

The Press Box

September 1999

By Lenny Luchtefeld

Long Island and Bloomington lock up titles.
Ocala has a firm grip in the West.
Jackets, Buckeyes, Sioux and the
Wolfpack battle for the Wildcards.

NL East

Long Island (19-9) had their best month of the year. They have been around the .500 mark all season. This month they have starting to turn it on with a 19 win month. The Tigers couldn't be peaking at a better time. With the playoffs just around the corner, this is a great time to be hitting on all cylinders. They have moved out to a 20 game lead and only need a couple of wins this month to get to the playoffs.

Glen Allen (13-15) hanging in there for 2nd place in the division again this month. After passing Wauwatosa, they have maintained their grip on a 2nd place finish. The Mets pitching has been the strong point all year. They are ranked 5th in ERA in the league with a 4.37 ERA.

Wauwatosa (14-14) bounced back after a disastrous last month. July only saw them get 7 wins. With 14 victories in August they managed to gain ground on Glen Allen. Fighting for 2nd place is all anyone has left in this division to go for as Long Island has taken command the last 2 months.

Racine (10-18) another tough month for the Heat. With 10 wins this month and dropping ground to all the other divisional foes, it seems apparent that they will finish last this year. Their bright spot this year has been the pitching staff. They are ranked 4th in ERA with a 4.31 mark.

NL Central

Bloomington (16-12) have clinched the division with a month to go. Their 92 wins lead the league in winning percentage. With a 24 game lead and knowing that they will have home field advantage in the playoffs will be a great benefit. They can rest players and get the rotation in order for their 1st round opponent.

Columbus (8-20) a bad month brought them back to the pack. Another bad month may prove to be their downfall for getting into the playoffs. They still have a 2 game advantage over Stanley and Gem City for the final Wildcard spot. The Buckeyes have the offense but will the pitching hold up.

Stanley (10-18) got sidetracked again this month. Hit a bump in the road last month and maybe watching the playoffs at home if this pace continues. With only 20 wins in the last 2 months, they went from leader in the Wildcard race 2 months ago to 3rd. They will

have a direct shot at Columbus to overtake them in September as they have 7 games with them.

River Bend (10-18) A rough month for the Blackhawks as they only managed 10 wins. HAL is doing what he can to guide the team but he's only human, I mean, a computer.

NL West

Ocala (17-11) The Ocelots maintained and increased first place lead in the division this month. They have opened up the lead to 6 game over North Georgia. Only a total collapse in September would keep them from winning the division. Playoff teams beware of the Ocelots' roadrunners as they have stolen a league leading 240 bases so far.

North Georgia (16-12) The Yellow Jackets find themselves entrenched in 2nd place in the division and in 1st place in the Wildcard race. They are 6 games behind Ocala in the divisional race and 5 games in front of Columbus in the Wildcard race. Their best bet looks like they will be in the playoffs as Wildcard participant.

Gem City (16-12) The Wolfpack continue to climb in the Wildcard race. They now find themselves tied with Stanley, just 2 games back from Columbus in the race for the 2nd Wildcard spot. The Wolfpack have an excellent chance to get the last Wildcard spot as both Stanley and Columbus have slipped recently. Gem City seems to be hitting their stride at jus the right time.

Metropolis (7-21) A long season for the Avengers is almost over. They are near the bottom in offense and pitching in the league. They do have some young players that will help them next year. Another bright spot for the team was their lone participant in the All-Star game, Will Clark, got the game wining homer in the All-Star game to give the National League the victory.

All-Star Game Completed

Nationals win 4-2

METROPOLIS (AP) -- Baseball's best players from all over the world converged at the Hall of Justice for last night's BRASSball All-Star Game, but the game's biggest hero had been there all along.

Will Clark, the fiery first baseman of the host Metropolis Avengers, launched a Woody Williams offering into the right field bleachers to lead the National League to a 4-2 victory over their American League counterparts.

Already a fan favorite in Metropolis, Clark's feat drew a standing ovation and further endeared him to the hometown faithful. "It certainly makes it a little more special, being here in Metropolis," said Clark following the game. "It's been a tough year for us here, and these fans deserve something like this."

While Clark's bat proved to be the night's biggest story, the game began as a first-rate pitchers' duel. Bloomington ace Greg Maddux and Cook County hurler Kevin Brown, of the National and American Leagues respectively, pitched two scoreless innings apiece to set the early tone for the evening.

The first truly dominating performance of the night, however, belonged to Kerry Wood. The rookie phenom of the Long Island Tigers showed no signs of nervousness,

pitching a perfect fourth inning for the National Leaguers. That inning included strikeouts of Santa Barbara teammates Jose Offerman and Mo Vaughn, neither of whom even came close to putting the ball in play.

