

AHL's youngest broadcaster a student at Memorial

BY PAULA HERRIDGE

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — Chris Bonnell, news and sports director of Memorial University's campus radio station, is the youngest broadcaster in the American Hockey League. MUN-radio (CHMR) set a national precedent earlier this year by gaining the radio broadcast rights to the St. John's Maple Leafs, Toronto's professional affiliate.

For the 22-year-old Bonnell the deal meant an opportunity to help with the broadcasts.

"On a game-to-game basis, I open things up for the game on the radio, during intermissions I do updates on what's going on around the league, [and] sometimes I do interviews with players," he said.

Bonnell has also had the opportunity to do some game commentaries, something he says he has enjoyed.

"All in all, I think I've done play-by-play commentary for about five games of the 30 we've done — not bad for a first crack at it," he said.

He says one of the difficulties in

broadcasting a local team is remaining completely impartial.

"Calling the Leafs' side of things isn't all that difficult because we've followed the team throughout the season and we know who everyone is," Bonnell said. "[It is difficult] when you have other teams coming in, especially teams that you haven't seen much of the season."

Chris Schwartz, team and media co-ordinator for the St. John's Maple Leafs, says he has been quite impressed with the way Bonnell has handled his duties.

"I think it was something he wasn't really expecting to be a part of this year. I think he's [improved] as the year has gone on [and] I think he's done a great job considering that

he never really had a chance to prepare for it," Schwartz said.

The arrangement between CHMR and the St. John's Maple Leafs officially ends at the end of this season, but there are ongoing discussions as to whether the contract will be renewed for next season.

Bonnell says he intends to pursue a broadcasting career and he

would like CHMR to renew the deal with the Leafs because the experience has given both the station and himself excellent exposure.

"[Right now] I just try to go out and provide the best analysis I can. I guess I'm still trying to find my niche in the hockey broadcast world."

Major League Baseball preview: part two

BY DANIEL CLARK

Big hitting has become the norm in the National League. The days of the .265, five home run, forty RBI platoon player are coming to an end. With it is the principle difference between the American and National leagues.

Throughout the 70s and 80s, the National League became known for its speed, its one-run games, and its bunt 'em over and sac 'em in run production. But baseball is a game of numbers, between 1983 and 1993 the NL won just three of the eleven

World Series. Attendance dropped and teams like the **Montreal Expos**, the **Chicago Cubs**, the **San Diego Padres**, and even the venerable **San Francisco Giants** were in trouble. So NL baseball sold its soul. It pursued big-hitting as a rule rather than an exception. It seems certain that, in 1998, Roger Maris' record of 61 home runs in a single season will fall. The front runner for that very American League title is National Leaguer Mark McGwire.

National League East

Last year the NL East was the

National League's most exciting division. Four teams struggled for the prize for most of the season until it became a two-team race and then a one-team race. It is still a one-team race

The **Atlanta Braves** have been the favourites since they moved to the east in realignment. And again the Braves will walk away with this. The slaughter starts with the \$140 million starting rotation. Despite some John Smoltz health problems, Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine, and Denny Neagle will beat up any lineup. The Braves sold-off aging Fred McGriff to pick up aging Andres Galarraga and Walt Weiss. The difference is the Big Cat has pulled in 88 homers and 290 RBIs in the last two years. The Braves have a solid lineup and will produce the anemic number of runs required by that rotation in spite of a terrible bullpen.

The **New York Mets** had a disappointing off-season. The Mets had a grand plan of building on last year's impressive 88-win campaign by adding a marquee starter but failed to land either Pedro Martinez, Randy Johnson or Kevin Brown. What they ended up with was a result of the **Florida Marlins'** fire sale — former Blue Jay Al Leiter. For the most part the Mets are unchanged and will probably gain the most from the Marlins' disintegration. The e Mets could be in contention for a wild card spot.

The fact that the **Philadelphia Phillies** are picked here to finish third in the NL East is a testament to the cesspool which is the East's basement. The Phillies showed some real life at the end of last season posting a 44-33 mark after the All-Star break. The key was a reliable starting rotation beyond Curt Schilling. Mark Portugal, Mike Grace and Garrett Stephenson should return to second-half form. Youth is the key word on the streets of Philadelphia these days. New manager Terry Francona is perfectly suited to giving this young team anchored by last year's Rookie of the Year Scott Rolen a strong emotional base.

H. Wayne Huizenga is the Wacky Wheatley of South Florida. Within days of the **Florida Marlins** winning the World Series, he let it be known that everything was on sale — no money down, no interest till 1998. Kevin Brown, Moises Alou, Robb Nen, Devon White, Jeff Conine, Dennis Cook, Tony Saunders, Alex Fernandez, and Al Leiter. All that remains is Bobby Bonilla, Edgar Renteria, Livan Hernandez, and Gary Sheffield.

