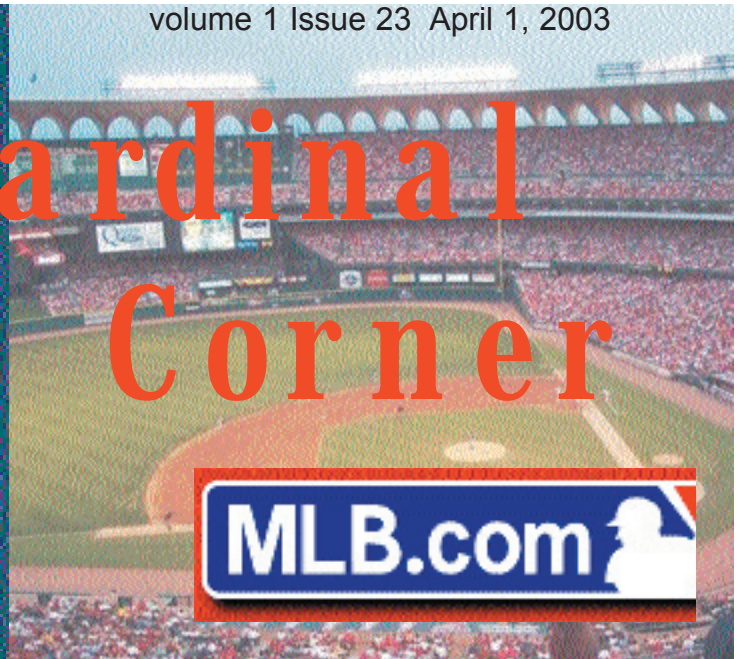




# Cardinal Corner



04/07/2003 10:27 AM ET

## Pujols carrying lumber and leather

By Matthew Leach / MLB.com

**A**lbert Pujols is off to a hot start at the plate, hitting .333 with two homers and six RBIs. (Cardinals/Scott Rovak) ST. LOUIS — In the seventh inning of the Cardinals' victory over the Brewers on Wednesday, Milwaukee's John Vander Wal ripped a line drive to deep left-center. Albert Pujols made a quick read, got a good jump and hauled in the ball.

It wasn't a spectacular play. In fact, it was almost routine. And that's the biggest difference between Pujols the slugger in 2002 and Pujols the evolving ballplayer in 2003. Already a remarkably advanced hitter, the third-year player has turned into a smoother, smarter, more effective outfielder.

His teammates have noticed.

"You can see how much he cares now," said Woody Williams, off of whom Vander Wal hit the liner. "He knows where he's gonna be. He can go out there and work on it. He's come a long ways.

"He made that last catch on Vander Wal's ball. Last year, year before, that's over his head for a double. But he's made a lot of adjustments. I tip my hat to him." It's not that he was awful before. But he looked like a player who hadn't played a lot of outfield.

"He was at least average his rookie year," manager Tony La Russa said.

"Last year, I thought he was a little

better than average and now he's considerably above average. Plus, he's got a strong arm. I think he wants to contribute in every phase of the game.

"I just think he's a hell of a player." It sometimes seems as if hitting comes easy to Pujols.

He had a historic rookie season, and followed it up with a sophomore campaign that landed him second in MVP balloting. All of it after just 133 games in the minors. If ever a hitter seemed like a natural, it was Pujols. But nothing comes easy to him, despite his sculpted physique and explosive swing. He works tirelessly as a hitter, and more than most people realize on his defense.

"I've been learning more," Pujols said. "Because the guys on the team have been helping me out. I worked hard in Spring Training this year on defense. I asked a lot of questions. I got better at reading the ball."

He has the tools. He's not a speed demon, but he is mobile for a man listed at 6-foot-3 and 225 pounds. He has a strong arm. His instincts are solid, and he proved himself as an adequate third baseman before he was moved. But the Cardinals' acquisition of Scott Rolen — and subsequent agreement with Rolen on an eight-year contract — ended Pujols' career at the hot corner. And so he is putting in the effort to become a

quality outfielder.

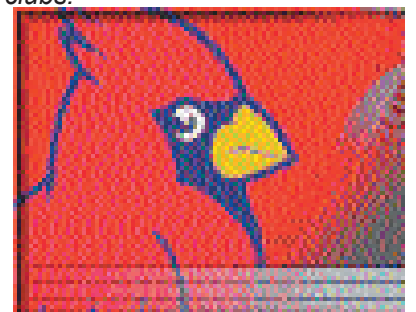
"I'm getting better every day at reading the ball," he said. "Just trying to get a good jump."

