

Eye on Sports

Eye on the Ball :The Lion's Eye Sports Editorial Five Reasons Why The Phillies Lost in the World Series

By Justin Park - Lion's Eye Sports Editor - jrp5321@psu.edu

5. *Brad Lidge:* Years from now, Brad Lidge will always be remembered as the heroic closer that recorded the final out to give the Philadelphia Phillies their first World Series Championship in 28 years. He completed a perfect 2008 regular season and postseason, recording 48 saves in as many opportunities. The following year was a different story for "Lights Out" Lidge. During the regular season, the right handed pitcher blew eleven saves and was far from perfect.

The 2009 playoffs were proving to be a fresh start for Lidge, as he recorded three saves against the Rockies and Dodgers. His command was perfect and his slider affective. Lidge was used sparingly throughout the World Series, for there were not many opportunities. However, in his one chance to shine during a tied game four, he did not get the job done. No, it may not have been a save situation, but Lidge still managed to blow the game.

After knotting up the game in the bottom of the eighth inning, the Phillies were hoping to tie the series and put Cliff Lee on the mound to pitch game five. This would not be the case. After recording two outs, Lidge let up a base hit to Johnny Damon, who would eventually steal second and third base. Lidge let up three runs that inning which led to the Yankees taking a stranglehold on the series, up three games to one.

That was a major turning point in the series. Lidge did not provide the automatic great performances like he had before and the Phillies could not make up his costly mistakes.

4. *Hideki Matsui:* The World Series Most Valuable Player seemed to be on a mission throughout the entire

series. Although he appeared in only thirteen at bats, he crushed the Phillies. Matsui batted .615 on the series and had three homeruns and eight runs batted in.

Matsui owned Pedro Martinez in games two and six and became the first designated hitter (DH) to win the MVP of the World Series. Matsui's most impressive stat would have to be the six RBIs in the series-clinching game six. The Phillies were hoping to take the Yankees to a decisive game seven, but Matsui clearly had other plans.

3. *Cole Hamels:* Like Lidge, Hamels was not the same pitcher he in 2009 as he once was in 2008. Hamels did not have that determination and cut throat attitude that a starting pitcher needs for the playoffs. Last playoffs, Hamels carried the Phillies to their World Series Championship. He was everything the team needed and pitched his way to the World Series MVP.

This past postseason, Hamels did not pitch nearly to the caliber that he had before and never seemed to be in the right state of mind. In a postgame interview, Hamels even admitted that he could not wait for the season to be over. Clearly, Hamels was not focused and simply wanted out. Hamels produced very averagely throughout the 2009 post season and it proved not to be enough for the Phillies to win consecutive World Series.

2. *Phillies Hitting:* There is no denying that the Phillies went up against a much tougher pitching staff this World Series, than they did in 2008. But, that is no excuse for the lack of hitting by the team. Aside from Chase Utley, Carlos Ruiz, and Jayson Werth, the team hit very poorly throughout the series.

Utley, of course, tied a major league record with five homeruns in the World Series. Ryan Howard also set a record for the World Series as well, striking out thirteen times. Howard pushed the Phillies past the Dodgers, batting .333 with two homeruns and eight RBIs. The first baseman earned himself the NLCS MVP and was hitting hotter than ever before.

When the Phillies finished off the Dodgers in game five, they had a full week to wait for the start of the World Series. During that week, Howard and the rest of the team had lost their "hot" bats and simply did not have the same success at hitting in the World Series.

Although the Phillies pitching was not at its best, the starters always gave the team the opportunity to win, however; the Phillies were getting shut down at the plate and could not score many runs.

1. *Yankees Were The Better Team:* Many skeptics believe that the Yankees bought their own success by signing the big name players and assembling an all-star team. Sure, their payroll is significantly larger than any other team in the league, but do not blame the Yankees for taking advantage of a flawed salary cap(less) system in the MLB. There were no rules to stop them from signing stars like C.C. Sabathia and Mark Teixeira during the 2008 offseason.

From the start of the season, the New York Yankees were projected to win the World Series, but projections are one thing and proving to be the best is another. The Yankees most definitely had the best roster in MLB, but they still played hard and earned their victories each night.

It's Early, But Time Will Tell...

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Unfortunately it appears that it will be more of the same for the Philadelphia 76ers this year. Although it is early in the young season, the Sixers appear to be much the same as they have been for the past couple of years. As of last Tuesday, the 76ers went to 2-2 on the young season after being demolished by the Boston Celtics, who moved to 5-0 on the year and appear to be the elite of the East.

The Sixers do have some young talent that is continuing to evolve, but it will be a surprise if the team crashes in on the party the Celtics, Cavs, and Orlando Magic, all of whom appear to be title contenders. This year we have seen an improvement and growth in the games of Louis Williams and Marreese Speights.

These are good signs for the future, but I fear we have seen the peak of Andre Iguodala's game and Elton Brand doesn't appear to be that dominant player we thought he would be. Thaddeus Young still shows glimpses of brilliance but has yet to fully establish a consistent jump shot.

