

PRE-SEASON PROGNOSIS 1956

AMERICAN LEAGUE

American League

South River Muck Dogs

The defending AL champs were upset in the World Series by the Rock Island Arsenal in a shocking five games, but they are clearly the pre-season favorite in 1956. The Big Klu, Ted Kluszewski will be the main man at first base. Klu will play the vast majority of games and has very good power. His backup is Frank Torre who has a nice glove. Gil McDougal has a great glove and very nice bat and will anchor second base. He'll be able to play in 125 or so games but his backups are weak. Dick Groat has a nice bat and glove and will play shortstop. The third baseman Daryl Spencer has some power and a decent glove but overall his bat is weak. Jack Shepard will catch about 100 games; he has an OK glove and mediocre bat. Ed Fitzgerald, who has a nice bat will fill in the balance of starts along with Wes Westrum. The outfield is loaded with Say Hey Willie Mays, a sensational flyhawk in center who also has good power. Charley Maxwell in left also can hit the ball out of the park and is an even better overall hitter than Mays. Charlie Suitcase Simpson and Carl Furillo will share the rest of the starts in the garden and both have 20-homer power. Furillo also has a cannon arm. Hot shot teenage prospect Curt Flood is waiting in the wings but he is still a few years away. Don Newcombe and Jack Harshman are a great R/L combo at the top of the pitching staff. The third starter, Robin Roberts is a workhorse who has great control but also a tendency to give up a lot of home runs. Several decent swing men will fill out the rotation. Bob Miller and Clem Labine are the anchors of the bullpen, but Taylor Phillips and Bud Byerly will also contribute.

Goshen Aces

The Aces have a solid attack, but a leaky pitching staff will hold them back. They could contend for the pennant but don't bet on it and likely they will battle the Walleye all year long for second place. Stan the Man Musial is 35 years old but shows no signs of slowing down as he promises to have another sensational season with a .300 BA, good on base, solid power and a solid glove at first base. Jim Gilliam at second base can play every day, hit .300, knows the strike zone and is fine with the glove. Chico Carresquel at short has little power and will struggle to hit .250 but his glove won't kill you and the manager can easily hide him in this lineup. At third Billy Klaus knows the strike zone, can hit doubles if not homers and can field his position. Ray Jablonski is a nice hot corner backup. Highly regarded prospect Brooks Robinson isn't quite ready yet. Ed Bailey is a top-flight catcher and he is backed up by Ray Katt who is adequate. Minnie Minoso in left field is right up there with Musial as a great offensive performer, and he can play every day. Larry Doby in center is a good defender who can hit the ball out of the park and will also draw close to 100 walks. Del Ennis has a weak glove and won't draw any walks but he can hit a few homers. Jim King is available as a decent outfield reserve. The pitching staff has some problems, but the top two hurlers, Murry Dickson and Tom Poholsky are decent but not spectacular. Sam Jones and Ray Moore are numbers three and four, but both have control issues. Several swingmen will fill out the rotation. Ray Narleski will be spectacular in limited bullpen appearances and Lou Sleator isn't bad but Hoyt Wilhelm who had a nice year in 1955 looks to be plagued with control issues in 1956.

St. Clair Walleye

This club won 94 games in 1955 but will be hard pressed to match that total in 1956 although they will be in a tight race with the Aces for second place. The attack can't match the Aces, but the pitching staff is top of the line. Dick Gernert and Walt Dropo will switch off at first base. Dick has nice power with very good on base and an excellent glove. Dropo is a notch below Dick in all areas. Gene Baker at second has modest power and a good glove but not much else. His backup Ted Kazinski can't do much with the bat and his glove is just average. Willie Miranda can play every day but he is your classic good field/no hit shortstop. Eddie Mathews at third has 40-homer power and decent on base plus he won't embarrass you with his glove. Yogi Berra is one of the best catchers in SPB3 both offensively and defensively. Ted Williams and Hammering Hank Aaron are two sensational outfielders both with very nice power. Hank is a much better fielder but can't hold a candle to Ted when it comes to his knowledge of the strike zone. Hank Bauer has good power but might not hit .250. Elmer Valo who has limited power is also available for outfield duty. None of the four mentioned above are natural center fielders, which could be a problem. The team is blessed with five good starters in Herb Score, Early Wynn, Lou Burdette, Warren Spahn and Bob Buhl but both Score and Buhl have control issues. Marv Grissom is a top-notch reliever but he won't have a lot of good backups. If this team does well in 1956, the pitching staff will be the key.

