

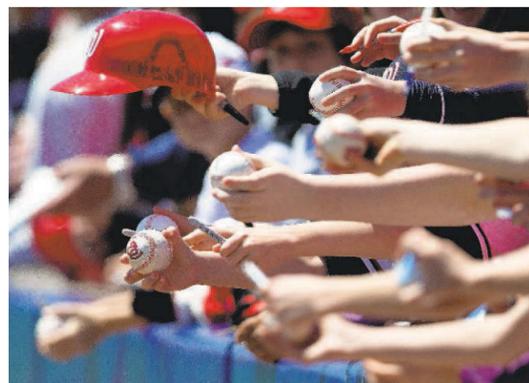
WORLD SERIES OR BUST

2013 SEASON PREVIEW



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

After a breakthrough season that included an NL East title, 100 wins and one heartbreaking loss, expectations for the Nationals can't get any higher



“Now when we are winning, we expect it, whereas last year we kind of felt our way out. ... This year it'll be like ‘OK, we're supposed to be here.’ But we've still got to go do it.”

— Adam LaRoche



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Being a preseason pick to win the World Series is uncharted territory for the Nationals, but the players are taking nothing for granted after the loss to St. Louis that ended their 2012 season (below). “What goes on in here ... is something you can't really calculate,” Jayson Werth (above) says. “Everything else is other people's thoughts and projections. And they don't really matter.”

CONTROL ISSUES

Talented Nationals enter season as favorites, but they know luck is a factor, too

BY AMANDA COMAK
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

There is a theory in baseball circles when it comes to the playoffs.

Teams are built for the grind. Built to win over the course of 162 grueling games from April through September. It's a schedule intended to weed out the lesser competitors, the teams without the depth to sustain injuries or the personnel that fits together just so.

But if you get to the playoffs, if you're one of the elite teams that reaches that first checkpoint en route to the promised land, that is a different animal.

Then, the thinking goes, you must simply let the Fates play out.

“Once you're in, all bets are off,” Washington Nationals right fielder Jayson Werth said.

“There's no favorites, there's no underdogs. It's just who finds a way to win, who can get lucky.”

★★★★

It is an interesting paradox, luck playing such an important role in deciding the outcome of a season that so much work has gone into. But baseball's postseason is littered with moments that can hardly be explained otherwise.

A routine ground ball through the legs of a first baseman. A hobbled MVP with a pinch-hit home run. A final out that is inches away, yet refuses to come.

Each October seems to serve as another reminder to toss your expectations out the window. Because it's not very often that the team that's expected to win it all actually does.

“I don't think the best team wins every year,” first baseman Adam LaRoche said. “I think the hottest team wins.”

What, then, does that mean for the 2013 Washington Nationals, a unit so balanced with talent that when Werth arrived at spring training he asked aloud if there had ever before been a team this complete on paper?

The expectations for what they can do — largely unchanged from the group that posted the best record in the majors in 2012 and with the gut-wrenching experience that a stunning playoff elimination can provide — are high.

With days to go before the 2013 season opens, the Nationals are 7-1 favorites to win the World Series, and 7-2 favorites to take the National League pennant, according to the online oddsmaker Bovada. Sports Illustrated and ESPN the Magazine picked them to win the World Series.

Earlier this month, a website called predictionmachine.com ran the 2013 schedule through a simulator that played it 50,000 times. Ten percent of the time, the Nationals won the World Series. In



the most common result, they lost in the Fall Classic to the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim.

The chance for disappointment is great. “It just tells you you're doing something right;” Nationals manager Davey Johnson said. “I like it. ... I certainly like the fact that what we've done hasn't gone unnoticed.”

There may be just one problem. According to Bovada, the last odds-on favorite to win the World Series that ultimately did it was the 2009 New York Yankees. And they're relatively alone in that class.

★★★★

Perhaps it is the mere nature of the playoffs that has brought those results, the “luck” that so many players, coaches and officials refer to. A glance back at just the past three World Series winners, and no doubt several others, would certainly support that idea.

Or perhaps it was the expectations that crushed those teams before they could reach their ultimate goal. The losses that weighed so much heavier on them — because they weren't supposed to suffer them — perhaps helped them pile up.

Present the idea that outside expectations can affect the play of those inside the clubhouse and the question hangs there like coconut swaying in the wind, before it's promptly swatted away.

“Pressure is just self-imposed,” Johnson said. “I think losing is what should bring teams together, really,” said Dan Haren, whose 2012 Angels had 7-1 preseason odds to win the World Series and

missed the playoffs entirely.

“Those are other people's projections,” Werth added. “What goes on in here, and what we have, is something you can't really calculate. You can't really put a finger on it. Everything else is other people's thoughts and projections. And they don't really matter.”

The consensus is that the focus must remain on the smaller goals, even if their manager spent all winter telling anyone who would listen that the slogan for the season was “World Series or bust.”

When the 2012 version of the Nationals was at its best, the players were able to float from one game to the next without carrying the results from the previous one with them, good or bad. They blew a nine-run lead to the Atlanta Braves last July and dropped the opener of the next day's doubleheader to shrink their division lead to 1½ games. They won eight of their next nine games.

Win the game. Win the series. Reach the All-Star break in a favorable position in the division. Win the game. Win the series. Clinch the division.

The ability to maintain that pragmatic approach was paramount to their consistency last season, just as it will be paramount now to brushing off the accelerated expectations.

“I don't think anything's changed,” LaRoche said. “If anything, now when we are winning, we expect it, whereas last year we kind of felt our way out. It was probably three months out before we started expecting to win.”

“This year it'll be like ‘OK, we're supposed to be here.’ But we've still got to go do it.”

★★★★

There is something people like about a team that hasn't previously won making its emergence.

There is something mystical about their wins, when viewed in the larger sense. Something romantic. When you've won, and you're supposed to continue, there can be fewer starry-eyed feelings about a team from the outside.

Inside? One quiet spring training morning last week, Johnson was asked if he liked it better to be favored.

“Oh, amen,” he said.

“It's one thing trying to climb the hill. It's another thing when you actually have that X on your back,” Johnson said on another occasion. “But it just makes it more fun. ... I'm going to take the heat if we don't play well, and they can have all of the trophies when they do play well. I have high expectations, and I know everybody in that room has high expectations. There's nothing wrong with that. That's a great feeling.”

Everywhere the Nationals have gone this spring, more opposing coaches, scouts and officials offer a low whistle or a raised eyebrow when the topic of how good they could be this year is broached. Or, if it isn't, it's often brought up unsolicited. Even their problems are coveted.

“They're a good club,” Braves manager Fredi Gonzalez said. “For me, they're still the club to beat in our division.”

Just another example of how the stakes have been raised.

But what that expectation does, really, is help put whatever they do accomplish in context.

