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Thursday, August 14, 2008

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Posted by Jason Wojciechowski at 17:28

Sunday, August 24, 2008

The NFL in Victoria (on TV)

Because I know you care: I made a spreadsheet of the games I'll probably see on TV this year, mainly relying on The 506's maps of last year, combined with their listings of the national games, and Awful Announcing's lists of which games are on which networks at which times so far. There are three uncertainties in my spreadsheet: first, there are the Sunday Night Games that can be flexed out; second, there's the fact that I'm guessing for any timeslot where the Texans or Cowboys aren't involved; third, I think I'm not in Houston's coverage area so that I won't get blacked out of other games while they have home games going, but I'm not entirely sure about that.

As to that last point, I'm about 85% sure that I'm not in Houston's area. In any case, this would affect only six entries in my spreadsheet: in Week 5, Fox would have to go with an afternoon game, which would be Bucs v. Broncos; in Week 6, Fox's morning game would get blocked; in Week 7, CBS's afternoon game would get blocked; in Week 10, I'd get Panthers v. Raiders in the afternoon; in Week 15, I'd get Vikings v. Cardinals in the afternoon; and in Week 17, CBS's morning game would get blocked. I'd only actually lose two games even if I'm inside Houston's market, but there'd be a fair amount of shifting in terms of which teams I got to see overall.

As to the Flex point, Chicago v. Minnesota in Week 13 seems like the only game that has a good chance of being flexed out, except maybe Chargers v. Bucs in Week 17. The other games involve Dallas (twice), Indy, the Giants, and the Patriots, so they seem to stand a good chance of sticking around.

As to my guesses ... well, they're my guesses. But a summary of the results: I will of course get all 16 Texans games; eleven Cowboys games are for sure, and the two SNF Flex games, as I said, seem likely to stick around. The next-highest team in terms of times I'm sure to see them is the Steelers, oddly enough: nine times! Add in two "questionable" times and I think I'll see them eleven times this year. That ranks behind only Indianapolis in terms of total times I figure I'll see them (13), who are not only a marquee team with a marquee quarterback, like the Steelers, but also a divisional rival of the Texans.

Teams I've got no guarantee of seeing are the Falcons, Rams, and Chiefs. Based on my guesses, I think I will actually not see the Chiefs even once this year. Which is fine by me.

As for the 49ers, I've got two guarantees and one more questionable (in Week 17, Fox's afternoon game, where they're matched up against the Redskins). The two guarantees are Week 12 in Dallas (where they'll likely get blown out) and Week 10 on MNF in Arizona. And of course by Week 17, there's a decent chance "Sully" will be down and out, Alex Smith will be retired, and Rich Gannon will have been lured out of retirement to lead the team to an improbable but meaningless victory at home against the Redskins, leaving them with a 6-10 record on the season.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski at 21:19

Marc Gasol

Marc Gasol may not be as good as Pau, but I may have underestimated him -- he can probably be 80% of Pau (with upside at 100% of Pau or close thereto) at, what, 10% of the price? 15%? That's a solid deal for Memphis. (Not that I regret the trade -- I wouldn't give up last year's Finals run for anything.)

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski at 10:03

Saturday, August 23, 2008

Vikings QBs, II

Forget what I said. Frerotte just made a horrendous throw right to a Pittsburgh DB. Wow.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski at 20:56

Vikings QBs

Gus Frerotte is looking really good as the Vikings' QB right now, with Tavaris Jackson out. Good enough that I wonder why, given how "well" Jackson has played the last few years, Frerotte isn't the starter.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Football at 20:41

Monday, August 18, 2008

Jim Leyland on the batting order

Check out what Jim Leyland has to say below about moving Magglio Ordonez and Miguel Cabrera up in the order.

Jim Leyland August 16, 2008

"Two great hitters, I'm going to get them up there more often if I can." My god, Jim Leyland gets it. He understands that a batting lineup is simply a method of distributing at-bats. The guys at the top bat more. Good hitters should bat more than bad hitters. End of story. Well done.

Obviously, it's not quite that simple. Platoon advantages matter to some extent, so you try to avoid stacking same-side hitters, and you have to figure out how to balance OBP and SLG (Frank Thomas, no matter his OBP, shouldn't be hitting first because that's a waste of his power), but as a general matter, this is what the lineup is about, not creating an "RBI spot" and a "contact hitter" spot and so forth.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Baseball at 09:20

Wednesday, August 13, 2008

Talent overload at USC

The best line in the article at below right is that USC can roll out a "clown car" of talent at basically every position. Which makes me wonder -- how on earth do they do it? What's the deal with these high school kids who look at USC and go, "Hey, you know where I want to go? A place where I'll ride the pine for four years because they've got All-Americans at every position." Why not go to UCLA, where you'll be a three-year starter? Or go up the coast a little bit to Cal or Stanford, or out of state to Oregon or Washington? Or to Arizona State? There are a lot of good programs in the vicinity of Southern California that these players can go to where they won't be stuck sitting on their thumbs, hoping to get a shot.

And this is far from unique to SC, of course. When you're Terrell Pryor, sure, you can pick your school. But what if you're the #20 QB in the country? Would you go to USC, knowing that they've probably recruited the #3 QB in the country from your class as well?

USC's talent August 13, 2008

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski at 09:00

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Sunday, August 10, 2008

Joe Morgan on SNB

Not five minutes into tonight's Sunday Night Baseball, before the game has even started, Joe Morgan has said, "Now, I'm not real big on statistics, but ..." and then proceeded to cite some stats about how good the Cubs were. Hey, Joe, you know why you cited stats to prove your point there? Because they're the best evidence of your point! Believe it!

