

# BRASS BASEBALL LEAGUE

## AMERICAN LEAGUE NEWSLETTER

May, 2001

### Junior Circuit Continues Its Dominance

*11 of 12 Teams Over .500*

For the second consecutive month, AL clubs asserted themselves as the stronger group, by far, over their NL counterparts. Through 56 games, 11 of the 12 teams in the American League sport +.500 records! What's more, only TWO NL teams currently reside above the .500 mark (Ocala and Stanley), with two others perched precariously at .500.

In the Central, Cook County asserted itself in May, with a 23-5 mark versus the NL East, while the Lions from Plaza stayed close with a fine 20-8 mark. Meanwhile, the upstarts from Iowa remain a viable candidate for one of the two wildcard slots after posting their second consecutive winning month. In the East, Georgia came back strong after a poor April to post a 20-win month. Minnesota edged ahead of Morris with a 19-win month, as the Monarchs posted an 18-10 mark themselves. Meanwhile, Hessville quietly lurks in the "cellar", only 5 games out of first place. Finally, in the West, Toledo was the only club with a plus .500 mark for May, as the Western division was matched against the NL Central, probably the strongest division in the NL from top to bottom. Santa Barbara trails the Mudhens by two games after a 14-14 May, and St. Croix also went .500 for the month, and reside five games out of first. Brooklyn lost 16 of 28, but remain within 6 of the top spot in the division.

Overall, the playoff races are shaping up quite nicely through 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the season. In both the Eastern and Western divisions, EACH team remains in the thick of the race, while in the Central, only Box City looks to be out of the running for October play. The month of June may begin to separate the "men from the boys", as the AL West will match up against the formidable central. Meanwhile, the AL East will look to fatten up versus the NL East, which currently has four teams below .500.

### American League East

**1. Cook County Maulers (23-5 in May, 44-12 overall):** Perhaps the single most impressive statistic one can present to illustrate the Mauler's season thus far is this: As a team, they are hitting .319. Meanwhile, their pitching staff is allowing its opponents to hit a paltry .222. They have out-homered their opponents 138-48, and have an amazing 230 MORE hits through 56 games than do their opponents. Individually, Nomar Garciaparra (.389) and Edgar Martinez (.374) are waging their own personal "war" for the AL batting title, ranking 1 and 2 respectively. Vladimir Guerrero (23) and rookie Troy Glaus (21) are 1<sup>st</sup> (tied with Barry Bonds) and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the league in homers respectively. Pedro Martinez (10-0, 1.17 ERA) extended his winning streak to 10 games, while rookie Britt Reames (4-0, 2.18 ERA in 5 starts) enjoyed a fine May in his own right. Mariano Rivera (1.45 ERA) has 13 saves and a victory in his 17 appearances, while Kevin Brown (7-3, 2.78 ERA) has completed 5 of his 12 starts thus far.

**2. Plaza Lions (20-8 in May, 42-14 overall):** Plaza currently ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in team batting, tied with Cook County at .319. Though they have managed to hit 74 fewer home runs than the Maulers, they have only 17 fewer hits. Jeff Kent (.369-10-50) and Luis Gonzalez (.355-15-64) rank 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in the league in hitting, while Luis Castillo has posted super numbers thus far: .353 avg, 54 runs, and

19 steals---all ranking in the top 5 in the league. Tom Glavine (9-2, 2.75) and Paul Abbott (9-0, 3.13) have stolen the show pitching-wise, while Armando Benitez (14 saves) and Turk Wendell (5 earned runs in 27 innings) have nailed down most all leads the Lions have had in the later innings.

**3. Iowa Rubes (16-12 in May, 33-23 overall):** The Rubes continued to surprise teams in May, and sit smack in the middle of the wildcard race with 2 months in the books. With no one player standing out statistically speaking, the Rubes have managed to play "team" baseball en route to their impressive record thus far. Cliff Floyd bounced back from a horrendous April to raise his average from .169 to .252. Magglio Ordonez (.279-9-41) leads the club in homers and RBI, while Cristian Guzman (.286-18 steals, 6 triples) and Eric Young (.327-4-26-17 steals) continue to put the pressure on opposing defenses with their speed. Kris Benson (6-5, 3.36) scuffled in May, losing 3 of 5 decisions, while Kenny Rogers (6-1, 4.44) and Jamey Wright (5-3, 4.34) picked up the slack a bit. Meanwhile, the bullpen of Scott Sullivan, Kevin Walker, Tim Worrell, Rick White, and Dave Veres continued as the most dominant aspect of this team. Collectively, the 5 have posted a 10-6 record, with 16 saves, and a fine 2.37 ERA. If the Rubes continue to get that type of quality pitching in the later innings, they will be printing playoff tickets come September.

