

Re: This Week In Baseball

Air Date: June 16, 2007

TWB #811

This week TWIB took a deep look inside the 2007 MLB draft. For the first time ever, the MLB First Year Amateur Player Draft was a televised event. The draft is all about MLB teams finding and selecting the stars of the future, and making young ball players dreams coming true.

Not surprisingly, the Tampa Bay Devil Rays quickly choose left-handed pitcher David Price of Vanderbilt University, as the first overall pick in the draft. Price is highly regarded as a pitcher and teammate. The unpredictable Milwaukee Brewers selected University of Florida first baseman Matthew LaPorta. The Brewers' player development staff plans to move LaPorta to left field so they can utilize his exceptional hitting ability and keep their current first baseman, Prince Fielder, at first.

Jimmy Lee Solomon, MLB Executive – VP Baseball Operations, says, “The days of a player spending two or three years in the minor leagues are over.” In fact, many recently drafted players have contributed right after they were drafted, including Washington Nationals third baseman Ryan Zimmerman and Oakland A's relief pitcher Houston Street.

Educational theme: Dreams are ambitions and desires to achieve something special. These are often goal-oriented objectives. Establishing goals is the first step in achievement.

Educational theme: Player development is a phrase used by professional baseball to express pedagogy. Pedagogy involves teaching skills, strategy and mental aspects of performance.

Educational theme: Youthful opportunities are becoming more prevalent in sport. Because of better instruction, training, nutrition and equipment, children are developing into elite athletes sooner.

“Act Two”: The Top Five Steals in the History of the Amateur Draft were identified. San Diego Padres super closer, Trevor Hoffman, was drafted as a shortstop, St. Louis Cardinals slugger Albert Pujols was drafted in the 13th round and Jeff Kent, the second baseman with the most home runs ever was drafted in the 20th round. In addition, Atlanta Braves multi-talented pitcher John Smoltz was drafted in the 22nd round and Mike Piazza, the greatest hitting catcher ever, was drafted in the 62nd round in 1988.

But many of today's stars were “can't miss” prospects – and some were number one picks. Some of these great moments in draft history were the first pick selections of Ken Griffey, Jr., Alex Rodriguez and 2006 American League batting champion Joe Mauer.

Tampa Bay's Delmont Young was also a first overall pick and his brother, Dirt, was the fourth pick in the 1991 draft. That makes them the first brothers ever to be picked in the top five players chosen.

Educational theme: Perfect planning leads to perfect performance. If you don't have a plan, you actually have a plan for failure.

Educational theme: Trivia is insignificant or inessential facts, but is a source of fun for fans of all ages. This is much of the lore that makes baseball interesting to players and fans alike.

“Act three”: This segment began with the answer to the TWIBIA question. Andy Pettitte became an outstanding left-handed pitcher who was never drafted. Andy was signed as an amateur free agent.

TWIB looked back at some clutch performances by former first round draft picks in the World Series. Among the many shown were Boston Red Sox catcher Carlton Fisk's pole-hugging home run in 1975 and Derek Jeter's alert back handed flip to get the out at home plate, followed by hitting a walk-off game winning home run for the Yankees in 2001. Reggie Jackson of the New York Yankees hit three home runs in a game in 1977 and the badly injured Kirk Gibson dramatically hit a pinch-hit walk-off home run in 1988 for the Dodgers.

The TWIB Note pointed out that in the last 41 years, fewer than 14 percent of all first round draft picks have ever been elected to an MLB All-Star Game.

The “Call of the Week” reported that Justin Verlander pitched only the sixth no hitter in the 107-year history of the Detroit Tigers.

Educational theme: There is often more than one path to success. If you do not succeed at first, try again.

Educational theme: Mental toughness is the ability to perform under pressure; therefore, players must practice under pressure.

Educational theme: Witnessing historic performances are part of the excitement and enjoyment of athletics. Landmark performances are methods to measure achievement. It is the account of sports history collected, written, and preserved for future generations.

“Front Row Fans”: This week’s front row fan is TV actor Tom Cavanaugh. Tom grew up as a baseball fan in Canada, a land obsessed with ice hockey. As a youngster, Tom witnessed Joe Carter’s World Series-winning home run. As a Montreal Expos fan, Cavanaugh twice came close to winning the World Series. In 1988, the Dodgers defeated the Expos. Then again in the strike-shortened season, Montreal had the best record in baseball when the season was wiped out. The Expos have since moved to Washington, but Tom still roots for Team Canada in the World Baseball Classic. Cavanaugh proudly noted that the Canadians upset Team USA in the first WBC.

Educational theme: Recognizing historic performances are part of the excitement of sport for both players and fans.

Educational theme: Fans develop intense loyalty to teams for various reasons, including “nationalism”. The devotion to the interests or culture of a nation is often a reason to support the “home team.”