

PRE-SEASON PROGNOSIS 1972

AMERICAN LEAGUE EAST

South River Gladiators

The Glads won 97 games to win the AL East by one game over the Elephants, then advanced to the World Series by beating the Wild Weasels and self-same Elephants before losing to the Totems in the Fall Classic. They are loaded again this year and should breeze to the divisional flag barring some serious underachieving on their part or sensational overachieving on the part of other teams. In a down year for hitting, South River is decent on the attack but sensational on the mound. Ed Kranepool at first is a decent hitter but on this team and will be spelled by Joe Torre when Joe isn't playing third. His offense is adequate but way down from a sensational 1971. Felix Milan at second has some defensive issues and is strictly a Punch and Judy hitter. Bud Harrelson wrote the book on good field no-hit shortstop and will be spelled by several no-names. Garry Jestadt and Carl Taylor will share time at third with Torre. Ralph Garr is probably the best hitter among the outfielders although he is reluctant to take a walk. Ritchie Schienblum, Rico Carty and Rusty Staub will share time in the garden with two future HOFers, Willie Mays and Frank Robinson, who are now on the downside of great careers. Behind the plate is the incomparable Johnny Bench who has great power and one of the best throwing arms of any catcher in history. Then we get to the pitching staff. Bert Blyleven, Tom Terrific Seaver and Rudy May are the guts of the starting rotation, but swing men Louie Tiant, Roger Nelson and Steve Stone will also get some quality starts. Jim Brewer, Cy Acosta and Ramon Hernandez form a lights out bullpen.

Los Angeles Angels

The Holy Ones were pitiful in 1971, losing 100 games but look to be much improved in 72 though challenging for the pennant seems out of reach. In the context of the division they have a good mix of offense and pitching. John Briggs has decent power and will hold down first base. Dave Cash at second has a flashy glove and decent bat, but he'll be limited to about 100 games with Terry Harmon, who has a good batting eye, picking up the slack. Mark Belanger is a wizard with the glove at short, but his bat is terrible, and he'll be spelled by Bob Heise who is a much better, if punchless hitter. Darrell Evens has decent power and a good glove and will get the lion's share of starts at the hot corner. Dave Duncan has some pop in his bat but won't hit for much of an average behind the plate and he'll be spelled by John Boccabella while hot shot rookie Darrell Porter waits in the wings. The starting rotation is not bad as they feature Dick Woodson, Tom Timmerman, Woodie Fryman, Jim Perry and Wilt Wilcox. Rookie Rick Reuschel is also available for limited duty. Bob Miller and Pedro Borbon are the mainstays of the bullpen.

Evanston Elephants

The Pachyderms won 96 games last year and then upset the heavily favored Hot Rods in the first round of the playoffs before falling to the Gladiators in Round Two. Little chance of that happening again. Boog Powell at first never had a great glove but he will be terrible this year although he does have some power and knows how to get on base. His backup is Tommy Davis who also can play the outfield. Second base will be shared between long timer Horace Clarke and newcomer Dave Johnson. Both can field but neither can hit much. Gene Alley and Sonny Jackson will share time at short and though neither will embarrass you, they won't get too many All-Star votes. Brooks Robinson will continue as a vacuum cleaner at third, but his bat is starting to fade and Ken Reitz was drafted as his long-term replacement. Jose Cardenal is by far the best outfielder as this is not a team strength. Jesus Alou and Hal McRae will each be limited to a handful of games and Dave May looks to have a down year while the

balance of the outfield starts will go to players who can't hit their way out of a paper bag. Carlton Fisk is finally ready to fulfill his great potential and will be an offensive and defensive force behind the plate and he has Bill Freehan as an able replacement. The pitching staff is pretty solid but nowhere near the level of South River. Dick Tidrow, Tom Bradley, Brian Downing and Nelson Briles will get the bulk of the starts, but Fred Norman is also available. Pete Richert, Doyle Alexander, Fred Gladding and Horacio Pena form a decent bullpen.

