

## 2005 Kansas City Royals = lethargic, boring baseball team searching for an identity



**5. Kansas City Royals:** Fans let me just put this bluntly: the Kansas City Royals are not going to make any noise in 2005. Hate to burst all you Royals fans' bubble, but it just ain't gonna happen. Not only does this team lack internal energy to win tilts in a 162-game season, but they also lack star power. Only one player on this team can legitimately say he's a star caliber baseball player. Who is that? First baseman/designated hitter Mike Sweeney, a 32-year-old man with a .305 lifetime batting average. Although Sweeney has never hit 30+ homers in a season, he's awfully productive on a daily basis when healthy on the baseball diamond. Key word there is healthy because KC's DH has been plagued by neck and back injuries the last few years. In fact, his latest injury in August of 2004 landed him on the 15-day DL when Kansas City's season was practically over.

Are the Royals capable of finishing with a better mark than their 2004 record of 58-104? Sure - if Tony Peña can get this team to start off really well. Nothing is more important for a team with lower expectations than everyone else in their division than a fantastic April and/or May. I say that because teams like the Yankees, Braves, etc. do not care if they start off on the mediocre side of the ledger due to the fact they always seem to be in the hunt around September.

Angel Berroa is the franchise's marquee player, and unlike Sweeney has yet to reach the pinnacle of his career. The shortstop only hit .263, drove in 43 runs and steal 14 bases, but he finished the '04 campaign strongly. Look for him to rebound and lead the Royals in '05. Joining him in the infield will be Ken Harvey, Tony Graffanino and Chris Truby. In Truby's case he is just keeping the third base position warm for 23-year-old Mark Teahen. As far as pitching goes, righty Zach Greinke, regarded as the ace of this staff, is one of the most promising young hurlers in the game. His fastball tops out at around 94MPH and his curveball is slow enough (high 60's, low 70's) to tempt impatient, undisciplined hitters.

Two confident and good pitchers early on in a season are Runelvys Hernandez and Jose Lima. Hernandez was one of the key pitchers when the Royals got off to that pleasant start a couple years back. He was locating his pitches precisely then, now it's a different story. Lima does not overpower his opponents. What he does is get the job done by getting the opposition to ground out and pop up for quick outs. It was evident last season as he surprisingly won 13 games, most of all winning his lone postseason start vs. St. Louis. In Game 3 of the NLDS he completely shutdown the best lineup in the National League and he hopes to get back the familiarity of facing AL batters.

Come August I think it's important the Royals maximize the amount of starts they can get out of Denny Bautista without damaging his arm. Clearly, Bautista looks like the top rookie for the franchise. Mr. Jimmy Gobble - he'll gobble up innings; not victories. Reason being? Gobble tends to get over confidence when he has hitters down 0-2 in a count, especially the tougher right-handed swingers he has not figured out to date.



**Royals infielder Angel Berroa (2003 AL Rookie of the Year) is one of the best in the biz at turning double plays.**

The catcher's position will essentially be an auditioning for a group of guys. Justin Huber, who was traded by the Mets organization, is my favorite to earn the job later this year and take over eventually sometime in '06. There are the traditional veterans sitting on the bench such as Terrence Long and Eli Marrero to name a couple. What Peña hopes to find out is which of these youngsters he has can make progress and make it quickly. The quicker they make progress the better his job status looks. Like the usual phrase: it's not always how you start; it's how you finish. And for the Royals to have any shot of improving next season they must finish this season off better.

**Bottom Line: To put it kindly, this is not a very good baseball team, whatsoever. Short on talent, short on hot prospects and soon to be short on victories once again. Kansas City's only hope is for a superstar player to emerge and Berroa, who is a good player, does not look like that guy.**

**Projected Order: CF David DeJesus  
SS Angel Berroa  
DH Mike Sweeney  
1B Ken Harvey  
LF Matt Stairs  
RF Terrance Long  
3B Chris Truby  
C John Buck  
2B Tony Graffanino/Ruben Gotay**

**Pitching Staff: R Zach Greinke  
L Brian Anderson  
R Jose Lima  
R Runelvys Hernandez  
L Jimmy Gobble**

*Pick: 5<sup>th</sup> in the AL Central; any reason to believe they won't be cellar dwellers?*