

**MLB Weekly --- Friday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005**  
**BY MATTHEW HATFIELD**

**W**ow! Has the summer flown by or what? It always does really. I sadly have to announce that this will be my final edition of MLB Weekly for the 2005 season. However, there is some good news. Starting in early September, I will begin my daily *MLB Blog* all the way through the World Series in October. Without further to say or do, I bring you the final MLB Weekly of this regular season...

**Curt Schilling:**

It's been a roller coaster 14 months for Boston Red Sox right-handed pitcher Curt Schilling. We all remember his courageous performances in the ALCS vs. the Yankees and World Series against St. Louis, playing on a bad ankle and with a bloody sock. No, it wasn't catsup either. Anyway, Schilling may never be the same pitcher that won a share of the 2001 World Series MVP award with Randy Johnson as a member of the Diamondbacks. He may never win 20 games again or be considered for the Cy Young award, one accolade that's eluded him his entire 18-year career.

In his first start since April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Schilling showed some encouraging signs. One of them was his pitch speed, which read on the radar gun at or around 95MPH. However, Schill didn't deliver the goods like they had hoped in the bullpen in the absence of Keith Foulke. Last night in Kansas City, Curt got beat up for six runs on nine hits in five innings. As a reliever, Schilling saved nine of 11 games. Not bad. On the flip side he left a few balls over the plate and batters were rewarded for home runs. He's got to be the Schilling of old for Boston to make a mark in the playoffs and maybe even hold off the Yanks - now only 2.5 back. It was pretty nice to watch Red Sox Nation finally get their title last year. **But I will definitely go on record today, August 26<sup>th</sup>, and say Boston will NOT repeat.** It's a strong statement and may sound misguided. I just think they lack that same kind of swagger, healthiness, mystique and hunger that broke the so-called curse.



**Curt Schilling's current 6.43ERA is the highest in his baseball career since his rookie year of 1988 when he pitched in just four games for the Baltimore Orioles.** (Associated Press Photo)

### **Marlins Bat Boy:**

Did you hear the story about the Florida Marlins bat boy? Well, if you haven't, let me briefly fill you in. Dodgers starting pitcher Brad Penny, a former member of the Fish, made a \$500 bet with his old team's bat boy that he couldn't drink a gallon of milk in 60 minutes or less and keep it down. The kid did it as far as drinking it goes, but the other part was an unsuccessful try. The Marlins have suspended the bat boy six games for participating in Penny's bet. They've yet to make any kind of public comment.

Penny's line simply says it all. "You get a 10-game suspension for steroids and a six-game suspension for milk."

### **More Tidbits:**

\*\*\* St. Louis Cardinals Manager Tony La Russa has passed Sparky Anderson on the all-time managerial wins list. Some question the little things La Russa has done in the Show-Me-State as well as Oakland as a coach. Others love him to death and would never blame a thing on him. I'm somewhere in the middle and won't be too surprised now if they fail to make the World Series due to injuries. At the same time, it won't come as any surprise if the Cards find themselves back in the Fall Classic and win this time.

\*\*\* On Wednesday night, Yankees pitcher Mike Mussina went 4.1 innings. Through four innings he was sharp. Then in the fifth inning, Mussina got beat up for eight runs, including a three-run blast by Toronto outfielder Vernon Wells. Thank goodness for the Shawn Chacon's, Aaron Small's and Al Leiter's of the world who've saved the Yanks rotation. These bad outings by Mussina and Randy Johnson absolutely cannot be afforded from September 15<sup>th</sup> on, period.

\*\*\* The Chicago White Sox have won two straight, extending their breathing room in the American League Central to eight games when it got down to seven games. The deficit between them and Cleveland got down to six because the Indians won seven of eight going into Wednesday, whereas Ozzie Guillen's Chicago club didn't fare so well going into the second game of their series vs. Minnesota. The White Sox were losers of eight of their last nine coming into Wednesday, averaging just 2.9 runs per game in that span. Scott Podsednik needs to get back and be the spark plug of the batting order, and third baseman Joe Crede needs to get out of the 0-for slump he's in or Geoff Blum will see more time at third base.

### **If they don't get there this year, look for the Mets to crash the postseason in 2006:**

Look at the New York Mets just 1.5 games back of wild card leading Houston. They are coming off a sweep of the Arizona Diamondbacks out in the desert and really put the offense together out there. On Tuesday and Wednesday night, the Mets became the first team since the New York Yankees in the 1930's to score 13+ runs on the road in consecutive games. They're also doing it without Mike Piazza, currently out with a broken hand. Jose Reyes has been a speed demon on the base pads for them all season long. Reyes is on pace to score over 100 runs, already has 45 stolen bases, and at 22 years of age, accelerates like no one else in baseball. David Wright from Hickory High in

Chesapeake, Virginia has 20 home runs and team highs in RBI's (82) as well as doubles (35). Wright is on the right track towards becoming the league's best third baseman. And with Scott Rolen out right now for St. Louis, he may be the most dangerous hitter at his position that NL pitchers must face. Lets also not forget about outfielders Cliff Floyd and Carlos Beltran. Floyd leads the team in homers with 27 and Beltran - the guy given the monster contract in the off-season - had a historic postseason last year for the Astros.

