?

The recent years have taken a toll. As Mr. Musselman himself says in his emergency instructions: "It is amazing how quickly young teams get old." Most of his offseason moves – Aramis Ramirez and Jack Wilson come to mind – only made his team older, but it's what you do when you need to plug holes on a contender. The offense now features 27-year-old superstar Matt Kemp, surrounded almost entirely by guys in their mid-30s. The cliff isn't an imminent threat, but now it's on the radar.

Arrived: Matt Angle, Ryan Mattheus, Guillermo Moscoso, Aramis Ramirez, Jeff Samardzija, James Shields, Rich Thompson, Anthony Varvaro, Jack Wilson

Departed: Shawn Camp, Brad Davis, Elmer Dessens, Scott Feldman, Kevin Frandsen, Ryan Franklin, Wes Helms, Carlos Silva, Brian Sweeney

Turnover Rate: 26%



SNT: Aramis Ramirez

34 years old this summer, he's still a hitting machine. He extends the Rye lineup by one more fine bat.

Pitching: 13.0
A scary playoff rotation.

ROTATION. Last year's ace, Jered Weaver, got even better this year (Grade 16 C+21). It doesn't end there. Add in trade acquisition James Shields (Grade 15) and second-round draft pick Guillermo Moscoso (Grade 13), and they not only have 88 excellent starts, but also a playoff rotation to scare all but the most ferocious opposing offenses. Teams who break camp as contenders wisely think in those terms from April onward.

Rounding out the starting staff is a stable of solid performers. Former ace Chris Carpenter (Grade 8 C+26 HR+26) can still keep his team in the game. Zack Greinke (Grade 9) is a Guy We Like and may be a future ace, even in this rotation. Tim Stauffer (Grade 9) only has to take the mound 13 times.

Jake Westbrook (Grade 4) and Jesse Litsch (Grade 7) don't have to start at all.



Weaver: Got even better



RYE HERONS

BULLPEN. Mike Adams (Grade 23* C+33 HR+23) returns as the closer and may be even better than last year when he saved 38 games. It's a good thing, too, because the rest of the bullpen has suffered a reality check. It's not that they are bad – they aren't – but Mr. Musselman won't have a Grade 21* available to set up this year.

The new set-up crew features Anthony "The Accountant" Varvaro (Grade 18* HR-21). (The "XL" after his grade means he works with spreadsheets.) He's joined by Jeff Samardzija (Grade 16* C-62 HR+34), Rich Thompson (Grade 14* C-22), and Javier "The

Lefty" Lopez (Grade 14* C-26 HR+62), bringing the total to almost 293 innings. Ryan Mattheus (Grade 14* HR+51), Litsch (Grade 13*), and Brian Sanches (Grade 12* C-51) add another 117 innings.

Pat Neshek (Grade 11* C-62 HR -24) and the ageless LaTroy Hawkins (Grade 10* C+33 HR+55) round out the relief corps, which totals almost 483 innings, which should be plenty with this rotation. However, only Adams and Hawkins can steal walks, and as mentioned, there are no dominant set-up guys to get to the closer. So how the relievers are used – mixing and matching them in the mid-to-late innings – will be a key to their success.

Offense: 11.0
Four big-time players.

Only Portland has a better offense than Rye in 2012. The lineup revolves around four big-time players: Matt Kemp, Nelson Cruz, Lance Berkman, and the newly arrived Aramis Ramirez. Kemp (1-1-4-6, 12 hits, 3 walks+22) can do it all, including run (30 SSN for 51 attempts). Like Kemp, Cruz (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks) is partial

to hitting them out. Ramirez (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22) and Berkman (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 5 walks+22) could bat cleanup for other teams.

There is a weakness, though. Kemp (L+6, R-4), Cruz (L+11, R-5), and Berkman (L-9) have some significant shift differentials on the boards. They are so good and have so much playing time that the shifts won't keep them out of the lineup, but the penalties may impact their batting averages. More importantly, in the playoffs, the right team

with the right relievers could pitch to these guys.

The table-setters and other bats, while not scary in and of themselves, will definitely get on base their share of the time. Marco Scutaro (11 hits, 3 walks), Jeff Keppinger (11 hits, 1 walk), Omar Infante (10 hits, 2 walks), and Chase Utley (9 hits, 3

walks+42, L-10, 35 SSN for 14 attempts) rotate in the middle infield. Torii Hunter (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+5, R-4) and Casey Blake (9 hits, 4 walks) add decent depth to the lineup.

That leaves the catchers. Miguel Olivo (1-0-0, 9 hits, 1 walk) and Humberto Quintero (0-0, 9 hits, 1 walk) won't exactly strike fear into the hearts of even mediocre pitchers. One of these two has to play every game.

Defense: 5.0
Not among the elite.

Kemp and Hunter (OF3s) cover a lot of ground in the outfield, and both have plus arms (37 and 35, respectively). Both play almost every day. Jack Wilson (SS9, 2B8, 3B4) is the new Omar Vizquel. It is, after all, Why He's Here. Utley,



Adams: Returns.



The elite of the Mays Division, since Las Vegas left for the Clemente. They should rule there again in 2012. Whether they can make it back to the World Series is another story.

Keppinger, and Infante are all 2B8s, and both catchers are C8s, although Quintero has a poor throwing arm (Th-2).

Scutaro (SS8), Blake (3B4), Berkman (1B3), and Cruz (OF2) will have their good days and their bad days, although Adam Kennedy (1B4) may spell Berkman occasionally. Then there is Ramirez (3B3), who is a liability in the field, but plays there versus RH pitching, which is to say most of the time. With Wilson covering SS and Blake limited by games, Ramirez may be a constant black hole.

In all, this defense has its strengths – Kemp and Hunter alone may save several games over the course of the season – but it’s certainly not among the league’s elite. Wilson definitely helps this team, but he can only play one position at a time.

Bench: 2.5
No big bats.

You get your big bats and you cover the other positions. Sometimes, that’s all you can do. Beside the platoon partners, the bench players on this team offer primarily two things: defense and stolen bases. Carlos Guillen (1-4 power), Kennedy (31 SSN for 10 attempts), and Wilson (0-0, 28 SSN for 7 attempts) all have anemic 9-hit, 2-walk cards. Waiver pickup Matt Angle sports a pinch-running card (0-0, 7 hits, 5 walks, L-6, 35 SSN for 12 attempts). This team could use a pinch-hitting toy and may suffer without one.

1st This TQ makes the 2012 Herons marginally better, on paper, than last year’s 99-win squad. That’s kind of frightening.

They will definitely make the playoffs. How deep they go may be determined by how well



Hunter: Covers ground

they match up against their opponents and how well they roll the dice.



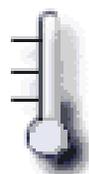
**MASTER PLAN:
RYE**

In 2010, the Herons followed a TBL-best 105-win regular season with a 12-1 playoff run to the TBL championship. Last year, they won 99 games and returned to the Conference Championship series. This year’s squad is poised to once again go deep in the playoffs. It’s all about winning *now*.

While most of the key players on the team could still be performing at peak levels for the next two years, there are some cracks in the façade. Rye has already traded the first three picks in the 2013 draft, though trades have returned players who should see them through.

Only Casey Blake (38 years old) will disappear next year: but Lance Berkman, Chris Carpenter, Torii Hunter, and Marco Scutaro (all 36 entering this year) are all key players who may be nearing the end of their shelf life. Losing all four of these players over the next two years could devastate this team, forcing a change in direction.

At the *Annual*, we side with the win-now philosophy when it makes sense, and this team has been put together with one purpose: to win now at any cost. We believe Mr. Musselman may push the team to the very edge of the cliff if he thinks he can still win. So far, so good.



TQ: 32.0



rye HERONS

2011 gotham city BATMEN in review



Management paid the price for contention.

2011 in Review Final Record: 74-88 (3rd, Mays)

While Rye sought to defend its TBL championship, Gotham City had a rebuilding year, trying to retool and get younger. Two years ago the club was in the World Series; but things have been problematic since then.

There are a number of reasons for this. Management paid the price for contention; there were old-but-good players that weren't traded away before their clock ran out, leaving fewer draft choices than most rebuilders. The older players had abrupt drops in production – and they retired. Meanwhile, there are only three players from the 2010 draft still in the majors.

The 2011 draft has produced better results so far. The club concentrated on position players and five draftees (as of this writing) are at starting positions. In 2012, only four wins separated the fifth and the twelfth draft positions; Gotham City did too well and picked 12th. Still, the draft brought a pile of pitchers – and now there's a shot at the playoffs.

What went right?

It was about what would be expected for a slightly below .500 team, a mixture of good and bad, with a lot of mediocre. Gotham City had good power, slugging 193 homers, though no player had more than Ryan Howard with 31. The very solid Nick Swisher turned in a 26-73-.271 season. Rod Barajas led all batters with an amazing .354 average.

On the mound, Justin Verlander (13-11, 3.46, 233 Ks in 245 innings) and Felix Hernandez (15-11,

3.78, 230 Ks in 260 innings) led the way, with Jonathan Papelbon (3 wins, 26 saves, 1.89 ERA) the definitive closer.

What went wrong?

There was a thin veneer of offense spread among a number of players, but there were a lot of very pedestrian performances. Four players struck out more than 130 times, led by Howard with 162, with a team total over 1,300. There were 193 HR but only 501 extra-base hits; the team hit only .236 with a .299 OBP. They stole 25 bases in 162 games, "led" by Alcides Escobar with 10.

On the mound, past Papelbon, the Big Two and the 20 starts of de la Rosa, they were pounded hard.

3 Things

1. *Opportunity cost.* This isn't quite like the last time: the core of the team isn't quite as established. But Grade 17 starters don't come along that often; there is some young talent on the roster; and other than Dallas no one in the conference is 100% solid. That sounds a lot like *go for it*.
2. *Take what the draft offers.* This year's rookie crop had a lot of pitching. Gotham City needed some pitchers to go with Verlander and King Felix. A match made in heaven, or at least in Milford, MA.
3. *Know that this isn't the last dance.* There are some veterans on the roster, but there's also some fine young talent. The future isn't now, but there's nothing wrong with enjoying the ride as far as it goes.



Swisher: Solid

gotham city BATMEN

Anton Greenwald (28th year)

Overall the plan is – or should be – to ride these horses as far as they can be ridden.



Our friend in Gotham City has had every imaginable experience in his many years in TBL. Anton Greenwald has won one World Series and lost two, and reached the playoffs on eight other occasions since he took the helm of the Batmen in 1986. He has also had five 100-loss and six 90-loss seasons. Gotham City has contended, pretended, built and rebuilt, been heavy and light in the draft, borrowed from the future and paid it forward. He's watched first rounders crash and burn, and has also seen them blossom into the best at their position.

It is a matter of *been there, done that* in Gotham City. This is true of many franchises (though not all: some have rarely scaled the heights of contention, while others have never reached doormat status.) Even when the teams have been good there have been flaws – Gotham clubs usually strike out a lot and almost never steal much. Even when the teams have been bad there have been high points – 88 losses last year, but the presence of Justin Verlander (13-11, 8 complete games) and Felix Hernandez (15-11, 7 complete games) put the team in position to win when they started, and the team did club 193 homers.

Similarly, Anton's experience with the highs and lows (and everything in between) means that, once he knows that the team is a contender or a pretender, he knows what to do. It might seem obvious, but many managers find it difficult to follow the script – especially if they overestimate their team's capability. A few years ago, Dr. Greenwald wrote a nice article for this publication on his '15 players to contend' theory; *Annual* staff commend it to new managers' attention.

So what's the problem here? On a game-by-game basis, the Gotham City club is in good hands. Likewise, Anton can handle the draft and evaluate talent. The problem comes when the course is not clear – when it's neither a dominant contender nor a cellar-dweller. What happens when the team is in that 70-90 win range, which *some years in some divisions* is a playoff club, and other times is the sixth-best team in the conference? (No prize is offered for the latter posi-

tion.) This is where Anton sometimes pulls up short: when to surge forward, when to pull back. This year could have been *pull back* – but having the best pitcher in baseball is a powerful inducement to *surge forward*. Having a superb second guy helps too. In some divisions, in some years that might not be enough. The question is whether there is sufficient support for them to vault over the chasm of also-ran and make it to the playoffs where they can be dominant.

Pitching: **10.5**
Very solid through 124.

ROTATION. The ace of the Gotham City rotation is the best starter in the set: Justin Verlander, who had a

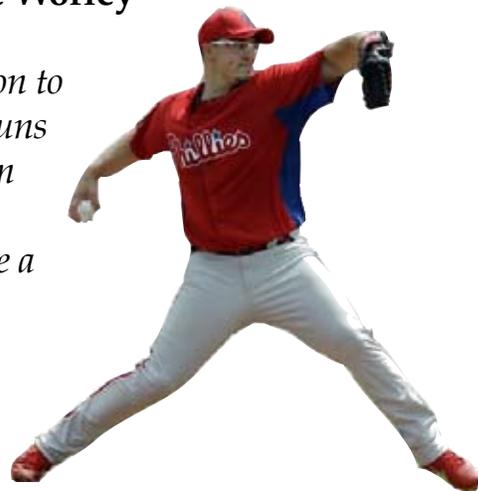
Arrived: Al Albuquerque, Bobby Jenks, Carlos Carrasco, Juan Cruz, Greg Dobbs, Octavio Dotel, Juan Francisco, Philip Humber, Conor Jackson, Sam Lecure, Chris Resop, Vance Worley

Departed: D.J. Carrasco, Jesse Chavez, Lance Cormier, Mark Derosa, Justin Duchscherer, Zach Duke, Troy Glaus, Scott Maine, Craig Stammen, Miguel Tejada

Turnover Rate: 31%

SNT: Vance Worley

A nice addition to the two big guns in the Gotham rotation. He should be here a while.





gotham city BATMEN

season for the ages in an era of six-inning pitchers and mediocre ERAs (Grade 17 C+22, 34 starts). Having someone like that makes any staff (other than perhaps the 1972 Phillies) one to take seriously. His tag-team partner, Felix Hernandez (Grade 11 lefty, C+13



Tag-team: Justin and Felix

HR+23) is a bit down from previous years, but his 33 starts and good fatigue number makes him a valuable second starter. Gotham City added a starter and a half in the draft with rookies Vanc Worley (Grade 12 C-13 HR+22) and Philip Humber (Grade 10 C+22 HR+21). Lefty Jorge de la Rosa (Grade 12 lefty C-24 HR+25) is good, but for only 10 starts. The top five have 124 very solid trips to the hill.

The rest of the rotation is a patchwork, but there are no truly bad starts. Carlos Carrasco (Grade 7), a contender draft selection (as he is out for all of 2012) and the last tour of Tim Wakefield (Grade 5 C+14

HR-23) will make up the remaining starts, and will be nailed to the mound until they have soaked up some innings to save the bullpen.

BULLPEN. Which, speak of the devil, is a bit more of an adventure. The closer grade belongs to rookie flamethrower Al Albuquerque (Grade 26* C-62 HR+62), who only has 43 innings: but they are likely to be exciting ones. On days where he is unavailable, closing duties fall to Jonathan Papelbon, who is a long step down (Grade 13*) but has excellent peripherals (C+41 HR+42). Both Albuquerque and Papelbon will strike out more than their share of hitters (they are a KX and a KY in the Master Game respectively).

Middle relief belongs to a motley quartet. Octavio Dotel (Grade 15* C+13), acquired by trade just

before spring rosters were finalized, is the best of the lot; draftees Juan Cruz (Grade 15* C-62) and Sam LeCure (Grade 13* C+21 HR-21) add innings from the right side, and converted starter and linguistic challenge Marc Rzepczynski (Grade 13* C-33 HR+41)

is the situational lefty. These four have about 240 innings between them. They will be useful, but may be a lirrle frightening in close games. Matt Albers (Grade 9* C-41) is the only other pitcher in the bullpen even remotely safe near open flame.

Overall, the starting staff will be expected to carry the bulk of the load. The bullpen is well-populated, but a little scary, with some cardboard relievers occupying crucial positions. If Gotham City is in the thick of it in September, the club may have to go find some help there.

Offense: 7.5
They can be pitched to.

The centerpiece of the offense is last year's top pick Giancarlo (formerly "Mike") Stanton. Giancarlo (formerly "Mike") has the hallmarks of a Gotham City offensive contributor: 9 13s and 4 14s, and a serious 1-1-4-6



Giancarlo. Call him Giancarlo.

power line. It should translate to lots of offense and lots of strikeouts. There is some supporting cast: Matt Joyce (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, E35) had a breakout year; Ryan Howard took a step back but is still dangerous (9 hits, 4 walks, 1-0-0-0, though the L-10 R+2 split will hurt him sometimes); and Nick Swisher (9 hits, 5 walks, 1-5-6) is useful but his platoon split on the boards (L+5 R-4) will be problematic.

The lineup then descends into mediocrity. Right handed lineups, which will face most opponents, rely altogether too much on the presence of Greg Dobbs (10 hits, 3 0s), who turned in a useful card, but merely the name *Greg Dobbs* in the same sentence as the



Despite having Verlander and "King" Felix at the top of the rotation, the Batmen will have a tough time overtaking the Herons for the Mays Division crown. Maybe in 2013.

words *everyday player* should give one pause. Jonathan Lucroy, Ruben Tejada and Jeff Baker are different variations on the ten-hit card, with strength against lefties (Lucroy and Baker are L+5s); weakness against righties (Lucroy is a R-3, Baker an unpleasant R-10); and some power (3 0s in each case). Tejada has little shift and little power. Similarly there are some 9-hit cards that get playing time: Rod Barajas (1-5-5) at catcher; Clint Barmes (3 0s) and Alcides Escobar (6-0, D29 for a slew of steal attempts) at short, and Will Venable (3 0s, D34 for another slew of steals) and Conor Jackson (3 0s) get time in the outfield or at first base.



Joyce: Supporting cast

This is a lineup that can be pitched to. Even the dangerous hitters will strike out regularly; there isn't an 11-hit card on the roster. The platoon shifts will make this a team that may have trouble on the road, where optimal matchups may be hard to arrange.

Defense: 6.0

More solid than usual.

The need to write in Greg Dobbs' name should be a warning flag. Dobbs and Clint Barmes (SS9, therefore 3B4) will be at third base; it, along with the mediocre catcher position (both Lucroy and Barajas are C7s with no real throwing arm) are the weak spots. The remaining positions are otherwise decent or better; both Barmes and Escobar are SS9s, a useful luxury, while Ruben Tejada is a 2B8 (in some lineups Jeff Baker will be a 2B7); at first base, Conor Jackson and Baker are both 1B4s, and Ryan Howard should not have to carry a glove. The outfield is solid OF2s all around. Jackson (29 arm) and Venable (30) will not figure into much throwing, but Swisher (32) and Joyce (33) are good and Stanton (35) is above average.

Bench: 2.5

Some flexibility.

The two shortstops and the variety of platoon choices give Gotham City some bench versatility. In addition, there is a pinch-runner in Jarrod Dyson (A35 for a dozen steal attempts), about a hundred PA of rookie Juan Francisco as a pinch hitter (1-4-6-6, 10 hits, L-11

R+2) and platoon fashion plate Dayan Viciedo (9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+12 R-10). The bench should not figure too much into the in-game maneuvers, but it does give flexibility to lineups.



2nd

Without a dominant hitter, with an idiosyncratic bullpen, Justin Verlander may have to have a season even better than he had for the

Tigers to pull the Gotham City club much above 85-90 wins. It should still be enough to get them into the playoffs, as the conference lacks many serious contenders this season. In a short series the great starting pitching may change the equation.



**MASTER PLAN:
GOTHAM CITY**

A year after a World Series against the Guru, the Batmen slipped below .500. The recent acquisitions encourage the idea that the club is remaining competitive while restructuring. The old guard is largely gone. In some ways the last few years have been about that transformation – except that it's managed to go all the way to the World Series twice. Anton is not a boom-and-bust GM, though his team has both boomed and busted; the gradual shift from older to younger players is more his style.

This is a team with young veterans, with only a handful of very youthful players. A team can only replace a few pieces each year – unless the team is Brobdingnag. To do what Joe Auletta does requires singular genius that virtually no one shares, and the willingness to be a doormat for multiple years. It also requires no sentimentality and exquisite timing. Gotham City has a solid core. There are areas of concern, but overall the plan is – or should be – to ride these horses as far as they can be ridden. Overall, the transition has been a comfortable one.



TQ: 26.5

gotham city BATMEN

2011 greater ohio CHIA PETS in review



The plan was for the better competition to pound the Chia Pets into the first pick in the draft. It almost worked.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 48-114 (4th, Clemente)

Boy did this team suck. The 114 losses were a league high (or low). It ultimately didn't matter that the team used starter John Danks out of the bullpen. He did somehow get to use 121.7 of his 170.3 innings and pitched remarkably well (5-2, 2 saves, 2.74 ERA). When a team ranks 20th in team batting average and dead last in team ERA, there are more problems at work than one pitcher could solve.

Despite the suck-i-tude, the team could still not earn the first pick in the draft. Thanks to the league rules in effect at the time, they had to settle for the second pick, as Brobdingnag was worse at the end of August. Still, a strong draft and rebound years from some of the veterans look to give the team a chance to return to the first division, even in always-competitive Mays Division.

What went right?

Apparently, Miguel Cabrera didn't get the memo that the team was taking the year off. He had another monster season, hitting .319 with 51 doubles, 40 homers, 81 walks, and 108 RBIs. Wow. Evan Longoria and rookie Brennan Boesch also topped 20 homers; Longoria had 48 doubles and 8 triples as well. Andre Ethier had 41 doubles and hit .283.

On the mound, Carlos Marmol saved 25 games with a sterling 3.14 ERA; Danks, as noted, was a workhorse in the bullpen, and Cliff Lee won a team-high 8 games.

What went wrong?

That's correct: no pitcher won as many as 10 games. The team ERA (5.30) was atrocious. Six pitchers lost double-digit games, led by the lefty tag team of John Lannan and Jonathan Niese (16 each).

The team batting average (.238) was awful, too – worse, when you factor in Cabrera's stats. Given the individual performances, it's kind of amazing Cabrera was intentionally walked only nine times. Boesch's 20 homers were offset by a .237 average and a .290 OBP. Kosuke Fukudome had 17 homers and 87 walks, but hit .199.



Cabrera: Didn't get memo

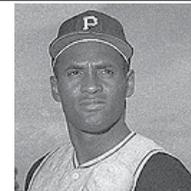
3 Things

1. *All part of the plan.* When the team moved to the Mays, the plan was for the better competition to pound the Chia Pets into the first pick in the draft. It almost worked. Enduring the season led to a draft that shored up the team's depth, adding a number of promising youth to a team that had become "Cabrera, Longoria and not much left for ya."
2. *Do it through the draft.* Only comeback kid Scott Feldman came via a trade; every other new arrival is a draft pick. And every one of them has upside. If the draft produces this kind of talent for the next several years, watch out!
3. *Working its way back to winning.* Winning is more fun than losing. This team may not win more than it loses, but the difference will be a lot closer. The team has some exceptional players. When it all comes together, this team could be a monster.

greater ohio CHIA PETS

Devlin Toth (17th year)

The 2012 draft infused some youth, vitality, and speed into a team that scored only 601 runs last year.



The Chia Pets' first year in the Mays Division was an unmitigated flop, as they lost a TBL-worst 114 games. The disastrous season, however, netted Mr. Toth the second overall pick, with which he took a potential franchise player in SNT Freddie Freeman.

By all accounts Greater Ohio had a banner draft. Young secondbaseman Jemile Weeks fell to them in the second round. Mr. Toth also grabbed a handful of other lottery tickets, infusing some youth, vitality, and speed into a team that scored only 601 runs last year. Only one TBL team (Brodingnag) scored fewer. But after the draft, we at the *Annual* can say, "Well played, Devlin."

The one thing the team didn't get in the draft was a left-handed starter. The Chia Pets already have four, so maybe they've placed a moratorium on southpaws, but 2012 marks the first year since 2007 that they haven't selected a lefty in the first few rounds of the rookie draft. It raises an interesting philosophical question: Do Chia Pets actually produce leaves and if not, how can they turn over a new one?

Pitching: **7.0**
At least they have an ace.

ROTATION. Last year, we stated, "Mr. Toth has always liked left-handed starting pitchers." This

Arrived: Alexi Amarista, Alex Burnett, Fautino De Los Santos, Andy Dirks, Scott Feldman, Tyler Flowers, Freddie Freeman, Josh Lindblom, Chris Marrero, Jemile Weeks

Departed: Bobby Crosby, Jake Fox, Juan Gutierrez, Ryan Langerhans, Garrett Olson, Nate Robertson, Luis Valbuena, Jason Varitek, Reggie Willits, Jack Wilson

Turnover Rate: 28%

year, it's true again. While the rotation grades are generally better, four of the six starters are left-handed. It starts with a *bona fide* ace in lefty Cliff Lee (Grade 14 C+32). Last year, Lee won a team-high 8 games with a solid 3.39 ERA as a Grade 11. He should win a lot more this year.



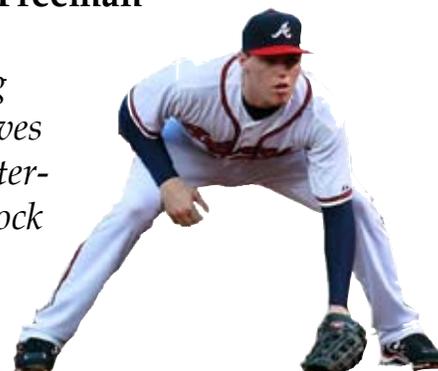
Lee: Bona fide

Freddie Garcia rebounded to a Grade 9. He's joined by rejuvenated John Lannan (Grade 8 C-25 HR+22). Together, they have 90 starts. Lefty John Danks (Grade 7 C+23) is the best of the rest. He's followed by Jason Hammel (Grade 6 C-23) and young lefty Jonathan Niese (Grade 4 C+22). Overall, we've seen better and we've seen worse. At least they have an ace.

BULLPEN. Last year, closer Carlos Marmol saved 25 of the team's 48 wins: that's impressive and futile at the same time. This year, Marmol (Grade 13* C-62 HR+31) has stepped back to make room for youngsters Josh Lindblom (Grade 14* HR+62) and Drew Storen (Grade 14* C+24). Add in Jose Veras (Grade 13* C-36), and the Chia Pets have 250 innings to serve as a closer by committee. While the number of innings is adequate, the grades may not be.

SNT: Freddie Freeman

His outstanding rookie season gives the Chia Pets a terrific building block for the future, both at bat and in the field.





greater ohio CHIA PETS

The team's instructions don't go into much depth, but it's safe to assume the four-headed closer also sets up. The next three relievers are just adequate middle men. Kerry Wood (Grade 12* C-21), once a can't-miss prospect, is now a 35-year-old middle reliever. Of course, others in his draft class aren't even in baseball anymore (like the two taken ahead of him in that draft: Ben Grieve and Travis Lee).

Rookie Fautino De Los Santos (Grade 12* C-46) serves as Wood's sidekick for a few months. Then there's 2011 waiver draftee Daniel McCutchen (Grade 8*), who will throw a ton of innings, most likely to support the weaker starters. These three add 169 innings to the mix. At the end of the pen, Alex Burnett (Grade 6* C-23 HR+25) and John "The Lefty" Grabow (Grade 5* C-22 HR-21) bring the total number of relief innings to 551.

The Chia Pets will have plenty of relief innings to throw around, and they may need to, given the bottom half of the rotation. The lack of a strong closer and solid set-up men will mean the team will have to score runs in bunches to be competitive.

Offense: 6.5
Better with "the Franchise."

Any conversation about the Chia Pets offense always starts with Miguel "The Franchise" Cabrera (1-5-6-6, 12 hits, 5 walks). He's a full-season, full-throttle force to be reckoned with. This year, he makes the switch to full-time DH; but no matter where he plays his presence makes the whole team better. He belongs in a higher league.

The next three hitters should do OK in *this* league. Andre Ethier (11 hits, 3 walks, L-12 R+3)

lost some power, but still has a nice stroke. SNT Freddie Freeman and Brennan Boesch have similar cards (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22), but Freeman has trouble against lefties (L-6).

Adding power to the lineup are Evan Longoria (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks+22, L+3, R-3), who regressed a little, rookie Jemile Weeks (3-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, L-4, 26 SSN for 33 attempts), who has power *and* speed, and Jarrod Saltalamacchia (1-4-5, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-6), who adds pop to the bottom of the lineup.

The table-setters include Jose Tabata (9 hits, 4 walks+22, L+5, R-3, 27 SSN for 23 attempts), Kosuke Fukudome (9 hits, 4 walks, L-4), and Maicer "The Good" Izturis (10 hits, 2 walks+22, R-3). Chris Getz (0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) plays against lefties. Only Cabrera and Longoria have more than three power numbers. Most of the other hitters can be pitched to because of shift differentials or lack of on-base numbers. Aside from Cabrera, this is a mostly mediocre offense.

Defense: 4.5
Only two standouts.

Longoria (3B5) and Ethier (OF3) are the defensive standouts, although Ethier's arm is only average. Getz (2B8), when he plays, and Freeman (1B4), who pushed Cabrera to DH, are above average. That's all the good news.

Izturis is an everyday SS8, backed by Getz (SS7). Fukudome and Tabata share CF and have



Cabrera: Franchise



From 2004 through 2006, the Chia Pets averaged almost 95 wins, culminating in a World Series appearance in 2006. Since then they've averaged under 68 wins. It won't be much better in 2012.

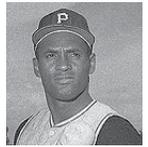
decent arms (34). But Boesch is an OF1 in RF and Weeks is a 2B6 versus righties for most of the season. Of the catchers, Saltalamacchia starts as a C7, backed by Craig Tatum (C7) and Tyler Flowers (C6). They won't help much. In general, neither will this defense.

Bench: 2.0
Surprising.



Longoria: Defensive

Picking up the pieces has already begun. Cabrera is in his prime, and no one on the team is about to expire. In fact, the only somewhat important players 35 or older are Fukudome, Garcia, and Wood. All three are imminently replaceable, but all three are still active in Major League Baseball, meaning they're not dead yet.



greater ohio CHIA PETS

The Chia Pets actually have a few decent bats on the bench. Surprising Scott Sizemore (9 hits, 5 walks, L+4, R-4) will see his share of time at third base. Nolan Reimold (1-4-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L-6) is beginning to deliver on the promise of his rookie year. Newcomer Andy Dirks (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22) has some pop and can spell Boesch in RF as an OF2. Then there are the backup catchers. Tyler Flowers (1-5-6, 7 hits, 4 walks+42, L-10, R+5) will have a hard time hitting his weight, and Craig Tatum (6, 8 hits, 2 walks, 8 24s, L+7, R-6) is probably around for his glove. Chris Marrero (6-0, 10 hits, 1 walk+22, L+5) and Alexi Amarista (6 hits, 1 walk, L-9) are lottery tickets waiting to be cashed.

The Chia Pets hit bottom in 2011. Mr. Toth has stopped trying to rebuild; now he's in full *build* mode. As mentioned earlier in this article, he made some astute picks in the last draft. While there are weaknesses at catcher and shortstop – no disrespect to Saltalamacchia or Izturis, respectively – the team is now much younger. Some of the team's lottery tickets will pay out. If Weeks and Tabata develop as expected, if the young starting pitching comes together, and if they add a few more key pieces, this team could be right back in the heat of a pennant race in 2014 – or even 2013.

3rd The 2012 draft added depth to a club that badly needed it, but it's only one draft: there are still holes to fill and players to develop. While the Chia Pets may end up closer to the bottom of the standings than the top, this year represents a giant step forward. Of course, when you finish with 114 losses, there is only one direction to go.

 **MASTER PLAN:
GREATER OHIO**

Since being swept by Portland in the 2006 World Series, the Chia Pets have floundered, twice losing over 110 games. Although the 2010 team made it to the Conference Semi-Finals, the crash that followed last year showed the price of that playoff run.

	Pets 2006 (100-62)	Pets 2012
C	Varitek	Saltalamacchia
1B	Dm. Young / T. Lee	Freeman
2B	Durham	J. Weeks / Getz
3B	Blake	Longoria
SS	Vizquel	M. Izturis
OF	Mench	Ethier
OF	Pierre	Tabata
OF	Nevin / Morse	Fukudome
DH	M. Cabrera	M. Cabrera
P	Zito	C. Lee
P	C. Lee	F. Garcia
P	Chen	Danks
P	D. Cabrera	Hammel
P*	Borowski	Storen
P*	D. Sanchez	J. Veras



TQ: 20.0

2011 grand cayman HAVENS in review



Focus on the sweepstakes. For Bryce Harper, that is.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 87-75 (2nd, Mays)

Well, we made the playoffs, and that's something. We were 37-23 at the end of June. A month later, we were 43-38 and never recovered. How often does a team make the playoffs after losing 15 games in one month? The fact that we did it has more to do with the weakness of the conference than with the perseverance of the team.

What went right?

The pitching was as good as advertised. Power pitcher Jonathan Sanchez led the way (16-8, 3.35, 238 Ks in 228 innings); Clay Buchholz (13-10, 3.16) and Livan Hernandez (14-10, 3.49) were also excellent. Evan Meek notched 34 saves, and rookie Wilton Lopez went 4-0, 1.56 as a setup man.



Sanchez: Power pitcher

The lineup was less powerful than desired, but Billy Butler (.306-16-95, 49 doubles) put up great numbers, and rookie Neil Walker (.298, 13 HR) was pretty solid as well. Emilio Bonifacio (.317, 13 steals) and Matt Holliday (46 doubles, 23 homers) added punch in the middle of the order, while Ryan Theriot and Drew Stubbs stole 21 bases each.

What went wrong?

Despite making the playoffs, the 87-win season was a disappointment, as was the first-round defeat to the Whitman River Rats. This team had its flaws, but it was built to dominate a short series, especially after a mid-season trade shored up two distinct weaknesses. We had great pitching and lots of hit numbers. It just

didn't happen – not during the season and not in the playoffs either. The team hit .264, but its OBP was only .315 and slugged only .362. There were far too many empty at-bats.

As for the coming year, Whitey is gone, and a good thing too because he wouldn't want to watch *this* team. As new GM Boomer Wells says, "It's payback time," since the 2012 draft was hawked for the 2011 push. What remained wasn't enough to repair the holes, so Boomer traded off a few valuable assets to get younger and add more depth. This season will hopefully be the bottom before the climb back to respectability.

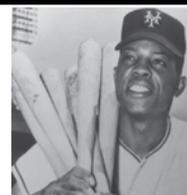
3 Things

1. *Enjoy the good offense.* It should be OK, at least through the first six batters in the order. Alex Avila and Emilio Bonifacio had breakout seasons to support Matt Holliday and Billy Butler (and to a lesser extent, Edwin Encarnacion and Neil Walker).
2. *Accept limitations.* We still have to play too many bad shifts and one-dimensional hitters. And while we have three solid starting pitchers, they had injuries that limit their starts.
3. *Focus on the sweepstakes.* For Bryce Harper, that is. This team has as ugly a bullpen as any team I've managed in all my years in TBL. It is both weak and light on innings. It's a recipe for disaster unless the club can overcome historically bad dice to score enough runs to make up for it. Unlikely. 2013 is what we're playing for. Any highlights this year will be a bonus.

grand cayman HAVENS

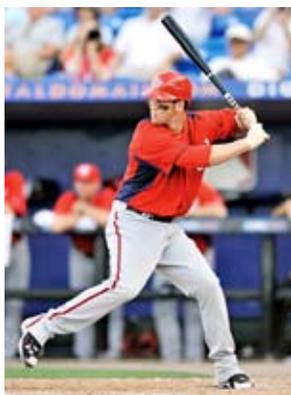
Mark Bloom (22nd year)

Uncle Boomer



The fastest way to determine how well a manager expects his team to do in a given year is to read the emergency instructions to determine the manager's own view of his team. It is really, really rare for a TBL team to outstrip the expectations of the manager. If a guy like the well-informed Mr. Bloom is charged up about his chances, there will be incantations about working the bullpen hard, and making substitutions on offense to gain every possible edge.

That ain't happenin' here. This is the Northboro story, only worse. The hitting is quite solid, but the pitching...well...avert your eyes. The dead giveaway is



The target.

in Boomer's instructions, where he dictates that starters are never to be removed before they have pitched six full innings. *Ever.* This line shows up only when teams are resigned to take a bludgeoning for eight months. Boomer is poised to backpedal furiously in an attempt to land Bryce Harper. And Harper is holding up his end of the bargain – he has pounded his way to

the majors already and is now planted in the #3 batting slot in Washington, where one assumes he will spend most of the next fifteen years.

Pitching: 5.0
An exercise in survival.

ROTATION. The top grade in the stack belongs to Nate Eovaldi (Grade 13 / 13* C-62 HR+33, 6 starts, 2.7 IP), a very promising 22 year old pitcher for the Dodgers who Boomer acquired in the third round of the 2012 TBL draft. Eovaldi has 6 starts ... that is not what you want from the top grade.

The *real* ace of the rotation is the excellent Atlanta righthander Tommy Hanson (Grade 12 C-14 HR-16, 22 starts). He's missing a third of the season and he

SNT: Nate Eovaldi

He blew through the Dodgers system and made his debut against Arizona last August at the age of 21. He came in the third round of the 2012 draft – a great pick.



Arrived: Brandon Crawford, Tim Dillard, Nate Eovaldi, Logan Forsythe, Rich Harden, Josh Lueke, Luis Perez, Bryan Petersen, Kyle Seager, Josh Tomlin, Dontrelle Willis

Departed: Nelson Figueroa, Sammy Gervacio, Chris Johnson, Scott Kazmir, Donny Lucy, Scott Podsednik, Placido Polanco, Doug Slaten, Mike Sweeney, Yorvit Torrealba, Joel Zumaya

Turnover Rate: 31%

has a 25 fatigue. The auxiliary ace is Red Sox righthander Clay Buchholz (Grade 12 C-16, 14 starts), who has similar fatigue issues to Hanson. Jonathan Sanchez (Grade 11, C-62 HR+15, 19 starts) went down with biceps tendonitis in June and an ankle injury in August, then got traded to Kansas City in the off-season. For Boomer, he'll be reasonably effective for about four months. The control will not be a help.