The most noticeable difference in Pujols' defensive game is on deep balls. He had a difficult time going to the warning track at times in 2002, but he's much smoother and more reliable on those plays this year.

"That's something that we worked on," Pujols said. "We worked on a lot of drills in Spring Training. That's something we try to do in the outfield. I'm having good success. Hopefully I'll just get better and better every day. Defense is a big part of this game. I try to get better and better."

There's not much better he can get as a hitter — the key will be to maintain the level he has reached. But as a fielder, he's making progress, and he will probably continue to do so.

*Matthew Leach is a reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to approval by Major League Baseball or its clubs.*



## History of Busch Stadium 1966-2000

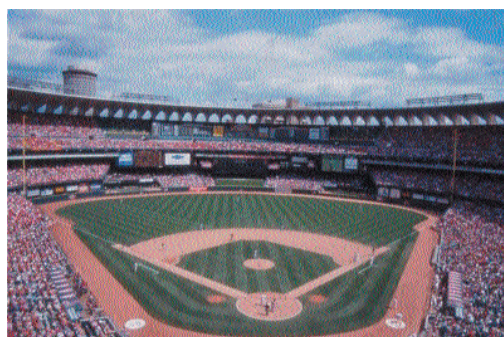
In the mid-1950s, several years after he persuaded the board of directors of Anheuser-Busch to purchase the St. Louis Cardinals, August A. Busch Jr. decided that if the team was to prosper and attract the fans necessary to support a major league franchise, it would have to move to a new stadium.



Mr. Busch took his idea for a new stadium in downtown St. Louis to city officials and civic leaders. Their interest in a major redevelopment of the downtown area and the idea that a new stadium could serve as the focal point for their efforts, paved the way for the laying of groundwork for the project.

In 1964, ground was broken, and on May 12, 1966, Busch Stadium officially opened as the new home of the St. Louis Cardinals. In a 12-inning inaugural, the Cardinals defeated the Atlanta Braves, 4-3.

Looking back over the stadium's 34-year past, it is clear that Mr. Busch and others involved in the project accurately anticipated that the new stadium would spur a rebirth of downtown St. Louis.



Busch Stadium

With Busch Stadium as the focal point, the redevelopment of the downtown area has been marked by the addition of new office buildings, hotels, shopping complexes, parking garages and other facilities, including the International Bowling Hall of Fame and Museum and the Cardinals Hall of Fame.

Recent improvements include the installation in 1997 of a hand-operated scoreboard flanked by flag decks commemorating the club's World Series championships and retired numbers; the return in 1996 to a natural-grass playing surface, which replaced the artificial turf that had been in place since 1970; the opening in 1996 of the Family Pavilion, featuring a variety of games and attractions for families and children, and Homer's Landing, a picnic area located above the bullpen in left-center field; and the return of a more traditional "ballpark green" color scheme for the outfield fence and stadium trim.

Other improvements include the installation in 1993 of a state-of-the-art sound system and a new large-screen video display, a Diamond Vision MARK III High Contrast system by Mitsubishi Electronics. Prior to the 1995 season, a Plaza of Champions monument display honoring the Cardinals World Championship teams was erected near the Stan Musial statue. The Stadium Club was totally renovated and included the addition of a sports-themed bar.

Busch Stadium's basic structure is concrete. The stadium is basically a two-deck facility with

about half its seats in each deck. The seats completely surround the field without posts or columns to obstruct fans' views. The nearly circular structure has an outside diameter of more than 800 feet, covers more than 12 acres and is 130-feet tall, measured from the playing field to the top of the stadium.

The playing field at Busch Stadium is 10 to 30 feet lower than street level. Spectators move from the entrance level either up or down to seating areas. There are eight major entrances.

Busch Stadium capacity is 49,814.

### CARDINALS BALLPARKS

- Grand Avenue Grounds
- Union Park
- League Park
- Robison Field
- Sportsman's Park
- \*Busch Stadium (Grand Ave.)
- Busch Stadium (Stadium Plaza)



- 1876-77
- 1885-86, 1892-97
- 1898
- 1899-1920
- 1920-1952
- 1953-1966
- 1966-present



This is a rendering of the new proposed ballpark to replace Busch Stadium.



## Cards can't escape early hole

### Tomko toughs out six innings

By Matthew Leach / MLB.com  
DENVER —

Recently, Brett Tomko was discussing his 2002 season, his only year with the Padres. He explained that his final numbers for the year were skewed by a couple of bad starts, and that at least once he took one for the team when he had the option to come out early.

