

## **Mets Lose the Battle, but Develop a Plan for the War**

by Lenhardt Stevens

The New York Mets lost their first world series appearance in a quarter of a century in a scant five games to the bat happy Kansas City Royals. We barely had enough time to check the scores after work before we realized that the dream was over, and the jubilation of winning the pennant was eclipsed by the bealuguredness of watching their pitchers out throw a New York met mound we had not seen in over a decade. Most of the series felt like we were stealing runs from the Royals, whose dominating bats drove homers in a so-called pitchers stadium in a game two that seemed like it would never end. The pain aside, there was something to behold that should give Mets fans a certain level of solace as we enter the 2016 season. The team is strong, ready to overcome the possibility of injuries We might have been disgraced on our own grounds, but we showed the league that our players pay-grade may finally be worth the dividends on the field.

Some managerial choices on the field had us scratching our heads in incredulity, as if the outcome was fated and yet we anticipated alternative outcomes to the situation that was unfolding before our eyes. Like your dad insisting that your brother drive the car home, even though you know that your sibling has barely been around the parking lot, Terry Collins allowed for pitching ace Matt Harvey to remain in game five through the ninth inning. Harvey ended up allowing the two runs that would tie the game, take it to extra innings, and prove to be the Mets downfall that night. Here it may be beneficial to believe in some kind of divine power that can inspire the right kinds of management choices when confronted with the unenviable task of trying to keep the hopes of the fans alive while demonstrating to your players that you trust them to know their limits on the field. Collins was faced with the insurmountable hurdle of choosing between these two decisions:

1) He take out a pitcher imploring to stay in the game and complete a World Series no-hitter, giving the possibility of his team and fans to bounce back from a 3-1 deficit on the steam of their star athlete who they had been waiting an entire year to see perform.

or

2) He take out a pitcher imploring to stay in the game, sending the signal that it is more important to Collins to seal a win in the best way he knows how, rather than risk the game on someone whose arm will most likely give out in the next inning, disappointing his team and fans who desired to watch the success of the poster boy for our franchise in a championship final hour.

What Collins' jeering critics may not realize is that he sent an important message to Harvey and to the Mets franchise; he trusts his players to get the job done and he knows when a player is at a moment where they can change the course of their career. You cannot buy that kind of decision-making from management. He might be something of a softie for making this kind of call, but he is also someone who appreciates the difference between a manager who respects his players or one who is more worried about the win. Safe to assume that in addition to the above sentiment, Collins was more willing to make a risk here because of the unlikelihood that he could bounce back from the 3-1 deficit his team was suffering. He had a %14 chance of making a comeback (10 teams out of the 70 times in WS History where teams came back from a 3-1), but was certain he could make a player's career with such an opportunity. Harvey, after having signed a new \$4 million contract, will be in Florida in a matter of weeks ready to deliver an effort in the 2016 season, and his second season after Tommy John surgery should prove to be even more productive than the last.

Before we leave 2015, allow me to give to you a couple of take homes to consider before we get into February 2016. Firstly, the performance of the team was a balancing act that teetered in both directions during the regular season. The Mets stepped up when it mattered, playing well above .500 in August and September, but during the slow burn of the early summer games, they were a losing team with a dismal pitching staff, the aspect of the team meant to be the jewel in Queens' crown. A pitcher did not complete a game for the mets until September, and while the team rebounded quickly, Yoenis Céspedes was the outfield hitter the team wanted, after earning the mark as the only Met to hit a walk-off home run all season. He will most likely not be returning for next season, but the Mets were not going to rely on him to get everything done next season; we will have to be a team that relies on finesse more than power, and with a defense that can back-up a small ball approach, this may prove to be a winning strategy. Things really started to come together when Wright returned from what was rumored to be a career ending spinal stenosis and proceeding to take his place at 3rd base as who is the face of the Mets franchise. Secondly, despite the move to the Nationals from David Murphy, the rest of the NL East division will look more or less the same in the upcoming season, leaving Mets and Nationals to duke out who will be the division leader come September.

At the time of writing, Mike Piazza has entered into the Hall of Fame after being the best hitting catcher the team has ever known. *Bona fortuna* to start the year.

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