Hoosier Thunderbolts

This club was terrible in 1955 but should rebound with a decent season. They will need a few breaks plus underachievement from the teams above to move out of fourth place but are unlikely to fall to fifth or lower. Unlike the Aces and Walleye who have an unbalance between offense and pitching, the 'Bolts are decent but not outstanding in both. The Hoosiers have some issues at first base where right now they have only Sam Mele and Norm Zauchin who together don't have enough plate appearances to last the season which will force Gus Triandos to play some games at first. Billy Martin and Jack Ditmer will switch off at second base with Eddie Miksis filling in when he isn't playing short or third. Both Martin and Ditmer are average in just about all areas, offense and defense. Pee Wee Reese at short has a little power and won't embarrass you in the field. Ray Boone is a solid performer at third where he has a good eye for the base on balls and 25-homer power with an adequate glove. Miksis will fill in as needed. Gus Triandos is a solid performer at catcher with nice power and a good glove but has stated above he'll need to play some first base. His main backup is Tim Thompson. Bob Nieman in right is a solid performer who could .320 with a slew of walks and decent power plus a good glove. Jimmy (I'm not crazy and have a paper to prove it) Piersall is a sensational ball hawk in center with a cannon arm and very nice power. Enos Country Slaughter, Monte Irvin and Bob Thurman will fill out the remaining outfield starts. Frank Lary and Sal Maglie are the top two hurlers, and several decent swingmen will fill out the rotation. Tommy Byrne is the closet thing they have to a decent reliever, but the swingmen will help out.

East Kenosha Larks

It will be a major accomplishment for the Larks to move up past fifth place, but stranger things have happened. Vic Power and Roy Sievers will share time at first base and both will get some outfield starts. Vic is a better hitter for average and a great defender while Roy has 30-homer power and knows the strike zone. Pepper Pot Nellie Fox returns at second base where he combines a solid bat with a good glove. Shortstop Harvey Kuenn could challenge for the batting title and has decent power. The manager will need to figure out what to do with Luis Aparicio who is a good shortstop but can't play any other position. Billy Gardner and Fred Hatfield will share the hot corner. Gardner has modest power and both are average fielders. Frank House, Les Moss and Andy Seminick will share time behind the plate; none of the triumvirate are world beaters. Bill Virdon in center has a very good glove and can hit over

.300 with nice power. Right fielder Roberto (don't call me Bob) Clemente slaps the ball around pretty well but few will leave the park and he is allergic to the base on balls. Jackie Brandt in left has a nice bat with adequate power and a good glove. Space will need to be found for Bill Tuttle, a solid outfielder. Three southpaws Billy Pierce, Curt Simmons and Chuck Stobbs lead the starting staff. This overload of lefthanders could be a boon or liability, we will see. Gene Conley and Vern Law will round out the rotation. Lindy McDaniel and Turk Lown lead a decent but unspectacular bullpen.