Fairfax Colts

Flip a coin between the Colts and Elephants for third place and either could rise to second but that's about it. Fairfax's offense is better than Evanston, but the pitching staff falls short. First base is the domain of Stormin Norman Cash, but he has some issues with LHP's and will need to be platooned with Jim Hickman. Wayne Garrett, who has a great batting eye will share time at second with John Kennedy. Marty Perez, who has no power to go with a weak bat and lousy glove will be the shortstop by default but there are a few part timers who can fill in for him. Steve Braun is a decent if punchless hitter at third with rookie Eric Soderholm waiting in the wings. Rick Monday has a good batting eye and modest power and will patrol center field. Greg Luzinski in left is the only other more or less full-time outfielder with the balance of starts filled by several part timers. Last year's star Tony Oliva had off season injuries and will be available for very limited action in 1972. Ray Fosse and Dave Rader will share time behind the plate. The starting staff isn't bad with Don Wilson, Clyde Wright, Larry Dierker and Sonny Siebert. Dick Hall and Roric Harrison lead a decent bullpen.

Nanose Bay Sox

The Sox lost 98 games last year and might repeat that sorry stat in 1972. They are at or near the bottom in all the categories of my complex formula so rising from the cellar will be an accomplishment. The pitching staff is especially woeful and might be the worst in all of SPBII. Mike Jorgenson, Don Mincher and Bob Robertson will share time at first base but none of them will be confused with Dick Allen or Willie Stargell. Bobby Grich at second knows how to take a walk, has some power and fields his position well. Bobby Valentine is a better second and third baseman but will have to play shortstop by default as there is little else. Paul Schaal will probably get most of the starts at third but Grich may move in for a few games with Ron Theobald filling in at second. Don Baylor will get about 100 games in the outfield but there is no one else other than light hitting Joe Lovitto who can be considered anything close to a regular. A parade of part-timers will fill in as needed. The bench does have two stars of the future in George Foster and Dwight Evans. Ellie Rodriguez who has some offensive ability and John Bateman who has little will share catching duties. Dick Drago is a nice number one starter, but the quality falls off very fast after him and the rest of the rotation probably couldn't pitch for almost any of the other teams in the league. Former star Denny McClain is trying for a comeback but it's doubtful he will be more than a punching bag. Gary Ross and Bill Spaceman Lee are two fine relievers but how many leads will they have to protect?

American League West

Route 66 Hot Rods

The Rods won 120 games last year but were shockingly upset in the first round of the playoffs by the Evanston Elephants. However, the team is loaded again this year and are heavy favorites to repeat in the AL West. The pitching staff is outstanding, probably the best in all of SPBII. They have a bit of a "problem" at first base but it's one that every manager would like to have. Both Mike Epstein and Harmon Killebrew could start for almost any other team in the league but they both only play first base so the manager may be forced to platoon them as Epstein, a LHB is great against RHP and Killebrew

pounds LHP's. Rod Carew at second doesn't have a lot of power but he has a .300 plus bat and is a more than adequate fielder. Bert Campy Campenaris is a flashy fielder and great base stealer at short but he needs to get on base first. George Boomer Scott is a great fielding first baseman, but he'll be forced to play third given the logjam at first. Scott has good power and is adequate with the glove. Pete Rose, Bobby Murcer and Reggie Jackson are a great outfield, maybe the best in all of SPBII. Thurman Munson is a sensational defensive catcher and more than adequate with the bat. Even with all this firepower at the plate, the pitching staff is the "Jewel in the Crown" of this team. They have six starting pitchers (Steve Carlton, Catfish Hunter, Jim Palmer, Ron Kline, Vida Blue and Marty Pattin) who would all be the first or second starter on most of the rest of the teams in the league. Tug McGraw, Mike Marshall and Sparky Lyle not to mention Eddie Watt and Bob Locker are all knockout relievers. Woe to the teams who have to compete with the Hot Rods.

