The Louis Lunatic
April 2005

2005 Major League Baseball Preview
Yankees / Red Sox: Lunatics Debate

Steroids Coverage
Pros and Cons of NBA Early Entry

A Sports Fan’s Guide to the American Studies Department

The Intimate Side of Brandeis Basketball
Hello! Welcome to the first issue of *The Louis Lunatic*, Brandeis’ all-new, independent sports magazine. Inside you’ll find coverage of professional sports, as well as plenty on our own Brandeis athletic teams. Make sure to check out the 2005 baseball preview (pgs. 6-10) and our exclusive inside look at Brandeis basketball (pg. 19). So take a look, and if you want to add your opinion, e-mail andrewkatz@brandeis.edu to join our team. Enjoy!

**The Katz in The Hat...is back**

By Andrew Katz

South Street.

Every Brandeis student knows it as the road that leads to the school. But what looks like a small road is really a multi-lane expressway. South Street divides the academic side of Brandeis from the athletic side; a gap that seems a lot bigger than the two-lane road it really is. It is no ordinary game of Frogger to navigate from the academic side to the athletic side.

The fencing team plays against Division I schools, the swimming team sends members to nationals, and the women’s basketball team wins back-to-back ECAC Championships. Yet, sports apathy seems to be at its peak (or, in reality, its valley). It’s tough not having Division I athletics to get behind. At Indiana University, University of Wisconsin, University of Miami, or the Ohio State University there is a true sense of school spirit. When there is a game on, everyone seems to get into it. People wear their school colors and say their school’s name with pride. There are fierce rivalries, and people care, with partying after wins and drunken sorrow after losses.

But we, at Brandeis, play in Division III. The rivalries are only between the players, coaches, and very few avid fans. We are never on ESPN, and you won’t hear us mentioned on 850 AM in Boston or 660 AM in New York.

It doesn’t take any measurements to see that the academic side of Brandeis dwarfs the athletic side in its size and campus representation. Admissions material claims we have the “largest multi-sport indoor facility on the East coast”…but what does that mean when the swimmers have to swim in a swampy pool or the ice hockey and golf teams have to travel for home games?

The late, great, Rodney Dangerfield made famous the phrase “I can’t get no respect,” but it seems to be the motto of Brandeis sports. There seems to be a great deal of disrespect from the student body, and, maybe to a lesser, but still apparent degree, the administration.

Some blame it on the lack of a football team, or the lack of interest in the success of non-spectator sports. But schools like Duke University, University of North Carolina and the University of Connecticut don’t rally around their football teams, they rally around their basketball teams. If you can’t understand fencing or golf, that’s understandable, but at least go see the basketball or baseball games. There are four sports talk shows on WBRS and the amount of regular callers and listeners is very small.

The women go through an unbelievable season and the men play exciting basketball and still the arena is empty. The “Brandeis electronic orchestra” doesn’t do much to ignite those who do show up with their version of the national anthem. And the off-white curtains that surround ¾ of the arena don’t exactly breed intimidation for opponents. And when baseball games are played in football weather it doesn’t bring many fans to the cold, wet, metal bleachers.

And besides Yankees/Red Sox, a little bit of the NCAA tournament and the Super Bowl, there doesn’t seem to be a huge interest for professional sports here either…until you look a little closer. There are actually avid sports fans on this campus not only in the student body but also in the administration. There ARE people on this campus who have a higher sports IQ than actual IQ (myself probably included). I can recall in detail the 1994 run to the Stanley Cup by the New York Rangers but, even as an economics major and future master’s economics student, supply and demand still baffles me. There are people like that on this campus.

For those people we write this magazine. For those who love sports or who even just have an interest in sports, we write this magazine. We will be covering national sports in this magazine, but you will also see a lot about Brandeis athletics. The goal—maybe set a little too high—is that sports apathy on this campus will start to diminish and sports dialogue will begin to increase. We will push the envelope, and we encourage you to push back. This will most probably be our only issue of the semester, but we’re looking to make a big bang. If you agree or disagree with anything written in our magazine or want to join, e-mail andrewkatz@brandeis.edu.

We’re all Louis’ Lunatics at heart. Let’s cross South Street and prove it.

**Field Of Dreams**

By Aaron Katzman

It’s the time of year that every sports fan dreams about. Classes in major college campuses across the country are half-full, and employees are calling in sick. It was just March Madness, and everyone was watching…well almost everyone. The closest that Brandeis University comes to March Madness was a statement on the school homepage that states: “It’s March Madness alright, only with books, not with basketballs.” Sure, the women’s basketball won the ECAC tournament for the second year in a row. And yes, there was (monopoly) money changing hands around campus with bracket challenges. But don’t begin to think that Brandeis is turning into a sports university quite yet.

It’s a common theme around campus: nobody follows sports. People talk about the reasons for this apathy towards sports. Could it be the long walk from the academic side of South Street to the athletic side of South Street? Possibly. Is it the lack of a football team? Maybe. Or is it a result of the lack of athletic talent around campus? Many students around campus were probably the last pick on their high school gym teams. While all of these certainly make an impact, there is a much deeper reason, one that is typically not talked about; that is, the lack of quality athletic fields and the diminutive fan seating at these venues.

Sure there’s no football team during the fall season, but our soccer teams are normally very successful. Good luck trying to find a seat at a home game though. The lack of seating is not a result of a sellout crowd. Actually, there is only one cold, metal bleacher set for those loyal fans. This bleacher does not exactly provide a comfortable experience for those fans. The lack of quality athletic fields and the diminutive fan seating at these venues.

You want to join the track team at Brandeis? I hope you like the indoor track at the Gosman Athletic Center because you won’t be running on the outdoor track here. That track is older than the Homezone lady who works in lower Usdan. It is not even possible for the teams to practice on their own track, so they have to travel off campus just to run (I guess the peripheral road does not qualify as a regulation track). Yes the administration has been discussing options for renovating the track and soccer field, but I have been here for four years and haven’t seen any changes yet.

Brandeis’ athletic teams are in need of a weight room that is just as modern as the brand new Gosman Center. But we, at Brandeis, play in Division III. The rivalries are only between the players, coaches, and very few avid fans. We are never on ESPN, and you won’t hear us mentioned on 850 AM in Boston or 660 AM in New York.

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American Studies has the reputation of being the “jock” major on campus. To simplify matters for any athlete or sports fan trying to choose an American Studies class, I’ve taken the liberty of comparing some well-known American Studies professors with some well-known athletes.

Jeffrey Abramson- Allen Iverson. Simply amazing…when you can find him. Between Harvard, Brandeis, and writing books this guy logs fewer minutes on campus than a Brandeis athlete. The only difference between Prof. Abramson and Iverson is that when Abramson disappears you know he is doing something productive and not getting arrested; heck, even if he is getting arrested, he can argue his way out. Regardless of where he is, get him in the classroom and students literally weep after listening to him lecture; that’s the Brandeis equivalent of “street cred.”

Jerry Cohen- Charles Barkley. Sir Charles is missing the championship ring, Jerry Cohen is missing the hair; both things are impossible to achieve at this point. And talk about physical resemblance, if you look close enough, you may mistake one for the other. But size and stature aside, he might talk about himself and go off on long tangents, but don’t ever say Prof. Cohen doesn’t know his stuff. His Lone Assassin argument makes Oliver Stone look about as credible as Oliver Miller’s last dietician. Like the Chuckster, you might love him or hate him, but you will always be curious to hear what he has to say. I’m just waiting for him to throw a student through his office window.

Michael Socolow- Charles Oakley. He’s a little quirky in class, his technological knowledge is limited, and he’s probably the last guy you want to run into on a bad day. While the Cohens and Abramsons might get more attention, Prof. Socolow is the one who steadies the department. This work horse literally runs the journalism program by himself, and judging by the increasing number of students enrolled in his classes, people are starting to take notice. Oh, and don’t discount his deceptiveness. Oakley could barely jump off the ground, but he would somehow manage to grab ten boards a game; Socolow can barely turn on a computer in class, but he responds to my e-mails within five seconds. He might average a call to ITS each week but he knows his role and does it better than anyone else.

Tom Doherty- Ron Artest. Most teachers either assign a lot of work or grade tough; Prof. Doherty does both. Doing extra work in the library then double checking if your essay is MLA-acceptable is like being pressured on both ends of the floor. On the other hand, he has a plethora of extracurriculars. Doherty might not be promoting “Allure,” but he’s written numerous books and has appeared on networks such as PBS. But talk about intensity: my class didn’t know the answer to a question and I could have sworn that he was about to jump into the seats and start throwing haymakers. After November we all know that being hit with a beverage is enough to set Ron off, and for those wondering what drives Doherty nuts, don’t ever open a bag of Kettle Chips in his class… seriously.

Stephen Whitfield- Reggie Miller. First, just look at their body types: pure skin and bones. Then there’s the form. I have never seen anyone over the age of 14 hold a lecture stance like Prof. Whitfield: arms flying all over the place, tripping over his own feet…I think I even heard his voice crack once. But the man has perfected his unorthodox technique. Just when you think that your attention is spent with 2 minutes left in class, it’s Whitfield time. Reggie hit 8 points in 10 seconds, I’ve seen Whitfield name AND spell out the names of every person who was at Watergate before class ends. Any student who packs up early before writing down Jeb Magruder definitely will be kicking himself the next day.
Brandeis has Its Place in the Pros

By Lauren Ruderman, Staff Writer

Brandeis students may be better known for their brains than their athletic abilities, but among many scholar athletes and coaches, there have been a handful that have brought recognition to the growing sports program. Even though athletes do not come to Brandeis to pursue professional careers in sports, our athletes do maintain a high level of play. While we have had a few alumni and coaches who participated in professional sports, let’s just say that none have ever attained the fame like that of Patrick Ewing.

This past summer, in the 2004 Summer Olympic Games, Tim Morehouse ’00 proudly marched in the parade of nations representing the USA with his saber in hand. While Morehouse made the US fencing team as first alternate, the team barely missed a medal, returning home with a fourth place finish. Morehouse was slightly recruited out of high school, but Brandeis Fencing Coach Bill Shipman saw his potential. Shipman’s acumen in evaluating talent certainly paid off. During a four year career at Brandeis, Morehouse was a three-time All-American. Currently, he is ranked fourth in the nation as a saberist and 57th in the world in the same category.

Another Brandeis alumnus in the news today is major league pitcher Nelson Figueroa. An American Studies major graduating in the class of 1998, Figueroa has since played for nine different major league teams. He has appeared as both a starter and reliever. His major league stat line reads 7-17 with a 4.65 ERA in 74 appearances, 33 of which were starts. Figueroa has only started once on a forty man roster, with the Milwaukee Brewers in 2002, spending this past spring training with the Pittsburgh Pirates. In addition to Figueroa, Brandeis has produced fourteen career minor league baseball players.

Former professional players have coached Brandeis athletes throughout its history. These include Bob Brannum, Chris Ford, Bud Collins, K.C. Jones, and perhaps the most famous, Benny Friedman. Brannum was a four-year starter at Brandeis from 1959-1963. After his retirement, he coached the Brandeis Men’s Basketball Team to 204 wins, the most in Brandeis history. Bud Collins, a member of the International Tennis Hall of Fame, coached the Brandeis tennis team, while K.C. Jones, another ex-Celtic, and member of the NBA Hall-of-Fame, coached the basketball team.

Chris Ford played for the Pistons and Celtics, winning the NBA championship with the latter in 1981. He coached the Celtics, Bucks and Clippers before taking over at Brandeis and leading the men’s basketball team for two years. He returned to the NBA as an assistant coach and eventually as head coach of the Philadelphia 76ers. Under his guidance, the Judges had a 13-37 record.

Perhaps the most famous athlete associated with Brandeis is Benny Friedman. Before serving as the first and only football coach in Brandeis history, he played in the NFL on four different teams. He was so popular that the New York Giants bought out the Detroit Wolverines just to acquire Friedman and his league high $10,000 contract. He was a triple threat on offense, passing, and rushing as a quarterback. Friedman twice passed for 1500 yards, which was unheard of in the 1920s. In Michael Vick fashion, Friedman led the league in passing and rushing touchdowns in 1928. Benny Friedman was recently elected as part of the class of 2005 to the hallowed halls of the Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

In addition to the players and coaches, one fact that every Brandeis student knows well is that Gosman served as the preseason home and practice facility of the Celtics from its opening in 1991 until 1999. Another, more morbid claim to fame, involves Celtic Reggie Lewis. Lewis was the Celtics captain at age 27, but in 1993, after collapsing during a game, he was diagnosed with a heart condition. In July of 1993, he was shooting hoops at Brandeis and collapsed again. Tragically Lewis died on the floor of our gym before the paramedics could arrive. It has taken the Celtics franchise many years to recover from his death.

