

Due to the fact everyone has already heard who will go where in the first two rounds of the NBA playoffs; I shall skip to the Conference Finals and NBA Finals. Three of the four teams I see in the Conference Finals are most likely similar to most anyone else's: Los Angeles Lakers, Dallas Mavericks, and Cleveland Cavaliers. The fourth team will be the team I mentioned several times in 2007 and 2008 as a "sleeper pick on the rise." the Atlanta Hawks. Yes, Atlanta still does have an NBA team and under Mike Woodson, have developed into a title contender. Two years ago they made eventual NBA Champs Boston Celtics sweat a few pounds away as they (#8 seed) took them (#1 seed) to seven games. Last year, the Hawks made it to the second round before being demolished by Cleveland, four games to none. Atlanta's upset special this year will be in the second round. Although the Orlando Magic defeated the Hawks in three of the four meetings this year, upended LeBron James' Cavaliers in last year's Conference Finals, and have a veteran club with "champions" written all over it; they will not return to the Conference Finals. It is not that Atlanta has a more talented team, but the Magic will be looking ahead for the Conference Finals rematch with LeBron and Co. The Hawk's six players who logged the most minutes (minus Jamal Crawford) during the 2009-10 season will be entering their third journey into the playoffs. The team has chemistry and an unselfishness which will play to their advantage when they face off against teams who, "on paper," have more talent. Kobe Bryant and Co. will decisively eliminate Dallas in the Conference Finals four games to one. And as ev-



eryone is anticipating, a showdown with Kobe and LeBron for all the marbles. Let us not forget the grudges Kobe and Shaq have for the other.

At the moment I am not sure which network will be covering the Finals, but if it is a Lakers-Cavaliers match-up; they will be dancing in the streets. If I had to bet a crate of tomatoes which two teams will meet in the Finals, it would be these two. But I can not keep thinking about how far Atlanta could go if...

Reality tells me teams build step-by-step. Just like the Detroit Pistons did in the mid-1980's when they



finally knocked off the Celtics. Just like MJ did in the early-90's when the Bulls eventually stopped Detroit. Two years ago the Hawks showed character in the first round, last year they showed it in the second round. This year their next logical step is to show it in the Conference Finals. I am sold on the Hawks taking down the Magic in round two. I am not completely sold yet on them besting Cleveland. But you never know, a key to beating the Magic will be them looking ahead to Cleveland. What if Cleveland is caught looking ahead to the Finals match-up with the Lakers?

The verdict was handed down today on Pittsburgh Steelers QB Ben Roethlis-

berger and his March 5th incident near a small college in the former capital of Georgia, Milledgeville. Big Ben will be suspended for six games beginning with Week 1 of the 2010 season. Ben can have the suspension reduced to four games if he agrees to counseling sessions chosen by the NFL commissioner Roger Goodell. If Ben complies with Goodell's demands, he will still forfeit almost \$2,000,000 in salary, if he refuses to comply (highly unlikely), he will miss seven weeks (Pittsburgh has a bye week in Week 5) of paychecks.

If he is non-compliant he will lose roughly \$3,300,000. Ben is, I believe 28; therefore he

should know better than to bounce around the town and spread mischief as would a 20 year-old. Ben...you signed a \$100 million dollar contract not too long back. There are perks to having that amount of money AND some drawbacks. You are a one-hundred million dollar prize for anyone in college - and you knew it. I will admit first and foremost, you have led

Pittsburgh to two Super Bowl victories. On the other end of the coin, you are a representative of Pittsburgh. The fans who cheer you on and buy your jerseys, pay your salary. Do not go Pete Rose and think you are bigger than game. You the are not...NOT BY A LONG-SHOT! Ben you are on the verge of being a train wreck or the next Terry Bradshaw. Yeah, I heard you do not like TB. Tough dung! Terry has four rings. You have two. No, you are not the king of the Steel City. As a lifelong Steeler fan, I will personally say right now, I would rather have TB and his depression episodes in my foxhole in a war, than you. At least I know TB is covering my back and not the wet bar. Do not get me wrong, Ben...you are a true gamer. Here is the deal...win two more Super Bowls

Championship / Behavior / George Lucas

and then show your rearend. You are yet to be added into the four Super Bowl ring yet kid. That belongs to TB and Joe Montana. You are still in Peyton Manning and Tom Brady's shadow. Let me tell you this in closing, kid, I was a Steeler fan before you took your first step. If it meant partial paralysis and constant pain, I

would suit up in the "black and gold" for any game. Yes, I would be carted off of the field, but in my heart I gave 110% for my team. The "Chief" would be proud. Take a cue from a Steeler fan and straighten up or you just may be shipped out before you equal TB.

I mentioned George Lucas in the title for this reason. He was the creator of Star Wars and I see Albert Pujols as Star Wars IV: A New Hope. Yes, there were three previous Star Wars (in reality SW showed parts 4-6, then 1-3) films. I would like to link the first three to former and current baseball players. The first was Mark McGwire, an extremely likeable individual with a dark secret (steroids) who shattered the singleseason home run mark and raised the bar from 60/61

Rocky Colavito

(Ruth's 60 in 154 games; Maris' 61 in 162) to 70. When you think McGwire...think Senator Palpa-



tine in SW I; a charismatic leader who appeared to have the support of the entire galaxy. As we move on to SW II, think of Barry Bonds. An ego-driven tyrant who is plotting his take-over of the galaxy. A person who pulled the wool over everyone's eyes for so long, it was too late from keeping him from "capturing the single season home run and all-time records." As we advance to SW III, picture Alex Rodriguez. ARod may be as much Palpatine as he is Anakin. He had gifts beyond imagination and was destined for super-stardom even when he played second-fiddle to, then team star, Ken Griffey. Year after year he obliterated records and was a sure-lock at the all-time home run record, the legal way. After admitting to the use of steroids and further allegations still pending, Alex, once the hope of bringing truth and integrity to the all-time home run record; was disclothed as just another slugger with a little avtra

slugger with a little extra help. In SW IV a new hope rises from the ashes. This athlete has never tested positive for any substance abuse and is a "fairy tale story" very similar to the recently retired NFL QB Kurt Warner. Both men married women with children from previous relationships who had cognitive disabilities. Think birth cycles of potential Jedi's according

to SW lore. I noted about a year ago, my son's favorite player was Pujols. I also noted my divorce of 30 years with baseball. With the help of a little more listening than stubbornness, I have caught myself glancing at box scores. All I can say is I hope Pujols is the real deal. Throughout the 2010 baseball season I will list where Pujols ranks and provide players he might possibly pass during the next month.

Below is a box with two categories. They pertain to Albert Pujols and his monthly progress in the alltime categories of Home Runs (HR) and Runs Batted In (RBI). Each month from now until the end of the baseball season, I will compile a list of players he is expected to pass within the month between issues.

1133

1128

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Albert's Ascension				
	Homeruns		RBIs	
	Jim Edmonds	382	B.J. Surhoff	1153
	Frank Howard	382	Rudy York	1152
	Jim Rice	382	Roy Sievers	1147
	Albert Belle	381	Mark Grace	1146
	Orlando Cepeda	379	Dante Bichette	1141
	Tony Perez	379	Ken Boyer	1141
	Matt Williams	378	Ron Cey	1139
	Norm Cash	377	Tony Gwynn Tommy	1138
	Jeff Kent	377	Corcoran Roberto	1135
	Carlton Fisk	376	Alomar Scott Rolen	1134

374

Joe Morgan

Greg Luzinski