The playoffs may be a crapshoot, but missing them altogether, or failing to move past what they did in 2012, won't be met with an “aw, shucks,” reaction any longer.

“Say we lose three in a row, we're not going to say ‘What's wrong with this team? We're supposed to be the best team how did so-and-so beat us?’” LaRoche said. “It'll be an end of the year thing, if we're not in the playoffs.”

“Instead of ‘Man, we had a really good year, just missed the playoffs, whatever.’ When you're a really good team, all of a sudden, the record doesn't even matter. It goes to ‘What went wrong? Whose fault was it?’ Usually it's the critics, fans, whoever, who make it a big story.”

But the Nationals are still an organization whose undistinguished moments account for more time than their supremacy. And for those who lived through those days, the memories haven't been erased.

No one will tell you they would rather be unheralded or under the radar. Or worse, overlooked entirely. They know they should make the playoffs. They hope it will be more than that.

“It's a good thing when you're in this position as a team, but if you're not in the playoffs, it's disappointing,” LaRoche said. “I don't want to say that that's not our goal, to get to the playoffs. Obviously it's not the end goal, but it's step one. Getting there.”

“Unfortunately after that, a lot of the time, it's who's hot at the right time. All bets are off.”

Cooler than winning it all? Winning it all during the day

Bill Millsaps is a former sports editor of The Richmond Times-Dispatch. During a long and distinguished career, he won multiple Virginia sports writer of the year awards and he was named The Associated Press Sports Editors' Red Smith Award winner in 2011.



MIKE HARRIS

Why? Many reasons, one of them being Millsaps can tell a story with the best of them. One of his favorites concerns his father, W. Hobart Millsaps, who was principal at Chattanooga High School in Tennessee. The

elder Millsaps was a stern sort and he made it clear he wasn't Dad at school and while there, his son was no different from the rest of the students.

So young Millsaps was a bit alarmed one day when the principal knocked on the door of his classroom and told the teacher, "I need to see Bill."

Bill followed the principal into his office, trying to figure out what he might have done to get called out of class. They got to the office. The door closed.

And W. Hobart Millsaps smiled and said, "Sit down, son. Don Larsen is pitching a perfect game."

That would have been Oct. 8, 1956, when Don Larsen of the Yankees pitched the only perfect game in World Series history.

New York beat the crosstown rival Brooklyn Dodgers 2-0 that day and Bill Millsaps got to experience the end of the game by watching it on a

small TV with his dad.

Davey Johnson, the manager of the Washington Nationals, created a mantra of sorts when he declared "World Series or bust" for his team this season.

The Nationals are certainly capable of winning the Series, just as they were last year. But as we learned last year, being good enough isn't enough.

There are probably 10 other teams that can make that claim and all of them aren't winning the Series. Or even getting there.

If the Nats do get to the Series, it would be cooler than cool. Baseball may not have the overall appeal it used to have, and it is kidding itself if it thinks it is as popular as the NFL.

But the World Series? It remains terrific, and having the national spotlight shining on the town for sporting reasons would be a ton of fun.

That said, it would have been a lot more fun in the old days. The Series has always been cool. It was a lot more cool when you had to work at it. Simply put, the World Series was much more cool during the day. That will never happen again, thanks to the incredible amount of television money available these days. A kid's challenge these days is staying awake until the games end after 11 p.m. on the East Coast. Heck, some adults have that challenge, too.

So indulge an aging man. Get off my lawn, then gather 'round while I tell you why I miss the simpler times. Why I miss those chances to bond over a great game. Why I miss finding ways to get sneaky and keep up with the score when I should have been paying attention to my arithmetic.

It has been more than 56 years since W. Hobart Millsaps pulled his



THE WASHINGTON TIMES



Just as they did for a NL Division Series game against the Cardinals in October (above), fans streaming into Nationals Park for a World Series day game would be cool. But now that all World Series games are played at night — thanks, TV! — it wouldn't be as cool as the old days (left, in 1917), when day games were the norm and streets would fill up with fans eager to check the score.

sport in itself.

A couple of generations before that, people used to stand in the streets by the local newspaper office. As every half-inning finished, someone would hang a number on a makeshift scoreboard. Go to any library in most any major league town and check out the photo archives. Crowds to rival Times Square on New Year's Eve would stand for hours, waiting on those numbers.

People who didn't know anything about baseball kept up with the World Series. That much may still be the same.

Yes, the world has changed for the better in the past 50 years, in more ways than it is possible to count. But not in all ways. The World Series remains cool. I just liked it better when it was old-school cool.

son out of class, and it remains one of Bill Millsaps' fondest memories. It has been more than 50 years since my father took a half-day off from work to greet me as I got home from school so we could watch his beloved Dodgers — by then located in Los Angeles — play the Yankees (and sweep that Series). It remains one of my fondest memories.

If you had the right teacher at

school, he or she might turn on the TV during the game (with the sound down low). Those who didn't have the right teacher would beg friends who did to find a way to slip out of class and convey the score with hand signals.

Even when Dad wasn't home waiting for you, you would sprint from the bus to your house to catch the last few innings. That became a

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Amid a shower of champagne, Giants manager Bruce Bochy hoists the 2012 World Series trophy after San Francisco finished off Detroit in four games for the franchise's second title in three seasons.

Championship rewind

A look at how the past five World Series winners took home the trophy

By AMANDA COMAK
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

It takes talent to win a World Series, of course, but luck and timing also are huge factors. As the Washington Nationals aspire to a championship in 2013, here's a look at how the past five World Series winners reached the top.

2012 San Francisco Giants: 94-68, NL West champions

How they were built: 10 free agents, seven players drafted, two amateur international signings, five trades, one waiver claim on the playoff roster.

What went right? A mid-season trade for Marco Scutaro gave the Giants a huge infield upgrade offensively and defensively. Scutaro hit .362 with a .385 on-base percentage in 61 games for the Giants and hit an unbelievable .500 with a .533 OBP in the NLCS. They also happened to have the NL MVP in Buster Posey as their catcher.

What went wrong? Melky Cabrera, hitting .346 and slugging .516, was suspended 50 games in mid-August for testing positive for PEDs. A bump in the road that could have crippled the Giants as they scrambled to fill that hole instead helped rally the team. They went 30-14 after Cabrera's suspension.

How did they wind up hoisting the trophy? The Giants never seem to be the most talented team at the postseason party, and that was again true. This time around, they relied much more on their offense, which consistently came through with big hits and didn't shrink when faced with Detroit's menacing pitchers. But they, too, could boast one of the league's best pitching staffs. The importance of manager Bruce Bochy getting the most of his players, sometimes a rag-tag bunch, cannot be overstated.

2011 St. Louis Cardinals: 90-72, NL wild card

How they were built: 10 drafted players, nine free agents, six players via trades on the playoff roster.

