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small TALK

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Spirit Fest pg. 2

Ashley Young
News Editor

"This was an experience that I have never felt in my life. They treated you like the star of the show. I started out by going to Raleigh, I went with the flow, and this is how I ended up. It has not come to an end yet," said Debra Teasley, a business major, who recently starred on Wheel of Fortune.

In Nov. of 2006, auditions were held in Raleigh at Crabtree Valley Mall for contestants to be on Wheel of Fortune. Teasley decided she wanted to go and try out. The auditions were held on a Saturday and Sunday, with three chances to be on stage and hundreds of people auditioning. Teasley was unsuccessful on Saturday-but that did not deter her. Instead she made a strategy for Sunday, noting that personalities came across strongest,



and was chosen to have her picture sent to Los Angeles.

After another audition at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Cary, Teasley was told she would more than likely be on the show, but it could take up to a year before it was filmed. It was not until Dec. that she received a call from the Sony Producer. She would be partnered

on the show with Country Music star Richie McDonald, a member of Lonestar.

"McDonald was the best partner that I could have ever had, because if it wasn't for him, I don't know if the outcome would have been the same," said Debra about her teammate.

Teasley won \$5,350 cash, a \$1,000 digital karaoke system,

a trip to Las Vegas Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino for four nights and five days, two tickets to the Blue Man Group, a tour of Hoover Dam, spa treatment, an additional \$1,000 spending cash. The cherry on top of Teasley's sundae of prizes was a 2007 Porsche, just for her participation in the show.



Movie Reviews pg. 5

In Depth: Life on Campus

A series examining living conditions in residence halls



Ashley Genova
Editor-In-Chief

Weaver Hall, named for the first president of Methodist, is a three-story, all-female residence hall located across from Garber Hall. The cost to live in Weaver is \$1,850 for a year.

Bathrooms are shared between two rooms, and each room houses two residents. The bathrooms have showers, but no bathtubs. Two sinks give the residents more room for grooming.

"I guess if the people in the adjacent room are nice, it's okay," said chemistry major Marianne Mosch in reference to sharing a bathroom. She also said she had no trouble keeping the bathroom clean.

Melinda Roberts, a freshman, said that it was complicated to figure out a schedule for showering between her and the other three residents, especially if they all have an early morning class.

Jessi Harris, a freshman biology major, complained

about the height of the shower head. "(We need) higher shower heads. One time, I turned and hit my face on it."

Some residents have complained about water temperature and pressure, but some are satisfied with the water.

For those who prefer baths to showers, there is a bathroom with a tub on either side of all the floors. However, not all the bathrooms appear clean, and one on the first floor is being used as storage for paintbrushes.

Weaver's lobby is the meeting place of activities such



Hole and watermarks in a ceiling tile. Photo by Cassandra Wells.

Weaver Hall

as "Paint 'til You Faint" and "Nicks and Needles." Seven couches and nine armchairs are placed neatly through the lobby. A decorative oriental rug covers the floor.

However, Mosch said she did not believe the lobby was well lit.

The ceiling of the lobby, near the guest sign-in table, has a hole of about six inches around. Sometimes, water drips from it and stains the carpet.

The ceiling tiles in the hallways also have holes and watermarks. While most of the ceiling tiles are in good condition, some expose pipes. The metal around some tiles is rusted.

The rooms themselves are measured at 15 by 13 feet. Each room includes two beds, two desks, two plastic chairs, and two wardrobes.

Harris said, "I'd like more room, but it's good enough."

Mosch disagreed, and said she wished for more storage room.

One of the most heard

complaints about Weaver involve the heating and air units. The entire hall is set either on heat or air, but residents have some control the settings in their own rooms.

Mosch said she usually keeps her heat on low. But she also said, "With the heating you have to open up the window or you'll cook."