An unlikely source of offense came in the bat of Mike Jacobs. Down in the minor leagues, Jacobs was a decent player at best. Although, I have to say a couple of scouts told me he was going to pan out sooner or later. In 16 short at-bats, Jacobs has eight hits, eight runs, four homers and nine runs driven in. That's crazy good in a short period of time. It'll be interesting to see whether or not he can keep this up. One question has to be asked. Why hasn't this guy been alternating between first base [where his swing could be much more valuable than Doug Mientkiewicz'] and catcher?

Pedro Martinez' control was off on Thursday night, but he still took a no-hitter into the sixth inning. Martinez has done better than I imagined coming over from the American League. Maintaining that mindset and numerous K's in September is a must for them to get in the playoffs. Right now they've got the healthiest and most effective rotation in quite a while. Steve Trachsel returns to a staff that includes crafty left-hander Tom Glavine, the up down, and sometimes okay Victor Zambrano, Kris Benson (9-5), Aaron Heilman or Kaz Ishii, and Jae Seo. Believe it or not, The least so-so of those five has been Seo. Since being called up from AAA Norfolk, Seo has been lights out. He's 6-1 with an ERA of 1.30, struck out 31 batters compared to only seven walks, and averages over six innings a start.

**Why the Mets will miss out: Bullpen. Nobody can shut the door in the ninth inning consistently. Wait, what about Braden Loper? He's got 26 saves doesn't he. Yes, but he's also blown five save chances, has six losses compared to four victories, has just six more strikeouts than walks, and has an ERA of 3.35. Roberto Hernandez has blow five save shots too, though in 56.1 innings has the most wins of any reliever along with a semi commendable 2.72ERA. After him they've got a sub-par group of middle relievers in Manny Aybar, Heath Bell and Danny Graves.**

### **HOT:**

**Tampa Bay Devil Rays: Even though they've lost three of their last four, the D-Rays have been tearing it up since the break. Heading into Monday's play, Tampa Bay had the best record of anyone in Major League Baseball since the break! Reliever Joe Borowski (1-0, 18.2IP, 0 runs allowed) and young outfielder Jonny Gomes (.281Avg. 17HR) have been catalysts for Lou Piniella's ball club.**

**New York Mets: Meet the Mets (8-2 in their last ten), step right up and meet the Mets. This is a fast, aggressive young team that's going to be scary for the month of September. Many of the NL East teams fighting for the Wild Card might be up on each other, giving Houston an increased chance of reaching the postseason. But that**

won't happen if the Mets - winners of four straight - have anything to say about it and can survive a grueling ten game road trip next month.

**Tigers first baseman Carlos Peña:** I thought about putting Marlins pitcher A.J. Burnett or Mets third baseman David Wright in the third hot slot. But Burnett, who's been terrific since the break, just lost a start earlier this week, and Wright has been very good all year long. Coming into last week, Peña was batting just under .200 and has now raised his batting average 19 points in a week's time. Peña, a former member of the Oakland A's, has hit four of his nine homers this week, too.

**NOT:**

**Arizona Diamondbacks:** No bullpen in all of Major League Baseball has been shakier than this one. What hasn't helped is the fact that starters Javy Vazquez, Russ Ortiz, Shawn Estes and Brad Halsey are a combined 28-38, all with ERA's over 4.30. None have pitched well during their current five game losing skid.

**Braves youngsters Jeff Francoeur and Adam LaRoche:** Both have had sharp seasons and Francoeur could be the NL Rookie of the Year. Though, everything has seemed to have caught up with the both of them. LaRoche hasn't gotten a hit in his last 18 at-bats, while his teammate - a product of the SI jinx if you will - has watched his average drop from .413 on July 31<sup>st</sup> to .353 on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Cardinals starting pitcher Jason Marquis:** Marquis got beat up and beat up bad by Pittsburgh on Tuesday night, allowing seven runs in three innings. Marquis has gone 1-10 in his last 13 starts dating back to June 15<sup>th</sup> at Toronto. The ex-Atlanta Braves pitcher has watched his ERA (8.79 in August) balloon to 4.67 overall.

**TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE WEEK:**

**Cubs first baseman Derrek Lee turned down a basketball scholarship to what school so that he could sign with the San Diego Padres?**

*Last Week's Answer: 1993*

**OUR TOP TEN PITCHERS OF ALL-TIME: (no particular order)**

**Nolan Ryan - He wasn't a big-time winner. He played on bad teams and never was so dominating like a Koufax or Johnson. What was Ryan then? A bulldog on the mound that had the blessing of longevity. This Hall-of-Famer towed the rubber for 27 seasons, fanned guys equally well in the American League and National League, and pitched 19 games where he allowed one hit or no hits.**

*Already on the List: Walter Johnson, Warren Spahn, Christy Matthewson, Roger Clemens, Bob Feller, Sandy Koufax, Lefty Grove, Bob Gibson & Cy Young*

*My Top Ten Hitters of All-Time List: Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, Barry Bonds, Stan Musial, Joe DiMaggio, Lou Gehrig, Mickey Mantle, Ted Williams & Ty Cobb.*

Check out my thoughts on the sports world from Thursday morning, including some of the happenings across Major League Baseball:

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