

MLB Baseball Weekly --- Friday, July 25th, 2008
BY MATTHEW HATFIELD

We're just a little bit past the midway point and that gives me an opportunity to breakdown the division races, standings and teams in this edition of *MLB Weekly*. Much of the focus will be on each team's first half, a preview to the second half and obviously talk of who may be on the move with the trading deadline less than a week away.

On a sad note – this is my final *MLB Weekly* of the season due to the football coverage that will soon be hitting the website. I'm not done talking baseball, though – be sure to check out my Blog and Playoff Previews in October!

American League:

Tampa Bay Rays (59-42): Changing their name from the Devil Rays to just plain Rays, Tampa has been anything but plain or ordinary. In fact, they've been the single biggest surprise story in baseball to this point. Joe Maddon's club goes into the weekend with a record 17 games above .500. Got a need for speed? Tampa is making things happen around the base pads with Carl Crawford, Justin Upton and Jason Bartlett. No team in the sport has more stolen bases than their 106. Leading the way for the rotation have been the likes of Scott Kazmir, James Shields and Andy Sonnanstine. In the bullpen the Rays have been extremely solid, converting 30 of 35 saves. It appears Tampa will be in the playoff picture and hunt for the AL East title until the very end. As long as the bats don't go cold, which getting Rocco Baldelli back should help, they have a great chance to be in the postseason for the first time in franchise history.

Boston Red Sox (60-43): Boston's 11 shutouts are more than anyone else in either league, although the bullpen hasn't been quite as strong as last year, blowing 16 saves. The Red Sox might be in the market for another reliever to help out closer Jonathan Papelbon. To me, it seems extremely bizarre that they are wanting to get rid of Manny Ramirez, because he and David 'Big Papi' Ortiz form the best hitting tandem around. J.D. Drew has given them a spark when Ortiz or Ramirez has been out of the lineup. In the rotation, they've missed Curt Schilling, no doubt. But Daisuke Matsuzaka and Josh Beckett are going to be perennial 15-game winners for the next few seasons. When the offense gets hot, the only team that can match the Red Sox run-for-run is the Yankees. I don't see a Championship repeat happening, though.

New York Yankees (56-45): Six consecutive victories put the Yankees in position to tie the Red Sox in the AL East standings with a sweep at Fenway this weekend. Over the past five seasons, the Yankees have the best record in Major League Baseball during the second half, compiling a .658 winning percentage during that time span. In other words, bank on them battling for the division and a Wild Card berth till the

very end. Mike Mussina, who is tied for the Major League lead in wins with 13, is a major reason why. He really has been a huge help with Chien Ming-Wang and others injured. Of course, the lineup has plenty of potency with the likes of former AL MVP Alex Rodriguez, Derek Jeter and Jason Giambi among others. The bullpen leading up to lights out closer Mariano Rivera may tell the story, though. So far Kyle Farnsworth has not allowed a run or hit in ten straight appearances. Will that continue though? A right-handed hitting outfielder could be in the works, but their most pressing need is another starting pitcher. Seattle southpaw Jarrod Washburn, a member of the Angels' 2002 World Series title team, would be an ideal #3 or #4 starter to bring over in a trade.

Toronto Blue Jays (51-51): Toronto's 3.68 team ERA is the second best in baseball. Much of that credit should go to Roy Halladay, who seems to be a Cy Young candidate year in and year out as long as he's healthy. The offense has been up and down and spotty to say the least. Outfielders Vernon Wells and Alex Rios can't the job done alone, and somebody will need to step up – such as a veteran like Scott Rolen perhaps – to get them in the hunt going into September. Usually solid in the pen with B.J. Ryan in the back fend, the Blue Jays have had some blown saves, which they cannot afford, especially against the likes of the Yankees and Red Sox. I don't foresee A.J. Burnett (139K's) being traded, nor should they even think about dealing Halladay for a second. General Manager J.P. Ricciardi and company tend to make more moves in the off-season rather than around the deadline. With 60 games to go, the Blue Jays would love to go 35-25, though that's unlikely unless their bats get hot for a 10 or 12-day stretch.

