

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

Week 7 Review

The much-hyped series between Anaheim and Texas went the way that the crucial series seem to have gone in the short rivalry between the 2 teams. The Angels won the series 2-1, with Texas only avoiding a sweep in Game 3. Game 1 kind of summed it up as former Angel David Eckstein made 2 errors which led to 3 unearned runs in a 9-6 victory.

This series sparked the Halos to a 7-2 week which puts them top of the division for the first time this season. They hold a 1-game lead over the A's (who now occupy the wild card position) and are 3 ahead of the Mariners who also had an excellent 7-2 week. The Rangers went 4-5 are now bottom of the division though, at 33-30, GM Gibson isn't particularly dissatisfied with the way his troops have been playing.

Another team on a surge are Dave Brown's Minnesota Twins. They lost a series 2-1 in Anaheim but had sweeps of the ChiSox and Texas either side of that. The Twins have the best pitching staff in the AL and were particularly miserly at the Metrodome this week as opponents didn't score more than 3 in any of the 6 games. The other 3 teams in the division had losing weeks to allow the Twins to open a gap. Martin Halls' Chicago White Sox are now 11 games back and may be falling out of contention even at this relatively early stage.

Paul Denyer's BoSox struggled without ace John Burkett as they lost all 3 series, including one against their rivals from New York. Dorman's men didn't take full advantage though as they lost the next 2 series to leave them 3 behind. The Blue Jays continued their steady climb back into the race and are now 5 back of Boston though Philip Howard will be disappointed that the week ended with his team being swept in the Sky Dome by the buzz-saw that is the World Champion Angels.

The big guns dominated in the NL. The Dodgers mercilessly disposed of San Fran and Atlanta, before dropping the last game of the week to the Pirates. Patrick Lee's men already have a 15-game lead in the division. Despite being swept by LA, GM Bradbrook was pleased with his team's overall performance (see later). The Rockies continue to be quite steady whilst the D'Backs have the league's longest current losing streak at 7.

The other big NL power (Bo Mayfield's Reds) matched the Dodgers by going 8-1. They continue to dominate at home and seem a better team on the road this year, making them even more dangerous. The Cubs got back on an even keel as they went 5-4 and remain firmly in the wild card race. New boy Guy Handley had a tough week in Pittsburgh and was particularly let down by his pitchers. The Brewers had a decent week as they won series against the Expos and Braves after opening the week by getting swept by the Reds. This leaves Tampa Bay with the worst record in the league.

It was an odd week in the NL East, especially with the Braves going 1-8. They were particularly let down by their bats. Apparently the week was so bad that GM Mike Sim has had to go on holiday to recover! The only relief is that the rest of the division didn't get out of sight. Though they lost the last 2 games of the week to the Cubs, the Phillies had a good week and are just 3 games off the division lead.

The Marlins bounced back from a series defeat to the Phillies with hard-earned series wins against Chicago and Colorado. This leaves them 1 game behind the division-leading Expos. You would think GM Trice would be happy with this but, after starting the week with a sweep of the Braves, they then lost series to the Giants and Brewers so didn't really take advantage and build any sort of gap. So frustrated was Trice that he described his team's performance in those series with just one word – "rubbish".

View from the Bay by Marc Bradbrook

So 5-4 overall but 5-1 outside of the Dodgers series. Still 5 games back from the wildcard but definitely gunning for it now!

Very pleased with the other 2 series, but gutted to be swept by the Dodgers. The first game was a blowout as we had all 4 of our hits in the 1st innings. Game 2 we lost when Cora homered off Jones in the 11th for a 2-1 win. Great pitching by Eyre for the Giants.

Game 3 we lost 7-6 when after taking a 6-4 lead in the 8th, my closer comes in and gets 1 out, walks 2 then gives up a homer for a 7-6 loss! At least we took them all the way in 2 games and had great pitching efforts by Eyre and Herges.

Life in Dodger-land by Patrick Lee

Pleased enough with an 8-1 week, although we were pushed very close in a few of those wins. We now have six starting batters hitting around .300 or more,

but we still badly need more depth as the youngsters who come in when we rest players almost always bat about .150! On the pitching front the loss of Alvarez for 14 games is annoying as he has been pitching fantastically this year. But Gagne is unbeaten as a spot starter so hopefully we'll get by.

Looking at the rest of the NL, with the Reds pushing on in the Central and nobody quite able to pull away in the East, it's looking a bit like Season 1 all over again. Can't really follow what's happening in the AL though. Last week it was Boston and the A's making the running, now it's the Twins and the Angels.

The View from the Champions by Paul Beaumont

Lots of positive form to be found across the board, but not a lot of high current form on individuals. Looks like we're playing well as a team rather than one or two carrying the rest, which is pleasing.

We are always looking to, but are not desperate to upgrade any position, so the Halos are going to try and solidify their financial position for the rest of the season. MERC will hopefully be 200 by the end of the regular season, and then we'll look to carry over LPs for investment next season. We have several players with potential who will hopefully improve over the next few seasons and we want to be in a position, financially, to be able to keep them all.

It's going to be a tough battle out West this year. Only four games separate all the teams. We'll be taking games off each other, which could help a team elsewhere get the wild card, although all the AL divisions are competitive.

Week 8 Preview

It's a top of the table clash in the NL East as the Marlins travel to Montreal. This is the start a very tough week for the Expos as they then travel to Cincinnati and host the Dodgers. The Marlins, meanwhile, have what look to be manageable series against Pittsburgh and Arizona. The Braves and Phillies face up to each other before playing San Fran and Cincy and Colorado and Pittsburgh respectively.

In addition to Montreal, the Dodgers face Arizona and the Cubbies. Colorado are 3 games out of the wild card slot and will need to make the most of a week in which they play San Fran, Philly and Milwaukee.

In the Central, the Reds travel to Pittsburgh before series against 2 of last year's playoff teams, the Expos and Braves. The Cubs host Milwaukee and San Fran either side of a daunting trip to LA to face the Dodgers. The Pirates will look to bounce back from a bad week, while the Brewers will look to continue to improve.

In the AL, it's a top of the table clash out West as the Angels face the A's. The A's then face New York and Kansas City, whilst Anaheim face the 2 teams with the worst records in the AL in the D' Rays and ChiSox. The Mariners and Rangers play in Seattle with the M's looking to continue their good run whilst the Rangers look to get a good run going as they welcome back all-star closer Ryan Drese from injury.

The Red Sox – now also without switch-hitting OF Bill Mueller with injury face a tough week as they travel to Toronto and Minnesota before a home series against Seattle. New York will need to take advantage of any slips as they face Tampa, Oakland and Minnesota. The Jays have fought hard to get back in the race after a poor start but will be without star OF Orlando Hudson for their 3 series this week. The Rays will hope that their bats woke up in the last 2 games of the week and that this will continue into Week 8.

The Twins will look to put some real distance between themselves and the pack this week and start by hosting Cleveland who have a 4-2 advantage over them so far. The Indians are a talented bunch, with money to spend, and Douglas Crawford must be disappointed that his team hover at only just over .500. After a couple of bad weeks, KC face Chicago, Seattle and Oakland as they look to get back on track in both the divisional and wild card race. The White Sox are probably better than their record suggests but have been horrible on the road and need to rectify that, regardless of the opponent.

Continued good luck to all and any contributions for the next issue appreciated as ever.

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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.