Between these four guys, there is almost three months of decent starts (59). Unless we suffer nationwide monsoon rains, there are still 100 starts on the schedule that must be attended to. The rest of the story on the Cayman Islands this year starts with Josh Tomlin (Grade 8 C+44 HR-22, 26 starts). Tomlin may end up leading this team in innings pitched, because he has a 27 fatigue and very good control. Kyle McClellan (Grade 8 / 7* C+14 HR-23, 17 starts, 37 RIP) contributes another competent set of starts scattered over five months, then does bullpen work for



grand cayman HAVENS

the rest of the year. That's 43 more starts from guys who can steal a hit without help, bringing the total to 103 starts of hope before this club steps in something sticky...

The northbound end of this southbound rotation starts with Chris Narveson (Grade 7/7* C-25, 28 starts) and Rich Harden (Grade 6 C-16 HR-34, 15 starts). Dontrelle Willis (Grade 6 C-42 HR+42, 13 starts) also tosses the ball plateward for a few months. The last two starts are endured by the unendurable Luis Perez (Grade 5/5* C-23 HR-14, 4 starts, 45 relief innings). The trouble isn't so much the grades of these guys, but the fact that the bullpen is not going to rise from their slumber until the seventh inning. This will be an ugly year for the starters.

BULLPEN. The 'closer' is Wilton Lopez (Grade 10* C+25 HR+15, 71 IP). A closer whose grade does not steal 8s is not a good sign. And all the signs are pointing in a really bad direction after you take a gander the setup crew. Chad Qualls (Grade 9* C+26 HR+11, 74 IP) is the main guy because he's decent and durable. Qualls gets help from Tim Dillon

(Grade 8* C+41 HR-12, 28 IP) for a little while, and Manny Acosta (Grade 8* HR-15, 47 IP) for most of the year. The total of 220 innings of Grade 8* and above would be severely strained even if the starters were terrific. And ...they're not.

There are a few bulk innings from guys like Clay Rapada (Grade 7* C-35 HR-32, 16 IP), Josh Lueke (Grade 3* C-16 HR+34, 32 IP), and the innocuous but toxic Casey Coleman (Grade 1* C-44, 50 IP). There are 420 innings total. Success is not even the consideration here. This is an exercise in survival.

Offense: 8.0
Way better news.

The news is way better once Cayman gets off the field and heads to the plate wielding the lumber. There are three huge cards in the lineup, plus



With GM Whitey Bulger now safely behind bars can Grand Cayman, a team which ran on violence and intimidation for years, be able to win on their field on merits alone. Time will tell.

some miscellaneous goodies. It starts with some eyeball-scorching cardboard from Billy Butler (1-6-6-0, 11 hits 3 walks) and Matt Holliday (1-5-6-6, 10 hits 4 walks, 4 24s).

These two beasts bat third and fourth in the lineup all season long, and they will have plenty of RBI opportunities thanks to one of the best leadoff men in the league - Emilio Bonifacio (3 0s, 11 hits 3 walks, 20 speed, 30 SSN for 48 SBA). This guy is channeling Ichiro, and he's just turning 27 years old. You don't see a lot of 20 speed numbers.



Butler: Eyeball-scorching

There's more. Alex Avila (1-0-0-0, 10 hits 4 walks, R+1) is suddenly one of the best hitting catchers in the majors. Edwin Encarnacion (1-0-0-0, 10 hits 3 walks + 22, 31 SSN for 10 attempts) had a nice bounce back year after struggling with health and ineffectiveness since 2008. He will be the regular DH this year.

There are nice supporting cards in other positions. Neil Walker (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 2 31s) hits in the 2-hole all year. His job is the hit and run and try to get to first before Bonifacio gets to third.

The solid and consistent David DeJesus (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, 16 speed) bats seventh. Ryan Theriot (6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 16 speed) and speedster Drew Stubbs (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+10, 31 SSN for 48 SBA) are the other regulars.



Avila: Suddenly

This is a very deep offense that should score enough runs to at least make things interesting for the fans. Some of Cayman's games may have football scores.

**Defense:
Dead average at best.**

4.0

Cayman does not have a lot of elite leather to throw around on defense. The strengths they do have are in good places, such as 2B Neil Walker (2B8) and catcher Alex Avila (C8, Th-1). Outfielders David DeJesus (OF3, 30 arm) and Drew Stubbs (OF3, 34 arm) can catch everything that floats their way.

Other Havens find catching the ball to be more problematic. Billy Butler (1B2) is never going to be confused for Keith Hernandez over there. Emilio Bonifacio (3B3) is OK at a few positions, but he'll struggle at third, which is where he'll play for Boomer. Matt Holliday (OF2, 31 arm) and Ryan Theriot (SS8) are average performers.

Despite the strengths, this is a dead average defense overall. Playing Butler every day at first will prove annoying at times.

**Bench:
Some options.**

2.0

There are some nice bench options. Against lefthanded pitching, Jason Bay (3 Os, 9 hits 4 walks, R-5, L+9) will be a big help. Bryan Peterson (3 Os, 9 hits 4 walks + 42, 34 SSN for 8 attempts) can get on base, run, play some defense and has almost half a season of usage – not bad for a bench toy.

Kyle Blanks (1-5-6, 8 hits 3 walks, R+2) is a big time power prospect that will help as a pinch hitting option against some right-handers. The monster hitting toy is missing, and there is no defensive subs to improve the starting lineup, but if you need to win a matchup battle in close and late situations, this unit can help.



Last in the Mays division. Boomer's club will be smacked around like a beach ball at a college graduation. The pitching is the issue, but it is likely to be an anomaly – Grand Cayman held opponents to

635 runs last year, so the talent in there. They just need the starters that have 20 starts to show up with 30 starts instead, and Cayman should be back in the playoff hunt. The question for this year is how high this club rises in the draft order for 2013.



**MASTER PLAN:
GRAND CAYMAN**



The club won 87 games last year and fell in a very close series to Whitman in the post-season – but it's been four years since the dominant 109-win team that was the third, and last, club that reached the playoffs. But truly, this club over its long history has suffered from the most painful of TBL afflictions: mediocrity. This publication once reproved a previous manager – Colonel Don Mahley – for having neither gone forward to contention nor backward to rebuild, but remained in the middle, where neither accolades nor high draft picks come to a team. Truly, it is the worst place to be.

What to make of this club? Clearly there is an eye for talent, and the patience to wait for it all to come together. Nate Eovaldi? Neil Walker? Tommy Hanson? Alex Avila? Check. And down further in the draft – Kyle McClellan, Emilio Bonifacio, Wilton Lopez? All fine choices. (Kyle Blanks? Joel Zumaya? Scott Kazmir? The jury is still out.) But in order to win 87 games – with two Grade 16 starters – there were acquisitions that may keep this rebuild going for a while. Placido Polanco? Ryan Theriot? Jason Bay? Joba Chamberlain? There was a time that those were the right pieces to acquire. (It's hard to argue with Billy Butler or Matt Holliday, though). The real question is whether this is a build-up that didn't go far enough, or a rebuild that has to go yet farther. Which direction to take?

Whatever the plan is – and rebuild is on the menu right now – it's important to avoid the middle. Grand Cayman has to decide where it wants to live in 2014.



TQ: 19.0

grand cayman HAVENS

Whack A Mole

The mystery for the Ruth Division in 2012 is not which team will finish on top. That's already established, and will be settled before Memorial Day – by the time this publication reaches print. No: it's which of the three remaining teams will find its way to the bottom. In two cases this is not by design: both the guys out in western Canada and our newest franchise in Detroit are dealing with the consequences of recent events and decisions. As for the Prince of Darkness: he's a clever devil, and he wants to say the name "Bryce Harper." Time will tell.



In-division games for the **Dallas Eagles** will be an exercise of Whack A Mole for *Steve Powell*, who will be wielding the big hammer. Games against most other opponents will

be similar: they've got arms and bats and gloves and will be looking to get back for another shot at the championship. They have a real good chance at it, too.

The **Brobdingnag Barbarians** have a serious challenge. Having added a number of capable pitchers, *Joe Auletta* has successfully divested his team of anything like an offense in the quest for the best pick in the 2013 draft. The club is



2011 Ruth Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Dallas*	110	52	.679	—
Houston	79	83	.488	31
New Westminster	56	106	.346	54
Brobdingnag	53	109	.327	57

* *Lost World Series to Melrose.*

nowhere near as impotent as the 36-126 editions, but 500 runs is not out of the question.

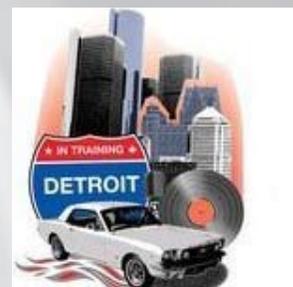


There's not a lot of gas – excuse us, *petrol* – in the tank for the **New Westminster Whiskeyjacks**, but they do have a big hitter and an ace starter. In general, the team overall is out of conten-

tion, but boy howdy does *Jim Jeatt* have lots of Guys We Like. As with the Prince's crew, they'll be headed for the bottom of the league and the top of the draft, but we think they'll be a little behind Brobdingnag for the also-ran spot in the Ruth.

The first year for a manager in TBL is sometimes difficult. It's hard to blame *Dave Jaskot* for the product on the field: the **Detroit Stars** are far more a

creation of the departed Zen Master than his efforts so far. It will take a few more drafts and a few more rebuilding campaigns before they are going in the direction he likes. In the meanwhile, there'll be some . . . teachable moments.



- 
- 1. Dallas 30.5
 - 2. Breckinridge 19.0
 - 3. New Westminster 16.5
 - 4. Detroit 15.0

Ruth Division

Brandon Phillips,
Dallas

2011 dallas EAGLES in review



It was, as they say, a banner year.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 110-52 (2nd, Ruth)

2011 was a banner year in many respects. It was the first World Series appearance for the franchise since the league's very first year (1984, for those of you who can't remember that far back), when the team played as the Tasmania Devils. That team featured George Brett, Andre Dawson, and Robin Yount. Charlie Hough won 17 games.

The 2011 Dallas squad was no slouch, with Carl Crawford, Mark Teixeira, and Ryan Zimmerman. Three pitchers (Dan Haren, Josh Johnson, and C.J. Wilson) each won 19 games. The team finished with the franchise's second-best team batting average (.276) and the best franchise ERA (a stellar 3.26). In addition, the team won a franchise-best 110 games. It was, as they say, a banner year.

What went right?

There weren't too many underachievers on this club. Dan Haren even chipped in with a .579 batting average in 21 plate appearances, including two homeruns. Mark Teixeira led the team with 36 dingers while Carl Crawford led with 31 steals. Four pitchers had ERAs under 2.00, including closer Andrew Bailey and starter Josh Johnson (19-3, 13 complete games). Ryan Zimmerman led the conference with a .322 average.

What went wrong?

Despite a scare – a 7-game semi-final series win against the Whitman River Rats – the Eagles

made it to the World Series. Only a 5-game loss to a loaded Melrose Avengers team kept 2011 from being a season for the ages.

Given the quality of the competition, there is hardly any shame in getting to the final stage and falling a little short.

3 Things



Johnson: Leader

1. *Getting back in the saddle.* What do you do when you make it all the way to the World Series, only to lose? If you're lucky, you try to get right back there. The team is strong again, although the pitching isn't as dominant and the hitting isn't as powerful. When you get the chance, you go for it.

2. *Tweaking the cardboard.* It's amazing how important Mike Morse is to this team. But he needed some help.

So Reed Johnson arrived via trade. Josh Reddick and Alejandro De Aza arrived via the draft, which also helped restock the bullpen for the coming season. But Dallas didn't fire every bullet in the gun on another pennant run.

3. *Remembering what's important.* With the first-round draft pick (sometimes a luxury for a team that made it to the World Series), Dallas took a nice little player named Dee Gordon. He only helps a little in 2012, but could be a vital piece of the puzzle going forward since he plays such a key position, is still very young, has a MLB job, and obviously has some skills. Many league prognosticators had Gordon going much earlier in the round, but Dallas scooped him up like a double-play grounder.

dallas EAGLES



Steve Powell (23rd year)

Lo and behold, he's loaded again.

It took 22 years, but Steve Powell finally put up the monster season we at the *Annual* have been waiting for since the day he drafted Mark Teixeira – 110 wins, and a deep playoff run that ended in a loss in the TBL World Series to a Melrose Avengers team that simply was not to be denied.

It all worked for Mr. Powell last year – he won his division by 31 games, scored 943 runs and had three 19 game winners on his pitching staff. Andrew Bailey had an ERA of 1.02 and 34 saves. Birds sang and children laughed – Steve had a great, great year and though we all love Mark Freedman, a lot of folks were rooting for Steve in that World Series.

It was not to be. Steve can now turn his attention to this year, when, lo and behold, he's loaded again.

Pitching: 12.5
No respite for opponents.

Last year, the starters for this club went a rather crispy 77-36 on the year. This year, Ruth division opponents expecting a respite will be bitterly disappointed.

ROTATION. It helps to have an ace, and Dallas has a nice one - C.J. Wilson (Grade 14 C-14 HR+26, 34 starts) pitched wonderfully for Texas last year and checks in as one of the best full season starter grades in the league. He's followed in the rotation by the consistent and durable Danny Haren (Grade 11 C+42 HR+21, 34 starts), and the not-so-consistent but still terrific Eric Bedard (Grade 12 C-23, 24 starts). The top 3 will give Dallas 92 rock solid starts.



Wilson: Nice ace



SNT:
Dee Gordon

A 24 year old shortstop with blazing speed and the ability to put the bat on the ball. This is the first piece in Steve Powell's next generation in Dallas.

The last 70 starts are entirely devoured by the ageless Bartolo Colon (Grade 8 C+24 HR-14, 26 starts), Jeff Karstens (Grade 9 C+34 HR-22, 26 starts) – who really exceeded everyone's expectations last year – and San Diego lefty Clayton Richard (Grade 8 C-21 HR+21, 18 starts). Not one pitch will be tossed by anyone that doesn't steal hits without help. This is one of the better rotations in TBL.

BULLPEN. Talk about versatile. Two years ago, Josh Johnson (Grade 20 C-12 HR+45, 60 IP) won 22 games losing only 2. Last year, he went 19-3, 1.95 and led the Eagles to the World Series. This year, he's the closer without portfolio – his 60 innings is better employed at the back of the pen.

The setup crew consists of four guys above Grade 13*. The best of them is probably Joel

Arrived: Bartolo Colon, Alejandro De Aza, Sergio Escalona, Dee Gordon, Jason Istringhausen, Reed Johnson, Josh Reddick, Bryan Shaw, Jerome Williams

Departed: Pat Burrell, Casey Coleman, Matt Diaz, Pedro Feliciano, Willie Harris, Tommy Hunter, Kevin Jepsen, Mitch Moreland, Xavier Paul

Turnover Rate: 26%



dallas EAGLES

Hanrahan (Grade 15* C+25 HR+56, 68 IP), whose big peripherals and stout inning total should make him a fan favorite in Dallas this year. The best grade among the close and late bunch belongs to power armed Grant Balfour (Grade 17* C-12 HR-16, 62 IP). Andrew Bailey (Grade 13* C+22 HR+25, 41 IP) and Heath Bell (Grade 14* HR+26, 62 IP) also contribute here. Dallas has 293 innings of very solid grades to finish the close and late contests.

There are two more guys around who may cause fans to take up smoking. Sergio Escalona (Grade 13* C-23 HR-12, 27 IP) has a nice grade, but peripherals that will make the manager think

twice about him when the game is on the line.

The same goes for Jason Isringhausen (Grade 13* C-46 HR-15, 46 IP), only more so. These two wild men give Dallas 366 innings of Grade 13*+ relief. The middle relievers are pretty good and will help some of the weaker starters. Brian Shaw (Grade 10* C+22 HR+25, 28 IP), a 25 year old right-hander from Arizona has the best grade and peripherals, but the bulk of the bulk work will go to Jerome Williams (Grade 10* C-14 HR-15, 44 IP) and Boone Logan (Grade 9* C+24 HR+15, 41 IP). Jose Mijares (Grade 7* C-61 HR+25, 49 IP) is around to ride fences and rope cattle. This bullpen pales in comparison to Las Vegas and a couple of others, but combined with the excellent starting staff, they should get the job done.

Offense: 9.5 The great cards just keep coming.

How good is Dallas offensively this year? Ryan Zimmerman (1-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L+6) has a high-quality card and plays an excellent third base...and he doesn't start against righthanders *because there's no place for him to play.*

The lineup is overflowing with superior, eye-ball-melting cardboard. How about we start



The Eagles made their first World Series appearance in 2011 and I'm sure they'd like to make it back again in 2012. That's totally possible as their path to the Ruth title, and the playoffs, is all but unobstructed.

with the 12-hit cards. Dee Gordon (2 0s, 12 hits, 30 SSN for 31 SBA, 56 games) will play only for a few months, but he will have an impact. Dan Murphy (0-6-6, 12 hits, 2 walks, 3 7s, R+0) is the regular third baseman and the reason Zimmerman is dusting the bat rack most game days.

There are two power anchors in the middle of the lineup. Mike Morse (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+42, no shift) has turned into a hitter as big as his frame (6' 5", 230 lbs) would imply. He hits cleanup most of the year.



Teixeira: Modest year, nice card

Mark Teixeira (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, R-4) had a modest year for the Yankees, but got a nice card out of it from the Game Company. The great cards just keep coming. Reed Johnson (4 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk+42, 7 on 55, 111 games) is over from Maracaibo, and should produce well here. Ryan Doumit (1-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, 2 31s) is the regular catcher, but George Kottaras (4 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, R+2) has a nice hitting card as well. Brandon Phillips (0-0-6, 11 hits 2 walks+22, 17 speed number) is the secondbaseman and leadoff man most nights.

Against better quality righties, Alejandro De Aza (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, 54 games) gets the call in the leadoff spot, although Carl Crawford (4 0s, 10 hits 1 walk, 29 SSN for 24 SBA) will play center field most of year. Jason Bartlett (2 0s, 9 hits 3 walks, 17 speed, 27 SSN for 33 SBA) is the regular shortstop, and has plus speed to go with an average hitting card.

It's all here – power, speed, on-base capability. Dallas should score plenty of runs, perhaps even exceeding the 940+ they scored last year. This is

easily the best offense in the division, and probably the best in the International Conference.

Defense: 5.0

Some problems to start.

Dallas has only one area where it do not excel – it is a below average defensive team, at least when the starters are on the field. There are a couple of top-shelf defenders. Brandon Phillips (2B8) is



McDonald: Maven

outstanding at the keystone. Mark Teixeira (1B5) is as good as it gets at first base.

There are a few defenders with average defensive grades. Shortstop Jason Bartlett (SS8) will have his ups and downs, but he's got an excellent backup in

defensive maven John McDonald (SS9, 3B5). Reed Johnson (OF2, 34 arm) is a solid outfielder for 2/3 of a season. Carl Crawford (CF-2, 31 arm) and Alejandro De Aza (CF-2, 31 arm) are also passable out there, although they may prove annoying some days. The weak spots are at third, left field and catcher. Dan Murphy (3B3) will need help from McDonald and Ryan Zimmerman (3B4). Mike Morse (LF-1, 33 arm) has too good a card to sit down, so Steve will live with the *Greg Luzinski effect* in the outfield. Ryan Doumit (C7, Th-2) can make the claim that he's better than backup George Kottaras (C7, Th-4), but that ain't sayin' much.

There are some problems, but the Eagles are so loaded on offense that they may not feel the effects of the weak defense as much as a lesser team might be.

Bench: 3.5

Nice options.

The bench has some nice options. There are two perfectly usable outfielders sitting here sunning themselves – one a former Red Sox prospect – Josh Reddick (4 0s, 10 hits 2 walks, 87 games) – and one now with the team: Ryan Sweeney (2 0s,

9 hits 4 walks, R+1). McDonald (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks) will provide tremendous defense for Dallas, which starts hitters at the expense of the leather. Ryan Zimmerman (1-6-6, 11 hits 3 walks, L+6) starts only against lefties, so he's waiting for opportunities as well. Chris Denorfia (3 0s, 10 hits 3 walks, L+7) has an average card, but a terrific lefty shift.

The bench is ok – no killer hitting toy, no defensive sub at catchers, just a nice set of cards that aren't quite good enough to crack the starting lineup.

1st

It will be over by Mother's Day. This team is so much better than the rest of the Ruth that they could play

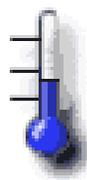
their bench all year and probably still win it. The question is – can Steve make a return appearance in the World Series, and can he win this thing?



**MASTER PLAN:
DALLAS**

Patient Dallas has been rewarded by the team that is already on the field – the key players and pitchers have been gathered over several years, almost (but not quite) under the radar. This comes now at a price: there are two 25-year-olds on the roster, and one player age 24. The core of the team is mature: not old, not quite yet, but in the 30-32 year old range.

Dallas faces a choice. Not for this year and likely not 2013. But this is when injuries and declines can begin to impact best-laid plans. What they do in the next two seasons will tell us whether Dr. Steve thinks that this is a five-year run, or that there's a rebuild on the horizon.



TQ: 30.5



dallas EAGLES

2011 brobdingnag BARBARIANS in review



It was about the thermometers and not the TQs. They're overflowing again.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 53-109 (4th, Ruth)

The dance continued in 2011. It was the dance of the Guignol puppets, as we described them in last year's *Annual*; the team was as awful as Joe Auletta wanted it to be – particularly by the end of August, when we determined draft order. We determine draft order at the end of the season now, which will remove this bit of artifice; it might be harder for the Barbarians to do exactly this again. But there's likely to be another act for the puppets in 2012.

Were they bad? Yes, but overall not quite as bad as the record would indicate; there was some power, there was a little pitching. But this was a season to forget. The coming year will also be a season to forget – by design. But in each case it was about the thermometers and not the TQs. They're overflowing again.

What went right?

Alex Rodriguez turned in another season to burnish his Hall of Fame credentials (.269/.374/.519, 25 homers, 42 doubles, 75 walks); Chris Young delivered 32 homers and drove in 95, as well as 11 steals, a quarter of the team total. Joe Mauer (.317, 42 doubles) was the top average. Eric Patterson had an uninspiring season, but did deliver 11 triples.

Jhoulys Chacin turned in a good rookie season (12-8, 5 CG, 3.14 ERA), as did Stephen Strasburg in his 12 starts (5-2, 3 CG and 2 ShO, 93 K in 88 innings). Brandon League saved 11 and Craig Kimbrel saved 6 in 13 appearances.

What went wrong?

There was a lot more bad news. The offense scored 586 runs and hit .227 with a .281 OBP. They did hit 149 homers, but only slugged .331. Beyond A-Rod

and Mauer, no batter hit above Chris Young's .247. The club struck out 1,266 times, led by Young's 149 and Adam Lind's 141. There were eight part-timers below the Mendoza Line.

The pitching staff was mostly bad news. Jake Peavy went 3-11, 4.98 in his half-season; Justin Masterson recorded a 4-20, 5.61 season (6 complete games); Rick Porcello 6-17, 7.30; James Shields, 5-19, 7.40. The staff surrendered 948 runs for a 5.21 ERA, which would have been worse if more than 821 of them were earned, pointing to the 125 team errors.



Young: 32 homers

3 Things

1. *Only the needful.* A key part of the 2011 and 2012 teams involved stripping away any players not strictly necessary. This especially applies to bench players. There's nothing illegal in this; it's an insidious way to make it very difficult to match up, come back, or stay competitive. Just as flexibility can win a half dozen games over the course of a season this tactic can cost just as much.

2. *Draft the talent first.* Draft handicapping in most cases has to do with identifying what a team needs and what its manager most prizes. Not so with the Barbarians. The Prince of Darkness drafts by age and projected ability, independent of position or depth. He takes what he wants and is willing to wait for them to mature. Witness Stephen Strasburg and Mike Trout.

3. *The Master Plan is not a spur of the moment thing.* No, it certainly is not. As noted in the main article, there is no one as forward-looking as Mr. Auletta. Joe knows 2014, and is probably giving serious thought to 2015 (while most of us are just trying to wrap our heads around 2013). As for 2012? That's been on the corkboard since 2008 . . .

brobdingnag BARBARIANS



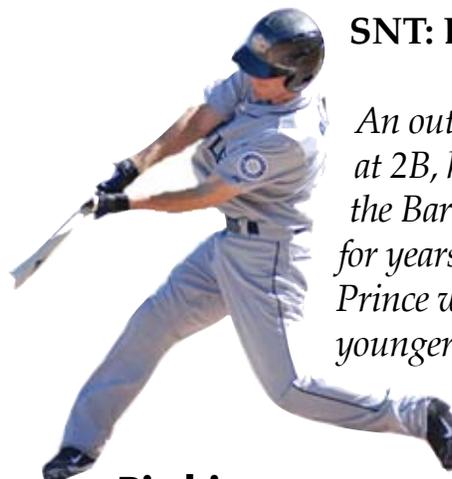
Joe Auletta (24th year)

It's all part of the game.

The Prince of Darkness has set many standards, established many trends, created many styles in his twenty-odd years in TBL. He has taught us all how to go deep into the bucket, to be profoundly bad in order to become disturbingly good. He has made us realize that drafts have “shelves” – where the talent level drops off. He has shown that sometimes sentimentality is a handicap, that (just about) anyone can be traded (just about) any time. He has shown, to a great extent, what works in APBA and what works in TBL.

Here's another way in which Brobdingnag will get the results it wants in 2012. Through the only circumstances that Joe Auletta can't control – what will be available when he arrives at the draft with his truckload of draft picks – the Barbarians have acquired talent that they want to keep, but that might hinder their ability to select early in 2013: pitching, and lots of it. Having a good rotation and a decent bullpen is a problem. But being able to have Michael Pineda, Jhoulys Chacin, Justin Masterson, Antonio Bastardo, and Craig Kimbrel – and some others – is decidedly *not* a problem. (Stephen Strasburg is on the roster as well: but he at least had the good grace to be uncarded in 2011, so as to keep this edition of the Barbarians from having him, too.)

So how to solve it? Simple. As has happened before, the Barbarians have *no bench*. The regular lineup has one spare position player: Jesus Flores. There are ten others for the nine regular positions; they rotate depending on the month, but the spare player will not be available when not starting. On the road, this works to the home team's advantage: by knowing that there'll be no replacement and no maneuver, pitching moves can be easily scripted. This can affect the outcome of ten to twenty games over the course of the season – enough to make the difference between around 60 and around 80 wins. Enough, in other words, to make sure that this edition of the Brobdingnag Barbarians do what they're supposed to do this year: move the team up the draft in 2013, where Joe Auletta will work his dark magic once again.



SNT: Dustin Ackley

An outstanding prospect at 2B, he'll be anchoring the Barbarians' infield for years . . . or until the Prince wants someone younger.

Pitching: Solid for an also-ran.

9.0

ROTATION. It is not often that an also-ran team can run out starters whose worst grade is a 5. The Barbarians, however, have that luxury this year. The best starter is rookie Michael Pineda (Grade 13), who adds 28 starts to the holdovers from last year: Jhoulys Chacin (Grade 12 C-41), Justin Masterson (Grade 10 C+14 HR+41), and lefty Derek Holland (Grade 9). This quartet covers 124 starts. The remaining 40 are not terrible either: Homer Bailey (Grade 6 C+23 HR-21) and Jake Peavy (Grade 5 C+34 HR+16).

Probably the best attribute of these six pitchers is that other than Peavy, who is only 30, the oldest of

Arrived: Dustin Ackley, Homer Bailey, Jason Bourgeois, Bill Bray, Fausto Carmona, Lonnie Chisenhall, Jesus Flores, Michael Pineda, Chris Ray, Jerry Sands, Mike Trout, Justin Turner

Departed: Scott Cousins, Ryan Kalish, Scott Linebrink, Justin Maxwell, Eric Patterson, Ramiro Pena, Brad Penny, Rick Porcello, Oscar Salazar, James Shields, Dontrelle Willis, Delwyn Young

Turnover Rate: 34%



broddingnag BARBARIANS

the crew is 27. And oh, by the way, Stephen Strasburg is 23 and will be back next year.

BULLPEN. The Barbarians have two powerful closer grades out in the bullpen. Craig Kimbrel was all-world for the Braves last year and will be quite capable for Broddingnag (Grade 20* C-36 HR+43), while lefty Antonio Bastardo has worse peripherals (C-53 HR-12) but a better base grade (24*). They've got some help too: Daniel Schlereth (Grade 16* lefty C-62), Bill Bray (Grade 14* lefty HR+26), Brandon League (Grade 12* C+43 HR+41) and Bobby Parnell (Grade 9* C-22 HR+31) are available to bridge from starter to closer. The high-end grades have 135 innings; the middle men add almost 220 more.



Kimbrel: All-world

This bullpen can really pitch, and the instructions call for them to come into any close game. There are a few hundred innings of bulk as well – Ryan Perry (Grade 5* C-44 HR+54) and Chris Ray (Grade 7* HR+34) are the best of them. Again, the relief crew is young: most of them should be on the next version of the club as well. Overall, this pitching staff on a contender like Rye or Melrose would be a key contributor to a winning season.

Offense: 4.5 A cipher.



A-Rod: The mighty fall

There is no card on the roster that has a power number on 22: not even a pitcher. This is so unlike the Barbarians as to evoke comment. The best card in the lineup – at least, for the 60% of the season he is available – is Alex Rodriguez (1-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks). The mighty fall as they age; ask ex-Barbarian Ken Griffey. The next best card belongs to prize rookie Dustin Ackley (3 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks, a few good steal attempts). Joe Mauer is far down from his

stratospheric performances (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 3 31s). Brett Wallace and Chris David both have 3 0s and 10 hits; Wallace hits righties, Davis lefties. Adam Lind is the other “power” hitter (1-5-5, 9 hits, but it’s an ugly card). Jason Bourgeois has the only 11 hit card on the roster (with only 1

walk; but he has a bunch of steal attempts) but the L+11 R-10 platoon split will be a hindrance. Jerry Sands has 3 0s, 9 hits and 4 walks. Chris Iannetta will do much of the catching (1-0-0, 8 hits, but 6 walks). The last capable card belongs to rookie Lonnie Chisenhall (1-6-6, 10 hits, 1 walk), and it’s not that capable.

Things descend after that. Chris Young continues to be Janus-faced; he has power (1-6-6) and speed (D28 for more than 20 attempts), but a tough platoon split (L+7 R-4) and only 8 hits and 4 walks. Justin Turner (3 0s, 9 hits), Jose Lopez (1-6-6, 9 hits), and Angel Sanchez (6, 9 hits, 3 walks) will all create many outs while covering middle infield games. Travis Snider (4-6-6, 8 hits, L-16 R+3) and Mike Trout (1-5-6, 8 hits) will play some games as well.

It’s important to consult the instructions when playing the Barbarians, as different combinations of these worthies will be on the roster each month. If there were potent cards missing significant time who had to be replaced by lesser ones, then there might be variance from month to month; but in fact, *most* of the cards on the roster – really all of them other than Chris Young – are missing time. Adam Lind has 125 games; four others have 110-120; and everyone else is significantly more limited. And it *doesn't matter*. This lineup will have trouble scoring runs, even against poor pitching. The lack of power, the very limited speed, the low OBPs, the batting shifts all contribute to making the offense a cipher.

Congratulations, Joe. *You've done it again.*



This team, just like its owner Vlad, has risen from the dead and is on the verge of being respectable again. They won't catch Dallas for the Ruth crown, but an over .500 finish is quite likely.

Defense: 4.0
Adequate in most places.

The difficult half-season of Joe Mauer has reduced him to a C8 with a Th+0, which is also the rating assigned to Chris Iannetta; while not outstanding, this is a defensive plus. Chris Young retains his OF3 (with a 32 arm) in the outfield; otherwise, it's a crew of average-armed OF2s (Bourgeois, Snider, Trout). Jerry Sands is the OF1 outlier. In the infield, all defenders are average or worse. Justin Turner, Dustin Ackley, Angel Sanchez and Jose Lopez are all 2B7s; Sanchez is an SS8, Turner an SS6; Alex Rodriguez is a 3B4, everyone else rated there is a 3B3; and the first basemen (Adam Lind, Brett Wallace, and Lopez) are 1B3s, with Chris Davis the superior glove as a 1B4.

Brodingnag's extremely restrictive bench usage precludes defensive substitutions, so there's little room to maneuver here; but the defense is probably not going to win or lose many games, as it's adequate in most places.

Bench: 1.5
Iron Man time.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it's 86 at-bats of Jesus Flores. Not previously showcased, he sports 5-6-6 power, 8 hits, 2 walks, no batting shift, and no speed. He also can't field (C7 Th-3). There will be no visiting manager twitch about whether one of his valuable plate appearances or games should be used or saved, as he's not better than anyone in the lineup. The instructions suggest that losing the DH is the first priority in case a player must be removed (injury, ejection and so forth). Flores is the second choice. Yes, it's clearly Iron Man time in Brodingnag.

2nd Probably, only because others are worse. The offense is sickly; there is no maneuver on the roster. The pitching will simply function too well some days for the team to lose, but this is like a late-1960s Senators club without Frank Howard or, really, anyone else. A-Rod is Ken McMullen; Jason Bourgeois is Ed Stroud; Chris Davis is Mike Epstein with a really bad head cold. You could find parallels for Del Unser and Brant Alyea, we suppose, but the point is that even good pitching couldn't keep the

Senators from being a punching bag, but it kept them – and will keep Brodingnag – from having the 45-117 season that is scripted for the grand rebuild. It's as if the Prince of Darkness has had a Jekyll-Hyde moment, injecting himself with Guru Serum and building the pitching staff first. He never ceases to amaze.

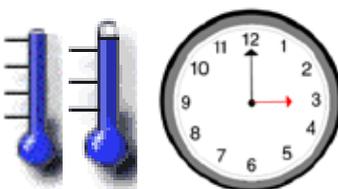


**MASTER PLAN:
BRODINGNAG**

They won it all in 2008, then slumped with eye-popping power and some good pitching, but overall the *Annual* called it "a fun season in Brodingnag, but not an especially successful one." 2010 was 2009 redux: a few strides further back, but still middle-of-the-pack. We said, "it's likely that the Prince of Darkness didn't want the club to be this good." In a way, the two seasons preceding 2011 were about coasting on the field and manipulating the future drafts.

In 2011 this publication compared the Brodingnag style to that of *Guignol*; they wanted to lose last year and lose big, and boy howdy didn't they. Joe Auletta likely saw 2011 coming in the late stages of 2009. Anticipating 2013 was clearly in mind when the 2011 draft was conducted. It added Strasburg, Bastardo, Chacin, Ryan Kalish and Craig Kimbrel; this year's added Ackley, Turner, Chisenhall, Trout, and Pineda. It's a young, young team: it's not as bad as the worst Barbarian rebuilders – but it's not good enough to go further than 70 wins. (We predict fewer, though with the number of rebuilding teams in TBL this year, they might surprise.)

Like many rebuilders, Mr. Auletta is looking to the future. Unlike less adept rebuilders – just about everyone else – he began looking to *this* future some time in the past. He knows, roughly, what 2013 and probably 2014 will look like. It's all part of the game.



TQ: 19.0



brodingnag BARBARIANS

2011 new westminster WHISKEYJACKS in review



TBL does not reward "kind of good" or "kind of bad" teams.

2011 in Review Final Record: 56-106 (3rd, Ruth)

New Westminster went into 2011 with the realization that the team was on the way down after winning 102 games in 2010. They had traded away Matt Holiday and the big three had become the big two with Prince Fielder and Hanley Ramirez. TBL does not reward "kind of good" or "kind of bad" teams; the club had expectations of being one of the worst teams in the league but ended up being only the seventh worst club in 2012.

What went right?

New Westminster was not particularly good at any aspect of the game of baseball. They finished 23rd in batting and 21st in pitching. A strong push at the end of the season got the team over the 600 run plateau.

Hanley Ramirez led the offense albeit at a lower level, finishing .299-27-83.

Prince Fielder led the team in power slugging just .441, with 27 HR and 86 RBI, as well as drawing 100 walks. Ryan Ludwick had a surprisingly good year slugging .401 and chipping in with 21 homers and 60 RBI. Dexter Fowler used his first column 2 quite a bit, recording 17 triples (only Dallas' Carl Crawford had more).

Joel Pineiro led all pitchers in ERA as the only pitcher under 4.00. Johnny Cueto was the leader in wins at 9. Marshall did well in the pen winning 7 and saving 5. Ross Ohlendorf threw a credible 7-7 record on the board. Jeremy Guthrie won 8 games before being traded to Maracaibo for their playoff run.

What went wrong?

New Westminster did seem to have a hard time defending as their gloves turned to iron. The 118 errors were not the worst in the league but it did result in over 100 unearned runs.

Kyle Davies and Kevin Correia had the dubious honor of starting 56 games, a third of the season, and recording a 10-35 record. This was 320 innings

with an ERA well over 6. Kenshin Kawakami recorded an 0-8 record with an ERA of 6.49. On offense Mario Mendoza was unable to bring 8 hitters over his own mark of .200. Cristian Guzman, Bengie Molina and Gregor Blanco combined for over 800 AB and slugged well under .270.

3 Things

1. *Collapse of the pitching.* Injury and indifference contributed to this. Johnny Cueto is now the ace. Drafting a better bullpen and some starters may make the team better in 2012 but there are not a lot of guarantees with the new group of pitchers. The team itself has seen a huge turnover.
2. *Hanley's step back.* More indifference, and too many strikeouts. It remains to be seen if this will extend beyond this season but there is no adequate back up currently in the system.
3. *Platoons and hopes.* Injuries mean that lots of positions are shared. Some pitchers will see change in role. Overall, the team may not be bad enough to rate a solid pick in the upcoming draft. The decision point of building down completely may be coming sooner than later.