What went right? Just about everything. The Cardinals were 10½ games back of NL Central-leading Milwaukee on Aug. 28 — and 9½ games behind NL wild card-leading Atlanta. The run they went on to cap the 2011 season was truly one for the ages. In the final month, the Cardinals went 20-8 and they stayed late in the clubhouse in Houston on Sept. 28 to watch as the Braves fell and they could pop the champagne as wild-card winners.

What went wrong? Just about everything. On top of a rash of injuries that started when ace Adam Wainwright underwent Tommy John surgery in spring training, the Cardinals blew 15 saves by the All-Star break. When all was said and done, they lost 22 games that they had led or were tied in after seven innings. Several shrewd midseason trades helped stabilize them all over the field and key their late-season run.

How did they wind up hoisting the trophy? The Cardinals may be the luckiest World Series winners in a long time. Twice down to their last strike in Game 6 of the World Series against the Texas Rangers, the Cardinals rallied from five deficits to win that game in 11 innings, and they

took Game 7 one night later. From expected heroes like Chris Carpenter and Albert Pujols, to unexpected ones like Allen Craig and hometown kid David Freese, the 2011 Cardinals epitomized the idea that if you go into the playoffs hot, it doesn't matter what happened to you during the season's first 162 games.

2010 San Francisco Giants: 92-70, NL West champions

How they were built: 10 free agents, nine drafted players, four via trades, one amateur free agent, one waiver claim on the playoff roster.

What went right? For a good part of the season, not much other than Buster Posey. The Giants were built on a terrific pitching staff but it was their penchant for 1-0 losses that helped broadcaster Duane Kuiper coin a slogan by describing watching the Giants play as "torture." Posey helped. Called up in May, the rookie catcher reeled off a 21-game hitting streak to help buoy the team. Key midseason pickups, like perhaps the greatest waiver claim in baseball's history in Cody Ross, were integral. It was a 20-11 run to close the season, coupled with a tremendous collapse by the San Diego Padres, that allowed the Giants to clinch the division on the season's final day.

What went wrong? The Giants' rotation was their strength, but they played 17 more one-run games in 2010 than they did games decided by five runs or more. When the pitching struggled, it got ugly. After the staff posted an ERA above 5.00 in August, they pulled it together and posted a 1.78 mark in September to allow the Giants to go 18-8 and ride that wave into the playoffs.

How did they wind up hoisting the trophy? The World Series against the Texas Rangers, which the Giants won in five games, put everything the Giants could do well on the game's biggest stage. Their offense showed up big in Games 1, 2 and 4. And while Tim Lincecum dazzled in Game 5, a much-maligned veteran got to play the hero one more time. Edgar Renteria's three-run homer stood up to give the Giants their first championship since moving west.



Members of the Yankees gather to celebrate their World Series victory over Philadelphia in 2009. It was New York's 27th championship.

2009 New York Yankees: 103-59, AL East champions

How they were built: 10 free agents, seven drafted players, four amateur free agents, four via trades on the playoff roster.

What went right? After they missed the playoffs for the first time in 13 years, the Yankees made a huge splash in free agency. They signed



Phillies catcher Carlos Ruiz rushes to the mound to celebrate with closer Brad Lidge after Philadelphia defeated Tampa Bay in Game 5 of the 2008 World Series to win the franchise's first title in 28 seasons.

Mark Teixeira, CC Sabathia and A.J. Burnett for a combined \$423.5 million and traded for Nick Swisher to add to a core that was perennially one of baseball's best. They were a juggernaut and they reeled off 103 victories — six more than any other team in the majors.

What went wrong? The Yankees got off to a relatively slow start and were just two games over .500 after 36 games. Their pitching staff wasn't as dominant as it could have been or, perhaps, was expected to be and they struggled to find a consistent fifth starter. But their offense was led by Robinson Cano, Derek Jeter and Alex Rodriguez and the team scored 32 more runs than any other team in the major leagues.

How did they wind up hoisting the trophy? The Yankees were never pushed to the brink of elimination during the 2009 playoffs as they disposed of the Minnesota Twins, Los Angeles Angels and Philadelphia Phillies to win the title. After mourning the death of The Boss, George Steinbrenner, earlier that summer, the 2009 championship largely represented the last run for the core of a Yankee dynasty that won five titles in 14 years.

2008 Philadelphia Phillies: 92-70, NL East champions

How they were built: Eight free agents, eight drafted players, six via trades, one amateur free agent, one waiver claim, one Rule 5 draft pick on the playoff roster.

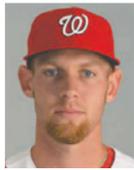
What went right? While the Phillies' rotation

encountered its share of struggles and the offense, normally robust and led by Chase Utley, Ryan Howard, Shane Victorino and Jayson Werth, was inconsistent at times, the one thing the Phillies could always count on was Brad Lidge. The Phillies' closer, acquired the previous offseason, saved 41 of 41 chances in the regular season, and continued the streak with seven more saves in the Phillies' playoff run.

What went wrong? The Phillies battled with the New York Mets for divisional supremacy all season long. After Philadelphia and shortstop Jimmy Rollins boldly predicted they would win the 2007 NL East crown, the Mets countered with their own bravado in the spring of 2008. The Phillies, who struggled to find starting pitching consistency all season, were a half-game back of the Mets as late as Sept. 19. A 6-2 record in the final eight games, along with the NL's best road record (44-37) helped them fend off the Mets.

How did they wind up hoisting the trophy? Ultimately the Phillies beat the Milwaukee Brewers and then the Los Angeles Dodgers handily to reach the World Series, with plenty of memorable moments built in. There was Matt Stairs' pinch-hit home run in Los Angeles as the Phillies mounted a furious comeback in Game 4, and the pounding rains that forced their World Series-clinching Game 5 victory over the Tampa Bay Rays to be spread over three days. It was the first of what many expected to be multiple championships for this Phillies' core, but they lost the World Series the following season and haven't been back since.

2013 ROSTER



ROTATION

37 Stephen Strasburg, RHP: Having rid himself of special restrictions and put his Tommy John recovery in the past, Strasburg is looking forward to a full season with the Nationals.



47 Gio Gonzalez, LHP: A tumultuous end to the offseason and an ongoing MLB investigation casts a shadow over Gonzalez, despite his best efforts to distance himself. He'll have to overcome that to prove he is the 21-game winner and Cy Young candidate of a year ago.



27 Jordan Zimmermann, RHP: Having added a changeup he's gaining confidence in to his repertoire, Zimmermann is primed to continue to build off his strong 2012 season.



48 Ross Detwiler, LHP: Finally sure of his place in the rotation after several years spent bouncing between the minor leagues and the bullpen, Detwiler is considered a top candidate for a breakout season and was the Nationals' best starter in the 2012 playoffs.



