

Mathematician foresees tight races in Major League Baseball's Eastern divisions

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The New York Yankees, Boston Red Sox, Cleveland Indians and Los Angeles Angels should make the playoffs in the American League (AL) in 2009 with most other teams lagging well behind. The National League (NL) should see another very tight race in the Eastern Division as has occurred in recent years.

However, this year it looks like there may be a three-way tie among the defending World Series Champion Philadelphia Phillies, the Atlanta Braves, and the New York Mets. Two of these teams should make the playoffs (one as Eastern Division champion and the other as NL wild card team) while the Chicago Cubs and Los Angeles Dodgers should handily win their divisions, said Bruce Bukiet.

Bukiet, an associate professor of mathematical sciences and associate dean of the College of Science and Liberal Arts at NJIT, once again provides the number of games each Major League Baseball team should win in 2009 based on the mathematical model he developed in 2000.

The contest for primacy in the AL East should go down to the wire with the Yankees winning 99 games to the Red Sox 97. With the two best records expected in the Major Leagues this season, both teams should make it to the post-season, one as AL East winner and the other as the AL wild card team. The defending AL champion Tampa Bay Rays should take third place with 91 wins. In the AL Central Division, the Indians should win 88 games to the Minnesota Twins 83, while the Angels should win AL West by a whopping 21 games with 92 wins while the Texas Rangers and Oakland Athletics win 71 each.

In the National League East, Bukiet is concerned that for the third year in a row his favorite team, the Mets, will miss the playoffs on the last day of the season. "The model has been quite accurate with

the Mets over past few years with the Mets slightly underperforming and the Phillies slightly over performing. If that repeats itself, it would spell another season of final game heartbreak to Mets fans."

In the NL Central Division, Bukiet's model calls for the Chicago Cubs to win 97 games, 12 more than the second-place St. Louis Cardinals. The Pittsburgh Pirates should win just 60 games, the least in the Major Leagues.

"In the NL West, the Los Angeles Dodgers should win 91 games, while the Colorado Rockies and the Arizona Diamondbacks tie for second place, 8 games back," said Bukiet.

His expected wins for the AL are the following.

- AL East: Yankees - 99; Red Sox - 97; Rays - 91; Blue Jays - 83; Orioles - 68.
- AL Central: Indians - 88; Twins - 83; White Sox - 79; Tigers - 78; Royals - 71.
- AL West: Angels - 92; Rangers - 71; Athletics - 71; Mariners - 65.

For the NL, he projects the following.

- NL East: Braves - 88; Phillies - 88; Mets - 88; Marlins - 73; Nationals - 67;
- NL Central: Cubs - 97; Cards - 85; Brewers - 82; Astros - 80; Reds - 75; Pirates - 60;
- NL West: Dodgers - 91; Diamondbacks - 83; Rockies - 83; Giants - 78; Padres - 76.

"These results are merely a guide as to how teams ought to perform. There are many unknowns,

especially trades, injuries and how rookies will perform," said Bukiet. "Over the years, the predictions have been about as good as those of the so-called experts. It demonstrates how useful math can be in understanding so many aspects of the world around us."

Source: New Jersey Institute of Technology

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