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The A's have put together a quality outfield, a respectable middle infield and a core of decent young pitchers. On the down side the A's most experienced starters will start the season on the disabled list, their bullpen ace is returning from a major injury, and their every day lineup is filled with some gaping holes.

The A's are forced to start the season minus the services of Joaquin Andujar (12-7, 3.82) and Moose Haas (7-2, 2.74). Thus Oakland must rely on the collective inexperience of Jose Rijo (9-11, 4.65), Curt Young (13-9, 3.45) and Dave Stewart (9-5, 3.74). Backing this starting core is a bullpen led by Jay Howell (3-6, 3.38, 16 saves) who is recovering from a multiple injury season (elbow, heel fracture) and Steve Ontiveros (2-2, 4.71, 10 saves) coming off an off season. Oakland must reduce their league leading walks total (667) and get more consistency out of their questionable bullpen.

In an attempt to improve their poor offence (13th in team batting average), the A's acquired Jackson (241, 18, 58) and Ron Cey (.273, 13, 36). Both are veterans suffering from the eventual decline related to advancing age. The A's however do possess a strong outfield with Jose Cancencio (.240, 33, 117) in left, Mike Davis (.268, 19, 55) in right and centre-fielder Dwayne Murphy (.252, 9, 39 in 329 ab's).

The rest of the A's starting lineup is solid if unspectacular with ex-Jay Alfredo Griffin (.285, 4, 50) at short, Tony Phillips (.256, 5, 52), at second, Carney Lansford (.284, 19, 72) at first and rookie Mark McGwire (23, 112 in triple a) at third.

The A's figure to be a decent team if their starting pitching improves. Unfortunately injuries and an erratic starting core will undermine the A's efforts this season and veterans Jackson and Cey will not dramatically improve the weak Oakland offence. A distant sixth place finish is in store for the A's.

Seattle

The Seattle Mariners provide the perfect foil to their expansion cousins in Toronto. The Jays have established the model for building an expansion franchise into a consistent contender. In contrast, Seattle has set records for persistent futility, failing to field a .500 team in each of its first 10 seasons. The Mariners do have a nucleus of young players who must be taught how to win. Dick Williams may be the man who can lift this team out of the throes of mediocrity. Glimmers of hope aside, this team lacks the pitching necessary to be a decent team. The only noise heard in the Kingdome this summer will be the crack of opposition bats.

Seattle's lame starting pitching is supported by a ridiculous bullpen. Yes, this collection is a joke. The stopper is Edwin Nunez (1-2, 5.82); Need I say anything more.

The Mariners 718 runs scored was a low total for a team playing in a hitters' haven. Seattle also led the league in strikeouts. Returning to the Seattle lineup are left fielder Phil Bradley (310, 12, 50) and centre fielder John Moses (.256, 3, 34). Mike Kingery (.258, 3, 14, 209 ab's) and Mickey Brantley are challenging for the other outfield position.

The infield is similarly unimpressive. Firstbaseman Alvin Davis (18, 72) has not lived up to his initial billing. Third Baseman Jim Presley (.265, 27, 107) provides a rare bright spot in an otherwise dim picture. The middle infield is suspect with second baseman Harold Reynolds (.222, 1, 25) and Rey Quinones (.218, 2, 22) giving little offensive production in addition to shaky defence.

Dick Williams has a proven track record when it comes to taking young teams and moulding them into winners but only time will tell if Williams can resurrect this moribund franchise.

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Hernandez was abandoned as the main stopper in the bullpen and his record (8-7, 3.55, 24 saves) hid some scary statistics. He gave up 13 homers, but nine let the opposition tie the score or go ahead and four of those were game-ending shots. After moving King to the starting rotation, Anderson is left with Mark Thurmond (4-1, 1.92, 3 saves in 25 appearances) to be Hernandez's partner, or if Willie goes down, as his stopper.

The power of right-fielder Gibson (.268, 28, 86 in another injury she plagued season), first baseman Darrell Evans (.241, 29, 85), shortstop Alan Trammell (.277, 21, 75), second baseman Lou Whitaker (.269, 20, 73) (.273, 20, 86), gives the Tigers a potent hitting team. But the rest of the outfield and the bench leaves much to be desired. Chet Lemon (.251, 12, 53), Pat Sheridan (.237, 6, 19), and Larry Herndon (.247, 8, 37) would be very good reserves. The problem, though, is that two of them have to start. Anderson is touting Sheridan this year and Sheridan may go the way of previous Anderson 'stars,' Chris Pittaro and Mike Laga—to the minors and/or oblivion.

