

March 29, 2005

UPDATED

- Dollar values
- Opening Day Lineups
- Pitching Rotations



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**SPRING TRAINING
UPDATE**

LOS ANGELES ANGELS OF ANAHEIM

AMERICAN LEAGUE - WEST DIVISION



Our pick to represent the American League in the World Series hasn't changed. Though they have had a few issues that could affect them at the start of the 2005 season.

ROOKIE REPORT

We were convinced the AL Rookie of the Year was going to come out of Anaheim in the form of third baseman Dallas McPherson. While that still might be the case, he developed a herniated disc in his back in camp and probably won't be ready to start the season. Robb Quinlan is the likely candidate to fill in for him until he returns.

DH DILEMMA

Certainly the biggest question mark in camp for the Halos has been at DH. Entering camp, Casey Kotchman was thought to have had the inside track, but it looks like they're going to go in another direction--with outfielder Jeff DaVanon in a platoon with newcomer Juan Rivera. Kotchman figures to start the season at Triple-A. Also in the DH department is young Cuban Kendry Morales. The talented kid has had visa problems and wasn't able to report to camp. With that, the corner infielder/outfielder will start his first pro season in the minors. But when he does finally reach The Show, he could be a special player. Figgins is in familiar territory, filling in for the injured Adam Kennedy at second base. But Kennedy is recovering quickly from knee surgery and could return by mid-May. Meanwhile, manager Mike Scioscia has decided to drop Figgins to ninth, with Darin Erstad leading off.

SLEEPY SHOULDER

Projected No. 3 starter Kelvim Escobar was unable to make his first start of the spring until March 15 due to what was deemed "shoulder fatigue". Fortunately, the Angels don't have any reason to believe he won't start the season as scheduled. Also in the rotation, Scioscia has decided to make John Lackey the fourth starter and Byrd fifth, although it would seem wiser the other way around to break up hard-throwers Escobar and Lackey.

KEY NOTES

Robb Quinlan has a chance to make an impact this year. If he excels filling in for McPherson, he could take over as DH.

opening day forecast

rotation	Update	\$Value
1. Bartolo Colon		\$28
2. Jarrod Washburn		\$16
3. Kelvim Escobar		\$18
4. John Lackey		\$15
5. Paul Byrd	▼-\$3	\$16

closer	\$Value
1. Francisco Rodriguez	\$39

batting order	\$Value
1. Darin Erstad (1B)	\$20
2. Jeff DaVanon (DH)	▲+\$3 \$3
3. Vladimir Guerrero (RF)	\$46
4. Garret Anderson (LF)	\$28
5. Steve Finley (CF)	\$23
6. Orlando Cabrera (SS)	\$22
7. Robb Quinlan (3B)	▲+\$15 \$15
8. Bengie Molina (C)	\$4
9. Chone Figgins (2B)	\$9

added to the lineup:	\$Value
Jeff DaVanon (DH)	
Robb Quinlan (3B)	
dropped from the lineup:	\$Value
Casey Kotchman (DH)	▼-\$3 \$4
Dallas McPherson (3B)	▼-\$3 \$18

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - WEST DIVISION



The most important thing to come out of Diamondbacks camp this spring is relative good health. New third baseman Troy Glaus and left-fielder Luis Gonzalez are healthy. However, there is growing concern about the bullpen, since Greg Aquino, Jose Valverde and Oscar Villarreal are all fighting injury/control problems.

CAMP BATTLES

The race for the No. 5 spot in the Arizona rotation is down to a two-southpaw contest, with Brad Halsey and Mike Gosling battling right down to the wire. Villarreal is no longer a consideration for the starting gig and will focus on securing an important bullpen role, while Edgar Gonzalez struggled throughout Cactus League play and was optioned to Triple-A Tucson... The D-Backs have yet to decide on their 2005 starting catcher. It will either be switch-hitting Koyie Hill or right-handed bat Chris Snyder--both still National League rookies. Hill may have the nod right now because of a thumb injury to Snyder, though the latter had been playing better in the Cactus League. It's a situation that could change often during the season.

IMPACT ROOKIES

One of the revelations of the Diamondbacks' preseason has been the play of Conor Jackson at first base. A converted outfielder, Jackson is proving to be very close to a shot with the Major League club. While Chad Tracy and Tony Clark will begin 2005 as the Arizona first basemen, Jackson should see time in the big leagues some time this year.

SHAKE IT UP

New center-fielder Jose Cruz Jr. was expected to hit near the top of the batting order (leadoff or No. 2) because of his patience. Instead, new manager Bob Melvin has inserted him into the No. 6 slot to begin 2005. As a result, Craig Counsell will lead off and Royce Clayton will move up to the 2 hole. Down at the bottom, Tracy is now expected to hit seventh--followed by the catcher.

KEY NOTE

When Opening Day rolls around, expect Halsey to win the final rotation spot and Hill to be behind the plate.

opening day forecast

rotation	Update	\$Value
1. Javier Vazquez		\$26
2. Russ Ortiz		\$7
3. Brandon Webb		\$15
4. Shawn Estes		\$0
5. Brad Halsey		\$0

closers	\$Value
1. Greg Aquino	▼-\$4 \$25
2. Jose Valverde	\$0

batting order	\$Value
1. Craig Counsell (2B)	\$8
2. Royce Clayton (SS)	\$10
3. Luis Gonzalez (LF)	\$23
4. Troy Glaus (3B)	\$23
5. Shawn Green (RF)	\$26
6. Jose Cruz Jr. (CF)	\$15
7. Chad Tracy (1B)	\$8
8. Koyie Hill (C)	\$7

added to the lineup:	\$Value
Brad Halsey (SP)	
dropped from the lineup:	\$Value
Oscar Villarreal (SP)	\$0

ATLANTA BRAVES

NATIONAL LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION

Left-handers Mike Hampton (knee) and Horacio Ramirez (Tommy John surgery) have both looked great this spring, which means the Atlanta rotation is set heading into the regular season: Tim Hudson, John Smoltz, Hampton, John Thomson, Ramirez. Hudson, signed to a new four-year, \$47 million contract extension, will lead the staff but Smoltz is making a smooth transition from closer to starter and is looking like an ace once again.

WHO TO WATCH

Center-fielder Andruw Jones has been one of the hottest hitters throughout the Grapefruit League, and looks primed to take up most of the offensive slack from the departed J.D. Drew in 2005... On the negative side of the coin, projected starting right-fielder Raul Mondesi recently pulled his hamstring--which places his starting assignment on Opening Day in jeopardy. Mondesi has had a recent history of medical and personal problems, so the Braves should be looking for alternatives immediately.

IMPACT ROOKIES

Two of the best position prospects in all of baseball belong to the Braves: Outfielder Jeff Francoeur and third baseman Andy Marte. Both are close to the Major Leagues, but for now have been sent down to the minor leagues. While Marte is closer to being ready for the bigs, he has no position to play as long as Chipper Jones remains in the infield. Sooner or later, the Braves will need to make a decision on Marte/Jones. As for Francoeur, he could be the starting right-fielder by September.

OUT OF LEFT FIELD

For now, veteran Brian Jordan appears to be secure as the Braves' starting left-fielder this season. However, Ryan Langerhans is still in the picture--mainly because he's out of minor-league options. Journeyman Roosevelt Brown is still in camp, but a major long shot to crack the 25-man roster.

KEY NOTE

The Braves may need help from outside the organization at the corner outfield positions in order to win another NL East crown.



opening day forecast

rotation	Update	\$Value
1. Tim Hudson		\$28
2. John Smoltz		\$24
3. Mike Hampton	▲+\$4	\$18
4. John Thomson		\$17
5. Horacio Ramirez	▲+\$5	\$11

closers

1. Danny Kolb	\$28
2. Chris Reitsma	\$7

batting order

1. Rafael Furcal (SS)	\$27
2. Marcus Giles (2B)	\$22
3. Chipper Jones (3B)	\$31
4. Andruw Jones (CF)	\$30
5. Johnny Estrada (C)	\$10
6. Raul Mondesi (RF)	\$1
7. Adam LaRoche (1B)	\$14
8. Brian Jordan (LF)	\$1

BALTIMORE ORIOLES

AMERICAN LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION

For the Orioles, nothing has really happened this spring that would shake the team's foundation or fortunes. They're still a middle-of-the-pack team with a shoddy pitching staff, but there are some developments worth noting.

STARTER STORIES

Most of the news this spring in Orioles country is going down at the bottom of the starting rotation. For "starters," projected fifth starter Matt Riley doesn't look like the man for that job anymore. The sophomore southpaw is out of options but is having a terrible spring. They'll either send him to the bullpen or expose him to waivers if he doesn't make the club. But his struggles, along with those of fellow lefty Eric DuBose, are good news for veterans Bruce Chen and Rick Bauer. Both have been strong in camp and are now fighting it out for the fifth spot. Another development among Baltimore starters is the loss of once-promising righty Kurt Ainsworth due to a bunch of problems with his shoulder that required surgery. He's expected to spend the entire season in rehab. He considered retirement but quickly thought better. Also projected Opening Day starter Sidney Ponson is getting on their nerves with his legal problems, so he's been dropped to No. 4, with Rodrigo Lopez taking his role.

RELIEVED RELIEVER

Righty Jorge Julio was hoping to come to camp and try to win his closer's job back, but those plans were put on hold due to an early forearm injury. It took him a month to recover, which essentially took him out of the race for his old job despite the fact that B.J. Ryan wasn't exactly running away with it. But the good news for Julio is that he's better and can try to win his role back if Ryan falters during the season.

TWO TURNAROUNDS

The O's had to be disappointed in the 2004 seasons of center-fielder Luis Matos and then-right-fielder (now first baseman) Jay Gibbons. But the good news is both have had strong springs.

