

WIEBE'S WORLD

By Henry Wiebe

The Nationals are going to win the World Series. I have never been so sure of something in my life. They have the rotation. They have the starting lineup. They have the bench. They have the chemistry. Everything is going to work for them. This is our year.

The Nats' offense, even though the injuries caused half of the starting lineup to miss considerable time, is as potent as ever. With the exception of Adam Eaton, all opening day starters are healthy for the playoffs. Even Eaton's replacement, Michael A. Taylor, posted a regular season slash line of .271/.320/.486, with a fWAR that placed him among the top 50 in the National League.

The core of the Nats' order consists of Bryce Harper, perhaps the best young player in the game, Anthony Rendon, the player with the highest fWAR in the NL, Daniel Murphy, who was the runner-up for the batting title, and Ryan Zimmerman, the franchise veteran who had the best season of his career. This lineup will strike fear into the hearts of any opposing pitcher.

In the postseason, a team only needs a three or four dominant relievers in order to be effective. The Nats have found this in Matt Albers, Ryan Madson, Brandon Kintzler, and Sean Doolittle.

Madson and Doolittle came to Washington in a midseason trade with the Oakland A's, marking the eighth time since 2010 that the Nats' General Manager, Mike Rizzo, has struck a deal with Billy Beane, the A's GM. Although he missed time with a finger injury, Madson was extremely effective in the set-up role, with an impressively low ERA of 1.83.

Upon his arrival in Washington, Doolittle was immediately plugged into the closer role. Prior to this trade, the Nationals had blown a whopping 16 saves. The hard-throwing left-hander thrived, saving 24 games with only one blown save.

Kintzler was acquired via trade with the Twins. The former Minnesota closer stepped into a high leverage reliever, as Doolittle was already settled as the closer.

Albers was quietly the Nationals' most consistent reliever all season, posting the lowest ERA on the team at 1.62. With this vastly improved bullpen, the Nationals have the ability to lock down the final innings of a game, an aspect of baseball that is crucial to a successful team.

The starting rotation, led by three Cy Young candidates in Max Scherzer, Stephen Strasburg, and Gio Gonzalez, is perhaps one of the best postseason rotations ever. The Nats have three starters that are able to completely lock down even the best of lineups.

Although Strasburg took the loss for game one, he didn't give up any earned runs and he pitched an extremely clean game. He was just unlucky.

Gio pitched very well in game two considering the Cubs are one of the best offensive teams in the MLB against left handed starters. Gonzalez also allowed the most regular season walks in the league, and the Cubs' lineup drew the most walks in the league. All of the intangibles for game two were pointing to another Cubs' victory, but the Nationals were able to prevail despite the negative game script.

The Nats stellar roster and the resilience that they have showed so far this postseason makes it very clear that they have what it takes to bring home the championship.

"Wiebe's World" is a monthly column where sports editor Henry Wiebe expresses on current events in the world of sports.

Teachers stand with Kaepernick

A commitment to social justice through the use of an NFL Boycott

By Adenike Falade

Nina Blake's San Francisco 49ers jersey laid abandoned in some drawer as the 2017 NFL season kicked off. Her hometown team suffered a pathetic 23-3 defeat at the hands of the Carolina Panthers that Sunday, but she couldn't care less. To her and a number of her colleagues, former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick's involuntary departure from the NFL signaled the end of Blake's commitment to professional football.

The Kneeling Begins

During the 2016 preseason, Kaepernick sat and knelt for the national anthem on multiple occasions. The protest gained attention with the release of an interview he did with NFL Media.

He was influenced by the seemingly careless disregard for African American lives in the U.S. "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color," stated Kaepernick in the interview.

His actions were quickly followed by extreme criticism from key NFL contributors. Drew Brees, a Super Bowl-winning quarterback for the New Orleans Saints, called his protest disrespectful and self-contradictory.

Kaepernick's former head coach, Jim Harbaugh, disapproved of the kneeling and his reasoning for doing so. "I acknowledge his right to do that, but I don't respect the motivation or the action," he stated. Kaepernick was not picked up by any team during his free-agency following the backlash.

Teachers Take Personal Offense

Kevin Shindel felt the repercussions Colin Kaepernick faced for his actions were too egregious for him to continue watching football. This came after roughly 35 years of watching every single game, winning multiple Fantasy Football tournaments, and rooting for his home team, the Baltimore Ravens.

Shindel believes the demonstrations are legitimate and decided Kaepernick's live-



JENNIFER CUEVA-DIAZ



ELIA GRIFFIN

FORFEITING THE 49ERS English teacher Nina Blake stopped being a fan of the San Francisco 49ers after Kaepernick lost his job, and decided to boycott the NFL to show her solidarity with Kaepernick.

lihood should matter more to him than football. Though he is steadfast in his decision, it doesn't make giving up decades of football any easier. "Sunday, I wanted to watch, you know? I really wanted to watch. But I'm just done with it," he explained.

The fact that the Ravens toyed with the idea of hiring Kaepernick especially hurt him. Back in 2012, Kaepernick led the 49ers to their first NFC Championship win in nearly 20 years, so he was an obvious choice.

Quarterback Joe Flacco missed the preseason with a bad back, and although Kaepernick's name was thrown around as a potential backup, he was never contacted.

"I want my team to stand up and do what's best for society. And when they didn't, I hoped they'd go 1-15. I hope they never win another game," he emphasized.

Rough Race Relations

The racism Kaepernick shed light on is too real for people to be denouncing his actions. The KKK, an antebellum institution of white supremacy, marched just a few hours from Blair without consequence.

Susan Thornton reasoned, "African-Americans in 2017 shouldn't be the predominant ones being pulled over by police [and] killed during traffic stops." She is also boycotting the NFL.

Blake's status as a California native and an African-American brings this issue closer to home. Kaepernick's cause, acts, and skill as a player are all legitimate to her, but the NFL is still keeping him from playing for unspoken reasons.

"The reason he is not playing is because he took a stand. And people don't

like that he took a stand. I can't watch the games and not feel a little disgusted," she remarked.

Kenneth Smith followed the New York Giants sparingly throughout the years, but even that became too much when he witnessed the way the NFL treated Kaepernick. "They can tolerate violence against women, and drug use... [but] they didn't want the distraction they said that Kaepernick would bring to a team," he said.

Presidential Interception

The demonstrations intensified recently after President Donald Trump used a derogatory and explicit term during one of his rallies to describe the protestors on the field.

Following those comments, every single game the following Sunday featured some form of anthem demonstration, whether individual players knelt or full teams linked arms in opposition of Trump's comments. The original purpose, to call attention to racial inequality, was forgotten in the wake of Trump's hate.

Blake does not think the acts hold much meaning anymore even though they are more unified. "To me, it's moved past that. If [Kaepernick] gets a job right now, maybe I would consider it. [But] to me, the ship has kind of sailed," she said.

No teachers plan to end their boycotts in the near future. The paraphernalia collected over decades serves as a reminder of a league they were once proud of.

Blake still holds her Kaepernick jersey as a dear memento. "It's one of my favorite shirts, [but] I don't wear it because it's from the National Football League."

soapbox

Do you think athletes should protest during the national anthem? Why or Why not?

"They are exercising their freedom of speech. It's good that these athletes are raising awareness of issues and expressing their opinions."

— Uro Lyi, *senior*

"Athletes should be able to protest because it is in their rights to do so. It is not disrespectful because the flag is not being damaged."

— Kevin Zhou, *junior*

"I think that some athletes don't protest because they fear backlash from coaches or teammates."

— Haydy Rodriguez, *junior*