

12 Baseball Wishes for the New Year

By Joe Connor

#12 For Theo Epstein to do something bold between now and Opening Day to make the Cubs relevant and exciting to watch in 2012.

#11 For someone to take a flyer on Manny Ramirez and give him an invitation to spring training because, well because, Manny just makes spring training more exciting (and who doesn't like to boo an admitted selfish cheater). "Dan (Duquette), Manny's on line one – *again*."

#10 For there to be a moratorium on announcers describing players as "products," "icons" and "legends." They're athletes, not peas at the supermarket, or Moses.

#9 If the Mariners are in the tank come the All-Star Break, for Seattle to trade Suzuki, aka Ichiro, to the Dodgers (presumably not in the tank and in the NL West chase).

#8 For a wildly-publicized "Burn the Marlins Ugly Uniforms Rally" during the All-Star Break to force the Marlins to burn their ugly uniforms – by the end of the 2012 season.

#7 For Bud Selig, the San Francisco Giants and the City of San Jose to agree on terms for a new ballpark for the A's.

#6 For Stuart Sternberg to announce he's selling the last place Rays – and the new owner to announce he's relocating the franchise out of Tampa Bay for the 2013 season.

#5 For at least one additional upstart country from Europe to earn one of four coveted spots from the fall 2012 qualifying round for entry in the 2013 World Baseball Classic (betting on Germany).

#4 For Japanese flamethrower Yu Darvish to win the Cy Young and turn Texas upside down and even Jerry Jones into a Rangers season ticket holder.

#3 For the Yankees to miss the playoffs because, well, because I hate the Yankees.

#2 For two long-time also-rans to finally make the playoffs – yes, one from each league. The Royals win the American League Central (joining the Red Sox, Rangers and Angels) and the Nationals capture the National League wild card (joining the Phillies, Reds and Dodgers). I know, I've probably had too much to drink.

#1 For the Red Sox to win the 2012 World Series over the Reds at Fenway Park on a walk off home run by Adrian Gonzalez off Aroldis Chapman.

Happy New Year! Pitchers and catchers start reporting Feb. 18, 2012. I can't wait.