

BRASSWORLD JOURNAL

Volume 3, Issue 2

August 2008



Inside this issue...

*All Star Game Recap
Revisiting Contract Insurance
All Hair-Pulling Team
'The Onion' calls the MLB 2nd Half
Who was Chuck Stobbs?
Rene in Japan
Jim Bodnar Crunches Numbers
First Time All Stars*

One Swing, One Star!

Carlos Pena nails Grand Slam in only AB to spark Nationals victory

GOTHAM CITY, NY--An offensive outburst occasioned the Sixth BRASSWORLD All Star game. 21 runs poured across home plate during the contest, making it the highest scoring affair to date. Trailing 7-1 at one point, Carlos Pena's two-out pinch-hit Grand Slam in the top of the eighth inning off of Mo Rivera secured the NL victory on this night. In the third inning, Gargoyle faithful thought that the home Americans had the game well in hand after Jack Wilson's two-run double had stretched the team's lead to six. But in the top of the fifth the Nationals charged back with a huge six-run inning off of Black Sox ace Aaron Harang, highlighted by a lightning fast, two-run triple from West Oakland speedburner Jose Reyes. The best pitching performance of the evening was put in by Chris Young who tossed two early scoreless frames.



The Nationals now enjoy a four game unbeaten streak in the annual event.

Thank you to Wayne and Daniel for playing the game.

Boxscore is below.

2008 BRASSWORLD ALL STAR GAME

NL	AB	R	H	BI	AL	AB	R	H	BI
Ramirez, ss	3	1	1	1	Helton, 1b	3	1	0	0
Verlander, p	0	0	0	0	Phillips, 2b	3	1	2	0
Molina, ph	1	0	0	0	Utley, ph-2b	2	0	0	1
Isringhausen, p	0	0	0	0	C. Jones, 3b	5	1	1	0
C. Pena, ph	1	1	1	4	Dunn, lf	5	1	2	1
Beimel, p	0	0	0	0	Hawpe, rf	0	1	0	0
Putz, p	0	0	0	0	Suzuki, ph-cf	3	1	1	0
Sizemore, cf	5	1	1	1	McCann, c	1	0	1	0
Ordonez, rf	5	0	3	1	C. Young, p	0	0	0	1
Pujols, 1b	5	0	1	0	A. Soriano, ph	1	0	0	0
Rodriguez, 3b	3	0	0	0	Harang, p	0	0	0	0
Damon, lf	1	0	0	0	Okajima, p	0	0	0	0
Posada, c	4	2	1	1	Street, p	0	0	0	0
Matsui, 2b	1	0	0	0	Braun, ph	1	0	0	0
Ellis, ph-2b	3	2	2	0	Downs, p	0	0	0	0
Granderson, lf	2	1	1	1	Neshek, p	0	0	0	0
Wright, ph-3b	1	1	0	0	Rivera, p	0	0	0	0
Smoltz, p	0	0	0	0	Morneau, ph	1	1	1	1
Penny, p	0	0	0	0	J. Wilson, ss	3	0	2	4
Crawford, ph	1	0	0	0	Rollins, ph-ss	2	0	0	0
Sabathia, p	0	0	0	0	Santana, p	0	0	0	0
Reyes, ph-ss	3	2	1	2	Varitek, ph-c	5	1	1	0

39 11 12 11

38 10 13 9

NL	010	060	040	11	12	2
AL	025	020	001	10	13	0

Nationals	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	
Smoltz	1	4	2	2	1	1	Att: 49,609
Penny	1	0	0	0	0	0	T: 2:54
Sabathia	1	6	5	5	1	0	2B: Sizemore, Ordonez, Pujols,
F. Rodriguez	1	0	0	0	2	1	Eillis-2, Phillips, Wilson
Verlander	2	1	2	1	2	2	3B: Reyes, Varitek
Isr'h'sen, W	1	0	0	0	0	0	HR: Pena, Posada, Morneau
Beimel	1	1	0	0	0	2	SB: Ramirez, Suzuki
Putz, SV	1	1	1	1	0	2	CS: Beltran
							E: Granderson, Reyes
							S: C. Young
Americans	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	LOB: AL-6, NL-5
Santana	2	2	1	1	0	1	DP: NL-1, AL-0
C. Young	2	0	0	0	0	1	GIDP: Helton
Harang	0	5	6	6	1	0	
Okajima	1.1	1	0	0	0	1	
Street	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	
Downs	1.1	1	1	1	1	1	
Neshek, L	0.1	1	2	2	1	0	
Rivera	1.1	2	1	1	0	2	

Considering Contract Insurance

By Mark Lentz

Let me preface my remarks by stating that I think contract insurance should remain an important tool in the BW manager's toolbox. However, due to shortsightedness on my part, I did not draw up as comprehensive a proposal/system as I should have. To some extent, Corey warned me of a few of the holes that were going to open before us. It is my attempt here to open the discussion up on how to close distasteful loopholes in the program before we create a monster in BW.

