

Sports

Capitolizing On Sports

Well, baseball fans, it is time for another season of topsy-turvy major league baseball. In this article we intend to point out the strengths and weaknesses of every team, as well as the division winners.

A.L. EAST

By Kevin "Jerry Kapstein II" Iannucci

Everybody's "money" team, the **New York Yankees**, added Dave Winfield to their already potent lineup. The only problem with this move is who will play right field, Winfield or the outspoken Reggie Jackson? The Yankees sport one of the best infields in the league, with Gold Glover Graig Nettles leading the way. If Nettles recovers from last year's injuries, they will be an awesome team. Pitching wise, the Yanks have probably the best crop of starting lefthanders in the league. Led by Ron Guidry, Rudy May, Tommy John, (and possibly Don Gullet) along with righty relievers Rich "Goose" Gossage and Ron Davis, the Yankees' staff should have the best E.R.A. in the league again.

The reason why the **Baltimore Orioles** are consistently in the running is pitching. With veteran starters such as Jim Palmer, Scotty McGregor, Mike Flanagan, and the 1980 Cy Young Award winner Steve Stone, the Birds are always competitive. Offensively they are led by the long-ball power of Eddie Murray, Ken Singleton, Lee May, and Doug DeCinces. If Al Bumbry keeps the running game alive, the O's could repeat their 1979 performance. Perennial Gold Glove winner Mark Belanger solidifies the infield. Rick Dempsey is slowly becoming an exceptional signal caller.

Youth is the name of the game for the **Milwaukee Brewers**. Led by 6-year veteran shortstop Robin Yount, the Brewers just might be the premier team in baseball. With the departure of Sixto Lezcano, the long ball is left up to Gorman Thomas. Milwaukee also sports the 2nd-leading hitter in the league in first sacker Cecil Cooper. Cooper's .360 batting average last year was second only to "Mr. Everything," George Brett. The Brewers, however, lack the key pitchers to get to the top. Jerry Augustine, Bill Travers, and Jim Slaton all are on the decline.

Much can be written about the **Cleveland Indians**, but most of their downfall can be attributed to youth. With a few years' experience, the Tribe could very well be building a dynasty out on Lake Erie. Sluggers Joe Charboneau and Andre Thornton lead the youth. Charboneau, last year's Rookie-of-the-Year in the American League, is looked to for the long ball, and he comes through. Thornton is looked on to lead the team's morale. Len Barker, a 19game winner last year, should, with some luck, win 20 this year. Miguel Dilonne keeps the Tribe running, as his 60 steals can attest. Watch for the Tribe, they might surprise!

The **Boston Red Sox**, the **Detroit Tigers**, and the **Toronto Blue Jays** are three teams in the rebuilding process, and not much over .500 should be expected. With Fred Lynn, Rick Burleson, Butch Hobson, and Carlton Fisk gone, Boston has too many holes. Detroit has no pitching and Toronto will finish last again. Not to demoralize you fans, but it is true that it takes an all-around team to win a division title, and these three will be also-rans.

A.L. WEST

By Kevin Spiegel

Coming off of a spectacular year, the **Kansas City Royals** hope to repeat as American League Western Division champs. When you mention Kansas City, you think of one man: George Brett. His statistics tell the story of just how good he performed in 1980. Brett hit .390, scored 118 runs, slammed 24 home runs, and also collected 33 doubles and 9 triples. Other main contributors to the Royal attack were Willie Wilson (.326, 230 hits, and 79 stolen bases), Hal McRae (.297, 14 home runs, 83 RBI's), and Willie Mays Aikens (20 home runs and 98 RBI's). It is apparent that K.C. has no problems in the hitting department. In 1980, pitching was also a big factor in the Royals' success. Led by 20-game winner Dennis Leonard and 18-game winner Larry Gura, they have one of the best 1-2 punches in the league. As for stars of the future in Kansas City, remember the names Ken Phelps (23 home runs, 72 RBI's, .294 average at Omaha last year) and Ronald Johnson (23 home runs and 104 RBI's at Jacksonville).