In a world mostly known for academic excellence, Brandeis athletics is starting to steal some of the headlines. Who will be next?
Steroids in Baseball
How Much Has the Game Lost?

Alexander Zablotsky, Copy Editor

During opening week, Major League baseball players took to the field to open the 2005 season. From now until October, America will be drawn to ballparks, television screens, and radios to vicariously partake in the annual seven-month marathon that is our national pastime. Once again we will take up our alphabetically littered debates over ERA, OPS, BA, and the ever-controversial DH. However, as soon as the first home run ball clears the outfield fence, all conversation will inescapably turn to steroids.

This winter’s Hot Stove cooked up much more than trades and monster contracts. Despite Major League Baseball’s best efforts to curb the steroid issue, America was introduced to what Barry Bonds termed the “cream” and the “clear.” Steroids took center stage in December, as leaked federal grand jury testimony revealed that current New York Yankee Jeremy Giambi had used steroids. A lengthy, though vague apology from Giambi followed, but his tacit avoidance of the word “steroids” was rendered laughable with the February publication of Jose Canseco’s tell-all book. Canseco’s rampant accusations of many former teammates, including Mark McGwire, Rafael Palmeiro, and Ivan Rodriguez, ignited an intense period of accusations and denials reminiscent of colonial Salem. Other stories included Padres GM Kevin Towers confessing that he suspected Ken Caminiti’s steroid use but did nothing for fear of losing revenue, Bonds repeatedly lashing out at anybody with a pen or video camera, and Jeremy Giambi admitting to his own steroid use. This tumult was only the beginning, though, as the March 17 congressional hearings elevated steroids from an issue plaguing baseball to one of national importance. The most poignant moment of the day was not McGwire’s emotional testimony or Palmeiro’s vehement denial of steroid use, but the testimony of the parents of teenage athletes who committed suicide due to the effects of withdrawal from steroid use. One such parent, Donald Hooten Sr., laid out the steroid problem to the congressional panel and to all of America watching ESPN’s complete coverage of the hearing. Hooten defiantly told professional athletes that while they may resist the label, they are role models for America’s youth. Their use of steroids influences thousands of young athletes to do the same in an attempt to get bigger and better faster. Truly, the problem extends far beyond the adequacy of MLB’s new testing policy.

This new policy introduces year-round random testing and a stiffer 10-game suspension upon the first violation. All players will be tested a minimum of once a year. Already, the new testing policy has yielded results, with Alex Sanchez becoming the first player to fail a test. However, the real damage being done by steroids is not the unfair advantage it gives to some players, and the debate over whether to asterisk a player’s stats is not the most pressing issue. Steroids have sullied our notion of ballplayers as heroes. With each new revelation, a bit of the magic disappears. Our heroes of summer cease to be exceptionally gifted and hard-working pinnacles of sport; they become regular men who took the short cut.

MLB desperately wants to avoid this disenchantment. McGwire and Sammy Sosa injected the game with new life in 1998, but if we suspect that they were injecting themselves as well, it feels as if all of those home runs fell short of the fence.

At the onset of spring training, many hoped for a close to the long winter of steroid debate. However, this was not to be. Every spring training interview included a question about steroids, and fans found themselves reevaluating their favorite players. If a player added some muscle in the offseason, he was on steroids. If a player slumped down, he had just gotten off the juice. McGwire touched on this overbearing suspicion in his testimony, saying that he would not answer questions about his past, since if he denied steroid use he would be labeled a liar, and if he admitted past use then his image would be tainted forever. Disturb runs rampant throughout the baseball world, but the game will go on. Jonah Kaitz, a Brandeis sophomore and an avid baseball fan, commented that while he would view ballplayers differently if they were revealed as steroid-users, he would nevertheless keep watching baseball. It is this unbreakable connection between Americans and baseball that fuels the entire steroid issue. The idolization of ballplayers by American youths leads to their imitation of the professionals’ steroid use, and though major leaguers’ images are taking a dive with the steroid controversy, America continues to watch them, maintaining the atmosphere of competition that initially bred the steroid problem.

So as the season begins, the home crowd will still cheer for home runs. Ballpark attendance will remain high. However, whenever a ball does find its way over the Green Monster or into McCoye Cove, eyes will be drawn to the man wielding the bat, and countless minds will wonder whether he or some chemical was responsible. As he trots around the bases, America will applaud, but with a little less enthusiasm as they recall the look on Donald Hooten’s face while he recounted his son’s suicide in a room on Capitol Hill. As the player touches home plate, people watching on TV will ask themselves if he had been tested recently. And just before he reenters the dugout, he will look back at the crowd, and they will look at him, and both will wonder how a small growth-enhancer robbed us of our heroes of summer.
Are We In “the Clear?”

Kyle Turner, Staff Writer

Your coach has been pushing you harder and harder at each practice, constantly prodding you, trying to press you to your limits. Each and every day, you return home sore and more worn out than the previous day. You are the school’s best football player and your coach wants to make sure that you don’t lose any intensity as your ascension to the college ranks approaches. Yet, you are wary of your body’s ability to hold out through the rigorous demands of a top tier high school football team. You then get word of someone on campus that insists on providing you with an extra edge that not only helps your conditioning, but also reduces your risk of getting injured and improves your overall performance on the field. You meet with him; he gives you a small jar and tells you to inject the liquid into your buttocks. That liquid just happens to be an anabolic steroid, and you have just become one of the rising percentages of high school students to purchase and use these performance enhancing drugs.

More so than college athletes, the use of steroids by high school students has risen in recent years. The emphasis in amateur athletics is on being bigger, stronger and faster than your opponent, and high school students have begun to resort to illegal substances to achieve these goals. In 2003, for example, a National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) study showed that 3.4 percent of all high school seniors nationally had used illegal steroids at least once. Nationally, that number may seem meek; however, when you compartmentalize the country and focus on certain regions, numbers then tend to rise. In Louisiana, 11.2 percent of high school boys reported using steroids in 2001, while 5.7 percent of high school Tennessee girls reported the same. The mainstream media has publicized the alleged use of steroids by high-profile athletes, possibly influencing younger student athletes and non-athletic students to do the same. Seeing or even hearing that major sports role models are using or allegedly using steroids puts a veil of justification behind it. The thinking shifts from “I shouldn’t do it” to “if these guys can get around it, so can I.”

As it stands, most high schools are using a test that has been approved by the NCAA to test for illegal substances, the list of which does not include anabolic or androgenic steroids. Most high schools pay $22 for tests that detect marijuana, cocaine, amphetamine and methamphetamines. The steroid testing package would cost schools $50 to $100, and school districts are not willing to pay that much money. Regardless of the high cost, it should be a necessary requirement to test for steroids, because many high school students are unaware of the dangers that steroids can present.

According to NIDA’s website, anabolic/androgenic steroids are for use only by prescription to treat natural deficiencies in testosterone. Athletes use the drug to improve physical characteristics, while at the same time improving stamina and recovery time. It is taken either orally or injected into the body. The androgenic aspect of the drug includes the extra secretion of testosterone that would also have effects on sexual characteristics of the user. Unfortunately, many people choose to ignore the negative side effects that are commonly associated with steroids. These adverse affects include an increase in cholesterol, testicular atrophy (decrease in the size of the testicles), menstrual dysfunction in females, liver failure, depression, and over-agression.

Because of the jump in high school steroid abuse, college athletics is also at risk. Right now, the percentage of college athletes using and abusing steroids has been decreasing, and the NCAA has played a role in the drop. Consider this: the NCAA gives less than twenty-four hours notice before urine samples are due from the athletes. Positive tests result in a one-year suspension from sports and a forfeit of one year of eligibility. A second positive test for anything other than an illegal drug results in the forfeit of the rest of the student’s eligibility. Still, more could be done on the NCAA’s part. Currently, the NCAA only tests once a year. If the school has a football team, then eighteen players from the team and eight random players from other sports in the school are tested. There are flaws in the testing policy of the NCAA also. For one, the once yearly philosophy is rather light, considering that there are many high schoolers coming into the collegiate athletic ranks that are at risk for steroid abuse.

As far as we know, Brandeis only tests its athletes if they reach the NCAA Div. III tournament. This policy is lenient, even for a small school such as Brandeis, and the lack of a football team makes it that much harder to deter possible steroid abusers. Professional athletes are tainting their respective games by using these illegal substances, but high school students are a major concern, as well as they are emulating professional athletes in regard to steroid use and are consequently damaging their bodies for a potentially long period of time. Steroids are bad, and in light of the MLB’s suspect handling of the steroids issue, high schools and the NCAA need to research ways that they can deter this and keep the future athletes of the nation from hurting themselves before they get started.

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E-Board Q&A

Who has been hurt the most by the current steroids scandal?

Bryan: Mark McGwire. His entire career, his hall of fame eligibility, and everything else about him has been called into question years after he has left the game.

Adam: The game. Home run records used to be revered by fans, but now their glamor has been spoiled forever.

Danny: The guy who bought Bonds’ 73rd home run ball.

Andrew: Mark McGwire. He used to be credited with saving baseball, but now his name will be synonymous with the era of cheating in baseball.

Alex: Clean players. Now everyone is tainted, simply because they play in the “steroid era.”

Seth: Barry Bonds’ vocal chords. He has to sing his children to sleep at night so they don’t have to think about the steroid issue.

Joe: Sandy Alderson. As the current VP of Baseball Operations, and the former GM of the A’s during the early 1990’s, he is in the center of the blame, and cannot escape involvement anymore.

Aaron: The state of Missouri. Now they have to re-name highway 70.
Everyone has hope to start out with

The Diamondbacks in 2001?
The Angels in 2002
The Marlins in 2003?

They were not the favorites

But they came into Spring Training with hope

It does not matter if your last World Series win came in 1908
Or if you are the defending World Series Champions
Or you have won 26 World Series Championships

You come in with a *tabula rasa*

*A clean slate*

A WHOLE SEASON TO BE PART OF BASEBALL HISTORY

...and then eleven more wins

-Andrew Katz
First Place - New York Yankees

Much to the dismay of Red Sox nation, the Yankees will finish first in the American League East this season. One word describes the Yankees: depth. With players like Ruben Sierra on the bench, the Yankees will have no problem keeping its team rested and strong through the season. With the acquisition of Randy Johnson, the Yankees have even more power on the pitching staff. Carl Pavano and Jaret Wright will also add depth to the starting rotation, although they may have to adjust to the atmosphere in New York. Jason Giambi's status is still a huge question, but if he can stay healthy through the year he will contribute. Finally, Mariano Rivera may no longer be able to pitch with the same tenacity as in the past, but with Alex Rodriguez, Derek Jeter, Jorge Posada, and Hideki Matsui, the Yankees have the experience to lead them to the top of the AL East.

Second Place - Boston Red Sox

The reigning world champions will finish second to their rivals, the Yankees, in this upcoming season. Pedro Martinez and Derek Lowe, two of the pitchers the Red Sox rode to the championship, have changed uniforms. On the other hand, they acquired David Wells, Wade Miller and Matt Clement. These newcomers provide the Red Sox with a few question marks starting on opening day. Clement has control problems, and Wells has back problems. Wade Miller has battled injury problems throughout his career. Will they be able to fill the empty cleats? The Red Sox still have Curt Shilling, who could be a dominating force if his ankle injury from last season heals. Keith Foulke has proven himself a solid closer. Another major off-season deal brought Edgar Renteria, one of the premier shortstops in the league, to Boston, replacing Orlando Cabrera. The ability of the Red Sox to retain Jason Varitek, their new captain, has kept the core of championship team alive.

Third Place - Baltimore Orioles

Sammy Sosa has traded a home in Baltimore, Sosa, Javier Lopez and Rafael Palmeiro give the Orioles one of the most powerful batting lineups in the league. The Orioles also have an all-star shortstop and leader on their team: Miguel Tejada. Unfortunately, the Orioles were not able to land a prominent starting pitcher this off-season to bolster their young, inexperienced rotation. Sidney Ponson is their most proven starting pitcher, accumulating an 11-15 record last season. Steve Kline, a left-handed veteran reliever, adds some key leadership and stability to the Orioles bullpen. The strong offensive lineup of the Orioles will provide some encouraging and an improved team from the one that finished 78-84 a year ago. However, there is even starting rotation lands the Orioles in last place in the AL East, but if their young pitchers can keep the offense in ballgames, the Orioles will be a legitimate contender for the American League Wild Card.

