



The United Cardinal Bloggers

present

The Year In Cardinal Baseball

2010

Soon after I started blogging, I was struck with an idea. I didn't think it was original; I could have sworn I'd seen before on the net, of bloggers of a team coming together to do projects and cross-promote each other. However, while maybe there had been scattered attempts at that throughout baseball, I feel proud that no other team has an organized and active group such as the United Cardinal Bloggers.

The UCB has grown tremendously since we began with our first project back in November of 2007. We've expanded out to around 40 blogs, have a regular Internet radio show that has interviewed luminaries such as Ozzie Smith, Bill DeWitt III, Matthew Leach and Kyle McClellan (just to name a few), and helped make the first Social Media Night held by the Cardinals a rousing success, if only by our attendance.

Now, you have before you our first written collaboration that doesn't require an Internet connection (at least, after you download it). We hope that you will enjoy our look back at the 2010 season. While it was disappointing, especially given the preseason expectations, no one can say that it was not memorable. If nothing else, we hope that this offering will help keep winter at bay for a little bit, to bring the summer heat and the smell of the grass into your home during this baseball-less time.

I want to thank all the bloggers, both contributors and those that aren't represented in this work, for all that they do to make the UCB such a great organization. It doesn't work if there's not participation and cooperation, but thankfully both things are in abundant supply with these talented writers and fans.

As always, you can check out the member blogs (listed at the end of this collection) and the official site, www.unitedcardinalbloggers.com, to see what we are doing and to read great things about this team we all love. For all of the UCB, I thank you for your time and your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel", written in a cursive style.

Daniel Shoptaw, founder

THE YEAR IN CARDINAL BASEBALL
2010

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Defying Consistency

By Daniel Shoptaw

At the beginning of the 2010 season, the St. Louis Cardinals had a quirky streak going. In each of their first three series, the Cardinals were able to win the first two games while dropping the series finale. Little did the fans know that this back-and-forth motion, this inability to get something going on a larger scale, was an omen for the most inconsistent and jarring season in quite some time.

Going into the season, everything looked great. The offense was led by, as always, Albert Pujols who was the defending National League MVP. Matt Holliday, who had played so well since the trade from Oakland, had resigned with the club for the largest contract in St. Louis history, giving the Cards a formidable 3-4 part of the lineup. Colby Rasmus, while not completely fulfilling expectations in 2009, had shown enough to create excitement to see what he would do with a full year under his belt. Ryan Ludwick's power bat meant that the Cardinals had significant punch in the middle of their lineup.

Brendan Ryan and Yadier Molina were expected not only to anchor the defensive with their Gold Glove-caliber play, but to be able to get on base enough to keep the lineup turning over with regularity. Skip Schumaker seemed to be a lock for a .300 average, though with little else in his bat, and was playing passable defense.

Up and down the lineup, in the rotation and in the bullpen, things looked like they were coming together. Coupling the strength of the Cards with the apparent weakness of the rest of the division, it seemed like this would be a walk for the Redbirds. Sure, Cincinnati was a young team with potential, but they were at least a year or so away. Nobody else seemed able to put up much of a fight.

April 2010: 15-8, three games up on Cincinnati

The Marathon

The Cardinals began April in a manner that appeared to confirm all those theories. Even with that inability to sweep series, their best-two-of-three method won the first five series and helped the Redbirds race out to a five game lead in the National League Central. Life was good in Cardinal Nation.

In the middle of that run, though, was one of those historical games that also foreshadowed some of the issues the club would run into during the season. On April 17 in a Saturday afternoon game televised nationally by Fox, St. Louis hosted the New York Mets. The Mets threw Johan Santana, who has been tough on numerous teams and players over his career, but as a left-hander had a significant edge when facing the Cardinals. St. Louis countered with Jaime Garcia, who had pitched well in his season debut against Milwaukee.

Both Santana and Garcia brought their A games. Santana went seven scoreless innings, giving up only four hits and striking out nine. Garcia was just as dominant, striking out five and allowing only one hit in his seven frames. In the eighth, it became a battle of the bullpens. No one knew just how protracted a battle that would be.

The teams matched zeros into the tenth. The Cardinals were able to put two on with two outs for Albert Pujols, who also drew a walk. However, Matt Holliday popped out to end the threat. Holliday was then

double-switched out of the game due to a nagging injury, something that would be a huge point in the decision of this game. With the double switch, the pitcher's slot was up after Pujols.

It first reared its head in the 12th. Again, with two outs, Schumaker and Ludwick were able to get on. However, with the pitcher up behind him, the Mets were not going to deal with Pujols, walking him on four straight. Even though Bryan Anderson, the young catcher who had been called up when Jason LaRue went on the disabled list a few days earlier, sat on the bench, Tony LaRussa let Jason Motte bat for himself and Motte promptly struck out.

The game continued to go along with no scoring. In the fourteenth, a similar situation came up. Joe Mather doubled to lead off the inning and when Brendan Ryan tried to sacrifice him over, Ryan not only got him over but also reached on an error. Ryan then took second on fielder's indifference, meaning that there were runners on second and third with no one out.

As would become depressingly common during the 2010 season, the big hit--even the big sacrifice fly--was not forthcoming. Instead of being the people that extended the rallies, Schumaker and Ludwick both struck out and, after yet another intentional walk to Pujols and with Anderson still available, Blake Hawksworth hit for himself and struck out.

After all of this, the Cards still had chances to win. Runners on first and third with two outs in the fifteenth, nothing. Two on with one out in the sixteenth and Anderson finally got a shot, only to ground into a double play. One on, one out in the eighteenth, but this time Schumaker hit into the twin killing.

After eighteen innings, the two teams still stood at 0-0. To indicate how long this game was going, the Colorado/Atlanta game started after this one and Ubaldo Jimenez completed the season's first no-hitter against the Braves before it finished.

Finally, in the nineteenth, the Mets got on the board. They weren't able to get to Felipe Lopez, who relieved Ryan Franklin in the prior inning, but Joe Mather came out and pitched the nineteenth, as we learned later Lopez was battling an elbow injury that the club did not know about either. Mather had trouble finding the zone, walking Jose Reyes to start off the inning. The Mets did the Redbirds a favor by having Luis Castillo sacrifice him over, then Mather intentionally walked David Wright and hit Jason Bay with a pitch. There are only so many scoring situations that can come up in a game before someone comes through, and this time it was Jeff Francoeur, who hit a sacrifice fly to left to put the Mets up 1-0. Mather got out of the inning with a groundout, but it looked like things were going to come to an end, finally.

However, another thing about the '10 Cards--they did their best work with their back against the wall. In a scene that would be replayed in one form or another during the rest of the season, the Cards came up in the bottom of the nineteenth and finally strung enough offense together to dent the scoreboard. With one out, Pujols doubled off of Francisco Rodriguez and moved to third on a Kyle Lohse groundout. However, Yadier Molina came through with a solid single and tied up the game at one. When Allen Craig struck out, the game went on to the twentieth.

You can only go to the well so often, though. Mather returned for another inning and promptly gave up back-to-back singles, putting runners on the corners. A sac fly by Jose Reyes brought in the second run and, even though the Cards had runners at first and second in the bottom of the inning, they weren't able to match them again.

The themes from this game--questionable decision making, solid pitching being wasted by a sputtering offense, opportunities not being cashed in--became the basis of discussion during the season.

May 2010: 14-14, tied for first

The Sweep

In May, the first signs of problems occurred. The Cardinals struggled against weaker teams and were unable to get a consistent offense together, being shut out four times that month. It got to the point where, for the first time in years, Albert Pujols was moved out of the third slot, flipping with regular cleanup hitter Matt Holliday for a couple of games at the beginning of the month. While the switch didn't last even a week, it was as big of a sign that things were not right as you would ever see.

Not that May didn't have its highlights. Pujols had a three-run home run game in Wrigley at the end of the month. Brendan Ryan had a big game to forestall a Padres sweep in San Diego, though he still wound up ending the month hitting under .200.

However, if you were to take anything symbolic out of this month, it might be a three game series in St. Louis against their old rival, the Houston Astros, during the first week of May. Houston came into the game with a 10-21 record and was doing little, if anything, right. The Cardinals started off the series 20-12 and looked to pad their record against a team that was struggling.

The first game pitted Brad Penny, with an ERA under two and off to a strong start with St. Louis, against Brett Myers, who was doing as well as could be expected for such a weak team. His record was under .500, but his ERA indicated that he was pitching better than that. Still, the edge had to go to St. Louis and early on, that was what happened. Penny was able to hold the Astros at bay while the Cards scored one in the first and one in the third.

In the seventh, though, it came crashing down. Penny got the first out, but then Brendan Ryan threw away a ground ball and the floodgates opened. Penny was unable to retire anyone else, allowing four hits and a hit batter along with a sacrifice fly, totaling four runs, before ending the damage.

The Cardinals cut the lead to 4-3 in the bottom of the frame, but Jason Motte allowed two home runs in the eighth, creating an insurmountable gap. The last were first and the first were last, at least for one night.

As much as the pitching matchup had favored the Redbirds in the first game, it was in Houston's favor for the second game. Wandy Rodriguez had a history of being tough on the Cardinals, especially Pujols, while St. Louis sent out Kyle Lohse, who had been inconsistent, to say the least.

It was 1-1 in the fourth when Ryan, who seemed to be pressing in the field to make up for his woeful hitting, misplayed a ball that led to Houston scoring five runs in the inning, capped by a Lance Berkman home run. The Astros got out to a 9-1 lead before the Cards chipped away in the sixth. They were able to score four runs, but it came to an end when Ryan grounded out to end the inning. St. Louis got an immaterial run in the ninth, but still fell 9-6 and lost the series with one game left to play.

The problem was, even though the Cardinals had Chris Carpenter going to try to avoid the sweep, he had to go up against Bud Norris. Norris had become a Cardinal killer in his young career, winning as many games against the St. Louis squad as he had against all other teams combined.

Which meant that, when Hunter Pence hit a three-run home run to put Houston up four in the third, the day was effectively over. The Cardinals did score their first earned run off of Norris, an RBI single by Matt Holliday, but at the end of the day, the Cards had been swept at home by the worst team in the NL.

That was something that happened way too often during the season--the Cardinals playing down to their competition. They played under .500 against teams that were under .500, while being quite competitive against the good teams of the league.

June 2010: 13-13, 1/2 GB

The Return

One of the more important story lines for June revolved around things that happened at the end of May. In a game against the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, Brad Penny, in a shaky outing, allowed four runs in three innings. However, he got them all back with one swing, cracking a grand slam in the bottom of the third to put the Cards ahead.

Penny left the game after that at-bat with a muscle issue, one that the club said would be just a few days. It turned out to be the last time he was seen in a Cardinal uniform.

Soon afterwards, Kyle Lohse went on the disabled list and underwent a surgery on his forearm that had never been done on a major league pitcher. Suddenly, St. Louis went from a full and impressive rotation to one with a gaping hole in the back end of it.

Blake Hawksworth got a try, but when he gave up six runs in four innings against the Dodgers, it didn't knock him out of the rotation, but it shook confidence in him. PJ Walters had a solid game in San Diego in his first outing, but then matched Hawksworth's line in relief of him vs. the Dodgers and was quickly sent off to Memphis. Adam Ottavino had a few strong outings, but they were interspersed with some stinkers and he was demoted as well, eventually hitting the disabled list.

Unbeknownst to many Cardinal fans, the short-term solution was a face from the past, who was pitching for a divisional rival. When the Milwaukee Brewers could not rationalize continuing to run Jeff Suppan out every fifth day, they gave him his unconditional release. Hours after Suppan cleared waivers, he was reunited with Tony LaRussa and Dave Duncan with the hope that glory days could be recaptured.