Baltimore Orioles (48-53): One statistic says it all for the Baltimore Orioles, a team that has been pretty competitive in a tough division when many expected them to lose 100 games easily. The Orioles haven't won a game on Sunday in 15 weeks, dating back to April 6th. Taking it a step further, their 426 walks are most in the sport. Yikes! And talented reliever George Sherrill on the trading block you say? Makes absolutely no sense to me. He's probably the best player they've got, and yet they want to get rid of him? Completely clue-less. Baltimore will have to add more punch to its lineup, and when they've done that in the past – bringing in the likes of Sammy Sosa, Rafael Palmeiro, Javy Lopez and Miguel Tejada for example – it didn't pay off with a postseason berth. If they're unable to do that though, it would be wise to hang on to their pitching, because that's their only hope to stay above .500.

Chicago White Sox (57-43): For the White Sox, the World Series Champions in 2005, to be 14 games over .500 is a bit of a surprise considering they had a terrible year last season and most anticipated them finishing third or fourth in the AL Central. Bringing in Carlos Quentin from the Arizona Diamondbacks has paid enormous dividends thus far, particularly with Paul Konerko swinging a cold bat. Quentin has belted 26 home runs and been the catalyst for their offensive attack. As far as surprises, the biggest one for the White Sox in the pitching department would be Gavin Floyd, someone that battled to be in the rotation with the Phillies and now could win 15 games. Additionally, Bobby Jenks is doing a really fine job as the closer for Chicago. To hold off the Minnesota Twins and win the division, they have enough power with Quentin, Jermaine Dye and Jim Thome;

they're just going to need a little more base stealing and for the starting pitching to be consistent down the stretch.

Minnesota Twins (55-46): Anybody doing a better job than Ron Gardenhire? There are some quality Managers out there with Mike Scioscia and Joe Maddon, but one can argue that Gardenhire has done the best job. Minnesota lost Torii Hunter and Johan Santana in the off-season, yet they are still competing for a playoff spot without their best fielder and ace of their pitching staff. Speaking of Minnesota's pitching staff, they've done an excellent of not walking batters. In fact, their 242 walks are at least 43 fewer than any other team. Livan Hernandez, who was acquired from the Diamondbacks in the off-season, has been a real plus and an innings eater. On the offensive side of things, first baseman Justin Morneau, the 2006 AL MVP and Home Run Derby Champion earlier this month, leads the way along with catcher Joe Mauer. What might lead the Twins to the AL Central crown? Two things – their base running and top-notch fielding, two staples of this team since Gardenhire took over.

Detroit Tigers (52-49): While the Tigers are three games above .500, they haven't functioned quite as well as many so-called 'experts' predicted going into the season. Detroit entered the 2008 campaign with World Series aspirations, and now they are just battling to stay in the playoff picture. Their pitching hasn't been dependable, whether it's Kenny Rogers, off-season acquisition Dontrelle Willis, Justin Verlander or the bullpen. Joel Zumaya and Fernando Rodney have been bothered by injuries, but if they're able to stay healthy and be effective the last part of the season, Detroit may be able to get hot. Power-wise, Miguel Cabrera, an addition from the Florida Marlins along with Willis, is probably the only player that's going to swat 30 homers. Pulling off a deal to get someone such as Ken Griffey Jr. will be tough, so Detroit will probably have to get it done with what they have. And if they don't? Don't be surprised if this is Jim Leyland's final season as Manager.

Kansas City Royals (46-57): Both hot and cold through the first part of the season, the Royals haven't gotten quite hot enough or been consistent enough to make a push towards the playoffs. Starting pitchers Gil Meche, Brian Bannister and Zach Greinke got off to promising starts, each looking like double-digit game winners. None has maintained the level they were pitching at in April. In the bullpen though, the Royals have found themselves a real gem of a closer in Joakim Soria. Unless some team that can offer him mega bucks – i.e. the Yankees or Red Sox – he'll be the piece that Kansas City builds around for the future. What they are lacking is that really dangerous stick in the order, and until they get it, don't expect to find this team in contention for the postseason for a while.

Cleveland Indians (44-56): As big of a disappoint as the Tigers have been in many people's eyes, Cleveland might be an even greater disappointment since they were one win away from reaching the World Series last October. Manager Eric Wedge could get the ax very soon unless the Tribe gain some momentum the final month of the season and can get to .500. Cleveland is shopping a few guys and among them is Casey Blake,

and they already dealt C.C. Sabathia to Milwaukee. One player they better not give away is Grady Sizemore, one of the best young outfielders in the sport. Sizemore has a shot to lead the AL in home runs this year or at some point in the future. But the real positive for the Indians has been starting pitcher Cliff Lee, who might win the AL Cy Young Award for a last place team because he's been so good. As far as fielding goes, the Indians have been great in that category, committing the fewest errors in the American League and posting the best fielding percentage in the game. So with great defense, excellent pitching with Lee and a talent in Sizemore – how are they in last place? Blame it on the bullpen, hitting slumps and plain under achieving.

Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim (62-39): Extremely impressive. That's the best way to sum up the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim through 101 games. Vlad Guerrero (17HR, 53RBI) leads an offense that has been pedestrian in the past, but not so this year. Garret Anderson and Casey Kotchman have chipped in with 50RBI apiece, while Torii Hunter and Howie Kendrick have combined for 47 doubles. Talk has Mark Teixeira possibly coming to the Angels, and if that happens, pencil them in for the World Series – that's how strongly I feel they are the best team in the AL. Of course, a Mike Scioscia managed team will run the bases aggressively and be effective in that aspect of the game. On the mound, they're getting the job done there, too. John Lackey is 8-2 since coming back from injury, while Ervin Santana and Joe Saunders have 11 and 13 wins respectively. Francisco Rodriguez has converted an astonishing 43 of 46 save opportunities as the Angels have won a lot of one and two run ball games.

Oakland Athletics (52-49): The A's have lost front-line starting pitchers Danny Haren, Rich Harden and Joe Blanton – all key parts of their AL West division title and run to the ALCS in 2006 – all in less than a year to clubs in the National League. Haren, Harden and Blanton went to the Diamondbacks, Cubs and Phillies respectively with the departures of Harden and Blanton coming in the past month. Since making those trades, the A's have sputtered, losing seven of their last ten going into Thursday. Oakland's team ERA of 3.42 is the best in the Majors, however. Quite simply, more offense is required for them to make some noise and get to the playoffs. But the direction Billy Beane and the front office are going appears to be selling rather than buying. They like to go with the youth movement and it's hard to blame them. Oakland tends to get hot in August, and if that happens again, they may be able to stay in the Wild Card picture.

Texas Rangers (52-50): For a long time now, the Rangers' Achilles heel has been their pitching. That's no different this season with a team ERA of 5.22 – worst in the American League. Error-prone also describes the Rangers. Texas has made the most errors – 86 – of any team in baseball to this point. Bad defense behind well below average pitching makes it tough for any club, even a potent hitting one, to challenge for a playoff spot. Outfielder Josh Hamilton, the big league's leader in RBI with 98, put on quite a show at the Home Run Derby. Hamilton is the 'feel good' player story of the baseball season, bouncing back from a career that was a disappointment prior to 2008. Both he and infielder Ian Kinsler, who had a 25-game hitting streak snapped earlier this month, are

the exciting bats in the lineup for a Rangers offense that is dynamite when they're clicking on all cylinders.

Seattle Mariners (38-63): My biggest disappointment clearly has been the Seattle Mariners, a team I predicted before the start of the baseball season to represent the American League in the World Series. That won't happen as Seattle is 25 games under the .500 mark and definite sellers as opposed to buyers with the trading deadline approaching. Seattle already got rid of Richie Sexson and more are going to be on the move. Veteran left-handed reliever Arthur Rhodes hasn't allowed a run since May, so the contenders – particularly the Phillies, D-Backs, Cardinals and Red Sox – should come calling for him. Outfielder Raul Ibañez, often overshadowed by hit machine Ichiro, appears to be on the move somewhere as well. Felix Hernandez probably will stay put and the same goes for starter Erik Bedard, who they traded for with Baltimore before the season.

National League:

New York Mets (55-47): A 5-2 mark against the Phillies this month has helped return New York to the perch of the National League East division. Four shutout victories during their ten-game winning helped turn things around when it looked very gloomy prior to the managerial change from Willie Randolph to Jerry Manuel. Johan Santana has a career 50-17 mark after the All-Star break. Santana has pitched fairly well, but thus far has yet to live up to the lofty expectations set when he arrived in the Big Apple. What makes them go though is their speed. The Mets lead all NL teams in stolen bases with 106, led by Jose Reyes'. Even better, Carlos Delgado, who was in a horrendous slump at one time, has heated up in the month of July. Fernando Tatis, Marlon Anderson and Damion Easley have provided strong contributions, too. GM Omar Minaya may get a corner outfielder, although the asking price is high, so it wouldn't shock me to see them quiet at the deadline for the second year in a row. Avoiding a late-season slump, which is what cost them last year, is the key to the Mets making the playoffs for the second time in three years.

