

'Better Eight Than Never' - The Newsletter of MLB8

Week 2 – Around the league

The dust is starting to settle after the 'week that never was' and, though teams are still wondering if that week ruined / saved their season, one thing is clear in MLB8. This is definitely a pitching league!

The league ERA after week 2 was 3.38. We have 7 teams with ERAs below 3 (with all but 1 having a winning record) and only 4 teams with ERAs above 4 (all of whom have losing records). Only 2 teams are currently on course to get over 200 homers and the same applies to the 200 stolen bases barrier. Adam Bernero was unable to repeat his complete game of Week 1 but allowed only 3 runs in 14 innings. The top pitching performance this week was a 1-hit shutout thrown by the Royals' Brian Anderson.



Adam Bernero



Brian Anderson

Martin Willan's Milwaukee Brewers are the ultimates in batting futility so far. They average a meagre 2.1 runs per game but the 3 worst stats are that, as a team, they have managed just 3 home runs, 3 stolen bases and have a higher on-base percentage than slugging percentage. (Sorry Martin! - ed).

Despite all of this, some batsmen are thriving in the early stages of the season. Angels SS Adam Kennedy is staking an early claim for MVP honours as he leads the AL in homers and RBIs. Second in RBIs is the White Sox Roberto Alomar whilst the leader in batting average is (amazingly – ed) Rafael Palmeiro of the Rangers.



In the NL, Adam LaRoche leads in batting average and in runs scored as he is being constantly driven in by twin power threats, the 'Jones boys' Chipper and Andruw. Amongst the leaders in RBIs are two NL West boys, Barry Bonds of the Giants and Adrian Beltre of the Dodgers.



There'll be tampering in Tampa!

Mass Exodus Expected!

There are only 18 games gone this season and everything that could have gone wrong has gone wrong for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays! They are currently sitting bottom of the AL East with just 5 wins and are easily one of the worst teams in baseball right now. It's easy to see why too. They are ranked bottom in pitching and second bottom in batting within the AL. What hardly helps matters is that one of their best two starting pitchers Brandon Backe is out for a further 65 games through injury too. Could anything further be going wrong for this ballclub?

Unfortunately, we've been informed by an insider at the club that all is not rosy within the club. Backe (the injured star pitcher) has said to have had an almighty argument with GM Dilworth. The slanging match was concluded with the GM promising to release Backe as soon as he became fit again. The reason behind the bust up was that Backe wanted to know of the club's ambitions in the near future as he is nearing the end of his baseball career and thus wanted to retire on a high. The GM informed him that he was very much planning for the future especially after their disastrous start and didn't expect to be challenging for the next couple of years or so. Backe was furious with this as he has alleged that he was signed under false pretences as he was assured that the Devil Rays were looking to challenge right now so he angrily demanded to be traded as soon as could be arranged.

The departure of Backe will surely anger already dismayed fans and a few of the other experienced stars will surely want out too as it's obvious that they have nothing left to play for this season. Especially, if their already weak pitching unit will be further weakened with the releasing of Backe. If GM Dilworth doesn't get to grips with proceedings soon then the Devil Rays could very well see all of their top stars walking out on the club in protest. This will hardly help the club in attracting top talent in the future!

The last word goes to GM Dilworth though who said this, "I am in this for the long haul, there will undoubtedly be bad times in the near future but in the end we will get things right as we plan to challenge for the World Series before I leave this ballclub!" So a defiant note to end.

The view so far from Fenway by Paul Denyer

"Overall pleased with the 10-8 start, lucky with the 'week that never was' even though if I remember rightly we lost a couple of games more the second time, we didn't have a lengthy injury like we did with the first run of the week.

I am very pleased with the pitching, a team ERA under 4.00, four of my starters are under 1.84 ERA, only Arrojito is letting the starting rotation down with a ERA of 9.00. With the bat a little disappointing, but then looking at the rest of the league it seems pitching is top dog at the moment, not one team is batting over .300 and only one with over 100 RBI for the season and Atlanta is miles ahead of anyone in that category!

One aspect of the Red Sox I am not enjoying is the fielding of Nomar, of the nine errors committed he has four of them, suppose it goes with the territory of being a 1B. I have always tried to have my teams prepared in the field and at the moment we need a little work on it.'

'View from the Bay' by Alan Molloy

"It's only week 2 but already there has been plenty happening to make me think that this will not be our season. Unfortunately the worst culprit in all this has been me. I forgot that I had to set up my details on the website so that I could post my instructions which as it was only a pre-season turn isn't a catastrophe in itself but we would have been the highest bidder on one of the best free agents available so it meant that we weren't able to strengthen the team as we would have wanted.

Things didn't improve any for week 1 when our strongest team went 2-7 although with the turns having to be rerun we 'improved' to a 3-6. Week 2 saw us maintain a balance with our 2nd successive 3-6 week which leaves us already 5 games behind the Dodgers.

So what is in store for the coming weeks? Well it looks like we will have to write off this season which to be fair was always the plan. We have one or two real bright spots on the team like Barry Bonds who came out of his pre-season slump and is now batting over .300 while on the mound starters Herges and Brower have ERAs under 3. Unfortunately we don't have any depth nor the money to make the long-term improvements that we need to make.

So our 3 step plan is;

1. Reduce the wage bill by cutting the players that I feel are over paid and replacing them with younger players who have potential.
2. Increase our revenue.

3. Finally bring in some solid veterans to supplement our team.

This plan will probably take all of this season until we can get to the financial position we want to be in. So for the fans in San Fran it looks like being a long season but hopefully next year we will be in a position to start challenging for the division.

Good luck with this weeks games"

Week 3 Preview

This week should provide an acid test for my Rangers as we face Anaheim, Toronto and the White Sox. I fear we may get a reality check! The first series between the Yankees and BoSox will be at Fenway (will this be the start of a great rivalry?) and Bobby Dorman will be looking to end an 0-9 skid on the road so far. The Central has yet to see any team post serious intent though all have played well at times. Will this week see any of the teams put up a big week?

The NL East sees the first series between the teams who currently lead the division as the Braves host the Phillies. Can the Phillies slow down the potent Braves offence? In the Central, the top 2 teams face off as the Pirates travel to Cincinnati. The offensively-challenged Brewers will hope that facing the team with the worst ERA in the league (the Cubbies) will spark their offense. In the West, again the top 2 teams meet as the Dodgers travel to Coors to face Adam Bernero and the gang. They travel without star reliever Eric Gagne who will be out for the foreseeable future and will look to improve in the field as they currently lead the league in errors.

Other than ex-Phillie Terry Adams there is nothing particularly outstanding on the free-agent list and it is likely that teams will continue to tinker with their rosters and look to bring in players on lower wages at the expense of more expensive players of equal ability.

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Until next week, Ian.