It goes without saying that this move, coming on the heels of bringing back Aaron Miles at the beginning of the month, sent the Cardinal Internet community into a furor. Charges of unimaginative moves, of a lack of trust in the minor leagues, of a front office under the influence of the field manager swirled around, fed by the mediocre play of the team on the field. It's easier to handle moves of this nature when the team is eight games up, much harder when it is struggling for its life.

His first outing gave hope that, perhaps, a limited version of the Jeff Suppan Cardinal fans remembered was still available. Suppan allowed only one run over four innings, leading the Cards to an interleague win over the Seattle Mariners. He continued to build stamina and normally kept the Cards in the game, even if he only went six innings three times as a member of the club. Save for a couple of hiccups, Suppan helped stabilize the rotation temporarily.

Suppan did not completely fix the problem, of course. There was still a hole and the bullpen was being overexposed. The Cards were again unable to complete sweeps (five different times in June they won the

first two games, only to lose the third) and the offense would swing from scoring eight runs a game to being shut out by pitchers like Brandon Morrow. Consistency was something that was eluding the Cardinals constantly.

However, the offense did get a jolt during this month, as Matt Holliday was again swapped in the lineup, this time moving to second ahead of Albert Pujols. The move was again short-lived, but Holliday did win Player of the Week as he tore through interleague games and started his second-half surge.

July 2010: 15-11, 1/2 GA

The Trade

July might have been the most inconsistent month of a season of inconsistency. After alternating wins and losses through their first four games, they took a road trip to Colorado that stuck daggers in Cardinal hearts and raised questions about a bullpen that had been relatively solid throughout the season.

The first game of that trip was the worst, when the Cardinals had a 9-3 with one out in the ninth inning, only to see the combination of Dennys Reyes and Ryan Franklin allow not one but two three-run home runs as the Rockies stormed back to an improbable 12-9 victory. That had to carryover somewhat, as the next night the Redbirds were up 5-0 after four and a half innings and 7-4 after seven.

However, this time the tandem of Mitchell Boggs, Trevor Miller and Jason Motte conspired to tie the game when Motte allowed a long ball to Dexter Fowler. In the bottom of the ninth, Evan MacLane made his major league debut a short one when he gave up the game-winning clout to Chris Iannetta, the first batter he faced. MacLane pitched one more inning for the Cardinals, against the Dodgers later in the month, keeping him from the ignominious fate of having an infinity ERA for the season and, perhaps, his career.

You couldn't fault the Cards too much for losing the final game of that series, as it did pit Ubaldo Jimenez, who won his fifteenth game, against Chris Carpenter. The Rockies got to Carp in the first with two runs and that, effectively, was the ball game.

The Cards rebounded to take two out of three from Houston, then got a few days off for the All-Star Game. The Cards were well-represented, as Albert Pujols, Matt Holliday, Yadier Molina, Chris Carpenter and Adam Wainwright all headed out to Anaheim. Wainwright and Holliday both had active hands in helping the National League to its first victory in fourteen years.

Whatever they picked up from being among the best of the best, it apparently came back with them from the trip. For a glorious week, the Cardinals couldn't lose. They swept a four-game series against the Dodgers coming back from the break, capped with a huge comeback in the final game against the Los Angeles bullpen. Then they won three more games against the Phillies, stretching the winning streak out to eight games before falling to Philadelphia in the 11th after ten scoreless innings in a game started by Cole Hamels.

So spirits were running high, but then St. Louis lost four of their next six coming into a series with Pittsburgh to end the month. These were also the final games before the trading deadline and most fans expected a move. Just not the one that was made.

Hours after scoring the winning run in the first game against the Pirates, erstwhile Cardinal outfielder Ryan Ludwick, who had come to prominence with the club and had a solid following among the fans, was traded to San Diego in a three-team trade. The Cardinals received an A-ball pitcher named Nicholas Greenwood back from the Padres, but the major part of the deal was getting Cleveland righthander Jake Westbrook.

Westbrook had long been rumored to be a target of the Cardinals, what with his noticeable ground-ball ratio and other Dave Duncan skills. That part of the deal was not surprising, but for a team that had a sporadic offense as it was, taking out one of the bigger bats was a large gamble. If nothing else, it should have woken up the clubhouse. It seemed to have that short term effect, since the Cards scored eleven and nine runs in the first two games, both wins, without Ludwick. Time would prove that a transitory effect.

August 2010: 11-15, 7 GB

The Fight and The Fall

The beginning of August was a stop-and-start affair, the sort that fans had started to become accustomed to during the season. Two losses followed by two wins, then a blown save in Florida dropped the club 2.5 games behind the Reds, though they made up a half game the next day with a rainout of their game and a loss by the Reds.

That meant the stage was set for what promised to be an important series against Cincinnati. The Cardinals had the pitching lined up in their favor, with Carpenter, Garcia and Wainwright going. If this team was ever going to make a stand, this was the time. A sweep by the Reds would push them five games out with only three more to play against the team from the Queen City. A sweep by the Cardinals would put them back into first place. Adding to the mix was the Reds picking up former Redbird Jim Edmonds right before the series started. The line was drawn.

In the first game, the Cardinals pinned seven runs on rookie starter Mike Leake, finishing off the inning with a grand slam by Skip Schumaker. Seven runs was plenty for Carpenter, who gave up only two runs in seven innings to beat Cincinnati for the ninth straight time.

After the game, though, was when the fuse was lit. Brandon Phillips had actually made the comments before the game, but they weren't reported until afterwards. He made no bones about his dislike for the Cardinals and the organization, something that was slightly ironic since so many former Redbirds were in the clubhouse with him. Needless to say, St. Louis team members did not take especially kindly to being referred to as canines of the female persuasion, even given their manager's well-known crusading on the part of animals.

Phillips, for his part, either was the most clueless of players or the most arrogant. As he led off in the bottom of the first inning in Game 2, he tapped Yadier Molina's shin guards with his bat, his way of saying hello that he has done on occasion. Molina took offense, standing up to let him know that he couldn't run his mouth then expect all to be forgotten. Words were exchanged, the players shoved each other and it was on.

Benches cleared and one of the general baseball brawls, where there's a lot of pushing and nothing seems to happen, seemed to be going on. That is, until the mass of humanity pushed that night's starter, Johnny Cueto, up against the screen.

The most charitable explanation what happened next was that he was afraid of being trapped and instinctively lashed out. Most explanations are more derogatory and, most likely, more correct. Whatever the case, Cueto lashed out by bracing against the screen and kicking his spikes, which left cuts down Chris Carpenter's back and gave Jason LaRue a concussion and a near-miss on having eye damage. Cueto stayed in the game, but eventually missed one start via suspension. LaRue never recovered and was forced to retire at the end of the season.

The game continued, but the Cardinals were inspired. Molina hit a home run in the top of the second and, after Cincinnati tied it at two in the bottom of the third, the Cards scored three in the sixth and three in the seventh to win the contest 8-4.

The final game was a scoreless duel for the first half, but Colby Rasmus smashed a grand slam, the Redbirds' second of the series, and that four run cushion was more than enough for Adam Wainwright. The score wound up 6-1 and the Cards were in first place by themselves.

The conventional wisdom was that the veteran club had established itself over the youthful usurper. Things would be different now. The Cardinals had answered the challenge and put down the pretender.

We all know just how much conventional wisdom is worth.

St. Louis won their next game, against the Cubs, but then lost five in a row against Chicago, Milwaukee and San Francisco, only pulling out of their slide when Carpenter outdueled Tim Lincecum. After a couple of wins there, they had one of their worst roadtrips ever, going 2-8 on a ten game trip through the weak sisters of the league--Pittsburgh, Washington, and Houston. The outlook went from calculating postseason matchups to just hanging in the race with a two week span.

September/October 2010: 17-15, 5 GB

The Finish

Even with more callups from Memphis than usual (after Memphis had finished their AAA playoff run), the month of September was a half-hearted affair. Cincinnati lost enough to keep the Cardinals around, but St. Louis was never able to put together any sort of sustained winning streak, even with teams like Milwaukee, Chicago and Pittsburgh on the schedule. The Cardinals did not put more than two wins in a row together in the final month until after they were officially eliminated, at which time they won their last five games.

Any sort of strong September and the Cards might have been able to climb that five game mountain, but their losing ways at the beginning of the month pushed the Reds' lead to seven and even with Cincy limping into the playoffs, there just wasn't anything St. Louis could do about it. The final matchup with the Reds occurred over Labor Day weekend, when the Cards took two of three, but again they were unable to follow that up with wins against inferior teams.

In fact, the highlight of the month for some of the fanbase was the Cardinals' first Social Media Night, which gave some bloggers and other followers of the team the chance to get together at a game and listen to people such as Matthew Leach and Derrick Goold, along with general manager John Mozeliak, talk about social media efforts. This also provided an opportunity for these fans to finally meet the people behind the screen names, as it were, and strengthen ties between people in the online community.

The last week of the season was meaningless baseball, as the Cards were officially eliminated on the final Tuesday. The team did give the fans one last hurrah, though, with an amazing performance in the final four games versus the Colorado Rockies. The same team that had done so much damage to the Redbirds in Colorado was rendered completely inert, allowing the purple-clad team to score only two runs in four games, one of which went into extra innings.

The final few games gave Cardinal fans a glimpse of the future as more and more of the bench players and minor league callups got playing time. No game epitomized this more than the Wednesday afternoon game against the Pirates, the first they played after elimination. Only one player in the lineup, Colby Rasmus, was a regular starter at the beginning of the year. The rest, including starting pitcher PJ Walters, had spent at least part of the year in Memphis. This AAA bunch beat Pittsburgh 4-1, perhaps strengthening John Mozeliak's off-season dealing hand.

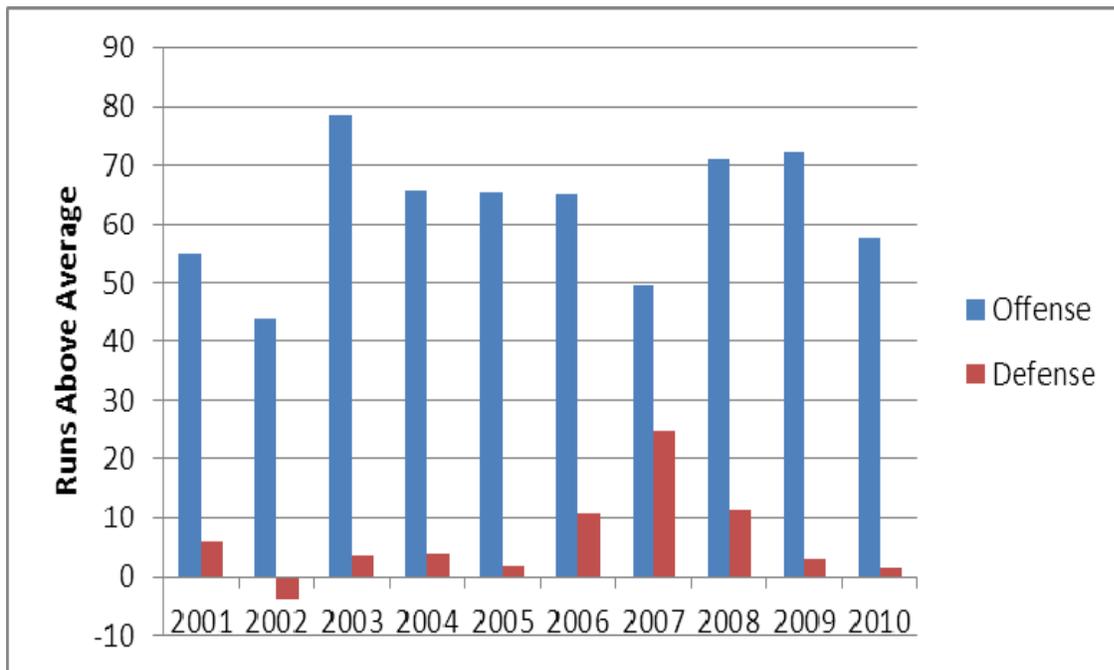
The themes of this season--inconsistent offense, an inability to win against sub-.500 teams, the uncanny knack of scoring four runs in the ninth to get within one, only to fall short--ran all the way from game one to game 162. It remains to be seen if Tony LaRussa, who decided after the season to come back for another go-around, can fix those problems and have the Cardinals back on top in 2011.

