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## Which MLB Tickets Provided A Look At The NL Award Winners In 2006?

By Jay Nault

It's been an interesting season in the National League, and MLB tickets in every city have offered

fans a chance to see players having special seasons. It's getting to the time when voters and fans alike start thinking about not only the postseason, but also the awards that will be handed out in the coming months. We're going to predict who may win what with our own award projections, even if they are informal in nature.

MVP: Ryan Howard

All Howard did this season was carry the entire Phillies team on his back. It appeared that the organization had basically given up on the season with its trade deadline moves, but somehow, some way the Phillies have stayed in contention. Howard is leading all of baseball and challenging history with his home run totals, and he's also setting the MLB pace in RBI's. This one appears to be a clear decision, and Howard deserves the accolades.

Cy Young: Chris Carpenter

This is a tough call, as it appears to be a two-man race between Carpenter and Brandon Webb of the Diamondbacks. Their statistics are nearly identical in terms of wins and ERA, and each has been vital to their teams. However, Carpenter's Cardinals are headed to the postseason while the Diamondbacks are not, and that always seems to make a difference with the voters.

Comeback Player of the Year: Carlos Beltran

Normally, this is an award that's given to someone who drops out of sight completely due to injury or some other reason. Beltran wasn't hurt in 2005, but he had an off year to say the least, hitting only 16 home runs. When Beltran is in a groove, he's the type of talent that can move MLB tickets all by himself, and he's definitely been in a groove this season as he helped the Mets win their division. Beltran is in the top 10 in the NL in six offensive categories and has, as of this writing, slugged 40 home runs. Theories abound as to why he turned it around so quickly, but I doubt the Mets or their fans are really concerned with the reasons as they are pleased with the results.

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Manager of the Year: Charlie Manuel

Manuel dealt with the same trials and hurdles that Howard did this year in Philadelphia. He did have what could be the MVP on his roster, but this was a team that was all but left for dead at mid-season, and he lost Bobby Abreu along the way. Manuel steered the ship in the right direction, and the team could wind up in the postseason after all. It's been a remarkable turnaround, and Manuel deserves credit for keeping his team focused despite the signals from management that could've doomed this team to another year of watching the playoffs in television.

Rookie of the Year: Hanley Ramirez

All Ramirez has done in his first season is step in and lead a young Marlins team to a solid record. Ramirez ranks near the top of the NL in runs and stolen bases and he hits for average. Ramirez is also

a good defensive shortstop, and he appears to be set in his position for the long-term in Florida.

All in all, it's been quite a year in the NL, and MLB tickets around the country have sold well because there were special performances all around the league. However, these candidates, even if they don't win these awards, deserve to be recognized.

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## Which MLB Tickets Provided A Chance To See The 2006 AL Award Winners?

**By Jay Nault**

It's been quite a season in the American League, and fans around the league agreed, as they set several records in terms of MLB tickets purchased. They got to see several unbelievable performances, and things are going to get quite interesting in the postseason, even though several spots have yet to be determined. We'd like to get a jump on the media and voters and make our predictions for the AL award winners for 2006.

MVP: Derek Jeter

## Which MLB Tickets Provided A Look At The NL Award Winners In 2006?

This is a tough call, as there are players, such as David Ortiz, who had better statistical seasons than Jeter, but there are a few reasons why Jeter will win. He was the glue on a team that not only won the AL East, but also a team that went through a very volatile season. Jeter remains the quiet leader and the guy who brings a calming influence and a confidence to the Yankees. Not to mention, Jeter will probably finish high on many ballots regardless of whether he's voted first, which will most likely give him the points necessary to win the award. The bottom line is he deserves it.

Cy Young: Johan Santana

This choice is a bit easier. Santana fulfills all the typical requirements for a Cy Young winner. He plays on a winning team and he leads the AL in the following categories: wins, ERA, IP, SO, BAA, WHIP and winning percentage. That's a dominant line, and Santana held it together for the Twins' surge towards the postseason when promising staff mate Francisco Liriano went down with injury. Santana will be a proud addition to the list of Cy Young winners.

Comeback Player of the Year: Frank Thomas

This one is a no-brainer, as Thomas had all but disappeared from the sport in recent years. In his prime, the "Big Hurt" could move MLB tickets all by himself, but injuries, age and dwindling production appeared to get the best of him. He was basically an afterthought when he moved to Oakland, but he has provided the power in the A's lineup that they seemed to lack for years. All Thomas has done this year is rank in the top 10 in the AL in every offensive category.

Manager of the Year: Jim Leyland

Leyland's work with the Tigers has been nothing short of amazing. He took a team that no one was talking about in the spring and led them to a start that's basically providing the cushion that should allow them to hang on to their postseason spot. The Tigers are a young team that needed to learn how to win, and Leyland is instilling that winning mentality. That's no small task for a team and organization that has been mired in losing for several years.

Caveat – If the Tigers somehow fail to qualify for the postseason, Minnesota's Ron Gardenhire could wind up with this award.

Rookie of the Year: Justin Verlander

Verlander came to the Tigers and basically stepped in as the number one starter immediately. That's a lot to accomplish for a rookie on a team that's been leading the division for most of the season, and Verlander's stats speak for themselves. He ranks in the top 10 in the AL in wins and ERA, and assuming the Tigers get to the postseason, he's going to be vital to the Tigers' chances.

Regardless of whether you agree or disagree with these predictions, we all have to agree that it's been a great year for MLB tickets, as every one of these awards has several deserving candidates.

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