

PRE-SEASON PROGNOSIS 1949

American League

Hoosier Thunderbolts

Should be a real dogfight between the 'Bolts and the Giants but on the basis of a much better pitching staff, the nod goes to Hoosier. The team has some good diffused power but the best hitters are OF Enos Country Slaughter and first sacker Tommy Henrich (a Massillon Ohio native!) although Henrich may be limited in the number of game he can play and will need to share time with Jack Phillips. Harry the Hat Walker will get most of the starts in CF but the third OF slot will be shared by several part-timers. Jerry Priddy will man second and combine an excellent batting eye with a top-notch glove. However, the batting eye deluxe belongs to SS Eddie Joost who will ably fill the role of lead-off man and score well more than 100 runs plus his glove is very good. Third base is in the capable hands of Bob Elliot who has good power, a great batting eye and is a standout defender. Les Moss and Aaron Robinson will share time behind the plate and should be adequate. The pitching staff has four excellent starters, all of whom are capable of 15-20 wins plus an excellent swingman in Dave Koslo. The bullpen is a little weak although Koslo and starter Sheldon Jones should be able to fill in as needed. The starters will finish a lot of games by themselves so the lack of a 'pen might not be that bad of a problem.

Brooklyn Royal Giants

The defending WS champs have a thunderous attack and could lead all of SPBIII in homers led by Ralph Kiner, who might even threaten Babe Ruth's legendary 60 homer mark. Ritchie Ashburn and Dale Mitchell will patrol the other two OF slots but Jolting Joe DiMaggio is available for spot play and as a dynamite pinch hitter. Phil Cavaretta and Eddie Waitkis will share time at first base. Don Kolloway and Phil Rigney will split time at second although both can also play third where hot hitting but feeble fielding Sid Gordon will get most of the starts. Shortstop is in the capable hands of Vern Stephens who can do it all, get on base, hit 35-40 homers and field his position very well. Several players will share time behind the plate and none will embarrass you. The top three starting pitchers are Vic Raschi, Art Fowler and Larry Jansen but swingmen Fred Hutchinson and Al Brazle will also be big contributors. The bullpen is a little thin after Frank Papish and this could be a season long problem.

River City Rugrats

A big falloff after the top two but River City should be able to hold onto third place. The offense starts with Teddy Ballgame Williams who can do everything except steal bases. If it wasn't for Kiner and his home run bat, Teddy could challenge for the triple crown and he could easily lead the league in walks. In fact, the Rats have three players who could exceed 100 walks, the others being SS Luke Appling and OF Elmer Valo. Hank Bauer and Johnny Groth will share time in center. Nippy Jones is a decent if feeble fielding first sacker but when he isn't in the lineup, the alternatives are grim. Bobby Adams and Monty Basgal will share time at send but this position is not a team strength. Bob Dillinger is a good hitter at third but lacks home run power and doesn't field his position particularly well. Yogi Berra is a top-flight catcher but when he sits down Jake Early will take over and he is a big falloff. Preacher Roe is the leader of the pitching staff but the quality falls off pretty quickly with Rapid Robert Feller the best of the rest. There are a lot of bodies on the staff but only Paul Hogue can be considered a decent reliever. The Rats can score some runs but they will need the pitching staff to overachieve if they have any hope of moving up in the standings.

South River Muck Dogs

Another falloff but the last four teams are all very close and any of them could easily finish anywhere from fourth to seventh. The Muck Dogs have a poor offense but the pitching staff could be their salvation. They should finish last in homers in the AL with no one player getting even fifteen dingers. First baseman Ted Kluszewski is a slugger in training but not in 1949 although he could hit over .300. The outfield is a grab bag with no real standouts and the manager will have to shuffle a half-dozen players in and out of the lineup in order to get through the season. Pete Suder is a good glove man at second and a decent hitter (in the context of this team) and he'll share time with Sherry Robinson who will also log in some time at third. The main third baseman is Billy Cox who can field with the best of them but doesn't hit much. Stan Rojek is the incumbent shortstop and he is also a vacuum cleaner in the field but has a punchless bat. The three-headed monster of Wes Westrum, Joe Garagiola and Bruce Edwards will share catching duties and the best you can say about them is that they won't kill you but also won't contribute a lot offensively. But then we get to the good news, the pitching staff. Virgil Trucks, Don Newcombe and Harry the Cat Brecheen are the staff leaders but Alex Kellner and Robin Roberts round out the rotation and all will be effective. Steve Gromek and Jack Banta can start but won't be able to crack this rotation and will be used very effectively out of the bullpen which also includes Ted Wilks. The staff will carry the team but as stated above it will be a minor miracle if they advance beyond fourth place and could fall all the way to the cellar.