When Bad Is Good

By Steve Sommer

2010 was a good news/bad news story for Albert Pujols.

On the bad side, 2010 saw him have one of his worst years statistically, both traditional and advanced, in his 10 year career. His batting average, on base percentage, and slugging percentage were all well below his career numbers. On the sabermetric side his weighted on base average (wOBA) of 0.420 was the third lowest total of his career while his ultimate zone rating (UZR) of 1.3 was his lowest since moving to first base. The following chart summarizes the affect the above numbers had on his runs above average for both offense and defense:



Combining those offensive and defensive contributions yields Pujols being worth 7.3 wins above replacement (WAR), which is his lowest total since his second season.

Those facts are the bad news. The good news is that despite all of that Albert still finished second in the NL and third in MLB in WAR. Additionally there is reason to believe that Albert may have been a bit unlucky. His batting average on balls in play (BABIP) was 0.297, which was ~20 points below his career average. Statcorner (www.statcorner.com) posts a version of wOBA called wOBA_r that shows what players wOBA would have been had his luck on balls in play been more like the players history. For Pujols in 2010 his wOBA_r was 0.442 which suggests he may have been slightly unlucky.

What does this all mean going forward? Pujols is on the wrong end of the general aging curve for MLB hitters (usual peak is around 27); however if his luck on balls in play improves some it could cancel out any aging effects. Add all of that up and we would expect Pujols to again be the best player in baseball (or at worst among the best) and post a WAR in the 7.5-8 range.

Finding the Happy

By Angela and Erika

Despite the final record being a disappointment, there were definitely positives to be found in the 2010 season. From eight game winning streaks to Web Gem nominees, the two of us had to put our heads together to narrow it down to just a couple of things to highlight. The two we chose should come as no surprise to those of you who have read our work: the starting rotation's "Big 3" and the Baby Birds.

At the beginning of the season, Chris Carpenter and Adam Wainwright were our two-headed pitching monster. Both starters were coming off stellar 2009 campaigns, coming in second and third (respectively) in the Cy Young award voting. The rest of the rotation was to be filled out by Kyle Lohse, free agent signee Brad Penny, and a to-be-determined fifth man. That fifth spot was so up in the air that there were at least four players that were brought up before the eventual winner that did not make the cut - Rich Hill (ended up in AAA and released before the end of the season), Kyle McClellan and Blake Hawksworth (mostly used in the major league bullpen this year), and Adam Ottavino (spent most of the year in the AAA rotation).

Who made the cut? Jaime Garcia. After watching Garcia with some interest in 2008, he had fallen off the radar when he went under the knife for Tommy John surgery that wiped him out of almost all of the 2009 season. Nothing was expected of him going into 2010, which makes his remarkable rookie year all the more noteworthy. He made 28 starts covering 163.1 innings, twirled a 2.70 ERA, a 1.316 WHIP, and struck out just over 2 batters for every walk allowed. His poise on the mound made the 24 year old look like a seasoned veteran instead of a rookie still shaking off the aftereffects of Tommy John.

Combine Garcia with Carpenter and Wainwright, and teams that faced all three of them in the same series sometimes left town shaking their heads. While Carpenter in some circles had somewhat of a down year, consider that the oft-injured pitcher picked up 35 starts (a career high) and 235 innings, tossed out a 3.22 ERA and garnered himself an All-Star invite, all in his year 35 season. Who would complain about that?

Wainwright was even more dominant! A 2.42 ERA, 5 complete games (including two 2-hit shutouts), a 20-11 record, a WHIP of 1.051 and a solid All-Star appearance put him in contention for a possible Cy Young award this year, although the competition was tough in this "Year of the Pitcher". The big three took the Cardinals deep into the pennant race in 2010, and watching any one of them pitch usually brought smiles to our faces.

But the pitching wasn't the only highlight. Ah, those Baby Birds!

We gals at the Cardinal Diamond Diaries have LOVED cheering on our fledgling Cardinals as they got a chance to shine at the big league level this season. Obviously the shining star of the young rookies would be Jaime Garcia, with his wise-beyond-his-years emotional control as well as his pitching brilliance. There was more than just Garcia, though.

Jon Jay came in and stole the show after the Cardinals traded Ryan Ludwick, appearing to be charmed at the plate with a batting average that *almost* topped .400 after his hot month of July. Nick Stavinoha, Allen Craig and Tyler Greene all had some high points during their stints with the big club. Right-hander Fernando Salas' 30.2 innings of relief pitching resulted in a 3.52 ERA (15 walks and 29 strikeouts) - not too shabby for a fill-in arm from AAA Memphis, huh?!

And we would never forget David Freese, the Cardinals rookie starting third baseman back on Opening Day. Freese quieted his detractors with his offensive success (especially with runners in scoring position) as well as his outstanding defensive range at the hot corner until injuries ended his season just before the All Star break.

Daniel Descalso was the Baby Bird who really burst onto the stage during the last 2 weeks of the season. Descalso impressively covered third base (after Felipe Lopez' unconditional release) even though his usual position was at second base in Memphis.

The Baby Birds may not have gotten as much playing time as *we* think they deserved (and needed) during the 2010 season, but during the final days of the season the boys made quite a statement. The Cardinals won 9 of their last 11 games with a large Baby Bird contingent in the lineup. On September 29th, PJ Walters pitched a winning game against the Pirates with a crew made up almost entirely of his Memphis teammates behind him on the field. For the final game of the season the Memphis Redbird reunion tour continued with Jon Jay in LF, Joe Mather in RF, Fernando Salas on the mound in relief, Matt Pagnozzi catching, Daniel Descalso at 3B, Allen Craig at 1B, Tyler Greene at 2B and Mark Hamilton and Nick Stavinoha pinch-hitting, as they beat the Rockies 6-1.

Viva El Baby Birdos!

Waino Is Bueno

By Bill Ivie

During the month of December in 2003, the Cardinals hit the trade market looking to bolster a struggling pitching staff. They would utilize Eli Marrero, a bench player that had contributed well over the previous seasons, and an oft-injured outfielder that was not quite living up to his potential in JD Drew.

The Cardinals had agreed to send the two bats to Atlanta in exchange for Jason Marquis and reliever Ray King, but they refused to sign the deal without the inclusion of Adam Wainwright. The Cardinals viewed the 6'7" right-handed starter as a potential front of the line starter. The former first round draft pick of the Braves was climbing through the minor league system and was not disappointing. It is hard to believe that the front office of the Cardinals organization realized at the time the blockbuster trade they had just completed.

In 2009, the Cardinals' dream of a one-two punch in their starting rotation was realized as Adam Wainwright lived up to his potential and matched counterpart and mentor Chris Carpenter all the way to the end of the season. It was said by most experts around the league that the fact that both Carpenter and Wainwright had such great seasons was the reason neither was able to walk away with the Cy Young Award for 2009. That was only the beginning.

As the sun set on 2010, Adam Wainwright confirmed what the Cardinals had already felt: he was a legitimate ace for the franchise and belonged at the head of their rotation for many years to come. He would compile a season that was a masterful work and showed just how dominant the young man can be.

Wainwright's season would pick up right where he had left off in 2009, as he fashioned a dominant April to open the campaign. Averaging more than seven innings pitched over five starts, the only blemish on his record came in San Francisco on April 24th, when he was outdueled in a 2-0 loss. The game was one of many games that epitomized the Cardinal offense in 2010. It was not Tim Lincecum that would confuse the Cardinals bats to the tune of ten strikeouts and eight innings of shutout ball, it was Barry Zito, a pitcher that would not even make the Giants' post-season roster.

Even including the loss to the Giants, Wainwright would struggle the most during the month in his next start against the Atlanta Braves. He would last only six innings, his shortest outing to this point in the season, and give up three earned runs. This time, however, the offense would show up to pick up their star pitcher and put a one in his win column by the score of 10-4. That game would put a close on a great opening month for Wainwright, with a 4-1 record, 38 innings pitched, 30 strikeouts and only eight walks while posting a 2.13 ERA.

May would roll around and expose Wainwright to the enigma that was this version of the St. Louis Cardinals. Wainwright would open the month on the hill on May 4th against the Philadelphia Phillies. For the second time that season, he would hold his opponents to two runs and not gain the victory, taking a no decision in the team's loss 2-1. His record would move to 5-1 the very next outing on May 9th as he would reap the benefits of a strong showing from the bipolar 2010 offense, as they would defeat Pittsburgh 11-4.

The see-saw month would continue along, seeing Adam give up no more than four earned runs in any given start and hold opponents to one earned run in three separate starts, yet only post a win-loss record of 3-2. Posting 47 strikeouts over 13 walks and an ERA of 2.41 during this stretch was barely enough for the Cardinals' ace to post an over .500 record.

On June 4th, Wainwright would take the ball as the Cardinals played Milwaukee in St. Louis. Whether from frustration from the month before, the feeling of having to do it all himself, or just the fiery competitive nature of the player, that outing yielded something that had never happened in Wainwright's young career. Over the course of the game, Wainwright would throw 103 pitches, strike out eight batters while walking one, induce 15 ground ball outs and four fly outs and put the finishing touches on a complete game shutout.

Wainwright would continue to cruise through his season until the Cardinals traveled north of the border into Toronto on June 24th. The game would be the shortest of Wainwright's season, seeing him last on four innings, throwing 75 pitches, surrendering five runs (four earned) and taking his fifth loss of the season. He would close out the month of June with a 4-2 overall record, 37 strikeouts, 11 walks, and a 2.45 Earned Run Average.

Domination was the theme of July for Wainwright. He would open the month with three straight wins against Milwaukee, Houston and the Dodgers, with Milwaukee and Los Angeles coming at home. He would take that momentum into the July 22 contest with the Phillies, seeking revenge for the earlier no decision. For the third straight game, Wainwright would not surrender a single run, running his scoreless streak to 25 innings. Despite his performance, he would once again receive a no-decision against the Phillies, and the team would suffer a 2-0 loss.

That streak of shutout innings would reach 26 on July 27th in New York. He would end up surrendering six runs that day, leaving after five innings and suffering his only loss of the month. Wainwright would finish the month with a 3-1 record, 28 strikeouts, seven walks, and an impressive 1.85 ERA.

August would continue the frustration of the strange offense behind the strong pitching of Wainwright. He would open the month with three straight victories, carrying his dominant July over into early August success. It took him years to throw his first career shutout; he would demonstrate a desire not to wait so long for another. On August 6th in Florida, Wainwright would combine seven strikeouts, 11 ground ball outs, and nine fly ball outs over 110 pitches to achieve his second shutout of the season and his career.

The tail end of the month would not be so kind, as Wainwright would suffer three straight losses at the hands of Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Washington despite not surrendering more than four runs in any contest. His month would close out with a 3-3 record, 36 strikeouts, 11 walks, and a 2.57 ERA.

September would be, statistically, one of Wainwright's worst months of the year. However, a sudden surge from the offense would help the hurler achieve another milestone that had eluded him up until this season.

A disappointing loss to division rival Cincinnati would open the month for Wainwright and epitomize the struggles of the team for the year. A win on September 9th against playoff-bound Atlanta indicated that Wainwright was on a mission to complete this year out strong. However, on September 14th against the hated Cubs, Wainwright would struggle. He would surrender 12 hits, the most hits in any game this season, to a team that was struggling for an identity. He would suffer a loss, dropping his season record to 18-11 with just two starts remaining on the year.

