

Who Got the Biggest Bang for the Bucks in MLB for 2010?

Written by Maury Brown
Monday, 18 October 2010 19:51

Team	W	L	W/L	Opening Day Payroll	Marginal Payroll	Marginal Wins	Change Marginal Win
New York Yankees	101	59	.630	\$211,400,000	\$20,200,000	36	\$1,000,000
Los Angeles Dodgers	97	65	.600	\$171,500,000	\$15,500,000	30	\$1,500,000
San Francisco Giants	96	66	.593	\$161,000,000	\$14,000,000	29	\$1,500,000
St. Louis Cardinals	96	66	.593	\$177,000,000	\$15,000,000	27	\$1,500,000
NEW YORK	W	L	W/L	Opening Day Payroll	Marginal Payroll	Marginal Wins	Change Marginal Win
Philadelphia Phillies	97	76	.562	\$177,000,000	\$16,000,000	30	\$1,000,000
Detroit Tigers	96	77	.558	\$113,000,000	\$10,000,000	27	\$1,000,000
Chicago Cubs	79	81	.494	\$99,000,000	\$9,000,000	30	\$1,700,000
Cleveland Indians	87	67	.564	\$81,000,000	\$7,000,000	30	\$1,000,000
Boston Red Sox	87	67	.564	\$79,000,000	\$6,000,000	30	\$1,000,000
MINN	W	L	W/L	Opening Day Payroll	Marginal Payroll	Marginal Wins	Change Marginal Win
Los Angeles Angels	87	67	.564	\$111,000,000	\$10,000,000	30	\$1,000,000

Select the image above to see details for all 30 clubs in MLB by Marginal Wins and Marginal Payroll

Everybody likes to get a great deal. Ads pummel you daily touting how this outlet or that offers you a product that another charges more for more.

But, if you run a business, the chief objective is getting the best performance for the lowest price – you're looking for efficiency and effectivity.

In Major League Baseball, it can be much the same. Some of the variables can shift, namely efficiency can be thrown out the window if you have high levels of revenues to compensate. After all, paying more – if you've got the green to spend – to win a World Series can be overlooked (that's you, New York Yankees).

Over the past several years, I have broken down who got the biggest bang for their buck in MLB. With the league functioning without a hard cap, and the softest of the soft cap systems in the Big-4 (the league's Luxury Tax system), the outcome of who performs best with the least has extra weight. As witnessed with the leaked MLB documents recently, questions surrounding the revenue-sharing system and the aforementioned Luxury Tax become more relevant as we get closer to the expiration of the current collective bargaining agreement.

To measure how well teams spent compared to their wins, we can use a metric created by the late, great Doug Pappas called Marginal Wins/Marginal Payroll.

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(Select the image above to see complete 2010 Marginal Wins/Marginal Payroll data)

What is Marginal Payroll/Marginal Wins?

As a baseline, we'll create a fictitious marginal team. Even the worst teams made up of near minor league players would not lose every game. So, we'll say that a truly mediocre team would win only 30 percent of their games. For salary, we'll set every players at the league minimum, which for 2010 was \$400,000 . And finally, we'll make the roster 25, plus 3 replacement players to allow for the DL.

Using each team's winning percentage, along with the Opening Day payroll we can determine a team's "marginal payroll". Using Opening Day payroll gives you the "intent" of a club at the beginning of the season. When adding in how many games a team won over the course of the regular season, we can then determine how much it cost for each marginal win.