Fourth Place - Tampa Bay Devil Rays

The Devil Rays are a steadily improving young team that showed significant improvements at times last season. Rocco Baldelli is an up-and-coming star, but he tore his ACL over the summer and is expected to miss at least the first two months of the season. Carl Crawford will help carry the load, as he led the American League in stolen bases for the second year in a row last year, with 59. The Rays will rely upon young pitchers this season in Dewon Brazelton and Scott Kazmir. Kazmir is a much-hailed twenty-one-year-old left-hander, acquired from the New York Mets last season in the Victor Zambrano deal with the potential to be a 15-20 game winner this season. Comprised of many young players, the Devil Rays will use speed and youth to try and outweigh their lack of experience. With the help of manager Lou Piniella, the Devil Rays will continue to improve from their 70-92 record in 2004.

Fifth Place - Toronto Blue Jays

The Toronto Blue Jays will feel the loss of Carlos Delgado in their offense and leadership this year. The Jays only notable acquisitions were infusion Shea Hillenbrand and Corey Klose. The two combined to hit 40 home runs for their respective teams a year ago, despite missing time with injuries. Each will add some run production to a team that has no big names on its roster. Centerfielder Vernon Wells is coming off a season in which he hit 23 home runs, and earned his first Gold Glove. The rotation for the Jays is lacking, as their only strong pitcher is Roy Halladay, the AL Cy Young winner two years ago. The Blue Jays will attempt to convert Miguel Batista from a starter into a closer. Toronto will need to stay healthy and get big production from Halladay to be able to stay competitive.
American League Central
By Kyle Turner, Staff Writer

First Place – Minnesota Twins
The Twins have finished in first place in this division for each of the past three seasons, and there is no feasible reason to go against them now. Almost their entire roster will return in 2005, including AL Cy Young award winner Johan Santana, who finished 20-6 in the 2004 campaign, and Brad Radke, a good second starter totaling 143 strikeouts in 34 games last season. If they have holes to fill, they have an extremely deep farm system. The Twins may face problems at the shortstop and first base positions, where inexperience is an issue. Jason Bartlett is a rookie trying to make the jump from AAA to the Major Leagues, while Justin Morneau is a relatively new first baseman who started only 62 games a year ago. Despite this inexperience and the possibility of knee problems facing catcher Joe Mauer, Torii Hunter and Johan Santana should lead the Twins to their fourth AL Central title in four years.

Second Place – Chicago White Sox
Although they lost Magglio Ordonez to division foe Detroit, expect the White Sox to make a strong run at the division title. Freddy Garcia will be looking to rebound from a below average season. Mark Buehrle will be bringing his ’04 stats (3.89 ERA and 165 strikeouts) back to the club. Jose Contreras and Orlando “El Duque” Hernandez will also be looking to help out a pitching staff that finished 25th in ERA. The additions of A.J. Pierzynski, Scott Podsednik (70 steals), and Jermaine Dye should help bolster an already powerful lineup with Aaron Rowand and Paul Konerko. They signed Tadahito Iguchi from Japan to play second base. According to ESPN.com, he won two stolen base titles, a Golden Glove award three times and has been a four-time All-Star. If Frank Thomas can return to his old form after an ankle injury that sidelined him for much of last season, look for the White Sox to match last year’s offensive output, when they finished tied for first with the Yankees in home runs (242) and fourth in RBI’s (823).

Third Place – Cleveland Indians
Cleveland made great strides last year, and Travis Hafner shined, posting a .311 batting average and driving in 109 runs. You can expect him to be even better in ’05. Victor Martinez has become one of the best all-around catchers in the AL, finishing in the top five in homeruns (first), RBIs (first), hits (fifth) and runs scored (third) among catchers. He also threw out one of every three would-be base stealers last season. He hope to have a healthy Aaron Boone to anchor third base, but will need a prayer to keep Juan Gonzalez healthy for the whole season. Still, even with C.C. Sabathia and Jake Westbrook (who has begun to emerge as a top-tier starting pitcher) combining with the addition of Kevin Millwood, their pitching still isn’t where it needs to be to make a serious push at a division title. They are an up and coming team, and look for them to contend in the next couple of years, but not in 2005.

Fourth Place – Detroit Tigers
Putting Detroit in fourth place was a tough decision, especially considering their much improved lineup in ’05. They acquired Magglio Ordonez who can easily go for 30 home runs and 100 RBI, while Ivan Rodriguez remains one of the best catchers in the game. Still, Magglio is an injury risk coming off of two knee operations, and Carlos Guillen, despite his great offensive numbers last year (.318 BA, 20 homers and 90 RBI), was still a little shaky defensively (17 errors – tenth most among shortstops). Also, their pitching is still young and learning, so they have a couple more years to get up there. However, Jeremy Bonderman, Nate Robertson and Mike Maroth are their future, and if they come around, the rest of the AL Central might need to take notice.

Fifth Place – Kansas City Royals
2005 will be another year, and another last place finish for the Royals. Despite a terrible year in 2005, they didn’t have enough resources to do anything beyond acquiring Terrence Long from San Diego in the offseason. This team definitely shows the struggles of small market teams, even though their owner has the money to spend. Mike Sweeney remains the best player on the team, and Angel Berroa keeps getting better. Still, they are a long way from becoming competitive again, even if rookie prospect Zack Greinke lives up to the hype. Greinke’s quick development could seriously speed up the painful process. But, Jose Lima is the number one starting pitcher, and no offense to “Lima Time,” but that says more than enough about the state of the Royals pitching in 2005.

National League Central
By Bryan Steinkohl, Online Editor

First Place - St. Louis Cardinals
With the addition of Mark Mulder, the Cardinals remedy their lack of a proven ace. That is, however, if this is the same Mark Mulder that started the All-Star game last year. If it is the pitcher with a second half ERA that hovered around 7.00, then the Cardinals could be in trouble. If Mulder can be consistent, and if the other starters can replicate their overachieving from last year, the pitching should dominate. If they can make up for the loss of Steve Kline and the inconsistency of Jason Isringhausen, the bullpen could be bulletproof. If Larry Walker is healthy for a whole year and Albert Pujols can brush aside his nagging off-season injury, the lineup is potent. And if the loss of Edgar Renteria does not hurt their middle infield too much, the Cardinals should grab another NL Central crown. That’s a lot of ifs…

Second Place - Houston Astros
After losing Carlos Beltran, no one thought it possible that Roger Clemens would return for one more year. However, the Astros gave him eighteen million reasons to take the mound once more as part of a strong starting rotation that will include a healthy Andy Pettitte, a dominant Roy Oswalt, and an emerging Brandon Backe. With Brad Lidge cementing his role as closer with authority last season, the Astros pitching could be the best from top to bottom in the game. If Lance Berkman can return from an off-season injury (an NL Central theme) and top prospect Willy Taveras opens the season swinging and running, with Jeff Bagwell reaching down into the fountain of youth once again, the Astros should contend thanks to their arms.

Third Place - Chicago Cubs
The key to the Central will be losses and injuries, and the Cubs are in the most danger of all the teams. With spring training injuries to aces Mark Prior and Kerry Wood, combined with the loss of Matt Clement to the Red Sox, the Cubs will be quickly down and out without a fast return from the injured stars and strong performances and a cool head from Carlos Zambrano. A healthy and happy Nomar Garciaparra will have something to prove, but Jeremy Burnitz is not Sammy Sosa. The Cubs will also need an injury-free season from perennial disabled-list mainstay Corey Patterson, as well as speedy utilityman Jerry Hairston Jr. If injuries hit this team as they did last year, it won’t matter who is closing, nothing will save them.

Fourth Place - Milwaukee Brewers
Trading your top talent is not a good thing for a team that is known for losing. Carlos Lee emerged from their offseason wheeling and dealing, but the loss of Scott Podsednik and Danny Kolb will be too much to overcome. With weaknesses all around, there is still one positive to watch for: a Cy Young caliber season from breakout star Ben Sheets. J.J. Hardy takes over at shortstop this season, with Jose Capellan, Rickie Weeks, and Prince Fielder (former major leaguer Cecil Fielder’s son) waiting in the wing. A stocked minor league system gives the Brew Crew fans something to look forward to, but that won’t help the major league squad this season, at least not until they’re already out of it. They should be slightly improved from last year, though.

Fifth Place - Cincinnati Reds
This team still has a horrendous pitching staff (with the likes of Eric Milton, Ramon Ortiz, Paul Wilson, and Aaron Harang) and questionable bullpen (can Danny Graves still close after a mediocre second half?). So the key to the Reds’ season relies on the health of Ken Griffey Jr. and Austin Kearns’ ability to protect sluggers Adam Dunn and Sean Casey, rather than the other way around. Given Griffey’s track record of injuries over the past few years, the chance of a consistent and healthy season is slim. Even with the potent lineup, the pitching will not be able to survive 81 games in Great American Ballpark.

Sixth Place - Pittsburgh Pirates
The Pirates seem to be done jettisoning top stars (Brian Giles, Aramis Ramirez) and are now a team with a good young nucleus and will be a contender in a few years, but not this season. Jose Mesa is still inconsistent and past him, the bullpen, as well as most the rotation, is shaky at best. Look for continued growth from Oliver Perez and Rookie of the Year Jason Bay as they develop into strong leaders, and with more financial flexibility sans Jason Kendall’s contract, the Pirates are only a few years away.
American League West

By Adam Green, Assistant to the Traveling Secretary

First Place - Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim

The Angels were very active this off-season, as they parted ways with David Eckstein, Troy Glaus, and Troy Percival, all key components of the Angel’s 2002 World Series team. The team’s marquee off-season acquisitions were aging center fielder Steve Finley and former Red Sox shortstop Orlando Cabrera. Finley, 40, is coming off a career best 36 home runs last season and Cabrera earned a large paycheck for his contributions in Boston. Finley and Cabrera join an Angel’s lineup filled with a mix of veterans, such as Vladimir Guerrero and Garrett Anderson, and youngsters, including Dallas McPherson and Chone Figgins. With a veteran lineup, a solid pitching rotation, and a bullpen featuring setup-man-turned-closer Francisco Rodríguez, look for the Angels to break away from the rest of the division foes late in the season and earn a second straight AL-West division championship.

Second Place – Texas Rangers

The Rangers once again will rely on their offense and bullpen as they hope to disprove all non-believers who feel last season’s 89-73 record was a fluke. Texas had a lackluster off-season, signing only one marquee player right fielder Richard Hidalgo. Although Hidalgo filled the now in a potent lineup, the Rangers failed to address their starting pitching woes this summer. Kenny Rogers and Ryan Drese will again lead the starting rotation, while Chris Young and Ricardo Rodriguez try to elevate their games to a higher level. Last season, the Rangers proved that with a powerful offense and a strong bullpen, a solid starting rotation isn’t an essential component to having a successful season. Finishing just three games out of first place in the AL West, they used an absurd eighteen different starting pitchers. Despite these concerns, this team will make the Angels earn their division title in 2005, however Texas seems one or two years away from being the favorites in the AL West.

Third Place – Oakland Athletics

Oakland’s two biggest moves over the summer were shipping off two thirds of the “Big 3,”* Tim Hudson and Mark Mulder, as both pitchers fell victim to the payroll limitations of the small market Athletics. The A’s did receive good, young talent in return for the two aces, including major league ready pitcher Dan Haren (24). Haren, along with Oakland farm product Joe Blanton (24) will join up-and-coming stud Rich Harden (23) and lefty Barry Zito (26) to form one of the youngest rotations in all of baseball. Offensively, Oakland came to terms with veteran catcher Jason Kendall, whose career OBP of .387 seems to make him an ideal fit in the A’s Moneyball style of play. Overall, a great deal of questions surround this team, which barely missed out on the playoffs just a season ago. With an extremely young rotation and a questionable bullpen, the A’s chances of a playoff birth seem slim this year, but their future is considerably bright.