The big, ugly warts on the contract insurance system were systematically exposed during last offseason's free agency period. What we witnessed were managers (astutely, imo) utilizing the possible forgiveness of final years of a contract to secure the services of talented veterans. While the signings were completely within the rules at the time, I believe that without changes BW will see a severe competitive problem commence. Below are a couple of the suggestions I have arrived at in discussion with Corey and reviewing messages passed along to me by other managers.

For ease of reference, here is the rule currently on the books:

There is contract insurance for all players on multi-year contracts (non-Y contracts). If a player fails to attain either 20 PA or 10 IP then the manager is only responsible for 20% of the contract's value for the coming season. The manager retains the rights to the player and is responsible for the full contract amount if the player returns to perform.

Change #1

This change is so important that I may institute it sans league vote. It is this: **A PLAYER MUST BE PROTECTED ON THE TEAM'S 40-MAN ROSTER IN ORDER FOR THE MANAGER TO RECEIVE THE INSURANCE.**

This is the rule in MLB (remember Albert Belle?). I feel strongly it should be the rule in BW as well.

Change #2

Another change that I think needs to be implemented is graduated insurance awards. The amounts below are not set in stone. At this point they are mere suggestions to give managers an idea what I'm attempting to illustrate.

First Year of contract: No insurance available on the player. (This covers a loophole that would have allowed a manager to sign a star player in FA who had missed a season and thus not owe the player a dime for the upcoming season).

Last Year of contract: Manager responsible for 75% of the player's salary.

Intervening years: Amounts applied as currently proscribed.

Here are other ideas that I assume will be on the proposals ballot this offseason in some form and merit discussion and possible passage.

- A player can only receive insurance for one season
- A team can only receive contract insurance for one player per season
- Assuming Change #1 is implemented, allow a manager to “buy back” the roster spot by making a lump sum payment of ‘X’ percentage of the contract’s remaining value
- Making contract insurance something that a manager has to “opt into” by acquiring coverage via a percentage charge of the overall value of the contract

* * *

BRASSWORLD All-Hair-Pulling Team

By Jonah Keri

Every team has one, an underachiever who drives you nuts. But it takes a special kind of frustrating player to make BRASSWORLD’s All-Hair-Pulling Team. These are the guys who’ve fallen so far short of their 2007 MLB numbers that they’ve driven owners to pull their hair out.

Here are the biggest hair pullers at every position (’07 MLB counting stats bumped up by 3%):

C Yadier Molina, Williamsburg

MLB ’07: .275/.340/.368, 6 HR, 41 RBI

BRASSWORLD ’08: .220/.273/.273, 2 HR, 18 RBI

Molina wasn’t much of a power threat for the Cardinals last season. Still, a .273 slugging average would embarrass a pitcher with a bat in his hands, let alone an everyday player. Even a 1 rating and -4 arm don’t make up for this kind of production.

1B Jason Giambi, Lafontaine Park

MLB ’07: .236/.356/.433, 14 HR, 40 RBI

BRASSWORLD ’08: .137/.297/.273, 6 HR, 16 RBI

.137! I mean, Giambi’s always been a power and walks guy, even at his peak, never much of a batting average guy. But still... .137! Here’s the crazy part: Giambi’s average was higher vs. righties than lefties last year for the Yankees, and New York only played him 28% of the time against lefty pitchers. Lafontaine Park has only played Giambi 7% of the time against righties—with disastrous results.

2B Rickie Weeks, New York

MLB ’07: .235/.374/.433, 16 HR, 37 RBI

BRASSWORLD ’08: .180/.314/.280, 6 HR, 20 RBI

Nothing's gone right this year for New York, as the team continues a rebuild process after being shackled with some monster contracts. Weeks may be the team's biggest underachiever, with his average and power numbers way down from MLB '07 levels. But hey, at least SOM didn't make him a 5.