**4. Box City (10-18 in May, 18-38 overall):** The pitching actually got worse in May, as the team ERA rose from 5.29 to 6.13. John Halama (2-4, 5.81) actually sports the lowest ERA of any Parcelman starting pitcher. On the plus side of the ledger, the team has four players on a pace for 30+ homers, including Mike Sweeney (.321-14-43) and Jim Thome (.299-13-37). Thome also ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the AL in bases on balls. Kenny Lofton ranks among the leaders with 13 steals, though he had trouble getting on base in May (.225 avg).

## American League Central

**1. Toledo Mudhens (16-12 in May, 35-21 overall):** Toledo continued to excell on the road in May, running their record away from home to 19-9. In all, they moved two games up on the Outlaws and into first in the division. Though they rank dead last in home runs with 48 (due in large part to the spaciousness of their home park---Comerica), the 'Hens are hitting a fine .299 as a team. Catcher Joe Girardi ranks in the top ten in the AL in hitting at .340, with Benny Agbayani (.336-6-30) and Gary Sheffield (.332-7-32) close behind. Rookie Mike Lowell (.306-12-40) cooled off a bit in May, but still leads his team in homers and RBI. Secondbaseman Miguel Cairo has surprised with his .309 average and 17 stolen bases. Both Dave Burba (4-0, 2.62) and Stan Spencer (5-0, 2.88) are unbeaten, as is Kelvim Escobar (4-0, 4.44 in 8 starts). Trevor Hoffman (11 saves) has been effective as the closer.

**2. Santa Barbara Outlaws (14-14 in May, 33-23 overall):** A mediocre May dropped the Outlaws out of first, though they still may be the team to beat. Catcher Javy Lopez is off to an MVP-caliber pace, at .331-18-45. Delino Deshields (.353-6-40-16 steals) has been a spark at the top of the lineup, with Robin Ventura (.307-14-37) providing considerable sock in the middle. Todd Hollandsworth (.304-7-15-16 steals) has been a nice surprise for the Outlaws, while Ellis Burks (2 homers in 130 plate appearances) has been a disappointment. As a team however, the Outlaws saw their batting average drop 20 points in May. Rob Nen saved another six games in May (17 overall), and Orlando Hernandez (5-0, 4.27 ERA) remained unbeaten. Bartolo Colon and Darren Dreifort (5 wins each) have each been solid in their eleven starts as well. \_

**3. St. Croix Rivermen (14-14 in May, 30-26 overall):** Only five games out of first, the Rivermen continued to hang in there with the big boys. Kevin Millwood (4-1 in May, 8-3 overall) was dominant in May, lowering his ERA to 2.62, behind only Pedro and Maddux. Carl Pavano (6-3, 4.05) and James Baldwin (5-5, 4.08) scuffled a bit in May, but still rank among the more consistent starters thru the first two months of the year. Ben Grieve (.329-13-44) ranks among the top ten in average and doubles, while Manny Ramirez (.267-17-44) ranks among the leaders in homers and RBI. Luis

Alicea ranks first in sacrifices with 16. Shortstop Mike Bordick (10 homers) has provided unexpected sock thus far, and Johnny Damon (15 steals, 79 hits) has been a major force at the top of the order.