He would defeat San Diego on September 19th, going eight innings, surrendering one run and matching his career high with his 19th victory. On September 24th in Chicago, Wainwright would pitch well, though not dominantly. In the course of 20 win seasons, though, it is the games that an ace pitcher is not dominant that he still needs to win. Wainwright would only surrender one run, though he would only go six innings as well. The offense, however, stepped up to protect the ace of the staff and scored seven runs, solidifying an impressive season for the pitcher.

Wainwright's 2010 season would conclude and see the pitcher post 20 wins while only losing eleven games. In addition, he would post a solid 2.42 earned run average, strikeout 213 batters, only walk 56, and post a 1.05 WHIP. His wins, strikeouts, WHIP and ERA would mark career bests in each category. He would finish second in the league in Wins (Roy Halladay, 21), second in ERA (Josh Johnson, 2.30), 3rd in Innings Pitched (Chris Carpenter, 235; Roy Halladay, 250.2), fourth in Strikeouts (Ubaldo Jimenez, 214; Roy Halladay, 219; Tim Lincecum, 231) and third in WHIP (Roy Halladay, 1.04; Roy Oswalt, 1.03).

It wasn't enough, this time, for Wainwright to bring home his first Cy Young Award, but it was definitely enough to classify him as a legitimate ace on this staff.

Worst. Road Trip. Ever.

By Josh Gilliam

Out of everything in 2010, the most maddening thing about the Cardinals made its presence felt in August. St. Louis finished dispatching Cincy to take the NL Central lead and seemingly control of their playoff future. The Reds could not answer the bell and looked much like the younger brother to the veteran Cards.

Then a funny thing happened, though it was not at all amusing to anyone who roots for the Birds on the Bat.

For a ten-day stretch to close out the month, St. Louis lost much more than a chance to return to the postseason. The Cards left their mojo at Busch Stadium and picked the worst possible time to resemble newcomer Jake Westbrook's former club.

A road trip the schedule gods gift-wrapped appeared just what Pujols and Co. had in mind following a brutal couple of months. When the Pirates, Nationals, and Astros didn't follow the script, however, the finger-pointing began and questions soon followed. St. Louis found zero answers to the pitching failures, hitting slumps, and defensive miscues that plagued Tony La Russa's typically solid core, but the character issues exposed were much more troubling.

Pittsburgh was the first stop on the roller coaster, and that should have been all the Cardinals needed to hear. Coming in after winning the San Francisco series, St. Louis gave the ball to Kyle Lohse with expectations higher than usual. He responded well by throwing into the sixth inning, and Albert did the rest with career home run 399.

With a blow-out loss in game one, the Pirates only needed to continue the trend of NL Central cellar dwellers for two more nights. Adam Wainwright was on the mound, and the playoff hunt appeared back on the radar...for about half the game. Just over 13,000 witnessed the beginning of the end for the Cardinals in 2010, but no one could have predicted the formula.

Wainwright sailed through the Pittsburgh lineup twice, yielding only a pair of hits through five innings. The wheels came off in the sixth, however, and St. Louis would manage just one more victory the rest of the month. The troubling thing for TLR was that his club had many chances to pull out the win but couldn't find the answer in yet another one-run defeat.

It became clear by the end of the Pirates' leg of the trip that something was very wrong with the Cards. Overpowered by a rookie hurler, the Birds On The Bat dropped the series and had no day off to recover. They looked flat and had zero answers for arguably the worst team in baseball, but a jolt was coming.

Unfortunately it takes more than a No. 5 no-doubter to keep the ship from sinking.

Heading from one last place team to another, Washington was a fitting place for Pujols to enter the 400 homer club. The Nats proved to be terrible hosts to history, though, and the extra-inning affair overshadowed the first-inning blast when the Cardinals again couldn't pull one out.

As agonizing as the 11-10 defeat was to swallow, nearly losing Albert overshadowed everything else. He tried to make yet another miracle catch but only received a twisted ankle for his trouble, playing in the next game. The Cardinals' problems were not nearly as easy to solve.

The rookie in the rotation stopped the bleeding momentarily and gave a glimpse of how much he means overall just by doing the little things. Pujols cracked 401 to give Jaime Garcia all the support he needed, but maybe Garcia did more than just throw strikes. He proved to everyone in St. Louis that you don't have to do it all yourself, something Albert needs to hear going forward.

While the victory momentarily stopped the bleeding, the morale took another beating the following day. This time it was the fatal blow to not only the thought of playing into mid-October but also to consistency. Lohse was handed a 3-0 cushion and even helped himself get back to even before Washington exploded for nine unanswered runs.

The 14-5 thrashing was bad but not nearly as devastating as Wainwright dropping another game, his third straight. The Nationals knocked him out after five innings and won their second game in a row for the first time in August. With another series defeat, the Cardinals fell further out of contention and right into the waiting arms of a ready Houston squad.

For whatever the reason, hungry did not describe St. Louis at a time when they should have been desperate for any resemblance of past efforts. The Astros traded their two stars at the deadline and played with a fire that left no doubt who the better club was; this came not even a month removed from the three games where Houston gave up 30 runs.

This time around the Cardinals would not score three runs combined over the series, a whimper that closed out one of the worst months of the TLR/AP era. A pair of shutouts started the pain, and a quote that rivaled Brandon Phillips to some extent put the finishing touches on the 2-8 trip.

Five consecutive losses heading into another Cincy match-up put St. Louis in a no-win situation. Gone were the chances of catching the leaders even with a sweep and any momentum from the last Reds/Cards battle was summarized by Geoff Blum all too well: "It didn't look like they wanted to come out and beat us."

When it really mattered, the BOB disappeared.

How could a club that fought (both literally and figuratively) their way back into the race allow such an epic collapse? Did the players check out early or was it a more a case of having nothing left? And finally, what makes a sure-fire HOF manager unable to see the writing on the wall and helpless to motivate his team in the time of need? We've no way of knowing the answers, but whatever they were, the results were the same: no postseason in 2010.

Inconvenient Truths About the Cardinals' 2010 Season

By Matthew Philip

The high hopes and dashed dreams of the 2010 Cardinals' frustrating season left fans in a near-perpetual state of trying to figure the team out. From the onset of spring training (Did John Mozeliak do enough for the team's chances in landing Matt Holliday?) to the north-breaking rotation (Should Jaime Garcia be in it?) to the seemingly inexplicable reasons for the team's demise (Was it "clutch hitting"? Bad baserunning? Not enough bench?), everyone and his brother had a theory on why the Cardinals abdicated their Central Division crown to the upstart Reds.

Amid the cacophony of punditry, from both old and new media, some ideas scored lower on the reality meter than others. So although 2010 will likely remain in some respects a mystery, let's clarify a few talking points that seemed to linger a little too long on the airwaves, newspaper print and blogs this year.

1. Ludwick's trade is not the reason that the team didn't win

Loyalists looking for a scapegoat were drawn to the "losing Ludwick led to collapse" narrative. But how many of those observers can now recall Ludwick's OBP at the time of the trade? If you guessed .329, we'll bet you're not one of the revisionists claiming that the offense went to pot when Ludwick left. Perhaps people still remember the 5.4-WAR version of 2008, as opposed to the version that posted 2.2, 2.0 and 2.1 WARs in 2007, 2009 and 2010. It's possible that Ludwick's departure created an "enthusiasm gap" inside the clubhouse, but given the sordid tales of Colby Rasmus's displeasure and others, we're inclined to believe that there wasn't much enthusiasm to begin with in this factious team.

To listen to and read the laments about the team's offense post-Ludwick, one would think that the Cardinals traded away Keith Hernandez in his prime and not a corner outfielder with a .329 OBP. The offense did lose a little power, going from .333 OBP/.410 SLG with Ludwick to .329/.388 without him. But lost in that split is the fact that the period also coincided with the team losing David Freese, one of the Cardinals' main offensive weapons with a .361 OBP and .404 SLG, and replacing him with .310/.340 Pedro Feliz.

It's true that Ludwick himself tailed after the trade -- posting a -0.3 WAR with San Diego -- but even if he had remained and continued to produce at his previous clip, the Cardinals would still have flopped offensively because of the Freese-Feliz tradeoff, a much greater disparity than between Ludwick and Jon Jay, the man who replaced him in right. Freese's injury aside, the Cardinals more than compensated for Ludwick's loss with the upgrade in Westbrook, who produced 1.3 WAR down the stretch, over Jeff Suppan.

2. The team didn't have a "clutch-hitting" problem

This meme went around most of the season, peddled most notably by multiple Post-Dispatch writers. The problem is that it's a fiction.

In the wake of the Cardinals' offensive woes, everyone became a critic. Nothing is wrong with that of course, but sometimes those critics go overboard, and their chicken-littlism manifests itself in trying to force facts into hypotheses. Between April 5 and October 4, Post-Dispatch writers referenced the dubious stat of "batting average ["with runners in scoring position"](#) (or [clutch hitting](#) or [RISP](#)) at least 40 times.

The gist of the view was that the Cardinals' top two hitters -- Albert Pujols and Matt Holliday -- lost or gained hitting skill depending on whether runners are on base. To make the claim, writers and fans used mid-season splits . They mentioned how "[Pujols is ... at his worst when the bases are empty](#)," that "Holliday took a .221 average with runners in scoring position into the break" and of course that "Ludwick was hitting .448 with runners in scoring position this season" ([One even went so far as to note](#) Holliday's batting *on the road* with runners in scoring position.)

What a difference an entire season makes. By the end of the year, players had mostly regressed to their career numbers, and those who hadn't certainly offered no proof that they had suddenly either lost or gained this magical skill. Oh, and the team batting average with runners in scoring position? .270, better than it was in 2009 (.264) and the same as it was in 2004, when the team led the league in runs.

We don't want to dredge up the question about whether clutch hitting exists, as it has been covered by smarter people in several places. They're listed at the end of this article in hopes of elevating the level of discourse around town next season.

3. The opening-day bench wasn't the problem

Another frequent complaint was the team's lack of bench depth. John Mozeliak waited and got a seemingly bargain in Felipe Lopez, coming off a 3.9-WAR season, and already had Jason LaRue, Joe Mather, Nick Stavinoha and Allen Craig in-house. None would've been a starter for other teams, but a deep bench is a luxury few teams have.

So blaming a deficient bench is a economic canard: It is unreasonable to expect that a team in the lower third in market size but has a payroll in the upper third has enough resources to spend on a classy bench. Sure, if you lose your starting third baseman and two of your starting pitchers and your starting rightfielder plays only 75% of the time, you're going to have a hard time winning. But unless you're the Yankees, bench depth is only found on fantasy baseball teams.

5. The offense wasn't as bad as people think

To read the blogosphere and local traditional media outlets, you'd think that the 2010 Cardinals were the second coming of the 1916 Cubs. But see if you can tell which of the following lines belonged to the 2009 NL Central champs and which belonged to the bunch of, as the commenting crowd would have it, modern-day Mendozas:

Lg Rk	BB%	K%	BB/K	AVG	OBP	SLG	BABIP	wRC	wRAA	wOBA	wRC+
7	.087	.185	0.53	.263	.332	.402	.296	715.4	-1.7	.321	102
8	.086	.190	0.51	.263	.332	.415	.296	719.2	-19.8	.325	100

If you guessed that the top line was the 2010 team, give yourself a treat, like a break from the fever swamps of sports-radio call-in shows. Yes, the 2010 team created more runs relative to the rest of the league and scored more total (736) than the 2009 team (730). Not that either squad was a murderers' row, finishing solidly in the middle of the National League both years. But if the Cardinals -- and their fans -- feel like they can't win without a major offensive overhaul, they'd better look at the numbers.

