

PRE-SEASON PROGNOSIS 1948

American League

Hoosier Thunderbolts

The AL should have a real dogfight in 1948, with as many as four (and maybe five) teams battling for the pennant. The 'Bolts get the nod, ever so slightly, on the basis of a very good pitching staff and a powerful offense. Outfielder Enos (Country) Slaughter and first sacker Tommy Henrich (a Massillon, Ohio native) lead the hit parade. Slaughter combines his legendary hustle with a .300 plus bat and the ability to get on base. Henrich has good double and homer power and will key a lot of rallies. Jeff Heath will get a lot of starts but will be limited to less than 120 games but there are several other outfielders who can pick up the slack. The team lacks a decent natural CF which could hurt the defense. Jerry Priddy is a solid second sacker who excels both at the plate and on the field. Bob Elliott is an on-base machine with good power at the hot corner and Eddie Joost at short also knows how to take a walk and can do the job in the field. Les Moss and Aaron Robinson will share time behind the plate. Lefties Gene Beardon and Hal Newhouser are the undisputed leaders of the pitching staff. The balance of the hurlers are solid but many have some problems with control which could be a problem as the season progresses.

Brooklyn Royal Giants

The defending AL champs have unquestioned power with four players having 30 plus homer potential. The best are Jolting Joe DiMaggio and Ralph Kiner. Joe is smooth as silk in CF and combines a .320 bat with power while Kiner will hit for a much lower average but he can take a walk, in addition to knocking the ball out of the park. Shortstop Vern Stephens is that rarest of creatures, a smooth fielder who can also hit the ball out of the park. Sid Gordon at third can also power the ball and also knows how to wait for a base on balls. Ritchie Ashburn and Dale Mitchell won't hit many homers but both are excellent table setters who will score on a lot of two and three run homers when the power guys are at bat. Eddie Waitkus will get most of the starts at first and is probably one of the weaker hitters in the lineup but he won't embarrass you. Catcher represents a cast of thousands but overall they are adequate to the job. Rex Barney, Larry Jansen and Dick Fowler are the leaders of the pitching staff but Vic Raschi isn't far behind. The bullpen is not that strong and several of the starters will have to pull double duty.

River City Rugrats

Teddy Ballgame Williams is unequaled and will put in another sensational season but overall the team lacks power and could easily finish the season with less than 100 team homers. Snuffy Sternweiss at second and Luke (Aches and Pains) Appling at short are a good keystone combo although it would be nice if Snuffy hit a little better but he does know how to take a walk. Bob Dillinger at third will hit for a high average but has non-existent home run power. Steve Vico at first is one of the weakest at his position in the league but catcher Yogi Berra is one of the best. Ron Northey and Elmer Valo are the best hitting OF's after Williams although Northey is weak on defense. Bud Stewart will also get a lot of OF starts, especially since he is the only decent CF on the roster. Dutch Leonard is the leader of the pitching staff but he'll get great help from Ralph Branca and Bullet Bob Feller although Feller has his usual control issues. Swingman Preacher Rowe will contribute along with pure reliever Bobby Hogue but the quality of the staff falls off pretty quickly after those mentioned above.

Goshen Aces

The Aces have a powerful lineup that will win a lot of games but the pitching staff has some holes that might sabotage the season. Stan the Man Musial is the Aces' answer to Ted Williams and the Man has a

real chance at the triple crown and could exceed 100 extra-base hits. Outfielder Del Ennis and first baseman Johnny Mize will amply supplement Musial's power. Whitey Lockman and Dave Philley will share the balance of the outfield at bats and both will be productive. Birdie Tebbetts is a solid catcher but doesn't have much power and Billy Johnson will give you a yeomanlike performance at third. The middle infield is not strong; if Eddie Stanky could play every day, he would be a star but he'll be limited to less than half a season and the remaining 2B starts will be filled with non-entities. Virgil Stallcup at short is well below average but the rest of the lineup should be able to carry him. Then we get to the pitching staff which is probably the worst in the AL. This group will have to overachieve if Goshen has any hopes of contending. It's not for lack of quantity as they have 20 hurlers on the roster as opposed to only 15 every day players. However, among this horde only Johnny Sain is a standout and he could easily lead the league in wins if given proper support. The rest of the starting staff is sketchy and it's possible that Harry Taylor and Mario Pieretti will get a decent amount of starts and when they do, it will be bombs away. Ken Trinkle is a decent reliever but there is very little behind him.

