

# BRASSBALL LEAGUE

## AMERICAN LEAGUE NEWSLETTER

July, 2001

### Mad scramble for final AL wildcard spot

As August rolls around, the contenders are beginning to separate themselves from the pretenders. Where last month only one AL club was realistically out of the playoff picture, there are now “only” nine teams with a legitimate shot at October baseball. In the West, the only true battle for a division crown is being waged between current leader Toledo (68-44) and annual favorite Santa Barbara (64-48). The Mudhen’s 19-9 month enabled them to break a deadlock with the Outlaws, and open a four game lead with 50 games to play. In the East, Minnesota extended their lead from 7 to 11 games over second place Georgia, while Cook County doubled their lead over Plaza from 6 to 12 games.

Meanwhile, the wildcard race continues to heat up. While Plaza has a strangle hold on the first slot, only five games separate five teams (Santa Barbara, Georgia, Iowa, St. Croix, Brooklyn) for the second wildcard position. It is TRULY anybody’s race. With a few days remaining before the final trade deadline, there is still time for one of these clubs to make that key acquisition to put them over the top. And with the AL West playing the AL East in August, wildcard hopeful Georgia will have the opportunity to take control of its own destiny with games against fellow wildcard hopefuls like Santa Barbara, Brooklyn and St. Croix. Meanwhile, Iowa (currently four games out of the wildcard spot) joins the rest of the AL Central in a face off versus the rugged NL Central.

Here’s a closer look at July’s action.....

### American League Central

**1. Cook County Maulers (22-6 in July, 85-27 overall, 43-13 at home, 42-14 away):** The Maulers are seemingly getting stronger as the year progresses. They vanquished the opposition in July, and now lead the Central by a commanding 12 games. By winning 13 of their 14 road games, the Maulers are perched atop the AL in road wins with 42. The individual story for the Maulers continues to be Vlad Guerrero (.353-47-132). Only Jeff Kent and his .371 batting average stands in the way of a triple crown season for the slugging right-fielder. All told, the Maulers place four of the top seven hitters in the AL, and make up three of the top four home run hitters thru 112 games. Rookie Troy Glaus (.300-35-95) raised his average 15 points while slugging 9 homers and knocking in 26. After a slow start to the season, Carlos Delgado (.337-28-93) has started to heat up of late, as has shortstop Nomar Garciaparra (.348-12-57). On the mound, Pedro Martinez (19-1, 1.67 ERA) continues to mystify opposing hitters. Chan Ho Park (15-5, 4.07 ERA) and Kevin Brown (11-3, 2.83) have stepped up of late as well. Interestingly enough, the Maulers don’t rank first in team batting OR ERA. They do rank second in each category however.

**2. Plaza Lions (16-12 in July, 73-39 overall, 41-15 at home, 32-24 away):** Though they slipped a bit in July, the Lions still rank as the third best team record-wise in the AL. Their league leading .317 batting average is impressive indeed, and their 4.49 ERA ranks well below the league average. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Jeff Kent (.371-31-108) holds a nice lead in the race for the batting title over Vlad Guerrero. He also ranks right up their when one talks of league MVP candidates! Jeff blasted 11 homers and drove in 30 runs in July. Speaking of MVP candidates, teammate Luis Gonzalez (.350-21-107) is putting up some huge numbers in his own right. Luis Castillo (.327, 93 runs scored, 55 steals) could be the finest leadoff man in all of Brassball. As a matter of fact, the Lions have an amazing NINE players with over 200 plate appearances who are hitting .300 or above!! Simpy amazing! Tom Glavine (14-5, 4.32 ERA) won 4 of 5 decisions in July, while David Wells (13-6, 4.69) and Paul Abbott (12-6, 4.49) provide stability in the #2 and #3 spots in

the rotation. Armando Benitez saved only five games this month, but ranks third in the AL with 26 saves.

**3. Iowa Rubes (14-14 in July, 60-52 overall, 33-23 at home, 27-29 away):** The Rubes stand four games behind Santa Barbara, and three behind Georgia for the final wildcard spot entering August. This despite managing a mediocre 27-29 in their past 56 games. The club's 4.46 ERA does rank fourth in the AL, and it has been the pitching which has kept the Rubes within striking distance. Kris Bensen (10-8, 4.03) went a shoddy 1-2 in July though, while Kenny Rogers (9-9, 4.71) dropped 4 of his 6 decisions. Jose Mercedes (13-4, 3.88) was perfect in July, posting a 4-0 mark and an ERA below TWO. Magglio Ordonez (.312-22-92) blasted 6 homers and drove in 24 on the month, while Todd Hundley picked up some of the power slack, increasing his homer total to 18 in less than 250 plate appearances. Cristian Guzman (30 steals) and Eric Young (36 steals) each continue to rank among the league leaders in steals.