KEY NOTES

Both Luis Matos and Jay Gibbons have a shot at moving up in the lineup if they stay strong.



opening day forecast

rotation	Update	\$Value
1. Rodrigo Lopez		\$19
2. Daniel Cabrera		\$2
3. Erik Bedard		\$4
4. Sidney Ponson		\$14
5. Bruce Chen		\$0

closers

1. B.J. Ryan	\$27
2. Jorge Julio	\$5

batting order

1. Brian Roberts (2B)	\$17
2. Melvin Mora (3B)	\$28
3. Miguel Tejada (SS)	\$32
4. Sammy Sosa (RF)	\$23
5. Rafael Palmeiro (DH)	\$17
6. Javy Lopez (C)	\$20
7. Jay Gibbons (1B)	\$17
8. Larry Bigbie (LF)	\$11
9. Luis Matos (CF)	\$15

added to the lineup:

Bruce Chen (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Matt Riley (SP)

\$0

BOSTON RED SOX

AMERICAN LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION



There's bad news for the Bo-Sox right off the bat in camp as they prepare to defend their first World Series title in 86 years. The biggest news from Boston is an achy rotation and that's not a good way to start their defense.

STINGING STARTERS

Right at the top, there's ace Curt Schilling, who will not be able to make his anticipated Opening Day start against former Diamondbacks co-ace Randy Johnson and the hated New York Yankees. Last season's lingering ankle injury is to blame, though he's expected to be ready to start around mid-late April. As a result, newcomer David Wells will make the April 3 start against his former club at Yankee Stadium. Another one of their newly acquired starters, Wade Miller, isn't so lucky. He missed much of last season with the Astros because of a rotator-cuff injury and the same injury has kept him out of Grapefruit League action and will also keep him out of the big-league rotation for at least the first month of the season.

BRONSON'S BACK

As a result of these injuries, and with a little help from off-days in their early schedule, the Sox are going with a four-man rotation until April 18. Still, these injuries re-open a spot for Bronson Arroyo in the rotation. And it's possible that knuckleballer Tim Wakefield could head to the bullpen if Arroyo is pitching like he did last season when Miller and/or Schilling returns.

SLUGGERS SWITCHED

Manager Terry Francona has decided to go with the configuration in the heart of the order that won him the World Series last year, rather than the one he used for much of the season. To start the year, DH David Ortiz hit third and left-fielder Manny Ramirez batted cleanup, but they were flipped late in the season and into the postseason. So Ortiz will be the cleanup hitter, with Ramirez third in 2005.

KEY NOTES

Sophomore Kevin Youkilis could make an impact on the lineup if injuries strike at either infield corner.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. David Wells		\$20
2. Matt Clement		\$20
3. Bronson Arroyo		\$9
4. Tim Wakefield		\$14
5. Curt Schilling		\$38

closer

1. Kevin Foulke	\$34
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batting order

1. Johnny Damon (CF)	\$28
2. Edgar Renteria (SS)	\$27
3. Manny Ramirez (LF)	\$37
4. David Ortiz (DH)	\$29
5. Kevin Millar (1B)	\$18
6. Jason Varitek (C)	\$16
7. Trot Nixon (RF)	\$18
8. Bill Mueller (3B)	\$13
9. Mark Bellhorn (2B)	\$15

added to the lineup:

Bronson Arroyo (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Wade Miller (SP) \$12

CHICAGO CUBS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



Everything that could have gone wrong for the Cubs pitching staff this spring apparently has: Both Mark Prior (elbow) and Kerry Wood (shoulder) are questionable to start the season in the rotation, which has forced the team to keep Ryan Dempster (who has struggled all spring) in a starter's role--instead of competing for the closer job. Adding insult to injury, incumbent closer Joe Borowski will now miss the next three-to-four weeks due to a broken hand. As a result, Chicago's staff is in shambles.

CAMP BATTLES

Due to the injury situation, the closer role will now fall back in the hands of LaTroy Hawkins--who is clearly better as a setup man. Meanwhile, Dempster will remain in the rotation as long as Prior and Wood are dinged up--at least. Furthermore, Glendon Rusch or Sergio Mitre could begin 2005 as the No. 5 starter if neither ace is ready to go... The situation in left field is almost as cloudy. While rookie Jason Dubois is enjoying a strong preseason, it still appears as if manager Dusty Baker is leaning towards going with veteran Todd Hollandsworth. What's worse for Dubois is the fact Jerry Hairston Jr. will probably spend a lot of time in left field as the team's new super sub, while the Cubs are also contemplating keeping David Kelton with the big club (he's out of options). In the end, a platoon is likely to settle in. As for Hairston, he should see playing time at five positions (2B, SS, LF, CF, RF).

RAMIREZ TO RAKE IT IN?

Third baseman Aramis Ramirez and Cubs GM Jim Hendry have not had any luck this spring coming to terms on a new contract that would keep the slugger in the Windy City for the long run. Therefore, the pressure will continue to mount in the coming months, since the Cubbies had been searching for a quality player to man the hot corner for what seems to be an eternity. Hendry would be committing public relations suicide if he were to lose Ramirez to free agency.

KEY NOTE

The Cubs probably won't settle into their projected lineup for at least one month, so they'll need to stay close to St. Louis in April.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. Mark Prior		\$32
2. Kerry Wood		\$24
3. Carlos Zambrano		\$23
4. Greg Maddux		\$23
5. Ryan Dempster	▼-\$13	\$12

closers

1. LaTroy Hawkins	\$9
2. Joe Borowski	▲+\$19 \$19

batting order

1. Corey Patterson (CF)	\$34
2. Todd Walker (2B)	\$12
3. Nomar Garciaparra (SS)	\$15
4. Aramis Ramirez (3B)	\$34
5. Derrek Lee (1B)	\$30
6. Jeromy Burnitz (RF)	\$26
7. Todd Hollandsworth (LF)	\$3
8. Michael Barrett (C)	\$12

added to the lineup:

Ryan Dempster (SP)

Joe Borowski (RP)

Todd Hollandsworth (LF)

dropped from the lineup:

Glendon Rusch (SP) ▼-\$6 \$15

Ryan Dempster (RP) ▼-\$13 \$12

Jason Dubois (LF) \$0

*Dempster was moved from relief to the rotation.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX

AMERICAN LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



The Chi-Sox have a definite shot at contending in 2005, so they went into camp with a roster that was mostly set. Still, there has been some tinkering to report here and there.

SHUFFLING STARTERS

Just past the halfway point in the spring, ace Mark Buehrle suffered what was thought to be a fractured foot, expected to keep him out four-to-six weeks and causing turmoil in the rotation. But, fortunately, the injury was much less serious than originally thought and he'll probably make his Opening Day start. Skipper Ozzie Guillen has decided to shuffle the bottom three in the rotation. Jose Contreras will start the third game of the season in Chicago, then Orlando Hernandez will pitch the fourth game in Minnesota, while Jon Garland becomes the fifth starter. The only reason for this switch is because Guillen believes Contreras is a better starter at home, while Hernandez is better on the road. One of the most pleasant surprises of the spring is the emergence 21-year-old prospect Brandon McCarthy all the more welcome. The tall, lanky righty has been absolutely lights out in camp, prompting Guillen to pronounce him the first starter called up if injuries strike.

WHO'S ON SECOND?

That's a good question, and Guillen is having trouble with it as well. He has two options: incumbent Willie Harris or former Japanese star Tadahito Iguchi. Guillen is still contemplating whether he'll start one or the other or even platoon the two. But the smart money remains on the Japanese veteran. In a minor outfield move, newcomer, and a center-fielder throughout his young career, Scott Podsednik has given way to Aaron Rowand for the role in the middle of the outfield. Podsednik will patrol left field.

HURTING HURT

Frank Thomas is progressing steadily from his ankle injury. Nonetheless, the Big Hurt is still hurt enough that he's not expected to be in the lineup until mid-late April.

KEY NOTES

A lot could change when Frank Thomas returns. Carl Everett could be traded or enter the outfield if someone's struggling there.

opening day forecast

rotation	Update	\$Value
1. Mark Buehrle		\$28
2. Freddy Garcia		\$22
3. Jose Contreras		\$7
4. Orlando Hernandez		\$17
5. Jon Garland		\$14

closers	Update	\$Value
1. Shingo Takatsu		\$32
2. Damaso Marte		\$9

batting order	Update	\$Value
1. Scott Podsednik (LF)		\$19
2. Tadahito Iguchi (2B)		\$20
3. Carl Everett (DH)		\$16
4. Paul Konerko (1B)		\$25
5. Jermaine Dye (RF)		\$20
6. Aaron Rowand (CF)		\$19
7. Juan Uribe (SS)		\$17
8. A.J. Pierzynski (C)		\$10
9. Joe Crede (3B)		\$12

CINCINNATI REDS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



The much-hyped spring training battle between Austin Kearns and Wily Mo Pena for the starting right-field job never materialized this preseason, as a healthy Kearns has pulled away due to a strong spring. Meanwhile, Pena has struggled at the plate during the Grapefruit League as trade rumors persist.

CAMP BATTLES

While Pena has lost the right-field job, GM Dan O'Brien insists he's not going to trade the talented 23-year-old. That's mainly because of the fact Pena can play all three outfield positions, and may be needed to spell veteran Ken Griffey Jr. in center field from time to time. This would also ensure a decent number of at-bats for Pena this season... Meanwhile, the No. 4 spot in the rotation behind Paul Wilson, Eric Milton and Ramon Ortiz has officially been awarded to right-hander Aaron Harang. Now, the only thing left to decide in the rotation is the No. 5 man, with left-handers Brandon Claussen and Jeriome Robertson, as well as righty Josh Hancock, vying for the job. They have all taken advantage of an injury to Luke Hudson (shoulder inflammation), who was a strong candidate to break camp with Cincinnati before being shut down. Robertson, a non-roster invitee, has been one of the biggest surprises at Reds camp... At shortstop, both Felipe Lopez and Rich Aurilia have done very well this preseason, so both are now expected to make the ball club. Whomever starts on Opening Day will likely hit second in the batting order.