Fourth Place – Seattle Mariners

It seems Ichiro will finally be able to consistently reach home plate in Seattle this season after getting on base with all of those singles. The additions of free agents Adrian Beltre and Richie Sexson to the Seattle lineup should considerably improve an offense that finished last in the AL in most of the major offensive categories a season ago. Also, the under-the-radar signing of Pokey Reese should help strengthen the Mariners defense up the middle. However, Seattle’s struggles this season will come as a result of their inconsistent starting pitching. Joel Pineiro heads up the staff, and after two superb seasons with the Mariners posted an era of 4.67 this past year. Also, veteran Jamie Moyer and youngster Gil Meche posted 5.00+ ERAs with Seattle a season ago. Although Seattle added a great deal of offense to their lineup this off-season, until they improve their starting pitching they will not be legitimate contenders in the American League West.

Check out our website at louislunatic.blogspot.com

National League West

By Dave Ostrowsky, Staff Writer

First Place - San Diego Padres

The Padres were the trendy pick to be a surprise team in 2004 and did not disappoint. Coming off a weak 2003 season, the Padres made a strong run at the playoffs before ultimately falling short. Unfortunately, the sluggers in the lineup had trouble adjusting to the conditions at Petco Park, the gorgeous new stadium they call home. Dave Roberts will be taking over Terrence Long’s role as the center fielder and will bat lead off, a huge boost to the lineup, providing them with speed at the top and allowing Sean Burroughs to drop down in the order. The Padres may boast the best overall middle infield in the National League, with Khalil Greene and Mark Loretta patrolling that area. In addition, the starting rotation is young and dangerous with the likes of Brian Lawrence and Jake Peavy.

Second Place - San Francisco Giants

The Giants are so old they could be eligible for social security benefits in 2005. The additions of Moises Alou, Omar Vizquel, and Mike Matheny doesn’t exactly reverse that trend. Still, perhaps the biggest question mark about this team is the controversy surrounding Barry Bonds, concerning both the steroid scandal and his injuries. While the Giants boast one of the premier sluggers in the game, they are unsure if and when he will suit up in 2005. The Giants’ staff consists of traditionally fly-ball pitchers and it will be interesting to see how they fare pitching in front of the vast SBC outfield, albeit behind a rather shoddy, aged outfield defense. Depending on whether the Giants receive the 2003 or 2004 Armando Benitez, he could prove to be a major asset to their depleted bullpen, especially with the retirement of Robb Nen.

Third Place - Los Angeles Dodgers

Dodger blue had its best season in nearly a decade in 2004, winning nearly one hundred games and capturing the NL West crown. Still, the defense is suspect, particularly in the middle infield positions, where Jose Hernandez and Alex Cora are being replaced by Jose Valentin and Jeff Kent. This weakness up the middle could hurt the Dodgers’ pitching, particularly the newly acquired ground ball specialist Derek Lowe. Much of the Dodgers’ success this season will depend on the health of starting pitchers Brad Penny and Odaliz Perez, both of whom missed significant portions of the 2004 campaign. Also, if J.D. Drew can find a way to stay healthy, he will beef up a middle of the batting order that has been incredibly weak over the past couple seasons. Yet, despite the addition of Drew, they have still lost three other key batters: Shawn Green, Steve Finley, and Adrian Beltre, weakening the Dodgers’ offense.

Fourth Place - Arizona Diamondbacks

Things couldn’t have been much worse for the Diamondbacks in 2004. Three years after winning their first World Series title, the Diamondbacks finished in the cellar of the mediocre NL West division. In an effort to remedy their poor finish in 2004, Arizona kicked off the free agent signing spree by spending lavishly on injury-prone third baseman Troy Glaus. Next, they traded for Shawn Green, a once promising, but steadily declining, power hitting outfielder. Lastly, they parted ways with David Eckstein, Troy Glaus, and Troy Percival, all key components of the Angel’s 2002 World Series team. Without any marquee player: right fielder Richard Hidalgo. Although Hidalgo filled the now in a potent lineup, the Rangers failed to address their starting pitching woes this summer. Kenny Rogers and Ryan Drese will again lead the starting rotation, while Chris Young and Ricardo Rodriguez try to elevate their games to a higher level. Last season, the Rangers proved that with a powerful offense and a strong bullpen, a solid starting rotation isn’t an essential component to having a successful season. Finishing just three games out of first place in the AL West, they used an absurd eighteen different starting pitchers. Despite these concerns, this team will make the Angels earn their division title in 2005, however Texas seems one or two years away from being the favorites in the AL West.

Fifth Place – Colorado Rockies

The team’s marquee off-season acquisitions were aging center fielder Steve Finley and former Red Sox shortstop Orlando Cabrera. Finley, 40, is coming off a career best 36 home runs last season and Cabrera earned a large paycheck for his contributions in Boston. Finley and Cabrera join an Angel’s lineup filled with a mix of veterans, such as Vladimir Guerrero and Garrett Anderson, and youngsters, including Dallas McPherson and Chone Figgins. With a veteran lineup, a solid pitching rotation, and a bullpen featuring setup-man-turned-closer Francisco Rodríguez, look for the Angels to break away from the rest of the division foes late in the season and earn a second straight AL-West division championship.

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Fifth Place – Colorado Rockies

It should not come as a surprise to anyone that the Rockies are the favorites to finish last in this strong division. Their lineup is mediocre at best, and the pitching is even worse. ToddHelton may be baseball’s most underappreciated superstar but the Rockies’ offense historically doesn’t fare very well away from the thin air of Denver. Either way, this is a weak team and even with the comeback of power hitting outfielder Preston Wilson, the Rockies will struggle and look to unload players come the July trading deadline. But with a young middle infield combination of Aaron Miles and Clint Barnes, and young pitchers Jason Jennings and Jeff Francis, there is hope someplace in the future for this team.
New and Old Nationals:
A Short History of DC Baseball
Professor Michael Socolow,

Special to the Lunatic

Baseball returns to our nation’s capital this spring. The woeful Montreal Expos - losers of 95 games last year - have become the Washington Nationals. Now, long-suffering DC baseball fans are welcoming the team with open arms and wallets, with sales of tickets and merchandise reflecting an excited and enthusiastic fan base. GM Jim Bowden has brought in new players, and this year’s pitching looks to be much improved. If the offense clicks, this team has a solid chance to match or surpass the 83 wins it garnered in 2002 and 2003.

With exciting young stars like Brad Wilkerson and Zach Day, the new Nationals (nicknamed the ‘Nats) should be one of baseball’s “feel good” stories this year.

Off the field, the Nats still have to contend with Major League Baseball’s bumbling management. Baltimore owner Peter Angelos remains furious over what he considers an incursion into his territory. He has yet to settle with Major League Baseball over the move and paying off the litigious Angelos will be costly. Then there is the more vexing problem facing this team: the Nationals represent baseball’s ultimate conflict of interest. The other Major League owners own the team. Thus, there is every incentive to keep the team weak and under-funded (so that it is not competitive with each owners’ primary investment) and there is no incentive to greatly improve the team (which would come at the expense of other teams). This ownership situation has very real on-field consequences. On Labor Day, 2003, the Expos were tied with the Marlins for the wild card lead. When every other National League club expanded their rosters to 40 players for the September stretch run, Major League Baseball, in a cost-saving move, prevented the Expos from adding additional talent. They faded, and the Marlins went on to win the World Series.

Baseball in DC has an amusing, yet ill-fated history. The original Senators – officially named the “Washington Nationals” – suffered through decades of sub-par baseball performances before fleeing for Minnesota’s twin cities. During that team’s greatest decade (1924-1934), during which it won three pennants and one world championship, it was overshadowed by the great Ruth-Gehrig Yankees squads. Between 1933 and 1960 the Senators had few bright moments. Following the 1960 season, the Griffith family packed up the franchise and moved it to Minnesota. The American League provided DC with a new expansion team to fill the void, and hoped to give baseball in DC a fresh start.

The club that left DC after the 1960 season included 24-year-old Harmon Killebrew and 21-year-old Jim Kaat. Killebrew, Kaat, and other young players quickly established a winning tradition in Minneapolis’ Metropolitan Stadium. They won the 1965 American League pennant only to lose a hard-fought World Series to Sandy Koufax’s Los Angeles Dodgers. In the meantime, DC baseball fans were left to cheer on a listless group of nobodies that lost 103 games in 1961, 101 in 1962, and a Mets-like 106 in 1963. The slogan of the 1964 Washington Senators said it all: “Off the Floor in ‘64.”

The new ‘Nats were a product of the Major League expansion in the early 1960s. Unlike the other new American League team, the surprising Los Angeles Angels, the ‘Nats were rarely competitive in their initial years. They were losers, but they couldn’t even lose properly. Two hundred miles north, the New York Mets quickly developed a loveable losers persona that bred loyalty and guaranteed revenue. The Mets had clowns (Marv Throneberry), a ringmaster (Casey Stengel), and the gracious and genteel ownership of Joan Payson. Even their name – the Metropolitans – harkened back to the glorious era of early Gotham baseball.

The new ‘Nats, on the other hand, were owned by the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, a lifelong bureaucrat named Peter Quesada. They reflected a bureaucratic approach to baseball. They were bad, but not completely rotten; occasionally they could surprise with an efficient level of play, but in general their efforts remained sub-par. One of their high notes included becoming the inhabitants of America’s first multi-purpose stadium. DC Stadium (later Robert F. Kennedy Stadium) was reflective of the team: functional and charm-less. It was in DC stadium that Senators’ shortstop Ron Hansen pulled off his amazing unassisted triple play in 1968, and the stadium hosted baseball’s centennial all star game in 1969. President Nixon attended games sporadically, even occasionally passing by the locker room to offer advice.

The new ‘Nats did have one brief flicker of success before they departed to Texas. Sold to trucking magnate Bob Short in 1969, the team offered Red Sox legend Ted Williams a remarkably generous financial package to skipper the motley crew. Summoning up that Williams magic, the splendiferous inspired his gang to win 86 games in 1969. But once again, the newly christened “Miracle Mets” overshadowed the ‘Nats. Adding insult to injury, the manager of the Mets, Brooklyn legend Gil Hodges, had managed the ‘Nats from 1963 to 1967. His success in DC had been (to say the least) limited.

Bob Short, inaugurated by the success of the 1969 season, decided his team was close to going over the top. All they needed were a few established stars – to show the youngsters how to win. He traded a promising young infielder to the Detroit Tigers to obtain one-time 30-game winner (and two-time Cy Young Award winner) Denny McLain. He enticed Curt Flood back to baseball after Flood’s battle against the League over the reserve clause. The ‘Nats were perhaps the most promising team in baseball in the spring of 1971.

But that optimism dissipated remarkably quickly. Shortly after helping the team win its opening game, Flood mysteriously disappeared on the way to the ballpark one morning (he would later turn up in Portugal; the battle with Major League Baseball, and his years away from the game, wore on his psyche and his body). The 1971 team finished with a record of 63-96. Despite charging the highest admission prices in the American League, Short claimed more than $3 million in losses in his first three years of ownership. The lease at RFK Stadium, he argued, was the culprit. When the City Council refused to negotiate, Short moved the team to Arlington, Texas, where they became the Rangers. In their last two years in DC, the team drew 1,479,945 paying fans, while attendance in their first two years in Texas topped out at 1,349,059 fans. Because of the favorable contract, however, the Rangers generated Short a hefty profit while costing the city of Arlington a fortune.

On the evening of September 30, 1971, slightly over 14,000 fans said goodbye to the Senators, and baseball in DC. The crowd was rowdy and angry. Banners throughout the stadium cursed Short, and as the game moved into the ninth inning - with the Senators holding a 7-5 lead over the Yankees - frustration boiled over. A fan jumped the rail, scammed to the first base, pulled up the bag, and started running around the outfield. Laughing, crying, screaming, angry and drunk fans by the thousands then poured out of the stands and swarmed the infield. They desperately tore up the grass, grabbed the bases, and did what they could to express their outrage. The players and umpires retreated to the dugouts and the Senators, fittingly, forfeited their final contest.

But now, over three decades later, the bad feelings engendered by Short’s ownership and a decade of lousy baseball have completely dissipated. There are no more “new” Senators fans around anymore. The Nationals are back in town, and all is forgiven. Play Ball!!
First topic: Off-season pitching transactions – who was better?

Jay: I’m gonna have to go with the Yankees on this one. Picking up Randy Johnson was just tremendous. In the postseason, having Randy Johnson – the most dominant playoff pitcher in baseball – stride to the mound once, twice, or maybe even three times for your team is huge. And losing Javier Vazquez is understandable, he fell apart in the postseason, which is all that matters in New York. And if you haven’t noticed, your ace isn’t quite ready for Opening Day.