Kansas City Barons

The Barons and Monarchs will battle it out for second place all year long and at least one of them could earn a wild card slot and we know what happened last year with the Elephants. The Kansas City attack is solid, but they have some pitching issues. Lee May at first is a pitiful fielder but he more than makes up for it with a powerful bat. Rennie Stennett and Dave Roberts will share time at second base. Neither is a very good fielder but Stennett is a much better hitter although he seems to possess an allergy to the base on balls. Chris Spier at short has surprising power for a middle infielder and is also a solid fielder. The hot corner is a problem with nothing like a regular and a parade of non-entities will share the position by committee. Roberts may work into that equation. Bob Oliver is a good defensive first baseman and a lousy outfielder but in order to get May into the lineup he will be forced to the garden. Oliver has some power and look for a lot of late inning defensive switches as the season progresses. Jimmy the Toy Cannon Wynn is a fixture in the outfield where he combines a great batting eye with good power. Joe Rudi is also a solid outfielder, both offensively and defensively. Garry Maddox has modest power, but he is the exact opposite of Wynn in terms of on base potential. Pat Kelly will also feature in the outfield mix. Duffy Dyer, a great defensive catcher, will share time behind the plate with Ed Kirkpatrick. Nolan Ryan, Clay Kirby and Bill Stoneman lead the starting corps but all three have control issues. Bill Hands and Paul Splittorff are also available to round out the rotation. Terry Forster, Frank Linzy and Moe Drapowsky are all top-notch relievers.

West Warwick Monarchs

The Monarchs have better pitching than the Barons, but the offense is not quite as good, especially in terms of power. Either Carlos May (my old neighbor) and Willie Montanez could play first base while the other moves to the outfield. May is a better hitter and knows how to take a walk. Montanez is a weaker hitter and not as good of an outfielder so he may get the nod at first. Doug Griffin will share time at second with Ken Boswell; Griffin is a much better player. Roger Metzger doesn't hit much and is just an average fielder but there is no one else to play shortstop. Doug Rader has decent power and a good glove at third. Cesar Cedeno, Dusty Baker and Ken Henderson are all acceptable outfielders and either May or Montanez will fill out the lineup card. Catcher is not a strong position on this team and a cast of thousands will put in time behind the plate. Don Sutton, Dock Ellis, Jim Lonborg and Ron Bryant are all solid starters with Baylor Moore filling in as needed. The bullpen has some depth and will be a major strength of the team.

East Kenosha Lions

Big drop off after the first three and the Cats will be battling with the Mets all year to stay out of last place. Both teams suffer from a serious lack of team power. You would like a few more homers and OBA than you'll get from Chris Chambliss, but he will get the Lion's share (pun intended) of starts at first with the balance going to Terry Crowley. Cookie Rojas at second can hit a few doubles but very few out of the park and won't kill you in the field. Pint-size Freddy Patek is your archetypical good-field no-hit shortstop. Aurelio Rodriguez brings a flashy glove and modest bat to third base. Vida Pinson is probably past his prime, but he is still a solid outfield contributor, especially on this team. Ken Berry is a flashy fielder in center with some offensive ability, but he won't be able to play much more than 120 games. Cesar Geronimo, hot shot rookie Buddy Bell, Bernie Carbo and Jose Cruz will share the balance of the outfield starts. Johnny Edwards is a serviceable catcher and will be backed up by Milt May and Steve Yeager. Pat Dobson and Joe Coleman are a solid 1-2 in the starting rotation and after them you have work horse Stan Bahnsen and Dick Bosman. Dave Guisti and Paul Lindblad are a great R/L combo in the bullpen, and they'll get good help from George Culver.

New York Mets

The Mets, in addition to a dearth of power also lack good team on base and their pitching staff is the worst in the division, by far. Matty Alou, a good slap hitter with no power will probably be forced to play first for lack of a serviceable alternative. Young Steve Garvey is still a few years away and Joe Pepitone looks to be on the downside of a once promising career. Ted Sizemore is an excellent fielder and decent hitter at second and he'll be backed up by Luis Alvarado who also plays short. Ancient Luis Aparicio will drag his 38-year old body out there for another season at short where his prior defensive wizardry seems to have evaporated and his base-stealing ability is almost all gone. Don Money who has some power and a good glove will keep third base warm in anticipation of the development of heralded rookie Mike Schmidt. Manny Mota doesn't have much power and is a below average outfielder, but he can slap the ball around pretty well. The rest of the outfield is pretty much by committee as the manager will be shifting players in and out all year. Ed Hermann will be a decent catcher for three fourths of a season, but his backups are a disaster. Bob Moose and Phil Niekro lead the pitching staff, but the quality falls off very quickly after that duo. Ken Sanders is the only really reliable reliever.