CHANGES AT THE TOP

Despite the fact the Reds spent big money on free-agent lefty Milton this off-season, it's Wilson who will get the starting assignment on Opening Day. Milton, Ortiz and Harang will follow him in the rotation. As for the leadoff role, that will go to second baseman D'Angelo Jimenez--by default. The Reds would prefer to go with Ryan Freel but the latter--like Pena--has no position to call his own at present time.

KEY NOTE

Despite rumors to the contrary, don't expect O'Brien to trade Pena anytime soon. Also, Claussen and Aurilia should win their battles.

opening day forecast

rotation	Update	\$Value
1. Paul Wilson		\$27
2. Eric Milton		\$14
3. Aaron Harang		\$11
4. Ramon Ortiz		\$17
5. Brandon Claussen		\$10

closers	Update	\$Value
1. Danny Graves		\$14
2. Ryan Wagner		\$15

batting order	Update	\$Value
1. D'Angelo Jimenez (2B)		\$15
2. Rich Aurilia (SS)	▲+\$5	\$5
3. Sean Casey (1B)		\$33
4. Ken Griffey Jr. (CF)		\$15
5. Austin Kearns (RF)	▲+\$4	\$22
6. Adam Dunn (LF)		\$35
7. Joe Randa (3B)		\$12
8. Jason LaRue (C)		\$8

added to the lineup:	Update	\$Value
Rich Aurilia (SS)		
dropped from the lineup:		
Felipe Lopez (SS)		\$6

CLEVELAND INDIANS

AMERICAN LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



This young Tribe squad has added a few veterans and has a shot at contending in the AL Central. Fortunately this spring, there's more good news than bad news to report.

C.C. STUNG

We'll start with the mildly bad news and work our way down to the good stuff. In late February, lefty C.C. Sabathia was given the nod to make his third straight Opening Day start for the club, but now it appears he won't be able to take the mound on April 4 in Chicago. Little more than a week had passed after being handed that honor before he strained an oblique muscle while warming up. Fortunately, though, he's not expected to miss more than the first week of the season. But in light of the injury, expect to see newcomer Kevin Millwood on the mound Opening Day.

BOONE BOUNCES BACK

On to the good news, Aaron Boone, coming off a season on the shelf due to knee surgery, appears as good as new in camp. He's hit quite well and his defense has appeared solid, so he shouldn't have any trouble making a strong contribution from the hot corner. To Boone's left, there's the battle for shortstop, which has turned out to be not much of a battle at all. Last year's International League (AAA) MVP Jhonny Peralta has run away with the job, hitting up a storm. Meanwhile, his competition, Brandon Phillips, hasn't hit a lick.

JUAN GONE STAYS PUT

Possibly the best news of all is that Juan Gonzalez, at least for now, appears to be in Cleveland to stay. The Indians took a bit of a flyer on the oft-injured two-time MVP, but he's been mostly healthy in camp and barring any last-minute injuries, he'll be their right-fielder and bat fifth. That causes a chain reaction in the outfield, keeping rookie Grady Sizemore out of the lineup for now, moving Coco Crisp from left field to center and shifting erstwhile third baseman Casey Blake from right to left field.

KEY NOTES

Since there are still question marks surrounding Blake and Gonzalez in the outfield, Sizemore still has a shot at making an impact in 2005.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. Kevin Millwood		\$27
2. Jake Westbrook		\$21
3. Cliff Lee		\$10
4. Scott Elarton		\$9
5. Jason Davis		\$0

closers

1. Bob Wickman	\$11
2. David Riske	\$12

batting order

1. Ron Belliard (2B)	\$13
2. Coco Crisp (CF)	\$17
3. Travis Hafner (DH)	\$26
4. Victor Martinez (C)	\$24
5. Juan Gonzalez (RF)	\$1
6. Aaron Boone (3B)	\$22
7. Casey Blake (LF)	\$14
8. Ben Broussard (1B)	\$17
9. Jhonny Peralta (SS)	\$6

added to the lineup:

Jason Davis (SP)
Juan Gonzalez (RF)

dropped from the lineup:

C.C. Sabathia (SP) \$21
Grady Sizemore (CF) \$5

COLORADO ROCKIES

NATIONAL LEAGUE - WEST DIVISION



Pitching may actually be a team strength in 2005, but two fifths of the starting rotation is still a major question mark at this time. Former closer Shawn Chacon, who is projected to start fourth in the rotation, is battling a hamstring problem and may not be ready for Opening Day. Also, Aaron Cook--who was the projected No. 5 starter--will not be able to start the season due to a blood clot in his lungs.

CAMP BATTLES

The injury situation with Chacon and Cook may have opened the door for Jamey Wright and Darren Oliver to secure two rotation spots. Oliver is a virtual lock to break camp with the Rockies because of his ability to both start and relieve. Therefore, the Rox will bring Chacon, Wright and Oliver to Denver for the start of the season... Meanwhile, the right-field job is still up for grabs between Dustan Mohr and Brad Hawpe. Either way, Mohr has a job locked up, while Hawpe may begin 2005 at Triple-A Colorado Springs. As for the closer role in Colorado, Taiwanese right-hander Chin-Hui Tsao has won the job--as expected. Former Japanese-league closer Eddie Gaillard fell out of the running early because of injury.

INJURY UPDATE

Center-fielder Preston Wilson has not suffered any setbacks this spring from last year's knee surgery. He looks primed for a big 2005 campaign. However, the same cannot be said for the second-base situation: Aaron Miles' sprained left knee could force him to miss Opening Day. Meanwhile, newcomer Desi Relaford is also suffering from a knee problem, while Luis Gonzalez recently suffered a wrist injury after being hit by a pitch.

UNHAPPY CAMPER

The Rockies have been unable to trade catcher Charles Johnson, so they're expected to release him before the start of the season. Rookie J.D. Closser and journeyman Todd Greene will handle catching duties in 2005.

KEY NOTE

There should be plenty of competition throughout Colorado's 25-man roster all season long, so the youngsters should get loads of opportunities in this rebuilding year.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. Joe Kennedy		\$12
2. Jason Jennings		\$14
3. Jeff Francis		\$5
4. Shawn Chacon		\$0
5. Jamey Wright		\$0

closer

1. Chin-Hui Tsao	\$18
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batting order

1. Aaron Miles (2B)	▼-\$5	\$9
2. Clint Barmes (SS)		\$15
3. Todd Helton (1B)		\$40
4. Preston Wilson (CF)	▲+\$7	\$20
5. Dustan Mohr (RF)		\$12
6. Matt Holliday (LF)		\$19
7. Garrett Atkins (3B)		\$11
8. J.D. Closser (C)		\$0

added to the lineup:

Jamey Wright (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Aaron Cook (SP) \$0

DETROIT TIGERS

AMERICAN LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



The Tigers made a couple of solid moves in the off-season that will make them a little better, but it was one transaction during spring training that largely changed the face of the lineup--the release of Alex Sanchez.

SANCHEZ SENT PACKING

Halfway through camp, the Tigers decided they didn't like what they were seeing from center-fielder and leadoff man Sanchez. He didn't know how to get on base by any means other than a single and, worst of all in the Tigers' eyes, his defense wasn't up to snuff. So they released him. That caused a hole in the outfield and in the leadoff spot. Replacing him in center field was the easy part, as they had Craig Monroe waiting in the wings to have a breakthrough season. In the long run, either Nook Logan or Curtis Granderson will patrol center field at Comerica Park. Finding a new leadoff man is the really hard part for the Tigers. With Sanchez's speed gone, there's no clear-cut leadoff-type in Detroit and they have yet to decide on one. In fact, it may take some trial-and-error during the regular season to really come to terms with one guy at the top of the lineup. But the candidates include third baseman Brandon Inge, second baseman Omar Infante and shortstop Carlos Guillen. Of those players, Infante will get first crack at the job.

OPENING DAY STARTER?

Projected breakthrough candidate Jeremy Bonderman will be the Opening Day starter for the Tigers, as manager Alan Trammell has named him ahead of righty Jason Johnson. And in the bullpen, the good news is that righty Ugueth Urbina reported to camp earlier than expected, thanks to the return of his mother from her Venezuelan captors. First and foremost, of course, it's good news for the Urbina family. And for the Tigers, it means they have a terrific setup man, since they've decided they don't want to trade the erstwhile closer.

KEY NOTES

Top prospect Granderson got a lot closer to the majors after the release of Sanchez, so look for him later in the season.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. Jeremy Bonderman		\$20
2. Mike Maroth		\$15
3. Jason Johnson		\$6
4. Nate Robertson		\$14
5. Wil Ledezma		\$4

closers

1. Troy Percival	\$28
2. Ugueth Urbina	\$5

batting order

1. Omar Infante (2B)	\$11
2. Carlos Guillen (SS)	\$17
3. Ivan Rodriguez (C)	\$20
4. Magglio Ordonez (RF)	\$25
5. Dmitri Young (DH)	\$20
6. Rondell White (LF)	▲+\$6 \$14
7. Carlos Pena (1B)	\$22
8. Craig Monroe (CF)	▲+\$11 \$17
9. Brandon Inge (3B)	\$11

added to the lineup:

Craig Monroe (CF)

dropped from the lineup:

Alex Sanchez (CF), TB ▼-\$16 \$3

FLORIDA MARLINS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION



It's been a relatively smooth training camp in the land of the Fish this spring, with only a couple of decisions left to make before Opening Day. What has Marlins fans excited is the health of the starting rotation, the presence of newcomer Carlos Delgado in the middle of the order and the upside potential of several members of the 25-man roster.

