

# WORLD SERIES 2006

*These 2006 Major League Baseball playoffs have brought some memorable moments. The heavily favored Yankees were eliminated in the first round by the Detroit. In the National League, the Cardinals were able to overcome the road crowd as they knocked off the San Diego Padres and New York Mets. Finally, the Detroit Tigers and St. Louis Cardinals now face off in the World Series. Although Games 1 and 2 of the Series were played after press time, the Settler sports staff took time to offer their perspectives on both squads.*

## Tigers looking to seize title with solid pitching

By **BRIAN ESTES**  
Sports Opinion

Although a worthy opponent stands in their way, one can count on the Detroit Tigers taking home the 2006 World Series title.

So, what is there to indicate that the Tigers will be celebrating before the week's end?

Well, simply put, the Tigers have better pitching than their opponent, the St. Louis Cardinals, and they are also the better offensive team.

The numbers are clearly on Detroit's side.

First, consider that the Tigers were the best statistical team in the regular season when it came to pitching.

Their .384 ERA led the major leagues, while the Cardinals came in 16th with a less than stellar 4.54 team ERA.

The Tiger pitching staff also had



AP Photo / Duane Burselson

**Kenny Rogers raises the intensity during a playoff win over Oakland. Photo provided by ESPN.com**

fewer walks and more strikeouts than their counterparts in St. Louis.

Don't think that success has been limited to the regular season.

Starting pitcher Kenny Rogers has revitalized his career and became the charismatic face of Detroit pitching.

Heading into Game 2 Sunday night,

Rogers had pitched 15 innings this postseason without allowing an earned run, while posting a 2-0 record and 14 strikeouts in two starts.

Opposing batters were hitting just .140 against him in postseason play.

He's not alone.

Jeremy Bonderman has a 1-0 record with an ERA of 3.00.

And in the bullpen, Todd Jones has done a commendable job as closer.

Jones recorded three saves with just one walk while not allowing a run in five appearances.

The Tigers have also proven that they're not too bad with the bat, either.

Placido Polanco had a .529 average against the Oakland Athletics with a double, two RBI and 10 total bases.

Polanco also proved his worth in the field.

Twice, the Athletics mounted scoring threats in Game 1 of the ALCS, and twice Polanco turned inning-ending double plays.

The Tigers swept Oakland and Polanco was crowned MVP of the American League Championship Series.

Outfielder Magglio Ordonez has also fared well at the plate.

Ordenez smacked a walk-off homer to clinch the series against Oakland and had six RBI in the League Championship Series.

Detroit had a long break between the end of the ALCS and the start of the World Series, but history has shown that teams can win in such a situation.

The 1984 Tigers and 1995 Atlanta Braves are examples of teams that swept their League Championship Series and went on to win it all.

On top of all that, it doesn't hurt that the Tigers have home-field advantage during the Series.

That means Games 6 and 7 would be played on the Tigers turf if necessary.

No, it didn't do the Mets much good, but it's a lot easier not having to play your foe on the road in an elimination game.

The Tigers formula of superior pitching and timely hitting has proven to be a very successful combination in October.

There's no reason why it shouldn't work against the Cardinals.

## Cards hoping small ball leads to sizeable results

By **ROB SPIRES**  
Sports Opinion

The St. Louis Cardinals are going to win the World Series. There is no doubt in my mind.

Sure, the Detroit Tigers may be the sentimental favorites.

That's only because it has been so long since they have actually been a championship contending team.

In fact, the last time the Tigers even made the postseason, National League Championship Series star Yadier Molina was only five years old!

Well friends, let's put the sentiment aside and look at the facts for a minute.

First off, St. Louis eliminated the New York Mets, statistically the best team in baseball, to reach the World Series.

This is no small feat for any team, but the Cardinals proved that they are worthy of the pennant by doing so in dramatic fashion.

With one runner on in the top of the 9th, Molina broke a 1-1 tie by crushing the first pitch he saw from Aaron Heilman over the left field wall.

Sure, Molina isn't a great hitter.

In fact, until that moment, he only had six career home runs, but he did what he needed to do to carry his team, and for that he is great.

That is what matters in the playoffs - getting the job done - and the Cardinals have proven that they can do just that.

Now, don't get me wrong, the Tigers are good. The American League is good, but the frankly Tigers aren't prepared for the challenges that the Cardinals will pose.

Sure, the Cards suffered through a mid-September slide that almost completely dropped them out of playoff contention.

But ever since that time, they have been playing masterful baseball. I

n fact, of late the Cardinals greatest asset has been their pitching.

Home runs are exciting, but they don't do any good if you're giving up as many as you hit.

The National League is the league of small ball (using a series of base hits as opposed to one giant blast to score runs) and that is the style that the

Tigers will have to play if they want to find success against Cardinal pitching.

In eliminating Oakland in the quick fashion they did, Detroit has had to endure a week-long break between



AP Photo / Julie Jacobson

**An ecstatic Yadier Molina rounds the bases after a 9th inning home run. Photo provided by ESPN.com**

games.

Sure, a vacation sounds nice, but the break was too long.

Players have gotten out of their routines, and play is likely to be sloppy once they step back onto the field.

St. Louis, on the other hand, finished off New York on Thursday night, had a day of rest on Friday, and was back on the field Saturday night.

This is following the exact routine of the last six months for the players.

Playing these games is old hat.

Sure, it would be fun to see the Tigers bring the trophy back to Detroit.

Everyone likes the 'underdog turned champion' story, but realistically it just won't happen.

The National League is overdue success against the American League, and the Cardinals want to avenge their World Series defeat two years ago.

Fortunately for NL fans, the St. Louis Cardinals are the team that will bring glory back to baseball's senior circuit.