

Yankees Win 25th World Championship of the Century

By Barry J. Hicks

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In the Sept. 22 edition of *The Capital Times*, I did a team by team breakdown of the playoff contenders. I predicted who would make the playoffs and what would happen after that. This goes to show you why they play the games.

ATLANTA BRAVES

This was probably my biggest mistake of the entire article. I stated that Chipper Jones couldn't carry the load much longer.

I made this comment with the understanding that teams would just stop pitching to him. They didn't and he killed them.

The Braves played the Mets six times in the final two weeks of the season. I thought the Mets would take the division by winning the majority of these games.

They pitched to Jones, and he made them pay by hitting four home runs in the first three games virtually taking the Mets out of the pennant race.

In the playoffs, Bobby Cox played baseball the way it was meant to be played utilizing stolen bases, sacrifice bunts, and scoring just enough runs to let his pitching staff carry the team.

This led them to the World Series but the Yankees big play offense took out the Braves' "small ball" National League style of play.

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

I predicted this team would go to the World Series behind the arm of Randy Johnson. He got bombed by the Mets in game one of the division series and gave up 7 earned runs in 8.1 innings.

The Diamondbacks just couldn't let this happen. The only pitcher who came to play for the Diamondbacks in this series was

Todd Stottlemyre and that wasn't enough. The Mets took the series, 3-1.

HOUSTON ASTROS

The Astros had the Central Division crown fall into their laps. Who would've predicted the Reds dropping two out of three in Milwaukee? Not me, that's for sure. They took on the Braves in the division series and, in one of my few correct predictions, their 11-22 record against other National League contenders came into play.

The Braves took them out in four games.

CINCINNATI REDS

This was, by far, the biggest disappointment of the season. The low payroll Reds fought all year long for respect and had the Central Division wrapped up going into a three-game series in Milwaukee.

They dropped two out of three and not only allowed Houston to take the division crown, but let the Mets back into the Wild Card race.

This forced a one-game playoff and the Reds were at a severe disadvantage. While the Mets got to throw their ace, Al Leiter; the Reds had to count on Steve Paris to win the biggest game of the season.

The Mets got on the board first when Edgardo Alfonzo hit a two-run home run in the first inning and for the first time all year, the Reds looked scared.

They never scored a run and became the first team since the advent of the Wild Card to win 90+ games and not make the playoffs. They finished the regular season 29 games over .500.

NEW YORK METS

You've got to give this team a lot of credit. They didn't give up when they dropped eight out of

nine games down the stretch and fought back to win their last four.

They forced the one game play-off with the Reds and won. The veteran group was patient and smashed Randy Johnson and the Diamondbacks in the divisional series.

They went on to almost pull off the unthinkable. After falling behind 3-0 to the Braves in the National League Championship Series, they didn't give up.

Behind Bobby Valentine's "Why not us?" attitude, the Mets fought back to win the next two games before losing game six in 11 innings.

This was one of the greatest playoff series in history as five of the six games were determined by only one run, and the other game was determined by two.

NEW YORK YANKEES

I said that the Yankees were still the team to beat. They proved that by winning another World Championship. This team continued to show how chemistry can help win championships.

Sure, a top five payroll helps, but they never got nervous when they fell behind. They were extremely confident and knew they were the best team in baseball all along.

The only doubt was whether they would win it all came in the American League Championship Series.

Pedro Martinez was only able to pitch one game because of a drawn out divisional series with Cleveland. The ALCS series might have turned out differently had he been able to pitch games one, four, and seven.

Instead, with the help of a few obviously blown calls and the Red Sox batting 13-53 with runners in scoring position, the Yankees took control of this series and won it 4-1.

That's 25 World Championships in the century. No one else is anywhere near that mark.

CLEVELAND INDIANS

I made a comment in my prediction that the Indians need to realize they will never win a championship until they get a number one starter.

They learned that lesson the hard way in the divisional series against Boston. The same Red Sox lineup that couldn't do anything against the Yankees pitching staff scored 41 runs in five games against the Indians.

Despite Pedro Martinez injuring his back in game one, he pitched six shutout innings in game five. This seems more astonishing when you add the fact that he could only throw 91 mph on the radar gun in contrast to his usual 98-99 mph fastball.

This should teach Cleveland that there is a huge difference between throwing and pitching. Pedro Martinez knows that difference and by the end of his career, in an era when the talk of baseball being juiced is at an all-time high, he will go down as the best pitcher in Major League Baseball history.

TEXAS RANGERS

I can honestly say that I was right on with this one. The Texas Rangers unluckily drew the Yankees in the divisional series once again. This rivalry has gone beyond physical ability and now reaches into the minds of the Rangers' players, manager, and front office.

They just feel they can't beat the Yankees in the playoffs. They didn't put up much of a fight and were swept by the Yankees in the series.

BOSTON RED SOX

I also stated in my prediction that the Boston Red Sox had the one guy who could determine the outcome of an entire playoff series in Pedro Martinez. It turned out that he only pitched four innings prior to game five of the divisional series against the Indians. The Red Sox took it to Cleveland's sub-par pitching staff and moved on to face the Yankees in the A.L.C.S.

This is where their weak lineup came into play. You aren't going to beat the Yankees with Mike Stanley, Lou Merloni, Trot Nixon, and Darren Lewis.

Jimmy Williams tried to play American League baseball with a National League style offense. After Troy O'Leary, the Red Sox had nothing. They sat back and

waited for the big play.

It never came. If Martinez could've pitched games one, four,

PSH Bowling Starts Soon

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Any student who is interested in trying out for Penn State Harrisburg's men's and women's bowling teams should be at the ABC East Bowling Lanes, located on Eisenhower Boulevard, on Tuesday, Nov. 9 from 9:10:30 p.m.

Tryouts for the teams will be Nov. 9 and 16. Teams will be selected on the 16th and will practice from 9 - 10:30 p.m. on the following dates: Nov. 30, Dec. 7, Jan. 11, Jan. 18, Jan. 25, Feb. 4, and Feb. 5.

There is no charge for this program and it is open to all full-time undergraduate and graduate students.

For further information, contact Bud Smitley of the Penn State Harrisburg Recreation/ Athletics Department at 948-6267.

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