Ramirez: Led the offense

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

Jim Jeatt (8th year)

What to do? Don't panic.



The highway to success is littered with vehicles that ran out of fuel, proved to be badly assembled, or had terrible car crashes. More years ago than the editor of this publication would like to admit, an account was given in which a team that had suffered the latter fate was chronicled. The reader's attention was drawn to the two emotions experienced by those passing by a hideous crash: pity for those involved, and relief that oneself was not among them. The event described, many seasons ago, was a result of self-inflicted wounds: too many Landrum-effect players, too many risky trades . . . it was like a sub-prime mortgage gone horribly bad, so that the owner could have one *hell* of a house party.

This is not the tale of the New Westminster Whiskeyjacks. Their first stab at contention, when Mr. Jeatt first joined the league, did result in a certain amount of self-immolation; but it led to a rebuild that brought some of the core players that are still on the roster. No, indeed: the second stab at contention was much more sound – but it fell short, and some bad fortune and off year performances have left it in the state in which it now can be found: not a horrible wreck by the side of the road, but in need of a tow and maybe in the end an engine rebuild.

It's not all bad. No club with Hanley Ramirez, Prince Fielder, J.P. Arencibia, Desmond Jennings, Johnny Cueto and a half-dozen others who would *Look Good On My Team* can truly be all bad. But it's going to scuffle, because there are missing games, disappointing seasons, not enough pitching . . . in other words, a rebuilding year. But if things work out, the rebuild might not take long.

Pitching: 5.5 **Not a total disaster.**

Like most rebuilding teams (other than Brobdingnag, which is a special and strange case), New Westminster has some pitching problems. The starters, says the rotation, "are built for six innings"; to us here at



SNT: **Mark Melancon**

Despite early struggles, Melancon has a great arm, and fills an important need for the rebuild.

Arrived: Brian Bixler, Taylor Buchholz, Alexi Casilla, Aaron Crow, Tony Cruz, Wade Davis, Ryan Dempster, Marco Estrada, Nick Evans, Jeff Gray, Desmond Jennings, Bryan Lahair, Paul Maholm, Nate McLouth, Mark Melancon, Hector Noesi, Trevor Plouffe, Martin Prado, Yoshinori Tateyama, Taylor Teagarden

Departed: Josh Bard, Gregor Blanco, Alberto Callaspo, Brett Carroll, Manuel Corpas, Kyle Davies, Cristian Guzman, Mark Hendrickson, Jeremy Hermida, Joe Inglett, Kila Ka'Aihue, Kenshin Kawakami, Sean Marshall, Juan Miranda, Bengie Molina, Ross Ohlendorf, Joel Pineiro, Jeff Stevens, Kanekoa Texeira

Turnover Rate: 57%

the *Annual*, it sounds a little like a LEGO® project. Unfortunately, sometimes they'll be forced out before that . . . but there won't be a lot of help in the bullpen. And there's no help against opposing left handed batters: Paul Maholm is the only southpaw on the staff. Some days are just going to be long.



Cueto: Young ace

ROTATION. The starting staff is headed by a young ace: Johnny Cueto (Grade 15 HR+35), who can only make 24 starts, but is as good a name as you'd want at the top of your rotation. He just turned 26, and appears to be



new westminster WHISKEY JACKS

picking up in 2012 where he left off late in 2011, when he was shut down by a back muscle strain. We like him.

The majority of the starts behind him aren't bad. The aforementioned Paul Maholm (Grade 8 C+15 HR+36) turned in an acceptable 26 starts, and trade acquisitions Wade Davis (Grade 7) and Ryan Dempster (Grade 6 C-25) have 63 decent starts between them; with Cueto, that covers more than two-thirds of the season. Marco Estrada, who will be pitching mostly in relief, has 7 stats as a Grade 11; the rest of the games will belong to Alfredo Simon (Grade 5 C+13 HR-14) and Kevin Correia (Grade 4 C+21 HR-24), who will be stapled to the mound when they start.

BULLPEN. Going into the draft, the 'Jacks had one reliever: Jose Arredondo (Grade 14* C-54), which left them about 300 innings short of a legal bullpen. Help was obtained in the form of rookie closer Aaron Crow (Grade 15* C-44 HR-13) and rookie setup man Mark Melancon (Grade 12* C+14 HR+25). These three, all better than starters not named Cueto, form a very exciting end-of-game crew when the team is ahead, and have about 190 innings between them.

After that it's going to be a mix of part-time pitchers. Taylor Buchholz (Grade 13* C+14 HR-36) and Yoshinori Tateyama (Grade 10* C+35 HR-33) have 70 innings of moved-the-fences-a-little-too-far-in middle inning relief, while Marco Estrada (Grade 8* HR-14), Jeff Gray (Grade 7* C-23 HR+24), Hector Noesi (Grade 6*) and Ryota Igarashi (Grade 5* C-62 HR+42) add another 190 innings. Simon has 21 relief innings . . . and then it's lots of Esmil Rogers when the game is out of hand.

The bullpen is much improved but there was no place to go but up. The 'Jacks are hoping for a return by Jonathan Broxton, who is uncarded for the season. The pitching staff isn't a total disaster, but good lineups – especially ones with power – should give it a rough time.

Offense: 5.5 Better names than cards.

The centerpiece of the New Westminster offense is, of course, Prince Fielder. He is Just Fine, Thank You (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks+22, L-8) and will play every inning of every game. When the Detroit Tigers invested \$200+ million on their new and shiny free agent, they knew what they were getting, and his club in TBL should be confident that they'll get it too.



Fielder: Just Fine, Thank You.

His tag team partner Hanley Ramirez is not at his best this year (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 30 SBA with 26 SSN) and only has 97 games, but there are some other cards to pick up the slack. Second year man David Freese, who had some World Series theatrics in MLB, turns in a good 97 games of his own (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, though there are 5 24s and 6 13s there as well); J.P.



Freese: Theatrics

Arencibia has only 8 hits and 3 walks, but showed some power (1-0-0-0); Martin Prado (3 0s, 10 hits) is a decent addition with no platoon shift and a lot of games; and rookie Desmond Jennings (1-3-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, 26 SBA with 30 SSN) has 63 fine games that are an indication of things to come.

The team really is a different club for a third of the season. Fielder, Prado/Freese, Arencebia and Ramirez are regulars; Jennings is a third of a season as a regular. But after that there are some spare parts pressed into service as everyday players, leaving little flexibility on the bench. A full season of Ramirez, Freese, or Jennings would be a major improvement; instead, the club has to piece together 162 games using people with other names. Martin Prado can play second base as a legacy 2B7, but he may be needed elsewhere – at third base and the outfield; that leaves the job to a decent 97 games (what is it with that number?) of Alexi Casilla (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 19 SBA with 30 SSN), with the rest left to rookie Trevor Plouffe (0-0-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+4), and speedy banjo hitter Eric Young, Jr. (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, 30 SBA with a 33 SSN), which is not as good. Plouffe will also be

available for games Ramirez cannot start. Behind the plate, New Westminster has to carry two backups: Tony Cruz (6-6-0, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Taylor Teagarden (6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks). In the outfield, the best of the regulars is Dexter Fowler (4 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks). He'll share time with Nate McLouth (6-0, 8 hits, 5 walks+22), who has simply never returned to the form that he showed a few years ago. Ryan Ludwick (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) is similarly disappointing; and Brent Lillibridge (1-1-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+2 R-5, 25 SSN for 16 SBA) is bizarrely useful for 97 games. We are beginning to become suspicious about this. Finally, Nick Evans has a third of a marginally useful season (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks).

The offense has bright spots but will have many empty at-bats. They will have to juggle depending on matchups.

Defense: 4.0
Ill omens.

Any section that begins by touting Brent Lillibridge (OF3, 33 arm) portends ill. He is, however, one of the two Fielding One players on the roster. The other is Alexi Casilla (2B8). Neither can play every day. The guys who *do* play every day, or who share positions, are Fielding Two or worse. Arencibia and Teagarden are C7s, while Cruz is a C6; Teagarden can't throw (Th-1) but the other two can (Th+4). Fielder is a 1B3, as are other first basemen on the roster; there are 2B7s and Young is a 2B6; Ramirez is a SS8, and Plouffe is an SS7; every third baseman on the team is a 3B3. Other than Lillibridge, all starting outfielders are OF2s – Ludwick, McLouth, Fowler, Prado and Jennings. Evans is an OF1, but shouldn't have to take the field.

A good fielding club would help the shaky pitching staff and give the team's uncertain offense an opportunity to win games. Unfortunately, this is not the case out in Western Canada. There will be some innings extended.

Bench: 1.5
Not much help.

The need to mix and match lineups will leave New Westminster's bench thin for most games. Teagarden replaces the starting catcher, as long as he is unlikely to bat; Ludwick can come off the bench if needed (but



In 2010, our Canadian buddy Jim Jeatt won over 100 games. Last year they almost halved their win total (56). The best they can hope for in 2012 is beating out Detroit for 3rd place in the Ruth Division.



may not be better than the starting player); Young, Plouffe and waiver rookie Eric Sogard (3 0s, 8 hits – fast but unable to steal bases) can pinch-run or occasionally pinch hit. Bryan LaHair (1-4-6-6, 10 hits, 5 walks) is listed in the emergency instructions at DH, but may be the best PH most days. There's just not much help.



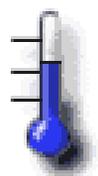
Maybe. The Ruth is TBL's greatest flea circus this year, while Dallas sets up its playoff rotation around Memorial Day. There should not be ten games' difference between the three, if for no other reason than they'll have to play each other.



**MASTER PLAN:
NEW WESTMINSTER**

In a way, the New Westminster master plan is the inverse of the Detroit one. Even discounting useful players such as Casilla and Prado, or potentially useful players such as LaHair or Evans, there's a very solid core of hitters not yet 30 years old. On the pitching side, there's a group also 30 or less. The cards and the usage for this year make this version of the club militate against contention, but check back in a year.

What to do? *Don't panic.* Some assets went to cover present needs. The club drafted some players without long term use. The move of Ramirez and the recovery of Broxton's return to form are important, but most of the outcome is out of Jim Jeatt's hands. The team is stable, and if it can stay the course, it has a good future ahead.



TQ: 16.5

new westminster WHISKEY JACKS

2011 houston LONE STARS in review

So long, Zen Master.



2011 in Review Final Record: 79-83 (2nd, Ruth)

We usually have a longer time to work through a theme. Dean Rogers – whom we never met, who never made it to a draft weekend – was in TBL for six years, which was long enough to get a nickname. A few years ago he wrote an article for the *Annual* about Sun Tzu, which led to a nickname: the *Zen Master*. Said Zen Master was (to say the least) unorthodox in his approach to team building, which is all right: not everyone is Joe Auletta, not everyone wants to wait for their chance. We are not getting any younger, none of us, and this was going to be *The Year*. This magazine thought there was a good chance for 90 wins and a playoff spot.

But real life intervened. When the team had to be shepherded by visiting managers – when the Zen Master was unable to meet TBL's requirements because other things got in the way – it suffered. The acquired pitching wasn't enough; the offense didn't perform as expected; and there were lots and lots and lots of strikeouts (on both sides of the scoresheet). They finished second as expected, but with only 79 wins.

So long, Zen Master. And best of luck. This should have worked out better.

What went right?

The Lone Stars brought in some serious pitching to help out C.C. Sabathia, who once again led the staff (13-15, 3.30, 216 strikeouts, 12 complete games). Roy Oswalt (14-16, 3.89, 10 CG) led the

team in wins; Brian Duensing (8-6, 3.14) was a good swing man; Jose Valverde (28 saves, 1.08 ERA) was lights out as the closer.

On offense, Adam Dunn hit 29 homers and Martin Prado hit .286 with 56 EBH. Lyle Overbay contributed 26 homers and 40 doubles; Cliff Pennington had 40 doubles and 10 triples.

What went wrong?

The pitching staff wasn't exactly Portland or Melrose, but it performed well enough, with 10 or more wins for all four principal starters. Valverde was excellent, but didn't have much behind him. But that wasn't the problem.



Sabathia: Once again

The team hit an unpleasant .250, but its real problem was swinging and missing. Six regulars struck out more than 100 times, led by Adam Dunn (170) and Cody Ross (142). There were 1,185 Ks in total, against only 486 walks.

With little speed and insufficient power the offense didn't hold up its end.

3 Things

1. *Find a master plan.* The new manager has to decide what kind of team he wants, and build toward it.
2. *Get younger.* This hardly needs to be said; but the team is built around an older core, and that's a recipe for further mediocrity at best.
3. *Lower the expectations.* Some leagues let teams go for contention every year; in TBL the ramp-up is longer. This will be a long year in Detroit.

detroit STARS

Dave Jaskot (1st year)

Any speculation on the future direction of the team is just that – speculation.



Our stability as a league is a selling point. It has been a few years since we last changed a manager, and it is with some regret that TBL bids goodbye to Dean Rogers, who managed the Houston Lonestars for several years. He never appeared at a draft, so unfortunately we never met Dean face to face, but at least at the *Annual* we felt that we had some investment in him – he'd even been given a nickname: the *Zen Master* (based on his excellent article a few years ago relating baseball to Sun Tzu's *Art of War*.)

But that is in the past; the reins have been handed to Dave Jaskot, and so has the legacy that the Zen Master's plans have left behind: which is, in short, *a mess*. Some of it was beyond Dean's control, and therefore a *fait accompli* for Dave: the decline of Lyle Overbay and Cody Ross and half of the pitching staff; the inexplicable vapor lock of Adam Dunn and Kelly Shoppach; the missing half season of Rafael Furcal . . . these things happen.

It could be argued that personnel choices help determine future outcomes – and don't worry, the *Annual* has never been hesitant to do so – but even the most well-laid master plans hit unexpected roadblocks. But it does mean that the club has to deal with what has dropped into its lap.

With the Zen Master still at the helm, this publication could have engaged in some suitably snarky repartée regarding the results of contender hubris – the explanation for the presence of Zito, Oswalt, Overbay, and Dunn on the roster (and the corresponding absence of recent high draft picks); commentaries in recent years have also focused on the mysterious plan that was a couple of years underway. But the fact is, *we don't know* what Dave Jaskot thinks of his team so far, nor much about his plans for the future – though if the instructions are any indication (starters will go deep; not much bench usage; if anything, a sense of resignation that this will be a long year) he harbors no illusions that the team can contend.

That, if anything, is a good sign. Welcome to TBL, Mr. Jaskot. Better days should be ahead.

Pitching: Much improved.

5.5

ROTATION. As has been true through a few franchise changes, C.C. Sabathia is the ace of the starting staff. The big guy turned in a very solid year (Grade 11 C+22 HR+26, fatigue 30); he is expected to pitch as far as he can, as deep as he can, with the bullpen rescuing him in a close game. As was true of Fernando Valenzuela many years ago, Detroit might wish they had two guys with half the grade and half the body weight, but they've only got one.

About half the season is taken up with starters 2-4. The best of the lot is recently acquired Chad Billingsley (Grade 8 C-33 HR+24); he is joined by wild lefty Francisco Liriano (Grade 9 C-62 HR+13) and crafty righty Roy Oswalt (Grade 6 C+25 HR+41). Their 79 starts go with Sabathia to get Detroit through three-quarters of the season.

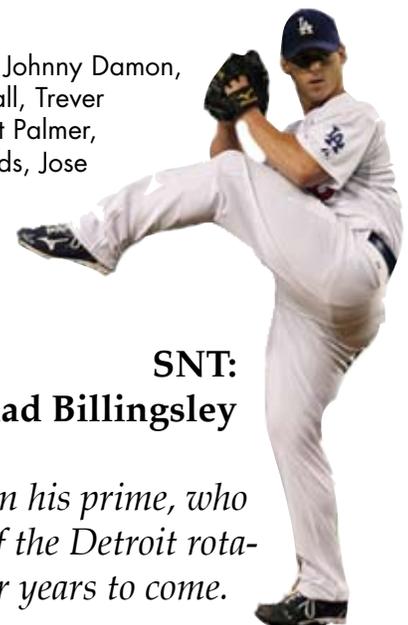
Arrived: Chad Billingsley, Brian Bogusevic, Orlando Cabrera, Mike Carp, Travis D'Arnaud, Jesus Guzman, Kila Ka'aihue, Mike Macdougall, Andrew Miller, Chris Nelson, Kelly Shoppach

Departed: Geoff Blum, Johnny Damon, Pedro Feliz, Jason Kendall, Trevor Miller, Scott Moore, Matt Palmer, Martin Prado, Scot Shields, Jose Valverde, Jamey Wright

Turnover Rate: 31%

SNT:
Chad Billingsley

A young pitcher in his prime, who should be a part of the Detroit rotation for years to come.





detroit STARS

Past that it's beatdown time. Barry Zito doesn't appear at all, which is just as well (Grade 5 lefty, C-36 HR-35); instead, the remaining games belong to Randy Wells (Grade 5 HR-31) and Brian Duensing (Grade 3 C+13 HR-13). While better, they are likely to give up many runs. Still, this is not the worst rotation in the league – which may be construed as damning with faint praise.

BULLPEN. Detroit's new manager describes this crew as a "strange bullpen" – and so it is: the best reliever in the crew is the closer, Alfredo Aceves (Grade 16* C-21 HR+26), who due in part to his four starts has an astounding

total of 114 innings. Unlike most closers, Aceves should regularly appear in the 8th inning of close games.



Aceves: Best of the strange

His support staff is more scary. Mike MacDougal turned in a solid year but is wild (Grade 14* C-43 HR+35); James Russell has great control from the left side but should avoid open flame (Grade 14* C+41 HR-32). Together they have about 120 more innings. The most reliable setup man may be Matt Lindstrom (Grade 10* C+32 HR+34), who has 57 innings – but he is not called out in particular by the instructions. Blake Wood (Grade 10* C-16 HR+26, 69 innings) is also a helpful arm. Beyond, bulk innings abound. Nick Masset (Grade 7* C-15 HR+25) and a few innings of Trevor Bell (Grade 7* C+16 HR+35) work from the right side; J.C. Romero (Grade 6* C-52 HR+45), Zito, and Andrew Miller (Grade 4 C-62) can carry the mop from the left.

Altogether this is a pen that lacks the solid, reliable depth of a contender, but greatly helps the rotation and should be effective in close games.

Offense: **4.5** Hunter Pence and the rest.

Let us begin with the heart of the lineup, the regular #3 hitter, Hunter Pence. He has a tremendous card (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, L+3 R-3, 10 SBA) that

plays essentially every day. The deadline MLB trade that took him to Philadelphia helped make this such a good performance. He's been the best guy on the roster for a few years; Detroit management will likely make him untouchable in trade talks (and rightly so).

He is flanked by some cards that hit for power and get on base, though they strike out a bit. Their disadvantage is that they all play the same positions: weak corner outfield and first base. Josh Willingham (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, 8 13s) is the everyday cleanup hitter; and two rookie 1B-OFs, Mike Carp (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 8 13s) and Jesus Guzman (4 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks), each of whom has about a half season of use. That's probably one too many, given the lack of punch at second and third base. Before it becomes necessary to discuss those positions, let's cover the others. Lyle Overbay (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) will get into games because of his defense. Cody Ross (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks) is the most-days center fielder; and Cliff Pennington (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks) is the everyday shortstop. Rookie

Brian Bogusevic (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 2 10s, D26) will likely get some playing time as well. For half a season, Ryan Hanigan (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L+5) will provide scarcely adequate offense at the catcher position. Unfortunately we play full seasons in TBL, so Kelly Shoppach (1-5, 7 hits, 3 walks+42, L+7 R-10) has to play about 70 games. Opponents won't pitch around him.

Which brings us to the rest of the infield. Rafael Furcal (3 0s, 9 hits, D25) is off his career highs and only half a season, which will be spent at third base. He'll share time with utilityman Don Kelly (3 0s, 9 hits, F26, L-10); second base will belong to Chris Nelson (3 0s, 10 hits, E29) who will play about a third of a season, but we play full seasons in TBL . . . so the artist formerly known as Orlando Cabrera (2 0s, 9 hits, E26) will pick up the slack – or, more likely, occupy space and make outs.



Gone are the Lonestars and our friend Dean Rogers. In comes our new friend Dave Jaskot and a franchise transfer to the Motor City. He inherits a moribund team that has talent, but is several years from a playoff team. Good luck Dave!

The offensive players have some power, though it's going to be difficult to get the best players into the lineup all at the same time. There's not a lot of speed, and the on-base percentages are unimpressive. The real problem is dead spots in the batting order – particularly second and third base and catcher. Good pitching is going to shut the hitters down.



Pence: Untouchable

Defense: 3.5
A few plus, but mostly minus.

Detroit has a few plus defenders. Lyle Overbay (1B5) doesn't swing the bat as well as he used to, but is top-notch at first base. Cody Ross and Don Kelly are both OF3s, though Kelly will have to serve primarily as a 3B4 this year. When he's not in the lineup, Rafael Furcal's SS8 earns him a 3B3, which is the rating every other third baseman on the team has. Ryan Hanigan is a fine catcher (C8, Th+2) and Kelly Shoppach is an adequate backup (C7) with a very good arm (Th+4).

Other than the superior defenders (and Gwynn's OF3 off the bench) it's average or worse. Pennington has regressed to an SS8; Cabrera, also an SS8, will be sharing second base with Chris Nelson; they're both 2B7s. Carp and Guzman are 1B3s, and Winningham – who will probably have to play the field most days – is an OF1. Hunter Pence is back to OF2, but has a superior arm (35).

The fielders will either save or extend innings – it will all depend on where the ball is hit.

Bench: 1.5
Twisting in the wind.

Usage constraints will make it difficult to do much with the regulars, particularly where it would do the most good. There's only one bench player worth mentioning: Tony Gwynn, Jr. (OF3; 6-3, 10 hits, 2 walks, C30, with about 30 steal attempts). If he could play second base, he'd start. The rest of the bench is the horror of the 2011 Adam Dunn (2 0s, 6 hits, 5 walks, 10 13s; hard to even figure out how he got that many plate appearances); and two

waiver wire picks, Kila Ka'aihue and Chase D'Arnaud. D'Arnaud's 15 or so steal attempts are the only reason he might see any action this year. Detroit's instructions say that players should remain in the lineup and "play through their shifts". The regulars will be twisting in the wind this year.



In a weak division, this team could finish higher. Even a second-place finish, however, will not cause them to appear in Dallas' rear view mirror, even if objects are larger than they appear.



**MASTER PLAN:
 DETROIT**

This team is largely the legacy of the last manager; the new boss has made a few moves and participated in one draft, which is scarcely enough time to re-fashion the team in his own image. Therefore, any speculation on the future direction of the team is just that – *speculation*.

It's probably time for a teardown. The only definite keeper is Hunter Pence; the best pitcher who should probably stay with the team is Chad Billingsley. That leaves a variety of players that could be converted into future value with only moderate loss of viscosity. Even Sabathia, in the right deal, might bring back more than his present value due to his reliability and durability.

Could they go the other way? There is some talent here which might have some left in the tank at age 35. The problem is that the core is age 28 and older; there are some serious missing pieces; and there will be obstacles – unforeseen things like injuries and declines, and foreseen things like the Dallas Eagles.

In any case, the *Annual* wishes our newest manager well in his inaugural season, and in unlocking the mysteries the Zen Master left behind.



TQ: 15.0



detroit STARS

The 2011 regular season saw gave us an extra nine innings of free baseball, as brothers Bruce and Glenn Taylor faced each other in a one-game playoff for the Williams Division title. Richmond had put together a blistering 18-4 November to catch the Wizards. That included a three game set with Wakefield themselves where Wakefield saved their season by winning 2 of 3 to force Richmond into the steel cage match for the division title. The game was a nail biter until the eighth when Richmond blew open the game with a Shane Victorino bases-loaded triple.



Whitman vs. Grand Cayman

Brian Hanley's River Rats barely survived their wild card series against Mark Bloom's excellent Grand Cayman squad, taking home their skins 4-3. Whitman had a 3-1 lead and seemed to be cruising, but a Drew Stubbs walk-off 3-run homer in Game 5 and Cayman's 6-run 8th inning explosion in Game 6 tied the series at 3 games apiece. Game 7 saw Jonathan Sanchez face off against Whitman's David Price, and Whitman iced the series behind their outstanding young lefty, who won 2 in the series.



Northboro vs. Maracaibo

Northboro came into the series with confidence, having won the season series 10-4. Maracaibo exceeded expectations outrageously, running off 90 wins in a rebuilding year. In this series, it was all about the dice; Northboro had them, and Maracaibo did not. It took 17 innings for the Rumrunners to score, and they lost game 3 in extra innings by getting stoned by the Northboro bullpen for the last six innings of the game. Mercifully, Northboro scored 5 in the fifth in Game 4 to complete the sweep.



Melrose vs. Richmond

Melrose came into this series as the heavy favorite with 123 regular season wins and an envelope full of killer cardboard. And they played like it, winning four straight

by scores of 5-1, 6-4, 9-2 and 11-5. Dan Uggla hit three home runs in the series. Richmond had one lead in the series – they led 1-0 early in Game 3. Other than that, it was all Melrose.



Rye vs. Las Vegas

Despite losing Nelson Cruz in the first game of the series, Rye jumped out to a 2-0 lead behind two excellent pitching performances from Cris Carpenter and Jared Weaver, then they pecked Zack Greinke to death in game 3, 9-6. Las Vegas got two home runs from Alfonso Soriano to take Game 4, but Jared Weaver iced the series by retiring the last 13 Gamblers he faced in Game 5.



Northboro vs. Portland

Portland won the season series 14-2, so it was with some trepidation that Bob and Steve faced Ray Murphy's ferocious Possum at the Watch City Brewery in Waltham, Mass. Northboro showed some pluck, tying the series 1-1 behind Johan Santana and a pair of 2-run homers by Seth Smith and David Ross. In Game 3, Northboro took an early lead – and Portland proceeded to pound the Phoenix into powder on their way to a 5-game series win. The last three games ended 8-2, 11-1, and 11-3. The games were not as close as the scores would indicate. The only positive note was that Bob Jordan did not have his car towed to a junk yard during the series.



Dallas vs. Whitman

The 110-win Dallas Eagles lined up against the 96-win Whitman River Rats in a knock-down drag out marathon of a series. This one went seven games and each game had highlights and heroes. Game 1 was a sloppy matchup between Whitman's Clayton Kershaw and Dallas' Josh Johnson. The two aces walked 13 batters between them,

but Johnson kept Whitman off the board all night, and Dallas survived Game 1, 4-1. In Game 2, Juan Pierre came to the plate with Whitman trailing 3-2. He walked, stole 2nd moved to third on a bad throw from Dallas Catcher George Kottaras, and tied the game on Nick Markakis' sacrifice fly. This one went to the bottom of the ninth, when Carl Crawford slammed a walkoff single off Tony Sipp to give Dallas a 2-0 series lead.

Brian Hanley's boys won two of the next three games, and gave the ball to fireballing lefty David Price. A good move, that, as Price allowed three scratch singles in 8 innings, and this series went down to a game 7. Carl Crawford led off the most important game in Dallas' history with a home run, Whitman starter Matt Garza recorded only one out before showering, and Dallas starter C.J. Wilson pitched brilliantly as Dallas punched their ticket to the Conference Championship with a 6-0 victory.



Portland vs. Melrose

This was the collision the league had been waiting for all season. Melrose steamrolled everyone in their path to get here. Portland won 107 games and crushed a solid Northboro team like an empty beer can in the conference semi-final. These two teams had been staring at each other since the TQs were totaled up at the draft.

Game 1 was tied 3-3 in the seventh when Dan Uggla, who was an absolute monster, throughout the playoffs, cracked a double and drove in the go ahead run. Hong-Chih Kuo made the lead stand. In game 2, Ryan Braun hit a 6th-inning home run and Melrose cashed in on some ugly defensive play by the Possum to take a 5-1 lead. Portland battled back to within 5-4 before ramming their heads on Kuo again. Melrose was up 2-0.

In Game 3 Joey Votto blasted a 3-run homer in the first and Gio Gonzalez shut down the rampaging Melrose offense for eight innings. Portland took this one 5-1. Game 4 was a game the Possum desperately needed to win, but Melrose jumped on Yovani Gallardo for four runs in the first two innings. Portland scratched to within 4-2, and loaded the bases against Kuo in the eighth, but Jim Edmonds grounded back to the pitcher to end the threat. Melrose applied the clamp the rest of the way to take a 3-1 series lead.

In Game 5 it was Portland's turn to pound on the starter early. In this instance, the unlikely victim of Possum fury was Ubaldo Jimenez, the Melrose ace. Joey Votto again delivered a homer and Portland took an early 5-0 lead before the game settled down. Melrose scratched across a

couple of runs, but Portland had a bullpen full of Grade 20*+ relievers to squash any nonsense. The series would end in a game that followed the same pattern as the rest of the series. Melrose took an early lead, this time 3-0. They carried the lead into the eighth inning, when Portland got one back on a Napoli double, but Melrose stretched the lead to 5-1 on a Dan Murphy double, then brought on Kuo to slam the door again. Melrose was headed to their first TBL World Series in a decade.



Dallas vs. Rye

Dallas, fresh from a serious test of fortitude against Whitman, entered the series against Rye trying to get to their first World Series in 22 years. Rye, the defending 2010 TBL Champion, was looking to get back there after another fine season.

Game 1 pitted Rye's Cris Carpenter against Dallas' Josh Johnson. Carpenter struggled, giving up two home runs to John McDonald and Carl Crawford. Johnson spent the night surrounded by Rye baserunners, but allowed only one run, as Dallas took a 1-0 lead in the series.

In Game 2, Dallas took an early 2-0 lead before Rye's bats woke up. Torii Hunter had the big blow – a 3-run homer in the 3rd. Rye kicked Danny Haren around, then tacked on four in the fifth to take an 8-2 lead. Dallas had no answer this night, and the series was tied at 1.

In Game 3, Dallas took a 4-1 lead into the seventh against Zack Greinke, then extended the lead to 7-1 with a 3-run 8th inning. C. J. Wilson went the distance for Dallas – his third complete game of the playoffs.

In Game 4, Dallas faced Carpenter, a 19 game winner in the regular season. They slapped him around like he was Reggie Cleveland for the second time in the series. Tommy Hunter went the distance for Dallas this time, and the Eagles had the defending champs on the ropes, as they took a 3-1 series lead.

In Game 5, Dallas beat up Jared Weaver for three quick runs, with Ryan Doumit delivering a big 2-run dinger. Rye left an army of men on base but just could not get the timely hit they needed to get back in the game. With Rye trailing 5-1 in the seventh, they got runners to first and third with powerful Lance Berkman to the plate, but Lance grounded into a 6-4-3 double play, and Rye's last chance was gone. Dallas moved on to face a stone-faced Melrose team in the 2012 TBL World Series.



Dallas vs. Melrose

The 2011 World Series would feature Steve Powell and his Dallas Eagles, making their first trip ever to the Fall Classic and fresh from the 4 games to 1 beat down of Rye against the Melrose Avengers. Melrose had won a hard-fought 4 games to 2 victory over monster Portland and was making its fourth appearance.

Game 1 at Melrose Johnson vs. Jimenez

The two staff aces squared off in game 1. Dallas jumped out to the early lead; in the third inning Crawford led off with a single. After a steal on a late throw by Pudge, DH Moreland sacrificed him to third, and he would score on a weak grounder by Zimmerman.

The two aces were true to form as the score remained 1-0 Dallas until the bottom of the 7th. Young singled and went to third on a hit and run by Eckstein. After a strikeout Pudge bounced into a fielder's choice; Phillips threw Young out at the plate to preserve the 1-0 lead. With 2 outs Heath Bell was summoned to pitch to Murphy, who stroked a 2-run double to give Melrose the 2-1 lead. The lead would be short lived; in the top of the 8th Wagner gave up a solo shot to Mark Teixeira to tie the game.



Huff

Melrose's offense, stymied by Johnson, would come to life in the bottom of the 8th against Bell. Adrian Gonzalez and Ryan Braun walked, and a triple to deep right by Aubrey Huff put Melrose ahead 4-2. Kuo's 1-2-3 in the 9th wrapped it up.

Melrose 4, Dallas 2

WP: Wagner LP: H. Bell S: Kuo

Game 2 at Midwest Hunter vs. Lester

Dallas would not go quietly into the night. Scoreless into the 4th, Morse began with a single; Zimmerman, Teixeira, and Colvin all followed with hits to push the score to 2-0. After a Denorfia popup, back to back doubles by Phillips and Kottaras would make it 5-0.

Dallas added another run in the 5th off Lester. Morse would walk and score on a fielder's choice. It could have been worse, but Ryan Braun gunned down Zimmerman trying to score for an inning-ending double play.



McLouth

Melrose finally got on the board in the bottom of the 6th. With one out Adrian Gonzalez ripped a deep shot, making the score 6-1; but Dallas tacked on 2 more in the 8th off Jesse Crain. Melrose would never challenge. The series was now tied at one game apiece.

Dallas 8, Melrose 1

WP: Hunter

LP: Lester

Game 3 at Dallas Garcia vs. Wilson

Melrose was eager to avenge the beating they'd taken in Game 2. In the first inning they jumped out to an early lead: Kevin Youkilis, leading off, doubled, and scored on a single by Dan Uggla to give Melrose a 1-0 lead.

Wilson and Garcia continued to trade scoreless frames until the fifth inning. With one out, Wilson walked Rollins; he stole second and scored on a triple by lefty-killer Youkilis. After two more

walks to load the bases, Wilson would get Braun on a grounder to end the frame with Melrose only ahead 2-0. Meanwhile, Jaime Garcia had given up only one walk and one hit going into the bottom of the 5th. With one out, Phillips singled and Dallas' own lefty killer George Kottaras took Garcia deep to tie the game at 2.



Wright

In the top of the 6th Huff singled and scored on a Delmon Young double. David Murphy singled Young to 3rd and both would score when Jimmy Rollins belts a two-run double. Up 5-2, Melrose didn't let up: a solo shot by Uggla and double by Youkilis, his third extra base hit of the game, led to two more runs. After 7.1 solid innings by Garcia, Lidge and Frasor cruised through the remaining inning and two-thirds.

Melrose 7, Dallas 2

WP: Garcia LP: Wilson

Game 4 at Dallas Billingsley vs. Haren

With fourth starters on the hill, an offensive game was expected. Dallas started the scoring. In the bottom of the second Teixeira walked and went to second on a Morse HBP. After warnings were issued, Billingsley walked Colvin to load the bases with one out. Doumit came up with a chance to do some serious damage but hit one right at Betancourt who started the 6-4-3 DP. Teixeira would come in the back door, limiting the damage to one run. The lead would be short lived; David Murphy took Dan Haren's first pitch out to center to tie it.



Young

In the bottom of the 4th Dallas came back, scoring two runs, including an RBI single by Doumit, making up for his double play. But again their lead would disappear: Kevin Youkilis struck again with a two-run homer to tie the game.

It remained that way until the eighth inning, when a Youkilis single chased Haren; he scored shortly after on a Braun double, a single by Huff, and another double by Delmon Young.

In the eighth inning, Moreland hit a solo homer off Wagner, but Melrose's bullpen kept it from getting closer, with Hong-Chih Kuo shutting the door again for an inning and two-thirds, striking out 3.

Melrose 7, Dallas 5

WP: Wagner LP: Haren S: Crain

Game 5 at Dallas Jimenez vs. Johnson

With the staff aces on the mound, the game was a pitcher's duel, remaining scoreless until the fourth inning. For Melrose, Gonzalez walked, moved to second on a Braun single and scored on a Huff double. A line drive double play by Young prevented further damage.

In the 6th Gonzalez started the inning with a walk and once again moved to second on a Braun single. Doumit was then called for catcher's interference, loading the bases. A sacrifice fly to left by Young was followed by a Murphy double, letting Melrose plate three in the inning to take a 4-0 lead. Jimenez turned the mighty Dallas offense cold, going the distance with a shutout, issuing no walks, striking out 11 and allowing only two hits.



Jimenez

Melrose 5, Dallas 0

WP: Jimenez LP: Johnson

Series MVP: Ubaldo Jimenez. The two teams had dynamic offenses, so it came down to the team that had superior performance from its pitchers. The Melrose ace pitched deep in Game 1, and in the decisive Game 5 he absolutely stymied the Eagles in a complete game shutout.

national conference hall of fame eligibles



Greg Maddux

Greg Maddux, SP
Amherst, Zion

1988-2009

Without question the greatest pitcher in the history of TBL. His 403 wins and 212 complete games, almost all recorded with the Elders of Zion, are unlikely ever to be exceeded. He won 20 or more games eight times, including the incredible 31-3 season in 1995 (311 Ks, 34 complete games, 1.26 ERA). If anyone is a first ballot Hall of Famer, this is the man.

Tom Glavine, C
Farmville/Pugest Sound, Zion

1988-2008

Maddux' left-handed tag team partner for most of two decades, Glavine was a great pitcher in his own right, winning 312 games in TBL and notching 132 complete games. He won twenty or more games three times, twice with Zion, and was as durable and reliable as any pitcher in TBL.



Tom Glavine



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

Like many other players in TBL, Mike Piazza's services were in demand; he played for several different teams, adding punch to contending lineups. He hit more than 30 home runs eight times, ending with a career total of 409, tops among catchers. His best season was 1998, when he led the league with 200 hits and a .354 average to go with 34 homers.



Mike Piazza



John Smoltz

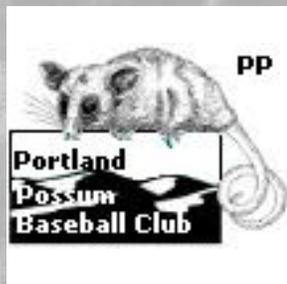
John Smoltz, SP-RP 1989-2008
Hudson, Portland, Munich, Rochester and others

John Smoltz had a long career as a durable starter, interrupted by four years as a stellar reliever. He pitched for many contenders, with his best years in 1997 for Portland (26-6, 2.36, 7 shutouts, 297 Ks in 271 innings) and 2004 for Rochester (6-3, 27 saves, 0.96, 62 Ks and only 7 walks in 56 innings). He had 237 lifetime wins, and was among the best in the league for many years.