National League East

Seattle Totems

The Tote's are coming off a three-peat and all indications are a breeze into the playoffs again as they are head and shoulders above the rest of the division. Their offense might be the best in the entire league, and they could approach 200 team homers. The pitching staff is also outstanding. There is a bit of an issue at first base where they have two high quality players, Dick (don't call me Ritchie) Allen and John Mayberry. Both have great bats and one may very well be traded, probably Mayberry. Joe Morgan at second is also sensational as he can hit, hit with power, get on base and steal a base. His defense is not great but more than adequate. Eddie Brinkman at short can field but not hit although in this lineup that is not a problem, but the manager could play Bill Russell who has a much better bat although his defense isn't quite as good. Sal Bando has some decent power and a good glove at third but won't hit for a high average. Bobby Tolan, Reggie Smith and Roy White are all good outfielders who can do it all but room must be found for Wes Parker who also plays first base. Russell also could get a few outfield starts. Ted Simmons is a .300 hitting catcher with decent power and a good glove. There is a lot of room for some late trades with this roster. The pitching staff has three work horses who are all capable

of 20 plus wins (Gaylord Perry, Mickey Lolich and Wilbur Wood). In fact, this trio could theoretically start 120 plus games between them. Mike Cuellar, a number one starter on most other teams, and Scipio Spinks can pick up the rest. Sidewinder Ted Abernathy and veteran Lindy McDaniel lead a deep bullpen. This team will be tough to beat.

Salzburg Bishops

A massive falloff after the Totems but the Bishops, on the strength of a solid pitching staff might challenge for a wild card slot. Bill Buckner, who also plays the outfield will share time at first with defensive whiz Tommy McGraw. Tommy Helms has some on base problems and not much pop in his bat, but he'll be the primary second baseman. Don Kessinger is a solid shortstop but another slap hitter without much power. Rico Petrocelli at third has some defensive issues but he has modest power and knows how to take a walk. They have a lot of bodies in the outfield but no one who is an everyday star. The best are Vic Davalillo, Cito Gaston, Tommy Harper and Danny Cater. Catcher is a grab bag with half a dozen non-entities shuffling in and out of the lineup. Rick Wise, Jim McAndrew, Ross Grimsley, Rich Hand and Mike Torrez are a very good rotation, but they'll have to pitch a lot of innings as the bullpen is not that strong. The best reliever is Jerry Bell, but he won't be able to pitch enough to be a major factor.

Winter Harbor Seals

With a few breaks, Winter Harbor could challenge for second but could also fall to fourth. Carl Yastremski will either play first or the outfield and even though he won't put up gaudy numbers as he has in the past, is still a solid hitter. Larry Bittner and his punchless bat is also available for first or the garden. Ron Hunt, the human clay pigeon, will hold down second base with help from Carman Fanzone. Larry Bowa at short can field and hit enough to be a modest offensive contributor. Ritchie Hebner has some decent power at third and he'll be backed up by Jim Fregosi who does not. Del Unser is a great flyhawk in center field but don't expect him to hit or get on base much. Bob Watson is a terrible fielder but makes up for it with a good bat. The balance of the outfield starts will go to whomever isn't playing first and several spear carriers. Catcher is by committee with Duke Sims the best of the lot. Milt Pappas and Tommy John are two good starters, and they'll get help from swingmen Mike Paul, Ray Corbin and Dave Lemons. Sudden Sam McDowell is battling Demon Rum plus control and won't be a major factor this year. Pat Zachary and the non-starting swingmen will man the bullpen.

