

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

We start this week with comments from new D'Backs GM Chris Stones who has taken over from previous manager David Ware who decided to resign before he was sacked after a disappointing season for the team from the desert.

### **D-Back Back-chat** by Chris Stones

"Hello to everyone in MLB8, I must say I'm really looking forward to the challenge of managing the Diamondbacks in what looks to be a very busy and tough league.

I'm only a recent convert to both Baseball and Gameplan Baseball and enjoying the introduction. I've previously never had much more than a passing interest, mainly generated from an Uncle of mine who lives near Seattle. He's a huge Mariners fan, and as such I suppose they were always my team if I ever had one, he has brought Mariners merchandise when he's come over to visit.

However a recent visit to the US and specifically Chicago opened my eyes a bit more. My friends over there are big Cubbies fans and I got to see quite a few games with them in bars and stuff - unfortunately they were on the road all the time I was there so I never went to see a game. But they were able to explain some of the finer points of the game and I started to take a lot more interest.

Once back in Blighty I regularly recorded channel 5 games and watched them the next day, and really enjoyed the playoffs (specifically the ALCS). I run a few gameplan (American Football) teams and I spoke to Mike Sim about the game a while back and was intrigued. The roster building side appeals and with a bit more interest in the game generally I decided to have a dabble, so here I am.

So onto the Diamondbacks in MLB8. Well my first impression is that it's a pretty decent squad, wages are under control and there's a fair bit of leeway for me to try and bring some players in and do some coaching.

There is a ton of potential on the batting side and I suppose one thing I need to learn pretty quickly is how best to balance what coaching I can do with the long-term aspect of the finances. I'm looking forward to getting to grips with all these decisions, I'm sure I'll make a few mistakes on the way, but that's usually the best way to learn stuff.

It looks to me that the league is quite evenly balanced being pretty new, and I suppose this gives me a chance with a decent squad to be reasonably good. However I'm not setting my expectations too high, as I'm sure I'll be

learning the game for a while, before I start seeing some results (if I do at all!).

So very much looking forward to it. Thanks to those who've already given me advice, and for the welcome on the Yahoo group and via email.

Go Diamondbacks!"

*Editor – I'm sure I speak for everyone in the league when I wish a big welcome to Chris. I hope he enjoys the game and improves the Diamondbacks. It will be extremely tough to think that he may overhaul the Dodgers but I think even Patrick Lee would hope for a closer race than last year in the NL West (though maybe not!) If not this year, then maybe in the future as he looks to build around young talent like Baerga, Bautista and Washington.*

*Anyway, welcome and good luck Chris.*

### **Season 2 Predictions** by Paul Beaumont

Paul repeats what he did last season in making his predictions. Just as a note, he got 3 of the 6 divisions right last year (and it would have been 4 if he hadn't been too modest to pick his own team!).

"After looking at the rosters again here's my predictions for Season 2" (*editors note – Paul bravely made these predictions before this week's player releases*):

#### **AL East**

1. **Toronto** - The line-up will give the Blue Jays the edge in the division.
2. **Boston** - The star players are still maturing, maybe next year?
3. **New York** - Deep on potential, low on experience. Their time will come.
4. **Tampa Bay** - The rebuilding continues....

*Ed – "You can't really go against the Jays after last season but they have had an awful preseason and, raw talent-wise, they aren't really much better than the rest of the division. The Red Sox will certainly challenge again and GM Dilworth has been quoted as vowing that his Devil Rays will NOT finish bottom of this division though that doesn't necessarily mean that an improving Yankees team will be the ones replacing him."*

#### **AL Central**

1. **Minnesota** - Built to win this season and next and, most probably, will do.
2. **Kansas City** - Their experience will bring them home second.
3. **Chicago** - On the look out for a quality catcher.

4. **Cleveland** - Not much line-up depth, need the pitching to step up.

*Ed – “Fascinating division and, though the Twins are favourites, you could make a legitimate case for any of the 4 winning the division (or, in fact, finishing last!). The Twins have an excellent front of the rotation and an ever-improving batting lineup. KC look solid and have plenty of pop to put runs on the board. The White Sox have a glaring weakness at catcher but look very strong at all other positions. Cleveland have the league’s best outfield to go with an emerging and improving pitching staff.”*

#### **AL West**

1. **Texas** - You can never have enough good pitching....
2. **Anaheim** - Lots and lots of depth, but lack a quality leftie pitcher(s). (WILDCARD)
3. **Oakland** - One to watch out for.....in a couple of seasons time.
4. **Seattle** - Lacking a quality 1-2 punch in the starting rotation.

*Ed – “The World Champions manager is simply being too modest when he picks the Rangers. The Angels are big favourites to retain the division. They may not have left-handed pitching but that didn’t seem to matter too much when they stymied the potent Dodgers in the World Series.*

*The Rangers will try to get by with their ‘grind-it-out’ low-scoring style and will be pleased if they can repeat as Wild Card. The A’s are too young to compete this year but, if they can keep their talented young lineup together could be a major force in the future. It could be another long season for Seattle unless top draft pick Randy Winn can ignite the rest of their offense.”*

#### **NL East**

1. **Montreal** - Too close to call, but you gotta like those arms to shade it.
2. **Atlanta** - Deeper line-up, weaker pitching. Have to go with the pitching. (WILDCARD)
3. **Philadelphia** - Dark horse. Plenty of depth and experience, but they need to convert this to wins.
4. **Florida** - Lacking the star power and line-up depth.

*Ed – “Like the AL Central – anyone could win this. The Expos pitching looks even better than last year and they will ride the emotion of this probably being their last season in Montreal. Atlanta also look stronger than last year as they look to have better pitching surrounding Russ Ortiz. The Phillies finished extremely strong last year and look a team with quality throughout their squad who could really threaten this year. The Marlins don’t look as talented as the other teams but didn’t last year and yet were in the race through most of the season.”*

#### **NL Central**

1. **Milwaukee** - Does this Martin Willan style roster look familiar to anyone?
2. **Cincinnati** - Depth on both sides of the ball isn't quite enough.
3. **Pittsburgh** - Roster looks good, but I'm thinking third! Could be made to eat my words.....
4. **Chicago** - Somebody has to come last, even if you're a decent team! (Needs more pitching.)

*Ed – “Despite the Brewers looking much improved, I am surprised that Paul has picked them to overhaul the Reds. Cincinnati will once again be fundamentally sound in all areas of the game and are my favourites. The Brewers have great pitching and any improvement on offense will have them in the race. The Pirates look very talented but appeared to be a team lacking any direction in the preseason. The Cubs look to be short on pitching and it will be interesting to see how they respond to the disappointment of last year’s end of season collapse.”*

#### **NL West**

1. **Los Angeles** - Looking even stronger than last year!
2. **San Francisco** - Deja vu? Another Alan Molloy Giants team Vs a powerhouse Dodgers (MLB6 anyone?).
3. **Arizona** - Need another couple of seasons to gain experience and for the potential to develop.
4. **Colorado** - Another young team looking to develop for the future.

*Ed – “LA look much too strong for the rest of this division. The other teams have plenty of youth and potential for the future but the Dodgers have the quality and experience to win now and will be keen to go one better than last year.”*

**MLB8 Season 2 World Series:** Minnesota Twins 4 Los Angeles Dodgers 2

*Ed – “On the basis of Paul’s prediction it may be another season of heartbreak for GM Patrick Lee. It should be noted though that he picked them to win the World Series last year so maybe picking them to be runners-up could be what they need to win it all this year.*

*Good luck to all and here’s to another enjoyable season.”*

#### **GAMEPLAN ADVERTISEMENTS**

<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.