

'Better Eight Than Never' - The Newsletter of MLB8

Week 10 Review

What a week for the National League as they trounced the AL 63 games to 45. And in particular, what a week for Mike Sim's Atlanta Braves! The Jays, White Sox and A's were all swept this week as the Braves ran their winning streak to 16 games. This is a league record, breaking the previous best of 13 games by the Phillies in Season 1.

Memories of that will do little to make Phillies fans feel better as their 2-7 week effectively ended their playoff aspirations. Elsewhere in the NL East, the Nationals and Marlins both had good weeks though they still lost further ground to the Braves. Though their offense found some form this week it will be worrying to GM David Trice that his men have drawn the fewest walks in the league.

Despite the good weeks by Washington and Florida, they are still only 3rd and 4th respectively in the wild card race. The Reds are 2nd after a great week in which they swept the Red Sox and Yankees – the top 2 teams in the AL East. 6 times this week the Reds scored 8 runs or more and, relatively quietly, they have scored the 2nd most runs in the majors. This has pulled them within 2 games of the Pirates whilst remain well in touch in the wild card chase. The Brewers are 5 games clear in the 'race' for the #1 pick, a 'race' they won last season.

Much to their annoyance, the Wild Card team is currently the Giants. Their week started with them being surprisingly swept at home to the Rangers and, though they won the next 2 series, the Dodgers 6-3 week has LA back on top on run differential. The Rockies seem to be fading and, despite the D'Backs good week, there are rumours that GM Beaton may be leaving the organisation in the near future which would be a shame for a team that needs stability.

The Dodgers week ended with them sweeping the Jays in Toronto. This was another blow to Toronto and was a series where their batsmen failed to draw any walks! This was part of a pretty awful week for an AL East that, to this point, had the best record in interleague play. Boston still lead the division while New York are equal 2nd in the wild card race. Both teams had further bad news on the injury front with Boston losing starting SS Graffanino and the Yankees starting pitcher Contreras for about a week or so.

The Central continues to be tight with the Royals taking the lead from the White Sox by a game. Chicago hold the wild card whilst the Twins continue to show some inconsistency. Hampered by a 5-game losing streak during the week, they are equal with the Yanks and 4 games behind KC. The Indians are the main 'challengers' to Milwaukee in the race for the #1 pick. The main reason for this is their fielding – they have conceded 112 unearned runs, 47 more than any other team! Goodness knows where they would be without all-star outfield candidates Bradley, Phillips and Escobar?

Whilst everyone else in the AL seems to be fighting for position and consistency, the Angels (see below) seem to be continuing to build momentum and have been really dominant at home. The Rangers seem to be improving slightly whilst the A's and Mariners are probably already planning for next season.

All business in LA by Paul Beaumont

The Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim are quietly going about their business and are pleased with the season to date. The team are ranked 2nd in the AL in both pitching (4.08 ERA) and batting (.285 Avg) through 90 games; and have the best record in the AL (57-33). The Angels haven't added any stars from last season but are playing consistently well as a team.

Young OFs DaVanon and Owens are developing well and, along with a veteran core of Erstad, Figgins, and Kennedy, anchor the batting line-up and the supporting cast are performing well too. On the pitching side Sweeney has taken his chance in the starting rotation and is currently 5-0 in 13 starts. Youngster Moseley (2.81 ERA) has also been pitching well but a major injury has interrupted a good season. The vast majority of the starters and bullpen have several years of experience, and the team has been developing several young players for the future at AAA.

The Angels are looking for more of the same for the rest of the regular season. The team failed in a bid to sign SS Belliard but are looking at every opportunity to improve the team. With the league still relatively young most teams are still evenly matched so nothing is being taken for granted, and the manager will make sure the team continues to play hard every game.

All-Star Preamble

The voting slip is attached as per previous seasons so please all get your votes in by the deadline of **Friday 10th March** (plenty of time so no excuses!). Please use the GBSPN website statistics facility to help you in your voting – full stats as at Week 10 are available. Even without that though, here are a number of players worthy of consideration.

In the AL, there is a dearth of catchers (again), outfielders like Olerud, Bradley, Walker, Alexander, Soriano, Hudson, DaVanon, Sweeney, Phillips, Escobar, Shumpert and Rivas and infielders like Stevens, Erstad, Gomez, Freel, Matos, Bloomquist, Koskie, Figgins, Merloni and Alomar.

The NL has a number of quality catchers (Estrada and Hundley amongst them), outfielders like Sanders, Chipper Jones, Lowell, Kata, Andruw Jones, Alou, Olmedo, McGriff, Young, Kinkade and Helton and infielders such as Rivera, Cabrera, Hill, Bay, Nunez, Pellow, Morgan, Lee and Millar.

Week 11 Preview

Key divisional matchups feature the White Sox at Twins, Braves at Marlins (Braves looking to continue 'the streak')

and the big one in San Fran as the Giants host the Dodgers. Other series between playoff-contending teams feature the Angels at Twins, Dodgers at Nationals, Red Sox at Angels, Cubs at Giants and Reds at Dodgers.

This makes it a pretty big week for a Dodger team who, in GM Patrick Lee's own words are 'not playing with any real authority'.

ALL-STAR GAME VOTING FORM

1B – 1:

1B – 2:

1B – 3:

2B – 1:

2B – 2:

2B – 3:

3B – 1:

3B – 2:

3B – 3:

SS – 1:

SS – 2:

SS – 3:

C – 1:

C – 2:

C – 3:

LF – 1:

LF – 2:

LF – 3:

CF – 1:

CF – 2:

CF – 3:

RF – 1:

RF – 2:

RF – 3:

P – 1:

P – 2:

P – 3:

P – 4:

P – 5:

P – 6:

Please vote for your top 3 position players and top 6 pitchers (doesn't matter whether they are starters or relievers). The top vote getter at each position and top pitcher will start the All-Star Game. Please note that you can vote for players from your own team.

The All-Star manager will decide on the DH, the other pitchers and batting order. They will also ensure that every team is represented on the squad, though no team is guaranteed to have someone actually play in the game.

The general intention is that the teams are managed by the managers of the champions of each league. This would mean Philip Howard for the AL and David Trice for the NL. However, David stepped into the breach last season when Patrick Lee was unavailable so I propose that Patrick takes on the honour this season.

I have kept a record of who paid last year and who offered but didn't need to pay. Based on this, could Philip, Paul B, Paul D, Dave, Martin and Bo confirm that they are willing to offer a credit again? If all OK, 4 of you will be picked at random.

Please feel free to replicate this form and return by email or through the post or however you would like to vote as long as there are 3 players for each position and 6 pitchers.

Deadline for receiving votes is 10th March so get checking the GBSPN website and get voting!

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<http://www.qbspn.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 time, Ian.