Bryan: First of all, you have to understand the question before you answer it. Curt Schilling would not be an acquisition, but Matt Clement has the ability to be great and David Wells knows how to pitch under pressure. The Sox have about seven starters, and by midseason their best starter will be Wade Miller, because he is going to be amazing once he gets used to playing in Boston.

Jay: And what about Jaret Wright? He was 15-8 last year with a 3.28 ERA. And Carl Pavano, the NL Cy Young candidate? They’re winners, and young too – unlike Wells. I think that any staff that has Kevin Brown, rough as he was at times last season, as its fifth starter is in real good shape.

Bryan: First of all, David Wells is too old? No, Kevin Brown is. Wells had a great year for San Diego last year. And what did Kevin Brown bring to the Yankees last year? What did Jaret Wright do before 2004? Nothing. Ohhh yahhh, one-nothing me!

Second topic: World Series hangover: do the Red Sox have one?

Jay: I think they do, but a hangover is inevitable when you take a bunch of idiots lucky enough to squeak by the Yankees in the ALCS, and ask them to re-align again the stars of the universe by repeating.

Bryan: We’re proud to be that bunch of idiots! Anyway, those lucky breaks the Red Sox got? Well, the Yankees had been getting them for years. And any team that can retool like they did in the off-season and still has the guys who basically won them the World Series – Manny Ramirez, David Ortiz, Curt Schilling – watch out. I don’t see a hangover. If you don’t believe it, fine. We’ll see you in October. The whole team is back because they won last year.

Jay: Except that you lost Pedro Martinez, the heart of the Red Sox rotation since 1998. Plus the age factor could begin to wear on the Sox team.

Bryan: Now you say that the Red Sox only have one World Series team. At least they have most of their players back. How many guys are still on the Yankees from their World Series years?

Jay: Jeter, Posada, Bernie, Rivera, Stanton and Tino. That’s six, and most of them will contribute heavily to the Yankees this year. When the Yankees won their four Series in five years, they walked through much of it. They won 12 of 13 World Series games in three years. The Red Sox snuck into the playoffs last year as the Wild Card. They just barely got to the Series at all, barely beating the Yankees. And now their biggest competition just got even better. Now do you honestly think the Red Sox are at the repeat level of the late-1990’s Yanks? No way. I question if they’ll even make the playoffs! Point – JERSEY.

Third topic: which would be a more crushing injury? Yanks lose Rivera or Sox lose Schilling?

Jay: I’m gonna say the Sox losing Curt Schilling. He’s already out for Opening Day. Six of the first nine Red Sox games are against the Yankees, and not having their ace out there and available during that stretch will hurt them. The worst thing for Boston would be to lose four of six or worse to the team they beat last year. They can’t afford to get behind so early in the season. They need their starter, he’s their linchpin, and there is no replacing Curt Schilling in the Red Sox’ rotation. Plus, he’s approaching what – 53? – and as we know from Barry Bonds, the elderly ballplayers need a long time to rehab from these kinds of serious injuries.

Bryan: Are ya done?

Jay: No. Mariano Rivera succumbing to injury would be a tremendous blow to the team, no doubt. But in that worst case scenario, they have other players who could step in to close. They do have Tom Gordon, who used to be the Red Sox closer. It’s easier to replace a closer with someone in your bullpen than it is to replace an ace.

Bryan: First of all, the Sox knew they would be without Schilling for at least some part of the early season.

Jay: So you’re saying they brought in Matt Clement, Wade Miller, and David Wells to make up for three weeks of Schilling’s lost starts?!

Bryan: Well this isn’t even really an issue because the doctors have guaranteed that Schilling’s ankle is healthy and he’ll play a lot this season. They say it’s in extremely good shape.

Jay: Of course they’re going to tell you his ankle is in great shape! But it’s not. If it were in great shape, then he’d be ready to go by April 3.

Bryan: Your team is almost as old as the Giants.

Jay: Sure is, but they’re not recovering from ankle surgery. The only player who had major off-season surgery was Gary Sheffield on that left shoulder. And he’s ready to go, unlike your boy Curt. Point: Jay.

Fourth topic: Which tandem will have a better season, Pavano & Wright or Wells & Clement?

Jay: Well Clement has control issues, and Wells has booze issues. Neither sounds great to me.

Bryan: Let’s talk about consistency, shall we? How many good years has Carl Pavano had compared to Wells? Pavano’s had a couple of good years. How many solid years has Wright had? He’s been in the league for how long – eight years – and how many good seasons?

Jay: Well he had 1997, 1998, and last year. And he was great in the ‘97 World Series.

Bryan: He was only good in Atlanta because of his pitching coach, Leo Mazzone.

Jay: I refuse to believe the guy went 15-8 with an ERA of just over three because he had some smart guy sitting on the bench. Was Leo throwing those K’s?

Bryan: Leo Mazzone can make almost anyone a Cy Young winner.

Jay: I’d rather take Pavano and Wright at the peak of their careers over a tandem with Wells, and Clement with his control issues.

Bryan: Clement does not have control issues, he has confidence issues.

Jay: Yup, those are much better issues to have. By the way, isn’t Wells a lefty breaking-ball pitcher now pitching in Fenway. What happens when old breaking ball pitchers start to hang their pitches to a right handed bunter in Fenway. Oh yahh, home runs and doubles off the Monster.

Bryan: Are you kidding? He was great last year with the Padres.

Jay: Wells was the veteran and the number one starter in their rotation. And he’s not going to be able to carry this team to another World Series. It’s the way I feel. I’m just glad we got Pavano instead of pursuing him any further.

Bryan: You’re just a joke. Wells was not the only good pitcher on the Padres. Peavy would have won even more than 13 games had he not gotten injured. You know what, I’m done. I’m just done.

Jay: Next time I’m going to bring in more numbers and throw them in your face! – Point Bryan.

Final topic – who won the battle this off-season? A-Rod or the Red Sox?

Bryan: Don’t you mean A-Fraud?

Jay: No, I mean A-Rod. The guy is earning $252 million over 10 years, which I agree, is an absurd sum of money, but the guy is an absurdly talented player and works hard for it. He’s up early training, and he walks into spring training in top shape. No steroids, no supplements, just speed and power. He speak to the media, signs autographs, and smiles while doing all of it. He’s the dream superstar – fantastic numbers, team player, well-spoken, and unselfish. Maybe he got caught up a little bit in the playoff intensity and tried to knock a ball out of Arroyo’s glove. But so what? In the heat of the moment like that, any major leaguer who hunger after winning would have done the same. He’s a model superstar, and I think the Red Sox still get jealous and wish he were in Boston. They ganged up on him, and it was unprofessional of them to do so.

Bryan: Come on Jay, you’re making it too easy for me. If you’re just setting me up to knock you down, then that’s okay. Do you mean to tell me he never fights with his manager? Ask Buck Showalter about that.

Jay: Last year he didn’t complain one bit on the team, and was a consummate clubhouse contributor. He’s such a man he didn’t even need the help from his teammates. He took it strongly and didn’t let it fase him. He let the Red Sox look like immature jerks for taking cheap shots through the media. They took their turns bashing it, and he acted like a professional. You can’t justify the Red Sox behavior.

We’re doing this again next year. Until we meet again…for Jay Hyne and Bryan Steinkohl, this has been Pardon the Interruption, Brandeis style.
2005 Major League Baseball Fantasy Sleepers and Busts

By Dan Tress, Staff Writer

It is that time again. When everyone begins to prepare for their fantasy draft for the 2005 baseball season. Competitors are hoping to pick the best team and are hoping to get lucky on some surprise players. For every Carlos Beltran or Randy Johnson, there are hundreds of relatively unknown and lower tier players. But watch out, some of those common players may not meet expectations. Here is our list of fantasy sleepers and busts for the 2005 season.

2005 Fantasy Baseball Sleepers

By Devin Carney, Staff Writer

C - Joe Mauer - MIN: Mauer looked like a sure rookie of the year candidate in 2004 before suffering a tear in his left knee early in the season. He had six home runs and 35 RBI in 107 at-bats last year; expect him to get 15-20 home runs with 70 RBIs and around a .300 average.

1B - Justin Morneau – MIN: If there is one player that defines a sleeper, it is Justin Morneau. In just 280 at-bats last year, he had 19 home runs and 58 RBI. Look for him to produce close to 100 RBI and possibly 30 homers. Watch out for his average though, it could fall between .260 and .270.

2B - Chase Utley – PHI: Utley is very similar to Morneau because both have been in the league for two years and have produced similar numbers. Utley hit 13 home runs with 57 RBI, but had a relatively low average of .266. He will have nearly twice as many at-bats this year so look for him to hit close to 20 home runs with 100 RBI.

3B - David Wright – NYM: Wright is similar to Cardinal's third baseman Scott Rolen in almost every offensive category. He hit 14 home runs and had 40 RBI in 263 at-bats last year. Expect him to hit at least double that in 2005, and have a batting average of at least .290.

SS - Angel Berroa – KC: Berroa was great his rookie season, but slumped his sophomore year. Expect him to hit around .275 with 160 hits, 15 home runs, 70 RBI, and 20 stolen bases. He has the talent to be extremely productive and is a risk worth taking.

OF - Richard Hidalgo – TEX: Hidalgo is an interesting sleeper because he is very inconsistent. He got hot last season when he was traded to the New York Mets, where he hit 21 home runs and had 52 RBI (although batting only .228). I would bet that he will hit at least 25 home runs and have 80 RBI with about a .260 average in 2005.

OF - Matt Holliday – COL: Like many players I have named, Holliday is still a very young player. However, last year he produced, and being a good hitter in Colorado is always a good thing. He hit 14 home runs and had 57 RBI last season with a .290 average and 116 hits. If he is a regular starter, expect him to hit 20 home runs with 75 RBI and 140 hits.

OF - Coco Crisp – CLE: Crisp had a breakout year in 2004, putting up impressive statistics in all categories. Batting .297, he also racked up a good number of hits, stolen bases, home runs and RBI. He is becoming a good hitter and base runner with the young Cleveland Indians. Crisp will give you about 15 home runs, 70 RBI, 20 stolen bases, 150 hits, and between a .280 and .290 batting average in 2005.

SP - Victor Zambrano – NYM: Zambrano will look to become more consistent in 2005 with the help of Mets pitching coach Rick Petersen. If he can limit his walks, Zambrano’s ERA projects to go down and he may strike out 120 batters. The Mets are hoping to contend for the NL East, so don’t be surprised if his win total is above 15.

RP - Dan Kolb – ATL: Signed by Atlanta this year, Kolb will get saves on a team that flat out wins games. In the past two seasons, he has had a low ERA but few opportunities to save games. In 2005, look for Kolb to get at least 40 saves with a 2.10 ERA.

2005 Fantasy Baseball Busts

By Dan Tress, Staff Writer

C - Mike Piazza: NYM: While Piazza is still rated among the top fifteen fantasy catchers, you can expect his injury problems to continue. He will be returning to full-time catching duties now that the Mets have acquired Doug Mientkiewicz’s glove at first, which could put even more stress on his knees. Piazza has missed significant time the last few years due to injuries, and even when he is healthy enough to play, his production has been declining.

1B - Shawn Green: ARZ: Despite being traded from the Los Angeles Dodgers, where he struggled to produce in a pitcher’s park, Green will still not approach the numbers that made him one of the top fantasy players in the game several years ago. Although his numbers last year were slightly improved from 2003, Green will be hurt by moving into an even more anemic lineup than he was in last year with the Dodgers.

2B - Jeff Kent: LAD: One of the top fantasy second basemen for almost a decade, Kent is due for a down year. He is 37 years old and has had a few injuries in recent years. Still, the most important factors in his decline may be his move from hitter-friendly Minute Maid Park, and a very good Houston Astros’ lineup, to the classic pitcher’s haven of Dodger Stadium, and a mediocre lineup.

SS - Rafael Furcal: ATL: Furcal does not get on base as much as a prototypical leadoff hitter (career .347 OBP). This means he needs the guys behind him to come through with RBI when he is on base. In the last two seasons Furcal has had either Gary Sheffield or a healthy J.D. Drew behind him; now he has Brian Jordan and Raul Mondesi. He will still steal bases, but don’t expect 100 runs from him again.

3B - Vinny Castilla: WAS: Castilla has never really had a good year outside of Colorado, and this year should be no different for the 38-year-old. His highest home run total outside of Coors Field has been 25, and that was in very friendly Minute Maid Park. He’s never reached 100 RBIs outside of the thin air. Now, expect him to struggle on an awful Nationals’ team.

