

PRE-SEASON PROGNOSIS 1955

AMERICAN LEAGUE

American League

South River Muck Dogs

The defending World Series champs are loaded again in 1955, but they will face a tough challenge from the St. Clair Walleye. South River possesses a powerful offense and arguably the best pitching staff in SPBIII. First sacker Ted (big Klu) Kluszewski has a .300 bat, good batting eye and 50-homer potential; what more do you want? At second they have Gil McDougal who has a very good glove and a fine bat for a middle infielder with some power. Shortstop Dick Groat will contribute more with his glove than his bat, but this team can carry him without a problem. Hank Thompson at third can get on base and has the ability to hit a few out of the park. A trio of nonentities will share time behind the plate. The Sey Hey Kid Willie Mays returns in centerfield where he can do it all, great batting average and on base plus will challenge for the home run crown and his glove is fantastic. Carl Furillo in right has a cannon arm and a very good bat. Harry Suitcase Simpson and Jimmy Piersall will share time in left where they both are well above average. The top four starters (Frank Lary, Don Newcome, Robin Roberts and Jack Harshman) are all top of the line with Herm Wehmeier filing in as needed. Bob Miller, Tom Hurd and Clem Labine are the mainstays of a great bullpen.

St. Clair Walleye

St. Clair's offense is right there with South River and the pitching is also top notch. Walt Dropo, a fine hitter will get the lion's share of starts at first base, but he'll get a lot of help from supersub Bob Hale. Second sacker Gene Baker has a good glove and decent bat with modest power. At short, Willie Miranda has a sensational glove and OK bat. Slugger Eddie Mathews is a fixture at third where he knows how to get on base and hit the ball out of the park. Yogi Berra is one of the best catchers in the league with a great glove and very nice power. Hammerin' Hank Aaron will patrol right field with a very good glove, a .300 bat and 30-homer potential. Elmer Valo will get the most starts in centerfield where his bat, though lacking home run power, is spectacular, and he is an expert at getting on base. Hank Bauer has a very good bat and will get a lot of starts in left field, but he has to make room for Ted Williams who will be limited to about 100 games but when he is in there, watch out. Johnny Groth and Faye Throneberry are also available for spot play in the garden. Early Wynn, Warren Spahn and Bob Buhl are the top starters along with rookie sensation Herb Score who possesses a sensational fast ball but will issue a lot of walks to go with a ton of strikeouts. Lew Burdette rounds out a very good rotation. The bullpen is a little thin and could cause problems as the season progresses, but the starters are so strong this isn't as big of problem as it could be.

Goshen Aces

A major falloff after the top two but the Aces will be battling the Royal Giants for third place all year long. Goshen has a weaker offense than Brooklyn, but the pitching staff is better. Stan the Man Musial will play first base in 1955 where he has a good glove and his usual sensational bat. Junior Gilliam has a decent glove with a good batting eye and will play second base. Chico Carresquel at short has a nice glove and decent bat with modest power. Billy Klaus will keep third base warm as the team waits for hot shot rookie Brooks Robinson to develop. Ray Katt has a decent glove and punchless bat and he'll share time at catcher with Walker Cooper who is a much better hitter but is limited in the number of games he can play. Del Ennis, Larry Doby and Minnie Minoso will fill out most of the outfield starts and

they are a solid trio, but Dusty Rhodes and Jim King are available for spot play and pinch hitting. Murray Dickson is the ace of the staff, and a parade of swing men will fill out the rotation. Ray Narleski is a decent closer and he'll team up with Hoyt Wilhelm in the bullpen. The non-starting swing men will also fill in.