A solid core of everyday players and Morris guarantee the Tigers an above .500 finish, but unless the bullpen and the rest of the starters come through, pennant hopes are out of the question.

Baltimore

Where have all the pitchers gone? That is the question, the Oriole braintrust must be pondering. 1985, where Baltimore had its worst ERA (4.38) in 30 years, was viewed as a fluke, but a 4.31 mark last year means that it's really time to start worrying. Besides Mike Boddicker (14-12, 4.70), the Orioles have a staff well past its prime. The only other starter who showed promise last year

was Storm Davis (9-12, 3.62) but he was traded for Terry Kennedy, a catcher whose defense is suspect and whose hitting stats have diminished every year since 1982.

Don Aase is the ace of the bullpen (6-7, 2.98, 34 saves) but will have to be used more carefully and less often this year to prevent the burnout he suffered last August and September (2-4, 5.32, 6 saves in his last 20 appearances). Signing Dave Schmidt (3-6, 3.31, 8 saves in middle and short relief for the White Sox) will help Aase but that's about it for proven relief pitchers. Cal Ripken Sr. will be gambling with rookies Tony Arnold and Mark Williamson to see if the Orioles can regain their pitching magic. It's very doubtful that Mike Flanagan (7-11, 4.24) and Scott McGregor (11-15, 4.25) will regain theirs.

Last year, the Orioles had holes at second, third, catcher and in left field. To fill those gaps, Baltimore signed Rick Burleson (.284, 5, 29) to play second, a position he's never played regularly; picked up free agent Ray Knight (.298, 11, 76 and World Series MVP for the New York Mets); traded for Kennedy; and handed the outfield job to rookie Ken Gerhart, who slammed 28 homers at Rochester. The jury is still out on whether this foursome will solidify the Oriole's starting line-up.

First baseman Eddie Murray (.305, 17, 84) and shortstop Cal Ripken (.282, 25, 84) do not have to worry about proving themselves, either offensively or defensively. They do, however, have a lot of pressure on them to have career years if the Orioles are to contend. Other prerequisites for a successful season are Fred Lynn (.287, 23, 67) remaining healthy for at least 140 games, and Mike Young recovering from a sprained thumb and regaining the power he had in 1985 (28 homers).

Milwaukee

Once again it is a rebuilding year

for the Brewers and hopefully it will be more successful than last year's 77-84 sixth place finish. Rookies can't be expected to be stars immediately but when the top eight hitters were all veterans and Dan Plesac was the only pitcher to shine, the Brewers' rebuilding year was not successful as predicted.

After Ted Higeura (20-11, 2.79), the starting rotation is full of holes. Last year's second best starter, Tim Leary (12-12, 4.21) was traded to the Dodgers for yet another first baseman in Greg Brock. Bill Wegman (5-12, 5.13) and Juan Nieves (11-12, 4.92) both had disappointing years and haven't shown anything this spring to herald a new beginning.

The bullpen at least, is strong. Mark Clear (5-5, 2.20, 16 saves) and Plesac (10-7, 2.97, 14) give the Brewers right-left closers that are among the best in the league.

Outfielder Rob Deer was the find of the hitters last year. Plucked out of the San Francisco system, Deer did his best Gorman Thomas imitation, slamming 33 homers, 86 RBI's while hitting .232. Robin Yount hits decently (.312, 9, 46) for a centre-fielder and right field is up for grabs between Brags and Felder.

Third baseman Paul Molitor (.281, 9, 55, 20 stolen bases) and second baseman Jim Gantner (.274, 38, 13 SB's) are dependable above-average players.

Catching is also far from settled. Bill Schroeder's injury-plagued career has prevented him from gaining a lock on the position. If he stays healthy, the position is his. If not, B.J. Surhoff (the Brewers should get an award for drafting youngsters with great names) will get the call. Touted as a can't miss prospect last year, Surhoff only hit five homeruns at Vancouver although he sis hit .308. If Surhoff and the other highly rated Milwaukee youngsters start playing nearer their potential, Milwaukee may return to the top before the end of the decade. 1987, however, is definitely not their year.

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