

Better 'Eight' Than Never

Hello and welcome to the first edition of the MLB8 Newsletter. The title is an amalgamation of some of the excellent suggested titles I have had from other GM's. We've had to wait a while for this new league but it's here now which is excellent. Many thanks should be given to Commissioner McConnell for getting this league up and running. I'm sure we are looking forward to pitting our wits against each other!

Every team now has their roster set though I'm sure we all made four or five separate selections before we finally settled on the rosters we have. The initial impression I get is that this league will at least initially be a league that will be quite low-scoring (12 large stadia, 5 medium and 7 small). Pitching looks strong which should mean lots of low-scoring close games which will emphasise the importance of good fielding. Also, six teams have opted for astroturf and will be looking to use their speed to take advantage of this.

It's very difficult to read much into the results from the initial week (other than that most games were low-scoring) but I'm sure we've all been looking at which teams are likely to be amongst the front-runners. I wasn't brave enough to do any season predictions but thank you to Paul Beaumont for doing this for me. His predictions are below and it will be interesting to see how accurate these are as the season progresses.

Order - (first, second, third, fourth)

AL East - Blue Jays, Red Sox, Yankees, Devil Rays

AL Central - White Sox, Twins, Indians, Royals

AL West - Rangers, Angels (Wild Card), Athletics, Mariners

NL East - Expos, Braves, Marlins, Phillies

NL Central - Pirates, Cubs, Reds, Brewers

NL West - Dodgers, Giants (Wild Card), D'backs, Rockies

Dodgers beat Rangers in the World Series.

I'm not sure whether Paul was just being nice in saying my Rangers would make the World Series but it is a good way of ensuring that any future articles he does will be in the newsletter! For what it's worth, I think the Jays and the BoSox look good in the East, Cleveland and Minnesota in the Central, Paul's Angels and the A's in the West (though the A's look very young). In the NL, out East the Expos and Braves look strong, in the Central the Pirates and Brewers and in the West, the Dodgers and Giants look good. I certainly wouldn't disagree with Paul's prediction that the Dodgers could go all the way this year. They look to have good pitching and a number of power bats who could rack up the runs at Dodger Stadium. Any comments on these predictions would be welcomed for the next newsletter.

Thanks also to Alan Molloy of the San Francisco Giants. The editor believes they will have their work cut out to beat the Dodgers in their division but Alan is currently focused on preparing his own team for the season and gave us these views on the initial preseason week and on his roster.

"I'm delighted to have gone 6-3, winning all my series 2-1, with 2 of those on the road but there were a few disappointments and while nobody should be judged on one weeks games there are a few that need to step up big time if they are to remain in the Giants uniform. The biggest disappointment had to be Barry Bonds. From what I hear most 'star' players under performed but our 10 hitter batted .157 from the 3rd spot and was our worst performer by .061 points. I'll probably move him in the line up but he has to improve quickly or make way! Ray Durham, Rich Aurilla and Benito Santiago were our best performers with a bat with the 1st 2 batting over .350. I went with a 4 man rotation this week and on the whole they performed well unfortunately the bull pen was abysmal with only Ponson recording positive form.*

Overall there are a few weaknesses I've identified. As a team we need to improve our hitting and our speed but on the other side of the ball it's more complicated. Outside of our top 4/5 they are all weak! We do have plenty LPs available so we can buy but we've also got a lot of 5 and 6* players on 2 LP wages so I'll be getting rid of most of them sooner rather than later. Whatever happens it promises to be a brilliant league and with all the top coaches from other leagues playing I'll be happy to keep in touch for a couple of weeks while I continue building."*

Interesting comments from Alan who, considering his comments on Barry Bonds, promises to be a manager who will demand the best from his players.

In terms of my own roster, I think our pitching should be good but I'm not sure about my batting lineup and could be a bit ropery in the field. Though the lineup should develop, I think we will be heavily reliant on LF Mark Teixeira producing a good year.

Anyway, interesting times ahead for all as I'm sure we can all see weaknesses on our rosters (and some strengths as well). This is going to be an excellent league and I hope to make this newsletter a part of that if I can. This will of course be with your help so any contributions will be welcomed (either articles for the newsletter or comments as to how I can improve the newsletter). It's not very 'flash' at this point but I will try and tart it up in the future when I have more time.

Merry Christmas to you all!

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