

# Out of Bounds

JASON SNYDER

## Yankees, Indians, Braves are teams to beat in '99

Very rarely in recent baseball history does the word "dynasty" come to mind. In fact, the last time a Major League Baseball team won three consecutive World Series Championships was in 1972-74 with the Oakland Athletics. Only the Toronto Blue Jays in 1992-93 have repeated as champs in the past 20 years.

So where does this put the 1999 New York Yankees? Basing their chances on the past, the image of seeing the Yanks on baseball's pedestal is rather blurry. But base the Yankees' chances on reality and the picture seems quite clear.

How can anyone go against a team that only months ago was considered the greatest ever? Add to that, the fact that the most consistent batting order in baseball history is back in full force. That alone is enough to convince many fans that the Yankees are the team to beat.

The talk of the off-season when any team wins a championship involves the stress and concern of returning that same team. Whether it be the Denver Broncos bringing back John Elway, Terrell Davis and their defense or the Chicago Bulls scurrying to return Michael Jordan and his starters in their dynasty, the idea of giving the same great players the same chance of a

championship is universal through all sports. So you would think that would be enough to convince George Steinbrenner that his Yankees have the tools to win. But it wasn't.

Who is Steinbrenner without a big name on his team and who are the New York Yankees without a future Hall of Famer? Last year, they were unlikely champions entering the season. This year, they are heavy favorites. Why? Because of one change in one position. Out with a good pitcher, in with a great one.

The David Wells/Roger Clemens trade was the only move the Yankees dared to make in the off-season. But it seems pretty safe to bring in the '90's version of Cy Young to replace a sloppily uniformed, left-hander with an attitude...doesn't it?

I would be the last person to turn down Roger Clemens. But why get rid of a pitcher that went 18-4 in the regular season, 8-1 in post season play and 4-0 against the Yanks' most feared opponent, the Cleveland Indians? Clemens did go 20-6 last season, but didn't make the playoffs with Toronto. In his career, he has only one post season win and has lost seven straight.

The Yankees' roster on paper looks unbeatable. But with those pitching stats, the Yankees would win 116 regular season games instead of 114, but would lose to the Indians in the American League Championship. Of

course, this is all on paper.

As if the rivalry wasn't heated enough, the Yankees vs. Indians matchup could blowup this season. Cleveland threw some fuel on the fire this off-season by becoming MLB's "City of Brotherly Love." Roberto Alomar will join brother Sandy in the Indian's lineup to give Cleveland their first strong second baseman since Carlos Baerga in 1995.

As for the other void in the Indians' roster...the bullpen. Filled. Ricardo Rincon and Jerry Spradlin will join Paul Shuey, Steve Reed and Mike Jackson (40 saves), to hopefully give the Indians a much needed lift in the final innings. With no starting pitchers averaging more than seven innings last season, the off-season additions could be key.

The needed changes in Cleveland have been made. The only thing separating them from baseball supremacy is consistency. Every player on the Indians' roster has shown signs of greatness. Many players have All-Star ability. And there is no doubt in my mind that if all wheels are turning come this fall, the Indians will beat the New York Yankees.

Unfortunately for baseball, that can't be the World Series match-up. You go from the AL "Series of the Century," to the World Series that has the NL championship team up for grabs.

There is no dominant team in the NL in '99. But I have to go with the Atlanta

Braves. They did lose Andres Galarraga in the off-season due to his illness, but picked up Otis Nixon, Bret Boone and Brian Jordan. And once again, Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine, John Smoltz and Kevin Millwood will make up the best pitching rotation in baseball. Mark Wohlers is back in force and 30-save man Kerry Ligtenberg will keep the bullpen strong.

Last year, the regular season ended with monumental wild card chases. 1999 should follow suit, but with new cities experiencing the excitement. Among those cities should be Toronto, Baltimore and Seattle in the AL.

In the NL, behind Atlanta and Houston will be the Dodgers, N.Y. Mets, San Francisco, Cincinnati and Big Mac's Cardinals vying for a post season opportunity.

But when the field gets narrowed, it should be a three-team show. The Yankees, Indians and Braves did what they had to in the off-season. The gaps are filled, the rosters are solid and the stage is set for a smashing end to the century.

And, oh yeah...McGwire opened the season with a bang. The countdown has begun.

*Snyder is the sports editor for the Beacon. Out of Bounds appears weekly on this page.*

## BEHREND BRIEFS

### Former PSU basketball standout speaks at Behrend

Angie Potthoff, a former Penn State basketball standout, spoke at Behrend this past Tuesday as part of "National Student-Athlete Day." The luncheon was held in Dobbins' Gazebo Room and was open to all Behrend student-athletes.

Behrend currently has nearly 150 student-athletes which gave the day more meaning for the college.

Potthoff has strong ties to both Penn State and the Erie area. She played high school ball at Mercyhurst Prep and was a key participant in the Nittany Lions' basketball program. Potthoff graduated from University Park in May 1997 after four solid seasons on the court.

She is the fourth all-time leading scorer at Penn State (with 1,724) points and rebounder (with 918). She also holds the all-time record for career field goal percentage at PSU at 57.4%. While she was on the roster, the Nittany Lions won two consecutive Big Ten Tournament Championships and made three NCAA appearances.

After graduation, Potthoff played professional basketball in the American Basketball League where she contributed to the champion Columbus Quest.

### Mandy Bodnor earns second AMCC Athlete of the Week Award

Behrend softball player Mandy Bodnor received her second Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference Athlete of the Week award this past week for her role in the Lions' 7-1 week. Bodnor is a junior pitcher/third baseman for the Behrend women and has been sharp on both sides of the bat.