CAMP BATTLES

Longtime Marlin Jeff Conine has been slowed by shoulder problems this spring, but the club is still leaning towards starting him in right field--ahead of Juan Encarnacion. Originally, the team wanted Miguel Cabrera to move back from left field to right if Conine won the job, but those plans have now been scrapped. Florida clearly wants to dump Encarnacion's \$4.45 million salary, though there may not be any takers. Before Opening Day, either Encarnacion or Conine will surely be gone.

ROTATION SET

Josh Beckett has looked great in the Grapefruit League and will get the nod on Opening Day. He'll be followed by veteran Al Leiter, a healthy A.J. Burnett, Dontrelle Willis and Ismael Valdez, as manager Jack McKeon will try to give opponents a different look every night. Valdez battled a virus in the early stages of spring training but should be ready to make his first start. If the Marlins need another starter at some point this season, look for the rejuvenated Brian Moehler to get the first call.

INJURY UPDATE

Center-fielder Juan Pierre hasn't been healthy this spring due to a calf muscle problem. As a result, he may not steal as many bases as he's used to stealing in the early part of 2005. This could affect the Marlins offense, since they rely heavily on Pierre to set the table. It may also affect Luis Castillo's offensive numbers, since the No. 2 hitter has been running less in recent years. If Pierre is banged up in the early going, second baseman Castillo may run more.

KEY NOTE

Look for Encarnacion to be elsewhere by Opening Day, and for Conine to see most of the time in right field in 2005.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. Josh Beckett		\$32
2. Al Leiter		\$6
3. A.J. Burnett		\$19
4. Dontrelle Willis		\$22
5. Ismael Valdez		\$2

closer

1. Guillermo Mota	\$34
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batting order

1. Juan Pierre (CF)	▼-\$3 \$23
2. Luis Castillo (2B)	\$23
3. Miguel Cabrera (LF)	\$36
4. Carlos Delgado (1B)	\$32
5. Mike Lowell (3B)	\$25
6. Paul Lo Duca (C)	\$18
7. Jeff Conine (RF)	\$8
8. Alex F. Gonzalez (SS)	\$14

added to the lineup:

Jeff Conine (RF)

dropped from the lineup:

Juan Encarnacion (RF) \$13

HOUSTON ASTROS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



The Astros entered training camp in a state of flux, with the departure of both second baseman Jeff Kent (Dodgers) and center-fielder Carlos Beltran (Mets) via free agency, as well as the off-season knee injury to right-fielder Lance Berkman. Unfortunately, the Grapefruit League has provided even more questions than answers, though the pitching staff looks to be in good shape overall.

CAMP BATTLES

The No. 5 slot in the starting rotation was open to several quality candidates when spring training began, but only two remain: Brandon Duckworth and rookie Ezequiel Astacio. Tim Redding had emerged as the favorite, but was traded to San Diego for catcher Humberto Quintero. Duckworth could make the club as a spot starter/long reliever, while Astacio has been a revelation in camp and is very close to a big-league job. The performances of both right-handers forced Houston management into making other surprising moves this spring: Pete Munro, the favorite to win the fifth-starter job was released, while left-hander Carlos Hernandez was optioned to Triple-A Round Rock... Meanwhile, third base will probably be shared by Morgan Ensberg and Mike Lamb to some degree, but Ensberg is the clear-cut starter at this point because Lamb will be needed as a utility player.

IMPACT ROOKIES

In a surprising turn of events, veteran Craig Biggio has spent most of the spring getting reacquainted with the second-base position, which is terrible news for potential rookie-of-the-year candidate Chris Burke--who in turn has spent a little time in left field during "B" games this spring. While Biggio may still see playing time in left field in 2005, with Burke as the starting second baseman, things may change very quickly once Berkman returns in May. The more Biggio plays in the infield, the better the chances of either center-fielder Willy Taveras or left-fielder Luke Scott emerging as the impact position-player rookie on the Astros in 2005.

KEY NOTE

When Berkman returns, look for Biggio to make a permanent return to the infield--which may also lead to a trade involving Burke.

opening day forecast

rotation	Update	\$Value
1. Roy Oswalt		\$28
2. Andy Pettitte		\$19
3. Roger Clemens		\$21
4. Brandon Backe	▲+\$4	\$4
5. Ezequiel Astacio	▲+\$3	\$3

closer

1. Brad Lidge	\$43
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batting order

1. Willy Taveras (CF)	▲+\$12	\$12
2. Craig Biggio (2B)		\$10
3. Jeff Bagwell (1B)		\$25
4. Jason Lane (RF)		\$13
5. Morgan Ensberg (3B)	▲+\$5	\$15
6. Luke Scott (LF)	▲+\$3	\$3
7. Adam Everett (SS)		\$15
8. Brad Ausmus (C)		\$0

added to the lineup:

- Ezequiel Astacio (SP)
- Willy Taveras (CF)
- Morgan Ensberg (3B)
- Luke Scott (LF)

dropped from the lineup:

- Pete Munro (SP) \$0
- Lance Berkman (RF) \$22
- Mike Lamb (3B) \$15
- Chris Burke (2B) \$15

KANSAS CITY ROYALS

AMERICAN LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



You may recall us referring to the Royals as a "royal mess" in the original magazine. Well, not much has changed in K.C., aside from a few small notes here and there.

RISKY ROTATION

The Royals were never going to enter the season with a rotation that would strike great fear into the opposition. And manager Tony Pena hasn't even decided to put his best foot forward on Opening Day. Rather than giving Zack Greinke, his best, albeit young, pitcher, the April 4 start in Detroit, he's gone with veteran righty Jose Lima. At least he'll make Opening Day a more flamboyant affair. As the No. 2 starter they like what they've seen from Runelvys Hernandez enough to name him. He missed all of 2004 and half of 2003 due to Tommy John surgery, but they have high hopes for him in 2005. The real race in K.C. was for the final rotation spot, where prospect Denny Bautista has beaten out veteran Kevin Appier and sophomore Mike Wood. As much as they like Appier in K.C., his career is probably over. Meanwhile, both Bautista and Wood have been phenomenal in camp, with Wood showing better control. However, they feel the 24-year-old Bautista has more upside, so he'll break camp in the rotation, with Wood in middle relief. In the bullpen, there was concern that closer Jeremy Affeldt was tipping his pitches last year. But he's worked on a change in his delivery that not only eliminates that problem, but makes his curveball better.

GOTAY TO STAY?

The most highly contested lineup spot was at second base, where sophomore Ruben Gotay was pitted against veteran utility man Tony Graffanino. Despite the fact that Graffanino barely played in the spring due to an ankle injury, he was always considered the second baseman. But Gotay has done everything possible to make the Royals reconsider and will be the man due to a superior Cactus League performance.

KEY NOTES

Emil Brown and Calvin Pickering have hit themselves into the right field and DH roles, respectively, instead of Matt Stairs, Abraham Nunez and Ken Harvey.

opening day forecast

rotation	Update	\$Value
1. Jose Lima		\$10
2. Runelvys Hernandez		\$11
3. Zack Greinke		\$26
4. Brian Anderson		\$7
5. Denny Bautista	▲+\$3	\$3

closers

1. Jeremy Affeldt	\$23
2. Nate Field	\$2

batting order

1. David DeJesus (CF)	\$13	
2. Angel Berroa (SS)	\$17	
3. Mike Sweeney (1B)	\$19	
4. Calvin Pickering (DH)	▲+\$5	\$5
5. Emil Brown (RF)	▲+\$2	\$2
6. Terrence Long (LF)	\$11	
7. Mark Teahen (3B)	\$4	
8. John Buck (C)	\$10	
9. Ruben Gotay (2B)	▲+\$9	\$9

added to the lineup:

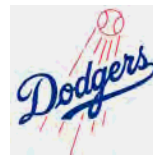
- Denny Bautista (SP)
- Ruben Gotay (2B)
- Calvin Pickering (DH)
- Emil Brown (RF)

dropped from the lineup:

- Mike Wood (SP) \$4
- Tony Graffanino (2B) \$1
- Ken Harvey (DH) ▼-\$3 \$8
- Matt Stairs (RF) ▼-\$4 \$6

LOS ANGELES DODGERS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - WEST DIVISION



As expected, the Dodgers traded left-hander Kaz Ishii this spring in order to fill a need behind the plate. The new starting catcher is Jason Phillips, who upgrades the position on offense but has defensive shortcomings. The other big news of the spring involved closer Eric Gagne suffering a sprained right knee early on in camp. He should be ready for Opening Day but may be slow out of the gate.

CAMP BATTLES

While Phillips partly solves the catching problem, third base is still up for grabs. Jose Valentin should be the left-handed part of a platoon, with one of Norihiro Nakamura, Antonio Perez or Olmedo Saenz seeing the rest of the at-bats at the hot corner... Meanwhile, Ishii's departure was supposed to be a reprieve for Edwin Jackson, who instead will begin 2005 in the minors.

INJURY UPDATE

Right-hander Brad Penny, who was the scheduled No. 4 starter behind Derek Lowe, Jeff Weaver and Odalis Perez, may not be ready by Opening Day because of nerve damage in his triceps. If he can't start the season in the rotation, Scott Erickson (who appears to have as many lives as a cat) and either Elmer Dessens or Wilson Alvarez will round out the rotation... Meanwhile, left-fielder Jayson Werth, who was scheduled to open the season as the No. 6 hitter, is questionable because of a broken left arm suffered early in the Grapefruit League. If he's not ready to start on Opening Day, newcomer Ricky Ledee or rookie Jason Repko would get the nod.

WHO'S IN CENTER?

Both J.D. Drew and Milton Bradley have spent time in center field this spring, but only one will be out there on Opening Day--while the other will patrol right field. It is Drew's desire to play in the middle of the outfield because it would mean less wear and tear on his knees. However, the Dodgers are now leaning towards giving Bradley the center-field nod once more.

