

**MLB Baseball Weekly --- Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008**  
**BY MATTHEW HATFIELD**

**E**arlier this week, the annual Major League Baseball Draft took place. With the first pick overall, the Tampa Bay Rays bolstered their already bright young future by selecting shortstop Tim Beckham, who many believe has Derek Jeter type potential. Another notable draft pick was by the Arizona Diamondbacks as they took Arizona pitcher Daniel Schlereth, the son of former Denver Broncos offensive lineman, ESPN analyst and *Guiding Light* star Mark Schlereth. Enough of the draft for me though, it's time to focus on some of the other topics of the week.....

**Boston Brawl:**

On the same night the NBA Finals between the Celtics and Lakers began in Boston, the action was even more heated and intense on the diamond in Beantown. Red Sox center field Coco Crisp charged the mound after Tampa Bay right-hander James Shields hit him with a pitch, and a brawl erupted. The previous day, Crisp was involved in a bit of controversy as he tried to steal a base in the bottom of the sixth inning and Rays shortstop Jason Bartlett placed his knee in front of the bag in an attempt to keep Crisp from stealing the base.

Eight players were suspended and also received fines. Crisp got hit with the heaviest penalty of all as he was given a seven-game suspension by Major League Baseball. Shields got six games, and his teammates Johnny Gomes and Edwin Jackson each were given five-game suspensions. Carl Crawford and Akinori Iwamura will sit out four and three games respectively. The only other Boston players suspended were left-hander Jon Lester (five games) and first baseman Sean Casey (three games). Of course, some of these players will likely appeal the suspensions, so ultimately they may not sit out all of those games and it's feasible someone has their suspension reduced.

It has been a wild week for the Red Sox, who swept Tampa Bay at home for the second time this year. Manny Ramirez tweaked his hamstring and got into a heated argument with Kevin Youkilis in the dugout. Ramirez recently hit his 500<sup>th</sup> career home run. David 'Big Papi' Ortiz is done for a month due to injury and likely on the shelf till the All-Star break. Center fielder Jacoby Ellsbury, one of the top young players in the game and one of the top base stealers, injured his wrist on Thursday night. He's listed as day-to-day.

Currently riding a 13-game home winning streak, the Red Sox will have to tread water the next few weeks with the latest suspension and injuries. Boston and Tampa Bay are battling for the AL East division title, and their next important meeting comes on June 30 in St. Petersburg. It's safe to say the juices will be flowing at Tropicana Field that evening.

### **Just What The Doctor Ordered:**

The story everyone was talking about with the New York Yankees this week was Joba Chamberlain's move from the bullpen, where he was a lights out eighth inning reliever to setup closer Mariano Rivera, to the starting rotation. Chamberlain went less than three innings and in his first outing as a starter, and the result was another loss for the Yankees. Personally, I think the move in the middle of the season is totally ridiculous, simply because even if he does turn out to be an excellent starter, you weaken the bullpen by moving him, plus he makes more appearances/has a greater impact as a reliever. For every bad start, that's two or three games he could've been used to get three outs in the eighth inning.

Still hanging around .500, Joe Girardi and the Bronx Bombers needed that defining game or moment to get the jump-started towards another big playoff push. They got it earlier this week against one of their AL East rivals, and not the Boston Red Sox. On Thursday against the Toronto Blue Jays, the Yankees trailed 7-2 midway through the fifth inning after getting out to a 2-0 lead through three innings of action. Despite starting pitcher Chien-Ming Wang remaining winless since May 2<sup>nd</sup> (*it's fair to say some-thing was Wang*). In the bottom of the ninth inning though, Jason Giambi delivered a pinch-hit, two-run walk-off home run off All-Star closer B.J. Ryan on a 0-2 pitch

Amazingly since April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Mike Mussina is the winningest pitcher in all of baseball. That's really remarkable considering his struggles last year

### **McLaren's Tirade Means Mariners Are Officially Baseball's Worst:**

It was only a matter of time before Seattle Mariners Manager John McLaren blew up, lost his cool and spoke his mind. Earlier this week following another tough loss, McLaren went into a profanity-laced tirade, and not the quiet one. There were so many bleeps, it made you wonder if it was McLaren speaking or Ozzie Guillen, the Chicago White Sox Manager who's known to have a short fuse.

