foul shots

By Glen Brownstein

Will Fergie win 20 games? Will Fogg Lynn and Jim Rice break the "sophomore jinx" that seems to infect previous-year runners? Yes, that's that time again. The baseball season begins next week, and it's time to look at what '76 will bring.

Those in attendance at Fenway on April 12 will notice a few changes at the venerable ballpark. For one thing, the old right-field scoreboard has been replaced by a combination message-picture-instant replay unit. There won't be any fireworks, although sentiment has been running heavily against the decision to install such a scoreboard (opponents say it mars the beauty and charm of the stadium, while the Red Sox simply say they need the advertising revenue the selling of space and time on the board will provide), and some fans would probably like to see the scoreboard blow itself up.

The distance markers on the outfield wall will take on a new look, also. While the Sox will continue to insist that it really is 315 feet to the left-field foul pole (an aerial measurement taken last year proved that that statistic is definitely overestimated), all markers will include a metric equivalent—it's also 96 meters to the foul pole, for example.

Ticket prices have gone up slightly, although bleachers remain $1.50. More importantly, the Sox have made a number of personnel changes, getting top pitcher Ferguson Jenkins from Texas for Juan Beniquez and Steve Barr, and acquiring reliever Tom House from Atlanta.

Can the Sox repeat as American league champions? As a member of the media put it earlier in the spring, the Red Sox have won the pennant at least 36 different ways. The pessimism of previous seasons (most people would not assume the pennant clinched until Boston had a three-game lead with two to play last year) has been replaced with a "wait until we get Cincinnati in the series this year" attitude.

It won't be that easy, though. I think the Red Sox have the best team in the American League East, but that the Yankees, with the acquisition of Mueller (from Milwaukee last year), and pitchers Dock Ellis, Ed Figueroa, and Brett Janssen, will give Boston a real run for the division title. Cleveland is on its way up, but still a couple of years away, and Baltimore, surprised last year, will begin its decline. Milwaukee and Detroit need a lot of help.

In the AL West, I like Kansas City to break the Oakland hold on first place, with California third, and Texas, Chicago, and Minnesota trailing.

Byrum Saam left one year too early. The popular Phillies broadcaster retired last year with the unenviable record of working 42 major league single games and never winning a pennant. Saam old Athletics games (from 1934-50) and moved to the Phils in 1951 (the year after they won their last pennant) and suffered through 25 days years (including the frustrating lost in 1964, when the Phils blew a 5-game lead with 12 to play). I like a Philadelphia-Cincinnati playoff this year, so that I think the Phils will outlast their opponents enough to offset the lack of a good pitching staff, and the Reds figure only to get some minor competition from the Dodgers, hurting injuries or some major trades.

At any rate, I'll be Milwaukee-Boston at Fenway Park a week from Monday, and the Sox, encouraged by their league-season-ticket sale in history, expect a capacity crowd to watch the return of last year's heroes and the raising of the AL Championship flag. With a little luck and a lot of work, maybe the World Series will fly at Fenway next year.

The men's varsity sailing team was victorious in the Boston Dinghy Cup held last weekend on the Charles River. The wind held strong, making the sailing in the Tech Dinghies exciting throughout the two day event. The team of Bill Critch '77 with crew George Dvorak '76 in A-Division and Paul Libbin '76 and Steve Gourley '77 in B-Division built a twenty point lead in the fourteen races held on Saturday.

In a fleet of eighteen boats, a twenty point lead with ten races to sail on Sunday was hardly comfortable. The team's strategy on Sunday was to hold the lead by sailing more conservatively, rather than taking unnecessary chances in trying to win every race. Despite the pressure from all the top schools gunning for MIT, the team held on to win the oldest intercollegiate dinghy regatta in the country.

Booed by this big win, the varsity competes in the Yacht Racing Invitational at Kings Point this weekend. The women host a regatta on Saturday, and the men host the Gehry Trophy on Sunday on the Charles.