

Baseball 1986: The American League

Detroit to dominate in the East, Yankees, Blue Jays in the wings

By TIM CROTHERS
Assistant Sports Editor

The American League East is a prognosticator's nightmare. In the last five years, there have been five different AL East champs. Again in 1986, there are five contenders and only two pretenders.

1. Detroit — The '84 Tigers were the biggest thing to hit the Motor City since Motown. In '86, with the core of the '84 team still in town and a few '85 weak spots caulked, look for Sparky's boys to challenge for the title again.

The Cadillac in the Motor City is Kirk Gibson (.287, 29 HR, 97 RBI, 30 SB in '85). Also, the starting rotation of Morris, Petry, Terrell, Tanana and Dave LaPoint acquired from the Giants is arguably the best in the Junior Circuit. If Alan Trammell, Chet Lemon and Willie Hernandez can return to near-'84 form, the Tigers will be cruising into the playoffs.

2. New York — Holy Cow!, the '86 Yankee lineup is a dimesize imitation of Murderer's Row. Henderson (.314, 80 SB, 99 BB), Mattingly (.324, 35 HR, 145 RBI), Winfield (26 HR, 114 RBI), and now Mike Easler in a trade from Boston should provide plenty of offensive punch. But what will tempt George to fire his latest field general, Lou Piniella, will be pitching. Outside of aging star Ron Guidry (22-6), there isn't much hope in the rotation unless Dave Righetti is released from exile in the bullpen.

3. Toronto — Tradition, the intangible adversary which dooms AL East champs never to repeat, looms over

Toronto's Exhibition Stadium. But the Blue Jays' real problem is the what-can-we-do-for-an-encore principle. Except for Dave Winfield and the seagull felony, the biggest crime committed in Toronto in recent years was the Blue Jays' '85 abuse of the law of averages. The Jays should come down to earth in '86.

4. Baltimore — The Earl of Baltimore must have questioned his comeback last season as his once-celebrated pitching staff ballooned to a 4.38 staff ERA, the O's highest in 20 years. The Baltimore lineup is a mix of quality vintage and youth. Eddie Murray (.297, 31 HR, 124 RBI), Fred Lynn and Lee Lacy are aging gracefully. Cal Ripken (.282, 26 HR, 110 RBI) and Mike Young are still babies in the spotlight. If Alan Wiggins isn't high, the Orioles might be.

5. Boston — Three Cheers for the Red Sox. The team that hasn't won the division since 1975, finally traded for two young arms to add to one oft-injured arm (Roger Clemens) and one thin and cocky arm ("Oil Can" Boyd). With Wade Boggs (.368), and the Green Monster inching closer every year, Boston will score plenty of runs, but unless the pitching shines, the Sox will still be in the red come October.

6. Cleveland — The Indians had almost as many losses (102) as fans last year. If Cleveland escapes from the cellar it will be the Butler (as in Brett, .313) that did it.

7. Milwaukee — The Brewers are the least in the East. Kick back with a Bud guys, this doormat's for you.

K.C. to paint West Royal blue, Twins and Chisox will contend

By MIKE BERARDINO
Staff Writer

It's been chucked at by fans and regarded as a hellhole by the players who populate it. But now, the division that for years was tagged the "AL Worst" is home to the world champions. With last October's win in the I-40 World Series over St. Louis, the Kansas City Royals forced the baseball world to take notice, for once, of the American League's other division.

1. Kansas City — As manager Dick Howser's Royals take aim on a third consecutive division crown, they must face the following optimism-tampering fact: No team since the 1978 New York Yankees has followed its world championship with so much as a division title.

Strong stuff, indeed. But with 32-year-old third baseman George Brett, the consummate ballplayer, back after an MVP-type year (.335 average, 30 homers, 112 RBI), statistical trends can be forgotten in a hurry. The Royals also have a youthful (no starter over 30) pitching staff that includes Cy Young award-winner Bret Saberhagen (20-6 record, 2.87 ERA). Add Charlie Leibrandt (17-9) and relief ace Dan Quisenberry (37 saves) and you've got the makings of a superstaff. They'll repeat.

2. Minnesota — Manager Ray Miller, a longtime pitching guru in Baltimore, enters his first full season at the helm with a pitching staff headed by seasoned vet Bert Blyleven and potential-laden lefty Frank Viola (18-14), who's going to win a

Cy Young award someday.

At the plate, the Twins are stacked: Kent Hrbek, Tom Brunansky and Gary Gaetti all have 30 home run-potential. Keep an eye on left fielder Billy Beane, from the Mets organization, who may be a darkhorse for Rookie of the Year.

