



## ***Giants a bunch of Zobrists, but no game breakers***

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Cubs fans need not experience hot flashbacks from 1984 and 2003, realizing the team was one win away from further glory and then all kinds of stuff exploded in their faces.

Going up 2-0, but with Mr. October Madison Bumgarner working Game 3, is no recipe for a three-game Giants comeback that would send the city into a depression the likes has never existed in the twisted history of Chicago baseball.

Look at it this way. The Giants' best chance to win the Division Series came and went in Game 1. That was the game they could have stolen given Johnny Cue-to's superb outing marred only by Javy Baez's barely-basket homer. Yet the San Franciscans simply did not have enough firepower in their lineup to cobble together two or three against Cubs ace Jon Lester, who did provide a couple of openings for a run producer to do his thing.

Sprinkle a Kris Bryant or Anthony Rizzo, maybe along with a Willson Contreras, into the Giants' batting order, and you have some legitimacy. Without a certified top-of-the-league power threat/RBI man and fresh face from the minors, they are a lineup of Ben Zobrists.

Now, that's no insult to the pride of downstate Eurerka, the lifelong Cardinals fan-turned-Cubs handyman. Zobrist is a great addition to any team, and he'll play a central Cubs role due to his long relationship with Joe Maddon. But zero on in that word: "addition." Zobrist is a fine complementary player, batting higher in the Cubs lineup that he would elsewhere thanks to Maddon. You would not want to stock your entire order with a host of 15-homer, 65-RBI types, unless you have some 95-to 100-RBI men to knit the thing together.



**If you put six Ben Zobrist (left) archetypes in the Giants lineup, savvy manager Bruce Bochy would have trouble generating runs consistently. That's exactly what has happened this season.**

In almost every game against the Cubs this season, the Giants have shown little ability to score. Two runs in the postseason followed just 17 runs in seven regular-season games (3-4 record). The Giants and Cubs played four consecutive one-run games against each other in a Sept. 1-4 series at Wrigley Field, with the Cubs winning three. Throughout, the visitors showed absolutely no ability to extend rallies or drive in clutch runs.

The Giants had shown that storing wins like acorns in the first half is never a bad idea. A 57-33 record and 6 ½-game NL West lead at the All-Star break was followed by a 2-11 second-half start. Bruce Bochy had enough starting pitching and managerial savvy to stop the slide from worsening, but could not re-ignite the boiler while finishing with 87 victories as the beneficiary of the dual wild-card setup. A sputtering lineup in a pitching-oriented ballpark is the Giants' legacy, and no mere appearance in the postseason gives a great indication they'll follow in their World Series-winning pattern of every even-numbered year since 2010.

To be sure, the Giants could extend the series thanks to Bumgarner. He has the Koufax-ian ability to rise above his own lofty standards and pitch nine gutty innings like a throwback from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. A very partisan crowd at A T & T Ballpark won't allow the Cubs to feel at home like many road stops in the regular season.

### **Cubs 0-for-West Coast in postseason**

A Cubs win in one of the two games by the Bay will break a streak that surprisingly has gotten little media play amid all the analysis of the NL's best franchise. The Cubs are 0-for-the West Coast in the postseason. They lost three games in San Diego in 1984, three more in San Francisco (Candlestick Park) in 1989 and one in Los Angeles in 2008. Factor in another two NLDS defeats in Phoenix in 2007, and the Cubs have been sleep-walking through the Pacific Time Zone or Mountain Standard Time (two hours behind Chicago during the season).

The West Coast truly used to be a trail of tears for the Cubs and other Midwestern or Eastern times, for that matter. The time change really played havoc on hitters with their body clocks out of synch in big, pitching-friendly ballparks.

The journey was particularly tough on the Cubs. After playing an entire homestand with 1:30 p.m. Central starts, and diligent players like Billy Williams going to bed at 10 p.m., now their body clocks had to be radically re-set to play night games at that bedtime. Being at your physical and mental prime to face a Sandy Koufax or Juan Marichal at 10 p.m. on a Monday, as your body clock interpreted it, after that four-hour flight west was not conducive to success. Physicians now call it "shift work disorder."

But this is a new century, surely a new and more prosperous Cubs era. If somehow the Giants cobble together lockdown pitching and uncommon clutch hitting to capture two games in San Francisco, they still won't have the mojo or the muscle to take Game 5 in Chicago. Against such odds, if Bochy prevails back in Chicago, he should not have to wait 'til retirement and immediately be inducted into the Hall of Fame.