6. If you need one explanatory variable, it was probably injuries

It's not as provocative or hifalutin as some theories, but if you want to pin the team's demise on a single cause, Occam's Razor would indicate that it was simply injuries. Not many teams can lose a productive third baseman and 40% of their starting rotation for most or all of the year and still win a division. Based on the pro-rated actual or projected WAR of players who spent time on the DL this year, the Cardinals lost at least 4.0 WAR to injury, including Brad Penny (1.5), Freese (0.9), and Kyle Lohse (1.0).

And yet, injuries didn't have to derail the team. Although the Cardinals certainly experienced more than their share, it's true that other teams, including the Phillies, Twins and Braves persevered and, either through trades or internal replacement, addressed their injuries and overcame. The Cardinals, on the other hand, failed to adjust when trouble befell Freese and Penny, their two most important injured players. Before Freese went down, the team had a .578 winning percentage when he started; in Feliz's starts, it was .420.

The worst of it was that Mozeliak might've done nothing at all and still done better. For example, if he had not traded on Aug. 19 for Feliz but instead summoned Memphis infielder Daniel Descalso — who had a .324 OBP during his callup — the Cardinal lineup would've conceivably had 11 more times on base (or 11 fewer outs) over the final 40 games. And midseason acquisitions Aaron Miles and Randy Winn combined for 313 below-average plate appearances, far too much drag on a team trying to keep pace with the hard-charging Reds down the stretch.

So although they may not have accounted for much of the team's disappointment in the standings, injuries were probably the single biggest factor. But falling short is relative: After all, this was a team that wasn't that much different from the 2009 group, whose Pythagorean win-loss record -- 91-71 -- was exactly how the team wound up in 2010.

Links on "clutch" hitting:

- [The Concept of "Clutch,"](http://www.baseballprospectus.com/article.php?articleid=2656) by Joe Sheehan (<http://www.baseballprospectus.com/article.php?articleid=2656>)
- [Clutch Hitting Study,](http://www.baseball1.com/bb-data/grabiner/fullclutch.html) by David Grabiner (<http://www.baseball1.com/bb-data/grabiner/fullclutch.html>)
- [Underestimating the Fog,](http://www.sabr.org/cmsfiles/underestimating.pdf) by Bill James (<http://www.sabr.org/cmsfiles/underestimating.pdf>)
- [Clutch Hitting One More Time,](http://www.philbirnbaum.com/btn1990-03.pdf) by Pete Palmer (<http://www.philbirnbaum.com/btn1990-03.pdf>)
- [Do Clutch Hitters Exist?](http://cyrilmorong.com/CramerClutch2.htm) by Dick Cramer (<http://cyrilmorong.com/CramerClutch2.htm>)
- [Cy Morong's Clutch Hitting links](http://cyrilmorong.com/ClutchLinks2.htm) (<http://cyrilmorong.com/ClutchLinks2.htm>)

Ain't That A Kick In The Head

By Tom Knuppel

**Well the walls come tumbling down, the walls come tumbling down
Just when you think you've got it made, the walls come tumbling down**

--Warner Mack, "When The Walls Come Tumbling Down"

Jason "Rusty" LaRue did what any good teammate would do on that fateful baseball day in August, stick up for your team and your prized starting pitcher. He unselfishly got himself mixed up in the fray involving the Cincinnati Reds and the St Louis Cardinals.

After a few words between Brandon Phillips and Yadier Molina tempers burst into a more pronounced altercation. Players push and shove and the scrum is at the screen behind home plate.

According to Reds pitcher Johnny Cueto, he was cornered and decided to fight back. He is swinging at Cards co-ace Chris Carpenter and landing very few punches. But then Cueto gets his behind up off the ground and starts kicking in a sissy fight manner. His cleats are exposed and in steps Jason LaRue to get his pitcher out of harm's way. The cleats rake Carpenter's back a time or two and then land squarely on LaRue's head.

His baseball career is over. Just like that he will never play the game he always knew and loved. A concussion takes him out of the lineup for good.

Before we close the book on this former Cardinals catcher, let's look back at his life and career.

Born Michael Jason LaRue in Houston, Texas on March 19, 1974, he played for three major league teams, the Cincinnati Reds, Kansas City Royals and St Louis Cardinals. His major league debut was in 1999 in Cincinnati, where he went on to be their starting catcher in 2001.

His best overall season was in 2005 with 14 HR, 60 RBI and a .260 batting average. After that season he signed a two-year \$9.5 million contract. In November of 2006 he was traded to the Royals and then almost one year later became the baseball property of the Cardinals.

In his three years in St Louis, he appeared in 141 games, had 71 hits with eight home runs and 32 RBIs. It was not about his offensive skills for the Cardinals, it was his ability to call a game and be a defensive stalwart.

Concerning his retirement, "I'm done. It's a simple decision," LaRue said.

"As a catcher you're so vulnerable to getting another (concussion). All it takes a foul ball to the head. Even as a backup that happened 3-5 times last year. It's not a question of if it would happen again, it's when. Nobody can guarantee anything. It'll probably be worse."

Jason LaRue had a career many people envy. He was able to have a 12-year major league career and according to Baseball-Reference he earned over \$19M during that time period. Cardinal Nation salutes you and thanks you for your time, service and dedication to the Cardinals and their fans and wishes you good luck in retirement.

Tomorrow's Cardinals Today

By Tim McCullough

In 2010, Jeff Luhnow presided over his sixth draft for the St. Louis Cardinals organization. During his tenure, the organization had selected a variety of number one overall picks including highly touted high schoolers (Colby Rasmus, 2005; Pete Kozma, 2007; Shelby Miller 2010), polished college hitters (Brett Wallace, 2008) and high octane college arms (Adam Ottavino, 2006). Criticized at times for being overly conservative and reliant on college statistics, 2010 began with a polished college hitter that was a favorite of scouts and statistical analysts alike. The draft featured a number high upside players in the early rounds and a more conservative approach later on.

Zach Cox was considered one of the top college hitters entering the 2010 draft despite being just a draft-eligible sophomore. A left handed hitter from the University of Arkansas, Cox features an advanced approach at the plate resulting in part from adjustments made between his freshman and sophomore year at college. Cutting back on his power-first approach and shortening his swing led to improved plate coverage and a significantly improved ability to put the ball in play. Analysts are split on his long term power prospects, with some projecting above average power and others looking for moderate doubles power.

The concern with Zach Cox is more directly related to his defense. Reminiscent of 2008 draftee Brett Wallace, Cox is regarded as having a strong arm and good first instincts but fringy range. He's a superior athlete to Wallace and has the legitimate ability to be an acceptable defender at the hot corner. Conditioning will be important to long term ability of Cox to maintain a solid defensive resume at third.

The Cardinals signed Cox to a \$3.2M, four year deal as a major league contract. Prior to the signing, bonus demands had ranged as high as \$6M in media reports. Having retained Scott Boras as an advisor and being a draft-eligible sophomore, Cox had significant leverage entering the negotiations after the draft. The result was a over-slot bonus, though still relatively modest in total dollars.

Moving forward, the question is not whether Zach Cox will make the majors but how quickly he will be able to establish himself. With a major league contract, the Cardinals will be forced to burn an option year in 2011 in order to keep him in the minors. The Cardinals believe that Cox has the potential to move quickly and become an integral part of the major league club in the near future.

The Cardinals selected a pair of pitchers in their first supplemental round. First was college right hander Seth Blair. A starter at Arizona State, Blair featured a mid-nineties fastball with a projectable curveball. Blair's command of his fastball is intermittent and leaves him prone to losing the natural sink. He'll also throw a changeup that, like his curveball, needs work before it's a major league ready pitch. Blair is an experienced arm that will work on developing consistency in the Cardinals organization.

In contrast to the college junior Blair, the Cardinals also selected a very raw, very athletic high school pitcher in Tyrell Jenkins during the supplemental round. Jenkins was a Baylor recruit for football and will require a great deal of time in the minors to refine his mechanics and skills on the mound. Jenkins is a lanky 180lbs at 6' 4" and has a low-90s fastball coming out of high school. The allure of a very athletic arm after two more polished selections provided the Cardinals with a long term, high upside project to add to the system was an ideal combination.

Jeff Luhnow returned to Arizona State's pitching staff in the second round to select Jordan Swagerty. As with Seth Blair, Swagerty features a curveball to compliment his fastball that will touch the mid-90s. In recent years, the Cardinals have made an attempt to convert players who spent the majority of their college pitching career as a reliever into starters in the minor league system. The most noteworthy in recent memory was Jess Todd, selected in the second round of the 2007 draft. Swagerty's two pitch arsenal is excellent and his curveball is regarded as the more potent of the two pitches. Converting to a starting role will dictate how much upside he represents for the organization but Swagerty has a high probability of succeeding as a reliever should the starter's experiment fail.

During the third round, the Cardinals looked to the high school ranks for another high upside pick. Sam Tuivailala was considered a two-way player entering the draft with many clubs rumored to prefer to develop him as a pitcher. The Cardinals selected the Californian as a shortstop though it's questionable whether he'll stay there as he develops physically; a shift to third base seems the most likely outcome as Tuivailala grows into his size. Born in October, Tuivailala was just 17 when drafted. A three sport athlete, he had committed to Fresno State's baseball program prior to signing with the Cardinals.

Cody Stanley was the Cardinals fourth round selection. A catcher out of North Carolina, Stanley has a skillset that rarely elicits excitement but harsh criticism is equally difficult to come by. Stanley has average tools across the board with no real weaknesses and no outstanding strengths. One aspect of Stanley's game that may be underrated is his athleticism relative to a traditional catcher; he's only slightly below average as a runner. Stanley has moderate power and average plate discipline. His well rounded skillset extends to catching as he's well regarded for his defensive prowess and game calling.

Closing out the first day of selections in the 2010 draft, the Cardinals targeted Nick Longmire a college outfielder. Longmire has plus power potential and the defensive ability to remain in centerfield as an average defender. Longmire will need to refine his approach at the plate and become a more selective hitter to have success at the higher levels. With some struggles during his 2010 college campaign, Longmire represents a college pick selected more from a scouting report than any overwhelming statistical or analytical argument.

As the draft progressed into the second day, the names became more obscure, though there were several that could make a imprint on the fans in the near term. In a system bereft of left handed pitching, John Gast (6th round) and Daniel Bibona (8th round) have both had past success in college. Neither player has a blazing fastball nor insufficient velocity for a lefty. Both pitchers feature a curveball as the primary complement to their fastball. Gast's fastball has touched the low-90s at times but he struggles with command.

In the 18th round, the Cardinals selected a RHP from the small NCAA Division 1 school Cenetary. Boone Whiting struck out nearly 13 batters per 9 innings during his junior season at college. With average fastball velocity at best, Whiting relies on command and mixing his pitches to retire hitters.

The Cardinals also selected some noteworthy late draft position players. Greg Garcia was a slick fielder drafted out of the University of Hawaii. Primarily a shortstop in college, Garcia follows the mold of recent shortstop draftees, e.g. Ryan Jackson, with a solid defensive resume and questionable offensive profile. In the 17th round, the Cardinals selected Cornelius Dodd a plodding powerful first baseman out of a Tennessee high school. A favorite of some statistical analysts, Pat Biserta posted impressive college numbers as a catcher in Rutgers University in New Jersey. Biserta was selected in the 24th round.

Any 2010 draft recap would be incomplete without mention of the 12th round selection made by the Cardinals. Austin Wilson was a premier talent with a firm commitment to Stanford University. Considered to be a first round draft pick on talent alone, Wilson and his parents had made it known that the priority would be pursuing an education in conjunction with his baseball career. A potent speed-and-power combination player, Wilson profiled as an elite right fielder with a plus arm, plus defense and plus raw power. The Cardinals took a late round flyer on Wilson hoping to entice him from college.

