

# BRASS BASEBALL LEAGUE

## AMERICAN LEAGUE NEWSLETTER

June, 2001

As the season reaches its midway point, **eleven** of the twelve American League teams still have realistic chances of playing baseball in October. Amazingly, 6 teams are positioned within 4 games of each other for the second wildcard slot. Plaza currently has a firm grip on the top wildcard slot, despite falling six games behind Cook County for the Central Division lead. The Maulers meanwhile, ran off 19 wins and now have a fairly comfortable lead. In the East, Minnesota won 21 games and stretched their lead over the competition to seven full games. Still, the remaining Eastern division teams all have very realistic shots at a wildcard spot. Over in the West, Santa Barbara and Toledo are in a dead heat through 84 games, with Brooklyn and St. Croix within striking distance.

July should be an interesting month, as the AL East matches up with the AL Central. With seven of the eight teams playing well above .500 baseball, there should be some terrific matchups to monitor. Meanwhile, the AL West will go up against the NL West, which has three teams playing sub .400 baseball. With the Central and Eastern division teams beating up on each other, July should provide teams like Brooklyn and St. Croix (not to mention division leaders Santa Barbara and Toledo) a great chance to fatten up and enhance their postseason chances.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch.....here's a look at what transpired in June.....

### American League Central

- 1. Cook County Maulers (19-9 in June, 63-21 overall):** Another fine month left the Maulers with six more wins than any other team in the AL, and a six game cushion on the Plaza Lions. The Maulers rank #1 in both pitching and hitting, and have outscored their opponents by 290 runs through 84 games. Individually, Vladimir Guerrero (.361-33-96) is making his case for a second consecutive MVP award, as he chases the Triple Crown. Vlad ranks third in batting, only six percentage points behind the AL leader Delino Deshields. He leads in both homers and RBI. Meanwhile, rookies Troy Glaus (.285-26-69) and Julio Lugo (.281-10-38-12 steals) have invigorated the Mauler offense with their energy and production. Pedro Martinez (15-1, 1.50 ERA, 8 CGs) lost for the first time in June, though he won his other five starts. Kevin Brown (7-3, 3.13 ERA) made five starts in June, all no decisions.
- 2. Plaza Lions (15-13 in June, 57-27 overall):** Were it not for the existence of the Maulers, Plaza would have the best record in all of BRASSball. At 30 games over .500, the Lions are looking like a sure bet for playoff baseball in 2001. Their .313 team batting average is tied for tops in the AL with Cook County. Jeff Kent (.363-20-78) had a monster June, with 10 homers and 28 RBI. Luis Gonzalez (.349-18-91) drove in 27 runs himself on the month, while Luis Castillo stole an amazing TWENTY bases on the month, increasing his league leading total to 39. Tom Glavine and David Wells each sport 10-4 records with ERAs below four, while Armando Benitez (21 saves) ranks second in the AL in saves.
- 3. Iowa Rubes (13-15 in June, 46-38 overall):** Still within range of a wildcard spot, the Rubes struggled in June. The club's 4.27 ERA does rank fourth in the AL, and it has been the pitching which has kept the Rubes within striking distance. Kris Bensen (9-7, 3.69) went 3-2 in June, while Kenny Rogers (7-5, 4.53) dropped 4 of his 5 decisions. Jose Mercedes (9-4, 4.92) has quietly tied Bensen for the team lead in wins. The bullpen continues to sparkle, including Dave Veres (6-2, 15 saves, 2.05 ERA) and Scott Sullivan (3-3, 2.71). Cliff Floyd (.290-10-41) has raised his average .121 points since a horrific April, and Magglio Ordonez (.313-16-68) blasted 7 homers and drove in

27 on the month. Cristian Guzman (25 steals) and Eric Young (27 steals) continue to put the pressure on opposing defenses with their speed. Carlos Lee (.262-2-19) has been a major disappointment thus far.

4. **Box City (9-19 in June, 27-57 overall):** Opponents continue to rake the Parcelmen pitching staff, to the tune of a .322 batting average against. John Halama and Pete Harnisch have combined to win 7 times in 33 starts. Neither has an ERA below six. On the plus side, Andy Benes (5-9, 5.84, 6 complete games) has given the club some decent innings at times. Closer Jeff Shaw (2.88 ERA, 5 saves) has pitched well, but with so few save opportunities, his value is not being maximized. Mike Sweeney (.306-16-53) and Jim Thome (.284-17-51) are having nice seasons, and shortstop Miguel Tejada (.287-16-66) is developing into a force at the plate.

