

PRE-SEASON PROGNOSIS 1931

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Lincoln City Riptide

The 'Tide won 94 games in 1930 but that was only good for third place, ten games off the lead. However in 1931 they should be fighting for the pennant all year long and are forecast to edge out the Blue Sox who shared third place with them last year. The off season acquisition of Babe Ruth (the Sultan of Swat) gives them an enormous shot in the arm. The Babe will patrol RF with Chick Hafey getting most of the starts in left where he will be a great hitter, if mediocre defender. Heine Manush, also an indifferent fielder if a solid hitter, will play some LF but the only legitimate CF on the squad is Fred Shuelte, so the manager will need to shuffle all four of these players around to maximize their potential. Don Hurst is a solid hitter with a great glove at first but George Grantham at second will need to maximize his offensive potential to make up for a horrible glove while SS Hal Ryne has a great glove but his offensive contribution will be adequate at best. The story continues at third where Red Kress has a thunderous bat but will need it to make up for a leaky glove. Roy Spencer will get most of the starts behind the plate and he won't embarrass you on either side of the diamond. The Tide will shine on the mound and the staff is led by the incomparable Lefty Grove. Someone forgot to tell Lefty that this was a hitter's year as his stats are comparable to the best in any pitcher's year. George Ernshaw, Ray Kremer and Larry Benton round out the next three spots and the fifth man Pat Malone could be the second or third starter on almost any other team. The bullpen is a little thin but with these starters, a 'pen isn't that big of a need.

Schenectady Blue Sox

The Sox don't have overwhelming home run power, but they can hit doubles and triples with the best of them. Jimmy Foxx is the big power guy and he would normally play first but he'll get pushed to third by Ed Morgan who has the potential to hit .350 with a good batting eye and he can spray the ball all over the field. Ski Mellilo at second has a great glove and with some good non-home run power. Woody English is another solid hitter at short. The team has four good outfielders in Lefty O'Doul, Earl Webb, Kiki Cuyler and Sammy West with the biggest problem finding enough playing time for them all. Bill Dickey is one of the best catchers on both offense and defense in the entire league and his backup Ray Hayward is solid. The pitching staff doesn't have anyone to compare to Grove but the top five starters are all solid and they can work their way in and out of the bullpen along with several other hurlers who could be in the regular rotation for almost any other team.

New York Mutuals

The Mutuals finished a close second last year with 102 wins but they will be hard pressed to come anywhere close to that in 1931 but a falloff by the top two above could get them into the pennant race. Outfielder Babe Herman is the only Mutual with serious double figure home run power but they do have some good hitters on the team. They have four decent (if unspectacular) OF's who will share time with Herman and first sacker Dale Alexander is a good hitter who might not hit it over the fence but can be counted on for close to 50 doubles. Wally Gilbert is a vacuum cleaner at third but his offense is below par. The middle infield is a grab bag with several players rotating in and out of the lineup. Only part-time 2B Dick Porter is a decent hitter but he lacks a good glove. Gabby Hartnett is back for another year at catcher and his backup Charley Berry is more than adequate. The pitching staff is top notch and led by Carl (Screwball) Hubbell and Lefty Gomez. The rest of the starting rotation is very good but except for the days when the regular rotation guys have a day off, there isn't much of a bullpen.

Frankfort Frogs

The Frogs should battle the Whiffenpoofs all year for possession of fourth place but moving up could be a challenge. The Iron Horse, first baseman Lou Gehrig, leads the offense and could challenge for the triple crown and end the season with half the homers of the entire team. Lou Fonesca and Freddy Leach are good hitting outfielders but both leave a bit to be desired on the defensive end. Hack Wilson suffered some off season injuries and will probably be a mere shell of himself in 1931 when compared to his sensational 1930 season. The balance of the OF at bats will be shared by a group of part-timers. Tony Cuccinello is a stand out 2B both offensively and defensively. Shortstop and third base will both be season long headaches and clearly the weakest positions on the field. The catching corps is a three-headed monster that won't embarrass you but will not be a team strength either. Ray Bengie is the workhorse leader of the pitching staff and he'll get decent support from part-timer Jesse Haines. However there isn't much quality in the rest of the starters and very little in the way of a bullpen. The staff must significantly overachieve if the Frankfort crew wants to move up in the standings.

New Haven Whiffenpoofs

The Poofs and Frogs are very close with the Frogs' offense a little better and the Poofs pitching staff with a slight edge. In any event a repeat of New Haven's 104 1930 wins and a berth in the World Series is completely out of the question. The team has a serious lack of home run power and at season's end will probably only out-homer the woeful Glaziers. Frankie Fritsch at second and Joe Cronin at short are among the best DP combo in the league, especially on defense. Les Mallon is a good defensive 2B but Fritsch will move him to first where he is pitiful with the glove and will share time with light hitting Al Van DeCamp who may also play some outfield. Rick Ferrell will be a good catcher for 120 or so games and his backups will not be a total disaster. Ossie Bluege is OK as a Punch and Judy hitting third baseman but the outfield is among the weakest in the league. There is no one in the garden who could start for any of the better teams and DeCamp may have to play a lot more than the manager would like, exposing even more of Mallon's defensive liabilities. Wes Ferrell and swingman Firpo Marberry are the leaders of the staff but the rest of the starters are weak. They do have a good bullpen hand in Jim Lindsey.