KEY NOTE

Werth could be ready to start, but Penny will probably miss time. Phillips' arrival could lead to the release of David Ross.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Derek Lowe	\$21
2. Jeff Weaver	\$24
3. Odalis Perez	\$22
4. Elmer Dessens	\$0
5. Scott Erickson	\$0

closer

1. Eric Gagne	\$48
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batting order

1. Cesar Izturis (SS)	\$20
2. Milton Bradley (CF)	\$22
3. J.D. Drew (RF)	\$28
4. Jeff Kent (2B)	\$33
5. Jose Valentin (3B)	▼-\$5 \$12
6. Jayson Werth (LF)	▼-\$8 \$14
7. Hee Seop Choi (1B)	\$8
8. Jason Phillips (C)	▲+\$5 \$5

added to the lineup:

- Scott Erickson (SP)
- Elmer Dessens (SP)
- Jason Phillips (C)

dropped from the lineup:

- Brad Penny (SP) \$13
- Edwin Jackson (SP) \$8
- Paul Bako (C) \$0

MILWAUKEE BREWERS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



The Brew Crew entered spring training with important position battles: No. 4 and 5 starter, shortstop, third base and center field. At this time, only the No. 4 spot in the rotation has been decided officially, with Victor Santos maintaining the spot he earned last season.

CAMP BATTLES

Right-hander Gary Glover out-pitched Jose Capellan, Wes Obermueller and Ben Hendrickson in the Cactus League and appears to have won the Brewers' No. 5 starter gig to begin 2005. Shortstop will likely go to rookie J.J. Hardy over utility infielder Bill Hall, who may wind up seeing time at second base to start the season because of an injury to Junior Spivey (shoulder). At the hot corner, none of Wes Helms, Russell Bryanan or Jeff Cirillo has made a lasting impression in spring training. As a result, look for Bryanan to get most of the starts against right-handers and Helms to play against southpaws. Finally in center field, the Brewers will likely give rookie Dave Krynzel more development time in the minors and allow Brady Clark to become a regular for the first time in his career. Clark will also serve as the leadoff hitter.

IMPACT ROOKIES

First-base prospect Prince Fielder was one of the best players throughout spring training, and served notice that he's not far away from making an impact in the big leagues. Sooner or later, the Brewers will have to make a decision between Fielder and incumbent Lyle Overbay. Also keep an eye on second baseman Rickie Weeks, especially if Spivey's troublesome shoulder doesn't improve in the coming weeks. As for disappointments, it starts with Capellan, who was expected to make a big impact in 2005. However, he still needs development time.

SO FAR, SO GOOD

Right-hander Mike Adams has looked good this spring and appears to be secure as Milwaukee's closer. Other candidates, such as Ricky Bottalico and Justin Lehr, may emerge but for now it's Adams' job to lose.

KEY NOTE

The Brewers must upgrade their third-base situation and possess enough minor-league talent to get a deal done. Look for GM Doug Melvin to be active.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Ben Sheets	\$43
2. Doug Davis	\$15
3. Chris Capuano	\$7
4. Victor Santos	\$5
5. Gary Glover	\$0

closers

1. Mike Adams	\$18
2. Rick Bottalico	\$0

batting order

1. Brady Clark (CF)	\$13
2. Junior Spivey (2B)	\$18
3. Lyle Overbay (1B)	\$28
4. Carlos Lee (LF)	\$31
5. Geoff Jenkins (RF)	\$24
6. Russell Bryanan (3B)	▼-\$5 \$1
7. Damian Miller (C)	\$7
8. J.J. Hardy (SS)	\$0

added to the lineup:

- Gary Glover (SP)
- Brady Clark (CF)
- J.J. Hardy (SS)
- Russell Bryanan (3B)

dropped from the lineup:

- Jose Capellan (SP) \$0
- Dave Krynzel (CF) ▼-\$7 \$5
- Wes Helms (3B) \$1
- Bill Hall (SS) \$9

MINNESOTA TWINS

AMERICAN LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



Reigning for the third straight year as AL Central champs, the Twins continue to be a contender, but have had a combination of injuries and position battles to deal with in spring training.

MAYS' DAY

Righty Joe Mays sat out for all of 2004 and much of 2003 due to an elbow injury that required Tommy John surgery. But he's pitched in camp like a guy who's been in the groove for years. Mays was originally projected as the fifth starter, but this fortunate circumstance has them wondering if they'd be better off with him in the fourth spot, where, if he carries his fine form into the regular season, he'll give them more chances to win early on. Due to off-days, the fifth starter wouldn't be needed for the first couple of weeks of the season, and they're talking about either Kyle Lohse or Carlos Silva falling into that role.

INFIELD INTRIGUE

The rest of the Twins' spring concerns surround the four corners of the infield. Beginning behind the plate, young catcher Joe Mauer continues to try to come back from a knee injury he suffered in the second game of 2004 and forced him to miss much of what would have been his rookie campaign. He's had a little bad luck in camp, first experiencing some residual soreness early in March, then undergoing dental surgery shortly thereafter. To protect his knee, he spent most of the spring schedule as the DH, but should be ready to be the No. 1 catcher by Opening Day. At the hot corner, the Twins were hoping to see Michael Cuddyer run away with the job and that seems to be the case. In particular, his defense has been strong, so they should be set there. And, at shortstop, rookie Jason Bartlett is beating out utility men Juan Castro and Nick Punto for the starting job. Castro has simply been a mess on defense in camp.

KEY NOTES

There are rumblings that the club is getting fed up with Luis Rivas underachieving at second base. Cuddyer or Punto could move there soon.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. Johan Santana		\$37
2. Brad Radke		\$26
3. Carlos Silva		\$20
4. Joe Mays	▲+\$9	\$10
5. Kyle Lohse		\$10

closer

1. Joe Nathan	\$37
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batting order

1. Shannon Stewart (DH)	\$19
2. Jacque Jones (RF)	\$20
3. Lew Ford (LF)	\$22
4. Justin Morneau (1B)	\$22
5. Torii Hunter (CF)	\$25
6. Joe Mauer (C)	\$7
7. Michael Cuddyer (3B)	\$10
8. Luis Rivas (2B)	\$5
9. Jason Bartlett (SS)	\$1

NEW YORK METS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION



Mets GM Omar Minaya acted quickly to shore up the No. 5 slot in the starting rotation, following a back injury to veteran right-hander Steve Trachsel: Minaya acquired left-hander Kaz Ishii from the Dodgers in exchange for backup catcher Jason Phillips.

CAMP BATTLES

The arrival of Ishii will mean more minor-league time for the likes of Matt Ginter, Jae Seo and Aaron Heilman--who all failed to impress the Mets brass following the Trachsel injury. Ginter may still find his way into the bullpen picture, but Seo and Heilman are headed for Triple-A Norfolk. In fact, Seo's days with the Mets organization may now be numbered... Meanwhile, the bullpen is still filled with question marks, including closer Braden Loooper (rumors persist that Minaya may be looking to acquire Tigers reliever Ugueth Urbina). However, an Urbina deal doesn't appear to be imminent.

INJURY UPDATE

Outfielder Mike Cameron, who was thought to be headed out of town following the arrival of fellow center-fielder Carlos Beltran in the off-season, now may be ready to start in right field on Opening Day. Cameron, who is coming off left wrist surgery, has now reportedly accepted his fate and would like to remain a Met. However, this situation may change again before long. On the other side of the field, veteran Cliff Floyd appears to be fully recovered from his various aches and pains; he will begin 2005 as the left-fielder. With the Mets outfield set, both Eric Valent and Victor Diaz will have to settle for bench jobs--at least for the start of the season.

BIG CAT SCRATCHED

Veteran first baseman Andres Galarraga was attempting yet another comeback at age 43 but instead decided to retire. Therefore, Doug Mientkiewicz may see increased playing time against lefties.

KEY NOTE

The arrival of Ishii gives the Mets one of the NL's strongest rotations. This team looks primed to contend for a playoff spot in 2005.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. Pedro Martinez		\$29
2. Tom Glavine		\$19
3. Kris Benson		\$13
4. Victor Zambrano		\$5
5. Kazuhisa Ishii	▲+\$2	\$2

closer

1. Braden Loooper	\$29
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batting order

1. Jose Reyes (SS)	\$21
2. Kazuo Matsui (2B)	\$15
3. Carlos Beltran (CF)	\$45
4. Mike Piazza (C)	\$20
5. Cliff Floyd (LF)	\$17
6. David Wright (3B)	\$24
7. Mike Cameron (RF)	\$25
8. Doug Mientkiewicz (1B)	\$13

added to the lineup:

Kazuhisa Ishii (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Steve Trachsel (SP)

▼-\$11 \$0

NEW YORK YANKEES

AMERICAN LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION



The Yankees are the Yankees, of course, and manager Joe Torre usually has a pretty easy job in the spring. All roster spots are usually set and this year is no exception. But there has been one or two issues worthy of mention.

SLUGGER STEROID FREE

The biggest question mark for the Yanks this spring surrounds oft-injured slugger Jason Giambi who, according to a report released during the off-season, testified in front of a grand jury that he has used steroids. Entering camp to boos and skepticism, the 2000 AL MVP (Oakland Athletics) had a lot to prove, now off the juice and attempting to come back from what was the worst season of his career on many levels. Unfortunately, the jury's still out on him. He hasn't been horrible in camp, but he hasn't been great. But Torre seems to have some confidence in his DH/first baseman, announcing that Giambi will be his cleanup hitter. In fact, Torre reshaped his lineup quite a bit. Third baseman Alex Rodriguez, surprisingly, will bat way up in the No. 2 spot, rather than a prime RBI slot. Other lineup surprises have catcher Jorge Posada ahead of slugger Hideki Matsui in the fifth spot and center-fielder Bernie Williams way down in the No. 7 hole.

BROWN BREAKDOWN?

