

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

Week 13 Review

The biggest movers this week were the Atlanta Braves who took advantage of sweeping the Nationals at RFK Stadium and take a 4-game lead in the division. A bad week for the Nats was made worse with the news that ace Liván Hernández will probably miss his next 3 starts. The Phillies are only on the fringes of the wild card race but the Marlins are just 2 behind Washington in that race.

The other big news in the NL was a losing week for the Dodgers! They lost a series at home to the Phillies and then one in Cincinnati. In what could be an NLCS preview, the Dodgers only win was in extra innings and all games were low-scoring pitching duels. LA also lost Kaz Ishii for what is likely to be the rest of the regular season. The Rockies winning week got them back in the wild card race whilst the D'Backs hit rock bottom. They went 1-8 and scored only 10 runs in 9 games.

In the Central, the Reds got back on an even keel, particularly with the win over the Dodgers. The Pirates 7-2 week got them right into the wild card race. New GM Guy Handley really seems to have this team going and has finances available if the right player came along. The Cubs remain on the fringes of the race.

In the American League, the Angels exerted their superiority over the Rangers with a one-sided sweep in Texas. They are now 8 games ahead of the Mariners who are a further game ahead of a Ranger team that now looks to be out of the playoff race. The A's ended the week by getting swept in Toronto and have now fallen well out of the race after what had been a promising start to the season.

It was a wacky series in the Metrodome when the Twins hosted the ChiSox. The Twins took the series 2-1 but all 3 games went to extra innings. This helped the Twins pull out a 6-game lead over the Royals and showed that,

despite their record, Chicago are very close to being a very good team. The Royals and Indians now seem to have only vague hopes of a postseason berth.

The East looks highly likely to be the division that boasts the wild card team. The Red Sox had another outstanding week and hold a 1-game lead over the Jays. The Jays hold a strong 7-game lead in the wild card race. The Yankees have slowly slipped away whilst Tampa, though improving, continue to struggle.

Philadelphia feelings by Rob Crowther

We're well out of the race I think. Losing a starting pitcher (Brandon Duckworth) for the rest of the year won't help but I know that won't be the difference between us and a playoff team. Serious under performing by our supposedly 'star' players, particularly some of the power hitting outfielders and our 8* pitchers, has left us without much chance. Build for the future mode is fully engaged.

Season over in Texas by Ian Gibson

Dreadful week for us and to all intents and purposes, postseason hopes are now over - 8 games behind the wild card. We simply haven't performed well enough and our pitching let us down badly this week in what was a crucial week. There may be major changes afoot in Texas as it is becoming clear that the current squad isn't quite good enough to get it done.

The week started with a huge series at home to the champs that we know we had to win to stay in touch. Close game in game 1 that we go onto eventually lose by 1 run (5-4). We out-hit the Angels by 3, drew 4 more walks and hit 1 homer to their none. Big difference, they left 3 runners stranded on base, we leave 11. Recurring theme in many of our defeats and evidence again that this team just isn't quite good enough.

This defeat took the stuffing out of us and a must win home series ended in us being swept. Nothing particularly notable to say about the rest of the week other than that the injury to Michael Young just makes things even worse. We now

have a losing record at home – very poor. As I say, this team is just not good enough – changes afoot!

Week 14 Preview

The week begins with a massive series in the AL East. Boston travel to Toronto looking to hang onto their slender lead. They have struggled slightly on the road but face a Blue Jay team that will be without their ace Roy Halladay who is having to miss a start due to a slight injury. The BoSox then face a trip to Cleveland before a home series against Texas. The Jays travel to the Twin Cities and then Tampa Bay.

There are no other matchups that immediately jump out in an American League where it would now be a surprise if the playoff teams weren't Los Angeles, Minnesota, Boston and Toronto. You never know though

In the National League, the week begins with the Nationals hosting the Marlins. This now looks a huge series for the Nats as they look to hold onto their wild card place against their nearest challengers without Livan Hernandez. Washington then travel to Pittsburgh before what they will hope be an easy home series against Arizona. Florida travel to Cincinnati and then host the Dodgers in what could be a make-or-break week for them. The Braves will look to take advantage of what looks a manageable week (Philly, Colorado and Pittsburgh) to give themselves a strong lead in the division.

In the Central, the Reds travel to Pittsburgh A sweep for the Pirates and you never know, there might be a race on again? The Reds also have that home series against Florida before a trip to the Phillies. Without any offense to their opposition (Milwaukee, Arizona and Colorado), the Cubs have as easy a week as you are likely to have and simply have to take advantage if they are going to make a run for the wild card.

The crisis-ridden Dodgers (!) travel to Arizona for a series that could get horrible if the Dodgers catch fire and the D'Backs offense continues to be so anaemic. LA follow this with a home

series against Milwaukee (LA are 16-2 against the Brewers and Arizona this year!).

All-Star Game

Will hopefully run this turn! My fault (not the Commissioner's) if it doesn't as I have only sent the information to him at the last minute. Managers are Paul Beaumont (as previously mentioned) and David Trice for the NL.

The votes have been sent to the respective managers and they will be making their selections based on these. Should be a good match-up and an enjoyable game.

Showing the competitiveness across the league, there were few unanimous selections. In the AL, unanimous selections were 2B Damian Jackson (Boston) and Alfonso Soriano (New York). Equally, there are relatively few players who repeat as starters – 1B Roberto Alomar (White Sox), SS Corey Koskie (Twins) and Soriano.

In the NL, unanimous selections are 1B Adrian Beltre (Dodgers), SS Ryan Freel (Reds) and pitcher (and likely Cy Young winner) Wilson Alvarez of the Dodgers. The only repeating starters are Beltre and 2B Jolbert Cabrera (also Dodger) along with C Jason LaRue of the Reds. 5 of the 9 starters will be Dodgers, which just shows their dominance this season. If it wasn't for the need to include every team in the selection, there would probably be even more Dodgers on the overall squad.

Will this number of Dodgers be enough to win the NL the game? The NL won last year but AL manager Paul Beaumont managed to beat the Dodgers in the World Series last year and will look to do the same in this all-star game.

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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.