

# Eye on Sports

## Philadelphia Phillies Clinch Fourth Consecutive Division Title



Roy Halladay and Carlos Ruiz celebrate the final out of the N.L. East clinching game against the Washinton Nationals  
(photo courtesy of sports.yahoo.com)



Jayson Werth and Roy Halladay continue the celebration in the club house  
(photo courtesy of sports.yahoo.com)

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

During a season that held its ups and downs, the Phillies are heading back to the MLB postseason for the fourth consecutive season. Having clinched a playoff berth on Sunday, the Phillies locked up the division on Monday night with an 8-0 win against the Washington Nationals in a game where Roy Halladay pitched all nine innings and allowed just two hits. Aside from the division, Halladay's 21st win also secured the best record in the National League and home field advantage throughout the playoffs for the league's hottest team.

Even though the division wasn't technically secured until Monday, it remained all but won following a three game sweep of the Atlanta Braves last week. The Phillies entered the series three games up over the Braves in the division and were able to line up the pitching trio known as "H2O" (Halladay, Hamels, and Oswalt). The Phillies took each game of the series and put the N.L. East out of reach for the struggling Braves and improved to 44-15 since July 21st, when they trailed Atlanta by seven games, in the process.

Although the ending and the celebration may have seemed routine for this team, the process was far different from any other year. Trailing in the division for a great portion of the season, this Phillies team did not look like the teams from past years. How could they? With each position within the infield missing time due to injury, and multiple players having extended hitting slumps, the Phillies had a lot of adversity going against them.

Injuries have plagued the 2010 Phillies throughout the course of the season. Ryan Howard missed eighteen days in August due to a high ankle sprain, Utley missed all of July with a thumb injury, and Placido Polanco was injured with an elbow sprain. Leadoff man, Jimmy Rollins missed much of the season with a variety of injuries, most recently as a result of a sore hamstring.

However, the team had something this year to pick them up that they haven't had before: outstanding pitching.

The obvious CY Young award candidate, Roy Halladay, leads the league in wins, is second in strikeouts, and third in ERA. Halladay been every bit as good as advertised since being traded to Philadelphia. He has been consistent throughout the year and is the Phillies first 20 game winner in 28 years. Although this will be Halladay's first time in the postseason, with his talent and mental toughness, one probably wouldn't know it.

Another Roy has also been responsible for the team's success, in more ways than one. Roy Oswalt

is sixth in the league in ERA and has been pitching tremendously since arriving in Philadelphia. Aside from his talent and experience, Roy Oswalt brought much more to this Phillies team: confidence. With the team just beginning to find its groove around the time of the trading deadline, the Phillies and fans alike weren't sure how to gauge their season; however, General Manager Ruben Amaro Jr. sent a message to the city by acquiring the three-time all star. The message was to win and they did just that. Following his debut with the team, the Phillies have won every game Oswalt has started.

The resurgence of pitchers Cole Hamels and Brad Lidge have also played a major role this season.

Cole Hamels is looking once again like the MVP of the World Series in 2008. After having a down season last year, Hamels has the focus, the mindset, and the "stuff" to help the Phillies reach the World Series again. Despite a lack of run support in many of his games during the regular season this year, Hamels was stayed determined and did not get frustrated. Hamels is ranked 14th in the league in ERA (following a rough outing against the Mets) and fifth in total strikeouts.

Brad Lidge is another pitcher looking like he did in 2008. After starting the season with a few blown saves and a trip to the disabled list, Lidge has again solidified his role on the team as the closer. From April through July, Lidge completed just nine of fourteen attempts. However, since early August, Lidge has 17 saves in 18 attempts and has looked completely in control and confident along the way. Aside from completing more saves, Lidge has also lowered his ERA from 5.57 down to 3.09. Lidge has been fantastic in pressure situations as of late and has been a crucial part of this team's incredible run.

