Sports

Pseudo-experts forecast the National League

Craig's cohesive Giants to capture the West again; Reds, Dodgers next in line

Chris Spencer
N.L. West

1. San Francisco — The Giants have a wealth of talent, but more importantly, in Roger Craig they have a manager who can mold that talent into a title-winning team.

The starting pitching is strong, but some, such as Rick Reuschel (13-9, 3.09 ERA) have to be considered questionable due to their age. Mike Krukow, Dave Dravecky, Mike LaCoss and young Kelly Downs make up the rest of a fine staff.

In the offseason, the Giants picked up Brett Butler (.295, 33 steals) from Cleveland to replace the departed Chili Davis in an awesome lineup. First baseman Will Clark is a Sports Illustrated coverboy, and Robby Thompson, Kevin Mitchell and Candy Maldonado are others who should give opposing pitchers into nightmares.

The bench is strong, with Mike Aldrete (.325) leading the way. In addition, the bullpen is tough — the 1-2 punch of Don Robinson and fireballer Scott Garrelts can slam anybody's door.

Craig was masterful last year with this mix of young promise and coming-into-their-own veterans, and he should find himself in the playoffs again this year without much trouble.

2. Cincinnati — We know Eric Davis is awesome, but the major problem keeping the Reds from the pennant is finding some clout at the plate to keep opposing pitchers from serving 'E' low-and-outside junk.

The Reds made a number of offseason moves and tried to solve their major problem from last year — pitching. As a result of the wheeling-and-dealing, they could be very strong. Danny Jackson (9-18, 4.02) could finally win big. Tom Browning, Dennis Rasmussen and Ron Robinson complete the rotation.

As for the lineup, Pete Rose's boys are young and strong, with rookie Jeff Treadway, Barry Larkin, Kal Daniels (.334, 26 HR in 108 games) and Tracy Jones (.290) following after Davis in the promise department.

3. Houston — The West's version of the St. Louis Cardinals, the Astros have long been a team dominated by speed and pitching. But while their glaring lack of power could be excused in the past, it is a gaping wound this season.

Only Glenn Davis (.251, 27 HR, 97 RBI) can empty the bases with any sort of consistency, and his average is a testament to his extended efforts. The same cast of Bill Doran (.283, 79 RBI, 31 steals), Denny Walling, Alan Ashby, Kevin Bass and Billy Hatcher returns, with one exception — Rafael Ramirez, who will shine now that he is out away from that horrible Atlanta infield.

The pitching is, as usual, very good. The rotation of Mike Scott, Nolan Ryan, Jim Deshaies and Bob Knepper is the best in the West, and Dave Smith (24 saves, 1.65 ERA) is a top-notch reliever.

4. Los Angeles — "Kirk! Kirk!" they'll scream in Tinseltown, and they won't mean Douglas. But for all the money they gave the man without razors, the Dodgers should've gone after some guys who can field or protect leads.

Tom Lasorda (would L.A. be big enough for him *and* Jim Valvano?) will be shrieking and eating lasagna because of the troubles this team will see.

They do have Kirk Gibson (.277, 24 HR, 79 RBI), frail Mike Marshall (.294, 16, 72), Steve Sax and Pedro Guerrero (.338, 27, 89) are as strong a group as anybody in the league, and Mike Scioscia and John Shelby are sturdy players.

If the bullpen continues its Swiss-cheese reputation, despite the pickups of Jesse Orosco and Jay Howell, you have a Dodger team that really looks bad.

Of course, the starting pitching, as always, will bail them out. The combo of Fernando Valenzuela (14-14, 3.98) and Orel Hershiser (16-16, 3.06) is an exquisite one. But when general manager Fred Claire gave up righthander Bob Welch in an offseason trade, he blew the Dodgers' title hopes out into the L.A. smog.

5. San Diego — This is a nice club that didn't deserve its 14-42 start last year. In the off-season, the Padres got rid of Goose Gossage and Steve Garvey, to let some of their youth shine, and that's precisely what will happen.

Leading the charge will be MVP-caliber outfielder Tony Gywnn, who hit .370 last year with a bad hand. Backing him up will be bruising John Kruk (.313, 20 HR, 91 RBI), Chris Brown, Stan Jefferson, newcomer Keith Moreland and last year's Rookie of the Year, Benito Santiago (.300, 18, 79).

6. Atlanta — Oh, boy. Why couldn't Ted Turner leave well enough alone six years ago, with Brett Butler and Brook Jacoby blossoming? Turner is all thumbs when it comes to baseball, and he should sell the team to someone who won't make any more bonehead trades.

Dale Murphy is the centerpiece of this squad, and he has some support in Dion James (.312) and Gerald Perry (42 steals).

