

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

Week 9 Round Up – Winners and Losers

In the AL, the Toronto Blue Jays continued their great form and now hold a 10-game lead over the Red Sox who occupy the wild-card position. The Angels put some daylight between themselves and the Rangers going 8-1 (including a 2-1 series win over the Rangers in the process) and the Twins made big steps going 7-2 – to pull within 4 games of the Royals – and signing top free agent RF Richie Weeks, though they paid a substantial amount to get him.

In the NL, the Expos have sorted out their pitching and their home form (9-0 in last 3 home series) and have surged into a 3-game lead in the ultra-competitive East. The Reds look extremely strong in the Central and have been pretty much unbeatable at home. The main threat now looks likely to come from the Cubs who have really hit form in the last couple of weeks as the Pirates have had a slight swoon. The West looks over already – the Dodgers are starting to really pitch well now and the rest of the division is falling away fast.

At the season's mid-point I had a glance back at Paul Beaumont's preseason predictions. Paul is currently spot on with the Jays, Expos and Dodgers (and probably would have been his Angels if he hadn't been so modest!). The only teams he has really been off the mark on are the Reds and the Royals (who were predicted last but with the closeness of the AL Central this can be forgiven and could even finish to be accurate).

Marlin Mutterings by Stuart Guard

Shocking week for the Marlins. We started well against the Expos in the first series, but then lost 1-2 to the Diamondbacks, after our pitchers let us down, before going on to lose a shocking series to the Reds. Ending the week at 3-6, and to boot will need to rest possibly two of our best bats this week. Not terribly impressed after resting one of them for 6 games just after his fatigue had jumped from 2 to 4 in a single turn, only to see his fatigue stay on 4 this week!!!!

With very tough games once again lined up for next week the wheels are beginning to look a little shaky on the Marlins wagon.

Dodger Briefing by Patrick Lee

Very pleased in LA to go 8-1 this week. I decided to bite the bullet and rest half my first-choice batting line-up for part or all of the turn - and these Dodgers weren't assembled with depth in mind! (I had four 5* batters in the team for the Rockies and Pirates series) Would have gladly taken 5-4 this week, so 8-1 was a very pleasant surprise. Quite a handy lead in the NL West now.

All-Star Game

I am hoping to run the All-Star game during either the Week 12 or Week 13 turn. I will issue a voting form with the next edition of the newsletter and would encourage as many managers as possible to vote for this inaugural all-star team. The more votes I get, the more it shows people are interested, the more representative the team is and the easier it is for the All-Star manager.

Speaking of which, I have decided that the All-Star manager will be the managers of the teams who have the best records at the end of Week 11 – assuming that they wish to manage. If they don't, the 'honour' would go to the managers of the team with the second best record. Therefore, Philip Howard is looking a strong favourite to manage the AL, while the favourites to manage the NL are Bo Mayfield and Patrick Lee, with an outside chance for David Trice.

To assist in the voting process full stats as at the end of Week 10 will be available on the excellent GBSPN website referred to at the bottom of the newsletter (<http://www.gbspn.com/>) in the next couple of weeks (big thank you to David Trice for this). I would urge everyone to have a look at this and use it to help them pick their all-star favourites.

To start the ball rolling and get people thinking about possible all-stars, I am going to preview possible all-stars in this and the next edition of the newsletter. The names included are mentioned as a flavour and this is not an exclusive list so apologies in advance if

I miss off anyone's star player. If I do, then feel free to plead his case in the next edition! This week, pitchers –

In the AL, there have been some outstanding performances by relief pitchers. Key names that deserve consideration include Julio Mateo, Aaron Loper (both Mariners), Aquilino Lopez and Mark Hendrickson (Blue Jays), Jorge Sosa (Devil Rays) and Andy Pettitte (Yankees).

The outstanding starting pitchers include John Burkett, Todd Jones, Alan Embree (all Red Sox), Reynaldo Garcia, Mickey Callaway (both Rangers), Jarrod Washburn (Angels), Eddie Guardado, LaTroy Hawkins (Twins) and Jon Adkins (White Sox).

In the NL, there is little doubt that Adam Bernero (Rockies) has been the outstanding pitcher so far. In terms of starting pitchers, he is joined by Russ Ortiz (Braves), Rick Helling, Josh Beckett (both Marlins), Jim Brower (Giants), Brian Boehringer, Joe Beimel (both Pirates), Livan Hernandez (Expos), Ben Diggins, Mike Crudale (both Brewers), Juan Cerros (Reds) and Kevin Brown (Dodgers).

The NL hasn't had as many outstanding relievers as the AL but there have been a few star performers who deserve a mention. These include Mike Remlinger (Cubs), Luis Ayala, Claudio Vargas (both Expos), and Tom Martin (Dodgers).

Next week, I'll start people thinking about batsmen and do a review of some of the top batsmen so far. And I promise to have included someone from every team in either the batting or pitching review!

Finally, a big thank to all of you who have volunteered to donate a credit towards the running of the all-star game. The more of you that volunteer, the less it should cost to run (i.e. if 8 volunteer, it will only be 0.5 credits each) so if anyone else is willing to volunteer it would be greatly appreciated.

Week 10 (Interleague preview)

Inter-league play is here again and it will be interesting to see if the AL can redress the balance having been quite comfortably beaten by the NL earlier in the season. Some matchups that jump out

as key are the Jays at the Braves, Red Sox at Marlins, Reds at Angels, Royals at Dodgers and Cubs at Red Sox. Another big matchup is the battle of Chicago as the White Sox make the short journey to Wrigley to face the surging Cubs.

Will it be a re-dressing of the balance or a clear indication that the NL is currently the stronger league?

Contributions for the next edition will be most appreciated and it would of course be nice if we get some interleague baiting / friendly rivalries going. I'll certainly be in 'gloating mode' if we do well against the Giants, Phillies and Brewers this week!

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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.