

Dodgers vs. A's: The World Series

Step right up to get answers to all your baseball questions

Well, as we all know, it's that time of year again. The leaves are falling, the sweaters are coming out of the closet, and the seemingly infinite baseball season has been shaved to a best-of-seven confrontation of league champions.

The World Series is here. The Oakland Athletics finally pinned the Boston Red Sox to the mat after four body slams. And, as at least 396 *Battalion* readers out there know, the Los Angeles Dodgers blasted the New York Mets Wednesday night to qualify as the National League representative. I say "at least 396" because that's how many people have told me about it.

I got endless ribbing from *Batt* staffers as the game mercifully wound down to a close. I got a phone call in the sixth inning, obviously a Dodger fan, asking what the score was. I got a note on my desk that read, "Dodgers 6, Mets 0."

Enough already. I was wrong, OK? I admit it. It's not like I've never gotten a prediction wrong. A quick glance over at the "Battalion Football Pics" graphic should prove that point.

With that said, I can proceed to the purpose of this column.

To wit: Many people out there, it must be said, are somewhat less than enthusiastic baseball fans. They might glance at the Astros or Rangers scores from time to time, but for the most part they consider themselves pretty well versed if they keep track of how many divisions there are. And this is their prerogative.

But trouble arises come World Series time. Suddenly thousands of people who didn't watch an inning all year turn on the tube to view what is probably the greatest spectacle in American sports.

Some are armchair jocks wanting to look knowledgeable at the sports bar. Some are women who'll be forced to spend evening after evening in front of the tube with their boyfriends or husbands. Some are boyfriends or husbands who are worried their counterparts will think they are dating idiots who know nothing about baseball and, consequently, anything else even remotely masculine. Such people bombard *The Battalion* with questions pertaining to the basics of the sport, and this seems like a good time to answer a few of them.

And since I don't seem like much of a baseball expert, I've referred them to my friend Spazmo. He helps me out occasionally with his... well, shall we say, *different* perspective. He's the sports enthusiast, Aggie nut and all-around fanatic we all have seen in one form or another.

I've taken the liberty of re-addressing the queries to him:



Hal L. Hammons
Sports Editor

Dear Spazmo,
It seems all I ever hear about when I watch baseball is balks. What is a balk?

Signed, Curious
Dear Curious,

Balks are called on pitchers when they have allowed a runner to reach base. A balk is called when a pitcher doesn't have a full stop in his delivery, when he gives too strong an indication he is going to throw the ball in one direction and then throws it somewhere else, or when in some other way he does too good a job of keeping the runner from trying to steal a base.

Dear Spazmo,
At Aggie baseball games, the batters use aluminum bats. The pros use wooden ones. Why is this?

Signed, Wondering
Dear Wondering,

Aluminum bats supposedly can send a ball farther and faster than wood, and they are broken very infrequently. Colleges consider the advantages of aluminum to outweigh the disadvantages, while the pros think the metal bats give the batters an unnecessary leg up. Translation: The colleges are cheap, and the pros are chicken.

Dear Spazmo,
Baseball games are so loooong! Sitting for nine whole innings makes my rear ache. Why do they have to play nine?

Signed, Pain-in-the-behind
Dear Pain,

How selfish we all are. If we shaved an inning or two off the game, we'd have to change all those scoreboards! Not only that, but the American vocabulary would need major revisions. "Two out in the ninth inning" is a universal metaphor. What kind of *oomph* do you hear in "bottom of

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A's have strengths in series, Dodgers depend on emotion

Associated Press

The cool and efficient Oakland Athletics, a team on a mission. The can-do Los Angeles Dodgers, the scrappers who don't quit.

The Athletics are a baseball machine without a weakness, and are strong favorites in the World Series. The Dodgers are emotional favorites, not nearly as powerful — but they have Orel Hershiser.

Oakland led the American League in pitching, was second in scoring and made only 105 errors. The four-game sweep against Boston in the playoffs was no big surprise.

The Dodgers' seven-game playoff victory over the Mets was a shock, although if forecasters had foreseen Hershiser working four times, maybe it wouldn't have been. Los Angeles was second in pitching, in the middle offensively and made 142 errors.