If I told you prior to last season that Billy Martin would take a terrible **Oakland Athletics** team and make it into a contender and, better yet, produce the best baserunner and second best pitcher in the American League, you probably would have said that I was off my rocker. To everyone's surprise, it happened. Ricky Henderson (100 stolen bases, .303 average, and 179 hits) proved to be a delight to watch. Tony Armas became the most dangerous hitter in Oakland since Reggie Jackson left the West Coast. Armas hit 35 homers and knocked in 109 runs. As George Brett excels in hitting, Mike Norris excels in pitching. Runner-up in the Cy Young balloting, Norris led the young A's pitching staff in almost every category. He went 22-9, with 180 strikeouts and an E.R.A. of 2.63. The A's are definitely a team to be reckoned with and should not be taken lightly this year. Martin and Company just might overtake the Royals. Outlook: a solid second.

Going against all oddsmakers, I picked the revamped **California Angels** for a third-place finish. I originally picked them to inhabit Mediterranean Avenue on the Monopoly board (we're talking low!). But with the acquisition of Fred Lynn and Rick Burleson, they will definitely improve. Lynn and Burleson team with Rod Carew (.331 average, 179 hits, 74 runs scored) to give California a potent offensive attack. Although Don Baylor had an off-year last season, the big guy should bounce back. A problem for the Angels is the pitching staff. With the signing of Geoff Zahn and John D'Acquisto, they have helped themselves. Returning starters Don Aase (8-13), Dave Frost (4-8), and Chris Knapp (2-11) need more support. A good performance from the pitching staff, and the Angels could be the surprise team in 1981. Outlook: a surprise third.

As for the **Texas Rangers**, the biggest news out of Arlington was the signing of a new manager, Don Zimmer. I'm sorry, Ranger fans, I can't give you any help here. Being from Boston, I'm familiar with Zimmer and, frankly, let the Rangers have him. As for hitting, Buddy Bell was sixth best in the league, hitting at a .329 clip. He does for Texas what Ronald Reagan does for our country: he creates problems for the opposition. Bell, a 29-year-old third baseman, hit 24 doubles, four triples, 17 homers, and knocked in 83 runs. Another standout was ex-Pirate Al Oliver, who quietly batted .319 and collected 209 hits. The reason that Texas won't finish higher than fourth is that the pitching is in deep trouble. Besides Jon Matlack and Fergie Jenkins, you can't even mention any other starters. Outlook: a dismal fourth.

The problem with the **Chicago White Sox** is that they have the talent, but it needs time to develop. They boast perhaps the best rookie pitcher in the league in Britt Burns (15-13, 2.84 E.R.A.). If the Chisox can put their heads together and play smart baseball, they will develop into a respectable team. Chet Lemon (.292, 150 hits, 11 homers) and Lamar Johnson (.277, 13 home runs, 81 RBI's) provide the limited power in the lineup, along with Jim Morrison. A surprise in the Chicago lineup in 1981 will be free agent outfielder Ron LeFlore. He provides speed (97 stolen bases) and hitting (134 hits and a .257 average) to the lineup. Outlook: fifth place.

The **Minnesota Twins** are a team that I like, but I know won't be competitive in 1981. The Twins have been victimized by trades and free agency. Names like Rod Carew, Larry Hisle, the late Lyman Bostock, and Geoff Zahn all have left Minnesota. What remains is a young and talented team with potential. The left side of the infield is solid, with third baseman John Castino and shortstop Roy Smalley providing strength and depth. The hitting is led by Ken Landreaux and Butch Wynegar. Pitching could cause Manager John Guryl a few more gray hairs. Veterans Jerry Koosman (16-13, 4.04 E.R.A.), Roger Erikson (7-13, 3.25 E.R.A.) and Doug Corbett (8-6, 1.99 E.R.A.) lead the staff of mostly no-names. With so much youth and virtually no power, the Twins pose no real threat. Outlook: sixth place.

The biggest thing in the state of Washington right now, besides the Kingdome, is Mount St. Helens. I pity Maury Wills, because he has so little to work with. As for pitching, Glenn Abbott (12-12) and Floyd Bannister (9-13) are among the top hurlers returning from last season. Ex-Pirate Richie Zisk (19 home runs and 77 RBI's) and Jeff Burroughs (13 home runs and 51 RBI's) lead the power department. All-Seattle ballplayer (equivalent to AllStar) Bruce Bochte is an excellent player on a lousy team. He hit .300, had 156 hits, 13 homers, and 78 RBI's in 148 games. The **Seattle Mariners** need pitching desperately; maybe next year. Outlook: seventh place or below.



You hear Tony, I think having spring training in sub-zero weather is for the birds!

READER Photo by Harry H. Moyer