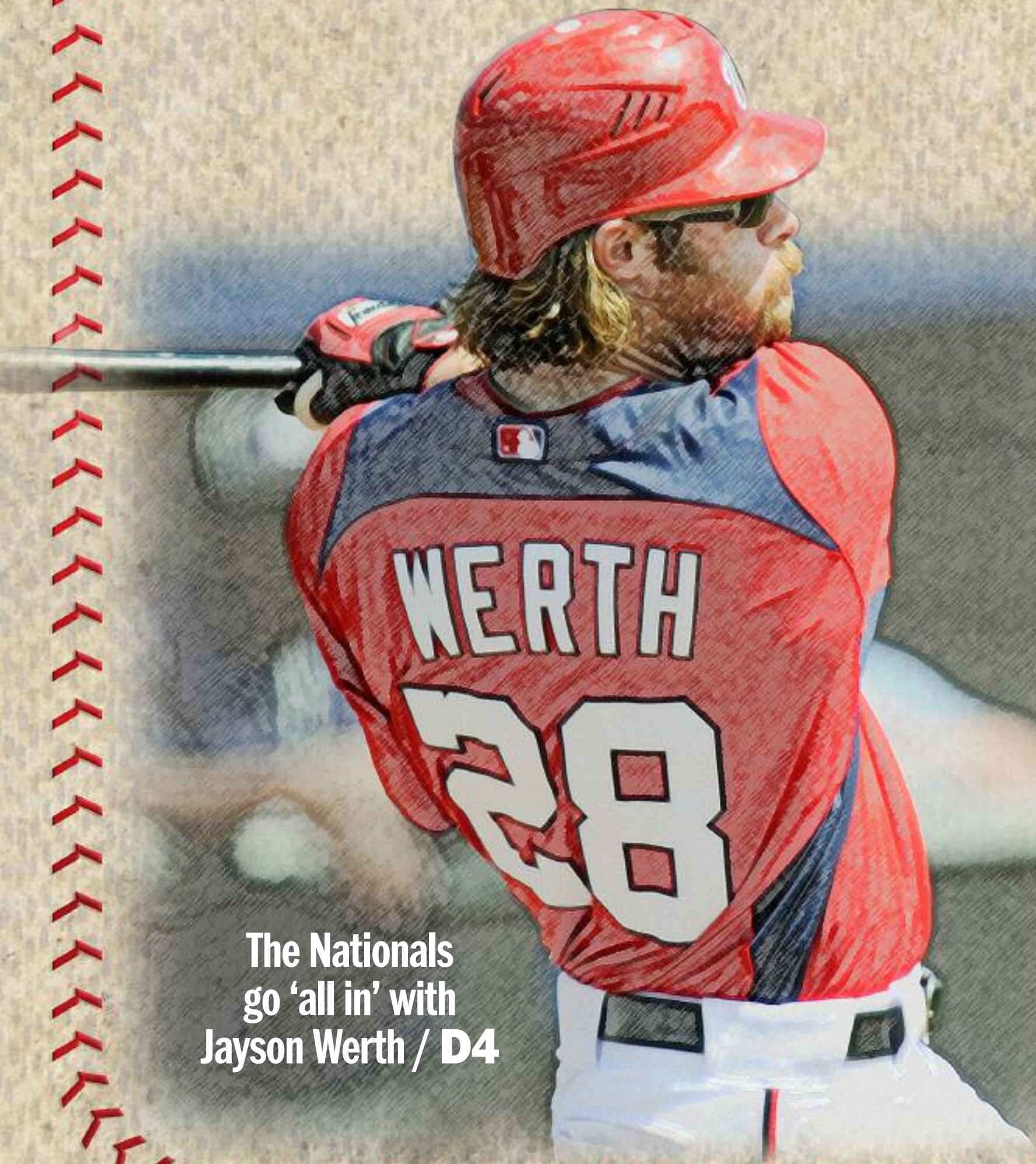


The Washington Times

2011

NATS



The Nationals
go 'all in' with
Jayson Werth / D4

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Where 'W' has a different meaning

For D.C. baseball fans, it's all about the waiting

Sometimes you wonder whether the W on the Nationals' caps stands for Wait. Let's face it, since the franchise took up residence in Washington in 2005, waiting is about all the team's fans have done.

First they waited for Major League Baseball to find an owner for the club. That took a year and a half.

Then they waited for a new stadium to be built. That took another year and a half.

All along, they've waited for the front office to put together a competitive roster, one capable of challenging for the National League East title.

And now, of course, they're waiting for Stephen Strasburg to come back from Tommy John surgery, for Bryce Harper to turn into Roy Hobbs and, quite a bit further down the list, for Teddy Roosevelt to win the Presidents Race.

(On the plus side, though, they no longer have to wait for Cristian Guzman to draw a walk or for Austin Kearns to be worth all those millions his benefactor, Jim Bowden, paid him. Thank heaven for small favors.)

Fortunately for the Nationals, Washingtonians have a lot of practice waiting. They waited 33 years for baseball to return to the District. They've waited the same length of time for the Wizards to win another championship. They've also waited 37 years for the Capitals to claim the Stanley Cup and — can it be? — two decades for the Redskins to return to the Super Bowl.

Waiting R Us, in other words.

Still, you couldn't blame Nats followers if they were beginning to look at their watches. After all, this wasn't an expansion franchise, a startup,



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that arrived in Washington in '05. It had a farm system and — on the major league level, at least — enough talent to finish .500 that first season.

But those 81 wins have been the high point so far of baseball's return to D.C. The past three years have been particularly gruesome, low-lighted by loss totals of 102, 103 and 93; the firing of a manager (Manny Acta) and general manager (Bowden); the stepping down of president Stan Kasten (the Lerner family's tour guide); and a noticeable thinning of the crowds (except when Strasburg was on the hill).

Indeed, when Nyjer Morgan flipped out last summer, he almost seemed to be channeling Nats Nation's smoldering rage. Especially when he hit that Phillies fan with a ball

— the same Phillies who had recently added Roy Halladay and Roy Oswalt to their rotation (and would further

In the offseason, owner Ted Lerner and general manager Mike Rizzo continued the 'assault' on Philadelphia by throwing \$126 million at right fielder Jayson Werth.

beef up their pitching in the offseason with prize free agent Cliff Lee). There was something wonderfully symbolic about Morgan's act, even if it did bring

him great gobs of grief.

In the offseason, owner Ted Lerner and general manager Mike Rizzo continued the "assault" on Philadelphia by throwing \$126 million at right fielder Jayson Werth. Aside from that, though, the past few months have been relatively uneventful in Nats Land. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. The Bowden years had an unhealthy amount of drama; if a prospect wasn't being unmasked as an imposter, then the GM was being charged with DUI — or interviewed by the FBI about the purported skimming of signing bonuses by Latin American scouts.

Rizzo's more understated approach has brought some much-needed normalcy to the organization. Viera, Fla., seemed more like a

place of work this year and less like the winter home of Barnum & Bailey. But it's hard to envision the Nationals making up much ground on the Phillies, not with Strasburg still on the mend and Harper figuring to spend the season in the minors. (Heck, the acquisition of Lee makes Philadelphia — winner of the past four division crowns — more of a colossus than ever.)

Aside from Werth, the Nationals have brought in Adam LaRoche to play first base — essentially replacing Adam Dunn's 199 strikeouts and 36 homers with LaRoche's 172 strikeouts and 25 homers. LaRoche also has a better glove. Defense, in fact, is a point of emphasis with the Nats this season.

Manager Jim Riggleman wants his pitchers to throw more strikes and go deeper into games, and the only way that's going to work is if his fielders can (a) cover ground and (b) catch the ball. Werth, with his range and arm, fits the bill nicely in right field, and Michael Morse should be an upgrade in left over the departed Josh Willingham. An infield of Ryan Zimmerman, Ian Desmond, Danny Espinosa (a shortstop playing second base) and LaRoche doesn't look too shabby, either, particularly if the athletic Desmond can whittle down his errors from an MLB-leading 34.

But without Strasburg, the starting rotation lacks an ace or even a certified No. 2, and it remains to be seen who the closer is going to be. (Drew Storen has not had a great spring.) The batting lineup, meanwhile, doesn't look much more murderous than it did last season, when it produced fewer runs (655) than all but two other NL clubs.

So expectations once again will be modest. The Nationals aren't about the here and now. They're still about the future, still a team that's more imagined than real.

Thus, the waiting continues. With successful clubs such as the Phillies and Braves, a W means one thing. With the Nats, it means something else.

By AMANDA COMAK
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Top prospects aim for short stay in minors

Here's a look at the next wave of prospects the Nationals hope will be making their way to Washington sooner or later:

LIKELY TRIPLE-A BOUND

Chris Marrero, 1B: Marrero, 22, drew rave reviews this spring for the strides he made defensively at first base. The Nationals' No. 1 pick in 2006, Marrero was drafted as a third baseman, but he was converted initially to the outfield and now to first base. The bat was always there — through a nasty broken fibula that also resulted in torn ligaments and ended his 2008 season in June — and was especially prevalent last year at Double-A Harrisburg, where he hit .294 with 18 homers and 82 RBI. Marrero was named an Eastern League All-Star and added to his progression in the Puerto Rican Winter League, where he hit .306 in 23 games.

Cole Kimball, RHP: Kimball will pitch for the Nationals at some point this season. Several members of the organization said as much following Kimball's dismissal from major league camp, which was predicated on the desire to have the organization's No. 7 prospect (as ranked by Baseball America) face minor league hitters at a higher level rather than any issue with his performance in camp this spring, which was terrific. Kimball is a bulldog on the mound and possesses the competitive fire teams love to see in potential closers. He's also got three effective pitches: a plus fastball, a split-finger fastball and a nice curveball he can use as an out pitch as well. Kimball dominated at Double-A in 2010, going

8-1 with a 2.17 ERA, 18 saves and 101 strikeouts in 78⅓ innings of work, and he'll most likely take his talents to Triple-A this year before an eventual call-up.