3. Chicago — The Hawk has landed. Using the words of David Bowie as his battle cry ("Ch, ch, ch, ch, changes,"), new General Manager Ken "Hawk" Harrelson will turn this team rightside up. Look for Tom Seaver and Carlton Fisk to be traded and don't be surprised if manager Tony LaRussa finally gets fired.

4. Seattle — Chuck Cottier's Mariners beat the Royals 10 times in 13 tries last year and have loads of young arms just waiting to bust loose. Former Dodger catcher Steve Yeager arrives to handle the tender psyches of Mike Moore (17-10) and crew.

5. California — Reggie Jackson (27 homers) will be the full-time designated hitter which, as past history shows, has a strange detrimental (accent on "mental") effect on his hitting. Without Rod Carew, the Angels will fade.

6. Oakland — A's manager Jackie Moore speaking from experience: "People say pitching is 75 percent of the game, but if you don't have it, it seems like 100 percent." Joaquin Andujar arrives; but is that really a positive thing?

7. Texas — Talk about a hellhole! Pete Incaviglia may be Rookie of the Year, but talented outfielder Oddibe McDowell oughta be outta here.

Sports

Campbell makes big splash at shortstop as freshman

By JAMES SUROWIECKI
Assistant Sports Editor

When this year began, one of North Carolina baseball coach Mike Roberts' biggest questions was who would be his starting shortstop. Roberts isn't asking any more. Darin Campbell, a freshman from DeMatha High School, has taken over the position and quickly established himself as one of the best hitters on the squad.

Campbell is leading the Tar Heels in hitting with a .402 average and has 10 doubles to go along with his two home runs. He has also walked 18 times for a stunning on-base percentage of .523 and is slugging .598. For a senior, these statistics would be excellent. For a freshman, they are phenomenal. But given what he did in high school, nothing Campbell does at UNC should be too surprising.

"Darin has the definite capability to play shortstop for a Division I school," DeMatha head coach Charlie Sullivan said. "He hit third for us, and he can be a power hitter. He hit .517 his senior year, and he has the ability to drive the ball into the gaps along with home run power." Thus far, Campbell has made Sullivan a raving fan.

Sullivan had ample justification for his praise, though. After a splendid

sophomore year at DeMatha, Campbell slumped a bit as a junior before rebounding with a senior year most players can only dream about. Besides hitting .517, he slugged .839 and had an on-base percentage of .603. In 27 games he scored 36 runs and had 29 RBI. When the year ended, Campbell was named Outstanding Prep Shortstop by *Baseball America* and was drafted in the sixth round by Philadelphia. It was decision time.

"I'd like baseball to be my career someday," Campbell said. "But I didn't feel I was ready for pro ball. I was going to sign with the Phillies, but they offered me a lot more than they did, but I really didn't want to go to Oregon and play baseball."

So instead Campbell headed south and came to North Carolina to play baseball. But his transition from high school to college ball wasn't as easy as it might seem. Besides the usual freshman jitters, there were the complications of fighting for a job and having to replace Walt Weiss, a UNC legend, at shortstop.

But Campbell seemed unwilling to think about the Weiss factor, choosing instead to focus his mind on the single

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Baseball crushes Wildcats

By JAMES SUROWIECKI
Assistant Sports Editor

The UNC baseball team, following a year-long custom, battered an opposing pitcher right into the showers Wednesday night and on the strength of an eight-run fifth inning roared to a 12-5 victory over visiting Davidson.

The Tar Heels came into the game with a 15-10 record after Tuesday's devastating 10-0 loss at the hands of N.C. State, and seemed only too willing to take out their frustrations on Wildcat starting pitcher Chip Knox. Actually, North Carolina took its time in exploding. After getting a run in the first, UNC was held scoreless over the next three innings, and had just two hits going into the fifth.

But if Knox was wondering where the vaunted Tar Heel offense was when he started the fifth, his questions had been more than answered when he left.

Second baseman Steve Mrowka, who finished the day 2-for-5 with two runs scored, drove in the first run of the inning by punching a beautiful opposite field single. Consecutive singles then set the stage for the unsurprising UNC explosion.

The Tar Heels quickly scored three times, and still had the bases loaded when Glen Liacouras stepped to the plate. The slick centerfielder, who finished the day 4-for-4 with two doubles and a home run, took full advantage of the situation by ripping a shot over the left field wall. The grand slam broke Davidson's back, and effectively ended the game.

UNC added a run in the fifth on a titanic shot by Paul Will and two more in the sixth to seal the win and up starter Jeff Edmonds' record to 2-1. Next up for the Tar Heels is UNCC in a 3 p.m. contest today at Boshamer Stadium.

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