Goshen Aces

The Aces are very close to the Muck Dogs in my overall rating system but a very poor pitching staff puts them a notch below. Stan the Man Musial will put up Ted Williams like numbers and will be ably supported in the garden by Del Ennis and Whitey Lockman. However, none of this trio is a natural CF and space will have to be found for Dave Philley, a good CF but there won't be enough at bats to satisfy all four who obviously all can't play at the same time. Jonny Mize has some power at first and he'll share time with Dick Kryoski who will give you a decent BA but no power. Eddie Stanky will man second with a good batting eye and a near .300 bat but little extra base potential. Virgil Stallcup is the shortstop and the best you can about him is that he is adequate. Billy Johnson and Sibby Sisti will split time at third and neither will kill you. Birdie Tebbetts will get most of the work behind the plate and he is above average. But unlike the Muck Dogs, this team has real problems on the mound. They won't have a regular rotation starter with an ERA under 4.00 and most will be above 4.50. Actually, the best ERA's will come from the bullpen but even they are no trip to Hollywood.

Maumee River Carp

The Carp don't have a terrible offense or pitching staff but neither is real good. Dick Kokos is the main power source and he is a cracker jack defensive RF. The other two OF slots will be filled by a parade of part-timers, none of whom will scare anybody. Billy Goodman and Elbie Fletcher will share time at first and both are decent. Goodman will have a better BA but no power while Fletcher can launch a few homers when he is in the lineup. Eddie Kazak has a decent bat but a lousy glove and will share time at second with Snuffy Sternweiss who is adequate both at bat and in the field. Third base is the domain of Grady Hatton who has some pop in his bat and is a good fielder. Shortstop Phil Rizzuto doesn't have a lot of extra base power but he can get on base and is a great fielder. Several non-descript catchers will fill in behind the plate but this is not a team strength. Bob Lemon is the unquestioned leader of the pitching staff with 20-win potential given enough run support. A big falloff after Lemon with Bob Rush, Lou Brissie and Joe Dobson filling out the bulk of the rotation. Al Benton will get a few starts but he and rubber armed Jim Konstanty will man the bullpen which is a team strength.

East Kenosha Larks

As stated above the Larks are not doomed to the cellar and could climb all the way up to fourth but will need the three teams above to underachieve. Bobby (the Giants won the pennant!) Thompson is the team leader and also plays a very good CF. Hot shot rookie Roy Sievers also has some power as the second outfielder while Marv Ricketts and several part timers will fill the third slot. Johnny Hopp and Charlie Kress will share time at first but neither has much pop. Cass Michaels is a very good 2B who combines an excellent batting eye with a top-notch glove. Roy Smalley at short also has a good glove and is probably a bit above average at his position with the bat. Connie Ryan and John Sullivan will share time at third but neither will make many highlight films. Catcher is a real problem and the manager will have to use a lot of creativity to get through the season at this position. As usual with an EKL team there are a lot of bodies on the pitching staff with enough starts available for one and a half teams but not a lot of quality. Ned Garver is the staff leader by default but he has some control issues. Mickey Haeffner and Bill Werle (who also has control issues) are second and third but the balance of starts will be a grab bag. The bullpen consists of the non-starting starters but none are standouts and when the team gets a late inning lead, it very well might not be safe.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Chicago Stammers

The 1949 NL could feature one of the closest and most exciting pennant races of all time as the top four teams are all closely bunched together. The Stammers have a good offense and just enough pitching to rate the top nod but not by much. Jackie Robinson will finally be freed from the shackles imposed on him the first two seasons and promises to have a break out season. He could approach .350 with a good batting eye, decent power, field well at second and can steal a base when needed. Carl Furillo and Willard Marshall are two of the starting outfielders and both are good with the bat and in the field. Danny Litwhiler and Johnny Wyrostek will split time at the third slot and also fill in for the top two when needed. Herman Reich at first has a .280 bat but a poor batting eye and can only play 100 games or so and when he is out of the lineup, the prospects are very grim. Pee Wee Reese at short is a great complement to Robinson as he also has a good OBA, great glove and can steal a base. Third base is very grim and the less said about it the better. Sherm Lollar and Del Rice will handle the catching chores. Warren Spahn is head and shoulders over everyone else on the staff and one of the best pitchers in the league. Howie Fox is OK as a number two but there is very little behind them. Bobby Shantz and Tom Ferrick are decent relievers but the team will stand or fall on its offense and not the pitching staff.

DeVilbiss Tigers

The Bengals are in some ways the exact opposite of the Stammers, a decent if unspectacular, offense but a good pitching staff. They won't win too many games with power as they should have the least number of homers in all of SPBIII. In fact, the entire team might out-homer Ralph Kiner by less than 20 dingers. Outfielder Andy Pafko is the only solid double figure homer threat and he might have less than 20. In fact, Andy is the only full-time outfielder as the other two slots will be filled by a rapidly changing cast of characters, none of whom are outstanding. First baseman Ferris Fain has a good batting eye and great glove but not the kind of power you would expect from the position. Emil Verban has another pop gun bat at second and even he will only be able to play about 100 games and his replacements are terrible. Al Dark is the shortstop by default but he seems averse to the base on balls and is also punchless. Third base is a mystery as the team doesn't seem to have enough bats available unless Pafko is moved there for a considerable number of games, putting even more pressure on the outfield. Mike Hegan and Mickey Owen are a decent pair at catcher. Howie Pollett, Bill Wright and Mel Parnell are all top-notch

starters who could crack any staff and Joe Hatten is a decent number four. Joe Page is an outstanding reliever and he'll get enough help so that this should be a team strength.

