

sports

Blue Jays pre-season report

by Mike Riley

The rise to glory by the Toronto Blue Jays has been an incredible ride. Saturday the 24th of October, 1992, is a day that will live in infamy. That was the day the glorious Toronto

Blue Jays captured the World Series, becoming the first team north of the border to win the Holy Grail of baseball.

You couldn't buy a more exciting World Series. All six games were hair raising nail-biters. If you have been a fan as long as I have, then you

know how it feels when you follow the Jays all the way to the playoffs and then see them crumble under the pressure. It sucks. But not last year. 1992 was the year the Blue Jays proved the naysayers wrong and won the crown.

The world champion Toronto Blue Jays, sounds pretty nice, eh? Well get used to it cause the Jays are going to pull it off in '93.

Although a much different team, the 1992 Blue Jays enter this season as the front runner.

The off-season has seen many changes to the line-up. Before the confetti got a chance to settle, general manager Pat Gillick began wheeling and dealing to upgrade his team. By Christmas, the whole left side was gone. Kelly Gruber, Candy Maldonado, Manny Lee plus 100 RBI man Dave Winfield disappeared. The pitching staff was also diminished; Jimmy Key, David Cone and ace stopper Tom Henke were lost to free agency.

Gillick is no stranger to controversial decisions and has made many big trades in the Jays' past. The one that brought Carter and Alomar to the Jays is the very reason why they are champions now. Well, it seems that he has worked his magic again.

Replacing the big bat of Winfield is Dave Molitor as DH, who batted .320 last year with Milwaukee. Although not as much power as Winfield, Molitor stacks up very well, adding speed and flexibility to the line-up.



Longtime gun for the A's Dave Stewart, is also a Jay who packs a 3.66 ERA and a wicked stare. Combined with Jack Morris, Jaun Guzman, Todd Stottlemyre, Pat Hentgen, and Mike Timlin, the Jays have a pitching rotation as strong as any. Henke will be missed, but set-up man Duane Ward is expected to fill the position quite nicely.

Third base will likely be filled by Darnell Coles, acquired from Cincinnati who batted .312 in 141 at bats last year. With Manny Lee gone, Luis Sojo and Eddie Zosky will compete for short stop. Domingo Martinez and World Series hero Ed Sprague will also vie for infield positions.

The rest of the team is pretty much the same as it was last year. Roberto Alomar will continue to dazzle people with his incredible defensive plays and shine at the plate as the best all round second basemen in the game.

The Sultan of Swing, Joe Carter who batted .264 with 119 RBI's and 34 homeruns in '92 will be back playing right field. Golden Glover Devon White will secure center field and continue to contribute at the plate as an excellent lead-off man (98 runs, 17 homers, and 34 stolen bases). World Series MVP Pat Borders will remain behind the plate while rookie catcher Carlos Delgado will likely hone his skills in Knoxville. And finally, young players Derek Bell and John Olerud will return at left field and first base respectively.

The Toronto Blue Jay's rise to the top is amazing considering the franchise is only 15 years old. The Jays have won five division championships in that time span, and its the only club to play better than .500 ball in the last ten seasons. The Jays have an excellent farm system with many new prospects and can only get better. Although Gillick has shuffled the deck, he has come up with winning hands in the past. Besides the Baltimore Orioles, the Jays have few barriers stopping them from regaining the AL East title. Once there, look out. There's not a doctor on earth that can cure Blue Jay fever! NEXT WEEK: The Montreal Expos.

MARCH MADNESS

by Graham F. Shaw

It's that time of year again. No, not final exams; for the real sports buff there is nothing better than the NCAA tournament. Beginning Thursday, CBS will take us on an epic journey filled with upsets, last second heroics, and super human performances than the Superbowl, World Series, and NBA Championships put together. This year's 64 teams include some who might make even Cinderella proud.

In the East, North Carolina is the team to beat. Las Vegas odds makers have made the Tarheels 9-2 favorites to win the NCAA championship, but with a loss to Georgia Tech in the Atlantic Coast Conference title game on Sunday, N.C. has shown that they are not unbeatable.

In the Mid West The Indiana Hoosiers are ready to make another bid for the Championship. Led by Calbert Cheaney, the Big Ten player of the year, and with coach Bobby Knight at the helm, the Hoosiers could be the team to be crowned Prom King of the big dance. Their toughest competition should come from Duke, and the NCAA all-time assists leader Bobby Hurley. The Blue Devils have been in the final game in each of the past three years, taking home the hardware the last two years running.

In the west Michigan and last year's Fab Five are hoping that this is their year. Forward Chris Weber and guard, Jalen Rose, will have to shine or it will be a no go for the Wolverines.

In the South East, Kentucky and their run and gun offence will be hoping to come out hot and put the competition on ice. The Wildcats will live and die by their three point shooting, and the performance of their star Jamaal Mashburn. The team to stop Kentucky could be Setan Hall, who will be looking to the Big East Player of The Year, and all-time leading scorer, Terry Dehere to come up big.

So, grab your T.V. Guide, fill out your pool sheets, make your side bets, sit back in your Lazy Boy and enjoy.

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