Roberts has also had problems with her heating and air. She said, "When it was not yet summer but not yet winter, they still had the heat on and it was like 70 degrees. I think we should be able to control if we want air or heat. Plus (the units)

continued on page 2, see Weaver



Biblical painting on the basement wall. Photo by Cassandra Wells.

small TALK

Opinions.....3

Entertainment.....5

Sports.....7

We want to hear from you! Post your comments on www.smalltalkmc.com

Gone With the Wind

Neglected Southern Writers

Ashley Young
News Editor

Teachers, scholars, and students alike gathered on Fri and Sat of Feb 23-24 to listen to pieces honoring Southern writers which were lost or neglected through the years.

Carole Brown Knuth from Buffalo State College spoke on Bennie Lee Sinclair in "Pilgrimage of the Hills: Revisiting Bennie Lee Sinclair." Sinclair was an Appalachian poet with her "artistic ability welded to her Southern identity," said Knuth.

Similar to Bennie Lee Sinclair was the next poet honored. Raymond W. Mize from Southeastern Community College spoke of A.R. Ammons in a piece called, "If We Could Be a Little at Home." Ammons wanted us to "dwell poetically in places."

Next Jesse Freeman, a free lance video producer, played a documentary that he had made on a Georgia author, Raymond Andrews. The film was entitled "Somebody Else, Somewhere Else." The film was about Andrew's life and the fact that he wrote despite his lack of a formal education. The last of his books was a biography entitled, *Last Radio Baby* and was about the stark segregation in rural versus urban America.

Freeman began researching Andrews over four years ago and made the movie because, "Southern Literature was a grain part of my life."

From Southern Arkansas University was the next speaker, Donnis W. Taylor, who spoke on Ada Jack Carver in a piece called, "Ada Jack Carver's Position in American Letters." Carver's "Classification as a local colorist is an oversimplification." She was instead a, "Southern regionalist," said Taylor. Carver "focused on picture image, scenery, and people," said Taylor.

Steve Knepper from the University of Virginia spoke on Frank Stanford in a piece called, "His Own Yoknapatawpha: The Surreal World of Frank Stanford's Poetry." Stanford's longest poem, "The Battlefield Where the Moon Says I Love You," was 15,000 lines, published in 1977, and had no punctuation.

Gregg A. Hecimovich, from East Carolina University, talked about an African American woman who was an escaped slave in a piece called, "Searching for Hannah Crafts in Eastern North Carolina."

From Emory University, Frances Abbott spoke on spoke on Raymond Andrews in her piece, "Once I Got into

Mukhogeon County, I Just Couldn't Leave': Exploring the Morgan/Muskhogeon County Line in the Life and Writing of Raymond Andrews."

Gordon C. Sauer III, from Clemson University also spoke on Andrews in a piece called "From Manuscripts to Muskhogeon: The Creation of Appalachian Red for Raymond Andrew's First Novel." Sauer said that though "Appalachee Red was carefully constructed his identity was undermined," in regards to Andrews.

The next speaker was Steve Knepper from the University of Virginia. His speech was entitled, "Violence and the Blues in Raymond Andrews's Appalachian Red."

Laura Patterson from Seton Hill University next spoke on "Baby Sweet's Revenge: Ritualized Sexual Violence in Raymond Andrews's 'Appalachee Red.'"

From Barton College was Katherine James who's piece was entitled, "Raymond Andrews's 'Rosiebelle Lee Wildcat Tennessee' and the Illusion of Completeness."

Christin Taylor from the University of Virginia spoke on "Libido, Lactation, and Les Femmes Fatales: Female Performance in 'Jessie and Jesus and Cousin Claire.'"

Weaver

continued from page 1.

are filled with dust and for people with asthma and allergies it's really bad."

Mosch said she thinks that there is another allergy problem in Weaver. "I have a theory that there is mold. And there are rashes all over my body that suddenly disappear after I leave campus for two days."

With the watermarks on the ceiling, mold is a possible problem for the hall.

Harris said she enjoys the

activities hosted by the resident advisors. She said there are a decent variety of activities "so people have no excuse to go out and get drunk."

Weaver Hall's basement is home to the Fellowship of Christian Athlete's meetings. The basement stairwell is painted blue with Jesus fish, seaweed, a whale, and a biblical scripture.

Weaver Hall has a kitchen for all the residents. However, resident advisors say it is messy because those who use it do not clean up after they cook. The utensils are old, but resident advisor Amber Smith said she hopes to replace them.