Tom Milone, LHP: A crafty left-hander, Milone has exceptional control over all three of his pitches, and one talent evaluator called him one of the best "feel the pitch" pitchers in the Nationals' organization. He was named the Nationals' 2010 minor league pitcher of the year after a 12-5, 2.85 season at Double-A Harrisburg, where he struck out 155 batters in 158 innings. After making the Eastern League All-Star team in 2010, Milone should start the year in a crowded Triple-A rotation.

LIKELY DOUBLE-A BOUND

Derek Norris, C: Considered one of the most advanced hitters in the Nationals' organization, Norris displays exceptional plate discipline and tremendous strike-zone judgment. Norris, ranked the Nationals' No. 2 prospect by Baseball America, has a short, quick swing and can hit the ball to all fields, helping him to a .286 average in 2009 at Single-A Hagerstown. After having his hamate bone removed in October of 2009, Norris regained full health last fall and put up big numbers in the Arizona Fall League (.293 avg., eight doubles, three triples, .385 OBP). Norris has a strong arm and has improved enough defensively that the Nationals are not considering moving him out of the catching position.



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Washington Nationals reliever Cole Kimball, ranked by Baseball America as the Nats' No. 7 prospect, possesses the competitive fire teams love to see in potential closers.

Tyler Moore, 1B: Moore was straddling the Mendoza line in the first half of the 2010 season at Single-A Potomac and got so hot in the second half — hitting .346 after the All-Star break — that he finished the season with a .269 average, 31 homers and 111 RBI. Moore has a lot of raw power, drawing comparisons to a young Dan Uggla. At 24 years old, the progress Moore made in 2010 sparked the idea that there may be even more to come from him, which could put him on a path to Washington sometime in the next one or two years, though not necessarily as a first baseman.

Steve Lombardozi, INF: Lombardozi, a Maryland native and son of the former major leaguer of the same name, is primarily a second baseman with a grinder mentality who is

lauded for quality at-bats and getting the most out of his tools. Lombardozi is a switch-hitter and profiles as a leadoff man who can drive the ball to all fields. He hit .294 with 35 doubles and had 20 stolen bases and a .371 on-base percentage in 2010 between Single-A Potomac and Double-A Harrisburg. He also hit .283 in the Arizona Fall League with a .385 OBP.

Brad Meyers, RHP: Meyers is one to watch this season because it will be his first fully healthy season since he broke the navicular bone in his left foot — an injury that limited him to just six starts for Double-A Harrisburg in 2010. The Nationals' 2009 Pitcher of the Year, Meyers has a herky-jerky delivery not unlike that of reliever Tyler Clippard's and is very de-

ceptive with his pitches (fastball, slider, change-up). He was 11-3 with a 1.72 ERA between Potomac and Harrisburg in 2009.

LIKELY SINGLE-A BOUND

Danny Rosenbaum, LHP: Rosenbaum was very impressive in 2010, posting a 2.25 ERA in 25 minor league starts between Hagerstown and Potomac, and was even better the year before in the Gulf Coast League (4-1, 1.95 ERA). A 22nd-round pick out of Xavier in 2009, Rosenbaum has strong control over his fastball, a plus curveball and a developing change-up. He could get the call up to Double-A Harrisburg early this season, if not at the start.

Sandy Leon, C: The 22-year-old out of Venezuela is about to begin his fifth season in the Nationals' organization and is considered the best defensive catcher in the organization. Leon, a switch-hitter who hit .249 in 2010 at Single-A Hagerstown, possesses sound fundamentals behind the plate and has been lauded for his character.

Eury Perez, Destin Hood, J.P. Ramirez, OF: This trio of outfielders played together last season at Single-A Hagerstown, and all three have drawn rave reviews. Ranked the eighth-best prospect in the Nationals' organization, Perez is a spark plug in center field and provides great speed on the base paths. He stole 64 bases for Hagerstown in 2010 and has strong instincts and lightning-quick bat speed. Hood, while still a bit raw, has shown great ability and sheer strength that has the Nationals high on his potential to be a toolsy left-handed corner outfielder at the major league level. Ramirez is perhaps the one who needs the most work defensively but is a good contact hitter, driving the ball well, a gap-to-gap hitter.

2010 draftees who will move quickly:

1. Bryce Harper OF - There are not too many superlatives that haven't been used to describe Harper. The No. 1 overall pick in the 2010 draft, Harper became the Nationals' best prospect the minute the ink dried on his major league contract last August. Harper was very impressive this spring during his time in major league camp and is expected to start the season at Single-A Hagerstown but could be in Washington as early as this fall, though it's more likely he'll hit the main stage sometime during the 2012 season.

2. Sammy Solis RHP - The Nationals' second-round pick in the 2010 draft, Solis is highly regarded within the organization for his ability to pitch to both sides of the plate with good movement and a good angle on his fastball. Solis, ranked the Nationals' No. 6 prospect by Baseball America, was drafted out of the University of San Diego and is further advanced than many of the Nationals' pitching prospects so he's expected to move through the system fairly quickly. Baseball America, for one, projects him to be in the Nationals' 2014 starting rotation, if not sooner.

3. Rick Hague SS - Taken in the third round of the draft last year out of Rice University, Hague is an impressive hitter who has the potential to be the organization-wide batting champion when all is said and done. Drawing comparisons to Texas Rangers infielder Michael Young, Hague has played at elite levels with Rice and Team USA. While he figures to begin the year at Single-A, Hague centers the ball well and can propel the ball to all fields so he could be one of the most fun minor league players to watch this season.

4. A.J. Cole RHP - Cole fell to the Nationals in the fourth round last year over concerns about signability — and impressed the Washington scouts enough that they offered him a well over-slot \$2 million signing bonus. Cole, at 6-foot-4, 181 pounds, has a large, lean frame and is projected as a front-end starter. Just 19 and drafted out of high school, Cole likely will start the season at one of the organization's Single-A levels while he adjusts to a life of baseball.

5. Robbie Ray LHP - Another well over-slot signing, Ray, a 12th round selection, agreed to a \$799,000 signing bonus — the second highest bonus handed out to any player drafted after the fourth round in 2010. It was believed that Ray had a strong commitment to the University of Arkansas, thus his drop in the draft, but the Nationals locked him up and are impressed by what they've seen so far. Ray has an incredibly fluid, easy delivery and, at 19, already possesses a strong fastball, curveball, changeup repertoire. Look for him to start the year at one of the Single-A levels.

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Without Strasburg, others will pitch in

By AMANDA COMAK
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

VIERA, FLA.

Stephen Strasburg can't pitch.

He throws — playing catch every other day in right field at the Nationals' spring training home with head athletic trainer Lee Kuntz — and he takes pitchers' fielding practice, and he works out.

But he can't pitch. Not yet. "Sure, we miss Strasy," pitching coach Steve McCatty said recently before heading out to the field to supervise Strasburg's session with Kuntz.

"There's no doubt about it. But he's not available, and tomorrow's another day."

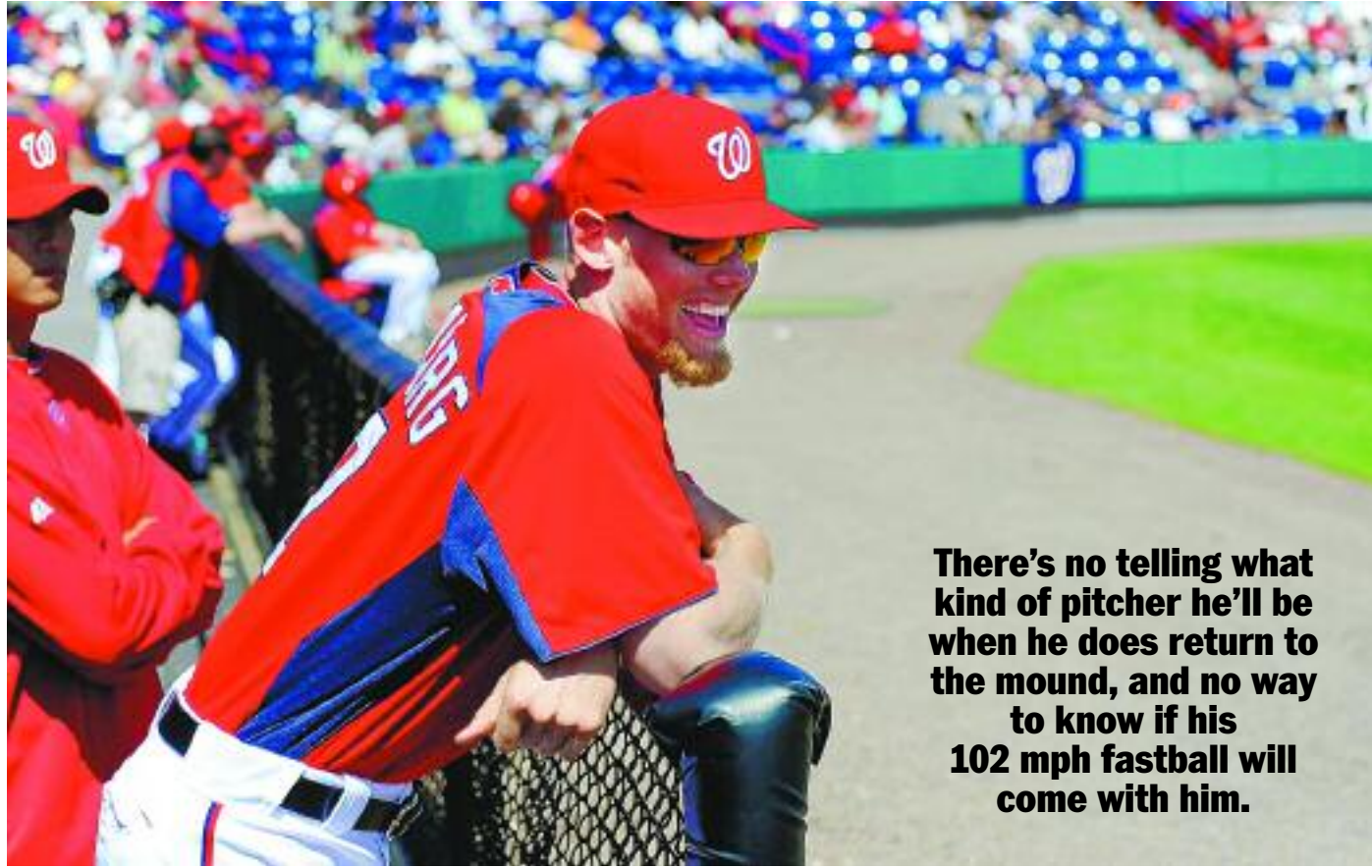
So as the Nationals watch their prized right-hander make the slow journey back to health after the Sept. 3 Tommy John ligament-replacement surgery on his throwing elbow, it's easy for the mind to wander toward the future.