Bodnor pitched in Behrend's wins over conference opponents Lake Erie, Pitt-Bradford and Pitt-Greensburg to move the Lions into a tie for the AMCC lead.

She is 12-3 already this season on the mound. Bodnor hit .500 on the week with 14 hits. She finished the week with 16 RBI's and five home runs. She slammed seven long balls on the year which is a new Behrend record for a season.

Bodnor is from Pittsburgh, PA where she attended Shaler High School.

## Down to the Wire...

# Mark McGwire faces huge task to reach Henry Aaron's 755

by Gene Guidi  
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

ST. LOUIS, Mo. - Cardinals senior field coordinator George Kissell, the man who gave Sparky Anderson his first manager's job, says he has seen all the great power hitters - even Babe Ruth.

"And none of them - including Ruth - hit home runs like Mark McGwire," said Kissell, in his 80s.

Kissell spoke as he watched another batting practice power show by McGwire.

"No one ever has hit the ball as hard or as far as McGwire," Kissell said.

It's a new season, but McGwire already has served notice that he's still a threat to homer every time he steps to the

plate. During Monday's rain-delayed opener, McGwire hit one homer, but easily could have had three. One ball carried near the wall in rightfield, and another stayed in the park in center after McGwire hit it on the end of the bat.

But the St. Louis first baseman reminded everyone after the game that "last year was last year and it's time to turn the page. The home run I hit was only that - a home run."

Because his first homer of the season came during a 10-8 loss, McGwire said, "It was just a reminder that this is a team game."

But no matter how much McGwire wants to distance himself from his personal accomplishments, his home runs are special and will continue to be chronicled whether his team wins or loses.

During his relentless six-month pursuit of Roger Maris last season,

McGwire did the unthinkable and hit 70 home runs.

Is Hank Aaron next on McGwire's list?

Most people would say no. Aaron's career-record 755 homers is a formidable mountain to climb, even for a prolific power hitter like McGwire. But then, so was Maris' season record of 61 - and McGwire and Sammy Sosa shattered that last year.

As Seattle manager Lou Piniella said: "This is a very homer-friendly time in baseball."

McGwire, 35, is 20th on the all-time home run list with 458, most among active players but 297 shy of Aaron. On NBC's "Meet the Press" last Sunday, McGwire said he'd like to play five more years "God willing." That means he would have to average 60 homers a season to catch Aaron.

No way, right?

But then you think, McGwire has hit at least 52 homers in each of his past three seasons. He has 128 in the past two seasons.

If McGwire were to challenge Aaron, he likely would have to stick around for more than five years.

Suppose he averages 50 homers for the next five years - not an unrealistic number for a slugger who has made home run hitting an art.

That would leave him 48 shy of Aaron. He would be 40, but remember, McGwire spent a lot of time on the disabled list between the ages of 28 and 32, which might have saved him some of the normal wear and tear an athlete experiences. In 1993 and 1994 combined, he played in 74 games.

It's why McGwire says that "he's in his prime" at 35 - an age when careers often are on the down elevator.

His work ethic is second to none

in the sport, which could keep him going into his 40s if that's how long it took to challenge Aaron.

What does Aaron think? "They could catch me in a hurry if they continue to hit home runs the way they did last year," Aaron told the Boston Globe.

There are some. Aaron included, who believe Ken Griffey is the player who might challenge the record. Griffey, 29, has 351 homers in 10 seasons, including one Monday in the Mariners' opener, and is one of only three players to hit 50 in consecutive seasons.

But already a wealthy young man reportedly entertaining a new \$100-million contract offer, there's no guarantee Griffey would play long enough to set the record.

The biggest question concerning McGwire might be whether he would choose to put up with the media attention and continuing loss

of privacy that would accompany his pursuit of 755.

"People come up and just sit down at my table when I'm out having lunch or dinner," McGwire said last season when asked how the record chase had changed his life. "I'll be sitting there eating and someone will come up, sit down and start telling stories."

"I look at someone like Michael Jordan and understand what a person like that goes through."

Jordan has retired, leaving McGwire as the most visible sports hero in the country.

That can be an incredible burden. And more than split-finger fastballs and crazy-quilt travel schedules, it might ultimately help preserve Aaron's spot atop home-run mountain.

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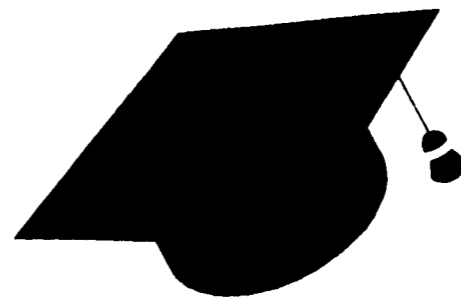
Campus wide Semi-Formal, May 1st formal 9p.m.-1a.m. Sponsored by the Athletic Advisory Committee. Please watch for further postings about this upcoming event.

### Free to Good Home

two hamsters, one mouse, and one slightly neurotic copy editor found in the Beacon office.

Students and employees of Penn State Behrend are invited to submit a free classified ad in *The Beacon*. Types of ads may include personal messages and items for sale. Maximum classified length is 25 words. Persons who submit ads must state their affiliation with Behrend. Classifieds are meant for individual use. Official notices and group events should be submitted to the Calendar editor. Businesses must pay regular advertising rates. *The Beacon* can not guarantee the publication of all classified submitted for space purposes. Classifieds should be sent to the Classified editor at *The Beacon*, Reed Building or dropped off at *The Beacon* offices, or sent to behrcoll4@aol.com. Deadline for submission for publication in that week's paper is Monday at 5:00PM.

## Attention Seniors



The deadline for ordering caps and gowns from the Penn State Behrend Bookstore is Friday, April 9.