Little did Tomko know how soon he would experience the same thing as a Cardinal.

The right-hander was hammered for nine runs in the first three innings on Wednesday night, but stuck it out to give a gassed St. Louis bullpen a little relief. He lasted six innings and retired the last 11 batters he faced, but the end result was still a 9-4 Colorado win. The loss snapped St. Louis' modest four-game Coors Field winning streak.

Still, after seven Cardinals relievers pitched 10 innings in a 13-inning win on Tuesday, merely lasting six was a valuable contribution.

"It was tough out there," Tomko said. "I think they had a pretty good game plan on how to go after me. Their hitting coach (Duane Espy) is my former hitting coach in San Diego, and I think he put together a pretty good game plan. They were taking everything the other way the first couple innings until I established I was coming in."

For the second consecutive game, Tomko got in trouble very

early, and by the time he got things sorted out, he was in a deep hole. Unlike his first start, when St. Louis fell 6-5 to Houston in extra innings, the Redbirds offense couldn't muster enough runs to get him off the hook.

"Tomko is geared to make a lot of pitches," said manager Tony La Russa. "Once he started cranking, you saw what he was capable of doing. (It had) something to do with not burning the whole pitching staff out, but I wasn't gonna let him give up much more than what he gave."

Tomko's troubles came primarily from the heart of the Colorado order. No. 3 hitter Todd Helton started the scoring with an RBI double in the first, and cleanup man Larry Walker followed with a double that drove in Helton. Fifth-place man Preston Wilson capped the first-inning eruption with a 445-foot homer to right field that made it 4-0.

Walker has always tattooed Tomko — he is 8-for-16 lifetime against the seven-year veteran, with every hit going for extra bases.

The Rockies went 1-2-3 in the second, but in the third Tomko had to deal with the same three

sluggers again, and the results were similar. Jay Payton led off with a single and Helton walked before Walker tripled for a six-run Colorado lead. Wilson roped an RBI double to left to make it 7-0. Two batters later, Bobby Estalella capped the scoring against Tomko with a mammoth homer of his own, a 438-foot jack to left center.

The game was all Cardinals after



that, but the 9-0 deficit was far too much to overcome.

"We started pounding some guys in," Tomko said. "I think in this park, they're real confident hitters. It's a big park, and I know (Espy) teaches stay inside the ball and take the ball the other way, and that's what they did."

Scott Rolen hit a solo homer in the fourth to put the Cardinals on the board, and Tomko managed to retire Helton, Walker and Wilson on his third try against each.

continued on page 4  
See Tomoko

When winning pitcher Nelson Cruz was tossed for hitting Tino Martinez with a pitch in the seventh, St. Louis took advantage. Orlando Palmeiro singled, and Fernando Vina drew a tough two-out walk from lefty Brian Fuentes. Hot-hitting Edgar Renteria doubled into the gap in left-center to cut the Rockies lead to 9-4.

When Martinez was hit, it marked the fourth time in two games that a Colorado pitcher had hit a St. Louis batter with a pitch. Home plate umpire Mike DiMuro had warned both sides in the third inning when Tomko threw behind Helton, mandating Cruz's ejection once he plunked Martinez.

Still, the Colorado hurler was perplexed.

"Why would you want to hit one of the nicest guys in baseball?" he asked.

That wasn't the end of the disputes, either. La Russa took exception to Preston Wilson's steal of third base in the eighth inning, with Colorado ahead by five runs.

Wilson's steal went for naught, as Kiko Calero struck out Chris Stynes to end the eighth. Calero and Jeff Fassero combined for two shutout innings in relief.

*Matthew Leach is a reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to approval by Major League Baseball or its clubs.*



Full name: Brett Daniel Tomko  
Born: 04/07/73  
Birthplace: Euclid, OH  
Height: 6'4"  
Weight: 215  
Position: P  
Bats: Right  
Throws: Right  
College: Florida Southern  
MLB Debut: 05/27/97

## Cards notes: Renteria rolling Williams was at the ready on Tuesday

By Matthew Leach / MLB.com

Edgar Renteria is hitting .333 through the Cardinals' first six games. (Cardinals/Scott Rovak)  
DENVER — Edgar Renteria can do very little wrong at the plate right now. The Cardinals shortstop and usual No. 2 hitter is batting .333 through six games, with a .533 slugging percentage. That means he's hitting for average and hitting for power.