It's a future that could be exceedingly bright for a Nationals rotation chock-full of home-grown talent.

Should Strasburg's rehab go according to plan, the potential top of the Nationals starting rotation in 2012 could be Strasburg, the raved-about Jordan Zimmermann (himself a Tommy John survivor) and Ross Detwiler — a former first-round pick who, McCatty said, has "made tremendous strides" since 2009.

"That was the plan when we took those three players," said Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo. "Things have to fall into place for that to happen, but we're confident we have the ability to do it."

Add to that list John Lannan, another product of the Na-



The Nationals are hoping ace right-hander Stephen Strasburg will return from the disabled list by late this season.

tional farm system, who has won 26 games the past three years with a 4.10 ERA, and the potential addition of Yunesky Maya — the Cuban sensation McCatty called "possibly the last piece," who signed a \$6 million major league deal with the Nationals in 2010 but has struggled adjusting to the major league game.

A rotation with five legitimate starters from their own system?

"It would be great," McCatty said. "But it takes time to build."

That's a fact Nationals fans know all too well after years spent watching the likes of J.D.

Martin, Garrett Mock, Mike Bacsik and Jason Bergmann take the mound night after night. Even with Strasburg sidelined, the Nationals' pitching depth is clearly better than it has been in the past. Case in point: Craig Stammen, a right-hander relied on to make 38 starts the past two years, was optioned to Triple-A Syracuse last week.

But when Strasburg stood on the mound that hot August day last year in Philadelphia shaking his right arm, that time was immediately set back. Instead of 2011 being Washington's first full year with its ace atop the rotation and a fully

healthy Zimmermann behind him, it immediately became a bridge year — a year to ponder the 'what ifs' of the future.

In that sense, Strasburg will always be the headliner. There's no telling what kind of pitcher he'll be when he does return to the mound, and no way to know if his 102 mph fastball will come with him. But in Zimmermann the Nationals have something of a fail-safe.

The low-key right-hander is now more than 18 months removed from his own surgery and held opponents scoreless in five of his first six starts of the spring, his fifth victim a very

powerful Detroit Tigers lineup. He's shown impressive control of his fastball, a pitch that sits around 94 mph, and worked his curveball and his slider in well — all without feeling pain in his surgically repaired right elbow.

"It's just about Jordan Zimmermann just living up to his capabilities," veteran starter Jason Marquis said. "Just doing what Jordan does. Jordan has the capability of being the top end of the rotation starter. He's just got to get consistent."

The Nationals chose three players ahead of Zimmermann in the 2007 draft, a drop many attribute to Zimmermann com-

ing out of the little-known University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. The first of those three was Detwiler.

But while Zimmermann made a steady ascent to the major leagues through 2007 and 2008, debuting on April 20, 2009, Detwiler burst onto the scene three months after he was drafted and couldn't stay. Erratic control and a hip labrum injury that required surgery in February 2010 helped produce ugly major league numbers. In 2009, he was 1-6 with a 5.00 ERA, and in 19 major league starts, he's 2-9 with a 4.74 ERA.

Detwiler's been a different pitcher this spring, though, opening his direction to the plate, lengthening his stride and attacking hitters when he's on the mound. The results have been impressive: 2.65 ERA, 12 strikeouts, three walks. One scout called him a surefire No. 3 starter in the Nationals' rotation.

"He's showing the stuff that he was drafted No. 1 for," McCatty said. "The stuff is finally coming out that we expected him to do."

At some point this season, late August perhaps, the Nationals could get a glimpse into what could be if three of their top draft picks since 2007 — Strasburg, Zimmermann and Detwiler — all find themselves in the major league rotation at the same time.

There won't be any instant gratification, but the optimism is there.

"I'm excited about our rotation," Rizzo said. "We think that we have a good group of guys in those three [Strasburg, Zimmermann and Detwiler] and another wave of guys coming after them. We feel good where we're at."

Youthful phenom Harper set for minor detour to the majors

By AMANDA COMAK
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

VIERA, FLA.

On the day that Bryce Harper was told for the first time in his life that he didn't make a baseball team, he was sitting in the Nationals' major league clubhouse at Space Coast Stadium.

It didn't matter that Harper, at 18 years old, should have been sitting inside a chemistry or calculus class at a high school in Nevada, thousands of miles away from a major league spring training game against the New York Yankees.

Nor did it matter that Harper, who hit .389 in 18 games in big-league camp, knew from the day he reported to Nationals spring training that there was no way he'd make the major league team.

Getting cut hurt. "I understood that I wasn't going to make the team," Harper said that day, the eye black smeared across his cheeks smudged and worn.

"I understood that completely from the first day, but I've got to tell myself, 'Hey, you're here, you've got to act like you're that star player on the team. You've got to come out here every day, and you've got to play like you're the guy.'"

The good news for Harper — and the Nationals — is that everyone involved thinks that, eventually, he will be the guy.

From the high fastballs he was able to connect with and drive, to his knowledge of the strike zone, to his preparation and his maturity on the field, Harper left everyone impressed — and more than one person wondering if his debut as a Washington National could come this season.

"I would not be surprised if he got here this year, late, if at all," Nationals manager Jim Riggleman said. "But I'll tell you, minor league baseball is tough. We'll see when he gets to Dou-



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bryce Harper is still adjusting to playing the outfield after spending much of his amateur career as a catcher. Harper is slated to open the 2011 season with Single-A Hagerstown.

ble-A. There'll be some wily veterans in Double-A who are going to make his progress as tough as possible."

Harper will begin this season at Single-A Hagerstown where, despite a sprained left ankle suffered March 21, he is expected to be ready by the opener in Rome, Ga., on April 7. How fast he moves through the Nationals' organization after that will depend on just how well he does.


One talent evaluator said Harper is easily the best prospect in the organization, with "no ifs, ands or buts about it."

Realistically, chances are that Harper won't make his first on-field appearance in Washington until 2012, but no one has officially ruled out a late

2011 call up. Unlike Stephen Strasburg, whom the Nationals had on a clear schedule of starts before he got the call to the big leagues, Harper's advancement will depend more on how he handles the rigors of each minor league level.

"I don't foresee him being in the big leagues this year," Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo said. "Like any other player, he needs development in the minor leagues. ... You look around, the guys that haven't played very long in the minor leagues at age 18, and you can count them on one hand."


"If he's the greatest of the great players, even the great ones went to the minor leagues and really got their jump-start season at the age of 19 or 20."

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Nationals banking future on Werth

Pricey free agent brings new era to D.C.

By **AMANDA COMAK**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

VIERA, FLA.
The man who changes everything wears his hair long and unkempt.

He brings with him a ring, from the 2008 Philadelphia Phillies — teammates turned rivals — along with a swagger, a presence, lofty expectations and a \$126 million price tag.

When the Jayson Werth era in Washington officially begins Thursday at Nationals Park, he will usher it in with the hopes of a franchise on his shoulders. For as much as Stephen Strasburg, Bryce Harper and the unknown potential of youth represent optimism for the Nationals' future, Werth is the bridge to get them there.

Werth, the Nationals hope, is the player who legitimizes the operation, who shows the baseball world that the Nationals are serious about competing in Major League Baseball.

In their own clubhouse, it's already working.

"The best way for me to say it," said shortstop Ian Desmond, one of three homegrown talents who'll reside in the Nationals' infield this season, "is that coming up in this organization, as a younger guy, you went home at the end of the season and you weren't really excited. You didn't take pride in being a Washington National."

That all changed this offseason when Werth signed the largest contract in franchise history on Day One of baseball's winter meetings. The Nationals then continued to show they were serious by getting involved in the Cliff Lee sweepstakes and the Zack Greinke trade talks, though neither potential move panned out.

"Now you've got guys pushing for spots down in the minor leagues who want to be up here," Desmond said. "There's veteran guys from other organizations, free agents that want to come over here. Five years ago, Cliff Lee wouldn't even have been in any conversation to come here. There's no chance. Not even a maybe."

"Now people are starting to gravitate toward the Washington Nationals."

Signing Werth, the type of



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jayson Werth, who averaged 29 home runs the past three seasons with the Philadelphia Phillies, is under "no pressure," according to Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo, despite his hefty contract, the 14th most lucrative ever in the game.

big-name free agent the Nationals had previously been unable to lure to Washington, is the next step in general manager Mike Rizzo's plan for the organization. It is the next step toward becoming a competitive team in the major leagues and bringing in the free agents who, like Werth, fit the profile of accomplished, athletic two-way players to complement Washington's growing stable of youthful talent.

But in achieving that, Rizzo and the Lerner family also handed out a seven-year contract to a soon-to-be 32-year-old, backloaded with a \$21 million annual salary when he's 36, 37 and 38 that also includes a full no-trade clause.

The deal was so large it compelled Mets general manager Sandy Alderson to quip at the time, "I thought they were trying to reduce the deficit in Washington." It's a contract on par with those of players such as Alfonso

Soriano (eight years, \$136 million) and Barry Zito (seven years, \$126 million) — two of what are widely considered the most untradeable deals in baseball.

It's the 14th most lucrative contract ever handed out in the game and, quite simply, if it doesn't work, it could haunt the Nationals for years to come.

When the Jayson Werth era in Washington officially begins on Thursday at Nationals Park, he will usher it in with the hopes of a franchise on his shoulders.

One year after signing with the Cubs, Soriano played in just 109 games, and only 17 the following year — when his .241 batting average was a far cry from the .300, .290 and .280 marks he'd posted from 2002 through 2004. Zito, despite being the highest paid player on the team, wasn't on the Giants' World Series roster when they won the

crown last fall. After six straight double-digit win seasons in Oakland, Zito has lost 57 games the past four years with a 4.45 ERA.

