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Saturday, September 25, 2004

I didn't know this was going to be about Posada ...

... until it was already too late.

The A's finally won, and they had the good fortune to see the Mariners continue their winning ways, so they were able to gain on both the Angels and Rangers, increasing their division lead to three games with just nine to play. According to Lee Sinins's ATM Report, the A's magic number stands at seven.

Mark Redman is pitching tonight, and since the game is in Anaheim, that's a good thing. You can't necessarily expect a strong game out of him, even on the road, but you can certainly have hopes that have a good chance of being fulfilled.

Last night started with the offense, when the A's nailed three consecutive hits to start the game against Kelvim Escobar, and finished with Rich Harden, who made the lead he was given stand up, allowing just two runs over seven innings while striking out six batters. As I said yesterday, Harden's the only guy in the rotation right now the A's can truly count on, and he showed why yesterday, lowering his season ERA to 4.00.

Oakland hit five doubles yesterday: Mark McLemore's 14th, despite limited playing time, Mark Kotsay's 35th, Erubiel Durazo's 34th, Eric Byrnes's 37th, and Jermaine Dye's 28th. The A's have been surprisingly successful overall at hitting the two-bagger, ranking third in all of baseball with 324 of them, eleven behind the second-place Indians and 26 behind the leaders, the Red Sox.

In fact, the A's ended up with a nice all around day offensively, with 12 hits and seven walks. The only guys not getting in on the action were Bobby Crosby, who struck out four times in going 0-5, and Scott Hatteberg, who had a sac fly, though he never made his way on base.

Eric Chavez, in case you hadn't noticed, is now in first place in the American League in walks, three ahead of Gary Sheffield and Jorge Posada, who have 88 apiece. Chavez's accomplishment is impressive, given his missed playing time because of his broken hand, but I hadn't realized that Jorge Posada's walking ways are at least as great. Since he's a catcher, he doesn't play every day even though he's remained healthy, so he actually has about twenty fewer plate appearances than even Chavez does, and far fewer than the rest of the guys near the top of the list.

On Posada

Posada, as much as I dislike him personally for how he acted after Tony Phillips ran him over all those years ago, may be one of the more overlooked players in baseball. I can see a couple reasons for this: he plays for the Yankees, and has always had brighter stars around him, whether it be Derek Jeter, Jason Giambi, Mike Mussina, or whoever; he didn't get to play his first full season (and even then, he only got to catch 111 games) until 1998, when he was already 27, so he's not likely to be able to put up Hall-of-Fame-type counting numbers; his batting average is mediocre, obscuring his great plate discipline and excellent power (.109 and .206 career isolated-OBP and -SLG).

I think Posada's OPS+ numbers from his age-27 to -31 seasons compare favorably to those of some recent Hall-of-Fame inducted catchers like Carlton Fisk and Gary Carter. Do I think Posada deserves to make it to the Hall? At this point, no, simply because he hasn't displayed this level of excellence long enough. Again, it's unfortunate how late he got started, because considering how well he hit when he was so young, it appears that he may have been ready offensively for some time before, but that's wild speculation from someone without any idea of his circumstance. By the time Carter was Posada's age, he was well his decline phase, which Posada appears to have put off, for this season, at least.

Let's look at Posada's career WARP3 (which includes fielding) and games-played totals vs. those of the Hall of Fame catchers. (Note: Roger Bresnahan, Buck Ewing, and Josh Gibson are omitted for lack of information.)

Name WARP3 Games Bench 127.12158 Berra 120.92120 Campanella 73.31215 Carter 126.02296 Cochrane 89.61482
Dickey 109.91789 Ferrell 73.41884 Fisk 125.92499 Hartnett 113.01990 Lombardi 75.61853 Posada 58.6998
Schalk 65.61762

Sorted by WARP3:

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Clearly, Posada's not getting in if he retires tomorrow. A strong comparable appears to be Roy Campanella, who also had a late start to his career, and despite being done after his age-35 season, made it to the Hall. PECOTA projects Posada to add 7.2 wins to his total over the next four seasons (plus whatever he adds in the last few games of this year), which would push him just past the second-to-last name on the list above, but being better than Ray Schalk doesn't get you into the Hall, in my opinion.

On the other hand, Posada's in the midst of a season that's somewhere between his 75th and 90th percentile PECOTA projects, so perhaps those five-year numbers will be adjusted upward. Unfortunately for this rather long aside, however, I'm guessing he won't pile up enough wins to really merit consideration.

Isn't This an A's Blog?

Yeah, I guess so. Um, I hope Oakland wins tonight! Go A's! (But don't win too much, because we still want Posada and the Yankees in the first round, assuming we get there, not David Ortiz and the Red Sox.)

Posted by jason in Baseball, Oakland A's at 16:08