South River Muck Dogs

We are getting pretty deep into the projections but the pitching rich Muck Dogs could contend with a few breaks and some "break-downs" from the teams above but passing four clubs will be a tall order. In any event, they are assured of significantly exceeding last year's 65 wins. The offense is not strong and could be the weakest in the AL, an exact reversal of the Aces. They might not have a 10-homer man but will get enough others here and there to approach 100 as a team. The clear team leader is OF Tommy Holmes who will hit well over .300 with some double and triple power but only a handful of homers. Shortstop Stan Rojek can give you a near .300 BA, fields his position adequately and can also steal a base, something very rare in SPBIII. Ted Kluszewski will get the majority of starts at first and can pop a few home runs but suffers from an aversion to the base on balls. Second sacker Pete Suder and OF Johnny Blatnik are the only other semi-regulars as the balance of the lineups will be filled by a variety of part timers. On the other hand, the mound staff is outstanding and will vie with the Thunderbolts for the best in the AL. Harry the Cat Breechen is superb and could easily win 20 plus games with the right support and also has excellent control, a rare condition in 1948. Robin Roberts, Blix Donnelly and Virgil Trucks will fill out the majority of the remaining starts after Breechen but the manager will have to be cautious in allocating too many starts to the number five man, Fred Sanford. Ted Wilks is one of the best relievers in the league and he has great depth behind him. The pitching staff will need to carry the team if they have any dreams of the post-season.

Maumee City Carp

The Carp look to be solidly in sixth place as it is unlikely they could rise and the Larks look to have a "lock" on the cellar. They have a pop-gun attack and will almost certainly finish last in all of SPB III and probably by a wide margin in homers. The best hitter is first baseman Billy Goodman who should hit over .300 and knows how to take a walk but might not get 30 extra-base hits and very few of those as homers. Phil (Scooter) Rizzuto will share time at short with Dickie Kerr while Al Kozar patrols second. None of the three will overwhelm you with the bat. Grady Hatton is another bango hitter at third and while Rube Walker is a decent catcher, he'll probably only be able to start 80 games or so and when he's not starting things will get grim. Dick Wakefield is the best of a weak outfield and probably the only team member with the potential of double figure homers. The balance of the outfield slots will be filled by a variety of part-timers, none of whom will excite you. The pitching staff isn't bad and has Bob Lemon, Johnny Van DeMeer and Joe Dobson as the leaders of the rotation. All three have the potential to be 15-20 game winners assuming proper support but that's a big if. Except for Ed Kleiman, the bullpen is weak.

East Kenosha Larks

New ownership and a new moniker but it's highly unlikely they will be able to match the 70 wins posted by the franchise in 1947. They do have some power led by OF's Dave Nicholson and Bobby Thompson. Dixie Walker will man the third OF slot and he has the potential for a .300 average but with very few extra base hits. The catching duo of Bob Scheffing and Phil Masi is among the league's best but Johnny Hopp at first will not confuse anyone with an All-Star. Cass Michaels and Bill Rigney will get most of the starts at the keystone but it's not clear who will play where although Roy Smalley might get in a few games at short. Third base looks like a grab bag and promises to be a season-long sink hole in the lineup. They do have three decent starters in Ray Scarborough, Ned Garver and Dizzy Trout but the last two suffer from control problems. Swingman Denny Galehouse could probably make the cut for most of the other teams in the league but after him, the situation is grim. The only thing that will save the bullpen from disaster is that they won't have too many leads to protect.

National League

Schaumburg Hawks

The defending SPBIII champs won the 1947 NL pennant by eight games but this year promises to be a year-long dog fight with the Kansas City Blues. You could flip a coin between the two clubs but I get to pick and the Hawks get the slight nod due to an excellent and deep pitching staff. The long wait for Hank Sauer has finally paid off as he is poised to finally fulfill his potential and should hit 35-40 homers and has the ability to play both 1B and the OF. Barney McCoskey doesn't have a lot of home run pop but he will give you a .325 BA and good OBA. Third outfielder Pat Mullin can drive the ball and also take a walk while fourth OF Whitey Platt is more than adequate and we haven't even talked about budding star Duke Snider. Third sacker Kenny Keltner is poised for a career season with a .300 average, 30 plus homers and a ton of walks. Red Schoendienst at second and Johnny Lipon at short are both very good and when either needs a rest Granny Hamner can fill in at both positions. Eddie Robinson has some pop in his bat and will get most of the starts at first. Ed Fitzgerald is the best of the three-man catching corps but this position is not a strength. Johnny Schmitz is the undisputed leader of the staff with 20-win potential but the rest of the starters are also very good and overall the staff has by far the best control in the NL. Ancient Satchel Paige and Clyde Shoun lead the bullpen and will get a lot of help from the starters during off days in the rotation.

Kansas City Blues

The Blues offense is slightly better than the Hawks and the pitching staff just a bit worse. It's enough for a very exciting pennant race. Surprisingly the big power guy is second sacker Joe Gordon who is also a Golden Glove quality (if such a thing existed in 1948) fielder. Hank Majeski has good doubles and some HR power and is a fixture at short while Johnny Pesky patrols third and has a good eye for the base on balls. George Sisler will get the job done at first although his glove is a little weak. Hoot Evers, Mike McCormick and Wally Westlake represent a very good OF trio. Super sub Bobby Brown can play just about everywhere and will do a good job wherever he plays. Rookie Roy Campanella is a budding star but will have to share time behind the plate with Buddy Rosar in 1948. Woe to the team who tries to steal a base against this cannon-armed duo. The pitching staff lacks a horse and the manager will have to run a lot of arms out to the mound and hope the lower half of the rotation doesn't cost him too many games. Bob Chipman is a decent reliever but most of his help will come from the part time starters when they aren't starting.