Data City Schema Busters

The team has some power especially from aging veteran Hank Aaron, who will probably play first base, and Dave Kingman at third. Tito Fuentes is a serviceable second baseman who can also steal a base if needed. Frank Duffy and Enzo Hernandez will share time at short, but Frank is a better hitter and fielder. Another aging veteran, Al Kaline will be out there for 100 games or so in right field, but his offense is way down from the glory days. Tommy Agee is another semi-regular in the outfield and the balance of starts will go to several part-timers while the manager waits for hot shot youngsters Mickey Rivers and Gary Mathews to develop. Manny Sanguillen is a well above average catcher and he'll be backed up by Paul Casanova. Claude Osteen and Steve Blass could each win 20 games on a team with better offense but that is unlikely here. Bill Singer, Jim McGlothlin and Ray Culp round out the rotation. They have some decent relievers, led by ex-starter Steve Barber but overall the pitching staff is probably the worst in the division.

Montreal Royals

The Royals' offense is arguably the worst in all of SPBII but the pitching staff, though below average, is not as bad. They will have a tough time escaping the cellar. Ron Fairly at first can field and hit enough to be a contributor, especially on this team where he is probably the team leader. Jack Brohamer brings an OK glove and weak bat to second base while management waits for highly touted rookie Davey Lopes to develop. Young shortstop Dave Concepcion is learning on the job but won't contribute much this year. Mike Ferrero will play third by default, but the Ron (the penguin) Cey is waiting in the wings. All around utilityman Rich Morales can fill in at second, short and third. A committee will cover catching duties with Gene Tenace the best of the lot. John Milner is probably the best of a poor outfield crew although Elliot Maddox will give you 100 or so decent starts. The rest are non-entities although rookie John Grubb is a diamond in the rough. John Matlack and Burt Hooton are good starters while Skip Lockwood and Ernie McAnally will also contribute. Dave LaRoche and Jack Acker are a good L/R duo in the pen but they don't have a lot of help.

National League West

Portland Beavers

The NL West looks to have the only real pennant race as the Beavers, Sparkplugs and maybe the Fortress should battle it out all year. Portland has a better offense than Speedway, but the pitching staff is not quite as good. It must also be said that this division is clearly the weakest in the league. Tony Perez will play first where he has good power and an adequate glove. This will push Felipe Alou who is also a decent first baseman to the outfield where his defense is suspect. Glenn Beckert, a decent slap hitter will get most of the starts at second but when he rests, Dalton Jones will take over and he is an offensive disaster. Gene Michael and Jackie Hernandez will share time at short, but neither can hit much. Earl Williams, who also catches and plays first will be at third where his glove is suspect, but he has 30 homer potential. Tim McCarver is the mainstay at catcher where he has limited power; his backup is Les Josephson who has even less long ball potential. Billy Williams is the best hitter on the team who might challenge for the batting title and approach 40 homers. Bobby Bonds will man another OF slot and he also has good power. Alou, a decent slap hitter and feeble fielding Tony Horton will round out the garden slots. Bob Gibson is the unquestioned leader of the staff and he is superb, but the number two starter is Juan Marichal who is beginning to show his age and the balance of the rotation will be several mediocre swingmen. The bullpen has half a dozen effective hurlers with Darrell Knowles the best. The pen should bail out the team on many occasions during the season.

Speedway Sparkplugs

The Plugs won 82 games last year but look to improve on that total in 1972 and should be in the pennant race all season. Willie Pops Stargell can't field very well but he knows how to hit and is clearly the team leader at first base. Dick McAuliffe will share time at second with Tony Taylor who is a much better hitter but will be limited in his playing time. Leo Cardenas is an effective fielder at short but has a pop gun bat and might yield some playing time to Toby Harrah who is a better hitter but has a lousy glove. Ron Santo at third can do it all, good BA and on base, hits with power and can field his position very well. Don Rudolph, Johnny Oates and Jerry Grote will share time behind the plate with Oates the best hitter and Grote far and away the best fielder. Mickey Stanley is a gold glove quality center fielder with a little power but not much of a batting average. Mike Lum can field and knows how to take a walk but that's about all. A parade of part timers including Rick Reichert, Walt No Neck Williams, Frank Howard, Dave Marshall and Don Buford will round out the outfield starts. Kenny Holtzman has 20 game potential as the leading starter with his main help coming from Carl Morton, Ron Reed, Jerry Reuss and

Jim Kaat. Rollie Fingers and Chuck Seelbach are the primary bullpen contributors, but rookie Rich Goose Gossage is waiting in the wings.