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski at 20:05

Friday, August 8, 2008

Oakland's offensive woes; no help for the future

So I have a question: where's the young impact Oakland talent on the offensive side? Every A's fan has heard about Trevor Cahill, Brett Anderson, Henry Rodriguez, Gio Gonzalez, Vin Mazzaro, James Simmons, Josh Outman, Fautino De Los Santos, Craig Italiano, Greg Smith and Michel Inoa. Not all of these guys can be fairly labeled "impact", but people are genuinely excited about at least Cahill, Anderson, Rodriguez, Gonzalez, De Los Santos, and Inoa. The other five guys have good chances to be quality major leaguers. That's six exciting pitchers at various levels of the system, and five pretty good guys behind that. And then there's still Dana Eveland, Justin Duchscherer, and Sean Gallagher, who should all range from pretty good to adequate for the next few years. It's a hugely impressive feat for Billy Beane to have built this kind of pitching depth.

But I ask again: where's the offensive talent? Kurt Suzuki is solid at best. Daric Barton is struggling: partly he's not making contact (25% strikeout rate), partly his line-drive rate is down to 20%, and partly he seems to have gotten a little unlucky with the BABIP, as with that line drive percentage, you'd expect a BABIP around .320, but he's actually at .270, which is a pretty large gap. But let's not kid ourselves: Barton had ISO's under .150 at Sacramento in 2006 and 2007. Even John Olerud's career ISO was .170.

Anyway. Ryan Sweeney's all batting average. Carlos Gonzalez has an impressive-looking swing, and his batting average is ok, but his power is mediocre and he's a hacking machine (5% walk rate, 24% strikeout rate). Travis Buck is having the struggles of his life this year, in the majors and at AAA. Eric Patterson doesn't hit for as much power as you'd like out of a guy who will probably have to play a corner outfield spot. Cliff Pennington, despite a Futures Game appearance, has a popgun bat, though good on-base ability. Anthony Recker looks fine, but is he any better than Solid Suzuki? Javi Herrera is still hanging around, but he's not hitting for any power. Adrian Cardenas is also just solid. Jemile Weeks might fit that description also, though his on-base ability is impressive. He should hit for more power than Pennington, but enough to make a real difference?

The only guys A's fans can really get excited about are Sean Doolittle, who's really emerged as a power hitter at AA, and Chris Carter, who's bashed 31 homers in the Cal League. (Matt Sulentic might be on this list as well.) But both of those guys are first basemen (and Carter might just be a DH), and power-hitting first basemen are a dime a dozen, notwithstanding the A's inability to find one ever since Jason Giambi left.

Where's our Jay Bruce? Where's our Evan Longoria? Where's our Geovanny Soto? Our Joey Votto? Longoria and Bruce were very high draft picks, higher than the A's have picked in years (but Bruce was a 12th pick, and does anyone think Jemile Weeks is going to be as valuable as Bruce over the next ten years?), but Soto was an 11th rounder and Votto was 44th overall back in '02.

It's not just rookies that makes me ask where the A's young hitting talent is. The VORP leaderboards are full of young, pre-free agency talent: Hanley, Matt Holliday, Grady Sizemore, Jose Reyes, Chase Utley, Ian Kinsler, Brian McCann, Ryan Braun, David Wright, Justin Morneau, Carlos Quentin, Nate McLouth, Dan Uggla, Joe Mauer, Jhonny Peralta, Nick Markakis, Prince Fielder, Conor Jackson, Longoria, Dustin Pedroia, Ryan Doumit, Curtis Granderson, Jason Bay, Russell Martin, Soto, JJ Hardy, Ryan Theriot, Matt Kemp, Stephen Drew, Jose Lopez, Mike Aviles, BJ Upton, Corey Hart, James Loney, Howie Kendrick, Fred Lewis, David DeJesus, Mark Reynolds, Ryan Spilborghs, Garrett Atkins, Ryan Howard, Kelly Johnson, Luke Scott, Chris Iannetta, Alex Rios, Mike Fontenot. Not all of these guys are young, but I'm fairly sure that this is the complete list of pre-free agency players who rank in VORP ahead of the A's top VORPer, Jack Cust, who is 109th in baseball. The highest VORP of a player on the A's who actually has a future with the team is Kurt Suzuki, who ranks 155th.

This is, frankly, depressing. It's depressing that even the Giants have youngish player (Fred Lewis) who is hitting better than any A's. It was going to get worse before it got better, because that's the course Billy Beane decided to run, but did it have to get so much worse?

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Oakland A's at 20:46

Saturday, August 2, 2008

NFL Shenanigans

Check out the Patriots item below. The gist is that Al Davis apparently had an agreement with Lamont Jordan that he wouldn't sign with the Pats after being released by the Raiders. Two questions. First, this can't be legal under the CBA, can it? Isn't Al Davis just asking for the Commish to come down on him? (Oh, wait, no, Goodell is only interested in cracking down on those nasty bad players who misbehave by celebrating in the end zone, not on anti-competitive behavior by the owners.) Second, is it common anyway, the way it seems Joe Smith-type deals were fairly common before Kevin McHale got caught?

Al Davis v. Lamont Jordan July 30, 2008

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski at 15:04

Jared Lorenzen interview

Here's a fun interview with Jared Lorenzen, everyone's favorite NFL backup quarterback. (If he's not your favorite backup, there's something wrong with you. The man is like the Charles Barkley of quarterbacks, except that he throws a football 66 mph.)

Jared Lorenzen July 30, 2008

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski at 14:47