



SPORTS

Major League Baseball preview: part one

BY DANIEL CLARK

As fans try to remember how baseball was before the days of strikes, ten-million-dollar salaries and spitting second basemen, Major League Baseball (MLB) has decided to dilute the product further by adding two new teams.

The **Tampa Bay Devil Rays** and the **Arizona Diamondbacks** will be trying to emulate the instant success of last season's **Florida Marlins** and recent **Colorado Rockies'** teams. In their attempts to do so, all the fans can expect is mediocre play, the four-million-dollar .250 hitter, and skyrocketing ticket prices. Welcome back to Major League Baseball (MLB).

American League East

The American League East features four of baseball's biggest payrolls and one expansion team. This makes the division highly exciting and extremely unpredictable. More so than any other time, an appearance in October's action will be based largely on how the teams come together, and who can stay healthy. Either way, it is almost certain that the wild-card team will come from this division.

The **New York Yankees** have to be an early favourite. George Steinbrenner's millions have bought him exciting young talent and reliable veterans. This, combined with some inspired trading, have given the Bronx Bombers a roster including Paul O'Neill, Andy Pettitte, Tino Martinez, Chilli Davis, and Derek Jeter. Joe Torre needs to keep a tight rein on his team, protecting them from their mercurial boss. If he does, the Yanks could go all the way.

The **Toronto Blue Jays** have the pitching to take them to the playoffs. Roger Clemens, Pat Hentgen, Randy Myers, and Juan Guzman will dominate any hitting battery. The

problem with Toronto is anemic run production. The Jays have acquired former Oakland great Jose Canseco, and are hoping for an injury-free year for 1996's surprise sensation Ed Sprague. New manager Tim Johnson has his work cut out for him to try and mould a team from the uncertainty which has seen Cito Gaston, Paul Beeston, and Pat Gillick leave management in the last three years.

The **Baltimore Orioles** will be hot in the hunt for the wild-card spot. However, the O's have lost managing great Davey Johnson and their closer, Randy Myers. Replacement Ray Miller is going to have to redesign the bullpen to keep it solid. Jimmy Key, Mike Mussina and Scott Erickson are still the heart of this team, providing a great starting rotation, but it will be aging Cal Ripken, Roberto Alomar, Raphael Palmeiro and Brady Anderson who will decide how Baltimore spends Halloween.

Spoiler role in the East will go to the **Boston Red Sox**. They acquired Expos pitching sensation Pedro Martinez, making him the 75-million-dollar man, and still have Rookie of the Year Nomar Garciaparra and big Mo Vaughn. Despite the potential to win 85-90 games this season, count on manager Jimmy Williams to mess it up like he did in Toronto ten years ago. Williams has worked under one of the best managers in baseball, Bobby Cox, for nearly 15 years and has learned nothing. Boston will be dangerous when they dump Williams.

The **Tampa Bay Devil Rays** are a study in how not to use your VISA card. With a \$25 million payroll, the Rays have acquired every career sliding veteran in the majors. In the past, the **Blue Jays** and the **Expos** have shown how to build solid expansion clubs by investing in young talent and an expansive scouting network. The Rays, however, want to take a page from

Florida's books by spending money, but are unwilling to enter the \$50-60 million payroll area. So the sun-worshippers will have to delight in troublemakers Fred McGriff, Wilson Alvarez and Roberto Hernandez

American League Central

The Central will be the division everybody wants to visit but will shake their heads when they leave. They look like a sweep site but this division will find a way to split series.

Mostly driven by scrappy small market teams, there is only one powerhouse. Still, there is enough talent here to give the pitching in the east and the sluggers in the west a

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The Dalhousie women's hockey team failed to defend their Nova Scotia Women's Hockey League title this past weekend. They fell 3-1 to the Halifax Breakers in Sunday's final after defeating AUA Champions SMU in preliminary action. Please see next week's issue for the full story. (Photo by Lisa Verge)

ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

The Dalhousie men's varsity hockey team will be holding their annual awards dinner to celebrate Tiger hockey. The event will take place on Friday, April 3 at 6:30pm at the University Club.



This year's guest speaker will be Earl Jessiman who is a former player and coach of the Dalhousie Tigers. Mr. Jessiman also coached in the WHL and AHL, and is a successful financial consultant with Midland Walwyn Capital Inc..

Tickets can be purchased at the Dalhousie Hockey office, from Dal hockey players or from the Committee. Prices are \$20 for adults and \$12 for children under 12 years.

For more information and tickets, please call the Dalhousie Hockey Office at 494-3375.

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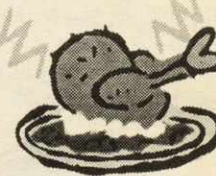
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