Show Some Spirit

Ashley Young
News Editor

"I think it was very inspirational and it touched a lot of people's minds and hearts," said Taron Stubbs, one of the hosts of Spirit Fest.

Feb. 1 is the commencement of Black History month and Methodist University celebrated by holding the first annual Spirit Fest. Speeches on Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, and Maya Angelou were presented. Poems were read, songs and dances

were performed, and an insight was given on James Langston Hughes.

"I am excited because I believe this it is going to be successful. I think this event will help Methodist students appreciate different cultures," said Ferron Grant, a sophomore English major.

Melinda Roberts, a freshman majoring in occupational environmental science said, "I think it's a great way for people to come together to share their talents and abilities in the name of cultural education."



Taron Stubbs and Nervin Dedeaux hosted Spirit Fest.
Photo by Ashley Young

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smallTALK is the student-run newspaper of Methodist College. It is published every other week throughout the school year. The newspaper is editorially independent of Methodist College, and any ideas and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the faculty, staff and administration of Methodist College.

smallTALK welcomes Letters to the Editor. All letters should be delivered to the Student Media office on the first floor of Bern's Student Center or sent via e-mail to ashgenova@yahoo.com. Story suggestions should be sent to the same address.

Students are free to join smallTALK at any point in the school year. Meetings are every Tuesday at 4 p.m. in the Heritage Dining Room.

Trustees Push for Renovations

Ashley Young
News Editor

"I think that right now it is our most pressing concern at the moment. The condition of those residence is one of the major problems in lack of retention of Freshman students. With our continuing expansion in size both population and resources [there is] no reason that this improvement should not be carried out immediately," said Kevin Page, President of Student Government Association.

Trustees are not upset but instead frustrated about the

traditional residence halls. The halls need renovations and the main topics were the air conditioning and heating units because they do not heat or cool correctly.

Pierce and West have small individual units in their windows however to do that in every room of every residence hall would cost \$250,000. The pipes are the big issue and removing them would have to be done during the Summer.

"The main area of contention is over how to do it," said Page.

Opinions

Remille's Rhetoric

Remille Shipman
Sports Editor



There are a couple of people that have recently said that we as a staff are a little too negative here.

I can't speak for my colleagues, but since I'm having trouble finding good things to write about (everybody's beating me to the good stuff), I'm going to get these things off my chest because I can't stand to hold them in any longer.

First off, I'd like to talk about the situation concerning our fitness center. What's taking so long?

About a month ago I was walking to class in the Trustees Building when I started a conversation with a friend of mine about the delays in the construction in the new fitness center.

From my understanding, this center was supposed to be completed by February.

But the doors haven't even been opened yet. People are starting to show concern about the actual date of the fitness center's opening.

That fitness center has taken so long to get ready that I wouldn't be surprised to hear that it won't be ready for occupation until next semester. Our dodge ball tournament (scheduled on Feb. 21) already got postponed.

Then again, the building could be finished by the time this article hits the stands.

I hope the latter situation happens.

I've wanted to address this next issue for a while. I live with two basketball players, and on at

least two occasions they have shown dismay over the lack of support at their games. We were last in the USA South in home attendance with less than 200 fans per game; I feel that we should at least double that. Our season-high crowd was 296 during the season opener in November, and I think that's insane.

Basketball is supposedly a revenue sport in college, but the 2006-2007 seasons were hard to watch in part because of the lackluster crowd.

The team may have suffered through consecutive losing seasons, but they deserve better than an average of 181 fans per contest.

Other things have concerned me as well. The dwindling number of smallTALK staffers for one thing as well as the fact that we even had to form a retention committee. But its formation at least shows that we are trying to work towards SOLUTIONS to our problems.

Correcting a lot of the problems here will take a lot of give and take and open-mindedness.

I hope this committee listens carefully to all of the possible solutions to low retention. They'd be better for it.

Ironically, I think that this place will be one of the best kept secrets in America in 2010.

I believe in this school's potential. That's why I act like a concerned parent when things go wrong around here.

