

Free Picks – April 7th Weekend

It was another winning weekend as our straight wagers went 2-1 last week, with George Mason and Florida staying just under the total, as predicted, and the L.A. Clippers going way over the spread in their 15-point win against the Utah Jazz. This week we have an especially large card, as BASEBALL is back. Look forward to banking on the proven success of our analysts this season!

On the hard court, we're looking to the New Orleans / Oklahoma City Hornets to pick up a nice cover when they host Toronto at home tonight. They broke through, beating the Raps on the road the last time these teams played, and now they get to do it on their home court, where they are 22-15 this year. Compare that with the Raptors, who are just 12-25 on the road. On the road against Western squads, the Raps are even worse: 3-11. The crowd will be pumped up as the Hornets look to push for a playoff spot. They know that at this point in the season, games against sub-.500 teams have to be looked at as gifts, and they'll take advantage. **Play New Orleans.**

We're going to take you out to the ball game for the first time this season, and recommend a play on the "over" in the Astros / Nationals game. The story in Houston this season is who is missing – Roger Clemens and Jeff Bagwell being the most notable. The 'Stros know that they're going to need some runs in a hurry to make up for the Rocket's lockdown pitching and Bagwell's bat. When Backe started against this Nationals team in Spring Training, it was like a day at the driving range. We're also cautious of the Nationals' staff – in the first week of the season, they had a whopping FIVE pitching injuries! We are going to look for a high-scoring affair in this one, and **Play the Over.**

For this week's PUCKLINE POUNDING, we're going to take Edmonton against the lowly Chicago Blackhawks. This one's all about emotion – Edmonton currently sits 8th in the packed Western Conference, just two points ahead of the Vancouver Canucks. While they control their own destiny, every game is crucial. The Oilers are on the road, but don't let that faze you: they are actually a BETTER road team than home team, having put up a 20-11-7 record away from their building this season so far. That record improves tonight against the 'Hawks, who are just 14-18-5 at home, and 24-40-11 overall. Chicago has nothing to hope for except a high draft pick, and against a fired-up Edmonton team, that's going to be the difference. **Play Edmonton on the Puckline.**

This week we're looking to bank a nice two-team parlay featuring an NBA team desperate to stay alive, and a young upstart MLB squad with something to prove against an aging and ailing pitcher.

We love the attitude of Jazz coach Jerry Sloan. This is a guy who'd rather get a root canal than lose a ball game unnecessarily. Since Utah still has an outside shot at the playoffs, he's going to have his troops ready to rip Minnesota apart tonight. The T'Wolves, despite the best efforts of star Kevin Garnett, have completely come apart at the seams, losing 12 of 17, including a two point let down against Atlanta. Since the

beginning of the 2004 season, Minnesota is just 24-47 ATS when matched up against a rested foe as the favorites. We were completely impressed as the Jazz fought back from a 24-point hole against the Spurs to cut the lead to five, and we think that toughness will see Utah take this one. **Play Utah**

The Florida Marlins have put up 16 runs in two days and look to be riding an early-season hot hitting streak. Today's starter, Jason Vargas, has allowed three earned runs or less in his last six starts. Last year, he played very well against the Mets, allowing just three earned runs over six innings of work. Mets starter Steve Trachsel has been torn apart by the Marlins in recent memory, giving them 19 runs in his last 19 innings against that team (a total of four starts... less than five innings per start!). In 14 of his last 15 starts, Trachsel has been listed as an underdog. Why on earth is he a sizeable fave today? It doesn't make sense, and we're going with what makes sense here. **Play Florida.**

Parlay the Utah Jazz and the Florida Marlins.

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