Veteran righty Kevin Brown had his troubles late last season and missed a good 10 starts due to injuries. He also turned 40 mid-way through the Grapefruit League season and, for the most part, he's looked his age. Sure, he's been overpowering at times, but on the whole he's been far too hittable. So, there's a chance he could open the season as the fifth starter rather than fourth. And there's been some mild concern in the bullpen regarding setup man Paul Quantrill and closer Mariano Rivera. Quantrill has had some rib-cage trouble and Rivera's had a little elbow bursitis, but both should be fine to start the season.

KEY NOTES

There's always question about Bernie Williams' health and Matsui will play center if Williams gets hurt.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Randy Johnson	\$47
2. Carl Pavano	\$24
3. Mike Mussina	\$31
4. Kevin Brown	▼-\$7 \$10
5. Jaret Wright	▲+\$4 \$7

closer

1. Mariano Rivera	\$43
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batting order

1. Derek Jeter (SS)	\$27
2. Alex Rodriguez (3B)	\$46
3. Gary Sheffield (RF)	\$36
4. Jason Giambi (DH)	\$13
5. Jorge Posada (C)	\$19
6. Hideki Matsui (LF)	\$26
7. Bernie Williams (CF)	\$19
8. Tino Martinez (1B)	\$15
9. Tony Womack (2B)	\$16

OAKLAND ATHLETICS

AMERICAN LEAGUE - WEST DIVISION



After four straight postseason appearances, the Athletics took a year off in 2004 and are hoping to get back there in 2005. It'll be a tough road and there are still some uncertainties on the roster.

REELING ROTATION

The starting rotation will feel the effects of the off-season trades of Tim Hudson and Mark Mulder for quite some time, but they're doing their best to get things in order. The top three of Barry Zito, Rich Harden and Dan Haren was set going into camp, but they weren't sure about the bottom two. However, rookie Joe Blanton has done a strong job and earned the fourth spot. It's the fifth spot that has caused some headaches. Entering the spring, it was up for grabs between Japanese import Keiichi Yabu, rookie Dan Meyer and oft-injured veteran Seth Etherton. For a while there it sounded like Yabu was headed to the bullpen and Meyer was the frontrunner. Then Meyer dropped out and it was between Yabu and Etherton. Then Yabu was sent to the bullpen, so it looks like Etherton is the winner.

SECOND OPINION

The other big hole on the A's roster was at second base, though newcomer Keith Ginter looked like the frontrunner, with Mark Ellis attempting to return from a shoulder injury. But Ginter, whose bat is his calling card, failed to hit in camp, while Ellis looked surprisingly impressive, shooting out from behind as the favorite at second base. In the outfield, rookie-of-the-year candidate Nick Swisher's bat has been disturbingly lame. He came into camp with the right-field job to lose, but off-season thumb surgery may be to blame for his struggles. Fortunately for him, minor injuries to outfielders Charles Thomas and Bobby Kielty should preserve his job, for now. At the top of the lineup, the projections have changed slightly, with Kotsay retaining his leadoff role despite the presence of newcomer Jason Kendall, who will bat second. But Kendall's contact bat should work well there.

KEY NOTES

Eric Byrnes' name swirled in trade rumors, but the A's don't seem too anxious to let him go unless they get big returns.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Barry Zito	\$30
2. Rich Harden	\$21
3. Dan Haren	\$1
4. Joe Blanton	\$11
5. Seth Etherton	▲+\$4 \$4

closer

1. Octavio Dotel	\$34
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batting order

1. Mark Kotsay (CF)	\$16
2. Jason Kendall (C)	\$15
3. Erubiel Durazo (DH)	\$23
4. Eric Chavez (3B)	\$30
5. Scott Hatteberg (1B)	\$15
6. Bobby Crosby (SS)	\$17
7. Eric Byrnes (LF)	\$17
8. Nick Swisher (RF)	\$14
9. Mark Ellis (2B)	▲+\$9 \$9

added to the lineup:

Seth Etherton (SP)
Mark Ellis (2B)

dropped from the lineup:

Keiichi Yabu (SP) ▼-\$4 \$6
Keith Ginter (2B) ▼-\$7 \$12

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

NATIONAL LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION



The status of right-hander Vicente Padilla is the main concern at Phillies camp these days. Padilla has started pitching again and is targeting April 17 as his return date, which may mean the club will get him back more quickly than anticipated. However, he'll probably be slotted fifth in the rotation until the tendinitis in his triceps subsides completely.

CAMP BATTLES

The emergence of rookie right-hander Gavin Floyd has come at a good time, in light of Padilla's injury woes. However, the big loser may wind up being right-hander Brett Myers, who has struggled again this spring (1-2, 7.94 ERA, 29 hits, 9 BB, 11 K in 17 IP). The Phillies will keep Floyd around to start the season as an insurance policy for Padilla, so there's a chance he may wind up taking Myers' spot in the rotation when the dust settles... Meanwhile, Placido Polanco isn't happy about being a backup and has let it be known publicly. However, Chase Utley has all but secured the second-base job, so Polanco will have to beat out David Bell at the hot corner in order to crack the Opening Day lineup. Incidentally, Bell is day-to-day at present time because of a sprained back. As for center-fielder Kenny Lofton, he was receiving a stiff challenge from Marlon Byrd before the latter suffered a broken finger. However, Lofton's own injury woes (left hamstring) could mean more playing time for Jason Michaels to begin 2005. All three players (Lofton, Byrd and Michaels) will probably see ample playing time this season.

TOP JIMMY

Regardless of who emerges as Philadelphia's center-fielder this season, the leadoff job is expected to belong to shortstop Jimmy Rollins. This probably means either Bell or Polanco will bat in the No. 2 hole, in front of Bobby Abreu, Jim Thome and Pat Burrell. Utley would follow in the sixth slot, with catcher Mike Lieberthal seventh and the center-fielder that emerges from the pack just ahead of the pitcher.

KEY NOTE

Polanco, Byrd and Myers are all good bets to be traded at some point in 2005. However, injuries will determine the timetable.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Randy Wolf	\$32
2. Jon Lieber	\$14
3. Cory Lidle	\$7
4. Brett Myers	\$6
5. Gavin Floyd	▲+\$7 \$8

closer

1. Billy Wagner	\$39
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batting order

1. Jimmy Rollins (SS)	\$30
2. David Bell (3B)	\$15
3. Bobby Abreu (RF)	\$41
4. Jim Thome (1B)	\$32
5. Pat Burrell (LF)	\$30
6. Chase Utley (2B)	\$23
7. Mike Lieberthal (C)	\$10
8. Kenny Lofton (CF)	\$7

added to the lineup:

Gavin Floyd (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Vicente Padilla (SP) ▼-\$13 \$15

PITTSBURGH PIRATES

NATIONAL LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



Incumbent fifth starter Ryan Vogelsong has lost his job in the rotation, and his successor is left-hander David Williams. He first entered the rotation in 2001--before being felled by injuries. However, rookie southpaw Zach Duke turned heads in spring training and should reach Pittsburgh by midseason (at the latest). Vogelsong will work out of the bullpen.

CAMP BATTLES

The spring training battles have yielded few surprises at Pirates camp: In center field, Tike Redman will start ahead of Rob Mackowiak. Behind the plate, veteran Benito Santiago will start but Humberto Cota is expected to see a fair amount of playing time. Finally, the second-base situation will remain in the hands of Jose Castillo.

LEADING OFF?

Center-fielder Redman has continued to hit throughout the spring, which makes him the likely candidate to bat first in the Pirates batting order. Redman's presence at the top would drop newcomer Matt Lawton to an RBI slot (probably third). Left-fielder Jason Bay, if healthy again after suffering a wrist injury early on in spring training, will probably take over the cleanup duties if Lawton bats third.

RUMORS ABOUND

While Redman is still penciled in as a regular, trade rumors have run rampant this spring about the Pirates acquiring another center-fielder. Names mentioned include Oakland's Eric Byrnes, Florida's Juan Encarnacion and the Mets' Mike Cameron.

IMPACT ROOKIES

After releasing catcher J.R. House earlier this spring, Ryan Doumit has now emerged as Pittsburgh's next-in-line catcher. While Doumit will eventually have to battle Neil Walker for the long-term position, he currently has the lead due to a very strong preseason performance.

KEY NOTE

Look for Duke to make an impact later in the year. Also, the Pirates are still shopping for an upgrade in center field.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Oliver Perez	\$29
2. Kip Wells	\$13
3. Mark Redman	\$8
4. Josh Fogg	\$6
5. David Williams	▲+\$2 \$2

closer

1. Jose Mesa	\$10
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batting order

1. Tike Redman (CF)	\$6
2. Jack Wilson (SS)	\$13
3. Matt Lawton (RF)	\$22
4. Jason Bay (LF)	\$30
5. Craig Wilson (1B)	\$24
6. Ty Wigginton (3B)	\$17
7. Jose Castillo (2B)	\$6
8. Benito Santiago (C)	\$4

added to the lineup:

David Williams (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Ryan Vogelsong (SP) \$0

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - CENTRAL DIVISION



One of the most stunning turn of events this spring took place at Cardinals camp, where left-hander Rick Ankiel announced his 'retirement' as a pitcher and would try to convert to the outfield on a full-time basis. Ironically, Ankiel was a candidate to begin 2005 in the rotation heading into spring training, due to the status of right-hander Matt Morris (shoulder surgery).

CAMP BATTLES

The only major battle for a regular job on the Cards was supposed to feature Ankiel and rookie right-hander Adam Wainwright. However, Ankiel turned himself into a position player overnight and Morris returned to live action much more quickly than expected. Therefore, Morris will be ready to fill the role of fifth starter (April 19) after a very brief stint on the DL to begin 2005--which means Wainwright will start out at Triple-A Memphis. Also, keep an eye on right-hander Anthony Reyes, who turned a lot of heads this spring and may also see action in St. Louis later this year... Meanwhile, it looks like both Hector Luna (a Rule 5 Draft pick that stuck with the Cards throughout 2004) and former Pirate Abraham Nunez will break camp as utility infielders. While they were competing for a job, the Cards have decided to keep them both.