A visit to Busch Stadium in full faux uniform attire, Wilson had the full Cardinal red carpet rolled out to impress him. The Cardinals failed in the end but that's hardly a condemnation of either the team or the process. Austin Wilson and his parents were honest and forthcoming prior to the draft beginning and the Cardinals were simply unable to sway them from that position. Between his selection and the signing deadline, no 2010 draftee more captivated the Cardinals narrative in the media and among fans than Austin Wilson.

Overall, the 2010 draft is a more balanced draft than in previous years. It features some players selected as refined, finished products -- Zach Cox, Jordan Swagerty, Cody Stanley, John Gast -- and players that are more raw, athletic talents -- Tyrell Jenkins, Sam Tuivailala. The organization retains its tendency to select late round players with impressive statistical profiles but less compelling scouting ones. With a front end of the draft that featured some high upside, high risk picks, the 2010 draft featured a compelling mix of unrefined athletes and polished college baseball players.

Harvesting The Crops

By Justin Hulsey

AAA – Memphis Redbirds

The Redbirds had by far the most exciting season any team in the system had, or at least the most exciting August and September. Memphis was in a dog fight all year for a playoff spot and finally, on the last day of the regular season, they made their way in with an 82-62 record. In the Redbirds' final 14 games they went 11-3, including a split with Iowa that earned them a spot in the post season. The Redbirds then swept Oklahoma City in the first round before being swept by Tacoma while defending their Championship crown.

Although being swept by the Rainers left a bitter taste in the mouths of Redbird fans, the 2010 season was a successful one. Memphis had several players contribute to the big-league club during the season, including Mark Hamilton and Daniel Descalso, who made their MLB debuts.

Team MVP – Allen Craig: .320/.389/.549, 57 R, 24 doubles, 14 HR, 81 RBI, 306 AB
Team Cy Young – Brandon Dickson: 11-8, 3.23 ERA, 1.40 WHIP, 137 SO, 167 IP

AA – Springfield Cardinals

While the Double-A Cardinals did not win their division, it was certainly not a bad season. In fact, it was actually a pretty successful year for Springfield. The Cards went 76-64, but trailed Northwest Arkansas by 10 games when it was all said and done. However, they made the playoffs as the second-best team when NWA won both halves of the split schedule. As management picked apart the Springfield roster, the Cardinals lacked impact bats. They had a few at the beginning of the season (Rapoport, Carpenter, Chambers), but two of them were sent to Memphis, with only Carpenter remaining on the roster all year.

As mentioned, there were many Cardinal players who made it to the next level, but Steven Hill was the only one to make it to St. Louis. Along with the hitters to get the call-up to Memphis, prospect relievers Eduardo Sanchez and Francisco Samuel also spent a significant amount of time with the Redbirds.

Team MVP – Steven Hill: .280/.352/.543, 60 R, 27 doubles, 22 HR, 86 RBI, 361 AB
Team Cy Young – Brian Broderick: 11-2, 2.77 ERA, 1.09 WHIP, 55 SO, 100.2 IP

A – Palm Beach

Palm Beach went down very similar to the way Springfield did. At 75-65, I wouldn't say it was a bad season by any means, but wasn't good enough. The Cardinals finished 5.5 games behind Charlotte in the overall standings. The main problem that I noticed throughout the season was how the team played on the road. At home the Cards were 42-29 (second in the league), but were 33-36 away from Hammons Field.

Much like Springfield, a few of the baby birds in Palm Beach were "promoted" mid-season. Chris Swauger, Matt Carpenter, and Arquimedes Nieto were a few of the players called up.

Team MVP – Alex Castellanos: .270/.339/.462, 62 R, 35 doubles, 13 HR, 58 RBI, 19 SB, 459 AB
Team Cy Young – Kevin Thomas: 10-2, 2.27 ERA, 1.22 WHIP, 94 SO, 107 IP

Position Player of the Year

Matthew Adams

.310/.355/.541, 41 doubles, 22 home runs, 88 RBI in 464 at bats

This guy had one of the quietest monster seasons I have ever come across. I'm not sure if it was because he never really had a big-time hot streak (was never named player of the week), or if it was because he spent the year in Quad Cities, but Adams consistently torn the cover off the ball this season. Matthew was atop the organization leaderboard in almost every major offensive category. He was first in batting average, second in hits, second in home runs, second in RBI, and first in slugging percentage.

Honorable Mentions: Matt Carpenter, Steven Hill

As most of you know already, I'm a huge Carpenter supporter. I feel like he could be the answer at third base for St. Louis. He has the best bat in the organization and will be MLB-ready very, very soon. He finished second in batting average, first in hits, and first in on-base percentage in the organization. Hill on the other hand, is the opposite of Carpenter. Not in MLB-readiness, but just the type of hitter he is. Carp gets on base like nobodies business while Hill is more of a power hitter (led all Cardinal Minor Leaguers in HR and RBI).

Pitcher of the Year

Brandon Dickson

11-8, 3.23 ERA, 137 strikeouts in 167 innings

Dickson is kind of like the Felix Hernandez of Triple-A. He goes out there, night after night, and delivers a very strong outing. Yet for some reason, it seems like the offense just takes a day off every time he's on the hill. If you look at his numbers, he was the best, most effective, and most consistent pitcher in the Cardinals organization. I'm a firm believer that W/L record should not matter in the Cy Young voting, so I'm going to back that up right here. I can't wait to see Brandon in St. Louis next season.

Honorable Mentions: Brian Broderick, Kevin Thomas

Picking this one was tough, no doubt about it. Broderick and Thomas have the better records, but as I said above, that means very little to me. Brian is the 6'6" right-hander who just dominated in Springfield (11-2, 2.77 ERA, 1.227 WHIP, 1.3 BB/9) but actually struggled at the beginning of the season while in Palm Beach. Thomas spent the entire 2010 campaign in Palm Beach, both as a starter and reliever. He made 29 appearances (only 14 starts) and he was golden in nearly every one. He ended the season 10-2 with a 2.77 ERA and 1.224 WHIP

Player Capsules

So many players make up a major league season. Some are mainstays, playing in almost every game and creating many memories. Some are just briefly Cardinals, getting that proverbial cup of coffee. This section lists out all the players that wore the Cardinal jersey this season. We've mixed some of the traditional stats with some that are more sabermetric in nature. We've also made our best guess of what sort of role these players will be in for 2011.

Bryan Anderson

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AAA	82	302	39	12	42	.270	.789	4.63
MLB	15	35	1	0	4	.281	.658	2.00

Anderson spent most of the year at AAA Memphis, but did finally get his chance in the big leagues when Jason LaRue was injured early in the year, then returned at the end of the season. Anderson's numbers in a small sample size were intriguing, though he had a slightly high BABIP and did not hit a home run in his 35 plate appearances. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting catcher in Memphis.

Mitchell Boggs

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	61	67.1	52	27	3.61	1.29	3.91	55%

Boggs made a step forward in 2010 and became one of the most reliable arms in the Cardinal bullpen. He was especially effective against right-handed hitters, holding them to a .238 BAA. His numbers did increase in the second half, but whether it was due to fatigue, hitters figuring him out, or he was a bit unlucky (his BABIP jumped from .243 to .346) still remains to be seen. *Projected 2011 role:* Late-inning relief specialist for St. Louis.

Chris Carpenter

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	35	235.0	179	63	3.22	1.17	3.72	51%

Some dropoff was to be expected with Carpenter in 2010 after he placed second in the Cy Young Award voting the year before. He allowed three times as many home runs (21) as he did last season and his numbers across the board were a little bit worse than '09. Even so, many pitchers in the league would kill for that kind of slump. *Projected 2011 role:* Number two starter for the Cardinals.

Allen Craig

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AAA	83	350	57	14	81	.320	.938	6.29
MLB	44	124	12	4	18	.246	.710	3.48

The use of Allen Craig--or rather, the lack thereof--was a topic often discussed on blogs around Cardinal Nation, especially when he was sent to Memphis when the club signed Randy Winn. Craig made the Opening Day roster when Julio Lugo was sent packing to Baltimore, but got off to an extremely slow start. However, his 1.047 OPS in the last month of the season gives hope for next year. *Projected 2011 role:* Infielder/outfielder/bench bat in St. Louis.

Daniel Descalso

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AAA	116	530	86	9	71	.282	.768	3.77
MLB	11	37	6	0	4	.265	.648	0.84

Descalso made quite a splash when he was called up in September, having a four-hit game in only his second start. He soon cooled though, tallying only four hits in the next seven games, which included a two-hit game in the season finale. Descalso is a second baseman by trade, but was pressed into action at third base in the big leagues and played passably at the hot corner. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting second baseman for Memphis.

Pedro Feliz

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB (H)	97	304	22	4	31	.221	.554	1.85
MLB (S)	40	125	14	1	9	.208	.482	1.93

Not only did the Cardinals acquire Feliz after the Astros placed him on waivers, they traded minor league pitcher David Carpenter to Houston to make sure he wasn't grabbed up in free agency. This move would have been puzzling on its own merits, but couple that with the returns of Jeff Suppan and Aaron Miles and the blogosphere was in an uproar. Feliz did not do much to counter those perceptions, though his glove was an upgrade at third base. *Projected 2011 role:* Backup infielder for a second-division club.

Ryan Franklin

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	59	65.0	42	10	3.46	1.03	3.87	45%

Franklin's ERA may have soared by over a run in 2010, but many of his other peripherals were not off that much of last season. His meltdowns were fairly rare, but when they happened they were spectacular, as evidenced by his part in the six-run ninth inning against the Rockies in July. He will be a free agent after 2011. *Projected 2011 role:* Closer for St. Louis.

David Freese

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB	70	270	28	4	36	.296	.760	3.41

It seems at least possible that Freese was born in a hospital built on an ancient Indian burial ground. Given a clear shot at the third base position, he was picked up for a DUI before spring training, then hurt his ankle, limped through a month, then on a rehab assignment in Springfield torn a tendon in the same ankle and was done for the season. When he played, he gave hope that he was adjusting to the game, as he hit three of his four home runs in one week. Even though he had another surgery on his other ankle, he is supposed to be ready for spring training. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting third baseman in St. Louis.

Jaime Garcia

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	28	163.1	132	64	2.70	1.31	3.44	55%

Garcia was almost an afterthought going into spring training, as the fifth starter slot was anticipated to go to the winner of the Kyle McClellan/Rich Hill battle. However, Garcia's performance in Jupiter forced McClellan back to the bullpen and Hill to Memphis, and he did not slow down once the games started counting. His ERA did not climb over 2.00 until the end of June and he won 13 games. He tailed off a little late, possibly costing him the Rookie of the Year, and was shut down with a couple of weeks left in the season. *Projected 2011 role:* Number three starter in St. Louis.

Tyler Greene

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AAA	82	385	67	9	34	.284	.804	4.02
MLB	44	122	14	2	10	.221	.655	1.97

Another player that rode the Memphis-St. Louis shuttle in 2010, Greene never quite got on his feet in the big leagues. While it looks like he has little left to prove at AAA, he's not been able to translate that fully in St. Louis. He made a total of eight errors while playing second, short and third, and his bat never compensated for those fielding struggles. With the Cardinals looking for a middle infield upgrade, he could either be the answer or part of a package that acquires that answer. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting shortstop at Memphis.

Mark Hamilton

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AAA	72	306	53	18	60	.298	.389	7.69
MLB	9	15	0	0	0	.143	.200	0.00

The problem for Hamilton is two-fold. First, he doesn't hit for quite as much power as you would like to see out of a first baseman, though he obviously has some. Secondly, he plays first base only in an organization that has Albert Pujols on their major league roster. With two solid seasons at AAA, he could be added to a package in the offseason and sent somewhere that he actually has a chance of cracking the lineup. *Projected 2011 role:* Bench bat for another organization.