OF - Sammy Sosa: BAL: I am taking a risk here, but not as much of a risk as the Orioles did in trading for Sosa. At thirty-six years old, health has now become an issue for Sosa, who missed 36 games last season. Accustomed to being a fan favorite in Chicago, it will also be interesting to see how he responds to increased scrutiny concerning his possible use of steroids.

SP - Kerry Wood: CHC: While Wood can still dominate when he is healthy, he has not been healthy and dominant at the same time in several seasons, and he is already having arm troubles this spring. Whenever a pitcher is having arm troubles, watch out.

RP - Armando Benitez: SF: Closers always face a lot of pressure, and Benitez has never performed well in the spotlight, just ask the New York Mets. It could potentially cost him his closing job if he blows big games in what should be a very tight NL West race.
Reachin’ For Rookies

Drafting a quality rookie in a fantasy baseball draft is almost as difficult as finding a good film in a Kevin Costner collection. Most rookies don’t start the year in the Major Leagues and when they finally do get called up, there is a serious adjustment period involved. Still, hunting down and procuring your very own “Field of Dreams” is an integral part of a good fantasy team. Listed below are some of the top rookies that can contribute to your fantasy baseball squad this year as mid or low round picks in your fantasy draft. And for those keeper leagues, check out the “Future Finds.”

Fantasy First-Years to Watch in 2005

C – Joe Mauer – MIN: Mauer is Peter Gammons’ number one rookie to watch and that’s enough for me. He played well in his short stint in the majors last season and is easily the most talented rookie. He could be a top five player at his position this year and should easily be the top drafted rookie.

1B – Casey Kotchman – LAA: There is a serious lack of quality rookie first basemen this year but Kotchman leads the pack. He is able to hit for power and average and is solid defensively. Unfortunately, he will have trouble displacing Darin Erstad as the starter this year, which limits his fantasy value.

2B – Tadahito Iguchi – CWS: Iguchi is this year’s version of Kaz Matsui although Iguchi will actually play the position that suits him best. Like Matsui, Iguchi is a Japanese league veteran with a mix of speed and power. Although his power numbers won’t translate as well in the major leagues, Iguchi should still steal a good number of bases and hit double-digit home runs. He is a safe bet as a rookie due to his experience overseas.

SS – Clint Barmes – COL: Barmes had a breakout season in 2004 and plays his home games at Coors Field. Wrapping up the starting shortstop position, those facts are enough to merit consideration for this youngster. If all goes well, Barmes could be Colorado’s most productive shortstop ever.

3B – Dallas McPherson – LAA: McPherson should win the starting third-base role in one of the most potent lineups in the major leagues. He’s got the ability to hit 20-25 home runs in the majors and batted over .300 in the minor leagues. Compared to a young Troy Glaus, he is one of the most sure shot rookie producers you will see this year.

OF – Delmon Young – TB: Playing for the Devil Rays, this young talent should see extended playing time this season. He is still a little rough around the edges, but hits for power and has one of the best arms in the game. He will be a star, it’s just a matter of when.

OF – Jeremy Reed – SEA: Reed was the key component of the deal that shipped Freddy Garcia to the White Sox, and for good reason. He has speed, power and defensive ability, making him the top choice to be the center fielder in Seattle for the next ten years. If everything comes together he could hit 20 home runs and steal 30 bases. More likely he’ll be in the ballpark of 15 and 20. Still a good pick up in the later rounds of your draft.

OF – Nick Swisher – OAK: One of Billy Beane’s famed young guns and a main character in the famous book “Moneyball,” Swisher is the trendy choice to be the top rookie of the 2005 season. At the age of 25 he has great plate discipline, signified by his .406 OBP in the minors. He can also hit for power and has major league experience. Still, Swisher has suffered a thumb injury already this season and seems to be having trouble with his swing. He can be a good player in the majors this year, but be careful not to draft him too early.

SP – Dan Meyer – OAK: Another one of Oakland’s young guns, Meyer will be looking to produce right away. With Mark Mulder and Tim Hudson gone, Meyer will step right in behind Barry Zito and Rich Harden as a viable third starter. He may experience some rookie woes, but Billy Beane and the A’s have a good track record when it comes to young pitchers and Meyer is a lefty, which helps.

RP – Brandon League – TOR: League moved from starter to closer midway through the 2004 season and his mid 90’s fastball, rough slider, and good change should be solid tools against big league hitters. Justin Spier is penciled in as the Blue Jays’ closer, but that’s not set in stone. He has a good chance to close for this team. For a rookie, that’s a pretty good proposition.

-Seth Roberts, National Sports Editor

Future Finds: Top Prospects For Years To Come

1. OF - Delmon Young - TB: Young, the Rays’ top prospect, did it all in low Class A last year, belting 25 home runs, collecting 116 RBI and even stealing 21 bases, to complement a .321 batting average.

2. 3B - Andy Marte - ATL: The Braves’ third base prospect of the future, Marte has incredible power for his 6’1”, 185-pound body, crushing 24 home runs last season in AA against competition much older than him.

3. 1B/OF - Ryan Howard - PHI: Although blocked by Jim Thome in Philly, this power prospect launched 48 home runs last season. If traded to another team, Howard is a potential Rookie of the Year candidate for 2005.

4. RHP - Gavin Floyd - PHI: Floyd is one of two prized pitching prospects for the Phillies, along with LHP Cole Hamels. In a late-season call-up to the Phillies in ’04, Floyd produced a 2-0 record with a 3.49 ERA in four starts.

5. LHP - Mike Hinkley - WAS: A probable September call-up, Hinkley posted a combined 2.74 ERA between high A and AA last season and may still develop even more velocity on his already potent 89-92 mph fastball.

6. C/1B - Ryan Garko - CLE. Garko is more likely to have an impact in the majors in ’05 than 1B prospect Michael Aubrey. However, until he finds a permanent position, Garko will probably spend some time this season in AAA. Garko was the Indians’ minor league player of the year in ’04, hitting a combined .336 with 22 HR and 99 RBI between three minor league levels.

7. OF - Curtis Granderson - DET: Granderson hit .303 with 21 HR, 93 RBI and 14 SB in AA last season. Granderson could be Detroit’s Opening Day center fielder, so keep an eye on him.

8. RHP - Jesse Crain - MIN: Crain will tandem with RHP prospect J.D. Durbin in the Twins’ bullpen this season. Crain will most likely be the Twins’ set-up man, while Durbin should start and relieve. Both pitchers throw fastballs in the mid-90s, but Crain will likely have a larger impact on the big league club this season, and is considered Minnesota’s closer of the future.

9. LHP - Zach Duke - PIT: With a slew of injuries to potential Pirates starters before spring training began (Ps John Van Benschoten, Sean Burnett and Bobby Bradley), Duke has a great shot of making the starting rotation. With a mix of impeccable control and a quality curveball, he was 15-6 with an amazing 1.49 ERA to become the team’s minor league pitcher of the year for 2004.

10. 2B - Chris Burke - HOU: Burke will not be counted on to replace former 2B Jeff Kent’s power numbers, but will attempt to hit for average with occasional power. He will likely be the Astros’ number two hitter this season.

-Eric Weinberg, Staff Writer
Hummers for High Schoolers, or...

NBA Set to Institute Age Limit
Adam Marks, Staff Writer

With the National Basketball Association’s collective bargaining agreement set to expire this June, it is likely a league age limit will be instituted. According to ESPN.com’s Chad Ford, the players association and the league owners have discussed a number of changes to the current agreement, most notably the inclusion of an age limit, which would go into effect for the 2006 draft. Currently, American players may declare for the NBA draft immediately after graduating high school, while international prospects must be at least 18 years old. The age limit being discussed would force American players to wait two years after their high school class has graduated, while international players must be 20.

The rule change would allow unprepared league prospects to improve their abilities in college before they declare for the draft. The new age limit would also protect the NBA veterans, allowing them to keep their jobs longer, instead of teams cutting them for a prospect based on potential. Finally, the NBA reportedly finds it difficult to market young players and have been more economically successful when established players are the face of the league.

If the league institutes an age limit, they can expect to be challenged in court. The NFL has a similar age limit, which recently held up in court after being challenged by Maurice Clarett. The new collective bargaining agreement will also reportedly include rules shortening the length of player contracts, lessening their raises, attempting to make it easier to trade players, and possibly creating a minor league system. Still, the proposed age limit is the most notable amendment. For every LeBron James there are ten Lenny Cookes, and the NBA is attempting to put an end to that trend.

Too Much Talent Would Breed Disaster for NCAA
Jordan Holtzman-Conston, Staff Writer

Only a short while ago, NBA fans were privileged enough to watch LeBron James start for the Eastern Conference in the NBA’s 54th annual All-Star game. James logged 31 minutes, second only behind Philadelphia’s Allen Iverson, and played the majority of the crucial fourth quarter. He finished the game with 13 points, 8 rebounds, 6 assists and 2 steals. In addition to his All-Star accomplishments, James is on pace to become only the fourth player in NBA history to average at least 25 points, 7 rebounds, and 7 assists per game in a single season and is a legitimate MVP candidate. As a twenty-year-old, he is leading the previously anemic Cavaliers towards their first playoff appearance in ten seasons.

Imagine if the NBA implemented a rule in which players under the age of 22 were prohibited from playing in the NBA...

On October 2nd, the Duke Blue Devils participate in a preseason scrimmage against the New Orleans Hornets and beat them, by twenty. LeBron James, disallowed from making the jump to the NBA from high school, is currently the star of the team. His teammates include Shaun Livingston, the fourth overall pick in this year’s draft and Luol Deng, a player who entered the NBA draft in 2004 after only one season at Duke. Forget Illinois, North Carolina, and Washington, three of these seasons #1 seeds would belong to a Carmelo Anthony’s Syracuse Orangemen, a Connecticut team featuring Emeka Okefor and Ben Gordon, and the Arizona Wildcats starring Andre Iguodala. Instead of a field filled with a great degree of parity, we would see a field of three or four legitimate title contenders and sixty or so Cinderella teams.

It is clear which case is better for both the NBA and the NCAA. For the most part, players coming out early do not hurt the NBA, but help. This year’s top pick Dwight Howard came straight out of high school and has started every game this season, helping Orlando contend for a playoff spot. Last year Carmello Anthony took Denver to the playoffs, something no college graduate in last season’s draft could have done. Going back ten years, Jason Kidd left Cal after his sophomore season, won rookie of the year, and started in the All-Star game a year later, in his would-be senior year of college. If players have the skills to be in the NBA, then regardless of age they should be able to play in it.

The NCAA tournament is the most exciting three weeks in sports and a large part of that is because twenty teams enter each year as legitimate final four contenders. I don’t think any of us want to see a LeBron-led Duke team steamroll their way to the final four. I think we would rather see a field where four seeds like Louisville and Syracuse have almost as good a chance as top seeds like Duke and Washington and Duke. Going into conference tournament play, approximately 12 teams were in contention for the four number one seeds. Without top college and high school players leaving early for the NBA I don’t see how there are more than a few title contenders. The top-level players should be in the NBA, college basketball is supposed to be a step down talent wise.

If top high school recruits go to college with no intention of sticking around all four years, they are simply taking up scholarship money from athletes who plan on graduating. Should players like Carmelo Anthony and Chris Bosh be allowed to attend a college for only a single season then leave for the NBA? Aren’t they taking away playing time and roster spots from other potential college athletes that really need a scholarship and won’t be making millions in the NBA? Early entry into the NBA draft serves essentially as a college salary cap. It balances out the teams and keeps parity present in a league without free agency or trades.

In men’s college basketball we have seen 14 different number one seeds in the past four years. In the women’s bracket we have seen only ten in the same time span. In the women’s game there are the same top teams every year and we often see four number one seeds in the final four. This is because the women do not go to the WNBA after only a few years in college or straight from high school. Instead they stay and play for four years and build dynasties. This usually leads to a rather boring tournament up until the final weekend of play. Players leaving early or not going to college at all is the best thing for the NCAA whether they realize it or not. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the level of competition we have now in college basketball, why start keeping the best players out of the NBA?
...Deny Their Draft and Delay the Dough

Imagine that you are an eighteen-year old kid out of inner city Philadelphia, where much of your life thus far has consisted of poverty, violence and domestic abuse. Every day is a struggle for you to survive on the streets in a brutally rough neighborhood.