I'll Do My Job, You Do Yours

David Santiago: Opinions Editor

Recently the newspaper staff has gotten complaints that we are too negative in this paper, that all we do is complain and present the school in a negative light. Somehow there is a misunderstanding that our job has anything to do with public relations, which is far from what our job is.

To the persons who presented us with this accusation, let me say this. We are not a public relations committee, nor are we writing the nice brochures for the University. We are journalists writing a newspaper. Our job is to present stories of interest to the students and that is exactly what we do. We are not training to be advertising agents; we are training to be journalists, and a good journalist picks up on what's creating a buzz amongst his or her readers and addresses it as news and voices the over all opinions that he or she gets from the general population to whom the issue affect.

It's not our job to think about how nice and wonderful we can make the school look, our job is to address the issues bothering the students and get all sides of the stories as well as suggestions on how to solve it. Our job is to encourage the stu-

dents to do more than just sit around complain and call them to do something about it. Our job is to organize the collective thoughts of our peers objectively and voice their opinions so that those who are working to make the university look nice know exactly what needs to be improved upon. We do this within all boundaries and rules of responsible journalism. Our news stories are objective; they show both sides. Our opinions stories are held up to a standard that requires that they be given in a polite manner and make a reasonable argument for all complaints.

We are not a Public Relations club and publication, we are a newspaper. We only do our job. And if the end product makes the school seem to look bad, that's not our fault, nor is it our concern whether it gives the school a good image. Image concerns are for the public relations people to think about, and if you don't like what you see in the paper, then don't complain to us for doing our job, do your job. We are just telling it like it is. And in the future if there is anyone who is offended by the facts we gather and wants to confront us, My name is Dave Santiago, talk to me anytime.

Corner Worker

Jameson Jones: Staff Writer

I Don't Get NASCAR

After two weeks of somewhat exciting racing in the world of NASCAR, I am still pondering to this very day, why do people like watching NASCAR so much?

As many of you probably know, I have a background with the Sports Car Club of America and many of the road races that I have seen from Champ Car, Formula 1, American Le Mans and Grand-Am only take two hours to complete on courses that involve both left and right turns.

In these races, there is actually some skill in dealing with gear changes and outraking your opponent before the apex of a corner. Occasionally, there is some side-to-side contact but other than this, the cars that are seen competing are made by some of the finest manufacturers such as BMW, Cosworth, Porsche, Lexus, Acura and an array of various foreign and domestic car manufacturers.

On the other hand,

Cont. on next page

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Corner Worker cont.

NASCAR has been proven to be used as a form of hypnosis, which has occurred all the time with me while watching these races.

I watch the start of the race then after about 50 laps, I fall asleep due to watching them make nothing but left turns for about a half an hour.

I end up taking approximately a three hour nap and then I finally wake myself up just in time to see if Dale Jr. has won the race. Most of the time, I am disappointed with Dale Jr.'s performances but I am glad that I was able to get a Sunday afternoon siesta.

If NASCAR would only include more road course events at venues such as Laguna Seca in California, Virginia International Raceway in Virginia, Road Atlanta in Georgia and even Sebring International Raceway in Florida along with cutting the time it takes to complete races in half to about two hours, then this corner worker would actually NASCAR.

Until this along with the France family actually have some common sense and not make up rules as they go, then there may be many more NASCAR followers here on campus. Feel free like always to drop me a line if you feel that I am overbashing NASCAR at sccaflagger08@yahoo.com. Until next time, I will see you at the races (and I mean road races).

A Voice From The Wilderness

David Santiago



This week, rather than my usual format of taking on an issue, I want to invite my readers into my head a little (which is a scary place, and not for the faint of heart) and show what really goes on up in there.

I have a hard time defining myself and faith in orthodox terms, although this is more out of the way in which some things are typically defined, not full blown disagreement. For example, being a monotheist. Sure, I declare belief in one God, but while most people treat this as a moral ternate of Christianity, for me it comes more in philosophical reasoning. The early Hebrews were not monotheist as many claim, they were Henotheist, which is the belief in the existence of other gods but choose to only worship YHWH. This is not to suggest they were immoral, in anyway, but merely saw the world as did most people of ancient cultures. It wasn't until later during the Diaspora that they encountered the philosophers of other cultures that the idea that there is only one God came into their minds.