This All Seems Familiar

A cliché for a teller of bad jokes is to start with the line, “stop me if you’ve heard this one before.” So stop already. We’ve heard it. It is more a question of envy than resentment, and the level of performance is easily matched by the amount of effort to get there. But the results will be the same: maybe more so. There will be a bit of a dogfight in the Aaron Division this year, as each of the three other teams has something to bring to the table. One of them will most likely get to the post-season.

But as for the eventual outcome of the Aaron Division pennant race: this all seems familiar, as it should. The winner is (almost certainly – because there are still games to be played, of course) the **Portland Possum**, led by the very capable *Ray Murphy* and his new sidekick *Jon Brinkmann*. Mr. Murphy, when last we left him, had gotten as close as anyone was able to get in halting the freight train from Melrose (they lost the conference championship in 6 games.) Both teams are loaded again, but Portland should leave Melrose behind this time.



Meanwhile, Northboro takes its heavy-hitting lineup and suspect pitching (other than the sublime Mr. Halladay) on another quest to get to the big series. There were enough doubts in the minds of *Robert Jordan* and *Steve Stein* that a rebuild for the **Northboro Phoenix** was contemplated in the off-season: but they are too good, and the competition too poor, and – perhaps – the team is too



2011 Aaron Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Portland*	107	55	.660	—
Maracaibo†	90	72	.556	17
Northboro§	88	74	.543	19
Kansas	79	83	.488	28

* Lost to Melrose in NC championship.

† Lost to Northboro in Wild Card playoff.

§ Lost to Portland in NC playoff.

old to pass up a chance to contend with this club while it’s still here.

And out on the Great Plains it’s another year for the **Kansas Koyotes** to restructure. Since *Bill Schwartz* came into TBL he’s been working hard to keep his club at the edge of contention. They’re starting to get old, though, and there is a point at which too many things will need to be replaced at once. We’ll see if Bill is ready to do a complete rebuild.



Which brings us to the **Maracaibo Rumrunners**, who are not accustomed to being fourth in the Aaron. The club has gone through some changes as familiar faces retire or just fade away; this year’s club has some of the hallmarks of a traditional Maracaibo team, such as a strong bullpen; but it is noticeably lacking in power. Instead, *Walter Hunt* has to try and squeeze performance out of a younger, faster team whose star players are mostly too old to trade for value and aren’t quite as good as they used to be. The club has never lost 100 and probably won’t this year – but can they avoid bottoming out?



Joey Votto,
Portland

Aaron Division

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| 1. Portland | 38.0 |
| 2. Northboro | 29.0 |
| 3. Kansas | 24.0 |
| 4. Maracaibo | 23.0 |

2011 portland POSSUM in review



What went wrong? Not much in the regular season.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 107-55 (1st, Mays)

The 2011 Possum got very close to the World Series. There was only one team that came between the club and the goal – and that team won 123 games.

The season featured more highlights than lowlights, as you might expect in a 107-55 season that included the franchise's 4th Aaron Division title under the current ownership regime.

What went right?

After stumbling through a lackluster 45-35 first half that failed to meet expectations, the Possum reeled off an impressive 62-20 second-half record to secure their second straight Aaron title. Adam Wainwright headlined the pitching staff with a 19-6, 2.90 season. He was backed by a trio of 15-game winners (Matt Cain, Gio Gonzalez, and Ian Kennedy). Joaquin Benoit was lights-out at the back end, locking up 32 saves with a 1.09 ERA. He had plenty of help from a stacked bullpen, which together recorded 29 of Portland's 107 victories.

The offense produced 915 runs on the strength of 270 home runs, with Carlos Gonzalez's 39 heading a balanced attack that saw nine batters launch 15+ HR. Jim Thome played in just 98 games and rung up a .328-29-88 line with a .681 slugging percentage. B.J. Upton led the team with 29 steals; the club recorded 88 thefts during the year.

What went wrong?

Not much in the regular season, other than the slow start that saw Maracaibo lead the division at the halfway point, and a staggering full-year total of 1,463 hitter strikeouts (one per inning for the *whole season*). In the playoffs, though, the team ran into the Melrose buzzsaw in the conference finals, derailing hopes for the franchise's second TBL championship.



Carlos Gonzalez: HR leader

3 Things

1. *Be the "big fish."* Coming off the disappointing playoff loss, the team is once again expecting to be the "big fish" in the Aaron in 2012, and has stocked up with additional firepower to hopefully slay the Melrose dragon in the postseason.

2. *Welcome back Jon Brinkmann.* He joins the Portland management team in a co-manager role, lending an experienced hand in guiding this team through the Aaron waters.

3. *Build from within.* Where did the players come from? 19 members of the current 35-man roster were homegrown draft picks, including all five of the starting pitchers who will combine to make all 162 starts. 2012 is the second consecutive year that we have only needed five starters to cover the 162 games.

portland POSSUM



Ray Murphy (21st year) / Jonathan Brinkmann (15th year / 1st year)

These aren't pieces of cardboard; the guys filling out the Portland roster are mostly young Guys We Like.

He might not like to hear it said about him, but Mr. Murphy is methodical. He built this team bit by bit, waiting not until his team was loaded, but until it was *overloaded*. His team's progress back from playing dead along the highway has been methodical as well. In 2010, a 98-win team got bounced in the semi-finals by conference champ Hudson. In 2011, a 107-win team made it to the Conference Finals before bowing to league champion Melrose.

This year, they are ready to take the next step. If it's possible, the 2012 team is over-overloaded, with a deep rotation, a dominant bullpen, and most important, a powerful lineup that can do it all. Worst of all for the rest of the league, these aren't pieces of cardboard; the guys filling out the Portland roster are mostly young Guys We Like. Besides Jim Thome and Omar Vizquel, the oldest player on the team is closer Scott Downs. This team will be together for a while.

Pitching: **15.5**
Built to win.



Cain: Steady

from the Yankees. The big three start 98 games.

The final two starters are loaded with potential, even if they have yet to live up to it. Yovani

"The Enigma" Gallardo (Grade 10) has flirted with dominance ever since entering the league, but hasn't yet put it all together. He did win a career-high 14 games last year. Fifth starter Bud Norris (Grade 10) stands to benefit for Adam Wainwright's injury.

This team won't much miss Wainwright, though can you imagine this rotation *with* a healthy Wainwright? Better peripherals throughout would help, but the grades of the big three will keep them in every game and should lead them deep into the playoffs. Henry Sosa (Grade 5 C-32) won't have to do anything but serve the iced tea.

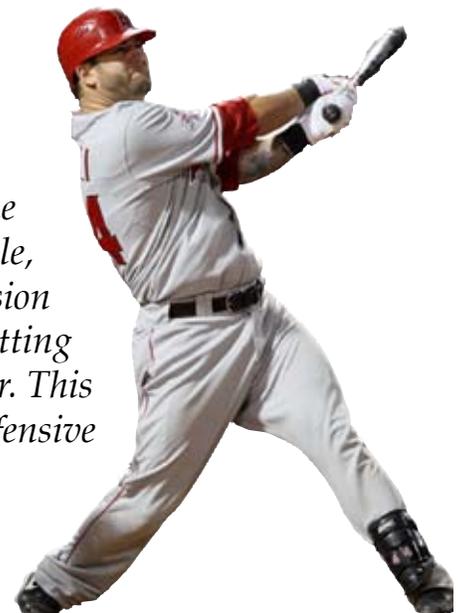
Arrived: Collin Balester, Jose Constanza, Lance Lynn, Joe Smith, Henry Sosa, Omar Vizquel, David Wright

Departed: Craig Counsell, J.D. Drew, Jim Edmonds, Aaron Harang, Jeff Mathis, Adam Rosales, Brian Wilson

Turnover Rate: 20%

SNT:
Mike Napoli

He's been on the roster for a while, but the old version was a power-hitting defensive player. This edition is an offensive force.





portland POSSUM

BULLPEN. As mentioned, lefty Scott Downs (Grade 21* C+23 HR+35) is the closer. Don't assume a left-handed closer is a weakness. The Possum wouldn't be the first team to ride a lefty closer to a championship. Just last year Melrose won it all with southpaw Hong-Chih Kuo as the closer. Besides, Downs will have company at the top end of the bullpen. Righty Joe "Not a Mormon" Smith (Grade 17* HR+61) and lefty Jonny Venters (Grade 21* C-36 HR+53) mean Portland has almost 209 innings of closer-like relief. Good luck trying to come back on this bunch.

The set-up crew includes last year's closer Joaquin Benoit (Grade 15* HR+21), Jeremy Affeldt (Grade 15*), and rookie Lance Lynn (Grade 14*). Stuck to the bottom of the pen are Todd Coffey (Grade 10* HR+26), Dan Wheeler (Grade 8* C+41 HR-21), and Collin "The Dessert Topping" Balester (Grade 6* C-23 HR-34). Balester, who gets his nickname from the letters "YM" (or "Yum!") after his grade, probably won't make an appearance before November, well after the division race is over. This staff has been built to win, now and into the future.

Offense: 12.0
Top to bottom, a scary lineup.

This team features two of the biggest, baddest cards in the set. No disrespect to Richmond's Hamilton/Pujols duo, but these two outshine them. It starts with the surprising Mike Napoli (1-1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 5 walks+22). His only weakness is his number of games. Joey Votto (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 5 walks+22) is almost as potent.

It doesn't end there. Troy Tulowitzki (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, L+5, R-4), Carlos Gonzalez (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L-6, 31 SSN for 25 attempts),



Gonzalez: Power/speed



They played second fiddle to Melrose last year, denied another World Series appearance by the Avengers. But not in 2012. Five studs make all of their 162 starts. A loaded bullpen and a lineup full of superstars make Portland this year's Melrose. Probably with similar success.

and Justin Upton (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, 27 SSN for 30 attempts) join the hit parade.

The merely very good include Wilson Betemit (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-10), Rickie Weeks (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22 twice), Matt Wieters (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks L+14, R-6), Jim Thome (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks), Scott Hairston (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+22), B.J. Upton (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, 29 SSN for 48 attempts), David Wright 1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks), and even Jose Constanza (0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, R-3). From top to bottom, this is a scary lineup with good platoon matchups.

Defense: 7.5
Two spots short of perfection.

This Possum team is two spots short of perfection, but let's look at the many, many highlights first. In the middle of it all is Tulowitzki, the first SS10 we've seen in while. Canadian Votto (1B5) is a goalie at first: nothing gets by him. The outfield has three OF3s: both Uptons and CarGo. The Uptons also share another family trait: a 37 arm. Behind the plate, Wieters (C9 Th+3) took a huge step forward. Napoli (C7 Th+3) makes an "acceptable" platoon partner.

Also in the mix is rookie Constanza (OF2), even though he has a rag arm (29). Then there are the two holes: Wright (3B3) and the tandem at second: Betemit and Weeks (both 2B6s). These two positions see a lot of action during a season. In addition to the multitude of errors they are likely to commit, the team will have to endure the missed double plays. Even average fielders at these positions would have helped.

Bench: 3.0
Plenty of usage.

The bench includes the platoon players, of which only Constanza and Betemit have under 100 games. Except for the big boppers, who start as often as possible, the team has plenty of usage for in-game substitutions. The bench also features defensive whiz Omar Vizquel (0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, 3 31s, L-5), who spells Wright (as a 3B5) and makes 19 starts at short (as a mortal SS8). Jonny Gomes (1-0-0, 7 hits, 5 walks+42, L+7, R-5), Travis "Young" Buck (5-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-11), and Ian Stewart (0-0, 6 hits, 4 walks, L-6) will play minimal roles, if any.



Tulo: SS10

to make Portland's players work harder. All that work pays off this year, when careers converge for one big blast. We at the *Annual* have seen it before, and very little can resist a team when the

stars (literally) are aligned. This team wants to win now.

Mr. Murphy has accomplished all this without decimating his 2013 draft. He's traded away his third-round and fifth-round pick, which means he can take players to fill holes if needed.

Since the team is still so young, he can also afford to develop young players who need time. This will keep Portland competitive into 2013 and even through 2014. Whether his players live up to the highs they've reached in 2012 remains to be seen, but the team has as much young talent as any other TBL team. This may be some run.

1st

The Possum will win the division. By Independence Day. The T.Q. proclaims them the strongest team in the league. They may surpass the impressive 107 wins from last year.

While defending champ Melrose will have a say in the matter, the only two obstacles to a World Series berth for Portland are "3B3" and "2B6." Perhaps Mr. Murphy 1) likes Wright and Weeks and 2) needs a challenge. Without this challenge, he's simply rolling dice to victory after victory.



**MASTER PLAN:
PORTLAND**

2010 marked the beginning of Portland's rebirth. After three losing seasons (and coming off a 111-loss season in 2009), the Possum rebounded to win 98 and take the Aaron Division crown. The early exit from the playoffs, while disappointing, only added to the team's desire to achieve.

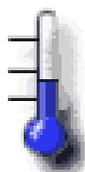
In 2011, the Possum won 107 games and reached the Conference Finals. Again, losing to the team that won the World Series only seemed



portland POSSUM



Ian Kennedy: Free from New York



TQ: 38.0

2011 northboro PHOENIX in review



So what happened? Almost the same thing as 2010!

2011 in Review

Final Record: 88-74 (3rd, Aaron)

2010 was a bitter disappointment for the Phoenix. Despite a 90-win season, a surprising Kansas club was able to edge Northboro for the last playoff slot in the National. That Phoenix squad couldn't score runs when it counted, and its bullpen didn't protect late inning leads. In 2011, Rafael Soriano anchored a deep bullpen. The offense was still lacking in pop – Ortiz, Rolen, Hardy and Kinsler had lovely cards, but they were all a month or three short of full-season usage. The outfield was stocked with role-players, not bashers. So once again, Steve and Bob spent a large chunk of their future to acquire a big bat – Jayson Werth from (where else to find bashers?) Brobdingnag.

So what happened? Almost the same thing as 2010! This time, Maracaibo put together a surprising season, finishing two games ahead of the Phoenix. But the Taylor brothers managed to tie for the Williams lead with 87 wins, assuring the Phoenix of the final playoff spot.

In the Wildcard series, Northboro easily swept the Rumrunners (This was the first post-season series success for Steve in his lifetime!) This meant facing Portland in the semi-finals. During the regular season, the Phoenix managed to win 2 of 14 encounters, so it surprised no one when they succumbed in 5 games to the Possum.

What went right?

The bats. The acquisition of Werth was a huge success – in 156 games he batted .290 and slugged .551 with 110 runs, 110 RBI, 34 HR, and 54 dou-

bles. (And 174 strikeouts.) David Ortiz also put up stellar numbers – a .307 average with .525 slugging and 25 HR, 87 RBI, 89 runs scored. Carlos Pena had 31 HR and Scott Rolen contributed 26. Roy Halladay anchored the staff, putting up a 17-10 record with a 2.55 ERA.

What went wrong?



Halladay: Anchor

The middle relief was solid (Street 2.06, Betancourt 2.35, Moylan 2.54) but surprisingly, the late inning relief was a disappointment once again. Soriano's gaudy 23* (+31/+26) grade was good for only a 3.43 ERA, 33 saves in 54 appearances (and 6 losses). Frieri's 25* fared only a little better, posting a 3.33 ERA. The end of the rotation got kicked around – Carlos Zambrano was 3-10, 6.13; Rodrigo Lopez wound up 1-9,

8.04. Not surprising, but worse than expected.

3 Things

Not surprisingly, the same as last year:

1. *Age*. Northboro is now one of the oldest squads in the league. The cliff approaches. Can the old regulars put together another decent season? Can Werth come back? Will Santana and Braden return from injuries? Will the repeat their good 2012 cards? That will determine whether the cliff is 2013 or 2014.
2. *No draft (again) in 2012*. But Bob and Steve were able to resist the temptation to mortgage 2013 for a weak challenge to Portland.
3. *Competition (again)*. While Northboro is one of the oldest clubs, the Possum is one of the younger ones. Everything has to fall just right (or just wrong) to make this club a contender in 2013.

northboro PHOENIX

Bob Jordan (13th year) / Steve Stein (10th year)



It is always a bit of a risk to write up a team in the *Annual* which is managed by one of its staff. In the process of writing this little book, the writers consult frequently, not only on subjects relative to analysis and enumeration, but also to complain about setbacks and bemoan the fates of their own players. To no little extent, Mr. Jordan, half of the two-headed director of the Northboro Phoenix, is a participant in this activity; thus, he knew very well what he was facing in the off-season, the draft, and the trading period prior to the start of our season. He knew – *knows* – where this team was strong, and where it would have difficulty. He knew – *knows* – whether the team is a contender or not.

And ultimately it's important for a manager to know the answer to that question. Teams that burst from Jove's head, glowing and stellar, like Portland (this year) or Melrose (last year) don't have much doubt that they are headed for the playoffs. Teams that are in need of a talent transfusion, or which have completely fallen to bits (fill in your own example), are clear that they are not. That leaves lots of teams in the middle, who have to make their own decision. Looking at a roster that has Roy Halladay, Ian Kinsler, David Ortiz and some fine supporting players should be headed for contention, right? But, then . . . a team that has to put a bearded lady (Carlos Peña) at first base much of the time, that has down years from Jason Werth and Carlos Zambrano, that's completely *missing* Johan Santana and has to put Rodrigo Lopez into the rotation 16 times, that has a 14* as a closer – that's a few tacos short of the combination plate, isn't it?

Arrived: David Carpenter, Eric Chavez, Tyler Chatwood, Scott Elbert, Michael Mckenry, Chien-Ming Wang

Departed: Joe Beimel, Ramon Castro, Sean Gallagher, Peter Moylan, Angel Pagan, Andy Pettitte

Turnover Rate: **17%**



SNT:
Jeff Francoeur.

The boys from Northboro never stopped believing he had talent. Last year he showed just how much.

We lay out the cards, we count hits and walks; we look at the starters, and look at the bullpen and see if the latter helps the former. We evaluate the defense, we value the bench. We consider the division and the competition. In the end we come up with a number which, once the balloon goes up on the season, means pretty much nothing.

Pitching: **7.0**
Not as strong as they'd like.

Are they a contender or an also-ran? *Contender*, we think. *We think*. The Northboro management thinks so, though they don't seem to be sure either. "Runs by the bucketful," they write in the instructions. "And may the best bats win."

To quote the instructions once more: "More taste! Less filling! More offense! Less pitching!" No kidding. The rotation lacks Santana and Dallas Braden, both uncarded, and Carlos Zambrano is a better hitter than a pitcher. The bullpen is a passel of middle relievers, with a good-control slightly-bad-homers Rafael Betancourt as closer. If the club is in the thick of it in September, either or both parts of the staff may be candidates for upgrade.

ROTATION. Before we delve into the starter depth, let us consider the sublime. Roy Halladay is one of the

best pitchers in baseball (Grade 12 C+42 HR+42). The fine control and excellent homer rating – the latter a difficult achievement for a full-season starter – along with the high fatigue rating should get him deep into any game he starts. He should give most of the bullpen a respite most days.

Now for the rest, who are also all right-handed. Javier Vazquez is the second starter. He's made a bit of a comeback (Grade 9 C+24) and goes to the hill 32 times; Dustin Moseley, a late-round pick last year, has 20 good starts (Grade 10 C+21 HR+16). With Halladay, that's just over half the season.

The other half becomes unpleasant at the tail end. Chien-Ming Wang has returned after a long period of injury (Grade 6 C+26 HR-15); Carlos Zambrano (Grade 5 C-15 HR-15) has two-thirds of a season; and the rest of the starts belong to the epitome of bulk starters: Rodrigo Lopez (Grade 4 C+21 HR-33), who is likely to get pounded regularly.



Halladay: Sublime.

BULLPEN. Rafael Betancourt (Grade 14* C+42 HR-15) is the closer. He can strike guys out too (K in the Master Game). And, indeed, he's better than the other choices: lefty Jerry Blevins (Grade

15* C-43 HR+31, only 28 innings), righty Ernesto Frieri (Grade 15* C-43 HR+41) or rookie lefty Scott Elbert (Grade 14* HR+51). This gang of four will probably be used in waves, taking advantage of batting shifts and the ever-popular +5 when one of them enters the game. There are almost 190 innings among them.

The next tier is led by former closer Rafael Soriano, who is somewhat less than his 2011 performance (Grade 12* C-33). There are a few innings of Clay Hensley as a 13* with bad peripherals (C-33 HR-15), and a similar number for David Carpenter (Grade 10* C+25). Will Ohman (Grade 8* lefty C+25 HR-21) and Huston "Whiplash" Street (Grade 7* C+42 HR-33) round out the pen, a total of about 260 additional



TBL's "Dandy Duo", Steve Stein and Bob Jordan, steered their shared club to the final Wild Card spot in 2011. They return a team with good offense, average starting pitching and a pen in search of a closer. Another spot in the playoffs could happen in 2012.

innings. Tyler Chatwood (Grade 5 C-42 HR+15) is available for bulk innings.

One of the measures of effectiveness of bullpen pitchers is whether they're mostly better than the starters they replace. In this case they are – but this is more an indication of the weakness of the starters than the strength of the relievers. To make this bullpen function, it will have to be managed carefully.

Offense: 11.0 Big buckets, full of runs.

When deciding to contend, some sentimentality may have come into play – a surprising career season from an unexpected source. It is with only moderate irony that the Phoenix SNT is Jeff Francoeur; in parts of six seasons, the Most Mispelled Outfielder in Baseball hit 46 homers in 1603 at-bats, with 316 strikeouts and only 66 walks, compiling a slash line of .245 / .281 / .390. And then he turned in this card (1-4-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, 32 SBA with a 27 SSN) – *a whole season of it*. To send this card away would be heartbreaking; and to pass up the opportunity to beat the hell out of opponents with it, as a part of a drive to the playoffs, would compile far too much karmic debt. Is this the card that tipped Northboro management toward contention?

Francoeur is one of five solid cards that play most days. Melky Cabrera (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 30 SBA with a 26 SSN) has his best card; J.J. Hardy came out of nowhere to hit 30 homers and turn in *his* best card ever (1-0-0-0, 10 hits); David Ortiz has a critic-silencing, no-platoon shift performance (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 4 walks); and Ian Kinsler is the every day second baseman (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 34 SBA with a 34 SSN). These five guys make this lineup among the most dangerous in TBL.

As for the rest of the positions: at catcher, Ramon Hernandez (1-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks) and David Ross (1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks) are a very capable tandem.

Seth Smith (4 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-13 R+1, 12 SBA with a 32 SSN) had – you guessed it – the best card of his career; Darnell McDonald (1-0-0, 10 hits, L+3 R-10) is the platoon partner. Shelley Duncan (1-5-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-5 R+2) also plays. At third Scott Rolen (4 0s, 9 hits) had a tough 65 games; Freddy Sanchez' 60 games is better (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 3 31s) but he'll rarely move Kinsler off second base, so he will help out at the hot corner; and Miguel Cairo (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L+6 R-3) gives some additional flexibility.

The final position is a true Bearded Lady. This year's version, for your amusement, is Carlos Peña (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 6 walks+22, 8 13s, L-12 R+2). It's a feast or famine situation; Ramon Hernandez or Miguel Cairo or Shelley Duncan might replace him against the better lefties, but he's there otherwise. It would be more of a handicap if (1) Peña wasn't excellent defensively, and (2) he can be put in the lineup at the bottom – because *there are lots of other, better hitters.*

The lineup should create buckets full of runs. Big buckets. Big buckets, full of runs. It'll be interesting to see if it's enough.

Defense: 8.5
Stellar.

With this year's club, there are two positions where there *isn't* a regular Fielding One player: left field and third base. In LF, Smith and McDonald are OF2s with average arms (and Duncan, rarely, will be an OF1). At 3B, the trio of Cairo, Sanchez and Rolen are all 3B4s. But that's it. Hernandez (Th+1) and Ross (Th+3) are both C8s. Peña is a 1B5. Kinsler and Sanchez are 2B8s. Hardy is an SS9. Francoeur (37 arm) and Cabrera (32 arm) are both OF3s; so is Jayson Werth, who doesn't have to start but can play just about every day (150 games; 36 arm). These guys will make sure that innings have no more than three outs.

Bench: 2.5
Choices and flexibility.

There are lots of choices, allowing the team to be very flexible in lineups. In addition to the starters and platoon players listed above, Jayson Werth (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, 22 SBA with a 33 SSN) is not good enough to

start but is a terrific pinch-runner and defensive replacement. Eric Chavez (0-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) can pinch-hit. It should also be noted that Carlos Zambrano may hit for himself in lieu of the DH (1-5-6, 12 hits).



northboro PHOENIX

2nd This is a contender, because they will score lots of runs, and offense wins games in TBL. Pitching wins playoff games, but offense gets you there. It is important, however, that the managers of the club believe in what they have. Confidence, we believe, goes a long way.

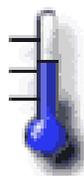


**MASTER PLAN:
NORTHBORO**

Strike, says the cliché, *when the iron is hot.* More accurately, it's important to strike while there's still an iron. Most of the key players are getting old: the middle infield is 30; Halladay is 35; Big Papi just turned 36. In order to remain competitive, there was been a need to choose present over future value.

Is there any choice other than to go forward? It certainly came up; *vide* the discussion at the beginning of this article. On the one hand, recovering from an age-induced crash can be painful; on the other hand, there are teams that have rarely gotten the chance to contend. Building a contender and keeping it that way is *hard*. Treading water, or sinking in it, is *easy*. The opportunities sometimes come far apart.

The plan: contend now, while it's possible. There are mighty teams in TBL this year, but it's a long season and sometimes momentum counts. This club will perform better in the playoffs, assuming they address their bullpen issues – one of the easiest things to do in the trading period. Next season will have to take care of itself.



TQ: 29.0

2011 kansas KOYOTES in review



The Koyotes experienced a streaky year.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 79-83 (4th, Aaron)

In 2010 “the planets aligned” – alas, no such luck in 2011. The Koyotes experienced a streaky year, alternately encouraging and frustrating their fans. They played .500 baseball for the first half of the season, then suffered through a 10 game losing streak in August to drop 12 games under, essentially dashing any playoff hopes. Winning 13 of the next 17 gave the most optimistic fans some hope, but then losing 10 of 13 ended that. A late season rally actually put Kansas over .500 at one point but dropping 6 of the last 7 resulted in a cellar dwelling position in the Aaron.

What went right?

Not a lot to brag about here. Off season trades resulted in several helpful cards joining the team. Coco Crisp hit .298 in 81 games and pilfered 35 bases without being thrown out. Alex Gonzalez, acquired for his SS9 defense, led the team in HR with 29 and RBI with 88. SNT Curtis Granderson chipped in with 26 HR, and with the short porch in Yankee Stadium, the hope is that his real value will lie in the future.

Miguel Montero led the team with a .309 batting average and .508 slugging average and surprisingly was the co-leader with Crisp with 6 triples. Andres Torres led the team with 91 runs scored, legged out 45 2B's, and supplied OF-3 defense. Neftali Perez was a fine closer, recording 5 wins and 19 saves, striking out 61 in 60 innings. Jason Motte (2.58, 52.3 RIP) led a group of excellent setup men, and he should be valuable in future.

What went wrong?

When Michael Young's .266 average was good for the team lead among qualifiers, it's clear what went wrong. Far too many Mendoza-type averages frequented the lineups with the likes of Granderson (.202), Gonzalez (.219), Brooks Conrad (.218) and Brad Hawpe (.211). And then there was Chris Snyder. The failure to keep a third catcher meant that Snyder's pathetic .129 BA appeared in 97 games. It also limited opportunities to PH or PR for him without “wasting” a game of Montero. Lesson learned! Short season cards for Montero (85 g), Dustin Pedroia (80) in addition to Crisp (81) led to platoon situations and associated roster problems.



Perez: Solid, but not lights out

Feliz and Joakim Soria combined for 36 saves, but also had 8 blown saves and 8 losses. Inefficient management of pen was also an issue, as 16 RIP of the closers were left unused. However, some blame can be placed on the inability to get leads to protect.

3 Things

1. *First Round jinx.* Will Mike Moustakas avoid what happened to Brian Matusz and Domonic Brown so far? With an aging rotation, should the Koyotes have drafted one of the starters instead?
2. *Can the pen save the starters?* It's deep, but has no lockdown stopper. Bullpen management will be crucial again.
- 3/ Will the middle of the order be enough? Can Pedroia, Young, Granderson, and Montero overcome the weakness elsewhere and put up enough runs to compete?

kansas KOYOTES



Bill Schwartz (5th year)

Kansas has some young talent, Guys We Like, but they also have some empty roster spots, Guys Talking Up Space.

The Kansas team has some talent. Good talent. Mostly young talent. Guys We Like, such as Neftali Feliz, Curtis Granderson, Miguel Montero, Dustin Pedroia, and Max Scherzer. It also has some empty roster spots. Guys without careers ahead of them. Guys Taking Up Space, such as Mike Cameron, Jon Garland (a candidate for "Do You Remember...?"), and Brad Hawpe. In between is a mix.

Despite a drop to 79 wins last year (not bad at all in a division that featured three playoff teams), this team is developing a core of solid players. Granderson is a good indication of this team's trend. A year ago, Mr. Schwartz fretted about overpaying for a 30-year-old outfielder. That outfielder rebounded to have a "pretty good" year.

The Koyotes too may have a pretty good year. Maybe not good enough to return to the playoffs, but good enough to escape the division cellar. They have strengths in the lineup and in the bullpen, almost everywhere except in the rotation, where the staff "aces" have single-digit grades. But you know what? This team underperformed by one game last year, and that was the first time the team has underperformed in Mr. Schwartz's tenure. We've learned never to count them out.

Pitching: 8.5
This may hurt.

ROTATION. Starting this year are not one, not two, but *three* lefty Grade 9s: Ted "L for Life" Lilly (C+24 HR-23), Randy Wolf, and Josh Outman (C-24 HR+32 for only 9 starts). Following this onslaught is righty James McDonald (Grade 8 C-34 HR-21). That's 106 starts, and those are all the starters who can steal 9s without help. Hold still a moment; this may hurt.

The "good" news is that the rest of the starting rotation isn't that much worse. Max "The Businessman" Scherzer (Grade 7 HR-21) is the underachiever on this team. We wish his nickname came from his attitude on the mound; unfortunately, it comes from the "XL" following his grade, which makes him a spreadsheet user. Jon "Lost at Sea" Garland (Grade 7 C-22) gets 9 juicy starts, and Blake "The Rookie" Beavan (Grade 6 C+36) takes the rest.

Sure, these guys will get lucky once in a while, but they'll get pummeled about as often. There is no staff ace to let the bullpen rest at least one of every five days. The Kansas relievers had better be ready to work overtime.

Arrived: Pedro Beato, Blake Beavan, Phil Dumatrait, Jim Johnson, Mike Moustakas, Chris Stewart, Cory Wade, Casper Wells

Departed: Tony Abreu, Jose Contreras, Jack Cust, Josh Fields, Cole Gillespie, Nick Johnson, Melvin Mora, Chris Ray

Turnover Rate: 23%



SNT:
Mike Moustakas

Kansas' first rounder this year fills a hole and has lots of future promise.



kansas KOYOTES

BULLPEN. Luckily, the Koyotes have over 566 innings, all no worse than the top starters, to dish out all year. They may need every single scoop. For those of you scoring at home, that's still only 3.5 innings per game, which means the starters have to pitch, on average, 5.5 innings a game over the course of the season.

Individually, the relievers are quite good. At the top end is young Neftali Feliz (Grade 18* C-52 HR+32). Setting him up are four relievers, all righties: Cory Wade (Grade 16* C+26), Jason Motte (Grade 15* C+25 HR+51), Ramon Ramirez (Grade 14* HR+42), and Jim



Feliz: Top end

Johnson (Grade 13* C+26 HR+35 for 91 innings). These pitchers contribute almost 330 innings of the total. That's a team strength.

The middle relievers include Hisanori "The Good Lefty" Takahashi (Grade 12*), Pedro Beato (Grade 9* C-21 HR+23), former closer Joakim Soria (Grade 9*), and Phil "The Bad Lefty" Dumatrait (Grade 9* C-41 HR-22). With good luck, the starters go six, and the set-up crew holds the lead. With bad luck, well, there's the offense ...

Offense: 7.5
'27 Yankees, this ain't.

Prospects aside, this team has just four players we wouldn't want to face with the game on the line: Michael Young (6-6-0, 12 hits, 2 walks), Dustin Pedroia (1-6-6, 11 hits, 4 walks, L+6, R-4, 30 SSN for 34 attempts), Miguel Montero (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L-15, R+3), and Curtis Granderson (1-1-4-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+42, 28 SSN for 35 attempts, and no substantial shift!). Montero



Bill Schwartz, our manager in the Midwest, and his Koyotes were the odd team out in 2011 when the rest of the Aaron Division made the playoffs. Kansas will not even be that close in 2012 despite some young talent on the roster.

and Granderson are the only two players on the team with four power numbers. That's a team weakness.

The offense falls off quickly after those four. Coco Crisp (10 hits, 3 walks, L-6, 32 SSN for 58 attempts) turned in a very productive card and leads off against righties. Leading off against lefties? Andres Torres (8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-4, 29 SSN for 25 attempts). Then there's Chris Snyder's funky card (1-6, 9 hits, 5 walks), the power of Laynce Nix (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-11) and Casper Wells (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, R-5), and the *potential* of Mike Moustakas (10 hits, 2 walks, L-10) and Domonic Brown (9 hits, 4 walks). The '27 Yankees, this ain't.

It gets even uglier after that. Brooks Conrad (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L+3, R-4), Rick Ankiel (9 hits, 3 walks, L-4), and Alex Gonzalez (9 hits, 1 walk, R-3) all take turns in the starting lineup. This team is built on walks and speed, and it's a bit short on walks.

Defense: 4.0
A few bright spots.

Gonzalez (SS9) is sweet. Pedroia (2B8), with Mark Ellis (2B9) backing him up is terrific. Snyder (C8) is solid. Montero is average, but he's got a great throwing arm (Th+4). That's all the good news in the infield. All the third base-



Granderson: Power

men are 3B3s, and Young plays first everyday as a 1B2. Can you say, "Clang?"

In the outfield, there's something we don't see everyday: Crisp and Torres are both OF3s, but

according to the emergency instructions, they will rarely play in the same game. Ankiel, Granderson, and Wells are all average out there, as are Cameron and Nix (who DHs against righties), but Brown (OF1) gets to play LF versus lefties. Ankiel still owns a cannon for an arm, but he's got the only exceptional one. This defense has a few bright spots, but the holes are deep enough to swallow baseballs.

Bench: 2.0
Meet Mark Ellis.

Mark Ellis (9 hits, 2 walks+22, 29 SSN for 19 attempts) is reputedly good-natured – a true team player. And he may be the best position player on a bench that also includes castoff players such as Brad Hawpe (9 hits, 3 walks, L-6), Mike Cameron (1-0-0, 7 hits, 4 walks, L-3), and backup C Chris Stewart (8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+9, R-6). Good luck with that.

3rd Third place is better than fourth, where they finished last year, but this is far from a team on the verge of the playoffs. Neither Kansas, nor Maracaibo, is anywhere near Northboro on offense, and Portland is much further away. Kansas plays to win every year; the club and its manager have not gone through a dear rebuild – perhaps because there has always been enough talent to compete: that may be satisfying for Mr. Schwartz, a long-time TBL player. But it might keep them from getting deep into the playoffs.

They may be hard-pressed to repeat their 2011 total of 79 victories. On the bright side, many players will get learning opportunities, and they may be fun to manage with all their moveable parts and the deep bullpen.



In 2010, the Koyotes made an impressive (and improbable) run to the playoffs, nosing out the

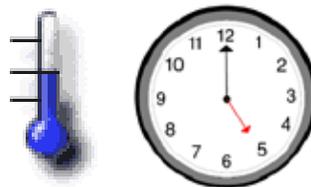
avored Northboro team by a single game. They slid back to 79 wins a year ago. The trend may continue this year, as Mr. Schwartz continues to solidify the core and dump the waste. It's a process that obviously has not yet finished.

In the meantime, a few key players are have stopped listening to Top 40 and have switched to the Golden Oldies. Lilly, a consistent presence on the mound for years, is now 36. Wolf, his partner in arm (both are lefties), turns 36 in August. 32-year-old Jon Garland, as we mentioned earlier, is already MIA. That represents 46 percent of the 2012 starts. Neftali Feliz is a starter in 2012, but with Joakim Soria injured, there'll be a need to refill the bullpen.

Of the key hitters, Torres was a late-bloomer and is now 34. Starting shortstop Gonzalez is 35. Michael Young keeps hitting, but he's now 35. A few other hitters have ripened, too. Ellis turns 35 soon, Hawpe turns 33 this year, and Cameron has already retired.

The point is that while he's busy building up the team's core, Mr. Schwartz also has to think about finding replacements for a few players actively contributing to the 2012 club. Our prediction? This club will still be building momentum when 2014 rolls around.

But don't take them for granted. A few more good drafts and Granderson-type trades, and their projection could change in a hurry.



TQ: 24.0



KANSAS KOYOTES

2011 maracaibo RUMRUNNERS in review



Ultimately the team just wasn't as good as its record.

2011 in Review Final Record: 90-72 (2nd, Aaron)

The 2011 *Annual* said what Maracaibo management knew to be true: it was going to be a rebuilding year. The team wasn't bad: it had a good bullpen, it had a few really solid cards – Suzuki, Scott, Quentin – and it could still catch the ball, mostly. But it would be a long season, with some difficult stretches when the team would struggle.

With Portland and Northboro in the division, and with Melrose in the conference, there was really no reason to exert oneself to contend. The draft brought young players, particularly a young shortstop; the Rumrunners passed up Mike (now Giancarlo) Stanton to get him. The end goal was a draft position, say, in the 8-10 range.