3B Troy Glaus, Alaska

MLB '07: .262/.366/.473, 21 HR, 64 RBI

BRASSWORLD '08: .203/.317/.348, 7 HR, 14 RBI

Glaus has shown the vulnerability of his card, faring well as expected against lefties but struggling against right-handed pitching. Alaska's another team with a lot of big contracts on the roster. Meanwhile, it's not a good start on the five-year contract Glaus signed with Alaska this off-season.

SS Jimmy Rollins, South Range

MLB '07: .296/.344/.531, 31 HR, 97 RBI

BRASSWORLD '08: .254/.297/.449, 9 HR, 34 RBI

With most shortstops, it's tough to complain about a .449 slugging average, a pace of 18 homers and 68 RBI and a 1 on defense. For NL MVP Jimmy Rollins, those numbers equal a big disappointment, especially when combined with a porous .297 OBP. Rollins hasn't been all that bad compared to the typical shortstop, and South Range is still on pace for 100 wins. Still, it's hard not to feel like something's missing here.

OF Torii Hunter, Hogan's

MLB '07: .287/.334/.505, 29 HR, 110 RBI

BRASSWORLD '08: .222/.264/.359, 8 HR, 27 RBI

Much of the value on Hunter's card is tied to his home run totals, both with regular rolls and with ballpark diamonds. The modest home run effects of Hogan's home park have snuffed out much of the impact of the 14 diamonds on Hunter's card vs. righties and lefties combined. For the most part, though, this is just rotten luck—another case where a great defensive rating doesn't make up for offensive woes, in this case 65 points of batting average.

OF Austin Kearns, Hogan's

MLB '07: .266/.355/.411, 16 HR, 76 RBI

BRASSWORLD '08: .170/.253/.308, 3 HR, 16 RBI

Another Hogan's disappointment, Kearns was significantly better against left-handed pitching last season for the Nats. But extremely high levels of usage vs. lefties for the Heroes—50% of Kearns' at-bat total—haven't helped at all. In fact the 96-point gap between Kearns' '07 batting average and his '08 BRASSWORLD average ranks among the largest of any player in the game.

OF Vladimir Guerrero, Plum Island

MLB '07: .324/.403/.547, 28 HR, 129 RBI

BRASSWORLD '08: .256/.312/.490, 12 HR, 52 RBI

The home run and RBI pace are pretty close to Vlad's efforts last year with the Angels. But his '08 BRASSWORLD season is the equivalent of his free-swinging ways coming home to roost. Guerrero's average has dropped 68 points this year. With fewer intentional walks to fall back on, Vlad's overall walks total has plummeted, adding up to a lowly .312 OBP. Those numbers don't look too good, especially when coupled with Guerrero's well-deserved 4e14 rating in right.

SP Roy Oswalt, Northwoods

MLB '07: 218 IP, 228 H, 62 BB, 14 HR, 14-7, 3.18 ERA

BRASSWORLD '08: 128 IP, 156 H, 32 BB, 14 HR, 7-9, 5.71 ERA

Northwoods' home park is one of the friendliest in the league for home run hitters—but Oswalt yielded few homers while playing in the cozy confines of Minute Maid Park. Seeing his home run rate nearly double then becomes a surprise. The hit rate's substantially higher too, at an unseemly 11 per 9 innings. Still, these component numbers don't quite up to a Lima-timeian 5.71 ERA. Blame bad luck here, with Oswalt struggling with men on base, and his bullpen letting in an unusually high number of inherited runners.

RP Chad Cordero, Annadale

MLB '07: 77 IP, 77 H, 30 BB, 8 HR, 3.36 ERA

BRASSWORLD '08: 49 IP, 63 H, 22 BB, 10 HR, 6.20 ERA

...and that's not even mentioning Cordero's 2-8 record and five saves, putting him just a smidge off last season's 38-save pace. Cordero actually has a huge reverse split, a condition that's been exploited by opponents, as evidenced by Cordero's rate of one homer allowed every five innings. Annadale has lost even more leverage in trying to trade Cordero to a contender, with the righty felled by injury for the Nats this year and thus unlikely to have any keeper value for 2009.

