

'Better Eight Than Never' - The Newsletter of MLB8

Week 11 Round Up – Winners and Losers

In another exciting week, 1 division lead changed and a few other divisions got noticeably closer. The Rangers were very surprised to go 7-2 as Teixeira was injured most of the week and a couple of others were rested. Their opponents had more baserunners and a couple of games were won on walk-off hits so the manager is not getting carried away and is putting this great week partly down to good luck.

The AL Central got closer all round and all 4 teams could still make a case that they could win the division. The same could be said for the NL East. The form team there is the Marlins who pulled within 2 games of the Expos. They have been outscored by their opponents but have been outstanding at home and will be confident having swept the Phillies and taken 2 of 3 against the Dodgers.

The NL Central is starting to get very interesting. All-Star manager Bo Mayfield's Reds are now hearing serious Cubbie footsteps. A 6-game Reds losing streak (mostly close defeats) has the surging Cubs within 4 games. The Jays are still pretty comfortable in the AL East but the BoSox have pulled to within 7 games. The Dodgers are still well clear in the NL West.

On the free-agent front, the Phillies continued to sign ex-Devil Rays as they acquired Brandon Backe. The Rays continued their restructuring signing LF Brad Wilkerson from the Expos. The Royals paid a heavy price for their signing and the editor wonders whether this move was some sort of mistake.

All-Star Game

It is hoped that the All-Star game may still run in Week 12 but, due to my lack of time and organisational skills, it may be that it runs in Week 13. Maybe that isn't such a bad thing as some votes may come in over this weekend and I'd rather get the organisation of the game right than rush it and mess it up! The absolute latest I'll accept votes is Sunday 6th June so the starting lineups may well be as follows:

American League

C	Jorge Posada	(New York)
1B	Roberto Alomar	(Chicago)
2B	Aubrey Huff	(Tampa Bay)
3B	Tony Graffanino	(Chicago)
SS	Corey Koskie	(Minnesota)
LF	Alfonso Soriano	(New York)
CF	Jeff DaVanon	(Anaheim)
RF	Mike Sweeney	(Kansas City)
DH	<i>To be selected by the manager</i>	

SP Mickey Callaway (Texas)

Mgr Philip Howard (Toronto)

The AL Voting was generally close and only Roberto Alomar was a unanimous selection. The total number of votes at 2B was a tie between Huff and David Eckstein of the Angels. At this stage, Huff is the starter as he had more 1st place votes. LF was slightly surprising as I thought my best player (Teixeria) would get more votes than he did and the league leader in steals, Eric Hinske, has only had one vote. At least 5 players got votes in nearly every position, with 7 players getting votes at 1B and 2B.

The pitching voting was particularly interesting as 6 voters selected a total of 16 pitchers! Behind Callaway, the next highest vote getters were Todd Jones (Boston), LaTroy Hawkins (Minnesota), John Burkett (Boston), Aquilino Lopez (Toronto), Julio Mateo (Seattle) and Eddie Guardado (Minnesota).

It should be noted by all that this AL starting lineup is not confirmed at time of going to press as this does not involve the votes from Toronto. Philip will add those in – which will determine the final starting lineup and then select the rest of the squad.

Thanks to all those who voted and shame on you to those that didn't! 6 voters altogether and another to come from Philip and was particularly pleased to receive a postal vote from Douglas Crawford in Cleveland who I haven't heard from before.

National League

C	Jason LaRue	(Cincinnati)
1B	Adrian Beltre	(Los Angeles)
2B	Jolbert Cabrera	(Los Angeles)
3B	Juan Castro	(Cincinnati)
SS	Ronnie Belliard	(Colorado)
LF	Barry Bonds	(San Francisco)
CF	Andruw Jones	(Atlanta)
RF	Sammy Sosa	(Chicago)
DH	<i>To be selected by the manager</i>	
SP	Adam Bernero	(Colorado)
Mgr	Bo Mayfield	(Cincinnati)

Some very close votes in the NL, but more unanimous selections. The entire outfield seems to have picked itself as all of Bonds, Jones and Sosa were picked unanimously. Bernero was one vote away from being the unanimous selection as starting pitcher.

2B, 3B and SS were the closest races with Casey (Reds) and Vidro (Expos) pressing Cabrera, Machado (Phillies) and DeRosa (Braves) pressing Castro and all of Cora (Dodgers), Martinez (Cubs), Freel (Reds) and Rivera (Pirates) pressing Belliard.

Three catchers got the vast majority of votes in LaRue, Hundley (Dodgers) and Rodriguez (Marlins). I don't think it is disrespectful to say that the worst of those would have walked into the AL squad as the starter.

5 voters in the NL voting for a total of 12 pitchers. Behind the dominant Bernero were Russ Ortiz (Braves), Livan Hernandez (Expos), Joe Biemel (Pirates), LaTroy Hawkins and Mike Remlinger (Cubs) and Juan Cerros (Reds).

Thanks again to those of you have voted. And for those of you who are interested, I am delighted to tell you that the venue for this inaugural MLB8 All-Star Game is Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles (on some personal logic of the team with the best record other than the 2 teams that the managers come from!).

Week 12 Preview

There are key divisional games in the NL East and AL Central but arguably the biggest divisional matchup sees the Rangers host the Angels. The Halos are 1 game behind and have the better run difference coming into this matchup and hold a 5-4 lead in the season series so far.

The Rangers torrid week continues as they travel to Boston to face the wild-card contending Red Sox. A bad week for the Rangers could be devastating for their postseason chances. It is also a big week for the Twins as they follow a series against the Indians with a visit to Toronto and a home series against the BoSox. The Angels also play the Royals and Yankees this week, with the improving Yanks holding a surprising 5-1 series lead so far against Anaheim.

In the NL, the Cubs look to continue their great form against the Brewers, Expos and Phillies. The Reds sandwich a home series against the Dodgers between trips to Pittsburgh and San Francisco. The Marlins travel to Montreal first of all and follow that with what looks like two relatively easy series against the Giants and Pirates. If they can get a series win against Les Expos there may be a change of division lead out East.

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Until next week, Ian.