Somehow, though, the *Annual* was wrong. Someone didn't get the memo (at least not until the offense went into the tomb in the playoffs.) Someone decided to sprinkle some fairy dust. Who knows? The club won 90 games, and got into the first round of the playoffs. It wasn't the desired result – Maracaibo drafted 17th, though they still got a new part that they wanted. Maybe the memo wasn't needed after all.

What went right?

For a team with suspect pitching, the mediocre grades outperformed any expectation. Cole Hamels (14-14, 4.04, 234 Ks) was solid all year, but the staff was led by the rock-solid Grade 7 John Lackey (17-10, 3.60). Late in the year Jeremy Guthrie came over from New Westminster to win 5 games down the stretch. The rotation's success is partly attributable to the deep and capable bullpen. Mariano Rivera (3 wins, 44 saves, 1.04, 62 Ks in 60 innings) and his sidekick Daniel Bard (6 wins, 1.22, 94 Ks in 74 innings) led the way, but there were several other contributors.



Lackey: Rock-solid

On the offensive side, only Ichiro Suzuki (.302, 24 steals) among the regulars hit over .300, but Carlos Quentin chipped in 30 homers and Luke Scott had 21 of his own along with 41 doubles. The team scored 786 runs, with only 131 homers.

What went wrong?

Ultimately the team just wasn't as good as its record. It wasn't as bad as its playoff performance, but that one performance was a disappointment, not a surprise: it might have been nice if the Rumrunners had put up more of a fight, but despite the surprising success during the regular season management was under no illusions that Northboro, Portland, and Melrose were beatable. There were too many vulnerabilities and not enough talent. But it was a fun year anyway.

3 Things

1. *Get younger, but not at any price.* The club's management has been chided that Ichiro, Mariano, Chipper and others are still in a Maracaibo uniform. True: but the offers were of the bargain-basement, Ocean State Job Lot variety. Thanks, but no thanks.
2. *Identify key positions and key players.* Last year's draft brought Starlin Castro in the draft, and Jeremy Guthrie by trade – the former a top stud rookie, the latter a durable, dependable bulk starter. This year's draft brought Salvador Perez, but also Steve Cishek and Eduardo Sanchez, and trades brought others. If Anton's metric is right, it takes 15 good players to contend, but the next 10-15 players help determine if your team can remain competent over a number of years.
3. *Contend when it's right.* Last year was nice, but unexpected. Not only were there teams that simply were too good to beat, there was one in the division. On the other hand, Portland may be good for the next decade. What to do?

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS



Walter Hunt (26th year); Hall of Famer

In order for the Rumrunners to become The Rumrunners once again, the youngsters will have to develop. In a hurry.

This is the 28th year of this storied franchise. In all that time, the team has never lost 100 games in a season. The team has more playoff seasons (17) than losing seasons (4). In fact, the team has won the World Series as many times as they've finished under .500. That's not just impressive, it's unbelievable.

Yet Mr. Hunt finds his team in a curious spot. Although they have a core of young talent, they also have guys who should rightfully be on a different team (many of whom *have* been on a different team). It's not that they're bad; they're just not prototypical Rumrunners.

This is a big transition year for the Rumrunners and for Mr. Hunt. Amongst the old-timers still hanging on, there is some enviable talent and some lottery tickets. In order for the Rumrunners to become The Rumrunners once again, however, the youngsters will have to develop. In a hurry. Guys like Chipper Jones and Orlando Hudson have already taken one trip too many to the trainer's room.

Pitching: **8.0**
Prototypical bullpen.

ROTATION. Here's the good news: Cole Hamels (Grade 14 C+26). He's everything you want in an ace. He starts 31 times and has been established for five years. After him come veteran righties Aaron Harang (Grade 9) and Jeremy Guthrie (Grade 8). This trio provides 91 hit-stopping starts. If only they had another 71 just like them.

They don't. Instead, they have some learning opportunities for



Hamels: Everything you want

SNT: Salvador Perez



Despite an early 2012 injury, he's part of the Royals' – and the Rumrunners' – future, filling a gaping hole at catcher. And he can hit too.

Arrived: Steve Cishek, Johnny Damon, Jason Frasier, Aaron Harang, Tommy Hunter, Mitch Moreland, Danny Moskos, Jimmy Paredes, Salvador Perez, Cesar Ramos, Eduardo Sanchez, Anthony Swarzak

Departed: Orlando Cabrera, Luke French, Aaron Heilman, Reed Johnson, Fred Lewis, Jensen Lewis, Andrew Miller, Felix Pie, Dan Runzler, Joe Smith, Mitch Talbot, Matt Treanor

Turnover Rate: 34%

Anthony Swarzak (Grade 6 C+23 HR+22), Chris Capuano (Grade 5 C+21 HR-22), Tommy "Zulu" Hunter (Grade 4 C+36), and Travis Wood (Grade 4). Hunter gets his nickname from the "ZL" following his grade, the sign of a pitcher whose stuff is always around the plate, just without much movement. John Lackey goes from leading the team in wins in 2011 to taking poker lessons in 2012. Everyone in this rotation (except Hamels) is as hittable as an inflatable Madonna doll.

BULLPEN. The pitching staff does have a strength, though: a bullpen with good grades *and* good peripherals, which is a vestige of



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

prototypical Rumrunner-dom. Rivera (Grade 16* C+46 HR+36) is still the closer, but this year he gets (and may need) some assistance. Eduardo Sanchez (Grade 26* C-62 HR+45), the new kid in town, is a late-inning rally-stopper, and Daniel Bard (Grade 17* HR+26) is the primary set-up guy. They give the team over 164 top-end innings.

The next tier could be set-up men on another team. David Hernandez (Grade 14* C-35 HR+33) and Steve Cishek (Grade 13* C+24 HR+55) are middle relievers here. Cesar Ramos (Grade 12* C-25) and Daniel Moskos (Grade 6* C+23 HR+62) are around to keep left-handed hitters honest.

The early/mop-up crew includes Jason Frasier (Grade 11* C-23) and part-time starters Swartzak (Grade 7*) and Hunter. All told, the Rumrunners have 455 non-innocuous innings to throw around. While that number may not be

enough to rescue the starters every day, it should be enough to protect any leads they have.

Offense: 6.5
Not like it used to be.

Remember Rafael Palmeiro? This year's team could use him. The offense features exactly two players with four power numbers and only five (including a bench bat) with a 1 in the first column. This is not your prototypical Rumrunner offense. "Led" by Carlos Quentin (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42 twice, L+4, R-3), the team also has Chipper Jones (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-4) in an outstanding year for a 40-year-old.



Everyone's favorite Master Mason, Walter Hunt, returns to a Rumrunners team that won 90 games in 2011 and made the playoffs last year. The 2012 edition isn't as good and will struggle to make it back there again, but Walter is game for a challenge.



Rivera: Still the closer

Before we get to the other "power hitters," there are three guys who can nibble with the best of them: Casey Kotchman (11 hits, 3 walks+42, L-7), Salvador Perez (12 hits, 2 walks+22, L+14, R-7), and Starlin Castro (11 hits, 2 walks, 28 SSN for 31 attempts) will get on when they play, which in Perez's case won't be often. Old-timer Jorge Posada (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-21, R+3) and youngster Mitch Moreland (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-8) bring some power, but neither will remind anyone of Palmeiro (who, for the record, hit over .300 with 23 homers in his final season).

The rest of the lineup, despite the promising or inspiring names, isn't very exciting. Not this year. At least Cameron Maybin (10 hits, 3 walks, 32 SSN for 48 attempts), Ichiro Suzuki (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 33 SSN for 47 attempts), Orlando Hudson (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-6, 33 SSN for 2 attempts), Johnny Damon (9 hits, 3 walks+22, 29 SSN for 25 attempts), and Jordan Schafer (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-4, 32 SSN for 26 attempts) can run. Jose Molina (10 hits, 3 walks+22) and Wilson Valdez (9 hits, 2 walks) can't.

This is not the offense we usually associate with the Maracaibo Rumrunners. According to the T.Q. ratings, they are deep in the lower half of the league. Filled with guys looking for the exit and youngsters looking for the entrance, they will struggle to not just score, but to get on base. This may be a long season in Maracaibo – we may see history if the team loses 100 games.

Defense: 7.0
Can still flash the leather.



Quentin: "Leader"

The Rumrunners can still flash the leather. Ichiro (OF3, 38 arm) is As

Good As It Gets in RF, Hudson (2B9) is a defensive wizard at second base, and Kotchman (1B5) is a vacuum at first. Molina (C8) is solid behind the plate and Jones (3B4) is still above average at the hot corner. Valdez (SS9/2B8) is excellent backing up second and short. But Castro (SS8), the everyday shortstop, is only average. Maybin and Schafer (OF2s) will make the highlight reel as often as the blooper reel.



Suzuki: As good as it gets

Perez (C7), in the few games he plays, is average too, and with a mediocre arm (Th-2). Posada (C5), meanwhile, is awful defensively, but has a deceptively accurate arm (+4). Then there are the holes. Paredes (3B3) is an error waiting to happen at third, and Quentin and Moreland (OF1s) are blocks of granite in a wide-open pasture. It's the defense (along with the bullpen) that stands between this team and 100 losses.

Bench: 2.0
They all help.

Besides the platoon partners, there are three bats we haven't yet mentioned, and they all help. Rookie Jimmy Paredes (11 hits, 2 walks, L-8) can hit and run a little. Ian Desmond (10 hits, 2 walks, 28 SSN for 35 attempts can pinch-run. Luke Scott (1-5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks) has more power than most anyone else on the team. Since Mr. Hunt knows how to use his bench (and his bullpen), he'll get the most out of what he has. The big question is: Will it be enough?

4th Yes, last place in the Aaron Division. That's what the *Annual's* crystal ball tells us, and so we believe it. But it's only happened three other times in TBL history (most notably in 2004, with a 91-71 record). While it's possible the Rumrunners

could edge out Kansas for third place, it would be a hollow victory. As we said, this is a transitional year for the team, and transitions are generally difficult. Mr. Hunt will play the cards he's been dealt and look to the future.

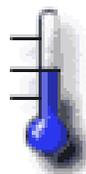


**MASTER PLAN:
MARACAIBO**

2010 marked the last time Maracaibo finished under .500 (and tied the franchise record for losses with 92.) The team rebounded last year, however, to post 90 wins, good enough for second place and another trip into the postseason. How did they manage that? The aging stars on the team had solid years, and the young draft picks played above their heads. (Mitch Talbot, for example, had a 12-8 record.)

If 2012 is the low-water mark for the team that the T.Q.s predict, it may be the start of a serious rebuilding effort. There are 14 players on the roster over the age of 30. A few of them—Mariano, Ichiro, and Chipper, for instance—have had tremendous careers that are slowly winding down. They will likely be gone by 2014, leaving behind a legacy ... as well as their unproven replacements.

Mr. Hunt's goal in the next several years will be to season the replacements and hope they can fill the big spikes of those who have departed. There's no guarantee.



TQ: 23.0



maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

Catch Me If You Can

2011 Mantle Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Melrose*	123	39	.759	—
Zion	76	86	.469	47
Munich	71	91	.438	52
Hudson	63	99	.389	60

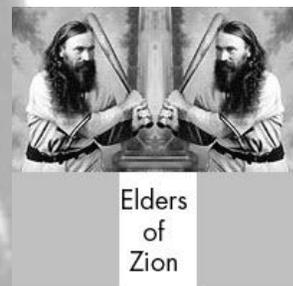
* 2011 TBL Champions.

For a while in 2011 it looked as if the all-time record for wins in a TBL season would be broken. But then the mighty **Melrose Avengers** “slumped” a little and wound up with only 123 wins. They were still the best hitting team in the league (.300, with only 963 strikeouts and 1,024 runs scored) and the best pitching team in the league (2.86 ERA with 1,467 strikeouts, 33 complete games and 19 shutouts. The second- and third-best teams in TBL – Portland and Dallas – hardly made sweat bead on *Mark Freedman’s* brow. Now it’s his title to defend. It won’t be quite as easy: they’re superb, but maybe short of awesome, and the competition is better. But others will still have to beat Melrose to claim the championship.



Has it really been ten years since the **Elders of Zion** won a World Series? It seems so.

Neither Mr. Maddux nor Mr. Glavine have lockers assigned to them in the home clubhouse anymore, and Albert Belle and Barry Larkin no longer swing bats or flash the leather. If



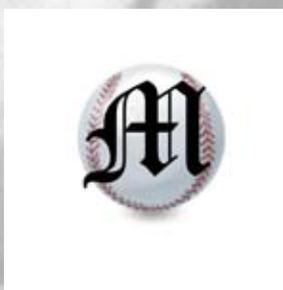
this was a rebuild, some of the new parts have not quite meshed with the machine. This edition of *Rich Meyer’s* team certainly doesn’t look like the fearsome Elders, and it looks as if the team may be at a crossroads. Last year they finished second . . . but 76-86 doesn’t meet the standard for this storied franchise. This year in MLB may tell the tale of the team’s immediate future.



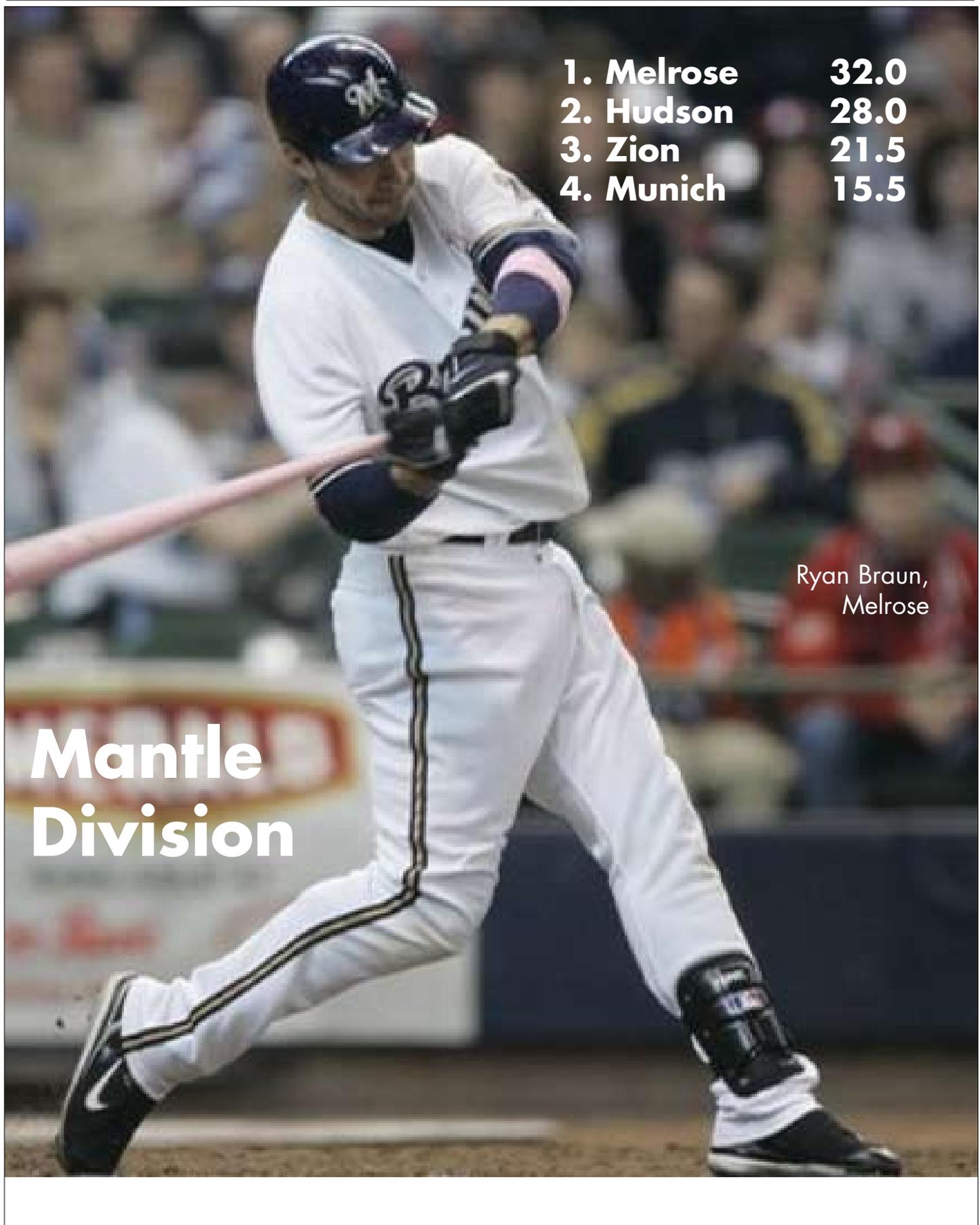
Exhibit one: the **Hudson Generals**. They’ve built a pretty good team up there, with a huge power card for Jose Bautista in the middle of the lineup next to a fit and trim – well, fit – Kung

Fu Panda, and plenty of pitching to get them deep into ballgames. They play all 25 guys (as we have so frequently noted), and Hall of Famer *Clay Beard* gets them all to do their jobs. This is not the best club in TBL, or even the best club in the division – but it’s a pretty good one that should get to the post-season.

The senior manager in TBL and the oldest franchise in the league bring up the rear in the Mantle this year. *Paul Montague’s Munich Marauders* have some great names on



the roster; but things haven’t developed as quickly as he had hoped, and it’ll be another patient year in 2012 – and possibly another strong draft in 2013 – ahead.



- 1. Melrose 32.0
- 2. Hudson 28.0
- 3. Zion 21.5
- 4. Munich 15.5

Ryan Braun,
Melrose

Mantle Division

2011 melrose AVENGERS in review



There is nothing to say.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 123-39 (1st, Mantle)

There is nothing to say. Neither Captain America nor any other member of the team of heroes has any complaints. Yes, the team had a chance on the last series of the season to knock the Rochester Express from the record books. They were unsuccessful but still netted 123 wins. We went 12-3 in our playoff run, was lucky enough to beat great teams by Portland and Dallas to win our second championship.

What went right?

Dan Uggla takes home MVP honors with a .297/ .371/ .583 mark, 49 HR, 40 doubles, 135 runs and 134 RBI. He had help from the other big bats: Adrian Gonzalez (.346/ .418/ .559, 30 HR, 54 doubles, 124 RBI and 129 runs); Aubrey Huff (.333/ .409/ .550, 26 HR, 40 doubles, 110 RBI and 109 runs); Ryan Braun (.311, 47 doubles, 109 RBI, 114 runs); Delmon Young (59 doubles, 103 RBI). Kevin Youkilis played 98 games but hit 17 HR and scored 116 while walking 81 times. As a team the balding superheroes hit .300/ .367/ .492 and scored 1024 runs on 216 home runs and 397 doubles.

The pitching staff was equally dominant, posting a 2.86 ERA with 19 shutouts. They gave up 104 homers and 1,142 hits while striking out 1,467. Hong-Chih Kuo failed in his attempt to go the season without giving up a run. He gave up 7 posting a 1.15 ERA with 36 saves. The bullpen lived up to expectations, with Billy Wagner (5-3, 2.39), Alexei Ogando (4-2, 1.79), Ryan Madson (2-1, 1.85), and Rhodes (5-1, 2.25).



Uggla: MVP

Ubaldo Jimenez led in wins (23-5) CGs, and shutouts posting a 2.39 ERA. Jon Lester went 20-5, 2.81, Garcia 17-2 2.20. The surprise was Kris Medlen going 11-1 in 15 starts with 3 shutouts, 2 on the road.

It was a well balanced team effort. Even the defense was good as Melrose committed only 69 errors.

What went wrong?

Just not making 125 wins and knocking Suter from the record books. Here is hoping Ray's Possum have the gumption to do it this year.

3 Things

1. *Pitching.* It all starts with pitching. Having to take Voglesong to shore up the staff could hurt long term but Lester, Jimenez, Garcia, Jurrjens and Ogando are still young and talented enough to be good for years. This year's staff is a step down. The pen is thinner after the Wagner retirement and Kuo implosion. Still, we have 500+ innings including 110 of Grade 18* or better.
2. *The second tier is crucial.* Youkilis, Gonzalez, Braun, Uggla Cuddyer and Gordon are reliable quantities. The team will succeed or fail on success of batters around them. Eric Thames, Peter Bourjos and Todd Frazier: two of the three need to have good years for continued success.
3. *Injuries are the big equalizer.* Kevin Youkilis continues to be a problem. Newcomer Todd Frazier may provide enough to fill in the current and future games he'll miss. Jimmy Rollins is the other question mark year to year. With no SS prospects, a long term injury to Rollins could devastate this team next year.

melrose AVENGERS

Mark Freedman (19th year)

They aren't quite the monster they were last year, but they haven't exactly lost their superpowers, either.



Last year, we labeled the Avengers “balding superheroes.” Mr. Freedman took the phrase to heart, even mentioning it during the year. It must have spurred him on, because his team charged out of the gate, destroyed the competition all year, and came within a win of tying the league all-time mark of 124 wins.

We can't take credit for spurring them on. The truth is the team *was* that good. They took their division by 47 games, which was one fewer win than the Greater Ohio Chia Pets managed *all year*. They stormed through the playoffs and offed the Dallas Eagles in a five-game World Series.

Now they are back to defend their title. The *Annual's* magic crystal ball has once again picked them to win their division. Maybe they aren't quite the monster they were last year, but they haven't exactly lost their superpowers, either. We're expecting a rematch with the Portland Possum in the National Conference Championship Series, from which a return to the World Series is only four wins away.

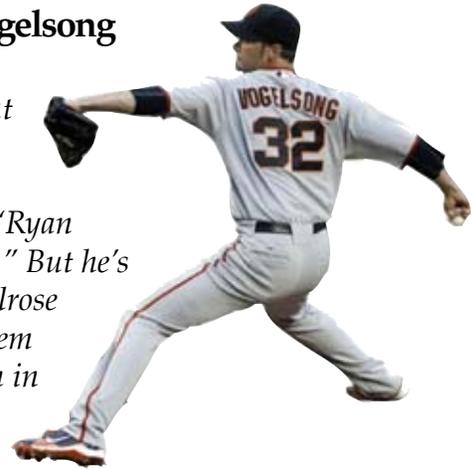
Pitching: **11.0**
Good, but not super.

ROTATION. Sure, there are better rotations in the league. Sure, the grades are not the same as last year's team. But the luster of their league championship will follow them around – teams hear them coming, pitchers become knock-kneed rookies, even umpires give them a nod of respect.

The rotation is led by lefty Jon Lester (Grade 13 C-26), who turned in another solid season. He's followed by a trio of righties: Ryan Vogelsong (Grade 12) in his breakout year, converted reliever Alexi Ogando (Grade 11), and Jair Jurrjens (Grade 11). The

SNT: Ryan Vogelsong

If he had come out of nowhere to do this fifteen years ago, we'd call it “Ryan Vogelsong Effect.” But he's just the piece Melrose needed to help them to the post season in 2012.



Arrived: Tim Collins, Michael Cuddyer, Todd Frazier, Kevin Jepsen, Ryan Kalish, Scott Linebrink, Joe Paterson, Justin Sellers, Pedro Strop, Eric Thames, Yorvit Torrealba, Jose Valverde, Ryan Vogelsong, Jamey Wright

Departed: Yuniesky Betancourt, Chad Billingsley, Aaron Cunningham, David Eckstein, Jason Frasor, Aubrey Huff, Adam Moore, Arthur Rhodes, Dustin Richardson, Ivan Rodriguez, Kelly Shoppach, Josh Tomlin, Billy Wagner, Delmon Young

Turnover Rate: 37%



Lester: Solid season

peripherals aren't strong, but this foursome provides 111 starts. Taking up the rest are Jaime Garcia (Grade 7 C+22 HR+22) and former ace Ubaldo Jimenez (Grade 7 C-23), who'll give the lower end of the bullpen something to do.

BULLPEN. Mr. Freedman must like relievers; he has 12 of them on the roster. We're sure they like him in return, because



melrose AVENGERS

only four of them have base grades under 13*. At the top are the Wild Boys, both Grade 19* righties: Brad Lidge (C-56 HR+62) and rookie Pedro Strop (C-45 HR+62). They'll surrender some baserunners, making the 9th inning exciting, but no one will beat them with one swing. Backing them up, and probably earning a few saves himself, is Jose Valverde (Grade 18* C-35 HR+31). These three bring about 113 innings of stopper-grade fastballs. Good, but not super.

The set-up relievers all have solid grades. Jesse Crain (Grade 17* C-33) can come in as early as the 6th inning, which is pretty scary. He's followed by righties Joey Devine (Grade 14* C-44 HR+62), Jamey Wright (Grade 13* C-31), and Ryan Madson (Grade 12* C+42 HR+45) and lefties Joe Paterson (Grade 14* C-35 HR+52) and Tim Collins (Grade 13* C-62

HR+26). That brings the total of 13*+ relief to 432 innings. That is how to build a winning team; these relievers will protect the starters.

Scott Linebrink (Grade 8*) brings a mop to work everyday, but waiver wire pickup Kevin Jepsen and former closer Hong-Chih Kuo (both Grade 1*) won't even get *that* close to games; they'll be serving cocktails to Wasp all year.

Offense: 11.0
Like pitching to Ted Williams.

When the Avengers win, it's often because the offense is superpowered. This year is no different. The team features not one, but two players with 12 hits: Ryan "Mr. Positive" Braun (1-0-0-0-0, 3 walks+22, L+3, 32 SSN for 39 attempts) and Adrian Gonzalez (1-5-6-6, 3 walks, L-8). The fun doesn't stop there. Alex Gordon (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks+22, L-4) is nearly their equal in his breakout year.



Before last season began, the Annual picked the Avengers to win their division and get to the World Series. But ya gotta play the games, right? They did and they won 123 games and the World Series. Melrose is a shadow of 2011 but will still win the Mantle easily.

Kevin "The Greek God of Walks" Youkilis (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 5 walks+42, L+7, R-5), rookie Eric Thames (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-8), Michael Cuddyer (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+7, R-5, 35 SSN for 12 attempts), and even Peter Bourjos (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, R-3, 28 SSN for 31 attempts) will all smack the ball around.

Table-setter Jimmy Rollins (10 hits, 3 walks, L-7, 30 SSN for 38 attempts) is a speed threat. Dan Uggla (1-5-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-5) and Russell Martin (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-3) add some power to a lineup that regularly features seven hitters with a first-column homer. It's like pitching to Ted Williams: throw it up there and hope he hits it at someone.

Defense: 7.0
Nowhere below average.

Welcome to the team, Alex Gordon. No longer a third baseman, he gives the Avengers a second OF3 to go along with Bourjos. Braun is only average, but all three play almost all year. In the infield, Rollins (SS9) and A-Gone (1B5) make everyone else better. Uggla (2B7), Youkilis (3B4) and Martin (C7, with a Th+1) are fine. In fact, nowhere can you find anyone below average at his position. Torrealba (C8 with the same arm as Martin) provides a solid backup and defensive replacement.

Bench: 3.0
A little of everything.

This bench has a little bit of everything, which is to say that they're not overloaded. Cuddyer is around to smash left-handed



Braun: Mr. Positive

pitching. David Murphy (10 hits, 3 walks, L-10), who'd be starting on a lesser club, can hit righties. Murphy and Alex Rios (9 hits, 2 walks, L+4) can pinch-run. Torrealba (10 hits, 2 walks, L-5) is also a very useful spare part. Todd Frazier (1-5-5, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+8, R-5) is waiting for his chance, and Justin Sellers (8 hits, 3 walks+22, L+7, R-5) is the team's UT.

Normally, a powerhouse team like Melrose would not need such an extensive bench: but Mr. Freedman is very adept in using it, and since several regulars have large negative shifts, the bench will help.

1st Defending a championship is never easy. Few teams in TBL have managed to repeat, but if the starting rotation can just keep the Avengers close in games, this offense will rarely be held in check. That translates to a lot of wins.

Yes, the Avengers will likely win the Mantle Division crown. Yes, the team will once again charge into the playoffs like the superheroes they are. Will they make it back to the World Series? Will they repeat? The T.Q.s say no – but as the Vegas Line notes, you gotta play the games. Betting against Melrose is unwise: we know how the comic book usually turns out.

 **MASTER PLAN:
MELROSE**

Before the charge to the league championship last year, harmony didn't reign in Melrose. It seems difficult to believe now, but the Melrose Avengers won only 70 games in 2010. Back then, the offense seemed suspect. Even A-Gone hit only .250.

Of course, we now know it was just a blip on the radar, as if every hitter had been exposed to kryptonite. Last year's squad was back at full strength. Not only did they bat .300 *as a team*,

they scored the eighth-most runs in league history. They had the third-best on-base percentage and the tenth-best slugging percentage. Back at full strength? They had a season for the ages.

The team will compete for the league championship again this year. Looking ahead, where will the team be? Mr. Freedman has already traded away his first-round pick in 2013, which may or not stop him from contending again that year. The oldest player on the roster is Jamey Wright at 37, but he's hardly a key player. Ryan Vogelsong (34) is next, and he still has lots of life left – depending on whether 2011 represented his true ability, or was just a Landrum Effect inspired mirage.

This isn't a team that will age all of a sudden, and there's no reason to think any of the stars will implode. This team is just beginning its run of dominance.

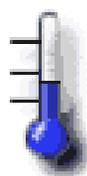
Mr. Freedman has three choices for the next few drafts: trade away picks to get aging pieces of cardboard, draft players to fill holes, or keep drafting good young players. His decisions will determine the length of the run.



Gordon: Welcome



melrose AVENGERS



TQ: 32.0

2011 hudson GENERALS in review



The team should rise in the standings like life insurance rates after an accident.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 63-99 (4th, Mantle)

2011 wasn't just a fall, it was a free fall. Going from 96 wins and a World Series appearance to 63 wins and a last-place finish was like winning the lottery and then getting struck by a car, which took all the money to fix the damage. Luckily, the core of the team hadn't changed – they were simply struck down by accident and injury.

The good news is that the team won't stay down long. Core players rebounded. A crop of youngsters from the draft will contribute immediately. As a result, the team should rise in the standings like insurance rates after an accident. In other words, the Generals are back to challenge league champion Melrose for supremacy in the Mantle Division.



Gregerson: More than half

What went right?

Luke Gregerson won 8 games and saved 27 more. That's more than half of the team's 63 wins. Trevor Cahill won 11 games with a sparkling 2.76 ERA. On offense, nine different hitters slugged double-digit homeruns, while Casey McGehee's 20 led the team. Rookie Ike Davis smacked 41 doubles and walked a team-leading 68 times.

What went wrong?

The team batting average was a measly .242, and no one, including the part-timers, hit more than Ryan Raburn's .278. Most were considerably south of that mark. No account of the 2011 Generals season would be complete without

mentioning David Huff's season. He started 24 games, managing a 2-14 record with an incredible 10.55 ERA. Let's say it again: incredible.

3 Things

1. *Hello, Mr. Bautista.* It cost a ton, but Hudson landed the premier home run hitter in the league. Sliding Jose Bautista into the middle of the order gives instant credibility to the team and makes the whole lineup better (except maybe the catcher spot). Deals of this nature don't come along very often.

Bautista changes the Generals' whole approach to the game. He also changes their present and future outlook: suddenly, they have a legitimate shot at returning to the World Series.

2. *Goodbye, Mr. Huff.* After the run to the World Series, the team needed to regroup. David Huff played a key role, taking 24 starts while taking a beating. The result? Being awarded the fourth pick in the draft. Goodbye, Mr. Huff, and thanks for all the fish.

3. *Rebuilding the pitching staff.* From its powerful draft position, the team was able to rebuild the pitching staff quickly. The team selected Brandon Beachy, Henderson Alvarez, and a bunch of top-end relievers. The Bautista deal also netted Ivan Nova, which deepened the team's starting pitching.

HUDSON GENERALS

Clay Beard (28th year); Hall of Famer

From conference champs to 60 games back is a drop off a precipitous cliff.



You don't get to be a Hall of Fame manager in TBL without picking up a few things along the way. Mr. Beard knew going into 2011 that his team likely wouldn't repeat as National Conference champions. But damn, he probably didn't expect a 99-loss campaign either.

Granted, the division winner (and eventual TBL champion) Melrose Avengers came within a hair of tying the TBL record for wins in a season, but for Hudson to go from conference champs to 60 games back is a drop off a precipitous cliff. Luckily for us all, the Generals know how to bounce.

How high they'll bounce back in 2012 will be determined by a solid if unspectacular pitching staff largely because they will simply crush the ball on offense. It's not the best offense in the National Conference—it's not even the best, on paper, in the Mantle Division—but it features a lineup that focuses on power instead of speed, which is itself noteworthy given that speed has been the traditional Hudson weapon.

Pitching: 9.5
Fine at the top.

ROTATION. World order has been restored, as Tim Lincecum (Grade 14, C-24 HR+25) has returned to his rightful place atop the Generals rotation. "The Freak" won a career low 7 games in 2011. We at the *Annual* will take odds that that won't happen this year.



Lincecum: The Freak returns

After Lincecum's 33 starts, the Generals' rotation is loaded

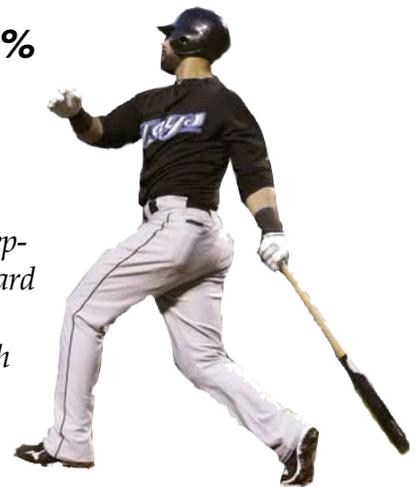
Arrived: Henderson Alvarez, Jose Bautista, Brandon Beachy, Javy Guerra, Jon Rauch, Gerald Laird, D.J. Lemahieu, Joe Nathan, Ivan Nova, Vinnie Pestano, Josh Spence

Departed: Luis Atilano, John Hester, David Huff, Shawn Kelley, Jai Miller, Logan Morrison, Guillermo Mota, Jordan Norberto, Fernando Rodney, J.R. Towles, Ramon Troncoso

Turnover Rate: 28%

SNT:
Jose Bautista

Hudson won the sweepstakes for a monster card that had no future on the rebuilding Munich roster. He fits right in the middle of a powerful lineup.



with potential, but only average grades. Ivan Nova (Grade 10 HR+24) arrived via trade, while Brandon Beachy (Grade 10) and Henderson Alvarez (Grade 9 C+43) came through the draft. Last year's ace, Trevor Cahill (Grade 8 C-23 HR+21), returns in a more pedestrian role. These starters cover 129 starts.

Edwin Jackson (Grade 7 HR+23) takes most of the remaining starts, with Phil Coke (Grade 5 HR+43) making a couple cameos. There's nothing wrong with Lincecum at the top, but the rest of the staff will struggle with consistency. This is the type of rotation that would benefit from a deep and talented bullpen.

BULLPEN. As with the rotation, the bullpen is excellent at the top end. Vinnie "The Sex



HUDSON GENERALS

Machine" Pestano (Grade 19* HR+22) and newcomer Josh Spence (Grade 24* C-55 HR+24) share closing duties. Pestano earned his nickname with his strikeout letters: "KY." These two have over 95 innings between them to preserve leads.

The set-up crew is a bit thin, though. Rookie Javy Guerra (Grade 15* C-23 HR+42) has fewer than 50 innings to work his magic. After him, Ed Mujica (Grade 12* C+43) is the best of the lot. Luke Gregerson (Grade 10* HR+45) and Ryan Webb (Grade 10* HR+43) are virtually identical. Rafael Perez (Grade 11* HR+51) is The Good Lefty. These four bring the relief total to almost 384 innings.

Joe Nathan (Grade 9* HR-23), Phil Coke (Grade 8*), and waiver pick Jon Rauch (Grade 6* C+22 HR-36) fill out the bullpen. Waiver draftee Cory Gearrin (Grade 1* C-34 HR+62) will

probably sit this one out. Where is Guillermo Mota when you need him? While they have a solid top end, this bullpen is short on both grades and innings. They'll need luck and judicious use of the bullpen arms to succeed.

Offense: 10.0
That's power!

In case you were wondering which team ended up with Jose Bautista (1-1-5-6, 10 hits, 6 walks+22, L+3, R-3, 25 SSN for 13 attempts), it was the Hudson Generals. He leads a powerful offense that includes Pablo Sandoval (a great comeback to 1-5-5-6, 12 hits, 2 walks, L-10), Carlos Beltran (1-4-



Clay Beard and his Generals avoided 100 losses in 2011 by only one game. This year's edition is much improved on both offense and pitching-wise. A wild card berth could be the result.

6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks), Lucas Duda (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L-8), the best Nate Schierholtz ever (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L-9), and a brief appearance by Ike Davis (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 4 walks, L-19, R+8). That's power!



Sandoval: He's back

And that's not all. Lifetime General Todd "The Old Man" Helton (1-6-6, 11 hits, 4 walks, L-4) and Derek "The Other Old Man" Jeter (2 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, L+8 R-5, 28 SSN for 22 attempts) turned in great cards for a player of any age. Chris Heisey (1-1-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, L-11) and Ryan Raburn (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22) add some pop.

Two positions (second base and catcher) are less impressive. Eduardo Nunez (10 hits, 2 walks) at least has speed (30 SSN for 28 attempts), unlike Ramon Santiago (10 hits, 2 walks, L+5). Starting catcher Kurt Suzuki (9 hits, 3 walks) and backup Gerald Laird (9 hits, 2 walks+22) can't hit much, but at least they have average power. This team will hit for power, driving home the fact that this is not your traditional Generals team.

Defense: 7.0
Four exceptional: no soft spots.

