

'Better Eight Than Never' - *The Newsletter of MLB8*

Week 7 Round Up – Winners and Losers

The big winners this week were Patrick Lee's Los Angeles Dodgers as they were the only team to win more than 6 games. Though leading their division, the Dodgers hadn't really clicked to this point and this may be the signal that they are hitting top form. The two 6-3 teams this week were Stuart Guard's Marlins (more from him later) and Alistair Brearley's Kansas City Royals. The Jays only went 5-4 but did sweep division rivals the Red Sox to extend their lead.

The big losers this week both came from the Bay Area. Alan Molloy will be extremely disappointed as his Giants have been woeful recently (only 4 wins from their last 18 games). Tom Shewry's Athletics also went 2-7 as their offense completely dried up. His line-up is very young though and will be prone to inconsistency and drought periods.

The Rockies, though not having a disastrous week, had an offensive drought that must be some sort of record. After scoring 28 runs in 3 games against the Diamondbacks, they scored a solitary run over the next five games – including not scoring a run in the entire series against the Pittsburgh Pirates! It would be interesting to hear what GM Mark Hall thinks of things.

On the free-agent front, the Braves signed prized 3B prospect Carlos Moreta and will look to him for inspiration as they chase the Marlins and Phillies. GM Sim was happy to get him and feels he will be extremely valuable cover as he looks to rest corner infielders LaRoche and DeRosa. Speaking of the Marlins, they won a minor bidding war to sign former Angel prospect Derrick Turnbow to add to their bullpen depth. The Brewers added young SS Eric Valent from the Reds while other teams juggled their rosters in an attempt to get players of equal or slightly higher quality in at a low price.

Some key players were injured this week with the most significant being KC's Mike Sweeney (20 games) and Cincinnati's switch-hitting 2B Joe Morgan who is expected to miss the next 7 weeks! Though GM Bo Mayfield was not happy with the Morgan played this week, this wasn't what the Reds needed with the Pirates breathing down their necks and the Cubs looking as if they are about to hit form.

Marlins Update by Stuart Guard

Well so far so good really for the Marlins, and we're pleasantly surprised to be level at the top of the NL East at the moment, but what a great competitive division we've found ourselves in. This week we managed to nick three key games against the Braves in Atlanta, which was a fantastic result for us. In fairness it was only game 3 where we really deserved it, but we're happy to get the first two as well when the games were really level, and we're bound to lose some we didn't deserve to as the season goes on. Against the Dodgers we lost the first two games, but managed to just squeeze back and win the final game in the 10th inning. It was then a case of hosting the Brewers, and stretched out a two game lead in the series, before slipping up in the final game as our hitters were locked down. A 6-3 week was superb for us, given that we played two of the series away from Florida.

This all means that at present we're level 3rd in the league rankings, which is certainly a good position to be in. 2 games from the best record in the league, and yet only 3 games away from being bottom in the NL East, what a league we have here.

Have been really interested in all the Yahoo group discussion of late about where to invest in your Club, and Troy Dilworth has produced some fantastic facts and figures that have given us all food for thought of late (*more of that possibly in a future issue but if you want to have a look on the Yahoo site then follow the weblink at the bottom of the newsletter – ed*). That is going to be one heavily financed club in the future, and the question is are we watching the early stages of development in a dynasty? Only time will tell.

Off the park we're pleased with how things are going. We have our Stadium level up a solid level at present for the first season, and the Trainer has also seen some investment., but as yet we haven't had the funds to get money into merchandise. We do now though have a little money in the bank at present, thanks mainly to some of our released players being picked up last week. This combined with pretty low wages means that we should be able to continue to build the franchise this season.

Not holding out a lot in terms of great players being on the Free Agency list, but we still have some players who may be swapped out in the coming season. Pretty pleased with the pitching at the moment, with 8 pitchers

recording an ERA below 4.00, but like most teams would like to get some of the batters performing a little better. It will all take time though, and the improvement of some of our players over the season is all helping.

This week Derrick Turnbow arrived at the club and the 5 year pro looks to be a solid addition to the bullpen, and with ample experience and a low wage could go on to be a starter in the next two seasons. All certainly really enjoyable at present, and I can relate to what Troy is saying when comparing this to the other games. If you like a bit of wheeling and dealing this is the place to be.

Let's all support the newsletter in the same way as some are now regularly writing on Yahoo, and this league will be looking good for a long time to come.

Still upbeat in Atlanta by Mike Sim

Well, was a bit disappointed to be swept by the Marlins, particularly after matching them hit for hit in games 1 and 2, but that's life. The series versus the Brewers was better, not least because with Andruw Jones back our offence looked lively again (reiterating how much we've missed him) and the series versus San Francisco went well.

Got some good innings from young pitchers (Wainwright / Bong), a big outing from Ortiz and some encouraging performances from Mike Hampton (returning after a lengthy injury suffered in week 1) so overall fairly good, even if we dropped a bit further back on the Phillies and Marlins.

Outlook from Miller Park by Martin Willan

With Milwaukee being the worst team in the league I've decide its time to do something. The hitting is awful, we've managed 143 runs in the first 63 games - that's an average of 2.27, and even with a team ERA of 3.37 it's just not good enough.

The initial squad was extremely short of power (only 2 players with good power) so we aren't driving in the runs - 17 HR in 63 games is on a pace for 44 for the season. That would be a good total for 1 player, but for the whole squad it's awful. This turn our runs scored went 3,0,2,3,0,2,1,1,5 so I guess winning 3 games is as good as we could expect.

There is a lot of promising pitching talent in the squad, so I'm going to keep the pitching and get rid of several of the hitters in the hope that some decent power guys will appear on the free agent list soon. On the plus side we should be drafting in a good position (probably first), so I'll be looking for some power hitting in the draft.

Good luck to those of you trying to win this year, unless the free agent list picks up soon then I'm looking to season 3 and beyond before I start competing!

Week 8 Preview by Ian Gibson

Interesting week ahead in the AL, though no matchups between teams who are 1st and 2nd in their division or any matchups between division leaders. The NL promises to be much more exciting and is headlined by the Marlins visit to Philadelphia as the 2 teams battle it out for top spot whilst also knowing that the Braves and Expos are right behind. The other big matchup has the Morgan-less Reds travelling to Dodger stadium with LA looking to avenge a series sweep in Cincy earlier in the season.

There are no outstanding players to be picked up off the free-agent list but there are a number of 7* who would appear to give good value. Some teams have a good stock of losing points and could invest heavily if they felt a player really fitted the profile of what they were after. Or you could save your losing points and hope an impact player appears later in the season.

For those of you that only receive the newsletter by post, apologies for things always seeming to be a turn behind. I have to post it to Danny and the post has been pretty slow. We are working together on it though so this should improve and hopefully you will get an up-to-date newsletter. Would love some contributions from managers we haven't heard from as yet and, if you're on the internet then take a look at the Yahoo site mentioned.

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<http://www.gbspn.com/> Gameplan Baseball news and statistics from all eight Gameplan Baseball leagues.

<http://www.uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/gameplanbaseball/messages> A discussion group for Gameplan Baseball managers. The group includes discussions on the features of the game, news, results, and possible developments.

Until next week, Ian.