Brooklyn Royal Giants

The Giants won only 51 games last year but could flirt with .500 this year and as mentioned above will be neck and neck with the Aces for third place this year; rising any higher would be a major miracle. Dale Long and Earl Torgenson are both left-handed hitting first baseman only but Long doesn't hit LHP's whereas Torgenson does so they will probably platoon at first. Granny Hamner and Solly Hemus are both decent fielders and mediocre hitters and will share time at second base. Ernie Banks is a stalwart at shortstop where he has a good glove and a 40 plus homer bat. Third base is a grab bag with several part timers sharing time until youngsters Harmon Killebrew and Cletis Boyer develop. The pickings are very thin at catcher and a trio of nonentities will have to suffice unless the club makes a late trade. Twenty year-old sensation Al Kaline will anchor right field and could challenge for the batting title; he also has a great glove. Center fielder Ritchie Ashburn could also challenge for the batting title; he has a good glove but a weak throwing arm. Gene Woodling and Jim Dyck will platoon in left field. Neither has much power but they won't kill you at the plate. Bob Turley is the staff leader by default, but he is very wild. Dick Donovan is a solid number two with Saul Rogovin not far behind. Willard Schmidt will pitch some good games, but his usage will be limited. Other than that the staff is catch as catch can with very little in the way of a bullpen.

Maumee River Carp

Another big falloff for the last three spots but all three, the Carp, Larks and Thunderbolts could easily move between fifth, sixth and seventh. Maumee's offense is weak, but the pitching staff is the best of the three. First baseman Billy Goodman can hit doubles if not homers and he has a keen batting eye with an adequate glove. Bobby Morgan and Wayne Terwilliger will platoon at second with Morgan also getting some work at shortstop. Morgan has modest power, Terwilliger has very little. Veteran Phil Rizzuto will share time at short with Morgan and good field no-hit Eddie Joost. George Kell, a fine hitter but feeble fielder will get most of the time at third base; his backup is Bob Kennedy who also plays first and the outfield. Sammy White, a great receiver with modest power will get most of the starts at catcher where his main backups will be Hal Naragon who has a great bat and Hank Foiles. Jackie Jensen has good power, a nice batting eye and a decent glove; he'll patrol right field. The rest of the outfield is very weak with several no-names and no-talents shuttling in and out of the lineup. Bob Rush is the leader of the staff and he's not bad with his main support coming from Bob Lemon, Luis Arroyo and Tom Brewer. Swingman Roger Craig will also contribute. Jim Konstanty is a solid closer with his main bullpen help coming from Roy Face and Mike Fornieles.

East Kenosha Larks

The Lark offense has some ability, but the team will be held back by what is probably the worst pitching staff in the entire league. Flashy first baseman Vic Power is a solid performer with both the bat and glove. Pepper pot Nellie Fox return at second where his hustling play and flashy glove will continue to inspire the rest of the team. Shortstop Harvey Keunn has a .300 bat and good doubles if not homer power to go with a decent glove. At third we have Fred Hatfield who won't hit for much of an average, but he knows the strike zone and can do a decent job with the glove. Frank House, Joe Astroth and Les Moss will switch off behind the plate. House and Astroth have decent gloves and weak bats whereas Moss can hit but not field very well. Bill Virdon in right has a decent glove and bat with good power.

In center the team has Bill Tuttle who is a ballhawk with a good bat. The team has a wealth of outfielders and time will need to be found for the likes of Roy Sievers, Whitey Lockman and hot shot rookie Roberto Clemente. Sievers and Lockman both play first base and may get some time there. Billy Pierce is poised for a great season and if he can pitch enough and get decent support, both of which are questionable, he could win 20 games. Vern Law, Ned Garver, Gene Conley and swingman Ike Delock aren't bad and if this crew could pitch every day and not worry about the late innings this team could be fine but the depth behind the top five is poor and the bullpen non-existent.

Hoosier Thunderbolts

As stated above, Hoosier could move up to fifth, but the cellar is just as likely. Norm Zauchin and Gail Harris will share time at first base. Norm has nice power, Gail not so much. Bobby Hoffman and Johnny O'Brien will share time at second base. They are both decent hitters and Hoffman has some power while O'Brien does not. Ree Wee Reese is a solid performer at short, nice BA, good on base, some power and top-notch glove. At third Ray Boone has nice power and a good glove. Gus Triandos is a rising star at catcher and will start the vast majority of games behind the plate. Ancient Enos Country Slaughter is the closest thing to a full time outfielder on the team; he has a good BA and on base but no power and the rest of the garden starts will go to a variety of part timers. Tommy Byrne will be limited in his appearances and has some control issues, but he is the best of a weak staff. A parade of non-entities will follow in his wake as the team waits for highly touted rookie Sandy Koufax to develop.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Rock Island Arsenal

