

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

Championship Series Round-up

And then there were two! After 2 great series the only teams left are the Anaheim Angels and the Los Angeles Dodgers, meaning that the first World Series in MLB8 history will be an all-california affair.

NLCS Report

Game One: An otherwise tight game is effectively decided by a five-run 3rd-inning for the Dodgers, Bale walking three batters. Kevin Brown pitches all nine innings and fans 11 batters to pick up the win. 1-0 to LA.

Game Two: The Reds jump on Colyer for a 4-run 1st, before Todd Pratt's grand slam in the 2nd makes it 4-4. However Jason LaRue registers two homers and despite a late Dodgers rally, the Reds pick up a vital road win 9-7 to square the series.

Game Three: The series moves to Cincinnati and the top of the Reds order does the business again with 15 hits and a comfortable 9-3 win on the back of 7 solidly pitched innings by Seth Etherton. The Reds go 2-1 up in the series.

Game Four: Kaz Ishii makes his first playoff start and he and reliever Gagne shut out the Reds. Jolbert Cabrera homers twice for LA who grab a 5-0 road win to level the series 2-2.

Game Five: Juan Cerros pitches a complete game and wins the duel with Kevin Brown as Cincinnati come out on top of a tense game 2-1. They will take a 3-2 series lead to Los Angeles.

Game Six: The Reds again jump on Colyer early to take a 3-0 lead and leave Dodger hopes in the balance. However Colyer settles down and Ashby does a good job from the bullpen to keep LA in it, and the home hitters eventually find their mark to secure a 7-3 victory and take the series to a deciding 7th game.

Game Seven: Mike Kinkade's homer gives the Dodgers an early 3-0 lead, but the Reds fight back and the lead is only 4-3 going into the 8th. But Cabrera's solo homer gives LA breathing space, and Guillermo Mota closes out the game - which ends with an outstanding play with a runner on by series MVP Cabrera. As is tradition, Randy Newman's 'I love LA' rang out across Dodger Stadium as the home team and fans celebrated into the night.

Patrick Lee – "Wow, what a fantastic series! The momentum went back and forth throughout the series and throughout many of the games individually. Very bad luck to Bo - it was a cracking series that obviously could have gone either way."

Twins thoughts by Dave Brown

So the Angels leave Minnesota to wing their way to the World Series. This after a hard-fought but deserved 4-2 series win over the Twins. An unexpected development was the Twins switching to a 3-man rotation for the series...indeed, this was even a surprise for GM Brown, who was expecting Eric Milton to be the

4th starter!! Nonetheless, the Minnesota management don't believe it made a major difference to the result.

The first turning point was Game 2 in Anaheim when, with the Angels 1-0 up in the series, Twins closer Joe Mays came on at the bottom of the 9th with the Twins up 4-3. With two men on base and 2 outs, a Garret Anderson double saw the Angels take a 2-0 series lead.

Then the series moved over to Minnesota and the Twins drew level at 2 games apiece. At this stage, the home team had won every game. That's why game 5 was the second turning point – the only game won on the road in the series. A complete game by John Lackey and 4 runs in the 2nd innings off Twins starter Guardado saw the Angels run out 4-1 winners to move 3-2 ahead in the series with two games in Anaheim to play.

This was the pivotal moment with the Angels winning game 6 by a comfortable 5-2 for the 4-2 series win. So, good luck to them against my favourites for the World Series, the Dodgers.

For the Twins fans, it's a slightly disappointing end to an exciting season. Nevertheless, nobody in Minnesota can be too unhappy – 8 weeks into the season, the Twins were rooted to bottom spot in the AL Central so the turnaround was quite a performance. And as GM Brown said earlier in the season, this team was built with a view towards seasons 2 & 3!!

Angels Perspective by Paul Beaumont

The Anaheim Angels are thrilled to be taking part in the first MLB8 World Series, and to cap it all it's against the cities other MLB8 team - the Los Angeles Dodgers! Each team has had their own distinctive brand of baseball, which will add to the spectacle; the Dodgers are set up to win in a small ball park, they have power hitters and control pitchers to make the most of the dimensions there. The Angels are at the other end of the spectrum with a large ball park, they have contact hitters and the pitchers look to throw strikes. It will interesting to see how each team adapts to playing in the others ball park.

Anaheim Angels - Edison Field is large stadium. The Angels batsmen aim is to get on-base, either by making contact (No. 1 in AL in hits - 1424) or by base-on-balls (No.1 in AL in walks - 597). This philosophy lead to the Angels being No.1 in runs scored in the AL with 745. Despite this philosophy the Angels also lead the league in Slugging (.425); Anaheim was 4th in the AL in doubles (374), 1st in triples (45), and 2nd in Homers (169).

The starting line-up has good depth and platoons were used successfully during the season to get playing time for most players, which has lead to fatigue not being an issue for the Angels during the post-season. The Angels are back to full strength after SS Kennedy recovered from a knee ligament injury to play three games in the ALCS. RF Anderson also returned to play all six games in the ALCS, after spending the end of the season at AAA to straighten out his swing (and head).