15 Dan Haren, RHP: The veteran on the staff at just 32, Haren has said he needs to prove that despite being the unique right-handed pitcher who throws below 90 mph, he is still the same reliable stalwart he's been the last 10 years.



BULLPEN

29 Rafael Soriano, RHP: Their flashiest addition of the winter, former Yankee Soriano will be the primary closer and the guy the Nationals hope will take their bullpen from a strong one to one of the league's best.



22 Drew Storen, RHP: Serving primarily as a setup man, Storen is going to have to adjust to a new role while he continues to distance himself from Game 5 of the NLDS.



36 Tyler Clippard, RHP: The Nationals view Clippard as arguably the best setup man in the major leagues and after a season where he proved he could close they'll be expecting him to be the same, reliable guy.



52 Ryan Mattheus, RHP: In a bullpen short on left-handed relief, the sinkerballer knows he will be called on to face more left-handed batters this season.



35 Craig Stammen, RHP: Manager Davey Johnson praises Stammen for his strength and his versatility. The right-hander established himself as a valuable member of the bullpen in 2012 and the Nationals expect nothing less from him this season.



63 Henry Rodriguez, RHP: The Nationals are looking for consistency this season from the flamethrowing Rodriguez, who is finally healthy after having a bone spur shaved down and large bone chip removed from his elbow last August.

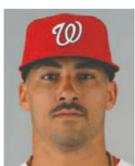


30 Zach Duke, LHP: The only left-handed reliever in the bullpen, Duke will be the Nationals' long reliever and primary spot starter, a role he earned after rediscovering himself in the minors in 2012.

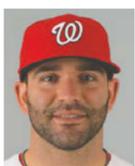


INFELDERS

11 Ryan Zimmerman, 3B: His shoulder cleaned up and his need for cortisone shots hopefully in the past, the Nationals' third baseman showed no ill-effects at the plate from offseason surgery and will show off his revamped throwing motion this season.



20 Ian Desmond, SS: Coming off the best season of his career, Desmond has established his place among the game's elite at his position and the Nationals will be looking for more of the same from him in 2013.



8 Danny Espinosa, 2B: The health of his left shoulder will be something to watch as Espinosa plays with a torn rotator cuff he spent all winter rehabbing. He says he feels great and, provided that remains true, the Nationals will look for a breakout year from him.



25 Adam LaRoche, 1B: It'd be unfair to expect LaRoche to duplicate his career-best offensive season in 2012, but if he can hit his norms and be his usual Gold Glove self, the Nationals will be more than pleased.



1 Steve Lombardozzi, INF: The young infielder excelled in a utility role last year. His defensive spot will be more defined this year, primarily as an infield backup, and he'll be an important safety net at second base if Espinosa's shoulder acts up.



18 Chad Tracy, INF: One of the best pinch-hitters in the major leagues last year, Tracy will return to his integral role as a veteran on the bench.



OUTFIELDERS

34 Bryce Harper, LF: The question of what feats he could accomplish as a 20-year-old with almost a full major league season already under his belt will be one of the most interesting to see answered this year.



2 Denard Span, CF: Acquired to fill a long-standing need, the Nationals hope Span can be the leadoff force they've lacked for much of their time in Washington.



28 Jayson Werth, RF: With the strength in his wrist slowly but surely returning, building off the healthy parts of his 2012 season should return Werth to the type of lineup complement he can be at his best.



33 Roger Bernadina, OF: Bernadina proved with his 2012 season that he can be a terrific complement to the Nationals' outfield regulars. He missed most of the spring playing for Team Netherlands in the WBC, but he got plenty of at-bats there and should be fine to fill the fourth outfielder role again this season.



12 Tyler Moore, OF/1B: The Nationals were so confident in Moore's abilities as a power right-handed bat in the outfield and at first base they felt he could fill any void left by the trade of Michael Morse and they look for another year of important contributions from him.



CATCHERS

24 Kurt Suzuki: A valuable asset down the stretch in 2012, Suzuki will have to adjust to more of a shared role with Wilson Ramos as the latter continues to return to full health.



40 Wilson Ramos: As he continues what has been a seamless rehab from a torn right ACL and meniscus, Ramos' workload will gradually increase and he plans to retake his role as the team's everyday catcher.

The goal: From good to great

Additions of Span, Haren, Soriano made with taking next step in mind

By NATHAN FENNO
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

White cinder block walls lead the way. Past the security guard in need of a cup of coffee just after 8 a.m. on a cool March morning. Through the makeshift clubhouse kitchen at Space Coast Stadium where three plug-in griddles serve up pancakes and eggs with toppings stored in plastic containers.

The new bunch is back here. Dodge the rolling laundry carts and folding plastic tables with rolls of paper towels and salt and pepper shakers and a lonesome stack of McDonald's coupons in the Washington Nationals' spring training home in Viera, Fla. The trio is near waist-high garbage cans and the dust-covered boom box with a bottle of leather conditioner resting on top.

One long-rumored trade and \$41 million in free agent contracts ushered Denard Span, Dan Haren and Rafael Soriano into the long room that smells of breakfast and wood bats. That's the outside, at least. Why a team that rolled up 98 wins and baseball's top record, then missed advancing to the National League Championship Series by one measly strike — inches, really — acquired the three men is a tale more complex than a few lines in a transaction column.

They aren't tweaks or tinkering. They're an aggressive, and in some cases unexpected, effort to make a good team great. They bring risk: Span's extended concussion struggle, Haren's season hampered by injury and Soriano displacing two veterans from their roles. But the three are here because of the no-kidding charge from manager Davey Johnson that the coming season will go bust without the World Series.

Peel back the black slipcovers on the nearby moldering couches and a faded (distinctly nonbaseball) floral pattern appears. The same is true of how the trio came to be in this clubhouse. There's a story under the surface. Just don't expect any flowers.

★★★

The first move rang Denard Span's phone Nov. 29. He happened to be in his home's unheated pool in

Tampa, Fla., to cool off after working out. Span saw the 612 area code. Minneapolis. Figured a Minnesota Twins staffer was calling with arrangements for TwinsFest. Instead, general manager Terry Ryan told Span that his Twins career was over.

Span expected the call. Too many outfield prospects lurked in the upper levels of Minnesota's minor-league system that, coincidentally, was starved for pitching. Part of Span, though, clung to hope he'd remain with the team that drafted him in 2002.

Reality arrived with the offseason. He figured Atlanta (replacing Michael Bourn) or Tampa Bay (replacing B.J. Upton) were likely destinations. Washington? A deal collapsed at the July trade deadline in 2011 while Span recovered from concussion-related problems.

"I figured they moved past me," he said.