All of that is about to change in a matter of minutes. It is the night of the NBA draft in Madison Square Garden, and Commissioner David Stern is about to call out your name as a lottery pick. You are only days removed from your high school graduation, and you are about to be thrown millions of dollars via a contract and endorsements. Many have chosen this intriguing path, including superstars Kevin Garnett, LeBron James, and Dwight Howard.

Some of the immense problems that these youngsters find themselves with include drugs, alcohol abuse and violence. One who is out of the NBA before their 25th birthday, may not be a billionaire, but is still well taken care of financially. The chances of them going out and becoming more educated and finding another career path are rather slim.

Alcohol abuse, drugs, and violence are only some of the problems with which these young men could find themselves involved. Being rich at such a young age gives them no incentive to become more educated and to endeavor to assume another profession. What kind of message does that send out to those who emulate them?

Charity is an option, but not a likely one for these gentlemen. When was the last time Darius Miles signed a check for a charity? This is not just picking on him; the fact of the matter is that this money is rarely spent on others in desperate need.

Jonathan Bender, Kwame Brown and Miles have all had a difficult transition going from high school to playing professional basketball, both on and off the court. Allen Iverson and Elton Brand

Pitfalls of Parity in the NCAA

Dave Ostrowsky, Staff Writer

may not be potential recipients for humanitarian awards, but, at the very least, they can retire knowing they attended first rate universities.

Sure, LeBron James is on his way to becoming one of, if not the greatest, NBA player. But, would he not have been this successful in the NBA if he had spent a year, or maybe even two, in college? Why not add a collegiate national championship to the resume? James would be putting up those eye popping numbers, while still being in his early twenties.

One may argue, what is the point of going to college, even for that one year, when much needed money is waiting for you in the NBA? It is difficult to address that issue from only having the experience of living a middle class lifestyle. But, it is not as though these basketball players would be subject to poverty and violence living on a pleasant college campus. Almost all of these guys go to college on a full scholarship and enjoy many other benefits.

Thousands of young Americans living in urban areas are hoping to follow James’ lead of making the successful jump from high school basketball to the professional level. Chances are not one of them will be able to pull it off as successfully as James. Yet James is pushing Sprite in his commercials instead of education.

College basketball is good right now and March Madness is always great. But wouldn’t exciting players such as LeBron James and Amare Stoudemire make it even more special? Sure there’s the potential that the college basketball powerhouses like Duke University, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Connecticut could become even stronger and diminish the parity in college basketball. But what is wrong with NCAA dynasties? Does a different team have to win the national championship every season?

Had the Minnesota Timberwolves not taken Kevin Garnett straight out of a small South Carolina high school with the fifth overall pick in the 1995 NBA draft, who knows if there would been this influx of players coming out early. It was a courageous decision that paid off tremendous benefits for him and encouraged many others to do the same. It would be even more courageous for Garnett to one day speak out, advocating for young children in South Carolina to attend the University of South Carolina.
SportsCenter’s Top 10, Sunday morning: eight slam dunks and two buzzer-beating half-court heaves.

The style of the game, the marketability of players, and the faces that represent the game of basketball rely most heavily on one thing: athleticism. Ask a hundred people who they’d rather see play basketball, Tony Parker or Kobe Bryant, Tim Duncan or Tracy McGrady, J.J. Redick or Rashad McCants, and ninety-five would answer in favor of the more athletic, more exciting, and less fundamental.

Most fans approach teams with a similar attitude: most prefer attending a Georgia Tech game as opposed to a Gonzaga game or a North Carolina game instead of a Texas Tech game. The Texas Tech Red Raiders, coached by fundamentals virtuoso Bobby Knight, play a fundamentally flawless, technically unblemished style of basketball, yet most fans consider them “boring” to watch. Steve Lavin, commentator for ESPN, writes: “The Red Raiders just know how to play the game.” This style of play led to an overachieving Texas Tech squad that reached the Sweet 16 this postseason.

Basketball has evolved so drastically today that it is more important to present a collection of athletes than a well-balanced, well-disciplined team. Hence the success of deceptively talented, well-trained college teams in the NCAA tournament, like Vermont over the more heralded Syracuse in the first round. Taylor Coppenrath, the 6’9” forward for Vermont plays efficacious, text-book basketball: his season is longer than the more athletic and popular Hakim Warrick. The University of Illinois Fighting Illini boast three superstars who focus on the team and defense, not the individual, and offense: they were the #1 team in the country for the majority of the season.

The fundamental player is the player who runs off screens with fluidity and shoots with purity, who stops short for a six-foot jump shot instead of attempting a dunk because it is a safer option, who makes a good individual finish against an opposing player and silently runs to the other end of the court instead of celebrating with his hands over his head. One rarely talks about this player.

Three weeks ago I visited my best friend at the University of North Carolina. We went to the gym to play pick-up basketball one afternoon. I rested on the sideline while my friend, a fundamentally sound player who shoots and passes with grace, played. He was the best player on the floor for two games, leading his team to victory both times. He scored the majority of his team’s points off of graceful jump shots and dished out assist after assist. Yet when the games ended, no one congratulated him or invited him to play with them again. Rather, the opposing team was embarrassed at having lost to a “shooter”; they refused to slap hands with him and ignored him when he left the court, as they casually attempted athletic dunk after dunk.

I watched in amazement this microcosm of the current state basketball: simply, my friend was disrespected because he is not a supreme athlete. He is one of the best fundamental basketball players I know, yet they were unimpressed. If he only was able to dunk, they would have loved him.

The state of affairs is no different in college or the NBA. Fans want to see dunks and one-on-one play – and that is what they are getting. ESPN’s SportsCenter, the sports show that has revolutionized the game of basketball, showcases high-flying slam dunks and blocked shots that sky-rocket into the stands: the routine jump shot is rare. Every kid in America wants to be the next T-Mac or Kobe. Outside of Houston and San Antonio, Tracy McGrady jerseys are significantly more popular than Tony Parker jerseys. Parker has been an integral part of the Spurs franchise in each of his four seasons in the NBA, while McGrady was traded from a fledgling Orlando team this past season. He later admitted that he did not always give his sincerest effort while in an Orlando uniform. His lackadaisical attitude was not criticized by fans: rather, their admiration for McGrady’s entertaining athletic style of play propelled his jersey into the top five best selling jerseys in the NBA in a recent survey. Meanwhile, Tony Parker failed to make this list, which contains the top twenty-five jerseys sold in the NBA. ESPN, ABC, and TNT frequently nationally broadcast the superstar-led Cleveland Cavaliers, Houston Rockets, and L.A. Lakers over the more team-oriented San Antonio Spurs, Dallas Mavericks, and Detroit Pistons.

And yet, when one looks atop the league standings, one sees the Spurs, Pistons, Suns, Duke Blue Devils and the Fighting Illini. These teams do not play flashy basketball or gloat, nor do they have a superstar whose demands come before those of the team. They play controlled, fundamental, team basketball…and they win. Fans, players, and owners may salivate over the superstar and worship the high flying, quick moving athlete: but come March and later in July, when one of the teams listed above is holding the championship trophy, I’ll just be smiling, nodding my head, and saying “I told you so”.

Praise to the Fundamental Athlete

Sidney Coren, Staff Writer
Brandeis Baseball preview: A New Season and a Chance for an NCAA Tournament Bid
Danny Katzman, Brandeis Sports Editor

The end of winter does not only symbolize the start of the Major League Baseball season, but also Brandeis University spring sports. After spending over a week in Florida, the Brandeis University baseball team returns to Waltham hoping to match the success of a recent Boston baseball team (sorry Yankee fans).

The Brandeis University baseball team begins the 2005 season with high expectations. After a 16-15 record and an ECAC bid a year ago, the team knows its potential and sets its sights on something more—a birth to the NCAA tournament. According to senior captain Brian Lambert, “We had a bit of a down year last year and a lot of guys put in hard work during the winter, and it has shown thus far.” The Judges recently finished their competitive UAA schedule in a second place tie behind Washington University. Brandeis swept Emory University, the defending UAA champions, and managed to defeat starting pitcher Will Carr, snapping his Division III record 26-game win streak. Junior starting pitcher Tim Dunphy carries the weight of the starting rotation, while Lambert anchors the bullpen. Dunphy was selected as a second team all-UAA performer this season, leading this year’s team to the NCAA Tournament. Junior pitcher, Tim Dunphy, leads the Judges’ pitching staff with a 4-2 record and a 2.30 ERA. Although Lambert is only a sophomore, he is leading the Judges’ starting rotation with a 4-2 record and a 2.30 ERA in six games started. Lambert, an all-UAA basketball performer, has started the 2005 season red hot. In his first eleven appearances of the season, Lambert has a 0.83 ERA with one victory and six saves. Sophomores Ben Dashefsky (OF) and Jonathan Winston (C), along with junior shortstop Zach Golden earned first team all-UAA honors. Winston was the team’s leading hitter in UAA play, with a .529 batting average and four doubles. The Judges’ mix of youth and veteran leadership should make them a contender all season and well into the postseason. “We have a strong group of senior leadership on this team, and a lot of talent from top to bottom,” Lambert noted. The present and future both look promising for the Judges, and the Judges are well on their way towards a postseason berth.

Gonzo is Gone: Hunter S. Thompson, 67
Leor Galil, Staff Writer

The man could tackle a quarterback better with words than a 250-pound gorilla of a linebacker could on the field. With the death of Hunter S. Thompson, most famous for his early 70’s novel Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, the blow that befell the literary and journalism community also made waves in the sports community. Thompson, the godfather of “Gonzo journalism,” started – and promptly ended his career as a sports writer.

While serving in the Air Force, Thompson began his career in the world of journalism as a sports writer for his base’s paper. Even after his rise to fame in the early 70’s, Thompson continued writing about sports in a column for ESPN’s website entitled “Hey Rube.” Thompson’s last column, published February 15, 2005, featured a homage to one of his favorite topics, the imaginary sport he and Bill Murray had invented, shotgun golf. It’s hard for Thompson’s sport to ever develop, as he had planned for it to in the article, considering he died at the hands of the sport’s nine-iron.

Thompson died doing what he was born to do: writing. Found face down over his typewriter, the man took his own life, and he went out the only way he knew how: with a flash. The influence he has had on the world of journalism is substantial. He was one of the key individuals responsible for the creation of New Journalism, a more narrative type of journalism, which his Gonzo-style form was epitomized. His style of journalism challenged people to redefine what was classified as news.

Thompson also played a role in the rise of blogs, which have had a huge effect on how people get and relate to their news. His idealistic goal to involve laymen in the dissemination and interpretation of news has been realized, and today many blogs are viewed as serious news sources. Thompson’s humor that could knock anyone off their feet. His ability to insult and degrade anyone in his path, from his mortal enemy Richard Nixon to Ray Lewis during the Ravens’ historic, defensive-fueled Super Bowl championship year, carried a massive punch, especially when coupled with his innate ability for ingenious word play. Thompson rarely held his opinions back, instead choosing to wear his heart on his sleeve. When referring to sports writers, he said: “Sports writers are a kind of rude and brainless subculture of fascist drunks whose only real function is to publicize and sell whatever the sports editor sends them out to cover. . . Which is a nice way to make a living, because it keeps a man busy and requires no thought at all.” Simply put, the man had the ability to insult like a first-rate stand-up comedian, combined with the vocabulary of a Harvard doctorate.

Unfortunately, Thompson’s role in the sports world will likely be obscured by his drug-addled personality and the massive popularity of his milestone classic Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas. While there’s plenty of reason for this, there is no reason he should not also be remembered for his contributions to the sports world. His humor and sharp wit certainly seem to have influenced current sports writers such as Tony Kornheiser and Michael Wilbon. Whatever the effect, Thompson’s dedication and contributions to the world of sports and sports journalism should always be remembered; he started, and very literally ended his career as a sports journalist. Maybe a proper tribute would be a nice game of shotgun golf - held the shotgun.
NFL Draft in Preview: The Stars of Tomorrow Today

Ben Gellman-Chomsky, Layout Editor

With the NFL amateur draft approaching quickly, The Louis Lunatic turns its attention to projecting this year’s picks. It looks to be a fairly deep draft, with impressive talent available at several positions. For this analysis, we’ll assume that nobody trades their pick. While this is not likely to be the case, it is tougher to predict trades than picks, so we’ll just stick to the latter.

With the loss of Muhsin Muhammad, the Panthers must find a complement for Steve Smith. Williamson is bigger than Smith and just as fast (4.29-40), with great hands.

