

PRE-SEASON PROGNOSIS 1954

AMERICAN LEAGUE

American League

South River Muck Dogs

The 'Dogs were terrible in 1953, only winning 65 games but what a difference a year makes! They have the best offense in all of SPBIII and the pitching staff isn't far behind. For them not to win the American League pennant would represent a monumental upset. The Big Klu Ted Kluszewski could flirt with 50 homers and is a topnotch defender to boot. At second we have Junior Gilliam who has decent power, can get on base and is more than adequate in the field. At short is Pee Wee Reese, who has a .300 bat and knows the strike zone very well; a great lead-off man to set the table for the South River sluggers. His defense is decent. Jim Finigan at third is another solid hitter who is a vacuum cleaner in the field. And we haven't even mentioned Hank Thompson who would be a starter and star at third for almost any other team. Gil McDougal is a solid infield spare. Ed Fitzgerald and Jack Shepard will share time behind the plate; both can hit but Shepard is better. Sey Hey Willie Mays in center has great power, could challenge for the batting title, and has a spectacular glove and arm. Carl Furillo in right has a cannon arm and will hit close to .300 with good power. Jimmy Piersall and Ed Burkowski will share time in left; they aren't up to the standards of the other two garden players, but this lineup can easily carry them. Robin Roberts is the ace of the pitching staff, but Virgil Trucks isn't far behind; both should easily win 20 plus games. Johnny Schmidt and Jack Harshman will get most of the remaining starts and both are top notch. Several swing men will fill out the rotation. Skinny Brown is the closest thing they have to a bullpen ace, and he'll be assisted by several part timers but with this lineup and starting staff a bullpen isn't that much of an issue.

St. Clair Walleye

A new ownership and new moniker for a team that is solid but just doesn't have what it takes to compete for the pennant with the Muck Dogs although they will battle the Aces for second place (sorry no wild cards in 1954!) First base is not a strength as Walt Dropo and Lou Limmer will switch off; neither can hit much although Lou has modest power. Gene Baker at second has modest power and a good glove. The team doesn't have anything close to a full-time shortstop as a cast of thousands will shuttle in and out of the lineup. Eddie Mathews at third has 40-homer power and a good batting eye. Yogi Berra at catcher has a cannon arm and is one of the best hitting receivers in the league. Rookie sensation Hank Aaron will patrol right field where he will be effective, but he promises to be a much better hitter when he gets some experience. Ted Williams in left has a great bat and a fabulous batting eye with excellent power but injuries will limit him to about 120 games. Johnny Groth will get most of the starts in center where he has a decent glove and modest power. Hank Bauer will fill in for Aaron and Williams and should do a creditable job. Bill Renna is also available for spot play in the garden. Burly Early Wynn and Lew Burdette are the leaders of the staff, and both are sensational. Veteran Bullet Bob Feller will be available for spot starts and when he is in there will do a great job. Johnny Podres and Dick Littlefield will round out the rotation. The bullpen is a little weak with Bob Chakeles the only reliable reliever. There is very little behind him.

Goshen Aces

Goshen was dead last in 1953 with only 59 wins but should flirt with .500 in 1954 and could be in a fight for second place. The offense has some holes, but the pitching staff isn't bad. Whitey Lockman is an OK first baseman with modest power. The team has some real problems at second base with no one able to play even half the games so a parade of non-entities will have to shuttle in and out. Chico Carresqual is a well above average shortstop with decent power and a good glove. Ray Jablonski at third might hit .300 with some power but his glove is weak. Walker Cooper and Ray Katt will share time behind the plate; Cooper is a better hitter but Katt a much better receiver. Stan the Man Musial returns with his peerless bat, great power and knowledge of the strike zone; he'll play right field with Minnie Minoso in left. Minnie has a nice bat with good power and a great glove. Bill Tuttle has a good glove and modest power in center. Space will have to be made for Del Ennis who has good power; he may force the nb manager to move Musial to first base. The team doesn't have a solid workhorse number one starter but does have half a dozen hurlers who can do the job; the best of which is Dwayne Pillette. The bullpen is strong with Hoyt Wilhelm and Ray Narleski plus the non-starting starters.

