

Monday, November 8, 2004

Predictions, pt. 5 - Expos

I may not know good teams, but I know bad ones. Thus did I have the Expos also slotted correctly in the NL East. I wasn't fooled by any of the outlandish predictions of an awesome, Yankee-style offense (they wound up scoring just 633 runs, despite playing a number of games in Hiram Bithorn in Puerto Rico).

The pitching, meanwhile, was predictably erratic, with Livan Hernandez being the ace of the staff (he ranked 10th in VORP among pitchers, right in the Brad Radke-Jake Peavy range) and nobody else managing to get 20 starts. Zach Day and John Patterson each made 19 starts, and Day was, in fact, the best non-Hernandez starter on the squad, with a 133 RA+. The relief corps boasted a couple of excellent regulars, Luis Ayala and Chad Cordero, who put up 181 and 178 RA+ in 90.3 and 82.7 innings, respectively.

Cordero's a young guy, just 22, who had 59 games (83 innings) in the minors, none above A ball, before being called up at the end of last year. He was drafted by the Expos with the expectation that he'd be able to debut quickly, and it's really worked out well. He struck out a guy an inning, gave up a homer every ten, and didn't allow many runs. The only quibble might be to cut out a walk or a walk and a half per nine (43 in 82 innings this year), but that would take him from being a good reliever to being an excellent one. Cordero's rate stats turn into very nice value ones as well: BP has him adding 2.1 wins for the Expos, right between Guillermo Mota and Billy Wagner, around 20 spots from the top of the list.

Ayala has an entirely different pedigree. He had three great seasons as a closer in the Mexican League before breaking into Arizona's system. The Rockies had actually given him, signing him in October, 1999, after a 41-save, sub-2 ERA season, but apparently they didn't like what they saw, because he was back in the MEX in 2000. Their loss, and the Diamondbacks's as well, who lost him in the Rule 5 to the 'spos. He had a nice year last year, keeping the ball in the park and not walking anybody, and he followed it up with a better season this time around. Despite his sub-3 ERA, though, his twelve losses and -1.4 expected wins added tell the story of runs allowed at all the wrong times.

The hitting side was full of injury and disappointment. Brad Wilkerson hit well, but PECOTA expected better: he finished under his 40th percentile performance expectation, though his health was a nice surprise as he gave the team 688 plate appearances. Tony Batista was bad, finishing below his 25th percentile expectation while sucking life out of the team for a whopping 650 PA's. Not that the 'spos would have had anyone better to put at third if Batista had done the nice thing and gotten an owie, but still.

Jose Vidro and Juan Rivera were about the only other bright spots on the team, but Vidro hurt his knee in July and Rivera just didn't play that much. Termell Sledge was ok, but not great, and Nick Johnson missed 87 games with head and back injuries and slugged under .400 when he was healthy.

It was essentially just a lousy, lousy year that probably many people saw coming, though I don't know if they saw that it'd be this "blah." If Johnson can ever get healthy and if the team can throw a little average pitching behind Livan Hernandez, the Expos could contend for third place in their division.

Posted by jason in Baseball at 15:32