

'Better Eight Than Never' - The Newsletter of MLB8

Week 10 Review

The interleague pendulum swung back to the National League this week as they went 62-46. This puts the overall series history at 439-425 to the NL. The major sufferer in the AL were Troy Dilworth's Devil Rays. They had a daunting schedule and their pitching just couldn't cope this week, culminating in a disappointing sweep at home to the Reds to end the week.

The Jays continue to lead the division, with the Yankees taking advantage of Tampa's bad week to go 2nd and move into the wild card spot. The bad news for the Yankees is that young RF Gary Sheffield has picked up an injury that will keep him out for a while. He's been a key player this year and is 3rd in the AL in hits.

In the Central, the Twins had a bad week which ended with them being swept in Atlanta – though all 3 games were close. Conversely, the Royals ended the week with an impressive sweep of the Dodgers which pulls them within 2 games of Minnesota. The White Sox are well in the race as well but more of them later.

In the West, the Angels re-took the lead taking advantage of the Rangers ending the week by getting swept by an in-form Cubs team. This leaves Kansas, Texas and Tampa all 2 games behind the Yankees in the wild card race. Oakland have yet to appoint a new manager and the Mariners continue to struggle. The M's did though make a nice signing this week, acquiring veteran 1B Darrin Erstad from the Angels. Erstad will particularly help in the field where the Mariners have really struggled this season.

In the NL East, the Braves stretched their lead to 9 games and now (on run differential) have the best record in the league. This is a nice lead and means that they can probably maintain the lead whilst catcher Johnny Estrada is out with an injury. The Phillies are at .500 whilst the Nationals have quietly crept back into the fringes of the race after a horrible start. Their 23-13 record in the last 4 weeks is equal best in the league (with the Braves and Reds) during that stretch.

The Reds run has them top of the Central, though only by a game from a Cubs team that cracked an incredible 100 runs this week. The form of these 2 teams means that it doesn't seem quite as certain that the wild card will come out of the West any more. The Pirates are still just about in touch but are having problems both on the mound and in the field.

The Royals sweep of the Dodgers helped the Giants take a 1-game lead over their LA rivals. Livan Hernandez seems to be settling in nicely in San Fran and LA are struggling a little with their pitching. They are giving up too many hits but would still look to have the quality to turn this round as they lead the league by some distance in terms of fewest

walks and steals given up. They will definitely be worried by only having a 2-game lead over Chicago for the wild card. The Rockies got back into the fringes of the race with a nice week, including a sweep of the Royals.

Managerial change on the South Side

In a shock announcement today at U.S Cellular Field, GM Bud Wiser announced that they would be firing long time Coach Martin Halls. Halls managed a single wild card in his 3 years in charge. Wiser said that the teams continual inability to win the division and compete with the Twins under Halls and a fall back in performance this year meant that a change was essential to move the team on to the next level.

Coach Halls said that he thought he had left the team in good shape and that the majority of the team had their best years ahead of them. It's unclear whether the Sox management have anyone lined up to takeover in a season where, with a bit of luck, the team could still challenge for a play-off spot.

Diamondbacks thoughts by Richard Ogg

With the Diamondbacks comfortably bottom of the NL West, ranked 21st in ERA and 22nd in batting average, it seems no progress has been made since the change of management. The squad is little changed with only one new player brought in via free agency and he may soon be waived.

However, I remain optimistic that the franchise is heading in the right direction as my first aim is now nearly achieved, the strengthening of the finances. I am now in a position to coach some of the younger players and bring in more experienced support players from free agency.

The bullpen is currently a major area of weakness but I am now beginning to gain the payroll flexibility to allow a couple of veterans to be signed. My main regret was bringing Luis Gonzalez up from AAA too soon and I hope to return him to the minors where he can develop further.

Overall I am enjoying the league and look forward to the Diamondbacks improving over the 2nd half of the season.

Week 11 Preview

There are 2 very big division series to open the week. In both cases, the home teams are just behind their rivals but have had the better of the individual skirmishes. The Dodgers and Rangers will hope they can continue this against the Giants and Angels respectively. The Dodgers also face the Reds and improving Nationals whilst the Rangers also play the Twins and Red Sox.

Other key series feature the Braves at the Cubs and the Yankees at the Angels. I'm not saying which but there are rumours of an imminent trade between 2 of these teams.....

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:

All-Star Game

It's that time of the season again! I'm really keen to maintain the history of this league and maintain a 100% record of having all star games and all-star games that have a decent number of votes to inform them.

David Trice will be kindly uploading the full stats onto his excellent GBSPN website as at the end of Week 10 so use that to help your votes. So, get voting whilst sitting there with a belly full of turkey sandwiches over the Xmas period!

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 game. You can vote for players from your own team. The All-Star manager will decide on the DH, other pitchers and batting order. They will also ensure that every team is represented, 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 Paul Denyer for the AL and Patrick Lee for the NL. Patrick also managed last season so I'll leave it to him as to whether he wants to again or nominate somebody else.

I've maintained records of credits from previous seasons. Messrs Howard, Handley, Brearley and Dilworth offered last year but weren't required so wonder whether they may offer again? No problem if not as I'll sort it but could you please let me know.

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.

Intending to run the game in Week 13 or 14 so get voting!

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<http://www.gbspn.com/> Gameplan Baseball news and statistics from all nine Gameplan Baseball leagues (now including MLB21 as well as the established 8 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.