

Predictions ...

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

Sunday, April 01 2007 7:00 PM -

Major League Baseball, says Gary Benz, is the hardest sport to handicap for a variety of reasons. On the other hand, there are several things about the sport that are pretty easy to forecast. In his latest ... Gary gives his thoughts on predictions as a whole, and then makes his "bold predictions" for the 2007 baseball season. Also, visit our Indians forum for a chance to win \$100 by making your own predictions on the season ahead of us!



Each week, the writers of this humble little web site get an email asking for a pithy response to a question posed for that week's roundtable which then gets posted sometime on Sunday. With the Cleveland Indians season poised to begin next week, this week's question naturally asked for predictions regarding the upcoming season.

Predictions, of course, are like nose hair in that most people have some. And it seems to be the role of those who write about the accomplishments of others to not only write about the accomplishments as they happen but to predict what might happen next. In other words, if there's no news, invent some.

The last time anyone saw a prediction under this byline was related to the Cavaliers. In that [column](#) we noted, with great accuracy, that if the Cavaliers were as good as advertised they'd win 50-52 games, if not, they'd win 46-48 games. There was little genius behind that prediction, by the way. It was made under the simple analysis of what the schedule held in terms of how many back-to-back games they played, particularly when the second of the two was on the road. In other words, and for various reasons, the home advantage seems much more pronounced in the NBA than in any other sport and thus makes it much easier to extrapolate the schedule's impact on the overall record.

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In other ways, the NFL is almost as easy to predict. You rarely see anyone predict a team going 12-4 for example or 2-14, for that matter. Instead, you're always safe if you predict that a respectable team will go 9-7 since most of them do. You're also always safe if you predict that an acknowledged lousy team will go 6-10 or 5-11 since, again, most of them do.

Major league baseball, on the other hand, is easily the most difficult sport to handicap, whether it's game by game or over a whole season. In the first place, 162 games is boat load of games by any measure. While that sort of marathon tends to ensure that the better teams will ultimately prevail, it also increases the variables one needs to consider in forecasting the upcoming season. Though baseball is the least physically demanding of the three major sports, the injuries nonetheless pile up. Outfielders run into walls or to each other. Infielders are prone to tough landings on ground balls in the hole or down the line or suffer the occasional spike to the leg. Pitchers eventually show the wear and tear of throwing curveballs since they were 10 years old. Catchers tend to show the strain of all that squatting. Runners pull hamstrings. Thus, much of the season can turn on the performance of players who currently reside in the minors or with other teams.

Another variable is the weather. Rain outs tend to get rescheduled as doubleheaders and doubleheaders tend to result in a splits. The use of the unbalanced schedule can be particularly rough on teams in good divisions and teams with an easy interleague schedule can get fat while their counterparts on the other end of the spectrum can get slaughtered.

If all this sounds like a cop-out for not participating in a rite of passage, you'd be wrong. There are still plenty of predictions to make:

First, I predict that Peter Gammons will predict a good year for the Boston Red Sox.

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Next, I predict that there will be 132,654 stories about the deteriorating relationship between Alex Rodriguez and Derek Jeter. In April.

Next, I predict that Larry Dolan will tell Indians fans that he won't hesitate to spend money if need be in order to help put the Indians over the top. I also predict he'll never see the need.

Next, I predict that Mike Trivisonno will conduct three interviews with Mark Shapiro during the season. I also predict that the toughest question Shapiro will get asked in any of those interviews is what he had for lunch earlier that day.

Next, I predict that the Kansas City Royals most current rebuilding plan won't work, either. I also predict that they'll consider another managerial change although I also predict that most fans inside and outside of Kansas City couldn't even name their current manager.

Next, I predict that Ozzie Guillen, manager of the Chicago White Sox, will say something stupid every other day. I also predict that Guillen will be forced by Bud Selig to seek a refresher course in sensitivity training after he goes all Ann Coulter on a writer who happens to highlight any number of the stupid things he says.

Next, I predict that Peter Angelos, owner of the Baltimore Orioles, will express dismay over his team's latest woeful performance. I also predict that Angelos will consider another managerial change although I also predict that most fans inside and outside of Baltimore couldn't even name their current manager.

Next, I predict that someone will do an interview with Billy Beane about how he manages to keep the Oakland As competitive despite such a small budget. I also predict that within the first two sentences of the lead-in to that interview, the writer will mention "Money Ball."

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Next, I predict that there will be 456,794 stories pondering whether the home run record Bobby Bonds is about to set is tainted by the lingering suspicions that Bonds used steroids. In April.

Next, I predict that Bobby Bonds will act surly toward the next reporter that asks him whether he's concerned that he might be prosecuted for committing perjury before the grand jury.

Next, I predict that ESPN's Baseball Tonight will spend the better part of 4 hours of their All Star game coverage discussing whether the winning team in that game deserves to get home field advantage in the World Series. I also predict that one of the participants in that discussion will be a contrarian and insist that having home field advantage at stake makes the All Star game more meaningful.

Next, I predict that Bob Costas will give at least a dozen different interviews in which he says that having a wild card team in the playoffs detracts from the purity of the game.

Next, I predict that there will be 658 stories suggesting that managers in the National League have an advantage when it comes to the World Series because they are more used to managing without a designated hitter and are, conversely, more versed in the beauty of the old double switch.

Next, I predict that at least three managers will be fired during the season, possibly four.

Next, I predict that there will be 978,943 stories about how baseball is alienating its younger fans by kowtowing to the networks by starting World Series games at 8 p.m.

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Next, I predict that at least four games in April and three playoff games in October will be interrupted by snow.

Next, I predict that at least 687 callers to WKNR (assuming they have that many different callers) will suggest trading C.C. Sabathia for prospects so that we don't risk getting nothing for him when he opts for free agency. I also predict that all 687 of those callers will say that the Dolans cheapskates.

Next, I predict that following Jhonny Peralta's first error, either one of the Indians beat writers or Terry Pluto will say that Peralta looks uninspired in the field.

Next, I predict that there will be 954 stories in which Omar Vizquel is referred to as an ageless wonder as he continues to play flawless defense and hit around .300 for the San Francisco Giants.

Next, I predict that the next time Manny Ramirez commits an error in the field or on the basepaths or takes his iPod into left field during a game, 4,567 commentators and/or writers will say "that's just Manny being Manny."

Next, I predict that there will be 886 stories pondering why teams in the north and the east don't start their seasons in the south or the west in order to avoid bad weather.

Finally, I predict that the Indians will win 89 games.