Rock Island breezed to the 1954 pennant with 106 regular season wins but lost out to the Muck Dogs in the Fall Classic. They are poised for a repeat and should have an easier time than the AL. Al Rosen, who is primarily a third baseman will be forced to play first in 1955 due to a lack of alternatives. He has nice power and good on base but won't hit for much if an average. His primary backup will be Stan Lopata who will also be needed as a catcher. Jim Finigan who has a decent bat and glove will play second base. Shortstop Roy McMillian has a great glove and more than adequate, though powerless, bat. Rookie Gene Freese will be plugged right into a starting third base role. Gene has some power and a decent glove. Smokey Burgess who has a very productive bat and adequate glove will be the primary catcher, backed up by Lopata. Mickey Mantle is the star of the team as he can do it all, a .300 BA, well over 100 walks, 40-homer potential and a great glove in center field. The other two primary outfielders, Carlos Paula and Dave Philley don't have a lot of power but can spray the ball around very well. Cal Abrams is a solid outfield backup and Bob Cerv a dynamite pinch hitter. Lefties Whitey Ford and Billy Hoefft lead the starting corps, and both are excellent. Several good swingmen, including Don Perfect Game Larsen round out the rotation. Harry Dorish and Ernie Johnson are both solid relievers.

Indianapolis Clowns

It would be a major upset for anyone to surge past the Arsenal, but it will be a three-way battle royale between the Clowns, Blues and Grays for second place in the AL. Dee Fondy plays first base; he has a good glove and some power but it would be nice if he drew a few more walks. Jack Phillips is a good backup at first. Johnny Temple has a great glove at second and his bat is more than adequate. Johnny Logan also has a great glove, but his bat is far more productive than you usually get at shortstop. Jackie Robinson is getting a little long in the tooth and his BA is no longer what it was, but he still knows how to draw a walk and continues as the inspirational leader of the club. He won't play much more than 100 games at third and will be spelled by Grady Hatton. Del Crandall has good power and a nice glove at

catcher, but his batting average is not that great. Billy Bruton in center field has a nice glove and even though he won't hit a lot of homers, he can still get doubles and triples. Jim Rivera, Jim Greengrass and Frank Thomas will shift in and out the remaining outfield starts. Thomas has good power, and the others aren't slouches with the bat. The team doesn't have a knockout number one starter, but swingman Bob Friend is pretty good when he's in there. A raft of other swingmen and part time starters will fill out the rotation. Ellis Kinder is a very good closer and, he'll get a lot of help from Jack Meyer and the swingmen.

Kansas City Blues

The Blues have a very good offense but will be held back by their pitching staff. Joe Adcock and Vic Wertz will platoon at first base. Both have nice power and complement each other very well. Pete Runnels doesn't have much power, but he can spray the ball around the infield pretty well. He doesn't hit LHP and will need to platoon at second with Rocky Bridges. Ken Boyer is a solid third baseman who can play every day, but he'll have to move to short at times as the team lacks an everyday shortstop. Bridges will cover for him when he's not playing second. Roy Campanella is one of the best catchers in the league on both offense and defense but can't play every day and will need to be spelled by Clint Courtney. Wally Post has a good bat with great power and can play every day in right field. Don Mueller and Rip Repulski will get most of the remaining outfield starts but the team lacks a decent centerfielder which could be a problem. Highly touted rookie Rocky Colavita is still not quite ready for the big time. Art Fowler and Willard Nixon are the closest the team has to regular rotation starters as the manager will need to plug in several swingmen in order to get through the season. The bullpen isn't bad with Hersh Freeman and Sandy Consuegra.