General manager Mike Rizzo hadn't forgotten. He scouted Span at Tampa Catholic High School and, a decade later, the center fielder presented the opportunity to solve a series of problems in one move. Span doesn't strike out much, can steal a base and pushed his on-base percentage to .342 in 2012. That's an ideal fit to end the years-long flux atop the Nationals' lineup, where a series of nontraditional leadoff men managed a .325 on-base percentage last season.

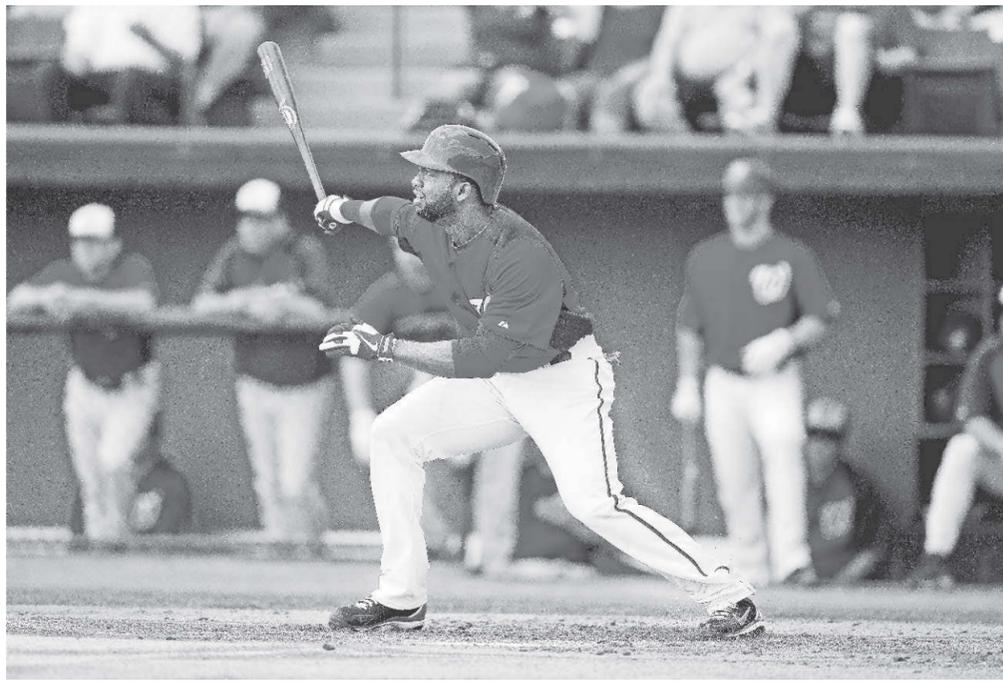
"Last season we were needing a really good leadoff hitter," said catcher Wilson Ramos, briefly teammates with Span in Minnesota. "Now we've got him."

The ripples push Jayson Werth from the top to a run-producing spot lower in the order that better suits his skill-set.

And, oh, can Span patrol center field. That's not where Rizzo and the front office wanted Bryce Harper long-term. Too much wear.

So, Harper shifts to left. Swap Span for Michael Morse, the other regular in last season's outfield, and defensive metrics hint at the extent of the upgrade to the group. Long since dealt to the Seattle Mariners, Morse distinguished himself with a powerful bat and A-ha walk-up music, not misadventures in the outfield.

Take the ultimate zone rating, which splits the field into 64 zones and calculates the number



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moving quickly to bolster the team in the offseason, the Nationals led off by trading for outfielder Denard Span. Washington subsequently added veteran Dan Haren as the fifth starter and signed Rafael Soriano (inset) to be the team's new closer.

of runs a player saves or costs his team compared to a league-average player at the position. The statistic isn't perfect, but it's a solid indicator of a player's range. Morse checked in at minus-15.2 runs per 150 games for his outfield career; Span is at plus-6.1.

All this came wrapped in a team-friendly contract of \$11.25 million for the next two seasons (with a team option of \$9 million in 2015), not to mention the easy smiles and affable personality Span is known for. The cost? Fireballing 6-foot-9 prospect Alex Meyer.

Relief hit the 29-year-old Span a couple of days after the surprise of the destination wore off. The rumors were finished.

"I was moving on with my life and career," he said.

★★★

The second move almost didn't happen. Dan Haren felt like his 2½ years with the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim were about to end after last season. That's where the complications, as the laid-back Southern California native calls them, began.

A low back strain harangued the onetime ace much of the year and landed him on the 15-day disabled list.

He managed 176⅓ innings (that broke a string of pitching at least 216 innings each season since 2005), but velocity dropped. Haren's fastball dipped from the low 90s to 88.5 miles per hour. Same with his cutter and curveball. All down.

The Angels weren't going to pick up his \$15 million option. Haren tries not to think about this much. He wanted to return to the area where he grew up in a Los Angeles suburb and played at Pepperdine University in Malibu. A last-minute deal to send him to the Chicago Cubs for Carlos Marmol fell through. So, the Angels bought out Haren's contract for \$3.5 million and he became a free agent.

A short-term contract to re-establish his value was the plan.

"Last year didn't go the way I wanted it to," Haren said. "I've got to go out and prove I'm healthy, and who knows what'll happen next year."

The Nationals made a competitive offer, \$13 million for one year that Haren agreed to Dec. 7 without so much as a recruiting trip to Washington. He liked being able to slide into a rotation stacked with Stephen Strasburg, Gio Gonzalez, Jordan Zimmermann and Ross Detwiler. Nobody would lean on Haren to be the No. 1. And, most

importantly, the Nationals were poised to win. The idea of moving cross-country was the toughest part.

"He's healthy. And if he's healthy, look out," said Kurt Suzuki, who caught Haren with the Oakland Athletics in 2007. "He's a special type of pitcher."

That's the gamble, bringing on a pitcher with a No. 1's ability to replace the strong-armed but inconsistent Edwin Jackson at the back of the rotation. If Haren's back and arm return to the form of previous seasons, the Nationals have an unabashed bargain without the long-term payroll entanglement a free agent like Zack Greinke would've brought.

The 32-year-old Haren may be the rotation's old man, but he didn't come here to mentor young pitchers. He's adamant about that. There's nothing he thinks he can teach them.

So, Haren reclines at his locker between Gonzalez and Strasburg, far from home, but looking as if he already belongs.

