

BASEBALL HISTORY

by

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2009 Opening Day Starters

It has been frequently stated that anywhere between 60% to 90% of a baseball game is dependent on pitching. Major league managers strategize, pull their hair out and lose sleep over their pitching rotation, or lack thereof, and with good reason. Oftentimes their best pitchers are not ready on Opening Day, or worse, fall short of expectations.

The following is a brief – and by no means conclusive – study of the 2009 Opening Day Starters (ODS) for each major league club and those other hurlers who were either next best or usurped the ODS. All pitchers considered had to have a minimum of 20 starts.

Actually, it's not as simple as all that. Take the Philadelphia Phillies, for example. Following their 2008 world championship season, Cole Hamels was clearly their top hurler. However, because of injuries he was not available on Opening Day nor when he became available would he have an ace-like season. Instead Brett Myers (himself a victim of injury) was the ODS and the unlikely Joe Blanton appeared to emerge as the ace.

Philadelphia (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Myers	10	4	6	70.2	1.37	4.84	0
Blanton	31 (2)	12 (T1)	21 (1)	195.1	1.32 (3)	4.05 (2)	10

The top name is the ODS. The (+4) indicates there were four other staff members with at least 20 starts. The other numbers in parentheses list the

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player's rank in those categories on his team's staff. A total of 6 is the best score possible.

There were many other variations. One of the more notable ones involved Arizona. Brandon Webb, the Diamondbacks ODS, was the reigning ace. He would last only 4 innings in game one before suffering a season-ending injury.

Arizona (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Webb	1	0	0	4	2.00	13.50	0
Haren	33 (2)	14 (1)	24 (1)	229.1 (1)	1.00 (1)	3.14 (1)	7

Then there were teams like Minnesota, the New York Mets, the Los Angeles Dodgers, the San Diego Padres and the Cleveland Indians whose projected aces missed considerable time or, in the case of Cliff Lee, a late season trade sent him to another team.

Minnesota (+2)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Liriano	24 (3)	5 (3)	10 (3)	136.2 (3)	1.55 (3)	5.80 (3)	18
Blackburn	33 (T1)	11 (2)	21 (1)	205.2 (1)	1.37 (2)	4.03 (1)	8
NY Mets (+2)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Santana	25 (2)	13 (1)	17 (1)	166.2 (2)	1.21 (1)	3.13 (1)	8
Pelfrey	31 (1)	10 (2)	15 (2)	184.1 (1)	1.51 (2)	5.03 (2)	10
<i>There were 11 different starting pitchers – four started between 10 and 17 games.</i>							
LA Dodgers (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Kuroda	20 (4)	8 (T3)	9 (4)	117.1 (4)	1.14 (2)	3.76 (3)	20
Wolf	34 (1)	11 (2)	24 (1)	214.1 (1)	1.10 (1)	3.23 (2)	8
<i>The four top starters had only 39 victories total.</i>							
San Diego (+1)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Peavy	13	6	8	81.2	1.19	3.97	0
Correia	33	12	22	198	1.30	3.91	6
<i>There were 15 different starting pitchers. Peavy was hurt early and later traded. Only Correia qualified.</i>							
Cleveland (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Lee	22 (T3)	7 (T3)	18 (1)	152 (1)	1.30 (1)	3.14 (1)	10
Huff	23 (2)	11 (1)	8 (T3)	128.1 (2)	1.56 (4)	5.61 (4)	16

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Carmona led the Indians with only 24 starts. Chances are pretty good had Lee spent the entire season with the Cleveland Indians that his total would have been a six. The Chicago Cubs were the only other group who had no 30 game starters.

Chi. Cubs (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Zambrano	28 (1)	9 (T4)	17 (4)	169.1 (3)	1.38 (5)	3.77 (5)	22
Lilly	27 (T2)	12 (T1)	21 (1)	177.0 (2)	1.06 (1)	3.10 (2)	9

Season long pitching woes were the norm for Washington, Baltimore and Seattle. They had only 1, 2, and 2 moundsmen respectively who met the criteria of twenty starts. Although previously mentioned above, San Diego also fits here.

Washington (+0)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Lannan	33	9	19	206.1	1.35	3.88	6
<i>Seven others between 11 and 19 starts. They were the only squad with no 10-game winner.</i>							
Baltimore (+1)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Guthrie	33	10	15	200	1.42	5.04	6
Berken	24	6	3	119.2	1.74	6.54	12
Seattle (+1)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Hernandez	34 (1)	19 (1)	29 (1)	238.2 (1)	1.14 (2)	2.49 (1)	7
Washburn	20 (2)	8 (2)	15 (2)	133 (2)	1.07 (1)	2.64 (2)	11
<i>Washburn was traded to the Tigers on July 31st. There were 7 others with 10 – 15 starts.</i>							

The only ODS (other than Guthrie and Lannan) who remained the top dog of their respective teams with perfect scores were Verlander, Halladay and Sabathia.

Detroit (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Verlander	35 (1)	19 (1)	22 (1)	240 (1)	1.18 (1)	3.45 (1)	6
E. Jackson	33 (2)	13 (3)	21 (2)	214 (2)	1.26 (2)	3.62 (2)	13
Toronto (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Halladay	32 (1)	17 (1)	22 (1)	239 (1)	1.13 (1)	2.79 (1)	6
Romero	29 (2)	13 (2)	16 (2)	178 (2)	1.52 (4)	4.30 (2)	14
NY Yankees (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Sabathia	34 (1)	19 (1)	21 (T1)	230 (1)	1.15 (1)	3.37 (1)	6
Burnett	33 (2)	13 (3)	21 (T1)	207 (2)	1.40 (3)	4.04 (2)	13

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The Yanks and the Rockies were the only two teams to boast of four men with 30+ starts.