Louisville Colonels

A big drop off for the last two spots but barring a total collapse, the Colonels are set in sixth as the Glaziers will have a very hard time moving out of the cellar. The team has some decent hitters in first sacker Jim Bottomley plus outfielders Mel Ott, Ben Chapman & Pepper Martin and catcher Spud Davis. However the quality after that quintet is weak. Second baseman Freddie Maguire is the closest thing to a regular in the rest of the infield but he can't hit his way out of a paper bag. The manager will have to run a relay of non-entities in and out of the lineup to cover the balance of infield starts. The staff has a decent Big Three of Freddie Fitzsimmons, Burleigh Grimes and Bill Hallahan but the quality falls off pretty fast after that trio. Jack Ogden is a decent guy in the pen but he won't be able to pitch enough games to be a serious factor.

San Diego Glaziers

The Glaziers were dead last in every single one of the factors in my complex formula, most by a wide margin and escaping the cellar will be a monumental accomplishment. Only part-time OF Vince Barton has anything close to double-figure HR power but he might not get enough at bats to hit even that many. Johnny Hodnap is a great fielder at second but even though he might hit .300, it will be a punchless .300. Center fielder Tom Oliver can go for the ball with the best of them and can hit a few doubles but he is allergic to the base on balls. There is nothing close to another full time OF on the roster and the manager will have to shuttle in a cast of thousands to get through the season. Marty

McManus at third is a decent gloveman but not much of a hitter. Young Luke Appling is a budding star of the future but in 1931 he will share time at short with Bill Cissell and neither will scare you with the bat. Four players will share time at catcher but none of them will be confused with an All-Star. Then we get to the pitching staff which has Earl Whitehall and Clise Dudley plus a decent swingman in Glenn Spencer but not much else. It will be bombs away when the lower half of the rotation is on the mound and it's possible (if he gets enough starts) that Sam Gray could equal his real life 24 losses. A bullpen; what is that?

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Albany Empires

The Albany crew won 85 games last year but finished a distant fifteen games out of first but they are the odds on favorite in 1931. Just as the Glaziers finished last in all five categories in my complex formula, the Empires finished first and again most by a wide margin. Al Simmons, who could flirt with .400 this year will occupy RF with Chuck Klein flanking him in left or maybe center as they lack a bonafided CF. However the offensive firepower of these two plus Bing Miller and Dave Harris who will share most of the remaining OF at bats will more than make up for the defensive issues. Max Bishop, Rogers Hornsby and Joe Sewell will share time at second and third with little drop off no matter who is playing. Lu Blue is an excellent first baseman with a great batting eye although it would be nice if he hit a few more balls out of the park. Shortstop Rabbit Maranville is the weak link in the infield both offensively and defensively. Mickey Cochrane is arguably the best catcher in SPBX. Bill Walker is probably the closest pitcher to Lefty Grove and is backed up by Red Lucas and Rube Walberg with a host of swingmen who can both start and provide an excellent (for 1931) bullpen.

Mojave Mavericks

In an off season move not seen since 1971 (that is 40 years in the future but who is counting!) when Carroll Rosenblum and Bob Irsay traded the Baltimore Colts and Los Angeles Rams franchises, the 1930 World Series champion Brooklyn Knights "traded" their team to a new manager who renamed it the Prairie Crossing Red Foxes while the Knights ownership took over the old Boise Trees and renamed it the Mojave Mavericks. Then they turned around and made a flurry of off season trades and wise draft picks, turning the 53-win Trees team of 1930 into a solid contender, but probably just for second place, as it will be very hard for anyone to knock off the Empires. They have some players with decent power such as outfielders John Stone and Buzz Arlett. The manager will be shuffling guys in and out of the third OF spot but without a big drop off in quality. Ripper Collins has a good glove at first but he will be pressed by Del Bissonette and Collins may play some OF as a result. Second will be shared by Johnny Burnett and Chick Fullis both of whom can hit but are mediocre fielders. Charlie Gelbert at short and Pinky Whitney at third round out the infield and both are solid. Shanty Hogan is the best of the catching corps and he has a cannon arm. Lloyd Brown and Paul Derringer lead the starters and the bottom of the rotation is pretty strong. Swingman Bump Hadley is a valuable addition to the staff and the non-starting starters round out a good bullpen.