## American League East

**1. Minnesota Mudcats (21-7 in June, 56-28 overall):** The Mudcats (a league best 30-12 on the road overall!) have run off a 40-16 mark the past two months, and are threatening to now run away with the division. Already up by 7 games, the pitching staff is really taking shape as we head into the second half of the year. Opponents are hitting only .244 versus Mudcat hurlers, led by the dynamic duo of Mike Hampton (12-4, 3.44) and Kevin Tapani (12-2, 4.01 ERA, 5CG, 2 sho). Hampton went 6-0 with a 3.30 ERA on the month, while Tapani won 3 of 4 decisions. Darryl Kile (7-7, 4.38, 4CGs, 2sho) is one heckuva #3 starter! Matt Morris has 14 saves. Andruw Jones (.313-18-67) ranks first in hits in the AL, and 3<sup>rd</sup> in runs scored. He, along with A-Rod (.305-22-74) and Brian Giles (.272-10-72) each rank among the top 12 in the AL in RBI. Jason Giambi (.267-23-53) hit 9 homers in June, and increased his league-leading walk total to 94! David Bell (.309-10-39) has been a revelation at third base, leading the team with 23 doubles.

**2. Georgia Braves (17-11 in June, 49-35 overall):** The Braves have run off a fine 37-19 mark in their past 56 games, yet have still fallen three games further back in the division. They are right in the mix for the 2<sup>nd</sup> wildcard spot however. Albie Lopez (12-4, 3.69) has run off a 9-2 mark the past 2 months, establishing himself as the unlikely ace of the staff. Russ Ortiz (10-5, 5.10) has 115 strikeouts in only 113 innings pitched. Tim Hudson (4-9, 4.94) has been a disappointment after a nice rookie year. Keith Foulke has 18 saves. At the plate, Derrek Lee (.326-17-42) has put up huge numbers in only 216 plate appearances. Dmitri Young (.320-11-60) continues to mash, and Travis Fryman (.309-13-49) has provided veteran leadership over at 3B. And how about shortstop Deivi Cruz?? 51 RBI??

**3. Morris Monarchs (12-16 in June, 46-38 overall):** The Monarchs took a dive in June, and now find themselves smack in the middle of a mad scramble for the final wildcard slot. With their .271 team batting average, Morris ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in the AL, only 3 points ahead of Brooklyn. Barry Bonds (.304-28-84) and Jim Edmonds (.288-28-72) are perhaps the most fearsome duo in the AL. After them, however, the lineup thins out. (THIS JUST IN: EDMONDS HAS BEEN DEALT!!!) Brian Daubach does have 19 homers, and Tony Womack has swiped 38 bases (2<sup>nd</sup> in the AL). Still, if you can keep Barry and Jim in the park, you have a good chance at a "w". Curt Leskanic (4-1, 13 saves, 2.70 ERA) has been terrific in the closer role. The rotation has been sporadic however. Rookie Elmer Dessens (7-3, 3.61) won 4 of 5 decisions in June, while Pedro Astacio (4-9, 6.07) posted a miserable 0-6 mark. Jesus Sanchez (8-4, 4.67) has surprised many with his performance thus far.

**4. Hessville Evereadys (15-13 in June, 45-39 overall):** Hessville continues to hang in there, thanks mainly to their aging firstbaseman Andres Galarraga (.338-20-57) and their Rookie of

the Year candidate Terrence Long (.297-12-40). Jeff Cirillo (.331-6-44-league leading 36 doubles) and Jose Vidro (.296-9-49) have provided some sock out of the infield. Frank Castillo (6-7, 3.83) won 4 of 5 decisions in June, and has assumed the role of staff ace. Josias Manzanillo has notched a surprising 20 saves, despite a sizeable 5.40 ERA.

## American League West

**1. Toledo Mudhens (14-14 in June, 49-35 overall):** A sub-par month allowed the Outlaws to sneak back into a tie for the division lead. The Mudhens lack of power may be catching up with them (league low 74 home runs). Miguel Cairo (28) and Eric Owens (27) rank 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively in steals though, and are leading more of a “small ball” attack. While Gary Sheffield (.320-16-58)-(9 homers, 26 RBI in June) is this team’s undisputed MVP, Benny Agbayani (.324-6-46) has come out of nowhere to provide a major jolt of excitement to the club. Rookie Mike Lowell (.293-14-46) had a second straight mediocre month (2 homers, 6 RBI) after starting the year like a house afire. Jeromy Burnitz (50 RBI) and Todd Zeile (45 RBI) have provided run production, despite their low batting averages. Dave Burba (5-3, 5.01) was rocked in June, losing 3 of 4 decisions with an ERA above six. Kelvim Escobar (6-0, 3.18) has been invaluable shifting between the bullpen and rotation, while Todd Van Poppel and Bob Wells have each pitched 45+ fine innings in relief. Will they hold up for the rest of the year? Trevor Hoffman (18 saves—7 in June) has been racking up saves, but his ERA is a not-so-great 4.64.