Maumee River Carp

The Carp could move up to fifth but just as easily fall to the cellar. Their attack is arguably the worst in the AL but the pitching staff is not bad. Marv Blaylock is a fair to middling first basemen who won't kill you but certainly won't get many All-Star votes. His backups are George Kell and Preston Ward who also play other positions. Billy Goodman who can spray the ball around the infield fairly well and has a decent glove will share second base time with Herb Plews who is decent but not as good as Goodman. Shortstop is a real problem as a parade of nonentities will switch off all season long. Veteran Phil Rizzutto is still around but only a shadow of his former self. When he isn't playing first George Kell will get the most starts at third base; is a decent hitter and fielder. His main backup is Foster Kellerman who can't do much of anything other than hit an occasional home run. Sammy White is a nice defensive catcher who has some modest hitting ability. Hank Foiles and Hal Naragon are available as backups. Jackie Jensen in right is the best hitter on the team; he can hit over .300 with nice power and on base and is decent with the glove. Jim Busby will patrol center field where he has a good glove but well below average bat. Ward will get quite a few outfield starts but won't contribute much offensively. Several no names and no talents will fill out the balance of the outfield starts. After all this negative on the offense we get to the pitching staff which isn't bad. Bob Lemon, Bob Rush, Tom Brewer and Roger Craig are a nice quartet at the top of the starting staff. Swingmen Stu Miller and Mike Fornieles will round out the rotation. Roy Face is the top man in the bullpen, but he doesn't have a lot of support other than the swingmen mentioned above as former star Kim Konstanty is clearly on the downside of his career.

Brooklyn Royal Giants

The Giants could clearly move out of the cellar and maybe even challenge for fifth place but realistically that's about all they could hope for. Dale Long has very good power and defense and will play just about everyday at first; as a LHB he also does very well against LHP's. That leaves little room for Earl Torgenson who only plays first but has a nice eye for the base on balls. At second base, Solly Hemus is a very good hitter and below average fielder but will only be able to play about 85 games. There are a lot of bodies behind him but none of them will light you up. Granny Hamner was a former standout but now he is well below average with both his bat and glove. Shortstop Ernie Banks is just starting to come into his own and is blessed with very good power and a decent glove. Third base is another comedy of errors as a parade of players will move in and out of the lineup. Clete Boyer and Harmon Killebrew both have a lot of potential, but they aren't ready yet. Along with Banks, the best players on the team are right fielder Al Kaline and center fielder Ritchie Ashburn. Both know the strike zone and are good defenders plus Kaline has 30-homer potential. Gene Woodling will get the most starts in left where he has a below average glove and minimal power but can get on base. Carl Olson will fill in the blanks when Woodling isn't playing. Red Wilson and Pete Daley will get the most starts behind the plate; Wilson is a decent hitter, but it will be pretty grim when these two both have to sit on the bench. The pitching staff is probably the worst in the AL, but Ron Kline is a workhorse and a nice number one starter. Paul Foytack, Dick Donovan and Willard Schmidt will get the most of the remaining starts. It is pretty grim after that with Bob Turley averaging almost a walk an inning. Several of the starters,

especially Foytack and Schmidt will need to pull double duty in the bullpen as there is absolutely nothing else available for relief.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Indianapolis Clowns

Unlike the American League where the Muck Dogs are heavy favorites, the NL promises a year long battle for the pennant with technically five teams competing for the flag. All have strengths and weaknesses, but the season promises to be very interesting. Dee Fondy, who is a better defender will switch off at first base with Bob Boyd who is a much better hitter. Johnny Temple a solid spray hitter and good defender will anchor second base. At short Johnny Logan has a decent bat with good power for a middle infielder and also can field his position very well. Veteran Jackie Robison is getting up there in years but can still contribute at third with a solid bat and glove; his backup is Randy Jackson who is a wizard with the glove. Del Crandall has some power and a cannon arm at catcher but will struggle to hit .250. His backup, Hobie Landrith is a weak imitation. Right fielder Walt Moryn has a nice bat with good power and an acceptable glove. Frank Thomas in left doesn't walk much and has a below average glove but he can hit the ball out of the park. In center Billy Bruton also has an aversion to the base on balls and has double and triple if not home run power but possesses a good glove. It is on the mound where the Clowns will shine. Work horse Bob Friend is the clear leader of the staff and could easily win 20 or more games. There is no clear number two but the rest of the starting corps won't embarrass you, but it is in the bullpen where the Clowns will excel. Ellis Kinder, Nellie King, Tom Acker, Bob Grim and Don Gross are all top notch and each could be the top reliever on many teams.