**4. Box City (12-16 in July, 39-73 overall, 22-34 at home, 17-39 away):** On the plus side, closer Jeff Shaw (3.00 ERA, 12 saves) managed 7 saves in July. Shortstop Miguel Tejada (.288-24-83) belted eight homers and drove in 17 runs. Mike Sweeney (.306-19-71) and Ray Lankford (.270-22-59) have carried their weight as well. Overall however, the team's 6.25 ERA ranks almost a full run below the 11<sup>th</sup> ranking pitching staff in the AL. They've yielded 1311 hits in 112 games, or an average of 11.7 per game. OUCH!!! That's not gonna get it done. Oh, how the mighty have fallen!

### American League West

**1. Toledo Mudhens (19-9 in July, 68-44 overall, 41-15 at home, 27-29 away):** The Hens bounced back after a so-so June to open up a four game lead over the Outlaws from Santa Barbara. While the team lacks any one dominant area, Toledo continues to do the "little things" to win ballgames. The team's 68 wins is even more amazing when one considers that not one Hen pitcher has notched double digit win totals. Dave Burba (7-3, 4.76 ERA in 21 starts has been the team's most consistent starter day in and day out. Kelvim Escobar (9-1, 3.85, 14 starts, 29 total appearances) has likely been the team's most valuable pitcher, as he's excelled both in a starter and reliever role. Meanwhile, Todd Van Poppel (2.85 ERA in 60 innings), Bob Wells (8-4, 3.52 in 76 innings), and Trevor Hoffman (25 saves) have enabled the Mudhens to play a bunch of six inning games with their tenuous rotation, turning the game over to this fabulous trio for the late innings. Gary Sheffield (.332-30-92)-(14 homers, 34 RBI in July) was incredible in July, while rookie Mike Lowell (.289-17-63-30 doubles) and Jeromy Burnitz (.249-18-60) have provided some punch in the middle of the order as well. Denny Hocking (.322 average in 290 plate appearances) ranks second in the entire league with a .374 batting average vs right handed pitching. How bout those apples!

**2. Santa Barbara Outlaws (15-13 in July, 64-48 overall, 36-20 at home, 28-28 away):** Unfamiliar territory for the Outlaws, as they find themselves four out of the division lead. Even worse, they lead the Georgia Braves by a scant one game for the final wildcard spot. Don't blame Delino Deshields (.348-10-72-37 steals, 28 doubles) however. Deshields has been one of the top offensive performers in the AL thus far, though his average dipped 20 points in July. Garrett Anderson (.305-31-88) had another fine month for the Outlaws, and Mo Vaughn (.262-28-76) continued to quietly provide run production despite leading the AL in whiffs. Ellis Burks (.314-10-57) hit only ONE homer in July. If the Outlaws are going to go anywhere, including postseason baseball, Ellis needs to get his rear in gear!! Seven of his ten homers came in June. Otherwise, despite his solid batting average, he's been a free agent BUST! Rob Nen saved eleven games in June (38 overall, far and away tops in the AL). Orlando Hernandez (10-5, 5.41 ERA) won 3 of 5 decisions on the month, and saw his ERA drop nearly a full run. Bartolo Colon (9-7, 4.78) has been the team's most consistent starter, while Doug Davis (6-7, 4.41 ERA in 17 starts) has provided the team with a pleasant surprise.

**3. Brooklyn Bulldogs (16-12 in July, 59-53 overall, 32-24 at home, 27-29 away):** The 'Dogs have dropped 9 games off the pace in the West, but they still stand only 5 games out of the final

wildcard spot, tied with division-mate St. Croix. With a league leading 3.72 ERA, the Bulldogs have the pitching to reel off 35 wins in the final two months. Greg Maddux (15-6, 1.95 ERA) is having a better season than any AL starter not named Pedro. Andy Pettitte (10-7, 3.51) continues to excell in the #2 slot in the rotation, while Garrett Stephenson (7-12, 4.89) has shown signs of coming around after a solid 3-3 July. Rookie Ryan Dempster (4-12, 4.92) has pitched in tough luck all year. Speaking of lack of offense, the Bulldogs have been riding the back of Darin Erstad (.326-11-57) of late, though Dean Palmer (.252-16-55) has also picked it up of late. David Justice (.204-22-53) is a lead candidate for "Dog of the Year". What a major disappointment he, along with the entire offense, has turned out to be.