★★★

The third move shocked. With established closers Tyler Clippard and

» see **NEW** | E9

OUR BEST GUESS

The Times' alleged experts offer up their fearless predictions for the 2013 season, in Washington and beyond



Amanda Comak



Nathan Fenno



Mike Harris



Marc Lancaster

Nats record:	96-66	95-67	101-61	95-67
Place in NL East:	First	First	First	Second
Nats HR leader:	Bryce Harper, 32	Bryce Harper, 30	Bryce Harper, 37	Bryce Harper, 34
Nats average leader:	Ryan Zimmerman, .297	Jayson Werth, .310	Jayson Werth, .312	Denard Span, .301
Nats wins leader:	Stephen Strasburg, 23	Stephen Strasburg, 18	Gio Gonzalez, 22	Gio Gonzalez, 19
Nats ERA leader:	Jordan Zimmermann, 2.87	Jordan Zimmermann, 2.60	Jordan Zimmermann, 2.71	Stephen Strasburg, 2.68
Nats saves leader:	Rafael Soriano, 33	Rafael Soriano, 35	Rafael Soriano, 44	Rafael Soriano, 44
Biggest Nats surprise:	'Take On Me' plays on in mid-8th inning at Nationals Park, despite the Michael Morse trade	Drew Storen and Tyler Clippard stay with Nationals entire season	Ross Detwiler makes the All-Star team	Dan Haren reverts to pre-2012 form and posts an ERA in the mid-3.00s
Biggest Nats disappointment:	One person actually polishes off a Strasburger	New racing president "Bill" Taft	Stephen Strasburg doesn't make the All-Star team	Danny Espinosa's decision not to have surgery comes back to haunt
Anthony Rendon in 2013?	He stays healthy, plays a full minor league season and earns a September call-up	Gets a late-season cup of coffee in the bigs.	Called up by the All-Star break	Up before September due to an injury on the big-league club
AL East champ:	Blue Jays	Blue Jays	Blue Jays	Blue Jays
AL Central champ:	Tigers	Tigers	Tigers	Tigers
AL West champ:	Angels	Angels	Angels	Angels
AL Wild cards:	Red Sox, Athletics	Rangers, Royals	Mariners, Rays	Indians, Rangers
NL East champs:	Nationals	Nationals	Nationals	Braves
NL Central champs:	Reds	Cardinals	Reds	Reds
NL West champs:	Giants	Dodgers	Giants	Dodgers
NL Wild cards:	Dodgers, Braves	Braves, Giants	Braves, Dodgers	Nationals, Giants
AL pennant:	Tigers	Blue Jays	Angels	Angels
NL pennant:	Nationals	Braves	Nationals	Braves
World Series:	Tigers	Braves	Angels	Braves
AL MVP:	Joe Mauer, Twins	Jose Reyes, Blue Jays	Mike Trout, Angels	Albert Pujols, Angels
NL MVP:	Yadier Molina, Cardinals	Justin Upton, Braves	Bryce Harper, Nationals	Justin Upton, Braves
AL Cy Young:	Jon Lester, Red Sox	Justin Verlander, Tigers	Justin Verlander, Tigers	Justin Verlander, Tigers
NL Cy Young:	Stephen Strasburg, Nationals	Clayton Kershaw, Dodgers	Craig Kimbrel, Braves	Zack Greinke, Dodgers
AL Rookie:	Jurickson Profar, Rangers	Trevor Bauer, Indians	Wil Myers, Rays	Mike Olt, Rangers
NL Rookie:	Oscar Taveras, Cardinals	Adam Eaton, Diamondbacks	Shelby Miller, Cardinals	Shelby Miller, Cardinals

ORIOLES

Baltimore in position to build on its success

Expectations up after playoff berth

By DAVID GINSBURG

ASSOCIATED PRESS

For the first time since 1997, the Baltimore Orioles are coming off a year that calls for an encore.

After a run of 14 straight losing seasons, the Orioles went 93-69 in 2012 and beat the then-defending AL champion Texas Rangers in the wild-card game. Baltimore then took the New York Yankees to the maximum five games before falling in the division series.

Now it's time for the Orioles to prove their sensational bounce-back season wasn't just an aberration, but rather the start of something big in a city that has renewed its love for the long downtrodden franchise.

"You always knew

this was a sports town,

you always knew this

was an Orioles town,"

second baseman Brian

Roberts said. "That

playoff atmosphere

blew my wildest ex-

pectations out of the water as to what

this city was like when this team wins."

So while the Baltimore Ravens were winning the Super Bowl, the Orioles' most significant moves during the offseason were to provide extensions for manager Buck Showalter and vice president of baseball operations Dan Duquette. Both are signed through 2018.

Duquette didn't delve deep into the free agent market over the winter, but Baltimore didn't lose much, either. So, with a few exceptions, this is the same squad that finished a surprising second place in the unforgiving AL East.

"Why fix it if it ain't broke?" right fielder Nick Markakis said. "We've got a young team, a lot of good young players, guys coming up. I can understand where Dan and Buck were coming from. We have a good lineup."

Markakis played in only 104 games last season because of injuries, one of several Orioles to miss significant playing time. Roberts (concussion, hip) was used in 16 games, outfielder Nolan Reimold (neck) was sidelined after April 30 and right-hander Jason Hammel — the ace of the starting rotation — pitched in only two regular-season games after July 13 because of a knee injury.

Fortunately, the Orioles had the depth to cover for their injuries, and they're confident they can do the same if necessary in 2013.

"At no time in our clubhouse did somebody go, 'We lost Nick. We lost Nolan. We lost Hammel. We lost Roberts.' I can go right down the line," Showalter said. "It gave somebody else a chance to shine."

Somebody such as rookie third baseman Manny Machado, who expects to build upon a solid 52-game debut over the final two months.

Another late-comer who shined was Nate McLouth, who was plucked from baseball's scrap heap and took over the leadoff spot held previously by Reimold, Markakis and Roberts. McLouth played so well (.342 on-base percentage, 12 stolen bases in 55 games) that the Orioles' made re-signing the free agent outfielder one of their main offseason priorities.

McLouth stayed in Baltimore because he enjoys playing for Showalter and with a team that appears to have a bright future.

"Expectations are obviously raised now, and that's a good thing," McLouth said. "I know the fans are going to have a lot of excitement. We're looking forward to duplicating what we did last year and then moving beyond that."

That's right. The Orioles won't be satisfied with merely replicating their success of last season. Now that they know what it's like to taste champagne during the postseason, they're striving to play deep into October.

"Our guys were very proud of the improvement last year, but they were not proud to get beat in Game 5," Showalter said. "I've got a good feeling. The core of people we have are very easy to trust."

"I feel like they're willing to do what it takes to get there."

No matter how many players it takes. "We have a lot of depth, not just at the major league roster," center fielder Adam Jones said. "Last year, we used 52 guys. Now, we got guys in Triple-A that have major league experience. It definitely helps out. That helps the psyche of this team."



Showalter

Rendon, Walters top prospects on deck

By AMANDA COMAK

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Nationals' roster doesn't have many weak spots heading into the 2013 season, but the front office always keeps an eye on the future. Here are some players in Washington's farm system who could fill key roles in upcoming seasons.