Frankfort Fortress

The Forts might have something to say about the division winner as while their attack is below par, the pitching staff is above average. First base could be a season long issue, barring a late trade as Stretch McCovey will be limited to less than 100 games and his numbers don't look to be that great anyway. Several part timers will fill in as needed, none very impressive. Sandy Alomar is a serviceable second baseman who can play everyday but there isn't much else positive you can say about him. Danny Thompson at short can field and slap the ball around pretty well but has little pop in his bat. Ken McMullen is OK at third, but you'd like a little bit more power from the hot corner. Catcher could be another position needing a late trade as right now the position is filled by three non-entities, Glenn Borgman, Jerry Moses and Larry Howard (not one of the Three Stooges). Jim Northrup and Leroy Stanton are the closest thing to full time outfielders but neither has the kind of power you'd like from the garden positions. Gates Brown has some modest power and can field his position but will be limited to about 100 games. Several part timers will fill in as needed while the manager waits for highly touted youngster Ritchie Zisk to develop. Dave McNally is the leader and workhorse of the pitching staff, but he'll get some good help from Andy Messersmith and swingmen Jim Barr and Bruce Dal Canton. Bill Parsons will also figure in the rotation. Clay Carroll is a knockout closer and Wayne Granger isn't far behind. Not much more quality on the staff.

Tippecanoe Voyageurs

The Voyageurs won the AL West going away in 1971, then bested the Fortress in the first round before falling to the ultimate champs, the Totems, in the LCS. However, this is another year, and the offense appears to be way down and the pitching staff not much better. With a lot of luck, they could climb to third but falling to the cellar is a much better possibility. First baseman Nate Colbert can pay every day, has excellent power and is probably the best hitter on the team. Darrell Thomas won't kill you at second, but he won't win too many games either; his backup is Bernie Allen. Tim Foli at short is about the same as Thomas except his bat is even more punchless. Dave Nelson at third is another offensive cipher and he can't even field very well. Paul Popovich is a good defensive fill in at second and short but can't hit at all. Catcher is a disaster area with as many as five players moving in and out of the lineup with none of them able to contribute much. Andy Etchebarren can field but that's about it. Gary Nolan is a top-flight pitcher but won't get enough starts to be a major factor. Fritz Peterson and Mike Kekich (the notorious wife swapping duo) plus Steve Arlin and Ken Reynolds round out the rotation. Joel Horlen, Bobby Bolin and Cecil Upshaw lead the bullpen. Lefty Doug Rau is on the way up while veteran southpaw Gary Peters is on the way down.

Thud Ridge Wild Weasels

The Weasels were in the AL West in 1971 and earned a wild card slot but lost to the Gladiators in the first round but that will be a distant memory in 1972 as they will have to battle to escape the cellar. Ron Blomberg is a terrible fielder at first (where is the DH when we need it?) but a very productive hitter for about 100 games. Mike Hegan can field and is a good hitter but will be very limited and used mostly as Blomberg's defensive caddy. Deron Johnson, another poor fielder with limited offense will also fill in at first. Mike Andrews, a below par hitter will share time with Tim Cullen, a better fielder and hitter but limited available, will share time at second. Rich Auerbach (no relation to Red) could be described as a good field no-hit shortstop, except that he can't field! Craig Nettles at third is a superb fielder and probably has the best home run potential of anyone on the team, but that isn't saying much as the team sorely lacks power. Utilityman Hal Lanier can fill in at second, short and third. Lou Pinella is a solid

outfielder with decent power and an adequate glove. Cesar Tovar can field and run the bases and he slaps the ball around pretty well but has little power. Paul Blair is an excellent ballhawk in center but once again lacks offense, especially the ability to get on base. Veteran Johnny Callison is available for spot play. Dick Billings and Randy Hundley will share time at catcher with Billings the better hitter and Hundley the better defender. The team has four decent starters in Johnny Odom, Fergie Jenkins, Mel Stottlemyre and Jack Billingham although Odom has some control issues. Don Newhouser and Jack Tatum are the best relievers but neither can pitch enough to be a major factor and there isn't much behind them so the starters will need to go deep into almost every game. Any modest success the Weasels enjoy will be due to an overachieving pitching staff.