As mentioned, winning the N.L. East and advancing to the playoffs is beginning to become routine for this Phillies team, something they and the fans should not take advantage of. This is a determined group that got the taste of success in 2008 and since then have done nothing but work back to it. From the moment they won the World Series in 2008, they were talking about doing it again, and last year they almost did. Although they didn't win the World Series last season, they have learned a great deal from the experience and have become hungrier than ever to win it all again. Surprisingly, what are merely hopes and dreams for most teams in baseball are serious expectations for this Phillies team, for each one of these players know that it is World Series or bust and that getting to the post season is only the beginning.

### Phillies NLDS Schedule:

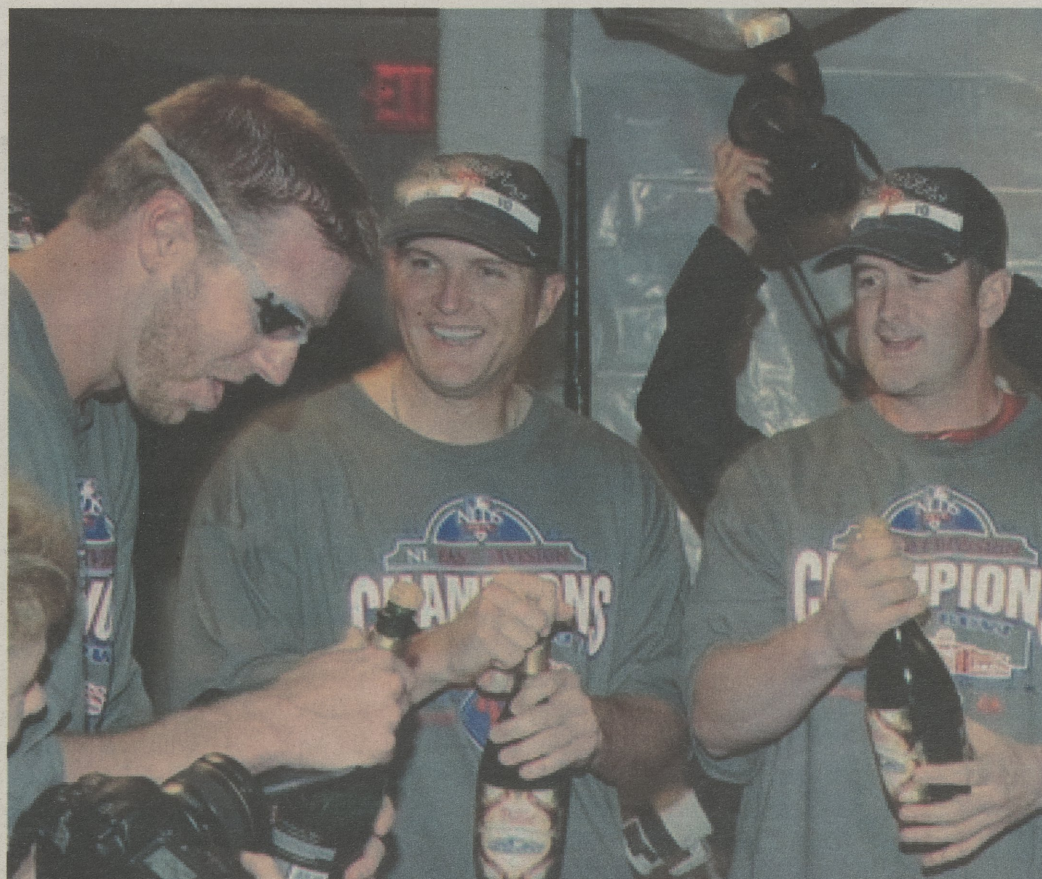
Game 1: Wed., Oct. 6

Game 2: Fri., Oct. 8

Game 3: Sun., Oct. 10

Game 4: Mon., Oct. 11

Game 5: Wed., Oct. 13



Roy Halladay, Mike Sweeney and Brian Schneider were the first to pop the champagne since this is will be their first postseason  
(photo courtesy of sports.yahoo.com)