**4. Brooklyn Bulldogs (12-16 in May, 29-27 overall):** Their AL low .266 continues to haunt the 'Dogs, despite their league BEST 3.53 ERA. So much for the old saying about pitching winning championships!! Greg Maddux (7-4, 2.11) and Andy Pettitte (6-4, 3.23) have done their part, as has rookie Kaz Sasaki (10 saves, 1 run allowed in 16 innings). David Justice (18 homers, 40 RBI) has struggled to get his average over .240, though he has been the team's biggest run producer. Robbie Alomar (.298-5-28-11 steals) and Darin Erstad (.294-6-24) have been effective at the top of the order, while Paul O'Neill (.246-5-28) and Dean Palmer (.233-4-21) have been a drain on an already mediocre offensive club. Still, a birth in the playoffs is within reach, if the offense can step up a notch in the final few months.

## American League West

**1. Minnesota Mudcats (19-9 in May, 35-21 overall):** Five games separates all four teams in the East, though the Mudcats still remain top dog thru May. With 19 road wins, the Cats have made hay away from their home park. Kevin Tapani (9-1, 4.20 ERA, 4CG, 1 sho) and Mike Hampton (6-4, 3.42) have been a fine duo atop the rotation, while Darryl Kile (4 wins in 13 starts) has pitched well, with little run support. Matt Morris (8 saves) has emerged as the surprise closer. As a team, the 'Cats have tossed a league-high 5 shutouts. Andruw Jones (.323-13-50) leads the AL in hits, while Jason Giambi (.260-14-35) leads the league with 59 walks. Geoff Jenkins (.296-16-52) and Alex Rodriguez (.289-13-45) have also put up huge numbers thru 56 games. Brian Giles knocked in 29 runs in May, though he still carries a mediocre .244 avg.

**2. Morris Monarchs (18-10 in May, 34-22 overall):** Currently in the 2<sup>nd</sup> wildcard position, the Monarchs have put together a fine start. Though they've won only 12 of 28 on the road, the team has offset that with a fine home mark thus far. Barry Bonds launched 12 more homers and knocked in an incredible 40 runs, bringing his season totals to .348-23-70. In fact, you'll find Barry among the league leaders in most offensive categories. Jim Edmonds (.291-21-51) has supplemented Barry's fine start with a great start of his own. Tony Womack leads the AL in steals with 25. Rookie Elmer Dessens (3-2, 3.60) had a fine debut in May, and Pedro Astacio (4-3, 5.68) rebounded from a disastrous April to lower his ERA from the 7.00 area. Curt Leskanic (4-1, 3.16, 11 saves) has been great out of the bullpen.

**3. Georgia Braves (20-8 in May, 32-24 overall):** A terrific May catapulted the Braves right into the thick of the division race. Albie Lopez (8-2, 3.42) won all 5 of his decisions in May, and has clearly entrenched himself as staff ace. Sid Ponson (5-2, 3.77) also pitched well, winning 3 of 4 decisions. And after a horrible April, Tim Hudson bounced back to go 3-0 in May, and lowered his ERA from 7.15 to 5.15. Those three hurlers could go a long way toward bringing their team to the playoffs with continued quality outings like they had in May. Keith Foulke has been great out of the pen, with 12 saves. Dmitri Young (.332-7-43) has emerged as the team's offensive force, as he drove in 25 with 4 homers this month. Derrek Lee, Jose Canseco, Travis Fryman, Mike Cameron and Olmaedo Saenz each have anywhere from 7-9 homers apiece.

**4. Hessville Evereadys (16-12 in May, 30-26 overall):** Hessville has hung tough thus far, thanks in large part to some surprisingly solid pitching performances. Ryan Rupe (6-2, 5.12) has continued where he left off in 2000, when he won 13 of 18 decisions as a rookie. Shawn Estes (3-3, 5.01 ERA) and Frank Castillo (2-6, 4.29) have been solid, though their records don't indicate it. Josias Manzanillo has 11 saves, despite an ugly 6.17 ERA. Southpaw Rob Ramsay

(5-2, 1 save, 3.27 ERA) has been the team's most effective pitcher overall, allowing only 22 hits in 33 innings. Andres Galarraga (.344-14-39) has somehow managed to put up great numbers despite getting drilled TEN times by opposing pitchers. Jose Vidro (.320-9-36) and Jeff Cirillo (.338-3-26) have contributed key hits along the way, while rookie Terrence Long (278-10-34) has been the team's biggest power threat next to the Big Cat. Only 5 games out of first, the Evereadys have a chance to surprise some people before the season closes.