

# Patton's

# 1993

# Player Predictions

for Rotisserie Baseball



**Alex Patton**

## Introduction

My first prediction is that there's going to be a lock-out.

The owners don't seem to understand that they have given all power to the very people they hope to crush. Astonishingly, one owner was quoted in a newspaper this winter as saying he didn't believe the players had the option to strike.

For sure they do. The owners gave it to them. That's precisely the can of worms that they reopened: we can lock out, you can strike. By September, the players will have received most of their pay; the owners will still be waiting breathlessly for their TV money. If you're Fehr, don't you have to strike? Threaten to? Say: Guys, the one thing that will stop us from striking now is your signed, sealed promise, enforceable in any court, that you'll neither lock us out in 1994 nor attempt to put any new tricky deals, like revenue sharing, like a salary cap, in the Basic Agreement.

If you're Ravitch, you've thought about this already. You've got to break the news to them gently. Fellas, we have to kick these guys where it hurts before they kick ours. Should have spelled this out to you sooner, but I didn't. Sorry about that.

How on earth did Ravitch manage to slip past the owners' defenses at the winter meetings and, on December 7, 1992, drop this bomb on baseball? The answer can only be that they're dumb as sailors. Another analogy, given the way the band played on at the winter meetings, is the Titanic. Rather than run to the lifeboats, the owners went into a feeding frenzy.

Maybe, in some unconscious way, they knew exactly what they were doing. They figured the more they owed the players this year, the more they'd enjoy not paying them.

Anyway, let's forget it, I agree. The less drastic and, admittedly, more likely outcome is that Ravitch and Fehr will sign some sort of binding pledge not to lock out and not to strike, while they continue talking.

This book has already played the season. It's played half the season, or the full season for the side that's up. In other words, as advertised in a few places and stated on the cover, there are player predictions this year. Hitters only. Hope that was clear in the ads. It's not on the cover.

Couldn't just tack them on, because the book was already too big. Lots of things had to go. The Q & A (if I ever see *him* again, I'll get an earful), the trials and triumphs in various leagues, somebody's auction round by round: all that good stuff. Whether this is better -- I'm still too close to it to tell. I'll say this, though. It was fun.

Didn't think it would be. The position I've taken in previous years -- that the future is for the reader to decide -- was not a fake one. I really did see myself as a war reporter. I was in the battles myself, but during the off-season my job was to write about previous campaigns. Some people try to think up every contingency of

what will happen going into Bosnia; others study what actually, really, truly did happen in the Gulf War. They are both necessary endeavors, of course. I just thought mine was one job, yours the other.

What brought me around?

First, the book may have been getting a bit stale. The game remains ever fascinating, but from a writer's standpoint there's tremendous pressure each year to find something new to say. The game may or may not have settled into Stage Three, the final stage, but it seemed to me what I wrote had.

Second, it wasn't selling enough. Most readers were much too polite to say, Damn it, do make predictions; but I began to suspect they wanted to say it. People who weren't buying the book I felt were saying it. I had three choices. Don't sell out, and slowly go under. Quit. Or sell out and see what happens.

As I say, I have no regrets. Like someone who has given up smoking, I can't believe I didn't do it earlier. Trying to figure out all 28 teams, down to the last guy on the bench, was both educational and entertaining. Perhaps too much of the latter. Then as time wore on, and on, I started to panic. The transactions section in USA Today became my mortal enemy. What? Lee Stevens gone to Montreal? Franklin Stubbs dropped? Chris James on Houston? How dare they! Those are at-bats I have to make room for now and make up for now. What are they *doing*?

The fact that you have this book means I snapped out of it. Barely. As soon as I finish writing this introduction, and have sent the book off to the printer's, I know what my next task is. Not working on the advertising, not getting out the mailing list -- marketing can't wait, but it will -- and not, unfortunately, preparing for the next semester. I'll be adding up all the team predictions. I want to sort out these pennant races before they happen. I want to know who to root for. All 28 teams. Sometimes rooting against. You got to start losing a few, Oakland. You trying to make a fool of me? Twenty-eight teams and about 400 hitters. Jerry Browne, will you get *off* the bench? You're on a pace for 300 at-bats, and you're supposed to get 525.

Do you think I'll end up rooting for the predictions, against myself? Hit the ball, Albert -- even though you belong to my arch rival. Wouldn't put it past me.

Because they can have an almost stifling effect, I've tried to remove the statistical predictions as far as possible from the players themselves. In the profiles, all you see is the dollar value. I debated not even doing that, but decided I'd just fall back into my old, often impenetrable ways.

And this turned out to be the most difficult part of the book: keeping the prices in the back and the prices in the front in sync. It was like the two ends of a camel. At one point I had -- oh, let's not burden him with being named -- Player X earning \$14 and being called a guaranteed underachiever in the profiles, while in the last chapter he was earning \$25, \$4 more than he ever had before. Where there's this kid of gaffe, as is bound to happen, the official call is -- in the back.

The goal of the book is to stand alone. If you're permitted to take just one baseball book on your vacation to the Seychelles in March, I want this one to be a contender. The stats in the player boxes and the five-year scans of salaries should provide the essential facts for thinking about baseball players in standard, eight-category Rotisserie terms. Not everyone has the time to pore over the wealth of more rarified information. For just about every profiled player, I've at least checked this stuff, and the best of it I've tried to pass along. The sources are

obvious: *Baseball America*, *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, *Elias* (1992), and all three Stats Inc. books: the 1993 *Major League Handbook*, *Minor League Handbook*, and *Player Profiles* (the latter is the new standard of its kind; you saw the threesome on the table of many a GM during the expansion draft).

Patton Ink otherwise leans heavily on people, two in particular. Colin Summers not only designs the book but executes the design. Credit for the overall look is entirely his, while any piddling errors that you may come across are attributable to the fact that his proofreader was still writing.

Peg Summers, who is a relation, took care of the cover and the writer.

Adam Summers and Brett Summers have scattered. But every time I checked my E mail in the last three months, there they were. It's hard to think of anything more supportive than to keep writing letters when you almost never get a reply.

Eric Lindow has helped with much, much more than just the software development. Dollar Bill Berensmann has always helped in ways that aren't limited to the fate of Moose Factory. Peter Golenbock sells more copies of my book with his plugs than mine do his, that's for sure. And Jerry Heath's excellent stat service (Heath Research, 228 North Lynnhaven Rd #106, Virginia Beach, VA 23452), as usual, has served me admirably.

The many correspondents who send me material on their leagues normally get at least acknowledged here. Because of space and time constrictions, the information has been almost totally untapped, the envelopes sitting in a box, and the place where I'm writing this, alas, is not where the box is.

There's only one change in the roll call of the American Dreams. Peter Kreutzer, who fought well and honorably in his first year, joins Bill Berensmann, Bruce Buschel, Larry Fine, Doug Garr, Ron Givens, Peter Golenbock, Mark Goodman, Les Leopold, Steven Levy, Tony Lukas, Walter Shapiro, Mark Starr, Steve Stoneburn, Michael Walsh, Drew Zambelli and me.