By Eric Tosi

CRUSADER SPORTS STAFF

For die-hard sports fans, the beginning of April means one thing: stop watching the season ending and start watching the season beginning. For others, it means that they have to be patient and wait just a little longer for their teams to come back from a 2-1 deficit to win the World Series. Meanwhile, small market teams that haven’t had the opportunity yet to purchase the services of Mr. Bonds or Mr. Pujols are finally getting a chance to win their last week-end’s trip to Foxwoods- but the 2002 fantasy baseball season. Just like anything else in life, you need to re- search, work hard, and practice to be a year-in-year-out contender in your group’s fantasy league. To add both the rookie managers (trying to become the fantasy baseball version of Rick Carlisle) and the veterans (who whether they admit or not, silently cheer when some of their fantasy friends gets a hit against their favorite real life team), I have picked the brains of some of the most knowledgeable fantasy minds around- and threw in some of my own insight as well- to come up with an easy-to-follow guide to this year’s up- coming season.

First things first. Any person who has ever participated in a rotisserie league knows that most championships are won in the last rounds and on the waiver wire. Most of the starting pitching, of course, are definitely inPenny-like position numbers. He will add to those numbers in 2002.

Roy Oswalt, SP, Houston

The second year flamethrower from Houston finished last year with a 14-3 record and a tremendous 2.73 ERA. Oswalt had a tremendous spring and could emerge as one of the most exciting and scary pitching staffs in the National League. Certainly a guy you want to keep your eye on.

Rookies to Watch:

This year’s rookie class is stacked with big time prospects, especially at third base. The Yankees’ Mark Teixeira, the Blue Jays’ Carlos del Rice, the Twins’ Torii Hunter to have a breakout season this year, but they will be back to reality soon. The Mets have helped themselves as much as their championship oval in the off-season, adding Mo Vaughn, Alomar, Jeremy Strickland, and Esteban belongings. The Mets could easily defend their championship status if things go their way, but if they can’t, they should be in good position to win the wild card. Forlorn Yankees pitching staff is going to be a pitching special and could make the Marlins competitive if they develop ahead of schedule. Philadelphia is a pleasant surprise last year, but their pitching staff is a huge question mark this year. They’ve added Omar Olmedo away from an already thin staff was a questionable move at best.


Seattle is likely the same team that set a record for last wins for last season, but a few changes. The Mariners should repeat as division champions, but expect them to win close games against one another. Expect A.J. Burnett to be the best starting rotation in the league next year, and the Yankees to have the most exciting and scary pitching staffs in the National League. Certainly a guy you want to keep your eye on.

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Although Cleveland traded away one of the top five players in the game in Roberto Alomar and lost all three starting outfielders from 2001 and several key pieces of their starting rotation but gave their team another chance to win the division in 2002, the Indians will be competitive if they develop ahead of schedule. Philadelphia is a pleasant surprise last year, but their pitching staff is a huge question mark this year. They’ve added Omar Olmedo away from an already thin staff was a questionable move at best.


Catcher: For six years, Sunny Golloway was the catcher for the 1993 World Series champion Montreal Expos. He had a 2.50 ERA and a .151 batting average in 11 games with 10 putouts and 11 assists in the 1993 World Series. He signed a minor league contract with the Montreal Expos, but his time in the majors was over. For the last six years, Sunny Golloway has spent his time playing baseball in the minor leagues and has developed a reputation as one of the best catchers in the minor leagues. He also has a .268 career batting average and a .345 on-base percentage.

Left Fielder: for the last 12 years, for the last 4 years, he has spent his time playing baseball in the minor leagues and has developed a reputation as one of the best catchers in the minor leagues. He also has a .268 career batting average and a .345 on-base percentage. He has been a .268 career batting average and a .345 on-base percentage.