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Predictions revisited

I'm going to leave the AL West for last (prolonging the pain), but I suppose it's time to start looking back to see what went wrong with my predictions for this year.

Beginning in the NL East, I had, as everybody, the Phillies phirst, phollowed by the Marlins, Braves, Mets, and Expos.

Philadelphia

The Phillies phinished second, ten whole games back of the Braves, and won just 86 games, so they weren't particularly close to the Wild Card, either, finishing six games back in that race. Philadelphia repeated phailures phinally cost Larry Bowa his job, but, as with any manager (except Grady Little), it's hard to tell who's to blame when your players don't get it done.

But let's start with who can't be blamed. The list has to be topped with Jimmy Rollins, who had a breakout season, posting the best VORP by a shortstop in the National League, more than doubling the offensive contribution of the former cream of the crop, Edgar Renteria. It seems like we should be saying "finally" about Rollins, but let's remember that he doesn't even turn 26 until Thanksgiving-time this year.

Also at the top of his league at his position was Bobby Abreu, who out-VORPed Lance Berkman by about six runs, though he was less valuable on a rate basis than both Berkman and JD Drew. Still, a .428 OBP and 40 steals from a guy who's slugging almost .550 is unimpeachably excellent.

David Bell was also a rousing success, outperforming both Chipper Jones and PECOTA expectations (not to mention human ones), both in terms of playing time and hitting performance. Jim Thome was his usual self, finishing third in VORP among NL first basemen, behind just the incredible duo of Albert Pujols and Todd Helton. Nothing to be ashamed of in not out-hitting those guys. Placido Polanco continued to provide some nice pop at second base, out-hitting his PECOTA weighted mean pretty handily. Mike Lieberthal hit better than anyone had a right to expect, though he wasn't Johnny Estrada or anything.

Pat Burrell, perhaps surprisingly to some people, also goes in the "did his job" category. Perhaps he's just not going to be Pat Burrell, and the Phillies have to live with that. He pretty much hit like PECOTA figured, rebounding from his atrocious 2003, though not nearly to the levels of 2002, which now looks more and more like a fluke season. It's too bad, but his inability to slug .550 can't be called the reason for a ten-game deficit.

Clearly, the offense was not the issue, as expected. Unfortunately for the Phils, they thought they'd get at least adequate performances from their pitchers, and they didn't. Their top VORPer was Ryan Madson in the bullpen, whose 25.8 VORP rank between Steve Trachsel and Solomon Torres. If that doesn't tell you something ...

It's just piling on if I start naming names (*ahem*, MillwoodMiltonMyers, *ahem*), so I'll just say that the pitching really let down a team that finished fourth in the NL (three behind the Rockies) in scoring. For a team that had playoff aspirations to only allow fewer runs in the NL than the atrocious Diamondbacks, Rockies, and Reds is truly embarrassing. I'll grant you that the Phils were much closer to fifth (seven runs) than they were to third (121 runs), but still, none of the other playoff teams allowed even 700 runs, and the Phils were motoring on toward 800.

Next

Clearly, this is going to take longer than I expected, so I'll just probably go team-by-team for awhile. New post Thursday.

Posted by jason in Baseball at 19:52