Sandoval (3B5) is a master at the hot corner, though Bautista is only average (3B4) when he plays there. Santiago is a 2B8 when he plays. Helton and Davis are both 1B4s. And the catchers, despite their offensive shortcomings, are both C8s, although both have subpar arms. Jeter and Nunez are both average (SS8) at short, and Nunez is average when he plays second. The outfield features OF3s in Schierholtz and sub Rajai Davis. Everyone else is an OF2. Schierholtz and Heisey have above-average arms.

Overall, this is the defense of a contender because it lacks a weakness. While an SS9 on the bench would help, they are above average almost everywhere else.

Bench: 2.5
Some extra usage.

The bench holds the platoon partners, as well as useful Rajai Davis (3-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L+8, R-5, 29 SSN for 45 attempts), Jed Lowrie (10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+7, R-6), and lottery ticket D.J. LeMahieu (6, 10 hits, 1 walk).

There's some extra usage to play with, which will help; there are good righty-lefty splits for the board game; and Rajai Davis makes a great pinch runner. This bench can help win some games.

1st

Defending TBL champion Melrose is still the monster in the division, but don't count out the Generals. Their offense should click regardless of the opposing pitchers, which will keep them in the fight for a playoff berth and maybe even the division crown. But the real test will be how the pitching staff fares against deeper competition. If the starters after Lincecum and the relievers after Guerra pitch well, this team will win lots of games.



**MASTER PLAN:
HUDSON**

In 2010, the Generals rode a 96-win Wild Card team to the team's first World Series appearance since 1990. It was almost anti-climactic that they lost. In 2011, the team finished a franchise



Pestano: KY for relief.

worst 60 back of first-place Melrose. It was a fall from grace.

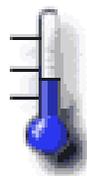


**HUDSON
GENERALS**

Hudson has been bouncing up and down the standings recently, but the Generals have been competitive (between 77 and 107 wins) from 1999 to 2010, which is a pretty impressive feat. Last year's measly 63 wins was the result either of a blowback from the effort it took to get to the 2010 World Series or a purposeful decline in a conference stacked against the club. In either case, it allowed the Generals to restock its pitching staff, as Mr. Beard selected Beachy, Pestano, Alvarez, and Spence in the first two rounds of the draft. All four pitchers will figure prominently this season.

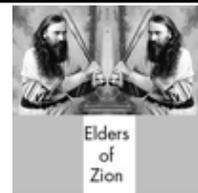
In 2012, the Generals are poised to fight for a return to the playoffs. The TQ says they'll make it. The staff at the *Annual* believe it too. Mr. Beard must sense it as well, since he's already traded his first-round pick in the 2013 draft (part of the payment for Bautista). Whether the team remains competitive in 2013 and beyond depends on the performance of the players on the field today, but there are many youngsters and lots of potential.

Beltran, Jeter, and Helton are the only key players at a vulnerable age (i.e., old), but incredibly, their replacements are already on the roster. That kind of planning ahead deserves reward, and we tend to think the Generals won't suffer another 63-win season for some time.



TQ: 28.0

2011 ELDERS of zion in review



Some folks will no doubt be happy to see the one-time dynasty scrambling to score runs.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 76-86 (2nd, Mantle)

I believe that the number of previous sub-.500 finishes by the Elders of Zion was once, and part way through that year, it was obvious that the drop-off was a bounce and not a free-fall. Not so this time: the sounds of defeat were accompanied by either the creak of old bones or the shuffling of MRI results. The karmic wheel finally rolled over the edge of the cliff and still seems to be descending.

Like many a non-contender, there were several solid campaigns turned in by Zion players. But the whole this time around was less than the sum of its parts. Long-time skipper Jesus MacFarlane's customary pre-season gloom was right on the money, so much so that he enters this last year of his current contract in considerable job insecurity. Some folks will no doubt be happy to see the one-time dynasty scrambling to score runs. But whether you're a fan or a nay-sayer, the odds are you're thinking less about this ballclub going forward into the new decade.

What went right?

A handful of Elders performed admirably. Adrian Beltre anchored the offense as expected. 208 hits, 63 (63!) doubles, 35 dingers, and 125 RBIs, plus a .338 average. God only knows why more teams didn't walk him more. Shin Soo Choo missed 30 games, but had 20 HRs and 91 runs scored with a .320 average. Part-time 1B Travis Hafner hit .282, albeit with little power.

On the pitching side, there were four performers of note. Scott Baker surprisingly led the staff with 16 wins, despite a 4.82 ERA. Mat Latos' year was more expected, as he went 15-11 with a solid 3.17 ERA and 211 Ks. Chris Perez had 29 saves and a 1.79 ERA, and rookie Kenley Jansen gave up only 7 hits (while walking 17) in 27 innings.

What went wrong?

Unfortunately, a handful of guys is far short of a 25 man roster. The rest of the ballclub spent the year washing up alongside the riverbank like flotsam. No other position player hit better than .246, and the team as a whole hit .250. Since it's difficult to steal first, the team managed only 65 SB, the lowest in many years. Some of the bats achieved remarkable levels of futility (Aaron Hill, .196; Garrett Jones, .206 in 500 AB.)



Beltre: Anchored the offense

Over at the mound, Anibal Sanchez stayed healthy, but lost 17 games. Mike Pelfrey (12-15, 4.18) and Chris Volstad (9-12, 5.29) were as mediocre as expected. Although most of the middle relievers performed decently, Leo Nunez (2-4, 4.62) was a disappointment, and by year's end was revealed to be a man living under a false identity. By the end of this year, perhaps others will be looking for new names in witness protection.

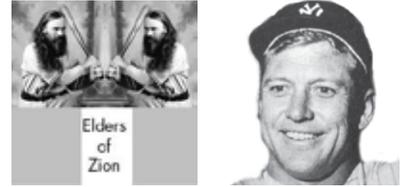
3 Things

1. *At least they're young.* As noted above, most of the old guard has shuffled off this mortal coil, and new bodies are in their place. We're excited by the prospect of seeing Jesus Montero behind the plate, and of whatever new face will join him from early in the next draft.
2. *Unfortunately, many are injured:* A lot of this roster has already missed time in 2012, and we're only a quarter of the way in. Three starters are out for the year (Baker, Pelfrey, de la Rosa) with no replacements in place. The bullpen is off to a good start, but to make this work a year from now we'd probably need 800 IP rather than 400. And the poster child for what has gone wrong (Grady Sizemore) continues his third year of missed time and lost skills.
3. *Patience? What's that?:* This organization has never had to talk much about looking to the future, or building up the prospects down on the farm. But this tunnel looks to be long, and very, very dark . . .

ELDERS of zion

Rich Meyer (28th year)

The plan is really simple: get younger, get more talented.



The year 2012 will mark the tenth anniversary of Rich Meyer's last TBL World Series win – the seventh in a career that will certainly be recognized with enshrinement in the TBL Hall of Fame in the near future. In the last decade, Rich has played in only one World Series: that was in 2003, when he lost to a very good Brobdingnag Barbarians club. Just to give you an idea of how long ago that was, Cory Lidle won 17 games for Zion that year.

So, it's been a while, and according to Rich's instructions, it will be a while longer before the next Zion title run. The 2012 Elders are young – 25 of the 35 players on the roster are 30 or younger. Rich grabbed Jesus Montero and Rubby De La Rosa – both 22 years old this year – in the 2012 draft. De La Rosa is coming off Tommy John surgery, and will not contribute to the Elders in 2013. This is a major rebuilding effort.

Pitching: **8.5**
Work in progress.

Rich has been hammering away at this unit for a number of years now. The names are terrific, but the dominant performances have been missing for the most part. All the potential is still there, though. The starting unit is led by two guys who have been rock solid for a few years now. Matt Latos (Grade 11 HR+16, 31 starts) is one of those Guys We All Want – a hard-throwing, durable top of the rotation beast who won 15 games for Rich last year. Latos gets help from the quietly reliable Scott Baker (Grade 11 C+24, 21 starts), and Anibel Sanchez (Grade 9 C+13, 32 starts), who is beginning to meet high expectations now that he is a few years removed from his last arm surgery.

ROTATION. Newcomer Rubby De La Rosa (Grade 12 C-46, 10 starts) helps out here for a couple of months before going into the cryogenic chamber



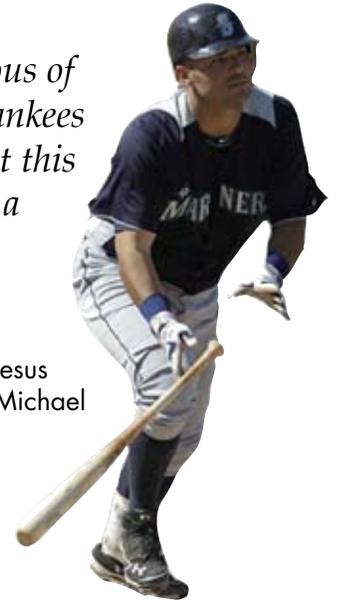
Latos: Guy We All Want

SNT: Jesus Montero

We are always suspicious of any hot prospect the Yankees are willing to trade, but this time they may have let a blue chipper get away.

Arrived: Rubby De La Rosa, Craig Gentry, Jake McGee, Jesus Montero, Fernando Rodney, Michael Stutes, Tony Watson

Departed: Jeremy Bonderman, Octavio Dotel, John Ely, Conor Jackson, Felipe Lopez, Jon Rauch, Danny Worth



Turnover Rate: 20%

for a season or so. These four give Zion 94 starts to compete before the real work begins. For the other 68 starts, Rich will staple guys like Mike Pelfrey (Grade 4, 33 starts), Chris Volstad (Grade 3 C+21 HR-21, 29 starts) and holdover Jason Marquis (Grade 4 HR+22, 23 starts) to the mound. These guys are accompanied by the instruction that all starters are to go 5 innings unless pounded out. Pounded they will be.

No one is more aware than Richard Meyer that this is not what a championship rotation looks like. Zion will struggle to keep pace for about half the season, and their lack of a top-end big grade starter is glaring.

BULLPEN. The good news is there are two terrific closer grades. Kenley Jansen (Grade 21* C-55 HR+33, 53 IP) blew away everyone for the Dodgers last year – 96 strikeouts in 53 innings,



ELDERS of zion

people! - and shows up as a 25 year old building block for the Zion bullpen for years to come. On the far end of the age spectrum is 37 year old Koji Uehara (Grade 20* C+42 HR-33, 65 innings).

This is an example of a guy who doesn't look like he belongs on a rebuild, but he'll make sure the eighth inning is pretty interesting for Rich in 2012.

The 7th inning will be the responsibility of two guys with modest grades. Chris Perez (Grade 14* C-24 HR+21, 59 IP) has emerged as a nice, consistent reliever since moving to Cleveland a couple of years ago. He had 29 saves for Zion last year, and will be the most reliable pitcher in this pen outside of the closers. Michael Stutes (Grade 13* HR-35 C-13,

62 IP) is also here when things are a little too sedate and the Elders are looking for a way to increase liquor sales at the stadium. The same can be said of Pittsburgh project



Jansen: Building block

Tony Watson (Grade 12* C-31 HR-23, 41 IP), who will see some time in middle relief.

Then, there are the guys whose job is to keep the game close if the weaker starters hold things together for five innings, or rescue those same starters on days when it all comes apart. Frankie Francisco (Grade 11* C-15, 50 IP), Leo Nunez (Grade 10* HR-15, 64 IP), and Blake Hawksworth (Grade 10* HR+15, 53 IP) combine for 167 innings. This may be a bit thin, given that 40 percent of the starts are by Grades 3 and 4. Rich acknowledged as much by grabbing Fernando Rodney (Grade 9* C-62 HR+53, 32 IP) from the waiver wire in April. The only other help beyond these guys is 28 innings of Jake McGee (Grade 7* C-23 HR-25).

Like Maracaibo's bullpen, if you are behind this club late, you will be in trouble. They can finish. The issue is going to be keeping games close in the middle innings against good clubs.

Offense: Outperforms last year.

7.0

Last year Zion struggled to score runs, plating only 699 for the season. The lineup consisted of Adrian Beltre, Shin-Soo Choo and a serviceable Travis Hafner, followed by a yawning abyss of toothpick swinging ineptitude. This year, the eyeball-scorching cardboard belongs once again to Adrian Beltre (1-1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, R-4, 124 games). In a season when power numbers are down around the league, this is a fantastic card that should dominate Zion's statistics all year.

There are two other solid power cards that should produce runs. Travis Hafner (1-5-6, 10 hits 3 walks, R+3, 94 games) is back for a good half season. An injury in 2008 diminished Hafner's power significantly, but Travis seems to have adjusted and is now a very effective part time player for Rich at the age of 35. Garrett Jones (1-0-0-0, 9 hits 4 walks, L-17 R+1) will sit against lefties, but will be in the lineup batting sixth most days. He is the regular DH this year.

The leadoff hitter is the electrifying Nyjer Morgan (3 0s, 11 hits 2 walks+42, 119 games, 19 speed number, 30 SSN for 17 SBA). The #2 hitter is shortstop Yunel Escobar (3 0s, 10 hits 4 walks, 2 7s), who was terrific for Toronto last year, bouncing back nicely from a down 2010. Bobby Abreu (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks, 31 SSN for 15 SBA, R+1) has produced excellent cards for Rich for a decade, and this one may be his last - he was waived by the Angels last week. He bats third for Zion in almost all lineups. Nick Hundley (1-0-0-0, 11 hits 2 walks, 82 games) is emerging as a very solid hitter at the catching slot, but there's only half a season here. Hundley is splits time with the low-watt John Jaso (3 0s, 8 hits 3 walks).

Most of the other starters are a little more 'Jaso' and a little less 'Hundley.' Aaron Hill (3 0s, 9 hits 2 walks, 2 31s, 35 SSN for 28 SBA) plays a lot of second for this team, but not because of his bat. Roger Bernadina (3 0s, 9 hits 2 walks, 33 SSN for 19 attempts, R+2) is the kind of guy that Rich always has



Beltre: Eyeball-scorching

in his lineups or on his bench – a guy with speed to burn who is just waiting for his bat to emerge. Jonathan Herrera (0, 9 hits 3 walks, 16 speed number) appears regularly in the lower parts of the lineup. Shin-Soo Choo (3 Os, 9 hits 3 walks + 42, 17 speed number, 85 games) has only got half a season to show off.

With a good bench behind it and a master of the game at the helm, this offense will outperform its anemic 2011 counterpart. The speed is a hallmark of Zion's approach.

Defense: 4.5
Average in some positions.

This is not an area of emphasis this year, as evidenced by the fact that Bobby Abreu (OF1, 35 arm) starts almost every day. (It could be worse – at least he can throw). They're good in spots. Aaron Hill (2B8) is a solid second baseman, which is why he's starting. Adrian Beltre (3B5) is as good with the leather as he is with the wood. Shin-Soo Choo (OF3, 37 arm) is a terrific defender when he's healthy.



Hundley: Throws a little

They're average in some positions. Escobar (SS8) will make a few and botch a few. Nyjer Morgan (OF2, 29 arm) will make some plays but he throws like a girl. Roger Bernadina (OF2, 35 arm) is a good defender. The catchers are both C7s – Nick Hundley (C7, Th+2) can throw a little, but John Jaso (C7, Th-4) cannot. The only real sore spots are left field and first base, where Garrett Jones (1B3) will wear his batting helmet, and his backup Allen Craig (1B2) is rated NC-17. Abreu patrols left, but Rich has Gary Gentry (OF3, 31 arm) and Franklin Gutierrez (OF3, 33 arm) on the bench waiting for the close and late situations.

This is a slightly above average defense overall. They won't embarrass themselves out there.



If anyone could make this team competitive it's the Sensei, but even he will be hard pressed to win with them. Only 7 of 20 positional players have more than 100 games and those with the most usage have crappy cards. Only Munich keeps them from the division basement.

Bench: 3.0
Work the matchups.



ELDERS of Zion

There is no lack of bench options. The monster hitting toy is here - Jesus Montero (1-1-6-6, 12 hits 3 walks+22, 69 at bats). Allen Craig (1-5-5-6, 11 hits 3 walks, 75 games) has almost half a season of a fabulous card. Craig Gentry (2 Os, 10 hits 2 walks+42, 35 SSN for 19 attempts) can pinch hit, run, and play terrific defense (OF3). Franklin Gutierrez (2 Os, 8 hits, 2 walks, 33 SSN for 15 attempts) is also a good defensive option with plus speed. Brian Roberts is a good defender at second base (2B8). Jonathan Herrera (0, 9 hits, 3 walks) is the backup shortstop and the sometimes DH. Grady Sizemore (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks+42, R+1) is around to get hit by pitches in clutch situations. There is plenty of everything here, and Mr. Meyer is one guy who knows how to work the matchups.



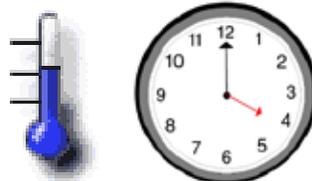
Hudson and Melrose will finish twenty games ahead of the Elders this year, but this is all part of the plan: get younger, wait for good health, and watch Montero turn into a monster.



**MASTER PLAN:
 ZION**

The plan is really simple: get younger, get more talented. There is a notion that the Sensei had hoped it would all come together by now – but there were bumps in the road (injuries to Sizemore and Roberts and Choo, disappointments in some of the pitchers). Still, Mr. Meyer is a long term planner like Mr. Auletta: his encyclopediac knowledge of the minor leagues, his skill at talent evaluation. His decisions are often based on all of that.

He's waiting, biding his time for a big push. The only question is which year it happens. Look out.



TQ: 21.5

2011 munich MARAUDERS in review



Not bad for an overall "meh" roster.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 71-91 (3rd, Mantle)

Munich's 71 wins were a tad short of the hoped-for 75, but still not bad for an overall "meh" roster. Early in the year, it seemed the Marauders might sneak into a wild-card playoff spot, but that proved to be a mirage as they stumbled down the stretch, going 19-43 from September through November. As rebuilding years go, it was one.

What went right?

Jose Bautista. The guy with the monster card set the tone for the team. Through the first half, Jose was having a truly epic season: .332/.443/.763 slash line, with 83 runs, 98 hits, 86 RBI, 20 doubles, 35 HR though 295 AB at the half-way mark. He carried Munich to a 41-39 record through 80 games. During the second half, Bautista's pace slowed to a purely mortal .248/.330/.489, 59 R, 78 hits, 52 RBI, 27 HR, and the team went 30-52 through those games. Bautista still easily qualified as the team MVP, finishing at: .289/.383/.605, 142 R, 176 hits, 138 RBI, 39-3-62 XBH's, 88 walks (NONE intentional, interestingly).



Bautista: Epic half season

What went wrong?

Starting pitching. Although the pitching staff as a whole nudged in just under a 5.00 ERA, every starter was well over that mark. Not surprisingly, none of them had a positive won-loss record, although Ricky Nolasco managed an even 9-9, while Derek Lowe and Brandon Morrow managed double-digit wins (11-16 and 10-14 respectively). The bullpen held up its end of things, led by J.J. Putz (25 saves,

2.36 ERA) and Brad Ziegler (1.34 ERA and 6 saves), but it wasn't enough. The offense, while not terrible (741 runs scored, .240/.314/.409 team slashline), was nowhere near good enough to make up for the holes the rotation dug. When Bautista couldn't maintain his personal momentum in the second half, the team foundered.

3 Things

- 1. Bye Bye Bautista.* After a long negotiation, GM Mays sent Jose Bautista (along with Ivan Nova) to Hudson in exchange for a package of young talent (Logan Morrison, an early draft pick that turned into Brett Lawrie, a first round pick in the 2013 draft, and a bonus pick that turned into Jose Altuve). The hope is that by continuing to get younger, the Marauders can contend by 2014 or so.
- 2. The Arms Race.* A key part of the rebuilding strategy was acquiring young pitching and hope it matured at the same pace as the lineup. Adding Walden, Sale, Rodriguez, and Brothers to the established Putz, Ziegler, and Janssen has yielded a deep and promising bullpen for 2012. If the young starters can turn their excellent raw skills into solid ERA's over the next year or so, Munich's staff could become very good. If not – there are always more draft picks . . .
- 3. The Questions of Spring.* Can Heyward and Posey come back? Can Morrison set aside off-field distractions and keep maturing as a hitter? Can Smoak or Rizzo avoid becoming "AAAA" players? Will someone emerge to claim second-base long-term? Will young starters mature or stagnate? Do the remaining 'oldsters' have anything left in the tank?

munich MARAUDERS

Paul Montague (29th year); Hall of Famer
Too bads.

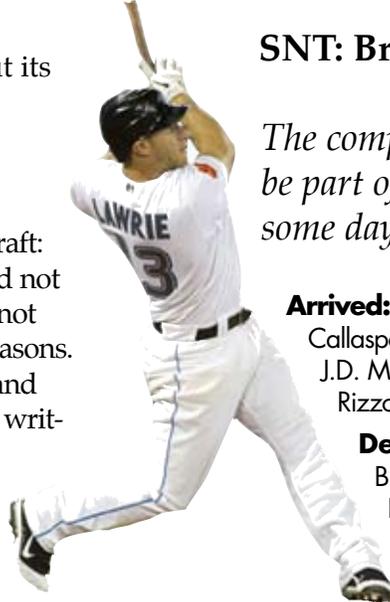


If there is a motto that could be applied to the Munich club – not just this year, but throughout its long history – is that *there is always a Plan B.*

Less than fifteen minutes after the start of the 2011 draft Mr. Montague, our senior statesman, made a deal to net both of the prizes from the top of the draft: Buster Posey and Jason Heyward. The future could not look brighter: Posey was 24 at the time, Heyward not quite 22, and both were coming off outstanding seasons. Heyward had burst on the scene with the Braves and looked to be a 5-tool kind of guy, the sort that gets written into the lineup for 15 years. Posey – he was a very solid hitter at a skill position. It cost a lot (and involved the Prince of Darkness, needless to say) – but who would say it wasn't worth it?

A year later, Heyward's .227-14-42 line and Posey's 45 games before the horrific injury that ended his season might dishearten others . . . but not here: not in Munich. There is always a Plan B Now it's 2012. Heyward and Posey didn't win a pennant for Munich anyway: they went 71-91 (Heyward hit .247 with 17 HR with a pretty good card; Posey hit .277 with 17 of his own; but the team hit .240 and had a 4.99 ERA; the won-loss record was predictable: the Stein predicted 69 wins.) Jose Bautista and his 62 homers have moved along; so has Ivan Nova. Does that suggest a deeper rebuild? Probably not: it's the same rebuild that was going on when Posey and Heyward were drafted. Had they had good years, then there might have been enough to build a contender. But they didn't . . . and they're still here, as they should be. Montague patience, when retooling, is significant. Instead, they – and the other young players on the roster, of which there are many – have been joined by even more: some riskier than others, but when all settled out, almost half of the players on Munich's roster had a birthdate of 1984 or later.

It could have been better, but there's a lot of young talent here. Some will have breakthrough performances; others will not. But there's much to build around. This could be a very good team a year from now.



SNT: Brett Lawrie

The complete package, who will be part of a dynamite lineup . . . some day.

Arrived: Jose Altuve, Rex Brothers, Alberto Callaspo, Chris Johnson, Brett Lawrie, J.D. Martinez, Logan Morrison, Anthony Rizzo, Trayvon Robinson, Zach Stewart

Departed: Jose Bautista, Milton Bradley, Wade Davis, Chris Dickerson, Jason Giambi, Rich Harden, Ivan Nova, David Purcey, Marcus Thames, Robbie Weinhardt

Turnover Rate: 40%

And if not, there's always Plan B.

Pitching: 5.5
Starters struggle; bullpen helps.

ROTATION. Optimism abounds. "I'd like to get 6 innings from my starters," the Munich instructions read. It *might* happen with the top two – Brandon Morrow (Grade 9 C-22 HR-21) and Joe Saunders (Grade 9 HR-22), the righty and lefty who lead the staff. They have 63 starts between them and are in the rotation all year; the HR ratings may be evidence of Munich management bringing in the fences for Jose Bautista. (*Psst: He's not on the roster anymore. Just saying.*)

The next step down is the half season of former ace Edinson Volquez, the sort of high-risk, high-reward pitcher that Munich adds when the team is in contending mode (and often suffers with for years afterward. He will have 20 fun-filled starts (Grade 6 C-62 HR-26; usually a bad combination in TBL) that will likely not get to the sixth inning.



Munich MARAUDERS

That's only half a season: the remaining starters, who will likely give up runs in torrents. Derek Lowe is far from what he was, but does cover a full season (Grade 3 C-14 HR+24). The same can be said of lefty Jeff Francis (Grade 3 C+34 HR+13); and the Marauders are waiting for Ricky Nolasco (Grade 2 C+34) to return to his 2009 form, but in the meanwhile he'll be straining the bullpen. All in all, having no double-digit grade in the starting rotation, and half a season of starts that barely avoid giving up hits on 12s and 35s, are not the mark of a contender. This is likely not a surprise.

BULLPEN. Back to the instructions: "... but don't stretch [the starters] if the game is at all close, especially the grades 6 and below." The dependent clause will be exercised frequently. The good news is that there is a lot in the bullpen, and as it says here, there is no specific closer – it'll fall to whomever is on the mound when the game is on the line. The six pitchers have 360-plus innings, with grades that range from Grade 16* to Grade 12*, and all other than Chris Sale are right handed.



Putz: Vintage pic.

Sale has the best grade of the six (Grade 16* C-16 HR+21). Drafted as a short innings reliever last year, he thrived in MLB and turns in 71 solid innings. He and veteran J.J. Putz (Grade 16* C+25 HR+24, 58 innings) are the top choices for late game action. Casey Janssen (Grade 14* C+22 HR+45, 55 innings) has great peripherals; Jordan Walden (Grade 14* C-25 HR+41, 60 innings) is a little more scary, but meets the criterion of "throws really hard", as does Henry Rodriguez (Grade 12* C-62 HR+61, 65 innings). Veteran Brad Ziegler (Grade 13* C+14 HR+62) is a homer-stopper.

The pen will be most effective when used in waves: multiple relievers in a game, choosing the one best suited to the situation. All of them stop homers, some exceptionally so; and they all strike people out. This pen doesn't quite make it as a contender staff, but it's

surprisingly good for a rebuilding team. It will get lots of work in any game that Munich is competitive.

Offense: 5.0 Bautista-sized hole.

The card that attracts attention right out of the envelope belongs to star rookie Brett Lawrie (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 9 SBA with a 34 SSN) is someone you'd like to put in the lineup every day. Unfortunately there are only 43 games; he'll come up for the last quarter of the season. Most of the time, however, third base will be given over to Chris Johnson (3 0s, 10 hits). He looks a lot more like most of the lineup.



Pierzynski: Returns

A.J. Pierzynski returns as the starting catcher (3 0s, 11 hits, L+3 R-2), with Posey (2 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42) to back him up, primarily for defense. First base belongs to Justin Smoak, who is still learning (1-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks); Matt LaPorta (1-6-6, 9 hits, L-7) and Ty Wigginton (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+2) can also play the position but are needed elsewhere; LaPorta will DH much of the year, and Wigginton will be in the outfield. Alberto Callaspo (2 0s, 10 hits, 4 walks) is similarly out of position: he was a third baseman in 2011, but a second baseman before that and is a legacy 2B5; he can be spelled by Jason Donald (2 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks+42) early in the year and rookie Jose Altuve (0-6, 11 hits, L+5) later on. The infield is rounded out by speedy Erick Aybar (0-0-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 40 SBA with a 32 SSN), who will play almost every day.

In the outfield, in addition to Wigginton, it's mix and match. Heyward (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, 13 SBA with a 31 SSN) will get a lot of time out there, as will trade acquisition Logan Morrison (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22). Rookies J.D. Martinez (3 0s, 10 hits, L+15 R-7) and Trayvon Robinson (4 0s, 8 hits) have almost 100 games between them, and Ryan Spilborghs (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks) will provide some empty at-bats.

There is a Jose Bautista-sized hole in the offense, not to mention the decline in key performers from last year. On the other hand, there are draft picks that produced key players, along with players not on the roster in 2011. The team is young and in transition,



Even Monty's instructions say Munich will be lucky to win 70 games in 2012 and that would be optimistic. Seriously tight player usages (lots of 2B5s) along with mediocre pitching means they will challenge Blue Hill for the No. 1 pick in the 2013 draft.

has some speed and at least modest power, and the lineup and platoons reinforce that: some complete innings will be non-productive.

Defense: 4.0
Too many constraints to be helpful.

There are some problems with a defense that has a 2B5 (Callaspo) playig regularly. With Donald (2B8, 3B4) or Altuve (2B8) in the game it's much better. Aybar (SS9), by comparison, is rock solid. At the infield corners, it's no better than average: all of the first basemen are 1B3s, and all of the third basemen are 3B3s except Callaspo (3B4) and Donald. Behind the plate, Pierzynski (C7, Th-3) is the regular; Posey (C8 Th+2) will replace him defensively after three plate appearances.

The outfield will feature too many OF1s: Wigginton and Morrison (both OF1, 30 arm) as well as Robinson (OF1, 33 arm) will be out there dropping flies; Ryan Spilborghs (OF2, 31 arm) and J.D. Martinez (OF2, 30 arm) are mediocre; Jason Hayward (OF2, 34 arm) is somewhat better. There are no other substitutions on the bench other than those listed above, and usage constraints may make it even less possible to help the defense when Munich is in the lead.

Bench: 2.0
Not in the game, not getting into it.

The best use of the bench is to do defensive substitutions. Most of the positions with more than one occupant share by games or at-bats, meaning that the player not in the game won't be getting into it. The remaining roster spots have players that do next to nothing. Rookie Anthony Rizzo (1B3, 3 0s, 5 hits, 5 hits+42) and veteran Brandon Inge (3B5, 7 hits) has a good glove, but it isn't enough to get him into the lineup.



It's not as good as Zion, and Hudson and Melrose are built to contend. This in neither due to oversight nor misconception. Paul Montague knows what he has; he also knows what he doesn't have. He has

youth and promise on his side; Munich is hoping for 70 wins, which might be a bit of a reach – but this isn't a terrible team. There are a few 11-hit cards, a few four-power cards, and a good bullpen.



It has Paul Montague – and it has Plan B.

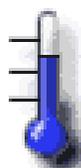


MASTER PLAN: MUNICH

Mr. Paul has been playing table top baseball for a long time, and he plays in a serious competitive league called MAX – in which managers must pay salaries, deal with contracts, build farm systems and participate in a college draft. We think we're serious baseball cognoscenti: but we are mostly *amateurs* compared to MAX managers. This frees the mind from the mundane consideration of simple cards, and it adds a sense of perspective when it comes to watching a hundred at-bats of some unknown rookie. It also tends to cause fascination with the AA second baseman who's two years away who will overrun the 27-year-old good card in the current draft. In short, it leads to long-term thinking, even more than the sort in which the Prince of Darkness has trained us all to think.

Yet this can be illusory. Sometimes the chase for the next crop of players leads to some short term stall. Munich wants to build a dynasty from the ground up – like the teams of the mid-1990s. The problem is that there haven't been that many stretches like that. They've been great at times. But sustained, many-year contention? Not part of the Munich plan. They have always made a big play to win when they could, and laid low and used great skill in scouting and acquisition in between. Ultimately, that's because Paul – like all of us, I think – *wants to win*, and is willing to suffer in between. What is to be admired is the facility to change gears: win, rebuild, win, rebuild. The master plan involves being able to take advantage of both situations.

munich MARAUDERS



TQ: 15.5

Meet the New Boss

2011 Williams Division Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Richmond*	88	75	.540	—
Wakefield†	87	76	.534	1
Knoxville	64	98	.395	23½
Midwest	60	102	.370	27½

* Lost to Melrose in NC playoffs.
† Lost one-game playoff to Richmond.

There is no need to rehash the most exciting season-ending game in recent TBL history. Unlike many such clashes, it was all on the line in Game 163: it wasn't about playoff position – one team got to go to the post-season, one team got to go play golf. As it turned out the other team was out on the links a few holes behind, as the winner was overrun by the eventual champion. But that was still ahead at the time.

So here we are again. *Glenn Taylor's Wakefield Wizards* appear to have the advantage,



at least as the TQ numbers indicate, going into the season. If past history is any indicator the *Annual's* prognostications are sometimes accurate and other times of no use whatsoever, like any good newspaper astrologer. But we think they have a slight edge. It may yet come down to another Game 163.

Bruce Taylor and his **Richmond Rebels** might well hope so, as they came out ahead in the game last year against his brother. It's hard to count out any lineup with Pujols and Hamilton in the middle of it, and they have friends, and Melrose isn't quite what they were. But they need to get past Wakefield before even considering the next step. Still, they've got game.



So do the Guru's boys, after a trip to the cellar. As usual, the team has some pitching, and as usual, *Darrell Skogen* is more than willing to play the small-ball game to squeeze wins out of his

Midwest Mongrels in what looks to be a tight pennant race. But it's hard to tell if he's coming or going: David Wright, once the centerpiece of the offense, has left the building . . . which at least hints at planning for the future. Is he hedging his bets?

Down at the bottom of the Williams, the **Knoxville Outlaws** are rebuilding again. Here the new boss *is* the same as the old boss: *Pat Martin* is trying once more to reconstruct a winning formula for a team that has done this many times before. From the point of view of the *Annual*, it's not the need for a rebuild – that's clearly there – it's how often he's had to do it, and how briefly the club remains competitive in between. It seems like a cycle that Mr. Martin would do well to try and break.



Williams Division

1. Wakefield	29.0
2. Richmond	27.0
3. Midwest	26.0
4. Knoxville	16.5

Robinson Cano,
Wakefield

2011 wakefield WIZARDS in review



It's true the Wizards probably wouldn't have fared any better against Melrose, but it would have been something.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 87-76 (2nd, Williams)

The team gave its all, but even after acquiring Casey McGehee during the mid-season trading period, the Wizards could not win that one last game it needed to win to make it into the playoffs. It was an exciting race. It was a rollercoaster ride. It was 163 games of fun. And then it was all over.

It's true the Wizards probably wouldn't have fared any better against Melrose, but it would have been *something*, some reward for all the effort the team put in, a little experience to get under the belt, because next year, the Wizards *will* get into the playoffs. In 2012, the team will not be denied.

What went right?

Once again, Robinson Cano led the team offensively. With a .310-33-108 slash line, he was an immense presence in the lineup, smacking 203 hits, including 46 doubles. No one else came close to that production, though Colby Rasmus hit 28 homers, and Derrek Lee hit 19 and also had 45 doubles. On the mound, Ricky Romero won 14 games and had 5 shutouts, 192 strikeouts, and a 3.07 ERA. Doug Fister won 13 and A.J. Burnett 11, with ERAs under 4.00 – always a challenge in TBL. Chad Durbin vultured 10 wins, and Sean Burnett saved 33 games with a terrific 2.11 ERA.

What went wrong?

Obviously, the team could not win that last game. Aside of that, the other big guns in the lineup – Vernon Wells and Colby Rasmus, who

had 22 and 28 homeruns respectively – batted .242 and .235. There also seemed to be a lack of team speed: the whole team stole only 25 bases, or as many as Shane Victorino stole all by himself. The back end of the rotation (such as Josh Beckett) and the bullpen (such as Fernando Salas) were awful.

3 Things

1. *Doin' it again.* The Wizards are back for more. The 2012 team look stronger than last year's over-performing team that almost, almost, *almost* made the playoffs. Good years from veteran players made the Wizards strong even before the draft, as Beckett, Romero, and Doug Fister all had strong years. Cano, Jhonny Peralta, and even Carlos Ruiz all turned in solid efforts.
2. *Making all the right moves.* The Wizards got what they needed. Picking up Kyle Kendrick strengthens the rotation. Really. Acquiring Raul Ibañez and Angel Pagan mean that Vernon Wells can start the year in the minors. That's got to help (look at his card).
3. *Taking rookies who help.* The draft filled in the remaining holes. Mark Trumbo has a tremendous card and equal potential. The rest of the draft (except for the very last pick) was spent restocking the bullpen, and the team got closer Fernando Salas the help he needed. This team is ready to rock.



Robinson Cano: Again

wakefield WIZARDS



Glenn Taylor (11th year)

We expect the sibling rivalry with the Richmond Rebels to continue.

Wow, was that an exciting end to the season or what? Even if you don't win it all, isn't that kind of excitement worth all the effort? Isn't that why we play the games?

We at the *Annual* expect this sibling rivalry with the Richmond Rebels to continue. The Tarot cards forecast another dogfight in the Williams Division, but this time, the TQs are tilted in the Wizards' favor. The difference maker is a superb pitching staff that will rival Midwest's.

The younger Mr. Taylor has built his team slowly. Until now. SNT Mark Trumbo is a good indication of the team's new focus: the future is *Now*. Furthermore, how Trumbo fares will also determine how the team does. He has power and lots of it, but his strikeout-to-walk ratio is 6-to-1. He's got to produce big hits (and not one of the 24s) at the most advantageous times.

Pitching: **13.0**
Worked out nicely.

ROTATION. What a difference a year makes. "Welcome back, Josh Beckett; we missed you." Beckett (Grade 15) and the continued development of Ricky Romero (Grade 15) give the Wizards a wicked one-two punch that will dominate during the season *and* in the playoffs, even though neither has great peripherals.

Last year's second-round draft pick Doug Fister (Grade 12 C+35 HR+36) matured faster than expected and more than ably backs up the two aces. Matt Harrison (Grade 10 HR+31) and Kyle "The Zombie" Kendrick (Grade 11 C+24) give the Wizards 138 solid starts. (Kendrick is back

from the dead, thus his nickname.) A.J. Burnett (Grade 7 C-32 HR-23), a relief caddy candidate, soaks up the remaining starts. The rotation is a team strength.

BULLPEN. Ideally, we like to see a Grade 18*+ reliever with big positive peripherals at the top end of a contender's bullpen, but Whitman proved last year you can go deep into the postseason with a Grade 17* closer (David Aardsma). This year's Wizards are going to test that theory with Fernando Salas (Grade 17*). With C+16 HR+0, his peripherals aren't strong, but at least they aren't negative.