The Blue Jays sent shock waves through the baseball world this winter when they were able to unload Vernon Wells and almost all of the \$86 million left on his seven-year, \$126 million agree-

ments to the Angels. Getting out from under deals like that doesn't happen often.

But that's assuming the Nationals will, at some point, want to rid themselves of an albatross. If Werth, a self-acknowledged late bloomer, continues the progression he was on during the past three years with the Phillies (averaging 29 home

runs and 84 RBI while batting .279), there won't be any problems paying him \$83 million of that \$126 million in the final four years of his deal.

"There's no pressure whatsoever," Rizzo said. "The deal is done. We got the player we wanted to get; he just has to be himself. If he's himself, he's going to put up terrific numbers and be the player we wanted to bring in here."

"I certainly don't feel any pressure over it, and I don't feel he does either."

In his first five weeks with the team, Werth has been a model citizen. He's taken a leadership role within the clubhouse, shared his knowledge of the opposition and perspective with teammates, and, despite a statistically mediocre spring, his approach at the plate — taking upward of five and six pitches each at-bat, for example — and his preparation have already been noticed.

"I couldn't be happier with what he's done," said Nationals manager Jim Riggleman. "But we have to see how things shake out when things get tough. There's no team where everything's good all the time, and the slightest thing can change people's perception of each other. . . . Your character is judged in bad times, not good times, so we have to hope that these good vibes that are flowing will continue through the season."

"When you sign a big contract like that, a lot of responsibilities come with it," Riggleman added. "The only one of those responsibilities I would be in tune to is effort. . . . All eyes are going to be on him. So if you ever drop your head, if you ever jog down the line, if you ever don't chase a ball after missing it — anything that's perceived as a lack of a great effort — people are going to feel like, 'We paid too much money for this guy.'"

Ted Lerner, who ultimately authorized that expenditure, has a reputation for being a visionary, for making calculated business deals and having the foresight to gauge what will work in the future. A 2007 Washingtonian magazine profile described the Nationals' owner as someone who "buys at the right time, builds quality properties and rarely sells. He never speculates or flips, he thinks decades into the future."

The Lerner family has committed its trust to Rizzo to do that with the Nationals and pledged its commitment to bringing a winning team to Washington. In many ways, Werth and his contract symbolize everything Washingtonian wrote about Lerner four years ago.

How it plays out from here will determine whether the Nationals invested their money and hopes in the right player — but they've got a long time to find that out.

"Jayson's here for seven years," Riggleman said. "He doesn't have to do it all the first year. I would venture to say that in seven years, he'll probably have some really big years and some years that are good but not [great]."

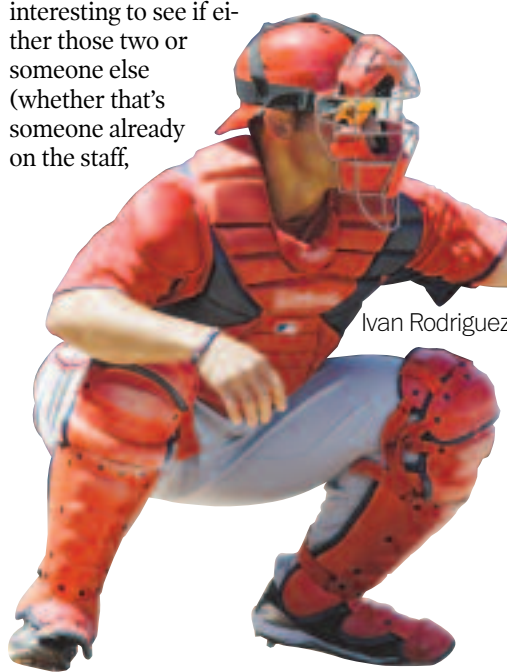
"But the effort and intensity and body language — those things have to be such that we have a positive feeling about what's going on here."

From Rodriguez to Ramos

The Nationals have made it clear that, while **Ivan Rodriguez** will be the team's Opening Day starter, **Wilson Ramos** is going to get every opportunity thereafter to seize the starting catching job. Rodriguez, a surefire Hall of Famer, is 183 hits shy of becoming the first catcher in major league history to reach the 3,000-hit milestone, and his veteran presence and knowledge are invaluable to the Nationals' pitching staff. But Ramos has already been tabbed the team's catcher of the future and has displayed the potential to become a force both at the plate and behind it. The only question now is when will the transition officially take place?

The process of finding a closer

The Nationals broke camp without a defined closer, and they'll likely spend the first few weeks of the regular season trying to get one pitcher to take control of the role. The early money is on either **Sean Burnett** or **Drew Storen** stepping up to take the job, but it will be interesting to see if either those two or someone else (whether that's someone already on the staff,



Ivan Rodriguez

Top Nats storylines for 2011

someone up from Triple-A or a trade addition) emerges, and how long it'll take them. The Nationals' bullpen was the most taxed in the National League last year, as Washington's starters ranked 29th out of the 30 major league teams in pitching only 5.5 innings per game, but they put together an impressive 3.35 ERA as a staff and did well even after **Matt Capps** departed at the trade deadline. Can they repeat that success?

The wait for Harper

Bryce Harper has made a believer out of just about everyone who's ever seen him play, but he'll be getting his first consistent professional experience this year, and it will be interesting to see when and if he struggles. At just 18, Harper is one of the youngest players in the organization, but has yet to truly hit a stumbling block in his progression as the next big thing in Major League Baseball. He'll start the year at Single-A Hagerstown, but there's no telling where he'll finish it — and yes, it could be in Washington.

The Strasburg-less rotation

There's been a lot of talk about the glaring weakness atop the Nationals' rotation while **Stephen Strasburg** continues the slow process of rehabbing his right elbow following Tommy John surgery in September. But what often goes overlooked in lamenting that absence is that **Jordan Zimmermann** will be starting his first full season since returning from his own Tommy John surgery. Zimmermann has looked exceptional all spring, hitting around 94 mph with his fastball and

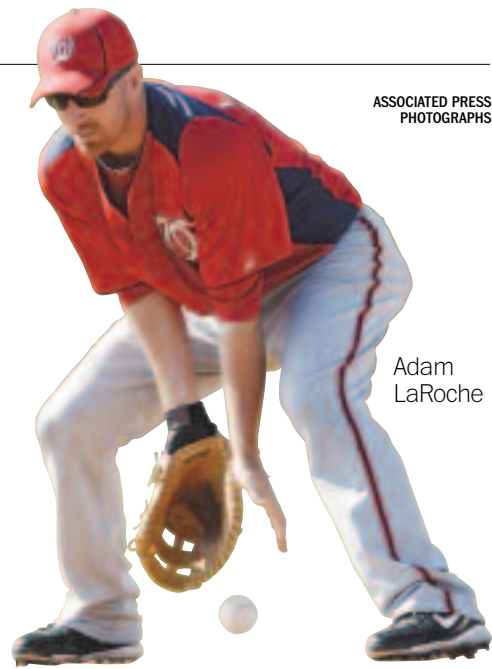
showing good control over his slider and his curveball. There's no telling what a fully healthy Zimmermann can do, and the Nationals are expecting a bounce-back season from **Jason Marquis** and average years out of **Livan Hernandez**, **John Lannan** and **Tom Gorzelanny**. Strasburg could reappear sometime in late August but, until then, the Nationals will be hoping those five — and perhaps **Chad Gaudin**, **Ross Detwiler** or **Yunesky Maya** — can make things as painless as possible.

What would Werth do?

Jayson Werth put together four straight impressive years as a member of the Philadelphia Phillies, and he cashed in on them by signing a \$126 million contract with Washington this offseason. Werth goes about his business as if he's just an-



Bryce Harper



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

Adam LaRoche

other player, but it goes without saying that there is significant pressure on the recipient of the franchise's largest financial commitment. He'll bat second, at least at the start of the season, and be protected in the lineup by **Ryan Zimmerman**, but it'll be noteworthy to see how he does this year and if his game changes now that he's looked upon to be "the man" more so than he ever was in a stacked Phillies lineup.

Youth will be served in the infield

Ryan Zimmerman is 26, **Ian Desmond** 25 and **Danny Espinosa** 23. At age 31, first baseman **Adam LaRoche** is easily the elder statesman of the infield. Zimmerman's not young when measured by experience, but with Desmond and Espinosa at second, the Nationals will have one of the youngest middle infield combinations in the major leagues. The potential for both is exceptionally high, and with LaRoche upgrading the defense at first base, seeing how Desmond, in his second year, and Espinosa, a rookie, work together should be exciting for Nationals fans — and, along with Zimmerman, a glimpse at what 75 percent of the infield could look like for years to come.