Until **Montreal** embraces the **Expos** and gives them consistent attendance, the 'Spos will always fall \$15 million short. After another money-saving fire sale, manager Felipe Alou is left to put the pieces back together. Pedro Martinez, Mike Lansing, Henry Rodriguez, Dave

Veres, David Segui and Darrin Fletcher were all lost. There is no point talking about who is on the team — no one's ever heard of them. In the words of Alou, "We won't be in contention this year".

National League Central

This could be the worst division in baseball. It will be interesting to see how the **Milwaukee Brewers** handle being in the National League. Incidentally, they are the first team to switch leagues in the twentieth century. The battle for this league will be between two teams.

The **St. Louis Cardinals** are poised to walk away with the division. Last season they made quite possibly the most momentous deal in team history when they acquired former Oakland slugger Mark McGwire. In addition, the Cards have the division's best starting rotation with Todd Stottlemyre, Alan Benes, Donovan Osborne and Matt Morris. They have solid catching with veteran Tom Pagnozzi. Gary Gaetti, Delino DeShields and Royce Clayton provide a potent infield, while Ron Gant, Ray Lankford, and Brian Jordan make for a solid outfield. All of this under managing great Tony La Russa should make the Cards tough to beat.

Hitting is the not the problem that the **Houston Astros** need to be addressing. With Jeff Bagwell, Craig Biggio and Bill Spiers providing the offensive base, the Astros added Moises Alou, Jack Howell and Dave Clark. But what won the division for them last year, namely pitching, has suffered terribly at the loss of Darryl Kile. Shane Reynolds is coming off injury but Mike Hampton has solid potential. The bullpen is loaded with consistency problems which will cause the team fits. Houston just has too many pieces out of place.

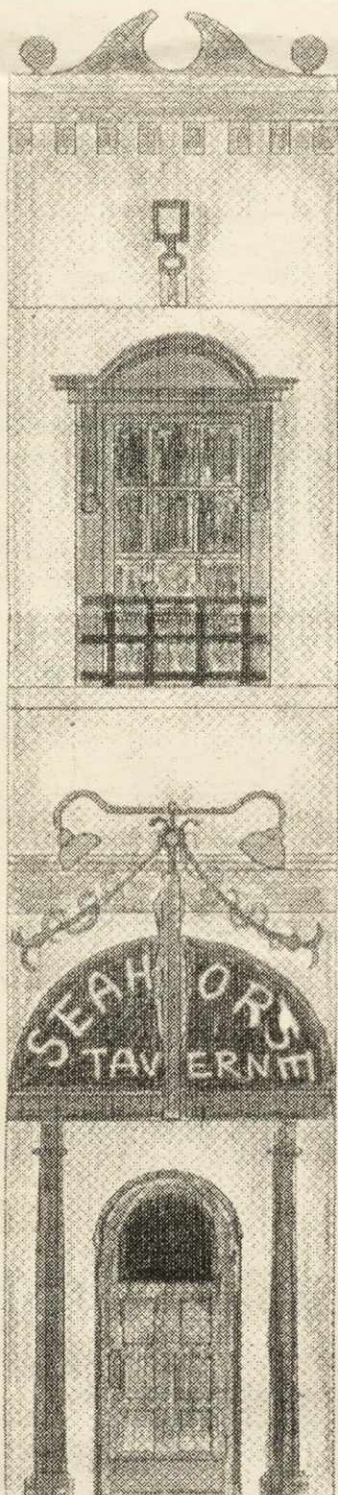
Yogi Berra once said, "50 per cent of this game is 90 per cent mental". The **Chicago Cubs** will need to prove that this year and have that opportunity in Harry Carey, a Chicago icon for thirty years, who recently passed away. The unanimous consent seems to be 'win it for Harry'. With Rod Beck, Kevin Tapani, Steve Trachsel, and Jeremi Gonzalez pitching, and Mickey Morandini, Jeff Blauser, Mark Grace, Sammy Sosa, and Henry Rodriguez hitting, the Cubs have enough talent to play spoiler.

If the **Milwaukee Brewers** ever benefited from having their owner, Bud Selig, being the interim commissioner of baseball, it was when he announced that the Brew-crew will be switching to a less rich league. To inspire them, a little more management went out and spent some of Milwaukee's sparse cash reserves on Marquis Grissom. Cal Eldred and Jeff D'Amico are both solid starting pitchers, and joining Grissom are Jeff Cirillo, John Jaha,

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