

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

### World Series Round-up

And so it's congrats to Paul Beaumont and his Angels – the inaugural champions of MLB8. Commiserations to Patrick Lee and his Dodgers who were great all season but just couldn't get it done on the biggest stage.

This was a series for the purists as pitching was on top all the way. In the four games, the Angels used 5 pitchers and the Dodgers 6. Fielding was also excellent as all runs scored were of the earned variety.

Game 1 was Brown vs. Washburn at Dodger Stadium. The Angels earned a vital 2-0 win with Shields getting the save, pitching 2 innings and allowing only 1 baserunner. Ortiz then pitched a 3-hitter against Ishii as the Angels won Game 2 (2-1). In the blink of an eye the Angels had taken both games in LA, not giving up any homers to the high-powered Dodger offense.

In Game 3 the on form Lackey (7 2/3 inning) then went toe-to-toe with Colyer who both allowed two runs before handing over to the bullpen. Shields retired 7 straight Dodgers and in the bottom of the tenth, DaVanon doubled and Molina drove him home to earn the Angels a 3-2 run.

In Game 4 the previously off-form Sele dug deep to throw 7 1/3 innings vs Alvarez. The bats gave him the lead for good in the bottom of the third (2-1) and added 2 runs in the 4<sup>th</sup> and another in the 5<sup>th</sup>. He tired in the eighth giving up 2 runs, Shields came in a retired the last five Dodgers in turn, for the save and a 4-0 World Series victory.

PB – “Two 2-run wins and two 1-run wins; the series was much closer than the 4-0 scoreline shows. Commiserations to Patrick as his team had the best regular season of us all. I hadn't looked at their roster before the World Series and wasn't too confident after having a good look at it! We managed to get our hits in groups better than LA, thus scoring those few, crucial, more runs.”

PL – “Congratulations to Paul on a thoroughly deserved WS victory. A bit miffed that we pitched so well and kept all the games close but didn't get even one victory, but that's a measure of how clinical the Angels were.

Have to particularly credit their pitching staff. Our success all year has been based on keeping games tight then hitting long balls. But whilst we kept ourselves in every game as planned, we didn't hit even one HR throughout the 4 games.”

World Series MVP – Anaheim relief pitcher Scott Shields. 6 innings of relief, giving up just 1 hit, no walks, with 4 strikeouts, earning a win and 2 saves in the series.

### End of Season Awards

I thought it would be a nice idea to hand out some end of season individual player awards (and then attempt to do it every season if possible). These may cause some conversation, even controversy but here goes anyway.

The first set of awards is the Silver Sluggers. These are handed out for the best 'slugger' at each position and try to take into account all of batting avg, on base %, slugging %, homers and RBIs. Winners as follows –

#### **American League**

Catcher	Toby Hall	(Devil Rays)
1B	Roberto Alomar	(White Sox)
2B	Aubrey Huff	(Devil Rays)
3B	Chone Figgins	(Angels)
SS	Adam Kennedy	(Angels)
LF	Alex Escobar	(Indians)
CF	Brandon Phillips	(Indians)
RF	Milton Bradley	(Indians)

#### **National League**

Catcher	Jason LaRue	(Reds)
1B	Adam LaRoche	(Braves)
2B	R Aurilia / J Cabrera	(Giants / Dodgers)
3B	Juan Castro	(Reds)
SS	Carlos Rivera	(Pirates)
LF	Mike Lowell	(Marlins)
CF	Andruw Jones	(Braves)
RF	Sammy Sosa	(Cubs)

Some surprises I think and it was an extremely close decision at some positions. Particularly unlucky were Adrian Beltre and Todd Hundley (Dodgers), Martin Young (Marlins), Jeff DaVanon and David Eckstein (Angels) and Jorge Posada (Yankees).

The next awards are the 'Gold Gloves' awarded to the players judged to be the best fielders at their position. This aims to take into account fielding %, errors, fielding saves, put outs, assists and double plays.

#### **American League**

Catcher	Victor Martinez	(Indians)
1B	Nomar Garciaparra	(Red Sox)

2B	Joe Crede	(White Sox)
3B	Jeff Cirillo	(Mariners)
SS	Corey Koskie	(Twins)
LF	Frank Menechino	(Athletics)
CF	Joe Randa	(Royals)
RF	Milton Bradley	(Indians)

#### National League

Catcher	Charles Johnson	(Rockies)
1B	Russell Branyan	(Reds)
2B	Jolbert Cabrera	(Dodgers)
3B	Eric Karros	(Cubs)
SS	Ronnie Belliard	(Rockies)
LF	Aramis Ramirez	(Cubs)
CF	D'Angelo Jimenez	(Reds)
RF	Mike Mordecai	(Marlins)

Difficult to pick 'Rookies of the Year' in this new league but I have decided that, for the purposes of this, I will regard a 'rookie' as anyone with 0 or 1 years experience. Based on this –

AL Rookie of the Year – Jeff DaVanon (Angels)  
NL Rookie of the Year – Doug Davis (Brewers)

The AL choice was relatively easy, the NL extremely difficult. All 3 of the top contenders (Davis, Chavez of the Expos and Helton of the Rockies) were true rookies and all had great seasons.

In the end, it was the sheer will of Davis that tipped it. He toiled all year on a frankly awful Brewers team, throwing over 250 innings (11 complete games) with a 3.27 ERA. If the Brew Crew can improve their offense you can easily imagine his 11 wins this season being doubled next season – providing his arm doesn't fall off from pitching so many innings!

The final awards are for the MVPs and Cy Young award winners. These have been selected entirely by your editor so feel free to criticise if you wish.

AL MVP – Milton Bradley (Indians)  
NL MVP – Adrian Beltre (Dodgers)

Despite being pipped for the Silver Slugger award at 1B by LaRoche (due to LaRoche's batting average), I feel Beltre deserves the MVP. He and his Dodgers were great all year and he led the NL in home runs and stolen bases and was 1 run behind in the RBI race. Also, he was at the peak of his powers early in the season when the Dodgers stamped their authority all over the league.

In the AL, I found it impossible not to give it to Bradley. There were a number of players who made the playoffs that you could make a case for but nobody really dominated. Bradley was excellent in all facets and, with outfield colleagues Brandon Phillips and Alex Escobar (who actually led the majors in RBIs), he will look to shoot the Tribe into the postseason next year.

AL Cy Young – LaTroy Hawkins (Twins)  
NL Cy Young – Livan Hernandez (Expos)

Whilst there were a number of excellent pitchers in the AL (Callaway, Adkins, Washburn, Halladay to name a few), Hawkins deserves this award. He was great all year but particularly dominant down the stretch when the Twins really turned it on.

In the NL, I really don't know whether I've made the right decision and may be open to criticism. In the early going, it looked as if it would be Adam Bernero of the Colorado Rockies. However, he slowed down (though only slightly) and his team slipped out of contention.

The other 2 big contenders were Russ Ortiz (Braves) and Livan Hernandez (Expos) whose teams battled it out to the end for NL East supremacy. Hernandez had more wins, strikeouts and innings, Ortiz a better ERA and more complete games. In the end, the only thing that tipped the balance was the sheer endurance of Hernandez who started 41 games and pitched 275 innings. Ortiz, though, must feel extremely unlucky not to win when posting a 1.66 ERA.

Hope this was interesting and many thanks to David Trice for his help with some of these categories. I'm sure David would be happy to discuss some of the working outs behind the Silver Slugger and Gold Glove awards if anyone wishes.

Next edition will feature season 2 predictions by our World Series winner Paul Beaumont but, as always, I would welcome contributions from all managers.

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<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.