The pitching could be downright nasty if Zane Smith's aching elbow is worse than he's letting on. Rick Mahler is the other bright spot, but then you get youngsters Tom Glavine, Kevin Coffman and some others who need more minor-league seasoning.

Bruce Sutter is trying to come back from rotator cuff woes, but unless a miracle takes place, you can pencil this squad in for the cellar. Not even Chuck Tanner's optimism can save this team.

The Mets' cocky group should reclaim East title after an injury-plagued 1987

Mike Berardino
N.L. East

1. New York — The Mets have not only supplanted the Yankees as the Big Apple's top team, they have succeeded their formerly feisty neighbors as Major League Baseball's foremost group of crybabies. Just ask Ozzie Smith about these guys.

But egg shell egos aside, the Mets are a lock to return to the throne they occupied two years ago. On the surface, last season's second-place finish behind the Cardinals was a disappointment. But the fact New York won 92 games despite a relentless rash of injuries (Ron Darling, Bob Ojeda, Sid Fernandez and Rick Aguilera) and personal setbacks (Dwight Gooden's two-month drug rehab hiatus) that beset the best pitching staff in baseball is a testimony to this team's greatness.

Offensively, no team in the National League, with the possible exception of the Cincinnati Reds, can match the firepower of the Mets. With little Lenny Dykstra leading off and Keith Hernandez, Darryl Strawberry, Kevin McReynolds, Gary Carter and Howard Johnson batting third through seventh for manager Davey Johnson, New York can't help but score reams of runs.

Addition by subtraction (trading Jesse Orosco and replacing him with young flamethrower Randy Myers) will no doubt improve the bullpen.

If someone could just figure out a way to keep Strawberry away from reporters, the Mets will clinch this division by Labor Day.

2. Montreal — With all the young talent in this organization, Buck Rodgers' Expos seem capable of contending well into the 25th century, or at least the late 1990s.

Tim Raines, while no longer the best player in the game, is still one of the top five. Third baseman Tim Wallach had his best season last year (26 homers, 123 RBI), while his compatriot across the diamond, first baseman Andres Gallaraga, has similar potential.

The middle infield, however, is suspect, and the same holds true for Montreal's super-glue pitching staff. Dennis Martinez? Pascual Perez? Throw out last September and you'll be left with a pair of undependable, remarkably average head cases. Look for them to return to previous form this year.

3. Pittsburgh — In about three years or so, after the Pirates win the World Series, Syd Thrift will be right up there with Art Rooney, Chuck Noll and Willie Stargell in the hearts of Steel City sports fans. Thrift, the Pirates' wily general manager, is quietly building a mini-dynasty in Three Rivers.

By unloading expensive, unmotivated veterans in favor of young, hungry studs like Barry Bonds, Andy Van Slyke, Darnell Coles and Bobby Bonilla, the Pirates are clearly on their way back. The pitching staff is a blend of old (Jim Gott, Bob Walk) and young (the sensational Mike Dunne, Brian Fisher) and is perhaps two quality starters away from excellence.

Manager Jim Leyland is like Roger Craig, in that he knows how to draw the utmost from his players. Hustle is a by-product of respect.

4. Philadelphia — Bullpen ace Steve Bedrosian won the Cy Young Award last season by saving half of the Phillies' 80 victories. "Bedrock" is opening this year on the disabled list with walking pneumonia, a possible omen of things to come.

Once again, the Phils have tons of offense (Mike Schmidt, Von Hayes, Juan Samuel, Lance Parrish and offseason acquisition Phil Bradley), but come up way short in defense and starting pitching. And would somebody please tell me where Mike Young is supposed to play?

5. St. Louis — Whitey Herzog is a great manager. That he was able to take the injury-ravaged Cardinals within one game of the world title last season proved that point, once and for all. But it's nearly impossible to repeat, even as a division winner, in today's world of gargantuan contracts and overinflated egos.

Plus, with Jack Clark gone, the Cards must turn to Bob (Red Devil) Horner for power. After seeing the former Braves slugger strike out a few times with the bases loaded, the folks at Busch Stadium are going to wish Horner had stayed in Japan.

The remarkably over-rated John Tudor is having arm trouble again, proving that Dal Maxvill should have traded the rag-arm lefty while he had the chance.

6. Chicago — "Holy cow, these guys are bad!" broadcaster Harry Caray might intone one day this year, maybe in the heat of August as his beloved Cubbies edge ever closer to 100 losses. How bad were the Cubs in 1987? Andre Dawson had an MVP season (49 homers, 137 RBI) and this club was still finished last, though just nine games under .500.