Neither of those is all that unusual for Renteria, who hit .305 with 49 extra-base hits in 2002. It is a bit unusual the way he's going about it. One of two Cardinals (along with Scott Rolen) to claim both a Gold Glove and a Silver Slugger in 2002, Renteria has

never been a particular patient hitter. But he's working deeper counts this year, and it's paying off.

"If I see they're not throwing strikes, I'm gonna take it," Renteria said. "Like I did in (Tuesday's) game. And if (Fernando) Vina's on first base, I take a couple pitches so Vina can steal a base and then I can move him to third base."

Renteria is seeing nearly 3.9 pitches per plate appearance over his first six games, a significant step up from his career pattern, which is more along the line of 3.6 per plate appearance. But he said it's not necessarily a planned thing.

"It's just happening," he said.

With the Cardinals' current three-game series in Colorado, Renteria goes head-to-head with the NL's other top offensive shortstop, Jose Hernandez. The two are completely opposite hitters, though. Hernandez is an all-or-nothing type, with plenty of power, but plenty of strikeouts. Renteria is more of a line-drive type hitter with doubles power and low strikeout totals.

But they share a fondness for Coors Field.

"This is a good field to hit," Renteria said. "You feel like you're the best hitter in the world."

**Different perspectives:**

Manager Tony La Russa took exception with Preston Wilson's steal of third base in the eighth inning of Wednesday night's contest, as the Rockies led 9-4.

"The only thing that (made me mad) was that steal in the (eighth) inning," La Russa said. "Because there's a coach on that ballclub that, when one of our players stole with a five-run lead in the sixth inning, made it a point to say that that's a good way to get hurt or something."

"I'm wondering if he told his player that. That's the only thing that I take away from that game. ... Everything else I think we've got it figured."

Wilson was perplexed by the reaction.

"They were saying a bunch of stuff from the dugout," he said, "like 'don't get yourself hurt.' Just silly stuff. The point of it is that if they were already conceding the game, why change pitchers when I come in the game? And then when I got to third, and they walk (Bobby) Estalella, then why hold him on?"

"If you are already conceding the game and saying there is no way you are going to score five runs, then why do that?"

If you are going to do all that talking, then manage that way. You can't tell me that four- or five-run leads are safe in hitters' ballparks, because it's not."

Third baseman Scott Rolen acknowledged that he exchanged words with Wilson after the steal, but declined to reveal the nature of his remarks.



**Woody at the ready:** The Cards used every position player they had in Tuesday night's 13-inning win, meaning that they could

have been in serious trouble if anyone had gotten hurt. La Russa said that in such a situation, he would have turned to Woody Williams, who played shortstop in college and is one of the game's best hitting pitchers.

"I asked him," La Russa said, "What is your favorite position?"

Williams said he didn't have quite so much choice in the matter, but that he was preparing to go in if called.

**Woody ready?** It's not certain, however, whether Williams will be able to make his scheduled start on Saturday. Williams is still bothered by neck spasms, though he said the condition is

getting better.

Williams and La Russa both expect the right-hander to pitch against the Astros.

"I'm not thinking any other way," Williams said. "I didn't want to miss (Tuesday, his original day to start). But I don't think I could have pitched (Tuesday)."

**Makeup game set:** The Cardinals announced Wednesday that the makeup for their rained-out game last Sunday has been set. The game between St. Louis and Houston will take place at 7:10 p.m. CT on Thursday, May 29.

**Baby birds:** Triple-A Memphis dropped a 3-2 game to Iowa in 10 innings, despite Nerio Rodriguez's strong start. Rodriguez allowed two runs on six hits in 6 1/3 innings, striking out 10. ... Double-A Tennessee's game against Jacksonville on Tuesday was rained out. ... Class A Palm Beach fell to Daytona by a 4-2 count, with Chris Narveson taking the loss. ... Class A Peoria continued its undefeated start with an 8-0 win over Cedar Rapids.

The minor league player of the day from Tuesday was Peoria third baseman Travis Hanson, who went 3-for-5 with a double and a home run. Hanson is hitting .400 with four doubles and two homers on the year.

*Matthew Leach is a reporter for MLB.com. This story was not*

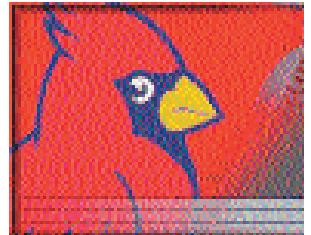
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