

Spring Training Surprises

Second base man Brian Roberts will head north with the club after a hot spring in Florida. Brian will bat leadoff against right-handed pitchers and hopefully provide the spark that the team needs to set the tables. He has always been solid defensively and the question was could he hit consistently. Tune in next month for the answer.

Veteran closer Bob Wickman will remain in Florida to rest and rehab the tendonitis he experienced. Yan and Vizciano will share closer duties.

David Segui will begin the year on the disabled list for a bad thumb. He hopes to join the team in May.

Outfielder Ricky Ledee was ice cold this spring, but could be called up when the weather warms up.

Lots of Z's at SS

Several players will share the shortstop position for Glen Allen this season. The funny thing is that they all have a Z in their family name; Chris Gomez, Jose Vizciano and Ramon Vazquez. The guys abbreviate the position "zz" rather than the usual "ss" for their little club.

Infield coach Billy Ripken reminded the guys that they had another "zz" in Omar Vizquel who played for the team a few years ago.

Regular Lineup?

Mets manager was asked about his lineup to start the season. He responded, "Albert (Pujols) will play every day somewhere and Melvin (Mora) will be the centerfielder."

The follow up question was about the other six positions, to which he replied, "sluggers Nixon and Bautista will platoon in right and Vizciano and Gomez at short, Kreuter and Molina at catcher. The rest of the order will be determined by who the starting pitcher will be for the opposition, so check with me before each game. I plan to put out the best lineup that we have each day."

Jimmy Key Excited!

Mets pitching coach discussed the strength of his rotation. "It will definitely be a strength! Zito, Clemens, Milton, Ashby and O. Hernandez. Usually, the #5 spot is a guy that you try to hide. Last year we set up the rotation so that our best four started on the road, but this year we don't really have a #5, more like 4A & 4B. Our best is the youngest and zaniest, Zito, then we have four veterans. We acquired Roger and El Duke in trade and picked up Andy (left unprotected by Bloomington) in the rookie draft. My job this year should be the easiest I ever had! These guys know how to pitch, encourage one another or provide a kick in the butt as needed. I'll keep them focused and watch for tendencies that need correction or when they get tired. I know the Mets have lots of good young talent in the minors that will need more of my attention in the future..."

Last year we had good pitching and I think it's even better today."