I am committed to the God that Jesus taught, but I am not a monotheist because of Christian doctrines. It's because for me when talking about an infinity, it is fundamentally flawed to speak in terms of numbers. If we are indeed talking about an infinite and transcendent force living outside the realm of the physical universe, it is a contradiction to

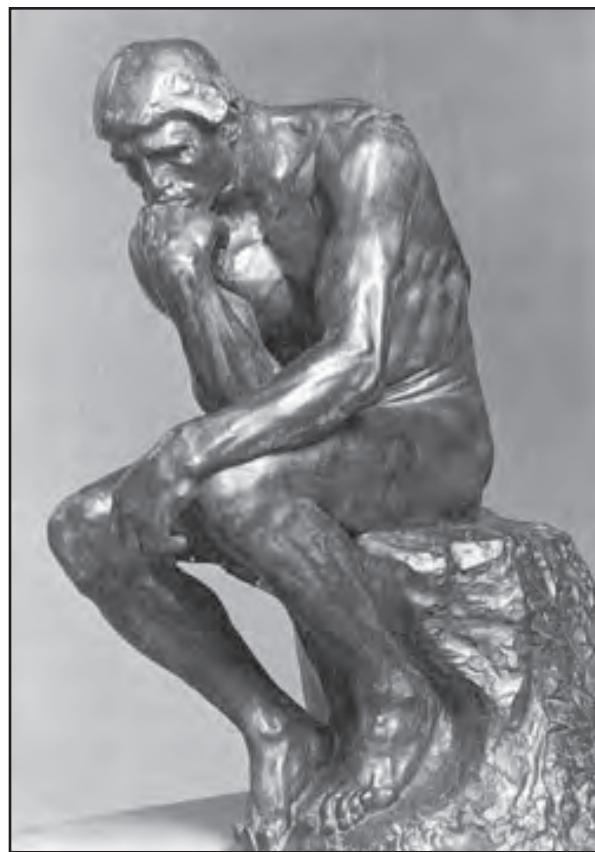
existing in one particular space and in time. So if I believe God is omnipotent and omnipresent, even saying that there is one is to suggest that it is even possible for there to be another. Even the

suggestion of monotheism being belief in one God is fundamentally flawed in nature. So saying there is only one god for me is not saying there is only one god, but merely an acknowledging that an infinity can have no other. So for me it is sufficient to say that God is a unity.

Naturally this raises questions in the whole trinity deal. I pretty much can't talk about the trinity seriously because it creates the premise that God can be equated mathematically. It's one

say that there is any other or even one, because to say that there is one would entail that God is an object or body ex-

isting in one particular space and in time. So if I believe God is omnipotent and omnipresent, even saying that there is one is to suggest that it is even possible for there to be another. Even the suggestion of monotheism being belief in one God is fundamentally flawed in nature. So saying there is only one god for me is not saying there is only one god, but merely an acknowledging that an infinity can have no other. So for me it is sufficient to say that God is a unity.



so much that it seems to become part of the fire, and certainly it takes on properties similar to the flames, but one can still asses that while consumed, the iron still has a existence and reality different from the fire that it is a part of.

As for the Holy Ghost, that is where the trinity deal gets lost on me since in reading the Biblical account the Holy Ghost seems to be a way of expressing God's sole emotional presence and guidance in our hearts. I don't think The Holy Ghost is a third person of God, but I do believe and use the term as an expression for the fact that Jesus now is transcendent and lives inside our hearts. So no, the Holy Ghost isn't a third partner in trititarian partnership, it is an anal-

ogy for God and Jesus' transcendence. To refer to the holy sprit is almost likened to saying God is Love. Certainly love itself is not a conscience force but expression for the unity we feel with God and how he reveals himself to the world. So if I say I believe in the Holy Spirit, it's the same as saying I have Jesus or that The Kingdom of Heaven is within me. It's kind of like when Buddhist say "If you meet Buddha on the road, kill him." In other words, don't get to attached to earthly expressions; acknowledge that in physical terms, God is essentially nothingness.