Arrived: Luis Ayala, Danys Baez, Louis Coleman, Raul Ibanez, Kyle Kendrick, Jeff Mathis, Mike McCoy, Micah Owings, Angel Pagan, Justin Ruggiano, Mark Trumbo, Tom Wilhelmson

Departed: Danys Baez, Manny Delcarmen, Chad Durbin, Michael Kohn, J.D. Martin, Lastings Milledge, Jamie Moyer, Fernando Nieve, Vicente Padilla, Jordan Smith

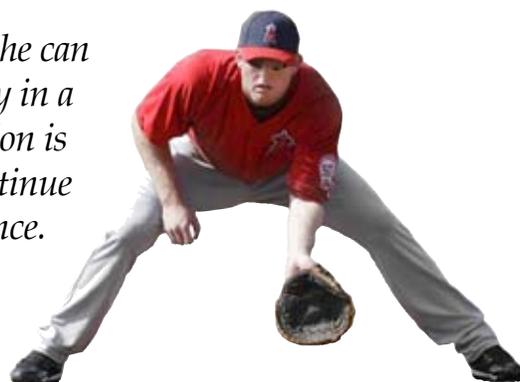
Turnover Rate: 34%

SNT: Mike Trumbo

There's no doubt he can hit enough to stay in a lineup; the question is whether he'll continue to be given a chance. The Wizards assume that he will. We do too.



Beckett: Welcome back





wakefield WIZARDS

Salas is set up by Louis Coleman (Grade 16* HR-23), Luis Ayala (Grade 15*), and Tom Wilhelmsen (Grade 14* C-31 HR+34), all righties. They will need to pitch effectively for the Wizards to keep winning. All told, the Wizards have over 220 quality innings, which may be enough, given the quality of the rotation.

The middle men include Micah Owings (Grade 11* C-22), Esmerling Vasquez (Grade 9* C-21 HR+31), and Sean "The Lefty" Burnett (Grade 9*). They add about 150 innings. At the tail end of the bullpen are Marcos Mateo (Grade 7* C-36) and Jeff "Mr. Innocuous" Fulchino (Grade 4* C-52) for blowouts.

Higher grades, better peripherals, or more innings in the bullpen would certainly help, but it's the quality of the rotation that will carry this team into the playoffs. If Beckett and

Romero pitch as well as expected, the shortcomings, on paper, of the bullpen may not be a factor.

Offense: 7.5
Runners in motion.



Cano: Exceptional

On a team that will surely emphasize speed—almost everyone on the roster can run—there are three exceptional players: Robinson Cano (1-5-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+42, 31 SSN for 10 attempts), Trumbo (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 1 walk+22, 27 SSN for 13 attempts), and Jhonny Peralta (1-5-6, 11 hits,

3 walks). Two other players add some punch: Derrek Lee (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22) and Raul Ibañez (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-8). Of this bunch, only Ibañez has a significant shift penalty.

The other four bats in the lineup will get on base. The best of the bunch is Carlos Ruiz (10 hits, 3 walks+42). Angel Pagan (10 hits, 3 walks, 32 SSN for 39 attempts) and Elvis Andrus (10 hits, 3 walks, 29 SSN for 49 attempts) add great speed, while Marlon Byrd's decent card (10 hits, 2 walks+42) means there are no serious weaknesses in this lineup.

This offense should score runs in bunches when the hit-and-run is clicking and the power numbers come up regularly. Having runners in motion will also keep the team out of double plays. While the cognoscenti at the *Annual* believe Ibañez shouldn't be a #5 hitter, this offense has enough other talent to support the excellent starting pitching. They should win a lot of games.

Defense: 5.5
Solid infield; adventurous outfield.

What a shame: Andrus dropped to a SS8 and ruined a stellar infield defense. The Wizards still boast some highlights. Cano (2B8) and Lee (1B5) anchor an infield that also has Peralta (3B4) playing out of position, but not out of his depth. Ruiz (C9) is superb, although his Th-2 arm won't stop many base stealers. Paul Janish (SS9) is available off the bench to protect a late-inning lead.

The outfield, however, is unreliable. Pagan and Byrd (OF2) are at least average, although their arms are not exceptional. Trumbo (OF1) will be an adventure in right field, but he has the best arm of the bunch (33). Colby Rasmus (OF2, 34 arm) helps a little off the bench, as will Vernon Wells (OF3, 33 arm) when active.

The infield defense should gobble up most of the ground balls, and turning two will benefit



Wakefield lost the Williams title in Game 163 and then missed a wild card berth to Northboro by one game! But in 2012 the Wizards, led by a good offense and great starting pitching, could give both Richmond and Midwest a run for their money.

the pitchers. Anything hit to the outfield, however, won't be an automatic out. Outfield miscues also tend to put runners in scoring position, where they can run on the subpar arms.

Bench: 3.0
Strength in numbers.

When you need all the relievers you have, roster spots become an issue. The Wizards have nine carded players fighting for four bench spots. The early winners were Willie Bloomquist (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+3 R-3, 26 SSN for 30 attempts), Rasmus (8 hits, 3 walks), Mike McCoy (2 0s, 7 hits, 4 walks, L-4, 33 SSN for 14 attempts), and backup catcher Brian Schneider (2 0s, 7 hits, 3 walks+22, L-8). Waiver draft pick Justin Ruggiano (1-0-0, 10 hits, 1 walk, L-5) will likely see some time on the active roster. Other options include Wells (1-5-5, 8 hits, 1 walk, L+8 R-6, 27 SSN for 13 attempts), Janish (2 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+22), Casey McGehee (8 hits, 3 walks, L-10), Chris Coghlan (8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-19 R+5), and Jeff Mathis (0-0, 7 hits, 2 walks). Bloomquist looks like Ichiro by comparison, although Mathis can at least field (C8, Th+0).

1st The T.Q. puts them slightly ahead of Richmond, which means another fraternal cage match for the Williams Division crown in 2012. Can we all stand another down-to-the-wire pennant race? It could happen. The crystal ball in the *Annual's* office predicts Wakefield will ride their big bats and strong rotation into the post-season, where anything can happen, even in the strong National Conference.

 **MASTER PLAN:
WAKEFIELD**

After years of rebuilding, the Wakefield Wizards came of age, so to speak, in 2010. They finished second with 85 wins and although they didn't make the playoffs, they announced themselves to the league. Last year, they won 87 and tied for first

in the division, forcing an exciting one-game playoff, which they lost.



The plan for 2012 is for more excitement. Mr. Taylor is determined to win more games this year, capture the division crown outright, and finally storm into the playoffs. The team is still stocked with prospects and comeback players (remember Kendry Morales?), and with a few more good drafts and shrewd trades, they can stay competitive for the next two years as well.

One note of caution: *It doesn't get easier once you reach this level, Mr. Taylor.* Playing to win now means making moves you may regret later but help you now, when it matters. Obviously, this is stale advice, as the Wizards have already traded their second-round through fifth-round draft picks in the 2013 draft.

As Wakefield gears up to contend in this age of National Conference juggernauts, they will have to hope that not only their regulars continue to play well and avoid injury, but that the prospects and comeback players already on the roster can contribute as early as next season. If not, it might necessitate a dip in his future plans even more. This strategy can work for the short-term for anyone not named Dave Suter, but eventually, it will catch up with them.



Ruiz: Superb

wakefield WIZARDS



TQ: 29.0

2011 richmond REBELS in review



The true highlight of the season was the one-game playoff.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 88-75 (1st, Williams)

It was a strange year for the Rebels. After being picked to win the Williams Division, the team found itself chasing Wakefield for most of the season. We got off to a horrible start. When May was completed, Albert Pujols was batting .210 and there were other full-time starters who wished they were batting that well!

Some of the areas that were troublesome included: Michael Bourn who batted .206 for the season and only got over the .200 mark in November. This negated his SB threat and I ended up batting him 9th instead of leadoff as I had intended. Victorino had an off year with his batting average, but compensated by blasting out 25 HR.

The pitching staff had its share of disappointments but overall achieved results in keeping with expectations. The biggest area of frustration was not something that shows up statistically in our TBL stats, but it was the inability of the relief pitcher to get an out against the first batter he faced. Sometimes it was a hit that was surrendered but also equally frustrating were the base on ball that extended both innings and rallies.

What went right?

On a positive note, the things that went well were Josh Hamilton's team record setting .351 average. Coupling that with 49 doubles and 30 HR made for a fantastic offensive season. Five Rebels hit 20 or more HR with Kevin Kouzmanoff kicking in 26, good for third-highest on the team.



Hamilton: Record-setting.

Pujols rallied from a dreadful start to finish up with a .285 BA and a team leading 41 HR. Three starters hit double digit wins: Carmona with 19, Myers with 17, and a surprisingly successful 15-6 season from Vargas. Thornton had 30 saves to add to the effort. All in all the staff posted a very fine 3.60 ERA.

The true highlight of the season was the one game playoff – the “World Series” for Glenn and me. With the prospect of facing Melrose as a reward for winning the play-off game, this was the pinnacle of the season.

What went wrong?

Once the 18-2 November and the one-game playoff was over, the team bowed to Melrose. It could have been better, but the result was not unexpected.

3 Things

1. *Hang in there.* There are some problems with the team, but it should be competitive. There's no reason to build down.
2. *Weak, but developing.* The starting staff is weak for 2012, but Richmond management is hopeful that it will develop. Like the names, not the grades.
3. *The offense appears solid.* It's in place and will probably win some games by rescuing the staff throughout the season. The team is unlikely to be playoff bound, though . . . at least this year.

richmond REBELS

Bruce Taylor (15th year)

Last year's division champion also accomplished a little rebuilding too.



Wow, was that an exciting end to the season or what? Wait, we said that already (see Wakefield's writeup). The Rebels won the sibling rivalry last year for the right to be swept by the eventual league champion Melrose Avengers. But last year's division champion also accomplished a little rebuilding too, getting young players like Danny Espinosa and Wilson Ramos in the 2011 rookie draft.

As most TBL managers know, it ain't easy to win a division while rebuilding. It speaks to the strength of the Rebels: Josh Hamilton and Albert Pujols, who combined to hit 71 home runs. The team also featured three other hitters who hit 20+ homers, just so you know this wasn't a two-horse show. With a better offense this year, the Rebels will be right back in the mix for the division crown again. Recent editions of the Richmond team have won by clobbering opponents' pitching. However, their own pitching hasn't been that bad. Consider that Fausto "Roberto Hernandez" Carmona won 19 games last year as a Grade 10! Maybe we at the *Annual* have undervalued his current staff.

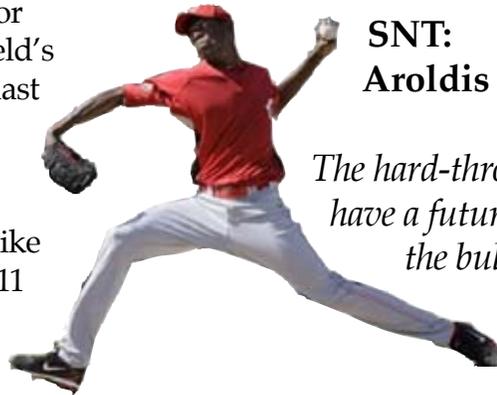
Then again, the 2012 team doesn't have a Grade 10 starter.

Pitching: **7.5**
They'll have to work hard.



Niemann: Bright spot (2012 ed.)

ROTATION. One thing you can say about the members of the 2012 Richmond rotation: they are consistent. The best of the lot is Jeff Niemann (Grade 9) while the worst are J.A. Happ



SNT:
Aroldis Chapman

The hard-throwing lefty might have a future in the rotation or in the bullpen; either way he's a terrific addition to the Rebel staff.

Arrived: Tony Campana, Aroldis Chapman, Chone Figgins, Brandon Gomes, Cristhian Martinez, Brent Morel, Charlie Morton, Yamaico Navarro, Jeff Niemann, Manny Parra, Matt Reynolds, Adam Russell, Everett Teaford

Departed: Andres Blanco, Bill Bray, Fausto Carmona, Francisco Cervelli, Jesus Flores, Armando Galarraga, Alberto Gonzalez, Sergio Mitre, Eric O'Flaherty, Sean O'Sullivan, Scott Olsen, Francisco Rodriguez, Michael Wuertz

Turnover Rate: 37%

(Grade 6 C-51) and Brett Myers (Grade 6 C+22 HR-22). All seven starters fall within that narrow range.

Following Niemann are lefties Jason Vargas (Grade 8) and Tom Gorzelanny (Grade 8 HR-22). Sophomore Jake Arrieta (Grade 8 C-44 HR-25) will get some northern exposure (since he's not a south-paw). Niemann, Vargas, Gorzelanny, and Arrieta combine for 92 starts. Happ, Myers, and Charlie Morton (Grade 7 C-31 HR+46) share the rest. This staff will not be confused with Wakefield's rotation and is one of the main reasons Wakefield is favored to win the Williams this year.

BULLPEN. With his first pick in the 2012 draft, Mr. Taylor jumped all over Aroldis Chapman (Grade 19* C-62 HR+43). He will serve as Richmond's closer this year, but could very



It took a 163rd game for Bruce Taylor's Rebels to beat back his brother's team and take the Williams Division crown in 2011. They were then promptly crushed by Melrose. In 2012 they will battle with Midwest for the division title.

well move into the rotation a few years down the road. The draft also provided the team's set-up crew. Cristhian Martinez (Grade 14* C+23), lefty Everett Teaford (Grade 14* HR-33), Brandon Gomes (Grade 13* C-34 HR+24), and Adam Russell (Grade 13* C-62 HR+35) will be pressed hard to protect late-inning leads. Meanwhile, Logan Ondrusek (Grade 12*), Matt Thornton (Grade 10* HR+42), Kevin Gregg (Grade 10* C-62), and rookie Matt "The Third Lefty" Reynolds (Grade 9* HR-42) can rescue starters from the fifth inning on. Burke Badenhop (Grade 6* HR+56) works the mop.

The bullpen should have enough innings, and the relievers complement the rotation nicely, which is good news. But they'll be worked hard all year long, especially in the heat of a pennant race. If manager Honus "I'm Still Dead" Wagner maintains a quick hook, the Rebels will stay in the race to the end.

Offense: 9.0
Best of the Williams.

Not surprisingly, the Rebels have the best offense of the Williams Division. Again. And



Pujols, Hamilton: Two studs

once again, we start with the two studs Everyone Wishes He Had: Albert "The Franchise" Pujols (1-1-6-0, 11 hits, 3 walks, 34 SSN for 10 attempts) and Josh Hamilton (1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-5, 34 SSN for 9 attempts). This is arguably the best 1-2 punch in TBL.

These two don't work in a vacuum. The next three bats would star on most other teams: Howie Kendrick (1-4-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 27 SSN for 20 attempts), Shane Victorino (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-4, 33 SSN for 22 attempts), and Brian McCann (1-5-5, 10 hits, 3 walks). As if that weren't enough, table-setters Michael Bourn (11 hits, 3 walks, L-6, 31 SSN for 75 attempts) and Gerardo Parra (11 hits, 2 walks, 35 SSN for 16 attempts) mean that the big bats won't often come up with bases empty. In case you hadn't noticed, in addition to the power, this team has plenty of speed. They will score a lot of runs.

Others who get to play are Alexei Ramirez (10 hits, 3 walks+22), Blake "Lefty Killer" DeWitt (10 hits, 2 walks, L+9), Kevin Kouzmanoff (9 hits, 2 walks+42), and Brent Morel (9 hits, 2 walks+22). The last three share third base, and it's the only real weakness in the lineup.

Defense: 7.0
Supreme in the pasture.

Let's start in the outfield, where four OF3s roam the pasture: Hamilton, Victorino, Parra, and Bourn. All but Bourn have above-average arms, so Bourn has been relegated to DH duty. That is pretty impressive.

The infield also has some highlights. Pujols (1B4) is only terrific (instead of outstanding), but both Kendrick and Danny Espinosa are 2B8s. Morel is the only 3B4, although one of the second basemen could play there as a 3B4 (and add a better bat to the lineup than any of the other third base options). Ramirez, McCann, and Ramos are merely average this year.

McCann's arm (-2) won't help, although Wilson Ramos' (+1) might.



Victorino: Impressive.

The outfield alone makes this a strong defense. The only weakness is at third base (if DeWitt or Kevin Kouzmanoff get a lot of playing time). While two key positions (shortstop and catcher) may make the easy plays look difficult, this is a team that won't hurt itself too much.

Bench: 3.5
Solid without Chone.

Ramos (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) and Espinosa (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+5, 29 SSN for 23 attempts) would be starting on other teams. Of the four remaining hitters on the roster, rookie Tony Campana (0, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6, 35 SSN for 26 attempts) and funky Tyler Greene (0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, 35 SSN for 11 attempts) are the most useful.

We expect that Yamaico Navarro (5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Chone Figgins (0-0, 7 hits, 2 walks) will be sitting this one out, waiting to deliver a return on Mr. Taylor's investment. Without them, this is a solid bench, with hitting options, fielding options, and lots of speed.

2nd The offense will keep this team in the Williams Division race all year, assuming the pitching is just good enough. It will be another interesting grudge match to watch, as the Rebels try to defend their division crown against a renewed onslaught by the boys from Wakefield. Midwest may have a say in it as well. Will the division come down to the wire again? Last year, the two teams needed 163 games to decide a winner. It could happen again.



MASTER PLAN: RICHMOND



Mr. Taylor has been bouncing around the standings for more than a few years: 75 wins in 2008, 95 in 2009, 69 in 2010, and 88 last year. Does that mean 2012 is supposed to be a down year? We think the offense is too good for that to happen, but it may mean the team isn't gearing up for a deep playoff run. Then again, the club didn't gear up for a playoff run last year, and the Rebels won the division (although just barely). Mr. Taylor noticed the behemoths in Melrose and Portland and decided that winning the division (which he almost didn't) would be enough, while taking building blocks for the future.

It worked. They won the division *and* added some youth and depth when it's time to pull out all the stops again. This year, the Rebels will be competitive, even if they miss the playoffs. They'll be competitive in 2013 and 2014, too, but we at the *Annual* believe the talent will come together slowly, over time, until – like a fine bottle of red wine – it ripens.

That's the key to the Richmond Rebels, in our humble opinion. Mr. Taylor is doing what he can to compete now while trying to put the pieces together for a future run deep into the playoffs. He still has the elusive World Series appearance in his sights; he's just going about it more deliberately now. We suspect he will continue this strategy for the next two years until he decides the team is ready. Then you'll see a much different approach at the draft.



TQ: 27.0

richmond REBELS

2011 midwest MONGRELS in review



This is still a building year.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 60-102 (4th, Williams)

2011 was a *good news-bad news* year for the Midwest Mongrels. The *good* – the boys won six more games than in 2010. The *bad* – 60 wins were only good enough for fourth place in the Williams Division. Guru cleaned house over the winter, and the Dawgs will do better in 2011 or more heads will roll!

What went right?

Some of the young talent on the roster came through as expected before the season began. Carlos Santana showed flashes of his ability, hitting .314 with 8 homers in limited play as a rookie. Adam Jones put together one of his better seasons (.294, 32 doubles, 24 HR). David Wright had the right stuff (.271, 35 2B, 38 HR, 100 RBI). Adam LaRoche had his typical season (.250, 39 2B, 30 HR, 87 RBI). Jeremy Hellickson, another rookie, flashed signs of greatness in limited play (3-1, 3.28), as did fellow rook Alex Sanabia (5-4, 3.35).

What went wrong?

Victor Martinez had an off season (.235, 31 doubles, 18 HR, 61 RBI). Jason Michaels provided power but no average in 90 games (20 HR, .224), and Trevor Crowe never got going (.212, 21 doubles in 463 AB). The big culprit was the team's pitching, which was an expected source of trouble after the Guru decided not to draft any relief help in what would be an obvious down year. Starters Ryan Dempster (8-10, 4.55), Homer Bailey (5-6, 5.05), and Brett Cecil (8-14, 5.12) were awful and paid for that by being sent off in winter trades

after the season ended. Kyle Farnsworth was the stopper, but had only 12 saves in 58 games. Bruce Chen worked long and poorly in relief all season, going 2-7, 3.99 in 135 innings in relief. Faring much more poorly were Jason Berken (1-8, 4.98), Dennys Reyes (0-2, 5.67), and Paul Maholm (0-1, 6.69), who also punched their tickets out of town. Ervin Santana (12-14, 5.18) and rookie Madison Bumgarner (3-12, 5.85) got to stay in anticipation that they will bounce back in 2011.

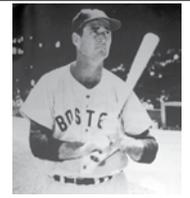


Jones: Better season

3 Things

1. *Much better starting pitching this year.* Bumgarner, Hellickson, and Santana return, while Jordan Zimmermann comes back from an injury year. Chen slides into the starting rotation, while new rookie Cory Luebke is expected to excel as a spot starter and quality reliever.
2. *Bullpen, bullpen, bullpen.* The Dawgs traded for Sean Marshall, Glen Perkins, and Brian Wilson, and drafted Greg Holland to close out games. Farnsworth is back as an 8th-inning option, and David Pauley moves from the rotation into the bullpen.
3. *Better offense.* Rookie Eric Hosmer is expected to take over first base for years to come. Darwin Barney and the platoon of Edgar Renteria and Mike Aviles at SS are upgrades in the middle infield, Ryan Roberts hopes to replace David Wright, with Jack Hannahan spells him on defense. Santana is the everyday catcher, and the Dawgs will have a patchwork to supplement Adam Jones in the outfield. Victor Martinez is the everyday DH. The team should contend in the division, but they might not be ready to play with the big boys in the playoffs. This is still a building year.

midwest MONGRELS



Darrell Skogen (11th year)

The Mongrels were successful, and got their ring, and now everyone wants pitching.

Our current commissioner won himself a World Series ring a few years ago, and with it he earned his nickname: *The Guru*, which apparently had been applied to him in another league at another time. We are never hesitant to apply nicknames where we believe they are warranted (*The Prince of Darkness, The Shift Doctor, The Sensei, The Zen Master*), but adulatory ones usually need to be earned. Indeed, the little-ball and pitching-heavy strategy was looked upon with some derision (not of course by this publication: we are ever fair-minded, even-handed and silver-tongued.)

Of course the Mongrels were successful, and got their ring, and now *everyone* wants pitching. Fortunately for the balance of the universe, we have not all gone in for extensive bunting. That strategy still resides most comfortably with the Guru, and we are pleased to refer to Mr. Skogen by his well-deserved nickname – though since that terrific 107-win championship season, the club has been closer to the bottom of the TBL barrel. So . . . whither Guru? It certainly looks better this year: there are some bats in the lineup, including prize rookie Eric Hosmer; there is lots of pitching; and there's no truly dominant team in the Williams Division.

They're back, they're competitive, and they're still bunting. But the Guru knows what he's doing. He's proved it, and he's built a team that should contend – even though some of the offense is more makeshift than other contenders.

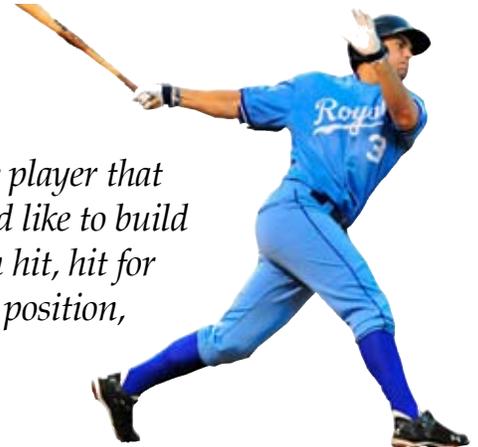
But he can always *bunt* his way to a pennant . . . *right?*

Pitching: 13.0
They pitch. No surprise.

As always, the pitching staff is a key part of a good Mongrel team. This edition is no exception. Aside from a stopgap bulk starter (Bruce Chen), the rotation is young and very talented; as for the bullpen – it's solid, though not as young. This part of the team should be successful in holding down some of the less-potent offensive opponents.

SNT: Eric Hosmer

The sort of core player that any team would like to build around. He can hit, hit for power, field his position, and even run.



Arrived: Sean Burroughs, Endy Chavez, Alex Cobb, Jack Hannahan, Greg Holland, Eric Hosmer, Aubrey Huff, Cory Luebke, Sean Marshall, Chris Parmelee, Xavier Paul, Glen Perkins, Rene Rivera, Ryan Roberts, Brian Wilson

Departed: Homer Bailey, Miguel Batista, Jason Berken, Alexi Casilla, Brett Cecil, Trevor Crowe, Ryan Dempster, Ross Detwiler, Paul Maholm, Nate McLouth, Jason Michaels, Carlos Monasterios, Dennys Reyes, Matt Tolbert, David Wright

Turnover Rate: 42%

ROTATION. In the lower half of 2011's first round, Midwest was able to spend a pick on Jeremy



Zimmerman: Back

Hellickson, yet another up-and-coming Tampa Bay starter. The bet paid off this year; Hellickson (Grade 15 C-15) is the ace of a very capable rotation (aside from the handful of Miguel Batista Grade 17 starts, which have already come and gone). He has 3½ close friends just behind him: Ervin Santana (Grade 12), Jordan Zimmerman, coming back after missing a year (Grade 10 C+33 HR+22), Madison Bumgarner (Grade 9 C+26 HR+36) and rookie lefty Cory Luebke



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(Grade 13 HR+13). Hellickson and his friends have 138 starts among them, though the last three pitchers have fairly low fatigue ratings, and the Guru warns that they may not get much past the fifth or sixth inning. Still, this is a commendable group of pitchers, and other than Santana at age 30, they're all quite young.

The balance of the starts will be covered by journeyman Bruce Chen (Grade 10 lefty) who bobbed to the surface again this year with a usable grade, and a few starts by rookie Alex Cobb (Grade 11 C-23 HR+35). They round out a very good rotation with no start lower than Grade 9.

BULLPEN. The strong rotation is supported by a capable bullpen. It's led by a rookie closer, Greg Holland (Grade 21* HR+36); he throws very hard (74 strikeouts in 60 innings, good enough for a Master Game 'K'). His supporting cast is led by righty Kyle Farnsworth, who returned to excellent form (Grade 16* C+31 HR+16). Cory Luebke is a Grade 17* when not starting. These three have 154 solid innings.



Holland: Hard thrower

The rest of the bullpen consists of a quartet of relievers, two lefties and two righties. The lefties are Sean Marshall (Grade 13* C+33 HR+61, 75 innings) and Glen Perkins

(Grade 13* C+15 HR+51), the token Twin on the roster. The righties are a little further down the food chain: David Pauley (Grade 12* C+23 HR+22, 74 innings) and Brian Wilson (Grade 12* C-62 HR+46, 55 innings).

The relief staff has good grades and peripherals. The only caution is the number of innings available. It will depend on how aggressive the Midwest manager is willing to be, particularly on days when the starters give up runs early.

Offense: 6.0
Winning 3-2.

The *Annual* staff traditionally begins its examination of a team with the analysis done at the draft. The lat-

ter is a less formal, less polite affair conducted by the Sensei himself, Rich Meyer; it's as much a part of our league weekend as the draft and the World Series. Every year, when preparing a team analysis, we do what is done at the draft: we lay out the cards, looking first for ones that we might not want to face with the game on the line.

While there are some good cards on the Midwest roster (certainly many more than last year's edition, as the Guru himself observes) there are none that reach the level of 'scary'. The best of the lot belongs to full-time DH Victor Martinez (0-6-6, 12 hits, 3 walks). The second column is most of a home run. Very good, but not scary. The best power resides with young catcher Carlos Santana (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 5 walks, L+7 R-6); the platoon shift and small number of hits keep him from being quite as scary either. Eric Hosmer (1-4-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, 2 10s, L-10 R+2, 16 SBA with a 27 SSN) has a fine card, but the two 10s and lefty shift will hinder his performance (aged Mark Kotsay platoons with him with a 10 hits, 3 walk one without the shift problem). Darwin Barney (2 0s, 11 hits, 11 SBA with a 31 SSN) and Ryan Roberts (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, 27 SBA with a 26 SSN) have useful cards that play every day; Adam Jones (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 16 SBA with a 29 SSN) as do half-time performers Mike Aviles (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+9 R-6, 18 SBA with a 30 SSN) and Endy Chavez (3 0s, 11 hits, 15 SBA with a 26 SSN). These cards share common features: many have speed; most have some power; few have high on-base percentage. They are players that can *continue* a rally, but may not be able to easily *start* one.

This is particularly true when the remaining semi-regulars play. Aviles has only 91 games; Edgar Renteria (0-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-3) has to fill the rest. Kotsay and trade acquisition Aubrey Huff (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) will fill games in the outfield, along with defensive specialist Carlos Gomez (1-4-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, 18 SBA with a 34 SSN – but, of course, you can't steal first base).



The Guru sure has fallen on hard times since his World Series victory in 2009, averaging a 57-105 record the last two seasons. But that won't be the case this season. A decent offense and great pitching will right the ship.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with the offense, especially if it is able to execute the running game. The little-ball approach helps here: Midwest instructions even give opportunities to execute the squeeze play, which is not a particularly good percentage choice in APBA. But the lack of power and walks makes it an offense better suited to winning 3-2 games . . . and even with the pitching staff, there may not be too many of them.

Defense: 4.5
Will keep the pitchers in the game.

The only true defensive strength for the Mongrels is in the outfield, where they can place three OF3s on some days (Jones, 33 arm; Chavez, 34 arm; and Gomez, 37 arm). Huff and Kotsay are both OF1s, which is a liability, but their bats are superior to Gomez and Chavez lacks a lot of games and doesn't hit lefties well. Kotsay is a 1B4 when in the lineup; Hosmer is only a 1B3. Barney and Aviles/Renteria are Fielding Two; Santana is a C7 with a Th-1 arm behind the plate, without help from Martinez (C6, Th-2); Rene Rivera, who will bat as rarely as possible, is a C8 (with a Th+3), but that's only an option when the club is ahead. There are also alternatives in Nick Punto (2B8) and Jack Hannahan (3B5).

Overall the defense is likely to keep the pitchers in the game, not making them work too hard. The defensive replacements on the bench will improve things when the team is leading, but otherwise it's just average, with no true problems other than the one outfield spot.

Bench: 2.5
Mixing and matching.

There'll be some mixing and matching in the line-ups, as detailed above, primarily due to the shift problems and lack of games. The bench has three defensive players: Hannahan (3B5, 3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks); Punto (2B8, SS8, 10 hits, 5 walks; if he had more than 63 games Edgar Renteria would probably be selling NutraLife, and Rene Rivera (C8, Th+3; the offensive potential is too horrible to contemplate).

In addition, they have hitting toy Chris Parmelee (88 plate appearances; 1-5-6-6, 12 hits, 5 walks of hitting goodness); he can pinch hit or start for a month. The draft also brought returned-from-the-grave Sean

Burroughs (2 0s, 11 hits), and the waivers brought Xavier Paul (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 22 SBA with a 28 SSN). The other bench guys have little to recommend them.



But it'll be close. We expect that the team will do well at home in the care of their manager – he knows how to get the most out of what he has.



**MASTER PLAN:
 MIDWEST**

A lot of our Skogen team building commentary has been no more or less than catching up with obvious punch lines, or wry observations wondering what he was doing. His first pick ever in TBL was 5 IP of Francisco Rodriguez; that proved to be mighty astute. Not long afterward, Darrell drafted David Wright; the *Annual* compared Wright to Ken Boyer (the comparison was judged as quite apt). Mr. Skogen knows his ballplayers, and knows his APBA. He may be forgiven for the wanting too many Twins; we've seen this before as well with Red Sox, Yankee and Giant fans. Hey, it happens; but it's better when the sought-after team is any good. The pickings are a tad slim, though obviously an accommodation has been made. But that is only a part of the Master Plan.

Midwest management is more than willing to look ahead a few years, sometimes with success and sometimes not; this is the nature of prognostication. Unlike Auletta, though, Skogen does have a certain amount of sentimentality for his players. But it's ultimately about building his team: good and reliable pitching speed and some little ball; and enough offense to keep it going. Say what you will about what works in TBL; tell it to someone who has a World Series ring. It may not be the most direct way to win a championship, but there's at least one data point that says it works. Don't expect that to change. Here's a chance to learn from the Guru.



TQ: 26.0

midwest MONGRELS

2011 Knoxville OUTLAWS in review



2011 was a year to endure.

2011 in Review

Final Record: 64-98 (3rd0 , Wil liams)

Another year, another bounce. After reaching 93 wins in 2010, the team bounced down to 64 in 2011. Does it ever get old? Well, the team gets to be competitive every two years or so, and then management gets to go fishing in the rookie draft. Still, while it's fun on both ends, it would be nice to be competitive for more than one year before the team has to bounce again.

2011 was a year to endure. The pitching staff was especially trying—not trying to improve, just trying: patience and incredulity, mostly. While there were a few bright spots on offense, it didn't—couldn't—make up for the pitching. Luckily, last year could be the low point of the bounce, meaning more wins and more fun in the coming years. That's the plan, anyway.

What went right?

Three hitters averaged better than .300, although only one (Justin Morneau) had more than 200 plate appearances. Jason Kubel slugged 22 homers, while Michael Cuddyer and Andrew McCutchen hit 18 each. Three players stole more than 20 bases, including 22 by Denard Span (who had a good all-around year with 9 triples and 11 homers). Matt Guerrier saved 25 before being traded in September. Dave Bush (who led the team with three shutouts) and Felipe Paulino somehow managed winning records.

What went wrong?

How about a 5.23 team ERA? Staff "ace" Mark Buehrle lost 21 games. Kyle Kendrick lost 19.

Four of the starters surrendered 30 or more homers. The two best relievers on the team were traded away midseason. Kubel, while slugging 22 homers, also batted an even .200. The best stat, however, has to be Ronnie Cedeno's: he committed almost as many errors (21) as he had RBI (24).

3 Things

1. *Preparing for a longer bounce.* This bounce may take a few years, as pitchers usually take longer to develop than hitters, and this draft brought a bunch of young pitchers into the fold. In fact, the team's first five picks were starting pitchers – a brand new rotation, eventually. Given last year's disappointment, that can only help.
2. *Taking the long view.* The core of the team is still young enough to survive a longer rebuild process. By the time the pitching staff matures (in other words, once they're old enough to legally drink), the team could be on the threshold of a long streak of winning seasons. That's the plan, anyway.
3. *Returning to health.* While the pitchers gain valuable experience, the offense must return to a semblance of health. Too many injuries to key players have derailed previous versions of the team. Now the team is buying some time so that all the nagging injuries can work themselves out, and the hitters can return to the level of performance they last enjoyed in 2010.



Span: All-around

knoxville OUTLAWS



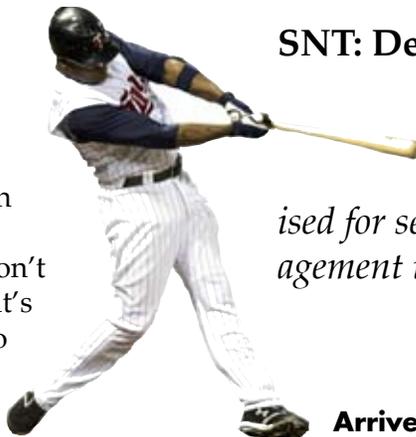
Pat Martin (26th year)

Then there's the whole Minnesota Twin players fetish. Okay, that's a problem; other than Skogen, most people don't make it a priority.

It's another long year ahead for the Knoxville club. Mr. Pat Martin, a very long time veteran of TBL, has admitted as much in his instructions, hoping for "a fun 2014" – confirming that he is under no illusions regarding the current talent on his team. It's clear (especially when looking over the pitching grades) that there won't be too many high points this season; and it's also clear that we've said that before . . . to exhaustion. The Williams Division has always been the last one described in the *Annual*, and more often than not, the Knoxville Outlaws have been the last team described in the division: Mr. Martin's club has simply not found much lasting traction, though there were two good years in 2008 and 2010, including a World Series appearance in the former year.

It begs the question about what the problem might be. Looking at the roster, there are three regular players that should be the core of a good team: Yadier Molina, Jose Reyes, and Andrew McCutchen. Where is the rest of the team? Some of the problem can be attributed to injuries, such as the ongoing problem with Justin Morneau; but every team has injuries. Sometimes people don't card out well, such as pitchers with superior control (Mark Buehrle) or who are speed-heavy and power-light, leading to the dreaded two 10s (Denard Span). But other teams face the same problems. And then there's the whole Minnesota Twin players fetish. Okay, that's a problem; other than Skogen, most people don't make it a priority. But it doesn't explain it.

Ultimately, the solution is *patience* – which, for Mr. Martin, is more of the same. This year's draft brought a metric ton of young pitching, none of which is going to be getting people out this season. If it comes together . . . and if the injuries don't cause a problem . . . and if the cards break right . . . and if there aren't too many Twins . . . then patience will be rewarded. Otherwise, see you here next year – same place, same result.



SNT: Delmon Young

Last season he displayed the ability that had been promised for several years. Knoxville management is betting that it's here to stay.

Arrived: Anthony Bass, Yuniesky Betancourt, Zach Britton, Brett Cecil, Francisco Cervelli, Enerio Del Rosario, Ross Detwiler, Kyle Drabek, Danny Duffy, Johnny Giavotella, Luke Hughes, Shawn Kelley, Jordan Lyles, Fernando Rodriguez, J.R. Towles, Delmon Young

Departed: Mark Buehrle, David Bush, Jorge Cantu, Michael Cuddyer, Sam Demel, Bill Hall, Kyle Kendrick, Gerald Laird, Joe Nathan, Jayson Nix, Ramon Pena, Glen Perkins, Mark Teahen, Brad Thomas

Turnover Rate: 40%

Pitching: 6.0
Young and, hopefully, talented.

There is a lot of fairly young pitching on this roster, which will mostly not be getting people out this season. The bullpen is better than the rotation, which is always helpful, but it's still far too thin; in games where the Outlaws are in a deep hole – and there'll be a number of those – innings will be eaten by bad grade pitchers.

