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## Evaluating MLB Pitching

By Sebastien Veilleux

As a MLB baseball fan and sports bettor, you probably know that one key element in any baseball

game is the pitching. A solid pitcher can completely shutdown an opposing side. What happens when you have two very good pitchers going at it? Usually the game is low scoring—no matter how good the hitters are. Just the opposite can happen when to sub-par pitchers take the mound. Knowing how to properly evaluate pitching is key to winning your baseball bets. However, evaluating can be a complicated task. Just what should we pay attention to? That's the purpose of this article. We will discuss what's important to look at and use the past performance of real pitchers to illustrate these points. It's time to play ball.

### ERA

The most common mistake for those wagering on MLB baseball has to be simply looking at the pitcher's ERA. The ERA is important, but you have to dig a little deeper to get the full story. Let's take a look at Chicago White Sox pitcher Freddy Garcia. Let's imagine that it's late in the season and he's on the mound with his 3.87 ERA. It would be easy to look at that and decide that he's a good pitcher. However, looking at his stats deeper tells a tale of two pitchers—home and away. Let's compare.

1. At home, Garcia has a 4–5 record. On the road he is 10–3. 2. At home, his ERA is 4.38. On the road his ERA is 3.40. 3. At home he gave up 17 home runs 38 walks. On the road he gave up 9 home runs and 22 walks. 4. He pitched 10 more innings on the road.

So what does this data tell you? For one, it tells you that Freddy Garcia is not a good pitcher at home. By looking deeper into the ERA and where the game is being played, you can get a better picture of just who's taking the mound for a game.

### Team Performance

Another area you want to look at is team performance, which looks at how well the pitcher has performed against the team. While you can look at history, it's best to look at the current season and only pull in history if there are no current season performances. The reason is simple; teams change,

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at least a little, each year. Let's keep looking at Freddy Garcia to see why team performance is so important. Take a look at a couple teams Garcia pitched against in 2005 and the outcome.

1. Garcia pitched four games against Detroit and had a 2.61 ERA.

2. Garcia pitched four games against Cleveland and had a 2.63 ERA. 3. Garcia pitched three games against Seattle and had an 8.35 ERA. 4. Garcia pitched two games against Oakland and had a 3.46 ERA.

By looking at team performance, we can see that Garcia's outcome fluctuated and there are certain teams that he just does not do well against and others he dominates. We just looked at ERA here, but you can drill down further and look at overall pitching performance such as: hits, walks, home runs, innings pitched and so forth.

### Inning Count

The last area of our discussion involves inning count. It's vital that you know how deep, on average, the pitcher goes into games. If the pitcher is known for 5–6 inning outings, then you know the bullpen will be a major factor in the game. If this is the case and the team's bullpen is suspect, you have to devalue the starting pitcher some. If you have a pitcher that normally works 7–8 innings and the team has a dominant closer and possibly a very good setup man, then you can focus more on the starting pitcher. Here's an example list of pitchers and their 2005 averages.

1. Freddy Garcia 7 innings. 2. Randy Johnson 6 2/3 innings. 3. Pedro Martinez 7 innings. 4. Jose Contreras 6 13/ innings. 5. Livian Hernandez 7 innings.

In the case of Randy Johnson and Jose Contreras, we would have to discount their ability slightly if their team's bullpen was not solid. Getting 7 innings of work out of a starting pitcher is good and about the average.

So the next time you go to bet baseball, look at who is pitching and do a little evaluating. It will pay off in the end.

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## **MLB Tickets In The NL East – It's The Mets And Everyone Else**

**By Jay Nault**

Although there was a swap of positions in the middle of the division standings over the past few weeks, MLB tickets are only relevant for the rest of the 2006 season in one or possibly two cities. The Mets are just a game or two away from clinching the division, and we'll examine their postseason prospects. The Phillies also remain somewhat alive, so we'll examine them and the outlook for 2007 for everyone else.

### **New York Mets**

**Currently:** The Mets have basically won the division on the heels of a tremendous season by Carlos Beltran and decent pitching. Not to take anything away from them, but this is a relatively weak division as well, and the Mets have feasted on their lack of competition. This is a veteran team that knows how to close out a race, and that's exactly what they're doing as of this writing.

**Outlook:** The Mets are getting Pedro Martinez back just in time, and he along with Tom Glavine need to be strong in the postseason. Beltran also needs to maintain his high level of play, or else the Mets will struggle. As it is, they're as good a bet as anyone to get to the World Series.

### **Philadelphia Phillies**

**Currently:** It's been a strange season for the Phillies, as they appeared to give up on the season only to surge into contention for the Wild Card spot. They're still barely hanging on in the chase, but they need to turn it on now, as they're running out of games to catch the Padres. The story of the season has been the emergence of Ryan Howard, and baseball fans everywhere want to root for a "clean" player as he puts up historic HR numbers.

**Outlook:** The Phillies could possibly land in the postseason, but regardless, they need pitching and another bat in their lineup to take the next step.

### **Florida Marlins**

**Currently:** The Marlins took over third place in the division and moved over the .500 mark as of this writing with a 19–9 month. This is a team that's slowly but surely getting better with another young nucleus that could challenge for big things in the coming season as these players mature. The Marlins have talent behind the plate and on the mound.

**Outlook:** MLB tickets should be a hot item in South Florida in 2007, as the team looks to only get better as their young team puts another year of valuable experience behind them.

### **Atlanta Braves**

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Currently: The Braves' incredible postseason streak is ending this year, but what they've accomplished in recent times should not be overlooked. The 2006 season was ruined by injury and age, and the Braves have struggled to maintain any type of consistency.

Outlook: The Braves always seem to be stocked with young talent, and they'll need that next generation to come of age to contend in 2007, as Andruw and Chipper Jones aren't getting any younger.

### Washington Nationals

Currently: The Nationals have been a bit of a disappointment this year after reaching the .500 mark in 2005. Their downfall was due to two things: bad pitching and no one besides Alfonso Soriano in the lineup that was a threat to produce runs.

Outlook: The Nationals need another bat in the lineup and more pitching. If they get that done during the offseason, MLB tickets will again be a hot item in Washington, D.C.

Written by Jay Nault, sponsored by

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