A position-by-position look at the teams:

First Base

Mark McGwire, Oakland

His 81 home runs are the most ever in the majors for the first two years. Hit 32 homers, just 12 in Oakland, this season. Homered again in the AL playoffs and batted .333. Adequate fielder.

Mickey Hatcher or Franklin Stubbs, Los Angeles

Hatcher, a right-handed batter, is a contact hitter who averaged .293. Led team with 12 pinch hits. Stubbs, a left-hander, has power but is prone to strike out. Neither player is good with the glove.

Oakland has a big advantage.

Second Base

Glenn Hubbard or Mike Gallego, Oakland

Hubbard will start if his hamstring is healed. Solid fielder, especially good at turning double plays. Hit respectable .255. Gallego was 1-for-12 against Boston but made all the plays.

Steve Sax, Los Angeles

Leads off and is Dodgers' sparkplug.

Tied playoff record with five stolen bases. Stole 42 during the year. Hit .277 in the season. Made only one error in final 38 games and none in playoffs.

Los Angeles gets the edge.

Shortstop

Walt Weiss, Oakland

Good rookie season and great playoffs. A switch-hitter, he batted .333 against Boston after .250 in regular season. Consistently got timely hits and made key plays in the playoffs.

Alfredo Griffin, Los Angeles

Excellent glove, weak bat. Solidified poor Dodger infield. Batted .199 and dipped to .160 in the playoffs. Committed 15 errors this year, the same as Weiss.

Oakland gets the edge because of Weiss' bat.

Third Base

Carney Lansford, Oakland

Started season batting over .400 in June, finished at .279 and hit .294 in the playoffs. Led league in fielding for second successive year, making seven errors each season. Stole career-high 29 bases.

Jeff Hamilton, Los Angeles

Became starter in first full season, although nothing exceptional. Hit .236 and batted .217 in playoffs. Walked 10 times in 309 at-bats. Average fielder.

Oakland gets a solid edge.

Left Field

Dave Parker or Luis Polonia or Stan Javier, Oakland

Parker batted .257 in first AL season after 14 years in the NL, six as an All-Star. Hit 12 homers with 55 RBI, but was not a factor in the playoffs. A defensive liability. Polonia and Javier are faster, lighter hitters with better defensive skills.

Kirk Gibson, Los Angeles

Which Captain Kirk will play? The hamstring-hurting version, who batted .154 in the playoffs, or the MVP of the 1984 World Series when he batted .333 and drove in seven runs for Detroit.

Gibson will be rested, giving Los Angeles the edge.

Center Field

Dave Henderson, Oakland

Best season of his 10-year career and more postseason heroics. Hit .304 with 24 home runs and 92 RBI, along with strong defense. Hit .375 in the playoffs against his former team.

John Shelby, Los Angeles

His 24-game hitting streak was longest in the majors and he batted .263 with 10 homers and 64 RBI. Struck out 128 times. Covers a lot of ground, but sometimes does not make the play.

Henderson is more volatile and likely to be more help. Edge to Oakland.

Right Field

Jose Canseco, Oakland

First player to hit 40 home runs and steal 40 bases in same season. Led majors with 42 homers and 124 RBI. Batted .304. Outstanding arm and had 11 assists. Hit three big homers in playoffs and batted .313.

Mike Marshall, Los Angeles

Overcame injuries and played career-high 144 games. Hit 20 home runs. Batted just .233 in playoffs but drove in five runs, one behind Gibson's team-leading total. Adequate fielder.

Oakland has a big edge.

Catcher

Ron Hassey or Terry Steinbach, Oakland

Hassey, a left-handed batter, is a better hitter with more power. Steinbach, the All-Star Game MVP, is better defensively. Hassey went 4-for-8 with three RBI in the playoffs. He threw out 31 percent of opposing basestealers this season. Steinbach was 1-for-4 against Boston. He threw out 40 percent of runners.

Mike Scioscia, Los Angeles

Scioscia's ninth-inning home run off Dwight Gooden in Game 4 was the turning point of the playoffs; he'd hit only three homers in regular season. Led Los Angeles regulars with .364 average against the Mets. Contact hitter. Great at blocking plate.

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Beta Theta Pi/The Aggie Cowboys

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The Bash is Back!