ROTATION. The top starter on the roster is Luke Hochevar, who turned in an acceptable full season (Grade 8 C+13, 31 starts). Hochevar is a puzzle in MLB; sometimes he goes out and looks like an ace, and other times he looks like Jesse Jefferson. (Raise your hand if you recognize the name.) He is joined by lefty trade acquisitions Ross Detweiler (Grade 11



knoxville OUTLAWS

C+14, 10 starts) and Brett Cecil (Grade 8 HR-26, 20 starts). This is a little over a third of a season of pitchers who steal hits regularly. The next tier also isn't too bad. Rookie Zach Britton (Grade 7 C-23 HR+25) and sophomore Felipe Paulino (Grade 7 C-23 HR+15) provide Knoxville with 48 more competent starts.

The rest of the games will be started by guys who, as a rule, will not be stealing hits. Nick Blackburn returns (Grade 4) and is joined by two rookies: lefty Danny Duffy (Grade 4 C-42 HR-15) and righty Kyle Drabek (Grade 3 C-62). They are here because they were born in 1988 and 1987, respectively, and in the distant land of 2014, they're likely to be on the up-and-coming Outlaws; Nick Blackburn, Twin or not, will be sweeping up peanut shells somewhere.

Mr. Martin intimates that starters are to remain until pummeled out or fatigued.

If the team is in the game in the sixth inning, the bullpen can rescue it. He also observes that this is the youngest staff he's ever had – and that's true: Blackburn is 30, Hochevar 29, Paulino 28, but the rest are coming into their prime. If they (and Jordan Lyles, just turned 21 and thankfully no more than a mopup man this year) break right, they'll be a very nice staff. Big if, but we all live in hope.

BULLPEN. There's a rookie closer: Anthony Bass (Grade 18* C-36 HR+31, 48 innings). He'll be nice to turn to in the ninth inning (or to be dealt away in the trading period). He should perform well; the problem will be getting to him. The setup crew will be a hit or miss proposition. Southpaw Michael Dunn, who throws very hard, is a Grade 14* (with a C-45 HR-22; keep away from open flame). David



Hochevar: Your ace

Herndon does not and is not as good (Grade 11* HR-26; see warning above). Franklin Morales, designated as a middle man, is not as flammable or as wild (lefty Grade 12* C-26 HR-15); Matt Capps is not wild at all but will be somewhat vulnerable to the long ball (Grade 8* C+33 HR-22). Fernando Rodriguez (Grade 10* C-45) adds a few wild innings as well, and there are 18 relief innings for Paulino.

There are just short of 350 innings with the gentlemen listed above, leaving the remaining rescue to Enerio Del Rosario

(Grade 5* C-51 HR+36) and bulk starters Jordan Lyles (Grade 2) and Joe Blanton (Grade 1). This bullpen will help the starters – sometimes – but other than Bass, there will be days that it will make things worse.

Offense: **4.5** Three and out.

With pleasure, we begin with three fine cards. Jose Reyes is all-world, one of the best cards in the set (2-0-0-0, 12 hits, 2 walks, 46 SBA with a 33 SSN). From his arrival in June, he'll be the leadoff hitter and full-time DH all season (Ronny Cedeño is mediocre, as noted below, but is an SS9). Andrew McCutchen is a true power-speed man (1-4-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, 33 SBA with a 27 SSN). Yadier Molina turned in a great offensive year (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks).



Reyes: First column 2

The next tier of players is nowhere near as good, but is good enough to play some. Jason Kubel will play two thirds of a season with decent power (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks). Denard Span suffered a power outage of sorts, and didn't even steal many bases in his 70 games (3-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 7 SBA with a 33 SSN).

Michael Brantley is a decent fourth outfielder who will play two-thirds of the season, partially compensating for missing games from other players (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 18 SBA with a 28 SSN). Delmon Young doesn't run, but has a little power (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks).

Then there's the rest. Justin Morneau had a very rough 69 games and never got on track (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-



Everything that you need to know about the 2012 Outlaw can be gleaned from Pat Martin's standard instructions. Their pitchers are "young", their offense is stuck in a "black hole" and, with luck, they'll be having fun in 2014. Woo, boy!

13 R+5); Luke Hughes is, well, a Twin . . . and versatile (3 Os, 8 hits, 3 walks+22 – he can be mediocre or worse at three positions); Ronny Cedeño is there for defense (3 Os, 9 hits, 2 walks); Pedro Alvarez is there to occupy space (2 Os, 7 hits, 3 walks+22; the error number is on 25, which should be a sort of apocalypse signal of how bad the card is). Johnny Givatella has a decent card but only 46 games (3 Os, 10 hits); Francisco Cervelli has about the same (1-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, a few more steal attempts). The good hitters will hit, but may stand out from the rest of the lineup and be left on base a lot.

Defense: 4.0
A real mix.

The Outlaws have some excellent defensive players. Yadier Molina (C9, Th+2) does not have as strong an arm as in some past years, but is arguably among the best catchers in baseball. Ronny Cedeño is an SS9; in the outfield, Denard Span is a Fielding One player for half a season with an average arm (OF3, 31 arm); Andrew McCutchen is only an OF2, but his arm is superior (35). Justin Morneau (1B5) is top notch at first, though he won't get into too many games.

The rest of the defense is Fielding Two – or worse. Michael Brantley is an OF2, and there are average middle infielders (Yuniesky Betancourt and Reid Brignac are SS8s; Luke Hughes is a 2B7 and 1B3). But second base belongs to Givatella and Betancourt (2B6), with Hughes spending a lot of time at first; all of the third basemen are 3B3s; and the rest of the outfielders are OF1s.

It's a real mix, with some people basically out of position. Other than catcher and shortstop it's likely that there will be players extending innings that will already be too long.

Bench: 2.0
Best nine are in the lineup.

Missing games will impact flexibility, and the players who don't appear in the starting lineup are not very useful – Reid Brignac (1 O, 8 hits) and Ben Francisco (0-6, 9 hits, 4 walks). They can dodge the worst of the batting shifts, but there's no really good option. As the instructions say, the best nine are in the lineup.



Easily, due to the pitching and the number of empty at-bats in the lineup. There are no illusions out there in Brooklyn Park

– and it's also clear that this year's draft was a stepping stone toward a distant goal – a young contender. In the meanwhile, this will be a very long season.



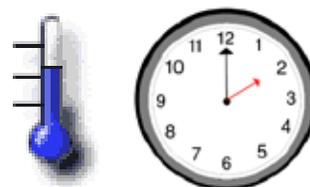
**MASTER PLAN:
 KNOXVILLE**

There are really only two basic master plans: build to contend, or break down to get younger. Knoxville is clearly trying to get younger, and its moves all facilitate that. The team has had to do this a number of times in its long history; sometimes this gives the club enough to pull together a winning season or two. Lather, rinse, repeat.

Why have there been so many rebuilds? Some of us here at the *Annual* remember the 111-win 1990 club, which ran into a buzzsaw from Hudson and spent three years rebuilding afterward. Was that team so fragile? Looking back at the roster, the answer is clearly *no* – it was taken apart after the disappointing outcome. And the 107-win World Series runner up a few years ago – was that destined for an immediate rebuild? Maybe yes, maybe no . . . but it was torn apart. It's clear that when Pat Martin is dissatisfied with the player mix, or the age of the components, or the level of competition, he disassembles the club and dives into the draft. It seems that Knoxville's Master Plan seems to be based on short term evaluations. Each change of tack is rapid and forceful; players and picks are either heavily sought after or rapidly made available. First come, first served. Pat Martin knows what he wants (at least *right now*) but it also seems as if the goal a year or two out is lost in the mist. The instructions say 2014; but does that mean that 2015 will be a contending year? What about 2016? Do they peak for a year, perhaps two, and then take it all apart? Sometimes we take pleasure where we can. Sometimes we go where the winds of fate push us. We're not sure whether the latter is what consistently happens out on the plains.



KNOXVILLE OUTLAWS



TQ: 16.5

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 J.P. Arencibia, Craig Kimbrel, Jeremy Hellickson, Wilson Ramos, Antonio Bastardo, Allen Craig, Kenley Jansen, Ivan Nova, and Chris Heisey.



1 Mike Trout, OF, Brobdingnag

The whole package: hits, hits for average, runs like the wind, hits for power, plays good defense. Yeah.



2 Jesus Montero, C, Zion

We're wary of prospects the Yankees trade away, but this guy is the real thing. Only question is whether he can be an everyday catcher.



3 Jason Kipnis, 2B, Columbus

A top-notch infield prospect with a good bat. Columbus will be writing his name into the lineup for years to come.



4 Henderson Alvarez, SP, Hudson

One of the youngest players in the 2012 draft, Alvarez has a dynamite arm. He'll look good in a Generals uniform.



5 Anthony Bass, SP, Knoxville

This year he's got a closer grade, but next year he'll be one of many young starters on the Knoxville staff.



6 Bryan LaHair, 1B-OF, New Westminster

Maybe Rizzo is a prospect; maybe he's an AAAA player. Meanwhile LaHair is hitting the snot out of the ball. That'll get you some more playing time.



7 Yonder Alonso, 1B-OF, Blue Hill

He doesn't have to worry about Joey Votto standing in his way. The best prospect on the Blue Hill roster.



8 Kyle Drabek, SP, Knoxville

Part of the flock of young Outlaw pitchers. He has some good bloodlines, and oh, yes, a pretty good fastball.



9 Felix Dubront, SP, Maracaibo

It's taken a little while for this to come about, but Maracaibo hopes to see him develop into a solid middle-of-the-rotation starter.



10 Pedro Strop, RP, Melrose

A little prone to wildness, Strop throws really hard. Just what Melrose needs: more pitching.

Honorable mention: Alexei Amerista, IF, Greater Ohio; Colin Balester, RP, Portland; Blake Beavan, SP, Kansas; Domonic Brown, OF, Kansas; Lorenzo Cain, OF, Maracaibo; Mike Carp, OF, Detroit; Lonnie Chisenhall, 3B, Brobdingnag; Alex Cobb, SP, Midwest; Fautino de los Santos, RP, Greater Ohio; Andy Dirks, OF, Greater Ohio; Danny Duffy, SP, Knoxville; Jarrod Dyson, OF, Gotham City; Nathan Eovaldi, SP, Grand Cayman; Johnny Givatella, 2B, Knoxville; Dee Gordon, SS, Dallas; Jesus Guzman, 1B, Detroit; Brad Hand, SP, Las Vegas; Jordan Lyles, SP, Knoxville; Jake McGee, RP, Zion; Mike Minor, SP, Hudson; Hector Noesi, SP, New Westminster; Carlos Peguero, OF, Las Vegas; Alex Presley, OF, Las Vegas; Josh Reddick, OF, Dallas; Anthony Rizzo, 1B, Munich; Chance Ruffin, RP, Columbus; Jerry Sands, OF, Brobdingnag; Kyle Seager, IF, Grand Cayman; Josh Spence, RP, Hudson; Chris Tillman, SP, Brobdingnag; Casper Wells, OF, Kansas.

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 all the top 10 and 18 of the 24 2011 first rounders in this section, so you be the judge. Thanks especially to Mark Bloom for preparing this list, and Ray Murphy for his help.



1 Bryce Harper, OF, Washington

He turns 20 in October and promises to be something special. If he keeps developing his strike zone judgment, watch out!



6 Devin Mesoraco, C, Cincinnati

While he hasn't shown it yet, he has a power bat. Once he settles into the majors, he should start hitting them out.



2 Yu Darvish, P, Texas

He's old for a super prospect at 26, but he projects to be an ace. He just needs to conquer his control problems.



7 Will Middlebrooks, 3B, Boston

Hard to believe this young man might move Kevin Youkilis out of the way, but he might be the real thing.



3 Matt Moore, P, Tampa Bay

He's a work in progress, but he might be the best southpaw since David Price. The Rays will give him the opportunity to develop.



8 Jacob Turner, P, Detroit

It's only a question of when, not if. This young righty may give the Tigers a tremendous 1-2 punch (with Verlander).



4 Yoenis Cespedes, OF, Oakland

Another foreign import, he has big-time power and speed. The A's expect a lot and invested a lot in this young man.



9 Wei-Yin Chen, P, Baltimore

This 26-year-old lefty has taken the majors by storm and is one of the reasons the Orioles are winning.



5 Julio Teheran, P, Atlanta

He was on our list last year, too, but needed more seasoning. He'll be back to the major leagues soon.



10 Zack Cozart, SS, Cincinnati

He's been given the starting job and will be given the opportunity that he has a major league bat. So far, so good.

Honorable mention: Norichika Aoki, OF, Milwaukee; Xavier Avery, OF, Baltimore; Trevor Bauer, P, Arizona; Brandon Belt, 1B/OF, San Francisco; Matt Carpenter, 1B, St. Louis; Steve Clevenger, C, Chicago (N); Ryan Cook, P, Oakland; Collin Cowgill, OF, Oakland; James Darnell, OF, San Diego; Randall Delgado, P, Atlanta; Scott Diamond, P, Minnesota; Rafael Dolis, P, Chicago (N); Brian Dozier, SS, Minnesota; Freddy Galvis, 2B, Philadelphia; Graham Godfrey, P, Oakland; Yan Gomes, C/3B, Toronto; Taylor Green, 3B, Milwaukee; Nick Hagadone, P, Cleveland; Lucas Harrell, P, Houston; Matt Harvey, P, New York (N); Liam Hendriks, P, Minnesota; Kelvin Herrera, P, Kansas City; Drew Hutchison, P, Toronto; Brett Jackson, OF, Chicago (N); Casey Kelly, P, San Diego; Ryan Lavarnway, C, Boston; Alex Liddi, 3B, Seattle; Steve Lombardozzi, 2B, Washington; Lucas Luetge, P, Seattle; Leonys Martin, OF, Texas; Zach McAllister, P, Cleveland; Wade Miley, P, Arizona; Jim Miller, P, Oakland; Shelby Miller, P, St. Louis; Tom Milone, P, Oakland; Wil Myers, OF, Kansas City; Mike Montgomery, P, Kansas City; Kirk Nieuwenhuis, OF, New York (N); Jordan Pacheco, 3B, Colorado; Jarrod Parker, P, Oakland; Tyler Pastornicky, SS, Atlanta; Troy Patton, P, Baltimore; Brad Peacock, P, Oakland; David Phelps, P, New York (A); Drew Pomeranz, P, Colorado; Addison Reed, P, Chicago (A); Wilin Rosario, C, Colorado; Hector Sanchez, C, San Francisco; Hector Santiago, P, Chicago (A); J.B. Shuck, OF, Houston; Chris Schwinden, P, New York (N); Tyler Skaggs, P, Arizona; Drew Smiley, P, Detroit; Brandon Snyder, OF/1B, Texas; Michael Taylor, OF, Oakland; Dale Thayer, P, San Diego; P.J. Walters, P, Minnesota; Kyle Weiland, P, Houston; Zack Wheeler, P, New York (N); Joe Wieland, P, San Diego; Alex White, P, Colorado.

would you continue to play . . . even if you knew you would never win?

by Mark Bloom



Now, after another dismal homestand, I've come to realize (at last) that the 2011 Grand Cayman Havens just aren't that good a team. They look good on paper. One opponent said – after taking 3 of 4 games – that he didn't understand how this team could lose. And that's been the story.

It's becoming frustrating to play the games, seeing the meager chances go by the boards for lack of a clutch hit. Then it actually became comical. I could see the patterns developing. A 1-out rally? This is where Matt Holliday (or Edwin Encarnacion or Neil Walker) hits into a DP. Bases loaded, 1 out, down by 1? This is where we get a medium fly to RF and the runner gets thrown out at home with 27 chances (on a 54 roll). Now, I'm resigned to it.

It's impossible to manage when there are no baserunners. It's easy to sit back and just roll the dice. 43, 26, 64 ... inning after inning. I know my team's cards have hits and walks on them, just like the opponent's cards. I know the hits are there. I just see them come up so rarely on dice rolls. Power? Oh yes, we're famous for the 2-out double or the solo homer down by 3. Fielding rolls are almost always high, and we weren't very good defensively to begin with. And don't get me started on the pitching rolls. I don't think Clay Buchholz (+36) has stolen a HR at home all year.

The sad thing is it will take a couple of years, at the very least, to recover from this pennant run. We picked Nelson Figueroa with a #3 last year to help contend. Worse, we took Chris Johnson (instead of, say, Craig Kimbrel or even Mitch Moreland) with a high #2 for the same reason. We may still hold on for the second wild card, and that's something, but as we drop closer to .500, it's clear this is not the team I thought it was. All I can hope for now is to hold off Houston (now only 3 games back), limp into the playoffs, and hope I get extremely lucky. It could still happen; there's still 2 months left.

Not everyone can win the World Series. We all know that. Only a handful of TBL managers have managed it. Those who have won multiple times have been placed, maybe even rightfully so, upon a pedestal of honor. We all acknowledge how utterly impossible it seems.

And yet, if you knew, if you were absolutely *certain*, that you would never win the World Series in this league, would you continue to play? It's not a rhetorical question, but one I asked myself as recently as this past September.

Back in July 2011, the Grand Cayman Havens experienced a horrendous month that "featured" four shutouts, three at home, none by a starter over Grade 7. In fact, I ended the month at home losing four straight to Knoxville. Their rotation? Dave Bush (Grade 6), Joe Blanton (4), Luke Hochevar (6), and Mark Buerhle (5). Then, in September, we went 7-12, including a 4-7 homestand against Greater Ohio (3-1, the loss to Grade 3 John Lannan), Gotham City (1-2, including a loss to Grade 3 Tim Wakefield), and Whitman (0-4). Our tenuous lead for the second Wild Card spot dropped to 3 games.

I couldn't believe it; no one else, I was certain, rolls dice this bad. How is it possible? I wrote the following e-mail to the league, but then thought better of it and did not hit the Send button. Let me reproduce it for you now:

"The State of the Havens"

At first I thought it was just bad luck, but luck can turn around eventually. Then I thought, maybe it's just bad dice, and while it's true that the dice *have* been especially cruel lately, the odds are against rolling 46, 32, and 21 forever. Just to be safe, I "purged" about 25 percent of my dice after July's 6-15 record.

I love this league. I love baseball. I simply realize now that in order for me to contend, I have to have a team like I had in 2008 – in other words, over-the-top in every respect. Even that year, we won more games on the road than at home. Even that year, we lost before we made it to the World Series, thanks in part to two home games without rolling an extra-base hit.

What are the odds? I ask myself that a lot. Every year, I have to overcome the dice/luck handicap that seems to dwell regardless where I locate the team (in case any of you were wondering the real reason for moving my teams so often). Well, thanks for listening.

Picking Up the Pieces

After I didn't send that e-mail, I decided that instead of rolling over, I'd do everything possible to get this team into the playoffs. I made a mid-season trade to acquire David DeJesus and Yorvit Torrealba, who both brought much better bats (and defense) than the players they replaced in the lineup. If we needed offense, maybe these guys could spark it.

After the trade, the Havens did make the playoffs as the second Wild Card, with a somewhat disappointing 87-win season. We took the Whitman River Rats to 7 games by winning two at Whitman. If a team wins two away games in a 7-game playoff series, you'd think they'd win the series. How did we lose? Not to take anything away from a fine Whitman team (and the job Brian did), but we lost the series in Game #4. Against Barry Enright, a mighty grade 10 +14/-41, we rolled exactly three hits: a double that became a solo homerun and two singles (one of which was stolen). Enright walked two (the second sent him to the showers) and struck out four in 5 2/3 innings. If he were a grade 5, we wouldn't have scored any more against him.

That was the pivotal game in the series. It put Whitman up 3 games to 1. (I've already written about rolling the "Game called because of rain" result one batter after pulling within a run in the 8th in that game – more of my "luck.")

Where Do I Go From Here?

Apparently, that's the kind of luck and dice rolling I have to look forward to next year and every year after that. I used to think that my luck had to turn at some point. I've tried new dice, old dice, different combinations. While I'd enjoy short spells where we scored a lot, we could never sustain it. Given this ever-present handicap, I now realize that it's going to be impossible for me to ever win a World Series in this league. Let Rich Meyer roll my dice, and the 2011 Grand Cayman Havens could have won over 100 games and maybe made it to the Series. With me rolling, the team barely made it over .500 (and that took a mid-season trade). *What are the odds?*

It impacts my psyche and plays havoc with my intellect. Maybe the league cognoscenti think little of my managerial skills, but I'll tell you this: you try managing a team to a win with a handful of scattered base runners. I can't think of more than a half dozen of my players ever over-performing. Ever. Hell, Matt Holliday hit .255 for me this year with an 11-hit card. *What are the odds?*

I almost quit the league earlier this year out of frustration, but I stuck it out. And I'll continue to stick it out. I love the league. I enjoy the games ... most of the time. Ironically, I enjoy it more when there's nothing riding on the outcome. And no – I don't win any more of those games than I normally do; I just don't get as emotionally invested in them.

So, to answer my own question: Yes, I'll continue to play even though I know I'll never win a TBL World Series. In fact, I'll go on record as saying the only way I'll ever win a World Series is if the game company gives me a player with a "1" on "52." I'll continue to play, I'll continue to build teams and roll the dice, but it'll be a while before I contend again, even if the cards say differently.



the rise of Rye

by Craig Musselman

Ed. Note: Since our theme this year is the Master Plan, readers should find this article interesting as a counterpoint to Mr. Bloom's comments on the curve balls that have come his way. Mr. Musselman is more self-effacing and modest than his evinced skill would indicate; what is depicted as turns of fortune suggest (as we have learned in the last few years) that he is a student of APBA and of baseball, a good trader, a smart manager, and an excellent judge of talent. This is his path from Dunn Loring to the World Series.

In 2005, a new TBL manager took over the Dunn Loring Iconoclasts, which had a roster bereft of pitching. After five years of mediocre performance as a team, resulting in mostly middle of the pack draft picks, the Rye Herons won the 2010 TBL World Series in a record-setting 14-1 playoff run. This was a new TBL manager who had ten years' experience drafting players in APBA computer leagues, and who had played APBA baseball for 45 years at that time, but who hadn't played competitively on the boards for nearly as long. It was also someone who was confounded by both the complexity and nuances of TBL, and who felt overwhelmed by the level of intelligence and baseball knowledge of the TBL general managers.

So, how did this 2010 success happen? That is a question that is of great interest to the author, and may, or may not, be of passing interest to other TBL managers.

The 2004 Dunn Loring roster had five players who contributed to the Rye Herons' 2010 championship – Chase Utley, Carlos Guillen, Omar Infante, Miguel Olivo and Miguel Batista. That is hardly, by any definition, the core of a future

championship team. That is Chase Utley, and four journeyman role players. So, again, how did this happen?

In the 2005 draft, Rye (then Portsmouth) had to choose all pitchers (10 of 11 picks) so that the team would have some pitching for the upcoming campaign. Zack Greinke was the cornerstone, and still is, after suffering through depression and growing pains in the coming years. The rest of the picks were flotsam and jetsam, predictable when drafting to fill a roster rather than to select talent. In 2006, Rye traded most of its draft picks in a futile effort to shore up its starting pitching, obtaining Noah Lowry and Jared Washburn, both now out of baseball. The Herons did obtain Torii Hunter by trade, which has worked out well. Rye is not the only team to have been fleeced willingly by the one the TBL managers call the "Prince of Darkness", as evidenced by a trade of *six* draft choices for LaTroy Hawkins and Jason LaRue, a trade which is now in the category of "*what must I have been thinking?*" So, through 2006, there's no evidence of any rising whatsoever. In two years, the team had added Greinke, Hunter and Hawkins.

Draft lightning struck in 2007. Jered Weaver fell to Rye at the #7 pick, and in the second round, Rye took future superstar Matt Kemp. Reliever Pat Neshek was taken in the bonus round, and Scott Feldman, was taken in the third round. Feldman, who was subsequently cut, and re-taken with a 2008 waiver selection, was a stalwart starting pitcher in 2010. In the fifth round, Nelson Cruz was taken! That draft filled out the core of a future championship.

The 2008 draft was non-descript. Rye picked

up Jesse Litsch and Jeff Keppinger, both of whom stuck, but first round pick Joba Chamberlain became trade bait a year later. Going into the 2009 season, Rye traded its first two picks for Manny Ramirez. This was seemingly an odd trade, but it worked. As it turned out, Ramirez was traded for Galarraga and J.A. Happ. TBL super-closer Mike Adams was a fortunate pick in the 2009 bonus round.

Going into the 2010 season, Rye had the core of a very good team. The decision was made to go for broke. High draft choices in both 2010 and 2011 were sacrificed for experienced veterans (read that as *“old”*). This brought Marco Scutaro, Casey Blake, Chris Carpenter and Lance Berkman. The drafting of reliever Joe Thatcher in the 2010 bonus round filled out the roster.

Rye’s 2010 roster was configured to succeed in the playoffs. It had offense, starting and relief pitching and decent fielding – in essence, no weaknesses to speak of. Due to rest requirements, the team had a much better playoff than regular season roster. The team won 105 games during the regular season, and significantly underperformed at that. In the playoffs, the team lost one game to Whitman in the first round, and then swept both final series. The team’s offense was different than most good teams in that no player exceeded 100 RBI. The lineup was deep – nine players had more than 15 home runs. Four of the starters had sixteen wins or more, led by Zack Greinke at 20-8. It was a complete team victory, led by many, reflective of the process in putting the roster together.

So the keys to the “rise of Rye” to the 2010 championship were as follows:

1. Drafting top notch rookie pitchers, contrary to some TBL traditions;
2. Striking gold in one draft where top notch players were found by pure luck with both high and low picks;
3. Trading for veterans to fill holes when the time was right, and going for broke;
4. Creating an offense capable of scoring runs in different ways, both small-ball hit and run and the home run, and with run-scoring capability throughout the lineup from 1 through 9; and
5. Assembling the championship roster for the playoffs, not the regular season.

This article could be rewritten (it won’t be) in a year or two, and retitled, “The Rise and Fall of Rye”. Lance Berkman, Chris Carpenter and maybe even Manny Ramirez have continued to produce long after they were projected to be toast, and the team remains a playoff-caliber team in 2012.

It is, however, only a matter of time until Rye once again can’t field a team without trading away assets and drafting to fill holes. At that point, the process will begin anew, and assembling the roster will continue to be very challenging, and great fun.



avenger spring training

by Mark Freedman

It was the calm between the storms, a time when the stadium was quiet, when he could relax bare-chested and in his Bermuda shorts to watch his team. It was a time before the blue-haired residents in their Panama shorts and Hawaiian shirts filled the stands; a time before adolescent kids stuffed their faces with hot dogs, French fries and popcorn. A time before mothers admonished fathers for buying too much junk food and drinking too much beer and the fathers bemoaned the cost of that indulgence. A few gulls would caw with anticipation over the smell of popcorn, hot dogs and fries that hung over the stadium like a cloud. When the game was over they would feast on the remains left by the fanatical and casual fan.

The heat of the Florida sun warmed the metal benches and the warm moist breeze brought cheer and life back into his tired body after the long cold winter. He leaned his thick forearms on the metal railing watching the ball-players warm up on the field, content with the solitude. It was always busy when they came to Florida; there was the bustle and preparation for start of spring training, new orientation for new players, salaries to be worked out, strategy meetings with Eckersley and the rest of the coaching staff, equipment the players needed, tickets to be printed and of course the roster worked out.

And then there was the obligation of being a superhero. Since arriving in the sunshine state he had to prevent two purse snatches and one bank robbery. Serving the greater good was always his first obligation. He was Captain America, after all, defender of the innocent. But every spring he dreaded his required appearances at Universal. Pressing the flesh with overweight flabby tourists and sniveling children with sticky hands and dirty diapers had always displeased him.

It was the few times they could allow the Hulk to appear in public unshackled. The little children would swarm over the massive beast as he laughed and jumped with joy threatening to topple Dr. Seuss. He would join the kids in consuming too much cotton candy and hot dogs until he'd clutch his stomach in pain and whimpered like one of them.

The others seemed to relish the opportunity to show off their powers and brag about their exploits, all except Thor, Florida was too warm for the Norse god. He would stalk around grumbling about how poorly Norseman tan trying to convince Storm to put a "Proper

chill" in the air. He would find her stretched out on blanket in smallest bikini she could find under the blazing Florida sun her skin turning bronze and glistening with oil. She would rebuke him as always and Thor would wander off moaning about spending spring training with Brobdingnag where the ground was properly covered with snow not sand.

But no amount of discord, strife of undercooked burritos could dampen his spirits this spring – not even the antics of Tony Stark, Iron Man. Tony owned a mansion in the area; Flash and Tony would be knee deep in booze and scantily clad women by now. It was inevitable that every spring he would receive the call from the County Sheriffs asking him to put a lid on the noise and debauchery or to come bail out the Flash for Running-Under-the-Influence. But his mood could not be dampened so easily this Spring. Last season had dispelled all the ghosts that had haunted him. It was difficult running a baseball franchise and shouldering the hopes of millions not to mention one's own pride; his melancholy was often mistaken for a psychotic flaw in his persona by his peers. But in 2011 it had all come together.

The thud of leather as it compressed under the impact of a baseball and the sharp crack of a well hit ball were a comforting sound in the Florida humidity. The voices from the field drifted over the fence to where he and Wasp stood and watched. Coaches offering friendly advice to the players others simply laughing and joking with a carefree attitude drifted to their ears. This year would be different. The ghosts were gone. They were 2011 TBL Champions.

For him the victory dispelled the failures of the past. 2001 was a monster team but the monster was slain in a seven game lose to Gotham City. In 2009 they had a 3-0 lead against Midwest before collapsing; Midwest would go on to win the Championship enforcing the lost opportunity.

They had won in 1999, but was it a fluke? The thought had always followed him. Yes, they made it to the World Series: 2011 was the team's fourth; could that still be called a fluke? If they didn't win this time, perhaps so.

Skill was important, but so was luck. That was especially true in the playoffs when the difference between teams was compressed to the bounce of the ball or the direction the wind was blowing. There was no way to overcome luck, even by overwhelming force. One

Championship might be luck two was more. He could smile now remembering how it all came together.

It had started the day Wasp had sauntered into his office, on a cold day in February with the snow piled so high he could not see past the window in his office. He could hear her coming. The heels of her leather boots clicked on the marble when she approached with purpose.

"We need Aubrey Huff," she said without so much as a greeting, her black and yellow leather looking dim in the grey light of February.

He looked up at her from the stack of papers he had neglected. Requests for appearances, fan mail, letters from politicians asking for support in upcoming elections and an overdue bill from the Mass Water Resource Authority.

"We need to extend the lineup," she continued with force. "Pitching wasn't the problem last year: we needed another bat."

He knew she was right. 2010 had been an aberration. They finished with 70 wins. The starting staff was solid. Jimenez, Lester, Billingsley and Jurrjens were not at issue. The offense was too thin. The bullpen lacked a real closers. Injuries and inconsistency had left most of the spots in the lineup barren. Uggla, Youkilis, Braun and Gonzalez could not do it alone. And then Uggla went and choked on one of his Gs and hit a paltry .176.

Hands on hips, she continued, "I got Aubrey Huff from Munich for Matt LaPorta and a player to be named later (Mel 12 #1)."

Captain America nodded in appreciation. LaPorta might be good one day, but Huff could slide right into the 5-hole and be the full time DH. It would mean Young and his career year card would bat 6th. An OF1 would go into the outfield full time but with Huff the offense went six deep. With good cards from Murphy and Rios the team only had to worry about shortstop and catcher.

He smiled. "And I got Russell Martin and Arthur Rhodes from New West. And in another deal I brought in Jimmy Rollins to help at shortstop. It cost us some prospects (11 #2 and 12 #2 and #3) but they should help."

"But what about the rotation?" he asked. "Jurrjens being injured in an encounter with Storm leaves us with a hole." "It wasn't so much an encounter," Wasp corrected with a wag of her finger. "Scarlet teased Storm into an uproar again and Jar got caught in the crossfire." She tapped the top of the monitor on his desk. "If you'd check your mail you'd see we got top prospects Jamie Garcia and Alexi Ogando to add to Kuo."

The 13 with 28 starts could slide right behind Lester in the rotation. 15, 14, 13, 10 sounded good and Ogando (21) would fit nicely with Kou (28*) who seemed determined to go through the major league season without giving up a run.*

"And do you want to hear the best?" she asked, leaning both hands on his desk. "I pried Wagner (25) away from Midwest. You should have seen the expression on the face of the Possum's owner when he found out."*

A broad grin split America's face. He didn't need to ask her how the price or even if Wagner would pitch one more year. If it was Scarlet or Storm he might worry about the circumstances – but not Wasp. Her mind was a sharp as her sting. They would have one of the best bullpens in years. Kuo (28), Wagner (25*) and Ogando (21*) would protect the lead from the 7th on. Lidge (17*), Rhodes (17*), Crain (15*) and Madson (14*) would round out the staff. And they didn't give up home runs, +56,+22,+41 out of the top three.*

It had been a master plan that had worked. The team scored 1024 runs and gave up 520; it hit 216 home runs but only allowed 104. 123 regular season wins, 12-3 in the playoffs; the second championship abolishing all the ghosts of the past.

He smiled down at her as she leaned against the fence watching the team she helped put together with the critical eye of someone who knew the nuisances of the game. She absently twisted a lock of golden hair that hung over her ear. Behind them Sweet Caroline drifted across the warm day.

She had told him once he would never see her in a bikini. Apparently winning had changed that attitude. It was not the black and yellow she normally wore. She stood barefoot on the grass in her white colorful polka dots, her blonde hair bleaching from the sun, her bronzing skin smelling of banana sunscreen. Nobody would mistake her for the superhero and mastermind of a championship team.

She smiled up at him showing perfect white teeth, her eyes sparkling with the joy she felt. "Repeat?" she hummed.

"It will be tough," he chuckled. "We have to get by Portland and Northboro first."

He mulled over her thought for a moment and a smile crept across his face. Talent always rises to the top but sometimes it helps to have a little luck.



commissioner's report by Darrell Skogen



With each season, it gets more difficult to write these season-opening columns for the yearbook. There are only so many ways you can congratulate World Series winners, thank everyone for their efforts in the past years, salute the guys who do the grunt work that make the league work effectively, and highlight your hopes for the future. So, consider all those things done and let me take this column off in a different direction this year.

More than ever, the game we love so much is facing challenges for the future. Just last night, I was surfing at the APBA Forum, and the site was abuzz with notification from John Herson that the forum would no longer be supported by APBA. Other long time users of the site are wondering what this means for the future, and after the controversy of the past season with the move to Georgia, the change in the cards, and the development of new policies related to the sale of past sets of game cards, as well as questions about the continuing problems of how to play the computer game on Windows updated operating systems, we start the season once again wondering what will happen in the near future.

Last year's discussion at the league level was interesting to say the least. It is clear that we have lots of different ideas out there about what to do should the Game Company foldup. While I do not think that we are in danger of not getting new cards in the immediate future, the long term future of the game is up for grabs. Just as we are aging, so are the members who participate at the Forum. Other types of sports games allow for more interactivity and appear to be far more exciting to younger gamers than our trusted old game. How long can the Company hold on? Who knows? What will we do if things change? If the computer game falls apart completely, will we be able to hold on to our present membership? Many questions, no answers – it's all conjecture at this point.

The tension I see about the game itself seems to be seeping into our relations as fellow managers. We seem to be shorter in our acceptance of the ways others treat us and our teams. I hear the discontent about managers not reading instructions carefully, using wrong players who are not on the roster for the month, not following the instructions, looking

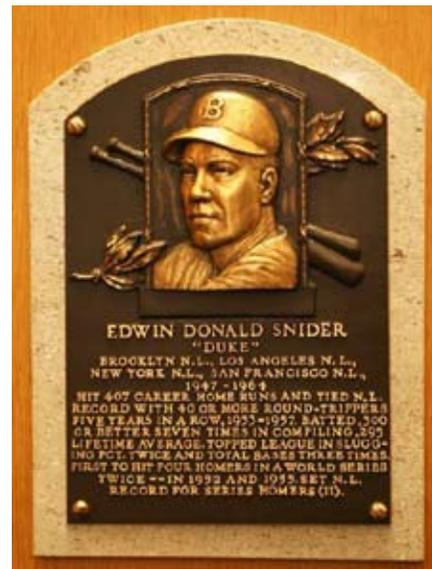
often as if they have barely even read what road managers have written. Tempers seem to flare a little more, the willingness to be gentlemanly seems to be a little lower. We are like the old married couple that has become unwilling to accept the shortcomings that we have always overlooked in the past.

As we begin to get into the 2012 season, I want to wish everyone the best of luck, and I want to reiterate comments I have been making for the past few seasons. We need to work harder to stay on time. If we are late, we need to be so much better about alerting our opponents as to when we will be able to fulfill our responsibilities. We need to be accepting of the needs of others for more time when the events in our lives get in the way of our play. We need to be nicer to each other, to hold our tongues in check and remember how our words might affect others. And if we get into a dispute, we need to resolve it quickly and with every attempt to be classy and friendly. If we take our long-standing friendships for granted, if we take liberties in our communications with each other that are mean and spiteful, we will drive each other from the league. As we get older, we often lose our ability to compromise, to understand others, and we are so sure that we have the corner on correct league manners. Let's all work together to repair relations, cement friendships, repair the ones that are teetering on the brink of disaster.

This has been a great league because of the respect we have all held for each other. We have had many good years. I believe we have many more ahead of us. But as with anything that is worthwhile, we have to work at that to maintain and improve what we do. Once again, best of luck to all this year. Have a great season, and enjoy the playing of your teams.



in memoriam



Duke Snider (1926-2011)

The Brooklyn Dodger member of the “Willie, Mickey and the Duke” trio, Snider was a great power hitter and center fielder in the 1950s. From 1953 to 1956, his *average* performance was .320-42-123: he was the third-place hitter for one of the best lineups of the modern era.

In 1980 he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame, and the Dodgers retired his number 4.

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 thirty-first 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.