— AMANDA COMAK

WASHINGTON NATIONALS 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
MARCH APRIL						
			<input type="checkbox"/> HOME <input type="checkbox"/> AWAY			
3 Braves 1:35pm	4	5 Marlins 7:10pm	6 Marlins 7:10pm	7 Marlins 7:10pm	8 Mets 4:10pm	9 Mets 7:10pm
10 Mets 1:10pm	11	12 Phillies 7:05pm	13 Phillies 7:05pm	14 Phillies 7:05pm	15 Brewers 7:05pm	16 Brewers 1:05pm
17 Brewers 1:35pm	18	19 Cardinals 8:15pm	20 Cardinals 8:15pm	21 Cardinals 1:45pm	22 Pirates 7:05pm	23 Pirates 7:05pm
24 Pirates 1:35pm	25	26 Mets 7:05pm	27 Mets 7:05pm	28 Mets 7:05pm	29 Giants 7:05pm	30 Giants 4:05pm
31 Braves 1:05pm						

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 Giants 1:35pm	2 Giants 7:05pm	3 Phillies 7:05pm	4 Phillies 7:05pm	5 Phillies 7:05pm	6 Marlins 7:10pm	7 Marlins 7:10pm
8 Marlins 1:10pm	9	10 Braves 7:10pm	11 Braves 7:10pm	12 Braves 7:10pm	13 Marlins 7:05pm	14 Marlins 1:05pm
15 Marlins 1:35pm	16 Pirates 7:05pm	17 Pirates 1:05pm	18 Mets 7:10pm	19 Mets 1:10pm	20 Orioles 7:05pm	21 Orioles 4:05pm
22 Orioles 1:35pm	23 Brewers 8:10pm	24 Brewers 8:10pm	25 Brewers 1:10pm	26	27 Padres 7:05pm	28 Padres 1:05pm
29 Padres 1:35pm	30 Phillies 1:05pm	31 Phillies 7:05pm			MAY	

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
JUNE						
1 Phillies 1:05pm	2 D'backs 9:40pm	3 D'backs 9:40pm	4 D'backs 8:10pm	5 D'backs 4:10pm	6 Giants 10:15pm	7 Giants 10:15pm
8 Giants 3:45pm	9 Padres 10:05pm	10 Padres 10:05pm	11 Padres 8:35pm	12 Padres 4:05pm	13 Giants 10:15pm	14 Giants 10:15pm
15 Cardinals 7:05pm	16 Cardinals 7:05pm	17 Orioles 7:05pm	18 Orioles 1:05pm	19 Orioles 1:35pm	20	21 Mariners 7:05pm
22 Mariners 7:05pm	23 Mariners 1:05pm	24 W. Sox 8:10pm	25 W. Sox 4:10pm	26 W. Sox 2:10pm	27 Angels 10:05pm	28 Angels 10:05pm
29 Angels 7:05pm	30					

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
JULY						
3 Pirates 1:35pm	4 Cubs 1:05pm	5 Cubs 7:05pm	6 Cubs 7:05pm	7 Cubs 7:05pm	8 Rockies 7:05pm	9 Rockies 7:05pm
10 Pirates 1:35pm	11	12	13	14	15 Pirates 7:05pm	16 Pirates 7:05pm
17 Braves 1:35pm	18 Astros 8:05pm	19 Astros 8:05pm	20 Astros 2:05pm	21	22 Dodgers 10:10pm	23 Dodgers 10:10pm
24 Dodgers 4:10pm	25	26 Marlins 7:05pm	27 Marlins 7:05pm	28 Marlins 12:25pm	29 Mets 7:05pm	30 Mets 7:05pm
31 Mets 1:35pm						

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 Braves 7:05pm	2 Braves 7:05pm	3 Braves 1:05pm	4 Rockies 8:40pm	5 Rockies 8:40pm	6 Rockies 8:10pm	7
8 Cubs 8:05pm	9 Cubs 8:05pm	10 Cubs 8:05pm	11	12 Phillies 7:05pm	13 Phillies 7:05pm	14 Phillies 1:35pm
15	16 Cubs 8:05pm	17 Cubs 8:05pm	18 Cubs 8:05pm	19 Phillies 7:05pm	20 Phillies 7:05pm	21 Phillies 1:35pm
22 D'backs 7:05pm	23 D'backs 7:05pm	24 D'backs 7:05pm	25 D'backs 7:05pm	26 Reds 7:10pm	27 Reds 7:10pm	28 Reds 1:10pm
29	30 Braves 7:10pm	31 Braves 7:10pm			AUGUST	

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
SEPTEMBER						
4 Mets 1:35pm	5 Dodgers 1:05pm	6 Dodgers 7:05pm	7 Dodgers 7:05pm	8 Dodgers 1:05pm	9 Astros 7:05pm	10 Astros 7:05pm
11 Astros 1:35pm	12 Mets 7:10pm	13 Mets 7:10pm	14 Mets 7:10pm	15 Mets 1:10pm	16 Marlins 7:05pm	17 Marlins 7:05pm
18 Marlins 1:35pm	19	20 Phillies 7:05pm	21 Phillies 7:05pm	22 Phillies 7:05pm	23 Braves 7:05pm	24 Braves 1:05pm
25 Braves 1:35pm	26 Marlins 7:10pm	27 Marlins 7:10pm	28 Marlins 4:10pm	29	30	



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2011 NATS

Nationals Roster



Rotation
61 Livan Hernandez
 Age: 36 - B/T: R/R
 Making ninth Opening Day start, threw more innings (211 2/3) and won more games (10) than any other Nationals starter in 2010.



31 John Lannan
 Age: 26 - B/T: L/L
 Worked to a 6-3 record, 3.42 ERA in second half of 2010 after mid-season demotion to minor leagues.



27 Jordan Zimmermann
 Age: 24 - B/T: R/R
 Will be his first full season after '09 Tommy John surgery, spun scoreless outings in five of seven spring starts.



21 Jason Marquis
 Age: 32 - B/T: L/R
 Fully healthy after an injury-marred start to 2010, should be closer to career norms this year: 10-15 wins, 4.48 ERA.



32 Tom Gorzelanny
 Age: 28 - B/T: L/L
 Won seven games with 4.09 ERA for Cubs in 2010, best season since 14-win campaign with Pittsburgh in 2007.



Bullpen
22 Drew Storen
 Age: 23 - B/T: S/R
 Struck out 52 batters in 55 1/3 IP in the majors last season and saved a Nationals rookie-record five games.



17 Sean Burnett
 Age: 28 - B/T: L/L
 Nationals' best reliever in 2010 with a 2.14 ERA, finished the season with 17 consecutive scoreless innings, striking out 17 batters in that period.



36 Tyler Clippard
 Age: 26 - B/T: R/R
 Was the Nationals' most-used reliever (91 IP) in his first full major league season and was incredibly reliable with a team-leading 23 holds.



60 Todd Coffey
 Age: 30 - B/T: R/R
 Led the Milwaukee Brewers in appearances with 147 combined the past two years, struck out a career high 8.1 batters per 9 IP in 2010.



45 Doug Slaten
 Age: 31 - B/T: L/L
 One of only two LHP in the bullpen, held left-handers to a .151 batting average and 0 home runs last season.



57 Chad Gaudin
 Age: 28 - B/T: R/R
 Versatile right-hander is 21-28 with a 4.72 ERA in 75 games as a starter, 14-11, 4.43 ERA in 183 games as a reliever.



55 Brian Broderick
 Age: 24 - B/T: R/R
 Rule 5 pick from the St. Louis Cardinals, allowed just one earned run in his first 14 2/3 innings of work this spring.



Catchers
7 Ivan Rodriguez
 Age: 39 - B/T: R/R
 Beginning his 21st season in the major leagues, just 183 hits shy of becoming the first catcher to reach 3,000-hit milestone.



3 Wilson Ramos
 Age: 23 - B/T: R/R
 In his first major league action, combined to hit .278 with seven doubles, one homer and five RBI in 22 big league games between Minnesota and D.C. in 2010.



Infielders
25 Adam LaRoche
 Age: 31 - B/T: L/L
 Has had six consecutive 20-plus homer seasons, including 25 in each of the last three seasons.



18 Danny Espinosa
 Age: 23 - B/T: S/R
 Hit six home runs and knocked in 15 runs in 28 games as a September call-up in 2010. Was 9-for-16 with 3 HR and 10 RBI in first five major league games.



6 Ian Desmond
 Age: 25 - B/T: R/R
 Hit .269 with 27 doubles, 10 homers and 65 RBI in first full year at the major league level.



11 Ryan Zimmerman
 Age: 26 - B/T: R/R
 Followed up Gold Glove and Silver Slugger 2009 campaigns by hitting over .300 for first time in his career with .307 average.



15 Jerry Hairston Jr.
 Age: 34 - B/T: R/R
 Can (and has) played every position on the field in the majors except pitcher and catcher, hit .244, scored 53 runs and drove in 50 with Padres in 2010.



13 Alex Cora
 Age: 35 - B/T: L/R
 Has a .244 career batting average in 10-plus seasons in the major leagues. Nationals are his sixth professional organization.



Outfielders
28 Jayson Werth
 Age: 31 - B/T: R/R
 One of two major league players to increase his slugging percentage in each of the last four seasons, from .459 in 2007 to .532 in 2010.



38 Michael Morse
 Age: 29 - B/T: R/R
 Hit .289 with 15 homers and 41 RBI in just 266 at-bats for the Nats in 2010.



43 Rick Ankiel
 Age: 31 - B/T: L/L
 Has hit 53 home runs since becoming a position player and making it back to the major leagues consistently in 2007.



20 Laynce Nix
 Age: 30 - B/T: L/L
 The Nationals are the third straight team Nix has made as a non-roster invitee. He hit .291 as a bench player for the 2010 NL Central champion Reds.



24 Matt Stairs
 Age: 43 - B/T: L/R
 The oldest player in the organization is MLB's all-time leader with 23 pinch-hit home runs.



Disabled List
37 Stephen Strasburg
 Age: 22 - B/T: R/R
 Rehabbing from Sept. 3 Tommy John surgery on right elbow.



40 Chien-Ming Wang
 Age: 30 - B/T: R/R
 Rehabbing 2009 surgery on torn capsule in right shoulder.



63 Henry Rodriguez
 Age: 24 - B/T: R/R
 Acquired from A's in Josh Willingham trade, he's dealing with neck spasms.



50 Elvin Ramirez
 Age: 23 - B/T: R/R
 Rule 5 draft pick from Mets has right shoulder soreness.

—Compiled by Amanda Comak



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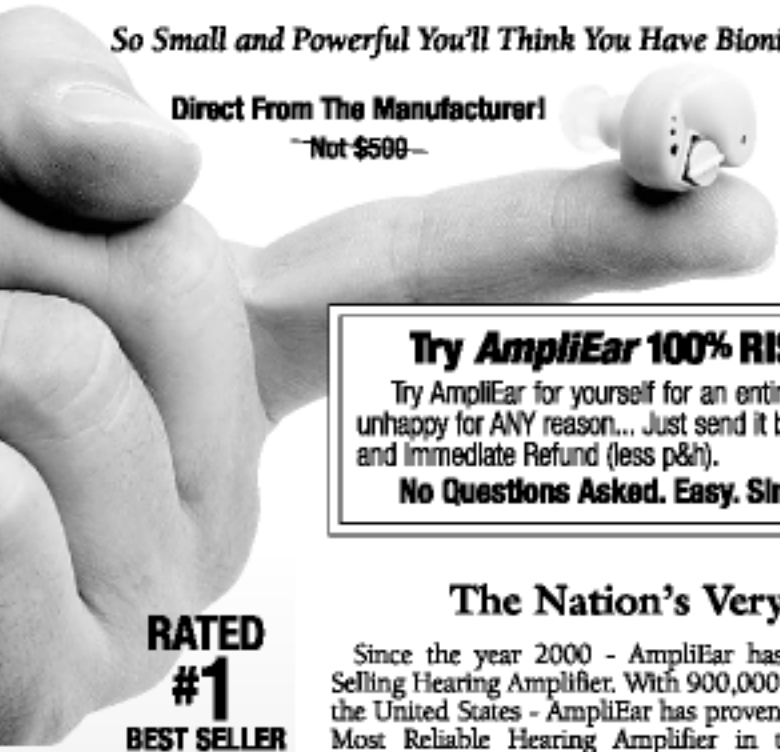
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20 **NATS** 11

New faces around MLB not all rookies

Many players wearing new uniforms

With four aces, the Philadelphia Phillies are all in. Because if this is the Year of the Pitcher yet again, then Roy Halladay, Cliff Lee and their pals should breeze into the World Series bracket and wind up in a parade down Broad Street.

