

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

Week 11 Review

The Nationals may have left Montreal and moved to Washington but Canadian baseball is alive and well in the form of the Toronto Blue Jays. Philip Howard's men were in tremendous form this week. They are currently on an 11-game winning streak and have jumped from 3rd to 1st in the division. In fact, they are now just 1 game behind the Angels (of Los Angeles!) for the best record in the AL.

The Jays form is illustrated by the fact that this winning streak includes sweeps in Boston and in LA – tough places to go and win. This week saw the first major signs of chinks in the armour of the Red Sox. They followed being defeated by the Jays by sweeping the White Sox but ended by getting swept in Oakland. The BoSox week got even worse with the news that a long-term injury will sideline CF David Ortiz until the last couple of weeks of the regular season.

Nevertheless, the Red Sox now occupy the wild card position in a hotly-contested AL race. They are a game ahead of Seattle, who are a game ahead of New York and Texas, who are a game ahead of Cleveland, who are a game ahead of KC who, in turn, are a game ahead of Oakland! 7 teams within 5 games of each other for the wild card and all well within striking distance of their division leaders.

Out West, the Angels (of Los Angeles) currently have a 4-game losing streak but a 3-game lead in the division. In the Central, the Twins needed a week-ending sweep of the Rangers in Texas to maintain a 2-game lead over the emerging Indians.

Maybe not according to the standings but the big series in the NL was the Giants (and Joe Beimel) trip to Pittsburgh to face his former team the Pirates. Beimel had only lasted 3 innings in his Giants debut at home to the Rockies so he had to do better against his former team didn't he?.....

In front of a fervent crowd at PNC park though, Beimel again struggled. He didn't get absolutely hammered but struggled through 4 2/3 innings giving up 4 runs and – much to the joy of the Pittsburgh faithful – getting the loss. Giants GM Marc Bradbrook will hope that this was just down to the pressure of joining a new team and surely Beimel has too much ability to struggle for long.

On the field, the Reds had a surprisingly terrible week, culminating in getting swept by, of all teams, the Diamondbacks. They still hold a comfortable 12 game lead however, though the Cubs had an excellent week to get themselves back into the wild card race. Unenviably, the Brewers have the worst record in the league.

The Expos (well OK, the Nationals) continue to hold the lead in the East, though the lead is down to 3 games ahead of the Braves, with the Marlins just a further game behind.

The Braves currently hold the wild card position and, though it's not quite as close a race as in the AL, it's pretty close. They are a game ahead of Florida and Colorado and only 4 games ahead of the Cubbies and 5 ahead of the Phils.

Out West, the Dodgers went a mere 8-1. They are simply dominant at the moment and are on course for 119 wins. Their 'magic number' for the division is already down to a mere 42 and, partly due to the Reds poor week, now hold a huge 13-game lead in the only race they are still in – the one for homefield advantage throughout the NL playoffs.

Off the field, some interesting free-agent moves took place but the big news came out of Tampa. Rookie Lance Carter, who was the #5 pick in the draft, may have had a disappointing rookie year but it is surprising that there are strong rumours that he is available for trade.

GM Dilworth is said to be keen to ship Carter in exchange for a big power bat who can take advantage of the tight confines of Tropicana Field. A number of teams are likely to be interested and it will be interesting to see developments.

Boom time?

An analysis of the financial accounts of franchises in MLB8 shows a healthy picture. The average losing point balance is 99, average stadium of level 11, average merchandising level of 106, average trainer of 9 and average wages of 85.

The interesting thing is that with all this money flying around and finances in such a healthy state, there isn't much for owners to spend money on other than investing in their stadium, training staff and additional merchandise.

The best free-agent available is arguably reliever Brendan Donnelly who, whilst a very solid player, isn't going to transform your team. This will obviously change over time but is it good for baseball that teams have so many losing points and long-term investment to sit on?

Week 12 Preview

The week starts with the Reds carrying their 3-game losing streak into Chicago. Cincy hold a 7-2 record against the Cubs so far this season but a sweep by the Cubs might just make the division interesting again. The Reds have 2 other tough series as they travel to Washington (tough for me to get used to saying that!) and then host the Braves. The Cubs though hardly have it easy as they have to face the Dodgers.

The Dodgers could play a major part in the postseason race this week as they face not only the Cubs but also the wild-card chasing Rockies and the NL East leading Nationals. They are also without Beltre for at least the first 6 games so may only win 6 or 7 games this week!!!

In the East, the Marlins have what looks to be a reasonable week after a series in Atlanta. They will look to take advantage of this and make a move this week as the Braves, and particularly the Nationals, have tough weeks.

The Diamondbacks will look to ride the wave of their series sweep of the Reds as they face the Giants and Marlins either side of a big series in Milwaukee. I say big series as this one may

have a big impact on the 'race' for the no.1 draft pick. The Brew Crew currently lead this 'race', a game ahead of the Devil Rays, and 2 ahead of the D'Backs.

The Jays will look to continue their hot streak but have a tough week as they face 3 teams chasing playoff spots in the Yankees, Indians and Rangers. Boston will look to get back on form as they travel to Tampa but then have to face Minnesota and the tough Seattle Mariners, who are led by probable rookie of the year Randy Winn.

This could be a big week for the Twins. They host division rivals, the Royals, then travel to Boston and host the Yankees. A good week may give them some breathing space in the competitive Central. The Royals and Indians both look to have slightly easier weeks and need to stay in touch with Minny.

It's a top of the table clash in the West as the LA Angels (again – finding this difficult!) travel to the Mariners. This could be a huge series for the Angels as it is followed by relatively easy looking series against Tampa and Chicago (who they have a combined record of 11-1 against this year). If they can win the Seattle series, they may be able to give themselves some clear breathing space in the division.

Still chasing them are the Rangers and A's who face each other before playing Chicago and Toronto and New York and Kansas respectively.

Not many All-Star votes yet guys! Other than your editor, only Bo Mayfield can hold his head high and say that he has got his votes in. I look forward to receiving some in time for the next issue, along with some contributions?

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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.