The pitching staff was set up with four main starters (the fifth spot was filled by 'committee' during the regular season) and two main relievers. Thus, the Angels knew how they'd be set-up for post-season play, should they reach that goal.

During the regular season the Angels added a few arms to the bullpen to give it more depth, and more options at fifth starter. Lewis, a pick-up from division rival Texas, has been the 'stand-out' from this group. The Angels had an ERA of 2.99 during the regular season (2nd in AL) and allowed the second fewest HRs (88). Keeping the Dodgers from hitting the long ball is going to be key for the Angels, especially at Dodger Stadium.

The Dodgers have the better regular season record so have the advantage of playing, potentially, an extra game at home. The Angels had a better record away from Edison field (Home 47-34 vs Road 48-33) so have proved they can play on the road. However, there are three small stadia, one medium stadium, and eight large stadia in the American League so the Angels only had minor adjustments to be made in the majority of the Road games.

It'll be a great deal harder to do so against a team in a small stadium, and one that is especially well set up to win in that environment. The Dodgers travelled to four teams with large stadia in the NL, and were only slightly less proficient on the Road (52-29 vs 49-32), impressive! The Dodgers also look to have the edge on the Angels in terms of experience on both sides of the ball, and on this stage this could tell.

The Angels have to manufacture a win in Dodger Stadium if they are to win the, but have to win their home games as well in order to do this. The first two games in LA will be key; if the Dodgers sweep them it'll be very hard for the Angels to come back.

However, if the Angels can nick one then they have a good chance to capitalise on this with the following three game series at home. Both teams are adept to winning on their own turf, the team that can adapt to winning on their opponents patch better will likely be crowned the first MLB8 World Series winners.

Tampa downsize in order to woo fans

It has been widely tipped that commissioner McConnell will accept the Tampa Bay Devil Rays application to reduce their playing area to one of the smallest parks in the league. A Tampa spokesperson explained the clubs reasoning behind this change.

"Last season, we didn't give our fans much to cheer about on or off the field. The move is designed to see more home runs scored, as that's ultimately what the fans want to see. On top of which, we will be able to fit in more seats as we're predicting an upturn in spectator numbers caused by the "new" party atmosphere that we are attempting to bring into our ballgames.

The "enjoyment for all policy", should be helped by the greater number of runs scored which would undoubtedly happen with bringing in the fences. On the playing side, we had the weakest pitching unit in the league last season, so we need to score more runs to make up for our lack of pitching quality."

GM Dilworth was approached with regard to his team's prospects for the coming season and he had this to say.

"Our provisional squad for the new season will have a wage around the 70 mark. This would, in fact, be lower than the total wage that we entered last season with and you know how that ended up!?!"

However, I am much happier with the current squad in comparison with last season's squad. The batting balance is much better as we will have a nice blend of right and left-handedness within the first choice lineup. On the pitching front, it's true that we are still not where we want to be but the drafting of Lance Carter will help enormously. Hopefully, we can improve the pitching as the season develops.

The one positive is that finances are well and truly in order so I won't have to penny pinch this season and I've also been promised money by ownership for player development which should help. With regards to the new season, our aim is simple. To do better than last season, as long as we accomplish this, we will know that we are going in the right direction.

Rather strangely, we can't wait for the new season to begin even though we know that we have a lot of hard work in front of us to turn this situation around! The truth is, you won't see the best of this squad, for a few seasons to come"

News from Milwaukee by Martin Willan

A poor first season in Milwaukee ended with a 3-2 series defeat to Arizona in the National Series playoffs. Typically for the Brewers we were shutout in all 3 losses while managing only 6 runs in the series. Even more typically game 1 was lost 1-0 at home as we failed to turn 7 singles, 2 doubles and 3 walks into any runs. On the plus side we went 7-2 in the opening pre-season week with an ERA of 1.91 and outscoring our opponents 38-23, so maybe there is hope on the horizon.

Such is the lack of hitting in the squad that 1st round draft pick RF Corey Hart will slot straight in and is expected to bat number 4 or 5. 2nd round pick RF Dave Krynzel will be expected to replace Wes Helms in the LF platoon, although he will need some coaching before he can contribute. The 3rd round pick will be a pitcher who will be expected to join the bullpen.

Like everyone else outside Southern Cal, the coaching staff is waiting anxiously to see how the players have improved or worsened in the offseason and what their wage demands will be.

World Series Preview

It's been a great season and whichever team wins they will have earned it. It should be a great series and a series of contrasts. The Angels play in a big ballpark while the Dodgers look to take advantage of the tight confines at Dodger Stadium.

May the best team win!

Future issues will feature the Season 1 awards winners. MVPs, Cy Young's, Rookies of the Year, Gold Glovers and Silver Sluggers.

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