15. Kansas City Chiefs: Carlos Rogers, CB, sr., Auburn
The Chiefs are in dire need of a defensive player who can prevent opponents from just rolling downfield. Rogers possesses great attributes across the board.

16. New Orleans Saints: Thomas Davis, S, jr., Georgia
While there are better defensive players on the board, they are ends, which the Saints don’t need. Davis can play either safety or linebacker, and could be asked by the Saints to do either.

17. Cincinnati Bengals: Travis Johnson, DT, sr., Florida State
The Bengals will continue to look to improve themselves on defense, and Johnson fits the bill as a top prospect at a position of need.

18. Minnesota Vikings: Anttaj Hawthorne, DT, sr., Wisconsin
Hawthorne appears to be the big run-stuffing presence that the Vikings would like to slide in next to Kevin Williams.

19. St. Louis Rams: Jamaal Brown, OT, sr., Oklahoma
Since Kyle Turley likely will not be back, the Rams need a major pass-blocker. Brown, who stands 6’6” and weighs in at 313 lbs., is a perfect fit.

20. Dallas Cowboys: Erasmus James, DE, sr., Wisconsin
The Cowboys should continue to improve their defensive line here, selecting James, who is an injury risk but possesses great talent.

Spears’ slide from his initial projection as a top-15 prospect ends here, where the Jags, who badly need pass rushers, snatch up the defensive end they’ve been eyeing.

22. Baltimore Ravens: Roddy White, WR, jr., UAB
White will complement Derrick Mason nicely as a vertical threat for Kyle Boller as the Ravens start building a passing game.

23. Seattle Seahawks: David Pollack, DE, sr., Georgia
After losing Chike Okeke in free agency the Seahawks need a pass rusher, and Pollack, with his high motor, fits the bill nicely.

The Packers, who need players on the offensive line and in the secondary, should snap up Pool, a speedy and hard-hitting safety.

25. Denver Broncos: Demarcus Ware, DE, sr., Troy State
The Broncos must upgrade along the defensive front, and Ware has a history of success and leadership that appeal to Mike Shanahan.

Washington, who clocked a 4.28 time in the 40, is the draft’s fastest prospect, and projects as a terrific cornerback.

27. Atlanta Falcons: Mark Clayton, WR, sr., Oklahoma
Clayton, who possesses terrific speed, could do what Peerless Price couldn’t: be a legitimate threat for Michael Vick’s cannon arm.

28. San Diego Chargers: Brandon Browner, DB, jr., Oregon State
Browner, with his great size, could be either a cornerback or a safety, both of which the Chargers need.

29. Indianapolis Colts: Bryant McFadden, DB, sr., Florida State
McFadden has the right size and track record for the job, one the Colts are anxious to fill.

30. Pittsburgh Steelers: Heath Miller, TE, jr., Virginia
Miller is far and away the best tight end in the draft this year, and the Steelers badly need a pass-catcher at the position.

The Eagles, who are losing most of their linebacker corps, would benefit by picking the speedy and talented Burnett.

32. New England Patriots: Justin Miller, DB, jr., Clemson
The Patriots need defensive backs, and Miller is a talented youngster with good upside.

Make sure to tune in for the draft on April 23-24 on ESPN, so you can see where the players from your favorite colleges are drafted!
Basketball Diaries: UAA Men’s Basketball

Scott Green, Staff Writer

The University Athletic Association (UAA) is regarded as one of the most competitive and intense Division III conferences in America. This season, compared with sixty other conferences, the Massey Ratings Index ranked the UAA as the fifth-most talented D-III league in the country and the eighth-most balanced league. In other words, there are some tough S.O.B.s in this association. If you need proof, let me quickly take you on a tour of the league.

Last season, NYU’s Daniel Falcon literally broke our poor Aaron Charlop-Woodhead. In an exhibition game this season against Springfield, freshman Stephen Hill bumped heads with guard Damien Farley. Farley was carried off on a stretcher fifteen minutes later, and Hill walked off the court, blood dripping from his forehead, declaring, “That’s what happens when you run into the man of steel.” Finally, there is NYU’s Jason Boone – who is best known for causing opposing centers to suddenly fall ill the night before the game with what doctors refer to as “Boone-itis” (just ask Bryan Lambert, who might tell you his flu-like symptoms were just a coincidence).

Passionate rivalries exist throughout the UAA: Brandeis/NYU, Wash U/Chicago, and Carnegie Mellon/Rochester are just a few examples. Unlike other DIII conferences, the geography of the UAA allows student-athletes to travel across the country to battle conference opponents. From January 19 until February 13, the Brandeis basketball team spent nine days in Waltham and sixteen days in Cleveland. In an exhibition game this season against George Washington, a Division I school, senior Omri Ayalon almost got in a fight with fans at the University of Chicago who wore wooden W’s on their heads in honor of guard Brandon Woodhead. In an exhibition game this season against Springfield, freshman Stephen Hill bumped heads with guard Damien Farley. Farley was carried off on a stretcher fifteen minutes later, and Hill walked off the court, blood dripping from his forehead, declaring, “That’s what happens when you run into the man of steel.” Finally, there is NYU’s Jason Boone – who is best known for causing opposing centers to suddenly fall ill the night before the game with what doctors refer to as “Boone-itis” (just ask Bryan Lambert, who might tell you his flu-like symptoms were just a coincidence).

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Posting Up with UAA Rookie of the Year Jaime Capra

Danny Katzman, Brandeis Sports Editor

Danny Katzman: What is the typical day of Jaime Capra like?
Jaime Capra: Locking myself in Cable 303 with Kiersten [Holgash] and eating pints of Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream from the C-store.

DK: You live quite a life.
JC: I don’t know. Danny, how would you describe me?
DK: That’s more than one word.

JC: Outgoing.
DK: Perfect.

DK: Kiersten Holgash, roommate of Jaime, in one word, how would you describe your roommate?
Kiersten Holgash: Confident. That’s why she’s a good basketball player and such an outgoing person.

DK: Good answer. Much better than Jaime’s.

DK: What is the best thing about playing college basketball at Brandeis?
JC: The UAA [United Athletic Association] allows us to travel to places I’ve never been, but the best part is definitely the meal money.

DK: What was your best moment on a basketball court in your life?
JC: Probably after I scored the basket to break the Old Bridge High School scoring record. They stopped the game for a while to honor the accomplishment. It was pretty cool.

DK: You’ve been playing basketball your whole life. What is the funniest thing that has ever happened to you on the court?
JC: I swear to you that this is a true story. During an AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] game in ninth grade, I was dominating this girl and talking a little trash to her. So after the game, when we were shaking hands, I reached my hand out to shake her hand and all of a sudden she punched me right in the face. Before I knew what happened, this girl on my team jumped from the end of the line and tackled her right to the ground and they were wrestling on the ground for a few minutes. It was a classic moment.

DK: I’ve heard you were quite an athlete in high school; all-state in basketball, softball, and volleyball. What is your favorite sport?
JC: Actually, my favorite sport is surfing. I want to be a pro surfer when I graduate.

DK: Are you a good surfer?
JC: Not really, but I will be after this summer.
DK: Fair enough.

DK: It most definitely has been a rough year since those guys [Red Sox] won this year, but I still sport the Yankees hat. I actually made a bet with a teammate during the Yankees/Red Sox American League Championship Series. The loser has to jump in the Massell Pond. I guess I’ll wait until it gets a little warmer out or hope she forgets.

DK: If you could play one-on-one with anyone in the world, who would it be?
JC: No doubt. Justin Timberlake because I love him.

DK: Who would win?
JC: Who cares?

Favorites…

Superhero: Spiderman.
Athlete: Kobe Bryant.

Carol Simon Moment: Early in the year, she was angry and picked up a cup of water and threw it as hard as she could. She got a technical, and we all got a pretty good laugh after the game.

Member of the Men’s Basketball Team: That’s a tough one. I’d say Danny Katzman. (That’s a popular decision. I’d have to agree.)
**Homegrown Report**

**“Hawaiian” Joe Udell, Publicity Director**

The transition from winter to spring on the East Coast is determined by the temperature; in Hawaii, the waves dictate the season. Late March to early April brings the unexpected to Hawaii’s waves, but fear not. Oahu has something for everyone.

North Shore: Don’t pack up those short boards just yet, there’s plenty of big wave surfing to be had. Expect as high as 10 foot waves on Oahu’s most beautiful stretch of beach.

West Shore: A great alternative to the huge waves up north. Ranging from 3-6 feet, these waves are powerful but still surfable for the experienced rider.

East Shore: A mixed bag of waves. With waves varying from flat to 3 feet, it might be a good idea to bust out the body board, save for those occasional 3 footers.

South Shore: With waves in the 2-4 foot range, long board season looks like it is coming a little early to Honolulu. Beat the summer rush and hit up your favorite South Shore spot. The waves will be there.

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**The Easy Minute**

**Eric Horowitz, Staff Writer**

Greetings from London, where “Duke” is a royal title, not a perennially overrated early tournament flameout (Take that Jay Bilas!), “Sheffield Wednesdays” is a soccer team, not MLB telling Gary what day to submit a urine sample (Take that George Steinbrenner!), and “Stuart Scott” is an idiotic incoherent sports anchor ... just like he is everywhere else (Take that Stuart Scott!) Despite being overseas I’m still in touch with all my secret sources and ready to bring you all the stories from the wide world of sport you might have missed.

A new study using the Body Mass Index found that nearly half of NBA players are overweight. However, in a follow up study where players were asked to remove their marijuana from their pockets before being weighed, only 2% were found to be overweight.

The ratings for the first two days of the NCAA tournament were the highest since CBS began full day coverage in 1991. Network executives credit the ratings increase to their “Dicky V doesn’t work here” ad campaign, which finally got people to realize Dick Vitale doesn’t broadcast any tournament games on CBS.

After giving testimony to Congress in which he denied using steroids, Rafael Palmeiro said he’s “very happy” he went. Most observers agreed that he seemed happy, but some believed that it may have just been the Viagra talking. Meanwhile, Mark McGwire gave a very quiet and evasive testimony, responding to numerous questions with “I’m retired.” A confused McGwire later admitted he thought he was at a hearing on President Bush’s new social security plan.

The Buffalo Sabres’ AHL farm team is experimenting with a new blue and fluorescent orange colored ice surface. So far the ice has received good reviews, and team executives say people will like it even more once the strobe lights are installed and the arena concession stands start selling ecstasy.

Six-time Tour De France champion Lance Armstrong dropped out of the Paris-Nice race due to a sore throat. Armstrong acknowledged that most riders compete with much more severe ailments, but said he was worried that if his throat got worse he wouldn’t be able to sing along with girlfriend Sheryl Crow at her next concert.

The Steve Spurrier era kicked off in South Carolina with the start of spring practice. As will be his routine for the rest of the spring, Spurrier skipped the practice to play golf with Danny Wuerffel.

Magic guard Steve Francis was suspended three games for kicking a courtside photographer. Francis claims the kick was consensual.

Finally, The NFL has reversed its position and will now allow the word “gay” to appear on the back of personalized jerseys. The decision by the NFL means that sports fans wanting to show off their gay pride will no longer be forced to buy Mike Piazza jerseys.

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**Exclusive 2005 MLB Picks**

Our Editorial Board’s Fearless Predictions

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Don’t forget each Wednesday night/Thursday morning from 12-2am you can hear host Aaron Katzman on Overtime with "Dr. Evil" Scott Green, "Hawaiian" Joe Udell, "Big" Aaron Szekel, and "Psycho" Sid Coren toe the line and never hold back during the "Overtime" sports show. From Hawaii to St. Louis from California to Dallas, the Sports Guys span the globe in this two hour show. With "Easy E" Eric Horowitz on assignment in London, England, no sport is left untouched on this exciting show.

It's Double Overtime every Thursday night/Friday morning 12-2am with hosts Andrew "Cookie" Katz and "Jersey" Jay Hyne who talk up with Ben "The Young Nucleus" Gelman-Chomsky and Bryan "The Dog" Steinkohl. A bit controversial with some New York Yankees fans on board, this show likes to debate the main topics in sports. If you need some Yankees/Red Sox banter, there is no better place to find it than right here!

Want to call in and discuss sports? Give us a call at (781) 736-5277 or x65BRS on the Brandeis Campus or WBRSFM on AIM!

Question, comments, or concerns email Sports Directors Aaron Katzman and Ben Wolinsky at sports@wbros.org
The Louis Lunatic says:

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