"That kid can really bring the heat," commented a humbled Vaughn. "It felt like he was throwing from only 40 feet away." Wood himself seemed surprised by his performance. "I just decided to throw my fastball and see what happened," said Wood. "I knew I would only get to face a few batters, so why leave anything in the tank?"

The Nationals broke the scoreless tie in the bottom of the fifth inning. Facing Box City pitcher Andy Ashby, Ocala right fielder Derek Bell hit a one-out single and advanced to second on a stolen base. A ground ball by Bloom Bloomington's Dante Bichette advanced Bell to third, and Bell's Ocala teammate Scott Brosius drove him home with a single to left to make the score 1-0.

The Nationals added to that lead in the sixth inning. North Georgia shortstop Derek Jeter started the inning with a single off of the Minnesota Mudcats' Williams. Racine center fielder Kenny Lofton followed with a double to deep center, putting runners at second and third. Following a line out by Columbus' Brian Jordan, Clark pinch hit for starting designated hitter Jeff Bagwell of the Gem City Wolfpack. Clark then connected with a 2-0 Williams offering for a three-run homer, making the score 4-0 in favor of the National League.

Showing resiliency, however, the American Leaguers answered in the top of the seventh with a home run of their own. Barry Bonds of the Monroeville Garys hit a two-run shot off of North Georgia's Shane Reynolds to make it a 4-2 ballgame.

That home run would end the scoring for the evening, as the National League bullpen took control of the game. River Bend reliever Mariano Rivera pitched a scoreless eighth for the NL and Long Island closer Trevor Hoffman a scoreless ninth, including a strike out of Bonds to end the game.

Home Run Derby Results

METROPOLIS (AP) -- Despite an American League squad filled with the most feared sluggers in BRASSball, Stanley Sioux third baseman **Ken Caminiti** topped **Juan Gonzalez** in the finals of this year's Home Run Derby, held at the Hall of Justice.

From start to finish, Caminiti stole the show. In round one he smashed twelve home runs off of Derby pitcher **Steve Sparks**, the highest single round total in this year's contest. And after sneaking through a second round marked by a mysterious **Mark McGwire** power outage, Caminiti withstood a late Gonzalez surge to earn the title of BRASSball Home Run Derby champion.

McGwire, considered by most experts as the favorite to win, did not disappoint in the first round. With only three home runs hit and nine outs against him, McGwire needed to hit four consecutive home runs to advance to round two. Not only did he accomplish that feat but he went on to add another four in a row for good measure, giving him eight consecutive home run swings and eleven for the round.

In the second round, however, things fell apart for McGwire. Despite words of encouragement and a good luck charm from Metropolis tycoon **Lex Luthor**, McGwire was unable to muster even one home run in round two.

have no explanation for that," said McGwire after the contest. "Lex (Luthor) patted me on the back and gave me a good luck charm, a beautiful Kryptonite-stoned necklace," explained McGwire. "For some reason, though, it felt like my strength was just sapped away by the time I got in that batter's box."

Nobody was more shocked by the outcome than Caminiti himself. "In these home run contests, it's really up to the pitcher," explained Caminiti. "Steve (Sparks) got me in a good groove and deserves as much credit for this as I do." Sparks, a starting pitcher for the host Metropolis Avengers, has allowed 23 home runs in 101.1 innings pitched during the regular season.

Although won by a National Leaguer, the American League still came out on top in overall home runs hit. The American League players combined for 47 total home runs, while their National League counterparts hit 44.

1999 BRASSball Home Run Derby Results						
League	Player	Team	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Total
American	Manny Ramirez	St. Croix	3	--	--	3
National	Damion Easley	River Bend	3	--	--	3
American	Barry Bonds	Monroeville	7	3	--	10
National	Ken Caminiti	Stanley	12	5	8	25
American	Juan Gonzalez	Cook County	8	10	6	24
National	Jeromy Burnitz	Wauwatosa	4	--	--	4
American	Sammy Sosa	Hessville	5	--	--	5
National	Jeff Bagwell	Gem City	1	--	--	1
American	Mo Vaughn	Santa Barbara	5	--	--	5
National	Mark McGwire	Bloomington	11	0	--	11
American: 47			National: 44			

The Futures Games

METROPOLIS, U.S.A. -- The 1999 All-Star break brought with it the first ever BRASSball Futures Game. With rosters filled with the best prospects of each BRASS franchise, this game was a showcase for many of the future stars of the league. Peter Bergeron, of the host Metropolis Avengers, led off the bottom of the second with a walk.