**4. St. Croix Rivermen (17-11 in July, 59-53 overall, 28-28 at home, 31-25 away):** The Rivermen have the best road record in the division, yet they sit tied for last place due in large part to their mediocre home mark. Still, 17 wins in July helped keep the Rivermen smack in the midst of the wildcard hunt. Kevin Millwood (14-5, 3.19), James Baldwin (10-8, 4.49), and Kirk Rueter (12-9, 4.71) went a combined 10-5 in July, and comprise three fifths of a pretty good rotation. Rookie Chuck Smith (2-5, 6.26 ERA) has struggled however, and the team needs him to step it up in the final 50 games. Ben Grieve (.333-22-73) was fairly quiet last month, drilling only 3 homers. Johnny Damon (.313-10-55-25 steals) and Manny Ramirez (.271-31-73) were also quiet for the most part, hitting only 7 homers between them. Scott Spiezio (281-17-45) has been solid, as has catcher Brad Ausmus (.309-5-34).

### American League East

**1. Minnesota Mudcats (18-10 in July, 74-38 overall, 36-10 at home, 38-18 away):** The Mudcats won 10 of 14 home games in July, yet still sit with a better road record than home. Jason Giambi (.283-31-78) and Alex Rodriguez (.301-26-95) are tied with Vladimir Guerrero for the league lead with 102 runs scored. Andruw Jones (.314-25-87) has scored 101, and leads the league with 159 hits. Brian Giles (.269-19-107) belted 9 homers and knocked in 35 runs in July!! Defensively, the Mudcats are FAR and AWAY the most sure-handed, as evidenced by their league low 37 errors. Next lowest error total.....59. Mike Hampton (12-6, 4.08) was winless on the month, while Kevin Tapani (16-3, 4.26 ERA, 5CG, 2 sho) won 4 of 5 decisions. Darryl Kile (13-8, 4.15, 5CGs, 2sho) was outstanding in July, posting a 6-1 mark with an ERA below four. Matt Morris saved 5 more games to run his total to 19, though he was cuffed around a bit as well. David Weathers, Greg Swindell, and Todd Jones give the Mudcats one of the strongest bullpens around.

**2. Georgia Braves (14-14 in July, 63-49 overall, 32-24 at home, 31-25 away):** The Braves didn't do themselves any favors in July, and find themselves a game behind the Outlaws for the final wildcard spot. Tim Hudson (8-11, 4.96) and Russ Ortiz (11-10, 5.77, but 1-5 in July) both rank among the league leaders in losses at this point in the season, yet they have each had their share of quality outings as well. Albie Lopez (13-6, 3.98) has been the ace of this staff however, with Keith Foulke (22 saves) providing super relief in the late innings. The Braves sport a balanced offensive attack. Rondell White (.328-13-41), Dmitri Young (.322-19-79), Travis Fryman (.316-17-68), and Derrek Lee (.317-22-54) give the Braves four legitimate producers, not to mention Jose Canseco and Mike Cameron, who have 35 homers between them. And how about their shortstop Deivi Cruz? (.291-7-72) 100 RBIs are not out of the question. What a pleasant surprise he's been.

**3. Morris Monarchs (8-20 in July, 54-58 overall): THUD!!** That noise you heard was probably the sound of the Monarchs taking a serious tumble over the past two months. The Monarchs entered June with a 34-22 mark, and trailed the Mudcats by one game. Since then, they've entered a death spiral which has seen them drop 36 of their last 56 games. Trading Jim Edmonds could not have helped the team morale however, so this slide is not a complete surprise. Without Jimmy in the lineup, Barry Bonds (.284-33-95) saw his average drop 20 points, while hitting only 5 homers and driving in 11 for the month. Tim Salmon has picked up some of the offensive slack (.276-19-60). Elmer Dessens (9-7, 4.59 ERA) has been among the most stable of pitchers this year, though he

dropped 4 of 6 decisions last month. Jesus Sanchez (8-9, 5.69) lost 5 straight decisions in July.

**4. Hessville Evereadys (8-20 in July, 53-59 overall):** Hessville fell out of the race in July, but don't blame Andres Galarraga (.326-25-73) or Rookie of the Year candidate Terrence Long (.313-15-52). Jeff Cirillo (.337-8-51-league leading 42 doubles) gives the Evereadys a third offensive threat as well. Unfortunately, the opposition is hitting a robust .299 versus the pitching staff. Frank Castillo (7-8, 4.13) and Shawn Estes (6-6, 4.84) have pitched fairly well, but don't have much in the way of wins to show for it. Aaron Sele and Jimmy Haynes have each been major disappointments, losing 9 games apiece with ERAs near or over six. Josias Manzanillo keeps racking up the saves however, despite his 5.70 ERA.

### Trades

1. OCALA trades Greg Myers to MORRIS for 1\$.
2. GEM CITY trades Wil Cordero and \$100,000 to PLAZA for Adam Bernero and Midre Cummings.
3. COLUMBUS trades their #4 pick and John Mabry (contract already prepaid) to GEM CITY for Brad Fullmer

### Fines

- á St. Croix is fined \$1,000,000 for late reporting of monthly results to Statistician