Non-ODS to accomplish a score of six were Arroyo, J. Johnson, W. Rodriguez, Greinke, and Weaver.

Cincinnati (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Harang	26 (3)	6 (4)	14 (T2)	162.1 (3)	1.41 (3)	4.21 (2)	17
Arroyo	33 (1)	15 (1)	23 (1)	220.1 (1)	1.27 (1)	3.84 (1)	6
Florida (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Nolasco	31 (2)	13 (2)	16 (2)	185 (2)	1.25 (2)	5.06 (3)	13
J. Johnson	32 (1)	15 (1)	23 (1)	209 (1)	1.16 (1)	3.23 (1)	6
Houston (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Oswalt	30 (2)	8 (T2)	17 (2)	181.1 (2)	1.24 (T1)	4.12 (2)	11
W. Rodriguez	33 (1)	14 (1)	23 (1)	205.2 (1)	1.24 (T1)	3.02 (1)	6
Kansas City (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Meche	23 (4)	6 (5)	9 (T3)	129 (4)	1.57 (5)	5.09 (3)	24
Greinke	33 (1)	16 (1)	26 (1)	229.1 (1)	1.07 (1)	2.16 (1)	6
LA Angels (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Saunders	31 (2)	16 (T1)	13 (3)	186 (2)	1.43 (3)	4.60 (3)	14
Weaver	33 (1)	16 (T1)	20 (1)	211 (1)	1.24 (1)	3.75 (1)	6

A few teams could post valid arguments for “co-aces” whether an ODS was involved or not or even whether the players were “aces” in the true sense of the word.

Milwaukee (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Suppan	30 (T2)	7 (4)	12 (3)	161.2 (3)	1.69 (4)	5.29 (3)	19
Gallardo	30 (T2)	13 (2)	17 (1)	185.2 (2)	1.31 (1)	3.73 (1)	9
Looper	34 (1)	14 (1)	14 (2)	194.2 (1)	1.49 (3)	5.22 (2)	10
St. Louis (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Wainwright	34 (1)	19 (1)	25 (1)	233 (1)	1.21 (3)	2.63 (2)	9
Carpenter	28 (3)	17 (2)	22 (2)	192.2 (2)	1.01 (1)	2.24 (1)	11
Boston (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Beckett	32 (T1)	17 (1)	20 (2)	212.1 (1)	1.19 (1)	3.86 (2)	8

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Lester	32 (T1)	15 (2)	23 (1)	203.1 (2)	1.23 (2)	3.41 (1)	9
Chicago WS (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Buerle	33 (1)	13 (T1)	19 (T2)	213.1 (1)	1.25 (2)	3.84 (2)	9
Danks	32 (2)	13 (T1)	20 (1)	200.1 (2)	1.28 (3)	3.77 (1)	10
Oakland (+2)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Braden	22 (3)	8 (3)	15 (T1)	136.2 (3)	1.36 (2)	3.89 (1)	13
B. Anderson	30 (2)	11 (1)	13 (3)	175.1 (2)	1.28 (1)	4.06 (2)	11
Cahill	32 (1)	10 (2)	15 (T1)	178.2 (1)	1.44 (3)	4.63 (3)	11
Tampa Bay (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Shields	33 (1)	11 (2)	17 (2)	219.2 (1)	1.32 (2)	4.14 (3)	11
Garza	32 (1)	8 (T4)	19 (1)	203 (2)	1.26 (1)	3.95 (2)	12
Texas (+2)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Millwood	31 (T1)	13 (2)	18 (T1)	198.2 (1)	1.34 (2)	3.67 (1)	8
Feldman	31 (T1)	17 (1)	18 (T1)	189.2 (2)	1.28 (1)	4.08 (2)	8

That leaves four National League teams remaining.

Atlanta (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Lowe	34 (T1)	15 (T1)	21 (3)	194.2 (3)	1.52 (5)	4.67 (5)	18
Vasquez	32 (3)	15 (T1)	22 (2)	219.1 (1)	1.03 (1)	2.87 (2)	10
Jurrjens	34 (T1)	14 (3)	25 (1)	215 (2)	1.21 (3)	2.60 (1)	11
Colorado (+4)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Cook	27 (5)	11 (4)	15 (T4)	158 (5)	1.41 (5)	4.16 (3)	26
V. Jimenez	33 (T1)	15 (T2)	24 (1)	218 (1)	1.23 (1)	3.47 (1)	7
Pittsburgh (+2)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Maholm	31 (2)	8 (3)	16 (3)	194.2 (2)	1.44 (3)	4.44 (3)	16
Duke	32 (1)	11 (T1)	21 (1)	213 (1)	1.31 (2)	4.06 (2)	8
S.F. Giants (+3)	GS	W	QS	IP	WHIP	ERA	Total
Lincecum	32 (3)	15 (1)	26 (1)	225.1 (1)	1.05 (1)	2.48 (1)	8
Cain	33 (T1)	14 (2)	20 (2)	217.2 (2)	1.18 (2)	2.89 (2)	11
<i>Lincecum was only one start away from a score of six.</i>							

I don't know how the information contained in this study compares with seasons past, but I suspect most other years were similar in that the majority of the ballclubs had some sort of disruption at the top of their rotation. And that brings us to another baseball adage: You can never have too much pitching.