San Francisco Seals

The Seals should battle the Mavericks and Red Foxes for second place but it will take a herculean effort and/or a total collapse of the Empires for them to challenge for the pennant. They have a crackerjack outfield with Earl Averill, Paul Waner and Earl Combs all of whom can hit with good extra base power, take a walk and won't be a burden in the field. Harvey Hendrick at first is a solid hitter, although lacking home run power, Bernie Friberg will get most of the starts at 2B where he is a good fielder but lacks a

potent bat, though he can play several other infield positions. Shortstop Lyn Lary is a fine fielder and can take a walk if needed. Third sacker Joe Stripp is a solid hitter although it would be nice if he walked a little more but he has several good backups. In fact one of the strengths of the team is a versatile roster with guys capable of playing multiple positions well. The team has several catchers who will share time and all are more than adequate. The pitching staff's main strength is good control, something missing in a lot of other SPBX teams. The top of the rotation is decent but when you get to the bottom, pitchers such as Tommy Thomas and Socks Seibold will be a challenge. Ancient spitballer Jack Quinn leads the bullpen and he should have a good year but is backed ably by several of the non-starting starters. There are only nine pitchers on the roster so the starters will need to go deep which could cause problems.

Praire Crossing Red Foxes

The new management of the former Brooklyn Knights still have several of the stars of 1930 such as first baseman Bill Terry and outfielder Goose Goslin but a few are missing such as Hack Wilson. They should contend for second place but this team might not hit 100 homers whereas the 1930 edition had a league leading 228. The left side of the infield with SS Travis Jackson and 3B Pie Traynor is very good while 2B Tony Lazzeri does have a good batting eye to make up for a less than stellar batting average. Mule Haas is an excellent flyhawk in center and he can hit very well but might not be able to play much more than 100 games. Taylor Douhit will get a lot of starts in center and right and the balance of the OF at bats will be handled by several capable part timers. Luke Sewell is a decent catcher and he'll be capably backed up by Bennie Tate. The pitching staff is above average but the only real standout is Bob Smith. The lower part of the rotation is a lot better than the Seals which could be a factor as the season wears on. Eddie Rommel (no relation to Erwin) is the leader of the pen and he'll get some quality help from the non-starting starters.

East Kenosha Leopards

A huge falloff after the top four but any of the bottom three could finish either fifth, sixth or seventh. The Gassers have the worst pitching staff of the three and the Titans the worst offense so by default the Leopards get picked for fifth. Outfielder Wally Berger and third baseman Johnny Vergez are the only real home run threats on the roster. Lloyd (Little Poison) Waner is a nice slap hitter and a great defensive centerfielder but he doesn't walk much. Charlie Gehringer at second and Dick Bertell at short are a good DP combo and both can hit but Gehringer may not be able to play much more than 100 games. Al Lopez is steady at catcher but his backups are weak. Willie Kamm is a decent third sacker but playing him will take time away from Vergez and give the Leopards even more of a power problem. Roy Johnson is a decent outfielder who can hit doubles and triples if not homers and Jack Rothrock will get most of the starts at the third OF slot. There are no standouts on the pitching staff but the starting rotation is decent and the non-starting starters will form an adequate bullpen.

Borger Gassers

The Gassers won only 66 games last year with Babe Ruth in the lineup, so they decided to deal him away for future considerations. Those 66 wins might be an achievable goal in 1931 but 100 losses is not outside the realm of possibility. Johnny Frederick is a decent OF and the only double-figure HR threat on the team. Charley Grimm is a top notch first baseman while Buddy Myer can do the job at second. Leo (the Lip) Durocher is an offensive millstone at short and his glove, though adequate, is not Golden Glove material. Sparky Adams at third will hit a few doubles but his defense is not good. Joe Vosmik is a decent outfielder to match with Frederick but the third OF slot will be filled by several part-timers who will need to be moved in and out of the lineup. The only two catchers on the roster aren't very good at either the plate or with the glove. The pitching staff is pretty pitiful and it will be bombs away on most

days. The best hurlers are swingmen Ed Baecht and Bruce Cunningham but neither of them would pitch much for any of the better (and some of the lesser) teams. Giving a lot of starts to the likes of Ray Phelps and Todd Lisenbee is not a recipe for success. There is nothing even remotely resembling a bullpen.

Detroit Titans

Though picked for last, the Titans are nowhere near the doormats of the NL that the Glaziers are in the AL and it would be no surprise if they finished as high as fifth. The team will probably finish last in the NL in homers and beat out only the Glaziers in all of SPBX. Joe Kuhel can hit a few extra base hits but overall he is one of the worst first sackers in all of SPBX. The outfield consists of a cast of bango hitters, few of whom can field very well. Fred Bickell is the only one who can play much more than 100 games and his bat is the definition of punchless. Second baseman Dickie Kerr is a decent fielder but not much at the plate. Gordon Slade and Dick Hunnifield will share time at short and at least Slade is a decent fielder even though neither can hit much. Urbane Pickering will get most of the starts at third and might be the only Titan to threaten the 10 home run mark. The Schnoz, Ernie Lombardi, is a good catcher but probably won't be able to start much more than 75 games and his replacements aren't much. Larry French and Charley Root are good starters who could crack any rotation but it gets a little thin after that duo and the bullpen is nowhere to be found.