Rock Island Arsenal

The defending World Series champs could easily contend again this year; their offense is solid, but a leaky pitching staff could be a problem. First base is not a team strong point; several players will move in and out of the lineup with the best being Dave Philley who is no trip to Hollywood plus he may be needed in the outfield. At second base Frank Bolling is a decent hitter with modest power and an acceptable glove but he will be limited to about 100 games. After him Jerry Coleman has a good glove but a no-power bat. Roy McMillan at short can play just about every day and is a nice spray hitter who knows the strike zone and is a great fielder. Al Rosen at third has some power and a decent glove; his backups are Jim Finigan and Gene Freese; neither of whom are standouts. The catcher Stan Lopata has 30-homer power and a nice batting eye, but his weak throwing arm will be an advertisement for other teams to steal bases at will. The unquestioned star of the team is Mickey Mantle who could vie for the triple crown and is also a great fielder in center. The other outfield starts will be spread out among several players the best of whom is Whitey Lockman but don't look for many long balls from him. Whitey Ford is the star of the staff and could easily take off with several pitching honors. Billy Hoefl and Art Ditmar are numbers two and three, but both have control issues. Several swing men will fill out the rotation and also constitute the bullpen as the team has no solid ace.

Schaumburg Hawks

The Hawks won only 60 games last year and will certainly improve on that in 1956 and could even contend with a few breaks. The club has several outstanding players such as Duke Snider, Red Schoendienst, Willie Jones and Mickey Vernon, except when he is facing a LHP but the team has serious problems with both infield and outfield depth which will certainly become an issue as the long season progresses. As stated above first baseman Mickey Vernon is a great hitter as long as the pitcher is right-handed. His backup, Frank Kellert is a good fielder but can't hit righties or lefties. Schoendienst is a good spray hitter without much power and an adequate fielder. Alex Grammas who also needs to play

shortstop is a mediocre replacement. Grammas is the best of a grab bag of players who will shuttle in and out of the shortstop position. Puddin Head Jones at third is a nice hitter with decent power, good on base and OK defense who can play every day. Elston Howard doesn't have much power and will need to play some outfield, but he does have a cannon arm at catcher. His backup is Joe Ginsberg who is mediocre in all areas. Snider will hit close to .300 with 40 homers, 100 walks and play a good center field. Gus Zernial and Hank Sauer are both part-timers and the manager will be challenged to find replacements that aren't a complete embarrassment. On the mound, Johnny Klippstein and Ruben Gomez are the only regular rotation starters and neither is especially impressive. A gaggle of swingmen including promising rookie Don Drysdale, Tom Gorman, Red Munger and Irv Palica will round out the rotation. Ed Roebuck and Walt Masterson plus the non-starting swingmen constitute a mediocre bullpen. The staff will have to overachieve if the Hawks hope to compete for the pennant.

Kansas City Blues

The team is blessed with two power-hitting first baseman (Joe Adcock and Vic Wertz) who can't play other positions and this will be a real challenge for the manager. Pete Runnels has a .300 bat plus some power and a nice glove at short. Don Blasingame is a nice slap hitter at short who also can field his position well. Ken Boyer is an every day third baseman who can hit .300 with nice power and a topnotch glove. Roy Campanella is a good receiver behind the plate with decent power but his BA will suffer this year. His backup is Clint Cortney who has a good bat. Wally Post is a full-time outfielder with excellent power and a good glove but doesn't walk much. Don Mueller is the next closest thing the club has to a full-time outfielder but he won't win many awards with the bat or glove. Rip Repulski, Rocky Colavito and Dick Williams will share the remaining outfield starts, all are competent hitters. The top four starting pitchers (Vinegar Bend Mizell, Johnny Kucks, Art Fowler and Willard Nixon) aren't bad although Mizell has some control issues. Hersh Freeman, Don Bessent and swingman Jerry Staley are the leaders of the bullpen.