Obviously, the Phils are kings of the hill. Heck, Logan Morrison seemed shocked that someone even bothered to ask him during a Twitter chat for their No. 1 weakness.

"They have one?" the 23-year-old Florida outfielder barbed. "Thought they were the best team ever."

Ah, youth. Baseball 2011 is full of fresh faces. Kyle Drabek in Toronto, Freddie Freeman in Atlanta and Jesus Montero in New York pinstripes, all hoping to become the next Buster Posey chomping for a chance in Triple-A, then celebrating a championship in the bigs.

Lots of rookies in the dugout, too. Don Mattingly takes over the Los Angeles Dodgers, trying to prove fine players can make fine managers. In all, a dozen teams go into opening day Thursday with a different skipper than they started with last season.

Gone are Joe Torre and Bobby Cox. They retired, as did all-time saves leader Trevor Hoffman, top postseason winner Andy Pettitte and former World Series MVP Mike Lowell.

But there's plenty of room for the old pros not including Jamie Moyer, who's recovering from Tommy John surgery and wants to pitch next season at age 49.

Derek Jeter, at 36, is coming off a down year that led to testy contract talks. Only 74 hits shy of No. 3,000, this is the first time since he was a rookie the Captain has fans wondering whether he's still an All-Star.

Chipper Jones, at 38, is

trying to bounce back from a knee injury that nearly finished him.

Jeter and Jones get early swings. There are six openers March 31, starting with Detroit at Yankee Stadium and Atlanta at Washington.

Then there's 40-year-old Jim Thome, needing just 11 home runs to be the eighth slugger in the 600 club.

"If it happens it'd be great. It'd be a wonderful thing. Not many guys have done it, so yeah, I respect it. The history of the game, you respect it," Thome said. "But on the other end, man, that World Series ring is something every player should want and strive to get. I've been close. But just not over that hump. We'll see. We'll see."

That's how a lot of San Francisco Giants and their orange-and-black

boosters felt going into last season. Led by whirlbird Tim Lincecum and bearded Brian Wilson, the Giants brought the trophy to the City by the Bay for the first time.

That made it nine different World Series champions in the last 10 years. And after a flurry of winter moves, no doubt a lot of teams are thinking it's their turn. Maybe even the Chicago Cubs, trying to end a 102-year drought.

Lee tilted the balance when he became a free agent, left the AL champion Texas Rangers, turned down the Yankees' big bucks and joined Halladay, Roy Oswalt and Cole Hamels in Philly. Stars Zack Greinke, Carl Crawford, Adrian Gonzalez, Vladimir Guerrero, Manny Ramirez, Vernon Wells, Jayson

Werth, Adam Dunn and Series MVP Edgar Renteria also switched teams.

Albert Pujols stayed on the St. Louis Cardinals. The three-time NL MVP didn't get a contract extension before he reported to spring training, and insists he will not negotiate again until after the season, when he can file for free agency.

"I already blocked it out," he said a few days ago.

Off the field, there's a lot to track this year.

The New York Mets' mess with the Bernard Madoff scandal is sure to hang over the club, even if team management says it won't. The All-Star game in Phoenix will be a politically charged event, with Commissioner Bud Selig the target of protesters upset with Arizona's immigration law and calling for him to move the event to another state.

Major League Baseball's deal between players and owners, meanwhile, expires in mid-December. Against the backdrop of an NFL lockout and brewing trouble in the NBA, baseball's labor landscape seems rather serene.

"I don't know. 'Peace' is a relative word," said Red Sox reliever Daniel

Bard, Boston's player representative. "It seems like everything's happy-go-lucky and calm waters right now. But something could come up, a topic that maybe hasn't gotten a lot of publicity that could become a big issue. But right now it seems good."

Said Colorado manager Jim Tracy: "This game took quite a blow when we lost the World Series in 1994. No one is interested to see that again. The NHL lost a whole season, and that is devastating to your sport."

Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens are back in the lineup, lingering reminders of the Steroids Era.

Bonds, the seven-time NL MVP, is on trial at a federal courthouse in San Francisco. The career home run leader Alex Rodriguez needs 150 to beat him is accused of lying when he told a grand jury in 2003 he never knowingly took steroids.

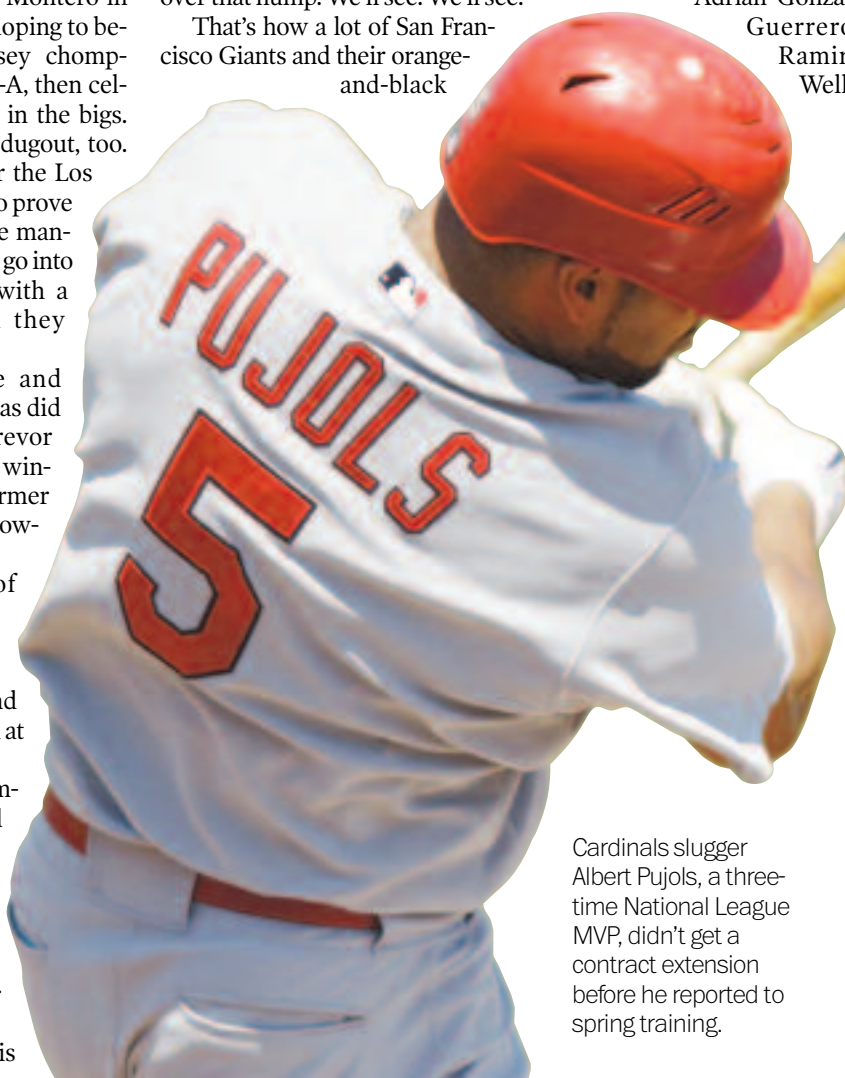
Clemens, the seven-time Cy Young winner, is set to go on trial July 6 in federal court in Washington, D.C., on three counts of making false statements, two counts of perjury and one count of obstruction of Congress stemming from his alleged use of performance-enhancing drugs.

By then, the Phillies and Pittsburgh Pirates probably will be far apart. The Phillies have won four straight NL East crowns and led the big leagues with 97 wins last year; the Pirates absorbed a majors-worst 105 defeats in 2010 and have endured 18 straight losing seasons.

Listen to their stars, though, and they're talking about the same thing.

"A lot of us are to the point in our career where you feel like the biggest thing left for you to do is win a championship, whether you've already done it or you haven't," Halladay said. "That's why I still want to play this game. I want to be part of a world championship team."

Echoed Pirates youngster Andrew McCutchen: "What I'm looking for is a championship with this team."



Cardinals slugger Albert Pujols, a three-time National League MVP, didn't get a contract extension before he reported to spring training.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OUR BEST GUESS

The Washington Times' writers pick the winners for the 2011 MLB season

Amanda Comak, Nationals beat writer

AL Division Winners: Red Sox, Twins, Rangers
AL Wild Card: Yankees
NL Division Winners: Phillies, Cardinals, Dodgers
NL Wild Card: Giants
World Series: Red Sox over Phillies

Dan Daly, sports columnist

AL Division Winners: Red Sox, Twins, A's
AL Wild Card: White Sox
NL Division Winners: Phillies, Brewers, Giants
NL Wild Card: Braves
World Series: Phillies over Red Sox

Deron Snyder, sports columnist

AL Division Winners: Red Sox, Twins, A's
AL Wild Card: Yankees
NL Division Winners: Phillies, Reds, Giants
NL Wild Card: Braves
World Series: Phillies over Red Sox

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Big years expected from a pair of Sox

BY JAY COHEN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Be it Red or White, this should be a good summer to play for the Sox.

