

# Yanks and Billy

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balt over the backstop. Slaughter, on the other hand is a defensive specialist but must be more consistent offensively in order to start. He likes to hit in spurts; last year finished up with a .224 batting average in 95 games.

Joel Skinner will be in back up. He has a rifle arm and is super on defense but his .137 batting average has got to improve for him to remain in the big league.

On the whole, this is one of the weaker areas for the Yankees. Cerone has to have another good year like the one he had in 1980.

GRADE: C

**INFIELD** — The Yankees have one of the best infields in the American League. If not one of the best, then one of the most expensive. First off, 25 year old Don Mattingly, is pure talent at its best. His three Golden Glove awards are well deserved and he is the answer to a manager's ideal player. He can play defense, he can drive in runs, and he can hit the long ball, not to mention his 10 home runs in those 8 consecutive games and his six grand slams breaking Ernie Banks record. Besides, he promised everyone that the Yankees would win it this year. He batted .327 with 30 homers and 115 RBI's.

Next is co-captain and ever so faithful Willie Randolph. Randolph the basic example of "I'll get the job done plus a little added extra". He is a solid .275 hitter and an exceptional fielder. Also, his

amazing eyes always put him high on the rankings in walks and on base for the big men to drive in. The Yankees just can not seem to function without his playing time. Meanwhile, on the hot corner of the diamond (not Mattingly's hot corner) is lefty power slugger Mike Pagliarulo. What I like best about Pags is that he hits them when it counts. He hits them when the Yankees are down or it is a close game, and he does this consistently. The Yankees need Pagliarulo to hit more base hits and for a better average. With Chris Chambliss, the new hitting coach, Pags should do just fine.

Finally, at shortstop, there is a big question mark. The Yankees hoped to resolve this problem by picking up former New York Met, Rafael Santana. This was a fine selection on the Yankees part. He's no power hitter but he has the crucial defense the Yankees need. What I like best about Santana is his gracefulness as he turns those double plays. Although last year he batted only .255 with the Mets, this year he is playing in a whole different league. This might be the adjustment he has been waiting for. Backing up Santana will be Bobby Meacham and Wayne Tollenon. Meacham is just to unsteady at short. What I mean is some days he will play like he has a golden glove and other days he commits foolish errors booting ground balls. What I do like about Meacham is his ability

to slap the ball to opposite fields. Wayne Tollenon is a good man to keep around when Santana needs rest or is injured.

GRADE: B

**OUTFIELD** — The outfield is totally awesome. The Yankees have a remarkable outfield starting off with rightfielder Dave Winfield. Winfield is approaching his sixteenth season in the majors and surely plays like it. Winfield hits well with men on base and has some clutch hits. Not to forget his dramatic home run saving catches as he towers over the wall in right. At the age of 36 he can run pretty well and plays rightfield better than just about anyone else I have seen in my time. I have heard that Roger Maris played right field quite well, Winfield can do it all, he can even publish his first book in which he talks about his Yankee times.

Next is one of my favorite Yankees, and I'm sure one of Billy Martin's. Rickey Henderson is the man the Yankees have to have in their lineup. He is the excitement that pushes the Yankees. Why? Rickey makes things happen, whether it be hitting his home runs, stealing second and third or causing pitchers to balk. When Henderson is on base pitchers worry. Besides, he is playing for former Oakland A's manager Martin, and he is an excellent leadoff hitter.

Backing Rickey up will be Gary Ward. Ward is a good

ball player. He finished the '87 season with a .298 batting average and 78 RBI's. Ward is also an excellent utility man who can play all outfield positions as well as first base and DH.

In centerfield is a man to watch, Roberto Kelly. Although a lot of people have not heard of him, I'm telling you he is sensational and keep your eyes on him. The 23 year old is brilliant for his age. He has great defensive ability, good speed, and a quick bat. He batted .278 with 13 homers, 62 RBI's and 51 stolen bases while playing with Columbus for part of the '87 season.

Claudell Washington might receive the task of playing center, or he might platoon with Kelly in center. Washington will probably earn center field based on his experience, but Kelly will test him out. Washington plays a great centerfield but his hitting style needs some improvement. He needs to acquire a better pitch selection. If he is consistent this year he will be superb. The Yankees need his one-two punch. Washington finished the '87 season with a .279 batting average.

GRADE: A

**DESIGNATED HITTER**

— Oh, what a magnificent addition. The Yankees acquired Jack Clark through free agency, who is an extremely gifted batter. He has the consistent power the Yankees need, plus he is a steady DH, whereas the Yankees previously tried a new DH every other day. In '87 Clark hit 35 homers, had 106 RBI's and batted .286 while playing with the St. Louis Cardinals. As fast as a ball is pitched is as fast as Clark hits them. The key to

Clark's success is his health.

GRADE: A-

**MANAGEMENT and COACHES** — With Billy Martin as the new Yankee skipper and former Yankee manager Lou Pinella as the new General Manager, things are looking dandy. With Martin, at the helm and back as a new man, he will be a fine example. The Yankee coaches are sensational, especially the newest hitting coach and former Yankee great, Chris Chambliss. Other coaches include Mike Ferraro, Jeff Torborg, Art Fowler, Clete Boyer, and George Mittenwald. Overall, the Yankees have a super staff.

GRADE: A

In conclusion, the determining factor to a prominent winning season will not be how many arguments Steinbrenner and Martin have; instead the togetherness, pitching, and overall playing as a close unit with each Yankee benefitting from cooperation, which will decide their fate. The success I see so clearly is the Yankees will win the American League East as they contend with the Toronto Blue Jays. As Don Mattingly convincingly stated, "We have the best team and we're gonna win it, I guarantee it."



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