With new coach Eddie Jordan changing systems it will undoubtedly take time for the 76ers to evolve into the team they are meant to be. They will continue to play tough defense but with the east having a couple very strong teams it seems the sixers will once again be in

the middle of the pack. This does not mean the 76ers cannot make a run at the end of the year and cause some problems if they were to make the playoffs. Everything can change in a 7 game series if some players were to get hot.

To succeed, the Sixers will need help off of

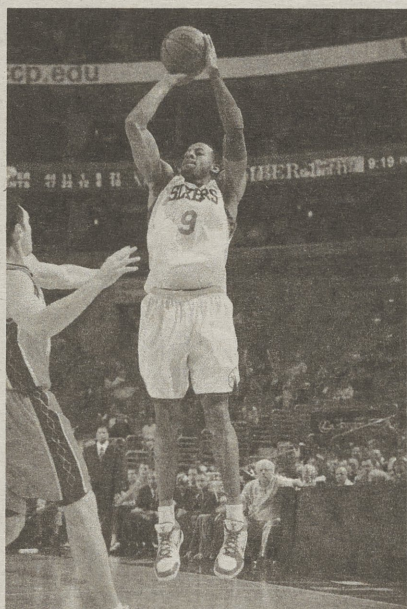
a bench that was weak last year. Players such as Willie Green, Jason Smith, and newcomers Jrue Holliday and Jason Kapono are shooters who will win valuable minutes if they can establish a good inside out game. Samuel Dalembert will also need to improve. He has yet to truly evolve into the player the Sixers paid him to be.

If Speights continues to grow we could see a downturn in playing time for Dalembert. This could ultimately be a blessing: if it comes down to gaining more experience for Speights over Dalembert playing the same all year, I'll take Speights.

Although it's tough to be a Sixers fan right now, especially when Philadelphia teams have dominated,

we must remind ourselves it is very early in the year and as we all know the NBA season is a long one. If the Sixers can continue to grow and evolve, and pick up Coach Jordan's Princeton offense, they could make the postseason as something of a darkhorse.

Sure this is a lot of "If's" but it would be nice to see this young team do well in the near future.



Sixers' Andre Iguodala takes a shot against the New Jersey Nets (photo courtesy of sports.yahoo.com)

Flyers Off to a Good Start

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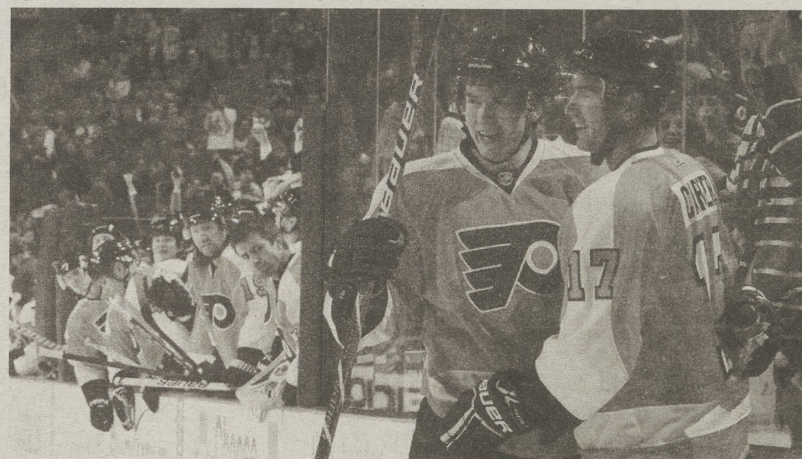
Hockey experts had predicted that this could be the year for the orange and black. The Flyers recently closed up the month of October going 4-2-1 at home and 2-2-0 on the road. As of November 9, following back to back wins over the weekend, the Flyers are placed fourth in the Atlantic division with 19 points and a respectable record of 9-4-1.

In addition to Danny Briere being out of the lineup with a lower body injury, forward Simon Gagne had surgery on November 3rd to repair two small hernias and is not expected to play for the next 6-to-8 weeks.

Flyers forward, James van Riemsdyk, has taken over the scoring lead among all NHL rookies. His three goals and eleven assists on the young season places him at the top with 13 points.

On a side note, the Flyers lead the league in goals per game, with an average of 3.67, and power-play success, at 28.1 percent.

The Flyers will be traveling west on a road trip in the middle of November to play some Western Conference teams, many of whom are playing well early in the season



Flyers' James van Riemsdyk (left) and Jeff Carter (right) celebrate a goal (Photo Courtesy of sports.yahoo.com)

November Schedule:

Nov. 14 Vs.	Buffalo	7:00 PM	CSN
Nov. 16 Vs.	New Jersey	7:00 PM	VS
Nov. 18 @	Los Angeles	10:30 PM	CSN
Nov. 20 @	San Jose	10:00 PM	CSN
Nov. 21 @	Phoenix	8:00 PM	CSN
Nov. 23 @	Colorado	9:00 PM	CSN
Nov. 25 @	NY Islanders	7:00 PM	CSN
Nov. 27 Vs.	Buffalo	1:00 PM	CSN
Nov.28 @	Atlanta	7:00 PM	CSN

Upcoming Sixers Schedule

11/11 Sixers @ Nets 7:30 11/13 Sixers vs Jazz 7:00 11/14 Sixers @ Bulls 8:00