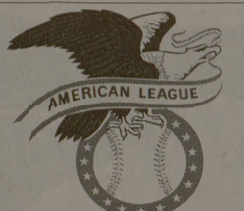


# Yankees stake their claim to A.L. East as Toronto rides its pitching to contention



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sports editor



**EAST**

Part 4 in a 7-part series



**NEW YORK YANKEES**

94-68; 2nd in AL East; Lost Divisional Playoff to Indians

The rich got poorer, but they also got better. Yankees owner George Steinbrenner pulled an early big move this winter by signing All-Star third baseman Chuck Knoblauch. His addition takes some pressure off third baseman Scott Rolen, who is coming off a horrid season, to replace in place of the departed Charlie Hayes Wade Boggs.

New York still has too many outfielders fighting for the left field spot: Tim Lincecum, Darryl Strawberry and Chad Curtis. With the addition of the switch-hitting Chili Davis at DH, two of those pieces will be on the bench at all times. It adds

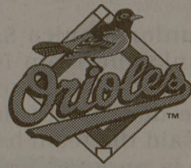
er, New York will return to its familiar perch at the top of the AL East.  
**Important Additions:** 2B Chuck Knoblauch; DH Chili Davis; 3B Scott Brosius.  
**Big Losses:** 3B Wade Boggs; 3B Charlie Hayes; RHP Dwight Gooden; DH Cecil Fielder.  
**Projected Record:** 98-74; 1st in AL East.



**TORONTO BLUE JAYS**

76-86; 5th in AL East

Toronto established itself as having one of the top pitching rotations in baseball last season. Now they have added the league's top closer and a host of role players to help some young talent flourish. Juan Guzman and Erik Hanson are coming off injury-plagued 1997 seasons. If they can



**BALTIMORE ORIOLES**

98-64; 1st in AL East; Lots ALCS to Indians

The Orioles may have missed their window of opportunity to claim a championship with this core of players. The bottom line — they have gotten too old since the big signings of a few years past.

Cal Ripken put up incredible numbers for a shortstop, but as a third baseman, he is not worth the same kind of money. The elite third basemen in baseball, such as Jim Thome, Matt Williams, Chipper Jones and Travis Fryman, put up much better numbers and don't command the same salary.

Age may have been showing on Rafael Palmeiro, Chris Hoiles and Roberto Alomar also. They each had their worst seasons in recent memory in 1997. And with Eric Davis a big question in the outfield, Baltimore finds itself dangerously thin in the field.

The pitching staff is good, but Mike Mussina is the only member of the rotation who can be expected to produce the same kind of season he had last year. Randy Myers is gone and has been replaced by maybe the most unreliable closer in baseball last season, Norm Charlton.

The Orioles will no doubt turn to a closer by committee strategy, but not since the Nasty Boys of Cincinnati has that worked for a team en route to a championship.

**Important Additions:** OF Joe Carter; LHP Norm Charlton.

**Big Losses:** LHP Randy Myers; OF Geronimo Berroa.

**Projected Record:** 86-76; 3rd in NL East.

**1998 BLUE JAYS**

|                     | AVG. | HR | RBI | SB |
|---------------------|------|----|-----|----|
| C-Darrin Fletcher*  | .277 | 17 | 55  | 1  |
| 1B-Carlos Delgado   | .262 | 30 | 91  | 0  |
| 2B-Tony Fernandez*  | .286 | 11 | 44  | 0  |
| 3B-Ed Sprague       | .228 | 14 | 48  | 0  |
| SS-Alex Gonzalez    | .239 | 12 | 35  | 15 |
| LF-Jose Cruz*       | .231 | 14 | 34  | 6  |
| CF-Shannon Stewart* | .286 | 0  | 22  | 10 |
| RF-Shawn Green      | .287 | 16 | 53  | 14 |
| DH-Mike Stanley*    | .287 | 3  | 12  | 0  |
| SUB-Benito Santiago | .243 | 13 | 42  | 1  |

\*Fletcher with Expos; Fernandez with Indians; Cruz in 55 games with Blue Jays; Stewart in 44 games with Blue Jays; Stanley in 28 games with Yankees

|                      | W-L   | ERA  | IP   |
|----------------------|-------|------|------|
| RHP Roger Clemens    | 21-7  | 2.05 | 264  |
| RHP Pat Hentgen      | 15-10 | 3.68 | 264  |
| RHP Juan Guzman      | 3-6   | 4.95 | 60   |
| RHP Erik Hanson*     | 0-0   | 7.80 | 15   |
| RHP Chris Carpenter* | 3-7   | 5.09 | 81.1 |