Some critics might now think they have me cornered as blasphemous because they think I just said God is nothing, as in he isn't all powerful, or that there is no God. Well, yes I did just say God is nothing, but I don't find this to diminish God since it is in our realm of somethingness (material) that we are limited by space, time and physical abilities, these are all somthings. Therefore Nothingness would represent no limits thus making nothingness a powerful thing. This is a double think, a practice common to many Buddhist traditions, in which you hold two seemingly contradictory concepts to be simultaneously true. This could go back to the discussion on Jesus' divine nature in saying that where he differs and abides under the father is that he, as the bridge between God and Man, is a bit more of something than nothing, but a lot more of nothing than the something we are. SO basically, God is nothing, we are something, but it is the something we are that is our flaw. And it is the infinite nothing that God is that is his strength and might. Jesus is more something than God but more nothing than us. OK? Yeah that makes sense I think. Well maybe not but of making sense is seen as a product of somethingness than making no sense would be closer to nothingness thus making nonsense the sensibility of nothingness and so to say God is nonsense is to acknowledge is transcendent power and majesty over us. So does that make sense?

Ok, my nose just started bleeding, so I guess I'd better stop thinking all together for now lest I have a stroke.

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Entertainment

The Devil's Bounty Hunter

Ashley Genova
Editor-in-Chief

Ghost Rider is hot... and I don't mean Nicolas Cage's looks. I mean that he transforms into a flaming skeleton who rides a blazing motorcycle

Cage plays Jonny Blaze, a motorcycle stuntman with no fear, or so it seems. Each night, he looks in the mirror repeating, "You can't live in fear," in hopes of convincing himself to be brave. When he was a teenager, Jonny sold his soul to the demon Mephistopheles to save his father, and was forced to break away from all the people he loved.

Years later, Johnny must uphold his end of the bargain by transforming each night into the Ghost Rider, the devil's fiery bounty hunter.

But instead of dragging a human's soul to hell, he must track down Mephistopheles' own son, Blackheart.

The special effects give the movie a creepy, horror-movie feel, with ordinary humans transforming into true terrors. The movie is a perfect length; the plot is fast-paced with few slow moments and a few touches of romance.



Nicholas Cage in "Ghost Rider." Photo courtesy of IGN.com.

Amazing Grace

David Santiago
Opinion Editor

"Amazing Grace" was an excellent re-telling of the writing of the song and how it tied in the battle to abolish slavery in the British Empire.

Ioan Gruffudd plays William Wilberforce. Wilberforce grew up in a church pastured by John Newton. John Newton had been the captain of many slave ships that took African from their homes to be slaves. When Newton found God he rejected slavery as evil and went into the ministry, and ultimately wrote

the song "Amazing Grace." Inspired by Newton's conversation, Wilberforce grew up to be elected to parliament, where after the American colonies were lost in the Revolution, he begins a thirty year campaign to end slavery in the British Empire. He goes from representing a handful of activists to finally convincing the majority of the house to outlaw slavery completely in the British Empire.

The movie was excellent, dramatic, moving and inspiring. My only complaint is that Wilberforce more or less stayed in London and I wish



The cast of "Amazing Grace." Photo courtesy by www.boston.com.

they had followed the other activist in their visits to Jamaica and the Bahamas where slavery was more common than on the British motherland.

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Two Dudes

by Aaron Warner



A College Girl Named Joe

by Aaron Warner



The cast of Tarheel Tales. Photo contributed by Nicole Raynovich.

Tar Heel Tales

David Santiago
Opinion Editor

it all, many of the male characters in the stories were portrayed by female players and female characters by male players. All in all the play was downright fun.

Tar Heel tales was a delightful experience for those attending. The play was retelling several folk takes from the mountains of western North Carolina.

The stage set up was that of a tavern or barn where the actors played the story tellers and told the stories while acting them out using only some chairs and each other for props. The Audience was also invited at several points to participate in certain elements of the stories. Adding to the humorous nature of

The four tales told were "Jack and the Northwest Wind," "Old Dry Frye," "Wicked John and the Devil," (which also tied into some of the mythology behind the Halloween tradition of the Jack-O-lantern) and "Jack and the Robber."