Blake Hawksworth

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	45	90.1	61	35	4.98	1.63	5.15	53%

After being one of those tantalizing prospects for so many years, Hawksworth made his debut in 2009 out of the bullpen and excelled. However, he wasn't able to follow that up in 2010, regressing almost across the board. His BABIP jumped 100 points, which was a large part of the issue, but there is still some doubt whether he can reclaim that rookie mojo he had going. He was traded to the Dodgers at the end of November. *Projected 2011 role:* Middle man in the Los Angeles bullpen.

Steven Hill

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AA	93	406	60	22	86	.280	.895	6.33
AAA	9	38	2	2	6	.176	.645	2.89

While his numbers at AA Springfield were striking, Hill owed his brief cup of coffee in the majors more to logistics than results. When Jason LaRue went down after the Rumble With The Reds, Memphis was out on the West Coast and therefore made it too difficult to get Matt Pagnozzi or Bryan Anderson to St. Louis for what was projected to be a short-term issue. Hill made the most of his one game, making his first major league hit a home run. After that, he was sent down, but only to AAA Memphis. *Projected 2011 role:* Backup catcher at Memphis.

Matt Holliday

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB	158	675	95	28	103	.312	.922	5.37

On a team without the greatest player on the planet, Holliday's line would easily get him a team MVP award. Even with his early struggles with runners in scoring position, Holliday was able to put up a line that justified at least the first year of the large contract he signed in the offseason. Holliday even wrested the team batting average title away from Mr. Pujols by a couple of points, something that hadn't been done since Albert joined the team in 2001. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting left fielder in St. Louis.

Jon Jay

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AAA	42	191	31	4	32	.321	.878	5.24
MLB	105	323	47	4	27	.300	.772	3.33

Jay burst onto the scene, hitting everything in the vicinity of the plate and racking up a gaudy batting average to go with it. Jay got his average into the .400 range after a mid-season demotion to Memphis. His success gave the organization confidence enough to trade Ryan Ludwick in a three-team deal that netted the Cards Jake Westbrook. Jay's offensive prowess dropped off after his blistering July, as he hit .266 in August and .218 in September. *Projected 2011 role:* Platoon right fielder in St. Louis.

Jason LaRue

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB	29	63	3	2	5	.196	.591	1.56

It was another average season for LaRue, playing once every three or four days, fielding well, getting the occasional hit, until an evening in Cincinnati changed all of that. Johnny Cueto's kick to the head gave LaRue another concussion and, after consulting with a doctor, knocked LaRue completely out of the game. *Projected 2011 role:* Spending more time with the family and enjoying retirement.

Kyle Lohse

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
AA	1	5.0	0	5	9.00	2.40	1.62	33%
AAA	3	14.0	14	2	3.21	0.78	4.80	47%
MLB	18	92.0	54	35	6.55	1.78	4.45	43%

The second year of Lohse's four-year, no-trade contract was about as frustrating and inconsistent as the first. In the middle of the year, Lohse had a rare surgery on his forearm, one that had never been done on a major league pitcher before. The results when Lohse returned to the mound were mixed, but he did end the season by throwing seven scoreless innings against Colorado. *Projected 2011 role:* Number five starter in St. Louis.

Felipe Lopez

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB (N)	109	425	50	7	36	.231	.648	2.08
MLB (A)	4	16	2	1	1	.267	.780	2.35

When the Cardinals signed Lopez late in spring training, it was roundly hailed as a solid move by the club. Lopez came at a very reasonable price and provided a good bat and depth at a number of positions. However, things soured as the season went on and Lopez was released from the team a couple of weeks before the season wrapped, catching on with Boston to end the year. Besides any off-field issues, Lopez was overexposed as the injury to David Freese and the struggles of Skip Schumaker and Brendan Ryan forced him to be a regular part of the lineup. *Projected 2011 role:* Bench player for someone, but not in St. Louis.

Ryan Ludwick

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB (SL)	77	312	44	11	43	.281	.827	3.97
MLB (SD)	59	239	19	6	26	.211	.631	2.40

With the emergence of Jon Jay, the organization felt that pitching was a more needed commodity and shipped Ludwick to NL West-leading San Diego at the July trading deadline to obtain Cleveland starting pitcher Jake Westbrook. While Westbrook held up his end of the bargain, neither Ludwick or the Cardinal offense really recovered from the move. As is traditional, Ludwick received a rousing standing ovation in his first game back in St. Louis in mid-September. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting right fielder for San Diego.

Mike MacDougal

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
AAA	8	9.1	6	3	3.86	1.17	4.66	54%
MLB	17	18.2	14	12	7.23	1.87	4.40	54%

The less said about the Mike MacDougal era, the better. It was quickly apparent not only that there was a reason MacDougal has bounced from team to team, but that even the Dave Duncan magic had its limits. He actually was not quite that bad away from Busch Stadium, but regularly blew up in front of the home crowd. *Projected 2011 role:* A non-roster invitee to spring training for some team.

Evan MacLane

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
AAA	24	147.2	82	21	4.45	1.24	4.87	43%
MLB	2	1.0	0	1	9.00	2.00	?	67%

To some degree, you have to feel for MacLane. Called up to fill a short-term problem, he gets brought into a tie game in Colorado and promptly gives up a game-winning home run. Thankfully he got into one other game before being sent down so that his career ERA would not be infinity, but he was still sent down and then in September released entirely. His time was so brief his FIP does not appear to be on the Internet. You'd like to see him get another shot somewhere just as a chance to redeem himself but that looks unlikely. *Projected 2011 role:* Organizational soldier for some other organization.

Joe Mather

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AAA	91	376	55	10	46	.275	.790	4.48
MLB	36	64	7	0	3	.217	.517	1.53

Joey Bombs made the Opening Day roster, but that was the highlight of his ML season. He went down to Memphis at the end of May and did not return until mid-September. Mather has never seemed to regain his power after wrist surgery in 2009 and, with a glut of outfielders in the system, lost out on a place in the organization. He was placed on waivers after the season and claimed by the Braves. *Projected 2011 role:* Reserve outfielder for Atlanta.

Kyle McClellan

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	68	75.1	60	23	2.27	1.07	4.11	50%

For the second straight year, McClellan went to spring training prepared to be a starter. In 2009, that was more as a precaution in case Chris Carpenter did not come back from surgery as expected, but 2010 McClellan had a clear shot at the back of the rotation. However, Jaime Garcia's ascendance, coupled with a hole in the bullpen, put McClellan in familiar territory. To his credit, he neither complained nor let it affect his work, becoming a solid late-inning option for Tony LaRussa. *Projected 2011 role:* Seventh inning bullpen arm for St. Louis.

Aaron Miles

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AA	16	71	11	0	13	.279	.696	2.55
MLB	79	151	14	0	9	.281	.622	2.63

Miles was the poster child for the Proven Veteran Reunion Tour that many fans took to their blogs and message boards to decry. After being cut loose by the Cubs and Reds, the Cardinals signed him and quickly promoted him to the majors due to the ineptitude of the middle infield. While it is true that St. Louis brings out the best in Miles, that best still is not high on the charts. *Projected 2011 role:* Managing an A ball team.

Trever Miller

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	57	36.0	22	16	4.00	1.27	4.11	42%

Miller's yeoman's work in 2009 earned him another contract with St. Louis, but the 2010 version was not quite as successful. Lefties hit 70 points higher against him this season than they had the season before, though they still struggled against him overall. Still, Miller was the more reliable of the lefty relievers and he pitched enough to trigger his option for 2011. *Projected 2011 role:* Main LOOGY in the Cardinal bullpen.

Yadier Molina

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB	136	521	34	6	62	.262	.670	2.96

It really was a tale of two seasons for Molina. He started off the season by smashing a grand slam on Opening Day in Cincinnati, but only wound up hitting .223 before the All-Star break. Vowing to treat the rest of the season as a fresh slate, he hit at a .315 clip after his trip to Anaheim. Most people would point to his home run off of Johnny Cueto after the melee in the mid-August series against the Reds as his finest 2010 moment. Molina was shut down for the last two weeks but should be ready for next year. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting catcher for St. Louis.

Jason Motte

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	56	52.1	54	18	2.24	1.12	3.32	40%

Cardinal fans have been waiting for Motte to come into his own for a couple of years now, and in 2010 he seemed to take a step toward claiming that destiny. He gave up only five long balls, half of his total from 2009, and put up solid numbers with an average BABIP. He still caused some angst in the fanbase from time to time, but another season like this in 2011 and Motte will be first in line to replace Ryan Franklin in the closer role. *Projected 2011 role:* Eighth inning St. Louis bullpen arm.

Adam Ottavino

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
AAA	9	47.2	43	12	3.96	1.15	4.09	50%
MLB	5	22.1	12	9	8.46	2.06	6.16	36%

Another long-time prospect, Ottavino finally got his big league shot in 2010. Only one of his outings was at all encouraging, when he limited the Brewers to two runs over five innings in his second start. Ottavino was shut down with an elbow injury in July. Instead of surgery, he opted for rest and rehab and was rumored to be considered for a start in the final week of the season, but that did not pan out. *Projected 2011 role:* Starter in the Memphis rotation.

Matt Paganzzi

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AAA	68	242	20	1	21	.242	.640	2.81
MLB	15	44	4	1	10	.359	.873	5.40

In the waning days of the 2010 season, with the Cardinals eliminated and Yadier Molina shut down, Paganzzi got almost all of the catcher innings, seemingly giving him a leg up on being the backup catcher in 2011. However, a different management philosophy emerged in the offseason and his weak bat, great glove skills were devalued in favor of more offense at the position. Paganzzi was placed on waivers, but does have one shining home run moment in the bigs. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting catcher for Colorado's AAA team.

Brad Penny

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	9	55.2	35	9	3.23	1.29	3.44	53%

It looked like a match made in baseball heaven. Dave Duncan had long wanted to work with Penny and the results early in the season were electric. Before his last two starts, he had his ERA around 1.70 and was being able to go deep into games. His last memory as a Cardinal, though, was hitting a grand slam against the Angels. That swing aggravated a muscle injury that took him out of the game and was supposed to have him on the shelf for just 15 days. He never pitched again. *Projected 2011 role:* Reclamation project for some team.

Albert Pujols

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB	159	700	115	42	118	.312	1.010	7.51

After action one day in August, Pujols led the league in home runs and RBI and was just percentage points off of the batting title. He wound up “only” leading the league in RBI (for the first time in his career), finished second on the team in batting average, and finished in the top three in the MVP voting yet again. All this in an off year. The only drama surrounding Pujols is whether or not he will sign a new contract this offseason or go into next year as an impending free agent. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting first baseman for St. Louis.

Colby Rasmus

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB	144	534	85	23	66	.276	.858	4.50

Lost in the furor of many side issues was the fact that Rasmus took another step toward fulfilling the projections that so many had for him. He improved his numbers against left-handers and, by the end of the season, was playing almost every day. Those side issues--mainly dealing with his relationship with Tony LaRussa and his reported demand, at one time, for a trade--have encouraged the hot stove to think he is on the market, but John Mozeliak has repeatedly stated there are no plans for trading him. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting centerfielder for St. Louis.

Dennys Reyes

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	59	38.0	25	21	3.55	1.44	4.30	50%

For a guy that was supposed to come in and shut down lefties, 2010 was a singularly unimpressive season. Reyes actually was able to get right-handed batters out much better, as those from the sinister side hit a whopping .307 and reached base against him over 40% of the time. Numerous were the times when he was called in to get one batter, but instead gave up a hit or a walk. The Big Sweat is going to need a rebound year to stay employed. *Projected 2011 role:* LOOGY in Philadelphia’s bullpen.

Brendan Ryan

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB	139	484	50	2	36	.223	.569	1.72

Sad as it is to say, that .223 looks pretty good to a guy that spent a majority of the season under the Mendoza line. While Ryan still played above-average to spectacular defense (save the two games in which he made four of his seventeen errors), his glove couldn't completely make up for the lack of offense after a season where he had hit close to .300. The middle infield got a makeover in the offseason, and Ryan was one of the changes. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting shortstop for Seattle.