**2. Santa Barbara Outlaws (16-12 in June, 49-35 overall):** Is that Delino Deshields perched atop the AL in batting? Yessir! Deshields (.367-7-56-27 steals) raised his average 14 points in June, while driving in 16 runs and stealing 11 bases. Catcher Javy Lopez (.315-23-57) continues to put up huge numbers, and Garrett Anderson (.304-23-69) has become the team’s biggest power threat from the left side. Ellis Burks (.331-9-45) got his wake-up call in June, slamming 7 homers and raising his average considerably. Todd Hollandsworth has 24 steals in 75 games. Rob Nen saved another ten games in June (27 overall), and rookie Matt Clement (5 wins) made his big league debut, winning 5 of 6 starts (despite a 6.11 ERA). Orlando Hernandez (7-3, 6.04 ERA) lost 3 of 5 decisions on the month, and saw his ERA jump nearly two full runs. Bartolo Colon (6-5, 4.96) has been the team’s most consistent starter, while Byung Kim and Danny Graves have pitched “lights-out” out of the pen.

**3. Brooklyn Bulldogs (14-14 in June, 43-41 overall):** The ‘Dogs are 6 games off the pace in the West, but their pitching is capable of making that up gap in no time. With a 3.97 team ERA, Brooklyn ranks 2nd behind Cook County, and they’ve given up only 6 more runs the entire year. Greg Maddux (10-5, 2.19) has been everything the club expected when they acquired him from Bloomington. He trails another former Bee, Pedro Martinez, for the ERA lead. Andy Pettitte (8-5, 3.68) has been solid in the #2 slot of the rotation, while Garrett Stephenson (4-9, 5.45) and rookie Ryan Dempster (3-9, 4.91) are still looking to find a groove. If they do, the ‘Dogs could find themselves right in the thick of things. Rookie Kazuhiro Sasaki came down to earth in June, allowing 5 earned in 10 innings, while saving only 4. Robbie Alomar (.290-8-41-13 steals) has been solid all year. Darin Erstad (.326-10-40) raised his average 32 points in June, and is 7<sup>th</sup> in the league in hits (108). Paul O’Neill (.259-10-41) and Dean Palmer (.246-11-43) each hit better in June. The ‘Dogs will need them to keep raking though, and hope that David Justice (.215-21-51) can hit with more consistency.

**4. St. Croix Rivermen (12-16 in June, 42-42 overall):** The Rivermen dropped two more games in the standings, but still remain within shooting distance of a playoff spot. As has been the case before, the outfield of Ben Grieve (.329-19-61), Johnny Damon (.308-7-39-20 steals), and Manny Ramirez (.280-27-61) are doing much of the damage in this solid lineup. Kevin Millwood (3-0 in June, 11-3, 3.21 overall) ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in wins and 4<sup>th</sup> in ERA in the AL. Look for him on the AL all-star roster! Carl Pavano (8-5 4.28) and James Baldwin (7-6, 4.27) posted decent months once again, and lefty Kirk Rueter (8-8, 4.65) is providing some stability at the back of the rotation. Despite yielding 53 baserunners in 33 innings, closer Jason Istringhausen has 17 saves and a nifty 3.00 ERA.

## Trades

MORRIS trades Jim Edmonds (contract paid) to FLEETWOOD for Lee Stevens (paid), Rickey Ledee (paid), Ryan Anderson, Fleetwood's #1 in 2002, and \$1.5 million.

## All Star Action

The midway point of the season has come and gone, and it is time to focus a little energy on the mid-summer classic! The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual All-Star Game will be played at Fred Bridgedal Park in Columbus, Ohio. Your ballot is included with this newsletter. Please take a few minutes to complete the ballot and return it to me NO LATER THAT JULY 15<sup>th</sup>. Voting is not voluntary, and failure to tender your vote will count against your on-time mailing record.

Results and details of this year's classic will be published towards the end of July.