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The Futures Of Major League Baseball – Betting To Win Big

By Pat Stevens

Futures wagering— which is in essence betting on who will win their division, conference, league or the whole kit and caboodle— is extremely attractive because more times than not the odds are very good. With any sport it is difficult to predict the future, but baseball with its 162 game, seven-month season offers an especially daunting challenge.

The great thing about wagering on futures is you can bet on various teams— fairly sure bets, up-and-comers, and long shots— and in the end either cover or win a substantial amount of money without having risked a lot.

This article will focus on two basic topics— strategies for determining on which teams you're going to bet and basic methods of betting that can, to a degree, protect your wager.

In betting futures you'll want to wager on more than one team and spread your bets amongst favorites, teams that have shown improvement, and clubs that might have that chance "Impossible Dream" year. It's similar to betting March Madness in that you have a much better chance if you spread your money amongst various teams rather than putting everything on one club.

Before you place even one bet, do your research. Magazines, newspapers and the Internet have a wealth of analytical pieces on each team and how they should fair in the upcoming season. If possible, reviewing some back issues to see how various prognosticators have done in the past is not a bad idea. Looking for trends, such as how many analysts have chosen the Yankees to finish first in their division and to go all the way. If you have a particular expert that you find has been fairly accurate and you think that their methodology is sound, that can be extremely helpful.

Read carefully, be selective especially in considering how the analysis has been done and how detailed it is (the more detailed usually the better), and be sure to incorporate your own knowledge of the game.

If an analysis does not include the following beware of its accuracy— business and management practices, including the team's budget for player salaries; baseball managerial experience and Minor

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League system strength. Some more obvious areas that should be covered include key acquisitions, trades and losses; pitching strength and depth; offensive potential and defensive abilities. Team chemistry and other intangibles, overall depth of the team and age/experience of the club are also important to consider.

Feel free to do more detailed research yourself, you certainly may and it can pay off. If, prior to the NHL season, you had read what everyone said about the Ottawa Senators you certainly would have known that they were an improved team.

But when you analyzed the Heatley–Hossa/DeVries trade, looked at how much the Senators had upgraded in terms of speed, scoring, and defense and saw their balance and depth, it became readily apparent that the Senators were the most improved team in the NHL and that they were poised to have a breakout season (which they have thus far). Anyone who says they are a "surprise team" did not do a thorough analysis of the Ottawa Senators.

Baseball, because of its long pre–season, may have more positive hype associated with it than any other sport. Every team seems to have at least one veteran player who's ready to have a breakout year, a rookie sensation who will make a difference, and a pitcher who can really put the team over the top.

Spring training by its very position in the calendar embodies and symbolizes optimism, signaling the end of a long, wet, cold winter and the start of a time that is defined by lazy, pleasantly warm days. Don't fall for it, especially if you have a favorite team. Wagering based on spring training hype is as dangerous as its gets.

Also, consider that some previews are written to generate fan interest in a season that is the longest in professional team sports and, thus, will not be overly critical of many teams. Of the 30 major league baseball teams less than half have any chance of making it into the playoffs, and of those who do get to compete in the post–season only three or four possess the potential to win it all.

So you've completed your due diligence and you're considering which teams to pick. Let's take a look at this year's futures and see what some of your choices are. The odds below were published the first week of February. Realize that different gaming sites will often present different odds. As an example, in this list the Toronto Blue Jays are 17 to 1 but another odds maker at the same time had them listed at 25 to 1.

MLB 2006 World Series (These are not current odds.)

TeamOdds

TIER 1: New York Yankees 7/2 New York Mets 4/1 St. Louis Cardinals 5/1 Boston Red Sox 7/1
Chicago Cubs 8/1 Chicago White Sox 9/1

TIER 2: Los Angeles Angels 10/1 Cleveland Indians 12/1 Oakland Athletics 15/1 Houston Astros
15/1 Toronto Blue Jays 17/1

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TIER 3: Atlanta Braves 20/1 Philadelphia Phillies 20/1 San Francisco Giants 20/1 Los Angeles Dodgers 20/1 Minnesota Twins 30/1 San Diego Padres 30/1

TIER 4: Texas Rangers 50/1 Ariz. Diamondbacks 50/1 Detroit Tigers 60/1 Wash. Nationals 60/1 Seattle Mariners 70/1 Milwaukee Brewers 80/1 Baltimore Orioles 80/1 Tampa Bay Rays 100/1 Cincinnati Reds 100/1 Pittsburgh Pirates 125/1 Colorado Rockies 150/1 Florida Marlins 200/1 Kansas City Royals 300/1

For the purpose of this exercise, the teams have been divided into four tiers. Tier 1 contains the six teams that this odds maker considers most likely to win the World Series. Tier 2 consists of teams that are believed to be competitive, but have less of a chance of winning it all. The third tier is made up of teams that many of us would consider to have some chance of getting to the post-season, but they are far from favorites. The final group, which is the largest and amounts to almost half of the MLB teams, are true long shots.