With all due apologies to Bill Murray, George Will and Dave Lohse, diehard Cub fans all, this year promises to be even worse for the Ivy-wallers.

After Rick Sutcliffe, Don Zimmer's pitching staff is a mess, and Rich Gossage is hardly a fair swap for Lee Smith in the stopper's role. The good news is that with general manager Dallas Green gone, and Jim Frey in his place, the youth movement is on. By late June you can look for the Cubs to turn to young replacements for Jody Davis (Damon Berryhill) and Leon Durham (Mark Grace). The marvelous Ryne Sandberg is still around, as is Rafael Palmeiro (whose name Caray pronounces differently each time he says it).

Another note of interest: After eons of protest, lights will finally be installed in Wrigley, with about 15 night games scheduled for this season. That's too bad; the Cubs would be better off playing their entire home schedule in the dark.

Kansas, Manning take NCAA crown

From Associated Press reports

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Danny Manning scored 31 points and grabbed 18 rebounds as unranked Kansas won its second national championship with an 83-79 victory over No. 4 Oklahoma Monday night to become the losingest champion in NCAA Tournament history.

The Jayhawks, 26-11, played fast and slow and withstood a record-setting three-point performance from Oklahoma's Dave Sieger to avenge two losses to the Sooners, 35-4, during the regular season.

This was the third championship game played between two teams from the same conference, and it was the third this decade in which a heavy underdog managed to win the title.

Kansas was an eight-point underdog, but in the first half the Jayhawks ran with the Sooners, the nation's second-leading scoring team and the regular-season and tournament champions of the Big Eight. Then the Jayhawks showed patience in the second half, running the 45-second clock before taking good percentage shots.

The Jayhawks shot 64 percent for the game, 35 of 55, and they cooled off after a first half in which they overcame injuries and academic problems.

Kansas took the lead for good at 69-68 on a hook shot by Manning with 8:50 left in the game. It was the last of seven straight Kansas points scored by the 6-foot-10 center and the play started with Manning standing at midcourt with the ball waiting for Oklahoma to come out and apply pressure.

Chris Piper then hit a jumper to give Kansas a four-point lead. The Sooners tied the score on a free throw by Sieger and a turnaround jumper by Grant with 5:55 left.

Pritchard hit a baseline drive with 5:34 left and the Jayhawks were on the way to the first national championship for a team from west of the Mississippi River since UCLA won in 1975.

Manning sealed the victory with four free throws in the final 14 seconds. He gave Kansas an 81-77 lead with the first two.

Sieger made six of his seven three-pointers in the first half, which ended with the score tied at 50-50.

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FOUND: KEYS at side of Howell Hall. Two keys and white plastic key chain found 3/28 am. Claim at the desk!

JAIMIE WARSHAWSKY: I found your Granville I.D. Call 942-6033 and ask for Donna.

LOST: YOUNG DEMOCRATS BANNER in the Pit on Tues., March 29. Please leave a note in Box 36 at the Union desk if you know where our banner is. REWARD GIVEN!

SET OF CAR KEYS, incl. monogram "RJ" and a Volkswagen key left in Career Planning and Placement office, 211 Hanes Hall, 962-6507.

ATTENTION: Anna E. Daly. Found your wallet in Howell. Pick it up at the APO lost and found.

LOST: An EMERALD and DIAMOND RING on 3-30-88. If found, call Elizabeth at 933-6381. Cash reward.

LOST — BROWN FOLDER TYPE PORTFOLIO with all my important papers in it! My name is on it — PLEASE call Jennifer Smart, 942-7608. I'm frantic!

TO THE PERSON WHO STOLE my red rhinestone heart pin from chemistry building 3-16-88. I know who you are. Return it to APO lost and found and no questions will be asked.

Have you lost something???? Look for it at APO Lost and Found in the basement of the Union or call 962-1044.

help wanted

BLACK FEMALES aged 18-22 needed for diet and bone research study. $5/hr. Dept of Nutrition, 962-0022.

HEALTHY, NON-SMOKERS AGES 18-35 earn $7 to $10 an hour as participants in EPA research of common air pollutants. Studies for white females full. No allergy or hay fever sufferers. Call collect (919) 966-1532.

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GRANVILLE TOWERS STUDENT DINING ASSOCIATION is now accepting applications for summer and/or fall employment as kitchen assistants within the student-managed organization. Advancement into the student management staff is available. Annual increases and a great meal option plan are included. See the student supervisor or manager on duty every afternoon in the cafeteria, or call 968-1037 for an appointment to discuss the opportunities available. EOE/MFH.

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ATHLETIC ATTIC is now looking for full and part-time help. Apply in person, 10-5, Mon-Fri at University Mall.

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