All-Stars Carl Crawford and Adrian Gonzalez wound up in Boston. Adam Dunn picked Chicago, plus Paul Konerko and A.J. Pierzynski decided to stick around.

"They did a great job getting players," slugger David Ortiz said of his Red Sox. "This is a tough division to play at, and you definitely want to go out there and get whatever you can, whatever's available, and that's what they did. So it all depends on us now."

Konerko, beginning his 13th season with the White Sox, echoed that sentiment.

"We certainly have what we need in every area — starters, bullpen, lineup," he said. "We have what we need, it's just a matter of coming together as a team and executing. That's easier said than done, and you have to stay healthy on top of it."

All that, and that's not even mentioning the four teams that actually made the AL playoffs last season — the champion Texas Rangers, New York Yankees, Tampa Bay and Minnesota.

Health could be the biggest question in Boston, where 2008 AL MVP Dustin Pedroia, Kevin Youkilis and Jacoby Ellsbury are coming back from serious injuries. But the Red Sox landed the speedy Crawford with a \$142 million, seven-year contract and traded for Gonzalez, giving them an upgraded lineup to pair with their deep rotation.

The Red Sox finished third in the AL East in 2010, unable to

keep up with the first-place Rays and wild-card Yankees. Those teams aren't planning on backing up, and Toronto and Baltimore should be better, too.

So while Boston is much improved, there are plenty of potential challengers within its division — and beyond.

"Like I always said, our division is the toughest in baseball," Yankees captain Derek Jeter said.

The Central could get into the act this season with its own three-team race. Minnesota is seeking its third straight division title, Detroit signed dangerous switch-hitter Victor Martinez and Chicago added Dunn to its strong core.

"Looking at the Twins over the years, they're always going to be competitive," said Jim Thome, who opted to return to Minnesota in January instead of signing with the AL cham-

Carl Crawford



ASSOCIATED PRESS

pion Rangers. "Look at what the White Sox and Tigers have done; they've upped their teams, too. It should be a fun, fun division."

The White Sox got off to a difficult start last year, moved into first place at midseason and stumbled down the stretch while the Twins surged into the playoffs.

Chicago responded with an offseason spending spree that rivaled the Red Sox, adding Dunn's big bat, shoring up its bullpen and bringing back team leaders Konerko and Pierzynski. Now even manager Ozzie Guillen and general manager Kenny Williams are getting along again.

"The Central is going to be tough. Central goes down to the wire every year," White Sox pitcher John Danks said. "If it doesn't come down to the wire, it will be a rarity."

Texas ran away with the West in 2010 on the way to the pennant. AL MVP Josh Hamilton is back, but the Rangers could be pushed by improving Oakland and the Los Angeles Angels.

Of course, a major injury or trade could jumble any one of the divisions, setting the stage for another wild season.

"The American League in general, the last couple years, has been really good," Konerko said. "Even the teams that were last place in each division were tougher than usual. There's no pushover."

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Making a run at Phillies' hot pitching staff

BY JANIE MCCAULEY

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bruce Bochy has already picked the Phillies as his World Series favorite, and that's coming from the manager who knows something about Philadelphia's aces.

The Colorado Rockies consider themselves a legitimate title contender, too, even if they have to take care of Bochy's champion San Francisco Giants in the pitching-heavy NL West to get there.

"When you walk into this clubhouse, it's no longer, 'Can we win this division?'" Rockies veteran Jason Giambi said. "I think it's a failure for this year if we're not a World Series contender."

With four No. 1 starters in its rotation, Philadelphia is eager to make up for an early exit to the Giants last fall in the NL championship series. The Phillies were supposed to be the team to beat. Now, the expectations are even greater for this club: Win it all or bust.

"Obviously, that is the ultimate goal," said Cliff Lee, who was on the other end against the Giants while pitching for AL champion Texas last season. "The first thing you've got to do is get there. We've got to play 162 games to get to the postseason. Once you're in the postseason, yeah, you've got to win the last game to do the ultimate."

Lee is far from the only new addition in the National League as he returns to Philly.

From Southern California to South Beach and north to the nation's capital, changes abound in the NL. No more Bobby Cox on the top dugout step for the Atlanta Braves after he retired. No more Joe Torre

managing the Los Angeles Dodgers. The four-time World Series winning skipper is Major League Baseball's new executive vice president for baseball operations.

Slugger Jayson Werth is now in Washington. The right fielder received a \$126 million, seven-year contract from the Nationals this winter, which includes a full no-trade clause.

And with another former AL Cy Young Award winner, Zack Greinke, now with Milwaukee, the Brewers figure to be in the playoff chase.

And don't rule out Cincinnati in the Central after the Reds reached their first playoff trip in 15 years last fall only to be swept by the Phillies in the first round.

In the NL East, does anybody else stand a chance against Charlie Manuel's bunch in Philadelphia and all of those aces: Lee, Roy Halladay, Roy Oswalt, Cole Hamels and Joe Blanton?

"We've still got to go play. We've got to beat people. That's part of it," Manuel said. "If you're good, you've got to stay good. That means you've got to play hard, stay focused on what you're doing, can't get distracted and you've got to stay at it. And you've got to love to play."

The new-look New York Mets hope they are fine after a winter of transition — and financial trouble — and the same goes for the Florida Marlins and Chicago Cubs, two more NL

teams with new managers.

The Mets fired manager Jerry Manuel and GM Omar Minaya after two straight losing seasons, and now longtime baseball executive Sandy Alderson is in charge and will be eager to get things turned around in a hurry. New skipper Terry Collins is getting another shot in his third managerial gig after going 444-434 during 1990s stints with the Astros and Angels.

"I think honestly the favorite has to be the Phillies. You want to pick the Giants because of the success last year, but the way the Phillies have built that rotation, it might be one of the best rotations ever," Milwaukee outfielder Corey Hart said.



Cliff Lee

ASSOCIATED PRESS



Baltimore's newest basher

UVA's Reynolds spreads power to all fields

By DAVID DRIVER
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

SARASOTA, FLA.
Kevin McMullan, now the associate head coach at the University of Virginia, got a telephone call after the 2005 minor league season from one of his former players.

Mark Reynolds, who had just finished his first full pro season with South Bend, the Arizona Diamondbacks' Low-A Midwest League affiliate, told McMullan his team had won the league title and he hit 19 home runs a little more than a year after being drafted by Arizona.

But Reynolds, who was traded by Arizona to the Baltimore Orioles in December, told McMullan he was most proud of the fact that more than half of his homers that year were hit to the opposite field. That would have seemed almost impossible before McMullan, then the hitting coach, and head coach Brian O'Connor arrived at Virginia after the 2003 season.

Reynolds, a former travel teammate of Nationals third baseman Ryan Zimmerman with the Tidewater Mets, was a dead-pull hitter his first two seasons in college. But when McMullan arrived in Charlottesville, the coach began a process of trying to have Reynolds use more of the field.

"He did not have the toolbox to make the adjustments," McMullan said in a phone interview. "We made a plan. He had some habits. We just changed those routines."

"It helped me understand what to do with a certain pitch and it translated into my first [full] year in the minor leagues," said Reynolds, 27, sitting by his locker during spring training. "That was a big step for me. I did it right away, as far as buying into what he was doing."

Last year, Reynolds hit .108 with 32 homers and 85 RBI for Arizona. His 30th homer was an opposite-field shot against San Diego as he became just the third Arizona player to hit at least 30 homers twice, joining Luis Gonzalez and former Oriole Steve Finley. Reynolds, in 2009, hit .260 with a career-high 44 homers, 24 steals and 102 RBI.

Then there are the strikeouts. Reynolds, from Virginia Beach, fanned a major league-record 223 times in 2009. In his big league career, which began in 2007 with Arizona, Reynolds has fanned 767 times in 1,982 at-bats with 121 homers and an average of .242.

"I am never going to be the



ASSOCIATED PRESS

New Orioles third baseman Mark Reynolds, a University of Virginia product, hit 32 home runs last season with the Arizona Diamondbacks.

guy that strikes out 50 times a year," Reynolds said. "I do what I can to minimize how many there are. There is no set limit I want to stay under. Even when I struck out yesterday [at Bradenton in a spring game], I saw six or seven pitches. Those at-bats at least get more pitches on the pitcher's total. When you first come up [in the majors], you are nervous and try to jump on the first pitch.

Reynolds, drafted in the 16th round in 2004 by Arizona, saw 4.31 pitches per at-bat last season, the most of any regular third baseman.

Now, I am not afraid to go strike one, strike two if I have to."

In the one year he played for O'Connor, Reynolds was the shortstop for the Cavs while Zimmerman played third.

"The biggest thing with Mark is the homers and how much he strikes out," Zimmerman said before a spring training game in Viera, Fla. "He can hit the ball the other way. If he

wanted to hit 20 homers and hit .300, he could do it. But he understands what his role is. So he tries to hit more homers."

And what about his defense? "He was good at short. He was not as big as he is now. He had a strong arm. He was a leader in the middle of the field. He was above average at shortstop," said O'Connor, who has built Virginia into one of the top programs in the country.

Reynolds, who expects to have family members at Camden Yards for the Baltimore home opener April 4 against Detroit, said he enjoyed his time out West but is also glad to be back on the East Coast. He said he had few ties to the Orioles before he was traded for pitcher David Hernandez and Kam Mickolio.

Reynolds had worked out near his Arizona home with Brady Anderson even before the trade. Anderson, who played for the Orioles from 1988 to 2001, was an instructor in spring training with the Orioles this year.

"I got a lot stronger and in a lot better shape," Reynolds said of working with Anderson. "He pounds in my head every day in the cage with new techniques and timing. I am seeing the ball

a lot better. I think he prepared me pretty well in terms of being strong and in shape and ready to go."

Reynolds, drafted in the 16th round in 2004 by Arizona, saw 4.31 pitches per at-bat last season, the most of any regular third baseman.

"I am more mature. I am just trying to get better at-bats and be more consistent. If I get 200 hits down the left field line, I don't care," he said.