Hoosier Thunberbolts

The 'Bolts look to be firmly in control of fourth place. They could move up or down a notch but don't bet on it. A mediocre pitching staff will probably hold them back. Wayne Belardi and Steve Bilko will share time at first; both are good fielders but neither can hit much. Off season acquisition Granny Hamner holds down second base; he has a very nice bat with good power and can do the job on defense. Shortstop Joe DeMaestri doesn't know the strike zone and can't hit much anyway but he won't kill you in the field; sadly there is no one else. Third baseman Ray Boone has a good bat with nice power and on base and can do the job with his glove. Toby Atwell and Joe Garagiola are the catchers; both are OK with the bat and below average with the glove. Jackie Robinson will play 120 or so games in the outfield and will be a good contributor with nice power and on base. Monte Irvin will play left field where he has good power and a solid glove. Several decent part timers including Enos Country Slaughter will fill out the remaining garden starts. Super sub Dusty Rhodes will get some OF starts but will also be a dynamite pinch hitter. Carl Erskine is a solid number one starter with Eddie Lopat and swingman Brooks Lawrence his best support. The balance of the rotation is not strong. Dave Jolly is a nice reliever and he'll get some help from Hal Newhauser, but the rest of the pen is weak.

Maumee River Carp

The defending World Series champs look to be middle of the road in 1954. Rising to fourth place would be an accomplishment but they could easily fall to sixth. The pitching staff is mediocre at best, but the attack is weak. Dick Kryoski and George Metkovich will share time at first base. George is a better hitter, and both can field but neither have any power. Billy Goodman is a nice banjo hitter at second and he'll share time with Wayne Terwilliger who can't hit at all. Bobby Morgan will get the most starts at short as veteran Phil Rizzuto's batting eye has seriously deteriorated. George Kell will be limited to about 100 games as his power has atrophied and the balance of the third base starts will go to Preston Ward who is a decent slap hitter. Sammy White is a nice catcher with modest power. Jackie Jensen in center has a good batting eye and 25 homer power with an acceptable glove. Bill Wilson will start 120 games or so in right and he has decent power, but the balance of the outfield starts will go to several no-names and no talents. Bob Lemon s a solid number one starter who could win 20 games with proper support, but I doubt it will happen with this crowd. Number Two is Bobby Rush who has some control issues. Harry Byrd and Ralph Beard aren't bad, but they will be limited in the number of starts. The rest of the rotation is weak, and several have control issues. Jim Konstanty is a decent reliever, and his best support will come from Dick Marlowe but there isn't much else.

Brooklyn Royal Giants

The Giants were horrible in 1953 and won't be much better in 1954 as their pitching staff is hands down the worst in the AL. A few breaks could get them to fifth place, but they could just as easily fall to the cellar. Earl Torgenson and rookie Bob Skinner will share time at first base. Earl is a far better hitter but neither have much power. Solly Hemus is a solid second baseman and knows how to take a walk. Shortstop Ernie Banks has good power for a middle infielder and his defense is adequate. Vern Stephens and Dick Cole will share time at third; they are both decent hitters with no power. A parade of nonentities will alternate at catcher. Teenage rookie Harmon Killebrew has a bright future ahead, but he is several years away. Ritchie Ashburn returns in center field where is the quintessential leadoff man with a great batting eye. He covers a lot of ground in the field but has a weak arm. Rip Repulski will play one corner outfield slot and his bat is decent with good power, but his glove is wanting. Gene Woodling and Karl Olson with some help from ancient Phil Cavaretta will cover the third outfield spot. Bob Turley is a workhorse at the top of the rotation, but he is wild as a March Hair and is almost guaranteed to lead the league in walks allowed. Russ Meyer (not the porno king) and Lou Kretlow will help out Turley but after them it is bombs away. Morrie Martin and Howie Fox will hold down the bullpen with little help from anyone else.

East Kenosha Larks

The Larks offense is among the worst in the league, but the pitching staff does have some bright spots. A rise as high as fifth place is technically possible but the smart money is on EKL in the cellar at season's end. Harry Agganis and Dick Waitkis will switch off at first base; both can handle the glove, but Harry has some modest power which is lacking in Eddie. Davey Williams is a slick fielder at second base, but his bat is very weak. Frank Bolling has a slightly better bat but can't field. Harvey Kuenn is a solid .300 hitter who can play every day at short and does the job with the glove. Bobby Cox and Gene Michaels can both do the job in the field at third base and know how to take a walk. Fred Hatfield is a good infield reserve. Frank House has a cannon arm and below average bat; he'll get in 100 plus games at catcher; his backups are a host of nonentities. Sensational youngster Mickey Mantle is an anchor in right field. He combines a .300 BA, nice batting eye with good power and is a great fielder with a cannon arm. Jim Busby is a sensational fielder in center and his bat is decent although you'd like a little more power from this garden slot. Rookie Vic Power, who also plays first will share time in left with slugger Roy Sievers. The top four starters (Ned Garver, Curt Simmons, Whitey Ford and basketball player Gene Conley are all good, but several have control issues. Chuck Stobbs and swingman Bob Buhl round out the rotation. When he is not starting Buhl will be pressed into service in the bullpen as there is little else available.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Devilbiss Tigers