He quickly stole second and moved to third as a single and a second walk loaded the bases. National League starter Jeff Weaver seemed a bit shaken up by the quick start, but he did manage to strike out Nick Johnson and Russell Branyan. With two outs and the bases loaded Weaver uncorked a very wild slider, allowing Bergeron to scamper home with the game's first run. After pounding his glove, Weaver settled down and blew a 95 MPH fastball by George Lombard for his third strikeout of the inning. In the bottom of the third, Bergeron t just kind of floated up there, and I put that bat on it."

The score stayed 8-2 until John Patterson came in for the bottom of the seventh.

Patterson was clearly unnerved by the big crowd and was in trouble throughout the inning. The two runs he allowed to the home team may have been unearned, but they were his responsibility. He threw a ball into the stands after an easy grounder and launched a wild pitch to the backstop before getting Lance Berkman to fly out to the base of the wall.

While Patterson is one of the top pitchers in the minors, he was taught a lesson by the NL hitters last night. "That was rough. Most nights I can get by when my stuff isn't the best, but these guys made me pay for it," he said. "I've still got some learning to do. And I'm not real comfortable coming out of the (bull)pen, either."

The NL continued to claw back into the game on a Doug Mientkiewicz single and Alex Escobar homer off of Jeff Austin in the 8th inning. Escobar's homer was a wind-aided shot that curled itself just around the left field foul pole, leaving Austin visibly upset on the mound.

After the game, Austin had this to say, "That was a good pitch. I didn't think he had a chance to hit it fair, and he just yanked it out. No one's ever hit that pitch in that location before."

AL manager Mark Fidrych called on Bobby Seay to close out the game in the ninth. Seay gave up a two out single to Adam Kennedy, but retired Berkman on a sharp lineout right to SS Brian Oliver to end the game.

Chen recorded the win for the AL with his two inning outing. Anderson's six run fourth-inning earned him the loss and Seay got credit for the save. In a game with several hitting stars, Burroughs' three one blast earned him the first ever Futures MVP.

Trades

No trades to report this month in the National League.

Contract Signings

Wauwatosa signed Ken Cloude to a MM contract.

Columbus signed R. Hidalgo to a MM contract.

Bloomington signs Rudy Seanez and Matt Mantei to MM contracts.

Contract Signings for Next Year

You need to notify your LD no later than midnight, September 25 which of your players you intend to sign to major or minor league deals, who are now under initial (M0) or that you have signed to (MM) contracts this last month.

A manager may also extend a player's contract for any amount of years, using the cost structure below. This must be done with money already in your bank account and not the 17 million that will be deposited in your account after the season.

Years 1-3: \$2,500,000 per year

Years 4-7: \$2,000,000 per year

Years 8-12: \$1,500,000 per year
Every additional year is \$1,000,000 per year.

Rules Proposals

I just wanted to take a moment to get to start thinking about any new ideas you might have for the league. Next month Kevin and I will be looking for any new rules changes that any manager would like to make. These rule changes should be something that will improve the realism of our hobby. It could also be an idea to make the games more enjoyable or fun.

I know that some people have been thinking along this direction already because I have 2 new proposals to vote on when the time comes. Kevin and I will outline the process further next month.

Upcoming Deadlines

September 15th...League report form due to your leagues reporter. Jeff Beresford-Howe for the AL and Tony Galietta for the NL. The report form is available on the web site.

September 15th...Series results are due out to your September opponents. You must send box scores, play by play and subset stats.

September 20th...If you make a trade during the month of September, you must report the trade in writing to your LD, Lenny Luchtefeld, for it to take effect. All trades now will take effect for the next season.

September 20th...If you wish to submit a trade wire listing, you must submit the listing to your LD, Lenny Luchtefeld, by the 20th of the month for it to be included in the following newsletter.

September 20th...If you wish to submit an article for the newsletter, you must submit the article to your LD, Lenny Luchtefeld, by the 20th of the month for it to be included in the following newsletter.

September 25th...Send a completed team leaders form and a hard copy printout of your teams primary stats for September to the leagues statistician, Tom Taormina and League Director, Lenny Luchtefeld. The Team Leaders Form is available on the web site.

September 25th...You must notify your LD in a mailing postmarked no later than midnight, September 25 which of your players you intend to sign to major or minor league deals, who are now under initial (M0) or (MM) contracts.

September 25th...You may extend a player's contract for any amount of years, using the following cost structure:

Years 1-3: \$2,500,000 per year

Years 4-7: \$2,000,000 per year

Years 8-12: \$1,500,000 per year

Every additional year is \$1,000,000 per year.

This contract extension option may be exercised anytime between the original signing of the initial contract and September 25 during the final season of the contract.