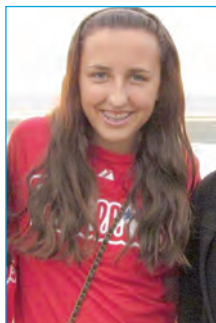


**"Now there's three things you can do in a baseball game:
You can win or you can lose or it can rain." ~Casey Stengel**



WITH DANIELLE WILSON



General Manager Ruben Amaro Junior wasted no time this offseason snatching up the players that will make the 2012 Philadelphia Phillies something to behold. Much to the fans' delight, the longest-tenured Philadelphia athlete, Jimmy Rollins, will remain

in red pinstripes for at least three more years. Cole Hamels will also be returning this year, hoping to soon sign a long-term deal with this club. However, we will be seeing a few new faces on the field, and one face who's making a one-year return with the Phillies: Jim Thome.

Thome, traded to the White Sox in 2005, will return this year to fill a spot on the bench, and the spot of Ryan Howard. It has been reported that Thome will start in 2-3 games per week this season. John Mayberry will also help out at first base. Newly acquired utility men Laynce Nix and Ty Wigginton will be able to play left field if needed.

The bullpen has certainly changed its appearance. After rumors swirled of closer Ryan Madson returning for four more years, they were proved untrue when the Phillies signed former Red Sox closer Jonathan Papelbon to a four-year, \$50 million deal. He is the highest paid closer in all of baseball. Along with Papelbon, the club signed left-handed reliever Dontrelle Willis, right-hander Chad Qualls, and minor leaguer Jeremy Horst, who was dealt to



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Philly from Cincinnati for infielder Wilson Valdez. Another minor leaguer, Frank Gailey, was traded to Philly from Toronto for right fielder Ben Francisco.

With an overwhelming amount of help on the bench and in the bullpen, the Phillies are set for what should be another winning season.

As for the starting rotation, it lost one of its aces, sadly. Roy Oswalt will not be returning this year due to free agency. He will not sign with Philadelphia, his agent recently stated. The rotation will now be Roy Halladay, Cliff Lee, Cole Hamels, Vance Worley, Joe Blanton. Although, Worley and Blanton may be switched. The bullpen is now home to Kyle Kendrick, Jose Contreras, Papelbon, Willis, Qualls, Antonio Bastardo, and David Herndon and/or Michael Stutes. The roster may or may not have room for both Herndon and Stutes.

Pitchers and catchers reported to spring training on February 19th, while the rest of the team along with non-roster invitees reported on February 25th. Utley and Howard will both be eased into spring training. Howard will miss time during the regular season due to his recovering from a torn Achilles. It is predicted that he will return by early May.

As for the pitchers, there isn't a single thing to worry about. Roy Halladay is still a workhorse, getting to the ballpark bright and early. Cole Hamels feels ready to go after undergoing a surgery which removed loose bodies in his elbow, and repaired a hernia. Everyone is in fantastic shape, especially Joe Blanton who lost a lot of weight. They're ready for the 2012 season, are you?



Starting pitcher Cliff Lee takes ground balls during fielding drills.



Brian Schneider looks on as his fellow catchers take batting practice.