One strategy dictates that you divvy up the money you want to wager in order to increase your chances of winning. If you are going to do this, and in wagering on futures it certainly makes sense, you'll need to decide how much of a risk you want to take. The greater the risk, the greater the payoff;

however, the greater the risk, the less likely you'll see a payoff.

Let's say you're willing to wager a total of \$100, and you decide to put it all on the 300 to 1 Royals. If Kansas City wins the series, you realize \$30,000! The chances of that are, however, negligible. Instead, you may want to divide that \$100 into 10 bets at \$10 each. If you do that, you need to realize that betting on the top six teams means that if any of them win, you have lost money (anywhere from \$10 to \$65).

However, putting money on any combination of Tier 2 to Tier 4 clubs insures that if you do pick a winner you will, at the very least, break even (the Los Angeles Angels are 10 – 1). Consider that Tier 2 includes the Jays, Astros, Indians, and A's. All of these teams have been in the mix in recent years.

Looking at the six Tier 3 teams, you'll find that all of these clubs certainly have a chance of winning and many have been competitive and playoff bound over the past five years. Simply betting these six and the bottom four teams in Tier 2 provides you with some action that has potential to garner a return.

If you decide to venture into Tier 4 with one or two of your bets, you will be lessening your chances of hitting the winner, but if you do hit, your return will be much larger than that from any of the other tiers.

How you wager is entirely up to you. But when putting money down on baseball futures remember a few salient points. When choosing your team(s), carefully analyze each club's entire pitching staff. Why? Pitching wins championships.

Good, steady pitching will defeat even great hitting at least 70% of the time. Don't just consider starters. Middle relief and closers are essential in going all the way. You also need to weigh the age of the pitching staff—too old may equal a late season breakdown and too young may mean a late season

meltdown. Finally, you will want to look at the depth of the farm system in terms of rookies ready to come up and, more importantly, talent that team may be able to use in a mid-season trade to bolster either its defense or offense. There's a dearth of quality pitching and even less quality pitching that a club is willing to deal to another team. When push comes to shove always go with sound pitching.

It's interesting to note that the New York Yankees are the team favored by most to win the World Series. The Yanks have not won it all since their team salary broke the \$100,000,000 mark. It is now, of course, over \$200,000,000. Although it's been five years since they've brought a championship to New York, since 2000 the Yanks have been the favorite every year.

Remember in 1991 when the Braves and Twins met in the World Series? Before the season began, both had been more than 100 – 1 underdogs. The Twins won it in seven games, with Minnesota pitcher Jack Morris being chosen series MVP. That was a big payoff!

Last year the Chicago White Sox were about 30 – 1 (a Tier 3 team in our example) and the Yankees were the overall favorites at 5 – 4. The White Sox paid \$300 on a sawbuck bet.

Of course if you believe in fate, numerology, and curses consider that in 2004 the Red Sox won the crown for the first time since 1918 and in 2005 the White Sox were world champs for the first time since 1917. If that trend remains that means the Chicago Cubs (last World Championship 1908) are next in line. Unfortunately, they're somewhere around 9 - 1, meaning the payoff is slim considering it's a futures wager.

Whether you're putting everything on one team or spreading your dough around, predicting the future World Champions is rarely a sure thing but often it's a lucrative venture for the people who get it right.

Article was written by Pat Stevens for

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Three Great MLB Baseball Betting Tips

By Sebastien Veilleux

Do you bet on MLB baseball? If not, you should. There are countless profitable betting opportunities every MLB baseball season. Whether you are already betting on MLB baseball or thinking about

starting, this article will give you three solid baseball betting tips. These baseball betting tips will help you refine your selection process so you are getting better value for your money and winning more in the long run.

Baseball Betting Tip One: Don't bet on heavy favorites

As a generally rule, I don't bet on any MLB team that's around -160 or higher. The principle is a sound one. The more money you lay—without getting anything in return—the more you have to win to just break even. Let's look at an example using a heavy favorite of -200 . You are laying \$2 to win \$1. Right away we can see that we must pick winners 66% of the time just to break even.

This is ridiculous. Take the best team in baseball and look at their win percentage. It's generally around 60–62%. Sure, the team playing a heavy favorite is probably not that good, but baseball is a funny game. Rather than getting suckered in, look for other betting options or steer clear of heavy favorites.

Baseball Betting Tip Two: If you must bet a heavy favorite, do it on the run line.

The run line in baseball is a spread and money line combination. In this case, you will be laying 1.5 runs—so your team must win by 2 or more—but you will be knocking down the money laid. Many good teams will beat poor teams by two or more. By betting them on the run line, you can knock off significant money. Perhaps the team you were going to wager on that was over the mark set in tip number one is now down to -120 .

Baseball Betting Tip Three: Don't bet on road teams going for the sweep

Yes, road teams do sweep, but it's very hard. Looking over recent history, a home team only gets swept about 10% of the time. Good ones get swept even less. You could say that a secondary tip would be to bet on home teams trying to avoid the sweep. That's up to you. My main point is to simply walk away from games where you like the visitor, but that team is going for the sweep.

There are your three great MLB baseball betting tips. Good Luck!

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