Hang out in the outdoors!



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Hot-air Ballooning
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October

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December

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Sports

Lord Byron Makes His Predictions As the 2007 MLB Season Looms

Byron Lowe
Staff Writer

The 2007 baseball year looks to be promising and exciting. Recent history of baseball has shown that anyone can win the big game. In 2003, the Florida Marlins had a payroll of 61 million compared to the New York Yankees 180 million, yet the Marlins defeated the Yankees in the World Series. In 2004, the Boston Red Sox came back from a 3 - 0 deficit in the American League Championship Series to go on to win the World Series. This was a feat never accomplished in the history of baseball. And just recently last season, the St. Louis Cardinals had the 13th best record at the end of the year, but showed anyone can win in the playoffs. Now in 2007, many teams have improved, and this will prove to be an exciting year.

Here is Small Talk's preview; all opinions are Byron Lowe's.

AL East

Front Runner

- **New York Yankees** – The New York Yankees have finished 1st in the AL East nine years in a row now, and although the Red Sox and Blue Jays have improved, I feel this Yankee line up will prove why they are paid the big bucks, and slug the Yankees to the playoffs once again.

Contenders

- **Boston Red Sox** – The Red Sox had a tough second half last year, filled with injuries and a shaky staff. This

year however, the Sox have an impressive staff to go along with one of the best 3-4 combinations in David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez.

- **Toronto Blue Jays** – Finishing higher than 3rd for the first time in 8 years last season, the Blue Jays have proven that they are an improved team. This team might have more to prove, but they do have the tools to contend.

Dark Horses

- **Baltimore Orioles** – Pitching has been an issue for Baltimore, they do have a descent offense with Miguel Tejada, Brian Roberts, and Ramon Hernandez, however with Eric Bedard as their ace, I do not see this team in the playoffs.

- **Tampa Bay Devil Rays** – Improving young team, but not nearly improved enough. Expect Carl Crawford or Rocco Baldelli to be traded by the trade deadline.

AL Central

Front Runner

- **Detroit Tigers** – This division was the hardest for me to decide; I see potentially four teams that can succeed. The Tigers are the American League champions and have added Gary Sheffield to an already decent line up. If this team can avoid injuries and playoff ego, they can be right back in October hunt.

Contenders

- **Chicago White Sox** – After winning the 2005 World Series, the White Sox missed the playoffs in 2006 by five games. This team has the lineup and the staff to go deep once again.

- **Cleveland Indians** – This team has a potent lineup; however pitching might pose an

issue. If the staff can over achieve, this team has a good chance.

Minnesota Twins

– Although the Twins were division winners last season, they have done little to improve, and have lost some good pitchers. However, they still have an ace with Johan Santana, and a steady offense with Justin Morneau, Joe Mauer, and Torii Hunter. If this

pitching staff apart from Santana can over achieve, this team can contend.

Maybe Next Year

- **Kansas City Royals** – Although this team has made an effort to improve, I do not feel it is nearly enough to compete this year.

AL West

Front Runner

- **Oakland Athletics** – The Athletics have been a consistent team over the years. A combination of solid pitching, defense, and a good

Continued on p. 8, see MLB

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MLB, continued
from p. 7

enough offense has made them a contender for years. This years offense seems to be improved, however there starting pitching is not as dominant as that of the past. However, this staff may be sufficient for this division to succeed.

Contenders

- Anaheim Angels –

Still a young pitching staff with Ervin Santana and Jeff Weaver, but the line up is potent and the bullpen is established with Rodriguez holding it down. This team will give Oakland a run for the division.

- Seattle Mariners –

This team has the potential to contend, but holds many if's that need to come true. Can 20 year old Felix Hernandez be the ace they need, can Carlos Guillen, Jose Vidro, and Adrian Beltre return to their from of two years ago? And can this bullpen compete regularly? This team may look good on paper, but they still have a lot to prove.