ETA: 2013

Anthony Rendon, INF, Double-A Harrisburg:

The Nationals' top prospect did a good job of showcasing just how talented he is with a strong showing this spring. He will start the season in Double-A, and all the Nationals are looking for this year is for him to remain healthy and get playing time. Barring a need because of injury that speeds up his timetable, it wouldn't be surprising to see him get a September call-up.

Zach Walters, INF, Triple-A Syracuse:

Acquired in the 2011 trade that sent Jason Marquis to the Diamondbacks, Walters has played his way into favor with the Nationals. Manager Davey Johnson is high on him and Walters' straightened-up stance helped him hit .297 and post an .809 OPS in spring training. Walters could be in line to help the Nationals if a rash of injuries runs through their middle infield corps this season.

ETA: 2014

Matt Skole, 1B/3B, Double-A Harrisburg:

A left-handed power hitter, Skole's stock has risen sharply the past year or so. After earning the organization's Player of the Year honors for 2012, Skole's development was aided by his stint in the Arizona Fall League and he was named the Nationals' No. 4 prospect by Baseball America. His defense at both corner infield spots is improving and he made a strong impression during his time in major league camp.

Nate Karns, RHP, Double-A Harrisburg:

Listed as the organization's No. 5 prospect by Baseball America, Karns is a hard-throwing right-hander whose age (25) is deceptive as his minor league career didn't truly begin until 2011 due to labrum surgery. His curveball has a chance to turn into a "plus" pitch and he has a change-up to complement a fastball that was clocked in the 93 to 96 mph range before leg tightness cut short his time in big-league camp.

ETA: 2015

Brian Goodwin, OF, Double-A Harrisburg:

Regarded by many as the center fielder of the future for the Nationals, Goodwin will return to Double-A



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Infielder Anthony Rendon (above), the Nationals' top draft pick in 2011, will start the season in Double-A, but he could get called up at some point this season. Rendon's path to Washington is a little more clear than that of fellow infielder Zach Walters, who impressed the organization by hitting .297 during spring training.

to begin the season. The Nationals' offseason trade for Denard Span, whose contract runs through 2014 with an option for 2015, gave Goodwin more time to develop in the minor leagues. His talents indicate he could be a dynamic player in the future, but he needs time to evolve into a more complete player.

A.J. Cole, RHP, Single-A Potomac: When the Nationals involved the Oakland Athletics in the three-way trade that sent Michael Morse to Seattle, they wanted to make sure they got a top prospect back. To them, Cole, traded to Oakland from Washington in the Gio Gonzalez deal the previous offseason, was that prospect. His fastball ranges from 92 to 97 mph and it can sink and cut. His curveball is a work in progress but has potential, and he is considered a possible front-line starter in the future. Cole, and to a certain extent Lucas Giolito, likely slides into the spot once occupied by Alex Meyer, who was sent to Minnesota in the Denard Span trade.



Starting this season, fans get interleague play every day

By BEN WALKER

ASSOCIATED PRESS

On a windy morning at spring training, a trio of Phillies catchers met behind the batting cage to shoot the breeze.

The topic? Interleague intrigue, right from the get-go.

"We were just talking about that in batting practice that it's a little weird to face the American League so early," All-Star Carlos Ruiz said. "But it's a different schedule this year."

Sure is.

Josh Hamilton and the Los Angeles Angels visit Cincinnati in an opener that's hardly traditional. Triple Crown

winner Miguel Cabrera and the Detroit Tigers finish the season at Miami — minus a designated hitter.

Derek Jeter and the Yankees cross over to the National League each month, then host World Series champion San Francisco in late September. Just a guess — New York fans will howl at the prospect of seeing Matt Cain and the pitching-rich Giants if a playoff spot is at stake.

Add up the scattered AL vs. NL matchups, it's like a mini-World Series most every day.

"It's going to be totally different," said Houston manager Bo Porter, one of six new skippers in the majors.

Might as well blame Porter's Astros,

too. Their shift from the NL Central to the AL West left 15 teams in each league, creating all this havoc.

Opening day is Sunday in Houston when Texas comes to town.

That's followed by Angels-Reds on Monday. A few days later, Philadelphia plays its home opener — against the Kansas City Royals.

"It is very strange," Cincinnati manager Dusty Baker said.

Previously, Porter said, it was easy to plan for blocks of interleague games.

"A lot of times, a National League team would call up a DH-type guy during that segment of their schedule," he said. "Now, that's hard to do because you're

going to have interleague taking place the entire course of the season. It definitely changes roster construction."

Porter already has his pitchers in the cage, working on their bunting. Too soon for Justin Verlander and Detroit.

"It's a Catch-22 because I don't want Verlander breaking his finger," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said.

As for his AL Central champions closing on the road against the Marlins, "whatever is good for baseball," the 68-year-old Leyland said.

"We have a designated hitter in the All-Star game, instant replay. Things change and if it is good for the game, I am all for it," he said.

NEW

From page E7

Drew Storen on the roster, signing Soriano on Jan. 17 to fill that job strengthened a strength. That's how Rizzo put it.

Drawing a line from the cold October night at Nationals Park when heavy plastic sheets hung in the team's clubhouse to shield the inevitable beer-and-Champagne deluge after the decisive Game 5 of the National League Division Series to Soriano's addition is understandable. One strike away from ending the game and Pete Kozma's stadium-silencing two-run single and Storen stunned at his locker next to the tarps that couldn't be removed in time.

But the Nationals insist the two-year, \$28 million deal (half is deferred; there's a team option for 2015, too) isn't a reaction to last season ending abruptly enough to produce whiplash. No, the move is a luxury to deepen a bullpen that limited batters to a .231 average last season. While Clippard scuffled in the second half of a season during which he piled up 32 saves, the bullpen's earned run average, strikeouts per nine innings and walks didn't change much in two fewer innings than the first half.

"To me, I think every team find something that they need," Soriano said. "They think they need the closer, the veteran that can help the young guy and they picked me for that situation and I'm so happy that they did."

BUILDING

From page E5

Nationals have made in building their team, the man leading them on the field still sees weaknesses if they're to be set for several years.

"I said it before I was managing, I thought the system was a couple years away, even though we had some really good drafts, from really having the insurance at all positions," said manager Davey Johnson, pointing to areas where the team lacks depth, like starting pitching at the top level of the minors.

At one time that weakness was in the outfield. The trade for Denard Span, the emergence of Bryce Harper and the use of Moore, a first baseman, in the outfield alleviated that while allowing some of their top prospects, like Brian Goodwin and Destin Hood, to continue to develop.

"I think now we're about maybe a half-year, year away from being a first-division organization through the whole system," Johnson said.