Philadelphia Phillies (54-48): Amazingly, Cole Hamels did not start in any of the last seven games the Phillies have played against the Mets. That's the main reason why Philadelphia sits in second place instead of first place in the division. Joe Blanton, an acquisition via trade from Oakland, probably isn't the answer to the team's starting pitching woes. However, Brad Lidge has had a fantastic, resurgent year as the new Philly closer. Last year's NL MVP, shortstop Jimmy Rollins, has gone into a bit of a funk. They'll need him to pick it up to go with first baseman Ryan Howard (29HR, 88RBI) and second baseman Chase Utley to form the best offensive trio in the league. In order to get to the Fall Classic, the pitching has to step up, but the hitting may be good enough to pass the Mets and hold Florida for the division title.

Florida Marlins (53-49): Free-swingers. Florida has the most strikeouts by their batters (857) of any team in baseball, but surprisingly they also lead both leagues in home runs with 143. That success with the bat has the Marlins thinking they're a contender instead of a pretender, which most believed heading into the season. Losing Miguel Cabrera and Dontrelle Willis to Detroit hasn't phased them one bit, and in fact, shortstop Hanley Ramirez has flourished as the face of this franchise. An argument definitely can be made that Ramirez is the best shortstop in the National League – even better than Jose Reyes and Jimmy Rollins. Second baseman Dan Uggla, an All-Star, helps carry the offensive load as well. What ultimately will keep Florida from making the playoffs this year is their starting pitching, which isn't strong enough to keep them in the hunt until the end of September in my opinion. Furthermore, I don't believe that Kevin Gregg is the answer as the closer in a crucial spot. That being said, watch out for the Marlins in 2009 – they'll be very dangerous and thinking World Series title, something they won in 1997 and 2003.

Atlanta Braves (48-53): In games decided by exactly one run, the Braves are a dreadful 6-22. They have dropped 24 straight one-run road games. Bobby Cox and company used to win those tight ball games thanks to their pitching with the likes of Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine and John Smoltz in the 1990's. With Smoltz injured, Maddux elsewhere and Glavine no longer a spring chicken, Atlanta's pitching no longer is among the elite in the sport. Mike Hampton is expected to start tomorrow for the first time in nearly three years, and their banking on him being an asset to make a late push, so it's unlikely that happens. They've leaned on Chipper Jones (.369BA) so much, but even as good as he's been, he can't get them to the playoffs alone. Mark Teixeira becomes a free agent at the end of this year, and it's highly unlikely Atlanta will retain him past the deadline or beyond 2008. Among teams that could sign him are the Orioles, Yankees, Mets and Red Sox, while Arizona has expressed interest in possibly trading for him so that Conor Jackson can play more regularly in left field as opposed to every day at first base.

Washington Nationals (38-64): Their .243 batting average ranks worst in all of Major League Baseball. Early on the Washington Nationals were playing pretty competitive, but Manny Acta's ball-club lacks the offensive firepower to compete with the Phillies, Mets and Marlins. They really lack it when their best hitter, third baseman Ryan Zimmerman, is out with an injury. In fact, Lastings Milledge is the favorite to lead this team in home runs and his total may be about 20 or 22. The Nats are banking on their farm system to develop quickly so that they can make a run in 2009 or 2010. If that happens, they'll only be one or two star players – whether it's in the batting order or a pitcher – to do what Tampa Bay is doing this year in the American League.

Chicago Cubs (60-42): Cubs, Cubs, Cubs – here come the Cubs! Slowly but surely, the Cardinals and Brewers are beginning to close the gap on the Cubs in this division. Chicago really began to start missing Alfonso Soriano, an electric force in their lineup when healthy because he offers power, speed and contact hitting. Soriano really makes them go, even with talented hitters such as Aramis Ramirez and Derrek Lee on board. Youngsters such as Geovany Soto and Kosuke Fukudome have made an impact to

make it a stronger offensive unit. Collectively, the pitching has been very good with Carlos Zambrano as the ace and Ryan Dempster and Ted Lilly adding support as #2/#3 starters. In the bullpen, Kerry Wood and Carlos Marmol are capable of getting outs, especially Marmol who throws electric stuff. When the postseason arrives though, they have to prove themselves. That will likely be the difference as to whether or not they have a quick postseason exit or end their long World Series drought.