Worcester Grays

Worcester won 92 games last year and could have a hard time repeating that win total in 1955 though they could compete for second place. The Gray's manager would like to get George Crowe into the lineup so he will start him at first base for a good part of the season and move excellent fielder Gil Hodges to the outfield where his glove is very poor. Crowe does have nice power and a good OBA. Danny O'Connell and Jerry Snyder will share time at second base; neither can hit much but Snyder is a much better fielder. Joe DeMaestri and George Strickland will share time at shortstop; Joe is the better hitter and George the better fielder. The Walking Man Eddie Yost will get the most starts at the hot corner with several others filling in as needed. Hal Smith and Andy Semenic will share time behind the plate; Smith is a better hitter and Semenic superior with the glove. Al Smith can play every day in right field where he combines a good BA and OB, nice power and a decent glove. Gus Bell is a solid hitter with a below average glove in center field. As stated above, Hodges will play a lot of left field with Connie Diering and Jim Delsing also getting playing time. The top four starters are Joe Nuxhall, Jim Hearn, Steve Gromek and Mike Garcia with Connie Johnson also getting some time. Frank Smith, George Zuvernik and Windy McCall are the leaders of a tough bullpen. One thing about this staff is they almost all possess good control which means they will rarely beat themselves by issuing untimely walks.

Schaumburg Hawks

Schaumburg will have a very tough time trying to rise to fourth place, but they could very easily fall to sixth. The offense is middle of the road, but the pitching staff is poor. First baseman Mickey Vernon is solid with the bat as he can hit .300 with good on base and his defense is decent. Second sacker Red Schoendienst has a good glove, and his bat is well above average. Billy Hunter and Alex Grammas will alternate at shortstop; both are decent fielders with weak bats. Puddin Head Jones has nice power and on base and he holds down third base. Toby Atwell, Matt Batts and rookie Elston Howard will switch off behind the plate. Howard is by far the best of the trio, but he'll also need to play some outfield. Duke

Snider (the Duke of Flatbush) returns in center field, and it looks like another stellar season. He'll hit .300 with 100 walks and 40 plus homers. Gus Zernial will get the most starts in right where he has 30-homer power. Hank Sauer, Gene Stephens and Howard will fill out the remaining outfield starts. The pitching staff doesn't have anything close to a leader and the manager will have to run 8-9 guys out to the mound to get through the season. Tom Gorman and Dixie Howell lead a below average bullpen.

DeVillibis Tigers

Just like the hawks, the Tigers are very unlikely to rise to fourth, but they could overtake Schaumburg for fifth. Falling to the cellar would indicate a major collapse. Moose Skowron, a fine hitter will get the most starts at first base and he'll be backed up by Ferris Fain who has a good glove but little power in his bat. Frank Kellert might get a few first base starts but his main value will be as a dynamite pinch hitter. Bobby Avila at second has a nice bat with some power and decent defense. Al Dark swings the bat fairly well but doesn't draw many walks; he'll alternate at shortstop with Bobby Stephenson who has an even worst batting eye. Andy Carey has a decent bat to go with a great glove and will play third base. Jim Hegan and Harry Chiti will share time behind the plate; neither can hit very well but Hegan is a much better receiver. Irv Noren and Ernie Oravitz are the closest thing the team has to regular outfielders, and they aren't much. The rest of the starts will go to a parade of part timers. Frank Sullivan, Johnny Antonelli and Jim Wilson are all fine starters but beyond them it's a little thin. They do have three fine relievers in Marv Grissom, Hal Jeffcoat and Tom Morgan.

Chicago Stammers

This team only won 52 games last year and might be hard pressed to repeat even that lowly number in 1955. The offense is probably the worst in all of SPBIII and the pitching staff not much better. It will be very hard for them to escape the cellar. Wally Moon is an accomplished outfielder, but he will be forced to play a lot of first base for the Stammers as there isn't much else except Joe Collins who is a mediocre hitter. Moon on the other hand is one of the best hitters on the team. Hector Lopez is good at both second and third base but will be forced to mostly play second in 1955 for lack of alternatives. His second base backups are very weak. At short Jose Valdivielso is good on defense and Freddie Marsh is OK but both have lousy bats. Don Hoak is the best they have at third base, and he is no trip to Hollywood, but he'll be restricted to about 100 games and his replacements are horrible. Sherm Lollar isn't a bad catcher either offensively or defensively and his replacement is Del Rice who can't hit his way out of a paper bag. With Moon at first base Ralph Kiner is the best of a poor group of outfielders. Half a dozen no-names will shuttle in and out of the lineup. They have several decent starting pitchers led by Johnny Podres, but the overall rotation is not strong. On the other hand, the bullpen is top notch with Don Mossi, Paul LaPalme and Leo Keily. Too bad the team won't have a lot of late leads to protect.