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On the cover:
 Led by blossoming star B.J. Upton, the Rays seem ready to erase a decade of misery and take steps toward contention.

Follow the Rays online

Keep track of the Rays on Times staff writer Marc Topkin's blog: blogs.tampabay.com/rays/

Times staff predictions for 2008

	Marc Topkin, lead Rays writer 	Joe Smith, baseball writer 	John Romano, sports columnist 	Gary Shelton, sports columnist 	Alan Rittner, sports copy editor 
AL East	Red Sox	Red Sox	Yankees	Red Sox	Yankees
AL Central	Tigers	Tigers	Tigers	Tigers	Indians
AL West	Mariners	Mariners	Angels	Angels	Angels
AL Wild Card	Indians	Angels	Red Sox	Indians	Red Sox
AL Division Series	Tigers over Red Sox, Indians over Mariners	Tigers over Mariners, Red Sox over Angels	Tigers over Angels, Red Sox over Yankees	Red Sox over Indians, Tigers over Angels	Yankees over Angels, Red Sox over Indians
AL Championship Series	Tigers over Indians	Tigers over Red Sox	Red Sox over Tigers	Tigers over Red Sox	Yankees over Red Sox
NL East	Mets	Phillies	Mets	Mets	Braves
NL Central	Cubs	Cubs	Cubs	Cubs	Cubs
NL West	D'backs	D'backs	D'backs	D'backs	Dodgers
NL Wild Card	Braves	Mets	Braves	Dodgers	D'backs
NL Division Series	Mets over Cubs, Braves over D'backs	Mets over D'backs, Phillies over Cubs	Cubs over Braves, Mets over D'backs	Mets over Dodgers, Cubs over D'backs	D'backs over Braves, Dodgers over Cubs
NL Championship Series	Mets over Braves	Mets over Phillies	Cubs over Mets	Cubs over Mets	D'backs over Dodgers
World Series	Mets over Tigers 	Tigers over Mets 	Red Sox over Cubs 	Cubs over Tigers 	Yankees over D'backs 
Number of Rays wins	76	82	77	79	83
Rays All-Star(s)	Carl Crawford, B.J. Upton	Carl Crawford, B.J. Upton	B.J. Upton	B.J. Upton, Carlos Pena	Scott Kazmir, B.J. Upton
Date of Longoria debut 	June 9	May 1	May 9	April 11	May 1
Most Rays homers	B.J. Upton, 38	Carlos Pena, 36	Carlos Pena, 34	Carlos Pena, 34	Carlos Pena, 39
Most Rays victories	James Shields, 14	James Shields, 17	James Shields, 14	James Shields, 16	Scott Kazmir, 17
First manager fired	Charlie Manuel, Phillies	Ozzie Guillen, White Sox	Ozzie Guillen, White Sox	Ozzie Guillen, White Sox	Cecil Cooper, Astros
Bonds plays for	Mets	Tigers	Rahway	Padres	Tigers
Clemens pitches for	Show (nobody signs him)	Nobody	Rikers	University of Texas batting practice. (Nobody)	No one
Most losses	Orioles, 108	Orioles, 102	Orioles, 98	Royals, 102	Giants, 103
Most wins	Tigers, 104	Tigers, 103	Tigers 101	Red Sox, 111	Yankees, 97
Elijah Dukes suspensions 	1, and done.	1	1	None	None
AL MVP	Magglio Ordonez, Tigers	Magglio Ordonez, Tigers	Curtis Granderson, Tigers	Grady Sizemore, Indians	Grady Sizemore, Indians
AL Cy Young	Erik Bedard, Mariners	Justin Verlander, Tigers	Justin Verlander, Tigers	Justin Verlander, Tigers	Felix Hernandez, M's
NLMVP	David Wright, Mets	David Wright, Mets	David Wright, Mets	David Wright, Mets	Mark Teixeira, Braves
NL Cy Young	Johan Santana, Mets	Johan Santana, Mets	Johan Santana, Mets	Jake Peavy, Padres	Chad Billingsley, Dodgers