Milwaukee Brewers (59-43): Winners of eight straight, the Brewers are a legit threat now to make the NL playoffs. Newly acquired starting pitcher C.C. Sabathia (154K's) was the piece that made them a threat, teaming with Ben Sheets to make arguably the best 1-2 pitching tandem in the league. Milwaukee also pulled the trigger on a deal to land Ray Durham from San Francisco. Durham helps with experience, some speed and versatility with the ability to play several different positions in the field. Oakland closer Huston Street might be another player the Brewers have their eye on in hopes of bolstering what has been a mediocre bullpen at best. Let's face it, while the offense has some punch with the likes of Ryan Braun (26HR) and Prince Fielder among others, and the starting pitching was just upgraded, they still don't have a strong enough bullpen to go deep into October. Someone will have to emerge or another arm must be brought in for their chances to significantly increase.

St. Louis Cardinals (57-47): Other than, Albert Pujols (.349BA, 18HR, 56RBI) could a casual baseball fan name another player on this St. Louis roster? Sure, Ryan Ludwick, Rick Ankiel, Aaron Miles, Braden Looper and Kyle Lohse have been instrumental in St. Louis achieving the record that they currently have, but none are household names. Tony La Russa might be the National League Manager of the Year when it's all said and done, especially if St. Louis makes the playoffs. The only player that can pass for a 'superstar' on the roster is Pujols. St. Louis' bullpen is very suspect to say the least; they've only converted 28 of 52 save opportunities, which really makes it surprising that the Cardinals are ten games over .500 with less than 60 games to go. They certainly need a reliever, and if they're unable to get one, that may cost them from being postseason bound. Adam Wainwright will be shoved into the bullpen when he returns off the disabled list in August. I don't envision them catching the Brewers or Cubs unless they make a 'blockbuster' deal and that seems to be too difficult to do at this present time.

Cincinnati Reds (50-53): This team is made to win the NL Central and make the playoffs in either 2009 or 2010. First-year Manager Dusty Baker, who led the Cubs and Giants to playoff appearances in the past, has to like what he's gotten from Adam Dunn (29HR's). Even more so, Baker has to love what young starting pitcher Edinson Volquez (NL-low 2.49ERA) has done. Future All-Star hitter Jay Bruce and flame-throwing 22-year-old Johnny Cueto are two other promising young talents that Cincy will build around. Pitcher Aaron Harang, who was terrific last year, has really struggled and may lose 15 games instead of winning 15. Names that may be on the move include Ken Griffey Jr., Bronson Arroyo and don't rule out a deal that could ship Dunn off to a contender. If someone is able to land Griffey or Dunn, that definitely improves someone's team.

Pittsburgh Pirates (48-54): Every year it seems like the Pirates are sellers at the trading dealing instead of buyers. This franchise hasn't been winning consistently since the 1970's when Willie Stargell and Roberto Clemente. Pittsburgh is 30-22 at home, but 18-32 on the road. Along with the Padres, the Pirates have the fewest stolen bases – 25 – in Major League Baseball. Throw in their ML-worst 5.24 team ERA and it's easy to see why the Pirates have been unable to sustain momentum when they gain it with a good series. Xavier Nady, who's batting .330, could be on the trading block with the Mets and Yankees among the possible destinations where he might land. Another valuable piece that may be on the move is reliever Damaso Marte, a specialist that would be a big help come postseason time. One player Pittsburgh needs to keep is outfielder Nate McLouth, an All-Star that powers the team's lineup.

Houston Astros (46-55): Only three years removed from losing to the Chicago White Sox in the Fall Classic, the Astros are a different looking team. No longer do they have Jeff Bagwell and Craig Biggio, a couple of Hall-of-Fame hopefuls, nor do they have Carlos Beltran or Brad Lidge. Roger Clemens and Andy Pettitte are gone, too. One player they still do have is Triple Crown contender Lance Berkman, who's also a prime candidate to win the NL MVP award. The other big bat in the lineup is Carlos Lee (22HR, 80RBI), one of the top outfielders in the league. Houston may need to search for a new ace come 2009 because Roy Oswalt no longer is pitching at the same level he was when the Astros made it to the World Series three years ago. Oswalt's inconsistencies makes him better suited to being a #2 starter on most staffs. However, here in Houston, he's been forced to be the ace. Jose Valverde has been okay as the closer, but they need a few more arms in the pen to be competitive in the NL Central next season.