Long Shot

- Texas Rangers –

The Rangers seem to be one of the most unlucky teams of recent years. The offense is there to compete, but will this hitter's park ever have a successful pitching staff? Kevin Millwood hopes to lead this staff to the playoffs; unfortunately he has little support. And closer Eric Gagne pitched a total of only two innings last season. If their pitchers can be half as good as their offense, they can contend.

NL East**Front Runner**

- New York Mets –

Although the Mets ran away with the division last season, there rotation is a concern this year. Pedro Martinez is expected to be out half the season, and the Mets did not land a big starter as was intention. They are hoping there offense can once again lead them to the playoffs.

Contenders

- Philadelphia Phillies

The Phillies finished 12 games behind the Mets last season, I predict a much closer race this year. Freddy Garcia and Brett Myers make decent number 1 and 2 starters for the Phils. And an offense led by NL MVP Ryan Howard will compete.

- Atlanta Braves –

Finishing under .500 for the first time in 16 years. I see the Braves improving, but not

making the playoffs. The Braves made no big signings of any kind, but will rely on players to improve for this season.

Long Shots

- Florida Marlins –

The Youngest and least paid team in the MLB, the Marlins can potentially be a surprise. Although young, this team is very talented. Hanley Ramirez and Dan. Uggla had impressive break out season last year; add in Miguel Cabrera and you have and impressive top line up. If the young players perform at a consistent level, I feel they can compete.

Maybe Next year

- Washington

Nationals – Although headed in the right direction, this organization is not yet ready to compete for the playoffs.

NL Central**Front Runners**

- Milwaukee Brewers –

This may be my boldest prediction, but I feel the Brewers who finished under .500 last season has the opportunity to take this division. On paper I see a team that can over achieve; with Ben Sheets, Chris Capuano, and Jeff Suppan in the rotation, and Fransisco Cordero closing the game down, all this team needs to do is avoid injuries and play to their potential.

- St. Louis Cardinals –

World Series Champions of 2006? Yes. Same team as last year? No. Also, a team has not won the series back to back sense the Yankees in 1999 – 2000. The Cardinals have lost Jeff Weaver, Jason Marquis, and Jeff Suppan, and in return have signed no starting pitchers.

Contenders

- Houston Astros –

Interesting team that can either be very good or average; Lance Berkman and Carlos Lee will be steady, but they can not do it alone, Morgan Ensberg and Brad Ausmus need to improve from last years awful season.

- Chicago Cubs –

Injuries and 'bad luck' have plagued this team for seems forever. Can Mark Prior and Kerry Wood stay healthy are questions asked seemingly for the last 3 seasons. Now it's that and can Alfonso Soriano adjust to one of the hardest center fields in the league? If these two questions can be answered yes, then I see the Cubs contending.

Long Shot

Photo by Vino Wong (MCT)

Three Atlanta Braves catchers resting before spring training workouts. The Atlanta Braves will be contenders in 2007 as they will be opening their regular season with a three-game on April 2-5 against NL East foe Philadelphia Phillies.

- Cincinnati Reds –

The Reds were a surprising team last year, with a lot of players seemingly over achieving. However, I am only impressed with one pitcher in this rotation, that in Bronson Arroyo, who may still be overated.

Maybe Next Year

- Pittsburgh Pirates –

The Pirates simply do not have the tools needed to contend in this tight division.

NL West**Front Runner**

- Los Angeles Dodgers

– simply and impressive team, division winners last season, and the addition of Jason Schmidt puts them right back in the hunt for October.

Contenders

- San Diego Padres –

The Giles brothers are united and Marcus should be an impressive part of this lineup. Having Jake Peavy and Greg Maddux anchoring a rotation is not that bad either.

- San Francisco Giants

– The Giants lost Jason Schmidt and added Barry Zito, either than that not much has changed for this team. And like every year, this team goes with

Bonds, if Bonds can stay healthy and out of trouble, they can compete.

Long Shots

- Colorado Rockies –

Is the Humidifier a miracle worker? The Rockies had a team ERA under five, something they have not done the last five seasons. This team however is young and still developing.

- Arizona

DiamondBacks – This team is also young and developing.

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