The formula works as such:

(club payroll - (28 x major league minimum) / ((winning percentage - .300) x 162)

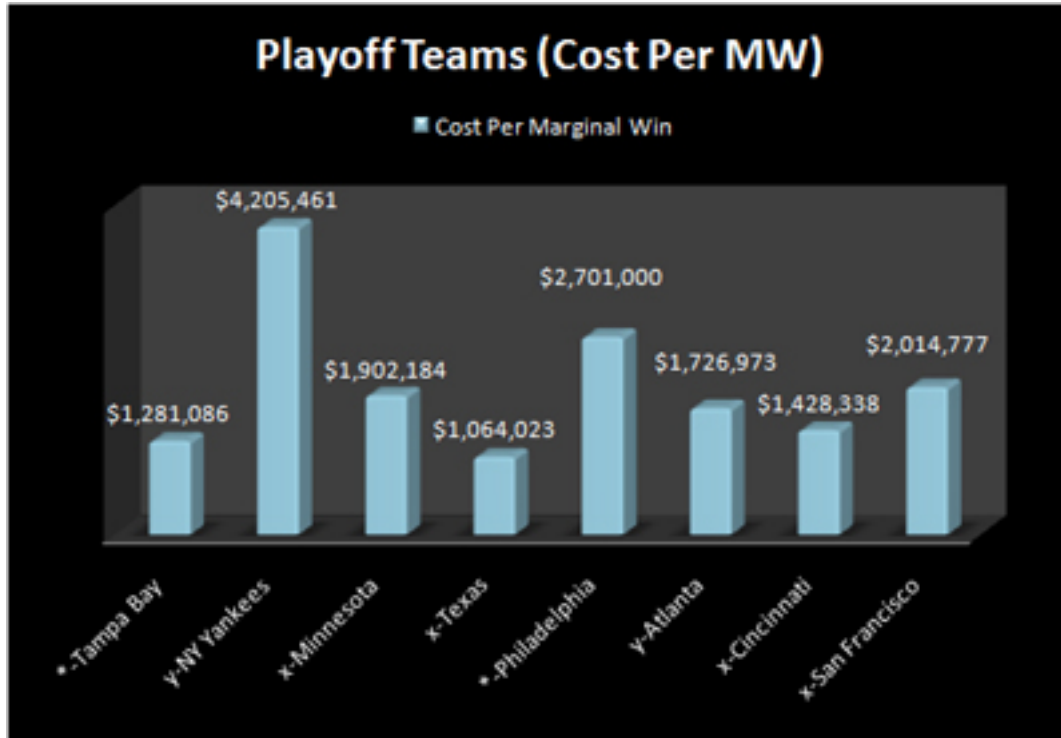
So, the lower the cost per marginal win that is derived out of this formula, the better. You're striving to get your cost per marginal win low, thereby spending less per win – you're efficient.

How did this year fare? For Bud Selig, it may be his shining moment for saying that there is parity in MLB (the postseason still needs to completely play out, as this look is just for the regular season). 2010 will go down as having the lowest average cost per marginal win (\$1,731,901) than any other over the last 5 years. A game here or there, and the figure could have changed dramatically. If the Padres had been able to get their way in, as opposed to the Giants in the NL West, the number would have dropped further still (\$1,503,188). If the Yankees had won the AL East, then 2010 doesn't see the 5-year low cost per marginal win by jumping to \$2,219,297. Still, we saw only one club win a Division with an Opening Day payroll above \$100 million (Phillies). Compared to 4 last year (Yankees, Angels, Phillies, Dodgers), 4 in 2008 (White Sox, Angels, Cubs, Dodgers), 2 in 2007 (Red Sox, Dodgers), and 2 in 2006 (Yankees, Mets).

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There was one club (Yankees) above \$100 million in 2005, but remember... These Opening Day payroll figures don't account for inflation making 2010 all that more impressive from a cost efficiency perspective.



Playoff Team Margin Wins Cost per Marginal Win

Playoff Team	Margin Wins	Cost per Marginal Win
Tampa Bay	47	\$1,281,086
y-NY Yankees	46	\$4,205,461
Minnesota	45	\$1,902,184
Texas	41	\$1,064,023
Philadelphia	48	\$2,701,000
y-Atlanta	42	\$1,726,973
Cincinnati	42	\$1,428,338
San Francisco	43	\$2,014,777

y - Won Wild Card

Leading the way for all playoff teams was the Texas Rangers. Their \$55,250,544 ranked as the 27th lowest in Opening Day payroll ahead of only the A's, Padres, and Pirates. Based on Marginal Payroll/Marginal Wins (MP/MW), the Rangers had a marginal payroll of \$44,050,544 and 41 marginal wins culminating in \$1,064,023 per marginal win. Compare that to the Phillies who spent \$2,701,000 per 48 marginal wins. The other efficiency experts for getting the most out of the least goes to the Tampa Bay Rays who paid \$1,281,086 per each of their 47 marginal wins.

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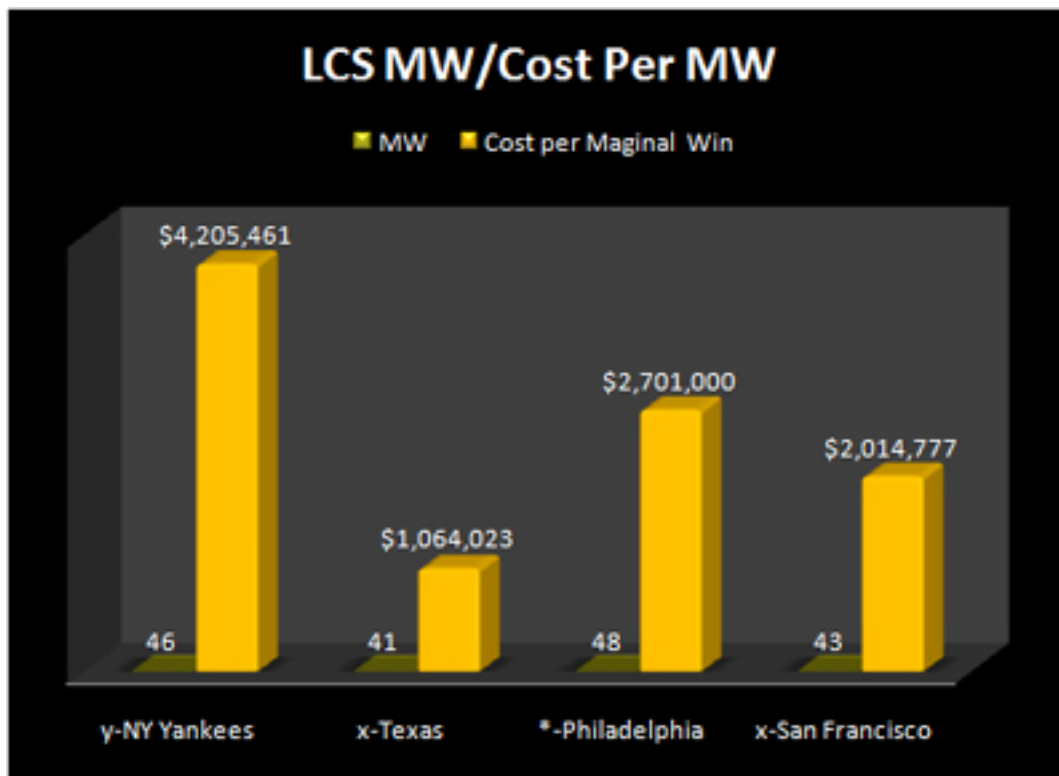
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But, if we can offer up the biggest hat tip for a club that missed the postseason, yet got incredible success with such a stingy payroll, the San Diego Padres win, hands down. Barely missing the postseason fielding a 90-72 (.556) record, the Friars had the 29th lowest Opening Day payroll for 2010 (\$37,799,300) which translates to a \$26,599,300 marginal payroll, or an incredible \$642,495 per each of their 41 marginal wins. The only club that had better player payroll efficiency over the last 5 years was the Tampa Bay Rays in 2008 (\$679,764 per marginal win).

In terms of losers in the efficiency and effectivity categories, the Seattle Mariners are this year's winner, or rather loser. With an abysmal 61-101 record (.377), and an Opening Day payroll of \$104,963,866, the Mariners spent a staggering \$6,073,387 per each of their 12 marginal wins. In spending so much for so little, the Mariners now have the dubious distinction of having the two worst MW/MP ratio since 2005. This year's figure ranks second only the M's cost per marginal win figure of \$8,634,999 in 2008.

Other losers this year include the Cubs (\$5,129,129 per marginal win), and Mets (\$4,053,386 per marginal win).

But, what may be of most interest is how the clubs that are in the LCS are faring. While a case for parity can be made in regular season play, how does MW/MP stack up once the playoffs get started?



If the Phillies and Yankees make it to the World Series (again), it would pit the highest payroll (Yankees at \$206,333,389 Opening Day payroll) against the fourth-highest (\$141,928,379). The Giants are still in the top 10 in Opening Day payroll (ranked #9 at \$98,641,333), while the Rangers are the at 27th (represent efficiency and effectivity's best hope (\$55,250,544). To place this in perspective, in terms of cost per marginal win, the Yankees spent 4 times as much per MW than the Rangers.

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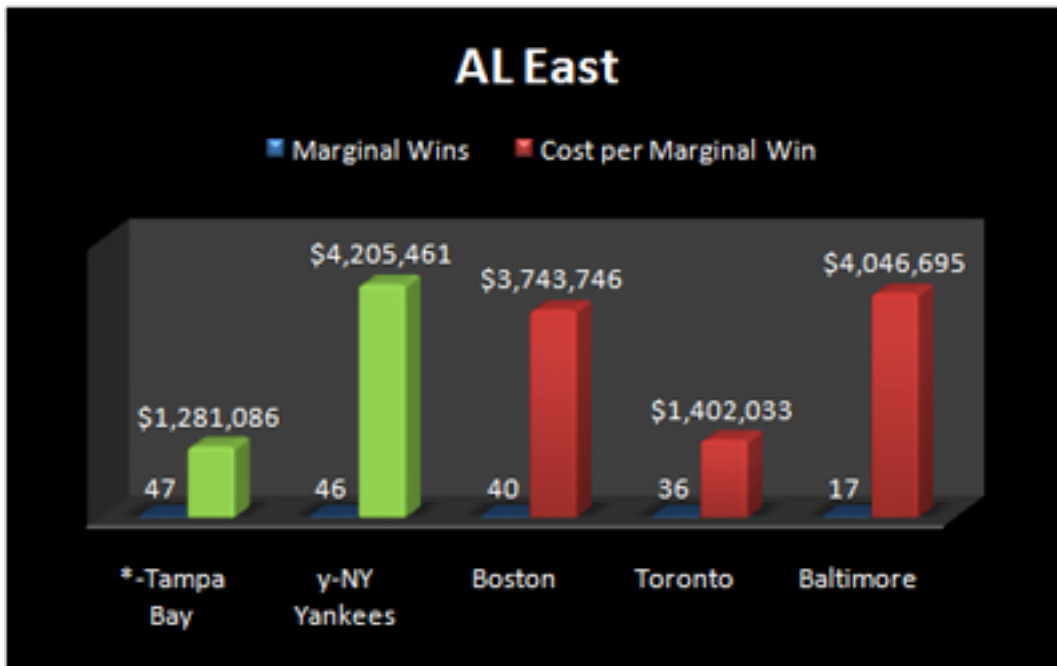
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FOR EACH CHART, GREEN COLUMNS DENOTE PLAYOFF CLUBS

AL EAST

As was the case in 2008, the 2010 regular season the AL East saw a case of David vs Goliath. The Rays won the Division posting a belt tightening \$1,281,086 cost per each of their 47 marginal wins. The scary thing, at least for the Orioles... they spent almost as much per marginal win as the Yankees but posted only 17 marginal wins, a sign of being ineffective and inefficient.



AL EAST

Marginal Wins

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Cost per MW

*-Tampa Bay

47

\$1,281,086

y-NY Yankees

46

\$4,205,461

Boston

40

\$3,743,746

Toronto

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36

\$1,402,033

Baltimore

17

\$4,046,695

* - *Won the Division*

y - *AL Wild Card winner*

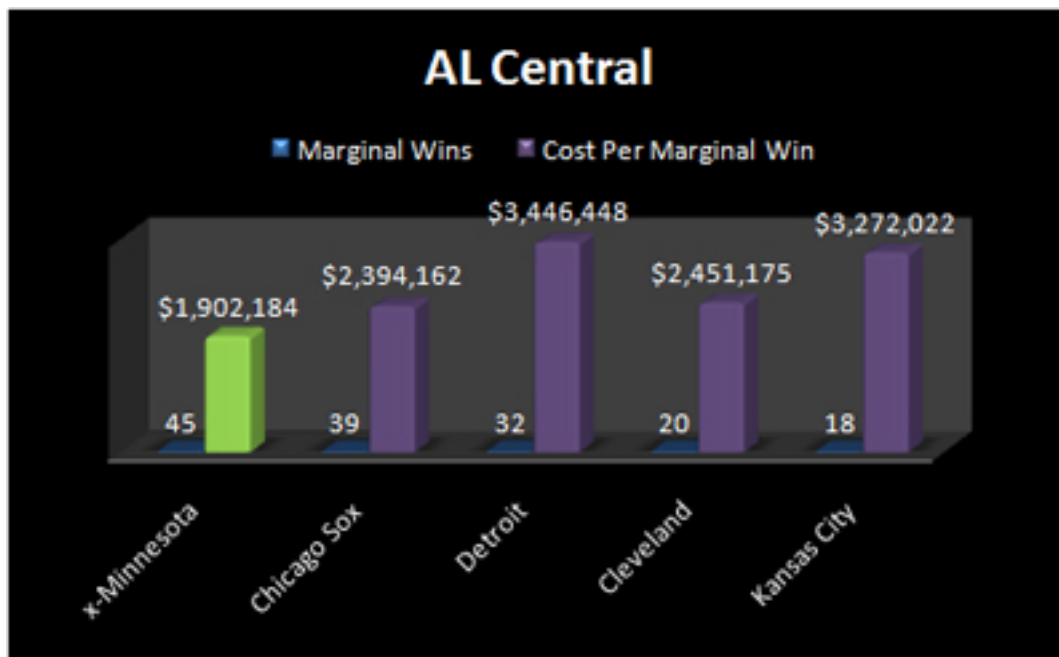
AL CENTRAL

The Twins didn't get out of the first round of the playoffs (again) due to the Yankees, but there was a slight difference from this year to last: Target Field opened which trickled down to getting Joe Mauer wrapped up into a long term contract, which bumped the Twins from being ranked 24th in Opening Day payroll last year to 10th in 2010. In terms of cost per marginal win, the Twins spent \$1,419,928 for each of their 38 marginal wins last season, compared to \$1,902,184 per the 45 marginal wins they racked up during the 2010 regular season. Not bad considering the extra wins they racked up.

On the downside, the Tigers wound up underachieving with a high-level of player payroll. Ranked at 6th in Opening Day payroll (\$122,864,928), the club spent \$3,446,448 per each of their 32 marginal wins. If it's any solace to Mike Illitch and the Tigers, the Royals, perennial cellar-dwellers, spent nearly as much per marginal win (\$3,272,022)

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AL CENTRAL

Marginal Wins

Cost per Maginal Win

x-Minnesota

45

\$1,902,184

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Chicago Sox

39

\$2,394,162

Detroit

32

\$3,446,448

Cleveland

20

\$2,451,175

Kansas City

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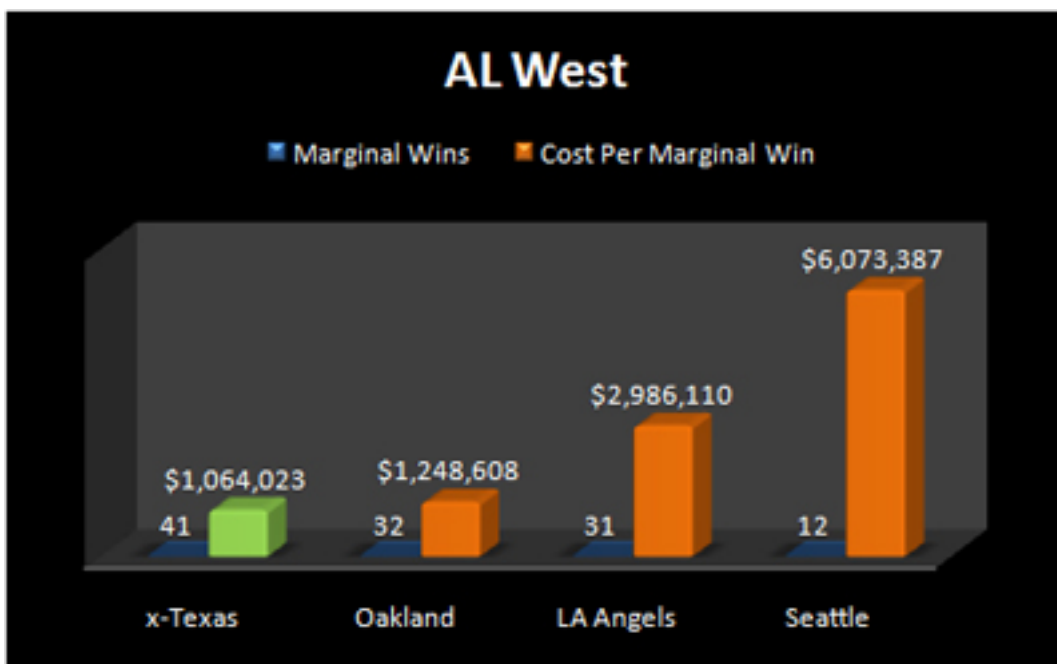
18

\$3,272,022

x - Won the Division

AL WEST

The AL West wound up being a study in extremes. Jon Daniels and the Rangers became a model of efficiency and effectivity while the Mariners plans for a defensive-minded roster that wound up having all the power of a 15-watt bulb was the polar opposite; a case of high-spending with nothing to show for it. This is one of those times when a picture is worth a thousand words.



AL WEST

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Marginal Wins

Cost per Maginal Win

x-Texas

41

\$1,064,023

Oakland

32

\$1,248,608

LA Angels

31

\$2,986,110

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Seattle

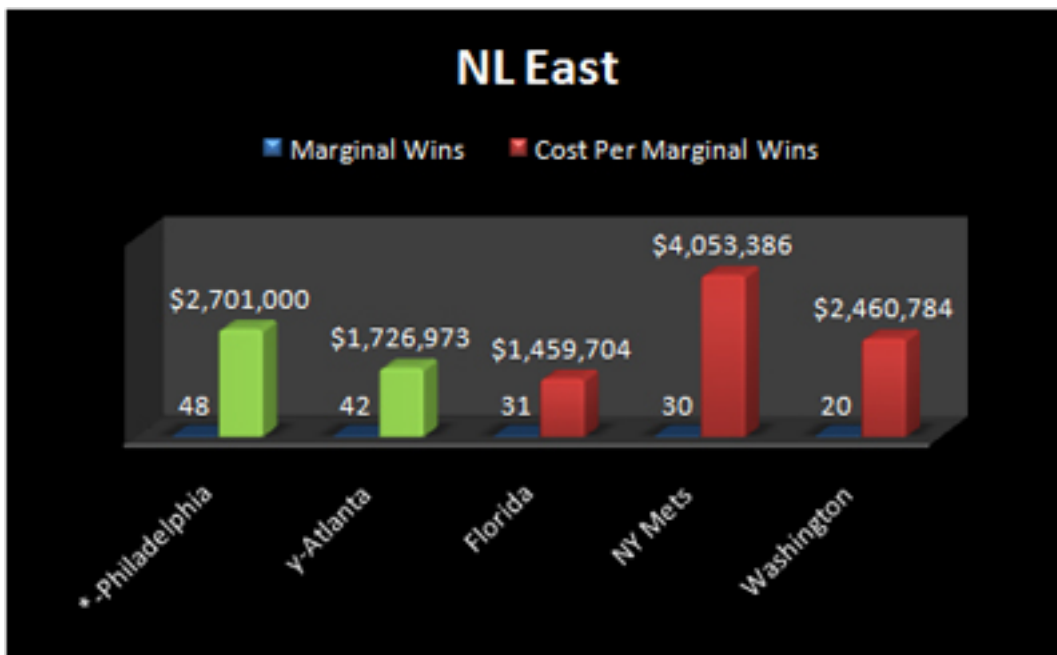
12

\$6,073,387

x - Won the Division

NL EAST

There wasn't a case of wise spending trumping poor-thinking, overspending in the NL East. Sure, there was a prime case of "spending doesn't always mean winning" with the Mets, but Phillies had a steep Opening Day payroll. The Braves, who won the NL Wild Card had an Opening Day payroll of \$84,423,666, right smack-dab in the middle of MLB's payroll rankings at 15th.



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NL EAST

Marginal Wins

Cost per Marginal Win

*-Philadelphia

48

\$2,701,000

y-Atlanta

42

\$1,726,973

Florida

31

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\$1,459,704

NY Mets

30

\$4,053,386

Washington

20

\$2,460,784

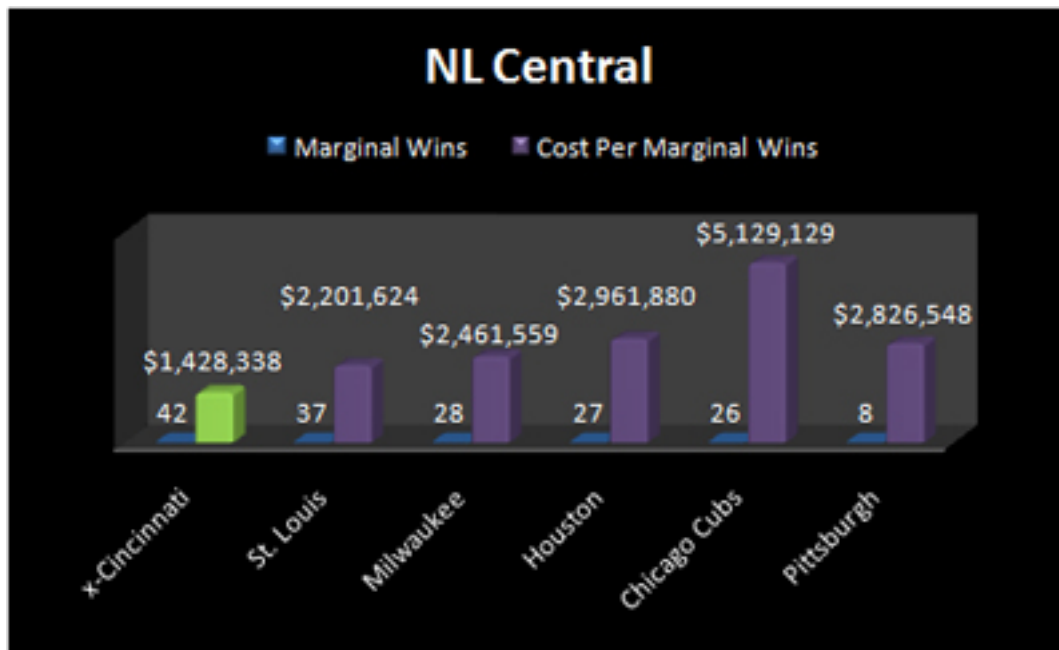
* - *Won the Division*

NL CENTRAL

How good is Walt Jocketty? How bad do the Pirates continue to be? How badly did the Cubs spend without having anything to show for it? Consider... The Pirates spent nearly twice as much as the Reds per marginal win. But, it could have been worse (at least if this year were the only year the Pirates stunk up the standings). The Cubs finished 5th in the Division, just ahead of the lowly Pirates, spending 3.6 times as much per marginal win as the Reds did. Ouch.

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NL CENTRAL

Marginal Wins

Cost per Marginal Win

x-Cincinnati

42

\$1,428,338

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St. Louis

37

\$2,201,624

Milwaukee

28

\$2,461,559

Houston

27

\$2,961,880

Chicago Cubs

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26

\$5,129,129

Pittsburgh

8

\$2,826,548

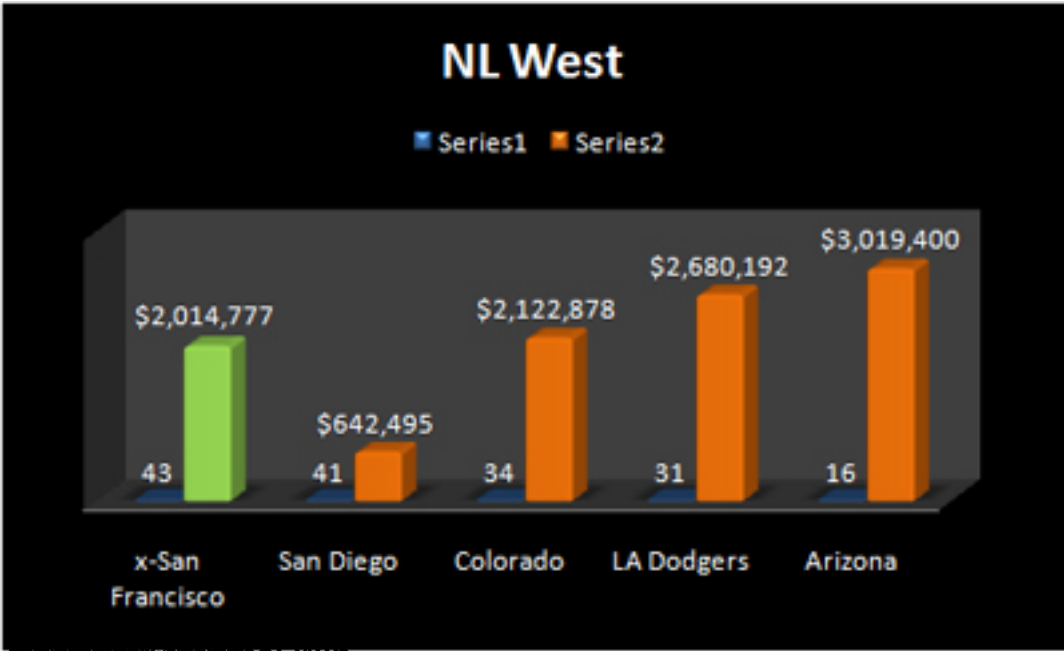
x - Won the Division

NL WEST

“If only...” That has to be what was on the lips of Jed Hoyer and every San Diego Padres fan. Barely missing the postseason, when Spring Training ended, few – if any – baseball “experts” would have the Padres as contenders for a moment, let alone the entire season. With an Opening Day payroll of \$37,799,300, they, along with the Pirates, were the only clubs with payroll under \$50 million. They wound up overachieving, well beyond expectations and would have been the perennial example of “smarts over expensive players”... if only they had made it to the playoffs. Not to make the likes of the Mariners and Cubs cry but the Padres posted an insanely efficient and effective \$642,495 per marginal win. Bravo, Padres. You’re Bud Selig’s new hero.

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Maury Brown's Personal Win
Baseball Division



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