Arizona Diamondbacks (50-51): At one time the Diamondbacks held the best record in all of Major League Baseball. But that was in late April and early May. Since then they have struggled, going through some dry spells offensively and a couple of unfortunate injuries, such as one that ended Eric Byrnes' season. Arizona's bullpen has gotten progressively worse as they've blown 17 saves, including some mind-boggling ones that have lingered around for a few days. What should keep the D-Backs atop the NL West, provided the Dodgers don't make a monster deal to bring in a big-time slugger, is their pitching. The 1-2 combo of Brandon Webb and Dan Haren are as good as it gets. Throw in 44-year-old left-hander Randy Johnson, who isn't the Cy Young caliber pitcher he once was, but has improved as the season has gone on and found his groove, and that's a nice trio to have for a postseason series. Still, Arizona needs to bring in a veteran presence to lead them, something they've lacked since Tony Clark left. Another arm in the pen wouldn't hurt either.

Los Angeles Dodgers (49-52): LA's 3.81 team ERA is tops in the National League. Their pitching has kept them afloat and allowed them to close the gap on the D-Backs. Well, Arizona has allowed them to close the gap, but nonetheless the Dodgers have been tough to score runs on lately. Chad Billingsley (133K's) has become the x-factor in the rotation for LA. Going into last weekend, Takashi Saito was 17 of 20 on save opportunities, but the rest of the Dodgers' team was 0-for-6 on save tries. Their

bullpen needs to step up. More importantly, the bats have to get going or else they are in jeopardy of going through a season-devastating losing streak. Andruw Jones has been a bitter disappointment, so they're going to have to rely on the likes of Jeff Kent, Andre Ethier and Russell Martin to produce hits.

Colorado Rockies (45-58): One season after getting hot down the stretch and making it to the World Series, Colorado got off to a dreadful start and is trying to recover in time to do it again. Some injuries early kept them from staying close with the Diamondbacks and Dodgers. Furthermore, arms like Jeff Francis and Ubaldo Jimenez, both of whom were instrumental for them in the postseason last year, have been unable to deliver so far in 2008. Matt Holliday (.343BA) is probably not going to be dealt unless the Rocks get a really sweet offer with prospects as well as an already established, every day player. Reliever Brian Fuentes could be on the trading block, though. What Clint Hurdle's team needs to do is what they did two years ago – and that's play competitively down the stretch even though the postseason appears to be a longshot. That would help them gain some momentum for next year, and with a couple of minor off-season moves, they can be right back in the thick of things with a young nucleus that includes Holliday and dazzling infielder Troy Tulowitzki.

San Francisco Giants (43-58): With Barry Bonds out of the picture, the Giants have moved on and are building around ace starting pitcher Tim Lincecum. The young phenom could win the NL Cy Young on a team with a losing record. San Francisco's 61 home runs are the fewest of any team in the NL West, National League or Major League Baseball. That's the part of this team that needs to be upgraded the most – the offense. Aaron Rowand was a nice move, but for most teams he'd probably be their fourth or fifth best hitter. Rowand brings solid fielding and is a pretty good hitter. The problem is on the Giants he's their best hitter at times. Fred Lewis is the next most exciting player they have after Lincecum. San Fran has weeded out some of the older players on their team. Acquiring a big name player, such as Manny Ramirez or Mark Teixeira, in the off-season might be that missing piece for the Giants to get back the playoffs.

San Diego Padres (38-65): Inept offense. Take that back – very, very inept offense. Quite frankly, there isn't a worse offensive team in baseball than the Padres. San Diego has scored the fewest amount of runs and stolen the least amount of bases in the sport, but they also rank 28th in batting average out of 30 teams and have the second most strikeouts. Jake Peavy, a former Cy Young Award winner, is a tremendous pitcher, though it's tough to win when he gets little run support. Adrian Gonzalez really is the lone bat in the lineup that opponents have to game-plan for because no else throughout the batting order makes you pay. Trevor Hoffman, the game's all-time career saves leader, probably has only one more year left, then it's expected that setup man Heath Bell will take over as the ninth inning stopper. It's been a long, rough year for Manager Bud Black. Management needs to make a push for a dynamic offensive player in the off-season, whether it's someone with speed and contact or someone that can bring power to the table. Until then, San Diego will likely bring up the rear in the NL West.

STAT OF THE WEEK:

Chicago White Sox outfielder Carlos Quentin, who's formerly of the Arizona Diamondbacks, leads all Major League Baseball players with 13 game-winning RBI.

TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE WEEK:

The New York Mets have won ten straight, a streak longer than any other team so far in Major League Baseball. When was the last time the Mets won 10 or more in a row?

Last Week's Answer: Fernando Tatis

This Week's Answer: 1991