Fernando Salas

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
AAA	34	35.2	44	9	3.78	0.98	2.69	38%
MLB	27	30.2	29	15	3.52	1.40	4.38	37%

Salas got to know every outpost and mile marker between Memphis and St. Louis, going back and forth between the big club and the AAA squad six different times. Salas's demotions rarely had anything to do with how he was pitching, though, as he performed at both levels. He held righties to a .665 OPS at the major league level and became a reliable swing man who could come into the game anywhere from the fifth to the eighth. *Projected 2011 role:* Flexible member of St. Louis bullpen.

Skip Schumaker

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB	137	529	66	5	41	.265	.665	2.98

It wasn't supposed to be this way. After three straight seasons of plus-.300 averages at the big leagues, Schumaker was supposed to benefit from full-time work with Mark McGwire and continue to solidify him as a major league second baseman. Instead, Schumaker scuffled most of the year, hitting .212 for April and never completely digging himself out of that hole. Couple that with average-at-best defense and it is not surprising that he goes into the off-season nervous about his playing time. *Projected 2011 role:* Starting second baseman for St. Louis.

Nick Stavinoha

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
AAA	23	107	19	6	28	.390	1.091	11.81
MLB	79	126	11	2	9	.256	.625	2.12

The highlight for Stavinoha's season probably came in the fourth game of the year, where his shocking home run off of all-time saves leader Trevor Hoffman gave the Cardinals an unexpected victory and sent Hoffman into a spiral that saw him lose his job. Used primarily as a pinch-hitter, as in only 21 MLB games did he get more than one at-bat, five of which came in a row from June 29 to July 3. *Projected 2011 role:* Pinch-hitter for another team.

Jeff Suppan

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB (M)	15	31.0	18	12	7.84	2.00	4.95	43%
MLB (S)	15	70.1	33	25	3.84	1.49	4.89	40%

As soon as Milwaukee released Suppan, the jokes started that the Cardinals would be picking him up. Those people weren't laughing when Suppan was quickly signed. Perhaps working with Dave Duncan did help him out some, though going by FIP it's possible that his pitching was not quite as improved as some of the traditional statistics indicate. Suppan still wants to pitch, but would any team trust he could keep it up without Duncan? *Projected 2011 role:* Managing Soup's Grill in California.

Adam Wainwright

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB	33	230.1	213	56	2.42	1.05	2.89	52%

As wonderful as Wainwright's 2009 season was, there was some thought that he had done it "too early", as his '12 and '13 options vested with a top 5 Cy Young finish in '10 or '11. Wainwright showed that 2009 wasn't a career year, but a baseline for what to expect out of him. He reached personal milestones by winning 20 games as well as fashioning his first (and second) career shutout. As late as August 11, when he was 17-6 with a 1.99 ERA, he was the unofficial leader for the Cy Young, but "faded" some down the stretch. *Projected 2011 role:* Ace of the St. Louis rotation.

PJ Walters

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
AAA	19	108.2	106	30	3.81	1.25	4.12	38%
MLB	7	30.0	22	10	6.00	1.40	4.81	42%

Walters had a tragic start to his season, as his daughter was born months prematurely and then passed away during spring training. He pitched in seven games at the major league level, including three starts, in two of which he did not allow a run, but lost out to Blake Hawksworth when the rotation needed a regular filler. He posted an 8-5 record at Memphis in 19 games (18 starts). *Projected 2011 role:* Bullpen arm or rotation insurance at Memphis.

Jake Westbrook

Level	Games	IP	K	BB	ERA	WHIP	FIP	GB%
MLB (A)	21	127.2	73	44	4.65	1.38	4.61	54%
MLB (N)	12	75.0	55	24	3.48	1.25	3.55	64%

Westbrook arrived from Cleveland in the trade that sent Ryan Ludwick to San Diego. He pitched well while with the Cardinals, though some tough luck left his record at 4-4, even as he put up an ERA over a run lower than his mark with the Indians. Westbrook was a free agent at the end of the season, but the Cardinals resigned him to a two-year deal. *Projected 2011 role:* Fourth starter in St. Louis.

Randy Winn

Level	Games	PA	R	HR	RBI	BA	OPS	RC/27
MLB (A)	29	71	7	1	8	.213	.591	1.37
MLB (N)	87	161	16	3	17	.250	.693	3.07

Winn began the year in the Yankee organization, but was placed on waivers by them and quickly picked up by St. Louis. He played in 87 games with the Cardinals, but was usually used as a pinch-hitter or a reserve outfielder. Winn looked to have two shots to finally get into the postseason, but with the Cardinals falling short he remains at the top of the list of active players without October experience. He was a free agent at the end of the year. *Projected 2011 role:* Bench bat and backup outfielder elsewhere.

Final Thoughts

By Daniel Shoptaw

As we put the finishing touches on this publication, the hot stove season has gone through its hottest portion. The Cardinals have a new outfielder and a new shortstop, while having bid adieu to their incumbent one. For the most part, this team seems set, but exactly what do we as fans have to look forward to in 2011?

The core of this team is still second to none. Albert Pujols, Matt Holliday and Colby Rasmus will anchor the offense while Adam Wainwright, Chris Carpenter and Jaime Garcia will head up the pitching staff. Right there, you are better off than 75% of major league baseball. The bullpen has live arms and Yadier Molina will be there to shepherd them as well as provide solid offense. With just a couple of breaks, this team is again a threat to go deep into October.

That said, there are questions. Can Lance Berkman's knees hold up to playing the outfield on a regular basis, and can his bat bounce back to his pre-2010 levels? Can Ryan Theriot's bat make up for what will surely be a significant decline in defense at a key position? Will Jake Westbrook's success in the National League continue or will the league adjust to him? Will David Freese be able to make it through the offseason without tripping over the dog and fracturing his ankles?

Overhanging all of those questions, though, is the big one: Will the Cardinals resign Albert Pujols? That has to be the top priority of the club between now and spring training. The distractions that would come with an unsigned Pujols could take down a team as precariously balanced as this one seems to be.

The Reds are a good young team that are not going away. While the rest of the division seems less than formidable, one of those teams will rise up and be a threat. Hopefully the Cardinals have enough firepower to stave off both of those problems and get back into October.

If nothing else, in this season of giving, the Cardinals continue to give us a quality product and plenty of on- and off-the-field topics to discuss, warming ourselves on the coldest of winter nights. Spring training is coming!

Writer Bios

Josh Gilliam is a third generation St. Louis fan who writes at [PH8](#). He has passed on his love for the Cardinals to an amazing wife who supports the “healthy distraction”. He can be heard regularly on UCB Radio and around Twitter during the season @aprfool79.

Justin Hulsey is a Cardinals writer and the Photo Editor for [i70baseball.com](#). He also runs his own blog, [SportsTopTens.wordpress.com](#). During his spare time he likes to hang out with his girlfriend, his friends and family, hunt, and be a complete sports geek. He tries to enjoy life and Cardinal baseball certainly helps him do that. You can find him on Twitter by following @JayHulsey.

Bill Ivie (Twitter: @poisonwilliam) is a proud father of five young people that he attempts to teach the value of life and baseball to every day. He is the Assignment Editor for [BaseballDigest.com](#), the Executive Editor of [i70baseball.com](#), the host of I-70 Baseball Radio and part of the rotation of hosts for the UCB Radio Hour. He has no spare time any more.

Tom Knuppel and son **Ryan Knuppel** operate a website known as [CardinalsGM](#) and is a founding father of the UCB Radio Hour. Tom is an avid Cardinals fan since birth thanks to his grandfather who would “catch the hobo train” every Sunday from Central Illinois to St Louis. He is a retired public school teacher and tweets as @cardinalsgm. Ryan owns and runs several other websites including [Albert Pujols Club](#) and [MVPujols.com](#) and can be tweeted @RyanKnuppel.

Erika Lynn is a relatively new baseball fan. She fell in love with baseball and the St. Louis Cardinals four short years ago and has been making up for lost time. She is extremely grateful for her understanding husband and kids who tolerate her Cardinal addiction and love the game almost as much as she does. She blogs with the ladies of [Cardinal Diamond Diaries](#) and has written for Baseball Digest.com and [i70 Baseball](#). She is also a photographer at i70 Baseball and you can find her on Twitter @Erika4stlcards.

Tim McCullough is a writer at Viva El Birdos and site editor at Future Redbirds. He was indoctrinated to Cardinal fandom during the 1998 home run record chase and has only deepened his devotion since. In 2007, he began avidly following the baby birds on Future Redbirds after being enamored of the 2005 draft class. While at times mistaken for a robot, Tim is in fact human enough to have a day job as an electrical engineer and enjoys spending his spare time reading books, running and playing sports.

Matt Philip (a.k.a. Pip) has been blogging since 2004 at [Fungoes](#), which focuses on “Cardinals’ news from a Sabermetric point of view.” Pip is a member of the Bob Broeg (St. Louis) Chapter of the Society of American Baseball Research, the United Cardinal Bloggers and the Baseball Bloggers Alliance and in his spare time works as a datacaster for MLB.com at Busch Stadium. He believes that Keith Hernandez was the greatest fielding first baseman of all time and the second best was his mustache.

Daniel Shoptaw is the author of [C70 At The Bat](#) as well as the founder of both the United Cardinal Bloggers and the [Baseball Bloggers Alliance](#). Daniel follows the Cardinals remotely from Arkansas, where he lives with his wife, his son and his daughter. When not writing, watching or discussing baseball, he’s involved in his church or is instructing his kids in Star Wars lore. He Tweets under the @C70 handle.

Steve Sommer blogs about the Cardinals at Play A Hard Nine from a sabermetric perspective. In the past he has also contributed to Beyond The Boxscore and Fangraphs. Steve currently lives in Lebanon, IL, a short 20-minute drive to Busch Stadium, with his fiance and 17 month old son. He coached American Legion baseball and high school baseball for eight years prior to this summer, but decided he'd rather spend his time with his new family (and, of course, blogging about the game). You can follow him on Twitter under the handle @Steve_Sommer.

Angela Weinhold is a life-long, long-distance Cardinals fan who currently teaches from the frozen tundra of Wisconsin. She feels blessed to get to work with the amazing writers that she does through her work with [Cardinal Diamond Diaries](#) and [i70 Baseball](#). A self-described “student of the game”, she feeds the addiction by getting in baseball-related discussions whenever possible, and yes, she will probably try to find the silver lining sooner rather than later. Catch her on Twitter @Cardschic.

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It was great to be able to tap the wonderful i70 Baseball site to get contributions from Justin Hulseley and grand pooba Bill Ivie. As with the PH8 guys, there's no way that UCB Radio Hour is still afloat without Bill's input and willingness to take a regular turn behind the mike.

I was honored to be able to meet Tom Knuppel and Matthew Philip, among others, at the Social Media Night in September. Two very different individuals, but both are founding members of the United Cardinal Bloggers and have contributed quality to the group both here and throughout the years.

I especially want to extend my gratitude to Tim McCullough, who is not a regular contributor to UCB projects but graciously agreed to bring his expertise to the analysis of the 2010 Cardinal draft for us. Tim, you are welcome any time!

Steve Sommer is no longer a newcomer, having been involved with the UCB for over a year now. His regular collaboration with Erik Manning at Play A Hard Nine is must reading to look at things from the sabermetric point of view.

Finally, my everlasting thanks and appreciation to all the bloggers who make up the United Cardinal Bloggers. Your dedication and perseverance is a wonderful thing to behold, and I am humbled that y'all humor me on such a regular basis. Here's to another great year of UCB projects and, more importantly, strengthened friendships!

Daniel Shoptaw, Editor

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