Sometimes it can be good for a Manager to have a bit of an outburst every once in a while. Look no further than two years ago when Detroit Tigers Manager Jim Leyland had a memorable postgame press conference following a loss and his team seemed to rally around that, reaching the World Series that year. But to me, this tirade had the feel of 'you know what, I'm sick and tired of losing,'... and also 'we really stink, and I wish there was something I could do about it... just something.' Part of the problem for Seattle is their best player, Ichiro, isn't a vocal leader. While he's a phenomenal player, Ichiro's first language isn't even English. Additionally, the moves the M's made a few years ago to bring in Richie Sexson at first base and Adrian Beltre at third base haven't paid off like they thought. This past off-season they brought in starting pitcher Erik Bedard from Baltimore, but he doesn't look like he will win 15 games. In fact, the M's, with a staff that also features Felix Hernandez, have the worst starters' ERA in the American League.

Maybe in the end it'll best if the Mariners and McLaren do part ways. A bad result in Boston, where they will begin a series tonight, just might end McLaren's time as Skipper. After all, the team does have the worst record in the sport. One name that Seattle could definitely look into bringing in is Bobby Valentine, the former Manager of the Mets. Valentine is managing in Japan, and since Seattle has some Japanese players with Ichiro and catcher Kenji Johjima, the fit makes some sense.

Last Friday, the Rockies led the Cubs 9-1 after five innings, but eventually lost 10-9 at Wrigley. Although Colorado may not even be the worst team in their own division as the Padres have a dreadfully bad offense, plus the Rocks are only about eight months removed from a World Series appearance. Kansas City recently lost 11 in a row, though if the Royals ever got hot they still would have a decent chance to make noise in the not so great AL Central. Pittsburgh is terrible, and the Pirates haven't been to the playoffs in forever it feels like. However, the worst team in baseball tag belongs to Seattle, and things don't look too promising for McLaren unless there is an incredible turnaround.



**The Braves got bad news this week when it was announced that pitcher John Smoltz will have season-ending shoulder surgery. Smoltz was 3-2 with a 2.57ERA and a 36-8K/BB ratio.**

#### **HOT:**

**Milwaukee Brewers - Ned Yost's 'Brew Crew' have won six in a row, including sweeping the NL West-leading Diamondbacks. In fact, Milwaukee is 9-1 over their past ten games to move four games above .500.**

**Phillies pitcher Cole Hamels - This Philly ace has pitched 91 innings and allowed only nine home runs. Best of all about Hamels though is that on Thursday he threw a complete game shutout, his second of the season, as the Phillies blanked the Reds.**

**Rangers DH Milton Bradley - Since May 27, Bradley has hit seven home runs. Furthermore, Bradley has had 13 multi-hit games over the Rangers' last 25 games, and for the season he's batting well over .300 with 17 doubles.**

**NOT:**

**Mets outfielder Endy Chavez - Over the past seven days, Chavez is 0-for-15. While Chavez batted .287 last season and .306 the year before, he has a lot of work to do to get near that in 2008. Right now he's batting just .189 with 2RBI.**

**White Sox pitcher Mark Buehrle - For the season, the Chicago left-hander is 2-6 with a 5.20ERA. Buehrle has given up nine earned runs in 11 innings over his last two starts. He's winless at home in 2008 as well.**

**Twins DH/outfielder Craig Monroe - A former member of the Detroit Tigers and Chicago Cubs, Monroe is 3-for-27 dating back to May 17<sup>th</sup>.**

**STAT OF THE WEEK:**

**In games decided by one run, the Atlanta Braves are 3-16 this season. Atlanta also is 1-5 in games that have gone to extra innings.**

**TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE WEEK:**

**Since the MLB Draft was held earlier this week, it got me to thinking about some of the past #1 overall selections. Who was selected first overall in the baseball draft precisely 15 years ago?**

*Last Week's Answer: Mickey Mantle*