Unlike the AL, the NL could have a two and maybe three-way race for the pennant, but the Tigers get a slight edge. Ed Glynn, Ferris Fain and hot shot rookie Moose Skowron will share time at first base. Moose is by far the best hitter, but he will be limited to about 90 games. Glynn can field but not do much else while Fain is a very good slap hitter. Bobby Avila at second could win the batting championship plus he is a great fielder. Alvin Dark at shortstop has a .300 bat with good power and can field his position but doesn't walk much. At third Andy Carey has a nice, if punchless bat and a great glove but will only be able to play about 120 games. When he's not in the lineup his backups are pitiful. Catcher Mike Hegan doesn't hit much but his glove and arm are fabulous. Irv Noren in center has a nice bat with modest power and a good glove. Jim Greengrass is a solid left fielder with 30-homer potential and a nice glove. Several mediocre spear carriers will fill out the garden starts. Lefty Johnny Antonelli is

the leader of the starting staff and one of the best pitchers in the league, but he'll get great support from Frank Sullivan, Joe Coleman and pint-size Harvey Haddix with Howie Pollett and swingmen Jim Wilson and Tom Morgan filling out the rotation. Marv Grissom is a top notch closer, and he'll get help from highly touted rookie Camilio Pascual.

Rock Island Arsenal

Rock Island has a solid offense and middle of the road pitching. With a few breaks they could challenge for the NL pennant. They don't have a full time first baseman as Eddie Robinson and Joe Cunningham will get the majority of starts with Ron Jackson filling in as needed. Cunningham is the best hitter as he possesses modest power and good on base. Nellie Fox is solid both offensively and defensively at second base and can play every day. Roy McMillian has a great glove to go with a punch and judy bat at short. Al Rosen has nice power and on base at the hot corner. Milt Bolling is a useful spare at short and third. Smokey Burgess has a great bat and so-so glove at catcher, and he'll be backed up by Stan Lopata who has nice power and on base plus a good glove. Larry Doby is solid in center; he can get on base, has 30-homer potential and a good glove. Cal Abrams in right can get on base and field his position but lacks power. Dave Philley with help from Bob Cerv will round out the garden. Al Houtteman and lefty Billy Pierce are the top starters. The balance of the rotation will be Don Larsen, Billy Hoelt and Vic Raschi but they are a big fall off from the top two. Harry Dorish and Ernie Johnson are the top relievers, and they'll get help from Howie Judson and Al Brazle.

Worcester Grays

The Grays could fight for second and even the pennant with a few breaks. The pitching is decent and the offense adequate. Gil Hodges at first is one man wrecking crew. He can hit for average, knows how to take a walk and has 40-homer potential. The second baseman Danny O'Connell can field and slap the ball around but doesn't have much power. At short the team has Jerry Snyder and George Strickland; both can field but neither one can hit. At the hot corner we have the walking man Eddie Yost, who wrote the book for leadoff men. He can also field and has some modest power. Behind the plate is Bill Sarni who has a .300 bat and a cannon arm. He'll be backed up by Joe Tipton who knows how to take a walk. Gus Bell is a solid centerfielder who can play every day and has modest power. Al Smith in left can get on base and has some power. Connie Diering, Jim Delsing and Sandy Amoros will also get playing time in the outfield. Mike the Bear Garcia and Steve Gromek are standouts at the top of the rotation. They also have Ernie Portocreo and George Zuvernik plus several swingmen. Frank Smith, Windy McCall and Bob Milken lead a solid bullpen.

Schaumburg Hawks

The Hawks had a thunderous offence in 1953 which totaled 939 runs and 243 homers, but a leaky pitching staff and a September collapse doomed them to a second-place finish. This year's edition is nowhere near as powerful. With a few breaks they could rise from fourth place but in able to contend for the pennant they would have to seriously overachieve and the three teams above underachieve. A fifth place finish is also possible. Mickey Vernon is still a solid first baseman, but he won't be anywhere near his sensational 1953 numbers. Ditto for Red Schoendienst who had a career year in 53 but is still an every-day .300 hitter with a great glove. At short Alex Grammas and Billy Hunter will share time; Alex is the better hitter and fielder, but Billy is no slouch although he seems to be allergic to the base on balls. Puddin Head Jones returns at third where he has modest power and an acceptable glove. Duke Snider in center and Hank Sauer in right are the two big boppers on the team. Duke could hit .340 with 40 homers and 40 doubles and knows how to take a walk. Hank is not quite as spectacular, but he should also approach 40 homers and has a good batting eye. Gus Zernial had 53 homers and 178 RBI's last year but won't get anywhere near those numbers this year as injuries will hold him to less than 100 games. His

backup Bob Talbot is pitiful. The catching corps is horrible with the duo of Jim Roberston and Matt Batts being one of the worst in all of SPBIII. Another weakness of the Hawks is a terrible and virtually nonexistent bench. Ruben Gomez is the clear leader of the pitching staff, but he has control issues. A gaggle of swingmen, the best of whom is Allie Reynolds will fill out the rotation. Johnny Sain is a good reliever and he'll get nice help from Clem Labine and the non-starting starters.