The 33-year-old Soriano is next to an empty locker, well away from Storen and Clippard. Those two are in-season roommates and have lockers next to each other. Soriano isn't like his wisecracking, tight-knit and much younger bullpen mates. The quiet newcomer keeps to himself and operates on his own schedule, to Johnson's amusement. Try to find Soriano after he pitches and, like a ghost, he's usually long since disappeared.

"Oh, yeah, I feel old right now," Soriano said, then laughed.

After saving 42 games for the New York Yankees last season while Mariano Rivera recovered from a torn anterior cruciate ligament, Soriano opted out of the final season of his three-year, \$35 million contract on faith a better deal (and opportunity to close with Rivera returning) existed elsewhere. The pitcher had no idea where he'd land. Discussions between his agent, Scott Boras, and the Nationals started in November. Owner Ted Lerner became involved.

That snagged the veteran with 132 saves over 11 seasons, gave the Nationals their most experienced closer since Chad Cordero and squeezed an upgrade into the last part of the roster with room for one.

In the clubhouse, conversation hums like the large refrigerator crammed with bottles of water. Playing cards and cellphones come out. Bowls of granola and plates of ham and eggs filter back from the kitchen. The trio waits on red-and-blue stools. The clock ticks down.

The Nationals will have to spend more to keep the team they have now intact, even just through arbitration. And they have the flexibility financially to afford luxury items like Soriano, with that rising cost.

But while their status as contenders may have changed, they still view the path to sustained excellence coming through their minor league system — with players who are cheaper and can be controlled for longer.

"When you're struggling, that means people aren't playing well," Rizzo said. "The difference now is that when you've got talented players who perform better, you can just rely on them and go with that until something nudges you to make a chance. That nudge is players performing or outperforming even what our plan is for them. Those are good issues.

"It always comes down to roster construction, control of players and cost certainty."

For now, Rizzo will continue working on the grease boards. He'll write, and erase, and write again.

DAVEY

From page E3

helped establish their identity as a team. The man who constantly hammers home one fact about the players on his teams: They almost always play up to their capabilities.

"When they decide whether he's a Hall of Famer, I just hope character comes into play," said first baseman Adam LaRoche. "Because that should go a long way with him."

★★★

When the Nationals announced in November that this would be Johnson's last season in their dugout, though his contract as a consultant runs through 2014, it seemed like he was signaling for retirement.

He emphasizes now the fact that it is a mutual agreement — and retirement is the wrong word.

"I will be working even if I'm not here," he said. "I know the organization feels that this should be my last year. I didn't really make that decision, as much as I felt that that was what they wanted. So I'm very comfortable with all of that."

While Johnson often jokes about Susan's "honey-do" lists and the tasks piling up for him around the house, he's not exactly ready to be put out to pasture, either.

The next opportunity might be doing more work with MLB's Urban Youth Academy to help bring one to Orlando. Maybe it'll be with the Florida Collegiate Summer League, or back with USA Baseball.

Maybe it'll be something completely different. He won't know until the phone rings. He just knows there will be something.

"I'm still going to be working at something that I think is challenging and that I'm the best candidate to do," he said. "That's always what turns my wheels."

It's possible that when the 2013 season is over,

Johnson still will not have written his final chapter in the game.

But if it is, everyone knows one more World Series certainly wouldn't hurt his cause.

"I could see how this year plays a lot into [his legacy]," Werth said. "I hope we win. I want nothing more than to win. Not only for myself, but for him."

"I wouldn't mind sending the old man off into the sunset on top."



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Dan Haren was slowed by a low back strain for much of last year with the Los Angeles Angels, but the Nationals still felt confident enough to give him \$13 million for one year. "Last year didn't go the way I wanted it to," Haren said. "I've got to go out and prove I'm healthy, and who knows what'll happen."

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2013 NATIONALS

NL EAST DIVISION CHAMPIONS

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
HOME AWAY	1 Marlins	2 Marlins	3 Marlins	4 Marlins	5 Reds	6 Reds
7 Reds	8 White Sox	9 White Sox	10 White Sox	11 White Sox	12 Braves	13 Braves
14 Braves	15 Marlins	16 Marlins	17 Marlins	18 Marlins	19 Mets	20 Mets
21 Mets	22 Cardinals	23 Cardinals	24 Cardinals	25 Reds	26 Reds	27 Reds
28 Reds	29 Braves	30 Braves	APRIL			

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
MAY						
5 Pirates	6 Tigers	7 Tigers	8 Tigers	9 Cubs	10 Pirates	11 Cubs
12 Cubs	13 Dodgers	14 Dodgers	15 Dodgers	16 Padres	17 Padres	18 Padres
19 Padres	20 Giants	21 Giants	22 Giants	23 Phillies	24 Phillies	25 Phillies
26 Phillies	27 Orioles	28 Orioles	29 Orioles	30 Orioles	31 Braves	

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
JUNE						
2 Braves	3 Mets	4 Mets	5 Mets	6 Mets	7 Twins	8 Twins
9 Twins	10 Rockies	11 Rockies	12 Rockies	13 Rockies	14 Indians	15 Indians
16 Indians	17 Phillies	18 Phillies	19 Phillies	20 Rockies	21 Rockies	22 Rockies
23 Rockies	24 D'backs	25 D'backs	26 D'backs	27 D'backs	28 Mets	29 Mets
30 Mets						

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
7 Padres	8 Phillies	9 Phillies	10 Phillies	11 Phillies	12 Marlins	13 Marlins
14 Marlins	15 ALL-STAR BREAK	16 ALL-STAR BREAK	17 ALL-STAR BREAK	18 ALL-STAR BREAK	19 Dodgers	20 Dodgers
21 Dodgers	22 Pirates	23 Pirates	24 Pirates	25 Pirates	26 Mets	27 Mets
28 Mets	29 Tigers	30 Tigers	31 Tigers	JULY		

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
AUG.						
4 Brewers	5 Braves	6 Braves	7 Braves	8 Phillies	9 Phillies	10 Phillies
11 Phillies	12 Giants	13 Giants	14 Giants	15 Giants	16 Braves	17 Braves
18 Braves	19 Cubs	20 Cubs	21 Cubs	22 Cubs	23 Royals	24 Royals
25 Royals	26 Marlins	27 Marlins	28 Marlins	29 Marlins	30 Mets	31 Mets

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 Mets	2 Phillies	3 Phillies	4 Phillies	5 Marlins	6 Marlins	7 Marlins
8 Marlins	9 Mets	10 Mets	11 Mets	12 Mets	13 Phillies	14 Phillies
15 Phillies	16 Braves	17 Braves	18 Braves	19 Marlins	20 Marlins	21 Marlins
22 Marlins	23 Cardinals	24 Cardinals	25 Cardinals	26 D'backs	27 D'backs	28 D'backs
29 D'backs	30 Cardinals	SEPT.				ALL-TIMES EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME