

# Aaron: Heyward Can Help 'What Ails Baseball' Tampa Bay Battles Past Baltimore

BY CHARLES ODUM  
AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Jason Heyward's debut has Hank Aaron convinced that the rookie can stir up more excitement about baseball in the black community.

The legendary Atlanta Braves slugger told The Associated Press Tuesday that Heyward, who is black, "can mean an awful lot to what ails baseball."

Aaron shares a growing concern that there are too few African-American players in the game. It's a concern he expressed again during spring training. He says it's a common problem that baseball has been slow to address.

Aaron isn't wasting anytime promoting the Braves' newest African-American star.

After Heyward's debut on Monday — which included a three-run homer on his first swing — the Hall of Famer was even more optimistic that the 20-year-old rookie can make a difference.

"You don't know how excited I was, and not only me," Aaron said. "I was talking to (civil rights pioneer and former Atlanta mayor) Andrew Young about the same thing, and he wants me to bring him out there to meet Heyward. It's beginning to move through the black area. People are getting excited."

Aaron, 76, says the buzz makes

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— HANK AARON, MLB HALL OF FAMER

him feel good.

"He can certainly bring the excitement back, not only for Atlanta but also for African-American players," Aaron said. "We do need to have many, many more Jason Heywards."

Heyward has shown interest in promoting baseball. He is associated with a program co-sponsored by the Braves which offers free instruction to Atlanta inner-city middle school and high school kids. The program called L.E.A.D. — Launch, Explore, Advise and Direct — aims to help players earn college scholarships through baseball.

Today, the NBA attracts more black athletes than Major League Baseball. And though Heyward — 6-foot-5, 240 pounds — chose baseball, Aaron said his first impression of him was that he "looked more like a basketball player."

"But he carries it well," Aaron said. "He moves around well. He can glide along and catches a lot of fly balls and he runs the bases very well."

Aaron said it's a bonus that Heyward is from Henry County, about 30 miles south of Atlanta. "He can be the kind of player that everybody dreams about, and coming from Georgia certainly has its advantages."

A fact that's not lost on the Braves.

Atlanta set up the Heyward era with a bookend pairing of its first and newest right fielders. Aaron, who played right field in the team's 1966 inaugural season in Atlanta, threw the ceremonial first pitch to Heyward before Monday's game.

"He said have fun and told me I'm ready to do this," Heyward said. "He said go out there and enjoy it."

The largest crowd to ever attend a day game in Atlanta was with Heyward from the start. He received a loud ovation from the 53,081 fans during pregame introductions and then was serenaded by "Let's go, Heyward!" chants in his memorable first at-bat.

Aaron said he was impressed with the discipline Heyward

showed, taking two balls before his first swing against Chicago Cubs ace Carlos Zambrano.

"They were not too far away from being called strikes," Aaron said. "He's a rookie and you've got a veteran out there pitching. Seems to me like being a rookie you'd go up there swinging the bat."

"But he knew exactly what he wanted to do and he got his pitch and he hit it out of the ballpark. That was a demonstration to me that this kid had everything under control."

The left-handed hitting Heyward sent a Zambrano fastball on a line behind the 390-foot mark on the right-field wall. The roar from the crowd shook Turner Field.

"I think I'll remember that the most, how loud it was," Heyward said.

Fans will get to see what Heyward can do for an encore when the Braves and Cubs resume their three-game series on Wednesday.

Atlanta manager Bobby Cox doesn't know what exactly to expect, other than it will be good.

"He'll have his struggles, probably, like any other 20-year-old that's in the big leagues, but he's a very talented kid," Cox said. "And when he's not hitting, he's going to help us in the outfield. He's a very gifted athlete."

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Carl Crawford drove in two runs with a bases-loaded double in the ninth inning to give the Tampa Bay Rays a 4-3 season-opening victory over the Baltimore Orioles on Tuesday night.

Adam Jones, Luke Scott and Matt Wieters homered for the Orioles, who were unable to put the game away because of a lack of timely hitting with runners in scoring position.

Evan Longoria homered in the sixth for the Rays, who loaded the bases in the ninth against Baltimore's new closer, Michael Gonzalez (0-1), with a single, double and an intentional walk. Crawford lined a 1-0 pitch into right field, driving in the winning runs before a sellout crowd of 36,973 at Tropicana Field.

The winning hit initially was scored a single. It was later changed to a double.

Rafael Soriano (1-0) got the win, despite struggling to get through the top of the ninth for Tampa Bay.

Orioles starter Kevin Millwood allowed two runs and nine hits in five-plus innings.

**YANKS 6, RED SOX 4: BOSTON (AP)** — Hideki Okajima walked Nick Johnson to score the tiebreaking run after a costly error by shortstop Marco Scutaro loaded the bases.

Scutaro, part of Boston's offseason emphasis on improving its run prevention, fielded Derek Jeter's routine grounder with two outs in the eighth. But his throw went in

the dirt and off first baseman Kevin Youkilis' glove. Then Okajima (1-1) walked Johnson, scoring Jorge Posada and making the score 5-4.

Alfredo Aceves (1-0) pitched two hitless innings and Mariano Rivera got his first save of the year and 527th of his career, most in AL history.

Rivera's appearance earned the Yankees a unique distinction — the only team in the history of major league baseball, the NFL, NBA and NHL with three players who played together in 16 consecutive seasons. Posada and Jeter complete the trio.

**NATIONAL LEAGUE BREWERS 7, ROCKIES 5: MILWAUKEE (AP)** — Randy Wolf's debut for the Brewers was a success. Casey McGehee and Rickie Weeks homered and Milwaukee beat the Colorado Rockies 7-5 on Tuesday night.

Wolf (1-0) struck out eight in 6 2-3 innings in his first start since signing a \$29.75 million, three-year contract in the offseason to bolster Milwaukee's starting staff.

McGehee and Weeks did their part to help. McGehee hit a three-run homer in the first and Weeks added a solo shot off Rockies starter Greg Smith (0-1) in the fifth.

Trevor Hoffman gave up a run in a rocky ninth for his 592nd career save.

**GIANTS 3, ASTROS 0: HOUSTON (AP)** — Barry Zito pitched three-hit ball over six innings and four relievers finished up the shutout for the Giants.

Zito (1-0) struck out five before he was replaced by Waldis Joaquin. Joaquin, Dan Runtz, Sergio Romo and closer Brian Wilson combined for one hit in the last three innings. Wilson earned his second save.

Giants newcomer Aubrey Huff had two hits and drove in a run in a game that was scoreless until the sixth.

Wandy Rodriguez (0-1) allowed seven hits and three runs in six innings. He struck out four and walked four.

## Pitch, Hit & Run Competition May 1

Yankton Sertoma Youth Baseball will host a free Aquafina Major League Baseball Pitch, Hit & Run Competition for area youth on Saturday, May 1 at 10 a.m. at the Sertoma Park north fields.

Competitors will be divided into four age divisions, 7-8, 9-10,

11-12 and 13-14. Youth will have the chance to advance through four levels of competition, including Team Championships at Major League ball parks and the National Finals at the 2010 MLB All-Star Game.

All participants must bring a copy of their birth certificate

and fill out a registration/waiver form prior to the start of competition.

For questions concerning the event, contact local coordinator Gary Pigney at gary.pigney@gmail.com.

## KRIER

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for the first game, because he does a good job of getting a quality start because you don't want to run deep in the bullpen in the first game," he said. "You want the first game to go crisp, espe-

cially during these important conference games."

It's also the conference games which are motivating Krier.

The Lancers are 7-1 in the GPAC, which is good for first, even though Mount Marty dropped its first game of the conference season to the University of St. Joseph's on Monday.

Krier said the perfect game will motivate him throughout the season, but he said it was the

loss to USF that will be the main source of inspiration for the rest of the year.

"We got off to a great start and then had a bit of a set-back," he said. "That kind of stings, especially losing to USF. That setback will be more of a motivator to go out there and score more runs because we want to go out there and win every conference game."

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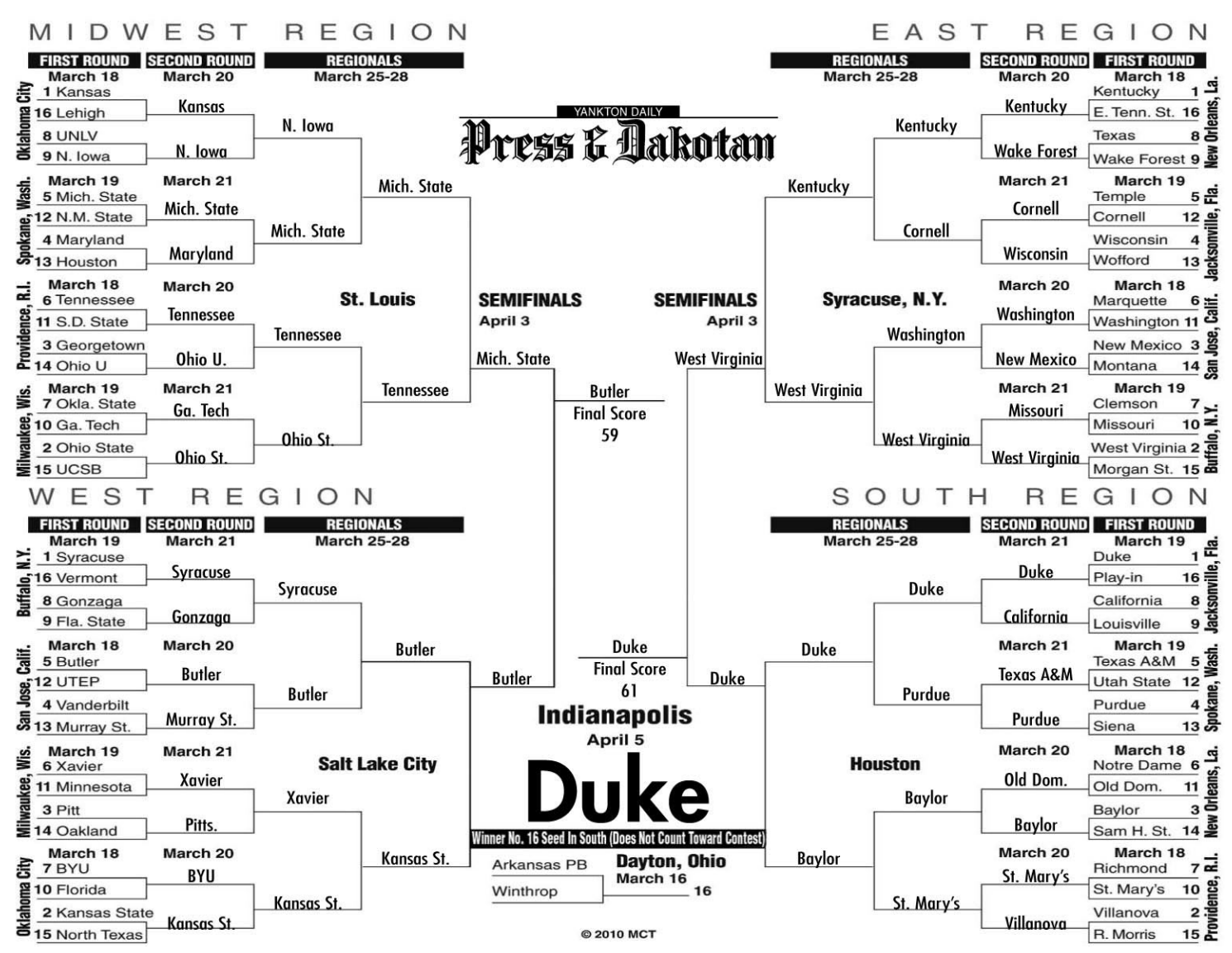
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Picked Duke to win with a final score of 63 - 61

**2nd Place: Roger Daughters, Yankton, SD**  
1st Round Picks: 23 Correct. 2nd Round Picks: 9 Correct. 3rd Round Picks: 5 Correct. Wins \$60  
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