INJURY UPDATE

Right-fielder Larry Walker missed the early part of spring training because of back problems, and is just starting to catch up with the rest of the regulars. Therefore, he may get out of the blocks slowly in the early going. Furthermore, Walker's back is somewhat of a chronic problem, so he's among the biggest injury risks in all of Major League Baseball these days.

WHO'S THE ACE?

While newcomer Mark Mulder, acquired from Oakland in the off-season, was expected to become the ace of the Cards rotation, right-hander Chris Carpenter has instead been named the Opening Day starter. He'll be followed by Mulder, Jeff Suppan, Jason Marquis and Morris--eventually.

KEY NOTE

The Cardinals will have to make room in the rotation for Wainwright and Reyes eventually, so Morris, Marquis and Suppan must continue to perform well.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Chris Carpenter	\$20
2. Mark Mulder	\$25
3. Jeff Suppan	\$12
4. Jason Marquis	\$21
5. Matt Morris	▲+\$5 \$8

closer

1. Jason Isringhausen	\$31
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batting order

1. David Eckstein (SS)	\$17
2. Larry Walker (RF)	\$31
3. Albert Pujols (1B)	\$48
4. Scott Rolen (3B)	\$37
5. Jim Edmonds (CF)	\$38
6. Reggie Sanders (LF)	\$17
7. Mark Grudzielanek (2B)	\$7
8. Yadier Molina (C)	\$0

added to the lineup:

Matt Morris (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Rick Ankiel (SP) ▼-\$7 \$0

SAN DIEGO PADRES

NATIONAL LEAGUE - WEST DIVISION



The Padres entered spring training with virtually a set roster, so there haven't been a lot of events to rock the boat. However, one major development is the status of both Sean Burroughs and Xavier Nady. Manager Bruce Bochy was looking for ways to give Nady more at-bats, and he may have found it at the expense of starting third baseman Burroughs.

CAMP BATTLES

In the battle for the No. 5 spot in the starting rotation, veteran lefty Darrell May lost out when the club acquired Tim Redding from Houston. Also, right-hander Tim Stauffer is very close to joining the Padres rotation and will see time in San Diego at some point this season. Another fifth-starter candidate, Justin Germano, will also be at Triple-A Portland and should get the call if injuries mount. However, Stauffer has probably moved ahead of Germano on the depth chart. Also, Miguel Asencio was officially placed on the 60-day disabled list, but factor into the mix by mid-season... Meanwhile, Nady is now officially challenging Burroughs for playing time at third base--although a platoon situation is likely. The Pads appear to have grown tired of waiting for Burroughs' power game to emerge.

ROTATION SET

With 2004 NL ERA champion Jake Peavy nursing a slight groin injury, veteran Woody Williams will make the Opening Day start in his place. Williams will be followed by right-handers Adam Eaton and Brian Lawrence at Colorado. Peavy should be ready to start the home opener on April 7 against the Pittsburgh Pirates, followed by Redding and Williams once again.

HOWDY HYZDU

The Pads acquired journeyman outfielder Adam Hyzdu from the Boston Red Sox in exchange for reliever Blaine Neal, with the hope the former could play all three outfield positions in 2005. To begin the season, however, Hyzdu will start in center field for Triple-A Portland.

KEY NOTE

The Burroughs-Nady situation should come to a head at some point in 2005. If Nady can handle the hot corner, Burroughs will probably be dealt.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Woody Williams	\$14
2. Adam Eaton	\$22
3. Brian Lawrence	\$20
4. Jake Peavy	\$36
5. Tim Redding	▲+\$3 \$3

closer

1. Trevor Hoffman	\$34
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batting order

1. Dave Roberts (CF)	\$25
2. Mark Loretta (2B)	\$24
3. Brian Giles (RF)	\$29
4. Phil Nevin (1B)	\$23
5. Ryan Klesko (LF)	\$15
6. Sean Burroughs (3B)	\$25
7. Ramon Hernandez (C)	\$13
8. Khalil Greene (SS)	\$16

added to the lineup:

Tim Redding (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Justin Germano (SP) \$0

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - WEST DIVISION



Things at Giants camp were running smoothly until franchise player Barry Bonds dropped a major bombshell: He won't be ready to play until at least mid-season, and possibly next season. As a result, San Francisco management is now in a state of flux.

CAMP BATTLES

The No. 5 job in the San Francisco rotation appears to be Noah Lowry's for the taking. In fact, he's penciled in to start the year as the No. 4 man. The young left-hander looked good in a short stint with the Giants last season, and has been equally as impressive this spring. Young right-handers Brad Hennessey, Merkin Valdez and Matt Cain all show promise but will start 2005 in the minor leagues. As for right-handers Jesse Foppert and Kevin Correia, they'll battle several others for a spot in a crowded San Francisco bullpen. Meanwhile, right-hander Jerome Williams is now slated to begin the season as the fifth starter, after falling behind the others this spring due to an illness in his family.

FELIZ NAVIDAD

The Bonds shocker should be eased somewhat by the presence of 29-year-old slugger Pedro Feliz, who has been knocking on the door of a regular spot in the lineup for what seems like an eternity. He'll get first crack at the left-field job temporarily vacated by Bonds, though Michael Tucker and Tony Torcato may also see ample playing time. However, the fact Feliz is now needed to play regularly means the Giants will be on the market for another utility player.

NEW ORDER

The loss of Bonds as the cleanup hitter shakes things up in the heart of the San Francisco attack. Veteran outfielder Moises Alou, who came over to protect Bonds in the lineup, will likely take over as the new No. 4 hitter. First baseman J.T. Snow and Feliz will likely follow, with Feliz batting fifth against southpaws.

KEY NOTE

Without Bonds, the Giants won't be able to compete this season. Therefore, look for free-agent-to-be starter Jason Schmidt to be dealt at the deadline.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Jason Schmidt	\$37
2. Kirk Rueter	\$0
3. Brett Tomko	\$14
4. Noah Lowry	\$9
5. Jerome Williams	\$13

closer

1. Armando Benitez	\$32
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batting order

1. Ray Durham (2B)	\$26
2. Omar Vizquel (SS)	\$22
3. Marquis Grissom (CF)	\$20
4. Moises Alou (RF)	\$31
5. J.T. Snow (1B)	\$16
6. Pedro Feliz (LF) ▲+\$3	\$20
7. Edgardo Alfonzo (3B)	\$13
8. Mike Matheny (C)	\$1

added to the lineup:

Pedro Feliz (LF)

dropped from the lineup:

Barry Bonds (LF) ▼-\$23 \$20

SEATTLE MARINERS

AMERICAN LEAGUE - WEST DIVISION



Looking to bounce back from an unspeakably bad season in Seattle, they made a few off-season moves that could do the trick. But they still went into camp with some unsettled positions and injury worries.

UNCERTAIN STARTERS

Since trading Freddy Garcia to the White Sox last summer, the Mariners haven't had anything remotely resembling a true ace. They're hoping Joel Pineiro will step up into that role, but things aren't looking great off the bat as shoulder problems have forced them to bump him from his Opening Day start. Jamie Moyer, at 42 and coming off a horrible 2004, will get the nod in Pineiro's absence. On the good-news side of things, sophomore Bobby Madritsch has looked good in camp and they're hoping for more big things out of him as the fourth starter. And the last bit of rotation news surrounds the fifth starting job. The M's began to sour on 16-loss righty Ryan Franklin last year and have long been considering shifting him to the bullpen. Veteran Aaron Sele came to camp hoping to force that issue and has done that with a strong spring, so there's a good chance the veteran will beat out Franklin.

CLOSER CONCERN

Closer Eddie Guardado came to camp with a little residual soreness in his shoulder and then quickly strained his right hamstring. But late in camp things started to heal up and he has pitched without pain, so he should be ready to go.

BATTLING FOR POSITION

The biggest position battle that arose in camp this spring was at shortstop, where young Jose Lopez gave newly signed veteran Pokey Reese a run for his money. They were leaning toward Lopez at one point, but ultimately opted for the vet. Behind the plate, after a decade using Dan Wilson as their primary catcher, the club has decided to go with the younger Miguel Olivo as the No. 1 guy. At this point in their careers, Olivo simply has more upside all around.

KEY NOTES

Rookie-of-the-year candidate Jeremy Reed will start the season in center and may get an extended look as the No. 2 hitter.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Jamie Moyer	\$6
2. Gil Meche	\$15
3. Bobby Madritsch	\$16
4. Aaron Sele ▲+\$5	\$5
5. Joel Pineiro ▼-\$5	\$20

closer

1. Eddie Guardado	\$32
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batting order

1. Ichiro Suzuki (RF)	\$32
2. Jeremy Reed (CF)	\$18
3. Adrian Beltre (3B)	\$23
4. Richie Sexson (1B)	\$28
5. Bret Boone (2B)	\$28
6. Raul Ibanez (DH)	\$13
7. Randy Winn (LF)	\$18
8. Miguel Olivo (C)	\$5
9. Pokey Reese (SS)	\$10

added to the lineup:

Aaron Sele (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Ryan Franklin (SP) ▼-\$19 \$0

TAMPA BAY DEVIL RAYS

AMERICAN LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION



The Rays thought they were going into camp with a revamped veteran lineup, but things quickly changed a few weeks into camp. And, slowly, their rotation confusion is clearing up.

RETIREMENT SPREE

Certainly the biggest news in Rays camp was when two members of the projected starting lineup, second baseman Roberto Alomar and right-fielder Danny Bautista, retired. Alomar, a likely Hall-of-Famer at 37, couldn't stay healthy this spring and knew he was done. And Bautista, at 32, was also frustrated by injuries. The replacement process was fairly simple at second base, as Jorge Cantu slips right in to replace Alomar. He looked good in 50 games last season and they hope for more of the same. Right field is a little more difficult. They signed speedy Alex Sanchez shortly after the Tigers released him and he seems like the best bet there, though he's not ideal. The hugely promising B.J. Upton was thought to have a chance at earning the job at third base or shortstop if he could show improvement with the glove this spring. Unfortunately, he couldn't do that and was sent down to Triple-A for more work.