Newfoundland Grays

The team moved from Worchester to Newfoundland during the offseason and hopes to improve on last year's 74 wins. The attack has some holes, but the pitching staff is decent. With some breaks they could move up in the standings and maybe even contend for the pennant. First sacker Gil Hodges can play every day, hit a lot of homers, knows the strike zone and is a wizard with his glove. Danny O'Connell, a decent fielder with a modest bat will get the most starts at second base as the team waits for teenage prodigy Bill Mazerowski to develop. Joe DeMasrei is your typical good field no-hit shortstop. The walking man Eddie Yost returns; in addition to his great batting eye, he has modest power and a good glove. Hal Smith and Bill Sarni are a nice one-two punch at catcher; both have decent bats and won't kill you in the field. Center fielder Gus Bell is right up there with Hodges as a prime mover on offense; he can hit home runs and bat close to .300. Al Smith in right is another solid performer who has decent power and knows how to take a walk. Sandy Amoros will get the most starts in left field and he is decent but the pickings behind him are slim. The team has three decent starters in Connie Johnson, Joe Nuxhall and Mike (the Bear) Garcia. Talented Wally Burnette is also available for limited use in the rotation. Swingmen Jim Hearn and Stev Gromek are also available. Windy McCall, George Zuvernik and Fred Waters lead the bullpen brigade.

Devilbush Tigers

The Bengals have the worst offense in the NL and arguably in all of SPB3 but the pitching staff isn't bad. However, for them to rise above sixth place will be a real achievement and they could easily slip to the cellar. Moose Skowron is a top notch first sacker with a powerful bat and great glove but time will have to be found for hot shot rookie Bill White. Bobby Avila at second knows how to take a walk and has

modest power plus a good glove but might not hit .230. Bobby Richardson looks to have a good future ahead of him but not this year. Al Dark at short is allergic to the base on balls but he does have modest power and an OK glove. At third Andy Carey has a very modest bat but a good glove. The manager is hoping that Frank Malzone will mature and take over the position in 1957. Jungle Jim Rivera has a good glove to go with a decent bat and will patrol right field. The rest of the outfield is up for grabs as only Pete Whisenant can play even 100 games, and he isn't very impressive. A parade of spear carriers will fill out the garden slots. Jim Hegan and Hal Smith will split time at catcher. Smith is a much better hitter but neither have much power. Lefty Johnny Antonelli is the clear leader of the pitching staff and could easily win 20 games with proper support, something he won't get from this club. Frank Sullivan and pint size Harvey Haddix are next in the line with several others filling out the rotation. Cuban born Camilo Pascual has a bright future, but he needs to learn the strike zone first. The non-starting swingmen plus Tom Morgan staff an unimpressive bullpen.

Chicago Stammers

The Stammers will battle the Tigers all year for possession of sixth place, but it will be tough for them to advance any further. Joe Collins who has nothing positive on his resume other than a good glove will get the most starts at first base with several outfielders such as Tito Francona and Wally Moon filling in as needed. Charlie Neal, who has a nice bat will share time at second with Hector Lopez, who also plays third. Shortstop is also a bit confused as Jose Valdespino, who has a lousy bat will need to switch off with Mike Bolling and Freddie Marsh, two other non-entities. It would be great if Lopez, who has a very nice bat and glove could play every day at third base, but he will be needed at short and Don Hoak, a lousy hitter and fielder will need to get a lot more third base starts than the manager would like. Sherm Lollar who has a good bat and glove will play most of the games behind with plate with Del Rice filling in as needed. Hot shot rookie Frank Robinson promises to break in with a bang as he has a .300 bat, great power and a very nice glove in right field. Moon, who has a good bat with power and good on base may need to play center field for lack of alternatives when he isn't at first. Francona, as stated above, will need to play some first base but he will also get a lot of time in left but his offensive contribution will be limited. Whitey Herzog and Joe Frazier, who both have pop gun bats are also available for outfield play. The club doesn't have a full-time top-flight starter and the manager will need to be very creative to massage the rotation as the season progresses. The team does have a very deep bullpen and by minimizing the innings pitched by the starters, the starting rotation issues may be handled. However overall the staff is clearly the weakest in all of SPB3.