Indianapolis Clowns

The Clowns will battle the Hawks for fourth place, but it will be tough for them to move any higher. The pitching staff is decent, but the offense is not. Dee Fondy at first is a decent hitter and fielder but has little power. At second we have Johnny Temple who has a solid if punchless bat and decent glove. Johnny Logan at short can do the job with both the bat and glove. Randy Jackson and Grady Hatton will share time at third base. Jackson has some power while Hatton does not, but Grady is the better fielder. Catcher Del Crandall has 20-homer power and a good glove. Frank Thomas has the best power on the team and possesses a good glove in left field. Bill Bruton is the center fielder; he has minimal power and a decent glove and will hit just enough to not be an embarrassment. Jungle Jim Rivera is the left fielder, and he has a decent glove with some power. Dale Mitchell and Milt Moryn are available for spot play in the garden. The top five starters (Bob Keegan, Bob Grim, Sal Maglie, Bob Porterfield and Mickey McDermott) are not bad while Ray Crone, Bob Miller and Jim Hughes are a nice bullpen trio. The pitching staff is the key for the Clowns to advance in the standings.

Kansas City Blues

A big falloff after the top five and the only good thing to say about the Blues is they aren't as bad as the Stampers. Joe Adcock is solid at first base; he could hit .300 with 25 homers and is an adequate fielder. Spook Jacobs at second wrote the book on a punchless bat but he can slap the ball around and won't kill you in the field. Shortstop Pete Runnels has a nice batting eye and good power for a middle infielder; he can also do the job in the field. Ted Lepcio would work better as a solid utility infielder, but he'll be drafted for the majority of starts at third base as there isn't anyone else. Rocky Bridges and Floyd Baker are his backups. Roy Campanella still possesses a great glove and cannon arm, but injuries will restrict his bat and durability; his backup is Clint Courtney. Don Mueller in left has a leaky glove and minimal power plus he doesn't walk much but he might also challenge for the batting title. Teenage phenom Al Kaline will play right field and he is still learning but the sky is the limit. Wally Post will get the majority of starts in centerfield where he has modest power but poor on base; his main backup will be Wally Westlake. Lack of appreciation for the strike zone and an aversion to taking a walk is endemic on the Blues roster. Art Fowler and Willard Nixon are the top starting pitchers but neither will get too many All-Star votes. Swingmen Andy Consuegra, Don Liddle and Jim McDonald are nice hurlers but can't start enough games to be a major factor. The balance of the rotation is grim. The team has no bullpen to speak of and don't look for them to protect many late leads.

Chicago Stampers

The Stampers won 101 games in 1953 and romped to the NL pennant but how the mighty have fallen! In 1954 Chicago's offense is pretty bad, and the pitching staff will give the Giants a run for the worst in all of SPBIII. A heroic effort might lift them into sixth place, but it is unlikely. Joe Ripper Collins will get the majority of starts at first base where he is middle of the road in all areas, but his backup Johnny Wyrostek is pitiful in all areas. Good field no hit Curt Roberts holds down second base. Gare Allie is decent field absolutely no hit at short. At third Don Hoak will start about 90 games but he has a punchless bat. The remainder will go to Sid Gordon who can hit but not field. This not a good infield. Sherm Lollar has an OK bat and cannon arm behind the plate and his backup Del Rice isn't bad. There is some talent in the outfield starting with Ralph Kiner who has a good sense of the strike zone and the

best power on an essentially powerless team. He'll play left field. Hot shot rookie Wally Moon will play center. He also can take a walk and has modest power to go with a good glove. Frankie Baumholtz who can slap the ball around with minimal power will get the most starts in left with assistance from Gordon and Wrostek. Peanuts Lowrey may even have to start a few games but that will be grim as he is an almost automatic out. On a better team Warren Spahn would be an automatic 20-game winner but he could easily lose 20 with this crew. Swingmen Al Aber, Warren Hacker and Leo Kiely aren't bad, but they will be limited in how many games they can start. After that we are talking about the likes of Alex Kelner and Paul LaPalme who are guaranteed to light up the scoreboard for the opposing team. Like Spahn rookie Don Mossi would be a standout reliever on a decent team but how often will he have a lead to protect with this crew? The rest of the staff is truly pathetic.