LHP Randy Myers\* 2-3 4.5 1.51  
LHP Kelvin Escobar 3-2 14 2.90

\*Hanson in 3 games with Blue Jays; Carpenter in 14 games with Blue Jays; Myers with Orioles

**1998 ORIOLES**

|                    | AVG. | HR | RBI | SB |
|--------------------|------|----|-----|----|
| C-Chris Hoiles     | .259 | 12 | 49  | 1  |
| 1B-Rafael Palmeiro | .254 | 38 | 110 | 5  |
| 2B-Roberto Alomar  | .333 | 14 | 60  | 9  |
| 3B-Cal Ripken      | .270 | 17 | 84  | 1  |
| SS-Mike Bordick    | .236 | 7  | 46  | 0  |
| LF-B.J. Surhoff    | .284 | 18 | 88  | 1  |
| CF-Brady Anderson  | .288 | 18 | 73  | 18 |
| RF-Eric Davis      | .304 | 8  | 25  | 6  |
| DH-Joe Carter*     | .234 | 21 | 102 | 8  |
| SUB-Tony Tarasco   | .205 | 7  | 26  | 2  |

|                       | W-L   | ERA  | IP    |
|-----------------------|-------|------|-------|
| RHP Mike Mussina      | 15-8  | 3.20 | 224.2 |
| LHP Jimmy Key         | 16-10 | 3.43 | 212.1 |
| RHP Scott Erickson    | 16-7  | 3.69 | 221.2 |
| RHP Scott Kamieniecki | 10-6  | 4.01 | 179.1 |
| RHP Doug Drabek*      | 12-11 | 5.74 | 169.1 |

LHP Norm Charlton\* 3-8 14 7.27  
RHP Armando Benitez 4-5 9 2.45

\*Drabek with White Sox; Charlton with Mariners

**1998 YANKEES**

|                     | AVG. | HR | RBI | SB |
|---------------------|------|----|-----|----|
| C-Joe Girardi       | .264 | 1  | 50  | 2  |
| 1B-Tino Martinez    | .296 | 44 | 141 | 3  |
| 2B-Chuck Knoblauch* | .291 | 9  | 58  | 62 |
| 3B-Scott Brosius*   | .203 | 11 | 41  | 9  |
| SS-Derek Jeter      | .291 | 10 | 70  | 23 |
| LF-Tim Lincecum     | .321 | 4  | 38  | 8  |
| CF-Bernie Williams  | .328 | 21 | 100 | 15 |
| RF-Paul O'Neill     | .324 | 21 | 117 | 10 |
| DH-Chili Davis*     | .279 | 10 | 39  | 4  |
| SUB-Chad Curtis     | .291 | 12 | 50  | 12 |

\*Knoblauch with Twins; Brosius with A's; Davis with Royals

|                    | W-L   | ERA  | IP    |
|--------------------|-------|------|-------|
| LHP Andy Pettite   | 18-7  | 2.88 | 240.1 |
| RHP David Cone     | 12-6  | 2.82 | 195   |
| LHP David Wells    | 16-10 | 4.21 | 218   |
| RHP Hideki Irabu   | 5-4   | 7.09 | 53.1  |
| RHP Ramiro Mendoza | 8-6   | 4.24 | 133.2 |

LHP Mariano Rivera 6-4 4.3 1.88  
LHP Mike Stanton 6-1 3 2.57

bounce back with solid years, Toronto will have the toughest four pitchers in any rotation in the American League and second only to Atlanta's in all of baseball.

Benito Santiago was a huge disappointment last season, so Darrin Fletcher and Mike Stanley were acquired to join the former All-Star behind the plate.

The key to this team, however, will be its young core of outfielders. Jose Cruz and Shawn Green have the talent to become perennial All-Stars, but the Blue Jays need them to fully mature this season if they want to have a chance at moving into the AL East's elite.

**Important Additions:** 2B Tony Fernandez; C Darrin Fletcher; LHP Randy Myers; C Mike Stanley.  
**Big Losses:** OF Joe Carter; OF Orlando Merced; 2B Carlos Garcia.

**Projected Record:** 86-76; 2nd in AL East.

PLEASE SEE FURTTICK ON PAGE 14.

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