RISKY ROTATION

This spring the Rays' options for starters looked like an open call for young kids and declining veterans. There were three spots essentially locked up and duking it out for the final two were the likes of Hideo Nomo, Denny Neagle, Seth McClung, Doug Waechter and Rob Bell. The latter was the first to nail down a job, but the final spot would go down to the wire. Neagle was taken out of the running by being released and it's pretty much down to Nomo and Waechter, though there's talk of a six-man squad.

CATCHER CONUNDRUM

Manager Lou Piniella came to camp looking to light a fire under catcher Toby Hall and did just that by suggesting newcomer Kevin Cash could take his No. 1 job. Hall has responded with a solid spring.

KEY NOTES

There's talk of Crawford going back to left field and Huff to right to allow Sanchez to play his more familiar center field.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. Dewon Brazelton		\$13
2. Scott Kazmir		\$8
3. Mark Hendrickson		\$8
4. Rob Bell		\$4
5. Hideo Nomo		\$1

closer

1. Dany's Baez	\$28
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batting order

1. Carl Crawford (CF)	\$25
2. Jorge Cantu (2B) ▲+\$14	\$14
3. Aubrey Huff (LF)	\$29
4. Travis Lee (1B)	\$14
5. Josh Phelps (DH)	\$13
6. Julio Lugo (SS)	\$12
7. Toby Hall (C)	\$3
8. Alex S. Gonzalez (3B)	\$9
9. Alex Sanchez (RF) ▼-\$16	\$3

added to the lineup:

Hideo Nomo (SP)
Jorge Cantu (2B)
Alex Sanchez (RF)

dropped from the lineup:

Doug Waechter (SP) \$0
Roberto Alomar (2B) ▼-\$18 \$0
Danny Bautista (RF) ▼-\$6 \$0

TEXAS RANGERS

AMERICAN LEAGUE - WEST DIVISION



The Rangers have to be concerned about the status of all-star second baseman Alfonso Soriano. Soriano, who was scheduled to return to the leadoff spot this season and vowed to steal more bases than a year ago, is still bothered by a bad hamstring.

CAMP BATTLES

Texas will go with Ryan Drese and Kenny Rogers in the first two rotation slots; after that, it's wide open. Veteran right-handers Chan Ho Park and Pedro Astacio should win the No. 3 and 4 jobs, respectively, but continue to face stiff competition from young right-handers Chris Young and Ricardo Rodriguez. Nick Regilio is also in the mix, though he's more likely to open the season either in the bullpen or at Triple-A Oklahoma. In the end, the Rangers may decide to keep six starters to begin 2005 and continue to audition rotation candidates through the month of April... Meanwhile, the outfield/DH picture is still a little muddy, mainly due to the strong showing by Adrian Gonzalez this spring. The Rangers would prefer to send Gonzalez to Triple-A Oklahoma to begin the season, but he's making the decision very difficult. David Dellucci and Greg Colbrunn could wind up sharing the DH role if Gonzalez is optioned, but Colbrunn is struggling. Left field would then fall back to Kevin Mench. In center field, Laynce Nix will play most of the time, but Gary Matthews Jr. or Andres Torres could face tough left-handed pitching this season.

DEROSA READY

If Soriano cannot start the season in the lineup, former Braves infielder Mark DeRosa will take over second-base duties. He's already a lock to win the utility infielder job, but could see a lot of at-bats in April. However, he is not a candidate to bat leadoff, so the batting order would likely be re-shuffled with Soriano out. Look for Michael Young to return to the No. 1 hole, with Hank Blalock moving up to No. 2 and either Dellucci or Mench moving up to third on a temporary basis.

KEY NOTE

Soriano is a major part of the Rangers offense. Therefore, they may struggle if they have to go without him in the early going.

opening day forecast

rotation

	Update	\$Value
1. Ryan Drese		\$7
2. Kenny Rogers		\$13
3. Chris Young		\$17
4. Chan Ho Park		\$7
5. Pedro Astacio		\$0

closer

1. Francisco Cordero	\$35
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batting order

1. Alfonso Soriano (2B)	\$34
2. Michael Young (SS)	\$25
3. Hank Blalock (3B)	\$29
4. Mark Teixeira (1B)	\$35
5. Richard Hidalgo (RF)	\$22
6. David Dellucci (DH)	\$12
7. Kevin Mench (LF)	\$17
8. Laynce Nix (CF)	\$12
9. Rod Barajas (C)	\$4

TORONTO BLUE JAYS

AMERICAN LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION



The Jays have assembled a largely young but hard-working group of players, with a roster that was pretty much set coming into camp. But there have been a few developments that change the early outlook.

SHUFFLING THE DECK

Indeed, the Jays shuffled their pitching cards considerably a couple of weeks into camp when they announced projected third starter Miguel Batista would be their closer and rookie Gustavo Chacin would enter the rotation. But Batista had some success in that role over the final couple of weeks of 2004, while Chacin looked strong in the rotation during the same time. Of course, this also means that projected closer Justin Speier falls back into a setup role. And his projected setup man, Billy Koch, is out of the picture altogether after being released. Also in the rotation, all-star lefty Ted Lilly came to camp with some shoulder tendinitis. He progressed slowly but surely, but is still expected to miss his first start, instead starting the sixth game of the season.

OVERFLOWING OUTFIELD

On to the outfield, the only place in the Jays' lineup where there was expected to be some sort of battle. The idea coming into camp was that sophomore Alexis Rios would stay in right field, while Frank Catalanotto would split time in left with Reed Johnson. But then came promising slugger Gabe Gross, who absolutely ripped the stuffing out of the ball in Grapefruit League action. He's given them something to think about, but they want him to play every day and he probably can't do that in the majors right now. So Cat and Johnson will platoon and share the leadoff job. Both Rios and new third baseman Corey Koskie have had injury troubles in camp. Rios had a sore shoulder that cleared up about midway through the spring campaign. As for Koskie, he was on the shelf for a couple weeks with a sore groin, but is looking fine for Opening Day.

KEY NOTES

There's still a chance Gross could contribute by the all-star break if Catalanotto and/or Johnson can't cut it.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Roy Halladay		\$36
2. Gustavo Chacin	▲+\$8	\$8
3. David Bush		\$15
4. Josh Towers		\$0
5. Ted Lilly		\$18

closers

1. Miguel Batista	▲+\$5	\$22
2. Justin Speier	▼-\$12	\$5

batting order

1. Frank Catalanotto (LF)	\$15
2. Orlando Hudson (2B)	\$14
3. Vernon Wells (CF)	\$29
4. Corey Koskie (3B)	\$21
5. Shea Hillenbrand (DH)	\$15
6. Eric Hinske (1B)	\$14
7. Alexis Rios (RF)	\$9
8. Gregg Zaun (C)	\$1
9. Russ Adams (SS)	\$8

added to the lineup:

Gustavo Chacin (SP)
Miguel Batista (RP)

dropped from the lineup:

Miguel Batista (SP)	▲+\$5	\$22
Billy Koch (RP)	▼-\$4	\$0

*Batista was moved from the rotation to relief.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS

NATIONAL LEAGUE - EAST DIVISION



Here's an irony: the team that changed cities (moving from Montreal) during the off-season is one of the most unchanged teams on the field in camp.

SET STARTERS

The Nats' five starters were set heading into camp with really only Tony Armas having any questions surrounding him after missing half of last season with shoulder and deltoid injuries. The good news there is that his shoulder feels normal, but a late-spring groin strain could force him out of his first four starts. That puts John Patterson into the rotation for now. Also in the rotation, one of the league's biggest workhorses, ace Livan Hernandez, was stretching it out and pitching 6.0-inning starts by the halfway point of the Grapefruit League season. The one small change in our projected rotation will have righty Tomo Ohka serving as the third starter, replacing Armas, with Zach Day moving up to No. 4 and Patterson inserted into the fifth slot. In the bullpen, reliever Francis Beltran came to camp with a good shot at a middle-relief role but it was soon discovered that he had a partially torn ligament in his right elbow, requiring Tommy John surgery that will erase his 2005 season.

CORNER CONCERNS

The Nats are hoping to get some power from the infield corners, with newcomer Vinny Castilla at third base and oft-injured slugger Nick Johnson at first. But Castilla hyper-extended his left knee more than halfway through camp and though he's feeling better, he may require a short DL stint to start the season. Across the diamond, the good news is Johnson has been healthy, but he's been tinkering with his batting stance and hasn't done much with the bat. And in the outfield, the club has given up on speedy Endy Chavez as its leadoff hitter and center-fielder. This means that Termel Sledge will once again play left field. This also means that Brad Wilkerson will shift over to center yet again and probably bat first. The situation in the outfield, however, is far from settled at this time.

KEY NOTES

With Day and Armas always battling injury concerns, big righties Jon Rauch and Patterson are always ready to join the rotation.

opening day forecast

rotation Update \$Value

1. Livan Hernandez		\$21
2. Esteban Loaiza		\$8
3. Tomo Ohka		\$13
4. Zach Day		\$9
5. John Patterson		\$2

closers

1. Chad Cordero	\$24
2. Luis Ayala	\$11

batting order

1. Brad Wilkerson (CF)	\$23
2. Cristian Guzman (SS)	\$17
3. Jose Vidro (2B)	\$25
4. Jose Guillen (RF)	\$24
5. Nick Johnson (1B)	\$19
6. Vinny Castilla (3B)	\$19
7. Termel Sledge (LF)	\$9
8. Brian Schneider (C)	\$6

added to the lineup:

John Patterson (SP)

dropped from the lineup:

Tony Armas (SP)	\$7
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