* * *

Predictions for MLB's Second Half

From the July 24th edition of *The Onion*

With the All-Star break out of the way, Onion Sports runs down what to look for between now and October:

- The Marlins will drop out of contention when they attempt to lower their payroll and play without a center fielder
- Traded ace Rich Harden will win both the AL and NL Cy Young Awards and promptly throw the NL trophy in the garbage
- After the Yankees win 20 games in a row in August, all those closet Yankee fans in the office that you didn't know existed for the entire season will resurface
- Chipper Jones will continue on his historic march back toward a .300 batting average
- Centuries from now, everyone will remember that play that Aramis Ramirez will make against the St. Louis Cardinals in the 10th inning on Sept. 15

- Dan Uggla, scarred by his awful All-Star performance, will make 2,014 errors and strike out 342 times over the second half of the season
- **The Cubs will blow a chance to win their first World Series in 100 years, because pitcher Kerry Wood has an ouchie on his widdle finky** (highlighted by your Dear Editor)
- Every team will win every game in the most awesome and outrageous second half of a season ever

* * *

The following is Peter Gammons' August 6th ESPN blog entry. Just doing my part to stoke the Strat defensive ratings bickering early ☺

*“One NL team's defensive statistics, scouting and ratings have **John McDonald** of the Blue Jays as the best defensive shortstop in the majors. No surprise. They have Boston's **Jed Lowrie** at No. 5 among the 62 ranked shortstops, even if his sample is small. **Derek Jeter** and **Jose Reyes**, who is still working out mechanical start issues, are in the 40s, among the 62 shortstops. **Edgar Renteria** and **Jeff Keppinger** are among the bottom 5.”*

* * *

Chuck...Stobbs???

The following appeared on a website called wizbangsports.com (posted July 13, 2008). I draw attention to it for two reasons. First, this brief obit was authored by a one Bill Jempty. Many, many moons ago I played against Bill in a SOM league. Just a name from the past, I suppose. The other reason is more philosophical. Bill Jempty, like Stobbs, is a mere name that found its way into my brain and stuck. Possibly it is the odd surname that allowed my former competitor to stick in an alcove of my noggin. Or maybe it was because Jempty- like Stobbs- is a fond remembrance of this great hobby no matter the time and distance.

“The left handed Stobbs came to the Major Leagues for the first time in 1947 and stayed around till 1961. He won over 100 games, but with a losing record. Mostly because he played most of his career with one of the worst teams (The Senators) in the American League. His one claim to fame or infamy, was giving up a 565 homerun to Mickey Mantle. My memories of Stobbs comes from my playing past seasons of Strat-O-Matic baseball. His luck in most of the games I recreated were no better than Stobbs was in real-life. RIP.”

* * *

A BRASSWORLD GAIJIN

Observations on Japanese Baseball from a visiting Rene Custeau

Kohn-nee-chee-wah,

I just got back from my first experience at watching a Japanese baseball game at the Tokyo Dome. The world famous Giants fell to the Swallows 7-4. The Giants had a familiar face, Alex Ramirez blast two shots, one to right and the other one to left center. He has 22 HR's for the season. The interesting thing I noticed was the fan cheering sections. I bought a ticket 1 hour before the game and sat with the Swallows. The Giants were the home team. All the swallow fans kept chanting several phrases that were hard for me to make out, due to them speaking Japanese. I desperately tried to make one out and it was in English, "we want a K!" It took me a while to make out the broken English but the chant always occurred when there were two strikes on a Giant's batter. I sat right in the left field seats that were very tiny. I was squished between two young Japanese gentlemen. I felt like I was sitting in a sardine can. Finally, I left to get some good old Japanese ballpark food, noodles with chop sticks! Yeah, and they were very good. I passed on the USA ballpark frank. Who knows what is in the Japanese version. I did, however drink a Japanese beer and had some nuts. All in all it was a very good ball park snack.

I did see this centerfielder for the Swallows. His name Norichika Aoki and he had a triple and a homerun. I lost track of him during his final at bats, who knows maybe he hit for the cycle! Anyway, after doing some research on him, he won the batting title last year batting a hefty .346 and won the rookie of the year in 2005 when he batted .344. There are rumors going around Japan that he may come to the US sometime soon. If he does I have first dibs!

I am going to attend another game next week and will send out a report on that game too! I am going to see the Baystars play against the Swallows so I will get another chance to see Aoki once again.

* * *

Retrospective on 2003 Minors Draft: Win Shares to Date

By Jim Bodnar

It's been 5+ years since the founding draft and this affords some minimum time for a perspective on that draft.

Since about half of the ownership has changed since then, I only fully reviewed the drafts whose teams still had their original owner.

I was able to obtain "Win shares" information on the players from the Hardball Times website. This database goes only to 2004 but career win shares total appear to include those earned in 2003 based on what I gleaned from the stats there.

Current most productive position players: Miguel Cabrera, NOR, 125; Mark Teixeira BOS 104, David Wright, ANN 103; Chase Utley WIL, 94.