Worcester Grays

A big falloff after the first two, but the Grays seem to have a solid hold on third place. They are better than anyone else in the NL, except the Hawks and Blues, on both offense and defense and do boast some All-Star quality players, the best of which is second baseman Bobby Doerr who has a great glove to go with a near .300 bat, a good batting eye and home run power. His SS mate, Marty Marion has a good glove and won't totally embarrass you at the plate. The Walking Man, Eddie Yost patrols the hot corner but his glove is suspect. Gil Hodges will get most of the starts at first but he hasn't yet reached his dazzling potential. A three-headed monster of Clyde Klutz, Bill Salkeld and Joe Tipton will handle the catching duties. Al Zarilla is the best in the OF but his mates, except for Stan Spence, lack any home run power and the bench is thin. The team lacks a solid number one starter and the manager will have to run seven to eight starters out on the mound to get through the season. Mike the Bear Garcia is a diamond in the rough but he'll contribute nothing in 1948. The non-starting starters will rotate into the bullpen but overall the staff is not that strong, unless you compare it to the four teams listed below.

DeVilbess Tigers

This team used to be the Perrysburg Stingers but an ownership change, new moniker and stadium change has given them a new look. Matching the Stingers 71 wins of 1947 is an achievable goal but it would be a lot to ask for a whole lot more. The team has some decent power and it is diffused throughout the lineup. The big bopper is third baseman Andy Pafko. Ferris Fain at first has a good batting eye but it would be nice if he hit a few more homers. Shortstop Al Dark has a good bat although he seems allergic to the base of balls and his defense is suspect. Gene Hermanski, Taffy Wright and Hal Jeffcoat will get most of the OF starts but the manager will try to get Pat Seerey and his decent HR bat into the lineup on occasion. Don Lang and Pete Schenz will share time at second but neither will be cause for rejoicing. Mike Hegan is a great defensive catcher with just enough offense to get by. Mel Parnell and Joe Hatten are decent starters but after them the cupboard is almost bare. Forrest Thompson is an OK reliever but his best helper Joe Page has serious control issues.

Indianapolis Clowns

The last three slots are interchangeable with very little to choose between them although all have weak pitching staffs which will get lit up as the season progresses. Shortstop Lou Boudreau is the overwhelming star of the team and should have an MVP quality year with a .350 BA, great on base, good power and excellent defense; what more can you ask? Unfortunately, virtually the entire balance of the lineup are bango hitters with the best being OF's Frankie Baumholtz and Harry the Hat Walker. Clarence Maddern and Ralph Hodgin are the best of the remaining OF's but Phil Cavaretta might get some starts in the garden when he's not playing first. Mickey Vernon will get the lion's share of 1B starts but his great glove won't make up for a woeful bat. George Kell and Putsy Cabarelo will share time at third but neither has any power. Don Kolloway and Lucky Lohrke will likewise share time at second but their offensive contributions will be even worse. Andy Seminick has some modest power behind the plate but he'll struggle to hit .230. Bill Voiselle is the closest thing to a number one starter but swingman Sam Zoldak will be his only reliable helper. The bullpen is very weak without anyone even being identified as a decent closer or even a set-up man.

Chicago Stammers

They won 86 games in 1947 but that will be a pipe dream in 1948. The lineup has some power and one of the best double play combos in the league with 2B Jackie Robinson and SS Pee Wee Reese. Johnny Wroostek and Willard Marshall will man two of the OF slots and both will give you some decent power. Carl Furillo will start 100 or so games in the third OF slot and he gives you a decent BA but no power. The balance of the OF starts are a wing and a prayer. Frankie Gustine will get most of the starts at 3B unless the manager decides to start Emil Verban at second and move Robinson to third. Actually, Robinson may have to play more than a few games at first as there aren't too many other alternatives. The catching corps is pitiful as they are unlikely to hit .200 as a group. Warren Spahn and Jack Kramer lead the pitching staff but there is very little behind them. Paul Minner and Tom Ferrick are decent relievers but they'll get very little support.

Rock Island Arsenal

Rock Island won 59 games last year and might be able to exceed that total and even move up to fifth place with a few breaks but any more is really asking a lot. Outfielder Larry Doby is the clear leader of the attack but the rest of the OF's are catch as catch can with only Bob Kennedy and light hitting Irv Dusak capable of starting even 100 games. Earl Torgenson has a good batting eye and modest power at first. Eddie Miller is OK at short but seems to be allergic to the base on balls. Nellie Fox is clearly the 2B of the future but in 1948 this position will be a disaster as several no-name players will move in and out of the lineup. It's possible Dusek may even have to put in a few games at second. Bobby Adams will give you a decent 85 or so starts at 3B but his primary backup is Frank Baker who is definitely not of the "Home Run Baker" variety. Ray Lamanno is the primary catcher but he'll be lucky to get 15 extra base hits in his 125 or so starts. Tommy Byrne is a decent swingman, assuming he can get the ball over the plate on a consistent basis. Carl Scheib and Cliff Fannin are probably the two best starters but there is very little behind them. Swingman Monk Dubiel is a decent reliever when not starting but there isn't much quality behind him.