Schaumburg Hawks

The Hawks finished only one game out in 1948 and should be battling all the way in '49. The team has good power and it is spread around to several different players. Duke Snider is finally coming into his own in CF and will be a fixture for many years to come. Slugger Hank Sauer will share time in left with rookie Gus Zernial while Pat Mullin and Whitey Platt will platoon in right. Plus some space will have to be found for Chuck Diering who could start for a lot of other teams. Eddie Robinson at first has a near .300 bat, good batting eye, decent power and a fine glove; you can't ask for much more. Red Schoendienst at second and Granny Hamner at short are a good DP combo although it would be nice if Granny was a little more patient at the plate. Puddin Head Jones is now ready to take over as the regular at third, displacing long-time incumbent Kenny Keltner who was lost in the off season. Catcher will be shared by four different players, none of whom will kill you. Russ (not the porno king) Meyer, Randy Gumpert and Allie Reynolds are the top three starters although Allie has some control issues. Murray Dickson and Bill Voiselle are good swingmen with ageless Satchel Paige and Erv Palica manning the bullpen.

Kansas City Blues

The Blues won the pennant in 1948 with only 84 wins and with the hyper competitive nature of the NL in 1949 plus the fact that 40% of the games will be played against the superior AL, that might be enough this year also. Vic Wertz and Wally Westlake will fill two outfield slots and they both have decent power. Hoot Evers will get most of the starts in the third slot and even though he'll have a decent BA and good on base it would be nice if he had more power. Dick Sisler will get most of the starts at first but he doesn't have the kind of power you'd like from that position. Joe Gordon at second has nice power and a very good glove. Lou Boudreau at short still has a good glove but he looks to fall way off from his sensational 1948 season, especially in terms of power. Johnny Pesky at third has a good bating eye and a great glove but also lacks power. Roy Campanella is a great catcher with a cannon arm. Ellis Kinder and Ken Rathensberger both have 20-win potential but the quality is a bit thin after the top two. Eddie Euratt and Bob Chipman are the best of a mediocre bullpen.

Worcester Grays

A falloff after the top four but the Grays should have a lock on fifth as they are much better than the two teams below them. Al Zarilla, Peanuts Lowrey and Wally Moses are the three best outfielders but none are outstanding and Clyde Vollmer will also get some playing time. Gil Hodges at first is the big power man but he'll get a lot of help from second sacker Bobby Doerr who is also a very good fielder. Marty Marion at short has some offensive ability and is tough with the glove. The walking man Eddie Yost will share time at third with Pete Castiglione. Rookie Del Crandall and Pete Salkeld each have cannon arms at catcher but both will be limited in playing time and there is not much behind them. Ted Gray, Joe Coleman and Vern Bickford are the top three starters but swingman Mike Garcia should be very effective. Except when Garcia is available, the bullpen is very thin.

Rock Island Arsenal

A dogfight between the Arsenal and Clowns to escape the cellar but it's unlikely either will rise any further. Outfielder Larry Doby is the leader of the attack but the best of the rest in the garden is Bob Kennedy with the rest of the OF at bats scattered among a host of mediocrities. Jack Graham has some power at first but not much else. Jerry Coleman is a vacuum cleaner at second but his bat is pretty punchless. The left side of the infield is a disaster area with only part-timer Hank Thompson having any real offensive ability. The manager may be forced to play Kennedy some games at third, seriously

weakening an already weak outfield. Stan Lopata and Mike Guerra will share time at catcher with highly touted rookie Smokey Burgess waiting in the wings. Rock Island has some good starting pitchers but several, especially Tommy Byrne and Billy Pierce have some serious control issues and these will have to be contained if they hope to overachieve. The non-starting starters will form the bullpen but this will be a season long problem.

Indianapolis Clowns

The Clowns have some power but it will be undercut by a poor team OBA. George Kell at third will have a great BA and decent OBA and hit a few doubles but very few homers. Sam Chapman is a good CF and the best power guy on the team and one of the few who knows how to take a walk. The other two OF spots are up for grabs with parade of part-timers moved in and out of the lineup. Mickey Vernon at first has some power and could approach a .300 BA. Al Kozar will share time at second with Eddie Miller and Danny Murtaugh but the last two are very weak at the plate. Johnny Lipon is the incumbent SS and he has a good glove and decent OBA to go with an otherwise punchless bat. Andy Seminick will catch about 100 games and his home runs per at bat will probably lead the team. Matt Batts will be his primary backup. Johnny Schmitz and Herm Wehmeier will get the most starts but neither is a standout. They have several swingmen, especially Jerry Staley, Cliff Chambers and Bob Kuzava who are better but will be limited in the number of games they can start. The last three guys mentioned are about all they have as an effective bullpen.