

BRASSWORLD NEWSLETTER

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Mid-Season Report

At the season's halfway point the races are starting to flesh out a little now. Per the league's Constitution, each division winner in each of the two sub-leagues make the playoffs and then the next 4 best teams by record in each sub-league. Based on that here's where we stand so far in 2019:

American League:

The two current division leading teams in the AL are the Alaska Hot Stoves in the Cobb Division and there is a 3-way tie for first place in the Ruth Division. The 3 teams atop the Ruth Division are the Williamsburg Burgesses, Plum Island Greenheads and the New York Metz. That accounts for 4 of the AL's 6 available spots. The last two spots currently belong to the Waikiki Rabbits and the Mansfield Mounties. It should also be pointed out that the Greenville Black Sox are also in the mix, as they have the same record as the three teams that are tied for the Ruth Division lead (but a worse record than Waikiki or Mansfield). So, technically the Ruth Division currently has 7 teams "occupying" 6 available slots. No other teams are really all that close to Greenville, Williamsburg, New York or Plum Island record-wise...so whoever ends up with the worse record of those 4 will be the last team out and the other 6 would be the playoff teams in the AL.

National League:

In the NL, the two current division leading teams are the Columbus Bobcats of the Aaron Division and the Los Angeles Outlaws of the Mays Division. The next 4 teams in order of record in the NL are the Exeter Alewives, Virginia Patriots, Aspen Rainmakers and the Washington Republics. After Washington, the West Oakland Wolverines are a distant, but catchup distance from Washington of 5 games back.

Whether or not the picture changes can depend on whether or not teams do trades in the 2nd half of the season, whether the teams that are in the lead will burn up key players soon into the 2nd half of the season and who all of the contending teams have as stand-ins for players who run through their available playing time.

Notable First Half Performances/Oddities/Tidbits:

There have been some notable first half occurrences to be aware of. No no-hitters yet this season to report, but we list just a few of the other "off the beaten path" performances for your enjoyment.

Columbus goes 14-1 at home in June:

The Columbus Bobcats reeled off an astounding 14-1 record at home in June. The only team they lost to was Virginia. Virginia also lost another of their road games to Columbus by only a run in extra innings.

Virginia and Washington play a 20-inning marathon which Washington wins, 5-4.

The Republics beat Virginia 5 – 4 in 20 innings despite being out-hit 19-7 in the game. Luis Avilan got the win for Washington and Rich Hill took the loss in a rare but necessary relief appearance.

West Oakland beats Palo Alto 23 – 9.

In a game that the pitchers on both teams apparently took off, the Wolverines battered Palo Alto, 23-9.

Six hit game for Nick Williams

Texas outfielder Nick Williams was 6 for 7 vs. Thunder Bay in a 13-inning game on April 26th.

Gio Gonzalez and Tehran get hammered

Gio Gonzalez of Virginia allowed 19 runs on 23 hits to Columbus in 9 innings on April 26th. A lot of hitting was going on April 26th. I'll say that.

Also, Julio Tehran of Los Angeles allowed 6 HR's to Thunder Bay in 5 and 2/3 innings of work on April 21st. Wow.

Improving the All-Star Game

Baseball's all-star game could use some improvements in my opinion. For one thing, why is it played on a weekday? Hockey, basketball and football all play their all-star games on a weekend. And going along with that...why so late? The game usually starts after 7 PM EST. This year it started at 7:30. If it takes 3 hours (as baseball games typically do) it ends at 10:30. If you live on the east coast and have to get up at 6 for work, you may not make it to see the end of the game. It should be played on a weekend and start around 5 PM EST...if not earlier. But, 5 PM would be a perfect time to allow reasonable viewing times for people all across the country. Rosters should also be expanded...from the current 32 players to 40. This would allow for putting almost all the deserving players on each squad. This is especially difficult under the 32-player format because each major league team has to have a representative. A 40-man roster would allow for that AND also would be more likely to include all deserving players as all-stars. These changes would certainly be a step in the right direction if instituted.

Back to Basics

Recently, I've started attending minor league baseball games again. There are many reasons for that which include the cost of major league games as opposed to minor league games, the size of the crowds (I don't particularly like crowds), and the proximity (there are two minor league teams closer and more easily accessible than the two major league teams that are relatively close to me. Minor league ball has improved, too...in the sense that the stadiums and parks are nicer (the seating, the field, concessions, etc.) than they were even 20 years ago. The overall experience doesn't differ too much except that at a major league game the level of play is obviously better and you know who all of the players are. When I was a kid growing up in upstate New York there were only minor league teams anywhere close and it's nice, sometimes, to revisit an earlier time in my life. Minor league baseball has been a staple of American life for decades. For some, it's the only LIVE baseball they've ever seen. It would be nice to see minor league baseball do better and even thrive...and maybe it is, I don't know. I certainly intend to make minor league ballgames a bigger part of my baseball entertainment experience in coming years.

- Bob Zuhlke

Hall of Fame Discussion

- I've always found the whole "Big Hall" versus "Small Hall" argument kind of inane and ridiculous.
- The Baseball Hall of Fame is one the toughest to get into. I liken it to Disneyworld vs. Epcot vs. Animal Kingdom vs. Universal. The Basketball and Hockey Hall of Fames are great, and they are fairly easy to be inducted into, and the Basketball Hall of Fame is fun, and also earned easily.
- What I mean by easily isn't that the players or owners or contributors did not earn their place in history, only that, historically, these Halls have had big induction classes year after year after year.
- Not so in Cooperstown. Not until recently that is. Over the past three years, an astronomical 14 players have been inducted, and that's not even counting the media members and owners selected. This has caused some great angst in the "Small Hall" and purists out there, but I say it's long overdue.
- Did the veterans committees get it right with Alan Trammell, Jack Morris, Harold Baines and Lee Smith? I believe all four are borderline Hall of Famers. But am I upset that I'll see their plaques in the great museum on my next visit. Absolutely not. They all had great careers, they all did some things very well on the baseball field.
- Being a child of the late 70s and 80s, I saw them all play, every year. I certainly think Trammell is a Hall of Famer and while I likely would not have voted for Baines or Smith had I earned the right to vote, as I previously stated, I do not think the Hall is soiled by their mere presence in it.
- The other 10 gentlemen were no brainers to me. Tim Lincecum was amazing and the fact he had to wait as long as he did befuddled me. He was better than Rickey in some years, but certainly he Robin to Rickey's Batman when in the years he wasn't.
- This weekend in Cooperstown, the aforementioned Baines and Smith will join the first unanimous choice ever, Mariano Rivera, along with Mike Mussina and Edgar Martinez. Like Raines, Edgar was forced to wait far too long for his call to the Hall, in my opinion. The DH argument bothered me and still bothers me. He was exceptional at what he did. I don't care about what he did not do, especially if it did not hinder his team's performance.
- There are those out in the world in angst about Rivera being the first unanimous selection. Again, I pay it no mind. To me, a diehard Red Sox fan, he was the greatest closer the game has even seen. That

silly, closed-minded writer did not vote for Babe Ruth or Ty Cobb or Mickey Mantle or Tom Seaver or Rickey Henderson to me should not have weight on today's voters when it comes to Rivera. In fact, the unanimous vote makes it clear to me the writers may actually be voting smarter.

- But then I remember they voted Mussina in before Curt Schilling and I get all bent out of shape and question their intelligence once again. But that's a story for a different day.
- Kris Dufour