Current most productive pitchers: Dontrelle Willis GRA 71, Jose Contreras, WIL 49, Scott Kazmir, ANN, 45.

Most win shares by team: Boston 240, Portland 232, Williamsburg, 224; Northwoods 219.

Least win shares by team: Greenville 14, Aspen 19, Plum Island 25.

So far out of this draft, Robert Smith, GM of Annadale, and myself have 2 of the best 7 players. Zack Greinke may come through yet and make this draft even better for the Anteaters.

Note that most players making bigger, more immediate impacts are position players, not pitchers. Willis' 71 WS trail several position players and after him there is quite a drop off. Some of these high-pick busts include Jesse Foppert, Gavin Floyd, Jerome Williams and Sean Burnett: all now just about worthless. Willis and Chien-Min Wang were likely in the lower half of the min draft and they have 71 and 40 win shares; so pitchers remain enigmatic and difficult to pick. The Burgesses may be adding more to the pitching prospect scrapheap: Mike Pelfrey, Anthony Reyes, are you listening?

Did Williamsburg have its "draft for the ages" in 2002? But Kotchman was traded for 3 years of Berkman, Guthrie for Jon Rauch (who still bests him in win shares, 23 to 13), and Loney was simply released. The Kotchman deal as of now is still in my favor as Berkman put up 87 win shares to Kotchman's 21 in this time. Obviously Contreras' future value is quite limited beyond the possibility of one "Last Hurrah" as I still have his rights. The Burgesses also are the only original franchise which did get every one of its min picks into MLB service.

* * *

Home-field Advantage in BRASSWORLD

By Jim Bodnar

The Strat-o-matic system gives players many options for configuring their baseball sim universe. The Brassworld league employs a few of the "max" rules which are generally thought to bring more elements of MLB to the simulation that would generally be difficult to achieve with a cards and dice version. One unused option in BW is the "Home field advantage" option that in some way helps the home team perform better in its own park. This variation is often frowned upon because it is said that HAL makes sufficient number of foolish moves as the visitor manager that the home field advantage option is not needed. So I dug up some MLB results from baseball-reference.com and our own results to see how the home field has played out.

League	2007	2006	2005	2004
AL	105	104	72	
NL	102	119	114	
ML Avg	6.69	6.98	6.84	4.98
BW	56	128	98	196
BW Avg	2.33	5.33	4.08	8.17

Rather than crunch numbers by computer, I simply looked at home-away W-L records using a plus/minus approach. For instance, in BW 2007, for all 24 teams, the home team won a grand total of 56 more games than visitors, or on average a 2.33 extra wins per home team. This is quite a low home field advantage. In 2006, BW played closer to the MLB expected +7 games for home field advantage. I have 4 of 5 BW seasons on the PC and in 3 of these years, the home team in BW did not do as well as in MLB. (I don't have 2005 BW results available.) 2004 was the best year of these 4 for BW home teams.

The MLB numbers are over a 3 year period to allow some random variation to even out. The numbers show a range of 5-7 game advantage for the average home team in these seasons. By comparison, the range is broader in BW, with an advantage of 2-8 games per team. Over the span of the study, BW home teams perform 2 games worse per year (4.98 to 6.84) than their MLB counterparts.

The above could be an argument for use of the “home field advantage” variant in Brassworld, perhaps just as an experiment. After all, who among us wouldn’t want to win more games that we play. Already it seems we can’t out manage HAL to the extent expected; why not try the rule? That’s the argument anyway, but I would still be ambivalent about it. Home-away records are already subject to “Stratball” manipulation as a way to monitor usage and to take advantage of home field dimensions.

Another discrepancy between MLB and BW, derivative to the above findings of course, is that many more teams have a worse home record.

In the 4 BW seasons I reviewed, 25 teams had no home field advantage (0 or worse home/road differential). In MLB for three seasons, 12 teams had no HF advantage.

* * *

Welcome to the Club!

First time BRASSWORLD All Stars are as follows. 25 newbies this year- that’s half of the selections!

Joe Beimel	Ryan Braun	Johnny Damon	Scott Downs
Adam Dunn	Mark Ellis	Curtis Granderson	Aaron Harang
Brad Hawpe	Jason Istringhausen	Kaz Matsui	Sergio Mitre
Bengie Molina	Justin Morneau	Pat Neshek	Hideki Okajima
Carlos Pena	Brad Penny	Brandon Phillips	Hanley Ramirez
Jimmy Rollins	Rafael Soriano	Ichiro Suzuki	Justin Verlander
Chris Young (P)			