But thanks to a lot of work with McMullan in college, Reynolds could make Orioles fans happy with hits — and homers — to all parts of Camden Yards.

"He can impact the game defensively if he is not hitting. I think he is in a great frame of mind. He is just 27," Orioles manager Buck Showalter said. "If he does what he did last year, he would lead us in three or four categories."

Orioles' schedule

April

April 1 at Tampa Bay, 7:10 p.m.
April 2 at Tampa Bay, 7:10 p.m.
April 3 at Tampa Bay, 1:40 p.m.
April 4 Detroit, 3:05 p.m.
April 6 Detroit, 7:05 p.m.
April 7 Detroit, 7:05 p.m.
April 8 Texas, 7:05 p.m.
April 9 Texas, 7:05 p.m.
April 10 Texas, 1:35 p.m.
April 12 at N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
April 13 at N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
April 14 at N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
April 15 at Cleveland, 7:05 p.m.
April 16 at Cleveland, 1:05 p.m.
April 17 at Cleveland, 1:05 p.m.
April 18 Minnesota, 7:05 p.m.
April 19 Minnesota, 7:05 p.m.
April 20 Minnesota, 7:05 p.m.
April 21 Minnesota, 7:05 p.m.
April 22 N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
April 23 N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
April 24 N.Y. Yankees, 1:35 p.m.
April 26 Boston, 7:05 p.m.
April 27 Boston, 7:05 p.m.
April 28 Boston, 7:05 p.m.
April 29 at Chicago White Sox, 8:10 p.m.
April 30 at Chicago White Sox, 7:10 p.m.

May

May 1 at Chicago White Sox, 2:10 p.m.
May 2 at Chicago White Sox, 8:10 p.m.
May 3 at Kansas City, 8:10 p.m.
May 4 at Kansas City, 8:10 p.m.
May 5 at Kansas City, 2:10 p.m.
May 6 Tampa Bay, 7:05 p.m.
May 7 Tampa Bay, 1:10 p.m.
May 8 Tampa Bay, 1:35 p.m.
May 10 Seattle, 7:05 p.m.
May 11 Seattle, 7:05 p.m.
May 12 Seattle, 7:05 p.m.
May 13 at Tampa Bay, 7:10 p.m.
May 14 at Tampa Bay, 4:10 p.m.
May 15 at Tampa Bay, 1:40 p.m.
May 16 at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
May 17 at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
May 18 N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
May 19 N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
May 20 Washington, 7:05 p.m.
May 21 Washington, 4:05 p.m.
May 22 Washington, 1:35 p.m.
May 24 Kansas City, 7:05 p.m.
May 25 Kansas City, 7:05 p.m.
May 26 Kansas City, 12:35 p.m.
May 27 at Oakland, 10:07 p.m.
May 28 at Oakland, TBA
May 29 at Oakland, 4:07 p.m.
May 30 at Seattle, 4:10 p.m.
May 31 at Seattle, 10:10 p.m.

June

June 1 at Seattle, 3:40 p.m.
June 3 Toronto, 7:05 p.m.
June 4 Toronto, 7:05 p.m.
June 5 Toronto, 1:35 p.m.
June 6 Oakland, 1:35 p.m.
June 6 Oakland, 7:05 p.m.
June 8 Oakland, 7:05 p.m.
June 10 Tampa Bay, 7:05 p.m.
June 11 Tampa Bay, 7:05 p.m.
June 12 Tampa Bay, 1:35 p.m.
June 14 at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
June 15 at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
June 16 at Toronto, 12:37 p.m.
June 17 at Washington, 7:05 p.m.
June 18 at Washington, 1:05 p.m.
June 19 at Washington, 1:05 p.m.
June 20 at Pittsburgh, 7:05 p.m.
June 21 at Pittsburgh, 7:05 p.m.
June 22 at Pittsburgh, 12:35 p.m.
June 24 Cincinnati, 7:05 p.m.
June 25 Cincinnati, 7:05 p.m.
June 26 Cincinnati, 1:35 p.m.
June 28 St. Louis, 7:05 p.m.
June 29 St. Louis, 7:05 p.m.
June 30 St. Louis, 7:05 p.m.

All Times EDT, subject to change

July

July 1 at Atlanta, 7:35 p.m.
July 2 at Atlanta, 7:10 p.m.
July 3 at Atlanta, 1:05 p.m.
July 4 at Texas, 8:05 p.m.
July 5 at Texas, 8:05 p.m.
July 6 at Texas, 8:05 p.m.
July 7 at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
July 8 at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
July 9 at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
July 10 at Boston, 1:35 p.m.
July 14 Cleveland, 7:05 p.m.
July 15 Cleveland, 7:05 p.m.
July 16 Cleveland, 7:05 p.m.
July 17 Cleveland, 1:35 p.m.
July 18 Boston, 7:05 p.m.
July 19 Boston, 7:05 p.m.
July 20 Boston, 12:35 p.m.
July 22 L.A. Angels, 7:05 p.m.
July 23 L.A. Angels, 7:05 p.m.
July 24 L.A. Angels, 1:35 p.m.
July 26 at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
July 27 at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
July 28 at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
July 29 at N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
July 30 at N.Y. Yankees, 1:05 p.m.
July 31 at N.Y. Yankees, 1:05 p.m.

August

Aug. 2 at Kansas City, 8:10 p.m.
Aug. 3 at Kansas City, 8:10 p.m.
Aug. 4 at Kansas City, 8:10 p.m.
Aug. 5 Toronto, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 6 Toronto, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 7 Toronto, 1:35 p.m.
Aug. 8 Chicago White Sox, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 9 Chicago White Sox, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 10 Chicago White Sox, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 11 Chicago White Sox, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 12 Detroit, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 13 Detroit, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 14 Detroit, 1:35 p.m.
Aug. 15 at Oakland, 10:07 p.m.
Aug. 16 at Oakland, 10:07 p.m.
Aug. 17 at Oakland, 3:37 p.m.
Aug. 19 at L.A. Angels, 10:05 p.m.
Aug. 20 at L.A. Angels, 9:05 p.m.
Aug. 21 at L.A. Angels, 3:35 p.m.
Aug. 22 at Minnesota, 8:10 p.m.
Aug. 23 at Minnesota, 8:10 p.m.
Aug. 24 at Minnesota, 8:10 p.m.
Aug. 25 at Minnesota, 1:10 p.m.
Aug. 26 N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 27 N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 28 N.Y. Yankees, 1:35 p.m.
Aug. 29 N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 30 Toronto, 7:05 p.m.
Aug. 31 Toronto, 7:05 p.m.

September

Sept. 1 Toronto, 7:05 p.m.
Sept. 2 at Tampa Bay, 7:10 p.m.
Sept. 3 at Tampa Bay, 4:10 p.m.
Sept. 4 at Tampa Bay, 1:40 p.m.
Sept. 5 at N.Y. Yankees, 1:05 p.m.
Sept. 6 at N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
Sept. 7 at N.Y. Yankees, TBA
Sept. 9 at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
Sept. 10 at Toronto, 1:07 p.m.
Sept. 11 at Toronto, 1:07 p.m.
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Sept. 24 at Detroit, 7:05 p.m.
Sept. 25 at Detroit, 1:05 p.m.
Sept. 26 Boston, 7:05 p.m.
Sept. 27 Boston, 7:05 p.m.
Sept. 28 Boston, 7:05 p.m.

2011 Orioles at a glance

2010: 66-96, last place.
Manager: Buck Showalter (1st full season).

He's Here: DH Vladimir Guerrero, 3B Mark Reynolds, 1B Derrek Lee, SS J.J. Hardy, RHP Justin Duchschere, RHP Jeremy Accardo, RHP Kevin Gregg.

He's Outta There: 1B Ty Wigginton, RHP Matt Albers, RHP David Hernandez, RHP Kevin Millwood, RHP Kam Mickolio, OF Corey Patterson.

Projected Lineup: 2B Brian Roberts (.278, 4, 15 in 59 games), RF Nick Markakis (.297, 12, 60, .436 slugging), 1B Derrek Lee (.260, 19, 80 with Cubs and Atlanta), DH Vladimir Guerrero (.300, 29, 115 with Texas), LF Luke Scott (.284, 27, 82), CF Adam Jones (.284, 19, 69), 3B Mark Reynolds (.198, 32, 85, 211 Ks with Arizona), C Matt Wieters (.249, 11, 55), SS J.J. Hardy (.268, 6, 38 with Minnesota).

Rotation: RH Jeremy Guthrie (11-14, 3.83, 32 starts), LH Brian Matusz (10-12, 4.30, 143 Ks), RH Brad Bergesen (8-12, 4.98), RH Jake Arrieta (6-6,

4.66), RH Justin Duchschere (2-1, 2.89 in 5 starts with Oakland).

Key Relievers: RH Kevin Gregg (2-6, 3.51, 37 saves in 43 chances with Toronto), RH Koji Uehara (1-2, 2.86, 13 saves in 15 chances), RH Jim Johnson (1-1, 3.42), RH Jeremy Accardo (0-1, 8.10 in five games with Toronto), LH Mike Gonzalez (1-3, 4.01), RH Jason Berken (3-3, 3.03).

Hot Spots: Starting rotation, 3B. Beyond opening-day starter Guthrie, who went 11-14 last year, the Orioles' rotation consists of three pitchers with a combined 4½ years of experience and the oft-injured Duchschere, whose nagging hip problems have been an issue during spring training. If Baltimore needs its offense to win, Reynolds has the power to provide the necessary home

runs. But he could be a rally killer if he can't cut down his strikeouts (211 last year) and raise his batting average (.198).

Outlook: The Orioles went on a spending spree during the offseason, breaking the budget to vastly improve their starting lineup. The signing of free agents Lee and Guerrero, along with trades that landed Hardy and Reynolds, should boost an offense that severely lacked power in 2010. Baltimore had a winning record after Showalter took over as manager in August, providing hope for a carry-over that will enable the Orioles to break their string of 13 straight losing seasons. For that to happen, a young starting rotation will have to mature under fire in the talent-laden AL East.

—Compiled by The Associated Press



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Buck Showalter

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